

# Committee on the Rights of the Child

Day of General Discussion

Friday, 28 September 2001 – OHCHR (Palais Wilson, Geneva)

**Violence Against Children within the Family and in Schools**

**Submission by EPOCH-USA**

Contribution to: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Day of General Discussion on Violence Against Children  
within the Family and Schools

From: **Center for Effective Discipline**  
**Headquarters for EPOCH-USA (End Physical Punishment of Children) and**  
**NCACPS (National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools)**

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### **Introduction:**

The Center for Effective Discipline is a United States non-profit organization which operates two programs for disseminating information about the effects of corporal punishment of children and alternatives to its use. EPOCH-USA (End Physical Punishment of Children) is part of a multi-national effort of EPOCH-Worldwide and concentrates its efforts on ending corporal punishment of children in families. NCACPS (National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools) seeks bans on school corporal punishment. Information about the status of corporal punishment of children in the U.S. is posted on <http://www.stophitting.com> under "U.S. Progress" (EPOCH-USA Section).

We appreciate the efforts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to end violence against children throughout the world. We urge the committee to increase its efforts so that children everywhere can grow up in healthy and safe environments.

Children in the United States experience significant violence in homes and in other settings where they live and learn.

### **Corporal Punishment in U.S. Schools:**

According to the latest survey (1998) of the U.S. Department of Education, more than 365,000 students were administered corporal punishment in that school year in 23 states which allow its use. In some states, at least 10 percent of students are hit on the buttocks by teachers with boards 18-24 inches long, 4-6 inches wide, and 1-2 inches thick for punishments such as tardiness, talking, failure to turn in homework and fighting. These paddlings lead to injuries, psychological problems, academic problems, and social problems. Paddlings teach children that violence should be used to solve problems. The practice adds to the cycle of interpersonal violence that exists at a high level in the U.S.

The Center for Effective Discipline, through NCACPS, brings attention to this issue in the United States by:

- Collecting, analyzing and publishing state laws allowing corporal punishment in schools.
- Conducting, analyzing and publishing surveys on the use of school corporal punishment.

- Providing technical support to state organizations seeking bans. Twenty-three states have banned school corporal punishment since 1984. A total of twenty-seven states now ban its use.
- Providing support and information to parents whose children have been injured in school paddlings.
- Highlighting best discipline practices in schools through awards programs, publications, and news stories.

## **Corporal Punishment in U.S. Families and Child Care:**

The latest national survey by Prevent Child Abuse America (2000) found that 41% of U.S. parents had spanked or hit their children in the previous year.

The majority of institutions, regulated day care facilities, and foster care programs do not allow corporal punishment of children in the United States. However, in some states it is allowed in almost all of the settings where children live and learn. Except for one state, all states allow parents the defense of “reasonable punishment” in courts. Children fall through the cracks of the legal system and institutions designed to protect them. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there were 826,000 victims of child abuse and neglect in 1999, a decline of 19 percent since 1993 when the number of victims was over one million. The government said 1,100 children died as the result of maltreatment, and children younger than a year accounted for 43 percent of deaths.

EPOCH-USA seeks an end to corporal punishment of children through education and legal reform including,

- Collecting, analyzing and posting information about the status of corporal punishment laws and regulations throughout the states.
- Developing, publishing and distributing guidance booklets and handouts for parents on positive, non-violent discipline. The publications are copyright free and provided at cost of production.
- Sponsoring “SpankOut Day USA – Raising Good Kids Without Hitting” on April 30<sup>th</sup> (since 1998) and providing mini-grants and technical support for informational programs on non-violent discipline to non-profit organizations.
- Publishing a newsletter about corporal punishment of children in the United States.
- Maintaining an informational website for researchers, students, the media, policy makers and the general public.

## **Recommendations for Reducing Corporal Punishment of Children in the United States:**

Federal Actions:

- The U.S. Senate should ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Surgeon General/ Secretary of Health and Human Services should establish a national task force and campaign to end the use of corporal punishment of children in all places where children live and learn including

- homes.
- All laws regarding schools, foster care, institutional/residential care and child care should condition federal funding to the prohibition of corporal punishment of children.
  - All federally funded parenting education programs should provide training on ill effects of corporal punishment and alternatives to its use.
  - Child abuse prevention grants should require state programs to focus activities on eliminating the use of parental corporal punishment.

**State Actions:**

- Parenting education, child development education and conflict resolution should be required training for students in all public schools.
- Parenting education should be available and accessible to all parents.
- All professionals with mandated reporting responsibility for child abuse should have appropriate training.
- Model laws should be developed for (1) removing the defense of “reasonable punishment” of children and (2) making it a misdemeanor to strike a child.

**Conclusion:**

The Center for Effective Discipline thanks the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child for being able to participate in the discussion of the subject “Violence Against Children in Schools and Within the Family”. We urge the Committee to maintain its strong efforts to end corporal punishment of children all over the world. We would be pleased to share additional information and materials about our educational efforts including “SpankOut Day USA”.

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