



# CAP ACTION EBLAST



**Do Something! Do One Thing! One Thing Counts!**

The Child Abuse Prevention Action Committee is a collaborative group involved in the planning and promotion of child abuse prevention efforts throughout Oklahoma.

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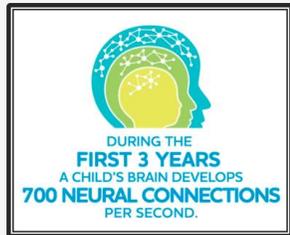
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## Child Abuse Prevention and School Readiness

### Early Experiences Matter

A young child's brain develops 700 hundred synapses a second, making his/her brain incredibly adaptive to new experiences, both positive and negative. Thus, exposure to abuse and neglect not only negatively impacts a child's physical wellbeing, but may also significantly alter their brain development, even after the abuse has ended. This, in turn, affects a child's ability to attend school ready and able to learn.



Whenever a child has more adverse experiences that create toxic stress, this overdevelops the brain's sensitivity to anxiety and fear. The more an abused or neglected child's overstimulated fear responses are activated, the critical thinking centers of a child's brain are activated less. According to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, “the end result may be that regions of the brain not connected to the fear response are not ‘available’ to the child for learning.” Toxic and chronic stress stemming from childhood abuse and neglect can also weaken their immune system, making them more susceptible to chronic illness later in life.

Early experiences lay the groundwork for all the development that follows. Overall, due to the adverse effects of abuse and neglect on a child's development, the foundation necessary for early learning and school readiness will be poorly constructed. The Frameworks Institute states that, “trying to change behavior or build new skills on a foundation of brain circuits that were not wired properly when they were first formed requires more work and is less effective” than ensuring that all children are in positive and appropriate relationships at the start. Preventing childhood abuse and neglect makes sure that our smallest citizens have the smart start they deserve. Early experiences matter. It is up to each of us to help make sure the world is a more inviting and supportive place for young children... in their home, in their school, and in their community.

**Toxic stress** - strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support.\*

#### Related Resources:

- \*[http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory\\_of\\_change/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/)
- <http://www.readynation.org/brainscience/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>
- [http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/30-2\\_Tierney.pdf](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/30-2_Tierney.pdf)

### Do just one thing! Your one thing counts!

- ✓ Write an Op-Ed for a newspaper or church bulletin about how important early learning and abuse prevention are to creating positive outcomes for children. Visit Frameworks Institute for helpful resources on writing about these issues. <http://bit.ly/19waQ31>
- ✓ Read the Harvard Center, Developing Child's Toxic Stress Information Guide. <http://bit.ly/18wDf92>
- ✓ Contact your legislator to discuss how he or she could better school readiness for your community.
- ✓ Give to charities that support school readiness and prevent abuse.
- ✓ Attend an Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) board meeting to learn about issues surrounding child well-being at the state level (meeting details below).

### Agency Spotlight

Smart Start is Oklahoma's statewide early childhood initiative and serves as the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Smart Start Oklahoma, known as the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR), is a public-private partnership that seeks to provide better opportunities to the children and families in our state. Their mission is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children. There are 18 Smart Start communities across the state, working at the local level to create better outcomes for children. Visit [www.smartstartok.org](http://www.smartstartok.org), follow on Twitter @smartstartok, or like on Facebook at Smart Start Oklahoma.

### Upcoming Events

**OPSR Board Meeting @ OK Department of Libraries**  
Tuesday, February 20, 2014, 1:00 – 4:00pm

**Upcoming CAP ACTION meetings:**  
Wed, January 17, 2014, 10:00am  
Wed, March 21, 2014, 10:00am

**CAP Day at the Capitol & Mini Conference:**  
Tuesday, April 8, 2014

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
TIP SHEETS**

**2014 Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Action begins now! [Sign Up](#) today to join efforts!**