

# New Hope for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in California:

## Proven solutions to save lives and prevent crime

This brief is based on a national report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, an anti-crime group of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence, and youth violence experts nationwide, including more than 270 members in California. The national report and citations for this brief are available at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).

### Summary

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS has taken a hard-nosed look at what works—and what doesn't work—to cut crime and violence. Exciting new research, combined with prior evidence, show that most abuse and neglect in high-risk families can now be prevented. Doing so will spare thousands of California children from terror, agony, and despair and will also save lives. Sharply reducing abuse and neglect in California will save billions of dollars, while greatly reducing the number of children who would otherwise grow up to be violent criminals.

### The Annual Toll: 128,251 California Children Abused or Neglected in 2001

In California, there were 128,251 substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect, 41,058 children removed from their homes, and 30 confirmed deaths from abuse or neglect in 2001. Even those tragic numbers, however, may mask the real toll of child abuse and neglect in California. Nationally, the best estimate of the real number of children abused or neglected each year is closer to three times the official figure, and the Justice Department released a report saying deaths nationwide from abuse and neglect likely exceed 2,000 a year, instead of the 1,300 officially reported in 2001. So, the true number of California children abused, neglected or even killed is likely to be much higher.

### The Future Toll: 5,100 Violent Criminals

While most victimized children never become violent criminals, being severely abused or neglected can lead to permanent changes in children's brains. Some children have trouble learning empathy, while others develop a pre-disposi-

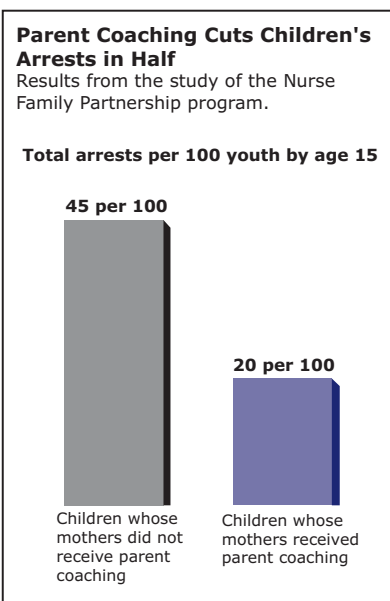
tion for misinterpreting actions as threatening and reacting violently. This sharply increases the risk that these children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime. The best available research indicates that, of the 128,251 California children who were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect in 2001, more than 5,100 will become violent criminals as adults who would otherwise avoid such crimes if not for the abuse or neglect they endured as children.

### Most Abuse and Neglect in High-risk Families Can Be Prevented

Failure to invest now in programs proven to prevent child abuse and neglect puts everyone in California at greater risk of becoming a victim of crime. The more than 265 California police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and crime victims who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS call on their state and federal governments to:

- **Offer high quality coaching in parenting skills to all at-risk parents.** The Nurse Family Partnership Program randomly assigned at-risk mothers to receive home visits by nurses who provided coaching in parenting and other skills.

Those children whose mothers were left out of the program were five times more likely to have been abused or neglected than the children whose mothers received parent coaching. Children of mothers left out had twice as many later arrests as the children of mothers who received home visits. Similarly, the Healthy Start program in Hawaii showed that high-risk families who did not receive parent coaching were six times more likely to have a child hospitalized for abuse or neglect than similar high-risk families who were coached.



- **Offer quality pre-kindergarten programs with parent-training for at-risk children.** The Chicago Child-Parent Center preschool program serving families in low-income neighborhoods cut the rates of child abuse and neglect in half for participants compared to similar children not in the program. Youngsters left out of the program were also 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who were enrolled.

**Children of High-Risk Parents Not Receiving Hawaii Healthy Start's Parenting Coaching Were Six Times More Likely to be Hospitalized for Abuse and Neglect**

**Children Hospitalized for Abuse or Neglect per 1,000 families**

**13 per 1,000**



High-risk families, no parent coaching

**2 per 1,000**



High-risk families, received parent coaching

- **Ensure that pregnant women who are addicted have access to drug and alcohol treatment**

programs. Maternal drug use during pregnancy can lead to brain damage in the child. Further, fetal alcohol syndrome is the leading cause of preventable mental retardation. The interaction of neurological damage at birth with deficient parenting multiplies the risk of criminality later in life. Research shows that an effective drug and alcohol treatment program for pregnant women in Baltimore dramatically reduced the number of babies who were born prematurely and at-risk for permanent brain damage that is associated with later criminality.

- **Provide mental health services for depressed or mentally ill parents.** People who grew up with a household member who was depressed, mentally ill, or who attempted suicide were two times more likely to have been physically abused than those who did not grow up in such a household. Just like other ill parents, depressed or mentally ill parents can effectively raise children if they receive treatment. Yet studies show only 25 percent of individuals nationally who suffer from depression receive adequate care for their illness.

## **Saving Lives, Preventing Crime and Saving Money**

Child abuse and neglect cost America upwards of \$80 billion a year. Two-thirds of that is crime costs.

In September, 1999 almost 118,000 California children were in foster care. In 2000, \$3 billion was spent on preventing or treating abuse or neglect in California, including \$1 billion in state funding. Most of that went for providing necessary foster care and victim services, and that funding - while never adequate - must at least be maintained. Investing more now in preventing child abuse and neglect, however, instead of waiting to treat it will save lives, reduce future crime and soon begin saving taxpayers money. For example, the RAND Corporation found that nurse home visitation programs

saved taxpayers four dollars for each dollar invested. The Chicago Child-Parent Center preschool program saved taxpayers, victims, and participants over seven dollars for every dollar invested (taxpayers alone saved almost \$3).

## **Law Enforcement Leaders are United**

California law enforcement leaders are calling for greater investments to protect children from abuse and neglect, save taxpayers' dollars, and make all Californians safer. This call has been endorsed by the California Police Chiefs Association, the California District Attorneys Association, the California State Sheriffs' Association, and the California Peace Officers' Association.

The evidence is in. We can save millions of dollars in California while preventing most abuse and neglect in high-risk families. The time to act is now.

### **A Wise Investment**

One dollar spent on the Nurse Family Partnership program...



...produced \$4 in savings for taxpayers.

## Endnotes:

### **The Annual Toll: 128,251 Children Abused or Neglected in 2001**

Annual official figures for: children maltreated, children removed from their homes, and confirmed deaths:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau. (2003). *Child maltreatment 2001*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cmreports.htm>

The total number of children maltreated may be three times higher:

Sedlak, A. J., & Broadhurst, D. D. (1996). *Executive summary of the third national incidence study of child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site: <http://www.calib.com/nccanch/pubs/statinfo/nis3.cfm#national>. For a discussion of this report, see: Child Welfare League of America. (2002). *Child protection frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/childprotection>. In this document, it is reported, "The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, conducted in 1995, estimates that the real incidence of abuse and neglect may be three times greater than the numbers reported to authorities."

Deaths from abuse and neglect likely to exceed 2,000:

Langstaff, J., & Sleeper, T. (2001). *The National Center on Child Fatality review*. Retrieved from the National Criminal Justice Reference System Web site: <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200112.pdf>

1,300 deaths from abuse and neglect reported each year:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau. (2003). *Child maltreatment 2001*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cmreports.htm>

### **The Future Toll: 5,100 Violent Criminals**

Permanent injuries leading to lack of empathy or quicker violent response:

This is based on quotes taken from Bruce Perry, as reported on page 4, paragraph 3 of the full report, *New hope for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*, which can be found at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/CANreport.pdf>. For these quotes, see: Perry, B. D. (2003). *Bonding and attachment in maltreated children: Consequences of emotional neglect in childhood*. Retrieved from The Scholastic Web site: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/bonding.htm>; Russakoff, D. (1999, May 15). *Horror that burned into Littleton minds: Students' flashbacks of fear cast light on violence's physical impact on brain*. The Washington Post, p. A3; Perry, B. D. (2003). *Aggression and violence: The neurobiology of experience*. Retrieved from The Scholastic Web site: [http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/aggression\\_violence.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/aggression_violence.htm)

Estimate of additional violent criminals:

The procedure used to compute this state estimate is the same as that used to compute the national estimate for the full report, *New hope for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*, which can be found at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/CANreport.pdf>. A full explanation is available in Appendix A of the full report. For the original data from which the projections are based, see: Maxfield, M. G., & Widom, C. S. (1996). The cycle of violence: Revisited 6 years later. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 150, 390-395.

### **Research Shows Most Abuse and Neglect in High-risk Families Can Be Prevented**

Nurse Family Partnership Program research results:

For outcomes on the mothers in the program, see: Olds, D. L. (1997). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on maternal life course and child abuse and neglect. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(8), 637-643. For outcomes on the children in the program, see: Olds, D. L. (1998). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on children's criminal and anti-social behavior: 15-year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(14), 1238-1244.

Hawaii Healthy Start research results:

Dew, B., & Breakey, G. F. (In press). *An evaluation of Hawaii's Healthy Start Program using child abuse hospitalization data*. Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Family Support Center.

Chicago Child-Parent Center research results:

For reduction of abuse and neglect, see: Reynolds, A. J., & Robertson, D. L. (2003). School-based early intervention and later child maltreatment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study. *Child Development*, 74(1), 3-26. For percent likely to be arrested for a violent crime, see: Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(18), 2339-2346.

Fetal alcohol syndrome and mental retardation:

Bradley, A. (2001). *Long-chain alcohol found to block mechanism of fetal alcohol syndrome: Paradoxical finding raises hope for pharmaceutical intervention*. Retrieved from the National Institute of Health Web site: <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/press/2001/longchain.htm>

Neurological damage at birth and later criminality:

Olds, D., Henderson, C., & Eckenrode, J. (2002). Preventing child abuse and neglect with prenatal and infancy home visiting by nurses. In K. Browne, H. Hanks, P. Stratton, & C. Hamilton (Eds.), *Early prediction and prevention of child abuse: A handbook*. London: John Wiley & Sons. For a review of the literature on pregnancy and delivery complications, see: Hawkins, J. D., Herrenkohl, T., Farrington, D. P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R. F., & Harachi, T.

W. (1998). A review of predictors of youth violence. In R. Loeber & D. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions* (pp. 106-146). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A development taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674-701. Moffitt writes, "There is good evidence that children who ultimately become persistently antisocial do suffer from deficits in neuropsychological abilities." This is important because, while many males become delinquent during adolescence then settle down, these children are more persistently anti-social and criminal during their life course, and "the most persistent 5% or 6% of offenders are responsible for about 50% of known crimes." Moffitt's work has been further supported by other research, such as: Piquero, A. (2001). Testing Moffitt's neuropsychological variation hypothesis for the prediction of life-course persistent offending. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 7, 193-215; Tibbetts, S. G., & Piquero, A. R. (1999). The influence of gender, low birth weight, and disadvantaged environment in predicting early onset of offending: A test of Moffitt's Interactional Hypothesis. *Criminology*, 37(4), 843-878.

Treatment for pregnant women who are addicted reduces under-weight births:

Svikis, D. S., Golden, A. S., Huggins, G. R., Pickens, R. W., McCaul, M. E., Velez, M. L., Rosendale, C. T., Brooner, R. K., Gazaway, P. M., Stitzer, M. L., & Ball, C. E. (1997). Cost-effectiveness of treatment for drug-abusing pregnant women. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 45, 105-113.

Children from households experiencing mental illness are twice as likely to be abused:

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-253.

25 percent of depressed individuals receive adequate care:

Lennon, M. C., Blome, J., & English, K. (2001). *Depression and low-income women: Challenges for TANF and welfare-to-work policies and programs*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

### **Saving Lives, Preventing Crime and Saving Money**

Child abuse and neglect costs \$80 billion a year, mostly from crime:

There are two studies showing child abuse costs American's \$83 billion and \$94 billion. The second study concluded two thirds of that cost is from crime: Miller, T. et al. (1998). *Cost of child abuse and neglect, 1996*. Landover, MD: Children's Safety Network Economics and Insurance Resource Center, National Public Services Research Institute. This figure includes accounting for lost quality of life: Prevent Child Abuse America. (2001). *Total estimated cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States: Statistical evidence*. Retrieved from [http://www.preventchildabuse.org/learn\\_more/research\\_docs/cost\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.preventchildabuse.org/learn_more/research_docs/cost_analysis.pdf). This figure also includes, indirectly, an accounting for lost quality of life.

Total children in foster care:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau. (2003). *Safety Permanency Well-being: Child welfare outcomes 1999, Annual report*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cwo99/outcomes.pdf>

Total and state spending on child welfare:

Green, R., & Bess, R. (2003). *The Cost of Protecting Vulnerable Children: Changes in state funding of child welfare programs 1998 - 2000*. Retrieved from the Urban Institute Web site: <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900608.pdf>

Four dollars returned for every dollar spent on the Nurse Family Partnership Program by taxpayers:

Karoly, L. A., Greenwood, P. W., Everingham, S. S., HoubÈ, J., Kilburn, M. R., Rydell, C. P., Sanders, M., & Chiesa, J. (1998). *Investing in our children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood interventions*. Retrieved from the RAND Corporation Web site: <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR898/>

Seven dollars returned for every dollar spent on the Chicago Child-Parent Centers:

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2002). Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(4), 267-303.