

Kenny, M. (2004). Teachers' attitudes toward and knowledge of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28, 1311-1319.

(info not yet integrated into Inspiration lit review info)

*****summary of key information:

1. "...educational personnel one of the most commonly identified reporters of child maltreatment."
2. "... many teachers are not compliant with the law and often fail to report child abuse."
3. "Schools establishing their own policies and procedures for handling reports of abuse contribute to teachers' uncertainty of their professional responsibility with regard to child abuse reporting."
4. "Teachers report a particular lack of knowledge about the...
 - a. ...legal standards in the reporting of abuse...
 - b. ...how to identify cases of child maltreatment
 - c. ... symptom specificity [i.e., what different types of CA/N look like] also deters professionals from reporting suspected abuse
 - d.lack training on information related to the requirements of mandated reporting and ethical concerns"
5. "...most teachers did not believe they would be aided by administration if they made a report of abuse."
6. "Few teachers believed child abuse was a grave problem..."

*****detailed info from article:

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"Nearly 3 million allegations of child maltreatment were made to child protective services in the US in 2001 (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2003), with educational personnel one of the most commonly identified reporters of child maltreatment. Nationally, educators constitute 16% of all reports (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2003) with rates varying in different states."

"Despite legal mandates to report, many teachers are not compliant with the law and often fail to report child abuse (Bavolek, 1983; Hinson & Fossey, 2000; Kenny, 2001b)."

"Educators can be involved in the detection, treatment and prevention of child abuse. In schools, children are seen on a daily basis and can be observed for signs of abuse or neglect (National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1992)."

"...a number of factors have been documented that may interfere with educators' ability

to identify and report maltreatment of children. For instance, teachers' preservice (college or university) and on-the-job training in child abuse have been reported to be insufficient (Abrahams, Casey, & Daro, 1992; Kenny, 2001b). Academic training for teachers is not always current (Alpert & Paulson, 1990), and there have been few efforts nationwide to establish university-based training in child abuse and neglect (Gallmeier & Bonner, 1992). Many teachers often cite their lack of training and knowledge of how to detect child abuse as a major impediment to their ability to report suspected abuse (Payne, 1991). Baxter and Beer (1990) recommend that school personnel "should receive formal, coordinated, workshop training on child abuse/neglect covering issues of identifying, referring, reporting and laws" (p. 75)."

"Schools establishing their own policies and procedures for handling reports of abuse contribute to teachers' uncertainty of their professional responsibility with regard to child abuse reporting."

"Oftentimes, these policies may be in direct opposition to the law, which in many states requires the individual who observes the abuse to make the report (Kalichman, 1999)."

"Teachers report a particular lack of knowledge about the legal standards in the reporting of abuse (Payne, 1991; Wurtele & Schmitt, 1992). Another obstacle in reporting is teachers' lack of information on how to identify cases of child maltreatment (Abrahams et al., 1992; Kenny, 2002). Kalichman (1999) found that lack of ability to identify symptom specificity also deters professionals from reporting suspected abuse. Finally, many professionals lack training on information related to the requirements of mandated reporting and ethical concerns (Plante, 1995)."

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"Measure

Educators and Child Abuse Questionnaire (ECAQ) (Kenny, 2001a). The questionnaire consists of 12 statements related to (a) competence in identifying and assessing various types of child abuse, (b) knowledge of reporting procedures, and (c) attitudes toward corporal punishment. These 12 statements are responded to on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). This questionnaire has been used in previous studies (i.e., Kenny, 2001b; Kenny & McEachern, 2002)."

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Results

"Of the sample, 25% had made at least one report of child abuse. Only 34% of the teachers reported that child abuse was covered in their preservice training (training that they received while in college). However, of this 34%, 23% felt it was adequately addressed, while 43% felt it was minimally addressed, and 35% felt the training was inadequate. Training at the professional level was rated adequate by 37%, 49% as minimal, and 14% as inadequate."

"...76% reported that the administration would not support them if they made a report of child abuse. A majority of teachers (56%) believed they could be sued by the family if they made an unfounded report. Only 13% of teachers reported knowledge of their school's procedures for reporting child abuse. In general, teachers did not feel that they were aware of the signs and symptoms of neglect, physical, or sexual abuse."

“The teachers’ mean awareness of signs and symptoms of sexual abuse was significantly greater than the mean awareness of physical abuse, 14.5% agreed/strongly agreed compared to 10.5%, respectively, $p < .001$. The teachers’ mean awareness of signs and symptoms of sexual abuse was significantly greater than the mean awareness of neglect, 14.5% agreed/strongly agreed compared to 8.5%, respectively, $p < .001$. There was no significant difference between respondents’ awareness of the signs and symptoms of physical abuse and neglect.”

“In the factor analysis, four factors were extracted: (1) Awareness of signs and symptoms of child abuse, (2) Knowledge of reporting procedures, (3) Attitudes toward discipline, and (4) seriousness of child abuse. Sixty-two percent of the variance of all the variables (12 statements from the ECAQ) was explained by the four factors.”

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“...the teachers who had made a report of child abuse, were less aware of the...

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“...signs and symptoms of abuse and less knowledgeable about reporting procedures than those who did not make a report.”

“The more adequately prepared (preservice) the teachers were, the less they agreed that they had awareness of the signs and symptoms of child abuse ($r_s = -.18$, $p < .011$). The more prepared professionally the teachers were, the less awareness of signs and symptoms of child abuse they had ($r_s = .34$, $p < .001$) and the less they had reported child abuse ($r_s = .32$, $p < .001$). Number of years working as a teacher did not correlate significantly with any of the factors. Additionally, 28% of those teachers who had preservice education in child abuse had made a report of child abuse, versus 23% of those who had not ($p = ns$).”

Discussion:

“The results of this study demonstrate the lack of knowledge teachers possess regarding identification of child maltreatment and reporting procedures. Almost two-thirds of the teachers reported having received...

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“...no training during their preservice in child abuse, and very few teachers were aware of their school’s procedures suggesting that they have not been educated on the job either. Teachers reported being inadequate in their ability to detect and identify all types of child abuse among their students, even when they had training. Lack of familiarity with the signs and symptoms of maltreatment, makes it extremely difficult to report suspected abuse (Payne, 1991).”

“As hypothesized and consistent with Abrahams et al. (1992), most teachers did not believe they would be aided by administration if they made a report of abuse. This finding highlights the need for principals to be educated regarding child maltreatment and to implement education for their staff. Teachers were also found to be unaware of the legal issues surrounding child abuse

reporting (Kenny, 2001b). Additionally, the results of this study highlight teachers' dissatisfaction with their role as mandated reporters, which in turn, may affect their compliance."

"Few teachers believed child abuse was a grave problem..."

"McIntyre (1987) found that many teachers report they never had a student they suspected as being a victim of maltreatment. However, since close to 1 million children are maltreated each year (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2003), some teachers must have victims in their classrooms and are just not able to identify them."

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"Preservice education did not seem to make much of a difference in whether or not these teachers believed they had adequate knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse. It may be that those teachers who have had some training, feel less aware of the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment, as they have been educated on the complexity of this issue. Those without training, may believe they possess all the knowledge they need to."

Recommendations:

"All schools should have clear, accessible, written policies (consistent with state statutes) for school personnel regarding child abuse reporting. Principals can help prevent further harm to children by implementing these procedures and providing appropriate training and support for their staff (Lowenthal, 2001; National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1992; Payne, 1991). Training for educators should include ways to provide support to abuse victims and their families (Abrahams et al., 1992), simulated experiences to develop assertiveness and consultation skills for mandated reporters (James & DeVaney, 1994) as well as identification and reporting of child maltreatment."

Conclusions:

"Though one goal of mandated reporting by professionals is to protect children from further harm, teachers do not seem to embrace their role as mandated professionals."

"Preventive efforts are needed by schools including programs for children, families and the community where staff development takes place as well as public awareness programs (National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1992)."

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