

Unemployment linked with child maltreatment

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The stresses of poverty have long been associated with child abuse and neglect. In a study presented Sunday, Oct. 3, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in San Francisco, researchers directly linked an increased unemployment rate to child maltreatment one year later.

Researchers reviewed state-level unemployment statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and compared them with [child maltreatment](#) data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), during the years 1990 to 2008. Each 1 percent increase in unemployment was associated with at least a 0.50 per 1,000 increase in confirmed child maltreatment reports one year later. In addition, higher levels of unemployment appeared to raise the likelihood of child maltreatment, as it was not only the lagged change in unemployment, but also the previous year's unemployment level that influenced the number of [child abuse](#) cases.

According to the study, a prolonged rise in unemployment rates is not only detrimental to the economic health of the country but also to the physical and mental health of children. Maltreated children suffer the immediate physical consequences of abuse, including physical injury and even death, and are also at increased risk of physical and mental health effects, often lasting for decades.

[Unemployment](#) in the U.S. has risen from 4.5 percent in 2007 to a current level of 9.5 percent.

"When times are bad, children suffer," said study author Robert Sege, MD, PhD, FAAP, professor of pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine, and director, Division of Ambulatory Pediatrics, Boston Medical Center. "These results suggest that programs to strengthen families and prevent maltreatment should be expanded during economic downturns."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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