



Parent Abuse

THE BEST HIDDEN FAMILY SECRET

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Education:

- 2025: Doctor of Behavioral Health (DBH), Cummings Graduate Institute for Behavioral Health Studies
- 2019: Master of Arts in Counseling, Northwestern University
- 1998: Master of Human Relations, University of Oklahoma
- 1995: Bachelor of Arts, Journalism, Central Michigan University

NBCC Certifications:

- 2022: National Board for Certified Counselors, Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC)
- 2019: National Board for Certified Counselors, National Certified Counselor (NCC)



Learning Objectives

WOULD YOU RECOGNIZE ABUSE IF THE VICTIM WAS A PARENT?

- **Identify key signs and characteristics of parent abuse**
- **Explain the impacts on mental and physical health**
- **Apply strategies to recognize and respond to parent abuse in practice**

Trigger Warning

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO CARE FOR YOURSELF DURING THIS PRESENTATION

This presentation includes discussion of family violence, including abuse directed at parents by children or dependents. Some descriptions or data may be distressing or activating.

You are welcome to step out, take a break, or seek support at any time. This space is grounded in compassion, respect, and trauma-informed care.

Domestic Abuse

UMBRELLA TERM FOR ABUSE IN THE CONTEXT OF
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



Unified Framework to Standardize Descriptions

ABUSE CENTERS ON UNWANTED, UNINVITED EXERTION OF POWER AND CONTROL

Physical

hitting, scratching, pushing, pinching, burning, kicking, pulling, poisoning, forced ingestion, biting, choking, weapon use, throwing items

Emotional

name-calling, fault-finding, insults, belittling, emotional withholding, humiliation, yelling, blaming, gaslighting, vilification

Psychological

intimidation, threats targeted at family or friends or self, harming pets, unwarranted accusations, pressure to isolate from friends and family members, or withdrawal from work, stalking

Sexual

coercion, rape, unwanted kissing or touching, or aggression, ignoring feelings about sexual interaction, shaming, forcing reproductive health choices

Financial

overspending and savings, withholding access to money or credit or financial information, identity theft or fraud, creating financial dependency, stealing

Technical

online emotional abuse, harassment or bullying, mobile tracking or stalking, profile impersonation or deception, exploitation or extortion, monitoring the use of the Internet, social media, email, text, and mobile devices

Abuse in the Context of Family Relationships

RELATIONAL SPECIFIERS

Sibling	Harm by or between siblings during childhood and into adulthood
Spouse/ Partner	Harm by or between current or previous romantic partners
Child	Harm to a minor child by a parent or custodial caregiver
Elder	Harm to an adult who is 60 years or older by a caregiver or trusted person

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Elder	Harm to an adult who is 60 years or older by a caregiver or trusted person
Parent	Harm to parent(s) or custodial caregivers by a minor child

Abusive Family Relationships are Complex

ABUSE DIRECTION AND FAMILY HIERARCHY PROVIDE INSIGHT



Literature is Rapidly Expanding

UNDERSTANDING PARENT ABUSE IS CHALLENGING

Nomenclature

135

unique terms

39

unique definitions

Behavioral Indicators

**POWER &
CONTROL**

Prevalence

1.43%-95%
prevalence

Perpetrator and Victim Profiles are Emerging

OFTEN EMERGES IN ADOLESCENCE, HIGH STRESS FAMILIES

Child Perpetrator

Mostly Teens

Family Violence

Males & Females

**Mental & Behavioral
Health Issues**



Parent Victim

Parental Stress

Strict Parenting Style

Mothers & Fathers

**Historical Trauma &
Stigma**

Abuse is Implicated in Health Concerns

WHOLE-PERSON HEALTHCARE IS NECESSARY



Mental Health

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Physical Health

**Inflammation
Obesity
Chronic Illness**

Providers &
Systems

**Trauma-Informed Care
Provider Awareness &
Attitudes**

The Study

Mixed Methods Research

SURVEY

PARENT ABUSE RESEARCH

Take the 7 min. Survey Today!

2/21 THRU 3/13

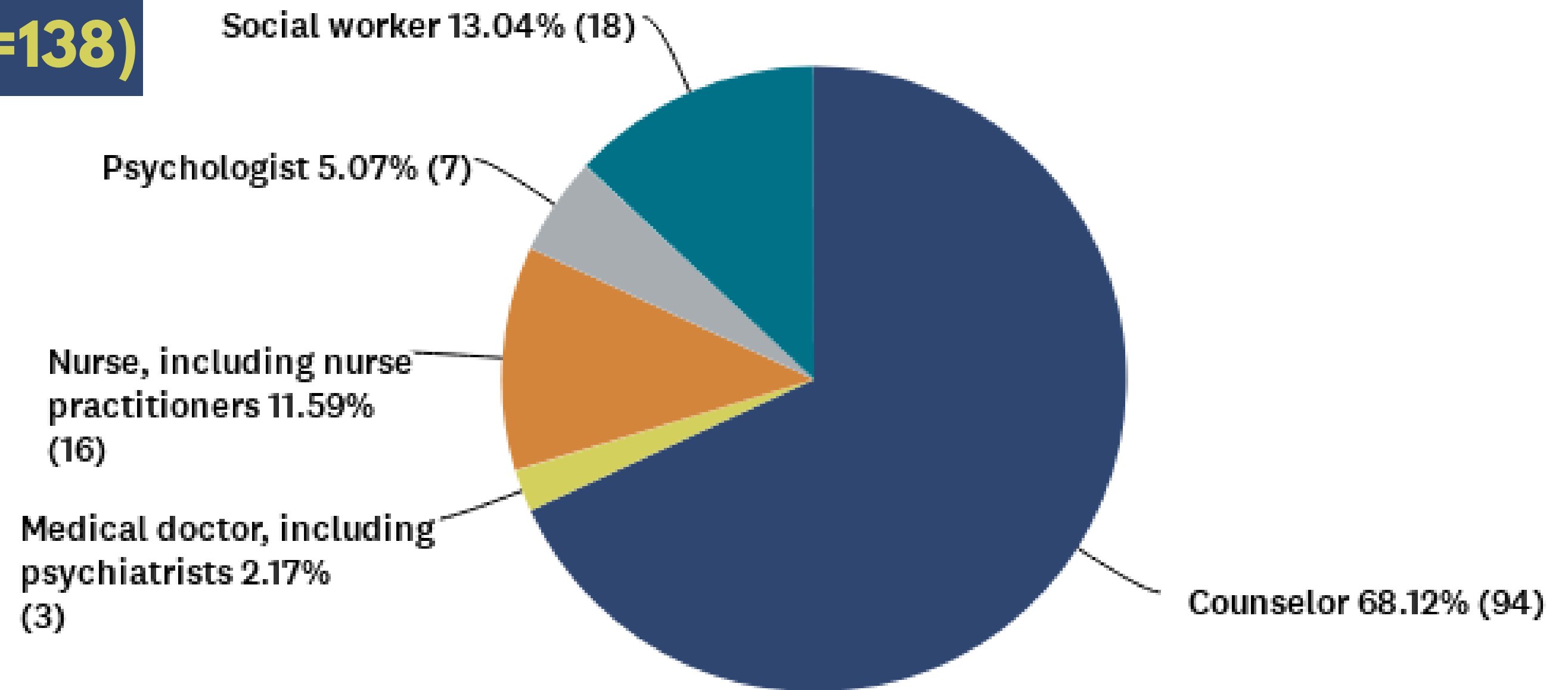
doctors
psychiatrists
nurses

nurse practitioners
psychologists
counselors
social workers

Results

PARTICIPATION

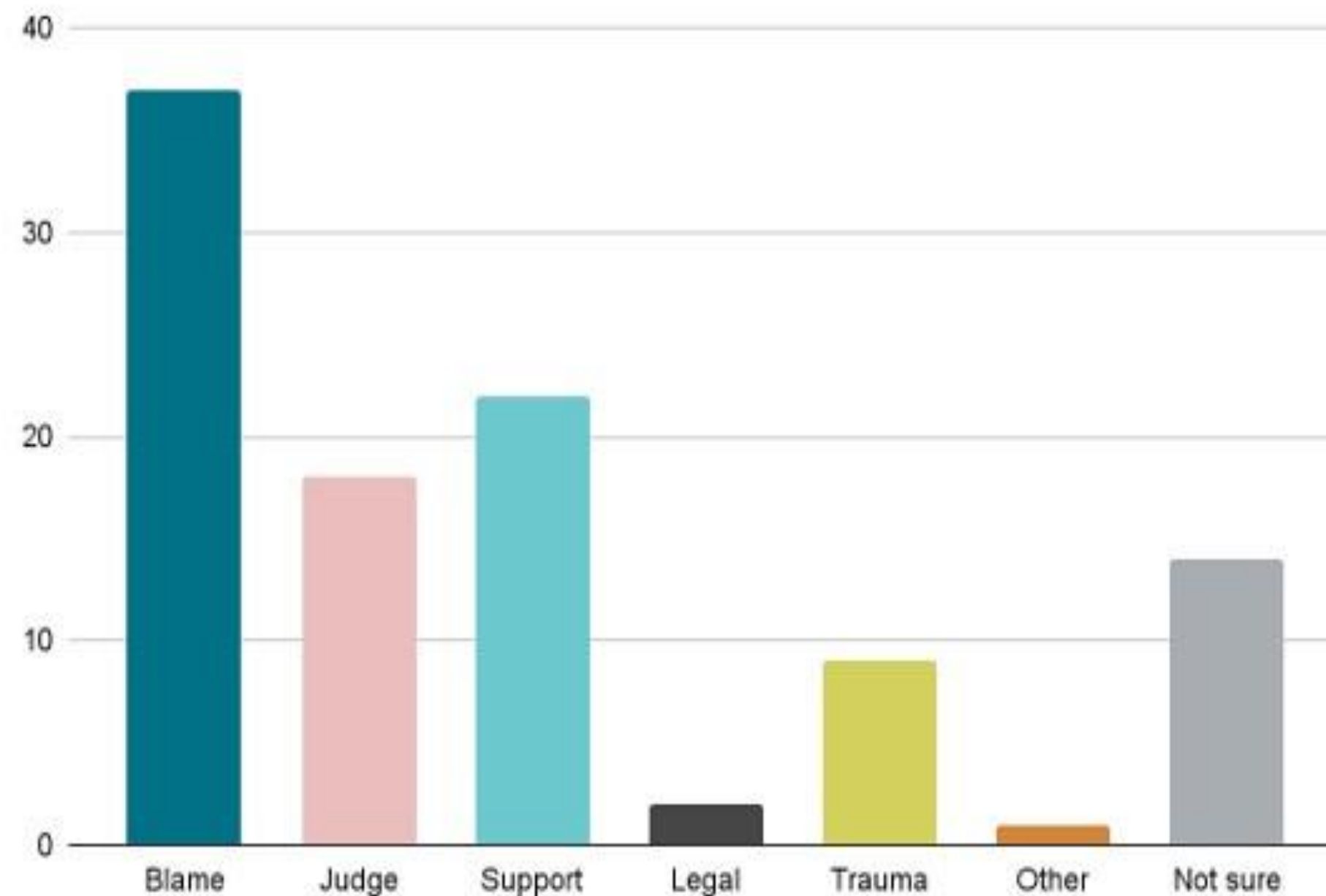
**Qualified
Respondents (N=138)**



Healthcare Providers Said...

BLAME MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIER

N=103

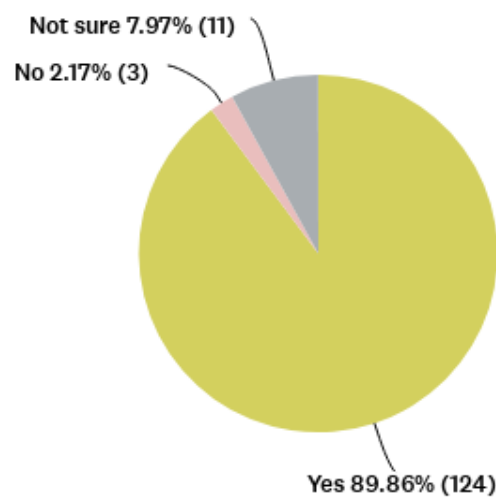


“Victims of parent abuse are most likely to be at fault and have permissive parenting styles. Our society barely thinks of children as having personhood, and traditional parenting is focused on being in control. So, I think it's easy for healthcare providers to believe they deserve it because they are not doing their part.”

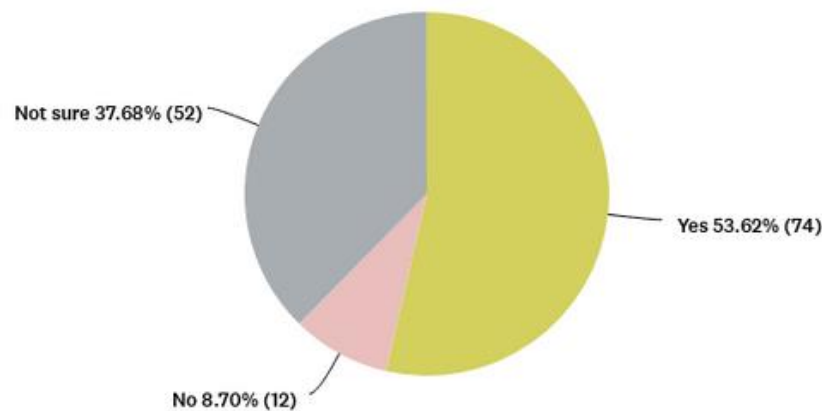
Healthcare Providers Said...

PROVIDERS ARE AWARE OF PARENT ABUSE

Is it possible for children to abuse a parent?



Is parent abuse a serious issue in the US?



US Healthcare Providers' Attitudes Toward Parent Abuse

Frequency	Subcategories	Theme
8	Denial	Parent Abuse as an Unrecognized Reality
7	Discomfort	Challenging the Traditional Parent-Child Dynamic
4	Dismissive	Minimizing Parent Abuse Through Assumptions and Oversight
2	Supportive	Recognizing Parent Abuse as a Valid Form of Harm

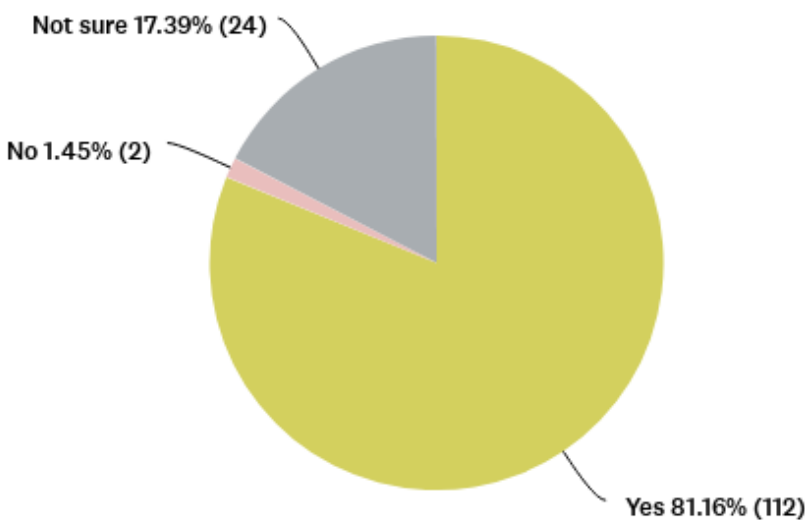
Healthcare Providers Said...

HEALTH IMPACT OF ABUSE IS KNOWN

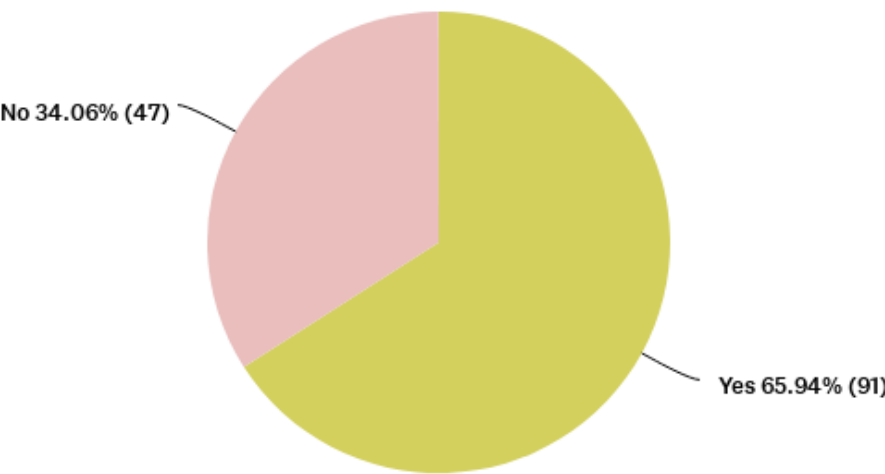
Crosstabulation Analysis of US-based Healthcare Providers’ Conceptualization of the Impact of Trauma on Chronic Illness and Mental Health

		Mental Illness							
		No		Not Sure		Yes		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Chronic Illness	Skipped	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	1	0.7%
	No	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	1	0.7%
	Not Sure	0	0.0%	2	40.0%	10	7.6%	12	8.7%
	Yes	1	100.0%	3	60.0%	120	90.9%	124	89.9%
Total		1	100.0%	5	100.0%	132	100.0%	138	100.0%

Is abuse a predictor of traumatic stress?



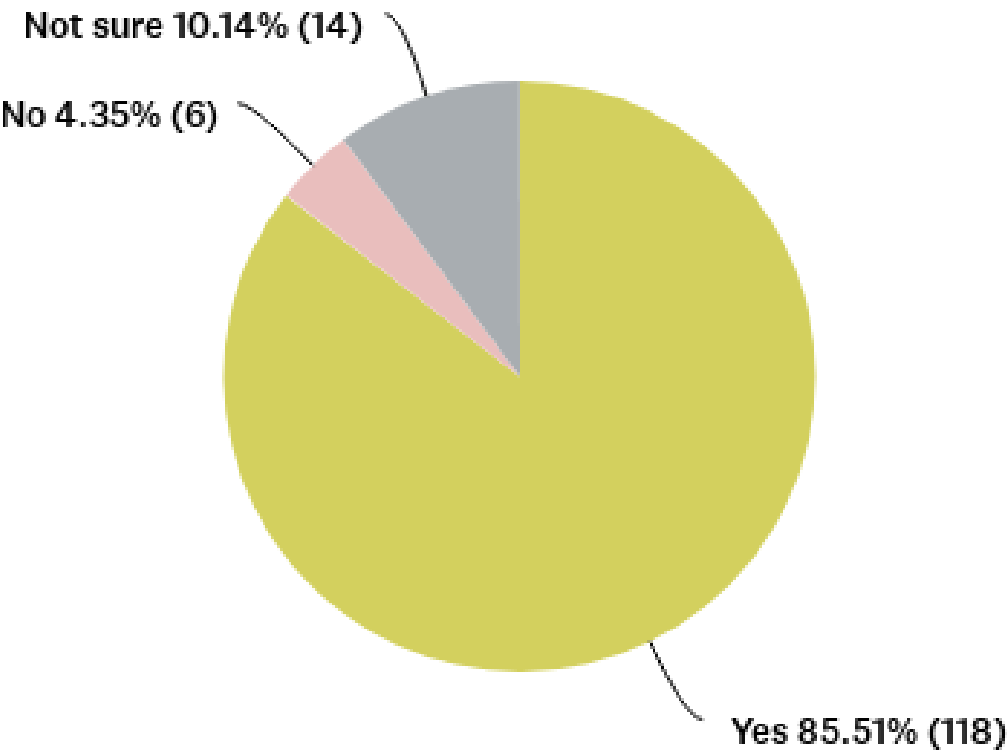
In your healthcare setting, do you regularly coordinate care with other providers on behalf of patients who experience traumatic stress?



Healthcare Providers Said...

CONSISTENCY IN LANGUAGE MATTERS

Would consistency in terms and definitions improve your ability to identify and treat patients?



Abuse Category Groupings and Thematic Analysis

Frequency	Abuse Categories	Theme
14	Physical, Emotional	Control Through Violence and Emotional Harm
11	Physical, Emotional, Financial	Exploitation and Harm
10	Physical, Emotional, Psychological	Breaking the Parent's Will
4	Physical, Psychological	Mind and Body Under Siege
3	Physical, Emotional, Psychological, Financial	Total Domination
3	Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Financial	Ultimate Betrayal
3	Physical, Psychological, Financial	Economic and Psychological Manipulation
1	Physical, Emotional, Psychological, Sexual	Violence and Violation
1	Physical, Emotional, Sexual	Physical and Emotional Harm With a Deep Breach of Trust
1	Physical, Financial	Financial Control as a Weapon Against Parents
1	Physical, Psychological, Sexual, Financial	The Most Extreme Forms of Abuse

Healthcare Providers Said...

PRIMARILY FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE

Strength

Association of emotional distress (75.36%) and physical injuries (66.7%) as key indicators of parent abuse

Opportunity

Additional research into financial control, sexual abuse reporting, and to identify full spectrum of abuse categories

Key Findings

AWARENESS AND TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE ARE NECESSARY

Awareness & Education

**US-Based Healthcare Providers' Knowledge of
Parent Abuse Improves Recognition**

Programs & Systems

**Trauma-Informed Care Settings Highlight Providers
with Less Stigmatizing Attitudes**

Clinical Implications

Estimated Prevalence

~166,482 ABUSED PARENTS IN TENNESSEE



Clinical Implications for Counselors

LISTEN FOR FEAR, "WALKING ON EGGSHELLS," CHRONIC CONFLICT

Treat Trauma

- **Validate experience**
- **Assess for safety**
- **Report, document**
- **Treat trauma with evidence-based protocols**

Trauma-Informed

- **Safety**
- **Trust**
- **Peer support**
- **Collaborate**
- **Empower**
- **Culture, gender, history**

Coordinate Care

- **Attitude check**
- **Medical**
- **Legal**
- **Mental**
- **Behavioral**
- **Education**
- **Social support**
- **Training**
- **Consistent terms, definitions**

Discussion