



The American
Professional Society
on the Abuse of Children[®]

Strengthening Practice Through Knowledge

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The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Supports the American Academy of Pediatrics Updated Policy Calling on Parents to End Spanking as a Form of Discipline

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), an organization of 67,000 pediatricians committed to the optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults released an updated policy statement advising parents against the use of spanking as a disciplinary tool. They have concluded that spanking “increases aggression in young children in the long run and is ineffective in teaching a child responsibility and self-control,” and urge parents to employ more supporting forms of discipline.

[APSAC](#) commends the AAP for taking this position and urges the members of the many disciplines working with child maltreatment to implement this recommendation into your practice. National experts working with APSAC and The National Initiative to End Corporal Punishment in the United States, a partnership between APSAC, the [New York Foundling](#), and the [U.S. Alliance to End Hitting of Children](#), offer the following scientific evidence to support the harm cause by hitting children.

What we know:

- [Results from large scale studies show that](#) hitting children increases their risk for multiple detrimental outcomes. Brain development, social skills, and mental health are all at risk.
- Children carry the lessons of violence from the parental relationship into their social lives, showing greater risk for [perpetrating dating violence](#) as adolescents and [partner violence](#) as adults; this is a logical consequence of learning that violence is an appropriate way to deal with anger.
- Countries that have implemented bans on spanking [have lower rates of physical fighting among adolescents](#) compared to those that have not. This is especially relevant at a time when social violence is dominating too many news cycles.
- Most adults in the U.S. were spanked as children and justify spanking because they feel that [they turned out OK](#). Parenting practices change over time in response to new health information such as this new, strong recommendation from the AAP.

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What we can do:

The task falls to everyone working to prevent child maltreatment and promoting the wellbeing of children to correct the misconception that spanking is harmless. Professionals can reach out to educators, clergy, community-based organizations, youth serving agencies, and others to work together to empower parents to raise their children to be strong and healthy, in the safest way possible. We can encourage people to:

- Support parents when they need help and share simple techniques like redirecting a child's behavior when they are being inappropriate or withholding privileges.
- Remind parents and anyone who disciplines children that supporting positive behavior is always the best first step in seeking to change the way children act.
- Remind parents that spanking is often the result of the parent's frustration in the moment and help them realize the importance of stepping back to think before reacting.
- Refer parents to websites like the [AAP's Healthy Children](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [positive parenting tips](#).
- Encourage organizations, institutions, sports leagues, and even entire communities to become [No-Hit Zones](#).

APSAC is an interdisciplinary professional society established to address society's response to the abuse and neglect of its children by promoting effective interdisciplinary approaches to identification, intervention, treatment, and prevention of child maltreatment. We fully support this policy statement from the AAP and are optimistic about the benefits that will accrue to children and parents as more positive methods of disciplining children become the norm in the United States.

For more information or media follow-up, contact Dr. Janet Rosenzweig, APSAC Executive Director at JFRosenzweig@apsac.org.