

Children First: Safe and Secure



Section I—Child Abuse Prevention

What is Child Abuse Prevention?

The goal of child abuse prevention is simple—to stop child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place, sparing children and families’ emotional and physical trauma and decreasing the need for costly intervention and treatment services.

The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is to support families and provide parents with the skills and resources they need.

Why Does Child Abuse Occur?

Although all the causes of child abuse and neglect are not known, a significant body of research has identified several risk factors with child abuse. Studies also have shown the risk of child abuse is greater when there are multiple risk factors present. For example, lack of preparation or knowledge of critical issues surrounding parenting, financial, or other environmental stressors, difficulty in relationships, depression, or other mental health problems can all lead to abusive or neglectful behavior.

Parents may lack an understanding of their children’s developmental stages and hold unreasonable expectations for their abilities. They also may not be aware of alternatives to corporal punishment or how to discipline their children most effectively at each age. Parents also may lack knowledge of the health, hygiene, and nutritional needs of their children.

These circumstances, combined with the inherent challenges of raising children, can result in otherwise well-intentioned parents causing their children harm or neglecting their needs.



How Is Child Abuse Prevented?

Prevention efforts build on family strengths. Through prevention activities such as parent education, home visitation, and parent support groups, many families are able to find the support they need to stay together and care for their children in their homes and communities. Prevention efforts help parents develop their parenting skills, understand the benefits of nonviolent discipline techniques, and understand and meet their child’s emotional, physical, and developmental needs. Prevention programs also can help parents identify other needs they may have and offer assistance in getting that additional support.

*Source: Prevent Child Abuse Texas, Austin, TX
Child Abuse and Neglect: Protection and Prevention*