

ASU School of Social Work ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY ssw.asu.edu

# EXAMINATION OF NEGLECT

*What makes it chronic and what can we do about it?*

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## OVERVIEW

- Historical Context
- Scope of the Problem
- Contextual Considerations
- Recognizing the Impact
- Understanding Risk
- Characteristics of Families
- Promising Opportunities for Intervention

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## PART 1: HISTORY OF NEGLECT

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## DEFINING CHRONIC NEGLECT

CHRONIC NEGLECT STARVES THE DEVELOPING MIND OF STIMULATION AND DENIES THE CHILD INFORMATION AND INTEREST ABOUT THE SELF AND OTHERS.

- One or more needs basic to a child's healthy development are not met
- The neglect is perpetrated by a parent or caregiver
- The neglect happens on a recurring or enduring basis



(Kaplan et al., 2009)

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## TYPES OF NEGLECT

NEGLECT IS TYPIFIED BY AN ONGOING PATTERN OF INADEQUATE CARE, AND IS READILY OBSERVED BY INDIVIDUALS IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE CHILD.

Type of Neglect	Examples
Physical	Nutrition, Inadequate Clothing, Hygiene
Abandonment	Parents/Caregivers
Medical	Health Care, Mental Health Treatment
Psychological/Emotional	Deprivation of Nurturance, Emotional Absence
Developmental	Failure to address developmental needs, Failure to foster normal development
Supervisory	Inadequate Supervision, Parental Incapacitation, Entrapment
Guidance	Exposure to illegal activities
Educational	School Enrollment/Absenteeism

(DHHS, 2016)

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## NEGLECT OF NEGLECT

DESPITE INCREASED AWARENESS OF CHILD MALTREATMENT, NEGLECT OFTEN IS UNREPORTED AND MISUNDERSTOOD.

- History of Child Welfare Intervention
- Political Implications
- Cultural Considerations
- Confirmation Difficulties
- Role of Government to Intervene




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### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

EXISTING RESEARCH CHALLENGES THE COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT NEGLECT IS NOT AS SERIOUS AS OTHER FORMS OF MALTREATMENT.

- Substance abuse does not impact children
- Domestic violence doesn't impact safety unless children get hurt
- It's okay if the home condition is cluttered or even dirty, but no safety hazards are present
- Home is not dirty by "DCS standards"
- Neglect isn't as harmful to children as physical abuse
- If I can't see it or measure, it doesn't exist
- There are no long-term consequences to children
- By addressing neglect I am judging a family's lifestyle

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### PART 2: SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

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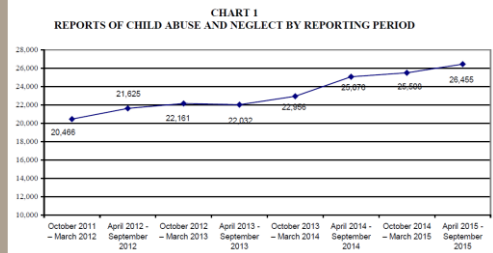
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### THE DATA ARE CLEAR

ARIZONA TRENDS CLEARLY SHOW A CONTINUAL INCREASE IN REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE ARIZONA CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE, PLACING FURTHER STRAIN ON ARIZONA'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM.



(Children's Action Alliance, 2016 from DCS data)

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### PART 3: CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

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#### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

CUMULATIVE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL CHANGES HAVE LED TO AN DECREASE IN AVAILABLE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS, AND A SUBSEQUENT INCREASE IN ARIZONA'S FOSTER CARE POPULATION.

- Economic Crisis
- Decline in Funding for Childcare Subsidies
- Reductions in System Capacity
- Increased Need for Supportive Services
- Child Welfare Services Mismatched with Needs
- Resource Allocation



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#### CONTEXT IS CRITICAL

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT IN WHICH NEGLECT IS OCCURRING IS CRITICAL TO APPROPRIATELY ASSESSING THE PROBLEM, AND SUBSEQUENT INTERVENTION

- Definition Determines the Response
  - Shaped by Values, Culture, and the Community
  - Assumptions about Intentions
- Care Occurs on a Continuum
  - When Does Care Become Neglectful?
- Policy, Practice & Research
  - Varying Definitions Across Jurisdictions

Single Incident



Chronic Neglect

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## PART 4: RECOGNIZING THE IMPACT

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### CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC NEGLECT

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF CHRONIC NEGLECT CAN ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

- Impaired Brain Development
- Attachment Disorders
- Cognitive Development
- Emotional Dysregulation
- Social Self Confidence
- Social Competence Concerns
- Perseverance in Problem Solving
- Empathy and Social Conscience
- Developmental Delays & Behavioral Concerns
- Diminished Sense of Safety, Stability, and Well-Being

(Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002, Perry 2003)

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## PART 5: UNDERSTANDING RISK

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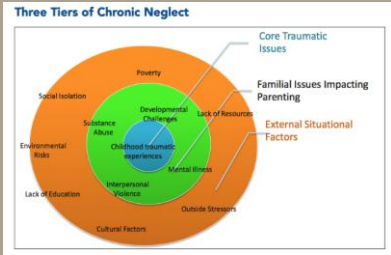
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# THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

THE EXISTING LITERATURE ON CHILD NEGLECT RECOGNIZES THIS MULTIFACETED PROBLEM REQUIRES A FRAMEWORK THAT ADDRESSES ALL THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FROM A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE




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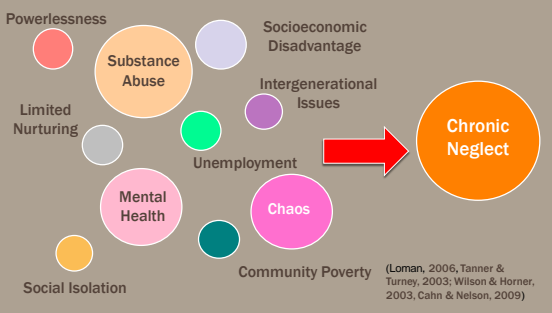
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# UNDERSTANDING RISKS

RISKS ARE OFTEN CUMULATIVE AND FLUID AS HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITIONS AND FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE




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# PART 6: CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES

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### PARENTAL INDICATORS

RECOGNIZING POTENTIAL INDICATORS FOR NEGLECT CAN ALLOW FOR APPROPRIATE CONNECTION TO SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

- Caregiver Limitations
  - Mental Health Concerns (Depression, Irrational or Bizarre Behaviors)
  - Caregiver Substance Abuse (Drug or Alcohol Abuse)
  - Single Parent Household
- Parental Capacity
  - Indifference Towards the Child
  - Unrealistic Developmental Expectations
  - Views Child as Entirely Bad, Worthless or Burdensome
  - Looks to Child to Fulfill Emotional Needs
  - Denial or Blame of Problems Concerning the Child
  - Large Family Size With First Birth as a Teen

(Cahn & Nelson, 2009)

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### CHILD INDICATORS

MANY INDICATORS FOR CHILD NEGLECT ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED OR MINIMIZED DUE TO AN UNDERESTIMATION OF THE IMPACT ON THE CHILD.

- Declining School Performance
- Untreated Medical Concerns or Delay in Treatment
- Parentification
- Disorganized or Insecure Attachment
- Basic Needs not Consistently Met (clothing, nutrition)
- Low Energy Levels
- Flat or Depressed Affect
- Hygiene
- Lack of Supervision
- Often Unsupervised or Responsible for Supervising Younger Siblings

(Cahn & Nelson, 2009)

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### FAMILY INDICATORS

THE NEEDS OF NEGLECTFUL FAMILIES ARE VARIED AND COMPLEX, CALLING FOR AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH.

- Home Environment
  - Dirty, Unsafe
  - Disorganized Unstable, Violent neighborhood
- Household Members
  - Transient
  - Many adults living in the home
  - Unrelated adults living in the home
  - History of criminal involvement or law enforcement interaction
  - Substance Abusing
- Household Characteristics
  - Poverty
  - Unemployment
  - Limited Support System
  - Domestic Violence

(Cahn & Nelson, 2009)

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## PART 7: PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERVENTION

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### TURNING INFORMATION INTO ACTION

WHEN ONE FORM OF NEGLECT IS IDENTIFIED WITHIN A FAMILY SYSTEM, THE IMPACT CAN BE FAR-REACHING. FURTHER ASSESSMENT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS IMPACTS OF NEGLECT ON THE CHILD, AND IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSE

- Nature of Neglect (Type, Severity, Chronicity)
- Family's Understanding of the Neglect
- Risk Factors Contributing to the neglect
- Protective Factors Buffering the Impact of Neglect
- What Problems need Further Assessment?
- Living Situation: Safety and Stability
- Support System
- Community Involvement/Social Isolation

(Johnson 2009, DeParfilis, 2006, Jones and Gutta, 2003)

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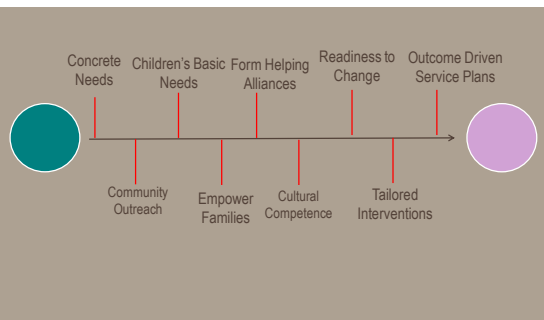
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### INTERVENTION PLANNING

THERE IS A GROWING CONSENSUS AMONG RESEARCHERS AND POLICY-MAKERS THAT A CAREFULLY COORDINATED, COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE SYSTEM HOLDS THE GREATEST PROMISE FOR IMPROVING THE LIFE CHANCES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN



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### PLANNING FOR CHANGE

CHRONIC NEGLECT INTERVENTIONS HAVE GREAT POTENTIAL TO REDUCE OCCURRENCE THROUGH ADDRESSING RISK FACTORS WITHIN INDIVIDUAL PARENTS, THEIR IMMEDIATE CONTEXT, AND THE BROADER SOCIETAL SYSTEM

- Building a Trusting Relationship with the Entire Family
- Tailored Interventions
- Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, and Related to Outcomes
- Plan for Longer Intervention Planning
- Ecological Approach
- Interventions which Focus on Skill Building
- Make More Frequent/Intensive Visits over a Longer Time



(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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### CONCRETE SUPPORTS

CONNECTING FAMILIES TO RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS FAMILY-SPECIFIC NEEDS SUCH AS CHILDCARE, RESPITE, AND HOUSING WILL HELP FAMILIES MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS AND ALLOW PARENTS TO TEND TO PARENTING.

#### Everyday Actions:

- Meet Concrete (Survival Needs) First
- Help Families to Develop Skills and Tools they need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports
- Assist Families in "Digging Deeper" to Understand Root Causes
- Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis
- Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community
- Assist Families in Connecting to Resources
- Empower Families to Identify Additional Resources
- Assist in Building Life and Problem Solving Skills around Time and Money, Household Management, and Family Planning

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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### PARENTAL RESILIENCE

EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO SEEK HELP AND TAKE STEPS TO COMBAT STRESS IS PART OF BUILDING BOTH RESILIENCE AND HOPE. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES INCLUDES HELPING ALL FAMILY MEMBERS TRANSLATE THEIR CONCERNS INTO SOLUTIONS.

#### Everyday Actions:

- Assist Parents in Understanding How their Ability to Cope with Stress may Impact their Parenting Behaviors and their Child's Development
- Empower Families to Seek Help and Take Steps to Combat Stress
- Partner with Families to Translate Existing Concerns into Specific Needs that can be Discussed and Resolved
- Facilitate the Modeling of Coping Behaviors by Parents in the Home
- Model Problem-Solving Skills
- Support Families in Strengthening their Communication Skills

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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### SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

IDENTIFYING WAYS TO HELP PARENTS EXPAND THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS AND BUILD A BROADER BASE OF PARENTING SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL. PARENTS WITH STRONG SOCIAL NETWORKS OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS HAVE BETTER SUPPORT IN TIMES OF STRESS.

**Everyday Actions:**

- Help Families to Value, Build, Sustain, and Use Social Connections
- Assist Families in Identifying ways in which past issues/behaviors/concerns have impacted their social connections
- Facilitate mutual peer support
- Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities
- Help strengthen support networks with positive peers
- Connect families with informal networks in the community

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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### PARENTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT TO ANTICIPATE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP, AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PARENTING WILL HELP PARENTS LEARN WHAT TO LOOK FOR AS THEIR CHILDREN DEVELOP, AND ASSIST THEM IN REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

**Everyday Actions:**

- Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children
- Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development
- Assist Families in Identifying Ways in Which They Can Promote Their Child's Development in Multiple Areas
- Encourage Parents to Observe, Ask Questions, Explore Parenting Issues and Try Out New Strategies
- Empower Families to Engage in On-going Follow-up With Their Child's Medical Providers and Develop Relationships with Professionals in the Child's Life
- Provide Information on Keeping Children Safe
- Address Parenting Issues From a Strength-Based Perspective

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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### SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

WHEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN HAVE STRONG, WARM FEELINGS FOR ONE ANOTHER, THEY DEVELOP TRUST THAT THEIR PARENTS WILL PROVIDE WHAT THEY NEED TO THRIVE, INCLUDING LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, POSITIVE GUIDANCE, AND PROTECTION.

**Everyday Actions:**

- Assist Parents in Recognizing Their Own Needs, as Well as the Needs of their Children
- Help Parents Foster their Child's Social-Emotional Development
- Assist Parents in Developing Secure Attachments with their Children
- Model Nurturing Care to Children
- Include children's social and emotional development activities in programming
- Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
- Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support
- Promote self-care and teaming

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016)

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## QUESTIONS?

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