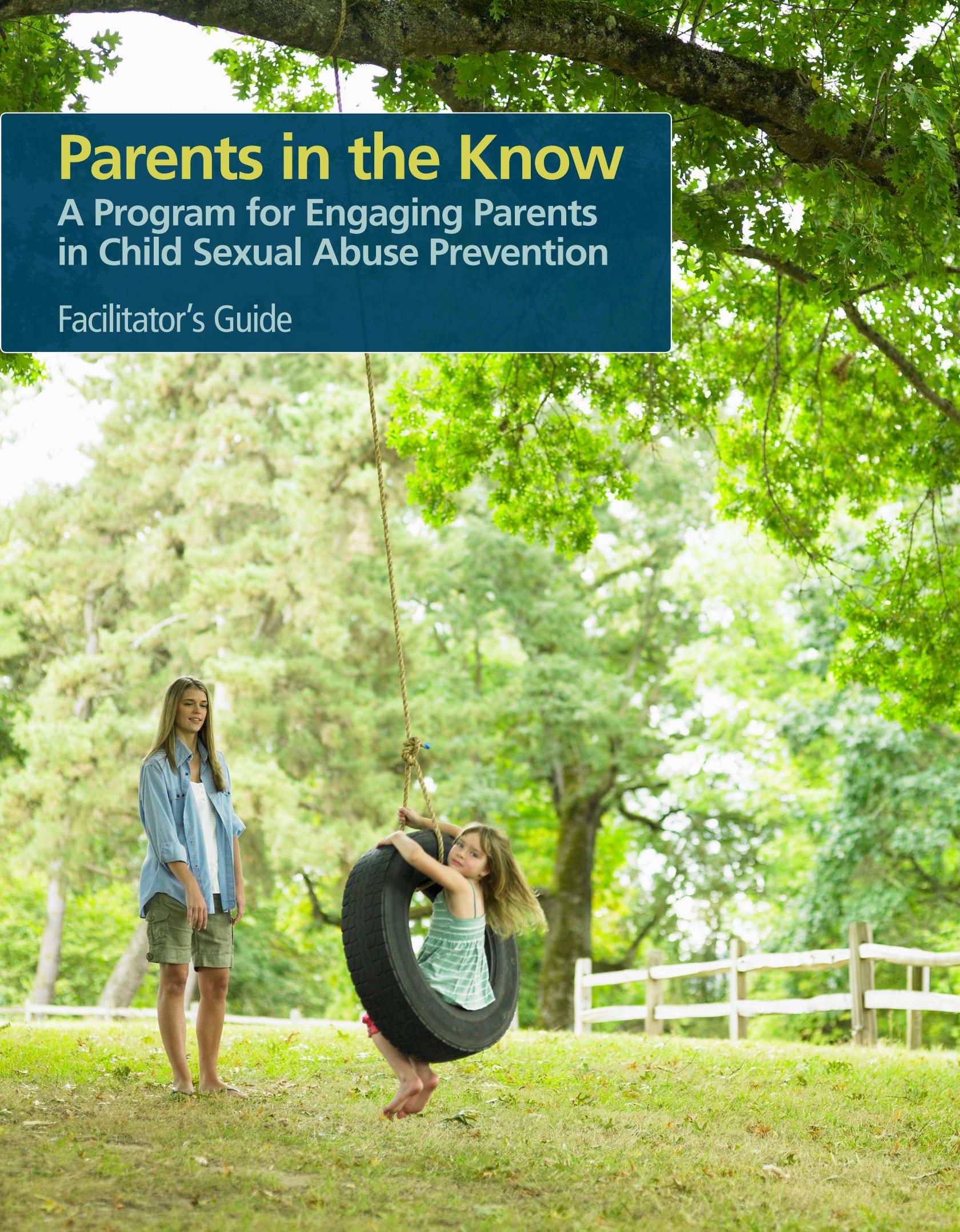


# Parents in the Know

A Program for Engaging Parents  
in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Facilitator's Guide







# Acknowledgements

The development and evolution of this program was the result of the hard work of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape's Prevention Services Team including; Jayne Anderson, Gail Brown, Julie Evans, Jamie Posey Woodson, and Laura Summers. The team brainstormed, created activities, developed worksheets, and outlined talking points which became the foundation for the curriculum. The team also pilot-tested the curriculum — taking the program to neighborhoods to test if what worked in the PAAR training room worked in the community. We found that, with some revisions, it did! This was a team approach utilizing the best all had to contribute.

This program began in the communities of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and with the commitment and dedication of the original creators and many others evolved into a model program that inspired others across the state and even the nation to engage caregivers in their communities in child sexual abuse prevention.

In 2013 a unique partnership was formed between PAAR, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, and AmeriHealth Caritas. Through this partnership Pennsylvania rape crisis center staff teamed up with health educators to deliver Parents In the Know in a variety of communities across the state, offering a unique model of collaboration to the field.

Today, Parents In the Know continues to inspire both the passionate facilitators and the dedicated community members who participate in the program. It is our hope that every individual who participates will see their role as parents and caretakers of children forever changed, leading to a decrease in child sexual abuse and an increase in child safety and respect.

For additional information on this program and the most recent evaluation report contact Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape at [PITK@pcar.org](mailto:PITK@pcar.org).

For additional training specific to the curriculum contact Pittsburgh Action Against Rape at [friends@paar.net](mailto:friends@paar.net).



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## Introduction:

Welcome to Parents in the Know, a practice-based child sexual abuse prevention program developed by Pittsburgh Action Against Rape with funding from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape's Vision of Hope Fund. We hope that Parents in the Know helps you reach more parents, build new partnerships, find strength and support within your communities, and that it validates what you are doing and how well you are doing it.

## Keep in mind...

It will be helpful to remember the focus of Parents in the Know is on recognizing and questioning behaviors of adults. Most adults treat children with respect and care. Most adults are not sexual offenders. Our frame is about questioning, not accusing.

The facilitation of Parents in the Know requires balancing the sharing of your personal experiences, modeling appropriate boundaries and creating a safe space for parents to share their personal experiences. It is important that while you may share personal experiences of protecting children, questioning adults, or age appropriate sexual development, it is important not to overshare and make the focus or the discussion about you.

In addition to maintaining appropriate boundaries in your facilitation, it is also important to take care of yourself. If you do have past sexual violence victimization it is important that you have worked through your experience and are able to manage your feelings. Many people find it helpful to work with a therapist.

We also know it is likely many of the parents attending Parents in the Know may have past experiences of sexual victimization. It is important to validate the experience and feelings in the moment and then suggest a private discussion following the program. It is important to remember this is not a therapy or process group; it is a prevention program. We want survivors to feel support and get connected to services. The intentional partnership between facilitators and rape crisis center staff promotes connecting victims to services and support throughout the program.

When it gets real it gets real. Don't pretend to have all the answers. Don't dismiss or deny the reality in the room. Don't allow for criticism or personal cross-talk. As the facilitator you need to ensure all parents feel safe sharing and participating in the discussions and activities.

# Parents in the Know: A Program for Engaging Parents

Finally, please remember the basic theory and premise underlying the curriculum — adults, specifically parents, can decrease children’s vulnerability and promote the prevention of child sexual abuse.

## **Parents can decrease vulnerability by:**

1. Prohibiting the sexualization of children which objectifies and dehumanizes children. Allowing for the sexualization of your child or any child increases vulnerability.

**Theory to Practice:** Stopping or preventing the sexualization of children promotes the prevention of child sexual abuse. Many adults may not recognize the sexualization of children and its impact. It is important for adults to recognize and interrupt the sexualization of children.

2. Educating themselves, other adults, and their children about age appropriate sexual development and behaviors.

**Theory to Practice:** Teaching children about their bodies and sexual development sets boundaries for appropriate behaviors. It also models respect and conveys the importance of being educated about the human body just as being educated about math and reading. Many adults may struggle with naming and discussing age appropriate sexual development and behaviors. It is vital to increase adults’ comfort and skills in talking with their children about age appropriate sexual development and behaviors.

3. Modeling safe and respectful behaviors in their own relationships.

**Theory to Practice:** Children learn from what they see. Adults in healthy and safe relationships show children what healthy and safe relationships look like.

4. Recognizing questionable behaviors in adults and engaging with the adult in a questioning versus confrontational manner to determine if the behavior is appropriate or inappropriate and if further intervention is required.

**Theory to Practice:** Adults who recognize questionable adult behavior and follow through by engaging with those adults send a public message that sexual abuse of children will not be tolerated. It brings the topic into the open and promotes the responsibility of all adults to intervene, question and protect children. If the questionable behavior has a reasonable explanation and no additional warning signs are noticed, the necessity for all adults to be involved in protecting children is reinforced. If inappropriate or abusive behavior is occurring, intervention and support can be provided to the victim and authorities should be notified. PREVENTION HAS OCCURRED.



**Parents can promote safe and healthy relationships for children by:**

1. Developing strong attachments and healthy relationships with their children.
2. Developing effective communication skills to improve talks and conversation with children.
3. Developing and engaging in safe and appropriate touch with children.
4. Modeling healthy, positive relationships.



# Parents in the Know: A Program for Engaging Parents

## GETTING STARTED

**AGENCY PLANNING:** Is this the right project for your agency?

The Parents In the Know program may not be the right program for every agency. It requires a specific combination of agency knowledge, skills, and community connections to be successful. Use the Agency Readiness Assessment below to help you decide if this is right for your agency.

## AGENCY READINESS ASSESSMENT

Do you have your Executive Director's support in implementing this program? YES NO MAYBE

Is their support communicated to all staff at your agency? YES NO MAYBE

Do agency opinion leaders support the project? YES NO MAYBE

Do you have staff who work on child sexual abuse prevention? YES NO MAYBE

Do you have staff who currently work with parents? YES NO MAYBE

Do these staff have the capacity to implement a new program? YES NO MAYBE

Do they have experience leading a group and facilitating dialogue? YES NO MAYBE

Can you partner and promote this program with other services currently being provided to parents? YES NO MAYBE

**AGENCY TRAINING:** What will it take for my agency's staff to learn this curriculum?

If you have decided to move ahead with this project, you will need to get your staff trained on the curriculum.



## **Training yourself/your team:**

### **1. What materials do I need to learn the curriculum?**

All of the materials you need are either in this manual or available to you. You will find the complete facilitator guide as well as ready-to-reproduce materials for participants. If you do not have training or experience with child sexual abuse awareness and prevention you will need to do some additional reading before facilitating these trainings. Forming a partnership with your local rape crisis center is often the best option for providing the necessary training to form a strong foundational understanding of child sexual abuse. Additional training specific to the curriculum can be provided by contacting PAAR at 412-431-5665 or friends@paar.net.

### **2. What is the best approach to learning this curriculum?**

We recommend starting with a group discussion to reach a joint understanding and agreement about the overall goals of the curriculum. The goals are listed in the curriculum for each session but each trainer needs to “own” these goals to be effective facilitators. Each trainer needs to look at the material carefully and think through their understanding of how the material comes together, or not, for them. The more time trainers spend getting a thorough understanding of the material, the more natural their facilitation will be. For some people, it means sitting on their own and coming up with the structure of the material in their own words. For others, it means reading and making a list of questions they have that they can raise for discussion in a group setting.

Once there is agreement on the goals, and a thorough familiarity with the materials, the old adage is true – practice makes perfect. Your agency may want to offer your first set of workshops to staff members who are also parents. This would allow trainers to practice in front of a friendly and knowledgeable audience.

### **3. Are there things I should know about facilitating a workshop for parents?**

The parent curriculum requires a facilitator who can support the parents in engaging in conversations. Facilitators need to be skilled at listening to participants and making connections to the conversations and the goals of the curriculum. In our experience, parents respond much better to shared learning from other parents than from experts at the front of the room.

### **4. What if I think I need to change something in the curriculum?**

Customization of the curriculum involves making changes – large and small – on the methods you use to achieve the goals of the program. This will be necessary to make the curriculum appropriate for your community.

You may want to adapt the curriculum - that is, change the goals of the curriculum. Adaptations of the curriculum should be done with full understanding that the evaluation findings might not still apply. You will need to adjust your evaluation to test whether the program meets the new goals you have established.

# Parents in the Know: A Program for Engaging Parents

**OUTREACH:** *How do I get community partners and parents to commit?*

Your staff is trained and ready to get out into the community and share all that they know. But now that you have a clearer understanding of what is involved in the program, you need to again assess your readiness to implement this program. You may find after reading this section that you need to start by building additional relationships in the community, or finding a partner to work with, before you can begin to offer the curriculum.

## **1. What type of community partner should I look for?**

We have had the most success with community partners that are part of a larger multi-service center or have multiple sites. If the community partner frequently offers programming for parents and has good attendance that agency would be a better choice for Parents In the Know than an agency which never provides programming or has very little parent involvement. Ask directors a variety of questions to gauge their parent engagement culture.

## **2. How do I recruit community partners?**

Finding a champion within the agency for child sexual abuse prevention programming is the easiest path to a successful partnership. An agency director is ideal but a staff person, parent, or board member supportive of this type of programming can also work. It is very difficult to “cold call” an agency for this program because it deals with a sensitive topic and requires a time commitment. Once you have a connection with one agency, using that director’s networks to reach out to other agencies is most effective.

## **3. What if I don’t know anyone at an agency I’m interested in working with?**

We have found very little success reaching out to agencies without first having some sort of connection there. If you want to start building connections some possible approaches include:

- Faith organizations often have parent groups and could be a good connector.
- Community partners might be interested in some of the other services your agency offers.
- Recruit a community leader to support this program. If a respected community leader supports the program, agencies might be more open to considering it.

## **4. How do I market the program to community partners?**

Even if you have a connection to an agency, you will still need good marketing materials. Your experience in creating materials about your existing prevention programming applies to these materials as well. A few additional considerations include:

- Highlight the testimonials of parents who have participated in the program. Previous participants’ quotes have great impact. They are included in the evaluation report.

- Cite the strong evaluation data supporting program effectiveness and participant support. They are included in the evaluation report.
- Demonstrate the positive impact that educating and building skills in parents has on the safety of children.
- Use language that promotes the parent program as a workshop – a place where parents are talking to other parents. Avoid using the language of training; focus on tapping into parent’s expertise through activities and discussions.
- Emphasize that parents are willing to intervene, ask questions, and talk with their children as allies in preventing abuse. Parents can feel empowered about creating safety for their children and in their community.
- You may refer to recent examples of child sexual abuse in the community. This can be complicated depending on the case and should be done cautiously.
- Using the language of “boundaries” or “how to talk to your children about safety” might be preferable to “child sexual abuse.”

## **5. How do I recruit parents for this program?**

As mentioned before, the community partner you are approaching should already have a captive audience of parents. There are various ways you can assist them by providing them information on the program that is designed for parents.

## **6. How do I market the program to parents?**

- Provide the center with a sample parent letter/flyer to distribute or attend a parent meeting to discuss the program.
- Removing barriers is vitally important to parent participation. Typical barriers include childcare and transportation. If the community partner can provide childcare, that eliminates a huge barrier for parent participation. Investigate if the program can be offered while the children are engaged in another activity at the agency or if an evening program can be held with the agency providing childcare.
- Offering the program within the community often removes the transportation barrier. This applies to agencies that serve a specific community rather than agencies that serve different areas. However, this may impact scheduling the sessions.
- If you have the funds, providing food can be an incentive for participation. You may also want to provide weekly raffles for gift cards or books or a small gift. If you can provide an end of program gift card that also helps. This can be a shared expense with the community partner.

## 7. How do I get a community partner to commit to the program?

Successfully managing the relationship with the community partner will have a large impact on your ability to get a commitment and on the implementation of your program. For instance, you may have a staff member who is very interested but does not have the support of the director, or the director may be very interested but feels like there is no support from senior staff. Finally, an agency director may be on board but needs the permission of a centralized office. Understanding how the agency functions and the key players will maximize your success.

It will be important to keep your program on the agency director's radar. Understanding the director's communication preferences is important and will lead to success. For instance, one director never responded to emails but always responded to voicemails.

The most important step in "sealing the deal" is discussing dates. In fact, if you can get a commitment on dates without many of the other logistics being mapped out, you are better off than trying to negotiate the logistics of food/snacks, childcare, gift cards, etc. Once you have a schedule in place, you can work out the rest of the details.

The goal is to share responsibility with the community partner in providing a safe and comfortable space for participants and having participants attend. However, having a clear understanding of who will play what role is important. For example, if there are snacks, who will purchase them? Some tasks that might need role clarification include: providing equipment, food utensils, setting up and breaking down the space, and making reminder calls.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** *What do I need to know/do for a successful implementation?*

You are trained to deliver the curriculum and you have caregivers signed up for the program.

What should you keep in mind as you move to implementation?

The Parents in the Know program involves work with parents of young children. For some rape crisis centers this will be a new audience. We have found that working effectively with this audience is one of the major challenges of implementing this program.



## Working with parents

- Many parents do not like being told how to parent, especially if they perceive the facilitator as not being a parent or not sharing their values. Spending time at the beginning building relationships and trust, and creating a safe space where parents can share their struggles without being judged, is important for engaging this audience.
- The four-part parent curriculum allows you to build relationships and trust with the participants and allows them to do the same with each other. Building trust will take time, particularly if the participants are just getting to know each other, but it is time well spent for the overall success of the program. Even though scheduling four sessions can be challenging, it ultimately benefits everyone.
- There are many ways to build trust. Some of them are techniques trained facilitators often use such as beginning and ending on time, pointing out the ground rules when necessary, and validating participants' comments.
- Parents attend these workshops as caring parents, not as professionals. The traditional structures and facilitation techniques rape crisis centers use in workshops may not work for parents. Unlike professionals who often have a common training, experience, or understanding of an issue, parents can have very different beliefs and styles.
- Flexibility in the structure of the session and the language used are important considerations. The facilitator needs to have a very clear idea of the goal of each session, and of the overall curriculum, but must be flexible and responsive to participants. For example, people may not use the term "bystander intervention," but if they are talking about how they "stepped in" or "said something" this is very much a bystander action. In one group, participants came up with other words to label someone who engaged in bystander behaviors - helper, Angel of God, lioness – and the group used these terms in future sessions.
- Respectful containment and concrete examples can help with addressing different beliefs and values.
- Remembering the role of the facilitator is to facilitate a conversation between parents, not act as the expert at the front of the room, is important for success

