

# Child Abuse and Neglect

## DEFINITION

*Child abuse and neglect* is the total unduplicated number of victims of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Child neglect includes emotional, educational, physical, and medical neglect, as well as a failure to provide for basic needs.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Children need love, affection, and nurturing from their parents and caregivers for healthy physical and emotional development. Experiencing child abuse or neglect can have lifelong consequences for a child's health, well-being, and relationships with others. Parents and caregivers are at increased risk for maltreating children if they are overwhelmed by multiple risk factors such as poverty, substance abuse, intergenerational trauma, isolation, and/or unstable housing.<sup>1</sup> Children who have been maltreated often face long-term consequences including chronic health and psychological problems. They are at increased risk for delinquency, substance abuse, mental health problems, teen pregnancy, impaired cognition, and low academic achievement.<sup>2,3</sup>

Responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and ensuring child safety are important functions of child protection systems. Maintaining the capacity to focus on prevention is

equally critical and more cost-effective. In Rhode Island, if an investigation does not reveal maltreatment but family stressors and risk factors are identified, Child Protective Services (CPS) refers families to community-based support services to reduce the risk of future involvement with the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). When maltreatment has occurred, a determination may be made that it is safe for the children to remain at home with support services provided to their family. In both of these cases, DCYF makes referrals to regional Family Care Community Partnerships (FCCP) agencies. They work with the family to identify appropriate services and resources, including natural supports (persons and resources that families can access independent from formal services).<sup>4</sup>

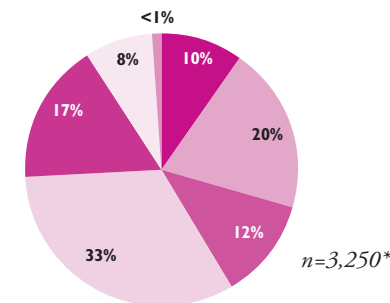
In 2019 in Rhode Island, there were 2,249 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 3,109 Rhode Island children. The rate of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18 was almost two times higher in the four core cities (20.1 victims per 1,000 children) than in the remainder of the state (10.8 victims per 1,000 children). Almost half (42%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in 2019 were young children under age six and almost one-third (30%) were ages three and younger.<sup>5</sup>



## Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2019

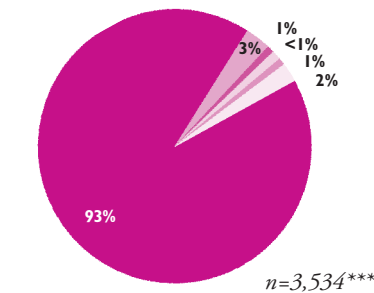
By Age of Victim\*

10% (328)	Under Age 1
20% (655)	Ages 1 to 3
12% (391)	Ages 4 to 5
33% (1,068)	Ages 6 to 11
17% (557)	Ages 12 to 15
8% (250)	Ages 16 and Older
<1% (1)	Unknown



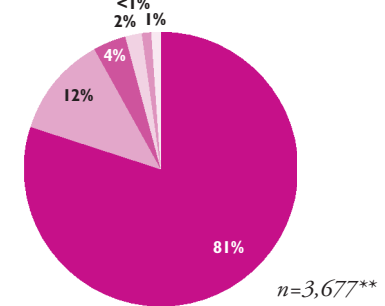
By Relationship of Perpetrator to Victims\*\*\*

93% (3,276)	Parents
3% (123)	Relatives/Household Members
1% (51)	Foster Parents
<1% (10)	Child Care Providers
1% (20)	Residential Facility Staff
2% (54)	Other or Unknown



By Type of Neglect/Abuse\*\*

81% (2,968)	Neglect
12% (453)	Physical Abuse
4% (146)	Sexual Abuse
2% (61)	Medical Neglect
<1% (13)	Emotional Abuse
1% (36)	Other



### Notes on Pie Charts

\*These data reflect an unduplicated count of child victims which includes out-of-state child victims. The number of victims is higher than the number of indicated investigations. One indicated investigation can involve more than one child victim.

\*\*This number is greater than the unduplicated count of child victims because children often experience more than one maltreatment event and/or more than one type of abuse. Within each type of abuse, the number of child victims is unduplicated.

\*\*\*Perpetrators can abuse more than one child and can abuse a child more than once. This number is a duplicated count of perpetrators based on the number of abuse and neglect incidents. Under Rhode Island law, Child Protective Services can only investigate alleged perpetrators who are legally defined as caretakers to the victim(s), except in situations of child sexual abuse by another child.

Source: Rhode Island DCYF, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2019. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



## DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline Calls for Reports of Abuse and/or Neglect, Investigations,\* and Indicated Investigations, Rhode Island, 2009-2019

YEAR	TOTAL # UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	% AND # OF REPORTS WITH COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS
2009	12,189	52% (6,362)	2,075
2010	13,069	53% (6,956)	2,392
2011	13,382	49% (6,520)	2,225
2012	13,540	50% (6,784)	2,266
2013	13,905	50% (6,975)	2,294
2014	14,735	51% (7,573)	2,413
2015	14,402	45% (6,470)	2,227
2016	14,942	40% (5,935)	2,074
2017	15,945	42% (6,628)	2,404
2018	21,837	38% (8,296)	2,430
2019	19,401	37% (7,240)	2,249

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2009-2019.

\*One investigation can be generated by multiple hotline calls. Investigations can result in a finding of indicated, unfounded, or unable to complete (as when essential party cannot be found).

◆ Between 2018 and 2019 in Rhode Island, the number of unduplicated child maltreatment reports decreased by 11% and the number of completed investigations decreased by 13%. The number of indicated investigations also decreased by 7% between 2018 and 2019. In 2019, 31% (2,249) of the 7,240 completed investigations of child maltreatment were indicated.<sup>6</sup> An indicated investigation is one in which there is a “preponderance of evidence that a child has been abused and/or neglected”.<sup>7</sup>

◆ Of the 19,401 maltreatment reports in 2019, 53% (10,235) were classified as “information/ referrals”.<sup>8</sup> Information/referrals are reports made to the CPS Hotline that contain a concern about the well-being of a child but do not meet the criteria for an investigation. Criteria for investigation include that the victim is a minor, the alleged perpetrator is responsible for the child’s welfare, there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect exist, and there is a specific incident or pattern of incidents suggesting that harm can be identified. In February of 2019, the Department began using a standardized screening tool to determine whether Hotline reports that don’t meet criteria for investigation should be referred for family functioning assessment. When essential criteria for investigation are not present, the family functioning assessment may lead to the development of a safety plan with the family, including referral and delivery of other services.<sup>9</sup>



## Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Due to Child Abuse and/or Neglect, Rhode Island, 2014-2018

YEAR	# OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS*	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS*	# OF DEATHS**
2014	102	44	1
2015	94	28	0
2016	79	8	1
2017	107	18	2
2018	102	13	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, 2014-2018.

Note: Effective October 1, 2015, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes changed from the 9th classification to the 10th classification, which may impact comparability across the years.

\*The number of Emergency Department visits and the number of hospitalizations include both suspected and confirmed assessments of child abuse and neglect.

\*\*Due to a change in data source, data for child deaths due to child abuse and/or neglect are only comparable with Factbooks since 2013.

◆ Between 2014 and 2018, there were 484 emergency department visits, 111 hospitalizations, and five deaths of Rhode Island children under age 18 due to child abuse and/or neglect.<sup>10</sup> Nationally, 73% of child maltreatment deaths involved neglect and 46% involved physical abuse (because a victim may have suffered more than one type of maltreatment, these categories are not mutually exclusive).<sup>11</sup>



## Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

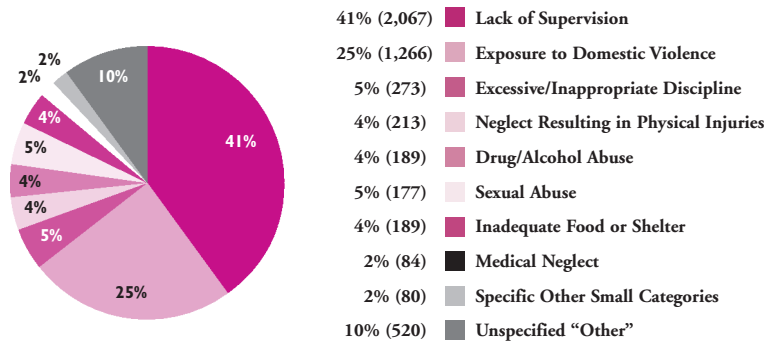
◆ Many parents at risk of child abuse and neglect lack essential parenting skills and are struggling with a combination of social and economic issues. These families can benefit from programs that enhance social supports, parental resilience, and knowledge of parenting and child development.<sup>12</sup> In addition, providing access to child care, early childhood learning programs, and evidence-based home visiting programs (such as the Nurse-Family Partnership) to families with multiple risk factors can prevent the occurrence and recurrence of child abuse and neglect.<sup>13,14</sup>

◆ In 2019, Rhode Island had 13.9 child victims of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children, which is lower than the rate (14.6) in 2018. Woonsocket (32.7 victims per 1,000 children) had the highest rate of child victims of abuse and neglect in the state. Other cities and towns with rates higher than 20 victims per 1,000 children were Central Falls (25.3), Newport (26.5), Pawtucket (24.0), and West Warwick (30.3).<sup>15</sup>

# Child Abuse and Neglect



**Indicated Allegations of Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2019**



n=5,058\*

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2019.

\*The total refers to indicated allegations of neglect. Some children were victims of neglect more than once. Multiple allegations may be involved in each indicated investigation.

- ◆ Of the 5,058 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect to children under age 18 in Rhode Island in 2019, 41% involved lack of supervision. This highlights the importance of access to high-quality, affordable child care, preschool, and after-school programs.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ The second largest category of neglect (25%) is “exposure to domestic violence.” These are instances where the neglect is related to the child witnessing domestic violence in the home.<sup>17</sup>
- ◆ The “specific other small categories” include: educational neglect (29), tying/close confinement (15), abandonment (8), emotional neglect (5), corporal punishment (3), failure to thrive (4), emotional abuse (8), inappropriate restraint (2), and poisoning/noxious substances (1).<sup>18</sup>



**Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2019**

◆ In Rhode Island in 2019, there were 177 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of child sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. There were 137 (77%) female victims and 40 (23%) male victims with confirmed allegations. Twenty-eight percent of the female victims were under age 12 while 53% of the male victims were under age 12.<sup>19</sup>

◆ In the majority of sexual abuse cases, the perpetrator is a relative or person known to the victim. Sexual abuse by a stranger is less likely.<sup>20</sup>



**Services & Supports for Young Children in the Child Welfare System**

- ◆ In Rhode Island in State Fiscal Year 2019, there were 847 children under age three who were victims of child abuse and neglect. Because maltreated infants and toddlers are more likely to have a developmental delay, federal legislation requires states to have procedures in place to refer victims to developmental screening and/or directly to Early Intervention (Part C of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*).<sup>21,22</sup>
- ◆ Of the 847 young victims of child abuse and neglect identified in State Fiscal Year 2019 in Rhode Island, 637 (75%) were referred to First Connections for a developmental screening, 156 (18%) were referred to Early Intervention for an evaluation, 44 (5%) were already screened or enrolled in Early Intervention, and 10 (1%) lost contact or were not referred.<sup>23</sup>
- ◆ Of the 267 young victims of child abuse and neglect that were referred to Early Intervention (either directly or through First Connections or another program), 229 (86%) were found eligible, 34 (12%) were found not eligible and 4 (1%) were in process.<sup>24</sup>
- ◆ Of all 847 young victims of child abuse and neglect in State Fiscal Year 2019, 81 (10%) were enrolled in an evidence-based family home visiting program in Rhode Island.<sup>25</sup>
- ◆ Of the 476 victims of child abuse and neglect under age six in foster care from October 2018-September 2019, 339 (71%) were enrolled in a licensed child care or early learning center. Of these, 96 (28%) were enrolled in a high-quality program with a 4- or 5-star BrightStars rating.<sup>26</sup>

Table 32.

Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2019

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT	INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS PER 1,000 CHILDREN	# OF VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT	CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT VICTIMS PER 1,000 CHILDREN
Barrington	4,597	13	2.8	21	4.6
Bristol	3,623	19	5.2	27	7.5
Burrillville	3,576	20	5.6	34	9.5
Central Falls	5,644	95	16.8	143	25.3
Charlestown	1,506	15	10.0	23	15.3
Coventry	7,770	53	6.8	77	9.9
Cranston	16,414	112	6.8	159	9.7
Cumberland	7,535	56	7.4	80	10.6
East Greenwich	3,436	15	4.4	27	7.9
East Providence	9,177	90	9.8	123	13.4
Exeter	1,334	7	5.2	9	6.7
Foster	986	12	12.2	16	16.2
Glocester	2,098	11	5.2	26	12.4
Hopkinton	1,845	18	9.8	25	13.6
Jamestown	1,043	4	3.8	4	3.8
Johnston	5,480	52	9.5	50	9.1
Lincoln	4,751	31	6.5	40	8.4
Little Compton	654	1	1.5	1	1.5
Middletown	3,652	21	5.8	41	11.2
Narragansett	2,269	17	7.5	22	9.7
New Shoreham	163	0	0.0	0	0.0
Newport	4,083	72	17.6	108	26.5
North Kingstown	6,322	27	4.3	55	8.7
North Providence	5,514	65	11.8	94	17.0
North Smithfield	2,456	13	5.3	18	7.3
Pawtucket	16,575	274	16.5	397	24.0
Portsmouth	3,996	26	6.5	24	6.0
Providence	41,634	449	10.8	617	14.8
Richmond	1,849	4	2.2	5	2.7
Scituate	2,272	9	4.0	16	7.0
Smithfield	3,625	10	2.8	8	2.2
South Kingstown	5,416	29	5.4	44	8.1
Tiverton	2,998	21	7.0	33	11.0
Warren	1,940	23	11.9	30	15.5
Warwick	15,825	82	5.2	131	8.3
West Greenwich	1,477	6	4.1	6	4.1
West Warwick	5,746	130	22.6	174	30.3
Westerly	4,787	57	11.9	76	15.9
Woonsocket	9,888	225	22.8	323	32.7
Unknown Residence	NA	11	NA	2	NA
Out of State	NA	54	NA	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	73,741	1,043	14.1	1,480	20.1
Remainder of State	150,215	1,206	8.0	1,629	10.8
Rhode Island	223,956	2,249	10.0	3,109	13.9

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), Calendar Year 2019. These data include child victims who child victims living out-of-state and in unknown residences.

Victims of child abuse/neglect are unduplicated counts of victims with substantiated allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. More than one victim can be involved in an investigation.

An indicated investigation is an investigated report of child abuse and/or neglect for which a preponderance of evidence exists that child abuse and/or neglect occurred. An indicated investigation can involve more than one child and multiple allegations.

Data cannot be compared to Factbooks prior to 2009. The denominator is the number of children under age 18 according to the U.S. Census 2010 and the numerator is an unduplicated count of child victims. Previous Factbooks used children under age 21 as the denominator and the indicated investigations as the numerator to calculate the rate of indicated investigations per 1,000 children.

In 2019, Rhode Island increased the eligibility for voluntary extended DCYF services to under age 21.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

<sup>1,12,13</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2019). *Strong and Thriving Families: 2019 prevention resource guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>2</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. *Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect*. (2019). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

<sup>3</sup> Vasileva, M., & Petermann, F. (2016). Attachment, development, and mental health in abused and neglected preschool children in foster care: A meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 1*(16), 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services, 2019.

(continued on page 184)