

# What You and Your Community Can Do to Help Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

## **Remember** *that children are our future*

Children are our future and their early years have an enormous impact on their future health and success. Child abuse prevention is one result of a firm community commitment to supporting children and the families raising them.

## **Recognize** *that prevention is a shared responsibility*

Parenting is the toughest job any of us will ever undertake, and our most important civic contribution. As parents we have enormous responsibility to raise our children to be productive members of society, and as citizens we are responsible for ensuring that all parents and families have access to the support, information and services they need to succeed.

## **Raise** *the issue of prevention*

We all care about the issue of child abuse. But, we hear a lot more about the problem than we do about the solutions. Preventing child abuse means setting the stage for healthy, stable families who have the tools they need for nurturing their children. Help your community understand *prevention*. Ask your elected officials to support programs and services that help families and children. 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*

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

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

## **Recommend** *ideas that your community can use\**

There are many programs, services and actions that support families and prevent child abuse.

**Facilitate friendships and support.** Offer opportunities for parents in the neighborhood to get to know each other, develop support systems, and take leadership roles. Strategies may include sports teams, potlucks, classes, advisory groups, board leadership and volunteer opportunities.

**Strengthen parenting.** Develop ways for parents to get support on parenting issues when they need it. Possibilities include classes, support groups, home visits, tip sheets in pediatricians' offices and resource libraries.

**Respond to family crises.** Offer extra support to families when they need it, as in times of illness, job loss, housing problems and other stressors.

**Link families to services and opportunities.** Make sure families know where to go for job training, education, health care, mental health and other essential services.

\*Adapted from *Building on Strengths: Enhancing Protective Factors for Children and Families*, National Clearinghouse of Child Abuse and Neglect Information.

