

Bringing Home Baby

Experts Discuss How Retailers Can Sell the Childproofing Category

When couples are expecting a baby in Dubuque, Iowa, they know they can find everything they need to take care of and protect their bundle of joy at Steve's Ace Home and Garden.

In addition to hardware, the store features mini-storefront businesses, including Sprout, a 1,600-square-foot baby boutique that offers everything from car seats to cloth diapers.

To supplement its wide selection of baby products, Steve's Ace Home and Garden stocks several items parents need to keep their babies safe and secure.

For Sara Carpenter, the store's vice president of operations, and her sister Tricia Kerth, store manager, expanding upon the business their parents started has widened their customer base. Together, they have brought products important to them to their customers.

The sisters' passion for their own children led to opening Sprout because they wanted healthy and safe homes for all families. They have even taken safety to the next level by becoming certified car seat technicians, which has allowed them to offer any parent access to their free car seat installation service.

While adding a baby and toddler boutique such as Sprout doesn't make sense for all retailers, childproofing products are a perfect fit at any home improvement location.

To learn a little more, *Hardware Retailing* spoke to two experts in the childproofing industry from the International Association for Child Safety, Inc. (IAFCS). On the following pages, we'll share their insights about child safety products, discuss ways to educate your staff, show how you can teach customers about this category and provide resources that you can utilize in your own business.





Products For Parents

It doesn't matter if it's their first or fifth child—parents are always thinking about how to keep their homes safe for their children. As a retailer, you have a wide variety of products you can stock to help them do just that. Below, babyproofing experts associated with IAFCs share a few important items you should invest in if you want to expand your child safety category.

Safety Gates

On average, more than 93,000 children under the age of five go to the emergency room for stair-related injuries each year, according to a report by Safe Kids Worldwide on protecting children in the home.

For Peter Kerin, an Advanced Professional Childproofing, IAFCs board member and owner

“Hardware retailers can benefit from offering quality safety gates, however, they must be educated on different gate types and their uses.”

—Peter Kerin, IAFCs Board Member

of Foresight Childproofing, Inc., one product parents should invest in is safety gates.

“Hardware retailers can benefit from offering quality safety gates,” he says. “However, they must be educated on different gate types and their uses.”

In the home, the best way to prevent babies and young toddlers from falling or accessing rooms that are off limits is to add safety gates, both pressure gates and mounted gates.

“Mounted gates are needed at the top of the stairs,” Kerin says. “The gate should be mounted into a stud.”

Pressure gates are the more common type of gates people purchase. They are best used between rooms and at the bottom of the stairs, as the gate is held in a doorway or opened by applying pressure against the doorframe or walls. Having a gate at both the top and bottom of the stairs is vital, says Colleen Driscoll, executive director for IAFCs. “Safety gates help prevent babies and young children from falling and injuring themselves on the stairs,” Driscoll says. “However, a baby can still crawl up the stairs and potentially fall, which is why you need gates at both ends. Retailers should educate their customers on why both of these gates are necessary.”

Why Childproofing Matters

For most parents, protecting their child begins the moment they're born and continues until the day they move out. While outside threats are everywhere, millions of children are injured annually in the home. Below are just a few statistics that highlight why homeowners should purchase and install childproofing products in their homes. Visit TheRedT.com/childproofing-resources for a list of resources to learn from and share.

Safe and Sound



2.3 Million

children are accidentally injured every year and more than 2,500 are killed.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Use Caution With Furniture and Fixtures



16 Thousand

children under the age of 5 went to the hospital in 2006 when furniture and appliances tipped over on them.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Furniture-Anchoring Products

A falling television or heavy piece of furniture is one of the most dangerous accidents a child could face in the home. In fact, “every 24 minutes, a child in the U.S. is injured as a result of a TV or furniture tip-over incident,” the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (CPSC) Anchor It! Campaign says.

With this in mind, anchoring products are must-haves in any home where children are present.

“It’s so important that homeowners are proactive and anchor the furniture and televisions in their homes,” Driscoll says. “If a curious child starts opening all of the drawers on a dresser or tries to climb up on furniture to reach something, the center of gravity changes.”

While Driscoll says many parents anchor furniture in a child’s nursery, other rooms in the home pose just as much of a risk.

While statistics show that incidents of child injury have been improving, furniture tip-overs are a major risk in most homes, Kerin says.

“Furniture safety straps are an important product for homeowners to invest in,” he says. “Small children tend to explore and play on their own. Safety straps for anchoring heavy furniture and televisions is something retailers should carry. Share with your customers tips on installing anchoring products, and explain the necessity of finding the stud in the wall to secure the strap to the furniture.”

Recommend consumers mount their flatscreen TVs on the wall or secure them by anchoring them to the wall. Existing furniture can be anchored with anti-tip brackets.

Latches, Locks and Knob Covers

Since small children are apt to explore their surroundings, parents must keep dangerous items out of reach or locked away. One way to do so is by installing latches on cabinets, drawers and even toilet bowl lids. According to the CPSC, safety latches can be installed in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas to prevent poisonings or other injuries.

Installing these products lowers the risk of small children being exposed to household cleaners, medicines and other toxic items.

In addition to latches, Driscoll suggests retailers offer parents items that they may not immediately think of when childproofing the home.

“Sometimes people don’t think of locks as a childproofing item,” Driscoll says. “Locks prevent access to lots of things. I recommend homeowners add locks to exit doors so kids can’t get out of the home, and they stay out of harm’s way.”



Steve’s Ace Home and Garden stocks a wide selection of childproofing products so parents visiting Sprout can get all the items they need in the hardware store.

Another way to protect children is by installing knob covers to doorknobs or even to stoves.

However, customers should know that knob covers on doors are not foolproof. Sometimes they don’t fit door handles or children defeat them because they are in reach.

One area in the home many people may not think to secure is the toilet.

Toilet lids should be secured shut for a number of reasons, says ChildproofingExperts.com, the IAFCS website.

A baby can drown in a toilet if they fall in; they could get sick from the bacteria or a strong chemical cleaner in the toilet; or a child could even flush valuables and clog up the system.

Education and Knowledge Are Key



Sisters **Tricia Kerth** (left) and **Sara Carpenter** offer childproofing products in the hardware section of **Steve's Ace Home and Garden**. Helping families stay safe and healthy is important to them both, so offering items like furniture anchors and cabinet latches are a great supplement to **Sprout's** eco-friendly, baby safe products.

Just like any category a retailer offers, childproofing requires knowledgeable and informed employees. Rather than just knowing the basics of this category, it may be advantageous to have an employee with in-depth knowledge.

Refer Customers to Professionals

"One word of advice I have for retailers is to realize childproofing products is a very serious category to sell," Kerin says. "You're selling products that people want to buy to protect children. I don't think a retailer needs to be paranoid about this, but they should know the limits of their knowledge."

Kerin suggests retailers provide resources or lead customers in the direction of even more professional advice to keep the home safe.

"When talking to customers purchasing child safety items, focus on creating safe areas in

"By taking small measures through childproofing, parents won't feel the need to hover, and kids can explore safe areas without potential injuries."

—Peter Kerin, IAFCS Board Member and Owner of Foresight Childproofing, Inc.

the home," he says. "I recommend the kitchen, family room and nursery as safe spaces that should be childproofed. To avoid childproofing the entire home, designate neutral rooms that are only accessed with adults present, as well as off-limit rooms that are locked and away from children, like attached garages or a home office."

While Driscoll thinks it's important for retailers to learn and educate customers as much as they can, she recommends partnering with a local childproofing expert or reaching out to IAFCS to provide parents with anything they'd need to know to keep their little ones safe from harm.

"When it comes to childproofing, consider if you are the right person to provide your customers with specific advice," Driscoll says. "Developing a partnership for problem solving would be great. If you have access to a certified childproofing expert, perhaps refer your customers to them for help with installation."

Become an Informed and Helpful Resource

For Carpenter and Kerth, childproofing the home is important, but so is making the home safe and healthy for the entire family.

"Child safety is very important, but a big emphasis we support as well is knowing the components of the products in your home," Kerth says. "We offer safety gates, latches and anchoring products, but I think we also make an effort to focus on eco-friendly items."

The sisters' idea for Sprout came about as they searched for items they believed would be better for the environment, like reusable cloth diapers rather than single-use diapers, but eventually led to a space parents could shop for health and safety products.

Driscoll urges retailers to understand that child safety is about more than the bottom line.

"Childproofing is about preventing injuries," Driscoll says. "Our goal is to provide education to families so they can make the necessary changes in their homes to prevent injuries. We're looking at injury data and learning from the past."

For further educational resources for retailers, Driscoll says membership with IAFCS is a way to continually learn. Members are primarily professional childproofers, but they also support manufacturers and distributors of childproofing products through associate memberships.

Providing knowledge and leading homeowners to the products and advice they need to secure their home will take the pressure off of parents, Kerin says.

"Parenting is hard enough without considering all of the dangers that can be found inside the home," he says. "By taking small measures through childproofing, parents won't feel the need to hover, and kids can explore safe areas without potential injuries." ➡

A Look Inside Sprout

Sprout, a baby store located inside Steve's Ace Home and Garden, started when sisters Sara Carpenter and Tricia Kerth began having kids and wanted to bring products like cloth diapers to other parents. Look at the photos below and go to TheRedT.com/sprout to read about the store and view more pictures.

