

Leadership Briefing



prevention education treatment

This issue of our leadership briefing includes a summary look at the latest research into the link between child maltreatment and youth violence – one aspect of what many refer to as the “cycle of violence” – and important risk factors you should be aware of concerning child and adolescent maltreatment. Child, family and community demographics and variables combine to offer vital information from which interventions and prevention efforts can be developed.

We are also pleased to bring you updates on activities and efforts that have kept us busy here at the Council since our last briefing, including news about our new group programs and a profile of Steve Allen, one of our *Leaders For Kids*. Our partnership with the Hamilton Bulldogs on March 8th offers a great opportunity to join leadership supporters like Steve as they work to promote and support our efforts. Can you purchase a block of discounted tickets for your employees, members or friends?

Finally, this issue includes our regular report of important happenings from the field of child maltreatment prevention and treatment. Local expert Dr. Harriet MacMillan’s latest findings about the effectiveness of home visiting programs is featured.

We hope you enjoy this issue and continue to be informed by the content we share. Your opinions and feedback are, as always, most welcome.

If you would prefer to receive future briefings by email, please let us know by calling (905) 523-1020, ext. 12.

Inside:

- **From The Field:** Latest news on interventions
- **Research:** Links between child maltreatment and violence in youth
- **Risk Factors:** Child and adolescent maltreatment
- **Council Update:** New group programs starting soon!



Our warmest thanks to the Hamilton Bulldogs for hosting the Council on March 8th – sales of dog tags, 50/50 tickets and game tickets raised \$7600 that will directly support our programs and services. Thanks also to J-Core Marketing, the many wonderful volunteers who came out to help, and to the many supporters whose purchases made the day such a success. Special thanks to Brian Melo, our Honourary Campaign Chair, who performed at the game, helped get our message out, and signed autographs to raise funds for us!

FROM THE FIELD...

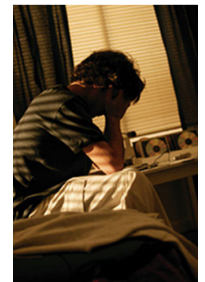
Signs a student is having difficulties:

Students may display difficulties when they are living in abusive homes. These problems can occur for other reasons as well (e.g., death of a parent, homelessness, being bullied, traumatic events experienced by a refugee or immigrant, parental alcoholism). Consult with educators, guidance counselor, and/or administrative or support personnel to discuss concerns. Difficulties often include:

- physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)
- tiredness
- constant worry about possible danger and/or safety of family members (e.g., going to check on sisters or brothers, phoning home)
- sadness and/or withdrawal from others and activities
- low self-esteem and lack of confidence, especially for trying new things (including academic tasks)
- difficulty paying attention in class, concentrating on work, and learning new information
- outbursts of anger directed toward educators, peers, or self
- bullying and/or aggression directed toward peers in and/or out of the classroom
- stereotyped beliefs about males as aggressors and females as victims

In addition to the behaviours listed above, older students may display:

- inflicted self-injury or mutilation
- suicidal thoughts and actions
- high risk behaviour (including criminal activities and alcohol and substance abuse)
- school truancy or leaving home
- dating violence



Woman Abuse Affects Our Children: An Educator's Guide, Baker & Jaffe, English-language Expert Panel for Educators 2007

Local expertise on Child Maltreatment – An Abstract

“Although a broad range of programmes for prevention of child maltreatment exist, the effectiveness of most of the programmes is unknown. Two specific home-visiting programmes—the Nurse–Family Partnership (best evidence) and Early Start—have been shown to prevent child maltreatment and associated outcomes such as injuries. One population level parenting programme has shown benefits, but requires further assessment and replication. Additional in-hospital and clinic strategies show promise in preventing physical abuse and neglect. However, whether school-based educational programmes prevent child sexual abuse is unknown, and there are currently no known approaches to prevent emotional abuse or exposure to intimate-partner violence. A specific parent-training programme has shown benefits in preventing recurrence of physical abuse; no intervention has yet been shown to be effective in preventing recurrence of neglect. A few interventions for neglected children and mother–child therapy for families with intimate-partner violence show promise in improving behavioural outcomes. Cognitive-behavioural therapy for sexually abused children with symptoms of post-traumatic stress shows the best evidence for reduction in mental-health conditions. For maltreated children, foster care placement can lead to benefits compared with young people who remain at home or those who reunify from foster care; enhanced foster care shows benefits for children. Future research should ensure that interventions are assessed in controlled trials, using actual outcomes of maltreatment and associated health measures.”



Interventions to prevent child maltreatment and associated impairment.
Harriet L MacMillan, C Nadine Wathen, Jane Barlow, David M Fergusson,
John M Leventhal, Heather N Taussig. *The Lancet*, December 2008.

What The Research Tells Us



Youth violence is the product of an interaction between the child and his or her environment, with outcomes determined, perhaps by the severity, duration, and level of impairment experienced in the course of early abuse...Multiple types of child maltreatment overlap and adverse outcomes worsen as a child is repeatedly victimized; however, even maltreatment of a limited duration appears to have a lasting impact.

Maas, Herrenkohl & Sousa

FROM CHILD MALTREATMENT TO YOUTH VIOLENCE – IMPORTANT PREDICTIVE LINKS

Child maltreatment poses clear risks to those who are victimized. Although not all children who are victimized suffer long-term consequences of abuse and/or neglect, many do. One potential consequence of having been a victim of single or repeated acts of abuse is developing one's own proclivity for violence. Some refer to this as the intergenerational "cycle" of violence. We define "youth" violence as that which occurs between 12 and 21 years of age.

Key Points from the Research:

- Physical child maltreatment is the most consistent type of abuse predicting youth violence to date
- Compounded types of abuse (e.g. sexual, emotional, physical) and increased severity of abuse appear to increase the likelihood of later youth violence perpetration
- Findings indicate that less severe forms of physical punishment and harsh parenting can result in an increased likelihood of later violence for some youth (e.g. youth in poverty and youth exposed to high levels of community violence)
- Evidence is emerging that childhood maltreatment may be a predictor of intimate partner violence perpetration, particularly for females.

Research has shown that maltreated children go on to have higher rates of arrest and an increased likelihood of violent delinquency in early and later adolescence. To the extent that differences in patterns of behaviour can be adequately documented, it may be possible to tailor interventions to more fully address the needs of children at highest risk of adverse consequences, including later perpetration of violence (e.g. serious violence such as aggravated assault, rape, murder, and less serious forms such as physical fighting).

Maas, Herrenkohl & Sousa, Review of Research on Child Maltreatment and Violence in Youth. *Trauma Violence & Abuse*, 2008; 9; 56

RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MALTREATMENT

Long a topic of debate, there is an emerging consensus that children's characteristics may influence their risk of being maltreated. Certain demographic variables may serve as markers that differentiate a child's risk of being maltreated. For instance, the incidence of maltreatment is higher among racial and ethnic minority children. Females are more likely to be sexually abused, and males may be more likely to experience physical abuse. Premature birth and low birth rate are also regarded as antecedents of abuse and neglect...and research has shown that children with disabilities are at greater risk of being maltreated than their nondisabled peers.

A number of family demographic factors are known to increase the risk of child maltreatment (e.g. family economic resources). Many studies have found that family structure (e.g. large family size, single parenthood) are also associated with abuse and neglect. Other parent characteristics such as low maternal age and low educational attainment have also been linked to maltreatment. Many studies have also found that adults who were maltreated during childhood are at risk of maltreating children in their care. A low level of parent participation in school has been shown a predictor of maltreatment among school-age children.

Community-level variables associated with abuse and neglect include social isolation, low levels of social support, high local unemployment rates and high population density. Two factors in particular – neighbourhood poverty and residential mobility – have received substantial attention.

Studies that identify unique predictors of abuse and neglect – particularly factors that may be altered by appropriate intervention – will provide valuable knowledge to tailor prevention efforts to particular types of maltreatment. That maternal age at a child's birth was associated with all maltreatment outcomes, including both physical abuse and neglect, indicates that targeting scarce resources toward families with younger parents may be an effective and economical maltreatment prevention strategy. Another implication of this finding is that programs and policies that reduce teenage pregnancy and childbearing may lead indirectly to lower rates of maltreatment.

Mersky, Berger, Reynolds & Gromoske, Risk Factors for Child and Adolescent Maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 2008

“No single factor or set of factors can be expected to “cause” child maltreatment.”



“Although some scholars regard the activities of social service agencies as charity work separate from civic engagement, others regard all forms of joining together to provide for the common good as emblematic of citizen participation in civil society. Organizations that foster civic engagement bring people together from diverse settings.”

Schneider, J. George Washington University, 2007.

Council Update...new group programs starting soon!

Group Programs with a support and psycho-educational focus designed for parents, caregivers, foster parents and others dealing with sexual abuse involving children.

Courage to Tell is a **two-part information session** is designed for parents and caregivers who are dealing with a recent disclosure of sexual abuse involving their child. Parents and caregivers will gain important knowledge in a safe and supportive environment without having to share their story. The group meets for 2 hours each week for two consecutive weeks. Participants must commit to attending both sessions. Light refreshments will be served.

Moving Towards Healing is a 10-week **therapeutic small group program** for 8-12 parents and caregivers of children who have been sexually abused that goes beyond the provision of information. The group meets weekly for 1.5 hours in a safe and supportive environment. Involvement in this group requires that the abuse investigation be completed and that the child be engaged in counseling. Parents are expected to commit to all 10 sessions.

Keeping Safe is a 3-session **educational group** designed for parents and caregivers of children with sexual behaviour problems offering an opportunity to gain important knowledge in a safe and supportive environment without having to share their story. The group meets for 2 hours each week, for three consecutive weeks. Participants are expected to attend all three sessions.

All groups are free of charge and held at the Child Abuse Council offices.

Call for information and group start dates: (905) 523-1020 ext. 12.

Steve Allen, Leader For Kids

Meet Steve Allen, owner of Allegra Print & Imaging Stoney Creek. Steve is one of our *Leaders for Kids* and a big supporter of the Council. An avid cyclist and father of two daughters, Steve has been a generous Council booster in many ways – discounted printing, loan of a display, volunteer time, sponsorship of Council events. “This is an important cause”, he says. “I was surprised to learn how little funding there is, how low profile it’s been. To me, being a leader means talking it up whenever I can, and doing whatever I can do to help. Part of leadership is also to challenge others to help raise the profile of this cause and to get others to become involved. I want to do that”. We are grateful to Steve and all our *Leaders for Kids* for all they do in support of our work.



DID YOU KNOW that according to the United Nations, some 223 million children worldwide are estimated to have experienced forced sexual involvement or sexual violence and exploitation involving physical contact. “Many Canadians don’t realize that children as young as 14 are involved in the sex trade in Canada, including a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children and youth. Sexual exploitation isn’t just confined to physical crimes, but can also happen via the media. The media is normalizing the message that being sexy is okay for younger and younger kids. We need to pay more attention to youth and their experiences concerning exploitation”. UNICEF, 2008

“There are no easy answers, no magic wands, no simple diagnostic test that will help us understand why a person is capable of an act of violence. This society (needs) to treat its children and families with more civility and dignity. Despite politicians’ rhetoric about a safer society...there is a stark unwillingness to invest in the kinds of support that will reduce poverty, support young children’s emotional and intellectual development, and make the world a safer place for children.”

Betsy McAlister Groves, Child Witness to Violence Project, 2002.

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