

Unit 9: Child Abuse and Neglect



Time Required: 2.5 hours

Resources Needed

- OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD (clips: Child Sexual Abuse/Nia; Child Sexual Abuse/Ron)
- *Participant Workbook*
- TV and DVD player
- Chalkboard or tear sheets
- Index cards

Prior to the Session

- Consider gathering local and state statistics and/or newspaper or magazine articles for the discussion about child abuse and neglect trends.
- Research your state's statutes related to child abuse and neglect; be prepared to provide information to participants about these statutes.
- Prepare four index cards with the following categories of child maltreatment: physical abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse. (This is for Activity A at the end of this unit.)

Objectives

- Define child abuse and neglect.
- Describe current trends for child abuse and neglect crimes.
- Provide examples of child abuse and neglect crimes.
- Explain the impact of child abuse and neglect crime on victims.
- Discuss thoughts and feelings about being held accountable for child abuse and neglect crimes.



Facilitator Tip

- Be prepared for participants to defend hitting and spanking children.
- Avoid discussions about people growing up "okay" despite being hit as children.
- Remember that some participants may be reacting to their own victimization.



What Is Child Abuse and Neglect?

There are four main types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Although any form of child maltreatment may be found separately, they often occur in combination. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms are identified.

The consequences of child abuse and neglect can be serious and long term. Abused and neglected children may experience a lifelong pattern of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, inappropriate or troubled relationships, or a lack of empathy.



Have participants read the “Words To Know” aloud.

Delivery options include reading the words aloud yourself, writing the words on a chalkboard or tear sheet, selecting participants to read the words aloud, or dividing participants into small groups or pairs and having them discuss the terms among themselves. For all options, survey participants to ensure they understand the terms before moving on.



Words To Know

Abuse: Causing harm to a person.

Emotional abuse: Includes acts or omissions by parents or caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders.

Exploitation: Taking advantage of someone for one’s own benefit, whether it is economic, social, sexual, or other.

Child neglect: Failure to provide for a child’s basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional.

Physical abuse: Causing physical injury by punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, or otherwise harming a child.

Sexual abuse: Includes fondling a child’s genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.



Group Discussion

After reading the “What Is Child Abuse and Neglect?” section, have participants discuss their thoughts and reactions and identify common themes or patterns.

Delivery options include taking turns with participants in reading the content aloud; dividing participants into small groups or pairs for part of the session; referring back to “Words To Know” as they appear in the unit; and covering only a few sentences or paragraphs at a time.

Solicit feedback from participants on an ongoing basis to ensure that they understand the material. Ask the following: “Do you understand what we are talking about?” “Talk about the information in your own words.” “What do you think?” “What is your reaction?” “What are you feeling?” and “Do you know of other examples?” Encourage note taking.



In the News: Child Abuse and Neglect Trends

This section offers recent statistics about child abuse and neglect. If you gathered local and state statistics, integrate them into your discussion on child abuse and neglect trends. If you found relevant newspaper or magazine articles, read them aloud or assign participants into groups of three to discuss and then present the information to the larger group.

When discussing child abuse and neglect trends—

- Select participants to read the child abuse and neglect trends aloud.
- Use local news articles, reviewing them carefully to avoid overly complex issues. Make sure the articles do not identify offenders in your facility or victims in your community.
- Ask participants which trends do not surprise them.
- Come up with additional questions, if desired.

Examples of Child Abuse and Neglect

The *Participant Workbook* provides definitions of types of child abuse and neglect, as well as example scenarios involving the crime; consider asking participants to substitute the names of their family members or friends in the scenarios. You can also share any state-specific statutes you found that are related to child abuse and neglect.

Delivery options include taking turns with the participants in reading the scenarios aloud, selecting participants to read the scenarios, and dividing participants into small groups or pairs to discuss the scenarios.

Refer back to “Words To Know” as they appear in the scenarios. Solicit feedback by asking the following questions: “Who was the primary victim?” “Who else may have been harmed by the offender?” “How was the victim harmed?” and “What do you think the victim is experiencing?” Add details to the scenarios. Encourage note taking.



Triad Session

Have participants write down their answers to the questions under each example of child abuse and neglect. Then, in groups of three, have participants share their responses with one another and offer feedback. Finally, bring the larger group back together to review and discuss participants’ responses.



Group Discussion

Have volunteers read aloud the quotes by child abuse and neglect victims in their workbooks. As a group, discuss the impact of victimization on these individuals. Ask the participants to consider how they would feel if the crimes had been committed against their own children or family members.

What Is the Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect?

Because many of these offenders are parents or soon will be, they should understand how trauma and violence affect children. Extreme stress experienced during childhood—such as poverty, neglect, physical abuse, and witnessing violence—alter the parts of the brain responsible for learning, memory, and the processing of stress and emotion. These changes in the brain may be linked to negative effects on behavior, health, employment, and even the choice of romantic partners later in life. The younger the child, the more sponge-like the brain is. Exposure to chronic, prolonged traumatic experiences has the potential to alter children’s brains, which may cause long-term effects.

Have volunteers read aloud the initial and long-term mental health effects of child sexual abuse. As a group, discuss the impact of victimization on children.



Chalkboard Exercise

Have participants take turns reading from the areas of impact lists in their workbooks. Solicit additional examples from the group.

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing medical bills • Medication • Legal fees • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor physical health • Poor mental and emotional health • Cognitive difficulties • Social difficulties • Self-injury • Suicide • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile delinquency • Adult criminality • Alcohol and other drug abuse • Abusive behavior toward others • Poor self-image • Sexually acting out • Inability to trust • Aggressive and disruptive behavior • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alienation from religion or “higher power” • Mistrust in faith leaders, faith institutions, or “higher power” • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____

**Facilitator Note**

If participants say they have never committed child abuse or neglect, ask them whether they or someone they know was ever a victim of child abuse or neglect and what the impact of that crime was.

**OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD**

Nia was sexually abused by her friend's older brother when she was between ages 5 and 7.

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate a discussion at the end. Possible discussion questions and answers:

- **What was the emotional impact of the abuse on Nia?**
 - When Nia disclosed her victimization, her mother was initially very upset and Nia believed her mother "was upset with her."
 - She was afraid that her family and friends blamed her.
 - She denied her victimization for some time and avoided the topic.
 - She now has a hard time trusting people.
 - Years later, she is still angry.
- **What was the physical impact?**
 - She had problems at school and received poor work notices from the teacher.
 - All Nia could do was "sit in her room and watch television and eat."
- **How was her mother affected?**
 - She was very upset about what happened, and most likely felt guilty for not being able to prevent it.
 - She was hurt, especially when Nia was afraid to disclose the name of her abuser.
 - She had also been attacked when she was 9 years old and never told anyone, so Nia's abuse probably brought back bad memories of her own assault.

Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Remind participants that no one has the right to abuse or neglect a child. A person who commits a violent or neglectful act against a child must recognize the devastating and often lifelong impact that his or her criminal actions will have.

**Group Discussion**

Have participants read the accountability statements in their workbooks and share their thoughts with the group. Ask participants how these offenders can specifically demonstrate accountability.



Additional Activities



Facilitator Note

If time permits after covering the material in this unit, you may conduct the additional activities listed on the next few pages before debriefing participants. You may also want to schedule a guest victim/survivor speaker.

Activity A — Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect

Objective: Participants start thinking about the impact that child abuse and neglect has on its victims.

Divide the participants into four groups. Hand out to each group one of the index cards you prepared before this unit began. (The index cards have one of four categories on them: physical abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.)

On their group's index card, have each group write a definition of the category they were given and provide five examples and as many impact areas as possible.

Ask each group to share their examples with the larger group, encouraging feedback.

Activity B — Nia

Objective: Participants learn about the long-term effects of child sexual abuse.

Ask participants to answer the questions on the "Nia" worksheet in their workbooks. The questions and answers:

- **At what age was Nia sexually abused?**

Correct Answer: Between 5 and 7.

- **When did she first tell someone about the abuse?**

Correct Answer: When she was about 17, a senior in high school.

- **Who abused her?**

Correct Answer: Her best friend's brother, about 7 years older.

- **Was Nia threatened during the abuse?**

Correct Answer: Not directly, although he told her she couldn't talk to her friend about it.

- **Nia says that she wishes she had told sooner, but she says, "I just couldn't." What do you think she means by that?**

Possible Answer: Nia may have been afraid of her abuser or possibly of hurting her mother.

Activity C — Drugs Don't Hurt Role Play

Objective: Participants explore how child neglect can be just as serious as child abuse.

Assign the four roles to participants for the role play:

- Drug dealer
- Brenda
- "John"
- Child

Participants need not act out their role but they should read it aloud. Distribute tickets (slips of paper) to participants who are not playing roles. Each ticket allows the holder to stop the role play once and ask a "role player" a question related to behavior, feelings, thoughts, or values related to the child. After the role play, discuss the effect of the role players' actions on the child.

Activity D — The Letter

Objective: Participants experience the ripple effects of child abuse.

Refer participants to "The Letter" worksheet in their workbooks and have them complete the activity.

Activity E — Life-Long Impact

Objective: Demonstrate that for many victims, crime has a life-long impact.

Show participants the clip of Ron who, along with his siblings, was physically, emotionally, and sexually assaulted as a child. Possible questions/prompts:

- Who victimized Ron?
- How was Ron harmed?
- Did Ron continue the cycle of violence?
- What is your reaction to the abuse Ron suffered?

Recommended Speaker

Have an appropriate speaker address the class on the topic of child abuse and neglect. Listening to victim/survivor speakers may be uncomfortable for offenders. Make sure to instruct participants beforehand about appropriate behavior during the speaker's presentation. (See "Implementing the Curriculum" for information about recruiting, selecting, and screening speakers and on how to prepare both speakers and participants for the experience.)



Discussion/Wrap-Up

Discuss what participants learned in Unit 9: Child Abuse and Neglect. Address any questions they may have.

Unit 9 Participant Worksheets

Activity B – Nia

Answer the following questions after watching Nia talk about being sexually abused as a child.

At what age was Nia sexually abused?

When did she first tell someone about the abuse?

Who abused her?

Was Nia threatened during the abuse?

Nia says that she wishes she had told sooner, but she says, "I just couldn't." What do you think she means by that?

Is there anything specific that Nia says that makes you stop and think or change your emotions?

Activity C – “Drugs Don’t Hurt” Role Play

Drug Dealer

Brenda, age 17, is a regular customer of yours. Today she approaches you with her 3-year-old child in tow. The child is crying and carrying an empty water bottle. Brenda has no money and she attempts to get you to “loan” her some drugs. You refuse.

Later she comes back with money and you sell her what she wants. You notice that she is pregnant, but you are more concerned about her young child seeing the drug exchange.

Brenda

You are 17 years old, the mother of a 3-year-old, and in the early stages of pregnancy. You are broke, your child is hungry, and you need drugs. You take your child with you while you try to find your dealer. You attempt to get the dealer to “loan” you drugs until you can get some money. You plead but he refuses.

You walk down the street with your child and solicit for sex. You get paid and return to the dealer. He will only sell to you when you leave your child out of sight.

“John”

You are in the neighborhood looking for a prostitute. Brenda approaches you with her child. You object to the child being present and tell her to do something with the child first. You notice that she is pregnant but you don’t care. You pay her for sex.

Child

You toddle around begging your mother, holding your empty water bottle, crying, and whimpering. You say that you are hungry and you are scared. When your mom leaves you somewhere to prostitute herself, you cry.

Ticket Holders

Each ticket holder gets one ticket, which can be used to stop the role play once to ask a “role player” a question related to behavior, feelings, thoughts, or values.

