

Child Maltreatment Indicators

When concerns regarding possible child maltreatment are reported to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department either decides to investigate the complaint or determines that the complaint does not meet the legal criteria for investigation and then suggests some referrals to other community resources. The data in NEO CANDO include only those reports that are investigated by DCFS.

I. Definitions

Children investigated for child maltreatment include children who are investigated by the Department of Children and Family Services for possible child maltreatment

Children with substantiated child maltreatment include children who are investigated for maltreatment and abuse and/or neglect is confirmed.

Children with indicated child maltreatment include children who are investigated for maltreatment and abuse and/or neglect is suspected, but there is insufficient evidence to confirm it.

Unsubstantiated child maltreatment includes investigations where maltreatment is unfounded.

METHODOLOGY: The child maltreatment numbers reported in NEO CANDO represent an unduplicated count of children with maltreatment incidents within each year. There are instances where the same child appears in multiple incidents within a given year. Our method for selecting the incident to be counted for children with multiple incidents is to choose the most serious incident within the year. Therefore, if a child has a substantiated incident and an indicated incident -- the substantiated incident would be selected. If a child has two indicated incidents -- the first incident to appear in the file would be selected. Similarly, if a child has two substantiated incidents in a year -- the first incident to appear in the file would be selected.

The counts include only victims aged less than 18.

NOTE: In November 2006, the Center changed the methodology for counting child maltreatment incidents. The change in methodology resulted in changes to counts of maltreatment (substantiated and indicated) for all years of data in NEO CANDO. Data extracted prior to November 2006 are not comparable to data currently in NEO CANDO.

The **population aged less than 18** used in calculating the maltreatment rates between census years are estimates prepared by the Center. These population estimates are not released.

Children investigated for child maltreatment per 1000 children is calculated as:

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$$\frac{\text{number of children investigated for maltreatment} \times 1000}{\text{population aged} < 18}$$

Children with substantiated or indicated reports of child maltreatment per 1000 children is calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{number of children where maltreatment is substantiated or indicated} \times 1000}{\text{population aged} < 18}$$

Percent of child reports with substantiated or indicated maltreatment

$$\frac{\text{number of children where maltreatment is substantiated or indicated} \times 100}{\text{number of child maltreatment investigations}}$$

Percent of child reports with unsubstantiated maltreatment

$$\frac{\text{number of children where maltreatment is unsubstantiated} \times 100}{\text{number of child maltreatment investigations}}$$

II. Precautions and Information regarding use of data

The child maltreatment counts and rates are generated from the child abuse and neglect reports from the Department of Children and Family Services. Conclusions about whether the allegation is substantiated or indicated are made in the reporting system at a single point in time. They do not reflect the Department's action on these reports and will not match other counts the Department makes of its children in custody or its open cases. These counts and rates are not intended as a measure of the activity or caseload of the Department of Children and Family Services. They can be used as an indicator of children at risk in a neighborhood.

There are many factors that affect whether an act or condition of abuse or neglect is actually observed, reported, and determined to be valid. Changes in surveillance, the process of investigation, or community expectations for parenting are factors that could explain changes in the rates and dispositions of child abuse and neglect reports over time, so these data must be used with caution. Nevertheless, official child maltreatment reports are the only data source that can be used to track maltreatment trends over time.

As with all of our data, we caution the user against using rates where the child population aged < 18 is low. The child maltreatment rates for some Census tracts in the Downtown, Goodrich-Kirtland Park, Industrial Valley, and Central neighborhoods are not reliable due to the small population, particularly of children, in these areas.

III. Data source and suggested citation

Information regarding child maltreatment indicators in NEO CANDO

Source of Child Maltreatment Data: Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services

Update Schedule: Annually in September

Years Available: Earliest year available -- 1998

Geographic Coverage: Cuyahoga County

Suggested Citation: NEO CANDO system, Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, MSASS, Case Western Reserve University (<http://neocando.case.edu>).

IV. Links to related web sites

[Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)

[Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services](#)