



**A Selected, Annotated
Bibliography of Child
Maltreatment Reporting by
Education Professionals**



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maintain and improve their health.*

Health Canada

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A Selected, Annotated Bibliography of Child Maltreatment Reporting by Education Professionals

Child Maltreatment Division
Bureau of Reproductive and Child Health
Health Protection Branch
Health Canada
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Introduction

School personnel and teachers in particular are in a unique position to identify suspected cases of abuse because of their daily contact with children in the classroom and lunchroom, on the playground, and in after-school activities. For this reason, teachers, principals, and other school professionals are required by law in Canada, the United States, and several other countries to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

Nearly half of all referrals made by professionals to the Ontario Children's Aid Society come from schools⁽¹⁾. In fact, schools were the most common source of referral among mandated and non-mandated reporters and had an above average substantiation rate⁽¹⁾. School staff were the most frequent source of recognition of maltreated children in the United States, according to the Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect⁽²⁾.

The significance of the role of school personnel in recognizing and reporting child maltreatment makes this group of professionals an important focal point for research. This bibliography looks at the issue of reporting within the school setting. It contains summaries of articles about mandated reporting for school professionals, mainly teachers. The articles address issues of who is reporting, why they are reporting, and what barriers exist to reporting. Further topics such as policy development and the need for training on the identification of child abuse and neglect are also addressed. The bibliography focuses on articles published in peer review journals after 1990; however, certain key articles published before 1990 have also been included.

Since the studies included in the bibliography vary in their methods of data collection, definitions used, types of questions asked, and applicable laws, generalization of study results should be approached with caution. Several articles are plagued with unreliably low response rates. A further limitation is that the survey designs could not test whether the barriers to reporting affect reporters and non-reporters differently.

Keeping these limitations in mind, several recurrent themes emerge from the articles. For example, common barriers to reporting often mentioned were as follows: lack of evidence, fear of legal ramifications, and fear of parental retaliations on the child. Teachers are more than willing to make reports. However, there often seems to be a significant lack of knowledge regarding both the identification of abuse and reporting procedures. More training in the identification of symptoms of abuse and neglect, especially sexual and emotional abuse, as well as training regarding reporting procedures is necessary to ensure that this group of mandated reporters continues its role as one of the most important stakeholders in child abuse and neglect prevention.

References

1. Trocmé N, McPhee D, Tam KK, Hay T. *Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*. Toronto, Ont.: The Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 1994.
2. Sedlack AJ, Broadhurst DD. *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996.

Methods

Search Strategies

The articles selected for this bibliography were identified by consulting various databases and Web sites using the search strategies outlined below. Articles were chosen for inclusion if the content focus was related to reporting of child maltreatment by education professionals (i.e. teachers, principals, school nurses, school counsellors). Preference was given to articles published after 1990.

Keywords

Teacher, professional, principal, school nurse, school, school counsellor, nursery school, child abuse reporting, disclosure, reporting decisions, reporting intentions, reporting, mandated reporting.

The key words were combined with:

Child maltreatment, child abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, child emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse.

Languages

English, French

Databases Consulted

Canadian Education Index (January 1976-May 1999)

Canadian Eric Tools (January 1991-November 1998)

Eric (January 1992-November 1998)

Psychinfo (January 1967-March 1999)

Social Science Abstracts (March 1997-March 1999)

Social Science Index (February 1983-February 1999)

Social Work Abstracts (January 1977-February 1999)

Sociofile (January 1974-February 1999)

Sociological Abstracts (January 1963-February 1999)

Internet Web Sites

Bell Canada Child Welfare Research Unit

<http://cwr.utoronto.ca>

International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

<http://child.cornell.edu/ispcan/ispcan.html>

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

<http://www.calib.com/nccanh>

National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect

<http://www.flcd.cornell.edu>

UNICEF

<http://www.unicef.org>

World Health Organization

<http://www.WHO.org>

Canadian articles

Beck KA, Ogloff JRP, Corbishley A. *Knowledge, compliance, and attitudes of teachers toward mandatory child abuse reporting in British Columbia*. Canadian Journal of Education 1994;19(1):15-29.

Purpose: To assess teacher awareness of, and compliance with, mandatory reporting responsibilities. To examine teachers' knowledge of and attitudes toward the British Columbia child abuse reporting laws and to evaluate specific factors in teachers' decisions to report or not to report child abuse. **Methods:** The mail-out survey, developed by the researcher, consisted of five sections exploring respondents' demographic and background characteristics; knowledge of British Columbia's child abuse reporting law; reporting experiences during the previous year; consistency of reports for different types of abuse; and attitudes toward child abuse reporting. A 56% response rate was obtained among the sample of 216 registered teachers from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. **Discussion:** Survey participants were aware of British Columbia's child abuse reporting legislation, but unaware of the reporting procedures. For example, 40% of respondents were unaware of their requirement to report suspected child abuse "immediately" to a child protection social worker. Of all the cases of child maltreatment reported in the previous year by the participants, physical abuse was reported most frequently and emotional abuse the least. The main reason given for reporting abuse was to protect the children. Less than one half of teachers indicated that they had made reports because of their legal obligation to do so. Lack of evidence was stated as the most common reason for not reporting suspected child maltreatment. Over 40% of teachers who did not report suspected child abuse feared that such a report would have negative consequences for the child or the family. Teachers were willing to report all forms of child maltreatment. The level of information about child abuse issues was significantly related to a teacher's reporting tendency.

Tite R. *Muddling through: the procedural marginalization of child abuse*. Interchange 1994;25(1):87-105.

Purpose: To explore the procedural context in which reporting decisions are made by female teachers in Ontario. **Methods:** The research was conducted in three phases: 1) Exploratory interviews were held with 10 teachers focusing on attitudes and knowledge of abuse and reporting requirements. (The results of the first phase were included in the development of the questionnaire used in the second phase.) 2) The survey was sent to a random sample of 500 female teachers and 100 principals (mainly male). The response rates were 52% and 49% respectively. The questions covered a wide range of items, including definitions of abuse, interventions, difficulties associated with detection, and reporting. Teachers who had suspected child abuse were asked whether they had made an official report and, if so, to describe the results. 3) Follow-up interviews focusing on the actual experience of reporting were conducted with a subsample of eight teachers and two principals drawn at random from those who stated that they had reported abuse. **Discussion:** Seventy-five percent of the teachers who participated in this study had suspected abuse at some point during their career. Of those, 85% had reported it, usually to their principals (as required by school board policy), and sometimes directly to the Children's Aid Society (CAS). Because teachers' reports were made to the principal first, it seems that almost half of the reports never made it beyond this internal investigation stage. Teachers surveyed found it difficult to report directly to the CAS: 85% of non-reporters and 70% of reporters indicated this difficulty; 39% and 17% of non-reporters and reporters respectively indicated that they found it difficult to report to their

principal. Ten percent of reporters had no idea what happened once they had made their report. Teachers worried that the CAS response would be too disruptive for the child's family life, and that the report would negatively affect the working relationship with children and their families. Over a quarter of the teachers felt that this working relationship would not be affected if the principals handled the report. Forty-six percent of the teachers surveyed felt that it was the principal's job to contact the CAS. Teachers had concerns about their legal liability (42%) and job security (11%) surrounding their duty to report. Survey results also indicated that teachers overestimated their principal's ability to handle reports; 94% believed that principals would know how to handle the report. Seventeen percent of the teachers questioned their own ability to make a report, and an additional 12% worried that their principal would not agree with their judgement of the situation. The study determined that principals could affect the teacher reporting procedure in several ways: 1) they could make the call immediately after a teacher had come forward or allow the teacher to make the call to CAS herself, 2) they could screen the report, meanwhile the teacher would believe the situation has been handled properly, or 3) they could dismiss the teacher's suspicions to the point where she would start doubting herself. The principals surveyed did seem prepared to handle reporting; 87% had attended child-abuse training in the previous five years, 67% responded that they were clear about the reporting route, and about 66% knew child abuse definitions. However, principals were less likely than teachers to apply the abuse label. Principals may not have directed every teacher report to the CAS, but those surveyed indicated that they had held private consultations with parents, set up counselling sessions for the children, or consulted with the public health nurse following such disclosures.

Tite R. *Detecting the symptoms of child abuse: classroom complications*. Canadian Journal of Education 1994;19(1):1-14.

Purpose: To assess the difficulties associated with detection and subsequent reporting of child abuse in an Ontario school setting. The study focuses on the initial stage of the decision-making process with regard to reporting suspected child abuse, the factors affecting the detection of symptoms, and the initial decision to proceed with a report. **Methods:** The research was conducted in three phases: 1) Exploratory interviews were held with 10 teachers focusing on attitudes and knowledge of abuse and reporting requirements. (The results of the first phase were included in the development of the questionnaire used in the second phase.) 2) The survey was sent to a random sample of 500 female teachers and 100 principals (mainly male). The response rates were 52% and 49% respectively. The questions covered a wide range of items, including definitions of abuse, interventions, difficulties associated with detection, and reporting. Teachers who had suspected child abuse were asked whether they had made an official report and, if so, to describe the results. 3) Follow-up interviews focusing on the actual experience of reporting were conducted with a subsample of eight teachers and two principals drawn at random from those who stated that they had reported abuse.

Discussion: Crowded classrooms and numerous teaching assignments do not enable teachers to engage individual children on a level that is conducive to noticing signs of abuse and to pursuing the topic. Often, teachers do not know what signs to look for and feel they have not been sufficiently trained to detect sexual, physical, or emotional abuse. Although the majority of teachers surveyed had received reporting law information from their school boards, fewer than half had been required to attend child abuse in-service training. Almost 40% stated that they did not know whether their school board had a child abuse policy. Many teachers chose to investigate the abuse informally before making a report. However, 97% of respondents found it difficult to probe for information with the parents, and 89% faced similar difficulties with the child. More than half of the respondents worried about disturbing the parent-teacher

relationship, fearing the reactions from the parents; 72% worried about invading the privacy of the family; 59% of respondents were concerned about disturbing the child's trust in the teacher; and more than 90% were afraid of parents taking their anger out on the child. Less than 10% of this sample of teachers and principals in their role as educators used corporal punishment, yet 69% were in favour of spanking as a disciplinary measure, and 42% indicated that it might be difficult to distinguish between abuse and discipline.

Tite R. *How teachers define and respond to child abuse: the distinction between theoretical and reportable cases.* Child Abuse & Neglect 1993;17:591-603.

Purpose: This study focuses on a discussion of the definitions of abuse that Ontario teachers use and the relation between these definitions and intervention. **Methods:** The research was conducted in three phases: 1) Exploratory interviews were held with 10 teachers focusing on attitudes and knowledge of abuse and reporting requirements. (The results of the first phase were included in the development of the questionnaire used in the second phase.) 2) The survey was sent to a random sample of 500 female teachers and 100 principals (mainly male). The response rates were 52% and 49% respectively. The questions covered a wide range of items, including definitions of abuse, interventions, difficulties associated with detection, and reporting. Teachers who had suspected child abuse were asked if they had made an official report and, if so, to describe the results. 3) Follow-up interviews focusing on the actual experience of reporting were conducted with a subsample of eight teachers and two principals drawn at random from those who stated that they had reported abuse. **Discussion:** Teachers hold a broader definition of abuse than that legally cited by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Respondents most frequently cited cases of neglecting cleanliness (87%), failure to provide supervision (64%), and bruising (55%). Teachers reported only a quarter of suspected abuse cases, and those reported most frequently were cases of incest. Of the 49 teachers in this sample who revealed suspicions of incest, 32% recalled making a report to child protective services. Teachers most often made their reports through the school principal, since they are required to do so by the Ontario School Boards. Bruising was reported 18% of the time by the 138 teachers who encountered these cases. The interview data suggest that in most cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, public health and/or community charity and school resources are channelled to the victim without drawing attention to Child Protective Services. Teachers described monitoring the situation and the child's behaviour, holding discussions with parents, consulting with colleagues, clergy, or local community resource people, and providing personal care themselves. The decision to report appears complex and difficult to predict. It involves the interplay of definitions, institutional response, teachers' experience and personal traits. With unreported cases, teachers felt they had insufficient evidence to proceed with a report and preferred informal intervention to determine whether a formal report would be supported. When teachers do make reports to child protective services, these generally involve cases in which efforts by the public health nurse and all informal attempts to convince and help the parents have failed.

Bridgeland WM, Duane EA. *Principals as secondary enforcers in child abuse*. Education and Urban Society 1990;22(3):314-24.

Purpose: To explore the impact of mandatory reporting laws on elementary school staff, mainly principals, in Ontario and Michigan. **Methods:** A sample of 20 principals was drawn from a representative list of principals compiled by both Ontario and Michigan to participate in the 50 minute telephone interview. Topics covered in the interview included the reporting process, school programs and practices, and the impact of abuse issues on the relationship between the abused child, the child's family, social services, and school staff. **Discussion:** Both Canadian and U.S. principals mentioned frustrations surrounding their contact with social services. In particular, they were upset about the lack of feedback and follow-up, the slow response of processing abuse cases, and the perceived self-importance on the part of the workers. Teachers and principals are equally responsible under the law to report suspected abuse. This equality in responsibility may conflict with traditional lines of authority. Teachers may delegate the problem to the principals and then expect full feedback and follow-up consultations. School teachers are more sensitive to identifying signs of abuse than they were in the past. However, concerns were expressed that this might undermine their traditional expression of caring and affection toward the children for fear of being charged themselves.

McClare G. *The principal's role in child abuse*. Education and Urban Society 1990;22(3):307-13.

Purpose: To provide an overview of issues that school principals in Canada should be aware of to effectively address child abuse. **Method:** Descriptive article. **Discussion:** The author suggests that the school principal should be the communications liaison with outside agencies and that a multi-disciplinary committee be formed to assist in developing child abuse reporting procedures. Important features of child abuse reporting procedures are presented as well as directions and warnings concerning common mistakes made by school personnel when confronted with a suspicion of child abuse. A strategy is provided for when a child is interviewed by child protection workers at the school. There are suggestions about information to be gathered if a child is removed from his or her parents, and the usefulness of employing a resource person is discussed. The topic of education and training programs (for teachers and parents) and their usefulness is included.

U.S. articles

Compaan C, Doueck HJ, Levine M. *Mandated reporter satisfaction with child protection. More good news for workers?* Journal of Interpersonal Violence 1997;12(6):847-857.

Purpose: To evaluate the level of satisfaction among mandated reporters in an upstate western New York county child protection system. **Method:** A survey was distributed to professionals who worked with children and/or families in an upstate western New York county. Of the 873 surveys distributed, 472 were returned. The professionals in the sample consisted of teachers (25%), principals (15%), school counsellors (13%), organizations (12%), day care providers (10%), Department of Social Services staff (9%), medical professionals (8%), school nurses (6%), police officers (2%), and probation staff (1%). Therefore, approximately 60% of respondents were education professionals. **Discussion:** The majority of respondents in each category had filed reports with child protection services, except teachers. Several factors increased reporter satisfaction with child protection services: initial contact with a child protection worker, the demonstration of interest by the child protection worker in the information provided, being asked to provide information considered unimportant, and worker sensitivity to the reporter's concerns. Respondents were more satisfied when the report was substantiated and when they were advised of the case outcome. Principals demonstrated the highest degree of satisfaction with child protection services, whereas teachers and school counselling staff showed the lowest degrees of satisfaction of all professionals surveyed.

Sedlak AJ, Schultz DJ. *Follow-up to the NIS-3 and NCANDS studies. Sentinel Questionnaire Follow-Up Study. Final report.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997.

Purpose: To provide more detail on the reporting policies of the U.S. school system, the reporting behaviours of the school sentinels, and the barriers to reporting recognized cases of child maltreatment. **Method:** Several months after the Basic NIS Sentinel Study had been carried out in 1993, the questionnaire was sent to all participants in the study. Of the 4,316 school sentinels that were mailed the anonymous survey, 2,763 returned a completed questionnaire. This result generated a 64% response rate. **Discussion:** The sample was composed primarily of whites (86%), females (79%) and people in their 40s (41%). Although three quarters of sentinels had received written information about child abuse and neglect reporting requirements and half had attended a workshop on the topic, 20% of them had not received either. Sentinels with any kind of training were more likely to make reports. Fifty-nine percent of respondents had reported a case of suspected child abuse during their career. Of those, 39% made the report uniquely to the designated school official. A quarter were dissatisfied with the outcome, and the same percentage stated that the result of the most recent case they had reported would influence future decisions to report. Twenty-two percent of sentinels who had suspected abuse had not reported it to any authority. The reasons most often cited for not filing a report were, in order of importance, a lack of evidence, uncertainty about the effectiveness of the Child Protective Services (CPS) response, someone else at the school had already made a report, fear of reprisal or false accusations, and no longer suspecting the abuse or neglect. Reasons for reporting suspected abuse were, in order of importance, concern for the child's well-being and safety, the legal obligation to do so, physical evidence, behavioural problems at school, and disclosure from the child. Sentinels required to report directly to CPS or police were more likely to have ever made a report than those instructed to report to school officials. Principals and counsellors were more likely to have made a report than teachers. Older sentinels and those from larger schools were more

likely to have made a report. Cases of suspected abuse involving male children were most often reported only to school officials, whereas cases involving older or female children were reported to CPS or police. Cases in which fathers committed the maltreatment were more often reported.

Crenshaw WB, Crenshaw LM, Lichtenberg JW. *When educators confront child abuse: an analysis of the decision to report*. Child Abuse & Neglect 1995;19(9):1095-113.

Purpose: To examine reporting decisions, update existing data on reporting rates and tendencies, examine existing reporting hierarchies, investigate any effect of victim gender on reporting behaviour according to reporter gender, and ascertain the level of support for mandatory reporting among U.S. educators. **Methods:** Participants were selected from a Kansas state directory of educators. Surveys were given to teachers, school counsellors, principals, superintendents and school psychologists. A total of 664 surveys were returned, which yielded a 42% response rate. The Crenshaw Abuse Reporting Survey, Form-S, was used to collect the data. **Discussion:** Although respondents had knowledge of the mandatory reporting law, only 10% felt very well prepared to recognize and report child abuse cases. Another 51% felt fairly well prepared, 27% felt barely adequately prepared, and 13% felt poorly or not at all prepared. No significant differences were found that might indicate that the gender of the victim or the reporter affected subsequent reporting. There was no relation between the age of the child and reporting tendency. The findings indicate that respondents who make a report are more willing to base their reporting decision on suspicions than on solid evidence, whereas non-reporters require extensive evidence before considering making a report. Educators' ability to recognize symptoms of child abuse directly affects their decision to file a report. Study findings show that mandatory reporting laws are not sufficient to drive reporting in ambiguous cases.

Mahoney KS. *School personnel & mandated reporting of child maltreatment*. Journal of Law & Education 1995;24(2):227-39.

Purpose: To focus on issues arising from mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect for U.S. teachers. **Methods:** Review article containing 41 references. **Discussion:** The author reviewed previous research addressing teachers' and principals' awareness of signs of maltreatment and of their requirement to report suspicions of child abuse. The article concluded with recommendations and implications for policy. The two main recommendations were 1) the need to train education professionals in the identification of child abuse signs, and 2) the need for standard definitions of child maltreatment.

Reiniger A, Robison E, McHugh M. *Mandated training of professionals: a means for improving reporting of suspected child abuse*. Child Abuse & Neglect 1995;19(1):63-99.

Purpose: To document the knowledge gap in the identification and reporting of suspected child abuse by professionals mandated to make such reports. **Methods:** A self-report questionnaire was mailed to 1,368 professionals who attended a required 2-hour training program on the identification and reporting of child maltreatment. A total of 536 participants returned the questionnaire (39% response rate). Included in the sample of respondents were podiatrists, psychologists, physicians, nurses, optometrists, chiropractors, teachers and social workers. **Discussion:** Over 80% of the respondents who attended the training session indicated that they had learned something new about identifying and reporting child abuse. For 60% of respondents, the information on reporting procedures and legal liabilities was mostly all new. All professions were more informed of the indicators of child abuse than

necessary under policy and legal requirements. Teachers were among those professions that had very little knowledge of these areas.

Wanat CL, Helms LB, Rosien JE. *Home v. school: issues for school leaders in reporting child abuse*. Journal of School Leadership 1994;4:223-44.

Purpose: To illustrate how the mandated reporting laws for educators in the United States, as they are written, do not differentiate between abuse occurring in the school and abuse occurring in the home. These distinct issues need to be handled separately as they require different responses on the part of school administrators. **Method:** Review article containing 62 references. **Discussion:** The authors reviewed and gave a critique of the legal framework that requires school personnel to report abuse and summarized both criticisms and empirical analyses of the under-reporting of abuse by school personnel in the educational literature. The article also provided a review of case law on decisions litigating failure of school personnel to report abuse. Findings from this review show that laws intended to facilitate reporting of abuse in home settings are now employed primarily for abuse occurring in schools.

Remley TP, Fry LJ. *Reporting suspected child abuse: conflicting roles for the counselor*. The School Counselor 1993;40:253-59.

Purpose: To explain the many roles and responsibilities of U.S. school counsellors once they have reported a case of child abuse. **Methods:** Descriptive article. **Discussion:** Counsellors in different states are governed by many different statutes, but generally the requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse supersedes duties of confidentiality and privileged communication. Counsellors are required to prevent harm if they conclude that their client is a danger to themselves or others. In addition to being subject to criminal penalties, counsellors can be held liable in civil suits for failure to report suspected child abuse. It is important for them to know the laws applicable in their state. The counsellor might maintain a counselling relationship with the victim after a report has been filed. He or she also needs to follow school procedures, and may be required to appear as a witness in court. The counsellor may also serve as a resource person for the family.

Rosien J, Helms L, Wanat C. *Intent v. practice: incentives and disincentives for child abuse reporting by school personnel*. Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal 1993;13:102-25.

Purpose: To examine the effects of U.S. statutes and case law that persuades or dissuades reporting of abuse by teachers and administrators. **Method:** Review article containing 56 references. **Discussion:** The ambiguity of the statutes regarding the definitions of “abuse” and “neglect”, the identification of the abuser, and the degree of certainty necessary to sustain a report of abuse or neglect may lead to poor reporting. Several incentives encourage reporting compliance. The primary incentive is immunity from legal action. Penalties are imposed for knowingly and willingly failing to report. Failure to report may also result in civil liability. Teachers tend not to follow the legislated procedures when they report. Several factors discourage reporting. Some of these are teachers’ perceptions about discipline, privacy values, lack of diagnostic expertise, and fear of confrontation following a report. Some principals are concerned that reporting a case of suspected abuse will result in a negative image of their school. Although the threat of legal liability for not reporting a suspected case of abuse is a strong incentive, there is a gap in the implementation of these laws. The second section of the article examined in more detail litigation about reporting.

Abrahams N, Casey K, Daro D. *Teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about child abuse and its prevention*. Child Abuse & Neglect 1992;16:229-38.

Purpose: To explore teachers' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about child abuse and its prevention in the United States. **Methods:** A sample was drawn from the random stratified 29 counties used in the 1986 National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect. Approximately 1,694 questionnaires were mailed to 49 school districts, to be completed by elementary school teachers. Five hundred and sixty-eight questionnaires were returned, yielding a 34% response rate. Respondents consisted of 501 (88%) females, 47 males (8%), and 20 (4%) who did not indicate gender. **Discussion:** The majority of teachers surveyed expressed dissatisfaction regarding the amount and depth of education on identification, reporting and intervention of suspected child abuse cases. Seventy-four percent of respondents indicated they had suspected a child as being abused or neglected at some point in time. Of these teachers, 90% indicated that they reported the case, most commonly to other school personnel such as the principal, social worker, or nurse. Only 23% indicated reporting directly to child protective services. Sixty-five percent of teachers surveyed indicated that a lack of knowledge on how to report and detect cases of child abuse was a deterrent to reporting. Other barriers to reporting included a fear of legal ramifications for false allegations (63%), fear of reprisal against the child, damage to the parent-teacher and parent-child relationship (52%), parental denial and disapproval of reports (45%), a lack of community and school support (24%), and school board or principal disapproval (14%). Sixty-five percent of teachers were favourable to teaching prevention programs; the majority of the respondents viewed such programs as valuable and felt they were an effective way to teach children to protect themselves. Thirty-five percent of respondents expressed reservations about teaching prevention programs, 64% of them stating that they felt unqualified to implement such a program. Over a quarter of respondents indicated that their school had a mandatory child assault prevention program, and 39% reported having no knowledge of their school's policy of assault prevention programs. Half the teachers indicated that their students had been exposed to such a program in the previous year. Finally, 57% of respondents considered the banning of corporal punishment as a high priority.

Payne B. *The principal's role in reporting child abuse*. Resources in Education 1991;26(11):80-85.

Purpose: To discuss the role of U.S. elementary school principals with regard to reporting suspected cases of child abuse. **Method:** Descriptive article. **Discussion:** Elementary school principals play an important role in reporting cases of child abuse. Most reports filed by teachers first go through the principal. However, principals may screen teacher reports, despite their ethical and legal obligation to file them. Several reasons have been suggested to explain this gate keeping behaviour: a report may damage school-family alliances and relationships; parents could become angry with principals; some principals prefer to conduct their own investigation prior to reporting to Child Protective Services (CPS); it is believed that CPS will not intervene; and many principals tend not to report cases in which they believe no abuse has occurred. The author also examines abuse occurring at the school. The need for proper training for teachers to identify possible abuse is underlined.

Batchelor ES, Dean RS, Gridley B, Batchelor B. *Reports of child sexual abuse in the schools.* Psychology in the Schools 1990;27:131-37.

Purpose: The purpose of this article was threefold: to examine the incidence of child sexual abuse reports to school psychologists in the U.S. school system, to evaluate the quality of the service as perceived by the victims, and to inquire into the use of child sexual abuse prevention and screening programs. **Method:** A total of 500 questionnaires were randomly distributed to members of the National Association of School Psychologists; 171 (34%) usable questionnaires were returned (62 male, 109 female). **Discussion:** Sixty-one percent of respondents reported that they had received formal training in identifying child sexual abuse, and 54% had attended child sexual abuse workshops; only 11% had received training in graduate school. In the previous year, 110 respondents (64%) reported encountering 498 child sexual abuse cases. Prevention programs were reported to be offered in only 44% of the school systems represented while screening programs were available in 14%.

Baxter G, Beer J. *Educational needs of school personnel regarding child abuse and/or neglect.* Psychological Reports 1990;67:75-80.

Purpose: To develop a measure of the frequency and the kind of problems related to child abuse and neglect in a rural Kansas school district. **Methods:** The "Baxter Inventory of Educational Needs of School Personnel Concerning Child Abuse/Neglect" was developed to obtain information from school personnel. Forty-nine questionnaires were distributed to school personnel in a rural Kansas school district. Forty-two administrators, teachers and counsellors returned a completed questionnaire, for an 86% response rate. **Discussion:** Ninety percent of respondents stated that they were aware of the mandatory reporting laws in the state of Kansas. Forty-five percent of school personnel were uncertain if all suspected cases of abuse and neglect were required to be reported, 28% were aware that all cases must be reported, and an equal percentage felt it was unnecessary to report all cases. Eighty-one percent of respondents were unclear whether the school district had a policy on child abuse and neglect. Only 14% of respondents from this sample had reported suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Of that group, 66% believed their report either reduced or eliminated the abuse or neglect. Approximately two thirds of school personnel were concerned about parental retaliation following a report. Only one respondent had received formal training in child abuse and neglect, and this training had occurred over 10 years ago. It is not surprising, then, that only 14% of school personnel felt prepared to assist abused or neglected students.

McIntyre T. *The teacher's role in cases of suspected child abuse.* Education and Urban Society 1990;22:300-06.

Purpose: To provide a U.S. perspective on important issues in suspected child abuse in the school setting. **Method:** Review article containing 23 references. **Discussion:** A review of current literature concerning teachers' reporting patterns was provided, including how teachers report as well as the common barriers to reporting. Implications for policy were considered, such as in-service training and a push on the part of teachers and unions for a referral process that protects all involved.

Zellman GL. *Linking schools and social services: the case of child abuse reporting*. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 1990;12(1):41-55.

Purpose: To analyse the reporting behaviour of school principals and the response of child protective agencies in the United States. **Methods:** Public school principals and other mandated reporters were selected from 15 states using stratified random sampling. The sample included general and family practitioners, pediatricians, child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, principals of public schools and heads of child care centres. An overall response rate of 59% was achieved (n = 1,196). **Discussion:** Most elementary school principals had reported child abuse (92%) at some time in their career. This was the highest figure for all groups of the sample. Many elementary school principals had made multiple reports; 20% had made more than five reports within the previous year. Principals in the sample had received less child abuse training than members of the other professions represented. The majority of principals indicated that they had discussed child abuse reporting at a staff meeting at least once in the previous year. More than 50% indicated that they sometimes investigated the concerns themselves. Over 37% of elementary school principals admitted not reporting a suspected case of child abuse during their career. However, this percentage was lower than those found among most of the other groups of professional mandated reporters sampled. Principals reported the following barriers to reporting: reports carry an emotional cost, fear of losing rapport with the family, and doubts as to whether reports are beneficial to children. Principals rated Child Protective Services (CPS) expertise more highly than any other group sampled. They also felt that they received feedback on the results of investigations, although they made considerable efforts to obtain this feedback. Ironically, staff interviewed at six different CPS regarded school staff as a major problem group because of their willingness to report, and the type of abuse reported. They felt most reports originating from school staff involved neither an immediate threat to the child's life nor serious injury.

Zellman GL. *Child abuse reporting and failure to report among mandated reporters. Prevalence, incidence, and reasons*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence 1990;5(1):3-22.

Purpose: To obtain data from a national sample of U.S. mandated reporters about their reporting behaviour. **Methods:** Public school principals and other mandated reporters were selected from 15 states using stratified random sampling. The sample included general and family practitioners, pediatricians, child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, principals of public schools, and heads of child care centres. An overall response rate of 59% was achieved (n = 1,196), 69% among public school principals. **Discussion:** Elementary school principals had the highest lifetime reporting prevalence among the professional groups represented in the sample (92%). While still above the sample average of 77% for lifetime reporting prevalence, secondary school principals (84%) placed behind pediatricians and child psychiatrists. The sample average for making a report in the previous year was 56%. Again, both elementary and secondary school principals were above average, 84% and 68% of principals respectively having made a report in the previous year. Thirty-six percent of the principals admitted not having reported suspected abuse or neglect during their career (sample average 39%). Forty-four percent of professionals sampled responded that they had reported at some time and had never failed to report, contributing to the most common lifetime reporting pattern of consistent reporting. The second most common pattern was that of discretionary reporting, in which respondents had reported on some occasions but not others. Seventeen percent of the sample had never made a report or had failed to make a report. Among the principals surveyed, the most important reasons for making a report were to stop the maltreatment; to get help for the child or family; to help the family see the seriousness of the

problem; to comply with the legal requirement to do so; to ensure continued treatment; to comply with a workplace reporting policy; to bring Child Protective Services (CPS) experience to bear; to ensure that the police would act to protect the child; and, in a small number of cases, to avoid a lawsuit for not making a report. The reasons given by this group for not reporting a suspected case of abuse or neglect were, in order of importance, a lack of evidence; the incident was not serious enough to report; the situation resolved itself; the case had already been reported; treatment was already accepted; the belief that "I could help the child better myself"; the belief that CPS services are of poor quality; the report would disrupt treatment; a perception that CPS overacts to reports; discomfort with the family; fear of lawsuit for reporting; and the length of time necessary to make reports. It is important to note that the last three reasons cited did not figure prominently in the decisions not to report. Having a lack of evidence was an often cited reason for over 60% of all professionals in the sample who had ever failed to report. This result reflects the occurrence of professional judgement and discretion in reporting decisions.

Shoop RJ, Firestone LM. *Mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse: do teachers obey the law?* West's Education Law Reporter 1988;46:1111-22.

Purpose: To determine rural Kansas teachers' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about child abuse and neglect. **Methods:** A total of 103 certified personnel from the elementary, junior and senior high participated in the study. Data were collected using the three following techniques: content analysis was used first to analyze and compare teachers' written definitions of child abuse with those found in the Kansas Child Protection Law; a questionnaire was then administered; and finally, a sample of 30 teachers was selected for personal interviews. The results obtained using one methodology were used to confirm and validate the results obtained in the others. **Discussion:** All teachers surveyed were aware of their legal obligation to report child abuse, but the majority did not know the correct procedure. The majority of teachers would report suspected abuse to their principal. None of the teachers had ever reported directly to the official reporting agency. Elementary teachers suspected and reported child abuse more than high school teachers. Training on school law, teachers' legal responsibilities, and child abuse would be helpful for all teachers. Teachers who had received some kind of training were more aware of their responsibilities to report and reported more often. The teachers recognized physical abuse and neglect more easily and more often than emotional or sexual abuse. The way a teacher defined abuse affected whether he or she suspected and reported abuse.

McIntyre TC. *Teacher awareness of child abuse and neglect.* Child Abuse & Neglect 1987;11;133-35.

Purpose: The purpose of this study of Illinois teachers was threefold: to determine the awareness of legal rights and responsibilities to report child abuse; to determine whether teachers can recognize signs of neglect and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; and to evaluate how well teachers are trained in the area of child abuse and neglect. **Method:** A self-report mail-out survey was sent to a random sample of teachers in Illinois. Items on the questionnaire assessed background information, teachers' exposure to information on child abuse and neglect, their awareness of abuse signs, legal aspects about reporting and personal opinion about the importance of the child abuse issue. Of the 600 questionnaires mailed out, 440 were returned, which resulted in a 73% response rate. **Discussion:** Most teachers felt they had never had an abused or neglected child in their classroom. In fact, 24% of the teachers surveyed believed that they had never taught or seen an abused or neglected child. Twelve percent of respondents stated that they were not at all aware of any indicators of physical

abuse; 21% felt they were very aware of them; and the remainder felt they could recognize signs of physical abuse if they were obvious. Only 4% of teachers felt very confident in recognizing signs of sexual abuse. Another 17% felt that they were somewhat aware, and 76% of teachers revealed they would not be able to recognize signs of sexual abuse. Teachers were more aware of the signs of emotional abuse (19% very aware, 52% able to recognize obvious signs, 28% unable to recognize signs) and neglect (30% very aware, 55% able to recognize signs, 15% unable to recognize signs). Teachers who reported being very aware of the signs and symptoms of the different types of abuse had more exposure to pre-service training than others.

Nightingale NN, Walker EF. *Identification and reporting of child maltreatment by head start personnel: attitudes and experiences*. Child Abuse & Neglect 1986;10:191-199.

Purpose: To investigate child maltreatment reporting attitudes of New York Head Start workers. One of the goals of the study was to determine whether variables such as child's age, history of abuse, socioeconomic status, and worker's familiarity with the family affect the perception of whether a child may have been abused. Another goal of the study was to examine the effect of respondents' age, level of education, and years of preschool experience on the identification and reporting of child maltreatment. **Method:** A survey was distributed to 143 Head Start employees and volunteers attending a regional Head Start conference in Syracuse, NY. Teachers, aides, and home base workers constituted 47% of the sample. **Discussion:** Identification and reporting did not seem to be affected by the socioeconomic status of the abused child's family, familiarity of the personnel with the family, or the family's previous involvement with Child Protective Services. Respondents with training in maltreatment identification suspected more abuse cases and made more reports. Identification and reporting also increased with respondent work experience. For all respondents with no prior training, those who had children were less likely to report an incident than those without children. The most commonly identified form of maltreatment, neglect, was also the least reported, while the most commonly reported form of maltreatment, sexual abuse, was the least likely to be identified.

Levin PG. *Teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and reporting of child abuse/neglect*. Child Welfare 1983;62(1):14-20.

Purpose: This Iowa study had four main objectives: to determine 1) the extent of teachers' awareness of their responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse; 2) teachers' perceptions of their ability to recognize symptoms of abuse; 3) teachers' awareness of the legal consequences if they fail to report a suspected case of abuse; and 4) whether teachers feel there is an adequate reporting procedure. **Method:** A total of 285 teachers completed the questionnaire; of these, 209 were elementary school teachers and 76 junior high school teachers. The sample was composed predominantly of female teachers (78%). **Discussion:** Only 34% of the sample had ever reported a case of physical abuse, and most of those who had made a report had done so only once. Twenty-one percent of those surveyed had ever reported a case of physical neglect, 8% had reported emotional abuse and emotional neglect, and only 5% had ever reported a case of sexual abuse. Knowledge of child abuse symptoms was greatest for physical abuse and neglect, followed by emotional abuse and emotional neglect, and only 5% had ever reported a case of sexual abuse. Half the teachers felt the training programs used to educate school personnel about child abuse were inadequate. Still, teachers felt a strong moral responsibility and obligation to report a case of suspected abuse. Sixty-one percent of the teachers were unaware of the personal legal consequences if they failed to report a suspected case of abuse.

International articles

Shor R. *Identification and reporting of maltreated children by teachers in Israel*. *Early Childhood Development and Care* 1997;134:61-73.

Purpose: To assess Israeli teachers' perceptions of the risk to the well-being of children in situations of abuse and neglect; to examine teachers' willingness to report these situations to child welfare agencies and the police; and to examine factors that influence their approach in these cases. **Method:** The quantitative and cross-sectional questionnaire was mailed to 161 teachers from 15 schools in different regions of the country. Three hundred and twenty questionnaires were sent out, and 161 were returned, yielding a 50% response rate. The sample was predominantly female (97%). **Discussion:** The type of abuse was found to be most significant with regard to teachers' perception of child maltreatment. Psychological abuse and educational neglect were given a low ranking in terms of teachers' perceptions of the level of risk to the child and their willingness to report these situations to non-school authorities. Teachers seemed more willing to report to the child welfare department than to the police. Teachers' training seemed insufficient to identify the signs of abuse or neglect. It was also found that teachers' decisions to report were dependent on their attitude toward the recipient as well as the possible ramifications of the report.

Sundell K. *Child-care personnel's failure to report child maltreatment: some Swedish evidence*. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 1997;21(1):93-105.

Purpose: To determine the long-term effects of failing to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect among Swedish nursery school staff and child-care providers. **Methods:** The longitudinal study was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, a questionnaire was sent out to all public nursery schools as well as to a random sample of family day-care centres in three suburbs of Stockholm. In this questionnaire, respondents were asked if there were any cases of suspected child abuse in their groups during 1990. The questionnaire was returned by 95% of nursery schools and 67% of family day-care centres. The second phase of the study was conducted five years later. The 20 child protective agencies (CPA) in Stockholm were visited to determine if records existed for those children who were suspected of being abused or neglected as determined by the respondents during the first phase of the study. **Discussion:** Results from the first phase of the study showed that 112 of the 3,767 (3%) children enrolled were suspected of being maltreated by their parents. Of the 112 children, 91 (81%) were unknown to the CPA according to the respondents. These 91 children were the focus of the analysis. The most frequent reason for the maltreatment suspicion was abnormal behaviour on the part of both the parents and the child. For half of the 91 children, the suspicion of child abuse occurred within three months of the child's enrollment. Only 37% of the children suspected of being abused or neglected were reported during 1990. The suspected maltreatment most often reported was, in order of importance, parental drug abuse, physical or sexual abuse, and psychological insufficiency of the parents. Reasons given for not reporting were uncertainty that the child was being maltreated, and previous negative reporting experiences. Of the respondents who had previously made a report, 55% indicated that they were satisfied with their contact with the CPA. Seventy-three percent of those who were dissatisfied mentioned the lack of feedback from the social workers. Variables such as the child's sex, age at enrollment, age at first suspicion, socioeconomic status of the neighbourhood, and ethnicity had no influence on reporting decisions. Results from the second phase of the study showed that 49% of the children that nursery school staff believed to be unknown to CPA were eventually reported by the nursery schools. Of the remaining

children that were not reported by the nursery schools, 43% were still unknown to the CPA five years after the first suspicion of abuse by nursery school staff. The children that were known to the CPA were reported either by police, school teachers, neighbours, relatives, and/or nursery school staff. Thirty-one percent of the children were reported by three or more people. Forty-one percent of the parents of children for whom reports were filed ended their child's placement at the school within one year of the report. The average delay between the first suspicion by nursery school staff and their subsequent report was 14 months. When the report was made by others, the average delay between the first suspicion by nursery school staff and a report was 21 months.

Lawlor M. *Assessment of the likelihood of primary school teachers believing children's disclosure of sexual abuse.* Child Abuse Review 1993;2:174-84.

Purpose: To assess Irish teachers' belief of sexual abuse disclosures by a pupil. **Methods:** Two mail-out questionnaires were sent to 1,000 randomly selected primary school teachers in the Republic of Ireland. The response rate was 45%. The first questionnaire included demographic variables as well as knowledge and attitude items. The second questionnaire focused on teachers' experience with physically and sexually abused students. **Discussion:** The majority of this sample was reasonably well informed about child sexual abuse. The teachers were not very well informed about abuser characteristics. Male teachers seemed to feel that child sexual abuse is not as widespread as is believed. Female teachers (78% of the sample) were more likely than their male counterparts to believe a child's disclosure of abuse and less likely to believe that the child misinterpreted touches as sexual. Female teachers were also more likely to believe the child rather than the parent. Fifty-three percent of respondents, both male and female, believed that there had never been a sexually abused child in their school. Sixty-five percent said they would hesitate to report a suspicion of child abuse for fear of being sued. Teachers were more likely to believe a disclosure if, in the past, they had suspected that there was a sexually abused child in their class, were not anxious about being sued, and were better informed about sexual abuse. Eighty-eight percent were in favour of instituting mandatory reporting.

Lamond DAP. *The impact of mandatory reporting legislation on reporting behaviour.* Child Abuse & Neglect 1989;13:471-80.

Purpose: To determine the impact of the mandatory reporting law in New South Wales, Australia, by examining the reporting behaviour of teachers and school counsellors prior to and after the introduction of the mandatory reporting law for teachers and other school professionals. **Methods:** The author looked at the quantity and source of reports made to the Department of Family and Community Services as well as the proportion of these reports that were investigated. Data were collected during October-December 1986 (six months before the mandatory reporting law was extended to include teachers and other school professionals) and October-December 1987 (three months after the introduction of the mandatory reporting law). All data were collected from the Department's computerized Child Protection Information System database. **Discussion:** There was a significant increase in the percentage of reports from teachers after the mandatory reporting law came into effect (from 11% to 16%). During that same time, there was no change in the proportion of reports from other human services professionals. There was, however, no change in the substantiation rate of the teachers' reports. Teachers' substantiation rates are similar to those of other human services professionals. Teachers accurately determined the type of abuse 54% of the time, and accurately determined that the child was a victim of some type of abuse 67% of the time.

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