



UNDERSTANDING PREVENTION

Most people can grasp the concept of prevention. Essentially, it focuses on **stopping a problem before it occurs**. If we take time to think about it, we can probably name numerous ways in which we incorporate prevention into our everyday lives. For example, changing the oil in our car on a routine basis prevents our engine from malfunctioning. Seeing the dentist regularly can help prevent tooth decay and ensure our teeth are healthy and strong. And, eating wholesome foods and exercising regularly can prevent heart disease and high blood pressure.

But when it comes to preventing child abuse, many people find the concept harder to grasp. This is understandable since most traditional child maltreatment activities have focused on risk-based intervention and addressing the problem after it has occurred. These would include tertiary prevention, which seeks to reduce risk of further harm, and secondary prevention which is targeted at at-risk families. And while these programs are all valuable, focusing on **primary prevention** allows us the opportunity to prevent maltreatment from ever happening in the first place.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION?

So what do we really mean when we use the term “child abuse prevention?” Well, it’s simple really. It means understanding the conditions that leave children vulnerable to harm and then taking the necessary action to improve those conditions. At its most basic level, preventing child abuse is a universal approach to valuing children and strengthening the capacity of parents and communities to care for their children’s health and well-being. It’s a hopeful message that says we don’t have to wait for a child to be harmed. We can make sure they thrive and never experience maltreatment in the first place!

We can educate ourselves about conditions that leave children susceptible to harm and then use this knowledge to empower ourselves and our communities to keep children safe. ***Preventing child abuse is the work of everyone, every day.***

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ☘ Parenting is hard work! Be a friend to a parent or caregiver you know by offering to babysit, run an errand or listen compassionately.
- ☘ Share Prevent Child Abuse Georgia’s 1-800 CHILDREN (244-5373) Helpline number as a source of support and access to community resources.
- ☘ Volunteer your time and resources to programs in your community that value children and help strengthen families.
- ☘ Call or write your elected officials and advocate for child abuse prevention funding and public policy that supports family resilience and stability.
- ☘ Speak up when you are concerned about a child’s safety and well-being.
- ☘ Assure that children have access to appropriate role models and are surrounded with secure relationships.
- ☘ Educate yourself about child abuse prevention and ways to value children, strengthen families and engage communities in this important work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For other ideas about how to prevent child abuse in your community, call our Helpline at 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373). You may also send an email to: helpline@preventchildabusega.org. ***Preventing child abuse is the work of everyone, every day.*** Join our efforts.