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**NEW STUDY FINDS INFANTS IN CALIFORNIA REMAIN AT HIGH RISK
AFTER INITIAL REPORT OF MALTREATMENT**

USC School of Social Work's Children's Data Network Finds 60% of Infants with an Initial Allegation of Abuse or Neglect are Re-Reported to the Child Protection System within Five Years

LOS ANGELES – April 16, 2015 – A new study by the [Children's Data Network](#) at the [University of Southern California School of Social Work](#) has found that 60 percent of infants in California who were reported to the child protection system (CPS) for alleged maltreatment were re-reported to CPS for suspected abuse or neglect within five years. Re-reporting rates were high, regardless of whether the initial allegation was investigated or substantiated by CPS.

Of the roughly 564,000 children born in California in 2006, 5.2 percent or an estimated 29,000 were reported for abuse or neglect before age one. Of those infants, nearly 82 percent remained at home, of which 6 out of 10 were re-reported to CPS within five years. The study also found that only one in 10 infants remaining at home following an initial allegation had a case opened for ongoing CPS services.

“These data document that the child protection system is not in the position to directly serve every family that may need ongoing support,” said Emily Putnam-Hornstein, Ph.D., assistant professor at the USC School of Social Work and lead investigator for the study. “This study underscores that we need a better understanding and coordination of available services to ensure the safety and well-being of children.”

Published in the SAGE Journal [Child Maltreatment](#), the study is the first to track infant CPS maltreatment re-reporting dynamics by linking birth records for all children born in California during 2006 with statewide child protection records through 2012. Infants reported for abuse or neglect before age one were identified and followed for five years to analyze re-reporting patterns based on the initial report for maltreatment.

“This research makes clear the critical importance of early intervention which includes safety based assessments of the needs of children and families upon their initial contact with child welfare services,” said Will Lightbourne, director of the California Department of Social Services. “With that information and the support of relevant professionals and community partners, we

(more)

can build a continuum of services that promotes careful and sensible decisions which maintain the child's health, safety and best interests, including maintaining families whenever possible."

The study also broke out numbers for infants in Los Angeles County. Of the 158,776 children born in the county in 2006, 4.3 percent were reported for abuse or neglect before age one. Following an initial report of maltreatment, more than half of the 78.5 percent of infants who remained in the home were re-reported within five years.

"This new study by the Children's Data Network shows the importance of child abuse prevention services for families with infants and pre-school aged children. This report helps make clear that the protection of children needs public, private and community support," said Philip L. Browning, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

"These findings add urgency to our current work to integrate, strengthen and deepen the full continuum of prevention-oriented resources, supports and services in communities across the county," said Fesia Davenport, interim director at the Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection.

"This study is the product of an innovative data linkage effort by the Children's Data Network that sheds important light on infants at-risk of maltreatment," said Kim Belshé, executive director of First 5 LA. "This type of data is essential to informing and driving policy and systems change to improve services and supports that strengthen families and improve child outcomes."

The study was funded through a grant from First 5 LA to the Children's Data Network at the USC School of Social Work.

The Children's Data Network

The [Children's Data Network](#) is a university, agency and community collaborative focused on the integration and application of data to inform programs and policies for children and their families. A project of the USC School of Social Work, the Children's Data Network is funded by First 5 LA and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and includes a partnership with the California Child Welfare Indicators Project.

The USC School of Social Work

The [University of Southern California School of Social Work](#) ranks among the nation's top social work graduate programs. A recognized leader in academic innovation, experiential learning, online education and translational research, the school prepares students for leadership roles in public and private organizations that serve individuals, families and communities in need. Its Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services was the first endowed research institute for interdisciplinary social work research and remains a pioneer in translational science – the acceleration of research findings into practice settings.