

Child Maltreatment



How the System Works

Approximately every five minutes, a child is reported abused or neglected in North Carolina. Of the 111,581 reports in 2005, 8 percent were for abuse, 86 percent were for neglect and 5 percent were for abuse and neglect. After a report is made, a child protective services (CPS) worker and supervisor review the report and make a joint decision to accept it for a CPS assessment or not. A report is accepted if the allegations made by the reporter meet the State's legal definitions of abuse, neglect or dependency; involve a juvenile; and involve the actions or inactions of a parent, guardian, caretaker or custodian. It is not accepted for a CPS assessment if it fails to meet any one of the three criteria.

Most accepted reports of neglect and dependency receive *family*

assessments while all reports of abuse and abandonment, as well as some special types of neglect reports, receive *investigative assessments*.^{vi} The goal of the Department of Social Services (DSS) in both assessment tracks is to ensure the safety of the children involved in the case. As a

^{vi} *Family Assessments are a child protection and prevention-oriented, family-centered approach that evaluates the strengths and needs of the juvenile's family, as well as the condition of the child. Investigative assessments focus on a formal information-gathering process to determine whether or not a child is abused, neglected or dependent, seek to identify the perpetrator and hold that person accountable for his or her actions.*

The Multiple Response System was implemented in 10 counties in 2002, expanded to 52 counties in 2003, and expanded again in January 2006 to include the remaining 48 counties. More information is available online at: <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs/>.

result, during both assessment tracks, CPS determines whether it is safe for the child to remain in the home. In 2005, there were 6,276 children found to be "services needed" as a result of *family assessments*. During the same time period, 20,394 children were substantiated as victims of abuse, abuse and neglect, neglect or dependency as a result of *investigative assessments*. Most of these children and their families are required to receive various services such as subsidized child care, various types of counseling and parenting education. Most children are best served if their safety, health and well-being can be protected while remaining with their own family. Therefore, DSS focuses its efforts on maintaining the child in the family when risk can be reduced to an acceptable level.

If it is determined that the child is unsafe living in his or her own

Better Measurement Can Lead to Better Outcomes

Until recently, data available about child maltreatment focused on providing basic head-count information. While such information is useful for tracking the number of children affected by abuse and neglect, it does little to help clarify the experience of children in the child welfare system or to measure if the system is successfully meeting its primary goal of safety, permanency and well-being for all children. To better track the experiences of children, Child Protective Services (CPS) has begun collecting data on child outcomes. These measures provide data on not only how many children are victims of abuse and neglect, but also on how these children fare after CPS intervenes in their lives.

Child Maltreatment *(continued)*

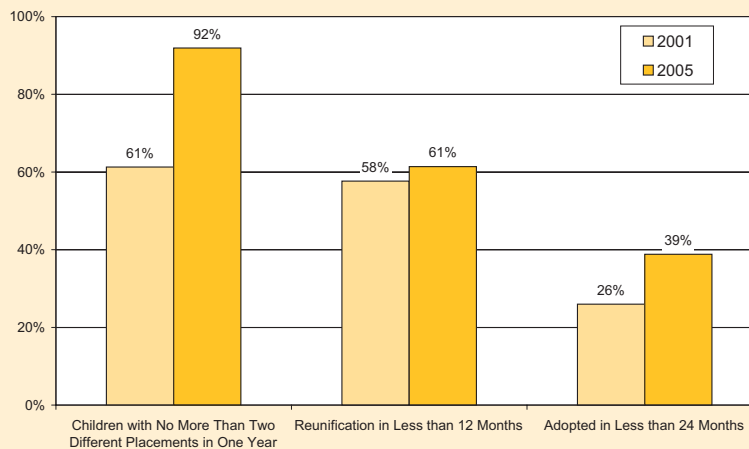
home, DSS may petition the Juvenile Court to place the child in the legal custody of DSS (10,829 children in 2005). Local DSS workers place children in the least restrictive, most family-like setting available that is close to their parents' home. Some of the placement options available for children include kinship care (i.e., with a grandparent or other relative), licensed foster homes and group homes.

Children in Foster Care

The new CPS data provide a more complete picture of the experience of children in our foster care system and how well CPS is meeting the needs of foster children. Ensuring that children are not mistreated while in foster care is critical to their well-being; in 2005 less than 1 percent of children in foster care were abused or neglected. In addition to securing a safe temporary environment for children, each county DSS works to provide stable living arrangements for all children while in foster care. Last year 92 percent of foster children had no more than two different placements in one year (compared to 61 percent in 2001).

Ultimately, the state would like to be able to reunify all children with their parents in a timely manner (less than one year); however, sometimes it is not safe for a child to return home within this timeframe. Often there are problems within the home that take longer than 12 months to resolve, such as substance abuse or domestic violence. In these cases, the state prefers to keep the children in custody longer instead of risking recurrence of maltreatment and, possibly, re-entry to foster care. Occasionally, it is determined that the child would not be safe returning to his or her home at all. In these cases, adoption may be the best option. In 2005, 61 percent of children who were removed from their homes were reunified in less

Foster Care Outcomes Improving



Data Source: N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, special data requests January 2006.

than 12 months and there was no recurrence of maltreatment within six months in 93 percent of cases.

On the Road to Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being for All Children

North Carolina has made progress in reaching our goal of safety, permanency and well-being for children. North Carolina is the first state in the southeast region to have successfully completed the federally-mandated program improvement plan

and has reached or exceeded federal goals for four of the six outcome measures. Improving performance on the other two—recurrence of maltreatment and adoption in less than two years—are goals that child welfare will be working on in 2006. Support for the full implementation of the Multiple Response System, employment and retention of professionally-trained staff and completion of other child welfare projects to improve data collection and service provision are still necessary.



Child Maltreatment *(continued)*

Child Maltreatment

	Current	Trend		Change
	2005	2001	2005	2001 to 2005
Maltreatment Reports Investigated ^a	111,581	51.4 per 1,000	53.6 per 1,000	4.3%
Investigative Assessments Substantiated ^{a, b, d}	20,394	-	9.8 per 1,000	-
Recurrence of Maltreatment ^e	7.2%	8.0%	7.2%	-9.1%
Family Assessments Found Services Needed ^{a, c, d}	6,276	-	3.0 per 1,000	-
Children in Department of Social Services Custody ^{a, f}	10,829	5.2 per 1,000	5.2 per 1,000	0.0%
Children in Foster Care ^{a, f}	9,820	-	4.7 per 1,000	-
Children with No More Than Two Different Placements in One Year	91.9% ^e	61.3%	91.9% ^e	50.0% ^e
Maltreatment in Foster Care	0.3% ^e	0.8%	0.3% ^e	n/a
Reunification in Less than 12 Months	61.4% ^e	57.7%	61.4% ^e	6.5% ^e
Adopted in Less than 24 Months	38.8% ^e	26.0%	38.8% ^e	49.5% ^e
Re-entry to Foster Care in Less than 12 Months	3.8% ^e	1.2%	3.8% ^e	215.1% ^e
Child Abuse Homicides	31	1.1 per 100,000	1.5 per 100,000	n/a

a Data are unduplicated counts from fiscal year 2000-2001 and 2004-2005. Number of children is captured by a point-in-time estimate for the last day of SFY (June 30) according to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Child Placement and Payment System.

b Maltreatment reports dealing with abuse and severe neglect receive investigative assessments.

c Maltreatment reports dealing with neglect receive family assessments.

d Fiscal year 2004-2005 data represent a transition year in how the Division of Social Services handles cases. During that time 52 counties were operating under the new Multiple Response System (MRS). Part of MRS requires handling and reporting abuse and severe neglect cases and neglect cases separately as shown here. Due to the fact that the counties were split between two methods of handling child maltreatment, the data for these two indicators are not comparable to data from other years.

e Data are from September of 2004 to September of 2005.

f The Child Protective Services definition of "children in department of social services custody" is broader than the federal definition for "children in foster care." For more information, see the data and technical notes.

Note: For definitions of the terms used in this table and for additional information on selected calculations, see the data notes at the end of this publication. Percent changes have not been tested for statistical significance.

Data Sources: All data except child abuse homicides: N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, special data requests October 2005 and January 2006. Some data available online at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/stats/cw.htm>. Child Abuse Homicides: Information was obtained from the North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention Team (Office of the Chief Medical Examiner), special data request February 2006.



Juvenile Justice

How the System Works

Youth^{vii} enter the juvenile justice system after a complaint, an allegation of a criminal offense, has been made against them.^{viii} While complaints against youth include many of the same types of offenses that can be brought against adults, there are some complaints, called status offenses, that are crimes only because of the age of the juvenile, such as skipping school or running away. In 2004, 46,097 complaints were recorded against 23,368 youth.

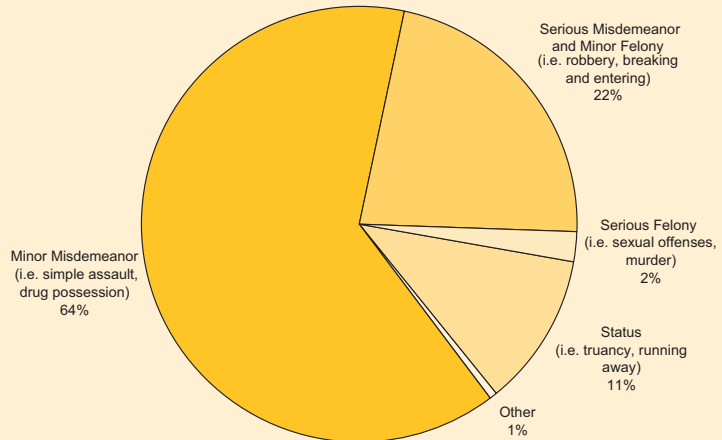
Complaints are reviewed by juvenile court counselors who, based on the offense, can approve the complaint for a court hearing or not approve the complaint. Complaints that are not approved for court (12,668 in 2004) are diverted. Youth whose complaints are diverted are often referred to community programs or other services such as counseling or home-based family services. Youth with a complaint approved for court (12,119 in 2004) are supervised by a juvenile court counselor. Youth who go to court and are found guilty of an offense (8,418 in 2004) can receive a variety of sentences such as: community service, substance abuse treatment, counseling, electronic monitoring or commitment to a Youth Development Center.



^{vii} In North Carolina, youth ages 6-15 who commit an offense are dealt with by the Juvenile Justice system. Older youth (ages 16 and 17) enter the adult justice system for all offenses except for status offenses which are handled by the juvenile justice system.

^{viii} Youth enter the juvenile justice system for a variety of reasons. Status/undisciplined offenses are those which are offenses only because of the individual's age, such as truancy (skipping school) and running away. Infractions include traffic and local ordinance complaints. Minor class misdemeanors include a variety of offenses such as simple assault, drug possession, disorderly conduct and carrying a weapon. Serious class misdemeanors and minor felonies cover violations such as breaking and entering, robbery and forgery. Violent class felonies include sexual offenses, murder and drug trafficking.

Juvenile Crime by Type of Offense, 2004



Source: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2004 Annual Report. Raleigh, 2005.

Juvenile Justice *(continued)*

Youth in the Juvenile Justice System Have Many Needs

Youth who enter the juvenile justice system often have encountered other difficulties in their lives. Data collected by the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP)^{ix} at sentencing show that 59 percent of youth have had serious problems at school, 40 percent are in need of substance abuse treatment, 37 percent have a prior conviction and 22 percent have a history of running away from home. Additionally, the juvenile justice system reports that 7-in-10 youth have mental health needs, 4-in-10 have a parent or sibling with a criminal history and 3-in-10 live in a home with a history of domestic violence.

^{ix} N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2004 Annual Report. Raleigh, 2005.

Youth in the N.C. Juvenile Justice System

- Mental health needs (75%)
- Serious school problems (59%)
- Prior encounters with DJJDP (55%)
- Associate with gangs and/or delinquent youth (40%)
- Substance abuse problems (40%)
- Family member with criminal history or currently incarcerated (40%)
- Family with a history of domestic discord or violence (31%)
- History of running away (22%)

Source: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2004 Annual Report. Raleigh, 2005

Juvenile Justice^a

	2004
Total Complaints^b	46,097
Males	33,688
Females	12,408
Juveniles with Received Complaints	23,368
Juveniles with Complaints Not Approved for Court	12,668
Juveniles with Complaints Approved for Court	12,119
Juveniles Sentenced	8,418
Juveniles with Complaints Approved for Violent Crimes	609
Juveniles Sentenced for Violent Crimes^c	211
Juveniles Placed in Youth Development Centers	473

^a The North Carolina juvenile justice system deals with youth ages 6-17 charged with status/undisciplined offenses and youth ages 6-15 charged with misdemeanors and felonies. Youth 16 and older charged with felonies or misdemeanors are handled by the adult court system.

^b Juveniles may be duplicated when complaints are received for multiple counties and/or offense. The sum of males and females is one less than the total because gender was missing for one complaint.

^c In many cases charges are reduced.

Note: The numbers in these tables reflect data edits made after the publication of DJJDP's 2004 Annual Report.

Data Source: N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Special data request, January 2006.

Treating Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

In the past five years, the juvenile justice system has done a good job increasing the alternatives to incarceration. Based on their experience working with youth, as well as emerging best practices, DJJDP has begun shifting away from a punitive, correctional model to a more holistic approach of treating youth to prevent further run-ins with the law. This change has included expanding the number of programs aimed at preventing juvenile crime, the types of services offered to offenders and efforts to ensure that youth in development centers are kept close to their families and homes. To provide more individualized care as well as safer, more secure facilities, DJJDP recently began operating a smaller facility pilot and is planning additional smaller Youth Development Centers. Since these types of changes are critical

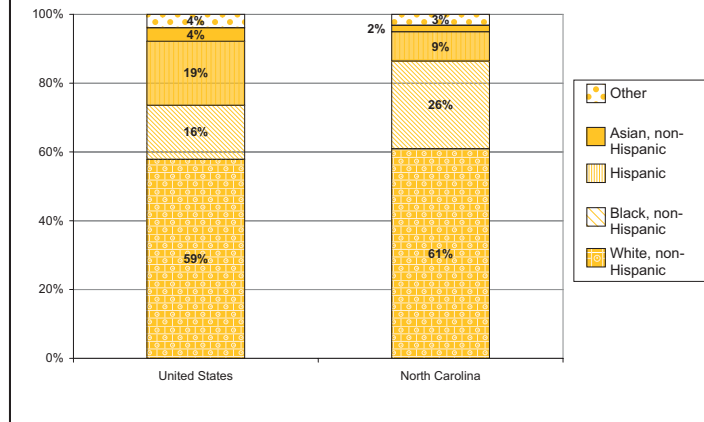
to ensuring that juvenile offenders become productive adults, DJJDP must be funded at adequate levels to ensure that they are able to provide holistic, therapeutic treatment and education to the youth they serve.

Demographics²¹

North Carolina's child population is increasingly diverse, mirroring the national trend. In 2004, almost 40 percent of North Carolina's children were non-white. This diversity varies greatly from county to county, from as few as 4 percent non-white (Clay) to as high as 77 percent (Robeson).



North Carolina: More Black, Less Hispanic than National Average



Data Sources: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2005. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office and original data analysis using data from the Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina state file, "County Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004." Available online at <http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/asrh/>

Population

	Estimates			Change 2000 to 2004
	1990	2000	2004	
Total Population	6,632,448	8,078,274	8,541,263	5.7%
Child Population 0-17	1,615,683	1,972,503	2,069,515	4.9%
Ages 0-4	469,147	543,335	577,896	6.4%
Ages 5-9	437,898	561,638	566,190	0.8%
Ages 10-14	436,557	554,989	587,892	5.9%
Ages 15-17	272,081	312,541	337,537	8.0%

Note: Percent changes have not been tested for statistical significance.

Data Source: N.C. State Demographics. Certified County/State Population Estimates, "County Total Age Groups-Children." Available online at <http://demog.state.nc.us/>.

Child Race and Ethnicity

	Current	Trend		Change 2000 to 2004
	2004	2000	2004	
White, non-Hispanic	1,288,320	62.6%	60.9%	-2.8%
Black, non-Hispanic	539,568	26.2%	25.5%	-2.8%
Hispanic	180,386	6.4%	8.5%	34.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	39,510	1.7%	1.9%	10.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native, non-Hispanic	29,714	1.5%	1.4%	-3.6%
Two or More Races, non-Hispanic	37,952	1.6%	1.8%	11.5%

Notes: Race and ethnicity data use July Census data. Other data in this report are based on July estimates from the N.C. State Demographics Office. Census data are used because they provide a greater level of detail on race, ethnicity and age breakdowns. Percent changes have not been tested for statistical significance.

Data Source: Original data analysis using data from the Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina state file, "County Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004." Available online at <http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/asrh/>.