

2004 Child Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is non-accidental physical injury of a child inflicted by a parent or caretaker which ranges from superficial bruises and welts to broken bones, burns, serious internal injuries and in some cases, death. The definition of physical abuse includes actions that create a substantial risk of physical injury to the child.

Physical Neglect

Physical neglect is withholding, or failing to provide, adequate food, shelter, clothing, hygiene, medical care, education, and/or supervision, such that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition is impaired or at imminent risk of being impaired.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a parent or caretaker commits a sexual offense against a child or allows a sexual offense to be committed, such as rape, sodomy, engaging a child in sexual activity, engaging a child in – or promoting a child's – sexual performance.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes parents' or caretakers' acts or omissions that cause or could cause serious conduct, cognitive, affective, or other mental disorders. For example, torture, close confinement or the constant use of verbally abusive language to harshly criticize and denigrate a child. It also includes emotional neglect – withholding physical and emotional contact to the detriment of the child's normal emotional development, and in extreme cases, physical development.

Risk Factors

A combination of individual, relational, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of child maltreatment. Although children are not responsible for the harm inflicted upon them, certain individual characteristics have been found to increase their risk of being maltreated. Risk factors are contributing factors – not direct causes. Examples of risk factors include:

- Social isolation in families
- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs and development
- Physical or mental disabilities in children that may increase caregiver burden
- Parents' history of domestic abuse and/or domestic violence
- Poverty and other socio-economic disadvantages, such as unemployment
- Lack of family cohesion
- Substance abuse
- Young, single, non-biological parents
- Poor parent-child relationships and negative interactions
- Parental thoughts and emotions supporting maltreatment behaviors
- Parental stress and distress, including depression or other mental health conditions
- Community violence

Reports and numbers of children

In 2004, 76,034 New York State children were abused or neglected, approximately 14 to 15 of every 1,000 children in the state. The NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (the Child Abuse Reporting Hotline) received 140,720 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, involving 245,515 children. Upon investigation, 43,160 (31 percent) were substantiated as situations of child abuse and/or neglect. There are more victims than reports because more than one child is involved in some cases. Compared to the prior year, the number of reports decreased 4.5 percent, from 147,339; the number of substantiated reports decreased 3 percent, from 44,495.

Nationwide, and estimated 872,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2004, a victimization rate of 11.9 for every 1,000 children in the country. States investigated or assessed 3,503,000 children because of suspected abuse or neglect. This represents a 3.6 percent increase in the number of children investigated, compared to 3,382,000 in 2003, and a decrease of 2.4 percent in the number of substantiated victims, compared to 893,000 in 2003.

Types of maltreatment

Child neglect continues to comprise the largest portion of cases of child maltreatment. According to the federal report *Child Maltreatment 2004* figures are as follows:

Child victims in the United States

- 62% were neglected
- 18% were physically abused
- 10% were sexually abused
- 5% were psychologically or emotionally maltreated
- 2% were medically neglected
- 22% other types of maltreatment

Child victims in New York State

- 91% were neglected
- 12% were physically abused
- 4% were sexually abused
- 1% were psychologically or emotionally maltreated
- 4% were medically neglected
- 27% other types of maltreatment

“Other types of maltreatment” include, for example, abandonment, threats of harm, or congenital drug addiction. Totals are more than 100 percent because a child may be the victim of more than one type of maltreatment.

Fatalities

In New York State in 2004, 71 children died as a result of abuse or neglect, a fatality rate of 1.55 per 100,000 children. This is a 15 percent increase over the previous year's 62 fatalities.

Nationwide in 2004, an estimated 1,490 children died as a result of abuse or neglect, 2 of every 100,000 children in the population. This is a 2 percent increase from the 1,460 fatalities that occurred the previous year. Children younger than 1 year old accounted for 45 percent of fatalities, and 81 percent of fatalities were children younger than 4 years old.

Sources of Data: *Child Maltreatment 2004*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, July, 2005; and *Child Maltreatment: Reports, Victims and Fatalities*, National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, Prevent Child Abuse America, May 2006.