



FAQ prepared in response to Pennsylvania's 2012 Annual Child Abuse Report

Prepared May 29, 2013

Were there more child abuse investigations and child abuse victims in 2012?

Yes, in 2012 there was a 9 percent increase in suspected child abuse reports registered at Pennsylvania's centralized child abuse reporting hotline - ChildLine.

In a letter to Pennsylvania Child Advocates included in [Pennsylvania's 2012 Annual Child Abuse Report](#), Acting Department of Public Welfare (DPW) Secretary Beverly Mackereth emphasized the "unprecedented increase" of suspected child abuse reports. She continued, "This marks 2012 as the year Pennsylvania received more reports of suspected child abuse than any other year on record." While she didn't speculate as to the exact reasons for the significant increase she assured, "What we do know is that in Pennsylvania there has been a surge in awareness of and conversations about child abuse."

26,664 reports of suspected child abuse were investigated by child welfare officials. After investigation, 3,565 or 13.4 percent of the reports were substantiated as child abuse. Last year, 53 counties investigated more reports of child abuse with the total increase in reports of 2,286 when compared with 2011.

More Pennsylvania children were also determined to be victims of child abuse in 2012 when compared with 2011 data. Last year, 3,408 Pennsylvania children were determined to be victims of child abuse. 54 percent of all substantiated child abuse reports involved sexual abuse.

3 percent of the reports substantiated as child abuse occurred in a child care setting – a setting generally described as outside the child's home (e.g., child care center, foster home).

33 percent of the overall child abuse reports were referred to law enforcement for possible criminal investigation and prosecution. This referral occurs when certain criminal offenses (e.g., aggravated assault, sexual abuse, serious bodily injury) are alleged to have been committed by a person who can be a perpetrator under the Child Protective Services Law (e.g., the parent, paramour of the parent, person responsible for the child's welfare or a person living with the child who is over the age of 14). Other possible crimes against children – when committed by a person

who cannot be a perpetrator under the CPSL (e.g., little league coach, neighbor, extended relative, clergy) – are also referred to law enforcement and known as Law Enforcement Only (LEO) reports. LEO reports made to ChildLine increased by more than 800 in 2012.

Year	Calls to ChildLine	Reports Triggering a Child Abuse Investigation	Reports Substantiated as Child Abuse	Percentage of Reports Substantiated	Reports Referred to Law Enforcement	Reporting Rate Per 1,000 Children	Total Number of Child Victims	Child Victim Rate Per 1,000 Children	General Protective Services Referrals to ChildLine	Law Enforcement Only Reports to ChildLine
2012	138,541	26,664	3,565	13.4	8,889	9.7	3,408	1.3	39,328	4,703
2011	128,111	24,378	3,408	14.0	8,314	8.7	3,292	1.2	33,898	3,885
2010	121,868	24,615	3,656	14.9	8,654	9.0	3,508	1.3	39,791	3,288
2009	117,203	25,342	3,943	15.6	9,144	9.2	3,777	1.4	36,373	3,037
2008	117,325	25,655	4,201	16.4	9,710	9.2	4,020	1.5	N/A	N/A

Will this increase in reports and child victims alter PA’s status as a statistical outlier?

No. Even as the overall reports of suspected child abuse and subsequent investigations went up as did our overall number of child victims, the rate of substantiated child abuse fell to 13.4 percent down from 14.0 percent in 2011. Over the last five years, the rate of reports substantiated as child abuse declined by 3 percentage points. Pennsylvania’s substantiated child abuse rate per 1,000 children was 1.3. While federal data has not been released yet, Pennsylvania’s notoriety as a statistical outlier when it comes to investigating and substantiating child abuse will be reflected again in 2012 data.

Rate of children receiving a child abuse investigation (per 1,000 children)

	2011	2010	2009	2008
NATIONAL	41.2	40.0	40.3	27.1
PENNSYLVANIA	7.8	8.0	8.3	9.1

Rate of children determined to be a victim of child abuse (per 1,000 children)

	2011	2010	2009	2008
NATIONAL	9.1	9.2	9.3	10.3
PENNSYLVANIA	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5

The statistical variation is evident as well when looking at specific demographics like age of the child victim. Consider that in 2011, Pennsylvania reported that only 121 children under the age of one were victims of child abuse (or 0.8 per 1,000 children). In that same year, Delaware had more than double the number of victims under age one (at a rate of 22.0 per 1,000 children). New Jersey had more than 1,200 victims (at a rate of 11.8 per 1,000 children) and Ohio confirmed more than 3,800 children of this very tender age as a victim of child abuse (27.2 per 1,000 children).

It is important to remember that this statistical variation exists for largely two reasons. First, Pennsylvania's definition of child abuse is quite narrow. The state's restrictive definition permits our children to experience injuries that can be and are determined by medical professionals to be child abuse and often are eventually prosecuted by law enforcement officials, but still fall outside of the definition within the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). Another reason for our statistical outlier status is that Pennsylvania remains unable to fully measure or report on the tens of thousands of referrals made and services delivered through the Commonwealth's General Protective Services (GPS) or *differential response* system.

GPS services, which were authorized by Act 151 of 1994, are generally considered to involve "non-serious injury or neglect" (e.g., inadequate shelter, truancy, inappropriate discipline, abandonment or other problems that threaten a child's opportunity for healthy growth and development). GPS are also enlisted when a report is received about "suspected child abuse occurring in another state" but the child victim is a resident of the Commonwealth and the other state child protective service agency "cannot investigate the report because of statutory or policy limitations." GPS referrals do not trigger a child abuse investigation, but rather receive an assessment by the children and youth services agency (CYA). It is through the assessment that the agency seeks "to determine if the child or children are safe and whether or not the family is in need of services."

If the safety of the child has not been assured at the time of referral, the county agency is expected to see the child immediately; otherwise "the agency prioritizes the response time based on the risk of the children." After the assessment, the family will either be accepted for services, referred to another community-based agency for services or the case will be closed. In their training, child welfare workers are cautioned to understand that "families receiving GPS should be taken very seriously as the outcomes stemming from child neglect can prove to be more serious than an injury sustained in a child abuse report and may lead to life threatening situations."

While generally perceived as "neglect" cases, GPS also involve incidents where a child has been physically harmed but the resulting injury did not meet the state definition of "child abuse". The 2010 Report on Progress from the City of Philadelphia Community Oversight Board for the Department of Human Services, noted that across the Commonwealth, GPS cases can "frequently involve significant risk to the safety and well-being of the children involved."

Did non-abuse referrals (General Protective Services) increase as well?

Yes, in addition to an uptick in reports of suspected child abuse, there were approximately 16 percent more (5,430 additional referrals) for General Protective Services (GPS) made to ChildLine in 2012. GPS referrals can be made directly to county children and youth agencies without being recorded at ChildLine. In other words this GPS figure does not reflect all GPS referrals made across the Commonwealth in 2012.

Who were the victims of child abuse in Pennsylvania?

Last year, 3,408 unduplicated Pennsylvania children were determined based on the state definition of child abuse to be victims of child abuse. 67 percent of the victims were female and 33 percent male.

Because some children experienced more than one type of injury, 4,227 injuries were recorded in 2012. 66 percent of the injuries were sexual in nature (e.g., rape, sexual assault, incest, exploitation). A quarter involved physical injuries (e.g., brain damage, burns, fractures, internal injuries/hemorrhage, lacerations).

21 percent of all injuries (sexual, physical, neglect) were experienced by a child who was under the age of 5. 18 percent of all physical abuse injuries happened to a child who had not yet celebrated their 1st birthday and 7 percent of the sexual injuries were experienced by a child under the age of 5.

More than 7,000 children were removed from the setting where the alleged or actual abuse occurred – an increase of 2 percent from 2011.

Children were most often abused by a person in a parental relationship to the child. Slightly more than 45 percent of the named perpetrators were the parent (father, mother, step-parent) to the child. Approximately 16 percent were another family member of the child’s and 13 percent were the paramour of the parent.

How often is a child re-abused in the Commonwealth?

Last year, 4.8 percent of reports and 8 percent of the reports that were later substantiated as child abuse involved a child who was a prior victim of child abuse. That rate of re-abuse is important to reflect on and reduce given how narrow Pennsylvania’s definition of child abuse remains. In other words, it is difficult to have injuries to a child or neglect substantiated as child abuse in general so having a child become a victim of a substantiated report more than once is troubling.

DPW reports that reabuse allegations are most often received for children ages 10 to 14. Reports of reabuse varied from county-to-county ranging from a reporting rate of zero to 15.2 percent.

It is also important to note that 10 percent of the perpetrators in 2012 were listed as a perpetrator in at least one prior substantiated child abuse report. As an example a 2-month-old child died in Beaver County killed by her father who had been named as a perpetrator of child abuse in 2010 after he bit the leg of his paramour’s child.

Who reported child abuse in 2012?

78 percent of all the reports of suspected child abuse were made by a mandated reporter. Mandated reporters in a school setting account for the highest number of reports followed by other public/private social service agencies and hospital staff. The rates by which reports made by these mandated reporters are substantiated as child abuse varies from 4.8 percent to 19.5 percent. 4 percent of the reports made in 2012 were made anonymously and those reports were substantiated at a rate of 3.6 percent. Children self reported about 2 percent of the overall reports with a substantiation rate of 30.2 percent.

Mandated Reporter Source	2012 Reports	2012 Reports Substantiated	2012 % of Reports Substantiated
School	7,635	365	4.8
Other Public/Private Social Service Agency	4,645	762	16.4
Hospital	3,151	613	19.5
Law Enforcement	1,686	656	38.9
Public MH/MR	1,237	135	10.9
Residential Facility	899	52	5.8
Private doctor or nurse	477	100	21.0
Private psychiatrist	434	66	15.2
Day care staff	415	21	5.1
Clergy	71	15	21.1
Public Health Department	49	9	18.4
Courts	43	7	16.3

CHILD DAY-CARE

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	461	40	8.7
2005	342	25	7.3
2010	426	28	6.6
2012	415	21	5.1

CLERGY

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	31	11	35.5
2005	42	15	35.7
2010	42	12	28.6
2012	71	15	21.1

HOSPITAL

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	2,657	873	32.9
2005	2,601	740	28.5
2010	2,783	636	22.9
2012	3,151	613	19.5

LAW ENFORCEMENT

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	1,168	658	40.7
2005	1,677	782	46.6
2010	1,387	586	42.2
2012	1,686	656	38.9

OTHER PUBLIC/PRIVATE SERVICE AGENCY

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	3,302	713	21.6
2005	2,865	539	18.8
2010	4,252	790	18.6
2012	4,645	762	16.4

PRIVATE DOCTOR/NURSE

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	658	169	25.7
2005	460	121	26.3
2010	432	82	19.0
2012	477	100	21.0

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	46	8	17.4
2005	27	4	14.8
2010	35	2	5.7
2012	49	9	18.4

PRIVATE PSYCHIATRIST

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	442	140	31.7
2005	496	96	19.4
2010	426	75	17.6
2012	434	66	15.2

RESIDENTIAL FACILITY

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	1,172	125	10.7
2005	1,404	95	6.8
2010	1,168	47	4.0
2012	899	52	5.8

SCHOOLS

YEAR	Reports Made	Reports Substantiated	% Substantiated
2000	5,248	722	13.8
2005	5,457	557	10.2
2010	6,921	389	5.6
2012	7,635	365	4.8

Has ChildLine staffing and funding including for child abuse investigations kept pace with the increase in reports?

This question requires additional information from counties and the Department of Public Welfare. We can gain insight, however, from the annual report's documentation about expenditures for ChildLine and child abuse investigations.

First a little background on ChildLine – the state’s child abuse hotline. It is operational 24 hours a day. Based on testimony given to the Task Force on Child Protection from DPW, there are 38 caseworkers and 6 supervisor positions authorized for ChildLine. DPW testified last September that, at that time, on average they had 2 to 4 vacancies each month. Coverage for the hotline ranges from a single person up to 24 people during peak hours.

In 2012, more than 138,000 calls were answered by ChildLine staff. Hotline staff responds to thousands of calls beyond child abuse reports or concerns about the general safety and well-being of a child. They also respond to calls when an applicant is checking on a child abuse background check or as individuals in need of some type of assistance (e.g., food or housing) are seeking information and/or referral. Well before the significant increase in the volume of calls at ChildLine, the hotline was struggling to answer all the calls made to the hotline. In 2012, more than 145,000 calls were actually placed to ChildLine. Of those calls, 138,541 were answered. Despite the increased call volume and staffing challenges, the Commonwealth reports that it was able to dramatically improve its rate of abandoned and deflected (essentially dropped calls) in 2012.

YEAR	Total Calls Received	# Calls Abandoned Deflected	% of Calls Abandoned Deflected
2012	145,794	7,253	4.95
2011	140,348	12,237	8.72
2010	133,660	11,792	8.82
2009	123,094	5,891	4.79
2008	121,369	4,064	3.35
2007	121,657	10,801	8.95
2006	105,737	7,223	6.83

Beyond the hotline calls, the verification unit processed 539,690 – an increase exceeding 37,000 - child abuse background check requests. 78 percent of the background check requests came from persons seeking to work in schools or in child care settings and 10 percent were from individuals looking to become a volunteer.

In 2012, \$46 million of the \$1.5 billion in state and county level child welfare funding was directed to investigating child abuse (and related activities). That was down from \$51.26 million in 2011, including a decrease in the county expenditures for child abuse investigations.

YEAR	CHILDLINE Expenditures	Child Abuse Clearances Verification Unit	Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)	Regional OCYF Offices	County Expenditures for Child Abuse Investigations
2000	\$2,600,000	\$313,000	\$264,000	\$1,600,000	\$32,206,506
2005	\$2,890,000	\$202,737	\$591,029	\$1,890,000	\$37,619,601
2010	\$4,580,000	\$1,320,000	\$545,000	\$1,950,000	\$42,902,814
2012	\$4,620,000	\$1,420,000	\$566,000	\$1,740,000	\$37,472,149

The Task Force on Child Protection addressed the antiquated technology utilized by ChildLine as well as the inability of counties, DPW and law enforcement to securely exchange information electronically. DPW is in the process of implementing a “statewide child welfare technology solution” that has identified as Phase I the need to “modernize state level applications, including the application used by ChildLine” in order to “support the exchange of information between the County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs) and the Department of Public Welfare (DPW).” This initial phase is underway and will also lead to improvements that will ease making a report by a mandated reporter as well as tracking key child-specific data like referrals for General Protective Services.

COUNTY	2000 Child Abuse Reports	2000 % Sub	2000 Victim Rate	2010 Child Abuse Reports	2010 % Sub	2010 Victim Rate	2012 Child Abuse Reports	2012 % Sub	2012 Victim Rate
Adams	184	17.4	1.4	277	22.4	2.8	275	16.4	2.0
Allegheny	1,602	16.9	1.0	1,506	7.2	0.4	1,705	4.4	0.3
Armstrong	144	25.7	2.1	140	17.9	1.9	140	7.9	0.8
Beaver	206	32.0	1.6	201	19.9	1.2	213	21.1	1.3
Bedford	75	21.3	1.3	95	8.4	0.8	93	11.8	1.0
Berks	951	14.9	1.7	773	14.6	1.2	880	15.6	1.4
Blair	339	16.8	1.8	344	14.0	1.8	405	12.6	1.9
Bradford	174	28.7	3.0	157	29.3	3.4	198	23.2	3.3
Bucks	712	10.5	0.5	816	10.0	0.6	858	9.7	0.6
Butler	195	20.5	0.9	221	11.8	0.6	263	12.5	0.8
Cambria	218	26.1	1.6	266	8.6	0.8	428	11.0	1.7
Cameron	10	40.0	2.9	17	5.9	1.0	10	40.0	4.3
Carbon	137	32.1	3.3	128	16.4	1.6	138	13.8	1.4
Centre	213	25.4	2.2	185	10.8	0.9	218	16.1	1.4
Chester	716	10.9	0.7	763	9.0	0.6	795	7.4	0.5
Clarion	75	18.7	1.4	61	14.8	1.2	77	15.6	1.6
Clearfield	133	27.8	1.9	179	17.3	2.0	241	18.7	2.8
Clinton	53	18.9	1.2	58	20.7	1.6	90	20.0	2.2
Columbia	124	27.4	2.5	119	26.9	2.7	139	23.7	2.7
Crawford	247	24.7	2.7	309	16.8	2.7	351	8.8	1.6
Cumberland	206	22.8	1.0	306	16.0	1.1	394	16.5	1.3
Dauphin	500	24.8	2.1	563	15.5	1.5	629	14.0	1.4
Delaware	870	15.5	1.1	940	7.9	0.6	960	10.0	0.7
Elk	35	45.7	1.8	53	9.4	0.8	49	8.2	0.6
Erie	569	23.4	1.8	934	12.8	1.9	900	9.3	1.3
Fayette	326	24.2	2.3	380	10.5	1.4	413	9.7	1.5
Forest	15	33.3	4.1	14	21.4	2.9	19	36.8	8.3
Franklin	147	34.0	1.6	194	24.2	1.4	196	21.4	1.2
Fulton	30	30.0	2.3	52	13.5	2.2	42	11.9	1.5
Greene	66	27.3	1.7	73	8.2	0.8	116	13.8	2.1
Huntingdon	40	30.0	1.2	59	16.9	1.2	94	28.7	3.0
Indiana	155	19.4	1.4	152	15.1	1.5	185	12.4	1.4
Jefferson	62	17.7	0.9	64	18.8	1.3	112	22.3	2.6
Juniata	33	24.2	1.4	44	36.4	3.1	67	20.9	2.4
Lackawanna	319	24.8	1.7	459	15.9	1.7	517	21.1	2.5
Lancaster	705	25.4	1.5	870	15.6	1.1	1,074	15.1	1.3
Lawrence	124	32.3	1.8	151	23.8	1.9	149	24.2	1.9
Lebanon	156	26.3	1.4	292	13.4	1.3	348	10.6	1.2
Lehigh	840	18.7	2.3	826	10.3	1.1	828	7.0	0.7
Luzerne	496	23.6	1.7	506	19.0	1.6	550	21.3	1.8
Lycoming	223	27.4	2.1	157	21.0	1.4	279	7.9	0.9
McKean	181	29.3	4.6	183	15.8	3.3	195	12.3	2.7
Mercer	190	19.5	1.3	243	17.3	1.7	235	17.4	1.7
Mifflin	73	21.9	1.4	98	19.4	1.8	116	28.4	3.1
Monroe	376	16.2	1.7	388	16.2	1.6	354	16.9	1.5
Montgomery	640	12.8	0.5	781	11.9	0.5	897	11.4	0.6
Montour	73	13.7	2.3	51	7.8	1.0	47	10.6	1.3

COUNTY	2000 Child Abuse Reports	2000 % Sub	2000 Victim Rate	2010 Child Abuse Reports	2010 % Sub	2010 Victim Rate	2012 Child Abuse Reports	2012 % Sub	2012 Victim Rate
Northampton	586	15.4	1.5	718	18.2	2.0	730	11.5	1.3
Northumberland	298	35.2	5.0	198	21.2	2.4	203	16.3	1.7
Perry	120	23.3	2.4	120	18.3	2.2	131	22.9	2.9
Philadelphia	4,806	28.4	3.8	4,765	18.6	2.5	4,537	14.6	1.9
Pike	65	13.8	0.9	109	2.8	0.2	93	15.1	1.1
Potter	51	23.5	2.6	70	18.6	3.5	50	26.0	3.5
Schuylkill	300	21.3	2.0	362	15.7	2.0	397	14.1	1.9
Snyder	34	17.6	0.6	42	42.9	2.2	33	15.2	0.6
Somerset	146	32.9	2.5	141	17.7	1.8	165	10.3	1.2
Sullivan	24	12.5	2.1	8	12.5	0.9	15	20.0	3.0
Susquehanna	96	39.6	3.4	91	31.9	3.4	97	23.7	2.6
Tioga	100	40.0	3.8	69	26.1	2.2	109	23.9	3.0
Union	55	34.5	2.2	56	19.6	1.5	51	29.4	1.8
Venango	221	15.8	2.4	156	17.3	2.4	164	13.4	1.9
Warren	71	25.4	1.7	115	22.6	3.3	113	18.6	2.5
Washington	339	20.9	1.5	330	14.5	1.2	421	22.1	2.2
Wayne	120	30.0	3.2	74	29.7	2.1	85	21.2	1.9
Westmoreland	516	15.3	1.0	574	11.7	1.0	631	14.9	1.3
Wyoming	62	38.7	3.0	56	16.1	1.5	82	24.4	3.4
York	841	15.0	1.4	1,113	11.5	1.3	1,275	10.5	1.3
TOTAL	22,809	21.9	1.8	24,615	14.9	1.3	26,664	13.4	1.3