

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM
FY11 CHILD ABUSE DATA

Q: How much child abuse and neglect occurs in military families?

A: The Department of Defense keeps track of how many incidents of child abuse and neglect are reported to the Family Advocacy Program. We do not know how many abuse and neglect incidents go unreported. We do not know how many incidents occur in Reserve component families (Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve) because they usually are in the civilian community.

Q: How does the Family Advocacy Program keep track of reported incidents?

A: When a report of child abuse or neglect is received at an installation, the caseworker collects information about the incident and inputs it into the Service's automated case management system.

Q: How does the Department of Defense count child abuse and neglect incidents?

A: Since 1997, we have counted incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect that have been reported to the Family Advocacy Program at each installation. Prior to 1997, we counted cases of suspected abuse and neglect reported to the installations' Family Advocacy Programs. Each case could have included more than one incident of suspected abuse or neglect. With an incident-based system DoD can calculate how many children within military families experience repeated abuse and/or neglect.

Q: What types of child abuse and neglect are included in this data?

A: The data includes physical and sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and the neglect of health and educational needs.

Q: Are all the child abusers Service members?

A: No, only approximately half are Service members. The alleged abuser may be a civilian parent; an employee, contractor, or volunteer in a DoD activity such as the DoD schools, youth programs, and childcare; or other caregiver. (This combination of intrafamily and external abusers is also included in the child abuse data collected by the states and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.) However, almost all of the alleged abusers are family members of the child.

Q: How does the DoD child abuse and neglect data compare to civilian studies?

A: The DoD rates of child abuse and neglect have remained relatively constant and are approximately half of their counterpart rates in the U.S. civilian population, as compiled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This may be explained in part by the strong support military families receive and the success of prevention efforts sponsored by the FAP and other military family support programs. We think that one incident of child abuse or neglect is one too many; but we have less than one substantiated victim out of every 100 children.

Q. The number of met criteria incidents of child abuse and neglect reported to the FAP increased 2.7 percent from FY10. Does this change mean that child abuse and neglect are increasing due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

A. We continue to monitor this data closely. Although there were 186 more met criteria incidents in FY11, the rate per thousand children increased only slightly from 5.7 in FY10 to 5.8 in FY11 but the rate reflects a decrease by 15 percent from FY01. The slight increase was evenly divided between child neglect and child physical abuse. There are several possible explanations for these increases. First, they may reflect the cumulative effects of nine years of high rates of deployment cycles on military families' capacity to sustain coping strategies. Or the increase in incidents that met FAP criteria may reflect the impact of rolling out the new FAP incident determination algorithm across more installations. Allegations of child abuse and neglect that may have been diverted from FAP or unsubstantiated using previous criteria are now classified as meeting FAP criteria.