

# Many child abuse cases may be going unreported during pandemic

August 20 2020, by Robin Foster and E.j. Mundell, Healthday Reporters

---



(HealthDay)—Child abuse reports have plunged during the coronavirus

pandemic, a troubling sign that the constraints of social distancing may mean thousands of cases are being missed, a new survey suggests.

The survey, conducted by the Children's National Alliance, found that children's advocacy centers across the country reported serving 40,000 fewer children nationwide during the first six months of this year than the same period last year, the *Washington Post* reported.

In 2019, more than 192,000 children were served by the centers while just over 152,000 were helped in 2020, a 21 percent drop, the survey showed.

But in no way can the decline be viewed as good news, said Teresa Huizar, executive director of the alliance.

"We have absolutely no reason to believe the actual incidence rate has declined," she said. "What we really believe is that there are 40,000 fewer kids that haven't been saved from abuse."

"What we were dreading did in fact happen," Huizar told the *Post*.

And the damage may be even more widespread, since the numbers from the centers, which receive referrals from child protective services departments and law enforcement, do not take into account all child abuse reports nationwide. A full third of U.S. counties don't even have access to a children's advocacy center, the *Post* reported.

More than two-thirds of child abuse cases are reported by teachers and other community professionals, the newspaper reported. Educators alone were responsible for 21 percent of the 4.3 million referrals made to child protective services in 2018, according to federal data. But with many schools, daycare centers and summer camps closed, vulnerable children have fewer contacts with adults who might spot signs of abuse or

neglect, the *Post* reported.

## **Parents overwhelmed as school year starts**

To make matters worse, another new survey shows most parents are feeling overwhelmed and abandoned as the school year starts.

Just 1 in 7 parents said their children would be returning to school full time this fall, and most children need help with remote schooling, *The New York Times* survey released Wednesday found. Yet, 4 in 5 parents said they would have no help in that endeavor, whether from relatives, neighbors, nannies or tutors. As well, more than half of parents said they will be taking on this burden while still holding down paid jobs.

Of course, when both parents are wage earners who need to work outside the home, they cannot be in two places at once. But three-fourths of these parents said they will be overseeing their children's education, and nearly half plan to handle child care, according to the survey of more than 1,000 parents polled between Aug. 4 and Aug. 8.

Of the parents who are both working remotely during the pandemic, 80 percent will also handle child care and education, the survey showed. One in five are considering hiring a private teacher or tutor to help with remote learning.

"All the choices stink," Kate Averett, a sociologist at the University at Albany in New York who has been interviewing parents since the spring, told the *Times*. "There is a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety. Parents tell me about not being able to sleep because they're so anxious, or tell me they've been crying a lot. There's been a lot of actual crying during interviews."

Meanwhile, two more universities have joined the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill in announcing a halt to in-person instruction, the *Post* reported. After making the move on Tuesday following a spike in coronavirus cases during the first week on campus, the University of Notre Dame said the switch will last for at least two weeks.

Notre Dame will also close public spaces on campus and restrict dormitories to residents. Students who live in off-campus housing have been barred from campus, the newspaper reported.

Michigan State University also shifted its reopening plans on Tuesday, telling students not to return for the start of classes in two weeks, the *Post* reported.

## **Lasting immunity to COVID-19 seen in early trials**

In a bit of good news, scientists reported this week that they are seeing signs of lasting immunity to the coronavirus, even in those who only experience mild symptoms of COVID-19.

A slew of studies show that disease-fighting antibodies, as well as B-cells and T-cells that can recognize the virus, appear to persist months after infections have run their course, the *Times* reported.

"This is exactly what you would hope for. All the pieces are there to have a totally protective immune response," said Marion Pepper, an immunologist at the University of Washington and an author of one of the new studies, which is now undergoing review by the journal *Nature*.

"This is very promising," said Smita Iyer, an immunologist at the University of California, Davis, who is studying immune responses to the coronavirus in rhesus macaques, told the *Times*. "This calls for some optimism about herd immunity, and potentially a vaccine."

Although researchers cannot predict how long these immune responses will last, experts consider the data to be the first proof that the body has a good chance of fending off the coronavirus if exposed to it again.

"Things are really working as they're supposed to," Deepta Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona, told the *Times*. Bhattacharya is an author on one of the new studies, which was published on medRxiv, a pre-print server for health research that has not yet been peer-reviewed.

By Thursday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 5.5 million as the [death toll](#) eclipsed 173,000, according to a *Times* tally.

According to the same tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Thursday were: California with over 646,000; Florida with more than 584,000; Texas with over 582,000; New York with nearly 432,000; and Georgia with over 227,000.

## **Nations grapple with pandemic**

Elsewhere in the world, the situation remains challenging.

India has passed Britain to have the fourth-highest death toll in the world from the coronavirus, after the United States, Brazil and Mexico, the *Post* reported.

By Thursday, India had more than 2.8 million confirmed cases of the infection and nearly 54,000 deaths, a John Hopkins tally shows. Britain remains the worst-hit country in Europe, the *Post* reported.

Brazil is also a hotspot in the coronavirus pandemic, with over 3.4 million confirmed infections by Thursday, according to the Hopkins tally. It has the second-highest number of cases, behind only the United

States.

Cases are also spiking in Russia: As of Thursday, that country reported the world's fourth-highest number of COVID-19 cases, at nearly 940,000, the Hopkins tally showed.

Even New Zealand, a country that hadn't seen a new coronavirus case in 100 days, hasn't been spared.

This week, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the country's general election, scheduled for Sept. 19, would be pushed back a month, the *Post* reported. The move comes as New Zealand grapples with a new wave of COVID-19 infections that have prompted a return to lockdown restrictions in parts of the country.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 22.4 million on Thursday, with over 788,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

Copyright © 2020 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Many child abuse cases may be going unreported during pandemic (2020, August 20) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-child-abuse-cases-unreported-pandemic.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------