Curriculum Guide for Instruction
in Child Maltreatment

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Purpose of the Curriculum Guide

Child maltreatment, which includes child physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and psychological maltreatment, is unfortunately prevalent in today’s society, with over 3 million reports of child abuse or neglect received by child protective services (CPS) in 2014 (USDDHS, 2016). Research on the consequences of child maltreatment has elucidated the wide ranging impact of child abuse and neglect on the child, family, and society as a whole. Training for professions such as psychology, medicine, nursing, law, dentistry, social work, public health, and education has not kept pace with the demands for expertise in child abuse and neglect. Education is an essential component of the effort to prevent child maltreatment and reduce the consequences to children who experience various forms of maltreatment. This publication provides guidance for professors and lecturers who want to incorporate information about child abuse and neglect into their teaching.

There are several reasons why child maltreatment should be included in both the graduate and undergraduate curriculum. First, many students will enter professions in which they will have contact with abused and neglected children or with adults who have a history of child maltreatment. Learning about the topic, including the causes and consequences of child maltreatment, strategies for preventing abuse and neglect, strategies for identifying and investigating maltreatment, and therapeutic services for children and adults will enhance their professional work. Failure to understand the signs of maltreatment and child neglect and the potential impact of trauma on individuals can lead to failure to stop ongoing maltreatment, to misdiagnosis, to ineffective systems’ approaches, and to inappropriate services. The research on a wide range of issues related to child maltreatment has expanded tremendously over the last couple of decades and students need to be aware of the advances in the area.

Second, research on child maltreatment indicates that a significant number of individuals within the general population have experienced some form of child maltreatment. Such childhood experiences can have an influence on an individual’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. This influence can last throughout childhood and adolescence and extend into adulthood. Education about child maltreatment can be an important component in helping students with abuse histories to understand their experiences.

Third, research suggests that child abuse and neglect is often associated with a number of factors including deficits in parenting abilities and skills, various social and demographic characteristics, and biological factors. Identifying specific abusive and neglectful parenting behaviors and disseminating information about factors associated with abusive and neglectful parental behaviors to students might help improve understanding about child maltreatment and thus reduce the likelihood of the problem for future generations.

Development of the Curriculum Guide

In early 2000, the Executive Committee of the Section on Child Maltreatment of the American Psychological Association’s Division 37 appointed an ad hoc committee to create a new curriculum guide on the topic of child maltreatment for use with undergraduate and graduate students. The committee worked to combine the Section’s previous curriculum guides, update references, and introduce new sections on timely topics. The current document represents a revision and update of these earlier efforts. The Executive Committee of the Section on Child Maltreatment approved the current version of this curriculum guide in Winter 2017.

The guide includes introductory and advanced resources on a variety of child maltreatment topics.
including: 1) Overviews of the different types of child maltreatment, 2) Definitions of child maltreatment, 3) Incidence and prevalence, 4) Causes and correlates of child maltreatment, 5) Consequences associated with child maltreatment, 6) Legal and social issues, 7) Treatment interventions, 8) Prevention, and 9) controversial issues in the field. Various search engines (e.g., Google Scholar, PsycINFO) were utilized by inputting section headings to identify these resources. Finally, the guide provides online resources on child maltreatment.

How to Use the Curriculum Guide

In this publication, topics that could be incorporated into a curriculum on child maltreatment are included along with a list of references that provide information about each topic. The first section includes resources that provide a general overview of the field including several resources and textbooks. Resources on child maltreatment definitional issues are included because it is important for students to become familiar with the variety of definitions that currently exist and the factors that have contributed to conceptually defining the various forms of child maltreatment. A section of resources related to the incidence and prevalence of child maltreatment is included to demonstrate to students the magnitude of the problem of child abuse and neglect in addition to the methodological complexities associated with gathering information on child maltreatment. Resources on the causes and correlates of child maltreatment are provided in order to expand students’ understanding of the factors that contribute to the problem and potential methods of intervention. A significant body of research literature has demonstrated that child maltreatment is associated with significant physical and psychological difficulties. Resources on the consequences associated with child maltreatment are included to assist students in comprehending the range of outcomes associated with abuse and neglect as well as the methodological difficulties inherent in conducting research in this area. A section of resources addressing legal and social issues associated with child maltreatment are provided to help students understand the functioning of the legal and social systems in response to the problem of child maltreatment such as the roles of police, prosecutors, social workers, and governmental agencies. Resources that focus on the treatment interventions available for victims and perpetrators of child maltreatment are included to broaden students’ understanding of methods used to ameliorate the mental health problems associated with child maltreatment. Resources on prevention programs are also provided in an effort to help students understand the most effective ways of preventing child maltreatment along with the difficulties researchers have encountered in attempting to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs. A section on controversial issues is included to provide information about topics within the field of child maltreatment that are the subject of continuing debate. Finally, a variety of general sources of information on child maltreatment, including online resources, are also provided.

The guide is organized to include general resources for each topic at the beginning of each section, followed by resources that address the topic in more specific detail. Some of the resources will be duplicated throughout the guide when topics overlap with one another. To assist users of this guide in determining the sophistication level of each resource, references are coded according to the following key:

(1) = good introduction to an issue, appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate training
(2) = advanced treatment of the issue, preferable for upper-level undergraduate and graduate training

A Final Consideration in Using the Curriculum Guide

Many students who are exposed to this curriculum will have either some direct or indirect experience with issues associated with child maltreatment. Instructors should be aware of the difficult nature of the topic of child maltreatment and attempt to be sensitive to the needs of their students. Some students may experience various negative feelings when discussing the topic of child maltreatment such as embarrassment, shame, fear, or guilt.
Instructors should observe students closely for signs of discomfort and attempt to keep discussions as general and impersonal as possible.

Because so many children experience various forms of child abuse and neglect, it is likely that some students exposed to this curriculum will have directly experienced child maltreatment. As users of this curriculum, it is important that instructors are equipped to respond appropriately to a student’s disclosure of abuse or neglect. Educators need to understand the importance of their personal reactions toward a victim of abuse in addition to their professional roles and responsibilities.

There is increasing evidence that supportive reactions to an individual’s disclosure of abuse can be influential in shaping the subsequent impact that the abuse experience has on an individual. If victims encounter positive and therapeutic responses when they disclose abuse, then their feelings of self-blame, isolation, embarrassment, or anger may be reduced. Appropriate responses for educators include avoiding negative reactions such as shock, horror, disapproval, or anger; conveying a belief in the victim’s statements; reassuring the student that he or she is not to blame; and acknowledging and praising the victim’s courage in disclosing.

Educators who receive disclosures of abuse can also play a critical role in assisting students in finding professional assistance. Instructors should consult with mental health professionals available in their area (e.g., community mental health centers, university counseling centers). Experts agree on the importance of referring individuals into therapy. Therapeutic intervention is essential for abuse victims because it helps to address initial and long-term consequences associated with abuse.

Educators have a mandated responsibility to report child abuse and neglect when they have a suspicion of ongoing abuse in children under the age of 18 years of age. Although most college students are age 18 or older, in some cases the student may be younger. In addition, some college-aged and graduate students may have younger siblings or know of other children who may be experiencing abuse. Depending on the jurisdiction, reports should be made to the local department of social services (usually referred to as child protective services), law-enforcement agencies, or central state registries. Most states require reporters to contact the appropriate agency “immediately” after suspicion has been aroused or a disclosure has been made. Educators should also make an effort to document any incident or discussion that leads them to suspect abuse (e.g., date, time, and description of the incident or discussion with the student). All states and districts within the United States provide immunity to reporters who report in good faith with the intention of ensuring a child’s safety, and most state statutes contain penalties for failure to report suspected abuse (e.g., misdemeanor subject to a fine and/or jail sentence). References regarding reporting requirements can be found in section VI.F. of this Curriculum Guide.

The National Child Abuse Hotline (Child Help USA: (800) 422-4453) can be an important resource for educators who come into contact with students who disclose ongoing or past abuse. The hotline provides crisis counseling, child abuse reporting information, and information and referrals for every county in the U.S. and District of Columbia. Mental health professionals staff the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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The authors of the curriculum welcome any constructive comments about this guide. Of particular interest are comments about any needed changes or missing aspects of the curriculum. Feedback about the curriculum will serve as a foundation for any future revised editions of the curriculum. Questions or comments about this
curriculum should be directed to:

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Table of Contents

I. Overviews of Different Types of Child Maltreatment
   A. Textbooks and General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse and Neglect
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Psychological Maltreatment

II. Definitions of Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Neglect
   E. Psychological Maltreatment

III. Incidence and Prevalence of Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse and Neglect
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Psychological Maltreatment

IV. Causes and Correlates of Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Intergenerational Transmission
   C. Physical Abuse
   D. Sexual Abuse
   E. Neglect
   F. Psychological Maltreatment

V. Consequences of Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Neglect
   E. Psychological Maltreatment

VI. Legal and Social Issues Related to Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Children’s Memory, Suggestibility, and Eye Witness Competency
   C. Expert Testimony
   D. False Allegations of Abuse
   E. Innovations and Modifications for Child Witnesses/Victims
   F. Mandated Reporting
   G. Parental Rights/Termination
   H. Removing Children from the Home
   I. Investigative Interviewing of Children
VII. Treatment Interventions for Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse and Neglect
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Psychological Maltreatment

VIII. Preventing Child Maltreatment
   A. General Resources
   B. Physical Abuse and Neglect
   C. Sexual Abuse
   D. Psychological Maltreatment

IX. Controversial Issues in the Field of Child Maltreatment
   A. Is Corporal Punishment a Form of Child Maltreatment?
   B. What are the Age Differences of Consent Associated with Sexual Abuse?
   C. Is Exposure to Domestic Violence Child Abuse?
   D. Are Home-Based Child Maltreatment Prevention Services Effective?
   E. What’s Best? Family Preservation or Removal of the Child?
   F. Do Repressed Memories of Child Maltreatment Exist?
   G. Do Children Fabricate Reports of Child Maltreatment?
   H. Is Community Notification Effective in Preventing Child Maltreatment?
   I. Is it Possible to Neglect or Abuse an Unborn Child?

X. Online Resources on Child Maltreatment Issues
I. Overviews of Different Types of Child Maltreatment

A. Overview: Textbooks and General Resources


B. Overview: Physical Abuse and Neglect


**C. Overview: Sexual Abuse**


**D. Overview: Psychological Maltreatment**


II. Definitions of Child Maltreatment

A. Definitional Issues: General Resources


**B. Definitional Issues: Physical Abuse**


C. Definitional Issues: Sexual Abuse


D. Definitional Issues: Neglect


E. Definitional Issues: Psychological Maltreatment


III. Incidence and Prevalence of Child Maltreatment

A. Incidence and Prevalence: General Resources


B. Incidence and Prevalence: Physical Abuse and Neglect


C. Incidence and Prevalence: Sexual Abuse


D. Incidence and Prevalence: Psychological Maltreatment


E. Incidence and Prevalence: Polyvictimization (Comparative and Comorbid Forms of Abuse)


### IV. Causes and Correlates of Child Maltreatment

**A. Causes and Correlates: General Resources**


B. Causes and Correlates: Intergenerational Transmission


C. Causes and Correlates: Physical Abuse


**D. Causes and Correlates: Sexual Abuse**


**E. Causes and Correlates: Neglect**


Dufour, S., Lavergne, C., Larrivee, M. C., & Trocme, N.(2008). Who are these parents involved in child
neglect? A differential analysis by parent gender and family structure. *Children and Youth Services Review, 30.* 141-156. (2)


**F. Causes and Correlates: Psychological Maltreatment**


V. Consequences of Child Maltreatment

A. Consequences: General Resources


**B. Consequences: Physical Abuse**


C. Consequences: Sexual Abuse


**D. Consequences: Neglect**


Psychology, 35(5), 523-532. (2)


E. Consequences: Psychological Maltreatment


Reyome, N. D. (2010). Childhood emotional maltreatment and later intimate relationships: Themes from


F. Consequences: Polyvictimization (Comparative and Comorbid Forms of Abuse)


VI. Legal and Social Issues Related to Child Maltreatment

A. Legal and Social Issues: General Resources
American Bar Association Standards of Practice For Lawyers Representing Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases. Available online at: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/family/reports/standards_abuseneglect.aut


**B. Legal and Social Issues: Children’s Memory, Suggestibility, and Eye Witness Competency**


Lyon, T. D., Carrick, N., & Quas, J. A. (2010). Young children’s competency to take the oath: Effects of task, maltreatment, and age. Law and Human Behavior, 34(2), 141-149. (2)


C. Legal and Social Issues: Expert Testimony


D. Legal and Social Issues: False Allegations of Abuse


E. Legal and Social Issues: Innovations and Modifications for Child Witnesses/Victims


Watters, T., Brineman, J., & Wright, S. (2007). Between a rock and a hard place: Why hearsay testimony may be a necessary evil in child sexual abuse cases. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice, 7*(1), 47-57. (2)


**F. Legal and Social Issues: Mandated Reporting**


Alvarez, K. M., Kenny, M. C., Donohue, B., & Carpin, K. M. (2004). Why are professionals failing to initiate mandated reports of child maltreatment, and are there any empirically based training


G. Legal and Social Issues: Parental Rights / Termination


**H. Legal and Social Issues: Removing Children from the Home**


I. Legal and Social Issues: Investigative Interviewing of Children


VII. Treatment Interventions for Child Maltreatment

A. Treatment: General Resources


Toth, S. L., Manly, J. T., & Hathaway, A. (2011). Relational interventions for young children who have been maltreated. In J. D. Osofsky (Eds.), Clinical work with traumatized young children (pp. 96-113). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press. (2)


B. Treatment: Physical Abuse and Neglect


New directions in the treatment of child physical abuse and neglect in Australia: MST-CAN, a case study. *Advances in Mental Health, 9*(2), 148-161. doi:10.5172/jamh.9.2.148 (2)


Webster-Stratton, C., & Reid, M. J. (2004). Strengthening social and emotional competence in young children—The foundation for early school readiness and success Incredible Years classroom social skills and problem-solving curriculum. *Infants and Young Children, 17*, 96–113. (2)


**C. Treatment: Sexual Abuse**


D. Treatment: Psychological Maltreatment


**VIII. Preventing Child Maltreatment**

**A. Preventing Child Maltreatment: General Resources**


Innocenti, M. S. (2016). Considerations on the Implementation, Innovation, and Improvement of Evidence-Based Home Visiting Programs. In Home visitation programs (pp. 135-153). Springer International Publishing. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-17984-1_9 (1)


**B. Preventing Child Maltreatment: Physical Abuse and Neglect**


Adults and Children Together (ACT) Against Violence Parents Raising Safe Kids Program. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 32, 147-160. (2)


C. Preventing Child Maltreatment: Sexual Abuse


Research, Treatment, & Program Innovations For Victims, Survivors, & Offenders, 18(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/10538710802584650


D. Preventing Child Maltreatment: Psychological Maltreatment


IX. Controversial Issues in the Field of Child Maltreatment

A. Controversy: Is Corporal Punishment a Form of Child Maltreatment?


**B. Controversy: What are the Age Differences of Consent Associated with Sexual Abuse?**


**C. Controversy: Is Exposure to Domestic Violence Child Abuse?**


D. Controversy: Are Home-Based Child Maltreatment Prevention Services Effective?


E. Controversy: What’s Best? Family Preservation or Removal of the Child?


Mennen, F. E., Brensilver, M., & Trickett, P. K. (2010). Do maltreated children who remain at home function better than those who are placed? *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*(12), 1675-1682. (1)


**F. Controversy: Do Repressed Memories of Child Maltreatment Exist?**


**G. Controversy: Do Children Fabricate Reports of Child Maltreatment?**


Lorandos, D., & Bone, J. M. (2016). Child custody evaluations: In cases where parental alienation is alleged. In M. L. Goldstein (Eds.), *Handbook of child custody* (pp. 179-232). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-13942-5_16 (2)


**H. Controversy: Is Community Notification Effective in Preventing Child Maltreatment?**


Tewksbury, R., Jennings, W. G., & Zgoba, K. M. (2012). A longitudinal examination of sex offender recidivism prior to and following the implementation of SORN. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 30*(3), 308-328. (2)


I. Controversy: Is it Possible to Neglect or Abuse an Unborn Child?


X. Online Resources on Child Maltreatment Issues

Aside from materials specific to each of the topics discussed above, a variety of general sources of information on child abuse and neglect exist on the Internet. Following are a list of websites with child maltreatment related material.

1) www.futureswithoutviolence.org: Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) website. The Family Violence Prevention Fund works to help those victimized by violence and supports efforts to prevent violence within the home and in the community. The website includes information about the fund’s programs and efforts to change the way health care providers, police, judges, and employers address violence.

2) www.standupforkids.org/: Stand Up For Kids website. Stand Up for Kids is a volunteer organization committed to helping homeless and street kids. The organization accomplishes its mission through volunteers who go to the streets to help homeless and street kids improve their lives. The website includes information about the organization and how to become involved as a volunteer.

3) www.preventchildabuse.org/: Prevent Child Abuse American website. Prevent Child Abuse America works at the national, state and community levels to prevent child abuse. The organization supports state and local prevention programs. The website includes information about the organization as well as information about advocacy, conferences, and research on child abuse.

4) www.csom.org: Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) website. The CSOM was established in 1997 with the goal of preventing victimization by improving the management of adult and juvenile sex offenders. The site includes training curricula as well as resources on a variety of child maltreatment related topics.

5) www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law.html: American Bar Association’s Center on Children and the Law website. The mission of the Center is to improve children’s lives through advances in law, justice, knowledge, practice, and public policy. The website offers information on professional training and education, publications, Internet resources, technical assistance, and counseling.

6) www.childhelpusa.org/: Childhelp USA website. Childhelp USA is one of the oldest national non-profit agencies dedicated to the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. The agency’s mission is to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of abused and neglected children by focusing efforts in the areas of treatment, prevention, and research. The website includes information about the agency’s programs and services as well as general information about abuse and abuse reporting.


9) www.ispcan.org/: International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) website. ISPCAN was founded in 1977 in an effort to bring together committed professionals from across the globe to work towards the global prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. ISPCAN's mission is to “prevent cruelty to children in every nation, in every form: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, street children, child fatalities, child prostitution, children of war, emotional abuse and child labor.” The website includes information about ISPCAN's goals, publications, congresses, professional training events, and world-wide activities.

10) www.ndacan.cornell.edu/: National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect website (NDACAN). NDACAN was established in 1988 to promote scholarly exchange among researchers in the child maltreatment field. NDACAN acquires microdata from leading researchers and national data collection efforts and makes these datasets available to the research community for secondary analysis. The website includes information about NDACAN's electronic mailing list, newsletter, and training opportunities through conference workshops and summer research institute.

11) www.nccafv.org/: National Council On Child Abuse & Family Violence (NCCAFV) website. The NCCAFV is a resource center on the prevention of intergenerational family violence including child abuse, domestic violence (spouse/partner abuse), and elder abuse. The website provides information about public awareness and education materials, program and resource development consultation, and technical assistance and training.

12) www.childabuseprevention.org/: Child Abuse Prevention Association website. The mission of Child Abuse Prevention Association is to “prevent and treat all forms of child abuse by creating changes in individuals, families and society that strengthen relationships and promote healing.” The goal of the association is to help children and their families overcome the traumatic effects of child abuse. The website includes general information about abuse, descriptions of the association’s programs and services, and links to various support organizations.

13) http://www.naccchildlaw.org: The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) website. The NACC is a non-profit child advocacy and professional membership association dedicated to providing high quality legal representation for children. The website provides information about NACC’s training and technical assistance opportunities. The website also includes a public information and professional referral center.

14) www.ndaa.org: National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse website. The center serves as a central resource for training, expert legal assistance, court reform and state-of-the-art information on criminal child abuse investigations and prosecutions. The website includes links to the center’s newsletter on current topics in child abuse and child abuse publications.

15) www.apsac.org/: American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) website. APSAC’s mission is to enhance the ability of professionals to respond to children and families affected by abuse and violence by providing education and other sources of information to professionals who work in the field of child maltreatment. The website includes information about APSAC services and events, child abuse publications, resources and links, child maltreatment conferences, and training institutes.

16) www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/index.htm: The Children's Bureau (CB) website. The CB is the oldest federal agency for children and is located within the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. The bureau assists states in the delivery of child welfare services including services to protect children and strengthen families. The website provides information about programs and
funding, laws and policies, statistics and research on child abuse, child welfare monitoring, training and technical assistance in child maltreatment, and federal and state reporting systems.

17) www.acf.hhs.gov/: Administration for Children and Families (ACF) website. The ACF is housed within the Department of Health and Human Services and is responsible for federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities. The website includes information about services for families including adoption, foster care, as well as child abuse and neglect. The website also provides information about grant opportunities, publications, and research.

18) http://abanet.org/domviol/home.html: The American Bar Association on Domestic Violence website. The website provides information on domestic violence-related conferences and meetings, national domestic violence resource center information, and materials related to culturally diverse and immigrant domestic violence groups.

19) http://www.apa.org/pi/families/: The American Psychological Association’s Children, Youth, and Family Services Division website. The website offers links to free publications, online documents, government agencies, and news concerning the welfare of children and families.

20) http://www.americanhumane.org/: American Humane Association. This website provides information pertaining to research, analysis, and training to help public and private agencies respond to child maltreatment.

21) www.cwla.org: Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). The CWLA website provides information pertaining to training, consultation, and technical assistance to child welfare professionals and agencies while educating the public about emerging issues affecting children.


23) www.nationalcac.org: National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC). The NCAC website provides information pertaining to prevention, intervention, and treatment services to physically and sexually abused children and their families.

24) http://www.nrccps.org. National Resource Center for Child Protective Services. This website provides technical assistance and training in efforts to build state, local, and Tribal capacity in the area of child protective services.

25) http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/family-centered-practice.html: National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. This organization and website provides training and technical assistance in efforts to build state, local, and Tribal capacity in the area of family-centered practice and permanency, as well as issues related to foster care.

26) http://www.ncjfcj.org/content/view/20/94/: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody. This program and website aims to promote improved court involvement regarding family violence through demonstration programs, professional training, technical assistance, national conferences, and publications.
27) **www.ctfalliance.org**: National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds. This website provides useful information pertaining to children’s trust and prevention funds aimed at strengthening families and preventing children from harm.


29) **www.parentsanonymous.org**: Parents Anonymous. This prevention organization and website provides information for families, professionals, and the community pertaining to supporting safe and nurturing environments for families.

30) **www.nctsn.org**: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. This program and website provides resources on prevention, treatment, and services for children and adolescents with trauma histories, as well as to their parents/caregivers, service providers, and media.

31) **http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/child-sexual-assault-prevention/preventing-child-sexual-abuse-resources**: A section of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center website. This website provides general information and educational and training resources on child sexual abuse, sexuality and child development, and child sexual abuse prevention.

32) **http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org**: The National Children’s Alliance website. This organization’s mission is “empowering local communities to serve child victims of abuse.”

33) **https://www.childwelfare.gov/**: The Child Welfare Information Gateway is a website that connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive resources to help protect children and strengthen families.

34) **http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/index.html**: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website provides a variety of information about violence prevention of child abuse and neglect including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

35) **http://www.childtrends.org/**: Child Trends is a research organization that focuses exclusively on improving the lives and prospects of children, youth, and families including those affected by child maltreatment.

36) **http://www.ecpat.net/**: ECPAT International is an organization that aims to end child prostitution and sex tourism and focuses on broad geographical coverage and first-hand experience involving advocacy at the national, regional, and international levels.

37) **http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/**: The Crimes Against Children Research Center aims to combat crimes against children (including child abduction, homicide, rape, assault, and physical and sexual abuse) by providing high quality research and statistics to the public, policy makers, law enforcement, and child welfare practitioners.

38) **http://developingchild.harvard.edu**: The Harvard University Center on the Developing Child is an organization focused on researching and implementing evidence-based practices aimed at improving the lives of children facing adversity. In addition to these practice approaches, the Center on the Developing Child also targets policy impacting the learning capacity, health, and economic and social mobility of young children.
39) **http://www.cebc4cw.org**: The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare is an online resource aimed at providing information regarding evidence-based practices relevant to child welfare.

40) **https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov**: Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness is a Department of Health and Human Services website dedicated to reviewing and discussing the effectiveness of various home visiting program treatment models.

41) **https://learn.nctsn.org**: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Learning Center website provides training resources including articles, webinars, and podcasts for clinicians working with child maltreatment.

42) **https://www.samhsa.gov**: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is an organization that promotes access to treatment and psychoeducation around mental health issues, such as substance abuse, trauma and violence, and homelessness that can contribute to the occurrence of child maltreatment.