



GROWING

a Better Tomorrow for All Children,

TOGETHER

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2022 Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit -Connecticut



2022 Community Action Guide Child Abuse Prevention Month

Table of Contents

Educating & Awareness.....	1
What is Prevention?	
Talking Points and Blurbs	
Training Opportunities	
Pinwheels for Prevention Materials.....	7
Pinwheel FAQs	
Pinwheel Resources & Activities	
Communication Templates.....	10
Sample Press Releases and Letter to the Editor	
Social Media Content	12
Social Media/ Digital Content	

What is Child Abuse Prevention?

ANYTHING that strengthens families and helps children thrive!

The prevention of child abuse and neglect cannot be achieved with one program or one strategy. Programs that only target caregivers are shown to improve parent-child interactions, but don't account for other root causes of maltreatment such as social isolation, poverty, community violence, and other stressors. It requires a comprehensive approach with strategies at many different levels and with multiple sectors working together.

There are several ways to think about and group strategies.

WHO	Everyone, those at risk, or those who have you are looking to influence already experienced abuse
WHEN	Before abuse/neglect occurs (Primary/Secondary), will your strategy occur or after it has occurred (Tertiary)
WHAT	Individuals, families, communities, or society level will the strategy address

Types of Prevention

PRIMARY

Primary prevention activities are directed at the general population and attempt to stop maltreatment before it occurs. All members of the community have access to and may benefit from these services. Primary prevention activities with a universal focus seek to raise the awareness of the general public, service providers, and decision-makers about the scope and problems associated with child maltreatment. Universal approaches to primary prevention might include:

- Public service announcements that encourage positive parenting
- Parent education programs and support groups that focus on child development, age-appropriate expectations, and the roles and responsibilities of parenting
- Family support and family strengthening programs that enhance the ability of families to access existing services, and resources to support positive interactions among family members
- Public awareness campaigns that provide information on how and where to report suspected child abuse and neglect

SECONDARY

Secondary prevention activities with a high-risk focus are offered to populations that have one or more risk factors associated with child maltreatment, such as poverty, parental substance abuse, young parental age, parental mental health concerns, and parental or child disabilities. Programs may target services for communities or neighborhoods that have a high incidence of any or all of these risk factors. Approaches to prevention programs that focus on high-risk populations might include:

- Parent education programs located in high schools, focusing on teen parents, or those within substance abuse treatment programs for mothers and families with young children
- Parent support groups that help parents deal with their everyday stresses and meet the challenges and responsibilities of parenting
- Home visiting programs that provide support and assistance to expecting and new mothers in their homes
- Respite care for families that have children with special needs
- Family resource centers that offer information and referral services to families living in low-income neighborhoods

TERTIARY

Tertiary prevention activities focus on families where maltreatment has already occurred (indicated) and seek to reduce the negative consequences of the maltreatment and to prevent its recurrence. These prevention programs may include services such as:

- Intensive family preservation services with trained mental health counselors that are available to families 24 hours per day for a short period of time (e.g., 6 to 8 weeks)
- Parent mentor programs with stable, nonabusive families acting as "role models" and providing support to families in crisis
- Parent support groups that help parents transform negative practices and beliefs into positive parenting behaviors and attitudes
- Mental health services for children and families affected by maltreatment to improve family communication and functioning

Child Abuse Prevention

365 Days of the Year

While April is Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Month child abuse happens every day and so must prevention efforts. Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Connecticut provides sample communications pieces and community event ideas to be used during CAP Month and year round to help promote awareness, educate the general public, and also target specific audiences. Whether you use these tools in their entirety or simply for inspiration, this guide is a stepping stone for your CAP Month activities. By clearly stating how individuals and groups can work to prevent child abuse and neglect, we can create a common agenda and collective effort to ensure safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for Connecticut's children and families.

The three domains of the 2022 Community Action Guide are:

• Educating and Awareness

• Messages and Ideas

• Communication



Educating & Awareness:

Individuals and communities can help prevent abuse by learning about strategies to strengthen families.



Messages & Ideas:

All month long we will be asking, individuals and organizations to make a visible commitment to helping make great childhoods happen by WEARING BLUE and submitting your photos!



Communication:

In April, communities send a unified message that child abuse and neglect is preventable by tangibly investing in children and families.

We encourage you to use messaging and artwork from this document, the CAP Month artwork and campaign elements, including images and image licenses, are property of Prevent Child Abuse America. Any campaign components used by a local partner must be attributed to PCA Connecticut, meaning they must mention PCA Connecticut in outreach efforts. Pinwheels for Prevention® and the blue pinwheel mark are both trademarked by Prevent Child Abuse America.

If you have any questions, need assistance customizing any of the campaign components, or need help with trademarked materials, please contact us at: pcact@ctchildrensalliance.org.



How Does Prevention Work?

Key Messages and Takeaway Points

Why Does It Matter:

We are the stewards of the next generation. We know that our ability to raise healthy children who will lead tomorrow's communities requires smart and innovative thinking today.

Children are shaped by their earliest experiences and relationships. Creating safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for Georgia's children allows healthy brain development and promotes lifelong learning and success.

What Is the Issue:

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as child abuse and neglect, can cause high levels of stress. When stress is frequent and prolonged, it can dramatically change how the brain develops. In the absence of supportive relationships and community resources, these early adversities can affect a person's health, educational attainment, and economic opportunity over their lifespan and can even carry over to the next generation.

While abuse and neglect occurs in families from all ethnicities, it is important to acknowledge that families of color continue to face systemic racism and differential access to supportive services that protect against abuse.

How to Solve It:

Child abuse and neglect is caused by multiple factors related to the individual, family, community, and society at large. Environments that have high rates of violence, inequitable access to community resources and social services, and are disproportionately affected by poverty or unemployment are contributors to child abuse.

Science shows that providing supportive and positive conditions for early childhood can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behavior, and health. Addressing community adversities and providing concrete supports to families and children is more effective and less costly than attempting to address the consequences of adversity later in life.

By removing barriers to supports for all families and investing in policies and programs that work to overcome individual and widespread adversities, we can create a state where all children thrive.



Who Can Solve It:

April is **Child Abuse Prevention Month**, a time to celebrate the good things our community does and lift up the work and partners we still need to ensure every child has the chance to thrive.

Below are a few examples of how caring and innovative adults, including policy makers, business leaders, and community members can prevent child abuse and neglect or other early adversities.

- **Business Leaders** can promote a culture of parent support.
- **Policy Makers** can identify and assess which policies may positively impact the lives of children and families and reduce possible barriers to families receiving needed supports and resources.
- **Faith Communities** can offer space for parent and youth activities.
- **Family and Youth Serving Organizations** can train staff on preventing, recognizing, and responding to child abuse.
- **Educators** can follow-up if something seems wrong with a child and be ready to give families local resources that might help families in their district.
- **Friends and Neighbors** can help break the social isolation some parents may experience or encourage parents to seek support when needed by calling the 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373) Helpline.
- **Individuals** can volunteer to help parents when they need a break or become a mentor for a child.

2022 Child Abuse Prevention Month Messaging

Growing a Better Tomorrow for All Children, Together

Throughout CAP Month, Prevent Child Abuse America the Connecticut Children's Alliance/ Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut are using a community garden metaphor to reinforce the message that "Every day, we help families and children thrive.

Theme Talking Points

- **Children and families are our greatest natural resource.** We all have a stake in preparing children to grow up to be healthy and thriving members of our community.
- **The best time to plant seeds of support for all children is now.** Every season presents a new opportunity to promote a young person's physical, emotional, and social development.
- **Each family is unique, but all parents and caregivers need support sometimes. We can all help by ensuring children have positive experiences, and families have the resources they need, when they need them.**
- **We proactively call out inequity and injustice and work to create the conditions for safe, stable, and nurturing spaces.** All children and families thrive when communities focus on addressing root causes that lead to health and social inequities.
- **Policies and services that put families first strengthen all of us during times of uncertainty or increased stress.** Working together, we can relieve some of the overload that parents experience and free them up to focus on caring for themselves and their kids.
- **Adversity is not destiny.** Our amazing bodies and brains are ready to respond to positive experiences and reshape our futures, from the inside out.



Education and Training Opportunities

April 14th

11:30am-1:00pm ET

**Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences:
What Prosecutors, Investigators, and MDTS Need
to Know**

April 26th

10:00am -11:30am ET

**Getting to the Root Cause of Child Abuse and Other
Health Issues by Building Health and Supportive
Relationships**

April 28th

10:00am -11:30am ET

**QPR Gatekeeper Training
for Suicide Prevention**



Pinwheels for Prevention

What are Pinwheels for Prevention®? Month.

Pinwheels for Prevention® is a national public awareness campaign during Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Month every April. It was designed by Prevent Child Abuse America to communicate efforts and change the way people think about prevention. Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Connecticut encourages community activities and the support of public policies that prioritize healthy child development right from the start!

Talking Points, We All Have a Role to Play

Everyone can make a difference in a child's life and as a community member, it is your responsibility to not only help people realize this, but to also communicate specifically how they can help. "Pinwheel gardens" planted in communities across the nation are visual reminders that we all play a role in ensuring happy and healthy childhoods for all children everywhere. Their presence has resulted in increased awareness, expanded dialogue and community engagement around the healthy development of all children and the prevention of child abuse before it ever occurs.

Use Positive Messaging

Research shows that while horrific stories of child abuse and neglect may gain short-term media attention, this approach is not successful in building lasting public will for effective prevention efforts. To promote lasting change, the pinwheel messages must focus on proposing **effective solutions and engaging people in positive, preventative actions** they can take on their own.

Connecting Pinwheels and Pinwheel Gardens to community resources or needs, let others know how they can help families in their community!

- Avoid giving lots of numbers, pick just one thought-provoking statistic
- Educate people on what child abuse prevention is and looks like in action
- Talk about the importance of healthy child development
- Give **specific actions** others (individuals, business, etc.) can do to get involved

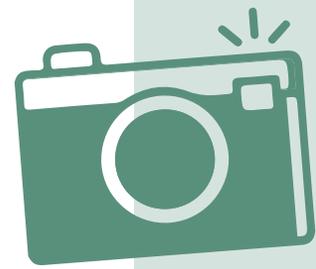
NOTE:

We ask that pinwheels are not used with negative or graphic content (a common example is the number of child deaths in a given year) because prevention is about promoting programs and resources that strengthen families.





#PinwheelsforPrevention GARDEN CONTEST

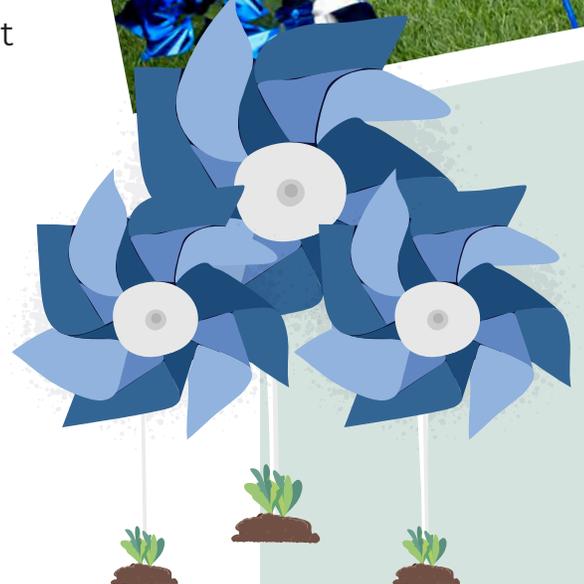
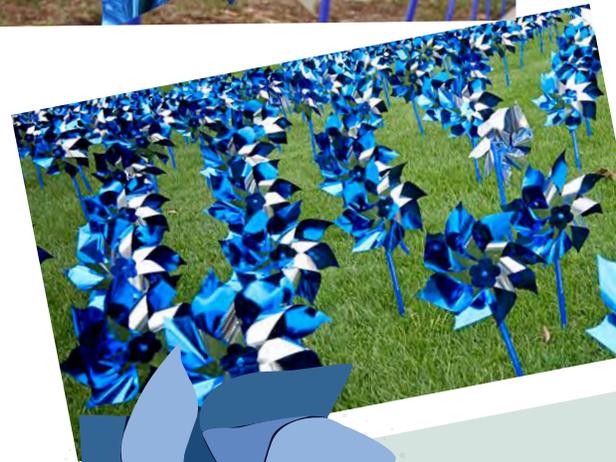


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This year we are asking people to send out pictures of their pinwheel gardens all month long to show support for our children.

Share them with us all month long (no later than 4/26) by emailing them to: pcact@ctchildrensalliance.org.

We will post them on Facebook anonymously and at the end of the month, we'll announce the top five most creative Pinwheel gardens, and 3 prizes will be awarded!





#PinwheelsforPrevention DESIGN COMPETITION

This year we are having a #PinwheelsforPrevention design competition.

We're calling on you to **design and create your own pinwheels** and share them with us via Facebook and Instagram!

We want to see pictures of pinwheels of all shapes, sizes, media and materials coming to life in your homes, whether you draw, color, sculpt, paint, knit, or any other way you find to make a pinwheel.

Share it with us all month long (no later than 4/26) by emailing them to: pcact@ctchildrensalliance.org. We will post them on Facebook anonymously and at the end of the month, we'll announce the top five most creative Pinwheels, and 5 prizes will be awarded!

Click here to download a pinwheel coloring sheet that is great for children of all ages.

For older children, click here to download instructions on how to make your own paper pinwheel!

 PINWHEELSFOR
PREVENTION



Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor (LTEs) get the most attention when they respond directly to a recent event or article in the news. When writing to your local news outlet, be sure to reference a specific story or community issue that's related to child health and well-being. Also, verify the maximum word count for the outlet to which you're writing, if your LTE is too long it will either be discarded or edited by someone else, sometimes deleting important elements. Up to 250 words is typical for local and regional papers, but many larger newspapers are limited to 150 or so, and some magazines limit letters to less than 100 words.

Sample—Short (150 words)

Letter to the editor, intended for publication

Your recent coverage of [APPLICABLE STORY IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER] reinforces that we all share a responsibility for the well-being of children and their families in [STATE or CITY]. And since April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, it's the perfect time to help people understand that it's possible to do the things they love and help families and their community thrive.

All parents want to provide and nurture their child in a positive, healthy environment, but sometimes they need a little extra support along the way. That's why I encourage everyone to proactively engage parents in their community and offer your support—whether it's by making a meal for the family or reading to a child. An easy way for professionals and caregivers to find supportive resources in their community is by calling 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373).

Collectively, these small steps will help create better, brighter futures for children and families in [STATE or CITY].

Sincerely,

[NAME, TITLE] [ORGANIZATION]

Press Release

CAP Month

Child Abuse Prevention Month Recognizes Every Community's Role in *Growing a Better Tomorrow for All Children, Together*

(CITY, STATE)—[Organization] along with Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut (PACT) recognizes the importance of community-based support for all children and families during National Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Month in April. The theme of this year's awareness and impact campaign is "Growing a Better Tomorrow for All Children, Together."

We can build healthier, safer, and thriving communities if we take the same approach to raising families that we do to tending a community garden on a shared piece of land. Too often, our society thinks of raising healthy children as a parent or caregiver's responsibility alone. In reality, we all benefit when groups of people work together to collectively care for children, who grow up to become successful, contributing adults.

"Research shows that positive childhood experiences in nurturing environments provide fertile ground for physical and mental health, learning, and social skills," explained Dr. Melissa Merrick, president and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. "By preventing child abuse and neglect we aim to holistically improve the lives of all families and the communities they live in."

The risk to our nation's children for experiencing child abuse and neglect in times of extreme stress and uncertainty is quite high. COVID-19 has added stressors to the lives of parents and caregivers, such as loss of employment, loss of income due to lack of paid leave, school and business closings that necessitate new childcare and homeschool arrangements, and food insecurity. We also know that these hardships disproportionately impact families of color. Although physical distancing alters the way families socially connect and interact with community services, we must ensure these supportive resources are still in place to help strengthen Connecticut's families.

We all share a responsibility for the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children and their families. [Insert Organization] and PCA Connecticut encourages everyone in Connecticut to help strengthen families in their community this April.