



Editors: links to the annual statistics and a one-page summary are at end

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**For More Information**  
**Roger Munns 515 281 4848**

## Little Change in Abuse, Neglect

**DES MOINES, Iowa** –There was a slight decline in the number of children who were abused or neglected last year, according to the latest statistics from the Iowa Department of Human Services. The rate of abuse has hovered within a narrow range in recent years, with lower rates generally coinciding with positive economic trends.

As usual, neglect accounted for most of the abuses, 79 percent.

Neglect – known as “denial of critical care” in Iowa – is a category in which the caretaker’s action or inaction places the child in harm’s way. Common examples are parents who are incapable of supervising a child because judgment is impaired by drug or alcohol abuse.

A total of 11,637 children were the subject of abuse or neglect last year, a decline of about 1 percent from the year before. Most of the abuses – 8,801 – were “founded” while the rest were the less serious “confirmed” cases in which the abuse was minor and not likely to reoccur.

In other findings:

- Nine percent of abuse was physical and 4 percent was sexual in calendar 2012. Both levels are comparable to past years.
- About half of all abused or neglected children were age five or younger, a longstanding trend.
- About 6 percent of all abuses were “presence of illegal drugs in a child’s body,” a slight increase from a year earlier. Some of these children are newborns, while others are toddlers who are exposed to unlawful drugs in their homes.

There were nearly 29,000 assessments for abuse or neglect last year. DHS social workers conduct assessments when the department’s centralized intake unit receives a credible allegation. As usual last year, about two thirds of these assessments yield a conclusion of “unfounded.”

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Editors: Here is the 2012 [one-page child-welfare-by-the-numbers](#) summary.

Editors: Here is a link to the [latest county-by-county spreadsheet](#) showing number of abuse assessments, type of abuse, and number and age of children subject to abuse or neglect in 2012 and in prior years.