

## Child protection in Minnesota: Keeping children safe

The Minnesota Department of Human Services, along with county and tribal partners, is engaged in efforts to ensure children are protected against child abuse and neglect, and promote family and community well-being. Data included below represents preliminary 2019 information.

### Protecting children

---

The department has been working on many improvements and revisions in policy and practices focused on screening guidelines, training, comprehensive assessments, resources, oversight and transparency in recent years. Child safety continues to be of primary concern when responding and providing services to families involved in child protection. The Safety Framework Advisory Committee, comprised of department staff and local social service agency staff, has created Safety Practice Profiles to support Minnesota's safety framework. The Safety Practice Profiles aim to support children safely in their homes whenever possible by supporting the child protection workforce in thorough safety assessment throughout the life of the case.

### Reporting abuse and neglect

---

Certain individuals, based on their professional association with children, must, by law, report any suspected abuse and neglect to authorities. In 2019, school personnel and law enforcement officials made approximately 39% of all maltreatment reports. Some children were reported for more than one form of abuse or neglect.

- 54% of all child maltreatment reports alleged nonmedical neglect, including emotional, physical and educational neglect; disregard for safety; inadequate supervision; abandonment; and prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol.
- 30% of reports alleged physical abuse.
- 13% alleged sexual abuse.
- 10% alleged threats of injury.
- 5% alleged emotional or mental abuse.

### Assessing and investigating reports

---

In 2019, about 38,000 children were the subject of screened in child maltreatment reports by county and tribal agencies in Minnesota. Of those screened-in reports:

- Approximately 38% of all children in maltreatment reports were age 5 or younger and 21% were under the age of 3.
- American Indian and African American/black children were around five and three times more likely, respectively, than white children to be the subjects of maltreatment assessments or investigations.

Children with two or more identified races were about four times as likely as white children to be the subjects of screened-in maltreatment reports.

- About 80% of all alleged offenders were victims' birth parents. Other relatives, including stepparents, adoptive parents and siblings, accounted for 12% of offenders. Unmarried partners of parents or primary caregivers accounted for 7% of offenders.

Counties and tribes completed about 11,000 investigations of child maltreatment involving approximately 16,100 children including investigations in licensed facilities. During investigations, counties and tribes make a determination of whether maltreatment occurred. Additionally, during family investigations it is determined whether child protection services are needed.

- Around 6,700 Minnesota children had a finding of abuse or neglect within their family or by a caregiver.
- About 300 children were abused or neglected in licensed facilities, such as family foster care, residential facilities or in-home child care.
- Ongoing child protection services were needed in approximately 34% of family investigations.

Counties and tribes completed about 18,600 assessments, involving approximately 24,200 children, using the Family Assessment Response, which ensures children's safety while supporting families without making a determination of maltreatment. Of these, 16% of families were determined to need ongoing child protection services.

The prevailing family conditions associated with maltreatment reports were mental illness, domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, poverty, inadequate housing and parenting concerns. Families in poverty often have less stable housing and less adequate social support systems to assist parents in their child care responsibilities. Both of these conditions have been linked to higher maltreatment rates. According to national research, children living in poverty are approximately seven times more likely to be neglected than other children.<sup>1</sup>



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to [dhs.info@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.info@state.mn.us), call 651-431-4671, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (1-18)

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *The National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4)* (2004–2009)