

Prevent Child Abuse New York

POSITION STATEMENTS

MISSION

To prevent child abuse in all its forms.

VISION

That all children live in families that love, nurture and protect them.



Positions adopted by the Board of Directors of
Prevent Child Abuse New York, January 10, 2001

Prevent Child Abuse New York

**POSITION ON
SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**

All children need and have a right to thrive and believe that they are valued. All families should have the resources and supports necessary to give every child a consistent caring, safe and nurturing family life. Poverty is a leading contributor to poor childhood outcomes; poor parents are usually highly stressed and therefore not apt to function as well as they might in the parenting role. Commitment by social and financial institutions, policy makers, human service providers, courts, community organizations and churches to the following guiding principles, will enhance the ability of every family to give children what they deserve.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT:

- **Social and financial stability is essential for families to be able to assure positive health, safety and developmental outcomes for their children.**
- **Children and families can thrive together when they have adequate resources and supports for safe affordable housing, quality health care, quality child care, nutritious food, and employment that provides a living wage.**
- **All children should live in families who love, nurture and protect them.**
- **Being a parent is one of the most important and challenging roles in life.**
- **Every family with a newborn should be able to experience a supportive relationship in their home environment that promotes confidence, building in good parenting skills.**
- **Parenting is a learned process; knowing how to be a good parent results from a combination of having a positive role model for parenting, having strong support in the learning process, and access to accurate, helpful information.**
- **Parents will feel self-confidence in their parenting abilities when they have parenting knowledge and steady support to act upon their knowledge.**
- **Every child will have a full opportunity to develop self-confidence when there is a caring partnership between parents and the community on the child's behalf.**
- **Children and their families will value and respect their communities when their communities value and respect them and their cultural heritage.**

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POSITION ON INVESTING IN CHILDREN

Industry leaders, policymakers, economists and academics frequently speak of the need to invest in workers. Adults are considered human resources who can provide a valuable economic return to society. Research shows that childhood experiences have a tremendous impact on people's adult lives. Mental and physical health problems, interpersonal difficulties, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and delinquency are just a few of the consequences of child abuse—all of which hinder productivity in later life. Yet, funding for the prevention of child abuse is a small fraction of that spent on other public health concerns. For every dollar spent on the treatment of child abuse, the U.S. spends only one penny on prevention. The investment in people should begin at birth. In the earliest years of life the human brain is most responsive to learning and a child's core personality is being formed. Recent research has concluded that a loving, caring and stimulating environment during the first 3 years of a child's life is vitally important for healthy brain development.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT:

- **Children are society's most valuable resource since they will be its future citizens, its future parents and its future workforce.**
- **If resources are not invested for the prevention of child abuse, a significantly greater amount of resources will be needed to treat the consequences that arise in later life.**
- **Drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and mental and physical health problems are common in adolescents with a history of childhood abuse or neglect.**
- **Children who have been abused or neglected are more likely to engage in juvenile and adult criminal activity than those who have no history of abuse.**
- **Research has demonstrated that maltreated and abused children often perform poorly in school, have a greater chance of dropping out of school and require the very costly intervention of special or remedial educational services.**
- **Studies have shown that childhood abuse is a significant risk factor for homelessness in later life and has been linked to the placement of one's own children in foster care.**
- **Investing resources in order to educate society about the grave consequences associated with child abuse and maltreatment is crucial.**
- **Although spending on treatment is critical and should not be reduced, we can greatly decrease the need for and cost of treatment by preventing the abuse from happening in the first place.**

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POSITION ON
EDUCATION FOR PREVENTION

Child abuse is an exceptionally complex problem with numerous causes, many of which relate to lack of needed knowledge and skills in: child development, the demands of parenting, parent-child communication, coping with the stresses of caring for children—especially those with special needs, home and child management, and accessing social and health services. Immaturity and unrealistic expectations about parenthood are frequently cited as reasons for child abuse. Risk factors are especially high among young parents who have more than one child, and for teenage mothers who have not completed high school. In 1998, 9% of all births were to teenage mothers. In 1995, there were 25,342 live births to adolescents in New York State. Many teen mothers are single parents without adequate economic resources, who also lack the support and knowledge they need to avoid situations where they may injure their child.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT:

- **Education is the key to learning patience, tolerance, appreciation and acceptance, traits that are necessary for quality parenting.**
- **Instruction in parenting and child-caring skills should occur prior to becoming a parent.**
- **New and young parents should have immediate access to information and resources concerning parenting.**
- **Parental competency can be enhanced through parent education programs.**
- **Parents should be provided with information about the consequences of child abuse and about prevention.**
- **Educating high-risk parents about positive parent-child interaction, connected with support such as home-visiting, can increase parents' positive perception of and relationship with their children.**
- **Education in child caring skills, child development and abuse prevention also is essential for day care providers to function effectively in their role as interim parents.**
- **Foster parents should have knowledge of the common behaviors of abused children, the ways they react in a foster care setting, and how to provide loving, effective care.**
- **Individuals charged with protecting children should have the necessary knowledge to perform the responsibilities associated with the position as well as a continuing education about the constantly changing and complex issues surrounding child abuse.**

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POSITION ON
HEALTHY FAMILIES NEW YORK HOME VISITING

Healthy Families New York Home Visiting is a voluntary program that helps parents meet the challenges of parenting and assures healthy development for their children. The program's comprehensive, home-based services to families start during pregnancy or when a child is born, and continue for up to 5 years after the child's birth. Home visiting has proven to prevent the abuse of infants in high-risk families, as well as preventing future learning problems and delinquency and improving health outcomes for children. A 1995 study by Prevent Child Abuse America concluded that for less than half the cost society spends treating and managing the consequences of child maltreatment, it could implement a universal, comprehensive, voluntary system of home visitation to prevent child abuse and other poor childhood outcomes. However, due to very limited resources, most home visiting programs are targeted specifically at families seen as high-risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Continued service for the children and families that rely on this program can only take place with adequate financial support.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT:

- **Being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs there is, but raising healthy, well-functioning children is one of the greatest contributions a parent can make to society.**
- **Healthy children come from households where they learn tolerance, patience, encouragement and love.**
- **Expectant and new parents should have a link to information about prenatal care, immunizations, developmental assessments, and needed child and family services.**
- **Parents of infants and young children should be provided with opportunities that enhance bonding and positive interaction with their children and parenting skills.**
- **Since family stress can often be a contributing factor in child abuse, new parents should have the knowledge and support needed to cope with stressful situations that occur during parenting.**
- **Home visiting provides ongoing parent education, social support and services tailored to a family's specific needs.**
- **Healthy Families home visited mothers are more involved with and responsive to their children's needs.**
- **Healthy Families home visiting improves family functioning and self-sufficiency.**

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POSITION ON CHILD PROTECTION

In 1999, there were more than 3 million reports of child abuse and neglect nationwide. That year, 44,416 cases of child abuse were indicated in New York State, a 21% increase from 1995. In New York State 42% of all child abuse fatalities in 1998 involved children who had current or prior contact with local child protective service (CPS) agencies. Of those fatalities, 86% involved children under the age of six, while 55% involved children under the age of one. Studies have revealed that about 25% of girls and 10% of boys are sexually abused during their childhood. According to a recent report by the Children Against Children Research Center, crimes against youth are less likely to be reported to the police; youths have a much greater chance of being sexually assaulted than adults; and youth are more likely to be injured during victimization.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT:

- **All children have a right to live in an environment free of abuse and maltreatment.**
- **Children are society's most vulnerable population and the least able to assert their rights.**
- **Child abuse and maltreatment is a societal problem and combating it requires universal support.**
- **The most effective way to combat child abuse is through preventive action, including education and public awareness.**
- **Laws need to be reviewed regularly and amended as needed to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to protect children from child predators and sexual offenders.**
- **There should be an effective and efficient system for reporting, investigating and recording cases of abuse that occur in all settings.**
- **Child protective caseworkers should have the necessary qualifications, skills and resources to meet the responsibilities associated with child protective service work.**
- **Treating child abuse requires more than just treating the child. If the child is to remain in the home, a family solution is required (e.g. education, counseling, substance abuse therapy).**

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POSITION ON PUBLIC AWARENESS

The general public is the greatest untapped resource in child abuse prevention. All institutions in our state need to adhere to the following guiding principles if the general public is to be fully mobilized for child abuse prevention.

IT IS PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW YORK'S POSITION THAT

- **Almost everyone knows that child abuse exists, and almost everyone wants it to stop.**
- **There has been a shift in public attitude in recent years from "why don't you stop this abuse?" to "how can I help stop this abuse?"**
- **Prevent Child Abuse America provides powerful media campaigns nationwide, and we in New York State need to take full advantage of this national resource.**
- **Child Abuse in New York State is at an epidemic level. The NYS Department of Health has called for a reduction from the current high incidence rate of 9 per 1000, telling all of us that public attitudes, knowledge and behaviors need to change to halt this epidemic.**
- **Despite these indicators, the great institutions in New York State government, corporate, and philanthropy devote only a tiny share of resources to halt the epidemic. We believe the low status of child abuse prevention is partially related to the inability of the general public to voice their concern, and show their support for prevention.**
- **An effective, persistent and consistent public awareness campaign should involve the general public in the solution of the problem of child abuse.**
- **Public awareness is not just a message on TV. In child abuse prevention, public awareness is accomplished through all media, at the local and state levels, and with the support of government, the health and human service professions, school systems, private corporations and philanthropy, in collaboration with a responsive media sector.**
- **Child abuse will be dramatically reduced in part because of a successful, long-term public awareness campaign that results in mobilization of the general public in these domains:**
 - **Very personal and very local support of the needs of parents and children in one's own community.**
 - **Active involvement in supporting and enhancing local community services that are dedicated to protecting children and reinforcing families.**
 - **Readiness to approach and convince elected representatives at the city, county, state and federal level of the urgency of this epidemic, and the specific actions that the governmental systems can take to end it.**