

NATIONAL ALLIANCE

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CHILDREN'S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS

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Join a new national initiative to prevent child *neglect*

Child neglect is the most prevalent form of child maltreatment, with serious and long-term consequences. It is also less clearly defined and publicly recognized. While we have seen progress in reducing physical and sexual abuse in recent years, the incidence of neglect has increased.

The **National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds**, with funding from the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**, is launching a 3-year effort to increase attention on preventing child neglect. This work will build on the important progress of the past six years as the Alliance has partnered with its members and their state colleagues, parents and other national partners to implement its Early Childhood Initiative. Given the importance of this ambitious undertaking, the Alliance invites participation from organizations and individuals interested in engaging in the learning community surrounding this initiative, which is designed to achieve five outcomes:

- 1 **Develop the knowledge base.** Capture current research and practice knowledge about preventing child neglect, including building on family and community strengths and promoting protective factors.
- 2 **Expand the national conversation and raise the issue's visibility.** Reach out to broad and diverse audiences, eliciting input and encouraging dialog on current knowledge, effective strategies and critical issues.
- 3 **Show what works.** Support three state children's trust funds and their partners in implementing strategies aimed at strengthening families and reducing the likelihood of child neglect.
- 4 **Strengthen and expand national and state-level collaborations.** Collaborate with multiple systems and with parents and communities to promote strength-based approaches that build protective factors and reduce risk factors.
- 5 **Build a broad state-based capacity to lead, develop and execute neglect prevention strategies.** Provide capacity building for state trust funds to lead the neglect prevention work with current and new partners.

Conducting a literature review of child neglect research

The Alliance is conducting a literature review of the most relevant and the latest research related to child neglect. It focuses on definitions of neglect, types of child neglect, child neglect studies of factors at the individual, family and community levels, and selected interventions targeted to preventing child neglect. Preliminary findings include:

- ✘ Child neglect remains a less studied and researched form of child maltreatment than child abuse, despite repeated documentation that neglect has deleterious consequences on children's developmental outcomes and behavior as well as on their adult social and economic well-being. However, there have been many developments and advancements in the last decade toward defining and understanding child neglect.
- ✘ Neglected children, in contrast to physically abused children, were more likely to have severe cognitive and academic deficits, increased social withdrawal and limited peer interactions, and more internalizing problems such as depression.
- ✘ It is useful in defining and conceptualizing neglect to apply the ecological theory, recognizing that there are multiple factors contributing to neglect including lack of support at the family or interpersonal level and stressors in the community.
- ✘ The research does not suggest a single intervention or type of intervention will suffice to prevent child neglect.
- ✘ Future interventions to prevent neglect should be multidimensional to address multiple causes of neglect. They should be guided by the diversity of contextual factors including culture, cultural patterns of child rearing and child supervision, local community norms, and societal attitudes surrounding parenting and child development. Also, they should recognize the capacities of all families, including families in poverty, to contribute to their families' and their children's social and emotional well-being. Families' resilience should be recognized and supported to positively shape the children's development and to prevent child neglect.