

# Ways to Prevent Child Abuse

- **Volunteer with a local program.** Parent support groups, crisis centers, emergency shelters, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, local Schools and child abuse telephone hotlines are typical programs that welcome volunteers.
- **Report suspected abuse and neglect to your county Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) or the police.** Keeping children safe means each of you an obligation to inform the authorities of you suspect children are being mistreated. Your concern may protect a child from further abuse.
- **Advocate for services that strengthen families.** Communities need comprehensive services that address issues that affect families. Health care, parenting programs, employment and housing are all important to maintaining healthy families.
- **Contribute to a child abuse prevention organization.** Your donations are put to good use in much-needed community programs that are crucial to prevent abuse and neglect.
- **Help a neighbor, friend or relative.** Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities. Offer a sympathetic ear or helping hand. Offering to baby-sit once in a while or helping locate community resources can be tremendous boost to someone under stress.
- **Support and suggest programs on a child abuse prevention sponsored by local organizations.** Many groups, including churches and men's and women's clubs, offer excellent opportunities for raising awareness in the community.
- **Promote school programs that teach children to protect themselves.**

- **Help yourself.** Recognize the signs that indicate you may need some outside help. If you feel overwhelmed, constantly sad, angry, and often out of control, talk to somebody and get help. Remember, it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to ask for help.

## **Promotes Positive Parenting in Your Community**

## **Protecting Children**

The job of protecting children starts in the community. While people are required by law to report child mistreatment, anyone can make a report of suspected abuse. The sooner the authorities know about a child, the faster they can move to help.

### **Things to Look For**

Children who are maltreated are:

- Often left home alone
- In the neighborhood for long periods without supervision
- Frequently hungry
- Dressed inadequately for the weather
- Absent from school frequently
- Bruised or have other marks of physical violence
- Withdrawn or overly aggressive
- Not receiving needed medical attention

If a relative, friend or neighbor see one or more of these signs or suspects that the children are in danger, the situation should be reported to the county Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

## **How to Report**

If a child is in immediate danger (obviously being beaten or left alone overnight, for example), the police should be called immediately. In all other cases, reports should be made to the DFCS office in the county where the child lives.

People who call to report suspected abuse do not have to be sure maltreatment has occurred. They simply report what they have seen or heard. The authorities will investigate and confirm whether or not abuse has occurred. People who call are asked to give the name and location of the child and the name of the suspected perpetrator. Reports are confidential and those who call do not have to give their name. However, it is most helpful to the child in the long run if the reporter is willing to give his or her name and address and, if necessary, testify in court.

## **What Will Happen Next**

If a child is under age 18 and appears to have been abused or neglected by a parent or caretaker, DFCS will begin investigating immediately.

If the child is not in imminent danger, a caseworker will visit the family within 5 days.

If the person who makes the original report wants to know what DFCS did, he or she can call the department and find out whether the maltreatment was confirmed.

## **Who is Required to Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect?**

Georgia law requires people in certain professions to report. Mandated reporters include:

- Physicians, nurses and hospital personnel
- School and ay care personnel
- Social workers and counselors

- **Dentists**