

# Sample Talking Points

Below are specific talking points about child abuse and neglect prevention. The emphasis of your remarks should be that everyone in the community is able to do something to help prevent child abuse every day. Remember to tailor your presentation for the format of your program, the nature of your audience, and the length of your presentation.

Please refer to other fact sheets in this packet and online from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>) and Prevent Child Abuse America ([www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)) to supplement these talking points.

## Child abuse continues to be an important public issue.

- \* The President and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, recognize April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- \* This year's theme, *Gateways to Prevention – What Everyone Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse*, focuses on raising awareness about prevention efforts and what every one of us can do to help keep children safe.
- \* This is a national problem; it affects children in every community.
- \* In 2001, three million reports of suspected child abuse were made, concerning the welfare of approximately five million children. Of those five million children, 903,000 were found to have been abused. [ADD LOCAL AND STATEWIDE STATISTICS, IF AVAILABLE.]

## What is child abuse?

- \* Child maltreatment is harm (or risk of harm) caused to a child by a parent, caretaker, or another person responsible for the child's safety.
- \* There are four major types of child maltreatment: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.  
[PROVIDE INFORMATION FROM YOUR STATE'S DEFINITIONS IF THEY DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THESE.]

**Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

**Physical Abuse** is physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, stabbing, choking, or otherwise harming a child.

**Sexual Abuse** includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

**Emotional Abuse** includes constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.



**Child abuse prevention centers on finding ways to support parents and families so that children can live in nurturing and healthy homes. We all have a role to play in keeping children safe. Remember the “Five R’s,” courtesy of Prevent Child Abuse America:**

**Raise the issue.**

Call or write your candidates and elected officials to educate them about issues in your community and the need for child abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment programs.

Contact your local school district and faith community to encourage them to sponsor classes and support programs for new parents.

**Reach out to kids and parents in your community.**

Anything you do to support kids and parents in your family and extended community helps reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Be a good neighbor. Offer to baby-sit. Donate your children’s used clothing, furniture, and toys for use by another family. Be kind and supportive, particularly to new parents and children.

**Remember the risk factors.**

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- \* Abuse alcohol or drugs
- \* Are isolated from their families or communities
- \* Have difficulty controlling their anger or stress
- \* Appear uninterested in the care, nourishment, or safety of their children
- \* Seem to be having serious economic, housing, or personal problems

**Recognize the warning signs.**

Some of the warning signs that a child might be abused or neglected include:

- \* Nervousness around adults
- \* Aggression toward adults or other children
- \* Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods
- \* Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities
- \* Acting out sexually or showing interest in sex that is not appropriate for his or her age
- \* Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries
- \* Low self-esteem
- \* Poor hygiene

**Report suspected abuse or neglect.**

If you suspect abuse or neglect is occurring, report it—and keep reporting it—until something is done. Contact child protective services (in your local phone book) or your local police department.

You can find the reporting number in your State by using the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information publication, *Child Abuse Reporting Numbers*, found online at [http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/reslist/rs\\_dsp.cfm?rs\\_id=5&rate\\_chno=11-11172](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/reslist/rs_dsp.cfm?rs_id=5&rate_chno=11-11172). For more information on how and where to file a report, call Childhelp USA<sup>®</sup>, National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-Child<sup>®</sup>).

**Other ways you can help support families—in April, and throughout the year:**

[SELECT ACTIVITIES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR AUDIENCE. FOR MORE IDEAS, SEE “BUILDING GATEWAYS TO PREVENTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY,” PAGE 37 OF THIS PACKET.]

- \* Encourage schools and other community organizations to provide classes in parenting education for students and parents.
- \* Request a speaker or in-service training through the child protective services hotline.
- \* Provide friendship and guidance to parents and children who need your help by volunteering for programs such as Befriend-a-Child or Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).
- \* Start or join community efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- \* If you see a parent abusing a child in public, approach and say something like, “Looks like you’re having a rough day, is there anything I can do to help?”
- \* If you are in a store and a child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if the child has been left unattended in a shopping cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.

