



Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia

Moderator / Convener Guide

West Virginia's Most Critical Question:

How Do We Keep Our Children Free From Abuse and Neglect?

Thank you for agreeing to moderate this community discussion. You're making a difference in the lives of children in this community by working to keep them free from abuse and neglect. The future of West Virginia hinges upon the effective prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia and community Partners in Prevention teams are working together to organize community discussions on "*West Virginia's Most Critical Question: How Do We Keep Our Children Free From Abuse and Neglect?*" A community discussion process was developed based on current research about solutions to the problem and the experiences of



West Virginia community partners working to build communities that protect children and strengthen families. The purpose of the community discussion is to inspire citizens to work together to:

- Better understand prevention of child abuse and neglect;
- Consider the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches;
- Identify actions that are likely to make a positive difference;
- Examine the roles of government, schools, businesses, and civic and religious groups, as well as our own responsibility as individuals; and
- Explore potential next steps.

Deliberative forums are nonpartisan and do not advocate a particular perspective or solution to any public issue. Rather, they enable diverse groups of citizens to determine together what direction they want policy to take, what kinds of action they favor or oppose, and what they are able to do individually and as a community.

The hope is that the ideas from each discussion will lead to action, and that a growing group of people will recognize the strong link between child development and community well-being.



Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia (PCA-WV) works to give children good beginnings by strengthening families and communities. This is done by implementing innovative strategies in the areas of effective programs, public engagement and sound public policy. Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia is a chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America and a project of TEAM for West Virginia Children, a Huntington-based nonprofit organization and recognized leader in local child abuse prevention programs. www.preventchildabusewv.org



The following approaches are described and featured for discussion in the Community Discussion Guide:

Approach 1:

Provide support and information for parents.

Parents need access to information and support programs that help them understand and deal with the challenges of child development and provide their children with the resources they need to thrive.

Approach 2:

Improve the systems that support children and families.

Systems already in place do a lot to support children and families, but they have limitations that keep every family from getting the help they need. There are few systems that focus on prevention. Better collaboration and family strengthening practices may help to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Approach 3:

Build communities that put families at the center.

The community environment impacts a family's ability to protect and provide for its children. Family-centered community building can mobilize citizens to work together for mutual well-being.



Getting Started



Who To Recruit?

The first steps to any successful community discussion are building a broad base of support that is strong in numbers, educated about your issue, and those who may want to learn what they can do in their community to prevent child abuse and neglect. A group of people who have a vested interest in your issue are more likely to be supportive and encourage action in their neighborhoods. Senior citizens groups, local congregations, elected officials, media, youth, teachers and parents are only some of the community representatives that should be invited to this community discussion. Others who should be in the target audience include business representatives, faith-based organizations, childcare workers, policymakers and social service providers. Your goal should be between 12 and 20 attendees; more or less than this range would make it difficult to have a productive discussion.

Choosing A Location

When choosing a location for your community discussion, keep the following things in mind:

- Is the venue easily accessible to all those attending, including people who may have physical disabilities?
- Is the location quiet, and will it allow everyone to be heard during the forum?
- Is the meeting room large enough? If possible, seating should be arranged in a semi-circle so that everyone can see and hear those who are talking. A sign-in table should be placed at the entrance to the venue.
- Does the venue fall within your budget? (Local city or county agencies will often allow you to use their space at no charge).
- How far in advance do you need to schedule the location?
- Does the venue portray a positive image for children and families?
- Is it a place where everyone will feel comfortable expressing their opinions? (Good venues include libraries, community centers, senior centers, etc.)
- What arrangements need to be made so that the audience can see and hear the DVD?
Is the lighting acceptable for viewing a DVD?

Role of the Moderator

If you're preparing to moderate a Community Discussion about keeping our children free from abuse and neglect, then it's a good idea to become familiar with the three different approaches. As a moderator, you may find it helpful at the beginning of the forum to

introduce a discussion about identifying “prevention” examples. The public struggles with the idea of “prevention”, so a clear definition of their personal roles and responsibilities will assist them in identifying what they can do to help. Examples of “prevention” activities also help the public get in the mindset of taking action before the abuse and neglect ever occur.

The role of the moderator is to provide an overview of the process and to encourage participants to direct their responses and questions toward one another. The moderator must remain neutral throughout the discussion, while encouraging participants to explore all angles of each area of discussion. He or she must also keep track of time so participants can move through the discussion of each of the major approaches in the time allotted.

Another important role of the moderator and/or organizer is to communicate with PCA-WV about the community discussions you are conducting. Please report the dates and locations of your event by email to: pcawv@teamwv.org. The moderator should ensure that there is a proper sign-in sheet with contact information for all attendees to sign when they arrive. At the conclusion of the community discussion, the moderator should provide feedback about the event to PCA-WV and include a completed Moderator Questionnaire.

Role of the Recorder

The role of the recorder is to create a written record of the group’s work that might assist future meetings of the group or additional forums. They must express main ideas in clearly written, brief phrases while capturing the tensions and tradeoffs of the group. The recorder may also be responsible for helping inform other members of the community about the outcomes of the community discussion.

Tips for Promoting the Community Discussion

- Highlight your community discussion in a newsletter or on a website.
- Utilize sites like Twitter and Facebook to promote the event to a broader audience.
- Send a press release to all local newspapers promoting the forum (see page 6).
- Word of mouth is always the best way to get your event known by the public.
- Share the event with co-workers, friends, neighbors, churches and libraries.
- Create attractive and eye-catching flyers and post them in local businesses, especially ones that have a child-friendly and family-friendly focus.
- Publicize your community discussion in advance, preferably at least 2 weeks prior to the event.



The most effective way to get people to come to your community discussion is to ask them personally and let them know how much you value their participation. Face-to-face invitations, emails, hand-written notes, or a postcard are some ways to invite others. Ask local pastors to invite parishioners; ask a parent-teacher group to invite its members; ask a teacher to invite students; ask friends to invite their friends.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact *(Name must be a person who can answer questions from the press)*

Phone number *(Include all numbers where this person can be reached before and after business hours)*

(Your Organization) Invites Residents to Community Discussion about Keeping Children Free from Abuse and Neglect in (your city or county)

(City, State)- (Your organization) will partner with Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia to convene a community discussion titled “West Virginia’s Most Critical Question: How Do We Keep Our Children Free From Abuse and Neglect?” The community discussion will take place at (location) on (date and time). This event is free to the public and everyone is invited to attend.

The forum will focus on three main areas: Providing support and information to parents, improving the systems that support children and families, and building communities that put families at the center. (Name and title of moderator) will be the moderator for this forum.

West Virginia has a high rate of child abuse and neglect, which compromises the health and future success of the state’s workforce and of our shared prosperity. The key to correcting this situation is to focus on strategies that keep child maltreatment from happening in the first place. During this community discussion, prevention strategies will be explored in ways that invite everyone to contribute to the health and well-being of children.

For more information about this forum, please contact (insert contact information).

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The Community Discussion

(suggested time: 2-3 hours)



Why Are We Here? What Will We Do? (15% of time)

The moderator should welcome all participants and provide an overview of the process of the discussion. Emphasize that there is work to do and that work is to move toward educating the community about how to reduce the instances of child abuse and neglect in this community.

At this point the moderator will show the DVD. The moderator should ensure that all attendees are able to view the screen and hear the dialogue without problem. Once the dvd has been viewed, the moderator should pass out the Community Dialogue Guides.

Ground Rules

Make it clear that this community discussion is NOT a debate. Some people may have personal and emotional experiences, but it is necessary to focus on solutions and prevention. The responsibility for doing the work of deliberation belongs to the group. Deliberation is necessary because there are competing approaches to prevention and finding solutions.

The moderator's role is to ensure that:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate and feels comfortable expressing their opinion.
- No single person or group of individuals dominates the conversation.
- The discussion is always focused on the issue and does not deviate.
- All the approaches on the issue are considered.
- Everyone listens to each other.

The moderator may want to write these ground rules on a flip chart and post them in the room.

Answering Difficult Questions

Be prepared to remain neutral as you present the approaches and as you listen to what people in the forum are saying. You should let the group work on the issues and approaches by sharing knowledge and perspectives with each other. If questions are directed toward you, be prepared to redirect them to the group. An indicator of group deliberation is when people start talking to and asking questions of each other instead of asking you, the moderator.

The moderator should acknowledge up front that abuse and neglect is an emotional issue and that it is likely that participants will be tempted to talk about their own abuse or horrific cases of abuse they have heard about or be tempted to focus on criminal punishments of abusers. When these issues come up, moderators should:

1. Acknowledge that this is a profoundly sad situation.
2. Affirm that the purpose of this community discussion is to make sure that abuse never happens to a child in the first place.
3. Redirect the conversation to the approach being discussed.

Approach 1 - Provide support and information to parents (20% of time)

Suggested questions to promote discussion:

1. Where and how do parents learn parenting?
2. What programs are there in our community to help support parents?
3. Why are some parents reluctant to ask for help?
4. What is the appropriate role for neighbors and communities in supporting families?
(Benefits and drawbacks of this approach.)
5. What can we do to provide better support and information to parents in our community?

Approach 2 - Improve the systems that support children and families (20% of time)

Suggested questions to promote discussion:

1. What systems are you aware of that help families in this community? (i.e., schools, public transportation, WIC, etc.)
2. Is every family in this community getting the services they need?
3. How can services make families stronger and self-sufficient?
4. What can we do to improve systems? (Benefits and drawbacks of this approach.)

Approach 3 - Build communities that put families at the center (20% of time)

Suggested questions to promote discussion:

1. What makes our community a safe place for families?
2. What challenges does our community face?
3. How are citizens and volunteers already working to make families strong?
4. How can we build communities that put families at the center? (Benefits and drawbacks of this approach.)

Identifying Action (20% of time)

At this point the moderator works to help the group identify and commit to some form of action, which should be recorded by the recorder.

1. After listening to the conversation, how will you personally act to support and strengthen families in your life?
2. What short-term project would help this community keep its children free from abuse and neglect? Who is willing to make a personal commitment to this project today?
3. If all of our collective efforts are successful, how will our community be different in 5, 10, or 20 years?

Closing (5% of time)

Thank participants for their time and encourage them to fill out the participant questionnaire. Collect the names of participants and their contact information so participants can receive copies of the recorded information. If a group has formed, secure a date for their next meeting. Thank the hosts, guests and funders and adjourn the meeting.

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia appreciates the generous support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation in funding the development of this guide, the accompanying DVD and related participant materials.

How To Get More Information

For more information please visit www.preventchildabusewv.org or contact:

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia
P.O. Box 1653
Huntington, WV 25717-1653
(866) 4-KIDSWV or (304) 697-0340
pcaawv@teamwv.org

Participant Questionnaire

Name (optional): _____

Phone (optional): _____ Email (optional): _____

Date and location of forum: _____

What was the most important issue discussed at this event?

What issue was the most difficult to deliberate?

What are your next steps?

What is your occupation? (Ex: student, parent, parishioner, policy-maker, etc.)

Additional Comments:

Moderator Questionnaire

After the forum, please complete this brief response sheet and send to pcawv@teamwv.com or by mail to Team For West Virginia Children, P.O. Box 1653, Huntington, WV 25701, or fax to (304) 697-0320.

Moderator's Name: _____

Phone: _____ Date and location of forum: _____

Briefly describe the audience of your forum, including city and state, diversity, age of participants and number of participants:

What elements of this issue seemed most difficult for the participants?

What common concerns were most apparent?

Did the group identify next steps? If so, what?

Other Comments: _____



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