

## PRIMARY PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All children require safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments to thrive. Achieving this goal requires bold strategies to support parents and caregivers to create the conditions for positive child development.

### Child abuse and neglect are common

Millions of children are abused and neglected each year.

### 1 IN 7 CHILDREN

HAVE EXPERIENCED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT IN THE PAST YEAR.<sup>1</sup>

### Child maltreatment is costly.

A recent study estimates that **each victim of child abuse and neglect incurs expenses in excess of \$830,928 over their lives** in treating the short- and long-term consequences associated with the abuse.<sup>2</sup> Child maltreatment alone cost Montana an estimated \$50.2M in total state and local Child Protection Services expenditures for SFY2016.<sup>3</sup>

### Yet, child maltreatment is preventable.

**Greater focus on preventing child abuse and neglect before happening in the first place yields significant cost reductions** later while simultaneously improving outcomes for children and families. These approaches are known as **primary prevention**.

**Primary prevention** includes approaches that aim to avert child abuse or neglect *before* it occurs. These include such strategies as family strengthening and parent education programs, child maltreatment public awareness campaigns, and increasing economic supports for families.

**Primary prevention** approaches do not focus on the treatment of children and families *after* child abuse or neglect has occurred (i.e. child protective services, mental health & substance abuse programs).

## CREATING A PRIMARY PREVENTION SYSTEM

Primary prevention programs promote healthy child development through strengthening parenting skills and reducing stress, which is a risk factor for child maltreatment. **Early and effective primary prevention is more cost effective than fixing the adverse effects of child maltreatment after it has occurred (e.g. child protective services).**

### Primary Prevention Strategies:

- Voluntary evidence-based home visiting
- Quality funded child care and early education
- Parent support, training and education
- Family Resource Centers
- Banning corporal punishment in public institutions
- Family-friendly workplace policies (e.g. paid family leave)
- Economic supports for families (e.g. Earned Income Tax Credit)
- Positive fatherhood engagement
- Child sexual abuse prevention programs

<sup>1</sup> Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., & Hamby, S. L. (2015). Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(8), 746-754.

<sup>2</sup> Klika, J.B., Rosenzweig, J., & Merrick, M. (2020). [Economic burden of known cases of child maltreatment from 2018 in each state](#). *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 37, 227-234.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CWFSReportSFY2016\\_ChildTrends\\_December2018.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CWFSReportSFY2016_ChildTrends_December2018.pdf)