

Prevention X Institutional Safeguarding Practice: Environment

Prevention-focused interventions to improve institutional environments in schools to safeguard children have positive effects, though this finding is based on only a few studies.

Evidence status	Low risk of bias	Clear impact of prevention-focused interventions to improve institutional environments to safeguard children (based on four RCTs).
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The summary in brief

Institutions that care for children, such as children’s homes, orphanages, schools, daycares, foster homes and hospitals, can implement various preventive interventions and policies to safeguard the children in their care.

Interventions to improve the environment to protect children in institutions include training for staff (e.g., teacher or staff training programs). The studies in this summary are of interventions that trained caregivers and professionals to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and practices/behaviors when working with children, identifying maltreatments, and avoiding violent behaviors. These changes are intended to improve the organization’s environment. All four completed primary studies in this cell were in schools, and all found improvements in the quality of practitioner’s or caregiver’s response as a result of the training.

There are six studies in this cell: four papers from three studies, all recent (Baker-Henningham 2019; Baker-Henningham 2021; Kim 2019; and Nickerson 2019); one protocol (Perez 2021); and one systematic review (Lo and Cho 2021). Our confidence in the findings of studies is assessed to be high for primary studies but low for the systematic review.

Studies in this cell

A. Completed Primary Studies	
Baker-Henningham 2019 RCT low risk of bias	Jamaica, primary schools School teachers Evaluation of the effect of a school-based violence prevention programme on (1) teachers’ use of violence against children and (2) class-wide child aggression.
Baker-Henningham 2021 RTC low risk of bias	Jamaica, primary schools School teachers Evaluation of Irie Classroom Toolbox, a violence-prevention teacher-training programme to see its impact on violence against children (including physical violence and psychological aggression) by teachers and class-wide child

¹Moullin, J.C., Dickson, K.S., Stadnick, N.A. et al. Systematic review of the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) framework. *Implementation Sci* 14, 1 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-018-0842-6>

	aggression measured at post-intervention and 1-year follow-up.
Kim 2019 RCT, low risk of bias	USA, elementary schools School teachers Evaluation of the Second Step Child Protection Unit (CPU) to assess the impact on teacher outcomes of knowledge, attitude, and relationships as well as any interaction effect before and after the implementation of intervention.
Nickerson 2019 RCT, low risk of bias	USA, eight elementary schools from a large suburban school district in the Northeast School children Evaluation of the Second Step Child Protection Unit (CPU) to assess the impact on students' CSA prevention knowledge, ability to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe touches, and perceptions of teacher-student relations. The study also investigated the moderating role of age and gender on program effectiveness.
B. Protocols for Primary studies	
Perez 2021 Protocol for RCT	USA: California Testing the implementation strategy for the "ACEs Aware" policy that provides Medicaid reimbursement for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) screening annually for child primary care visits to low-income families in Southern California.
C. Systematic Review	
Lo and Cho 2021 Systematic Review high risk of bias	To review the evidence available on the impacts of community-based interventions on the reduction of child maltreatment and to identify the core components of the interventions.

A. PRIMARY STUDIES

The interventions

Baker-Henningham 2019 and Baker-Henningham 2021: Both studies are of a violence prevention program named the IRIE Classroom Toolbox. This is a school-based teacher training programme for teachers of young children. The programme is designed for use in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to reduce violence against children by teachers and prevent the development of antisocial

behaviour in children aged 3–8 years. The Toolbox also aims to improve the quality of the classroom environment and promote child mental health, self-regulation, and prosocial skills.

Both studies evaluated the effectiveness of the Irie Classroom Toolbox in Jamaican preschools. The major difference between the two studies is the scale of implementation. The first study (Baker-Henningham 2019) had a smaller sample (14 primary schools, 55 teachers, and 220 children), whereas the later study (Baker-Henningham 2021) was much larger (76 preschools, 229 teachers, and 3,993 children).

The Irie Classroom Toolbox has four modules: (1) creating an emotionally supportive classroom environment; (2) preventing and managing child behaviour problems; (3) teaching social and emotional skills; and (4) individual and class-wide behaviour planning. Training materials for teachers include (1) a tools book which gives simple guidelines on how to use each strategy and the rationale behind that; (2) an activity book of songs, games, activities, lesson plans; (3) three sets of picture cards to help teachers teach classroom rules, friendship skills, and understanding emotions; and (4) a story book with 14 pictorial stories showing common classroom problems that children face in school, and suggesting how children tackle these problems.

Kim 2019 and Nickerson 2019: Two papers (Kim 2019 and Nickerson 2019) are from the same study (i.e., the same set of children) on an intervention called the Second Step Child Protection Unit (CPU).

CPU addresses child sexual abuse (CSA) through (a) school policies and procedures, (b) staff training, (c) student lessons, and (d) family education. CPU makes all school staff (e.g., teachers, office staff, monitors) complete a 75–90-min online module to prepare them to recognize indicators of CSA, responding better, and reporting abuse. After completing training, teachers and/or other staff provide six lessons to students. The lessons involve multiple delivery strategies (e.g., didactic instruction, songs, videos, case scenarios, role-plays) to address the topics of safety, asking adults, unsafe and unwanted touches, rules about private body parts, and practicing of rules to stay safe.

Kim 2019 evaluated CPU to assess its impact on teachers' knowledge, attitude, and relationships. Nickerson 2019 evaluated the effect on students' CSA prevention knowledge, ability to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe touches, and perceptions of teacher-student relations. Nickerson 2019 also investigated the role of age and gender on program effectiveness.

Do these interventions work in improving institutional safeguarding practices?

Baker-Henningham 2019 and Baker-Henningham 2021:

Both studies found that the programme reduced teacher violence against children and provided a more emotionally supportive classroom environment compared to the control group. But the training had no effects on class-wide child aggression, pro-social behaviour, teacher wellbeing, or child mental health.

The intervention improved children's early learning skills, like oral language and self-regulation skills, but had less effect on math calculation, reading and spelling.

Overall, the intervention seemed to reduce violence against children by teachers and raise the quality of the classroom environment.

Kim 2019 found that the CPU teacher training improved teacher knowledge, attitude, and student-relationship. Teachers' acceptance of the teacher training was associated with stronger improvements in knowledge, attitudes, and student-relationships.

Nickerson 2019 found that CPU students had higher scores on all outcomes than students who didn't take part in CPU. Children in younger grades experienced greater gains from the program. Whilst both boys and girls made significant gains in CSA knowledge and the ability to recognize, refuse, and report unsafe touches, the effect was stronger for girls than boys.

Have the interventions been implemented at scale?

None of the studies are implemented at scale.

Which type of organisation delivered the intervention?

The Irie Classroom Toolbox was delivered by female staff members. Among them, senior staff facilitated teacher-training workshops, and some facilitated in-class support. These facilitators were trained and supported by the principal investigator, and joined weekly group supervision meetings with facilitators working on another similar intervention in Jamaican preschools.

The Second Step CPU is a program by The Committee for Children (2014) (CPU; www.cfchildren.org/child-protection). CPU teacher training is delivered as a 75–90-min online module, and after completing the CPU online training modules, these teachers delivered the CPU student curriculum in their classrooms.

What do the interventions cost?

None of the studies report cost data.

How is the programme meant to work? The theory of change

The Irie Classroom Toolbox studies followed a conceptual model that suggests the toolbox will reduce violence against children by helping teachers to gain skills, motivation, and the opportunity to use positive discipline techniques.

Kim 2019 did not present a theory of change but had hypotheses to guide their study. They hypothesized that: (1) Participation in the CPU will improve teacher outcomes in the intervention group as compared to the control group. (2) The CPU will interact with teachers' prior knowledge, attitudes, and

relationships to improve their outcomes. (3) A higher level of treatment acceptability will show better teacher outcomes for teachers who participated in the CPU.

Nickerson 2019 presented The Second Step CPU logic model (see Fig. 1) suggests the student lesson and reinforcement activity components of the intervention will increase student knowledge of personal safety rules and the ability to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe situations and touches. The authors thus hypothesized that participation in the CPU lessons would raise abuse prevention knowledge as well as an increased ability to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe and sexually abusive situations. The logic model also emphasizes intervention components that foster positive relationships with students through safe and supportive environment strategies; thus, the authors hypothesized that the intervention would improve teacher-student relations.

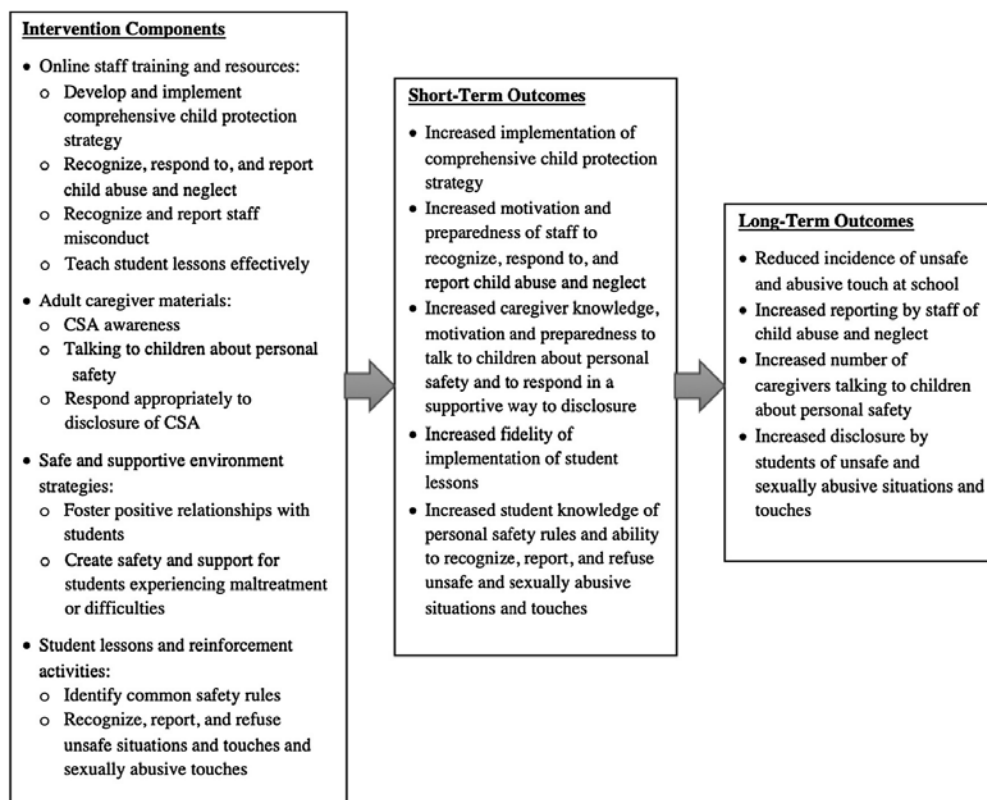


Fig. 1. Logic Model for the *Second Step* Child Protection Unit Curriculum.

How reliable is the evidence?

Very. All four RCTs are rated to have a low risk of bias.

B. RCT PROTOCOL

Perez 2021 (US, California) proposes to develop a better implementation strategy to improve the awareness and uptake of the "ACEs Aware" policy that provides Medicaid reimbursement for adverse

childhood experiences (ACEs) screening annually for child primary care visits to low-income families in Southern California.

The study will test a multifaceted implementation strategy in partnership with a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) system. The Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) framework is a widely used implementation framework¹. This study plans to follow the EPIS framework for implementation mapping to refine implementation. The refined implementation strategy will include online training videos, a customized algorithm and use of technology to improve workflow efficiency, implementation training for internal FQHC personnel, clinic support and coaching, and written implementation protocols. This randomized trial with five primary care clinics will assess this implementation strategy for (a) fidelity to the ACE screening protocol, (b) reach, defined as the proportion of eligible children screened for ACEs, and (c) the impact of the ACE policy on child-level mental health referrals and symptom outcomes.

C. SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The cell has one systematic review (Lo and Cho 2021). Details are below:

The intervention: community-based interventions.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Those published in English before January 2020,
- Focused on the prevention of child maltreatment,
- Placed emphasis on modifying the community's environments and processes,
- Evaluated the actual change in child maltreatment at the community level as one of the outcomes,
- Primary studies reporting original data.

Studies Included: Four studies were included in this review.

Results: All four included studies are from the USA. The four community-based child maltreatment programs included were Strong Communities for Children, the Durham Family Initiative (DFI), the Enough Abuse Campaign, and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. There were two interventions aimed at preventing physical child abuse and neglect in children between the ages of 0 and 6, and two interventions focused specifically on addressing child sexual abuse (CSA). These interventions incorporated various components of primary and secondary prevention strategies. Out of the four interventions, three focused on community-level interventions that involved modifying community environments and processes, while one intervention simultaneously targeted multiple ecological levels.

How reliable are the findings:

Not very. The systematic review is rated to have an overall **high** risk of bias.