

Who's at Risk?

Child Maltreatment in Palm Beach County – an Analysis by Zip Code and Type (2009-2011)

Summary

Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County provides leadership, funding and research on behalf of the county's children so they grow up healthy, safe and strong. In this capacity, we often seek answers to vital questions that impact the long-term health and well-being of Palm Beach County children, their families and our community as a whole.

Child neglect and abuse is one serious threat to our children's health and well-being. Scientific research has shown that toxic stress, the kind associated with child neglect and abuse, damages a young child's developing brain. This leads to lasting problems in a child's learning, behavior and overall health – hindering his or her lifetime achievements. And this has huge implications for our community's future.

Children's Services Council was particularly interested in understanding the extent, and types, of maltreatment in the 10 zip codes where our BRIDGES program is located. This prevention-focused program is specifically designed for communities where children are at a higher risk of floundering.

In this report, Children's Services Council analyzed Florida Department of Children and Families verified child maltreatment data (Sept. 1, 2009 through Sept. 30, 2011) to answer four main questions:

1. Who are the victims of child maltreatment and where do most instances of verified neglect/abuse occur (in the county and in BRIDGES zip codes)?
2. What are the most common types of neglect/abuse? Are there any differences in the type of maltreatment by zip code where BRIDGES are located?
3. Who are the perpetrators of verified child maltreatment in which cases are closed?
4. What are the conclusions and implications of this analysis?

This in-depth analysis confirms Children's Services Council's decision to target the BRIDGES communities for programs aimed at families with young children. It also intended to raise awareness and prompt community conversation, and collaboration, around essential safety issues affecting Palm Beach County's children.

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Key Findings:

- Very young children are the majority of Palm Beach County's child neglect and abuse victims. More than 50% of verified maltreatment involves children younger than 6.
- Black children are disproportionately victimized. Forty-four percent of child verified maltreatment victims are black, even though just 25% of the total child population in Palm Beach County is African American. More discussion on this finding is available in the Conclusions/Implications section of this report.
- Nearly 300 children who live in the 33404 zip code (Riviera Beach) were victims of verified child maltreatment in 2009-2011. This community has the highest rate of child neglect/abuse in Palm Beach County.
- *Family Violence Threatens Child* is the most common maltreatment description overall. This type of maltreatment typically occurs when a child is in the home during a domestic violence incident.
- Child neglect and abuse rears its head in different ways, depending on the community. While *Family Violence Threatens Child* is the most common maltreatment description in the county and in the BRIDGES communities as a whole, this is not the case everywhere. In Pahokee, for example, *Physical Injury* is the finding in more than 25% of the verified cases. In Lake Park, a prominent verified finding is *Substance Misuse*.
- BRIDGES are located in seven of the 10 zip codes with the most verified findings of child neglect/abuse relative to the population under 18.

“Who’s at Risk?”

Child Maltreatment by Zip Code and Type in Palm Beach County, 2009-2011”

This report is a special analysis of Department of Children and Families’ data on verified maltreatment from September 1, 2009 to September 30, 2011. It seeks to examine the following questions:

1. a) Who are the victims of child maltreatment?
b) Where do most instances of verified abuse occur in Palm Beach County and in Bridges zip codes?
2. a) What are the most common types of abuse/neglect?
b) Are there any differences in the type of maltreatment by zip code areas where Bridges exist?
3. Who are the perpetrators of child maltreatment cases in which the investigation is closed and abuse verified?
4. Conclusions and implications

Special emphasis of this analysis is given to Bridges geographic areas.

Data Source: Disposition B report and zip code report, Circuit 15 CPI Investigations DCF Data Extract, September 1, 2009 to September 30, 2011.

A) Who are the Victims of Maltreatment?

Table 1: Victims in Verified Reports by Gender

PBC	Total Substantiated		Gender					
			Male		Female		Unknown	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	5023	100	2504	50.0	2510	49.9	9	0.2

*Table includes unduplicated number of victims with verified instances of maltreatment
Numbers may exceed 100 percent because of rounding.*

- No gender differences in maltreatment reports.

Table 2: Victims in Verified Reports by Age

Age										Total
0–2 yrs.		3–5 yrs.		6–9 yrs.		10–13 yrs.		14–17 yrs.		
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1,551	30.9	1,034	20.6	1,013	20.2	826	16.5	597	11.9	5,021

Six cases were open a few days before the baby was born, the age was counted within the 0-2 category; unduplicated victims, date of birth unknown for two cases.

- More than 50% of verified child maltreatment involves children ages 0-5 years (51.5%). Children involved in verified episodes of maltreatment are very young (31% are 0 to 2 years old and 20.6% are 3 to 5).

Table 3: Victims in Verified Reports Closed by Race

PBC	Race								Total
	Black		White		Other		Unknown		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
	2,208	44.0	2,519	50.1	38	0.8	258	5.1	5,023

- Black children are disproportionately victimized. 44% of victims of verified abuse are black even though they make up just 25.5% of the total child population in Palm Beach County (60.5% White, Children 0-17 Census 2010).¹

B) Where do most instances of verified abuse reside?

Table 4: Victims in Verified Maltreatment Reports by Geographic Region (N= 4,152)²

	Zip Code	# Victims	%
Lake Worth/Lantana	33460	178	4.3
	33461	221	5.3
	33462	91	2.2
	33463	199	4.8
	33467	75	1.8
	Sub Total	764	18.4

¹¹ The debate on the overrepresentation of black children in the child welfare system has been questioned by new evidence from the “national Incidence Study 3, Final Report” which has recently concluded that actual black child maltreatment rates are significantly higher than white rates. Thus, rather than a bias embedded in the system the recent debate calls attention to the fact that “black children are actually at significantly higher risk than white children for serious maltreatment” (Elizabeth Bartholet, 2011 and 2009; Drake, 2011).

² Zip codes can include many cities or part of big cities as they cross over.

	Zip Code	# Victims	%
West Palm Beach	33401	121	2.9
	33405	64	1.5
	33406	105	2.5
	33407	245	5.9
	33409	131	3.2
	33412	33	0.8
	33413	65	1.6
	33415	239	5.8
	33417	150	3.6
	33418	47	1.1
	Sub Total	1,200	28.9
Riviera Beach/Lake Park	33403	86	2.1
	33404	291	7.0
	33408	26	0.6
	Sub- Total	403	9.7
Glades	33430	38	0.9
	33476	22	0.5
	33493	28	0.7
	Sub-Total	88	2.1
Delray Beach	33444	93	2.2
	33445	27	0.7
	33446	8	0.2
	33483	9	0.2
	33484	13	0.3
	Sub-Total	150	3.6
Royal Palm Beach	33411	238	5.7
Wellington	33449	20	
	33414	140	
	Sub-Total	160	3.9
Boynton Beach	33426	33	0.8
	33435	153	3.7
	33436	92	2.2
	33437	34	0.8
	33472	14	0.3
	Sub-Total	326	7.9
Palm Beach Gardens	33410	90	2.2
Boca Raton	33428	70	1.7
	33431	18	0.4
	33432	16	0.4
	33433	33	0.8

	Zip Code	# Victims	%
	33434	10	0.2
	33486	14	0.3
	33487	19	0.5
	33496	5	0.1
	33498	19	0.5
	Sub-Total	204	4.9
Loxahatchee	33470	90	2.2
Jupiter	33458	146	3.5
	33469	19	0.5
	33477	6	0.1
	33478	29	0.7
	Sub-total	200	4.8
PBC	Total	3,913	94.2

Note: FSFN reports the zip code listed for the child's location at the time of investigation closure. Zip codes cannot be pulled from initial intake reports. Out of an unduplicated count of 5,023 DCF victims of substantiated reports closed during September 1 2009 to September 30, 2011 the zip code was not known for 17.3% (871). Zip codes with frequencies lower than 5 are not included in table. A total of 4,152 reports of verified maltreatment were closed during this time period. Out of the 4,152 reports closed, 60 children were living in other counties.

- Table 4 illustrates the number of victims of child maltreatment in PBC zip codes and percent of victims out of the total number of victims. Out of an unduplicated count of 4,152 cases with zip code information, 94.2% were closed in PBC zip codes identified above. When we look at this information by city, West Palm Beach (28.9%) and Lake Worth (18.4%) had the highest percent of victims. Zip codes with the highest percent of victims include 33404 (7.0), 33407 (5.9), 33415 (5.8), 33411 (5.7) and 33461 (5.3).

Table 5: Age of Victims of Verified Child Maltreatment by Geographic Region (N=3,913)

City	Zip Codes	Age by Categories					Total
		0-2	3-5	6-9	10-13	14-17	
Lake Worth/ Lantana	33460	59	52	34	23	10	178
	33461	60	47	41	44	29	221
	33462	29	17	23	11	11	91
	33463	41	43	55	33	27	199
	33467	17	15	17	16	10	75
	Total	206	174	170	127	87	764
	%	27.0%	22.8%	22.3%	16.6%	11.4%	100.0%
West Palm Beach	33401	54	21	25	12	9	121
	33405	20	14	13	10	7	64
	33406	31	24	22	15	13	105

City	Zip Codes	Age by Categories					Total
		0-2	3-5	6-9	10-13	14-17	
	33407	73	60	45	41	26	245
	33409	38	31	31	21	10	131
	33412	10	10	5	5	3	33
	33413	16	15	12	14	8	65
	33415	68	52	50	43	26	239
	33417	43	42	36	23	6	150
	33418	8	7	9	10	13	47
	Total	361	276	248	194	121	1200
	%	30.1%	23.0%	20.7%	16.2%	10.1%	100.0%
Riviera Beach/Lake Park	33403	22	16	23	18	7	86
	33404	92	47	60	51	41	291
	33408	5	2	8	6	5	26
	Total	119	65	91	75	53	403
	%	29.5%	16.1%	22.6%	18.6%	13.2%	100.0%
Glades	33430	8	9	10	5	6	38
	33476	6	5	7	2	2	22
	33493	10	7	11	0	0	28
	Total	24	21	28	7	8	88
	%	27.3%	23.9%	31.8%	8.0%	9.1%	100.0%
Delray Beach	33444	33	16	19	20	5	93
	33445	10	4	5	6	2	27
	33446	5	2	0	1	0	8
	33483	3	2	1	1	2	9
	33484	3	3	4	1	2	13
	Total	54	27	29	29	11	150
	%	36.0%	18.0%	19.3%	19.3%	7.3%	100.0%
Royal Palm Beach	33411	60	46	49	54	29	238
	%	25.2%	19.3%	20.6%	22.7%	12.2%	100.0%
Wellington	33449	8	2	7	0	3	20
	33414	34	18	34	31	23	140
	Total	42	20	41	21	26	160
	%	26.3%	12.5%	25.6%	19.4%	16.3%	100.0%
Boynton Beach	33426	14	9	3	5	2	33
	33435	43	35	39	24	12	153
	33436	29	22	15	15	11	92
	33437	12	6	6	7	3	34
	33472	6	1	4	1	2	14
	Total	102	73	67	52	30	326
	%	31.9%	22.4%	20.6%	16.0%	9.2%	100.0%
Palm Beach Gardens	33410	28	20	20	11	11	90
	%	31.1%	22.2%	22.2%	12.2%	12.2%	100.0%
Boca Raton	33428	23	21	10	7	9	70
	33431	9	3	2	2	2	18

City	Zip Codes	Age by Categories					Total
		0-2	3-5	6-9	10-13	14-17	
	33432	7	3	1	3	2	16
	33433	6	4	7	8	8	33
	33434	2	0	3	2	3	10
	33486	6	2	1	2	3	14
	33487	4	6	5	3	1	19
	33496	1	0	1	3	0	5
	33498	5	3	1	5	5	19
	Total	63	42	31	35	33	204
	%	30.9%	20.6%	15.2%	17.2%	16.2%	100.0%
Loxahatchee	33470	33	20	14	16	7	90
	%	36.7%	22.2%	15.6%	17.8%	7.8%	100%
Jupiter	33458	50	31	28	19	18	146
	33469	11	3	1	2	2	19
	33477	4	0	0	1	1	6
	33478	7	3	6	7	6	29
	Total	72	37	35	29	27	200
	%	36.0%	18.5%	17.5%	14.5%	13.5%	100.0%
Total							3913

Table 6: Zip Codes with Highest number of Victims of Verified Maltreatment (all children less than 18)

City	Zip Code	# Victims < 18 yrs.
Riviera Beach	33404	291
West Palm Beach	33407	245
West Palm Beach	33415	239
Royal Palm Beach	33411	238
Lake Worth	33461	221
Lake Worth/Lantana	33463	199
Lake Worth	33460	178
Boynton Beach	33435	153
West Palm Beach	33417	150
Jupiter	33458	146
Wellington	33414	140

Table 7: Zip Codes with the Highest Rate of Victims of Verified Maltreatment, 2009-2011 (all children less than 18)

City	Zip Code	# Victims	Population <18 yrs.	Ratio < 18 (per 1,000)
Riviera Beach	33404	291	6,515	44.7
West Palm Beach	33407	245	7,682	31.9
Lake Park	33403	86	2,842	30.3
West Palm Beach	33401	121	4,155	29.1
West Palm Beach	33417	150	5,277	28.4
South Bay	33493	28	990	28.3
Lake Worth/Lantana	33460	178	7,020	25.4
Boynton Beach	33435	153	6,453	23.7
Delray Beach	33444	93	4,166	22.3
Lake Worth/Lantana	33461	221	9,983	22.1

Note: red indicates that these zip codes reflect high numbers of verified reports relative to the population < 18 years old, but do not appear in Table 6 because the number of cases is not the highest in the county in actual frequency. Thus the following zip codes had the greatest number of victims < 18 years old, but not relative to the population: 33415 (21.1); 33411 (15.5); and 33463 (13.0) (rates per thousand). Population extracted from 2010 Census.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_GCTP2.ST09&prodType=table

Table 8: Zip Codes with the Highest Number of Victims of Verified Maltreatment, 2009-2011, Ages 0 to 5

City	Zip Code	# Victims 0 to 5
Riviera Beach	33404	139
West Palm Beach	33407	133
West Palm Beach	33415	120
Lake Worth	33460	111
Lake Worth	33461	107
Royal Palm Beach	33411	106
West Palm Beach	33417	85
Lake Worth/Lantana	33463	84
Jupiter	33458	81
Boynton Beach	33435	78

Table 9: Zip Codes with the Highest Rate of Victims of Verified Maltreatment, 2009-2011, Ages 0 to 5

City	Zip Code	# Victims 0 to 5	Population 0 to 5	Ratio 0-5 (per 1,000)
Riviera Beach	33404	139	2,214	62.8
South Bay	33493	17	345	49.3
West Palm Beach	33401	75	1,619	46.3
West Palm Beach	33407	133	2,887	46.1
West Palm Beach	33417	85	1,927	44.1
Lake Park	33403	38	936	40.6
Lake Worth/Lantana	33460	111	2,768	40.1
Boynton Beach	33435	78	2,123	36.7
Delray Beach	33444	49	1,406	34.9
Loxahatchee	33470	53	1,599	33.1

Note: red indicates that verified reports in these zip codes reflect high numbers of cases relative to the population 0- 5, but do not appear in Table 8 because the number of cases is not the highest in the county in actual frequency. Thus the following zip codes had the largest number of victims 0 - 5 but not relative to the population: 33415 (29.5); 33461 (27.6); 33411 (23.1); 33463 (16.8) and 33458 (24.3).

Population extracted from 2010 Census

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_GCTP2.ST09&prodType=table

- Cities with a smaller child population but more maltreatment relative to the population 0 to 5 stand out, such as Loxahatchee, Delray Beach and South Bay (see tables 7 and 9).
- The rate of abuse of children < 18 and children 0 to 5 in Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach and Lake Park is remarkably higher than in the county as a whole. Even though report rates are calculated for verified maltreatment for a two- year period, the rates are noticeably higher than for Palm Beach County, which had a rate of 10.0 for most serious verified findings in 2010-2011 for children < 18 (Data from 2006 to 2010-2011 is from FSFN Data Repository; Run Date September 12, 2011, Child Populations: Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Florida Legislature; Calendar Year 2011 Population Estimates).

Analysis of Verified Findings in Bridges' Geographic Areas

Table 10: Victims of Verified Maltreatment < 18 years in Bridges' Zip Codes

	Zip Code	# Victims < 18 yrs.
Lake Worth	33460	178
	33461	221
West Palm Beach	33401	121
	33407	245
Lake Park/Riviera Beach	33403	86
	33404	291
Glades	33430	38
	33476	22
Boynton Beach	33435	153

- 32.6% of victims of substantiated reports in Palm Beach County lived in zip codes within Bridges areas at the time the case was closed. Bridges are located in five out of the top 10 zip codes with the most verified findings of abuse for children under 18 years (in red Table 10, see table 6 on p.6)

Table 11: Victims of Verified Maltreatment Reports Relative to the Population under 18 years old in Bridges' Zip Codes, 2009-2011

	Zip Code	<18 yrs.	# Victims < 18	Ratio < 18 (per 1,000)
Lake Worth/ Lantana	33460	7,020	178	25.4
	33461	9,983	221	22.1
West Palm Beach	33401	4,155	121	29.1
	33407	7,682	245	31.9
Riviera Beach/Lake Park	33403	2,842	86	30.3
	33404	6,515	291	44.7
Glades	33430	6,492	38	5.9
	33476	2,439	22	9.0
Boynton Beach	33435	6,453	153	23.7

Population extracted from 2010 Census.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_GCTP2.ST09&prodType=table

- Bridges are located in seven of the 10 zip codes with the most verified findings relative to the population < 18 (in red in Table 11).
- **Table 12: Victims of Verified Maltreatment 0 to 5 in Bridges' Zip Codes, 2009-2011**

	Zip Code	# Victims 0-5
Lake Worth	33460	111
	33461	107
West Palm Beach	33401	75
	33407	133
Riviera Beach/Lake Park	33403	38
	33404	139
Glades	33430	17
	33476	11
Boynton Beach	33435	78

- Bridges are located in six out of the 10 zip codes with the largest number of victims 0 to 5 (in red Table 12)

Table 13: Victims of Verified Maltreatment Reports Relative to the Population 0 to 5 in Bridges' Zip Codes, 2009-2011

	Zip Code	# Victims of Verified reports 0 to 5	# Population 0-5	Ratio 0-5 (per 1,000)
Lake Worth	33460	111	2,768	40.1
	33461	107	3,876	27.6
West Palm Beach	33401	75	1,619	46.3
	33407	133	2,887	46.1
Riviera Beach/Lake Park	33403	38	936	40.6
	33404	139	2,214	62.8
Glades	33430	17	2,263	7.5
	33476	11	862	12.8
Boynton Beach	33435	78	2,123	36.7

Population extracted from 2010 Census.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_GCTP2.ST09&prodType=table

- Bridges are located in six out of the 10 zip codes with the most verified findings relative to the population 0-5 years old (in red Table 13).

Part II: Analysis of Maltreatment Data, September 1, 2009 to September 30, 2011

2. A) What are the most common types of maltreatment?

Upon completing an investigation, a state investigator makes a determination for each allegation of maltreatment.³ Findings are verified when a preponderance of the evidence shows that the specific harm or threat was the result of abuse or neglect. During the course of the investigation -- based on the evidence found-- additional maltreatments can be added to the abuse report. A child may be the victim of more than one type of abuse, and be involved in more than one episode of maltreatment with different maltreatment types. (See tables 15 to 16).

(<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/childsafety/docs/CHILDALLEGATIONMATRIXDRAFT02092010.pdf>)

Table 14: Categories of Maltreatments of Victims in Verified Maltreatment Reports

Total		Threatened Harm		Neglect		Abuse	
verified maltreatments							
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6,331	100	2,879	45.5	2,713	42.9	739	11.7

Note: numbers are duplicated (one or more than one type or episode of maltreatment)

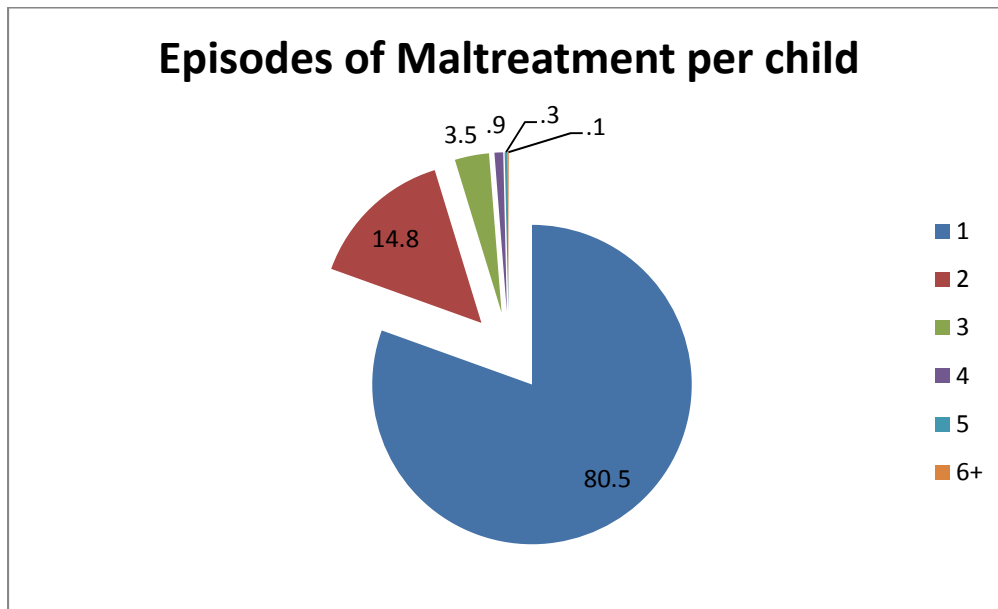
³ Maltreatment is any act of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. Even though abuse and neglect are used interchangeably in the literature, maltreatment is a general term that includes both abuse and neglect. Abuse refers explicitly to acts of commission (Rebeca T. Leeb, 2008).

Table 15: Episodes of maltreatment per child*

# of Episodes of Abuse/Neglect	# of Children	Valid Percentage
1	4,043	80.5
2	742	14.8
3	174	3.5
4	44	.9
5	15	.3
6+	5	.1
Total	5,023	100.0

**Unduplicated number of children involved in investigations opened during time frame. Number may exceed 100% because of rounding.*

Figure 1



- The majority of children had one or two episodes of maltreatment investigations within the time frame (80.5 % had one, 14.8% two). NOTE: this study has only examined **verified** reports of maltreatment. Prior investigations of maltreatment with “some or no indication” of maltreatment may have already been conducted prior to the investigation described here that led to a verified report.

- Out of 5,023 unduplicated children, 7.2% (360) were placed in out-of-home care.

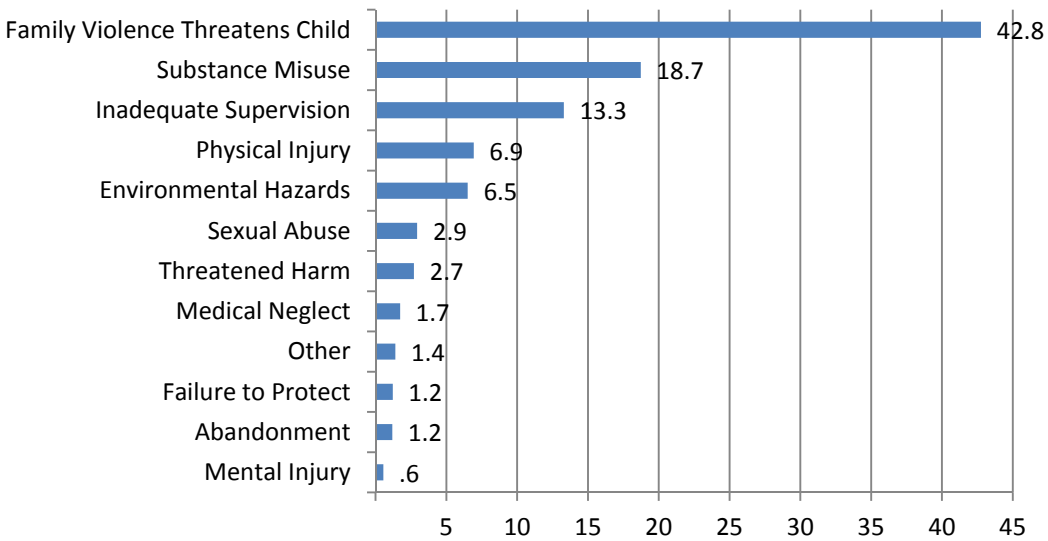
Table 16: Description of types of maltreatment

Abuse	Neglect	Threatened Harm⁴
Human Trafficking	Abandonment	Family Violence Threatens Child Threatened Harm
Asphyxiation	Environmental Hazards	
Bizarre Punishment	Failure to Protect	
Internal Injuries	Inadequate Supervision	
Bone Fracture	Medical Neglect	
Burns	Substance Misuse	
Mental Injury	Malnutrition/Dehydration	
Physical Injury	Failure to Thrive	
Sexual Abuse		

Death

⁴ “Threat of harm occurs when a parent/caregiver expresses an intention or gives signs or warnings through the use of words, gestures, or weapons to communicate the likelihood of inflicting harm to the child.” This threat can be implicit, such as raising a hand as if to strike a child or implicit, which would include, for example, breaking down doors (Rebeca T. Leeb, 2008, p. 12).

Most Common Description of Maltreatment (N= 6,331)



Cases that comprise less than one percent of the types were categorized as “other.” They include “mental injury,” “death,” “bone fracture,” “asphyxiation,” “bizarre punishment,” “malnutrition/dehydration,” “failure to thrive,” “internal injuries” and “human trafficking”. The total of 6,331 includes 2,287 children with duplicated reports who had one or more episodes of maltreatment and one or more descriptions of verified maltreatment.

- Analysis of the different types of verified maltreatment that were verified in Palm Beach County indicates that the majority of reports were for “family violence threatens child,” followed by “substance misuse,” “inadequate supervision,” “physical injury” and “environmental hazards.” Note: data describes one or more investigations of maltreatment in which there could have been more than one type of maltreatment (for example “substance misuse” and “environmental hazards”). This is supported by research on child maltreatment that has demonstrated that the multiple types of maltreatment often co-occur (Rebeca T. Leeb, 2008).

Table 17: Top Ten Types of Maltreatment in Palm Beach County, by Geographic Region (n=5021) *

Type of Maltreatment	City	Zip Code	#	% of Maltreatment type
Family Violence Threatens Child	Riviera Beach	33404	161	7.5%
Substance Misuse	LW/Lantana	33463	63	6.8%
Inadequate Supervision	Riviera Beach	33404	50	7.7%
Environmental Hazards	West Palm Beach	33407	36	10.2%
Physical Injury	LW/Lantana	33461	25	7.4%
Threatened Harm	Royal Palm Beach	33411	13	9.2%

Sexual Abuse	West Palm Beach	33415	17	12.2%
Medical Neglect	LW/Lantana	33461	10	11.2%
Abandonment	Boca & Lantana	33428 and 33463	5	7.8%
Failure to Protect	Lake Worth	33460	9	14.5%

** Total descriptors of maltreatment from 6,331 duplicated investigations for which zip code is known. Zip codes with frequencies lower than 5 are not included in table.*

- Table 17 illustrates cities/zip codes with the highest number of cases with that type of maltreatment within each category. For example, Riviera Beach (zip code 33404) has the highest number of maltreatment reports for “family violence threatens child” and “inadequate supervision.”

2. B) Are there any differences in the type of maltreatments in Bridges zip codes?

Table 18: Categories of Maltreatments of Victims in Verified Maltreatment Reports, Palm Beach County and Bridges geographic area

	Total							
	verified maltreatments		Threatened Harm		Neglect		Abuse	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PBC	6,331	100	2,879	45.5	2,713	42.9	739	11.7
Bridges	1,694	100	812	47.9	694	41.0	188	11.1

Note: numbers are duplicated (one or more than one type or episodes of maltreatment). Out of 6,331 categories of maltreatment there is zip code data for 5,334 (duplicated) cases.

- The Bridges zip codes, compared to maltreatment in the county, indicate slightly higher percentage of reports of *threatened harm* (47.9 % vs. 45.5 %) and *abuse* (11.1% VS 8.7%) compared to *neglect* (41.0% vs. 42.9%).
- 6.8% (92) of children in Bridges zip codes were placed in out-of-home placement (out of N= 1,269).
- Similar to the county as a whole, the top five descriptors of maltreatment in Bridges zip codes were “*family violence threatens child*,” “*substance misuse*,” “*inadequate supervision*,” “*environmental hazards*” and “*physical injury*.”

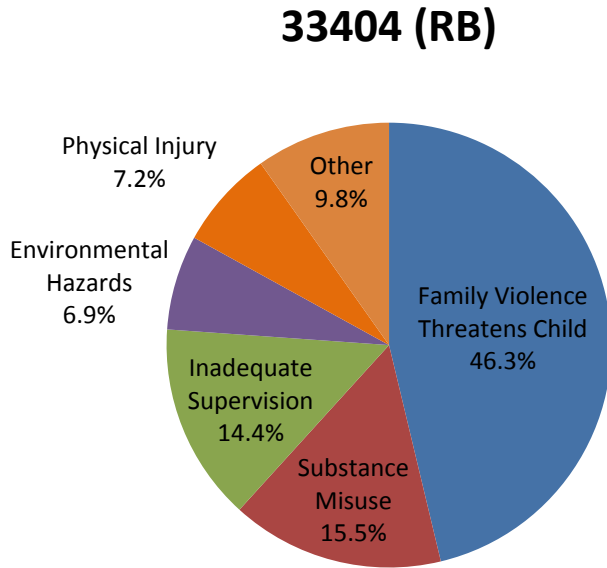
Table 19: Top five descriptions of Maltreatments in Bridges geographic area (by percent)

	33404	33407	33461	33460	33435	33401	33403	33430	33476
Family Violence Threatens Child	46.3	50.0	51.1	46.4	49.0	34.5	41.8	14.6	16.1
Substance Misuse	15.5	10.6	18.8	10.9	13.9	18.2	27.3	4.2	0.0
Inadequate Supervision	14.4	10.3	6.0	11.7	8.9	18.9	17.3	22.9	22.6
Environmental Hazards	6.9	11.9	9.4	10.0	7.4	13.5	3.6	22.9	0.0
Physical Injury	7.2	7.9	7.1	7.9	6.4	5.4	2.7	10.4	25.8
Threatened Harm	3.2	2.3	1.9	2.1	4.0	2.7	0.0	4.2	9.7
Sexual Abuse	1.7	3.3	3.4	0.4	2.0	2.7	1.8	10.4	6.5
Medical Neglect	2.9	0.7	1.1	2.9	2.5	0.7	0.0	6.3	6.5
Failure to Protect	0.9	1.0	3.8	1.0	1.4	3.6	3.6	0.0	6.5

Note: percentages are calculated on the basis of the total description of maltreatment verified in each zip code.

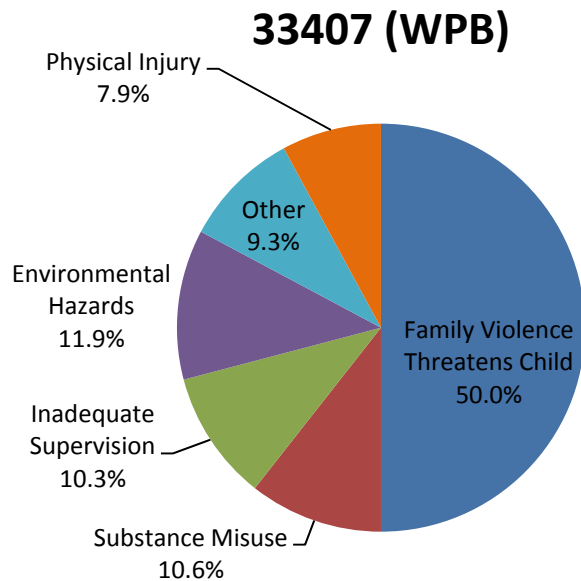
The examination of maltreatment types by zip code sheds further light on differences in the prevalence of certain types of maltreatments in certain geographic areas (see Figures 3 to 11).

Figure 3



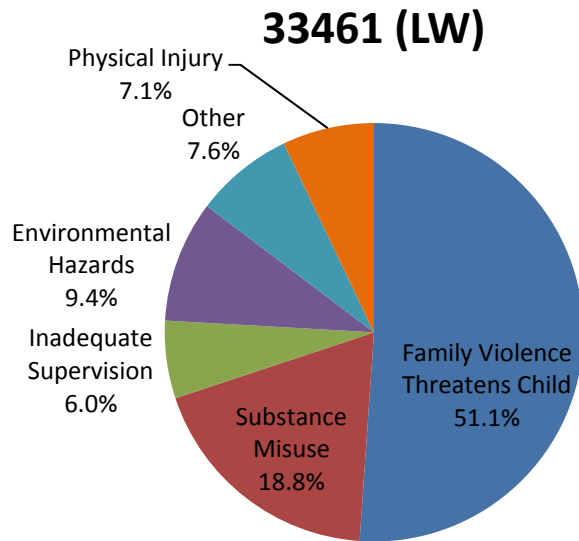
N= 348. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "failure to protect," "abandonment," "burns," "mental injury" and "death."

Figure 4



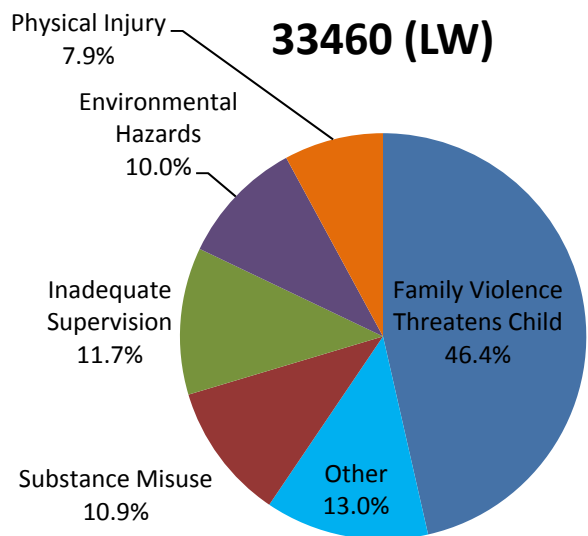
N= 302. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "failure to protect," "abandonment," "burns" and "mental injury".

Figure 5



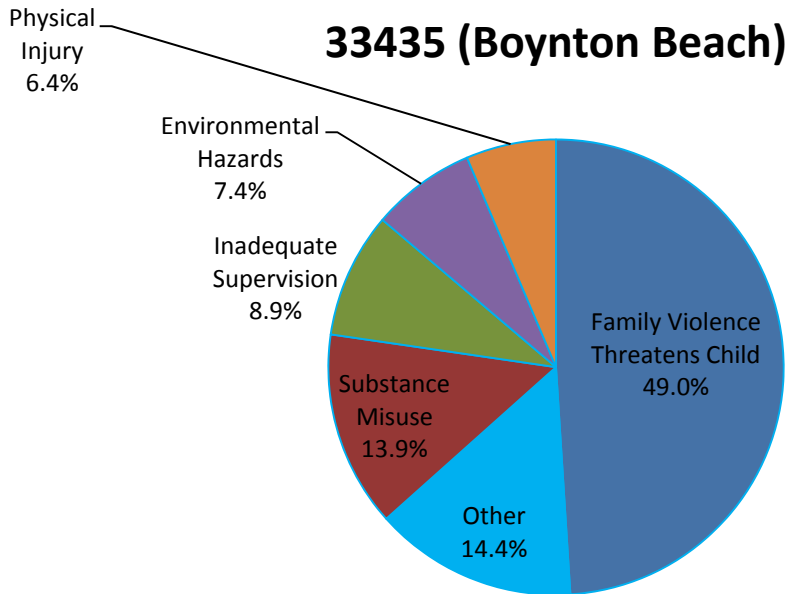
N= 266. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "burns" and "asphyxiation."

Figure 6



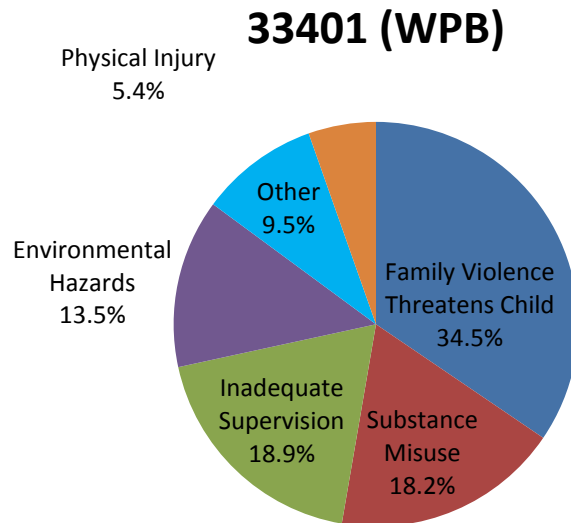
N= 239. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "failure to protect, abandonment," "malnutrition/dehydration," "bone fracture" and "asphyxiation."

Figure 7



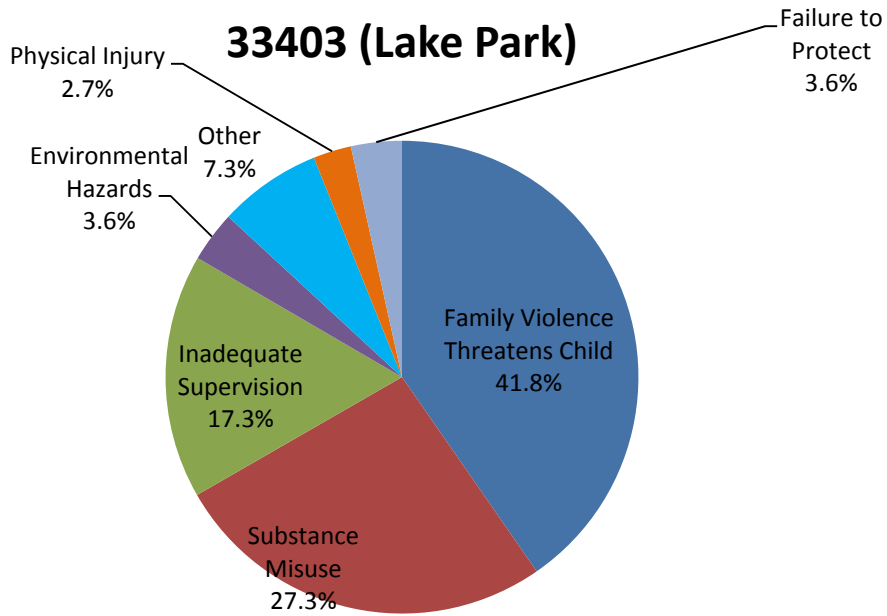
N=202. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "failure to protect," "abandonment," "malnutrition/dehydration," "burns," "mental injury," "death and asphyxiation."

Figure 8



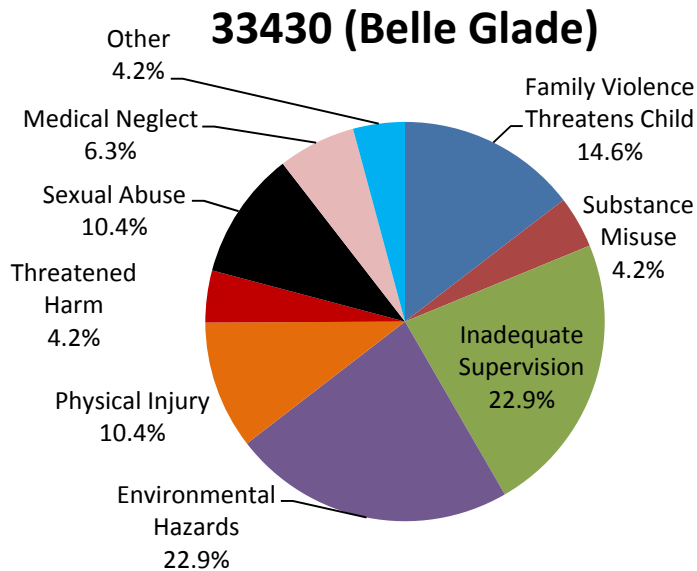
N= 148. "Other" includes "threatened harm," "sexual abuse," "medical neglect," "failure to protect" and "abandonment."

Figure 9



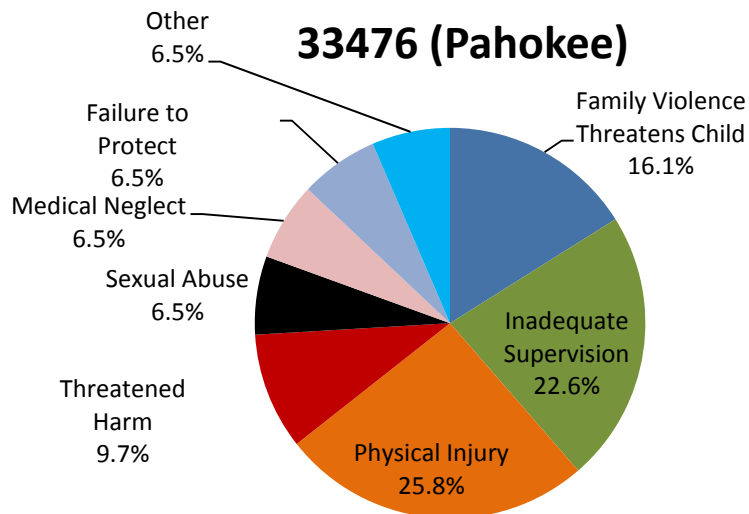
N= 110. "Other" includes "sexual abuse," "burns" and "bone fracture."

Figure 10



N= 48. "Other" includes "substance misuse," "threatened harm," "abandonment," and "bone fracture."

Figure 11



N= 31. "Other" includes "burns" and "death."

- Even though "family violence threatens harm" is the most frequent description of verified maltreatment (both in the county and Bridges zip codes as a whole); this is not the case in Belle Glade and Pahokee. "Physical injury" and "inadequate supervision" are the top types of abuse/neglect in Pahokee, whereas "inadequate supervision" and "environmental hazards" are higher in Belle Glade.
- "Inadequate supervision" is a frequently verified maltreatment type in the Glades and also in West Palm Beach (Zip code 33401) and Lake Park.
- The examination of the top five types of maltreatment in Bridges zip codes shows "sexual abuse" and "environmental hazards" occurring in Belle Glades disproportionately than in other Bridges zip codes.
- Lake Park has the highest number of cases where "substance misuse" is the verified maltreatment type. In contrast, "substance abuse" does not appear as a category of verified maltreatment in Pahokee and is very low in Belle Glade.

3. Perpetrators in instances of verified child maltreatment

- Data on the perpetrator in closed cases provides very little information on his/her characteristics. In 99% of the maltreatments, the caregiver responsible for the child is charged with the maltreatment when the case is closed.

Table 20: Final Role at Case Closure, duplicated counts.

Responsible	Maltreatments	Valid Percent
Caregiver Responsible	6,269	99.0
Non-household Member	6	.1
Parent in Home	35	.6
Parent Not in Home	15	.2
Parent/Caregiver	5	.1
Significant Other	1	.0
Total	6,331	100.0

Table 21: Final Role at Case Closure, unduplicated counts.

Responsible	Maltreatments	Valid Percent
Caregiver Responsible	4,977	99.1
Non Household Member	4	.1
Parent in Home	24	.5
Parent Not in Home	12	.2
Parent/Caregiver	5	.1
Significant Other ⁵	1	.0
Total	5,023	100.0

⁵ Even though there is only one case with “*significant other*” as the perpetrator of abuse, the significant other is more frequently accused of the maltreatment when the abuse is reported to the DCF hotline. The significant other has an “*initial role*” of the alleged maltreatment in 251 unduplicated and 316 duplicated cases.

4. Summary and Implications

Limitations: During September 1, 2009 and September 30, 2012, state investigators closed 5,023 unduplicated substantiated reports. The zip code was not known for 17.3% of the cases. In addition, zip codes are listed by DCF for the child location at the time of investigation closure. However, in 7.2% of the cases the child is placed in out-of-home care so one can assume that the data fairly represents children's residence.

Findings from this report indicate:

Palm Beach County:

- ❖ Higher victimization among youngest children (50.1% are 0-5 years old); 31 % are 0 to 2 years old.
- ❖ 44% of victims of verified maltreatment are Black children, which is disproportional to their percentage in the larger PBC population.
- ❖ The examination of child maltreatment by city illustrates that West Palm Beach and Lake Worth had the highest number of victims. Zip codes with the highest number of victims include 33404 (Riviera Beach), 33407 and 33415 (West Palm Beach), 33411 (Royal Palm Beach 33411) and 33461 (Lake Worth).
- ❖ The analysis of maltreatment data by zip code and age of the victim highlights differences between cities. For example Loxahatchee stand out as having a larger percentage of victims 0-2, as well as Boynton Beach.
- ❖ Cities with a smaller child population but more maltreatment relative to the population 0 to 5 stand out, such as Loxahatchee, Delray Beach and South Bay.
- ❖ In Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach and Lake Park, the abuse rate of all children under 18, as well as the rate specifically of children ages 0 to 5, are remarkably higher than in the county as a whole.
- ❖ The rates of abuse/neglect of children < 18 and children 0 to 5 in Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach and Lake Park are remarkably higher than in the county as a whole.
- ❖ The majority of children had one or two episodes of maltreatment investigations within the time frame (80.5 % had one, 14.8% two). Even though prior investigations of abuse with "some or no indication" of maltreatment may have already been conducted prior to the investigation described here that led to a verified report, this study only examined verified reports of maltreatment.
- ❖ The majority of maltreatment reports were for "*family violence threatens child*" followed by "*substance misuse*," "*inadequate supervision*," "*physical injury*" and "*environmental hazards*" (there could be more than one investigation of for a child, in

which there could have been more than one type of maltreatment .(For example, substance misuse and environmental hazards).

Bridges Zip Codes:

- ❖ High prevalence of children involved in verified maltreatment live in Bridges zip codes, which are among the highest verified reports in the county as a whole, both in terms of their high frequencies and also relative to the child population < 18 and 0 to 5.
- ❖ 32.6% of victims of substantiated reports in Palm Beach County lived in zip codes within Bridges areas at the time the case was closed.
- ❖ Bridges are located in seven of the 10 zip codes with the most verified findings relative to the population < 18
- ❖ Bridges are located in six out of the 10 zip codes with the largest number of victims 0 to 5
- ❖ The examination of maltreatment by zip code differs in the types of maltreatment that prevail in different zip codes. For example, while “family violence threatens harm” is the most frequent description of abuse in the county as well as in most Bridges zip codes, “*physical injury*” and “*inadequate supervision*” are the top types of abuse in Pahokee whereas “*inadequate supervision*” and “*environmental hazards*” are higher in Belle Glade.

Implications

The variation in the types of maltreatment in different zip codes is puzzling and spurs intriguing questions. What is the scope of variation in maltreatment types in different zip codes? How do cultural norms in each community influence reporting and verification? Can child maltreatment in these zip codes be attributed to bias in reporting, screening and investigation, or to the higher risk factors associated with these communities?

According to Brett Drake, a research expert, training in cultural competency and oversight may be suggested if racial bias is found – for example minority children may be more likely to have skeletal surveys ordered by physicians and to be reported to child welfare (Drake Brett, 2011, p. 472). Even though he does not “deny the importance of uncovering bias in reporting or the need to understand cultural specific factors that may help buffer risk,” bias is not a large-scale driver of the racial disproportionality in the child welfare.

Recent research suggests that the child abuse system fairly reflects the underlying rate of maltreatment. “Need, not bias appears to be the main driver of racial disproportionality” (Bartholet, 2011, p.6.) The evidence suggests that higher maltreatment rates in some communities occur because these communities – as in the case of the Bridges areas – are

disproportionally plagued by risk factors (poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, and single parenting).

Thus, evidence shows that when poverty and neighborhood characteristics are included in the analysis of child maltreatment, race disappears as an explanatory factor. This suggests the need for prevention and early intervention services that target the risk factors and available resources for fragile families. As the youngest are the most vulnerable to being victimized by parental maltreatment, the critical importance of early intervention is evident. In addition, these findings also support the need to improve access to resources and services in disadvantaged neighborhoods where maltreatment rates are particularly high.

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