



Child Abuse Facts & Statistics

Provided by: National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse

NUMBER OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTS NATIONWIDE

In 1997, over 3 million (3,195,000) children were reported for child abuse and neglect to child protective service (CPS) agencies in the United States. This figure represents a 1.7% increase over the number of children reported in 1996. Child abuse reporting levels have increased 41% between 1988 and 1997. Experts attribute much of the increase in reporting to greater public awareness of and willingness to report child maltreatment, as well as changes in how states collected reports of maltreatment (Wang & Daro, 1998).

In 1997, 1,054,000 children were confirmed by CPS as victims of child maltreatment. This represents 15 out of every 1,000 U.S. children.

According to the 1997 survey, physical abuse represented 22% of confirmed cases, sexual abuse 8%, neglect 54%, emotional maltreatment 4% and other forms of maltreatment 12%. These percentages have undergone some shift since 1986 when approximately 26% of the children were reported for physical abuse, 16% for sexual abuse, 55% for neglect, and 8% for emotional maltreatment (AAPC, 1988).

INCIDENCE OF CHILD MALTREATMENT IN THE GENERAL POPULATION

Currently, about 47 out of every 1,000 children are reported as victims of child maltreatment (Wang & Daro, 1998).

CHILD FATALITIES

The most accurate data on child maltreatment fatalities currently available estimate that in 1996, 1,185 child abuse and neglect related fatalities were confirmed by CPS agencies. Based on these numbers, more than three children die each day as a result of child abuse or neglect. Since 1985, the rate of child abuse fatalities has increased by 34% (Wang & Daro, 1998).

Young children remain at high risk for loss of life. Between 1995 and 1997, 78% of these children were less than five years old at the time of their death, while 38% were under one year of age (Wang & Daro, 1998). As for cause of death, 44% of deaths resulted from neglect, 51% from physical abuse, and 5% from a combination of neglectful and physically abusive parenting. Approximately 41% of these deaths occurred to children known to child protective service agencies as current or prior clients.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

In 1997, approximately 84,320 new cases of child sexual abuse were accepted for service, accounting for 8% of all confirmed victims. This number underscores the substantial threat to child well-being represented by this form of maltreatment.

ABUSE IN DAY CARE/FOSTER CARE

Reports of child maltreatment involving day care centers and foster care homes attract a great deal of attention. Such publicity has created the perception that abuse is common place in these out-of-home settings. However, this perception seems out of line with reality (Finkelhor & Williams, 1988). Based on information from 18 states, reports of abuse in day care, foster care, or other institutional care settings represented about 3% of all confirmed cases in 1997 (Wang & Daro, 1998). This percentage has remained consistent over the past eleven years.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND CHILD ABUSE

The link between substance abuse and child abuse has strengthened over the years. In 1997, 88% of respondents named substance as one of the top two problems presented by families reported for maltreatment. This percentage is higher than those reported in previous years, suggesting that after several years of some improvement, substance abuse is again surfacing as a primary contributor to child maltreatment (Wang & Daro, 1998).

CITATION

Wang, C.T. and Daro, D. (1998). *Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1997 Annual Fifty State Survey*. Chicago, IL: National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.

SOURCES

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