Briefing for the Human Rights Committee, Country Task Force

To: The Human Rights Committee, Country Task Force

Re: Corporal punishment in the United States

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On behalf of The U.S. Alliance to End the Hitting of Children, we request that the Human Rights Committee include the issue of the corporal punishment of children in your List of Issues for the USA. We fully support the briefing submitted by Peter Newell regarding this matter. In addition, we provide four reasons why the issue should be included in the List of Issues for the USA.

1. Corporal punishment (CP) of children has long been a contentious topic in the United States. However, there is evidence that attitudes and behavior are gradually changing. These changes can be detected in national polls, reports of parental discipline, as well as the increasing number of states in the U.S. that prohibit CP in its public schools. Thus, we believe this is an ideal time for a national discussion.

2. The research evidence is remarkably consistent: Corporal punishment does not promote children’s healthy behavioral, emotional, or brain development. For example, in 2012, there were at least nine journal articles that investigated various questions related to corporal punishment. Six of the articles addressed whether corporal punishment was related to child problems\(^1\)\(^-\)\(^6\). All six studies found evidence that CP was associated with behavioral or psychological problems such as aggression at home and at school, anxiety, mood and personality disorders, substance abuse, health problems, and an inhibition of prosocial behavior. In addition, CP can escalate into abuse\(^8\).

3. The use of CP on children in the home or the school is a violation of their human right not to be subjected to cruel, inhumane, or degrading punishment. Corporal punishment
is, at a minimum, degrading. Children who have been spanked commonly report the practice is ineffective, embarrassing, and humiliating.  

4. We believe that progress on this problem must occur on multiple fronts including public awareness, parenting education, and legal reform. By having the Human Rights Committee address this important and timely matter on the List of Issues, this will help elevate the awareness of the topic in the United States.

References


