

Child Abuse and Neglect:

A Resource Guide

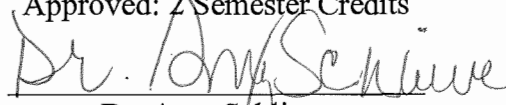
by

Kyrsha M. Dryden

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits


Dr. Amy Schlieve

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

December, 2009

**The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI**

Author: Dryden, Kyrsha M.

Title: *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Resource Guide*

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Education

Research Adviser: Amy Schlieve, Ph.D.

Month/Year: December, 2009

Number of Pages: 27

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

This resource guide examines the research available surrounding child abuse and neglect. I will define exactly what child abuse and neglect is in a broad sense as well as specific types of abuse and neglect. The research identifies what population of children is most likely to be effected by abuse and neglect as well as what adults will likely be abusers when they become parents.

Although risk factors can be and are identified the prevalence of this epidemic is widespread and is not localized to one population or another. It is found in every population and every society around the world. That being said, basic risk factors have been identified and although there is no hard and fast rule there are basic guidelines that help educators seek help for these children. There are many strategies that educators can implement to attempt to improve the quality of life of the child and ultimately the entire family.

This is an issue that is paralyzing our youth and their families. It is one that is present in every classroom across the United States as well as the world.

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin Stout

Menomonie, WI

Acknowledgements

I would like to first and foremost thank Dr. Amy Schlieve for her never ending support and guidance throughout the past several years. I began my graduate work in September of 2005, since then my life has gone through tremendous changes both positive and negative. Amy you have pushed me through this incredibly long process, without your support I could not have accomplished this. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, I wish I could write how much this your support has meant to me.

I need to thank my mother, Kathi, and my father, Robert, for their continued support. No matter what the obstacle has been they are always first in line to help me through. There is no way that I could have survived the last five years without them in my life and only a phone call away.

Finally, I need to thank my children, Zack and Rose. Zack was born when I started my undergraduate program and Rose came along when I started my graduate work. They are still here and holding strong with me.

I dedicate this accomplishment to Zack and Rose as well as my grandparents, Dale and Evelyn. I love you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	1
<i>Purpose of the Study</i>	2
<i>Assumptions of the Study</i>	4
<i>Definition of Terms</i>	4
<i>Limitations of Study</i>	5
<i>Methodology</i>	5
Chapter II: Literature Review	7
<i>Risk Factors and Prevalence</i>	7
<i>Education and Prevention</i>	11
<i>Educational Implications</i>	15
Chapter III: Discussion	19
<i>Goal/objective</i>	19
References	21

Chapter I: Introduction

Alekseeva (2007) stated, “Children make up the segment of society that is the most defenseless, vulnerable, and completely dependent on adults. It is the fault of adults when children end up in areas of natural disasters and catastrophes or zones of military combat operation and become the hostages and victims of physical, sexual, and emotional violence.” In education today, as in years past and surely in years to come, child abuse and neglect is and will be an overwhelming epidemic. Teachers are faced daily with the prospect of having to call human services to report an incident of child abuse and/or neglect. Study after study has been conducted and an overwhelming amount of them find that child abuse and neglect is a behavior that is handed down from generation to generation and only with education can the behavior be broken.

As I began researching for this guide I decided that I should understand the numbers that are associated with abuse and neglect. I found that girls are at a greater risk of sexual abuse as compared to boys. The research has shown that 20-25% of women and 5-15% of men were sexually abused as children. An estimated 906,000 children are victims of abuse and neglect every year. The rate of victimization is 12.3 children per 1,000 children as found by the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse Organization. They also have found that 1,500 children die each year from child abuse which translates into four deaths per day. Of the 1,500 children that die each year, 79% of these children are less than four years old.

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse and neglect is a problem plaguing children today. I will be identifying the risk factors, prevalence and the interventions and/or parent education programs that are available. It is my intent to answer the questions of why child abuse/neglect happens, who it happens to and

finally what avenues to parents and educators have to improve the environment for the student or child involved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to develop a resource guide for educators, caregivers, and parents so that they are able to understand child abuse and neglect. It is my hope that with increased understanding and knowledge educators, caregivers, and parents will be able to better protect and care for children in abusive and neglectful environments. I will be reviewing the current research that is available regarding child abuse and neglect.

At completion, this resource guide will provide educators, parents, and caregivers a checklist of sorts to guide them through recognizing the risk factors, understanding the prevalence, and finally identifying steps to be taken once a student is assumed to be in a situation of abuse and/or neglect.

I have been working in the field of special education for almost seven years. I have worked with children from ages 5-21. I also have four children of my own ages ranging from 5-11. I am around children from most walks of life at almost every moment of the day. On nearly a daily basis I am faced with a situation that involves a child in a situation of abuse or neglect. In each case I feel that I would be better equipped to make the correct or best decision if I had a basic understanding of child abuse and neglect and its causes, risk factors, and prevalence.

Risk factors are clear and consistent throughout research. McDaniel and Dillenburger (2007) state that, "Children who are brought up by very young parents with no partner or family support or by a parent who has learning difficulties are seen to be at increased risk of neglect" (p. 102). The risk of a child being abused and/or neglected rises if there is poverty, social isolation,

unemployment, housing problems, or lack of parental basic childcare skills. The trend is clear children who have young, poor and or uneducated parents are at high risk of being neglected or abused.

Because of the close interactions I have with children and their families I have found trends and commonalities in the families that are being affected by abuse and neglect. In most cases the abuse and neglect has been happening in the family for generations. Because I have worked in primarily rural communities I have had the opportunity to have interactions with multiple generations within a family that have attended the district. This has given me an opportunity to learn about the family histories and patterns for the children that I work with. Craig and Prang (2007) found the following:

The intergenerational transmission theory postulates that being a victim of physical abuse, or witnessing the abuse of other family members, teaches boys to become violent. With continued exposure to violence, learning occurs through both observational learning and positive reinforcement in the form of approval for violent behavior. (p. 296)

This theory shows a trend that children that are in abusive homes are more likely to be abused themselves. It is well known that children do as they see, they learn through observation. Because abusive parents/caregivers are less likely to be employed they are more likely to keep their children home with them each day, the children are never given the opportunity to observe and learn from healthy relationships.

Studies have been in progress to measure whether a child abuse/neglect prevention program can decrease the risk of child abuse and neglect. Programs focus on specific parenting skills and techniques. The techniques are modeled, taught and then observed. The research shows that there is hope for parents and children wanting to break the pattern of neglect and abuse in

their family. Researchers are proving that with education and support these families can escape the circle of abuse and live normal and productive lives with healthy relationships and more importantly happy and healthy children.

In working with many families over the last seven years that have been affected by abuse and neglect, I have found that a majority of the parents want to break the chain of abuse and neglect. The problem in all of these cases is that the parents just don't know what to do or how to do it.

Assumptions of the Study

I assume that I will discover that parents in lower income brackets or living below the poverty level will be at a higher risk of abusing or neglecting their children. I also assume that with the use of prevention and education those same parents will be able to become effective parents breaking the pattern of abuse and neglect in their family. I will be completing a review of the current research, not an exhaustive review. Data is always being collected and there is a significant population that does not report abuse and neglect.

Definition of Terms

All definitions were taken from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website.

Neglect. Failure to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be physical, medical, educational, or emotional.

Physical abuse. Failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision

Medical abuse. Failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment

Educational abuse: failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs

Emotional: inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs

Physical abuse. Physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap or other object), burning or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Sexual abuse. Includes activities by a parent or caretaker such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials

Emotional abuse. Includes a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove and therefore, child protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm to child. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms are identified.

Limitations of the Study

I will not be conducting my own action research but instead evaluating current studies in the areas of child abuse and neglect. The information that is available is vast and covers each area of child abuse and neglect in great detail including risk factors, prevalence, and prevention.

Methodology

I will be completing a review of current research regarding child abuse and neglect. I have been teaching in the field of special education for almost seven years. I have taught at all levels: elementary, middle and high school. In all three areas I have been faced with circumstances of child abuse and neglect. I found that every situation was slightly different. I

believe it is essential that all people that work with and interact with children, including parents, should have access to a guide when faced with cases of child abuse and neglect.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Risk Factors and Prevalence

“Child abuse is a complex term that defies a precise, timeless definition. What one generation may regard as acceptable, even desirable child discipline may be regarded by another as unacceptable and abuse” (Child Abuse Encyclopedia, p. 160). Not until the Western society became industrialized in the nineteenth century and the growth of large cities did people begin looking at and evaluating the treatment of children. So many times when I am sitting in a meeting with a parent/guardian I hear the statement made by the parent that they were treated the same way by their parents that they are treating their own children and they tell me that nobody cared or thought two thoughts about it when they were kids. These parents don’t understand that standards have changed, times have changed and it is not okay to use excessive force or abuse on their children for punishment or any other reason.

Child abuse is known as any avoidable and non-accidental act that causes physical injury to a child and is inflicted by someone who is responsible for that child’s welfare (Child Abuse Encyclopedia, p. 219). Child maltreatment is a blanket term used to describe all child abuse and neglect which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect and exploitation. (Child Abuse Encyclopedia, p.238).

Barbara Lowenthal states several signs of physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect in her article, *Educational Implications of Child Abuse*. She stated signs of physical abuse may include unexplained bruises, cuts, welts, bite marks, burns or fractures, an injury inconsistent with the nature of it, child reports an injury reported by his or her caretaker, the youngster appears extremely fearful or startles easily.

Signs of sexual abuse are abrupt change in behavior, seductive behavior with other youngsters and adults, extreme behavior in regard to touching, such as inappropriate sexual touch or reluctance to be touched by an adult, a knowledge of sex that is age inappropriate, student consistently appears isolated, depressed and angry, and the child complains of itching, bleeding or bruises around the genital area.

Lowenthal states that the signs of neglect are a lack of supervision by the caretaker for long periods of time, unattended medical problems, evidence of caretaker drug or alcohol abuse, inappropriate dress, hygiene, or an unkempt appearance and hunger or fatigue.

Finally, she describes emotional abuse signs to be an impaired sense of self-worth, failure to thrive, intense fears, anger and/or depression, failure to thrive, delayed physical, emotional or intellectual development and finally extremes of behavior such as being extremely compliant and passive or extremely aggressive. She also states that abused children in general may feel unworthy to interact with their peers, isolate themselves and encounter peer rejection. Anxiety, guilt, embarrassment, depression, and anger also are common feelings stemming from abuse.

Each year 250,000 children have been reported injured by an act of child abuse or neglect; all of these have been investigated and confirmed. Many more cases are assumed but because not every case is found and/or reported it is suspected that 300,000 to 1.5 million children are injured each year as a result of child abuse and neglect. "In the United States alone, an estimated 879,000 children suffered from abuse and neglect in 2000. In 2001 about 2,475 children were abused daily, and more than 50,000 reports of possible child abuse and neglect were reported to child protective services." (Child Abuse Encyclopedia, p.237)

I found that males and females are at the same amount of risk of experiencing abuse or neglect. The difference is who the perpetrator is. Girls are more likely to be abused by family

members or care givers, males on the other hand are more likely to be abused by nonfamily members such as coaches and/or teachers. Children from birth to three years old are at the highest rate of victimization, the older the child the less likely they are to be abused except when the abuse is sexual in nature. According to the Child Abuse Encyclopedia, the median age for female sexual abuse victim is 11 years and for males it is 8 years. Half of all victims of abuse or neglect are white, 24.7% are African American, and about 14.2% are Hispanic. American Indian/Alaskan Natives makes up 1.6% of victims, and Asian/Pacific Islanders account for 1.4% of victims. These percentages are only an approximate number of cases of abuse, we have to understand that many cases of abuse never get reported or discovered. From the research that I am finding I am discovering that the lower the economic standing of the family/children the less likely they are to report or be discovered.

Like I stated above, I have worked with many families throughout the past seven years. Each family is very different with only slight similarities. The U.S. Department of Human Services (2008) states that:

No consistent set of characteristics or personality traits have been associated with parents or caregivers who maltreat. However, some characteristics identified in those who are physically abusive or neglectful may include low self-esteem, belief that events are determined by chance or outside forces beyond one's personal control, poor impulse control, depression, anxiety and antisocial behavior.

Pediatric Nursing has found that according to a report from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), disabled children are almost four times more likely to be sexually, physically and emotionally abused and neglected than non-disabled children. Such abuse can go unrecognized and unreported due to people's attitudes and assumptions about

people with disabilities. Disabled children may need high levels of personal care and assistance for daily activities and abusive practices are often not recognized as such by the perpetrators or the abused (Macfarlane, 1994). Children with disabilities don't always have the verbal abilities to disclose whether or not they are or have been abused. It is necessary to educate children with disabilities how to verbalize intimate or abuse acts, to not do so is abuse in itself states Pediatric Nursing.

Approximately 1.6 million people die from acts of violence annually; making it the leading cause of death worldwide for individuals ages 15-44, (Craig and Sprang 2007). Approximately four million children are traumatized annually in the United States (Rogers and McAleavey Eng, 2003). Roger's and McAleavey also found that parents who were abused or experienced trauma as children are more likely to abuse. In the media and in general conversation we hear of all the people that are dying from cancer, heart disease and more recently the H1N1 virus. Many times a day walk past people that are speaking of how many people have been killed by a virus or disease but seldom do I hear of people speaking to the numbers of deaths caused by abuse and neglect. According to the numbers stated above the issue of abuse and neglect is just as prevalent as cancer and heart disease if not more so.

Because the population being affected by abuse and neglect is very vulnerable the crimes against them are under-reported. Children and adolescents as well as people with disabilities are unlikely to self-report if something has happened to them. In many cases they are too ashamed or frightened to report the incident/s.

Very simply, Lisa Shannon lists the following factors that may contribute to a parent abusing their children:

1. Factors associated with poverty

2. Being a teen parent
3. Having many closely spaced children
4. Experiencing high levels of conflict in one's family
5. Holding unrealistic expectations about parenting and about what children are capable of doing
6. Having a negative attitude towards one's children
7. Using authoritarian parenting styles with lots of control but little warmth
8. Using physical punishment
9. Having a history of abuse
10. Experiencing low self-esteem, depression, anxiety or other mental health problems
11. Having a substance abuse problem
12. A lack of social support from friends, family and other networks
13. Experiencing high levels of stress

Education and Prevention

Parenting has been around since the beginning of time. Since its beginning it has been a struggle for parents to meet all the needs of their children. "In an effort to meet these demands, parents have drawn on the modeling they experienced with their own parents and extended family members, the availability of support and advice from friends, and assistance provided by local services and related resources" (Daro). Parent education programs have grown in number in recent years due to an overwhelming amount of children being affected by abuse and neglect. It has been shown that not all families that need the help are getting the help. Studies are showing that families that do not realize they are struggling with parenting don't seek the help or have the

resources to do so. “On balance the majority of prevention programs target and successfully serve parents who recognize their limitations. Far fewer resources exist for families who may not know they need assistance or, if they recognize their shortcomings, do not know how to access help.”

In the 1980s there was a push to implement educational curriculums focusing on teaching children how they could avoid abuse. With that offenders were put into two categories: fixated offenders and regressed offenders. Rebecca Bolen (2003) tells us that fixated offenders are those whose pedophilic tendencies are toward abusing multiple children, both strangers and acquaintances. The fixated offender was thought to be more dangerous. Because of the push and the prevalence in child abuse and neglect “stranger danger” programs were implemented.

Empathy is a crucial skill that needs to be taught and learned by children. Children that are in abusive homes are less likely to learn these skills that are crucial to understanding people throughout their lives. Dr. Stephen Bavolek defines empathy as the fundamental “people” skill. He states, “an empathic response is an attempt to put ourselves in the other person’s place so that our feelings will suggest to us not only his emotions but also his motives.” A person who has empathic skills is aware of the state of being of another, understanding of this condition, a personal identification with the situation, and appropriate affective responses. In other words a child or person that is empathetic is able to put themselves in the shoes of someone else appropriately and then will know what to do when they get there.

Most people are born with the ability to be empathetic, or at the very least they have the potential to gain the skills. Bavolek states that if a child is emotionally neglected the empathy is dulled. If a child is experiencing high levels of stress they are less likely to be empathic towards the needs of others. I feel that most important, for the purpose of this study, emotional abuse

results in hyper vigilance to cues that have signaled threat, this preoccupation with the feelings of others as children often results in adults who suffer intense emotional ups and downs (Bavolek, 2007). Adults who experience intense emotional ups and downs, as Bavolek states, are more likely to be abusive towards significant others as well as their children. When an adult lacks the ability to empathize, in a case of sexual abuse will not think that they are hurting the child, instead they will think to themselves, “I’m not hurting the child, I’m just showing love.” Their ability to think about the child’s feelings does not exist. They truly feel they are showing love.

A natural progression can be seen in the development of empathy. Once an infant reaches one year, infants become more aware that they are distinct from others, and try to soothe another crying infant. At approximately two years of age, children begin to realize that someone else’s feelings differ from their own and become more sensitive to cues revealing what another child feels. By late childhood, advanced empathy emerges and child can understand distress beyond the immediate situation. It must be noted, however, that this progression is only possible when a nurturing environment is available.

Bavolek has identified a few practices that are positively associated with the development of empathetic understanding:

1. Responsive, nonpunitive, nonauthoritarian behavior of mothers toward their preschool children
2. Explaining to children the effects of their behavior on others
3. Pointing out to children that they have the power to make others happy by being kind and generous to them
4. Parental modeling of empathetic, caring behavior

5. Explaining to children who have hurt or distressed others why their behavior is harmful and giving them suggestions for making amends to those hurt
6. Encouraging school-age children to discuss their feelings and problems with parents

Bavolek has also identified practices that are negatively related to the development of empathy:

1. Threats and physical punishments aimed at inducing children to “behave properly”
2. Inconsistent behavior toward children’s expression of emotional needs or rejection/withdrawal in response to those needs
3. Home situations in which children’s mothers are physically abused by their fathers
4. The provision of extrinsic rewards or bribes aimed at eliciting “good” behavior from children

By looking at the lists, neither of them are surprising, they almost seem like common sense.

Lisa Shannon, an associate at North Carolina State University speaks to the value of a parent education prevention program. She states that one of the first things that is crucial is to teach parents what is typical for children. This includes how they act, how they react, how they think and how they grow. If a parent has a good understanding of these few areas they are more likely to react to situations more appropriately. A component of a parent education program has to include real life examples and situations so that the parent can actually see what it is suppose to look like.

The parents also need to practice what they have learned in a carefully monitored situation. This can be done by acting out or showing scenarios to with the parents, once again so they can see what it looks like to react appropriately to situations. While practicing these skills a parent may need to practice their empathetic skills, once a parent realizing how their extreme discipline or abuse makes their children feel they may realize that they need to learn these skills and implement them.

As was stated above, parents that experience large amounts of stress are at a higher risk of becoming an abuser. In many cases, the parent may need to be taught how to manage their stress. Along with learning how to manage their stress they need to be taught and/or shown what their triggers are and what things in particular cause them the most stress. As well as teaching how to manage stress and identify stressors parents should be shown and directed to additional resources that can help them if they are unable to control the stress in their lives.

It is important to understand that a parent education program will not cure a parent, especially in a short period of time. A program that is going to be effective will take time, in some cases six to eight month or longer. This is a process that could have the potential to save a parent and a child from a life of pain and suffering, this is not a task that will come easily or without hard work on the part of the parent as well as the teacher.

Educational Implications

A child that has been abused either physically, sexually, emotionally, or neglected will most likely suffer from many long-term effects. David Preininger put together a list of effects that could affect the child into adulthood.

Developmentally a child may have difficulty with processing what they hear and expressing themselves verbally. They also could suffer from gross motor problems including

delays in fine motor adaptive skills. Essentially it seems that a child who is abused stops growing developmentally from the time they are abused.

Preininger also speaks to self-esteem and impulse control. These children become less able to get satisfaction from tasks well done as well as seeing themselves as undeserving. Children who have been abused also feel that they are incapable of change. After being abused children tend to exhibit poor impulse control and may require more external controls on their behavior and could have a poor attention span.

Emotionally children who have been abused are essentially scarred. These children are able to, with help, regain normal functioning but the scars will not go away. The emotions of these children may: have trouble understanding basic cause and effect, have difficulty expressing feelings appropriately; especially anger, sadness, and frustration, and have difficulty in appropriately recognizing feelings in others.

Students will have cognitive difficulties in the following ways: may have trouble understanding basic cause and effect, may experience problems with logical thinking, may appear to have confused thought processes, may have difficulty thinking ahead, may have an impaired sense of time, and may have difficulties with abstract thinking.

As educators we are faced with the responsibility of teaching these students with all of the above mentioned effects. These children come to us on a daily with the expectation of being safe and taken care of they also are in need of a quality education. Those expectations can be difficult to meet because they are not coming to us ready to learn. A student that is going to learn to their full capacity need to be well fed and nurtured. They need to have a strong support system in place and a safe environment in which to grow. Given these circumstance it is a teacher's job to make the learning possible for each student.

A project that has been developed in Texas, The Pebble Project, is a resource for teachers that assist in dealing with students in your classroom that have been affected by abuse. A teacher needs to ensure security, structure, consistency and predictability in their classroom. Children need to have a sense of security when they are in school, for some that is the only place that they are truly safe.

The Pebble Project lists some great ideas that will assist a teacher in helping a student that has been abused. The ideas are as follows:

1. Set aside a place in the classroom for children to “gather themselves together” or calm down
2. Give the child his own set of cards with pictures of different feeling states and encourage them to place the card that reflects his feeling state on the corner of his desk so you can easily see it
3. Plan together with the class for times when someone becomes overwhelmed. If too upset or overwhelmed a child can take responsibility for themselves by going to the “cool down” place
4. Give the child a task such as delivering a “note” in a sealed envelope to another teacher with whom you have made prior arrangements
5. Natural consequences such as having to do unfinished homework during recess are also very effective if consistently applied to all children
6. Always interrupt inappropriate behavior and redirect the child. A smile helps to reassure the child that you are not a threat, that he or she is still safe.

Educators play a large role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Every state in the United States has mandates in place that require professionals working with children to report

any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. If a professional does not report there are severe consequences including professional sanctions, fines, certification and license suspensions, jail sentences and civil suits.

At times it can be difficult, as an educator, to decide when it is appropriate to make a call to the department of children and families. It is important to talk with the child about exactly what has happened, but more importantly it is important the conversation is had only once. If there is any suspicion of abuse in any way, you are required to call human services.

When calling human services, be sure to have the contact and demographic information about the student in which you are calling about. This includes: the child's name, home address, parents' names as well as any adult that lives within the same household, the names of any other child living within the household, phone numbers for the parents, and lastly as much information about the incident as you were able to obtain from the child. In situations when human services are called it is best practice to notify the building administrator and in some cases the building's guidance counselor or social worker. As I have stated, I have taught for seven years in the area of special education, I have followed this process countless times throughout each school year, unfortunately it does not become easier nor does the decision making process become less ambiguous. Every call is based on a situation by situation basis; no two are alike which means there is no cut and dry rule about when to call or when to not call.

Chapter III: Conclusions

What is child abuse and neglect? Child abuse and neglect is any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of harm, according to the Child Welfare Information Gateway website. I have outlined many of the risk factors that tell which children are most likely to be affected by child abuse and neglect but in reality any and every child can be affected. This is why the job of being a mandatory reporter is so difficult, not only do we need to ultimately make the call reporting a child being abused or neglected, but we need to do so with no clear guidelines and at times with very little information.

I had two goals in writing this thesis project. The first was to first and foremost educate teachers in the steps that need to be taken when a child is thought to be in an abusive environment. In a lot of cases we, as teachers, are the only person that these children have to count on to keep them safe.

Not only does an educator need to understand what to do when faced with a situation of child abuse and neglect but they need to know what to do with that student when they are aware of abuse and neglect. There are many things that an educator can do to help a student who is in an abusive environment. It is so important to seek these children out; they need a person to be there, a person that can be their support system because they don't have one anywhere else.

My second goal was to educate teachers once again, but not in the steps of reporting but on how to educate parents and reach out to them. I strongly believe that not a single person, as a child, decides that they are going to be an abuser, to their spouse or their child. In most cases an abuser becomes an abuser because they were abused themselves.

I have sat in many Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P) meetings with parents that are at the end of their wits because they just don't know how to be a parent. They talk about how they struggle with boundaries, with discipline, with money, with the responsibility, and with every other aspect of parenting. They just don't know how to handle the responsibility of parenting. There are many resources for parents and teachers, education is the bottom line.

There are many programs available to educators and parents. In my opinion it is the responsibility of teachers to know what is available to parents in the county in which they teach. As a teacher, if we suspect abuse the first step to take is to make a report. Legally this is as far as a teacher needs to be involved. There is no law that states that the teacher is required to reach out to the parents or family of the abused child. Best practice, in my opinion, is to work with the human services as much as possible to assist the family, or the parents to improve the environment in which they live.

For the purpose of this thesis project I reviewed current studies and peer-reviewed research. My recommendation for further research in this area would be to conduct personal interviews with social workers from counties around Wisconsin. I would also suggest working with a parent education program to study and measure the success rates. Along with studying the success of a parent education program it would be beneficial to speak with parents who have participated and "graduated" from a program as well as the facilitators that teach the programs.

References

- Alekseeva, L. S. (2007). Problems of child abuse in the home. *Problems of child abuse in the home*, 49(5), 6-18.
- Bavolek, S. (n.d.). Developing empathy in families. Retrieved December 20, 2009, from http://www.nurturingparenting.com/research_validation/developing_empathy_in_families.pdf
- Child help. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from <http://www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics/child-abuse-statistics>
- Child maltreatment. (2006). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/index.htm
- Child welfare information gateway. (2007). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining/can.cfm>
- Child welfare information gateway. (2007). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/define.cfm
- Craig, C. D. (2007). Trauma exposure and child abuse potential: investigating the cycle of violence. *Trauma exposure and child abuse potential: investigating the cycle of violence*, 77(2), 296-305. Retrieved from EBSCO.
- Definitions in federal law. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can.defining/federal.cfm>
- P. (n.d.). Abuse of children with disabilities in hospital: issues and implications. *Abuse of children with disabilities in hospital: issues and implications*, 19(6), 29-32. Retrieved November 23, 2008, from Ebsco.

- Preininger, D. R. (n.d.). Long-term effects of the failure of childhood attachment. Retrieved December 20, 2009, from http://www.nurturingparenting.com/research_validation/long-term_effects_of_the_failure_of_childhood_attachment.pdf
- Shannon, L. C. (n.d.). Best practices for parent education programs seeking to prevent child abuse. Retrieved December 20, 2009, from <http://npen.org/pdfs/BestPra.pdf>
- State definitions of child abuse.* (2007). Retrieved October 14, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining/can.cfm>
- Terry, K. J., & Tallon, J. (n.d.). *Child sexual abuse: a review of literature* [Scholarly project]. In *Child sexual abuse: a review of literature*. Retrieved October 14, 2008, from <http://www.usccb.org/nrb/johnjaystudy/litreview.pdf>
- The Pebble Project. (n.d.). Retrieved December 12, 2009, from http://www.cisaustin.org/pebbleproject/html/how_teachers_can_help.html
- Tymchuk, A. J., Andron, L., Bavolek, S. J., Wuattrociochi, A. S., & Henderson, H. I. (n.d.). Understanding the parenting issues of adults with mental retardation. Retrieved from http://www.nurturingparenting.com/research_validation/understanding_parenting_issues.pdf
- Woodhouse, B. B. (2001). Implications for children's rights in the united states. *An introduction to children's rights*, 25-29.