

State Data Provide Key Information on Risk Factors for Infant Maltreatment

Children under the age of 1 year account for the largest percentage of maltreatment victims in this country. In a recent study, researchers investigated perinatal and sociodemographic risk factors associated with infant maltreatment. The study involved nearly 4,500 infants in Florida with a verified report of maltreatment prior to the age of 1 year. Data were gathered from several State databases, including Vital Statistics (birth certificates), Child Protective Services, and Medicaid. Of the 15 risk factors included in the analysis, 11 were associated with infant maltreatment. The five most significant risk factors were:

- Smoking during pregnancy
- More than two siblings
- Medicaid beneficiary
- Unmarried marital status
- Low birth weight

Results showed that mothers and infants with at least four of the top five risk factors had maltreatment rates seven times higher than the population average. Moreover, mothers with at least three of these five risk factors accounted for more than one-half of all infant maltreatment cases.

Findings from this study have implications for both policy and practice. Because all data were



gathered from State data sources, this study can serve as an example of how other States might use their own data to develop an epidemiologic risk-assessment tool to identify families to participate in child abuse prevention programs. In terms of practice, programs working with pregnant women can place a greater emphasis on addressing stress and other underlying conditions that contribute to tobacco use.

This article, "Risk factors for Infant Maltreatment: A Population-Based Study," is available in the December 2004 issue of "Child Abuse and Neglect." Copies can be purchased from the publisher at <http://authors.elsevier.com/JournalDetail.html?PubID=586&Precis=DESC>.

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Injury Prevention Program

California Chapter 4, American Academy of Pediatrics
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The California Chapter 4, American Academy of Pediatrics Injury Prevention Program was developed in 2001 with the mission to contribute to the prevention of injury, death and disability and secure wellness for children age 0-5 years and their families. Funding for this project is provided by the Children and Families Commission of Orange County.

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Child abuse and neglect in Orange County

How safe and well are our youngest and most vulnerable Orange County residents? Newly released 2004 child abuse and neglect statistics suggest some good news, and hint at effective new strategies to protect young children.

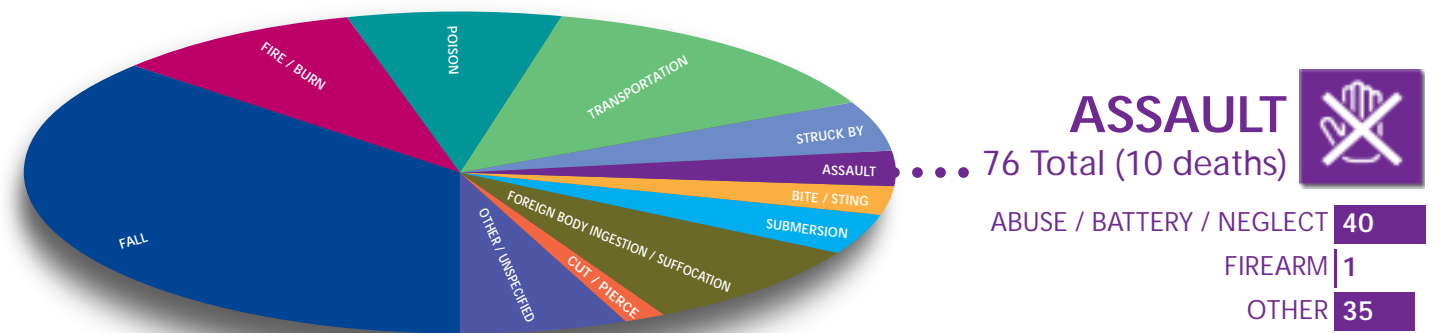
In 2004, 31% of the 36,311 reports received by the Orange County Child Abuse Registry involved children less than five years of age. Reports for this age range have declined slightly over the past nine years, while reports involving teenagers have increased. The majority of reports (44%) allege general neglect. Reports alleging sexual or physical abuse have declined significantly in the same nine year period.

Since 2003, the Social Services Agency has been tracking the percentage of repeat reports on the same child over time. In 2004, 37% of the total reports received were first incidents, or the first incident reported. The majority, or 64%, of the total reports were repeated reports on the same children. This, coupled with the fact that the majority of reports allege general neglect, suggests the Orange County community needs a clearly defined strategy to address intractable, chronic neglect. Neglect

includes a child's exposure to domestic violence. Chronic neglect situations often escape judicial intervention because they are not "bad enough" to justify the extreme action of removing children from parental care. Chronic neglect cases defy quick interventions and frustrate those who would help. Worst of all, chronic neglect depletes a child's potential to become a competent, contributing member of our society.

One interesting approach has been identified by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. It suggests that child care centers can effectively prevent abuse and neglect by incorporating strategies to strengthen :

- Parental resilience,
- An array of social connections,
- Adequate knowledge of parenting and child development,
- Support in times of need, including access to necessary services such as mental health, and,
- Support for the social and emotional competence of children.



"2000-2002 Leading Causes of Death and Hospitalization for Orange County Children Ages 0-5."

Profile of Childhood Injuries, 0-5 years produced and distributed by the California Chapter 4, AAP, IPP. Data analysis for this report was done by Diane Winn, RN, MPH, Child Injury and Transportation Safety Research Group at the University of California, Irvine using data provided by California Department of Health Services EPIC Branch.

Forensic Evaluation of Burns Suspicious for Child Abuse

Jeanie Ming, CPNP
Child Abuse Services Team

There are approximately thirty suspected child abuse burns reported each year in Orange County. After medical care and safety needs have been addressed, it is imperative to begin the investigation of the possible crime scene before it is disturbed. This will speed the process of separating intentional burns from accidents. It will also reduce the trauma for non-abusive families under the suspicion for abuse.

Medical providers need to provide the police and social workers a detailed descriptive history of what was told to them by the historian(s). Delay in seeking medical care, no eyewitness, and "sibling did it" are high-risk histories. It is essential to give the time, nature, extent, and location of the burn. The probable cause of the burn will assist law enforcement in assessing the crime scene for objects (contact burns) and the directional flow or depth of submersion in the liquid (scald injuries). Careful evaluation for other signs of physical abuse and an assessment of the child's developmental skills will be required in the investigation.

Medical documentation should be done on the new mandated OES 900 Medical Report: Suspected Child Physical Abuse and Neglect form available on-line at www.oes.ca.gov. *

Parents, particularly young single parents, are most likely to be suspects and victims are usually children under 4 years old. Half of intentional cases involve families with prior child protective service contact(s).

The majority of burns involve scalding. Whenever burns appearing older than time given, involve symmetrical scalds of the hands and feet, or isolated burns of the buttocks, perineum and genitalia are present, one should consider abuse. The test for suspicion is "if your eyebrows go up, report." Call 714-940-1000.

*For medical group training on the form contact jmingcast@earthlink.net



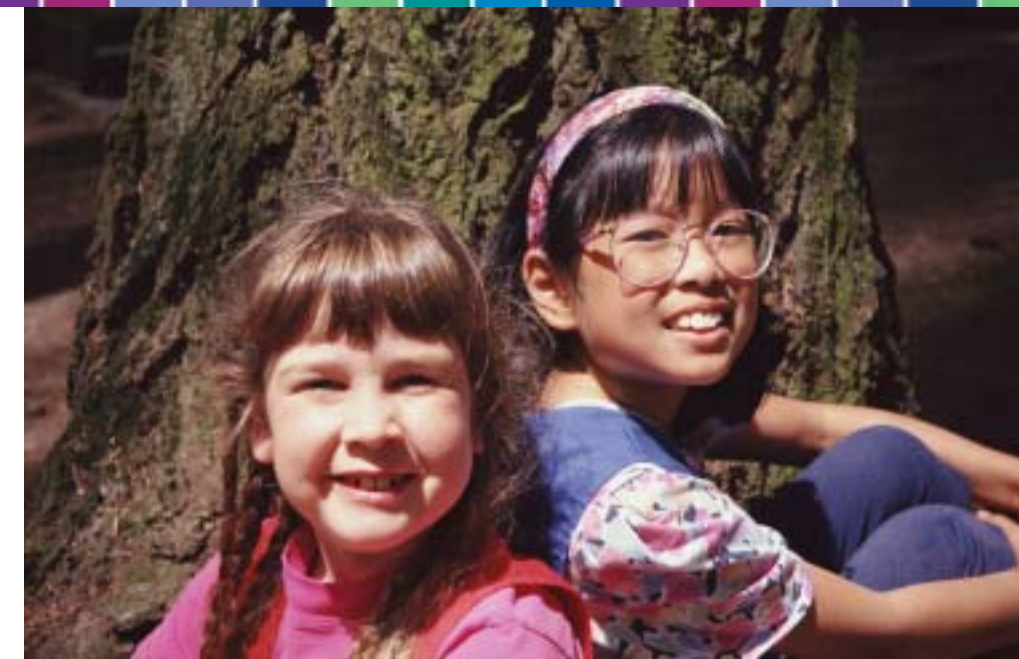
FaCT Family Resource Centers What is your wish for Orange County families?

The day my four year old son discovered the word "wish" I would have done anything to bottle up his enthusiasm and excitement. Suddenly our week was full of Paolo's well wishes for himself and for those around him: I wish for candy...I wish for my granny to come...I wish for more fun...no wish was too big or small. In my world as a non-profit administrator my wishes seem so big and impossible that I forget to say them out loud.



I wish for more access to health care; I wish for more city parks and more support for families who deal with the rigors of life, work, childrearing, overpriced housing, traffic. All throughout the county, there are people like me and you at Family Resource Centers, offering wishes and work towards a better Orange County.

Family resource centers (FRCs) are an important prevention strategy for addressing the diverse needs of families. FRCs promote healthy families in healthy communities by offering services and activities that educate, develop skills and promote opportunities to dream about and work for local change. FRCs are places where families can access counseling, parent education, referrals to local support services and more. Families and Communities Together (FaCT) is a partnership between the Social Services Agency and the Orangewood Children's Foundation supporting Orange County family resource centers (FRCs) operated by community-based collaboratives. Like



the communities that each FRC supports, each of the FaCT FRCs is unique.

Do you have a wish for the children of Orange County that you would like to put in motion (programs, services, etc)? Do your wishes for your patients and their families require that you know more about family support services of all kinds (counseling, basic needs, counseling, case management, health resources, etc). Stop by, check out your local Family Resource Center, offer your support, utilize their resources and dream big for Orange County families and communities because healthy families are healthy communities.

For more information, log onto the web at www.factoc.org or call 714-704-8777

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