

# Child Maltreatment In Florida



## A Data Retrospect

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## Child Maltreatment A Data Retrospect

Two primary sources of data used for this report were the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System (FAHIS) and HomeSafenet, the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) for the state of Florida. FAHIS contained data records of all children in Florida who were reported as being maltreated between July 1996 and July 2002. Due to the state transition to HomeSafenet during July 2002 through June 2003, information included in FAHIS became a part of the HomeSafenet Child Safety Assessment module. Therefore, both databases were used to obtain records for fiscal year 2002-2003. These data sources were well suited because both allowed tracking children in care over time and covered the entire population of children in Florida who were reported as being abused or neglected. At the end of June, 2007 a new child welfare information system called Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) was implemented in the state of Florida.

Aggression and violence toward children have been drawing considerable societal attention due to increased reporting of alleged child maltreatment in recent years. As reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005), 2.9 million reports alleging children abuse or neglect were accepted by state and local child protective services agencies for investigation or assessment in 2003. By comparison, approximately 2 million such reports were received in 1995 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1997). Some of these reports lie outside of the responsibility of child protection system, and some do not have sufficient information for follow-up. The bulk of the reports were followed up and investigations were performed by child protection workers. In 2003, 31.7% of all children investigated were found to be victims of maltreatment (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2005).

See the Glossary for Florida Child Welfare Services Overview

### Child Protection System Referrals

In Florida, 1,884,644 child protection system referrals (i.e., allegations accepted for scrutiny) were investigated from July 1, 1996 to June 30, 2003. This number includes repeat investigations for the same alleged victims (i.e., duplicated counts). There were three outcomes of investigation registered in Florida: verified maltreatment, some indication of maltreatment, and no indication of maltreatment. The child protection system referrals included all cases regardless of whether maltreatment was verified, some indication of maltreatment was found, or no indication of maltreatment was found. The total number of children with allegations (i.e., unduplicated count) referred to the child protection system in Florida during that seven-year period was 1,251,445. The table below represents the unduplicated child maltreatment referrals; change in number from 1996-1997 to 2002-2003 showed an 81 percent increase in children involved in these referrals.

**Number of Unduplicated Child Maltreatment Referrals in Florida by Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Number of Referrals
1996-1997	150,722
1997-1998	121,549
1998-1999	107,480
1999-2000	120,909
2000-2001	134,585
2001-2002	248,439
2002-2003	272,360

\* All data are from Florida Department of Children and Families, the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System (FAHIS) and HomeSafenet, the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) for the State of Florida.

**Number of Unduplicated Child Maltreatment Referrals by County in Fiscal Year 2002-2003**

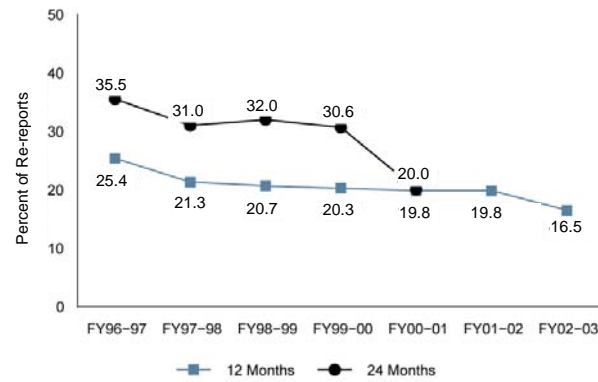
	<b>Number of Reports</b>	<b>Percent Within State</b>		<b>Number of Reports</b>	<b>Percent Within State</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>272,360</b>	<b>100</b>	Lafayette	111	-
Alachua	3,830	1.4	Lake	4,303	1.6
Baker	499	.2	Lee	7,549	2.8
Bay	4,207	1.5	Leon	1,838	.7
Bradford	680	.2	Levy	987	.4
Brevard	9,329	3.4	Liberty	208	.1
Broward	12,809	4.7	Madison	456	.2
Calhoun	344	.1	Manatee	5,699	2.1
Charlotte	1,830	.7	Marion	6,101	2.2
Citrus	2,293	.8	Martin	1,403	.5
Clay	3,487	1.3	Monroe	1,310	.5
Collier	3,168	1.2	Nassau	1,201	.4
Columbia	1,423	.5	Okaloosa	3,785	1.4
Miami-Dade	25,708	9.4	Okeechobee	1,020	.4
Desoto	901	.3	Orange	17,913	6.6
Dixie	333	.1	Osceola	4,182	1.5
Duval	17,708	6.5	Palm Beach	17,495	6.4
Escambia	6,969	2.6	Pasco	7,103	2.6
Flagler	962	.4	Pinellas	15,949	5.9
Franklin	211	.1	Polk	12,136	4.5
Gadsden	985	.4	Putnam	1,697	.6
Gilchrist	404	.1	Santa Rosa	2,317	.9
Glades	205	.1	Sarasota	4,338	1.6
Gulf	228	.1	Seminole	3,071	1.1
Hamilton	286	.1	St Johns	3,825	1.4
Hardee	686	.3	St Lucie	5,634	2.1
Hendry	783	.3	Sumter	936	.3
Hernando	2,539	.9	Suwannee	894	.3
Highlands	1,794	.7	Taylor	436	.2
Hillsborough	18,897	6.9	Union	280	.1
Holmes	507	.2	Volusia	9,099	3.3
Indian River	1,440	.5	Wakulla	634	.2
Jackson	1,046	.4	Walton	1,157	.4
Jefferson	269	.1	Washington	533	.2

## Rate of Maltreatment Re-reports

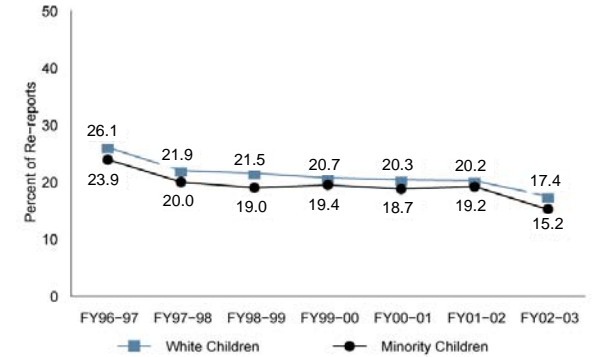
Maltreatment re-report was defined as a second maltreatment report for the same child within 12 months or 24 months of a child's first report regardless of whether these reports were verified, had some indication of maltreatment or no maltreatment was found. When more than one subsequent report was registered by the Florida Hotline during the 24-month period, analyses were restricted to the first maltreatment re-report. The percentages of children with maltreatment re-reports were estimates obtained from Life Tables using the Kaplan-Meier procedure (Kaplan & Meier, 1958). Data for this analysis consisted of unduplicated counts of children reported as maltreated, grouped by fiscal year entry cohort. Entry cohorts were defined as groups of children who were tracked from the time of occurrence of initial maltreatment report. Children were grouped by fiscal year (i.e., the year they were first reported as being maltreated).

- The percentage of re-reports to Florida Abuse Hotline steadily decreased during the period between fiscal year 1996-1997 and fiscal year 2002-2003.
- Within 12 months of the first referral, re-reports declined by almost 9 percentage points from fiscal year 1996-1997 to fiscal year 2002-2003.

**Percent of Maltreatment Re-reports Within 12 and 24 Months by Fiscal Year**



**Rate of Maltreatment Re-reports Within 12 Months by Minority Status by Fiscal Year**



**Percent of Maltreatment Re-reports by Gender and Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Percent of Re-reports			
	Within 12 Months		Within 24 Months	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1996-1997	25.2	25.6	35.3	35.7
1997-1998	21.2	21.4	31.1	31.0
1998-1999	20.5	20.9	31.3	31.5
1999-2000	20.0	20.6	30.5	30.9
2000-2001	19.6	20.0	22.8	23.3
2001-2002	19.8	19.8	N/A	N/A
2002-2003	16.6	16.3	N/A	N/A

**Percent of Maltreatment Re-reports by Age Group and Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Percent of Re-reports Within 12 months			
	Under age 1	Age 1 to 5	Age 6 to 11	Age 12 and older
1996-1997	25.5	27.9	26.0	21.4
1997-1998	23.0	22.9	21.4	18.5
1998-1999	23.1	22.2	20.6	17.6
1999-2000	23.0	21.4	20.0	17.7
2000-2001	22.5	21.3	19.5	17.2
2001-2002	18.8	21.0	20.6	18.5
2002-2003	16.6	17.3	17.0	15.0

**Percent of Maltreatment Referrals  
by Disposition Within Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Verified Maltreatment	Some Indication of Maltreatment	No Indication of Maltreatment
1996-1997	11	37	52
1997-1998	12	36	52
1998-1999	14	35	51
1999-2000	17	34	49
2000-2001	17	33	50
2001-2002	17	31	52
2002-2003	19	30	51

**Maltreatment Victims:  
Substantiated or Indicated Maltreatment Cases**

Maltreatment victims are defined as those children who were found to be neglected, abused or experienced threatened harm as a result of the protective investigation. If as a result of the protective investigation maltreatment was verified or there was some indication of maltreatment a case is called “substantiated” or indicated. “Verified” maltreatment is a conclusion that the allegation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment was supported or founded on State law or State policy. “Some indication” of maltreatment is a determination that maltreatment could not be substantiated under State law or policy, but there was reason to suspect that the child might have been maltreated or was at risk of maltreatment.

- Of the 1,251,445 referrals resulting in child protective investigations in Florida during the seven-year period, 16 percent were closed with confirmation of verified maltreatment, 33 percent were closed with some indication of maltreatment, and 51 percent found no indication of maltreatment.
- In fiscal year 2002-2003, of 211,154 maltreatment reports 19 percent were closed with confirmation of verified maltreatment, 30 percent found some indication of maltreatment and 51 percent found no indication of maltreatment.

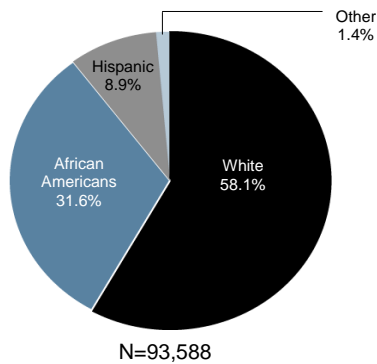
Approximately 499,330 children were victims of abuse and neglect between July 1, 1996, and June 30, 2003. The number of victims fluctuated slightly from year to year. The seven year trend of the number of victims shows an overall increase by 51.2 percent. It should be noted that case closure dates may influence fiscal year victim counts.

Note: A child can be a victim of maltreatment more than once during a specific fiscal year.

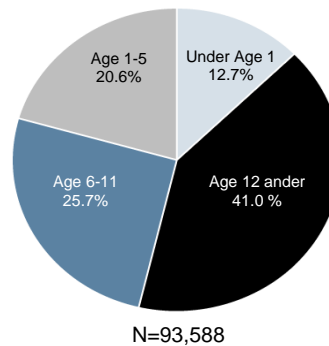
**Number of Maltreatment Victims by Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Number of Children
1996-1997	61,656
1997-1998	55,690
1998-1999	54,771
1999-2000	64,668
2000-2001	57,437
2001-2002	111,520
2002-2003	93,588
<b>Total</b>	<b>499,330</b>

**Percent of Maltreatment Victims  
by Race/Ethnicity in 2002-2003**



**Percent of Maltreatment Victims  
by Age Group in 2002-2003**



**Number of Maltreatment Victims by County in Fiscal Year 2002-2003**

	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Percent Within State</b>		<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Percent Within State</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>93,376</b>	<b>100.0</b>	Lafayette	29	-
Alachua	1,300	1.4	Lake	1,514	1.6
Baker	170	.2	Lee	1,152	1.2
Bay	1,355	1.5	Leon	109	.1
Bradford	171	.2	Levy	378	.4
Brevard	4,286	4.6	Liberty	49	.1
Broward	1,370	1.5	Madison	90	.1
Calhoun	156	.2	Manatee	2,161	2.3
Charlotte	241	.3	Marion	2,224	2.4
Citrus	625	.7	Martin	369	.4
Clay	1,499	1.6	Monroe	549	.6
Collier	782	.8	Nassau	466	.5
Columbia	353	.4	Okaloosa	1,316	1.4
Miami-Dade	9,809	10.5	Okeechobee	355	.4
Desoto	301	.3	Orange	6,491	7.0
Dixie	127	.1	Osceola	2,008	2.2
Duval	6,479	6.9	Palm Beach	7,494	8.0
Escambia	1,319	1.4	Pasco	2,472	2.6
Flagler	410	.4	Pinellas	6,213	6.7
Franklin	73	.1	Polk	4,121	4.4
Gadsden	243	.3	Putnam	471	.5
Gilchrist	140	.1	Santa Rosa	1,006	1.1
Glades	34	-	Sarasota	1,229	1.3
Gulf	94	.1	Seminole	985	1.1
Hamilton	94	.1	St Johns	1,294	1.4
Hardee	194	.2	St Lucie	1,506	1.6
Hendry	122	.1	Sumter	399	.4
Hernando	1,98	1.2	Suwannee	311	.3
Highlands	541	.6	Taylor	111	.1
Hillsborough	7,477	8.0	Union	70	.1
Holmes	198	.2	Volusia	3,677	3.9
Indian River	478	.5	Wakulla	216	.2
Jackson	341	.4	Walton	451	.5
Jefferson	37	-	Washington	173	.2

### Types of Victim Maltreatment

A report made to the Florida Abuse Hotline indicated an alleged maltreatment of a child by a caregiver. There were four types of maltreatment recorded in the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System or Child Safety Assessment module in HomeSafenet: abuse, neglect, threatened harm, and special conditions (e.g., incarceration or death of a parent resulting in absence of a caregiver). A child might have only one type of maltreatment or can have all four involving the same incident. The numbers include only cases with either some indication or a verified maltreatment.

- During the period between fiscal year 1999-2000 and fiscal year 2002-2003 “threatened harm” as a type of maltreatment was found in over 30 percent of cases.
- Approximately one third of all cases involved multiple types of maltreatment (i.e., more than one).
- Higher proportions of older children were victims of abuse and a higher proportion of younger children were victims of neglect in fiscal year 2002-2003.
- Slightly more males than females were victims of neglect in fiscal year 2002-2003 and slightly more females than males were victims of abuse.

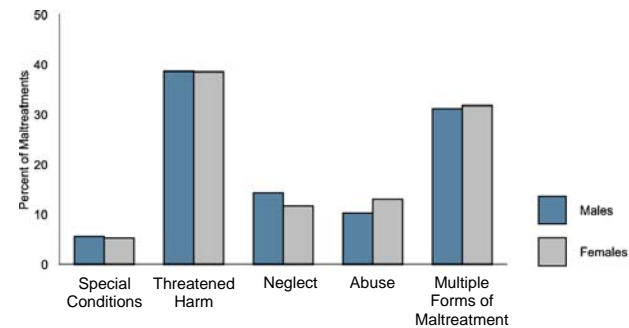
**Percent of Victim Maltreatment Type Within Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Types of Maltreatment				
	Abuse	Neglect	Threatened Harm	Special Conditions	Multiple Types of Maltreatment
1996-1997	18.4	24.3	17.6	7.6	32.1
1997-1998	17.2	20.4	22.6	8.2	31.5
1998-1999	15.4	19.0	25.9	8.2	31.4
1999-2000	11.6	14.9	33.8	7.9	31.9
2000-2001	12.2	13.7	34.1	9.2	30.9
2001-2002	13.1	14.3	37.3	6.1	29.2
2002-2003	11.6	12.9	38.6	5.4	31.5

**Percent of Type of Maltreatment within Age Group in Fiscal Year 2002-2003**

Type of Maltreatment	Age				
	Under Age 1	1-5	6-11	12 and older	Total
Abuse	7.6	7.0	11.5	18.8	11.6
Neglect	14.0	16.0	12.8	9.3	12.9
Threatened harm	48.2	40.3	38.0	31.8	38.6
Special conditions	2.4	6.0	6.1	5.9	5.4
Multiple types	27.8	30.7	31.6	34.2	31.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Percent of Type of Victim Maltreatment by Gender in Fiscal Year 2002-2003**

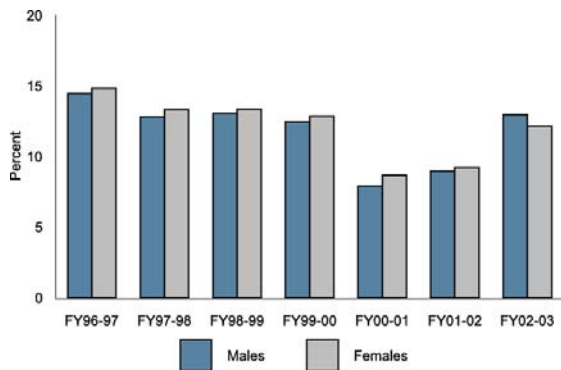


**Percent of Children with Recurrence of Maltreatment by Age Group and Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Percent of Recurrence Within 12 months			
	Under Age 1	Age 1 to 5	Age 6 to 11	Age 12 and older
1996-1997	14.7	16.6	15.2	11.6
1997-1998	13.3	14.9	13.7	10.1
1998-1999	14.5	14.2	13.5	10.5
1999-2000	13.8	13.5	12.7	10.8
2000-2001	8.1	9.3	9.0	6.6
2001-2002	8.7	9.8	9.4	8.1
2002-2003	12.9	13.0	12.8	11.5

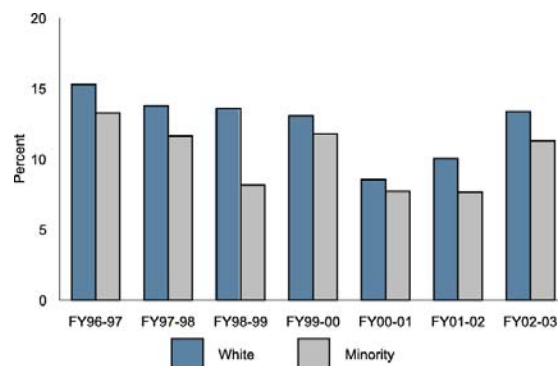
Younger children more often experienced recurrence of maltreatment than older children and this trend remained stable over the seven year period.

**Rate of Recurrence of Maltreatment by Gender and Fiscal Year**



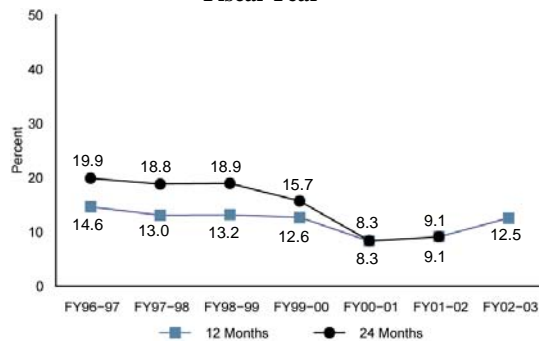
Females experienced recurrence of maltreatment at a slightly higher rate than males with an exception in fiscal year 2002-2003.

**Rate of Recurrence of Maltreatment by Minority Status and Fiscal Year**



A higher proportion of White children became victims of subsequent maltreatment within a 12 month period than did Minority children.

**Rate of Recurrence of Maltreatment by Fiscal Year**



**Recurrence of Victim Maltreatment**

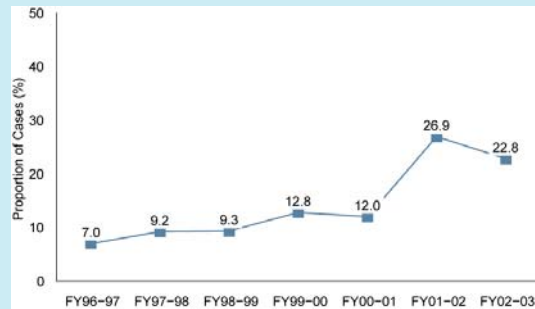
Recurrence of maltreatment was defined as a second episode of maltreatment (i.e., there was some indication of maltreatment or maltreatment was verified) within 12 months or 24 months of a child's first substantiated maltreatment episode. When the same child experienced multiple recurrences, analyses were restricted to only the first recurrence of maltreatment. The follow-up period between the first and subsequent events ranged from 12 months to 24 months. The percentages of children with recurrence of maltreatment were estimates obtained from Life Tables using the Kaplan-Meier procedure (Kaplan & Meier, 1958). Data for this analysis consisted of unduplicated counts of maltreated children grouped by fiscal year entry cohort. Entry cohorts were defined as groups of children who were tracked from the time of occurrence of initial experience of maltreatment. In this report children were grouped by fiscal year (i.e., the year they were initially maltreated and entered child protection system).

- Life Table analysis indicated the rates of recurrence of maltreatment were decreasing steadily over time for the 12-month and 24-month periods until fiscal year 2001-2002.
- An elevation of a slightly less than 1 percent in recurrence within 12 months after the first incident was observed in fiscal year 2001-2002 compared to fiscal year 2000-2001 and a little more than 3 percent in 2001-2002 compared to fiscal year 2002-2003.

## **Glossary and References**

## GLOSSARY

Proportion of Cases Involving Substance Abuse or Alcohol



### Florida Child Welfare Services

**Florida Community Based Care Initiative:** In Florida, the 1996 Legislature mandated the outsourcing of child welfare services, known in Florida as Community-Based Care (CBC), through the use of a lead agency design. The intent of the original statute was to strengthen the support and commitment of local communities to the “reunification of families and care of children and their families,” and increase the efficiency and accountability of services. The initial child protective investigation is carried out by either the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the local sheriff’s office. Statewide expansion of CBC was mandated in 1988. In 1999, the Florida Legislature brought the State into compliance with Adoption and Safe Families Act by revising Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes and amending the substantive legislation regarding CBC. The CBC Implementation Plan, issued in July 1999 by the DCF, embraced the Adoption and Safe Families Act goals, while transitioning to local community-based systems of care. All of the districts in Florida have now implemented a CBC contract. There are currently 20 lead agencies with 22 contracts serving Florida’s 67 counties.

### Life Tables

A type of event history analysis (Allison, 1984), a statistical procedure that allows for analyzing data collected over time as well as for utilizing information about cases where the event of interest did not occur during data collection (e.g., children who did not experience a second founded episode of maltreatment during the 12-month period). This technique allows for calculation of the probability of an event occurring at different time points (e.g., in 12 months after having the first incident of maltreatment).

### Maltreatment

**Abuse:** any willful act or threatened act by a caregiver that causes or is likely to cause significant impairment to a vulnerable adult's physical, mental, or emotional health. Abuse includes acts and omissions

**Neglect:** the failure or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide the care, supervision, and services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of the vulnerable adult, including, but not limited to, food, clothing, medicine, shelter, supervision, and medical services, that a prudent person would consider essential for the well-being of a vulnerable adult. The term "neglect" also means the failure of a caregiver to make a reasonable effort to protect a vulnerable adult from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by others. "Neglect" is repeated conduct or a single incident of carelessness which produces or could reasonably be expected to result in serious physical or psychological injury or a substantial risk of death.

**Threatened harm:** a situation, circumstances, or behaviors which lead a prudent person to have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect has occurred or may occur in the immediate future if no intervention is provided (Florida Statutes, 2005, Chapter 415.102).

**Special conditions:** a situation when a child is left without a caregiver. Although, “special conditions” is not included in Florida statute as a type of child maltreatment this category has been tracked by the data system because they require a protective response.

### **Maltreatment cases**

**Some indication of maltreatment:** result of the protective investigation concluded maltreatment could not be substantiated under State law or policy, but there was reason to suspect that the child might have been maltreated or was at risk of maltreatment.

**Substantiated or Indicated maltreatment:** result of the protective investigation concluded maltreatment was verified or there was some indication.

**Verified maltreatment:** result of the protective investigation concluded that the allegation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment was supported or founded on State law or State policy.

### **Recurrence of maltreatment**

A second episode of maltreatment (there was some indication of maltreatment or maltreatment was verified) within 12 months or 24 months of a child's first substantiated maltreatment episode.

### **Re-report of maltreatment**

A second maltreatment report for the same child within 12 months or 24 months of a child's first report regardless of whether these reports were verified, had some indication of maltreatment or no maltreatment was found.

### **Referrals**

Allegations accepted for scrutiny.

### **Victims**

Children who were found to be neglected, abused or experienced threatened harm as a result of a protective services investigation.

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### **Center for the Study of Children's Futures**

Susan Weitzel, Director

The **Center** serves to centralize research, public education, and outreach activities benefiting the citizens of Florida. The activities of the Center meld traditional research with the presentation and dissemination of data and information to a wide range of audiences. Center staff are practiced in a methodology for synthesizing data and developing easily understood presentation formats. Our efforts include maintaining a repository of statistical data, the development of child well-being indicators, providing technical assistance and consultation services, and linkage to comprehensive policy analysis and research in program development.

### **Department of Child and Family Studies**

Mario Hernandez, Ph.D., Chair

In the **Department of Child and Family Studies**, our focus is to generate hope and solutions for the complex issues confronting individuals, children, families and communities. Our dedicated faculty and professional staff address this goal through leadership and innovations in research, evaluation, practice and policy. From this empirically based, applied viewpoint, the department's academic programs are designed to equip a new generation of professionals to be effective researchers, practitioners, and administrators.

### **Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI)**

#### **College of Behavioral and Community Sciences**

Junius Gonzalez, M.D., M.B.A., Dean

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The **College of Behavioral and Community Sciences** focuses on the development and implementation of innovative solutions to the complex conditions that affect the behavior and well-being of individuals, families, populations, and the communities in which we live.

Through multidisciplinary teaching and research, the College engages with community partners to prepare students who will become service providers, professionals, scholars, and policy makers committed to (1) improving the quality of life, health, and safety of diverse populations; (2) promoting sustainable communities, organizations and systems and (3) supporting positive change for individuals and groups.

**Center for the Study of Children's Futures**  
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