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Child abuse is seldom a single event - it occurs with regularity, often increasing in violence. It crosses all boundaries of income, race, ethnicity, and religious faith. A child abuser is usually closely related to the child, such as a parent (estimated to be 75% of cases), step-parent or other caregiver. In homes where child abuse occurs, fear, instability and confusion replace the love, comfort and nurturing that children need. Abused children live in constant fear of physical harm from a person who is supposed to care for and protect them. They may feel guilt at loving the abuser or blame themselves for causing the violence.

Victims of child abuse may feel that they are bad and deserve the abuse. They usually have poor self-esteem. In addition to physical injuries that may be the result of abuse; child victims may develop eating disorders or sleep disturbances, including nightmares. Victims may develop speech disorders or developmental lags in motor skills. Many child victims demonstrate some form of self-destructive behavior; physical illness such as asthma, ulcers, allergies, or recurring headaches; irrational and persistent fears or hatreds; or demonstrate either passive or aggressive behavioral extremes.

WHO IS CONSIDERED A VICTIM OF CHILD ABUSE?

The victim of child abuse is a person under the age of 18 who has suffered one or more of the categories of child abuse as defined in Iowa law (physical abuse, mental injury, sexual abuse, denial of critical care, child prostitution, presence of illegal drugs, manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance).

ECONOMIC COST OF CHILD ABUSE

The monetary costs associated with child abuse are staggering; Prevent Child Abuse America released an economic impact study in 2012 that estimated the cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States at \$80 billion, or nearly \$64,000 per child, this year.

These estimates include direct costs (hospitalizations, mental health treatment, child welfare system, and law enforcement) as well as indirect costs (special education, early intervention, adult homelessness, mental health and health care, juvenile and adult criminal justice, and lost work productivity).

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE UNDER IOWA LAW?

The Iowa Department of Human Services has legal authority to conduct an assessment of child abuse when it is alleged that a child is subjected to one or more of the eight categories of child abuse defined in Iowa Code section 232.68:

- ♦ Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for a child's health and well-being
- ♦ Intended physical injury
- ♦ Sexual abuse of a child
- ♦ Presence of an illegal drug in a child's body as a result of actions or neglect
- ♦ Allowing a known sex offender, who is not the child's biological parent or the caretaker's spouse, custody or access to a child
- ♦ Manufacturing a dangerous substance in a child's presence
- ♦ Mental injury to a child
- ♦ Providing access to or showing obscene material to a child

SNAPSHOT OF CHILD ABUSE IN IOWA

- ✓ **Number of abused children:** 26, 129 assessments for child abuse or neglect were reported in 2013. This represents a decrease of 10% from 2012. There were 12,276 children subject to abuse or neglect, an increase from 2012.
- ✓ **Age of child abuse victims:** Child abuse disproportionately impacts young children. In 2013, approximately 49% of child abuse or neglected children were under six years old.
- ✓ **Gender variance:** Girls are slightly more likely to be abused than boys. The pattern of abuse differs between genders, with girls more likely to experience emotional abuse and neglect, and boys more likely to experience physical trauma.
- ✓ **Categories of child abuse:** Almost 4 out of 5 child abuse cases in 2013 were due to denial of critical care, which indicates a parent or caretaker failed to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, or other care necessary for a child's well-being. The next most common types of abuse were physical injury (9 percent), illegal drugs in a child's body because of caretaker action or inaction (6 percent), and sexual abuse (4 percent).

Child Abuse in Iowa - 2013

| Type of Abuse | Number | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Denial of Critical Care | 14,279 | 78.4% |
| Physical Abuse | 1,646 | 9.0% |
| Illegal Drugs in a Child's Body | 1,172 | 6.4% |
| Sexual Abuse | 716 | 3.9% |
| Sex Offender Allowed Access to Child | 186 | 1.0% |
| Meth Manufacturing near a Child | 162 | 0.9% |

Children who are abused are more likely to: *perform poorly in school, develop unhealthy relationships, attempt suicide and/or suffer from attention deficits, depression, violent aggression, obesity, alcoholism, drug usage, cigarette addiction.*

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EFFECT OF ACEs

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs) conducted by Drs. Robert Anda and Vincent Felitti revealed that childhood trauma, including all types of abuse, has a devastating effect on the future behavioral, mental, and physical health of a child.

ACEs fall into two general categories: experiences of childhood abuse (including physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse and sexual abuse) and experiences of household dysfunction (including substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, adult violence and parent separation or divorce).

Iowa is one of only 19 states collecting ACEs data on its youth population and planning for action to prevent, build resiliency, and understand how to mitigate the effects of ACEs through what it termed "trauma-informed care" (trauma-informed care is structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma).

THE FOLLOWING SIGNS MAY SIGNAL THE PRESENCE OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT:

The Child:

- Changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Is reluctant to be around a particular person
- Discloses maltreatment

The Parent:

- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of the parent's emotional needs
- Shows little concern for the child

The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship entirely negative
- State that they do not like each other

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT WHEN...

The Child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

The Parent or other Adult Caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGLECT WHEN...

The Child:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

The Parent or other Adult Caregiver:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

The Child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

The parent or other adult caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ABUSE WHEN...**The Parent or other Adult Caregiver:**

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

RESOURCES:

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Safety_and_Protection/Abuse_Reporting/ChildAbuse.html

<http://www.iowacacs.org/faqs/>

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

**Chrysalis Roundtables in partnership with Des Moines Police Department
7:30-9 am, Metro Waste Authority Board Room**

**September 26 – Violence in the School and Workplace
October 31 – Cyberbullying/Sexting – The Dangers
December 5 – How to Enjoy a Safe Holiday**