

# Child Maltreatment 2007



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau



# Summary







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## Overview

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories have mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting laws that require certain professionals and institutions to report suspected maltreatment to a child protective services (CPS) agency. Examples of these mandatory reporters include health care providers and facilities, mental health care providers, teachers and other school staff, social workers, police officers, foster care providers, and daycare providers. The initial report of suspected child abuse or neglect is called a referral. Approximately one-third of referrals are screened out each year and do not receive further attention from CPS. The remaining referrals are “screened in” and an investigation or assessment is conducted by the CPS agency to determine the likelihood that maltreatment has occurred or that the child is at risk of maltreatment. After conducting interviews with family members, the alleged victim, and other people familiar with the family, the CPS agency makes a determination or finding concerning whether the child is a victim of abuse or neglect or is at risk of abuse or neglect. This determination often is called a disposition. Each State establishes specific dispositions and terminology.

Each State has its own definitions of child abuse and neglect based on minimum standards set by Federal law. Federal legislation provides a foundation for States by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. The *Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)*, (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g), as amended by the *Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003*, defines child abuse and neglect as:

- Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

Within the minimum standards set by CAPTA, each State is responsible for providing its own definitions of child abuse and neglect. Most States recognize four major types of maltreatment: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological maltreatment. Although any of the forms of child maltreatment may be found separately, they also can occur in combination.

## What is the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)?

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort that collects and analyzes annual data on child abuse and neglect. The 1988 CAPTA directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish a national data collection and analysis program. The Children’s Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, collects and analyzes the data.

The data are submitted voluntarily by the States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The first report from NCANDS was based on data for 1990; the report for 2007 data is the 18th issuance of this annual publication.

## How are the data used?

NCANDS data are used for the annual report, *Child Maltreatment*, which is published each year. In addition, data collected by NCANDS are a critical source of information for many publications, reports, and activities of the Federal Government and other groups. Data from NCANDS are used in the Child and Family Services Reviews of the States, in the *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress*, and in the Program Assessment Rating Tool.

## What data are collected?

NCANDS collects case-level data on all children who received an investigation or assessment by a CPS agency. States that are unable to provide case-level data submit aggregated counts of key indicators.

Case-level data include information on the characteristics of referrals of abuse or neglect that are made to CPS agencies, the children referred, the types of maltreatment that are alleged, the dispositions (or findings) of the investigations, the risk factors of the child and the caregivers, the services that are provided, and the perpetrators.

## Where are the data available?

Restricted usage files of State case-level data are available for researchers from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect at [www.ndacan.cornell.edu](http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu). In addition, aggregated counts of key indicators by State are available for 1990–2007.

The *Child Maltreatment* reports are available on the Internet at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/index.htm#can](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm#can).

## How many children were reported and received an investigation or assessment for abuse and neglect?

During Federal fiscal year 2007, an estimated 3.2 million referrals, involving the alleged

maltreatment of approximately 5.8 million children, were referred to CPS agencies.

- Approximately 62 percent (61.7%) of referrals were screened in for investigation or assessment by CPS agencies.
- Approximately 25 (25.2%) percent of the investigations or assessments determined at least one child who was found to be a victim of abuse or neglect with the following report dispositions: 24.1 percent substantiated, 0.6 percent indicated, and 0.5 percent alternative response victim.
- More than 74 percent of the investigations or assessments determined that the child was not a victim of maltreatment with the following dispositions: 61.3 percent unsubstantiated, 6.1 percent alternative response nonvictim, 5.7 percent “other,” 1.6 percent closed with no finding, and 0.0 percent intentionally false.

## Who reported child maltreatment?

For 2007, more than one-half (57.7%) of all reports of alleged child abuse or neglect were made by professionals. The term professional means that the person had contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of the report source’s job. This term includes teachers, police officers, lawyers, and social services staff. The remaining reports were made by nonprofessionals, including friends, neighbors, sports coaches, and relatives.

- The three largest percentages of report sources were from such professionals as teachers (17.0%), lawyers or police officers (16.3%), and social services staff (10.2%).

## Who were the child victims?

During 2007, an estimated 794,000 children were determined to be victims of abuse or neglect. Among the children confirmed as victims by CPS agencies in 2007:

- Children in the age group of birth to 1 year had the highest rate of victimization at 21.9 per 1,000 children of the same age group in the national population;
- More than one-half of the child victims were girls (51.5%) and 48.2 percent were boys; and
- Approximately one-half of all victims were White (46.1%), 21.7 percent were African-American, and 20.8 percent were Hispanic.

### What were the most common types of maltreatment?

As in prior years, neglect was the most common form of child maltreatment. CPS investigations determined that:

- Nearly 60 percent (59.0%) of victims suffered neglect;
- More than 10 percent (10.8%) of the victims suffered physical abuse;
- Less than 10 percent (7.6%) of the victims suffered sexual abuse; and
- Less than 5 percent (4.2%) of the victims suffered from psychological maltreatment.

### How many children died from abuse or neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. Yet, each year children die from abuse and neglect. During 2007:

- An estimated 1,760 children died due to child abuse or neglect;
- The overall rate of child fatalities was 2.35 deaths per 100,000 children;
- More than 30 percent (34.1%) of child fatalities were attributed to neglect only; physical abuse also was a major contributor to child fatalities;
- More than three-quarters (75.7%) of the children who died due to child abuse and neglect were younger than 4 years old;

- Infant boys (younger than 1 year) had the highest rate of fatalities, at 18.85 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the national population; and
- Infant girls had a rate of 15.39 deaths per 100,000 girls of the same age.

### Who abused and neglected children?

In 2007, nearly 80 percent of perpetrators of child maltreatment (79.9%) were parents, and another 6.6 percent were other relatives of the victim. Women comprised a larger percentage of all perpetrators than men, 56.5 percent compared to 42.4 percent. Nearly 75 percent (74.8%) of all perpetrators were younger than age 40.

- Of the perpetrators who were child daycare providers, nearly 24 percent (23.9%) committed sexual abuse.
- Of the perpetrators who were parents, nearly 90 percent (87.7%) were the biological parent of the victim.

### Who received services?

During an investigation, CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in the home and in foster care.

- More than 60 percent (62.1%) of victims and 31.2 percent of nonvictims received postinvestigation services.
- More than 20 percent (20.7%) of victims and 3.8 percent of nonvictims were placed in foster care.