



April is Child Abuse Prevention month, and BBBS is a recognized program for preventing child abuse! In recognition of this cause, we are encouraging communities across Alabama to raise awareness for the importance of the well-being of Alabama's children and their families. As a grant recipient of the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund, we are encouraging Bigs & Littles to engage in the following activities/discussions as we bring awareness to child abuse and neglect prevention.

- Bigs and Littles are encouraged to participate in our "Pinwheel for Prevention" match activity by making their own pinwheel. [Click here for a pdf that includes directions to make your own pinwheel or color one.](#) The pinwheel has come to serve as the national symbol of the great childhoods we want for all children. Completed pinwheels can be turned in at the office by April 27th and we will display them in our pinwheel garden at the Big Give on April 29th. The Pinwheel Garden honors children in communities nationwide but prevention cannot and does not happen alone. "Building Together: Prevention in Partnership" reminds us that we all have a role to play as healthy partners in our communities. Each day is an opportunity to build the foundation for our future.
- We are encouraging Littles to participate in our Happy Day Coloring Challenge – Have your Little create a drawing of their happiest day or simply a "Happy Day Picture". Submit their drawing by April 27th to [kelly@bbbssa.org](mailto:kelly@bbbssa.org). Several will be highlighted as we share their "Happy Days" in our community. Those highlighted will be provided a Happy Days gift pack!
- Ten Things Bigs/Parents/You Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse
  - Volunteer your time through BBBS. Get involved with other parents in your community to share preventative opportunities. Help vulnerable children and their families connect to service organizations such as BBBS as a way to prevent child abuse and neglect.
  - Discipline your children thoughtfully. Never discipline your child when you are upset. Give yourself time to calm down. Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control.
  - Examine your behavior. Abuse is not just physical. Both words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Be a nurturing parent. Use your actions to show children and other adults that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.
  - Educate yourself and others. Simple support for children and parents can be the best way to prevent child abuse. After-school activities, parent education classes, mentoring programs, and respite care are some of the many ways to keep children safe from harm. Be a voice in support of these efforts in your community.
  - Teach children their rights. When children are taught they are special and have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault, and more likely to report an offender.
  - Support prevention programs. Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported. Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs - such as mentoring programs, family counseling and home visits by nurses who provide assistance for newborns and their parents.
  - Know what child abuse is. Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, or the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide a child with needed food, clothing, and care. Children can also be emotionally abused when they are rejected, berated, or continuously isolated.
  - Know the signs. Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse. Depression, fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of family problems and may indicate a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.
  - Report abuse. If you witness a child being harmed or see evidence of abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department or local police. When talking to a child about abuse, listen carefully, assure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling an adult, and affirm that he or she is not responsible for what happened.
  - Invest in kids. Encourage leaders in the community to be supportive of children and families. Ask employers to provide family-friendly work environments. Ask your local and national lawmakers to support legislation to better protect our children and to improve their lives.