

The Facts About (CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

PREVALENCE

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, childhood trauma is defined as the experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects. Nearly 35 million children age 0 to 17 in the United States today have experienced one or more types of childhood trauma. In Illinois, 42% of children age 0 to 17 have experienced one or more adverse experiences.

CAUSES

The most common causes of childhood trauma include:

- **Accidents**
- **Bullying/cyberbullying**
- **Chaos or dysfunction in the house (such as domestic violence, parent with a mental illness, substance abuse or incarcerated)**
- **Death of a loved one**
- **Emotional abuse or neglect**
- **Physical abuse or neglect**
- **Separation from a parent or caregiver**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Stress caused by poverty**
- **Sudden and/or serious medical condition**
- **Violence (at home, at school, or in the surrounding community)**
- **War/terrorism**

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Trauma has the potential to impact a person's physical, emotional, social and cognitive abilities throughout his or her life. Some typical long-term effects of untreated trauma include:

- **Alcoholism**
- **Biological and neurological disorders**
- **Chronic depression and/or anxiety disorders**
- **Cigarette smoking**
- **Dropping out of school**
- **Drug abuse**
- **Early death**
- **High risk behaviors (e.g., HIV exposure, sexually transmitted diseases)**
- **Obesity**
- **Suicide**

A QUICK WAY TO IDENTIFY A PROBLEM

Need a quick way to identify whether your child might be experiencing a trauma? Just remember the word "SCARED" and the six types of behaviors you should keep an eye out for:

- S** – Sudden changes in sleep habits
- C** – Crying, clingy behavior
- A** – Afraid of things not feared before
- R** – Refuses activities she/he once enjoyed
- E** – Easily startled
- D** – Displays disruptive, violent, bullying or aggressive behaviors

LOOK THROUGH THEIR EYES

CAMPAIGN

The Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition, a joint effort by more than 80 partner agencies throughout Illinois, is launching a campaign to increase awareness among parents and caregivers in the state about childhood trauma. The campaign encourages parents and caregivers to look through the eyes of their children to assess the children's reactions to the world around them and stay ahead of any potential traumatic experiences. The campaign is anchored by public service announcements, the first of which will be released in spring of 2014. A dedicated website provides practical information about childhood trauma prevention, identification and treatment along with links to local, state and national organizations that provide support. For more information about the Look Through Their Eyes Campaign and the Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition, please go to LookThroughTheirEyes.org.

