



"Many young parents are experiencing new stresses in their lives and are not seeking support services," said Nick Macchione, HHSA Director. "These stressors include things like a recent job loss, financial difficulties or having more than one young child at home. These parents often tend to feel isolated and alone and have a very limited support system."

GET HELP. CALL 858-560-2191 or 1800-344-6000.

Photo: Nick Macchione, left, Director, HHSA; Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors

A study reveals that the economic crisis caused...

AN INCREASE IN CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse injuries rise as the economy falls. A study found that almost twice as many cases per month. The number of abusive head traumas among infants and young children appears to have risen dramatically across the United States since the onset of the current recession in 2007, new research reveals.

"Abusive head trauma -- previously known as 'shaken baby syndrome' -- is the leading cause of death from child abuse, if you don't count neglect," noted study author Dr. Rachel P. Berger, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "And so, what's concerning here is that we saw in four cities that there was a marked increase in the rate of abusive head trauma among children during the recession compared with beforehand."

"Now we know that poverty and stress are clearly related to child abuse," added Berger. "And during times of economic hardship one of the things that's hardest hit are the social services that are most needed to prevent child abuse. So, this is really worrisome."

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The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has examined the



most severe physical child abuse cases from the past 18 months and some alarming trends have surfaced. While the overall number of child abuse cases has decreased, the severity of the cases remains a concern. The victims of severe abuse tend to be young babies and the perpetrators are younger parents or caregivers..

The examination of 51 cases of severe physical abuse revealed:

- 10 fatalities, five of which are children four months old or younger
- 16 children had five or more broken bones
- Two children had 24 bone fractures
- Nearly 60 percent of children were three months of age or younger

"These findings are disturbing and disheartening," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors. "One child living in an abusive environment is one child too many."

The examination also found that 45 percent of the female perpetrators and 35 percent of the male perpetrators were under the age of 22.

County Officials Asks Community to Help Prevent Abuse

"We are asking members of the community to help by watching for potential signs of child abuse or endangerment," said Debra Zanders-Willis, Director, HHSA Child Welfare Services. "Don't be afraid to ask someone you know if they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed or if they could use some help."

Some of the potential warning signs of child abuse include:

- Spouse or partner jealous of a new baby in the home
- Spouse or partner exhibiting controlling behavior
- Any prior Child Welfare Services history
- Unwanted or Unplanned Pregnancy
- Spouse or partner exhibiting violence toward adults
- Domestic violence incidents within the past year

The County of San Diego Child Abuse Hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can call
(858) 560-2191
or toll free
1-800-344-6000.

The social worker who answers the call will do an immediate assessment.

Photo: Debra Zanders-Willis, center, Director, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) Child Welfare Services, talks about the resources available to parents and caretakers to prevent or stop child abuse.