

Creating a Culture of Safety through Professional Development and Coaching

National Indian Head Start Directors Association Conference

June 15 - 18, 2026

Costa Mesa, CA



Head Start Regional TTA Network

Facilitators



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Who is in the room?

Teachers

Coaches

Ed Managers

Health or Mental Health Managers

Directors

Other staff



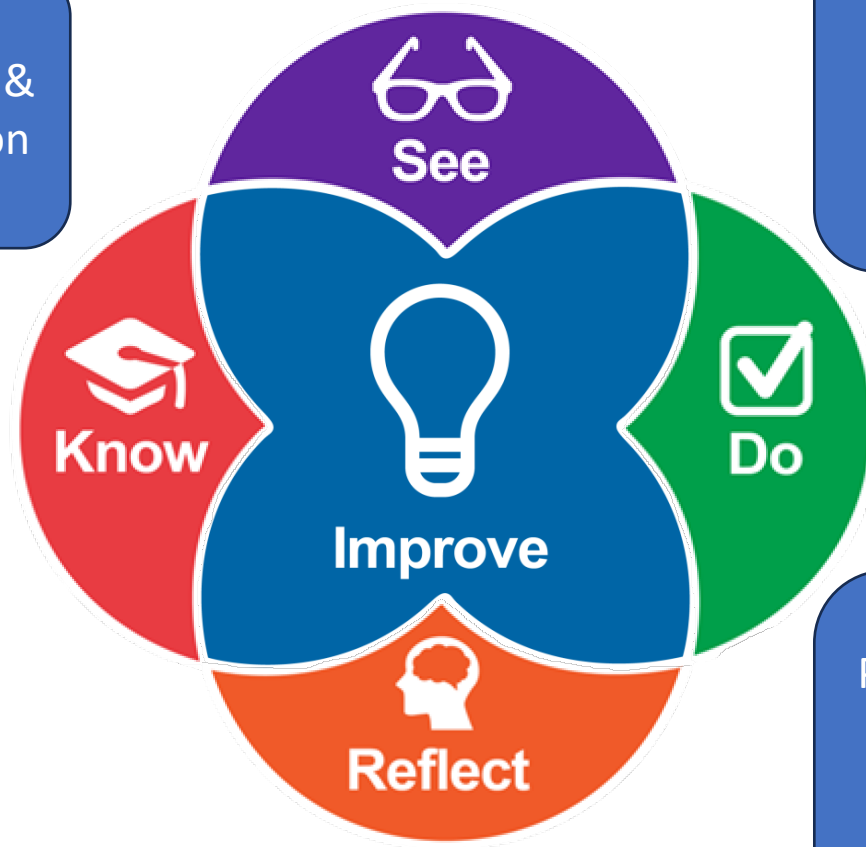
Learning Objectives

Flow of the Day



Structure of the Day

Culture of Safety & Active Supervision



How Coaching and Professional Development support implementation

Planning, practicing, and implementing safety through coaching and Professional, Development



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Learning Objectives

Module 1 objective

- Describe what a Culture of Safety looks like in daily classroom routines.
- Identify how active supervision supports safe, responsive learning environments
- Recognize why coaching and professional development are essential for consistent implementation of safety practices.



Culture of Safety and Active Supervision in Head Start



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Puzzle Swap

- Receive puzzle piece
- Move, trade, and work together to complete the puzzles.

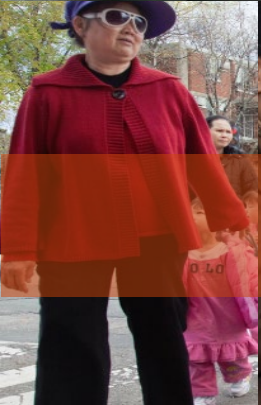




Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.



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8:55-9:40	CIRCLE
9:40-9:30	PLAYCOURT
9:50-10:30	FREE CHOICE
10:30-10:45	SMALL GROUP
10:45-10:55	CIRCLE
10:55	HOME OR DATA

Culture of Safety







Everybody has a role in keeping children safe



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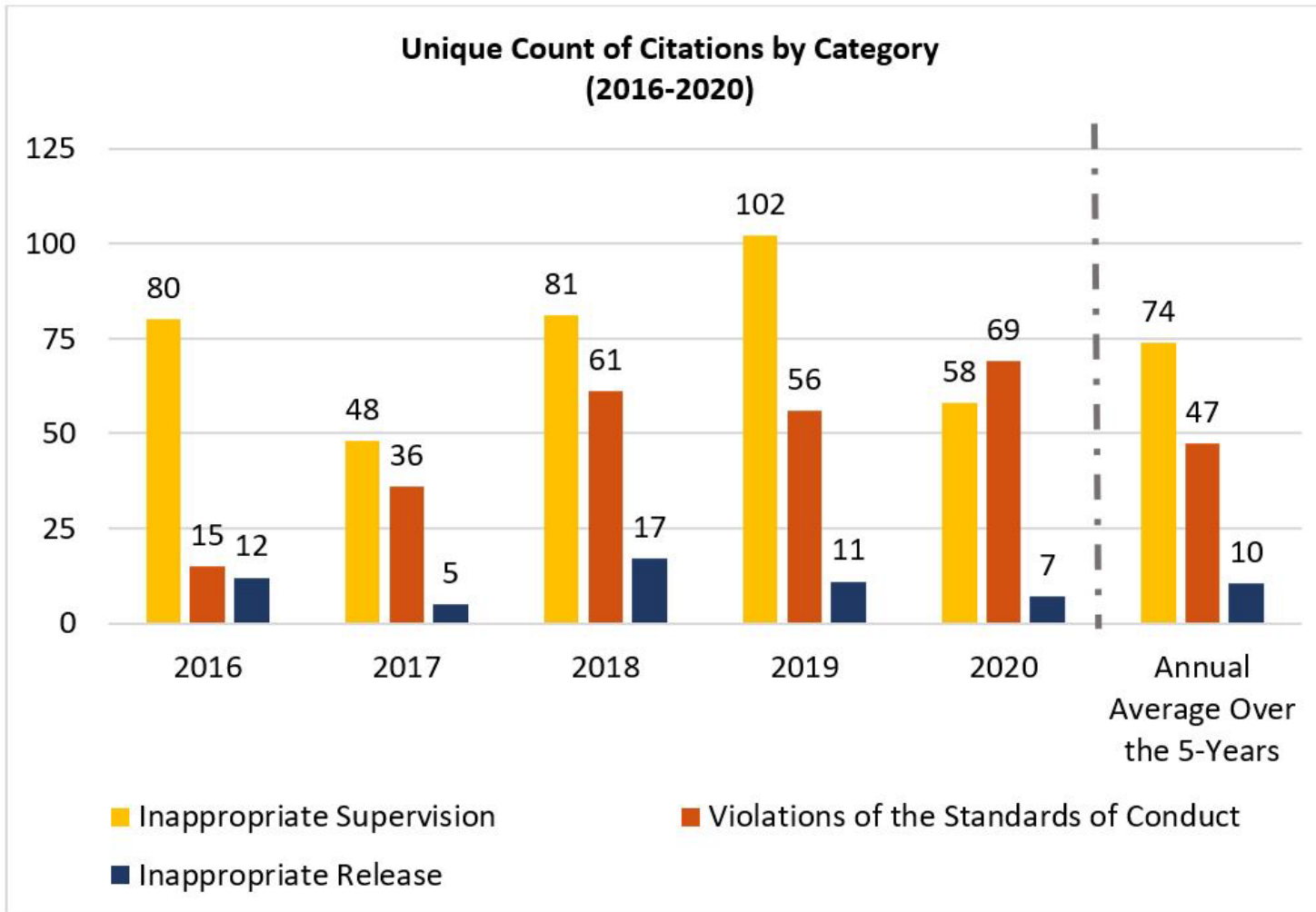
In a Culture of Safety, Everyone:

- Observes the environment and identifies safety concerns before harm occurs
- Speaks up when they have a safety concern
- Acts quickly to remedy an unsafe situation
- Supports others to openly discuss mistakes as a source of learning
- Works together to change practices so safety incidents do not reoccur



Injuries are Predictable





What types of injuries are you seeing in your programs? Where and when are children most likely to get injured?

- Transitions (indoor/outdoor, mealtimes, naptime)
- Positioning and supervision challenges
- Playground and outdoor environments
- Staffing patterns and ratios



Remember a Time...



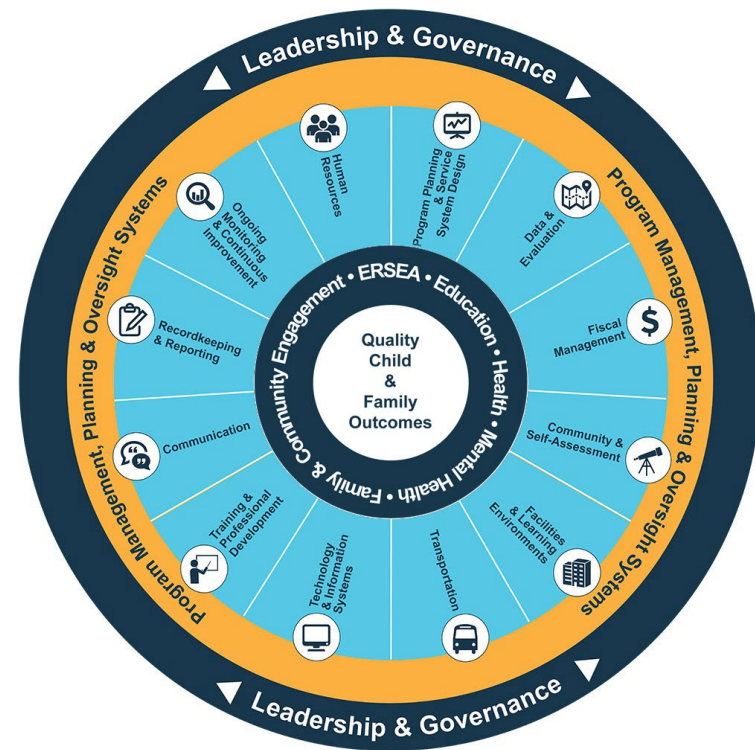
...when a child in your program was injured or left unattended.

- Were there circumstances or factors that may have predicted the incident?
- What could you have done to prevent it?
- What were the child, adult, and environmental factors that contributed to what happened?

Repeated Safety issues are usually **system issues**, not individual failures

They signal the need for:

- Learning
- Practice
- Support



The 10 Actions for a Culture of Safety

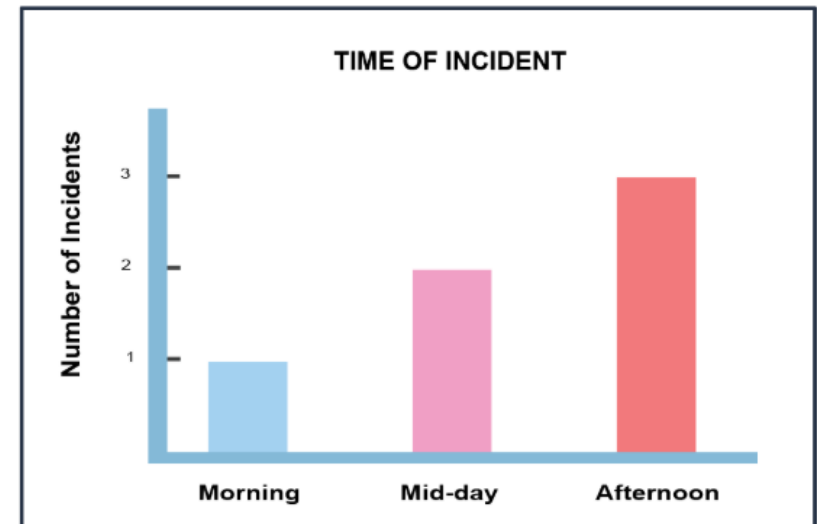
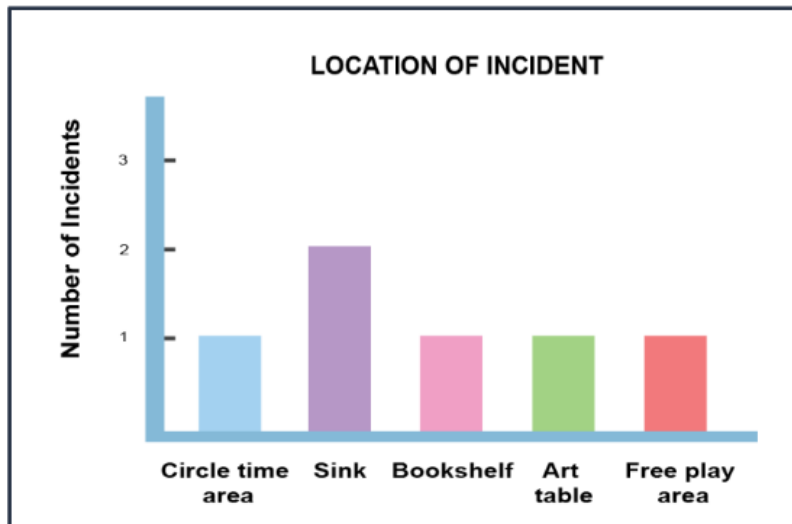
1. **Use Data to Make Decisions:** Program and incident data serve as an important resource to help managers and staff evaluate children's safety.
2. **Actively Supervise:** Children are never alone or unsupervised. Staff position themselves so that they can observe, count, and listen at all times.
3. **Keep Environments Safe and Secure:** Programs create, monitor, and maintain hazard-free spaces.
4. **Make Playgrounds Safe:** Regularly inspected, well-maintained, age-appropriate and actively supervised outdoor play spaces allow children to engage in active play, explore the outdoors, and develop healthy habits.
5. **Transport Children Safely:** Programs implement and enforce policies and procedures for drivers, monitors, children, and families using school buses, driving to and from the program, or walking.
6. **Report Child Abuse and Neglect:** Managers and staff follow mandated reporting statutes and procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
7. **Be Aware of Changes that Impact Safety:** Staff anticipate and prepare for children's reactions to transitions and changes in daily routine, within and outside of the program.
8. **Model Safe Behaviors:** Staff establish nurturing, positive relationships by demonstrating safe behaviors and encouraging other adults and children to try them.
9. **Teach Families about Safety:** Staff engage families about safety issues and partner with them about how to reduce risks to prevent injuries that occur in the home.
10. **Know Your Children and Families:** Staff plan activities with an understanding of each child's developmental level and abilities, and the preferences, culture, and traditions of their families. This includes everything from maintaining current emergency contact information to understanding families' perceptions about safety and injury prevention.



Use Data to Make Decisions

Documenting Injuries and Analyzing Data for trends.

- Identify locations, times, and other factors that play a role in injuries
- Pinpoint systems and services that need to be strengthened
- Develop an action plan to prevent future injuries



Activity – Data Review

Hazard Mapping Data
 Classroom: Guppies, 3 year old Classroom
 Month: October 2015

Child Initials	Age	Date of Incident	Time of Incident	Location	Equipment / Product Involved	Cause of Injury
JK	3.1	10/1/15	8:50 AM	classroom carpet area	N/A	child bitten by another child
BC	3.9	10/2/15	10:05 AM	classroom shelves/corner	N/A	child bitten by another child
BC	3.9	10/2/15	11:30 AM	playground	big slide	child pushed by another child
JK	3.1	10/2/15	11:25 AM	playground	N/A	child tripped and fell while running
PT	3.5	10/5/15	2:35 PM	classroom sink	stool	child fell off of stool
JK	3.1	10/7/15	11:25 AM	playground	tricycle	child collided with another child
JK	3.1	10/9/15	3:15 PM	classroom bathroom	N/A	child slipped on wet floor
BC	3.9	10/9/15	8:45 AM	classroom carpet area	N/A	child hit by another child
LM	3	10/9/15	4:10 PM	classroom sink	stool	child tripped while climbing stool
KC	3.5	10/13/15	10:20 AM	classroom shelves area	shelves	child hit elbow on shelves
JS	3.3	10/13/15	11:40 AM	playground	small slide	collided with another child
PB	3.5	10/14/15	10:20 AM	classroom bathroom	stool	stool tipped
TC	3.4	10/14/15	8:35 AM	classroom carpet area	N/A	child punched by another child
AC	3.6	10/16/15	3:45 PM	playground	sandbox	a child threw sand in another child's eye
MM	3.8	10/16/15	8:40 AM	classroom shelves/corner	shelves	child hit another child with a block
JK	3.1	10/16/15	3:50 PM	playground	swings	child hit by swing
LP	3.4	10/16/15	10:20 AM	classroom bathroom	stool	child slipped while climbing on stool to changing area
PJ	3.5	10/19/15	8:35 AM	classroom carpet area	N/A	child slapped by another child

Incident Data Tracking Sheet

- Where did most of the injuries take place?
- During what time of the day did most of the injuries take place?
- What steps could be taken in an action plan to prevent future injuries?

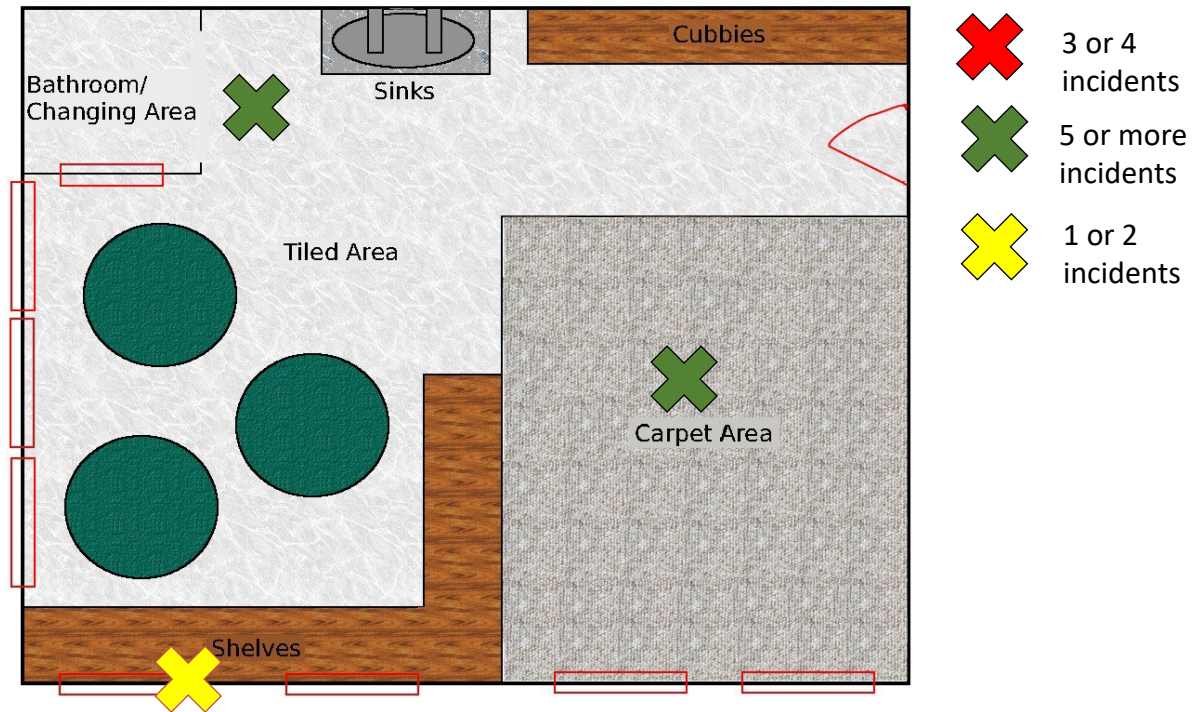


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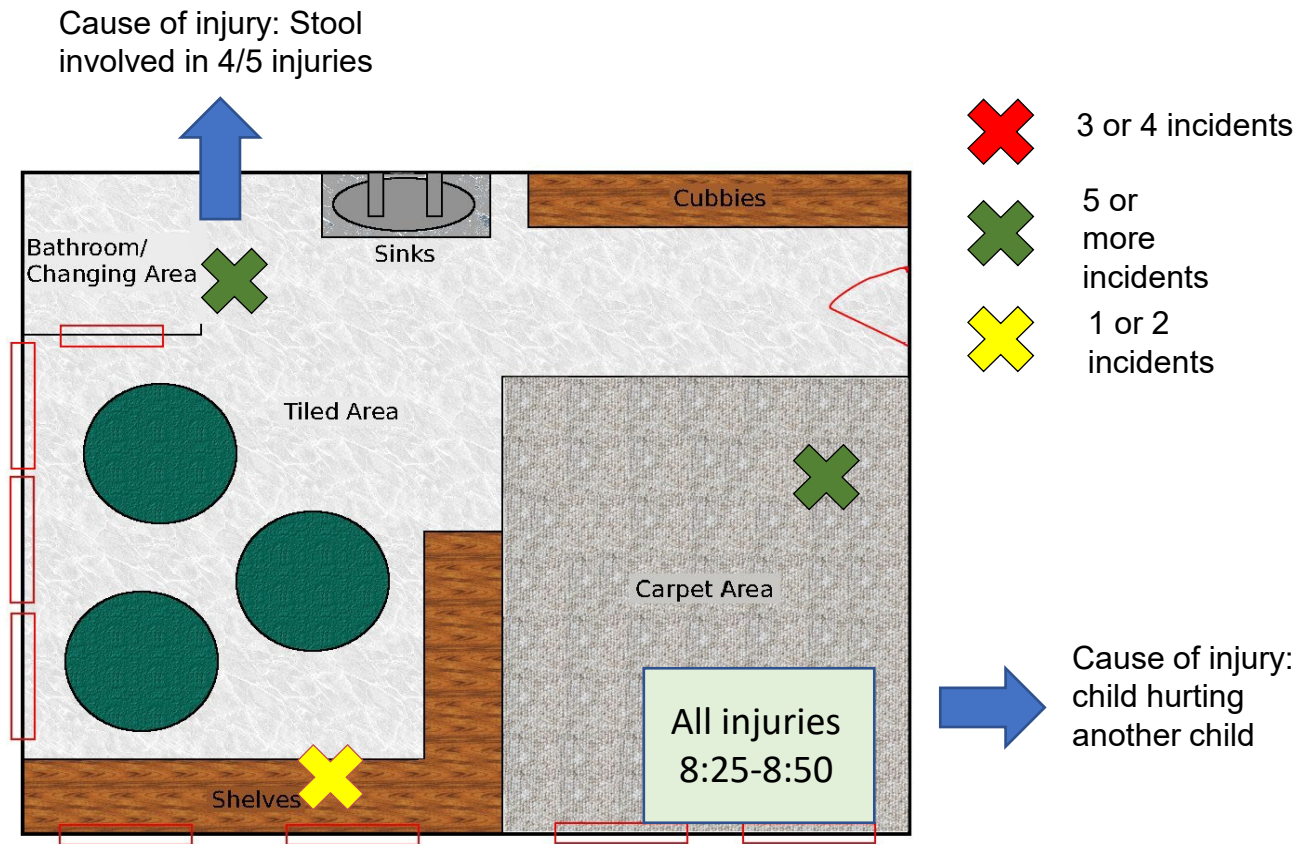


Activity – Data Review

Hazard Mapping



Activity – Data Review



Activity – Data Review

Next Steps?

- Make an educated guess about what's contributing to injuries
- Gather additional information, if needed
- Implement a change to address the cause of injuries
- Evaluate your new safety measures to see if they are working



The 10 Actions for a Culture of Safety

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Active Supervision

Staff set up the environment so they can supervise children and always have access to them.

Furniture is at waist high or shorter.

Small spaces are clutter free and big spaces have clear play spaces for staff to observe.

Staff are able to account for the children.

Teachers are conducting head counts when transitions happen.

Staff continuously scan the entire environment to know where everyone is and what they are doing.

Staff are aware of changes in a child's mood and anticipate when a child may wander off, get upset, or take a dangerous risk.

Staff complete daily health check to inform and predict children's behaviors.

Staff use their knowledge of each child to predict what they might do next.

Staff position themselves to see and hear children at all times.

Staff make sure there are clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping, and eating.

Staff listen closely to children to quickly identify signs of potential problems.

Listen for the absence of sounds.

Engage children in meaningful activities to keep them focused and engaged.

Offer different levels of assistance or redirecting offered.

Redirect children to more appropriate behaviors if you see them starting to engage in unsafe or disruptive actions.



Active Supervision is Visible

- You can see it
- You can describe it
- You can reflect on it

Because it's visible, it's also learnable and coachable.



Sharpen Your Skills



- Identify strengths and barriers to active supervision in each picture
- Think about how you can use this information to support staff improve

#1



#2



Be Aware of Changes that Impact Safety: Transitions

Have a clear plan for where staff are positioned during transitions.



Prepare children to move from one activity or setting to another. Count children before, during, and after transitions to ensure no one is left behind.

Plan for transitions, and limit the number of transitions in a day.



Use transition activities, like songs and guessing games.

Know which children need extra help.



Give praise when transitions go smoothly.



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Activity: Transitions









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Self-Reflection Tool and Implementation Plan

- How do we teach active supervision strategies and support staff when they apply these skills in everyday practice?
- How do we arrange the space to create a safe environment in classrooms, playgrounds, and family child care homes so it is easy for staff to observe children?
- How can staff position themselves to see and hear children at all times and move quickly to children who need assistance?
- How do we make sure staff continuously scan and count children during both indoor and outdoor play?
- How do staff assess individual children’s skills and abilities, adapt activities to avoid potential injuries, and use their observational skills to anticipate times when a child may need closer supervision?
- How do staff engage and redirect children who need additional support?

Active Supervision Implementation Plan

Key Strategy	Current Practice	Action Steps
 Set up the environment		
 Position staff		
 Scan and count		
 Listen		
 Anticipate children's behavior		
 Engage and redirect		



Reflection – Identify a Safety Gap

Individual Reflection:

- Choose one classroom or setting
- Identify:
 - A safety concern or pattern
 - When/Where it typically occurs
 - Possible contributing factors

Note: Do not solve it yet.

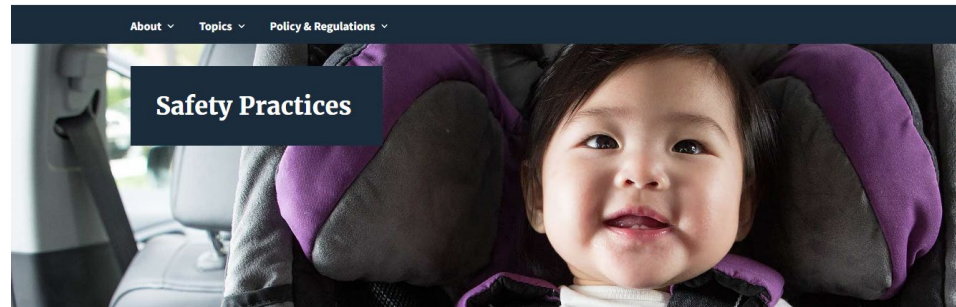
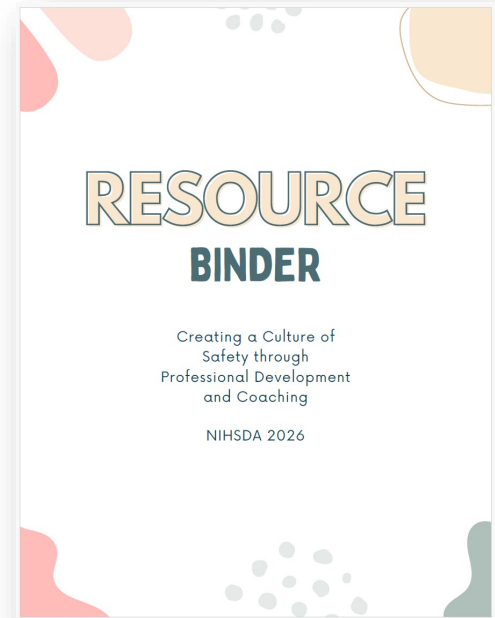


Wrapping Up

- Head Start Programs are responsible for creating environments where children are safe at all times.
- A Culture of Safety means everyone shares responsibility, speaks up about concerns, and works together to prevent incidents.
- Active Supervision is an intentional practice that requires staff to position, scan, count, and listen at all times.
- Most safety incidents are predictable and often occur during specific times, routines, or environments.
- Identifying safety gaps and contributing factors is the first step toward improving practice and preventing incidents from happening again.



Resources



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Professional Development and Coaching in Head Start



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Connector: Rainbow Breath



Pulse Check

How are you feeling after the Culture of Safety content?



Any outstanding questions or wonderings?

Learning Objectives

Module 2 objectives

- Describe Head Start's requirements for professional development and coaching
- Consider how to connect professional development and coaching to a culture of safety
- Understand the purpose and structure of Practice-Based Coaching



What is Professional Development (PD)?

Professional development refers to the process of acquiring new knowledge and skills that relate to current job duties and allow for growth along a career path.



What is Coaching?

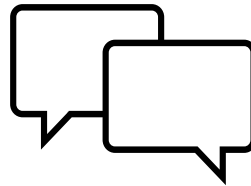
Coaching is an intentional, ongoing professional development strategy that involves a collaborative partnership between a coach and a teacher to enhance their instructional practices.



Partner Share

What does professional development currently look like in your program?

What does coaching look like?



How do PD & Coaching Strengthen Safety?

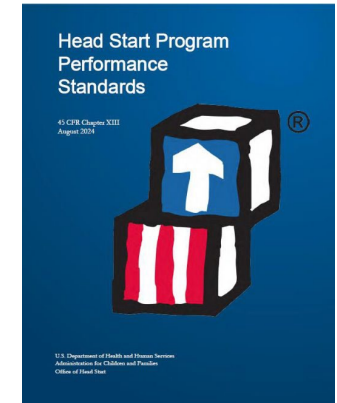
- Build shared expectations
- Strengthen staff confidence and competence
- Support consistent implementation of safe practices
- Create reflective spaces to identify risks and solutions
- Reinforce trauma-informed, relationship-based approaches

How have you used PD or coaching to strengthen safety practices?



Head Start Program Performance Standard

§1302.92(b) A program must establish and implement a **systematic approach** to **staff training and professional development** designed to assist staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality, comprehensive services within the scope of their job responsibilities, and attached to academic credit as appropriate.



PD and Coaching

Professional Development in Head Start

Activity: 5 minutes

Pen, sticky notes

- Reflect on common PD topics in your program
- Write each topic on a sticky note (one per sticky)
- Place your sticky notes on the corresponding charts around the room



Best Practices for Observation

Group Debrief

Looking at the charts:

What common themes do you notice?

What topics are represented less or missing?



Professional Development in Head Start

- Systematic approach to planning for and providing PD
- 15 clock hours of training as a minimum each year
- Required training:
 - Orientation
 - Child abuse reporting- annually
 - Positive strategies to support SEL, behavior- annually
 - Curricula, ELOF, Individualizing, adult-child interactions, etc.
- Individual Professional Development Plans required for all classroom staff (IPDPs)



Connecting Professional Development to Safety

Possible Topics

Active
Supervision

Safe Routines &
Transitions

Trauma-
informed Care

Staff Wellness

DAP Materials

Communication
& Teamwork

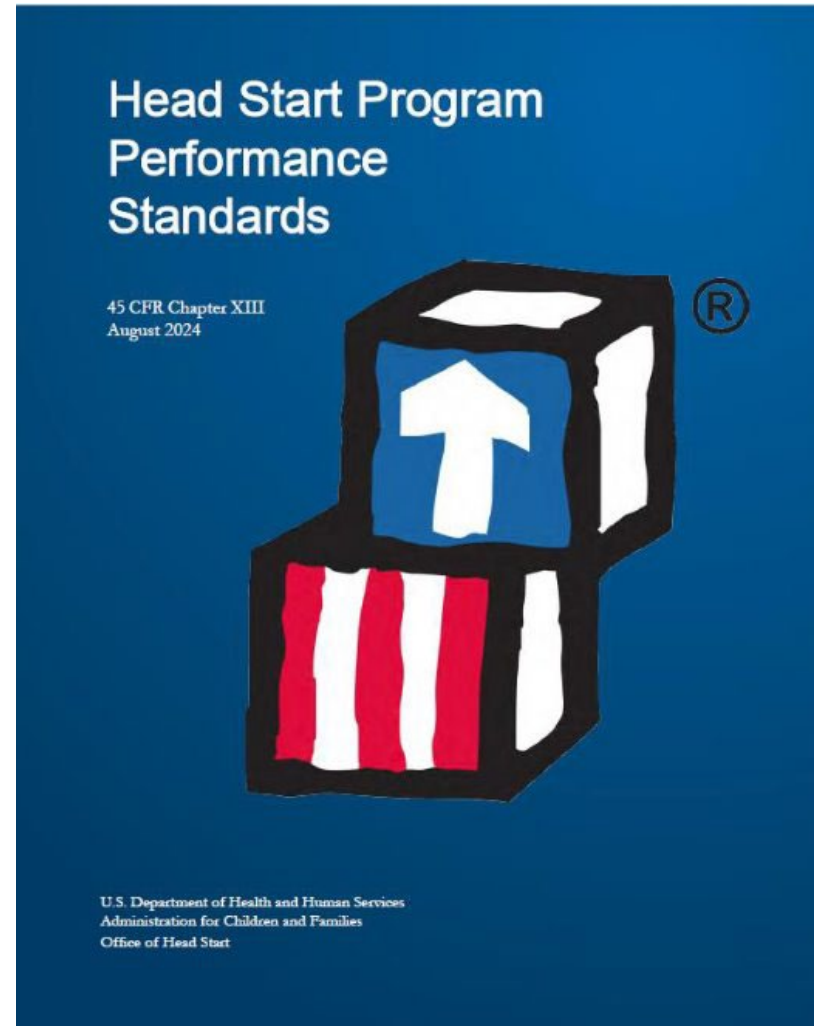


PD and Coaching

§ 1302.92(c)

A program must:

- Implement a research-based, coordinated coaching strategy
- Assess all education staff to identify strengths and needs and identify those who will most benefit from intensive coaching
- Provide opportunities for intensive coaching to identified staff



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What does intensive coaching mean?

- **Part** of the research-based coordinated coaching strategy
- **Not** for every staff member
- **Not** punitive
- **For** those who would benefit most

What does “benefit most” mean?

Who do you think would benefit most from intensive coaching?

Who Might be a Coachee?

Need identified through:
Review of cluster/center data
Review of child/family data
Review of staff data
Motivation
Volunteer
Apply

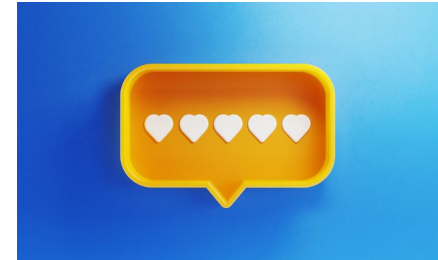
Identifying Coaches

- Experience working in early childhood
- BA degree in early childhood or related field
- Knowledge of the curriculum
- Understand adult learning principles
- Experience with policies, procedures and culture of program



Who Might Be a Coach?

- Coach
- Education Manager
- Education Specialist
- Child Development Specialist
- Director of Training
- Others?



*Who have you identified as a coach
in your program?*

Coaching as a Safe Place



- Clear separation of coaching and supervision
- Transparency about how data is collected and used
- Time to build the collaborative partnership BEFORE constructive feedback
- Thoughtful selection of coachees

PD and Coaching

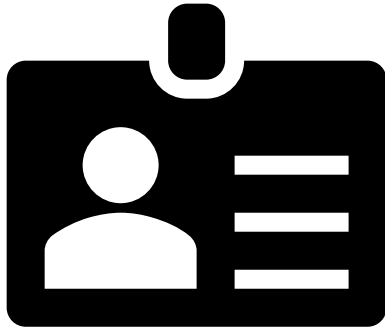
When coaching is a safe place, coachees are able to:

- ✓ Try new things
- ✓ Get supportive and constructive feedback
- ✓ Ask for help



Why might coaching not feel like a safe place?

Coaching and Supervision



- Sometimes supervisors serve as coaches
- Clarify the role of the supervisor or coach at each visit.
- Regardless of role, specify what will happen if the person observes an unsafe activity in the classroom or in the home.

PD and Coaching

What is Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)?



- Cyclical
- Collaborative
- Supports implementation of effective practices
- Aligned to HSPPS

PD and Coaching



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Collaborative Coaching Partnerships

- Built on trust and confidentiality
- Teachers are an active part of the process. Coaching doesn't "happen" to them.
- Coaching agreements are agreed upon by all parties



PD and Coaching

Shared Goals and Action Planning

- Identify Strengths & Needs
- Set a goal for coaching focused on specific, actionable practices
- Create an action plan to guide coaching



Focused Observation

- Observed agreed upon practices
- Record objective, non-judgmental information about the observation
- Use observation strategies to learn more or improve practice (model, prompt, video, etc.)



Reflection and Feedback

- Discuss and reflect on observation and progress
- Share and consider feedback
- Use strategies to learn more or improve practice (question prompts, creating materials, etc.)



PD and Coaching



Examples:

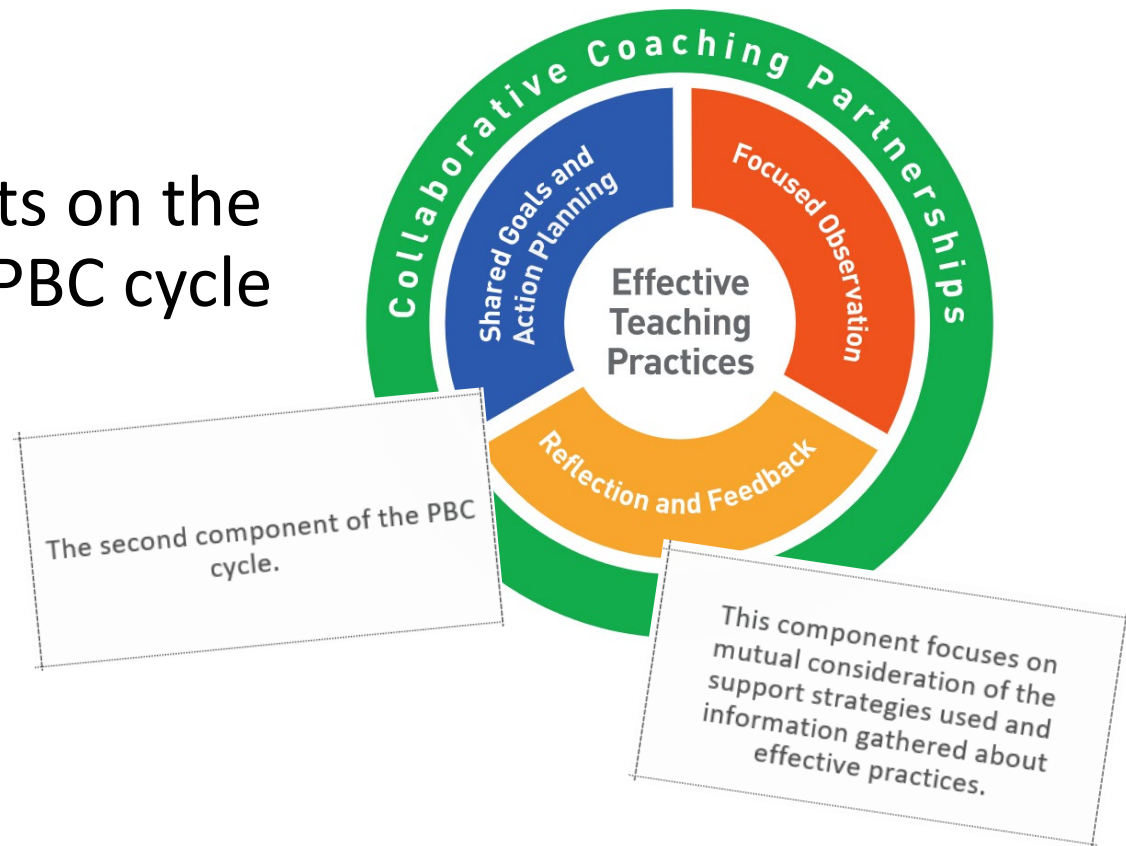
Zoning
Counting Children
Transition Activities
Picture Routines
Transition Warnings
Teacher Communication

PD and Coaching

PBC Sorting Activity

10 minutes

- Table groups
- Place statements on the corresponding PBC cycle component

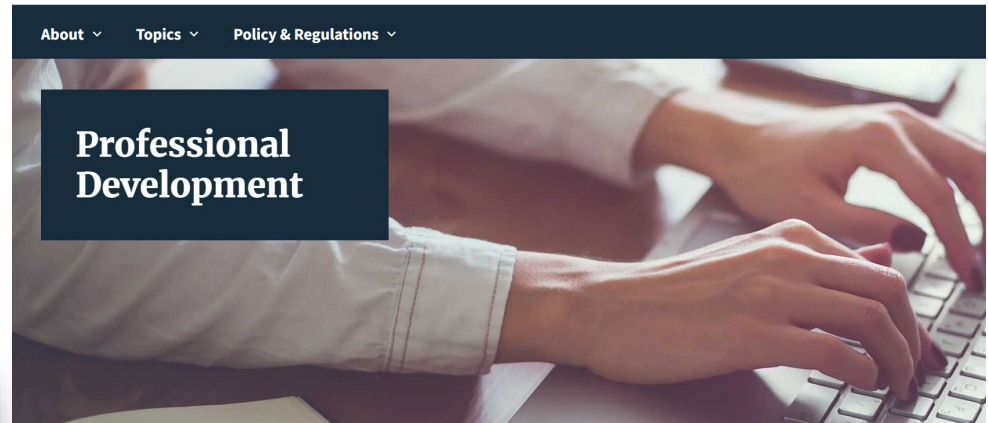
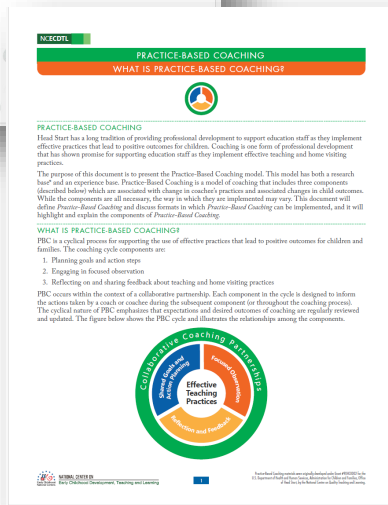
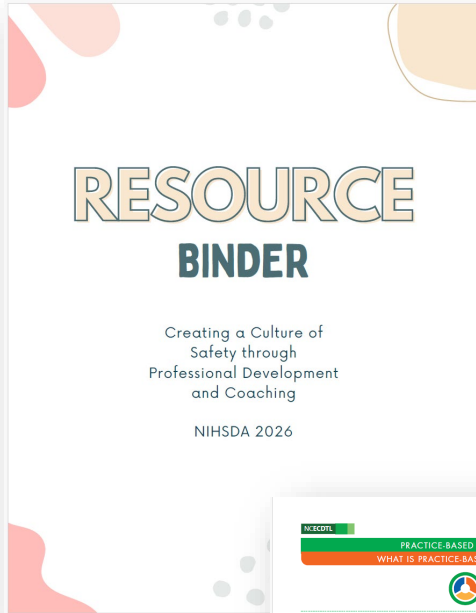


Wrapping Up

- Head Start Program Performance Standards require a coordinated approach to staff training and development, which includes intensive coaching
- Coaching is a safe place where teachers and coaches work together to develop new skills
- Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is a cyclical, collaborative coaching model that supports implementation of effective practices.
- PD and coaching work together to support a culture of safety



Resources



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Come Back



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These materials were developed for OHS/Region XI Training and Technical Assistance Network under Contract No 140D0425C0027 by ICF.

Building a Coordinated Approach to Safety



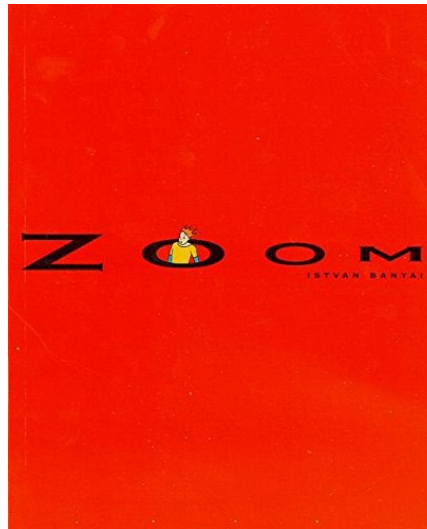
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Building a Coordinated Approach

Connector: Zoom

Activity: 20 minutes

- Work together to place the photos in order



Building a Coordinated Approach

Group Debrief

When we are thinking about supporting safety in our programs how can we zoom in?

How can we zoom out?



Building a Coordinated Approach

Pulse Check

How are you feeling after the PD and Coaching Content?



Any outstanding questions or wonderings?



Learning Objectives

Module 3 objectives

- Identify root causes for a safety concern
- Understand the elements of a coordinated approach to safety in Head Start Programs
- Develop a coordinated plan to address a safety concern using systems and professional development



Return to Your Safety Gap

- What was the safety concern you identified earlier?
- Where and when does it happen?
- What patterns are you noticing?



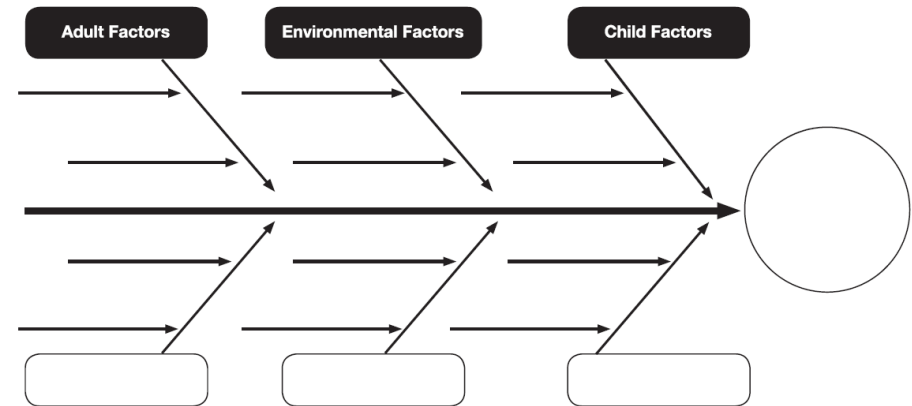
Digging Deeper

Understanding the **Root Cause**

- Safety Concerns are often symptoms – not the root issue
- To create meaningful change, we need to understand:
 - Why is this happening?
 - What is contributing to this pattern?



Fishbone Diagram



What can you do to prevent this problem from happening again?

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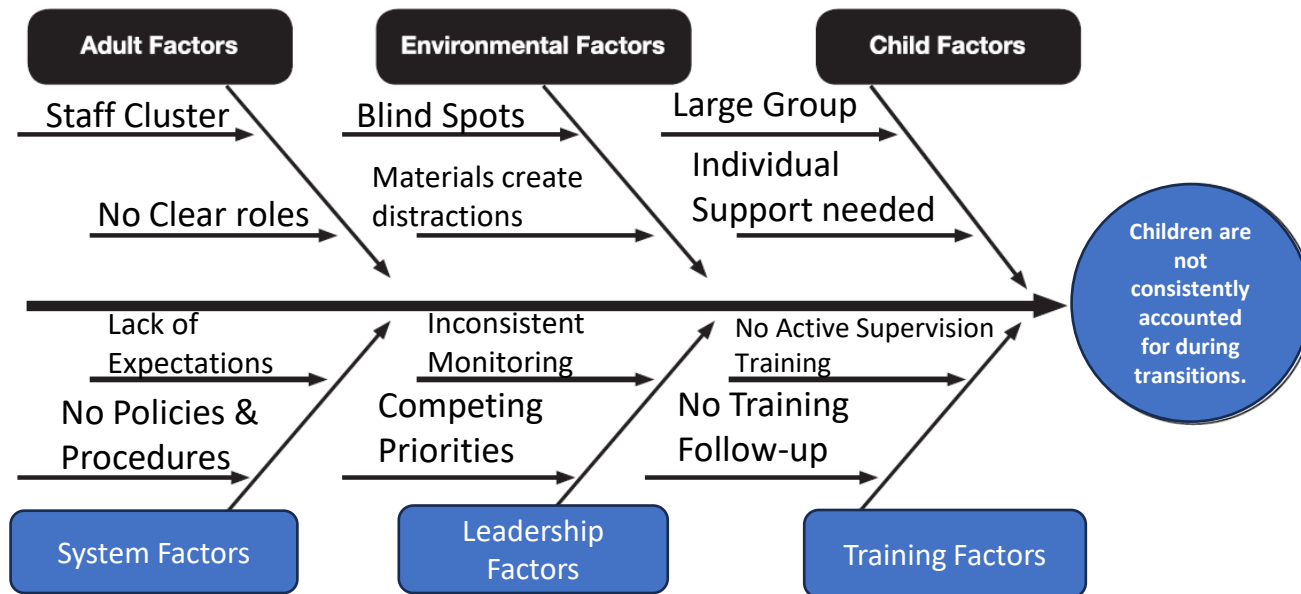


Digging Deeper: Example

Children are not consistently accounted for during transitions.



Fishbone Diagram

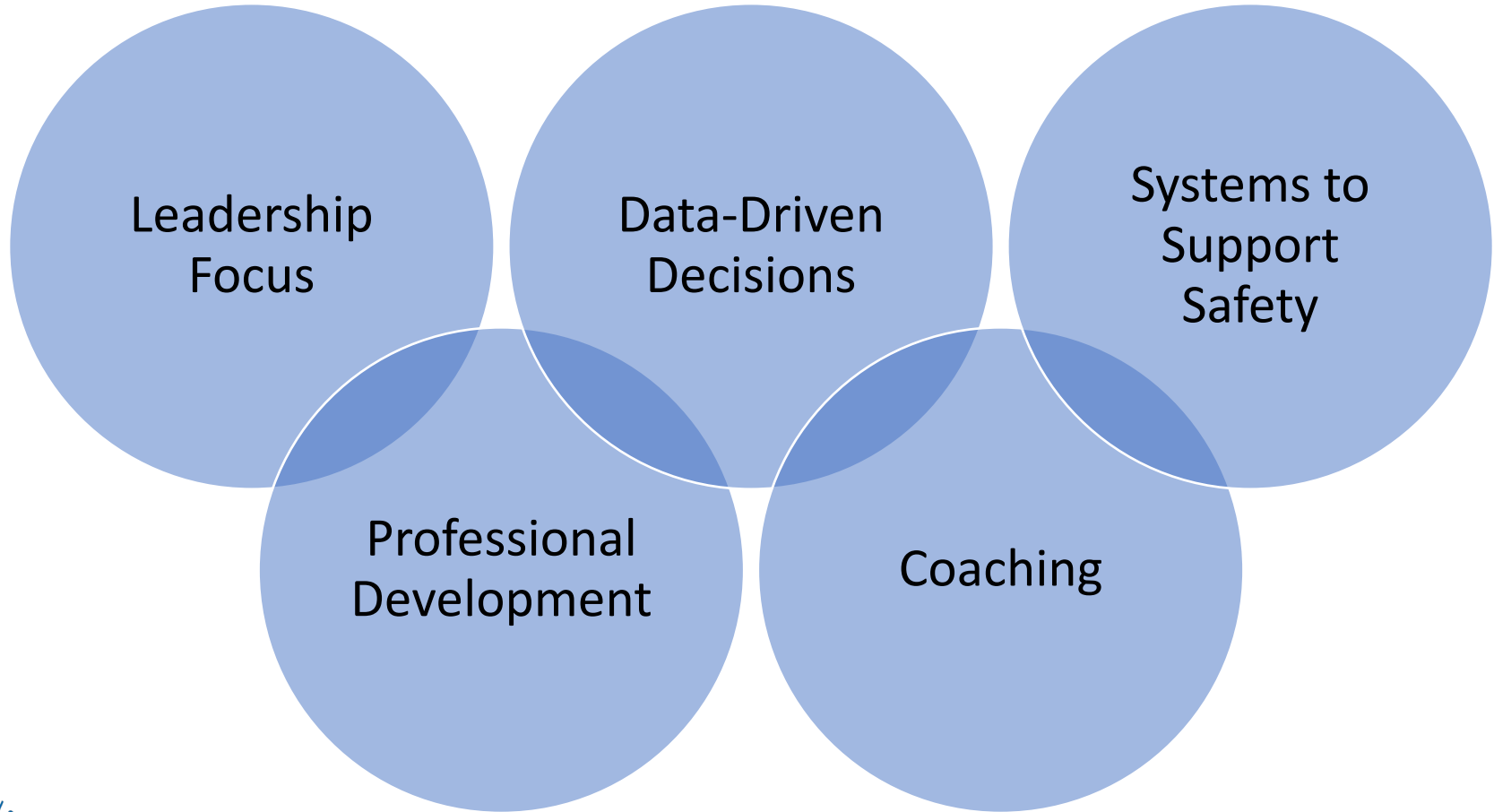


What can you do to prevent this problem from happening again?



Building a Coordinated Approach

Elements of a Coordinated Approach to Safety



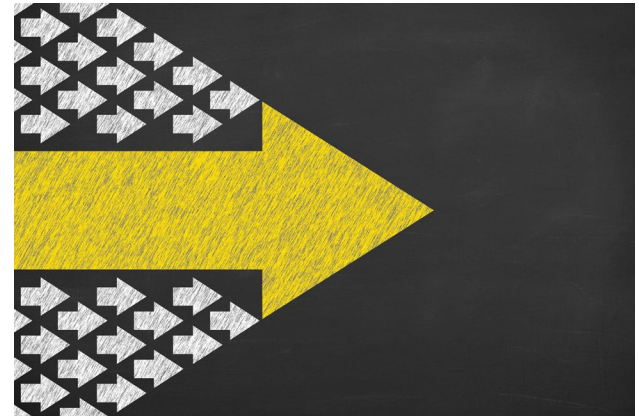
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Building a Coordinated Approach

Leadership's Role in Safety Culture

Leaders must:

- Model safety expectations
- Protect coaching time
- Coordinate ongoing PD
- Encourage reporting
- Celebrate improvements
- Ensure accountability



Building a Coordinated Approach

Using Data to Strengthen Safety

Potential Data Sources:

- Incident reports
- Supervision checklists
- Coaching notes
- Environmental assessments
- Staff feedback



Building a Coordinated Approach

Systems That Support Safety

- Clear policies
- Regular walkthroughs
- Ongoing Monitoring
- Data-driven decisions
- Coaching
- Staff onboarding
- Professional Development
- Others?

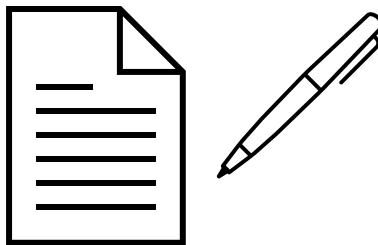


Building a Coordinated Approach

Systems That Support Safety

What systems do you currently have in place that could support your identified safety concern and/or root causes?

What systems could be built or strengthened to support your identified safety concern and/or root causes?



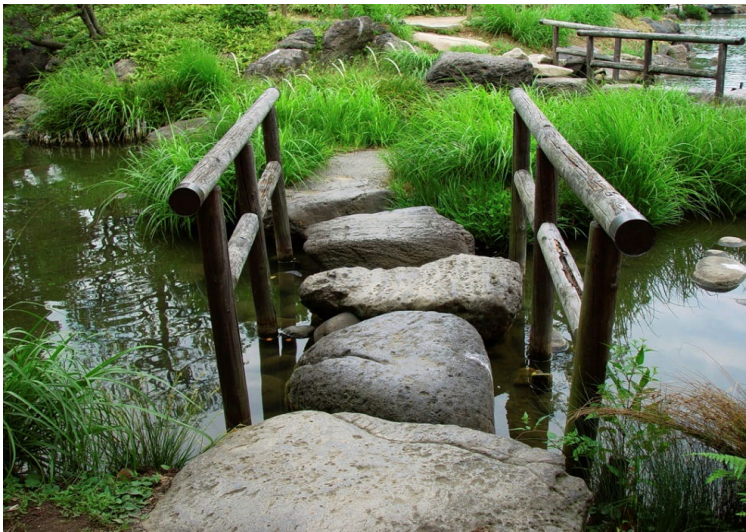
Building a Coordinated Approach

Coordinated Approach to PD and Coaching



Building a Coordinated Approach

PRACTICE-BASED COACHING AS A BRIDGE



Building a Coordinated Approach

Coaching Impact

	OUTCOMES % of Participants who Demonstrate Knowledge, Demonstrate New Skills in a Training Setting, and Use new Skills in the Classroom		
TRAINING COMPONENTS	Knowledge	Skill Demonstration	Use in the Classroom
Theory and Discussion	10%	5%	0%
...+ Demonstration in Training	30%	20%	0%
...+ Practice & Feedback in Training	60%	60%	5%
...+ Coaching in Classroom	95%	95%	95%

Joyce and Showers, 2002



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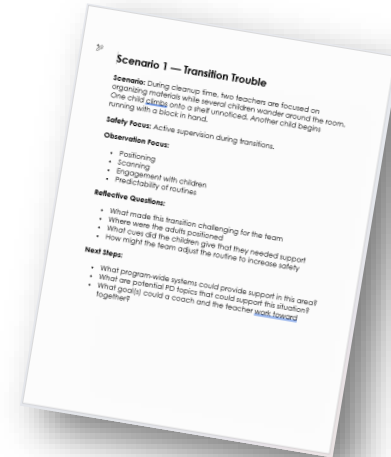
Building a Coordinated Approach

Activity: Safety Planning in Action

15 minutes

Scenario, chart paper, marker

- Review your scenario in table groups
- Consider the reflection questions
- Plan a coordinated approach to supporting the concern
 - Write on your chart paper:
 - Program-wide systems
 - PD topic(s)
 - Coaching focus



Building a Coordinated Approach

Group Debrief

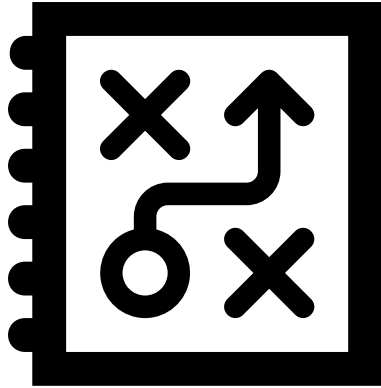
What program-wide systems could provide support in this area?

What are potential PD topics that could support this situation?

What goal(s) could a coach and the teacher work toward together?



Building a Coordinated Approach



Elements of a Strong PD Plan

A PD plan should include:

- Program priorities- including safety
- Staff strengths & needs
- Training topics
- Coaching alignment
- Timeline & frequency
- Evaluation & follow-up

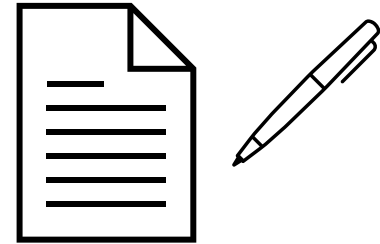
Building a Coordinated Approach

Activity: Build a Mini PD Plan

8 minutes

Using the safety concern or pattern you identified earlier, complete the Mini-PD plan portion of your planning form

- Identify the goal
- Choose PD topics
- Determine timeline
- Identify evaluation methods
- Align coaching supports (later)



Building a Coordinated Approach

Pair-Share

Share your PD goal and one topic to support your safety concern



Wrapping Up

- We can look closely at a problem or step back to see the bigger picture, helping us understand what may be causing a safety concern
- A coordinated approach to safety includes five key elements: strong leadership focus, data-driven decision-making, systems that support safety, professional development, and coaching.
- Coaching serves as the bridge between training and real-world implementation, increasing the likelihood that staff apply new strategies effectively in the classroom.



Come Back



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These materials were developed for OHS/Region XI Training and Technical Assistance Network under Contract No 140D0425C0027 by ICF.

Implementing and Practicing: DO



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Connector

Where Are You in the Cycle?

- Know
- See
- Do
- Reflect
- Improve



Instructions: Move to the area that best represents where your program is right now with safety implementation.

Implementation and Practice - Do

Pulse Check

How are you feeling after the Building a Coordinated Approach to Safety?



Any outstanding questions or wonderings?

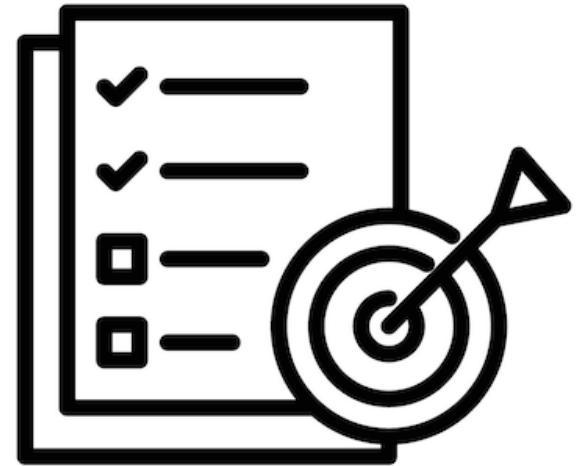


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Learning Objectives

Module 4 objectives

- Summarize key concepts from the session
- Apply learning to realistic practice scenarios
- Identify next steps and available supports/resources



Return to Your Safety Gap

- What root causes were identified?
- What patterns came up?
- What areas can teachers be supported with?
- How can we align impacting factors with coaching and PD?



Implementation

Connecting Safety Goals to Coaching Safety Concerns need **SPECIFIC** actions

Coaching helps turn:

Broad ideas → Observable practices



Count children every time they move locations and every 2 minutes during active play, using name-to-face verification.

Active Supervision

Set up the Environment	Listen
Position Staff	Anticipate Children's Behavior
Scan and Count	Engage and Redirect

Office of Head Start
National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety

Count children throughout the day to ensure active supervision.

Now we can SEE it, SUPPORT it, and COACH it.

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Goal Writing

Write a shared SMART coaching goal tied to one priority root case.

Practice

- The observable practice

Measure

- How much or how often the practice will be seen or heard

Activity

- When/where the practice will be implemented

When reading a book in large group, I will **ask five open-ended questions and provide prompts** if needed to support children to answer. (Preschool)



Goal Writing Considerations

Issue	Why is it an issue?	Tip
Focusing on too many practices	The goal is too big to be accomplished in 2-5 weeks Overwhelming	Break the practices down into a logical sequence for multiple action plans Focus on practices that will have the greatest impact. (acquisition/fluency)



Goal Writing

Create your Goal

- Practice
- Measure
- Activity

Action Plan

Action Plan

The goal I will work on:

I will know I achieved this when:



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What is an Action Plan?

Action plan goal:			
Goal(s)			
I will know I have achieved this goal when:		Goal Achievement Statement	
Steps to achieve this goal:	Resources needed:	By when:	Completed:
Action Steps	Supports or Resources	Timeframe	

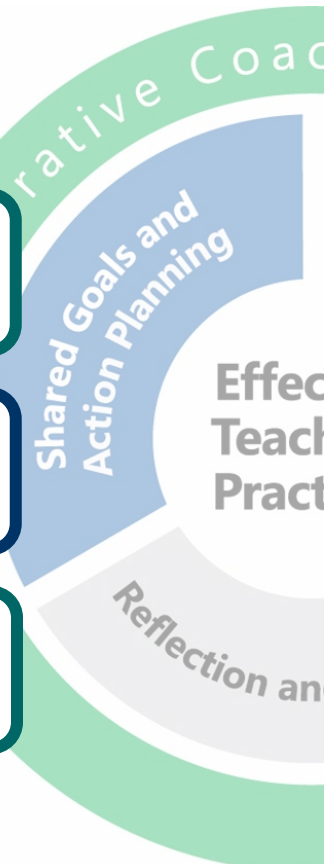


Action Planning

? Are there individual children who might need more support to meaningfully participate?

? Does the coachee need more support to implement this practice with a particular child/group of children/family?

? How will the coach/coachee collect data?



Action Plan Quality Checklist

- Does it target a specific teaching or home visiting practice?
- Will we able to observe it?
- Is it achievable in the time frame set?
- Does the coachee know exactly what to do?
- Does the goal let the coachee know when to use this practice?



Action Planning

Create your Plan

- Steps
- Who's involved
- Timing
- Resources

Steps to achieve this goal:	Resources needed:	By when:



Reflection

Strength-based



Encourage, affirm, and acknowledge

Conversational and Reciprocal



Open-ended prompts



Grounded in data/observation



Connected to action plan



Combines challenges and support



Effective Feedback

Planned

Focused

Supportive

Constructive

Intentional

Specific



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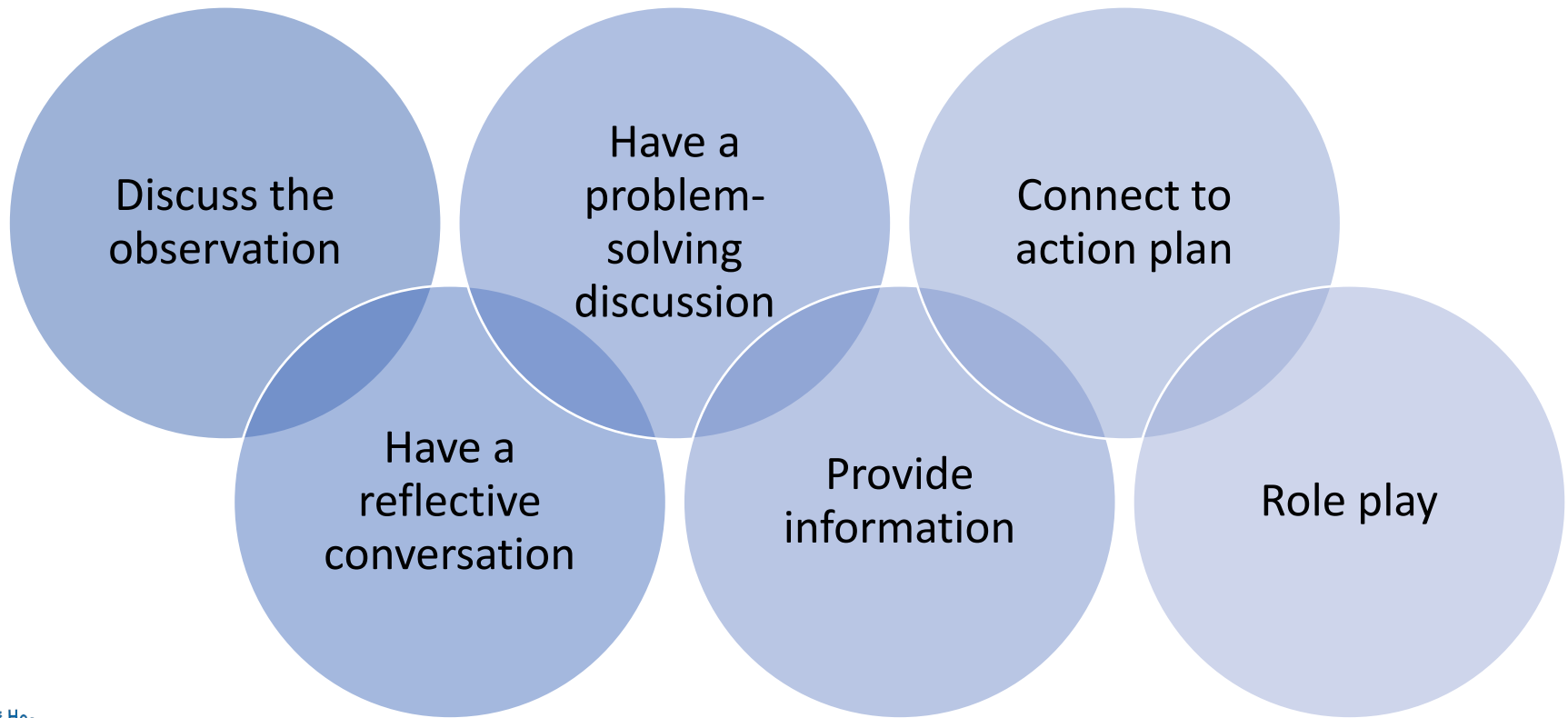
Deliver a Constructive Message

- 1 Start with what you observed regarding the targeted practice.
- 2 Give information and suggestions for improving the practice.
- 3 Ask the coachee to reflect on other ways to improve the practice.
- 4 Ask a reflective prompt/Decide which strategy to implement.
- 5 Provide resources to support implementation.



Role Play: Reflection and Feedback

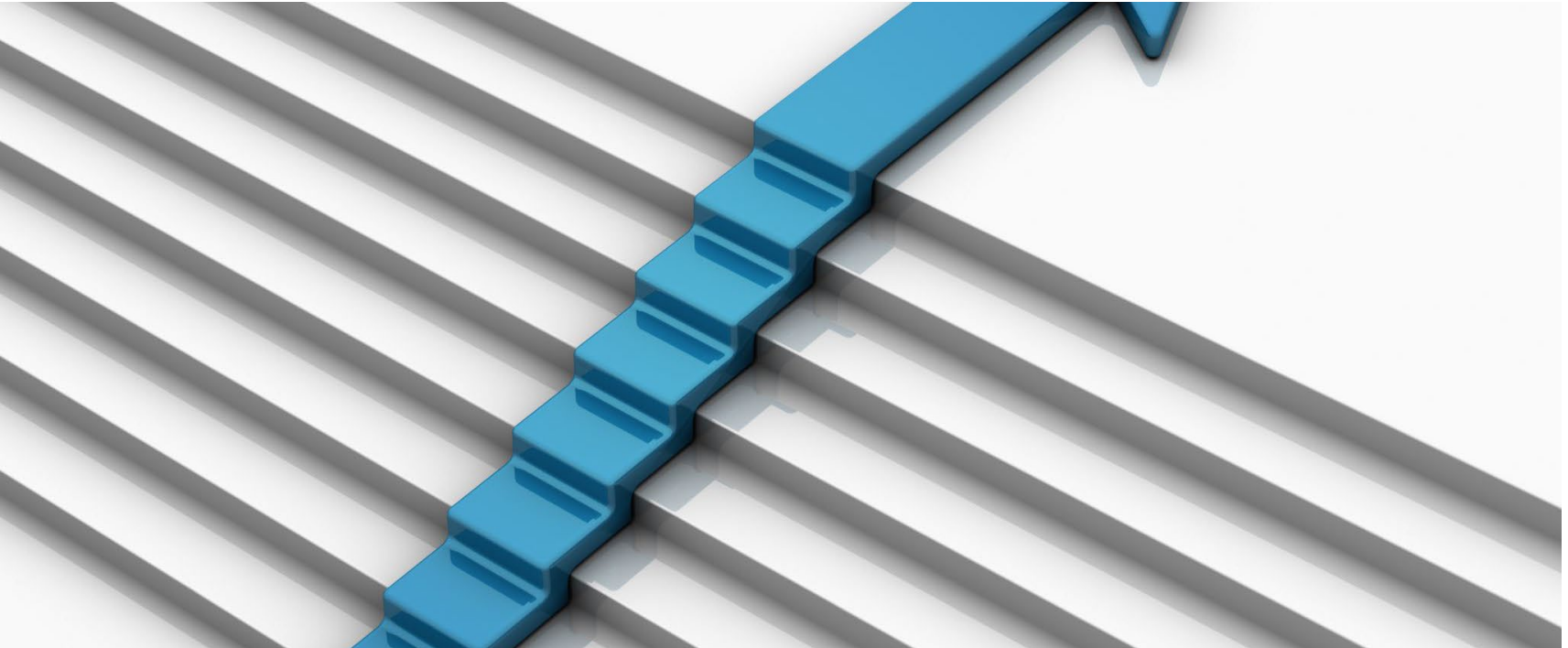
Quick role play using observation → reflection prompts → next steps.



Follow-up Planning

What will follow-up look like in your program?

Next Steps



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Wrapping Up

- Understanding the root cause of a safety concern leads to more effective and sustainable solutions
- Clear, specific goals make safety practices observable, consistent, and coachable
- Coaching helps staff move from knowing what to do to consistently doing it in daily routines
- Intentional planning and follow-through ensure safety practices are implemented, monitored, and improved over time





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