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## Overview of Brain Injury and the Brain Injury Association of America

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a blow or jolt to the head arising from blunt or penetrating trauma or from acceleration/deceleration forces in the skull that result in a decreased level of consciousness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year, at least 1.4 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Annually, TBI claims more than 50,000 lives and leaves more than 80,000 individuals with lifelong disabilities. With a brain injury occurring every 23 seconds, this public health concern ranks as the leading cause of death and disability in children and young adults.

Males are twice as likely to sustain a brain injury as females, but people of every age, race, gender and socioeconomic status are at risk for brain injuries. Brain injuries are caused by falls, motor vehicle crashes, assaults, and sports/recreation accidents and can lead to physical, cognitive, and psychosocial or behavioral impairments ranging from balance and coordination problems to loss of hearing, vision or speech. Fatigue, memory loss, concentration difficulty, anxiety, depression, impulsivity; and impaired judgment are also common after brain injury. Even so called "mild" injuries can have devastating consequences that require intensive treatment and long-term care.

Often called the "silent epidemic," brain injury affects people in ways that are invisible. The injury can lower performance at school and at work, interfere with personal relationships and bring financial ruin. The annual estimated cost to society exceeds \$60 billion, and consumers mistakenly believe employer health plans or the government will pay for needed services in a health crisis. In reality, insurance policies are geared to wellness and routine care, strictly limiting the type, amount, and length of rehabilitation available to most people.

The Brain Injury Association of America was founded in 1980 by individuals who wanted to improve the quality of life for their family members and patients who had sustained brain injuries. Today, the Association is headquartered just outside Washington, DC, and encompasses a nationwide network of more than 40 state affiliates with a shared mission of creating a better future through brain injury prevention, research, education and advocacy.

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The Brain Injury Association of America and its affiliate network welcomes more than 2 million website visitors each year and answers more than 100,000 individual requests for information and help. The Association and its affiliates distribute millions of awareness, prevention and information materials and host world-class educational symposia, seminars and workshops in venues across the country and on-line.

In the month of March each year, the Association sponsors Brain Injury Awareness Month to increase awareness of brain injury and its causes and consequences. The Association is home to The Lynn A. Chiaverotti Memorial Fund, which educates children and adults about the dangers of brain injury and distributes multi-purpose sport helmets free of charge. The Association and its state affiliates also work in collaboration with NASCAR legend Ernie Irvan's Race2Safety to host Leadership and Awareness to Promote Safety Walks (LAPS Walks) at race tracks across the country.

The Brain Injury Association of America and its nationwide network of affiliates enjoy a 25-year legacy of public policy achievement in the U.S. Congress and among multiple Federal and State agencies. Accomplishments include:

- Establishment of the TBI Model Systems of Care, administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research in the U.S. Department of Education and amendment of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 to ensure students with traumatic brain injury receive a free and appropriate education;
- Establishment of the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, a joint project of the U.S. Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration, providing research, treatment and education to military personnel and their families after brain injury; and
- Passage of the TBI Act of 1996, and related amendments, providing multiple initiatives within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services including funding for scientific research at the National Institutes of Health; surveillance and public education at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and state grant programs that improve access to comprehensive systems of care for people with brain injury and their families as administered by Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

By acting as a clearing house of information and resources, participating in legislative advocacy, facilitating prevention awareness, hosting educational programs and engaging grassroots advocacy to generate millions of dollars for research, treatment and support, the Brain Injury Association of America and its affiliates offer vision, voice and value to the 5.3 million brain injury survivors with a lifelong disability plus their families and the researchers, clinicians and professionals who provide treatment and long-term care.

For more information about brain injury or the Brain Injury Association of America, please visit our website at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

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