

Preface

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Several years ago, a number of colleagues—social workers, psychologists, attorneys, physicians, nurses, researchers, law enforcement officers, and protective services administrators—started talking when they met at conferences of their desire for a national interdisciplinary organization designed to meet their needs as professionals in the field of child maltreatment. This new society would give professionals from all of the different disciplines who respond to child maltreatment a common forum for addressing the difficult problems they face in their work. To build a knowledge base on which professionals could confidently practice, it would encourage research and disseminate research findings in a usable form to all professionals working in the field. This association would serve as a vehicle for approaching difficult policy and practice questions that require an interdisciplinary response and as a "home base" for all professionals whose main concern was how best to help those affected by child maltreatment.

In 1987, these leaders founded the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC). In the intervening years, thousands of professionals from all 50 states and around the world have joined, and APSAC has made steady progress toward realizing its founders' goals. It has published the *APSAC Advisor*, a highly regarded quarterly news journal that delivers current information from

leading experts in an immediately useful form. It has submitted *amicus curiae* briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court in cases with important implications for child abuse practice; published guidelines for practice on critically important aspects of practice; offered advanced professional education in institutes, colloquia, and audio tapes; fostered the development of a nationwide network of chapters through

which interdisciplinary professionals address issues with local import; and issued press releases and letters to editors to promote accurate public awareness of the complexities of child maltreatment. In 1996, APSAC is launching its official journal, *Child Maltreatment*, an interdisciplinary, policy- and practice-oriented journal that will address all aspects of child maltreatment.

The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment is a natural extension of APSAC's mission. Its chapters address all facets of the professional response to child abuse and neglect: prevention, assessment, intervention, and treatment. Its contributors represent all of the major disciplines responding to child abuse and neglect, including mental health, law, medicine, nursing, child protective services, and law enforcement. *The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment* covers all aspects of child maltreatment, including emotional neglect and other forms of neglect, psychological maltreatment, and physical and sexual abuse.

The chapters in this book are based solidly on the latest empirical research, with extensive references for further

reading. Yet all chapters are written in plain language and with an eye to immediate application: Chapter authors admirably succeeded in writing to experts in the field who are *not* experts in the chapter's particular subject area.

The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment is, like APSAC, a single place where all professionals can come for the latest information about their critically important work.

Finally, *The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment* reflects the central wealth of APSAC, which is the unstinting labor of volunteers. The editors and chapter authors have donated their work so that all proceeds from the sale of the book directly benefit APSAC. These authors and hundreds of other busy professionals who have given so freely of their scarce and valuable time have made APSAC a living, breathing force for all professionals in the field of child abuse and neglect. With their help, through the publication of *The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment*, APSAC has made another step forward in its central aim: to ensure that everyone affected by child maltreatment receives the best possible professional response.