

## PRIMARY PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All children require safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments to thrive. Achieving this goal requires bold strategies that work to support parents and caregivers to create the conditions and contexts for positive child development.

### Child abuse and neglect are common

Child abuse and neglect affect more than one million children.

### 1 IN 7 CHILDREN

HAVE EXPERIENCED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT IN THE PAST YEAR.

**CHILD MALTREATMENT IS COSTLY.** A recent report estimates that children who had substantiated cases for child abuse and neglect in **Kentucky** in the year 2018 will incur costs of over \$19 trillion over their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Child maltreatment and neglect alone cost Kentucky an estimated \$560M in total federal, state, and local Child Protection Services expenditures for SFY2016.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, child maltreatment is *preventable*.

- **Primary prevention** approaches (i.e. programs, policies, or other strategies) aim to stop child abuse or neglect *before* it occurs (i.e. child maltreatment public awareness campaigns, family strengthening programs, increasing economic supports for families).
- **Secondary prevention** approaches specifically target high risk families to prevent child maltreatment (i.e. head start programs, voluntary parenting programs).
- **Tertiary prevention** approaches focus on the treatment of children and families *after* child abuse or neglect has occurred (i.e. child protective services, mandated mental health and substance abuse programs).

### CREATING A PRIMARY PREVENTION SYSTEM

A public health approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect requires strategies that address the conditions and contexts in which children and families live. This involves reducing the factors that put people at risk for experiencing violence and also includes increasing the factors that protect people or buffer them from risk.

Primary prevention programs promote healthy child development through strengthening parenting skills and reducing stress, which is a risk factor for child maltreatment. Policies are important primary prevention strategies because they directly address community conditions that influence parental access to safe, stable, and nurturing environments. **Early and effective primary prevention is more cost effective than fixing the adverse effects of child maltreatment after it has occurred (e.g. child protective services).**

**Greater focus on preventing child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place yields significant cost reductions** later while simultaneously improving outcomes for children and families.

#### Primary Prevention Strategies:

- Expanding voluntary home visiting (i.e. HANDS)
- Quality funded child care and early education
- Support for parenting teens
- Promoting positive fatherhood engagement
- Parent training and education
- Family Resource Centers
- Increasing economic supports for families (e.g. Earned Income Tax Credit)
- Banning corporal punishment in public institutions
- Evidence-based child sexual abuse prevention programs

<sup>1</sup> Klika, J.B., Rosenzweig, J., & Merrick, M. (2020). Economic burden of known cases of child maltreatment from 2018 in each state. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 37, 227-234.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CWFSReportSFY2016\\_ChildTrends\\_December2018.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CWFSReportSFY2016_ChildTrends_December2018.pdf)