

The Impact of COVID-19 on Child Health & Safety

Stephanie Anne Deutsch MD, MS FAAP
Co-Medical Director, CARE (Children at Risk Evaluation) Program
Section Chief, Child Abuse Pediatrics

Disclosure

There are no relevant financial disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.

Dr. Deutsch provides testimony in civil and criminal proceedings regarding suspected child abuse.

Artwork included in this presentation was obtained from publicly available, Internet-based sources.

Kids use art to tell the story of the coronavirus outbreak

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost/kids-paint-corona-from-around-the-world/2020/06/22/4d5b1ee2-a416-11ea-bb20-ebf0921f3bbd_story.html

Objectives

Review the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, including children at risk for abuse and neglect

Discuss how pandemic circumstances have impacted pediatric medical care-seeking, functioning of child welfare agencies, foster care and safety investigations

Evaluate use of data for advocacy – how have lessons learned altered the future trajectory of supportive service provision for at-risk families

Describe the anticipated effects of COVID-19 on child health and safety across generations

What have we learned from the pandemic, and how does it change us and what we do, moving forward?

SARS-CoV-2: A Novel, Controversial Threat

- Social Distancing/Infection Control
- Personal Protective Equipment, Masks
- Testing Availability, Efficacy
- Quarantine Policies
- Vaccine Engineering
- Treatment Availability/Utility
- MIS-C
- Asymptomatic Spread
- School/Business Re-opening

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Vulnerability: High Risk Populations

- Elderly – highest direct risk of severe disease, at risk for social isolation
- Individuals with mental health or substance use disorders – relapse, barriers to treatment
- Homeless – unable to isolate, affected by disrupted support services
- Individuals with disabilities, institutionalized (foster care) – disrupted support services, infectious hubs
- Those involved with criminal justice system – infectious hubs, delayed proceedings
- Children – target for violence, at risk for social isolation, school disruption, poor supervision

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Community Stressors



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Propensity Towards Violence

Domestic violence

Gun violence

Violence directed towards children

Trauma does not quarantine: violence during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Hatchimoni JS. et al. *Annals of Surgery* (2020); 272 (2):e53-54

Violence unchecked by social distancing. Cannon JW, Martin ND, Quasim Z. *Journal of Emergency Medicine* (2020)
doi:10.1016/j.jemermed.2020.06.049

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Changed injury patterns – similar to prior work on natural disasters

Increased incidence of inflicted traumatic brain injury in children after a natural disaster. Keenan H, Marshall S, Nocera M, Runyan D. *Am J Prev Med* 2004; 26(3)

Epidemiology of pediatric fractures

Dog bites, burns, bruises, ingestions

The role of supervisory neglect

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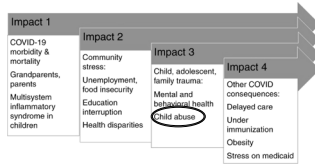
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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

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Shoring up the safety net for children in the COVID-19 pandemic. Cheng, T.L., Moon, M. & Artman, M. *Pediatr Res* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-020-1071-7>

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Parental Burn-Out: Risk Factors for Abuse and Neglect

Parental burnout – Balances Between Risks and Resources Theory (Mikolajczak and Roskam 2018), mismatch between resources and demands

Factors predictive of parental burnout – unemployment, financial insecurity, low levels of social support, lack of leisure time

Increased association with child abuse and neglect, controlling for confounding factors (Mikolajczak 2019)

Any parent can become abusive under the “right” circumstances (Curtis et al. 2000)

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/the-american-academy-of-pediatrics-advises-parents-experiencing-stress-over-covid-19>

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COVID-19: The Newest Adverse Childhood Experience

Bauer, L. Brookings Institution. *The COVID-19 crisis has already left too many children hungry in America.*
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/05/06/the-covid-19-crisis-has-already-left-too-many-children-hungry-in-america/> (2020)

Smialek, J. *Poor Americans hit hardest by job losses amid lockdowns, Fed says.* New York Times (14 May 2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/14/business/economy/coronavirus-jobless-unemployment.html>

Parolin, Z. & Wimer, C. *Forecasting estimates of poverty during the COVID-19 crisis.* Poverty Soc. Policy Brief 4, 1–18 (2020)

Panchal, N. et al. *The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use* (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020)
<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-COVID-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-COVID-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use>

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What's Actually Happening: The Gray Zone

For the first time ever, minors make up half of visitors to national sexual assault hotline. www.rainn.org/news (2020)

Illegal online sexual behavior during COVID19 pandemic: a call for action based on experiences from the ongoing prevent it research study. Parks, A. et al. Archives of Sexual Behavior (2020) 49:1433-1435.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/kids-health/has-child-abuse-surged-under-covid-19-despite-alarming-stories-n1234713>

Calls to national hotlines up; significance unclear

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Impact on Child Welfare System

Variable program structure, service delivery and overall approach across states

Barriers to reporting – need to educate general public

Funding and technology

Navigating investigations

What COVID19 means for America's child welfare system. Welch M, Haskins R.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-covid-19-means-for-americas-child-welfare-system/#:~:text=COVID%2D19%20has%20created%20a, the%20stress%20of%20job%20loss>

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Operational Protocols

Hotline level – reports down (some online reports), differing responses to investigations (triaging?)

Ongoing family involvement: virtual sessions

Who really needs a medical? Who really needs an in-person/in-home assessment?

CAC level – emergent interviews only, online/virtual interviews, triaging? Impact on criminal prosecution? Trauma?

Law Enforcement/ Investigative level – reduced scene assessments/re-enactments, preserving resources for COVID response

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Impact on Foster Care

Delayed reunification – delayed court proceedings, limited ability to access intervention services

Virtual visits with biological families

Placement disruptions – non-kinship care (health of elderly relatives), ill foster parents, children/foster parents with pre-existing conditions

Infection risk for children/teens in residential facilities

Foster teens in college, dorms shut, no homes

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Caring-for-Children-in-Foster-Care-COVID-19.aspx>

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Harnessing Data for Advocacy



<https://youtu.be/0oDHok7Jd8s>

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Harnessing Data for Advocacy

Predictive Analytics – hundreds of historical factors utilized to build a model ("long arc historical risk" to give a "long arc future risk" score)

When hotline reports fell, the children not being referred were lower risk – the risk score for the referred children significantly increased

Average risk score higher

"True" child protection reports during pandemic, versus other reports that could be amenable to community agencies

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Where Do We Go From Here?

Paradigm shift – towards prevention
Restructuring our current systems, enhancing collaborative capacity
Upstream resource provision, active Outreach/linkage to Services
Better-equipping the system (technology, PPE)

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Resiliency and Emotional Connection – Hoping for the Best

Providing supports to reduce stress for caregivers and protect children from threats to their safety
Economic supports
Psychosocial supports

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Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus (COVID-19):
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
Child Welfare Information Gateway, COVID-19 State Child Welfare and Related Health Resources: www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunction=action=rois:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=177&Llist=ROL
Coalition for the Homeless, COVID-19 Update: www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/covid-19
Mental Health America, Mental Health and COVID-19—Information and Resources: <https://mhanational.org/covid19>
National Alliance on Mental Illness, COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide: www.nami.org/Support-Education/NAMI-HelpLine/COVID-19-Information-and-Resources/COVID-19-Resource-and-Information-Guide

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Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline: www.thehotline.org/help

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence: www.nrcdv.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Helpline:
www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

World Health Organization, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic:
www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

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Thank You



Stephanie.deutsch@nemours.org

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