Since South Korea ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, Korean government has enacted laws to protect children from all kinds of abuse. However, recently child abuse has been becoming an important social issue nation-wide after a series of physical and sexual abuse incidents became known. Still, there is controversy over the definition of child abuse, given the differences between eastern and western culture.

The current statistics in 2012 showed that a total of 8,979 cases of child abuse were reported last year. Eighty-seven percent of child abuse occurred in the home, 84% of abusers were the child’s parents, and 41% happened every day. Multiple abuses accounted for 47%, followed by negligence (27%), emotional abuse (15%), physical abuse (7%) and sexual abuse (4%).

The reports of child abuse have been increasing every year. Some causes are thought to be a rise in weak family structures resulting from divorce, remarriage, and poverty-stricken households. Because there are still a lot of cases that are hidden, there should be more effort put forth in getting better results regarding prevention, early detection, and in setting up well-managed reporting systems of child abuse. First, citizens and the community should all pay attention to neglected children and report abuse in their neighborhoods. This can be done through an educational campaign. Second, inadequate reporting systems should be revised by setting up a mandatory section on EMR so that all doctors can record suspicious cases which will then be reported to the child protective center automatically. Third, the legal limits in restricting parental rights and the monitoring system of high-risk families should be strengthened. Lastly, there must be more facilities to provide care and shelter for the victims. With the enactment of these initiatives society overall can be made better. This will result in the protection of children, and their rights as human beings, against all forms of violence. It is the most important investment we can make for the upcoming generations, and the future of all throughout the world.

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Case Reports

Case 1: Physical Abuse to Death
- In 2011, a father beat his three-year-old son to death and dumped the body in a garbage site.
- The neighbors said they heard the boy crying almost every day because of the father’s violence.
- If they had reported it to the police, the boy may not have died.

Case 2: Sexual Violence
- In 2005 an 11-year-old girl was murdered.
- The man murdered the girl after he attempted to rape her but failed.
- The man had previously served time in prison for sexual molestation.

Case 3: Sexual Violence
- In 2008 a man choked and raped an 8-year-old girl.
- The rape was so severe that the victim’s internal organs were exposed externally.

Case 4: Child Abuse on Disabled Children
- In 2005 a large scale system of sexual, physical and mental abuse was discovered at a school for students with hearing impairment.
- Based on a true story, the movie “Silenced” shed new light on the case.

Why is child abuse prevention important?
- Human Beings
- Violence Cycle
- Huge Economical Impacts
**History**

- 1981 Korean Child Welfare Act
- 1989 Korea Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- 1998 Child Abuse Neglect Prevention Act
- 2000 The first Revision of Korean Child Welfare Act
- 2011 The second Revision of Korean Child Welfare Act
- 2013 Expansion of Child protection centers in Korea: 17 centers in 2000 → 47 centers in 2013
Organizations

Public
- Ministry of Health and Welfare
- National Child Protection Agency (NCPA)
- Local Child Protection Agency
- Ministry of Gender equality and Family
- Sunflower child protection center for sexual abuse

Private
- One-step supporting center
- Korea Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- Good neighbors (research center of child abuse)
- ChildFund Korea (Group Homes)

Efforts and Activities

KMA’s efforts
- Cooperation with child protection agency since 2003
- Hospital-based child protection team
- Guidelines and Manuals

KMA’s efforts
- 24 hour hotline call center
- Training for the experts
- Collaboration with Korean Bar Association for amendment of law

Call Center: 1577-1391, 129, 112, 119

Emergency case
Suspected case
Normal

Potential
Child Abuse
Normal

Education and Monitoring
Isolation (within 3 days)
Family Protection

Appropriate action

Counseling
Medical Treatment
Prosecution

Final Assessment

Closing
Follow-up

Prevention Day of Child Abuse

Korea Children Assembly
The Changes

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  - In 2011, a father beat his three-year-old son to death and dumped the body in a garbage site.
  - The neighbors said they heard the boy crying almost every day because of the father’s violence.
  - If they had reported it to the police, the boy may not have died.

Case 2 & 3: Sexual Violence of Students
- In 2005 an 11-year-old girl was murdered.
- The man murdered the girl after he attempted to rape her but failed.
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- In 2008 a man choked and raped an 8-year-old girl
- The rape was so severe that the victim’s internal organs were exposed externally

Prevention

“Dogani Law”
- Called “The Crucible” in English

- The National Assembly passed “Dogani Law”
- Prison terms for those raping the disabled or young children will increase, up to life imprisonment
- All teachers and doctors with a history of sexual assault are restricted from working in their profession for 10 years

- Currently the law requires brutal sex offenders to wear a GPS enabled electronic ankle and the disclosing of personal criminal information.

Electronic ankle with GPS http://www.sosexoffender.go.kr/
But still...

Summary

- The number of child abuse reports has been increasing.
- Most abuse cases are committed by parents at home.
- The rate of isolation and prosecution is too low and most victims are sent back to their own family.
- The current law, public awareness, and the independent legislation should be promoted more vigorously.

Social-Cultural barriers

- Traditional thoughts
  - Confucianism
  - Familism and Paternalism
  - *Sarangcheol* (whip of love)

Child Protection Law

- Expansion of family court intervention
- Clear guidelines and criteria of child abuse
- Independent legislation of child abuse and juvenile justice systems