



UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT STATISTICS

Types of Reports

The Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services, recently changed the way they track child abuse and neglect statistics. This effort will allow them to release statistics that more accurately reflect the unduplicated number of children experiencing child maltreatment. The new reporting system will also show how many families receive Alternate Response services, allowing the family to remain intact and work with a multitude of service providers to ensure the safety of their children. In the past few years, statistics have been released in a variety of ways:

- Valid Allegations- the number of allegations of child abuse and neglect that were found, through the investigative process, to be true. It is important to note that one child may have been the subject of multiple allegations (i.e. physical abuse and emotional abuse, or multiple types of sexual abuse). These numbers are broken down to reflect the forms of abuse and neglect experienced by children in each of Louisiana's 64 parishes.
- Valid Investigations- the number of investigations performed by the Office of Community Services that resulted in substantiated findings. It is important to note that one child may have been the victim in multiple investigations, either through multiple perpetrators or multiple instances with the same parties involved. These numbers are not broken down to reflect the different forms of child maltreatment.

Year by Year Comparisons

Due to the shift in the way these statistics are released to the public, it is impossible to compare Allegations to Investigations in order to determine a rise or fall in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Though the number of Valid Investigations more closely resembles the actual number of unduplicated children experiencing child maltreatment in Louisiana, it is not an accurate picture of such. Therefore, Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana has included the Fiscal Year 2006 and 2007 reports of Total, Valid and Invalid Investigations. This will at least offer a comparison in the number of reports that led to investigative work by the Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services, from one fiscal year to the next.

Expectations for the Future

The Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services, is working to gather the unduplicated number of children who were found to be victims of child maltreatment in the past fiscal year. These figures, when released, will also include a breakdown of the forms of abuse and the number of families receiving Alternate Response services. Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana is looking forward to receiving this data and will release it to the public upon receipt. In particular, Alternate Response data will be an exciting addition to these statistics. Families whose situations meet the legal definition of abuse or neglect, but clearly can find success with the right support, are now offered services to aid in the **prevention** of a potentially escalating situation.