

Battered Women, Rape, and Abused Children

Battered women can be defined as physically abused women within the arena of the domestic household or family -- could be wife, mother-in-law, sister or any other adult female in the family.

1. How prevalent is this problem?
A nationwide survey shows that one out of every four couples in the nation resort to slapping or beating during their relationship and 16% do so each year.
2. In Washington, D. C. over 10,000 cases of woman abuse are reported each year; there is no index on the unreported numbers there or anywhere else.
3. How violent is the violence against battered women? In Michigan in a survey of 20 battered wives, 6 required hospitalization, 4 had concussions, 4 miscarriages, 1 broken set of ribs, 1 cracked set of ribs, and 1 a first degree burn. This can be multiplied by the hundreds throughout our country.
(In our smaller study group, we will discuss causes, problems related specifically to and solutions recommended for the battered woman.)

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Rape can be defined as forced sexual abuse of women outside the marriage contract. This topic includes the gamut of sexual abuse from the attacker on the street to the neighbor, friend, or acquaintance in familiar environs who may force sexual intercourse on an unwilling or unsuspecting partner.

Evie Whitsett will help in the discussion of this problem, its causes, problems that face a raped woman, and recommendations for solutions.

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Abused Children -- Those who are abused physically
Those who are abused sexually
Those who are abused emotionally -- which includes regularly demanding a child to do more than he is capable of doing and humiliating him for not living up to the demand.

1. Child Abuse is one of the leading causes of infant mortality in the USA.
2. 50% of abused children are under 6 years of age.
3. There were over 5 million children in Texas under 18 years of age in 1975; 34,384 cases of suspected child abuse and neglect were reported. Countless numbers go unreported daily because neighbors hate to report things like this for fear of "getting involved". Many don't know that it is now a law, at least in Texas, that if you suspect child abuse, you MUST report it to the Harris County Child Welfare Department.
3. Child abusers come from All strata of income and social position, All ethnic groups, and All religious persuasions. Abusers are not necessarily psychotic or mentally ill.

We will try to uncover the causes, problems, and recommended solutions of the abused child



BATTERED WOMEN

1. Definition: physically abused women within the arena of the domestic household or family -- wife (usually), but could be mother-in-law, sister or any other adult female in the family.
2. Possible causes:
 - a. An English study showed an increase in woman abuse during a period of high unemployment.
 - b. In a study in Michigan, 60% of woman abuse involved alcohol.
 - c. Sometimes a family pattern of beating is observed and passed on to the next generation.
 - d. 95% of Michigan study cases could not remember or anticipate attack causes -- sometimes it was delayed TV dinners, or misplaced cigarettes, or some other "failure" in the part of the domestic routine to be carried out by the wife.
2 cases were asleep when the beatings began.
 - e. Social acceptance that a woman is the "property" of a man and if she does not live up to his expectations, he "has a right" to bring her into line.
3. Problems relating to the plight of the battered woman.
 - a. Wives have a physical and financial dependence on their husbands -- and some have no other alternatives when faced with an emergency of beating.
Houston has no shelters for battered wives with children.
Financial aid is hard to come by -- women are often ineligible until divorce or separation proceedings are initiated.
 - b. Many wives still love their husbands when he is in "his right mind" and do not want to leave him.
 - c. The legal system is not responsive to the problem of woman abuse:
 - 1) in many states a wife is not allowed to sue her husband for assault and battery because the 2 are a single legal entity.
 - 2) domestic quarrels are dangerous for police; more police are killed in breaking up family fights than in any other area (FBI records).
 - 3) In Washington, D. C. in a study of 7500 wives who tried to bring charges against their husbands, fewer than 200 ever achieved their objective.
 - 4) Judges try for reconciliation rather than conducting hearings as a criminal procedure; often the husband is let off with a suspended sentence and a warning.
 - d. A woman's economic dependence and her responsibility to her children, her isolation, socialization, and the lack of available help keep her trapped in a violent home.
4. Some recommended solutions:
 - a. Educate the public, social service agencies and legal system to understand the problem of woman abuse.
 - b. Provide community shelters for women to occupy with their children until they can make other arrangements to solve financial dependency on their abusive husbands.



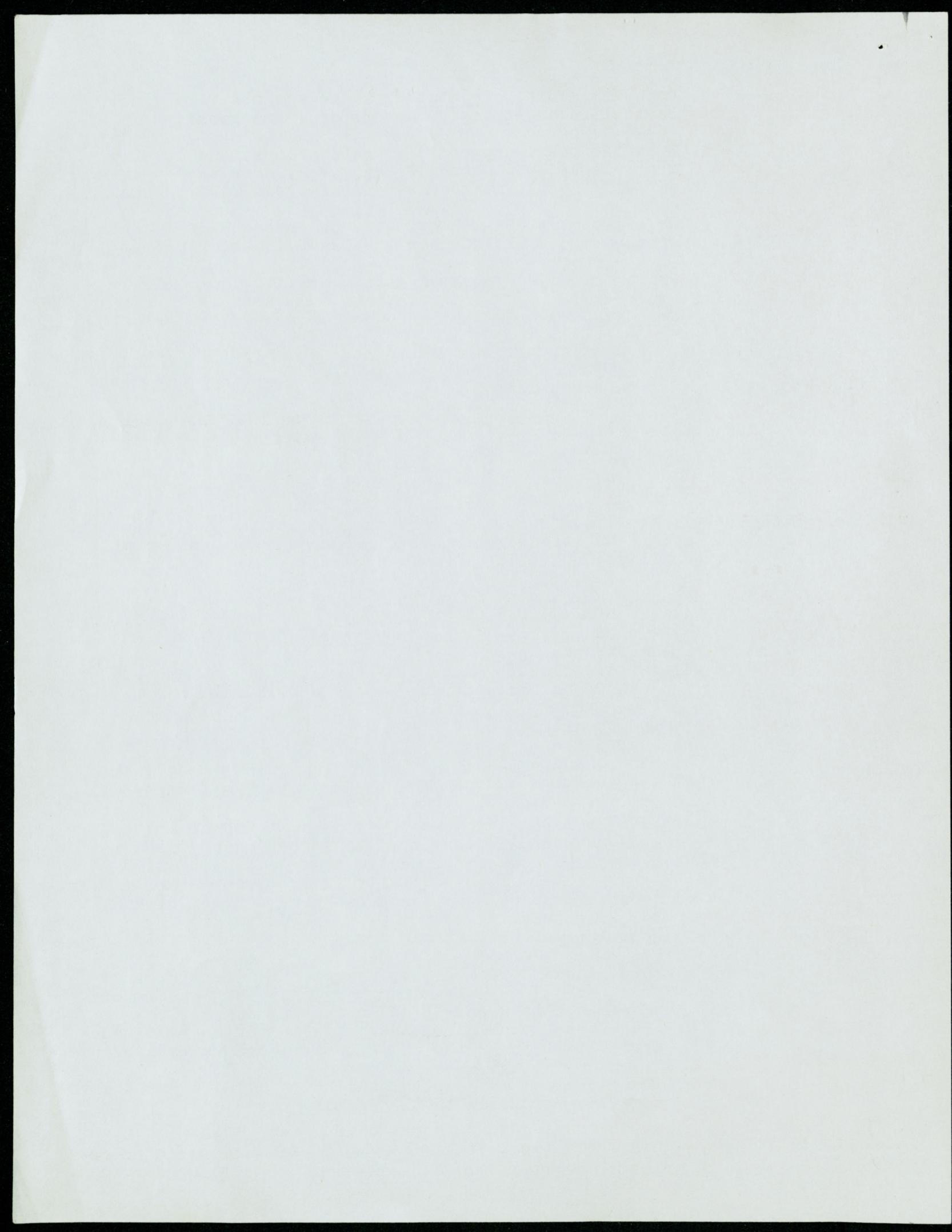
Battered Woman (cont'd)

- c. Urge all media to combat violence against women, not capitalize on it on TV, newspapers, and books.
- d. Organize peer support in women's groups, and develop programs of legal counsel, day care, emergency housing, part-time employment, and financial aid for victims.
- e. Legally treat woman beating as other cases of assault and battery are treated under the law....as a crime.
- f. Train police for more effective handling of domestic quarrels, and authorize them to make arrests in cases of evidence, even if they have not witnessed the assault.
- g. Improve handling of the offender in rehabilitation and counselling of family matters while he is removed from his battered wife.
- h. Remove legal barriers for women's financial independence.

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RAPE

- 1. Definition: --is a crime of violence more than of sexual gratification. often the attacker has a background showing male-female conflict in his life.
- 2. Three conditions under which rape most often takes place --
 - a) surprise attack
 - b) marked victim -- the attacker is one the woman knows and trusts.
 - c) initial consent on part of the woman -- but something goes wrong and a forced attack continues.
- 3. Problems of the raped woman:
 - a) Fear of being alone
 - b) Fear of being in crowds
 - c) Inability to discuss reactions -- cannot face male police, doctors, social workers, lawyers, or identify the attacker without a great deal of anguish.
 - d) Feels embarrassed, guilty, suspicious, angry, and is obsessed by details of assault awake or asleep.
 - e) Needs immediate hospital care to test for V.D. and later for pregnancy.
 - f) Poor law enforcement and arrest procedures.
- 4. Some solutions:
 - a) Encouragement of all victims to make a report and identifications. Treatment by physician immediately after an attack and later on is also imperative. Therefore education on the whole matter must be made available through the media and all community services.
 - b) Train police and hospital admission clinics for a more sensitive approach to the victim.
 - c) Attackers should be removed from the public and given rehabilitation; once returned to society frequent reports to probation officer,---or counselling services.



ABUSED CHILDREN

1. Definition: Child abuse is divided into three categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse
Child Neglect is divided into two categories: physical neglect and emotional neglect.

2. Possible causes:

Child abusers are characterized by immaturity and insecurity. They are often immature parents who look to their children for the very support and love they should be giving.

Abusing parents most often have experienced defective parental care themselves. They come from all backgrounds -- all strata of society, all ethnic groups, all religious persuasions.

3. Problems relating to abused children:

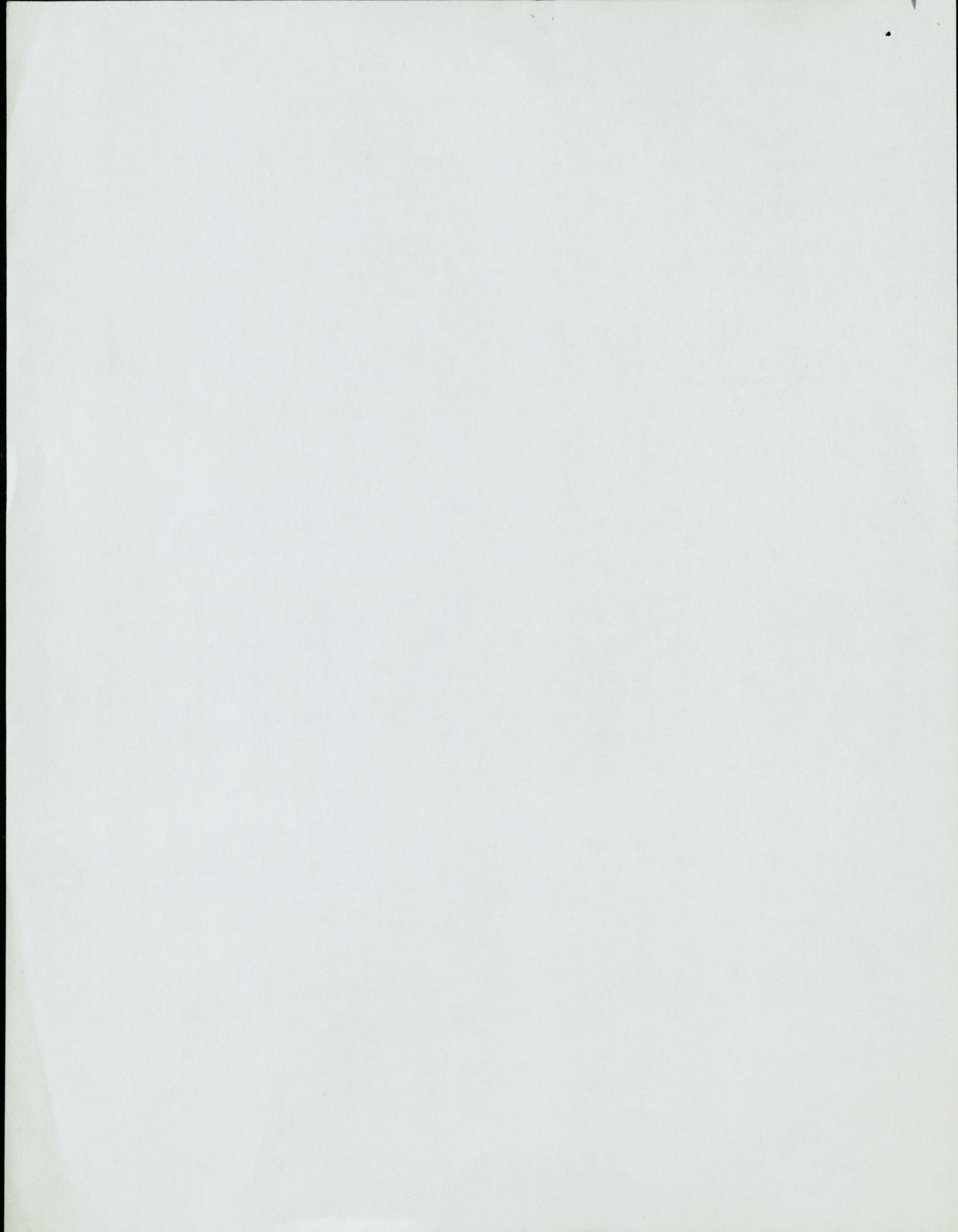
- a) Many cases go unreported; children cannot be expected to testify against their own parents; -- neighbors hate to "get involved".
- b) Almost all parents at one time or another have "abused" their children. Most are sincerely repentent. Some feel they were "justified". The fact that they are bigger than the child, or stronger -- makes the child a victim of parental judgment.
- c) Children have few alternatives -- no place to go -- shame in telling another "outsider" adult -- fear of parental retaliation -- especially when sexually abused.
- d) If child is returned to parent without any intervention, 5% are killed, 35% seriously reinjured. Untreated families tend to produce children who will grow up to be juvenile delinquents and murderers as well as child batterers.
- e) Parents feel emotional rage coming on -- need to cry out to someone for help -- instead take it out on the child.
- f) About 10% of cases of physical child abuse involve burns -- cigarette or hot water forcible immersion. Abdominal injuries are the second most common cause of death in battered children -- central nervous system damage is the worst injury in terms of death.

(Above information from "The Battered Child Syndrome" by Dr. Barton D. Schmitt and C. Henry Kempe, M.D.)

- g) In Texas: 3 out of 4 families with children under 6 years of age have moved in last 5 years -- divorces have increased to 28%; 28% are in poverty; 23% live in over-crowded housing; 40% of Texas mothers with children under 6 have not finished high school and 30% of the fathers have not. The number of babies born to Texas mothers under 19 is increasing at a rate 5 times that of other births.

4. Some Solutions:

- a) Education and training ⁱⁿ family relationships in schools



ABUSED CHILDREN (cont'd)

from early grades on up through high school. Parent-child effectiveness training given wide coverage in media as well.

- b) Widespread use of peer group telephone counselling by "Parents Anonymous" -- and group meetings of same.
- c) Information given to the public that in Texas it is against the law not to report child abuse.
- d) Family Service counselling at sliding scale fee made known to all offenders.
- e) Planned parenthood methods be made available to all; sex education be promoted in the schools along with a system of values urging self-discipline.
- f)
- g)
- h)

