Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in Alaska

The prevention of child abuse and neglect is an act priority.

What is child abuse and neglect?

**Abuse** describes overt harm committed by others, usually adults. Abuse can be:
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Verbal/emotional mental abuse

**Neglect** means parents and caregivers don’t meet a child’s basic needs. Neglect can be physical or emotional.

- 80% of child maltreatment cases reported in 2015 involved NEGLECT
- 44% AGES 0-4
- 29% AGES 5-9
- 27% AGES 10-17

2,226 Confirmed Cases of child abuse and neglect in 2015

Child abuse and neglect begins early. Forty-four percent of Alaskan victims are between the ages of 0-4 when they experience their first abuse. Children under age 4 are at the greatest risk for severe injury and death from abuse. Children who have been abused once before are often victims of repeated abuse. In Alaska, children reported more than once as victims of abuse or neglect account for more than two-thirds of OCS investigations. Most of the time, abusers are someone children know.

Abuse and neglect occur most often in families experiencing high levels of stress, such as poverty, family deaths, or chronic illness. Families without nearby friends, relatives or social support are the most at risk.
What are symptoms of child abuse and neglect?

Symptoms vary by the kind of abuse or neglect experienced by the child, but can include:

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Difficulty concentrating or problems learning
- Consistent anxiety, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Absence of adult supervision
- Extreme compliance or passivity
- Disclosure of maltreatment

How does child abuse and neglect impact children?

Research shows that abuse and neglect affect children throughout their lives. In addition to immediate injuries, abuse and neglect can disrupt brain development, weaken children’s bodies, and cause long-term health problems. Children often adopt high-risk behaviors to cope with the pain of abuse and neglect, and those also can lead to chronic illness, disease, homelessness, and other social ills. Finally, the effects of abuse and neglect can be embedded in a child’s DNA and passed on to future generations.

Direct Costs of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Estimated lifetime cost per Alaskan victim of child abuse and neglect: $228,000
- Estimated lifetime cost in medical and productivity losses per Alaskan child death: $1.4 Million

Average Rate of Confirmed Child Abuse and Neglect

- Reports to OCS of individual children identified as potential victims of child abuse and neglect in 2015: 17,000
- Alaskan children identified as potential victims of child abuse and neglect in 2015: 1 in 10
- OCS reports of child abuse and neglect received in 2015: 5/hour
- Reports received, on average, by OCS of confirmed child abuse and neglect in 2015: 12/day
How can we prevent child abuse and neglect?

relationships and environments are essential to prevent child abuse and to assure all children reach their full potential.

What can we do to support Alaska’s children?

The CDC recommends 5 steps:

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<th>Strategy</th>
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| Strengthen economic supports to families      | • Strengthening household financial security  
                                                • Family-friendly work policies                                                              |
| Change social norms to support parents and positive parenting | • Public engagement and education campaigns  
                                                • Legislative approaches to reduce corporal punishment                                           |
| Provide quality care and education early in life | • Preschool enrichment with family engagement  
                                                • Improved quality of child care through licensing and accreditation                           |
| Enhance parenting skills to promote healthy child development | • Early childhood home visitation  
                                                • Parenting skill and family relationship approaches                                              |
| Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk | • Enhanced primary care  
                                                • Behavioral parent training programs  
                                                • Treatment to lessen harms of abuse and neglect exposure  
                                                • Treatment to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence                       |
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TAKE ACTION!

1. **Enhance parenting skills to support healthy child development.**
   - Bright Futures  [www.brightfutures.aap.org](http://www.brightfutures.aap.org)
   - The Whole Child  [www.pbs.org/wholechild](http://www.pbs.org/wholechild)
   - Zero to Three  [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
   - Child Development Institute  [www.childdevelopmentinfo.com](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com)
   - Healthy Children  [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

2. **Promote protective factors to strengthen families.**
   - Strengthening Families  [www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/programs/strengthening-families](http://www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/programs/strengthening-families)
     - Parental Resilience
     - Social Connections
     - Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
     - Concrete Support in Times of Need
     - Social & Emotional Competence of Children

3. **Take simple steps.**
   - Volunteer your time and talent with a group focused on children and families.
   - Create a neighborhood parent’s group.
   - Offer to babysit for family or friends who are having stressful times.
   - Know your kids friends and their parents.

4. **Report suspected child abuse and neglect.**
   - CALL: (800) 478-4444
   - EMAIL: reportchildabuse@alaska.gov
   - FAX: (907) 269-3939

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1. Data courtesy of Alaska Surveillance of Child Abuse and Neglect Program (Alaska SCAN).