

Frequently Asked Questions

How many children are reported and investigated for abuse or neglect?

For calendar year 2002, an estimated 1,800,000 referrals alleging child abuse or neglect were accepted by State and local child protective services (CPS) agencies for investigation or assessment. The referrals included more than 3 million children, and of those, approximately 896,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect by the CPS agencies (HHS-ACF, 2002).

CPS agencies respond to the needs of children who are alleged to have been maltreated and ensure that they remain safe. The rate of children who received a disposition by CPS agencies was 43.8 per 1,000 children in the national population. This yields an estimate of 3,193,000 children who received investigations or assessments during 2002 (HHS-ACF, 2002).

An estimated 896,000 children were found to be victims, which was approximately 28.1 percent of all children who received an investigation or assessment. The national rate of victimization was 12.3 per 1,000 children (HHS-ACF, 2002).

The rate of all children who received an investigation or assessment increased from 36.1 per 1,000 children in 1990 to 43.8 per 1,000 children in 2002, which is a 21.3 percent increase (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Approximately 30 percent of the reports included at least one child who was found to be a victim of abuse or neglect. Sixty-one percent of the reports were found to be unsubstantiated (including intentionally false); the remaining reports were closed for additional reasons (HHS-ACF, 2002).

In 2001, the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (the Child Abuse Reporting Hotline) received 152,671 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, 32.6 reports for every 1,000 children in the State. Out of those reports 31% or 45,298 were confirmed as cases of child abuse and neglect. The number of reports increased by 1% compared to 2000, when the Central Register received 143,712 reports (PCA-NY, 2003).

How many children are victims of maltreatment?

An estimated 896,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect in 2002. The rate of victimization per 1,000 children in the national population has dropped from 13.4 children in 1990 to 12.3 children in 2002 (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Is the number of abused or neglected children increasing?

Although the rate of child abuse and neglect appears to have dropped from 1990 to 2002 (from 13.4 per 1,000 children in 1990 to 12.3 per 1,000 children in 2002--a 7.5 percent decrease), the rate of child abuse and neglect fatalities reported by National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) has increased. Over the last several years there has been a slight increase in fatalities from 1.84 per 100,000 children in 2000 to 1.96 in 2001 and 1.98 in 2002. However, experts do not agree whether this represents an actual increase in child abuse and neglect fatalities, or whether it may be attributed to improvements in reporting procedures. For example, statistics on approximately 20 percent of fatalities were from health departments and fatality review boards for 2002, compared to 11.4 percent for 2001, an indication of greater coordination of data collection among agencies (HHS, 2004).

What are the most common types of maltreatment?

Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment. During 2002, 60.5 percent of victims experienced neglect (including medical neglect); 18.6 percent were physically abused; 9.9 percent were sexually abused; and 6.5 percent were emotionally or psychologically maltreated. In addition, 18.9 percent of victims experienced such "other" types of maltreatment as "abandonment," "threats of harm to the child," and "congenital drug addiction". States may code any maltreatment type that does not fall into one of the main categories— physical abuse, neglect, medical neglect, sexual abuse, and psychological or emotional maltreatment— as "other". The maltreatment type percentages total more than 100 percent because many children were victims of more than one type of maltreatment and were coded multiple times (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Who are the child victims?

For 2002, 48.1 percent of child victims were boys, and 51.9 percent of the victims were girls. The youngest children had the highest rate of victimization. The rate of child victimization for the age group of birth to 3 years was 16.0 per 1,000 children of the same age group. The victimization rate of children in the age group of 4-7 years was 13.7 per 1,000 children in the same age group (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Overall, the rate of victimization was inversely related to the age of the child. The youngest children accounted for the largest percentage of victims. Children younger than 1-year-old accounted for 9.6 percent of victims, and children age 1-9 years accounted for approximately 6.0 percent for each single-year age (HHS-ACF, 2002).

American Indian or Alaska Native children and African-American children had the highest rates of victimization at 21.7 and 20.2 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity, respectively. White children and Hispanic children had rates of approximately 10.7 and 9.5 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity, respectively. Asian-Pacific Islander children had the lowest rate of 3.7 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity (HHS-ACF, 2002).

One-half of all victims were White (54.2%); one-quarter (26.1%) were African-American; and one-tenth (11.0%) were Hispanic. American Indians or Alaska Natives accounted for 1.8 percent of victims, and Asian-Pacific Islanders accounted for 0.9 percent of victims (HHS-ACF, 2002).

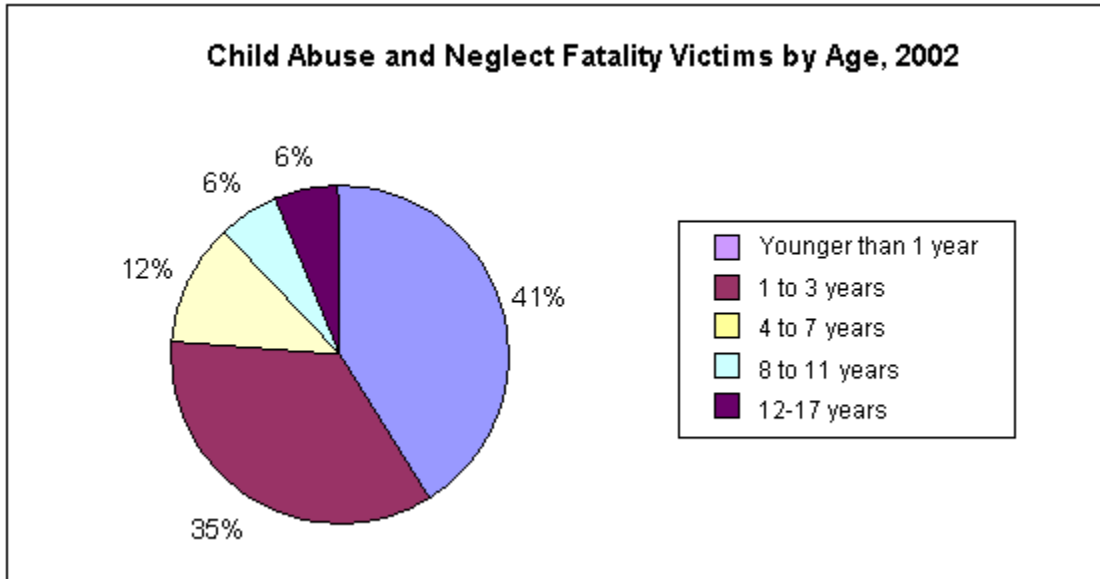
How many children die from abuse or neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) reported an **estimated 1,400 child fatalities in 2002**. This translates to a rate of 1.98 children per 100,000 children in the general population. NCANDS defines "child fatality" as the death of a child caused by an injury resulting from abuse or neglect, or where abuse or neglect were contributing factors (HHS, 2004).

Research indicates very young children (ages 3 and younger) are the most frequent victims of child fatalities. NCANDS data for 2002 demonstrated children younger than 1 year accounted for 41 percent of fatalities, while children younger than 4 years accounted for 76 percent of fatalities. This population of children is the most vulnerable for many reasons, including their dependency, small size, and inability to defend themselves (HHS, 2002; HHS, 2004).

Children age 4 to 7 years old were fatal victims of abuse or neglect in 12 percent of cases; 6 percent were 8 to 11 years old; and 6 percent were 12 to 17 years old (HHS, 2002).

Infant boys (younger than 1 year old) had the highest rate of fatalities, nearly 19 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the national population. Infant girls (younger than 1 year old) had a rate of 12 deaths per 100,000. The overall rate of child fatalities was 2 deaths per 100,000 children. One-third of child fatalities were attributed to neglect. Physical abuse and sexual abuse also were major contributors to fatalities (HHS, 2002).



US Department of Health and Human Services (2004).

Many researchers and practitioners believe child fatalities due to abuse and neglect are underreported. States' definitions of key terms such as "child homicide," "abuse," and "neglect" vary (therefore, so do the numbers and types of child fatalities they report). In addition, some deaths officially labeled as accidents, child homicides, and/or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) might be attributed to child abuse or neglect if more comprehensive investigations were conducted or if there was more consensus in the coding of abuse on death certificates (HHS, 2004).

Recent studies in Colorado and North Carolina have estimated as many as **50 to 60 percent** of deaths resulting from abuse or neglect are not recorded (Crume, DiGuseppi, Byers, Sirotnak, Garrett, 2002; Herman-Giddens, Brown, Verbiest, Carlson, Hooten, et al., 1999). These studies indicate that neglect is the most underrecorded form of fatal maltreatment (HHS, 2004).

In New York State in 2000, 140 fatalities reported to the NYS Central Register alleged the death of a child resulted from abuse or maltreatment. Of these fatality reports, 60% or 72 children were confirmed to have died of as a result of child abuse and neglect (PCA-NY, 2003).

Who abuses and neglects children?

For 2002, 58.3 percent of the perpetrators were women and 41.7 percent were men. Female perpetrators were typically younger than male perpetrators. The median age of perpetrators was 31 years for women and 34 years for men. More than 40 percent (42.5%) of women who were perpetrators were younger than 30 years of age compared to one-third of the men (32.4%) who were younger than 30 years (HHS-ACF, 2002).

By far, the largest percentage of perpetrators (81.0%) were parents, including birth parents, adoptive parents, and stepparents. Other relatives accounted for an additional 6.6 percent. Unmarried partners of parents accounted for 2.9 percent of perpetrators (HHS-ACF, 2002).

More than one-half (53.3%) of all perpetrators were found to have neglected children. Slightly more than 10 percent (11.0%) of perpetrators physically abused children, and 6.9 percent sexually abused children (HHS-ACF, 2002).

There were variations in these overall patterns when the relationship of perpetrator to the child victim was considered. Less than 3 percent (2.5%) of parents committed sexual abuse; however, 28.9 percent of other relatives, 19.3 percent of daycare providers, 16.4 percent of residential facility staff, and 11.2 percent of unmarried partners of parents committed sexual abuse. More than one-third (36.9%) of perpetrators who were in "other" types of relationships to the child victims—including camp counselors, school employees, and hospital staff—committed sexual abuse (HHS-ACF, 2002).

In cases of fatal abuse, one fact of great concern is that the perpetrators are, by definition, individuals responsible for the care and supervision of their victims. In 2002, one or both parents were involved in 79 percent of child abuse or neglect fatalities. Of the other 21 percent of fatalities, 16 percent were the result of maltreatment by nonparent caretakers, and 5 percent were unknown or missing. These percentages are consistent with findings from previous years (HHS, 2004).

There is no single profile of a perpetrator of fatal child abuse, although certain characteristics reappear in many studies. Frequently the perpetrator is a young adult in his or her mid-20s without a high school diploma, living at or below the poverty level, depressed, and who may have difficulty coping with stressful situations. In many instances, the perpetrator has experienced violence first-hand. Most fatalities from *physical abuse* are caused by fathers and other male caretakers. Mothers are most often held responsible for deaths resulting from *child neglect* (HHS, 2004).

Who reports child maltreatment?

In 2002, an estimated total of 2.6 million referrals concerning the welfare of approximately 4.5 million children were made to CPS agencies throughout the United States. Of these, approximately two-thirds (an estimated 1.8 million) were accepted for investigation or assessment; one-third were not accepted (HHS, 2002).

Professionals submitted more than one-half (56.5%) of the reports. "Professional" indicates that the report source came into contact with the alleged victim as part of the reporter's occupation. State laws require most professionals to notify CPS agencies of suspected maltreatment. The categories of professionals include educators, legal and law enforcement personnel, social services personnel, medical personnel, mental health personnel, child daycare providers, and foster care providers. The three most common sources of reports in 2002 were from professionals— educational personnel (16.1%), legal or law enforcement personnel (15.7%), and social services personnel (12.6%) (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Nonprofessional report sources submitted the remaining 43.6 percent of reports. These included parents, other relatives, friends and neighbors, alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, anonymous callers, and "other" sources. Anonymous (9.6%), "other" sources (9.0%) and other relatives (8.0%) accounted for the largest groups of nonprofessional reporters (HHS-ACF, 2002).

Based on data from 38 States for a 5-year timeframe, the percentage of reports made by nonprofessionals decreased from 47.4 percent in 1998 to 43.4 percent in 2002, with an

accompanying increase in professional reporters from 52.6 percent to 56.6 percent (HHS-ACF, 2002).

What happens after I make a report?

The Child Protective Service (CPS) unit of the local department of social services is required to begin an investigation of each report within 24 hours. The investigation should include an evaluation of the safety of the child named in the report, and any other children in the home, and a determination of the risk to the children if they continue to remain in the home.

CPS may take a child into protective custody if it is necessary for the protection from further abuse or maltreatment. Based upon an assessment of the circumstances, CPS may offer the family appropriate services. CPS has no legal authority to compel the family to accept such services. However, the CPS caseworker has the obligation and authority to petition the Family Court to mandate services when they are necessary for the care and protection of a child.

CPS has 60 days after receiving the report to determine whether the report is "indicated" or "unfounded." The law requires CPS to provide written notice to the parents or other subjects of the report concerning the rights accorded to them by the New York State Social Services Law. The CPS investigator will document activities and decisions in the State Central Register file.

Are victims of child abuse more likely to engage in criminality later in life?

According to a 1992 study sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) maltreatment in childhood increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 53 percent, as an adult by 38 percent, and for a violent crime by 38 percent. Being abused or neglected in childhood increases the likelihood for arrest for females by 77 percent. A related 1995 NIJ report indicted that children who were sexually abused were 28 times more likely than a control group of non-abused children to be arrested for prostitution as an adult.

Is there any evidence linking alcohol or other drug use to child maltreatment?

A 1999 study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that children of substance abusing parents were almost 3 times likelier to be abused and more than 4 times likelier to be neglected than children of parents who are not substance abusers. Other studies suggest that an estimated 50 percent to 80 percent of all child abuse cases substantiated by CPS involve some degree of substance abuse by the child's parents.

What is HIPAA and does it affect or limit my responsibility as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse, neglect or maltreatment?

HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The privacy provisions contained in this regulation do not affect the responsibilities of mandated reporters, as they are defined in the New York State Social Services Law (NYSOCFS, 2003).

Information concerning the provisions of HIPAA may be found at www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa.