



COLORADO Child
Fatality
Prevention
System

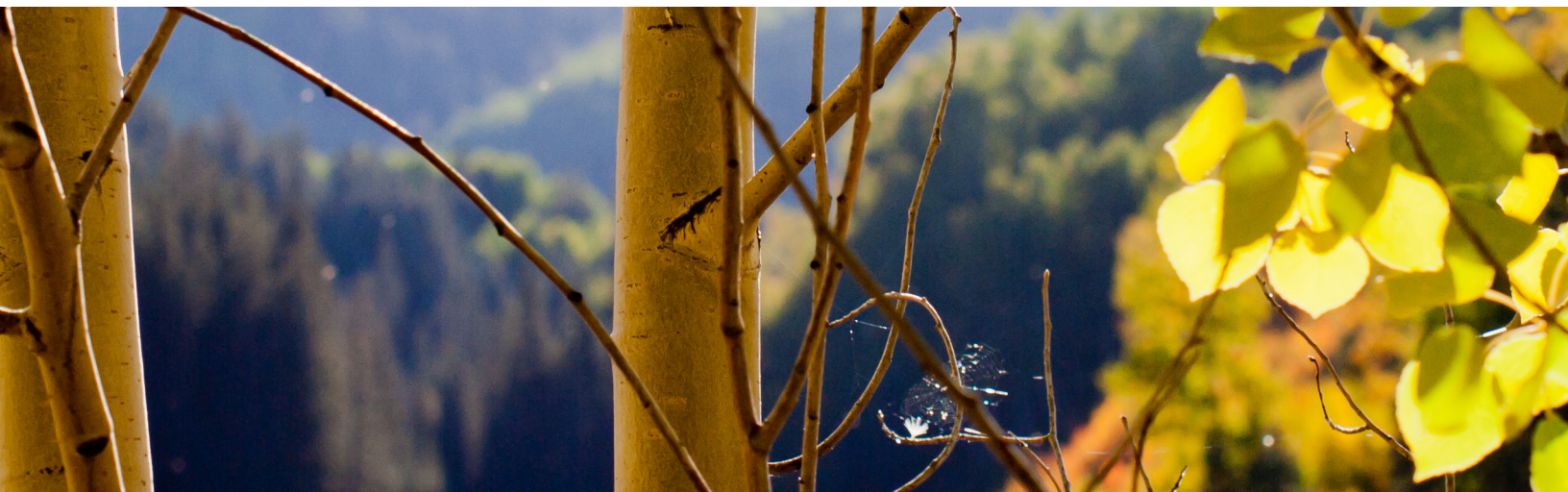
Child Maltreatment Deaths in Colorado, 2011-2015

Introduction

The Child Fatality Prevention Act (Article 20.5 of Title 25, Colorado Revised Statutes) established the Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS), a statewide, multidisciplinary, multi-agency effort to prevent child deaths. Although not codified in Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) until 2005, CFPS has been conducting retrospective reviews of child deaths in Colorado since 1989. CFPS applies a public health approach to prevent child deaths by aggregating data from individual child deaths, describing trends and patterns of the deaths and recommending prevention strategies. The identified strategies are implemented and evaluated at the state and local levels with the goal of preventing similar deaths in the future.

The data presented within this data summary come from comprehensive, statutorily-mandated reviews of deaths among those under 18 years of age occurring in Colorado between 2011 and 2015. Local child fatality prevention review teams are responsible for conducting individual, case-specific reviews of fatalities of children meeting the statutory criteria. Reviewable child deaths result from one or more of the following causes: undetermined causes, unintentional injury, violence, motor vehicle/other transport-related, child maltreatment, sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and suicide. During Fiscal Year 2017, local teams completed reviews of deaths that occurred in 2015.

The CFPS review process includes deaths of Colorado residents occurring in Colorado, as well as deaths of out-of-state visitors who died in Colorado, and non-residents who were transported to a Colorado hospital and died. These criteria are different than those used in other reports of child fatality data and in many other Colorado government data sources. As a result, the data presented in this data summary may not match other statistics reported at both the state and national levels. This data brief provides an overview of child maltreatment deaths occurring in Colorado among those under 18 years of age between 2011 and 2015. For more information on CFPS data, access additional cause-specific data briefs here: <http://www.cochildfatalityprevention.com/p/reports.html>.



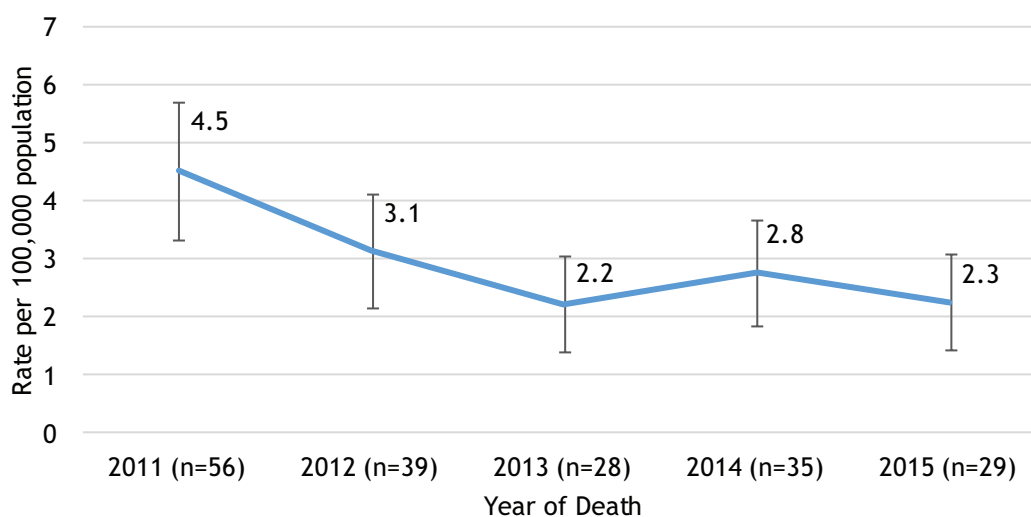
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Overview of Child Maltreatment Deaths

Although Colorado’s Children’s Code (C.R.S. 19-1-103 (1)) and legal definitions of child abuse and child neglect serve as guidance for CFPS, the final decision on whether to record an act child maltreatment (abuse or neglect) is based on available information and professional judgments made by multidisciplinary CFPS review teams. These teams include representatives from departments of human services. The decision by a CFPS team to rule an act as child abuse or child neglect does not have legal ramifications. The determination is the subjective opinion of CFPS review teams and does not trigger any prosecution or action on the part of departments of human services. As such, fatalities classified as child maltreatment by CFPS review teams will not be reflective of official counts of child abuse or child neglect fatalities reported by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). Additionally, some of these fatalities do not meet the criteria for review by the CDHS Child Fatality Review Team. This is because deaths of children with no previous involvement with county departments of human services prior to the fatality or deaths of children where child maltreatment was not the direct cause of death do not meet the CDHS Child Fatality Review Team review criteria.

Between 2011 and 2015, there were 198 fatalities where child maltreatment caused and/or contributed to the death among those from birth through 17 years of age in Colorado. Figure 1 displays the rates of child maltreatment fatalities per 100,000 population among Colorado residents by year of death, using the guidance employed by CFPS teams above. The 5-year incidence of child maltreatment fatalities was 2.98 deaths per 100,000 population, and the rate of 4.53 per 100,000 population in 2011 was significantly different from the rate of 2.26 per 100,000 population observed in 2015. It is worth noting, however, that child maltreatment and its identification according to the previously provided definition allows teams great latitude when determining whether child maltreatment contributed to the events leading to death.

Figure 1. Crude rate of child maltreatment fatalities occurring in Colorado among Colorado residents by year of death, 2011-2015 (n=187)

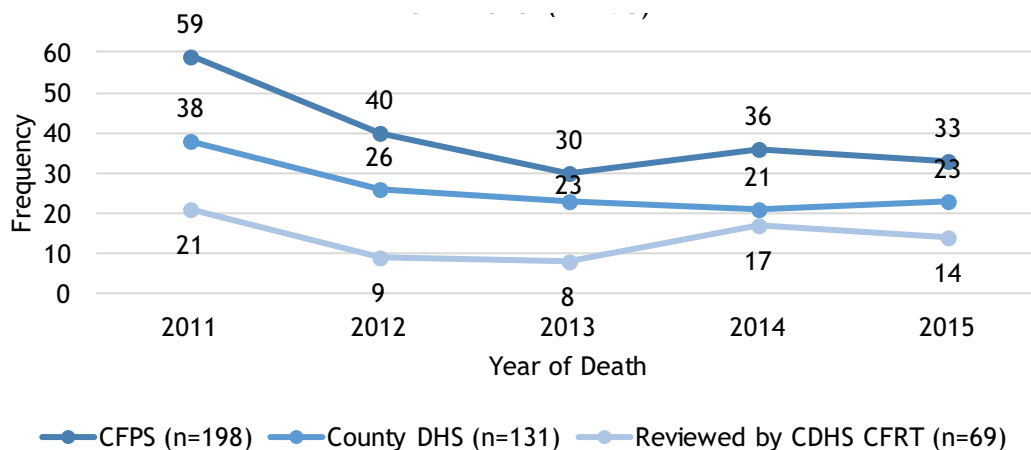


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Indeed, CFPS is aware that prior to 2014 all child maltreatment fatalities substantiated by county departments of human or social services were also identified as child maltreatment by CFPS. Prior to completing the CFPS quality assurance process, three fatalities were identified that were substantiated by county departments of human services, but were not identified as child maltreatment fatalities within CFPS in 2014. This number grew to five that were not identified in 2015 (data not shown). These observations suggest more technical assistance should be provided to local teams about the purpose of CFPS to appropriately classify child maltreatment deaths. Additional training in the future will help to eliminate cases where child maltreatment should be, but is not, identified as contributing to the death of an infant, child, or youth in the system. Per statute, CFPS reconciled these child maltreatment fatalities and the data presented here have been updated to include the child maltreatment rulings made by county departments of human services.

County departments of human services substantiated 131 (66.2 percent) of the 198 fatalities identified as child maltreatment by CFPS between 2011 and 2015. Additionally, 69 (34.8 percent) of these deaths met the statutory criteria for CDHS Child Fatality Review Team review (Figure 2). The remaining 67 (33.8 percent) of the 198 child maltreatment fatalities were identified as child maltreatment fatalities solely by CFPS review teams. These 67 fatalities were either not reported to county departments of human services or the incident did not meet the statutory definition of child maltreatment that guides the work of CDHS.

Figure 2. Fatalities occurring in Colorado ruled child maltreatment by CFPS, substantiated by county departments, or reviewed by CDHS CFRT by year, 2011-2015



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Demographics

Of the 198 child maltreatment fatalities CFPS identified from 2011 through 2015, 77.3 percent (n=153) occurred among those under 5 years of age, and males represented 65.7 percent (n=130) of all fatalities identified. Table 1 displays the rates of child maltreatment fatalities identified by CFPS by age group. The highest rates of child maltreatment fatalities were among those under 1 year of age and from 1 through 4 years of age. The rate for those under 1 year of age was 21.7 per 100,000 population, almost seven times the rate for all ages and more than 20 times the rate for those ages 5 through 9. For children 1 through 4 years of age, the incidence of child maltreatment fatalities was 5.45 per 100,000 population, 1.8 times the rate for all ages and more than five times the rate for those from 5 through 9 years of age. Additionally, the incidence of child maltreatment fatalities among males was 3.8 per 100,000 population, a rate 1.8 times greater than that observed among females (2.1 per 100,000 population).

Table 1. Age-specific rate of child maltreatment fatalities occurring in Colorado among Colorado residents by age group, 2011-2015.¹

Age Group	n	Rate ²	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
All Ages	187	3.0	2.6	3.4
< 1 year	72	21.7	16.7	26.8
1 thru 4	74	5.4	4.2	6.7
5 thru 9 ³	19	1.1	0.6	1.5
10 thru 14 ³	13	0.7	0.3	1.1
15 thru 17 ³	9	0.9	0.4	1.6

¹As defined by the Colorado Child Fatality Prevention System.

²Per 100,000 Colorado residents.

³Rates with fewer than 20 observations may be unstable.

Data source: Colorado Child Fatality Prevention System, Colorado State Demography Office

Child Maltreatment Types and Circumstances

Of the 198 child maltreatment fatalities occurring between 2011 and 2015, neglect caused or contributed to 50.1 percent (n=101) of the deaths, abuse caused or contributed to 34.3 percent (n=68) of the deaths, both abuse and neglect caused or contributed to 12.1 percent (n=24) of the deaths and five cases (2.5 percent) did not have enough details, due to ongoing investigation or litigation, for teams to determine whether abuse, neglect or abuse and neglect caused or contributed to the death (Figure 3).

Among fatalities classified as involving abuse (those classified as abuse or abuse and neglect, n=92), all involved physical abuse, including 53.3 percent (n=49) where abusive head trauma occurred and 45.7 percent (n=42) where other abusive injuries occurred (data not shown). Among fatalities classified as involving neglect (those classified as neglect or abuse and neglect, n=125), 80.8 percent (n=101) involved a failure to protect from hazards.

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Failure to protect from hazards may have been determined in these cases for numerous reasons, but the most frequent hazards indicated by CFPS teams included: motor vehicle (20.8 percent, n=21), unsafe sleep environments (19.8 percent, n=20) and drowning (14.9 percent, n=15). Following failure to protect from hazards, the next most common neglect category was failure to seek medical treatment (17.6 percent, n=22). This most commonly indicated an acute failure to seek treatment following an injury and failure to properly seek and administer treatment for decedents with more long-term health considerations (data not shown).

Figure 3. Child maltreatment fatalities occurring in Colorado by type, 2011-2015 (n=198)

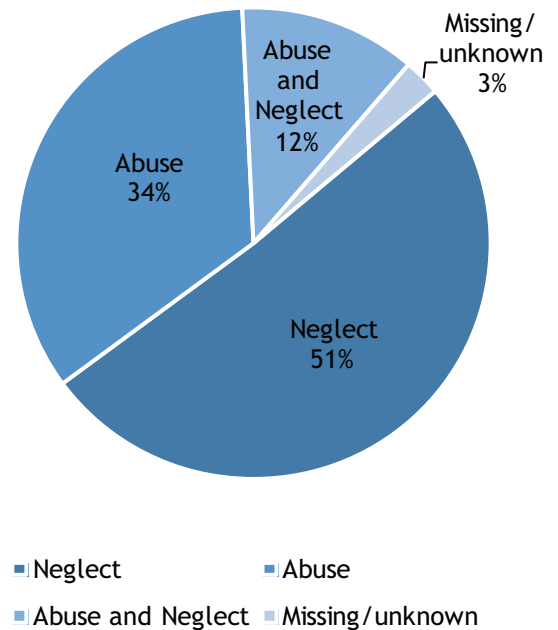
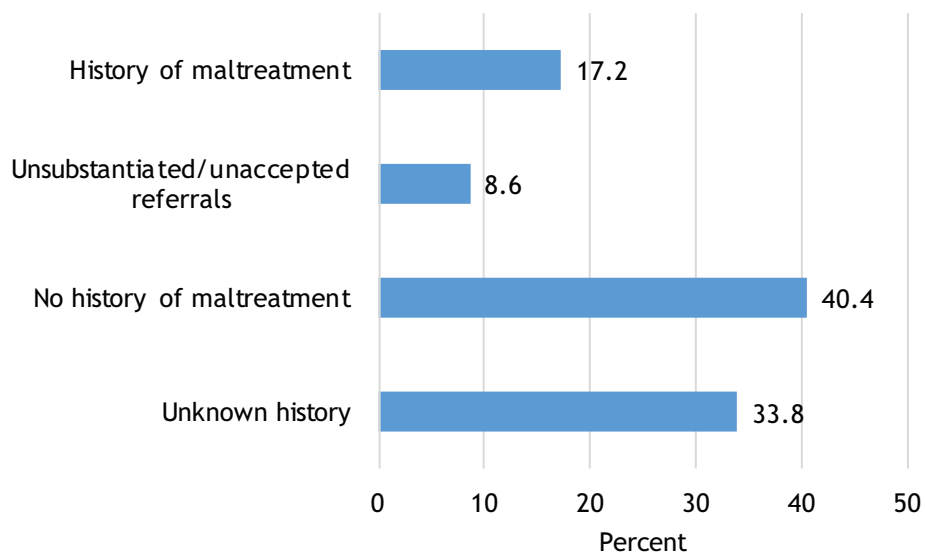


Figure 4 displays the child’s previous history of child maltreatment among decedents of child maltreatment fatalities. Approximately 17 percent (n=34) of the children who died had a substantiated history of child maltreatment, 8.6 percent (n=17) had unsubstantiated or unaccepted referrals and 40.4 percent (n=80) had no known previous history of maltreatment. Information on history of child maltreatment was missing or unknown for 33.8 percent (n=67) of decedents.

Figure 4. History of maltreatment as victim among child maltreatment fatalities occurring in Colorado, 2011-2015 (n=198)



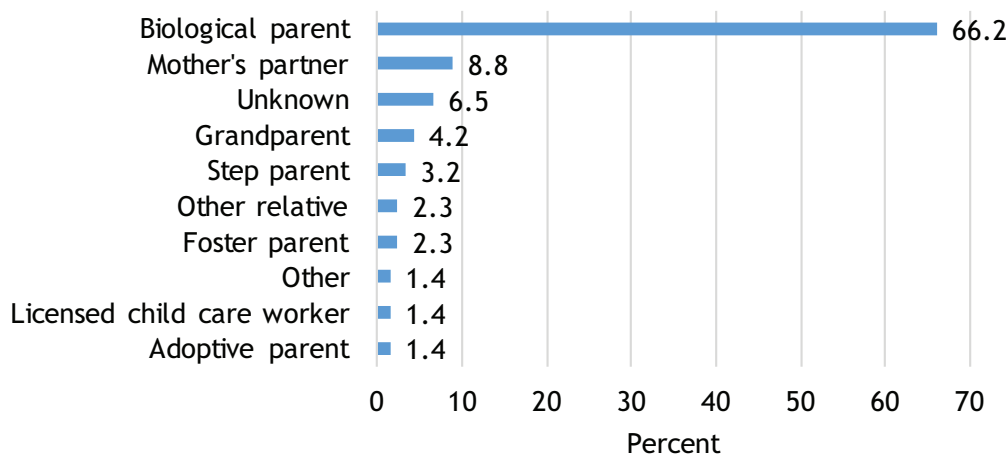
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Perpetrators of Child Maltreatment

The CFPS review process allows for the identification of up to two perpetrators for each child maltreatment fatality (i.e. one perpetrator may have caused the fatality and another perpetrator may have substantially contributed to the fatality). Between 2011 and 2015, 216 total perpetrators caused or contributed to 198 child maltreatment fatalities. As is shown in Figure 5, biological parents were most often indicated to be the perpetrators of child abuse or neglect (66.2 percent, n=143) followed by mother's partner (8.8 percent, n=19). When stratified by maltreatment type (abuse or neglect), the proportion of biological parents identified as perpetrators is higher for fatalities involving neglect (75.2 percent, n=97), while the proportion where the mother's partner is identified is higher for fatalities involving abuse (16.1 percent, n=14).

Among perpetrators of child maltreatment fatalities, 17.1 percent (n=37) had a known, previous history of child maltreatment as a perpetrator, 10.2 percent (n=22) had unsubstantiated or unaccepted referrals and 32.4 percent (n=70) had no previous history of child maltreatment as a perpetrator. This information was missing or unknown for 40.3 percent (n=87) of the perpetrators. Additionally, 27.3 percent (n=59) of the perpetrators had a history of intimate partner violence, 14.8 percent (n=32) as a perpetrator and 12.5 percent (n=27) as a victim. Information on history of intimate partner violence was missing or unknown for 31.4 percent (n=68) of perpetrators.

Figure 5. Perpetrators of child maltreatment fatalities in Colorado by type, 2011-2015 (n=216)



For more information about CFPS data, please contact the CFPS Support Team at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: support@cfps.freshdesk.com