

Title: Preventing Child Maltreatment: The Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK) model.

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Background: Pediatric primary care offers an excellent opportunity for addressing prevalent psychosocial problems. The infrastructure is in place and there are generally good relationships between providers and parents.

Aims: To help address prevalent psychosocial problems (e.g., parental depression, substance abuse, major stress, intimate partner violence, food insecurity and harsh discipline). This in turn should strengthen families, support parents and parenting, promote children's health, development and safety, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Methods: 2 federally-funded RCTs were conducted, the first in a high risk urban sample, the second in relatively low suburban pediatric practices, with approximately half randomly assigned to implement the SEEK model, others to usual care. The SEEK model had these core ingredients: 1) training of health professionals, 2) use of the SEEK Parent Questionnaire, 3) brief assessment and initial management, incorporating principles of Motivational Interviewing, 4) ideally, good access to behavioral health, and 5) SEEK Parent Handouts.

Health professionals and parents were recruited to help evaluate the study. They completed initial surveys and then periodically up to 36 months. Toward the end of the studies, we reviewed children's medical records and obtained child welfare data on possible involvement. In one study, medical students observed checkup visits to see the extent to which psychosocial problems were being addressed.

Results: SEEK was associated with significantly improved provider thinking and practice behavior, and these were sustained for up to 36 months. Similarly, there was a reduced rate of child abuse and neglect and harsh discipline, measured in different ways.

Conclusions: SEEK appears to be a practical evidence-based model for enhancing pediatric primary care to help address psychosocial problems and help prevent child maltreatment.

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