

Child Maltreatment in Mecklenburg County

Executive Summary

Child maltreatment is one of the most significant issues impacting child welfare. During fiscal year 2015-16, 14,527 children, or 5.5% of all children under 18 in Mecklenburg County, were reported maltreated. 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 must be educated about 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 2017 report are outlined below.

Key Findings:

- In 2015-16, DSS received **7,723 reports** of abuse and neglect concerning **14,527 children**, up from 7,618 reports concerning **14,048 children** in 2014-15.
- The number of children reported abused or neglected has increased **38.6%**, or **4,046 children**, since 2005-06.
- Of the 7,723 reports, **1,320 (17.1%) were considered substantiated**. A report is substantiated if a claim of abuse, neglect, or dependence is verified by DSS. The number of substantiated reports equals the sum of six categories: abuse, neglect, abuse & neglect, dependency, services needed, and services provided-no longer needed. Reports of maltreatment may only be substantiated when it involves abuse by a caregiver. The statutory definitions of abuse, neglect, and dependency do not extend to non-caregivers.
- The **number of reports** has **increased by 37.7%** since 2005-06, while the number of **substantiations** has **decreased** by 2.1% and the number of **services recommended findings increased by 67.3%**.
- In 2015-16, 50.4% of the Mecklenburg County children involved in DSS investigations were referred more than once. Since 2007-08, when the gap was the widest, **first time reports increased 15.5% or 966 reports** and **re-reports increased 74.9% or 3,134 reports**.
- Nearly 40% of children initially reported abused or neglected were under the age of six. This group consistently accounts for the greatest number of reports.
- Nearly 63% of reports include **more than one child victim**.
- The number of children in foster care decreased more than **39%** since 2005-06. The **decline in the number of children taken into custody reflects a 2008 federal law requiring DSS to invest in families** to address maltreatment prior to removal.
- Maltreatment is most often reported by the court, law enforcement, and educational personnel.

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: 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: <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/> Population data found in this report is from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office: United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2015 American Community Survey. U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2015. Web. 1 October 2016 <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>.