



CHILD ABUSE

LET'S STOP THE VIOLENCE

STATISTICS

In the United States, **78.3%** of children abused suffered from neglect, **18.3%** were physically abused, **9.3%** were sexually abused, and **8.5%** were emotionally abused.

In 2012 **1,640** children died of child abuse and neglect.

Professionals such as teachers, officers, and doctors were responsible for **58.7%** reports of child abuse in 2012.

Every year more than 3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States involving more than 6 million children (a report can include multiple children).

What is child abuse and what does it look like?

The following are the most common forms of child abuse and possible warning signs.

- **Neglect:** Failure to provide for a child's basic needs.
 - **Signs:** Begs or steals food or money, lack medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses, is constantly dirty, abuses drugs or alcohol, lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- **Physical Abuse:** Is physical injury as a result of hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or otherwise harming a child.
 - **Signs:** Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes, has fading bruises, seems frightened by a particular adults, and reports injury by caregiver or other adult.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Is any situation where a child is used for sexual gratification.
 - **Signs:** Difficulty walking or sitting, reports nightmares or bedwetting, experiences sudden change in appetite, demonstrates bizarre or unusual sexual knowledge and behavior, contracts venereal disease, reports abuse and runs away.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Is any pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self worth, including constant criticism, threats, and rejection.
 - **Signs:** Shows extreme behavior such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity or aggression, is either inappropriately adult or infantile, shows delayed physical or emotional development, has attempted suicide and reports lack of attachment to parent.

Consequences Of Child Abuse



**“Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun; not living a nightmare in the darkness of the soul.”
Dave Pelzer**

Child abuse is often

linked to an increased risk of:

- *Depression*
- *Suicide Attempts*
- *Substance Abuse*
- *Developmental Disabilities and Learning Problems*
- *Teen Pregnancy*
- *Social Problems with children and adults*

- Lack of success in school

- Domestic Violence

- Chronic Illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, and lung disease.

- Victims of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) are at an increased risk of experiencing Intimate Partner Violence as adults.

- Premature sex engagement.

Reporting Child Abuse

If you are a counselor, you are a mandatory child abuse reporter, which means you:

- Have an absolute duty to report.
- Do not have to be certain; suspicion is enough to establish a duty.
- Have an obligation to report within your state’s specified time period: Specific state statues are available at www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state
- Are protected, since good faith reporting is assumed.
- Understand there is not a statute of limitations on child abuse reporting.

Most states have a toll-free number for reporting. You also can call the Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline at 1800 4 A CHILD (1800-422-4453). When you call to make a report, you may be asked the following:

- The name, address and gender of the child, and parent or caregiver
- The child’s condition, including the nature and extent of the injury
- Actions taken by the reporter, such as detaining the child



FAQ

- What can I do if I suspect child abuse or neglect?

If you suspect a child is being harmed, or has been harmed, you should report your concerns to the appropriate authorities

- Who are the appropriate authorities?

Child protective services (CPS), in the State where the child resides.

Most States have a toll-free number to call to report suspected child abuse and neglect

- How do I determine if physical discipline is considered child abuse?

Physical discipline should be reported as abuse if it leaves an injury and either harmed the child or put the child's health and

- Can child sexual abuse also involve a child abusing another child?

YES. More than a third of those who sexually abuse children are under the age of 18 themselves. In many instances, especially with younger children, a child may not understand that his or her forceful sexual actions toward another child are harmful.

- What stops us from seeing abuse?

It's very disturbing to imagine that someone you know could be harming a child. Without certain proof of abuse, it's so much easier to dismiss such thoughts or to think you're overreacting. Common misunderstandings about abuse often contribute to that denial. When adults trust their gut feelings and speak up, they can prevent abuse from happening.

Signs of Child Abuse

1. Unexplained Injuries
2. Changes in Behavior
3. Returning to Earlier Behaviors
4. Fear of Going Home
5. Changes in Eating
6. Changes in Sleeping
7. Changes in School Performance and Attendance
8. Lack of Personal Care or Hygiene
9. Risk Taking Behavior
10. Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors
11. Untreated Medical Problems



RESOURCES

Counselors

Parents

Educators

How can counselors and educators help parents?

- **Understand that parents' reactions** (including anger, resentment, or avoidance) may be a reaction to trauma.
- **Assess a parent's history** to understand how past traumatic experiences may inform current functioning and parenting.
- **Refer parents to evidence-based, trauma-informed services** whenever appropriate.
- **Remember that parents who have experienced trauma are not "bad."** Blaming or judging them is likely to make the situation worse, rather than motivating them to make changes.
- **Recognize that all parents want their children to be safe and healthy.** Compliment parents' good decisions and healthy choices, when you see them.
- Model direct and honest communication.
- Establish clear **boundaries and expectations**. Be consistent. When you make a commitment, follow through.
- Be aware that you could experience secondary/vicarious traumatic stress, which can occur when you see or hear about trauma to others. Take care of yourself and take time to address your own reactions, when you feel you are getting overwhelmed.

How can parents help their children heal from trauma?

- **Help your child feel safe.** Stay calm and keep a regular routine for meals, play time, and bedtime. Prepare children in advance for any changes or new experiences.
- **Encourage children to talk about their feelings.** Tell children it is normal to have many feelings after a trauma. Listen to their stories; take their reactions seriously, correct any misinformation about the traumatic event, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.
- **Provide extra attention, comfort, and encouragement.**
- **Teach children to relax.** Encourage them to practice slow breathing, listen to calming music, or say positive things ("That was scary, but I'm safe now").
- Be aware of your **own response to trauma**.
- Remember that everyone heals differently from trauma.
- **Find help when needed.** If your child's problems last more than a few weeks, or if they get worse rather than better, ask for help. Find a mental health professional who knows proven strategies to help children cope with trauma.

Further Training for Counselors on Child Abuse

Professionals looking to gather more training on prevention and intervention strategies for child abuse can utilize **Child Victim Web**, a multimedia, online training, resource for professionals in the child advocacy and trauma response fields.

Child Victim Web is free and is equivalent to 8 hours of CE credits.

It includes access to effective assessment strategies, evidence based treatments, trauma management skills, care strategies, interactive tools including interviews with leading experts and online courses.

MUSC
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTH CAROLINA
National Child Victim
Research & Treatment Center

DEFENDING
CHILDHOOD
PROTECT HEALTHY
The First Non-Profit
Lowcountry Children's Center
CHILDREN'S
RESILIENCY

CHILD VICTIM Web

Home Register Login Introduction Resources Contact Us

- Overview of Child Victimization
- Psychological and Behavioral Impact
- Social and Health Consequences
- Criminal Justice and Child Advocacy
- Assessment Strategies
- Evidence-Based Treatment Planning
- Case Management Skills for Treatment Success
- Evidence-Supported Treatments

A Resource for Professionals System Requirements | Credits

This website is funded through a grant from the Office of Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Neither the U.S. Department of Justice nor any of its components operate, control, are responsible for, or necessarily endorse, this website.

CEU Statement
Copyright © 2013 Medical University of South Carolina

Child Protective Services Resources

National Child Abuse Hotline

24/7 Services Number: 1-800-422-4452

References

Child Help. *The parent as a coach*. Retrieved from <https://www.childhelp.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/3fs.pdf>

Hattery, A., & Smith, E. (2012). *The social dynamics of family violence*. New York, NY: Westview Press.

National Childrens Alliance. (2013). *Child victim web*. Retrieved from http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/sites/default/files/download-files/NCA_flyer_childvictimweb_FINAL_web.pdf

Stone, C. (2013). *School counseling principles: Ethics and Law (3rd ed.)*. Alexandria, VA: The American School

Compiled by: Jennie Altieri, Richard Genus, Daniela Montealegre, Karen Thompson, and Elizabeth Wahl (2015) George Mason University.