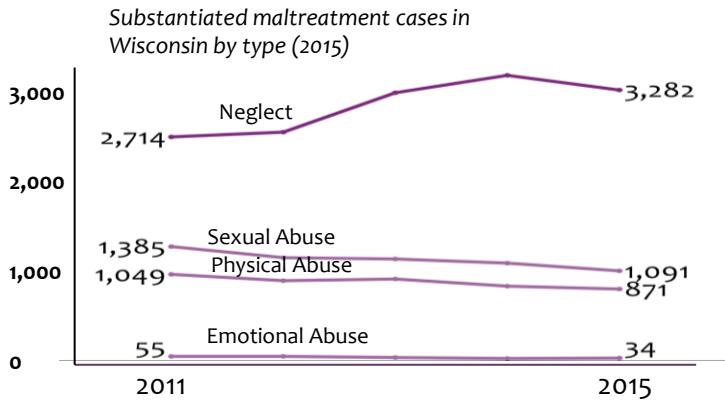


# FACT SHEET: Child Maltreatment and Out-of-Home Care

The Wisconsin Child Welfare System aims to keep children safe, and to support families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children. Wisconsin does this by safely keeping children in their own home, family, tribe, and community whenever possible. When this is not possible, children are placed in safe, stable, and temporary homes to nurture and support children's development, with the goal of transitioning back to the family, or another permanent home. The system strives to engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections and supports in their community and tribes and bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.

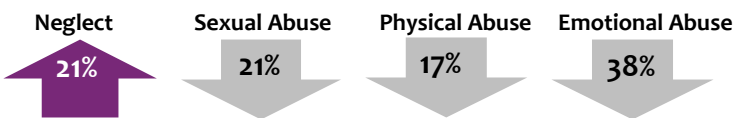
## Maltreatment<sup>1</sup>

Children can be found to be victims of four categories of maltreatment: neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse.



In Wisconsin, the most common form of maltreatment (62% of all cases in 2015) is neglect, defined as “failure, refusal or inability on the part of a caregiver, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.” [Ref. s. 48.02(12g), Wis. Stats.]

Statewide, from 2011 to 2015, the number of neglect cases increased, while the other forms of abuse decreased

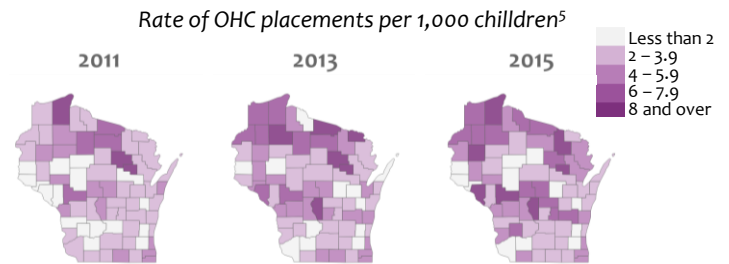


## Key Findings

- In Wisconsin, the most common form of maltreatment is neglect.
- The number of children in out-of-home care increased steadily from 2012 to 2015, reaching its highest point in the last 10 years.
- Caregiver substance abuse is increasingly being identified as a reason for placement.
- The number of youth aging out of OHC in Wisconsin has declined since 2011.

## Out-of-Home Care (OHC)

Statewide, 11,640 children were placed in OHC in 2015, an 8% increase from the ten-year-low in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The Wisconsin OHC rate was 3.9 per 1,000 children in 2015 (up from 3.5 in 2011), which is similar to the U.S. rate.<sup>3,4</sup>

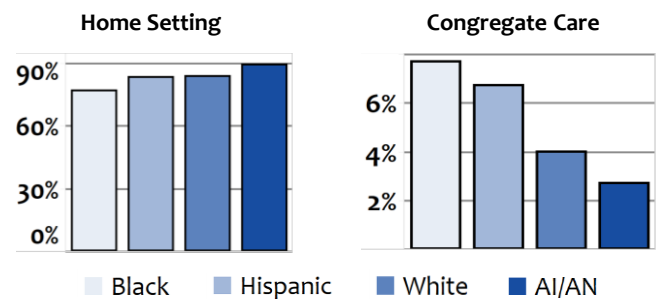


The OHC rate varies significantly by county. 80% of counties in the northern region, and 67% of those in the western region had higher than average placement rates.<sup>6</sup>

## Placement Setting

When children are placed in OHC, placements with relatives are sought whenever possible. In Wisconsin, one out of three children in OHC are placed with a relative. In 2015, rates of placement with a relative were similar across all racial/ethnic groups. The percentage of children identified as Black or Hispanic who were placed with relatives increased 25% between 2012 and 2015.<sup>7</sup>

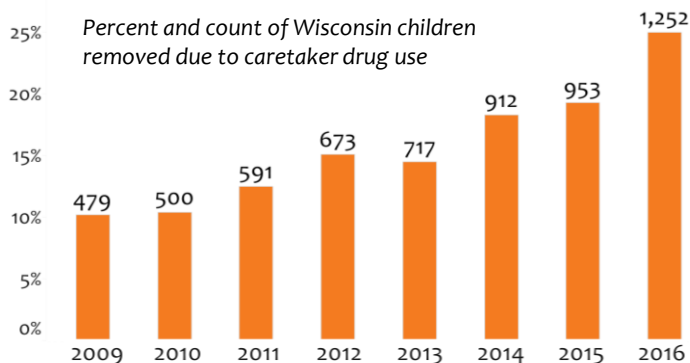
While there are times when group care is necessary to ensure a child's safety, most children and youth in OHC are best served in a home setting.<sup>8</sup>



In 2015, a higher percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Native children were placed in home settings than all other racial groups, while Black children had the highest percentage of congregate care placements.<sup>9</sup>

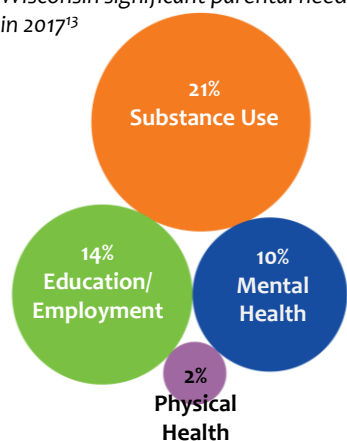
## Parental Substance Use<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to provide precise statistics on the number of families in child welfare affected by parental substance use or dependency, but two measures used are removal reason (captured at time of placement) and the level of parental need (evaluated throughout the child's OHC placement).



In 2016, **caretaker drug use** was listed as a removal reason for 25% of Wisconsin children, up from 10% in 2009. Children age 4 and under were the most likely to have this as a removal reason, but the percentage of those age 5-10 has increased, and in 2015 was nearly equal to that of the youngest children.<sup>11</sup>

Wisconsin significant parental need in 2017<sup>13</sup>



As of October 1, 2017, **substance use** and **mental health** were each listed as a parental need for 2 out of 3 OHC cases statewide, with substance use identified as a significant need in 21% of all cases.

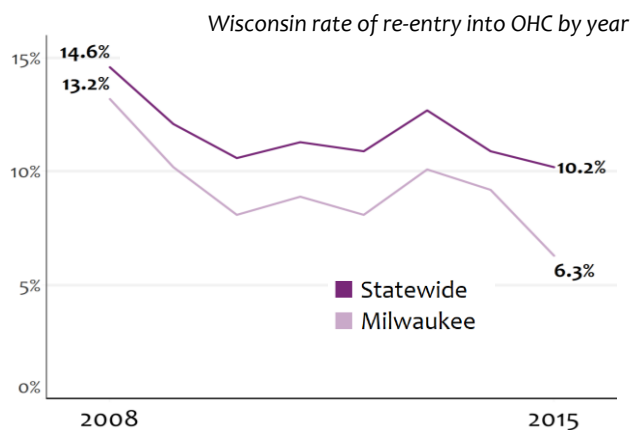
In both the western and northern regions, **substance use** was listed as a significant parental need nearly three times more often than **mental health**.<sup>12</sup>

## Permanence<sup>14</sup> (2015)

The median length of time in OHC per removal was 343 days, slightly lower than the national average of 378 days.<sup>15</sup> Older children have longer stays (median 632 days), as do Black children (median 385 days) compared to children of any other racial group. In Wisconsin, 64% of children who exit OHC are reunified with their parent(s), compared to 51% nationally.<sup>16</sup>

## Re-Entry<sup>17</sup>

The rate at which children re-enter OHC within 12 months has been falling since 2008. One out of 10 children who were discharged from OHC statewide re-entered care within the next 12 months, down from 1 in 7. The rate has fallen more sharply for Milwaukee county to 1 out of 16 re-entering care.



## Aging Out

When youth exit the foster care system without achieving permanence (either through reunification, guardianship, or adoption), they are said to have "aged out." These youth often face more significant struggles than their peers, including higher rates of incarceration, pregnancy, economic hardship, and substance dependency and lower educational attainment.<sup>18</sup> The number of youth aging out of OHC in Wisconsin has declined by 38% since 2011 (462 in 2011 to 285

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