

## Maltreatment-Related Fatalities: Issues of Policy and Prevention\*

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### Abstract

Maltreatment-related child fatalities, despite their relatively infrequent occurrence, constitute a serious social problem. Based on a review of national and unpublished state and local child fatality review team reports, we ascertained some risk factors that set parameters for prevention programs. Children under age four, and in particular those under age two, are at highest risk for maltreatment-related fatalities. Neglect-related deaths occur almost as often as abuse-related ones. Unrelieved crying and toilet training problems are “triggers” for assaults on young children. Males are frequently involved in abuse-related fatalities. People in their mid-twenties, rather than teenage parents are the most frequent perpetrators. About a third of maltreatment-related fatalities were known to child protective services. Implications of these findings, as well as the problem of predicting infrequently occurring events, are discussed in relation to programs of prevention.

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