

Fact Sheet 1—The Extent of People’s Involvement With Alcohol and Drug Services, Child Welfare Services, and the Dependency Court Across Systems

Relatively few empirically sound studies or nationally representative data exist on the number of children in either child welfare services (CWS) or dependency courts who are impacted by their parents’ substance abuse or dependence. The two systems that could systematically monitor this population, CWS and substance abuse treatment, are not required in the Federal data systems to capture the data elements that would identify families receiving services in both systems. Several States have added those data elements to their automated data systems; however, they are not accumulated at the Federal level.

Therefore, estimating the number of families affected by substance use disorders and child abuse and/or neglect is extrapolated based on analyzing data collected in specific studies and applying those findings to national statistics of alcohol and drug services and child abuse and neglect. States and communities assessing their own systems’ responses may want to take a similar approach using prevalence data and their own State or community’s statistics on overall numbers of cases. Therefore, this fact sheet presents the national systems data, the data on the prevalence of the population that crosses over between systems, and explains the sources of the estimates.

Alcohol and Drug Treatment - 2004

- 1.88 million adults were admitted to the public treatment system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], Office of Applied Studies [OAS], 2006).
- 590,261 (31.5% of 1.84 million) were women (DHHS, OAS, 2006).
- 1.09 million parents (59% of 1.88 million) are estimated to be those of minor children (Hser et al., 2003; Ahmed, 2006).
- 295,000 parents (27.1% of 1.09 million) are estimated to have had one or more children removed by CWS (Hser et al., 2003).
- 108,000 parents (36.6% of 295,000) are estimated to have had their parental rights terminated for at least one child (Hser et al., 2003).

Because there are no national data on the number of children of persons in substance abuse treatment, the percentage of parents of minor children is taken from two sources: the California Treatment Outcome Project (CalTOP) study and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment’s (CSAT’s) Treatment Outcomes and Performance Pilot Studies (TOPPS-II). The CalTOP study, California’s implementation of CSAT’s TOPPS-II, found that 60% of persons in treatment were parents (Hser et al., 2003). The cross-State analysis of the TOPPS-II study included primary data from 16 States and also found that 58.5% of persons admitted to treatment had a child younger than age 18 (Ahmed, 2006). Applying those prevalence data to the annual number of adults admitted to treatment results in the estimate that 1.09 million parents of minor children were admitted to substance abuse treatment in 2004.

The Hser et al. (2003) study also found that 27.1% of parents had one or more children removed from their custody and that 36.6% of those parents with a child who was removed had their parental rights terminated.

Applying the percentage of parents with a child removed (27.1%) to the 1.09 million parents in treatment results in 295,000 parents in substance abuse treatment with a child who has been placed in protective custody. Of those parents, approximately 108,000 (36.6%) had their parental rights terminated.

However, the percentage of parents varied significantly by the type of treatment they received. Among parents with a child removed by child protective services (CPS), 29% in outpatient programs, 53% in residential programs, and 80% in narcotic treatment (primarily methadone maintenance) had their parental rights terminated. Similar analyses of the TOPPS-II data set by Ahmed (2006) found that 22% of parents in the 16-State data set had a child removed by CPS and that only 10% of those had their parental rights terminated. However, 36.6% of parents had parental rights terminated or a child removed. In the cross-State data set, termination of parental rights also varied by type of treatment program. Of parents with a child removed by CPS, 66% of those in outpatient programs, 29% in residential care, 3% in narcotic treatment, and 1% in other programs had their parental rights terminated (Ahmed, 2006).

Child Welfare Services - 2004

- 5.5 million children were reported for abuse or neglect (DHHS, Administration on Children, Youth and Families [ACYF], 2006a).
- 3.5 million children received an investigation (62.7% of referrals made to CPS) (DHHS, ACYF, 2006b).
- 1.24 million children received postinvestigation services (DHHS, ACYF, 2006c).
- 872,000 children (47.8% of those receiving an investigation or assessment) were victims of neglect (64.5%); physical abuse (17.5%); sexual abuse (9.7%); emotional or psychological abuse (7%); medical neglect (2.1%); and other (14.5%) (DHHS, ACYF, 2006d).
- 268,000 children entered out-of-home care (DHHS, ACYF, 2006c).
- One-third to two-thirds of families in child welfare services are affected by substance use disorders (DHHS, 1999).
- In a study of children served in their home, an estimated 11% of children had a caretaker who met diagnostic criteria of substance dependence (Gibbons, Barth, & Martin, in press).
- Studies using a case review method have found that a range of 43% (Murphy et al., 1991) to 79% (Besinger, Garland, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 1999) of children had a parent with a substance use disorder).

The data on the number of children who received postinvestigation are derived from the Children's Bureau's report that states that 62.7% of children reported (5.5 million) received an investigation (DHHS, ACYF, 2006). The percentages of children by type of victim do not add up to 100% because children can be found to be victims of multiple types of abuse and/or neglect.

In one nationally representative study conducted with families, the children remained in the home and caregivers were assessed for substance use disorder with a diagnostic tool using criteria to determine substance dependence (Gibbons, Barth, & Martin, in press). They found a rate similar to the approximately 11% rate of parental substance use disorders in the general population (DHHS, 1999).

Studies conducted using case review procedures specifically looking for notations of substance use problems among parents of children placed in protective custody have found rates from 43% (Murphy et al., 1991) to 79% (Besinger et al., 1999).

Based on these percentages, it is estimated that 66,440 children (872,000 child victims less 268,000 children who were placed in custody x 11%) were victims of child abuse and/or neglect and received in-home services and had parents who would have met criteria for substance dependence.

It is estimated that 115,240 to 211,720 child victims in out-of-home care (268,000 child victims served out of home x 43% and x 79%) had parents with a substance use disorder.

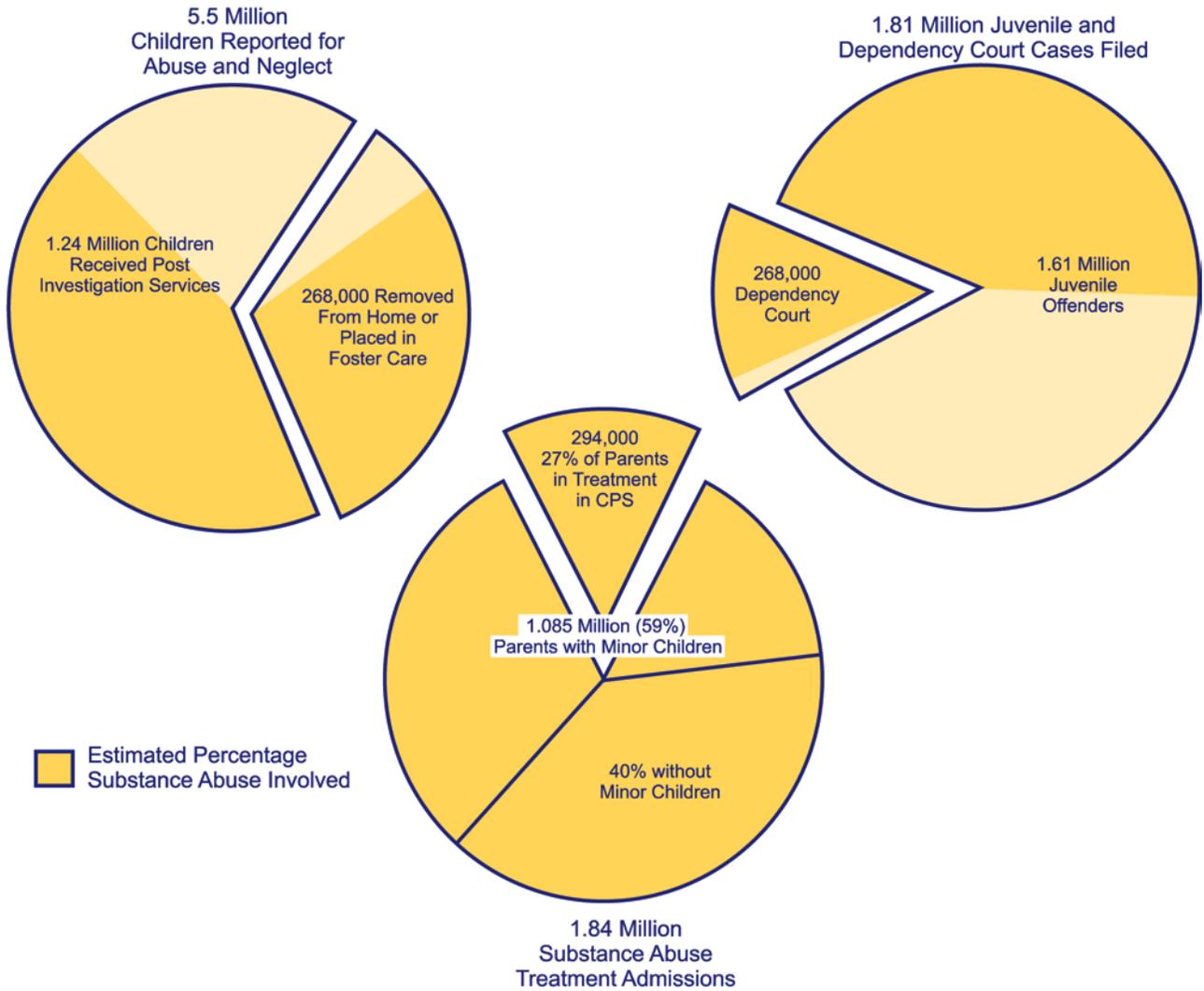
Dependency Court - 2002

- 1.81 million juvenile court cases were filed (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006a).
- 1.62 million delinquency cases were filed in juvenile court (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006b).
- 193,200 cases (about 12% of 1.62 million) were for drug-related offenses (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).
- The total number of dependency cases filed is not known; however, 268,000 children were court involved because of placement in foster care (DHHS, ACYF, 2006e).
- The number of children who were court involved but not removed from parents' custody (often referred to as "in home" cases), and for whom a petition alleging parental abuse or neglect was filed in court, is not known.

The national number of child abuse and/or neglect court cases in a given year is not known. Cases filed in the juvenile court are recorded for juvenile offenses; the number of total cases filed was derived from the total juvenile offender cases added to the number of children placed in out-of-home care who would have had a court case filed as a dependent of the court. The national number of court cases filed in which the child is not removed from the home (i.e., court-order in-home cases) is not known. Each case represents a new referral to juvenile court for one or more offenses. A youth may be involved in more than one case in a year. However, it is not known how many children are represented in these court cases because the Juvenile Court Statistics series does not provide a count of individual juveniles brought before juvenile courts.

The figure below, **Children and Parents in Three Systems**, illustrates how each system interacts with the other for part of the population it serves. While the overlap across the three systems is extensive, none of the systems have a specific mandate to differentially address the portion of parents and families with substance use disorders.

Children and Parents in Three Systems



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