



**Consider Protective Factors: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**  
By [Chicago Children's Advocacy Center](#) via the [Strengthening Families Initiative](#)

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month! This is an excellent time of year to remember what you can do to help prevent children from experiencing the type of violence referred to as child abuse.

Child abuse includes physical and sexual abuse as well as neglect. These topics are covered in depth in the Illinois Mandated Reporter Online training as well as ChicagoCAC's Keeping Children Safe professional development session, which you can request to have offered to your workplace by filling out the link at [www.chicagocac.org/request](http://www.chicagocac.org/request).

**Protective factors** can help to prevent child abuse. Protective factors, as defined by the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families initiative, "are characteristics that have been shown to make positive outcomes more likely for young children and their families, and to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect." This initiative focuses on five protective factors, including parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need and social and emotional competence of children.

A wealth of information about these five protective factors can be found on the Strengthening Families website here: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf>

According to this resource, here is a list of everyday actions you can do to promote these protective factors for families:

**How to promote parental resilience:**

- Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued
- Honor each family's race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting
- Encourage parents to manage stress effectively
- Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills
- Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times

**How to promote social connections:**

- Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections
- Create an inclusive environment
- Facilitate mutual support
- Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities



**How to promote knowledge of parenting and child development:**

- Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children
- Provide information and resources on parenting and child development
- Encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies
- Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective

**How to promote concrete support in times of need:**

- Respond immediately when families are in crisis
- Provide information and connections to services in the community
- Help families to develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports

**How to promote social and emotional competence of children:**

- Help parents foster their child's social emotional development
- Model nurturing care to children
- Include children's social and emotional development activities in programming
- Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
- Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support

Consider how you can promote and develop these skills in Chicago's families through your work or community connections! It takes all of us to prevent abuse! Learn more at [chicagoCAC.org](http://chicagoCAC.org).