

Types of Prevention Approaches

Public health frameworks categorize prevention strategies, approaches and programming according to **timing** or by **targeted population**. These frameworks guide the development of programming and approaches to meet the needs of individuals and families through increasing levels of intensity of services. By classifying prevention strategies, it is possible to identify a continuum of supports and services for families and to offer them in a cost effective manner. Low intensity services reach the largest number of people for the lowest cost per person whereas the highest intensity services reach the lowest number of people for the highest cost per person. Therefore, it is most effective and beneficial to seek to ensure that individuals and families are provided with the lowest intensity of service that will meet their needs.

Primary Prevention focuses on the general public, addressing root causes and underlying factors to stop child maltreatment prior to any occurrence. Primary prevention activities with a universal focus are designed to provide access and seek to benefit all members of a population without regard to their level of risk. Primary, universal prevention is a cost effective and far reaching means to address maltreatment before it can affect children and families.

Secondary prevention activities are designed for populations whose members possess risk factors or characteristics that increase the likelihood of child maltreatment, such as poverty, substance abuse, adolescent parents, mental health concerns, and disability of parental or child. In contrast with universal prevention, Selective prevention does not focus on the entire population, but targets those with greater risk whether due to individual, community or societal factors factor such as low income, unsafe neighborhoods, racism or lack of opportunity. Many child maltreatment prevention agencies and organizations focus on secondary, selective prevention because it is a way to allocate limited resources by concentrating them on groups whose characteristics are linked to increased likelihood of child maltreatment perpetration.

Tertiary Prevention targets those children and families who have clear signs of the occurrence of child abuse or neglect to seek to reduce the negative consequences of the maltreatment and to prevent its recurrence. Indicated interventions are intensive and costly so they need to be focused on those identified with the highest level of need, rather on all families or at-risk children and families, to address the harm done by neglect and abuse and to support the long-term healing and health of children and families as they confront the lifelong impact of their experiences.

The Prevention Board has chosen to champion on primary prevention. While it is tempting to respond to the more urgent needs of families and children by focusing on secondary and tertiary prevention, these two approaches, without primary prevention cannot prevent neglect or abuse of all children.

Secondary and tertiary prevention will not, on their own, prevent neglect or abuse of all children. Even if child welfare and child protective services intervene at once after neglect or abuse is identified, with the goal of ensuring that a child who has been harmed is not harmed again. This effort protects a particular child from further neglect or abuse but will not universally prevent abuse before it starts.