Child Victims and Witnesses
Support Materials

Welcome!

Sasha Rutizer, Chief of Staff, Office for Victims of Crime
Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials
Presented by

Bethany Case, Victim Justice Program Specialist
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs
Inspiration for the Materials
Opportunity for the Materials

• Systems’ response to young victims has improved
  – Chance to model trauma-informed responses
  – Minimize re-traumatization, reduce stress

• We know more about HOW children experience trauma
  – Feel responsible, alone, confused, isolated
  – Respond to their needs—developmentally, emotionally
Opportunity for the Materials, Cont.

• Diversity of victims
  – Time to portray a true range of victims
  – Ages, identities, races, and ethnicities
Development of the Materials

• Formation of Stakeholders Group
• Needs Assessment
• Developing Content and Style
• Pilot Testing
• Peer Review
• Publication
Partners & Stakeholders

- Aequitas
- Alliance for HOPE International
- Association of Prosecuting Attorneys: Child Abuse Prosecution Project
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Victim Services Department
- Casa de Esperanza
- Center for Urban Pedagogy
- Gundersen National Child Protection Center
- Institute on Disabilities of Temple University
- Native American Children’s Alliance
- National Center for Victims of Crime
- National Children’s Advocacy Center
- National Children’s Alliance
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- New York Police Department
- New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- Safe Horizon
Needs Assessment

- Reviewed 90 publications and 92 journal articles, analyzed existing child witness support materials
- Conducted 61 interviews, 21 focus groups
- Online practitioner survey
- Compiled a report with findings and recommendations
Developing Content and Style

- Describing process in general terms
- Modeling helpful responses
- Identifying common thoughts and feelings
- Planting healthy “seeds” - affirmations, activities
- Storyboarding
Pilot Testing

• Draft materials pilot tested with children, adolescents, caregivers and practitioners
• June 2018 – April 2019
  – Northeast: New York (NYC)
  – West: California (Los Angeles), Oregon (Portland)
  – Southeast: Alabama (Huntsville)
Expert Peer Review

• Reviewers included a children’s book editor at Scholastic, a disability specialist, victim advocates, attorneys, and other practitioners
  – 71% currently work directly with child victims and/or witnesses
  – 82% have over 15 years of experience
• 90% described the materials as ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’
Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials
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Chris Newlin, Executive Director, National Children’s Advocacy Center
UGHH! I HATE TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS!
Mari: How did it go? Are you okay?

Alex: It was okay. Let's talk about it later.

Mari: OK. See you soon. Got a new nail polish to cheer you up! GLITTER!!!
Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials
Presented by

Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman, Partnerships Manager,
Kings County Health and Human Services
There are so many people in my business!
Tôi LÀ MALIK

مايا
الشجاعة

Office for Victims of Crime

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS  •  JUSTICE FOR ALL
1. Pon tus manos sobre tu barriga.

2. Hárra profundamente, contando 1, 2, 3. Siente cómo tu barriga sube cuando inhalas.

3. Luego exhala, contando 1, 2, 3. Siente cómo tu barriga baja.

4. Haz otra respiración profunda, contando 1, 2, 3. Luego exhala, contando 1, 2, 3.

5. Haz una tercera respiración profunda, contando 1, 2, 3. Luego exhala, contando 1, 2, 3.
Moving your body can be a good way to relieve stress.

Omar and Jamal took a short walk.

You can also do stuff like jump, jog, exercise, or even dance to get rid of extra energy and help your body calm down.
The Materials

• Three age groups (2–6, 7–12, 13–18)
• Separate materials: criminal legal and child welfare systems
• Narrative style, developmentally appropriate
• Trauma-informed and emotionally validating
• Topics covered:
  – Roles of practitioners
  – Rights of child victims and witnesses
  – System responses and processes
  – Healthy coping strategies
Maya looked around the room.
She saw the grown-ups that had come to her house. She saw her mommy. And she saw other people she didn't know.

Ages 2-6: Brave Maya

COURT REPORTER

The court reporter's job is to write down everything people say in the courtroom.
Ages 7–12: I am Isabella

They want me to meet with them. Then they’ll decide...

If everything is fine. Or they might be around for awhile...

She showed me some things I can do every now to help me calm down when I am too stressed.

Lisa taking deep breaths and counting down from 10 in my head.

Or humming along to my favorite song.

She said there’s someone you could meet with at school, who you can talk to about all of this. Why don’t you go see her tomorrow?

I’ll say you next week?

Okay. Bye!

The Breathing Trick

Ms. Mary showed Isabella how to use breathing exercises to feel calm. You can try this when you’re feeling stressed or worried.

Put your hands on your tummy. Take a big breath in for a count of three, letting your body fill up with air.

Hold your breath for a count of two.

Then breath out slowly and let out all the air in your tummy.

Repeat this three times.

You can also close your eyes while you breathe or put your hand on your tummy to feel the breath go in and out.
Ages 13–18: There’s More to Me

You’ve been through a lot, Alex. Do you want to take a break?

Okay.

I don’t know if you want to try this, but there’s this breathing exercise that a lot of the kids I work with find really helpful when they’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Want to give it a try?

Slowly take a big breath in, counting 1 – 2 – 3 as you fill your stomach with air.

Then hold your breath while you count 1 – 2.

Then breathe out slowly and let out all the air, feeling your stomach empty out. Repeat this three times.

If it helps, you can try closing your eyes while you breathe, or put your hand on your stomach to feel the breaths go in and out.
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Free download from OVC’s website: https://ovc.ojp.gov/

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Family and Dependency Court

• Practitioner and Parent/Caregiver Guides
  • Ages 2–6
  • Ages 7–12
  • Ages 13–18

Criminal Court

• Practitioner and Parent/Caregiver Guides
  • Ages 2–6
  • Ages 7–12
  • Ages 13–18

Human Trafficking

• Practitioner and Parent/Caregiver Guides
  • Ages 12–18

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Introduction

For children and youth, participating in the justice system as a victim or witness can be especially confusing, distressing, and even re-traumatizing. Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials were created to support children and youth during their involvement.
Translation

Five languages:
• Arabic
• Chinese (Simplified)
• Haitian Creole
• Spanish
• Vietnamese
Specialized Materials

• Young survivors of trafficking
  • Published January 2022

• Native American child victims and witnesses

• Practitioner guides
Questions? Thank you!

Kathryn Ford
Director of Child Witness Initiatives
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• Translations:
  – Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Vietnamese, Arabic, and Haitian Creole
Questions?
Enter in the Q&A section, selecting All Panelists