

# Drug Endangered Children: The Role of Prevention



Prevention is the best solution to the problems of child abuse and neglect – and the harm that can result from parental drug abuse. When we prevent child maltreatment that results from addiction, we increase the chances that children will reach their full potential and grow into healthy, productive members of a prosperous society.

Substance abuse prevention and child abuse prevention initiatives provide individuals and communities the tools to assess needs and develop and implement strategies. The strategies address factors that increase the risk of child abuse and substance abuse and foster protective factors that diminish these risks. The strategies prevention professionals use are similar: public information and awareness, educational programming, identification of problems and referral to helping resources, and public policy review and change, among others. All are designed to increase knowledge of the issues and to effect change in the community.

## Fast Facts

- Child maltreatment is the leading cause of trauma-related death for children under the age of five, with 66% occurring at the hands of parents under the influence of alcohol or other drugs<sup>1</sup>
- Children of substance abusing parents are the most vulnerable and endangered individuals in America; they are:
  - 2.7 times more likely to be physically abused;
  - 4.2 times more likely to be neglected;
  - Significantly more likely to be abused by others<sup>1</sup>
- Adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse and neglect and substance abuse in the home, are a common pathway to social, emotional and cognitive impairments that lead to increased risk of unhealthy behaviors, risk of violence or re-victimization, disease, disability and death<sup>2</sup>

## The Important Role of Prevention in Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Initiatives

- Prevention breaks the intergenerational cycle of substance abuse and child abuse by increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors
- Prevention conserves resources (both financial and manpower), which can then be focused in other areas
  - The detrimental effects and consequences of substance abuse and addiction cost federal, state and local governments at least \$467.7 billion in 2005<sup>3</sup>
  - One substance-exposed child can cost a community more than \$1.5 million over his or her lifespan<sup>4</sup>
  - Every \$1 spent on prevention saves society \$10<sup>5</sup>

## The Critical Role of Child Abuse and Substance Abuse Prevention Professionals in DEC Initiatives

- Child abuse and substance abuse prevention professionals offer expertise in:
  - Community assessment
  - Data collection and evaluation
  - Evidence-based programs
  - Community mobilization/capacity building
  - Training and facilitation
  - Strategic planning
  - Advocacy
  - Implementation of initiatives designed to change or influence community conditions, standards, institutions, structures, systems and policies (environmental strategies)

- Additional strategies implemented by prevention professionals:
  - Community coalitions organized around substance abuse and child abuse prevention efforts
  - Public awareness, including media strategies, informational sessions and public town hall meetings
  - Training and education for practitioners working with families
  - Interventions for families and caregivers (e.g. parent education)

## **Targets for Prevention Efforts Related to Drug Endangered Children**

- Substance abusing parents/caregivers
- Children living with substance abusing parents/caregivers
- Women who are abusing substances during pregnancy
- Women of child-bearing age and those who influence them
- Agencies that serve families
- Public officials and policy makers
- Communities

## **Prevention Resources**

### *Substance Abuse Prevention*

- Single State Agencies for Substance Abuse Services: <http://www.samhsa.gov/Grants/ssadirectory.pdf> (includes state contact information)
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA): [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org) or 1-800-54-CADCA
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP): <http://prevention.samhsa.gov/about/spf.aspx>

### *Child Abuse Prevention*

- Prevent Child Abuse America: <http://www.preventchildabuse.org> (includes state contact information)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/CMP/default.htm>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://childwelfare.gov/preventing/>
- National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds: <http://www.ctfalliance.org/> (includes state contact information)
- Child Welfare League of America: [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

### *Other Helpful Links*

- Partnership for a Drug Free America: <http://www.drugfree.org/>
- Join Together: [www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)
- Office of National Drug Control Policy: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/>
- Child Trauma Academy: [www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov)

## **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup> *No Safe Haven: Children of Substance-Abusing Parents*, National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), January 1999

<sup>2</sup> Anda, R. & Felitti, V., *The Health and Social Impact of Growing Up with Adverse Childhood Experiences: The Human and Economic Cost of the Status Quo*, 2007

<sup>3</sup> *Shoveling Up II: The Impact of Substance Abuse on Federal, State and Local Budgets*, National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), May 2009

<sup>4</sup> Embry, D., "Cost Effective Prevention, Intervention and Treatment" Presentation, August 2004

<sup>5</sup> Spoth, R. & Gyll, M., *Prevention's Cost Effectiveness: Illustrative Economic Benefits of General Population Interventions and Prevention of Substance-related Problems: Effectiveness of Family-focused Prevention*

**For more information on Drug Endangered Children, visit our web site  
[www.NationalDEC.org](http://www.NationalDEC.org)**