



**Prevent Child Abuse
Kentucky**

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For Immediate Release

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**Child Abuse and Neglect Cost Nation over \$100 Billion per year
*Cost is over \$1.4 Billion in Kentucky***

Dear Editor:

An economic impact analysis recently released by Prevent Child Abuse America in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts estimates the costs of child abuse and neglect to society were nearly \$104 billion last year. A companion report highlights the unavailability of federal child welfare funding for programs and services shown to be effective at reducing incidences of child abuse and neglect.

While the report speaks to the inadequate funding levels to address child abuse and neglect at a federal level, Kentuckians could omit the word ‘federal’, replace it with ‘state’ and the remainder of the report would be almost identical. As Kentucky is facing its own budget crises, and impending cuts to our social and human services systems are looming large before us, this report offers statistics and lessons from which Kentucky’s policy makers should take heed.

The national report documents pervasive and long-lasting effects of child abuse on children, their families and society as a whole. The \$103.8 billion cost of child abuse and neglect on a national scope includes more than \$33 billion in direct costs for foster care services, hospitalization, mental health treatment and law enforcement. Indirect costs of over \$70 billion include loss of productivity, as well as expenditures related to chronic health problems, special education and the criminal justice system. These national costs equate to more than \$1.4 billion spent in the Commonwealth to treat the effects of child abuse and neglect.

The age-old adages referring to prevention are ones which we all know...”An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure;” “An apple a day keeps the doctor away;” “A stitch in time saves nine.”—but do we ever pause to look at the impact that a lack of prevention has on our families and children? “A stitch in time saves nine”....a small tear, repaired quickly, will save a

much larger repair later. There's no heavier weight we can carry than carrying the responsibility of caring for an abused or neglected child. And failing to do so will continue to tear at the fabric of Kentucky families and communities.

We know that investing \$1 on front-end prevention services saves on \$4 on back-end treatment services. We know that a comprehensive approach to address obvious serious problems in the child welfare system is needed. We know that previous approaches, while laudable, have not been sustained despite a multitude of reports and information that have documented problems over the past 30+ years. We know that the Commonwealth has not provided adequate resources to prevent or respond to the serious nature of child abuse and neglect. We know that Kentucky, both within and outside of the state system, needs to improve on existing efforts to provide a coordinated approach to accountability for its child protection efforts. We know that prevention works! And lastly, we know that the state Department for Community Based Services needs its community partners to tackle this problem.

Working collaboratively in our prevention efforts, and having adequate resources to do so, is the key to not only long-term family success, but also long-term economic stability for Kentucky. A workforce plagued by physical and mental health problems, criminal justice issues and unproductivity in the work-place that can be traced back to child abuse and neglect does not bode well for Kentucky right now, nor 20 years from now.

A community partner from Lebanon, Kentucky says it best when she says "...providing effective communications programs that increase awareness, build community support, change attitudes, teach skills and reinforce healthy behaviors—can make a change one child at a time."

Kentuckians should take note of the price—not only economically, but more importantly the heavy toll that abuse and neglect has every day in every community in every county of our Commonwealth. Child abuse and neglect CAN be prevented; we know how to do it and the price of NOT preventing the abuse will be felt for generations to come.

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View the Prevent Child Abuse America/Pew Charitable Trust report at www.preventchildabuse.org. For additional information on programs and services in Kentucky call 1-800-CHILDREN or log on to www.pcaky.org

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky is a statewide child abuse prevention organization located in Lexington. They offer public education campaigns, programs and advocacy aimed at preventing the abuse and neglect of Kentucky's children. Contact them at 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373) 24 hours a day/7 days a week.