

# Child Maltreatment in Mecklenburg County

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## 2018 Executive Summary

Child maltreatment is one of the most significant issues impacting child welfare. During fiscal year 2016-17, 13,968 children, or 4.6% of all children under 18, were reported maltreated. The number of reported victims decreased 3.9%, or 568 children, from last year. Reporting abuse or neglect is not only essential, it is mandatory. **North Carolina law mandates that any person or institution who suspects that a child is abused, neglected, or dependent must make a report to the county department of social services.** Despite this mandate, child maltreatment is largely underreported. To ensure every child's safety, the community must be educated about child abuse, signs exhibited by a child who is abused, and ways to intervene. To better educate the community, the Council compiles information on maltreatment annually. Key findings and policy considerations from the 2018 report are outlined below.

### Key findings:

- In 2016-17, 57.4% (8,013) of children reported maltreated in Mecklenburg County were identified as black, 28.1% (3,923) were identified as an "other" race, and 14.5% (2,032) identified as white.
- Consistently, the largest age group of children reported abused or neglected were **under age 6**, 39.2% (5,479) in the current year.
- Over the past ten years, **re-reports increased 65.6%** (2,750 reports), while first time reports only increased 12.5% (783 reports)
- Since 2007-08, **the number of investigated reports increased 30.4%**, from 5,722 in 2007-08 to 7,463 in 2016-17. Concurrently, **the number of substantiations decreased 17.2%**, from 1,437 substantiations in 2007-08 to 1,190 substantiations in 2016-17.
- Despite a small increase between 2013 and 2015, **the number of Mecklenburg county children in foster care has steadily decreased.** Conversely, children entering foster care at the **state-level has spiked 21.2%** since 2012-13 after a six year downward trend; making the number of children in foster care today greater than in 2007-2008.

### Policy considerations:

- The North Carolina General Assembly passed Rylan's Law in 2017 to address a series of child welfare issues and requires additional observation before a child can return following a substantiation.
- In Mecklenburg County, the greatest percentage of maltreatment reports have consistently come from the court system or educational personnel, followed by medical personnel and human services.
- Electronic reporting of child maltreatment through an online portal has been suggested as a way to reduce the burden of reporting on both the reporter and system. In the US, there are 13 states with electronic reporting system
- Research demonstrates that Black boys with a history of maltreatment are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Several factors increase the likelihood that families will be reported on suspicions of maltreatment including a child's low performance on a standardized developmental assessment, maternal drug use, four or more children in the home, and maternal depressive symptoms. Universal prevention policies (e.g. family support services, family-friendly workplaces, quality childcare and early education, anti-poverty programs, etc.) can identify these risks early and provide services to children who experience trauma even when report is not substantiated.
- Prevention strategies that work: strengthen economic supports to families, change social norms to support parents and positive parenting, increase access to quality childcare and early education, enhance parenting skills to promote health child development, and intervene to lessen harms and risk.

Protecting children is the responsibility of every adult.

If you have concerns, you need to call Youth & Family Services at 980.31.HELPS (43577).



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Children's  
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**Sources:** Child maltreatment and foster care data used in this report is from UNC Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families, part of the UNC School of Social Work. Data is found through the Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food and Nutrition Services in North Carolina and is available for all counties in North Carolina: <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/> Population data found in this report is from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office: United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2016 American Community Survey. U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2015. Web. 1 October 2017 <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>.