

Teaching Tips for Fire Safety Educators of Children with Disabilities

Basic fire safety information needs to be conveyed in a way that gives all children the opportunity to learn and practice fire safety skills. Keep in mind that general fire safety tips still apply to all. Children with disabilities are first and foremost children, and will benefit from the years of conventional wisdom that went into creating fire safety programs.

- When making preparations to address a group of school children, contact the teacher in advance to find out if you will be addressing a class of children both with and without disabilities, or a class entirely of children with disabilities. Ask the teacher the age range of the children, the types of disabilities the students have and how this will impact the presentation. If possible, fire safety educators should attend disability awareness training to work effectively with children with disabilities.
- If the class has both children with and without disabilities ask the teacher if it would be useful to meet ahead of time with the children who have disabilities before the presentation or on a separate occasion to go over the material with them. This will allow them time to ask questions and to experience first-hand all aspects of the presentation, thereby helping them to understand what will occur during the formal presentation.
- Produce a kit of developmentally appropriate educational aides that children can examine and touch. This can include a conventional smoke alarm, smoke alarms with vibrating and strobe features, a heating pad to teach children the difference between hot and cold, a model of a fire truck, fire hydrant, and ladder, a section of fire hose, a burned piece of cloth, a melted candle, and a firefighter helmet.
- For children with disabilities in grades K through 2, spend extra time demonstrating fire safety behaviors such as how to Stop, Drop, and Roll, Get Low and Go, and Cool a Burn. Then, under the guidance of the teacher, practice these behaviors with the students. Also, review with the children knowing the sound of a smoke alarm, telling a grownup about matches and lighters, reporting fire and smoke immediately, responding correctly during fire and smoke alarm drills, identifying exit signs and knowing two ways out. Use artwork to demonstrate fire safety behaviors and escaping.
- For children with disabilities in grades 3-6, demonstrate how to Stop, Drop, and Roll, Get Low and Go, and Cool a Burn. Then under the guidance of the teacher, practice these behaviors with the students. In addition, discuss smoke alarms, precautions involving matches and lighters, escape plan grids, locating two ways out, escaping fire

immediately, feeling the door knob before opening the door, cooking safety, and heating safety.

- Use artwork for all grades demonstrating fire safety behaviors and escape techniques. Keep printed materials and graphics – fun foam or tactile – simple.
- For older children who are able to read who have low vision, print text in 16 or 18 point type.
- Produce developmentally appropriate educational handouts in Braille, audio recordings, CD-ROMs or simple illustrations or pictograms.
- Look to associations for parents of children with disabilities, teachers of students with disabilities, hospital organizations, medical organizations, professional organizations, community groups and nonprofit organizations for people with disabilities to form a panel of experts to help advise you. The following is a sampling of national organizations for individuals with disabilities. Many have local chapters.

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

www.agbell.org

American Association of People with Disabilities

www.aapd.com

American Council of the Blind

www.acb.org

American Association of the Deaf-Blind

www.aadb.org

Hearing Loss Association of America

www.shhh.org

Helen Keller National Center

www.hknc.org

Lighthouse International

www.lighthouse.org

National Association of the Deaf

www.nad.org

The National Council on Independent Living

www.ncil.org



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One Batterymarch Park • Quincy, MA 02169

Phone: 617-770-3000 • Fax 617-770-0700 • www.nfpa.org