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1. EACH DAY, 3 CHILDREN DIE IN THE US B/C OF CHILD ABUSE

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES II. 29. 99 Joe DiMaggio's Children Hospital, "Ten Critical Threats To America's Children")

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Part 2 - Abuse and Neglect at Home

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Everyone in America should agree that the horrifying epidemic of child abuse and neglect in this country must be eliminated. The number of children abused and neglected across the United States stands at an all-time high, while our child protection systems are fragmented, strained by huge caseloads, and under-financed. The numbers are heartbreaking. During 1997, an estimated 3,195,000 children were reported abused or neglected. The number of children reported to authorities as abused or neglected increased a staggering 41 percent between 1988 and 1997. (1) Each day in the United States, more than three children die as a result of abuse or neglect. During 1996, when an estimated 1,185 children died of abuse or neglect, 82 percent of the victims were under the age of five and 42 percent never reached their first birthday. Between 1985 and 1996, the rate of child deaths due to abuse and neglect increased by 34 percent. (2)

Recent studies support the common sense notion that people who are victimized as children often struggle to overcome such experiences in their teen and adult years. Children who are abused and neglected often have problems involving juvenile crime, poor academic performance, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and other social ills. (3)

2. 3 MILLION CHILDREN ARE ABUSED AND NEGLECTED ANNUALLY

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•Child abuse and neglect are at epidemic levels in the United States. During 1997, an estimated 3,195,000 children were reported to authorities as abused and neglected. Reports of child abuse and neglect rose a staggering 41 percent between 1988 and 1997. Children who are abused and neglected often experience problems down the road involving juvenile crime, poor academic performance, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and other social ills.

3. CHILD ABUSE CAUSES HOMELESSNESS

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Often, children who are abused or neglected wind up living in out-of-home care, such as family foster homes, kinship care and residential programs. However, despite the surge in reported incidents of child abuse and neglect, the number of such facilities in some instances has declined. By the end of 1996, more than 530,000 children were estimated to be living in out-of-home care, yet there were 140,000 licensed family foster care homes, a decrease of more than 20,000 homes from the previous year. Teenagers represent about 30 percent of the children in foster care.

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homeless

The legacy of child abuse and neglect is seen starkly in the experiences of the 25,000 to 30,000 young people who leave foster care each year to take on the responsibilities of adult life, either by reaching 18 or by being emancipated. Within one year, 25 to 40 percent experience homelessness, only 40 to 50 percent will have completed high school, less than half will have jobs, and over 60 percent of the young women will have babies within four years. (8)

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