



HELPING PARENTS, PROTECTING CHILDREN IN OHIO

Voluntary Coaching for Young, At-risk Parents Can Prevent Abuse and Neglect in Our Communities

– WHO WE ARE –

SHEPHERDING THE NEXT GENERATION is a nationwide movement of Shepherd Advocates: evangelical pastors and ministry leaders who are committed to speaking out on behalf of children at risk so that each child will have the opportunity to grow up in a strong, stable and healthy family.

God desires the best for every family. However, we know that in this imperfect world, many families don't have the ideal support they need. Tragically, in 2012 an estimated 679,000 children were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect nationwide, and 1,590 children died as a result. In the same year in Ohio, 29,250 children were victims of abuse or neglect and 70 children died as a result.

Most abuse, neglect and deaths occur at the hands of parents. The youngest children are the most vulnerable: one-third of child abuse and neglect victims are under the age of four, and almost half of the children who died from abuse or neglect never reached their first birthday.¹

Paul writes in the Bible that those of us who are experienced in parenting should coach the younger ones (*Titus 4:2-3*). The good news is that making coaching available to parents has shown remarkable success in preventing abuse and neglect before it happens. It can give young and inexperienced parents the training and support they need to succeed in raising a family.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

There are many parent coaching models that families receive on a voluntary basis that can significantly reduce abuse and neglect:

- The Nurse-Family Partnership is a program in which at-risk families can opt to receive visits by specially trained nurses who offer coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Beginning during the mother's pregnancy and continuing until the child's second birthday, parents learn to manage stress, understand the health and nutrition needs of

newborns, identify the signs of problems, make their home safe and find resources such as doctors and child care help. A rigorous study found that children served by the Nurse-Family Partnership were half as likely to be abused and neglected throughout childhood.²

- Chicago's Child-Parent Centers are preschools for three- and four-year olds from low-income neighborhoods that also offer voluntary coaching to their parents. There are staffed parent-resource rooms in the childcare centers where parents can receive coaching, and many parents take advantage of these services. Rigorous studies showed that children in the program were half as likely to experience abuse or neglect and they were about half as likely to be placed in foster care as similar children not receiving the program.³

- Triple P, the Positive Parenting Program, teaches parents how to help their children behave responsibly. Parents who participate can pick the type



Approximately 30,000 children are confirmed victims of abuse or neglect each year in Ohio.

Source: Child Maltreatment 2010-2012



Credit: Creative Commons 2013

“Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least amongst all of you, this is the one who is great.” (Luke 9:48)

of help they want, ranging from a newsletter article, to a brief consultation, to ten weeks of parent coaching for parents with especially challenging children. Triple P was tested in counties throughout South Carolina with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Compared to children in counties left out of the program, the thousands of children randomly assigned to receive the program experienced 25 percent less abuse and neglect and a third fewer foster care placements and emergency room visits or hospitalizations for abuse.⁴

- SafeCare is available for families who are at high-risk or have existing reports of physical abuse or child neglect with young children. Parents who opt to receive help from a professional are trained on child health, home safety and parent-child interaction. According to a statewide, randomized trial of over 2,000 families who had a history of maltreatment, the families receiving the SafeCare program had 26 percent fewer incidents of further maltreatment than families who received services as usual. SafeCare is currently available in 16 states, including statewide in Colorado, Oklahoma, Georgia, California and Washington.⁵

UNMET NEED FOR HOME VISITING:

In Ohio, 81 percent of children under the age of four never received a voluntary home visit by a professional during or after their mother's pregnancy in 2012. This is not due to a lack of need: there are more than 12,000 babies born to teen mothers in Ohio every year.

Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center

CONCLUSION

As pastors and ministry leaders, we are dedicated to strengthening families and helping at-risk children in our communities. To help these children, we urge churches to do four things:

- First, pray on behalf of victims of abuse and neglect, and for those who rescue children out of danger.
- Second, speak words of encouragement to struggling parents.
- Third, speak up and report abuse when we suspect it.
- Fourth, call on our policymakers to increase support for proven prevention strategies proven to substantially reduce abuse and neglect.

We believe our nation is only as strong as our families and communities. Together, we can help build strong families by encouraging our leaders and policymakers to support investments in effective parent coaching programs. To protect children, it's time to act.

Endnotes

¹ Children's Bureau. (2013). Child Maltreatment 2012. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved on February 24, 2014 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2012>

² The original findings were presented in Olds, D.L. (1998). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on children's criminal and anti-social behavior: 15-year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(14), 1238-1244. The principal author updated some of those findings using alternative statistical analysis. Those results are presented on the following website under "Proven Results": Nurse Family Partnership. (n.d.). *Preventing child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved on October 20, 2010 from <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/proven-results/Preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect>; Eckenrode, J., Campa, M., Luckey, D.W., Henderson, C.R., Cole, R., Kitzman, H. et al. (2010). Long-term effects of prenatal and infancy nurse home visitation on the life course of youths: 19-year follow-up of a randomized trial. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 164(1), 9-15.

³ Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Ou, S., Robertson, D. L., Mersky, J. P., Topitzes, J. W., & Niles, M. D. (2007). Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being: A 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 161(8), pp. 730-739.

⁴ Prinz, R.J., Saders, M.R., Shapiro, C.J., Whitaker, D.J., & Lutzker, J.R. (2009). Population-based prevention of child maltreatment: The U.S. Triple P System Population Trial. *Prevention Science*, 10, 1-12; Ron Prinz, Professor, University of South Carolina. Personal communication on October 2, 2009.

⁵ Chaffin, M., Hecht, D., Bard, D., Silovsky, J.F., & Beasley, W.H. (2012). A statewide trial of the SafeCare home-based services model with parents in Child Protective Services. *Pediatrics*, 129(509).

