

THE LONGTERM IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT ON ADULT PHYSICAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

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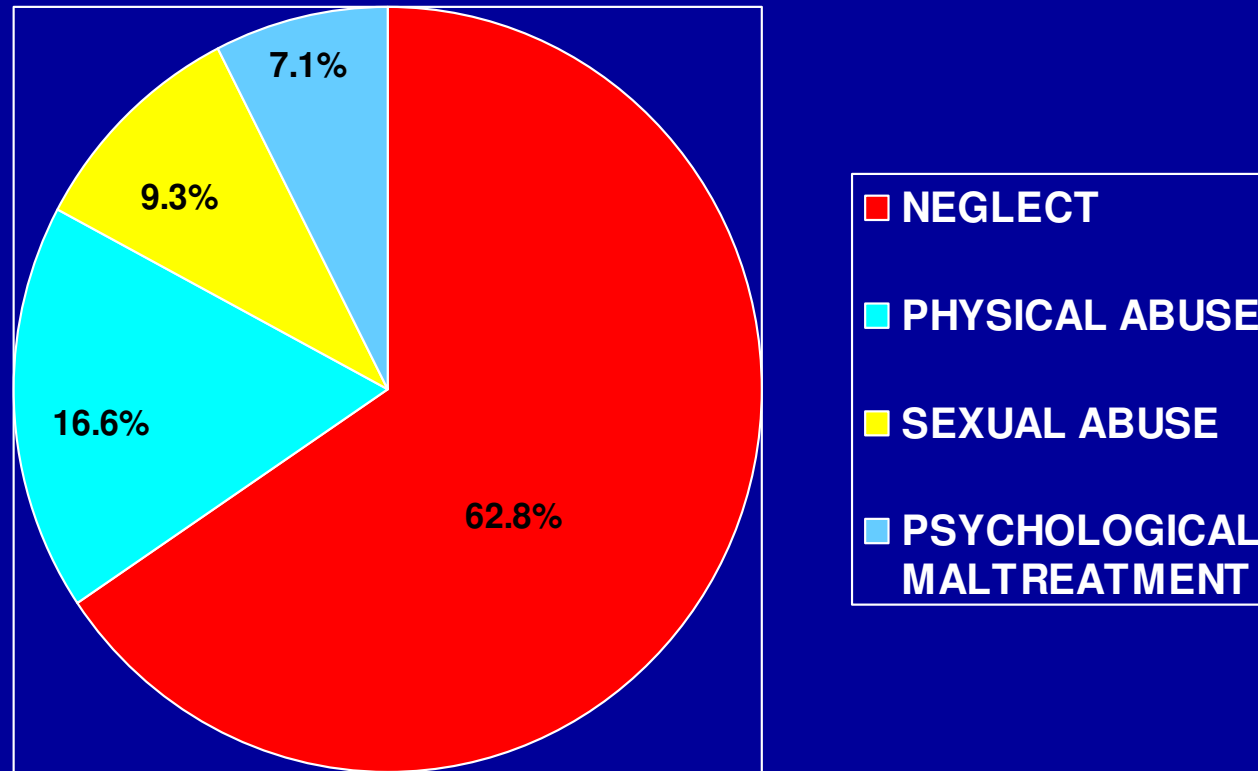
Brief synopsis of presentation at seminar on *Stress and Conflict in Family Environments: Pathways to Child and Adult Health Outcomes*, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, 27 March 2009, Washington, DC.

EXTENT OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN UNITED STATES (2005)

- CPS agencies received about 3.3 million referrals for possible maltreatment
- Approximately 899,000 cases were substantiated after investigation
- Approximately 1,400 children died of abuse or neglect

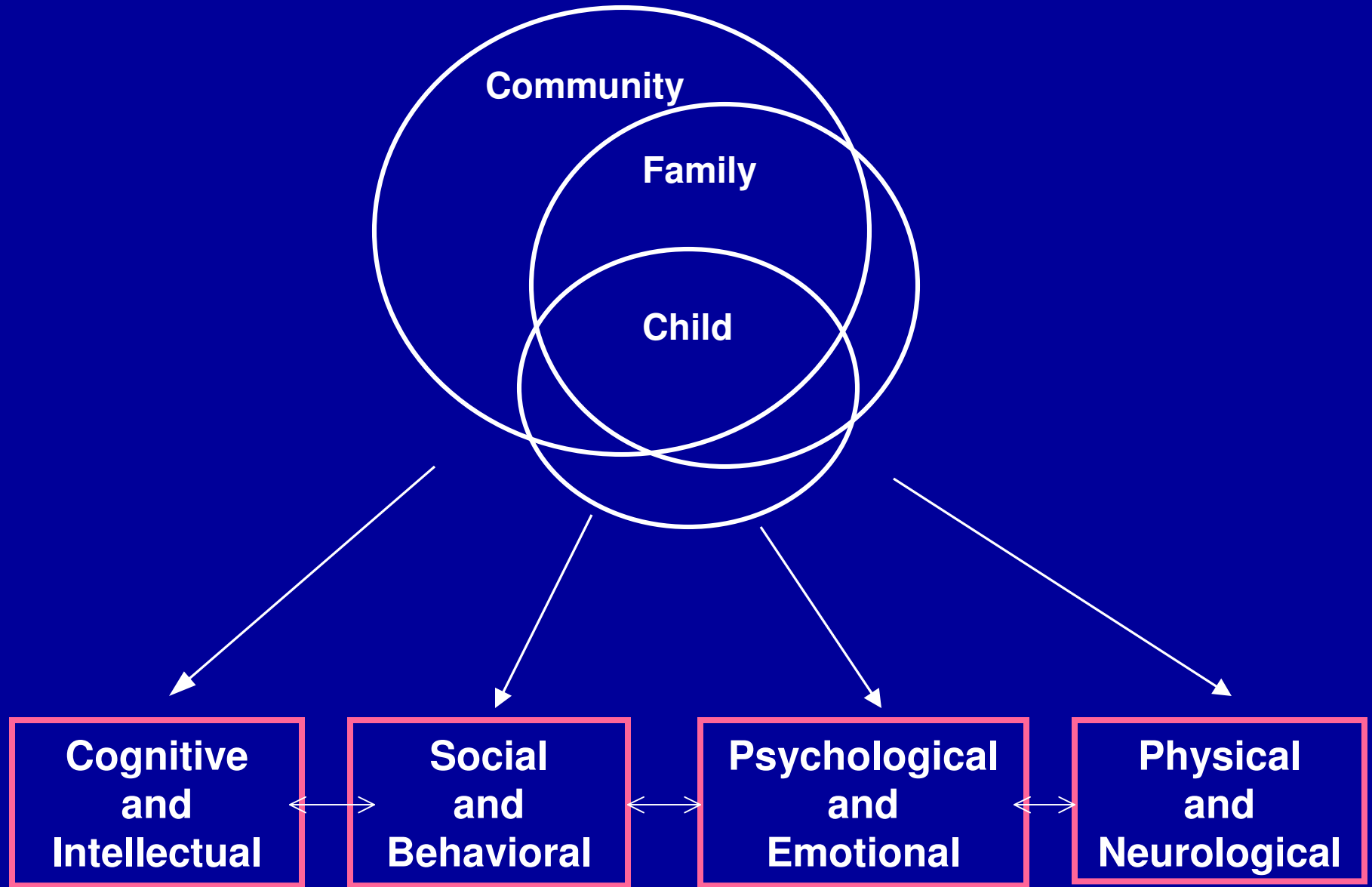
Source: US DHHS, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Child Maltreatment 2005 . Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2007.

PREVALENCE OF TYPES OF MALTREATMENT IN USA

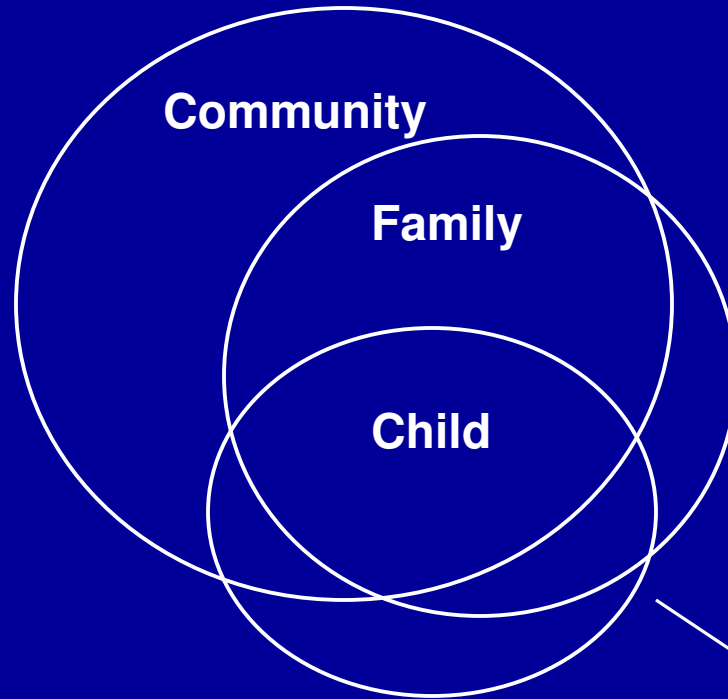


Source: US DHHS, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Child Maltreatment 2005. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2007.

CASCADE OF CONSEQUENCES



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TODAY'S FOCUS

**Physical
and
Neurological**

WHY FOCUS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH OUTCOMES?

- Recent attention to biomarkers and biomeasures as potential tools for understanding complex biosocial pathways to differential well-being
- Early childhood adversities (including child abuse and neglect) have been associated with negative health outcomes in adulthood (primarily cross-sectional studies)
- Why might childhood abuse and/or neglect be associated with physical health outcomes so long after the initial occurrence?

POTENTIAL PHYSICAL OR NEUROLOGICAL OUTCOMES

- Brain damage → irreversible sequelae
- Malnutrition → impact on cognitive abilities
- Risky behaviors and lifestyle → health risk
- Acute or chronic stress may have an impact on neuroendocrine system (HPA axis)

EARLY ENVIRONMENT, EMOTIONS, RESPONSES TO STRESS, AND HEALTH (Taylor et al., 2004)

- “Early family environment affects the development of emotional, social, and biological mechanisms that underlie the ability to regulate stress.”
 - Focus on “risky families”, in which offspring are exposed to cold, conflict-ridden, or neglectful parenting
 - May include extreme cases of abuse
 - Focused primarily on relatively normal and common family dysfunctions and their impact on an offspring’s emotional, social, and biological development

THE STUDY DESIGN

- Prospective cohort design
- Documented cases of childhood physical and sexual abuse and neglect (ages 0-11)
- Matched control group
- Follow up into middle adulthood
- Outcomes across multiple domains of functioning

CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Cases included injuries such as bruises, welts, burns, abrasions, lacerations, wounds, cuts, bone and skull fractures, and other evidence of physical injury.

- **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Charges varied from relatively non-specific charges of assault and battery with intent to gratify sexual desires to more specific charges of fondling or touching in an obscene manner, sodomy, incest, rape, and so forth.

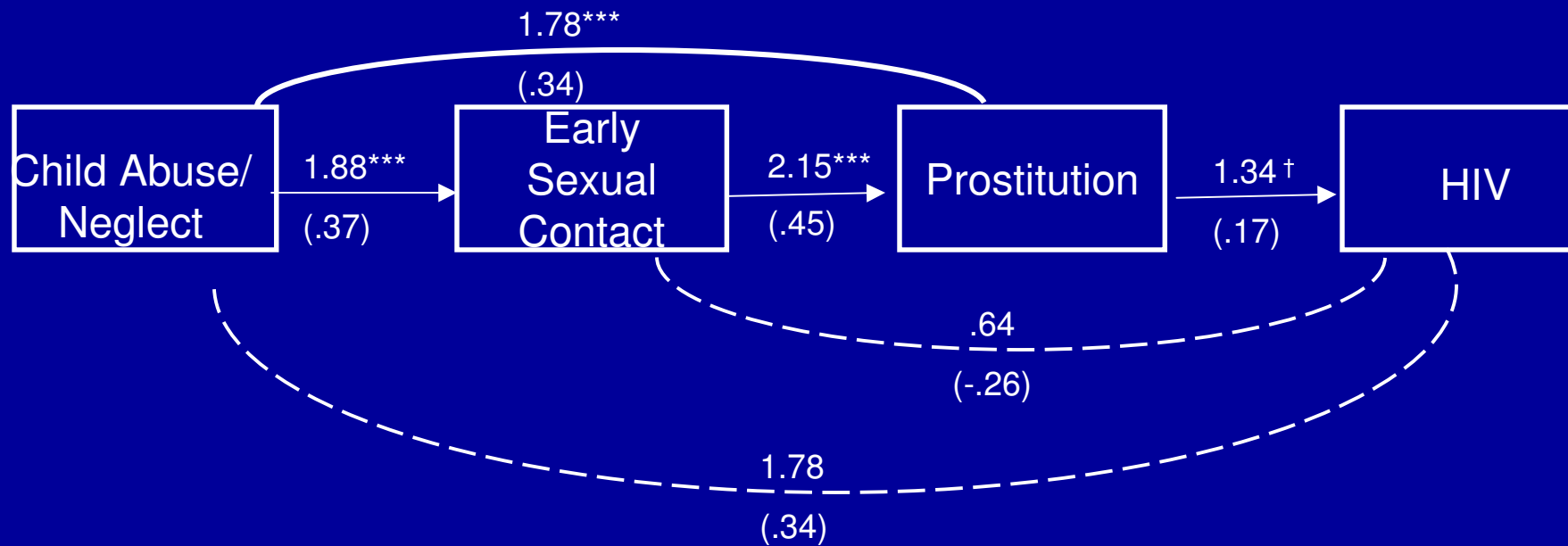
- **NEGLECT**

Cases reflected a judgment that the parents' deficiencies in child care were beyond those found acceptable by community and professional standards at the time. These cases represented extreme failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention.

**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:
NOT AVAILABLE ON THE WEB**

**ONE EXAMPLE:
RISK FOR HIV**

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT, RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND HIV



Numbers above the paths are estimated odds ratios converted from probit regression coefficients. Numbers in parentheses below the paths are unstandardized probit regression coefficients. Gender and race are controlled in the path to early sexual contact and race is controlled in path to prostitution.

*p<.10 ** p<.01 *** p<.0001 (2-tailed) † p<.10 (1-tailed, positive)

Source: Wilson, H.W., & Widom, C.S. (2008) An examination of risky sexual behavior and HIV in victims of child abuse and neglect: A 30-year follow-up. *Health Psychology*, 27: 149-158.

CONCLUSIONS

- Preliminary and published findings show evidence of long term (30 year) impact of child abuse and neglect on physical health.
- Preliminary findings provide some support for the “risky families” model proposed by Repetti, Taylor and colleagues.
- We need to understand the mechanisms linking child abuse and neglect to long-term health outcomes to develop interventions to prevent these negative consequences.

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