

First three years of life are critical to a child's success

Child abuse contributes to:

Damaged brain development

- Prevents vital connections for early learning and alters brain growth
- Changes brain chemicals that affect learning and ability to handle stress
- Leads to heightened fear and anxiety in other settings, disrupts concentration

A study of sexually abused children, many of whom had been physically abused, also found that they had smaller brain volumes. (De Bellis, et al., 1999).

Poor school performance

- Lowers scores on standardized tests
- Contributes to learning disorders
- Increases likelihood of repeating a grade
- Contributes to problem behaviors and aggression
- Makes enrollment in special education more likely
- Contributes to language delays

A study of abused and neglected children found they had lower grades, more suspensions, more disciplinary referrals, and more grade repetitions than normally treated children, independent of the effects of poverty. (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996).

Increased crime and delinquency

- Over half of juvenile delinquents committed to Massachusetts Department of Youth Services come from families with confirmed reports of abuse
- Increases the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality by 40 percent

Youth who experienced maltreatment during childhood were significantly more likely to display a variety of problem behaviors during adolescence, including serious and violent delinquency, teen pregnancy, drug use, low academic achievement, and mental health problems. (Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997).



Children's Trust Fund

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