

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Prevent Child Abuse America Joins Call to Make Children a Priority in the Presidential Campaign

CHICAGO, IL – September 16, 2008 – Today, Prevent Child Abuse America joined with Every Child Matters in a national “Step Up For Kids Day” to urge Senators John McCain and Barack Obama to address the needs of children in the presidential campaign.

“We believe that there is no issue more important to the future of our nation than how we raise our youth,” said Jim Hmurovich, President & CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. “That’s why we’re partnering with Every Child Matters to urge the presidential candidates to address issues that impact children, such as poverty, health care, early childhood development, and child abuse prevention.”

A recent UNICEF report found the United States was ranked 20th in child well-being out of the world’s 21 wealthiest nations.¹ The measures used by UNICEF represent educational, health and safety, material, and family and peer well being; measures that can reduce the potential for child maltreatment. The UNICEF study reinforces countless reports and government data showing that child neglect and maltreatment is a significant but preventable public health problem in our country today.

Research, such as the *Adverse Childhood Experiences* study,² has shown that child abuse and neglect have life-long impacts, not only for child but for the nation. These studies show a strong correlation between child abuse and neglect and debilitating and chronic health consequences, delinquency, criminal behavior, mental health illness, drug dependency and lower academic performance.

“The early years are a critical time for a developing child,” said Hmurovich, “but for far too long our public policies have ignored this reality, addressing the problems that arise when a child is denied healthy childhood experiences rather than ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow up in a nurturing, stimulating and stable environment.”

Getting prevention right early is less costly to the nation, and to individuals, than trying to fix things later. Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that implementing effective

¹ United Nations Children’s Fund (2007). *Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries*. Innocenti Report Card 7, UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, Florence, Italy, p. 2.

<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf>

² Felitti, VJ, Anda, RF, Nordenberg, D, Williamson, DF, Spitz, AM, Edwards, V, Koss, MP, & Marks, JS. (1998). [The relationship of adult health status to childhood abuse and household dysfunction](#). *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14, 245-258.

<http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/07493797/PIIS0749379798000178.pdf>



policies and strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect can save taxpayers \$104 billion per year. The cost of not doing so includes more than \$33 billion in direct costs for foster care services, hospitalization, mental health treatment, and law enforcement. Indirect costs of over \$70 billion include loss of productivity, as well as expenditures related to chronic health problems, special education, and the criminal justice system.³

“On behalf of Prevent Child Abuse America and our network of 44 state chapters over 400 Healthy Families America programs,” said Hmurovich, “I hope that Senators McCain and Obama utilize the unique opportunity they have as presidential candidates to elevate children’s issues in this campaign.”

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ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

Prevent Child Abuse America, founded in Chicago in 1972 is the nation’s leading organization working solely to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation’s children. Through its chapters in 44 states and its voluntary home visitation services provided by Healthy Families America® in more than 400 communities nationwide, Prevent Child Abuse America helps provide healthy, stable and nurturing experiences for more than 100,000 families every year. For more information, please visit www.preventchildabuse.org and www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org.

³ (1) Wang, CT, & Holton, J (2007). *Total estimated cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States*. Chicago, IL: Prevent Child Abuse America. http://www.preventchildabuse.org/about_us/media_releases/pcaa_pew_economic_impact_study_final.pdf

