

Child abuse in U.S. declines for 5th straight year

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But 681,000 kids are still mistreated, report finds.

(HealthDay)—The number of child abuse and neglect cases reported in the United States in 2011 fell for the fifth consecutive year, according to a new federal government report.

About 681,000 cases of child abuse or neglect were documented last year, which continues the steady decrease from 723,000 cases in 2007, said the document from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

However, the number of [child deaths](#) due to maltreatment has fluctuated. Deaths peaked at 1,740 in 2009, but were at a five-year low of 1,570 in 2011.

"We have made excellent progress over the past five years," George Sheldon, acting assistant secretary of the administration, said in an HHS news release. "But what this report tells me is that we still have 681,000 children out there who need our help. We must continue coordination efforts among federal, state and local agencies to focus on [child maltreatment](#) prevention."

The report said about 54 percent of abusers were women, about 48 percent were white, roughly 20 percent were black and around 19 percent were Hispanic. In about 81 percent of cases, the abusers were the victim's parent.

Of the children who suffered abuse or neglect last year, about 11 percent were physically or mentally disabled.

Some of the victims were exposed to [domestic violence](#) (about 25 percent), drug abuse (almost 19 percent) or [alcohol abuse](#) (almost 10 percent), according to the report.

Bryan Samuels, commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, said the report shows that the families who experience child abuse and neglect face multiple challenges. "So we are targeting some investments to approaches that understand and respond to that complexity," Samuels said in the news release.

This year, the Administration for [Children](#) and Families awarded grants to several projects meant to prevent or treat [child abuse](#) and neglect in these families.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [child abuse](#).

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