

## 2008 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



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**Reports and numbers of children**

In 2008 78,891 New York State children were abused or neglected, according to the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (the Child Abuse Reporting Hotline)—a victimization rate of 17.9 for every 1,000 children. 163,808 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, involving 216,267 children were received. Upon investigation, 51,830 (32 percent) reports 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 increased 5.8 percent, from 154,837; the number of substantiated reports increased 3.5 percent, from 50,093; and the number of victims increased 3.7 percent from 76,104.

Nationwide, an estimated 772,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2008, a victimization rate of 10.3 for every 1,000 children in the country, according to *Child Maltreatment 2008*. A child was counted each time he or she was found to be a victim; the adjusted estimate is 690,061 unique child victims. The 2008 victimization rate is the lowest it has been in the previous five years. While this is the second year that the number of victims has decreased, it is not possible to tell whether this year's decrease indicates a trend until more data are collected. The decrease can partially be attributed to several factors, including the increase in the number of children who received an unsubstantiated disposition, the increase in the number of children who received an alternative CPS response, and the decrease in the number of children who received a substantiated or indicated disposition. Compared to 2007, the number of substantiated victims decreased by 2.8 percent.

States investigated or assessed 3,700,000 children because of suspected abuse or neglect, an increase of 5.7 percent from 2007. The national rate of children who received an investigation or assessment is the highest it has been in the previous five years. Compared to 2007, the number of substantiated victims in 2008 decreased by 14.9 percent.

**Types of maltreatment**

Child neglect continues to comprise the largest portion of cases of child maltreatment. According to the federal report *Child Maltreatment 2008*, figures for the country and for New York state are as follows:

	<i>United States</i>	<i>New York State</i>
Neglect	71.1%	91.8%
Physical Abuse	16.1%	10.1%
Sexual Abuse	9.1%	3.3%
Psychological Maltreatment	7.3%	0.6%
Medical Neglect	2.2%	5.1%
Other Types	9%	25.8%

"Other types of maltreatment" include, for example, abandonment, threats of harm, or congenital drug addiction. In New York State in 2008, 107 children died as a result of abuse or neglect, a fatality rate of 2.43 per 100,000 children, according to *Child Maltreatment 2008*. This is a 11.4 percent increase from 96 fatalities that occurred in 2007.

**Fatalities**

Nationwide in 2008, an estimated 1,740 children died as a result of abuse or neglect, 2.33 of every 100,000 children in the population. This is a 0.6 percent increase from the 1,730 fatalities that occurred the previous year. Children younger than 1 year old accounted for 45.3 percent of fatalities, and 79.8 percent of fatalities were children younger than 4 years old.

Sources of data: New York State Office of Children and Family Services and *Child Maltreatment 2008*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families.



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