

VIOLENCE, CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Child maltreatment is a very complex and sensitive issue, and it remains a big concern in schools across the nation. While there are many terms used to describe child maltreatment, it encompasses all types of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and exploitation that can result in actual or potential harm to a child.

Children who experience maltreatment are at a higher risk for poor academic outcomes. Additionally, those who experience neglect are at greater risk of lower academic success than children who are physically abused. Maltreatment also leads to poor social skills and behavioral challenges in the classroom which can then lead to lifelong negative psychosocial and economic consequences.

School nurses play a vital role in the recognition of the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment including assessment, identification, intervention, reporting, referral, and follow-up for children in need. School nurses also have the opportunity to build supportive and trusting relationships with students which can aid in the identification of maltreatment and assist with gaining necessary help and services.



In Nebraska, everyone is a mandatory reporter. This includes physicians, medical institutions, nurses, school employees, social workers or any other person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect is required by law to make a report to the CPS Hotline and/or Law Enforcement (Nebraska Revised Statute 28-711). Reporting is based on reasonable cause, not proof. School staff are not expected to investigate, just have concern.

DEFINITIONS

Physical Abuse: intentional use of physical force against a child that has resulted in or has the potential to result in physical injury

Sexual Abuse: any type of completed or attempted sexual act, sexual contact, or exploitation of a child by adult

Psychological Abuse: intentional behavior from a caregiver that conveys to a child he/she is worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or valued only in meeting another person's needs

Neglect: the failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect child from harm or potential harm

Failure to Provide: failure by a caregiver to meet the child's basic physical, emotional, medical/dental, and/or educational needs

NEBRASKA LAW (28-707) SPECIFICALLY STATES:

A person commits child abuse if he or she knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causes or permits a minor child to be:

- a. Placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health;
- b. Cruelly confined or cruelly punished;
- c. Deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care;
- d. Placed in a situation to be sexually exploited through sex trafficking of a minor as defined in section 28-830 or by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such minor child to engage in debauchery, public indecency, or obscene or pornographic photography, films, or depictions;
- e. Placed in a situation to be sexually abused as defined in section 28-319, 28-319.01, or 28-320.01; or
- f. Placed in a situation to be a trafficking victim as defined in section 28-830.

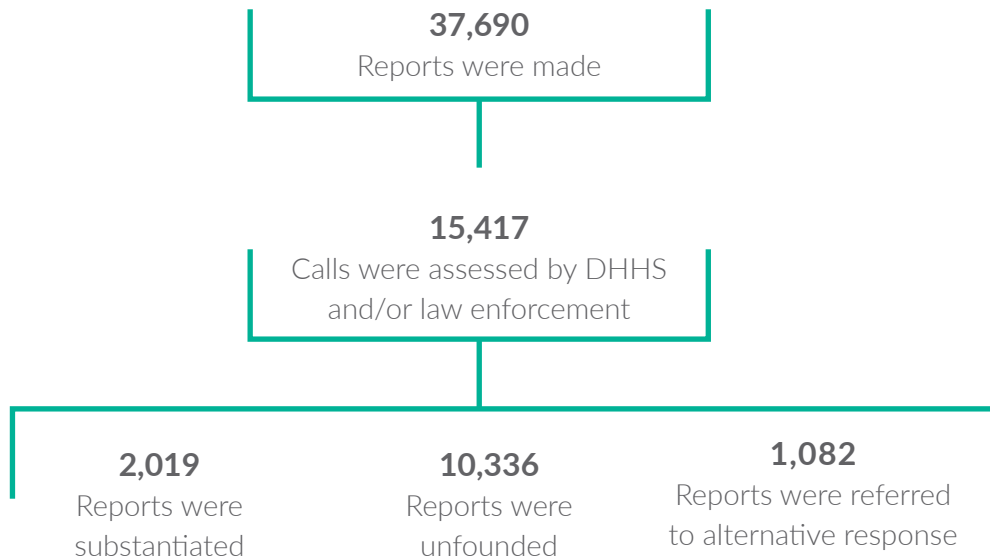
Failure to Supervise: failure by the caregiver to ensure a child's safety within and outside the home with consideration to the child's emotional and developmental needs

Sex Trafficking (another form of child maltreatment): the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act

Source: NASN, June 2018

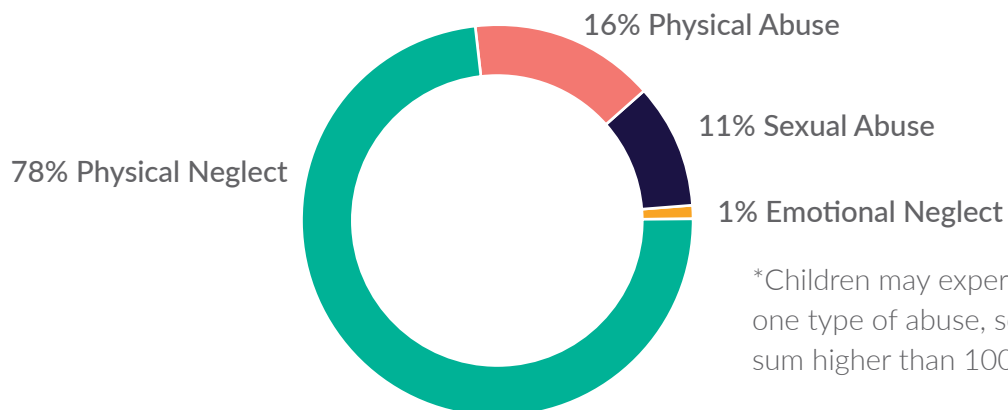
DATA

37,690 REPORTS OF ALLEGED MALTREATMENT WERE MADE TO THE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT HOTLINE IN 2019:



Source: Kids Count Nebraska, 2020

THERE WERE 3,503 CASES OF SUBSTANTIATED MALTREATMENT IN NEBRASKA IN 2019:



*Children may experience more than one type of abuse, so percentages will sum higher than 100%.

Source: Kids Count Nebraska, 2020

When children enter Nebraska child welfare system, there are multiple ways for them to receive services and ensure child safety and reduce trauma.

CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM ENTRIES IN 2019:

- 3,006 children entered without court oversight and remained in their homes
- 460 children entered with court oversight and remained in their homes
- 1,693 children entered with court oversight and were removed from their homes
- 1,278 families received Alternative Response services

Source: Kids Count Nebraska, 2020

HEALTH OFFICE CONSIDERATIONS

Remember you are a mandatory reporter!

- Know local laws, regulations, policies, and procedures for reporting child maltreatment
- Know the signs and potential indicators of child maltreatment including sexual exploitation
- Provide clear nursing documentation that includes questions asked and answers given and use a body diagram when appropriate for suspected child maltreatment and sexual exploitation
- Provide students with personal body safety education and advocate for school health education policies that include personal body safety
- Educate and support staff regarding the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment
- Identify students with frequent somatic complaints which may be indicators of maltreatment
- Provide support to victims of child maltreatment
- Facilitate the linkage of victims and families to community resources, including a medical home (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016)
- Collaborate with community organizations to raise awareness and reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect

Source: NASN, June 2018

Watch for physical or behavioral signs that a child may be abused or neglected:

- Inability to gain weight (especially in infants)
- Bedwetting in a child who has already been potty-trained
- Pain or bleeding
- Poor performance in school
- Unexplained injuries (burns, cuts, fractures, bruises, abdominal or head injuries)
- Attempts to run away from home
- Sudden, dramatic weight loss
- Withdraws from social settings
- Big appetite and stealing food
- Scared of adults, parents, or going home
- Lacks hygiene or weather-appropriate clothing
- Fear, anxiety, depression, or nightmares

Source: Children's Hospital & Medical Center, 2021

Note: The “signs” of abuse are not diagnoses, and there may be other reasons why a child has these signs.

RESOURCES

Do You Have Concerns About A Child Being Maltreated?
Call the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999
or email DHHS.ChildrenandFamilyServices@nebraska.gov

LOCAL

- 911 or local police/sheriff office
- Local health departments - dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Local-Health-Departments.aspx

STATE

- Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers: www.nebraskacacs.com
- Children's Advocacy Team - www.childrenomaha.org/departments/childrens-advocacy-team
- Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska - www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/prevent-child-abuse-nebraska
- Child Protective Services - dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Abuse.aspx
- Project Harmony Training Institute - projectharmony.com/training

NATIONAL

- American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org: www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/What-to-Know-about-Child-Abuse.aspx
- ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline - www.childhelp.org

This material was developed as a compliment to the Project ECHO School Health series on Social Determinants of Health, Session 7: Utilizing Discernment Around Violence, Child Abuse & Neglect, presented by Dr. Suzanne Haney, on April 14, 2021. Additional resources can be found here: www.childrenomaha.org/projectecho