



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

November 1999 #120

Child Welfare National Data Analysis System

by Nancy Walsh

On May 17, 1999, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), the oldest and largest nonprofit association assisting abused and neglected children and their families, announced the Nation's first comprehensive and interactive child welfare database: the National Data Analysis System (NDAS). This free online service provided by CWLA and 30 sponsoring State agencies (listed on the database) is the only place where practitioners can find child welfare data from all 50 States and the District of Columbia in multiple subject areas presented in a user-friendly format. NDAS allows users to create customized tables and graphs by selecting States and data years of interest. It also allows them to compare a State's data with data from neighboring States or States with similar population sizes. In addition, NDAS provides users easy Web access to child welfare data and allows them to download the data (complete with sources and footnotes) underlying the tables they view or create.

Accessing NDAS

Users can access NDAS through <http://ndas.cwla.org> or by visiting the CWLA Web site at <http://cwla.org>. Users should enter "guest" for user name and password.

Information Available on NDAS

State Child Welfare Data. NDAS provides a range of child welfare data, including information on child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, and adoption, and fiscal and administrative data. Some of the available data sets, collected by the Federal government, CWLA, and other national organizations, include reports alleging child abuse or neglect referred for investigation, substantiation rates for these allegations, the number of children who have died as a result of abuse or neglect, the number of children in out-of-home care placements, the number of children legally adopted through public agencies, and the number waiting for adoption. Demographic information, including age, race/ethnicity, and gender, is also available for these data sets. Most available data are for 1996; however, some data sets cover 1990–1996. By the end of 1999, CWLA expects to have 1997 data and some 1998

data on the system. NDAS also plans to release data on family preservation and support services and additional fiscal data by the end of 1999.

Explanatory Notes. To help users understand the material being provided, CWLA has incorporated explanatory notes about the States' child welfare data into NDAS. The notes appear, along with data sources, for all child welfare data on the system. NDAS also supplies explanatory notes and data sources for each predefined table and graph.

State Summaries. The "State Summaries" section—which includes contact information and notes on how topics relate to a State's data, policy, and practice—allows States to supply a comprehensive view of their child welfare programs. State summaries are also accessible from NDAS tables or graphs by clicking on any State name displayed.

Internet Links. NDAS's searchable "Internet Links" section provides connections to Web sites—including child welfare agency home pages, State statutes and policies, and research organizations—that may help users more fully understand the data contained in the system. Users may search for links by selecting a main topic, subtopic, and State.

Data Sources

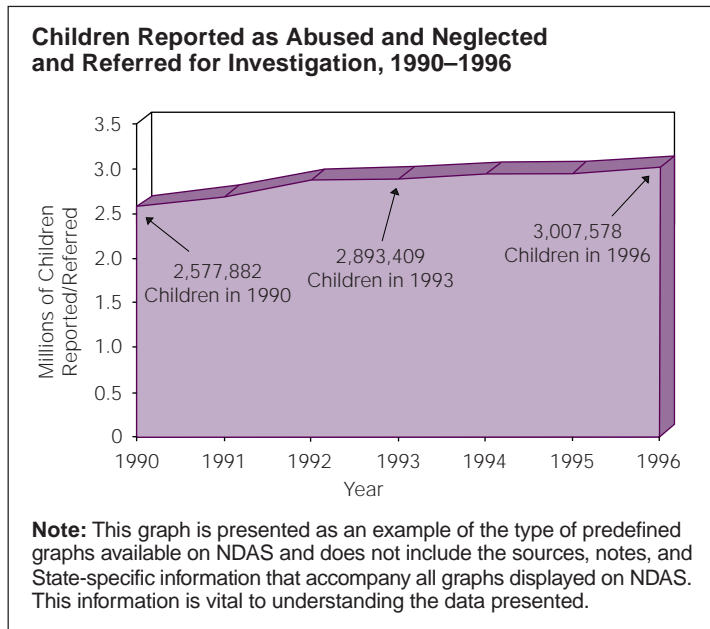
NDAS integrates national child welfare data from many sources, including the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the CWLA State Agency Survey, the U.S. House of Representatives' *Green Book*, and the Voluntary Cooperative Information System. NDAS plans to add data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System in the near future.

Special Capabilities

In addition to providing child welfare and neglect data from all 50 States and the District of Columbia, NDAS features two special capabilities. It allows users to: (1) view and create tables and graphs and (2) download the data underlying those tables and graphs.

Viewing and Creating Tables and Graphs. The table of contents in the “Predefined Tables and Graphs” section lists main topics and subtopics for which predefined tables and graphs are available. Under Reports Alleging Maltreatment, for instance, users may choose from eight tables or graphs, including a graph showing Children Reported Abused and Neglected and Referred for Investigation, 1990–1996 (see figure).

Users may customize certain predefined tables and graphs by selecting data years and/or specific States that they are interested in. For example, a predefined table showing Children With Substantiated or Indicated Reports of Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect in 1996 may be customized to display data for Indiana and neighboring



States. CWLA is also developing user-defined tables and graphs (i.e., those that will allow users to create tables or graphs by choosing from hundreds of data elements, data groups, or calculations).

Downloading Data. The NDAS download feature allows users to download data underlying tables and use that data to perform further analysis or create user-defined graphs or tables based on the data. For example, a user who has customized a table may download the data for use in a spreadsheet package, such as Microsoft Excel. When downloading data and performing additional analyses, users must cite NDAS and all primary sources used.

A Word of Caution

Because States vary in how they define and address child welfare issues, collect data, and maintain information systems, child welfare data are complex and it is difficult (and potentially misleading) to make direct comparisons of States. To ensure that data are interpreted correctly, users need to carefully review State laws, policies, practices, and definitions and refer to the supplemental text, notes, and State summaries provided on NDAS.

For Further Information

For additional information on NDAS or help using the database, users may call CWLA’s NDAS Information Line (202–942–0333) or e-mail their questions and comments to ndas@cwla.org.

Nancy Walsh is a Senior Writer-Editor with OJJDP’s Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

FS-99120