

# Understanding Task Force Draft Recommendations

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on primary care interventions to prevent child maltreatment. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from August 29, 2023, to September 25, 2023. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

## Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment

The Task Force issued a **draft recommendation statement** on *Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment*.

The Task Force found there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against providing primary care interventions to prevent maltreatment before it occurs in children who do not show any signs or symptoms of maltreatment.

This recommendation does not apply to children and adolescents under 18 years of age with signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect or known exposure to maltreatment. Those children should be immediately evaluated, have their situation reported to the appropriate authorities based on state laws, and get connected to the care they need to stay safe.

### Facts About Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment, which includes abuse and neglect, can have profound effects on children's health, development, and well-being throughout childhood and adulthood. Abuse includes physical, sexual, and psychological or emotional abuse. Neglect includes failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs, or to protect a child from harm or potential harm.

Maltreatment can be carried out by a parent or other caregiver, as well as others in positions of responsibility, trust, or power who interact with the child. This is a serious problem that affects too many children and teens across the United States. In 2021, an estimated 600,000 children were victims of child abuse or neglect, and more than 1,800 children died as a result of that maltreatment. However, many cases of maltreatment are not reported, so these numbers may be even higher.

Children who are younger than 4 years of age, have special healthcare needs, are female, and have a past history of being abused or neglected are at higher risk of maltreatment. Other risk factors for child maltreatment include having parents or caregivers who lack social supports, have a history of maltreatment, experience intimate partner violence, or are emotionally absent.

### Potential Benefits and Harms of Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment

Primary care interventions focus on preventing maltreatment before it occurs. These interventions aim to strengthen the parent-child relationship and encourage positive discipline strategies and coping skills. However, the evidence is not clear on the effectiveness of these interventions in the primary care setting to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs in children with no signs or symptoms, so the Task Force is calling for more research on this important topic.



#### What is child maltreatment?

Any act of abuse or neglect that results in direct or potential harm to a child.

# Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment

There is also not enough evidence to determine the potential harms of interventions, which could include stigma, negative effects on families, and higher likelihood of being reported to child welfare agencies.

In the absence of evidence, healthcare professionals should remain vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect and use their clinical judgment when deciding whether and when to provide interventions to help prevent maltreatment in children without signs or symptoms.

## The Draft Recommendation on Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment: What Does It Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on primary care interventions to prevent child maltreatment. The recommendation is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of interventions for this purpose. It is also based on the size of the potential benefits and harms. Task Force recommendation grades are explained in the box at the end of this fact sheet.

When the Task Force issues an **I statement**, it means that there is not enough evidence to recommend for or against the preventive service.

Before you send comments to the Task Force, you may want to read the **draft recommendation statement**. The recommendation statement explains the evidence the Task Force reviewed and how it decided on the grade. An **evidence document** provides more detail about the scientific studies the Task Force reviewed.

**1** The USPSTF concludes that the **current evidence is insufficient** to assess the balance of benefits and harms of primary care **interventions to prevent child maltreatment**. **I Statement**

## Notes

**1** **current evidence is insufficient**  
There is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against interventions to prevent child maltreatment.

### **interventions to prevent**

Programs or services in primary care, or referred from primary care, intended to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs. Examples include parent education, psychotherapy, and community programs.

### **child maltreatment**

Any act of abuse or neglect that results in harm or the potential for harm to a child. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological or emotional abuse, and neglect.

# Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment




## What is the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force?

The Task Force is an independent, non-federal, volunteer group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services, such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medicines. The recommendations apply to people with no signs or symptoms of the disease being discussed.

To develop a recommendation statement, Task Force members consider the best available science and research on a topic. For each topic, the Task Force posts draft documents for public comment, including the **draft recommendation statement**. All comments are reviewed and considered in developing the final recommendation statement. To learn more, visit the **Task Force website**.

USPSTF Recommendation Grades	
Grade	Definition
A	Recommended.
B	Recommended.
C	Recommendation depends on the patient's situation.
D	Not recommended.
I statement	There is not enough evidence to make a recommendation.

[Click Here to Learn More About Child Maltreatment](#)

-  **Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention**  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **Child Abuse**  
(Medline Plus)
-  **Child Abuse & Neglect**, including resources for reporting maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, HHS)

## [Click Here to Comment on the Draft Recommendation](#)



The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation.



Comments must be received between August 29, 2023, and September 25, 2023.



All comments will be considered for use in writing final recommendations.