

Patterns of Spouse and Child Maltreatment by Discharged U.S. Army Soldiers

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The transitional compensation (TC) program of the U.S. Army provides financial and other benefits to the families of service members discharged for child or spouse maltreatment. We analyzed the TC records of the 347 offenders, 337 spouses (160 victims and 177 nonvictims) who were applicants for benefits, and 820 children (244 victims and 576 nonvictims). One hundred fifty-two spouses were physically abused and eight were sexually abused. One hundred eighty-two children were sexually abused, 61 were physically abused, and one was emotionally abused. The Army Central Registry (ACR) of child and spouse maltreatment cases was examined to determine whether the TC offenders and victims had a history of prior maltreatment and to assess its severity. Ninety percent of the TC offenders had an ACR history as child or spouse maltreatment offenders. Seventy-four percent of the TC child abuse victims had an ACR history as victims, and 81 percent of the TC spouse abuse victims had such a history. The severity of maltreatment in the ACR of TC child and spouse victims was greater than the overall severity of maltreatment for those in the ACR database who were not in the TC database. Other children in the family who had not been identified as TC victims also had an ACR history that was more severe. Health and social service agencies should be aware of the TC program and be knowledgeable about its benefits for family members of soldiers discharged for abuse-related offenses.

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In 1994, the U.S. Congress authorized the payment of monthly compensation and other benefits to relatives of former members of the armed forces who had been discharged, if the basis for discharge included child or spouse maltreatment.¹ The purposes of this entitlement, called the transitional compensation (TC) program,² were to provide support for families in which maltreatment had occurred and to encourage the reporting of maltreatment by family members that might otherwise go unreported because of the fear of losing their livelihood if the service member were separated from the Army. Requirements of

the program are that the maltreated person be a spouse or dependent child of the service member and that the act be a criminal offense such as sexual assault, rape, sodomy, assault, battery, manslaughter, or murder. TC is payable from 12 to 36 months and begins on the date the court-martial is approved or when an administrative separation is initiated. By the end of fiscal year 2000 (FY00), the amount of compensation paid out was about \$2.5 million.

Each of the military services also maintains a family advocacy program (FAP).³ (While all the military services have a TC program and a FAP, this article examines only the Army's experience with the FAP⁴ and TC.⁵) The objectives of the FAP are to prevent child and spouse maltreatment, to encourage the reporting of all instances of such maltreatment, to ensure the prompt assessment and investigation of all cases, to protect victims, and to treat all family members affected by maltreatment. When incidents of alleged maltreatment are reported to an Army installation (regardless of whether the incident occurred on or off the Army post), a multidisciplinary Case

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Review Committee (CRC) reviews them. If the incident is substantiated, case information is forwarded to the Army Central Registry (ACR), a confidential database of incident and demographic data on all substantiated child and spouse maltreatment victims and offenders. Descriptions of the ACR and its reports of child⁶ and spouse⁷ maltreatment have been published elsewhere. The magnitude of child abuse and neglect and spouse abuse in the U.S. Army is relatively low. The number of substantiated cases in FY02 was less than 1 percent of the at-risk populations of children under age 18 and married soldiers and their spouses. Child maltreatment cases declined from 4,101 in 1994 to 2,652 in FY02, a 35 percent decrease; spouse abuse cases dropped from 8,267 in 1994 to 3,848 in FY02, a 53 percent decrease.

While both the FAP and the TC were established to assist soldiers and families with the problem of child and spouse maltreatment, they are separately administered programs. The FAP (and its component database, the ACR) is a program for all active-duty service members and their families. Substantiated cases of maltreatment are entered into the ACR. TC, in contrast, is a program for family members of soldiers who have been discharged for family abuse and hence should be instituted after cases of maltreatment have been entered into the ACR. Ideally, all TC offenders and victims should have been entered into the ACR. Interest in the relation of these two programs to each other prompted our decision to conduct this study.

Specifically, the purposes of this study were: (1) to report the demographic data for those soldiers who were TC offenders and for the family members who were applicants for TC benefits and their children; (2) to report the types of maltreatment committed by the offenders as determined by the TC program; (3) to determine whether the offenders, applicants, and children from the TC program had been reported to the ACR previously; and (4) to determine the history of severity of the ACR cases recorded for TC offenders against applicants and children and compare these data to the overall severity of ACR cases. This study provides the first comprehensive examination of the TC program and comparisons of its data on offenders, spouses, and children with data in the ACR. An understanding of both these military programs is important for persons who provide counseling and legal services to military or former military

personnel and their families involved in spouse and child maltreatment.

Methods

We examined the U.S. Army TC cases from the beginning of the program in 1996 until 30 September 2000. This report describes the nonfatal TC cases. (There were an additional 13 TC cases involving fatalities.) The TC database is administrative and confidential and is maintained by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center. It includes information on the soldiers who were offenders and on family members, who were applicants, and their children. Spouses and former spouses were either abuse victims themselves or served as applicants on behalf of their children. Likewise, children were listed in the TC as maltreatment victims or, while not victims themselves, were members of a family in which someone had been a maltreatment victim. Only a single type of maltreatment (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse) was listed for each TC applicant or child, and each person was listed only once, regardless of victim status. (No child neglect cases were found in the TC database, although the Army recognizes child neglect as a type of child maltreatment.)

The ACR was a source of historical information for TC offenders, spouses, and children when previous cases of their maltreatment had been reported to the ACR. In other words, because the TC and ACR are separate programs, spouse and child maltreatment victims in TC cases were not necessarily reported to the ACR. To determine whether TC cases were listed in the ACR, we matched the records of the TC offenders with the ACR and extracted historical case information for TC offenders. ACR information was regarded as historical because it was not possible to determine whether the TC case and the ACR case were for the same offense. Access to the TC and ACR databases was given to us through an Interagency Support Agreement between the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) and the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center.

Severity of maltreatment is not recorded in the TC database but is recorded in the ACR. The level of severity of abuse or neglect is determined by the Case Review Committee at the Army installation that substantiates the case for the ACR. We examined the severity of the ACR maltreatment history of offend-

ers and victims and compared the severity of their cases with the other ACR cases for the same type of offender or victim for the same period of time. The protocol for this research was reviewed and approved by the USUHS Institutional Review Board. Chi-square tests were used to determine the significance of differences between independent groups using nominal level data. The McNemar test was used to test for the significance of changes in which persons were used as their own control when the data were nominal level. T-tests were used to test the difference between two independent groups when the data were of interval level (such as age). Statistical significance was accepted at $p \leq .05$.

Results

TC Offenders, Applicants, and Children

There were 347 offenders, 352 applicants, and 821 children in the TC database as of the end of FY00.

TC Offenders

Three hundred forty-five (99%) of the offenders were male and two (less than 1%) were females. Ninety-six percent ($n = 334$) were enlisted personnel and four percent ($n = 13$) were officers or warrant officers. One hundred eighty-seven (54%) of the offenders maltreated children only, 144 (41%) abused spouses only, and 16 (5%) abused both children and spouses. The offenders abused 244 children: 182 sexually, 61 physically, and one emotionally. There were 152 cases of physical abuse of spouses and eight of sexual abuse. The mean age of the offenders at the time the case was received at Army headquarters was 30.47 ± 6.23 years (SD). Eighty-nine percent of the offenders were between the ages of 22 and 36.

Courts-martial were received by 191 (55%) offenders, while 156 (45%) received an administrative discharge. (An administrative discharge is a nonjudicial discharge in which the soldier is put out of the Army without a criminal record. It has no civil counterpart.) Offenders who abused children were more likely to be court-martialed than those who abused spouses ($\chi^2 = 74.17$, $df = 2$, $p = .001$). A court-martial was received by 140 (75%) child-only abusers, 11 (69%) child and spouse abusers, and 40 (28%) spouse-only abusers.

TC Applicants

Applicants are defined as individuals who applied for benefits under the TC program. An applicant could apply as a spouse abuse victim or on behalf of a child victim in the family. TC applicants included spouses (both present and former), other family members, and individuals appointed by a court. There were 352 TC applicants: 347 (99%) females and 4 (1%) males. (Gender was unavailable for one applicant.) In some cases there were separate applicants for custody of children in the same family, and thus applicants outnumbered offenders. Of the 352 applicants, 337 were spouses or former spouses: 318 spouses (152 of whom were victims themselves and 166 of whom were not victims, but applied on behalf of a child) and 19 former spouses (8 victims and 11 nonvictims who applied on behalf of a child). We conducted our analyses only on these 337 spouses and former spouses. (Hereafter, we refer to both spouses and former spouses as spouses.)

Of the 337 spouses, 160 had been listed as spouse abuse victims (152 cases of physical abuse and eight of sexual abuse) in the TC database: 159 females and one male. Of the 177 spouses who applied on behalf of children, there were 176 females and one male. The female victim applicants were 4.45 years younger (mean = 28.27 ± 5.46) than the females applying on behalf of children (mean = 32.72 ± 6.48 , $t = 6.791$, $df = 327.5$, $p < .0001$).

TC Children

Of the 821 children who were listed in the TC database, 453 (55%) were female and 368 (45%) were male. A total of 244 (30%) of the 821 children were listed as victims of abuse. The remaining 576 (70%) children were not victims, but instead were listed as members of a family applying for TC benefits. Of the 244 children who were classified as victims of abuse, 182 (74%) were the victims of sexual abuse (166 females and 16 males), 61 (25%) were the victims of physical abuse (28 females and 33 males), and one male was a victim of emotional abuse. Despite the fact that the Army regulation system allows for the recognition of neglect as a form of child maltreatment, no such cases were listed in the TC database. (One child did not have a victim/nonvictim status listed.)

The mean age of the female child victims was 11.52 ± 5.12 years, about five years older than that of the female nonvictim children (6.56 ± 4.55 , $t =$

10.85, $df = 449$, $p < .0001$). The mean ages of the male child victims (7.20 ± 5.31) and nonvictims (7.73 ± 5.03) were not significantly different.

Comparisons of TC and ACR

Child Abuse

Of the 244 children identified as victims in the TC database, 182 were victims of sexual abuse (75% of all TC child abuse cases). There were 2,139 in the ACR between FY88 and FY00 (12% of all child abuse cases in the ACR). While 91 percent of the TC child sexual abuse cases involved female children ($n = 166$) and nine percent males ($n = 16$), 75 percent of the child sexual abuse cases in the ACR involved females ($n = 1,609$) and 25 percent males ($n = 530$). Differences in gender and child sexual abuse between the TC and ACR were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 23.83$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$).

There were 61 cases of child physical abuse in the TC database (25% of all child TC cases) and 5,543 in the ACR (30% of the child cases in ACR from FY88 to FY00). The percentage of physical abuse of males and females was identical (54%) in the TC and the ACR. There was only one case of emotional abuse (less than 1%) in the TC compared with 2,961 (16%) in the ACR. The largest category of child maltreatment in the ACR was neglect ($n = 7,587$, 42% of all ACR cases), but there were no child neglect cases in the TC database.

Spouse Abuse

Physical abuse was the predominant category of offenses against spouses in both the ACR and the TC. Spouse physical abuse cases comprised 94 percent ($n = 312$) of all TC spouse abuse cases: 311 against women and one against a man. Similarly, 89 percent ($n = 28,191$) of all ACR cases between FY88 and FY00 were for physical spouse abuse: 17,631 (56%) against women and 10,560 (33%) against men. Eleven percent of the ACR cases were reported as emotional spouse abuse: 3,362 cases (2,335 against women and 1,027 against men, 7.4% and 3.2%, respectively). There were no emotional spouse abuse cases recorded in the TC. There were 30 cases (29 against women and one against a man) of sexual abuse in the ACR (a total of .09 percent of all ACR cases) and 18 (all against women) in the TC (a total of 5.45% of all TC cases). We could not test the differences between the TC and the ACR cases of

maltreatment, because there were no spouse emotional abuse cases in the ACR for the TC families.

ACR History of TC Offenders

We examined the ACR for records of TC offenders to determine whether they had a history in the ACR as child or spouse abuse offenders. Of the 347 TC offenders, 313 (90%) were listed in the ACR as child or spouse maltreatment offenders and 34 (10%) were not (Fig. 1). We were unable to identify whether this history in the ACR represents the same events reported in the TC. Therefore, this represents a measure of the identification of general types of cases rather than a match between the specific ACR and TC cases. We found 642 maltreatment cases in the ACR for these 313 offenders, an average of about two cases per offender: 379 child cases and 263 spouse cases. (Note that a case in the ACR can involve more than one type of maltreatment.) Of those 313 offenders, 148 offenders abused only children, 71 abused children and spouses, and 94 abused only spouses.

We compared the type and severity of all maltreatment cases, while controlling for the type of maltreatment. Specifically, for all cases ($n = 379$) we compared the severity of the 395 child maltreatment offenses in the ACR committed by the TC child maltreatment offenders (fathers) with the severity of the ACR cases (also committed by fathers) from FY88 to FY00 (Table 1). Of the child physical abuse cases by TC fathers who were reported in the ACR, 37.36 percent were severe compared with 11.44 percent for all other fathers physically maltreating children in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 59.25$, $df = 2$, $p < .0001$). The level of severe emotional abuse cases among the TC fathers was 5.88 percent compared with 3.76 percent among all other fathers in the ACR who emotionally abused their children (not significantly different). The level of severe neglect cases in the ACR by the TC offenders was 12.50 percent compared with 4.83 percent for the other fathers in the ACR with records of child neglect ($\chi^2 = 8.36$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). Thus, the TC father offenders had more severe child maltreatment cases reported than did other fathers in the ACR.

ACR History of TC Children

There were 820 children who had a victim status listed in the TC database: 244 (30%) children were abuse victims in the TC database and 576 (70%)

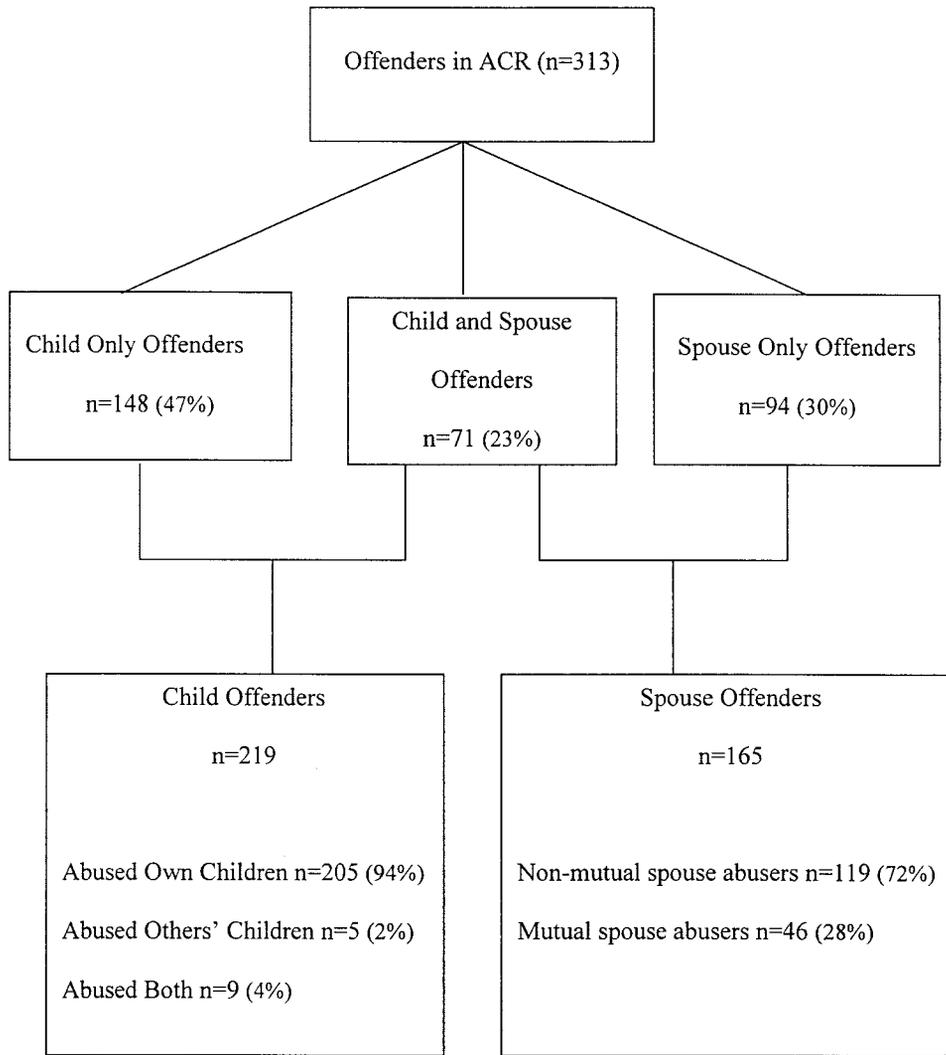


Figure 1. History of child and spouse abuse by transitional compensation offenders in the Army Central Registry.

Table 1 Child Maltreatments (n = 395) Recorded in the ACR by TC Father Offenders (n = 313) Compared With Overall ACR Child Maltreatment Cases by Fathers

Type of Maltreatment	Severity	Maltreatment by TC Child Offenders in ACR n (%)	Overall Child Maltreatment in ACR n (%)
Emotional abuse	Mild	46 (67.65)	3,022 (76.76)
	Moderate	18 (26.47)	767 (19.48)
	Severe	4 (5.88)	148 (3.76)
Physical abuse	Mild	30 (32.97)	5,717 (50.30)
	Moderate	27 (29.67)	4,348 (38.26)
	Severe	34 (37.36)	1,300 (11.44)*
Neglect	Mild	41 (73.21)	7,224 (72.81)
	Moderate	8 (14.29)	2,219 (22.36)
	Severe	7 (12.50)	479 (4.83)†
Sexual	Severe	180 (100)	2,554 (100)

* p < .0001.

† p < .05.

were not (Fig. 2). Of the 244 TC victim children, 180 (74%) had a history of maltreatment in the ACR. Of the 576 nonvictim children in the TC, there were 86 TC (15%) with a history of maltreatment in the ACR.

We examined the severity of each type of maltreatment for the TC children in the ACR compared with other children in the ACR (Table 2). Of the 180 TC victim children with a history of prior maltreatment, 144 (79%) were maltreated by their parents, with a total of 244 cases of maltreatment against them. The severity of maltreatment by the TC parents was greater than that of the total ACR maltreatment by parents for emotional abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. Of the emotionally abused TC victims in the ACR, 15.79 percent of the maltreatments were severe compared with 4.11 percent for all other emo-

Patterns of Maltreatment by Discharged Soldiers

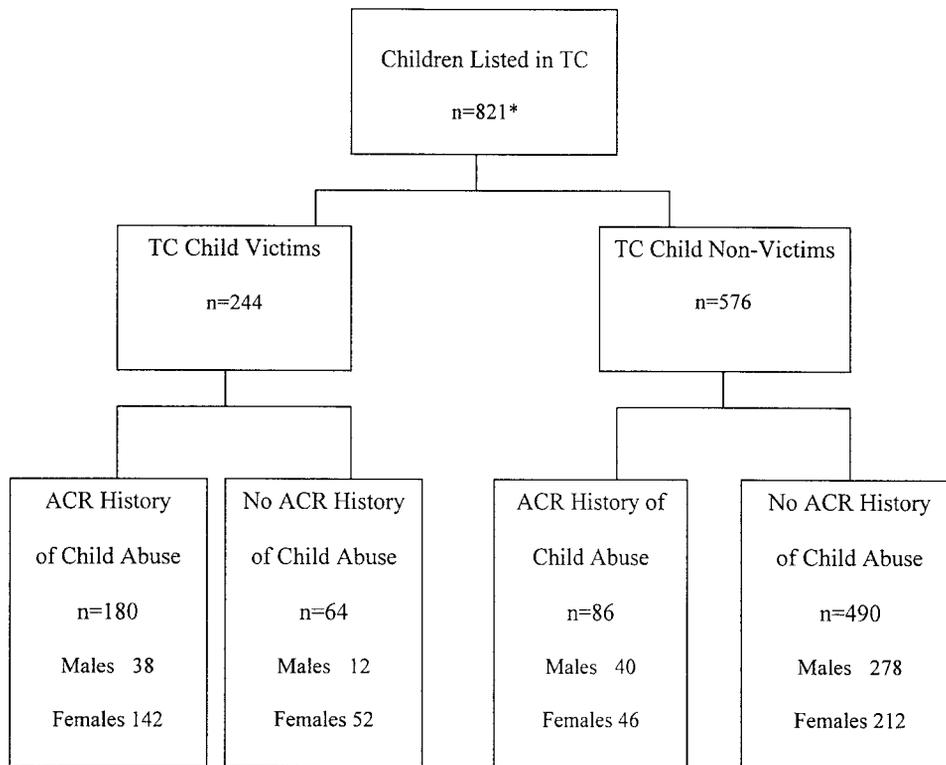


Figure 2. Transitional Compensation victim and nonvictim children with a history of abuse in the Army Central Registry. *One child in the TC did not have a victim/nonvictim status listed.

tional child abuse cases in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 6.58, df = 2, p < .05$). Similarly, 43.40 percent of the physical abuse maltreatments of the TC victims in the ACR were severe compared with 11.09 percent for all other child physical abuse victims in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 55.54, df = 2, p < .0001$). For child neglect, 15.15 percent of the TC cases of maltreatment in the ACR were severe compared with 4.71 percent of all other

child victims in the ACR who were severely neglected ($\chi^2 = 9.02, df = 2, p < .05$).

Examining the TC nonvictim ($n = 86$) children with a history of maltreatment in the ACR, we found 69 maltreated by their parents. We found 136 instances of maltreatment of these 69 children: 41 of emotional abuse, 25 of physical abuse, 53 of neglect, and 17 of sexual abuse (Table 3). The severity of emotional abuse, physical abuse, and neglect were all

Table 2 Child Maltreatments ($n = 244$) of TC Victim Children ($n = 144$) by Parents in the ACR and Overall ACR Child Maltreatment by Parents (FY88–FY00)

Type of Maltreatment	Severity	TC Child Victims in the ACRn (%)	Overall ACR Child Victims n (%)
Emotional abuse	Mild	13 (68.42)	4,672 (74.97)
	Moderate	3 (15.79)	1,304 (20.92)
	Severe	3 (15.79)	256 (4.11)*
Physical abuse	Mild	17 (32.08)	9,354 (50.65)
	Moderate	13 (24.53)	7,067 (38.26)
	Severe	23 (43.40)	2,048 (11.09)†
Neglect	Mild	19 (57.58)	16,391 (72.94)
	Moderate	9 (27.27)	5,023 (22.35)
	Severe	5 (15.15)	1,059 (4.71)*
Sexual	Severe	139 (100)	2,895 (100)

* $p < .05$.

† $p < .0001$.

Table 3 Child Maltreatments ($n = 136$) of TC Nonvictim Children ($n = 69$) by Parents in the ACR and Overall ACR Child Maltreatment by Parents (FY88–FY00)

Type of Maltreatment	Severity	TC Child Nonvictims in ACRn (%)	Overall ACR Child Victims n (%)
Emotional abuse	Mild	29 (70.73)	4,672 (74.97)
	Moderate	10 (24.39)	1,304 (20.92)
	Severe	2 (4.88)	256 (4.11)
Physical abuse	Mild	12 (48.00)	9,354 (50.65)
	Moderate	9 (36.00)	7,067 (38.26)
	Severe	4 (16.00)	2,048 (11.09)
Neglect	Mild	38 (71.70)	16,391 (72.94)
	Moderate	10 (18.87)	5,023 (22.35)
	Severe	5 (9.43)	1,059 (4.71)
Sexual	Severe	17 (100)	2,895 (100)

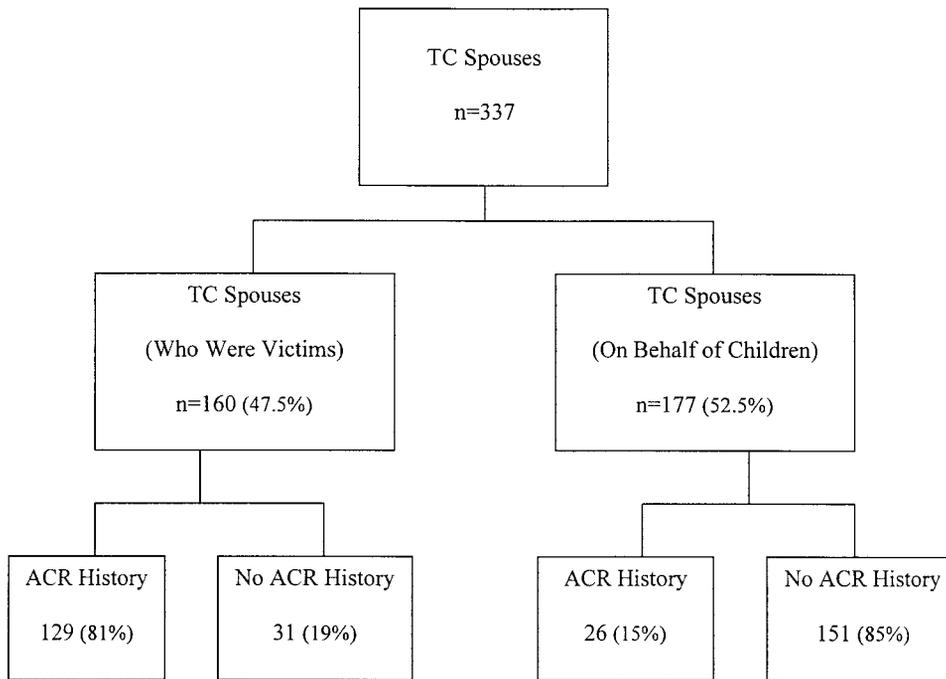


Figure 3. Transitional compensation spouses with a history of spouse abuse in the Army Central Registry.

greater in the TC child cases than in the other child cases in the ACR, but differences were not statistically significant.

ACR History of TC Spouses

We compared the history in the ACR of the 337 TC program spouses to the other female spouse abuse victims in the ACR (Fig. 3). Of the 160 TC spouse abuse victims, 129 (81%) had a history of being a spouse abuse victim in the ACR. Of the 177 who were not spouse abuse victims in the TC program, but were applicants on behalf of their children, 26 (15%) had a history of being a spouse abuse victim in the ACR.

Of the 129 TC spouse abuse victims reported to the ACR between FY88 and FY00, we found 238 incidents of maltreatments against them (an average of 1.8 maltreatments per victim; Table 4). When we compared the severity of the spouse abuse in the ACR of the TC spouse abuse victims with the maltreatment of all other female spouse abuse victims in the ACR, we found that the TC victims were more severely maltreated. While 15.46 percent of the physical abuse incidents of the TC victims were severe, 4.85 percent were severe among all other female ACR victims ($\chi^2 = 59.25, df = 2, p < .0001$). Similarly, for emotional abuse, 6.67 percent of the incidents of maltreatment of the TC victims in the ACR

were severe compared with about 2.5 percent of all other emotional spouse abuse in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 6.05, df = 2, p < .05$). There was only one case of spouse sexual abuse in the ACR against a TC spouse victim, and thus no statistic could be calculated.

We also compared the number and percentage of maltreatment events among the spouses who had not been TC victims but who had a history of abuse in the ACR with the history of the other spouse abuse victims in the ACR. Of the 177 TC spouses who were not themselves spouse abuse victims in the TC, 26 had a history in the ACR of being a spouse abuse

Table 4 Spouse Maltreatments (n = 238) in the ACR of TC Spouse Abuse Victims (n = 219) Compared With the Overall ACR Female Spouse Abuse Victims (FY88–FY00)

Type of Maltreatment	Severity	Spouse Abuse By TC Offenders in ACRn (%)	Overall Spouse Abuse in ACR n (%)
Emotional abuse	Mild	17 (56.67)	4,547 (75.05)
	Moderate	11 (36.67)	1,359 (22.43)
	Severe	2 (6.67)	153 (2.53)*
Physical abuse	Mild	111 (53.62)	42,674 (70.47)
	Moderate	64 (30.92)	14,942 (24.68)
	Severe	32 (15.46)	2,936 (4.85)**
Sexual abuse	Mild	0 (0)	3 (10.34)
	Moderate	0 (0)	10 (34.48)
	Severe	1 (100)	15 (55.17)

* p < .05.
+ p < .0001.

victims (Fig. 3). There were 32 incidents of maltreatment involving them in the ACR: 27 of physical abuse and five of emotional abuse. For physical abuse, 3.7 percent of the maltreatment events in the ACR were severe compared with 4.8 percent for all female spouse abuse victims. There were no cases of severe emotional abuse against the TC nonvictim spouses in the ACR.

Recidivism of TC Offenders in the ACR

TC offenders in the ACR had a greater rate of recidivism than did other ACR offenders. TC child and spouse offenders had a greater percentage of more than one incident than did the other offenders in the ACR. Eighteen percent ($n = 40$) of the 219 TC child maltreatment offenders had more than one incident in the ACR compared with 10 percent of the other child maltreatment offenders in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 18.06$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$). Of the 165 TC spouse abuse offenders with a history in the ACR, 61 (37%) had repeated incidents of spouse abuse compared, with 15 percent of all spouse abuse offenders in the ACR ($\chi^2 = 63.16$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$).

We also examined the severity of the first and later incidents for both the TC offenders and for other child and spouse offenders in the ACR. We compared the severity of the first and second child maltreatment incidents of the 40 TC offenders who had more than one child maltreatment offense. Of the 40 offenders, 25 (62.5%) had first and second incidents of the same severity: 12 (30%) had nonsevere first and second incidents, and 13 (32.5%) had severe first and second incidents. Fifteen of the 40 had different severities for the two incidents: 12 (30%) had nonsevere first incidents and severe second incidents, and 3 (7.5%) had severe first incidents and nonsevere second incidents. The changes were statistically significant (McNemar test = 5.40, $df = 1$, $p = .02$).

We then compared the severity of the first and second incidents committed by all other ACR child maltreatment offenders. There were 2,451 other child abuse offenders in the ACR with more than one offense. A total of 1,883 (77%) had nonsevere first and second incidents, and 184 (7.5%) had severe first and second incidents. Of those who had different severities for the first and second incidents, 202 (8%) had nonsevere first incidents and severe second incidents, and 182 (7.4%) had severe first incidents and nonsevere second incidents. The changes in se-

verity between the first and second incidents were not significant.

There were 61 TC offenders who had more than one spouse abuse offense. Twenty-one (34.4%) had nonsevere first and second incidents, and 11 (18%) had severe first and second incidents. There were 29 who had different severities for the first and second incidents: 21 (34.4%) had nonsevere first incidents and severe second incidents, and 8 (13%) had severe first incidents and nonsevere second incidents. The differences were statistically significant (McNemar test = 5.84, $df = 1$, $p < .05$).

There were 10,159 other spouse abuse offenders in the ACR who had more than one incident. A total of 5,872 (57.8%) had nonsevere first and second incidents, and 989 (9.7%) had severe first and second incidents. There were 3,298 (32.4%) who had different severities for the first and second incidents: 1,778 (17.5%) had nonsevere first incidents and severe second incidents, and 1,520 (15%) had severe first incidents and nonsevere second incidents. The differences were statistically significant (McNemar test = 20.18, $df = 1$, $p = .001$). In this last comparison between TC and ACR spouse abuse offenders, the statistical significance was largely due to sample size. The magnitude of the difference in severity between the first and second maltreatment cases of the TC offenders was much greater than for the other ACR offenders.

Discussion

In summary, our exploration of the TC database indicates that offenders were almost exclusively enlisted male soldiers. Their victims were slightly more likely to be children (54%) than spouses (41%), while a much smaller percentage (5%) abused both spouses and children. Spouse abuse was almost exclusively physical abuse, whereas 75 percent of the children were sexual abuse victims. We were fortunate to be able to compare cases of the TC offenders with similar cases in the ACR, although we could not match the offenses. Overall, our findings indicate that the spouses and children who are TC beneficiaries received more severe maltreatment than all other similar cases in the ACR. The greater likelihood of discharge by court-martial for TC child abusers also suggests the seriousness of the offenses. We found that the TC offenders had more recidivism in their ACR history than other similar offenders in the ACR. It is not surprising that the TC beneficiaries

received more severe maltreatment than those in other cases in the ACR, since by definition the TC offenders were discharged from the Army based in part on incidents of severe abuse.

It is unlikely that the Army, or any other segment of society, can identify persons who, having committed one spouse or child maltreatment offense, will commit more severe abuse offenses. There is a requirement for reasonable preventive action by commanders, such as identifying all soldiers who might benefit from FAP assessment and treatment, monitoring treatment attendance and progress of those soldiers who have been referred to the FAP, and reviewing the cumulative impact of repeated incidents on the safety of the victim and other family members. Thus, it is particularly important that commanders monitor those soldiers who have committed more than one maltreatment offense or any severe maltreatment offense.

Families of discharged service members may not be in a position to receive treatment for past incidents of maltreatment at the installation where the soldier was discharged, because they may immediately move out of the area or refuse to participate in FAP assessment or treatment. If treatment is desired by any offender or family member, it should be encouraged by military and civilian health care providers. It is important that health care and social service providers be aware of the TC program for the families of discharged personnel who have transitioned from the Army to civil society. Spouses, former spouses, and others who have custody of children can apply for TC benefits retroactively. Those providers who come in contact with veterans who have been discharged for an abuse-related offense may consider that the offender is at risk to perpetrate more abuse.

Our data also indicate the complexity of social services that might be required by the TC families. We could not determine how many families in the ACR with incidents only of spouse abuse had children or, in those families with child maltreatment, how many of the abused children were in single-parent families. Hence, in the former, there was no possibility of estimating the number of children at risk; in the latter, it was impossible to determine how many families with child maltreatment had the potential for spouse abuse. However, from a service-delivery point of view, we estimate that the TC families have twice the percentage of combined child and spouse maltreatment as do the overall ACR families.

The complexity of the social services suggests that a thoroughly integrated delivery approach is essential, while respecting privacy and confidentiality concerns. There are many mechanisms in the Army to increase the likelihood that at-risk families will be identified and services offered to them. For example, commanding officers and military staff judge advocates should be thoroughly familiar with the process of court-martial and administrative separation of soldiers involved in abuse of dependents, in terms of the specifications required for the family to be eligible for the TC program. The Army also has extensive public awareness campaigns for soldiers and family members on the TC program as a part of domestic violence awareness campaigns.

Other interventions for those outside the Army would emphasize collaboration between civil and Army authorities, including those responsible for the FAP and the TC program, to help insure victim safety and accountability of all offenders whose cases cross jurisdictional lines. In addition, mental health and medical professionals, legal and forensic personnel, and court officials, both within and outside the Army, should become familiar with both the FAP and the TC program to be able to understand the nature of the military response to child and spouse maltreatment and thus provide better services to victims and offenders.

There are many limitations to this study. As previously mentioned, the TC program requires only that child or spouse maltreatment be a portion of the reason for a soldier's discharge. It would have been helpful if we had known the charges for which soldiers were convicted for all offenses. For example, it could be that those who maltreated children were court-martialed for more serious offenses than those soldiers whose discharge involved only spouse abuse.

This study suggests many possibilities for future research. For example, the severity of maltreatment and the distributions of the types of maltreatment were very different in the TC than in the overall ACR. One might ask why there were no child neglect cases in the TC database when child neglect by the TC offenders was found in the ACR, and it was more severe.

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Patterns of Maltreatment by Discharged Soldiers

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