Prevent Child Abuse America® advocates for policies and services that strengthen families, promote healthy child development, and prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs.

In the United States, at least one in seven children experience child abuse and/or neglect annually. Studies show that the total lifetime economic burden associated with child maltreatment is approximately $2 trillion.\(^1\) This economic burden rivals the cost of high profile public health epidemics and issues, such as stroke and type 2 diabetes.

Greater focus on prevention now yields significant cost reduction later, saving taxpayers from long-term, costly interventions, while simultaneously improving outcomes for children and families. Our nation must prioritize children in both policy and budget decisions by significantly increasing funding for prevention.

Prevent Child Abuse America urges the President and Congress to take the following actions in 2019:

**REAUTHORIZE THE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT (CAPTA)**

Originally enacted in 1974, CAPTA remains the only federal program exclusively dedicated to the prevention, assessment, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It is also the only federal legislation providing universal primary prevention capacity building to support local services essential to building healthy and thriving communities in every state.

**We ask that Congress:**

**1. Act urgently to reauthorize CAPTA.**

CAPTA expired on September 30, 2015 and must be reauthorized in order to provide the necessary resources states need to help develop, implement, and evaluate strategies that prevent child maltreatment, reduce entry into the public child welfare system, and enhance the overall wellbeing outcomes of children and families.

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2. Increase CAPTA’s funding to $1 billion annually, appropriating $500 million to Title I and Title II respectively.

The expansive mission and directives inserted into CAPTA by Congress are severely underfunded and have led to uneven implementation and protection. CAPTA is currently funded at less than half its authorized level of $200 million, a drop in the bucket compared to the public dollars spent after neglect or abuse has occurred. Some states receive as little as $85,000 annually in order to properly meet nearly two-dozen mandated state grant requirements while also maintaining their Child Protective Service (CPS) systems.


CB-CAP grants provide critical support for locally-driven services that are essential to building healthy and thriving communities, including voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs, parental skills-building, self-help programs, mental health and substance use services, and other family support services. Although Congress has authorized funding of $80 million per year for CB-CAP, it is currently funded at $39 million annually for all 50 states, falling short of the funding necessary to implement and evaluate these programs throughout each state and provide service delivery.

Increasing funding to $500 million annually will allow for greater service delivery to address the needs of vulnerable families and facilitate robust systems-building at the state and community levels. CB-CAP can serve as a catalyst for, and partner to, other related policy areas including: early childhood development, broad parenting support, health, mental health, substance abuse, jobs, upward mobility, and access to opportunities, among others.

4. Re-envision and modernize CAPTA by supporting policies that prioritize prevention and family strengthening strategies, build up services and infrastructure, and disseminate and bring to scale best practices.

CAPTA, as written in 1974, is primarily focused on intervention-based child welfare strategies that are implemented after crisis occurs, rather than on the prevention of crisis through family strengthening and support. We urge Congress to overhaul CAPTA to have a stronger focus on prevention and family strengthening strategies; better align to current best practices; and support a system that empowers families and communities by providing the tools and resources necessary for a healthy, safe home so that the foster care is a system of last resort.

We also urge Congress to re-envision Title I to encourage states and localities to provide service delivery and infrastructure. By creating community networks of child and family services, communities can be empowered to build collaboration, infrastructure, and linkages at the systems and case levels. Building these linkages could help create the infrastructure for the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), the SUPPORT Act, and other existing federal policy to succeed. Title I should also be re-envisioned to support increased accountability among states, investments in new demonstration grants, and expanding research and technical assistance.
PRIORITIZE PREVENTION IN FEDERAL BUDGET AND POLICY DECISIONS

We will work with Congress to promote policies that ensure families are able to meet the basic needs of their children through greater financial security and access to quality services, such as health care and child care.

We will work with Congress to ensure adequate federal funding for services to prevent child abuse and neglect, such as evidence-based early childhood home visiting, parenting education, trauma-informed early childhood systems, and child sexual abuse prevention.

We will engage in collaborative, comprehensive advocacy with our allied organizations and internal networks to ensure federal policies and funding prioritize prevention in order to enhance the government’s commitment to strengthening families and child wellbeing.

Such policies include, but are not limited to:

- Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) set to expire in 2020
- Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)
- Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF)
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF)
- Paid Family Leave
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- 21st Century Cures Act
- Evidence-based federal initiatives such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Essentials for Childhood Framework which we would like to see expanded to all 50 states

INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE MATERNAL, INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV) PROGRAM

The MIECHV program is an evidence-based policy that supports overburdened families at-risk for adverse childhood experiences, including child maltreatment. In 2018, Congress reauthorized MIECHV for five years, until 2022, but failed to allocate additional funding beyond its funding level of $400 million annually. Stagnant funding has meant that MIECHV serves only a fraction of the children and families who could benefit from home visiting. MIECHV currently serves approximately 150,000 families, while 18 million children and families are projected at risk nationally and could benefit if MIECHV was expanded and more widely available. We recommend that Congress double funding for MIECHV from $400 million annually to $800 million annually over the remaining four years to enable MIECHV to serve more children and families in need.
MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ENACTED PREVENTION POLICY AND EVALUATION

- **Monitor the Family First Prevention Services Act landmark legislation**
  The historic Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA), enacted on February 9, 2018, redirects federal investments toward evidence-based prevention services and programs that are intended to prevent the need for children to enter foster care. PCA America’s home visiting program, Health Families America®, is currently being reviewed as a qualified program for the FFPSA clearinghouse.

  *We will work with Congress and federal agencies tasked with carrying out FFPSA to ensure implementation prioritizes prevention, and states are issued the guidance they need to build up services.*

  *We will work with our national 50-state chapter network and other allies to advocate for inclusive definitions, including state definitions of imminent risk, to broaden access to these critical funds.*

- **Monitor the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Evaluation (MIHOPE)**
  The Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE) is a legislatively-mandated, large-scale evaluation of the effectiveness of home visiting programs funded by MIECHV. Healthy Families America has long embraced a continuous quality improvement philosophy and continues to strengthen best practices based on the most rigorous scientific research, and will take findings from the report into account.

**BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE AND AWARENESS FOR PREVENTION POLICY**

**Invest in efforts to prevent child sexual abuse, including institutional child sex abuse.**

Congress must do more to support states and communities working to prevent child sex abuse (CSA), including building consensus and policy to deter and address institutional CSA. Given the rise in public discourse from large-scale cases of proven institutional CSA, increased funding for the prevention of CSA is vital. With funding states can implement initiatives that provide evidence-informed child sex abuse prevention education. This includes prevention in schools and youth-serving organizations and assistance to these entities to implement and institutionalize safe child policies and practices that include: training employees, volunteers, and parents to learn about child sexual abuse and its prevention; developing codes of conduct; screening prospective employees and volunteers; and reporting and responding appropriately to boundary violations, and suspected or disclosed cases of child sexual abuse.

Our nation must work together to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect through necessary resources and support. Prevent Child Abuse America will work with the President, Congress, federal agencies, our allied partner organizations, stakeholders, and national coalitions to ensure vital programs and services are funded so all of America’s children have the opportunity for the healthy and safe childhoods. Reaching children and families sooner is the key to avoiding unnecessary trauma, disrupting intergenerational cycles of maltreatment, and achieving better outcomes for children and families. We urge Congress and the Administration to prioritize and act on the recommendations in our agenda.
Founded in 1972, Prevent Child Abuse America is a national organization dedicated to healthy child development and the prevention of child abuse and neglect, with chapters in all 50 states and nearly 600 Healthy Families America home visitation sites throughout the country. It promotes services that improve child well-being and develops programs that help to prevent all types of abuse and neglect.