

Program Overview



www.onekindword.org

Empowering individuals with strategies to support parents and caregivers struggling with a child, or to assist when a child is unsafe

OneKindWord® is a program of Family Resources

141 South Highland Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15206 • Ph. 412-363-1702
Family Resources is a private, nonprofit agency dedicated to preventing and treating child abuse by strengthening families and neighborhoods

For more information, please contact:

Jocelyn Antenucci, Program Director
412-363-1702 ext 1107
jantenucci@onekindword.org

Christine Patterson, Training Coordinator
412-363-1702 ext 1159
cpatterson@onekindword.org

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Most people have witnessed a parent and child struggling in a public place. Yet, most people do nothing when they see these situations. These situations are uncomfortable for everyone involved. For companies that serve the public, parent-child conflicts present issues of safety and liability risk, disruption of sales, and harm to public image.

The mission of OneKindWord is to create a sense of social responsibility to support parents in public places and assist when a child is unsafe. OneKindWord offers a product that teaches employees how to step in helpfully when they see a stressed parent or a child who is unsafe.

The Issue and the Need

A century ago, children were seen as property, worked in sweatshops, and had few opportunities to play or explore life. Today, society acknowledges the rights of children and is saddened by reports of child physical and sexual abuse. Intervention on the part of child welfare authorities is quick and decisive when children have been badly injured, neglected, or molested. Yet ordinary people may hesitate at the sight of a parent screaming at or humiliating a child in a public place, a parent beating a small child out of anger or frustration, or a child left unattended by a parent who is preoccupied.

When observing such incidents, individuals freeze, watching the spectacle of the child and parent, uncertain how to respond. Should something be done? In this culture, there is still strong sentiment that parents have the right to be aggressive in disciplining their children. This concept of “parents’ rights” can be intimidating for those who might otherwise step in.

A 1999 Child Welfare League of America survey entitled “Assessing Public Opinion and Perceptions Regarding Child Abuse in America,” found that more than 80% of Americans believe that everyone should play a role in stopping child abuse. At the same time, 53% said that they had done *nothing* after witnessing child abuse in a public place.¹ Why? Because they didn’t know what to do, weren’t sure it was their business, or were concerned about the consequences of taking action for those involved.

¹ Lieberman Research Worldwide. (1999, April). *Assessing public opinion and perceptions regarding child abuse in America: Final report*. Prepared for the Child Welfare League of America, Washington, DC.

The Impact on Businesses

Child maltreatment and family conflict in the consumer setting bring up a number of issues for the workplace. There may be a safety risk to the children involved and to bystanders. Family conflict negatively affects the image of a business and creates an uncomfortable environment for innocent bystanders and employees. It can also directly impact revenue in the form of lost business if the family involved, or other customers, leave abruptly due to their discomfort. Having managers or employees who are uncertain about the appropriateness of stepping in when parents are in the midst of conflict or when there is a child safety matter can increase the company’s liability.

The Product

The OKW product is a training workshop designed specifically for employees of companies that serve the public. The workshop teaches employees how to defuse parent-child conflicts through supportive words and actions. It also teaches them to identify children who are unsafe or in danger, and to address those situations quickly and proactively. The goals of the workshop are to: increase employee awareness of the issue; change attitudes towards these situations from judgmental or passive to understanding and proactive; and provide employees with a specific approach, words and actions to intervene in a way that is positive and helpful.

The product includes a facilitator’s manual, a DVD that details the OKW approach with examples of OKW in action, participant guides and pocket cards, situational practice cards, pre- and post-tests and posters that can be displayed

in the workplace. There is also a review session curriculum available to companies, upon request.

Implementation

OKW is offered to companies using a train-the-trainer approach, whereby designated OKW “champions” are trained and certified to facilitate workshops. The number of trainers required for OKW company certification is dependent upon the number of employees to be trained and the size of the company. Trainers are most often existing trainers within the company or location/department managers. In addition to maintaining quality and effectiveness of the OKW training, use of a train-the-trainer approach allows larger companies to implement OKW in a cost-effective manner and promotes OKW in becoming a part of the company’s “culture.”

A OKW Training Coordinator completes a consultation process with the management of companies interested in implementing OKW in order to customize the training materials and approach to best fit the culture and existing processes of the company.

All company champions are trained as facilitators in a four-hour session. The OKW Training Coordinator then completes a workshop with 15-20 company employees. The company champions are present to observe. Company champions then co-facilitate a workshop with the OKW Training Coordinator. Finally, the champions facilitate a workshop on their own. OKW staff observes those workshops and gives feedback, as needed.

Companies that sustain the program, and train at least 75% of their staff to use OKW are certified and recognized as “OneKindWord Places”. As the company trains its staff, the curriculum may evolve to meet the specific needs of the company and unsafe situations that may be encountered there.

Pricing

The average cost of materials and train-the-trainer certification ranges from \$500 to \$1,000 per trainer. This includes the materials needed to carry out the training within the company, a half-day session of training, co-facilitation, and observation with feedback.

Conclusion

OneKindWord provides corporate sponsors and business partners the opportunity to invest in the cause of child welfare and the respectful treatment of children. Its approach promotes supporting struggling parents and teaches employees valuable conflict-resolution skills that are transferable to any on-site conflict. Taking a stand for families and promoting healthy relationships are values that society has stood behind for many years. Corporate sponsors will find that the reward for participating is two-fold: their promotion of child safety and family friendliness will bring attention from new consumers and their employees will learn a new approach to customer service skills that is rooted in empathy and kindness, rather than obligation. With OneKindWord, company environments improve for employees, children and customers, alike.

History of OneKindWord

OneKindWord is a program of *Family Resources* in Pittsburgh, PA. It was conceived in early 2000 after many discussions about a social marketing campaign to end the mistreatment of children in public places. The OneKindWord training video was developed jointly with *Family Communications, Inc.*

OneKindWord has been generously supported by grants from *The Heinz Endowments*, *Grable Foundation*, *Giant Eagle Corporation* and an anonymous donor.

Giant Eagle Corporation served as a retail partner throughout the development of the video, and in 2007, the *OneKindWord for Employees Workshop* was piloted at the *Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium* and *Giant Eagle Market District* locations. *Family Resources* launched the OneKindWord website, and in 2009 it was exposed to national markets on Fox News.

Family Resources and *Family Communications, Inc.* are currently working together to expand OneKindWord across the Pittsburgh region and to build the program on a national level.