



The Minnesota Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America and Circle of Parents National

At Minnesota Communities Caring for Children (MCCC) we empower individuals and communities to stop child abuse and neglect *before it starts*; through education, advocacy, and family support. To ensure the well-being of all children, we must pay equal attention to prevention and intervention. We need to approach families, communities, and systems with both compassion and accountability.

The question has been raised, what if child protection had responded differently in 56 cases of child death in Minnesota during the last decade? We would note that studies have shown, it is likely that many of the caregivers in those cases experienced childhood trauma themselves and lived in conditions of great stress and risk. So we pose the questions, what if those caregivers had support and education before they became parents? What if they had easy access to community support as soon as they became parents? We believe breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect is the best way to protect children.

We already know a lot about how to set the conditions for successful families. Research from the Center for the Study of Social Policy indicates that we can increase caregiver capacity through efforts that expand these protective factors: (a) parental resilience, (b) social connections, (c) knowledge of parenting and child development, (d) concrete support in times of need, and (e) social and emotional competence of children.

We strive to provide education and support to expand protective factors for families and communities by engaging as many MN communities as possible. We work with communities to offer Circle of Parents® support groups. We host Café conversations in communities to engage their creativity. We train speakers across the state to share information on brain development, the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES), and resilience strategies. We are encouraged by many efforts across the state including those that teach mindfulness and other practices that support self-awareness and self-management. However, we need a lot more of these efforts, from all segments of society, if we are to keep child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place.

These efforts need to be community based. Racial disparities exist. African American and American Indian children in MN are alarmingly more likely than their counterparts to have a determination of maltreatment, to be removed from their families and placed in foster care, and to remain in care longer. When parents and family members are given a voice in decision-making, it has a direct impact on positive outcomes in their communities. At MCCC, we nurture parent leaders in Minnesota's diverse communities to help create change. We believe hope exists at the intersection of science and community wisdom.



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The well-being of our children and the prevention of child abuse and neglect is the shared responsibility of every citizen. At MCCC, we have reviewed best practices in various states. A number of states have implemented legislation to assist in the creation of prevention councils or task forces.

The goals in the establishment of these councils vary by state, with the most common objectives being to create a statewide child abuse prevention strategy, develop a plan for establishing family resource centers, coordinate and encourage a continuum of prevention services for children and families, and/or to assist in the appropriation of funds for prevention programs.

We are recommending a statewide plan for the well-being of all Minnesota children be created by stakeholders from education, public health, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems, the business community, and families who have experienced the child protection system. We offer our organizational expertise in this process.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Clint Doroff

Vice Chair, Board of Directors, Minnesota Communities Caring for Children