

Programs That Prevent Child Maltreatment

PCA North Carolina's *Understanding Prevention: An Introduction to Definitions, Principles, and Evidence-Based/Promising Programs* contains further information of the following programs and a full set of references.

Home Visiting Programs/Home Based Services

Nurse Family Partnership - Prenatal and early childhood home visitation program designed to improve maternal and child health and well-being. Home visits conducted by experienced, well-trained and supervised nurses who work intensively with first time, low-income mothers and their families over a period of two years.

Project 12 Ways/Project SafeCare - Home-based set of skills-based parent training interventions designed to treat or prevent child maltreatment, with a focus on child neglect. Project 12 Ways consists of a set of twelve protocols focused on building parent skills in the areas of parent-child interaction, health and safety training, stress reduction, self-control training for parents, money management, and others. Project SafeCare refined protocols to three: bonding/parent-child interaction training; infant and child health care, and home safety and cleanliness.

Healthy Families - Early childhood home visitation program designed to prevent maltreatment, improve maternal/child health and child development, and improve maternal life course outcomes. Home visits begin prenatally or within the first few weeks after birth and can continue up to age five, are targeted toward high-risk mothers, and are conducted by paraprofessionals or professionals.

Parents As Teachers - Early childhood education and family support program designed to enhance child development and school achievement through home visits, parent group meetings, periodic developmental screenings, and referrals to community services. Prevention of child maltreatment is one of the program's goals. Home visits conducted by certified parent educators to families with children prenatal through five years old.

Parent Aide Program - Developed in the 1970s as one of the earliest home visitation programs designed to strengthen families and prevent maltreatment by using members of a community (volunteer or paid) to work with a family in areas of child safety, problem-solving skills, parenting skills, and social support. The program serves families with children across developmental stages and provides a minimum of four visits a month until families achieve success in all four areas of their treatment plan and maintain those successes for three months.

Parent Education/Parent Training Programs

Parent Child Interaction Therapy - Parent training program originally designed to treat children (age two to eight) with conduct problem behavior and now being used for treatment with physically abusive families. Designed to help parents improve parenting skills; help parents build a warm and responsive relationship with their child; and decrease child behavior problems in fourteen weekly, one hour sessions. Trained therapists "coach" parents (use of a one way mirror in which therapist uses a microphone device from another room) in child management

techniques (e.g. how to praise appropriate behavior, ignore undesirable behavior, give clear, age-appropriate instructions, how to implement “time-outs”) while parents are interacting with their children in a safe environment.

Nurturing Program - Home and group-based parent education sessions designed to treat child maltreatment, prevent its recurrence, and build nurturing parenting skills in at-risk families. Fifteen separate curriculums exist based on age of child and family needs (substance abusing families; foster families) and include activities for both parents and children. Number of sessions range from nine to forty-eight and focus on discipline, empathy, developmentally appropriate expectations, stress and anger management, and substance abuse among others. Content delivered through activity manuals, parent handbooks, instructional video, group discussion, and games.

Additional Programs

Following are several parent education/parent training programs that have strong evidence with regard to preventing and treating emotional/behavioral disorders in children and other negative outcomes. They target parental knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior and target risk factors closely associated with child maltreatment such as harsh physical discipline, coercive parent/child relationships, verbal aggression, negative attributions of child behavior, family communication, and family cohesion. Although these programs have not been tested, or tested extensively with regard to child maltreatment prevention, they hold promise and should be considered by prevention practitioners.

The Incredible Years - Comprehensive, developmentally-based intervention with components for parents, teachers and children (age two to twelve years) designed to prevent and treat emotional/behavioral problems in young children by promoting children’s social, emotional and academic competence; strengthening parental competence and family relationships; promoting teacher competence in managing classroom behavior and strengthening school-home connections. Interventions use a group format and deliver content through multiple methods including video, discussion, activities, role-playing, and home assignments.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) - Multi-level set of parenting interventions that primarily targets the treatment/prevention of emotional/behavioral disorders in children, but also focuses on the prevention of other negative outcomes such as child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency. Interventions range from the provision of brief information resources such as tip sheets and videos at Level One, to brief targeted interventions (for specific behavior problems) offered by primary care practitioners at Levels Two and Three, to more intensive parent training programs at Level Four and Level Five targeting broader family issues such as relationship conflict and parental depression and stress. Triple P targets five developmental periods from infancy through adolescence and aims to help parents create a safe, engaging, and positive learning environment for their children, use assertive discipline, have realistic expectations, and take care of oneself as a parent.

Strengthening Families - Family skills training program for elementary school children (ages six to twelve years) and their families, designed to improve family relationships, parenting skills, and youth’s social and life skills to reduce problem behaviors in children, improve school

performance and reduce alcohol/drug use in adolescents. Program implemented in fourteen, two-hour family training sessions in which parents and children meet separately for the first hour to focus on skills development (parents - child behavior management; children - social and problem-solving skills) and then meet together for a structured parent-child interaction activities in which they can practice their skills. A second program has been developed that target youth ten to fourteen years of age and their parents.

Parenting Wisely - - a brief, interactive, self-administered, computer-based program that teaches parents and their children (nine to eighteen years of age) skills to prevent delinquent or substance abusing behavior. Parents and children watch video clips showing families in nine common problem situations (e.g. children not doing chores) and then parents choose from among three problem solution methods presented. Feedback about positive and negative consequences of the choice is given and parents receive additional instruction through a workbook with solutions and critiques, review questions, and detailed skill practice exercises. Program provides instruction in effective parenting skills through use of demonstration, quizzing, repetition, rehearsal, recognition, and feedback from correct and incorrect answers. The program is being implemented in numerous locations including community mental health agencies, substance abuse treatment programs, and child protection agencies.

Self-Help/Social Support

Parent Anonymous - Founded in 1969, Parents Anonymous is one of the oldest child abuse prevention programs in the country. A mutual, self-help parent support group program open to all parents that focuses on shared parent leadership, effective mutual support, and long-term personal growth for parents and children. Weekly group meetings are co-facilitated by parents and professionally trained facilitators, and are open to parents free of charge. Free childcare or children's programs are usually offered. The model focuses on reduction of risk factors such as unrealistic expectations, ineffective coping and social isolation and increasing protective factors such as social support, problem-solving strategies, and self-esteem.

Circle of Parents - Mutual, self-help parent support group - very similar in theory and design to Parents Anonymous - in which parents who are experiencing difficulties in their parenting roles can exchange ideas, support, information, and resources. The group is co-led by a parent and a professional, is open to all parents/caregivers with children of all ages (although some Circle of Parents groups target specific population such as single mothers, or parents of children with special needs/disabilities), is free of charge, and typically meets once a week. Programs provide a children's program or quality childcare. Circle of Parents programs focus on reducing parent isolation, increasing positive parenting practice, strengthening parent communication skills and problem-solving, and promoting parent leadership.

Parent To Parent - Matches trained veteran parents of children with special needs with newly referred parents who are experiencing similar issues with their own children. Parents are able to share common experiences, obtain social support, and learn about resources for their children within the community.

Early Childhood Initiatives

Chicago Child-Parent Centers - A federally funded (Chapter 1), center-based early childhood program for low-income children in preschool through third grade (ages three to nine years). Designed to improve children's school readiness through four features: early intervention, parent involvement, a structured language-based instructional model, and program continuity between the preschool and early school-age years. The Centers utilize a multi-faceted parent program that includes a parent resource room staffed by a Head Teacher, parental involvement in the classroom, and home visits focused on increasing parental involvement in their child's education. Comprehensive health and nutrition services (health screenings, nursing services, free breakfasts and lunches), community outreach (school-community representative, family recruitment, resource mobilization, home visitation), low teacher/student ratios, and a comprehensive school age.

Early Head Start - A federally funded community-based program for low-income, pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers up to age three. Goals are to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of children ages 0-3, and support healthy family functioning through either center-based, home based or a combination of center and home-based services. Services include early childhood education, parent education, home visitation, comprehensive health and mental health services for children and parents; adult literacy, education and job skills training, assistance in obtaining safe housing, income assistance, and transportation.

Primary Health Care Initiatives

Healthy Steps for Young Children Program - Initiative to improve delivery of developmental and behavioral services to young children through pediatric practices. Program added two nurses, nurse practitioners, early childhood educators, or social workers (all with training and experience in child development and each carrying a caseload of approximately 100 families) to the staffs of fifteen pediatric practices in fourteen states. Healthy Steps specialists met with physicians and parents during office visits, made home visits, staffed call-in child development phone lines, performed developmental assessments, provided developmental materials to parents, organized parent support groups, and made community referrals.

Respite Care

Respite care provides a range of services including temporary childcare, support, and referral services for families in order to reduce stress, support family stability, prevent child maltreatment and minimize the need for out-of-home placement. Respite may be pre-planned and scheduled, or it may be crisis or emergency oriented. It may be center-based, or it can take place in the home of the caregiver or the child. It is often part of a more comprehensive early intervention strategy provided to children with developmental delays, disabilities, and other special needs (low birth-weight infants); to children who have a chronic or terminal illness (HIV/AIDS); to children with emotional and behavioral problems; and to those children at risk for or with a history of child maltreatment.