



























## Training

Families commonly encounter service providers who have limited training in and knowledge of working with children with disabilities. Training regarding disabilities is not offered sufficiently to child welfare service providers, making it difficult for many providers to identify and assess disabilities and maltreatment (Lightfoot, 2014). Service providers may be unable to identify the unmet needs of children with disabilities and their families or connect them to appropriate services. Training topics could include an introduction to the relevant policies, programs, and services that are in place to support children with disabilities (Shannon & Tappan, 2011) as well as effective ways to communicate about disabilities to help gather pertinent information from the family, the child, and other service providers (Lightfoot, 2014).

Funded by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the National Network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDDs) supports universities in every state to carry out interdisciplinary training, technical assistance, research, and information dissemination. For more information, including a listing of centers, visit UCEDDs' website at <https://www.acl.gov/node/466> or the Association of University Centers on Disabilities at <http://www.aucd.org>.

## Training Examples

The following are examples of training programs that focus on working with children with disabilities:

- The National Children's Advocacy Center offers free trainings (registration required) on a number of topics, including working with children with disabilities. <http://www.nationalcac.org/online-training-catalog/>
- The Support Center for Child Advocates, which provides legal assistance to child maltreatment victims in Philadelphia County (PA), produced a series of webinars about transition planning for youth with disabilities. <http://sccalaw.org/past-webinars/>
- The Oregon Project Ability: Demystifying Disability in Child Abuse Interviewing training curriculum identifies common problems when interviewing maltreated children with disabilities and presents a systematic strategy for professionals to engage successfully with children with disabilities. <https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/CHILDREN/ADVISORY/CJA/Documents/project-ability.pdf>.

## Evidence-Informed Interventions

Using evidence-informed interventions to reduce parental stress is an effective way to help decrease the potential for child maltreatment when working with families with children with disabilities (Weisleder, 2011). Each of the following programs focuses on positive ways of addressing the behavior of children with disabilities and decreasing the stress associated with parenting a child with emotional or behavioral problems.

- The Stepping Stones Triple P—Positive Parenting Program is a family-centered model of parenting to help prevent emotional and behavioral issues in children with disabilities. It helps parents develop ways to manage their children’s behavior problems and developmental issues in order to increase parents’ competence and communication. <http://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/>
- The Parent Management Training—Oregon Model is aimed at caregivers of children with antisocial behavior. It teaches parents to encourage positive behaviors through the use of praise and incentives, limit setting, and family problem-solving skills. <http://www.isii.net/>
- Parent-child interaction therapy is aimed at addressing disruptive behaviors in preschool-aged children by teaching parents how to work with their children to decrease negative behaviors, increase prosocial practices, and improve parenting skills to decrease parental stress. <http://www.pcit.org/> and <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-interactbulletin/>
- The Incredible Years teaches parents about family-based problem solving and positive child relationships and attachment to increase understanding of their children’s developmental abilities. <http://www.incredibleyears.com/>
- Family group decision-making centers on the belief that children and their parents are part of a larger family group and recognizes the need for both to be involved in decision-making about the children’s safety, permanency, and well-being. <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/medicalschoo/departments/pediatrics/subs/can/FGDM/Pages/FGDM.aspx> and <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/famcentered/decisions/>

## Additional Resources

Information Gateway has several web sections that provide additional information about working with children with disabilities and their families:

- **Child Welfare and IDEA Part C** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/prevention-programs/earlychildhood/childwelfare/>)
- **Children With Disabilities** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/casework/children/children-with-disabilities/>)
- **Developmental and Physical Disabilities Resources** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/services/disability/>)
- **Permanency for Children With Disabilities** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/specific/disabilities/>)
- **Services to Children and Youth With Disabilities** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/service-array/services-to-children-and-youth-with-disabilities/>)

The following are additional resources that may be helpful for child welfare professionals:

- **National Dissemination Center for Children With Disabilities** <https://www.fhi360.org/projects/national-dissemination-center-children-disabilities-nichcy>  
This website provides information for the public on specific disabilities and programs and services for children with disabilities.
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)** <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/special-populations-and-trauma>  
This website offers information and toolkits, NCTSN materials, interventions and initiatives, and other resources for children with disabilities and others who have experienced trauma.
- **Facts on Traumatic Stress and Children With Developmental Disabilities** [http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/traumatic\\_stress\\_developmental\\_disabilities\\_final.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/traumatic_stress_developmental_disabilities_final.pdf)  
This report includes information on modifying trauma treatment for children with developmental disabilities and how characteristics related to specific disabilities may influence the incidence of trauma.

- **Center on Technology and Disability**  
<http://ctdinstitute.org>  
This website includes webinars, e-learning modules, and other resources about assistive technologies for children with disabilities.
- **Center for Parent Information and Resources**  
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>  
This website includes information and products intended to support professionals who work with families of children with disabilities.
- **Childhood Maltreatment Among Children With Disabilities**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/abuse.html>  
This website provides information about maltreatment for parents of children with disabilities and resources for children, parents and caregivers, and others.

## Conclusion

Children with disabilities experience a higher rate of abuse and neglect than children without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012). They are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system (Lightfoot, 2014); however, due to time and budget constraints, training for child welfare professionals and service providers on how to best serve children with disabilities and their families may not be available. Awareness of the characteristics of different disabilities in relation to the risks of maltreatment and the supports each child needs may help child welfare professionals provide services that assist children in meeting their cognitive, behavioral, social, and daily-living needs. Promising strategies are available to prevent the maltreatment of children with disabilities, and opportunities exist to improve collaboration between child welfare and disability agencies to respond more effectively to children and families in this population. Child welfare professionals can play a key role in developing networks of support for children with disabilities and their families, identifying and addressing family strengths and needs so children with disabilities can live in safe and supportive homes, and educating children about abuse and neglect so they are better able to protect themselves.

## References

- Algood, C. L., Harris, C., & Hong, J. S. (2013). Parenting success and challenges for families of children with disabilities: An ecological systems analysis. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *23*, 126–136. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/jspangler/Downloads/Parentingsuccessandchallenges-publishedarticle.pdf
- Algood, C. L., Hong, J. S., Gourdine, R. M., & Williams, A. B. (2011). Maltreatment of children with developmental disabilities: An ecological systems analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*, 1142–1148. doi: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.02.003
- American Psychological Association. (2016). *Resolution on the maltreatment of children with disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/maltreatment-children.aspx>
- American Psychological Association. (2017). Understanding and preventing child abuse and neglect. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/understanding-child-abuse.aspx>
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). *Creating opportunity for families: A two generation approach*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-CreatingOpportunityforFamilies-2014.pdf>
- Berg, K. L., Shiu, C., Msall, M. E., & Acharya, K. (2015). Victimization and restricted participation among young people with disabilities in the US child welfare system. *Development Medicine & Child Neurology*, *57*, 564–570. doi: 10.1111/dmcn.12678
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017a). *Child abuse and neglect: Risk and protective factors*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017b). *Childhood maltreatment among children with disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/abuse.html>

- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Addressing the needs of young children in child welfare: Part C—early intervention services*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/partc/>
- Corr, C., & Santos, R. M. (2017). “Not in the same sandbox”: Cross-systems collaborations between early intervention and child welfare systems. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 34(1), 9–22. doi: 10.1007/s10560-016-0470-4
- Fisher, M. H., Hodapp, R. M., & Dykens, E. M. (2008). Child abuse among children with disabilities: What we know and what we need to know. *International Review of Research in Mental Retardation*, 35, 251–289. doi: 10.1016/S0074-7750(07)35007-6
- Haight, W., Kayama, M., Kincaid, T., Evans, K., & Kim, N. K. (2013). The elementary-school functioning of children with maltreatment histories and mild cognitive or behavioral disabilities: A mixed methods inquiry. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 420–428. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.12.010
- Hall-Lande, J., Hewitt, A., Mishra, S., Piescher, K., & LaLiberte, T. (2015). Involvement of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the child protection system. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 30, 237–248. doi: 10.1177/1088357614539834
- Helton, J. J., & Bruhn, C. M. (2013). Prevalence of disabilities and abilities in children investigated for abuse and neglect. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 7(5), 480–495. doi: 10.1080/15548732.2013.843497
- Helton, J. J., & Cross, T. P. (2011). The relationship of child functioning to parental physical assault: Linear and curvilinear models. *Child Maltreatment*, 16, 126–136. doi: 10.1177/1077559511401742
- Herman-Smith, R., & Schmitt, K. (2014). Implementing developmental screening programs for infants and toddlers in the child welfare system. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 8, 416–432. doi: 10.1080/15548732.2014.939251
- Hibbard, R. A., Desch, L. W., Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, & Council on Children With Disabilities. (2007). Maltreatment of children with disabilities. *Pediatrics*, 119, 1018–1025. doi: 10.1542/peds.2007-0565
- Hill, K. (2012). Permanency and placement planning for older youth with disabilities in out-of-home placement. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 1418–1424. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.03.012
- Hill, K., Lightfoot, E., & Kimball, E. (2010). Foster care transition services for youth with disabilities: Findings from a survey of county service providers. *Child Welfare*, 89(6), 63–81.
- Holtz, C. A., Carrasco, J. M., Mattek, R. J., & Fox, R. A. (2009). Behavior problems in toddlers with and without developmental delays: Comparison of treatment outcomes. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 31, 292–311. doi: 10.1080/07317100903311018
- Javalkar, K., Rak, E., Phillips, A., Haberman, C., Ferris, M., & Van Tilburg, M. (2017). Predictors of caregiver burden among mothers of children with chronic conditions. *Children*, 4(5), 39. doi: 10.3390/children4050039
- Jee, S. H., Conn, A. M., Szilagyi, P. G., Blumkin, A., Baldwin, C. D., & Szilagyi, M. A. (2010). Identification of social emotional problems among young children in foster care. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 51, 1351–1358. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02315.x
- Johnson, H. (2011). *Awareness and prevention of abuse/neglect as experienced by children w/ disabilities*. Presented at the Council for Exceptional Children National Convention, National Harbor, MD. Retrieved from <http://deafed-childabuse-neglect-col.wiki.educ.msu.edu/file/view/Handout+-+Awariness+and+Prevention+of+Abuse+-+Neglect+as+Experienced+by+Children+w+Disabilities.pdf>



- Jones, L., Bellis, M. A., Wood, S., Hughes, K., McCoy, E., Eckley, L., . . . Officer, A. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Lancet*, *380*, 899–907. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60692-8
- Lightfoot, E. (2014). Children and youth with disabilities in the child welfare system: An overview. *Child Welfare*, *93*(2), 23–45.
- Lightfoot, E., Hill, K., & LaLiberte, T. (2011). Prevalence of children with disabilities in the child welfare system and out of home placement: An examination of administrative records. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*, 2069–2075. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.02.019
- Martin, M., & Citrin, A. (2014). *Prevent, protect & provide: How child welfare can better support low-income families*. Retrieved from <https://www.cssp.org/policy/2014/Prevent-Protect-Provide.pdf>
- Murphy, N. (2011). Maltreatment of children with disabilities: The breaking point. *Journal of Child Neurology*, *26*, 1054–1056. doi: 10.1177/0883073811413278
- Murphy, N. A., Christian, B., Caplin, D. A., & Young, P. C. (2007). The health of caregivers for children with disabilities: Caregiver perspectives. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, *33*, 180–187. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2006.00644.x
- Palusci, V. J., Datner, E., & Wilkins, C. (2015). Developmental disabilities: Abuse and neglect in children and adults. *International Journal of Child Health and Human Development*, *8*, 407–428.
- Sedlak, A. J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., & Li, S. (2010). *Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to congress*. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/fourth-national-incidence-study-of-child-abuse-and-neglect-nis-4-report-to>
- Shannon, P., & Tappan, C. (2011). A qualitative analysis of child protective services. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*, 1469–1475. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.11.014
- Slayter, E. (2016). Youth with disabilities in the United States child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *64*, 155–165. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.03.012
- Slayter, E., & Springer, C. (2011). Child welfare-involved youth with intellectual disabilities: Pathways into and placements in foster care. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *49*, 1–13. doi: 10.1352/1934-9556-49.1.1
- Steen, J. A., & Harlow, S. (2012). Correlates of multiple placements in foster care: A study of placement instability in five states. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *6*, 172–190. doi: 10.1080/15548732.2012.667734
- Turner, H. A., Vanderminden, J., Finkelhor, D., Hamby, S., & Shattuck, A. (2011). Disability and victimization in a national sample of children and youth. *Child Maltreatment*, *16*, 275–286. doi: 10.1177/1077559511427178
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *School-aged children with disabilities in U.S. metropolitan statistical areas: 2010*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-12.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2015). *National child abuse and neglect data system [Data file]*. Retrieved May 2016.
- Van Horne, B. S., Moffitt, K. B., Canfield, M. A., Case, A. P., Greeley, C. S., Morgan, R., & Mitchell, L. E. (2015). Maltreatment of children under age 2 with specific birth defects: A population-based study. *Pediatrics*, *136*, e1504–e1512. doi: 10.1542/peds.2015-1274
- Weisleder, P. (2011). Family interventions to prevent maltreatment of children with disabilities. *Journal of Child Neurology*, *26*, 1052–1053. doi: 10.1177/0883073811413279

Weiss, J. A., Waechter, R., & Wekerle, C. (2011). The impact of emotional abuse on psychological distress among child protective services-involved adolescents with borderline-to-mild intellectual disability. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 4, 142–159. doi: 10.1080/19361521.2011.574677

**Suggested Citation:**

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). *The risk and prevention of maltreatment of children with disabilities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children’s Bureau

