
▪ DID YOU KNOW ▪

Statistics about the abuse and neglect of Australian children

- 317, 526 notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect were made to child protection authorities nationally in 2007-2008
- 148, 824 of these reports resulted in a finalized investigation
- 55, 120 of these reports were substantiated
- 34, 279 children were on orders in 2008
- 31, 166 were in Out of Home Care in 2008
- The most common types of child maltreatment were Emotional abuse 38%, Neglect 29%, Physical abuse 23% and Sexual abuse 10%
- Current statistics on child abuse and neglect only tell us how many children come into contact with child protection authorities
- Current child protection data is seen as a conservative estimate of child maltreatment (Bromfield & Higgins 2004)
- Child protection data also excludes cases where the abuse or neglect was not perpetrated by the parent and the parent is protecting the child (e.g., child sexually abused by a non-family member who lives in the community) (Bromfield & Higgins, 2004)
- Another limitation of current data is that as economically disadvantaged families are more likely to come into contact with child protection authorities, it is more likely that child abuse and neglect will be identified in economically disadvantaged families.





■ What does it mean when we are described as abused and neglected? ■

The following definitions are used to identify the types of abuse that occur most frequently:

- Physical abuse: non-accidental aggressive act towards a child including slapping, shaking, punching, kicking etc.
- Psychological abuse: includes rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing and/or not providing emotional support and care.
- Sexual abuse: any sexual activity between a child and an adult or older person (5 or more years older). Includes fondling, oral or anal and vaginal penetration, exposing or involving a child in pornography, voyeurism etc.
- Neglect: failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including not enough food, shelter, clothing, supervision, medical attention etc.
- Witnessing Family Violence: a child being present, either hearing or seeing, while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical, sexual or psychological abuse or is exposed to damage caused by the abuser. (AIFS National Child Protection Clearing House)

What happens in families and communities to increase a child's vulnerability of being abused or neglected?

- Caring for a child or children with disabilities
- Family isolation – migrants; refugees; geographical; social
- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs and child development – poor parenting capacity
- Domestic violence and family violence
- Poverty and other socioeconomic disadvantage, such as unemployment
- Substance abuse in the family
- Young parents
- Poor attachment between parent and child
- Parent's own experiences of childhood abuse and neglect
- Parents' mental health issues
- Community violence



▪ What are some ways to help keep children and young people safe? ▪

- Raise community awareness about child abuse and neglect particularly the concept that children need to be cared for by communities, not just families.
- Promote the conduct and dissemination of sound research so that the causes and impact of child abuse can be better understood and effective ways to prevent it can be developed.
- Advocate for Government policy & strategy to prioritise the needs and rights of children in relevant legislation and public policy.
- Support and encourage the development of programs and services which are effective in supporting vulnerable children and families, develop resilience in children and young people, and facilitate social inclusion and child friendly communities.
- Support families in crises when they need it, in times of illness, job loss, housing problems and other stressors.
- Consult and work in partnership with the families and communities who are the target of these strategies.
- Understand the right of children and families to be treated with dignity and respect no matter what their circumstances. Families who feel stigmatized and dehumanized find it difficult to become involved in programs or services.
- Support successful programs to continue running. Many successful programs end because they only receive short term funding.
- Support the development of Australian communities that have supportive services in place and a shared goal of safety and stability for families. Communities that openly respect the rights, needs and views of children, and that have services and systems that work in a coordinated way, have fewer incidences of child abuse and neglect.





▪ Where did we get our information from? ▪

- 1 Bromfield, L. & Irenyi, M. (2009). Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics. Resource Sheet n.1. National Child Protection Clearinghouse; Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 2 Bromfield, L. Holzer, P. & Lamont, A (2009). The economic cost of child abuse and neglect. Resource Sheet n. 2. National Child Protection Clearinghouse; Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 3 Buchart, A. & Harvey, A. (2006). Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence. World Health Organisation and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN).
- 4 Caliber Associates; Authors: Thomas, D., Leicht, C., Hughes, C., Madigan, A. & Dowell, K. (2003) Emerging Practices: In the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. Children's Bureau's Office on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- 5 Holzer, P., Higgins J., Bromfield, L., Richardson, N. & Higgins, D. (2006) The effectiveness of parent education and home visiting child maltreatment prevention programs. Child Abuse Prevention Issues, no 24, Autumn. National Child Protection Clearinghouse; Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 6 MacMillan, et al. (2009). Child Maltreatment 3: Interventions to prevent child maltreatment and associated impairment. The Lancet, v. 373, issue 9659, p250-266.
- 7 Mikton, C. & Butchart, A. (2008). Child maltreatment prevention: a systematic review of reviews. Bulletin World Health Organisation, 2009;87:353-361. Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, World Health Organisation.
- 8 Price-Robertson, R., Bromfield, L. & Vassallo, S. (2010) The prevalence of child abuse and neglect. Resource Sheet, National Child Protection Clearinghouse; Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 9 Sammut, J. with O'Brien, T. (2009). Fatally Flawed: The Child Protection Crisis in Australia. Centre for Independent Studies, Policy Monograph 97.
- 10 Tomison, A. & Poole, L. (2000). Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: Findings from an Australian audit of prevention programs. Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 11 Oberklaid, F (2007). Brain Development and the Life Course - The Importance of the Early Caretaking Environment. Key note address at the Quality Counts - Responsive and Effective Child Care |Conference, Melbourne. 2007

