



Annual Child Abuse Report gets rebranded and will arrive in “three releases” ***Initial “release” provides insight to, invites questions about fatalities and near fatalities***

May 3rd - The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) unveiled a new approach to informing the public about the degree to which children in the Commonwealth are victims of child abuse or intersecting with the child welfare system as a result of a non-abuse General Protective Services (GPS) case.

This year DHS scrapped its Annual Child Abuse Report and instead on Monday released a rebranded Annual Child Protective Services Report.

In addition to reframing the report's title, DHS will release data to the public through “three releases.”

Monday's initial “release” provides insight about applied for and processed certifications (formerly known as background checks) for employees and volunteers, expenditures for child abuse investigations, Safe Haven, fatality and near-fatality analysis and the Citizen Review Panel report.

In its second release, DHS will set forth “data on Child Protective Services (CPS) reports completed in 2015.”

The final release will be directed at informing on General Protective Services (GPS). DHS underscores that 2015 marks the first year that the state can report on GPS data, as part of modernizing the way child abuse reports are made and tracked through its Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS). DHS writes that the 2015 data will “establish the baseline of data from which future reports will be

developed.” Using this baseline data and moving forward, “trends will be identified for GPS reports upon which we will be able to measure outcomes for all children served through the child welfare system.”

DHS also will issue “an appendix” setting forth data from December 2014. This data wasn’t captured in the 2014 Annual Child Abuse Report because of the transition that unfolded at that time, including with emerging categories of child abuse.

DHS has taken a new approach to packaging the data, but the new packaging doesn’t divert from the fact that the state’s data continues to be quite stale by the time it is ever released. Five months into 2016 and truncated data is only now beginning to emerge about what unfolded throughout 2015 (and in some cases well before 2015). DHS’ new approach also doesn’t ameliorate persistent questions about how valid and reliable the data is about fatalities and near fatalities substantiated as child abuse or neglect.

It was reported Monday that 33 fatalities and 57 near fatalities were “substantiated for the first time in 2015.” Consistent with longstanding practice, captured inside this DHS reported data are 5 fatalities and 7 near fatalities that occurred in a year other than 2015.

Quarter	2015 Fatalities <i>(fatality occurred and was substantiated as child abuse or neglect in 2015)</i>	Prior Year Fatalities <i>(fatality occurred in a year prior to 2015, but was substantiated as child abuse or neglect in 2015)</i>	2015 Near Fatalities <i>(near-fatality occurred and was substantiated as child abuse or neglect in 2015)</i>	Prior Year Near Fatalities <i>(near-fatality occurred in a year prior to 2015, but was substantiated as child abuse or neglect in 2015)</i>
1st	7	2 (2014)	6	4 (2012, 2014)
2nd	7	2 (2013, 2014)	14	2 (2013, 2014)
3rd	9	1 (2013)	18	1 (2013)
4th	5	0	12	0
TOTALS	28	5	50	7

DHS also reworked its five-year fatality and near fatality table (Figure A in its report). When compared with the same table in the 2014

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