

# The Texas Prevention Ecosystem

## ▶ Building Strong Families through Community Supports

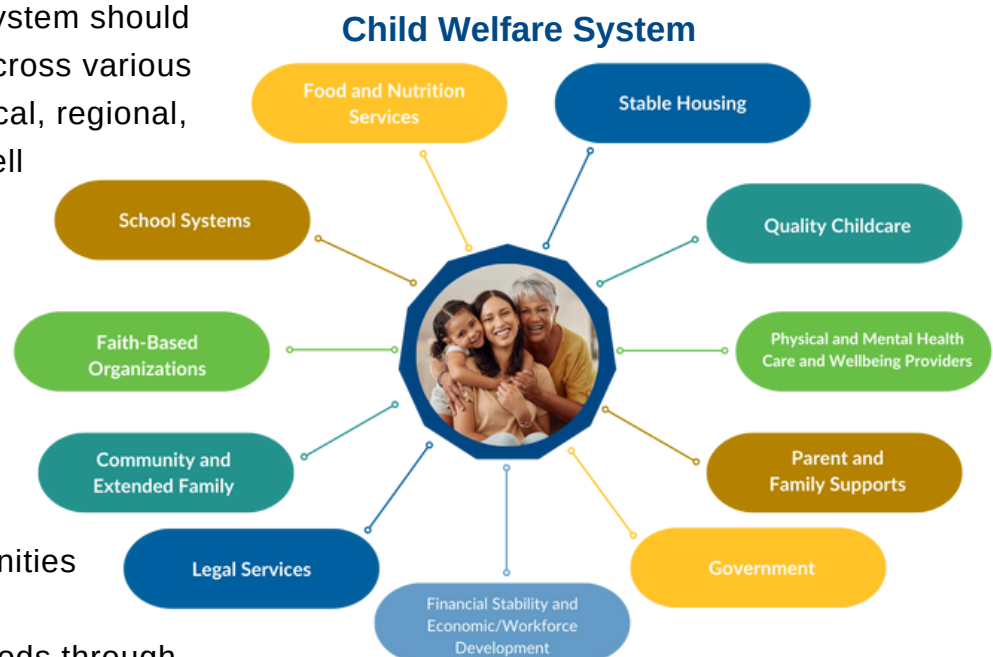
Texas is home to approximately 7.7 million children, each deserving an environment free of the trauma of abuse and neglect. **In 2023, however, there were over 58,000 confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect in Texas.** Despite the complex factors that can lead to abuse, it is largely preventable. Child abuse and neglect often occurs because of various factors involving individuals, families, and the communities within which they live.

Additionally, families are often supported by multiple systems, such as healthcare, social services, juvenile and/or criminal justice, and education. **It is crucial to collaboratively address these factors across multiple sectors of society, not just in silos, to effectively strengthen families.**

## ▶ Strong Families are Supported by Strong Communities

The needs of families and children can be met, enhancing their ability to thrive, when communities have a comprehensive prevention ecosystem that brings together a range of supportive services. This ecosystem should be inclusive of organizations across various sectors and operating at the local, regional, state and national levels, as well as members of families and communities themselves.

Each of these prevention ecosystem supports offer programs and solutions to help families overcome tough obstacles. Examples include job training/assistance opportunities for parents, affordable housing programs, access to healthy foods through food banks and food subsidy programs, mental health services, childcare subsidies, and parenting skills classes to promote healthy child development.



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## ▶ Working Together to Strengthen Families

Resilient communities collaborate to tackle the challenges families may encounter, finding solutions collectively. Bringing together multiple sectors to create a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes the needs of families and children is the most effective approach to preventing child abuse and neglect.



A comprehensive strategy includes:

- **When families have access to a full continuum of community supports**, it is more likely that they can cope with the stressors they inevitably face and stay together safely.
- **Addressing the needs of families at an early stage** can significantly reduce the risk factors associated with maltreatment.
- **Implementing educational initiatives** that focus on parenting skills, stress management, and child development.
- **To help families connect to resources and/or assistance in their own communities**, it is important that clear, easy-to-access pathways or access points exist.
- **Building a sense of community by fostering community** involvement strengthens the support available to families.

## ▶ Call to Action

### Investment

It's essential to adequately fund a full continuum of community supports that address the fundamental needs of children and families and enhance children's development, health, and safety, while also prioritizing training and education to reinforce protective factors against abuse and neglect.

### Connection

A large percentage of child maltreatment cases are the result of neglect, which occurs when a child's basic needs are not adequately met. All too often, people don't know where to turn for help or feel ashamed to ask for it. It's important to ensure there is a coordinated, less siloed system to connect more families to the resources they need in a timelier way, ultimately leading to less families in crisis. You can start by getting to know your neighbors and what supports are available in your community.

### Collaboration

Increased coordination amongst providers would result in additional families accessing services in a timely manner. Are you a prevention provider looking to connect with others in the prevention space? If so, please join our Texas Prevention Network where we offer regular virtual learning opportunities, spotlighting providers, bringing in outside experts, and providing state resources and networking opportunities.