

Children at risk and the responsibility of the Public Dental Service



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Agenda

- Requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC)?
- Child abuse in Sweden
- Child Security Net
- The Public Dental Service and its responsibility
- How does the Public Dental Service take action?

“Isn't the CRC completed in Sweden?”

- A lack of knowledge of the situation for children in Sweden
- A lack of knowledge of what the CRC requires



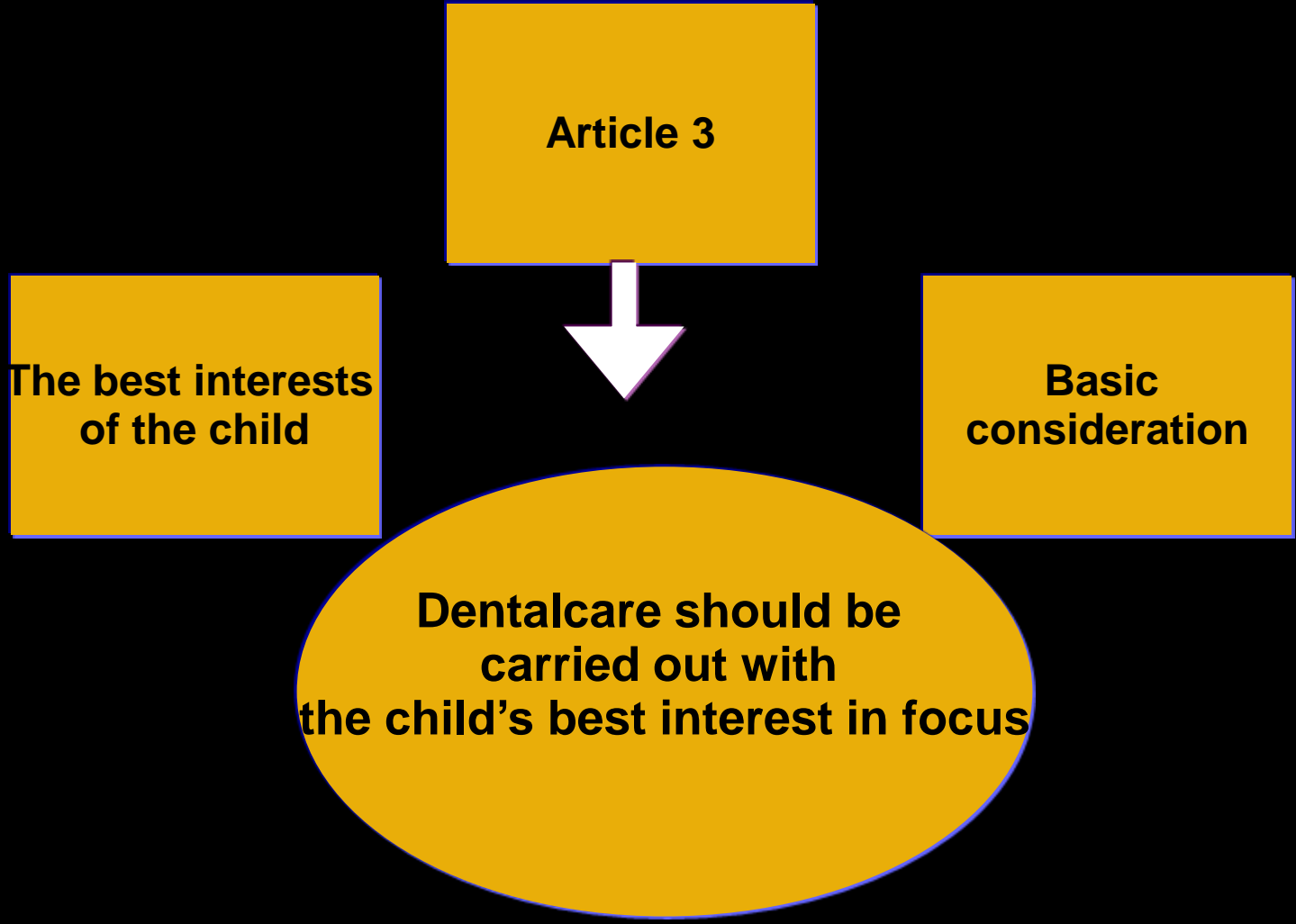
Article 2



**Non-
discrimination**

**All children
have the right to
be protected**

**All children have an equal right to
good dental care**

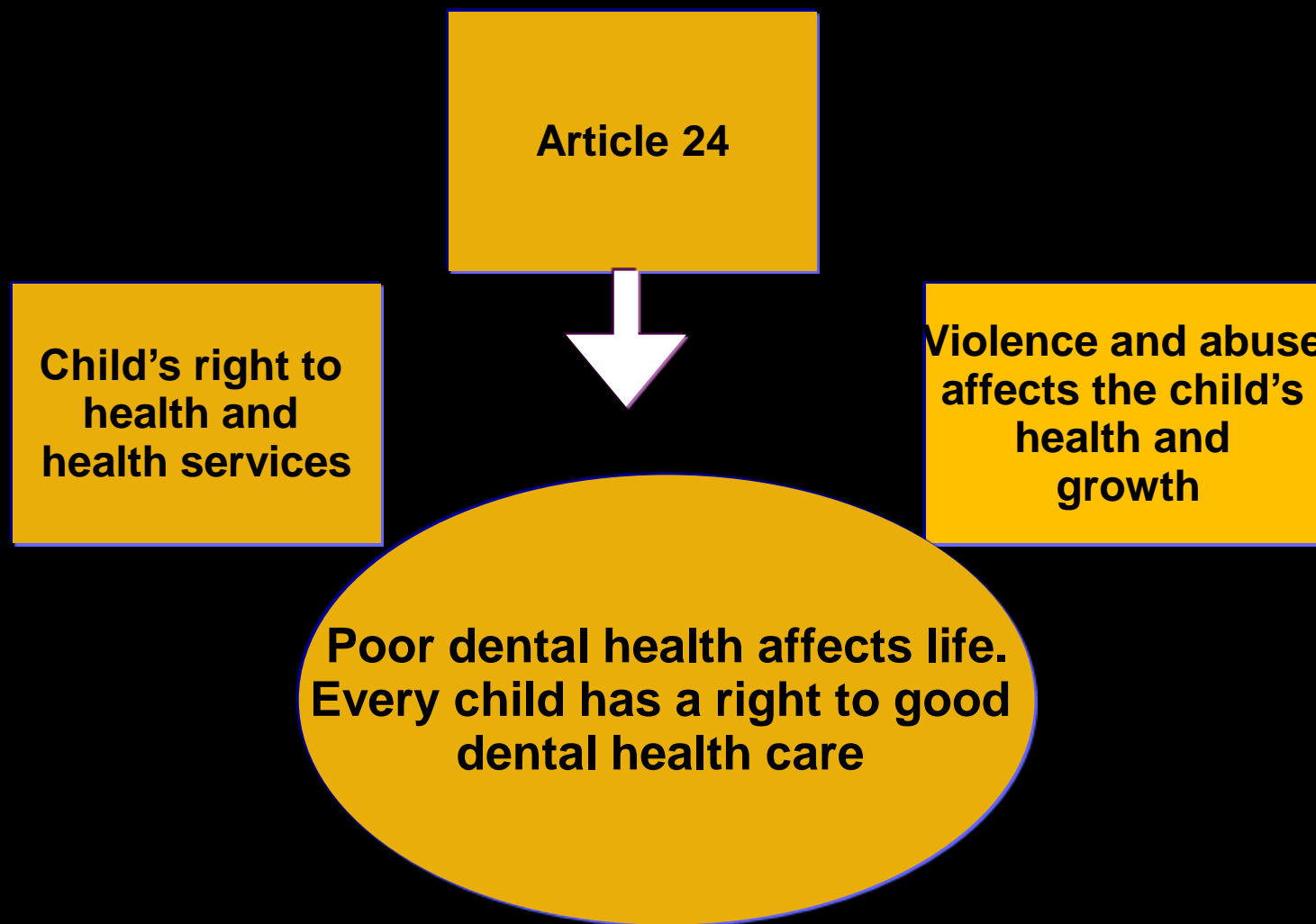


Article 19

**Child's right to
protection from
all forms of
violence**

**All forms of
violence against
children is harmful
and prohibited**

**The Public Dental Service
must recognize
any indication of abuse
and act on it appropriately**



Child abuse

”Child abuse is when an adult subjects a child to physical or psychological violence, to injuries, offenses and sexual abuse, or neglects to provide the child’s basic needs.”

*The Swedish Parliamentary Committee on Child Abuse
(SOU 2001:72)*

Abuse frequency

- **Student questionnaire.** 13 percent of all pupils stated they were beaten by their parents or by another adult in their home.
- **Parent questionnaire.** Corporal punishment has not declined compared to the year 2000. Instead, the amount of parents who have pushed, grabbed or shaken their child has increased and young children are most vulnerable to corporal punishment.
- **Serious assault.** Children subjected to serious forms of assault equals about 3%.

Few children receive support

- Regional studies involving 8500 children show that **1 out of 7 children** are subjected to violence in their homes.
- More than half of those with experiences of domestic violence have also been beaten.
- According to the study only **7 percent** of the afflicted children have informed a professional officer.

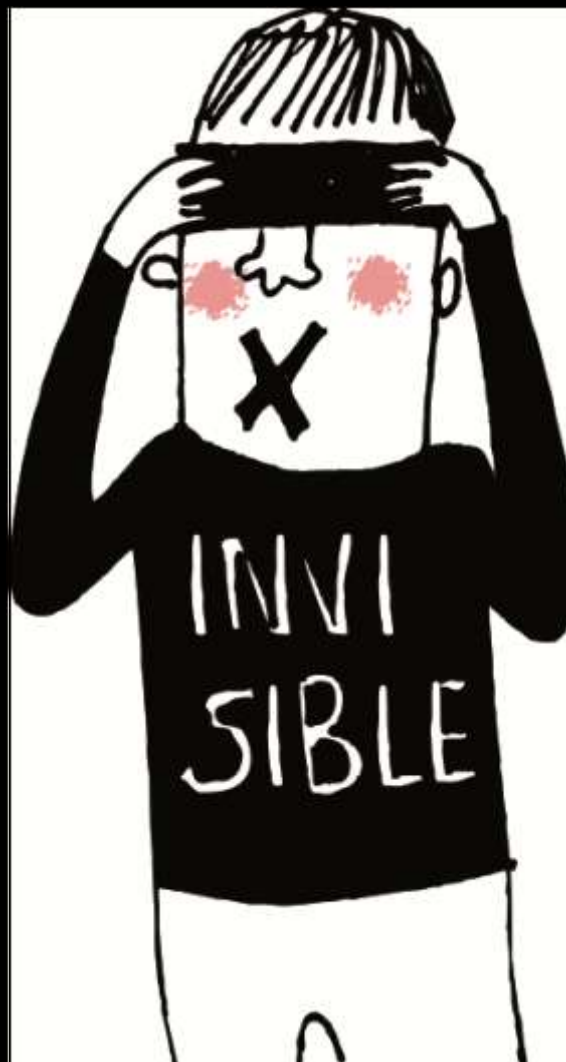


57% of all child assault injuries in Sweden reported between 1999-2005 concerned injuries to the face and possibly the mouth. (The National Board of Health and Welfare: Violence against children).

What makes the situation at the dentist so special?

- All children in Sweden are summoned to the dentist on a regular basis.
- Patients come for an examination with their parents, who are not conscious of the dentists ability to draw attention to signs of neglect or violence.
- When the dentist shifts his/her focus from the mouth to other parts of the face, throat and neck, in certain situations he/she can observe signs of violence or abuse.
- The patient is sitting and is well lit. The dentist has a good visual overview on the whole of the head and throat region.
- The dental status is affected by different types of abuse and violence. It is 5-8 times more likely that children who are subjected to abuse have untreated tooth decay compared with other children.

Visa filmen...





**Victoria Adjo Climbié -
died at the age of nine!**



The Public Dental Service and its responsibility

- **The Public Dental Service has a statutory responsibility to detect signs of children being mistreated and to notify their concern to the Social Services.**
- Authorities whose functions concern children and youth are required to immediately notify the social services committee, if they become aware of situations within their activities where the social welfare committee need to intervene to protect a minor.

How do dental service clinics act in their meetings with children at risk?

- A national survey to all public dental service clinics. (about 95-98 percent of all children receive dental care via the public dental service clinics).
- Purpose: Through the study, the Ombudsman for Children wish to map out the level of experience housed by the Swedish Public Dental Service in their meetings with children at risk, but also to examine their preparedness to handle such situations.

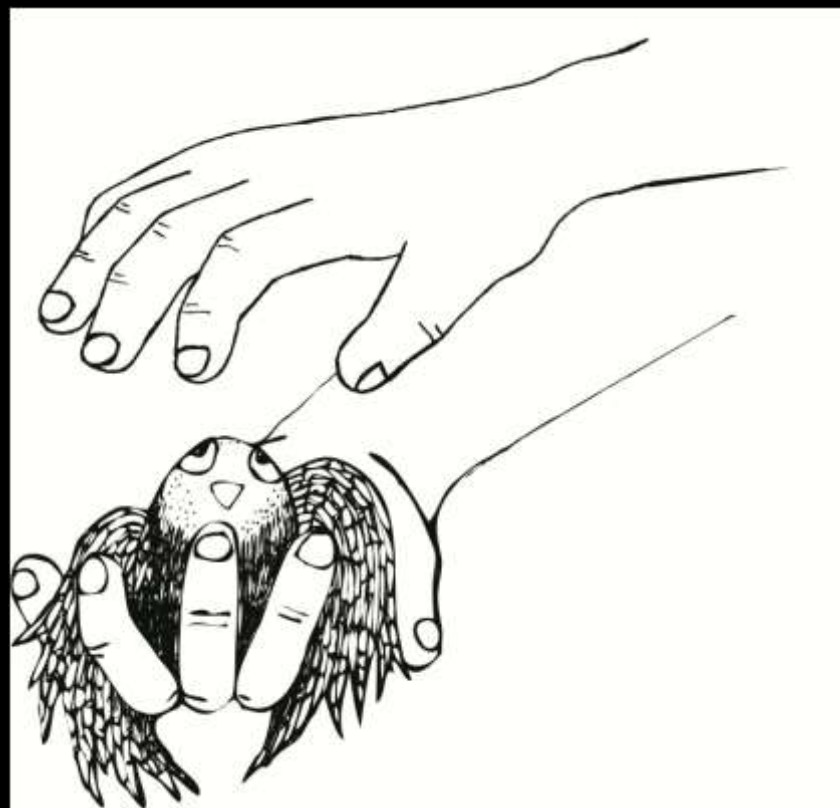
Query areas

- Have your clinic reported concern about a child to the Social Services...?
- Knowledge/guidelines...?
- Children who are absent...?

Questionnaire to the clinic department heads

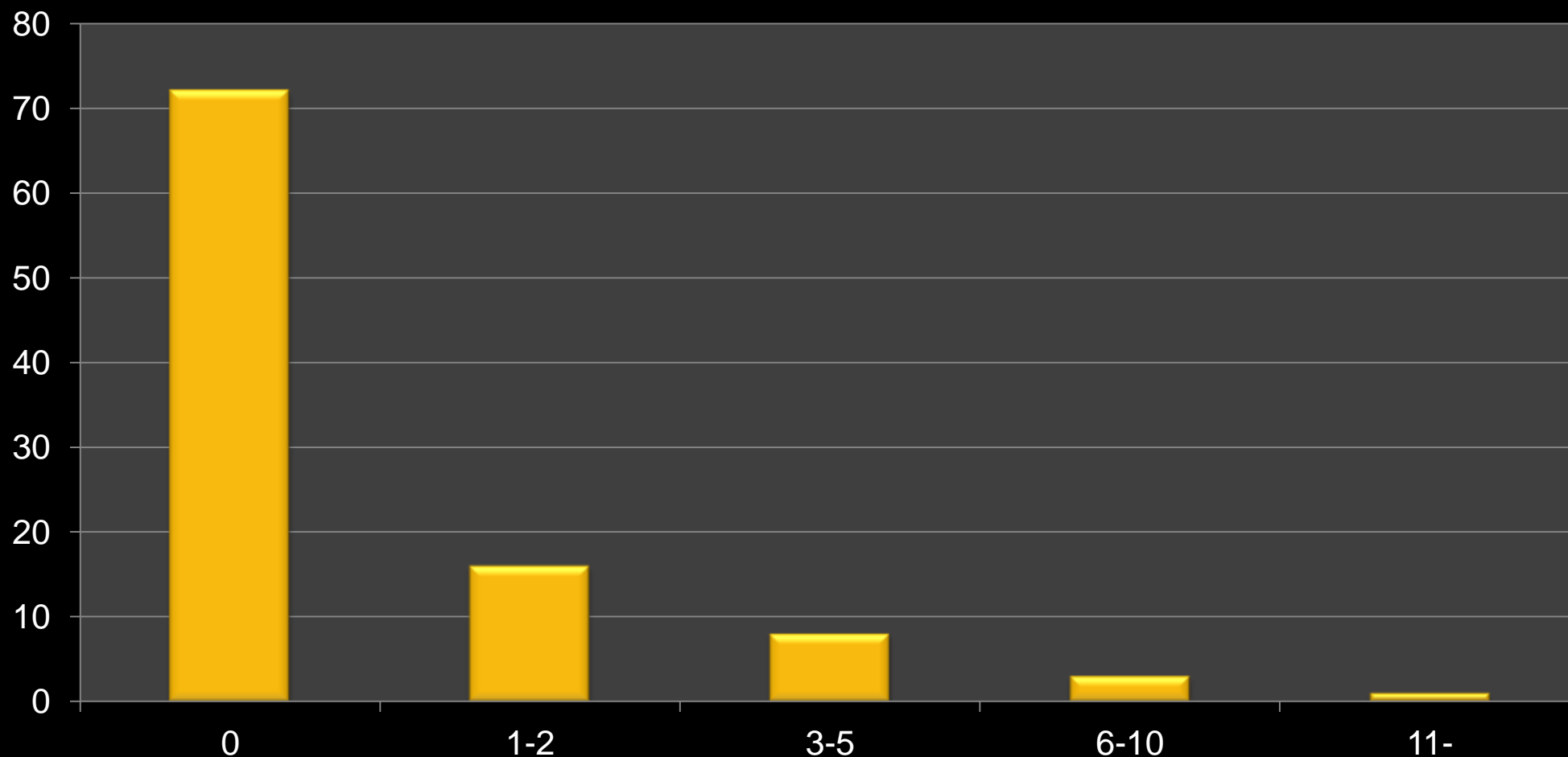
- Webb questionnaire to all clinics within the Public Dental Service
- 621 clinics in total
- Response rate 95 %

Reports to the Social Services...?



How many reports to the Social Services have been made from your clinic during the last 12 months?

Clinical department heads replied accordingly.

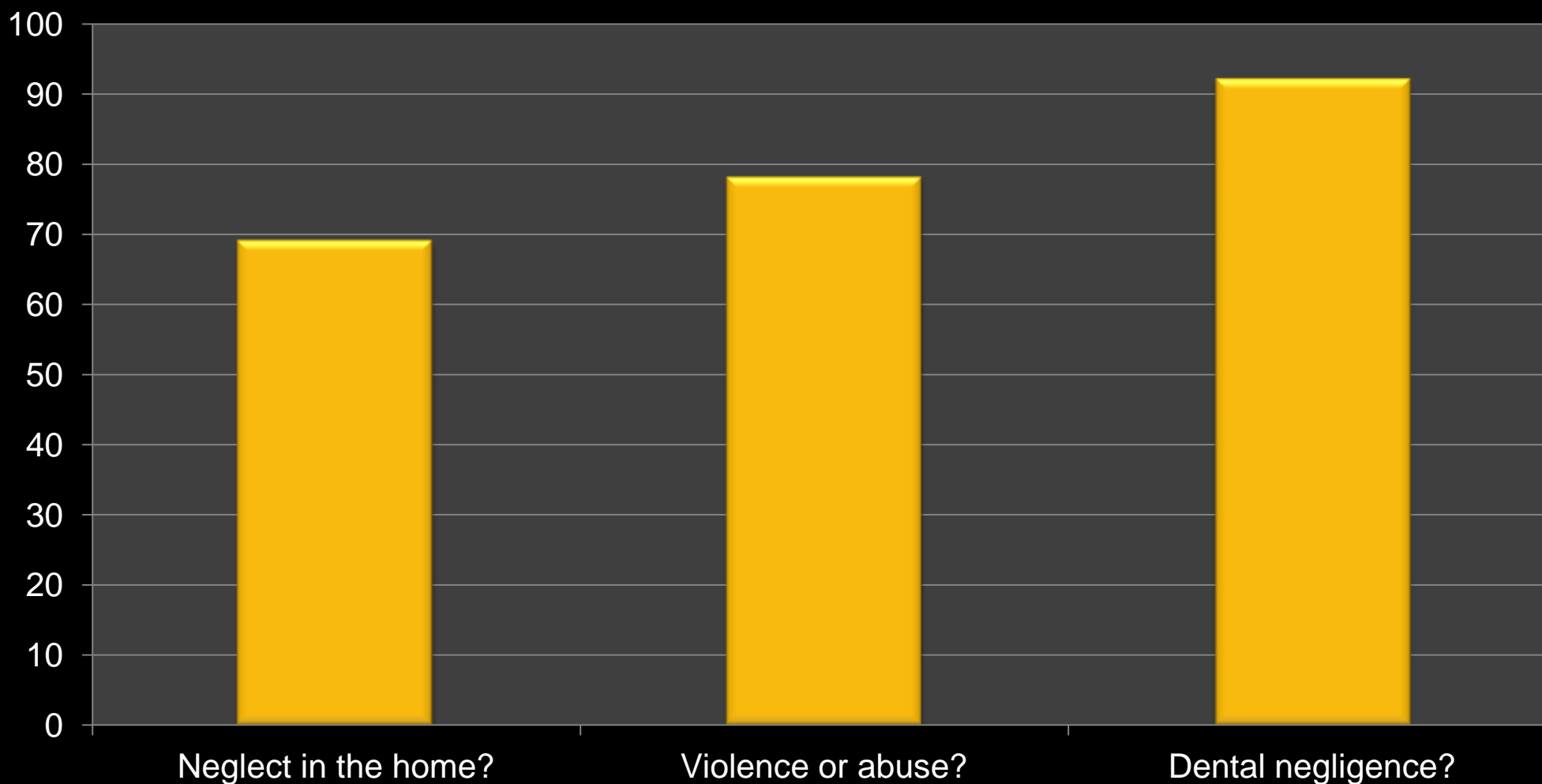


Information/guidelines...?



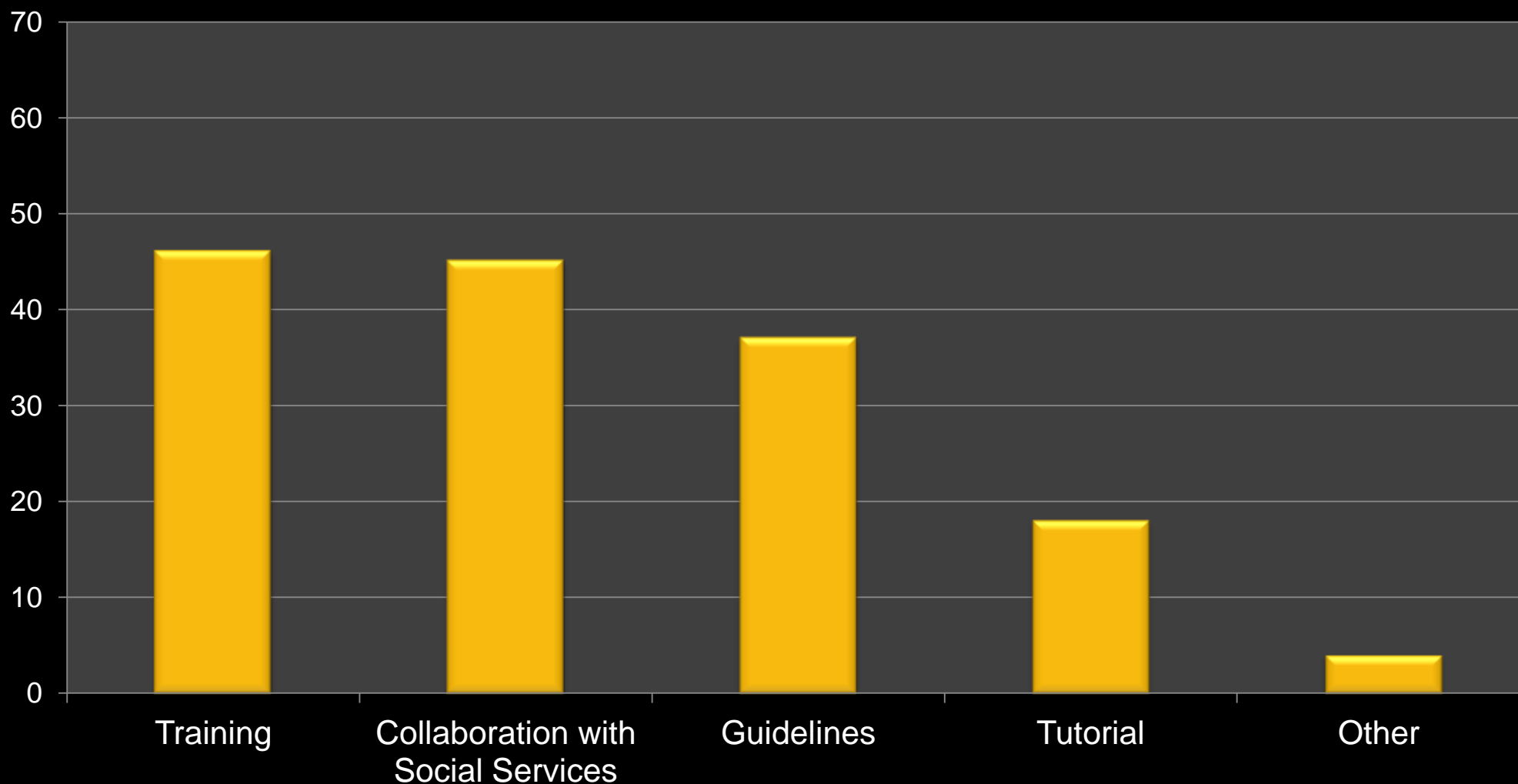
Are there any guidelines at the clinic on how dentists should conduct a meeting with a child who they suspect is subjected to...?

Clinical department heads replied accordingly .



What kind of support does your staff require, according to your assessment?

Clinical department heads replied accordingly.

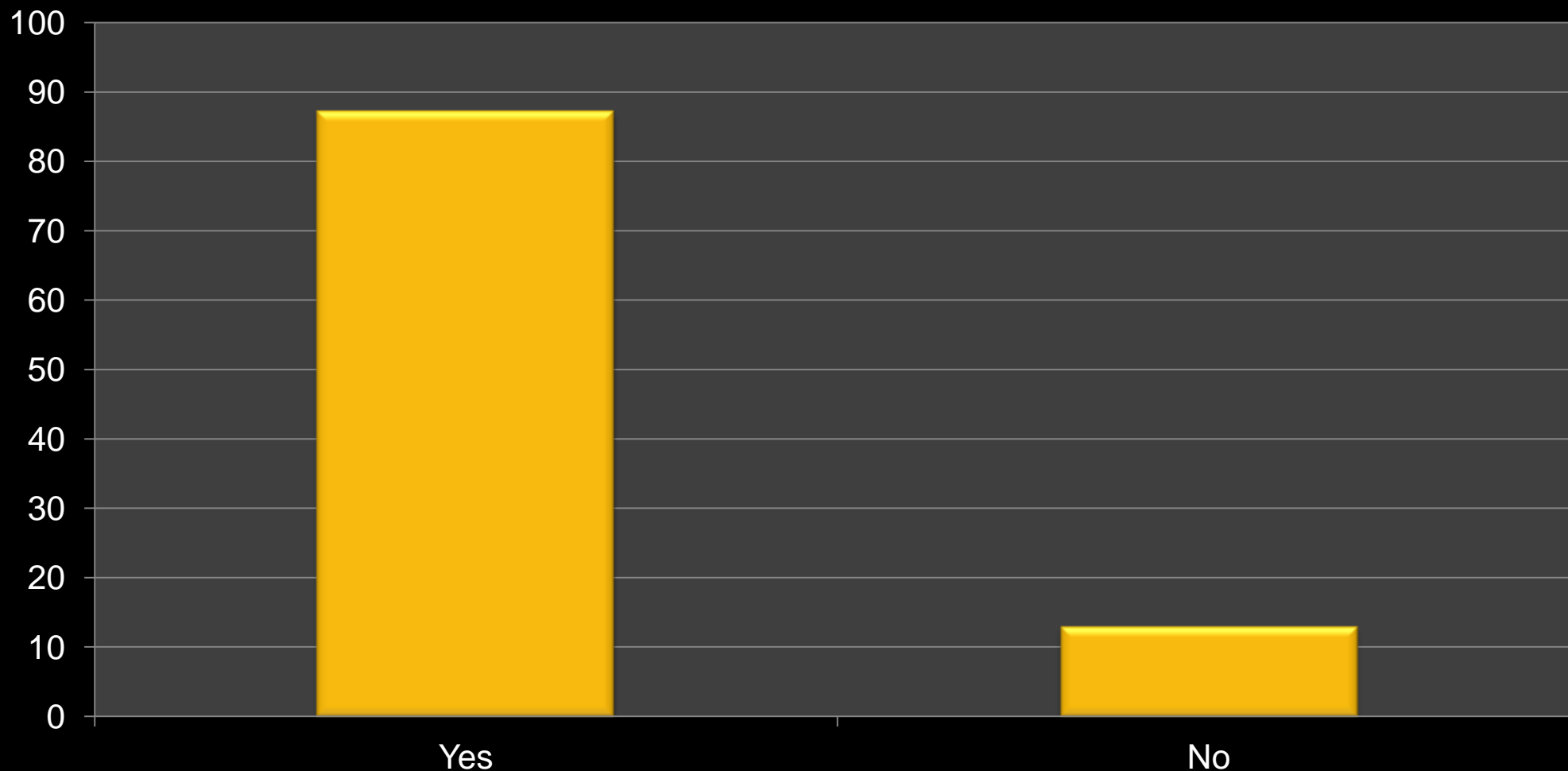


Children who are absent....?



Has it occurred that children are entirely absent from dental visits despite repeated summons during the last 12 months?

Clinical department heads replied accordingly .



How would you react if a child is absent on several occasions from visits you announced?

Multiple answers can be specified. The clinical department heads replied accordingly.

	Percent
We contact the child's guardian	91
We issue a new call	41
We contact the Social Services	29
Other	28
We file a complaint to the Social Services	21
Nothing in particular, the child is summoned to the next scheduled routine check-up	10
We file a police report	0

Conclusions

- The public dental health care system meet with children who are at risk and in need of support on a regular basis.
- A large number of children at risk can be detected through the examinations being performed within the dental health care system.
- The dental health care system can play a crucial part by cooperating with other agents within a childs "security net".

Measures

- The National Board of Health and Welfare, county councils and clinic managers need to clarify the dental health care systems important role in reporting suspicions concerning children at risk.
- County councils need to enable dental professionals to participate in relevant training on how to detect children at risk.
- Clinic department heads within the Public Dental Service need to ensure that dental staff have knowledge of and access to existing guidelines.
- Training in how to detect children at risk should be compulsory during undergraduate studies (for dentists).

Thank you for listening!

