

Ten Reasons to Prevent Child Abuse

- ⇒ **One** Child abuse can be fatal. Each year, an average of three children a day are fatal victims of maltreatment. The vast majority of these children are under the age of one.
- ⇒ **Two** Child abuse stymies a child's normal growth and development. The emotional and physical damage children suffer from abuse and neglect is extensive. Documented consequences of abuse include chronic health problems, cognitive and language disorders, and socio-emotional problems, such as low self-esteem, lack of trust, and poor relationships with adults and peers.
- ⇒ **Three** Child abuse is costly for many social institutions. Remediating the immediate consequences of serious physical abuse alone costs child welfare agencies, hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities millions of dollars annually.
- ⇒ **Four** Child abuse costs continue to multiply over time. For example, children killed as a result of parental abuse or neglect never have the opportunity to contribute to society. In the past five years these deaths cost over \$3 billion in lost future productivity.
- ⇒ **Five** Child abuse victims often repeat the violent acts that they experienced on their own children. Although some victims can overcome the scars of their abuse, child abuse victims are six times more likely to become abusive parents than non-abused children.
- ⇒ **Six** Treatment services, while critical, are often ineffective in permanently altering parental behaviors. Program evaluations have found that even sophisticated clinical demonstration projects, often consisting of weekly contact for twelve to eighteen months, eliminate the future likelihood for physical abuse or neglect for less than half their clients.
- ⇒ **Seven** Prevention programs targeted at parents before they become abusive or neglectful reduce the likelihood for future maltreatment. Home visitor programs for new parents have consistently demonstrated the most positive outcomes. Specific gains include improved mother-infant bonding, enhanced parenting skills, and more consistent use of health care services. Recipients of these services also have demonstrated a reduced rate of child abuse when compared to comparable groups of parents not receiving services.
- ⇒ **Eight** Prevention programs targeted at children can improve a child's awareness of how best to avoid child abuse and other unsafe practices. Repeated reviews of numerous evaluations of these programs indicate that such efforts can result in increased knowledge for children about safety rules and what they should do if they are being abused. Further, the programs create an environment in which children can more easily disclose prior or ongoing maltreatment.
- ⇒ **Nine** Child abuse prevention efforts serve as a way to combat other social problems of concern to the public and to policy makers. Research has found a strong correlation between a history of abuse and a variety of adult problem behaviors, including substance abuse, juvenile and adult crime, and poor social adjustment. The consistent expansion of prevention services may well lead to the eventual reduction of these problems.
- ⇒ **Ten** Child abuse prevention creates a more compassionate society, one that places a high value on the welfare of children. Insuring the safe and secure rearing of the next generation requires the efforts of all policy makers and all citizens. To the extent all are involved in the battle to prevent child abuse, all are made more aware of the need to nurture human potential in all that we do.



PREVENT CHILD ABUSE TEXAS

13740 Research Blvd #R-4 Austin, TX 78750

512/250-8438 512/250-8733 (fax)

pcatx@preventchildabusetexas.org (e-mail)