

**Legacy: Crisis Nursery**

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### **Legacy: Crisis Nursery**

The Crisis Nursery Organization, located in Urbana, Illinois, offers a 24-hour safe space free of charge for children during emergencies. This not-for-profit organization focuses on strengthening families and helping children in crisis. Crisis Nursery is family-focused by providing vital families programs that support interactions between parents and children (Crisis Nursery, 2022). This organization also provides a program that helps mothers with support groups, interactive groups, home visits, respite hours, crisis care, and referrals to other resources (Crisis Nursery, 2022).

Based on 2021 statistics, the Crisis Nursery had 1,404 admissions, 2,137 follow-up activities, and 177 families in the Safe Children and Strong Families programs (Crisis Nursery, 2022). From the programs offered by Crisis Nursery in 2021, there is a 74% decrease in stress, 92% improvement with parenting skills, and 95% reduction in risk of maltreatment (Crisis Nursery, 2022). Statistics from last year show this as a beneficial resource for the public and its impact on families. Crisis Nursery is a helpful resource to the community and impacts public health.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Crisis Nursery: Serving the Community**

Universally, child abuse and neglect are prevalent problems that public health aids in by providing resources to help families in need. Several factors affect families and children, such as parental stress, sudden illness or hospitalization, job or school emergency, accident or fire, domestic violence, inability to cope, personal or family problems, homelessness, mental health, court-related, support services, and substance abuse (Crisis Nursery, 2022).

This group of students chose Crisis Nursery because we understand the hardships and unexpected life changes people experience and wanted to see how Champaign county can help children and families during these times. During volunteer hours on February 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of 2022, students helped with counting inventory to ensure supplies were readily available. While volunteering, we also learned about the populations this organization serves and the resources they provide to the community.

### ***Trends, diagnoses, and hospitalization costs of child abuse and neglect in the United States of America***

Child abuse and maltreatment affect more than one in eight children in the United States (Wojciak et al., 2021). In the United States, one in three children will have a maltreatment investigation before eighteen (Wojciak et al., 2021). Globally more than one billion children between the ages of two and seventeen have been the victims of violence (Wojciak et al., 2021). Victims of child abuse are more likely to suffer from suicidal ideation, depression, inadequate physical health, lifelong health effects, and early death (Wojciak et al., 2021).

Child abuse and maltreatment are public health concerns that affect healthcare systems worldwide (Wojciak et al., 2021). Over eighty-six thousand hospitalizations for abused children in the United States from 2000-2016 (Wojciak, 2021). The estimated cost on government payers for hospital costs totaled one billion dollars (Wojciak et al., 2021). Disrupting the cycle of abuse will require society to adjust the approach to preventing child abuse (Wojciak et al., 2021). By taking a holistic approach to child abuse and providing more prevention programs and education, the societal burden on hospitals, schools, and juvenile justice systems will be reduced (Wojciak et al., 2021).

### ***Outcomes from a randomized controlled trial of the relief nursery program***

Child abuse prevention is a public health concern due to the rising cases and costs on society (Eddy et al., 2020). Studies have shown that prevention programs and early intervention reduce child abuse and decrease the risk of abused children growing up to repeat the cycle of abuse (Eddy et al., 2020). Families have utilized respite and complete care prevention programs in crisis to provide relief of stress and aid in childcare to reduce abuse and maltreatment cases (Eddy et al., 2020). In this particular study on the Relief Nursery in Oregon, the complete care program for families considered at-risk consists of The Therapeutic Early Childhood Classroom Program, home visits, and parent education and support services (Eddy et al., 2020). The complete care program also provides families with child transportation, individual and family counseling, and mental health services on an as-needed basis (Eddy et al., 2020). In this study, families are assessed to receive respite care and referrals to local services and include that families can request two weekends a month of childcare for up to six months (Eddy et al., 2020).

Since child abuse prevention is critical, relief nurseries focus on prevention by providing services to at-risk families (Eddy et al., 2020). The complete program offered by the Relief Nursery shows that families with more social support are more inclined to follow through with home visits and enroll children in The Therapeutic Early Childhood Classroom program (Eddy et al., 2020). Families that received the complete program versus respite care reported higher satisfaction levels and that the program was helpful to their families (Eddy et al., 2020). Relief Nurseries offering more than respite care has shown promise as a way to support struggling families with young children by proactively connecting them with community-based resources (Eddy et al., 2020).

### ***Morbidities from child abuse and neglect***

Child abuse and neglect are serious worldwide public health concerns. Together, they are a significant risk factor for the development of subsequent mental health and behavioral disorders, health morbidities later in life, and compromised cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and neurobiological development (Zeanah & Humphreys, 2018). In 2016, 676,000 children in the United States were victims of some form of child abuse and neglect. Although 676,000 is a large number of reported cases, child maltreatment remains one of the most underreported problems in the United States (Zeanah & Humphreys, 2018). Whether a healthcare worker or a community citizen, it is essential to know and identify signs of child abuse and neglect so proper further actions can protect the child or children from other harm and prevent lifelong complications (Zeanah & Humphreys, 2018).

### ***Screening children for abuse and neglect***

Child abuse and neglect are worldwide health issues that can lead to life-threatening consequences (Shakil et al., 2018). Despite race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, approximately 25% of children in the United States experience some form of neglect and abuse in their lifetime, whether sexual, physical, or psychological. About two child deaths per 100,000 children occur annually from abuse and neglect (Shakil et al., 2018). Child abuse and neglect cases can decline if the community is aware of the signs of child abuse and neglect and what resources are readily available to help those in need. Additionally, child abuse and neglect screening tools utilized within clinical settings are valuable for identifying or detecting abuse and neglect in children and initiating appropriate interventions, if needed (Shakil et al., 2018). Early detection of abuse and neglect through screening and implementing the necessary actions as soon as possible to protect the child, or children, is imperative. It plays a significant part in preventing lifelong complications for the child, or children, such as mental health disorders, depression,

educational difficulties, low self-esteem, and difficulties forming and maintaining relationships (Shakil et al., 2018).

### ***Neglect and abuse in children***

Unidentified child abuse or neglect leads to delayed development, poor school performance, chronic stress, increased risk for violence, substance abuse, and social difficulties (Hoft & Haddad, 2017). It is crucial to identify, prevent or stop abuse to prevent lifelong complications. The community's responsibility is to safeguard vulnerable children by learning the signs of abuse and knowing what resources are available (Hoft & Haddad, 2017). Emergency settings screen children for abuse, but it is often after the abuse has occurred (Hoft & Haddad, 2017). There is a great need for a single screening tool to identify physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect to identify those within an at-risk population (Hoft & Haddad, 2017). Implementation of screening tools will prevent poor outcomes for those involved, decrease costs for the client and community, and prevent lifelong consequences.

### ***Risk factors for neglect***

The start for preventing child abuse is knowing the risk factors. Risk factors for child abuse or neglect include lack of knowledge related to child care, poverty, substance abuse, unstable family dynamics, single parenting, or parenting a child with developmental delays or physical illness (Perkins, 2018). Certain factors help decrease the risk of abuse, such as supportive family and friends, parental employment and financial stability, and stable housing (Perkins, 2018). Often, it is hard to recognize child abuse until after the event has occurred. Understanding the signs of abuse is imperative to early intervention. Signs and symptoms of abuse include new and healing wounds, burns, broken bones, fear of adults or caregivers, sudden changes in or aggressive behaviors, poor hygiene, hunger, and developmental delays (Perkins,

2018). Abused children may experience poor self-image, anxiety or depression disorders, substance abuse, difficulties with impulse control, PTSD, and chronic stress (Perkins, 2018). Acting quickly after suspecting child abuse or neglect is crucial to preventing long-term complications. If a suspicion arises for abuse or neglect, Child Protective Services should be contacted with any suspicious (Perkins, 2018). After identifying child abuse or neglect, several support programs within the community, such as the Children's Advocacy Center or a Crisis Nursery, are available (Perkins, 2018). These support programs are available to advocate for vulnerable children, provide families with referrals and resources, and provide therapeutic services to strengthen families (Perkins, 2018). It is crucial to educate individuals on the warning signs of child abuse to prevent complications and create positive changes in children's lives.

### ***Crisis in the family and positive youth development: the role of family functioning***

Family role and function are essential for child development. Children in the family crisis receive poor parental supervision (Mackova et al., 2019). A family crisis can lead to child development in endanger outcomes, and it can affect formulating family functions (Mackova et al., 2019). The types of family crises such as divorce, living in an incomplete family, and parents who are alcohol abusers can develop emotional and behavioral problems in children (Mackova et al., 2019). Also, the children or adolescents in the family crisis would have more chances to experience lower self-esteem (Mackova et al., 2019). The author emphasizes the positive youth development (PYD) theory which can increase competence and maintain the capacity and potential even though the children are in disadvantaged backgrounds (Mackova et al., 2019). The article states that positive youth development goals focus on the five domains; competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Mackova et al., 2019). Moreover, the author

emphasizes that counseling for parental skills, supervision, and family activity could counteract the family crisis (Mackova et al., 2019).

### ***Parental burnout***

Parental roles are essential in child development when raising children and meeting their needs. Initiation of parental burnout started in the 20th century (de Paula, 2022). The following characteristics define parental burnout; physical and emotional exhaustion, depression, ineffectiveness, and lack of achievement (de Paula, 2022). Parental burnout is one of the risk factors of child neglect and abuse. Increasing stress in parental roles causes burnout, which could negatively impact mental and physical health (de Paula, 2022). It is essential to release parental stress to improve the quality of life of parents and children.

### ***Long-term cognitive, psychological, and health outcomes associated with child abuse and neglect***

Child abuse and neglect are essential to recognize. It is also crucial to acknowledge the long-term cognitive, psychological, and health effects associated with child abuse. Studies show many children who suffer from abuse or neglect likely suffer from behavioral problems later in life (Strathearn et al., 2020). Many victims suffer from anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychosis, and intimate partner violence (Strathearn et al., 2020). Victims of child abuse and neglect are more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol addiction. Child abuse and neglect often lead to long-term effects into adulthood. It is essential to acknowledge the chances of a child's long-term effects to prevent or manage them properly. By recognizing the possibility, a healthcare provider can assess these cognitive, psychological, and health disorders and help treat them accordingly.

### ***Pandemic hospitalizations for child abuse: trends in U.S. emergency department visits***

Identifying child abuse and neglect is a critical task given to healthcare providers. The emergency departments are the first healthcare providers to lay eyes on children suspected of abuse. During Covid-19, emergency departments saw a rise in hospitalizations due to abuse in 2020 compared to 2019 (Swedo et al., 2020). Healthcare providers saw an increase in hospitalizations for children eighteen and younger from 2.1% in 2019 to 3.2% in 2020 (Swedo et al., 2020). This information shows that the stressor of the pandemic increases the risk for child abuse and neglect. Effects from the pandemic continue, and caregivers still need the information to reduce stress. Healthcare providers should provide ways to decrease stress like economic support, family-friendly workplaces that allow an individual to work while having their child present, and other resources like therapy to help reduce the risk for abuse and neglect.

### ***Improving measurement of child abuse and neglect***

Child abuse and neglect are prevalent worldwide, thus making reliable data in decreasing the vulnerable youth involved in these cases more essential than ever (Mathews et al., 2020). The maltreatment that children may experience shows in various forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence (Mathews et al., 2020). The purpose of this research study was to systemically review comprehensive national studies of the prevalence of child abuse and maltreatment (Mathews et al., 2020). The researchers then critically appraised the different methodologies to help inform the design of future studies (Mathews et al., 2020). While following a guided and published protocol, the study's authors searched 22 databases to identify nationwide studies of the prevalence of either all five or at least four forms of child maltreatment (Mathews et al., 2020). The research results identified 30 national prevalence studies regarding the four to five forms of child maltreatment (Mathews et

al., 2020). The study thus concluded that countries need to invest in rigorous national studies due to the limitations and unreliable information (Mathews et al., 2020).

### ***Child abuse awareness month during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic***

During the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, children have experienced an increased risk of child abuse due to heightened stress and social isolation of youth and their families (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020). The article identifies risk factors for child abuse during social isolation: loss of physical connection, increased stress on parents and caregivers, and loss of financial support (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020). The author discusses the stress and emotional disconnection causing an increase in child abuse and neglect during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020). Research has shown that all types of child abuse increase during school holidays, summer breaks, and worsening natural disasters (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020). Rosenthal and Thompson continue the article, identifying factors and advice to aid in the reduction of child abuse and neglect cases (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020).

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