

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance Newsroom  
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How many cases of child abuse and neglect occur in Pennsylvania?

- About nine of every 1,000 Pennsylvania children were reported as victims of suspected abuse in 2009, while about one of every 1,000 Pennsylvania children was substantiated as a victim of abuse.
- In absolute numbers, 25,342 cases of suspected child and student abuse were reported in Pennsylvania in 2009. Of these, 3,943 cases, or 15.5 percent, were substantiated. Sixty-six percent of substantiated victims were girls; 34 percent were boys.

Q: How does this compare with other years?

- The number of suspected cases was the second-highest during the past decade, while the number of substantiated cases was the lowest in the past decade.

Q: What is the result of abuse?

- Forty-three children died from abuse in 2009, a decrease of seven from the previous year. Nineteen of the children who died in 2009 were under 1 year of age. Seventeen were between the ages of 1 and 4. One was between 5 and 9, two were between 10 and 14, and four were between 15 and 17.
- Parents accounted for nearly 70 percent of fatal abuse perpetrators.
- Substantiated reports of child abuse in 2009 accounted for 4,966 injuries to children. Physical injuries ranged from bruises, cuts, and abrasions to broken bones, skull fractures, and scaldings. The majority of injuries, more than 3,000, were sexual in nature, ranging from sexual assault to rape and incest.

Q: Where does child abuse occur?

- Unfortunately, the problem of child abuse is universal. Last year it occurred in all 67 counties of Pennsylvania—urban, suburban, and rural. It can and does happen where we all live. That's one important reason we all need to be aware and we all need to be prepared to report suspected child abuse.

Q: What does the term “mandated reporter” mean?

- Mandated reporters are people who are required by law to report child abuse. Generally, these are people who by the nature of their jobs come in contact with children on a regular basis, such as doctors and nurses; health and social service

workers; teachers and school employees; law enforcement authorities; and members of the clergy.

- Mandated reporters accounted for 75 percent of reports of suspected abuse and 77 percent of reports of substantiated reports in 2009. Schools were far and away the largest single source of reports from mandated reporters.

Q: How does PFSA fit into this? How are you trying to solve the problem?

- One of the important missions of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance is to help train Pennsylvania's mandated reporters. Participants in our training learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect and how to properly report such cases. Reporting is essential. Otherwise our child protection system cannot respond to help abused children.
- During the past year, we presented nearly 300 in-person training sessions on child-abuse reporting throughout Pennsylvania. These sessions helped educate nearly 8,000 individuals at schools, child-care programs, faith-based organizations, and a variety of community-service agencies covering areas ranging from public assistance to early childhood intervention to mental health.
- We've also recently added online, self-paced training to make it easier and more convenient for mandated reporters to get updates and refresher training. Online training is available on our website at <http://www.pa-fsa.org/>. Click on "Mandated Reporters" and then choose "Online Training Course."

Q: How effective is the training PFSA provides?

- A study by a research associate at Johns Hopkins University concluded that our training has a lasting positive effect on participants' knowledge of the law and reporting requirements.

Q: What does PFSA do in addition to providing training?

- We assist families directly by providing information and educational materials on good parenting practices. More than 6,000 families attend our support programs annually. Follow-up indicates parenting skills and parent-child relationships almost always improve as a result. An estimated 25,000 families a year benefit from our parenting material—brochures, videos, and books—and use our website to seek help or contact our office for guidance on referrals and resources.
- We work in partnership with over 50 organizations in 40 counties, who operate 130 family support and education programs. These programs comprise our "network." They include programs in prisons and halfway houses; programs at substance-abuse treatment facilities; general community programs; and programs targeted at specific populations, such as grandparents, teen parents, and Spanish-

speaking families. We provide our network partners with resources and training and help them create awareness and reach those who need to hear their message.

Q: What services to you provide to local organizations?

We customize our services to meet the needs of the affiliated organization; these organizations then provide family support programs in their communities. Here are some services that our affiliates enjoy:

- Current information on issues facing the child welfare and abuse prevention community; an organized presence in state government to educate legislators about the needs of the families they serve.
- Organization of special events and awareness campaigns like the Blue Ribbon campaign for Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- A video lending library and book lending library of over 100 titles each is available to supplement the local family support program meetings and enhance learning.
- When parents are looking for help, they can access a local group by calling the state office toll-free number, where we will refer them to the program.
- Training to increase the skills of staff as group facilitators; this is provided near your office at no charge. Training for childcare staff ensures the best possible program for the whole family.
- Technical assistance -and a variety of marketing materials to help local programs recruit new families. Monthly mailings provide meeting ideas, legislative alerts, and other resources to make the job easier.
- High quality publications- like the "Parenting Primers" and our parenting series on special topics such as parents in recovery and parents with mental illness - at reduced cost to the affiliated agency.

Q: Why should we care about child abuse?

- In the end, child abuse is a tragedy for everyone involved, but especially the victims. Child victims can suffer not only physical harm, but also emotional damage—and may have to live a lifetime with the scars. That's why it's so important all Pennsylvanians understand the depth and breadth of the problem and what can be done about it. We are proud of our role in helping to make this happen and in being a partner with community agencies in the prevention of, intervention against, and treatment of child abuse.