

Child Maltreatment in Mecklenburg County

Executive Summary 2016

One of the most significant issues concerning child welfare is abuse and neglect. During fiscal year 2014-15, 14,047 children, **or 5.8% of all children under age 18**, were reported abused or neglected in Mecklenburg County, up from 13,305 in fiscal year 2013-14. Reporting abuse or neglect is not only essential, it is **mandatory**. North Carolina law mandates that any person or institution who suspects that a child is abused, neglected, or dependent must make a report to the county department of social services. Despite this mandate, child maltreatment is largely underreported. To ensure every child's safety, the community needs to be educated on child abuse, signs exhibited by a child who is abused, and ways to intervene. To better educate the community, the Council compiles information on maltreatment annually. Key findings from the 2016 edition are outlined below.

Key Findings:

- Despite a dip in 2013-14, since 2004-05 the number of children reported maltreated **has increased 39.8%**, or 3,998 children.
- In 2014-15, 50% (7,044) of the children reported maltreated were **reported maltreated for a second, third, or more times**.
- Children **under age 6 accounted for nearly 40%** of initial child abuse and neglect reports in 2014-15. This group consistently accounts for the greatest number of reports.
- Despite making up 32.9% of the child population, **59.9% of child maltreatment reports involved children identified as Black**.
- In 2014-15, there were 1,107 children in DSS custody. The number of children in foster care has declined more than 38% since it peaked 2007-08, but that number has increased in each of the past two years. The **previous decline in the number of children taken into custody reflects a 2008 change in the federal law requiring DSS to invest in families** to address maltreatment prior to removal.
- **Of the 7,617 reports that covered the 14,047 children, 1,143 reports (15.0%) were considered substantiated**. A report is substantiated if a claim of abuse, neglect, or dependence is verified by DSS. In fiscal year 2003-04, North Carolina implemented a multiple response system involving two assessment tracts, investigative and family assessments, which are selected based on the type of allegation being reported. Currently, the number of substantiated reports equals the sum of six categories: abuse, neglect, abuse & neglect, dependency, services needed, and services provided-no longer needed.



Protecting children is the responsibility of every adult.

If there is a concern, it needs to be reported to Youth Family Services at 704.336.CARE (2273).



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Sources: Population data found in this report is from the US Census Bureau Population Estimates Division: U.S. Census Bureau: Population Estimates 2011. (2013) 1 March 2015. <<http://www.census.gov/popest/>>. Child maltreatment and foster care data used in this report is from UNC Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families, part of the UNC School of Social Work. Data is found through the Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food and Nutrition Services in North Carolina and is available for all counties in North Carolina.