Life or Death

The Relationship Between Child Abuse and the Education System

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Abstract

Child abuse occurs when an adult demonstrates dominance over a child by mistreating that child physical, mentally, emotionally, or through neglect. This tragic issue is pervasive in the United States today and the number of children being abused continues to rise. Children who have been abused are affected in many different ways, and the effects can be both devastating and long lasting, depending on the child. Teachers are some of the only adult figures and role models that children have in their life. Since teachers see most children between six and eight hours each day, they can and should play a major role in detecting and reporting child abuse. If the child discloses abuse to a teacher, the teacher has a legal responsibility to report that abuse. If not, depending on the type of abuse a child is a victim of, there could be any number of signs or symptoms present for a teacher to detect and report. Teachers must follow certain guidelines when reporting child abuse. Once the abuse has been reported, a teacher should help with the follow-up and recuperation of the child. None of those steps can be completed, however, if teachers are uneducated about child abuse. There is a gap in teacher education programs when it comes to child abuse. If future teachers are educated, they are more likely to report child abuse and more children are likely to be rescued from the abusive situation.

Life or Death:

A Teacher's Responsibility in Detecting and Reporting Child Abuse

A fifteen year old boy was found by police living in a box behind a retail store with a broken hand, multiple scars on his stomach, back, and neck after having run away from his adoptive parents. He has two siblings (age 9 and 11), who were also found beaten and malnourished. All of these children are school aged and seem to have repeatedly been victims of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, yet there had been no previous reports to the police about abuse. In fact, the children were rescued because of a missing person report placed by the abusive, adoptive parents themselves (*News 9*, 2011). One has to wonder if this case of abuse could have been reported earlier and if any of the apparent suffering could have been avoided.

Child abuse is a major issue in the United States. It occurs when an adult treats a child inhumanely. It can include anything from physical and sexual abuse of a child to complete neglect of a child. This is a sad situation because children are made helpless and hopeless under the power of the abusive person. Sadly, child abuse continues to become more prevalent. According to Childhelp, each year more than three million child abuse reports are made that, in 2009, affected an estimated six million children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). That statistic accounts simply for the reported cases – there could be millions more abused children who never spoke up or were never helped. These children need to be protected, safeguarded, and avenged because the effects of abuse can be long-lasting and devastating.

Teachers are some of the most prominent adults in a child's life, second only to parents, guardians, or other close relatives (Sinanan, 2011). Aside from the abusive

relationship a child is in, teachers may be the only adults or outside world connections that a victimized child sees (Romeo, 2000). A teacher can have a highly beneficial or a devastatingly harmful relationship with each one of the students in the classroom. If a teacher is aware of what is going on in students' lives, it allows the opportunity for an effective and purposeful response to potentially harmful situations. Therefore, teachers have a social responsibility to detect and report suspected abuse of a child. The government has also recognized this fact as teachers are included in the list of professionals that are legally mandated to report child abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). However, the topic of child abuse is missing in most teacher education programs and teachers are left unaware of the guidelines and rules that they need to follow (Abrahams & Daro, 1992). If teachers do not know the guidelines, there is a level of uncertainty added to the process and they are less likely to take a proactive approach in defending children from abuse (Walsh, 2008). Research shows that teacher education programs have a gap in knowledge regarding child abuse – this gap needs to be filled.

Teachers need to know how to detect and report child abuse because of the role they can play in saving children's lives. Child abuse can be detected in a couple of different ways. The child can either disclose the abuse personally or someone else can detect that abuse is taking place through observation. A child may tell someone about the abusive adult directly or indirectly depending on the situation (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). If a child does not tell anyone, teachers can observe that abuse is taking place by being aware of the signs that may be present from each type of abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect (Walsh, 2008). As part of their legal responsibility, teachers must follow certain guidelines when reporting child abuse. After the report has been

made, teachers have done their part in helping save children, but they can also help the child develop resiliency after abuse has taken place. Teachers should follow certain guidelines when dealing with the victims of abuse in order to aid the recovery process (Roberts, 2009). These are all things that future teachers should be taught as part of their licensing education.

The information that follows is a review of research done on the relationship between child abuse and the education system. Child abuse occurs far too often. It affects children in many negative ways, and research is still finding new correlations and connections between victims of abuse and the possible effects that abuse can have on a child. The effects are widespread and change every area of a child's life – the psychological, social, physical, and emotional (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Something that all children are supposed to be involved in is education. There are truancy laws in the United States that require children to attend class at least until the age of sixteen (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). There are also other policies put in place to encourage kids to stay in school. Because of this mandated involvement, teachers could possibly be the only people outside a child's family who are even remotely involved in that child's life. A child's limited exposure to the outside world places an extremely important responsibility on teachers to provide a safe and positive classroom environment for their students. It also allows a teacher to be the first respondent to any signs and symptoms of abuse that may be present. In this way, a teacher can make a major difference in stopping child abuse. Teachers should be educated about child abuse because, as the most present adults in a child's life besides the child's parent(s), teachers can and should play a major role in detecting and reporting child abuse.

Definition and Statistics

Education about child abuse starts with its definition. The definition continues to be debated among professionals regarding certain aspects of the issue; however, there is a general consensus on the characteristics that child abuse definitely encompasses (Gelles, 1982). Statistics on child abuse are also important to be aware of. The number of child abuse reports continues to rise in the United States – this could be due to a heightened awareness of the issue, but the statistic could also indicate that child abuse is actually taking place more frequently (Childhelp, 2012). Once the issue has been identified, it is clear that something needs to be done about it. The effects of abuse can impact a child's life dramatically and can even end a child's life. In order to prevent this issue from occurring, more teachers need to be educated.

Child abuse has been defined by the International Child Abuse Network as "the bad treatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home, or someone who works with or around children" (International Child Abuse Network, 2012). When an adult abuses a child, it shows instability and irresponsibility in an effort to demonstrate dominance over a minor in order to gain power – an adult taking advantage of the innocence, naivety, and weakness of a child. Within the general definition of child abuse, there are four types of child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect (Brooks, 2011).

Physical abuse is defined as "the infliction of bodily injury on a child by other than accidental means" (Brooks, 2011, p. 477). This means that the adult or power figure in the abusive relationship is purposefully hurting the victim using physical means. Physical abuse could include hitting, burning, breaking bones, or cutting a child (Child

Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). This is usually done by the abuser as a form of punishment when the child has simply done something that the abuser did not like. Most likely, physically abused children do not know what they have done wrong or have done something that most people would not consider bad behavior. The abuser has shown dominance by hurting the child physically.

Emotional abuse is defined as "persistent and extreme thwarting of a child's basic emotional needs" (Brooks, 2011, p. 478). The terms verbal abuse and psychological abuse can be included under this categorization. The child is being deprived of love and belonging in the abusive relationship. In fact, they are being shown that they are worthless, hopeless, and horrible children. Emotional abuse could include verbal attack, confinement, and inadequate nurture – it can be done with words or in action by the abuser (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Children consequentially feel that there is something innately wrong with them, and believe that what the abuser is telling them or showing them is true. In these situations, the abuser has shown dominance by belittling the child emotionally.

Sexual abuse is defined as "sexual contact or attempted sexual contact between a caregiver or other responsible adult and a child for purposes of the caregiver's gratification" (Brooks, 2011, p. 477). In this abusive relationship, the child is being taken advantage of sexually in order for the abuser to feel sexual pleasure. Sexual abuse can include biting, touching or fondling genitalia, oral sex, or intercourse. It can also include coercion to perform these acts on the abuser (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). If the child is not under a threat of harm, the adult has probably used power or parental influence to convince the child to participate in the abusive acts. The child probably does

not know exactly what the abuser is doing (depending on the child's age), but can still understand that the actions are wrong; however, the child may feel that there is no escape option. The abuser has shown dominance by taking away the child's innocence and objectifying the child sexually.

Finally, neglect is defined as "the failure to provide minimum care and the lack of appropriate supervision" (Brooks, 2011, p. 478). In this abusive relationship, children are dependent upon the abusive adult to provide them with what they need. However, the adult withholds these necessary items and care on purpose. Neglect can include refusal to provide water, food or shelter for the child, refusal to give or allow healthcare treatment, or failing to supervise the child causing the child to be in danger (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Children are inhibited from their rights as human beings and could die quite easily from this type of abuse. Neglect shows ultimate disregard for the child's well-being. By proving that they are in charge of the child's health and safety and purposefully withholding basic care from the child, abusers show dominance in the abusive relationship.

Child abuse occurs in all demographics, regardless of ethnicity, race, financial situation, religion, or education. In 1994, according to the Survey of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, about three million children were reported abused each year. In the same year, 2022 deaths by child abuse occurred – 58% of the deaths were caused by physical abuse and 37% were caused by neglect (Patterson, 1998). The most current statistics report that approximately six million children are abused each year. In one minute, six reports of child abuse are written up. Five or more children die each day by abuse-related injuries (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Child

abuse is becoming more and more common in the United States. As demonstrated by the previous statistics, the number of children affected by abuse each year has doubled in just fifteen years. This issue is getting very serious and, if the number of abused children continues to rise, too many innocent lives will be lost.

The statistics presented above are only indicative of the cases that are reported. Some cases of child abuse may not be detected and, subsequently, may be left unreported. It is estimated that for every case that gets reported, two cases go under the radar and are left unreported (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). This means that, by estimation, triple the number of children might be victims of abuse and nobody knows about it. Millions of children are being abused and there are no law enforcement officials formally investigating the situation or trying to help them. Unreported cases are a major problem related to child abuse.

If there are millions of victims of child abuse, the effects they experience will be more widespread. Experiencing abuse from someone older and someone who is supposed to play a protective role can change a child's entire outlook on life. According to Childhelp, approximately 30% of abused children will abuse their future children. Of those children who were victims of abuse, about 80% met the requirements for at least one psychological disorder. Victims of abuse are 59% more likely to be arrested as a minor, 28% more likely as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime. Thus, 14% of men and 36% of women in jail were abused as children. About two-thirds of people in drug treatment centers were victims of abuse (2012). Criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness are not always related to child abuse, but, as shown by the statistics above, can be.

Abuse can and will create many other negative effects for the victim. These negative effects could be short-lived or long-lasting depending on the type of abuse, the child's age and development at the time of the abuse, the length of the abuse, and the relationship between the victim and the abuser (Chalk, Gibbons, & Scarupa, 2002). Resiliency of the victim can also change the effects of child abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). The effects can compound with each other and may all be indicated in the same child. Every child is unique in those characteristics, which will cause different actions and reactions to the abuse. If the abuse happened only one time, the effects are sure to be different than from abuse that occurred over twelve years. Each victim affected by abuse has a different resiliency level depending on personality, temperament, upbringing, acceptance of peers, positive role models, social environment, support system, neighborhood stability, access to adequate health care, and other protective factors (Frazier & Terzian, 2005). Regardless of all the different factors, each victim of child abuse experiences some kind of effect from the abuse.

Issues that the abused child may experience are multi-faceted; the effects could be physical, psychological, neurobiological, behavioral, or societal. Physical effects of abuse are any indicators that are visible on a child's body or bodily health-related. The psychological effects of abuse include emotional reactions, personality changes, mental health disorders, problems with cognition, and attachment issues. Neurobiological changes can take place as well, these effects can include anything that affects a child's brain functioning. Abuse can cause a child to act out in ways that indicate abuse has taken place – a child's behavior can change dramatically. Finally, child abuse affects society as a whole, both financially and emotionally (Child Abuse Information Gateway,

2012). Gaining a greater knowledge of these signs will help someone detect whether or not abuse is occurring so that a person can step in and change the situation.

The physical effects of abuse are the most obvious of all the different effects because they can be visibly seen. A child may go through all of the different types of abuse and exhibit only physical signs that abuse has occurred. If the abuse was physical, the child may have many unexplained bruises, broken bones, burn marks, scratches and scrapes, missing hair, and so on. If the abuse was emotional, children may have physical signs that they have inflicted upon themselves – cutting, eating disorders, and hunching over are some examples (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). These physical signs show that the child has emotional problems that may have stemmed from abuse. If the abuse was sexual, the child may have red marks, rashes, bite marks, or tearing on or in the genitals or other sexual regions of the body (Martin, 1987). These signs pretty much guarantee that abuse has taken place. Finally, if the abuse was neglectful, the child may have physical signs of malnourishment or bad hygiene. Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience allergies, arthritis, asthma, bronchitis, high blood pressure, and ulcers (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo & Carnes, 2007). All of these signs are physically seen on the body and can be a warning sign to those observing the child that abuse has taken or is taking place.

There are also psychological signs of abuse. These signs are not as obvious as the physical signs. Because the child has been abused, there has been a major loss of trust in that child's life (Martin, 1987), which can cause major psychological damage. Abused children might also experience fear – abused children may be afraid of adults, males or females, human contact, and relationships because of what has been done to them (Child

Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Abused children may also have low self-esteem (a lack of confidence), difficulty handling certain situations, and are at a high risk of developing a psychological disorder (Brooks, 2011). Victims of child abuse may also experience cognitive difficulties like low grades and poor classroom functioning (Springer et al., 2007). These few signs can be seen in a child's life while the abuse is taking place, but the future effects of these few psychological signs can be detrimental to a child's life.

There are also a few neurobiological signs of abuse. These can be easily detected by those in contact with the child in a learning environment. The abused child may have trouble with arousal, alertness, and attention because of the ever-changing levels of cortisol in the body. The abused child could also have issues with memory and learning (Brooks, 2011). These signs will be most evident in a learning environment because the child's brain will be stimulated and tested in the classroom environment more than in any other environment. Abused children need intervention in these areas so that the damage in their brains can be reversed before it is too late.

The behavioral signs of abuse are important to notice as well. These signs are quite obvious but do not always indicate that abuse has taken place. A child who has not experienced abuse may still exhibit these signs, but if the child does act out in these ways, abuse is one option that needs to be investigated. The child may get annoyed easily, be chronically absent from school or simply do poorly in school, become sexually promiscuous, have many health complaints, lie, run away from home, and abuse drugs and alcohol (Johnson, Rew, & Sternglanz, 2006). These children may act awkward or obnoxious in social situations, and demonstrate increasing frigidity during normal life

situations (Martin, 1987). These signs could come out when the child is interacting with either adults or other children, and may be inconsistent. These signs simply show that the child does not know how to behave properly or is expressing negative emotions resulting from the abuse that has taken place.

Finally, the effects of child abuse can be seen in society. The United States puts about $24 billion annually towards maintaining a child welfare system for investigating and handling child abuse reports as well as keeping up judicial, law enforcement, health and mental health systems (Child Abuse Information Gateway, 2012). There are also costs associated with all the effects of abuse seen in society when it comes to criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2001). The fact that child abuse victims are more likely to become abusers in the future causes an emotional strain on society. The cycle of abuse will continue to affect victims and impact lives. The financial and emotional effects of abuse on society show that child abuse does not simply affect one child, it affects everyone.

The effects of abuse can be long-lasting and detrimental to a child. There could be permanent physical damage, crippling psychological damage, tragic damage to the brain, and disturbing behavioral damage. Abuse can also lead to death. Through case reports, it is known that there are millions of children being abused every day and still millions more are being abused that are not reported. The number continues to rise as time goes on as well. Child abuse is a major problem in the United States. Something needs to done about the child abuse going on in America so that children can be spared these horrible effects of abuse. Teachers are on the front lines to be able to participate in detection, reporting and ultimately saving lives.

Teacher Responsibility

As one of the most prominent adults in a child's life, a teacher can take responsibility in the classroom to detect and report child abuse. Because the issue of child abuse is so rampant, everyone should be looking, first, to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place, but also to save and protect those children who have already been mistreated. A teacher's role is especially important in saving and protecting the victims of child abuse as teachers are some of the only outside world connections that the victimized children may have (Romeo, 2000). Therefore, detecting and reporting child abuse are both part of a teacher's social responsibility. Teachers are also legally required to report suspected child abuse. However, there is a gap in the education programs for teachers. Future teachers are not learning about child abuse as part of their licensure programs and current teachers were not educated when they received their licensure (Sinanan, 2011). Logically, teachers will be unable to effectively report child abuse if they do not know what it is or what to look for (National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, 1998). Education is an important component – if teachers are educated about the indicators of abuse and about what to do about their suspicions, they are more likely to take an active approach towards abuse (Darby, 2007). In order to help detect and report child abuse, teachers need to be educated in that area.

As citizens, everyone is responsible to contribute to society in a beneficial way. This includes following the law, contributing to the economy, and helping to enforce the law. As demonstrated above, child abuse is a major issue that is affecting millions of children negatively. Children can experience devastating and long lasting negative consequences as victims of abuse. Therefore, if someone can reduce the number of

victims of child abuse, that person should do so. Teachers have the capacity to do just that (Crenshaw, Crenshaw & Lichtenberg, 1995). Therefore, it is a teacher's social responsibility to take part in detecting, reporting, and ultimately preventing child abuse.

Quite a few professionals, such as doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, childcare workers, and law enforcement officers, are required to report suspected child abuse – teachers are also including in that group of professionals (Crenshaw, Crenshaw & Lichtenberg, 1995). There are guidelines surrounding the reports that include time limits, information for reporting, who to report to, and how (Greytak, 2009). Many teachers are unaware of these guidelines – one-third of teachers are well aware of the legislated requirements and standard child abuse reporting procedures and only three percent of teachers say they know their school's specific procedure for reporting child abuse (Kenny, 2001). The administration departments in schools should take the initiative to share the child abuse reporting policy with every new teacher at the school (Lowenthal, 2001). If a teacher does not report child abuse or completes a report incorrectly, the ramifications may be severe.

It has also been found that teachers are underreporting suspected child abuse (Kenny & McEachern, 2002). Teachers have disclosed a few of the reasons that they do not report child abuse every time they suspect it – the main reason is that they are uncomfortable with the reporting procedure as a whole (Sinanan, 2011). Teachers are afraid of the legal ramifications for false allegations, the consequences of disclosure, and the possible deterioration of relationship between the school and the family (Compaan, Doueck & Levine, 1997). Another reason teachers gave for underreporting child abuse was a lack of knowledge about detecting and reporting child abuse (Hawkins &

McCullan, 2001). These reasons all point to the fact that education programs for future teachers need to include child abuse and current teachers need to be given more information as well.

In order for teachers to feel comfortable reporting child abuse, they need to be educated on the topic. Unfortunately, courses on child abuse are missing from teacher education programs (McIntyre, 1987) and are not required for teachers by the national accrediting association (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2012). Many teachers report that the main reason they fail to report suspected child abuse is because they are unsure of how to go about the procedure and are afraid to make a mistake in the process (Kenny, 2001). It has also been found through studies that many teachers are unaware of their specific school board's policy on reporting (Kenny, 2001). Teachers are left uneducated about something that could save a child's life.

If current and future teachers get educated about child abuse, they are far more likely to report suspected cases and take an active role in fulfilling their social and legal duties (Darby, 2007). Darby (2007) completed a study that surveyed 529 teachers, 273 of which had attended the child abuse course in question. According to the results of the study, teachers who attended the course reported greater use of the materials given to them during the program, greater interest in preventing child abuse, greater knowledge of what to do about child abuse, and higher confidence in school procedures. As demonstrated, the reasons teachers give for not reporting child abuse include being uneducated and fearful about the procedure. Therefore, if the education is provided, the excuses currently being used will no longer be valid. It has been said that ignorance is bliss, but knowledge is power.

As one of the most involved adults in a child's life, part of a teacher's social responsibility is to protect the students in those respective classrooms. Abuse is a relatively common issue and brings the safety of a child directly into question, which subsequently makes child abuse detection part of a teacher's duty (Romeo, 2000). However, in order to be able to detect child abuse, teachers need to be educated about child abuse and the different signs that children can show. Teacher education requirements are, unfortunately, not completely fulfilling this need (Walsh, 2008). It is a logical progression that if teachers were educated more thoroughly about child abuse, they would be able to detect child abuse and handle the situations with more confidence. Teachers with confidence in reporting child abuse will benefit and protect children. The education that equips teachers to deal with the implications of child abuse should cover the detection of the abuse, the legal requirements for teachers, and strategies to help the victims cope with and recover from abuse. If child abuse education is required for future teachers and includes all three of those channels of study, teachers will be well equipped for the situations that they come across in their careers. Studies have been done to test this logic and the findings support that teachers are more likely to take a stand and report child abuse if they have been educated and are well prepared on the different aspects of child abuse (Walsh, 2008). With adequate knowledge and experience, teachers can fulfill their social responsibility as educators to protect children from abuse by taking the right precautions, legal steps and adapting education in order to help the victims of abuse succeed afterwards.

Detecting and Reporting

Aside from parents, teachers are the adults who see a child the most often. Consequentially, they are most likely to be able to detect that abuse is taking place and, in turn, report it. As demonstrated by the statistics presented, child abuse is a relatively common issue that brings the safety of a child directly into question, which subsequently makes child abuse detection part of a teacher's social responsibility and civic duty (Romeo, 2000). Child abuse can be detected through disclosure or observation. Teachers have the legal responsibility to report any suspected or confirmed abuse according to certain standards placed on them by the state and school board. During the process and once the abuse has been reported, teachers can help support and encourage victims on the way to recovery. Teachers should be educated on the reporting procedure for child abuse so that they can effectively participate.

Child abuse can be detected in a couple of different ways. Children may tell someone that they trust or an adult that may be able to do something about the abuse. The child could tell someone directly and in plain words or the child could tell someone through action or indirectly (Roberts, 1998). If the child does not tell someone, the abuse can still be detected through observation. Each child may exhibit different signs of abuse depending on the type of abuse the child is experiencing and the situation surrounding the abuse (Heineman, 1998).

Some children personally disclose the abuse they have gone through or are going through currently. Personal disclosure can happen explicitly or implicitly. A child may feel comfortable enough to explicitly tell someone that the abuse is taking place. Sadly, this is not usually the case because children are scared and ashamed of the situation they

are in (Roberts, 1998). Children may also disclose the abuse implicitly through a number of means. They may give hints, ask hypothetical questions, or show through play (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). This situation is more likely to occur, but still does not usually happen. In each of these cases, however, the child personally discloses the abuse.

After disclosure takes place, a teacher is legally responsible to take some action in the reporting process. If the child explicitly discloses the abuse, teachers are required to report the abuse either to Child Protective Services or another specified agency (Newberger, 1993). In the case of implicit disclosure, further conversation should take place before a report is made. The most important thing to remember when dealing with child abuse is the child needs support, encouragement, and love. Teachers should ask specific questions, but let the child be in control, and stay away from accusations (Roberts, 2009). With security and prompting, children will feel more at ease to open up about the abusive relationship that they are a victim of. More information will be acquired that is useful for making a report. In all situations, a report should be made – if the child directly discloses, if the child indirectly discloses, or if a teacher simply suspects that abuse is taking place – but more information is always better.

If the child does not disclose the abuse, a teacher can detect abuse through observation of a child. This is the most likely situation to occur because of the stigma attached to child abuse. A child may be waiting for an adult to notice what's going on or may even be trying to hide the situation to protect a parent or guardian. Every child is different, which will cause each one to react differently to the abuse, but with each type

of abuse there are some typical signs that a teacher would be able to notice (Walsh, 2008).

Physical abuse will be the easiest to detect on a child. Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, head trauma, and abdominal trauma are all indicators that abuse may be taking place (Loder & Bookout, 1991). Psychological abuse will have fewer visible signs, but can still be detected. Low confidence and self-esteem, eating disorders, and cutting as well as unjustified or unexplained fear are some noticeable signs. There may also be declines in intelligence, perception, attention, or memory (O'Hagan, 1995). The most common signs of sexual abuse are highly seductive behavior, sexualized play, knowledge about sexual acts, excessive shame or guilt, and depression, or sleep changes (Patterson, 1998). Children who have been neglected may be missing immunizations, frequently tardy or absent from school, permitted by parents to do dangerous things, or be extremely unclean and unhygienic (Kleinman, 1987).

Some other detectable signs of child abuse include hunching over, red marks or rashes on the genitals, trust issues, socially awkward behavior, a psychological disorder, attention and memory problems, irritableness, frequent lying, low achievement in school, and chronic absence (Walsh, 2008). With each case of child abuse, the signs may vary largely and there are an infinite number of combinations possible. These signs may also be demonstrated by a child who has never been abused; they are simply some things that a teacher should be looking out for.

Once a teacher has detected child abuse, it should be reported as soon as possible. Educators have a mandated, legal responsibility to report suspected child abuse (Patterson, 1998). There are some regulations surrounding the process of reporting

suspected child abuse. The person making the report must do so within the first seventy-two hours of suspicion (VCU VISSTA, 2011). Each school, district, and state may have different requirements as far as the nature of the report – whether or not there has to be written documentation and who actually makes the report (Lowenthal, 2001). Teachers must follow their school's regulations, but eventually the report will get to Child Protective Services (VCU VISSTA, 2011). Though the process is not exactly difficult, reporting child abuse is an important step for a teacher in fulfilling her social responsibility. Therefore, a teacher must make sure to follow all the rules in making a report.

Once the report has been made and the child is protected, the teacher should keep up with the child to ensure safety and success in school for that particular student. Teachers should promote resiliency, which is defined as "the ability to draw on personal strengths to help overcome negative circumstances" (VCU VISSTA, 2011). Some children may have the tendency to be resilient already, but resilience can also be fostered as an attitude about life. If a child is supported and given opportunities to continue to thrive in the classroom, resiliency will be developed much more quickly and easily. As the consistent adult role model in a maltreated child's life, a teacher can be instrumental in encouraging and fostering resiliency.

In order to promote resilience, teachers should view children positively and with respect, demonstrate good behavior, respect and praise the child, promote the child's personal interests, and keep promises (VCU VISSTA, 2011). When a teacher continues to show interest in a child that has been abused, the child will start to feel more comfortable and more secure. If abused children have teachers that know what happened

to them and have a special interest in helping them succeed, the children are given more opportunities and are more likely to become resilient regardless of their situation (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). This is why teachers should be proactive in staying in the child's life even after the report has been written and processed. By now, the child should be placed in either a temporary or permanent safe place and attend school again. The teacher should now encourage and foster resiliency and discourage negative behaviors in the classroom (Roberts, 1998). The child needs support and safety in order to succeed.

Teachers should fulfill their social and legal responsibilities by paying attention to their students and caring about their students' personal lives. Detection of and reports of abuse are two very important protective processes that teachers can and should be a part of. Teachers see children for quite a few hours during the day and teachers are usually seen by students as adults who can be trusted. Therefore, many opportunities for detecting abuse may come up. Children may disclose abuse with words, through play, or by hinting. If this occurs, teachers should try to confront the issue by asking questions and finding out important information. Teachers may also observe that abuse is taking place without a child saying anything. In all situations, teachers should take child abuse seriously and follow guidelines to report the abuse. Once the abuse has been reported, teachers can play a role in the recovery of the child as well by providing a safe and secure environment for the victim. Teachers can make a difference in students' lives by detecting and reporting child abuse, but how will teachers fulfill this responsibility if they are uneducated about the issue?

Conclusion

As one of the most prominent adults in a child's life, teachers can and should play a major role in detecting and reporting child abuse. Child abuse is a major issue in the United States today. Physically, children are being hit, burned, and broken. Adults are also verbally attacking children and instilling fear in their hearts. Sexually, adults are taking advantage of children for gratification through molestation and rape. Through neglect, children's basic human needs are being ignored. All of these things happen to millions of children each year and the numbers are continuing to rise. Between 1980 and 2012, the numbers have doubled and there are still cases going under the radar. Detection of abuse needs to be more frequent so that more children can be protected. Also, if more people are aware of child abuse and the signs and effects it can have on a child, more abusers are likely to be caught, and more people may be wary of participating in abuse. If society becomes stricter about abuse, a precedent will be set about the consequences for abusing a child.

The abuse that is taking place makes an impact on both the child and society as a whole. Children may experience physical, psychological, neurobiological, or behavioral problems as a result of the abuse that they are a victim of. Consequently, society has taken a stand against abuse, but has to use billions of dollars to do so – facilitating Child Protective Services, rehabilitation programs, and funding jails is expensive. Child abuse needs to be stopped.

Teachers are responsible for observing the children in their classrooms in order to keep them safe. Child abuse is included as part of a teacher's social responsibility to protect children from abuse. In order to do so effectively the teacher needs to be well

educated on all the different aspects of maltreatment. First of all, teachers need to be knowledgeable on the various types of abuse and the signs that may be indicative of abuse. If a teacher notices these signs or a child discloses that abuse is taking place, a teacher is held legally accountable to report this information within seventy-two hours. The teacher must be aware what the school's specific regulations are for making reports. Once the report is filed, Child Protective Services takes over the situation and becomes responsible for keeping the child safe until there is removal from the abusive relationship. Teachers can also aid in the recovery process for a child by supporting and encouraging the child in any struggles the child may come across.

As part of the education programs, teachers need to learn about a few aspects of the issue. For prospective teachers, this should occur during licensure training. For current teachers, staff training programs, or required education segments should include information on child abuse. First of all, teachers need to know how to detect child abuse. Children may disclose the abuse directly through words or indirectly through actions or subtle questions. If children do not disclose the abuse personally, teachers need to be aware of the signs of child abuse so that they can look for those signs in their students. Teachers can observe physical signs of abuse, psychological effects of abuse, sexually suggestive behavior, and signs that a child that is not being taken care of properly. If any of these signs are present, teachers need to follow certain procedures. Depending on the school and school district, these rules may be different, but teachers still need to be aware of them. Once the abuse has been reported, teachers can also participate in the recovery process for the victim by fostering resilience and supporting the child emotionally. As seen throughout the research presented, a well-educated teacher can and should play an

important role in detecting child abuse and protecting victims after abuse. What a mighty responsibility that is!

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