

and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 mandates that effective transition to adulthood planning be done with youth in foster care.

The challenges for the foster care system are great. However when children are placed with competent and nurturing foster parents and provided coordinated care from skilled professionals, significant improvements in a child's health status, development, and academic achievement usually occur.

FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

Physical Needs

Failure to meet a child's physical needs for protection or nutrition results in some of the most severe forms of family dysfunction (see Chapters 21 and 22). There are many other ways in which parental behaviors can interfere with a child having a healthy and safe environment, such as prenatal and postnatal substance abuse. Prenatal use of alcohol can damage the fetus resulting in spectrum disorders known as **fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD)**. At the most severe end of the spectrum, this teratogen causes **fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)** characterized by in utero and postnatal growth retardation, microcephaly, intellectual disability, and a characteristic dysmorphic facial appearance. Other manifestations of FASD include birth defects and problems with coordination, attention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, learning, or behavior. Children with these difficulties may be diagnosed with *alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder*, *alcohol-related birth defects*, or *partial FAS*.

Other substances also may affect the fetus, but investigation of these effects is complicated by the fact that often more than one substance is used, and nutrition and prenatal care are not optimal. Cigarette smoking during pregnancy is associated with lower birth weight and increased child behavioral problems. Use of cocaine in the perinatal period has been associated with prematurity, intracranial hemorrhages, and abruptio placentae. Exposure to opiates in utero can result in prematurity and a neonatal withdrawal syndrome. Investigations of the effects of cocaine and opiates on cognitive development have produced mixed results.

Parental substance abuse after the child's birth is associated with increased family conflict, decreased organization, increased isolation, and increased family stress related to marital and work problems. Family violence may be more frequent. Despite the fact that these parents often have difficulty providing discipline and structure, they may expect their children to be competent at a variety of tasks at a younger age than non-substance-abusing parents. This sets the children up for failure and contributes to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The parents' more accepting attitude toward alcohol and drugs seems to increase the chance that their children will use substances during adolescence.

Parents also may expose children directly to the harmful effects of other substances, such as exposure to *second hand cigarette smoke*, which is consistently associated with increased rates of childhood respiratory illnesses, otitis media, and sudden infant death syndrome. Despite these effects, only a few parents restrict smoking in their homes. There are many other ways in which parents may not physically protect their children. Failing to immunize children, to childproof the home adequately, and to provide adequate supervision are other examples.

Parents' attempts to provide too much protection for their child also can cause problems. One example of this is the **vulnerable child syndrome** in which a child who is ill early in life continues to be viewed as vulnerable by the parents despite that the child has fully recovered. Behavioral difficulties may result if parents are overindulgent and fail to set limits. Parental reluctance to leave the child may contribute to the child having separation anxiety. Parents may be particularly attentive to minor variations in bodily functions, leading them to seek excess medical care. If the physician does not recognize this situation, the child may be exposed to unnecessary medical procedures.

Emotional Support, Education, and Socialization

Failure to meet a child's emotional or educational needs can have a severe and enduring negative impact on child development and behavior. Infants need a consistent adult who learns to understand their signals and meets the infant's needs for attention as well as food. As the adult caregiver learns these signals, he or she responds more rapidly and appropriately to the infant's attempts at communication. Through this process, often referred to as **attachment**, the special relationship between parent and child develops. When affectionate and responsive adults are not consistently available, infants often are less willing to explore the environment and may become unusually clingy, angry, or difficult to comfort.

Appropriate stimulation also is vital for a child's cognitive development. Children whose parents do not read to them and do not play developmentally appropriate games with them have lower scores on intelligence tests and more school problems. In these situations, early intervention has been shown to be particularly effective in improving skill development and subsequent school performance. At the other extreme, there are increasing concerns that some parents may provide too much stimulation and scheduling of the child's day. There may be such emphasis on achievement that children come to feel that parental love is contingent on achievement. There are concerns that this narrow definition of success may contribute to problems with anxiety and self-esteem for some children.

Chapter 25

VIOLENCE

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pattern of purposeful coercive behaviors aimed at establishing control of one partner over the other that may include inflicted physical injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, stalking, deprivation, intimidation, and threats. Such violence between adults affects the lives of millions of children each year. Children experience IPV by seeing or hearing the violence and its aftermath. Children who live in households with