



**Breaking the cycle of child abuse and
reducing crime in Connecticut:**
Coaching parents through intensive home visiting



Acknowledgements

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization. The organization has a membership of over 4,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. The members take a hard-nosed look at what works — and what doesn't work — to prevent crime and violence. They then recommend effective strategies to state and national policy-makers.

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Executive Summary

The 55 police chiefs, state's attorneys, and violence survivors who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids in Connecticut have taken a hard-nosed look at what works—and what does not work—to cut crime and violence. Investing more in effective home visiting programs will save millions of dollars, protect children from abuse and neglect, and greatly reduce the number of children who grow up to become violent criminals.

The Annual Toll: 10,174 Abused and Neglected Children **The Future Toll: 400 Additional Violent Criminals**

In Connecticut, 10,174 children were officially confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect in 2006 – enough to fill the University of Connecticut's Gampel Pavilion where the Huskies play. The true number is likely far higher, and from 2000 through 2006, 54 Connecticut children were killed by abuse or neglect.

While most victimized children who survive never become violent criminals, being abused or neglected sharply increases the risk that children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime. The best available research indicates that, of the 10,174 children who had confirmed incidents of abuse or neglect in one year, 400 will become violent criminals as adults who otherwise would have avoided such crimes if not for the abuse and neglect they endured. Year after year in Connecticut, abuse and neglect creates more violent criminals.

MOST ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN HIGH-RISK FAMILIES CAN BE PREVENTED

Home visiting is provided by trained professionals to interested at-risk young mothers starting usually before they give birth and continuing until their first child is age two or beyond. It significantly reduces abuse and neglect. For instance, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), showed it can prevent nearly half of all cases of abuse or neglect of at-risk children. And, by the time the children in NFP had reached age 15, mothers in the program had 61 percent fewer arrests than mothers left out of the program, and their children had 59 percent fewer arrests than the kids left out.

A recent randomized controlled trial of the Healthy Families home visiting program in New York (HFNY) showed that mothers in the program reported engaging in one eighth as many acts

of very serious physical abuse as the mothers not receiving services. A Parents as Teachers randomized controlled trial showed that treatment for injuries – a possible sign of abuse – dropped from 13 percent among the children not served to 3 percent for the children served.

In Connecticut, the state provides intensive home visiting for at-risk families through its Nurturing Families Network, a program of the Children’s Trust Fund. The program combines local elements along with curriculum from both the Healthy Families and Parents as Teachers approaches. The Nurturing families Network program serves approximately 1,300 families across the state. An evaluation of the program found promising results: the children served had rates of abuse or neglect that were comparable to, and in some cases lower than, the rates experienced by the children in other trials of successful home visiting programs.

In addition to the Nurturing Families Network program, which serves about a third of all eligible at-risk first-time mothers, there are also Parents as Teachers programs provided in conjunction with the Department of Education’s Family Resource Centers that serve not just at-risk parents, and home visiting through most of the eight Early Head Start programs in the state. Even with these other programs, home visiting in Connecticut could be greatly increased without running out of at-risk families to serve.

SAVING LIVES, PREVENTING CRIME, AND SAVING MONEY

Preventing child abuse and neglect also saves money. Researchers who studied the costs of abuse and neglect for the U.S. Justice Department estimated the total costs from abuse and neglect are over \$2.2 billion each year in Connecticut. A Washington State Institute for Public Policy analysis found that the NFP home visiting program reduced crime so effectively among high-risk families that NFP produced average net savings of over \$27,000 per family served.

LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS ARE UNITED

Law enforcement leaders and violence survivors are united in calling for greater investments in effective home visiting. The evidence is in. Home visiting services can prevent as much as half of abuse and neglect in high-risk families, saving the people of Connecticut hundreds of millions of dollars a year while reducing later crime. The time to act is now.

Breaking the cycle of child abuse and reducing crime in Connecticut:

Coaching parents through intensive home visiting

From shocking accounts on the evening news, most people from Connecticut are aware of the severe abuse and neglect some children suffer, even in their relatively well-off state. Few people in the state, however, realize the breathtaking scope of the problem or the severity of its consequences. In 2006, there were 10,174 confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect in Connecticut¹ – more than can fit in the University of Connecticut’s Gampel Pavilion where the Huskies play basketball.² Connecticut’s rate of confirmed cases of child abuse is slightly higher than the national average.

From 2000 through 2006 there were 54 confirmed deaths from abuse and neglect in Connecticut.³

The Hidden Toll of One Year of Abuse and Neglect

This is not the end of the tragedy. Though many abused and neglected children grow up to lead fulfilling and productive lives, children who live through abuse or neglect are far more likely than other children to go on to harm or kill someone else—or themselves. A year’s toll of abuse and neglect has consequences well into the future and well beyond the initial victims.

FINDING THE CHILDREN

In a society obsessed with statistics, data on abused and neglected children routinely miss thousands of children. Grim as the official numbers are, the truth is that the real numbers of children injured and killed by abuse and neglect each year are much higher than the official counts.

According to a 1995 federal government study, the Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, the actual number of children abused or neglected nationally each year is three times the officially reported number.⁴ This includes abused or neglected children that social workers missed when they conducted their investigations, and all the abused or neglected children who were never brought to the attention of

In Connecticut, 10,174 children were abused or neglected in 2006 – more than can fit in the University of Connecticut’s Gampel Pavillion where the Huskies play.

CONNECTICUT'S DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND SERIOUS PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL NEGLECT

Excerpts from the Connecticut Department of Children & Families (DCF) definition of child abuse and serious physical and emotional neglect include:

ABUSE is a non-accidental injury to a child which, regardless of motive, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care.

TYPES OF ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE is any physical injury inflicted other than by accidental means, any injury at variance with the history given of them, or a child's condition which is the result of maltreatment such as malnutrition, deprivation of necessities or cruel punishment.

NEGLECT is the failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide and maintain adequate food, clothing, medical care, supervision, and/or education.

SEXUAL ABUSE is any incident of sexual contact involving a child that is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE or maltreatment is the result of cruel or unconscionable acts and/or statements made, threatened to be made, or allowed to be made by the person responsible for the child's care that have a direct effect on the child.

The observable and substantial impairment of the child's psychological, cognitive, emotional and/or social well-being and functioning must be related to the behavior of the person responsible for the child's care.

Connecticut Department of Children And Families, 2007

In Connecticut, of the children who were abused or neglected in 2006, six percent suffered physical abuse, four percent suffered sexual abuse, and 91 percent suffered neglect (with some suffering from more than one form of abuse or neglect).

Child Maltreatment, 2006

From 2000 through 2006, Connecticut reported to the federal government that 54 children were killed in the state from abuse or neglect. Nationally, four out of ten children who died from abuse or neglect were killed before their first birthday.

authorities in the first place because no one knew of the abuse, or someone knew but was unwilling to make a report. Three times the official figure of 10,174 confirmed cases would equal approximately 30,000 children abused or neglected in Connecticut in 2006. It is impossible at this time to arrive at a firm number that everyone can agree accurately measures how many children are abused or neglected each year in Connecticut, but there is little doubt that it is much higher than the officially reported figure.⁵

54 CONNECTICUT CHILDREN DIED FROM ABUSE OR NEGLECT FROM 2000 THROUGH 2006

From 2000 through 2006, Connecticut reported to the federal government that 54 children were killed in the state from abuse or neglect.⁶ Nationally, four out of ten children who died from abuse or neglect were killed before their first birthday.⁷

Research shows the official number of children killed by abuse or neglect is likely an undercount. In 2006, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) recorded 1,376 children killed by abuse or neglect nationwide.⁸ However, in a Justice Department publication, the National Center on Child Fatality Review concluded that "an estimated 2,000 children in the United States die of child abuse and neglect each year."⁹ A fatality review in California concluded that the true number of deaths in that state from abuse or neglect was three times the NCANDS number at the time,¹⁰ and an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that North Carolina had undercounted its deaths from abuse or neglect by a factor of three.¹¹

Connecticut is fortunate to have a child fatality review process. It is very helpful in finding areas where more needs to be done to prevent abuse or

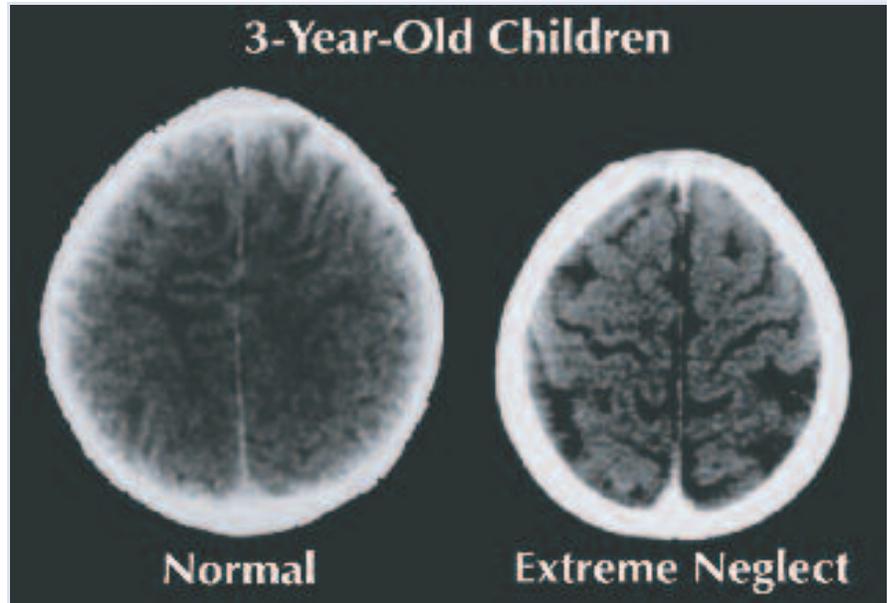
neglect based on reviews of individual child deaths. Unfortunately, the state review panel only investigates the deaths of children that had received services from a state social services agency, so it is not yet possible to determine whether the officially recorded number of 54 children killed over seven years is the full count.¹²

CREATING CHILDREN PRIMED FOR VIOLENCE

Severe abuse and neglect, particularly when it occurs during the earliest months and years of life, can permanently injure children in ways that make them much more prone to violence. According to Dr. Bruce Perry, a neurobiologist and authority on brain development and children in crisis, “The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life ... With severe emotional neglect in early childhood, the impact can be devastating.”¹³ Perry explains that severely neglected children frequently respond to mild provocation with aggression and cruelty that “is often accompanied by a detached, cold lack of empathy.”¹⁴ Research shows that neglect is as likely as physical abuse to lead to future criminal behavior when a child reaches adulthood.¹⁵

Physical abuse can cause post-traumatic stress disorders in children. Even when nothing is threatening them, abused children’s brains can become “stuck” in high alert with very high resting heart rates and high levels of stress hormones in their blood. These children are predisposed to interpret others’ actions as threatening and are quick to respond impulsively and aggressively in their own defense.¹⁶ Perry warns: “The most dangerous children are created by a malignant combination of experiences. Developmental neglect and traumatic stress during childhood create violent, remorseless children.”¹⁷

EFFECT OF NEGLECT ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



B. Perry, 2003

These images are from studies conducted by a team of researchers from the Child Trauma Academy in Houston led by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

Of growing concern is the role head injuries play in violent behavior, particularly injuries to the frontal or temporal lobes of the brain. The frontal lobes are the seat of the capacities for planning and self-regulation as well as abstract thinking and judgment, while the temporal lobes contain the limbic system that regulates aggression, impulsiveness, and the more primitive emotions such as jealousy and rage.¹⁸ A baby or toddler’s head is especially vulnerable to rough shaking or blows to the head that can cause shearing and microscopic lesions throughout the brain during this time of critical and rapid development. Young children’s head injuries are often cumulative from repeated incidents of abuse. These injuries usually go undetected, except in the most extreme cases, because they leave no external marks. The damage done may not manifest itself until much later as the brain matures.¹⁹

A number of studies on adolescents and adults link head injuries to recurring aggression and violence. Studies done on death row inmates by Dr. Dorothy Lewis and her colleagues show that a high percentage of them have a history of serious head injury.²⁰ Many researchers have

concluded that as many as 30 to 50 percent of individuals with a criminal history may have sustained injuries to their frontal or temporal lobes.²¹

Research shows that neglect is as likely as physical abuse to lead to future criminal behavior when a child reaches adulthood.

One year of child abuse and neglect produces 400 additional violent criminals in Connecticut

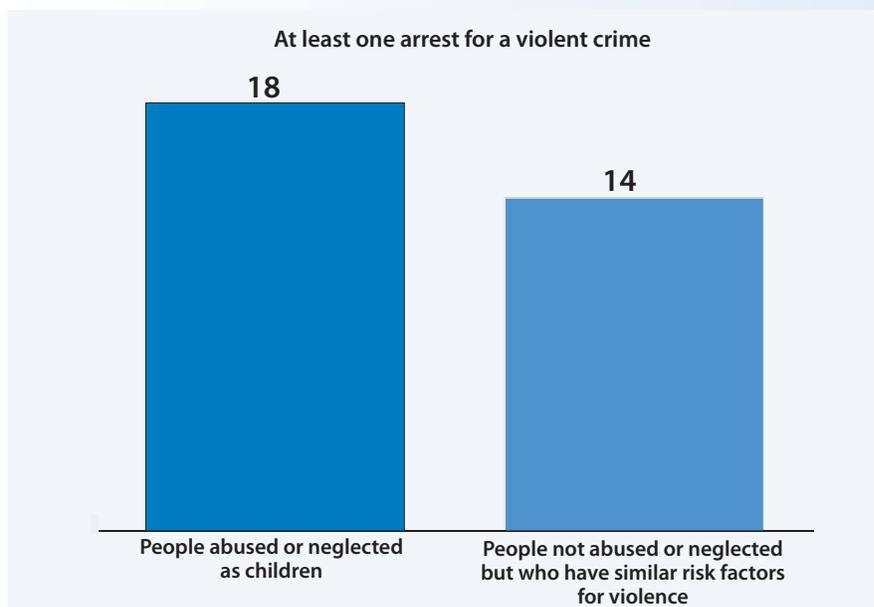
Although surveys report varying numbers, it is clear that a high percentage of criminals were abused or neglected as children. One review of the literature on prior abuse and neglect concluded that approximately half of the youths arrested for delinquency had been abused and/or neglected earlier in their lives.²² Many of these individuals, however, also had other risk factors for crime in their lives, such as poverty or growing up with high-crime peers.

In an effort to isolate the specific impact of abuse and neglect by controlling for other factors, Dr. Cathy Spatz Widom, a professor of psychology at the New Jersey Medical School, identified individuals who had been abused and neglected as children and compared them to otherwise similar individuals who had no official record of abuse or neglect. By studying the subsequent arrest records and controlling for other demographic risk factors, Widom found that being abused and neglected almost doubles the odds that a child will commit a crime as a juvenile.²³

As for violent crime, Widom found that 18 percent of the abused or neglected youngsters went on to be arrested for a violent crime either as juveniles or as adults, compared to 14 percent of similar individuals who shared the same other advantages and disadvantages as these children but who had not been abused or neglected as children—a difference of four percentage points.²⁴

Applying Widom's four percentage point figure to Connecticut's 10,174 confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in 2006 produces a figure of approximately 400 additional individuals who will be arrested for at least one violent crime beyond the number of those who would have been arrested had the abuse or neglect never occurred. In other words, the abuse or neglect will result in approxi-

ABUSE AND NEGLECT PRODUCE MORE VIOLENT CRIMINALS



Maxfield & Widom, 1996

Compared to children with similar other risk factors but with no official record of abuse or neglect, children who had been abused or neglected were 29 percent more likely to grow up to be violent criminals.

mately 400 additional violent criminals and the violent crimes those individuals will commit.

Widom cautions that her research does not indicate whether the same relationship would hold for unconfirmed cases of abuse or neglect, since those children may not have been as seriously harmed as the individuals whose abuse or neglect was confirmed. As previously discussed, it is estimated that in Connecticut there are three times as many actual cases of abuse and neglect as the number of officially confirmed cases. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 400 figure will prove to be a significant underestimate of the number of additional violent criminals in Connecticut resulting from the children who were abused and neglected in 2006; and each year more victims of child abuse and neglect – and more

future criminals – are added to the total.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMINALS?

Children who are abused and neglected are not only more likely than other children to commit crimes as adults, but they are also more likely than other criminals to be arrested at a younger age. This is a well-known risk factor that indicates these children might become both more serious and more chronic offenders, committing more crimes over their lifetimes.²⁵

For example, a study done in Sacramento County, California showed that children between the ages of nine and 12 reported to have been abused or neglected were 67 times more likely to be arrested than other children in that age group. Six percent of those who had been abused or neglected had already been arrested by age 12, compared to

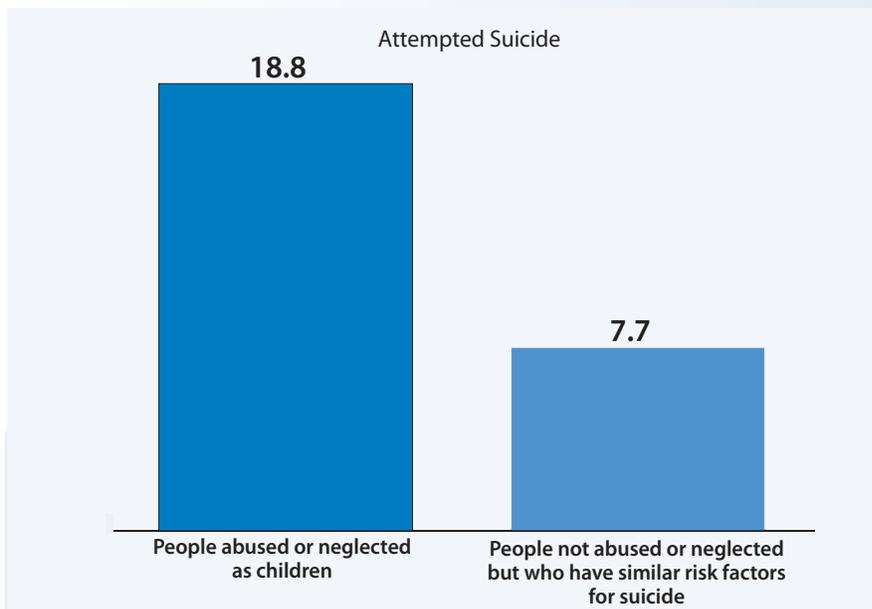
less than one-tenth of one percent of other children in that age group.²⁶

In their Rochester Youth Development Study, Carolyn Smith and Terence Thornberry tracked 1,000 seventh- and eighth-grade students from Rochester, N.Y. up to age 22. They found that the more frequent and severe the maltreatment, the more likely the child was to commit more violent acts of delinquency.²⁷

Perhaps most disturbing, the researchers who have extensively interviewed extremely violent offenders are convinced that severe abuse or neglect was a defining influence in almost all of these violent offenders' lives.²⁸ In addition to documenting the link between head injuries and extreme violence,²⁹ Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus interviewed 14 of the 37 juveniles facing death sentences in 1986 and 1987. They found that only one of those interviewed had not suffered childhood family violence and severe physical abuse.³⁰ John Douglas, one of the experts who helped the FBI develop violent criminal profiles, reached similar conclusions from his studies.³¹

Abuse and neglect was part of the history of Connecticut serial killer, Michael Ross. From 1981 to 1983, Ross raped and killed eight young women. Ross had grown up in a dysfunctional family, his mother was overcome with psychiatric problems, and she emotionally and physically abused Michael. As an eight-year-old, Ross was sexually abused by an uncle.³²

ABUSE AND NEGLECT LEAD TO MORE SUICIDE ATTEMPTS



Widom, 2000
Compared to children with similar other risk factors but with no official record of abuse or neglect, children who had been abused or neglected were more than twice as likely to attempt suicide later in life.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CAN LEAD TO LOST EMPLOYMENT, FAILED MARRIAGES AND SUICIDE

Most abused or neglected children never become involved in violent crime. While many grow up to lead productive lives, research by Widom and others shows that abuse and neglect often lead to other serious consequences for its victims. For example, individuals not abused or neglected as children were 40 percent more likely to be employed and 50 percent more likely to have stable marriages than similar individuals who were abused or neglected.³³

Victims of child abuse or neglect, as they grow older, are also two and a half times more likely than other children to attempt suicide. Widom's research indicates that 18.8 percent of abused or neglected children later attempted suicide, compared to 7.7 percent of children with similar risk factors but who had not been abused or neglected.³⁴ This means that as many as 1,100 people in Connecticut who were the victims of abuse and neglect in 2006 will ultimately attempt suicide who otherwise would not have if

not for the abuse and neglect they endured. Although the number of these abused or neglected individuals who will succeed in killing themselves cannot be reliably estimated, a large number undoubtedly will succeed.³⁵

A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Research shows that all too often negative behaviors and consequences — violent or otherwise — are passed on to the next generation, and the cycle continues. One rigorous study showed that poor mothers who had been severely physically abused as children were 13 times more likely to abuse their children than mothers who had emotionally supportive parents.³⁶

The *New York Times Magazine* chronicled one example of this perpetual cycle of abuse and neglect in the life of a 29-year-old Stamford Connecticut woman, Marie, and her five children. Marie's mother was addicted to crack-cocaine.

She eventually deserted Marie and her siblings. Marie then spent years as a teenager living in group homes in New York City.

Marie had her first son at the age of 13, and from then on a vicious cycle of violence followed suit: four children born to three different fathers, marriage to a convicted drug dealer, drug addiction, time spent in jail, and partners physically abusing Marie. Marie was accused of physically abusing her own 16-year-old son Joseph. Joseph then

became a runaway who spent time in juvenile detention.

Marie vigorously followed a drug treatment plan, took parenting classes, and regularly showed up for scheduled visits with her children who were then under Connecticut Department of Children and Families custody. Despite her continuing efforts at cleaning up and going straight, Marie, who is pregnant, will likely lose custody of all five of her children, as well as her unborn child. They will be placed in foster homes

throughout Connecticut.³⁷

Marie and her kids are not the only families to endure this cycle – there are other young, pregnant girls in Connecticut beginning to experience similar tragedies. But with greater access to home visiting, these other girls can have a better chance at breaking the cycle than Marie.

Research Shows Abuse and Neglect Can Be Prevented

Waiting to act against abuse and neglect until after it occurs will always be too late, and it may be fatal. Child protective services and available foster parents are essential services that can help protect children who have already been identified as abused or neglected. But many maltreated children never come to the attention of child protective services – or if they do, their cases may not be serious enough at the time to warrant removal from their homes. Relying only on child protective services and foster care services to protect children is not enough to save the Connecticut children who are killed as a result of abuse or neglect.

Even when children are identified as victims and they and their families receive services, healing their physical and emotional injuries is difficult. And some injuries can never be undone. For instance, early neglect can stunt brain development, and prenatal exposure to alcohol can cause mental retardation. For many children, treatment is too frequently limited in its duration and effectiveness.

As a child grows older, it becomes more difficult to undo damage and is more expensive to treat the consequences of abuse and neglect. Even more troublesome is the plight of thou-

sands of Connecticut children who receive no treatment at all because they fall through the cracks and never come to the attention of child protective services. As long as these “lost” children remain unidentified, there will be few opportunities to repair the damage done to them or to protect communities from the risk that they might become future criminals. For these “lost” children, prevention is probably their only hope.³⁸

Research shows there are rigorously tested solutions that can significantly reduce child abuse and neglect in high-risk families. Programs beginning as early as during pregnancy to help families develop parenting skills and change problem behaviors have proven effective in preventing child abuse and neglect. To protect vulnerable children—and all people in Connecticut—these programs must be made available to all families who need them before abuse or neglect takes place.

The only nationwide home visiting program that has tracked children long enough to report on their later involvement in crime is the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program. We begin by highlighting those crime prevention results in this report, although there are currently no NFP programs operating in Connecticut.

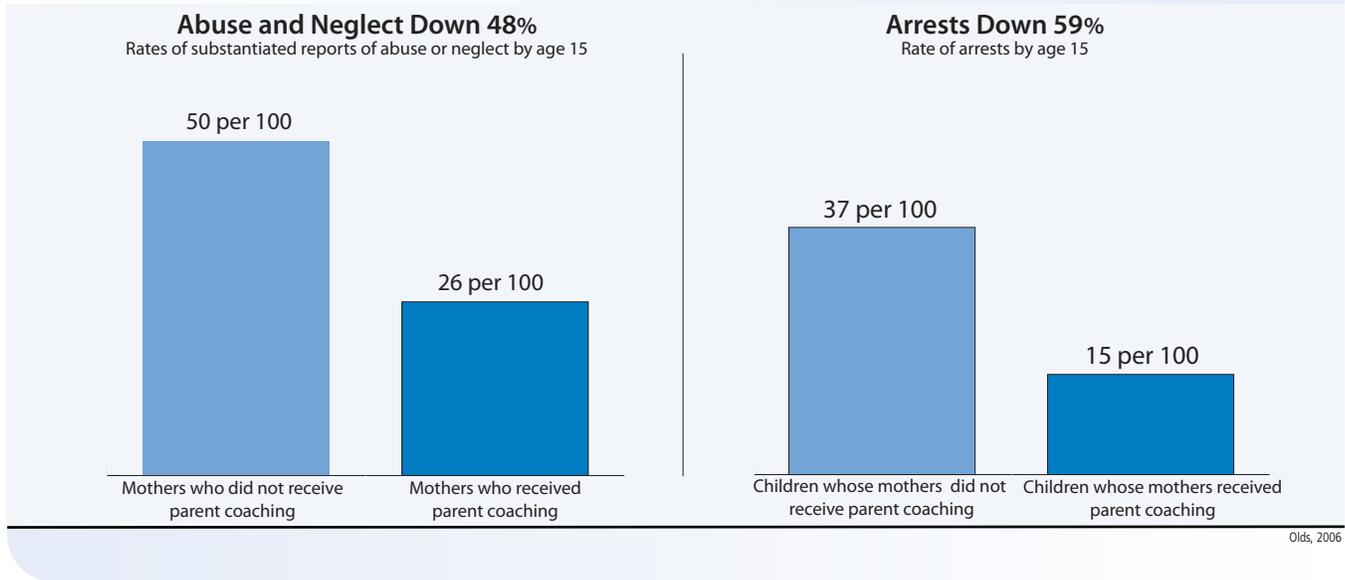
NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM SHOWS WHAT HOME VISITING SERVICES CAN ACCOMPLISH

Beginning during pregnancy, voluntary parent coaching for at-risk parents of infants and toddlers can dramatically reduce abuse and neglect. Who are those “at-risk” parents? While there are parents from all income levels and walks of life who abuse and neglect their children, some families face more challenges than others.

Nationally, almost half of the families referred to child protective services for abuse or neglect were receiving welfare at the time and more than half of all referred families had received assistance in the past.³⁹ In a study conducted in Illinois, 40 percent of the children placed into foster care came from families receiving welfare (while only 15 percent of all families in Illinois were on welfare at the time) and another 20 percent of children in foster care were from families that had recently received welfare.⁴⁰

Failure to graduate from high school is also a risk factor. Compared to parents with a high school degree, those without a degree are almost five times more likely to be officially reported for abuse or neglect.⁴¹ Multiple risk factors can have

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP CUT ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND ARRESTS IN HALF AMONG AT-RISK KIDS SERVED



cumulative effects. Single mothers without a high school diploma are 10 times more likely to be officially reported for abusing or neglecting their children than women in two-parent families with more education.⁴²

Groundbreaking research initially conducted in Elmira, N.Y. showed that parent coaching in the homes of new, at-risk, young parents can be extraordinarily effective in reducing child abuse and neglect when provided with enough quality and frequency. The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) randomly assigned half of a group of single, poor, first-time young mothers to receive visits by carefully trained nurses. The nurses provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Starting in 1978, the women in the program received an average of nine home visits during their pregnancy and 23 visits from birth to their child's second birthday. Rigorous research, originally published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows that children of mothers in the program had 48 percent fewer substantiated reports of abuse or neglect. Put another way: home visiting services can prevent nearly half of all cases of abuse or neglect of at-risk children.⁴³

In addition, by the time the children reached age 15, mothers in the program had 61 percent fewer arrests than the mothers left out of the program, and their children had 59 percent fewer arrests than the kids left out.⁴⁴

A replication study of NFP, also using a randomized controlled trial, began in 1990 in Memphis. The mothers and children served are still being followed. There is no data available yet on the children's arrest records, and the official abuse and neglect records are not adequate to directly measure whether the children were maltreated.⁴⁵ However, in the most recent follow-up study of NFP in Memphis, researchers found that the children not receiving NFP were four times more likely than the children in NFP to die by age 10 from any cause including complications from preterm deliveries, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and injuries. The one NFP death was due to chromosomal abnormality.⁴⁶

In elementary school, the children participating in NFP whose mothers had low psychological resources for coping with their child outperformed the children of similarly challenged mothers not receiving NFP. The high-risk children receiving NFP had 10 percent better GPAs on average (2.68 vs. 2.44) and

scored 26 percent better on math and reading achievement tests (44.89 vs. 35.72) than the high-risk children not receiving NFP.⁴⁷

There were many other benefits as well. For example, the children in the Elmira study were brought before local courts as juveniles in need of supervision for incorrigible behavior 90 percent less often than the children not in the program.⁴⁸ The mothers receiving parent coaching in Elmira also averaged 21 percent fewer births 15 years after delivery of their first child, and one-third fewer months on welfare than the mothers not receiving coaching.⁴⁹

Another NFP replication underway in Denver is also generating strong positive results for the children being served.⁵⁰

There are as yet no NFP sites in Connecticut, but the Nurturing Family Network of the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund provides state-funded intensive home visiting programs from 44 sites throughout the state. Their programs typically combine the best features of two well-established national home visiting programs, Healthy Families and Parents As Teachers, along with their own curriculum features.⁵¹

Neither Healthy Families nor Parents as Teachers has yet been able to follow the children they serve long enough to measure crime results as has NFP. However, Healthy Families had a randomized controlled trial (RCT) done in New York State, and the mothers in that program reported engaging in one eighth as many acts of very serious physical abuse as the mothers not receiving services.⁵² Parents as Teachers has an RCT showing that abuse or neglect dropped from 2.4 percent among the families not receiving the program to none among the families receiving Parents as Teachers when it was combined with case management services.⁵³ Another Parents as Teachers RCT showed that treatment for injuries — a possible sign of abuse — dropped from 13 percent among the children not served to 3 percent for the children served.⁵⁴

The Children Trust Fund targets at-risk families with its Nurturing Families Network home visiting programs. They report that, “Each year 10,000 children in Connecticut are born into families with at least one significant risk factor for abuse or neglect.” A little more than a third of those children, 3,500, are born to first-time mothers who would be eligible to be offered home visiting services.⁵⁵ Through its Nurturing Families Network, the Children Trust Fund is providing intensive home visiting services to approximately 1,300 families a year, or barely more than third of all the high-risk, first-time mothers in the state.⁵⁶

This is a voluntary program, so it will never serve all those eligible, but almost 97 percent of families who have agreed to be screened at the hospital for risks factors and are then offered Nurturing Families Network services accept.⁵⁷ So, parents will take advantage of the program, and if adequate funding existed, Connecticut’s home visiting programs could be greatly expanded without running out of at-risk families willing to participate.

The families being served in

Connecticut are certainly high-risk. For example, 49 percent of the mothers who showed up on a screening questionnaire as being at-risk for committing abuse or neglect were still teenagers when they gave birth, and 77 percent of those teenage mothers did not have a high school degree when their child arrived. As for the fathers: 42 percent of all fathers had an arrest history, and 10 percent were incarcerated at the time their babies were born.⁵⁸

Researchers at the University of Hartford conducted an evaluation of Nurturing Families Network intensive home visiting program. They found promising results for preventing abuse and neglect: 1.6 percent of the families receiving home visits had a substantiated case of abuse or neglect that year. That rate of abuse or neglect “is comparable to and in some cases better than [the rates for] similar populations receiving home visiting services across the country.”⁵⁹ It therefore appears that Connecticut’s program is doing its job of protecting more children from abuse or neglect, while helping those children to start life on a path leading to success.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS USING PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Parents as Teachers is also the model being used by the Department of Education’s Family Resource Centers for their home visiting services that reach a range of parents, not just those who screen positive for higher-risk of perpetrating abuse or neglect. There are 63 Family Resource Centers around the state and their home visiting programs serve approximately 1,500 families.⁶⁰ There are also eight sites for Early Head Start, at least five of which offer home visiting to coach parents as part of their early developmental programs for infants zero-to-three.⁶¹ Even with these additional programs, Connecticut is nowhere near reaching all the at-risk families that need services. As Pamela Langer, the Connecticut State Systems Leader for

Parents as Teachers explained, “We have waiting lists for many of our programs and often receive calls from parents in towns without PAT programs asking how they can get home visiting services.”⁶²

THE REAL CHALLENGE IS FUNDING

The Children’s Trust Fund spends approximately \$9 million a year on Nurturing Families Network, which includes intensive home visiting and other services for at-risk families.⁶³ Almost all of that is state funding and none of that is directly from federal funds. But, as discussed above, it is serving only about a third of all high-risk, first-time mothers. The Family Resource Center programs will spend an additional \$2 million a year on their home visiting programs.⁶⁴ Obviously, these programs and others in the state could be greatly increased before they would run out of families that need and should receive these services.

QUALITY IN-HOME PARENT COACHING SAVES MONEY

Taxpayers saved over \$5 for every \$1 invested in the Nurse-Family Partnership program



Over \$5 was saved



For every \$1 invested

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006

Saving Money While Protecting Kids and Preventing Crime

Stopping child abuse and neglect before children are hurt is not only the right thing to do, it is also the fiscally sound thing to do. In a study commissioned by the United States Justice Department, the Children's Safety Network's Economic Insurance Resource Center analyzed the direct and indirect costs of child abuse and neglect to taxpayers and all those individuals impacted by the consequences of abuse or neglect. It concluded that child abuse and neglect costs Americans \$83 billion a year,⁶⁵ and the same researchers estimated the total costs each year for Connecticut are over \$2.2 billion.⁶⁶

In the most recent accounting, Prevent Child Abuse America concluded that the true cost of abuse and neglect nationwide is more than \$100 billion.⁶⁷

The direct taxpayer costs alone of paying for child abuse and neglect in Connecticut are huge. According to the Urban Institute, in fiscal year 2004, the federal and state governments combined for a total cost to taxpayers of \$348 million.⁶⁸ The direct child protective costs do not include later indirect costs borne by taxpayers. These include educational, welfare, medical and criminal justice costs when many of the abused or neglected children fail to become productive adults.

By waiting to pay for services until the problems cannot be avoided, Connecticut taxpayers are paying huge sums to cover the costs of holding children back in school, providing special

education services, paying for welfare, and especially paying for arresting and imprisoning criminals. Not only is this an unbalanced investment strategy, it ignores the opportunity to act when the interventions are less expensive and more likely to succeed.

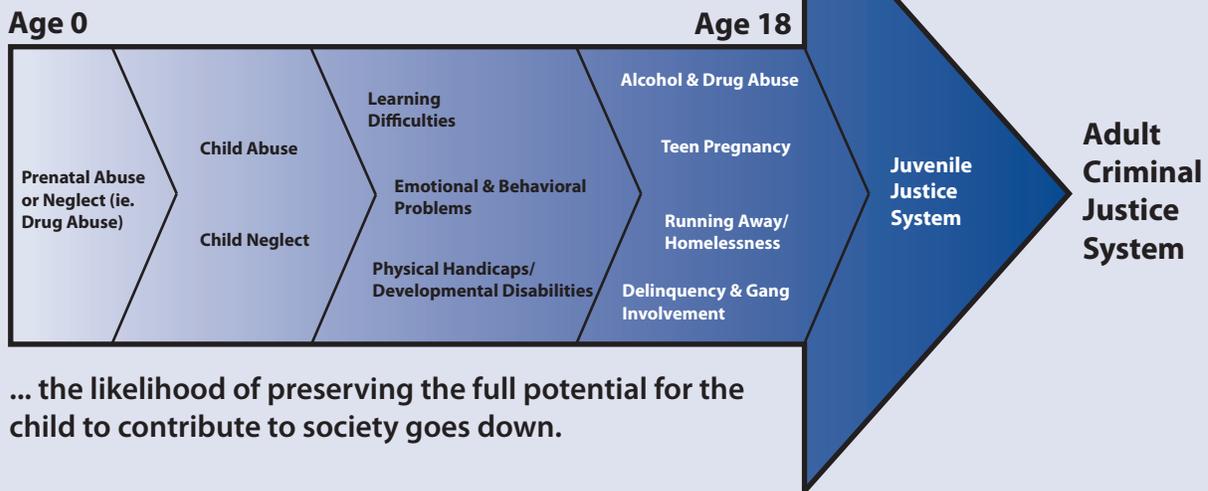
HOME VISITING PROGRAMS CAN SAVE MONEY

Analysts with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis reported that NFP produced an average of five dollars in savings for every dollar invested and produced more than \$28,000 in net savings to taxpayers for every high-risk family enrolled in the program.⁶⁹ A new study by Steve Aos of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found similar results: \$27,000 in net savings per family because of reductions in crime by the mothers and their children.⁷⁰ In fact, of the over 50 different adult and juvenile programs to reduce crime reported on by Aos in that particular study, the reduction in crimes among the at-risk teen mothers served by NFP was by far the largest crime reduction produced by any of the programs reviewed.⁷¹

With such potential savings, Connecticut and the federal government should seize the opportunity to ensure that Connecticut's home visiting programs reach their full potential and are offered to all at-risk parents of infants and toddlers in the state.

THE COST OF WAITING

As time goes by, the cost and intensity of treatment efforts to reverse the problems go up, while ...



Robin Karr-Morse, 2003

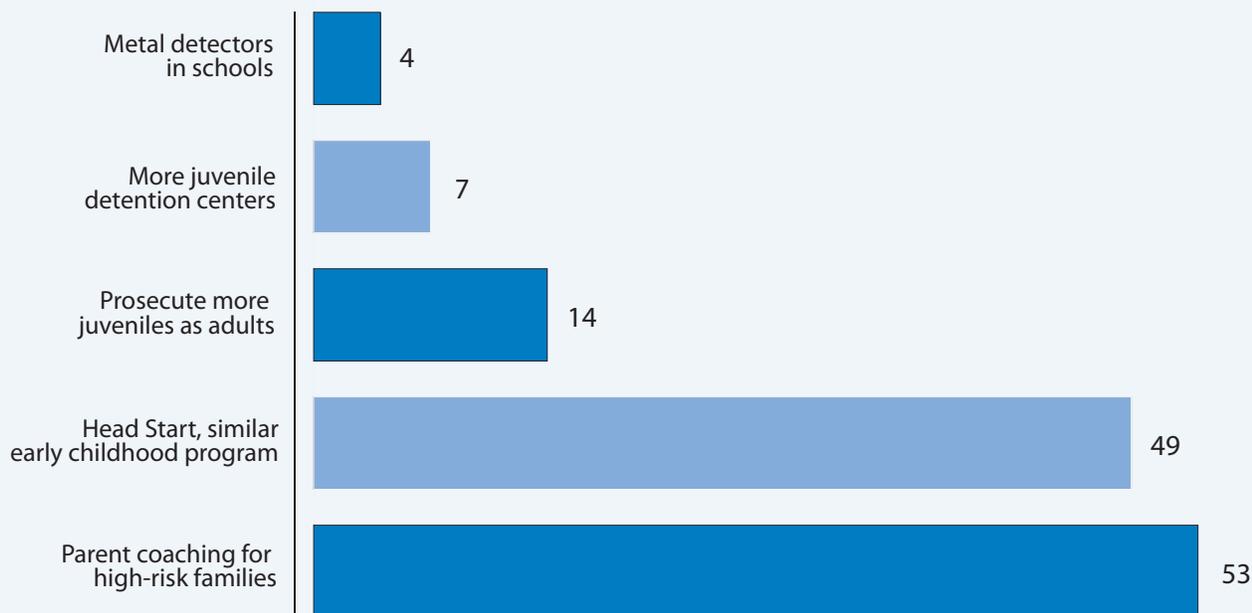
A Call to Action From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime

The 55 police chiefs, state's attorneys, and violence survivors who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids in Connecticut, and the over 4,000 members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids throughout the United States, are calling for greater investments in home visiting to help children succeed in school, protect them from abuse and neglect, save taxpayers' dollars, and make all the people of Connecticut safer.

Research shows how to prevent child abuse and neglect before children are hurt and before those children can go on to hurt others. The research shows that high-quality parent coaching services beginning prenatally can help children succeed while preventing as much as half of all cases of abuse or neglect of at-risk children. They can save children's lives now while helping to prevent 400 children a year in Connecticut from growing up to become violent criminals. The programs will prevent murders and suicides in Connecticut. All this can be accomplished while saving the people of Connecticut hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect its citizens. When more than 1,000 children nationwide are dying each year from abuse and neglect and tens of thousands more are growing up to be violent criminals as a result of abuse or neglect, federal, state and local governments clearly are not doing enough. Connecticut's home visiting efforts are a good first step. But many more families need high-quality services. For example, the Nurturing Families Network programs are reaching only about a third of eligible at-risk, first-time mothers. Government must meet the challenge of providing adequate funding. Elected leaders at the state and federal level should invest now in the best research-driven programs that can eliminate up to half of all abuse and neglect among high-risk families. With the right help, at-risk children can start life on the right track, avoid prison, and become productive adults who strengthen, rather than threaten, our communities.

POLICE CHIEFS RATE PARENT COACHING AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS AS EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION



George Mason University, 2000

Police chiefs nationwide were asked "Please rate the following strategies on a scale of one to five on their value as a crime prevention tool." This chart shows the percentage for each strategy that received a "one" rating by the police chiefs.

TECHNICAL NOTES ON ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF VIOLENT CRIMINALS, MURDERERS, AND THOSE WHO ATTEMPT SUICIDE WHO WILL EMERGE FROM THE CHILDREN ABUSED AND NEGLECTED IN 2006

APPENDIX A

The projections on how many abused or neglected children will grow up to be arrested for a violent crime, to be arrested for murder, or to attempt suicide are based on the original research of Michael Maxfield and Cathy Spatz Widom. Their article, "The cycle of violence: Revisited 6 years later," appeared in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine in April of 1996 (v.150: 390-395). Widom and Maxfield matched 908 children who had substantiated cases of abuse or neglect with a control group of 667 individuals with no substantiated cases of abuse or neglect. The individuals in the study were matched on the basis of their date of birth, race, sex, and approximate social class. Using official records, the researchers determined that the abused and neglected individuals were one quarter (4 percentage points) more likely to have had at least one arrest for violence, either as an adult or as a juvenile, than those otherwise similar individuals who had not been maltreated [18 percent - 14 percent = 4 percent]. In other words, while 14 percent of the abused and neglected individuals in this study would have been arrested for a violent crime whether or not they had been abused or neglected, an additional 4 percent of the abused and neglected individuals were arrested for a violent crime who apparently would not have been if they had not suffered abuse or neglect as children.

The four-percentage point difference can be applied to the number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect in Connecticut in 2006—10,174 (which is a conservative count of the number of children abused and neglected every year in Connecticut). Four percentage points multiplied by that number results in an estimate of 400 additional individuals who will be arrested at least once for violence at some time in their life after having been abused and neglected in 2006 [$10,174 \times .04$

=407]. Other research cited in this report, however, indicates that each year there are three times as many children who were victims of abuse or neglect that were not confirmed, or over 2,000 children abused or neglected. Widom has cautioned that her research cannot answer whether the same rate of arrests for violence applies to the higher number of unconfirmed cases of abuse and neglect. Even if only a small percentage of these children go on to become violent criminals who otherwise would not have, the 400 figure is a significant underestimation of the number of additional violent criminals arising out of the children who were abused and neglected in 2006.

In a national version of this report, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids projected that there will be at least 250 additional individuals arrested for homicide which would not take place if not for that abuse and neglect these children suffered in 2001 (see www.fightcrime.org). Given the smaller numbers for Connecticut, however, this report does not attempt to make such projections. The research is clear though: if Connecticut can significantly reduce abuse and neglect now, it will be preventing many murders in the future.

When Widom later looked at attempted suicides, she determined that 18.8 percent of children with substantiated cases of abuse or neglect went on to attempt suicide at some point in their life, whereas 7.7 percent of the children without abuse or neglect later attempted suicide. The difference is a dramatic 11.1 percentage points. Applying that 11.1 percentage point difference to the number of confirmed cases of abuse or neglect in 2006 produces 1,100 additional suicide attempts that presumably would not happen if not for the lingering suffering from the abuse and neglect suffered in 2006 [$10,174 \times .111 = 1,129$].

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