



# Violence Prevention

## Risk and Protective Factors

Risk factors are those characteristics linked with child abuse and neglect, but they may or may not be direct causes. A combination of individual, relational, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of child abuse and neglect. Although children are not responsible for the harm inflicted upon them, certain factors have been found to increase their risk of being abused and or neglected.

Watch [Moving Forward](#) to learn more about how increasing what protects people from violence and reducing what puts people at risk for it benefits everyone.

## Risk Factors for Victimization

### Individual Risk Factors

- Children younger than 4 years of age
- Special needs that may increase caregiver burden (e.g., disabilities, mental health issues, and chronic physical illnesses)

## Risk Factors for Perpetration

### Individual Risk Factors

- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs, child development and parenting skills
- Parental history of child abuse and or neglect
- Substance abuse and/or mental health issues including depression in the family
- Parental characteristics such as young age, low education, single parenthood, large number of dependent children, and low income
- Nonbiological, transient caregivers in the home (e.g., mother's male partner)
- Parental thoughts and emotions that tend to support or justify maltreatment behaviors

### Family Risk Factors

- Social isolation
- Family stress, separation or divorce, and violence, including intimate partner violence
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions

### Community Risk Factors

- Community violence
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (e.g., high poverty, high unemployment rates, and high density of alcohol outlets), and poor social connections.

## Protective Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect

Protective factors may lessen the likelihood of children being abused or neglected. Identifying and understanding protective factors are equally as important as researching risk factors.

### Family Protective Factors

- Supportive family environment and social networks

- Concrete support for basic needs
- Nurturing parenting skills
- Stable family relationships
- Household rules and child monitoring
- Parental employment
- Parental education
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care and social services
- Caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors

## Community Protective Factors

- Communities that support parents and take responsibility for preventing abuse

See [Child Abuse and Neglect Resources](#) for more resources about child abuse and neglect perpetration.

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