Child abuse and neglect may affect an individual's physical and mental health in a number of direct and indirect ways. Negative effects on physical development can result from physical trauma (e.g., blows to the head or body or violent shaking) and from neglect (e.g., inadequate nutrition, lack of adequate motor stimulation, or withholding medical treatments). Maltreatment during infancy and early childhood has been shown to negatively affect early brain development and can have repercussions into adolescence and adulthood. The immediate emotional effects of abuse and neglect—isolation, fear, and an inability to trust—can translate into lifelong consequences including low self-esteem, depression, and relationship difficulties.

Discuss how childhood maltreatment, assessed in childhood or adolescence, predicts the course of poor prognosis of depression in adulthood.

Focus on the long-term impact of emotional abuse and neglect on mental health. The article indicated emotionally abusive acts increased the odds of lifetime diagnoses of mood and personality disorders.

Examine the effects of child maltreatment on cognitive functioning, especially working and short-term memory. The article shows results that sexual abuse may have different effects on working memory depending on when during the course of development, it occurred.

Provide basic information on brain development and the effects of abuse and neglect on that development. The information is designed to help professionals understand the emotional, mental, and behavioral impact of early abuse and neglect in children who come to the attention of the child welfare system.