

Teaming up to keep kids...



**Safe at Home™**

## Letter to the Editor

## Prevent Child Abuse America

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Dear Editor:

Each year, more than 3 million children in the United States are reported abused or neglected, according to statistics released by Prevent Child Abuse America, the nation's leading child abuse prevention organization. Approximately one million of these cases are confirmed.

Here in *(insert community or state here)*, approximately *(insert statistics here, if known)* are reported abused or neglected. These statistics are particularly alarming in light of the fact that overall crime statistics have gone downward since 1993 (by 21 percent) while the number of children reported abused and neglected increased 9 percent from 1993 to 1997.

While it is important to take note of these statistics and to learn from them, it is just as important -- maybe even more so -- to prevent abuse and neglect from happening in the first place. That's what April's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month is all about.

Here are a few simple ways each of us can help prevent child abuse and neglect:

1. **Be a nurturing parent.** Children need to know that they are special and loved. Educate yourself about a child's development process so you can have reasonable expectations about what your child can and cannot do.
2. **Help a friend, neighbor or relative.** Being a parent isn't easy. Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities. Offer a helping hand.
3. **Help yourself.** When the big and little problems of everyday life pile up to the point you feel overwhelmed and out of control, take time out. Don't take it out on your child. Take a deep breath, turn on some music. Know where you can turn for help when you need it.
4. **If your baby cries ...** It can be frustrating to hear your baby cry, especially when nothing you do seems to work. Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying. But, never shake a baby!
5. **Get involved.** Advocate for services to help families. Ask your community leaders, clergy, library and schools to develop services to meet the needs of children and families.
6. **Monitor your child's television and computer use.** Watching violent films on TV or playing violent computer games can harm young children. Not only does it scare them, it also teaches children that aggression is a good way to handle frustration and solve problems.
7. **Spend time playing with your children ...** or read to them instead!
8. **Report suspected abuse or neglect.** Keeping children safe is the responsibility of every adult in our community. If you have reason to believe a child has been -- or may be -- harmed, call *(insert appropriate information here)*.

April's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month is an appropriate opportunity to remind ourselves of our collective responsibility to prevent the abuse and neglect that robs so many of our society's children of their childhood, their sense of security and well-being, and their future. Together, we really can make a difference.

For more information about how to prevent child abuse and neglect, call Prevent Child Abuse America at 1-800-CHILDREN *(or insert appropriate local information here)*.

Signed,  
*(Name)*  
*(Title)*  
*(Organization)*



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