



## CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

### **Child Care and Development Programs Prevent Child Abuse**

Goals of community-wide comprehensive prevention of child abuse include:

- Increase parents' knowledge and understanding of how children develop and what they can expect at each stage of development.
- Enhance bonding and communication between parents and their children.
- Increase parents' skills in coping with the stresses of caring for children with special needs.
- Increase parents' knowledge about managing homes and families.
- Reduce the burden of child care.
- Increase access to social and health-care services for all community members.

Child care and development programs can provide all of these, and provide opportunities for working parents, for parents who need respite from the stresses of their responsibilities, and for children who have been abused or neglected to obtain safe, nurturing care.

Child care professionals prevent child abuse by providing emotional and educational support to families in crisis and can serve as extended support systems for families by:

- Developing positive, non-judgmental relationships with parents
- Being alert to signs of stress in parents
- Providing opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's care
- Communicating regularly with parents concerning children's progress
- Providing parent education
- Modeling developmentally appropriate practices
- Providing information about community resources

Early care and education programs not only prevent child maltreatment, but also improve factors that may lead to less abuse and neglect: improved parenting skills, healthy child development, and economic self-sufficiency. Research studies and longitudinal surveys show that high quality child development programs with parent involvement have lasting benefits for children and their families.

Additionally, child care workers' frequent contacts with children puts them in a good position to recognize victimized children and because of this, child care workers are legally mandated reporters of child abuse/neglect.