

Appendix IV.

Child Protective Services Cases: Fatalities due to Abuse or Neglect

The Virginia Department of Social Services is mandated by statute to investigate child abuse and neglect in Virginia. These investigations are performed by the Child Protective Services Units of local Departments of Social Services. During calendar year 1994, Child Protective Services (CPS) documented that 37 children died as a result of abuse or neglect.¹ These deaths are represented in [Part One](#) of this report and may be categorized as homicide, natural, or unintentional. This occurs because of the different definitions used by the medical examiner system and the ICD-9 coding system. For example, the medical examiner classifies homicides by fatal agency, thus child homicides due to stab or burn would be classified as homicide due to stab or burn rather than due to child abuse. In addition, CPS is the only system that categorizes deaths as a result of neglect when the precipitating circumstances are lack of supervision by caretakers or acts of omission, such as failing to take children for medical attention in a timely manner. The distinguishing feature of a CPS fatality is that the death occurred either at the hands of a parent or caretaker or because the parent or caretaker failed to provide adequate supervision or failed to attend to the medical needs of the child. Of

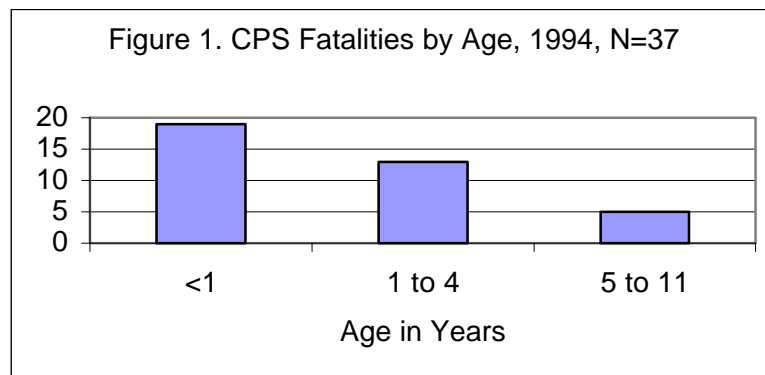
the 37 CPS fatalities in 1994, 20 died as result of abuse and 17 died as a result of neglect.

Types of Abuse or Neglect

Of the 17 deaths attributed to neglect, four occurred due to abandonment shortly after birth, one was a result of medical neglect and the remaining deaths were a consequence of lack of supervision. These include four deaths by drowning, two fire deaths, four deaths by smothering, and two deaths from other causes. The abuse deaths include six deaths due to internal injuries, five deaths due to brain damage as a result of shaking, five deaths due to suffocation, two deaths due to stab injuries, one death due to drowning, and one death due to burns or scalds.

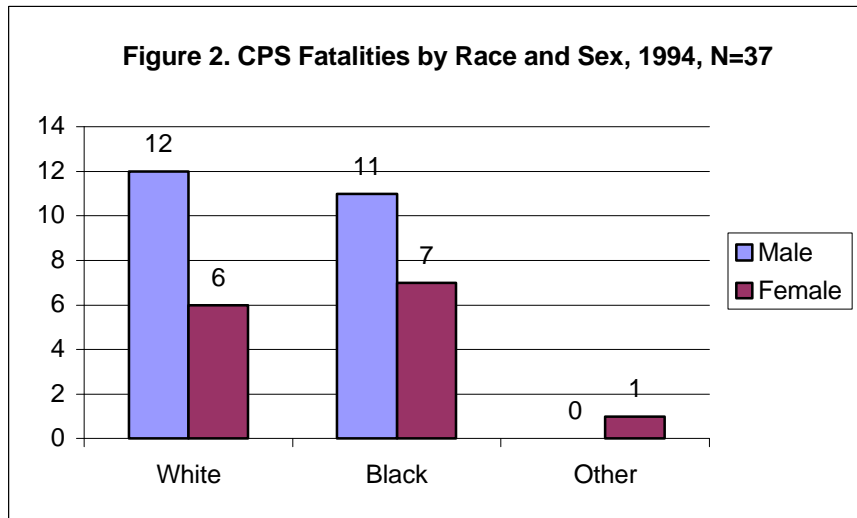
Age

The age range of these children was newborn to 11 years old. Nineteen deaths occurred among children less than one year old representing 51% of the total. Children aged 1 to 4 were the second largest group, accounting for 13 or 35% of the total. Children aged 5 to 11 accounted for five deaths or 14% of the total ([Figure 1](#)).



Race/Sex

Boys were three times more frequently the victims of abuse, accounting for 15 of the 20 cases. The neglect deaths were almost equally divided between boys and girls, accounting for nine and eight deaths respectively (Figure 2).



ⁱThe information in this section was provided by the Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services. CPS usually presents child fatality and child abuse and neglect data in a fiscal year format, consequently the data presented here are different from previously published reports.