

MARCH 2022

The Wellbeing of Minnesota's Children

A REPORT BY CORNERHOUSE



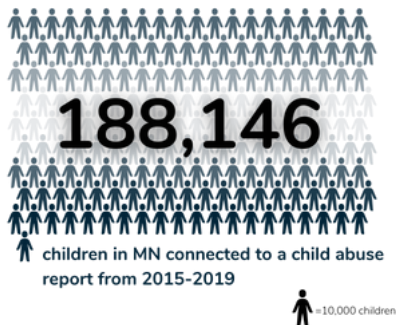
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As a Children’s Advocacy Center, CornerHouse spends our time and energy focused on the well-being of children. We hear from children everyday about their experiences and their needs. We take community calls from families and communities worried about children’s safety. Ongoing and increased calls asking for support and growing waiting lists prompted us to ascertain how children are doing in our region and our state.

What we found is troubling both in terms of the numbers of children experiencing abuse or adverse childhood experiences as well as their mental health.

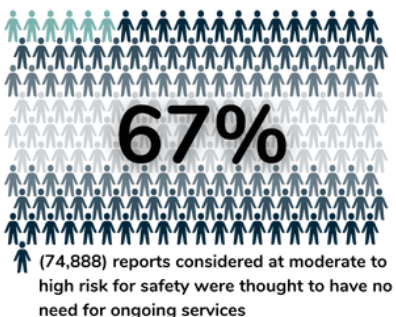
In reviewing the Minnesota Child Maltreatment Report, we found that 188,146 children were connected to a child abuse report from 2015 to 2019. We also saw that in every year, about 32% of reports assessed as a moderate to high risk for safety were thought to need ongoing child protective services to “maintain safety, and promote permanency and well-being.”

2015 - 2019 MN Child Maltreatment Report



That means that at a minimum of 68% each year for a five-year total of 74,888 reports considered at moderate to high risk for safety were thought to have no need for ongoing services. It is not surprising that 31,629 children over these years had a subsequent child maltreatment report within twelve months during that same period.

A lot of factors likely impact why a family did or didn’t receive services or did or didn’t have a subsequent report. This review wasn’t meant to judge the system or its services, but instead to discover if families need additional supports. We also know that an additional 19,667 families over this time period were screened out for not meeting the threshold of a child abuse investigation/family assessment only to have a subsequent report in 12 months that did.



In addition, we saw that year after year, Native, Black and children of two or more races were "disproportionality seen in child protection cases which is further evidence of a gap in services and opportunities for these families and children."

These findings clearly suggest families are at risk of continued experience of trauma and need support.

How are our children doing?

While the Minnesota Child Maltreatment Report holds a lot of information about child abuse, demographics, the process, etc. it doesn’t have any information about the wellbeing of children. What services did/do they need? What trauma symptoms were they displaying? How are they doing in school? Are they thriving?

31,629 children had a subsequent child maltreatment report within 12 months of the initial report.



19,667 families who were screened out for not meeting the threshold of a child abuse investigation had a subsequent report in 12 months that did meet the threshold.



To get a better sense of this, we turned to the results of the Minnesota Student Survey. This report is only conducted about every three years and we focused on the latest report from 2019. When looking at responses from 8th, 9th, and 11th graders (older grades surveyed), we found that an average of 21,583 students per grade indicated that they felt nervous, anxious, or on edge several days, more than half the days, or nearly every day of the past two weeks.



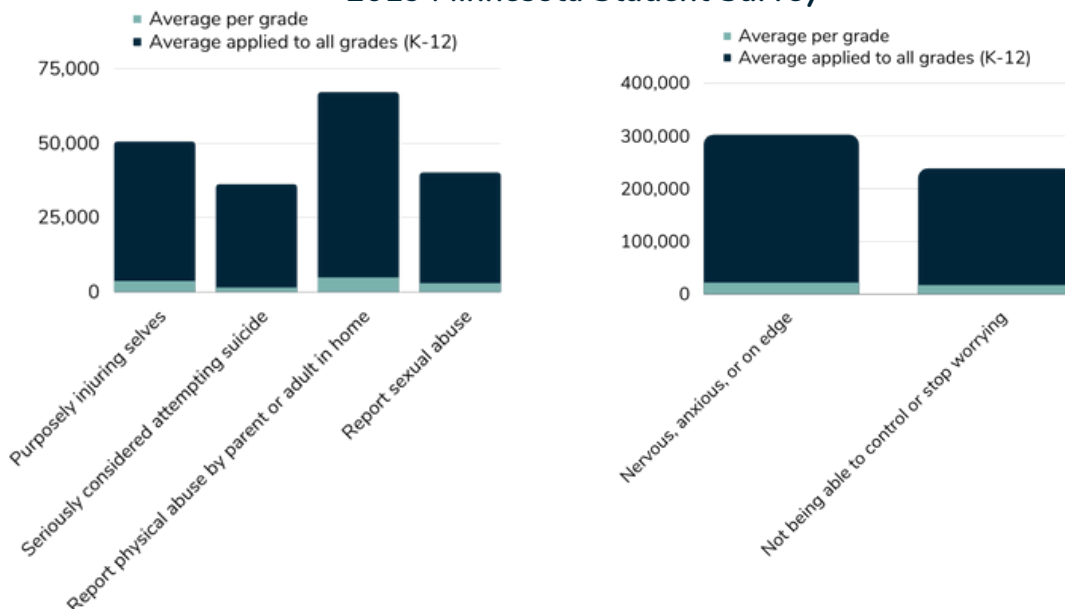
When the average is applied to all grades (K-12), it suggests that approximately 280,579 children may be impacted. An average of 16,980 students reported being bothered by not being able to control or stop worrying several days, more than half the days, or nearly every day in the past two weeks. Again, if the average is applied to all grades, we see that potentially 220,740 children may be struggling with an elevated level of worry. An average of 3,607 students per grade reported purposely injuring themselves 3 or more times in the past year (or 46,891 for all grades or 25,249 grades 6-12). An average of 4,952 students per grade stated that they had seriously considered attempting suicide within the last year and an average of 1,478 per grade had actually attempted suicide in the last year. When we apply these averages to older children in grades 6-12, we see that about 34,664 students could have seriously considered and 10,346 could have actually attempted suicide. However, the numbers are likely higher when including children who had seriously considered or actually attempted more than a year ago. **This is alarming information and children are shouting at us to pay attention – expressing that they are not doing well and they need us to take action.**

While these two Minnesota reports aren't linked directly, they both offer a window into how many children are impacted by abuse. The Minnesota Student Survey asks children themselves if they have been impacted by physical or sexual abuse. An average of 4,789 students per grade that report they have been hit, beat, kicked or physically hurt by their parents or any adult in their home. Applying the average to all grades means that 62,257 children may have experienced physical abuse. 2,860 students per grade report that either a relative, a family member, or someone who is not a relative/family member has pressured, tricked, or forced them to do something sexual or had something sexual done to them. Again, applying the average across all grades 37,180 children may have experienced sexual abuse. And this data doesn't represent all children impacted by abuse. The Minnesota Child Maltreatment Report data show that 73,437 children ages five and younger were connected to a child abuse report across 2015-2019.

The short- and long-term effects of abuse

What we're seeing is that a staggering number of children are telling us that they are impacted by abuse, that they are struggling with anxiety and worry, and that they have seriously contemplated or attempted suicide. 48% of students from just 8th, 9th and 11th grades report that they have had at least one or more adverse childhood experience. The immediate impact of dealing with an adverse childhood experience is that they are processing or not processing the trauma that they have experienced. To the rest of us, it can look like the inability to concentrate, hyper-activity, perfectionism, night terrors, speech or physical developmental delays, poor school performance, anger, engaging in risky behaviors, etc. But the students who reported in the survey described above are telling us that the problem is much deeper and it is imperative that we listen and act. Without intervention and support, we know that these children will continue to struggle and face long-term impacts such as lower high school graduations, lower participation in higher education, lower financial success, increased physical health issues, increased drug and alcohol use, and ongoing difficulty with relationships.

2019 Minnesota Student Survey

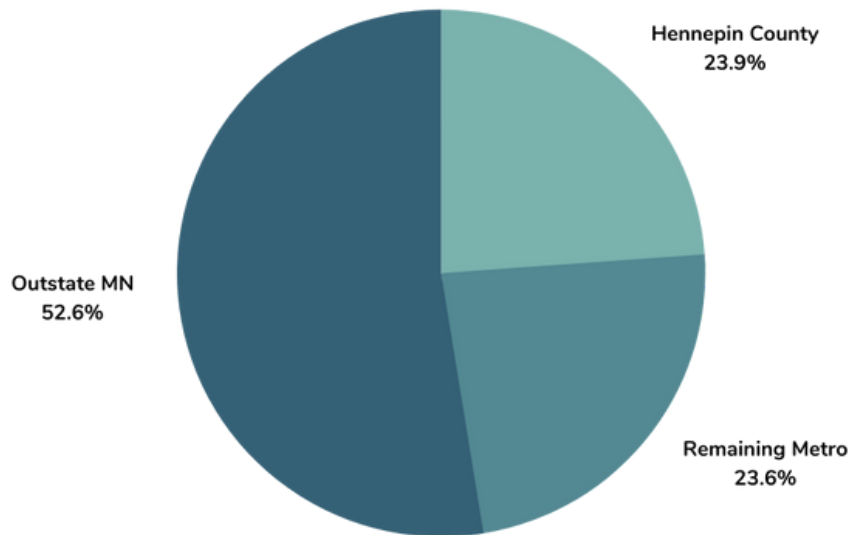


2015 - 2019 MN Child Maltreatment Report

What can we do?

First, we need to strengthen Children's Advocacy Centers like CornerHouse who were built to provide help specifically for these children. For over 30 years, CornerHouse has been working locally responding to children disclosing experiences in partnership with child protection, law enforcement, county attorneys, and medical teams to respond to immediate safety through developmentally appropriate and trauma informed practices to support all children. In addition, CornerHouse provides advocacy and supportive programming for caregivers to enhance safety and wellbeing of the whole family, along with concurrent individual and group therapy to help children and families process and emerge from traumatic experiences.

Total unique victims
with at least 1 accepted report



While mental health services are absolutely important, therapy by itself doesn't address safety and stabilization, and therapy will not be successful in reducing the impact of trauma without safety and stabilization of family systems being addressed first. Therefore, organizations like Children's Advocacy Centers with expertise in child abuse and coordinated care are an exceptional solution. In addition to CornerHouse, there are 12 Children's Advocacy Centers across Minnesota in rural and metro areas all dedicated to helping these children.

Second, we need to increase awareness and skillsets for professionals who work with children and adolescents. While not every Children's Advocacy Center offers training, CornerHouse in the metro area and First Witness in Duluth have decades of experience training professionals across the state and the nation.

Third, we need to expand prevention services both in terms of increasing direct support for families to provide safe homes and to help adults understand how to protect children from manipulation. CornerHouse has a multi-tiered prevention program that works with corporations, businesses, families, schools, and communities to understand and prevent abuse.

Governments, schools, companies, and the public spend a lot of time looking at graduation rates, joblessness/unemployment, violence, disease, and even childhood mental health and how each impact our economy and our people, but **we overlook childhood trauma or abuse which is often – not the only – root cause of each of these societal challenges.** And we keep looking to large government or school systems to find answers rather than build on proven national models like Children's Advocacy Centers as a solution. Considering the number of children impacted by maltreatment year over year displays a startling picture. It's no wonder that graduation rates are impacted, that adults struggle with mental-chemical-physical health, that joblessness/unemployment numbers rise, etc. **It's time that we started thinking about the impact of childhood trauma differently and with haste.**

Minnesota's children are depending on us.





How can I help?

- Share this report with your network and let them know how Minnesota's children are at risk
- Join us at **Help Keep Kids Safe** on April 14th - an event hosted by CornerHouse that will provide education and solutions for protecting Minnesota's children
- Give a chance for every child by **making a donation** to our capacity-building campaign as we grow to serve every child who needs us
- Join **CornerHouse Champions for Children** - a network of businesses invested in keeping kids safe from abuse

Press inquiries:

Contact Ivy Estenson Abdullahi at ivy@cornerhousemn.org or 612-445-9416

[Data sets for all source data can be found here.](#)



CornerHouse