NURTURING POSITIVE CHILDHOODS

A TOOLKIT FOR NORTH CAROLINA MEDICAL PROVIDERS 2024

Positive Childhood Alliance NORTH CAROLINA

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

Positive Childhood Alliance North Carolina (PCANC, the NC chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America), in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, **developed this toolkit to assist North Carolina healthcare providers in fostering a unified approach to promoting positive childhoods.** This toolkit offers practical information and resources medical providers can use to create a shared language across the state and build their understanding amongst themselves, their colleagues, and communities they serve, of the pivotal role they play in nurturing children's well-being and supporting families so child maltreatment never occurs.

This toolkit draws on research from the FrameWorks Institute and is designed to help healthcare providers **better support parents and caregivers by connecting them to services that strengthen families and promote positive experiences.** The tools, design, and messaging are adapted from the Building Better Childhoods Toolkit, which is grounded in a 2021 framing brief developed by the FrameWorks Institute, in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse America and Social Current.

ABOUT POSITIVE CHILDHOOD ALLIANCE NC

PCANC advances policies, programs, and practices to support the well-being of all NC children and families. We do this by:

- **Offering data-driven coaching and professional development opportunities** for Positive Childhood Allies across NC, like you;
- **Building a better understanding about what families need for children to be happy, healthy and successful,** and
- **Advocating for policies that prioritize all children and families** – especially those who have been left behind.

PCANC is committed to supporting medical providers in effectively utilizing this toolkit through free training sessions (live and recorded) and one-on-one virtual technical assistance.

For more information, please contact LouMecia Staton, PCANC's Community Relations Manager, at lstaton@positivechildhoodalliancenc.org or call 919-820-8009.

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CHILD MALTREATMENT PREVENTION IS A PRIORITY

North Carolina's future prosperity requires the healthy development of our children. Our state will lead in innovation, resiliency, and economic development when we invest in strengthening families and building thriving communities so all children can thrive.

Caring connections, strong foundations, and positive experiences matter when it comes to developing healthy brains that are ready to learn and grow. Healthy brain development allows children to reach their full potential and benefits all of us in the long run. That's why we all have a stake in preparing North Carolina's children to grow up to be healthy thriving members of our communities. As trusted members of your community, medical providers play a vital role in helping ensure all families have the support they need, when they need it, free of bias.

Several studies show child maltreatment affects us all, through a variety of ways including crime in our communities; increased medical, juvenile and adult justice costs; lost worker productivity; among others. In NC alone, we spend about $2 billion every year, nearly $4,000 per minute, on the downstream consequences of child maltreatment.

But all of this is preventable. When we work together to strengthen families and nurture positive childhoods for every child, we can remove the heaviest loads from weighing families and entire communities down – ultimately building a stronger future for us all.

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CHILD MALTREATMENT IS A PUBLIC ISSUE

Every child is filled with tremendous promise – and we all have a shared obligation to foster their potential. That means shoring up the ways we support families. A public health approach to child maltreatment prevention adopts three levels of prevention strategies: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Primary prevention involves universally providing all families with supports. This means strengthening families through strategies like connecting them to available services and programs in your community, increased economic supports, universal home visiting, and family-friendly workplace policies, to name a few. Primary prevention approaches *do not* focus on the treatment of children and families after child abuse or neglect has occurred.

Secondary prevention involves supporting families who are at an increased risk for child abuse or neglect. This includes targeted home visiting services, Early Head Start, and the Family First Prevention Services Act, which redirects federal dollars toward evidence-based prevention services & programs and expand trauma-informed practice across NC to improve the care children receive and prevent the need for kids to enter foster care.

Tertiary prevention is the most downstream prevention services and includes responding and intervening *after* child abuse or neglect has already occurred to minimize the negative impacts and prevent further harm. This includes strategies like foster care and mental health or substance abuse programs.

But it's important to note that all levels of child maltreatment prevention must incorporate interventions at the systems level to address the structures that lead to inequitable outcomes and experiences of adversity in childhood.

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PRIMARY PREVENTION
OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

What is Primary Prevention of Child Maltreatment?

Stopping child abuse or neglect before it happens.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Stop abuse ***before*** it occurs

- Family strengthening & parent supports
- Universal home visiting Increasing
- economic supports for families Family-
- friendly workplace policies

SECONDARY PREVENTION

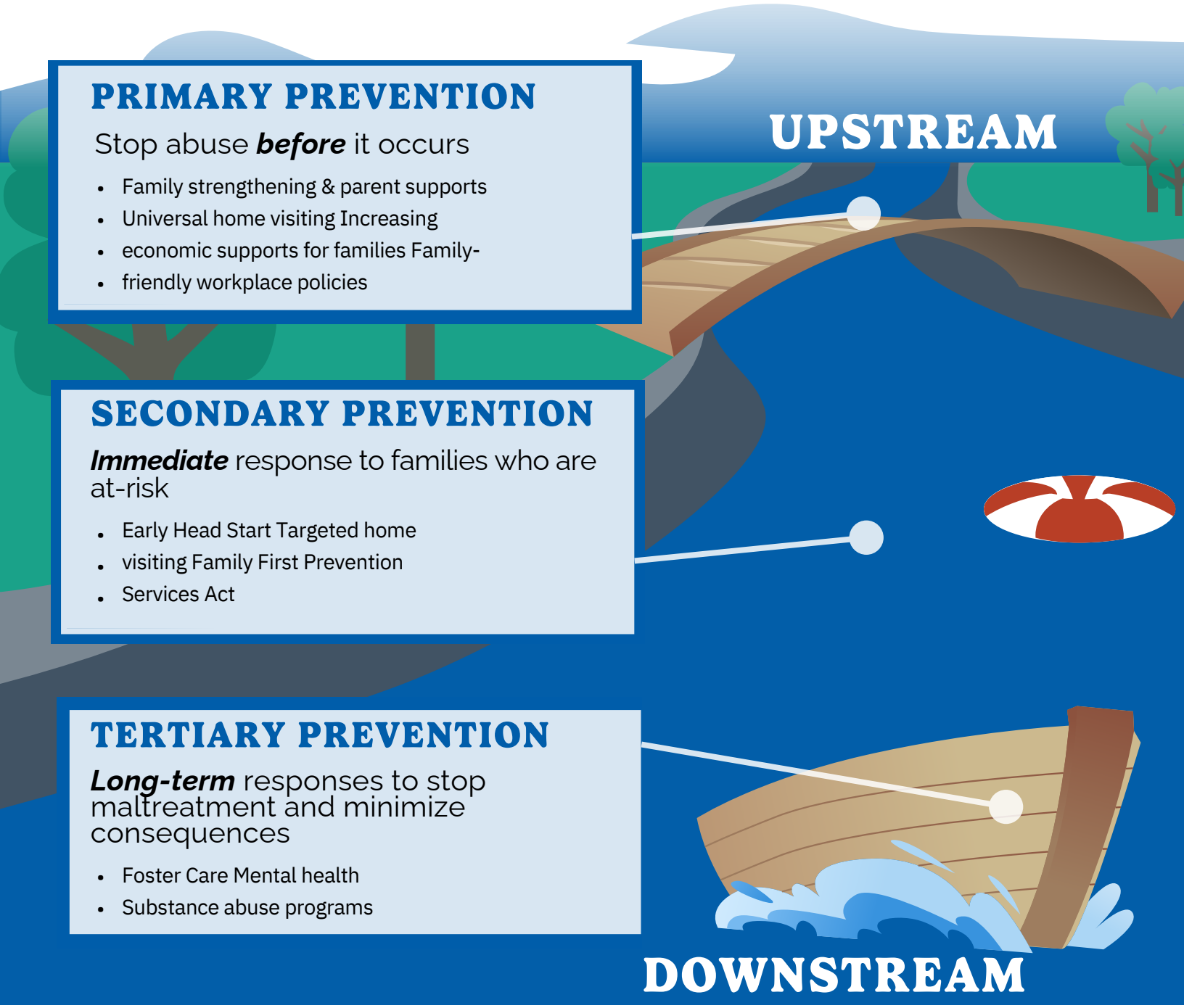
Immediate response to families who are at-risk

- Early Head Start Targeted home
- visiting Family First Prevention
- Services Act

TERTIARY PREVENTION

Long-term responses to stop maltreatment and minimize consequences

- Foster Care Mental health
- Substance abuse programs



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CHILD MALTREATMENT IS PREVENTABLE

OVERLOAD METAPHOR

Using the metaphor of an overloaded vehicle helps people understand how external and multiple pressures on families contribute to child maltreatment. These pressures, or layers of stress, can keep parents from functioning as they would like to in caring for their children.

Just like a car can only bear so much weight before it stops moving forward, stress can overburden parents and caregivers - making it hard for them to provide the best care and support for their children. To prevent a breakdown in care, we can keep the heaviest loads from weighing families down.

THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. These attributes serve as buffers, helping parents find resources, support, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. Research has shown that the protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect.

As a medical provider, you play a vital role in ensuring the families you serve are connected to resources and supports that promote their well-being.

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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Social and Emotional Competence

Children's early experiences of being nurtured and developing a *positive relationship* with caring adult *affects all aspects* of behavior and development.

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Children *thrive* when parents provide *not only affection*, but *also* respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence.

Social Connections

Parents with a social network of *emotionally supportive friends family, and neighbors* often find that it is *easier to care* for their children and themselves.

Resilience

Parents who can cope with the *stresses of everyday life*, as well an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to *bounce back* when things are not going well.

Concrete Support

Families who can meet their *own basic needs* for food, clothing, housing, and transportation—and who know how to access essential services such as childcare, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs—are *better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children*

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ACEs can have devastating impacts on long term health

When a child experiences adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), it can have life-long consequences for physical and mental health. But, one caring adult can make a difference. That's why we know building protective factors in parents, communities and businesses is important.

Download this graphic: ENGLISH SPANISH

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CHILD MALTREATMENT IS SOLVABLE

When children experience adversity, we have a shared responsibility to buffer the impact. One innovative approach involves medical providers having a conversation with families who come in for visits to ask about difficult things their children may have experienced.

If there's a need, they can connect families to resources in the community, like family counseling or a parenting education program. The idea is to add positive supports to counterbalance the weight of negative experiences.

Issues like poverty and inadequate childcare can prevent parents from successfully parenting. But communities can help solve the issues and provide happier, healthier childhoods. Child maltreatment is solvable when we address root causes of adverse childhood experiences.

CALL TO ACTION FOR MEDICAL PROVIDERS:

Education and Resources: Educate your colleagues, community, and the families you serve about their role in promoting the Protective Factors with the resources in this toolkit. Continue your own education by taking our free online trainings or request a free Connections Matter presentation for your medical practice, agency or community.

Connect Families to Local Services: Provide parents and caregivers with information about healthy child development and connect them to local support programs and services.

Collaborate with Community Programs: Establish strong partnerships with local child welfare agencies, Family Resource Centers, and community organizations to create a network of support to further connect families to.

Together, we can create a North Carolina where every child has the strong foundation they need for their healthy development. Your role as a medical provider is crucial in this collective effort to build a brighter future for our state.

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Get Connected to Local Programs and Services

All Families Need Support Sometimes

And it's okay to ask for help. Whether you're facing a new challenge or simply looking for programs and services your family can benefit from, check out the list of resources below with local supports that are available at free or reduced cost..

Find Local Programs and Services

FindHelp

Use this free tool to find existing programs and services in your community that are free or at a reduced-cost to assist with food, housing, financial assistance, health care, and more.

Child & Family Support Programs

Visit a local **Family Resource Center** or **Smart Start** to access parenting support, resources, child development activities, parent leadership development, and more.

NCCare360

Find community resources available in your county for basic needs – food, housing, transportation, and other services.

Parenting Education

Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) offers a free parenting education course, online. Visit Triplep-parenting.com/nc-en/triple-p/ to begin.

Crisis Services

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, chat with them online via their website, or text HOME to 741741.

NC211

Call 2-1-1 or 1-888-892-1162 to receive free and confidential information on health and human services. Provided by United Way of North Carolina.

Scan the QR Code to learn more

If you have an emergency, call 911

ADDITIONAL TOOLS & MATERIALS

These tools and resources have been developed and formatted for immediate use to educate and engage your medical practice, agency and the community you serve. Below you will find an overview of each material as well as recommended best practices for their implementation. Feel free to add your logo and share how you see fit. **Hover over the product image on the left to download the tool(s).**

PRODUCT	USE	BEST PRACTICE
FREE Handout to Connect Familes to Local Resources		
	One 8.5" x 11" handout to give to all parents and caregivers during their visit to your medical practice or agency.	Add co-branding and print. Give out to *all* families during their visits and/or place around the office for families to easily pick up and take with them.
Flyers		
	Three 8.5" x 11" flyers for placing in key locations within your medical practice, agency or distributing to your community at events.	Add co-branding. Place in frames in key locations, e.g., flyer displays on check in or check out counters or on the back of doors in restrooms.
Posters		
	Three 18" x 24" posters for placing in key locations within your medical practice, agency, or community center with high traffic.	Add co-branding if you'd like. Print with professional printer. Hang these posters in your medical practice or agency lobby, waiting room, bathrooms, examination rooms, breakrooms, or hallways.
Social Media Graphics		
	16 jpg files for engaging audiences on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn (1200x628), and Instagram (1080x1080). Files are associated with post copy in the Social Media Calendar and intended to promote Protective Factors in your community.	Use suggested social media messages and hashtags. • Post images to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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ADDITIONAL TOOLS & MATERIALS

PRODUCT	USE	BEST PRACTICE
Social Media Pre-written Posts		
	Use this pre-written copy for posting on social media along with the graphics listed above.	Make changes to the copy by adding a link to your medical practice name or linking to local resources in your community.
Press Release		
	Sample press release to promote your medical practice or agency's commitment to increasing both child and family well-being by focusing on changing the narrative around what's needed to help children thrive.	Tailor press release with organizational info. Partner with local publishers to submit a press release for your organization.
Opinion Editorial		
	Sample press release to start conversations in your community about the role we all play in nurturing positive childhoods.	Tailor as you see fit.
Talking Points		
	Talking Points are intended for use engaging with colleagues, partners, stakeholders, and the community you serve to help educate them about protective factors, the overload metaphor, and primary prevention strategies.	Tailor talking points for your medical practice or agency.

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CONCLUSION

Please contact LouMecia Staton, Positive Childhood Alliance North Carolina's Community Relations Manager, with questions about this toolkit.

Learn more about the vital role you play in nurturing positive environments and experiences all children need to thrive with these additional resources:

- Take PCANC's free, online What is Prevention Course
- Take PCANC's free, online Recognizing & Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment Course
- Become a Positive Childhood Ally by aligning with PCANC and receive our monthly newsletter to continue learning more about how together, we can nurture positive childhoods!
- Watch the recorded training on this campaign toolkit - Coming Soon!
- Access PCANC's Public Awareness Tools throughout the year, including the Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit, the Family Support Awareness Month Toolkit, the Kids First License Plate Toolkit, and more.

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