

The Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS): Identifying Prevalence Rates of Child Abuse, Neglect and Adverse Childhood Experiences in Oregon

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HOW MANY OREGON CHILDREN EXPERIENCE CHILD MALTREATMENT, INCLUDING ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

**HOW DO THESE COMPARE WITH REPORTS TO CHILD WELFARE, OR NATIONAL RATES?
HAVE WE MADE HEADWAY IN DECREASING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN THE PAST 20 YEARS?
OREGONIANS CANNOT ACCURATELY ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS.**

Oregon depends on data from reports to law enforcement and child welfare to measure and track rates of child abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, what such reports measure are simply the incidents that get reported – and which go up and down based on the number of available mandatory reporters or how visible local efforts are, rather than on the actual prevalence of child abuse in any given community. Retrospective research suggests that report rates reflect a fraction of the problem, and yet, policy makers and funders use report rates to make decisions, measure change across time, and assess the effectiveness of prevention efforts. This is because these are the best data we have – but it is not accurate. It is time for a new approach.

The Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS) is designed to create an ongoing measurement tool to much more accurately determine rates of child abuse and neglect in Oregon by directly surveying a sufficient and randomized sample of Oregon 6th and 11th/12th graders and caregivers. Although a few studies have attempted to measure the rates of child abuse and neglect with children and youth as primary informants, these studies have important limitations. For example, a frequently cited randomized survey by Finkelhor and colleagues (2013) concluded that U.S. girls 17 years old and younger have a 2.5% lifetime prevalence rate of sexual abuse by a known adult. This frequently cited study significantly under-reports actual rates for each of the following reasons:

- a. Researchers asked parents and other caregivers (of children under 10 years of age) about their child's rate of abuse, rather than asking children. The study reports what the adults disclosed
- b. For children over the age of ten, researchers first spoke with parents, and then interviewed children in the home, and, potentially, within the hearing of adults
- c. Researchers used questionnaires that do not effectively capture actual rates

Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS)

The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) at the University of Oregon developed the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study because routine efforts to measure child abuse and neglect prevalence rates in Oregon do not exist. The OCAPS has three major components, implemented in phases:

- Phase I. A pilot was completed with University of Oregon undergraduate students (2017); a pilot with Lane County high school students is currently underway (winter and spring, 2018). Statewide high school implementation is targeted for 2020.
- Phase II. We will adapt the survey for a 6th grade population, pilot it in 2020, and implement statewide in 2022.



- Phase III. Finally, we will conduct a study with a random selection of caregivers, parents and guardians to obtain data on abuse and neglect prevalence with very young children (Finkelhor, et al., 2013).

Unlike the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, where students are mostly asked about their behavior (e.g., how often do you drink), OCAPS will ask directly about abuse or neglect Oregon youth may have experienced. The OCAPS measure draws on existing abuse and neglect instruments (e.g., ICAST-C, JVQ) and includes constructs related to known child abuse and neglect protective factors. The survey includes all Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) items. This will be the first study in Oregon, and the first of its kind in the U.S., to work to measure prevalence rates with students as primary informants in a school context – and will serve as a more accurate marker of the impact of prevention and intervention efforts in our communities. The research plan includes a representative (multistage cluster sample) cross-sectional design, with new cohort samples drawn every 3 to 4 years.

Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study Design Measure and Sampling Highlights

Measure Development¹ and pre-pilot efforts were funded by The Ford Family Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust. The 167-item survey is the result of an exhaustive literature review and draws on several existing measures and several items developed by CPAN. The questionnaire is designed to measure: 1) physical abuse, 2) sexual abuse, 3) psychological and emotional abuse, 4) neglect, 5) exposure to intimate partner violence, and 6) the ACE items. The questionnaire will also measure 1) social support – home, 2) social support – neighborhood and community, and 3) overall health and well-being. The current draft of the questionnaire is in a high school format only. The measure identifies whether the youth experienced harm from peers, from older youth, from adults or some combination thereof.

Sampling Strategy

Oregon includes 197 public school districts with about 900 schools that include sixth and eleventh/twelfth graders statewide (approximately 43,000 sixth graders and 46,000 twelfth graders in Oregon’s public schools). Our multistage cluster sampling frame is designed to generalize findings to all Oregon sixth/eleventh/twelfth graders – and balanced by research ethics and feasibility considerations. We are working with consultants from the Oregon Health Authority to finalize our statewide sampling strategy.

A Sample of the Questions the Oregon Prevalence Study Will Address

1. How do child abuse and neglect prevalence rates compare to child welfare report rates statewide?
2. How many Oregon children by grade 6, and by grade 12, have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and have witnessed or heard intimate partner violence?
3. How many Oregon children by grade 6, and by grade 12, have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACE)?
4. What is the relationship between child maltreatment and adverse events (ACE items), social support, school performance, and health among Oregon children?
5. What is the relationship between intervention and prevention activities and child abuse rates in Oregon over time and across generations?

¹ ICAST-C, OHTS, Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire, OQ30-Y, ACE, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale.



SAMPLE ITEMS

If I have a serious problem, I have people in my family that I can count on for help.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

My family is a source of strength and support.

Never True Rarely True Sometimes True Often True Very Often True

Has a parent or other adult in your life ever:

Twisted your ear?

never 1-2 times 3-5 times 6-9 times 10-19 times 20 or more times

Pulled your hair

never 1-2 times 3-5 times 6-9 times 10-19 times 20 or more times

Pinched you to cause pain?

never 1-2 times 3-5 times 6-9 times 10-19 times 20 or more times

How often do your parents, or the people who are in a parenting role in your life, do the following things? Your choices are *never, almost never, sometimes* and *a lot*.

When you were young, make sure that you bathed or showered regularly?

Never Almost never Sometimes A lot

Make sure you see a doctor when you need one?

Never Almost never Sometimes A lot

Sometimes parents or other adults hurt children. So far in your life, how often did a parent, stepparent, or adult living in your home:

Actually push, grab, shove, slap or throw something at you?

Never True Rarely True Sometimes True Often True Very Often True

Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

Never True Rarely True Sometimes True Often True Very Often True

At any time in your life, did you SEE any of your parents get pushed, slapped, hit, punched, or beat up by another parent?

Yes No

Sometimes adults or other people make children do sexual things that make them feel uncomfortable. Did any of the following happen to you at any time in your life?

Made you look at their private parts or wanted to look at yours?

never 1-2 times 3-5 times 6-9 times 10-19 times 20 or more times

Touched your private parts in a sexual way, or made you touch theirs?

never 1-2 times 3-5 times 6-9 times 10-19 times 20 or more times



The Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Pilot Study

Student Reflections on their Experience – Eleven pilot classrooms

As a part of the pilot we are asking students what it is like for them to complete the survey. Overwhelmingly, students like the iPad format, find it easy to use, and are overall OK with the length of the questionnaire. To date, students are averaging 25 minutes to complete the survey (range 11 to 60 minutes).

Our impression is that students take the survey seriously, are engaged in the process, and find our approach to be sensitive.

A few highlights:

Students were asked to select from a list of emotional experiences they may have had when completing the survey. They were invited to check all that applied. The results from 11 Lane County classrooms:

- ✓ Forty-nine percent felt ‘neutral,’ which we believe means they did not have a strong emotional response to completing the survey.
- ✓ Fifteen percent felt uncomfortable, 10% felt upset or sad, and 2% felt discouraged or confused.
- ✓ Fifteen percent felt inspired, 31% felt hopeful, and 38% felt “supported or validated because people are learning about child abuse.”
- ✓ Fewer than 5% of parents opted their student out of the study.

A sample of common statements made by students when asked about the value and purpose of the survey:

“I feel like child abuse and neglect shouldn’t be taken lightly. Since we’re giving you the information I think it would be very useful if you used it to your max potential, and do as much as you can with the information as you possibly can, in every way that you can so you can reach your 90 percent goal.”

“Thank you for all the good that you’re trying to do for Oregon kids, you’re needed and once again thank you.”

“I feel like this survey is a really good place to start. First, gather everything you can and once you have some statistics on the problem then you can start on fixing certain issues. I feel like it may be challenging to take it all down at once, but if it’s an organized approach and things are taken one by one then you can for sure reduce the negative experiences they (children) have.”

“This was a good learning experience and really gets a person thinking about their life at home.”

“Have many resources for them to go to if something’s wrong and talking about it. So many people are afraid of coming forward so we need to make it more okay to talk about.”

“This survey does justice.”

“This was great and it’s a good way for students to say what they need to say when they can’t say it. I don’t have an abusive history, but I think this is a great way to connect with students and help them.”



“Provide a safe school environment for them (students) to learn and express any issues. Thank you so much! I appreciate what you’re doing.”

“This survey is very cool and I can bet it makes a lot of differences in kids’ lives so that’s pretty amazing!”

“Thank you for helping and caring for this cause, although I don’t have to face any of these problems I know many people that do and I really appreciate what you guys are doing.”

