



Executive Summary

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Helping children who have been maltreated

Maltreatment can lead to diverse outcomes for children, ranging from resilience despite adversity to mental health problems. The severity, frequency and type of maltreatment influences child outcomes, as do protective factors such as good adult supports and healthy coping strategies. Interventions can also help. To determine which ones are most effective, we conducted a

systematic review of high-quality studies assessing programs designed to help children who had been maltreated. Six interventions showed benefits.

- Promoting First Relationships reduced child apprehensions due to maltreatment and improved children's behaviour and emotional responses.
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy increased children's "secure attachment" to their mothers and improved their behaviour.
- Project Support reduced physical abuse among children exposed to intimate partner violence and improved children's behaviour and emotional well-being.
- Multisystemic Therapy reduced re-abuse and out-of-home placements; it also reduced child posttraumatic stress, dissociation, and other emotional and behavioural problems.
- Fostering Healthy Futures reduced placement changes as well as child dissociation and emotional distress.
- It's My Turn Now reduced children's posttraumatic stress symptoms.

Implications for practice and policy

- **Prevent child maltreatment.** The best way to help children flourish is to support families to meet children's basic needs, including preventing maltreatment. When such efforts have not succeeded, children can still be protected from further maltreatment with programs such as Multisystemic Therapy and Project Support.
- **Ensure stable and supportive environments for children.** Steps can be taken to help make families safer even when maltreatment has occurred, through programs such as Promoting First Relationships, Multisystemic Therapy and Fostering Healthy Futures. Clearly, it is possible to ensure children's residential stability.
- **Intervene before mental health symptoms develop.** Emotional or behavioural problems can be prevented even when children have been maltreated, with programs such as Child-Parent Psychotherapy, Promoting First Relationships and It's My Turn Now.
- **Intervene quickly when symptoms do develop.** Children who have been maltreated and then develop emotional or behavioural symptoms need to receive effective interventions as quickly as possible. Programs such as Fostering Healthy Futures, Child-Parent Psychotherapy, Multisystemic Therapy, It's My Turn Now and Project Support can help.

Child maltreatment is an avoidable form of adversity that puts children at risk of continuing negative mental health and life course outcomes. Prevention is therefore imperative. Yet when maltreatment *has* occurred, interventions such as those listed above can help reduce harm for children while also supporting parents. Please see our [full issue](#) to learn more about helping children who have been maltreated. 🙌



About the Executive Summary

Here are highlights from the most recent issue of the *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly*, available for free at childhealthpolicy.ca. The *Quarterly* presents the best available research evidence on a variety of children's mental health topics. The BC Ministry of Children and Family Development funds the *Quarterly*.

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About the Children's Health Policy Centre

We are an interdisciplinary research group in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. We focus on improving social and emotional well-being for all children, and on the public policies needed to reach these goals.

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