



**Prevent Child Abuse  
Kentucky™**

# Reinventing Our Messages:



**Promoting Action  
for the Prevention  
of Child Sexual Abuse**



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## Project Background:

As nonprofit organizations, government agencies, child and youth-serving entities, we all communicate about our mission. What we say, how we say it, the images we use for our messages, and the messengers who deliver our important messages play a critical role in communication strategies.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky (PCAK) is embarking on a multi-year quest to take an in-depth look at the messages we convey around the topic of child sexual abuse. Through a grant from the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Board/Child Victim's Trust Fund, we underwent a strategic frame analysis with Dr. Lynn Davey of Davey Strategies, Inc., which included a framing workshop. The framing analysis allowed PCAK to assess its existing public-facing communication materials and messages around child sexual abuse prevention.

The framing workshop provided PCAK, and key partners, an opportunity to understand how the public processes information about social problems; understand how the public thinks about child sexual abuse and its prevention; as well as understand framing strategies for improving the public's understanding of child abuse prevention and services.

The end result? Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky is revising our products, and has created this messaging toolkit intended to help partners and service providers across the Commonwealth improve communication efforts in preventing child sexual abuse. This toolkit is largely adapted from Davey Strategies, Inc, and informed by the Frameworks Institute's "Talking Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Toolkit."



## Toolkit Instructions:

This toolkit is designed for any messenger wanting to create social change through communication, story telling, or advocacy, specifically around the topic of child sexual abuse prevention. The toolkit starts with a look at the way we think and receive information, then transitions to how frames impact the way we form ideas around social issues, such as child sexual abuse. The toolkit provides informed concepts, ideas and messages targeting a universal audience. Content includes an introduction to reframing, talking points, quick-start guides to core frame elements essential for reframing child sexual abuse, editorials organizations can customize for op/eds or blog posts, as well as social media content.

It is our hope you will pair this toolkit with intentional conversations and webinars from Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, and use the information as a springboard for creating your own reframed messages for your organization.





## Understanding the Public Discourse on Child Sexual Abuse

Social science literature establishes, how issues are framed in public discourse influences how people evaluate the causes of and solutions to those issues. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) has historically been portrayed in news stories and in popular culture as an issue for which the causes and solutions reside in individual people; those individuals being either those who perpetrate sexual abuse, or even those who have been victimized.

The general public's understanding of CSA comes from an environment that promotes sensationalism, horror stories, highly punitive policies for perpetrators and, when there are solution stories, they tend to be about protecting children and keeping them safe from perpetrators. The public may view

current CSA messages through the lens of individual behavior change at best, and feel it is an intractable, unsolvable problem at worst.

As CSA messages are constructed, we must consider what influences the way people think. This backdrop, or public discourse, creates a challenge for advocates of primary prevention who promote collective, structural solutions to the problem. We hope this toolkit addresses these issues.



## Four Dominant Frames in Public Discourse

### 1. Sensationalism

Using shocking stories, language or data to provoke public interest is common. Sharing stories of crisis or a horrible criminal atrocity, possibly even using unframed statistics and other references designed to grab attention, can actually have unintended consequences of shutting individuals down. Rather than knowing how to solve the issue of CSA, they see a problem that can never be resolved. Our society knows child abuse, specifically, child sexual abuse, is a problem. Let's give them solutions.

Further, it is important as we work to normalize conversations around child sexual abuse, so it can be addressed directly and appropriately, that we do so through positive examples and language.

#### EXAMPLE:

"Kentucky ranks number one for child abuse cases in the nation. Child sexual abuse is a prominent form of this issue in society, happening more often than we even realize due to the number of under reported cases." (Then insert gruesome details or unframed statistics of specific cases.)

### 2. Unseen Sexual Predators in Our Midst

This focus around an unseen predator results in a story of "stranger danger." What we know from research is child sexual abuse predators are most prevalently individuals known by the family and/or child. They are individuals who manipulate and groom children and families, building their trust. Focusing on "stranger danger" produces a story of personal safety. It further erodes trust of the community, pushing the solution to a family or parent focus.

#### EXAMPLE:

"Don't talk to strangers."

"Child sexual abuse can happen at any time, any place by anyone. 90% of the time, perpetrators are people we know and trust."



## 3. Parent/Family Responsibility

Focusing on child rearing taking place only within the family system, or by parents, diminishes the role of community focused prevention efforts. This focus also places all responsibility on family and parents. Of course, parents have an important role in child sexual prevention, but parents are not the only ones needing to be made aware, nor the only ones involved in prevention. If we want to look at the idea "it takes a village" to raise children, and involve communities in keeping kids safe, we need to allow for opportunity for the 'village' to be involved in keeping kids safe. We do not want the public to wash their hands of any responsibility, nor do we want to increase guilt or shame of those parents whose children do experience child sexual abuse. We need to stay away from family centric frames.

### EXAMPLES:

"It's the parent's responsibility to keep their child safe."

Utilizing photos of only parents with children.

Focusing tips on only what parents can do.

## 4. Child Safety

Safety can seem like a logical frame choice for talking about child sexual abuse - after all, who doesn't want to keep kids safe from sexual abuse? The downside is a focus on safety triggers a belief the world itself is a dangerous place, and it makes it hard to argue for community engagement in preventing child sexual abuse. If most people are possibly dangerous predators, why would we want to involve them in prevention efforts? Safety also often defaults the parents as being responsible for child sexual abuse prevention, rather than the wider community. Healthy child development research tells us children should not be isolated from communities of caring and supportive adults and peers, so again, like the family and parent focused messages, we do not want safety focused messages.

### EXAMPLES:

"As parents, we make daily decisions to keep children safe, but it's easy to forget that sexual abuse can happen to any child, at any place, by anyone."

"We work to keep children safe. We vaccinate from disease, teach them to not touch the hot stove, to wear a seat belt, and put on a helmet when riding a bike. Child sexual abuse can happen at anytime, any place, from anyone. We can keep kids safe from child sexual abuse."



## The Frame We've Got versus The Frame We Need:

The Frame We've Got	The Frame We Need
<b><i>Sensationalism</i></b>	<b><i>Restrained and nonsensational</i></b>
<b><i>Unseen Sexual Predators in our Midst -  Cause is personal ('predators')</i></b>	<b><i>Causes are contextual  (e.g. health, mental health, economic, community influences, etc.)</i></b>
<b><i>Parent and Family Focused Solutions</i></b>	<b><i>Solutions are strategic and community based</i></b>
<b><i>Value of Safety</i></b>	<b><i>Value of problem solving and future prosperity</i></b>

Adapted with permission from Lynn Davey, Davey Strategies, Effective Storytelling for Social Change, presentation given to PCAK, January 15, 2019.





## What Are Our Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Communication Goals?

- reducing the risk of child sexual abuse of all children
- shift in perceived responsibility for children - from personal to shared community responsibility
- increase in public support for policies supportive of children and families
- reduction in beliefs that getting help for parenting is bad, thus an increase in parents who seek help for parenting
- increase public awareness of factors that can inhibit or promote healthy child development, including child sexual abuse



Center for Disease Control (2016). "Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm and Programmatic Activities." Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can-prevention-technical-package.pdf>



## Six Recommended Strategies for Communicating about Child Sexual Abuse:

1. **Begin by appealing to shared values.** Effective frames are coherent stories that begin with a value explaining why the issue matters to all of us. A values frame starts a conversation - creating a different lens on the issue and draws people in with a shared ideal.

For example: **Future prosperity:** *Preparing Kentucky for a prosperous future begins with recognizing our youngest citizens must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy.* **Ingenuity/Innovation:** *We can and do solve difficult problems by working together to create lasting and meaningful change. We can support children to grow up healthy and violence-free.*

2. **Tell a causal story** defining the challenges and explaining how to solve them. Every communication should carefully describe the cause of child sexual abuse in a way that attributes the cause beyond the success or failure of parent behaviors and choices. What are the factors in communities, schools, and other places that increase a child's vulnerability? How does child sexual abuse affect a child's development? How does that, in turn, impact an entire community?

3. **Be solutions focused.** Solutions must be spelled out at the top of the communication, to advance the prevention message and overcome the public's sense that bad parents allow bad people to pierce their family bubble... and to counter the futility of any action. Give communities specific tools to find a solution to child sexual abuse.

4. **Use data sparingly, with interpretation, and free from jargon.** People already believe child sexual abuse is a big problem, and tend to overstate abuse numerically (as they do may social problems), and correcting their error is only likely to result in diminished concern for the problem. Using horrific statistics is unlikely to disrupt the models people use to reason about the causes of and solutions to child sexual abuse. It's likely the public understands child sexual abuse is a real issue affecting many children, due to the high level of media coverage in recent years. Painting it as a crisis with lots of dire statistics makes the problem seem inevitable, unsolvable and hopeless. It doesn't motivate anyone towards action. Further, using jargon, only complicates the audience's understanding of your message.

5. **Widen the lens on attribution of responsibility.** Attribution of responsibility focuses on who has the power to alleviate the problem or play a role in the solution. Try to get multiple actors into the frame, and avoid tightly framed communication to make sure it does not portray the child as willful or intentional, or define abuse as an internal flaw within bad people. Use visuals that broaden the perspective beyond the "family bubble" - no tight shots of children with parents, but rather, show groups, coaches, mentors, community members interacting with families/children.

6. **Emphasize societal benefits, while championing programs that work.** Effective issue frames will explicitly and sensibly link the problem definition and the attribution of responsibility, and point to societal benefits of prevention. Show those benefits in your messages, and spotlight programs that are working well in preventing child sexual abuse.



# Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

## Press Releases

### What Doesn't Work

#### Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky and Other Agencies Address Child Sexual Abuse

Kentucky (April x, 2019) – April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky (PCAK), in conjunction with Kentucky partners, is sponsoring a Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Campaign. This is the tenth year PCAK has sponsored this campaign in our state.

“For the 10th year, PCAK is reminding people in our area we must protect and nurture children from child sexual abuse,” said Jill Seyfred, Executive Director at PCAK. “We are using the blue and silver pinwheel and the positive message ‘When We Nurture, Children Blossom’ to remind parents of the importance of protecting and nurturing children.”

In 2018 there were 84,595 children involved in reports of abuse and neglect in Kentucky. The number of children with a substantiated report for sexual abuse was 2,273. According to Seyfred, the number of children found to be abused or neglected has increased since the mid 1990’s, and continues to remain a problem for our state. Specifically, there has been a 25% increase in the number of unique children in substantiated or services needed reports from 2014 to 2018. Seyfred stated child abuse and neglect are significant problems in our area. “Child abuse and neglect remain significant problems in our area. The rate of child abuse/neglect in our state tends to be significantly higher than the nation’s average.”

According to final year statistics the Department for Community Based Services. This data clearly documents the ongoing need for child abuse and neglect prevention in Kentucky. This information may be used to better understand the needs of families and develop activities to support those needs.

PCAK has chosen to address child sexual abuse this April during their Child Abuse Prevention Month kick-off event on April 1st at their office in Lexington, KY. During the event, PCAK will recognize four agencies for their efforts to advocate for children in the community. Those agencies included: Advocacy Network for Children in KY, Cheerful Home of KY, Child and Family Connections of KY, and KY Children Charity. All of these agencies provide important services to children and families, advocating for children, and working to prevent child sexual abuse. Each agency received a certificate, and pinwheel in recognition of their service.

Children from the Township Children’s Theater provided musical entertainment, with song. The event concluded with a pinwheel planting, with each pinwheel representing the children involved with substantiations of abuse and neglect this year.

Contact Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky to be involved.  
[www.pcaky.org](http://www.pcaky.org)

### Reframed Message

#### Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Agency and Partners Address Child Sexual Abuse

Kentucky (April x, 2019) – The future of our communities depends on the ability to foster the health and wellbeing of the next generation. When communities work together to implement programs in effort to promote child wellbeing in early development, we see significant long-term improvements for children.

We know in effort to create stronger foundations for children’s development, we must create environments where children and families can thrive. Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, along with their partners have developed an innovative, effective campaign to support families, provide access to resources and give all children in our state the opportunity to develop in a safe, stable environment.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky has chosen to address child sexual abuse this April during their Child Abuse Prevention Month kick-off event, and will share details about this innovative approach. During the event, PCAK will recognize partner agencies, including: Advocacy Network for Children in KY, Cheerful Home of KY, Child and Family Connections of KY, and KY Children Charity.

PCAK’s Executive Director, Jill Seyfred, encourages all of Kentucky to share in the responsibility for the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children and their families. Seyfred added, “I encourage everyone in the state to do what they love this April, and throughout the year, to help ensure great childhoods in their community.”

What an impact we can make when we work together! Kentucky’s kids are thriving because of the support of these programs, and Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky looks to celebrate community partnerships and prevention programs at this event. To learn more, contact their office at 859-225-8879, or visit their website, [www.pcaky.org](http://www.pcaky.org).



# Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

## Talking Points

### What Doesn't Work

- As parents we make daily decisions to keep our children safe, but it's easy to remember sexual abuse could happen to any child at any place, by anyone. It's our responsibility to prevent child sexual abuse.

*(This message singles out one group as responsible, putting the ownership on parents, when it should be a shared responsibility of the community at large.)*

- Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are all around us, only 10% of perpetrators are strangers! It is a myth that individuals who sexually molest children are strangers. It is most often, individuals who are known and trusted by the family.

*(This message reinforces the myth of stranger danger.)*

- It's very important you report suspected abuse to your county child protective services agency. The number should be in the front of your phone book. Beyond that, our prevention campaign is an opportunity to work together to keep children safe, provide support to families, and raise children and youth to be happy, secure and stable adults. We have many resources, and suggest you check out website for ways to be involved.

*(This message fails to address the public's underlying mistrust of the 'community' as a safe and supportive place for children.)*

- Children should really pay attention to the situations they put themselves in so they are not groomed by predators.

Often times, victims of child sexual abuse grow up to be offenders. Act now, intervene before it is too late.

*(This message focuses on victim blaming. In addition to victim blaming, this illustrates the misuse of research, shames victims and makes the audience feel it is hopeless or there is nothing to be done to break the cycle of abuse.)*

- Although you might think most children are abused by strangers, the fact is most child maltreatment is committed by parents or someone the family knows. That's why we have to reach out and educate parents about how to do better.

*(This message tells audiences of a false belief that only strangers abuse children. Defaults to bad parents as the problem, and parent education as the only solution.)*

- It's a parent's responsibility to protect their children from abuse and neglect, as child sexual abuse can happen to any child, at anytime, by anyone. More often than not it is by someone the family knows.

*(This message puts all responsibility on parents, and frames the issue as inevitable, not preventable.)*

### Reframed Message

- When adults are empowered with the right tools and information, occurrences of child sexual abuse CAN be prevented. Caregivers become more confident and children receive the foundation to strengthen their ability to maintain healthy relationships into adulthood.

- We have the power to prevent child sexual abuse! As a community, we invite you to learn more about environments where these occurrences may take place and what you can do to lessen the risk. Contact us at 1-800-CHILDREN to learn more. If you suspect a child is being victimized or targeted, report suspected abuse to the child abuse hotline at 1-877-KYSAFE1.

- Did you know, 90% of the time perpetrators of child sexual abuse are known to the family and not considered strangers? Education is key to preventing child sexual abuse, we can all learn signs to look for in identifying potentially harmful situations and what to do about it.

- By educating adults on how to strengthen supports around families, children and our communities, we ensure the wellbeing of the next generation. From learning the stages of healthy child development to figuring out ways to identify safe caregivers, we can all play a role in child sexual abuse prevention. Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky has tools available for all members of the community, accessed via internet or hard copy.

- The future prosperity of our community depends on our ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. Innovative communities have been able to design high-quality programs to reduce and prevent child abuse and neglect. These programs create significant long-term improvements for children and are the kind of innovations we need.

- When we attend to the important aspects of child development now, we improve future outcomes. Trying to change behavior or build new skills on a foundation of brain circuits that were not wired properly when first formed requires more work and is less effective. This means we need to invest in the kinds of programs that prevent child abuse and neglect. Foster care, clinical treatment and other professional interventions are more costly and produce less desirable outcomes than nurturing, protective relationships and appropriate experiences early in life. When we make investments in children and families, the next generation will pay it back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship.

- What a wonderful gift we have to make a difference in the life of a child! It is our collective responsibility, as adults, to ensure the safety of Kentucky's children. As individuals we can learn how child sexual abuse occurs and what to do to lessen risk; as a community we can collaborate and create awareness so all understand the importance of investing in the future of our children and families. For every \$1 we spend on prevention, we later save \$4 on interventions needed after abuse has occurred.



# Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

## Letters To the Editor

*Letters to the editor (LTEs) get the most attention when they respond directly to a recent event or article in the news. When writing to your local news outlet, be sure to reference a specific story or community issue that's related to child health and well-being. Also, verify the maximum word count for the outlet to which you're writing; if your LTE is too long it will either be discarded or edited by someone else, sometimes deleting important elements. Up to 250 words is typical for local and regional papers, but many larger newspapers are limited to 150 or so, and some magazines limit letters to less than 100 words.*

### What Doesn't Work

Dear Editor,

It is not easy to address a topic as serious as child sexual abuse; therefore, we commend Dr. Bob Joe for having the wisdom to draft an article addressing child sexual abuse, and for your newspaper to have the courage to run this important article. The information provided by Dr. Joe is a critical first step in preventing child sexual abuse.

As an agency with the mission of preventing child abuse, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky works daily to raise awareness, educate the citizenry of Kentucky and advocate for practices designed to assure better outcomes for children. Through our 30 years of providing parent education, prevention resources and training, we recognize the importance of engaging local communities in prevention work. No one is exempt from keeping children safe, including recognizing and reporting child sexual abuse. We invite your readers to join us in our effort to prevent all forms of abuse and neglect by contacting us via our website: [www.pcaky.org](http://www.pcaky.org).

Sincerely,  
[NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION]

Dear Editor,

Your recent coverage of Kentucky being number one in cases of child maltreatment reinforces the need for effective prevention program and interventions that support families and children in our community. We can do better, and must work to see our children stay safe. Our agency has programs that can help.

This is a ranking, we as Kentuckians should not want for our children. Please know child abuse is preventable, and we can do more if we work together.

Contact us to learn how, <insert website>.

Sincerely,  
[NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION]

### Reframed Message

Dear Editor,

All parents want to protect, provide for and nurture their child in a positive, healthy environment, but sometimes they need a little extra support. This is why I encourage people to proactively engage parents in their community and offer support - whether it is by making a meal for a family, or reading to a child. Helping out new parents with their crying infant, or offering to relieve the stress of another meal, by bringing over dinner.

Your recent coverage of child sexual abuse reinforces we all share a responsibility for the well-being of children and their families in Kentucky. Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky is working to help individuals understand it is possible to prevent child abuse while doing the things they love which can help families and their community thrive.

Collectively, these small steps will help create better, brighter futures for children and families in Kentucky.

Sincerely,  
[NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION]

Dear Editor,

Your recent coverage of [APPLICABLE STORY IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER] reinforces we all share a responsibility for the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children and their families in [STATE or CITY]. The healthy development of our children is good for the longevity of our community and success of our future.

Everyone wants to provide and nurture their child in a positive, healthy environment, but sometimes parents and communities lack access to resources to support them along the way. That's why I encourage people across the state to proactively engage parents with an opportunity to receive appropriate child development education, provide approachable resources in their local community and offer support.

Here are some suggestions:

- Volunteer for an after-school reading program or book club— you'll help kids meet new friends and spark their imaginations, too.
- Give a new mom a break by bringing over dinner or offering to babysit.
- Coach a youth sports team to teach kids the value of teamwork— they'll learn how to trust teammates and themselves.
- Host a kid-friendly BBQ or organize a block party so parents can socialize without the stress of finding a sitter.
- Contact your elected officials and urge them to support policies and programs that promote safe, healthy childhoods.

For more recommendations, please visit [WEBSITE].

Collectively, these small steps will make a big impact and help create better, brighter futures for children and families in [STATE or CITY].

Sincerely,  
[NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION]





# Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

## A Tweet and a post are a frame! Ideas for Effectively Framing Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Social Media

<b>DO</b> Talk in ways that say this is about 'us.'	<b>DON'T</b> Talk in ways that says this is about 'them.'
<b>DO</b> <b>Focus on building healthy families which will help communities thrive.</b> Focus on community connections to benefit children and their families.	<b>DON'T</b> Focus solely on individuals or parents as responsible for protecting children, making it seem there is no role for anyone else. Don't fall into the trap of putting responsibility solely on parents to make social connections, or imply it's easy to make these connections.
<b>DO</b> <b>Focus on solutions, interactivity and mutual benefits for families and communities.</b> Do clearly spell out solutions.	<b>DON'T</b> Focus on the data, the problems or unframed data, which can overwhelm, and not point anyone to solutions.
<b>DO</b> <b>Share stories of efficacy, demonstrating how programs and policies have worked</b> for the benefit of children by preventing or addressing child sexual abuse.	<b>DON'T</b> Share vivid, dramatic details focused on worst cases, as this frame only reinforces a criminal script and the inevitability of abuse.
<b>DO</b> <b>Try to get multiple actors in images, and avoid tightly framed images of families, or children alone.</b> Broaden the discussion to the community with the images you use, to promote trust.	<b>DON'T</b> Use tightly framed images that only show parents and children, but rather show coaches, mentors, librarians and other community members. Don't share frames emphasizing stranger danger. Don't share images of sad, bruised or crying children. This does not call individuals to action.
<b>DO</b> <b>Champion calls to action which work,</b> and demonstrate how they have worked.	<b>DON'T</b> Issue calls to action that are doomed to fail, like expecting outsiders to both befriend individuals, but also turn in families

### Example Social Media Copy that Works:

*Healthy connections matter to the developing brain, so we build caring relationships and help communities thrive. Children's brains develop best through positive social interactions. Tell us what positive connections you are making!*

*Every child deserves to grow up feeling safe and loved. It's easier than you think to help make great childhoods happen. Learn how you can help kids in your community have the childhoods they deserve. <insert website>*

*How can you organize kid-friendly social events so parents can connect without the stress of finding a sitter? You can be a family-friendly pillar in your community. Learn more: <insert website>*

*The experiences of a child are built into their bodies - shaping their brain development and building the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. Prevention is possible, and you play a role. Learn more:*

*It takes everyday courage by people like you to keep children safe. Trust your gut, have body safety conversations with your kids, ensure youth-serving organizations have protection policies, report any suspicion to proper authorities - these simple tasks can protect kids!*

*Did you know establishing healthy boundaries, teaching assertiveness, monitoring a child's exposure to adult topics, helping your child identify trustworthy adults, identifying the difference between secrets & surprises, are just a few every day steps to help prevent child sexual abuse. What every day steps are you taking? <website>*



## Reframing Checklist:

- The first sentence should explain why the issue matters, with an appeal to collective values, such as:
  - Opportunity for all, ingenuity, and future prosperity
- Next, explain what the problem is and how it is solved
  - Connect the dots among causes, consequences and solutions
- Appeal to the readers'/viewers' sense of community and civic responsibility.
- Use visuals that reinforce and reflect the frame.
- Be positive and solutions-oriented in tone.
- Do not lead with data/numbers; and when you use data/numbers, always interpret the meaning of the data.
- Use messengers who are credible and unbiased.
- Don't include jargon and "expertise" such as acronyms, abbreviations and technical language.
- Finally, remember:
  1. Never suggest "It's a crisis." Crisis framing disengages and makes problems seem unsolvable.
  2. Do not use a compelling story of an individual person (such as a program or service recipient) if your goal is policy change. People will attribute responsibility for the cause and solution to the problem (e.g. poverty, obesity, addiction) to that individual. Individual stories obscure the systemic/structural causes and solutions to issues, and often, trigger stereotypes about the individuals portrayed.



# Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky™

## A Framing Scorecard

Use this framing scorecard to evaluate communication materials in terms of evidence-based framing principles.

<b>Framing Principle</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Does the piece begin with an appeal to shared values?  (i.e. something that suggests we have a collective stake in this issue)		
2. Does the piece communicate a causal story?  (i.e. the dots are clearly connected between problem and solution)		
3. Is the piece solution-focused?  (as opposed to problem-focused)		
4. Is the piece free from crisis/ "the sky is falling" language?		
5. Is the attribution of responsibility for solving the problem clear?		
6. Is the piece FREE from jargon and acronyms that ordinary people might not understand?		
7. Does the piece use data sparingly, and interpret all figure/stats for readers?		
8. Is the messenger likely to be viewed as credible?  (i.e. informed about the issue, but without a vested interest in the outcome/solution being advanced)		
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b> (Add <b>only</b> those marked <b>YES</b> ):		-----



Used with permission from Lynn Davey, Davey Strategies, April 2019.







## Framing Template

1. Why does this issue matter? (Begin with an appeal to shared values.)

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2. What is the problem/challenge?

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3. What are the consequences?

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4. How can we solve it?

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5. End with a specific ask of your target audience.

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/This  
is  
your  
causal  
story

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## Key Definitions Used in this Toolkit:

**Causal Story:** a story that connects the dots between systemic causes and their consequences, and leads to a specific policy or program solution.

**Child Sexual Abuse:** includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Sexual abuse is defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act as "the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children, (Child Welfare Information Gateway)

**Contextual:** depending on or relating to the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea. (dictionary.com)

**Frames:** the way any communication is packaged, including values, text data, images and messengers. (Davey, Lynn)

**Public Discourse:** the way the public is communicated to through media or a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing. (Davey, Lynn)

**Sensationalism:** the use or effect of subject matter and messages that tend to arouse a quick, intense and usually superficial interest, curiosity or emotional reaction due to gruesome, melodramatic or shocking detail. (dictionary.com)

**Schema:** a conception of what is common to all members of a class; a general or essential type or form. (Davey, Lynn)

**Values:** important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. (dictionary.com)

\*What is Child Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing Signs and Symptoms." Child Welfare Information Gateway, accessed March 2019, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/whatiscan.pdf#page=2&view=How%20Is%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect%20Defined%20in%20Federal%20Law?>



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FrameWorks Institute. (2009). "Talking About Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention." (Toolkit). Retrieved from <https://www.framerworksinstitute.org/toolkits/canp/index.html>.

## Additional Resources

Berkley Media Studies Group  
<http://www.bmsg.org/>

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, Information and Data Center:  
<https://www.pcaky.org/information-and-data>

The Montana Institute:  
<http://www.montanainstitute.com/>

The Opportunity Agenda:  
<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/>

Topos:  
<http://www.topospartnership.com/>

## Articles of Interest

"How the News Frames Child Maltreatment: Unintended Consequences," Cultural Logic, LLC (2003), Prevent Child Abuse America, accessed March 2019,  
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