Child Maltreatment Research, Policy and Practice for the Next Generation: A Workshop
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CHANGES IN RATES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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US Maltreatment Trends 1990-2010

- **Neglect**: 10% decline
- **Physical Abuse (x2)**: 56% decline
- **Sexual Abuse (x3)**: 62% decline

Source: Substantiated cases of maltreatment compiled by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)
Harvard School of Public Health researchers explored possibility that increased worker caseload was related to decline in CSA and found no evidence for this.

They concluded that their results supported “…the existence of a true decline in incidents of substantiated sexual abuse cases during the latter part of the 1990s.”

NCANDS Trends Confirmed by Other Data Sources

- NIS (93-05)
  - SA down 44%; PA down 23%*
- Self-report data
  - Minnesota Student Survey (92-10)
    - SA down 28%; PA down 20%
  - National Crime Victimization Survey (93-05)
    - Juvenile sex victimizations down 52%

*Harm Standard
Juvenile Victimization Trends, 1993 – 2005 (NCVS)

Note: Age 12 – 17 years; 3 year averages.
Similar Trends in Other Child Well-being Indicators

- Teen birth rate: 48% decline (94-09)
- Youth runaway: 66% decline (94-09)
- Teen suicide: 43% decline (94-07)
- Teen suicidal ideation: 52% decline (91-09)
- Teen drug use: 27% decline (97-07)
- Domestic violence: 60% decline (93-05)
Explanations for CM Trends

- Economic fluctuations?
- Better violence and maltreatment prevention?
- Increased incarceration and prosecution of offenders
- Better mental health and trauma treatment?
- Improving cultural norms around caring for and protecting children?
Neglect and Child Fatalities

- These 2 CM trends do not match other improvements in child well-being.
- Evidence suggests that increasing attention to these problems and shifting definitions may be masking parallel declines in these problems.
NIS4: Rates of Neglect from 1993-2005 (Endangerment Standard)

*Changes in rates are not statistically significant
This graph shows child victim homicides as measured by the FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) in red and the National Vital Statistics System (WISQARS) in blue. It also shows child maltreatment fatalities as reported by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The lines show declining child homicides from 1993 to 2005 according to the data from the two older, more established systems. The declines are somewhat smaller when including only younger children, the ones whose homicides are most likely to be at the hands of family members. The child maltreatment fatality data show a very different pattern, increasing throughout most of the time period. One possible explanation is that the scope of child maltreatment fatality data has been expanding as the system develops. Some accounts from Texas and California about the development of the child fatality surveillance system suggest this explanation.
Recommendations

- NCANDS and NIS data provide critical public health information on child maltreatment trends.
- The Children’s Bureau needs to publicize these data more effectively—help professionals, media and the public learn about and understand the trends.