

Prevent child abuse with strong families

Child abuse affects hundreds of thousands of children each year. Even if you don't know someone affected by child abuse, you can help prevent it. It starts with knowing its causes and risk factors.



WHY DOES ABUSE HAPPEN?

If a parent or caregiver has these risk factors, child abuse is more likely to happen:

- Low self-esteem
- Poor impulse or temper control
- Untreated mental health conditions like depression or anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Lack of education or knowledge about child development
- Unemployment or poverty

In addition, if a child has special needs or a challenging temperament, they are more likely to be abused. Babies and young children, because they require constant care, are also more likely to be abused than older children. Teens are at a higher risk of sexual abuse than younger children.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors are things that lower the risk of child abuse or neglect. Protective factors include:

- Having resources for things everyone needs, like food, transportation and housing
- Access to safe schools and health care
- Parents who have ways to cope with stress
- A strong family support system of family and friends
- Children who have self-esteem, confidence and independence
- Parents and children who communicate well with each other

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

If you suspect that someone is abusing or neglecting a child, there are resources to help.

- **State child abuse and neglect agencies:** Contact your local child protective services office or law enforcement agency.
- **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1.800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453). Professional crisis counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 170 languages. All calls are confidential. The hotline offers crisis intervention, information and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service and support resources.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Child Welfare Information Gateway