Preventing Child Neglect Is More Than a Family Matter: It Takes All of Us

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Teresa Rafael, Alliance Executive Director
Corey Best, Birth Parent National Network
Agenda

Welcome and Introductions
Alliance’s neglect prevention work – What we know
Innovative neglect prevention strategies – Communications, Protective Factors, Theory of Change/Call to Action
Next Steps
Questions and answers
Who Is In the Room?

Fields of Work?
Direct Services to Parents/ Families?
Knowledge of the Protective Factors Framework?
Experience with Preventing Child Neglect?
The Alliance has invested five years of significant attention to understanding and promoting strategies that help build healthy communities and prevent child neglect.

We are developing tools for sharing parent perspectives on preventing child neglect.

Based on our Theory of Change, we are identifying examples around the country of implementation of strategies that work.
The Search for a Definition

While there is no singular definition of child neglect, the Alliance uses the following:

**Child Neglect** is a failure to meet children’s basic needs – whether the failure is the responsibility of parents, communities or society – and this void places children in harm’s way.
There is a Thin Line...

between societal neglect of families and communities and parental neglect of children.

Let’s think of this issue in a new and broader way and explore the range of solutions provided.
Conceptualizing Neglect

Parental neglect of children

Societal neglect of families

Community neglect of families

Societal neglect of community
Think of Examples…

Community Neglect of Families

Societal Neglect of Communities

Societal Neglect of Families
Child Neglect Trends

- Is the most common form of child maltreatment in the U.S. today
- Is the most frequently investigated allegation by CPS
- Is the most common reason for placing children in foster care
- Is the type of maltreatment most closely associated with poverty

Indicators of poverty are more consistent predictors of neglect than most measures of parenting. In fiscal year 2013, 80% of all cases nationally referred to child protective services (CPS) involved neglect. Trends in neglect have not declined in pace with declines in physical and sexual abuse. The trend is to view all forms of child maltreatment through a public health perspective.
Poverty and Neglect

Poverty is repeatedly shown to be a risk factor for child maltreatment, in particular, child neglect.

Line between poverty and neglect is sometimes blurred.

Parents and the “can’t win” dilemma.

American ideology that poverty equates to a personal flaw.

Yet, longstanding philosophy in child welfare that poverty does not equal maltreatment:

- Children should not be separated from their families “for reasons of poverty alone.”
- This phrase has permeated child welfare practice philosophy for over 100 years and is common in many state statutory definitions of neglect even today.

Kristen Shook Slack, PhD, Presentation to the Birth Parent National Network Virtual Convening, November 3 2015 (www.bpnn.ctfalliance.org)
Poverty has a Sense of Urgency, But Most Families in Poverty Do Not Neglect Their Children

Action is Needed to:

- Shore up the safety net
- Raise political awareness about poverty
- Reframe issues & narratives in ways that reduce or eliminate polarization of our reactions to social problems
- Move discussion from incriminating parents to examining context & communities in which almost all parents are trying to raise children safely
Good news! IT’S PREVENTABLE
Child Neglect within the SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

**Child Neglect Risk Factors**

**SOCIETY**
- Poverty and deprivation of basic needs
- Lack of collective (shared) responsibility for children
- Low level of importance to politicians – lack of political will

**COMMUNITY (Neighborhood)**
- Environmental problems
  - Neighborhood violence
  - Unemployment
  - Inadequate housing
  - Social isolation
- Caregiver childhood adversity

**FAMILY**
- Maternal depression
- Situational or enduring problems
  - Mental health
  - Substance abuse
  - Interpersonal family violence
- Apathy/hopeless

**CHILD (Individual)**
- Child vulnerability
  - Young age
  - Poor health
  - Disabilities and behavioral challenges
  - Unmet basic needs

**Protective Factors to the Rescue**

**SOCIETY**
- Concrete Supports

**COMMUNITY (Neighborhood)**
- Concrete Supports for Parents (Quality Child Care)
- Community Norming of Acceptable Parenting Behaviors
- Social Connections (Cohesion)

**FAMILY**
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (Early Childhood Education)
- Parental Resilience (Hope)
- Faith and Spirituality
- Nurturing and Attachment

**CHILD (Individual)**
- Attachment
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children
A Research-Based Action-Oriented Approach to Preventing Child Neglect

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO GET FROM HERE...

A CALL TO ACTION TO PREVENT CHILD NEGLECT
Theory of Change/ Call to Action: PREVENT CHILD NEGLECT

SOCIETY
Federal laws and public policies that
• Remediate child and family poverty
• Meet children’s basic needs
• Increase supports of family policies
• Support father involvement
• Develop partnerships with families
• Respect culturally diverse practices
• Promote universal approaches that target very young children and families
• Encourage comprehensive, integrative approaches

Public will and social norms that
• Encourage giving of ourselves to benefit those less fortunate
• Eliminate stigma associated with needing and asking for help
• Expect formal and informal leaders to “walk the talk”

Federal and state financing that
• Invest in cost-effective prevention efforts
• Fund strategies/programs that collectively meet the multi-dimensional needs of families
• Prioritize research funding (including neuroscience)

COMMUNITY
Neighborhood
• Available/accessible/affordable/quality
  • Food
  • Housing
  • Education
  • Child care
  • Transportation
  • Health care
  • Job opportunities/living income
  • Social supports
• Safe, stable and nurturing environment
• Parent participation in local endeavors
• Community culture of collaboration
• Concrete supports in times of need
• Linkages to quality services when needed
• Culturally specific services and supports
• Research-based services selection to enhance child and family well-being

INDIVIDUAL
Parent/ Caregiver/Child
Strategies and methods that build and sustain
• Physical, emotional and economic well-being
• Knowledge of parenting and child development
• Parental resilience
• Social and emotional competence of children
• Parent’s ability to obtain assistance if needed

FAMILY
Relationship
Strategies and methods that build and sustain
• Strong families
• Healthy partner relationship
• Nurturing and attachment
• Fathers’ involvement
• Social connections
• Family’s ability to provide basic needs for children
• Parents as key decision-makers in their own families

OUTCOMES:
Humanitarian Society
Supportive and Thriving Communities
Strong and Stable Families
Safe and Healthy Children

NATIONAL ALLIANCE of CHILDREN’S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS
Building Healthy Communities and Preventing Child Neglect

IT’S MORE THAN A FAMILY MATTER

**CHILD NEGLECT** is a failure to meet children’s basic needs – whether the failure is the responsibility of parents, communities or society – and this void places children in harm’s way.

**FACTS** about Child Neglect

- **ABUSE** More than 75% of all cases in the United States
- **NEGLIGENCE** Most Common Form of Child Maltreatment
- Cognitive and Academic Deficits
- Social Withdrawal and Limited Peer Interactions
- Violent and Criminal Behavior
- Possible Long-Term Impacts
- **$585 B** total burden
- **$1.24 B** lifetime productivity loss due to death

Cost of Child Maltreatment in billions of USD (2008)

**Good news** IT’S PREVENTABLE

NATIONAL ALLIANCE of CHILDREN’S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS
EXPAND THE CONVERSATION

PREVENTING CHILD NEGLECT will require effective messaging to increase public support for policies and programs that improve children’s lives. We must expand the conversation to help people see that we have a collective, public responsibility for our children.

MESSAGES to Mobilize Support

NATIONAL ALLIANCE of CHILDREN’S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS
Everyone Needs an Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is essential for communicating the preventing child neglect message quickly, clearly and distinctly. A good pitch:

- Should be no longer than 60 seconds or about 200 words
- Takes planning and practice

Think of your elevator speech as an executive summary that provides a quick overview of the Preventing Child Neglect Initiative and why it is going to be successful.

Key Components of a Quality Elevator Speech

1. What problem are you trying to solve? Does your elevator speech address meeting children’s basic needs?
2. Keep it simple. Use plain English and avoid buzzwords.
3. Would people want to know more? Think about the issue in a different way. Does your pitch invite interest?
4. Does it invite passion? If you are excited, your listeners will be too.
**The Community Connection**
Focus on the big picture:
- It’s everyone’s responsibility. Communities are ultimately responsible for welfare of children.
- It’s not just nice to do. It’s necessary for the long-term success of the community.
- Communities benefit from addressing child neglect by producing safer, happier children and families.

**Order Matters**
- Start with BIG ideas
- Then move to issue types
- Only after first two, speak about specific policies, programs and solutions

*Explain the link between cause and solution. Do not assume people can connect the dots.*

**Change the Dialogue**
- Raise political awareness about poverty.
- Create messages that challenges the notion that support to families is coddling them.
- Move discussion from incriminating parents to examining context and communities in which parents are trying to raise children safely.

**Use Solution-Oriented Stories**
To help change minds and build:
- More support for children’s policies
- More support for government action
- More support for public investment
- Higher priority for children’s programs

**Together we can do more.”**

**“Each of us has been helped by someone in our lives. It is our responsibility to give back.”**

**“The whole community benefits when children grow up to be healthy, productive adults.”**

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CHILDREN’S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS
Resources Available from the Alliance
cfalliance.org

- Executive summary of the key informant interviews
- Special editions of the Research Review (literature review, Discussion on key informant interview as a qualitative research methodology)
- Fact Sheets
- Sample educational powerpoint presentations on neglect prevention
- Info-Graphics: Facts About Child Neglect; Communicating about Child Neglect Prevention; Alliance Theory of Change
- Alliance’s free of charge 14-hour online training on the protective factors framework
- Information about the Alliance’s 3-day training for trainers
- Applications to join the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN)
New Tools under Consideration through Neglect Prevention Community of Practice

- **You Can Help Prevent Child Neglect in Your Community** includes concrete actions targeted audiences can take (target audiences may include general public, agencies, community organizations and policymakers).
- **A bank of parent stories** that can be used to illustrate how parents have worked in partnership with programs/communities to prevent child neglect and build social capital among families.
- **Resource to engage parents in helping to increase understanding of child neglect** (This may be a conversation guide to use to help bring people together, facilitate dialogue and help create greater understanding about child neglect and prevention strategies.)
- **Two-page brief for a Board member, legislator or other policymaker** to gain understanding as to why to start shifting funding to programs identified as effective in strengthening families and preventing child neglect.
What Can I Do Now?

- Reframe the issue of neglect and expand the discussion beyond incriminating parents
- Communicate the importance of child neglect prevention to your family members, neighbors, work colleagues and others
- Mobilize community supports and information and referral services to help families access them
- Dialogue with policymakers about child neglect issues and propose solutions to address them
- Partner with parents in promoting effective messages to build healthy communities and prevent child neglect.

- Join the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN) to find out if there are parents in your area who may be interested in working with you on neglect prevention strategies (To join the BPNN, please email: info@ctfalliance.org or you can learn more at bpnn.ctfalliance.org)
Think About Your Interest and Readiness for Preventing Child Neglect

- Your level of interest
- Your readiness to expand your focus on neglect prevention
- Time and resources you can invest
- What assistance do you need? From whom?
Join Us in Preventing Child Neglect

We all have an important role to play in ensuring that children are safe and cared for, families are strong and communities support children and their families.

Join us in this collective work. Begin spreading the word, helping families build protective factors and promoting strategies, programs and policies that help prevent child neglect.
Birth Parent National Network (BPNN)

Contact the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN) to find out if there are parents in your area who may be interested in working with you on neglect prevention strategies.

BPNN Contact:
Meryl Levine, Senior Consultant
National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds
meryl.levine@ctfalliance.org

BPNN website: bpnn.ctfalliance.org
To learn more about building healthy communities and preventing child neglect, visit
http://ctfalliance.org/neglect
Working Together to Build Healthy Communities and Prevent Child Neglect

Questions and Answers
Thanks for Being With Us!

For more information and to download the neglect prevention tools and resources, check out the website for the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds at

www.ctfalliance.org
Alliance Contact Information for Neglect Prevention Strategies

Meryl Levine, Senior Consultant
National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds
Phone: 818-523-9410 -- E-mail: meryl.levine@ctf alliance.org

Teresa Rafael, Executive Director
National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds
Phone: 206-526-1221 -- E-mail: teresa.rafael@ctf alliance.org

Corey Best, Birth Parent National Network
info@ctf alliance.org