

Abuse and Neglect

Problem:

Children and adult populations at risk for abuse and neglect.

Violence among family members is a pervasive complex problem that has many ramifications for the physical and emotional health of the family. It also has an economic impact on society. Family violence can include acts of domestic/intimate partner violence, sexual violence, maltreatment of the elderly, abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, and violence against children.

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated or dating. Emotional abuse is defined as the willful infliction of mental or emotional anguish by threat, humiliation or other verbal and non-verbal behavior. Violence can be criminal and can include physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking. Other types of abuse include emotional and financial. Financial abuse is improper or illegal use of funds, property or resources.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. The Minnesota Department of Health reports that an estimated 30,000 women experienced intimate partner violence in 2003. In Minnesota, at least 20 women were murdered as a result of domestic violence in 2006.⁸ Domestic violence is one of the most chronically underreported crimes in the U.S.⁹

Elder Abuse: Elder abuse, like other types of domestic violence, is extremely complex. Some elderly and other adults who can not care adequately for themselves are considered vulnerable adults. Generally, a combination of psychological, social, and economic factors, along with the mental and physical conditions of the victim and the perpetrator, contribute to the occurrence of elder maltreatment. Elder abuse has increased dramatically in recent years. Estimates of the frequency of elder abuse in the U.S. range from 2% to 10% of the elderly population based on various sampling, survey methods, and case definitions.¹



Over the past two years, adult protection assessments in Washington County averaged 28 per month. In Minnesota during 2007, Adult Protective Services received 7,207 reports of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation involving 8,976 incidents. Of those incidents, approximately 62% required the need for adult protective services. The most frequent allegation was neglect, followed by abuse, self-neglect, and financial exploitation.² It is estimated that for every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect reported to authorities in the U.S., about five more go unreported.³ As the demographics in Washington County increasingly reflect an aging population (those age 65 and over), the prevalence of elder abuse is expected to increase.

Elderly victims are most often abused by family members, usually by adult children or the victim's spouse. Ninety-two percent of long-term care services are provided by family members or other informal

Abuse and Neglect

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relationships.⁴ Adults who can not protect themselves are especially vulnerable to financial crimes by those who care for them. See Figures 7-9 for data on adult abuse and violence.

Child Maltreatment: Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. In many cases, children are victims of more than one type of abuse, although the majority of cases are those involving neglect. Child abuse occurs among all social, ethnic, and income groups. However, reported cases often involve poor families with little education. Other risk factors include young mothers, single parent families and race.

Abuse can have long-term consequences. Research shows that children who are abused are more likely to suffer from long-term impacts such as academic problems, physical and mental health problems, abuse substances, and suicide attempts. Child abuse and neglect is often associated with physical injuries, delayed physical growth, neurological damage, or death. Family and domestic violence is a learned behavior that often continues a cycle of violence.

Abuse can have significant economic impact to the community. According to a 2007 report from Prevent Child Abuse America, the estimated annual cost of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. is \$103.8 billion. The financial cost in the U.S. of partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each with over \$4 billion of that total paying for direct medical and mental health services.

Domestic Violence: Over 37,000 women and children in Minnesota were served by battered women community advocacy programs in 2006.¹⁰ However, Minnesota's largest state funding source for domestic violence victim services decreased from \$18.4 million in 2004 to \$15.4 million in 2005. Funding cuts have left shelter programs with less staff and assistance. Although transitional and long-term supportive housing is key to providing safety and stability for a victim of domestic violence, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find stable and affordable low-income housing in Minnesota. This leads to longer stays in shelters and fewer openings for women seeking shelter.¹¹

“Between July 2006 and June 2007, we had to turn away 401 women from our shelter and have referred 592 to other area shelters due to lack of capacity.”

- Executive Director, Women's Advocates, Inc., St. Paul, MN

Effective prevention programs that promote the safety and well-being of children and families hold potential for improving the lives of families and reducing costs to society.

Community Feedback

In Washington County, there is widespread public concern about abuse and neglect issues. Results of the community health assessment on-line survey indicated that 92% of respondents had either a major concern or some concern about child abuse and neglect. Concerning domestic violence, 40% of respondents had a major concern about the issue and 52% expressed some concern. Over 87% of respondents had either a major concern or some concern about abuse and neglect of seniors.

Abuse and Neglect

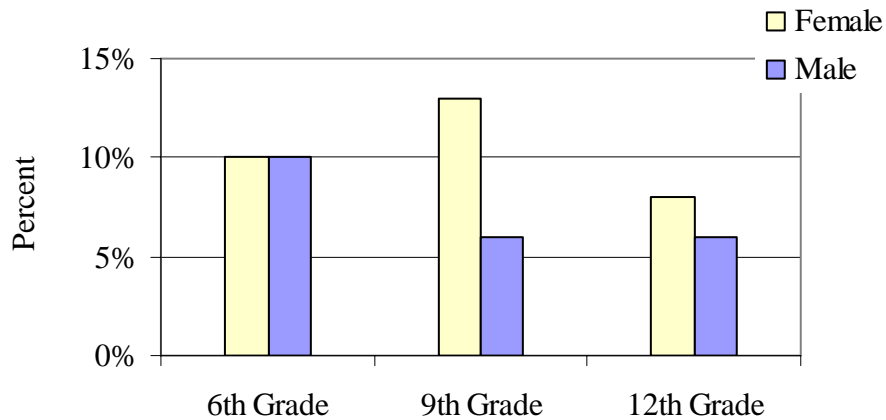
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Key Data

Figure 1.

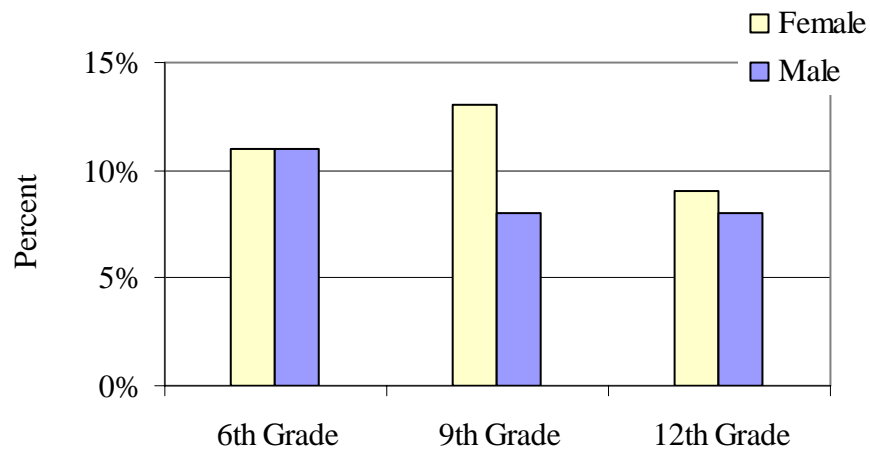
Students Reporting Physical Abuse to Self by an Adult in Household, Washington County, 2007



Source: Minnesota Student Survey 2007. Percent of students completing survey who reported yes to “Has any adult in your household hit you so hard or so often that you had marks or were afraid of that person?”

Figure 2.

Students Reporting Physical Abuse to Other Family Members, Washington County, 2007



Source: Minnesota Student Survey 2007. Percent of students completing survey who reported yes to “Has any adult in your household hit anyone else in the family so hard or so often that they had marks or were afraid of that person?”

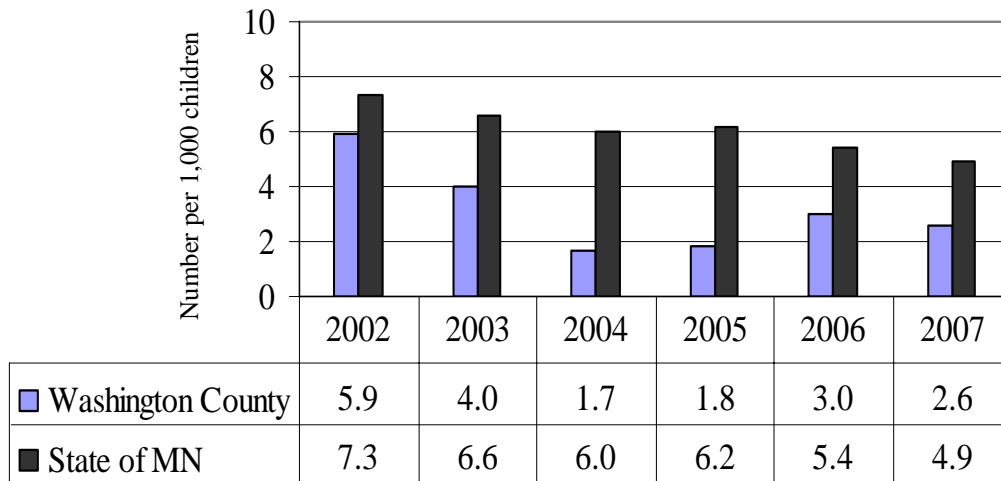
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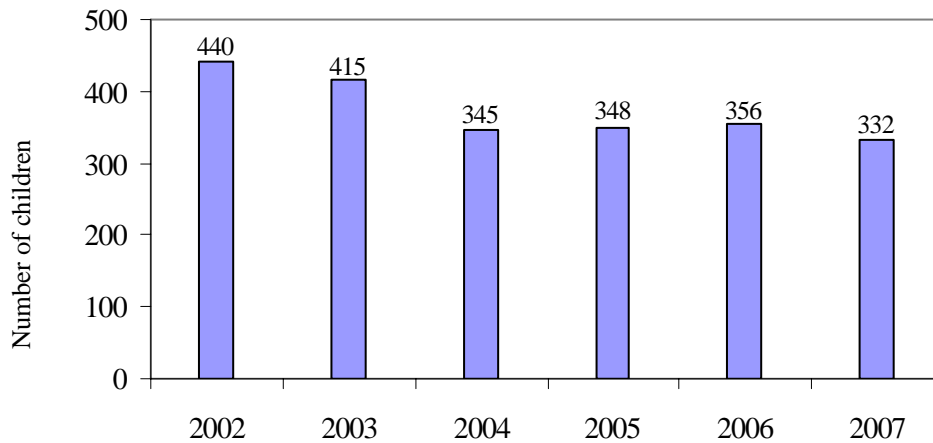
Figure 3. **Children with Determined Maltreatment*, Washington County and Minnesota, 2002-2007**



* Child maltreatment rate is the number of children, ages 0-17, per 1,000 children with a determination of maltreatment.

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Reports, 2001-2006

Figure 4. **Children in Placement, Washington County, 2002-2007**



Source: Washington County Department of Community Services, 2008. Unduplicated count of the annual number of children removed from their home due to abuse and/or neglect.

Abuse and Neglect

Problem:

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Key Data

Figure 5. **Number of Child Protection Investigations and Assessments, Washington County, 2005-2007**

Year	Traditional Investigation		Family Assessment*
	Alleged	Determined	
2005	202	108	259
2006	202	122	248
2007	231	116	312

* Family Assessment is a strengths-based and family focused alternative to working with families in the child protection system. No determination of maltreatment is made within Family Assessment.

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Reports, 2005-2007

Figure 6. **Number of Child Subjects of Child Protection Reports, Washington County, 2005-2007**

Year	Traditional Investigation		Family Assessment
	Alleged	Determined	
2005	314	158	348
2006	324	193	333
2007	347	160	430

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Reports, 2005-2007

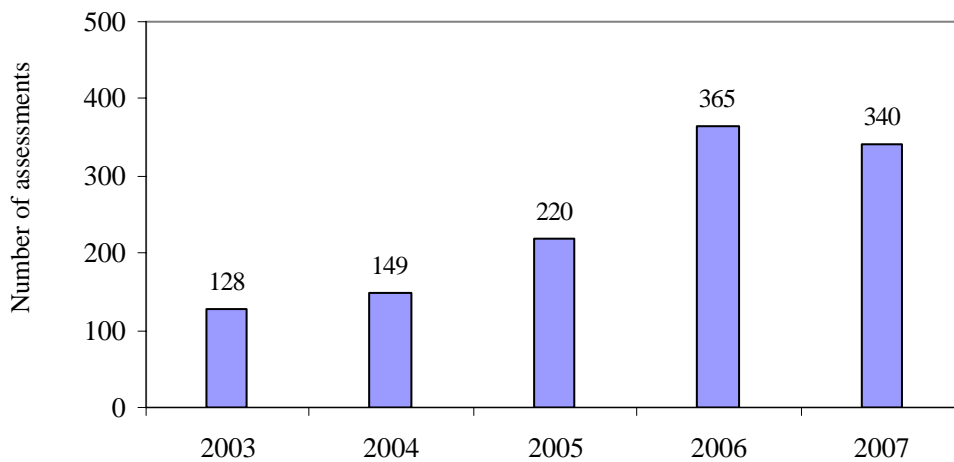
Abuse and Neglect

Problem:

Children and adult populations at risk for abuse and neglect.

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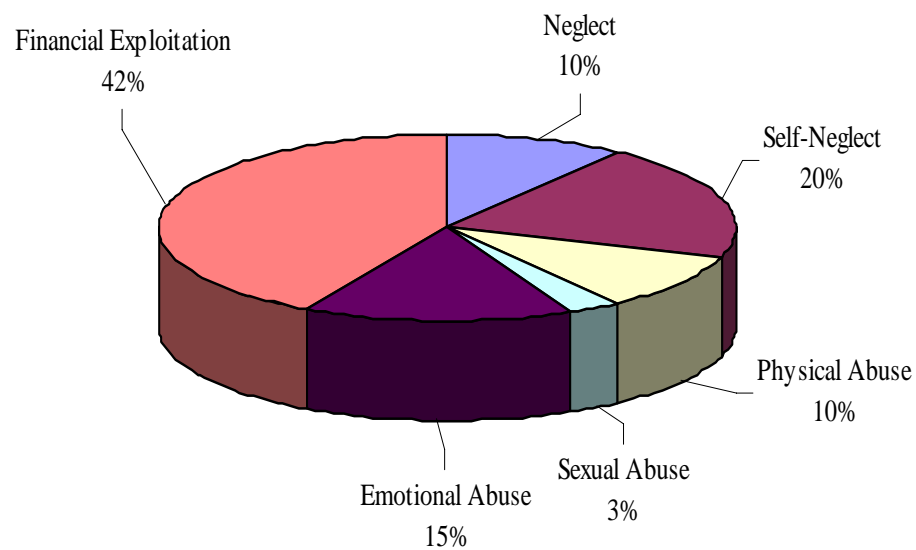
Figure 7. **Adult Protection Assessments, Washington County, 2003-2007**



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Figure 8.

Adult Protection Maltreatment Allegations, Washington County, 2007



Source: Washington County Department of Community Services, 2008

Abuse and Neglect

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Figure 9.

**Domestic Assault Filings,
Washington County, 2002-2007**

Description	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Felony	1	0	0	1	6	22
Gross misdemeanor	25	24	20	27	25	26
Misdemeanor	<u>377</u>	<u>359</u>	<u>412</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>438</u>	<u>392</u>
Total	403	383	432	470	469	440

Definitions: "Felony" means a crime for which a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year may be imposed. "Misdemeanor" means a crime for which a sentence of not more than 90 days or a fine of not more than \$1,000, or both, may be imposed. "Gross misdemeanor" means any crime which is not a felony or misdemeanor. The maximum fine which may be imposed for a gross misdemeanor is \$3,000.

Source: Washington County Department of Court Administration

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Community Assets

- ◆ Faith communities
- ◆ Law enforcement and county child protection services
- ◆ Established multi-agency collaborations, such as Metro Alliance for Healthy Families
- ◆ Mental health services for adults/children
- ◆ Chemical dependency assessment and treatment services
- ◆ Emergency assistance and food shelves to support families
- ◆ Quality primary care facilities
- ◆ Parenting education and support through the Washington County Department of Public Health & Environment, ECFE, Head Start, and other community agencies
- ◆ School and other community agency support for children with special needs
- ◆ Senior centers in local communities
- ◆ Home and community-based services such as home health care, home delivered meals, day programs, assisted living and medical phone alert systems

Community Gaps and Risks

- ◆ Limited local resources for racial/ethnic minorities and non-English speaking residents
- ◆ Increasing economic stress and unemployment
- ◆ Limited resources and support for caregivers

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Summary

Washington County residents experience less violence than Minnesotans as a whole. However, all populations are at risk. The number of victims of child abuse and neglect rose between 2004-2006. As the senior population continues to grow in the county, the resources to prevent abuse and neglect for this population may not be adequate. The potential is high for on-going abuse and/or neglect for all populations as Washington County continues to grow, as resources become increasingly scarce and as economic stresses on families escalate.

Sources

- ¹ Lachs, Mark S., and Karl Pillemer. October 2004. "Elder Abuse," *The Lancet*, Vol. 364: 1192-1263)
- ² Minnesota Department of Human Services, Central Entry Point Count Report, December 2008.
- ³ National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, 1998. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse at American Public Human Services Association.
- ⁴ Preparing Minnesota for the Age Wave and Beyond-Transform 2010, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- ⁵ Minnesota Department of Health. Minnesota Children with Special Health Needs Fact Sheet.
- ⁶ March of Dimes
- ⁷ Minnesota Department of Health, County Health Tables
- ⁸ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- ⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization," 2003
- ¹⁰ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 2006 Femicide Report
- ¹¹ "Critical issues in Domestic Violence" A Wilder Research Report Sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, December 2005