



Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Policy Priorities: 2022-2024

We know from our own families that children’s early experiences, both positive and negative, impact them throughout their lives. When children are raised in stable and nurturing families and communities, they are much more likely to be happy, independent, and contributing adults. The best way to keep children safe and happy is to provide families with a full range of early supports they need to prevent child abuse and neglect in the first place.

Evidence shows that when Illinois invests strategically in upstream programs designed to strengthen families, children experience better outcomes, communities thrive, and the state is able to save critical taxpayer dollars on more costly interventions down the road. In partnership with policy makers and other government and community partners, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois is committed to advancing a range of policies and services that are proven to support families and prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs.

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois envisions an Illinois in which all children grow up in healthy, nurturing homes and communities free of abuse, neglect, violence, or endangerment of any kind. We work to prevent child abuse by providing statewide leadership through education, public awareness, support for community initiatives, and advocacy.

Prioritizing and investing in the following prevention policies is everyone’s responsibility and an important step in ensuring that all Illinois families have the opportunity to thrive.

Raise Public Awareness and Support for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention in Illinois.

With the right policy supports, preventing child abuse and neglect *is* possible. Building sustained investments in effective family support programs begins with widespread public awareness about what is really at stake for children, families, and communities. Prevent Child Abuse Illinois is committed to working with policy makers to educate parents, teachers, child care providers, faith-based leaders, coaches, neighbors and other community stakeholders about how early childhood development, home visiting, quality health and mental health care, workforce development, and economic supports are working to keep children safe and help them thrive.

✿ **Increase Funding for the Primary Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.**

Primary prevention encompasses many different upstream strategies designed to connect children and families to the supports they need before they face a crisis. To ensure these services are accessible to every family that needs them, additional funding is needed to replicate community-based prevention programs across the state, expand early intervention and family support services, and provide affordable, high-quality child care.

✿ **Expand Access to Evidence-Based Home Visiting and Other Programs to Support Families and Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect.**

Research shows that a range of coordinated evidence-based programs work together to produce better outcomes for children and their families. These include early childhood interventions such as Early Head Start, home visiting services, and quality child care. Evidence-based home visiting has been shown to prevent child abuse and neglect. Fostering and funding home visiting programs will help to ensure broader access for all families.

✿ **Invest in the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.**

Building a comprehensive strategy for the prevention of child sexual abuse requires policies as well as the implementation of evidence-based programs for educating adults and children about creating environments where the opportunities for child sexual abuse are minimized.

✿ **Fully Implement the Recent Expansion of the State Earned Income Credit.**

The state Earned Income Credit (EIC) helps to provide vital economic support to low-income families and increases family stability so parents are able to take care of their children and themselves. Last year, the State Legislature expanded access to this tax relief for low-income people, including undocumented working immigrants, and increased the state's EIC tax relief amount from an 18% to 20% match of the federal program. Policy makers should continue their work to ensure the successful implementation of this expansion to assure that all families eligible have the financial support they need to thrive.

✿ **Support the Effective Implementation of Illinois Safe Haven Laws.**

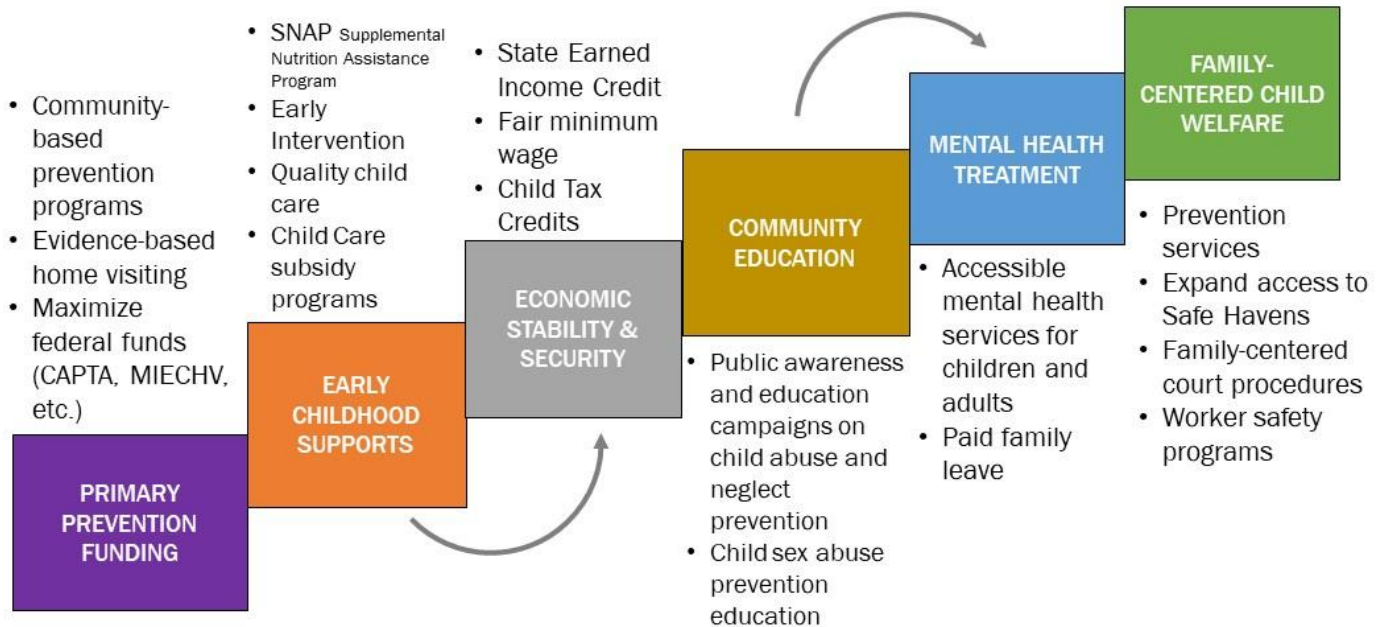
Passed in 2001, Illinois' Safe Haven law has effectively provided parents who are unable to care for their newborn infants the opportunity to safely relinquish their unharmed infants to staff in hospitals, emergency care facilities, and fire and police stations. To ensure the continuing success of the law, additional changes are needed to expand access to safe havens to include first responders, improve the relinquishment process, and improve current court procedures.

✿ **Ensure the Safety and Well-Being of Child and Family Caseworkers.**

The dedicated and highly-trained social workers who work for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and other community-based service providers are the first responders when children and families face challenges. As they fulfill this critical role in their communities, they often face stressful and sometimes dangerous situations. Caseworkers deserve a range of supports to ensure their own well-being and continue to do their jobs well including: stringent safety measures and protection on the job; appropriate benefits and high-quality mental health care; proper training and manageable caseloads; loan forgiveness programs; and other needed supports.

CONTINUUM OF POLICY OPTIONS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN ILLINOIS

Research shows that with the right policies and programs, we can prevent child abuse and neglect and ensure that every child and family has the support they need to thrive.



Prevent Child Abuse Illinois Snapshot



About Us

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA Illinois) is a free standing 501(c)(3) charitable organization and the chartered state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. Established in 1990, PCA Illinois provides key leadership for child abuse prevention throughout Illinois. PCA Illinois is actively involved in prevention awareness and education, community outreach, public policy advocacy, and the promotion of positive parenting programs. **We believe every child deserves a great childhood!**

For more information about our policy priorities, please contact Denise McCaffrey, Executive Director, at dmccaffrey@pcaillinois.org.