

# 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 credible 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 and medical neglect.

## 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, lack of a job or a decent place to live, emotional stress, isolation from extended family or friends, drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental illness, or domestic violence.<sup>1</sup> Recent studies confirm that child abuse is linked to increases in poor school performance, juvenile delinquency, running away, substance abuse, suicide, criminal behavior, emotional and mental health problems,

promiscuity, and teenage pregnancy.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

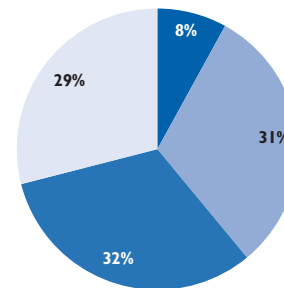
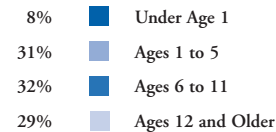
Many abusive parents lack essential parenting skills and are struggling with a combination of social and economic issues. Preventing child abuse and neglect requires help with housing, food, and child care as well as parenting education and counseling for substance abuse, domestic violence, and other problems. Families benefit from access to community-based, comprehensive services that are able to flexibly respond to their needs.<sup>6,7</sup>

Responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and ensuring child safety in crisis situations are important functions of child protection systems. Maintaining the capacity to focus on prevention is equally critical and frequently more cost-effective. The absence of appropriate lower-cost placements and community-based family supports and early interventions contributes to a disproportionate share of the budget of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) being spent on high-end costs such as psychiatric hospitalization, juvenile corrections, and residential treatment.<sup>8,9,10</sup>

In 2003 in Rhode Island, there were 2,126 indicated cases of child abuse and neglect involving 2,913 children, a rate of 7 cases per 1,000 children.<sup>11</sup>

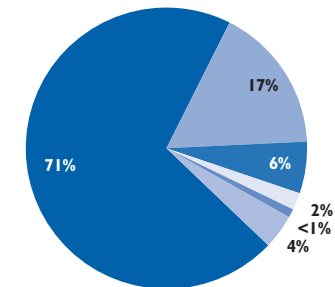
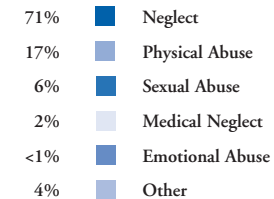
## Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2003

### By Age of Victim



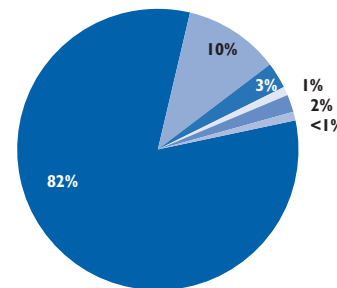
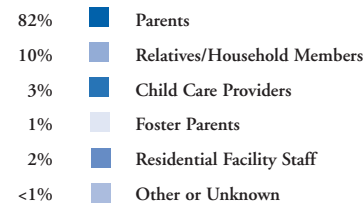
(n=2,913)\*

### By Type of Abuse



(n=3,566)\*\*

### By Relationship of Victim to Perpetrator



(n=3,798)\*\*\*

### Notes on Pie Charts

All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2003. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

\* 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.

## DCYF (CANTS)\* Hotline Calls for Reports of Abuse and/or Neglect, Investigations, and Indicated Cases, Rhode Island, 1995-2003

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	NUMBER OF COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS**	NUMBER OF INDICATED CASES
1995	13,841	8,553	2,781
1996	13,098	8,398	2,541
1997	12,437	8,485	2,577
1998	12,674	8,463	2,459
1999	13,519	7,882	2,628
2000	13,580	7,635	2,234
2001	13,804	7,479	2,261
2002	14,545	7,254	2,209
2003	13,651	6,847	2,126

- ◆ Between 1995 and 2003 the number of child maltreatment reports remained steady but the number of completed investigations, and to a lesser extent, the number of indicated cases, declined.
- ◆ In 2003, 50% of reports resulted in completed investigations and one in three completed investigations resulted in a finding of an indicated case. An indicated case is one in which there is credible evidence that child abuse and/or neglect occurred.
- ◆ During 2003, among the 13,651 maltreatment reports, 5,658 were classified as “early warnings,” that is, instances where an essential criterion for investigation is not present, including that the victim is a minor, the alleged perpetrator is living in the home or responsible for the child’s welfare, there is harm or risk of harm alleged and there is a specific incident or pattern of incidents suggesting that harm can be identified.

*\*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).*

Source: All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 1995-2003.

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

YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS	YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS
1994	5	1999	3
1995	5	2000	3
1996	4	2001	5
1997	2	2002	1
1998	3	2003	4
<i>Total 1994-1998</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Total 1999-2003</i>	<i>16</i>

*\*Based on R.I. Department of Children Youth and Families determination of death due to child abuse or neglect by a parent or caretaker.*

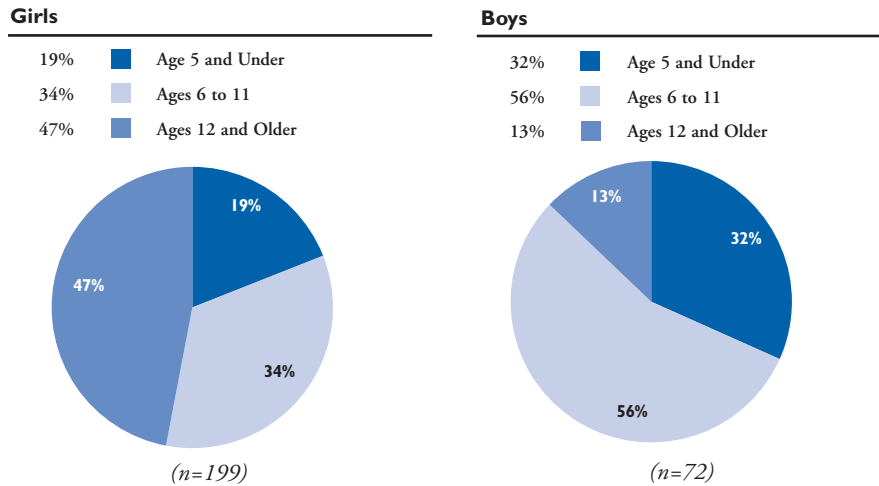
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, 35 children died as a result of injuries due to abuse by a parent or caretaker.
- ◆ During 2002, there were 46 children hospitalized with the diagnosis of child abuse or neglect, up from 29 in 2001 and 23 in 2000. The average over five years (1998-2002) was 30 hospitalizations.<sup>12</sup>

## Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2003, almost three-quarters (71%) of all child abuse and neglect cases were the result of neglect.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Families overwhelmed by multiple personal, social, or economic problems may lack the resources to meet their children’s needs and require a variety of readily accessible services and interventions.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Connecting families with economic supports, decreasing isolation, and providing easy access to substance abuse and mental health treatment are especially critical.<sup>15</sup>

# Child Abuse and Neglect

## Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2003

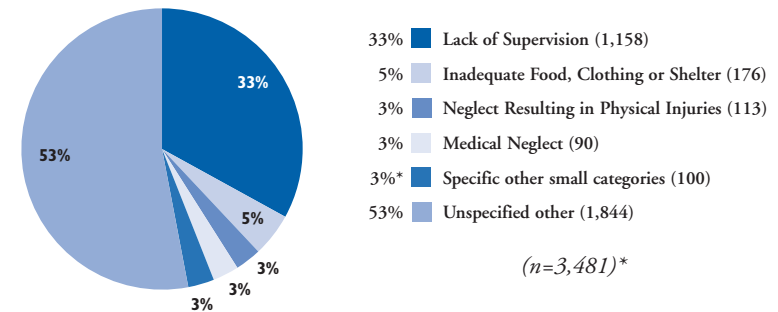


◆ In Rhode Island in 2003, there were 271 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. Multiple allegations (or claims) may be involved in each indicated investigation. An indicated allegation of abuse is defined as one in which credible evidence was found indicating sexual abuse.

◆ In 73% (199) of the 271 indicated allegations of sexual abuse the victim was a female. Sixty-two percent of the victims (53% of girls and 88% of boys) were under age 12.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2003.

## Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2003



\* 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.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2003, of the 3,481 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect, 33% involved lack of supervision.

◆ The single largest category of neglect (53%) falls under other. These are instances of neglect that do not fit into any of the other specified categories.

◆ The specific small categories of less than 1% each include: drug and alcohol abuse (28), failure to thrive (23), abandonment (21), educational neglect (9), tying and confinement (6), poisoning (5), emotional neglect (5), excessive/inappropriate discipline (3).

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2003.

Table 23.

Indicated Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2003

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 21	NUMBER OF INDICATED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT	2003 RATE OF CASES OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT PER 1,000 CHILDREN
Barrington	5,211	2	0.4
Bristol	6,294	21	3.3
Burrillville	4,646	25	5.4
Central Falls	6,443	80	12.4
Charlestown	1,952	20	10.2
Coventry	9,438	50	5.3
Cranston	19,854	85	4.3
Cumberland	8,595	25	2.9
East Greenwich	3,861	7	1.8
East Providence	12,060	79	6.6
Exeter	1,790	5	2.8
Foster	1,234	2	1.6
Glocester	2,998	12	4.0
Hopkinton	2,255	10	4.4
Jamestown	1,354	5	3.7
Johnston	6,729	25	3.7
Lincoln	5,720	30	5.2
Little Compton	874	6	6.9
Middletown	4,757	18	3.8
Narragansett	3,897	21	5.4
New Shoreham	203	0	0.0
Newport	7,046	75	10.6
North Kingstown	7,561	39	5.2
North Providence	6,854	47	6.9
North Smithfield	2,674	18	6.7
Pawtucket	20,870	233	11.2
Portsmouth	4,726	8	1.7
Providence	62,125	591	9.5
Richmond	2,221	11	5.0
Scituate	2,944	6	2.0
Smithfield	6,112	19	3.1
South Kingstown	10,393	20	1.9
Tiverton	3,806	10	2.6
Warren	2,809	24	8.5
Warwick	21,330	133	6.2
West Greenwich	1,606	9	5.6
West Warwick	7,746	82	10.6
Westerly	6,094	52	8.5
Woonsocket	12,792	179	14.0
Out of State/Unknown	NA	15	NA
Core Cities	117,022	1,240	10.6
Remainder of State	182,852	845	4.6
Rhode Island	299,874	2,100	7.0

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the State of RI Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), number of reports (indicated investigations) for the period January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003.

An indicated investigation is an investigated report of child abuse and neglect for which credible 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 of indicated investigations reports fewer indicated investigations than does the chart with reports/investigations and indicated cases.

The denominator is the number of children under the age of 21 according to the 2000 U.S. Census of Population.

### References for Indicator

- <sup>1,2,6</sup> *America's Children at Risk: A National Agenda for Legal Action*. (1993). Chicago, IL: American Bar Association, Working Group on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children and Their Families.
- <sup>3,7</sup> Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect. *The Future of Children*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1998). Los Altos, CA: Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- <sup>4</sup> English, D. (1998). The Extent and Consequences of Child Maltreatment. *The Future of Children*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1998). Los Altos, CA: Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- <sup>5</sup> Chalk, R. et al. (May, 2002). *The Multiple Dimensions of Child Abuse and Neglect: New Insights into an Old Problem* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>8</sup> D'Ambra, L. (September 2001). *DCYF System of Care Task Force Report of the Current Reality Subcommittee*. Providence, RI: Office of the Child Advocate.
- <sup>9</sup> *A Review of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families* (January 2001). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council.
- <sup>10</sup> *Towards an Organized System of Care for Rhode Island's Children, Youth and Families*. (January 2003). The Report of the Rhode Island System of Care Task Force.
- <sup>11,13</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2003.
- <sup>12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 1998-2002.
- <sup>14,15</sup> Protecting Children from Child Abuse and Neglect. *The Future of Children*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring 1998). Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.