



Child Maltreatment: Introduction, Innovation and Integration

August 24, 2010

Scott A. Bates, MSW
Colorado Children's Trust Fund
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Carol Wahlgren, MSW, LCSW
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment
Colorado Department of Human Services

Intentions for Today

- Introduction and brief history of child maltreatment and its prevention
- Innovations in the field of child abuse prevention
- Ways the CA/N prevention field can integrate with other fields of injury and violence prevention in the future
- Keep in mind: child maltreatment encompasses many subtopics and unfortunately, our time is limited today

Introductions

- Who is here today (from which fields)?
- What do you hope to learn about child maltreatment prevention today?

Setting Foundations...

- The concepts of “family,” “parent,” and “child.” have changed over time and are interrelated to our discussion of child abuse.
- How do we determine what is “good” or “bad” parenting and the consequences?
- When does society intervene?
- Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention

Colorado's Statutory Definition of Child Abuse

- Definitions related to Child Maltreatment
 - Child Abuse – presence
 - Child Neglect – absence
 - Child Sexual Abuse
 - Child Emotional Abuse/Neglect
 - Child Educational Neglect
 - Other Maltreatment Types

The Rights of Children

- What rights should children have?
- Where is the balance between parental rights to raise children as they see fit vs. society's responsibility to keep children safe?
- How should children's rights be enforced?
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Case of Mary Ellen Wilson

- Landmark case in 1874
- Mary Ellen was born in New York, NY in 1864, her father died soon thereafter
- Mary Ellen was given up to the city's Department of Charities at age two.
- She went from family to family without adequate investigation into her new living conditions or parents.
- The neighbors had only seen the girl in the apartment once or twice and heard her cries and did nothing for years.
- A Methodist missionary who visited the tenement, Etta Wheeler, was finally called to inquire about the child.
- At the time, there were laws regarding "excessive physical discipline" of children – these were not enforced, however.
- Wheeler approached the apartment and was able to see the child by pretending to inquire about the sick woman next door.

The Case of Mary Ellen Wilson

- Wheeler guessed that the girl was about five or six years old and could see many bruises and lacerations on the girl's legs, face and arms – the girl was actually nine.
- **From Wheeler's biography:**
 - "Across the table lay a brutal whip of twisted leather strands and the child's meagre arms and legs bore many marks of its use."
 - "But the saddest part of her story was written on her face in its look of suppression and misery, the face of a child unloved, of a child that had seen only the fearsome side of life."



The Case of Mary Ellen Wilson

- She finally approached the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to seek their help.
- Within a week of telling them of the girl and the conditions she found her in, an investigator was sent to the apartment disguised as a census worker, to document Mary Ellen's conditions.
- Within a day of this visit, police came to the apartment and took the girl away and arrested the foster mother.
- The foster mother received a year of hard labor for the seven years of misery suffered by Mary Ellen.
- Mary Ellen lived to be 92 and had two daughters of her own: Etta and Florence.



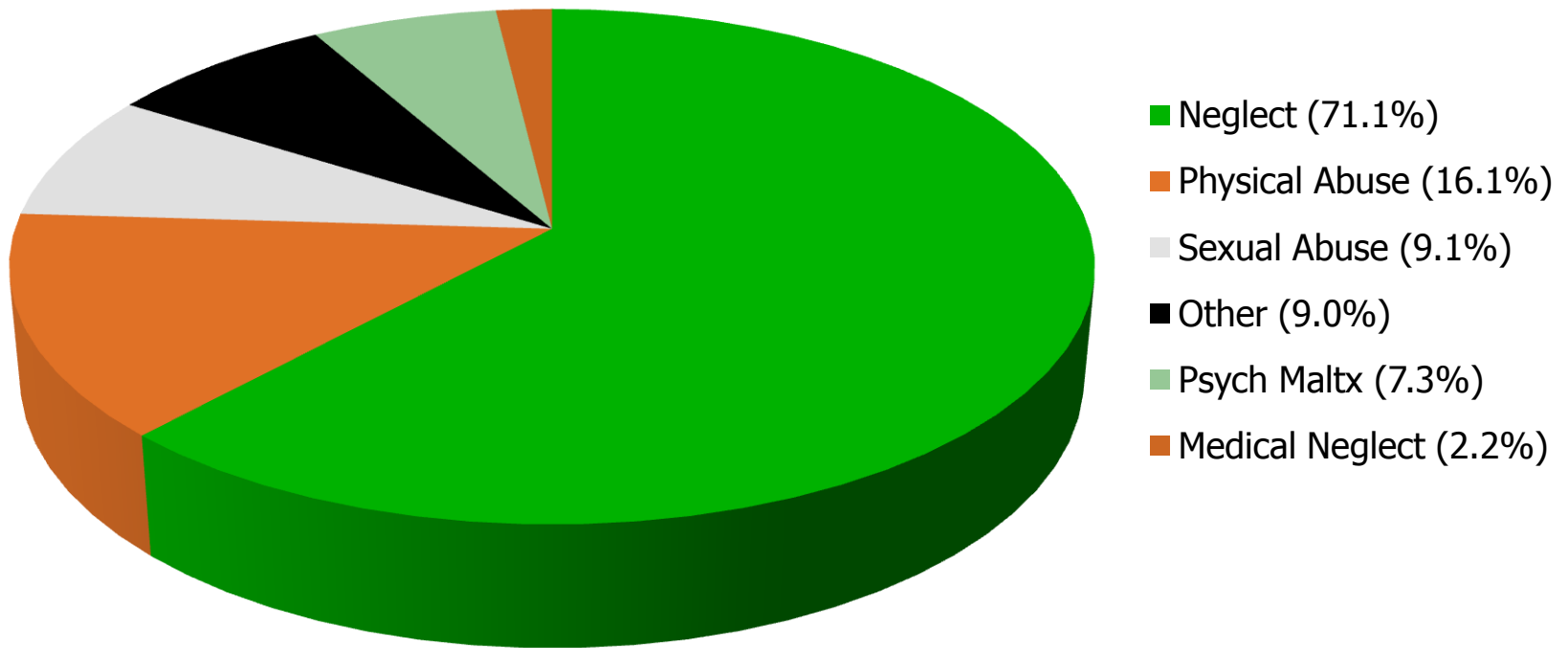
Since Mary Ellen...

- A National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed.
- This later became the American Humane Association, HQ'ed in Englewood, Colorado.
- The American legal system has evolved since approximately 1900 to include juvenile law.
- Many child abuse-focused agencies and organizations at all levels (local, state, national) have been founded as the result of changes in the law.
- Law enforcement and dept. of human service agencies in Colorado and around the country are mandated to provide child protection investigation and intervention.
- The approach to child protection has also evolved to include child abuse prevention before CA/N occurs.

How Prevalent is Child Maltreatment?

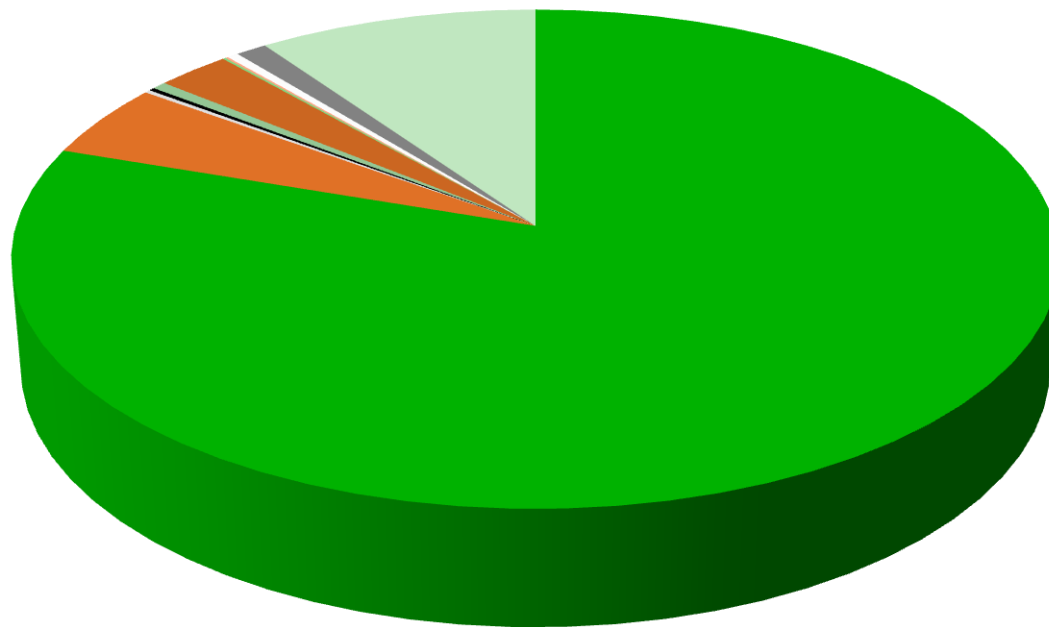
- Your perspectives?
- National rate (2008) was 9.7 children per 1000 – second year the rate has gone down
- Colorado (2008) rate was 9.3 per 1000 = 11,247 children (CO children pop = 1.2 million; 53,392 children received an investigation).

Child Maltreatment Type Percentages



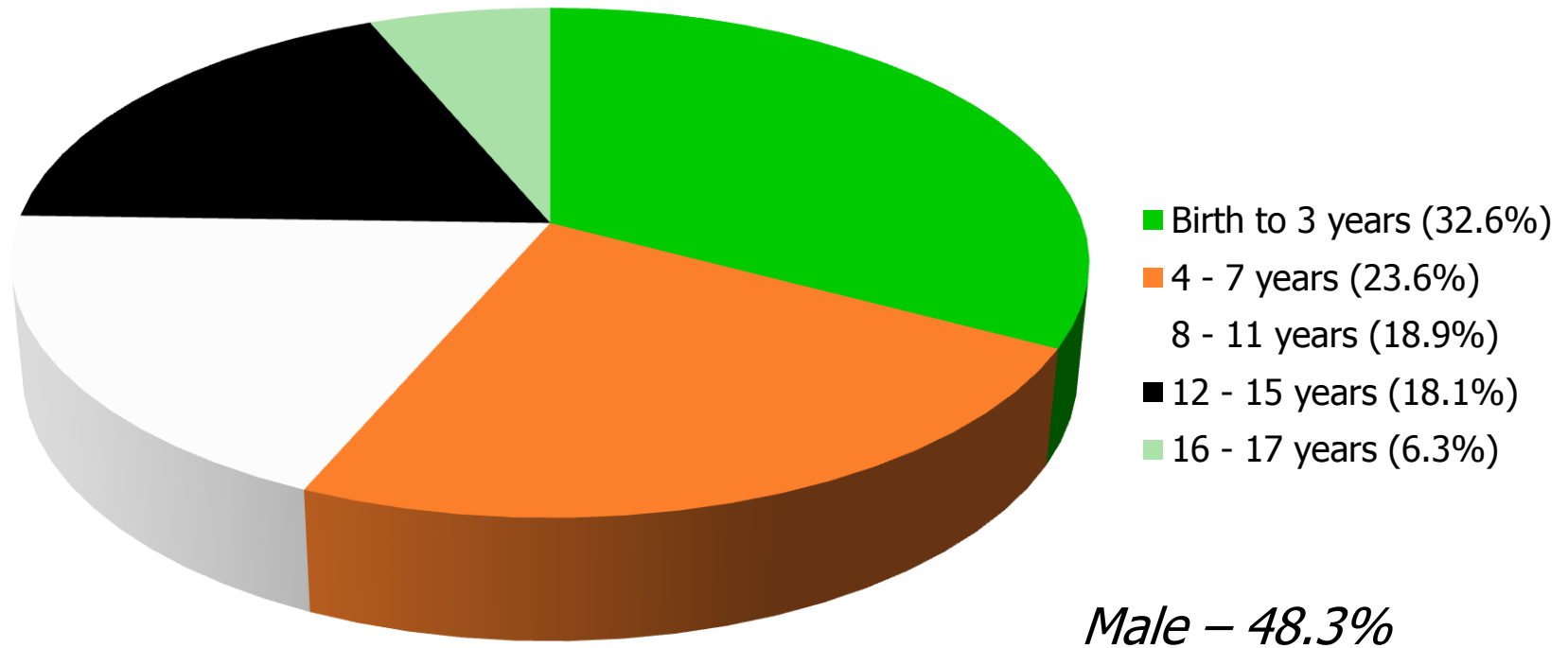
All data is national-level data from Child Maltreatment 2008

Who Perpetrates Child Maltreatment?



- Parent (80.1%)
- Other Relative (4.8%)
- Foster Parent (.2%)
- Residential Facility Staff (.2%)
- Child Daycare Provider (.5%)
- Unmarried Partner of Parent (2.6%)
- Legal Guardian (.1%)
- Other Professionals (.1%)

Demographics of Victims of Child Maltreatment



Male – 48.3%

Female – 51.3%

Child Neglect – the Silent Killer

- Neglect is the silent killer underlying the death of more children than overt physical abuse alone. (Lack of supervision is the most common.)
- Of the 1,530 deaths in the United States documented in 2006 to have resulted from some kind of child maltreatment, **41% of these were due to neglect alone!** **Over three-fourths of all of these deaths involved neglect of some kind.**
- Of the 905,000 founded child maltreatment cases in the United States in 2006, **64% of these were founded for neglect!**

What Groups of Children Are Most Vulnerable?

- Research indicates that very young children (ages 3 and younger) are the most frequent victims of child fatalities.
- NCANDS data for 2006 demonstrated that children younger than 1 year accounted for 44.2 percent of fatalities, while children younger than 4 years accounted for more than three-quarters (78%) of fatalities.
- These children are the most vulnerable for many reasons, including their dependency, small size, and inability to defend themselves.

Key Risk Factors Associated With Severe or Fatal Child Maltreatment

- No prenatal visit before 6th month of pregnancy or none.
- How did the first day of the baby's life go? First day is the most important day of life. 95% of babies killed on the first day of life were not born in the hospital .
- Target is often the 2nd or subsequent infant born to an unmarried teen mother who is 19 years of age or younger.
- History of maternal mental illness.
- Less education - this holds true internationally.
- Child is 60% more likely to be maltreated if maltreated in the past.
- It is 131% more likely to be determined as maltreatment when children are reported by human services and mental health personnel than by school staff.
- Policy implication is the importance of infusing information about child abuse and neglect in undergraduate and graduate education. Doctors also need more specific education.

The Need for More Training

- 31% of SIDS that turn out to be infant death due to child maltreatment are not recognized as such by physicians.
- A study of ER doctors revealed that 25% of them could not even correctly label baby genitalia!
- More child abuse and neglect training is needed for all mandated reporters, who now “mess up” many cases even before they report them.
- More training is needed for all people who work with, or have, children on how to talk with children! People too often still do not seem to sufficiently understand that interviewing children is not the same as interviewing adults.

The Need for More Research Resources

- 120 billion is spent in one year on the **aftermath** of child maltreatment, but only five cents out of every \$100 on research about child abuse and neglect. (To put this in perspective: we spend \$2 out of every \$100 on cancer research)
- There is a lack of a unified voice to communicate children's needs, leading to maltreated children receiving an inadequate share of our country's financial resources.
- The annual cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is \$103.8 billion.
 - \$33.2 billion is in direct costs.
 - \$70.6 billion is in indirect costs.


Why Does Child Maltreatment Occur?

- Most parents are nurturing and caring and want the best for their children, regardless of their station in life.
- High stress, lack of education about child developmental stages, lack of parenting help, lack of knowledge about other services – these all add to the problem.

How Can Child Maltreatment Be Prevented?

- Your perspectives...
- Effective child maltreatment prevention programs are not very common, considering that the “field” of child abuse prevention has been around for over 45 years.
- Those that are successful focus on educating parents about child developmental stages, empathy and having more parenting resources in general

Other Issues and Areas for Innovation

- 
- Mandated reporting
 - Expedited process in courts
 - Improved assessment and monitoring of foster care
 - Differential (Alternative) Response
 - Community structures

Integration with Child Welfare and Child Maltreatment Prevention

- Many opportunities exist for the integration of child abuse prevention and other fields
 - Domestic Violence
 - Nutrition Programs
 - Education
 - Medical Education
 - Mental Health
 - Corrections

Other Resources for You

- Child Welfare Information Gateway
 - www.childwelfare.gov
- American Humane
 - www.americanhumane.org
- Child Welfare League of America
 - www.cwla.org
- Prevent Child Abuse America
 - www.preventchildabuse.org

The Power of Prevention

- “Of all the possible focuses of prevention, child maltreatment is one of the most compelling. The promise of child maltreatment prevention is that it effects savings in several important areas. The most obvious savings are, of course, in the lives of the children who will not suffer the devastating effects of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and all forms of neglect. Beyond their benefit, we accrue both tangible and intangible dividends as a society. Finally, by preventing child abuse we save the staggering amounts of money spent annually dealing with its consequences.”
- *Ray Helfer, M.D., father of the children’s trust fund movement*

Any other general questions
about child maltreatment?



Contact us if you have any questions...

Scott Bates, MSW

Colorado Children's Trust Fund

Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment

(303) 692-2942

scott.bates@state.co.us; www.coctf.org

Carol Wahlgren, LCSW

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Colorado Dept. of Human Services

(303) 866-3278

carol.wahlgren@state.co.us