

News Release

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CONTACT:
Melissa Pelletier
Manager, Public Relations & Advertising
312.663.3520 ext. 146

Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect in U.S. Estimated at \$258 Million Per Day

*First-Ever Analysis Shows Staggering Financial Drain on
Social, Medical and Judicial Services*

NEW YORK CITY, April 2, 2001 – As the nation began its observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month, a landmark report estimates that the United States spends \$258 million each day as a direct or indirect result of the abuse and neglect of our nation's children. The estimate includes the direct costs associated with intervening to help, and treating the medical and emotional problems suffered by abused and neglected children, as well as the indirect costs associated with the long-term consequences of abuse and neglect to both the individual and society at large. The annual costs are equivalent to \$1,461.66 per U.S. family.

Each year, more than 3 million children are reported as abused or neglected in the United States, and more than 1 million of these reports are confirmed, according to the author of the study, Prevent Child Abuse America. The cost analysis released today, which was funded by a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, represents the first comprehensive attempt to estimate the costs associated with such abuse and neglect nationally.

The announcement came at a news conference jointly held by Prevent Child Abuse America and the National Basketball Association (NBA), a long-time supporter of Prevent Child Abuse America. During the month of April, the NBA is holding Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Night 2001 in each of its 29 arenas in the United States and Canada, to raise public awareness about the importance of child abuse and neglect prevention.

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Studies have shown for years that abused and neglected children are less likely to be school-ready and more likely to exhibit behavior disorders, to become teen parents and juvenile criminals, and to abuse alcohol and drugs. These consequences can become more pronounced as abused or neglected children grow into adulthood, making them more likely to become adult criminals and to develop chronic illnesses.

As a result, a broad range of services – from medical and mental health care to special education and law enforcement – are brought to bear, often at a staggering cost to society. According to the study by Prevent Child Abuse America, for example, the cost of hospitalization for abused and neglected children is estimated to be \$17 million each day (or \$6.2 billion annually), while the total annual cost to the child welfare system is estimated at \$39 million each day (or \$14.4 billion each year).

Total Daily Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect in the United States

Direct Costs	Estimated Daily Cost
Health Care System	
Hospitalization	\$17,001,082
Chronic Health Problems	8,186,185
Mental Health Care System	1,164,686
Child Welfare System	39,452,054
Law Enforcement	67,698
Judicial System	934,725
<i>Total Direct Costs</i>	<i>\$66,806,430</i>
<i>Indirect Costs</i>	
Special Education	\$612,624
Mental Health and Health Care	12,678,455
Juvenile Delinquency	\$24,124,086
Lost Productivity to Society	1,797,260
Adult Criminality	151,726,027
<i>Total Indirect Costs</i>	<i>\$190,938,452</i>
TOTAL COST	\$257,744,882

Data courtesy of Prevent Child Abuse America

Note: The statistical data used to compile this chart is available on our web site, www.preventchildabuse.org or by calling Melissa Pelletier at 312.663.3520 ext. 146.



“We’ve known for years that abused and neglected children pay a terrible price, in terms of their own physical and mental health,” said A. Sidney Johnson III, president and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. “Now, we have a better understanding about how much abuse and neglect is costing our society, and that cost is more than \$258 million every day, nearly \$94 billion each year.”

The data used to obtain the total cost to society was based on research from a variety of sources, which was then compared with data relating to child abuse and neglect. For example, the cost of adult criminality was obtained by multiplying the total annual cost of violent crime in the United States by the percentage of total crime estimated to be attributable to earlier child maltreatment (13 percent), resulting in an estimated annual cost of \$55.4 billion. Since conservative estimates were used in all instances, Prevent Child Abuse America said the actual annual cost of child maltreatment in the United States could be considerably higher than its estimate of \$94 billion.

“Until we recognize the value of prevention and invest adequate resources to support prevention activities, we will never eradicate child abuse and neglect and we will continue to exact an astronomical cost on both the individuals being abused and our society at large,” said Johnson.

Prevent Child Abuse America is the leading organization working at the national, state and local levels to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation’s children. Headquartered in Chicago, Prevent Child Abuse America has 39 chapters in 38 states and the District of Columbia, and is supported by private and corporate donors. The organization is widely known for its public awareness, education, prevention programs, advocacy and research.

More information about the prevention of child abuse and neglect is available by calling Prevent Child Abuse America at 1-800-CHILDREN or by accessing the organization’s web site, www.preventchildabuse.org.

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