



Data from the 2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook

2,976

In 2016 in Rhode Island, there were **2,976** child victims of abuse and neglect.

79%
NEGLECT

The breakdown by type of child abuse and neglect in 2016 was **79%** neglect, **13%** physical abuse, **4%** sexual abuse, and **4%** other.

On December 31, 2016, **355** children were living in a residential facility or group home (a decline of 11% from December 31, 2015), **678** children were living in a relative foster home, and **602** children were living in a non-relative foster home.

275

On September 30, 2016, there were **275** Rhode Island children in the care of DCYF who were waiting to be adopted.

639
ER VISITS

Between 2011 and 2015, there were **639** emergency department visits and **169** hospitalizations of children due to child abuse and neglect.

According to DCYF, to date in 2017 there have been **10** deaths of children from all causes, including abuse and neglect.

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The Providence Journal, in partnership with Leadership Rhode Island and Rhode Island College, present a Publick Occurrences forum to explore problems at the R.I. Department of Children, Youth & Families.

DCYF: Children in Crisis

Panel 1:

Why does DCYF seem to cycle from tragedy to tragedy?



Sue Pearlmuter
Dean, Rhode Island College
School of Social Work

Suzan Morris
Retired DCYF
social worker

Panel 2:

What do insiders say could be changed?



Michelle Saunders
R.I. business executive,
grew up in foster care

Bruce Perreault
R.I. banker, grew up
in foster care

Jennifer Griffith
Rhode Island
Child Advocate

Panel 3:

What are the policy-makers doing to address the issues?



Michael Forte
Chief Judge, Rhode
Island Family Court

Trista Piccola
DCYF Director

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Executive Director,
Rhode Island Kids Count



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Meet the Panelists



Sue Pearlmuter

Dean, Rhode Island College School of Social Work

Pearlmuter began as a child welfare worker in Massachusetts in the 1960s. Later, she worked with low-income women in Missouri and trained child-welfare workers and supervisors in Kansas and Ohio. She got her Ph.D in 1996 moving to RIC in 2004. She became dean in 2008.



Suzan Morris

Retired DCYF social worker

Miller started as a case worker for DCYF in 1984. In 1992 she became a supervisor; in 2002 a regional director. After retiring in 2012, she reviews state programs for the federal department of family services.



Michelle Saunders

R.I. business executive, grew up in foster care

Saunders grew up in Rhode Island foster care to get a master's degree from URI and a series of human resources jobs. She found a way up and out of foster care. Her siblings did not.



Bruce Perreault

R.I. banker, grew up in foster care

Abandoned when he was 2, Perreault was placed with Theresa and Gerald Perreault. They adopted him when he was 7. Growing up, he lived with about 100 different children who came in and out of the house. Of his parents, he says: "I was lucky to stay with them the whole time."



Jennifer Griffith

Dean, Rhode Island College School of Social Work

Before being named child advocate, Griffith worked as a Family Law Center attorney at Rhode Island Legal Services where she represented clients in divorces, custody cases, restraining orders, child support motions, and abuse and neglect petitions filed by DCYF.



Michael Forte

Chief Judge, Rhode Island Family Court

Forte was named chief in June, 2016 after nearly 30 years on the Family Court bench. As chief his goal is to reorganize the court "to provide optimum services to the families of Rhode Island."



Trista Piccola

DCYF Director

Piccola was the deputy director of the Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services department in Cleveland, when Governor Raimondo named her DCYF director this spring. She began her career as a child protective services worker.



Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Executive Director, Rhode Island Kids Count

A lawyer, Bryant is the founding executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count. Data and research driven, Kids Count provides information and strategies on "what works" and promotes best practices to improve the well-being of children.



Mike Ritz

Moderator

A Publick Occurrences sponsor and organizer, Ritz is the executive director of Leadership Rhode Island, which since 1981 has helped leaders and emerging leaders "to positively affect their communities."

