

A Time for Strengthening Families

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month was established to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and encourage individuals and communities to support children and families. Raising awareness of the problem of child maltreatment is important, as is sharing information about programs that support children and families, but we must go beyond a month of special events if we want to effectively reduce child maltreatment and ensure the long-term success of families. We must strengthen all families, throughout the year.

Protective Factors to Strengthen Families

Research has shown that effective prevention and intervention programs not only reduce risk factors for abuse, but also promote what are known as protective factors. The protective factors are positive attributes that can be introduced to all families, at any time, in a variety of settings. Introduction of the protective factors does not require a large investment of resources. Instead, organizations are asked to identify small but significant steps they can take to strengthen families within their current practice.

Anyone interested in applying the strengthening families approach to build protective factors is encouraged to utilize the Self-Assessment Package that was developed for the Strengthening Families National Network. The Self-Assessment Package includes an overview of the strengthening families concept and a several survey instruments. Among these is a self-assessment tool to evaluate your day-to-day practice in order to set and track specific action steps you can take to begin building specific protective factors with families. Available at www.strengtheningfamilies.net.

Protective Factors

The protective factors that have been shown to promote optimal development are:

- nurturing and attachment
- knowledge of parenting and child and youth development
- parental resilience
- social connections
- concrete support in times of need
- healthy social and emotional development of children.

Community Engagement to Strengthen Families

When service providers work with families to increase protective factors, they are drawing on existing community resources and identifying unmet needs. When communities work together to invest in supporting families, they are investing in the community as a whole. Following are some excellent resources for those interested in starting or sustaining community-wide efforts to strengthening families:

Local Child Abuse Prevention Councils—Local councils are knowledgeable of prevention resources and needs at the county level. They advocate for prevention vs. treatment, and may work to develop programs when none exist. Local councils which have been certified by the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board are the link between their county and the Children's Trust Fund, with access to funding and other resources. To find out if your county has a certified local council, contact the Children's Trust Fund at 501-664-2227 or www.arkansasctf.org.

Reframing Toolkit—The toolkit is a set of resources that offer a more effective way of discussing child abuse prevention. Rather than focusing communication messages on what is lacking or flawed when child maltreatment occurs, users are encouraged to talk about what is available and what is working, and how the audience can support these efforts. Sample materials include: a set of common questions about child abuse, with standard responses, followed by more effective responses; basic talking points; sample press releases and letters to the editor. Available at www.preventchildabuse.org/canp/index.html.

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PROGRAM NEWS



SAVE THE DATE

The 13th Annual Arkansas Conference for Parenting Education and Involvement
October 19-21, 2011

Send your ideas for keynote speakers and workshop topics to apen@arkansasctf.org.

Home Visiting Program Grants

The Arkansas CTF is looking for organizations who are interested in establishing home visiting services for teen mothers in their community. Grants will be provided to support pregnant and parenting teens or pregnant and parenting women who are participating in formal educational services (i.e. – GED or community college). A home visiting program includes periodic visits to the home prenatally and/or following the birth of a child. Through these visits, trained professionals will provide education, skills training and support on subjects such as child health and development, basic care giving skills and nurturing techniques. Home visitors will also assist young women with their educational goals and other important life skills.

Approximately ten (10) new programs will be awarded across the state at a maximum of \$75,000 each. Training and technical assistance will be provided to all grantees. If your agency is interested in applying for funds to develop a home visiting program, please contact the Trust Fund office at 501-664-2227 or watch our [web site](#) for details to be posted.

Local Council Certification

The Children's Trust Fund relies on local councils to review grant applications and make funding recommendations. In preparation for the next grant funding announcement, local councils should apply for certification by February 15, 2011. For more information, contact the Children's Trust Fund at 501-664-2227 or visit <http://arkansasctf.org>.

Community Engagement, cont.

Child Welfare Information Gateway—This site includes numerous resources for protecting children and strengthening families. Look here to find tools and information on developing and sharing an effective message, making an economic case for prevention, creating community support and partnerships, and ideas to raise public awareness. Available at www.childwelfare.gov.

Prevent Child Abuse America Advocacy Guide—This guide is a comprehensive resource for advocates from all levels of expertise, and contains detailed information on what advocacy is; how to do legislative advocacy, lobbying, media advocacy, advocacy during election years, and regulatory advocacy; and how to organize your advocacy efforts. It includes state information as well as many government resources. Available at www.preventchildabuse.org.

April is Also...

- April 10-16** **National Library Week**
story time with a special guest
book giveaway
tour library to learn about other services they offer

- April 11** **Teach Children to Save Day**
partner with a local bank to open savings accounts

- April 21** **Earth Day**
community clean-up
plant trees or flowers
eco-friendly products for the home

- April 23-30** **National Infant Immunization Week**
a great time to make sure all shots are up-to-date

April is also a busy month for kite enthusiasts, gardeners and nature lovers, and other outdoor hobbyists. Check your local community pages for other possible partners in family-friendly programming and activities.

The Magic Parenting List

Have you ever wondered if some parents had access to a magic list of secrets that made raising cooperative children seem effortless? Ever wondered where you could find such a list? Worry not, there is no magic required, just some common sense and a willingness to develop some new approaches to common situations.

1. Anticipate trouble. Consider the ages and personalities of your children to guess their likely responses to situations and people. You can control the physical environment to minimize stress.
2. Give gentle reminders. Demeaning children or nagging them doesn't work. Reminders may be just one word, such as "helping" or "waiting", or even a nonverbal nod of the head ("yes, that's okay"), or shake of the head ("no, not now).
3. Divert attention. Compliment one child on a positive behavior, and see how quickly a sibling will want that positive attention as well. Don't compare the two children or behaviors as much as redirect the focus to the desired behavior.
4. Deliberately ignore provocations. Annoying behavior has a tendency to disappear when it earns no response. Instead, find ways to give children specific attention during times of acceptable behavior.
5. Offer choices. When possible, offer children choices that are acceptable to you. Freedom to make choices makes it more likely that children will cooperate, as well as learn to make good decisions.
6. Give praise or compliments. Sincere praise, not over-used, reinforces those behaviors that you enjoy in your child.
7. Offer encouragement. Related to praise, this is another way of giving your children respect for what they are attempting to accomplish at their own level, not in comparison with others, and helping them learn to overcome obstacles.
8. Clarify messages. Leave no room for misunderstanding, and make sure you have children's attention before using language that they can understand. Ask them to repeat it back to you, if they have the capacity to do so.
9. Overlook small annoyances. Ask yourself if the situation merits a battle, or even discussion for that matter.
10. Inject humor. A note of humor (not sarcasm) can defuse a deteriorating situation. Remember to laugh with them, not at them.
11. Reconsider the situation. Nothing is set in concrete. You don't have to be "wrong" to decide that a different approach is needed to handle a difficult situation.
12. Point out natural or logical consequences. Help young children see the connections between their actions and the results of their behavior. When these behaviors and results are presented as a means of explanation, not as a moral judgment or punishment, consequences help children see the sense in acting in a certain way.
13. Provide renewal time. This is not the punitive isolation of "time out," but an opportunity to calm down, renew themselves, and regain composure. Make sure children understand the purpose of the exercise.
14. Give hugs and caring. Provide an atmosphere in which children want to behave well and are less demanding of attention.
15. Arrange discussion among the children. Children need help in communicating with other children to solve their problems. For example, you may need to explain the limitations of a younger child to an older child to help him choose appropriate behavior.
16. Provide discussion with an adult. Treat children the way you would like them to behave—with compassion and care.

Note that the list emphasizes keeping emotions in check by guiding and responding positively, rather than by allowing emotions to shape the situation. There's your magic.

* This list was originally published in a book titled **Parents, Please Don't Sit on Your Kids**, by Clare Cherry. This book is no longer in print, but may be available in your local library.

RESOURCES

Consumer News

In December 2010, government regulators banned the manufacture and sale of traditional drop-side baby cribs. Beginning in the summer of 2011, it will be illegal to sell a crib with sides that drop down or those that do not pass strict tests measuring the durability of slats and mattress supports. Child care providers will have approximately two more years to phase out the banned cribs. Parents who wish to purchase a new or used crib are encouraged to research their chosen product for recalls and other safety concerns at the Crib Information Center, www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html.

Funding Opportunities

The American Academy of Dermatology's Shade Structure Program awards funds for the purchase for permanent shade structures to non-profit organizations in need of shade for outdoor locations. These locations include any areas where children and adults gather and are exposed to the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun, such as playgrounds and other recreation areas. To be considered for future grants, applicants must be sponsored by an AAD member dermatologist and must have a sun safety/skin cancer awareness program in place for at least one year prior to application. For more information and tools to assist you in preparing a request for funds, visit <http://www.aad.org/public/sun/grants.html>.

The Charles Lafitte Foundation accepts grant requests at any time to support education and children's advocacy. Complete information about the Foundation and its programs, as well as grant guidelines, can be found at www.charleslafitte.org.

Other Resources

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund—ASPSF works with county affiliates to provide scholarship funds to single parent who wish to further their education. For more information about program eligibility, go to <http://aspsf.org>.

Car Seat Check—Car Seats AR is dedicated to the safe and proper use of car seats and safety restraints. For useful tips, including how to locate a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician in your area, visit www.carseatsar.org.

Inspirational Speaker—Rebecca Wright is a child abuse survivor who believes her story can help others. She is willing to visit your group or organization to share her message about the importance of communication, not only in healing those who have been abused, but in preventing further abuse. Her presentation will address the causes and consequences of abuse, as well as the importance of speaking up on behalf of those in harmful situations and being the person “not afraid to get involved”. Contact her directly at Rebecca Wright, PO Box 372, Trumann, AR 72472.



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