

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 or 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 or caregivers are at increased risk for maltreating children in their care if they are overwhelmed by multiple risk factors such as poverty, divorce, substance abuse, and/or mental health problems.¹ The immediate effects of child abuse and neglect include isolation, fear, injury, and even death. Children who have been maltreated are at increased risk for delinquency, substance abuse, mental health problems, teen pregnancy, impaired cognition, and low academic achievement.^{2,3}

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

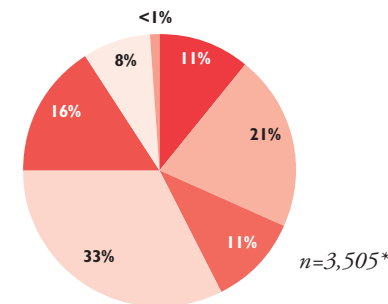
equally critical and more cost-effective. In Rhode Island, if an investigation does not reveal maltreatment but family stressors and risk factors are identified, Child Protective Services (CPS) refers families to community-based support services to reduce the risk of future involvement with the Department 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 families are willing to work with community providers. 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).⁴

In 2018 in Rhode Island, there were 2,430 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 3,505 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 (21.5 victims per 1,000 children) than in the remainder of the state (11.2 victims per 1,000 children). About half (49%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in 2018 were young children under age six and almost one-third (32%) were ages three and younger.⁵

Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2018

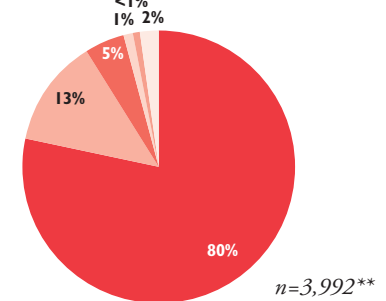
By Age of Victim*

11% (372)	Under Age 1
21% (742)	Ages 1 to 3
11% (395)	Ages 4 to 5
33% (1,148)	Ages 6 to 11
16% (550)	Ages 12 to 15
8% (297)	Ages 16 and Older
<1% (1)	Unknown



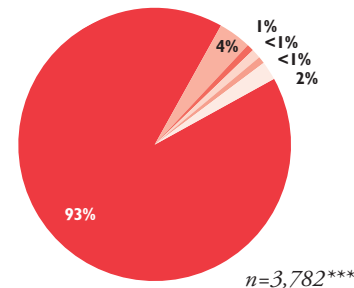
By Type of Neglect/Abuse**

80% (3,186)	Neglect
13% (501)	Physical Abuse
5% (185)	Sexual Abuse
1% (42)	Medical Neglect
<1% (14)	Emotional Abuse
2% (64)	Other



By Relationship of Perpetrator to Victims***

93% (3,506)	Parents
4% (140)	Relatives/Household Members
1% (51)	Foster Parents
<1% (13)	Child Care Providers
<1% (7)	Residential Facility Staff
2% (65)	Other or Unknown



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 and neglect, 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), 2018. 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, 2008-2018

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

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2008-2018.

*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).

◆ From 2017 to 2018 in Rhode Island, the number of unduplicated child maltreatment reports increased by 37%, and the number of completed investigations increased by 25%. The number of indicated investigations stayed about the same. In 2018, 29% (2,430) of the 8,296 completed investigations of child maltreatment were indicated, cases in which there is a “preponderance of evidence that a child has been abused and/or neglected”.^{6,7}

◆ Of the 21,837 maltreatment reports in 2018, 52% (11,300) were classified as “information/ referrals” (formerly “early warnings”).⁸ Information/referrals are reports made to the CPS Hotline concerning the well-being of a child that 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 exists, and there is a specific incident or pattern of incidents suggesting that harm can be identified. In February of 2019, the Department began implementation of the Family Functioning Assessment model to conduct the Family Assessment Response (FAR) by CPS Caseworkers. When essential criteria for investigation are not present, the (FAR) may lead to a referral to the development of a safety plan with the family, including voluntary referral and delivery of other services in the community.⁹

Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Due to Child Abuse and/or Neglect, Rhode Island, 2013-2017

YEAR	# OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS*	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS*	# OF DEATHS**
2013	133	34	3
2014	102	44	1
2015	92	28	0
2016	79	8	1
2017	107	18	2
TOTAL	515	132	7

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, 2013-2017.

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 2013 and 2017, there were 515 emergency department visits, 132 hospitalizations, and 7 deaths of Rhode Island children under age 18 due to child abuse and/or neglect.¹⁰ Nationally, 75% of child maltreatment deaths involved neglect and 42% involved physical abuse (because a victim may have suffered more than one type of maltreatment, these categories are not mutually exclusive).¹¹

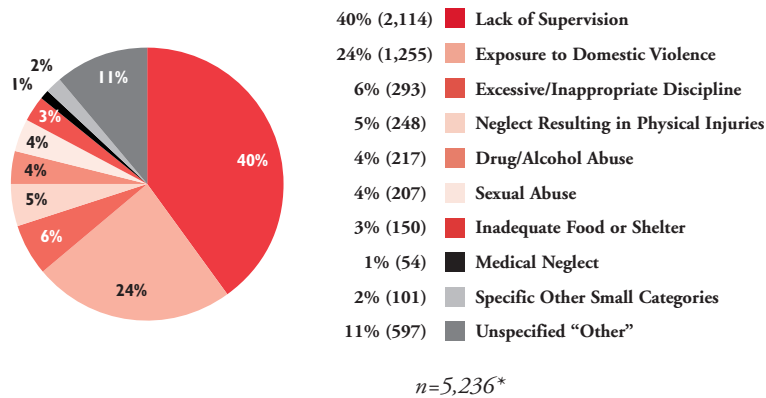
Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

◆ 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.¹² 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.^{13,14}

◆ In 2018, Rhode Island had 14.6 child victims of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children, the same rate as in 2017. Woonsocket (35.7 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 (23.4), Newport (22.8), North Providence (22.7), Pawtucket (24.7), and West Warwick (23.1).¹⁵

Child Abuse and Neglect

Indicated Allegations of Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2018.

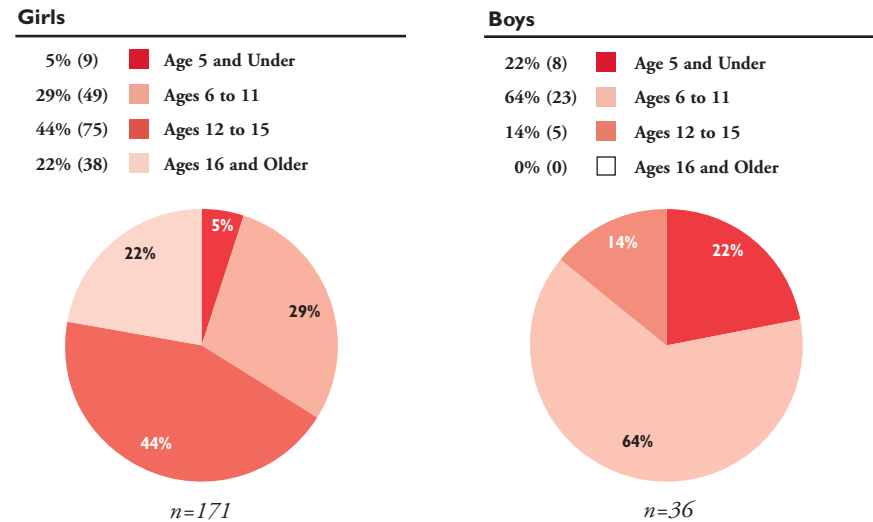
*The total refers to indicated allegations of neglect. Some children were victims of neglect more than once. Multiple allegations may be involved in each indicated investigation.

◆ Of the 5,236 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect to children under age 18 in Rhode Island in 2018, 40% involved lack of supervision. This highlights the importance of access to high-quality, affordable child care, preschool, and after-school programs.¹⁶

◆ The second largest category of neglect (24%) is “exposure to domestic violence.” These are instances where the neglect is related to the child witnessing domestic violence in the home.¹⁷

◆ The “specific other small categories” include: educational neglect (34), tying/close confinement (16), abandonment (14), emotional neglect (11), corporal punishment (8), failure to thrive (8), emotional abuse (6), inappropriate restraint (3), and poisoning/noxious substances (1).¹⁸

Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2018.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2018, there were 207 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of child sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. The victim was a female in 83% (171) of the 207 indicated allegations of sexual abuse. Thirty-four percent of the female victims were under age 12 while 86% of the male victims were under age 12.¹⁹

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

Table 32.

Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2018

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	7	1.5	7	1.5
Bristol	3,623	32	8.8	39	10.8
Burrillville	3,576	28	7.8	31	8.7
Central Falls	5,644	101	17.9	132	23.4
Charlestown	1,506	22	14.6	29	19.3
Coventry	7,770	58	7.5	90	11.6
Cranston	16,414	125	7.6	151	9.2
Cumberland	7,535	46	6.1	66	8.8
East Greenwich	3,436	7	2.0	15	4.4
East Providence	9,177	98	10.7	128	13.9
Exeter	1,334	7	5.2	6	4.5
Foster	986	5	5.1	11	11.2
Glocester	2,098	12	5.7	15	7.1
Hopkinton	1,845	15	8.1	23	12.5
Jamestown	1,043	2	1.9	5	4.8
Johnston	5,480	46	8.4	72	13.1
Lincoln	4,751	37	7.8	42	8.8
Little Compton	654	3	4.6	6	9.2
Middletown	3,652	33	9.0	55	15.1
Narragansett	2,269	21	9.3	16	7.1
New Shoreham	163	0	0.0	0	0.0
Newport	4,083	65	15.9	93	22.8
North Kingstown	6,322	33	5.2	52	8.2
North Providence	5,514	85	15.4	125	22.7
North Smithfield	2,456	8	3.3	14	5.7
Pawtucket	16,575	283	17.1	410	24.7
Portsmouth	3,996	31	7.8	32	8.0
Providence	41,634	521	12.5	687	16.5
Richmond	1,849	6	3.2	13	7.0
Scituate	2,272	8	3.5	14	6.2
Smithfield	3,625	11	3.0	28	7.7
South Kingstown	5,416	29	5.4	45	8.3
Tiverton	2,998	24	8.0	31	10.3
Warren	1,940	27	13.9	30	15.5
Warwick	15,825	123	7.8	168	10.6
West Greenwich	1,477	9	6.1	12	8.1
West Warwick	5,746	109	19.0	133	23.1
Westerly	4,787	57	11.9	85	17.8
Woonsocket	9,888	227	23.0	353	35.7
Four Core Cities	73,741	1,132	15.4	1,582	21.5
Remainder of State	150,215	1,229	8.2	1,682	11.2
Rhode Island	223,956	2,361	10.5	3,264	14.6

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 2018.

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. 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.

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 2018, Rhode Island increased the eligibility for voluntary extended DCYF services to under age 21.

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

References

^{1,2,13} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2018). *Keeping children safe and families strong in supportive communities: 2018 prevention resource guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

² Child Welfare Information Gateway. *Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect*. (2013). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

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