

New Hope for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

*Proven solutions to save lives
and prevent future crime*

A report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a non-profit organization supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS receives no funds from federal, state or local governments.

Major funding is provided by:

Afterschool Alliance • Chicago Community Trust • Robert Sterling Clark Foundation • Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation • Freddie Mac Foundation • Garfield Foundation • Grable Foundation • William T. Grant Foundation • Harris Foundation • Heinz Endowments • James Irvine Foundation • Robert Wood Johnson Foundation • Walter S. Johnson Foundation • Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation • W.K. Kellogg Foundation • McCormick Tribune Foundation • J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation • Charles Stewart Mott Foundation • David and Lucile Packard Foundation • William Penn Foundation • Penney Family Fund • Pew Charitable Trusts • Rauch Foundation • Rockefeller Brothers Fund • Rockefeller Family Fund • The After-School Corporation • The California Endowment • The California Wellness Foundation

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Publication design by Dini Stewart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction: Needed: A Comprehensive Initiative to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect	4
Chapter One: The Hidden Toll of One Year Of Child Abuse and Neglect	6
Chapter Two: Research Shows Abuse and Neglect Can Be Prevented	11
Chapter Three: Saving Money While Protecting Kids and Preventing Future Crime	19
Chapter Four: From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call to Action	22
Appendices: A: Technical Notes on Estimating the Number of Violent Criminals, Murderers, and Those Who Attempt Suicide Who Will Emerge from Those Children Abused and Neglected in 2001 B: Federal Programs That are Used to Provide Funding for Child Welfare	24
Endnotes:	27

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Executive Summary

New Hope for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS has taken a hard-nosed look at what works—and what doesn't work—to cut crime and violence. Exciting new research, combined with prior evidence, shows that most abuse and neglect in high-risk families can now be prevented. Doing so will spare millions of children from terror, agony, and despair and will save thousands of lives. Sharply reducing abuse and neglect will save billions of dollars, while greatly reducing the number of children growing up to be violent criminals.

The Annual Toll: Over 2,000 Deaths; The Future Toll: 35,000 Violent Criminals

Official figures mask the real toll of child abuse and neglect in America. Although there are 900,000 cases officially verified for one year, the best estimate of the real number of children abused or neglected each year is closer to 2.7 million. Deaths from abuse and neglect likely exceed 2,000 a year, instead of the 1,300 officially reported. Forty percent of those killed die before their first birthday.

While most victimized children never become violent criminals, being abused or neglected sharply increases the risk that children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime. The best available research indicates that, of the 900,000 children who had confirmed cases of abuse or neglect in one year, an additional 35,000 violent criminals and more than 250 murderers will emerge as adults who would never have become violent criminals if not for the abuse and neglect they endured as children.

Research Shows Most Abuse and Neglect in High-risk Families Can Be Prevented

Failure to invest now in programs proven to prevent child abuse and neglect puts every American at greater risk from crime. The more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and crime victims who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids call on state and federal governments to:

- **Offer coaching in parenting skills to all at-risk parents.** When the Nurse Family Partnership Program randomly assigned at-risk mothers to receive home visits by nurses providing coaching in parenting and other skills, children whose mothers were left out of the program were five times more likely to be abused or neglected as the children whose moms received parent coaching. Children of mothers left out later had twice as many arrests as the children of mothers who received home visits. Similarly, the Healthy Families program in Hawaii showed that high-risk families who did not receive parent coaching were six times more likely to have a child hospitalized for abuse or neglect than similarly high-risk families who were coached.

- **Offer quality pre-kindergarten programs with parent-training for at-risk children.** The Chicago Child Parent Center preschool program in low-income neighborhoods cut the abuse and neglect of children in the program in half, compared to similar children not in the program.

Youngsters left out of the program were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those enrolled.

- **Ensure that pregnant women who are addicted have access to drug and alcohol treatment programs.** Drug use during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with brain damage. Further, fetal alcohol syndrome is the leading cause of preventable mental retardation. The interaction of neurological damage at birth with deficient parenting multiplies the risk of criminality later in life. Research shows that an effective drug and alcohol treatment program in Baltimore for pregnant women dramatically reduced the number of premature babies born at risk of suffering permanent brain damage that can lead to later criminality.

- **Provide mental health services for depressed or mentally ill parents.** People who grew up with a household member who was depressed, mentally ill, or who attempted suicide were two times more likely to have been physically abused than those who did not grow up in such a household. Just like other ill parents, depressed or mentally ill parents can effectively raise children if they receive treatment. Yet studies show only 25 percent of individuals suffering from depression receive adequate care for their illness.

Saving Lives, Preventing Crime and Saving Money

Child abuse and neglect cost America upwards of \$80 billion a year. Two-thirds of that is crime costs. Preventing child abuse and neglect will save lives, reduce crime and save taxpayers money. For example, the RAND Corporation found that nurse home visitation programs saved taxpayers four dollars for each dollar invested. The Chicago Child-Parent Centers preschool program saved taxpayers almost three dollars for every dollar invested, and the Baltimore drug treatment program for pregnant women paid for itself before the children even left the neo-natal intensive care unit.

Law Enforcement Leaders are United

Law enforcement leaders and crime victims are united in calling for investments to protect children from abuse and neglect, save taxpayers' dollars, and make life safer for all Americans.

This call has been endorsed by leading national and state law enforcement and anti-crime organizations including: the Major Cities Chiefs' Organization, the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National District Attorneys' Association and the National Organization for Victim Assistance, as well as the 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and victims of violence who make up FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS.

The evidence is in. We can save billions while preventing most abuse and neglect in high-risk families. The time to act is now.



Introduction

Needed: A Comprehensive Initiative To Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect

Today, like every other day, thousands of defenseless children will be terrorized, battered, bruised, left unfed, ignored, violated sexually or killed by the very people they instinctively trust and turn to for love and nurturing. On a typical day, at least five children are killed by abuse or neglect¹ and two of those five are infants under a year old.² These are the chilling realities of child abuse and neglect in America.

Creating Children Primed for Violence

However, the terror does not stop there. Dr. Bruce Perry, a neurobiologist and authority on brain development and children in crisis, explains how severe neglect or abuse can permanently injure children in ways that make them much more susceptible to violence.

Perry writes: “The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life... With severe emotional neglect in early childhood the impact can be devastating.”³ Perry explains that severely neglected children frequently respond with aggression and cruelty that “is often accompanied by a detached, cold lack of empathy.”⁴ Physically abused children can develop post traumatic stress disorders. Even when nothing is threatening them, their brains become “stuck” in high alert, with very high resting heart rates and high levels of stress hormones in their blood. These children are, “overly quick to interpret others’ actions as threatening, and quick to respond aggressively in their own defense.”⁵ Perry warns that “the most dangerous children are created by a malignant combination of experiences. Developmental neglect and traumatic stress during childhood create violent, remorseless children.”⁶

A Cycle of Violence

This report will show that thousands of the children who are abused or neglected every year will grow up to be violent criminals, and that hundreds will become murderers. Others will kill themselves. This terror spreads widely through our communities and reaches well beyond the original victims. Indeed, the tragedy sometimes continues generation after generation in a cycle of violence as some of the parents who were abused and neglected as children turn on their own children.

The members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS are law enforcement leaders and crime victims. Like most Americans, they believe that individuals must be held accountable for their own actions, no matter what life has dealt them. A great many abused and neglected children go on to lead productive, non-violent lives. Therefore, predicting that certain groups of individuals are at greater risk of future crime is not the same as excusing any individual’s actions.

But FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS’ members also know that no punishment can bring back a loved one who has been killed or maimed or undo the fear and agony that crime leaves in its wake. They know that our most powerful weapons against crime are the proven programs that

can keep kids from ever growing up to be criminals in the first place. The best way to stop a violent criminal or murderer is to make sure he or she never becomes one.

America's current child protection, foster care and adoption systems are falling far short of what needs to be done to protect and heal the children who are already victims. But that will be the subject of another report. This report focuses on recently confirmed strategies that can prevent abuse and neglect before children are harmed.

The evidence is now conclusive: it is possible to prevent most abuse and neglect in high-risk families. Recent and exciting new research shows that—instead of just waiting for the next horror story to splash across the news—America can prevent abuse and neglect before children are hurt. Doing so will not only save thousands of lives now, but will prevent thousands of violent crimes when these children grow older.

Government Is Investing Far Too Little to Protect America's Vulnerable Children

Local, state and federal governments are failing to make the investments necessary to prevent child abuse and neglect. Indeed, government is not even adequately tracking the extent of the problem. In a society obsessed with statistics—we know how many people see a new movie the weekend it opens or how many households have only one TV—data on abused and neglected children are woefully inadequate. The national system set up to track abuse and neglect deaths reported there were 1,300 deaths in 2001. But a report from the Justice Department says the true figure for deaths from abuse and neglect each year is really 2,000.⁷

Do any Americans have a greater right than innocent children to expect that the government will do everything possible to protect them? Most Americans feel that preventing child abuse and neglect should be at the top of government priorities. In a poll conducted by Mason Dixon Polling and Research, 82 percent of the public said preventing abuse and neglect should be either a top or high priority for government, even higher than the 72 percent who picked improving schools as a top or high priority.⁸

However, federal and state budgets tell us that majorities of policy-makers have not made protecting children from abuse and neglect a high priority. In fact, the federal government in recent years has been moving in the wrong direction, actually cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from the Social Services Block Grant, the single largest source of support for child abuse and neglect prevention services.

Shortchanging the prevention of abuse and neglect is cruel. But it also quickly costs taxpayers far more than it saves. This report reveals that investing wisely now in abuse and neglect prevention will prevent later crime and other expensive social problems, saving billions of dollars.

Law Enforcement Leaders Are United

Law enforcement leaders know that preventing abuse and neglect is among the most powerful steps we can take to prevent crime and violence.

Asked in a national survey which of various strategies to reduce youth crime was “most effective,” America's police chiefs selected “parent coaching for high risk families” by a four-to-one margin over “prosecuting more juveniles as adults” and by a thirteen-to-one margin over “metal detectors in schools.”⁹

The crazy quilt of under-funded federal, state and local abuse and neglect prevention programs is full of gaping holes. Instead of a stitch here and a patch there, the 2,000 sheriffs, police chiefs, prosecutors and victims of violence who make up FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS are calling on state and federal officials to fund a comprehensive, research-driven initiative to eliminate most abuse and neglect in high-risk families.

Chapter 1

The Hidden Toll of One Year Of Child Abuse and Neglect

From shocking accounts on the evening news, most Americans are aware of the severe abuse and neglect some children suffer. Few Americans realize, however, how many children are victims of abuse and neglect. According to official statistics, over 900,000 American children were victims of abuse or neglect in 2001. Thirteen hundred of those children died.¹⁰ Of those, 40 percent were killed before their first birthday.¹¹

Even these tragic figures are only a part of the story of what took place in 2001. As will be discussed later, the real number of children actually abused and neglected each year, including those who were never reported or who were reported but not confirmed, was likely three times higher, or 2.7 million children in 2001.¹² And the real number of deaths was not 1,300, but more likely 2,000 according to a report released by the Justice Department.¹³

Furthermore, what happened in 2001 is not the end of this tragedy. Though many

“The real number of children actually abused and neglected...was likely...2.7 million children in 2001...the real number of deaths...2,000”

abused and neglected children grow up to lead happy, productive lives, children who live through abuse or neglect are far more likely than other children to go on to harm

or kill someone else—or themselves.

This chapter will explore how many children who were abused and neglected in 2001 will grow up to try to kill themselves, and will estimate how many of the 900,000 children who were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect will become violent criminals or even murderers.

A year’s toll of abuse and neglect cuts a wide swath of suffering and death through our society. The toll reaches well into the future, and well beyond the initial victims.

Finding the Children

In 2001, child protective service agencies across the United States received 2,672,000 referrals of alleged abuse or neglect. Initial screening resulted in almost a third of those referrals receiving no further investigation. Some were ruled out because they did not legally qualify as abuse or neglect. Others were not judged as credible. However, because of frequent shortages of experienced staff in many agencies, some reports were not investigated because there simply were not enough staff to investigate all credible reports. Child protective service agencies were able to confirm that 903,000 of the children referred to them were victims of abuse and neglect in 2001.¹⁸

Once abuse or neglect is confirmed, the child welfare system can offer services to the parents, services to the child, or, with a court’s approval, remove the child from the home to be placed in foster care or with other relatives. Adoption may become an option. Although treating child abuse and

What is Abuse and Neglect?

Each state defines child abuse and neglect through its own state laws. Criminal statutes specify the forms of maltreatment that are punished as crimes while civil laws guide family court decisions on whether the parent should lose custody of a child because of abuse or neglect.

According to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, this is what constitutes the three main forms of abuse and neglect:¹⁴

Physical abuse generally means inflicting physical injury by punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking or otherwise physically harming a child.

Child neglect generally means failing to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational or emotional. Physical neglect includes failing to provide enough food, allowing unsanitary living conditions, failing to seek medical care, or abandonment and inadequate supervision. Educational neglect includes allowing chronic truancy or failing to enroll a child in school. Emotional neglect includes extreme inattention to the child's needs for affection. Assessing child neglect requires consideration of cultural values and standards of care, as well as recognition that the failure to provide the necessities of life may be related to poverty.

Sexual abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, or commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Although neglect may be unintentional and thus may seem less serious, it can be just as dangerous, and even harder to heal.¹⁵ A baby who goes unfed or unloved because a mother is too depressed or addicted to care for her child may have physical and emotional injuries that will last a lifetime because the child's brain was unable to develop adequately at crucial stages.¹⁶ Research also shows that neglect is as likely as physical abuse to lead to future criminal behavior when a child reaches adulthood.¹⁷

neglect and preventing further harm is critical, this report focuses on preventing abuse and neglect, not treating it.

It should be noted, however, that the lion's share of child welfare funding goes to provide maintenance support for the relatively few abused and neglected children who are placed in foster care or the even fewer children who are eventually adopted. Foster care and adoptive parents provide an invaluable resource. However, nationally, six in ten children who are abused and neglected stay with their parents because providing careful monitoring and/or services is sometimes seen by social workers as less traumatic for the child, or because foster care services are scarce and no relative is available

to care for the child. Another two in ten, though initially removed, will return to their parents.¹⁹ Yet, services for children and parents once they come to the attention of the child welfare system are woefully inadequate.²⁰

As bad as that is for the children with confirmed cases of abuse and neglect, it is only part of the story. The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, conducted in 1995, concluded that the true number of children abused or neglected each year is three times the officially recognized number. This includes children that social workers missed when they conducted their investigation, children screened out without an investigation, and all the children who

were never reported to authorities in the first place because no one knew about them or whoever knew was unwilling to make a report. Three times the 2001 figure of 903,000 confirmed cases would equal 2.7 million children abused and neglected in that year.

A further indication of the seriousness of these 'missed' children is the fact that over half of all the children who die from abuse or neglect were previously unknown to child protective services.²¹

2000 Children Die from Abuse and Neglect Each Year

In 2001, official reports to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) recorded 1,300 children killed by abuse or neglect.²² Other studies show that the true number is much higher. In California, an exhaustive review discovered that, in 1996 and 1997, the number of children who died from abuse and neglect was nearly three times the number reported through the official NCANDS system.²³ In Georgia, when a state abuse and neglect fatality review board was instituted, official reports of deaths from abuse and neglect jumped 76 percent from the previous year.²⁴ An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that North Carolina had systematically undercounted deaths in the state from abuse and neglect by a factor of three.²⁵

The National Center on Child Fatality Review concludes in a 2001 report released by the Justice Department that "an estimated 2,000 children in the United States die of child abuse and neglect each year."²⁶

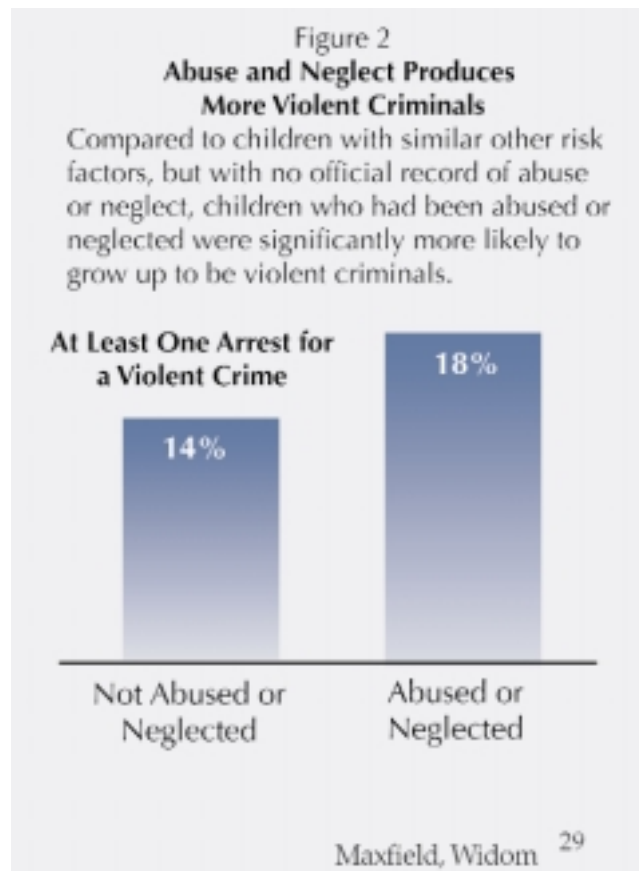
Child Abuse and Neglect Produces 36,000 Additional Violent Criminals Each Year

The abuse or neglect inflicted on children is heart-wrenching, almost beyond comprehension. Too often, however, that abuse or neglect is only the first step in a long, sometimes multi-generational, tragedy. While most victimized children will never commit a violent crime, being abused or

neglected sharply increases the risk that children will become violent criminals as adults. When that happens, abuse and neglect launches a cycle of violence that endangers us all, and victimizes many thousands of additional innocent people.

Although surveys report varying numbers, it is clear that a high percentage of criminals were abused or neglected as children. One review of the literature on prior abuse and neglect concluded that approximately half of the youth arrested for delinquency had been abused and or neglected earlier in their lives.²⁷ Many of these individuals, however, also had other risk factors in their lives, such as poverty or growing up in high-crime neighborhoods, so it cannot be concluded from these surveys alone that abuse and neglect was necessarily the only cause of their later criminal behavior.

In an effort to isolate the impact of abuse and neglect by controlling for other factors, Dr. Cathy Spatz Widom, a professor of psychology at the New Jersey Medical School, found individuals who had been



abused and neglected as children and compared them to otherwise similar individuals who had no official record of abuse or neglect. By studying the subsequent arrest records, and controlling for other demographic risk factors, Dr. Widom found that being abused and neglected almost doubles the odds that a child will commit a crime as a juvenile.²⁸

As for violent crime, Widom found that 18 percent of the abused or neglected youngsters went on to be arrested for a violent crime either as juveniles or as adults, compared to 14 percent of similar individuals who had not been abused or neglected as children—a difference of 4 percentage points.²⁹

Applying Widom's findings to the 903,000 confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in 2001, means that approximately 36,000 additional individuals will be arrested for at least one violent crime beyond the number of those who would have been arrested had the abuse or neglect never occurred. In other words, the abuse or neglect will result in at least 36,000 additional violent criminals. (See Appendix A for a longer explanation of the estimates of future violent criminals, murderers, and individuals who will attempt suicide).

Widom cautions that her research does not indicate whether the same relationship would hold for unconfirmed cases of abuse or neglect, since those children may not have been as seriously harmed as the individuals whose abuse or neglect was confirmed. However, there are twice as many cases of unconfirmed abuse or neglect. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 36,000 figure will prove to be a significant underestimate of the number of additional violent criminals arising out of the children who were abused and neglected in 2001.

Murders: What Does This Mean for Homicides?

Children who are abused and neglected are not only more likely than other children

to commit crimes as adults, but they are also more likely than other criminals to be arrested at a younger age, a well-known risk factor that indicates these children might become both more serious and more chronic offenders, committing more crimes over their lifetimes.³⁰

For example, a study done in Sacramento County, CA showed that children between

“...produces a figure of 250 additional individuals arrested for murder...from the children abused and neglected in 2001”

the ages of nine and twelve reported to have been abused or neglected were 67 times more likely to be arrested than other children in that age group. Six percent of those reported abused or neglected had already been arrested by age twelve, compared to less than one-tenth of one percent of other children in that age group.³¹

In their Rochester Youth Development study, Carolyn Smith and Terence Thornberry found that the more frequent and severe the maltreatment, the more likely the child was to commit more frequent and more violent acts of delinquency.³⁷

Perhaps most frightening, researchers who have extensively interviewed very violent offenders are convinced that severe abuse or neglect was a defining influence in almost all of these violent offenders' lives.³ Researchers Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus interviewed 14 of the 37 juveniles under death sentences in 1986 and 1987. They found that only one of those interviewed had not suffered childhood family violence and severe physical abuse.³⁴ Similar conclusions have been reached by John Douglas, one of the experts who helped the FBI develop violent criminal profiles.³⁵

Again, we choose in this report the most

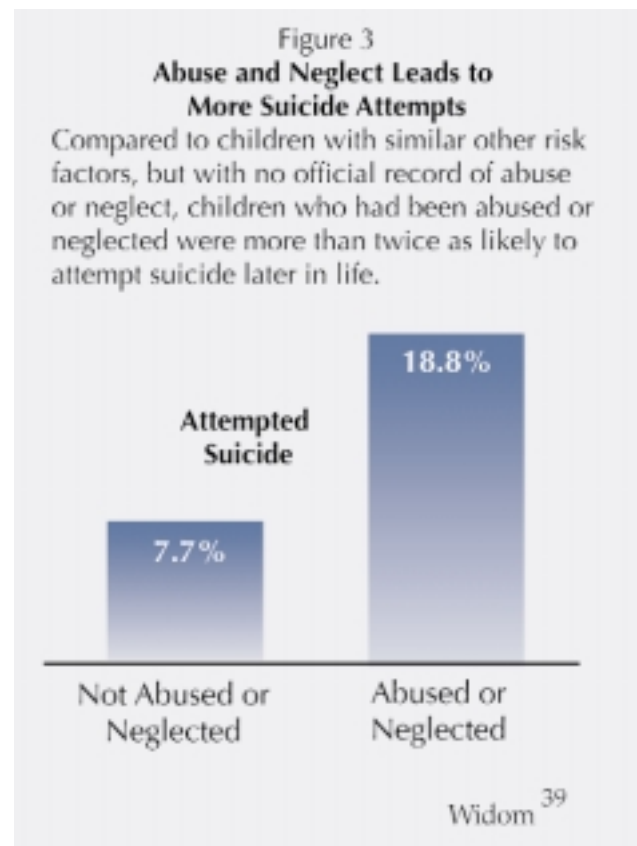
conservative estimate of the number of additional crimes resulting from abuse and neglect. Thus, for these purposes, we first do not include the estimated 1.8 million unconfirmed cases of abuse and neglect. We also assume for this purpose that abused and neglected children are no more likely than other criminals to commit murder.

Nationally 0.7 percent of all violent crime arrests³⁶ are for murder or non-negligent manslaughter.³⁷ Applying that percentage to the at least 36,000 projected future arrests for a violent crime produces a figure of 250 additional individuals arrested for murder over and above those who would have been arrested anyway, from the children abused or neglected in 2001. The real number of murderers is almost certainly higher.

Child Abuse and Neglect Leads to Lost Employment, Failed Marriages, and Suicide

Most abused or neglected children never become involved in violent crime. Many grow up to lead happy, productive lives. However, research by Widom and others shows that abuse and neglect often continues to exact a heavy toll on its victims—and on society—for the rest of their lives. For example, individuals who were not abused or neglected as children were 40 percent more likely to be employed, and 50 percent more likely to have stable marriages than similar individuals who had been abused or neglected.³⁸

Victims of child abuse or neglect are also more likely than other children to attempt suicide as they grow older. Widom's research indicates that 18.8 percent of abused or neglected children later attempted suicide, compared to 7.7 percent of similar children who had not been abused and neglected.³⁹ Thus, abuse and neglect victims were almost two and a half times more likely to attempt suicide than others. This means that over 100,000 additional people will ultimately attempt suicide who would not have, had they not been victims of abuse or neglect back in 2001. Although how many of these abused or neglected individuals will succeed



in killing themselves cannot be reliably estimated, thousands undoubtedly will succeed, and that is a terrible tragedy.⁴⁰

A Cycle of Violence

Research shows that too often negative behaviors and consequences, violent or otherwise, are passed on to the next generation, and the cycle continues. One rigorous study showed that poor mothers who had been severely physically abused as children were 13 times more likely to abuse their children than mothers who had emotionally supportive parents.⁴¹

Chapter 2

Research Shows Abuse and Neglect Can Be Prevented

If we act against abuse and neglect only after each case occurs, we will always be too late. Children will already have been hurt. Over half of all children who die from abuse or neglect had never come to the attention of child protective services.⁴²

Even when children are identified as victims, healing their physical and emotional injuries is difficult. For millions more children we will never have an opportunity even to attempt to repair the damage because they will never be identified as abuse or neglect victims by child protective services.⁴³ For these unidentified victims, prevention is their only hope.

At last, research has provided tested, proven solutions that can prevent the majority of child abuse in high-risk families.

Programs that help families develop parenting skills and programs that treat drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness and depression have now been proven effective in preventing child abuse and neglect. To protect vulnerable children—and ourselves—these programs must be made available to all families that need them before abuse or neglect can take place.

RECOMMENDATION: Offer coaching in parenting skills to all at-risk parents

Parent coaching for at-risk parents can dramatically reduce abuse and neglect.

Who are those “at-risk” parents? Some families face many more difficulties than other families. While there are parents from all income levels and walks of life who abuse

and neglect their children, the demographic factors that are most closely associated with child abuse and neglect are well known.

About half of the families referred to Child Protective Services for abuse or neglect are receiving welfare at the time, and more than half received assistance in the past.⁴⁴ In a study conducted in Illinois, 40 percent of the children placed into foster care were from families on welfare and another 20 percent were from families that had been on welfare recently.⁴⁵

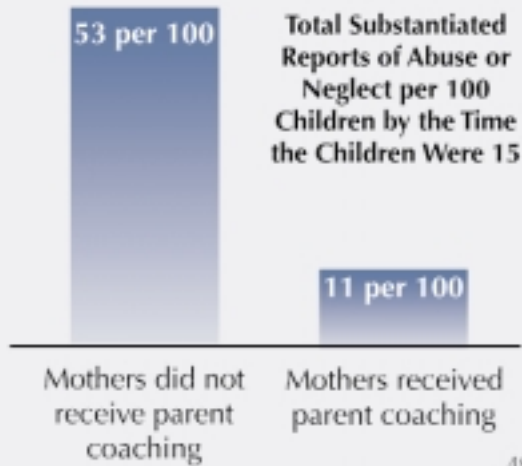
Failing to graduate from high school is also a risk factor. Compared to parents with a high school degree, those without a degree are almost five times more likely to be officially reported for abuse or neglect.⁴⁶ And risk factors pile up. Single mothers without a high school diploma are ten times more likely to be officially reported for abusing or neglecting their children than women in two-parent families with more education.⁴⁷

Parent coaching for new at-risk parents has been proven extraordinarily effective in reducing child abuse and neglect when it is provided with enough quality and with enough frequency. The Nurse Family Partnership randomly assigned half of a group of single, poor, first-time young mothers in Elmira, NY, to receive visits by carefully trained nurses. The nurses provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Starting in 1978, the women in the program received an average of nine home visits during their pregnancy and 23 visits from birth to their child’s second birthday.

Figure 4

Abuse or Neglect was Five Times More Common When At-Risk Mothers Were *Not* Given Parent Coaching

Results from the study of the Nurse Family Partnership program

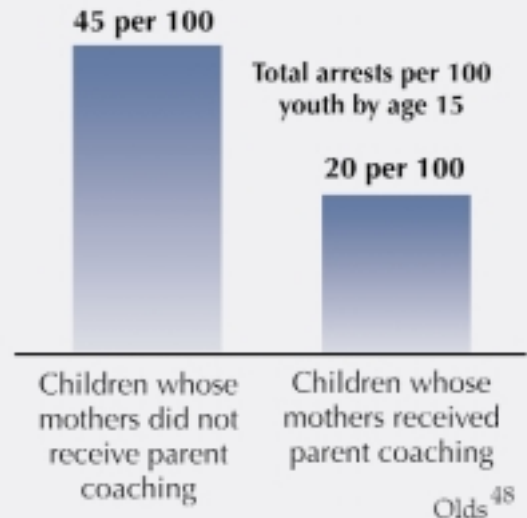


Rigorous research, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows that the children of mothers left out of the program had five times as many substantiated reports of abuse or neglect. In addition, fifteen years after the services ended, the mothers in the program had only one-third as many arrests as those left out of the program, and their children had only half as many arrests.⁴⁸

A replication of this study, also using a rigorous random assignment design, is under way in Memphis. Children in the study are still too young to have arrest records, and official records in the area are not adequate to directly measure abuse or neglect.⁴⁹ However, compared to children in the program, those children whose parents did not receive the parenting coaching and family support services averaged four and a half times more hospitalization days for injuries or ingestions. While children can certainly be injured without being abused or neglected, such extreme differences seem to corroborate the findings of the earlier study. Moreover, the hospitalizations for children not in the program were also for more severe injuries.

Figure 5

Parent Coaching Cuts Children's Arrests in Half
Results from the study of the Nurse Family Partnership program



For example while none of the 206 children in the program was hospitalized for fractures or head trauma, eight of the 465 children in the group that did not receive parent coaching had fractures and/or head trauma requiring hospitalizations.⁵⁰

The Nurse Family Partnership's benefits are not limited to reducing child abuse or preventing crime. Compared to mothers not in the program, the mothers in the Elmira study averaged 21 percent fewer births

"While none of the 206 children in the program was hospitalized for fractures or head trauma, eight of the 465 children in the group that did not receive parent coaching had fractures and/or head trauma requiring hospitalizations."

fifteen years after delivery of their child,⁵¹ and a third fewer months on welfare.⁵² Their children also ran away less than half as often.⁵³

Another home visitation model, Hawaii's Healthy Start program, has just collected data showing it was able to dramatically cut hospitalizations for abuse or neglect among high-risk families. The Hawaii Healthy Start model, which is the basis for the Healthy Families home visiting program now being widely implemented by Prevent Child Abuse America, begins by screening new mothers for risk factors such as single-parenthood, poor or non-existent pre-natal care, and depression. If a family is at high risk, it is offered parenting coaching and support services by a trained para-professional. An average of nineteen out of twenty families accept the offer. The home visits begin weekly, progressing to fewer visits depending on the family's needs.

On the island of Oahu, all children who are hospitalized for abuse or neglect are treated at one hospital. Records exist on whether the families of those children were ever screened to determine if they were at higher risk for abuse or neglect and then, if they were at higher risk, whether or not they received parent-coaching services.

The study of these children reviewed over 27,000 families screened for risk of abuse or neglect. It found that one in 1,000 children from families determined to be at relatively lower risk still had a child hospitalized for abuse or neglect. Among those who had been identified as high risk but who had not received parenting coaching and support services (because coaches were

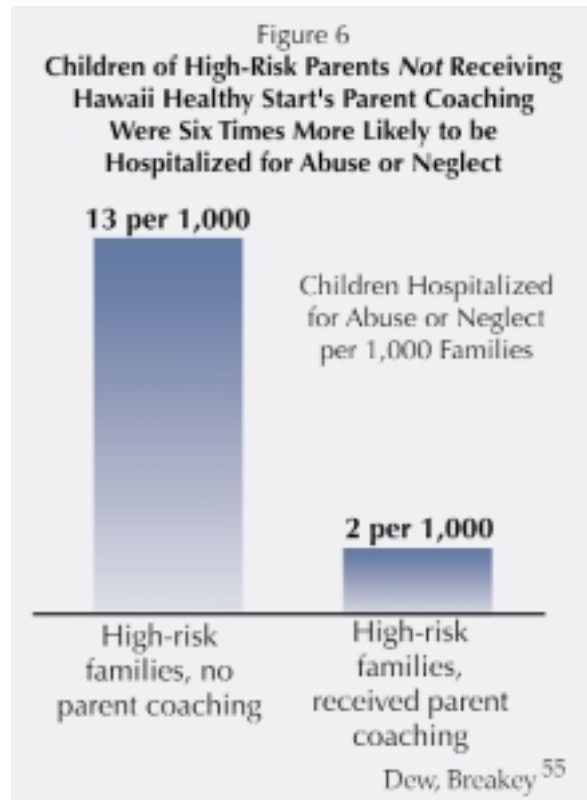
unavailable),⁵⁴ 13 in 1,000 children had been hospitalized. Clearly, the program succeeded in identifying parents that were thirteen times more likely than others to abuse or neglect their children.

It also succeeded in reducing abuse and neglect. Of children from the equally high-risk families who did receive services, only two in 1,000 children were later hospitalized for abuse or neglect. The program appears to have prevented roughly six out of seven cases of abuse or neglect. In other words, failing to provide similarly high-risk families

with such coaches, multiplied by six times their risk of being hospitalized for abuse or neglect.⁵⁵

While currently 900,000 low-income first-time pregnant women nationwide would fit the criteria for eligibility in the Nurse Family Partnership program,⁵⁶ so far only 20,000 are being served specifically by that program.⁵⁷ The Healthy Families program, based on the Hawaii's Healthy Start effort, serves another 50,000 families.⁵⁸ Many other women are currently served by one of the other home visitation programs aimed at reducing abuse and neg-

lect and improving other child outcomes.⁵⁹ However, the results on child abuse and neglect for some of those other programs, while usually encouraging, are more mixed.⁶⁰ Many of these programs are either planning to or already have undertaken improvements in how they operate, and are planning to test those changes.⁶¹ So the programs operating now or in the near future will be different from those tested in the past. At this point, however, at least 500,000 at-risk women are receiving no coaching, and hundreds of thousands of others may not yet be receiving



enough of the high quality coaching they need in order to fully benefit from this very promising approach.⁶²

From program to program, state to state, funding for parenting coaching programs is typically pieced together from a variety of sources. One of the most important sources of funding is the federal Social Services Block Grant program. Traditionally about one third of this program —\$603 million of \$1.7 billion in FY 2002— has gone for child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention services at the state level. Another potentially important source of funding is Medicaid. Some of the individual Nurse Family Partnership programs receive at least part of their funding from Medicaid, because their pre- and post-natal programs are proven to reduce pre-mature births and future hospitalizations, and in the process save money. However, each state Medicaid agency must rule that this is an appropriate use of Medicaid funds, and so far this remains a relatively small source of funding nationwide.

Some home visitation programs also receive federal funding from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds (TANF), Justice Department crime prevention funds, and Head Start and Early Head Start funds. But most of the additional federal funding for prevention comes from programs set up directly to fund child welfare efforts. (See appendix B for these federal programs and their funding levels).

Typically at the state level, these federal funds are combined with state funds to pay for parent coaching programs that have been specifically set up by the state legislature, although some agencies also use their discretion to use funds under their control for parent coaching programs even if specific legislation does not establish such programs.

To ensure that all at-risk parents are offered coaching, and that the coaching is of

sufficient quality and duration to deliver real results, much more funding is needed. While treatment dollars for children who are already victims is clearly inadequate, funding to actually prevent abuse and neglect before it starts is often even less available. The tremendous opportunity to prevent child abuse and neglect through quality home visitation programs is still far from being fully realized.

RECOMMENDATION: Support high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for young children and their parents that cut abuse and neglect in half.

Research shows that quality pre-kindergarten programs can change the course of life for an at-risk child.⁶³ Now, in a surprising finding, new

evidence from the Chicago Child-Parent Center program shows that quality pre-kindergarten programs can also cut child abuse and neglect in half.

Since 1967, Chicago's federally funded Child-Parent Centers (CPCs) have served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds in some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. CPCs are

school-based with certified teachers holding bachelor's degrees, and the program not only emphasizes literacy, it also focuses on family support. CPCs go beyond many pre-kindergarten programs in their emphasis on training the most important people in children's lives—their parents. The parents have their own teachers and classrooms. The program also conducts home visits and offers many opportunities for parents to join in field trips or other activities with their children. All of this is aimed at helping parents to learn and practice better child-raising skills and to get them actively involved in their children's education.

A recent follow-up study was conducted of 989 children enrolled in the CPC program in 1985 and 1986, and of 550 similar children

“At this point, however, at least 500,000 at-risk women are receiving no coaching, and hundreds of thousands of others may not yet be receiving enough of the high quality coaching they need.”

“New research by Reynolds shows that the children who were not in the [Child-Parent Centers] program were more than twice as likely to be victims of abuse or neglect.”

who were not in the program. This study, conducted by professor Arthur Reynolds from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and his team, showed that, 15 years later, children who were not in the program were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime than those enrolled. Furthermore, those not in the program were 67 percent more likely to be retained a grade in school and 71 percent more likely to have been placed in special education.⁶⁴ These results are themselves compelling evidence of the benefits of funding quality early childhood education efforts.⁶⁵

Now there is another important reason to fund these efforts. New research by Reynolds shows that the children who were not in the program were more than twice as likely to be victims of abuse or neglect. From the ages of 4 to 17, five percent of the children who participated in the program were listed in formal court petitions as victims of abuse or neglect. For those children not in the program, the rate was 10.5 percent, more than twice as high.⁶⁶

Additional analyses of the data by Reynolds and his team show that abuse and neglect were an important part of the explanation of why the children not in the program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, most at-risk children are not receiving quality programs like CPC. The federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, intended to help low- and moderate-income working families purchase adequate child care, is so under-funded it can serve only one in seven of the children Congress has concluded need such assistance.⁶⁸ For

those lucky enough to receive such help, the funding is typically too meager to purchase high-quality care even if such care is available in their neighborhood.

Head Start, America’s premiere pre-kindergarten program for children in poverty, has only enough funds to serve 6 out of 10 eligible families.⁶⁹ While it is clearly making an important difference for those children,⁷⁰ it will need more resources if the program is to reach all the children who need it, and to increase staff education and training to fully achieve its potential.

Universal pre-kindergarten, for families who want it may offer an excellent opportunity to reach at-risk children if the programs provide enough quality and include parent training for at-risk families. While many states are experimenting with pilot programs, only a few states yet have meaningful programs serving large numbers of children.⁷¹

As the Chicago Child-Parent Centers demonstrate, if quality programs were reaching at-risk children similar to those in Chicago, the subsequent abuse or neglect of those children could be cut in half.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure access to drug and alcohol treatment programs for pregnant women who are substance abusers.

Parents who are struggling with alcohol or drug addiction as they try to raise their children are far more likely than other parents to abuse or neglect their children. Two-thirds of abusive or neglectful families have drug and alcohol problems, but only 31 percent receive treatment.⁷² Treating drug and alcohol abuse for all who need it will help reduce the abuse and neglect of children. The same is true for effective public education campaigns that keep youth from starting down the path of abusing drugs or alcohol.

However, it is crucial to assure adequate treatment for pregnant women who are alcohol or drug addicted. Substance abuse during pregnancy is far too common. The

National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 6 percent of pregnant women abuse illicit drugs and 19 percent consume alcohol.⁷³ While not every pregnant mother who drinks alcohol or uses some drugs needs full substance abuse treatment, according to a 1997 survey of all state child welfare agencies, 35 percent of pregnant women in the child welfare system need alcohol and other drug treatment services.⁷⁴

Pregnant mothers' drug and alcohol abuse can lead to low birth weights and a range of subtle to severe neurological injuries for their babies. The National Institutes of Health reports that "fetal alcohol syndrome is the leading cause of preventable mental retardation in the U.S. [and] impacts about one in every 1,000 infants."⁷⁵

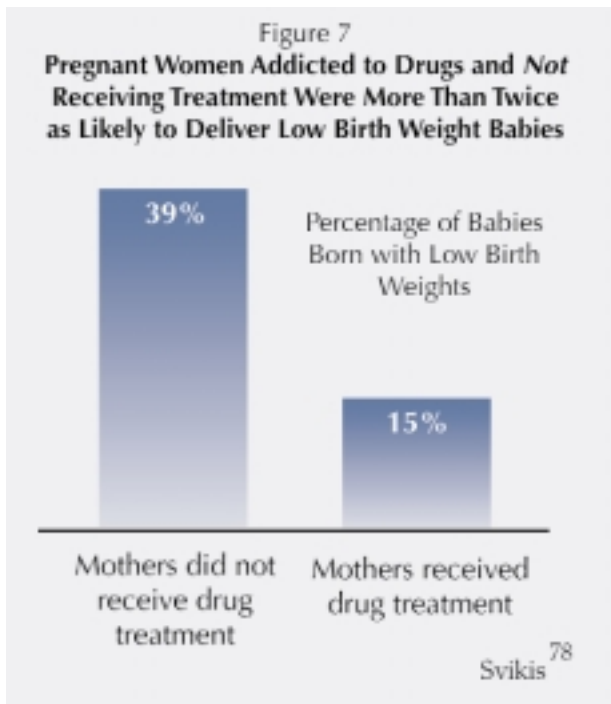
The damage is not limited to those children who are born with severe mental retardation, or who are severely underweight at birth.⁷⁶ Subtle neurodevelopmental deficits (brain damage) increase the risks a child will have persistent psychological problems and commit violent crimes later in life. That risk is further multiplied when such deficits are combined with the abusive or rejecting parenting that often comes with alcohol or drug addiction.⁷⁷

Timely drug and alcohol treatment can help prevent this. For example, the Center for Addiction and Pregnancy (CAP) program in Baltimore provided one week of residential care and then intensive day treatment up until the delivery of their child for drug-abusing, pregnant women. Similar addicted women who did not receive this voluntary drug treatment while pregnant were twice as likely to be using illicit drugs at the time of their delivery. Women not in the program were over two and a half times more likely to deliver low birth weight babies (under 5.5 lbs.). While 17 percent of the women not in the program delivered very low birth weight babies (under 3.3 lbs.) none of the babies of the women receiving treatment was that small.⁷⁸

This study did not use random assignment because the researchers felt it would be unethical to randomly deny women access to care if they desired it. Instead, the first 100 women voluntarily entering this program were carefully matched with 46 other women who were pregnant and addicted, with similar demographic characteristics and comparable drug use, but who did not undergo drug treatment. Presumably, the woman who entered the program had higher motivation to cease drug use than the comparison group. Nevertheless, it is clear from other studies that motivation without treatment would not cut drug use in half as this program did.

Other studies of programs for drug and alcohol abusing pregnant women show similarly strong results.⁷⁹ For example, a study of 24 of the 35 federally-funded treatment programs for Pregnant and Postpartum Women (PPW) showed that the birth-weight results for babies born to women in these programs were not only far better than for most pregnant women who are abusing cocaine, but were also better than the national average for all women.⁸⁰

When programs like these succeed in helping pregnant women break their addictions, they are not only preventing damage to the fetus. They are also sharply



reducing the risk that parents will abuse or neglect their children in the years after the birth.

Unfortunately, as the PPW study concluded, "many communities throughout the country do not have access to the type of comprehensive residential treatment provided by the PPW program."⁸¹ Although 35 percent of pregnant women already in the child welfare system need drug or alcohol treatment, agencies only have the capacity to serve 20 percent of those needing services.⁸² In fact, many pregnant women or women with children are not seeking needed drug and alcohol treatment because the treatment programs available are designed with single men in mind and cannot accommodate the needs of these pregnant or parenting women. Of all drug treatment facilities, only 20 percent have any programs for pregnant women.⁸³

Clearly, the states and the federal government need to do much more to provide effective and adequate treatment programs, and those efforts must be targeted to reach and serve the critical population of pregnant women who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. One important step would be to enact the federal Child Protection/Alcohol and Drug Partnership Act that would provide much needed support for drug and alcohol treatment programs for families in the child welfare system.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide mental health services for depressed or mentally ill individuals who are or will become parents.

When a parent is severely depressed or mentally ill, children often face multiple risks. They may inherit a genetic disposition to the same problem. But whatever their genetic inheritance, the parent's emotional

problems may be reflected in inadequate parenting that can stunt a child's mental and emotional development and ultimately lead to behavioral problems. Too often, a parent's severe mental or emotional problems contribute to abuse and neglect.

No hard figures exist on how many children are abused and neglected as a consequence of a parent's mental illness. Certainly, as with any illness, it is possible for mentally ill parents, especially those receiving treatment, to shield their children from the harmful consequences. No one

should assume mentally ill parents are automatically abusive or neglectful.

However, research suggests that the number of children seriously impacted may be very large, in part because mental illness is more widespread than commonly acknowledged.

Research shows that depression and

inadequate treatment for depression hit poorer families the hardest. In surveys of the general population, about 20 percent of those surveyed reported symptoms of clinical depression. But in families receiving public assistance, the rates ranged from 30 percent to 45 percent.⁸⁵

Of 9,508 respondents to a survey conducted for a large Health Maintenance Organization, nearly one out of five respondents said they had a household member who was depressed, mentally ill, or attempted suicide during their childhood. And those persons exposed as children to someone in their homes who had depression or mental illness or who had attempted suicide, were twice as likely to have suffered physical abuse as all persons responding to the survey.⁸⁶

The HMO survey did not study child neglect. However, University of Washington

"By age 3 1/2, while the mothers remained chronically depressed, the children in Dawson's study exhibited above normal levels of behavioral problems, including withdrawal, aggression toward others, crying episodes, and disobedience."

psychologist Geraldine Dawson studied the children of severely depressed mothers who provided very little engagement or positive reinforcement to their infants. She found that, at 14 months, many of those babies had reduced brain-wave activity in the part of the brain associated with positive feelings such as happiness and curiosity. By age 3 1/2, while the mothers remained chronically depressed, the children in Dawson's study exhibited above normal levels of behavioral problems, including withdrawal, aggression toward others, crying episodes, and disobedience⁸⁷

Treatment for depression is effective for roughly half of those treated with medication or psychotherapy, and one study showed that the success rate goes up to 85 percent when medication and psychotherapy are combined.⁸⁸

In addition to successful medical and counseling interventions, one home visitation program specifically targeted depressed mothers. In a study of this program, 98 women were randomly assigned to either the program or a control group. Results of the study showed the home

visitation approach successfully decreased depression and prevented an increase in more punitive parenting practices⁸⁹. While most parents using more punitive discipline practices clearly will not escalate to physically abusing their children, giving parents more tools to effectively discipline their children, can help reduce the number of parents who do physically abuse their children.

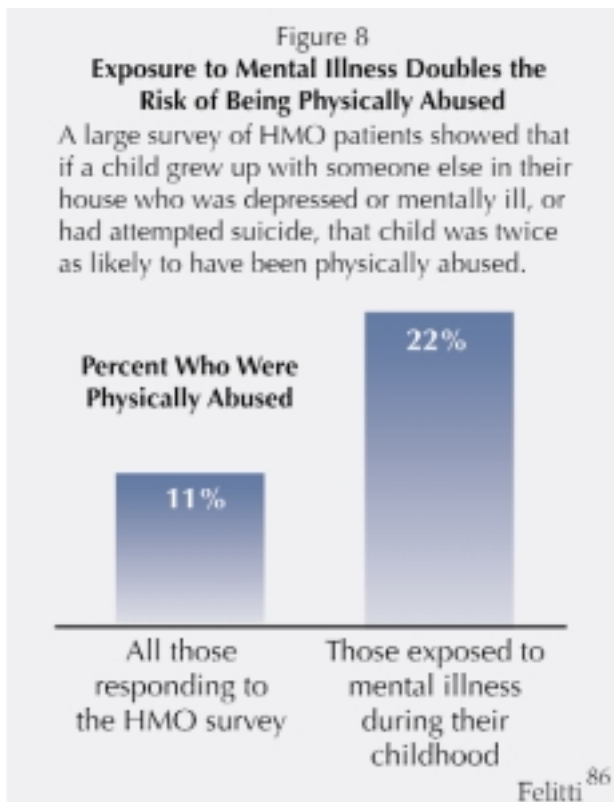
Regretably, most people who need treatment for depression or other mental health problems are not getting it. In the general population, studies show that only about 25 percent of depressed individuals receive adequate care for their illness.⁹⁰ The situation is even worse for poor families. Those with incomes less than \$15,000 a year are one-third as likely as those with incomes over \$61,000 to receive mental health treatment.⁹¹

Medicaid coverage is available for mental health services for the poor, but one study showed the treatment offered was usually inferior to private insurance.⁹² For the working poor, lack of income to pay for care or access to insurance, particularly insurance that has adequate mental health coverage, is an often insurmountable barrier.

Stigma also remains a barrier to treatment of mental illness. Negative attitudes or fears have changed little over the years, and 40 percent of women with depression still attribute it to personal weakness.⁹³

To ensure that depressed and mentally ill parents have access to mental health services:

- Agencies (such as welfare offices and child protective service agencies) and health care providers need to develop and use routine screening tools for mental illness.
- Parents must have affordable access to mental health care.
- Agencies must work to break down the stigma that discourages many parents from seeking mental health care.



Chapter 3

Saving Money While Protecting Kids and Preventing Crime

Stopping child abuse and neglect before children are hurt is not only the right thing to do, but also the fiscally sound thing to do. Two studies confirm that child abuse and neglect are costing Americans at least \$80 billion a year.

The Children's Safety Network Economic Insurance Resource Center, on which the Justice Department relies for major studies on the cost of crime, concluded child abuse and neglect costs Americans \$83 billion a year in costs incurred by all taxpayers and those individuals directly impacted.⁹⁴ Prevent Child Abuse America reached a similar conclusion, finding that abuse and neglect costs Americans \$94 billion a year, with two-thirds of that cost due to crime.⁹⁵

The 2001 Urban Institute Child Welfare Survey reported that the federal government spent \$9.9 billion directly on child protection, foster care and adoption in 2000. The states

provided another \$7.9 billion, while localities contributed an additional \$2.2 billion.

The total federal, state, and local spending directly on child welfare payments for foster care, adoption services, child protective services, and treatment services for children and families was \$20 billion.⁹⁶ And even those billions do not count the increased welfare or crime costs that taxpayers must shoulder if abused or neglected children continue drawing heavily from the public treasury instead of contributing to it as adults. Obviously, the best solution is to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Failure to invest in programs proven to prevent child abuse and neglect will cost taxpayers billions of dollars while endangering millions of children, and ensuring there will be thousands of future crime victims. Research shows that programs that reduce child abuse and neglect also save money,

Federal Spending to Prevent Abuse and Neglect Lags

Last year, research spending by the federal government on cancer and HIV averaged about \$4,500 for every person affected with those diseases, but federal spending on research for child abuse averaged less than \$100 dollars for every reported case. I am not suggesting that AIDS and cancer are not important public health issues, but I am suggesting that we ought to make the same kinds of investments in the prevention of child abuse and neglect."⁹⁷

A. Sidney Johnson, III, President, Prevent Child Abuse America

including parent coaching, quality pre-kindergarten programs and treatment for addicted pregnant women.

Parent coaching

The Hawaii Healthy Start researchers found that just the hospitalization costs alone for abused or neglected children averaged \$60,000 per child.⁹⁸ From the families who were screened as being high risk, but for whom services were not available at the time, 34 children ended up in the hospital because of abuse or neglect. The study found that 28 of those children could have avoided hospitalization for abuse or neglect if services had been available for their parents. The savings in hospitalization alone for these children would have totaled \$1.7 million dollars.

The RAND Corporation concluded that the Nurse Family Partnership program services for low-income, first-time single parents saves more than it costs by the time the children are just three years old. The program ultimately saves the government four dollars for every dollar invested.⁹⁹ That figure does not even attempt to include the

savings from reduced welfare costs and increased tax revenues when these children become productive adults, much less the benefits to the children themselves.

Quality pre-k programs

The Child-Parent Centers (CPC) program, which cuts subsequent abuse and neglect in half, has already served 100,000 Chicago kids. By the time these children reach 18 years of age, it will have prevented an estimated 33,000 crimes, including 13,000 violent crimes. The program is saving taxpayers, victims, and participants over \$7 for every \$1 invested (of which taxpayers alone save almost \$3). And that is without counting pain and suffering from crimes. For the children already served, this translates to a savings of \$2.6 billion.¹⁰⁰

Even before the CPC program showed high-quality pre-k programs can cut abuse and neglect in half, many economists had already concluded that early childhood programs were among the best investments government can make in education. William Gale and Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution wrote that investing in early

A Wise Investment

One dollar spent on the Chicago Child-Parent Centers' Pre-Kindergarten Program...



...produced \$7 in savings for taxpayers, victims and participants

100
Reynolds

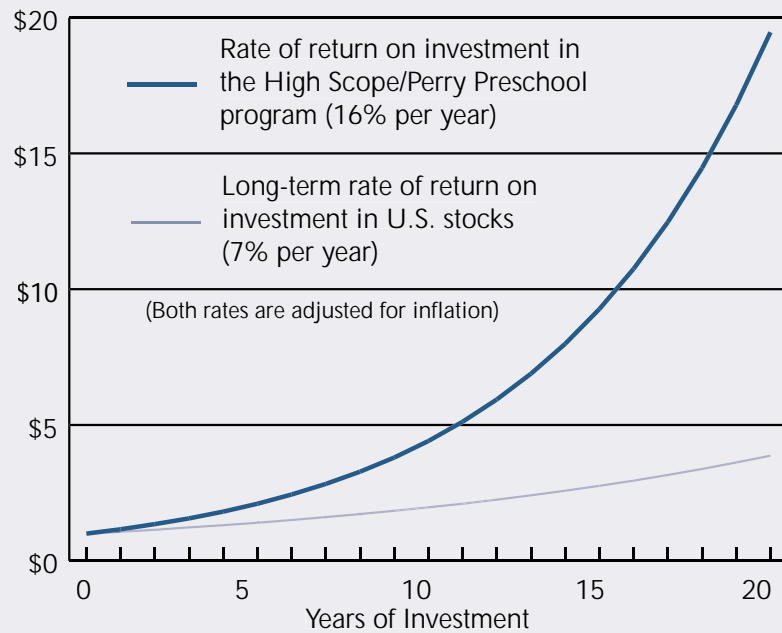
childhood education provides government and society “with estimated rates of return that would make a venture capitalist envious.”¹⁰¹ Arthur Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, calculated that the return on investment in early-childhood development is a dramatic 16 percent.¹⁰² This led Chris Farrell, contributing economics editor at Business Week, to write: “To put [Rolnick’s figure] in perspective, the long-term real return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent.” Farrell urged liberals and conservatives to agree that, “government should provide disadvantaged youngsters with a high-quality preschool learning environment.”¹⁰³

Treatment for Women Who Are Pregnant and Addicted

Research in Baltimore showed that the women who were addicted and not receiving voluntary drug treatment while pregnant delivered more babies who were underweight, especially more premature babies who were severely underweight (under 3.3 pounds). The babies born to the women who did not receive treatment stayed in intensive care, on average, 12 times longer than those whose mothers received treatment. At a cost of \$1,200 a day, that quickly adds up. Consequently, even though this drug treatment program was intensive and thus more expensive than many bare-bones treatment programs, it saved an average of \$4,644 per child before the children even left the hospital.¹⁰⁴ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that, “The lifetime costs

Figure 10

Pre-Kindergarten is an Excellent Investment
 A \$1,000 investment in quality pre-kindergarten returns over \$19,000 in 20 years, while a stock market investment returns less than \$4,000.



Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis¹⁰²

for one premature baby are conservatively estimated at \$500,000.”¹⁰⁵

As these healthier children born to women who received treatment grow up, no doubt they will need to be held back less in school, will need fewer placements in special education classes, will need less welfare assistance as adults, and will spend less time in prisons. Because the program pays for itself before the children even leave the hospital, all of those additional benefits are pure savings to taxpayers that just keep accumulating.

Not Just Dollars

The crime victim members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS remind us that this is not just about wasted dollars. Thousands of lives are at stake. When children are abused or neglected, thousands die, and far too many of those who survive go on to kill themselves or someone else.

Chapter 4

From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call to Action

The more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors who make up FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS are on the front lines in the fight against crime. They are guided not by political ideology, but by tested, practical, proven solutions. They insist on doing what really works to fight crime and save lives.

These law enforcement leaders are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But they also know that the most powerful weapons against crime are the ones that keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place.

In a survey of America's police chiefs by George Mason University professors Scott Keeter and Stephen Mastrofsky, the chiefs were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, various strategies to prevent crime. Five out of every ten police chiefs gave "parent coaching for high-risk families" a number one rating, almost four times the number who chose "prosecuting more juveniles as adults", and thirteen times the number of chiefs who chose more metal detectors in schools as a highest rated strategy. Five out of every ten chiefs also gave "Head Start or similar early childhood education" a number one rating for preventing crime.¹⁰⁶

Along with many state organizations of law enforcement leaders and crime victims, the following national organizations have joined in calling for greater investments in effective programs to prevent child abuse and neglect: the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities [Police] Chiefs, the National Association of Attorneys General, the National District Attorneys Association, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, and the Police Executive Research Forum.

The public also feels that preventing child abuse and neglect should be at the top of government priorities. In a poll conducted by Mason Dixon Polling and Research, 82 percent of the public said preventing abuse and neglect should be either a top or high priority for government, even higher than the 72 percent who picked improving schools as a top or high priority.¹⁰⁷

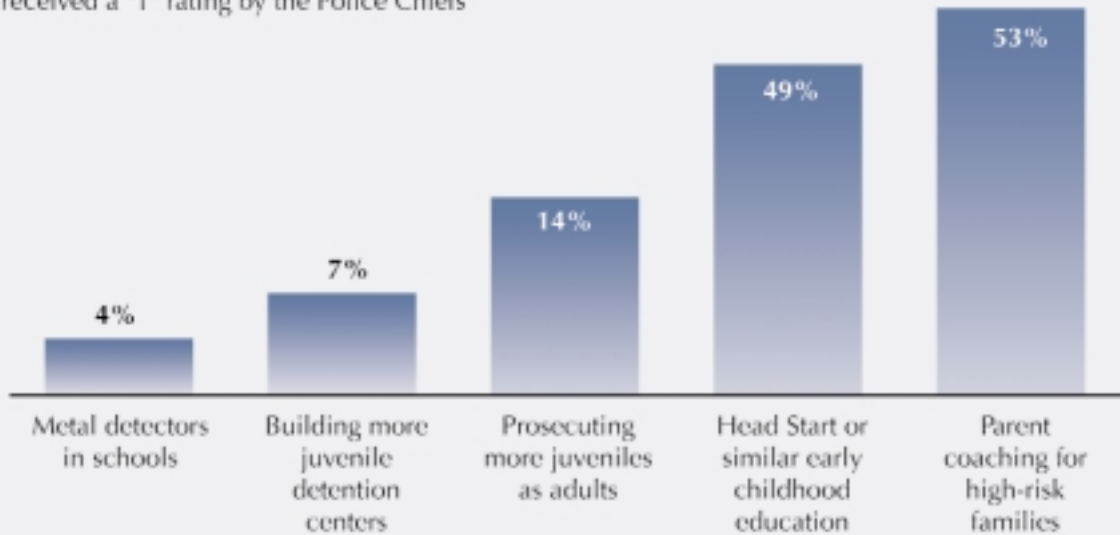
"In a poll conducted by Mason Dixon Polling and Research, 82 percent of the public said preventing abuse and neglect should be either a top or high priority for government, even higher than the 72 percent who picked improving schools as a top or high priority."

The good news is that research shows how to prevent child abuse and neglect before children are hurt. Parent coaching, pre-kindergarten programs, drug and alcohol treatment programs for pregnant women, and efforts to reduce the number of mentally ill parents

Figure 11

Police Chiefs Rate Parent Coaching and Pre-Kindergarten Programs as Effective Crime Prevention

Police Chiefs nationwide were asked: "Please rate the following strategies on a scale of 1 to 5 on their value as a crime prevention tool." This chart shows the percentage for each strategy that received a "1" rating by the Police Chiefs



Scott Keeter and Stephen Mastrofski, George Mason University, 1999¹⁰⁶

are all proven effective. They can dramatically reduce the terrible toll that child abuse and neglect take each year. They can keep hundreds of thousands of children from ever being abused or neglected. They can save many of the 2,000 children who are killed each year from abuse or neglect, and can help prevent 36,000 children a year from growing up to be violent criminals. They can prevent over 250 murders and thousands of suicides. All this can be accomplished, while saving taxpayers billions of dollars.

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. When thousands of children are dying every year from abuse and neglect and tens of thousands more are growing up to be violent criminals as a result of abuse or neglect, federal, state and local governments clearly are not doing nearly enough. Instead of the patchwork of inadequate current funding streams and programs, it is time that public leaders at the state and federal levels invest in a comprehensive, research-driven plan to eliminate most abuse and neglect in high-risk families.

Research proves that effective action now

will protect hundreds of thousands of children from terror and agony, save billions of taxpayer dollars and will save thousands of lives.

Appendix A

Technical Notes on Estimating the Number of Violent Criminals, Murderers, and Those Who Attempt Suicide Who Will Emerge from The Children Abused and Neglected in 2001

The projections on how many abused or neglected children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime, to be arrested for murder, or to attempt suicide are based on the original research of Michael Maxfield and Cathy Spatz Widom. Their article, “The cycle of violence: Revisited 6 years later”, appeared in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, in April of 1996 (v.150: 390-395). Widom and Maxfield matched 908 children who had substantiated cases of abuse or neglect with a control group of 667 individuals with no substantiated cases of abuse or neglect. The individuals in the study were matched on the basis of their date of birth, race, sex, and approximate social class. Using official records, the researchers determined that the abused and neglected individuals were one quarter (4 percentage points) more likely to have had at least one arrest for violence, either as an adult or as a juvenile, than those otherwise similar individuals who had not been maltreated, [18 percent - 14 percent = 4 percent]. In other words, while 14 percent of the abused and neglected individuals in this study would have been arrested for a violent crime whether or not they had been abused or neglected, an additional 4 percent of the abused and neglected individuals were arrested for a violent crime who apparently would not have been if they had not suffered abuse or neglect as children.

That four percentage point difference can be applied to the number of confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in 2001—903,000 (which is a conservative count of the number of children abused and neglected every year in the U.S.). Four percentage points multiplied by that number results in an estimate of 36,120 additional individuals who will be arrested at least once for violence at some time in their life after having been abused and neglected in 2001 [903,000 x .04 = 36,120]. However, other research, cited in this report, indicates that each year there are twice as many children who were victims of abuse or neglect that were not confirmed, or 1,806,000 additional children abused or neglected. Widom has cautioned that her research cannot answer whether the same rate of arrests for violence applies to the higher number of unconfirmed cases of abuse and neglect. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 36,000 figure is a significant underestimate of the number of additional violent criminals arising out of the children who were abused and neglected in 2001.

This report also attempts to answer the question, how many of the 36,000 additional individuals arrested for violence, will possibly be arrested for murder. Based on the data in ‘Table 29 Estimated Arrests’ of the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report for 2000, 0.7 percent of all arrests for violent crimes (including simple assault) are for murder and non-negligent manslaughter. Applying that percentage to the total of those arrested for violence would result in an estimated 252 additional individuals arrested for homicide after being abused or neglected in 2001 [36,000 x .007 = 252]. Again, these are murders beyond what would be expected from those individuals if they had not been victims of abuse and neglect. As discussed in the text, there are a number of reasons to assume that this estimate for murders is conservative, because those who have been severely abused or neglected are even more likely to commit murders than other, more typical, violent criminals.

When Widom later looked at attempted suicides she determined that 18.8 percent of children with substantiated cases of abuse or neglect went on to attempt suicide at some point in their life, whereas 7.7 percent of the children without abuse or neglect later attempted suicide. The difference is a dramatic 11.1 percentage points. Applying that percentage point difference to the

number of confirmed cases of abuse or neglect in 2001 produces 100,233 additional suicide attempts that presumably would not happen if not for the lingering suffering from the abuse and neglect suffered in 2001 [$903,000 \times .111 = 100,233$]. In addition, it is impossible to estimate how many of this particular population of abused or neglected children who later attempt suicide will succeed in killing themselves. However, it is likely based on information provided by the National Institute of Mental Health on suicides in the general population that it is in the thousands.

Spread quietly around the country, these homicides and suicides are rarely linked to prior abuse and neglect. But year after year, the toll continues to mount, as more and more children are abused and neglected. Thousands of them die from the abuse and neglect directly and thousands of those who survive go on to do violence to themselves or others.

Appendix B

Federal Programs That are Used to Provide Funding for Child Welfare

A. Programs Used to Provide Funding to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in 2002

The Social Services Block Grant to States (Social Services Act, Title XX) - \$1.7 billion.

This is the largest source of federal funding for child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention services. In 2002, \$603 million of the money from these grants was used by the states to fund child abuse and neglect related services.

Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (Social Security Act, Title IV-B 2) - \$375 million.

This is the largest dedicated source of federal child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention services funding. It helps communities run parenting coaching, family strengthening services, adoption services, and other child abuse prevention programs.

Child Welfare Services Program (Social Security Act, Title IV-B 1) - \$292 million.

This is the second largest dedicated source of federal child abuse and neglect services funds.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Programs - \$81 million.

These funds are used for:

- Community-Based Family Resource Centers – \$33 million
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment State Grants – \$22 million
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Discretionary (research/demonstration) Grants – \$26 million

It is also possible that the **Chafee Foster Care Independence Program** (Social Security Act, Title IV-E - \$140 million), could be used to help young women emerging from foster care who are pregnant. This program was designed to help youth who are aging out of foster care.

B. Non-Prevention Oriented Child Welfare Funding:

Foster Care Reimbursements to States (Social Security Act, Title IV-E) – \$5 billion.

This program pays for foster care placements and related costs, not prevention.

Adoption Assistance Reimbursement to States (Social Security Act, Title IV-E) – \$1.4 billion.

This helps states with subsidy payments to families who adopt a child with special needs. This is not for initial child abuse or neglect prevention or even therapeutic services for the children who have been adopted.

Adoption Incentives Grants to States – \$43 billion.

This has been a very successful effort to encourage states to place more children into adoptive families from foster care.

Endnotes

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³³ One of these researchers, Dr. Lonnie Athens, interviewed a large number of violent criminals and concluded that children who became seriously violent criminals were almost always trained to be violent by violent individuals in their lives. For a profile on Athens, see: Rhodes, R. (1999). *Why they kill*. New York: Randomhouse. See the rest of the text for additional examples.

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