

# Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Abuse or Neglect



## Introduction

Children who have been abused or neglected need safe and nurturing relationships that address the effects of child maltreatment. If you are parenting a child who has been abused or neglected, you might have questions about your child's experiences and the effects of those experiences. This factsheet is intended to help parents (birth,

### What's Inside:

- What should I know about my child?
- What is child abuse and neglect?
- What are the effects of abuse and neglect?
- How can I help my child heal?
- Where can I find support?
- Resources

foster, and adoptive) and other caregivers better understand the challenges of caring for a child who has experienced maltreatment and learn about the resources available for support. (In some cases, the term “birth” parent is used to distinguish parents with children involved with child welfare from kin or foster or adoptive parents.)

## What Should I Know About My Child?

Learning about your child’s unique history is an important first step for all parents and caregivers in providing a healing environment for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Try to consider the child’s background and history from the child’s point of view. What has happened in the child’s life—both good and bad—and how might this impact the child’s behavior and family adjustment? This history is one of many variables that will affect how you can help your child heal and thrive. For instance, your history with the child and other factors specific to the maltreatment (e.g., type of abuse or neglect), specific to the child (e.g., age, resilience), and specific to you (e.g., parenting experience) all come into play.

Parents who reunite with a child who was in out-of-home care, relatives that provide care for the child of a family member, and foster and adoptive parents may confront different challenges when raising a child who has experienced maltreatment. The amount and types of information you are able to obtain about your child’s history may also depend on the type of parent-child relationship.

**For birth parents.** Many children whose parents are reported for child maltreatment are not removed from their homes; instead, the family receives in-home services. For children who do enter foster care, the primary goal is usually family reunification, and the majority of children who enter foster care due to child abuse or neglect eventually return home (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). In both cases, the goal is to reconnect and build strong parent-child relationships in a safe home environment that promotes child and family well-being. While birth parents may know just about all there is to know about their child’s background, they may need to learn more about any foster care or kinship care experiences that their child has had, and they may need to learn more about the possible impact of abuse or neglect on their child. You may wish to talk with your social worker about your child’s history, and sharing your concerns will help your social worker help you and your family, including help seeking professional mental health services. Information about therapy and support groups is provided later in this factsheet.

**For kinship caregivers.** Some children who have been abused or neglected enter formal or informal kinship care with a grandparent, aunt, or other relative. Kinship caregivers may become responsible for a child unexpectedly or may confront issues that didn’t exist when they raised their own children. Kinship caregivers may or may not have a good history of their child’s background and any maltreatment experiences. They may not have received training in providing out-of-home care and may need to be brought up to date on what has happened to the child, as well as any possible impact of abuse or neglect.

**For foster and adoptive parents.** Foster and adoptive parents may not be aware of their child's past traumas or the extent of the abuse or neglect. Although they have received training to prepare them to care for the child, they may not be completely ready for the unique situation of a particular child. While child welfare agencies are required to provide all available information about a child, some information may not be obtainable, and some children may not feel comfortable disclosing past abuse or neglect.

Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet *Obtaining Background Information on Your Prospective Adopted Child* addresses the questions prospective adoptive parents should ask their adoption agency, reasons some information may not be available, and where to find more information: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_background.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_background.cfm)

Educating yourself about your child's history and about child abuse and neglect and the services available for help will better prepare you and your family to face the challenges ahead and continue down the road toward healing.

## What Is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect is the first step toward getting help for your child and your family. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect have varying symptoms, some of which are presented below. The presence of one or more of these signs does not prove that maltreatment has occurred, but caregivers who are aware of these indicators are better equipped to seek appropriate services.

While there is a Federal definition for abuse and neglect, States also have specific laws addressing the definitions and consequences. As of 2010, the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) defines child abuse and neglect as "Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

Child maltreatment falls into a number of categories:

- *Physical abuse* refers to a nonaccidental physical injury (e.g., hitting, kicking, burning, etc.) by a parent or other caregiver in the parenting role.
- *Neglect* is the failure of the parent or caregiver to provide for the child's basic needs—food, shelter, supervision, medical care, and emotional nurturing.
- *Sexual abuse* refers to not only forcing or coercing a child to engage in sexual activity but also to exploitation through pornography.
- *Emotional abuse* is usually a pattern of behavior that hurts a child's emotional development (e.g., constant criticism, threats, withholding love, etc.).

Some signs of physical abuse in a child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets

Some signs of neglect:

- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs

Some signs of sexual abuse:

- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

Some signs of emotional abuse:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Shows either inappropriately grown-up behavior (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately childish behavior (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

## What Is Trauma?

Trauma is any event that threatens someone's well-being or the well-being of a loved one. It can take many forms, from experiencing maltreatment to witnessing domestic violence or surviving a natural disaster. Children and youth's response to trauma varies; some may be reluctant to trust, some may act out, and some may be withdrawn. In extreme cases,

children may develop posttraumatic stress syndrome, depression, or other mental health conditions. With help, children who experience trauma can cope, heal, and even thrive. This is called "resilience," and parents and caregivers play an important role in the healing process.

Some signs that your child has experienced trauma include:

- Night terrors or a fear of going to sleep
- Bedwetting or other issues with bodily function control
- Anxiety, confusion, agitation, temper tantrums, or other emotional control issues
- Self-mutilation, purging, or vomiting (The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, 2012)

## RESOURCES ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND TRAUMA

Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet *What Is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms* offers information about how to spot abuse and neglect and provides a list of resources:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's web section on What Is Child Traumatic Stress? <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers/what-is-cts>

## What Are the Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect?

Research shows that abuse and neglect can affect a child's ability to learn, form relationships, and problem solve, and children who have experienced maltreatment are at risk for many illnesses and poor health later in life. Knowing how maltreatment may have affected your child may help you recognize the effects of abuse or neglect and seek the appropriate assessments and help.

### Effects on Child Development

A great deal of research in recent years has examined child and adolescent brain development. We now know that the way the brain develops can change when a child has experienced stress from severe or ongoing abuse or neglect (Center for the Developing Child, n.d.). Maltreatment can delay or affect the ways a child is able to control his or her emotions, see right from wrong, identify consequences of actions, and learn from mistakes.

Most children experience developmental milestones along the same general timelines. Typically, children from birth to 5 acquire the ability to soothe themselves when they are stressed; children ages 6–7 have more control over their emotions and behaviors; and adolescents ages 11–14 might have frequent mood swings, but they learn to accept disappointments and overcome failures. Abuse or neglect can impair this healthy development. Some causes for concern about developmental delays include:

- A child ages birth–5 who exhibits an inability to relax or manage stress
- A child ages 6–7 who is frequently sad, worried, afraid, or withdrawn
- A child ages 11–14 who has strong negative thoughts about him or herself, or has an extreme need for approval and social support

It's important to remember that although crucial brain development occurs during the first 3 years of life, our brains continue to develop into adulthood. The brain development that takes place at age 2 is quite different from the development that happens at age 14. In fact, the brain experiences a growth spurt right before puberty that affects a preteen's ability to plan, reason, and control impulses and emotions.

It is normal for teenagers to act impulsively and take risks, because the part of their brain that regulates impulse control—the frontal lobe—is not fully matured. Adolescents who have experienced abuse, neglect, or other trauma, however, may be more impulsive. Teens who have been maltreated may:

- Struggle academically and socially
- Have difficulty with tasks requiring a higher level of thinking
- Experiment with drugs or criminal activity

A caring adult who provides healthy guidance to youth can offer the opportunity for them to model appropriate behaviors and develop the skills necessary for healthy adult relationships.

## Effects on Health

While child abuse and neglect can leave physical scars, there also can be a number of underlying, less visible effects. Several studies have demonstrated a link between negative experiences during childhood and poor adult health outcomes that can lead to early death, including (Saul, 2012; Felitti & Anda, 2009):

- Heart, lung, and liver diseases
- High blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, and obesity
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Sexually transmitted diseases

## Social, Psychological, and Behavioral Effects

Children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect may also experience one or more of the following psychological and behavioral effects:

- Borderline personality disorder, depression, and/or anxiety
- Attachment issues or affectionate behaviors with unknown/little-known people
- Inappropriate modeling of adult behavior, aggression, and other antisocial traits
- Juvenile delinquency or adult criminality
- Future abusive behavior such as interpersonal violence or domestic abuse

For more information on research on adverse childhood experiences, see the website for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>

## RESOURCES ON THE EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child Welfare Information Gateway's issue brief *Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development*: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue-briefs/brain\\_development/index.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue-briefs/brain_development/index.cfm)

Information Gateway's *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long\\_term\\_consequences.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm)

ZERO TO THREE's series of handouts with information about supporting healthy brain development in the first 3 years of life: <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/healthy-minds.html>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities with resources on child development, developmental milestones, developmental disabilities, and parenting tips: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/index.html>

## How Can I Help My Child Heal?

Knowing the possible effects of child abuse and neglect is a first step. This section explores some strategies for helping your child or youth overcome these traumas, including some techniques for discipline that can help prevent future abuse or retraumatization.

### Building Resilience and Promoting Protective Factors

Resilience is a child or youth's ability to cope, and even thrive, following a negative experience. This is not an inherent trait but something that has to be developed and nurtured.

Some of the ways you can help your child build resilience include:

- **Build strong connections** with friends and family that can support children during challenges and teach them to think about and consider other people's feelings.
- **Allow children to feel their feelings.** Teach them how to describe those feelings, and commend them for expressing feelings of hurt or sadness without acting out.
- **Be consistent.** If you say you'll be there, be there. If you say you'll listen to concerns, listen. This will help to teach your child that people can be trusted.
- **Be patient.** Children's reactions to trauma vary as widely as the types of

trauma one can experience. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.

- **Express your support.** Express love and support for your child verbally and physically. Express your love through words, notes, and hugs.
- **Teach your child the importance of healthy behaviors.** Have open and honest talks about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, smoking, and sexual promiscuity. Teach your child the importance of eating properly and exercising.

Experiencing abuse or neglect doesn't mean your child *will* develop poor health or negative well-being outcomes. When caregivers and parents foster protective factors—circumstances in families and communities that increase the health and well-being of children and families—it may lessen the negative effects of maltreatment (Pizzolongo & Hunter, 2011). A strong and secure emotional bond between children and their caregivers is critical for children's physical, social, and emotional development, including their ability to form trusting relationships, exhibit positive behaviors, and heal from past traumas.

The healing process is not always a clear, straight path, and it takes time. Some things you can do to help your child heal include:

- Address the child's physical safety first by letting him or her know that no one will physically lash out. This will help the child create feelings of trust and open up to psychological and emotional healing.
- Address the past as the past. Help the child identify elements of his or her current life that are different from the

past. Use this as an opportunity to discuss new boundaries and expectations to encourage feelings of belonging and attachment (The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, 2012).

## Building a Strong Relationship With Your Child

A child's earliest relationships are some of the most important. Attachment is the sense of security and safety a child feels with caregivers and is important for your child's physical, emotional, mental, and psychological development. It is formed through consistent, positive affection and emotional interactions. The issues and challenges most caregivers face with children who have experienced maltreatment is the result of a break in attachment during the first 3 years of life (Keck & Kupecky, 2002).

To foster a secure relationship with a child:

- **Be available.** Provide consistent support to build feelings of trust and safety.
- **Offer comfort.** Support the child when he or she is upset, modeling appropriate displays of affection and building the child's self-esteem.
- **Be respectful.** Let your child know that you will keep him or her safe (Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, 2011).

## RESOURCES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE AND PROMOTING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The 2013 Resource Guide, *Preventing Child Maltreatment and Promoting Well-Being*, offers parent tip sheets and more information about protective factors: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/guide2013/>

The American Psychological Association's (APA's) guide *Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers*: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>

The APA's *Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents*: <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Documents/FamilyHandout.pdf>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers a training curriculum, *Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents*: <http://www.nctsn.org/products/caring-for-children-who-have-experienced-trauma>

## What Is the Difference Between Child Abuse and Child Discipline?

It is normal for children to act out and challenge a parent or caregiver's authority. Toddlers throw tantrums. Teenagers argue. The ways in which parents guide a child and discipline poor behavior is critical to shaping more positive behavior. Children



learn control and self-discipline from their caregivers, and discipline should never be harmful to a child. In fact, severe punishment won't accomplish your goals and can do more harm than good. For children who have experienced abuse or neglect, aggressive punishment could elicit memories of past trauma or cause retraumatization.

Discipline and punishment, while often used interchangeably, are actually quite different.

- **Discipline** is the act of *teaching* children the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This can be accomplished by talking to children about misbehavior and requiring children to take responsibility for its consequences, like being responsible for cleaning up a mess or apologizing for hurting someone's feelings. You also can guide your child by positively reinforcing and encouraging their good behaviors and not just correcting their poor behaviors.
- **Punishment** is an approach to discipline that can be physical—a slap on the hand—or psychological—the loss of TV time, or other freedoms. (Center for Early Education and Development, n.d.).

A misbehaving child can be frustrating, but using physical force to teach a lesson or relieve aggravation is always wrong. Factors like sleep and diet can cause tensions to rise. If your child is acting out and you feel overwhelmed, consider whether he or she is hungry, tired, or expressing a reaction to an underlying issue like fear or anxiety.

## Practical Discipline Tips or Techniques

The following tips may help you safely discipline your child:

- **Role modeling:** Children learn more about behavior by watching adults than in any other way. Be a positive example for expressing emotions and dealing with frustration. Stay calm instead of yelling.
- **Encouragement:** Let children know what they are doing right as well as pointing out the mistakes they make.
- **Rules:** Set routines for bedtimes, meals, and chores. Knowing what will happen next can be very important to a child whose life once felt chaotic.
- **Set limits:** Be very clear about your limits.
- **Attention-ignore:** Ignoring behavior is simply pretending that the behavior is not occurring. The parent does not look at, talk to, or respond to the child until the inappropriate behavior ends. When a child breaks a rule, stay calm and do what is fair. Sometimes, your child can help you decide what is fair to do when a rule is broken.
- **Never hit or shake a child:** Hitting is not a useful discipline tool for your children. Besides the potential physical abuse and injury, hitting and other physical punishments are not effective ways to discipline. They teach children that it is acceptable to hurt people, and they make children much too angry to be sorry for what they've done.

- **Gear the discipline to the child’s developmental stage:** Don’t expect a child of any age to perform something he or she is not ready for. Allow your child to learn at his or her own pace. Break tasks down into small, manageable steps, so that he or she feels a sense of success and accomplishment.

## RESOURCES ON DISCIPLINE

The Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect offers helpful information for caregivers on discipline and tips for dealing with misbehavior: <http://www.kempe.org/index.php?s=10394&item=3980>

The annual Prevention Resource Guide supports service providers in their work with parents, caregivers, and their children to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. While this resource was written for child welfare professionals, it includes helpful tip sheets for parents and caregivers, like “Dealing With Temper Tantrums,” which address a number of parenting issues. The free guide and tip sheets are available on Child Welfare Information Gateway’s website: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/guide2013/>

For more information, visit Child Welfare Information Gateway’s Discipline Versus Abuse web section: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining/disc\\_abuse.cfm#discipline](https://www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining/disc_abuse.cfm#discipline)

## Where Can I Find Support?

Recovering from child maltreatment is a journey that affects the entire family, and parents and caregivers need support, too. Learning as much as you can about child maltreatment and bolstering your parenting skills can go a long way in promoting your child’s well-being and building a healthy family.

### Parent Education and Training

Parent education programs are geared toward reinforcing your parenting skills and teaching you new strategies. They foster parent leadership and empower you to shape your family and advocate for their needs.

These support programs and training programs not only offer you strategies for tackling difficult situations and enhancing your problem-solving skills, they may also help reduce children’s misbehaviors. Parent education programs can be online, in-person, involve one-to-one instruction, or take place in a group setting. Whether you prefer a course with direct instruction, videos, or in another format, successful programs will:

- Promote positive family interaction
- Involve fathers
- Use interactive training techniques
- Offer opportunities to practice new skills
- Teach emotional communication skills
- Encourage peer support

## RESOURCES ON PARENT EDUCATION

The website for the FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, a service of the Children's Bureau, has several resources for parents: <http://friendsnrc.org/cbcap-priority-areas/parent-leadership-and-involvement>

Circle of Parents® offers parent-led self-help groups where anyone in a parenting role can openly discuss the successes and challenges of raising children: [http://www.circleofparents.org/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.circleofparents.org/about_us/index.html)

Child Welfare Information Gateway's issue brief *Parent Education to Strengthen Families and Reduce the Risk of Maltreatment* provides recent research on successful parent education and highlights a number of programs: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue\\_briefs/parented/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue_briefs/parented/)

## Therapy or Support Groups

Dealing with the effects of maltreatment can be challenging, and you and your family may wish to seek professional help. Therapy, counseling, and support groups can provide children and caregivers with the skills necessary to build healthy relationships, overcome past trauma, and prevent reoccurring or future trauma.

Take your time when searching for a mental health professional to ensure you find the right fit. If you and your family are receiving child welfare services (discussed later in this

factsheet), your agency or caseworker may provide you with a referral to a therapist. If you are selecting a therapist on your own, you can call prospective therapists or schedule an initial interview to gather basic information. Some therapists will even offer an initial brief consultation that is free of charge. It's important that the professionals you choose to work with are specifically trained to effectively address the unique needs of your family—as mentioned earlier, the issues that affect parents differ from those affecting kinship caregivers, which differ still from issues faced by adoptive or foster families. Some things to keep in mind include:

- Your therapists should be knowledgeable about the impact of trauma on children and families.
- Your therapists should allow and encourage your participation in treatment.
- You should be wary of therapies that restrain a child or intrude on his or her physical space, as children who have been maltreated need to develop clear boundaries to feel safe and prevent retraumatization.

Just like there are different types of parent education programs, there are different approaches to therapy. From group or family therapy to individual psychotherapy or cognitive therapy, it's important that the type of treatment you seek fits the needs of your family. One type of therapy proven effective for abused children between the ages of 2 and 8 is parent-child interaction therapy. In this approach, therapists coach parents while they interact with their children, teaching parents strategies for promoting positive behaviors.

A resource that rates the effectiveness of treatment interventions for specific populations of children and families is the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices: <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov>

## RESOURCES ON THERAPY AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Child Welfare Information Gateway's issue brief *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy With At-Risk Families*: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_interactbulletin/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_interactbulletin/)

Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet *Selecting and Working With a Therapist Skilled in Adoption* offers information on the different approaches to therapy, treatment settings, and tips for finding the right therapist for adoptive families, but many of the tips are applicable to other families, too: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_therapist.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm)

To find support groups and other resources in your State, visit the National Foster Care & Adoption Directory: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/>

## Child Welfare Services

The child welfare system offers support to prevent child abuse or neglect and provides services to families that need help protecting and caring for their children. Agencies will arrange for children to live with kin or with foster families when they are not safe

at home. When formal assessment is not warranted, families often can benefit from services to prevent future reports of abuse or neglect.

Sometimes, a family might benefit from respite services, counseling, or other help for which a child welfare agency might provide a referral.

- **Prevention services**, like parent education programs, are those that aim to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect or the reoccurrence of maltreatment.
- **Family preservation services** are short-term services for families in crisis that are intended to keep families safely together in their own home.
- **Postadoption services** can help children and families dealing with a range of issues after an adoption is finalized, such as loss or grief, birth family connections, adjusting to family dynamics, and more.

Sometimes, parents and caregivers just need a break. Respite care is just one of the family support services that can provide relief and support to families in crisis. There is a variety of respite services, and finding one that fits your family's needs is key. The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center offers a national respite locator to help you find services in your State: <http://archrespite.org/respitelocator>

## RESOURCES ON CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet *How the Child Welfare System Works* provides a brief overview of the child welfare system and its functions: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/cpswork.cfm>

Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet for families *Finding and Using Postadoption Services*: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/fpostadoption.cfm>

### Making Your Community Safer

Helping children and families heal from maltreatment, or prevent abuse from happening in the first place, is not the sole responsibility of parents and caregivers. Just like children and youth need permanent connections to help them thrive, families need strong communities. There are things you can do to help make your neighborhoods safe—not just for your family, but for the benefit of all the children in your community.

Parent and community cafés are a helpful tool for bolstering community support. Cafés can include parents, neighbors, school professionals, church members, and other adults in your community who are concerned with the health and well-being of children. These gatherings should be intimate and designed to ignite conversation among participants about the presence of—or lack of—protective factors in their own lives. Communities

with committed parents who have taken on a leadership role have improved their neighborhoods and improved child safety. Programs like Circle of Parents® (see box on page 11) can help strengthen communities.

Other things you can do to engage your community in preventing child abuse and neglect include (Prevent Child Abuse America, n.d.):

- **Building partnerships** to enhance support for parents and caregivers
- **Educating community members** about the stages of child development
- **Promoting a community responsibility** for the health and well-being of children
- **Developing a consistent language** within your community about protective factors and the signs of abuse and neglect
- **Building awareness** about the available services and supports for families and children

## RESOURCES ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Community Café Learning Community equips communities with the tools (in English and Spanish) to organize gatherings to discuss their unique concerns and build relationships to help strengthen families: <http://www.thecommunitycafe.com/>

*Essentials for Childhood: Steps to Create Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Relationships*, a guide from the National Center for Injury Prevention, Division of Violence Prevention, within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, aims to help concerned individuals and communities promote these healthy relationships: <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/childmaltreatment/essentials/index.html>

The Maternal and Child Health Library at Georgetown University offers Community Services Locator, an online directory for finding community services for children and families: [http://www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp\\_community.html](http://www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_community.html)

The National Parent Helpline provides parents and caregivers with emotional support and can link you to services in your State. To find available services near you, visit <http://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/find-support>, or call 1.855.4.A.PARENT (1.855.427.2736).

## Conclusion

If you are the parent or caregiver of a child who has experienced maltreatment, helping him or her through that pain can be daunting, yet there are resources available to help. It's important to remember that many children who have been abused or neglected do not grow up to abuse others and can live happy and healthy lives. You and your family will play an important role in your child's healing, and the more knowledge you acquire about maltreatment and the services available for support, the better prepared you will be to help your child through this difficult time.

## Resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway  
<https://childwelfare.gov>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
<http://www.aacap.org/>

Center for the Study of Social Policy, Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework  
<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
<http://www.nctsn.org/>

National Foster Parent Association  
<http://nfpaonline.org/>

Stop It Now!  
<http://www.stopitnow.org/warnings#behavioral>

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

The Child Trauma Academy

<http://childtrauma.org/>

The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration National Center for Trauma-Informed Care

<http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/>

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