

# Child Abuse and Neglect

## DEFINITION

*Child abuse and neglect* is the total number of indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children. "Indicated investigation" means that a preponderance of evidence exists that child abuse and/or neglect occurred following an investigation of an abuse report. An indicated investigation can involve more than one child and multiple allegations (claims) of different forms of abuse. Child abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Child neglect includes emotional, educational, physical and medical neglect, as well as a failure to provide basic needs.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Preventing child abuse and neglect is critical to helping children grow into strong, healthy, productive adults and good parents. Children are at increased risk for maltreatment if their parents or caregivers are overwhelmed by multiple problems such as inadequate income, family stressors, isolation from extended family or friends, drug and/or alcohol abuse, depression, or domestic violence.<sup>1</sup> Child abuse and neglect are linked to increases in low academic achievement, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, behavioral, emotional and mental health problems, teenage pregnancy, adult criminality and increased likelihood of

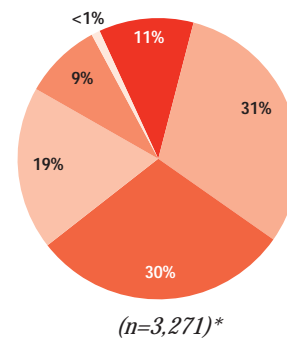
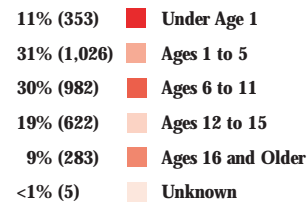
becoming an adult victim of physical or sexual abuse.<sup>2,3</sup>

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 in situations where 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). In 2006 the CPS Case Monitoring Unit was developed to provide more intense service coordination and monitoring to families where maltreatment has occurred or is highly likely to occur. Initial reviews indicate that the majority of families involved with the Case Monitoring Unit have been successfully engaged in services and have not been the subjects of subsequent child protective investigations.<sup>4</sup>

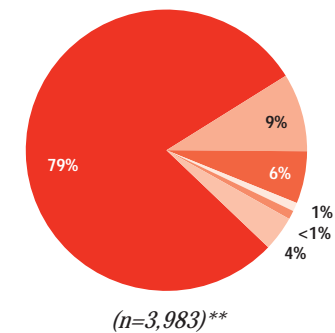
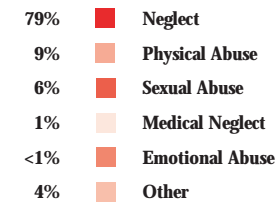
In 2007 in Rhode Island, there were 2,396 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 3,271 children.<sup>5</sup> Of the 3,271 children who were victims of child abuse and neglect, 42% were under the age of 6. Children under age one are the fastest growing segment of the child welfare population.<sup>6</sup>

## Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2007

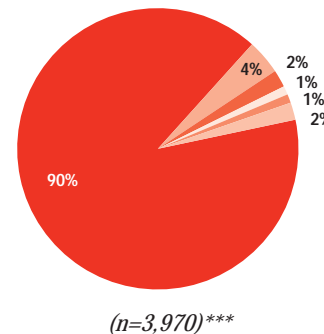
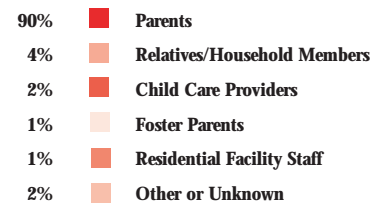
By Age of Victim\*



By Type of Abuse\*\*



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



### Notes on Pie Charts

\* These data reflect an unduplicated count of 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 their number of victims. 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 Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2007. 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, 1998-2007

YEAR	TOTAL # UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	% AND # OF REPORTS WITH COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS
1998	12,674	67% (8,463)	2,459
1999	13,519	58% (7,882)	2,628
2000	13,580	56% (7,635)	2,234
2001	13,804	54% (7,479)	2,261
2002	14,545	50% (7,254)	2,209
2003	13,651	50% (6,847)	2,126
2004	13,341	52% (6,890)	2,095
2005	13,144	55% (7,188)	2,260
2006	14,957	59% (8,841)	2,862
2007	13,542	54% (7,363)	2,396

◆ Between 1998 and 2007 the percentage of unduplicated child maltreatment reports for which there were completed investigations declined from 67% in 1998 to a low of 50% in 2002 and 2003 and back to 54% in 2007.

◆ In 2007, 33% of completed investigations based on child maltreatment reports were indicated. The percentage of investigations that were indicated remained fairly stable over the past decade.<sup>7</sup> An indicated investigation is one in which there is a preponderance of evidence that child abuse and/or neglect occurred.<sup>8</sup>

◆ Of the 13,542 maltreatment reports in 2007, 4,924 were classified as “information/referrals” (formerly “early warnings”).<sup>9</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 a legal caretaker or is living in the home, there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect circumstances exist, and there is a specific incident or pattern of incidents suggesting that harm can be identified. When essential criteria for investigation are not present, the report may lead to a referral to other services or to the information being passed on to a DCYF case-worker (depending on if the family is active with DCYF).<sup>10</sup>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2007.

\* 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).

## Rhode Island Child Deaths Due to Child Abuse and/or Neglect\*

YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS	YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS
1998	3	2003	4
1999	3	2004	3
2000	3	2005	4
2001	5	2006	0
2002	1	2007	0
<b>Total 1998-2002</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total 2003-2007</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 1998-2007.

\* Based on Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families determination of death due to child abuse or neglect by parent or caretaker.

◆ Between 1998 and 2007, 26 children died as a result of injuries due to abuse by a parent or caretaker.<sup>11</sup>

◆ During 2006, there were 32 children hospitalized with the diagnosis of child abuse or neglect, compared with 34 in 2005, 22 in 2004 and 28 in 2003.<sup>12</sup>

## Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

◆ In 2007, the core cities had the highest rates of indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect out of all Rhode Island communities. All six core cities, North Providence, Warren and Westerly had rates equal to or higher than that for the state as a whole.

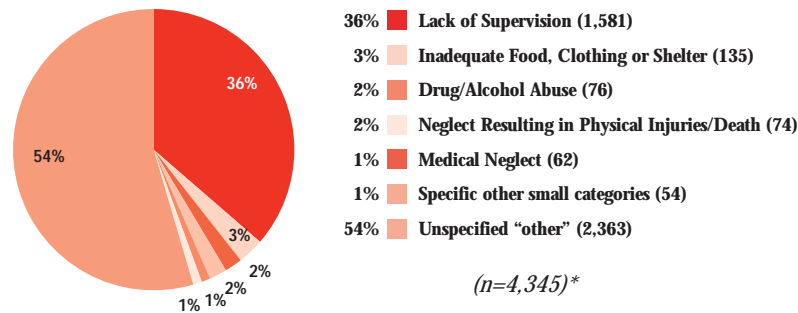
◆ In 2007, 58% of indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect occurred in the core cities, which contain 39% of the state’s population under age 21.

◆ The rates of indicated investigations of child maltreatment in the core cities ranged from a low of 7.8 per 1,000 children in Newport to a high of 19.1 per 1,000 children in Woonsocket.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2007; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

# Child Abuse and Neglect

Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2007



◆ The importance of adequate capacity, affordability and quality of child care, preschool, other early childhood programs, and quality after-school opportunities is highlighted by the fact that of the 4,345 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect in Rhode Island in 2007, 36% involved lack of supervision.

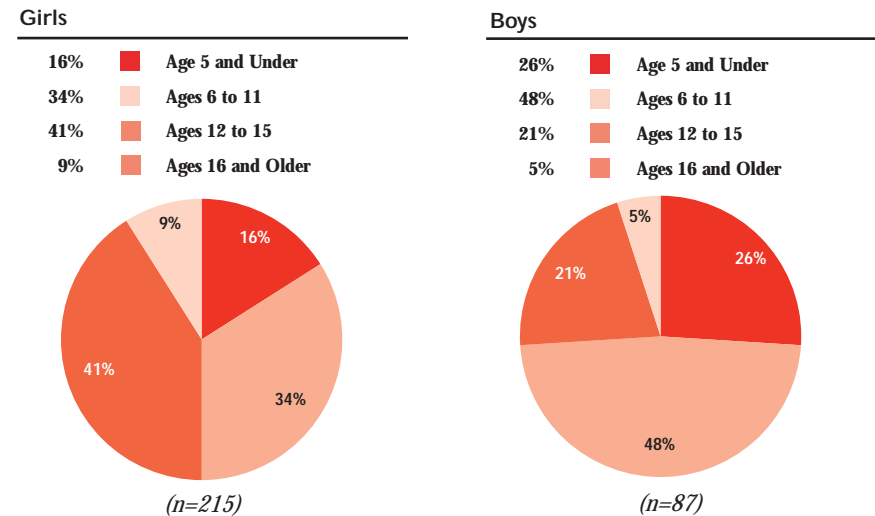
◆ The single largest category of neglect (54%) is “unspecified other.” These are instances of neglect that do not fit into the other specified categories.

◆ The “specific other small categories” include: abandonment (13), tying or confinement (17), failure to thrive (8), emotional neglect (8), excessive/inappropriate discipline (5), educational neglect (1), malnutrition/starvation (1), and poisoning/noxious substances (1).

\* 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. Numbers do not include indicated allegations of institutional neglect.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2007. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2007.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2007, there were 302 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In 71% (215) of the 302 indicated allegations of sexual abuse, the victim was a female. Fifty-seven percent of all victims, 50% of the female victims, and 75% of the male victims were under age 12.<sup>14</sup>

Table 27. Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2007

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 21	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT	INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS PER 1,000 CHILDREN
Barrington	5,211	5	1.0
Bristol	6,294	26	4.1
Burrillville	4,646	33	7.1
Central Falls	6,443	94	14.6
Charlestown	1,952	13	7.2
Coventry	9,438	65	6.9
Cranston	19,854	117	5.9
Cumberland	8,595	30	3.5
East Greenwich	3,861	4	1.0
East Providence	12,060	92	7.6
Exeter	1,790	6	3.4
Foster	1,234	4	3.2
Glocester	2,998	8	2.7
Hopkinton	2,255	14	6.2
Jamestown	1,354	2	1.5
Johnston	6,729	39	5.8
Lincoln	5,720	26	4.5
Little Compton	874	3	3.4
Middletown	4,757	19	4.0
Narragansett	3,897	15	3.8
New Shoreham	203	1	4.9
Newport	7,046	55	7.8
North Kingstown	7,561	56	7.4
North Providence	6,854	67	9.8
North Smithfield	2,674	10	3.7
Pawtucket	20,870	211	10.1
Portsmouth	4,726	15	3.2
Providence	62,125	633	10.2
Richmond	2,221	8	3.6
Scituate	2,944	6	2.0
Smithfield	6,112	14	2.3
South Kingstown	10,393	20	1.9
Tiverton	3,806	26	6.8
Warren	2,809	33	11.7
Warwick	21,330	141	6.6
West Greenwich	1,606	2	1.2
West Warwick	7,746	112	14.5
Westerly	6,094	63	10.3
Woonsocket	12,792	244	19.1
Out of State	NA	42	NA
Unknown	NA	18	NA
Core Cities	117,022	1,349	11.5
Remainder of State	182,852	988	5.4
Rhode Island	299,874	2,337	7.8

## Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

◆ Many abusive parents lack essential parenting skills and are struggling with a combination of social and economic issues. Families benefit from access to community-based, comprehensive services that are able to respond flexibly to their needs.<sup>15</sup>

◆ Preventing the occurrence and recurrence of child abuse and neglect requires family support systems such as access to high quality early childhood education, parenting education, education and training to increase family economic security, and treatment services for substance abuse and mental health problems.<sup>16</sup>

◆ One study showed that high quality early care and education programs that involve parents in the classroom, provide vocational and educational training, and home visits can reduce maltreatment of children under age 17.<sup>17</sup>

◆ On December 31, 2007, there were more than 1,000 infants and toddlers (birth through age 3) in the care of DCYF, comprising 31% of the caseload.<sup>18</sup>

### 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), number of reports (indicated investigations) for the period January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007.

City/town reports of indicated investigations omit certain investigations, particularly those where there are data entry errors affecting location. For this reason, the city/town table of indicated investigations reports fewer indicated investigations than does the chart with reports/investigations and indicated cases.

The denominator is the total population of children under age 21 according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census.

### References

- <sup>1,2,17</sup> Horton, C. (n.d.). *Protective factors literature review: Early care and education programs and the prevention of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- <sup>3</sup> Office of Justice Programs. (2004). *Violence against women: Identifying risk factors*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- <sup>4,10</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services, 2007.
- <sup>5,6,7,8,9,11,13,14,18</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2007.
- <sup>12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2002-2006.
- <sup>15</sup> Szekely, A. (2005). *Developing a comprehensive approach to child abuse and neglect prevention: Strategies for state and local policymakers*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project.
- <sup>16</sup> Alexander, R., Baca, L., Fox, J. A., Frantz, M., Glanz, S., Huffman, L. D., Hynes, C. J., Reynolds, A. J., Ritter Jr., W., Trask II, G., Walker, G., Newman, S. & Christeson, W. (2003). *New hope for preventing child abuse and neglect: Proven solutions to save lives and prevent future crime*. Washington, DC: Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.