

Annual Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect – State Estimates

Kathryn Harding, M.A.

Child abuse and neglect will cost our nation an estimated \$80 billion in 2012, according to a new national report by Richard Gelles, Ph.D., and Staci Perlman, Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania.¹ The report, available at www.preventchildabuse.org/, uses national cost data combined with the number of abused and neglected children estimated by the Fourth National Incidence Study (NIS4²). Costs include direct costs (child welfare system, medical treatment, mental health care, and law enforcement) and indirect costs (early intervention, special education, mental health and health care across the lifespan, juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, adult homelessness, and lost worker productivity). One of the largest costs is the child welfare system at \$29 billion, reported by Child Trends.³

States differ greatly in their share of these costs. State-level estimates can help policymakers and the public understand the extent of these costs closer to home. However, few states have the resources to develop their own cost estimates using data specific to their state. Perhaps an even greater problem is state variation in defining, reporting, and investigating child maltreatment. Not only is the official count of maltreated children far lower than actual incidence, but the degree to which child maltreatment is undercounted varies considerably from state to state.

This brief uses Gelles and Perlman's report to estimate state costs of child maltreatment, using the average cost per child, except for child welfare costs, which reflect actual expenditures.³ The NIS4 national rate of child maltreatment (17.1 children per 1,000) is used to estimate the number of maltreated children in each state, multiplying the NIS4 rate by each state's total child population. Because this is an estimate, a 95% confidence interval is used to show the possible range in the number of maltreated children. Simply stated, this provides a lower and upper limit on the estimated number of maltreated children, with 95% confidence that the true number is somewhere in this range. The table below presents total child population in 2010 (residents aged 0 – 17 years), estimated number of maltreated children with lower and upper bounds calculated from the 95% confidence interval, and estimated cost based on NIS4 rate with costs for the lower and upper bounds. The estimates have been rounded to avoid a misleading sense of precision.

There are important caveats to this method. First, the cost estimates do not reflect state-to-state variation in cost of living and wages, medical and mental health care, and education spending. Second, the estimate of child maltreatment does not consider the potential impact of state variation in the extent of prevention efforts, or concentration of poverty and other risk factors. As a result of these limitations, the state costs provided in the table below are rough estimates.

These estimates are conservative, as Gelles and Perlman used a conservative interpretation of cost data and as there are many additional categories of costs, beyond those included in their report, that are difficult or impossible to estimate. What is clear is that child abuse and neglect place a tremendous burden on every state. Child abuse and neglect affect us all. Investments in prevention support healthy child development and reduce the number of children affected by abuse and neglect, and the financial cost to our nation in turn.

¹ Gelles, R.J. & Perlman, S. (2012). Estimated Annual Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect. Chicago: Prevent Child Abuse America. Available from www.preventchildabuse.org/.

² Sedlak, A.J., Mettenberg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., & Spencer, L. (2010). *Fourth national incidence study of child abuse and neglect (NIS-4)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ DeVooght, K., Allen, T., & Geen, R. (2009). Federal, state, and local spending to address child abuse & neglect in SFY 2006. Washington DC: Child Trends.

Annual Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect - STATE ESTIMATES (rounded)							
State	2010 Child Population	Maltreated Children (NIS4 rate)	2010 Maltreated Children (NIS4 Rate) 95% Confidence Interval		\$\$\$ Estimated Cost (in 2012 dollars)	\$\$\$ Range of Estimated Cost (in 2012 dollars)	
Alabama	1,128,864	19,260	15,350	23,170	1,122,641,000	963,865,000	1,281,417,000
Alaska	183,546	3,130	2,500	3,770	249,140,000	223,324,000	274,956,000
Arizona	1,732,019	29,560	23,560	35,560	1,718,672,000	1,475,062,000	1,962,283,000
Arkansas	709,968	12,120	9,660	14,570	608,334,000	508,476,000	708,192,000
California	9,435,682	161,020	128,330	193,710	11,543,104,000	10,215,963,000	12,870,245,000
Colorado	1,227,763	20,950	16,700	25,200	1,366,617,000	1,193,931,000	1,539,304,000
Connecticut	807,985	13,790	10,990	16,590	1,340,267,000	1,226,622,000	1,453,911,000
Delaware	206,993	3,530	2,820	4,250	203,994,000	174,880,000	233,107,000
DC	114,036	1,950	1,550	2,340	382,926,000	366,886,000	398,965,000
Florida	4,057,773	69,250	55,190	83,300	3,953,322,000	3,382,591,000	4,524,053,000
Georgia	2,583,792	44,090	35,140	53,040	2,722,839,000	2,359,425,000	3,086,253,000
Hawaii	290,361	4,960	3,950	5,960	330,700,000	289,860,000	371,539,000
Idaho	419,190	7,150	5,700	8,610	351,084,000	292,124,000	410,044,000
Illinois	3,177,377	54,220	43,220	65,230	3,613,866,000	3,166,963,000	4,060,768,000
Indiana	1,589,365	27,120	21,620	32,630	1,839,690,000	1,616,144,000	2,063,236,000
Iowa	713,155	12,170	9,700	14,640	889,713,000	789,407,000	990,019,000
Kansas	704,951	12,030	9,590	14,470	817,207,000	718,055,000	916,359,000
Kentucky	1,014,323	17,310	13,800	20,820	1,173,605,000	1,030,939,000	1,316,270,000
Louisiana	1,123,386	19,170	15,280	23,060	1,031,509,000	873,504,000	1,189,515,000
Maine	271,176	4,630	3,690	5,570	326,393,000	288,252,000	364,534,000
Maryland	1,351,935	23,070	18,390	27,750	1,503,625,000	1,313,474,000	1,693,776,000
Massachusetts	1,433,002	24,450	19,490	29,420	1,811,776,000	1,610,223,000	2,013,330,000
Michigan	2,349,892	40,100	31,960	48,240	2,572,267,000	2,241,752,000	2,902,782,000
Minnesota	1,260,797	21,520	17,150	25,880	1,478,824,000	1,301,491,000	1,656,157,000
Mississippi	767,742	13,100	10,440	15,760	627,343,000	519,359,000	735,327,000
Missouri	1,431,338	24,430	19,470	29,380	1,459,774,000	1,258,455,000	1,661,094,000
Montana	219,828	3,750	2,990	4,510	222,492,000	191,573,000	253,411,000

Annual Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect - STATE ESTIMATES (rounded)							
State	2010 Child Population	Maltreated Children (NIS4 rate)	2010 Maltreated Children (NIS4 Rate) 95% Confidence Interval		\$\$\$ Estimated Cost (in 2012 dollars)	\$\$\$ Range of Estimated Cost (in 2012 dollars)	
Nebraska	451,641	7,710	6,140	9,270	522,290,000	458,766,000	585,814,000
Nevada	681,033	11,620	9,260	13,980	587,422,000	491,634,000	683,210,000
New Hampshire	289,071	4,930	3,930	5,930	293,079,000	252,421,000	333,737,000
New Jersey	2,045,848	34,910	27,830	42,000	2,243,208,000	1,955,457,000	2,530,959,000
New Mexico	510,238	8,710	6,940	10,470	436,641,000	364,875,000	508,407,000
New York	4,424,083	75,500	60,170	90,820	5,264,534,000	4,642,281,000	5,886,787,000
North Carolina	2,277,967	38,870	30,980	46,760	2,057,467,000	1,737,068,000	2,377,866,000
North Dakota	143,971	2,460	1,960	2,960	160,987,000	140,737,000	181,236,000
Ohio	2,714,341	46,320	36,920	55,720	3,139,785,000	2,758,009,000	3,521,561,000
Oklahoma	918,849	15,680	12,500	18,860	919,319,000	790,082,000	1,048,556,000
Oregon	872,811	14,890	11,870	17,920	1,069,013,000	946,251,000	1,191,775,000
Pennsylvania	2,775,132	47,360	37,740	56,970	3,770,883,000	3,380,557,000	4,161,209,000
Rhode Island	226,825	3,870	3,090	4,660	393,532,000	361,629,000	425,435,000
South Carolina	1,080,732	18,440	14,700	22,190	989,213,000	837,207,000	1,141,220,000
South Dakota	199,616	3,410	2,710	4,100	202,728,000	174,652,000	230,805,000
Tennessee	1,493,252	25,480	20,310	30,650	1,629,564,000	1,419,536,000	1,839,592,000
Texas	6,895,969	117,680	93,790	141,570	5,933,783,000	4,963,856,000	6,903,710,000
Utah	868,824	14,830	11,820	17,840	759,085,000	636,884,000	881,287,000
Vermont	126,275	2,150	1,720	2,590	186,339,000	168,578,000	204,099,000
Virginia	1,847,182	31,520	25,120	37,920	1,591,379,000	1,331,570,000	1,851,187,000
Washington	1,569,592	26,790	21,350	32,220	1,634,943,000	1,414,178,000	1,855,709,000
West Virginia	386,449	6,590	5,260	7,930	478,763,000	424,409,000	533,118,000
Wisconsin	1,310,250	22,360	17,820	26,900	1,284,024,000	1,099,735,000	1,468,312,000
Wyoming	132,025	2,250	1,800	2,710	122,186,000	103,616,000	140,755,000
Total	74,548,215	1,272,160	1,013,960	1,530,370	80,931,891,000	70,446,588,000	91,417,193,000