

**What Organizations
Can Do**

Leading Your Community Through the Gateway to Prevention

Help prevent child abuse and neglect in your community. Use the following innovative ideas as starting points for planning activities to help raise awareness and protect children. While some of these activities are specific to Child Abuse Prevention Month, many can be used year-round.

Hold a Blue Ribbon Campaign. In 1989, Bonnie W. Finney of Virginia tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her van. When asked about it, she told people the tragic story of the abuse of her grandchildren, and the resulting death of her grandson. Since then, millions of people across the country have participated in Blue Ribbon campaigns by wearing the ribbons and getting involved in community activities to remind people that they can help prevent child abuse in their communities.

Ms. Finney originally chose blue to remind herself of the bruised bodies of her grandchildren. In recent years, some organizations have chosen to reinvent the symbol using a strength-based approach. Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, a State chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, uses the blue ribbon to celebrate “Blue Ribbon Parents,” “Blue Ribbon Kids,” or “Blue Ribbon Communities” that find new and innovative ways to support families.

Involve local faith communities. A local church in Arlington, Virginia, hosted a Bishop’s Summit on Children and Violence. They invited the faith community and general public to learn about and help prevent child abuse and family violence.

Volunteer at an organization providing family support services. In many communities across the country, volunteers are making significant contributions to ensuring the healthy development of children in need. In New Mexico, AmeriCorps volunteers provide one-on-one support, mentoring, and other wrap-around services to pregnant and parenting teens enrolled in their GRADS program. The program is designed to help the teens graduate, improve their parenting skills, and foster self-sufficiency.

Team up with a local professional or semi-professional sports franchise. Prevent Child Abuse America has partnered with the National Basketball Association (NBA) for the last 15 years to raise awareness during Child Abuse Prevention Month, holding a national press event as well as local activities at games across the country. For example, the Partners in Prevention Campaign Planning Committee in Washington, DC, worked with the NBA to hold a professional basketball game (Washington Wizards) that recognized Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Invite a local celebrity or feature a children’s cartoon character. Raising a Healthy Child, Inc., in Tallahassee, Florida, hosted a free event featuring Spider-Man™. The event included a Spider-Man skit, autographs, photos with Spider-Man, Spider-Man comic books about child abuse prevention, face painting, games, and snow cones. Resource information about child abuse prevention and counselors were available for families. (To order a Spider-Man comic book about child abuse prevention, see <http://pcaamerica.channing-bete.com>.)

Involve men and fathers. The Hillsdale Child Abuse Council in Minnesota kicked off its county-wide “Real Men Rock” shaken baby public awareness campaign with an ad campaign showing local fathers nurturing and rocking their babies. Participants included a local emergency medical technician and a teacher.

Encourage community members to celebrate their own heroes. The New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund, New Hampshire's Community-Based Family Resource and Support (CBFRS) grantee, advertised the opportunity to make a contribution to the trust fund to honor a mother or someone else special to the donor. The message read, "When you make a gift to the New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund in the name of someone you love, your gift will not only honor her, but also help other women become strong, effective mothers, too."

Use a clever gimmick to attract the community's attention. The Kalamazoo County Child Abuse Council in Michigan sponsored a Life Savers[®] campaign. More than 200 community volunteers handed out Life Savers[®] candies on corners or in stores in exchange for donations. The funds went to support ongoing child abuse prevention programs.

Honor the community's culture. The child abuse prevention program for the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe hosted a conference called "Honor Our Children, Honor Our Heritage." The conference included a spiritual run/walk and a pow-wow ("Honor Our Children, Drum Out Child Abuse.") Speakers from other reservations were invited to talk about child abuse prevention. (For more information on this and other prevention activities for Native American communities, see the listing for National Indian Child Welfare Association in the Resource Directory, page 60.)

Distribute a resource guide for parents. Many local Boy Scout troops distribute the booklet, "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide," among their members as part of the Boy Scout Guidebook for youth.

The National Exchange Club Foundation (see Resource Directory, page 59) distributes "Time Out Teddy" brochures with insights on positive and effective childrearing skills. The brochure is also available in Spanish.

Prevent Child Abuse America also offers a variety of parenting publications through its Web site at <http://pcaamerica.channing-bete.com>.

Involve local businesses. Community business owners in a suburb of Chicago were asked to contribute a child's-sized white or blue T-shirt with the business logo on the front. The T-shirts were attached to a clothesline that was threaded around a prominent building to draw attention to Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Indiana's CBFRS grantee printed public service announcements and the child abuse hotline number on thousands of grocery bags used by a statewide grocery chain.

For Child Abuse Prevention Month 2002, Prevent Child Abuse America's Minnesota chapter, the Family Support Network, was chosen by Sidney's Restaurant as its "Children's Charity of Choice." In each of the restaurant's five locations, Sidney's included information about the Family Support Network in its menus and created a display at which customers could make donations.

Vermont kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with a cake-cutting ceremony. The cake, donated by Vermont-based Ben & Jerry's, served approximately 250 people. The first piece went to a child.

Involve local schools. The Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse of the Trident Area, South Carolina, has developed a report card insert to show parents a positive approach to dealing with disappointing grades. The inserts are available in bulk by calling the National Exchange Club Foundation. (See Resource Directory, page 59.)

Engage local legislators. The Children's Trust Fund in Missouri distributed lapel pins to all members of the State legislature with a card that read, "April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Missouri's children are pinning their hopes on you."

Take your message on the road. In Puerto Rico, CBFRS funds were used to develop two mobile outreach buses that delivered educational materials and training during Child Abuse Prevention Month. Service providers on board helped community members determine where and how to receive additional services. The buses attracted attention through music and popular entertainment.

Many communities also use variations of the following "tried and true" activities to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month and focus attention on child abuse prevention throughout the year. Make one of these ideas your own:

- * Host an awards' breakfast or luncheon to recognize key individuals and organizations working to prevent child abuse.
- * Submit a press release or feature story to your local newspaper or TV/radio station.
- * Offer a speakers' bureau.
- * Disseminate calendars of State or local child abuse prevention activities. Use local children's artwork to illustrate them.
- * Seek Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamations by mayors and local councils.
- * Spread the word on bus placards and billboards or through television and radio PSAs.
- * Display literature on child abuse prevention at local libraries, or ask the library to develop a reading list on child abuse and where help can be found.
- * Develop a child abuse prevention exhibit at a local shopping mall.
- * Celebrate families with a festival or picnic.
- * Hold an essay or poster contest for school children.
- * Organize a children's parade.
- * Sponsor a "Kids' Day at the Zoo."
- * Host parent support groups on prevention topics. Contact Circle of Parents and Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. for more information about such groups. (See the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- * Offer a workshop or conference on child abuse prevention or positive parenting.
- * Fly Children's Memorial Flags in prominent locations. (Available from the Child Welfare League of America—see the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- * Hold a candlelight vigil for victims of child abuse.

How to Involve the Media

Gaining media attention is an effective way to raise awareness during Child Abuse Prevention Month and throughout the year. Use the following suggestions to increase media exposure and educate your community about child abuse and neglect.

Develop a Press Release

The primary tool for gaining publicity is the press release. Press releases tell the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of a news story. The sample press release provided in this packet (on page 27) was written to announce Child Abuse Prevention Month and educate the public about what everyone can do to help prevent child abuse in their own communities. Spaces in the press release are designated for you to insert information about your organization and community. (See “Where to Find Child Abuse Data for Your State or Local Community,” page 33.)

Write an OpEd Piece

The Opinion/Editorial (OpEd) pages of newspapers include articles written by experts in certain fields. These articles usually offer a viewpoint on current events and hot topics. An OpEd should be sent to the editor of your local newspapers. You can locate the editor’s name at the top of the OpEd page in each newspaper. Remember to ask for word count limitations.

Submit Prewritten Articles to Community Newspapers

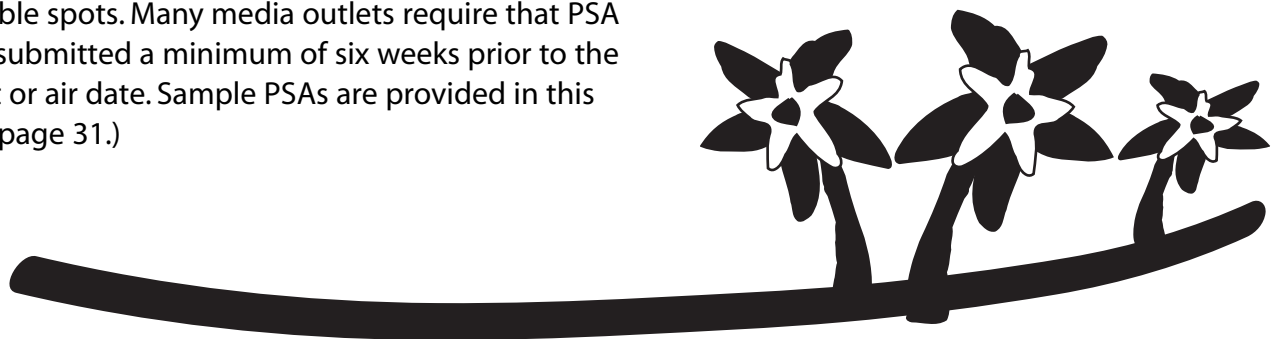
Community papers often accept prewritten articles and photographs. Call the editors or reporters at community papers at least six weeks before you would like your article to appear.

Secure Television and Radio Coverage

Don’t forget local broadcast media. Approach radio and television programs in the same way as newspapers. Send your press release to the appropriate person at the station at least four weeks in advance. Prior to sending your materials, listen to the shows and familiarize yourself with their formats.

Develop Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are essentially free advertisements, available only to nonprofit organizations. Local radio and television stations donate a percentage of their air time to worthwhile campaigns; however, PSA spots are limited and many nonprofit organizations vie for available spots. Many media outlets require that PSA requests be submitted a minimum of six weeks prior to the desired print or air date. Sample PSAs are provided in this packet. (See page 31.)



How to Involve Local Spokespersons

A fundamental step for involving the media and generating local support is to identify and train representatives to conduct media interviews and honor speaking engagements during Child Abuse Prevention Month and throughout the year.

Selecting Spokespersons

The ideal spokesperson is often the person at your organization or in your community who is most knowledgeable about issues related to child abuse prevention. Identifying a single spokesperson helps the public put a “face” on the issue. The reality is, however, that most people are committed to other tasks and personal responsibilities. Therefore, it is important to select and prepare backup spokespersons to ensure that no speaking engagement or media opportunity is missed.

Spokespersons should:

- * Be personable and at ease when speaking publicly.
- * Have a clear, pleasant speaking voice.
- * Be an interesting conversationalist.
- * Have some public speaking experience and, preferably, experience talking with members of the media.
- * Have a working knowledge about issues related to child abuse prevention.
- * Be “fast on their feet” and able to handle nonscripted responses.

Preparing Spokespersons

When making appearances or conducting interviews, your spokesperson should be prepared with:

- * General information about child abuse prevention.
- * Answers to questions about national prevention efforts and your State or local activities and involvement. Encourage him or her to review the materials contained in this resource packet and online from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (www.calib.com/nccanch) or Prevent Child Abuse America (www.preventchildabuse.org).
- * A local or national telephone number that people can call for more information.
- * A press kit, for reference. Include talking points in the kit. Talking points are a single page of bulleted messages that the spokesperson should mention. (See Sample Talking Points, page 23.)

When scheduling media interviews and speaking engagements, provide the reporter or organization with a paragraph-long biographical sketch for the spokesperson (not a full resume) that includes the credentials that qualify him or her as an “expert.” The reporter or organization will use the sketch to introduce your speaker.



Tips for Preparing Parent Spokespersons

Parents can be powerful advocates for child abuse prevention by partnering with staff to educate the public, reach out to other parents in need of help and support, and shape policies and practices that impact families. When parents speak out through the media or at public presentations about the positive changes in their own lives, others gain valuable insights and are moved to take action to help themselves or their neighbors. Staff should offer tangible and emotional support during this process.

You may wish to ask the following questions of potential parent spokespersons to help them decide whether or not they are ready to share their stories:

- * Is this the right time for you to speak out? Are you prepared for the attention that may follow? Is your life fairly stable right now?
- * How much (or how little) do you want your name, face, or voice to be used publicly?
- * What do you most want to share in an interview or speech?
- * How does your family feel about your interest in speaking publicly about your life experiences? Do your family members mind if you refer to them in your talk?
- * What effect will your exposure have on you and your family members, especially your children?

If parents are ready to speak out, you may wish to offer them the following suggestions:

- * Remember to speak from your heart and from your own experience.
- * Decide what you most want to say and then practice how you will say it. If you agree to an interview, have a friend, family member, or staff member ask sample questions so you can rehearse your responses.
- * Anticipate difficult questions. It is always OK to say that you don't know the answer to a question or don't want to respond.
- * Always assume that anything you say to a representative of the media is "on the record" and might be repeated in a story.
- * Be aware that a media story or headline may be portrayed in a more dramatic way than you expect.
- * Keep the focus on your own positive growth and change.
- * Emphasize that "asking for help is a sign of strength."
- * Choose your words carefully and avoid slang, unrelated remarks, and angry responses.
- * Don't feel the need to volunteer information just to fill in uncomfortable silences.
- * Make helpful suggestions to other parents in the audience and invite your listeners to take action that will help strengthen families and prevent child abuse.

Remember to thank parent spokespersons for sharing their experiences and to debrief and provide support to them after the event. By sharing their expertise and life experiences with others, parents are sharing a valuable gift and are helping to make their community a better place.

Sample Talking Points

Below are specific talking points about child abuse and neglect prevention. The emphasis of your remarks should be that everyone in the community is able to do something to help prevent child abuse every day. Remember to tailor your presentation for the format of your program, the nature of your audience, and the length of your presentation.

Please refer to other fact sheets in this packet and online from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (www.calib.com/nccanch/) and Prevent Child Abuse America (www.preventchildabuse.org) to supplement these talking points.

Child abuse continues to be an important public issue.

- * The President and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, recognize April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- * This year's theme, *Gateways to Prevention – What Everyone Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse*, focuses on raising awareness about prevention efforts and what every one of us can do to help keep children safe.
- * This is a national problem; it affects children in every community.
- * In 2000, three million reports of suspected child abuse were made, involving five million children. Of those five million children, 879,000 were found to have been abused.
[ADD LOCAL AND STATEWIDE STATISTICS, IF AVAILABLE.]

What is child abuse?

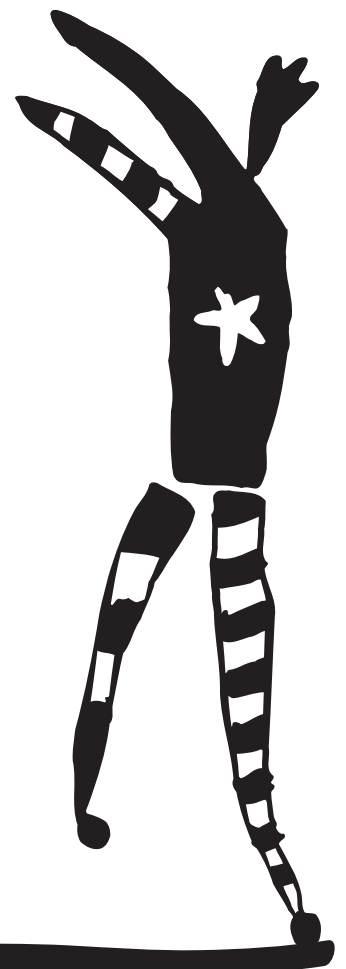
- * Child maltreatment is harm (or risk of harm) caused to a child by a parent, caretaker, or another person responsible for the child's safety.
- * There are four major types of child maltreatment: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.
[PROVIDE INFORMATION FROM YOUR STATE'S DEFINITIONS IF THEY DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THESE.]

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

Physical Abuse is physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, stabbing, choking, or otherwise harming a child.

Sexual Abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Emotional Abuse includes constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.



Child abuse prevention centers on finding ways to support parents and families so that children can live in nurturing and healthy homes. We all have a role to play in keeping children safe. Remember the “Five R’s,” courtesy of Prevent Child Abuse America:

Raise the issue.

Call or write your candidates and elected officials to educate them about issues in your community and the need for child abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment programs.

Contact your local school district and faith community to encourage them to sponsor classes and support programs for new parents.

Reach out to kids and parents in your community.

Anything you do to support kids and parents in your family and extended community helps reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Be a good neighbor. Offer to baby-sit. Donate your children’s used clothing, furniture, and toys for use by another family. Be kind and supportive, particularly to new parents and children.

Remember the risk factors.

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- * Abuse alcohol or drugs
- * Are isolated from their families or communities
- * Have difficulty controlling their anger or stress
- * Appear uninterested in the care, nourishment, or safety of their children
- * Seem to be having serious economic, housing, or personal problems

Recognize the warning signs.

Some of the warning signs that a child might be abused or neglected include:

- * Nervousness around adults
- * Aggression toward adults or other children
- * Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods
- * Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities
- * Acting out sexually or showing interest in sex that is not appropriate for his or her age
- * Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries
- * Low self-esteem
- * Poor hygiene

Report suspected abuse or neglect.

If you suspect abuse or neglect is occurring, report it—and keep reporting it—until something is done. Contact child protective services (in your local phone book) or your local police department.

You can find the reporting number in your State by using the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information publication, *State Toll-Free Child Abuse Reporting Numbers*, found online at www.calib.com/nccanch/pubs/prevenres/organizations/tollfree.cfm. For more information on how and where to file a report, call Childhelp USA[®], National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-Child[®]).

Other ways you can help support families—in April, and throughout the year:

[SELECT ACTIVITIES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR AUDIENCE. FOR MORE IDEAS, SEE “BUILDING GATEWAYS TO PREVENTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY,” PAGE 37 OF THIS PACKET.]

- * Encourage schools and other community organizations to provide classes in parenting education for students and parents.
- * Request a speaker or in-service training through the child protective services hotline.
- * Provide friendship and guidance to parents and children who need your help by volunteering for programs such as Befriend-a-Child or Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).
- * Start or join community efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- * If you see a parent abusing a child in public, approach and say something like, “Looks like you’re having a rough day, is there anything I can do to help?”
- * If you are in a store and a child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if the child has been left unattended in a shopping cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.



Sample Press Release for Child Abuse Prevention Month

Release Date:

[DATE]

Contact:

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[PHONE NUMBER]

Everyone Can Help Prevent Child Abuse

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

CITY, STATE - [MONTH, DAY, YEAR] – [Starting with a short profile of a successful program participant can be a powerful way to engage the media. To feed into the press release language below, you could weave in the fact that the participant’s child is now safe and healthy.]

In 2000, almost one million children did not know what it was like to be “safe and sound” in their homes. Tragically, three children—of all races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds—die each day as a result of abuse or neglect.

During April’s annual observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month, [ORGANIZATION NAME] will be sponsoring events to call attention to the importance of preventing these tragedies and all forms of child maltreatment, as well as to the role each of us can play in these efforts.

“We need to raise the public’s awareness of the devastating effects of child abuse,” said [YOUR SPOKESPERSON’S NAME AND TITLE], “and empower and encourage people to become involved and support families and parents so that we can prevent all forms of child abuse and neglect from reaching our Nation’s children.”

[DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL EVENTS AND/OR PROGRAMS.]

There are also many things that individuals can do—during April and throughout the year—to keep the children in their lives and communities from becoming statistics. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, working with its National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, has teamed up with Prevent Child Abuse America to create a packet of information and resources about child abuse and neglect prevention with the theme of “Gateways to Prevention.” It contains strategies for how each one of us can get involved in preventing child abuse. The packet is available from www.preventchildabuse.org or www.calib.com/nccanch.

Everyone can provide a Gateway to Prevention, and everyone can play a role in preventing child abuse. Raise the issue. Reach out to kids and families in your community. Join community prevention efforts. Take action to help ensure that the children in your community are safe and sound.

For more information about activities relating to Child Abuse Prevention Month or for information about child abuse prevention programs and activities throughout the year, contact [INSERT ORGANIZATION’S CONTACT INFORMATION.]

Sample Broadcast PSA Solicitation Letter

[LOGO HERE]

[DATE]

[CONTACT NAME]

[TITLE]

[COMPANY]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

RE: Donated airtime for PSA to increase awareness about child abuse prevention.

Dear [CONTACT]:

No child is immune from abuse. Tragically, an average of three children die each day as a result of abuse or neglect. In our State alone, [INSERT NUMBER] children were victims. [Pull statistic from *Child Maltreatment 2000*, found at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cmreports.htm.] These children need your help.

[ORGANIZATION] asks you to join thousands of individuals, government agencies, and child advocacy organizations across the Nation in promoting an increased awareness of child abuse prevention. The President and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, have dedicated this April as Child Abuse Prevention Month to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and what each one of us can do throughout the year to help keep children safe.

Please show your support by donating airtime for a public service announcement to [ORGANIZATION NAME].

Attached you will find information about Child Abuse Prevention Month 2003, with the theme, *Gateways to Prevention – What Everyone Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse*, along with a prewritten PSA for your use. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[TITLE]

Sample Radio and Television PSA

60-second PSA

Each day, an average of three children die as a result of child maltreatment. Thousands more are abused or neglected in some form. Child abuse hurts on many levels, and no child is immune. But it can be prevented.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. This year, “Gateways to Prevention” is the theme.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, and Prevent Child Abuse America are working with children’s organizations across the country to raise awareness about what each one of us can do to help keep children safe.

You can provide a “gateway to prevention” by doing what you can to protect the children in your life and community—during April and throughout the year.

Raise the issue. Reach out to kids and families. Take action to help ensure that the children in your community are safe and sound.

For more information contact [INSERT LOCAL INFORMATION HERE].

30-second PSA

Each day, an average of three children die as a result of child maltreatment. Thousands more suffer from some form of abuse or neglect.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this month and throughout the year, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] is dedicated to raising awareness about child abuse and neglect and what each one of us can do to help keep children safe.

Raise the issue. Reach out to kids and families. Take action to help ensure that the children in your community are safe and sound.

For more information contact [INSERT LOCAL INFORMATION HERE].

Where to Find Child Abuse Data for Your State or Local Community

The following provide different sources of data about children and child abuse in your State. This information can be useful in making a compelling case for action in your community.

Child Maltreatment 2000

This annual publication is the primary vehicle through which the Federal government reports on child abuse and neglect statistics gathered through the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). NCANDS is recognized as the official source for State and national data related to child abuse and neglect. NCANDS data are reported by State child protective services (CPS) agencies to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Appendix C of *Child Maltreatment 2000* also includes contact information for the person responsible for each State's data collection activities. *Child Maltreatment 2000* is available free of charge from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, 1-800-FYI-3366, or online at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cm00.

KIDS COUNT Data Book

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* (www.aecf.org/kidscount), funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provides State and national data on the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children. The Casey Foundation also funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed, community-by-community picture of the condition of children (www.aecf.org/kidscount/contacts.htm).

Prevent Child Abuse America 50 State Survey

The National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, a program of Prevent Child Abuse America, has been collecting detailed information from all 50 States and the District of Columbia on the number and characteristics of child abuse reports, the number of child abuse fatalities, and changes in the funding and scope of child welfare services since 1986. The center provides an annual summary of these data to Prevent Child Abuse America's Chapter network, CPS agencies, advocates, policy-makers, researchers, and the public at-large. By providing these data, the center can document the scope of child abuse and neglect and its effective prevention strategies, and begin to establish child abuse and neglect prevention as a public policy priority at the national, State and local levels. See www.preventchildabuse.org/learn_more/research_docs/2000_50_survey.pdf for more information.

State Web Sites

Statistical information on children and families often can be located on your State's Web site. Through the Web site, you will be able to identify the department designated for addressing the needs of at-risk children and families (e.g., Department of Human Resources, Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Children and Family Services, etc.).

