

Race/Ethnicity and Reporter Type for Child Protective Services Reports:
A Pre-Pandemic Baseline

Andrea Lane Eastman, PhD
Lillie Guo
Jacquelyn McCroskey, DSW

Children's Data Network
Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
University of Southern California

February 9, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a drop in the number of Child Protective Services (CPS) hotline calls and altered the distribution of reports by reporter type (i.e., the individual who reported suspected maltreatment to the child abuse and neglect hotline)¹. These changes in reporter types are expected to continue until schools reopen. The data below provide baseline information about the number and origin of CPS reports pre-pandemic for California and Los Angeles for years 2017 through 2019².

The tables display mandated reporter types in the following nine categories³:

- (1) Family/Friend, which includes relatives, sisters or brothers, cousins, aunts or uncles, great aunts or great uncles, grandparents, great grandparents, godparents, people with no relation, friends, landlords, or clergy members;
- (2) Neighbor;
- (3) Law Enforcement, which includes attorneys, parole officers, and probation officers;
- (4) Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian Ad Litem (CASA/GAL);
- (5) Counselor/Therapist;
- (6) Child Welfare Staff;
- (7) Day Care/Foster Care;
- (8) Medical, including medical and dental professionals; and
- (9) Education, including teachers, substitute care providers, and school personnel.

An example is provided at the bottom of each table to help interpret the data.

Table 1. Frequency of CPS Reports by Reporter Relationship

Reporter Relationship	California		LA County	
	N=1,894,908	col%	N=426,025	col%
Family/Friend	101,119	5.3	15,858	3.7
Neighbor	16,648	0.9	3,314	0.8
Law Enforcement	306,909	16.2	88,348	20.7
CASA/GAL	2,192	0.1	533	0.1
Counselor/Therapist	208,453	16.3	75,228	17.7
Child Welfare Staff	83,501	4.4	25,283	5.9
Day Care/Foster Care	5,397	0.3	711	0.2
Medical	116,456	6.2	22,728	5.3
Education	393,668	20.8	83,021	19.5

This table shows that out of all CPS reports made between 2017 and 2019, those from educational personnel made up 20.8% of reports in California and 19.5% of reports in LA County.

¹ Baron, J.E., Goldstein, E.G., & Wallace, C.T. (2020). Suffering in silence: How COVID-19 school closures inhibit the reporting of child maltreatment. *Journal of Public Economics*, 190.

² CPS records reflecting all reports in California for calendar years 2017 through 2019 (N = 1,894,908) were obtained from the California Department of Social Services. All research activities were approved by both state and university human subject review boards and adhered to strict requirements for data security to ensure the confidentiality of individuals.

³ The mandated reporter categories used in this memo align with those used by the University of California at Berkeley, California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP, <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>), the California Department of Social Services (DSS), and the LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). However, the numbers in this memo may not exactly match the data published by CCWIP because CCWIP data are analyzed at a child level, whereas the following tables use data analyzed at the report level.

Table 2. Frequency of Substantiated CPS Reports by Reporter Relationship

Reporter Relationship	California			LA County		
	N=708,349	col%	row%	N=178,413	col%	row%
Family/Friend	40,396	5.7	39.9	7,340	4.1	46.3
Neighbor	6,088	0.9	36.6	1,251	0.7	37.7
Law Enforcement	125,934	17.8	41.0	36,550	20.5	41.4
CASA/GAL	1,181	0.2	53.9	262	0.2	49.2
Counselor/Therapist	103,943	14.7	49.9	30,108	16.9	40.0
Child Welfare Staff	47,445	6.7	56.8	15,520	8.7	61.4
Day Care/Foster Care	2,512	0.4	46.5	436	0.2	61.3
Medical	44,130	6.2	37.9	10,137	5.7	44.6
Education	121,281	17.1	30.8	28,861	16.2	34.8

In California, out of all CPS reports that were substantiated, 17.1% originated from education personnel. This table also shows that 30.8% of reports from education personnel were substantiated. In LA County, education personnel made 16.2% of substantiated reports and 34.8% of reports from education personnel were substantiated.

Table 3. Frequency of CPS Reports in LA County by Reporter Relationship and Race/Ethnicity

Reporter Relationship	White			Hispanic			Black			Asian/Pacific Islander			Native American		
	N=56,087	col%	row%	N=271,409	col%	row%	N=83,528	col%	row%	N=14,236	col%	row%	N=765	col%	row%
Family/Friend	2,380	4.2	15.0	9,264	3.4	58.4	3,855	4.6	24.3	321	2.3	2.0	38	5.0	0.2
Neighbor	400	0.7	12.1	2,076	0.8	62.6	754	0.9	22.8	80	0.6	2.4	--	--	--
Law Enforcement	11,339	20.2	12.8	55,929	20.6	63.3	18,090	21.7	20.5	2,889	20.3	3.3	101	13.2	0.1
CASA/GAL	69	0.1	13.0	328	0.1	61.5	130	0.2	23.7	--	--	--	--	--	--
Counselor/Therapist	10,966	19.6	14.6	50,492	18.6	67.1	11,008	13.2	14.6	2,621	18.4	3.5	141	18.4	0.2
Child Welfare Staff	2,689	2.8	10.6	15,942	5.9	63.1	6,142	7.4	24.3	462	3.3	1.8	48	6.3	0.2
Day Care/Foster Care	115	0.2	16.2	389	0.1	54.7	185	0.2	26.0	17	0.1	2.4	--	--	--
Medical	3,387	6.0	14.9	13,575	5.0	59.7	4,812	5.8	21.2	917	6.4	4.0	39	5.1	0.2
Education	9,756	17.4	11.8	55,133	20.3	66.4	14,005	16.8	16.9	3,947	27.7	4.8	180	23.5	0.2

Note. Cell sizes ≤10 left blank given data sharing requirements.

In LA County, out of all CPS reports for White children, 20.2% were filed by law enforcement (column percentage). Law enforcement filed CPS reports for 11,339 White children, which comprised 12.8% of all reports from this reporter type.

Table 4. Frequency of Substantiated CPS Reports in LA County by Reporter Relationship and Race/Ethnicity

Reporter Relationship	White			Hispanic			Black			Asian/Pacific Islander			Native American		
	N=20,208	col%	row%	N=112,890	col%	row%	N=41,263	col%	row%	N=3,669	col%	row%	N=383	col%	row%
Family/Friend	972	4.8	13.2	4,310	3.8	58.7	1,920	4.7	26.2	110	3.0	1.5	29	7.6	0.4
Neighbor	132	0.7	10.6	766	0.7	61.2	329	0.8	26.3	22	0.6	1.8	--	--	--
Law Enforcement	4,125	20.4	11.3	23,004	20.4	62.9	8,516	20.6	23.3	851	23.2	2.3	54	14.1	0.2
CASA/GAL	32	0.2	12.2	146	0.1	55.7	83	0.2	31.7	--	--	--	--	--	--
Counselor/Therapist	3,586	17.8	11.9	20,083	17.8	66.7	5,724	13.9	19.0	648	17.7	2.2	67	17.5	0.2
Child Welfare Staff	1,532	7.6	9.9	9,614	8.5	62.0	4,124	10.0	26.6	227	6.2	1.5	23	6.0	0.2
Day Care/Foster Care	58	0.3	13.3	231	0.2	53.0	130	0.3	29.8	12	0.3	2.8	--	--	--
Medical	1,322	6.5	13.0	6,039	5.4	59.6	2,487	6.0	24.5	266	7.3	2.6	23	6.0	0.2
Education	2,852	14.1	9.9	19,282	17.1	66.8	5,946	14.4	20.6	705	19.2	2.4	66	17.2	0.2

Note. Cell sizes ≤10 left blank given data sharing requirements.

In LA County, of all substantiated reports made for Hispanic children, 17.8% were filed by a counselor or therapist. Among all reports made by counselors/therapists (that were later substantiated) 66.7% were for Hispanic children.