Child Maltreatment
In 2020, California had 359,699 total referrals for child abuse and neglect. Of those, 199,749 were referred for investigation.¹

There were 60,317 child victims of abuse or neglect in California in 2020, at a rate of 6.9 children per 1,000. This translates to an 4.2% decrease since 2016.²

Of the 60,317 children, 47,931 were first time victims.³

The largest age group of victims was children under one, representing 9,747 of the 60,317 cases.⁴

Types of Maltreatment Victims, 2018
- 53,680, 80% Medical Neglect
- 4,132, 6% Neglect
- 5,422, 8% Physical Abuse
- 3,258, 5% Psychological Maltreatment
- 343, 1% Sexual Abuse
- 47, 0% Sex Trafficking
- 65, 0%

Plans of Safe Care
- In 2020, California reported 1,015 infants who were screened-in with prenatal substance abuse exposure.⁵

- California reported 0 plans of safe care for screened-in infants.⁶

Child Victims by Race or Ethnicity, 2020
- African American
- Hispanic
- Multiple Race
- White
- Unknown
- American or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Pacific Islander

• 87% of child maltreatment perpetrators in 2020 were parents of the child. 13% were non-parents or had an unknown relationship.⁷

• 51% of California’s child victims in 2020 were female while 48% were male.⁸
Foster Care and Adoptions

- 74,441 total children were served by the foster care system in FY 2020.
- 50,737 were in care on the day of September 30th, 2020.
- 24,748 children entered care during the 2020 FY while 23,704 exited during the same year.
- 5,562 of California’s children were adopted while 15,019 were waiting to be adopted.

There was a 1.0% increase in the number of children in care between 2019 and 2020. Adoptions from the system also decreased 20.3% from 2019.

3,273 children in California aged out and exited foster care in 2019. This is a decrease from 1,988 in 2018 and represents an 64.6% increase.

- Children in foster care in 2020 spent an average of 25.0 months in care.
- The average length of stay in California for children waiting to be adopted from foster care is 30.8 months.
- The average age of children waiting to be adopted in 2020 was 6.0 years old.
- The average age of adopted children was 5.2 years old.
Data from 2019 shows that 24,667 children in foster care within California were living with non-relatives while 16,695 stayed with a relative.

3,618 children were staying in group homes while 659 children were classified as runaways. xxii

5% of households in California in 2020 had a grandparent living with a grandchild. xxiii

The average length of time a child in care spent living with their current relative foster family was 12.9 months. xxiv

Child Poverty
California had 2,413,000 children in 2019 who lived with parents who lacked secure employment, representing 27% of all children. xxv

41% of California’s children lived in households with a high housing cost burden. xxvi

The average number of individuals receiving TANF rose from 1,866,182 in 2020 to 3,627,940 in 2021. This represents a 9.7% decrease. xxvii xxviii

The state spent $460,389,520 on WIC in 2021, serving 947,788 people. This represents a 7.6% increase in total participants and a 1% decrease in spending. xxix

$4,011,960 people in California were food insecure in 2019, including 1,205,260 children who struggled with hunger. xxx

49.2% of households receiving SNAP benefits in California in 2019 had children. xxxi
Health

California had 31,699 low birth-weight babies born in 2019 which is constituted as babies weighing less than 5.5 pounds. This translates to 7.1% of infants born in California in 2019.

California had a total of 39,958 preterm births in 2019, meaning less than 37 completed weeks of gestation. 7.8% of all white babies were born premature while 12.6% of black babies arrived prematurely in 2019. The total premature birth rate was 8.9%.

There were 15,356 births to mothers aged 15-19 in California in 2019, representing a rate of 12 in every 1,000 teen girls.

1,879 infants under 1 died in California in 2019, representing an infant mortality rate of 4.2 per 1,000.

7.7% of California’s children had no health insurance in 2019. California is a Medicaid expansion state.

4,344,769 children in California were enrolled in Medicaid in 2020. This represents 4% decrease from 2019.

1,811,755 children in California were in the state Children Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 2020. This represents an 6.9% decrease from 2019.
Juvenile Justice System

- There were 38,617 total arrests for children under 18 in California in 2019.
- 832 of these arrests were for Disorderly Conduct.
- 6,539 arrests were made for Property Crimes.
- 2,549 were arrested under the charge of Drug Abuse Violations.
- 4,131 children lived in juvenile correction facilities in California in 2019. This is a decrease from 5,463 kids in 2017, representing a 24.4% decline.

 Teens & Youth

- 124,000 (6%) of California’s youth were both not in school and not working in 2019.
- In 2020, there were 49 reports of children in California aged 10-14 committing suicide, and 473 reports of suicide among children aged 15-24.
- 301 children under age 19 were killed by a firearm in California in 2020.

Child Welfare Services Funding

- California spent $4,867,209,623 on child welfare services in 2018. Child welfare services are all of the direct and administrative services that state agencies provide to children and families.
- $2,763,642,560 were allocated from the federal government and $2,103,567,062 came from state and local funds.

Federal Funding Sources

- Title IV-E: $284,663,716 (11%)
- Title IV-B: $258,223,879 (9.0%, 10%)
- TANF: $62,174,665 (0.0%, 2%)
- SSBG: $6,697,863 (0.0%, 0%)
- Medicaid: $2,000,568 (544.00%, 77%)
- Other Sources: $6,697,863 (0.0%, 0%)

The breakdown of the $1,155,479 in federal funding received in California in 2018:

- $623,852,324 as part of the Title IV-E Foster Care Program.
- $531,626,455 as part of the Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program.
- California’s sum of expenditures for Social Service Block Grants in 2020 was $550,015,936.


California’s Children 2022


xvi Based on Calculations from the CWLA


xx Ibid.

xli Ibid.


xiv Ibid


xvi Ibid.


xxxI Ibid.

xxxII Ibid.


xxxix Ibid


