Child Abuse and Neglect: The Educator's Perspective

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by

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UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The reality of child abuse and neglect surfaces in our society day after day. It is continually publicized through every viable form of media in the United States. But child abuse and neglect is extremely difficult to define—so terribly difficult, in fact, that there is still no acceptable standard definition for the many professionals who are tragically familiar with these problems. Because child abuse and neglect does occur, a myriad of different definitions have been constructed for practical use. These definitions, of course, reflect the purpose for which they were formulated.

Definitions of abuse and neglect are based on the underlying assumption that children are, by nature, dependent. Until the time when children reach physical and mental maturity, they continue to be dependent on adults for survival and for adequate socialization. Obviously, abuse and neglect can take many forms. The following, however, is an example of a definition which gathers together many forms of abuse and neglect under one conceptual framework:

An abused or neglected child means a child whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by the acts or omissions of his parent or other person responsible for his welfare (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1964, p. 2).
CLASSIFICATION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A review of the literature reveals that child abuse and neglect can be classified into countless categories of maltreatment. For the purpose of this paper, however, child abuse and neglect will be examined in four forms—physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse of children includes "those injuries resulting from non-accidental trauma inflicted on the victim by a parent or designated caretaker (Miller and Miller, 1979, p. 285)." By definition the injury is clearly not an accident. This does not necessarily mean that the child's caretaker intends to injure the child, however. Physical abuse of children may result from overdiscipline or from inappropriate punishment in relation to the child's age or condition (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984). Physical abuse may include: burning, bruising, biting, scratching, beating, branding, punching, and so on (Mudry and Prewo, 1981)(Miller and Miller, 1979)(Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

"Failure of the parent or designated caretaker to provide the minor with minimum standards of food, shelter, and clothing constitutes physical neglect (Miller and Miller, 1979, p. 285)." Physical neglect also involves inattention to the basic needs of a child, such as medical care and supervision. Physical neglect tends to be chronic rather than occasional (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).
SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse has been defined as "any act designed to stimulate a child sexually or to use a child for sexual stimulation, either of the perpetrator or of another person (Williams, 1981, pp. 103-104)." Sexual abuse can also be committed by a person under the age of 18 when that person is notably older than the victim or when that person is in a position of power or control over another child (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984). Sexual abuse may also include incest or child pornography (Mudry and Prewo, 1981).

EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

"Emotional maltreatment includes blaming, belittling, or rejecting a child; constantly treating siblings unequally; and persistent lack of concern by the caretaker for the child's welfare (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984, p. 18)." Emotional maltreatment may also include lack of nurturance or tearing down of the child's self image (Mudry and Prewo, 1981). Although emotional maltreatment can occur alone, it often accompanies physical abuse and sometimes sexual abuse. "Emotionally maltreated children are not always physically abused. But physically abused children are almost always emotionally maltreated as well (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984, p. 19)."

EXTENT OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

"In the past fifteen years, child abuse has emerged as one of society's most perplexing and pervasive problems (Kinard, 1978, p. 1)." In 1973, it was estimated that for every case of child
abuse reported there were from 10 to 100 cases not reported. In November of 1975, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare released figures indicating that more than one million children are victims of physical abuse or neglect each year (Griggs, 1977). In 1977, the National Council on Family Relations announced that two thousand children had died painful deaths from beatings, burns, and severe malnutrition in the previous year (Otto and Brown, 1982).

Unfortunately, the 1980's have brought with them even more devastating statistics. In 1984, reports of child sexual abuse soared nationwide. According to Ann H. Cohn, executive director of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, sexual abuse reports increased an average of 35 percent across the country during 1984. This translates into more than 123,000 reports of sexual molestation in a twelve month period (Kokomo Tribune, 1985). In fact, experts are now claiming that one in five American children are sexually molested before the age of 18 (Feldmeth, 1984).

One child is abused in some way about every two minutes (Slater, 1984). Of the approximately one million children maltreated each year, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect estimates that as many as 100,000 to 200,000 are physically abused, 60,000 to 100,000 are sexually abused, and the remainder are neglected (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984). In 1984 alone, child abuse reports in general rose 19 percent bringing the total number of reports to 1,273,000. Sadly, these numbers probably represent only "the tip of the iceberg" (Kokomo Tribune, 1985). The bottom line is: child abuse is now the second most leading cause of death in children (Slater, 1984).
SCHOOL SYSTEMS' FAILURE TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Because of their naturally occurring contact with nearly all children, teachers are a potentially helpful resource for abused children. However, detecting abuse cases among school children can be a formidable task. Indeed, it is not a responsibility school systems are anxious to assume.

Historically, schools avoid involvement in situations that relate to a student's home life. Principals are not eager to 'rock the domestic boat' by questioning a parent's chosen discipline methods or values (National School Boards Association, 1984, p. 1).

Schools are not traditionally seen as places where parents of one's pupils are suspected of major wrongdoing (Pelcovitz, 1980). "The school has traditionally taken the position that the parent is right and is appropriately tending to the needs of the child (Otto and Brown, 1982, p. 104)." Unfortunately, some school officials feel that parents have the right to treat children in any way they wish, while others feel that abuse is the parent's problem and not the teacher's responsibility (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984) (Hazzard and Rupp, 1983).

In 1974, a study which surveyed attitudes towards child abuse among various American professional groups revealed that educators were most likely to avoid personal involvement in suspected cases of child abuse (Pelcovitz, 1980). There are many difficulties that may be encountered which can discourage involvement in child abuse and neglect. These difficulties can be classified into five categories: personal feelings, problems internal
to the school, previous bad experiences, the belief that nothing will be done, and fear of legal involvement (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984)(Mudry and Prewo, 1981).

**PERSONAL FEELINGS**

Individuals within the community who may suspect that abuse has occurred are typically "afraid of getting involved in others' family matters or are reluctant to make accusations about such serious matters (Blain, 1981, p. 667)." Some people just do not want to get involved!

Many individuals vehemently deny that a problem as serious and threatening as child abuse could occur in "their" community (Otto and Brown, 1982). Similarly, it is difficult for us to admit that someone close to us may very well have a problem. Unfortunately, the rein of child abuse and neglect does not exclude the children of friends, acquaintances, or even colleagues, and this is a hard fact for many educators to face up to. Although this feeling is natural, it must be overcome. No children should be excluded from protection (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984).

Teachers are positioned in a context that normally calls for respecting the parents' right to privacy. Consequently, teachers have become accustomed to regarding any intrusion into their students' home life as a direct invasion of privacy (Pelcovitz, 1980). A consideration which haunts many a teacher is that he or she will alienate the parent whose child has been injured accidently, or that the child who is mildly or moderately abused will be placed in future jeopardy by an angered parent.
(Griggs, 1977). These are only some of the personal feelings which may discourage a teacher's involvement in child abuse and neglect.

PROBLEMS INTERNAL TO THE SCHOOL

Sometimes school principals obstruct the reporting of child abuse and neglect, thus discouraging teacher involvement, by failing to take teachers' reports seriously. At other times, principals may refuse to make an official report of suspected maltreatment once a situation is brought to their attention.

Similarly, central administrative staff may not provide support or "back-up" to line staff. This action undercuts the reporting staff member who has acted with the child's best interest at heart. Suddenly these reporters may find their motives questioned. Superintendents often fail to provide "in-service training" to staff in order to make them aware of their obligations to reporting. Staff who are ignorant of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect will be unable to help those abused and neglected children they come into contact with. Again, these are only some of the procedural difficulties within the school systems which may discourage a teacher's involvement in child abuse and neglect (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

PREVIOUS BAD EXPERIENCES

Unfortunately there are some educators who risk involvement once but, because of a previous difficult experience when reporting child abuse and neglect, they may be reluctant to become involved a second time. Negative experiences with the courts and welfare departments may contribute to this problem as well.
Such educators may have felt discouraged from reporting, feeling that a previous case was not handled satisfactorily.

These are very real, and often valid, concerns. Things may not have gone as well as they should have. But one previous bad experience does not mean that this injustice will necessarily be repeated. Child protection agencies are continually striving to upgrade their services. Many communities are providing more resources and increased staff to handle the growing number of child abuse and neglect cases. Actually, the picture is brighter than it was even a year ago, and it is thought that this trend will continue (Pelcovitz, 1980)(Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

**THE BELIEF THAT NOTHING WILL BE DONE**

When discussing obstacles to reporting suspected abuse, some teachers expressed "a perception that school officials do not take action when requested to do so (Hazzard and Rupp, 1983, p. 12)." Often times potential reporters become convinced that nothing will be done if they report, so they choose not to "waste their time." Such reasoning is inherently faulty. If an incident of suspected child abuse and neglect is reported, some type of action will occur. At the very least, a record of the report will be made and the investigative process begun. On the other hand, if the incident is not reported, one may be sure that absolutely nothing will be done. We cannot protect abused and neglected children unless they are first identified and reported (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).
FEAR OF LEGAL INVOLVEMENT

Professionals in all disciplines are often unwilling to report child abuse and neglect for simply the fear of being sued (Broadhurst, *Policy Making*, 1976). A study completed in 1975 concluded that "many teachers are afraid of parental reprisal after a report of abuse or afraid of the legal system (Hazzard and Rupp, 1983, p. 5)." These concerns are very real; however, educators must report regardless of their concerns or previous experience. The law requires it (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984). Educators must immediately recognize that reporting child abuse is no longer just a moral responsibility; it is a legal one (National School Boards Association, 1984, p. 2).

THE LAW REGARDING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect laws are intended to place important restrictions on parents rights; that is, "children may not be harmed or threatened with harm as a result of their parent's behavior (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984, p. 2)." Through the enactment of P. L. 94-247, The Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act of 1974, the federal government calls for "mandatory and prompt reporting and investigation" of all suspected cases of child abuse (National School Boards Association, 1984, p. 2). Since 1974, all 50 states, Washington D. C., and all other jurisdictions have adopted similar laws. The details of these laws vary, but one common element underlies all of them: "Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected must notify the
prescribed intervention agency immediately (National School Boards Association, 1984, p. 2)." Failure to do so may result in the individual being held as an accomplice to the crime. Individuals who comply are guaranteed immunity from civil and/or criminal liability (National School Boards Association, 1984). As responsible professionals it is essential that our knowledge and awareness of the child abuse laws in our respective states be continually updated (Miller and Miller, 1979).

I. Excerpts from Indiana Public Law 135

A. Any person suspecting; or having knowledge of child abuse or child neglect shall report the same.

B. Failure to make such a report shall be a Class B misdemeanor.

C. Definitions:

1. "Child" means any person under the age of eighteen years.

2. "Child Abuse" means circumstances where a child:
   a. has any physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means, or an injury at variance with the history given of it; or
   b. is a victim of a sex offense as defined by IC 35-42-4, IC 35-45-4-1 or IC 35-46-1-3.

3. "Physical Injury" means any injury that causes or creates a substantial risk of death, permanent disfigurement, unconsciousness, extreme pain or permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member or organ.

4. "Child Neglect" means circumstances where a child is the victim of neglect.

5. "Institutional Child Abuse and Neglect" means situations of child abuse or neglect where the person responsible for the child's welfare is a foster parent or is employed by a public or residential home, school, institution or agency.
6. "Neglect" means the circumstance in which a person having the care, custody, or control of the child knowingly:

a. places the child in a situation that may endanger his life or health;

b. abandons or cruelly confines the child;

c. deprives the child of education required by law;

d. fails, being able, to provide necessary support;

e. permits the child to participate in an obscene performance as prohibited by IC 35-30-10.1-1 and IC 35-30-10.1-3;

f. permits the child to commit the sexual offenses prohibited by IC 35-45-4.

D. Any person who has a duty to report child abuse or neglect under Section 3 of this chapter, or who participates in any judicial proceedings or other proceedings resulting from such report, is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions, provided the individual is acting in good faith.

E. Local child protection services may be allowed entry to the school in their investigation of reported abuse or neglect. Failure to admit persons authorized to investigate can result in a court order for such investigation to take place. If the investigators feel that immediate removal is necessary to protect the child from further abuse or neglect, the court may issue an order for temporary removal and custody.

II. School Procedure:

A. School staff members may initially question the child to determine if the child's injuries resulted from cruel or inhuman treatment, sexual abuse or malicious acts by the child's caretaker. However, in no case should the child be subjected to undue pressure in order to validate the suspicion of abuse. Validation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Child Protection Division of the Welfare Department.

B. Any staff member who has reason to believe a child is the victim of child abuse or neglect will make an oral report to the principal of that building. The principal in turn has the responsibility to report the information to the Child Protection Division of the Welfare Department. An oral report is acceptable. (Indiana Code. Public Law 135)
In other words, the law is relatively simple. In general, it does require the involvement of educators in child abuse and neglect problems. It provides protection to those educators who become involved, but penalizes those who fail in their obligation.

JUSTIFICATION FOR TEACHER INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

School systems are in an excellent position to recognize and identify abused and neglected children. This can be accomplished through observation of the child's behavior, appearance, and on occasion, verbally, when the child might relate an abusive incident to a teacher or other school faculty member (Mudry and Prewo, 1981).

Over time, educators have come to realize that physical, social, and emotional factors affect intellectual growth. As the school has accepted responsibility for both social and intellectual growth, it has also broadened its horizons to include concern for the child's general welfare. Thus the school setting provides a good contact point for the majority of abused children who are of school age (Otto and Brown, 1982).

The fact that abused and neglected children may be found in any classroom in any school in every community across the nation is a compelling reason for educators to become involved in child abuse and neglect treatment and prevention (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984, p. 6).

For many years child abuse and neglect was considered a problem
primarily of the very young child — ages three and under. Studies now indicate, however, that the incidence of abuse among school age children is as high as 50% of all cases (Pelcovitz, 1980).

Schools are the only places in which children are seen daily over periods of time by professionals trained to observe their behavior and appearance. Some of the strongest reasons for involvement develop from the professional responsibilities, basic principals of justice and democratic ideals, and the personal commitment of educators to the well being of the children they serve. Educators are often aware that something is not right with a child long before severe abuse or neglect occurs. To ignore this perception would be to do a great disservice to the profession itself and to the children whom educators are dedicated to teach. If schools are truly to teach, they cannot ignore the reasons why children cannot learn (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984).

Children are generally regarded as an important resource for the future of society and, as such, are allowed many rights with the intention of optimally fostering their development (Otto and Brown, 1982, p. 104).

In spite of these rights, however, children in American society have not been protected from their own families by either schools or communities (Otto and Brown, 1982). Without a concentrated effort by school personnel, many children will continue to be abused and neglected. Hopefully the level of tolerance of this
inhuman abuse will eventually be exterminated (Watson, 1980).
"The problem of child abuse and neglect will not be solved
without the involvement of the educator and the school
(Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984, p. 7)."

PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

PHYSICAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

Physical indicators of physical abuse in the school-age
child include: unexplained bruises and welts, unexplained burns,
unexplained fractures, unexplained lacerations and abrasions,
unexplained abdominal injuries, and human bite marks (Broadhurst,

Unexplained bruises and welts are usually found on the face,
lips, mouth, back, buttocks, thighs, or on large areas of the
torso of physically abused children. These welts and bruises
are usually in various stages of the healing process. Sometimes
they are clustered, forming regular patterns, or reflect the
shape of the article used to inflict pain. These unexplained
bruises and welts regularly appear after an absence, weekend,
or vacation (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984)(Tower,
1984).

Unexplained burns are usually the result of cigar or
cigarette burns and are likely to appear on the soles of the
feet, palms of the hands, back, or buttocks. Immersion or
"wet" burns include glove- or sock-like burns and doughnut-
shaped burns on the buttocks or genitalia. Patterned or
"dry" burns show a clearly defined mark left by the instrument used to inflict them such as an iron or electric burner. Unexplained burns may also include rope burns on the arms, legs, neck, or torso of the victim (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

Unexplained fractures are usually to the skull, nose, or facial structure. These fractures are noted in various healing stages indicating that they occurred at different times. Swollen or tender limbs may indicate fractures of this nature (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

Unexplained lacerations and abrasions are commonly to the mouth, lips, gums, eyes, and to the external genitalia. These injuries are also found on the backs of the arms, legs, and torsos of physically abused children (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

Unexplained abdominal injuries may result in swelling of the abdomen, a localized tenderness, or constant vomiting. Human bite marks are also a physical indicator of physical abuse, especially when they appear adult size or are recurrent (Tower, 1984).

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

There are many behavioral indicators of children who are physically abused. These children are notably wary of any adult contacts. They tend to be apprehensive when other children cry. Physically abused children reflect distinct behavioral extremes -- they are either terribly aggressive or alarmingly withdrawn. Children who are physically abused are
clearly frightened of parents and are many times early to school and afraid to go home afterwards. Children may report injuries by parents to the teacher or other school staff member (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984).

Physically abused children often complain of soreness and may move awkwardly. They develop tendencies to be destructive to themselves and others. These children may appear to be accident prone. They wear clothing that covers their entire bodies even when inappropriate. These children may even be chronic runaways. Finally, children who have been physically abused are unable to tolerate physical contact or touch (Tower, 1984).

**PHYSICAL NEGLECT**

**PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

Physical indicators of physical neglect in the school-aged child include constant hunger, poor hygiene, and inappropriate clothing. Physically neglected children are known for their consistent lack of supervision -- especially when they are involved in dangerous activities, or over extended periods of time. Physically neglected children appear constantly fatigued or listless. These children's physical problems or medical needs are left unattended such as untreated or infected wounds. At worst, these children are even completely abandoned (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

There are several behavioral indicators of children who
are physically neglected. The educator should be alert for the children who are begging or stealing food, constantly falling asleep in class, rarely attending school, or coming to school very early and leaving very late. These neglected children may be addicted to alcohol or other drugs, or engaging in delinquent activities such as vandalism or theft. Neglected children may even state that there is no one to care for or look after them (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

SEXUAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

Sexual abuse is rarely discovered in a school setting through physical indicators alone, but there are some signs to be alert for. Sexually abused children may have difficulty in walking or sitting. Their underclothing may be torn, bloody, or stained. They may complain of pain or itching in the genital area. Some may even have bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas. Frequent urinary or yeast infections as well as frequent unexplained sore throats may be physical indicators of sexual abuse. Of course, venereal disease, especially in a child under 13, and early pregnancy are the most tragic physical signs of the sexual abuse of children (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

There are many behavioral indicators of children who are sexually abused. These children show a regression to immature behavior (Slater, 1984). They may appear withdrawn, engage in
fantasy or infantile behavior, or even appear to be retarded. Sexually abused children are likely to have poor peer relationships and are concerned about being touched by anyone (Slater, 1984). These children may experience a sudden drop in school performance. They may also begin crying with absolutely no provocation (Tower, 1984). These children may be unwilling to change for gym or to participate in physical activities (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

Educator's should be on the lookout for a sexualized element in the child's behavior with others. The child might relate detailed or inappropriate sexual information that otherwise would not be known. The child might begin to talk about sexual organs and functions, or begin to create explicit drawings of sexual acts or organs. The child may complain of sleep disturbances or make comments about privacy and always being bothered. Finally, the child may state that he/she has been sexually assaulted by a caretaker (Slater, 1984). These statements should be regarded in all seriousness because "young children will not lie about sexual molestation (Slater, 1984, p. 1)."

**EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT**

**PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

Emotional maltreatment is rarely manifest in physical signs. Speech disorders, lags in physical development, and failure-to-thrive syndrome (a progressive wasting away commonly associated with lack of mothering) are physical indicators of emotional maltreatment (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).
Asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers may also be considered as physical indicators of emotional maltreatment (Tower, 1984).

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

Most often emotional maltreatment is observed through behavioral indicators, and even these indicators may not be immediately apparent. The emotionally maltreated child may demonstrate the following behavioral characteristics: habit disorders, conduct disorders, neurotic traits, psychoneurotic reactions, behavior extremes, overly adaptive behaviors, lags, and attempted suicide (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984) (Tower, 1984).

Habit disorders include sucking, biting, rocking, or feeding disorders. Conduct disorders include withdrawal and antisocial behavior such as cruelty, destructiveness, and stealing. Neurotic traits of emotionally maltreated children include sleeping disorders and inhibition of play; whereas psychoneurotic reactions include hysteria, obsession, compulsion, phobias and hypochondria (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984) (Tower, 1984).

Behavior extremes of emotionally maltreated children include appearing overly compliant, extremely passive or aggressive, or very demanding or undemanding. Overly adaptive behaviors are either inappropriately adult (such as parenting other children) or inappropriately infantile (such as rocking, head-banging, or thumbsucking.) Emotionally maltreated children show lags in both emotional and intellectual development as well as a high

The behavior of emotionally maltreated and emotionally disturbed children is similar, but parental behavior can help to distinguish between the two. The parents of an emotionally disturbed child are generally concerned about the child's welfare and actively seeking help. However, the parents of an emotionally maltreated child often blame the child for the problem (or pretend it doesn't exist), refuse any offers of help, and are unconcerned about the child's welfare (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984)(Tower, 1984).

GENERAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

They're in your schools; they're reaching out to you when they seem to be turning away. Abused and neglected children may be labeled hyperactive, learning disabled, or behavior problems (National School Boards Association, 1984). Many go undetected because these children tend to suffer silently rather than admit the abusive treatment they receive (Watson, 1980).

Being abused or neglected may affect a child's development of physical growth and neurological status, cognitive functioning, speech and language development, and personality characteristics. Again and again, widespread studies show that battered children do suffer deficits in one or more of these developmental areas (Kinard, 1978). All abused and neglected children seem to have some difficulty in school. Many fail first grade work and some suffer from mental retardation as a
result of head injuries and under-nutrition (Rose and Hardman, 1981) (Timberlake, 1976). Among school age children, the abused and neglected are often found in special classes due to learning problems or are in grades below their age level (Griggs, 1977). Teachers are quick to label these children underachievers in the classroom (Timberlake, 1976).

Abused children characteristically have lower I.Q. scores than their peers. A study completed in 1977 revealed a clear pattern of lower verbal intelligence in abused children (Lynch and Roberts, 1982).

While an exact risk factor cannot be established, there is no doubt whatsoever that mistreated children have lower I.Q.'s, poorer language, and show less competent academic progress than children who have been well parented (Kempe and Helfer, 1980, p. 349).

Although 50 percent of abused children have permanent physical injury, all abused children will have mental and psychological problems (Griggs, 1977).

The personality dynamics of abused children tend toward polarization of behaviors, feelings, and attitudes. These range from silence, withdrawal, fear, and submissiveness to anger, hostility, and aggression (Griggs, 1977, p. 192).

These children are sometimes aggressive to children and adults, and at other times express almost no feelings (Otto and Brown, 1982). They suffer from a negative self-concept and are considered to have poor controls in school situations (Timberlake, 1976).
Teachers describe abused and neglected children as having serious patterns of aggression. They judge that the level of defiance in the abused child is in excess of the normal child. Teachers notice that these children are quick to react. Some types of aggressive behaviors they display are: fighting with peers, being cruel to animals, stirring up trouble, throwing temper tantrums, rebelling against authority, damaging objects, disobeying, being hostile to others, and running away from home and school. These children seem to strike out aggressively at others in response to stress. They seem to cope with school stress through self-defeating aggressive behavior which in turn supports their negative self-images (Timberlake, 1976). Again, many of these children are labeled behavior problems, but their problems go much deeper than that. As teachers, we need to be responsible and learn what we can do to help these children.

HELPING VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

As teachers, we need to develop a genuine concern for our fellow man. If we fail in this task, we will never solve the problem of child abuse and neglect (Belnap, 1981). These children desperately need educators who will support them, defend them, and be their advocates (Otto and Brown, 1982). Teachers must be alert to the special needs of these children (McCaffrey, 1979). As professionals we must recognize that these children need help to alleviate their current problems and to prevent further ones (Reidy, 1977). Teachers need to let
these children see an adult in a positive, supportive, and caring role by providing a warm school environment in which to work and grow (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

Teachers need to do all they can to see that abused and neglected children become involved in programs of remediation for their developmental lags and deficits (Rose and Hardman, 1981). Teachers should take the initiative and make referrals for medical testing and assessment of special learning needs (Tower, 1984). Teachers should take advantage of the resources available to children within the school system such as: speech and language services, guidance and counseling services, special education services, remedial help services, and health care services. Similarly, teachers should begin to identify and become acquainted with resources within the community that might help children and their families (McCaffrey, 1979). These resources might include parenting classes, parent support groups, or community hot-lines.

Within the classroom, teachers need to maintain a very warm, caring, and open environment. Teachers should display a very deep concern for children and should be easily recognized by children as understanding people (Otto and Brown, 1982). Teachers need to show that adults can be trusted and that love is not always "conditional on the gratification of adult needs (Franklin, 1977, p. 118)." A good teacher encourages children to talk and stimulates verbal interaction (Otto and Brown, 1982). It is important to give children plenty of time to talk and to be sensitive to clues that a child needs to talk such as sudden behavior changes (Tower, 1984). Again,
encourage children to ventilate their feelings and reward children when they share their feelings (Griggs, 1977)(Feldmeth, 1984). This will help to keep the lines of communication open at all times. Above all, you should make it clear to your children that if something troubles them, hurts them, or makes them sad, they can come to you and talk about it (Feldmeth, 1984).

Abused and neglected children have an increased need for self-esteem and positive group experiences with peers (Griggs, 1977). Teachers must do all they can to work in improving the self-concept of their students (Franklin, 1977). An abused child, especially, needs to improve his self-image (Tower, 1984). The whole class can participate in exercises designed to enhance self-image and feelings of worth. Acknowledge the strengths of all the children. Work to help them discover their strengths. Help children to focus on the good things about themselves, and to talk about what they do well. Emphasize their positive aspects as often as possible (Tower, 1984). Strive to provide positive school experiences that will leave children with a sense of achievement and accomplishment (Broadhurst, The Educator's Role, 1984).

Teachers also need to provide socialization skill programs for abused and neglected children (Rose and Hardman, 1981). Through increased contact with classmates, an abused child may develop better peer relations (McCaffrey, 1979). Improvement in adult interaction is also very important (McCaffrey, 1979). Teachers must remember to underline the good points and thus increase the child's self-confidence and sense of success in his relationships. Again, stressing positive
performance should help the child in improving his self-concept (Broadhurst, *The Educator's Role*, 1984).

The best teachers are not reluctant to discuss child abuse and neglect with their students. These discussions may be on an individual or classroom basis (Hazzard and Rupp, 1983). Children need to know that there are proper times for disobedience and that they have certain rights. Of these rights, possibly the most important is the right to say no. Children need to learn when and how to say no to adults (Feldmeth, 1984). Educating all children in areas relating to child abuse and neglect will help classmates better understand the abused and neglected child (Rose and Hardman, 1981).

Bibliotherapy is another way of helping children who are the victims of abuse. A teacher may effectively involve the child with an emotional attachment to a literary character.

The child can participate vicariously in incidents that are developed in a well-written story. The child may gain new insights into personal problems and may even find a solution. The cathartic reaction of realizing that others suffer in much the same manner can be a respite from the isolation and suffering of abused children (Watson, 1980, p. 205).

Some excellent books on child abuse include:

*The Pinballs* by Betsy Byars (Harper and Row Publishers)
*Foster Child* by M.D. Bauer (Houghton Mifflin Publishers)
*My Private Zones* by Frances Dayee (Charles Franklin Press)
*What If I Say No?* by Jill Huddad (M.H. Cap Publishers)
*The Lottery Rose* by Irene Hunt (Scribner Publishers)
*Like the Lion's Tooth by M. Kellogg (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)
*Don't Hurt Laurie by W. Roberts (Atheneum Publishers)
*Tough Chauncey by D. B. Smith (Crowell Publishers)
*No More Secrets For Me by O. Wachter (Little, Brown, and Co.)
(Watson, 1980) (Feldmeth, 1984)

It may be a rewarding experience for teachers to become familiar with these books, to know their students well enough to make appropriate story recommendations, and to handle the related discussions with compassion and empathy (Watson, 1980).

Finally, teachers may help abused and neglected children by realizing that their problems don't just disappear (Reidy, 1977). Instead, teachers should get involved by listening to and following up abuse related comments (Feldmeth, 1984). Teachers should not only know the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, but also recognize them and deal with them (Talbut, 1981). All help should be offered nonjudgmentally (Otto and Brown, 1982). Every teacher should treat each incident of suspected abuse separately and consult with supervisors or other knowledgeable professionals when abuse or neglect is suspected. Also, each teacher must know his/her state's reporting laws, guidelines, and available services (Moore and McKee, 1979). Finally, when making a report of suspected abuse or neglect a teacher must give complete and specific information including the child's name, address, name of caretakers, and the extent and nature of abuse (Slater, 1984).
FURTHER INFORMATION ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Because teachers are now required by law to report child abuse and neglect, they need to be familiar with their particular state law regarding this subject. This information is available from the attorney general's office in any state (Talbutt, 1981).

Teachers interested in developing further awareness in the area of child abuse and neglect can receive booklets, as well as other worthwhile, useful materials from:

*National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect
U.S. Children's Bureau
P.O. Box 1182
Washington, D.C. 20013

(and)

*Child Help U.S.A.
Woodland Hills, CA 91370

More immediate information can be obtained by calling the following national toll free number:

*1-800-4 A CHILD    ---    *1-800-422-4453
Bibliography


Indiana Code. Public Law 135. (An excerpt distributed to teachers in a Muncie Community School, March 1985.)


Watson, Jerry J. "Bibliotherapy for Abused Children." _School Counselor_. 27, No. 3 (1980), 204-208.