

## Concrete Supports for Parents

Many factors affect a family's ability to care for their children. Families who can meet their own basic needs for food, clothing, housing, and transportation – and who know how to access essential services such as childcare, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs – are better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. When parents do not have steady financial resources, lack health insurance, or suffer a family crisis such as a natural disaster or the incarceration of a parent, their ability to care for their children may be at risk.

Poverty is associated with greater rates of child abuse and neglect, and families living in poverty often benefit from specific concrete supports, such as help with housing, food, transportation, childcare, clothing, furniture, and utilities. Partnering with parents to identify and access these resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

### Sharing, Strategies, and Resources to Strengthen Concrete Supports

Parents may not always know about community resources that can help meet their basic needs or how to access essential services. Language or cultural barriers may make it difficult for some parents to identify services and make the necessary contacts. Providing information and connections to concrete supports can be a tremendous help to families under stress or in crisis. You might provide contact information (a person's name is the most helpful) or help parents make the initial calls or appointments, depending on what parents say they need.

When specific services do not exist in your community, you may be able to work with parents or community leaders to help establish them. Parents can become powerful advocates for a particular cause, such as low-cost, after-school programs or safe transportation for teens, if they know the process for forming groups and creating services.

Your expertise may be the most helpful in the following ways:

#### **Linking families with services**

- Parents may not be aware of the services that could help. You can let them know about all available resources, so they may select what is most appropriate for their needs.
- Parents are more likely to use culturally appropriate services. If you can link them with a service provider who speaks their language or comes from a similar background, parents may feel more comfortable and experience a greater benefit.

- Parents with many needs may be overwhelmed by the different requirements for accessing various services. A “systems of care” approach may be most useful, in which different helping systems work together to support the family.

#### Building community services

- Linking parents with community leaders and others to organize support, advocacy, and consulting groups gives parents the opportunity to use their experiences to help others.
- Parents who go public with their need or cause usually find that they are not alone. The fact that a parent is willing to publicize a need or cause may mobilize the community.
- Parents who are new to advocacy may need help connecting with the media, business, funding, and other parts of the community to have their needs heard and identify solutions.

**ChildHelp Pee Dee  
24 Hour Toll-Free Helpline  
1-866-867-9857  
Parenting is tough. Asking for help doesn't have to be.**



Information brought to you by:  
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