



# Effective Child Abuse Prevention Strategies



## Child Abuse Prevention Strategies

Child Abuse Prevention Month provides a perfect opportunity to showcase successful prevention strategies. When doing this, it is important to connect the dots from the program or strategy to specific examples of better outcomes for kids and families. Many people tend to think about child abuse only in its worst forms. For them the term "child abuse prevention" holds little meaning, outside of reporting. Thus, describing a parent support program as an example of child abuse prevention will not make sense to them without some explanation.

### Protective Factors

Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers are increasingly thinking about factors that strengthen families and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect. Research shows that while certain risk factors have detrimental effects on children and families, other "protective" factors can mitigate those effects and provide benefits, resulting in greater resilience for parents and children. Successful family support activities and child abuse prevention programs are designed to promote these protective factors.

Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. These attributes serve as buffers, helping parents to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. Research has shown that the following protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge and parenting and child development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete support for parents

Successful family support and child abuse prevention programs bolster protective factors by:

### Facilitating friendships and support

Offer opportunities for parents in the neighborhood to get to know each other, develop support systems, and take leadership roles. Strategies may include sports teams, pot lucks, classes, advisory groups, board leadership, and volunteer opportunities

### Strengthening parenting

Develop ways for parents to get support on parenting issues when they need it. Possibilities include classes, support groups, in-home visits, tip sheets in pediatricians' offices, and resource libraries.

### Responding to family crises

Offer extra support to families when they need it, as in times of illness, job loss, housing problems, and other stressors.

### Linking families to service opportunities

Provide referrals for job training, education, health care, mental health, and other essential services in the community.

### Supporting children's social and emotional development

Some programs specifically focus on helping children articulate their feelings and get along with others. When children bring home what they have learned in the classroom, parents benefit as well.