

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION DURING COVID-19: PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed social engagement and economic sustainability on a wide scale, ravaging communities of color and immigrant households that already struggled with poverty, housing instability and poor health. These challenges are heightened now, as parents and caregivers face disruptions in employment and pay, growing health concerns and new barriers to accessing affordable food, maintaining safe and stable housing, and meeting other critical necessities.

The inability to meet children's basic needs can bring children and their families to the attention of the child welfare system. In fact, prior to COVID-19, more than two-thirds of indicated cases in New York City's child welfare system were related to allegations of neglect, often due to parents' or caregivers' inability to provide basic resources that children need such as food, clothing, shelter, health care, etc.

Child Abuse and Neglect by Allegation, 2018

■ Neglect-Related ■ Abuse-Related ■ Other



| Type of Neglect | | Type of Abuse | |
|----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| Other neglect | 103,285 | Physical abuse | 20,309 |
| Educational neglect | 11,622 | Substance abuse | 21,925 |
| Lack of medical care | 7,307 | Sexual abuse | 3,981 |
| | | Psychological abuse | 1,149 |

Out of concern for the safety and well-being of children and their families as a result of worsened conditions due to the pandemic, CCC is prioritizing advocacy efforts to secure funding for child welfare preventive services. Increased investment for general prevention across city, state and federal levels will be critical to continue to respond and recover from COVID-19 and its aftermath.

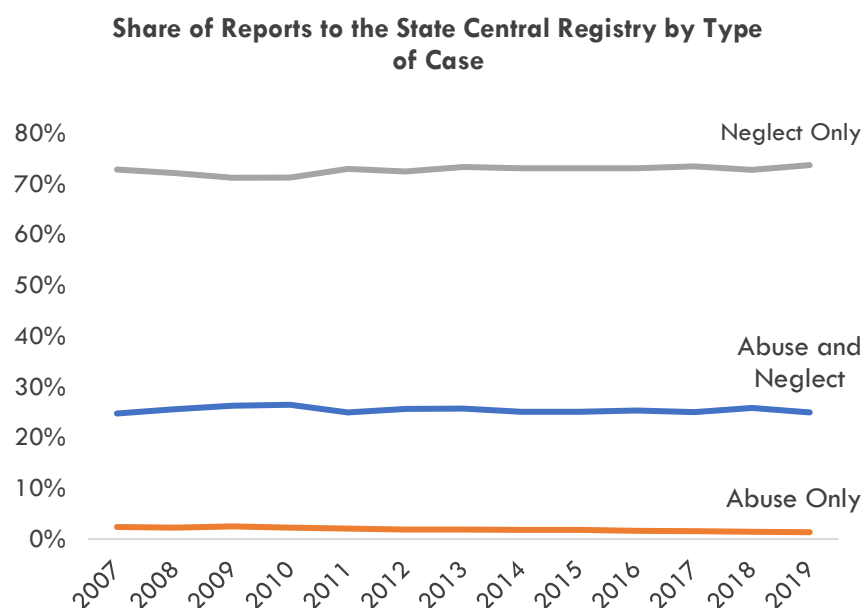
Preventive programs are in fact key to identifying and helping children under duress in times of social isolation, as other institutions (schools, summer camps, community gathering places) no longer come in contact with those at risk. Preventive services programs are structured such that

they are in touch continually with precisely those families most likely to need support, offering essential services to decrease the risks of child maltreatment and provide crucial supports for families in crisis.

Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

Children typically come to the attention of the child welfare system through reports to the State Central Register (SCR), the state-run hotline for reporting concerns of child abuse neglect.

Cases of neglect-only make up the largest share of reports to the State Central Register, and this trend is consistent over time since the Great Recession in 2007. Neglect-only reports include reports of educational neglect, lack of medical care, inadequate food/clothing/shelter, inadequate guardianship, lack of supervision, malnutrition, among others.

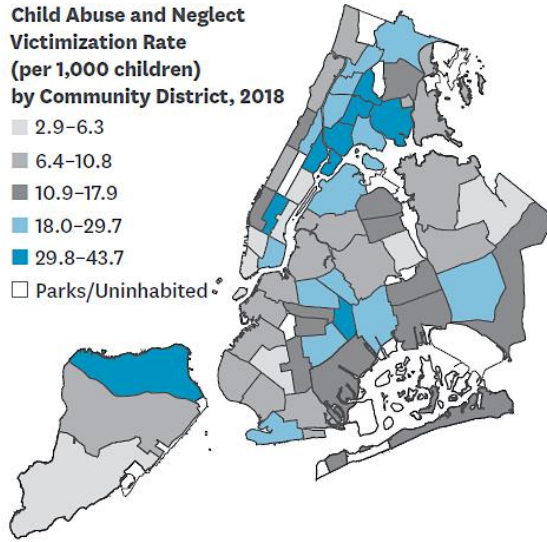
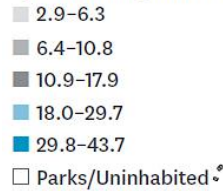


Source: Administration for Children's Services - Annual Child Welfare Indicators Report

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/reports-archive.page>

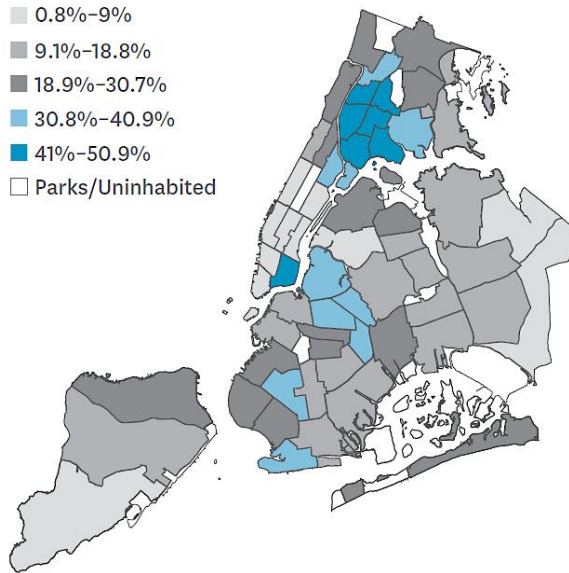
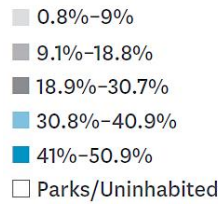


**Child Abuse and Neglect
Victimization Rate
(per 1,000 children)
by Community District, 2018**



Victimization Rate is the number of distinct children under 18 with indicated reports of abuse or neglect (where credible evidence of abuse or neglect is found) per 1,000 children under 18.

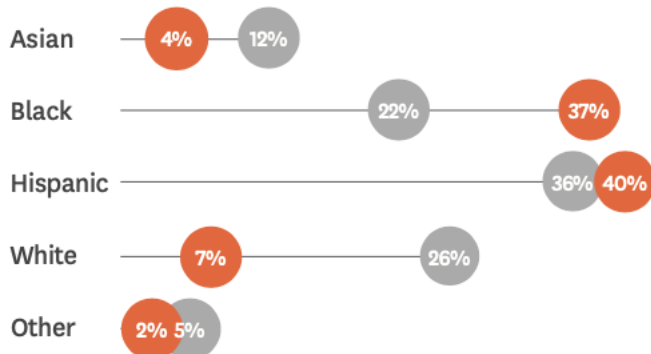
Child Poverty Rate by Community District, 2018



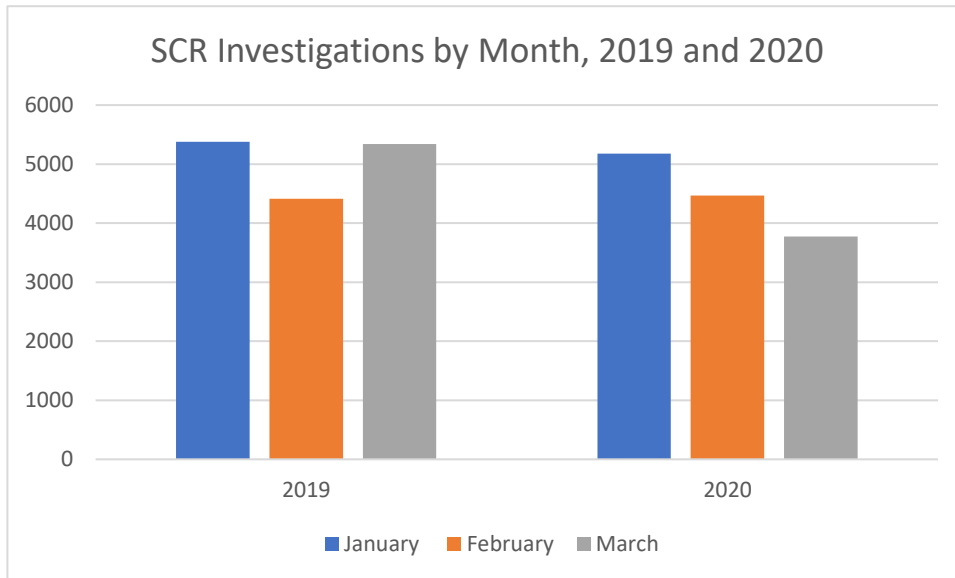
Furthermore, children of color are overrepresented in child welfare investigations relative to their share of the child population, while Asian and White children are underrepresented.

Children in Investigations by Race/Ethnicity, 2018

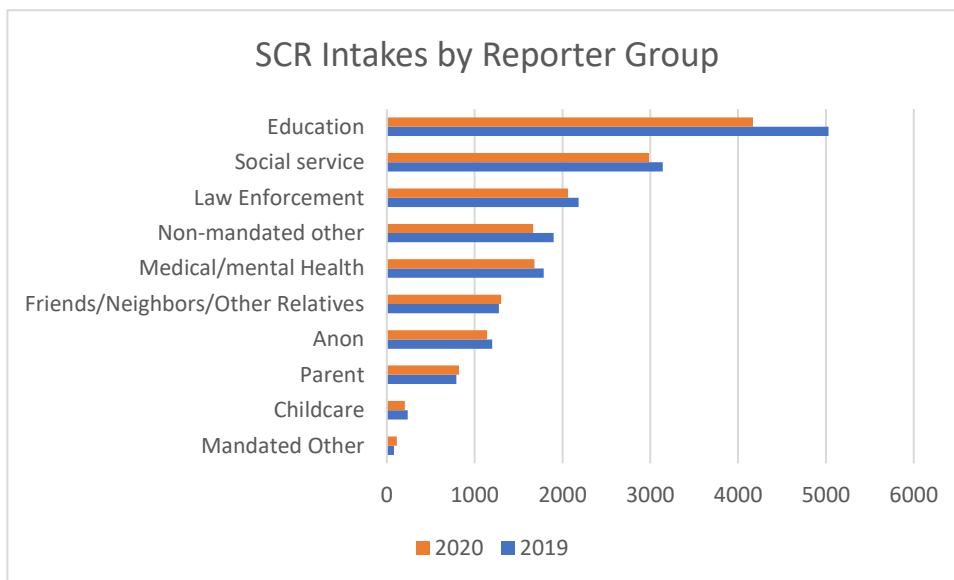
- Children in investigations
- Child population



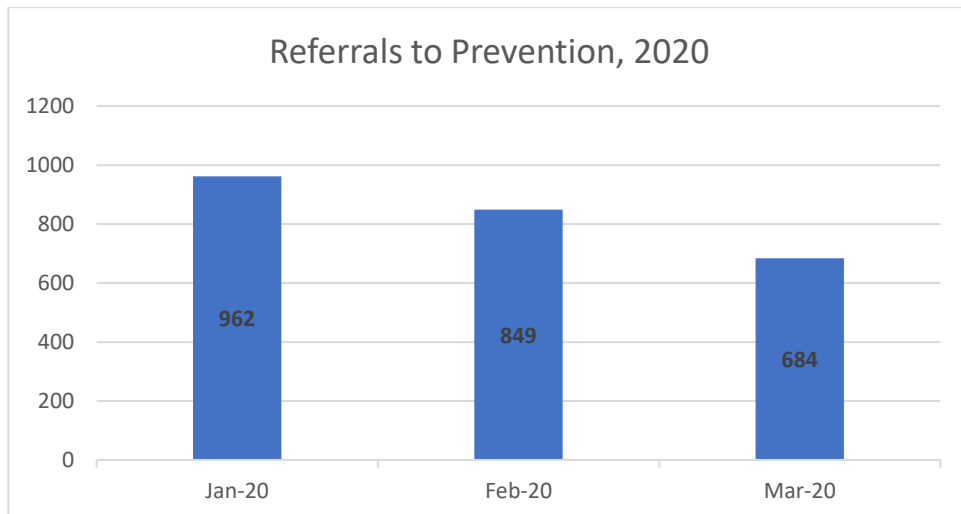
The majority of cases come from a wide array of mandated reporters such as school staff, doctors and other professionals. Shelter in place requirements make it more difficult for mandated reporters to observe children's well-being while child care programs, schools and afterschool programs are now closed and/or offering services remotely. As a potential consequence of this reality, SCR investigations have decreased since the outbreak of COVID-19.



Educators have consistently made up the majority of reports called in to the State Central Register, and the most recent data from ACS show a decline in SCR reports by educators for the first quarter of 2020 (calendar year) compared to the first quarter of 2019.



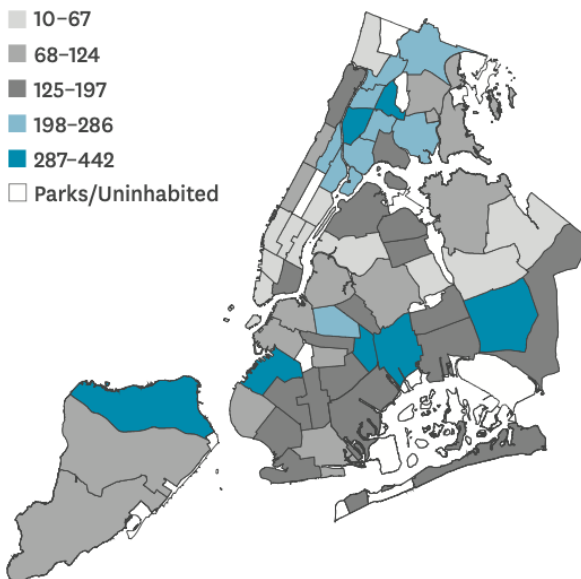
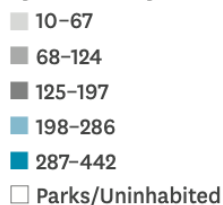
As SCR reports have decreased, preventive services programs have also experienced a decrease in referrals.



General Preventive Providers Are Effectively Responding to the Pandemic

In New York City, the Administration for Children's Services contracts with preventive service programs that provide services to 44,000 children and 20,000 families across the city each year.

**New Child Welfare Preventive Cases
by Community District, 2018**



During the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City's child welfare preventive programs have pivoted quickly to respond to the needs of their communities, building upon existing preventive service delivery models to respond to the heightened needs of families impacted by this crisis. Case management staff in



general preventive programs have been collaborating with educators and communities to ensure that families are being served on multiple fronts, allowing for a broad network of support.

While families with children shelter at home, case management, risk assessments and counseling services are being provided through telephone and video conference, and programs have been able to ensure families are linked to financial relief, ongoing food packages and assistance with enrollment for unemployment and entitlement benefits. Moreover, virtual support groups for parents are providing essential avenues of connection for parents who are overwhelmed and isolated and who have experienced loss due to COVID-19.

For some families, accessing school programs and services online has been a challenge because of lack of access to internet or devices. Child welfare staff have stepped in to help families through these situations, supporting them in paying cell phone bills, purchasing phones and tablets, or accessing free or affordable broadband. Children and youth have also remained connected to their peers, in the context of social isolation, through participation in virtual afterschool programming including arts, recreation and academic supports.

Child welfare preventive services programs are also providing critical supports to immigrant families during this time, as federal policies predating the COVID-19 pandemic have created a climate of fear in communities with high populations of undocumented citizens and mixed status families. Community-based preventive services are providing families with a wide range of necessities including formula, diapers, food, and more because parents and caretakers are not only fearful of exposure to COVID-19 but also the possibility of being discovered by ICE.

General Prevention Must be Part of COVID-19 Recovery Efforts

New York City's Administration for Children's Services is preparing to roll out new contracts for its child welfare preventive programs starting July 1st. These new contracts will expand the City's capacity to provide evidence-based "Therapeutic and Treatment Models," and reduce capacity in general preventive programs (to be called "Family Support" programs in the new system).

We are concerned about reductions in general preventive service capacity. These services function as a safety system today and will be desperately needed for the foreseeable future as the risk of continued COVID-19 outbreaks and shutdowns mean continued instability and isolation for families throughout the summer and fall, and likely well into the new year.

CCC is calling on city, state and federal leaders to protect and expand general preventive services and we urge the City to integrate general prevention into regional enrichment centers and expand Beacon preventive services during the school year. These steps are essential to stabilize families, reduce risk factors and promote immediate and long-term child safety and well-being as part of a COVID-19 recovery effort.