



PRIORITIZING CHILD MALTREATMENT PREVENTION

**A TOOLKIT FOR
STRENGTHENING
NORTH
CAROLINA'S
CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES** **2022**



Prevent Child Abuse
North Carolina™



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Public Health

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview Page 3

Child Maltreatment Prevention is a Priority Page 4

Child Maltreatment is a Public Issue Page 5

Primary Prevention of Child Maltreatment..... Page 6

Child Maltreatment is Preventable..... Page 7

Overload Metaphor..... Page 7

The Five Protective Factors Page 8

Child Maltreatment is Solvable Page 9

Resources for Families Page 10

Practice: Identify Your Community Strengths..... Page 10

Tools and Materials Pages 11-12

Conclusion..... Page 13

OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC), in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), created this toolkit to help local Division of Social Service (DSS) agencies develop a shared vision, understanding and messaging around child maltreatment prevention. This toolkit provides an overview of research-based public education messages about effective child maltreatment prevention strategies and solutions.

In Spring 2022, PCANC conducted two virtual focus groups with NC DSS staff from across North Carolina. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn about the DSS workforce's beliefs around child maltreatment prevention. PCANC reviewed the information collected from the focus groups and used that data to develop this toolkit.

PCANC is offering trainings and one-on-one virtual opportunities to support DSS agencies in the implementation of this toolkit. Please contact Kris Demers, PCANC's Director of Communications and Marketing, with questions or to receive technical assistance on the implementation of this campaign or toolkit by emailing kdemers@preventchildabusenc.org or calling 919.829.8009 ext. 619.

ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NORTH CAROLINA

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina ensures that child maltreatment prevention is a priority for North Carolina and all communities have the knowledge, support, and resources to prevent child abuse and neglect. We envision a future where all children grow up in safe, stable, nurturing families and communities. Our upstream approach to preventing child maltreatment focuses on building the safe stable nurturing environments and relationships children need to thrive so child maltreatment never occurs.

ABOUT BUILDING BETTER CHILDHOODS

This toolkit is grounded in recent research from the FrameWorks Institute and is intended to support practitioners and professionals at social service organizations communicate about childhood adversity. The tools, design, and messaging were curated from the [Building Better Childhoods Toolkit](#) which is based on the February 2021 framing brief titled [“Reframing Childhood Adversity: Promoting Upstream Approaches”](#) developed by the FrameWorks Institute, in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse America, and Social Current (formerly the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities-Council on Accreditation).

CHILD MALTREATMENT PREVENTION IS A PRIORITY

North Carolina's future prosperity requires the healthy development of our children. Our state will lead in innovation, resiliency, and economic development when we invest in building strong, safe, nurturing communities. After all, children and families are our greatest natural resource.

Caring connections, strong foundations, and positive experiences matter when it comes to developing healthy brains and building thriving communities. Healthy brain development allows children to reach their full potential and benefits all of us in the long run. That's why all adults from every sector have a stake in preparing North Carolina's children to grow up to be healthy thriving members of our communities.

Child maltreatment doesn't discriminate or only impact certain families or communities. It can affect all socioeconomic classes, races, and communities. Several studies show child maltreatment affects us all, through a variety of ways including crime in our communities, increased medical and juvenile and adult justice costs to us all, and loss of worker productivity, among others. In NC alone, we spend about \$2 billion every year on the downstream consequences of child maltreatment.

But all of this is preventable. When we work together to create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments and equal opportunities for every child in every corner of North Carolina, we can remove the heaviest loads from weighing families and entire communities down – ultimately building a stronger future for us all... we are helping children reach their true potential.

TALKING POINTS

- *Child and family well-being is a top priority for our DSS agency.*
- *We must make children's health and well-being a priority for North Carolina's future success.*
- *Prioritizing supports for families equips parents and caregivers with the strong foundations they need to help their children thrive.*

CHILD MALTREATMENT IS A PUBLIC ISSUE

Every child is filled with tremendous promise – and we all have a shared obligation to foster their potential. That means shoring up the ways we support families.

A public approach to child maltreatment prevention adopts three levels of prevention strategies: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

First, there is primary prevention. The primary prevention of child maltreatment involves universally providing families with supports *before* any form of child abuse or neglect has occurred. *Primary prevention* approaches **do not** focus on the treatment of children and families *after* child abuse or neglect has occurred. This means strengthening families through strategies like increased economic supports, universal home visiting, and family-friendly workplace policies, to name a few.

Next is secondary prevention, which involves supporting families who are at an increased risk for child abuse or neglect. This includes targeted home visiting services, Early Head Start, and the Family First Prevention Services Act which redirects federal dollars toward evidence-based prevention services & programs and expand trauma-informed practice across North Carolina to improve the care children receive and prevent the need for kids to enter foster care.

And finally, tertiary prevention is the most downstream prevention services and includes responding and intervening *after* child abuse or neglect has already occurred to minimize the negative impacts and prevent further harm. This includes strategies like foster care and mental health or substance abuse programs.

But it's important to note that all levels of child maltreatment prevention must incorporate interventions at the systems level in order to address the structures that lead to inequitable outcomes and experiences of adversity in childhood.

TALKING POINTS

- *Children and families are our greatest natural resource.*
- *North Carolina will lead in innovation, resiliency, and economic development when we invest in building strong, safe, nurturing communities where children can thrive.*
- *We have a collective responsibility to foster and protect children's potential to learn, grow, and contribute to our communities.*
- *Our focus should be on reducing the pressures families face.*

PRIMARY PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

What is Primary Prevention of Child Maltreatment?

Stopping child abuse or neglect before it happens.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Stop abuse **before** it occurs.

- Family strengthening & parent supports
- Universal home visiting
- Increasing economic supports for families
- Family-friendly workplace policies

SECONDARY PREVENTION

Immediate responses to target at-risk populations.

- Early Head Start
- Targeted home visiting
- Family First Prevention Services Act

TERTIARY PREVENTION

Long-term responses to stop abuse and neglect & minimize consequences.

- Foster Care
- Mental health & substance abuse programs

UPSTREAM

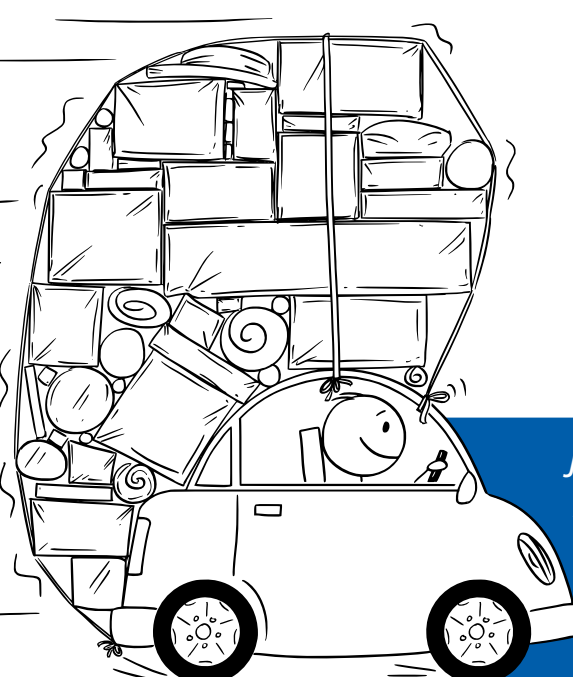
DOWNSTREAM

CHILD MALTREATMENT IS PREVENTABLE

The [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 find resources, support, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. Research has shown that the protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect.

OVERLOAD METAPHOR

Using the metaphor of an overloaded vehicle helps people understand how external and multiple pressures on families contribute to child maltreatment: These pressures, or layers of stress, can keep parents from functioning as they would like to in caring for their children.



Just like a car can only bear so much weight before it stops moving forward, stress can overburden parents and caregivers - making it hard for them to provide the best care and support for their children. To prevent a breakdown in care, we can keep the heaviest loads from weighing families down.

TALKING POINTS

- Experiencing adversity, without the buffer of a caring relationship, can produce toxic stress and disrupt healthy brain development.
- When we work together to create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children, we can remove the heaviest loads from weighing families down – ultimately building a stronger future for us all.
- We can relieve some of the overload that all families experience at times and free them up to focus on caring for themselves and their kids.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Social and Emotional Competence

Children's early experiences of being nurtured and developing a *positive relationship* with caring adult *affects all aspects* of behavior and development.

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Children *thrive* when parents provide *not only affection*, but *also* respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence.

Social Connections

Parents with a social network of *emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors* often find that it is *easier* to care for their children and themselves.

Resilience

Parents who can cope with the *stresses of everyday life*, as well an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to *bounce back* when things are not going well.

Concrete Support

Families who can meet their own *basic needs* for food, clothing, housing, and transportation—and who know how to access essential services such as childcare, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs—are *better able to ensure the safety and well-being* of their children.

ACEs can have devastating impacts on long term health

When a child experiences adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), it can have life-long consequences for physical and mental health. But, one caring adult can make a difference. That's why we know building protective factors in parents, communities and businesses is important.

5

PROTECTIVE
FACTORS



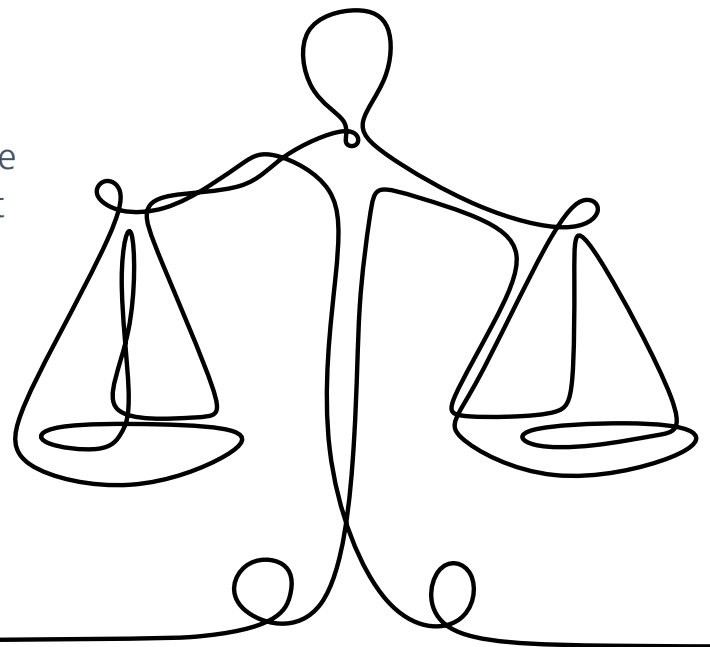
Download this graphic: **ENGLISH** **SPANISH**

CHILD MALTREATMENT IS SOLVABLE

When children experience adversity, we have a shared responsibility to buffer the impact. One innovative approach involves DSS employees having a conversation with families who come in for services to ask about difficult things their children may have experienced.

If there's a need, they can connect families to resources in the community, like family counseling or a parenting education program. The idea is to add positive supports to counterbalance the weight of negative experiences.

Issues like poverty and inadequate childcare can prevent parents from successfully parenting. But communities can help solve the issues and provide happier, healthier childhoods. Child maltreatment is solvable when we address root causes of adverse childhood experiences.



TALKING POINTS

- *Adversity is not destiny.*
- *Our amazing bodies and brains are ready to respond to positive experiences and reshape our futures, from the inside out.*
- *By investing in upstream policies and strategies that can address the root causes of child abuse and neglect, we can prevent child maltreatment from EVER occurring in the first place.*
- *We all have a responsibility to build the safe, stable, nurturing environments children need to counterbalance the weight of adversity with positive relationships and experiences.*

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

No matter what North Carolina county you’re in, your DSS agency can help strengthen families by connecting them to resources that enhance the Protective Factors:

- 1. Food and Nutrition Services
- 2. Work First Family Assistance
- 3. Energy Assistance
- 4. Medicaid and NC Health Choice
- 5. Parenting education opportunities, like Triple P [Positive Parenting Program](#), which is available for free, online to all NC parents and caregivers
- 6. The Center for Disease Control & Prevention’s Free Mental Health Resources
- 7. Local faith and community groups that can provide social supports for families
- 8. Local quality, affordable early care and education providers

What other programs, services, or resources are available to help strengthen families in your communities? Get together with colleagues to brainstorm the strengths in your community like parenting programs, food banks, diaper banks, community groups for parents and caregivers, or even a respite care program. Share these ideas with all DSS employees so they can connect families to these invaluable resources.

IDENTIFY YOUR COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Practice Session: Fine tune your knowledge of protective factors while identifying the unique strengths of your community. Fill in this table with resources, programs or services available to families in your community that promote one (or more) of the protective factors.

Social Connections	Parental Resilience	Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development	Social & Emotional Competence	Concrete Support

TOOLS & MATERIALS

These communication tools and resources have been developed and formatted for immediate use to engage your DSS workforce and the community you serve. Below you will find an overview of each material as well as recommended best practices for their implementation. Feel free to add your agency logo and share how you see fit.

Hover over the product image on the left to download the tool(s).

PRODUCT

USE

BEST PRACTICE

Flyers



5 different 8.5" x 11" signage for hand-outs, take-aways, and key locations with low visibility

- Add co-branding.
- Place in frames in key locations, e.g., back of doors in restrooms.

Posters



3 different 18" x 24" signage for placing in key locations with high visibility

- Add co-branding.
- Upload high-resolution files with a trusted printer.
- Decide paper weight in context of overall budget and quantity.
- Select a text paper weight no less than 60 lbs.; 80lbs. or 90 lbs. will add longevity and quality.
- Files include bleed and cropmarks.

Hang these posters in the following areas of your DSS Agency:

- Lobby or entryway
- Conference and meeting rooms
- Breakrooms
- Bathrooms

Social Media Images



10 unique PNG files for engaging audiences on Facebook/Twitter (1200x628), and Instagram (1080x1080). Files are associated with post copy in the Social Media Calendar and intended to promote the campaign message, sub-messages, and key observances.

- Use suggested social media messages and hashtags.
- Post images to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

TOOLS & MATERIALS

PRODUCT

USE

BEST PRACTICE

Social Media Pre-written Posts



Use this pre-written copy for posting on social media.

Make changes to the copy by adding a link to your DSS Agency or resources in your community.

ZOOM/Team Backgrounds



1920 x 1080 digital file intended for use in online meetings as a personal background.

- Save Zoom background file to your computer
- Open Zoom desktop app
- Select your profile picture, then settings
- Select Background & Filters
- Select + , add image, and select the Zoom background as your image choice

Press Release



Press release intended to announce CAP Month campaign in association with PCANC.

- Tailor press release with organizational info.
- Partner with local publishers to submit a press release for your organization.

Opinion Editorial



Opinion editorial intended to inform the community of the shift in framing child maltreatment as an issue that is preventable, solvable, and we all have a stake in.

Consider having the DSS Director of Child Welfare Administrators 'author' this piece.

Talking Points



Talking Points are intended for use engaging with stakeholders.

Tailor talking points for your DSS agency.

Powerpoint Slide



Add this PowerPoint slide to internal presentations to share with DSS staff during meetings. Use as a rotating slide on monitors.

Encourage staff to include the PowerPoint slide in presentations to generate awareness about this campaign and resources.

CONCLUSION

Please contact [Kris Demers](#), Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina's Director of Communications and Marketing, with questions about this toolkit or to receive technical assistance and support on the implementation of this campaign.

Learn more about child maltreatment prevention and the vital role you play in nurturing positive environments and experiences all children need to thrive with these additional resources:

- Take PCANC's free, online [What is Prevention Course](#)
- Take PCANC's free, online [Recognizing & Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment Course](#)
- Join the [Prevention Action Network](#)
- Watch the recorded training on this campaign toolkit (COMING SOON)
- Watch the recorded webinar on how to talk to the media about child maltreatment prevention (COMING SOON)
- Access PCANC's [Public Awareness Tools](#) throughout the year, including the Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit, the Family Support Awareness Month Toolkit, the Kids First License Plate Toolkit, and more.

State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services
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