

“FOR me,



FOR us,



Pinwheels for  
**PREVENTION**®

Prevent Child Abuse  
Florida™

FAMILY ADVOCACY GUIDE

FOR  
THEM”







# Dear ADVOCATE:

The future success of our state depends on our ability to nurture the healthy development of our children—the next generation of leaders, teachers, employees and parents. Research tells us that what children learn through their early interactions with parents and caregivers becomes the foundation for all future development. While safe and nurturing relationships and stimulating and stable environments improve brain development and child well-being; neglectful or abusive experiences and unstable or stressful environments increase the odds of poor outcomes.

Parents and caregivers who have a social network and concrete support in times of need are better able to provide safe environments and nurturing experiences for their children. All families need a helping hand at some point, and Pinwheels for Prevention promotes individual and community involvement in activities that build on family and community strengths. It is our mission to prevent child abuse and neglect by promoting a better understanding of child development, providing tools for positive parenting, and prompting community action.

This advocate booklet provides information on what you can do to contribute to the healthy development of children and families in your community. By learning more about how communities shape children's lives, you are helping to ensure our children have the foundation they need to become tomorrow's leaders.

This campaign would not be possible without the support and dedication of our partners. We thank the Florida Department of Children and Families and our community partners throughout Florida for making this campaign possible.

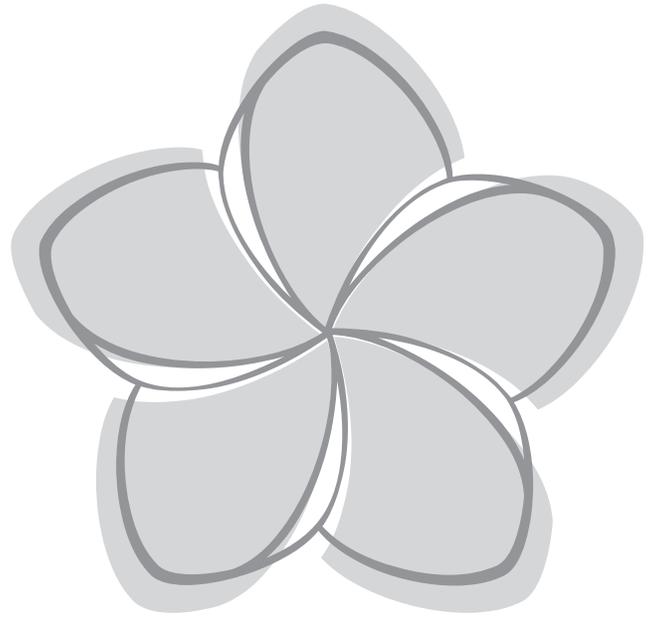


Pinwheels for  
**PREVENTION**<sup>®</sup>

**Prevent Child Abuse**  
Florida<sup>™</sup>







# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Promoting Protective Factors..... 1

Supporting Families in Your Community ..... 3

Offering Support in Public Places ..... 5

Helping Children and Families During Times of Crisis..... 6

Advocating for Children..... 7

Supporting Family-Friendly Workplace Policies ..... 9

Coaching Kids..... 11

Fostering Parent Engagement and Leadership..... 13

Mentoring Youth, Couples and New Parents..... 17

Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect..... 19

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect..... 25

**Bonus:** Make Your Own Pinwheel Activity Page ..... 27

*Published 2015*



# INTRODUCTION



## Promoting the Protective Factors that are Linked to Healthy Child Development and Strong Families

We know that child development is largely influenced by early interactions with parents and caregivers; however, the community also plays a role in the story of child development. Access to quality healthcare, safe and affordable housing, quality early learning, afterschool programs and enriching educational, cultural and spiritual experiences all help promote healthy child development.

Research shows certain protective factors are crucial for parents to keep their families strong. Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. These qualities serve as safeguards by helping parents find solutions to family and life challenges. These protective factors are:

- 1. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (Being a great parent is part natural and part learned):** There is extensive research linking effective parenting to healthy child development. Children thrive when parents provide not only affection, but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters positive psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world and motivates children to achieve.
- 2. Nurturing and Attachment (A close bond helps parents understand, respond to, and communicate with their children):** A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance and protection.
- 3. Parental Resilience (Being strong and flexible):** Parents who can cope with the stress of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple stressors such as poor health, marital conflict, domestic or community violence, unemployment, poverty and homelessness may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stress of raising children.
- 4. Social Connections (Parents need friends):** Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family members and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on at times when they need a sympathetic listener, advice or concrete support. Research has shown that parents who are isolated, with few social connections, are at higher risk for abusive and neglectful behavior.
- 5. Concrete Support in Times of Need (We all need help sometimes):** Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes leads to child maltreatment. Providing concrete support may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children's basic needs.
- 6. Social and Emotional Competence of Children (Healthy child development):** Children's emerging ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior, and effectively communicate their feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Parents and caregivers grow more responsive to children's needs—and are less likely to feel stressed or frustrated—as children learn to tell parents what they need and how parental actions make them feel, rather than “acting out” difficult feelings. >>

There are a number of ways you can help build these protective factors for children and families in your community. Some detailed strategies are discussed in the following pages of this booklet. We hope you will use these suggestions to become an active advocate on behalf of children and families. You can also contact local schools and social service programs for more ideas on how to support children and families in your area.

# SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Social relationships influence every area of our daily life, from our personal health, to the safety of our neighborhood, to the development of our children. Getting to know your neighbors makes your community safer and provides individuals and families with support. Yet a recent study found that Americans' social networks are shrinking dramatically and nearly 25 percent of Americans say they have **no one** to talk to about important matters or personal problems.

Ties to community and neighborhood have "withered" and people have fewer family confidants as well. Causes for this social shift have not been determined, but may reasonably include:

- The more transient nature of families today and decreased likelihood that grown children will live near their parents in the communities in which they grew up
- Increased reliance on communicating through technology (cell phones, e-mail) promotes the development of a wider, less-localized network of weak ties rather than the stronger ties built by face-to-face interaction that can offer real support every day and in times of crisis
- The hectic pace of daily life, especially for dual income families, which limits the time available to invest in new relationships



So how do we reverse this social shift and reconnect individuals and families to the community? Here are some simple ways to build a strong environment that will allow children to grow into healthy, productive citizens who will in turn give back to communities.

## *In your Neighborhood:*

**Know your neighbors.** Introduce yourself and your family to your neighbors. Know their names and the names of their children. Families feel safer and less stressed when they know support is nearby. Offer to be that support for your neighbor.

**Reach out to those in your community.** A wave, a smile or a kind word can make a passerby's day a bit brighter.

**Keep your neighborhood safe.** Offer to pick up your neighbor's mail when they are out of town and let them know you can keep an eye on their home. When street lights burn out, report the outage to the city to avoid dark places in your neighborhood.

**Mentor a new parent in your neighborhood.** Sometimes families go from receiving a lot of support when the baby first arrives to little support a few months later, which can leave a new parent feeling overwhelmed. Check-in often with a new parent. Sometimes just holding or changing the baby will allow the new mom or dad to shower or fold laundry.

**Offer support to families.** Instead of telling a parent to call you if they need anything, offer to make dinner, help with chores or baby-sit their children on a specific day. A little extra help from a neighbor can ease the demands of parenting.

## ***In your Community:***

---

**Be a good role model.** Parents are always looking for new parenting techniques and you can help provide them by setting a good example.

**Celebrate children.** Smile at children and praise them for doing something well. It helps children and parents feel good about themselves and will also reinforce positive behavior.

**Congratulate parents on doing a good job.** Let parents know their child is a reflection of good parenting. Praising parents can raise their self-esteem and make them feel good about their parenting skills.

**Be active in your community.** Developing playgroups for new families at community centers, libraries or schools ultimately contributes to the well-being of children.

**Volunteer your time.** Start a Circle of Parents® support group, spend time mentoring a child, or start a family program of your own.

**Distribute parenting materials** in your community.

**Remember, anything you do** to support children and parents in your community helps strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

### **Join or Support Local Organizations that Promote Community Involvement:**

- Home Owners Associations
- Junior Leagues
- Girls Scouts/Boy Scouts
- Places of Worship
- Senior Centers
- Library-based Adult Literacy Programs
- Professional Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Salvation Army, Red Cross, Goodwill
- Big Brothers/ Big Sisters
- School-based Mentoring or Tutoring Programs
- Social Clubs
- United Way
- Sporting events (football, basketball, etc.)

# OFFERING SUPPORT IN PUBLIC PLACES

Parenting can be most stressful when running errands with a small child, or a few children, in tow. Sometimes parents don't choose the best parenting techniques when their child is difficult to handle in public. Parents become focused on what needs to be done, such as the grocery shopping or the doctor visit, and can feel embarrassed that their child is acting out. Any assistance you can offer a parent will help them take a few seconds to take a deep breath and deal with the situation calmly.



- **Praise the parent or child at the first opportunity.** Think of something positive to say and say it! It helps to hear others are supportive of you.
- **Identify with the parent.** You can let them know you've been there by saying, "My kids used to do the same thing when they were that age. Is there anything I can do to help?"
- **Blame the environment.** "This is such a bright and colorful place and filled with things for children to want to touch. I think the supermarkets have really done a great job creating a place where children just want to run around."
- **Offer assistance.** "You seem to really have your hands full. Can I help you?" Or, "Can I find someone to come and help you with something?"
- **Empathize with the child.** "You don't feel like sitting in that stroller anymore, do you? Well just a little longer and Mommy/Daddy will be all done and you can get out."
- **If you are concerned about the physical safety of the child,** then offer assistance. For example, if a child is left unattended, stand by the child until the parent returns.

Any assistance you can offer a stressed parent will help them take a few seconds to take a deep breath and calm down.

# HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING TIMES OF CRISIS



**B**ig changes in everyday family life can be difficult—for both adults and children. Natural disasters, layoffs, serious accidents and other conditions beyond their control can leave families feeling powerless. The deprivation and stress children experience during a crisis can also affect their growth and development.

Nurturing childhood experiences, positive parent-child interaction and family supports can help children overcome challenges and develop to their full potential. Here are some tips for building resiliency in parents and children to help them bounce back from adversity stronger than ever.

## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS IN CRISIS

- Use active listening and empathy.
  - Relate to parents as partners who are experts on their lives and on their children's lives. They can share that expertise with you. You can share your knowledge of child development, human behavior and resources with them.
  - When you don't know an answer, you can say so. Offer to find out the needed information, and then follow up.
  - Be nonjudgmental and accepting, even when you don't agree. Share ideas, information and beliefs from your own perspective and listen to what parents have to say.
  - Find out about parents' hopes, values and goals for themselves and their children.
- Help parents find resources that address unmet concrete needs.
  - Comment on positive behaviors. A positive behavior can be arriving on time for an appointment, or reading to, feeding or playing with a baby.
  - Admire parents' resourcefulness in getting their families' needs met.
  - Thank a parent for responding to a request you made.
  - Notice parents' skills or abilities and ask them to teach skills to you or to other parents.
  - Ask a parent if you can offer some referral resources to meet a need or address an issue that you have noticed.
  - Ask parents what they feel they do best as parents.
  - Ask parents to list what they most enjoy about their child.

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND OTHERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN CRISIS

- Listen to students' concerns and answer their questions in direct, factual, age-appropriate ways. (Be careful of giving TOO MUCH information, especially with younger children.)
- Express your certainty that students can cope with the situation and faith in their strength and inner resources.
- Help students come up with ways they can address the crisis themselves: i.e., raising money, sending cards and letters, forming a Peace Club.
- Provide students with positive activities to do together that give them a sense of purpose and mastery in the situation.
- Set clear, consistent boundaries and strike a balance between addressing concerns and getting back to a normal schedule. Young people need the safety of familiar rules and routines.
- Encourage students to communicate their thoughts and feelings, but don't let the talk escalate and overwhelm students.

*Online resources used in developing this tip sheet:*

[www.familyhomelessness.org/media/327.pdf](http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/327.pdf)

[www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/](http://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/)

# ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN

**A**dvocacy is speaking out in favor of a cause or proposal. Anyone who cares about an issue and is willing to speak out to promote what works and challenge what doesn't can be an advocate. We advocate for our children, ourselves and our community through simple things we do each day, such as voting to fund improvements to the school system, negotiating time off from work, or attending a city council meeting to oppose a development proposal.

Children and families are in need of advocates to generate community support for resources and services. Child advocates speak out in a variety of ways, based on their personality, skills and interests, to ensure families' needs are recognized and met. Here are some ways you can be an advocate for children in your community:

**REGISTER TO VOTE AND VOTE!** This is your most basic right. Elected officials help determine the priorities that shape our community. Learn about candidates and their voting history; help elect representatives who believe in preventing child abuse by investing in prevention programs that support families.

**GET TO KNOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND THEIR STAFF.** They depend on you to communicate concerns in the community, so call or write your representatives and encourage them to vote for legislation supporting child abuse prevention efforts. The most persuasive messages come from familiar faces. Know them by name, and make sure they know you by name.

**SAY "THANK YOU" BEFORE YOU SAY "PLEASE."** A well-written, brief thank-you note is always appreciated. Even if you disagree with your elected officials' positions on some issues, they are more likely to listen to you if you've found some way to compliment them. If nothing else, thank them for being a public servant.

**BE CONCISE AND TO THE POINT.** The history of your issue or program needs to be a paragraph or a two-minute presentation. The key to effective communication is not volume, but precision. Elected officials need to know they can trust you as an expert source of information.

**FOCUS ON YES.** Remember the difference between lobbying and advocacy. Lobbyists make it hard for elected officials to say "No." Advocates make it easy for them to say "Yes." Advocates do not need to be partisan and never resort to threats or retribution. Advocacy is the art of communicating a positive message for good causes.

**USE THE MEDIA TO SEND YOUR MESSAGE FAR AND WIDE.** Once you're viewed as an accessible expert when reporters are on deadline, you can pitch them ideas anytime. Write letters to the editor, submit a guest editorial, and encourage allies to do the same. The opinion pages are read word-for-word by every public official. You have their attention if your case is made in print.

**ENLIST YOUR FRIENDS.** Invite your allies to join your advocacy efforts, especially those from law enforcement, education, business and the faith community. While there's strength in diversity, there's power in unity. Bring as many diverse voices to your cause as possible, but agree on the important unifying goals and success will be achieved.

**JOIN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN.** The National Movement for America's Children is calling on the country to establish and implement a national strategy to ensure that all of our children are given an equal opportunity to develop—socially, emotionally and cognitively—in healthy, nurturing homes, schools, neighborhoods and communities. Join the movement by signing the National Children's Pledge at [www.MovementForChildren.org](http://www.MovementForChildren.org) and help develop a comprehensive national strategy.

*For additional information on effective advocacy, visit [www.successby6-fl.org](http://www.successby6-fl.org) and click on "Communicating with Policy Makers: A Toolkit."*





# SUPPORTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES

## What are family-friendly workplace policies?

Family-friendly workplace policies are a range of working practices designed to help employees balance both work and home responsibilities. Studies show that comprehensive family-friendly policies have a positive impact beyond the individual employees who use these benefits.

## What are the overall benefits of family-friendly workplace policies?

Employees with family obligations have valuable skills to contribute to the workplace. They are often masters of negotiation, multi-tasking and budgeting. Yet, for many individuals, the demands of work and family responsibilities are often competing for attention, causing conflict both at work and at home. When employees are experiencing high levels of stress, they have poorer overall health, morale and attendance and a higher turnover rate—all of which is bad for business. Although introducing a family-friendly policy has some up-front costs, many employers say these practices improve their bottom line. Research confirms family-friendly businesses have fewer employee absences, lower health-care costs, and higher rates of worker retention.



## BENEFITS TO THE BUSINESS:

- Increased employee productivity, motivation and commitment
- Reduction in absenteeism and employee turnover
- Greater ability to meet the demands of clients or customers—for example, through flexible start and finish times that increase the span of hours your business operates
- Attraction and retention of talent—becoming an employer of choice

## BENEFITS TO THE WORKFORCE:

- More time to provide necessary support to family or dependents
- A more balanced and enjoyable life
- More time to participate in the community including sports, hobbies and volunteer work
- Greater ability to manage time at work and workload

## WHAT ARE COMMON FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES?

- **A flexible work schedule.** Flexibility is a worker-friendly benefit valued by the majority of today's workers. Working parents seek flexibility as a way to juggle the demands of work and home. Flexible working schedules can include a range of options such as working hours from 7:00 am – 4:00 pm, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm or 8:30 am – 5:30 pm instead of a standard 8:00 am – 5:00 pm workday. According to a *Center for Law and Social Policy* report, employees offered flexible scheduling report lower stress than those without flexibility.
- **On-site childcare.** Depending on the number of employees who will utilize the service and whether it fits the budget, contemplate how beneficial it may be for the organization as a whole, not just the parent employees. Employees will be grateful to have this option, as reliable, high-quality childcare is often expensive and difficult to find. The employees will have peace of mind knowing their child is close to them and in a safe environment; freeing them to focus on their work in the office. Employees may also be more willing to occasionally work long hours or come in on a weekend when they know you value their role as a parent. A 1998 study calculated that unstable childcare was costing employers about \$3 billion yearly. After inflation, that tab may be more like \$4 billion today.

- **Learning opportunities.** Beyond the ordinary routine in the office, reward your employees with an opportunity to learn something new. Invite a guest speaker to your quarterly meeting or host a lunch-hour workshop where employees can learn a new skill.
- **Gym membership.** As an added bonus to your employees' benefits package, include a membership to a local gym. Exercise is an important part of staying healthy. By providing this benefit, it shows that the company values the health of its employees. Highly stressed workers create health expenditures nearly 50 percent greater than those with low stress. Daily exercise will help employees manage stress and serve as a preventative measure to improve employee health. Another bonus, it could potentially keep health insurance costs down for the company.

### Is it worth it? Yes!

It is in the best interest of both employees and businesses to invest in a family-friendly workplace program. It is not uncommon to hear about work/life conflicts, such as having missed a family event because of having to work late. On the other hand, there are times people say job worries are such a distraction at home that they cannot enjoy time away from the office. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that stressed workers are more likely to be absent from or tardy to work—and make plans to quit their jobs. This kind of pressure can make employees irritable at work and at home. Employers can help reduce or eliminate these struggles by adopting common family-friendly workplace policies. These policies are good for families and good for business.

## Businesses Benefits of Breastfeeding

Federal and state laws protect and support a mother's right to breastfeed her infant. Businesses must meet their legal obligations to breastfeeding mothers, but many go above the minimum requirements because they understand that breastfeeding has short and long-term benefits for mothers, infants, businesses and communities.

Florida Statute 383.015 protects a mother's right to breastfeed in any public or private location and Section 7 of the United States Fair Labor Standards Act requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private place, other than a bathroom, for mothers to express breast milk for their nursing children for one year after the child's birth.

Supportive policies and practices that enable women to successfully return to work and breastfeed send a message to all employees that breastfeeding is valued. When businesses fully support breastfeeding mothers, they are rewarded with more satisfied, loyal employees and significant cost savings to the business. These savings are seen in such areas as:

- **Retention of experienced employees.** Employees are more likely to return to work after childbirth when their workplace provides a supportive environment for continued breastfeeding. Being able to keep experienced employees after childbirth means lowering or eliminating the costs a company otherwise would incur to hire temporary staff or to recruit, hire, and train replacement staff, both of which involve additional lost revenue while getting these new staff up to speed. Mutual of Omaha's lactation support program led to a retention rate of 83 percent of their maternity workforce compared to the national average of only 59 percent.
- **Reduction in sick time taken by both moms and dads for children's illnesses.** That's because breastfed infants are healthier! Human milk boosts an infant's immune system and helps protect him from common childhood illnesses, infections, and dermatitis. For infants in childcare settings where they are exposed to a multitude of germs and viruses, human milk provides even greater protection. Mothers and fathers of breastfed infants typically spend more time at work rather than taking leave to care for sick children. One-day absences to care for sick children occur more than twice as often for mothers of formula feeding infants.
- **Lower health care and insurance costs.** The insurance company CIGNA conducted a 2-year study of 343 employees who participated in their lactation support program, and found that the program resulted in an annual savings of \$240,000 in health care expenses, 62 percent fewer prescriptions, and \$60,000 savings in reduced absenteeism rates.



For additional information, visit  
[www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers](http://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers)  
[www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding)

# COACHING KIDS

You may have volunteered because you love sports, because your son or daughter asked you to, or because no one else would do it. Whatever the case, you have made a commitment to coach a group of kids. **When you coach children, remember you are teaching them more than just a sport, you are teaching them about life.** Here are a few tips to help you manage your responsibilities like a champion.

## About the Children

Most kids under age 12 are there either because their parents signed them up, or because they saw an opportunity to have fun with their friends. Your job is to make sure they have fun, learn the sport, and want to play again next season.

- **Make everything a game.** The kids are playing sports to have fun. They do not come to practice at this age to “work” on anything. They are there to have fun with their friends and your goal is to get everyone wanting to come to practice. To improve your practices, replace many of the drills with skill building practice games.
- **Organize a get together to foster team spirit.** Getting together outside of practices or games gives players and parents a chance to get to know each other. Fostering friendships among teammates will improve both individual player and team confidence. If you notice a conflict among your players, address and resolve it. Tell them that everyone on the team is important and they all need to support one another.
- **Stress the importance of teamwork.** Explaining the importance of each position to the players will keep them focused on what they are supposed to do individually. This helps each player understand the need to work together as a team.
- **Be realistic.** Focus on small, easy-to-accomplish goals. Ask your players to focus on effort, rather than outcome. When they focus only on results and wins, this becomes a huge distraction. They should be proud of themselves every time they give their best effort.
- **Refrain from negative criticisms.** Instead of telling players what *not* to do, try telling them what *to do*. Show them how they can improve, notice when they make progress and offer words of encouragement to keep their spirits up. Experts recommend giving specific, positive feedback. Try to give feedback on things the player is doing well, or in which he or she is improving, five times for every one piece of critical feedback.
- **Instill self-control.** Do not tolerate temper tantrums. Make it clear that a loss of self-control will result in consequences, such as pulling them out of the next game. Sitting on the bench during a game is generally a small punishment that will make a big impact and teach a valuable life lesson.
- **Teach your players to be respectful of their opponents.** Explain the importance of congratulating one’s opponents after a game, regardless of how the other team may conduct themselves. Making this a habit will teach your players to be strong, moral individuals and they will gain respect from everyone.
- **Teach the team that patience and determination pays off.** As the coach, remind the players and parents that one of the most valuable benefits of playing sports is that results do not come instantly. The coach’s consistent message should be that *improvement* is a gradual process requiring effort and focus. Success and satisfaction will often follow.



## About the Parents

Dealing with parents can be the most challenging part of coaching children. Here are a few tips to help you manage this important part of your team.

- **Set ground rules.** Have a **required** parent meeting at the end of the first practice where you can:
  - ▶ **Discuss your role as the coach**—reinforce the fact that everyone is looking out for the best interest of all the players. Show parents that you care about their child’s overall well being just as much as they do.
  - ▶ **Discuss your coaching philosophy**—that fun, everyone playing and skill development are more important than winning.
  - ▶ **Discuss good sportsmanship**—tell the parents that you will be teaching the players to respect the opponents, officials and their teammates and that you expect them to model those behaviors.
- **Ask for the help you need right away.** Have a signup sheet to get everyone’s contact information. Compile a team roster with parent names, phone numbers and emails and start asking for volunteers. At a minimum, you will need a snack parent, a pre-season party parent and an end of the season party parent. Depending on the sport, you might need a scorekeeper, fundraising or awards coordinator, and others.
- **Open the lines of communication.** Let parents know that just before a game is not a good time to bring important issues to your attention. They should talk to you after practice or call you during the week. If you are concerned about being overwhelmed by calls from parents, set “office hours” to let parents know when you are available to take their calls, or provide them an email address and let them know when you will have time each week to respond to emails.
- **Explain how parents should handle some common issues:**
  - ▶ *You feel that your child is not getting enough playing time.* If you see that your child is on the bench more often than others are, talk to your child first. See if they are unhappy about this or if they even feel it is true. From here, approach the coach and express your concerns respectfully.
  - ▶ *The referee makes a bad call.* As difficult as it may seem, try your best not to “bad mouth” the referee. They are unbiased and do their best to be fair at all times. If you feel it is a recurring issue with the same ref, bring it up with the coach and have the coach approach the official.
  - ▶ *You have a conflict with another parent.* Most importantly, keep the children out of it. Everyone wants their child to have the best experience possible, and making them aware of negative conflicts unrelated to them is unnecessary. Approach the parent respectfully and politely express your concerns. If you find that you cannot resolve the issue on your own, do not get other parents involved. Instead, bring the issue to the coach. Sit down with both the coach and the other parent and try to talk it out; keeping in mind that everyone wants a positive experience for the children.

## Here are a couple of ideas from [www.wecoachkids.com](http://www.wecoachkids.com) to help you get the most out of your limited practice times:

- Start practice with a favorite game to increase on-time attendance and get everyone in the right spirit from the start.
- Get the kids out of lines whenever feasible and keep the lines short when it’s not.
- Make sure every child is touching the ball as many times as possible, not just the ones who excel.
- Lose the words “drill” and “working” from your vocabulary and start talking about playing games and having fun at practice.
- Make time for team building at the end of practice. Five minutes on the playground or a game of dribble tag with the coach may be the most memorable part of the season for some kids.
- Don’t panic that you don’t have enough time in practice. You never will. Your job is to keep them coming back and build their love for the game. Achieve that and there will be plenty of time.
- Make sure they see YOU having fun too.

For more ideas and valuable information, visit [www.wecoachkids.com](http://www.wecoachkids.com).

# FOSTERING PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

## What is Parent Leadership?

Parent Leadership is a strength-based approach to family support that is founded on the belief that parents are knowledgeable about their families and communities and can provide valuable insight into programmatic and community changes to benefit children and families. Parent leadership is successful when parents and staff work together to make decisions that affect families and communities, sharing responsibility, expertise and leadership.<sup>1</sup> Parent leadership begins when organizations support parents' development of leadership skills and eliminate barriers to active parent participation in organization dialogue.



## Who can be a parent leader?

A parent leader is someone who represents the needs and perspectives of parents without speaking or acting in a staff role for an organization or institution. Parent leaders are parents who have used support or training to address the challenges of parenting, gained the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful leadership roles, and served as a “parent voice” to help shape the direction of their families, programs and communities.<sup>2</sup> Parent leaders can be parents, step-parents, grandparents, foster or adoptive parents, or anyone who is in a primary caregiver role.

## Parent Involvement and Empowerment

Developing parent leadership is a progressive process. Parents may find themselves at different stages at different times. Parent involvement, awareness, and acceptance of responsibility begins when a parent enters a program. Parent involvement strengthens families and improves outcomes for children. As parents learn and practice new skills, they gain a sense of empowerment. The positive self concept developed through empowerment may help individuals manage stress, maintain high self-esteem, feel in control of their lives or improve their sense of competence in parenting.<sup>3</sup>

## Shared Leadership

To fully understand parent leadership, it is important to understand the principles and benefits of shared leadership. Shared leadership involves a true partnership between parents and staff members who share responsibility for the process and outcomes of the group or team. Specific leadership roles are carried out by different members of the group/team at different times.

1 Circle of Parents. (2006) Parent Leadership Ambassador Resource Section of Training Manual

2 Parents Anonymous, Parent and Shared Leadership, Retrieved from <http://www.parentsanonymous.org/pahtml/leadDefining.html> (2007)

3 Research, Evaluation, and Systems Unit, Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida. (2006, October). Mutual self-help parent support groups in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

## **PRINCIPALS OF SHARED LEADERSHIP**

- Parents and staff members are equal partners
- No one person has all of the solutions; it depends on how people act together to make sense of the situations that face them
- Mutual respect, trust and open-mindedness
- Collective action based upon shared vision, ownership and accountability
- Consensus building instead of a democratic process

## **BENEFITS OF USING PARENT LEADERS WITHIN A SHARED LEADERSHIP MODEL**

### *Benefits to parents and their families:*

- Builds knowledge and skills
- Increases sense of personal achievement
- Opens doors for employment
- Offers leadership role models for other families
- Models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family
- Prevents child abuse and neglect

### *Benefits to providers:*

- Enhances relationships between families and providers
- Increases appreciation of various cultures
- Improves the quality of programs and services
- Develops a fresh perspective on how services should be delivered

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP AT EVERY LEVEL**

The role of a parent leader is constantly evolving. Leadership roles can begin within a program, such as a parent support group, and evolve, with nurturing support and training, into leadership roles within the organization and the community. A parent leader may eventually advocate for systemic change on behalf of children and families. Some specific roles a parent leader may assume are listed below.

### *Within a parenting group, a parent leader can act as a:*

- **New member liaison.** Parent leaders can take calls from perspective members, introduce new members during meetings and provide new members with program and resource information.
- **Meeting space specialist.** Parent leaders can arrange for space and make sure the room is set-up for the meeting and cleaned up after the meeting. They can also make sure resource materials are set-up for group members.
- **Greeter.** Parent leaders can make sure each member feels welcome by greeting each parent that comes. They can also start the group with opening statements, and end with closing statements.
- **Transportation coordinator.** Parent leaders can make sure everyone has transportation to the group meeting and home from the meeting.
- **Secretary.** Parent leaders can take attendance and help with note taking for the group. They can also help with attendance of the children's program, if applicable.

### *Within a program or an organization, parent leaders can:*

- Review and provide input for development of parent materials
- Assist with training facilitators, parent leaders and children's program staff
- Help with local events and fundraisers
- Mentor other families enrolled in programs
- Become members of task forces, advisory councils or board of directors

*Within the community, parent leaders can:*

- Generate public awareness about the importance of family support programs in the community
- Serve on community councils and advisory boards
- Volunteer in local events for child abuse prevention
- Advocate for family support programs and prevention services
- Submit letters to the editor and opinion editorials on the importance of parent leadership and parents' involvement with their children

### **How do you identify a parent leader for the group, program or agency?**

There are different strategies for selecting parent leaders. Some parents may volunteer to become a parent leader as their way of giving back to a program that supported them during their time of need. Some parents may also feel compelled to help other parents overcome challenges similar to their own. Another strategy is to ask for volunteers to take on certain roles and allow them to step forward, or to have the group elect someone for the leadership role. Sometimes parents need to be asked to take a leadership role. The atmosphere and philosophy of programs and organizations should value and promote parent leadership. All parents have at least one leadership characteristic that can be nurtured. Some common traits of parent leaders include:

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Trustworthy                   | • Committed to excellence |
| • Enthusiastic                  | • Caring                  |
| • Confident                     | • Inspiring               |
| • Tolerant                      | • Competent               |
| • Ability to think analytically |                           |

Some parents may not see themselves as a leader until someone else does. **Here are some signs a parent may want to be a leader:**

- Asks for help
- Asks questions about the mission, policies, and/or operation of the agency
- Volunteers to take on more tasks or responsibilities
- Asks about other parents or families involved in the agency
- Voices another family's concerns and/or goals
- Notices and encourages progress and growth within themselves and others
- Shares ideas for activities, fundraisers or other projects
- Shares information and resources with others in their family or community
- Encourages other parents to take opportunities
- Respects and models the rules or policies of the program
- Takes on leadership roles in the community, other programs and agencies

### **PARENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

For both parents and providers to receive the optimal benefits of parent leadership, parents and staff must receive ongoing nurturing, support and training. There are several organizations that conduct training on parent leadership in the family support field. Providers will also need to develop clear goals of how they would like parents to be involved in their programs or agency. Ideally, this is done with parent input and involvement.

Some examples of the types of training that will help develop leadership skills are:

- Public speaking
- Understanding and respecting diversity
- Assessing and defining problems — thinking critically
- Using the media
- Learning how to use and maximize community resources
- Advocacy through communication with local, state and federal policy makers

In addition, it is also important to provide parents with:

- Plenty of positive feedback
- Recognition, both formal and informal
- A process for sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Help to assess their strengths and challenges
- Opportunities for skill- and knowledge-building
- Access to community resources to help them develop their talents
- A clear message when it's not "working out"
- Mentorship as a new parent leader and the opportunity to provide mentorship to others as an experienced parent leader

For training resources, FRIENDS has a Parent Leadership Ambassador Training Guide prepared by Circle of Parents. Many Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) agencies have used the Shared Leadership in Action Program of Parents Anonymous® Inc. that includes evidence-based strategies with evaluation tools to achieve meaningful parent leadership as specified in Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) requirements. The following is a list of organizations and programs that offer information about parent leadership training:

Florida Circle of Parents®  
111 North Gadsden Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
(850) 921-4494 x107  
[www.ounce.org/circlegroups.html](http://www.ounce.org/circlegroups.html)

Parent Leadership Network  
129 West Trade Street, Suite 1555  
Charlotte, NC 28202  
(704) 335-0100  
[www.parentleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.parentleadershipnetwork.org)

Parents Anonymous®, Inc.  
675 West Foothill Blvd., Suite 220  
Claremont, CA 91711-3475  
(909) 621-6184  
[www.parentsanonymous.org](http://www.parentsanonymous.org)

The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLI)  
18-20 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591  
(860) 240-0290  
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/COC/plti.htm>

*FRIENDS September 2007. The FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, under Cooperative Agreement 90CA1729. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funders, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is in the public domain. Readers are encouraged to copy portions of the text which are not the property of copyright holders and share them, but please credit the FRIENDS National Resource Center for CBCAP.*

# MENTORING YOUTH, COUPLES and Parents

## **Mentor: a trusted counselor, guide, teacher, or coach**

Mentors build trusting relationships with younger, less experienced individuals, provide positive role models and allow others to benefit from their experience and learn from their mistakes. While mentoring is typically associated with children and young adults, mentoring newlywed couples and new mothers is a growing practice in communities and congregations. By providing support, guidance and social interaction, mentors can help build self-confidence, provide direction and help others reach their goals and achieve their full potential.



## **MENTORING YOUTH**

Kids with mentors know they have someone that cares about them and what they do. Research has shown mentoring has many benefits for children and young adults including improved school attendance and academic achievement, improved behavior and reduced delinquency, greater self-esteem and more positive life outcomes. Mentors help support education, day-to-day living and career goals. Mentors provide youth with new experiences and an outside perspective. A mentor reinforces positive values and is part of a team including parents, coaches, and teachers. The role of the mentor may be to help with a school project, practice an extracurricular activity, or simply enjoy an activity like fishing or drawing.

### *How to become a youth mentor:*

Youth mentors should be able to dedicate at least four hours a month to mentoring. Many communities, schools and religious organizations have organized youth mentoring programs. There are also local, regional and national programs dedicated to connecting youth with mentors. Big Brothers/Big Sisters or Mentors.org have well known and trusted youth mentoring programs that connect youth and mentors and provide information and training for mentors.

## **MENTORING NEWLYWED COUPLES**

The first few years of marriage can be an exciting as well as demanding time for couples. Similar to youth and new mothers, newlywed couples may need to enlist the help of marriage mentors. Mentors for couples differ from other mentors because they are usually a married couple or a member of a religious organization. Mentors for newlyweds are experienced and have been down the same path as the newly married couples. Sometimes, newly married couples are not prepared for the day-to-day challenges that are a part of the transition from being single to sharing their life with another person. Mentors for couples listen to both individuals in the marriage and offer advice, scenarios and solutions. Couples mentoring newlyweds offer both a male and female perspective.

### *How to become a mentor:*

Many newlyweds check with their church, religious institution or community centers when trying to find a mentor couple. Some newlyweds may approach a couple whose marriage they admire. Either way, the relationship between mentors and newlyweds is a strong and personal one. The decision to choose a mentor couple, or professional, should be discussed and well thought through by both the newlyweds and mentors.

## **MENTORING NEW MOTHERS**

While there is not a lot of research on the benefits of mentoring new mothers, the practice is growing. A variety of organizations claim positive results including improved knowledge of child development and appropriate discipline and guidance techniques, greater self-confidence as a parent, and greater awareness of community resources for families. Like youth mentors, new mother mentors are experienced adults that want to provide support for new mothers. Mentors have been mothers themselves and understand the physical and emotional exhaustion after the birth of a child. They provide advice on how to find a balance between motherhood and other commitments.

*How to become a new mother mentor:*

Check with your local hospital, community center, high school or religious organization. There are also many local and regional organizations that connect mentors with new mothers. Many of these programs are faith based and provide information as well as guides for new mother mentors.

*For more information, check out some of these Web sites.*

### **Youth Mentors**

[www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

MENTOR is a resource for the expansion of mentoring initiatives nationwide. The site provides information on mentoring opportunities, how to start mentoring programs, and other mentoring resources. MENTOR works with a strong network of state and local mentoring partnerships to leverage resources and provide the support and tools that mentoring organizations need to effectively serve young people in their communities.

### **New Mother Mentors**

[www.americanmothers.org](http://www.americanmothers.org)

The Gentle Art of Mother Mentoring program pairs experienced mothers with those mothers who desire assistance with their responsibilities. Mentors help new mothers with the uncertainties of child growth, behavior, development and discipline.

### **Newlywed Mentors**

[www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage)

This family focused web site contains a personal story of a newly married couple and their experiences with a mentor couple. The story focuses on making the most of the marital journey by gleaning wisdom from others who have been down the same road.

### **Marriage Mentors**

[www.12Conversations.com](http://www.12Conversations.com)

Marriage mentoring can be as simple as finding a couple you respect and hearing their stories of married life. A neighbor, a family member or a church could be a great source for a mentor couple. If your church does not have a mentoring program, encourage your minister to contact 12Conversations.com to learn more about developing a marriage mentoring program.

# RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

## FLORIDA DEFINITIONS OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

Florida law is very specific about child and vulnerable adult abuse and neglect. A few of the definitions are mentioned below.

**“Abandoned”** means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver responsible for the child’s welfare, while being able, makes no provision for the child’s support and makes no effort to communicate with the child, which situation is sufficient to evince a willful rejection of parental obligations. If the efforts of the parent or legal custodian, or caregiver primarily responsible for the child’s welfare, to support and communicate with the child are, in the opinion of the court, only marginal efforts that do not evince a settled purpose to assume all parental duties, the court may declare the child to be abandoned. The term “abandoned” does not include an abandoned newborn infant as described in s. 383.50, a “child in need of services” as defined in chapter 984, or a “family in need of services” as defined in chapter 984. The incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child’s welfare may support a finding of abandonment.



**“Abuse”** means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

**“Caregiver”** means the parent, legal custodian, permanent guardian, adult household member, or other person responsible for a child’s welfare.

**“Neglect”** occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. The foregoing circumstances shall not be considered neglect if caused primarily by financial inability unless actual services for relief have been offered to and rejected by such person. A parent or legal custodian legitimately practicing religious beliefs in accordance with a recognized church or religious organization who thereby does not provide specific medical treatment for a child may not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent or legal custodian; however, such an exception does not preclude a court from ordering the following services to be provided, when the health of the child so requires:

- (a) Medical services from a licensed physician, dentist, optometrist, podiatric physician, or other qualified health care provider; or
- (b) Treatment by a duly accredited practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing in accordance with the tenets and practices of a well-recognized church or religious organization.

Neglect of a child includes acts or omissions.

**“Other person responsible for a child’s welfare”** includes the child’s legal guardian or foster parent; an employee of any school, public or private child day care center, residential home, institution, facility, or agency; a law enforcement officer employed in any facility, service, or program for children that is operated or contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice; or any other person legally responsible for the child’s welfare in a residential setting; and also includes an adult sitter or relative entrusted with a child’s care. For the purpose of departmental investigative jurisdiction, this definition does not include the following persons when they are acting in an official capacity: law enforcement officers, except as otherwise provided in this subsection; employees of municipal or county detention facilities; or employees of the Department of Corrections.

## **THERE ARE FOUR PRIMARY TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE:**

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

While the first two categories get the most attention, perhaps because they involve physical violence, neglect is the most common form of child abuse. Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, to the extent that the child's physical and/or psychological well-being are damaged or endangered. In child neglect, the parents or caregivers are choosing not to meet the basic needs of children in their care, despite their ability to do so. There are three types of neglect.

## **Child neglect: types and warning signs**

### **Physical Neglect**

1. Failure to provide adequate food, clothing or hygiene
2. Reckless disregard for the child's safety, such as inattention to hazards in the home, drunk driving with kids in the car or leaving a baby unattended.
3. Refusal to provide, or delay in providing, necessary health care for the child.
4. Abandoning children without providing for their care or expelling children from the home without arranging for their care.

### **Educational Neglect**

1. Failure to enroll children in school or provide them with an education.
2. Permitting or causing a child to miss too many days of school.
3. Refusal to follow up on obtaining services for a child's special educational needs.

### **Emotional Neglect**

1. Inadequate nurturing or affection.
2. Exposure of the child to spousal abuse.
3. Permitting a child to drink alcohol or use recreational drugs.
4. Failure to intervene when the child demonstrates antisocial behavior.
5. Refusal of, or delay in providing, necessary psychological care.

## **SOME SIGNS OF CHILD NEGLECT:**

- Clothes that are dirty, ill-fitting, ragged, and/or not suitable for the weather
- Unwashed appearance; offensive body odor
- Indicators of hunger: asking for or stealing food, going through trash for food, eating too fast or too much when food is provided for a group
- Apparent lack of supervision: wandering alone, home alone, left in a car
- Colds, fevers, or rashes left untreated; infected cuts; chronic tiredness
- In schoolchildren, frequent absence or lateness; troublesome, disruptive behavior or its opposite, withdrawal
- In babies, failure to thrive; failure to relate to other people or to surroundings

A single occurrence of one of these indicators isn't necessarily a sign of child neglect, but a pattern of behaviors may demonstrate a lack of care that constitutes abuse.

## Physical child abuse: types and warning signs

**Physical child abuse** is an adult's physical act of aggression directed at a child that causes injury, even if the adult didn't intend to injure the child. Such acts of aggression include striking a child with the hand, fist, or foot or with an object; burning the child with a hot object; shaking, pushing, or throwing a child; pinching or biting the child; pulling a child by the hair; cutting off a child's air.

Physically abusive parents have issues of anger, excessive need for control, or immaturity that make them unable or unwilling to see their level of aggression as inappropriate.

Sometimes the very youngest children, even babies not yet born, suffer physical abuse. Because many chemicals pass easily from a pregnant woman's system to that of a fetus, a mother's use of drugs or alcohol during pregnancy can cause serious neurological and physiological damage to the unborn child, such as the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome. Mothers can also pass on drugs or alcohol to babies through breast milk.

Another form of child abuse involving babies is **Shaken Baby Syndrome**, in which a frustrated caregiver shakes a baby roughly to make the baby stop crying. The baby's neck muscles can't support the baby's head and the brain bounces around inside the skull, sustaining damage that often leads to severe neurological problems and even death. While the person shaking the baby may not intend physical harm, shaking a baby in a way that can cause injury is a form of child abuse.

An odd form of physical child abuse is Munchausen's syndrome by proxy, in which a parent causes a child to become ill and rushes the child to the hospital or convinces doctors that the child is sick. It's a way for the parent to gain attention and sympathy, and its dangers to the child constitute child abuse.

### Is corporal punishment the same as physical abuse?

**Corporal punishment**, the use of physical force with the intent of inflicting bodily pain without injury for the purpose of correction or control, used to be a very common form of discipline. Most of us know it as spanking or paddling. Many of us were spanked as children without damage to body or psyche; however, the widespread use of corporal punishment doesn't mean it is a good idea.

Most child-care experts have come to agree that corporal punishment sends the message to children that physical force is an appropriate response to problems or opposition. The level of force used by an angry or frustrated parent can easily get out of hand and lead to injury. Even if it doesn't, what a child learns from being hit as punishment is less about why conduct is right or wrong than about behaving well — or hiding bad behavior — out of fear of being hit.

Signs of physical child abuse include visible marks of maltreatment, such as cuts, bruises, welts, or well-defined burns, and reluctance to go home. If you ask a child about how he or she got hurt and the child talks vaguely or evasively about falling off a fence or spilling a hot dish, think hard before you accept the child's story at face value.

Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse. Children may exhibit fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy or hostility.

### SOME SIGNS OF PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE:

- Frequent absence from school
- Unexplained burns, bruises or other injuries
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent
- Obvious need for medical or dental care
- Strong body odor or unusually dirty appearance
- Running away from home
- Attempted suicide

## Sexual abuse in children: types and warning signs

Sexual abuse is *any* sexual act between an adult and a child. Such acts include:

- **Behavior involving penetration**—Vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex.
- **Fondling**—Touching or kissing a child’s genitals, making a child fondle an adult’s genitals.
- **Violations of privacy**—Forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom.
- **Exposing children to adult sexuality**—Performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling “dirty” stories, showing pornography to a child.
- **Exploitation**—Selling a child’s services as a prostitute or a performer in pornography.

The adult who sexually abuses a child or adolescent is usually someone the child knows and is supposed to trust: a relative, childcare provider, family friend, neighbor, teacher, coach or clergy member. More than 80 percent of sex offenders are people the child or adolescent victims know. It’s important to understand that no matter what the adult says in defense of his or her actions, the child did not invite the sexual activity and the adult’s behavior is wrong.

### **Sexual abuse is never the child’s fault.**

Children are psychologically unable to handle sexual stimulation. Even toddlers, who haven’t formulated the idea that the sexual abuse is wrong, will develop problems resulting from the over stimulation. Older children who know and care for their abusers know that the sexual behavior is wrong, but they may feel trapped by feelings of loyalty and affection. Abusers warn their victims not to tell, threatening children with violence or banishment, and the shame associated with the sexual activity makes the child especially reluctant to tell. When sexual abuse occurs within the family, children may worry that other family members won’t believe them and will be angry with them if they tell—as is often the case. The layer of shame that accompanies sexual abuse makes the behavior doubly traumatizing.

### **SOME SIGNS OF SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE:**

Often children who have suffered sexual abuse show no physical signs, and the abuse goes undetected unless a physician spots evidence of forced sexual activity. However, there are behavioral clues to sexual abuse, including:

- Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
- Seductive behavior
- Reluctance or refusal to undress in front of others
- Extra aggression or, at the other end of the spectrum, extra compliance
- Fear of a particular person or family member

Children who use the Internet are also vulnerable to come-ons by adults online. Among the warning signs of online sexual child abuse are these:

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night
- You find pornography on your child’s computer
- Your child receives phone calls from people you don’t know, or makes calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don’t recognize
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don’t know
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family
- Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else

## Emotional child abuse: types and warning signs

Emotional child abuse involves behavior that interferes with a child’s mental health or social development. Such abuse can range from verbal insults to acts of terror, and it’s almost always a factor in the other three categories of abuse. While emotional abuse by itself doesn’t involve the infliction of physical pain or inappropriate physical contact, it can have more long-lasting negative psychological effects than either physical abuse or sexual abuse.

**Examples of emotional child abuse include:**

### Verbal abuse

- Belittling or shaming the child: name-calling, making negative comparisons to others, telling the child he or she is “no good,” “worthless,” “a mistake”
- Habitual blaming: telling the child that everything is his or her fault

### Withholding affection

- Ignoring or disregarding the child
- Lack of affection and warmth: Failure to hug, praise, express love for the child

### Extreme or bizarre punishment

- These are actions that are meant to isolate and terrorize a child, such as tying the child to a fixture or piece of furniture or locking a child in a closet or dark room

### Corruption

- This involves causing a child to witness or participate in inappropriate behavior, such as criminal activities, drug or alcohol abuse, or acts of violence

Emotional abuse can come not only from adults but from other children: siblings, neighborhood or schoolyard bullies, and peers in schools that permit a culture of social ostracism (the “mean girl” syndrome). The signs of emotional child abuse include lack of concern, depression and hostility. If the abuse happens at school, the child may be reluctant to go to school and develop or fake a physical complaint.

## Causes of child abuse

Why would someone abuse a defenseless child? Not all child abuse is intentional. Several factors in a person’s life may combine to cause them to abuse a child:

- **Stress**, including the stress of caring for children or the stress of caring for a child with a disability, special needs, or difficult behaviors
- **Lack of nurturing qualities** necessary for raising or caring for a child
- **Immaturity**: a disproportionate number of parents who abuse their children are teenagers
- **Difficulty controlling anger**
- **Personal history of being abused**
- **Isolation** from the family or community
- **Physical or mental health problems**, such as depression and anxiety
- **Alcohol or drug abuse**
- **Personal problems** such as marital conflict, unemployment, or financial difficulties

No one has been able to predict which of these factors will cause someone to abuse a child. A significant factor is that abuse tends to be **intergenerational**—those who were abused as children are more likely to repeat the act when they become parents or caretakers.

In addition, many forms of child abuse arise from ignorance or lack of knowledge. Sometimes a cultural tradition leads to abuse. Such beliefs include:

- Children are property
- Parents have the right to control their children in any way they wish
- Children need to be toughened up to face the hardships of life
- Girls need to be genitally mutilated to assure virginity and later marriage

### **An abusive adult may...**

- Seem unconcerned about the child's welfare
- See the child as worthless or a burden
- Avoid discussing the child's injuries
- Show signs of alcohol or drug abuse
- Use harsh physical discipline or ask other caretakers to use it
- Seem indifferent to the child
- Seem secretive or try to isolate the child
- Frequently blame, belittle or insult the child

### **Effects of child abuse**

Child abuse can produce dire consequences during the victim's childhood and adulthood. Some effects of child abuse are obvious: a child is malnourished or has a cast on her arm; a very young child develops a sexually transmitted disease. But some physiological effects of child abuse, such as cognitive difficulties or lingering health problems, may not show up for some time or be clearly linked to abuse. Other effects of child abuse are invisible or go off like time bombs later in life.

#### **Emotional Effects of Child Abuse**

Just as all types of child abuse have an emotional component; all affect the emotions of the victims. These effects include:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression and anxiety
- Aggressive behavior/anger issues
- Relationship difficulties
- Alienation and withdrawal
- Personality disorders
- Clinginess, neediness
- Flashbacks and nightmares

Many adults who were abused as children find it difficult to trust other people, endure physical closeness, and establish intimate relationships.

#### **Behavioral Effects of Child Abuse**

Children who suffer abuse have much greater chances of being arrested later as juveniles and as adults. Significant percentages of inmates in U.S. prisons were abused as children. One of every three abused or neglected children will grow up to become an abusive parent. Other behavioral effects include:

- Problems in school and work
- Prostitution
- Teen pregnancy
- Suicide attempts
- Criminal or antisocial behavior
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Eating disorders
- Spousal abuse

# REPORT ABUSE, IT'S THE LAW!

## NEW INFORMATION

- Failure to report known or suspected child abuse, neglect or abandonment is now a third degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison, five years probation, and a \$5,000 fine.
- College and university law enforcement and administrators are now required to report known or suspected child abuse occurring on campuses or at events sponsored by their institutions. Failure to report may subject the institution to a fine.

**If you know or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected by parents, caregivers, other adults or juvenile sex offenders, you must immediately report what you know or suspect to the Florida Department of Children and Families.**

## WHO IS A "MANDATED REPORTER"?

Although everyone has a responsibility to report suspected child abuse, neglect and abandonment, only those in certain occupations designated by law as professionally mandated reporters are required to provide their names when making a report to the Abuse Hotline. Mandated reporters' names are entered into the record of the report, but remain confidential. Mandated reporters include those in the following occupations:

- Chiropractor/chiropractor physician
- Day care center worker
- Foster care worker
- Hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of children
- Health professional
- Home visitor
- Institutional worker
- Judge
- Law enforcement officer
- Medical examiner
- Mental health professional
- Nurse
- Osteopath/osteopathic physician
- Physician
- Practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing
- Professional child care worker
- Residential care worker
- School teacher
- School official or other school personnel
- Social worker

## INFORMATION NEEDED

Details about the abuse or neglect you know or suspect is happening, including who is involved, what happened, when and where it happened, why it happened, the extent of any injuries, what the victim(s) said happened, and any other related details are very important. Information callers should have ready includes:

- Name, date of birth (or approximate age), race, and gender, for all adults and children involved
- Addresses for all subjects, including current location
- Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the victim(s)

## 3 WAYS TO MAKE A REPORT

### Call

1-800-962-2873  
(1-800-96-ABUSE)  
TDD: 1-800-453-5145

### Fax

1-800-914-0004

### Online at

<https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>

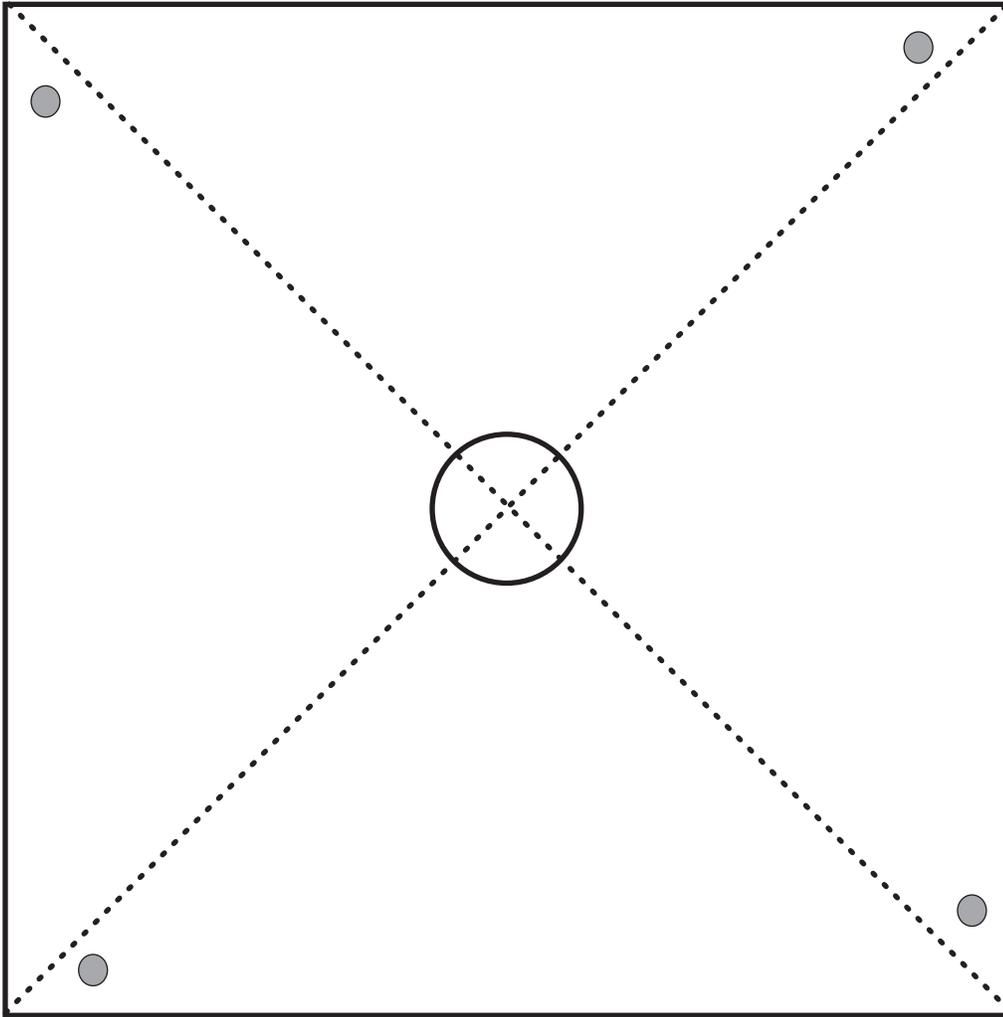
Other relevant information that would expedite an investigation, such as directions to the victim (especially in rural areas) and potential risks to the investigator, should be given to the abuse hotline counselor.

### **WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?**

Keep reporting abuse until the situation is resolved. You may not have the legal right to know what steps are being taken to protect the child in question as a result of your report; however, you can help the child in other ways:

- Be a good listener—show that you understand and believe what the child tells you
- Be kind and supportive of the child
- Talk to the child’s teacher, school counselor, or minister—they may be in a position to reach out to the family
- If appropriate, you can support the family by offering to help with child care, chores, errands, etc.

# MAKE YOUR OWN PINWHEEL!



## What you'll need:

- ▶ A pencil with eraser
- ▶ 8 ½ x 11 sheet of construction paper
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Colored pencils or markers
- ▶ Paper fastener
- ▶ Plastic drinking straw

## How to make a pinwheel:

1. Print the pinwheel pattern. You can reproduce this pattern on white construction paper with a copy machine. Be sure to cut the construction paper to 8½ in. by 11 in.
2. Cut-out the pinwheel on the solid lines only.
3. Decorate both sides of the construction paper pinwheel.
4. Cut the dotted lines from the four corners to the center circle. Try not to cut into the center circle.

5. Use the sharpened pencil to poke a hole through the four tiny dark circles. The pencil point also works well to poke a hole into the straw. Carefully push the pencil point through the straw about ½ inch from the top.
6. Make the tiny holes on the four points meet at the center circle.
7. Push the ends of the paper fastener through the holes on the pinwheel, then push the fastener through the center circle.
8. Place the straw on the back side of your pinwheel and push the ends of the fastener through the hole in the straw. Open-up the fastener by flattening the ends in opposite directions.

*Now you are ready to try-out your beautiful pinwheel.  
All you will need is a little bit of wind to make your pinwheel spin round and round. Have fun!*

