



Primary Prevention Overview and Position

New York State spends millions of dollars each year on interventions and remediation for child abuse and neglect - secondary and tertiary interventions. While these programs and services are critically important, they are implemented after abuse and neglect have been identified.

Primary prevention, however, is focused on addressing the root causes of abuse and neglect – those factors that increase family stress and pressure on families. Those factors include many of our policy issues: housing, child care, economic stability, family supports (like home visiting). Primary prevention encompasses those initiatives that prevent abuse from ever occurring. While initiatives to improve many of these factors exist, they are not adequately funded or as comprehensive as they should be. These initiatives often operate within their own silos - not integrated or meaningfully coordinated with one another, functioning under different and conflicting rules, regulations and eligibility requirements.

We can start by creating resilient communities that drive locally-based initiatives. We can build these communities on the Five Protective Factors: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence for children. We need to build the skills of all professionals working with children and families to operationalize these protective factors into actions that dictate and govern their interactions with those they serve. Knowledge of theory is meaningless unless put into practice.

Individuals, professionals who work with children and families, communities and systems need to better focus on alleviating the stress of families, a major risk factor for abuse. All of our systems that exist solely to support family success unintentionally add to family stress: the health care system, education system, child care system, child welfare system, mental health system - the list goes on and on. If we are not focused on alleviating stress, we will always unintentionally add to stress, making families less safe.

Our mission at Prevent Child Abuse New York is to prevent child abuse in all its forms and our vision for the future is that all children will be loved, nurtured and protected. We put forward a strong call to action. For systems. For communities. For professionals. For individuals. We need to increase investment in the multiple existing primary prevention efforts across the State; provide skills-building training for professionals to enable them to more authentically support family success by alleviating stress; and better coordinate and integrate family support systems and services to enable those systems to refocus efforts on why they exist and who they are serving.