DCYF, Child Victimization in Rhode Island Communities

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Child victimization, also known as child abuse and neglect, is “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.”

Rhode Island child victimization rates have consistently surpassed the nation over time, reaching almost twice the national rate in 2015.

In 2016, among the 39 communities in Rhode Island, child victimization ranged from about 2 child victims per 1,000 to almost 30 child victims per 1,000.

Child victimization is impacted by factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Social and ecological factors include the setting for child maltreatment such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.
Social-Ecological Characteristics Associated with Childhood Victimization: Rhode Island 2016

- Bachelor’s Degree or more per 1,000
- Licensed Early Learning Centers per 1,000 Children
- College Enrollment per 1,000 Students
- Married per 1,000
- High School Diploma or more per 1,000
- Female per 1,000
- Health Insurance Coverage per 1,000
- White per 1,000
- Moved Residence per 1,000
- Vacant Households per 1,000
- School Suspensions per 1,000 Students
- Property Crime per 1,000
- Unemployment per 1,000
- Below Federal Poverty Level per 1,000
- Violent Crime per 1,000
- Student Mobility per 1,000 Students
- Children with incarcerated parents per 1,000 Children
- Mental Health Treatment Admissions per 1,000
- Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions per 1,000
- Juvenile Arrest for assault/weapons per 1,000

Social and ecological level childhood victimization prevention requires involvement across sectors such as education, government, social services, health services, business/labor, justice, housing, media, and other non-governmental organizations. 3

4 The number of victims is a unique count of children with substantiated maltreatment investigations. Rates were calculated by dividing the number of victims by the child population and multiplying by 1,000.
5 Data unduplicated by child; child victims with out-of-state or unknown case address are excluded; child victims of maltreatment in foster care are excluded. Rates were generated based on child population estimates from American Communities Survey 2012 - 2016 Aggregated 5 year estimates.
6 Poisson Regression was used to model child victimization counts with offset of child population in each community from American Communities Survey 2012-2016 Aggregated 5 year estimate. All characteristics had statistical significance at α=0.05. All covariates were transformed to a standard normal distribution for ease of relative comparison. Data source for child victimization is RICHIST fiscal year 2016; data unduplicated by child; child victims with out-of-state or unknown case address are excluded; child victims of maltreatment in foster care are excluded.
3 Data source for community characteristics is American Communities Survey 2012 - 2016 Aggregated 5 year estimates.
4 Data source Rhode Island Department of Corrections 2016; children of incarcerated parents is the number of children with parents serving sentences at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections per 1,000 children under age 18; data are reported via place of parent’s last residence before entering prison and do not include Rhode Island children who have parents incarcerated at other locations.
5 Data source Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015-2016 school year; student mobility defined as the number of students who enrolled in school after September 30 or withdrew from school before June 1 divided by the total enrollment for that school district; school suspensions per 100 is out-of-school suspensions for the school district at all grade levels divided by student enrollment multiplied by 100; % college enrollment is the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in a two- or four-year college within 6 months.
4 Data source RI Early Care and Education Data System; licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs; rates were generated based on child population estimates from American Communities Survey 2012-2016 Aggregated 5 year estimates.
6 Data source for crime is Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) 2015; rates were generated based on adult population estimates from American Communities Survey 2012-2016 Aggregated 5 year estimates.
3 Data source for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Admissions is BHDD fiscal year 2016; data unduplicated by patient; patients with out-of-state or unknown addresses are excluded; rates were generated based on adult population estimates from American Communities Survey 2012 - 2016 Aggregated 5 year estimates.

In Rhode Island, many social and ecological characteristics are associated with higher child victimization rates: poverty, crime, substance abuse and mental health burden, unemployment, and mobility. Other characteristics are associated with lower child victimization rates: towns with greater health insurance coverage, married, female, and white populations, higher levels of education, and more availability of early learning centers.

Created by the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH).