



PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR FAMILIES

Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. These attributes serve as buffers, helping parents to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009.)

Through the Center for the Study of Social Policy's research efforts, they documented the following factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect. PCA Florida's Pinwheels for Prevention campaign has intentionally embedded these protective factors within the parenting and advocate materials that are disseminated. This will help to equip communities with research based information that is linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect.

- 1. PARENTAL RESILIENCE** (Being strong and flexible) Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.
- 2. KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING & CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT** (Being a great parent is part natural and part learned) There is extensive research linking healthy child development to effective parenting. Parents who understand normal child development are less likely to be abusive and more likely to nurture their children's healthy development. Children thrive when parents provide not only affection, but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world, and motivates children to achieve.
- 3. NURTURING & ATTACHMENT** (Non-verbal actions that promote parent/child bonding) Research shows that babies who receive affection and nurturing from their parents have the best chance of healthy development. A child's relationship with a consistent, caring adult in the early years is associated later in life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.
- 4. SOCIAL CONNECTIONS** (Parents need friends) Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support. Research has shown that parents who are isolated, with few social connections, are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect.
- 5. CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED** (We all need help sometimes) Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.
- 6. SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN** (Healthy child development): Children's emerging ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior, and effectively communicate their feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Parents and caregivers grow more responsive to children's needs—and are less likely to feel stressed or frustrated—as children learn to tell parents what they need and how parental actions make them feel, rather than "acting out" difficult feelings.