

# Child Abuse Prevention Month 2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

MISSOURI  
**KIDSFIRST**  
Ending Child Abuse Now



## What's Inside?

### Strengthen knowledge

- Learn the Facts
- Support Families
- Be a Safe Adult
- Respond Responsibly



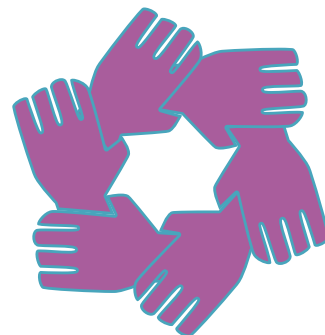
### Strengthen awareness

- Safe Policies and Practices
- Child Abuse Prevention Training
- Connect with Child Advocacy Centers

### Stronger Together!

#### Partner with Missouri KidsFirst

- Host a Prevention Training
- Bring Awareness- Wear Blue!
- Stand with Missouri's Children





# Child Abuse Prevention Month

## Welcome

**FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Friends,

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time when child wellness and child welfare organizations across highlight the importance of creating systems and programs that put children and families first.

Missouri KidsFirst recognizes that all community members have a role in ensuring children have positive experiences and families have the resources they need when they need them, well before they are in crisis. The theme of this year's awareness and impact campaign, is "Stronger Together for a Better Future."

Extreme stress and uncertainty for families may increase the risk of child abuse and neglect, raising the need to support families and prevent abuse before it occurs. Child abuse and neglect are preventable, and all communities benefit when children and families are well supported.

We invite you to join Missouri KidsFirst Child Abuse Prevention Month education and awareness efforts throughout April! Please share the following information with families, schools, youth serving organizations, and all adults who care for children. Together we can create healthy childhoods for all Missouri's children!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Seitz".

Jessica Seitz

# Strengthen Knowledge

## Learn the Facts

### SIGNS A CHILD IS NOT SAFE



#### → Emotional Abuse

- Caregiver consistently belittles or berates the child and refuses to help the child when needed.
- Child shows extremes in behavior: overly aggressive or compliant.
- Appears emotionally unattached to caregiver and others.

#### → Physical Abuse

- Child appears frightened of the caregiver.
- Child has burns, bites, broken bones, bruising, black eyes, or complains of pain.
- Caregiver offers no/odd explanation of a child's injury. Does the story match the injury?

#### → Online Abuse

- Unexplained gifts, money, game subscriptions
- Child presents themselves as older online.
- Child sends revealing photos or videos of oneself.
- Child becomes secretive: minimizing screens or hiding devices.

#### Where To Report

Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline  
1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL  
Online at [dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm](https://dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm)  
If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.



#### Children in need of help may:

- Take care of other children and/or have limited support systems.
- Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral or medical r delays.
- Live in a home with domestic violence.

#### → Sexual Abuse

- Non-biological, transient caregivers in the home (a live in partner).
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Child attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment.
- Witnessing an adult inappropriately touching or saying sexual things to/with a child; exposing a child to pornography.
- Demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for their age.
- Nightmares and/or bed wetting

#### → Neglect

- Child begs or steals food and/or has severe consistent poor hygiene.
- Caregiver is abusing alcohol or other drugs.
- Caregiver mental health concerns: unable to provide for child's basic needs.
- Highly stressful family situations
- Unlocked weapons or guns in the home

To learn more go to [essential4kids.org](https://essential4kids.org)



# Strengthen Awareness Support Families

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS HELP FAMILIES THRIVE

For many years the child abuse prevention field focused primarily on risk—how likely abuse or neglect might occur when risk factors are present. Risks, such as poverty, trauma, and disabilities, among others, are known to contribute to the likelihood that a child might be abused or neglected.

Yet most families—even those in risk—do not abuse or neglect their children. Certain conditions, when present in families' lives, help them to overcome the odds that could otherwise lead to tragedy. Those conditions are protective factors. Support families-Every Child Safe, Every Community Aware! Use [these tools](#) to get the conversation started!

### 1

## Parental Resilience

**Having adaptive skills and strategies to persevere in times of crisis**

- Help parents and caregivers see their strengths and find solutions to their problems by building on those strengths.
- Focus on flexibility and help parents learn how to bounce back from difficult situations.



### 2

## Social Connection

**Connections with other adults reduces stress**

- Give families a safe place to gather and make friends.
- Host or sponsor child and family events, such as health fairs, reading nights, and block parties.
- Encourage your place of worship, school, daycare, and work to do the same.



# Strengthen Awareness Support Families



## PROTECTIVE FACTORS HELP FAMILIES THRIVE

### 3 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

**Use positive parenting strategies with age-appropriate expectations**

- Share information with parents and caregivers on child development and appropriate discipline strategies
- Start a lending library of books and toys that will help parents understand the ages and stages that their child is going through

### 4 Concrete Supports in Time of Need

**Families have access to tangible goods and services to meet needs**

- Link families to needed community services in a time of crises with a positive and respectful manner
- Offer support to a caregiver who is under stress through babysitting, making a meal or active listening

### 5 Social Emotional Competence

**The ability of a child to self-regulate appropriately**

- Teach children to recognize and express their feelings along with providing opportunities to practice
- Help children learn how to share, cooperate and take turns. Seek support for challenging behaviors to reduce stress for the family

### 6 Parent - Child Relationship

**Strong bonds build resilience**

- Provide opportunities for parents and children to spend fun time together. Emphasize the importance of connectedness for all adults in a child's life
- Support home visiting programs in your area such as Healthy Families, Head Start and Parents as Teachers which provide parents with early bonding experiences



# Respond Responsibly

## BE A SAFE ADULT FOR A CHILD

We believe it is every adult's responsibility to keep kids safe

**A safe adult is someone a child can go to if they ever feel unsafe, have ever been hurt, or if they're not sure if a situation is unsafe.**

### A safe adult should be someone who:

- Is an adult that can get the child help if they're ever hurt or unsafe.
- Doesn't break personal boundaries with a child or try to get the child to break them.
- The child feels comfortable with and can easily talk to about things that may be difficult to talk about.
- The child can trust to keep them safe.

## Teach children...

- To have multiple safe adults
- If you have a safe adult now, and sometime in the future that safe adult doesn't make you feel safe, they you can always choose another safe adult.
- To keep telling safe adults they do not feel safe or have been hurt until someone LISTENS and DOES something to help them.

**For more information on being a safe adult go to:**

[d2l.org/how-to-be-a-safe-adult](https://d2l.org/how-to-be-a-safe-adult) or

[mbfpreventioneducation.org/learn-more/safe-adult-club/](https://mbfpreventioneducation.org/learn-more/safe-adult-club/)

# Every child safe

## Be a safe adult



### Set and Maintain Clear, Protective Boundaries

This is a crucial step because boundaries help us to respect each other and feel respected. A child who knows that you will respect (and even protect!) their boundaries will have an easier time trusting you to take care of them.

### Develop Protective Bonds

Really listen when the child talks to you. Show them that you're interested in their opinion; involve them in conversations and show them that their input is valuable.

### Talk openly and honestly about difficult subjects, including child sexual abuse

When we talk to children in age-appropriate ways about our bodies, sex, and boundaries, children understand what healthy relationships look like. It also teaches them that they have the right to say "no." This conversation looks different depending on how old the child is, but by discussing tough topics together you become the go-to "expert" for your child. Be clear that your child's safety is of the utmost importance to you,

## Taking action as a safe adult

### If a child shares or you become aware a child is being harmed:

#### Listen

Stay calm and listen with compassion. Tell the child, "I believe you." Only ask open ended questions, like "Tell me more." You do not need proof. You need reasonable suspicion. Avoid trying to dig for details or having different adults question the child's story. This can re-traumatize the child and damage the investigation and/or prosecution.

#### Get Help

**Report suspicions of child abuse to the CA/N hotline 1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL.. Reporting is not making an accusation, but asking for professional help, resources, and support for a child and their family. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.**

#### Legal responsibilities and protections

No business owner or supervisor may impede or inhibit any report. When you make a report in good faith, you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action.

#### You may be the only person to act

Don't assume someone else is making a report, you may be the only person to act.

# Stronger Together!

## Partner with Missouri KidsFirst

Everyone can spread awareness and make an impact to prevent child abuse and neglect!  
Partner with Missouri KidsFirst this April during Child Abuse Prevention Month.

### Open a dialogue in your community

Learning as much as you can about the issues and talking about it in your community are great places to start!

- Learn how all adults are essential in preventing child abuse at [essential4kids.org](https://essential4kids.org)
- Missouri KidsFirst offers FREE mandated reporter training that is available to the public at [protectmokids.com](https://protectmokids.com).
- Hold a Stewards of Children child sexual abuse prevention training in your community. Go to [missourikidsfirst.org/soc/](https://missourikidsfirst.org/soc/) to learn more!



### Shine a light on the Issue

A visible way to show your support during Child Abuse Prevention Month is to participate in Wear Blue Day.

On March 31st, simply **WEAR BLUE** and snap a picture of it.

Send that picture out on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag **#GoBlueMO**

### Pinwheels for Prevention

One of the most popular ways to show your support during Child Abuse Prevention Month is to use pinwheels. The pinwheel is a symbol of Child Abuse Prevention Month and planting or displaying them in prominent areas is a great way to pique the public's curiosity!

Order your real or virtual pinwheels today and tag our social media with pictures of your garden!



[ORDER PINWHEELS TODAY](#)



[ORDER VIRTUAL PINWHEELS  
TO SUPPORT MKF](#)



# Stronger Together for a Better Future

## Celebrate with Missouri KidsFirst



Celebrate Missouri's most dedicated child advocates!

**Get your tickets today!**



Follow MKF throughout April for more  
information and resources

