



# Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Theresa McCutcheon

Chief Development Officer

Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey

Phone: (732) 246-8060 x123

E-Mail: [tmccutcheon@preventchildabusejnj.org](mailto:tmccutcheon@preventchildabusejnj.org)

**Tuesday, April 07, 2009**

## **Sharing Responsibility for New Jersey's Children**

### **New Brunswick, NJ-**

The death of 9-year old Jamar Cruz is a call to action for the citizens of New Jersey. Children live in families and families live in communities. As members of the community, we must all ask ourselves "what could have prevented this child's death from occurring?" We must consider how we can help parents perform the most difficult job of all; raising children in safe, healthy and nurtured homes. Decades of research have informed the development of effective services to reduce the factors that cause child abuse and neglect. We need to make these services available to all families, regardless of wealth, to address factors that typically precipitate incidents of abuse and ensure that children are never harmed.

Home visiting and parent education programs can build protective factors and reduce risk factors. New Jersey has a national model of collaborative excellence in the home visitation field, bringing together various models like Healthy Families, Nurse Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers. These services educate parents about critical child development milestones, decrease a parent's social isolation, inform families about appropriate forms of discipline and empower parents (including those headed by single-parents) with knowledge and support reduces risk and builds resiliency. Parent support groups such as EPIC (Every Person Influences Children) and Circle of Parents can give parents the education and dialogue needed to foster their confidence and strengthen the decisions they make for their family.

While we must rely on the criminal justice system to deal with Jamar's perpetrator, we, as a state, must ensure that interest in his life does not end. Questions about who should have known about the family's history of abuse must be transformed into questions about what community systems and services should have been in place, and what kinds of support could have been available to families to decrease the likelihood that such a horrible act could have occurred.

We each have a responsibility to recognize the signs of child abuse and report information when child maltreatment is suspected, but these very factors imply that the abuse and neglect may be occurring already. Our greatest responsibility to children is to ensure that they never experience these symptoms.

It's time we acted as a community to examine how we can provide prevention services to all of our families in need. The well-being of a child is a shared responsibility that is critical to the fabric and integrity of our society. It takes the entire community working together to ensure that these terrible situations never happen. And when a community works together in the interest of children, child abuse and horrible tragedies like Jamar's death CAN be prevented.

Prevention services come with a cost; but so, too, does the limited availability of these critical community services. We can choose to invest in children, or experience the painful human costs later. It's time that we understand how these horrific situations occur and implement measures that will decrease the chances that another child in New Jersey will experience a tragedy like Jamar's. As a country, the United States has acted with decisiveness and unwavering commitment whenever our economic or national security has been threatened. Let's make the same commitment to nurture our greatest resource...our children. Let's act now to change the way we think about supporting families and make a commitment to prevention. Child abuse CAN be prevented. Learn more by visiting [www.preventchildabusej.org](http://www.preventchildabusej.org) or calling 1-800-CHILDREN.

Jim Hmurovich, CEO & President

Prevent Child Abuse America

Theresa McCutcheon, MSW

Prevent Child Abuse - New Jersey