



PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2020

Dear Presidential Candidate:

The future of America depends on what we do for our children today because our children are our future. Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA America) was founded in 1972 on the belief that every child should have an equal opportunity for healthy development and no child should suffer from abuse or neglect.

Our nation is recognized for meeting any challenges brought before us, and our position of leadership is greatly impacted by how we support our children. That is why we call on you as candidate for the office of President of the United States of America to start a national conversation about the grave consequences of trauma and the importance of prevention.

The research is clear that investing in families to provide prenatal and early childhood support improves birth outcomes, child development and educational achievement and reduces premature mortality, mental illness, violent crime, substance abuse and addiction, and child abuse and neglect. See Appendix A for facts on child abuse and neglect.

Our extensive network of chapters in nearly 50 states and nearly 600 Healthy Families America® evidence-based home visiting program sites in 38 states, the District of Columbia, and all five U.S. Territories, work alongside us every day to promote the full range of strategies, policies and, programs that make a difference locally, as well as nationally. Collectively, we provide direct services to nearly 150,000 children, adults, and families.

There is nothing more important for the future success of our great nation than to ensure that children and families in every community have the support they need to thrive. In an effort to inform our national networks of your policy priorities and your plans to prioritize children and families, we have developed the enclosed questionnaire. It addresses many of the issues that help promote stable communities, healthy families, and the prevention of child abuse and neglect. We look forward to learning more about your vision for America!

You can find out more about PCA America on our [website](#) and about our signature home visiting program [Healthy Families America](#). Each candidate's response will be posted verbatim on our website and shared widely across our extensive networks. Please return responses to Marissa Morabito, Chief Government Affairs and Policy Officer, Prevent Child Abuse America, mmorabito@preventchildabuse.org.

Prevent Child Abuse America
c/o Marissa Morabito
228 South Wabash Avenue
10th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604

2020 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Promoting healthy child development and preventing ACEs:

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, defined as traumatic events that occur in childhood (0–17 years), including experiences like violence; abuse or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; having a family member attempt or die by suicide; or, growing up in a household with substance misuse and mental health problems, have been given increased attention. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. Preventing ACEs could reduce a large number of health conditions, including up to 21 million cases of depression, 1.9 million cases of heart disease, and impact education, employment, and earnings potential.¹

- ✿ **In your administration’s budget outlay, how would you continue to promote the increases in funding for ACEs studies and implementation of policies that can reduce ACEs that are currently underway at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)? What do you see as effective strategies, programs, or policies to address ACEs?**

Emergency funding and support during COVID-19 pandemic:

The Coronavirus is one of the greatest health and economic challenges in American history. Parenting itself is a challenge– even without the added stress of uncertainty, social isolation, job loss or reduction in wages, or inadequate food and shelter. We urge dedicated funding to support essential services to families that will aid in reducing the stress and anxiety associated with this pandemic and ensure the safety and well-being of our nation’s children.

- ✿ **Access to concrete supports can be instrumental in lowering familial stress and incidence of child abuse and neglect. What policies would you enact or expand to alleviate child and familial suffering during this difficult time?**

Child care and high-quality early childhood education and its role in child abuse and neglect prevention:

Recognizing that quality child care can make a powerful difference in children’s development and families’ well-being, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act provides federal funding to states for child care subsidies for low-income families. High-quality or even adequate child care to ensure a child’s health and safety is not accessible or affordable for many working families. In fact, many parents, due to nontraditional working hours, cannot find

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Vital signs: Adverse Childhood Experiences: Preventing early trauma to improve adult health. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/pdf/vs-1105-aces-H.pdf>

or afford adequate child care. They are often forced to leave their children alone or with caregivers who do not have the capacity to provide safe and appropriate supervision, leaving them vulnerable to endangerment, neglect or abuse. In addition, affordable high-quality child care aids in preventing child abuse and neglect by reducing parental stress and isolation.

✿ **What will you do to make sure that all families have access to affordable, high-quality child care?**

High-quality early childhood programs promote safe and nurturing family environments and focus on the physical, social, and emotional development of young children. This is especially important for children in families with less access to resources, who often face greater obstacles to success. Investing in high-quality early childhood education is one of the most effective ways to break the pervasive cycle of poverty and ensure equal opportunity for all. In fact, there is an estimated cost-benefit ratio of approximately \$7 for every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood experiences for at-risk children.² Children who are able to participate in early childhood education programs grow to be healthier, graduate from high school and college, and are employed at higher levels.

✿ **Programs that help children learn and grow in their earliest years can change the trajectories of their lives; what would you do to close the opportunity gap for the millions of children now being left behind? How would you increase access to high-quality early childhood education?**

Addressing health disparities and racial inequities in our nation:

With respect to the issue of health disparities and racial inequities in the United States, PCA America believes that to be truly successful, we must actively dismantle the root causes of stress and anxiety that can lead to child abuse, including systemic, structural racism and discrimination. Communities of color have long experienced disparities and inequities related to equal access and quality of care which have contributed to high rates of morbidity and mortality in these communities.

✿ **How would you treat and address the health disparities and racial inequities in the United States and work to prevent them in the future?**

Maternal mortality and morbidity:

PCA America is concerned about recent studies demonstrating the high incidence of maternal mortality among women of color, and firmly believes that voluntary home visiting is an important tool to address this serious health issue. Evidence-based home visiting promotes

² Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 114–128.

healthy development, addresses health risks and prevents future health issues for women and their children. Moreover, home visiting contributes to the prevention and reduction of the impacts of negative early childhood experiences, improving health trajectories for mothers and infants alike. It also targets social determinants of health affecting families, such as social support, parental stress, access to health care, income and poverty status, and environmental conditions.³

✿ **What measures would you take to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity?**

Expansion and increased funding for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program:

One of PCA America's top priorities is to support the expansion and funding of home visiting programs, including Healthy Families America, an evidence-based multi-generation model that demonstrates powerful outcomes for mothers and babies. Currently, however, home visiting and MIECHV program funding reaches only an estimated 3% of families in need.

✿ **What plans does your administration have to coordinate closely with governors, local government entities and local communities and non-profit organizations to ensure that there is increased funding for MIECHV that serves all children and families in need?**

Strengthen economic supports for families:

Paid family leave policies help working people care for a new child without jeopardizing their economic security and are significantly associated with reductions in hospitalizations for abusive head trauma, higher rates of successful breastfeeding and maternal health, and lower rates of family stressors and risk factors. Studies show that paid leave improves worker retention and reduces turnover costs citing that new mothers who take paid leave are more likely than mothers who take unpaid leave or no leave to be working again after childbirth⁴ and return to the same employer.⁵

✿ **In what ways do you support paid family and medical leave for workers, and, if so, what is your vision for a substantive paid family leave law?**

Creating a shared vision and public health approach to reduce violence:

Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which (all) people can be healthy. The focus of public health is on the health, safety and well-being of

³ Artiga, S., Hinton, E., (2018). Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity.

⁴ Houser, L., & Vartanian, T. P. (2012). Pay matters: The positive economic impact of paid family leave for families, businesses and the public. Center for Women and Work.

⁵ Laughlin, L. (2011). Maternity leave and employment patterns of first-time mothers: 1961-2008. U.S. Census Bureau.

entire populations. A public health approach also emphasizes input from diverse sectors including health, education, social services, justice, policy and the private sector. The United States needs a systematic approach to creating and sustaining public and political will for investment in healthy child development. This starts with a shared vision for America's children, recognizing the interconnectedness and shared root causes of violence and early life adversity.

- ✿ **What are examples of public health strategies, programs or policies that you would support or enact to prevent violence?**

Poverty and child health in the United States:

One in five babies and toddlers in the U.S. live with families whose incomes are below or near the poverty line. Our persistently high level of child poverty proves we are not doing enough to ensure that every child has a fair shot at success. Moreover, due to COVID-19 and significant rises in unemployment and poverty, 25% of children nationally are projected to experience food insecurity. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a landmark consensus study on child poverty that confirms that child poverty is a solvable problem when there is the political will to address it.⁶

- ✿ **What are your plans to address poverty and what do you see as the best way to alleviate the effects of poverty on very young children?**

Food Insecurity:

Tightened work requirements for the federal food stamp program has eliminated thousands from benefits. However, we know that when kids get the nutrition they need, they grow up healthier, are ready to learn.

- ✿ **What plans do you have to address food insecurity for low-income populations and those that are one incident away from not being able to put food on the table?**
- ✿ **What are your plans to reduce the stigma of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation; raise awareness and understanding of food insecurity; and, amplify compassion for individuals and communities in need of assistance?**

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>.

Medicaid:

Medicaid is a federal and state program that helps with medical costs for some people with limited income and resources. As the primary health care program for low-income pregnant women and children, states seek Medicaid funding for their home visiting programs because these programs successfully promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes among these vulnerable populations.

- ✿ **What changes would you seek in Medicaid, which currently covers nearly 67 million (one in five) Americans, a large portion that are children?**

Federal/State partnerships & Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grants:

[Community Based Child Abuse Prevention](#) (CBCAP) grants provide grants to all 50 states for the sole purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect, including key services like state helplines, voluntary home visiting programs, parent support programs, baby pantries, distribution of food and medication, family resources centers, child care, respite care services, services specific to domestic violence, and coordination and connection with mental health and substance use services, among others. Additionally, CBCAP supports community-based services that are trusted by families and its infrastructure helps to ensure that funding gets to the communities that need it most. Very few resources are allocated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and instead large sums of money are spent each year on child welfare services, often after child maltreatment has occurred. Nearly \$30 billion is spent a year on child welfare services⁷ yet, CBCAP services – the largest dedicated federal source for primary prevention funding for child abuse and neglect – is funded at a substantially lower rate of just under \$56 million a year.

- ✿ **How would your administration ensure that CBCAP is funded at appropriate levels to meet the expansive mission of the law and support upstream prevention of child abuse and neglect directly in communities?**

Immigration Policy and Child Separation:

As a nation, we must set the highest standard possible in our unwavering pursuit to prevent the abuse and neglect of children. PCA America recognizes the proven science surrounding toxic stress and the lifelong negative consequences trauma can have on a child and their brain development. Data overwhelmingly demonstrates that putting a child in a confusing and frightening situation, away from their parents or caregivers, can, and will lead to long-term, negative health outcomes. Despite the June 2018 emergency declaration of an end to immigration policies that lead to familial separation, more than 2,000 unaccompanied children

⁷ Rosinsky, K. & Williams, C. (2018). Child Welfare Financing SFY 2016: A survey of federal, state, and local expenditures, Child Trends.



have been expelled from the United States. Reports that children continue to be separated from their families is a concerning trend and furthers the traumatic experiences for these children.

- ✿ **What is your position on immigration policies that separate children from their families?**

Appendix A: Child Abuse and Neglect Facts

- In the United States, at least one in seven children experience child abuse and/or neglect annually.⁸
- Every day, an estimated four to eight children die from abuse and neglect.⁹ Children who die from abuse and neglect are overwhelmingly young; approximately one-half are less than a year old, and 75% are under three years of age.
- According to the most recent brain research, abuse and neglect of children in the early years negatively impacts the formation of pathways in the brain that are essential to later learning and growth. Victims of child maltreatment are at high risk for a host of adverse short and long-term outcomes, including chronic health problems, mental health issues, developmental delays, substance abuse, poor educational well-being, and future involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- A recent study estimates that each victim of child abuse and neglect will incur expenses in excess of \$830,928 over their lives in treating the short- and long-term consequences associated with the abuse. These include areas such as child welfare, juvenile justice, special education, and productivity losses.¹⁰
- The high costs of child abuse and neglect include increased use of foster care and child welfare costs, increased short- and long-term health and mental health care costs, and long-term costs in areas including juvenile justice and later adult criminal justice.
- Child abuse and neglect impacts everyone – it occurs across the socioeconomic and geographic spectrum. 37%, or nearly 4 out of 10 children, will experience a child protection services (CPS) investigation by the age 18.¹¹ And, an estimated 674,000 children were determined to be victims of child maltreatment with millions of children having reports of abuse and neglect each year.¹²
- Research and evidence confirm the importance of protective factors to buffer families from child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect occurs in all socio-economic backgrounds of our country. There are ways to decrease it and there are strategies that can stop intergenerational abuse. Prevention is possible.
- Evidence-based home visiting programs that provide parenting support and education, such as Healthy Families America, improve both child and parent well-being. This strategy strengthens the relationship between a parent and a child, leads to long term improvements in a child's ability to learn and later success in school and life. Evidence-based home visiting is an effective approach to child abuse prevention and solidifies the importance of early childhood development programs with impacts that reach into adulthood.

⁸ Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., & Hamby, S. L. (2015). Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(8), 746-754.

⁹ Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. (2016). [Within our reach](#): A national strategy to eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

¹⁰ Klika, J.B., Rosenzweig, J., & Merrick, M. (2020). Economic burden of known cases of child maltreatment from 2018 in each state. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 37, 227-234.

¹¹ Kim, H., Wildeman, C., Jonson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. *American journal of public health*, 107(2), 274-280. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303545>

¹² <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/media/press/2019/child-abuse-neglect-data-released>