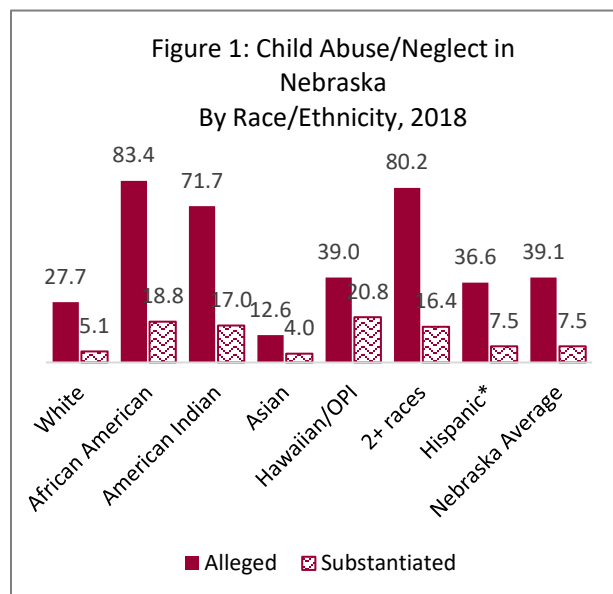


Child Abuse and Neglect

Exposure to abuse and/or neglect as a child is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). ACE’s have been found to have negative, long lasting effects on physical and mental health, and well-being.¹ According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 3,346 Nebraska children experienced substantiated abuse and/or neglect during 2018.² The number of substantiated cases of abuse/neglect dropped from 2009 to 2018.²

In October 2019, NDHHS Division of Children and Family Services began to implement a five year prevention action plan that was developed through the Family First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA) which puts a focus on federal child welfare financing to focus more on prevention, working to keep families out of the child welfare system, especially in cases of physical neglect.³

Criterion 1: Disparities Exist Related to Health Outcomes



Considerable disparities exist in cases of both alleged and substantiated child abuse/neglect.¹ In Nebraska, African American, American Indian, and multiracial children are overrepresented among maltreatment reports and substantiations when compared to other races (Figure 1).

Poverty is often considered the single best predictor of child maltreatment. According to the American Community Survey in Nebraska 19.4% of children live at or below 100% of

the poverty level.⁴ There are major disparities in poverty that exist among African American, Hispanic, and multi-racial children when compared to White children. These patterns follow closely to those of child abuse and neglect.

Criterion 2: Data Exists to Document the Problem

Population-level data of every child served through Nebraska’s child welfare system is available from the NDHHS Division of Children and Family Services. This data indicates that the majority of children entering foster care is due to neglect and that approximately 45% of children who enter out-of-home care are ages 0-5.⁵ Data also indicates that 50% or more of children who enter out-of-home care in Nebraska do so due to parental substance use.⁵ DHHS tracks the number of infants and toddlers with substantiated abuse and/or neglect who were referred to Early Development Network (EDN), which helps to connect families with services for children with developmental delays. In 2019, there were 1019 cases referred to the network and 149 cases referred to services.⁵

Thorough, valid and reliable state and national-level data on these and other aspects of child abuse and neglect are available through the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, funded by the Children’s Bureau, an office of the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.⁶

Criterion 3: Alignment, use the priority to maximum advantage

Nebraska was one of the first states in the country to fully commit to implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The FFPSA reforms federal child welfare financing to focus more on prevention, working to keep families out of the child welfare system, especially in cases of physical neglect. When children and families do enter the child welfare system, Nebraska has several secondary prevention efforts to minimize the trauma related to the removal from their homes. These efforts include, among others, Community Response, Alternative Response, and non-court case management.³

The Nebraska Children and Family Foundation houses Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska (PCAN), which works to promote the healthy development of children, increase public awareness, and advocate for policy changes aimed at promoting prevention.⁷ In Nebraska, PCAN partners with Bring Up Nebraska, a statewide effort that provides a framework for local organizations in local communities to form a collaborative to help prevent problems from escalating to crises for local families.⁸

Nebraska has made strategic investments in communities across the state in planning, professional development, community collaboration and implementing local home visiting programs. The DHHS Division of Public Health oversees the Nebraska Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (N-MIECHV), with funding from the federal Health Resources Service Administration (HRSA). Sites across the state are supported by the federal funding and also state general funds. MIECHV supports evidence-based home visiting programs that provide support for pregnant or parenting families of children birth to age five who may struggle with significant life stressors such as poverty and exposure to violence.⁹

Healthy Families America (HFA) is one of the approved MIECHV implementation models, and is an evidence-based home visiting program that is both community-owned and community-driven. HFA is currently being implemented in six sites across the state. The HFA program hopes to expand into more communities throughout the state.

Criterion 4: Strategies Exist to Address the Problem/An Effective Intervention is Available

The FFPSA was signed by the U.S. Congress in February 2018 and rolled out in Nebraska in October 2019. Each program authorized for use under FFPSA goes through a six step process including:

1. Identify candidate programs and services.
2. Prioritize programs and services.
3. Conduct a literature review related to the prioritized programs and services.

4. Studies are screened for eligibility.
5. Programs are reviewed through the evidence provided in the eligible studies.
6. Programs and services are given up at a three star rating.³

The prevention plan began implementation in October 2019 by DHHS. This plan contracts with service providers who are already providing in-home services to reach low income families in need. Services will focus on substance abuse prevention and treatment, mental health services, and in-home parent skills based program all designed to keep the families together and the children from entering the system. All programs are evidence-based and trauma informed.

Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) also identifies ten evidence-based strategies they employ to prevent child abuse and neglect.¹⁰ Annual evaluations of the recommended strategies are conducted and published to maintain accountability of programming and identify effectiveness of granted community services. The ten strategies are:

1. Be a nurturing parent.
2. Help a friend, neighbor or relative.
3. Help yourself.
4. If your baby cries...Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying.
5. Get involved.
6. Help to develop parenting resources at your local library.
7. Promote programs in school.
8. Monitor your child's television, video, and internet viewing/usage.

9. Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention program.
10. Report suspected abuse or neglect.

Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska (PCAN), PCAA's local chapter, works with the Bring Up Nebraska program to serve 74 of the 93 Nebraska counties and have nine grantee partners across the state.

Criterion 5: Severity of Consequences

The overall rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect has dropped significantly in Nebraska over the past decade from 12.2 instances per 1,000 children in 2009 to 7.1 per 1,000 children in 2018.¹¹ Even though the rate has improved, the consequences of experiencing child abuse and neglect are myriad. Data shows that children who have experienced abuse or neglect are at increased risk for problematic development, physical and mental health problems, learning delays, and social problems. Adults who experienced child abuse or neglect as children continue to show increased risk for psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, serious medical illness, and lower economic productivity.¹ In addition, ACEs are known to affect a child's brain development. A child with a higher ACE score is more likely to have poor health outcomes when not addressed. More than 50% of Nebraskans have at least one ACE, therefore abuse and neglect prevention strategies need to be addressed systematically across the state of Nebraska.¹

If this issue is selected as one of the Title V MCH priority needs in 2020, what do you expect this issue to look like five years from now? What kind of progress can you expect for the next five years?

If child abuse and neglect is chosen as a Title V priority we would hope to see a decline in the rate of both alleged and substantiated child abuse and neglect in the next five years. In the next five years there is a hope that evidence based home visiting would be universal across the whole state and access to it would increase.

¹ Nebraska Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System. ACE Fact Sheet, 2014. <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Reports/PRAMS%20Adverse%20Childhood%20Experiences%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%202014.pdf>

² Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Child Abuse and Neglect, Annual Data, Calendar Year 2018. <http://dhhs.ne.gov/DCFS%20Data%20and%20Reports/CAN%202018%20Annual%20Data%20Report.pdf>

³ Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). <http://dhhs.ne.gov/FFPSA%20Nebraska%20Documents/FFPSA%20Overview.pdf>

⁴ US Census American Community Survey <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

⁵ Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska. <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/prevent-child-abuse-nebraska/overview.html>

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. <https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>

⁷ Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska. <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/prevent-child-abuse-nebraska/overview.html>

⁸ Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Bring Up Nebraska. <https://www.bringupnebraska.org/>

⁹ U.S. Health Resources & Service Administration. Home Visiting. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-initiatives/home-visiting-overview>

¹⁰ Prevent Child Abuse America. Ten Ways to Help Prevent Child Abuse. <https://preventchildabuse.org/resource/ten-ways-to-help-prevent-child-abuse/>

¹¹ Voices for Children in Nebraska. 2019 Kids Count in Nebraska Report. <https://voicesforchildren.com/data-research/kids-count/>