



Pergamon

Child Abuse & Neglect 29 (2005) 293–294

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Book Review

Childhood, Disability, & Violence. Empowering Disability Organisations to Develop Prevention Strategies.

Prepared by AIAS (Italy), Fenacerci (Portugal), DFA (Spain), and Disability Now (Greece), 2004, 26 pp.

Domestic violence is a worldwide problem that involves every section of the population. It can be found in all socio-economic, religious, cultural, and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, little is known about violence against children with disabilities. Maltreatment of children with disabilities can be considered as a taboo within a taboo, probably because the association between disability and violence is emotionally difficult to cope with. Violence in families of children with disabilities is difficult to trace and to prevent. In Europe, too little accurate epidemiological data is available to have a clear idea of the incidence of domestic maltreatment involving children with disabilities.

The issue of maltreatment of children with disabilities regards the whole of society. Public institutions have specific responsibility for the matter. The authors of this booklet emphasize that in addition to society at large and public institutions, local associations representing families or people with disabilities (e.g., social co-operatives and other NGOs in the field of disability) have an important role in defining, understanding, analysing, and preventing violence against children with disabilities. This booklet is written principally, though not exclusively, for these local associations.

The aim of the booklet is to raise awareness levels regarding the importance of the issue of violence against children with disabilities. The booklet further aims to inform readers of the complexity of the issues at stake, while avoiding branding the families as criminals. The booklet presents important concepts and knowledge about violence against children with disabilities, including definitions, explanatory models, and indicators of violence. Finally, the booklet promotes prevention by providing “cornerstones” for the development of prevention strategies and concrete examples to illustrate key concepts.

The booklet was written by organizations working in differing social and cultural contexts across Europe. The writing was preceded by a period of research during which the contributing organizations collected literature, cases of violence against children with disabilities, and good practices in prevention. Various experts, representatives of institutions, and persons representing the target audience were consulted.

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This booklet is published in five different language editions (English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish) with financial support from the Directorate-General for Justice & Home Affairs of the European Commission under the Daphne Programme. Versions of this booklet and details of the full report are available on the web site: www.aiasbo.it/daphne.

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