



## Child Maltreatment 2014: Summary of Key Findings

This factsheet presents excerpts from *Child Maltreatment 2014*, a report based on data submissions by State child protective services (CPS) agencies for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014. The full *Child Maltreatment 2014* report is available on the Children's Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2014>.

This year's full report includes comparison statistics for the last 5 years. These statistics indicate a decrease in overall rates of child victimization and in deaths from maltreatment, as well as an increase in overall rates of children who received a response from a CPS agency.

States voluntarily provide statistics on child abuse and neglect to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), which analyzes the data for the annual report. States have their own definitions of child abuse and neglect based on standards set by Federal law. States' screening policies and responses to maltreatment may differ, as does what each State reports to NCANDS.

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## How Many Allegations of Maltreatment Were Reported and Investigated?

During FFY 2014, CPS agencies received an estimated 3.6 million referrals involving the alleged maltreatment of approximately 6.6 million children. This estimate is based on a national referral rate of 48.8 referrals per 1,000 children in the population.

Of these referrals, approximately 2.1 million reports concerning approximately 3.9 million children (duplicate count) were screened in as “appropriate” for CPS response.<sup>1</sup> The national rate of screened-in reports was 28.9 per 1,000 children in the population.

- Three-fifths (60.7 percent) of referrals were screened in for investigation or assessment by CPS agencies in the 46 States that reported statistics for both screened-in and screened-out reports.
- Approximately 3.2 million children (unique count) received either an investigation or alternative response, with a national rate of 43.7 children per 1,000 in the population.
- Approximately one-fifth of the children investigated were found to be victims of abuse or neglect—a rate of 9.4 per 1,000 children in the population. Investigations resulted in the following report dispositions (duplicate count): 17.8 percent substantiated, 0.8 percent indicated, and 0.6 percent alternative response victim.<sup>2</sup>
- The remaining four-fifths of the children investigated were found to be nonvictims of maltreatment, with the following dispositions (duplicate count): 55.9 percent unsubstantiated, 11.6 percent no alleged maltreatment,

10.8 percent alternative response nonvictim,<sup>3</sup> 1.5 percent closed with no finding, 0.6 percent “other,” 0.06 percent intentionally false, and 0.08 percent unknown.

## Who Reported Child Maltreatment?

For FFY 2014, three-fifths (62.7 percent) of all reports of alleged child abuse or neglect were made by professionals. The term “professional” means that the person who was the source of the report had contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of their job. The most common professional report sources were legal and law enforcement personnel (18.1 percent), education personnel (17.7 percent), social services staff (11.0 percent), and medical personnel (9.0 percent). Professionals have submitted more than one-half of all reports for the past 5 years.

The remaining reports were made by nonprofessionals (18.6 percent), such as friends, neighbors, and relatives, and by unclassified reporters (18.7 percent), a category that includes anonymous and unknown reporters.

## Who Were the Child Victims?

In FFY 2014, an estimated 702,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect nationwide, resulting in a rate of 9.4 victims per 1,000 children in the population. Among the children confirmed as victims by CPS agencies in FFY 2014:

- Children in the age group of birth to 1 year had the highest rate of victimization at 24.4 per 1,000 children of the same age group in the national population. The youngest children are the most vulnerable to maltreatment.
- Slightly more than one-half (50.6 percent) of the child victims were girls, and 48.9 percent were boys. The gender was unknown for less than 1 percent of victims.

<sup>1</sup> Over time, the Child Maltreatment report series has transitioned from using duplicate counts to unique counts for most analyses. A “duplicate” count of child victims counts a child each time he or she was found to be a victim, while a “unique” count of child victims counts a child only once, regardless of the number of times he or she was found to be a victim during the reporting year. All numbers provided here are unique counts unless noted otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) disposition category of “alternative response victim” is defined as a conclusion that the child was identified as a victim when a response other than an investigation was provided. Three States report children in this category.

<sup>3</sup> The NCANDS disposition category of “alternative response nonvictim” is defined as a conclusion that the child was not identified as a victim when a response other than an investigation was provided.

- Three races or ethnicities comprised 88 percent of victims: African-American (21.4 percent), Hispanic (22.7 percent), and White (44.0 percent). African-American children had the highest rates of victimization at 15.3 per 1,000 children in the population of the same race or ethnicity. Hispanic and White children had rates of victimization at 8.8 and 8.4 per 1,000 children, respectively, in the population of the same race or ethnicity.

## What Were the Most Common Types of Maltreatment?

As in prior years, neglect was overwhelmingly the most common form of child maltreatment. CPS investigations determined the following:<sup>4</sup>

- 75.0 percent of victims suffered neglect.
- 17.0 percent of victims suffered physical abuse.
- 8.3 percent of victims suffered sexual abuse.
- 6.0 percent of victims suffered psychological maltreatment.
- 2.2 percent of victims suffered medical neglect.
- 6.8 percent of victims experienced “other” maltreatment, which may include threatened abuse or parents’ substance abuse. States define “other” differently, but it generally refers to any maltreatment that does not fit in one of NCANDS’s categories.

Research indicates that there are risk factors for maltreatment, including caregiver alcohol abuse and caregiver drug abuse. For FFY 2014, NCANDS also asked States to report on these risk factors with the following results (not all States reported on all factors):

- 9.2 percent of victims and 3.8 percent of nonvictims were reported with the caregiver alcohol abuse risk factor.
- 26.0 percent of victims and 8.2 percent of nonvictims were reported with the caregiver drug abuse risk factor.

<sup>4</sup> Each victim could be counted for multiple forms of maltreatment.

## How Many Children Died From Abuse or Neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. During FFY 2014:

- An estimated 1,580 children died due to abuse and neglect.
- The overall rate of child fatalities was 2.13 deaths per 100,000 children in the national population.
- Nearly three-quarters (72.3 percent) of child fatalities were attributed to neglect only or a combination of neglect and another maltreatment type, and 41.3 percent of the children died exclusively from physical abuse or from physical abuse in combination with another maltreatment type.
- Slightly more than 70 percent (70.7 percent) of the children who died due to child abuse and neglect were younger than 3 years old.
- Boys had a slightly higher child fatality rate than girls at 2.48 boys per 100,000 boys in the population compared to 1.82 girls per 100,000 girls in the population.

For more information about child maltreatment fatalities, including information about what States and communities are doing to prevent fatalities, read Information Gateway’s *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2014: Statistics and Intervention* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/fatality>.

## Who Abused and Neglected Children?

NCANDS tracks child maltreatment by caregivers, including parents and other household members who are responsible for children’s well-being. These cases are generally handled by child welfare agencies. (Cases of child maltreatment by out-of-home perpetrators are considered criminal cases and are generally handled by law enforcement.)

In FFY 2014, 51 States reported a total of 522,945 perpetrators of child maltreatment (each perpetrator counted once, regardless of the number of children or reports involved). Who were those perpetrators:

- Women comprised a larger percentage of all perpetrators than men: 54.1 percent compared to 44.8 percent.
- Four-fifths (83.2 percent) of all perpetrators were between the ages of 18 and 44 years.
- The great majority of perpetrators were parents—one or both parents maltreated 91.6 percent of victims. Of the percentage of perpetrators who were parents, 78.1 percent were biological parents.
- A perpetrator who was not the child's parent maltreated 12.6 percent of victims, sometimes alone and sometimes with other perpetrators. The largest categories in the nonparent group were male relatives, male partner of parent, and "other," but the category also included daycare providers, foster parents, and unknown.

## Who Received Services, and What Did They Include?

As a result of an investigation or alternative response, CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in the home and in foster care. For the 2014 duplicate count of children:

- 47 States reported that approximately 2.9 million children received prevention services.
- 48 States reported that 1,301,337 children received postresponse services from a CPS agency.
- Approximately two-thirds of victims (63.7 percent) and one-third of nonvictims (32.0 percent) received postresponse services.

- Among the States reporting a breakdown of service type, almost one-fourth (23.0 percent) of victims who received services and 3.4 percent of nonvictims who received services were removed from their homes and received foster care services. The remaining almost two-thirds (63.7 percent) of victims and 32.0 percent of nonvictims who received services received in-home services only.

*The statistics in the Child Maltreatment reports are based on data submitted to NCANDS by the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. NCANDS is a voluntary reporting system that was developed by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to collect and analyze annual statistics on child maltreatment from State CPS agencies. The NCANDS Child File includes all children with an allegation of maltreatment that are investigated or assessed and reach disposition during the year. The Child File may include assessments that began in a previous year but were completed in the current year, but it does not include screened- in reports that have not yet reached disposition. The inclusion of alternative/differential response varies from State to State.*

### Suggested citation:

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