

Executive Summary

The maltreatment of children includes abandonment, abuse, aggravated circumstances, great bodily harm, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation.¹ Child maltreatment is a pervasive problem in the United States, and New Mexico is no exception. Every year, thousands of children in New Mexico are maltreated. The number of victims affected by this violence is simply staggering. The negative physical, psychological, emotional, and social impact of neglect and abuse is terribly tragic. Reducing its occurrence and mitigating its impact through prevention and intervention will (a) first and foremost, save precious lives and (b) reduce consequent financial costs incurred by communities and our state.

This briefing report focuses on the physical, psychoemotional and behavioral impact of child maltreatment, estimated direct and indirect financial costs to society, the long-term socioeconomic impact of abuse and neglect and strategies for prevention and intervention.

What are the risk factors that contribute to or elevate the incidence of child abuse and neglect? What are the protective factors that reduce its incidence and prevalence? What are the physical, mental, emotional and behavioral consequences of child maltreatment? And finally, What are some evidence-based strategies that address risk/protective factors and prevent maltreatment or mitigate its impact? These are essential questions that need to be answered and acted upon. In chapter 1 of this briefing report, New Mexico State University/School of Social Work Professor Dr. Patricia Sandau-Beckler answers these questions. She reviews risk and protective factors; discusses the debilitating influence of child maltreatment on the child's developing brain and the negative impact on body, mind, emotional states and behavior; and highlights prevention and intervention programs that work.

While the human suffering for the victim of child maltreatment is incalculable, financial costs to community and society can be estimated. In chapter 2, Dr. Suzette Fromm Reed, Assistant Professor of Psychology at National-Louis University (and a former research director at Prevent Child Abuse America), provides an estimated cost analysis of child abuse and neglect for the United States. Dr. Fromm Reed breaks these costs down into direct costs (costs associated with immediate needs of the abused or neglected child) and indirect costs (costs associated with more long-term and/or secondary effects of child maltreatment). Her total annual cost estimate for the U.S. is \$94,076,882,529. While estimates are for the United States, in extrapolating these staggering costs, one can realize the cost burden child maltreatment causes in New Mexico.

The consequences of child maltreatment have a long-term influence on the victim, affecting wellbeing and quality of life into adulthood. In the third chapter, Dr. David Zielinski, a Research Scientist at the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University, discusses the long-term socioeconomic impact of child maltreatment and implications for policy. Negatively affected life variables include adult employment, income and reliance on public assistance. Dr. Zielinski outlines policy recommendations, including (1) providing victims with (a) access to quality physical and mental health care and (b) additional educational support, (2) creating multidisciplinary community-based centers to address victims' needs and (3) ensuring that programs for the prevention of child maltreatment are in place.

¹ For definitions of these categories of maltreatment, see chapter 1 of this publication, *Psychoemotional Impact of Child Maltreatment and Strategies for Prevention and Intervention*, by Patricia Sandua-Beckler