

Shaken Baby Syndrome

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), abusive head trauma, which includes shaken baby syndrome, is a leading cause of physical child abuse deaths in children under five in the United States. The CDC also suggests that it is difficult to know the exact number of Shaken Baby Syndrome cases per year. Many cases of Shaken Baby Syndrome are underreported and/or never receive a diagnosis.

According to The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, there were 54 child maltreatment reports alleging a child had been shaken, or was suffering from shaken baby harm in Ohio in 2016. These reports were investigated by local Children's Services agencies in Ohio.

In 2016 40 of the allegations that the child was shaken or suffered shaken baby harm were substantiated. Two of the reports were indicated. Twelve of the allegations were unsubstantiated. Thus, 78% of the reports have a disposition of either substantiated or indicated. This percentage is significantly higher than 2015 data where 67% of reports were substantiated or indicated.

- A substantiated report is a disposition in which there is an admission of child abuse or neglect by the person(s) responsible; an adjudication of child abuse or neglect; or other forms of confirmation.
- An indicated report is a disposition in which there is circumstantial or other isolated indicators of child abuse or neglect lacking confirmation; or a determination by the caseworker that the child may have been abused or neglected.
- An unsubstantiated report is a disposition in which the assessment determined no occurrence of child abuse or neglect.

- 59% of alleged perpetrators were male.
- 34% of the individuals named as the alleged perpetrator were between the age of 20 – 24. This age group consistently represents the largest number of alleged perpetrators.
- 44% of the alleged perpetrators in a substantiated or indicated report have a parental relationship with the child.

To reduce the instances of potential shaken baby injuries in Ohio, parents receive shaken baby educational materials from child birth educators, staff of obstetrician offices and/or public children services agencies.

In Ohio, 31 counties had at least one allegation of shaken baby harm. In 26 of those counties, at least one allegation was either substantiated or indicated.

It is important to note that unsubstantiated reports of child maltreatment where the child's injuries are consistent with having been shaken do exist. Serious injuries with an unsubstantiated finding can occur for various reasons. One reason is that the Children's Services agency determined that the injuries were not caused by the individual named as the alleged perpetrator.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) maintains a webpage dedicated to Shaken Baby Syndrome. This website includes links to downloadable Shaken Baby Syndrome education materials, as well as Claire's Law. Claire's Law was passed in 2008 in response to an incident

where an infant was shaken by her babysitter. Ohio Revised Code section 3701.64 mandates that educational materials are in place and distributed to child birth educators, pediatric physicians' offices, hospital staff, infant's parents or guardian, help me grow staff, child care facilities and public children services agencies. The law also mandates that Children's Services agencies investigating child abuse indicate if the child injuries resulted from the shaking of a baby. In 2016 the ODH Shaken Baby webpage had 461 unique pageviews. The same webpage had 487 unique pageviews in 2015.

Examples of local resources related to Shaken Baby Syndrome include:

In Lucas County, Ohio infant caretakers have the resources of Mercy Hospitals' Crying Baby Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Caretakers can speak to a registered nurse whenever they are frustrated or concerned about a baby that won't stop crying. An assessment is done over the phone to uncover any possible health issues for the crying. Callers are educated on comforting techniques to help soothe the baby. Support and encouragement is also provided to the callers.

Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio published an informational sheet on their website concerning Shaken Baby Syndrome. This guide shows individuals how to recognize signs of Shaken Baby and most importantly, steps to take to avoid Shaken Baby Syndrome.