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CHILD SEX ABUSE REPORTS INCREASING DOWNSTATE

24 downstate counties have child sex abuse rates more than double state average

SPRINGFIELD – A new report from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services shows a 6 percent increase in reports of sex abuse across the 101 Illinois counties outside of Cook, where sex abuse allegations have actually declined slightly this year. The report compares allegations of sex abuse from July 1, 2012 through November 30, 2012 to the same period last year. DCFS says the rise in reports is of deep concern because 67 downstate counties already had higher than average sex abuse rates last year, including 24 counties in Central and Southern Illinois where the rate of sexual abuse of children was more than twice the state average.

“The high rate of sex abuse in downstate Illinois, particularly Central and Southern Illinois, is rising even further this year,” said Dave Clarkin, DCFS Spokesperson. “We are implementing a reorganization plan that increases the number of abuse investigators at DCFS so that we can get children and families the help they need more quickly, and we hope lawmakers will fund that plan in early January.”

Downstate counties with sex abuse rates of more than twice the state average last fiscal year (7 victims per 10,000 children; July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012) include:

Quad Cities: Henderson, Knox, Rock Island;

Central Illinois: Clark, Crawford, Edgar, Mason, Pike, Sangamon, Schuyler;

Metro-East: Bond, Calhoun, Macoupin;

Southern Illinois: Alexander, Clay, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Richland, Saline, Wabash, Wayne, White.

(more)

Demographics of the 2,208 indicated sex abuse victims last fiscal year:

- 65 percent of sex abuse victims are from outside of Cook County;
- 72 percent of sex abuse victims are under age of 14;
- 58 percent of sex abuse victims are white;
- While girls account for the majority of victims, one in five sex abuse victims are boys.

Demographics of the 1,965 indicated sex abuse perpetrators last fiscal year:

- 53 percent of abusers are family members, including: uncles and aunts; fathers and mothers; brothers and sisters; step-fathers and step-mothers; grandfathers and grandmothers;
- 60 percent of abusers are white;
- 68 percent of abusers are under age 40;
- While men account for the vast majority of perpetrators, one in 13 perpetrators are women.

Family and friends failing to report sex abuse

Although an estimated one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before age 18, the state's Child Abuse Hotline only received 1,366 calls last year from a family member, friend or neighbor reporting sexual abuse. 82 percent of reports are made by professionals who are required to report abuse and neglect under Illinois law, primarily: police officers, registered nurses, school social workers, mental health professionals and other social services staff. According to the department, relying on law enforcement, hospital personnel and school employees as a safety net for reporting abuse delays getting children help and increases their injury.

"The department offers vital counseling and other supportive services, primarily through Child Advocacy Centers across the state, and DCFS puts safeguards into place so that less than three percent of alleged victims need to be removed from the home," says Clarkin. "Family members, friends and neighbors have a social responsibility to call our Child Abuse Hotline at 800-25-ABUSE whenever they suspect a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect. Children shouldn't have to wait to get help until a 911 call brings police or an ambulance, or until they are old enough to attend school."

(more)

Potential signs of sexual abuse:

- A sudden change in behavior or personality, including regressing to earlier behaviors such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking, nightmares or difficulty sleeping;
- Depression, anxiety, or withdrawal from family, friends or activities;
- Aggressiveness, school problems or self-destructive behavior such as cutting themselves, eating disorders, alcohol or drug use;
- Acting out sexually or showing sexual knowledge that is not age appropriate;
- An older, more dominant child, teenager and/or an adult who seems to want to spend time alone with your child.

“Because children who are sexually abused often experience feelings of guilt and betrayal, they are often unable to report abuse themselves and will even deny the abuse when confronted by a parent, relative or other untrained person,” says Clarkin.

“Parents and other adults should learn the warning signs and trust their instincts when they suspect a child is in harm’s way. When that happens, the best way to help kids is to call the child abuse hotline so that our trained professional staff can determine what is wrong and get kids professional help if they need it.”

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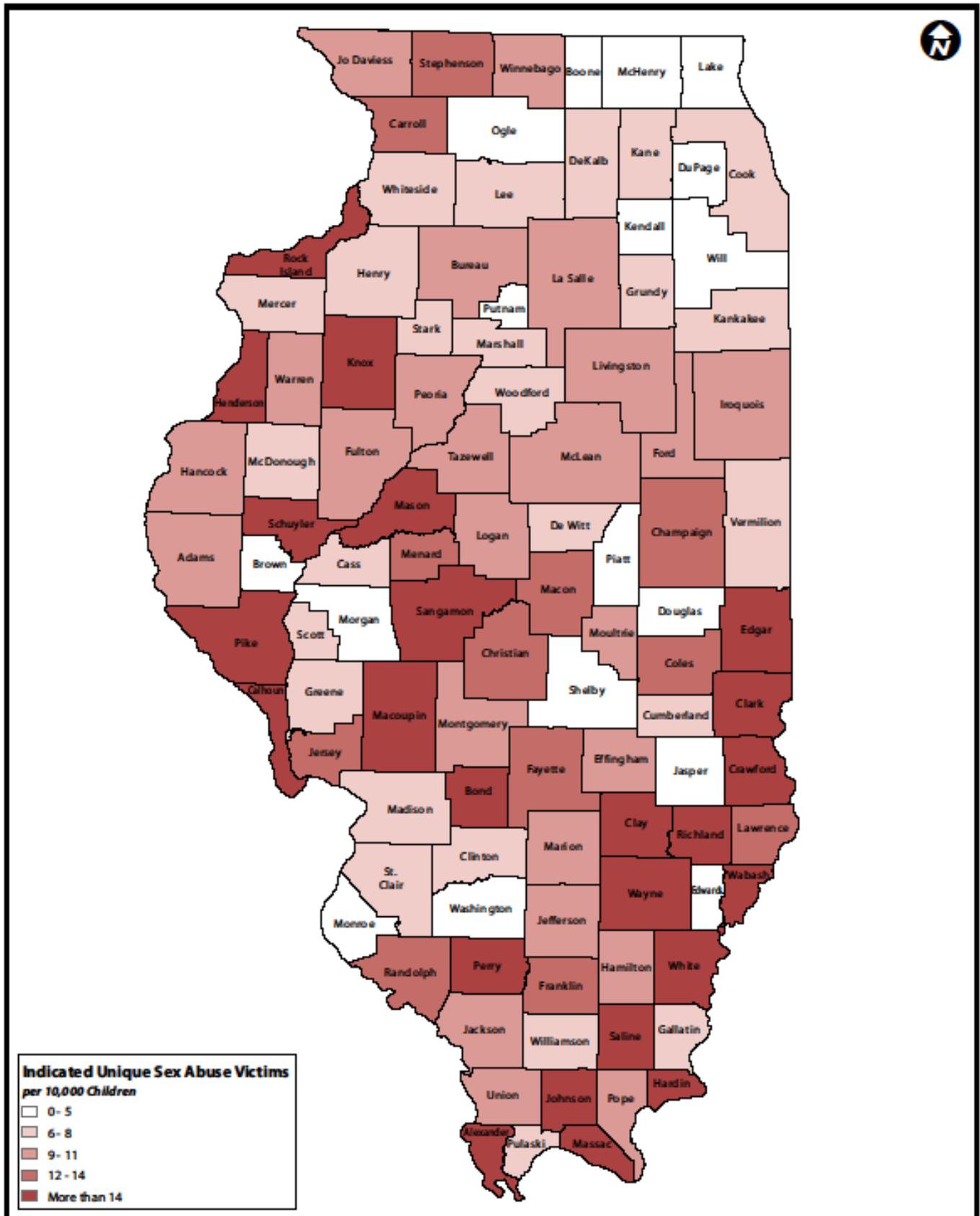
Attachment: Map of Illinois Child Sex Abuse Rates by County, FY 2012

About Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Founded in the 1960’s, DCFS has the primary responsibility of protecting children and strengthening families through the investigation and intervention of suspected child abuse or neglect by parents and other caregivers. Over the last four years, DCFS received more than one million calls to our Child Abuse Hotline, offering and coordinating services wherever needed to help children remain in their homes safely. In instances where children must be removed from the home for their safety and well-being, DCFS makes every effort to return them safely to their homes as quickly as possible. When that simply is not possible, DCFS is equally committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with the permanent, safe, and nurturing homes they need and deserve to reach their fullest potential. As part of its duties, DCFS licenses and monitors all Illinois child welfare agencies and more than 14,000 day care centers, homes, group homes and day care agencies in the state.

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DCFS Unique Indicated Sex Abuse Victims per 10,000 Children: FY 2012



Indicated Unique Sex Abuse Victims per 10,000 Children

- 0-5
- 6-8
- 9-11
- 12-14
- More than 14

Source: Northwestern University MHSP

