



Child Abuse and Neglect

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How large is the problem?

National statistics on the amount of child abuse and neglect are difficult to obtain because states use different definitions. Some states report only substantiated cases that have been verified according to state law. Other states report and combine both the number of substantiated and indicated cases. In indicated cases of abuse there is reason to suspect abuse or neglect, but less evidence to prove it.

In the United States it is estimated that for every 1,000 children, there were approximately 15 cases of substantiated abuse and neglect. Missouri's rate of 15 cases per 1,000 children mirrors the national figure.

What behaviors are abusive?

There are five general categories of child maltreatment: (1) physical abuse, (2) sexual abuse, (3) emotional abuse, (4) neglect, and (5) other. Each of these includes a list of behaviors in its definition. Physical abuse includes scolding, beating or severe physical punishment. Sexual abuse includes incest, sexual assault, fondling of genital areas, exposure to indecent acts or involvement in sexual pornography. Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse

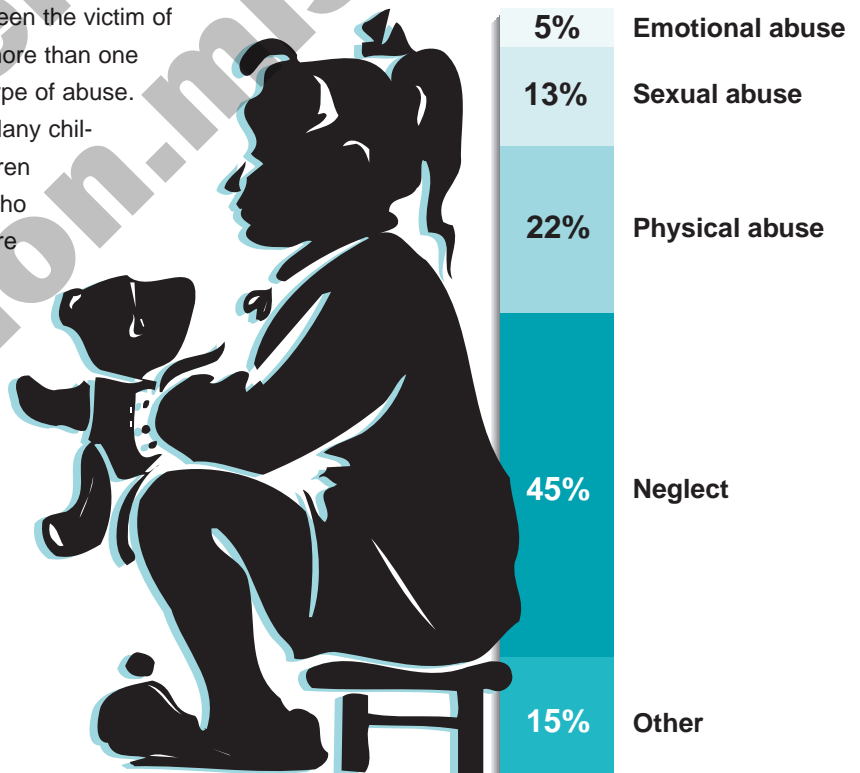
and belittlement, terrorizing acts, and lack of nurturance or emotional support. Neglect occurs when a parent/care giver fails to meet the child's educational, supervisory, and medical needs. The "other" category includes abandonment, prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs, and threats to harm the child.

Often a child has been the victim of more than one type of abuse. Many children who are

known to have been physically abused or neglected have also been sexually abused. Such sexual abuse may or may not be reported.

What causes abuse and neglect?

Researchers no longer believe that it is only the poor mental health of the



Although accurate national statistics on child abuse and neglect are difficult to obtain, reports of maltreatment generally fall into these five categories.

parent or care giver that causes child abuse and neglect. Other factors that may be involved include financial stress and poverty, adult use of alcohol and other drugs, a lack of parenting skills and basic knowledge of child development, and the community and family in which the child lives.

Adults abuse children in different ways. For example, physical abusers tend to be lonely, angry, anxious and unable to make and keep close relationships with family members and friends. Neglectful adults, on the other hand, seem to be immature and unable to make life decisions about marriage, employment or having children.

What can be done to prevent child abuse and neglect?

The number of children who are abused and neglected will not decline without major efforts by federal, state and local officials to: (1) reduce poverty, (2) prevent and treat substance abuse, (3) educate new parents on basic child development and parenting skills, and (4) rebuild communities and support children and families. The following types of programs have been shown to have a positive effect on preventing child abuse and neglect:

- Home visiting by volunteers or professionals
- Education of new parents immediately after child delivery
- Parent education classes
- Family preservation services that combine several programs
- Time-out programs for stressed parent/care givers
- Education of children about self-protection
- Education of children in “self-care” or latchkey situations
- Programs targeting pregnant or parenting teenagers
- Media programs and campaigns

What are some signs of abuse?

- Welts, bruises, bruises in various stages of healing, cigarette burns or other skin injuries
- Dirty or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Dirty appearance and lack of basic hygiene (i.e. dental care)
- Severely abnormal eating habits and/or malnourished appearance
- Tired and listless much of the time
- Poor physical and/or emotional development for the child’s age
- Extreme behavior: unusually aggressive or destructive, extremely passive and withdrawn, excessive crying, or lack of response to pain or pleasure
- Intense fear of parents, men and/or strangers, or extreme efforts to please a parent or parents
- Habitual absence from or late to school

What can I do?

If you witness or suspect that a child is a victim of maltreatment you must help. There are various programs in Missouri that offer assistance to both parents and children who are in violent situations. Reports of abuse should be made by telephone to the state’s toll free hotline number (1-800-392-3738), county police departments or welfare offices as soon as possible.

Mandated reporters are individuals who have direct contact and supervision or care of children — they are required by law to report instances of abuse. Examples of mandated reporters include, but are not limited to, teachers, child care workers, medical personnel, dentists, social workers and law enforcement. Mandated reporters are responsible for reporting abuse or neglect when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been the victim of maltreatment. Mandated

reporters must make a report when they suspect a child has been or may be subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse of neglect.

If you voluntarily report an instance of abuse, your identity will be kept confidential. However, you will be asked to give information on how you may be contacted if further investigation is needed. Your name will not be revealed as reporter of the incident of maltreatment.

When should I call the hotline?

Calls to the hotline should be made as soon as possible when abuse/neglect or maltreatment is witnessed or suspected. In order for the hotline to accept a report, it is important for the reporter to know the identity of the child, parents and the alleged perpetrator, and where the child can be located. There must be specific allegations of abuse or neglect, and the alleged perpetrator must have care, custody and control of the child. Other questions which will be asked by staff from the hotline include:

- How do you know about the abuse and neglect?
- Were there other witnesses and how can they be contacted?
- What is the present location of the child?
- Is the child currently in a safe location?

These numbers are available to assist you in your efforts to report cases of abuse and neglect:

- Missouri Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline 1-800-392-3738 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- Child Help U.S.A. Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline 1-800-422-4453
- Parent Stress Help line 1-800-367-2543
- Child Abuse and Neglect (314) 751-3348 (Reporting and Assistance)

Where can I find more information?

- 1) Division of Family Services in your community
- 2) Missouri Chapter-National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse/Neglect
308 High Street
Suite 303
Jefferson City, MO 65101
(573) 634-5223
- 3) Children's Trust Fund
PO Box 1641
1719 Southridge
Jefferson City, MO 65102-1641
(314) 751-5147
- 4) Missouri Department of Health
Bureau of Family Health
PO Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570
(573) 751-6215
- 5) National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect
8201 Greensboro Dr.
Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102
(703) 821-2086

Books

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- Englander, E. K. 1997. *Understanding Violence*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
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6) *With a Little Help From My Friends*. 1988. Purdue Child In Your Life Series/University Extension – Indiana. "Parental Stress."

Manuals

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4) Koralek, D. 1992. *Caregivers of Young Children: Preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment*.

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6) *Campaign Against Family Violence: Program Resources*. Health and Information Resources Coordinator, AMA Alliance 515 N. State Street, Chicago, IL 60610 (312) 464-4470.



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