

Slight incidents trigger child abuse

Conviction difficult in Oregon courts

PORTLAND (AP) — Perhaps the child didn't know the right answer to a question, or spit food as his mother, or wet his pants.

Social workers believe small actions like these can sometimes trigger an explosive response by a troubled parent that results in the child being beaten, burned and sometimes killed.

The majority of these child abuse cases are handled by the Oregon Children's Services Division through counseling and other forms of therapy. Authorities say only a small percent result in criminal prosecution.

"If you throw the mom or dad in jail, society has got its pound of flesh, but the family is just as destitute as before," said Nick Peet, head of the Children's Services Division. "Sometimes a woman or man is unemployed, has big bills, big burdens and the world is crushing them. They are lashing out at anyone. It's not that they don't love the child."

The decision whether to prosecute an adult in a child abuse case rests with the local district attorney. In cases where the child has died, police handle it like any homicide investigation.

This year, one child has died so far as result of child abuse. Coos County officials arrested the girl's mother and the mother's boyfriend. Both have pleaded innocent to a murder charge in the beating and choking death of 7-year-old Felila Alo.

In Lane County there have been four homicide cases in the last five years where children were starved or beaten to death. Each case resulted in convictions of the adults involved.

But assault cases are harder to prove, according to district attorneys in Lane and Multnomah counties. "There's all kinds of difficulty," said Lane County District Attorney Pat Horton. "The child may not be a competent witness or too young to testify and one

spouse may be reluctant to testify against the other."

Horton said another problem is receiving a case soon enough to get solid evidence, such as photographs of fresh wounds.

"We request reports voluntarily from the police and the Children's Services Division," said Horton. "But many times we don't get the reports or we're not notified until several months after the incident."

In Multnomah County last year, one man received a 20-year sentence for beating and locking in a closet a 3-year-old boy, and a mother and father received five year sentences for nearly starving their infant daughter to death.

"Several years ago you didn't see many child abuse cases and now we're seeing a lot more," said John Bradley, Multnomah County deputy district attorney. "The police investigators are putting a lot of work into these cases and a lot of times the cases that come to us are good and not too hard to win."

Bradley said he lost one case because he couldn't prove a motive. "Sometimes a parent explodes over something small and beats a child," he said. "It's hard to pin down a reason."

The Children's Services Division says mother and fathers are responsible for the more than half the confirmed cases of child abuse. The largest number of cases involve bruises and welts. The second greatest form of abuse is sexual — usually by the girl's own father or stepfather.

Mary Eiler of the division's Lane County office said that child abuse problems frequently are resolved by removing the child from the home for about six months. This allows the parents time to work out their problems with a counselor.

"When people abuse children in their own family, we have no reason to believe that they are going to go next door and beat up on somebody else's kid," said Eiler. "The community is not in danger. Putting the mom or dad in jail seems punitive instead of therapeutic."

She said when a parent is sent to prison, Children's Services Division caseworkers visit the inmate to provide counseling and work with the family at home.

Jane Wiener, an assistant Multnomah County district attorney, thinks it's unfortunate that more child abusers aren't charged with felonies.

She handled the cases of Daniel Winniford, 36, now serving a sentence for manslaughter. Winniford and his wife were raising the 3-year-old son of a dead friend. In October 1976, the little boy was beaten and drowned.

"The little boy was very bright and Mr. Winniford asked him one day how many birds were outside the window," said Wiener. "The boy was near-sighted or something and he didn't give the right answer."

"Mr. Winniford felt he was rebelling against him and asked him for the right answer and again the child didn't give it. By the fourth time he said he'd have to punish him."

She said Winniford beat the boy with a plastic hairbrush and when that broke began hitting him with sticks. The beating lasted two and-a-half hours. Wiener said Winniford was downstairs the whole time.

After the beating the Winnifords put the child in a bathtub, Wiener said. She said when the child was unable to stand, the Winnifords still felt he was rebelling and so they held him under the water.

The Winnifords called an ambulance, but it was too late.

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Emigration plaguing S. Africa

Causing 'brain drain'

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some cracks are appearing in the once-solid South African white community. Property values are dropping in the face of racial unrest and an uncertain political future; the numbers of whites leaving are mounting and the nation is suffering a "brain drain." Here is a report.

(AP) — For the first time since 1960, when racial tensions also ran high, the number of whites leaving South Africa is outstripping the number of whites coming in to seek a new life in this racially segregated land.

For those leaving, it is a decision based on what they see as a bleak future of increasing black-white hostility and possible bloodshed.

Patrick McDuling is one of the whites going away.

"I'm pro-South Africa, but not pro-government," he says. "I don't want my kids to fight for this government. I can see a war situation developing which nobody can win."

McDuling is a 33-year-old bachelor, an accountant whose roots reach to the earliest Dutch-descended Afrikaner settlers.

Born and reared in the eastern coastal province of Natal, McDuling is the son of a local policeman of Scottish descent and an Afrikaner mother. Unlike most of the highly skilled emigrants, who are generally English-speaking, McDuling was reared in a home

where the Dutch-based Afrikaans language was spoken almost all the time.

At a small farewell party for close friends, McDuling said of his decision to go to Australia: "I'm looking 15 years into South Africa's future. Violence is inevitable I can't see any light at the end of the tunnel."

The latest figures released by the government Statistics Department showed that 22,400 persons left South Africa between January and October 1977, as opposed to 11,900 in the same period in 1976. Immigrants in the same period numbered 21,000, in contrast with 41,000 in 1976, a net 10-month loss of 1,400.

White flight from South Africa began after racial rioting in 1976 in which more than 600 blacks died. In 1977 mounting international pressure, internal unrest, a depressed economy and difficulty planning a future in troubled times fueled the exodus. Property values in the past two years dropped by 40 percent. While wages remained fairly constant, prices rose.

The quality of life in South Africa, though still good, has declined with the economy and rising international pressure. Youths face a military draft that was recently increased from one to two years.

Doctors, architects, engineers and other professionals are among the most common emigrants — the people leading the country's brain drain. Their skills make them more desirable as immigrants, enabling them to safely navigate myriad immigration regulations of their adopted nations.

As for McDuling, he said he was leaving "to get away from politics and get on with living. The politics of race is always on television, in newspapers and in social conversation."

"I don't want to raise kids in this atmosphere."

Alcohol film to be shown

"Alcohol in the Human Body" will be the film featured Tuesday in the Community Alcohol Education series, which studies the physiological effects of alcohol consumption. Yvonne Karotka of the Lane County Mental Health Division will be the speaker.

The free program is one of the weekly series designed for the public and coordinated by the Lane County Council on Alcoholism. The series is presented at 7:30 p.m. in the Scout Room of Central Presbyterian Church, 1475 Ferry St.



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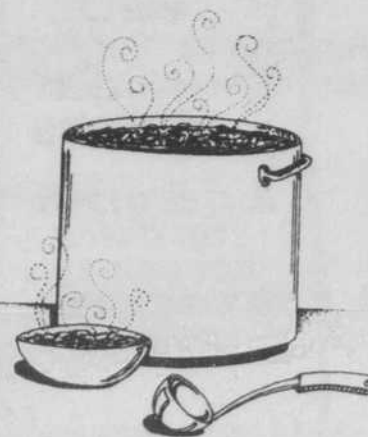
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