

Promoting Effective and Nurturing Parenting

Effective parenting and nurturing familial relationships lay the foundation for healthy children and a stable and productive society. Families need to be supported by policies and services that ensure that children live in nurturing and safe environments free from abuse and neglect, thereby enabling children to reach their full potential.

PCA America supports public policies that promote effective parenting and that reinforce parents' aspirations to raise their children in loving, supportive, and healthy homes.

Prevent Child Abuse America Advocates for:

● **Increasing funding for family support programs and other necessary supports so that they can be established in all communities and made available to all families.** Research indicates that children in at-risk families that receive support services are more likely to receive appropriate medical care including immunizations and have fewer emergency room visits than families that do not receive such services.¹ Children whose parents receive appropriate support services are also likely to be on track developmentally and to live in homes where their parents consciously work to provide a nurturing and educationally stimulating environment.² Moreover, parents who receive support services are more likely to develop a secure attachment relationship with their young child.³ Such services include:

- Home visiting services where trained home visitors work with parents to build on their existing strengths and minimize potentially harmful behavior. Home visitors educate parents about interacting with their child, help parents understand their child's capabilities at each developmental stage, and teach parents positive forms of discipline. Home visitors also help parents build a strong parent-child relationship and develop skills to increase their sensitivity and responsiveness to their children. Finally, home visiting helps families become self-sufficient by helping parents set goals and linking parents to other services.
- Mutual self-help parent support groups that offer caregivers the opportunity to participate in weekly meetings where parents talk about the challenges and successes they have experienced raising children, and help reduce isolation and stress while increasing self-esteem and parenting competency.⁴
- Resources promoting a nurturing, secure, and trusting relationship between parent and young child.
- Quality substance abuse treatment services and domestic violence programs.
- Education outlining reasonable expectations of children's developmental stages.
- Strategies for dealing with challenging child behavior such as tantrums or the disregard of parents' wishes.

Prevent Child Abuse America
200 South Michigan Avenue
17th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604.2404
312.663.3520

www.preventchildabuse.org

- Strategies encouraging positive behaviors in children.
- Resources aiding a child's mental development and emotional competency, such as quality early education programs.
- Information about child health, nutrition, and safety.
- Affordable quality childcare and respite care.
- Affordable quality healthcare, including prenatal and mental health services.
- Affordable and safe housing.
- Services that address the special needs of teen parents such as programs that help such parents successfully finish school while lovingly and effectively raising their children.
- Family resource centers that serve as gathering places for families within communities to share the joys and struggles of parenting, help improve service access, build community, and foster informal problem solving.

No one family support program provides families with all the tools they need to foster safe and healthy environments for children. Each community, therefore, must provide an array of support services so that every parent and each family has access to the supports they need. Such services must include an appropriate mix of parent education and parent support programs, ensuring that parents receive the information as well as supportive attention they need.

● Raising the value of parenthood among members of our society so that voters and communities agree that such services are worthy of funding.

The benefits of promoting and supporting positive parenting practices reach far beyond the realm of preventing child abuse and neglect. Confident, knowledgeable and prepared parents form the foundations for families in which children are safer, healthier and better prepared to learn.

● Conducting research to understand the best ways to reach parents and the public with messages underscoring the importance of family support programs.

Background

Most parents want to provide the best for their children, but often lack the resources and knowledge to easily do so. We, as a society, have a responsibility to help parents surmount the challenges that inhibit effective parenting because effective parenting is essential for stable families, and healthy and stable families help lay the foundation for a healthy society.

An indispensable component of a healthy and stable home is freedom from child abuse and neglect. Child maltreatment rarely stems from unloving or deliberately bad parenting, but rather from a lack of preparation for, or knowledge of, critical challenges surrounding parenting.

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Parents face an array of challenges in their efforts to provide the best possible situation for their children. Given the mobility of American society, many parents are apart from the family and friends whom they might otherwise rely on for child-rearing help. In addition, many parents are wary of seeking assistance or advice with regard to their parenting out of fear that their lack of knowledge may reflect badly on them as caregivers.

Moreover, parents may lack an understanding of their children's developmental stages and may hold unreasonable expectations of their abilities. They may also be unaware of alternative means of discipline to corporal punishment, or how to effectively discipline or manage their child's behaviors in age-appropriate ways. Parents may also lack knowledge of health, hygiene, and nutritional needs of their children.

Finally, many communities lack appropriate support services for parents who wish to take steps to improve their parenting. These barriers to support and knowledge, which are reinforced by the inherent challenges of caring for children, can lead to situations in which overwhelmed, upset or confused parents inflict physical or emotional abuse on their children, or neglect their children's needs.

Additional Resources

¹ "Healthy Families America Helps Ensure Healthy Child Development".
Healthy Families America Research Folder.

² "Healthy Families America Helps Ensure Healthy Child Development".
Healthy Families America Research Folder.

³ "Healthy Families America Promotes Positive Parenting". Healthy Families America Research Folder.

⁴ Parent Mutual Self-help Support Programs brochure. Prevent Child Abuse America.

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