

## 2017 Federal Public Policy Agenda

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There's nothing more important for the future of our nation than to ensure that children in every community have the great childhood they deserve. In order to make this dream a reality, we urge Congress to take action and strengthen American policies.

Child abuse and neglect has profound and far-reaching effects that impact a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development, including the very architecture of their brain. Research is clear: prevention reduces the likelihood of costly ailments to the individual and to society, including mental illness, criminal justice, child welfare, substance abuse and addiction, chronic health problems, lowered educational achievement, and the perpetuation of abuse and neglect.<sup>i</sup>

*Individuals who experience child maltreatment are more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as smoking, substance abuse and sexual promiscuity, and to suffer from adverse health effects such as obesity and chronic diseases (Centers for Disease Control, 2013)*

Prevention services strengthen families by improving parental education and job prospects, increase upward mobility and opportunity, and enable families to achieve self-sufficiency. Ultimately, giving families the tools they need to help grow the next generation of American leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs.

But in today's world, children are disproportionately affected by budget cuts, especially to funding streams that provide substance use, mental health, medical, and other support services that parents need to help them provide a safe, stable and nurturing home. In 2017, *one in four children live in poverty and nearly two-thirds rely on federal programs.*<sup>ii</sup> Children must be kept at the forefront, so they are not the casualties of broad-based budget cuts that destabilize their future success.

Child abuse and neglect affects over *one million children*<sup>iii</sup> annually and costs our nation \$124 billion every year in new costs.<sup>iv</sup> Implementation of effective policies to prevent child abuse and neglect can save taxpayers *\$80 billion per year.*<sup>v</sup> In fact, a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that total federal costs of prevention program funding were offset over four years.<sup>vi</sup>

### **This is a return on investment that cannot be ignored.**

For these reasons, Prevent Child Abuse America advocates for policies, legislation and programs that not only promote healthy child development, but help to improve family functioning as well, supporting families and preventing child abuse and neglect before it occurs. We must prioritize children in both policy and budget decisions and increase early funding for prevention to save taxpayers over the long-term while simultaneously improving outcomes for children at risk.

To accomplish this, Prevent Child Abuse America urges the President and Congress to take the following actions in 2017:

### **Reauthorize the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program:**

The [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting \(MIECHV\) program](#) is an evidence-based policy that supports overburdened families at-risk for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including child maltreatment. This bipartisan, federal and state partnership supports funding for voluntary home visiting services in every state that build upon ***decades of scientific research***, helping states to achieve impressive outcomes at significant savings for state and federal governments.

The MIECHV program provided more than 2.3 million visits to at-risk families across 50 states, D.C. and five territories in communities that are at highest risk of infant mortality, poverty, low-weight births and teen pregnancy. The program *meets the most rigorous standards for accountability* and requires that programs demonstrate improvement among eligible families in six benchmark areas: maternal and newborn health; prevention of child injuries, including maltreatment; school readiness; reduction in crime or domestic violence; family economic self-sufficiency; linkages and referrals.

Prevent Child Abuse America worked to successfully extend this program twice since its initial authorization, maintaining its annual funding level. Yet in 2016, home visiting still only reaches one-third of the counties that states themselves identify as highest risk.

We ask Congress and the President to pass a 5-year extension with incremental funding increases up to \$800M per year for this successful federal-state partnership and pro-family program. We look forward to working with lawmakers to help continue evidence-based home visiting services in high-risk communities across the country, including programs like [Healthy Families America](#).

### **Reauthorize and Invest in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)**

We have an extraordinary opportunity to follow the best path to a prosperous future for our nation and our communities by giving all children the opportunity for future success. The [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act](#) (CAPTA), created in 1974, is the only federal legislation exclusively targeting prevention, assessment, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It is also the only federal legislation providing for universal primary prevention of child abuse and neglect capacity building.

Congress must *act urgently* to reauthorize CAPTA, including adequately funding and fully implementing provisions in the law.

Thanks to CAPTA, states receive grants to address child abuse and neglect. *However, in 2016 the federal government is funding CAPTA at a level of just 32 cents per child per year.*

In FY 2016, CAPTA state grants provided less than \$26 million a year for all 50 states with some states receiving less than \$100,000 annually to cover child protection, reporting, investigations, prevention services, training, workforce recruitment and data collection. In FY 2016, Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) grants, which are structured to leverage local and private funds, were funded at \$40 million, half of the federal authorization cap of \$80 million. This relatively small sum has been the key federal investment in primary prevention for the entire country.

**We spend less per child per year than we spend on an average cup of coffee.**



**\$2.10\***  
per day



**32¢\*\***  
per child under 18  
per year

\* Estimates are based on a 16-ounce grande coffee at \$2.10 per cup (source USA Today, Starbucks brand).  
\*\* Based on total annual Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) state grants.

The estimated average lifetime cost per victim of nonfatal child maltreatment is \$210,012, including \$32,648 in childhood health care costs; \$10,530 in adult medical costs; \$144,360 in productivity losses; \$7,728 in child welfare costs; \$6,747 in criminal justice costs; and \$7,999 in special education costs<sup>vii</sup>.

Investing in prevention is less costly to society and individuals than trying to treat problems later. Research indicates prevention programs lay the foundation for family resilience and healthy developmental trajectories while also addressing individual family need. State grants from CAPTA and CB-CAP provide a continuum of preventive services, allow the development of unique approaches and foster understanding and knowledge of diverse populations to address child abuse and neglect prevention in our communities. The expansive mission and directives inserted into CAPTA by Congress are grossly underfunded and lead to uneven implementation and protection. **We request no less than \$30 million dollars for CAPTA state grants.**

We call on Congress to strengthen the law by including the necessary funding and resources to states through authorization levels and the annual budget process.

**National Leadership to Prioritize Prevention and Ensure Safety in Federal Budget and Policy Decisions:**

The President and Congress face difficult budgetary choices every year and it takes courage to make tough decisions in times of fiscal constraint. Prevent Child Abuse America will work to ensure decisions related to the federal budget maintain and, where appropriate, enhance our nation's commitment to healthy child development and strengthen American policies by:

- Ensuring that the budget process and funding decisions allow families to meet the basic needs of their children by empowering families to achieve self-sufficiency and access to quality services, such as health care and child care; and,
- Investing in evidence-based services to prevent child abuse and neglect, such as early childhood home visiting, parenting education, trauma-informed care, social and emotional learning, bullying and child sexual abuse prevention, among others. This includes level or increased funding for:
  - The Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) at \$800 million over 5 years;
  - Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) at \$2,805 billion;
  - Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) at \$335 million;
  - Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit;
  - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) state grant funding at \$30 million and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants (CB-CAP) at \$42 million;
  - Restore funding for preventive services funded by the Title IV-B, Child Welfare Services (CWS) to \$269 million;
  - Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC);
  - 21st Century Cures Act grants and training to promote infant and early childhood mental health;
  - Evidence-based processes such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Essentials for Childhood Framework* to \$16.25 million to fund 25 new states;
  - Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) at \$1.7 billion; and,
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at \$16.5 billion.

**Build Infrastructure to Restore the American Dream: Stronger Families, Stronger Communities and National Progress, A National Strategy for America's Children**

It is clear that we need to create a new direction and build a brighter future for America's children. Congress and the President should build the infrastructure to empower future generation's success. We owe it our children and our nation to outline a specific course of action including:

- Support flexible funding in existing entitlement programs to provide critical services in mental health, substance abuse, and in-home parent skills training such as counseling and early infant home visiting services to support identification and mitigation of risk within families.
- Develop standard definitions, investigative procedures, and reporting requirements across all 50 states in an effort to eliminate inconsistent state definitions of maltreatment which affect legal standards and create barriers to multidisciplinary coordination and data collection.
- Invest in a public health and safety approach to tackle complex social problems and support community change. Create a coordinated approach involving federal, state, private and public institutions and increase primary prevention services, including:
  - Place greater emphasis on educating the American public on healthy child development through social norms research and a national public information campaign;
  - Increase multidisciplinary support for families by proactively reducing familial and community stressors, including studying the effects of poverty on child maltreatment and neglect;
  - Develop a standardized assessment for child well-being that is aligned with national and international methodologies and is useful to both community and state levels;
  - Invest in the research and development of an evidence-based screening tool for ACEs to provide upstream connections to services; and,
  - Recognize that the healthy development of children is the shared responsibility of other societal institutions such as corporations, faith-based communities and local service organizations.
- Provide adequate funding for access to targeted and responsive services and supports for families that address underlying issues including prenatal care, mental health, employment, education, housing, early childhood education, paid family leave, parent skills training, as well as substance abuse, and domestic violence programs.
- Issue guidance to states regarding the use of Medicaid, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for wraparound services, where it is permitted, including what can be used to fund services such as mental health treatment, health screenings, and substance use screening and treatment.

**Conclusion – Our Future Depends on It:**

Looking ahead, Prevent Child Abuse America will work with the President, Congress, stakeholders and national coalitions to ensure important programs, services and funding are protected. Our nation must work together to address the social and economic challenges confronting a shared vision and help shape a future where all of America's children have the great childhood they deserve.

2017 should become the starting point for a call for universal services, a substantial increase in funding and state action plans based upon a collective agreement that every child deserves a great childhood. Prevention of child abuse and neglect should be a national priority and we hope Congress and the Administration act urgently to prioritize the recommendations in our agenda.

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<sup>i</sup> Fang, X., et al. (2012). *The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention*. Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 36, Issue 2, pages 156–165.

<sup>ii</sup> Laughlin, Lynda, 2014, A Child's Day: Living Arrangements, Nativity, and Family Transitions: 2011, Current Population Reports, P70-139, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. and USDA – Economic Research Service. *Child Poverty*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/child-poverty/>

<sup>iii</sup> Sedlak, A.J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., and Li, S. (2010). *Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

<sup>iv</sup> Fang, X., et al. (2012). *The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention*. Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 36, Issue 2, pages 156–165

<sup>v</sup> Gelles, Richard J., & Perlman, Staci (2012). *Estimated Annual Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect*. Chicago IL: Prevent Child Abuse America. [http://www.preventchildabuse.org/images/research/pcaa\\_cost\\_report\\_2012\\_gelles\\_perlman.pdf](http://www.preventchildabuse.org/images/research/pcaa_cost_report_2012_gelles_perlman.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> U.S. General Accountability Office. (1992). *Prevention Programs Need Greater Emphasis. Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate*. (GAO Publication No. GAO/HRD-92-99).

<sup>vii</sup> Fang, X., et al. (2012). *The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention*. Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 36, Issue 2, pages 156–165.