

Leadership for Child Maltreatment Prevention

North Carolina has developed a coordinated system to respond to child maltreatment, which has been guided by years of federal and state legislation and funding targeted at this problem.⁷⁷ However, there are no federal or state policies guiding child maltreatment prevention efforts or agency initiatives. As a result, there has not been a similar mandate to develop a system to ensure the safety and well-being of children before they are reported to local departments of social services for maltreatment. Prevention efforts are fragmented across agencies with little shared planning and few shared outcome measures. Numerous public and private agencies provide prevention services, however no state agency with programmatic authority assumes leadership and accountability for child maltreatment prevention efforts in the state. Lack of leadership for child maltreatment prevention is a significant barrier to advancing prevention efforts statewide.

The Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention recognized the importance of identifying a leadership structure to ensure that the state moves forward in its child maltreatment prevention efforts. State-level leadership would ensure collaboration between public, non-profit, and community based agencies; unite these agencies and programs through planning and implementation; maximize existing resources to prevent child maltreatment; oversee the implementation of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention recommendations and plan; and continually monitor the effectiveness of different strategies in decreasing maltreatment and reducing risk factors. These leadership responsibilities include:

- > **Collaboration** - Child maltreatment prevention efforts require the participation of multiple public, non-profit, and community-based agencies. To guide such efforts, the leadership entity will need to build strong collaborative partnerships across state and local NC departments and agencies, the non-profit community, and universities. The leadership structure should help develop strategies to prevent child maltreatment that involve these different agencies and organizations and include shared planning and accountability.
- > **Planning and implementation** - A key function of the leadership entity will be to unite agencies and existing programs to identify needs, establish priorities for action, and assure quality and success in implementing program strategies to prevent child maltreatment, reduce risk factors, and strengthen protective factors.
- > **Maximizing resources** - Adequate funding of child maltreatment prevention services is an essential component of effective programs and initiatives. The leadership entity will need to develop and pursue strategies to leverage state and

federal funding, identify new resources, promote shared resources across organizations, and reallocate resources to evidence-based programs.

- > **Oversight** - One of the most essential functions of the leadership entity will be to oversee implementation of the final Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan, including development of realistic implementation schedules, monitoring, and accountability among agencies involved in the plan.
- > **Evaluation** - The leadership entity should be charged with continuing the work of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention Program Subcommittee in evaluating the effectiveness of strategies in decreasing maltreatment and reducing risk factors, and in modifying programs or strategies in light of the evolving evidence about successful prevention efforts.

The state agency or leadership structure charged with developing and overseeing the state's child maltreatment prevention efforts, must have sufficient influence and authority to ensure the plan is implemented and child maltreatment prevention is considered a priority in the state. The leadership organization must be able to bring together multiple, diverse partners within governmental departments, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to review and act on strategies to reduce child maltreatment and share accountability. In addition, the leadership organization must have the resources needed to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan and its recommendations.

To address the issue of leadership for child maltreatment prevention, the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention suggests the creation of a two-tiered system of leadership: a Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council staffed by the NC Division of Public Health, and an interdepartmental Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team housed and staffed within the NC Division of Public Health. The Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council will oversee the implementation and evaluation of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan and would ensure that visibility and attention are brought to these issues. Specifically, the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention recommends:

- Rec. 4.1.** The NC General Assembly should establish a standing Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council with diverse membership representation and strong leadership from state and local agencies and community providers. The Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council should specifically focus on preventing maltreatment before it occurs. The Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention supports SB 871/HB 1530 *Establish Child Maltreatment Prevention Council* which outlines membership and responsibilities of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council.
- A. Responsibilities of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council should include:
 - i. Oversee implementation and evaluation of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan.
 - ii. Ensure high visibility and attention to the issue of child maltreatment prevention.
 - iii. Ensure shared planning, implementation, and accountability for child maltreatment prevention efforts among appropriate North Carolina governmental agencies.
 - iv. Identify additional opportunities to enhance child maltreatment prevention efforts in existing state and local systems that serve families and children.
 - v. Establish and oversee mechanisms to support evidence-based and promising child maltreatment prevention and family strengthening programs in North Carolina.
 - vi. Ensure sufficient funding for child maltreatment prevention activities identified in the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan and in the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council's ongoing work.

- B. The NC General Assembly should appropriate \$250,000 per year for the staffing and operational support of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council. Staffing for the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council will reside in the NC Division of Public Health and will include an executive director and staff support.

The interdepartmental leadership team will be responsible for the day-to-day work in implementing these recommendations; coordinating the work of different state, local, and non-profit agencies and organizations; ensuring that the state focuses on implementing evidence-based or promising practices to prevent child maltreatment; and ensuring that programs are evaluated to determine their impact on strengthening families, reducing risk factors, and reducing child maltreatment. The Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention recommends:

- Rec. 4.2 The NC Department of Health and Human Services - NC Division of Public Health should develop a Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team to assist in supporting the work of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council.
 - A. The Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team should be a true public-private partnership between state and local agencies, non-profits, and other community organizations, that works to coordinate efforts, maximize funding, and promote shared accountability among governmental and private organizations.
 - B. The Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team will have primary responsibility for:
 - i. Providing expertise, technical assistance, and support to the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council.
 - ii. Implementing and evaluating the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention plan and recommendations from the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council.
 - iii. Ensuring shared decision-making, planning, implementation, funding, and accountability of child maltreatment prevention efforts among appropriate state governmental agencies.
 - iv. Developing strategies to collaborate with local community providers in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention.
 - v. Developing strategies to ensure collaborative decision-making, planning, implementation, and accountability at the state and local levels.
 - vi. Identifying and promoting funding strategies for child maltreatment prevention activities outlined in the Task Force for Child Abuse Prevention plan and its ongoing activities.
 - vii. Identifying trends, emerging issues, and best practices and bringing them to the attention of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council.
 - viii. Reporting to the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council and the Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services about its progress in achieving these goals. These reports should also be provided to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and to the Secretary of the NC Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
 - C. The Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team should include diverse representation from the NC Department of Health and Human Services, various state agencies and departments, universities, local agencies, non-profits, other private organizations, and families.
 - D. The Executive Director of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Legislative Oversight Council and a representative of PCA North Carolina should serve as co-chairs of the Child Maltreatment Prevention Leadership Team.

Table 4.1 Child Maltreatment Prevention Oversight Committee Model

