We live in a culture that values comfort and a sense of well-being. Even in today’s difficult economy, the expectation is that, despite having to make some sacrifices, each citizen has the opportunity to achieve this sense of well-being. Yet many members of our culture—our children—are being beaten, neglected, and sexually exploited in alarming numbers. Every 10 seconds, a child is being abused or neglected.

Granted, child abuse and neglect have existed for centuries. And although some sources suggest that the incidence of child maltreatment has actually decreased slightly in the last few years, the fact remains that children are still being abused—in some cases more seriously than ever. Why has child maltreatment become such a serious issue? The answer may lie in several areas. We live in a more violent society than ever before. We are barraged with violent images, both in the news and in our entertainment. Crime statistics attest to the impact of this desensitization. The intensity and seriousness of the abuse perpetrated against children does, as well.

Does the answer also lie in the fact that the child protection system, set up to safeguard the lives of the children at risk for maltreatment, is not achieving its goal? As a former protective services worker, I recognize that individual professionals within protective services are often dedicated and well meaning, but the system as a whole is still not adequately protecting children, nor are these services often our fiscal priority.

What can be done to reverse the disturbing fact of child maltreatment? And how can society, and more specifically the child welfare system, better protect the children at risk?

These questions can be addressed from several vantage points. We look not only to raise societal awareness and increase research into causes of abuse and neglect, but we must also change social policy, triage the child welfare system, and provide better training for protective workers, not only in the skills important to do their job but in culturally sensitive ways to approach a variety of people from many different backgrounds.

After over 30 years of teaching courses on child abuse and neglect, many years in the child protection system, and over 40 years in the field of social services, I have written this book, now in the ninth edition, to prepare future and even current professionals to better intervene and treat the children and families at risk. This book draws on my years of practice to present an all-encompassing view of maltreatment, in its various guises, from symptoms of abuse and neglect to motivations of those who abuse and neglect children, as well as how the social services system intervenes. The questions asked of me by students,
social service workers, and trainees have helped to shape the direction of the book. My experiences not only as a protective social worker but also as a therapist treating victims, families, and perpetrators and now a clergywoman have helped to provide ideas for the illustrations and examples.

New to This Edition

There are many new and updated materials throughout the text. Below are a few of the most exciting changes:

1. The text has been reorganized into 16 chapters to correspond with the typical academic semester.
2. CSWE's Core Competencies and Practice Behavior Examples grid added to front matter
3. Chapter 8 features the new topics of sexting and sexual trafficking.
4. Chapter 10 now covers the full range of intervention from reporting through case management.
5. Chapter 16 outlines what it is like to work in the child protection system from the everyday experiences of a social worker through the need for workers to use their knowledge to address effective prevention as well as planning for the future.
6. Additional pedagogical materials and specially correlated multimedia available in the eText included with the purchase of MySearchLab.
   - New learning objectives, self-study assessment including key topic quizzes and chapter reviews
   - Multimedia including videos, readings, weblinks, and more

Plan for the Text

Chapter 1 lays a framework for the discussion of abuse and neglect by tracing the history of child maltreatment from biblical times to the present. Chapter 2 considers the responsibilities of families and what rights society accords families and children. Maltreatment and the developing child are the focus of Chapter 3, which examines the effects of abusive and neglectful behavior on children's progress, or lack of progress, through developmental stages.

Chapters 4 through 9 outline the symptoms of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional/psychological abuse, and they examine the needs and motivations of abusive and neglectful parents. Chapter 7 looks more closely at the incidence of incest, or sexual abuse within the family setting. Since sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by strangers, Chapter 8 considers abuse outside the family, including a discussion of child pornography, abuse on the Internet, prostitution, and sex rings. Chapter 9 considers the psychological abuse of children.

Chapters 10 and 11 focus on how to combat the problem of abuse. Chapter 10 discusses the intervention process—from the report through the investigation and case management—and highlights such important elements of protective work as home visiting, investigative interviewing, case management issues, and the roles of other professionals. The court system and how it might be called on to address abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse are
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considered in Chapter 11, distinguishing between intervention through the juvenile court process and prosecution through the criminal court system.

Chapters 12 and 13 outline the models of treatment available for abused and neglected children and their families. Therapy approaches for each type of maltreatment are considered separately. Chapter 14 discusses foster care as a therapeutic tool.

Following this examination of intervention, Chapter 15 provides a view of the experiences of adults who, as children, never reported abuse. The treatment available for these survivors is discussed.

The experience of working in child protection is the subject of Chapter 16—from a typical day in the life of a protective social worker and the challenges the work to the part that workers must play in prevention and in planning for the future.

In this ninth edition, I have continued to search more current research. Majority of the most recent research is now coming from Britain, Australia, and Europe as these countries meet the challenges of responding to child abuse and neglect. I have used these sources when the information appeared to be applicable to the United States. I have also continued to use classic writings in the field as well as a few more recent, albeit smaller, studies.

In response to reviewer requests, this edition has been reorganized into 16 chapters to correspond with the typical academic semester. The information on intervention as well as case management is now contained in Chapter 10. A new Chapter 16 focuses on the important aspects of child protection work including the need for social workers to not only pay attention to prevention but also to use their expertise to anticipate the best solutions for the future.

There continues to be the attention to military families reflected in the eighth edition. Additional topics such as sexting, and sexual trafficking have also been added.

*Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect* can be used as a text for undergraduate as well as graduate courses in social work, human services, psychology, and sociology or in counseling, family studies, and education programs.

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Cynthia Crosson-Tower
Harvest Counseling and Consultation

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