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Child Abuse and Disabled Children

Abstract

Children with disabilities are a population at a higher risk of abuse and maltreatment. Studies have shown that children with disabilities are 3.4 times more likely to be abused than non-disabled peers. These disabilities include children who are visually-impaired, hearing-impaired, chronically-ill, developmentally delayed, behaviorally or emotionally disordered. The apparent low incidence of child abuse perpetuated against disabled children in Nigeria may not be unrelated to the inability to recognize and report cases as they occur. Studies have also shown that cultural practices and traditional practices contribute to the problem of child abuse. Several elements may increase the risk of abuse for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities often place higher emotional, physical, economic and social demands on their families making it imperative for the caregivers or parents of children with disabilities to be supported. The parents should be supported by the community to prevent risk factors that may lead to child abuse. Risk factors for child abuse on children with disabilities can be increased when the parent/guardian becomes depressed with caring for the disabled child. Raising a disabled child in the family may lead to one parent abandoning the child, thereby creating an even greater burden on the parent that is left with the child. This also increases the risk of abuse on the disabled child. The support of the community is very important in managing a disabled child.

Key Words: Child Abuse, Disabilities, Nigeria