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Report # 88

Child Maltreatment: Victims And Perpetrators

December 2006

Child Maltreatment In America

On The Front Line

Agencies Get 60,000 Maltreatment Reports A Week

Each week, child protective services (CPS) agencies across the nation receive, on average, more than 60,000 allegations of child maltreatment, including reports of neglect, and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. These agencies are on the front line of community efforts to investigate maltreatment, protect the young victims, and offer services to prevent further abuse and neglect.

But CPS agencies are not alone. They rely on educators, hospital personnel, social workers, neighbors, and others to alert them to child maltreatment. And in some states, including Pennsylvania, many less serious cases of neglect fall into the jurisdiction of other agencies.

Data reported by reported by CPS agencies across the United States are routinely collected by the federally sponsored National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services each year. The department also reviews state CPS policy and the services they offer.

Allegations investigated by CPS agencies in 2004 involved more than 3.5 million children. Investigations confirmed that about 872,000 of the children were victims of abuse or neglect.

Reporting Sources Vary

About 56% of all of the reports of child maltreatment made nationwide in 2004 came from professionals, such as educational, legal, law enforcement, social services, and medical personnel, and daycare and foster care providers. The remaining 44% of the allegations were reported by nonprofessional sources, such as friends, neighbors, par-

ents, and anonymous sources.

In most states, including Pennsylvania, professionals are required by law to report alleged maltreatment. Sixteen states also require some, if not all, nonprofessionals to report alleged maltreatment. In Kentucky, for example, all nonprofessionals are required to report maltreatment. In Pennsylvania, friends and neighbors are the only nonprofessionals required to report maltreatment.

The NCANDS data offer a glimpse of how allegations of child abuse and neglect reach CPS agencies.

- Educational personnel reported 16.5% of the child maltreatment allegations made in 2004, the most by any single source.
- Legal and criminal justice personnel reported 15.6% of the alleged acts.
- Social services accounted for 10.5% of the allegations.

Related Reports

Who are the victims of maltreatment and who are the perpetrators of these acts? Sadly, the youngest children are the most vulnerable and parents are most likely to be the ones who abuse or neglect them.

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- Relatives of the child reported 7.9% of the allegations of maltreatment.
- Medical personnel reported 7.9% of the allegations.
- Parents accounted for 6.2% of the reports of child maltreatment.
- Friends or neighbors reported 5.5% of the allegations.
- Mental health workers reported 3.8% of the allegations.
- 9.4% of the allegations were reported anonymously.
- Childcare providers, foster parents, and victims each accounted for fewer than one percent of the reported allegations.

Allegations reported by professionals accounted for 67% of the reports that resulted in substantiated findings of child abuse or neglect. Educational personnel,

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for example, reported 24% of the confirmed cases of physical abuse; law enforcement, 22%; and medical personnel, 11%. Law enforcement also reported the largest share confirmed cases of neglect and sexual abuse.

Reports made by nonprofessional sources, on the other hand, accounted for 81% of allegations that were determined to be intentionally false.

Child Protective Services

CPS agencies in each state typically maintain a reporting hotline, receive reports of alleged abuse and neglect, screen those reports, investigate allegations that pass initial screening, and assess the safety of the children involved. They are also involved in providing services to prevent future incidences of child abuse and neglect and to improve conditions that threaten the health, safety, and overall well-being of the child.

In 2004, screening and intake workers each handled an average of more than 65 investigations per year, up slightly from the previous year.

Preventive Services

Preventive services are provided to parents whose children are at risk of abuse and neglect. These services are designed to help parents and caregivers better understand child development and improve their abilities to raise children appropriately and effectively. Examples include respite care, parenting education, housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, daycare, home visits, and individual and family counseling.

Nationwide, 26.7 children per 1,000 children received preventive services in 2004. In 2003, the rate was 25.3 per 1,000 children. In Pennsylvania, 83.3 children per 1,000 children were given preventive services, one of the highest rates in the nation.

Post-Investigation Services

Post-investigation services are offered on a voluntary basis or ordered by the courts to help ensure the safety of children. Examples include individual counseling, foster care, and family-based services provided to the whole family, such as counseling or family support.

More than 76% of the states require workers to provide short-term services during an investigation of child maltreatment, if needed, including Pennsylvania. More than 59% of the victims of child maltreatment across the nation received post-investigation services in 2004.

In 2004, about 19% of children who were victims of maltreatment were placed in foster care as a result of an investigation in 2004, up from 15% the previous year.

About 66% of children who were removed from their homes had experienced neglect; another 10.6% had been physically abused; 4% had been sexually abused; and 14% of them had experienced several types of maltreatment.

There are several reasons why some children and families receive post-investigation services or family reunification services and not others. For example, there may not be enough services available for families or the waiting lists may be long. Child victims with a disability were 70% more likely to receive post-investigation services than children

without a disability and were 94% more likely to be placed in foster care, according to the 2004 NCANDS data. And prior victims of maltreatment were 75% more likely to have been placed in foster care than children who had not previously been abused or neglected.

Recurrence

For a state to meet the national standard for recurrence set by the Department of Health and Human Services, no more than 6.1% of children identified as victims during the first six months of the review period can become victims again within six months.

Several factors influence the likelihood of a child being abused or neglected more than once. For example:

- Recurrence is 84% more likely among children who have been victims more than once compared to first-time victims.
- Victims with a disability are 61% more likely to become victims of maltreatment again than children without a disability.

In 2004, only 42% of the states met the national standard for recurrence. Among them was Pennsylvania, which reported that fewer than 3% of child maltreatment victims had experienced additional abuse or neglect.

**references**

This report is based on the following publications:

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Children, Youth & Families background is published by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD), a program of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. These reports are based on available research and are provided as overviews of topics related to children and families.

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