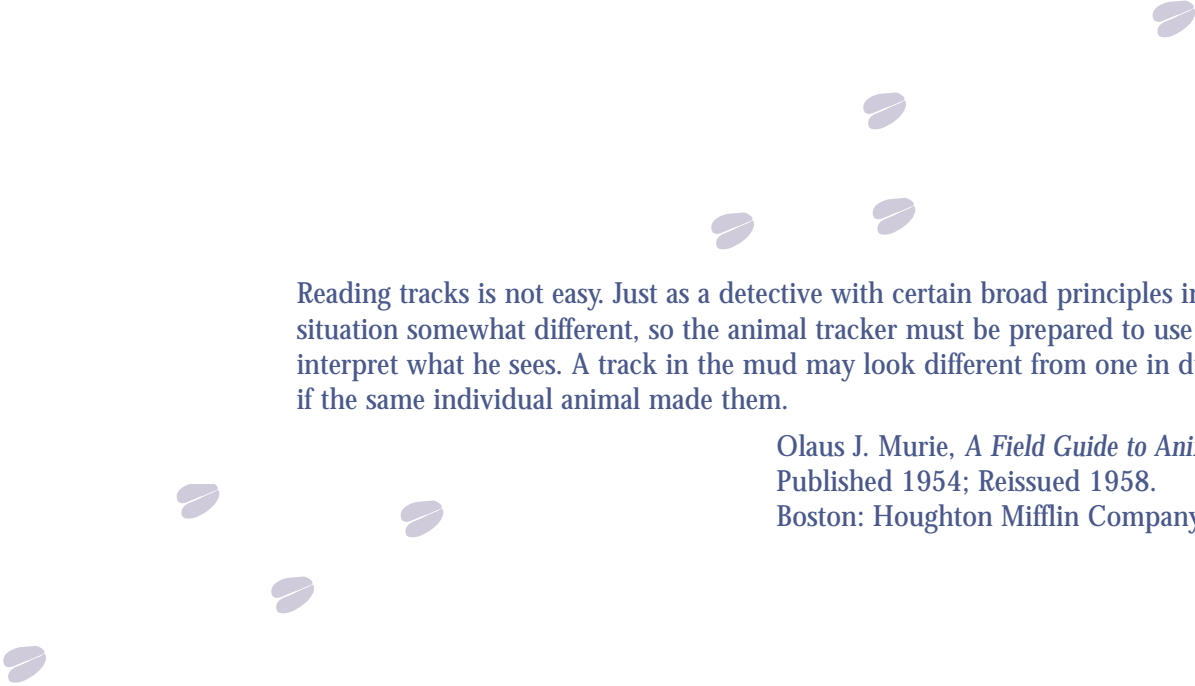

Children in Danger

Child Death Rate

Teen Violent Death

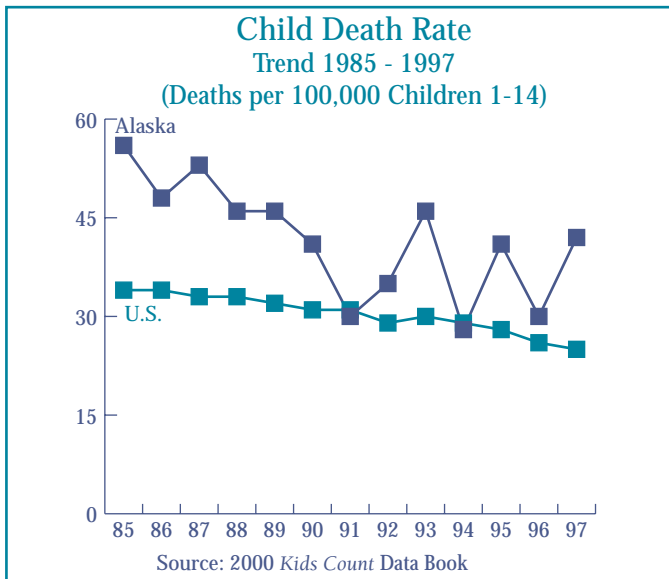
Child Abuse and Neglect

Child Injuries



Reading tracks is not easy. Just as a detective with certain broad principles in mind finds each situation somewhat different, so the animal tracker must be prepared to use his ingenuity to interpret what he sees. A track in the mud may look different from one in dust, or in snow, even if the same individual animal made them.

Olaus J. Murie, *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*
Published 1954; Reissued 1958.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The child death rate is the number of deaths per 100,000 children, ages 1-14, from both illness and injury. Regional statistics are based on the child's place of residence, not place of death.

Injuries kill most of the children who die in Alaska and nationwide—including injuries from vehicle and airplane crashes, drownings, fires, poisonings, and gunshot wounds. Many children could be saved if parents and other adults used infant car seats, maintained smoke detectors in homes, and kept firearms and poisons away from children.

Alaska had the highest child death rate in the U.S. in 1997: 42 per 100,000 children ages 1-14, as compared with a national average of 25 per 100,000. The rate in the U.S. declined steadily in recent years, but Alaska's rate fluctuates sharply from year to year, partly because the number of Alaskan children

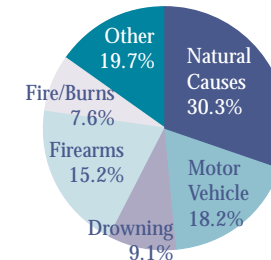
who die is—fortunately—small. So a small change in the number of deaths can make a significant difference in the rate of death in a given year. Looking at an average rate over several years helps smooth out year-to-year fluctuations.

From 1993 through 1997, the death rate among Alaskan children was 37 deaths per 100,000 children—lower than in just 1997, but still far above the national average.

The death rate among Alaskan children varied sharply by region in recent years, from a high of 96 per 100,000 in the Northern region to a low of 25 per 100,000 in Anchorage.

Natural causes killed about a third of the children who died in Alaska in 1998, but injuries killed the rest. The leading cause of injury death was vehicle accidents.

How Did Alaska Children (1-17) Die in 1998? Causes of Death (In Percentages)

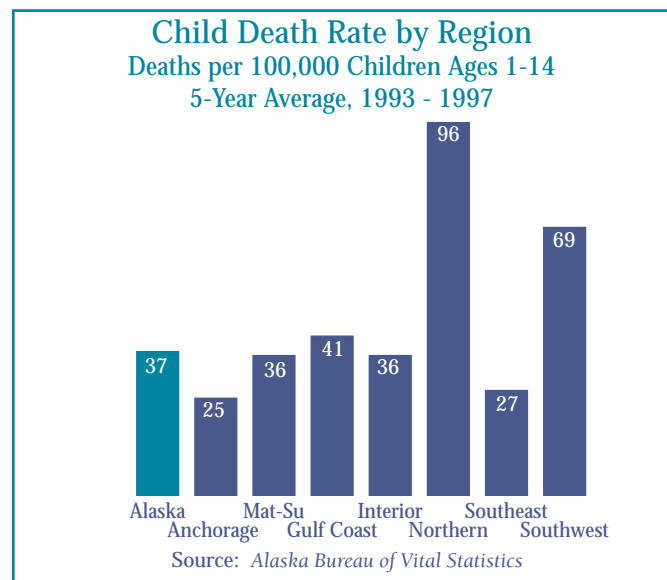


Manner of Death (Numbers of Deaths by Age)

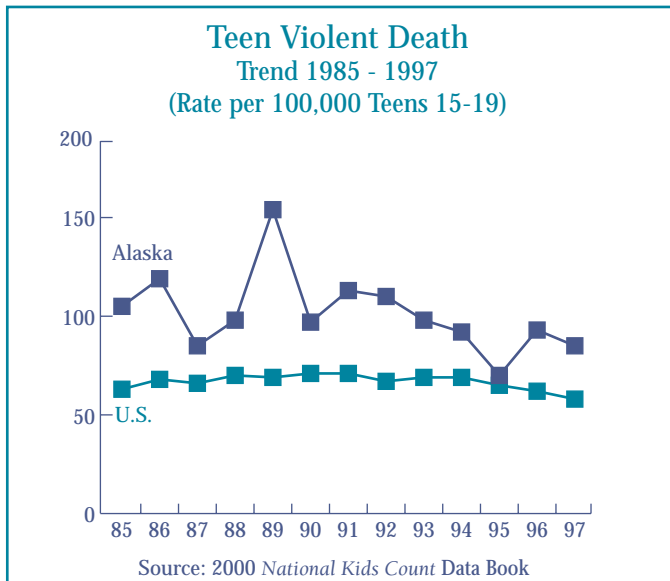
	1-4	5-9	10-17	Total
Natural Causes	7	5	8	20
Accidents	5	7	19	31
Suicides	0	0	9	9
Homicides	2	1	2	5
Other	1	0	0	1
Total	15	13	38	66

Total Deaths in 1998: 66

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1998 Annual Report



TEEN VIOLENT DEATH



Still, even if we look at an annual average over a longer period—1993 through 1997—we see that Alaska’s rate is consistently high. During that five-year period, the violent death rate among Alaska’s teenagers averaged 104 per 100,000. (We use the most current Alaska population numbers to calculate our five-year averages; the resulting rates are somewhat different from the national *Kids Count* calculations for Alaska.)

The violent death rate among Alaska’s teenagers varies sharply by region. On average from 1993 through 1997, the highest rate (369

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

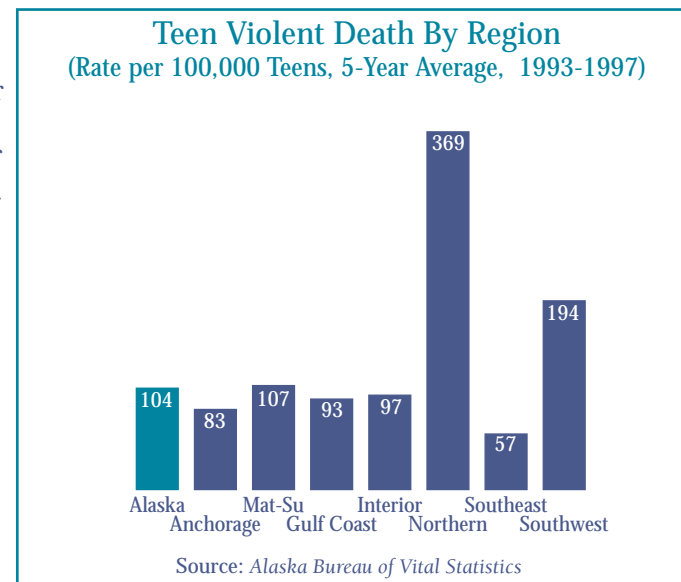
This indicator measures the rate of violent death (from accidents, homicides, and suicides) per 100,000 teenagers ages 15 to 19. The national *Kids Count Data Book* for 2000 reports that nearly 90 percent of deaths among teenagers nationwide in 1997 resulted from accidents, homicides or suicides.¹

The rate of teen violent death in Alaska has been consistently higher than the national rate for more than a decade. In 1997, Alaska’s rate was 85 deaths per 100,000 teenagers, compared with a national rate of 58. Only two states (Arkansas and Mississippi) had higher rates in 1997.

But remember that Alaska’s rate is based on a relatively small number of deaths (44 in 1997), so a modest change in the number of deaths in a given year can make a significant change in the death rate.

per 100,000 in the Northern region) was nearly 6.5 times greater than the lowest rate (57 per 100,000 in the Southeast).

Again, remember that numbers of actual deaths in regions of Alaska are very small. Using an average over a period of years rather than a single year shows a more reliable picture of death rates in areas with small populations—but even so, the rates are based on a relatively small number of deaths.



DEFINITION

Child abuse or neglect exists when parents or other adult guardians hurt or endanger children in their care—physically or mentally—or fail to protect them from such harm.

Alaska Investigation Procedures and Interpretation of Statistics

The Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) in the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services investigates reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in Alaska. Anyone who believes a child is in danger can file a report with DFYS, which screens the reports and assigns investigation priority by assessing the degree of potential risk to the child.

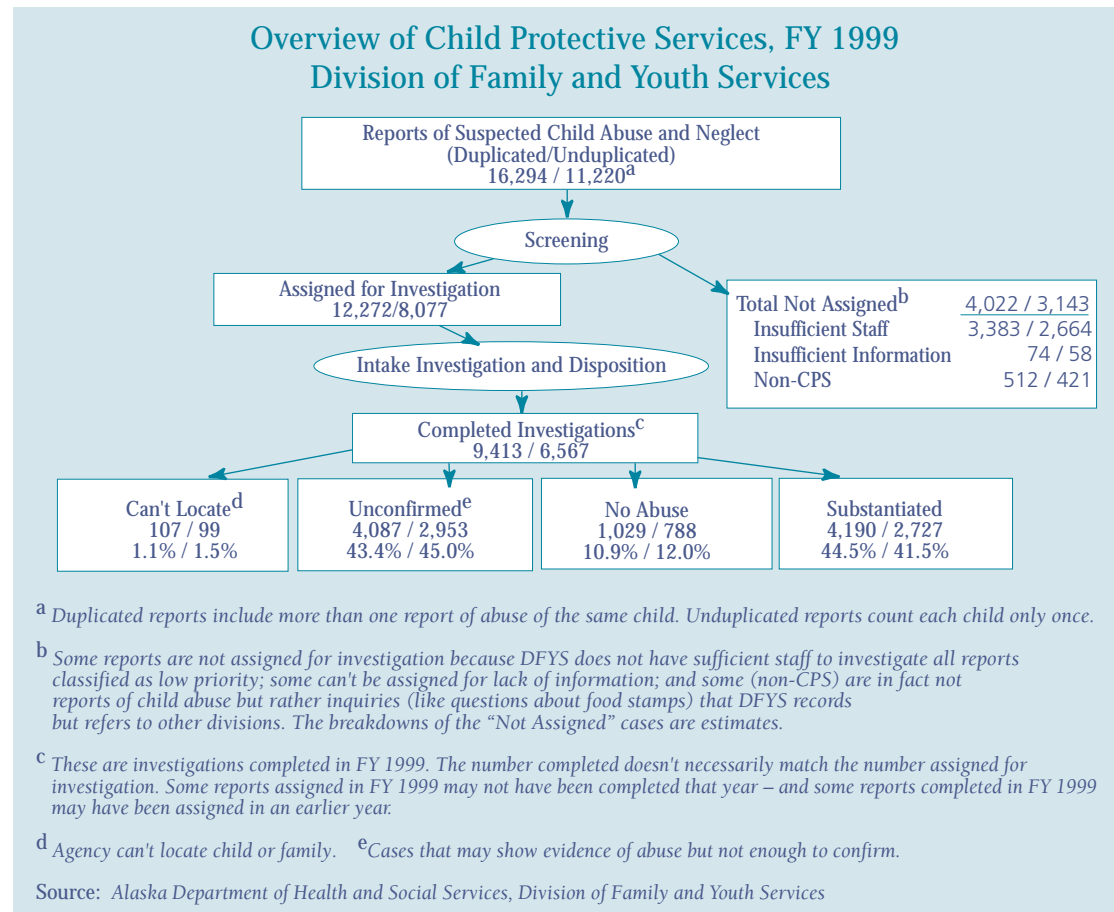
DFYS investigates most (over 70 percent in FY 1999) but not all reports it receives. DFYS cites lack of staff as the chief reason for not investigating some reports of abuse that it assesses as posing the lowest risk to children.

As the flow chart shows, DFYS received almost 16,300 duplicated reports of abuse in FY 1999 and 11,200 unduplicated reports. Duplicated reports include multiple reports of suspected abuse of the same child. Unduplicated counts include each child only once, even if there are several reports concerning the same child. The number of duplicated reports shows DFYS's workload; the unduplicated reports show the number of children who may have suffered abuse.

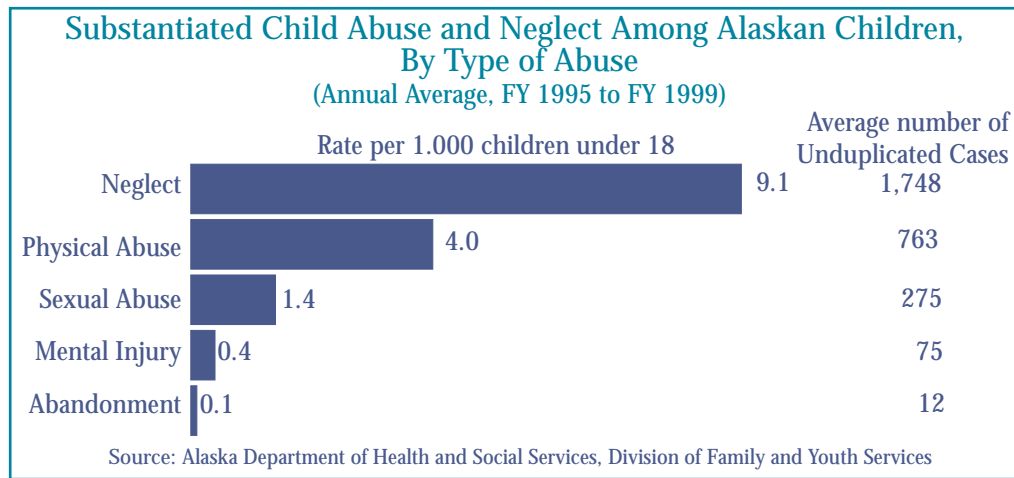
Not all reports of abuse are substantiated. The flow chart shows that of the investigations completed in FY 1999, about 42 to 45 percent involving more than 2,700 children and 4,200 reports were substantiated.

Another 45 percent of cases, involving nearly 3,000 children and more than 4,000 reports, were classified as “unconfirmed,” which means that investigators found evidence of child abuse but not enough to meet DFYS's criteria for substantiating abuse.

In about 10 to 12 percent of cases in FY 1999, DFYS found no abuse, and in a few cases it couldn't locate the children who had been reported as abused.



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (CONTINUED)



Child Abuse by Type

Neglect was by far the most frequent type of substantiated child abuse in Alaska in the late 1990s. From fiscal year 1995 through 1999, DFYS found evidence that on average about 9 in 1,000 Alaskan children had been neglected each year. During the same period, an average of 4 per 1,000 children were physically abused each year. Sexual abuse occurred at less than half that rate—about 1.4 per 1,000 children. Mental injury and abandonment were uncommon.

Trends in Child Abuse

Reports of suspected child abuse and neglect varied little between FY95 and FY99, with DFYS receiving about 57 (unduplicated) reports of abuse for every 1,000 Alaskan children under 18. Rates of substantiated abuse were much lower and were also stable in the late 1990s. DFYS found evidence that parents or guardians had abused or neglected about 15 of every 1,000 children.

Child Abuse by Race

Rates of child abuse and neglect varied significantly by race in recent years. DFYS found that on average from FY 1995 through 1999, nearly 33 in 1,000 Alaska Native children and more than 21 in 1,000 Black children in the state were abused or neglected. Substantiated rates of abuse were much lower among White children (8 per 1,000) and Asian/Pacific Island children (6 per 1,000).

Alaska Native and Black children were most likely to be neglected, but rates of physical abuse among Native and Black children were also high. White and Asian children were neglected and physically abused at lower but about equal rates.

SUBSTANTIATED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG ALASKAN CHILDREN BY RACE AND TYPE OF ABUSE (ANNUAL AVERAGE FY 1995-99)

(Average Number Unduplicated Cases and Rate per 1,000 Children Under 18)

	Neglect		Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Mental Injury		Abandonment		Total	
	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate	#	Rate
White	502	3.8	363	2.7	125	0.9	37	0.3	5	n/a*	1,031	7.7
AK Native	1,003	23.7	246	5.8	101	2.4	27	0.6	6	n/a*	1,383	32.6
Black	117	12.9	62	6.8	14	1.5	6	n/a*	0.4	n/a*	198	21.8
Asian/PI	24	2.7	21	2.3	4	n/a*	1	n/a*	0	n/a*	51	5.6

* Rate not available because numbers of cases too small.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

TRENDS IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FY 1995-FY99

(Number of Unduplicated Cases and Rates per 1,000 Children Under Age 18)

	FY95		FY96		FY97		FY98		FY99	
	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate
Reported	10,908	56.8	10,691	55.7	10,615	55.5	11,191	57.9	11,220	57.8
Not Assigned	4,120	-	3,589	-	3,452	-	3,186	-	3,143	-
Completed Investigations*	6,845	35.6	6,473	33.7	7,782	40.7	7,570	39.2	6,567	33.8
Substantiated	2,866	14.9	2,695	14.0	3,034	15.9	3,042	15.7	2,727	14.0
Unconfirmed	3,574	18.6	3,271	17.0	4,087	21.4	3,642	18.9	2,953	15.2
No Evidence of Abuse	351	1.8	436	2.3	571	3.0	773	4.0	788	4.1
Can't Locate	54	0.3	71	0.4	90	0.5	113	0.6	99	0.5

*Investigations completed in any given year may have begun in an earlier year.

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (CONTINUED)

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

Among all the dangers children face as they grow up, child abuse is the most reprehensible. But Alaskans are fighting child abuse in a number of ways.

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network

The Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network is a statewide coalition of non-profit organizations that works with the Alaska Children's Trust (a state government entity) and hundreds of community partners to make Alaskans more aware of ways to prevent child abuse and help families. Through four regional centers, the network serves as a clearinghouse for information on and resources for preventing child abuse.

Key Network Prevention Activities

Teleconferences: Four to six times a year the network hosts "Statewide Discussions on Prevention." These teleconferences include discussions across communities about the importance of efforts to prevent child abuse; about model family support programs and prevention initiatives; about opportunities to advocate for protection of children; and about issues facing children and families.

Statewide Media Campaign: The network, the Alaska Children's Trust, and the Alaska Public Radio Network collaborate in an ongoing radio campaign to promote community responsibility for preventing child abuse. Parents and community partners help write and review sample announcements and select messages.

Announcements on ways to combat child abuse aired 3,000 times around the state in 2000.

Community Resource Kits: The network and the Alaska Children's Trust have developed Community Resource Kits that offer an array of information, ideas, and resources to use in the fight against child abuse. To get one you can call 1-800-643-KIDS or download a copy at: www.eed.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html

Newsletters, Newspaper columns, Website: www.ak.org/html/childabuseprevention.html The network uses these means to share prevention information, highlight model programs and key resources, describe upcoming training sessions, and promote increased community responsibility for child abuse prevention.

Parental Involvement: The network involves parents in all its activities. For example, parents take part in network teleconferences and serve as reviewers for public service announcements and the Community Resource Kit.

To get involved in the Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network:

Write to Marie J. Lavigne, Statewide Coordinator, Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network and Prevent Child Abuse, Alaska Chapter, at Anchorage Center for Families, 3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 102, Anchorage, AK 99508

Or call: 907/257-0305 or 1-888-701-0328; Statewide Parent Resource Line 1-800-CHILDREN

Or e-mail: prevention@acfonline.org

Alaska Children's Trust

The Alaska Children's Trust is a state government entity that raises money for and helps fund community-based programs to strengthen families and prevent child abuse. The trust began with a \$6 million state appropriation in 1996, and by 1999 the trust account had grown to \$9 million, through private donations and income reinvestment. The trust and the Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network work together closely, encouraging prevention of child abuse through community programs around Alaska.

A Community-Based Program: Intensive Home-Based Services

For most of the 1990s, Anchorage Center for Families has provided a program designed to help strengthen families, thereby reducing the number of children who are abused or who have to be taken out of their homes. The Intensive Home-Based Services Program sends workers into the homes of families with children who are either severely emotionally disturbed or who have been referred to the program by DFYS. These workers help families learn about and get access to services and resources available through the program or in the broader community.

In an evaluation of the program after its first year, a majority of families reported a number of improvements—including better social support, family interaction, and children's well-being. For more information about this program, get in touch with the Anchorage Center for Families.

Resources to Help Prevent Abuse

Below we list some of the organizations and programs the prevention network tracks. More information is available at: www.ak.org/html/childabuseprevention.html

AK Info Network: www.ak.org

Alaska Children's Trust:
www.eed.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html

Alaska Family Partnership (Fairbanks Native Association): www.alaskafamily.org/

Ak. Family Violence Prevention Clearinghouse
www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/mcfh/library.htm

Statistics on Reported Child Abuse In Alaska
www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/stats/data.htm

Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services
www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/

Foster A Future: Becoming A Foster Parent
www.hss.state.ak.us/foster/default1.htm

RID Alaska of Child Sexual Abuse: www.alaskanet/~rosenbau/NationalPreventionResources

Admin. for Children and Families: www.acf.gov/

American Professional Society on Abuse of Children
<http://www.apsac.org>

Child Protection Clearinghouse
www.cssp.org/cpcintro.html

Children's Bureau Express Newsletter
www.calib.com/cbexpress/

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu/

Family Resource Coalition of America
www.frca.org

National Alliance for Children's Trust and Prevention Funds: www.msu.edu/user/millsda/index.html

National Child Abuse Prevention Network
child.cornell.edu

National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect
www.ndacan.cornell.edu/

National Indian Child Welfare Association
www.nicwa.org

Parents Anon.: www.parentsanonymous-natl.org/

Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org/index.html

Stop It Now (Child Sexual Abuse Prevention)
www.stopitnow.com/

Partnership Against Violence Network
www.pavnet.org/

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention
www.shakenbaby.com

Shaken Baby Prevention Plus
members.aol.com/sbspp/sbspp.html

Resources for Parents and Caregivers Especially for Parents:
www.childrenhospitals.net/nachri/news/forparents.html

Family and Work Institute
www.familiesandworkinst.org/

Fathers and Family Link
fatherfamilylink.gse.upenn.edu/

I Am Your Child: www.iamyourchild.org

KidSource Online: Resources for Parents and Children:
kidsource.com/

National Parent Consortium
www.natlparentconsortium.org/

National Parenting Center
www.natlparentconsortium.org/

National Parent Information Network
npin.org/index.html

Resources for Advocates
Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund:www.childrensdefense.org/

Coalition for America's Children: www.usakids.org/

Connect for Kids
www.connectforkids.org/index.htm

Federal Interagency Forum on Children and Family Statistics: www.childstats.gov/

Future of Children Journal
www.futureofchildren.org/index.htm

Handsnet: www.handsnet.org/

National Association of Child Advocates
www.childadvocacy.org

National Association of Counsel for Children
NACCchildlaw.org/

National Child Advocacy Center:
www.ncac-hsv.org/

Stand For Children: www.stand.org

CHILD INJURIES IN ALASKA

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Injury figures include physical injuries to Alaskan children (through age 19) that are serious enough to require medical attention or to cause death. Hospitalizations or deaths resulting from illnesses are excluded

Injuries to children can be either intentional or accidental—and many injuries of all kinds could be prevented. A big share of accidental injuries could be prevented through simple measures—like insuring that children wear bike helmets, flotation devices, seatbelts, and other safety devices—and by supervising small children more closely.

For example, the risk of head injury to children riding bicycles can be reduced as much as 85 percent if they wear properly-fastened helmets.² A 1997 study found that two thirds of children hit by cars were unsupervised at the time they were hurt.³ And although a number of Alaskan children are accidentally hurt or killed by firearms every year, only one in four adults who owned firearms in 1999 said they had attended a firearm safety course within the previous three years.⁴

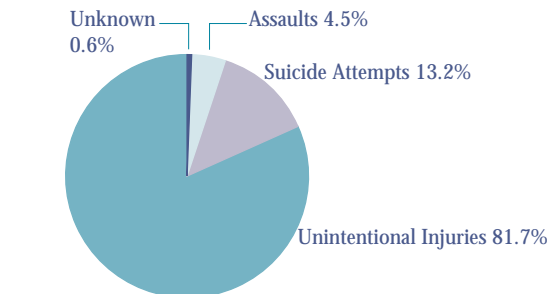
Many intentional injuries—including homicides and child abuse—could also be prevented. But the means of prevention are more complex.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reports that annually from 1994 through 1997, about one in four Alaskan children suffered injuries serious enough to require getting medical attention, missing school, or resting in bed.⁵ Over that period, the department found:

- Accidents accounted for about 8 in 10 of the injuries that put Alaska children in the hospital—but more than 1 in 10 resulted from suicide attempts.
- Teenagers (15 to 19) were the likeliest to be hurt.
- Low-income Black and Native children living in urban environments were more likely than other children to sustain serious injuries.
- The three most prevalent non-fatal injuries were from falls, suicide attempts, and vehicle accidents.
- Alaska Natives account for about 22 percent of the state's children, but they sustained almost 41 percent of the serious and fatal injuries.

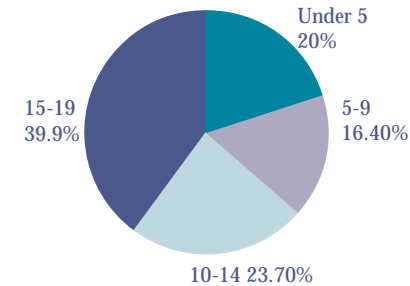
Unfortunately, some children who are injured die from those injuries. Of the 66 children (through age 17) who died in Alaska in 1998, about a third died from natural causes

Percent of Injury Hospitalizations by Type, Age 19 and Under, Alaska, 1994 - 1997



Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

Percent of Fatal and Serious Non-Fatal Injuries by Age, 19 and Under Alaska, 1994 - 1997



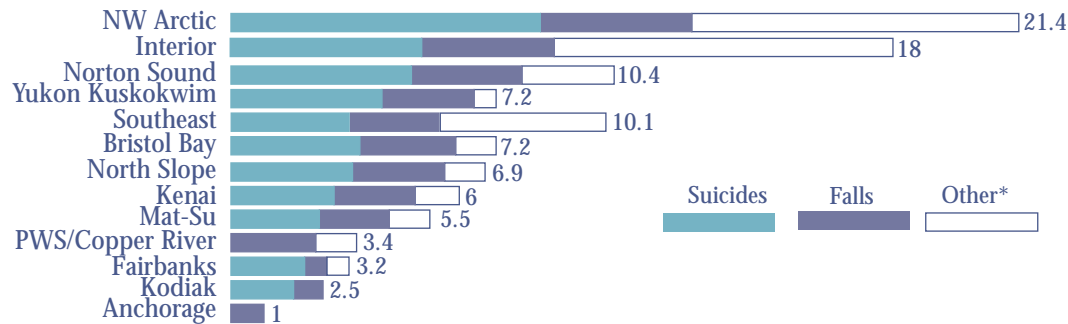
Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

and the rest from injuries. The leading cause of injury deaths was vehicle accidents, followed by firearms. But one in five of the children who died in 1998 either committed suicide or were murdered. (See figure, page 43).

Injury rates—including both injuries that resulted in serious but not fatal injuries and those that were fatal—differed sharply within regions of Alaska in recent years. During the period from 1994 through 1997, the

Northwest Arctic region saw the highest rates, with 21 in 1,000 children sustaining either serious or fatal injuries. At the other end of the spectrum was Anchorage, where about 1 in 1,000 children suffered serious or fatal injuries. As the figure on page 51 shows, suicides and suicide attempts took an especially heavy toll in the Northwest Arctic, Interior, and Norton Sound areas, but they also accounted for a substantial share of serious or fatal injuries in most regions. Falls accounted for a significant number of injuries and deaths in all regions.

Fatal and Serious Non-Fatal Injury Rates Among Children, By Region 1994 - 1997
(Per 1,000 Ages 19 and Under)



*Includes injuries from motor vehicle accidents, all-terrain vehicle and snowmachine accidents, sports injuries, and cuts.
 Note: Rates shown only for those injuries that accounted for at least ten in an area in the four-year period and for which the rate was at least 5 per 10,000 population per year. In Anchorage, for example, there were certainly suicide attempts and other fatal and serious injuries, but not at high enough rates to show in this graph.
 Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services.

PREVENTING INJURIES

As the figure on page 43 shows, nearly one in ten children who died in Alaska in 1998 drowned. The State of Alaska is working to keep children safer on the water.

Kids Don't Float Program

The Alaska Kids Don't Float Program hopes to reduce the number of children who drown by educating teachers, parents, and others on the dangers of boating and other activities that draw children to the water. The program also loans flotation devices to boaters at many harbors and boat ramps in Alaska.

A group in Homer (on Kachemak Bay in Southcentral Alaska) established the program to fight the high numbers of children who drown in Alaska. It was named after a program in New York, "Kids Can't Fly," intended to prevent children from dying in falls.

For more information about this program, get in touch with the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety office at (907) 463-2297, or the state Community Health and Emergency Medical Services at (907) 465-8631.

New Boating Legislation

Another step toward making children (and adults) safer on the water came in May 2000, when the state government created Alaska's first Boating Safety Program. Before that, Alaska was the only state in the nation without such a program. Alaska has an estimated 100,000 recreational boats and a rate of recreational boating fatalities 10 times the national average.

The law requires registration of all boats except those under 10 feet and without motors. Boats will have to meet Coast Guard standards and comply with regulations on maintaining safety equipment, carrying flotation devices, and reporting accidents.

CHILDREN AND SNOWMACHINES

In the past few years, Alaskans have also become increasingly aware of children and teenagers being hurt or killed in snowmachine-related accidents. In the winter of 2000, 23 people—including 3 teenagers—died in snowmachine-related accidents in Alaska. By February in the winter of 2001, another 21 people—including 3 teenagers under age 16—had died in snowmachine-related accidents in Alaska.⁶

An analysis of snowmachine-related deaths during the first half of the 1990s in several northern states with large numbers of snowmachines showed Alaska with by far the highest rate of death. Between 1990 and 1994, North Dakota, Maine, Wisconsin, and Minnesota had average rates of 0.2 or 0.3 snowmachine-related deaths per 100,000 people. Alaska's rate during that period averaged 2.2 snowmachine-related deaths per 100,000 people.⁷

And for every Alaskan who dies in a snowmachine accident, many more are hospitalized with snowmachine-related injuries. According to the Alaska Trauma Registry, 1,038 Alaskans were admitted to hospitals for snowmachine-related injuries between 1991 and 1997. Of those, 20 percent were children under the age of 18, with 42 children sustaining brain injuries and 2 spinal damage.⁸

Despite these injuries and deaths, the State of Alaska as of early 2001 has no minimum-age requirement for snowmachine drivers, no snowmachine speed limits, and no requirements for driver's education or safety training.

CHILD INJURIES IN ALASKA (CONTINUED)

By contrast, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Maine all have minimum-age requirements for snowmachine drivers. Michigan, Minnesota, and New Hampshire all require riders under the age of 18 to wear helmets. New Hampshire also requires children under 18 to wear eye protection. Of six northern states with large numbers of snowmachines, all except Alaska and Maine restrict snowmachine speeds.

Snowmachines are a primary means of winter transportation for rural Alaskans, and many urban Alaskans use snowmachines for recreation. But snowmachines are large and powerful and can easily reach speeds of more than 60 miles per hour. They typically are driven in areas with unpredictable conditions and unexpected hazards. The question for Alaskans is why we aren't better protecting children from the obvious dangers of snowmachines. We require automobile drivers to be 16 and to wear seatbelts. But we allow children of any age to drive snowmobiles, at any speed.

The Committee on Accident and Poison Prevention of the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that children under 16 not be allowed to operate snowmachines, and that older drivers be required to take snowmachine safety courses and wear helmets.⁹

NOTES FOR CHILDREN IN DANGER

¹Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book 2000*, page 27.

²Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Community Health and Emergency Medical Services. (October 1997). *Serious and Fatal Child and Adolescent Injuries in Alaska, 1991-1994*.

³K.E. Wills, R.R. Tanz, K.K. Christoffel, J.L. Schofer, J.V. Lavigne, M. Donovan, and K. Kalangis (1997). "Supervision in childhood injury cases: A reliable taxonomy" in *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 29(1), 133-137.

⁴Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and U.S. Centers for Disease Control, *Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1999*.

⁵Data from Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services.

⁶*Anchorage Daily News*, "Snowmachine toll nears record," January 16, 2001 and "Snowmobile Perils: An Anchorage Daily News special report," April 16-19, 2000.

⁷M.G. Landen, J. Middaugh, and A.L. Dannenberg (1999). "Injuries associated with snowmobiles, Alaska, 1990-1994" in *Public Health Reports*, 114, 48-52.

⁸Data provided by Alaska Trauma Registry, Section of Community Health and Emergency Medical Services, Division of Public Health, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

⁹American Academy of Pediatrics (1998). Policy Statement (RE8129) in *Pediatrics*, 82(5), 789-799.