

Sample Paper from 2008-2009

The following Senior Project paper is an actual student paper from 2008-2009. It is not necessarily perfect or error-free; however, the research and content demonstrate an advanced level of thinking and writing.

Please note that for the 2009-2010 school year, the prompt and paper rubric have changed slightly. Students should use the 2009-2010 prompt, rubrics, and paper template to complete their senior project.

Running head: CHILD ABUSE AND

Child Abuse and Child Protective Services

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Abstract

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act makes available information of child abuse and neglect from each State. Child protective services has an incredibly difficult job in determining whether to remove a child from their home if abuse is suspected. Every life is precious; what constitutes child protective services to take action on a call or not? Every call should be looked into, especially if there has been more than one allegation. There needs to be more initial training and licensing for caseworkers, as well as furthering education classes during their careers. There is always research going on and caseworkers need to be aware of the findings. This paper will be talking about child abuse in general, including some of the statistics, and how child protective services respond to each case.

Child Abuse and Child Protective Services

Child protective services deal with life and death situations everyday. No child should ever have to suffer from abuse and it is CPS' responsibility to make sure it doesn't happen again. No child should ever fall between the cracks of child protective services.

Policy Identification

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was originally enacted in 1974. It was most recently amended in 2003, by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act (Child Welfare, 2004). CAPTA establishes a minimum definition of child abuse and neglect, provides Federal funding, identifies the Federal role in helping with research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection, and it establishes the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (Child Welfare, 2004).

History/Background

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, or known as CAPTA, for short, was amended in 1988. It was created to make available State child abuse and neglect information. The Department of Health and Human Services established the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) in response, which serves as a voluntary national reporting system (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

When amended again in 1996, CAPTA required all states to work with the Department of Health and Human Services if they received funds from the Basic State Grant. They worked together to provide specific data about children who had suffered abuse. This information was included into NCANDS (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

CAPTA defines child abuse and neglect as: any serious act of failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual

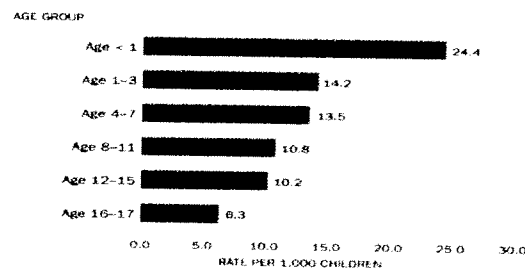
abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. (*Child maltreatment, 2006*)

Current Situation

“Every 35 seconds, a child is abused or neglected in the United States.” (Dominique, 2009) In 2006, approximately 3.3 million allegations of child abuse were made to Child Protective Services. Nearly seventy-five percent of victims had no history of previous abuse (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment followed by physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and medical neglect. A condition that doesn't fall into one of the main categories is listed as “other”. Boys and girls are both victims of maltreatment, with about fifty percent of cases each (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Race does play a factor in the statistics. African-American children had the highest rate of victimization at 19.8 per 1,000 children of the same race. This was followed closely by American Indian or Alaska Native children and children of multiple races. White and Hispanic children had similar rates of 10.7 and 10.8, respectively, per 1,000 children of the same race (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Children of Asian ethnicity had the lowest rate of 2.5 per 1,000 children. The rate of victimization is highest for children from birth to one year. The following chart has the victimization rate for each age group “(*Child maltreatment, 2006*).”

Figure 3-3 Victimization Rates by Age Group, 2006



Based on data from table 3-9.

There are two stages in Child Protective Services (CPS) for responding to allegations of child maltreatment. The first stage is the referral. This is the initial notification of alleged maltreatment of at least one child (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). More than one-half of referrals were from professionals. Professionals include: teachers, legal staff, police officers, social services staff, medical staff, mental health workers, child daycare workers, and foster care providers. Teachers have the largest percentage of referrals, followed by lawyers or police officers and social services staff (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). The remaining referrals came from nonprofessional sources, such as: parents, relatives, friends and neighbors, alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, anonymous callers, clergy members, sports coaches, camp counselors, bystanders, volunteers, and foster siblings (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

The second stage is called the report. The CPS agency either starts an investigation or follows an alternative response. The investigation determines if there in fact, was maltreatment to a child, or if the child is at risk of maltreatment. An alternative response calls attention to the family's needs and the prevention of future maltreatment (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

In 2006, 3.3 million allegations of child maltreatment were made to CPS agencies that involved six million children. Nearly sixty-two percent reached the report stage, and about thirty percent of those that reached the report stage determined that at least one child was a victim of child maltreatment (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Some states have requirements of time for starting an investigation. Many states have specified that high-priority responses be within one hour or twenty-four hours. Lower priority responses range from twenty-four hours to fourteen days. Investigation workers have an average number of completed investigations of sixty-two (*Child maltreatment, 2006*).

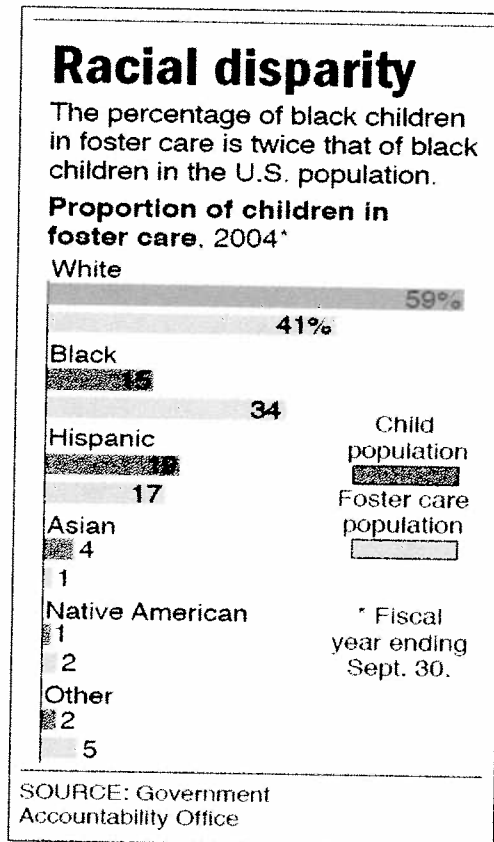
Preventative and post-investigation services are the two categories of CPS services.

Preventative services are for parents whose children are at risk of maltreatment. These services aim to increase the parent's and other caregiver's understanding of a child's developmental stages (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). "Examples of preventative services include respite care, parenting education, housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, daycare, home visits, individual and family counseling, and home maker help. "(*Child maltreatment, 2006*)"

Almost sixty percent of victims received post-investigation services in 2006. Not all families receive post-investigation services because of many factors, like long waiting lists and the characteristics of a child's case (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Children who have a reported disability are twice as likely to receive these services. Victims of multiple maltreatments are sixty-five more likely to receive services. If the child's perpetrator wasn't a parent, they are sixty percent less likely to receive post-investigation than victims abused by their mothers alone (*Child maltreatment, 2006*)

Children with prior victimization are sixty-three percent more likely to be placed in foster care than first-time victims. Multiple maltreatment victims are nearly eighty percent more likely to be placed in foster care than victims of physical abuse (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Children who are victims of neglect are twenty-two percent more likely to be placed in foster care than physical abuse victims. Compared to Caucasian victims, African-American victims are almost thirty percent more likely to be placed in foster care. Child victims that are abused by their fathers are fifty percent less likely to be placed in foster care than if they are abused by their mothers (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). Victimized children who are reported by mental health personnel or educational personnel are both fifty percent less likely to be placed in foster care than children who are referred by social services personnel (*Child maltreatment, 2006*). The

following graph has the racial disparity of children in foster care (*Child abuse treatment and prevention act, n.d.*).



Opposing Viewpoints

Advocates for CAPTA believe that it and other child abuse regulating actions are necessary to fight child abuse. One of the actions that helps regulate child abuse is the national sex offender registry (Leading Issues, 2009). Child abuse is life altering for the children that it affects. Even just one time can give children emotional grief that is difficult to overcome (*It shouldn't hurt to be a child, n.d.*). I think you would be hard pressed to find a large group of people that think CAPTA and CPS are unnecessary. Child Protective Services does its best to protect children and take them out of dangerous situations.

Others that oppose CAPTA will argue that these laws and actions are too strict and that they infringe on privacy and that First Amendment rights are violated. There was an article, *The Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children Sex Offender Registration Act*, that says that registering sex offenders may do more harm; that it leads to harassment, exclusion, and may increase the risk that they will repeat their crime (Leading Issues, 2009). Some also believe that CPS have gotten careless with their work and carried away with their authority. The caseworkers are not properly trained for the responsibility that have in their job (Kim, 2009). They claim that CPS makes false allegations to make a profit, because the federal government pays nearly twenty thousand dollars annually for each child in the foster care system. It is also said that it easier for caseworkers to remove children from their homes to avoid going through a time-consuming investigation (Kim, 2009).

Policy Recommendation

The topic of child abuse is always a tough subject. Child Protective Services have an important job in determining whether to screen in an allegation of maltreatment or to screen it out. In many cases, CPS has made the right call, but there have been several cases where maltreatment has occurred and been reported, but no investigation has taken place. Every life is precious and CPS shouldn't just brush aside cases that they think may have a child at risk, but are too busy with other cases. If CPS is overwhelmed with allegations, they should take on more caseworkers, especially in the larger states with a larger child population.

Every call is significant. If someone believes child abuse may be happening, it should be looked into. A good way of doing this would be contacting the child's teacher at school and see if they have noticed anything unusual that may be a result of abuse. This is an easy call to make, and it may save a life. If the teacher doesn't suspect anything, and the caseworker believes that

the child isn't at risk, then the case can be screened out. This way the family isn't completely involved and parents aren't accused of something that may not be happening. I don't think any parent would want to be accused of child abuse if it isn't happening.

All caseworkers need to have more intensive training. A life is in their hands, and walking in the office on the first day and taking a call isn't what should be happening. In Idaho, new caseworkers receive six months of classroom training and fieldwork and the fieldwork is under the supervision of a coach/mentor/supervisor. After training, caseworkers have a nine-month probationary period (O. Morgan, personal communication, February 26, 2009). Idaho also requires that all social workers be licensed. Idaho has increased the new worker training from four days to twenty-five days. After the initial training and probationary period, caseworkers receive ongoing training (O. Morgan, personal communication, February 26, 2009). Training needs to be thorough, informative, and ongoing. Research is always going on and caseworkers need to be aware of the new findings.

In conclusion, child abuse is not something to be taken lightly. Caseworkers need to be fully aware of what they are doing and what to look for in each case. If they have any suspicion of abuse, they should follow up. And if more than one call is received regarding the same child, it should definitely be investigated. Abuse stays with children forever; they can't ever escape what they felt during abuse. The psychological problems are immeasurable. CPS should take every measure possible to keep children from experiencing that pain. I commend them for everything they have done for children and families and all the lives they have saved.

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