

SKAGIT FAMILY STUDY CENTER

FAMILY SAFETY

We in the Skagit Family Study Center believe that safety is the most important thing. Change will be resisted and learning will be stunted until safety is established for each individual. In order to increase safety we believe the following commitments are the highest priorities:

1. When adults and/or children choose consequences that create danger for themselves or others the question is not whether they have the right to choose danger. People sometimes do choose danger whether they have a right to or not. The problem is that when one person chooses danger they choose other consequences as well and they create consequences for others.
2. When anyone acts in a dangerous way it is important that they be given consequences that are clearly connected with their actions and with little, if any, drama to distract them from learning. When people are not given the consequence they ask for (by making dangerous choices) the level of safety decreases until, eventually, someone gets hurt.
3. Sometimes a dangerous choice creates unsafety but is not necessarily illegal. (Emotional abuse, reckless behavior and frightening behavior.) In these situations it is important to invite the person to get help, to get help in dealing with them or to form a team of caring people to form around the person who is making dangerous choices. The team must not force the acting out person to do anything, but the team can offer support and resources to the person. The team can also feel empowered if necessary to document the legal but dangerous choices so that eventual legal consequences are more likely to happen before anyone is hurt.
4. Sometimes a dangerous choice is illegal and requires official involvement and consequences to increase safety and decrease consequences for others. (Violence, threats of violence, substance abuse, violations of the physical boundaries of others and physical destructiveness.)
5. These days police officers are more truly "Peace Officers" than ever before. More and more police officers are trained and skilled in de-escalating domestic situations and creating safety. At a time when many parents are isolated and have little outside support it is important for parents to know they can utilize the skills of local police organizations to prevent unsafe situations from turning into tragedies. If you encounter a police officer who does not have these skills it is OK to seek clarification of the situation with local officials. Many local organizations are willing to help responsible parents establish good relations with local police to get emergency help for families in trouble.
6. When I am unwilling to seek help outside the family to help me create safety I may be choosing tragic consequences.