



# ***Athlete Welfare Educational Workshop***

## ***An Overview of Child Abuse and Neglect in America***

Presented at  
USA SWIMMING  
Aquatic Sports Convention  
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by  
Child Welfare League of America



# Today's Agenda



- About CWLA
- Overview of Child Abuse
  - Definitions & Types of Abuse
  - Data
- Child Sexual Abuse
  - Definitions
  - Data
  - Developmental Impacts
  - Risk Factors/Signs of Abuse
- Prevention



## *Who Is CWLA?*



*CWLA's mission is to lead the nation in building public will to ensure safety, well being, and permanence for children, youth and families by advancing policy and defining and championing practice excellence.*



*CWLA fulfills its goals by leveraging an extraordinary broad network of members and supporters.*



# What Do We Do?



*Driven by research and knowledge, and informed by over 90 years of practice and policy experience we:*

- provide authoritative information to agencies, individuals, and communities;*
- develop standards for child welfare services;*
- shape sound public policy and fight for passage of key legislation;*
- assist agencies in implementing best practices;*
- partner with organizations that have shared goals to improve children's lives*
- inspire success, so that those who work with children are prepared to deliver results and make tomorrow brighter for children.*





# How Do We Work With Communities?



*We improve life for children and youth through:*

- **Publications for professionals** to give them information needed to serve children and families effectively
- **Consultation and training** that builds skills and helps leaders plan for and meet the needs of children and families
- **Research and data** about programs and practices that work
- **Advocacy** to help policy-makers respond to needs of children
- **Standards of excellence** that provide specific guidance to organizations regarding best practices
- **Resources for children and families** that help parents connect with and teach their biological, foster and adoptive children





## *Who Have We Partnered With?*



- Prudential Foundation (*Parenting Rich Communities*)
- New York Life (*Peer to Peer Youth Mentoring*)
- US Department of Human Services (*National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology*)
- Capitol One (*Foster Care Awareness*)
- The United States Army Reserves (*Children's books for deploying soldiers*)
- United Airlines (*Child Safety Program for Staff Volunteers*)
- The Archdiocese of Washington (*Child Safety Guidelines for Clergy*)



# Child Abuse and Neglect



Federal Law defines child abuse and neglect as

“any recent act, or failure to act, ***on the part of a parent or caretaker*** that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents imminent risk of serious harm to a child\*.”

\*child is usually defined as under age 18



# *Child Abuse and Neglect*



Child Abuse and Neglect reports generally fall into these categories:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Emotional Neglect
- Educational Neglect







# *Child Abuse and Neglect*



Each state has their own child abuse and neglect laws and a designated agency responsible for responding to reports of child abuse (common names are Social Services, Child Welfare, Child Protective Services, Children and Family Services)

- After a complaint is assessed or investigated, the case may be referred to the legal system---juvenile courts
- Egregious cases may also go to criminal courts



## *Other Incidents of Violence*



Incidents of acts of violence and/or maltreatment of children and youth under the age of 18 that are NOT at the hands of a parent or caretaker are handled through the legal system.





# *Child Abuse and Neglect: Statistics*



States Report Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics  
Annually to the Federal Government  
through the



**National Child Abuse and Neglect Data  
System (NCANDS)**



## *Child Abuse and Neglect: Statistics*



Each year throughout the United States:

- Approximately 3 million children are reported to state child protective services agencies
- Approximately one million of those reports are substantiated
- Child neglect is the most commonly reported form of maltreatment
- The most common victims of physical and emotional abuse are infants, toddlers, preschool children, and young adolescents



# Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics



2008 data from NCANDS states approximately 772,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse and neglect. Of this number:

- 71.1% suffered neglect
- 16.1% were physically abused
- **9.1% were sexually abused**
- 7.3% were emotionally/psychologically maltreated
- 2.2% experienced medical neglect
- 9% experienced other types, such as abandonment, threats of harm to the child, congenital drug addiction

Statistics from Child Maltreatment, 2008



# What Is Child Sexual Abuse?



- Engagement of children in sexual activities for which the child is developmentally unprepared and cannot give informed consent.
- Child sexual abuse is characterized by deception, force, or coercion.\*
- Abuse typically occurs within a long term, ongoing relationship between an offender and a victim, escalates over time, and lasts an average of four years.\*\*

- \*AMA 1992 \*\* National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse



## Sexual Abuse Statistics



- One in three girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused at some point during their childhood\*
- Between 85-95% of child victims know their perpetrator\*\*
- 88% are never reported to authorities\*\*
- Approximately 70% of the time the child does not tell anyone while the abuse is going on\*\*\*



\*Briere and Elliot, 2003    \*\*Stop It Now, 2010    \*\*\*London et.al. 2005



## *What are the Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect?*



### Developmental Difficulties

- Early childhood experiences create the basis for expression of intelligence, emotions, and personality.
- Predominantly negative experiences may “set the stage” for emotional, developmental, and behavioral problems that persist throughout life.
- Studies have shown that the brains of children who have experienced chronic abuse and neglect remain in a state of "hyperarousal" or expectation of imminent danger.
- This hyperarousal may interfere with learning and the ability to form emotional bonds with others.







## *What are the Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect?*



### Common symptoms include:

- Inability to control emotions or frequent outbursts
- Unusually quiet or submissive behavior
- Difficulty learning in school
- Interpersonal difficulties with siblings or classmates
- Unusual eating or sleeping behaviors
- Socially or emotionally inappropriate behavior for their age
- Lack of response to affection





## Longer-term Consequences of Abuse and Neglect



- Likelihood of Later Arrest
- Behavioral Implications
  - Studies show that being abused or neglected as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a *juvenile* by 59%; as an *adult*, by 28%
  - Adolescents who were victims of sexual assault are 3-5 times more likely to:
    - Suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder
    - Be abused again
    - Be dependent on drugs and alcohol
    - Commit delinquent acts

National Institute of Justice, 2010.



## *Longer-term Consequences of Abuse and Neglect*



### Violence as a Precursor to Later Victimization

Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey suggests the following:

- Nearly half of all adults are physically assaulted as children
- More than half of all women raped are raped before age 18
- Children who are victims of assault or rape are more likely to experience similar victimization as adults





# Why does Child Abuse and Neglect Occur?



Parent(s) may:

- Be overwhelmed or lack knowledge of critical issues related to parenting, financial, or other environmental factors
- Lack understanding of child's developmental stages and unreasonable expectations of child's abilities
- Be unaware of alternatives to corporal punishment or how to discipline child most effectively at each developmental stage
- Have difficulty in relationships, depression, or other mental health issues that may lead to abusive or neglectful behavior
- Lack knowledge of health, hygiene and nutritional needs of their children





## Where Does Child Abuse Occur?



- Child abuse and neglect occurs in every community at all socio-economic levels
- The risk factors are greater in families where parents:
  - Abuse alcohol and drugs
  - Have difficulty controlling their anger or stress
  - Appear disinterested in the care, safety, or well-being of their children
  - Are isolated from their families or communities





## *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*



Research has shown that parents and caregivers who have support—from family, friends, neighbors, and their communities—are:

- more likely to provide safe and healthy homes for their children. When parents lack this support or feel isolated, on the other hand, they may be more likely to make poor decisions that can lead to neglect or abuse.
- Increasingly, concerned citizens and organizations are realizing that the best way to prevent child abuse is to help parents develop the skills and identify the resources they need to understand and meet their children's emotional, physical, and developmental needs and protect their children from harm.





# Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect



Prevention is the best hope for reducing child abuse and neglect. Strengthening families and preventing child abuse requires a shared commitment of individuals and organizations in every community

Each of us has a role to play:

- Through individual actions
- Public discourse
- Community service
- Supporting public policies that address this issue





## *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*

Prevention programs/activities are offered through state, local, and Tribal governments, as well as community and faith-based organizations. They:

- May be intended for everyone, such as public service announcements (PSAs) or may be targeted for individuals, families, or groups
- Include common components, such as:
  - Public awareness, PSAs, posters, brochures, promoting child safety, healthy parenting, how to report suspected child abuse
  - Skills-based curricula that teach children safety and protection skills. Many of these focus on preventing sexual abuse
  - Parent education to help parents develop parenting skills
  - Parent support groups







## *What Does it Mean For USA Swimming to Respond to This Issue?*



- Supporting and creating a safe environment (visibility, privacy, access, travel, transportation)
- Centering on the healthy development of young people
- Providing strategies that work at every level of the organization
- Having measurable goals, a concrete plan, and is evaluated for impact
- Is consistent with USA Swimming's mission





## *How Does USA Swimming Do This?*



- Develop a Sound Policy Foundation
- Implement Best Practices that Support an Athlete Protection Program
- Education and Training at All Levels of the Organization
- Engage Athletes, Parents, Volunteers, Coaches, Club Owners in Safety Efforts
- Review process for Alleged Policy Violations
- Implement Continuous Quality Assurance



## Who Should USA Swimming Collaborate With?



- Victims
- Professional Experts in Child and Sexual Abuse,
- Professional Experts in Health and Mental Health
- Local Swim Clubs and Other Community Partners
- USOC and Other NGB's





## *Imagine an America ....*



*...where every child is healthy, safe and thriving*

*...where each child develops to their potential*

*...where all children are nurtured, getting what they need, as they require*

*...where all children grow into adults who are able to make positive contributions to family, community, and the nation.*





# Child Welfare League of America



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