



**Family Digest 11**  
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**The Neglect of Children**

Neglect is broadly defined as failure to take proper care over something. Synonyms include careless; remiss; irresponsible; unmindful; disregarding and inadvertent, while antonyms include careful and attentive. Neglect implies acts or conduct that involve omission. Thus, while the neglect of children is often associated with active physical abuse, this is not always so. Furthermore, the extent of failure to take care may vary considerably and remedial action will vary accordingly. Broadly, there are four types of neglect: physical, emotional, educational, and medical. Child neglect should be seen as failure to provide needed and age-appropriate care in any of these areas.

Moreover, systemic neglect contributes greatly to the neglect of children, and their primary care-givers can often do little to overcome such difficulties. Structural neglect in terms of access to schools; distance from health care facilities; no transport to schools; lack of uniforms to wear, all compound neglect and exacerbate already-existing challenges. The isolation of single female-headed households, or those headed by teenage parents with little experience and even less support, create circumstances which compound neglect. Depression is common. While the Child Support Grant is one of the successes of our democracy, it is was meant to be part of a short term poverty alleviation programme contributing to the realization of a more equal society. Instead, it is now the sole income of many households 'trapped in poverty'. The neglect experienced by children in such households is not intended by their care-givers, and may well be the result of parental despair. Children who are hungry may be fractious and 'difficult', and parents in such situations may disengage from their children emotionally. Parenting is always demanding and the more difficult the circumstances the greater the challenge.

The annual Child Protection Week began on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> May with government and civil society planning to spend the next seven days paying attention to some of the difficult issues faced by South Africa's most vulnerable citizens. The week seeks to raise awareness of the rights of children as articulated in the Children's Act of 2005.

Below please find links to articles of interest:

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<http://www.dgmt-community.co.za/organisations/childrens-institute/learning-briefs/reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect-what-you-need>

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/brain\\_development.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/brain_development.pdf)

[http://www.iupui.edu/~childwel/Neglect/basic\\_needs.htm](http://www.iupui.edu/~childwel/Neglect/basic_needs.htm)

<http://cccrd.publishpath.com/Websites/cccrd/images/NParenting.pdf>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/child-neglect>

[http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/63-of-young-sa-children-live-in-poverty--study?utm\\_source=Politicsweb+Daily+Headlines&utm\\_campaign=c152b630cb-DHN\\_15\\_May\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a86f25db99-c152b630cb-140187545](http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/63-of-young-sa-children-live-in-poverty--study?utm_source=Politicsweb+Daily+Headlines&utm_campaign=c152b630cb-DHN_15_May_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a86f25db99-c152b630cb-140187545)

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/child-protection-week-to-focus-on-issues-faced-by-sas-children-20160529>

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