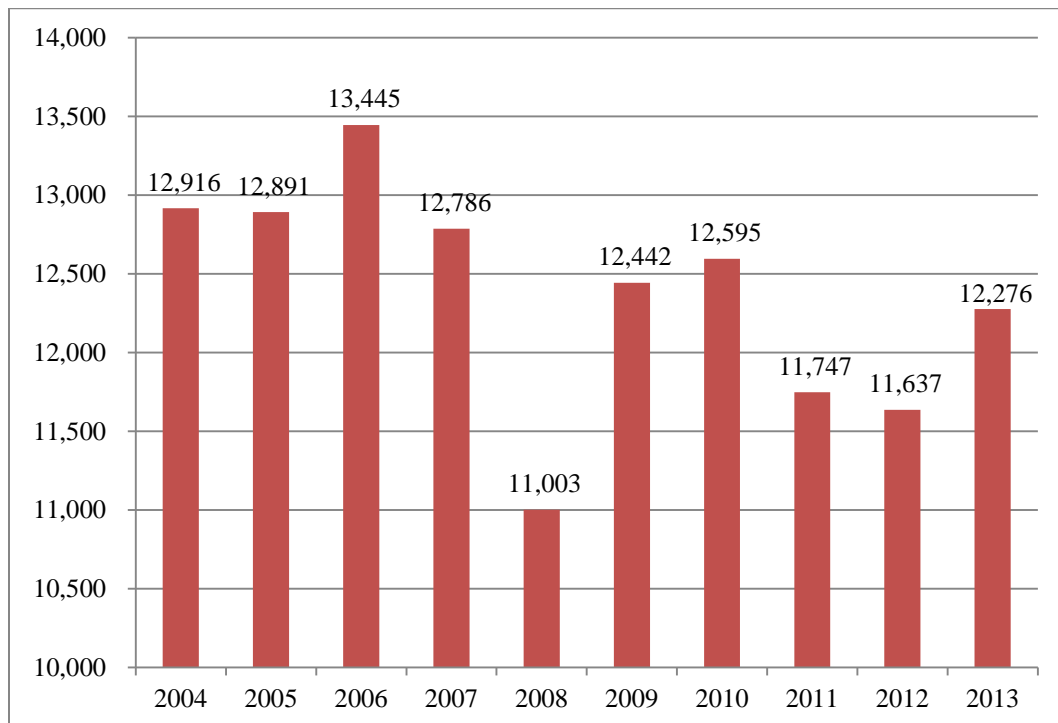


CHILD ABUSE IN IOWA INCREASES IN 2013, COUNTY RATES OF ABUSE VARY WIDELY

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) determined that 12,276 children suffered abuse in 2013. This represents a five percent increase from the number of children abused in 2012 (11,637) and follows two years of decline from 2010, when 12,595 children were found to be abused (see Chart 1). The 2013 figure (12,276) is close to the average annual number of abused children from 2004 to 2012 (12,385).

CHART 1
Number of Iowa Children Found to Be Abused, 2004-13



TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

Table 1 (next page) lists the number and types of abuse that DHS found in 2013. Most child abuse involved cases of *denial of critical care*, commonly called *neglect*. Almost 4 out of 5 child abuse cases in 2013 were due to denial of critical care, which indicates a parent or caretaker failed to provide adequate supervision, food, shelter, clothing, or other care necessary for a child's well-being. The next most common types of abuse were physical injury (9.0 percent), illegal drugs in a child's body because of caretaker action or inaction (6.4 percent), and sexual abuse (3.9 percent).

In 2008, the Legislature added a new category of abuse to include cases where *a child's parent or caretaker knowingly allows a sex offender access to a child*. This prohibition does not apply if the sex offender is not the caregiver's spouse or the child's parent. DHS found 186 cases of this new type of abuse in 2013 (1.0 percent of all abuse).

Iowa is also one of nine states with a category of child abuse that includes instances where a child's parent or other caretaker is involved in *manufacturing a dangerous drug in a child's presence*. In 2013, DHS found that 162 children were present when a parent or other caretaker manufactured methamphetamine – a figure that represented 0.9 percent of all confirmed child abuse.

TABLE 1
Number and Types of Child Abuse, 2013

Types of Abuse	Number	Percent
Denial of Critical Care	14,279	78.4%
Physical Abuse	1,646	9.0%
Illegal Drugs in a Child's Body	1,172	6.4%
Sexual Abuse	716	3.9%
Sex Offender Allowed Access to Child	186	1.0%
Meth Manufacturing near a Child	162	0.9%

Table 2 (below) details the trends in different forms of Iowa child abuse from 2008-13. The most common type of child abuse, *denial of critical care*, has declined in some years, risen in others, and was almost ten percent higher in 2013 than in 2008. Though higher than in 2012, the number of physically abused children in 2013 is still 7.2 percent lower than in 2008. The most dramatic change has occurred in cases involving *the presence of an illegal drug in a child's body* due to a caretaker's action or inaction. Founded cases of this type of abuse have increased every year since 2008, resulting in an overall increase of 85.5 percent from 2008 to 2013. By contrast, after rising in 2009 and 2010, founded cases involving *allowing a sex offender access to a child* in 2013 almost matched the 2008 figure.

Founded cases of sexual abuse increased in 2013, following five years of alternating increases and declines. From the late 1980s through the mid-2000s, child sexual abuse in Iowa and many other states declined by 50 percent or more. Experts have noted this substantial and widespread decline and recognized the importance of a range of prevention efforts. Unfortunately, this decline appears to have stalled in Iowa.

TABLE 2
Types of Child Abuse in Iowa, 2008-13

Years	Denial of Critical Care		Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Presence of Illegal Drugs in a Child's Body		Allowing Access to a Sex Offender	
	Number	% of all abuse	Number	% of all abuse	Number	% of all abuse	Number	% of all abuse	Number	% of all abuse
2008	13,005	79.7%	1,774	10.9%	636	3.9%	633	3.9%	182	1.1%
2009	15,282	81.2%	1,753	9.3%	719	3.8%	689	3.7%	244	1.3%
2010	15,470	81.1%	1,696	8.9%	637	3.3%	827	4.3%	258	1.4%
2011	13,844	79.1%	1,689	9.7%	713	4.1%	861	4.9%	215	1.2%
2012	13,170	78.7%	1,570	9.4%	648	3.9%	1,002	6.0%	142	0.8%
2013	14,279	78.4%	1,646	9.0%	716	3.9%	1,174	6.4%	186	1.0%
Average	14,175	79.7%	1,688	9.5%	678	3.8%	864	4.9%	205	1.1%
Change 2008-13	1,274	9.8%	-128	-7.2%	80	12.6%	541	85.5%	4	2.2%

THE AGE OF CHILD ABUSE VICTIMS

The proportion of abused children in 2013 who were under age six was 49.0 percent, which is 7.7 percent lower than the proportion in 2008 (53.1 percent). Since 2008, the proportion of children abused who were under age six has declined steadily, though very young children are still much more likely to be abused than older children.

TABLE 3
Percent of Abuse Victims Who Were Under Six Years Old, 2008-13

Years	Percent
2008	53.1%
2009	51.5%
2010	50.8%
2011	50.8%
2012	50.6%
2013	49.0%

DISPARITY IN COUNTY RATES OF ABUSED CHILDREN

The county-specific rates of child abuse varied widely in 2013 (see Table 4). For instance, Adams County’s rate of abuse (39.81 children per 1,000) was eight times higher than the rate for Lyon County (4.68 children per 1,000). The disparity in abuse rates is especially striking when comparing counties with similar child populations. As one example, Wright County had 116 abused children compared to 29 abused children in Grundy County, yet their populations differed little (2,967 children in Wright and 2,917 in Grundy).

TABLE 4
Highest and Lowest Child Abuse Rates in Iowa Counties, 2013

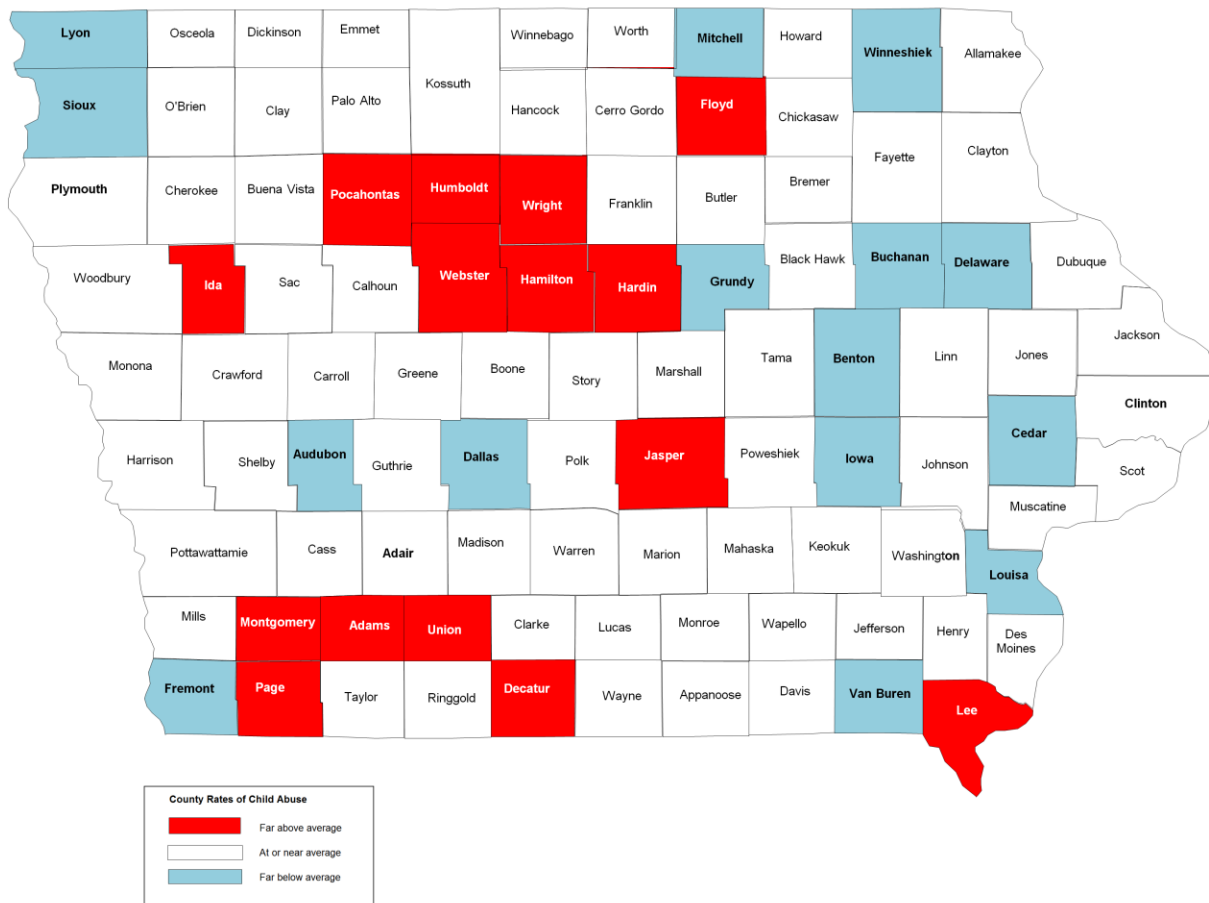
<i>County</i>	<i>2011 Pop 0-17</i>	<i>Abused children</i>	<i>Confirmed children abused per 1,000 ch'n.</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>2011 Pop 0-17</i>	<i>Abused children</i>	<i>Confirmed children abused per 1,000 ch'n.</i>
Adams	829	33	39.81	Cedar	4,366	45	10.31
Wright	2,967	116	39.10	Delaware	4,286	43	10.03
Montgomery	2,407	89	36.98	Grundy	2,917	29	9.94
Union	2,905	100	34.42	Louisa	2,827	28	9.90
Page	3,250	100	30.77	Fremont	1,625	16	9.85
Pocahontas	1,484	45	30.32	Benton	6,400	63	9.84
Jasper	8,076	241	29.84	Van Buren	1,760	17	9.66
Humboldt	2,186	65	29.73	Buchanan	5,419	51	9.41
Hamilton	3,601	105	29.16	Iowa	3,830	33	8.62
Hardin	3,767	107	28.40	Winneshiek	4,125	32	7.76
Ida	1,690	48	28.40	Sioux	9,055	67	7.40
Webster	8,084	225	27.83	Mitchell	2,567	18	7.01
Decatur	1,837	51	27.76	Dallas	19,888	139	6.99
Floyd	3,714	103	27.73	Audubon	1,261	8	6.34
Lee	7,585	210	27.69	Lyon	3,206	15	4.68

* Rates are computed per 1,000 children and do not represent percentages

Large differences in the child abuse rates among Iowa's counties are common. There is no clear, consistent reason for these differences – especially to the degree shown in Table 4. The difference appears not be a results of differences in DHS regional practices. While there is modest geographic clustering, all regions of the state have counties with both high and low rates of abuse (see Chart 2 below).

PCA Iowa used statistical analysis to discern what factors might be associated with differences in county abuse rates. PCA Iowa included in its analysis these categories: county population; rates of child poverty, unemployment, and teen parenting; the percentage of families headed by a married couple; and the percentage of children born with a low birth weight. Of these multiple factors, two showed a significant relationship to increased child abuse rates: low birth weight infants and females 15-19 years old who gave birth. The statistical significance of teen parenting rates is especially strong.

CHART 2
Counties with Highest and Lowest Rates of Child Abuse, 2013



CONCLUSION

An analysis of the 2013 abuse numbers and trends over preceding years identifies challenges to and opportunities for making Iowa a state where children are nurtured and safe. Three areas seem particularly worth highlighting. First, the rise in child abuse, following two years of decline, shows the need for enhanced and improved prevention efforts overall. Second, expanding and targeting services and supports for families with a teen mother and/or infant born with a low birth weight seems to be a priority. Third, given the stalled decline in child sexual abuse rates shows the importance of expanded prevention efforts to address that problem.