

Play your Part in Prevention: NAPCAN's Framework for creating a child safe and friendly Australia

VISION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

The intent of *Play Your Part in Prevention: NAPCAN's Framework for creating a child safe and friendly Australia* (*Play Your Part in Prevention*, or the *Framework*) is to provide guidance for all Australians on how different sectors, communities and individuals can work together to protect children from harm. It sets the basis for change that focuses on the driving factors that can lead to abuse and neglect and the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection and youth justice systems.

Children thrive when parents and adults who care for them have the confidence, skills and support they need. Our vision is for all Australian children to live in safe, caring families and supportive communities.

Child safety is a shared responsibility and requires a commitment from all members of the community. Children rely on the adults in their lives to ensure they are valued, respected and protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is to promote children's safety and wellbeing and value their internationally recognised rights. The attitudes, practices and behaviours that place children at risk need to

change in order to create a child-friendly and child-safe Australia.

Play Your Part in Prevention emphasises the collective role that different sectors, communities and individuals have in relation to keeping all children in Australia safe. Together, we can prevent child abuse and neglect from happening and make sure that all Australian children are safe, thriving and reaching their full potential.

Play Your Part in Prevention has three clear purposes:

1. to define the different elements of prevention – the primary, secondary and tertiary systems; and
2. to describe everybody's responsibilities regarding prevention – including actions that can be taken by individuals, the community, businesses and service providers, as well as the role of governments.
3. to guide organisations and governments across Australia in the development of local, state and territory-based prevention plans, strategies and services.



WHAT IS PREVENTION?

Prevention of child abuse and neglect most often refers to stopping harmful actions or behaviours towards children before they start. It can also refer to promoting positive actions or behaviours that keep children safe.

Research (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014) has shown that to be successful in preventing child abuse there must be activities both to reduce risk factors (that make it more likely for harm to occur) and to increase protective factors (that improve safety and wellbeing). Risk and protective factors are present in individual children, families, communities and at the societal level. Ensuring children's safety may require change at each level (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017).

There are several types of prevention approaches along a continuum from primary support through to tertiary intervention.

Effective primary prevention and early intervention means that: children can live safely with their family; they are not subject to statutory involvement or removal; and they are less likely to come into contact with police.

This Framework is focused on **primary prevention, targeted universalism and secondary prevention (early intervention)** in order to:

- promote child safety and wellbeing
- prevent the onset of child abuse and neglect, and
- reduce demand on the child protection and youth justice systems.

Primary Prevention or Universal Support includes services and activities that provide support and information for the whole community (i.e. at a population level) before problems occur. These can include parenting websites, child care, clinics, playgroups, family fun days, child and family centres, schools, youth clubs and community events. The term also refers to whole-of-community approaches such as community education and social marketing campaigns, which are effective ways to share information at a population level to promote the safety and wellbeing of children. These approaches can challenge attitudes about key issues such as corporal punishment, gender bias and violence in relationships. **Targeted Universalism** provides a focus on the needs of a particular group within a community or region, for example bonding and attachment support for young mothers.

Secondary Prevention involves two points of intervention:

- **Early intervention** refers to services and supports that families experiencing 'low risk' issues can access – either early in a child's life, or early in the 'life' of a problem. These can include counselling, home help and financial support.
- **Late (targeted) intervention** refers to more intensive help and support, such as family support services for families experiencing 'high risk' issues.

Tertiary Prevention or Crisis Response is a statutory child protection or police intervention, responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. The prevention focus in this instance is on stopping child abuse from reoccurring.

"...according to the public health model, primary, secondary and tertiary services are all critical elements in the child welfare and child protection system. However, a well-balanced system has primary interventions as the largest component of the service system, with secondary and tertiary services progressively smaller components of the service system. Investment in primary prevention programs has the greatest likelihood of preventing progression along the service continuum and sparing children and families from the harmful consequences of abuse and neglect (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014).

Primary, secondary and tertiary approaches to prevent child abuse and neglect can be depicted along a continuum (refer to Diagram 1).

THE CONTINUUM OF PREVENTION

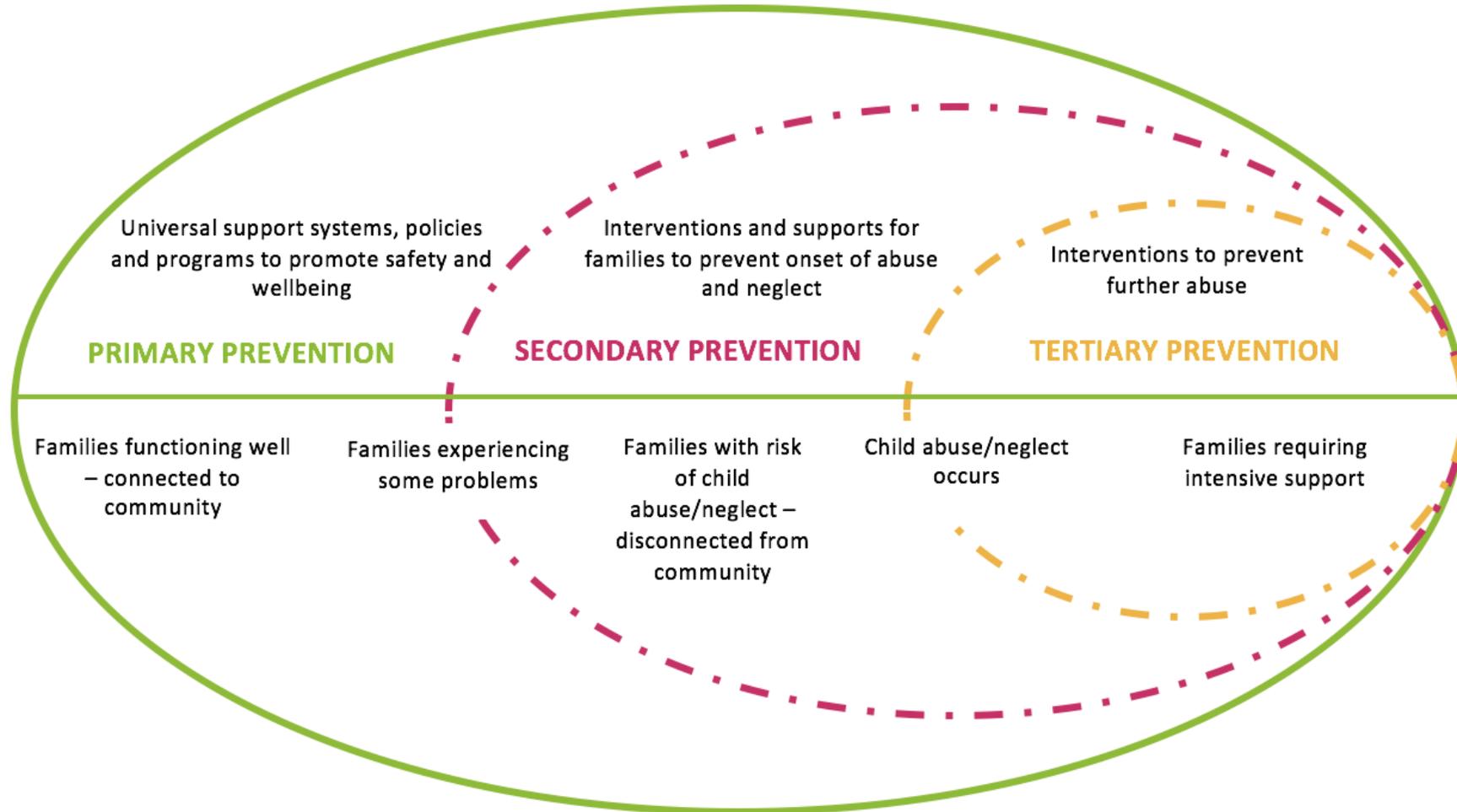


Diagram 1. Source: Adapted from I. Prilleltensky, G. Nelson and L. Peirson's (2001), 'Eye of Prevention'

PRINCIPLES FOR PREVENTION

The following six principles have been developed to guide all levels of government and agencies that work with children, young people and families. Following these principles can support the capacity of Australian families and communities to meet the physical, emotional, social and cultural needs of children.

❖ Ensure children have a voice in all matters that impact on them

Every child has the right to be listened to by the adults in their lives and to have their opinions taken seriously. When children and young people are involved in decision making in families and organisations, it increases their feelings of security, builds life skills and improves safety and wellbeing.

❖ Support children to remain connected to family, culture and community

Family, language, community and culture are integral to the wellbeing of children. Children have a right to practise their cultures and languages with their families and communities. Culture is a strength and protective factor against abuse and neglect.

❖ Enable local decision making and Aboriginal service delivery

Communities work collectively to grow happy and healthy children and are empowered to drive local solutions. Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are recognised as being best-placed to respond to and provide services to their communities.

❖ Champion equality, inclusion and cultural security

Equality, inclusion, and cultural security of children and their families is acknowledged and respected within communities and organisations. People have the right to be free from discrimination. All laws, policies and practices are developed accordingly.

❖ Draw on strengths of children, families and their community

Resilience, capacity, dignity, rights, and uniqueness of children and their families is acknowledged and respected. The capacity of families and community is strengthened to support the continuing safe and protective care of children.

❖ Promote healing and restoration for children, families and the community

A focus on healing and restoration is integral for children, families and communities affected by trauma. Services and support are holistic, non-stigmatising, universally accessible and trauma-aware.



HOW THE FRAMEWORK GUIDES US

The *Play Your Part in Prevention* framework guides us to:

- create a fundamental shift towards primary prevention and early intervention – rather than allowing circumstances to escalate to high risk situations requiring a child protection or police intervention
- engage ALL Australians in protecting ALL children
- listen carefully to children and families
- recognise the existing strengths of families and communities in raising their own children
- better support parents and communities with the skills, knowledge and resources they need to raise children who thrive.

It introduces a community approach to preventing child abuse and neglect. Road safety awareness campaigns aim to reduce the number of accidents by both reducing risk (like dangerous road conditions) and promoting protection (like passengers wearing seatbelts). In a similar way, this Framework aims to reduce the number of children who are abused or neglected by reducing risk (the things that are likely to reduce child wellbeing) and increasing protection (the ability of adults to protect and value children)

WHAT WE HEARD

Consultations, interviews and surveys from the Northern Territory informed the development of *Play Your Part in Prevention*. NAPCAN believes these findings can apply to the experiences of children, families and organisations in other states and territories.

- Children and young people expressed what they regard as important in family and community life.
- Families identified what is important for them to raise their children, and
- Organisations suggested ways they can contribute to safer environments for children and their families.

A summary of what people told us is outlined in the chart opposite. (Refer to Chart 1)

NAPCAN hopes to inspire and partner with other states and territories to use *Play Your Part in Prevention* to develop prevention plans and strategies.

Example of using the Framework

The Framework has been used to form a Northern Territory Prevention Alliance of key agencies to:

- share information, knowledge and resources
- collaboratively analyse and provide collective responses to existing or emerging issues and
- establish a balance between prevention, early intervention and crisis response.

The intent is to develop a territory strategic plan for key agencies in relation to prevention.

For further information about the Alliance or the Terms of Reference contact contact@napcan.org.au.

WHAT WE HEARD



Children in the Northern Territory have reminded adults that children and young people need...

- Adults to ask their opinions and to listen to them.
- Someone they can always ask for help, e.g. family or a good friend.
- Parents, a house, a school, food, friends and a close community.
- Programs to help young people with problems.
- To feel safe at home, at school and in their neighbourhood.
- Trusted friends, family and school staff.
- To feel accepted everywhere.
- Activities to keep them busy.
- More foster parents who have the same culture as the kids.
- Support from other families.
- Good role models and friendly adults.



Families in the Northern Territory have told us what's important for them in raising children...

- Good public facilities and activities for families (e.g. libraries, pools, parks, events, playgroups).
- Strong social relationships and networks (family, friends, colleagues, neighbours).
- Safe, friendly and supportive communities free from violence and other anti-social behaviour.
- Knowing what support/services/activities are available and how to access them.
- Supportive schools that provide a positive environment for all children, where teachers are kind.
- Being able to get the support they need, when they need it – so they can care for their own children.
- Having a say in government decisions that affect their family.
- Involving Elders in decisions affecting families in Aboriginal communities.
- Keeping children connected to their own community and culture.



Organisations in the Northern Territory have suggested how we can better work together to help families and children...

- Change from a culture of reporting abuse to a culture of supporting families.
- Provide earlier support to children, their families and communities.
- Provide earlier support to children, their families and communities.
- Put children and families at the centre of service delivery.
- Empower communities and the non-government sector through local control.
- Invest in evidence-based services with a focus on outcomes.
- Contribute to community awareness campaigns on prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- Build support systems that are responsive, timely, appropriate, coordinated and holistic.
- Commit to a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of all children.
- Ensure staff have skills to help build support networks for the whole family.
- Promote social and emotional competence of children, knowledge of parenting and child development, and parental resilience, social connections and concrete support in times of need.

WHERE WE HEARD IT...

Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children

Workshops with government agencies and community service providers

Meetings and conversations with stakeholders across the NT

Family Wellbeing Survey for parents, caregivers and families

Consultation with children and young people - survey and conversations

PLAY YOUR PART IN PREVENTION

Play Your Part in Prevention identifies goals for children’s wellbeing across six life domains, with twenty-four priorities and actions at the child, family, community and societal levels. It aims to address all aspects of a complex solution to create a safe, healthy future for children. Play Your Part in Prevention provides all Australians with a shared reference point to see where and how they can play a role in helping children to grow up cared for and protected in their families, cultures and communities.

	Loved and Safe Children are nurtured and protected by their families and have healthy and strong emotional attachments. They are part of communities that value, respect and collectively keep them safe, and part of a society that celebrates children and does not tolerate child abuse and neglect. 1	Health Children develop and thrive emotionally, physically and socially within healthy and strong families. Their families access the health services they need. Their community is free of health-related stigma and society promotes health and wellbeing. 2	Empowerment and identity Children have a sense of self-worth and belonging. They live in communities that respect and support the identities of children and families. They are members of a society that embraces and celebrates diversity. 3	Social and community Children have a voice and are heard. Children and their families are part of a strong community where they feel supported, connected and are able to access help, in a society that encourages social connection and inclusion. 4	Home and economic Children feel secure, provided for and have their needs met. They live within communities that provide access to services for all citizens and within a society that is focused on social equity and economic growth. 5	Education and skills Children prosper emotionally, culturally, socially and academically. Families have the knowledge and skills they need to raise children, and communities actively support children’s development in a society that values life-long learning. 6
 Child	1.1 Develop the social and emotional competence of children to build positive relationships, manage their emotions and communicate their feelings.	2.1 Nurture children’s health and wellbeing right from conception into adulthood so that children are born healthy, meet their developmental milestones, have healthy relationships and lifestyles.	3.1 Support children to have a strong sense of identity, culture and belonging.	4.1 Give children a voice and involve them in decisions that affect them.	5.1 Provide children with the resources they need to live, play, learn and thrive.	6.1 Meaningfully engage children in learning from early in life through to adulthood.
 Family	1.2 Build on the existing knowledge and strengths of families to be safe, stable and free from family violence, including developing resilience and knowledge of child development.	2.2 Ensure families can access social and professional supports to raise healthy children and look after their own physical and mental health.	3.2 Support the identity and sense of belonging of families, including their diversity, culture and connections. Provide access to trauma-aware and culturally safe healing support.	4.2 Encourage and support families to make decisions together, connect with other families, and meaningfully participate in their community.	5.2 Build families’ capacity to generate and manage income, and access the housing, food and resources they need.	6.2 Support families to be actively engaged in their children’s learning and development and to feel capable and confident in raising their children.
 Community	1.3 Encourage a whole-of-community approach in creating safe environments in the home, school, organisations and community.	2.3 Enable communities and health services to respond in an integrated and holistic way to the health needs of children and families, where social support networks are valued and promoted.	3.3 Build communities and organisations that are inclusive of all abilities, cultures and genders.	4.3 Build opportunities for communities to connect and reduce social isolation, including through activities, clubs and groups.	5.3 Support communities to grow and sustain local economies in which all community members can meaningfully contribute.	6.3 Enable communities to provide learning and development opportunities for children and families.
 Society	1.4 Influence societal attitudes to value and respect children and families, and ensure everyone understands that they have a role in protecting children from abuse and neglect.	2.4 Promote healthy living and make it okay to ask for help, particularly for mental health issues and substance abuse.	3.4 Preserve and protect cultural beliefs, practices and traditions, celebrate the power of culture in growing safe, loved and healthy children and value Aboriginal participation in child safety.	4.4 Promote the importance of social connections in growing safe, healthy and happy children, families and communities.	5.4 Continue to grow the local economy with a focus on making sure all families have adequate, secure and reliable housing, food and income.	6.4 Promote the value of life-long learning within schools, families and communities and promote the role all members of society have in encouraging children to learn.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

AS A PARENT OR CARER

- Children need their parents to be well supported. Know that it's ok to reach out and ask for support – from family, friends, services, health professionals and others.
- Discover what helps to reduce your stress, and take time out when you are starting to get upset or frustrated.
- Listen to your children and involve them in planning things as a family.
- Join parent groups and playgroups – they can provide fantastic support for you and your children.
- Children need their parents to continually develop their parenting skills. Look out for ways – such as parenting courses and information – to learn more.
- Play, talk and read with your children throughout the day.
- Make plans for enjoyable family time – this can really help to build and strengthen close relationships.
- Talk regularly with your children about safety. Talk about what being unsafe might be like at home, in their community, online or at school. Make plans about what to do if they feel unsafe.
- Celebrate your children, and their achievements, values and interests to build a strong, loving family.
- Join sporting clubs and social groups to help you and your children have fun and meet people.

AS A COMMUNITY MEMBER

- Encourage families to ask for help.
- Make it easier for families to locate services and supports in your town or community.
- Look out for all children, not just your own.
- Provide family-friendly activities to help parents connect socially.
- Be a part of making child-friendly neighbourhoods, communities and clubs.
- If you are concerned about a child's safety, don't ignore the problem – get advice on what to do.
- Support community control of family support services.
- Promote the rights of all children to be safe and reach their full potential.
- Take time out to stop and listen to children and young people – they have valuable things to say.
- Offer help to parents, rather than judgement.



WHERE YOU CAN GET HELP

- Parent Helpline
- Raising Children Network
- NAPCAN
- Lifeline
- Kids Helpline

AS A BUSINESS OPERATOR

- Provide parental and carers' leave to your staff to recognise the importance of parents bonding with newborns and caring for their children. Show that you value your staff as parents as well as employees.
- Have flexible, family-friendly work conditions for staff who are parents and carers. Flexibility allows parents to meet the needs of their family, and better cope in times of stress.
- Partner with a community organisation or school to support children and families. Sponsoring children's recreational and cultural activities increases opportunities for families to be involved in their community.
- Be family friendly and welcome children: you could provide a play area and baby change facilities.
- Contribute to the development of your organisation's child safe policies and procedures.
- Have a code of conduct for working with children and young people as a practical tool for promoting clear and consistent roles and behaviour.
- Think about safe and respectful ways to be an active bystander if you see an adult being inappropriate towards a child or young person.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE – AS A SERVICE PROVIDER OR GOVERNMENT AGENCY

All services and organisations that have contact with children and young people (including universally accessible services such as libraries, children’s services, family centres, schools and clinics) can implement or support strategies to promote child safety and wellbeing. Below are some examples of approaches and strategies that can address specific types of safety for children, families and communities, including social reform.

PROMOTING PHYSICAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- Respectful relationships and anti-bullying programs for all children
- Parenting education on child development, anger management, reducing stress, and alternatives to harsh, physical punishment
- Healing programs for families who have experienced trauma and toxic stress
- Social marketing campaigns to focus on child wellbeing through positive and respectful parenting

PROMOTING EMOTIONAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- Services for young parents to include bonding and attachment
- Mental health and drug and alcohol services supporting parental sensitivity and responsiveness
- Encouraging parents to seek help and making it easier to locate and access support services
- Community education and action to reduce impact of violence on children

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Home visiting and home help for all young parents
- Providing parents with knowledge of child development and self-care
- Access to affordable, quality child care
- Community education on the importance of child development in the first years

PROMOTING PERSONAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- Respectful relationships and protective behaviours programs
- E-Safety education and workshops for all parents, children and young people
- Child safe organisational practices that actively seek the input of children’s voices and concerns
- Social marketing campaigns promoting the role of adults to look out for children and ensure their safety

OVERALL PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES

- Community members advocating for children’s rights to be safe and valued
- Collective impact approaches to bring agencies together to focus on child safety and wellbeing
- Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Community education to promote child safety and wellbeing

References

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2017). *CFCA Resource Sheet: Risk and protective factors for child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/defining-public-health-model-child-welfare-services-context>

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