

What is Child Abuse Prevention?

The goal of child abuse prevention is to prevent child abuse and neglect prior to it happening or prior to any involvement with the child welfare system. The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is to support families and help parents learn the skills they need to be effective caregivers. Parenting is a learned skill. Child abuse prevention often focuses on helping parents learn how to meet the needs of their children through positive parenting. [Back to Top](#)

Primary Child Abuse Prevention efforts consists of activities that are targeted toward the community at large. Primary prevention strategies often seek to strengthen family functioning. Examples of primary prevention include:

Public awareness campaigns for the prevention of child abuse and neglect, such as shaken baby syndrome, child sex exploitation, and when to report abuse/neglect;

Public education and outreach activities;

Information and referral regarding community and social services available for families;

Parent education classes that are open to everyone in the community;and,

Family support programs such as family resource centers.

These activities are meant to impact families prior to any allegations of abuse or neglect.

Secondary Child Abuse Prevention includes activities targeted to vulnerable families that have one or more risk factors, including families with substance abuse, teen parents, parents of special needs children, single parents, and low income families. Examples include:

Parenting classes - parent education/skills classes targeted for high-risk parents;

Concrete services (clothing, food, utility payment, housing assistance, job training, transportation);

Counseling for adults and children;

Respite care/crisis care for parents of a child with a disability or for families at risk of abuse/neglect;

Voluntary home visiting programs for new parents and teen parents;

Parenting programs for new moms;

Parent mutual support/self help;

Mentoring programs for high risk youth;

Family resource centers/family support services for at risk families;

Home based early intervention services for at risk populations;

Population specific services for fathers, racial and ethnic minorities, and parents/children with disabilities

Tertiary prevention consists of activities targeted to families that have confirmed or unconfirmed child abuse and neglect reports. These families have already demonstrated the need for intervention, either with or without court supervision. These are families that qualify for services under child welfare programs and where there is an open case. These efforts are aimed at stopping the abuse from occurring again. Tertiary child abuse prevention happens within the Child Protective Services System. Examples include out-of-home care and the removal of children from the family.

West Virginia's primary and secondary prevention activities are a distinct part of the continuum of child welfare services but not a part of the child welfare system.