

Child Abuse or Neglect Data Brief

Maryland Child Fatality Review, 2010-2019



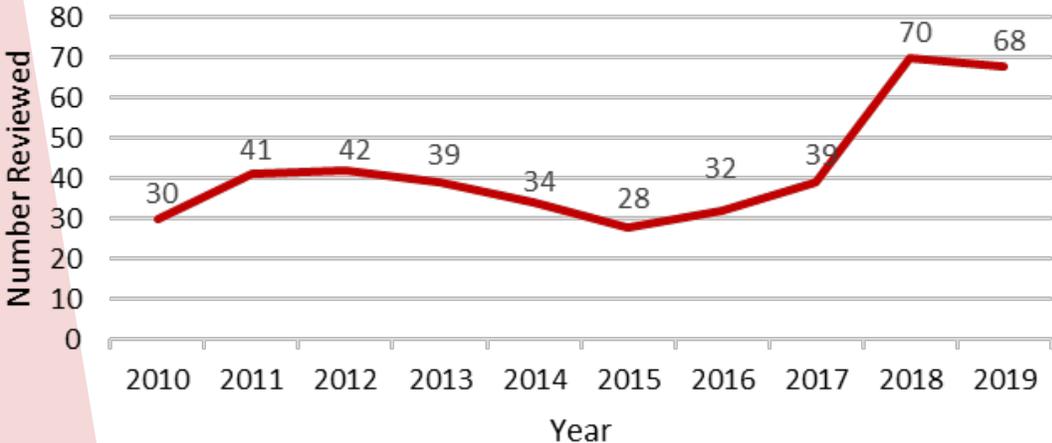
Introduction to Child Fatality Review

Child Fatality Review (CFR) is a systematic, multi-agency, and multi-disciplinary review of unexpected child deaths. The Maryland CFR Program was established by statute in Health General Article, § 5-702 4(b)(12) and Senate Bill 464 (Chapter 355 of the Acts of 1999) and is housed within the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). Local CFR teams operate in each Maryland jurisdiction and receive notice from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) of unexpected resident deaths of children under age 18. This report examines data related to 2010-2019 unexpected child deaths associated with child abuse or neglect available as of January 2022. Child abuse is any injury inflicted on a child by a parent or caregiver. Child neglect is the failure on the part of a parent, caregiver, or supervisor to provide for the shelter, safety, supervision, and nutritional needs of the child. This report also includes cases of poor or absent supervision or exposure to hazards. Only deaths which were referred by OCME and reviewed by local teams were included in this analysis.

Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect

During the ten-year period from 2010 to 2019, approximately 423 child fatalities reviewed were associated with child abuse or neglect; accounting for 18% of all reviewed unexpected child deaths. This also includes cases of poor or absent supervision or exposure to hazards. The number of child deaths reviewed that were associated with child abuse or neglect is increasing, with a high in 2018 at 70 deaths reviewed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Year, Maryland, 2010-2019



Of the 423 deaths reviewed that were associated with child abuse or neglect occurring in the ten-year period from 2010-2019, nearly 64% were among Black non-Hispanic (NH) children (Figure 2) and 57% were among male children (Figure 3). Children age 1-4 years old made up 62% of all reviewed child abuse or neglect deaths, followed by children age 5-9 at 24% (Figure 4).

Figure 2: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Race and Ethnicity, Maryland, 2010-2019

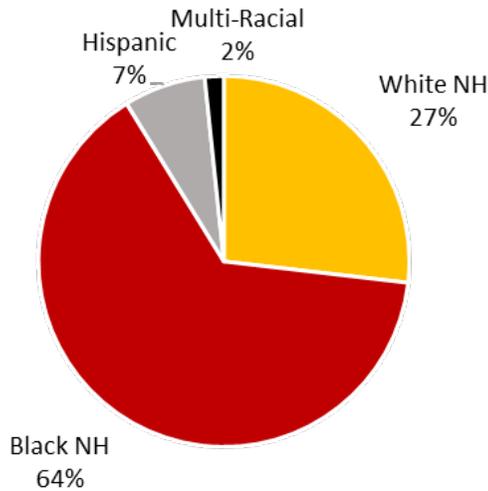


Figure 3: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Sex, Maryland, 2010-2019

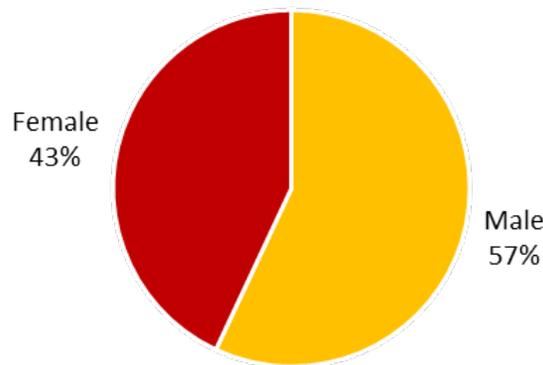


Figure 4: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Age Group, Maryland, 2010-2019

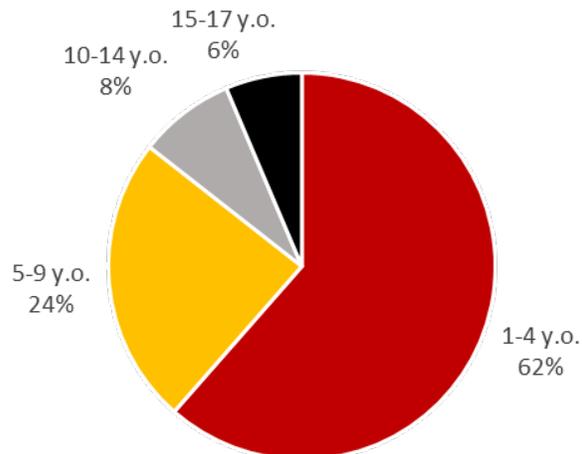


Table 1 shows the number, percent, and rate of reviewed child fatalities associated with child abuse or neglect by jurisdiction of residence. Baltimore City had the highest number of reviewed child deaths associated with child abuse or neglect during this time period with 175 cases, followed by Baltimore County with 61 cases.

Table 1: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Jurisdiction, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=423)

	Number	Percent	Rate Per 100,000 Population
Baltimore City	175	41.4	29.5
Baltimore	61	14.4	7.4
Prince George's	28	6.6	3.1
Anne Arundel	22	5.2	3.8
Harford	20	4.7	7.8
Frederick	16	3.8	6.2
Wicomico	16	3.8	15.4
Montgomery	12	2.8	1.1
Washington	11	2.6	7.3
Howard	10	2.4	3.1
Charles	9	2.1	5.5
Caroline	8	1.9	23.9
Cecil	8	1.9	7.8
Calvert	6	1.4	6.5
Carroll	6	1.4	3.6
Queen Anne's	4	0.9	*
Allegany	2	0.5	*
St. Mary's	2	0.5	*
Worcester	2	0.5	*
Dorchester	1	0.2	*
Garrett	1	0.2	*
Kent	1	0.2	*
Somerset	1	0.2	*
Talbot	1	0.2	*

* Rate not calculated for jurisdictions with less than 5 deaths due to rate instability

Incident Information

The majority of cases occurred in an urban area with 195 cases, and the person responsible was usually the biological mother with 232 cases, followed by the biological father with 93 cases (Table 2).

Table 2: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Area and Person Responsible, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=423)

Area:	
Urban area	195
Suburban area	171
Rural area	49
Unspecified	8
Person Responsible:	
Biological mother	232
Biological father	93
Grandparent	18
Mother's partner	16
Other relative	11
Babysitter	4
Self	3
Sibling	3
Friend	3
Step parent	2
Licensed child care worker	2
Adoptive parent	1
Foster parent	1
Acquaintance	1
Other	3
Missing	30

Method of Death

Of the reviewed child fatalities associated with child abuse or neglect, most cases were sleep related with 197 cases, follow by assault/weapon/person's body part with 89 cases (Table 3). The majority of sleep related cases (74.6%) were between the ages of 1 and 4 years old.

Table 3: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Method of Death, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=423)

Sleep related	197
Assault, weapon, or person's body part	89
Unintentional asphyxia	33
Drowning	27
Poisoning, overdose, or acute intoxication	25
Motor vehicle	17
Fire, burn, or electrocution	14
Failure to seek or provide treatment	11
Fall or crush	6
Starvation	1
Poor living conditions	1
Unknown	2

Child Protective Services (CPS)

Of the reviewed child fatalities associated with child abuse or neglect, 353 cases had a CPS record check conducted, 92 had evidence of prior abuse, and 200 cases had CPS action taken as a result of the child abuse or neglect (Table 4).

Table 4: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by CPS Information, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=423)

	Yes	No	Unspecified
CPS record check conducted	353	40	30
Evidence of prior abuse	92	268	63
CPS action taken	200	177	46

Biological Parents Information

Table 5 describes demographic information of the biological parents. Of those whose information were obtained, some biological parents were unemployed with 170 persons, and the majority of biological parents were of low income with 267 persons had a High School degree or GED with 212 persons, and/or were receiving social services with 278 persons.

Table 5: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Biological Parents Information, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=846)

Employment Status	
Employed	215
Unemployed	170
Stay-at-home caregiver	22
On disability	7
Unspecified	432
Income Level	
Low income	267
Medium income	41
High income	4
Unspecified	534
Educational Attainment	
Less than High School degree	81
High School degree or GED	212
College degree	61
Post graduate degree	9
Unspecified	483
Receiving Social Services	
Yes	278
No	162
Unspecified	406

Biological Parents Information Continued

Table 6 describes the remaining demographic information of the biological parents. Some biological parents had a history of substance use with 220 persons, had a history of child abuse with 118 persons, had a disability or chronic illness with 147 persons, had a delinquent or criminal history with 206 persons, and/or had a history of intimate partner violence with 59 persons.

Table 6: Child Fatalities Reviewed and Associated with Child Abuse or Neglect by Biological Parents Information, Maryland, 2010-2019 (N=846)

	Yes	No	Unspecified
History of substance use	220	238	388
History of child abuse	118	374	354
Disability or chronic illness	147	296	403
Delinquent or criminal history	206	291	349
History of intimate partner violence as a perpetrator	59	0	787

Conclusions

During the ten-year period from 2010 to 2019, approximately 423 child fatalities reviewed were associated with child abuse or neglect, including cases associated with absent supervision or exposure to hazards. This accounts for 18% of all reviewed unexpected child deaths. Nearly 64% were among Black non-Hispanic (NH) children and 57% were among male children. Children age 1-4 years old accounted for 62% of all reviewed child abuse or neglect deaths, the majority of which were sleep related. Baltimore City had the highest number of reviewed child deaths associated with child abuse or neglect during this time period with 175 cases, which corresponds to a rate of 29.5 per 100,000 population.

The majority of cases occurred in an urban area with 195 cases, and the person responsible was usually the biological mother with 232 cases. Most cases were sleep related with 197 cases, followed by a assault/weapon/person's body part with 89 cases. Approximately 353 cases had a CPS record check conducted, 92 had evidence of prior abuse, and 200 cases had CPS action taken as a result of the child abuse or neglect. Of those whose information were obtained, the majority of biological parents were of low income with 267 persons, had a high school degree or GED with 212 persons, and were receiving social services with 278 persons.

Public health efforts should focus resources to reduce risks associated with child abuse or neglect, especially in Baltimore City. Outreach should be targeted to low income Black non-Hispanic populations who may be receiving social services. They may also have a substance use disorder, may have a history of child abuse, and/or may have a delinquent or criminal history. Strategic communication between schools, social services, substance use treatment facilities, and law enforcement is needed to detect at-risk parents and children in order to intervene prior to preventable deaths.

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