

# LEAN ON ME KENTUCKY

**Presented by  
Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky  
and  
Kentucky Department for Community Based Services**

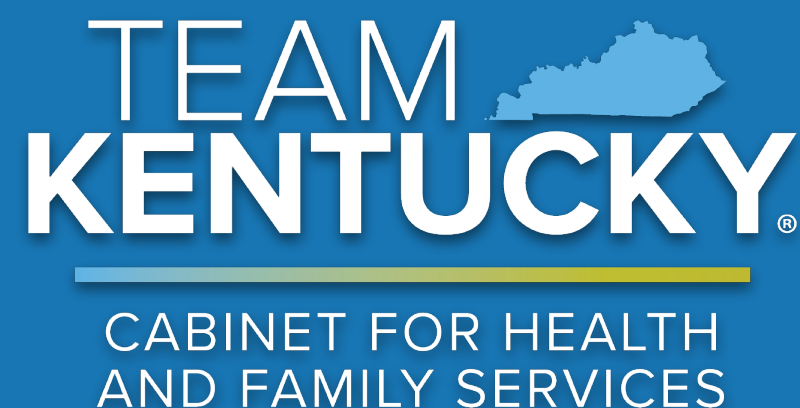
***A RESOURCE TO BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES***



*This project is funded in part or in whole with state or federal funds through a contract (#PON2 736 2000003480) with the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services.*

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# ... **BECAUSE CHILDHOOD LASTS A LIFETIME**™



# INTRODUCTION

*\*This toolkit is not intended as an aid in an acute crisis. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call 911.*

Every person has the power to make a difference in a child or family's life. What if we had stronger community involvement in the health of our families and children?

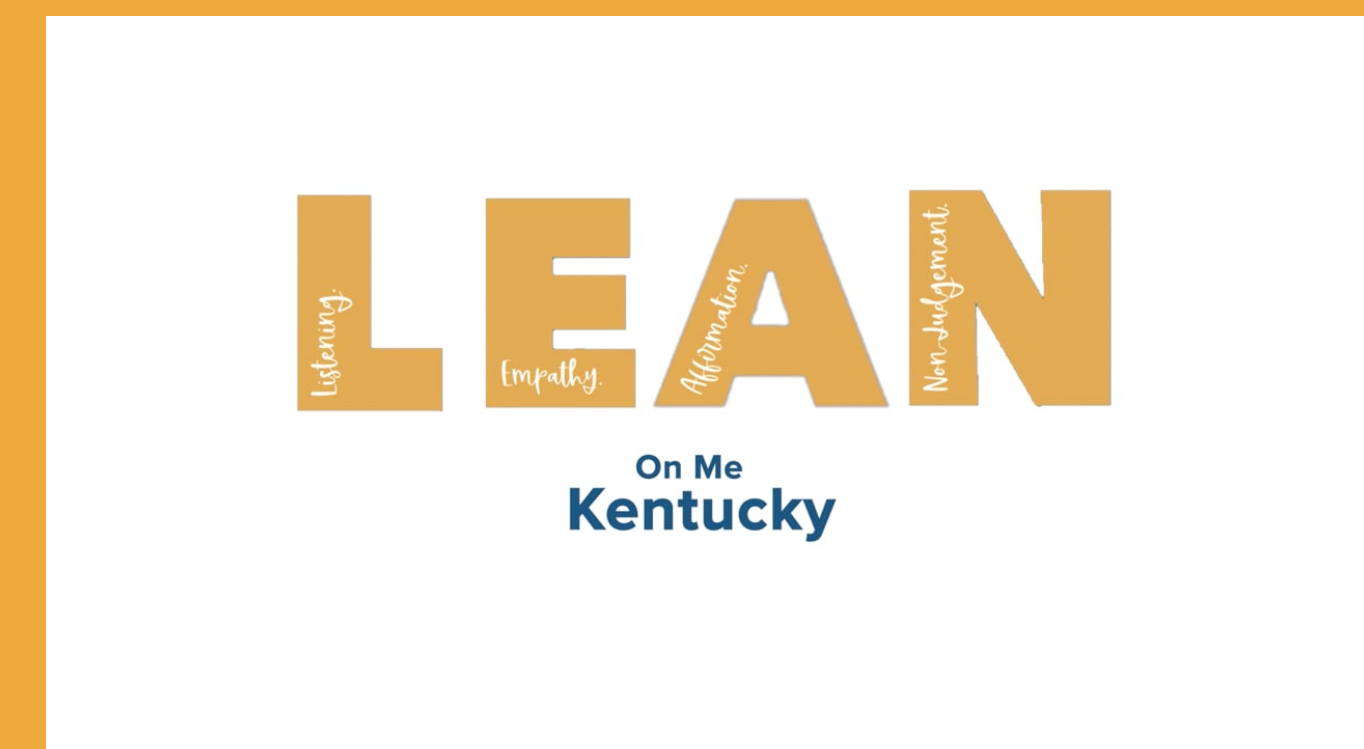
**What would our Commonwealth look like then?**

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky and partners have compiled data from evidence-based frameworks and conversations in 10 different regional focus groups, inspired by one goal:

**Building stronger families and communities.**

Meet prevention specialists, service providers, and community members with lived experience, all of whom are finding new ways to strengthen their communities.\*

This free resource has been provided by [Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky](#) in partnership with the [Department for Community Based Services](#). Share it and start a conversation!



# LEAN ON ME

Listening.

Empathy.

Affirmation.

Non-judgement.

A common theme to come out of this project is people don't know where to turn for help; and if they do know, they feel ashamed asking for it. All too often, there is stigma associated with *asking* for help. Start normalizing asking for help and de-escalating the situation by using the **LEAN** On Me acronym of **L**istening, **E**mpathy, **A**ffirmation and, **N**on-judgement.

Here are three perspectives about asking for help:



**Valerie Frost** is a single mom who has accessed multiple social services. Her experience led to a life of advocacy. She brings her experience to statewide conversations about social services.



**Crystal Wilder** is a Service Region Clinical Associate with DCBS. She knows about the stigma of asking for help from both sides of the coin. She knows the impact of practicing **LEAN** On Me in her work and her life.



**Bre Millay** is busting stigma around using social services. Her experience shows us social services are for everyone. She thinks the way to get rid of stigma is by getting comfortable with asking for help.

# THE WHY

**We can do better.**

When our communities are equipped to support people, we are empowered to strengthen families, decrease maltreatment, and ensure healthy outcomes for kids.

“Value people as human beings. Remember they did not wake up one morning and decide they wanted to be in this place. Relate. Empathize. Those are ways we can all support families in need.”

— Focus Group Participant  
(Eastern Mountain Region, July '22)



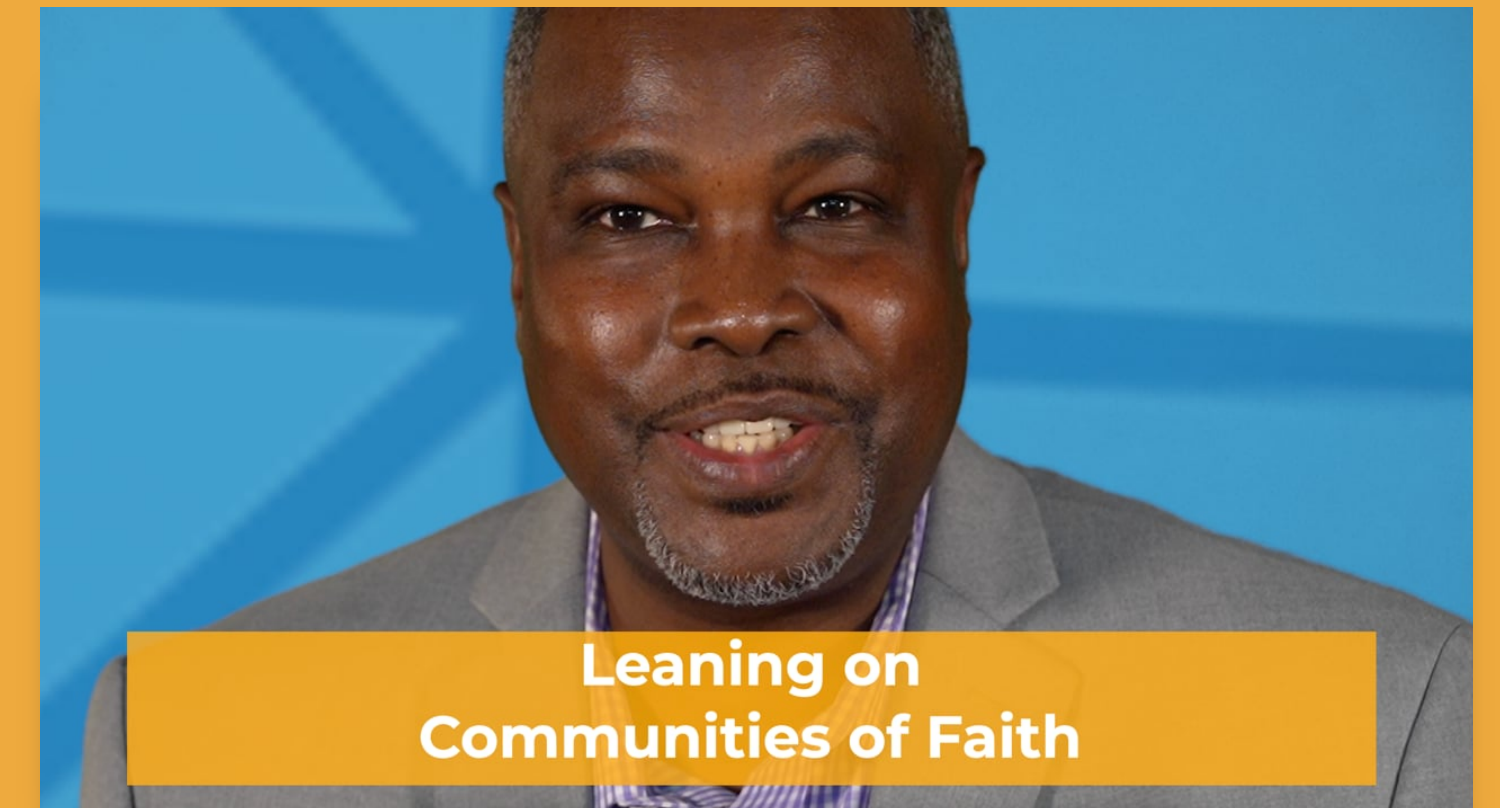
**Treating Each Other With Kindness**

**Dante Lynox's** experience as a LGBTQ+ youth in the foster care system shows us the importance of the **LEAN** On Me philosophy. His complex story illustrates how manners ... and a little kindness go a long way when interacting with people who have different backgrounds.



**The Value of Making All Children Feel Seen and Heard**

**Melissa Hall Sommer** is a mom first, fierce advocate second. She has dedicated her life to making sure ALL children feel seen and heard. Through her work with the Brighton Center, Sommer has been on the front lines of the battle. She lives and breathes the **LEAN** On Me philosophy.



**Leaning on Communities of Faith**

**David Cozart** is a man of faith, a minister and a father. He sees a parallel in the decline of communities of faith and the decline of communities in general. His work as a faith leader has shown him that it's not for an hour on Sunday, but 24/7, that faith can play a role in strengthening families across the Commonwealth.

# THE WHAT

“Work together, be aware of community resources. Remember we are all united as one to work together for the greater good of our people”

-Focus Group Participant  
(Cumberland Region, July '22)

There's no one right tool. This toolkit is designed to help build stronger families and communities by discovering which tools work best for them. The **LEAN** On Me toolkit encourages participants to use tools that include; **L**istening. **E**mpathy. **A**ffirmation. **N**on-judgement.



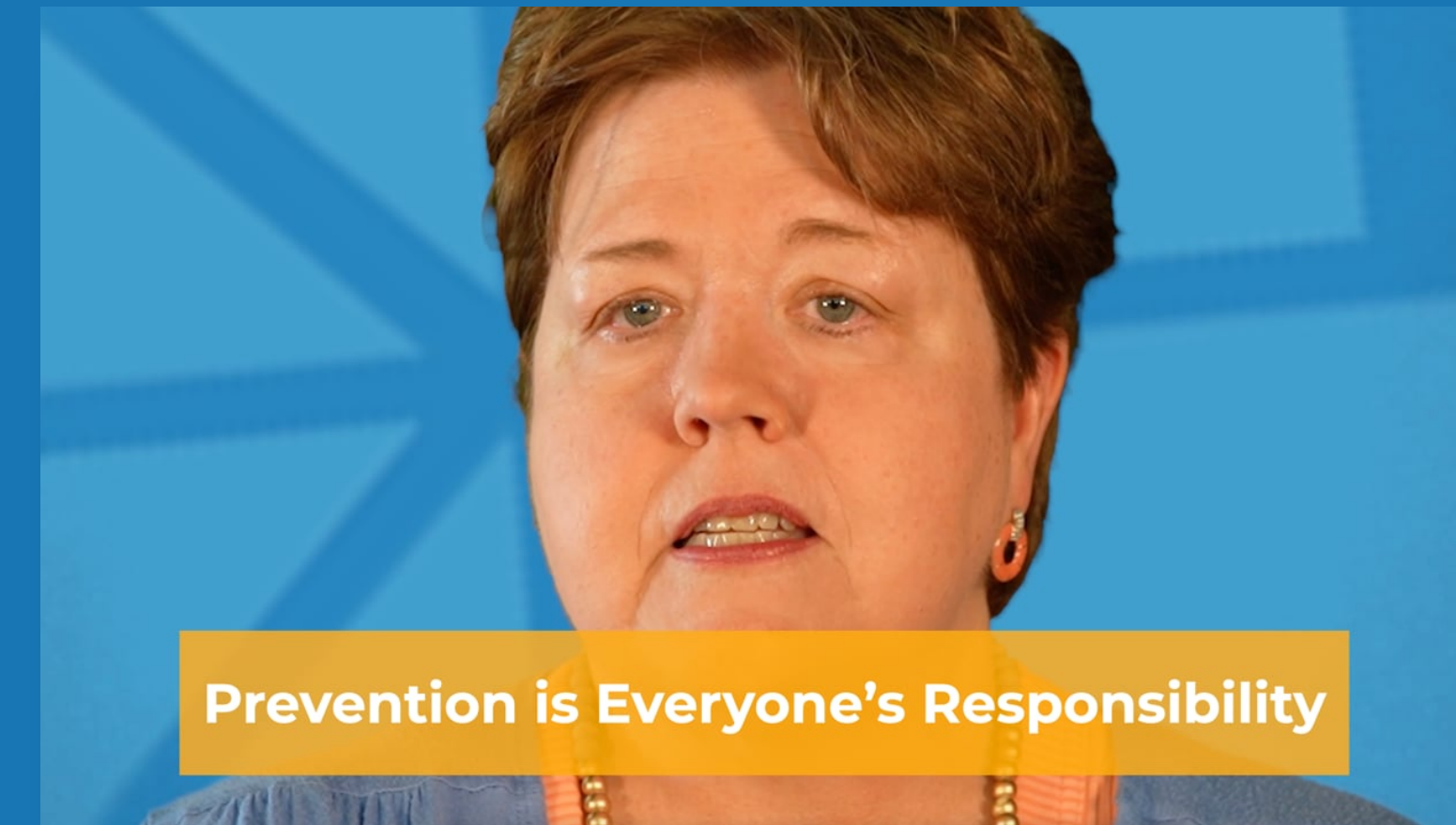
**The Types of Prevention and The Tools to Implement Them**

**Christa Bell** is a former Executive Advisor for DCBS in Kentucky. Her experience shows us when it comes to the health and safety of families - flexibility and open-mindedness are key. If we're going to stop putting people in boxes, we will need to start thinking outside of them.



**The Value of Shared Experience**

**Carmel Cline** is a Peer Support Coordinator for the START program in Eastern KY. She has found value in refraining from lecturing someone who is struggling but instead, standing side by side sharing her own story of overcoming adversity.



**Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility**

**Jill Seyfred** is the Executive Director of PCAK. With years of experience comes wisdom and insight. She believes prevention is everyone's responsibility. By establishing this toolkit she hopes everyone can find a resource to help build stronger communities.

# THE HOW

Okay, so we've laid the foundation. Below are six protective factors that, when present, have the ability to strengthen families and communities.

“In order to teach our children healthy social skills, we adults have to model them”

— Focus Group Participant  
(Southern Bluegrass Region, June '22)

## Social & Emotional Competence of Children

*Families teach children how to have healthy relationships*

## Parental Resilience

*Families bounce back*

## Knowledge of Child Development

*Families learn how their children grow and develop*

## Nurturing & Attachment

*Families ensure children feel loved and safe*

## Social Connections

*Families have friends they can count on*

## Concrete Support in Times of Need

*Families get assistance to meet their basic needs*



**To Help Children, We Need to Help the Parents**

**Chris Hagans** has been in and out of foster care. His experience showed him *nothing changes if nothing changes*. He found a community of people to help him. Within his community he was able to start looking inward to find healing.



**The Value of Self-Care While Caring of Others**

**Crystal Wilder** has seen the devastating effects that poor self care and a lack of self-awareness have on social service professionals. She believes the hard work has to start within. The most effective service providers know their limitations and how to ask for help.



**Strengthening Families by Strengthening Fathers**

**David Cozart** has been working in the community for decades promoting the benefits of strengthening fatherhood across the commonwealth. He believes that fatherhood programs are childcare programs and that we need to support the whole family.

# THE WHO... ... IS YOU!

“Be familiar with what is out there and what may be needed. Be willing and understand that it is ALL OUR JOBS to help where help is needed and where we can”

- Focus Group Participant  
(Eastern Mountain Region, July 22)

## If it starts with me, how do I start?

Start by looking in your own community. Maybe a young family has just moved in. Maybe there's a new parent that could use some help with groceries. Get to know your neighbors. Ask them if they need help and offer specific tasks to ease their burden. A simple act of kindness towards your neighbors can go a long way. If you're looking for them, opportunities to help are always present by practicing **LEAN** On Me; **L**istening. **E**mpathy. **A**ffirmation. **N**on-judgement.

### Know Your Community

*And find ways to help*

### Teach By Doing

*Model appropriate behavior and relationships*

### Be Specific

*When letting people know how you're available to help*

### Listen More. Talk Less

*Listen actively*



**The Value of Being an Engaged  
Community Member**

**Janna Estep-Jordan, PCAK**



**Every Child Deserves A Safe Space**

**Andrew Shayde, Arbor Youth Services**



**Critical Thinking and Conversations  
as Tools for Prevention**

**Christa Bell, DCBS**

# Sam's Story

During the research we heard a story about Sam. Sam was sitting on the front stoop in the late afternoon/early evening. Sam looked a little scruffy. A neighbor kept checking on Sam through the window. An hour passed, then another. The neighbor called the Department for Community Based Services to report child neglect. A social worker came and removed Sam from the house.

What the neighbor didn't know was that Sam's parent was stuck at work and the family member who agreed to babysit was sick. Sam's parent couldn't afford to pay for childcare.

So ... is this neglect? Or is it poverty? It's doubtful anyone felt as bad about Sam being alone on the stoop as did the parent. Alas, a terrible situation was made worse as the family was shamed and had to jump through substantial hoops to clear up the situation, many of which required time off of work and additional costs.

What could've happened if that neighbor had gone over and asked if Sam was okay? Brought a snack and checked if the family needed anything?

There may be a risk of being called nosey or being told to mind your own business. These are small risks to take in comparison to the lasting impacts of making a judgment call without the right information.

We couldn't help but wonder ... what if the neighbor chose to do something different? What if they had chosen to be a *Community Supporter* instead of just reporting the situation to authorities?

Maybe there could have been a different outcome.



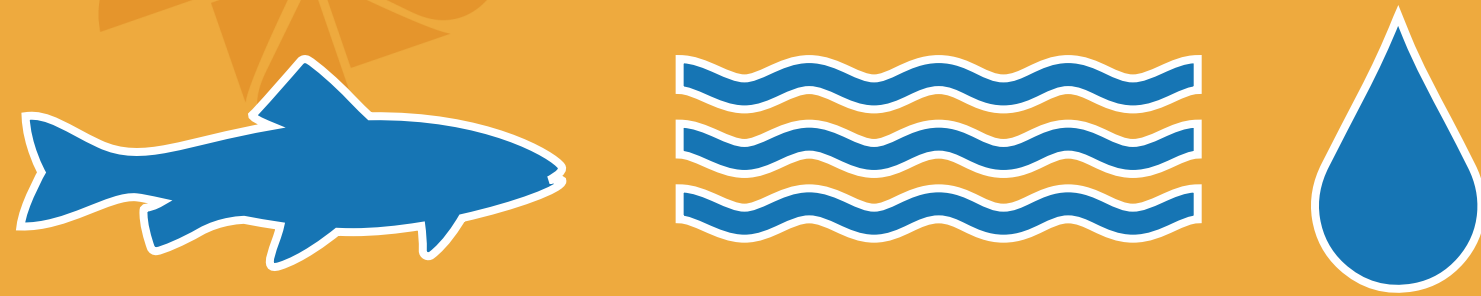
## Supporting and Reporting

All Kentuckians are mandated reporters of suspected child maltreatment. What if **EVERYONE** chose to be a COMMUNITY SUPPORTER prior to abuse or neglect ever occurring? If you believe a family is struggling with basic needs, stress, or lack of support, reach out and see what help you can provide!

If you believe a child to be a victim of child maltreatment or if a child has disclosed abuse to you—make a report! Always believe a child or youth if they disclose abuse. Contact the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services Centralized Intake on Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-752-6200 or the Statewide Hotline at 1-877-KYSAFE1 (1-877-597-2331) after hours, holidays, and weekends to submit a report.



# PERSPECTIVE SHAPES JUDGEMENTS



## The fish, the lake and the groundwater:

If you have a lake in front of your house and one fish is floating belly-up dead, it makes sense to analyze the fish. What is wrong with it? Imagine the fish is one student failing in the education system. We'd ask: did it study hard enough? Is it getting the support it needs at home? But if you come out to that same lake and *half* the fish are floating belly-up dead, what should you do? This time you've got to analyze the lake. Imagine the lake is the education system and *half* the students are failing. This time we'd ask: might the system itself be causing such consistent, unacceptable outcomes for students? If so, how? Now... picture five lakes around your house, and in *each and every* lake half the fish are floating belly-up dead! What is it time to do? We say it's time to analyze the groundwater.

The Groundwater metaphor is designed to help practitioners at all levels better understand and internalize the reality that society is racially structured; and the foundational structure of racism is what causes racial inequity. The Groundwater metaphor is based on three research observations: **1) Racial inequity looks the same across systems;** **2) Socio-economic difference does not explain racial inequity;** and **3) Inequities are caused by systems, regardless of people's culture or behavior.**

Source: <https://racialequityinstitute.org/groundwater/>

**It goes both ways.**

Learning how to talk about what you've gone through is just as important as listening to others.



**The Importance of Talking About It**

**Chris Hagans**, Advocate, Lexington, KY

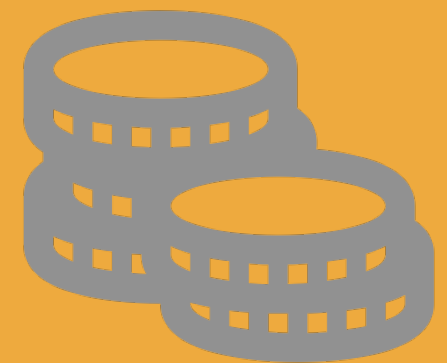
# PREVENTION IS WORTH THE INVESTMENT

**\$220 million dollars are spent each day in the U.S. addressing maltreatment after it has occurred. Research shows for every \$1 we spend in prevention; we later save \$4 on services after abuse has occurred. Further works show that by addressing poverty, racism, and education, incidents of child abuse and neglect can be reduced.**



Nearly **85% of families investigated by Child Protective Services** earn below 200% of the federal poverty line (*\$43,920 for a family of 3 in 2021*)

Families living below the poverty line are **3x more likely** to be substantiated for child maltreatment



## The **F**amily **P**reservation Program (**FPP**) works!

Helping families in crisis by improving parenting and family functioning while keeping children safe

Every **\$1** spent on **FPP** services saved **\$2.85** in out of home care costs

**FPP** is **94%** effective in avoiding entry into out of home care (the placements of children when removed from their home due to abuse/neglect)

*The 2019 share of children by racial category under age 18 who live in families with income below the federal poverty threshold (e.g., \$25,926 per year for a family of 4)*

Sources: [Chapin Hall](#), [Prevent Child Abuse America](#)

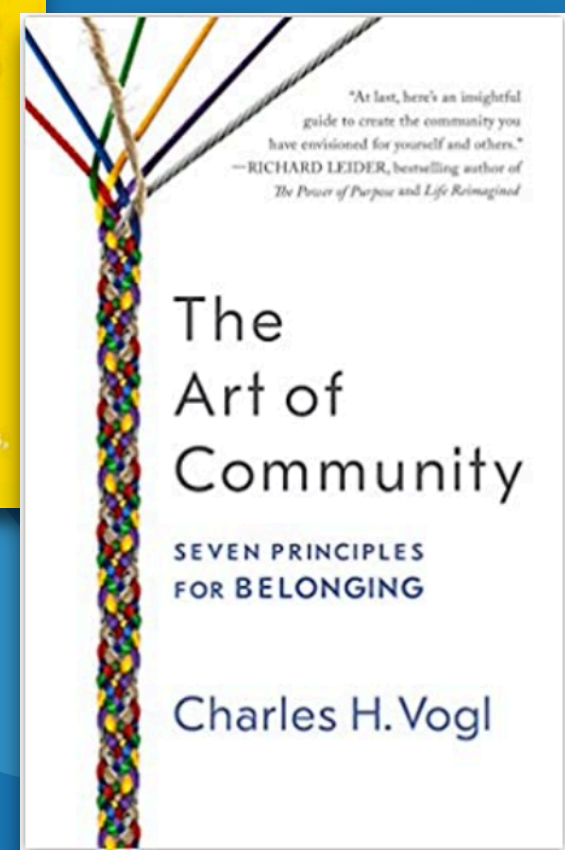
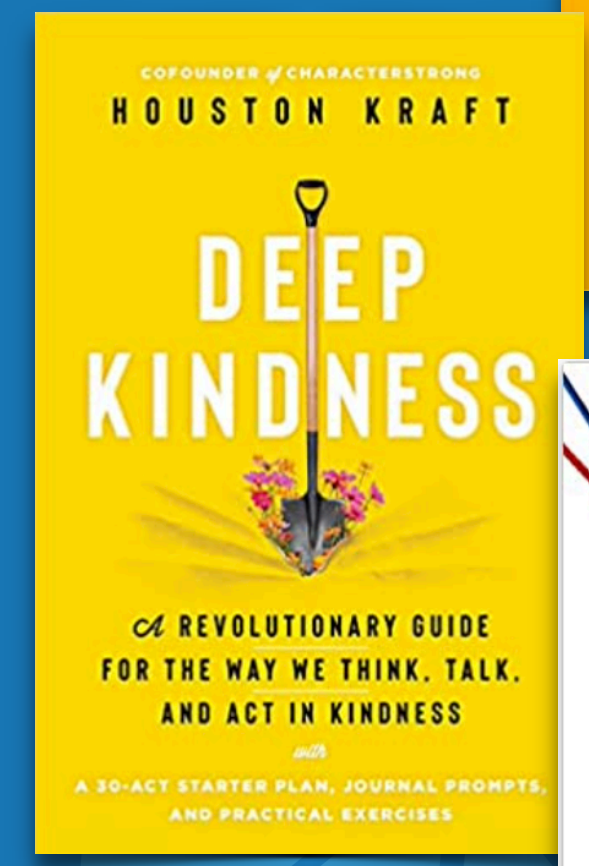
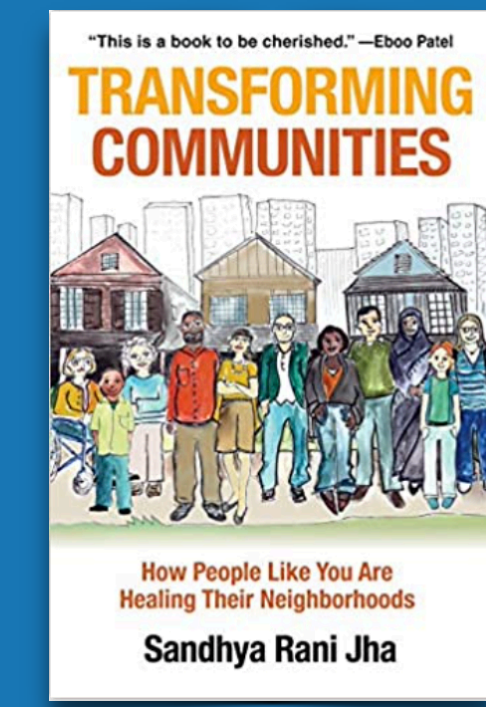
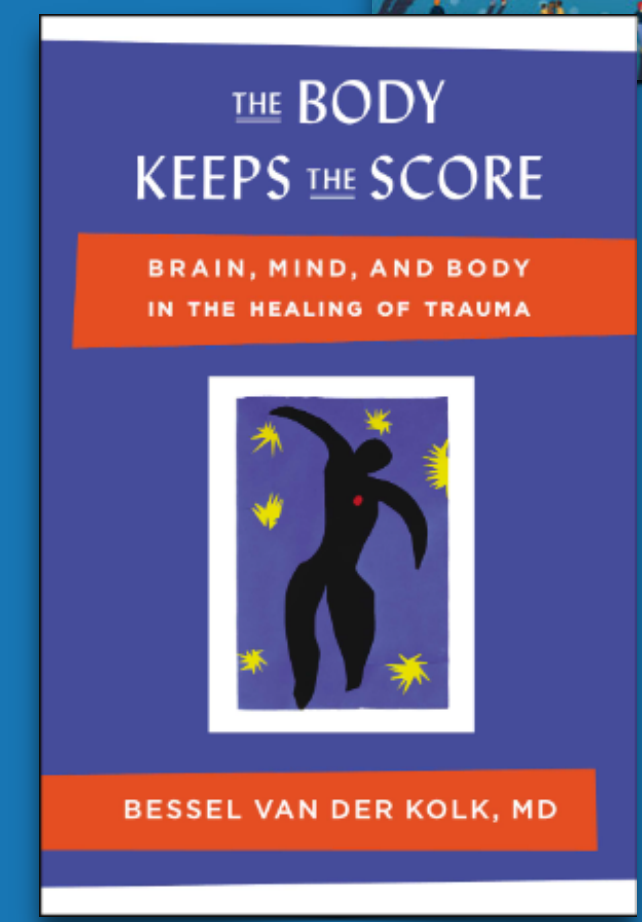
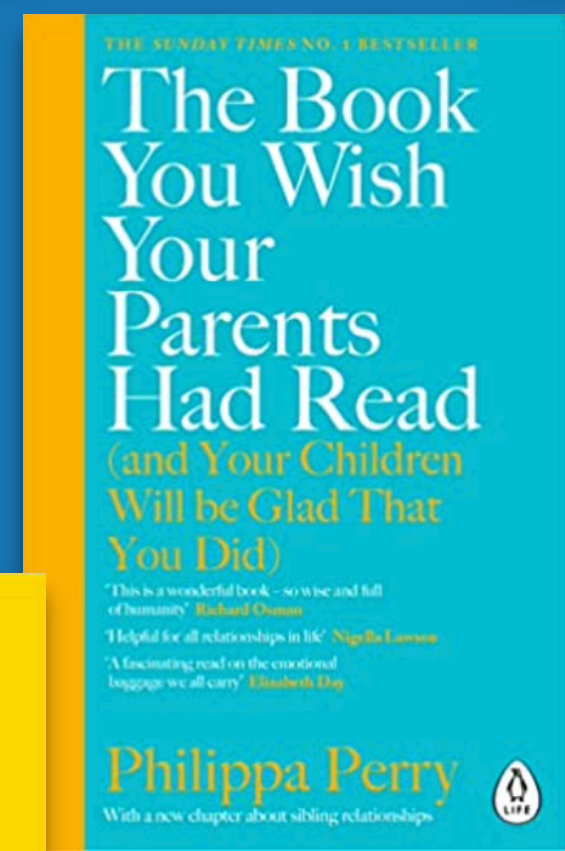
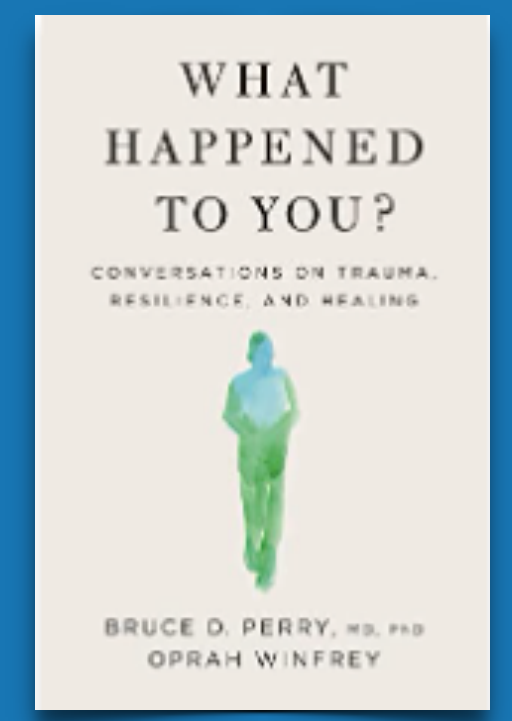
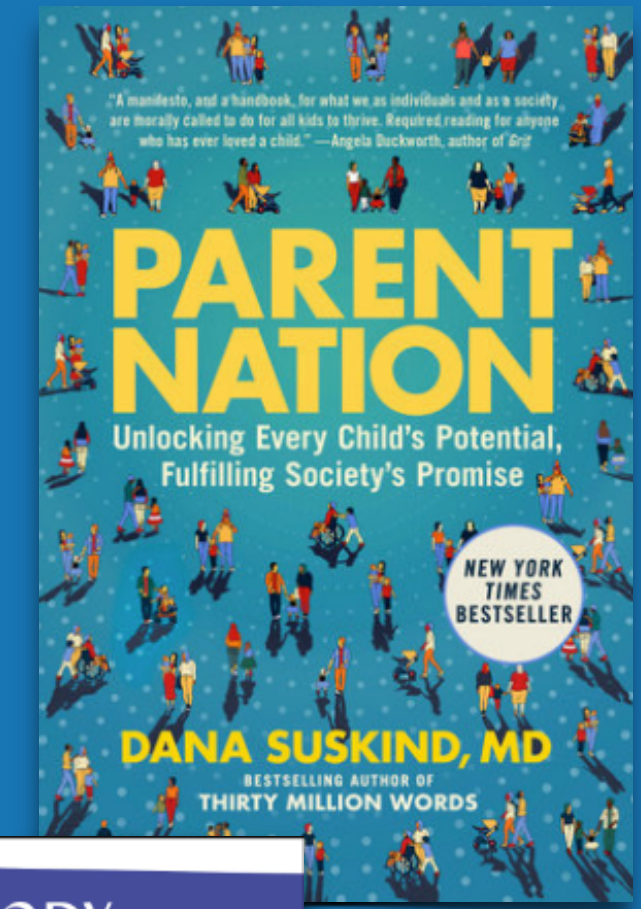
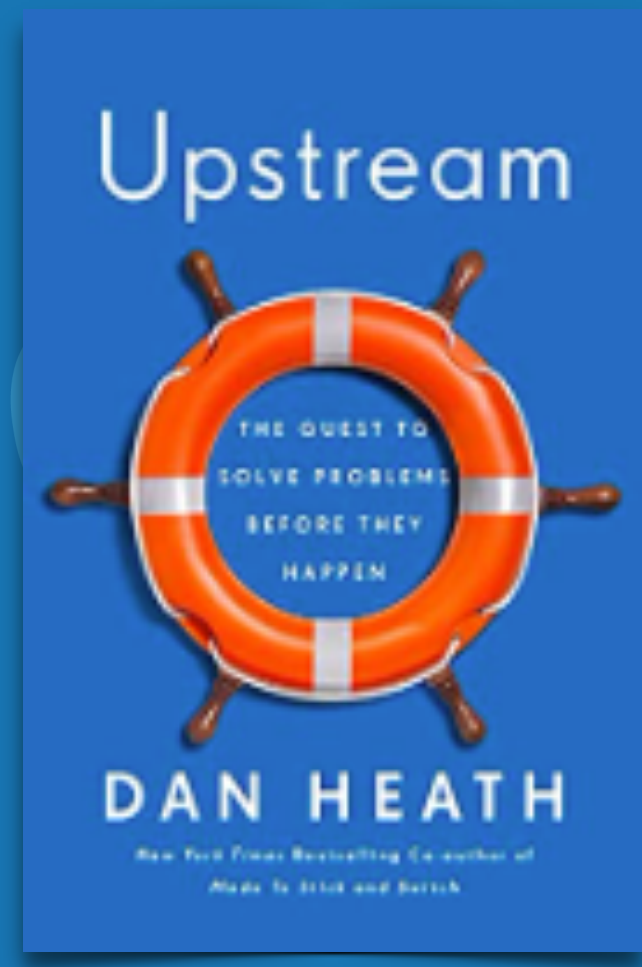
# OUTSIDE RESOURCES



## Books

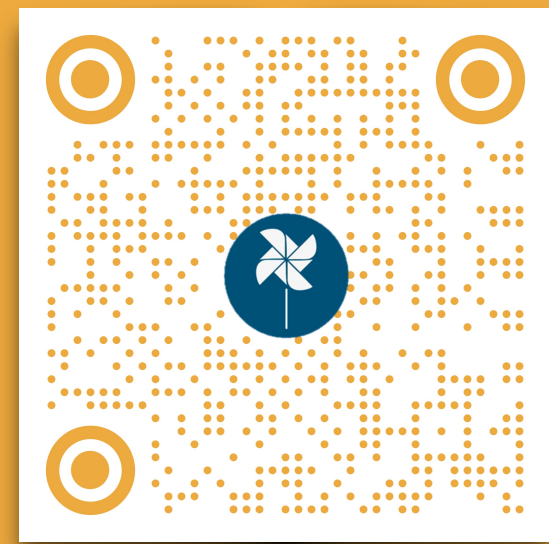


## Podcasts

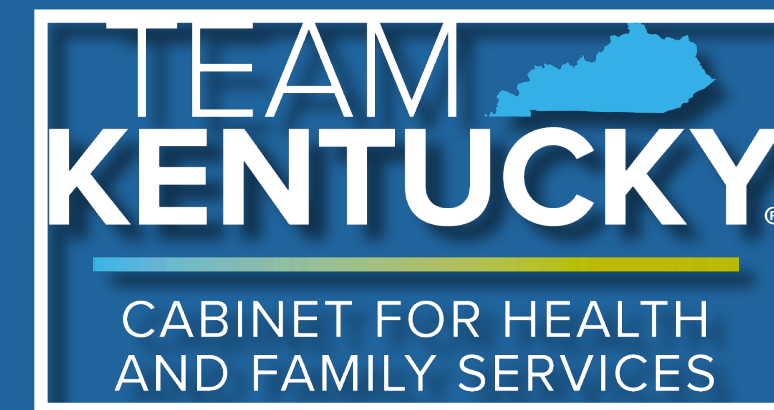


# TRAINING & SUPPORT

**1-800-CHILDREN**  
A free, confidential information  
and support hotline



Scan for Full List  
of **PCAK** Trainings





Dear Community,  
I \_\_\_\_\_, choose to  
be a *Community Supporter*,  
available for you to **LEAN** On Me.

I pledge to do better.

I pledge to help more and  
to ask for help when I need it.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_

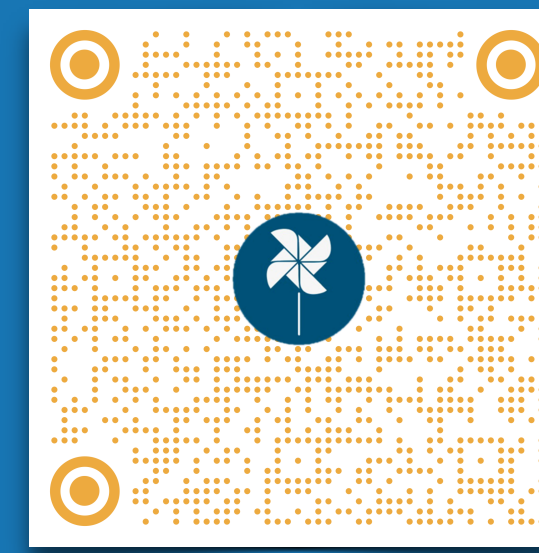
# A PLEDGE

You have the tools, **now it is time to act.** Take the pledge, join the conversation, and let's continue to make the world a better place ... ***because childhood lasts a lifetime.***

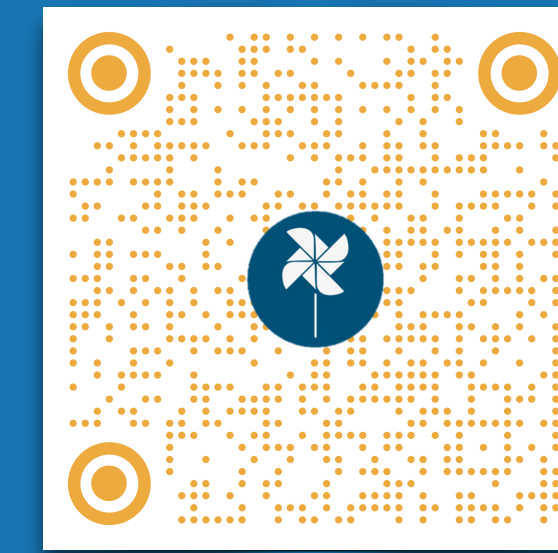
**#LEANOnMePledge**



# FOOTNOTES



Scan for a full  
bibliography  
of the toolkit



Scan for Focus  
Group Reports

<https://pcaky.org/>

<https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-and-Concrete-Supports.pdf>

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/oc/Pages/start.aspx>

<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/HO-2.1e-CW-Social-Emotional-Competence.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/essentials-for-childhood-framework508.pdf>

<https://www.lena.org/engaging-resilience-with-responsive-caregiving/>

<https://www.chapinhall.org/>

<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf>

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:7a4007ad-1061-3dbd-b083-6f23b2e39ca8>

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>

<https://www.aecf.org/work/past-work/making-connections>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>

<https://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/find-support>

<https://arborky.org/>

<https://pcaaz.org/mandated-supporters/>

<https://diversity.nih.gov/sociocultural-factors/implicit-bias-training-course>

<https://racialequityinstitute.org/groundwater/>



## KEEP YOUR WORD

Following through builds trust. Be realistic about what you can and cannot provide to others. If you can't address their problem, remind them they are not alone.



## WE ARE ALL HUMAN

Our life experiences, past and present, shape each of us. We are all worthy of respect and love. Remind caregivers of their strengths.



## SHOW SUPPORT

Meet people where they are. We never know what a person has been through that may lead to them not trusting you. Show support when you can to build trust and relationships.



## CARE ABOUT KIDS!

Acknowledge the feelings of the children in your life. Help teach kids to make friends, be kind, and talk about their feelings. Show them they are valued and loved.



## SUPPORT MALE ROLE MODELS

Involved fathers can have positive influences on a child's social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes. Support the father figures you see and encourage their positive interactions with their children!



## LISTEN MORE; TALK LESS

You can change a person's life by learning their story. Listen actively. Ask if they would like your advice - sometimes people just need to vent and are not looking for you to "fix" them.



## UNDERSTAND CAREGIVING IS STRESSFUL

Recognize signs of stress in others and figure out what you can do to help. Take care of yourself and monitor your own stress levels.



## ASK FOR HELP

Tell the people around you you are willing to help them and identify people you can ask for help if you need it. Asking for help is the right thing to do.



**SUPPORT ROLE MODEL**  
Involved fathers have positive influences on a child's social, emotional and cognitive outcomes. Support the father's role by seeing and encouraging their interactions with their children.

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Click [HERE](#) to download a PRINTABLE PDF of the Lean On Me Kentucky cards

Click [HERE](#) to download a DIGITAL COPY of the Lean On Me Kentucky cards

