

Protect Kids from Abuse



CENTER
ON THE
FAMILY

College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Our state should be an island paradise for all our children. But too many of our keiki suffer from child abuse, which includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (which is when parents fail to give them enough food, shelter, safety, and affection).

Each week in Hawai'i:

- 35 children are reported as victims of physical abuse by a caregiver
- 28 children are reported as victims of neglect
- 20 children are reported as victims of both abuse *and* neglect
- 9 children are reported as victims of sexual abuse and exploitation

Almost half of abused and neglected children are under 6 years old. In our State, abuse of children from kindergarten to 6th grade has increased 66%—*more than doubled*—in the last 10 years.

In the United States,

- Every day more than 3 children die because of abuse and neglect.
- Over 3 million cases of child abuse are reported each year. Three times as many (9 million) may go unreported.
- Infants and toddlers (birth to 2 years old) are the most likely to be victims of injury. Preschoolers (3 to 5 years old) are more likely to suffer neglect.



Child Abuse Affects Our Community

Abused children carry physical, emotional, and psychological scars for life. They often suffer from low self-esteem and hopelessness, which could result in destructive behaviors, at risk sexual activity, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, and suicidal behavior.

Many abused children grow up to be abusive adults—80% of child abusers were once abused children. Thus, the cycle continues and affects the entire community.



The Connection Between Child Abuse and Neglect & Substance Abuse

There are many causes of child abuse and neglect. Many children who are experiencing violence in their homes are also living with adults who abuse drugs and alcohol. The chances that these children will be maltreated are increased by their parents' dependency on drugs and alcohol and the lifestyle linked to that dependency.

An estimated 13 million Americans are current drug users. A recent national study indicated that substance abuse causes or worsens 7 out of 10 cases of child abuse and neglect. In Hawai'i, an estimated 79,000 people abuse drugs and/or alcohol; many of them are parents and/or caregivers.

Here are some ways you can help protect kids:

- ♥ Talk to kids about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- ♥ Don't allow others to bring drugs into and around your home.
- ♥ Keep children away from friends or relatives who are using drugs and abusing alcohol.
- ♥ Participate in campaigns to protect kids.

- Children of alcoholics suffer more injuries and poisonings than children in the general population.
- Neglect is the major reason that children are removed from a home in which parents have alcohol or other drug problems.
- When families have problems with both child maltreatment and substance abuse behaviors, *both* problems must be treated *at the same time* in order to guarantee a child's safety.

What You Can Do

Start protecting our children before they are born.

Using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs while pregnant—especially during the earliest stages of pregnancy—increases a baby's risk for serious illness, birth defects, developmental problems, and even death.

Reach out to our keiki.

Many child maltreatment cases won't be reported. Many children of substance abusers go unidentified. Within both these groups, children often are afraid to speak up because they think no one will believe them. Growing up with abuse, they sometimes think abuse is normal and learn to repeat these behaviors.



- ♥ Work with other families in the neighborhood to improve and maintain peace and safety in the area.
- ♥ Keep track of your kids; know their friends and activities.
- ♥ Offer to baby-sit for families that are stressed or may be abusing drugs or alcohol. You may be the nurturing role model their kids need.
- ♥ Be a link to resources that may be helpful to a child from a drug-abusing home.

A caring adult who gets involved can help break the cycle of abuse.

Kids depend on adults to survive and thrive. They need our time, energy, love, and support to reach their full potential. You can make a difference—with a little time, and simple actions, you can give children a positive role model and some hope for the future.



Help a Child: Make a Call

If you are worried about a child's safety, you can call the Child Protective Service (CPS) (numbers below) or police (911) to make a report, which may be anonymous.

O'ahu (808) 832-5300

East Hawai'i (808) 933-0350

West Hawai'i (808) 327-4787

Maui (808) 243-5143

Moloka'i (808) 553-1073

Kaua'i (808) 274-3320

Lana'i (808) 565-7102

- ♥ Encourage pregnant friends to be healthy and drug-free. Make sure they avoid any use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- ♥ Work to provide drug and alcohol treatment programs in your community.
- ♥ Refuse to tolerate maltreatment of children! Learn enough about child abuse and neglect so that you can do something helpful when you see it happening.

Get Help for Drug & Alcohol Problems

You may know individuals—possibly parents, relatives, or older siblings—who are using drugs or are unable to control their drinking. If so, they're not only hurting themselves, they're also increasing the likelihood that they will abuse and neglect their children. Moreover, their children will have difficulties dealing with drugs and alcohol in the future.

Substance abusers can't be expected to stop by themselves. Drug users or heavy drinkers need professional assistance to stop their habits.

For a directory of treatment programs, call:

Drug Free Hawai'i

O'ahu 545-3228 x34

Neighbor Islands 1-800-845-1946 x34

ASK Aloha United Way

O'ahu 275-2000

Neighbor Islands 1-877-275-6569

For help with alcohol problems call:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 946-1438

For help with drug addiction call:

Drug Addiction Services of Hawai'i (DASH) 538-0704

Other Resources

Wai'anae Comprehensive Center - Baby S.A.F.E. Program
668-2277

ALANON/ALATEEN 599-7755 or 948-2666

The Salvation Army Family Treatment Services 732-2802

St. Francis WATCH – Addiction Treatment for Women
547-6273

The Parent Line 526-1222

Sponsored by the Hawai'i Children's Trust Fund.

For more information, contact the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family at (808) 956-4132 or at www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu