



Protection from Maltreatment Among Children and Youth with Disabilities Participating in 360° – The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk

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The study was commissioned by 360° – The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, and funded with their assistance.

Suggested citation:

Nagar Edelman, R., & Barlev, L. (2026). *Protection from maltreatment among children and youth with disabilities participating in 360° – The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk*. RR-26-085. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

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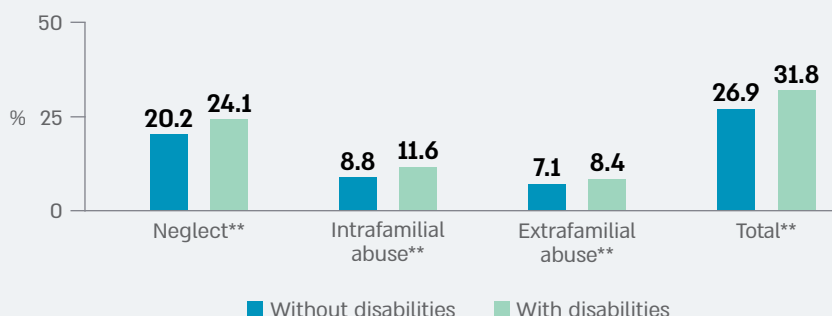
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Abstract

Children with disabilities are at increased risk of maltreatment. However, in Israel, there is a lack of up-to-date information regarding the scope of this phenomenon and its underlying factors. This study examined the risk of maltreatment among children with disabilities and the characteristics associated with this risk, with the aim of providing an evidence base for improving policy and services.

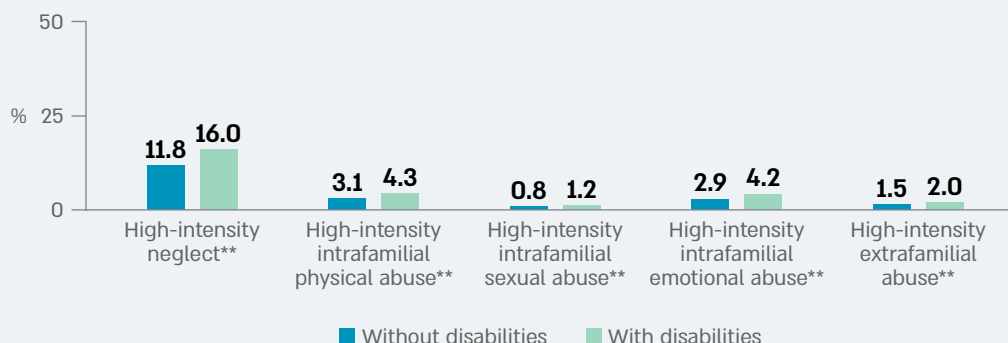
The study was informed by data from the 360° National Program for Children and Youth at Risk in Israel. It included 111,216 children and adolescents who participated in the program between September 2022 and December 2023, including 16,802 children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities experienced more maltreatment than did children without disabilities



** $p < .01$

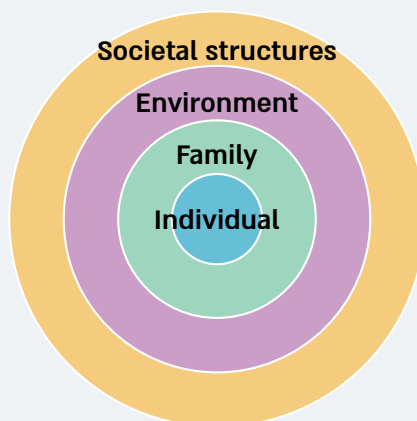
Children with disabilities experienced more high-intensity maltreatment than did children without disabilities



** $p < .01$

Disability is not a central explanatory factor for the differences in the risk of maltreatment between children with and without disabilities. Rather, it amplifies the effects of other risk factors. In other words, children with disabilities are more exposed to maltreatment not due to their disability per se, but due to the background characteristics of these children, their families, and their environments.

Characteristics Contributing to the Risk of High-Intensity Maltreatment



- ● **Individual and family characteristics**
Higher child's age; unmarried parents, parents with disabilities; economic hardship
- ● **Personal skills shaped by family and environment**
Difficulty identifying risky situations – among all children;
difficulty coping with complex situations – among all children;
difficulty seeking help – among children with disabilities
- ● **Environmental and community characteristics**
Local authority characteristics; peripherality and socioeconomic status – associated with risk of harm; particularly among children with disabilities
- All of these characteristics are shaped by **broader societal structures**. For example, skill acquisition depends on cultural attitudes, norms, and expectations, as well as on access to services and support networks.

Recommendations

- 1** Develop and implement screening, assessment, and intervention mechanisms based on a multidimensional approach that addresses the full range of risk and protective factors.
- 2** Integrate knowledge on patterns of maltreatment among children with disabilities into screening and intervention processes, and equip professionals with practical tools for assessment, reporting, and intervention.
- 3** Adapt existing services and develop new ones tailored to the unique needs of children with disabilities, including both physical accessibility and service delivery accommodations.
- 4** Expand support for families, particularly those experiencing economic hardship, single parenting, or parental disability.
- 5** Develop and expand community-based services and programs that strengthen family support and promote protective environments for children with disabilities.
- 6** Keep collecting data on children with disabilities to improve the identification of risk trends and to develop data-informed responses.
- 7** Continue strengthening interministerial collaboration to develop integrated responses that bring together education, health, and social welfare services.