Risk Factors for Child Maltreatment

Child Risk Factors
Premature birth, birth anomalies, low birth weight, prenatal exposure to toxins
Temperament: difficult or slow to warm up
Physical/cognitive/emotional disability, chronic or serious illness
Childhood trauma
Anti-social peer group
Age
Child aggression, behavior problems, attention deficits

Parental/Family Risk Factors
Personality Factors
External locus of control
Poor impulse control
Depression/anxiety
Low tolerance for frustration
Feelings of insecurity/Lack of trust
Insecure attachment with own parents
Childhood history of abuse
High parental conflict, partner violence
Family structure - single parent with lack of support, high number of children in household
Social isolation, lack of support
Parental psychopathology
Substance abuse
Separation/divorce, especially high conflict divorce
High general stress level
Poor parent-child interaction, negative attitudes and attributions about child's behavior
Inaccurate knowledge and expectations about child development

Social/Environmental Risk Factors
Low socioeconomic status
Stressful life events
Lack of access to medical care, health insurance, adequate child care, and social services
Parental unemployment; homelessness
Social isolation/lack of social support
Poor schools
Exposure to environmental toxins
Dangerous/violent neighborhood/Community violence

*This is not an all-inclusive or exhaustive list, nor do these factors imply causality
Protective Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect

**Child Protective Factors**
- Good health, history of adequate development
- Above-average intelligence
- Hobbies and interests
- Good peer relationships
- Personality factors/Easy temperament/Positive disposition
- Active coping style
- Positive self-esteem
- Good social skills
- Internal locus of control

**Parental/Family Protective Factors**
- Secure attachment; positive and warm parent-child relationship
- Supportive family environment
- Household rules/structure; parental monitoring of child
- Extended family support and involvement
- Stable relationship with parents
- Parents have a model of competence and good coping skills
- Family expectations of pro-social behavior
- High parental education
- Ability to read child’s cues/moods without gross distortions
- Help-eliciting/Help-seeking behaviors
- Mechanisms in place to reduce impact of parent’s mental illness
- Ability to recognize effects of parent’s own prior abuse/neglect

**Social/Environmental Protective Factors**
- Mid to high socioeconomic status
- Access to health care/social services
- Consistent parental employment
- Adequate housing
- Family religious participation
- Good schools
- Supportive adults outside of family who serve as role models/mentors to child
Selected Reference List (revised 06/2014)


Eve et al. (2014). What is Good Parenting? Family Court Review (52,1) pages 114-127.


Other Web Resources:


Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Adverse Child Experiences http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acesstudy/

Intimate Partner Fact Sheet at National Center for Injury Prevention and Control http://www.brooksidepress.org/Products/OBGYN_101/MyDocuments4/Library/FactSheet/IntimatePartnerViolencePreventionFacts%20NCIPC.htm