

SAFETY BRIEF: PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF) provides comprehensive research-based prevention education programs to educate and empower children and teens to prevent, recognize, and respond appropriately to bullying, cyberbullying, all types of abuse, and digital dangers. While it has traditionally been school-based staff who have been trained to present our programs, external organizations such as Child Advocacy Centers have become valuable partners in providing these important prevention lessons to schools who have limited resources and time.

This Safety Brief is a tool for agencies and organizations who are considering partnering with schools to present the *MBF Child Safety Matters*® and/or *MBF Teen Safety Matters*® program lessons. Below are some suggestions to help you work with districts and schools to start a collaborative partnership.

Step 1 – Define benefits of a partnership for your organization and school(s).

Organization benefits:

- ⇒ Helps support organization's mission to provide prevention education and support child safety.
- ⇒ Provides positive exposure for organization.
- ⇒ Provides opportunities for grant funding to hire additional staff.
- ⇒ Provides opportunities to train and utilize volunteers.

School benefits:

- ⇒ Provides opportunities for students to learn research-based, universal strategies, to help adults keep them safe and increase academic success.
- ⇒ Increases parent awareness of strategies to keep their children safe and increases communication between home and school.
- ⇒ Supports schools' and/or districts' efforts to create a positive school climate and decrease bullying, cyberbullying, and abuse rates and improve academic achievement.
- ⇒ Helps schools meet state mandates for bullying and abuse prevention education (i.e. Erin's Law).
- ⇒ Provides professional development opportunities for school staff.
- ⇒ Provides schools and/or districts with positive exposure and a meaningful community partnership.

Step 2 – Determine need, interest, and support for a partnership.

- ⇒ Complete a needs assessment to determine if other organizations are doing prevention education and if so, what program(s) they are using.
- ⇒ Assess support from key stakeholders. Talk with principals, teachers, families, and community leaders who are involved with schools and concerned about youth safety to assess their level of support and resources they may provide.
- ⇒ Determine possible barriers, for example:
 - Schools and/or organizations may have limited resources
 - Emphasis on testing/limited classroom time
 - Support from administrators, teachers, and/or parents may be limited
 - Support from legislators and key community stakeholders may be limited
 - Funding may be limited

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- ⇒ Seek information and data that supports the need for prevention programs in your community. Sources may include:
- State laws related to bullying, cyberbullying, and abuse prevention and reporting
 - Bullying policies and data from school district(s) and state Department of Education
 - Community Youth Risk Behavior Survey data
 - Abuse reporting data
 - Media coverage of bullying, cyberbullying, or abuse
 - State task-forces and coalitions

Step 3 - Select a program.

- ⇒ Research successful and effective programs considering the following characteristics of effective programs (see *Safety Brief: Program Comparison* for more information):
- Based on research
 - Developmentally appropriate
 - Trusted and supported by educators, parents, and experts
 - Comprehensive in content and audience following universal safety rules and strategies
 - Practical and easy to use; cost-effective and sustainable
 - Provides multiple exposures and reinforcements; opportunities for practice
 - Fun and engaging for students
 - Evidence-based or promising programs
- ⇒ Utilize available resources and databases to research programs such as the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse and Blueprints for Violence Prevention, as well as resources from your state organizations.

Step 4 - Begin outreach and collaborative efforts.

- ⇒ Begin with general outreach and awareness. For example, you may want to:
- Share program information by attending community and school events or by offering professional and community education trainings
 - Provide program information to news and media outlets
 - Develop and share PSA's (Public Service Announcements)
 - Update your website and social media pages with program information
- ⇒ Look for collaboration and partnership opportunities in the community such as:
- Local organizations and businesses
 - Like-minded organizations
 - PTA and other professional school associations
- ⇒ Seek approval and support from district and school staff. Identify and talk with key departmental staff at the school district who may approve and/or support a partnership such as:
- Superintendent, or their designee
 - Safe Schools or Bullying Prevention
 - Student Services
 - Community Relations
 - Curriculum and Instruction

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- ⇒ Discuss disclosure and abuse reporting.
 - Discuss the district policies and school processes regarding student disclosure of bullying or abuse.
 - Explain that disclosures are likely and clarify your role and the role of the school in these cases, including mandatory reporting laws and school administrator notification.
 - Offer mandated reporting professional development training for staff.
- ⇒ Schedule a meeting with all school counselors, social workers, and health educators in the district to explain your goal of assisting schools with implementing the program(s) and to recruit schools.

Talking Points:

- Define the problem and present the facts. Explain why this problem should be addressed within schools and the impact it may have on the school climate and academic success of students.
- Present the solution and explain why and how prevention education can help and the benefits of a partnership to all parties. (*Share Safety Brief: Victimization and Academic Achievement*)
- Share support you have received from relevant parties and stakeholders.
- Discuss a suggested timeline and implementation schedule. Explain how and when you would implement lessons considering factors that impact schools, such as the testing schedule. You may want to consider implementing the lessons during Bullying Prevention Month (October) or Child Abuse Prevention Month (April).
- Explain outcomes that might be expected, such as an increase in bullying and abuse reports at first, followed by a longer-term decrease in incidence rates of bullying and abuse, a decrease in student absenteeism, and an increase in student test scores and grades.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of each partner:

Your organization may:

- Provide staff or volunteers to teach the lessons in classrooms
- Provide funds to pay for curriculum materials (if applicable)
- Provide professional development training for staff
- Provide parent information training
- Coordinate scheduling lessons with teachers
- Provide implementation reports and data to schools and/or district

District staff may:

- Identify schools to participate in the partnership (Even if you have schools in mind, be open to district suggestions)
- Identify a contact person at each school
- Assist with visitor clearance for facilitators (Including background checks if needed)

School administrators and staff may:

- Identify staff to be trained as facilitator(s) if they will be implementing lessons
- Assist with scheduling classroom lessons
- Send *Parent Information and Opt-Out Forms* home with students prior to lessons
- Assist with lesson follow-up and reinforcement

Step 5 – Prepare and implement program lessons.

- ⇒ Become familiar with MBF Prevention Education Programs materials to share and to facilitate classroom lessons. You can:
 - Take the MBF online facilitator training
 - Review and prepare program materials
 - Learn more about curriculum topics via MBF online training courses
- ⇒ Partner with schools and schedule lessons. Meet with the principal(s), or their designee, to provide information about MBF programs and resources* and ensure their agreement to participate.
- ⇒ Determine your point of contact at each school, and if it is best to communicate with them by phone or email. Also determine who will implement the lessons:
 - You or your staff
 - School counselors
 - Teachers
 - Other professionals
 - Volunteers
 - A combination of the above
- ⇒ Clarify the responsibilities of all parties at the school.
- ⇒ As discussed with the district, remind school administrators and staff of outcomes that might be expected, such as an increase in bullying and abuse reports at first, followed by a longer-term decrease in incidence rates of bullying and abuse, a decrease in student absenteeism, and an increase in student test scores and grades.
- ⇒ Determine what data will be collected and by whom, for example lesson tracking information and/or pre- and post-tests.
- ⇒ Discuss program implementation timeline and criteria. For example, following research and best practice guidelines, lessons should be presented in classrooms; they should not be implemented as a large group presentation.
- ⇒ Explain technology needs for classroom presentations, including computer, LCD projector, speakers, a screen or blank wall. Determine if schools can provide these resources, or if you will need to provide them.
- ⇒ Develop a timeline and schedule to present the *MBF Child Safety Matters* and/or *MBF Teen Safety Matters* lessons. Google calendars have been an effective tool for some facilitators to schedule lessons with classroom teachers. Work with the schools to accommodate their schedules.
- ⇒ There are additional things you will need to do to prepare to implement the programs, such as:
 - Order your program materials from MBF (if not previously done)
 - Deliver *Parent Opt-Out Forms* to schools to be sent home 1-2 weeks in advance of lessons
 - Provide school with *Safety Brief: Sample Communications* to engage staff and students in advance of the lessons
 - Deliver *Safety Briefs* to administrators, teachers, PTA leaders, etc.
 - Provide staff and parent trainings as requested

(Please see the *Facilitator Manual* and *Getting Started Checklist* for complete details about preparing and implementing lessons.)

Step 6 – Evaluate and report on program implementation.

- ⇒ Compile data after lessons are complete, including:
 - The number of students who participated in lessons
 - Disclosure or reports of bullying and/or abuse after lessons
 - Feedback from students, parents, and staff
- ⇒ Develop and implement a plan for ongoing communications such as:
 - Thank-you emails to principal or other administrator(s), counselor(s), and participating classroom teachers
 - Follow up communications to classroom teachers, including resources to share with students as lesson reinforcement
 - Share program data and any other evaluation emphasis

While not all-inclusive, our hope is this Safety Brief is a useful guide to help you secure and foster effective and successful collaborative partnerships with schools. When we work together, children will be better protected!

**The Monique Burr Foundation for Children provides our facilitators with a wide variety of marketing materials and resources to assist you with communicating about the programs. Resources are available on the Facilitator Portal.*