

Children in Danger

Child Death Rate
Teen Violent Death Rate
Child Abuse and Neglect



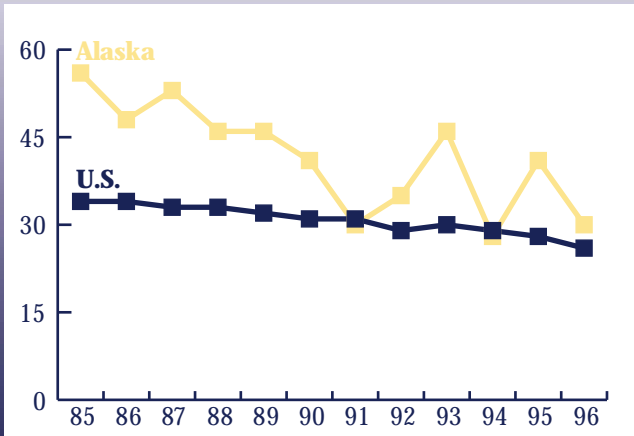


Once you bring life into the world, you must protect it. We must protect it by changing the world.

*Elie Wiesel,
Rumanian-born writer and Holocaust survivor*

Child Death Rate

Trend 1985-1996: Child Death Rate (Deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14)



Source: Kids Count Data Book, 1999, Annie E. Casey Foundation

be prevented. The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics estimates, for example, that among the youngest children (those under age seven) who died in Alaska in 1997, 38 percent weren't supervised adequately at the time they were fatally injured, and 16 percent died when houses without working smoke detectors caught fire.¹

What About Alaska?

The child death rate in the U.S. in 1996 was 26 per 100,000 children, down substantially from 34 a decade ago. Alaska's child death rate in 1996 was 30 per

100,000—down very sharply from 56 in 1985, when it was the highest in the nation. But while the trend in Alaska's rate is down, it is still higher than the national average—and it jumps up and down from year to year.

Part of the explanation for that fluctuation is that even a few additional deaths in a given year can change the rate dramatically in a small population like Alaska's. For example, Alaska's 1996 child death rate of 30 per 100,000 was based on 46 deaths, while the 1995 rate of 41 per 100,000 was based on 62 deaths.

But even when we calculate a five-year average—to help smooth out the year-to-year jumps—Alaska's rate is still much higher than the national average. As the bar graph below shows, the annual child death rate for the period 1992-1996 in Alaska was 36 per 100,000. It varied from a low of 22 in Anchorage to a high of 84 in the Northern region.

Definition

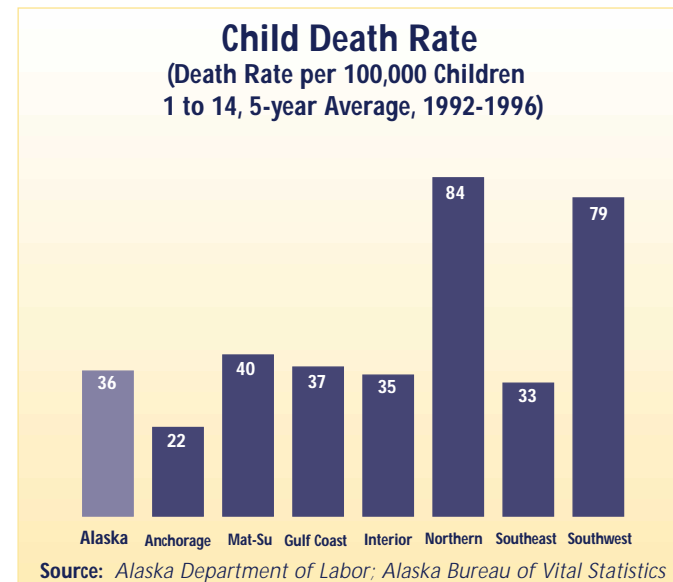
The number of deaths from *all* causes, including both illness and injury, per 100,000 children ages 1 through 14. The data are reported by child's place of residence, not place of death.

Significance of Indicator

We could save many children's lives if we were more vigilant. The largest cause of death for children of all ages in the U.S. is injury—and many (if not most) injuries could

Data provided by Annie E. Casey Foundation and Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, unless otherwise noted

Child Death Rate (Death Rate per 100,000 Children 1 to 14, 5-year Average, 1992-1996)



Source: Alaska Department of Labor; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics



Child Death Rate (continued)

Injuries (accidental or intentional) kill many Alaska children each year, especially in rural areas. Unlike many other **Kids Count** indicators—which examine things that are difficult to change, like poverty levels—we could substantially reduce the number of child deaths through relatively simple measures. We could, for example, make sure that all children wear life vests in boats; that all homes have working smoke alarms;

and that guns and poisonous household products are locked away from children.

The pie chart below shows that natural causes explained only 30 percent of the 84 deaths among Alaska’s children (through age 17) in 1997. Accidents with motor vehicles, which include everything from cars to snowmachines, and airplane crashes killed nearly 30 percent of the children who died that year. Nearly another 10 percent of the children died by drowning or in fires. One third of the older children (10 to 17) who died in 1997 were murdered or committed suicide.

- After crashes, fires and related burns and drowning are the next largest causes of injury deaths among American children. Fire and drowning kill children ages 1 to 4 at approximately three times the rate as among children ages 5 to 9.⁴
- The rate of child deaths from homicides nearly tripled between 1960 and 1991. Homicide in the 1990s became the fourth leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 9.⁵
- At the start of the 1990s, unintentional injuries killed an estimated 3,600 children per year, permanently disabled 20,000, put 350,000 in the hospital, and sent 15 million to emergency rooms.⁶

How Did Alaska Children (1-17) Die in 1997?

Causes of Death (In Percentages)



Manner of Death

Manner of Death	Numbers of Deaths by Age			Total
	1-4	5-9	10-17	
Natural Causes	11	4	10	25
Accidents	13	11	16	40
Suicides	0	1	7	8
Homicides	1	0	8	9
Other	0	0	2	2
Total	25	16	43	84

Total Deaths in 1997: 84

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1997 Annual Report

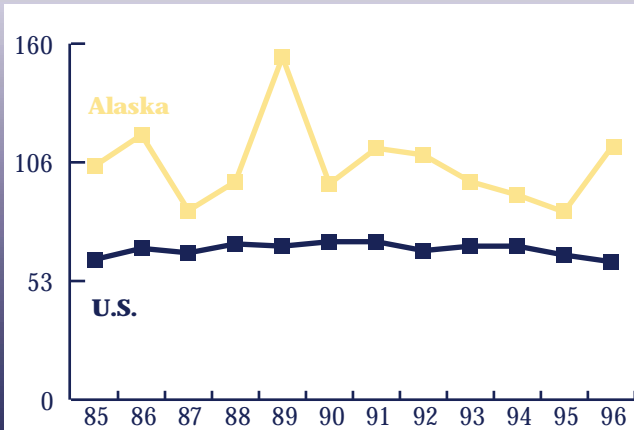
Costs and Prevention

- The leading cause of death for children of all ages throughout the U.S. is injury. Each year injuries kill 36 percent of the children from ages 1 through 4 who die and 41 percent of those 5 through 14 who die.²
- Motor vehicle crashes are the single largest cause of injury death for American children between ages 1 and 9.³



Teen Violent Death

Trend 1985-1996: Teen Violent Deaths
(Rate per 100,000 Teens, Ages 15 -19)



Source: Kids Count Data Book, 1999, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Definition

The number of deaths due to accidents, suicides, and homicides per 100,000 teens ages 15 through 19. Data are reported by place of teen's residence, not place of death.

Significance of Indicator

American teenagers die—accidentally or intentionally—at rates much higher than in many other developed countries. Experts say that two-thirds of the teenagers who die each year could be saved, if parents and teenagers themselves did a better job of recognizing risks and guarding against them.⁷

Data provided by Annie E. Casey Foundation and Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, unless otherwise noted

What About Alaska?

In 1996, the teen violent death rate in Alaska was nearly 113 per 100,000, compared with a national rate of 62. For the past decade, rates of violent death among Alaska's teenagers have consistently been either the highest or close to the highest in the nation. The Alaska rate does, however, fluctuate sharply from year to year. Alaska's population is small—and a relatively small change in the actual number of deaths can make a big difference in the death rate. For example, in 1995, Alaska's rate of close to 83

deaths per 100,000 teens represented 35 actual deaths. In 1996, Alaska's teen death rate jumped to nearly 113 per 100,000, based on 50 deaths.

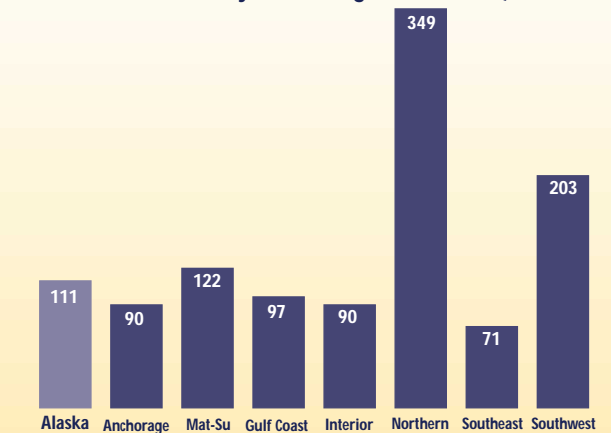
Looking at a five-year average of teen violent deaths helps smooth out the year-to-year fluctuations—but we can still see that death rates among Alaska's teenagers are discouragingly high. Between 1992 and 1996, Alaska's teens died at a rate of 111 per 100,000. Regional rates varied from a low of 71 per 100,000 in the Southeast (a rate still above the national average) to a high of 349 per 100,000 in the Northern region. While these rates are extremely high—and we all want

them to come down—remember that even averages over five years in regions with very small populations are based on relatively small numbers of deaths.

Costs and Prevention

- The top three causes of death among American teens are accidents (including motor vehicle and other accidents), homicides, and suicides.⁸
- Among teenagers who die in the U.S. each year, 30 percent are killed in car crashes—and almost half those crashes are linked to alcohol.⁹

Teen Violent Death Rate
(Accidents, Suicides, and Homicides per 100,000 Teens 15 to 19, 5-year Average, 1992-1996)



Source: Alaska Department of Labor; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics



Teen Violent Death (continued)

- The death rate for male teenage drivers (13 per 100,000) is twice that of female teenage drivers (6 per 100,000).¹⁰
- Teenage drivers who have been drinking but are not legally drunk are still far more likely than sober teenage drivers to be killed in single vehicle crashes—18 times more likely for boys, 54 times more likely for girls.¹¹
- Immaturity and lack of driving experience contribute to teenagers' high crash rates. About half of all deaths among teenage drivers occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.¹²
- Roughly 10,000 teenagers are murdered, commit suicide, or die of complications from AIDS in the U.S. annually. Experts believe almost all these deaths could be prevented.¹³
- The death rate among teenage girls in the U.S. is twice that of girls in the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, or Germany.¹⁴
- Adolescents and young adults die more often than people at any other age from accidents and homicides involving firearms.¹⁵



Definition

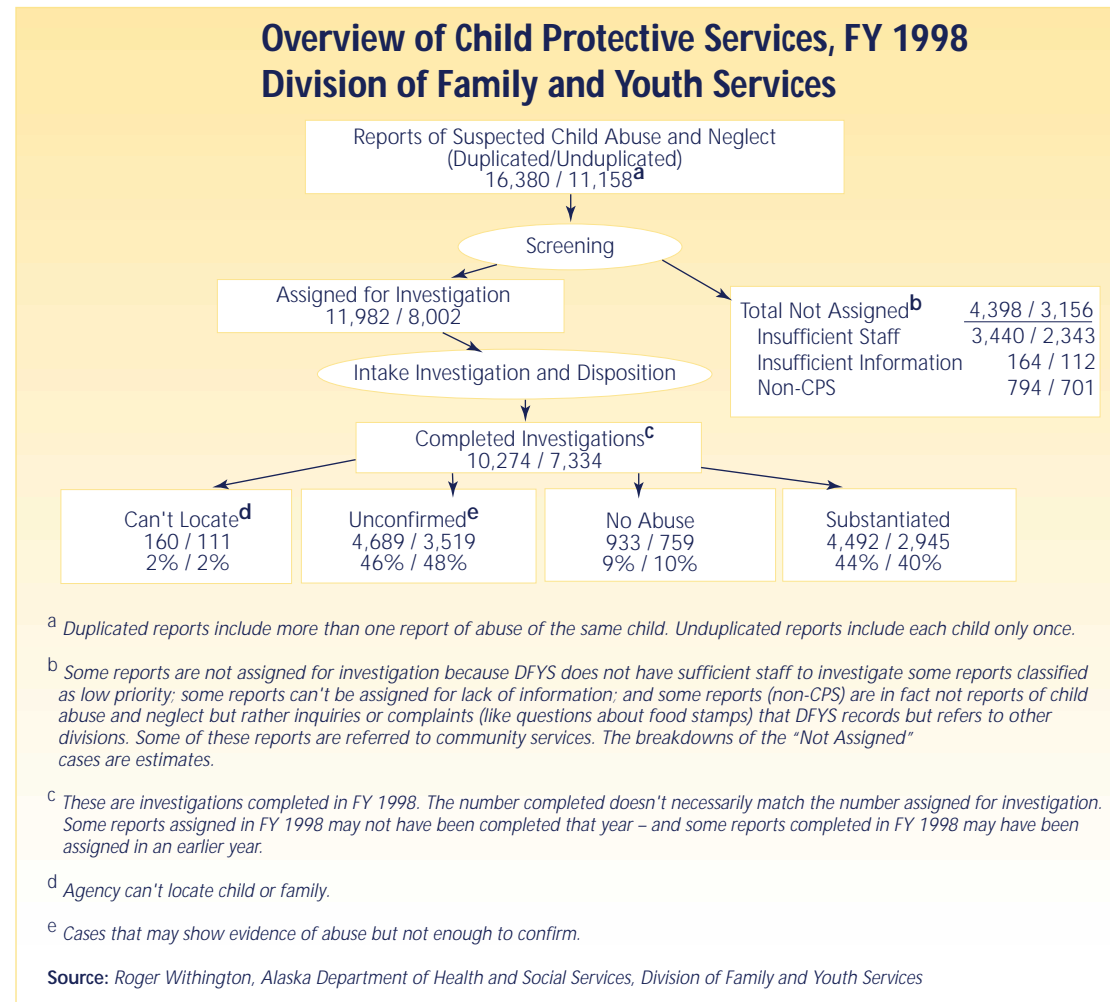
Child abuse occurs when adults with custodial responsibility for children endanger them physically, sexually, or mentally—either directly or by failing to protect them from others.¹⁶ Neglect includes emotional, medical, or physical neglect.¹⁷

Interpreting Statistics on Child Abuse and Neglect

Child protection agencies often receive more than one report of neglect or abuse for the same child—so cases of abuse can be reported in *duplicated* numbers (including more than one report for the same child) or *unduplicated* numbers (with each child reported only once). Duplicated cases show an agency's workload. Unduplicated cases show the number of reports of children suffering abuse.

The figures in this section report mainly *unduplicated* cases. But the adjacent flow chart shows both duplicated and unduplicated reports of abuse and the Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services handled in fiscal year 1998. That chart makes it clear that the agency's workload is much higher than unduplicated counts show.

Information about Alaska provided by Roger Withington, Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services



There is also a big difference between *total reports* of suspected abuse (which may not all be substantiated) and *substantiated* cases. Experts disagree about which measure best shows actual levels of child abuse—mainly because total reports may overstate the problem, and substantiated

cases may not capture all the incidents of abuse.¹⁸ Here we report information both ways, always making the distinction clear.

Finally, reliable measures of child abuse and neglect are difficult to obtain. While some cases of suspected child abuse and



Child Abuse and Neglect (continued)

neglect are never reported, other cases receive multiple reports. Furthermore, variations in the way child protective service agencies screen and investigate cases can also have a significant influence on the estimated rates of child abuse and neglect. So readers should pay careful attention to what measures of child abuse are being used—and keep in mind that a number of factors can influence the reported rates.

Significance of Indicator

Among all the dangers children face as they grow up, abuse is the most reprehensible. Unlike other indicators in this book, child abuse is harm adults inflict on children they are supposed to protect. And statistics show that it is the most vulnerable—infants and very young children—who are most likely to be hurt. Children under the age of five suffer most of the abuse nationwide, and most of those who die at the hands of their abusers are under age 2.¹⁹

What About Alaska?

Investigation Procedures

The Division of Family and Youth Services in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services investigates reports of children being hurt (or exposed to harm). The flow chart on page 55 shows the numbers of both duplicated and unduplicated reports the division receives, as well as the process it follows for investigating those reports.

Anyone who believes a child is in danger (or at risk of harm) can file a report. The division screens all the reports and assigns most for investigation. Some reports are closed because they don't provide enough information for the division to investigate. Others are closed because the division doesn't have enough staff to investigate all reports it classifies as lowest priority. Finally, some reports don't actually involve child protection issues; these are referred on to other agencies.

In fiscal year 1998, the division received 11,158 reports (*unduplicated*) of suspected child abuse. About three out of four of those reports were assigned to investigators. Of those, 40 percent were *substantiated*, meaning the division found evidence to confirm child abuse or neglect. About half (48 percent) of the reports were *unconfirmed*—meaning that investigators found some evidence of abuse, but not enough to substantiate the case. Another 10 percent of investigated cases found no abuse. Finally, in a few cases (less than 2 percent) investigators couldn't locate the family or children in question. Duplicated reports of child abuse followed similar patterns.

Rates of Abuse, FY 1993-1998

Neglecting children was the most common type of substantiated abuse in Alaska from 1993-1998, at an average

rate of about 9 neglected children per 1,000 children under 18. More than 4 children per 1,000 were physically abused and nearly 2 children per 1,000 were sexually abused during that period. Mental injury and abandonment were relatively rare .

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children, by Type of Abuse, Annual Average FY 1993 - FY 1998

Type of Abuse	Average No. of Unduplicated Cases	Rate per 1,000 Children Under 18
Neglect	1,682	8.7
Physical Abuse	873	4.5
Sexual Abuse	348	1.8
Mental Injury	67	0.4
Abandonment	15	0.1

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children, by Race Annual Average FY 1993 - FY 1998

Race	Average No. of Unduplicated Cases	Rate per 1,000 Children Under 18
White	1,132	8.5
AK Native	1,363	32.9
Black	235	25.5
Asian/Pacific Isl.	50	5.9

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services



Child Abuse and Neglect (continued)

Rates of substantiated child abuse and neglect vary significantly by race in Alaska. The highest rates of abuse from 1993 to 1998 were among Alaska Native children (33 per 1,000) and Black children (25 per 1,000). Substantiated abuse was considerably lower among White children (about 9 per 1,000) and Asian/Pacific Island children (6 per 1,000).

Overall reports of child abuse and neglect were relatively stable in Alaska in the 1990s, ranging roughly between 55 and 57 reported cases per 1,000 children. But rates of *substantiated* harm were higher in 1993 and 1994 than they have been in more recent years. In 1998 the rate of substantiated abuse was 15 per 1,000, down from 17.5 in 1993.

Alaska Native children suffered the highest rates of neglect and sexual abuse. Physical abuse was highest among Black children. Rates of all kinds of abuse were lowest among children of Asian or Pacific Island descent.

Trends in Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children

(Number of Unduplicated Cases and Rates per 1,000 Children Under Age 18)

	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate
	FY 93		FY94		FY95		FY96		FY 97		FY98	
Reported	10,572	55.7	11,073	57.7	10,916	56.1	10,711	55.7	10,635	54.9	11,158	56.7
Not Assigned for Investigation	3,518		3,669		4,126		3,595		3,456		3,156	
Completed Investigations*	7,577	39.9	7,521	39.2	6,808	35.0	6,397	33.3	7,654	39.5	7,334	37.3
Substantiated	3,325	17.5	3,103	16.2	2,852	14.7	2,681	14.0	3,004	15.5	2,945	15.0
Unconfirmed	3,572	18.8	3,774	19.7	3,550	18.2	3,218	16.7	3,999	20.6	3,519	17.9
No Evidence of Abuse	643	3.4	569	3.0	352	1.8	427	2.2	567	2.9	759	3.9
Can't Locate	37	0.2	75	0.4	54	0.3	71	0.4	84	0.4	111	0.6

* Investigations completed in any given year may have begun in an earlier year.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children by Race and Type of Abuse (Annual Average FY 1993 - 1998)

Average Number of Unduplicated Cases and Rates per 1,000 Children Under 18

Race	Neglected		Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Mental Injury		Abandonment	
	No. Cases	Rate	No. Cases	Rate	No. Cases	Rate	No. Cases	Rate	No. Cases	Rate*
White	471	3.7	431	3.2	173	1.3	32	0.2	6	n/a
AK Native	955	23.1	262	6.3	115	2.8	23	0.6	8	n/a
Black	126	13.7	83	9.0	18	1.9	7	n/a	0	n/a
Asian/Pacific Isl.	22	2.6	23	2.7	4	0.5	1	n/a	0.5	n/a

* Rate not available because numbers of cases too small.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services



Costs and Prevention

- Up to 40 percent of those who are abused as young children become abusers themselves—sometimes before they are even teenagers.²⁰
- Nearly 3 million children were reported as possible victims of child abuse or neglect nationwide in 1995. Of those reports, 52 percent were for neglect, 25 percent for physical abuse, and the remaining 23 percent for sexual or emotional abuse.²¹
- An estimated 50 to 80 percent of families reported to child protective services nationwide have substance-abuse problems.²²
- As they get older, children who have been abused and neglected are more likely to do poorly in school, to commit crimes, to have emotional or sexual problems, and to abuse alcohol or drugs.²³
- The incidence of child abuse is approximately 22 times higher among families with annual incomes below \$15,000 than among those with incomes of more than \$30,000 per year.²⁴

To report child abuse and neglect in Alaska, call 1-800-478-4444.

Notes for Children in Danger Section

¹ Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1997 *Annual Report*, pages 63-67.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, *Child Health USA 1998*, 1998.

³ Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book*, 1997.

⁴ See note 3.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, *Child Health USA 1993*, 1993.

⁶ Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, *The Future of Children*, 5 (1), Spring 1995, p.214.

⁷ *USA Today: Health 1999*, "Risky actions send teen death rate soaring." Available online at: <http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/child/teens/lhcte015.htm>

⁸ *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 47, No. 9, November 10, 1998.

⁹ See note 7.

¹⁰ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *Teenage Motor Vehicle Deaths: Fact Sheet*. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/teenmvh.htm>

¹¹ See note 10.

¹² See note 10.

¹³ See note 7.

¹⁴ See note 7.

¹⁵ See note 8.

¹⁶ Adapted from Colorado Children's Campaign, *Kids Count in Colorado*, 1994.

¹⁷ Definition from *Kids Count in Nebraska*, 1995.

¹⁸ New York's Kids Count data book for 1995 discusses in detail the complexities involved in trying to choose the most accurate measure of child abuse.

¹⁹ K. McCurdy and D. Daro, *Current trends in child abuse reporting and fatalities*. Presents results of the 1992 Fifty State Survey by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse. 1993.

²⁰ Survivors And Victims Empowered, *Child Protection Guide*, 1997. Available from P.O. Box 3030, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 17604-3030.

²¹ Center for the Future of Children, *Protecting children from abuse and neglect*, 1998. Available from 300 Second Street, Suite 102, Los Altos, California, 94022.

²² See note 21.

²³ See note 21.

²⁴ See note 21.

