



The Protective Factors

When relating stories of successful prevention strategies, it is important to connect the dots from the program to the prevention of child abuse. Given the public's overwhelming tendency to think about child abuse in its worst forms, the term "child abuse prevention" is still not well understood and is mainly thought of in terms of solely reporting incidents of child abuse and neglect. There is still a lot of opportunity to educate the public regarding known effective prevention strategies.

For years, researchers have been studying the common risk factors among families experiencing abuse and neglect and the protective factors among families who are under stress. There is growing interest in understanding the complex ways, for how both factors can affect the incidence and consequences of abuse and neglect within the context of a child's family, community, and society. Research has found that successful interventions must reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure the well-being of children and families.



5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

FOR PREVENTING RISK OF CHILD ABUSE.

SOURCE: Prevent Child Abuse America



Protective factors are positive attributes that strengthen *all* families. A universal approach helps get needed support to families that may not meet the criteria for "at-risk" services, but who are dealing with stressors that could lead them to abuse or neglect.

Focusing on protective factors, which are attributes that families themselves often want to build, helps service providers develop positive relationships with parents. Parents then feel more comfortable seeking out extra support if needed. This positive relationship is especially critical for parents who may be reluctant to disclose concerns or identify behaviors or circumstances that may place their families at risk.

When service providers work with families to increase protective factors, they also help families build and draw on natural support networks within their family and community. These networks are critical to families' long-term success.