



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Community Services | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs

Community Services Block Grant

Dear Colleague Letter

DCL#: CSBG-DCL-2022-26
DATE: April 11, 2022
TO: CSBG Network
SUBJECT: National Child Abuse Prevention Month: Take Action to Prevent Child Maltreatment
ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this communication is to encourage the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network to partner with child welfare agencies in being a child abuse prevention partner. In recognition of [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) in April, the Office of Community Services (OCS) stands with the Children's Bureau in taking action to prevent child maltreatment.

It has been more than two years since COVID-19 was first detected, and families have experienced unprecedented levels of stress for many reasons. This stress could relate to a family member or friend contracting the virus, the loss of a job or reduced number of hours, and/or the inability to afford basic needs. While stress can often be linked to child maltreatment, wide-spread access to community-based supports, services, and resources can help alleviate stress and mitigate risk of child abuse and neglect.¹ Community and state-level partnerships between child welfare and CSBG eligible entities (often referred to as "Community Action Agencies") are examples of such supports that promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships for children and their caregivers.

¹ "Parenting Stress and Risk of Child Maltreatment During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A family stress theory-informed perspective." Developmental Child Welfare. October 2020.

Helping Create Strong and Thriving Families

As noted in Associate Commissioner Aysha Schomburg's [letter to child welfare leaders](#) last year, the Children's Bureau is committed to carrying out the actions outlined in the President's Executive Order on [Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) and has made equity a priority throughout their work. Specifically, she states, "Historically, the child welfare system has not served all people equitably, and too often, poverty has been treated as neglect and child maltreatment."

The CSBG Network can be a significant partner to child welfare agencies by helping families experiencing poverty — or on the brink of poverty — access supports and resources to address concerns that might otherwise result in their involvement in the child welfare system. We know that many CAAs already serve as key partners in helping keep children and families strong. We encourage more CAAs to be more intentional in their partnership efforts with child welfare agencies.

The [Protective Factors Framework](#) is utilized in prevention efforts to reduce the risk of child maltreatment and prevent the occurrence or recurrence of abuse or neglect by drawing upon the strengths of families. This framework includes five key areas:

- 1) Parental resilience
- 2) Social connections
- 3) Knowledge of parenting and child development
- 4) Concrete support in times of need
- 5) Social and emotional competence of children

A helpful resource is the [Protective Factors Toolkit](#), which includes tip sheets, vignettes, and activities that service providers can use to incorporate the Protective Factors into conversations with children and their families, and are published in Spanish and English. Whether it be through helping families make ends meet with their grocery or heating bill, offering a quality early childhood education, or hosting "[Getting Ahead](#)" groups so families can increase their networking and social supports, CAAs can incorporate this framework into their everyday work.

Actions the CSBG Network Can Take to Strengthen Families

The following ideas are a few examples of action steps that the CSBG Network can take to further support our child welfare colleagues:

- **Reach out to your child welfare counterparts.** Make sure child welfare staff are familiar with the local Community Action Agency, and ensure at-risk families have information and access to Community Action resources. Host an outreach event with child welfare partners to help answer questions the community may have regarding the Community Services Block Grant and other available resources.

- **Start a conversation in your community.** Help “[Spread the Word](#)” by using the Child Welfare Information Gateway [social media posts, graphics and proclamations](#) to spotlight how cross-sector partnerships only strengthen families. The [National Community Action Partnership](#) also has graphics and messages tailored for use by the CSBG Network.
- **Show your support.** Update your [social media](#) accounts to show your friends, colleagues, and families that we must all come together to support families by reducing their stress and addressing their needs, so no child has to experience any harm.
- **Share resources.** All families need support, and we can all benefit from strategies that promote well-being. Follow the #ThrivingFamilies hashtag and share [important messages](#) and tools to normalize asking for help and to give others access to important information.
- **Promote the Prevention Resource Guide.** The Children’s Bureau’s [2021/2022 Prevention Resource Guide](#) can be used as a critical tool to help communities reduce the rates of child maltreatment. Help every community get access by letting your network know this edition is available for [download](#)!
- **Participate in Events to Raise Awareness about Child Abuse Prevention.** Activities and events throughout the nation are conducted in April to promote strategies to support families and prevent child maltreatment. In addition to seeking opportunities in your state or community, consider joining the Children’s Bureau’s virtual [event](#) on April 28, 2022 from 3-4 p.m. ET. In addition, reaching out to the state lead for the [Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention](#) program will allow you to know about events taking place across your state.

Additional Resources Available

The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) also offers a host of resources and ideas to help [spread the word](#) about child abuse prevention. In particular, as noted above, the [Prevention Resource Guide](#) is designed to help service providers and organizations find ways to build on family strengths to foster healthy child and youth development. A series of [conversation guides](#) are available as well so that providers can better engage caregivers in conversations around the protective factors. The Children’s Bureau issued an [Information Memorandum](#) a few years ago that outlines some great examples of collaboration between and among child welfare agencies and service providers, legal representatives, and individuals with lived experience. Lastly, in addition to the social media content noted above, the National Community Action Partnership crafted a [one-pager](#) that the CSBG Network can use when reaching out to community leaders and policymakers.

This year’s theme for National Child Abuse Prevention Month is “Thriving Children and Families: Prevention with Purpose.” Indeed, the CSBG Network helps keep children safe and helps their families to thrive. We encourage the entire Network to take action not only this month, but year-round.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. OCS looks forward to continuing to provide high-quality services to OCS grantees.

/s/

Charisse Johnson

Director, Division of Community Assistance

Office of Community Services