

What is Essentials for Childhood?

Essentials for Childhood is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Violence Prevention's vision for creating safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children to prevent child abuse and neglect (CAN). This vision is accomplished through the [Essentials for Childhood Framework](#), which has the following four goal areas:



1. Raise awareness and commitment
2. Use data to inform prevention actions
3. Create the context for healthy children and families through norms change and programs
4. Create the context for healthy children and families through policies

CAN is highly prevalent with significant health and economic consequences

- At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect (CAN) in the last year.
- Consequences of CAN include physical injuries, mental health and social development problems, risk-taking behavior into adolescence and adulthood, chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, and increased risk for high school non-completion, unemployment and living in poverty.
- The total U.S. lifetime economic burden associated with new or incident cases of CAN occurring in 2008 was ~\$124 billion.
- CAN prevention, if effective, may reduce other health problems and forms of violence & injuries.
 - Prevention of CAN may also lead to decreases in violence, including youth, intimate partner, sexual violence, suicide, and unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle accidents and prescription drug misuse.

State Health Department Prevention Capacity Needs

- A 2009 CDC environmental scan of state health departments found:
 - 39% of state public health departments had child abuse and neglect prevention staff.
 - 41% of states had a strategic plan to address child abuse and neglect, with most plans being led by an agency other than public health and focused on responding to cases and reducing reoccurrences of child abuse and neglect rather than primary prevention, or stopping violence before it starts.

Impact of Current Essentials Funding on Capacity

- In 2013, CDC provided 5-year funding (\$175K each year) to 5 state health departments: California, Colorado, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Washington to implement the Essentials Framework.
- Realizing the potential benefits of Essentials for Childhood Initiative, 30+ unfunded states are utilizing available supports, such as CDC's technical assistance webinars, and many are self-supporting activities similar to those of funded states.
- For the first time, three of the five grantee states have a full time staff person dedicated to child abuse and neglect prevention and the other two have dedicated time from several people. This allows them to focus on primary prevention using both population level and health equity (everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible) strategies.

- CDC-funded state health departments are bringing together key partners in government, communities, business, and philanthropy to develop a shared state vision and agenda to promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children and their families.
- This vision and agenda are being incorporated into many state agencies' work, as well as the activities of many community organizations.
- CDC-funded states have increased the percentage of Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) dollars invested in evidence-based programs from 24% pre-Essentials to 52% post-Essentials.
- Colorado and North Carolina secured other funding to extend evidence-based programming:
 - Colorado extended Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) to all counties.
 - North Carolina extended the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) to 33 counties and \$400M is provided for NFP.

Enhancing Use of the Best Available Evidence

CDC has released "Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities" to help states and communities make use of the best available evidence for prevention. The [CAN technical package](#) supports goals 3 and 4 of the [Essentials for Childhood Framework](#), which focuses on creating healthy contexts wherein children and families can thrive. The strategies and approaches outlined in the technical package include policies, norms change, and programmatic activities to support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. Essential states have developed partnerships and networks that form the foundation for implementing strategies in the CAN technical package.

Essentials for Childhood Informing Policy

Essential state partnerships help educate decision-makers on evidence-based strategies, many of which are included in the CAN Technical Package. Between 2014–2016, CDC-funded Essential states enacted 3 times as many policies in the CAN Technical Package as self-supported states and almost 5 times as many policies as states who have not been engaged in any Essentials for Childhood activities. These policies include:

- Strengthen Economic Supports for Families:
 - **Minimum wage** was increased in California (2014 & 2016), Colorado (2014 & 2016), Massachusetts (2014), and Washington (2016).
 - **Child support** 100% passed through to the custodial parent in Colorado (2015).
 - **Earned Income Tax Credit** enacted in California (2015).
 - **Paid sick leave** passed in California (2014) and Massachusetts (2014).
- Provide Quality Care and Education Early in Life:
 - Percentage of **children enrolled in pre-K** increased in 2016 California, Colorado, and Washington.
 - **Child care subsidies** and **number of pre-K** slots increased in North Carolina (2016).
 - **Full-day kindergarten** implemented in Washington (2016).
 - Washington's **Early Start Act** (2015) improves home visiting, developmental screening, and early support for infants and toddlers. Also, state health department organizational policy now allows new parents to bring their infants to work.