

# Chronic Families, Chronic Neglect

Debra Gilmore, JD

Prepared with Caren Kaplan, ACSW

American Humane Association

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## Objectives:



Participants will:

- Increase research-based knowledge of chronic child neglect
- Learn strategies to reduce repeat maltreatment and apply those strategies to individual family cases.



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# Values

What should every child have?



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# Prevalence

- Prevalence
  - Neglect = more than the majority of all child maltreatment reports and substantiations *for more than a decade.*
- Repeated exposures
  - If exposed to one type of maltreatment, likely exposed to more than one type (over time or chronically)
  - Exposure to multiple types of maltreatment leads to high rates of repeat referrals to CPS
  - neglected children 46% more likely to experience recurrence



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# Fatal Consequences

- More than half of all child maltreatment fatalities can be attributed either solely to neglect (35.6%) or neglect co-occurring with other types of maltreatment (25.2%)

(US DHHS 2003).



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# Definitions - Neglect

- GA: A “deprived child” is a child who
  - Is without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education, as required by law, or other care or control necessary for the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health or morals
  - Has been placed for care or adoption in violation of the law
  - Is without a parent, guardian, or custodian

O.C.G.A. Sec. 15-11-2(8) (2008)

- Generally: *Omission(s)* of a child’s basic needs



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# Definitions – Neglect (cont'd)

- Forms of Neglect
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Medical
  - Educational
- Types of Neglect
  - Situational/  
Circumstantial
  - Recurring
  - Pervasive/Long-term
- Safety vs. Risk of Neglect
  - Safety: Immediate danger
  - Risk: Spectrum of Low to High



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# Definitions – Chronic Neglect

- American Humane’s working definition: an ongoing, serious pattern of deprivation of a child’s basic physical, developmental, and/or emotional needs by a parent or caregiver.

 Results in accumulation of harm to the child



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# Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs



Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and Personality (2nd ed.)*. New York: Harper & Row.



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# Georgia's Statistics

Of 92,952 reports made to Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) in 2006:

- 16% were screened out
- 25% were diversions
- 60% were accepted and entered into system
  - 41% of entered reports were substantiated
    - 23% of investigated cases were opened for services
    - 45% of substantiated cases were closed

(GA DHR 2006)



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# Associated Characteristics

- Characteristics of the parent/caregiver
  - Extreme poverty
  - Mental health/substance abuse issues/Multiple impairments
  - Low educational achievement
  - Social isolation
- Characteristics of the family
  - 3+ children
  - Child placed out of home previously

(Gilbert 2008; Loman & Siegel 2006; Nelson, Saunders & Landsman 1993)



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# Associated Characteristics (cont'd)

- Characteristics of communities (for child maltreatment generally)
  - Poverty
  - High crime
  - Low social cohesion

(Gilbert 2008; Loman & Siegel 2006)



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# Associated Characteristics (cont'd)

- Effects on children (cumulative)
  - Increased risk of behavioral/mental health problems
  - Increased possibility of aggression and criminal behavior
  - Detrimental effects on early brain development
- Characteristics of children
  - Disabilities or mental retardation
  - Young age

(Thomas et al. 2003; Gilbert et al. 2008; Loman & Siegel 2006)



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# Protective Factors

- Good health
- Above average intelligence
- Hobbies, interests
- Good peer relationships, good social skills
- Easy temperament/positive disposition, positive self-esteem

(Thomas et al. 2003)



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# Understanding Chronic Neglect

- It's complex. It's multi-dimensional.
- IAR Study:
  - 55.5% of families reported to CPS had subsequent report within five years
  - The more frequently family was encountered by CPS the more likely it was for allegations of neglect
  - BUT new reports more often for a *different* report type or reason than for the same type or reason as the initial report

(Loman 2007).



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# Costs of Chronic Neglect

- Chronic neglect as subset of child abuse/neglect accounts for a disproportionate amount of child welfare resources....



- Cost of chronically neglecting families seven times that of a non-chronic family: about \$39,452 compared to \$5,630 (Loman & Siegel, 2004).



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# Recognizing Chronic Neglect

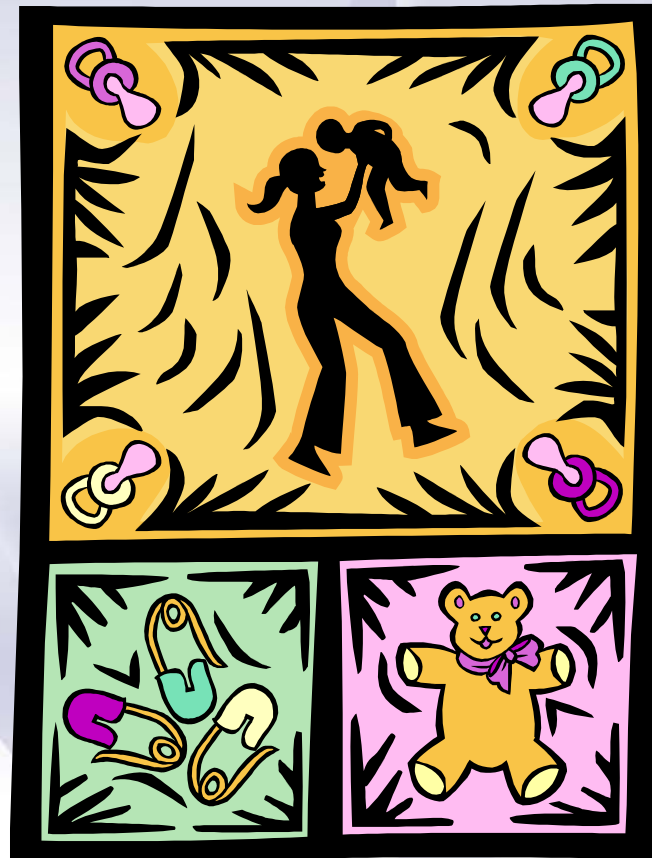
- “The factors that retard children’s futures are interrelated; connecting the dots is the clearest way to see the lines of cause and effect.” David Shipler, author of *The Working Poor*



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# Case Study



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (MO)

- MO Child Welfare Policy Manual
  - recommended practice for families experiencing chronic neglect
    - Family Engagement, Family-Centered Practices
    - Collaboration with other community supports and providers (juvenile court, health organizations, parenting education, ministry, neighborhood organizations, etc.); use of a team approach
  - Emphasizes that case closure should occur only after observing sustained improvement over time.

MO Child Welfare Manual, Section 7, Chapter 10. Found online at [www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/section7/ch1\\_33/sec7ch10.htm](http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/section7/ch1_33/sec7ch10.htm)



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (WA)

- WA State: It is the intent of the legislature that the department of social and health services be permitted to intervene in cases of chronic neglect where the health, welfare, or safety of the child is at risk. One incident of neglect may not rise to the level requiring state intervention; however, a pattern of neglect has been shown to cause damage to the health and well-being of the child subject to the neglect.

*Justin & Raidin Act 2005 c 512 § 2.*



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (WA)

- “It is the intent of the legislature that, when chronic neglect has been found to exist in a family, the legal system reinforce the need for the parent's **early engagement in services** that will decrease the likelihood of future neglect. However, if the parents fail to comply with the offered necessary and available services, the state has the authority to intervene to protect the children who are at risk. If a parent fails to engage in available substance abuse or mental health services necessary to maintain the safety of a child or a parent fails to correct substance abuse deficiencies that jeopardize the safety of a child, the state has the authority to intervene to protect a child.”

*Justin & Raidin Act 2005 c 512 § 2.*



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (WA)

- Revised definition of “negligent treatment or maltreatment” to include “the cumulative effects of a **pattern** of conduct, behavior, or inaction...” (emphasis added)

*RCW 26.44.020(15); Justin & Raidin Act 2005 c 512 § 2.*



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (WA)

- Intake – intake supervisor will review case history and current allegations on all screened out referrals that have chronicity flag (next slide) to:
  - Review patterns or history to determine if cumulative harm exists.
  - Assess if additional information is necessary to make final screening decision.
- Assessment – When family is assessed as moderately high or high risk & person meets chronically referred criteria, social worker must:
  - Follow staffing procedures
  - Complete Family Action Plan w/active link to services/supports
  - Review case with CPS supervisor before case closure.



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# What's Being Done? Policy Changes (WA)

- New database has “Chronically Referred Person Indicator” built in.
- Chronically Referred Person is defined as:
  - 3 accepted referrals in the prior year;
  - 4 accepted referrals in the prior 2 years;
  - 5 accepted referrals in the prior 3 years; or
  - 2 or more founded allegations in the past 2–6 CPS referrals.



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# What's Being Done Promising Practices

## Prevention Models

- Circle of Security
- Family Connections
- Healthy Start/Healthy Families
- Helping Families Prevent Child Neglect
- Nurse Family Partnership



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# What's Being Done Promising Practices

## **Intervention Models**

- Nurturing Parents Program
- Project Safe Care (adaptation of Project 12-Ways)/Project 12-Ways
- Social Network Intervention
- Strengthening Families Program
- Building Healthy Families



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# What's Being Done Research

- Dee Wilson, Northwest Institute for Children & Families, Seattle, WA (<http://depts.washington.edu/nwicf/>)
- Loman & Siegel, Institute of Applied Research, St. Louis, MO ([www.iarstl.org](http://www.iarstl.org))
- January 2009 Chronic Neglect Research Meeting hosted by American Humane ([www.americanhumane.org/chronicneglect](http://www.americanhumane.org/chronicneglect))



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# What Can Courts Do?

## INDIVIDUAL CASES:

- Adjudication:
  - Evidence of pattern of deprivation
  - Accumulation of harm to child
- Disposition and reviews:
  - Expect court reports to include family's past history.
  - Listen to parents and parents' assessments of their needs (basic needs may need to be met first)



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# What Can Courts Do?

## INDIVIDUAL CASES:

- Disposition and reviews:
  - Acknowledge strengths and accomplishments.
    - Small improvements may be significant and should be acknowledged as such.
- From petition through permanency
  - Holistic approach → early identification
  - Individualized consideration of reasonable efforts and contrary to welfare findings.



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# What Can Courts Do? (cont'd.)

## INDIVIDUAL CASES:

- Intensity and duration of intervention matter.
  - Find ways within existing legal limits to obtain longer-term services for chronically neglecting families
- Think creatively – explore who or what entity can best carry out a task or provide longer-term assistance.
- Subpoena power – bring outside providers and collaborative agencies into court when necessary.



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# What Can Courts Do?

## SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS:

- Limit continuances.
- Be a community partner in collaboration.
- Maintain awareness of local/community resources AND gaps, especially:
  - Concrete (basic) services
  - Long-term informal and formal supports
    - Churches, strong community leaders, Project Safe Care
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)
  - Meetings/conferences, training and technical assistance, flexibility



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# What Can States/Systems Do?

## ADDRESSING THE POVERTY CONNECTION:

- Affordable child care.
- Adequate supply of low-income housing.
- Increased educational opportunities.
- Increased employment opportunities.

Nelson, Saunders & Landsman (1993)

## ADDRESSING THE COMPLEXITY OF NEEDS:

- Holistic approach to families
- Community-based collaboration
- Family engagement
- Comprehensive, long-term prevention and treatment initiatives



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# American Humane's Chronic Neglect Initiative

- November 2007: American Humane announced the launch of its Chronic Neglect Initiative
- Jan-Dec. 2008: joint presentations, meetings and exchanges of information with others interested in chronic neglect.
- January 2009: jointly held Chronic Neglect Research Meeting with American Humane's Child Protection Research Center
- March 2009: American Humane's *Protecting Children* journal will publish an edition dedicated to chronic neglect
- Spring 2009: AHA will begin hosting regional forums on chronic neglect
- 2009-2010: More regional forums and activities are planned....



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# Questions?



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# American Humane's Chronic Neglect Initiative

## Contact American Humane for More Information:

Debra Gilmore, JD

Program Manager, Child Protection Reform

P.O. Box 148, Sneads Ferry, NC 28460

(910) 327-0820

[debrag@americanhumane.org](mailto:debrag@americanhumane.org)

## Check our Website for Updates:

[www.americanhumane.org/chronicneglect](http://www.americanhumane.org/chronicneglect)



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