



Child Welfare

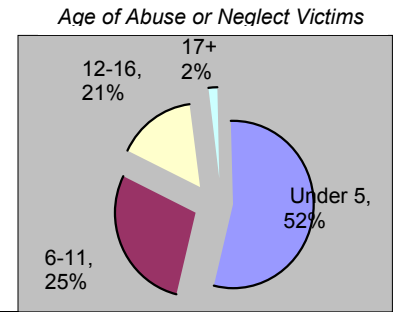
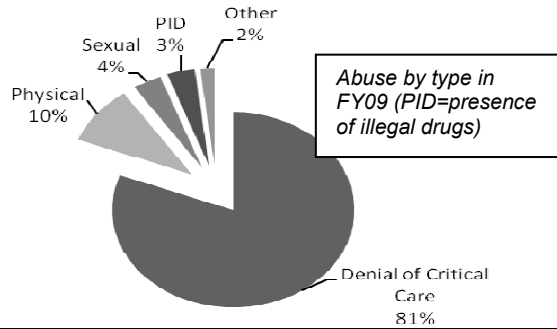
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Purpose

Child welfare services are directed at three outcomes – safety for children at risk, permanency, and child and family well-being.

Who

The DHS provides services for children who have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected, and for children determined to be a child in need of assistance (CINA). The greatest risk factors are mental illness, drug abuse, and domestic violence.



What

The department:

- Assesses reports of child abuse to determine if the child is safe and whether abuse has occurred. During FY2009, DHS completed 22,483 child abuse assessments. In FY09, as in most years, about a third of assessments were founded for abuse.
- Provides services to maintain safety at home for children who have been abused. If that is not possible, the department arranges temporary out-of-home placement, first seeking relatives to help. Another option includes foster care or group care.
- Provides permanency services, including family reunification, adoption and guardianship.
- Works with communities to prevent child abuse and develop community partnerships for child protection.
- Maintains abuse registries and performs record checks.

How are We Doing?

In SFY 2005, the department launched a redesigned child welfare system and used it to successfully complete a demanding federal program improvement plan. Iowa is improving on most major federal child welfare indicators, especially a reduction in foster care re-entry. Highlights of the redesign include:

- Creation of regional units to determine if a complaint should be investigated. Helps prevent local variations in previous county-centered method of intake.
- Free and voluntary help for low-risk families (the “Community Care” program).
- Expanded use of family team meetings to engage families.
- Sharply expanded percent of children and their families who receive at least monthly visits from DHS caseworkers.
- Strategies to reduce disproportional representation of children and families of color.
- Regular and public reporting of Iowa’s performance compared to federal benchmarks. <https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/digitaldashboard/>
- Results-based child welfare service contracts that provide more flexible individualized services for children and families, and which provide incentives for results.
- Permanency for older youth. The DHS provides guardianship subsidies for youth for whom neither family reunification nor adoption are viable, and it has a rapidly expanding Preparation for Adult Living program for aged-out foster youth.