

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Types, Subtypes, and Severity of Substantiated Child Neglect in U.S. Army Communities

Cozza, S. J., Ortiz, C. D., Fullerton, C. S., McCarroll, J. E., Holmes, A. K., Harris, A. M., & Ursano, R. J. (2015). Types, subtypes, and severity of substantiated child neglect in U.S. Army communities. *Military Medicine*, 180(11), 1147-1153. doi:10.7205/milmed-d-14-00373

SUMMARY: An investigation around the types, subtypes, and severity of child neglect among a sample of substantiated cases at four U. S. Army installations was conducted. Descriptions of demographic correlates of victims and offenders by type and subtype were provided. Overall, five types and 17 subtypes of neglect were represented, separately or in combination, and with varying severity.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The neglect cases that were included consisted of mostly young offenders with young children; approximately 40% of children were infants and toddlers (i.e., under three years of age) and 84% of offenders were 32 years or younger, with nearly 40% under 24 year.
- The types of neglect most highly represented included lack of supervision (35%), emotional neglect (32%), and failure to provide physical needs (26%).
- The majority of incidents coded as emotional neglect involved male offenders whereas the majority of the remaining types of incidents involved female offenders.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide support for deployed Service members that focuses on relationship building with their children during reintegration
- Offer pre- and post-deployment support groups for deployed parents and their children
- Develop curriculum for deployed parents that focuses on the inclusion of targeted prevention of child neglect strategies

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Build awareness across military branches around the importance of supporting and promoting effective parenting for Service members and their partners
- Recommend education of professionals (e.g. child caregivers, mental health, education professionals) on the different types and subtypes of child neglect
- Support parenting skill development that promotes resilience in Service members, their partners, and children

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Six hundred randomly sampled child neglect cases were selected out of 5,640 cases from four Army installations with the highest number of substantiated child neglect cases.
- Out of the 600 randomly sampled cases, the first 100 from each site were used in the analysis with a total of 397 case files included.
- Trained research team members coded each case for five distinct types of child neglect: (1) Failure to Provide Physical Needs, (2) Lack of Supervision, (3) Emotional Neglect, (4) Moral-Legal Neglect, and (5) Educational Neglect.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 512 offenders for the 397 case files, meaning that in some cases there were two offenders (i.e. civilian spouses and Service members).
- Offenders were 55% female and 44% male, with 56% identifying as White, 29% as Black, and 16% as other.
- Two thirds of military offenders were junior enlisted (E-1 to E-4) in rank; 98% were E-6 and below and 60% of spouse offenders were from E-1 to E-4 families.

LIMITATIONS

- Only large U.S. Army installations were sampled; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to child neglect on small Army installations or in other military communities.
- The focus of this study was on substantiated cases of child neglect which limits the understanding of risk and protective mechanisms among non-substantiated cases of neglect.
- Data for this study was from cases filed between 2003 and 2007, a high deployment period; which could bias the outcomes.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine specific risk factors and their relationship to neglect types and severity of outcomes
- Investigate correlates of types and subtypes of child neglect in military communities to identify other individual, family, and community risk factors
- Explore the association of military risk factors (e.g., combat deployment) to specific types and subtypes of child neglect

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>