

# 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

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, or depression.<sup>1</sup> Child maltreatment can lead to 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>

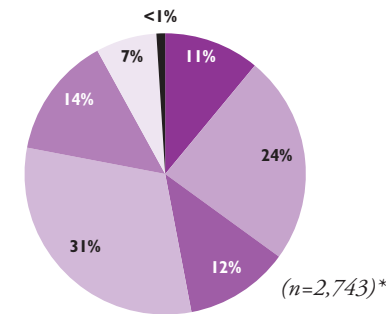
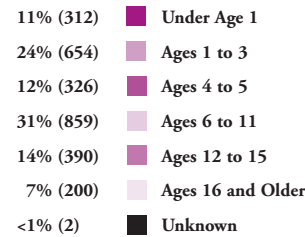
Responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and ensuring child safety are important functions of child protection systems. Maintaining the capacity to focus on prevention is equally critical and more cost-effective.

In Rhode Island, 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 when the families are willing to work with community providers. In both of these cases, DCYF makes referrals to regional Family Community Care Partner (FCCP) agencies. They work with the family to identify appropriate services and resources, including natural supports.<sup>4</sup>

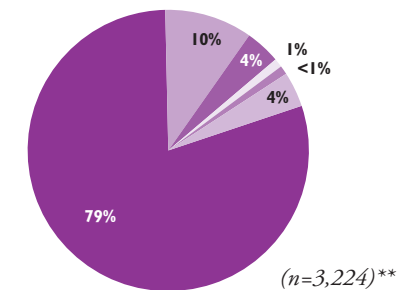
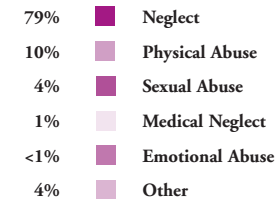
In 2008 in Rhode Island, there were 1,913 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 2,743 children. The child abuse and neglect rate per 1,000 children under age 18 was more than two times higher in the core cities (17.0 victims per 1,000 children) compared to the remainder of the state (7.0 victims per 1,000 children). Almost half (47%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in 2008 were young children under age six and more than one-third (35%) were ages three and younger.<sup>5</sup>

## Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2008

By Age of Victim\*



By Type of Neglect/Abuse\*\*



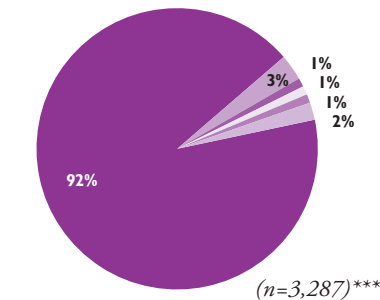
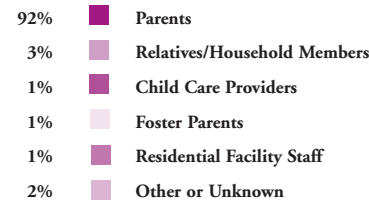
Notes on Pie Charts

\* 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.

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



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2008. 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, 1999-2008

YEAR	TOTAL # UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	% AND # OF REPORTS WITH COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS
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
2008	12,204	51% (6,214)	1,913

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2008.

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

◆ The percentage of unduplicated child maltreatment reports for which there were completed investigations declined from 59% in 2006 to 51% in 2008. The number of unduplicated child maltreatment reports to the CPS Hotline was also lower in 2008 than at any point in the past decade.<sup>6</sup> In 2008, there were 1,913 indicated investigations based on child maltreatment investigations, 31% of completed investigations. The percentage of completed investigations that were indicated has 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 12,204 maltreatment reports in 2008, 5,019 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 (if the family is active with DCYF).<sup>10</sup>

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

YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS	YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS
1999	3	2004	3
2000	3	2005	4
2001	5	2006	0
2002	1	2007	0
2003	4	2008	0
<i>Total 1999-2003</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Total 2004-2008</i>	<i>7</i>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 1999-2008.

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

◆ Between 1999 and 2008, 23 children died as a result of injuries due to abuse by a parent or caretaker.<sup>11</sup> During 2007, there were 32 children hospitalized with the diagnosis of child abuse or neglect, the same as in 2006, compared with 34 in 2005, 22 in 2004 and 28 in 2003.<sup>12</sup>

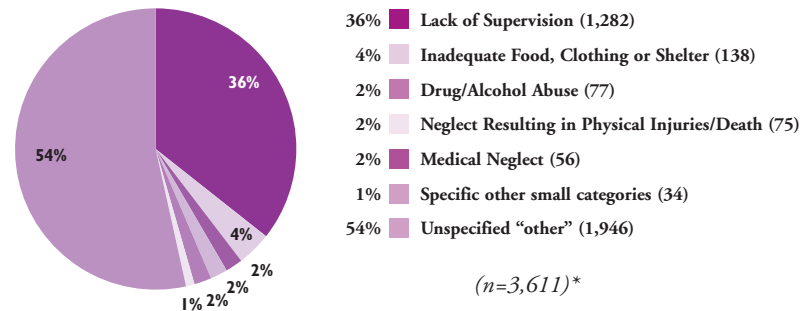
## Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

◆ 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 benefit from access to community-based, comprehensive services that are able to respond flexibly to their needs.<sup>13</sup> Preventing the occurrence and recurrence of child abuse and neglect requires family support systems such as evidence-based home visiting programs, access to high quality child care, parenting education, vocational training, and counseling and treatment for substance abuse and mental health problems.<sup>14,15,16</sup>

◆ In 2008, the six core cities had the highest rates of child victims of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children out of all Rhode Island communities. Warren (18.3) and Johnston (13.0) also had child abuse and neglect rates higher than that of the state as a whole (10.7). Child abuse and neglect rates in the core cities ranged from a low of 14.4 per 1,000 children in Providence to a high of 28.2 per 1,000 children in Woonsocket.<sup>17</sup>

# Child Abuse and Neglect

**Indicated Allegations of Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2008**

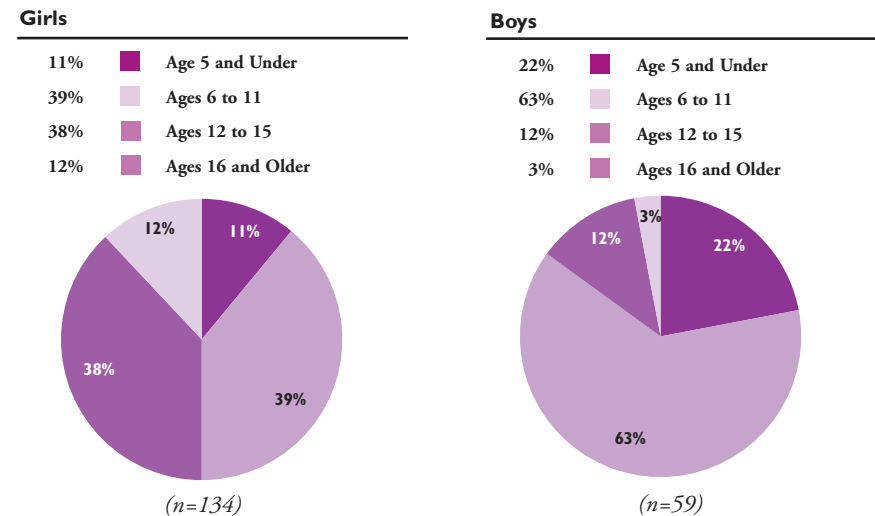


- ◆ The importance of adequate capacity, affordability and quality of child care, preschool, other early childhood programs, and quality after-school opportunities is highlighted by the fact that of the 3,611 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect in Rhode Island in 2008, 36% involved lack 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 (10), educational neglect (8), failure to thrive (7), excessive/inappropriate discipline (5), tying or confinement (5), and emotional neglect (2).

\* 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, 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2008**



- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2008, there were 194 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. In 69% (134) of the 194 indicated allegations of sexual abuse, the victim was a female. Half (50%) of the female victims were under age 12 while 85% of the male victims were under age 12.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Note: Total victims equals 194 as one victim had no gender reported.

Table 27.

Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2008

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	VICTIMS PER 1,000 CHILDREN
Barrington	4,745	5	1.1	8	1.7
Bristol	4,399	15	3.4	19	4.3
Burrillville	4,043	25	6.2	32	7.9
Central Falls	5,531	83	15.0	103	18.6
Charlestown	1,712	9	5.3	11	6.4
Coventry	8,389	43	5.1	42	5.0
Cranston	17,098	131	7.7	172	10.1
Cumberland	7,690	24	3.1	24	3.1
East Greenwich	3,564	14	3.9	13	3.6
East Providence	10,546	59	5.6	75	7.1
Exeter	1,589	10	6.3	12	7.6
Foster	1,105	4	3.6	6	5.4
Glocester	2,664	6	2.3	7	2.6
Hopkinton	2,011	17	8.5	13	6.5
Jamestown	1,238	4	3.2	6	4.8
Johnston	5,906	54	9.1	77	13.0
Lincoln	5,157	23	4.5	34	6.6
Little Compton	780	4	5.1	3	3.8
Middletown	4,328	24	5.5	38	8.8
Narragansett	2,833	16	5.6	18	6.4
New Shoreham	185	2	10.8	1	5.4
Newport	5,199	58	11.2	91	17.5
North Kingstown	6,848	31	4.5	51	7.4
North Providence	5,936	36	6.1	60	10.1
North Smithfield	2,379	10	4.2	19	8.0
Pawtucket	18,151	234	12.9	303	16.7
Portsmouth	4,329	4	0.9	7	1.6
Providence	45,277	452	10.0	650	14.4
Richmond	2,014	9	4.5	17	8.4
Scituate	2,635	6	2.3	6	2.3
Smithfield	4,019	20	5.0	14	3.5
South Kingstown	6,284	35	5.6	56	8.9
Tiverton	3,367	14	4.2	28	8.3
Warren	2,454	33	13.4	45	18.3
Warwick	18,780	92	4.9	116	6.2
West Greenwich	1,444	6	4.2	8	5.5
West Warwick	6,632	66	10.0	102	15.4
Westerly	5,406	38	7.0	48	8.9
Woonsocket	11,155	197	17.7	315	28.2
Unknown	NA	0	NA	4	NA
Core Cities	91,945	1,090	11.9	1,564	17.0
Remainder of State	155,877	823	5.3	1,086	7.0
Rhode Island	247,822	1,913	7.7	2,650	10.7

### Note to Table

Data can not be compared to previous Factbooks. The denominator is the number of children under age 18 according to the US Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 and the numerator is an unduplicated count of child victims. Previous Factbooks used children under 21 as the denominator and the indicated investigations as the numerator to calculate the rate of indicated investigations per 1,000 children. In 2008, Rhode Island lowered the eligibility age for entry into DCYF services to under age 18, although some children remain eligible for services after their 18th birthday.

### 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 2008.

Victims of child abuse/neglect are unduplicated counts of victims with substantiated allegations of child abuse and/or neglect.

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. 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 includes fewer indicated investigations than the chart with reports/investigations and indicated cases.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

### References

<sup>1,2,16</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>4,8,10</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services, 2008 & 2009.

<sup>5,6,7,9,11,17</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2008.

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