Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

Child Abuse Prevention Month FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES

The faith community plays an important role in reaching out and helping families and children at risk. Spiritual leaders can use their messages as a positive force in supporting child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.

Tips and Activities
FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES

Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based groups play an important role in reaching out and helping families and children at risk. Spiritual leaders are a positive force in supporting child abuse and neglect prevention. No matter the faith community in which you find yourself, we trust that children are held to be sacred, nourished, and loved. Some religions refer to children as "gifts" and "rewards." Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky welcomes your involvement in our statewide efforts of ensuring all children are valued, cherished, and grow up healthy and free from maltreatment.

Prevention activities for faith communities include:

- Acknowledge child abuse and neglect as a major concern for the faith community, and affirm that religious and lay leaders are dedicated to the concern.
- Raise awareness of child abuse and neglect by setting aside a day in April to observe Child Abuse Prevention Month and celebrate your community's commitment to children and families.
- Assure your place of worship is welcoming and safe for children of all ages by establishing policies such as a two adult rule for those working with children, properly training volunteers, increasing supervision for activities, and reducing hidden areas within your building.
- Train religious and lay leaders to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, to work with victims and their families, and to make appropriate referrals.
- Participate in interfaith/interagency groups developing community prevention programs and services. These programs support families, especially those in crisis, before harm ever comes to a child.
- Host parent education and support groups at your faith community's facilities. Stay informed about where and how to locate local resources and referral services available to families.
- Share information on how to report suspected child abuse or neglect, such as publishing the toll-free abuse "reporting hotline" (1-877-597-2331).
- Promote prevention resources (www.pcaky.org) in bulletins and newsletters.
- Publish a series of articles on child abuse prevention, awareness, and reporting in your church newsletter or blog.
- Sponsor on-site, after-school programs for children whose caregivers work during the hours after the school day ends.
- Provide space for local child welfare agencies to host meetings or visitation services.
- Share information on child development, parental stress, and local community resources and supports for parents during counseling sessions with your members.
- Offer respite care to congregation and community members in need of short-term relief from care-giving responsibilities.
- Organize a "Baby Supplies" drive to collect diapers, formula, car seats, and other supplies for new parents and/ or families in need.
- Participate in the Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign. The pinwheel symbol is being used nationwide to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect prevention. For ideas on hosting campaign, check out www.pcaky.org.
- Hosting trainings for your communities. Email us as pcaky@pcaky.org for more information!

Modified with permission from Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey

Raise Awareness

- Become informed about all of your community's resources.
- Celebrate your community's commitment to children and families during April's Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- The blue and silver pinwheel is the national symbol for child abuse prevention. Host a Pinwheels for Prevention campaign.
- Incorporate child abuse prevention information in a worship service, sermon, bible study, or prayer meeting.
- Make available prevention information and/or community resources throughout the year at high traffic locations throughout your facility.
- Share information on how to report suspected child abuse or neglect, publish the toll-free abuse reporting hotline: 1-877-597-2331.
- Promote and share prevention resources (www.pcaky.org) in bulletins and newsletters. If you need sample materials, contact Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky at 859.225.8879.
- Publish a series of articles on child abuse prevention, awareness, and reporting in your church newsletter or blog.
- Share information on child development, parental stress, and local community resources and supports for parents during counseling sessions.

Create Safe Spaces

- Establish policies such as background checks for all volunteers/staff, a two adult rule for those working with children, ensuring properly trained volunteers, increasing supervision throughout your facilities, and reducing hidden spots.
- Host a training session using PCAK's Youth Serving Organizations training. Email pcaky@pcaky.org for more information.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures to protect children, youth and other vulnerable persons.
    - Policies and procedures need to cover all programs that serve minors in your building and through the programs you offer. Examples include: nurseries, all children's programs, classes, all youth/student classes, outings and trips, daycare centers, after school programs, counseling sessions, etc.
- Train leaders, volunteers, and parents to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, to work with victims and their families, and to make appropriate referrals.

Provide Space

- Host parent education and support groups at your faith community's facilities.
- Stay informed about where and how to locate local resources and referral services available to families.
- Sponsor on-site, after-school programs for children whose caregivers work during after school hours.
- Provide space for local child welfare agencies to host meetings.
- Offer respite care to congregation or community members in need of short-term relief from care-giving responsibilities.

Join A Network

- Join the PCAK Partners in Prevention Network. Contact Amanda Royer at aroyer@pcaky.org for more information.
- Participate in interfaith/interagency groups developing community prevention programs and services. These programs support families, especially those in crisis, BEFORE harm ever comes to a child.

Learn About Theory of Change

Published by Prevent Child Abuse America, the Theory of Change for Primary Prevention in the United States is a shared vision for a world in which all children and families are living purposeful and happy lives with hope for the future. See more here: https://tinyurl.com/yc54555d.

Offer Support & Resources

- Organize a "Baby Supplies" drive/shower to collect diapers, formula, car seats, and other supplies for new parents and/or families in need.
- Partner with local foster care programs to supply backpacks with basic supplies and personal keepsake items to provide comfort to children who do enter out of home care.
- Connect with other private child care agencies in your area to learn ways you may support their needs.
- Donate used ink cartridges or cell phones to Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky.
- Partner with local organizations to host resource fairs.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

Join the Lean On Me Kentucky Movement

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 heath of our families and children? What would our world 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.

View the toolkit to meet prevention specialists, service providers, and community members with lived experience, all of whom are finding new ways to strengthen their communities.

Take the Lean On Me Kentucky pledge as a faith community!

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, _____

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

Positive Messaging Checklist
FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES

The following checklist should be used when communicating data, statistics, and messaging associated with the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Not all items are required to be used. Please consider the following when crafting speeches, presentations, graphics, press releases, Op-eds, social media, Child Abuse Prevention Month messaging, advertisements, and more.

Use a Primary Prevention Lens:

- ☐ **Does the message include solutions addressing the root cause of the problem?**
  Primary prevention is when you look at the root cause of a problem to determine solutions geared at preventing the problem from ever occurring.

- ☐ **Does the message show how external conditions (overload of stress on families, poverty, parental stressors, lack of resources, or connections) shape health, development, and outcomes?**

- ☐ **Does the message target everyone and illustrate we all have a stake and role in outcomes that matter?**

- ☐ **Does the message create a sense of belonging for all?**
  Focus on community level solutions and causes contributing to the problem verses focusing solely on the family.

- ☐ **Does the message include a clear call to action?**
  When talking about adversity faced by families and children, highlight the capacity for resilience. Provide solutions at the individual, community, and policy level.

- ☐ **Does the message take a positive approach?**
  When messaging feeds into myths or ill-informed perceptions such as "it's just too late for some folks," that "society is broken," persons receiving the message may believe the problem is too large to solve or doesn't involve them.

  Promote hopeful messages and ensure your message has more hope and healing than heartache.

  Acknowledge it is a difficult issue, but let people know solutions are within reach. Stay away from shocking events or stories. Most often these illustrations receive the most attention but are also outliers that make up a small percentage of abuse or neglect cases. This continues a misperception of what child abuse and neglect looks like and leads the pubic to formulate their own solutions or casts blame on certain systems or groups.

- ☐ **Does the message apply a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion?**
  Include images with visible differences in ethnicity, race, and gender identity.

Positive Messaging Checklist
FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES

Suggestions when forming messages:

- Avoid sensationalism and using the most horrific stories or statistics.
- Avoid telling a story or providing a statistic without a solution to address the problem.
- Avoid using negative images, like images of sad or abused children.
- Avoid using images of only families or children. It is helpful to show images of all community members to reiterate solutions involve everyone.
- Avoid targeting parents through words or images. Research tells us the public believes child abuse to be a family problem or that parents are flawed. However, prevention cannot occur unless the whole community understands their role and becomes involved in supporting families.
- Avoid negative statistics, like, "Kentucky ranks #1 in maltreatment." Not only does this messaging lead the public to believe this problem is too large to solve, but it is also similar to comparing apples to oranges. For example, there are many factors that prevent us from comparing Kentucky to other states. Kentucky is a mandated reporting state, whereas other states only mandate certain professions to report suspicions of abuse. Furthermore, laws that regulate findings of abuse cases differ from one state to another.

Sources:

Linkenbach. J. (2017) An Introduction to Positive Community Norms. Retrieved from www.montanainstitute.com.

Manuel, T. (February 2009). Framing Child Abuse and Neglect: Effects of Early Childhood Development Experimental Research. Prevent Child Abuse America. https://preventchildabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Framing_Child_Abuse_and_Neglect_Effects_of_Early_Childhood_Development_Experimental_Research.pdf

Sweetland, J. (February 2021). Reframing Childhood Adversity: Promoting Upstream Approaches. Social Current. https://www.social-current.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Childhood-Adversity-Brief.pdf

Contact us for more information!

859.225.8879

2265 Harrodsburg Road
Suite 200
Lexington, Kentucky 40504

pcaky@pcaky.org

www.pcaky.org

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky

@PreventChildAbuseKy

@PCAKY

This project is funded in part with state or federal funds through a contract (#PON2 7362200003127) with the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™