

# Keep Children Safe by Keeping Families Strong

Prevention Strategies  
for Child and Family Well-Being

Pediatric Behavioral Health Partnership  
April 24, 2025



Maine Child Welfare  
Action Network



# Presenters

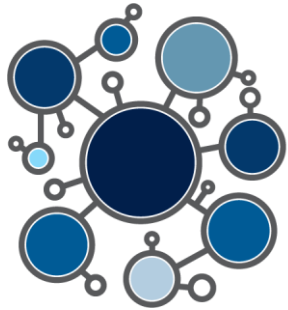


## **Mariette Aborn**

Special Projects Manager, Child & Family Well-Being  
Department of Health and Human Services  
[mariette.aborn@maine.gov](mailto:mariette.aborn@maine.gov)

## **Christine Theriault**

Family First Prevention Services Program Manager  
Office of Child and Family Services  
[christine.theriault@maine.gov](mailto:christine.theriault@maine.gov)



## **Melissa Hackett**

Coordinator  
Maine Child Welfare Action Network  
[mhackett@mekids.org](mailto:mhackett@mekids.org)

# Learning Objectives

## 1. Increase Awareness

Help primary care providers understand the continuum of prevention and the statewide programs available to support families and children.

## 2. Enhance Access

Equip providers with the knowledge and tools to connect families to prevention resources.







"It's [hard] trying to find the support that you need and balancing a healthy family life and making sure that your kids' needs are met."

- *A parent or caregiver in Maine*

"We have to find ways for communities to come together to recognize that everyone can do something to make a difference."

- *A community partner in Maine*

"Because no one can predict exactly where, when, or in which families abuse or neglect will occur, we believe the best way to prevent it is to create conditions in which all families can thrive."

- *Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families*

There is a movement in Maine to move upstream from the child welfare system to support families earlier and promote collective responsibility for child and family well-being.

## Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan

- A partnership between DHHS and MCWAN
- Developed with families, communities, and state partners
- Informed by data and best practice
- Initial version released in 2023
- 5-year plan released in February 2025



### Maine Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan

Version 1.0 - May 9, 2023

Prepared by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
in Partnership with the Maine Child Welfare Action Network



### Keep Children Safe by Keeping Families Strong:

Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan  
(2025-2030)

February 11, 2025

A partnership between the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Child Welfare Action Network.





## Together, we can keep children safe by keeping families strong.

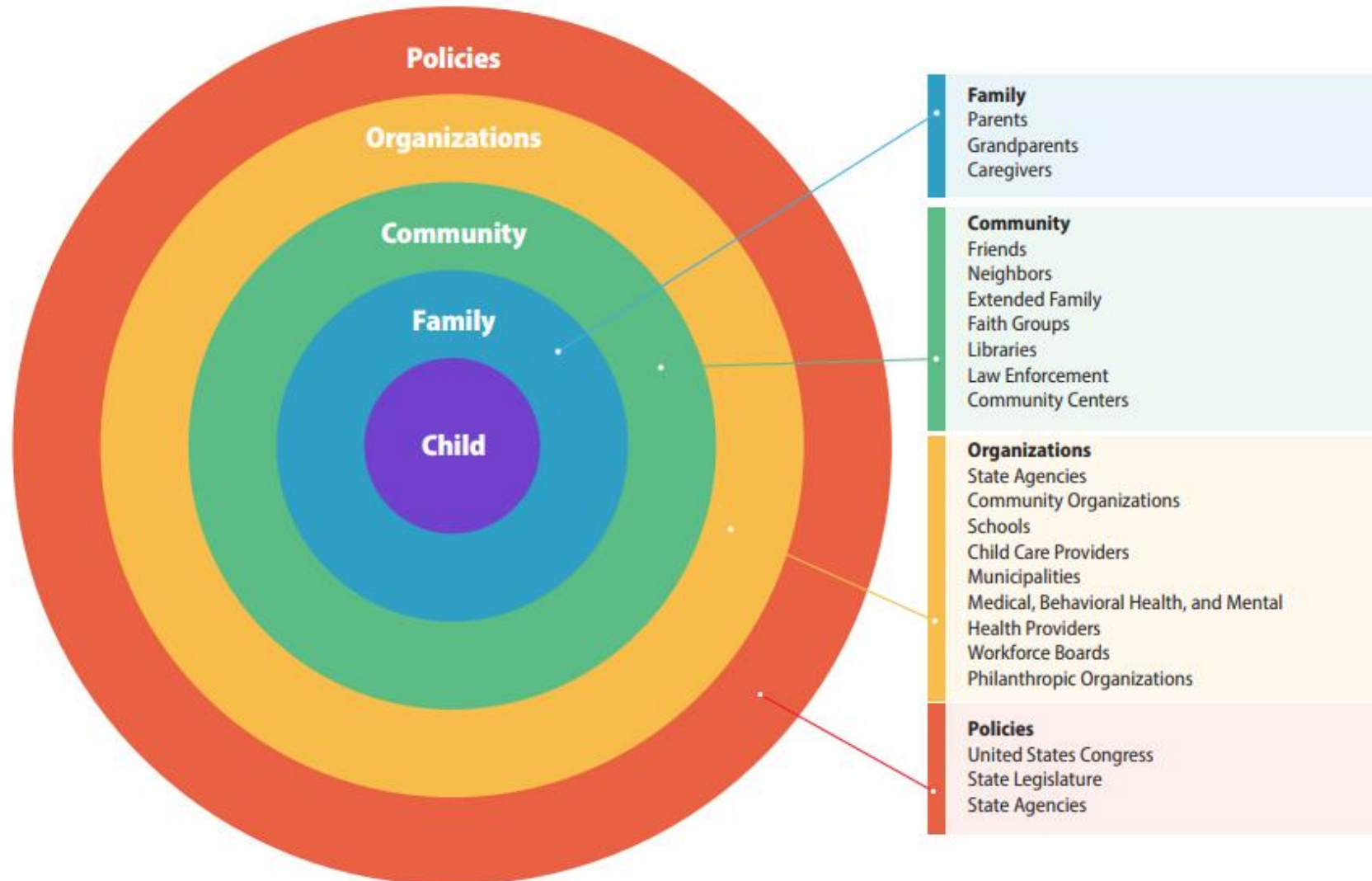
- Every child, youth, and family in Maine deserves to live in a supportive community where they can get the help they need, when they need it.
- By supporting families earlier, we can create the conditions for strong families and limit the need for involvement by the child welfare agency.





## A Coordinated System

Improving outcomes will require coordinated and sustained efforts across all levels of the social-ecological model. Most of us have a role to play at multiple levels.



## Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan

### OCFS Child Welfare Division

#### Primary Prevention

- ▶ Services for the general population.
- ▶ Strengthen all families and communities.
- ▶ Prevents child abuse or neglect before it occurs and prevents the need for involvement by the state's child welfare agency.

#### Secondary Prevention

- ▶ Services for individuals or families where there is increased risk for child abuse or neglect.
- ▶ Strengthen specific populations, communities, and neighborhoods.
- ▶ Prevents child abuse or neglect before it occurs and prevents the need for initial or deeper involvement with the state's child welfare agency.

#### Tertiary Prevention

- ▶ Services for families where child abuse or neglect has occurred.
- ▶ Strengthen families with indicated or substantiated child abuse or neglect, keep families together, and help them heal from trauma.
- ▶ Prevents family separation, recurrence of child abuse or neglect, and reinvolved with the state's child welfare agency.



**Primary Care Providers play an essential role in connecting families to resources that build resilience and reduce risk.**

### **Statewide Child and Family Well-Being Resources You Should Know About\***

- Be There for ME
- Help Me Grow Maine
- Maine Families Home Visiting
- Maine's Prevention Councils
- Family First Prevention Services
- Access Maine and 211 Maine

*\*This is not a comprehensive list of child and family well-being resources in Maine.*



**Be There for ME** (<https://bethereforme.org>) aims to reduce the stigma of asking for help and provides a judgement-free website for parents and caregivers to start to find support. The campaign also speaks directly to community members, identifying opportunities for everyone to step up to support parents and caregivers in Maine.

Parents and caregivers were co-designers in the creation of this campaign, its message, and the website.

The website and campaign materials are available in 12 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Khmer, Lingala, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese.

*"I really needed to hear that today."  
- A parent in Maine*









Parenting  
can be a joy.



It can also be hard.

Everyone needs help sometimes,  
and support is out there.

Be There for ME is a judgement-free place  
to start to find support.



If you're a parent or caregiver,  
**Be There for ME** is a place to start  
to find support with:

- Housing
- Transportation
- Getting Everyday Items
- Food
- Child Care
- Your Child's Health or Development
- Your Child's Feelings or Stress
- Being a New Parent or Caregiver
- Your Feelings or Stress
- Drugs or Alcohol
- Figuring Out What You Need



Find out more at: **BeThereforME.org**  
Supporting Parents and Caregivers in Maine

Be There for ME was developed by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Child Welfare Action Network in partnership with a diverse group of parents and caregivers.

## You can:

- Carry forward the Be There for ME message in your interactions with patients
- Familiarize yourself with the resources listed on [BeThereforME.org](https://BeThereforME.org)
- Offer [BeThereforME.org](https://BeThereforME.org) as a place your patients can look to find support for common needs
- Print [flyers](#) and make them visible to patients at your practice
- Request additional Be There for ME materials (rack cards, posters) be sent to your office at no-cost through the [Maine Prevention Store](#)

"I love the tone of the campaign, I love the videos, I love the way the website provides resources but also tells the story of how to be helpful to not make things worse for parents... I am thankful for this work here in Maine."

- A community partner



Help Me Grow (HMG) Maine is a free information line linking families and professionals to information about child development, pregnancy, and community resources for children all over Maine up to the age of eight years old.

**Families** can dial 211 option 5 to speak to a Family Support Specialist who will listen, link them to services, and provide ongoing support when needed.

**Providers** can refer families with their permission by dialing (207) 624-7969 or completing an [online referral form](#).



# Maine Families Home Visiting



- Maine Families is a **free** and **voluntary home visiting program** available for all pregnant people, expectant couples, and primary caregivers of young children in Maine.
  - Eligibility for referrals is pregnant people and children under 3.5 months, but Maine Families can serve children until age 5.
- Family Visitors utilize the **evidence-based** Parents as Teachers (PAT) model to partner with families.
- Home visiting strengthens families by supporting:
  - Increased knowledge of early childhood development
  - Universal education and screenings for the family around a variety of topics including health, safety, and well-being
  - Early detection of developmental delays
  - Positive and creative learning environments for children that prepare them for educational success
  - Assistance with family goal-setting and resource discovery
  - Social and community connectedness



# Maine Prevention Councils



Created in Statute in 1985, Maine Prevention Councils are the state-designated entities in each county that encourage and maintain **coordinated community efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect** through the provision of **family-strengthening programming**, because *strong families and supportive communities prevent child abuse and neglect*.

The Prevention Councils offer a wide range of services and supports for families and the community, that are FREE, and both in-person and virtual. These can include:

- Parenting education classes
- Supportive groups for parents and children
- Family and parenting resources, and child development information
- Family and community activities and events
- Trainings for professionals

To learn more about your local Prevention Council, please find us [here](#):



# Family First Prevention Services

---

Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018: Provides federal funding for specific evidenced based services for child welfare involved families to keep children safely at home and prevent removal from the home. It also improves the standards for youth needing Children's Residential Care Facility Services.

Only child welfare staff can make referrals to Family First programs: Homebuilders, Intercept, and Parents as Teachers Expansion (provided by Maine Families Home Visiting.)



# Access Maine and 211 Maine

**Access Maine** ([www.AccessMaine.org](http://www.AccessMaine.org)) is an online Resource Guide created as part of the FFPSA initiative. The content of the guide includes state level programs that can support and serve families and individuals in Maine.



**211 Maine** is a service directory that provides easy, free, and confidential way to help people find community-based resources that help them stay healthy, safe, and independent. Their contact center is based here in Maine.





**Together, we can keep children  
safe by keeping families strong.**



Maine Child Welfare  
Action Network