Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect is defined in state law as any form of poor treatment of a person under age 18 by a caregiver, parent, or another authority that results in harm or potential for harm to the child. This includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse or neglect.

Children subjected to abuse and neglect experience physical, emotional, and psychological consequences that can affect them throughout their lives. In addition to any immediate physical injuries they sustain, abuse has been shown to cause long-term consequences for social interactions, thinking skills, language development, and academic achievement. The experience of abuse and/or neglect in childhood increases the victim's risk of mental health issues, substance abuse, chronic disease, obesity, and sexual risk taking. The total direct and indirect costs of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. are estimated at $80 billion annually.

The 2017 state Legislature created a Child Abuse and Neglect Review Commission and charged it with educating the public, service providers, and policymakers about child abuse and fatalities, and strategies for intervention and prevention. The commission developed a strategic plan for reducing child abuse and neglect, which it will present to the 2019 Legislature.

64.7% of child out-of-home placements in MT were associated with parental substance abuse in April 2016

MT Dept. of Justice

MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services, Child and Family Services Division

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