



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

ODDS OF ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT ADD UP

Prevention starts with understanding

By Nancy Shute (NPR)

Children who are maltreated are much more likely to have physical and mental health problems later on. They face a higher risk of suicide and of getting in trouble with the law. But there's a big gap between the number of people who say they were abused or neglected as children and the official rate of annual confirmed cases, which runs about 1 percent.

That may be because looking at annual numbers alone understates a child's risk of maltreatment throughout childhood, researchers say. By that measure, 12.5 percent of children have experienced at least one episode of abuse or neglect by age 18, a study published.

The numbers are worse for children in minority groups, with 21 percent of African-American children, 14.5 percent of Native Americans and 13 percent of Hispanic children affected. Just looking at the 1 percent annual number makes it easy for people to think

that maltreatment affects just a few children with bad parents, says Christopher Wildeman, an associate professor of sociology at Yale University who led the study.

"When it's 12.5 percent of parents, this isn't psychopaths, this isn't drug addicts," Wildeman told Shots. "A lot of these folks are in dire straits financially and certainly have their ups and downs, like we all do."

This study, which was published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, used confirmed cases of maltreatment in a national child abuse database from 2004 to 2011. Almost 6 million children were included. The vast majority of cases, about 80 percent, involved neglect. In 2011, 18 percent were victims of physical abuse and 9 percent sexual abuse, according to state and local child protective services reports.

The risk was highest in the early years of a child's life, with 25 percent of first reports of maltreatment

coming before a child turned 2. All told, 6 percent of children had been maltreated by the age of 5. And sadly, parents and other relatives pose the greatest risk. Most victims, 81 percent, were maltreated by a parent, according to the 2011 data. About 6 percent of perpetrators were nonparent relatives; 4 percent were unmarried partners of parents; and just 3 percent were unrelated adults. Child protective services are good at limiting maltreatment among children who have been neglected or abused, Wildeman says, but not so much at helping avoid that maltreatment in the first place. "If you could address that immediate time when parents are stressed out and broke, and the child is crying," he says, it could lower the risk of abuse in early childhood.

Archdiocese of Louisville

Volume VII Issue I

November 2017

If you need support or someone to talk to:

- ☉ Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana:
800.CHILDREN/
800.422.4453
www.pcaky.org
www.pcaain.org
- ☉ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
800.4.A.CHILD
800.422.4453
www.childhelp.org

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts/mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Sudden/unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is unusual for the child's age.

ABUSE SURVIVORS AND THE HOLIDAYS

While commercial advertisements and greeting cards may paint the holiday season as a picture-perfect time of year, the reality is that the holidays are a time of anxiety and sadness for a lot of people.

For survivors of sexual assault, the holidays — with the busyness and expectations they bring — can be particularly stressful.

Some survivors feel alone as they deal with their trauma; a trauma they may not have talked about with other people. Others have post-traumatic stress disorder and are dealing with a vast array of physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms that accompany PTSD.

For survivors of incest, there may be additional stressors: the possibility of seeing their abusive relative, tension with relatives who don't want to accept that the abuse occurred, or inner conflict because the survivor still loves the relative but is angered and hurt by the abuse that occurred. At this busy and sometimes emotional time of year, it is important for survivors of sexual assault to practice self care. Relaxing activities such as baths, quiet walks, time with friends, and special times with children or other special people in your life is critical to your health.

It's easy to forget self-care skills in the hustle and bustle of the holidays, but they're particularly critical during times of high stress.

Some survivors of child sexual abuse put additional pressure on themselves to provide their children with perfect holidays — holidays very different from the ones they remember. It's healthier, however, to simply enjoy time together with your children rather than creating unrealistic ex-

pectations for your family's holidays. For incest survivors, it's critical to know your limits and establish boundaries with your family ahead of time. If you don't want to participate in the family celebration, explain your feelings to a family member who understands.

If you want to be with your family, set boundaries beforehand. For example, if you're uncomfortable sitting next to your abusive relative at the family dinner table, find a seat at the other end of the table.

It may take work and self-reflection, but developing a positive outlook about the

holidays will help improve your mood. Try to control your negative thoughts by remembering happy times in your life or things for which you're grateful today, rather than thinking about the abuse.

Also, remember that while "perfect" holidays aren't attainable, fun times are possible if you focus on sharing time with people you care about. If your family isn't supportive, find "family" in friends you love and who love you. We don't have a choice in the family we're born into, but as adults we have the choice to create a family of people we trust and cherish. This holiday season; take the time to care for yourself. It's the best gift you'll give or receive.

Ways that you can take care of yourself:

- If you're a survivor of incest, here are a few tips for easing your anxiety over the holidays.

Remember to practice self care by doing activities that relax you.

- Know your limits.

-Establish boundaries with your family ahead of time.



UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated.

12.4.17

St. Gabriel

1.8.18

St. Margaret Mary

1.22.18

St. Paul

2.5.18

Holy Spirit-Louisville

3.5.18

St. Gabriel

3.19.18

St. Andrew Academy

4.9.18

Incarnation

Keep checking

www.archlou.org/safe for updates as trainings cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted here

- Be sure a knowing relative or friend is with you for support at family functions.
- Have a plan for how you'll excuse yourself if things become too intense.
- If you think you'll be alone over the holidays, find healthy ways to occupy yourself, such as volunteering at a community meal or homeless shelter.

CHILD ABUSE AND THE HOLIDAYS

Stress can increase during the holidays, even in the most loving of families. And that can put some children at risk for abuse.

With children home from school, holiday travel and seasonal shopping and associated expenses, parents can get frazzled more easily than usual. What is typically a fun and joyful time for children can become devastating when parents or caregivers cope with stress by becoming abusive.

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), the state agency charged with child and adult protection, reminds adults to keep their cool this winter when it comes to disciplining kids.

"Parents enjoy spending time with their children, but frustration can escalate during times of high stress," said Teresa James, commissioner of the CHFS Department for Community Based Services (DCBS). "It's never OK to hit a child."

When parents are upset with a child's behavior, a tried-and-true method to regain composure is leaving the room and counting to 10, James said.

"Once you return to your child, stay composed and speak in a calm voice," she said. "Keep a clear head so you can appropriately discipline for unacceptable behavior."

Teach children how to communicate, James said. Ask them to talk about what's bothering them rather than reacting by hitting or yelling. Model this behavior, and ask other adults around your children to do the same. "Children are usually better behaved when their parents and caregivers are happier and more relaxed," James said.

If you're under stress, talking to

someone is an easy and effective outlet, James said. Looking to other parents for advice helps mothers, fathers and other caregivers feel less isolated in their problems, she said.

"Sometimes just being able to appropriately express anger and frustration can help ease tension," she said. "Technology can even play a part in helping relieve stress. There are plenty of online support groups and weblogs where parents can see they are not alone."

Likewise, you can give other parents a break by offering to listen.

James said staff at county DCBS offices may help parents by finding resources to deal with the problems



that may cause stress, such as the loss of a job. Community resources are often available to assist families who need help with services like

utilities, child care or job training.

"The local offices can assist with referrals to appropriate agencies," James said.

Log on to https://prd.chfs.ky.gov/Office_Phone/index.aspx to find the phone number for the DCBS office in your county.

Drug and alcohol abuse may increase during the holidays, leading to an increase of child safety risk. Families who need help with these issues can get information about prevention resources from the CHFS Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities' Substance Abuse Prevention Program at <http://dbhdid.ky.gov/dbh/sa.aspx>.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky (PCAK), one of the cabinet's community partners, is a statewide nonprofit agency whose mission is to prevent the abuse and neglect of Kentucky's children

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

With winter sports in full swing now is the time to reach out to your athletic directors for a list of your coaches.

Is your school safe environment compliant?

Can you be absolutely sure you know who is coaching your kids?

- Have they attended Safe Environment Training?
- Have they had a background check in the last five years via selection.com?

Field trip season is near. Don't wait until the last minute to get your chaperones compliant

through its outreach.

"Abuse and neglect are associated with short- and long-term consequences that affect not only the child and family, but also society as a whole," PCAK Executive Director Jill Seyfred said. "PCAK gives parents and caregivers expert guidance on child safety. We're proud to be one of DCBS' partners in prevention." PCAK offers a toll-free hotline that provides information and referrals to help prevent child abuse. If you are a parent or caregiver and need a listening ear, call (800) CHILDREN, or visit PCAK online at www.pcaky.org.

James said it takes effort from entire communities to stop abuse and neglect. Kentuckians should remember that if they even suspect child abuse or neglect, they must report it. "It's the law," she said.

Call your local police or the cabinet's

See "HOLIDAY ABUSE" (page 4)

**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

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No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

HOLIDAY ABUSE (CONT.)

child abuse hotline at (877) KYSAFE1 - (877) 597-2331 - to report suspected abuse. Callers will remain anonymous.

Parenting Tips

When you feel you need to discipline your child with a timeout or punishment, keep these tips from Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky in mind.

- Get some space. If you are so upset that you feel like screaming -- or more -- leave the room. Say, "I'm so angry; I need a minute to think." Then leave the room or send your child to his room so you can calm down and regroup. You'll get yourself under control, and it's a good example for your children.
- Be quick. Catch your child in the act. Delayed reactions dilute the effect

of the punishment.

- Use selectively. Use timeout for talking back, hitting and safety-compromising problems. Don't overuse it.
- Keep calm. Your anger only adds fuel to the fire and changes the focus from the behavior of the child to your anger. This prevents you from being in control.
- Stick with it. Once you dole a punishment or say "timeout," don't back down or be talked out of it. If you decide to use timeout to control hitting, for example, use it every time your child hits, even if he spends most of the day in timeout. Eventually, he'll decide that it's more fun to play without hitting than to sit alone in his room.

IMPORTANT



Please convey to those you send to training that:

NO children under the age of 16 will be admitted to the training

Those who arrive late will NOT be admitted to the training.