

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

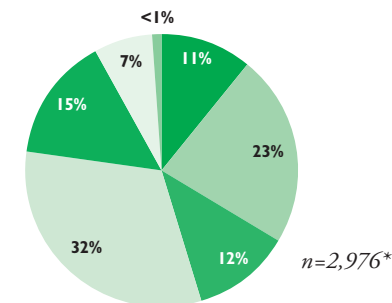
equally critical and more cost-effective. In Rhode Island, if an investigation does not reveal maltreatment but family stressors and risk factors are identified, Child Protective Services (CPS) refers families to community-based support services to reduce the risk of future involvement with the Department 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 2016 in Rhode Island, there were 2,074 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 2,971 children. The child abuse and neglect rate per 1,000 children under age 18 was more than two times higher in the four core cities (19.8 victims per 1,000 children) compared to the remainder of the state (8.7 victims per 1,000 children). Almost half (46%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in 2016 were young children under age six and one-third (34%) were ages three and younger.⁵

Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2016

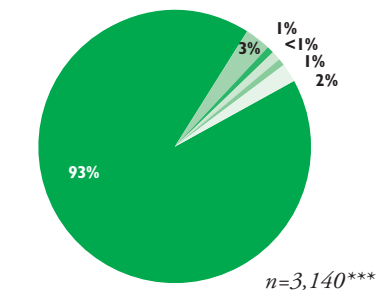
By Age of Victim*

11% (327)	Under Age 1
23% (685)	Ages 1 to 3
12% (345)	Ages 4 to 5
32% (957)	Ages 6 to 11
15% (438)	Ages 12 to 15
7% (222)	Ages 16 and Older
<1% (2)	Unknown



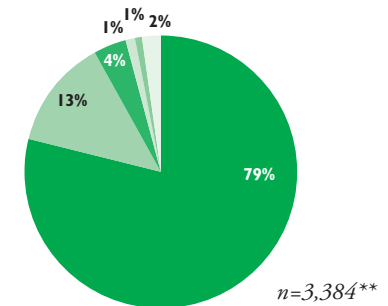
By Relationship of Perpetrator to Victims***

93% (2,929)	Parents
3% (97)	Relatives/Household Members
1% (32)	Foster Parents
<1% (7)	Child Care Providers
1% (23)	Residential Facility Staff
2% (52)	Other or Unknown



By Type of Neglect/Abuse**

79% (2,673)	Neglect
13% (450)	Physical Abuse
4% (134)	Sexual Abuse
1% (50)	Medical Neglect
1% (18)	Emotional Abuse
2% (59)	Other



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), 2016. 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, 2007-2016

YEAR	TOTAL # UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	% AND # OF REPORTS WITH COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS
2007	13,542	54% (7,363)	2,396
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

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2007-2016.

*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).

◆ After increasing annually between 2011 and 2014, the number of child maltreatment reports, completed investigations, and indicated investigations declined between 2014 and 2015 in Rhode Island. Between 2015 and 2016, the numbers of unduplicated child maltreatment reports increased by 4%, completed investigations decreased by 8%, and indicated investigations decreased by 7%. In 2016, 35% (2,074) of the 5,935 completed investigations of child maltreatment were indicated.⁶ An indicated investigation is one in which there is a preponderance of evidence that child abuse and/or neglect occurred.⁷

◆ Of the 14,942 maltreatment reports in 2016, 53% (7,948) were classified as “information/referrals” (formerly “early warnings”).⁸ 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 caseworker (depending on whether the family is active with DCYF).^{9,10}

Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Due to Child Abuse and/or Neglect, Rhode Island, 2011-2015

YEAR	# OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS**
2011	159	38	2
2012	153	25	1
2013	133	34	3
2014	102	44	1
2015	92	28	0
TOTAL	639	169	7

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, 2011-2015. Data for 2014 and 2015 are provisional.

**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 2011 and 2015, there were 639 emergency department visits, 169 hospitalizations, and seven deaths of Rhode Island children under age 18 due to child abuse and/or neglect.¹¹ Nationally, 73% of child maltreatment deaths involved neglect and 44% involved physical abuse (because a victim may have suffered more than one type of maltreatment, these categories are not mutually exclusive).¹²

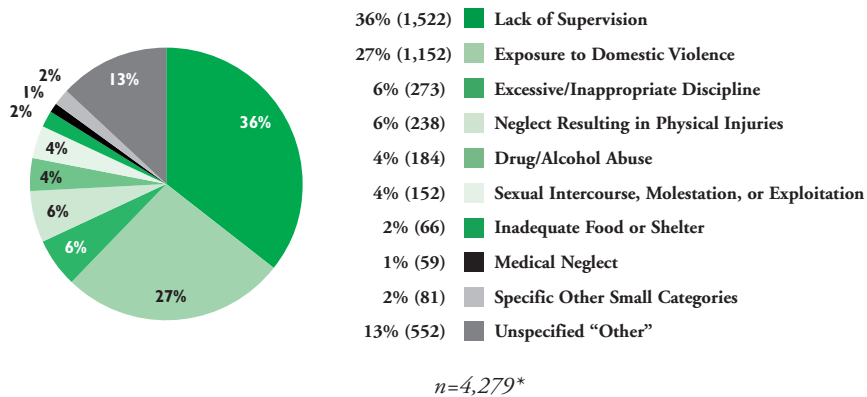
Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

◆ 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.¹³ 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.^{14,15,16}

◆ In 2016, Rhode Island had 12.3 child victims of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children, down from a rate of 13.8 per 1,000 children in 2015. With a rate of 29.2 victims per 1,000 children, Woonsocket 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 (25.7), and Pawtucket (22.1).¹⁷

Child Abuse and Neglect

Indicated Allegations of Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2016



◆ The importance of adequate capacity, affordability, and quality of child care, preschool, other early childhood programs and after-school opportunities is highlighted by the fact that of the 4,279 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect to children under age 18 in Rhode Island in 2016, 36% involved lack of supervision.

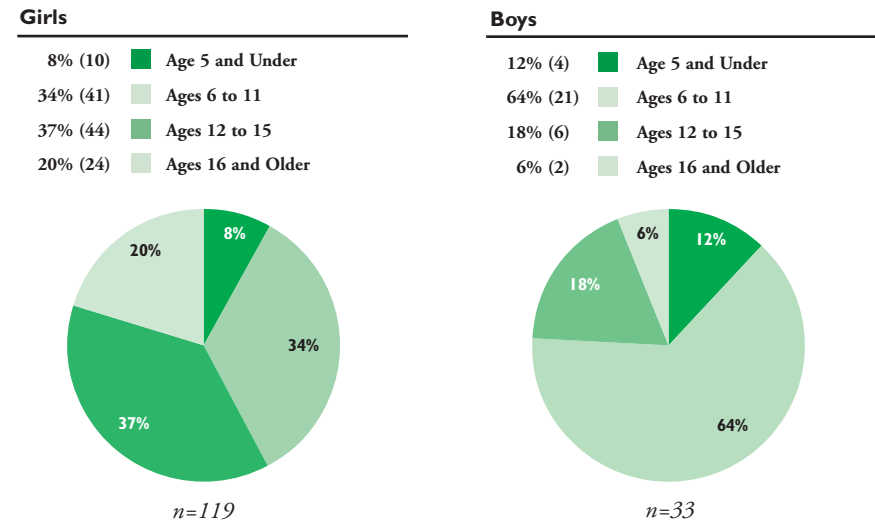
◆ The second largest category of neglect (27%) is “exposure to domestic violence.” These are instances where the neglect is related to the child witnessing domestic violence in the home.

◆ The “specific other small categories” include: emotional abuse (21), educational neglect (16), corporal punishment (13), tying/close confinement (9), abandonment (8), inadequate clothing (6), inappropriate restraint (6), 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, 2016.

Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2016. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2016, there were 152 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of child sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. The victim was a female in 78% (119) of the 152 indicated allegations of sexual abuse. Forty-three percent of the female victims were known to be under age 12, while 76% of the male victims were under age 12.¹⁸

◆ The perpetrator is a relative or person known to the victim in the majority of cases of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse by family members is more common than sexual abuse by strangers.¹⁹

Table 31.

Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2016

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	15	3.3
Bristol	3,623	21	5.8	28	7.7
Burrillville	3,576	21	5.9	29	8.1
Central Falls	5,644	81	14.4	145	25.7
Charlestown	1,506	8	5.3	10	6.6
Coventry	7,770	54	6.9	64	8.2
Cranston	16,414	104	6.3	130	7.9
Cumberland	7,535	28	3.7	48	6.4
East Greenwich	3,436	14	4.1	24	7.0
East Providence	9,177	70	7.6	90	9.8
Exeter	1,334	4	3.0	5	3.7
Foster	986	5	5.1	14	14.2
Glocester	2,098	6	2.9	13	6.2
Hopkinton	1,845	12	6.5	19	10.3
Jamestown	1,043	5	4.8	6	5.8
Johnston	5,480	37	6.8	40	7.3
Lincoln	4,751	31	6.5	40	8.4
Little Compton	654	0	0.0	2	3.1
Middletown	3,652	27	7.4	34	9.3
Narragansett	2,269	15	6.6	20	8.8
New Shoreham	163	0	0.0	0	0.0
Newport	4,083	72	17.6	72	17.6
North Kingstown	6,322	29	4.6	42	6.6
North Providence	5,514	67	12.2	82	14.9
North Smithfield	2,456	8	3.3	9	3.7
Pawtucket	16,575	282	17.0	366	22.1
Portsmouth	3,996	27	6.8	27	6.8
Providence	41,634	484	11.6	663	15.9
Richmond	1,849	3	1.6	4	2.2
Scituate	2,272	17	7.5	18	7.9
Smithfield	3,625	6	1.7	11	3.0
South Kingstown	5,416	39	7.2	38	7.0
Tiverton	2,998	27	9.0	41	13.7
Warren	1,940	21	10.8	37	19.1
Warwick	15,825	73	4.6	106	6.7
West Greenwich	1,477	2	1.4	6	4.1
West Warwick	5,746	85	14.8	110	19.1
Westerly	4,787	42	8.8	68	14.2
Woonsocket	9,888	175	17.7	289	29.2
Four Core Cities	73,741	1,022	13.9	1,463	19.8
Remainder of State	150,215	987	6.6	1,302	8.7
Rhode Island	223,956	2,009	9.0	2,765	12.3

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 2016.

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 2008, Rhode Island lowered the eligibility age for entry into DCYF services to under age 18, although some youth remain eligible for services after their 18th birthday.

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

References

^{1,13,14} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2015). *Making meaningful connections: 2015 prevention resource guide*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

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

(continued on page 184)