

## **STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Is Housing Insecurity Threatening Healthy Child Development?**

**CHICAGO, IL, August 2, 2012** – A new study from researchers at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia titled “Trends in Child Physical Abuse and The Relationship with Housing Insecurity” ([policylab.us/images/pdf/policylab\\_childmaltreatment\\_1page\\_2012.pdf](http://policylab.us/images/pdf/policylab_childmaltreatment_1page_2012.pdf)), states that increases in child abuse are tied to troubles in the housing sector as shown by rates of mortgage delinquency and foreclosure.

The authors:

- Used hospital discharge data from the Pediatric Health Information System for 38 freestanding children’s hospitals from January 2000-December 2009.
- Described trends in monthly admission rates for physical abuse, high-risk traumatic brain injury (TBI), and all injuries.
- Found over a 10-year period, hospital admission rates for physical abuse and high-risk TBI increased the 38 hospitals in contrast to the admission rate for all injuries.
- Linked hospital data to 90-day mortgage delinquency, mortgage foreclosure, and unemployment data for the associated metropolitan statistical areas.

Based on this, the study authors write, “An increase in housing insecurity was associated with an increase in abuse-related hospitalization: for each 1% increase in 90-day delinquency from the previous year, there was a 3% increase in the physical abuse admission rate and a 5% increase in the high-risk TBI admission rate in one year.”

The study also validates anecdotal reports of increases in child abuse since the onset of the recession. Many in the child welfare field have continued to try and understand the federal statistics on child abuse rates (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System or NCANDS), which shows a steady decline over the same decade reviewed in the study.

The study authors propose that:

- At the local and state levels, child welfare agencies should consider additional methods of tracking child abuse data, including hospital data.



- Pediatricians and other healthcare providers should be aware about housing insecurity that may be affecting families in their care. Providers can help connect patients and families to appropriate social services, such as cash assistance, food stamps, medical assistance benefits, and foreclosure counseling.

Prevent Child Abuse America strongly endorses these proposed actions and believes that all adults, have a role in supporting families facing significant challenges such as housing insecurities, just as we all have a role in preventing the child abuse and neglect of our nation's children.

It is important to be aware of the impact the downturn of the economy has had on the overall health and stability of children in our country. This study illustrates how the stress of economic realities collides with the challenges of raising a child. Even with the best intentions, parents can be pushed to the breaking point. The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is to provide parents with the support, skills and resources they need to be effective caregivers, particularly during this difficult time.

Prevent Child Abuse America's signature program Healthy Families America, and other federally-recognized home visiting programs, recognize this and help families address basic needs to reduce stress, while focusing on building a positive parent-child relationship that is essential for child well-being.

"When we are able to support families early in children's lives, we see the results later on in a healthier future for not just children and their families, but for all of us." said James M. Hmurovich, President & CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America. "That is why this study is so important. Healthy Families America is a lifeline for parents, helping them connect to community resources and maintain a nurturing relationship with their baby. We encourage all citizens to learn more about programs like Healthy Families America. We also encourage everyone to ensure that for parents facing housing insecurity or other challenges, programs like Healthy Families America are available to the children and families who live in their communities."

To learn more about Healthy Families America please visit the website here [www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org](http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org)

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#### **ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA**

Prevent Child Abuse America, founded in 1972, works to ensure the healthy development of children nationwide while recognizing that child development is a building block for community development and economic development. We believe that communities across the country are doing innovative things with great results to prevent abuse and neglect from ever occurring, and what we need to do as a nation is commit to bringing this kind of ingenuity to communities everywhere. Based in Chicago, Prevent Child Abuse America has chapters in 49 states and over 400 Healthy Families America, home visitation sites in 38 states, the Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and Canada. For more information, please visit [preventchildabuse.org](http://preventchildabuse.org) and [healthyfamiliesamerica.org](http://healthyfamiliesamerica.org).