

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.¹ 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.^{2,3,4,5}

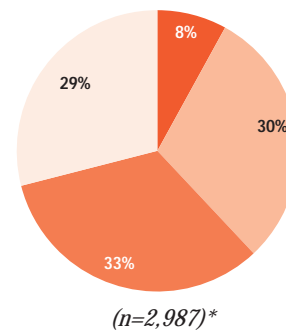
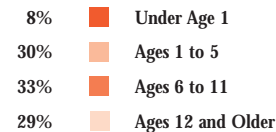
Many abusive parents lack essential parenting skills and are struggling with a combination of social and economic issues. Preventing child abuse and neglect requires help with housing, food, and child care as well as parenting education and counseling for substance abuse, domestic violence, and other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

Responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and ensuring child safety in crisis situations are important functions of child protection systems. However, maintaining the capacity to focus on prevention is equally critical and frequently more cost-effective. Currently in Rhode Island, a disproportionate share of the budget of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) continues to be spent on high-end costs such as psychiatric hospitalization, juvenile corrections, and residential treatment.^{8,9,10}

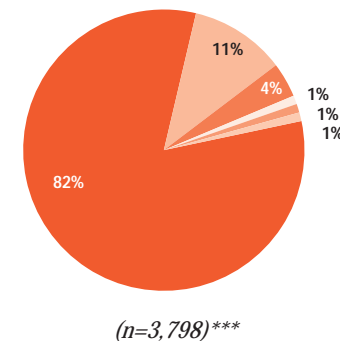
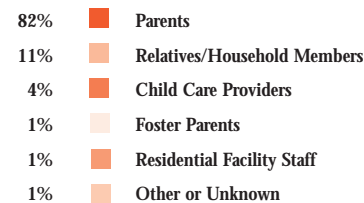
In 2002 in Rhode Island, there were 2,209 indicated cases of child abuse and neglect involving 2,987 children, a rate of 7.4 cases per 1,000 children.¹¹ During 2001, there were 29 children hospitalized with the diagnosis of child abuse or neglect.¹²

Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2002

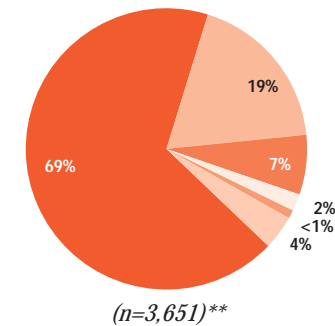
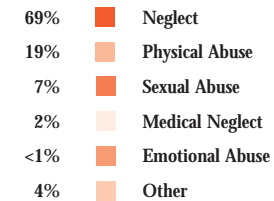
By Age of Victim



By Relationship of Victim to Perpetrator



By Type of Abuse



Notes on Pie Charts

All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2002. 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, 1995-2002

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

◆ In 2002, DCYF received 14,545 calls to the Rhode Island Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-RI-CHILD); completed 7,254 investigations of child abuse reports; and determined that there were 2,209 indicated cases in which credible evidence existed that child abuse and/or neglect occurred.

* One investigation can be generated by multiple hotline calls.

Source: All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, 1995-2002.

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

YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS	YEAR	NUMBER OF DEATHS
1993	3	1998	3
1994	5	1999	3
1995	5	2000	3
1996	4	2001	5
1997	2	2002	1
Total 1993-1997	19	Total 1998-2001	15

◆ Between 1993 and 2002, 34 children died as a result of injuries due to abuse by a parent or caretaker.

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

Family and Community Centered Practice

◆ The objectives of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 include the safety, stability and well-being of children. Spurred by these goals, as well as the Act's requirements for adherence to strict timelines, national research has focused on developing new approaches for child welfare systems. Family-centered practice is one such strategy. It seeks to use the strengths of nuclear and extended families and communities in order to be culturally competent and to promote strong networks of both formal and informal community-based resources.¹³

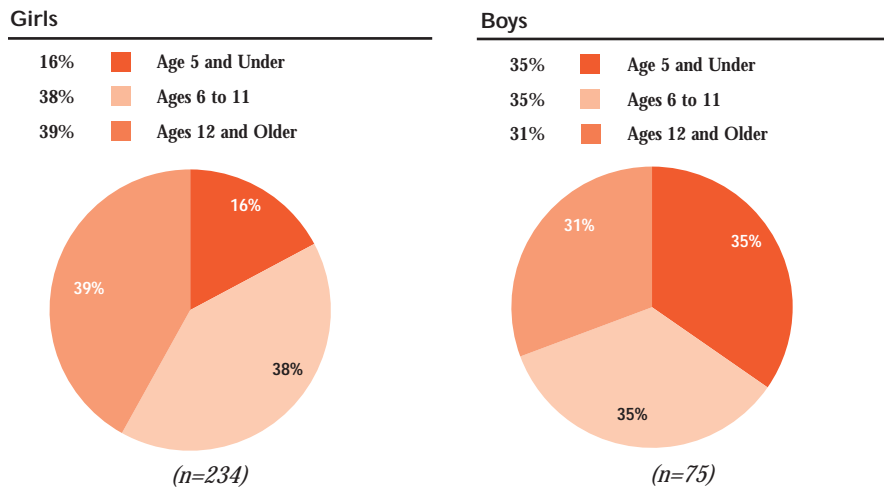
◆ The Family-Centered Practice Initiative is a Rhode Island demonstration project initiated in 2001 that seeks to change DCYF practices in order to better involve families in designing strategies for achieving desired family outcomes. Core practice strategies include full-disclosure, strength-based assessments, family-driven case plans, concurrent planning (i.e., simultaneous planning for reunification with the family and for alternative permanent placement) and the use of professional teams.¹⁴

◆ Recognizing that change within DCYF is not sufficient, the initiative is designed to involve communities and community providers in this new approach and to measure concrete outcome changes achieved for children.¹⁵

◆ As part of bringing the demonstration project to scale throughout the state, in 2003 the initiative will begin providing comprehensive training in family-centered practice to both DCYF staff and community service providers. The initiative also aims to implement neighborhood-based strategies to recruit and train community partners, and resource families to provide family-to-family support within the community.¹⁶

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2002



◆ In Rhode Island in 2002, there were 309 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. Multiple allegations 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 76% (234) of the 309 indicated allegations of sexual abuse the victim was a female. More than half of the victims (55% of girls and 70% of boys) were under age 12.

◆ The most frequent perpetrators of sexual abuse were relative caretakers (20%), other household caretakers (17%), step-parents (16%), birth parents (15%) and baby sitters/caretakers (13%). There were two instances of sexual abuse by residential facility staff and two instances of sexual abuse by a day care provider.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2002.

Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities

◆ Studies indicate that children with disabilities are between two and three times more likely to be maltreated than children without disabilities. Children with emotional and behavioral disorders are at greatest risk of abuse and neglect.¹⁷

◆ A number of factors can contribute to increased rates of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities. Family stress, isolation, lack of supports and training are contributing factors.¹⁸

◆ Institutionalization and care provided by caregivers who may be encouraged to remain emotionally detached can contribute to increased neglect and abuse rates. Societal attitudes and myths may lead to devaluing and/or segregating children with disabilities and may increase abuse rates.¹⁹

◆ The child's physical and emotional reliance on caregivers and lack of understanding of appropriate personal boundaries may increase vulnerability.²⁰

◆ Preventing abuse of children with disabilities requires a combination of strategies aimed at changing societal attitudes about children with disabilities; providing families with parenting education, respite, and access to a variety of supports and services; increasing the knowledge and safety skills of children with disabilities; and effective policies and procedures in settings involving non-familial caregivers, including supervision, training and adequate staff/client ratios.²¹

Table 22.

Indicated Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2002

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 21	NUMBER OF INDICATED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT	2002 RATE OF CASES OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT PER 1,000 CHILDREN
Barrington	5,211	11	2.1
Bristol	6,294	27	4.3
Burrillville	4,646	21	4.5
Central Falls	6,443	63	9.8
Charlestown	1,952	11	5.6
Coventry	9,438	58	6.1
Cranston	19,854	120	6.0
Cumberland	8,595	41	4.8
East Greenwich	3,861	10	2.6
East Providence	12,060	78	6.5
Exeter	1,790	5	2.8
Foster	1,234	6	4.9
Glocester	2,998	10	3.3
Hopkinton	2,255	10	4.4
Jamestown	1,354	7	5.2
Johnston	6,729	40	5.9
Lincoln	5,720	25	4.4
Little Compton	874	4	4.6
Middletown	4,757	27	5.7
Narragansett	3,897	13	3.3
New Shoreham	203	0	0.0
Newport	7,046	83	11.8
North Kingstown	7,561	46	6.1
North Providence	6,854	47	6.9
North Smithfield	2,674	10	3.7
Pawtucket	20,870	196	9.4
Portsmouth	4,726	12	2.5
Providence	62,125	600	9.7
Richmond	2,221	11	5.0
Scituate	2,944	9	3.1
Smithfield	6,112	8	1.3
South Kingstown	10,393	34	3.3
Tiverton	3,806	22	5.8
Warren	2,809	21	7.5
Warwick	21,330	142	6.7
West Greenwich	1,606	6	3.7
West Warwick	7,746	91	11.7
Westerly	6,094	38	6.2
Woonsocket	12,792	188	14.7
Out of State/Unknown	NA	58	NA
Core Cities	117,022	1,221	10.4
Remainder of State	182,852	988	5.4
Rhode Island	299,874	2,209	7.4

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, 2002 to December 31, 2002. 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.

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

References for Indicator

- ^{1,2,6} *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.
- ^{3,7} "Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect" in *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.
- ⁴ English, D. (1998). "The Extent and Consequences of Child Maltreatment" in *The Future of Children*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1998). Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- ⁵ Chalk, R. et al. (May, 2002). *The Multiple Dimensions of Child Abuse and Neglect: New Insights into an Old Problem*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ⁸ D'Ambra, L. (September 2001). *DCYF System of Care Task Force Report of the Current Reality Subcommittee*. Providence, RI: Office of the Child Advocate.
- ⁹ *A Review of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families* (January 2001). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council.
- ¹⁰ *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.
- ¹¹ Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System, 2002.
- ¹² Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, FY 2001.
- ¹³ *Rethinking Child Welfare Practice under the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997* (November 2000). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ^{14,15,16} *Family Centered Practice: A New Perspective on Permanency for Rhode Island's Child Welfare System*. Material developed in collaboration with: The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families; The Child Welfare Institute at Rhode Island College; The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning; The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice.
- ^{17, 18, 19, 20, 21} *The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities* (February 2001). Washington, DC: The Administration for Children and Families, National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect.