

# EPOCH • USA

END PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN • Vol.1 • Issue 9 • Fall 2005

## School Corporal Punishment News

### *National Survey says paddles should be expelled!*

According to the results of 50 separate statewide public opinion polls released by SurveyUSA for its media clients across the country in August 2005, an average of 77 percent of respondents did not approve of school corporal punishment. Advocacy groups in states like Indiana, Missouri, Texas, North Carolina, Florida and Colorado can take heart in these results! This may be the year to work for a corporal punishment ban in your state.

Question: "Do you think it is OK for a school teacher to spank a student?"

Highest support in the nation:  
Arkansas and Mississippi – 53% said "Yes".

Lowest support in the nation:  
New Hampshire – 8% said "Yes".

**Average "Yes" for entire USA: only 23%.**

Answers:

<http://www.surveyusa.com/50StateDisciplineChild0805SortedbyTeacher>

## African American leaders call for an end to school paddling

Dr. Alvin Poussaint, EPOCH-USA Advisory Board member and a Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, was instrumental this year in getting African American leaders to sign a proclamation calling on local boards of education and state legislatures to end school corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is disproportionately used on African American children in U.S. schools. The proclamation can be found on [www.stophitting.org](http://www.stophitting.org) (school discipline). It can be used effectively in convincing African American school board members and state legislators to support corporal punishment bans.

**Within the largest 100 U.S. school districts 486,872 students in the following districts are NOT protected from paddling:**

Hillsborough County, FL  
Polk County, FL • Garland, TX  
Plano, TX • Caddo Parish, LA  
Aldine, TX • Shelby County, TN

**Over 400,000 more children are protected from school corporal punishment:**

Memphis City Schools (TN), Duval County (Jacksonville) (FL) Schools and Dallas Independent School District (TX), all school districts among the largest 100 districts in the U.S, banned corporal punishment in schools this year. Many small districts did too!

Congratulations to all school board members who did the "right" thing by voting for the bans!

**PA ban on school corporal punishment**

On October 6, the PA Independent Regulatory Review Commission approved a State Board of Education regulation banning corporal punishment in public schools. The regulations go into effect immediately after publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. Congratulations to PA State Board of Education member Edith Isacke who led the fight and hundreds of advocates who put more than two years of work into getting the regulation approved.



**Discipline improves after paddling is banned in Memphis City Schools**

**Memphis Flyer Newspaper (9/23/05)**

"Figures comparing the first 20 days of the new school year to last school year were encouraging. Fights decreased 40 percent; officer referrals dropped 34 percent; and district suspensions decreased 57 percent."

Says Superintendent Johnson in the article: "What we're trying to do is get people to think differently about dealing with children. In the past, our way of trying to do that was to put out the bad kids, just put out those kids who won't do what you want them to do, but we can't afford to do that. They're part of our citizenry and our community."

# SPANKOUT DAY USA

## April 30th

Hundreds of informational events on effective, non-violent discipline for children have taken place since 1998 when EPOCH-USA initiated SpankOut Day USA.

Check our website for information about SpankOut Day USA 2006 mini-grants.

### SpankOut Day 2005 Events

#### Austin, Texas

People Opposed to Paddling Students and other opponents of school corporal punishment held "SpankOut Day Texas" on the steps of the state capitol to support HB 2413, a school paddling ban bill sponsored by Representative Alma Allen. The bill was heard in the House Education Committee but died when the brief legislature session ended. A recent national survey shows Texans are "getting it!" Sixty-eight percent said "NO" to "Do you think it is OK for a school teacher to spank a student?"

#### Lima, Ohio

The partnership for Violence-Free Families sponsored a free family event with a circus theme. It included three one-half hour parenting sessions on effective discipline.

Ohio had twenty informational programs on discipline sponsored by non-profit organizations and supported by \$250 mini-grants from the Center for Effective Discipline. The programs served almost 500 adults and teens. Mini-grants supported educational programs on effects of corporal punishment and alternatives using lecture, discussion, displays, panel discussions and interactive materials. Evaluations showed a high degree of consumer satisfaction with programs and information provided.

See summaries of some of the 2005 SpankOut Day events on [www.stophitting.org](http://www.stophitting.org)

**Please contribute to the 2006 SpankOut Day USA mini-grants program. A contribution of \$250 will support an event, perhaps in your state. Smaller contributions are welcome!**

*Small guest enjoys Partnership for Violence-Free Families SpankOut Day Event.*



## Bill introduced in Massachusetts would end all corporal punishment of children

It would be unlawful for an adult to use corporal punishment on a child in Massachusetts if HB 1787 passes. The Judiciary Committee of the MA House of Representatives held a hearing on the bill in June, 2005. Sue Lawrence of Arlington, MA was successful in getting the bill introduced. She helped organize testimony in support of the bill. Seventeen countries now prohibit all corporal punishment of children. The text of HB 1787 can be found on the website:

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/ht01/ht01787.htm>

## Become A Member of the Center for Effective Discipline

**YES**, I want to become a member of the Center for Effective Discipline to help stop corporal punishment of children. EPOCH-USA and the National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools are programs of the Center, a **non-profit organization** which provides information about the effects of corporal punishment of children and alternatives to its use.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBER \$35**

**SPONSOR \$100**

Please make checks payable to:

Center for Effective Discipline  
155 W. Main Street, Suite 1603,  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

# How To Talk About Spanking... and What To Say

## How to talk about spanking

### - *Be a good listener*

Listen to what parents say. Avoid preaching. Try to find a point of agreement: "I agree that children need discipline." "Yes, many kids need more discipline; they need rules, firmness, a good model for reasonable and calm behavior, and being given time and loving attention."

### - *Ask questions*

"How do you feel when you spank your child?" "Did spanking work?" "Are there other things you can do instead of spanking?" "How do you like to be corrected when you make a mistake?"

### - *Use analogies*

(1) Not all smoking results in death just as not all spanking results in irreparable harm but both a health risks. (2) We don't allow hitting of adults in society and corporal punishment is specifically outlawed for people in prisons, in mental institutions, and in the military. You cannot hit your spouse, your neighbor or your neighbor's dog. Children should not be hit either.

### - *Provide information about spanking and alternatives and time to digest it*

Give parents brochures or fact sheets and give them time to digest the information. Ask if you can talk again after they've had a chance to look at them. Materials are available from [stophitting.org](http://stophitting.org).

### - *Affirm that spanking is a bad habit and we can change bad habits*

We often develop bad habits to

help us deal with frustration... yelling, smoking, drinking, over-eating and hitting children. Bad habits can be broken. Instead of spanking, stop, think about what you can do to help the child to develop better behavior, and act accordingly.

## What to say about these spanking defenses:

### - *"I got hit when I was a kid and I turned out alright"*

We don't know how we would have turned out if we had NOT been spanked. Studies show that even a few instances of being hit as children are associated with more depressive symptoms as adults (Strauss, 1994, Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994). A landmark analysis of 88 corporal punishment studies over six decades by Dr. Elizabeth Gershoff (2002) showed that spanking was associated with 10 negative behaviors. The argument "I got hit when I was a child and I turned out OK" often masks the need to hide pain associated with corporal punishment in our childhood. It is hard for us to believe that people who loved us would intentionally hurt us. While most of us who were spanked "turned out OK", it is likely that not being spanked would have helped us turn out to be healthier.

### - *"Spanking works"*

Hitting a small child will usually stop misbehavior. However, there are other ways to stop such behavior that work as well or better. Verbal correction, reasoning, and time-out work as well and do not have the potential for harm that hitting does. Hitting children has actually been shown to increase misbehavior. One large study showed that

the more parents spanked children for antisocial behavior, the more the antisocial behavior increased (Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997). The more children are hit, the more likely they are to hit others including peers and siblings and, as adults, they are more likely to hit their spouses (Straus and Gelles, 1990; Wolfe, 1987). Hitting children teaches them that it is acceptable to hit others who are smaller and weaker. "I'm going to hit you because you hit your sister" is a hypocrisy not lost on children. Better alternatives exist.

### - *"The bible says, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' and I follow the bible"*

Spanking is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the United States. The bible is often used to support parental use of corporal punishment. Many clergy today are speaking out against that interpretation of scripture. The Reverend Dr. Thomas E. Sagendorf, a retired Methodist Minister says the following "I can find no sanction in the teaching of Jesus or the witness of the New Testament to encourage the practice of corporal punishment at home, school or anywhere else. A number of popular voices take a different view, often quoting Old Testament scriptures to prove their point. Those who subscribe to this argument misunderstand and misuse scripture. A similar method of selective reading could just as well be used to justify slavery, suppression of women, polygamy, incest and infanticide".

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# Child Abuse in Sweden

**This article provides a summary of research by Joan E. Durrant, Ph.D. Dr. Durrant is a Child-Clinical Psychologist and Associate Professor of Family Social Sciences at the University of Manitoba, Canada. She is an internationally recognized expert on the Swedish law banning all corporal punishment of children, even in homes. Over the past decade, she has conducted extensive research on this law and has lived in Sweden for extended periods to gain a full understanding of its history, implementation and effects.**

For a number of years, various media have carried reports stating that child abuse has increased in Sweden since the passage of the 1979 corporal punishment ban. This statement, which was recently given new life in the Canadian Charter Challenge to Section 43 of the Criminal Code, is completely erroneous. All available evidence indicates that Sweden has been extremely successful in reducing rates of child physical abuse over the past few decades and that reduction has been maintained since the passage of the corporal punishment ban. The purpose of this brief report is to disseminate accurate information on this issue.

## 1. Reporting Rates vs. Rates of Actual Abuse

The claim that child abuse has increased in Sweden is primarily based on misinterpretation of assault report statistics. It is the case that reporting of child physical assault has increased in Sweden since the 1970s - as it has in every nation that has raised awareness of the issue of child abuse. Reporting rates are by no means equivalent to rates of actual abuse. They are sharp reflections of/strongly tied to shifts in public awareness.

For example, in the early

1960s, it was estimated that about 300 children were being maltreated in the U.S. By 1990, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect had officially recorded 2.4 million reported cases. By 1993, they had recorded almost 3 million cases. It is highly unlikely that actual child maltreatment increased by a factor of 10,000 in that period. It is also highly unlikely that only 300 children were maltreated in the U.S. in the early 1960s.

It is a well-known fact that when mandatory reporting laws, public education campaigns, and other measures are implemented to increase awareness, reporting will increase. This is the goal of such measures. The Swedish reporting figures have been cited as if they are actual rates of abuse, which they are not.

Recently the Swedish National Crime Prevention Council examined 434 cases of assaults on young children within the family that were reported to the police in 1990 (all cases) and 1997 (every other case). It was found that the proportion of cases involving serious injuries sustained by children in this age range had decreased substantially. The majority of reported assaults result in minor injuries or no injuries at all. On the basis of an extensive analysis of the data, the National Crime Prevention Council concluded that There has been an increase in the propensity to report cases of assault on young children, and that it is this increase that is responsible for most, if not all, of the rise in the number of such offenses reported to the police@ (Nilsson, 2000, p. 68).

## 2. Prevalence of Child Physical Assault Across Time

Studies conducted at various points in time demonstrate that the prevalence, frequency and harshness of assaults against children have declined dramatically in Sweden over the last two generations.

*...continued on next page*

# Child Abuse in Sweden (continued from page 4)

Substantial proportions of women who became mothers in the 1950s struck their children at least weekly (e.g., 55% of mothers of 4-year-old daughters; 20% of mothers of 8-year-old sons) (Stattin et al., 1995). Among 3- to 5-year-old children of that generation, implements were used by 13% of mothers (Stattin et al., 1995).

In contrast, 86% of youth who were born in the 1980s report never having been physically punished (Janson, 2001). Of those who were, the vast majority experienced it no more than once or twice in their childhoods (SCB, 1996). Virtually no children are hit with implements in Sweden today.

It is important to note that legislative reform began many decades ago in Sweden. The corporal punishment ban was the end, not the beginning, of legal changes in that country. Most notably, the provision excusing parents who caused minor injuries to their children through physical punishment was repealed from the Swedish Penal Code in 1957. The explicit ban on physical punishment was implemented 22 years later.

### 3. Child Abuse Fatalities

The incidence of homicides of children under the age of 5 can provide an estimate of child abuse mortality, as it is these children who are most vulnerable to fatal injury and the contribution of other forms of external violence is minimized among this age group. Between 1975 and 2000, the average annual number of homicides of children aged 0 to 4 in Sweden was 4. The average incidence between 1995 and 2000 (2.8) was lower than that between 1975 and 1980 (4.0) - despite population growth.

The World Health Organization (2002) provides homicide incidence figures for children aged 0 to 4 in Sweden (1996), Canada (1997) and the United States (1998)<sup>1</sup>. These figures are:

- Sweden: 3
- Canada: 24
- United States: 723

(Canada's population is approximately 3 times larger than Sweden's. The U.S. population is approximately 30 times larger than Sweden's.)

Child homicides attributable specifically to physical abuse (excluding homicide-suicides, neonaticide and postnatal depression) are virtually non-existent in Sweden. Between 1976 and 2000 (the most recent year for which statistics are currently available), a total of 4 children died in Sweden as a result of physical abuse.

### Summary

There is no evidence to support the claim that child abuse has increased in Sweden since corporal punishment was banned there in 1979. In fact, Sweden has maintained a very low rate of child abuse internationally for more than 25 years.

"Sixty-six percent of adults believe that the percentage of teens who commit violent crimes has increased over the past ten years and another 25 percent believe that it has remained the same, while only five percent believe that it has decreased."

"In fact, government statistics show that the violence crime rate among teens has reached its lowest recorded level in more than 25 years; between 1990 and 2000, the juvenile crime declined by 56 percent." (Child Trends Research Brief, July 2003)

### References

**Janson, S. (2001).** Barn och Misshandel. A Report to the Swedish Governmental Committee on Child Abuse and Related Issues. Statens Offentliga Utredningar; Stockholm.

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**SCB (1996).** Spanking and Other Forms of Physical Punishment: A Study of Adults = and Middle School Students = Opinions, Experience, and Knowledge. @ Demografiska Rapporter, 1.2. Author; Stockholm.

**Stattin, H., Janson, H., Klackenberg-Larsson, I., & Magnusson, D. (1995).** Corporal punishment in everyday life: An intergenerational perspective@. (J. McCord, ed.) Pp 315-347. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge.

See Dr. Durrant's webpage for her full response to critics of the Swedish Ban: *Durrant, J.E. (2005). Law Reform and Corporal Punishment in Sweden: Response to Robert Larzelere, the Christian Institute and Families First. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Department of Family Social Sciences. www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/human\_ecology/family/Staff/joan\_durrant.shtml*

<sup>1</sup> Rates per population are not available for Sweden and Canada due to their low incidence. Incidence rates are presented here for the most recent years for which data were available in the WHO World Report on Violence and Health (2002).

*"When a child hits a child,  
we call it aggression.  
When a child hits an adult,  
we call it hostility.  
When an adult hits an adult,  
we call it assault.  
When an adult hits a child,  
we call it discipline."  
Haim Ginott*

# Voices of Children Contest

\$100 each to 10 teachers  
or schools  
for student art:

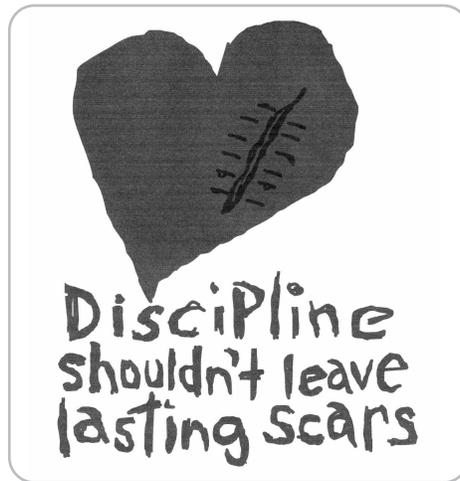
“How corporal punishment makes kids feel”  
painting or drawings.

Prizes will be donated by  
PsychHealth, LTD. of Chicago.  
Ask for details at [info@stophitting.org](mailto:info@stophitting.org)



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For Spouses,  
Employees, Animals,  
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and for Children**

[www.stophitting.org](http://www.stophitting.org)  
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SpankOut Day USA April 30



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