

# Best Practices for Preventing Abuse Against Adults with Disabilities

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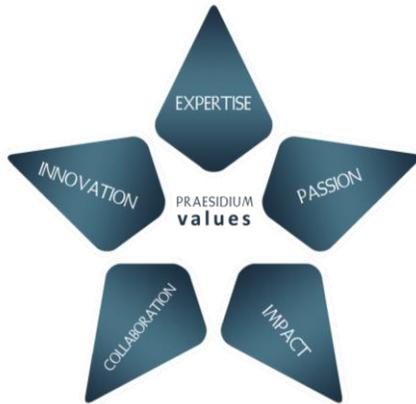
## Laura Hardin Aceves, LMSW, Account Manager

*Laura Hardin Aceves works closely with Praesidium's social services clients as well as other youth-serving organizations. In collaboration with the Praesidium team, Hardin Aceves trains employees and volunteers, conducts risk assessments, performs accreditation visits, and consults with organizational leaders to ensure the protection of youth and vulnerable adults from abuse. As a licensed master-level social worker, Hardin Aceves brings to Praesidium her experience of working in youth development, mental health care, child welfare, and community research. She received her bachelor's degree in religion and sociology and her master's degree in social work from TCU in Fort Worth, Texas.*

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## About Praesidium



“To help you **protect those in your care** from abuse and to help **preserve trust** in your organization.”

Over **25+ years** of experience with multidisciplinary team

More than **4,000 clients** across diverse industries

Completed thousands of **root cause analyses**

Developed proprietary **abuse risk management model**

Offer complete range of **risk management solutions**

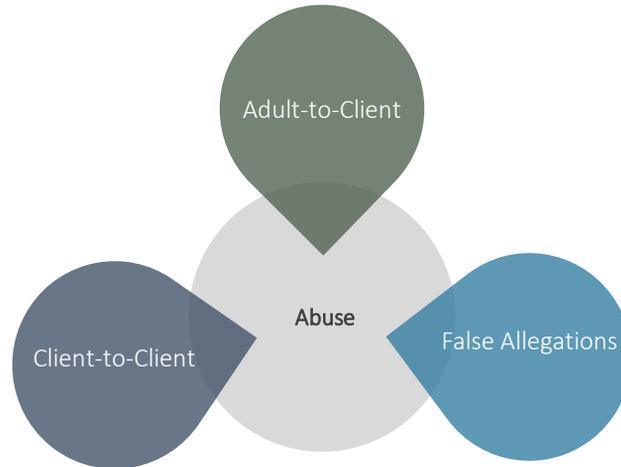


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We believe abuse is  
**PREVENTABLE**

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## Risks of Abuse



## Scope of the Problem

Adults with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate 7x higher than those without disabilities

Rate of rape and sexual assault against women with intellectual disabilities is 12x higher than against men with disabilities

Only 14% of the time are sexual assaults against individuals with disabilities committed by strangers

## Trend Forecasting

### Industry Trends

- Headline news
- Increased community expectations
- Lower community tolerance
- Increased industry standards
- Less immunity
- Increased challenges to statutes of limitation
- Increased litigation

### Common Claims in Litigation

- Negligent screening
- Negligent training
- Negligent supervision
- Negligent retention

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## NPR Special Series: Abused and Betrayed



Michelle Gustafson for NPR

**The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About**

▶ LISTEN - 11:54 + PLAYLIST



Talia Herman for NPR

**'She Can't Tell Us What's Wrong'**

▶ LISTEN - 12:18 + PLAYLIST

### States Aim To Halt Sexual Abuse Of People With Intellectual Disabilities

June 25, 2018 • An NPR investigation found people with intellectual disabilities have one of the nation's highest rates of sexual assault. Now states, communities and advocates are proposing changes to prevent abuse.

▶ LISTEN - 3:59 + PLAYLIST



<https://www.npr.org/series/575502633/abused-and-betrayed>

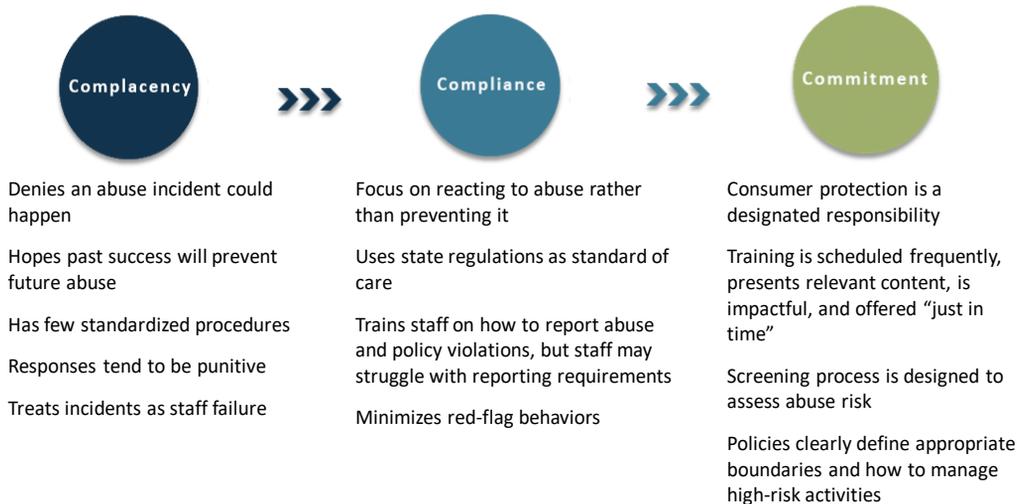
Published in January 2018 – a series discussing sexual assault among individuals with intellectual disabilities

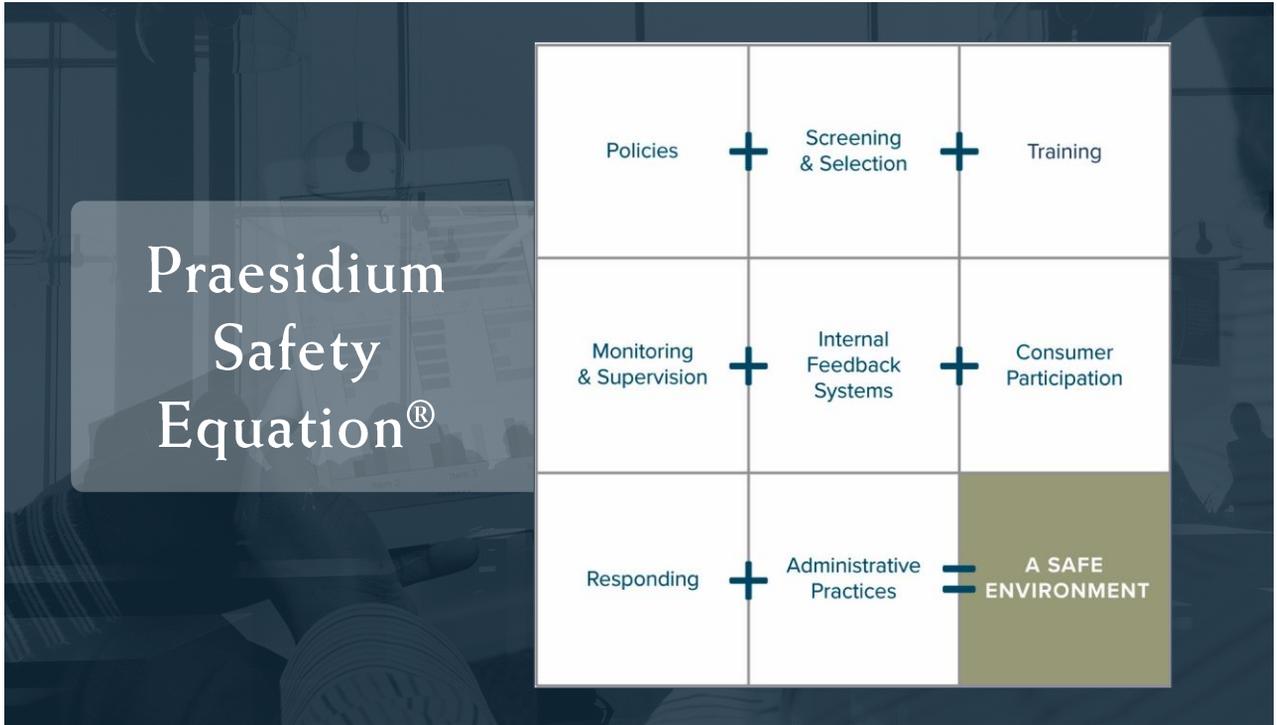
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## The Challenge

- ✓ Competing demands
- ✓ Low frequency, high impact event
- ✓ Complacency and Compliance
  - “we know everyone here”
  - “we’ve never had a serious incident”
  - “all of our staff undergo background checks”
  - “we train all of our staff on mandated reporting”
  - “we must adhere to all state licensing requirements”

## Why Leadership Matters





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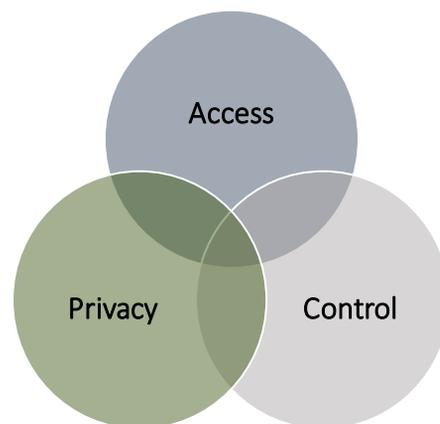
## How Offenders Operate

### Types of Offenders:

- ✓ Preferential
- ✓ Situational

### Conditions Necessary to Offend

- ✓ Access
- ✓ Privacy
- ✓ Control



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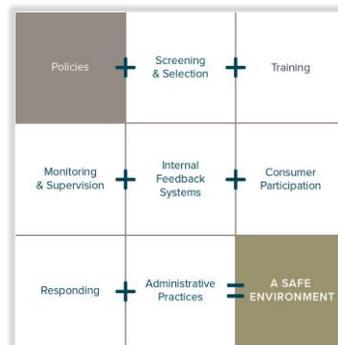
# Policies

## Importance:

Policies are important because they communicate a zero tolerance for abuse and create a bandwidth of acceptable behavior.

## Best Practices:

- ✔ Define boundaries
- ✔ Create institutional memory
- ✔ Communicate effectively

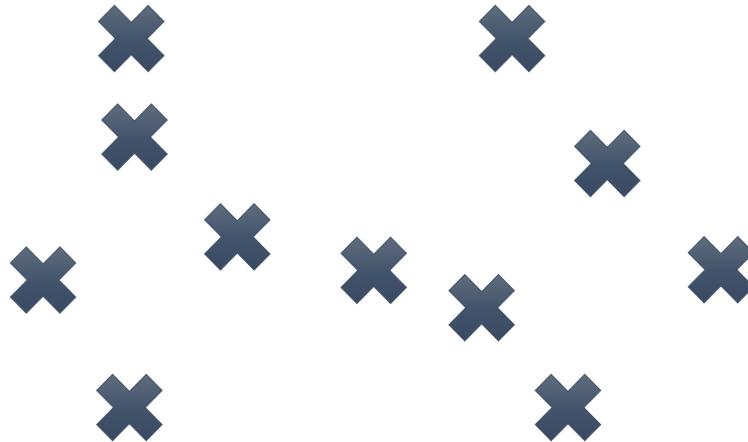


# Red Flag Behaviors in Adults

Physical	Psychological	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Wrestles</li> <li>✔ Tickles</li> <li>✔ Massages</li> <li>✔ Hugs too long or too often</li> <li>✔ Lap-sits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Isolates clients from caregivers and peers</li> <li>✔ Creates personal friendships</li> <li>✔ Chooses favorites</li> <li>✔ Overly involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Encourages breaking rules</li> <li>✔ Keeps secrets</li> <li>✔ Encourages alcohol use</li> <li>✔ Encourages drug use</li> <li>✔ Encourages use of porn</li> <li>✔ Lets clients break caregivers' rules</li> </ul>

## Bandwidth of Acceptable Behavior

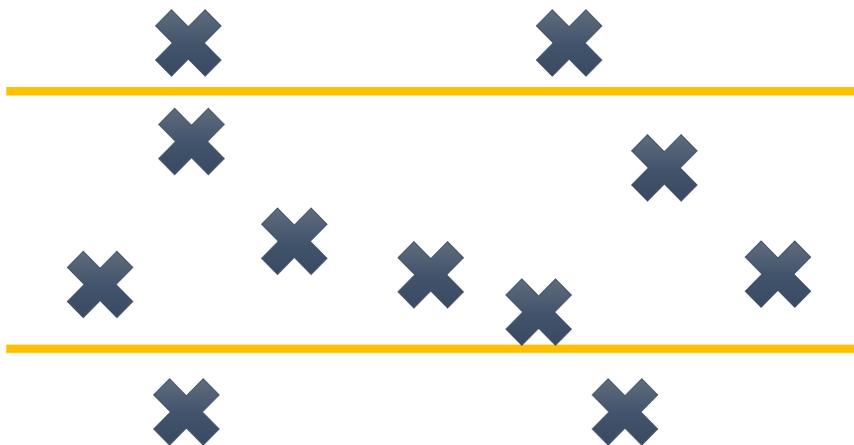
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## Bandwidth of Acceptable Behavior

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## Define Boundaries

- ✓ Physical interactions
- ✓ Verbal interactions
- ✓ Electronic communications and social media
- ✓ Contact outside designated program activities
- ✓ Managing one-on-one situations
- ✓ Favoritism
- ✓ Gift giving and receiving

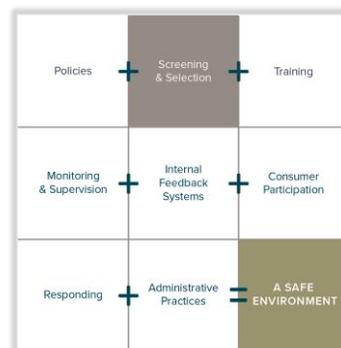
## Screening & Selection

### Importance:

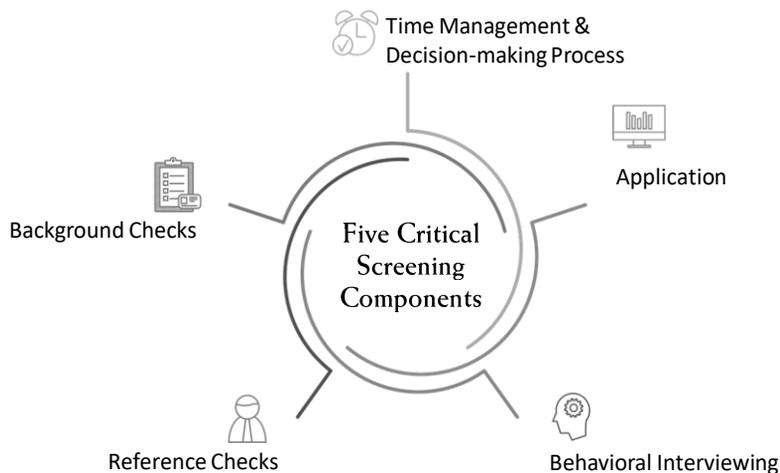
Screening and selection are important because they control who has access to your clients.

### Best Practices:

- ✓ Encourage applicants to self-select out
- ✓ Assess abuse risk
- ✓ Is verifiable
- ✓ Behaviorally-based interview questions
- ✓ Integrate all information



## Five Critical Screening Components



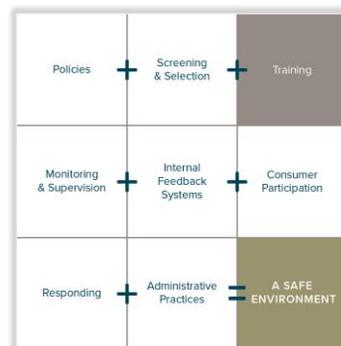
## Training

### Importance:

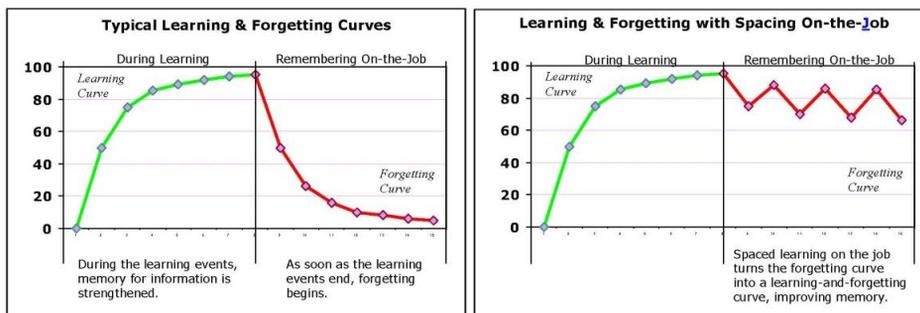
Training is important because it teaches all staff how to perform their role in abuse risk management.

### Best Practices:

- ✓ Right content at the right time
- ✓ Routinely schedule
- ✓ Use as “reminders”
- ✓ Make an active part of supervision
- ✓ Blended learning



## Spacing Effect



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## Monitoring and Supervision

### Importance:

Monitoring and supervision are important because they decrease the opportunity for privacy and inappropriate behaviors.

### Best Practices:

- ✔ Monitor clients
- ✔ Supervise staff, volunteers, and caregivers
- ✔ Manage high-risk locations and activities
- ✔ Use violations as teaching moments



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## Supervision Tools for Administrators

- Exception monitoring
- Scheduled observation / unscheduled observation
- Regular and random visits to programs
- Formal and informal interviews or questioning
- Self-reports
- Suggestion boxes
- Satisfaction surveys (internal/external)
- Written documentation
- Summary and trending incident data
- Electronic surveillance
- Meetings
- Performance evaluations

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## Monitor and Supervise

### High-Risk Locations:

- ✓ Bathrooms
- ✓ Showers
- ✓ Bedrooms
- ✓ Vehicles
- ✓ Isolated Areas

### High-Risk Activities:

- ✓ Personal care assistance
- ✓ Sleeping or overnight time
- ✓ Periods of transition
- ✓ Transportation activities
- ✓ Free time
- ✓ One-on-one interactions

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## Internal Feedback Systems

### Importance:

Internal feedback is important because it sends information about the risk of abuse to all levels in the organization.

### Best Practices:

- ✔ Incorporate systems for reporting concerns, complaints, and grievances (including an anonymous method)
- ✔ Collect, compile, and analyze data related to preventing abuse
- ✔ Remove barriers to reporting



## Internal Feedback Systems

- ✔ Identify potential gaps through:
  - ✔ Complaints from employees, volunteers, or consumers
  - ✔ Serious or frequent incidents
  - ✔ Violations noted by external licensing or regulatory bodies
- ✔ Information about program operations can identify:
  - ✔ High-risk programs or individuals
  - ✔ Where increased monitoring, supervision, and training or policy changes may be needed
  - ✔ Whether a program should be allowed to continue operating

## Consumer Participation

### Importance:

Consumer participation is important because it involves caregivers and clients in abuse prevention.

### Best Practices:

- ✔ Empower clients to protect themselves from abuse
- ✔ Educate on appropriate boundaries with staff
- ✔ Provide caregivers and clients with multiple ways to report concerns



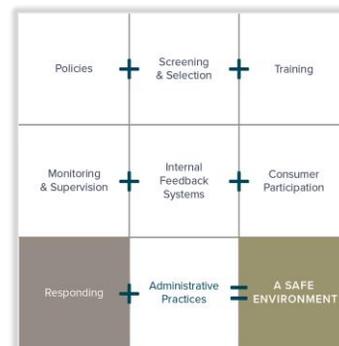
## Responding

### Importance:

Responding is important because it results in immediate response to red-flag behavior and to suspicions of abuse.

### Best Practices:

- ✔ Respond to tremors, not earthquakes
- ✔ Treat “near misses” as free lessons
- ✔ Don’t respond in isolation
- ✔ Procedures for responding to red-flag behaviors and client-to-client incidents
- ✔ Use a continuum of responses



## Implement Systems for Responding and Reporting

- ✔ Develop written response procedures
  - Red flag behaviors and policy violations
  - Suspicions or allegations of abuse
  - Client to client sexualized behaviors
  
- ✔ Activate response procedures and initiate internal and external response communications



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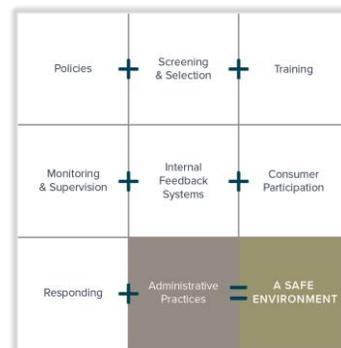
## Administrative Practices

### Importance:

Administrative practices are important because they set and enforce zero tolerance.

### Best Practices:

- ✔ Communicate commitment to safety
- ✔ Develop system-wide abuse prevention standards
- ✔ Prevent drift from standards



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## Questions to Consider

- ✔ Does your agency have written policies that clearly define boundaries?
- ✔ Do your screening processes assess for abuse risk?
- ✔ Do you require all individuals working directly with clients to complete training that is preventative, not just reactive?
- ✔ Do you have defined methods for monitoring and supervising staff, caregivers, and clients?
- ✔ Do you have specific procedures for managing high-risk activities related to preventing abuse?
- ✔ Do you have written procedures for responding to policy violations, suspected abuse, and client-to-client sexualized behaviors?



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## ISA Resources

ISA offers an array of Praesidium services at either free or discounted rates, including:

- ✔ Armatus® Learn to Protect Training System
- ✔ *Know Your Score!*™ Online Self-Assessment Tool
- ✔ Policy Analysis
- ✔ Onsite Training
- ✔ Toll-Free Confidential Helpline
- ✔ Criminal Background Checks
- ✔ ... and more!



Contact the risk management department at Irwin Siegel Agency to learn more:  
[riskmanagement@siegelagency.com](mailto:riskmanagement@siegelagency.com) or 800-622-8272.



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## KEEP IN TOUCH

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