



of abuse and neglect, and recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Resources about the impact of trauma on well-being also are included in this factsheet.

How Is Child Abuse and Neglect Defined in Federal Law?

Federal legislation lays the groundwork for State laws on child maltreatment by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g), as amended and reauthorized by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, defines child abuse and neglect as, at minimum:

“Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.”

Most Federal and State child protection laws primarily refer to cases of harm to a child caused by parents or other caregivers; they generally do not include harm caused by other people, such as acquaintances or strangers. Some State laws also include a child’s witnessing of domestic violence as a form of abuse or neglect.

- *Child Maltreatment*

This report summarizes annual child abuse statistics submitted by States to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). It includes information about child maltreatment reports, victims, fatalities, perpetrators, services, and additional research:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/child-welfare/publications>

For more information about this issue,
see Child Welfare Information Gateway's
Parental Drug Use as Child Abuse at
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/parental-drug-use-as-child-abuse/>

THE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA ON WELL-BEING

Child abuse and neglect can have lifelong implications for victims, including on their well-being. While the physical wounds heal, there are several long-term consequences of experiencing the trauma of abuse or neglect. A child or youth's ability to cope and even thrive after trauma is called "resilience," and with help, many of these children can work through and overcome their past experiences.

Children who are maltreated often are at risk of experiencing cognitive delays and emotional difficulties, among other issues. Childhood trauma also negatively affects nervous system and immune system development, putting children who have been maltreated at a higher risk for health problems as adults. For more information on the lasting effects of child abuse and neglect, read Child Welfare Information Gateway's factsheet *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*: https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's webpage *What Is Child Traumatic Stress* offers definitions, materials on understanding child traumatic stress, and several Q&A documents: <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers/what-is-cts>

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children's brief *Speak Up Be Safe: The Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect* explains the immediate and long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect to child, family, school, and community well-being: http://www.moniqueburrfoundation.org/SUBS/Resources/Impact_of_Abuse_and_Neglect.pdf

The National Council for Adoption's article "Supporting Maltreated Children: Countering the Effects of Neglect and Abuse" explains several issues common to children that have experienced abuse or neglect and offers suggestions for parents and caregivers on talking with children and helping them overcome past traumas: https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/images/stories/documents/NCFADOPTIONADVOCATE_NO48.pdf

ZERO TO THREE produced *Building Resilience: The Power to Cope With Adversity*, which presents tips and strategies for helping families and children build resilience after trauma: <http://www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/31-1-prac-tips-beardslee.pdf>

Resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway's web section on child abuse and neglect provides information on identifying abuse, statistics, risk and protective factors, and more:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/information-gateway-cs-build-w>
