

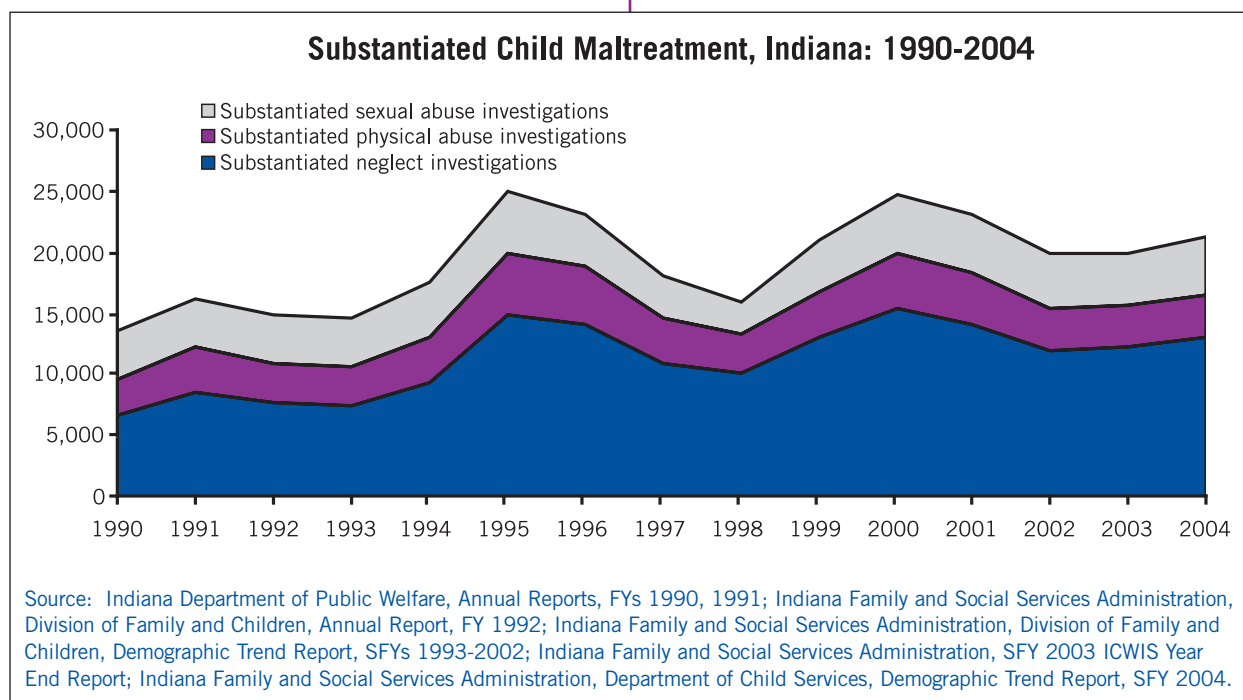
## Child Maltreatment in Indiana: A Status Report

### *In Brief...*

Several significant developments aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect occurred in 2005. Agencies have formed, funds have increased, and the number of caseworkers is climbing. With so much activity surrounding the issue, policymakers and the public may begin to feel that the challenge of protecting Hoosier children has been solved. However, state officials and child advocates emphasize that real progress will not be made until prevention of child maltreatment—within families, across communities and throughout the state—is at the heart of child protection.

### *The Numbers are In...*

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2004, the state verified 8,122 abuse cases and 13,128 neglect cases. The child abuse and neglect rate has steadily increased over the last three years, with 13.5 children per 1,000 being a substantiated victim of maltreatment in 2004, compared to 12.7 per 1,000 in 2002. More than one a week, 57 Hoosier children in total, died as a result of abuse or neglect in SFY 2004.<sup>1</sup> However, in a recent media article, DCS acknowledged that the number of deaths calculated by the state was under represented, due to inconsistencies in reporting of abuse and neglect incidents.<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Kids Count Database, Indiana Youth Institute. Retrieved on October 15, 2005 from [www.iyikcdb.org](http://www.iyikcdb.org).

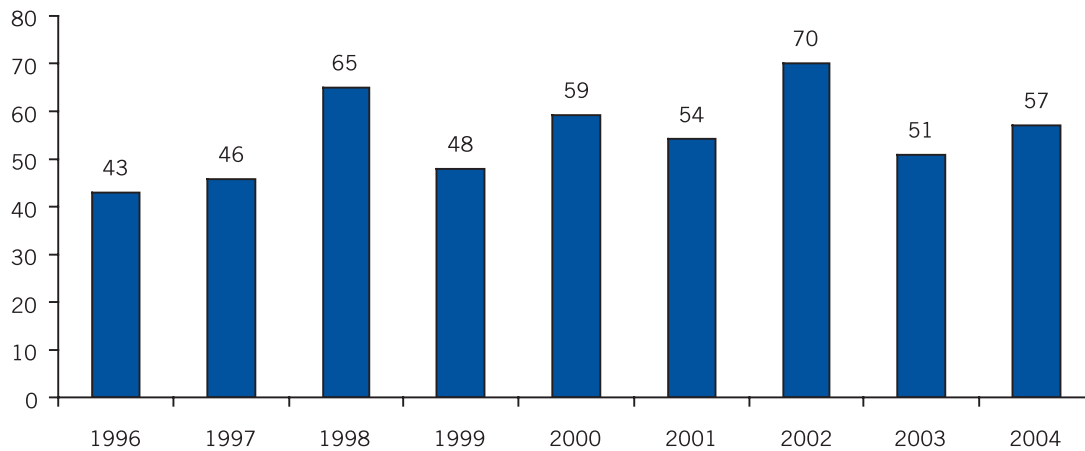
<sup>2</sup> Evans, T. "Deadliest Year." *The Indianapolis Star*, October 30, 2005.

Over \$81 million was budgeted by the state for child protection in 2005, with additional outlays by the federal and local governments. The state child protection budget will increase 31% by 2007, to \$106 million<sup>3</sup>.

exceed 50 cases per month. The Commission recommended hiring an additional 720 Family Case Managers and 103 supervisors.

- Hiring requirements for Family Case Managers must change to include a degree requirement with

**Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities, Indiana: SFYs 1996-2004**



Source: Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family and Children, Demographic Trend Reports, SFYs 1996-2003; Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Department of Child Services, Demographic Trend Report, SFY 2004.

a preference for a degree in the field of human services or social work that includes a supervised practicum experience. Supervisors should hold a minimum of an MSW or bachelor's degree with five years of child welfare experience. Research has found that workers with higher educational levels are better prepared for work in the child welfare system, are more effective in developing permanency plans for children in foster care, and are more likely to report higher levels of

## Motivating Change...

In 2003, the Indiana General Assembly established the Indiana Commission on Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families. The panel considered best practices regarding public and private family service delivery systems, funding, provision of child and family services, qualifications and training of service providers, and program, policy, and legislative changes necessary to improve services to children and families. In August 2004, the Commission released its final report with 32 recommendations for improving the child welfare system in Indiana. Some of the Commission's recommendations:

- Indiana should meet the caseload best practice standard of no more than 12 investigations and 17 children per child protection caseworker per month. High caseloads have been linked to high caseworker turnover; it is reasonable to conclude that high caseloads make it more difficult to provide services to families and keep children safe. Yet, in some parts of Indiana, caseloads

skill and confidence in their work.<sup>4</sup>

- A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) should be appointed for every child in Indiana who is found to be a Child in Need of Services (CHINS). Research has identified positive outcomes in cases where CASA/GALs are involved, such as reduced court time and faster permanency decisions. Because CASA/GALs represent one or two children, they have the time to investigate the best interests of the child. Currently, 24 counties in Indiana do not have a CASA/GAL program.

Additional recommendations:

- Ongoing professional development for child protection staff members.
- Improved communication among judges, prosecutors, doctors and other child-advocate professionals.
- Stricter accountability at every level of the system.

<sup>3</sup> Family Social Services Administration. "FSSA Budget 2005-2007." Retrieved on October 24, 2005 from [www.in.gov/fssa/issues/budget2006-07.html](http://www.in.gov/fssa/issues/budget2006-07.html).

<sup>4</sup> Indiana Commission on Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families. "Putting Children First: Recommendations from the Indiana Commission on Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families." August 15, 2004.

- In-depth research into child abuse indicators, causes, prevention and intervention.
- Expansion of programs that give victims representation in court.
- Formation of PECCAN—a Permanent Executive Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect—to partner with the child protection system in their strategic planning process, support the system in bringing best practices in child protection to Indiana, and monitor the implementation of recommendations from the Commission report.

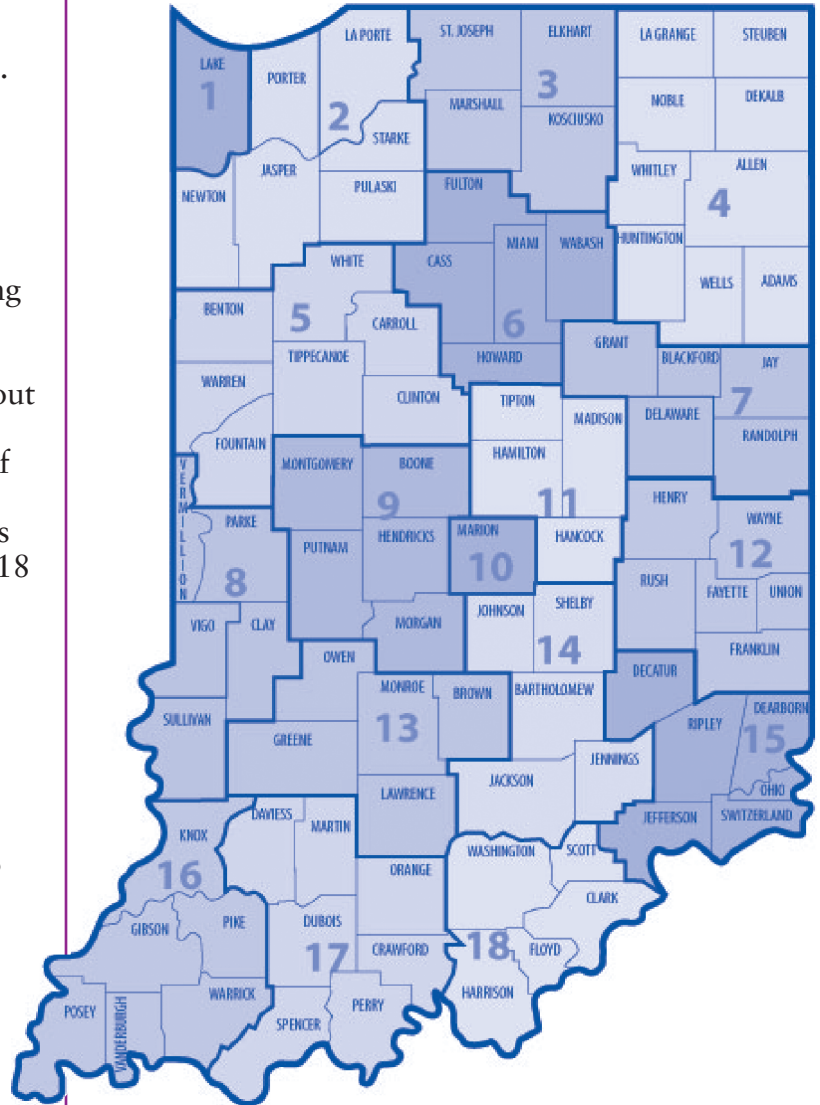
## The State Responds...

Immediately following the release of the Commission report, the state announced the hiring of 60 new caseworkers, two trainers, and seven caseworker mentors.<sup>5</sup> In January 2005, an executive order moved Child Protective Services out of the Family and Social Services Administration and created a new department, the Department of Child Services (DCS). Indiana’s legislature made DCS a permanent addition to state government as of July 1, 2005. DCS has divided the state into 18 regions. According to DCS, the goal of regionalization is to ensure consistency among individual counties in providing services, sharing information and compensating service providers.<sup>6</sup>

The same bill that created DCS (SEA 529) also established maximum caseloads in line with national best practice standards and required the appointment of a CASA or GAL for each CHINS case. Requiring CASA/GAL representation made Indiana eligible for the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) program for the first time, and Indiana is expected to receive more than \$575,000 in CAPTA funds in 2006.<sup>7</sup>

The legislature has also approved the hiring of 400 new caseworkers, half by June 30, 2006, and half the following fiscal year. Educational requirements for these caseworkers have been raised; qualifications now include a bachelor’s degree in a related field and experience or training in providing services to children and families.<sup>8</sup>

## New DCS Regions



<sup>5</sup> Indiana Department of Child Services. “Changes to Indiana’s Child Protection System.” Retrieved on October 15, 2005 from [www.in.gov/dcs/protection/protectchild.html](http://www.in.gov/dcs/protection/protectchild.html).

<sup>6</sup> Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. “A Strategic Plan for the Welfare of Marion County’s Children and Families.” June 2005.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “ACF Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Funds to Be Available for Indiana.” October 5, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Indiana State Personnel Department. Retrieved on October 21, 2005 from [www.in.gov/jobs/stateemployment/fe/apply.html](http://www.in.gov/jobs/stateemployment/fe/apply.html).

## Another Key Issue...

One particular area of concern is the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system. Consistent with national trends, African-American children in Indiana are overrepresented at every point in the child welfare system, from investigations and out-of-home care to termination of parental rights. Although African-American children make up 10.3% of Indiana's child population, they make up 16.6% of child abuse and neglect cases. According to the *Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care*, these disparities exist despite evidence that there are no differences in the incidence of child maltreatment according to racial group.<sup>9</sup>

In an attempt to respond to racial overrepresentation, DCS mandates 36 hours of cultural sensitivity training for all case managers and supervisors and is developing culturally sensitive screening tools, refining assessment practices, and revising training.<sup>10</sup>

## Still Pending...

Despite significant legislative activity on child welfare issues in 2005, state officials and child advocates expect additional measures will be considered by the Indiana General Assembly. The list includes:

- At present, the state mandates child welfare services. However, counties are responsible for covering the costs of these services. In 2004, counties paid out about \$264 million from their property tax funds. Some counties are in favor of transferring the financial responsibility to the state.<sup>11</sup>
- Addressing methamphetamine and other substance abuse prevention. Drug dependency is one of the most common factors contributing to neglect cases in Indiana.<sup>12</sup>
- The cost of expanding prevention programs could come from funds shifted from dealing with the aftermath of abuse and neglect.

## In Your Community...

Funding for additional caseworkers helps after the fact—after the child suffers from abuse or neglect. Families and communities still have a unique and important role of preventing child maltreatment in the first place.

**The Marion County Commission on Youth** (MCCOY, Inc.) recently released a plan to improve the lives of vulnerable children by increasing emphasis on prevention while simultaneously strengthening families. “A Strategic Plan for the Welfare of Marion County’s Children and Families,” while tailored to Marion County, provides action steps that can be replicated by community-based organizations and county child service departments around the state. The action steps include:

- Strengthen and expand the public education effort around the prevention message.
- Increase availability and accessibility of parent supports, adolescent life skills trainings, substance abuse treatment and quality childcare, which address the most common stress factors reported in association with child abuse and neglect.
- Utilize a family-centered practice and engage non-resident fathers.
- Develop an alternative response system for first contact with the child protection system that allows for service instead of criminal investigation.
- Create a community child welfare report card that presents a clear picture of the local system and its effectiveness.
- Invest in the child welfare workforce by rewarding education and experience, increasing support staff, using technology, recruiting a diverse workforce, and providing employee assistance programs.
- Supplement financial resources by fully accessing federal re-imburements and by using a 501(c)3 organization for resource development and community education.

<sup>9</sup> The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care (2003). *Fostering the future: Safety, permanency, and well-being for children in foster care*. Retrieved on July 11, 2005 from [pewfostercare.org/docs/index.php?DocID=41](http://pewfostercare.org/docs/index.php?DocID=41).

<sup>10</sup> Indiana Department of Child Services. “Changes to Indiana’s Child Protection System.” Retrieved on October 17, 2005 from [www.in.gov/dcs/protection/protectchild.html](http://www.in.gov/dcs/protection/protectchild.html).

<sup>11</sup> Schneider, M.B. “Daniels Give Counties Reprieve.” *The Indianapolis Star*, October 19, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Family and Social Services Administration. “The Child Abuse and Neglect SFY 2004 Annual Report.” Retrieved on October 17, 2005 from [www.in.gov/dcs/pdf/protection/2005-02-08childfatalityreport.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dcs/pdf/protection/2005-02-08childfatalityreport.pdf).

- Convene a Citizens Advisory Board to monitor child maltreatment risk factors, community support, and the child welfare system.
- Develop and implement a strategic communications plan.
- Provide training on maltreatment prevention and intervention for all who work with children.
- Combat racial overrepresentation by knowing the demographic makeup of the community, developing culturally sensitive interventions, and recruiting a diverse child welfare workforce.<sup>13</sup>

**The Neighborhood Alliance for Child Safety** is a voluntary program that links families with programs, services, people and activities that help strengthen families and lower family stress. Currently, the program has two sites in Marion County. The rate of abuse allegations against families participating in the program dropped from 13% in 2000 to 1% in 2005.

**Healthy Families Indiana** is a voluntary home visitation program designed to promote healthy families and healthy children through a variety of services including child development, access to health care and parent education. The Healthy Families program has worked successfully with Hoosier parents to ensure that their home environment is safe and nurturing. Fifty-six Healthy Families sites serve families in all 92 counties.<sup>14</sup>

**Parents as Teachers (PAT)** is a voluntary early childhood parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. The program uses home visits and parent group meetings to educate and support parents. There are 74 PAT programs throughout Indiana.

## *Good News For Tight Budgets...*

Besides protecting children from the trauma of child abuse and neglect, the potential financial savings of prevention efforts are immense. A 1995 Colorado study estimated the annual cost of the state's child welfare services at \$402 million and prevention services for high risk families at \$24 million annually.<sup>15</sup> In 2004, Michigan released a study estimating a statewide prevention program for all first-time parents would cost less than 3% of the money spent to treat the consequences of abuse and neglect.<sup>16</sup>

## *Additional Resources...*

- Indiana Department of Child Services, [www.in.gov/dcs](http://www.in.gov/dcs)
- Prevent Child Abuse Indiana, [www.pcain.org](http://www.pcain.org)
- Prevent Child Abuse America, [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)
- Child Welfare League of America, [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)
- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, [nccanch.acf.hhs.gov](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov)
- Casey Family Programs, [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)
- Parents As Teachers National Center, [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)
- IYI's Fall 2004 Issue Alert, *Child Maltreatment in Indiana: From Silence to Solutions*, [http://www.iyi.org/pdf/issuealert\\_fall04.pdf](http://www.iyi.org/pdf/issuealert_fall04.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. "A Strategic Plan for the Welfare of Marion County's Children and Families." June 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Healthy Families Indiana. Fact Sheet. Retrieved on November 1, 2005 from [www.in.gov/dcs/protection/hfifactsheet.html](http://www.in.gov/dcs/protection/hfifactsheet.html)

<sup>15</sup> Gould, M.S., & O'Brien, T. "Child Maltreatment in Colorado: The value of prevention and the cost of failure to prevent." Center for Human Investment Policy, University of Colorado at Denver, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Noor, I., Caldwell, R., and Strong, D. The Costs of Child Abuse vs. Child Abuse Prevention: A decade of Michigan's experience. Michigan Children's Trust Fund. June 22, 2004.

## Indiana Youth Institute Resources

**IYI Weekly Update**, a free, electronic newsletter featuring useful information such as training opportunities, free resources, new reports about youth, and a “Grant Tip of the Week.”

**Kids Count in Indiana Data Book and online database**, including state and county statistics on Indiana children and youth to support grant proposals and program initiatives.

**Virginia Beall Ball Library**, a free lending library of youth development and nonprofit management materials, which can be borrowed easily by youth workers throughout the state, either on-site, on-line or through our toll-free main number.

**Youth Service Help Line**, 877-IYI-TIPS, providing free phone assistance to youth organizations seeking quick answers to questions about fundraising, youth development and legal matters.

**Free Custom Research** on Indiana youth.

**IYI's Web Site, [www.iyi.org](http://www.iyi.org)**, an online source for new reports on children, data for grant proposals, information about IYI's programs and library materials, and links to other valuable sources of youth development information.

**Regional Trainings**, taught by nationally regarded instructors, offered at convenient locations across the state, on topics such as fundraising and working with youth.

**Professional Development Grants**, mini-grants for qualified youth workers to attend their choice of seminars, workshops, and conferences.

**Kids Count in Indiana Conference**, an annual fall conference designed to give Indiana youth workers the inspiration, networking opportunities, information and tools they need to serve children effectively.

**IYI Consulting Services**, low-cost professional consultation on program evaluation, technology, fundraising and such nonprofit management issues as strategic planning, board development, marketing and more.

**IYI Evaluation Associates**, for organizations requiring comprehensive, long-term professional evaluation, billed at low contract rates.



603 East Washington Street, Suite 800  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317.396.2700 or 800.343.7060  
[www.iyi.org](http://www.iyi.org)