

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

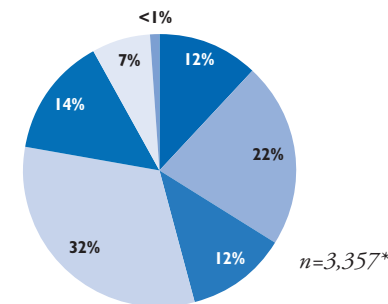
equally critical and more cost-effective. In Rhode Island, if an investigation does not reveal maltreatment but family stressors and risk factors are identified, Child Protective Services (CPS) refers families to community-based support services to reduce the risk of future involvement with the Department 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 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 2017 in Rhode Island, there were 2,404 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 3,357 children. The rate of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18 was more than two times higher in the four core cities (23.5 victims per 1,000 children) than in the remainder of the state (10.2 victims per 1,000 children). About half (52%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in 2017 were young children under age six and one-third (34%) were ages three and younger.⁵

Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2017

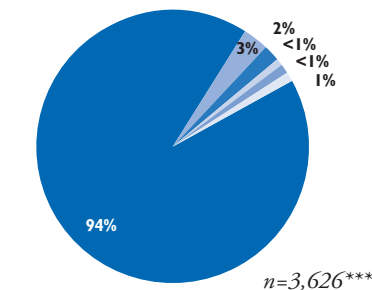
By Age of Victim*

- 12% (397) Under Age 1
- 22% (742) Ages 1 to 3
- 12% (412) Ages 4 to 5
- 32% (1,087) Ages 6 to 11
- 14% (480) Ages 12 to 15
- 7% (237) Ages 16 and Older
- <1% (2) Unknown



By Relationship of Perpetrator to Victims***

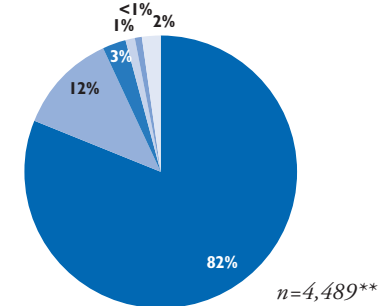
- 94% (3,404) Parents
- 3% (113) Relatives/Household Members
- 2% (57) Foster Parents
- <1% (9) Child Care Providers
- <1% (11) Residential Facility Staff
- 1% (32) Other or Unknown



Source: Rhode Island DCYF, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2017. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

By Type of Neglect/Abuse**

- 82% (3,701) Neglect
- 12% (521) Physical Abuse
- 3% (116) Sexual Abuse
- 1% (53) Medical Neglect
- <1% (15) Emotional Abuse
- 2% (83) 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.

DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline Calls for Reports of Abuse and/or Neglect, Investigations,* and Indicated Investigations, Rhode Island, 2008-2017

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

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2008-2017.

*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).

◆ Between 2016 and 2017 in Rhode Island, the numbers of unduplicated child maltreatment reports, completed investigations, and indicated investigations all increased. This followed two years of declines in the numbers of both completed and indicated investigations. In 2017, 36% (2,404) of the 6,628 completed investigations of child maltreatment were indicated.⁶ An indicated investigation is one in which there is a “preponderance of evidence that a child has been abused and/or neglected.”⁷

◆ Of the 15,945 maltreatment reports in 2017, 48% (7,703) were classified as “information/referrals” (formerly “early warnings”).⁸ Information/referrals (IR) 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 exist, and there is a specific incident or pattern of incidents suggesting that harm can be identified. In 2017, DCYF reinstated a practice of doing a second review of all maltreatment calls initially classified as IR within 24 hours to either confirm IR status or to reclassify for investigation. 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 (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, 2012-2016

YEAR	# OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS*	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS*	# OF DEATHS**
2012	153	25	1
2013	133	34	3
2014	102	44	1
2015	92	28	0
2016	79	8	1
TOTAL	559	139	6

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, 2012-2016. Data for 2015 and 2016 are provisional.

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 2012 and 2016, there were 79 emergency department visits, eight hospitalizations, and six 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

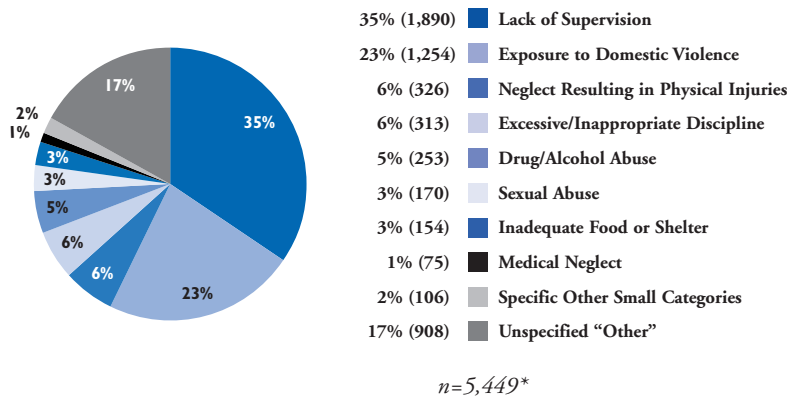
Child Abuse and Neglect in Rhode Island Communities

◆ 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 2017, Rhode Island had 14.6 child victims of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children, up from a rate of 12.3 per 1,000 children in 2016. Woonsocket (35.9 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 (30.8), Newport (27.9), Pawtucket (24.1), and West Warwick (25.9).¹⁷

Child Abuse and Neglect

Indicated Allegations of Child Neglect, by Nature of Neglect, Rhode Island, 2017



*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.

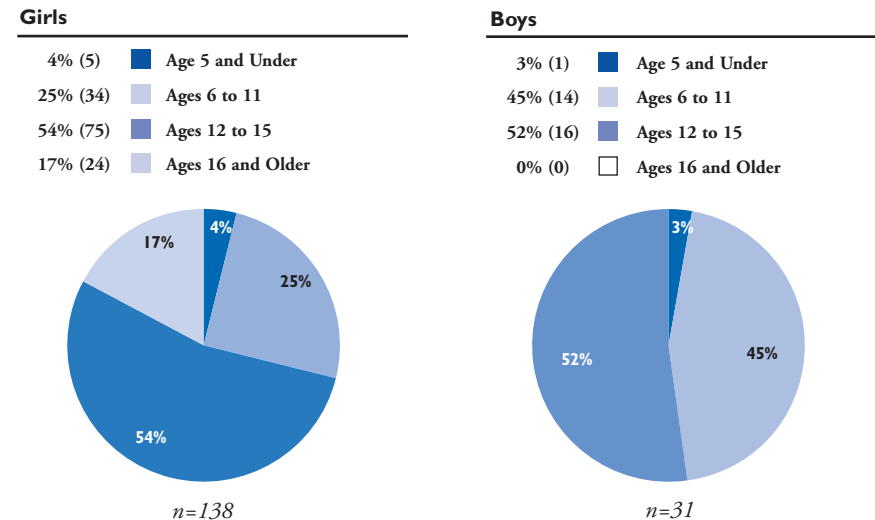
Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHOST, 2017.

◆ Of the 5,449 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of neglect to children under age 18 in Rhode Island in 2017, 35% involved lack of supervision. This highlights the importance of access to high-quality, affordable child care, preschool, and after-school programs.¹⁸

◆ The second largest category of neglect (23%) is “exposure to domestic violence.” These are instances where the neglect is related to the child witnessing domestic violence in the home.¹⁹

◆ The “specific other small categories” include: educational neglect (29), tying/close confinement (19), emotional abuse (15), abandonment (12), inappropriate restraint (11), corporal punishment (9), malnutrition/starvation (7), poisoning/noxious substances (2), and emotional neglect (2).²⁰

Child Sexual Abuse, by Gender and Age of Victim, Rhode Island, 2017



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHOST, 2017.

◆ In Rhode Island in 2017, there were 169 indicated allegations (confirmed claims) of child sexual abuse. Some children were victims of sexual abuse more than once. The victim was a female in 82% (138) of the 169 indicated allegations of sexual abuse. Twenty-eight percent of the female victims were known to be under age 12 while 48% of the male victims were under age 12.²¹

◆ 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.²²

Table 31.

Indicated Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Rhode Island, 2017

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	12	2.6	13	2.8
Bristol	3,623	45	12.4	57	15.7
Burrillville	3,576	27	7.6	23	6.4
Central Falls	5,644	104	18.4	174	30.8
Charlestown	1,506	15	10.0	12	8.0
Coventry	7,770	75	9.7	69	8.9
Cranston	16,414	104	6.3	157	9.6
Cumberland	7,535	53	7.0	72	9.6
East Greenwich	3,436	11	3.2	18	5.2
East Providence	9,177	79	8.6	120	13.1
Exeter	1,334	10	7.5	11	8.2
Foster	986	5	5.1	4	4.1
Glocester	2,098	13	6.2	15	7.1
Hopkinton	1,845	29	15.7	34	18.4
Jamestown	1,043	2	1.9	5	4.8
Johnston	5,480	51	9.3	56	10.2
Lincoln	4,751	31	6.5	35	7.4
Little Compton	654	0	0.0	1	1.5
Middletown	3,652	29	7.9	37	10.1
Narragansett	2,269	16	7.1	16	7.1
New Shoreham	163	1	6.1	1	6.1
Newport	4,083	77	18.9	114	27.9
North Kingstown	6,322	39	6.2	60	9.5
North Providence	5,514	60	10.9	63	11.4
North Smithfield	2,456	11	4.5	16	6.5
Pawtucket	16,575	285	17.2	400	24.1
Portsmouth	3,996	15	3.8	24	6.0
Providence	41,634	540	13.0	805	19.3
Richmond	1,849	4	2.2	3	1.6
Scituate	2,272	20	8.8	11	4.8
Smithfield	3,625	10	2.8	14	3.9
South Kingstown	5,416	26	4.8	43	7.9
Tiverton	2,998	26	8.7	37	12.3
Warren	1,940	19	9.8	27	13.9
Warwick	15,825	111	7.0	122	7.7
West Greenwich	1,477	5	3.4	6	4.1
West Warwick	5,746	87	15.1	149	25.9
Westerly	4,787	52	10.9	81	16.9
Woonsocket	9,888	226	22.9	355	35.9
Four Core Cities	73,741	1,155	15.7	1,734	23.5
Remainder of State	150,215	1,170	7.8	1,526	10.2
Rhode Island	223,956	2,325	10.4	3,260	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 2017.

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 children 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. (2016). *Building community, building hope: 2016 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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