

# TAKING A STAND FOR CHILDREN



Do something about it.

## THE REALITY

1 in 4 children is left alone after school

Between the hours of 3 and 6 pm, kids are most at risk of getting into trouble or becoming victims of a crime

Nearly 1 in 3 students in Greater Houston does not graduate from high school

## BUT LAST YEAR, THANKS TO UNITED WAY...

82% of children and youth in United Way programs did better in school

46,200 young people benefited from United Way mentoring programs

27,000 young people were involved in United Way after school programs

86% of moms and dads in United Way programs improved their parenting skills

In 2008, United Way laid the foundation for a good life for more than 500,000 of our kids

## UNITED WAY STANDS UP FOR CHILDREN

Today's children and youth face an array of challenges such as a lack of adult supervision after school, little or no access to activities including museums, parks or sports and difficulties with schoolwork. While the message is dire, it is the reason why United Way invests so heavily in programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring children and youth develop to their full potential. Anna Babin, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Houston, explains:

*For any community to be successful, it must make sure its children are successful. Children are like empty vessels, and we have a responsibility as a community to fill them up with positive life lessons and the skills necessary to excel in the world.*

United Way is standing up for children and youth with groundbreaking programs, after-school care, mentors, parenting classes and after-school activities. Caring supervision and positive out-of-school programs help children learn and grow.

A nurturing environment and a positive role model can set a child on the path to a better life.

United Way is taking a stand for children with groundbreaking programs like Houston's Kids. United Way leads a collaborative of community organizations in providing meaningful after-school activities that result in improved academic performance and personal growth.

Through United Way, Houston's children and youth find that parents with improved parenting skills, access to caring adults, mentoring, quality child care, help with homework and fun activities are the stuff dreams are made of. We are committed to making the dreams of young people come true.





## 10 TIPS FOR PARENTS

“Parents are busy making sure their kids are ready for the upcoming school year, and we want to ensure parents are prepared themselves,” says Anna M. Babin, president and CEO, United Way of Greater Houston. “While some of the tips seem pretty straightforward, it is always good to offer a reminder.”

### 1. Be an advocate for your child

Acquaint yourself with your child’s teacher and become a presence at your child’s school. Communicate with the teachers and staff on a regular basis. Your involvement will help your child see school as important and also will maximize his/her school experience.

### 2. Show appropriate affection towards your children

Holding, hugging and touching are critical for children to thrive. The need for affection never ends. Even adolescents and teens need affection.

### 3. Validate your child’s feelings

When your child has misbehaved, let him know that you understand or you are trying to understand how he/she feels. Validate the emotions or intentions and explain why they are not acceptable. Speak in a normal tone of voice.

### 4. Teach your kids to fish (rather than fish for them)

Many parents do everything for their kids. This only robs their children of the opportunity to learn self-reliance—a vital key to their self-esteem. Encourage your child and be supportive while making sure that he or she is completing homework and projects.

### 5. Have clear rules and boundaries, and enforce them consistently

It sounds silly, but we often don’t tell our children the rules or set boundaries. Children understand cause and effect and if we are inconsistent in certain situations—regardless of our intention—our children will learn that their inappropriate behavior is the way to get what they want. It also is important in this day and age to set boundaries and be involved in what our children are viewing on TV and at the movies; who they are interacting with over the internet and their phones; and what video games they are playing.

### 6. Positively reinforce behavior

Never use the words stupid, dumb or other negative words to describe your children or their actions. Your children will hear enough negativity from other children when adults are not present. Build them up through positive words at home, so they will be able to deflect the negative words they hear when you are not with them. Give your child a choice between two activities that you propose to reinforce the idea that life is about choices and they need to make the appropriate choice at the appropriate time.

### 7. Establish a routine

Routines give children a structure and environment that fosters feelings of security, comfort, trust and less anticipatory anxiety. They know what to expect, feel more in control, and can learn more easily. Routines give children a better understanding of their world and how they are expected to function in it. For school-aged children, this means waking up and going to bed at the designated time completing homework by a certain time each day, and giving them specific play times. It also is important to make

sure your children eat a balanced diet at regularly scheduled times.

### 8. Make sure your child gets enough sleep

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should consistently get at least 9 to 11 hours of sleep each night. When children are even slightly sleep deprived, it not only negatively affects their health, but it also can make it harder for them to control their behavior and concentrate in school.

### 9. Speak to your child at eye level

Talk with your children, not at them. For young children, this usually requires getting down on your knees or sitting on the floor, but it provides an opportunity for eye contact and reinforces what you are telling them. Also, it is important not to raise your voice.

### 10. Maintain healthy relationships with others

Whether it is with your spouse or your own friends, it is important that you model healthy relationship behavior for your children. They in turn will model those behaviors with their teachers and peers. Additionally, by having strong relationships yourself, you can show your children how to have strong and healthy relationships.

