

## ***April is Child Abuse Prevention Month***

### **Why does Child Abuse occur?**

Child abuse and neglect affect children of every age, race, and income level. However, research has identified many factors relating to the child, family, community, and society that are associated with an increased risk of child abuse and neglect. Studies have also shown that when multiple risk factors are present, the risk is greater.

Young mothers and fathers unprepared for the responsibilities of raising a child; overwhelmed single parents with little support; and families placed under stress by poverty, divorce, or a child's disability are all at greater risk. Some families are stressed by worries about employment, health, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, or other problems, or are simply unaware of how to care for their children's basic needs.

These circumstances, combined with the inherent challenges of raising children, can result in otherwise well-intentioned parents causing their children harm or neglecting their needs.

### **How many children are abused and neglected in the US?**

In 2004, about 3 million reports were made to child protective services about the safety and well-being of more than 5.5 million children. As a result of these reports, about 872,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse or neglect. Of these, more than 60% were neglected, about 18% were physically abuse, 10% were sexually abuse, and 7% were emotionally maltreated.

Child deaths are the most tragic results of maltreatment. In 2004, an estimated 1,490 children died due to abuse or neglect. More than one-third of these deaths were caused by neglect.

### **What are the consequences?**

The impact of child maltreatment can be profound. Research shows that child maltreatment is associated with adverse health and mental health outcomes in children and families, and those negative effects can last a lifetime. The long-term effects can be physical, psychological, or behavioral.

A history of child abuse or neglect has been associated with increased risk of:

- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Developmental disabilities and learning problems
- Social problems with other children and with adults
- Teen pregnancy
- Lack of success in school
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Domestic Violence

**Next Week:** What we know about protecting children.

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Register for the Walk a Mile in Their Shoes Walk-a-Thon to be held Saturday, April 21, 2007 in Allentown. All donations benefit abused children and the Child Advocacy Centers of north east Pennsylvania. Forms are available at [www.diobethkids.org](http://www.diobethkids.org). April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

"The interests of childhood and youth are the interests of mankind."  
Edmund Storer James