Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

# Child Abuse Prevention in a Pandemic—A Natural Experiment in Social Welfare Policy

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Maassel and colleagues examine trends in abusive head trauma in the 2 years following the first COVID-19–related shutdowns. Relying on a database of admissions for AHT at 49 children's hospitals across the US from January 2016 through April 2022, the authors report that COVID-19–related shutdowns in the spring of 2020 were associated with a 25% reduction in the incidence of hospitalizations for AHT among children younger than 5 years. Analysis of trends following the first 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, uncovers a steady rise in AHT incidence back toward prepandemic levels among infants, who account for 75% of all AHT cases. If replicated by future research, these results suggest that pandemic-related policies served as an unplanned child abuse prevention program with a rate of success far above that described for any established child abuse prevention efforts.

## Journal:

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