



## CHILD SAFETY

“Research suggests that adults who were maltreated as children show higher rates of many health problems not typically associated with abuse and neglect, such as heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, and liver disease. The link between maltreatment and these diseases may be depression, which can influence the immune system and may lead to high-risk behaviors such as smoking, substance abuse, overeating, and sexual risk-taking.”

Child Welfare Information Gateway, Administration for Children and Families,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



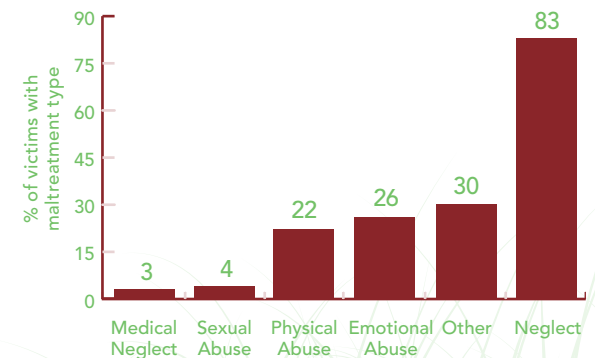
The most vulnerable children are those whose parents or guardians do not have the resources—financial, emotional, mental or physical—to care for them. In order to grow, develop and maintain health, children need to have their physical and emotional needs met, and be protected by their parents or guardians from harm or potentially harmful activities and events. Sometimes the parents or guardians of children are incapacitated temporarily, and the situation can be remedied by services or other interventions, but other times the situation may be serious and long term.

Children whose parents or guardians cannot provide adequate care for them often come to the attention of Child Protective Services (CPS) at the Michigan Department of Human Services. Traditionally children with health problems or disabilities are at higher risk for abuse or neglect, and maltreatment, including neglect, can also create health problems or disabilities. As more children live with chronic health conditions, and more families experience stress due to social and economic deprivations, the risk of abuse or neglect escalates.

Aggravating the situation in Michigan, investments in programs to strengthen families and prevent abuse or neglect have been severely cut or eliminated over the past decade. Prevention programs are critical: Once abuse or neglect occurs, damage to children has been done. In Michigan in 2009 four of five child victims suffered from neglect—meaning there was harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care or to protect a child from an unreasonable risk. In considering neglect it is important to take into account the societal and environmental factors that compromise a parent’s ability to provide for the basic needs of a child. Social isolation, poverty, mental illness, substance abuse or domestic violence often are involved in cases of neglect. High unemployment and inadequate social programs play a role in the incidence of child neglect.



Physical neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment in Michigan.



Source: U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data

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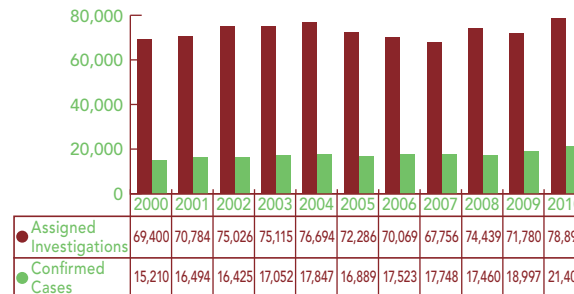
Complaints or allegations of child abuse or neglect are made to CPS by both mandated and non-mandated reporters. In 2010 roughly 121,000 reports were made to CPS about suspected child abuse/neglect. The majority were made by mandated reporters, those in professions required to report if they suspect abuse or neglect. Law enforcement (11,300) lodged the most complaints, followed by school counselors (5,949) and hospital/clinic social workers (5,900). Among the nonmandated reporters, almost 7,300 reports were provided anonymously and 6,200 were by relatives of the affected children. Staff at CPS determine whether the reported incident meets the definition of child abuse or neglect and merits an investigation—those that do not are screened out, and some are referred to law enforcement or integrated into an ongoing case.

### CHILDREN IN INVESTIGATED FAMILIES

In fiscal year 2010 seven of every 100 children in the state lived in families investigated for alleged child abuse or neglect—a total of roughly 165,000 children. (Each report or case represents a family, often with more than one child.) Over the decade the rate of children in investigated families went up by 6 percent in Michigan—rising from 66 of every 1,000 children to 70 of every 1,000 children ages 0-17.



Investigations and confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect peaked in 2010.



Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

Caseload trends show that the number of families or cases investigated rose from 69,400 in 2000 to 78,900 in 2010, when the largest number of cases merited an investigation and the largest number resulted in confirmed abuse or neglect.

Among Michigan counties the rate of children in families investigated for child abuse or neglect ranged from 25 per 1,000 children in Keweenaw County to 197 children per 1,000 in Luce County—a startling one-fifth of all the county's children. Most counties (68 of 83) sustained increased rates of children in investigated families—with 10 counties, including Luce, doubling their rates over the decade. (Luce also had a confirmation rate double the state average in 2010.) Only five counties, including Wayne, saw their rates go down by at least 25 percent.

At the end of an investigation of abuse or neglect, cases are assigned to a category based on the result of evidence and risk to the child. Cases of confirmed abuse or neglect are assigned to categories I, II, or III, based on level of continuing risk of harm to the child(ren). Unconfirmed cases, designated as categories IV and V, comprise roughly three-quarters of all cases investigated. In such cases the evidence of child maltreatment is inadequate or nonexistent so the case cannot be confirmed.



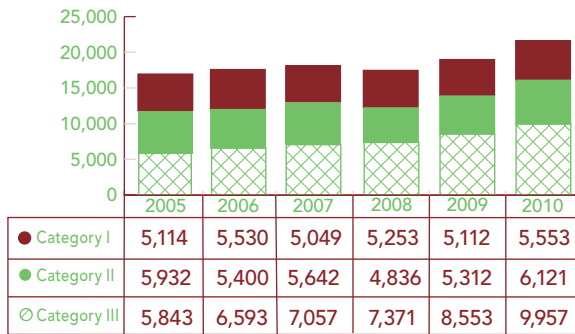
### CONFIRMED VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

In 2010 roughly 32,500 children in Michigan—almost equal to the entire child population in Calhoun County—were confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect. The rate of confirmed child victims of abuse or neglect in the state rose by over one-third between 2000 and 2010—from 10 to 14 of every 1,000 children. Child abuse or neglect is confirmed when the majority of the evidence reviewed in the investigation indicates that maltreatment has occurred.

In 2010 all three categories of confirmed abuse or neglect showed an increase compared with 2005, with the largest increase (70%) in those determined as Category III where the risk to children is considered low or moderate. For these families the child remains in the home, and CPS must assist in obtaining the appropriate community services for the family to prevent further abuse or neglect.<sup>13</sup> The number of confirmed victims in the highest risk Category I, which requires a petition for court action, rose by 9 percent. The number of victims determined to be Category II, which requires CPS to open a case and provide services reflected the smallest increase.

<sup>13</sup> Names of individuals are placed on the statewide abuse and neglect Central Registry if an investigation confirms that they have abused or neglected their child and the future risk to the child is high or intensive (category I or II). The Central Registry is an internal government document accessible only to such individuals as the following: a physician treating a child suspected to have been abused or neglected, law enforcement or a child protective agency investigating a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, an adoption agency or foster care placement agency.

The number of confirmed child abuse/neglect cases designated as low/moderate risk (category III) rose by 70 percent in six years.



Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

While confirmed victims in 2010 were evenly divided by gender, younger children under the age of 4 were at highest risk—they represented two of every five victims. African Americans represented 29 percent of confirmed victims, roughly double their proportion (14%) of the state’s total child population. Recent studies of decision making within CPS suggests some of this disproportion results from racial bias at key decision points, and a state task force has been assembled to implement strategies to address the issue. Higher incidence of such factors as poverty, teen parenthood, neighborhoods with more consistent contact with police, lack of prevention services, and poor prenatal care, in communities of color also elevate the risk of involvement in the system. These factors also often result from racial bias within other systems.

The increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect in Michigan over the trend period was widespread. Only seven Michigan counties experienced a decline in their rate of child abuse and neglect—with decreases of at least one-quarter in Presque Isle, Wayne, Cass and Clare counties. In almost 30 counties, however, the rate at least doubled over the decade, and even quadrupled in Lake, Eaton and Iron counties. The rate of confirmed victims ranged from three victims among every 1,000 children in Presque Isle to 46 among every 1,000 children in Lake County.

**CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE (FOR ABUSE OR NEGLECT)**

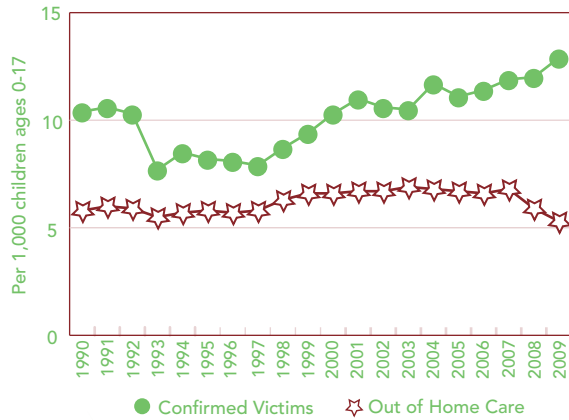
While the rates of investigation and confirmation of child abuse and neglect rose over the decade, the rate of children being placed in out-of-home care declined. Much of this can be explained by reviewing the trends in the categories: growth occurred in confirmed cases deemed low-risk (Category III) where children would remain in the parental care with services. A substantial increase in the number of finalized adoptions in 2008 and 2009 also contributed to significant declines in the number of children living in foster care.

In Michigan the rate of children in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect actually dropped by almost one-quarter between 2000 and 2010—from roughly 7 children of every 1,000 to 5 children of every 1,000 despite the increases in investigations and victimizations. The total number of children in foster care declined from over 17,000 to roughly 12,000. This may partially be a result of the efforts of the department to move more so-called “legal orphans” out of the foster care caseload into permanent situations such as adoption or legalized guardianships. (Legal orphans are those children eligible for adoption but who remain in foster care.) The increase in funding and staffing available for foster care support and monitoring due to the lawsuit and settlement agreement to improve conditions and outcomes for children in Michigan’s foster care system also have undoubtedly influenced these trends.



# CHILD SAFETY

More child victims in Michigan were confirmed since mid-'90s, but fewer removed from family in recent years.



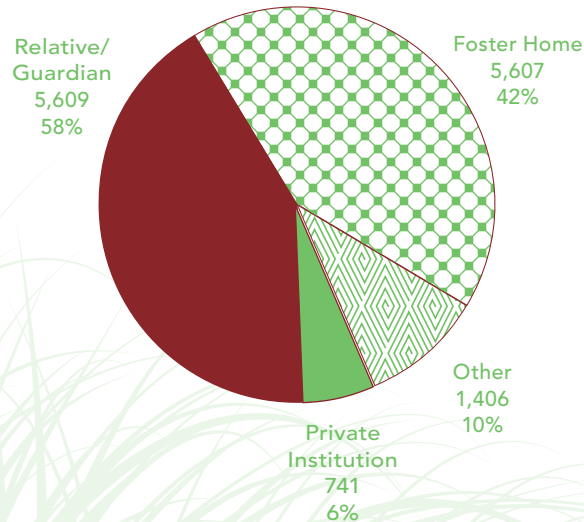
Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

Most counties experienced an increase in the rate of children living in out-of-home care for abuse or neglect, but the rate in Wayne dropped by half over the decade, which meant roughly 4,500 fewer children just from that county entered care in 2010 than in 2000. Among the 76 counties with a rate for children living in out-of-home care for abuse or neglect, Lapeer had the lowest rate of 1 of every 1,000 children and Crawford the highest—17 of every 1,000 children.



One of the challenges in providing for abused or neglected children is recruiting and sustaining the supply of foster homes for those whose parental homes are not a safe place. Over the years Michigan has increasingly relied on relatives. In 2011 children in care were equally likely to be living with relatives as living with foster parents. While maintaining the child within the extended family has advantages such as emotional stability and maintaining familial relationships, unlicensed kinship providers do not receive the financial support available to licensed foster parents (\$14–\$17 per day vs. \$4.50 per day) unless parental rights have been terminated, and the child is a permanent ward of the state. Currently 22 percent of unlicensed providers qualify for the increased rate due to caring for permanent wards.

Two of five children in out-of-home care for abuse or neglect resided with a relative or a guardian.



Source: Michigan Department of Human Services, June 2011  
N=13,363

In 2011 Michigan's Department of Human Services, under a recent lawsuit settlement agreement, was directed to increase the number of relative foster care providers that are licensed. DHS has committed to licensing 55 percent of new relative foster parents within 180 days of placement of a child in the relative's home by June 30, 2012; 65 percent by December 31, 2012; 75 percent by June 30, 2013 and 85 percent by December 31, 2013. These commitments will require expediting what has been a much more time-consuming process. Roughly 38 percent of relative foster care providers were licensed providers as of October 2011, according to department staff. Specialized workers in the department have been detailed to facilitate and expedite the process.

