

Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center

Project PONY



Protecting Our Native Young

Facilitator's Guide

A Program of the Department of Family & Community Services
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Choctaw, MS 39350

April 2006

From the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center:

This handbook was put together to provide a guide for the presenter to bring information and support to the non-offending caregiver of children who allege abuse. It is merely a guide to give the presenter ideas on topics that the staff feel are important to help parents create violence free homes in the Choctaw Community. We encourage the presenter to take into consideration the needs of the parents who attend and tailor the content appropriately.

We as staff have developed this curriculum to be in agreement with our mission and guiding principals which directs all our interventions.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center is to provide interventions in a safe, neutral environment that extends hope and healing for abused children and their family.

CCAC Guiding Principles

We are committed to provide an environment in which people, their culture and their beliefs are honored.

We are committed to provide actions that will be guided by Best Practice Standards and ethical practices that truly serve the best interest of a child.

We are committed to help affirm and strengthen the Choctaw family unit as safe keepers of Choctaw children.

We are committed to seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership with individual and other programs that share our mission.

Project PONY Format

Week 1:	“One Brick at a Time”	(Intro to program/group)
Week 2:	“Shelter During the Storms...”	(Build Group Cohesiveness)
Week 3:	“When Mothers Cry”	(Domestic Violence and Child Abuse)
Week 4:	“The Path Begins Here”	(Speaker – Survivor)
Week 5:	“Stretch marks on my Sanity”	(Self-care/NOC needs)
Week 6:	“Bring in the Mop”	(Crisis/Stress mgmt-grp support)
Week 7:	“Recipe for a Healthy Child”	(Child Development and Discipline)
Week 8:	“Protecting the Gift”	(Healthy relationships)
Week 9:	“How the snakes acquired their poison”	(Sex Offender Dynamics)
Week 10:	“Protectors of the Village”	(MDT – Criminal Investigations/AGO)
Week 11:	“It Takes a Village...”	(MDT- Soc Svc Investigations)
Week 12:	“It’s a celebration!”	(Family Day/Night Activities)

Week 1 – “One Brick at a Time”
Project PONY Goals 1/2

Instructional Goals – To introduce the program and engage participants

Objectives Introduction to program, define child abuse, achieve program participation,

Outcome:

Indicators: Participants attending will
Commit to attending 8 of the 12 sessions by a show of hands
Manage family life to promote self sufficiency, safety and stability.

Intervention:

“One Brick at a Time” – Project PONY Brochure

The brochure can be use to introduce the CCAC, staff and the PONY program to participants. The program consists of a series of 12-one hour sessions where non-offending caregivers of Choctaw children who have alleged abuse come together to share experience, strength and hope. Other topics to introduce are the dynamics of the non-offending caregiver that is described briefly in the brochure.

Myths and Facts brochure to define child abuse

There are misconceptions and social stigmas that have an effect on the parent’s response to children who allege abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, step-parent or close relative. However, a supportive and protective parent or caregiver is important if a child is to recover from abuse experiences with minimal distress. In addition to the misconceptions and stigmas surrounding child abuse, learning about the sexual victimization of one’s child can be a confusing and disturbing event. Whether parents themselves are able to cope positively with the distress they feel following a disclosure weighs heavily on how they will be able to respond to their child. The program is designed to support and educate the parent so in turn become supportive and protective of their abused child and siblings.

The Legend of Nanih Waiya

The legend describes the journey taken by Choctaw ancestors and of new beginnings. Participation in the program will take parents on their own journey of healing, perhaps in ways unfamiliar to them.

Activity: “Top Secret”

Self-disclosure is not simply providing information to another person, but is the sharing with others information that they would not normally know. Self-disclosure involves risk and vulnerability on the part of the person sharing the information. The leader emphasizes that the NOC group is to be an understanding and trusting environment which can be the basis for a meaningful interpersonal relationship among the participants. It is valuable for some members to disclose information that have been kept locked for many months or even years, to finally disclose and be understood and fully accepted.

The sharing of sensitive information in a non-threatening environment builds group cohesiveness for building a system of informal support for each other.

Week 2 – “Shelter During the Storms of Life”
Project PONY Goals 1/2/3

Instructional Goals - To promote social and group connectedness and recognition of common bonds among group members.

Objectives: Share with the group the benefits of social connections, and explore the needs of others.

Outcome: Participant will recognize that other parents of children who have been abused can support one another in positive ways

Indicators: Participants will
identify and verbalize a time when their needs were met by someone else.
identify a common experience or need they all share.

Intervention: Discussion on the dynamics of the non-offending caregiver
Poem “One Brick At a Time”

Activity: “Shopping Trip”

The purpose of this activity is to reveal the individual’s self through choice of objects and explore the needs of others through the expression of their wishes and desires.

Each person goes on a pretend shopping spree and later describes the contents of their shopping and explains the significance of the items selected.

Before the discussion begins about their selection, each person draws a participants name at random and sets aside a gift for that person. Once this is completed the discussion begins with what each has selected for them, and what they chose to give to the person whose name was drawn.

Session 3 – “When Mothers Cry”
Project PONY Goal 1/3

Instructional Goals – To increase the awareness of domestic violence upon children

To increase the awareness that mothers who cannot protect themselves increase the risk of violence upon their children.

Objective: promote the reduction of risk factors by demonstrating the similarities between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse.

Outcome: Participants will understand the effects of Domestic Violence upon the family
Participants will create violence free homes.

Indicators: Participants do not re-enter the social system for new or repeat events of violence in the home at 3, 6, and 12 months after participation.

Intervention:

Speaker – Domestic Violence program specialist, survivor or video

The speakers/video shares their knowledge and/or experience of Domestic Violence and the effects it has upon the well being of the family. The professional will describe what are domestic violence and the services that are available to victims and their families. The survivor is able to share their experience of a domestic violent relationship, and the strength that helped them remove those risk factors for the safety of their children.

Brochures- “Love is Not Hurtful”, “Children are In Pain” Handout

The handout describes the effect of Domestic Violence upon children, and the MDT response to this multifaceted problem. The non-offending parent learns names of people in the child abuse response to address specific questions and concerns during the process of investigations and prosecution of their case.

Activity: Self – Assessment on Brochure
Bracelets using PONY Beads (15 minutes)

A self assessment will be completed for the participant to perceive their relationships and the potential negative impact it has upon children in the home. Making designs using beads requires making color choices by the crafter. Similarly, creating a safe home for children requires conscious decision making and choosing those options that promote wellness for the family.

Discussion questions:

1. Which risk factors are present in your relationship?
2. Which risk factors are you willing to remove from your home to increase safety for your children?
3. What factors are present for you as an individual that prevents you from making decisions concerning an abusive relationship?

Week 4 – “The Path Begins Here”

Project PONY Goal 1/2

Instructional Goals – To promote the supportive caregiver-abused child relationship by addressing the psychological consequences of the child’s victimization.

Outcome: Participant will
Become more aware of the effects of child abuse on children
Acknowledge the child’s need for health and safety.

Indicators: Participants will
attend intake and therapy sessions for child and family as appropriate.
Practice giving and receiving emotional reaffirmation that children and parents need during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse

Intervention: Speaker or video (Child Sexual Abuse Survivor)
Video – Hidden Shame 17 min
The speakers and/or video share survivor’s experiences about the abuse events in their life and how childhood abuse has impacted them being able to live a productive life. The speakers also communicate the elements they viewed lessened or could have lessened the trauma they suffered.

“If Angels Could Speak” Brochure

When a child tells someone about sexual abuse, a supportive, caring response is the first step in getting help for the child and reestablishing their trust in adults. Adults, because of their maturity and knowledge, are always the ones to blame when they abuse children. The abused children should never be blamed.

The brochure reflects real statements made by individuals who have suffered sexual abuse. Some of the statements reinforce what research continues to show that children who are listened to and understood do much better than those who are not. The response to the disclosure of sexual abuse is critical to the child’s ability to resolve and heal the trauma of sexual abuse.

Activity: Car Wash Exercise – 5 min
(Reference – LAMS self esteem building activity, page 49)

The exercise is a group and individual building activity. This helps the participants become aware that any time a traumatic memory is re-lived; supportive systems are there to help restore personal harmony. This activity encourages the participants to give and receive the emotional reaffirmation that is needed during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse.

Week 5 – “Stretch Marks on My Sanity”

Project PONY Goal 1 / 2

Instructional Goals – To promote improved functioning of the non-offending caregiver through self-care of their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

Outcome: Awareness that poor health can interfere with their ability to provide good parenting.
Awareness of common health problems, risks and ways to prevent illness.

Indicators: Participants will
Identify areas of health and well being that can be improved.
Self report activities to improve health during the program period.

Intervention: Healthy Life Brochure (www.herhealthylife.org)

General good healths, as well as preventive measures to avoid illness have a positive impact upon the quality of life for all individuals. A parent who makes positive lifestyle choices will most likely make positive choices for their family.

Activity: Health knowledge Assessment

The responses to the health questions allow the provider to assess the knowledge needs of the group and discuss appropriate topics to discuss. All the information can be accessed from www2a.cdc.gov/od... Then a discussion following the choices participants have made about their health and life can follow with an explanation of free services available at the health care facility. This session will aide the individual to prioritize what kinds of health changes that they may need to make based on risks.

Week 6 – “Bring in the Mop”

Project PONY Goal 1/ 2

Outcome: Participants will
Practice pro-social methods of stress and anger management.
Access help when their emotions (depression, anxiety, anger, fear, etc.) interfere with their ability to provide good parenting.

Indicators: Participants will
Identify times when the anxiety, exhaustion, anger, depression or other stressors affecting their mental health has affected their parenting decisions.
Utilize community resources or self help groups

Intervention: Speaker (Behavioral Health – Stress)
Stress self-evaluation
Choctaw Legend “Help from Above”-handout

Activity: Stress Relief Exercise

Everyone has stress, regardless of age, sex or race. In every day terms, stress is better known as the tension or pressure we feel as our bodies respond to everyday demands and changes. All stress is not bad nor does all stress have a negative effect on us. Some stress we experience is good and has a positive and motivating effect on us. Too much stress causes us to feel tense and pressured; this creates conflict in our experiences. Stress also affects the way parents relate to their children. Children of all ages require an enormous amount of their parents' energy and patience - sometimes more than you feel you can give. It's reassuring to know that all parents find it difficult at times. Children from all kinds of social, religious and cultural backgrounds can grow up to be happy, well adjusted adults - so long as their basic needs for love, physical care, security and respect are met. Parents all have their 'off days', but if they feel that their lives are bad most of the time, it can be difficult to meet their children's needs. Some adults may take out their anger and frustration on their children, or blame them for the problems in their own lives. Stress can sometimes push parents past their limit and lead parents to discipline or punish their children in ways which can do them harm.

Whatever happens in life, it is always easier to cope if you have a supportive partner, family and friends. If you are bringing up children alone, the problems you face may not be so different from those faced by two-parent families but they will quite often feel very different and are frequently more difficult to solve. There's nearly always something you can do to reduce there are often people who are willing to help. Remember that being a parent is one of the most valuable and important jobs you can do. The occasional angry word to your child probably won't do much harm, as long as the relationship is basically good. But if you get angry and find yourself shouting at your child a lot, they will suffer - and you'll probably not feel so good either.

Week 7 – “Recipe for a Healthy Child”

Project PONY Goal 2 / 3

Outcome: Participant will
Understand the need for an effective and nurturing manner in management of child behaviors that foster optimal child development
apply knowledge of child development in mediating their child’s challenging behaviors

Indicators: Participants will
Address one problem behaviors of toddler, school age child or adolescent where they can use appropriate discipline techniques.
Identify one new approach to address their child’s behavior pattern

Intervention: “ Discipling Kids” –Video
“Effective Discipline and Child Development of the Toddler” Brochure

Activity: Puzzles

Discipline can be defined as *a process to help children learn appropriate behaviors and make good choices*. Effective discipline aids a child in exercising self-control, responsibility, and respect. Through proper discipline, children learn how to function in a family and society that is full of boundaries, rules, and laws by which we all must abide. All parents seek disciplinary techniques that work. However, not all techniques work for all ages or for all children.

Children learn primarily through example and learn more from parents than all of their peers. The messages that parents send concerning their own personal goal directed activities are what children will adapt as theirs. Parenting and teaching takes not only sacrifice and energy, but also consistency. Good parents and teachers don't just happen by accident. People plan to be good parents and teachers and good parents and teachers plan. Good planning requires consistency.

Jigsaw puzzles can offer an escape from the routine or troubled times, as well as provide parents an opportunity to succeed with their children in a modest way. The team of parents and children completing a jigsaw can give a sense of accomplishment that is shared among the family of puzzlers. This simple and inexpensive task of completing a jigsaw puzzle also provides the family time together in a relaxed natural environment for conversation and relationship building. Puzzles and discipline have a similar goal—a sense of team develops as participants work toward accomplishment of a meaningful product.

Week 8 –“Protecting the Gift”

Project PONY Goal 1 / 2 / 3

Goal: To guide and assist the non-offending caregivers’ ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children to live and grow.

Outcome: Gain an understanding of characteristics of healthy vs unhealthy relationships.
Gain an understanding of elements vital to building healthy relationships.

Indicators: Participants will
complete a self-evaluation quiz of their relationship with their partner.
identify two elements in their relationships with their children to improve.

Intervention: Healthy Relationships brochure
Speaker –History of Child Witness to Violence

Activity: Describe a Shape Exercise (Adapted from the LAMS curricula)

Communication is at the heart of every successful relationship. When there is no communication it is hard to tell someone exactly what you mean. This is important in an argument with a partner or when telling children what is expected of them. For example, when you ask a child(ren) to “clean up your room”. They may have a different understanding of what that means than their parents. The exercise to describe a shape is an example of how what we say is not always what another person hears.

Draw several geometric figures on blank 3 X 5 (or larger) cards, one on each card. Distribute blank cards of the same size and a pencil to each participant. The facilitator picks up one figure card and describes the shape aloud, very precisely. (Example-this shape is one and one half inches from the right side of the card, straight up three inches, one inch to the left, etc).

Group members listen and try to reproduce the shape on one of their blank cards. The Leader cannot use gestures, only words, and cannot answer questions. On completion of the diagram, participants are asked to hold up their cards so the leader can see the results. Comments can be made that some are close, but no identification should be made of a correct copy. Then participants are asked to turn the same card over and redraw the diagram as the leader describes the shape again—this time with gestures and responses to questions from the group. Ask them to hold up their drawing, then the facilitator shows them the diagram they have been trying to copy.

When the exercise is completed, explain that they have just illustrated how hard it is to tell someone exactly what you mean. The speaker may think that what they are saying is perfectly clear; yet the listener is hearing something very different.

Week 9 – “How the Snakes Acquired their Poison”

Project PONY Goal 1/ 2/3

Outcome: Understand the dynamics of the sexual offender.
Advocate for their abused child(ren).

Indicators: Participants will
be able to identify three personal safety rules to teach their children.
Not have any events of child maltreatment in their homes for up to 1 year after
interventions

Intervention: Speaker – Behavioral Health
Video – “Truth, Lies and Sex Offenders”
Choctaw Legend, “How the Snake Acquired their Poison”

Perpetrators know they have to lower their victim’s guard to successfully engage their victim. There are many techniques perpetrators use to gain cooperation from their victims. Perpetrators also know that the acts they commit with children must be kept in secrecy to continue their victimization. In many instances, the non-offending caregiver may not be aware of abuse until much later when it is disclosed by the child. This session focuses on bringing to the surface the methods perpetrators use to manipulate children into cooperation and the need to teach parents and children about recognition and responding appropriately to “lures”.

Activity: Checklist for Protecting Children

This activity focuses on the parents as the “teachers” of personal safety to their children. The check list is designed to identify protective factors that can be taught by a parent. The parents are also asked to self-examine their ability to prevent abuse, and their willingness to strengthen those areas of doubts. The checklist is to help bring awareness of protective factors and is not an evaluation of learning.

Week 10– “Protectors of the Village”

Project PONY Goal 1

Outcome: Participant will
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: Participants will
Participate as a partner with the criminal justice system in the community to hold offenders accountable.

Intervention: Speaker (Criminal investigator or prosecutor)
Court Terms Brochure

The CI or prosecutor will give an overview of the investigation process and prosecution phase of the criminal justice system. The speaker will provide information on federal and tribal laws that govern child abuse and the overall goal of protection and safety for the community.

Activity: Pipe cleaner Art

Most people worry about what will happen in the future. Not knowing if something good or bad will happen to you can produce a lot of fear and anxiety. This is especially true when faced with the unknowns that can happen through the court and judicial system in cases involving children who are alleged to be abused. No one can predict the future with 100 Percent certainty. A lot of times, our worrying can make problems even worse. It is not easy to deal with the fear of the unknown; however the way we react to the fear can be worse than the situation. You have a choice, a choice you can make again and again or that you can change based on what is best for you.

The items in this activity are available to help with bringing to conscious the fears surrounding your encounter with the court system. Or these items can be used to plan a different action you will take when overcome with the fears that prevent you from handling the situation facing your family. You are free to choose whether you want to create an item that represents your fears, or something that you can hold in your hand that represents the strength you will rely on when faced with the fear of the unknown.

Example: the creation of the hot air balloon represents the fear of height, the butterfly can represent freedom from fear, etc

Week 11 –“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Outcome: Participant will
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: Participants will
Engage with their case workers to develop treatment plans that promote the safety of children in their homes.

Intervention: Speaker – Division of Social Services
Handout – Parent Guide to the Division of Social Services
Choctaw story of “Iyyi-Kowa”

This African saying teaches unending truth, that no man, woman or child can stand alone. The Choctaw tribe once had a similar outlook on families and the community. The “Iyyi-Kowa” is the Choctaw tradition of families coming together to help a member who had become sick or injured and found themselves and their family in need. The community took care of their members, whether it was a financial problem or family disputes.

We all want to live in a place were people care about others—where people pitch in to help when things get rough—where its safe to leave the door unlocked and where kids can safely play by themselves outside. Today, communities are not always what they should be. Today the Choctaw communities face challenges such as poverty, drug abuse, violence in the home and sadly, child abuse. Today, we have laws to keep the social order in our community and helpers like the police and social services.

It does take a village to work with a family, raise a child and weather the storms of life. It takes cooperation of family, schools, leaders and community programs working together to make sure a child lives a healthy and safe life. It is this same village that is called upon to build a foundation of support when a child is abused. Keeping families safe and intact is the goal of the Division of Social Services.

Activity: Garbage Pail/Treasure Chest
Adapted from “Creative Therapy” page 7

This activity encourages the participants to review the negative outlook they harbor which may hinder their current involvements with the criminal justice system. Each participant is asked to discard one negative belief they have concerning the police, the courts or the child abuse response system in the garbage pail. Variation: the same activity can include a positive outcome placed in the treasure chest. Then the facilitator gets approval to read the results to stimulate group discussion.

Week 12 – “Celebrate”

Project PONY Goal 3

Goal: To create an opportunity for caregivers and their children to experience positive and enjoyable interactions with each other and their peers.

Outcome: Participants will plan a family day for children.

Indicators: Parents will participate in activities with children.

Intervention: meal and activities

Activity: Affirmation

I am important
What I say is important
What I think is important
What I do is important,
To myself and those around me.
I choose to be the best, most caring, accepting and
Understanding person I can be.