THE NEGLECT...
OF NEGLECT

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- “...Neglected children experience worse outcomes than physically or sexually abused children and non-maltreated children...

- Over a range of cognitive, developmental, psychosocial and physical parameters (APSAC Practice Guidelines, 2008)”
Neglect has been identified as the central feature of all maltreatment. Neglect is most common/frequently reported maltreatment type (59-71%). Neglect is least understood form of child maltreatment.
Early Recognition of Pervasive Impact of Neglect

“...the essential element in child abuse is not the intention to destroy a child but rather the inability of a parent to nurture [his or her] offspring (Newberger, 1973)“
CHALLENGES IMPACTING NEGLECT AS MALTREATMENT

- Classification types
- Definitions
- Cultural concerns
- Socio-economic considerations
- Co-morbidity
Classification Types

- American Humane Society*: 4 Neglect types
  1. **Physical** (includes inadequate supervision; abandonment)
  2. **Emotional** (includes witnessing intimate partner violence; inadequate nurturance)
  3. **Educational** (includes chronic truancy; inadequate home schooling)
  4. **Medical** (includes dental)

*APSAC, 2008
Other Classification Types

Various researchers include:

1. **Environmental** (living in at-risk areas)
2. **Cognitive** (inadequate support of..)
3. **Dimensional Ratings** (include severity & developmental period)
4. **Assessment of Intentionality** (of offender)
Definitions of Neglect

- Broad Legal: 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- Act of Omission - failure to provide care; child’s needs unmet
- **Physical** - most widely recognized & identified
- **Medical** – Failure to provide required/recommended medical care
Definitions of Neglect (Cont’d)

- **Mental Health** – “Refusal” to comply with recommended therapeutic procedures
- **Educational** – Failure to comply with state school attendance, children’s schooling, special education programming
- **Emotional Neglect/Psychologically Unavailable** - most difficult to substantiate (e.g. attachment difficulties; extreme=non-organic failure to thrive)
Cultural Concerns (Examples)

- Hispanics - “abandonment” in infant car seats (Garbarino, 1991)
- “Western” standards – child sleeps alone in separate room from parents
- Parents’ freedom of choice & religion - Medical recommendations (e.g. immunizations related to Autism)
- Latino females significantly lower neglect v AA and WNH
Socio-Economic Considerations

- Most common demographic linked to neglect is poverty
- Poverty positively correlated to neglect more than other forms of maltreatment
- African American children more at risk (44%) as overrepresented in poverty*
- Neglect learned: Parents neglected as children > more likely to neglect children
Co-Morbidity of Maltreatment

- Longitudinal study-65% of school-aged children experienced >1 form
- 45% > 3 forms of maltreatment
- 65% experienced supervisory neglect
- Failure to provide basic needs 49%
- Cumulative adverse long term effects of more than 1 type of maltreatment
- *Physical neglect, PA, and verbal abuse
“Critical” vs. Chronic events

- Majority of neglect is repetitive, sub-threshold, chronic
- No clear critical event
- CPS and law enforcement respond to critical events
- Neglect is a persistent condition
Chronic nature of neglect

- Chronic, insidious nature > long term damage
- Long series of “subcritical” events & chronically poor living conditions more detrimental to child’s development than critical events
Consequences of Neglect – Infancy/early childhood

Prospective, longitudinal study of 267 children born to at-risk mothers (Minnesota Mother-Child Project):

- Observable developmental delays by 9 months for emotionally neglected (EN) children
- Significantly lower IQ by kindergarten for physically neglected children (v. general pop, other forms of MT & EN); poorer problem solving skills between 2-4 yrs.
Specific Consequences

- Expressive & receptive language deficits/delays
- Greater communication deficits with longer periods of social deprivation
- Bi-directional finding - parents engage less
- Peer problems & social withdrawal
- Disruptive behavior > teacher discord
Long Term Consequences

- 2/3rd emotionally neglected (EN) anxiously attached by age 1
- By age 2, EN group easily frustrated, angry, noncompliant problem solvers, *markedly lack enthusiasm*
- If physically neglected during preschool age >kindergarten inattention, aggression, anxiety, *uninvolved learning*
Long Term Childhood Struggles of “Pure” Neglect Group

- Lower grades in school
- Highest teacher ratings of learning problems
- Most grade repeats (v. other MT forms)
- Highest # of school absences
- Worse performance in language & reading
- Aggressive behaviors (< those abused)
- Delinquency
Long-term Outcomes for Adolescents & Adults

- Lowest grades & test scores compared to controls and other abused teens
- Lower IQ scores for 28 year olds with neglect history (v. no maltreatment)
Most Significant Long-term Outcome (Nikulina et al, 2011)

- Prospective, cohort, design of 507 adults (& 497 matched controls) followed from childhood
- Neglect strong predictor of academic achievement (...when family & neighborhood poverty added to statistical analysis...)
- **Neglect alone...predicted lower academics**
- Neglect appears to be most damaging MT
Clinical Consequences

- **Neglect is also psychopathology predictor**
  - Internalizing Disorders: Depression, anxiety, dissociation, lower self worth; suicidal ideation (v other MT)
  - Vulnerability for Externalizing Disorders when combined with other MT forms
Adults with Personality Disorders report neglect history as well as other MT

- Paranoid Personality Disorder
- Avoidant Personality Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Passive Aggressive Personality Disorder
Ecological* Considerations for Neglect & Prevention

- Ontogenic (Individual “offender” characteristics & child’s influence)
- Microsystem (Family factors)
- Exosystem (Community factors)
- Macrosystem (Cultural values/beliefs that perpetuate neglect)

(*Belsky, 1993)
Ecological Model

- Less punitive approach to neglect
- Modifies factors at all levels
  - Child
  - Caregiver
  - Family
  - Community
  - Society
THANK YOU!!!!