

The Cost of Child Abuse vs. Child Abuse Prevention: Alabama's Experience

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The heartache of child abuse and neglect can take many forms and have devastating effects on children, families and communities. In 2007, the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama conducted a study to assess the financial cost of child abuse and neglect to the State of Alabama. The research reviewed both the direct costs of child abuse and neglect (i.e. medical, enforcement, judicial) and the indirect costs (i.e. education, delinquency, social impact.) The estimated cost of child abuse and neglect to Alabama taxpayers each year is **\$520,800,290**. Those who work with children and families who have been affected by child maltreatment agree this is a very conservative figure. **See complete study at <http://www.ches.ua.edu/news>**

The study uses publicly available secondary data. Alabama specific data was preferred and much of the data came from Alabama state agencies.

Components to the Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in Alabama's Economy

Direct Costs are those costs associated with the immediate needs of abused or neglected children and include:

- hospitalization bills
- chronic health problems
- mental health treatment
- use of the welfare system
- law enforcement investigations
- judicial system's cost for prosecution

Indirect Costs are those costs associated with the long-term and/or secondary effects of child abuse and neglect and include:

- special education
- mental treatment for permanent psychiatric disorders
- juvenile delinquency
- lost productivity of society
- adult criminality

"Confronting the child abuse crisis is costly. Ignoring the direct and indirect expenditures associated with attempts to resolve this social problem will not make the task less costly nor will it result in the most efficient practice choices."

*Dr. Deborah Daro
Associate Professor and Research Fellow
Chapin Hill Center for Children*



Total Annual Financial Cost Estimates

The study shows already existing data on each category of direct and indirect costs and explains in detail how and why each figure was used. The resulting dollar figures were astounding.

Total Direct Costs:	\$392,131,895
Total Indirect Costs:	\$128,771,935
Total:	\$520,800,290

See the complete study on www.ctf.alabama.gov

Lowering the Number of Child Abuse and Neglect Cases Through Prevention Programs

The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is the state's main funder for child abuse and neglect prevention services. Funds from CTF are used to develop and maintain programs of Parent Education and Support; Home Visiting; Fatherhood; Respite Care; School-Based; Non School-Based/After School; Mentoring; Marriage/Couple Relationship Education and Community Awareness. All programs aid in preventing child abuse before it occurs.

More research is being done to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention strategies. However, Alabama's prevention programs are developed on the solid foundation of current research data on the causes of child abuse/neglect and the consensus of researchers in the field.

Experts in this field are confident that these evidence based prevention programs **do** ameliorate the harmful incidences of child abuse and their associated cost to society and state taxpayers. **Alabama ranks 48th in the nation in child well-being. We can do better than this.**



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