

[Please stand by for realtime captions] >> Good morning everyone. We will be starting shortly. It is almost the top of the hour. Please so yourself -- please show yourself on ZOOM.

We ask you put yourself on Mute when you're not speaking. We have a lot of people joining us. We are happy to have you. >> [Pause] >>
Good morning.

Hello how are you?

Glad you could join us.

Thank you. >> This is Janet. We will be recording the session and we will be start -- we will be starting in a minute. We have many people joining us.

>> Good morning. This is Janet. Good to see everyone. This is the first time we had the conference call by ZOOM so as a reminder, please put yourself on Mute when you're not speaking, if you want to activate your video, on the bottom, on the left-hand side, you can stop and start your video. This is a great opportunity to see each other, we know sometimes people prefer to join by phone or not activate the video which is acceptable as well.

We will be recording this session. I will do a little bit of ground keeping before we get started, this is Janet. We have captioning today on the call so if you're speaking, please say who it is so the captioner can caption who is speaking.

Also remember, talk one at a time and if you want to say something feel free to raise your hand. Sarah Kennedy who was part of the project team, she will watch the chat box and Sarah, you might also, I may not see everybody on the screen, if you see somebody raising their hand, let us know.

We will be starting.

>> Good morning. I want to welcome you on behalf of the project team, to the first call for O.U.R., I want to give you background of the O.U.R. project, we started over 10 years ago, thinking about our children's safety. O.U.R. regards observing understanding and responding to safety.

We would also ask as we move forward, please put yourself on Mute while we are talking.

There is some background noise. Please Mute your line. Thank you.

The O.U.R. project has been an organic process over the years, I first became involved when Doctor Harold Johnson was in the project and he began to discuss issues as far as safety, we were not sure exactly how we would approach this and over the years it has taken different twists and turns in -- as far as how we can spread awareness.

We have a three-pronged approach to this topic, spreading awareness and understanding of the topic of children's safety, observing reporting and responding and prevention and systems change. >> For me, as the director for Hands & Voices One of the commitments I made early on in a clear understanding that was important for me personally, how I want to be involved, and organizationally, the idea that when it comes to children's safety we would have a cultural and institutional understanding within the organization about how to respond to instances that we might find ourselves involved with, there may be a child at risk or in danger but also organizationally everyone has a clear understanding of this topic, know what to do, also moving into what we can do organizationally to bring this topic to the forefront of a conversation and integrate that within the supports and services.

We have worked on a year calendar, to do with the fiscal year at Hands & Voices and around our conferences, we look at the conference at our

conference as a starting point for our project for a particular year and we have been having monthly meetings and we are excited to have all of you here today.

I will go ahead and turn things over to Harold Johnson who will introduce our speaker.

Thank you. This is Harold Johnson. I am pleased to introduce you to someone you may already know, this is Irene, who

is the cofounder of care power, this is a global nonprofit leadership that is dedicated to provide empowering child protection, communication and personal safety skills to everyone, everywhere.

We hear a new text that Irene wrote

called doing right by our children, Benjamin Franklin is quoted to have said tell me now, teach me and I may remember and involve me and I will learn.

This is a way to involve us with our children to convey to them our love for them, respect, where always there to listen to them and we have to plan for the realities, as you know this is not a perfect world.

We think everyone has their well-being at hand, that's not the reality. This provides us with a proactive way to plan for the safety of our kids and rehearse with our children and it does this throughout the lifespan. As the kids are young or as they enter college, with that I want to introduce Irene who will talk to us about her new book doing right by our kids, hopefully you will leave today encouraged and informed about some concrete things you can do to help your kids and the kids of all the parents that you work with. >> Please share some of your critical elements of this text.

Thank you. I am thrilled to be here. I enjoyed and appreciate our partnership with hands and voices and this is an opportunity to be part of your meeting.

I have to say, Harold, one thing we acknowledge in the book is about people who work towards change and systems, and Carol's leadership is an example of that, not only with the O.U.R. project but also what you're doing and what you have done, with having the Council for exceptional children to it. a resolution -- exceptional children to adopt a resolution.

You in making recommendations about child protection and safety being part of the educational part and support plans. I think there are people on this call, it's a critical piece, you have more ammunition for getting more support for kids getting these skills and for being supported.

One of the things we talk about is protecting child safety at all levels, what you have done is an example. I want to make a little statement because that is hot off the press, anything you want to say about that right now?

This is all about you and doing right by our children. I will share with you some things that just happened that are good.

Okay. I was asked to focus on the inter-circle and what it means to keep kids safe. My inner circle we mean people who have access to our kids, and also what to do to help organizations and schools and places of worship being worthy of trust.

I appreciate the opportunity for interaction so feel free to ask questions. The book goes all the way through being safe the college and say from prejudice and advocating for change within systems, I will start with what I was asked to talk about but if you have a question, please speak up.

>> The inner circle, we have the tools of kids power that we start with, this is for preventing and solving problems with people. Strategies such as awareness, noticing what is safe and what is not safe, having the tools for intervening in a powerful and persistent way, dealing with the obstacles that get in the way, the tools we want to teach our kids, it is about how to stay aware and had to recognize trouble and move away from it, how to set boundaries, how to get help.

I will stress some of these and showing how we can practice that but I want to talk about the strategies first and we will get into some of the tools.

The recognition that kids in our circle, we do not realize that somewhere we get into the illusion of safety, we automatically trust people or places because they are familiar. And because they have been safety before. Or because you have a really good reputation, so many examples of this.

One of the tragic examples was a woman in a church and

she was a deacon in the church, and yet she killed a little girl in a trailer park where children could wander freely without knowing where they were or who they were with. They were assuming things were safe.

The illusion of safety happens -- when a doctor said how -- said he had a party with his son and his best friend and they have a pool at their house. He is a pediatrician and the parents trusted that all the adults were around, the seven-year-

olds were at the party and they went away and the boy was under the water and not moving and she could save him. He was not permanently harmed. It was Friday.

He was trying to understand why would somebody, I can repair, leave their child and it was because of the illusion of safety. We want to pay attention to behavior and to changing circumstances.

Do not automatically trust. One of the great tools for doing this is to check -- teach children to check first about where they are going, who was with them and what they are doing.

For us to think first, have something changed, we have a safety signal for that, it is pad in your arm that means check first with your adults, we have a safety signal, if I recognized those -- can you make a list for me of the things I'm going to promise to send people?

I will send you the link to our website, you can download the safety signals. We have 30 of them. They are simple gestures. They help with core concepts such as check first, think first, and think before you change the plan. >> If somebody's behavior makes you uncomfortable, not just push it away, you can say this is not safe, this could be a problem, you do not have to jump to a big conclusion. You can say, and after schoolteacher was telling a little girl to keep it a secret that he was listening -- to music and he was touching her ears, and when he did that, it felt uncomfortable to her but she did not say anything because he told her to keep it a secret. But they did an intervention at that school.

Part of the illusion of safety is due not just stick to fingerprinting . If something makes you uncomfortable, speak up , you teach kids not to keep secrets.

Problems should not be a secret and when you have kids who think very literally as often kids do and many times kids with disabilities tend to think more literally because they are trying to understand and they have to work harder sometimes. So having very clear specific rules is important.

Problems should not be a secret, activities should not be a secret. If somebody does -- touching should not be a secret. If somebody asks you to keep a secret, it does not mean they are evil it means they are breaking the safety rules and the child's job is to let you know.

That way you do not have to make things scary but you can start to ask questions when somebody is asking to keep something a secret. Another thing to watch out for is when somebody wants to be your child's friend but not your friend.

I had this with the church, contacting me and saying, somebody in the church was focused -- did not have any use for her was focused on making a connection with her child. She was having trouble because this is somebody that was well regarded, and yet, she felt uncomfortable and I said that as a warning signal.

>> This is one of the kinds of danger signals that you can see and you do not have to panic when it happens but you want to pay attention and you want to keep asking questions and you want to know where the boundaries are.

When people -- you deal with different cultures and teaching kids that touch or play should be their choice, it should be safe, we have signals for this, the choice of each person , this is your choice.

You want to be safe and think should not be a secret. Teaching kids this, it helps them and it gives you concrete ways in the schools, they are taking the posters we have and posting them on the wall.

Is this the choice of each person? Is this allowed by the adults in charge? These are some of the tools that you can provide for kids and again, this is all in our safety signals, we have self -- we have healthy rules for touching for friends and family.

Often it is uncomfortable because people are offended when you set boundaries. Do any of you have that problem with friends or family members?

People get their feelings hurt. Don't you trust me? Can I hug and kissed her child? -- Can I hug and kiss your child? I had that in every culture I have encountered including my own.

If you explain to people and they will not always listen, you have to say these are the rules. But if you explain to people that true affection is not forced, forced kissing, hugs are not affection. Younger kids can have a very hard time with being put on the spot, suddenly everybody is focusing on them, for many kids, having to acknowledge another person can be uncomfortable and they can practice this as they get older.

With younger children we say they are reserved and it takes them a while to warm up and our people want to make a connection. I can suggest ways to do that. You can do something interesting. They will come to you in other words. As kids get older you can teach them to look somebody in the eye, to shake hands, if there is affection that the child is uncomfortable with physical affection then you can come up with other ways to show things such as making a drawing or having a photo with the child.

Hugs and kisses and the physical affection and forced affection -- it teaches kids that the boundaries are not important. I can remember one class, we have a cheek pinching technique, about how you grab somebody's attention and you give them something else to do. You can move them away and you can have a cup of coffee.

One child said, would -- why can't you just suffer through that? And I said because it is not healthy for you. It is supposed to be something that is good which is affection. >> So instead of suffering through that what you can do is practice saying stop. You can move people away with their hands. And I say, you always let me pinch your cheek. You always let me hug you. I have her practice saying I am older now. That is not me anymore.

And then I said this hurts my feelings the as we want kids to know that hurt feelings is not a way to give away boundaries.

When I talk to survivors of childhood sexual abuse, sometimes when I do a continuum of intrusion, and having hurt feelings, that is where a lot of times the abuse begins. Because people are taught you're wrong, I will have puppets with little children and one puppet will try to tickle the other puppet and the other puppet will start to cry. And I say is that wrong. The puppet did not want to be touched and kids will see that the puppets feelings were hurt.

So we say no, one puppet was bothering the other, even if somebody has hurt feelings, it is still important to be able to tell them to stop.

Understanding there can be a continuum of intrusion for people who do not have boundaries, or for adults who have -- they are positively triggered, I am in public as her grandmother, people were dying to become grandparents, they say how cute. And the kids are hiding behind me. And I say, I'm sorry, but they do not have evil intention. They are caught up in what they want, they do not think about what is best for the child and I can happen in families.

Recognizing that it does not mean somebody -- if you teach kids how to do with the lower level intrusions, you prepare them to be ready to deal with more emergency type of situations.

Child molesters go through -- they target families or schools or places of worship. We can see this all over, they target places where there is access to kids and they put themselves into positions of trust.

If kids are taught do not keep secrets, check first, and know how to say no, move away and get help as soon as you can,

then they are far better prepared to protect themselves. Any questions? >> In our book, we show how to apply this methodology. One other skill for kids is being persistent in getting help. Knowing who to ask, and had to keep asking, in the schoolyard a lot of times kids are told solve your problem yourself about bullying. And I say if somebody is drowning you do not say solve the problem yourself. >> We say,

we practice, we do not say to kids, horrible things.

That would make them scared, do not be scared of people, you think about skills for solving problems.

So be persistent in setting boundaries in the face of emotional coercion, be prepared to be persistent in getting help knowing who to ask. If one person does not listen ask someone else.

For the schoolyard situation we tell kids, there are things to try and we rehearse to being included in a lot of times kids might struggle with communication, for many different reasons,

they do the wishy technique. They hope somebody will notice them and include them so we teach them how to go in

and say, I want to play. We also teach them to persist in the face of rejection. >> If they say there are too many of you already, they can have answers ready to say, I want to play. Everybody gets to play with each other. The bottom line, adult leadership is necessary for keeping kids safe. If kids are given some tools that they try and do not work for them we want them to go to the adult in charge.

We teach them to go to the teacher, instead of saying -- instead of being aggressive, you can say excuse me, we have a safety problem. Kids are playing too rough. Or I try to get them to stop calling me names.

Often adults say, if the kid approaches them that way they will be blown away. They would automatically listen. We know some people have rigid philosophies, I have kids practice when someone says solve the problem yourself, they can say I tried and it did not work and you're supposed to help me. They should also tell their parents at home.

We give them the language to say, -- >> What happens if the students have communication challenges? They are already uncomfortable about communicating. How do you work with kids with communication challenges?

>> When children -- you want to develop a common language with the adults around the child about what something means so if a child wants to be included, you can use a gesture to be included. If you understand sign language that is great but we tried to give some simple gestures that can mean certain things. >> Communication modalities are different we make sure all these adults are trained in how to understand the signals of that child. We rehearse with the child who has some ability to communicate. Often people make an assumption that kids cannot communicate when they can.

We had this happen with adults who had communication challenges,

they worked in programs for years and we came in and we rehearsed, I need help, and guess what? A lot of times with these gestures, a lot of times they will start to say it.

>> I came into the office because this is the best Internet connection. By working with families, and the schools, then we tried to make an individual plan for each child. Everybody is different.

People who cannot speak, if you give them -- you want to give them tools. Shyness and being uncomfortable, I have had people who work with somebody for years and were floored when he finally said, please stop. And that was just with a little bit of rehearsing. They said I did not know they could talk. Isn't that sad?

And this is what adults. This is not an uncommon experience for us. Simple rehearsal if somebody cannot talk, clear gestures, that everybody can understand, if they cannot communicate in sign language, give some simple gestures. This is why we have developed the safety signal, we're finding that part of the complexity was literally, people were speaking different languages plus using different words for the same things.

By getting a consistent word, I need help, that is consistent, everybody is different.

And how we communicate is different and when we create a common language about safety specific to that family, the person, it makes a huge difference.

Safety in different settings, we have the inner circle, and what you want to know is who they are, -- who is there. >> If the child goes over to a friend's house, but the problem is, there's a friend of the older brother, who is also at the house, some nails that you did not know who may cause a problem, or they go down the street to the park and you did not know that family was allowed to do that, make sure you have really clear rules with people and want to uphold those rules.

Safety and well-being of the child are more important than anyone.

That is hard to live by, to put safety first. You don't want to hurt people's feelings or offend somebody. >> Kids and safety, your supporting other people who are worried about doing this so that is part of that, as you move out of youth serving organizations, anyplace that deals with kids, whether they define themselves that way or not, that is a Youth organization. If there is child care where you go, or if when kids go to college is, -- go to colleges, those are Youth organizations.

Sometimes when people pair up with a roommate, for college, that puts older kids with younger kids, that is one of the places where inappropriate behavior can happen. >> Instead of hearing kids up with kids who are more aligned, so you want to assess where you're sending kids. Just do not trust the reputation. Go and look for yourself. Make sure your

child knows how to contact you . You want to know anytime there is a problem.

They are prepared to interrupt, yes? >>

Can you talk about cyber safety? So many of our children's lives are spent online. >> For cyber safety, what are the things that we do with adults? We have everybody look at their own hands and can you see the hands of the person next to you? And the answer is if you're looking on your phone, you do not. You cannot see. That means if your child is using technology next to you, they are on their own.

Even if you're sitting right beside them, they are out in the wild world of the Internet -- you want them to be safe, one of the dangers online , especially for young boys getting exposed to pornography, images pop up. And they are connected with innocent things. And they pop up and they get curious which is normal and it causes changes inside. They feel ashamed. And they look at that more and more. So acknowledging we teach kids the safety rules, and we tell them to look away.

It does not work all the time. If they have a problem, tell your grown-ups. It does not mean you're a bad person.

One of the online dangers is technology and sometimes it pops up in the weirdest way, there's something coming up on the sidebar, so we teach them not to click on that. Check first. We do not want to -- we do not want them to disappear, you need to know what happened.

It does not ruin them for life but it upsets them if they see inappropriate pictures. We want to make sure -- teach kids about being digital citizens.

>> Part of this is being aware as adults and you copilot with kids, you are with them looking at the technology, you're looking at the same screen.

It's just like you are with them out in the real world until they are ready to do that on their own. Smart kids -- I don't know about all the technology that is possible

for safeguarding kids but I will tell you many kids know how to get around things or they have friends. So teaching kids to say, that is not safe, being mean to somebody else even if it seems like a joke to you is not safe. >> You can be specific with technology. I will send you articles that will give you specifics and you think about this with them. So you are together, you want to --

technology is a wonderful tool, and yet , the devices can help kids be safe and help them communicate, but just like when they're out on the world, every situation is different. I build in the safeguards , I would be with them and we have a technology agreement that family sign that you can modify . You can modify this for your child. >> I am experiencing this presentation on so many levels,

some of the aspects of this direct coaching of the children, this is imperative. We know Deaf kids do not get the inferential information at times that might build some safety mechanisms but around organizational intent, as you were talking I was thinking whenever we have a meeting we talk about our communication ground rules.

We make sure there is accessibility and wouldn't it be great the organization to have a simple safety ground rules checklist. Have we considered safety elements ? Do you have any organizational resources for us?

>> I would love to work with you on that. We have a lot of resources. Part of this is getting everybody on the same page, it is communicating with each other, it is agreeing on the ground rules so I propose some for you. We have worked with positive coaching alliance to develop ground rules so we already have them. They can be modified for you. In your case, we have to see what kind of things happen at your events, to make things relevant and specific. >> To be worthy of trust, that's what you are doing. Take a thoughtful look and we do what we can. I have to say, we recently asked -- that people be fingerprinted . Part of we do, we never have people alone with kids. There are always parents that are present. Sometimes it is not practical.

You have to have -- if somebody is along with your child, it's like an inner circle situation. The requirements are higher. If you can have the leadership,

supposed apparent gets a flat tire, their cell phone doesn't work. And the leader cannot leave the child. At that point they can call somebody else and say I'm going to take this child home. Or I will stay with them. You want to make a plan about the fact that if a child is alone, sometimes in therapeutic situations, it is required that there are one-on-one opportunities and those can be --

you want to have a higher level of vigilance.

A lot of the activities you're talking about, these rules will apply. >> Any last thoughts?

What you are doing is so important. I was thinking about this, I was regretting I did not have Hands & Voices in the book. What you are doing is advocating and setting a model for Agassi -- for advocacy. This book was written in order to increase access to our work and to show how the things we have been teaching for 30 years could apply to lots of situations, places of worship.

Do not be afraid to speak up. You can reach me so easily. If you have a specific question, I will answer you. I will keep the specifics of your questions confidential. But my advice is not confidential.

>> If you have a question? If I do not know the answer, I have a wealth of people that I can ask. >> It took us a long time to write this book. And we are excited of the tremendous reception we have gotten. Be aware of the power of the situation. The power of the situation is when you have teenagers or young adults, on hormone -- on her own she might not go drinking but when they are with their friends, make sure they have refusal skills that are strong.

It's not that I do not trust them, I do not trust the power of the situation. Because there are pressures and they intensified. >> We also have an article for kids that are away at college that you might find useful. >> This is a conversation to be continued in different ways. I am excited to work with you.

Thank you very much for sharing. This is my copy of the book. I am going to send this to my brother and sister. A quote from Benjamin Franklin that I have used before, by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. This group is not about failure. It's about success.

Irene, thank you for helping us to plan for the success of our children. I will turn things back over to Janet.

Thank you. On behalf of all of us, thank you for the presentation. My mind is filled with information, you have shared this information with us using different terminology. We have a couple of minutes left. Sarah, anything to share about your conference presentation? Any updates?

This is Sarah Kennedy. We had a presentation on the project in Cheyenne last month. If you could not attend, that is available online.

You can see all of that. We covered some basics about awareness and understanding of this issue and we gave some updates about the quilt project. Colorado and California have upcoming quilts that are in various stages, they had some great discussions about concepts as they put the quilts together to illustrate the concepts of safety and what we can teach our children.

We give an update about the look project, that starts up again next Monday. The first book is a manual story. It is a true story about a young boy who grew up in Ghana with the formed legs, and what happened to him and allowed was because of his mother who believed in him. It is a good story.

We talked about the safety goals and Harold will share a little bit about that. We had the idea of looking at this presentation that we could come up with apparent safety toolkit. This was inspired by an autism group, they put together a document with links about safety. And how to work with your local police department.

We wanted to encapsulate some information from the project so it was easier for parents to learn more about this even if they did not join the call. >> This is another means to get the information out. It was a great discussion and well attended. >> This is Janet. Thank you. Having the opportunity to be here together on ZOOM reminds me one of the most powerful parts of our project is that we are a community. We learn from one another, there are many of you that have done so much in this area, and our children's safety through the years, we want to continue that element of each one of us thinking about what we can do to contribute.

We have a tradition in our organization to think about what we might do this month in this area. I know how busy every-

one is. We will reinstate that next month when we meet again to say, last month I did blank this month I will. It just might be reading one article.

In the beginning, when we were learning this, we talked about this conversation with someone else and we both come back every month whether we went out and talk to a teacher, someone at a party, to begin to learn to have a conversation. Silence is not an option. That's one of the first things we have all had to learn and continue to learn about. How do we have these conversations when we live in a society that doesn't?

We are grateful for all of your participation today. We will try this again next month. It was nice to see you. Next month will have more conversations about what you are doing. >> Harold ?

You have known Deafed.net for a long time, I came to Hans invoices because you are the movers and shakers in Deafed.net . Once the parents were on board, they are the ones that change things, I begin to work on the professional side.

It came about that last week the Council for children has passed a policy statement about the recognition and prevention and response to maltreatment.

Imagine when we talk about the safety, now you have this document that says, the Council says this is important. >> The big thing, is the special education administrators, they are on board. They will publish a document about this on how administrators can incorporate safety into their schools and checklists.

They have commitment to the next 2 1/2 years of talking to their administrators to send out information. Now that we have Hands & Voices working to build safety, the pushback will be decreasing .

>> More information will come.

>> When the checklist came out, and we hit resistance, imagine the day -- demonstrators can understand the importance of having these conversations with families. It's not just the parents trying to push the conversation. There is a culture of this conversation around safety. Thank you. >> I am excited. This is exciting.

Thank you. Thank you everyone for being here.

>> Thank you for being here. Thank you for supporting us. We will send out the minutes. We will meet the second Tuesday of the month. Thank you.

Thank you.

Goodbye. >> Thank you.

Goodbye. >> [Event concluded]