

California Institute of Preventive Medicine

Vincent J. Felitti, MD; President

May 1, 2016

Dear Fellow Health Practitioners:

This letter is to let you know that I support the *Rule Out Abuse Campaign* that was developed by Dr. Nora Baladerian of the Disability and Abuse Project of the Spectrum Institute.

As you know, I and many other medical researchers and practitioners, are well aware of the traumatic events that children experience and that these events affect them both at the time they occur and well into adulthood.

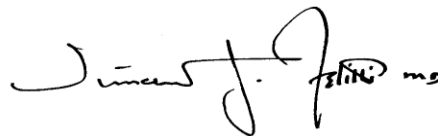
Dr. Baladerian has pointed out that this awareness has not specifically included the effects of such trauma on children and adults with disabilities. They are abused at rates much higher than the generic population. At the lowest, it is 3.4 times the rate of abuse in the general population. As health practitioners, we should be aware of the incidence and prevalence of abuse and maltreatment among those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other disabilities.

Dr. Baladerian informed me of her concern that across the nation, when she is involved in cases of abuse of children and adults with developmental disabilities, she has found time and again that the parents have taken them to their specialist physicians and mental health practitioners with their list of changes they have noted in their children, but health professionals have not linked the symptoms of abuse presented by the parents to abuse. When the parents learn, either from law enforcement or the press that abuse that has been occurring in these programs, they invariably say, "Now it all makes sense." Dr. Baladerian wants the list of changes the parents observe and report to their physicians to be analyzed so that the possibility of abuse as a contributing factor is included in the constellation of causes that are considered. Although the reason abuse is not considered in such cases is unclear, Dr. Baladerian wishes the medical community to be proactive in filling the gap, increasing awareness that abuse may be the cause of the symptoms list presented.

I encourage you and your professional colleagues to respond positively to Dr. Baladerian's offer to make presentations to your programs, read the materials she has made available, and design an informational program in your arena to add the Rule Out Abuse practice to your existing algorithms for understanding the cause of the list of complaints presented by the parents and caregivers of your patients who have developmental and other disabilities.

Complete information about the campaign is available for free download at this website: <www.disabilityandabuse.org>.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent J. Felitti MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vincent" and last name "Felitti" being the most prominent parts.

Co-Principal Investigator of the ACE Study

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