



# Child Abuse and Neglect: It's Everyone's Concern

What is child abuse? Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse.

## The Facts: Child Abuse and Neglect in St. Louis

- **15,032** incidents of abuse and neglect were reported involving **21,275** children in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County and Jefferson County in the year ended June 30, 2015 (Missouri Children's Division).
- **944** of these reports were substantiated as abuse or neglect.
- **49%** involved neglect
- **35%** involved physical abuse
- **24%** involved sexual abuse
- **9** children died from substantiated abuse and neglect.
- **8,196** other reported cases received family assessments and preventive services.
- In the three Illinois counties of the St. Louis region, **5,441** children were alleged as abused in the year ended June 30, 2015, with **1,415** of these indicated (Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services).
- Statewide in Missouri, **68,623** reports were made and **4,360** cases involving **6,244** children were substantiated in FY2015.

## The Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Abusive parents often have experienced abuse during their own childhoods. One study found that girls who experienced childhood physical abuse were 1–7 % more likely to become perpetrators of youth violence and 8–10% more likely to commit interpersonal violence.<sup>1</sup>
- Children with disabilities are 1.7 times more likely to be abused.<sup>2</sup>
- Children who have experienced abuse are nine times more likely to become involved in criminal activities. More than half of youth with reports of maltreatment are at risk of grade repetition, substance abuse, delinquency, truancy, or pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>
- Abused children are more likely to smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, or take illicit drugs during their lifetime. Male children with six or more adverse childhood experiences were 40 times more likely to use intravenous drugs later in life.<sup>1</sup>
- Each year, child abuse is estimated to cost society over \$80 billion, including direct costs for the child welfare system, hospitalization, juvenile justice, etc., as well as indirect costs such as special education, adult criminal justice, lost productivity and more.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services Children's Bureau, "Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse & Neglect."

<sup>2</sup> Prevent Child Abuse America, "The Estimated Annual Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect," 2016.



# April Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

## Help Spread the Word

- Post an "**Every Child, Every Family. Secure and Safe.**" yard sign at your agency, your church or your home. Signs are available from Vision for Children at Risk.
- Share **Child Abuse Prevention Month materials**, including bookmarks, pins and stickers, also available from Vision for Children at Risk.
- Visit the Vision for Children at Risk **Facebook** page (visionforchildren) daily in April to see pictures of organizations participating in Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Join in the **Healthy Kids Family Resource Fair** on Saturday, April 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the O'Fallon Park Recreation Complex YMCA, 4343 West Florissant Ave. More than 30 agencies will have displays on their services. Entertainment for the children will include face painting, crafts, story time and team mascots from the St. Louis Blues and Gateway Grizzlies. Encourage families to attend, or set up a table for your agency.



## Reach Out to Strengthen Families

- Promote healthy relationships and strong families. Be a nurturing parent and let your children know they are special and loved. Offer a helping hand to relatives and friends.
- If a family you know is undergoing stress, encourage them to get help. Use the **2-1-1** Missouri Information & Referral line to connect with services.
- Support community agencies that work to prevent and treat child abuse. For names of child-abuse prevention agencies in the St. Louis area, visit the St. Louis Family & Community Partnership website, [www.stlfamilycommunity.org](http://www.stlfamilycommunity.org).
- If you observe child abuse, report it to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline, **1-800-392-3738**. Learn the warning signs of child abuse.

## A Few Signs of Abuse and Neglect

### The Child:

- Shows sudden 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
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway,  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

