

# ***CHILD ABUSE AND REPORT CARDS***

*By*

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The evidence is clear surrounding corporal punishment by parents. Study after study confirms: it doesn't work. But there's more.

A study out last month in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) – Pediatrics has found a strong association between physical abuse and release of report cards for children ages 5 to 11. While the study is not an empirical examination and was conducted in the state of Florida, the alarming potential correlation has implications for schools. The study relied on verified incidents of abuse as determined by calls to a child abuse hotline.

*The JAMA report stated: Release of report cards on Monday through Thursday was not associated with increased incident rates of verified cases of physical abuse the same or next day.*

*However, a nearly 4-fold increase in the incident rates of verified physical child abuse occurred on Saturdays after a Friday report card release.*



Why the difference? The study noted that one possibility might be that when report cards are released earlier in the week, other pressing matters may distract parents. Still, another explanation may be that caregivers may purposefully want to avoid harsh punishment when their children may come under the watchful eyes of mandated reporters such as teachers the following day.

While the study concludes that its findings are speculative and do not indicate causality, its implications are clear for schools and the release of school report cards.

(Special thanks to Tony Kildare, Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health Program Manager, who shared this compelling study at a recent meeting of the Yuba County Children's Wellness and Child Abuse Prevention Council).