

# Breaking the Cycle of Child Abuse and Reducing Crime in Oregon

COACHING PARENTS THROUGH HOME VISITING



*A Report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON*

# Acknowledgements

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization. The organization has a membership of more than 4,500 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors including over 160 members in Oregon. The members take a hard-nosed look at which methods work—and which don't work—to prevent crime and violence. They then recommend effective strategies to state and national policy-makers.

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# Breaking the Cycle of Child Abuse and Reducing Crime in Oregon

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **BREAKING THE CYCLE OF CHILD ABUSE AND REDUCING CRIME IN OREGON: COACHING PARENTS THROUGH INTENSIVE HOME VISITING**

The more than 160 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, leaders of police officer organizations and violence survivors who are members of *FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON* 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: 10,716 ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN THE FUTURE TOLL: 420 ADDITIONAL VIOLENT CRIMINALS**

In Oregon, 10,716 children were officially confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect in 2007 – enough to fill McArthur Court where the Oregon Ducks play basketball. The true number is likely far higher. In 2007, 12 Oregon 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. It also increases the chance that they will pass on this cycle of violence to their own children. The best available research indicates that, of the 10,716 children who had confirmed incidents of abuse or neglect in one year, 420 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 Oregon, 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 on a voluntary basis to interested at-risk young mothers starting as early as 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 program (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. In Oregon, there is only one NFP program, which serves Multnomah County.

Oregon's primary home visiting program, Healthy Start, is an accredited program of the national Healthy Families approach. A randomized controlled trial was done of the Healthy Families home visiting program in New York (HFNY) which found that mothers in the program reported engaging in one quarter as many acts of serious physical abuse as the mothers not receiving services. And, the high-risk families served by Oregon's Healthy Start were less than a third as likely to be involved in abuse or neglect as typical families in the state (7/1,000 vs. 25/1,000).

There are currently 31 Healthy Start home visiting programs in Oregon, serving 34 counties, enrolling 1,423 families a year, and serving a total of over 3,235 at-risk families. But Healthy Start was unable to screen all families and has to turn away families it knows are eligible, so it could roughly triple services around the state without running out of eligible at-risk families who should be offered services.

Another promising home visiting program in Oregon is the Early Head Start program that includes home visits for children zero to three.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **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 \$796 million each year in Oregon. A 2008 study by Steve Aos of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy also found strong results: \$18,000 in net savings per family because of reductions in crime and other problems in the families served, and three dollars saved for every dollar invested.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS ARE UNITED**

Law enforcement leaders and violence survivors are united in calling for greater investments in effective home visiting not less. 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 Oregon hundreds of millions of dollars a year while reducing crime. Even in these tough times, this is a program that deserves to be expanded, not cut.

## Chapter 1

### The Hidden Toll of One Year of Abuse and Neglect

From shocking accounts on the evening news, most people from Oregon are aware of the severe abuse and neglect some children suffer. Few people in the state, however, realize the breathtaking scope of the problem or the severity of its consequences. In 2007, there were 10,716 confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect in Oregon<sup>1</sup> – more kids than could fit in McArthur Court where the Oregon Ducks play basketball.<sup>2</sup>

In 2007, there were 12 confirmed deaths from abuse and neglect in Oregon.<sup>3</sup>

In Oregon, 10,716 children were abused or neglected in 2007 - More than enough to fill McArthur Court where the Oregon Ducks play basketball.



David Piper, 2006

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

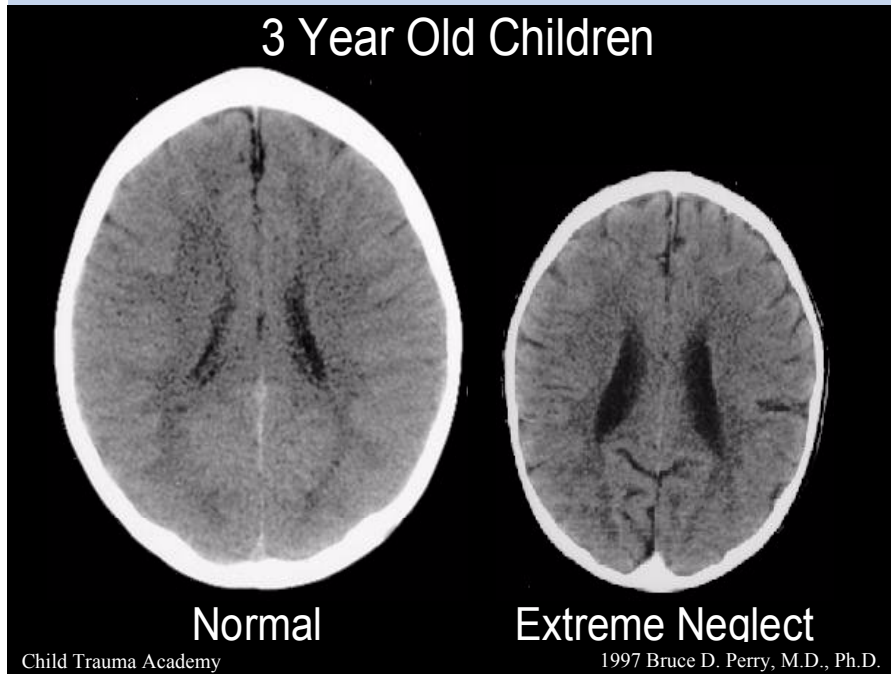
In a society obsessed with statistics, data on abused and neglected children routinely miss thousands of children. Grim as the official numbers are, the truth is that the real numbers of children injured and killed by abuse and neglect each year are much higher than the official counts.

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.<sup>4</sup> 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 authorities in the first place because no one knew about them or someone knew but was unwilling to make a report. Three times the official figure of 10,716 confirmed cases would equal approximately 32,100 children abused and neglected in Oregon in 2007. It is impossible at this time to arrive at a firm number that everyone can agree accurately measures how many children are abused and neglected each year in Oregon, but there is little doubt that it is much higher than the officially reported figure.<sup>5</sup>

#### 12 OREGON CHILDREN DIED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN 2007

In 2007, the Oregon Department of Human Services reported that 12 children were killed in the state from abuse or neglect.<sup>6</sup> Nationally, four out of ten children who died from abuse or neglect were killed before their first birthday.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> However, in a Justice Department publication, the National Center on Child Fatality Review concluded that “an estimated 2,000

**EFFECT OF NEGLECT ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT****3 Year Old Children**

Child Trauma Academy

1997 Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

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.

children in the United States die of child abuse and neglect each year.”<sup>9</sup> 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,<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

Presently, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) collects basic statistics on child deaths related to child abuse and neglect, but there is no longer a child fatality reporting system that reviews individual child deaths in Oregon. For a number of years the Oregon DHS Health Division was funded to prepare child fatality reviews, however this funding was cut and the last review undertaken was in 1999.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, this contributes to the

difficulty of determining accurately how many deaths in the state are likely due to abuse and neglect, so it is not yet possible to determine whether the officially recorded number of 12 child deaths is the full count or not.<sup>13</sup>

**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.”<sup>14</sup> 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.”<sup>15</sup> Research shows that neglect is as likely as physical abuse to lead to future criminal behavior when a child reaches adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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 and usually go undetected, except in the



## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

**Oregon law defines physical abuse as an injury to a child that is not accidental. Most parents do not intend to hurt their children, but abuse is defined by the effect on the child, not the motivation of the parents.**

**Physical abuse includes:** Bruises or cuts, head injuries, poisoning, fractures, sprains, burns or scalds, internal injuries, electrical shocks, death.

**Sexual abuse and child exploitation:** Child sexual abuse occurs when a person uses or attempts to use a child for their own sexual gratification. This includes incest, rape, sodomy, sexual penetration, fondling, voyeurism and sexual harassment.

**Neglect:** Neglect is the most common form of abuse seen and may have long-term effects. Neglect is failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care.

**Medical neglect:** Children need adequate medical, dental or mental health care services. Medical neglect is when a parent or caregiver does not provide these.

**Mental injury:** Mental injury/psychological maltreatment is the result of cruel or unconscionable acts and/or statements made, threatened to be made or permitted to be made by the caregiver(s) which have a direct effect on the child; or caregiver's failure to provide nurturance, protection or appropriate guidance.

... Threat of harm was the largest type of maltreatment experienced by victims (48.7 percent), followed by neglect (33.9 percent).

Source: Oregon Department of Human Service, 2007

most extreme cases, because they leave no external marks. The damage done may not manifest itself until much later as the brain matures.<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

## ONE YEAR OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PRODUCES APPROXIMATELY 420 ADDITIONAL VIOLENT CRIMINALS IN OREGON

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.<sup>23</sup> 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 or neglected almost doubles

## The Annual Toll: 10,716 Abused and Neglected Children in Oregon

the odds that a child will commit a crime as a juvenile.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup>

Applying Widom's four percentage point figure to Oregon's 10,716 confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in 2007 produces a figure of approximately 420 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 approximately 420 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 Oregon 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 420 figure will prove to be a significant underestimate of the number of additional violent criminals in Oregon resulting from the children who were abused and neglected in 2007; 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.<sup>26</sup>

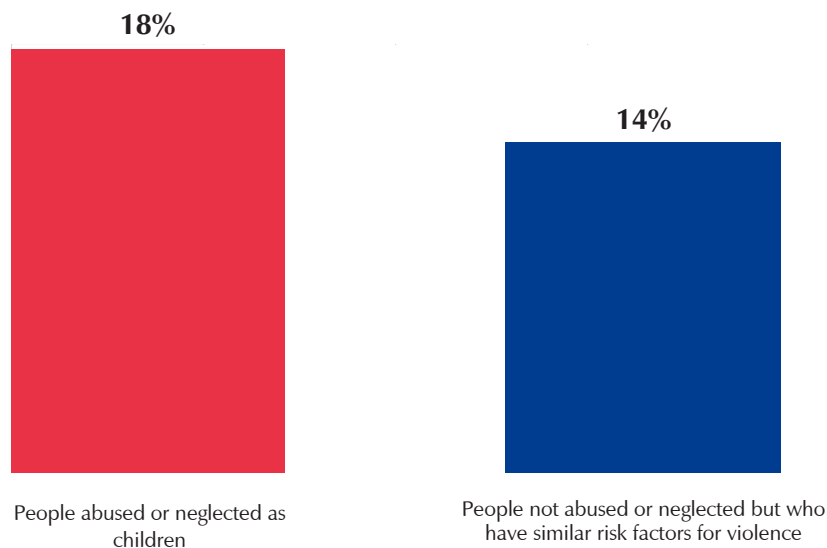
For example, a study done in Sacramento County, California showed that children between the ages of nine and twelve reported to have been abused or neglected were 67 times more likely to be arrested than other children in that age group. Six percent of those who had been abused or neglected had already been arrested by age 12, compared to less than one-tenth of one percent of other children in that age group.<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> In addition to documenting the link

### ABUSE AND NEGLECT PRODUCE MORE VIOLENT CRIMINALS

At least one arrest for a violent crime





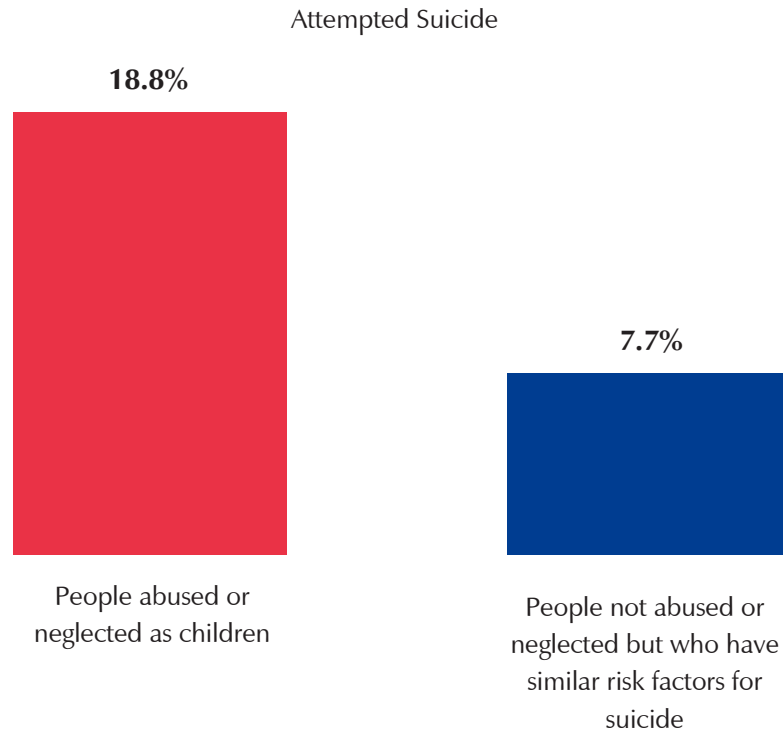
between head injuries and extreme violence,<sup>30</sup> Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus interviewed 14 of the 37 juveniles facing death sentences in 1986 and 1987. They found that only one of those interviewed had not suffered childhood family violence and severe physical abuse.<sup>31</sup> John Douglas, one of the experts who helped the FBI develop violent criminal profiles, reached similar conclusions from his studies.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of Oregon, Dayton Leroy Rogers and Keith Hunter Jespersen are two convicted serial killers who targeted prostitutes for their murders and are now likely to spend the rest of their lives in prison. Rogers' brother-in-law testified that Rogers' father had mentally and physically abused him, and a psychologist asserted that, because of those beatings as a child, Rogers had injuries to his brain's frontal lobes that contributed to his psychotic behavior.<sup>33</sup> Keith Hunter Jespersen, nicknamed the Happy Face murderer from his taunting notes to newspapers, also apparently had a brutal father who even bragged to their neighbors of his son's killing of stray cats in their neighborhood. As Keith Jespersen wrote, "No longer did I search for animals to mistreat. I now looked for people to kill. And I did. I killed over and over until I was caught. Now I'm paying for it with the rest of my life behind bars. We should stop the cruelty to anything before it develops into a bigger problem, like me."<sup>34</sup>

### 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

## ABUSE AND NEGLECT LEAD TO MORE SUICIDE ATTEMPTS



Widom, 2000

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.<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup> This means that as many as 1,180 people in Oregon who were the victims of abuse and neglect in 2007 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.<sup>37</sup>

### 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.<sup>38</sup>

## Chapter 2

### 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 adequate foster care are essential services that can help protect children who have already been identified as abused or neglected. But many children never come to the attention of child protective services or if they do, their cases, at the time, may not be serious enough to warrant removal from their homes. Available data show that, of the 12 children killed in Oregon during 2007, all 12 of those children appeared to be receiving no services from the child welfare agency at the time of their deaths.<sup>39</sup> Relying only on child protective services and foster care services to protect children is not enough to save the Oregon 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 thousands of Oregon 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.<sup>40</sup>

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 Oregonians—these programs must be made available to all families who need them before abuse or neglect takes place.

#### TARGETING THE MOST AT-RISK FAMILIES

Beginning as early as 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.<sup>41</sup> In a study conducted in Illinois, 40 percent of the children placed into foster care came from families receiving welfare

and another 20 percent of children in foster care were from families that had recently received welfare. This compares with only 15 percent of all families in Illinois who were on welfare at that time.<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> Multiple risk factors can have cumulative effects. Oregon’s Healthy Start program screens new families for risk factors such as being a single parent, being 17 years or younger, living in poverty, having an unemployed spouse/partner, family conflict and/or a history of substance abuse or mental health problems. Researchers who reviewed the Oregon data found that “families with two or more risk

*Families with six risk factors are almost 30 times more likely to have a founded report [of abuse or neglect].”*

*Oregon Commission on Children and Families and NPC Research*

factors are about six times more likely to have a founded maltreatment report, compared to families with no risk factors, while families with six risk factors are almost 30 times more likely to have a founded report.”<sup>44</sup>

### PROOF THAT HOME VISITING FOR NEW FAMILIES CAN CUT LATER CRIME

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. This report highlights those crime prevention results although NFP currently only serves families in Multnomah County. It serves about 200 new families a year and has a capacity to serve a total of 400 families starting before the child is born up to age two. Healthy Start is the primary home visiting program in the state,

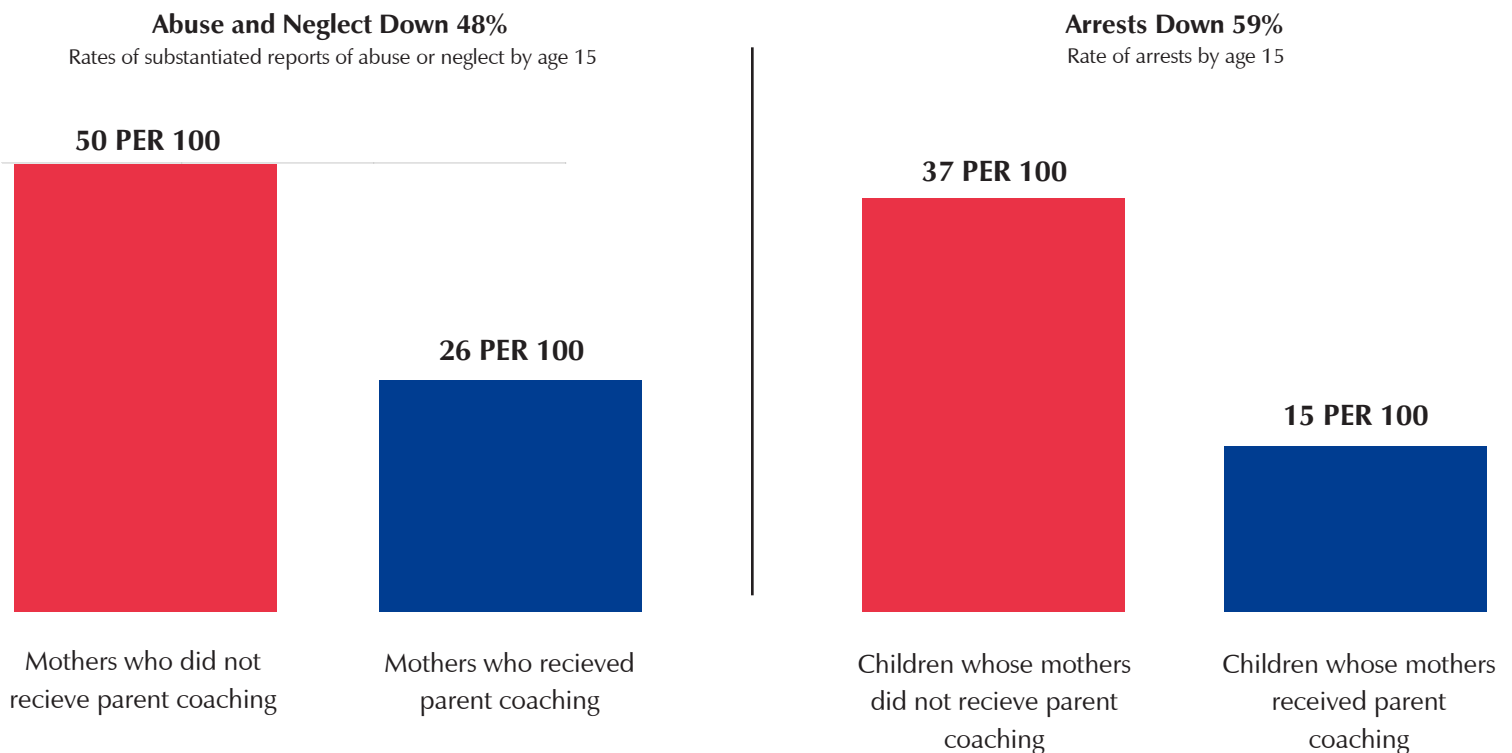
serving children in the rest of the state, and while it does not yet have long-term crime outcomes, it has encouraging results for preventing abuse and neglect.

Groundbreaking research on NFP 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. 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 than the children of mothers in the control group. Put another way: home visiting services can prevent nearly half of all cases of abuse or neglect of at-risk children.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

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 are 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.<sup>47</sup> However, in the most recent follow-up

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



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.<sup>48</sup> Finally, another NFP replication underway in Denver is also generating strong positive results for the children being served.<sup>49</sup>

### OREGON'S STATE-FUNDED HOME VISITING PROGRAM, HEALTHY START, IS PRODUCING PROMISING RESULTS ACROSS THE STATE

Oregon's Healthy Start program follows the national Healthy Families model and is now accredited by the national organization. A recent randomized controlled trial of the Healthy Families home visiting program in New York state (HFNY) showed that mothers in the program reported engaging in one quarter as many acts of serious physical abuse as the mothers not receiving services. The study also showed that it was the children of young, poor, teenage mothers and the children of mothers who were "psychologically vulnerable" who benefitted the most. For example, the children of mothers who were "psychologically vulnerable" acknowledged they had committed incidents of serious abuse and neglect one fifth as often as the similar mothers in the control group (rates of 2/1,000 vs. 11/1,000).

Oregon is carefully tracking data for the families in Healthy Start. The data show that Healthy Start families in Oregon were a third as likely to be involved in abuse or neglect as the typical families in the state not served by Healthy Start (7/1,000 vs. 25/1,000) even though the Healthy Start families were chosen for the program because they were at higher risk of committing abuse or neglect.<sup>50</sup>

### OTHER HOME VISITING PROGRAMS IN OREGON

Parents as Teachers operates separate programs in other states, but in Oregon Parents as Teachers works with Healthy Start sites to provide additions to the curriculum used to train new Healthy Start providers.<sup>51</sup> There are 24 sites run by seven implementing agencies for the federally, state, and locally funded Early Head Start (EHS) programs. They offer home visiting to coach low-income parents as part of their early developmental programs for infants 0-3.<sup>52</sup> EHS serves about

1,000 children in Oregon.<sup>53</sup> There are no crime outcomes yet for EHS, but Mathematical Policy Research and Columbia University conducted a national evaluation of EHS. Families randomly assigned to receive the combined center/home visiting approach were 62 percent more likely to read to their children daily than families that did not receive the program. Children left out of these EHS programs were 34 percent more likely to score in the low range on a test of cognitive, social and emotional development than those enrolled in EHS.<sup>54</sup>

### THE REAL CHALLENGE IS FUNDING

In the 34 counties served by Healthy Start in FY 2007-08:

- There were over 20,000 eligible births (20,324).
- Only about half of those were even screened (9,750).
- Of those screened, about 5,000 were eligible for ongoing home visits because they were at higher risk for abusing or neglecting their children (5,208).
- But only about three of five of those families were offered services (3,137).
- So, two out of five of those eligible were not offered services (2,018),
- 61% were not offered services because caseloads were full (627), and
- 26% because the families could not be located.
- And Healthy Families actually enrolled only 1,423 families across Oregon (not all those offered services are able or willing to take advantage of the offer).

If it were possible to offer screening to all 20,000 families eligible for it, and services were offered to all those eligible (roughly 10,000 instead of the 3,137 being offered services each year now), the Healthy Start program could likely triple the number of at-risk families being served.

**Bottom line: home visiting programs in Oregon should be reaching roughly three times the number of families they currently serve.**

But instead of vastly expanding the home visiting programs in Oregon, the state is considering again cutting back Healthy Start because of the recent financial crisis. That would jeopardize jobs in the short run, adding to Oregon's economic crisis, and it would have longer-term negative outcomes for the children left unserved and all Oregonians.

## Chapter 3

### 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 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,<sup>55</sup> and the same researchers estimated the total costs each year for Oregon are over \$796 million.<sup>56</sup>

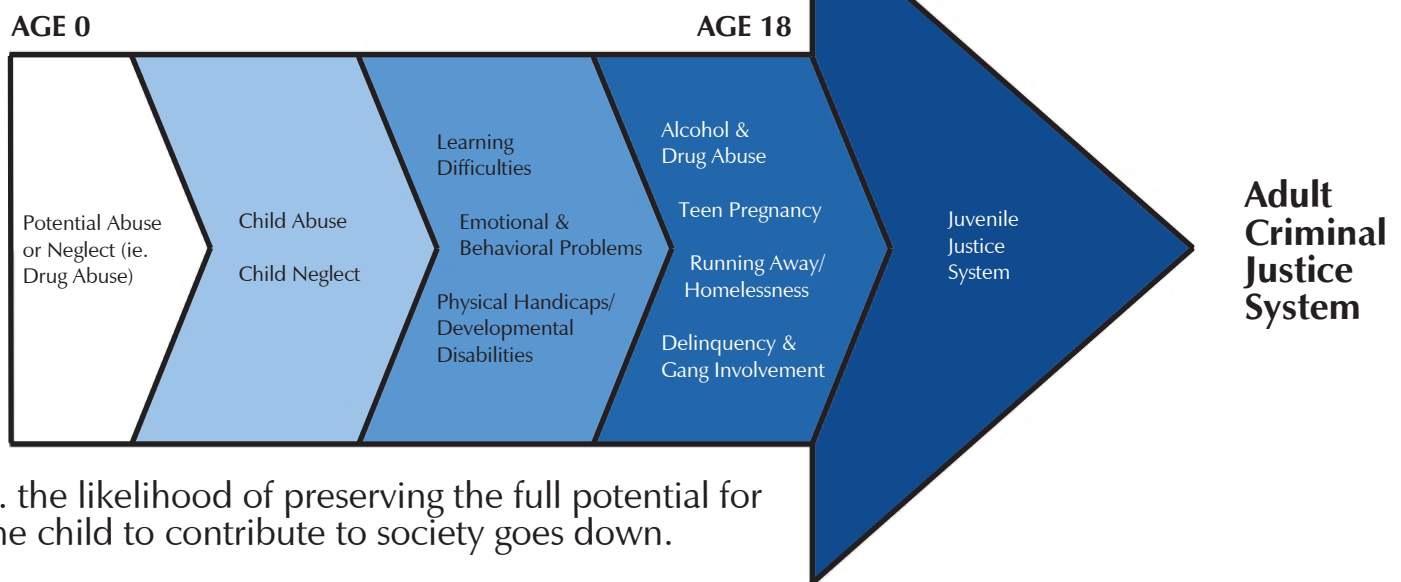
In the most recent accounting, Prevent Child Abuse America concluded that the true cost of abuse and neglect nationwide is more than \$100 billion.<sup>57</sup> The direct taxpayer costs alone of paying for child abuse and neglect in Oregon are huge. According to the Urban Institute, in fiscal year 2004, the federal and state governments combined for a total cost to taxpayers that reached over \$320 million.<sup>58</sup> The direct child protective costs for child welfare services and foster care in Oregon 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, Oregon 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.

#### THE COST OF WAITING

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



## 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.<sup>59</sup> A 2008 study by Steve Aos of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy also found strong results: \$18,000 in net savings per family because of reductions in crime and other problems in the families served, and three dollars saved for every dollar invested.<sup>61</sup>

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

## QUALITY IN-HOME PARENT COACHING SAVES MONEY

**Taxpayers saved over \$3 for every \$1 invested in the Nurse-Family Preschool program.**



For every \$1 invested



Over \$3 was saved



## Chapter 4

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

The more than 160 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, and violence survivors who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON, and the over 4,500 members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS throughout the United States, are calling for greater investments to help children succeed in school, protect them from abuse and neglect, save taxpayers' dollars, and make all Oregonians safer.

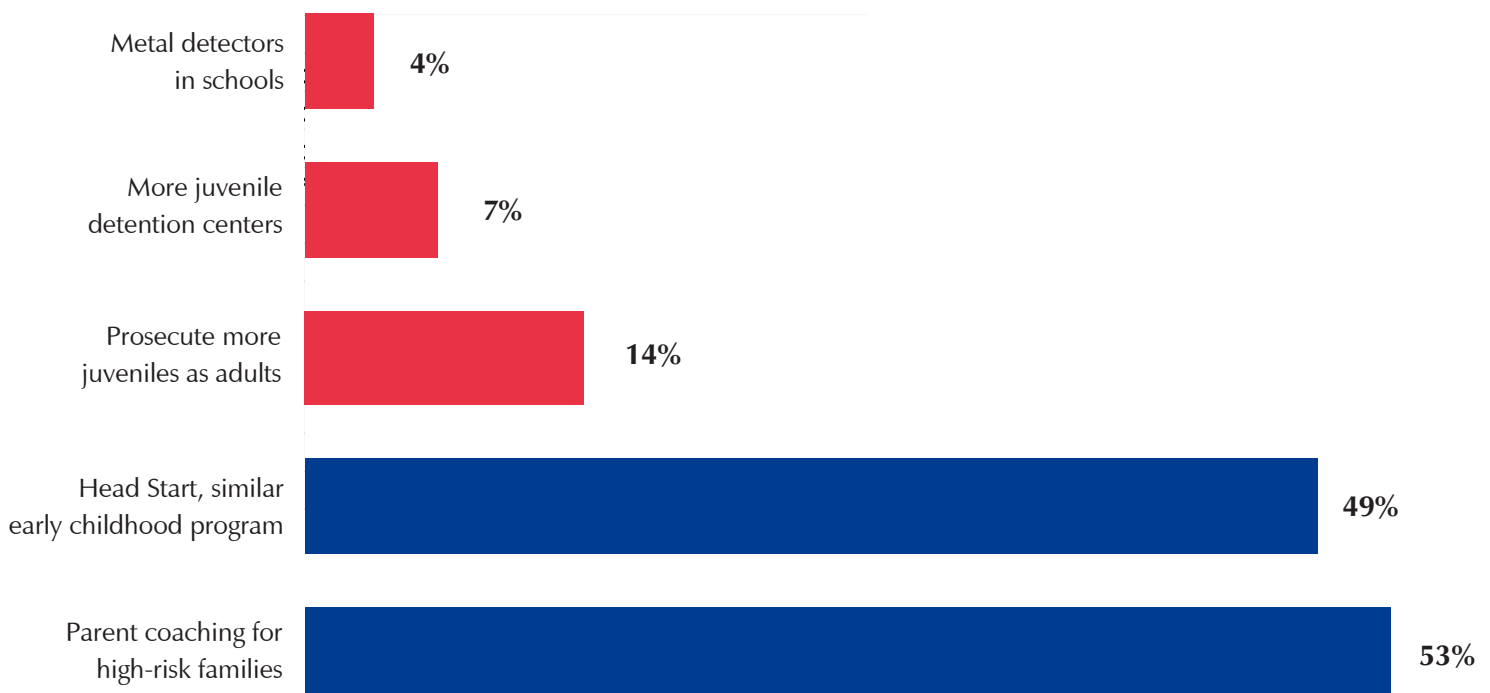
Research shows how to prevent child abuse and neglect before children are hurt and before those children can go

on to hurt others. High-quality home visiting 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 420 children a year in Oregon from growing up to become violent criminals. The programs will prevent murders and suicides in Oregon. All this can be accomplished while saving the people of Oregon 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. Oregon's Healthy Start and Nurse Family Partnership home visiting efforts are a good first step. But as many as three times as many families need high-quality services. 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 be counted on to eliminate up to half of all abuse and neglect in 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



## Appendix

### **TECHNICAL NOTES ON ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF VIOLENT CRIMINALS, MURDERERS, AND THOSE WHO ATTEMPT SUICIDE IN OREGON WHO WILL EMERGE FROM THE CHILDREN ABUSED AND NEGLECTED IN 2007**

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 Oregon in 2007—10,716 (which is a conservative count of the number of children abused and neglected every year in Oregon). Four percentage points multiplied by that number results in an estimate of 420 additional individuals who will be arrested at least once for violence at some time in their life after having been abused and neglected in 2007 [ $10,716 \times .04 = 428$ ]. 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 420 figure is a significant underestimation of the number of additional violent criminals arising out of the children who were abused and neglected in 2007.

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](http://www.fightcrime.org)). Given the smaller numbers for Oregon, however, this report does not attempt to make such projections. The research is clear though: if Oregon 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 2007 produces 1,180 additional suicide attempts that presumably would not happen if not for the lingering suffering from the abuse and neglect suffered in 2007 [ $10,716 \times .111 = 1,189$ ].

## Endnotes

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