

Family Violence Issues and Programs

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U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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*Conrad N. Hilton
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An Occasional Paper Series

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ABOUT THE CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is one of the country's larger private foundations. It was formed by the charitable bequest of Mr. Conrad N. Hilton, the Founder of the Hilton Hotels Corporation. The Foundation has several interests which are now being refined by its Board of Directors including:

- A specific field test of a drug abuse prevention education program
- The human services work of the Catholic Sisters in the U.S.
- Reducing and preventing family violence
- Strengthening elementary and secondary public education

A limited number of additional fields will be added by the Board after the Foundation has been fully funded.

ABOUT THE OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation would like to be of service to others in several ways beyond its traditional role of providing funds for meritorious philanthropic projects in its areas of interest. Under the auspices of its Board of Directors and President, Donald H. Hubbs, the Foundation's staff has sought out the opportunity to provide selectively a needed public service or to be a catalyst or entrepreneur for worthwhile projects. The Occasional Paper Series is an effort to share with the broader community some of what we have learned from these projects and/or summarize our analysis of selected topics of interest and concern to the Foundation and our colleagues.

Other papers in this series are:

The Human Services Work of the Catholic Sisters - 1984

Balancing Quality and Equity: Toward a Grantmaking Program in Pre-Collegiate Public Education - 1984

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper was prepared by Terry W. McAdam, Program Director of the Foundation. A number of persons were consulted in developing the materials (see Appendix 1). Ellen Friedman and Marge G. Balopole provided particularly helpful input.

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This document is a working paper intended to help us:

- Outline the scope of the family violence problem
- Look at alternative ways our Foundation might have some impact on the problem
- Propose a course of action which might make the most sense for our Foundation to take given our current and likely future resources
- Summarize our actions to date

Our conclusions and recommendations are based on a number of interviews and site visits with persons knowledgeable about various aspects of family violence, research in the literature, and our own staff analyses of the issues. A listing of individuals consulted to date is provided in Appendix 1. However, we take full responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations contained herein. Several bibliographies are available in our Foundation offices.

THE PROBLEM

Violence in the family affects all classes, religions, races, income groups, and geography. Its effect on the family unit and the individuals involved is both devastating and long-lived.

- Large numbers of persons are physically and emotionally hurt each year; most of them women and children
- And, many individuals who abuse others were once abused themselves.

The effects on our economy are also great.

- Violence results in high rates of absenteeism in the work force.
- The bulk of cases seen in the criminal justice system are family violence related (e.g. the majority of prisoners incarcerated for violent crimes and anti-social behavior were victims of abuse as children.)

Yet society has devoted quite limited fiscal resources to this problem; to date the focus has been on primary aid and prevention of further violence to victims.

The Problem...

Family violence is comprised of several different elements:

- Physical abuse against children
- Sexual abuse of children
- Physical abuse against spouses (nearly all wives) and women⁽¹⁾
- Sibling abuse
- Sexual assault against spouses (nearly all wives) and women
- Physical abuse against elders, most of whom are women

Emotional and psychological abuse, present in all these abuse categories, often inflicts the most long-lasting harm though it is the most difficult to diagnose and measure.

(1) Many observers believe that children who observe violence done to their mothers are indirectly but seriously victimized themselves and that male children with such experiences often grow up to be abusers themselves (cite research?)

Reliable statistics on the different aspects of family violence are difficult to secure for several reasons:

- Social stigma associated with many aspects of family violence inhibits reporting -- and there is considerable reluctance to report acquaintances, friends, and family members
- The element of secrecy that is critical in perpetuating violence in the family results in high rates of denial if the abuse is discovered
- Many service organizations are small and isolated with no connection to research organizations
- Existing research is based on small samples that are not randomly selected resulting in many reports and studies being heavily anecdotal
- There is limited uniformity in the country on reporting criteria

But existing evidence suggests that violence within the family is serious and widespread.

For example, a number of observers believe that wife battering is at the core of many other social problems such as alcoholism and other substance abuse within the family.

And, those who are abused are at greater risk of becoming abusers themselves.

The Problem...

Looking at physical abuse alone:

- According to William French Smith, U.S. Attorney General, battering is the single major cause of injury to women, exceeding rapes, muggings, and even auto accidents (1983)
- One national incidence study estimated that 1.3 million children are physically abused each year
- In 1982 the FBI estimated that 30% of female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends
- A 1981 Harris survey reports 27% of respondents knew someone who is or has been a victim of wife abuse
- One 1978 study projects that 1 out of 6 family units (roughly 7.5 million couples) experience at least one violent episode per year (ranging from slapping to severe physical assault) (1)

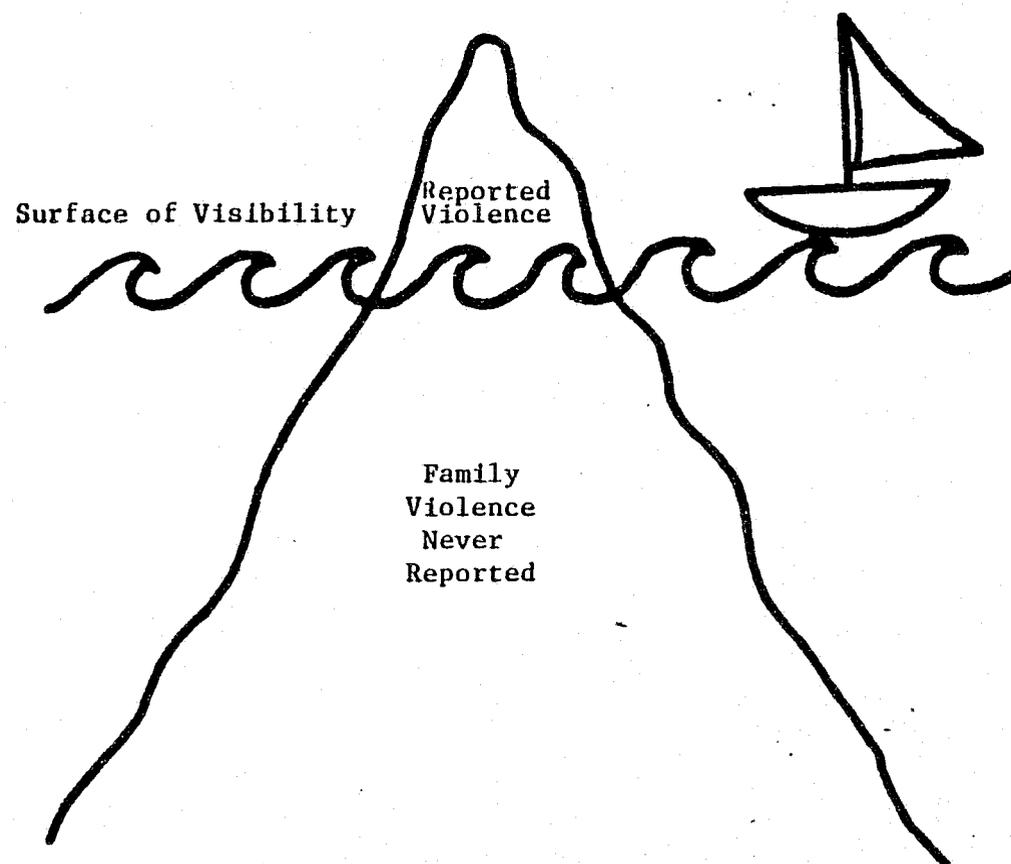
In sum, despite controversy over definitions and research practices, nearly all observers believe family violence in its various forms is a large and serious set of social problems -- pervasive yet still hidden in many ways from view.

(1) Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration-sponsored 1977 study of a national sample of 2,143 people.

The Problem...

Much family violence is hidden "below surface" making the problem difficult, but more important, to work on.

- One study on child sexual assault reported that of the women who had been abused by a family member, only 4% ever told anyone
- A 1979 study reported that battered women called the police in only 10% of the cases.

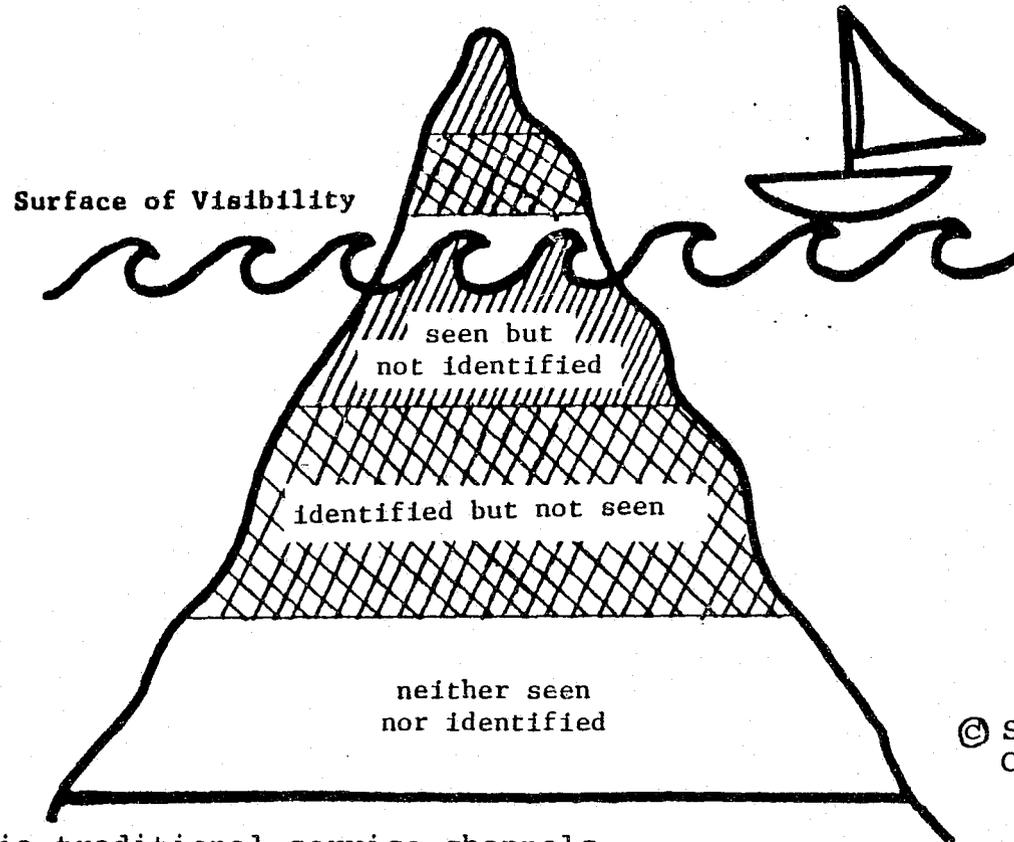
Schema of Family Violence in the U.S.

The Problem...

Doctors and social workers can respond to only part of the problem since many victims do not seek help through traditional service channels.

Therefore, a broad network of other service institutions must be developed that are able to meet the needs of the victims not seen in established social service organizations.

Schema of Responses to Family Violence in the U.S.



-  Treatable via traditional service channels
-  Addressed by other social mechanisms (e.g. education, hotlines, legal clinics, religious programs, etc.)
-  Addressed by no one

The Problem...

Many segments of our society have the potential to break through the secrecy barriers and identify victims of family violence. They include:

- Doctors and dentists
- Therapists and other mental health professionals
- Hospitals, clinics, emergency rooms, and social service departments
- Shelters
- Police, courts, and other parts of the legal system
- Social service agencies
- Schools via teachers, counselors, nurses, bus drivers, and lunchroom volunteers
- Religious institutions and clergy
- Retail store personnel
- Neighbors
- Co-workers and supervisors
- Hotlines (child abuse, rape, and battered women hotlines)
- Lawyers
- Friends and relatives

Thus, many different systems, through multiple entry points, could address family violence -- but much work is needed to strengthen the capacity of helping mechanisms to identify correctly and then treat efficaciously these problems.

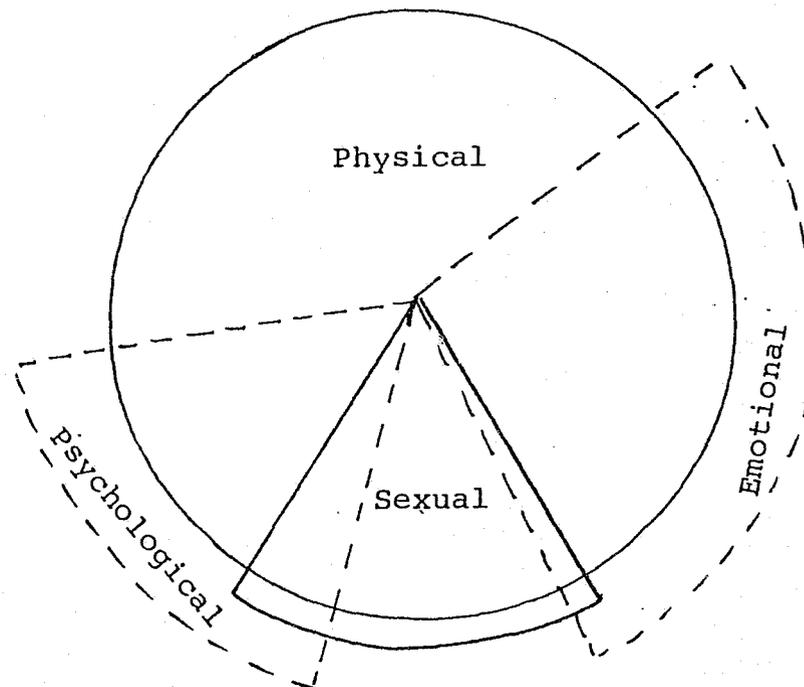
The Problem...

Given our Foundation's historical focus on and commitment to children, we would like to focus our initial efforts on two aspects of the problem most directly and seriously affecting children:

- Physical abuse in the family
- Sexual abuse of younger children

These two crucial aspects of the larger problem of family violence are closely interrelated.

Two Key Aspects of Family Violence*



* No one knows the proportions between physical, sexual, physical/sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse though a number of experts such as Kee MacFarlane believe that physical/sexual abuse suffers most from underreporting.

The Problem...

Overall, our approach will be to try to address the child victims of our society's stresses and shortcomings within the context of their families or living unit.

Until we know more, we will use an "ecological" approach, which assumes that the predominant factors which cause abuse vary considerably from family to family -- making multi-faceted responses appropriate to the problem as we understand it.

Any category of grantmaking tackling a complex social problem must focus limited resources in order to have any impact. Thus, it will be necessary to make many painful choices among categories of need.

The next few pages discuss the two selected aspects of family violence in a little more detail and outline some of the more promising options we have identified for possible Conrad N. Hilton Foundation action.

PHYSICAL ABUSE IN THE FAMILY

The major approaches to diagnosing and treating physical abuse in the family seem to be in a variety of settings:

- A network of 600-750 battered women's shelters unevenly distributed around the country
- A number of hospital-based Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) teams plus a limited number of special diagnostic, treatment, and professional training programs
- A growing number of Community Mental Health Centers which are adding family violence counseling programs
- Emergency children's shelters/crisis centers for very short-term stays (1-3 days), operated primarily by government agencies
- Runaway shelters and "crash pads"
- The police and the judicial system which play roles from passive to aggressive intervention
- The foster care system as one means of protecting children from the immediate threat of physical violence
- Child Protective Services, consisting of hotlines and limited crisis intervention, operated by government agencies with some nonprofit organizations contracted
- Self-help organizations like Parents Anonymous where parents provide ongoing support to each other to stop violent behavior
- Other children's service organizations which provide services such as day care, respite care, children's advocacy, program development and research, and information and referral
- Schools where case finding and intervention can take place

Physical Abuse in the Family...

- Parenting and anger management skills programs
- Efforts to sensitize and train religious persons to handle revelations of abuse situations better (e.g. Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, Seattle, Washington)
- Lay advocate efforts, many needing better management and supervision, offer considerable potential for low-cost support services to children, parents, perpetrators, and others

Many of these programs, while addressing the same issues, often work in isolation, resulting in some duplication of services and, often, superficial interventions.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- The Shelters

Providing shelter, albeit temporary, to protect children (and often mothers) from harm is one critical component of a strategy to reduce family violence...and seems to go to the heart of Mr. Hilton's wishes..."Be ever watchful for the opportunity to shelter little children..."

Several particularly promising avenues to support services for family violence victims are:

- Strengthening the U.S. network of shelters through the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - Help upgrade management, administrative, and program practices
 - Strengthen or establish regional networks
 - Expand the base and sources of funding available to shelters
 - Facilitate the development of the "next generation" of programs such as second stage housing, special employment training, better services to third world communities
- Assist in the continued development of shelter-based children's programs
 - Encourage networking between shelters and other children's support agencies and service providers*
 - Foster local links between shelters and runaway shelters in order to improve services to families with teenage children
 - Add funds to existing shelters to develop specialized services for the children

* Although most shelters were founded to protect battered women, most children that come in with them (two for every adult) are themselves abused or severely traumatized by the violence they have witnessed. Many reenact that violence in the shelters and are in great need of specialized remedial programs in shelters and after they leave.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- The Shelters...

- Support the testing of lower cost drop-in, non-shelter, family advocacy centers as a component of a shelter program. Shelters can house only 2% of the women who call hotlines for help; many other families can be helped through drop-in centers.

- Helping local communities start shelters in localities in particular need such as rural communities, some minority communities, and selected states, primarily in the Midwest and South.
 - It is difficult to forecast the number of shelters still "needed and feasible" nationally with much accuracy, but projections range from 200 to 400.

 - Year 1 start-up costs for a modest-sized shelter run from \$50,000 to \$150,000 depending on the geography and local situation (i.e. free rent or building, number of volunteers, etc.). Such a modest-sized shelter could be expected to serve 5-10 families a month or 300 people a year, 200 of whom would be children.

 - One approach for our Foundation could be to provide start-up challenge grants in the \$25-40,000 range with second year funding contingent on the local shelter meeting selected pre-agreed upon objectives. Our "quick and dirty" analysis of six particularly high-need states suggests that there are 22 high-potential shelters, several potential safe home networks, 9 shelters which could be salvaged from closing, and 6 vans clearly needed to expand territory in these states alone.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Hospital-Based Programs

Hospital emergency rooms see a high number of battered women and physically abused children. Many victims go undetected because medical personnel are untrained in recognizing the signs of physical abuse.

Several of the few hospital-based treatment programs we have heard about to date were defunded due to cutbacks. We cannot replace government cuts. But it has been argued that hospitals are a good setting for:

- Training health professionals about recognizing, diagnosing, and treating physical abuse
- Gathering data and providing early identification of high-risk families
- Carefully evaluating causes and consequences across social class, income, age, ethnicity, and other variables
- Teaching parenting skills in a non-threatening environment (or at least providing access to nearly all parents) (1)
- Acting as an information and referral source to connect people with other social services

(1) There is a counter argument to this type of training that says that parents need skill acquisition more than knowledge, and that skill acquisition takes more time than parents have for close contact with the hospital. The hospital is, however, the argument goes, an excellent location for imparting information (à la Gift Pax).

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Hospital-Based Programs...

Based on the work of the late Dr. Kempe in Denver, there is some indication that families at high risk of physically abusing their newly born children can be identified...and that a constructive intervention can be carried out.

We need to understand the implications of this research better and answer several questions such as:

- How promising are the results when examined carefully?
- Is the average stay of mother and baby at birth long enough for adequate (valid) observation? Could the program be executed in a home-based mode?
- Would the average "high-risk" family accept an intervention?
- How expensive and practical would an expansion of this program approach be?
- Where would broad-scale expansion financing come from?
- How much further testing is needed and at what scale?
- Could lower cost/equally or nearly equally effective interventions be carried out?

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Crisis Centers

Many service providers recognize the need to develop short-term respite care centers that provide a relief from the ongoing pressure of the home. These crisis centers not only are useful as a place to begin intervention work with abusive families, they often provide a prevention service by separating the parent and child.

Crisis centers can either be residential programs for:

- families, in which case one or both parents live in the center from 24 hours to 3 days, working with house parents to develop violence-free parenting skills; follow-up support is provided on a longer term basis; or
- children only, in which case the child is given counseling and support. Often children are placed in crisis centers prior to foster placements or while awaiting court hearings. Counselors often act as the child's advocate in a court situation. Parents can also voluntarily place children in crisis centers if they are afraid they may abuse them.
- parent/child support, crisis day care ranging from a few to 12 hours, where parents can either get respite by dropping off a child during a crisis or an emergency, or come in with the child for help with developing parental or coping skills.

The major benefit from both family and children's crisis centers is that the child and parent are able to see that they do not have an isolated problem. Often, connecting with other parents and children from violent families is an important first step toward constructive change. Currently, there are very few centers of this sort across the country.

Another alternative to crisis centers is to encourage more work-place-based child care reducing the need for as many crisis centers. There are barriers impeding more work-place-based child care which need to be examined.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC)

CMHC's provide crisis intervention, short-term and long-term family and individual counseling services. Recently, a small number of CMHC's have begun to provide specialized family violence or child abuse counseling components.

- Individuals and families can be referred by doctors, police, or schools
- Some CMHC's also provide drop-in and hotline services so individuals can seek help without having to be identified by the larger service systems

CMHC's are connected to other social service agencies and can provide a wide variety of referral services.

- Some programs provide child care and respite care services
- Many programs provide "prevention" services by working with high-risk populations

Waiting lists for these programs are common, some have waits as long as two months before a family can be seen by a therapist.

Note that available, specialized services for family violence with therapists trained in this area are still very rare. Some observers are concerned that a number of the CMHC's are not well equipped or trained to deal with violent persons or their victims.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Criminal Justice System

Above and beyond the emotional and physical abuse suffered by child victims, it is important to note that child abuse is a crime punishable in all fifty states.

- All service providers are mandated by Federally required State reporting laws to report any suspected abuse to local law enforcement officials
- However, many service providers are hesitant to report abuse because they fear that the child will encounter more abuse and victimization by the system once charges have been filed against the abuser.
- This and other disincentives to report abuse, minimize the scope of the problem and retard a decisive, significant societal response

Many local police departments are creating special abuse investigative units:

- Officers come to the home in plain clothes
- Officers are trained in the dynamics of child abuse in order to increase their sensitivity to the child and the family
- Child abuse units often maintain close connections to crisis centers, battered women's shelters, and counseling programs
- However, these units have small staffs and are often the first services negatively affected by budget cuts

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Criminal Justice System...

There are several legal issues requiring more exploration:

- Not all program records are confidential, opening victims to being located through legal proceedings by abusers
- Counselor-client relationships and records are not now considered privileged
- There is controversy over mandatory arrest for abusers; some feeling it is a useful deterrent and others feeling it inhibits many from seeking help and protection

A small but growing number of district attorneys are developing special family violence units which act as advocates for the child as they go through the court system.

- Guardian ad litem programs assign one advocate to follow a child through all phases of the judicial system
- It is believed that pre-trial orientation for child victims reduces re-traumatization
- Family Violence programs provide counseling to families as well as intensive training for judges and lawyers about family violence issues
- Vertical prosecution units consist of district attorneys who specialize in cases involving child victims and child witnesses to violence. One prosecutor is assigned to stay with each case throughout the criminal justice process.

Mediation is another approach being explored, though there is considerable concern that for mediation to work well and equitably the two parties must be roughly equal in power (a situation which cannot exist in a violent relationship).

A considerable amount of additional work is needed in this area in terms of, for example: increased sensitivity to advocacy for victims, training for various actors in the criminal justice system, increasing uniformity of responses at local, state, and national levels, and more/better services for child sexual abuse victims and non-offending parents.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Foster Care

Foster care is intended to provide temporary care for children whom have been removed from their homes with the stated goal of placing the child in a permanent setting as soon as possible.

The foster care system(s) have a number of problems:

- Most children stay in foster care far too long
- There have been a number of instances of further child victimization in foster care
- The economic incentives of the system are contrary to children's best interest
- Systems to hold foster care agencies more accountable for performance have not yet been widely implemented, though several states are making progress

Yet, the foster care system also helps many children get away from dangerous or damaging environments.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- The Broader Context

While the physical abuse of children is a serious problem, it is a small part of the broader area of child abuse and neglect.⁽¹⁾

Considerable ferment has been under way for a number of years in the area of child abuse and neglect.

- There is much discussion among service providers about the definition of child abuse
 - Are children that grow up in homes where they witness violence between their parents abused?
 - Many children's service workers feel that this has as devastating an effect on children as if they had been physically abused themselves
- Further work is needed to define and build a consensus on our society's norms for acceptable behavior, especially violent behavior. For example:
 - Is it abusive or violent to deny a child food temporarily?
 - Is it abusive or violent to fail to stimulate a newborn child so it fails to thrive and develop?
 - Aren't there cultural differences in the extent of touching or corporal punishment?
 - Are the most harmful abuses always physical?
 - To what extent does television violence increase our tolerance of violence in general? (See the Surgeon General's report)

(1) Statistics and the definitions upon which they are based are not yet uniform at all, making assessment of the problem's scale quite difficult.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- The Broader Context...

- Is it possible that some human services may be intruding too easily or too far into the family? For example, to what extent should society "educate" or otherwise intervene in the parents' role in the parenting process? The key difference is that:
 - Anger management is skills training and quite appropriate
 - Parenting education constitutes a transmission of values and may therefore be less appropriate (so the argument goes)

- The process of reporting needs improvement to address:
 - Issues of appropriate versus inappropriate reporting
 - Expunging names of inappropriately reported individuals from data bases
 - Issues of confidentiality

- There are some important opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of the organizations which try to help the victims and perpetrators of family violence
 - Preventing any further violence within the helping organizations
 - Strengthening administrative practices
 - Improving programmatic operations

- The cost of intervention and care suggests that programs using, in part, well-trained volunteers (especially senior volunteers) may merit further exploration

Physical Abuse in the Family -- The Broader Context...

- Very little work is being done just now on violence between siblings and between unrelated children. (1) We need to explore this topic further.
- A nationwide Child Abuse and Neglect reporting system has been installed. It is said that large-scale overreporting takes place, wasting time and resources. (2)
- The federal government and several major foundations have already spent heavily on physical abuse -- we are beginning to synthesize that experience in an attempt to understand what avenues, if any, merit further exploration, and what lessons can be learned.

(1) One program cited is the Community Board's effort to train elementary school children as mediators so children will learn non-violent means of settling disputes at an early age.

(2) One New York study indicated that only 9% of child abuse and neglect reports were valid after full investigation. Note, however, that those 9% were altogether real and dangerous. We do not know yet if massive reporting is leading to a large number of "false" cases or to dashed hopes on the part of victims that society is going to do something. Further study is needed.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Prevention

At this point, the area of prevention seems particularly attractive. Prevention holds much promise conceptually. As research begins to uncover the underlying causes of abuse and identify high-risk populations, prevention programs can discourage violent behavior.

Moreover, if we are dealing with a massive, and heretofore unknown phenomenon, prevention becomes increasingly critical.

Prevention model programs, which are carefully documented and evaluated, need funding. New approaches to the management of prevention services are needed. So are efforts to expand previous experiments which have been well-documented.

- Most prevention programs that work with young children attempt to encourage non-violent problem solving skills and increased self-confidence
- Some direct services are preventive (e.g. shelters) by providing a safe, violence-free living alternative.
- Some of the most promising experiments include:
 - General public education programs to shift public attitudes so that violence is not a tolerated or acceptable style of behavior (Sweden has led the way in this regard)
 - We must look at corporal punishment in schools
 - We must explore how we as individuals and society resolve disputes
 - Early intervention via effective parent education for high-risk cohorts (e.g. teen parents). Note: We need to be wary of the labelling aspect of identifying people as high risk.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- Prevention...

- We need to explore collaborative efforts with corporations marketing to the new parents' market (i.e. Procter and Gamble's use of Gift Pax) as vehicles for parent education
- Could video and newer communication/teaching technologies hold promise?
- Elementary school programs on sexual abuse avoidance which empower children by providing them with skills and information
- Junior high and high school-based programs teaching teens about non-violent problem solving skills plus teaching them parenting skills as well as providing some information about the stresses and responsibilities of parenthood. Teen parents are among the most vulnerable to slipping into violent and destructive behavior patterns.

Prevention programs can also include social service components to handle crisis intervention work and better reporting when appropriate.

And, all programs working with children must contain some mechanism for parent involvement and vice versa...Most programs in the past have focused on parents with far fewer services for children.

Physical Abuse in the Family -- A Course of Action

In sum, we see a number of promising grantmaking opportunities which meet critical needs.

Several unifying principles seem appropriate to focus and guide our grantmaking.

Specifically, we plan to emphasize:

- Prevention over treatment (though not exclusively because in a violent society treatment remains an important and necessary strategy)
- More uniform and higher quality interventions when necessary. We hope to explore further the tension between further disruption of the family unit and interventions which protect children and women from further abuse and danger
- Experiments which promise considerable 'leverage', given our limited resources
- Efficient and effective use of all resources applied to this area
- Efforts to inform and strengthen public policy
- Programs which address particularly large service gaps (e.g. rural shelters)
- Functions which integrate and coordinate services
- Programs which pay attention to the needs of minority and other underserved communities
- Efforts which facilitate communities developing coordinated, community-wide, more comprehensive approaches to the problems of family violence

In this way we hope to:

- Communicate clearly with prospective grantees
- Have significant impact with our limited resources
- Know whether we are succeeding by seeing measurable results from grants

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

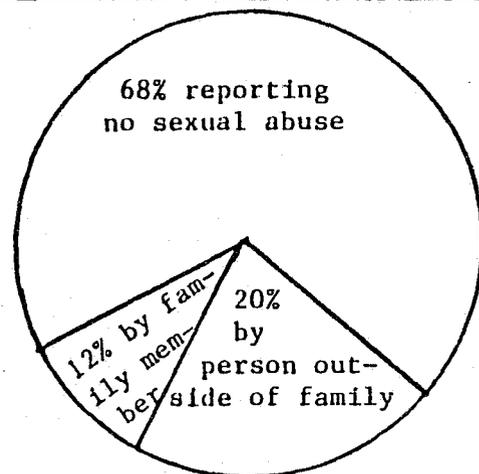
Children have been sexually abused throughout history, but in our culture, the issue has only recently been acknowledged and discussed very openly.

Solid data on the scale of the problem is limited.

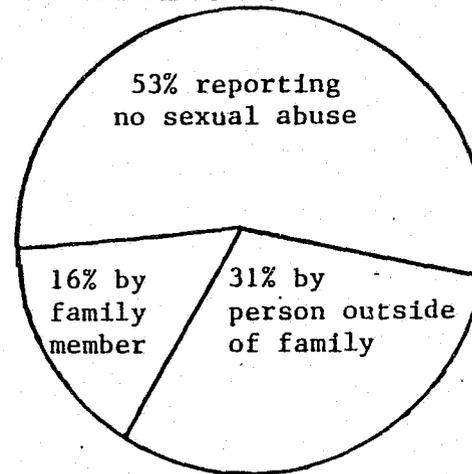
- Study projections range from 50-336 thousand sexually abused children in the U.S. each year, and acknowledge there is substantial underreporting. (1)
- A 1978 San Francisco study indicated shocking levels of sexual abuse (See diagram below).
- Note that an insidious and important component of sexual abuse is secrecy; children are often afraid and threatened if they tell anyone.

Incidence of Sexual Abuse of Young Women Perpetrated by Family and Outside Family Persons (2),

Females
Under
14 Years



Females
Under
18 Years



(1) Kempe, C.H., "Sexual abuse, another hidden problem": 1977 C. Anderson Aldrich Lecture, Pediatrics 62(3): pp. 382-89, September 1978.

(2) Russell, Diana F.H., Ph.D., "The Incidence and Prevalence of Intrafamilial and Extrafamilial Sexual Abuse of Female Children," Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol. 7, pp. 133-146, 1983.

Note: A strict definition of actual contact was used. While incidence levels of abuse of boys are somewhat lower (roughly 1 in 11 boys with a mean age of less than 8 years), they are substantial and indicate serious damage to the victims.

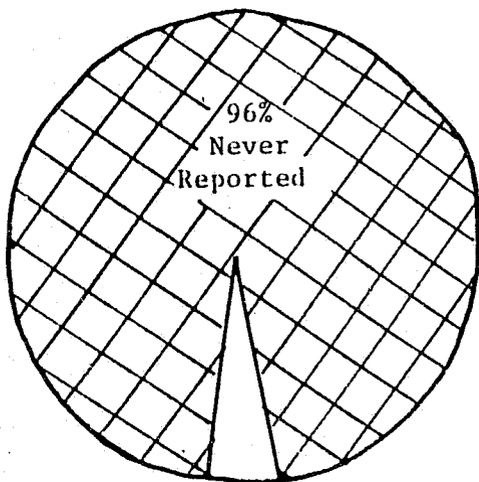
Sexual Abuse of Children...

This is a serious problem, one that is devastating to the child and often the entire family unit.

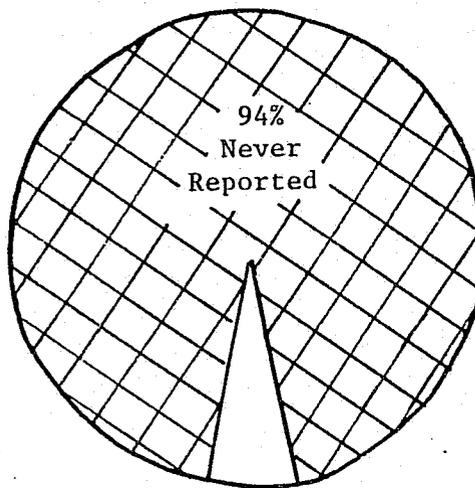
And, so often, it is kept secret, doing further damage.

% of Sexually Abused Females Not Reporting (1)

Females
Under
14 Years



Females
Under
18 Years



(1) Russell, Diana F.H., loc. cit.

Sexual Abuse of Children...

Several factors make sexual abuse of children, particularly young children, a potential top priority for us at this time.

- The exploitation of the weak by the strong is more apparent than in most other forms of child maltreatment
- The physical and emotional effects of sexual abuse are not always immediately evident, allowing them to be more easily minimized or overlooked, yet they often result in a "psychological and emotional time-bomb"(1)
- It is viewed by a number of observers as the "last remaining component of the maltreatment syndrome in children to be faced head on"(2)
- Growing publicity and media attention may be helping create an atmosphere conducive to constructive action now
- Limited available trend data suggest that reported cases are growing in number. In the broader category of child abuse of all kinds, the total number of cases reported has increased 123% from 1976 to 1982.(3)
- Sexual abuse is most harmful when it is not detected early and/or when interventions are not handled sensitively. According to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center psychiatrist Dr. Summit "When the secret is maintained and there is no chance for repair, with an inner sense of counterfeit -- 'If people knew how I feel inside they'd hate me.'--The secret tends to be your prison."(4)
- Runaways often have been sexually abused and may end up in abusive situations and/or as prostitutes in large urban centers
- In a number of cases, teenagers or preteens are the perpetrators of the assaults as well as the victims.

- (1) However, in 35% of the cases of sexual abuse of boys in a recent study, physical damage took place. Showers, Jacy "The Sexual Victimization of Boys: A Three Year Survey," Health Values, 7(4): pp. 15-18
- (2) Sgroi, S.M., "Sexual molestation of children: the last frontier in child abuse," Children Today 4(3): pp. 18-21, May-June 1975, quoted in National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse: Incest, Assault and Sexual Exploitation, p. 1 rev. 1981.
- (3) National reporting of child abuse cited in Bycer, Alene and Trainer, Cynthia, "Trends in Officially Reported Neglect and Abuse in the United States," Children's Division, American Humane Association, Denver, Colorado, February 1984.
- (4) Los Angeles Times. April 2, 1984.

Sexual Abuse of Children...

While all of the programs addressing physical abuse of children also serve victims of sexual abuse, many clinicians feel that sexual abuse of children is quite different from physical abuse.

Factors Believed to be True by Type of Abuse(1)

<u>Physical Abuse (Battering)</u>	<u>Sexual Abuse</u>
Physical abuse correlates to some degree with:	Sexual Abuse is:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lower economic circumstances ● Family economic crisis ● Other external stresses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No more prevalent among poor than rich ● No more prevalent among any ethnic groupings ● Not necessarily related to external stress

Some preliminary research⁽²⁾ indicates that sexual abusers of children seldom use violence. Instead, perpetrators:

1. Exploit children's natural love, affection, and their drive for emotional bonding
2. Manipulate children's respect for and fear of adult authority (society provides children with many cultural messages that children should do what adults say).

As a result, one particularly promising prevention approach is to teach children the skills needed to resist victimization. Others are discussed on the following page.

(1) Based on reported cases which both understate the level of abuse and may skew results if reported cases are different in character than unreported cases.

(2) Conducted by Committee for Children, P.O. Box 15190, Seattle, Washington 98102

Sexual Abuse of Children...

Some other promising programmatic approaches include:

- Safety education which is built around family rules for appropriate forms of touching (i.e. the Seattle-based Committee for Children's "Talking About Touching" curriculum).
 - School-based
 - Parent involvement
- Use of anatomically correct dolls, video tape and child-sensitive interviewing to diagnose victims and prosecute offenders, especially in cases involving very young victims (e.g. Kee MacFarlane and Dr. Astrid Heger, Children's Institute International, Los Angeles, California).
- Training professionals in frequent contact with children to recognize the symptoms of sexual abuse more readily -- and how to help child victims more sensitively and effectively.
- Experiments to strengthen current treatment resources for special high-incidence populations (e.g. runaways, child prostitutes).
- Reforming the criminal justice system's response to child sexual abuse cases; balancing victims' rights with a sensitivity to those of the accused.
 - Washington State permitting young molested children to testify without an audience
 - Experiments using video tape to reduce need for multiple provision of testimony
 - Training of police and prosecutorial staffs

Sexual Abuse of Children...

Prevention education is a particular challenge.

It seeks to raise the levels of children's

- Assertiveness
- Problem solving skills and decision making skills
- Reporting and effective use of support systems (1)

Experts (2) are learning that imparting knowledge is not nearly enough to ensure changed behavior or to ensure prevention in child sexual abuse. (Our study by the Rand Corporation in substance abuse prevention reached similar conclusions).

Techniques to get at other-than-cognitive learning include: role play, discussion, and projective methods ("What if you were...").

(1) These programs also increase the levels of children's knowledge.

(2) See, for example, the staff at the Committee for Children, Seattle, Washington.

Sexual Abuse of Children...

Incest interventions often seem to present a dilemma or a difficult choice.

- "Heavier" intervention, which often seems to dissolve the family (e.g. father removed from home, mother without support or on welfare, child possibly placed in foster care) and
- No interference, which does not help change the situation.

The goal of ending the victimization of the child and minimizing further trauma seems most appropriate...but difficult to execute.

Some self help programs (i.e. Parents United, Daughters and Sons United) assist families in helping each other take corrective action without necessarily dissolving the family unit.

Additionally, many of the programs working on physical abuse in the family are in positions to detect and intervene with sexually abused children.

For example, programs that conduct community education around family abuse often include sexual abuse information in their presentations.

Sexual Abuse of Children -- A Course of Action

Until we can refine our thinking about this complex topic, our initial emphasis for grantmaking will focus on three topics:

- Prevention education - especially on projects which expand programs which have already demonstrated their effectiveness in pilot tests
- Exploring concrete ways to improve public policy vis-a-vis this problem
- Strengthening the overall functioning of the criminal justice system in this area

We recognize a need to sharpen and make more explicit these statements of interest. As we await the distribution of the balance of the foundation's assets, we will work to accomplish this task.

ACTIONS TO DATE

While we have much to learn, we have begun to make a few modest grants.

We have already executed four:

1. \$25,000 basic support for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2. \$10,000 to finance an effort to strengthen the management of 35 shelters, all members of the Southern California Coalition
3. \$25,000 to expand and document the performance of a high-potential violence prevention education program -- an excellent learning opportunity
4. \$ 5,000 to implement a trainer's training of the violence prevention education curriculum in the Los Angeles school system

We are now seeking Board approval for a budget for the balance of our fiscal year.

Colleagues in the field should know that until our Foundation's additional assets are distributed to us, our grantmaking will be quite limited.

* * *

Your comments and reactions to this Occasional Paper would be most welcome. Please address them to:

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