

Understanding Child Abuse in Our Community

Santa Cruz County Children's Mental Health Prop 63 Mental Health Services Act Family & Youth Input From Watsonville Digital Bridges Academy Surveys

One of the strengths of our local Children's Interagency System of Care is the on-going needs assessment, quality improvement, and strategic planning engaged in by all partners. This community input is included as a key part of our local Prop 63 planning.

The Watsonville Digital Bridges Academy assists youth and adults at-risk in successfully "bridging" the transition to college and the workforce. The following information has been used to help identify key needs and issues in the area of Child Welfare, from the viewpoint of community members.

Background

- Surveyed 283 people
 - 81% - Were affected or knew someone that suffered from child abuse.
 - 19% - Were not affected or didn't know someone that suffered from child abuse.
- Age distribution of respondents knowing about child abuse victims
 - 40% - Were between 15 and 20 years old;
 - 24% - Were between 20 and 30 years old;
 - 36% - Were over 30 years old.

Data Collection

- Surveyed 283 people
 - 98.5% - Child-Abuse Victims
 - 1.5 % - Social Service Workers
- Surveys distributed to and collected from:
 - CPS Office
 - Si Se Puede – Residential Drug Treatment Program
 - New School
 - Plaza Vigil
 - Youth Services
 - Watsonville High School Students
 - Salud Para la Gente
 - Family Services
 - On the streets
 - Laundry mats

Project Goal

- To collect information and data about:
 - If child abuse is prevalent in the county;
 - What we, the community, can do to prevent it.

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- To come up with solutions that will address:
 - Why child abuse occurs;
 - Why the cycle repeats itself.

Research Questions

- What causes child abuse?
- Will the cycle repeat itself?
- How can the community help prevent child abuse and help victims?
- What community resources exist?

What Is The Need?

- Child abuse victims need to understand why it happened;
 - Many think it was their fault
 - Though their parents were alcoholic or drug addicts
- Many are scared and are under-aged
 - Counselors and teachers are not good solutions because of mandatory reporting
 - They need a confidential place where it is not reported.
- Abusers need help in dealing with issues of self-control and anger
 - 85% were abused by a family member
 - 15% were abused by others

How Long Did The Abuse Last?

- 24% - under 6 months
- 3% - 6 to 12 months
- 11% - 1 to 2 years
- 62% - Over 2 years

Did You Grow Up With Violence In Your Home?

- 51% were abused and had witnessed violence in their home.

What Are The Consequences of Meeting The Need?

- Children will:
 - Be safe and feel safer
 - Gain positive attitudes
 - Renew their self-esteem
 - Break the cycle of child abuse
- Abusers will learn to:
 - Control their violent behavior
 - Use non-violent communication
- Decrease in child abuse

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Consequences of NOT Meeting The Need?

- Children will:
 - Be more depressed
 - Have low self-esteem
 - Be placed in Foster Care
 - Face adoption
 - Repeat the cycle of violence
 - Run away from home
 - Live on the streets
 - Commit suicide
 - More likely to be delinquents
- Parents will:
 - Go to jail
 - Lose their children and become depressed
 - Turn to drugs and alcohol

What Do We Need To Stop Child Abuse?

- Help families confront the issues;
- Help parents and children understand what is driving their behavior;
- Support parents in dealing with their anger and self control issues.

Three Solutions To Child Abuse

- Education to help parents
 - Anger management & non-violent communication
 - Parenting classes
- Individual counseling for parents and children
 - Understand why abuse happens
 - Understand why the cycle repeats
- Services for the family
 - Family counseling and education
 - Child Protective Services

Relevance to Children's Prop 63 Recommendations

- ❖ **Expanded counseling and education to parents involved with Child Protective Services.** *(Child Welfare recommendation # 1 and 2)*
- ❖ **Expansion of Therapeutic Visitation program (supported by Juvenile Dependency Judge) as a key strategy to meeting these needs** *(Child Welfare recommendation # 1)*