

HEAR ME

By C. Paige Brooks

A worldwide epidemic affecting the young is among us, and it is called *child abuse and neglect*. In the United States alone, it is estimated that at least 1760 children die each year ([Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)) from abuse and neglect, translating to a rate of 2.35 children per 100,000 in the general population. Not only is this large number increasing, but it is also believed to represent only a small percentage of reported fatal abuse cases. Definitions of abuse and neglect differ from state to state. Because a coroner may label a child's death as an "accident" or sudden infant death syndrome (also known as SIDS), an investigation by law officials is rarely pursued.



There are many explanations as to why most child abuse cases are not reported. One is that those who could help stop the abuse, because they don't want to get involved or because they simply don't care, often ignore it. Also, *children* might not report abuse due to threats from the abuser or the fear that no one will believe them. When the perpetrator is someone they love or trust, they might not want to see this person sent to jail.

Specifically regarding children with disabilities, there have been very few studies conducted on the extent and frequency of abuse. Overall, it appears that children with disabilities are more likely to be abused than their nondisabled peers according to [this document](#) [DOC] found on [The Arc's website](#):

A number of weak and small-scale studies found that children with all types of disabilities are abused more often than children without disabilities. Studies show that rates of abuse among children with disabilities are variable, ranging from a low of 22 percent to a high of 70 percent (National Research Council, 2001). Although the studies found a wide range of abuse prevalence, when taken as a whole, they provide consistent evidence that there is a link between children with disabilities and abuse (Sobsey, 1994).

Adults need to be aware of the signs of an abused child. The Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) offers media that examines this topic:

- [Eternal Scars: Physical and Emotional Child Abuse](#)
- [Understanding Childhood Trauma: A Parents Guide to Identifying and Responding to Childhood Trauma](#)
- [Understanding Childhood Trauma: Domestic Violence and Childhood Trauma](#)
- [Understanding Childhood Trauma: Identifying and Responding to Trauma—Ages 0 to 5 Years Old](#)
- [Understanding Childhood Trauma: Identifying and Responding to Trauma—Ages 6 to Adolescence](#)
- [The Eleventh Commandment](#) (a captioned music video that includes contact information for [ChildHelp](#))



Not all child abuse ends in death. Some children endure abuse for many years. One form of abuse that has gained nationwide attention in recent years is child sexual abuse. This can occur inside or outside of the home, in school, in places of worship, and can be committed not only by a parent, stepparent, or guardian, but by people who seem “normal” and who have gained the trust of the child or the child’s family.

The DCMP has a title regarding this particular topic of abuse. It includes interviews with adults who were sexually abused as children: [Close to Home](#).

Parents and guardians need to ensure background checks are completed for individuals spending any length of time with their children while they are not present. This includes any kind of daycare, schools (including residential), and places where the child may take part in activities, such as sports or art. Parents can also check a [national database](#) of registered sex offenders (though not always complete and accurate) for a listing of sexual predators and where they live. Each state has its own registry. This is useful in that it gives parents a tool to protect their children by finding out if a pedophile lives nearby. This information is always available to the public.

For the deaf community, there is a service called DOVE: Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Women and Children that aids in communication for abused deaf children and adults who have survived abuse. It is the Interpreter Paradigm Training Series (IPTS), the first of its kind in the nation. For more information, please email info@deafdove.org. DOVE can also be contacted by calling (VP) 1-866-283-5632 or (VOICE) 1-303-831-7932 for more information about their services. Their website is <http://www.deafdove.org>.

Another support group for the deaf or hard of hearing who were abused as children or are suffering abuse now is Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims (ASADV). Their website is <http://www.asadv.org>. Their mission is to provide support for adults who are deaf and hard of hearing and their children who are or have been victims of domestic violence and or sexual assault—a safe environment of empowerment, advocacy, and educational/training services will be offered to them.



Two more articles of interest can be found on [About.com](#)’s website. They are [“Abuse of Deaf Children: When Deaf Children are Hurt”](#) and [“Sexual Abuse of Deaf Students in Schools: It Happens Internationally,”](#) which includes a list of residential schools where abuse has been documented.

For missing, abused, or sexually exploited children, contact the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#). Be sure to access their “Frequently Asked Questions and Statistics” for more information and their campaign area for downloadable posters like the one pictured on the next page.

And for adults working with deaf children who are being abused, check out this [annotated bibliography of multimedia resources](#).

