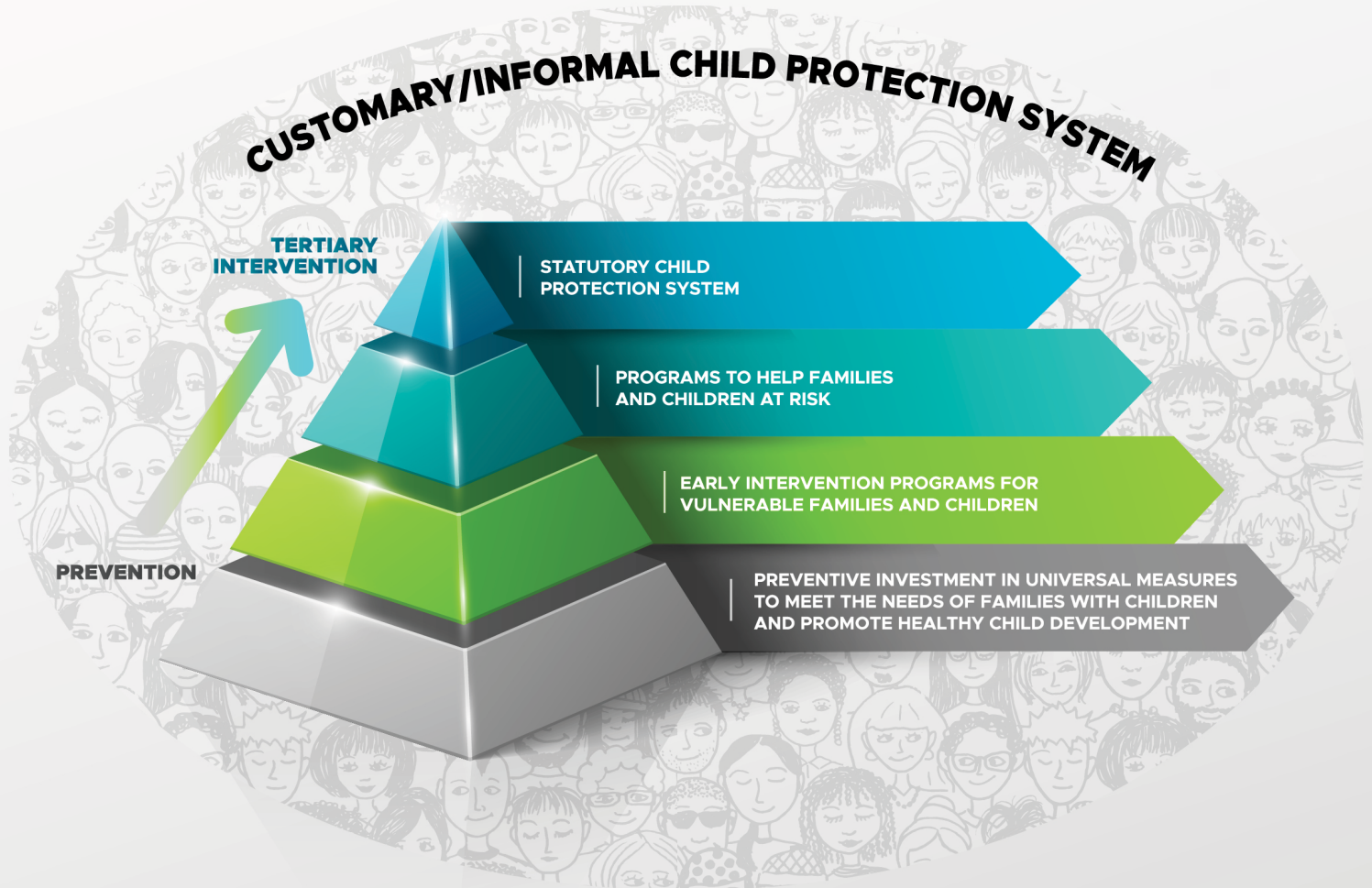


# STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN CHILD PROTECTION



This diagram represents how government can make strategic investment in child protection, starting with preventive investment in universal measures to strengthen the customary/informal child protection system and promote healthy child development, with the statutory child protection system only being brought in when prevention, primary and secondary interventions have failed. A major role of preventive investment is to protect families and children from exposure to the risk factors that inhibit healthy child development and raise the likelihood of maltreatment.

# RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD MALTREATMENT

**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 19: (1)** States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child....

The problem of child maltreatment can be defined in terms of human rights violations and understood in terms of social context, but it needs to be diagnosed and addressed as a population health issue. This means identifying and mitigating the risk factors that make child maltreatment more likely, as well as promoting the conditions that prevent it or reduce its likelihood. Factors known to be strongly associated with a heightened likelihood of maltreatment include:

## Family planning issues

including the timing or spacing of children.<sup>1</sup>

1

## Economic disadvantage

-accounts for an estimated 27.3% of maltreatment, with poverty and parental unemployment the strongest predictors (Australian data).<sup>2</sup>

2

## Parental problems with mental health, substance abuse or social instability.

*Risk of maltreatment increases exponentially as these factors interact with others including economic disadvantage and exceed 80% in the highest risk groups (Australian data).<sup>3</sup>*

3

## Parental experience of childhood abuse<sup>4</sup> or out of home care.<sup>5</sup>

4

**Exposure to domestic violence** constitutes maltreatment in its own right and is also 'very closely associated with several forms of maltreatment and exposure to other forms of family violence' (US data).<sup>6</sup>

5

## Certain disabilities in children

- intellectual disability, mental or behavioural problems, conduct disorder (Australian data).<sup>7</sup>

6

**Use of corporal punishment** - contravenes the rights of the child, is associated with a range of poor developmental outcomes for children<sup>8</sup>, and increases the likelihood of physical injury.<sup>9</sup>

7

1. For an overview and reference material see Marie Cohen's blog of April 16, 2018 [An Overlooked Approach to Child Maltreatment Prevention](#); Guterman K (2015) [Unintended pregnancy as a predictor of child maltreatment](#), *Child Abuse Negl.* 2015 Oct;48:160-9; Lukasse M et al (2015) ['Pregnancy intendedness and the association with physical, sexual and emotional abuse – a European multi-country cross-sectional study'](#), *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth.* 2015; 15: 120., May 26.
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3. Doidge et al (2017) [Risk factors for child maltreatment in an Australian population-based birth cohort](#), *Child Abuse Negl.* 2017 Feb;64:47-60.
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5. [The prevalence of intergenerational links in child protection and out-of-home care in NSW](#), FACSAR Report, August 2017.
6. Hamby et al (2010) [The overlap of witnessing partner violence with child maltreatment and other victimizations in a nationally representative survey of youth](#), *Child Abuse Negl.* 2010 Oct;34(10):734-41.
7. Maclean M, Sims S et al (2017) 'Maltreatment Risk Among Children With Disabilities' *Pediatrics*, April 2017, 139,4
8. Gershoff E & Grogan-Kaylor A (2016) 'Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses' *Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453-469 cited in Corporal punishment: Key issues, CFCA Resource Sheet — March 2017, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
9. Durrant J & Ensom R (2012) [Physical punishment of children: lessons from 20 years of research](#) *CMAJ* September 04, 184 (12) 1373-1377 additional references.