



Child Abuse Prevention Month

PATHWAYS to INJURY PREVENTION

The History of Child Abuse Prevention Month

By the Child Welfare Information Gateway
A Service of the Children's Bureau

Increasing public awareness of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of children led to the passage of the first Federal child protection legislation, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), in 1974. While CAPTA has been amended many times over the years, most recently by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, the purpose of the original legislation remains intact. Today, the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the Federal agency charged with supporting States, Tribes, and communities in providing programs and services to protect children and strengthen families.



In the early 1980s, Congress made a further commitment to identifying and implementing solutions to child abuse. Recognizing the alarming rate



at which children continued to be abused and neglected and the need for innovative programs to prevent child abuse and assist parents and families affected by maltreatment, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives resolved that the week of June 6-12, 1982, should be designated as the first National Child Abuse Prevention Week. They asked the President to issue a proclamation calling upon Government agencies and the public to observe the week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

The following year, April was proclaimed the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Since then, child abuse and neglect

awareness activities have been promoted across the country during April of each year. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCAN) within the Children's Bureau coordinates Child Abuse Prevention Month, providing information and releasing updated national statistics about child abuse and neglect each April.



Did you know?

Warning Signs of Child Abuse

- **Clothes that are dirty, ill-fitting, ragged, and/or not suitable for the weather**
- **Unwashed appearance; offensive body odor**
- **Indicators of hunger: asking for or stealing food, going through trash for food, eating too fast or too much when food is provided for a group**
- **Apparent lack of supervision: wandering alone, home alone, left in a car**
- **Colds, fevers, or rashes left untreated; infected cuts; chronic tiredness**
- **In schoolchildren, frequent absence or lateness; troublesome, disruptive behavior or its opposite, withdrawal**
- **In babies, failure to thrive; failure to relate to other people or to surroundings**

A single occurrence of one of these indicators isn't necessarily a sign of child neglect, but a pattern of behaviors may demonstrate a lack of care that constitutes abuse.

In This Issue...

- ☐ History of Child Abuse Prevention Month ... page 1
- ☐ Did You Know ... page 1
- ☐ Child neglect: Types and Warning Signs... page 2
- ☐ Injury Prevention vs Neglect? page 2

Child neglect: Types and Warning Signs

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, to the extent that the child's physical and/or psychological well-being are damaged or endangered. In child neglect, the parents or caregivers are simply choosing not to do their job. There are three basic types of neglect.

Physical Neglect:

1. Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or hygiene
2. Reckless disregard for the child's safety, such as inattention to hazards in the home, drunk driving with kids in the car, leaving a baby unattended
3. Refusal to provide or delay in providing necessary health care for the child
4. Abandoning children without providing for their care or expelling children from the home without arranging for their care

Educational Neglect:

1. Failure to enroll a child in school
2. Permitting or causing a child to miss too many days of school
3. Refusal to follow up on obtaining services for a child's special educational needs

Emotional Neglect:

1. Inadequate nurturing or affection
2. Exposure of the child to spousal abuse
3. Permitting a child to drink alcohol or use recreational drugs

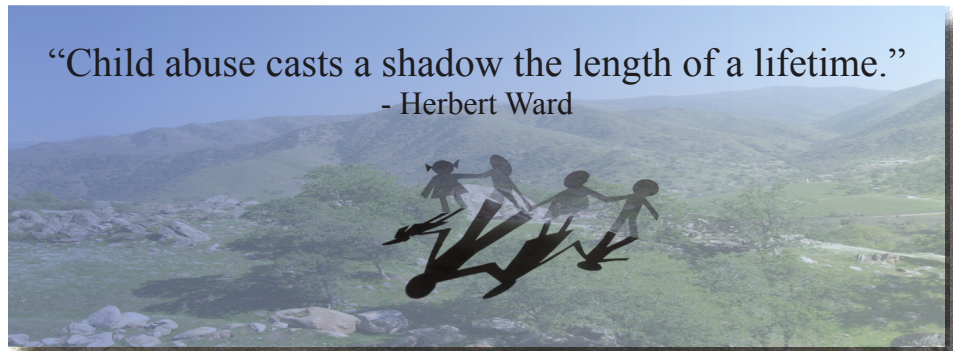
4. Failure to intervene when the child demonstrates antisocial behavior
5. Refusal of or delay in providing necessary psychological care

Sexual abuse in children: types and warning signs

Sexual abuse, which accounts for about 10 percent of child abuse, is any sexual act between an adult and a child. Such acts include:

1. Behavior involving penetration – vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex
2. Fondling – Touching or kissing a child's genitals, making a child fondle an adult's genitals.
3. Violations of privacy – Forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom.
4. Exposing children to adult sexuality – Performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling "dirty" stories, showing pornography to a child.
5. Exploitation – Selling a child's services as a prostitute or a performer in pornography.

If you know someone who is committing sexual abuse or neglecting their child let it out! Breaking the silence will help to break the cycles of abuse. Contact your local clinic or county offices to find the resources in your area. You can save a life or save the future of someone today!



Injury Prevention vs Child Neglect? Discovering the Connections

At a recent conference sponsored by the California Kids' Plates Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice, attendees from the field of childhood maltreatment and injury prevention were brought together to begin looking at strategies to prevent child injury and maltreatment. For many years the two fields have not intersected but in taking a more in depth look at the work and education provided out in the communities there are a startling amount of similarities.

For instance, how many times have health educators and CHRs gone out and provided education and free helmets to children only to find that a few weeks later the kids are back to not wearing the helmets? Same with free car seats... even when provided people will still choose to not use them correctly, not even for

the safety of their child. At what point should you say that the caregiver has had enough education to know that wearing a helmet or using a car seat can save lives and prevent serious injury? Is that they don't know or are they actively choosing to neglect safe practices?



In examining these questions, educators in the field begin to wonder if caregivers' lack of enforcing things such as wearing a helmet or correctly installing a car seat is really because of education or if it is simply neglect?

Let us know what you think! E-mail your thoughts to Karen Santana at:

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