

Parent and caregiver support

Objective

Reduce harsh parenting practices and create positive parent-child relationships.

Rationale

Helping parents and caregivers to understand the importance of positive, non-violent discipline in child development and of close, effective parent-child communication reduces harsh parenting practices, creates positive parent-child interactions, and helps increase bonding between parents or other caregivers and children. These factors all help prevent violence against children.

Supporting families, parents, and caregivers to learn positive parenting techniques can reduce risks of separation from children, child maltreatment, witnessing intimate partner violence against mothers or other female caregivers, and violent behaviour among children and adolescents.

Evaluations of these programmes also indicate that this type of prevention is cheaper than paying the price for the consequences of violence against children.



Evidence-based programmes that support parents are cost-effective ways to strengthen parent-child relationships, caregiving, and the health, safety and resilience of children and families. These dynamics help prevent all types of violence throughout children's lives, from infancy into adulthood.

Support for parents and caregivers can encompass general programmes provided for all families; targeted programmes for families at higher risk for violence in the home; and support for parents and caregivers where children have experienced violence.



Promotion of positive or nurturing parenting is at the core of programmes to support parents and caregivers. These techniques help mothers, fathers, and caregivers to manage children's behaviour and offer alternatives to harsh punishment, whether physical or emotional. Support for parents and caregivers also helps them understand children's development and improve parent-child communication, both of which are protective factors against physical, emotional and sexual violence. Many programmes help parents teach their children skills (such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and social skills) that help children build resilience and avoid experiencing or perpetrating violence or bullying in the future.

Approach

● Parent training and support (delivered through home visits or in community groups)

Parenting programmes provide information and skills-building, support, and monitoring delivered by nurses, social workers, or trained lay workers through a series of home visits or community group meetings.

- **Evidence:** WHO guidelines endorse parenting programmes for reducing child maltreatment (including revictimization), with evidence from both high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries as well as in humanitarian settings.

Evidence also suggests parenting programmes may reduce co-occurring maternal intimate partner violence, although few studies have directly examined this outcome. In high-income countries only, there is promising evidence that parenting programmes can reduce youth violence, including bullying. However, there is limited evidence across

contexts that parenting programmes alone prevent child sexual abuse or abusive head trauma, and findings are more limited with mixed effects for specific at-risk populations.

● Parenting-plus programmes (parent training and support combined with other social interventions)

These programmes combine parent training and support with other services or interventions, such as substance use treatment, life-skills training, or other school-based or economic strengthening interventions.

- **Evidence:** The strongest evidence is for programmes that combine parenting support with cash transfers (covered under the *Income and economic strengthening* strategy). Other parenting-plus intervention combinations had insufficient evidence of effectiveness for prioritisation.

Intervention Type	HICs	LMICs
Parent training and support delivered through home visits or in groups in community settings on child maltreatment (including revictimization)	✓✓	✓✓
Parent training and support on youth violence (including bullying)	✓✓	—
Parent training and support on sexual abuse	✗	✗
Parent training and support on abusive head trauma	✗	✗
Combined parenting programmes and cash transfers on child maltreatment	(See cash-plus programmes under <i>Income and economic strengthening</i> strategy)	(See cash-plus programmes under <i>Income and economic strengthening</i> strategy)
Combined parenting programmes and substance use treatment on child maltreatment	✗	—
Combined parenting programmes and other social interventions on violence against children	✗	✗

- ✓✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are well-supported or supported by evidence
- ✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation have promising or emerging evidence, or are prudent
- ✗ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are not currently supported by evidence
- No new systematic reviews