



Child Abuse Prevention

Childhood should be a carefree time in life, but far too often, children of all ages experience and or witness physical, emotional and or sexual abuse. Abuse affects children in a variety of harmful ways during their formative years, but also has a deep, long-lasting effect that can negatively impact their entire lifetime. Whether you are a parent, teacher, neighbor or community member, we all must be vigilant and protect the children around us.

Prevention tips for parents or caregivers

Here are some ways you can help protect your child or children you care for from abuse and neglect:

Child abuse not only harms children in their formative years, but also has a deep, long-lasting effect that can negatively impact an entire lifetime.

- All babies cry, some more than others. Learning calming and coping techniques can help parents who may feel overwhelmed. Create a **Crying Baby Plan**.
- Get help from family and friends by delegating some of the childcare responsibilities. This will allow you to have some free time to focus on self-care.
- Listen to your child. Let them know it is safe to talk about anything with you.
- Get to know your child's friends and their families.
- Screen all caregivers, such as babysitters and day care centers. Find out what they know about child health, child development and child care. Visit **Idaho Stars.org** to find a list of child care providers statewide and resources for child development, family resources and financial assistance.
- Teach your child the difference between "good touches" and "bad touches."
- Learn how to appropriately and safely discipline children when they misbehave. Avoid using physical punishment. Parenting classes are offered in most communities. Ask your doctor or call a local hospital for more information. Also see **Family Strengthening Education**.
- Learn healthy ways to resolve conflicts and manage stress. If there is someone in your child's life who you think is close to becoming an abuser,

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Be a vigilant community member— a child's life may depend on it!

you may be able to talk to that person about it and help the person learn more about managing stress and about how children grow and develop.

- Remove firearms and other dangerous weapons from your home. If you are unable to remove dangerous items, learn how to properly store them to prevent accidents. **Parents & Gun Owners – Project ChildSafe or 6 Ways To Safely Store Your Firearms | NRA Family**
- Know your triggers and learn how to recognize when you're angry. It's important parents/caregivers don't take their anger out on others and know when to step away for a few minutes to cool down. Consider an anger management course. Simple relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery, can help calm angry feelings.
 - + Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest won't relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your "gut."
 - + Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as "relax," "take it easy." Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
 - + Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.

Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you're in a tense situation.

Prevention tips for everyone

Everyone can help prevent child abuse and neglect by showing concern for children and their well-being. Here are some ways you can help prevent abuse and neglect of children in your community.

- **Learn to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect.** For example, a child may not grow as expected, may be dirty or unhealthy, or may seem fearful, anxious or depressed.
- **Be an advocate for children.** Support any group that helps parents at risk of abusing their children. Donate time, money or goods to a local domestic violence shelter. Volunteer in child abuse programs.
- **Get to know your neighbors and their children.** Learn the children's names, and show you care simply by waving to them or asking about how they're doing at home and school. Offer to help a new parent. Child abuse becomes less likely if parents and caregivers feel supported.
- **Give parents a break.** Relieve a friend, neighbor, or relative who is feeling overwhelmed with child care and other issues.

Reporting child abuse

It is up to all of us to protect our children. Everyone in Idaho is a mandated reporter. It's not your job to investigate, but it IS your job to take action if you suspect harm to a child.

- **If you suspect that a child has been abused or neglected take action!** Call the Idaho Care line at **211**, the police or local child protective services. If you don't know who to call, a hospital may be able to tell you. Many of them have special programs to deal with child abuse and neglect.
- **If a child is in immediate danger or has been badly hurt, don't wait.** Call **911** or other emergency services right away.

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Listen to your child and let them know it's safe to talk about anything with you.

- **If it is your own child, get them to a safe place and stay there.** This may be the home of a close friend or family member or a domestic violence shelter.
- **If you are a child or teen who is being abused, don't keep the secret.** Tell someone who can make a difference: a trusted family member, teacher, counselor or doctor.

More Resources

Idaho Children's Trust Fund: To learn more about prevention strategies including regional home visiting programs and protective factors, resources such as parenting tips, parenting and child care **organizations** and educational materials, visit idahochildrenstrustfund.org.

Family Advocates is dedicated to ending child abuse and offers free Family Strengthening classes for adults and teens. Learn more at familyadvocates.org.

Reporting Neglect, Abuse, or Abandonment | Idaho Department of Health and Welfare: **1-855-552-KIDS(5437)**

50 Ways to Strengthen Families to Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect

If you need immediate crisis help, you can call or text the National and Idaho Suicide & Crisis Helpline at **988**, or chat at 988lifeline.org. Someone is available to help you 24/7.



2-1-1 Idaho Careline: Dial **211** or **1-800-926-2588** or text **898211** to speak with a resource specialist for health and human services available in your community.

Optum Idaho's 24/7 Member Access and Crisis Line: **1-855-202-0973** (TDD/TTY services at **711** for the hearing impaired) or visit optumidaho.com.



optumidaho.com