

JOHN S. COCHRAN, MISSISSIPPI  
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WALTER D. DICKERSON, MISSISSIPPI  
C. B. BUSHMAN, MISSISSIPPI

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JIM SLOTT, TENNESSEE  
DAVID PRYOR, ARIZONA  
CARL LEVIN, MICHIGAN

JOHN W. MCINTYRE, STAFF DIRECTOR

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

February 23, 1981

Honorable Richard S. Schweiker  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Surgeon General of the United States, speaking about the report "Health: United States, 1980," said on December 5, 1980:

"Accidents and violence pose the greatest threats to children, adolescents and young adults. The death rate for the 40 million young adults and adolescents is higher today than it was 20 years ago. The major health problems in this group are violent death and injury, alcohol and drug abuse.

"It is clear that if we are to meet our goal of reducing deaths among young people by 20 percent by 1990, we must identify better ways of bringing violence under control, and we must put our knowledge to work in every community."

That statement and especially the aspects about violent death to children alarm me greatly.

The long-run and lasting solutions to the problems of child abuse will probably grow from bio-medical research on the special health problems and requirements of children, including basic research in child abuse and neglect. Ever since the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) was established, research on these problems has been an active concern of the institute.

Could you inform me of the nature and level of NICHD support for basic research into child abuse and neglect and into the developmental origins of violence?

In January 1978 the Human Learning and Behavior Branch of NICHD reported to the National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council about NICHD activities and projected research on these subjects. Have any of those research initiatives gone forward?

In February 1977 the NICHD director received a report entitled "Federal Research Activity in Mental Retardation: A Review with Recommendations for the Future." The NICHD consultants stated and recommended that "[a]lthough the Office of Child Development has the legislative responsibility for child abuse, it needs the help of NICHD and NIMH to elucidate underlying causes. Without such knowledge, lasting solutions will be impossible." How has NICHD pursued this recommendation?

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Any approach to strengthening the health and well-being of our children requires all that we can learn about the origins of violence and aggression and about the basic causes of child abuse. I would appreciate knowing what NICHD is doing to discover the origins of violent and destructive behavior so that society can, in fact, reduce deaths among young people by 1990. Thank you.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.  
United States Senator

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