



From Data to Action:

Moving Upstream When Using Child Maltreatment Data, Statistics and Messaging

The following checklist should be used when communicating data, statistics and messaging associated with the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Not all items are required to be used.

Please consider the following when crafting speeches, presentations, graphics, press releases, Op-eds, social media, Child Abuse Prevention Month messaging, advertisements and more.

GOAL: The goal should be to drive the public to action by helping them better understand their role in prevention, **root causes of maltreatment** and **solutions**.

Use a Primary Prevention Lens:

- Does the message **include solutions addressing the root cause of the problem?** Primary prevention is when you look at the root cause of a problem to determine solutions geared at preventing the problem from ever occurring.
- Does the message **show how external conditions** (overload of stress on families, poverty, parental stressors, lack of resources or connections) shape health, development, and outcomes?
- Does the message **target EVERYONE** and illustrate we all have a stake and role in outcomes that matter?
- Does the message create a **sense of belonging** for all?
 - Focus on community level solutions and causes contributing to the problem verses focusing solely on the family.
- Does the message **include a clear call to action?**
 - When talking about adversity faced by families and children, highlight the capacity for resilience.
 - Provide solutions at the individual, community, and policy level.
- Does the message take a **positive approach?** When messaging feeds into myths or ill-informed perceptions such as “it’s just to late for some folks,” that “society is broken,” persons receiving the message may believe the problem is too large to solve or doesn’t involve them.
 - Promote hopeful messages.
 - Acknowledge it is a difficult issue, but let people know solutions are within reach.
 - Stay away from shocking events or stories. Most often these illustrations receive the most attention but are also outliers that make up a small percentage of abuse or neglect cases. This continues a misperception of what child abuse and neglect looks like and leads the public to formulate their own solutions or casts blame on certain systems or groups.

- Does the message **apply a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion?**
 - Include images with visible differences in ethnicity, race and gender identify.

Things to Avoid:

- Sensationalism. Using the most horrific stories or statistics.
- Telling a story or providing a statistic without a solution to address the problem.
- Using negative images. Images of sad or abused children.
- Using images of only families or children. It is helpful to show images of ALL community members to reiterate solutions involve everyone.
- Targeting parents through words or images. Research tells us the public believes child abuse to be a family problem or that parents are flawed. However, prevention cannot occur unless the whole community understands their role and becomes involved in supporting families.
- Using negative statistics, “Kentucky ranks #1 in maltreatment.” Not only does this messaging lead the public to believe this problem is too large to solve but it is also similar to comparing apples to oranges. For example, there are many factors that prevent us from comparing Kentucky to other states. Kentucky is a mandated reporting state whereas others states only mandate certain professions to report suspicions of abuse. Furthermore, laws that regulate findings of abuse cases differ from one state to another.

Sources:

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