

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment

More research is needed on how to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – May 22, 2018 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review on primary care interventions to prevent child maltreatment. The Task Force determined there is not enough evidence to assess the balance of benefits and harms of interventions to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs and is calling for more research. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

[Learn more here](#)

Child maltreatment, which includes abuse and neglect, is a serious problem that affects too many children in the United States. In 2016, approximately 676,000 children experienced some kind of child maltreatment, and many cases are not reported. Maltreatment can have immediate devastating effects, such as injury and death, and can lead to long-term negative physical and emotional consequences, such as disability, substance abuse, and depression.

The Task Force reviewed evidence on primary care interventions to prevent child maltreatment including parental education, psychotherapy, and referral to community resources, as well as home visitation programs. The Task Force also looked at the evidence on how to identify children who may be in greatest need of interventions to prevent future child maltreatment.

“No child should suffer from abuse or neglect,” says Task Force member Alex R. Kemper, M.D., M.P.H., M.S. “Unfortunately, we still do not have the evidence we need about what primary care clinicians can do to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs in children who do not show any signs of abuse or neglect.”

Protecting children from all forms of maltreatment is critical, and primary care clinicians are in a unique position to help monitor children for signs of abuse and neglect. All clinicians must remain vigilant for signs of maltreatment.

“The Task Force is calling for more research into ways primary care clinicians can help prevent maltreatment so we can better protect all children,” says Task Force member John Epling, M.D., M.S.Ed. “Future research should look at the benefits and harms of such interventions as well as how best to identify children at greatest risk of maltreatment.”

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from May 22, 2018 to June 18, 2018 at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Kemper is a board-certified pediatrician and chief of the Division of Ambulatory Pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital. He is also the deputy editor of *Pediatrics*.

Dr. Epling is a professor of family and community medicine at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke, VA. He is the medical director of research for family and community medicine, is the medical director of employee health and wellness for the Carilion Clinic, and maintains an active clinical primary care practice.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (202) 572-2044