

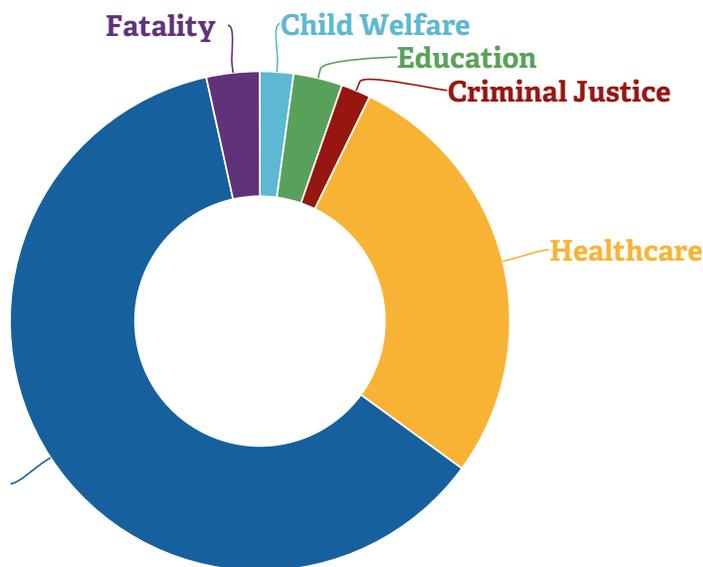
# The Economics of Abuse Report: A Study of Contra Costa County

Child abuse and neglect is a persistent problem within Contra Costa County. Although it is a hidden social ill, its impact is significant. Child abuse and neglect impacts not just the child, but the family, the community, and society at large. In California, as many as one out of every 23 children is suspected of being abused or neglected. The impact of abuse and neglect not only morally degrades our society, it significantly hurts our economy. In fact, the physical, mental, and emotional effects of abuse and neglect persist long after it occurs, and result in ongoing costs to every sector of California.

Child abuse and neglect is a core underlying factor in many of California's ongoing struggles, such as high rates of school dropout, homelessness, incarceration, and chronic health issues. This report shines a light on this largely ignored issue, with a specific focus in your county, and the negative impact it has on all of us.

## The Financial Impacts of Child Abuse

The cumulative financial impact to Contra Costa County for the **463** verified survivors of abuse and neglect and **3** abuse and neglect fatalities in 2023 is **\$229,000,000**. Though these costs are accrued over the course of the victim's life, the community will continue to occur the same cost each year until we are able to reduce and ultimately end child abuse.



### CHILD WELFARE - \$4,926,473

Victims may require intervention services, foster care, and counseling services.

### EDUCATION - \$7,251,355

Abused and neglected children are 77 percent more likely to require special education.

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE - \$4,399,260

Abused and neglected children are 59 percent more likely to be arrested as juveniles, and 28 percent more likely to have an adult criminal record.

### HEALTHCARE - \$63,595,747

Victims may require hospital care, mental health services, and other medical services during childhood, and have a higher incidence of physical and mental health issues throughout adulthood.

### LIFETIME PRODUCTIVITY - \$140,716,479

Victims are more likely to be unemployed and rely on public assistance which lead to diminished earning potential.

### FATALITY - \$7,879,002

Accounts for the victims' lost wages and healthcare costs.

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# Protective Factors in Contra Costa County

## Individual Protective Factors

Communities can support vulnerable children and families by fostering the five protective factors. By helping families to enhance their protective factors, they will be better equipped to combat risk factors (history of abuse, isolation, substance abuse, and others) and prevent incidences of child abuse. Research shows that healthy and safe families share these five commonalities:

### **SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN**

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships.

### **KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Understanding parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.

### **PARENTAL RESILIENCE**

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.

### **SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, and spiritual support.

### **CONCRETE SUPPORT**

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by life's challenges.

## Community Protective Factors

Strong families and communities help to keep children safe and thriving. Every community has Protective Factors, or characteristics that are linked to lower rates of child abuse and neglect. Ongoing research from the Center for the Study of Social Policy suggests that the following Community Conditions nurture strong families:

### **EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL NEEDS**

This includes policies and programs that support equitable access to economic opportunities, family-friendly employment, health care, housing, high-quality childcare, education, and food security. Economic support and high-quality and affordable childcare are two essential needs that have been shown through research to reduce abuse and neglect.

### **SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CONNECTION**

This means an acknowledgement across community members that parenting is hard and all caregivers can benefit from community support. Cohesive neighborhoods and community institutions like schools, churches, community centers, and family resource centers contribute to building these social connections and reducing abuse and neglect.

### **SUPPORT FOR BUILDING INDIVIDUAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

In addition to the community conditions listed above, it is important that parents and caregivers have access to resources that will help them strengthen their individual protective factors, including parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and the social and emotional competence of children.

### **SOCIAL CONTRACT**

This represents a collective understanding about what support can be provided by institutions, and what support must come from friends, family, and neighbors. Strong communities promote positive social norms about parenting and provide well-functioning response systems to prevent further harm when abuse and neglect occurs.

### **RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

This means fostering an anti-racist and equitable social structure. Institutional racism and systemic oppression over generations have prevented many families of color from accessing the other social and economic factors listed here. Initiatives that promote racial equity are critical to promoting Community Protective Factors and mitigating Community Risk Factors.