

World Affairs Blog Network: Children

<http://children.foreignpolicyblogs.com/>

October 6, 2009

Caring About the Treatment of our Children

Recently The Future of Children, which is a collaboration between the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, published the journal; Preventing Child Maltreatment, The Future of Children, vol. 19, no. 2, Fall 2009. The full journal can be found [Here](#).

The report begins with the question; “*Why Should We Care About Preventing Child Maltreatment?*”. Maybe the answer to the question is obvious, maybe it isn’t as obvious as it seems. Simply we should care as they are children and they need our protection, but why we should care so much and place increased efforts is less obvious to most than it seems. Of course if I ask you if its ok to mistreat or abuse a child you will say “no”. When it comes to the issue of sexual or physical abuse the problems and answers are often easier to see, but in regards to maltreatment the areas often become confusing and gray. One I know many of you are already asking yourself what is “maltreatment”.

However the issue is not just about awareness, but its about when we care and who’s children we care about. We must care about not only our own, but all children, for the effects of their maltreatment is spread far and wide.

Therefore going back to the question, “*Why Should We Care About Preventing Child Maltreatment?*”, the reports summarized answer to the question is:

In 2006, 800,000 children were identified by state agencies as having been abused or neglected. More than 1,500 children died as a result of maltreatment. High rates of maltreatment are a cause for grave concern. Further, maltreatment often has profound adverse effects on children’s health and development. Maltreated children are more likely than others to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and engage in criminal activity. They may very well enter the child welfare system, a complex web of social and legal services whose purpose is to ensure children’s safety. The child welfare system is expensive. Taking into account the costs of case management, administrative expenses, services to families and children, foster care, adoption services, administrative services, hospitalization, mental health care, and law enforcement that stem directly from maltreatment, the total for direct expenses is \$33 billion. In light of the toll that maltreatment takes on child well-being, as well as its high financial costs, the expert contributors to this volume explore the vexing question of how to prevent child abuse and neglect.

What is maltreatment? The maltreatment of a child includes all forms of abuse and neglect. Often the signs of abuse seem clearer, and the issue of neglect is missed. However neglect is the most preventable form of child abuse. What is Neglect? Neglect can include;

- Not providing a child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or safety
- Leaving a child unattended or home alone
- Leaving, or placing, a child in an unsafe place
- Not getting proper or adequate medical attention for a child
- Keeping a child out of school

What is also often missed general dialog is the subject of verbal and emotional abuse, which often escalate over time and can turn into physical abuse. While this type of abuse is most often spoken it can also be carried out in written form, and other non-verbal actions. Verbal and emotional abuse can include;

- Ignoring, ridiculing, disrespecting, and criticizing a child
- Manipulating a child's words
- Humiliation
- Manipulating a child in order to influence them to conduct in negative behaviors
- Making a child feel unwanted and unloved
- Threatening to leave or abandon a child
- Blaming a child for ones actions or abusive behavior
- Isolating the child from school, friends or family

In conclusion the report ends with, "What Approaches should be Implemented to Prevent Child Maltreatment?"

Prevention holds the key to reducing child maltreatment in the United States and to bringing down its well-documented long-term costs, both human and financial.

What can be done? The report addressed the following in regards to the child maltreatment prevention:

- Use Risk Factors to Create Accurate Risk Assessments.
- Invest in Proven Community-wide Interventions.
- Rethink the Approach to Families with Drug or Alcohol Abuse Parental addictions

The report in summary states that the first step in reducing maltreatment of children is to, "redouble efforts to collect evidence on the effectiveness of prevention programs, in part by constructing programs in ways that makes it possible to evaluate rigorously their effects." Secondly the report stated that the second step, and most needed in my opinion, is to fund prevention programs, one such way as suggested is to increase and "strengthening early childhood programs by expanding home-visiting programs and improving the quality of child care."

The report highlights that we need to place more focus and care on the issue of the maltreatment of our children, and all children. Children do deserve our undivided and devoted attention, however we continue to fail our children as we continue to provide inadequate protection and services to those children who are abused and neglected. Children's rights are not just a battle to be won internationally, children's rights is a battle that continues to be fought daily on our streets, in our schools and in our homes.

For more on child abuse and the strained welfare system in the US and what you can do to help in, [Reducing child abuse and neglect here at home](#), please see the following article I posted on the [DC Human Rights Examiner](#).

For additional information and resources see; [Crisis Hotlines](#), [Links for Abused Children and Parents](#) and [The Signs of Child Abuse](#)

Posted by Cassandra Clifford on October 6, 2009 at 1:01 PM

<http://children.foreignpolicyblogs.com/2009/10/06/caring-about-the-treatment-of-our-children/>