

Protect Kids

Reduce Crime

Save Money

Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in Wyoming

A Report on In-Home Parent Coaching from FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization. The national organization has a membership of more than 2,500 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other police leaders, and violence survivors. The members take a hard-nosed look at what works – and what doesn't work – to prevent crime and violence. They then recommend effective strategies to state and national policy-makers.

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Executive Summary

Protect Kids, Reduce Crime, Save Money— Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in Wyoming

The 29 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS from Wyoming, and their over 2,500 colleagues nationwide, have taken a hard-nosed look at what works—and what does not work—to cut crime and violence. Extensive evidence shows that children who suffered abuse or neglect are more likely to grow up to commit crimes. Solid research shows that most abuse and neglect in high-risk families can now be prevented. Doing so will spare thousands of children in Wyoming from pain, agony and despair, and will also save lives. Sharply reducing abuse and neglect will save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in Wyoming, while greatly reducing the number of children growing up to be violent criminals.

The Annual Toll in Wyoming: As Many as 786 Abused and Neglected Children The Future Toll: 30 Additional Violent Criminals from Every Year's Abuse and Neglect

Official figures mask the real toll of child abuse and neglect in Wyoming. Although 786 children were officially substantiated as being the victims of abuse or neglect in 2003, the best estimate by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services of the real number each year is over 2,000. In 2003, eight children were officially documented as dying from abuse or neglect in Wyoming, but there are likely others who were not counted as deaths caused by abuse or neglect. Typically, half of Wyoming children killed by abuse or neglect die before their first birthday.

While most victimized children who survive never become violent criminals, being abused or neglected sharply increases the risk that children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime. The best available research indicates that, of the 786 children who had confirmed incidents of abuse or neglect in one year, more than 30 will become violent criminals as adults who otherwise would have avoided such crimes if not for the abuse and neglect they endured. Year after year, abuse and neglect create more violent criminals in Wyoming.

Research Shows Most Abuse and Neglect in High-Risk Families Can Be Prevented

Failure to invest now in programs that coach at-risk parents in parenting and other skills which are proven to prevent child abuse and neglect puts every Wyomingite at greater risk of becoming a victim of crime. Members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS call on the state of Wyoming and the federal government to offer high-quality in-home parent coaching to all at-risk parents of newborn babies.

Parent coaching provided in the home to parents of infants by trained professionals can significantly reduce abuse and neglect. The Nurse Family Partnership in Elmira, N.Y. randomly assigned at-risk pregnant women to receive in-home visits by nurses. The nurses coach the expectant mothers in parenting and other skills, and help the mothers address their own

problems starting before the birth of their child and continuing until their child is age two. Rigorous research, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows that children of mothers left out of the program had five times as many substantiated reports of abuse or neglect. Put another way: in-home parent coaching services can prevent as many as four out of five cases of abuse or neglect among at-risk children.

Children of mothers left out also had twice as many arrests by age 15 as the children of mothers who received home visits. When this program was later replicated and carefully studied in Memphis, seven of the 515 children in the study whose parents did not receive in-home parent coaching had fractures and/or head trauma requiring hospitalizations while none of the 228 children whose parents received the program were hospitalized for such injuries. A further replication underway in Denver has so far produced similarly strong results.

Saving Lives, Preventing Crime, and Saving Money

Preventing child abuse and neglect will not only save lives and reduce crime, it will also save taxpayers money. Just to maintain the existing child protective system in Wyoming alone costs the federal and state governments combined over \$30 million a year. Until the number of victims of abuse or neglect can be reduced, those expenses are unavoidable. Yet that is only a small part of the overall costs to taxpayers and society as a whole from abuse and neglect. Two comprehensive studies, one done by Prevent Child Abuse America and the other commissioned by the U.S. Justice Department, have concluded that child abuse and neglect cost taxpayers and crime victims over \$80 billion a year. Wyoming's portion of that total cost is over \$100 million a year. By preventing such expenses, the RAND Corporation concluded that NFP averages \$18,000 in savings for every family in the program. A Washington State analysis produced similar results and found that reduced crime costs accounted for almost two-thirds of the savings.

Wyoming has embraced the benefits of in-home parent coaching with a strong commitment to supporting the Nurse Family Partnership Program throughout the state. Yet the majority of all low-income first-time families in Wyoming are still falling through the cracks. Wyoming is unlikely to succeed in reaching its goal of preventing abuse and neglect unless the federal government makes new investments.

Law Enforcement Leaders are United

Law enforcement leaders and violence survivors are united in calling for investments to protect children from abuse and neglect, save taxpayers' dollars, and make life safer for all Wyomingites.

A national survey of over 1,000 chiefs of police, sheriffs, and prosecutors was conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research in 2002. The law enforcement leaders were asked, "Do you believe that offering parenting coaching for at-risk parents and expanding resources for other child abuse prevention and foster care programs will: significantly reduce youth crime and violence, or, have little impact on crime and violence?" Eighty-one percent of the chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors said it would significantly reduce crime and violence.

The evidence is in. In-home parent coaching can save Wyoming taxpayers tens of millions of dollars a year while preventing most abuse and neglect in high-risk families and reducing crime. The time to act is now.

Chapter 1

The Hidden Toll of One Year of Abuse and Neglect

From shocking accounts on the evening news, most Wyomingites are aware of the severe abuse and neglect some children suffer. Few people in the state, however, realize the breathtaking scope of the problem or the severity of the consequences. In Wyoming in 2003, there were 786 confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect and eight confirmed deaths from abuse and neglect.¹

However, this is not the end of the tragedy. Though many abused and neglected children grow up to lead productive lives, children who live through abuse or neglect are far more likely than other children to go on to harm or kill someone else—or themselves. A year's toll of abuse and neglect reaches well into the future, and well beyond the initial victims.

Finding the Children

In a society obsessed with statistics, data on abused and neglected children routinely misses thousands of children. The national system set up to track abuse and neglect and deaths from abuse and neglect reported that 786 Wyoming children were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect and eight Wyoming

children died from that abuse or neglect in 2003.² Grim as those official numbers are, the truth is that the real numbers of children injured and killed by abuse and neglect each year are much higher than the official counts.

According to the federal government's *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect* conducted in 1995, the true number of children abused or neglected nationally each year is three times the officially recognized number.³ This includes children that social workers missed when they conducted their investigation and all the children who were never reported to authorities in the first place because no one knew about them or someone knew but was unwilling to make a report. Three times the figure of 786 confirmed cases would equal 2,358 children abused and neglected in Wyoming in 2003. Because of the challenges in investigating reported cases of abuse or neglect, and the large number of unreported cases of abuse and neglect, it is impossible at this time to arrive at a firm number that everyone can agree on for how many children are abused and neglected each year. But there is little doubt that it is much

"The crime of child abuse and neglect doesn't stop with the innocent victim. I know that we can stop child abuse and neglect in its tracks by teaching parents how to take care of their kids. It works. It saves money and lives. It's just the right thing to do."

- Police Chief John Love of Green River

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information has provided this summary of Wyoming's legal definition of abuse or neglect:

Physical Abuse: Abuse with respect to a child means inflicting or causing physical injury, harm, or imminent danger to the physical health or welfare of a child other than by accidental means, including excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment.

Physical injury means any harm to a child, including but not limited to disfigurement, impairment of any bodily organ, skin bruising if greater in magnitude than minor bruising associated with reasonable corporal punishment, bleeding, burns, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, or substantial malnutrition.

Neglect: Neglect means a failure or refusal by those responsible for the child's welfare to provide adequate care, maintenance, supervision, education, medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the child's well-being.

Sexual Abuse: Abuse with respect to a child means the commission or allowing the commission of a sexual offense against a child, as defined by law.

Emotional Abuse: Abuse with respect to a child means inflicting or causing mental injury, or harm to the mental health or welfare of the child.

Mental injury means an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child as evidenced by an observable or substantial impairment in his or her ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior with due regard to his or her culture.

Abandonment: Abuse with respect to a child includes abandonment, unless the abandonment is a relinquishment substantially in accordance with [existing laws].

higher than the officially reported figure.

Eight Wyoming Children Died from Abuse and Neglect in 2003

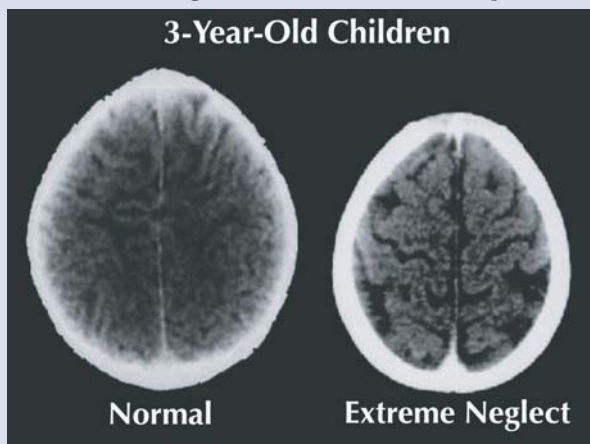
In 2003, the state of Wyoming reported to the federal government that eight children were killed from abuse or neglect.⁴ This number is higher than earlier years, however the increase may indicate better reporting rather than actual increased deaths. Even with better reporting, as with the numbers of children abused or neglected, research shows the official number of children killed by abuse or neglect is likely an undercount. In 2001, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) recorded 1,300 children killed by abuse or neglect nationwide.⁵ However, in a Justice Department publication the National Center on Child Fatality Review

concluded that "an estimated 2,000 children in the United States die of child abuse and neglect each year."⁶ A fatality review in California concluded that the true number of deaths from abuse or neglect was three times the NCANDS number,⁷ and an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that North Carolina had undercounted its deaths from abuse or neglect by a factor of three.⁸

Creating Children Primed for Violence

Severe abuse and neglect, particularly when it occurs during the earliest months and years of life, can permanently injure children in ways that make them much more susceptible to violence. According to Dr. Bruce Perry, a neurobiologist and authority on brain development and children in crisis, "The

Effect of Neglect on Brain Development



These images are from studies conducted by a team of researchers from the ChildTrauma Academy in Houston led by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

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systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life... With severe emotional neglect in early childhood the impact can be devastating."⁹ Perry explains that severely neglected children frequently respond with aggression and cruelty that "is often accompanied by a detached, cold lack of empathy."¹⁰ Research shows that neglect is as likely as physical abuse to lead to future criminal behavior when a child reaches adulthood.¹¹ Physical abuse can cause post-traumatic stress disorders in children. Even when nothing is threatening them, abused children's brains can become "stuck" in high alert with very high resting heart rates and high levels of stress hormones in their blood. These children are predisposed to interpret others' actions as threatening, and are quick to respond impulsively and aggressively in their own defense.¹² Perry warns, "The most dangerous children are created by a malignant combination of experiences. Developmental neglect and traumatic stress during childhood create violent, remorseless children."¹³

Of growing concern is the role head injuries play in violent behavior, particularly injuries to the frontal or temporal lobes of the brain. The frontal lobes are the seat of the capacities for planning and self-regulation as well as abstract

thinking and judgment, while the temporal lobes contain the limbic system that regulates aggression, impulsiveness, and the more primitive emotions such as jealousy and rage.¹⁴ A baby or toddler's head is especially vulnerable to rough shaking or blows to the head that can cause shearing and microscopic lesions throughout the brain during this time of critical and rapid development. Early head injuries are often cumulative from repeated incidents of abuse and usually go undetected, except in the most extreme cases, because they leave no external marks. The damage done may not manifest itself until much later as the brain matures.¹⁵

A number of studies on adolescents and adults link head injuries to recurring aggression and violence. Studies done on death row inmates by Dr. Dorothy Lewis and her colleagues show that a high percentage of them have a history of serious head injury.¹⁶ Many researchers are concluding that as many as 30 to 50 percent of individuals with a criminal history may have sustained injuries to their frontal or temporal lobes.¹⁷

Child Abuse and Neglect Produces 30 Additional Violent Criminals Among Wyomingites Each Year

Although surveys report varying numbers, it is clear that a high percentage of criminals were abused or neglected as children. One review of the literature on prior abuse and neglect concluded that approximately half of the youth arrested for delinquency had been abused and/or neglected earlier in their lives.¹⁸ Many of these individuals, however, also had other risk factors for crime in their lives, such as poverty or growing up in high-crime neighborhoods.

In an effort to isolate the specific impact of abuse and neglect by controlling for other factors, Dr. Cathy Spatz Widom, a professor of psychology at the New Jersey Medical School, identified individuals who had been abused and neglected as children and compared them to otherwise similar individuals who had no

official record of abuse or neglect. By studying the subsequent arrest records, and controlling for other demographic risk factors, Widom found that being abused and neglected almost doubles the odds that a child will commit a crime as a juvenile.¹⁹

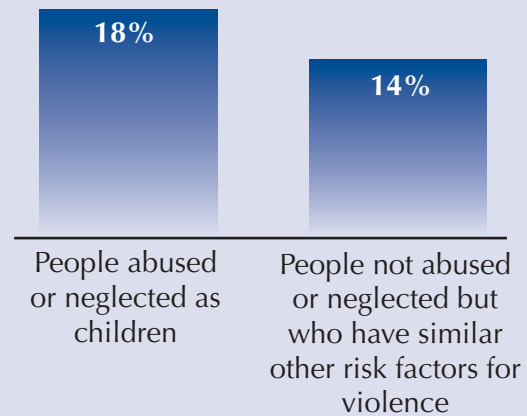
As for violent crime, Widom found that 18 percent of the abused or neglected youngsters went on to be arrested for a violent crime either as juveniles or as adults, compared to 14 percent of similar individuals who shared the same other advantages and disadvantages as these children but who had not been abused or neglected as children—a difference of four percentage points.²⁰

Applying Widom's four percent figure to the 786 confirmed cases in Wyoming of abuse and neglect in 2003 produces a figure of approximately 30 additional individuals who will be arrested for at least one violent crime beyond the number of those who would have been arrested had the abuse or neglect never occurred. In other words, the abuse or neglect will result in 30 additional violent criminals and all the violent crimes those individuals commit (see the Appendix for a more detailed discussion of this projection).

Widom cautions that her research does not indicate whether the same relationship would hold for unconfirmed cases of abuse or neglect, since those children may not have been as seriously harmed as the individuals whose abuse or neglect was confirmed. As previously discussed, it is estimated that there are three times as many actual cases of abuse and neglect as the number of officially confirmed cases. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 30 figure will prove to be a significant underestimate of the number of additional violent criminals in Wyoming resulting from the children who were abused and neglected in 2003. And each year more victims of child abuse and neglect, and more future criminals, are added to the total.

Abuse and Neglect Produces More Violent Criminals
Compared to children with similar other risk factors but with no official record of abuse or neglect, children who had been abused or neglected were 29 percent more likely to grow up to be violent criminals.

At Least One Arrest for a Violent Crime



M.G. Maxfield & C.S. Widom, 1996

What Does This Mean for Homicides?

Children who are abused and neglected are not only more likely than other children to commit crimes as adults, but they are also more likely than other criminals to be arrested at a younger age. This is a well-known risk factor that indicates these children might become both more serious and more chronic offenders, committing more crimes over their lifetimes.²¹

For example, a study done in Sacramento County, Calif. showed that children between the ages of nine and 12 reported to have been abused or neglected were 67 times more likely to be arrested than other children in that age group. Six percent of those who had been abused or neglected had already been arrested by age 12, compared to less than one-tenth of one percent of other children in that age group.²²

In their Rochester Youth Development study, Carolyn Smith and Terence Thornberry tracked 1,000 seventh- and eighth-grade students from Rochester, N.Y. up to age 22.

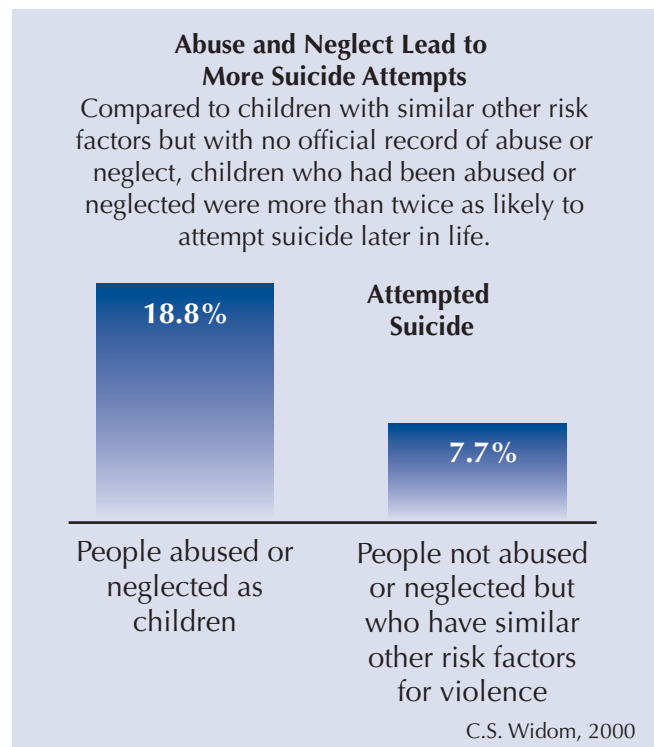
They found that the more frequent and severe the maltreatment, the more likely the child was to commit more violent acts of delinquency.²³

Perhaps most disturbing, researchers who have extensively interviewed extremely violent offenders are convinced that severe abuse or neglect was a defining influence in almost all of these violent offenders' lives.²⁴ In addition to documenting the link between head injuries and extreme violence,²⁵ Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus interviewed 14 of the 37 juveniles facing death sentences in 1986 and 1987. They found that only one of those interviewed had not suffered childhood family violence and severe physical abuse.²⁶ John Douglas, one of the experts who helped the FBI develop violent criminal profiles, reached similar conclusions from his studies of very violent criminals.²⁷

Child Abuse and Neglect Can Lead to Lost Employment, Failed Marriages, and Suicide

Most abused or neglected children never become involved in violent crime. While many grow up to lead productive lives, research by Widom and others shows that abuse and neglect often lead to other serious consequences for its victims. For example, individuals not abused or neglected as children were 40 percent more likely to be employed and 50 percent more likely to have stable marriages than similar individuals who were abused or neglected.²⁸

Victims of child abuse or neglect, as they grow older, are also two and a half times more likely than other children to attempt suicide. Widom's research indicates that 18.8 percent of abused or neglected children later attempted suicide, compared to 7.7 percent of children with similar risk factors but who had not been abused or neglected.²⁹ This means that over 87 additional Wyomingites who were the victims of abuse and neglect in 2003 will ultimately attempt suicide (see Appendix A). Although the number of these abused or



neglected individuals who will succeed in killing themselves cannot be reliably estimated, a large number undoubtedly will succeed.³⁰

A Cycle of Violence

Research shows that all too often negative behaviors and consequences, violent or otherwise, are passed on to the next generation and the cycle continues. One rigorous study showed that poor mothers who had been severely physically abused as children were 13 times more likely to abuse their children than mothers who had emotionally supportive parents.³¹

The sixth annual report by Wyoming's Child Major Injury/Fatality Review Team illustrates this inter-generational cycle of violence by caregivers in terms of two children killed in Wyoming:

- A five month old child was found not breathing and unresponsive by the father who was alone with the child. The father of this child had extensive Department of Family Services involvement and had 16 arrests including three for violence against

people. When he was 12, he witnessed his father beating his mother to death.

- A 16-year-old baby-sitter banged a two year old's head against the wall and strangled him. The perpetrator had an extensive record of violence, attachment disorders and placements. He was thrown out a second story

window when he was a baby.³²

The last example reminds us all that when violence comes to haunt the next generation, even those families without a history of abuse or neglect in their own families are still at risk from others whose families abused or neglected them.

Chapter 2

Research Shows Abuse and Neglect Can Be Prevented

Waiting to act against abuse and neglect until after it occurs will always be too late, and it may be fatal. Child protective services and available foster care families are essential services that can help protect children who have already been identified as abused or neglected. In Wyoming, however, none of the eight children killed in 2003 had families that had received preservation services in the past five years or who had been reunited with their families in same period.³³ That means it is possible that none of the children were known to child protective services before they died. Relying only on child protective services and foster care services to protect children proved to be inadequate to save the Wyoming children who were killed in 2003 as a result of abuse or neglect.

Even when children are identified as victims and receive services, healing their physical and emotional injuries is difficult. And some injuries can never be undone. For instance, early neglect can stunt brain development and prenatal exposure to alcohol can cause mental retardation. For many children, treatment is too frequently limited in its duration and effectiveness.

As a child grows older, it becomes more difficult to undo damage and is more expensive to treat the consequences of abuse and neglect. Even more troublesome is the plight of hundreds of Wyoming children who receive no treatment at all because they fall

through the cracks and never come to the attention of child protection services. As long as these “lost” children remain unidentified, there will be few opportunities to repair the damage done to them or to protect communities from the risk that they might become future criminals. For these “lost” children, prevention is probably their only hope.³⁴

Research shows there are rigorously tested solutions that can significantly reduce child abuse and neglect in high-risk families. Programs beginning in the earliest months and years to help families develop parenting skills and change problem behaviors have proven effective in preventing child abuse and neglect. To protect vulnerable children—and all others—these programs must be made available to all families who need them before abuse or neglect takes place.

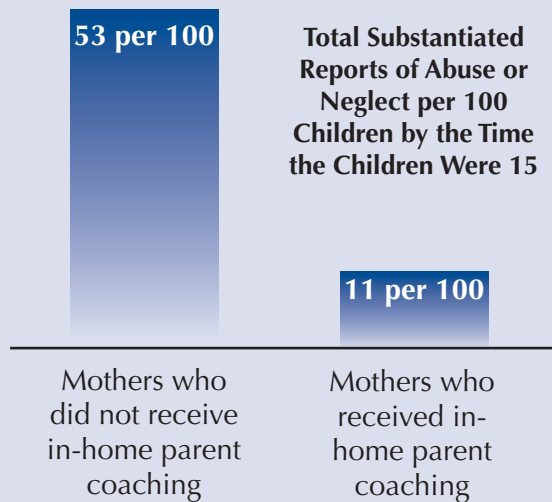
The Nurse Family Partnership Program Shows What In-Home Parent Coaching Can Accomplish

Beginning during pregnancy, individualized in-home coaching for at-risk parents of newborns can dramatically reduce abuse and neglect. Who are those “at-risk” parents? While there are parents from all income levels and walks of life who abuse and neglect their children, some families face more challenges than others.

Nationally, almost half of the families

In-home Parent Coaching Cuts Child Abuse and Neglect

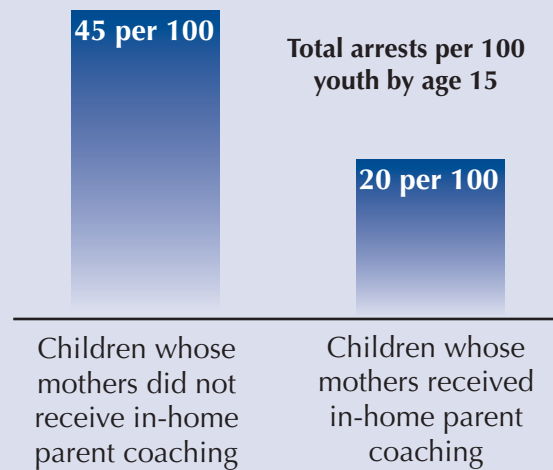
Results from the study of the Nurse Family Partnership program



D.L. Olds, 1997

In-home Parent Coaching Cuts Children's Arrests in Half

Results from the study of the Nurse Family Partnership program



D.L. Olds, 1997

referred to child protective services for abuse or neglect are receiving welfare at the time and more than half of all families have received assistance in the past.³⁵ In a study conducted in Illinois, 40 percent of the children placed into foster care came from families currently receiving welfare (while only 15 percent of all families in Illinois were on welfare at the time) and another 20 percent of children in foster care were from families that had recently received welfare.³⁶

Failing to graduate from high school is also a risk factor. Compared to parents with a high school degree, those without a degree are almost five times more likely to be officially reported for abuse or neglect.³⁷ And risk factors such as being young parents can pile up. Single mothers without a high school diploma are 10 times more likely to be officially reported for abusing or neglecting their children than women in two-parent families with more education.³⁸

Groundbreaking research initially conducted in Elmira, N.Y. showed that parent coaching in the homes of new at-risk young parents can be extraordinarily effective in reducing child abuse and neglect when provided with enough

quality and frequency. The Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) randomly assigned half of a group of single, poor, first-time young mothers to receive visits by carefully trained nurses. The nurses provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Starting in 1978, the women in the program received an average of nine home visits during their pregnancy and 23 visits from birth to their child's second birthday. Rigorous research, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows that children of mothers left out of the program had five times as many substantiated reports of abuse or neglect. Put another way: in-home parent coaching services can prevent as many as four out of five cases of abuse or neglect among at-risk children.³⁹

In addition, 15 years after the services ended, mothers in the program had only one-third as many arrests as those left out of the program, and their children had only half as many arrests.⁴⁰

A replication study of NFP, also using a rigorous random assignment design, began in 1990 in Memphis. Though the program was not designed to be ongoing, the mothers and

children served are still being followed. There is no data available yet on the children's arrest records, and the official abuse and neglect records are not adequate to directly measure whether the children were maltreated.⁴¹ Compared to children in the program, however, the children whose parents did not receive the parent coaching and family support were more likely to be hospitalized for injuries or ingestions and spent five times more days in the hospital for those causes. While children can certainly be injured without being abused or neglected, such extreme differences reinforce the findings of the earlier study in Elmira, N.Y. Moreover, in Memphis, hospitalized children who were not in the program sustained more serious injuries. For example, while seven of the 515 children in the group that did not receive parent coaching had fractures and/or head trauma requiring hospitalizations, none of the 228 children in the program were hospitalized for fractures or head trauma.⁴² Finally, another replication

underway in Denver is also generating strong positive results for the children.⁴³

NFP's benefits are not limited to reducing child abuse or preventing crime. Compared to mothers not in the program, the mothers in the Elmira, N.Y. study averaged 21 percent fewer births 15 years after delivery of their child and one-third fewer months on welfare.⁴⁴ Children not in the program also ran away more than twice as often as those in the program.⁴⁵

The Nurse Family Partnership in Wyoming

The Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) began serving Wyoming families in July of 1996, and went statewide in 2000, serving all 23 counties. Through 2004, it has served almost a thousand Wyoming families.⁴⁶ In 2005, NFP was serving an average caseload of 328 families a year with plans in place to nearly double the number of families served by 2007 if sufficient funding is

Nurse Family Partnership:

Hospitalizations in Memphis for which injuries or ingestions were detected

Separate admissions of children whose mothers were visited by nurses prenatally up to age 2 (N=228)		Separate admissions of children whose mothers were not visited by nurses (N= 515)	
Diagnosis	Days in hosp.	Diagnosis	Days in hosp.
Burns	2	Head trauma	1
Coin Ingestion	1	Fractured fibula/congenital syphilis	12
Ingestion of iron medication	4	Strangulated hernia w delay in seeking care/burns	15
		Bilateral subdural hematoma	19
		Fractured skull	5
		Bilateral subdural hematoma/aseptic meningitis, 2 nd hospitalization	4
		Fractured skull	3
		Coin ingestion	2
		Child abuse/neglect suspected	2
		Fractured tibia	2
		Burns (2 nd and 3 rd degree to face/neck)	5
		Burns (2 nd and 3 rd degree to bilateral leg)	4
		Gastroenteritis/head trauma	3
		Burns (splinting/grafting) 2 nd hospitalization	6
		Finger injury/osteomyelitis	6
Total days hospitalized	7	Total days hospitalized	89

From the Wyoming Evaluation of Nurse Family Partnership:

The Program Model

The program consists of having nurse home visitors work with women and their families in their homes during pregnancy and through the first two years of the child's life to accomplish three goals:

- Improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women alter their health-related behaviors, including reducing use of cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs;
- Improve child health and development by helping parents provide more responsible and competent care for their children; and
- Improve families' economic self-sufficiency by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

[The program uses] detailed visit-by-visit protocols to guide the nurses in their work with the families.

Source: Wyoming Nurse-Family Partnership Year Four Report

available.⁴⁷

An evaluation studied the women who had graduated from the NFP program. When the women enrolled in the program during their pregnancy, over 80 percent were unmarried and 58 percent were unemployed. The median age was 18, only 41 percent had completed high school, and all were expecting their first baby.

Continuous Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The Nurse Family Partnership has been very scientific about how it approaches expanding services to new areas. Instead of just assuming new programs are implementing the program as it was designed, NFP carefully collects a wealth of data to determine whether the program is being implemented as designed and whether it is gaining results comparable to other programs throughout the country. This continuous improvement process ensures that the best research is being turned into best practices on the ground in each site, and that new lessons learned from around the country will be quickly adopted throughout the NFP system.

There have already been a total of five yearly evaluations of NFP in Wyoming and they have consistently found that "Wyoming NFP graduates receive a healthy dose of program exposure with more visits during infancy and toddlerhood, on average, than participants in the national NFP. There is also strong exposure to program material, with Wyoming NFP closely matching program guidelines for content of home visits."⁴⁸

Not only are the Wyoming programs carefully implementing the model, but they are also achieving impressive results. For example, the graduates of the Wyoming NFP program are exceeding the national NFP goals for reducing the average number of cigarettes they smoke per day during pregnancy, and they have exceeded national NFP goals as well for immunizations. Wyoming is close to matching the national NFP graduates' rate for low birth weight babies. The graduates of the Wyoming program were working more months, on average, after the births of their babies than the national graduates of NFP. Wyoming's NFP graduates have fewer children who show speech and language delays – nationally 11 percent of the children of graduates of NFP

show serious problems with language acquisition as toddlers while only 6 percent of Wyoming NFP children demonstrate such problems. In fact, 39 percent of toddlers in the Wyoming program perform at the top level for language acquisition compared to 20 percent of the NFP children nationally.⁴⁹

Because of the multiple challenges in measuring abuse and neglect outcomes accurately, NFP has not yet established a standardized national goal or provided standardized national data from other sites for comparing abuse and neglect results. The Wyoming data on emergency department visits and hospitalizations for injuries and ingestions that is available in the evaluations is presented differently than earlier research results and does not include days in the hospital or the specific nature of the injuries, so it is not directly comparable. However, the data that is already available in Wyoming indicates that the program is producing low rates of children visiting emergency departments for injuries and ingestions – a sign that abuse and neglect is lower.⁵⁰ When more data on emergency room visits is available and if data on actual abuse and neglect cases becomes available, it should show that Wyoming is on track to achieving the dramatic reductions in abuse and neglect that were achieved by the NFP in the studies cited above.

NFP developed a model that has been rigorously tested and shown to work. It has implemented a continuous improvement process for bringing the program to scale with fidelity. NFP is able to ensure that its programs throughout the country are delivering predictable services and results that will improve over time. This program development and implementation process should serve as a model for all social service programs.⁵¹

Other in-home parent coaching programs in Wyoming

In-home parent coaching is also a part of the services delivered by other Wyoming

programs. Early Head Start programs and Even Start (adult literacy) programs utilize the well-established Parents as Teachers curriculum. Because in-home parent coaching is just one element of these programs they will not be discussed in detail. Evidence shows, however, that Parents as Teachers can also be effective, particularly when serving at-risk parents.⁵²

The real challenge is funding

In Wyoming, the Nurse Family Partnership program has far to go before it is fully reaching the families that need its services. Wyoming averages more than 1,200 babies born each year to first-time mothers on Medicaid. In 2005, NFP served a little more than a quarter of those children, with an average caseload for the year of 328 children. This is a voluntary service, so not all mothers will agree to the coaching when it is offered. Even allowing for that, it appears that most first time low-income mothers are still not yet being served.⁵³

The program's goal for 2007 is to reach 50 percent of all low-income first-time mothers by almost doubling the number of children and families now being served to 610.⁵⁴ NFP funding in Wyoming comes primarily from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). That funding has not increased since the inception of the statewide NFP program in 2000 while nursing salaries and training costs have gone up.⁵⁵ Without new federal funding, NFP will be forced to gradually decrease the number of families it currently serves putting us all at greater risk for future crime.

Chapter 3

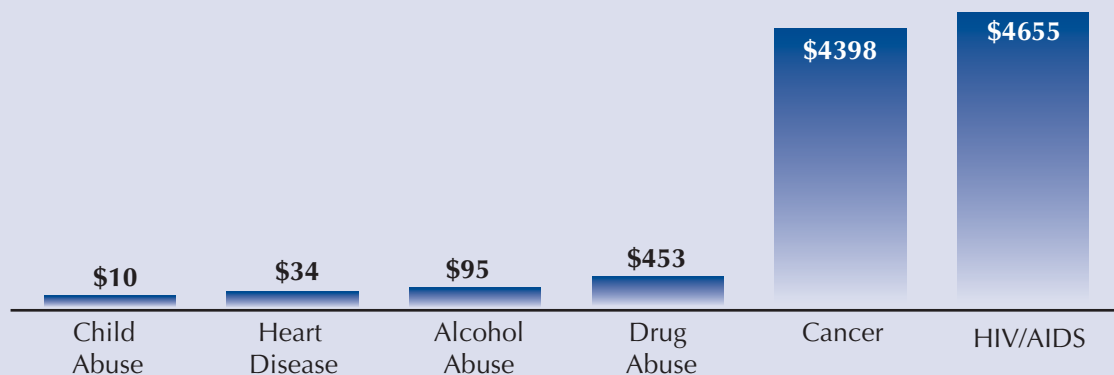
Saving Money While Protecting Kids and Preventing Crime

Stopping child abuse and neglect before children are hurt is not only the right thing to do, it is also the fiscally sound thing to do. The Justice Department relies on The Children's Safety Network Economic Insurance Resource Center for major studies on the cost of crime. The Center analyzed the direct and indirect costs of child abuse and neglect to taxpayers and all those individuals impacted by the consequences of abuse or neglect. It concluded that child abuse and neglect costs Americans \$83 billion a year.⁵⁶ Prevent Child Abuse America found that abuse and neglect costs Americans \$94 billion a year – and that two-thirds of that cost is due to increased crime

costs.⁵⁷ When the Children's Safety Network broke down the costs for each state, it found that the share of abuse and neglect costs for Wyoming amounts to over \$100 million every year.⁵⁸

The direct taxpayer costs alone of paying for child abuse and neglect in Wyoming are huge. According to the Urban Institute, in fiscal year 2002 the federal and state governments each paid about half of the costs, with the total cost to taxpayers reaching \$30 million.⁵⁹ The direct child protective costs do not include later indirect costs borne by taxpayers. These include educational, welfare, medical, and

Government Spending Per Affected American



"Research spending by the federal government on cancer and HIV averaged about \$4,500 for every person affected with those diseases, but federal spending on research for child abuse averaged less than \$10 for every reported case in 2002. I am not suggesting that AIDS and cancer are not important public health issues, but I am suggesting that we ought to make the same kinds of investments in the prevention of child abuse and neglect."

A. Sidney Johnson, III, President, Prevent Child Abuse America

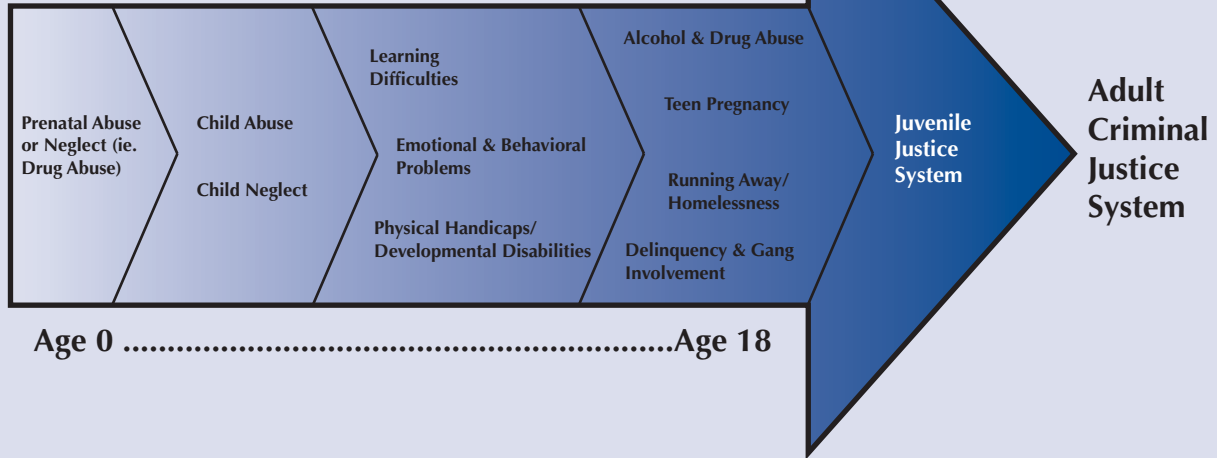
Prevent Child Abuse America

The Cost of Waiting

As time goes by the cost and intensity of treatment efforts to reverse the problems go up, while...



the likelihood of preserving the full potential for the child to contribute to society goes down.



Robin Karr-Morse 2003. Used by permission.

criminal justice costs when many of the abused or neglected children fail to become productive adults.

By waiting to pay for services until the problems cannot be avoided, Wyoming taxpayers are paying huge sums to cover the costs of holding children back in school, providing special education services, paying for welfare, and especially paying for arresting and imprisoning criminals. Not only is this an unbalanced investment strategy, it ignores the opportunity to act when the interventions are less expensive and more likely to succeed.

In-home Parent Coaching Can Save Money

The RAND Corporation, which studies many programs for children and youth, concluded that the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) averaged more than \$18,000 in net savings to taxpayers for every family enrolled in the program. RAND also concluded that NFP produced \$4 in savings for every \$1 invested.⁶⁰ When analysts from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy looked at savings to individuals as well as

taxpayers from NFP they reached similar conclusions. In the Washington State analysis, crime costs accounted for almost two-thirds of the savings.⁶¹

With such potential savings, Wyoming and the federal government should seize the opportunity to ensure that Wyoming's in-home parent coaching programs reach their full potential and are offered to all at-risk new parents in the state.

Quality In-home Parent Coaching Saves Money

Taxpayers saved over \$4 for every \$1 invested in the Nurse Family Partnership program.



For every \$1 invested



Over \$4 was saved

RAND Corporation, 1998

Chapter 4

From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call to Action

The 29 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS from Wyoming and their over 2,500 colleagues throughout the United States are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. They also are committed to keeping kids from becoming criminals in the first place.

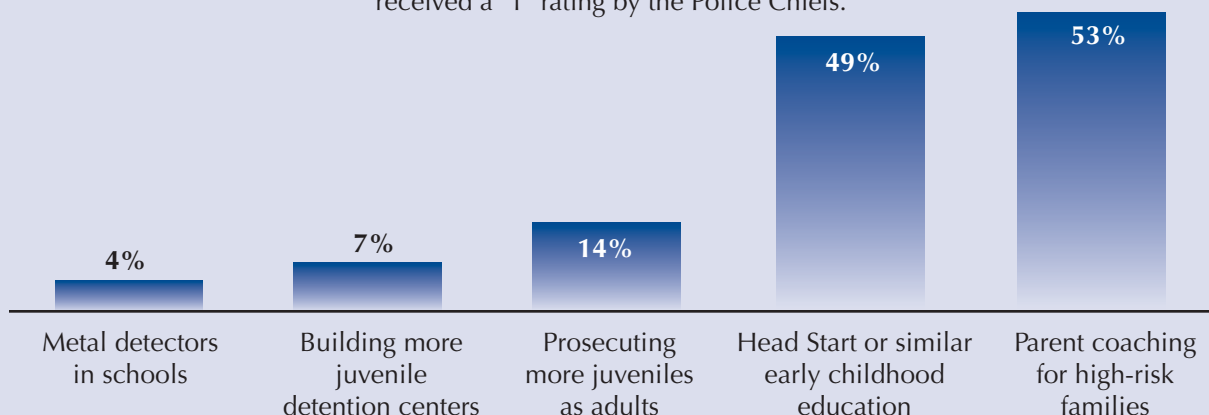
The good news is that research shows how to prevent child abuse and neglect before children are hurt and before those children can go on to hurt others. Solid research shows that high quality in-home parent coaching services beginning prenatally can prevent as many as four out of five cases of abuse or neglect among at-risk children. They can save children's lives now while helping to prevent 30 children a year in Wyoming from growing up to be violent criminals. The programs will

prevent murders and suicides in Wyoming. All this can be accomplished, while saving taxpayers tens of millions of dollars each year.

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect its citizens. When more than 1,000 children nationwide are dying each year from abuse and neglect and tens of thousands more are growing up to be violent criminals as a result of abuse or neglect, federal, state, and local governments clearly are not doing enough. Wyoming's impressive in-home parent coaching efforts are still far from reaching their goals. Wyoming cannot do it alone. The federal government must meet the challenge of providing adequate funding. It is time that elected leaders at the state and federal levels invest in a comprehensive, research-driven plan to eliminate most abuse and neglect in high-risk families.

Police Chiefs Rate Parent Coaching and Pre-Kindergarten Programs as Effective Crime Prevention

Police Chiefs nationwide were asked: "Please rate the following strategies on a scale of 1 to 5 on their value as a crime prevention tool." This chart shows the percentage for each strategy that received a "1" rating by the Police Chiefs.



S. Keeter & S. Mastrofski, 2000

Appendix

Technical Notes on Estimating the Number of Violent Criminals, Murderers, and Those Who Attempt Suicide Who Will Emerge from the Children Abused and Neglected in 2003

The projections on how many abused or neglected children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime, to be arrested for murder, or to attempt suicide are based on the original research of Michael Maxfield and Cathy Spatz Widom. Their article, "The cycle of violence: Revisited 6 years later," appeared in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine in April of 1996 (v.150: 390-395). Widom and Maxfield matched 908 children who had substantiated cases of abuse or neglect with a control group of 667 individuals with no substantiated cases of abuse or neglect. The individuals in the study were matched on the basis of their date of birth, race, sex, and approximate social class. Using official records, the researchers determined that the abused and neglected individuals were one quarter (4 percentage points) more likely to have had at least one arrest for violence, either as an adult or as a juvenile, than those otherwise similar individuals who had not been maltreated [18 percent - 14 percent = 4 percent]. In other words, while 14 percent of the abused and neglected individuals in this study would have been arrested for a violent crime whether or not they had been abused or neglected, an additional 4 percent of the abused and neglected individuals were arrested for a violent crime who apparently would not have been if they had not suffered abuse or neglect as children.

The four-percentage point difference can be applied to the number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect in Wyoming in 2003—786 (which is a conservative count of the number of children abused and neglected every year in Wyoming). Four percentage points multiplied by that number results in an estimate of 30 additional individuals who will be arrested at least once for violence at some time in their life after having been abused and neglected in 2003 [$786 \times .04 = 31$]. Other research cited in this report, however, indicates that each year there are three times as many children who were victims of abuse or neglect that were not confirmed, or over 2,000 children abused or neglected. Widom has cautioned that her research cannot answer whether the same rate of arrests for violence applies to the higher number of unconfirmed cases of abuse and neglect. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 30 figure is a significant underestimation of the number of additional violent criminals arising out of the children who were abused and neglected in 2003.

In a national version of this report, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS projected that there will be at least 250 additional individuals arrested for homicide which would not take place if not for that abuse and neglect these children suffered in 2001 (see www.fightcrime.org). Given the smaller numbers for Wyoming, however, this report does not attempt to make such projections. The research is clear though: if Wyoming can significantly reduce abuse and neglect now, it will be preventing many murders in the future.

When Widom later looked at attempted suicides, she determined that 18.8 percent of children with substantiated cases of abuse or neglect went on to attempt suicide at some point in their life, whereas 7.7 percent of the children without abuse or neglect later attempted suicide. The difference is a dramatic 11.1 percentage points. Applying that 11.1 percentage point difference to the number of confirmed cases of abuse or neglect in suicide attempts that presumably would not happen if not for the lingering suffering from the abuse and neglect suffered in 2003 [$786 \times .111 = 87$].

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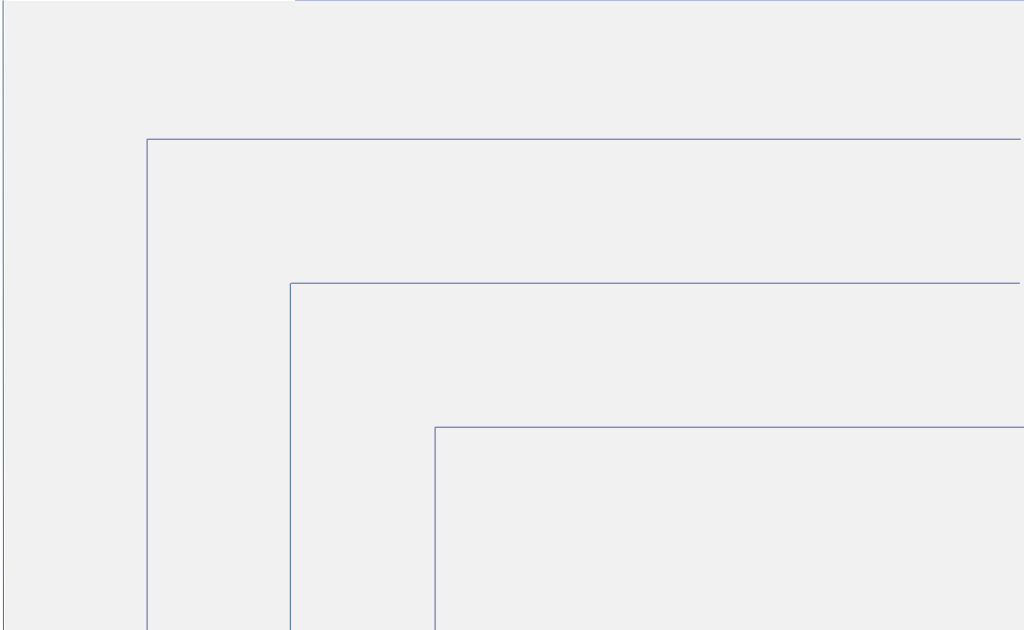
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