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**Recent Federal Report on Child Maltreatment
Probably Reflects State Budget Cuts, Rather Than Less Child Abuse**

(AUSTIN, Texas) — Center for Public Policy Priorities Senior Policy Analyst Jane Burstain, Ph.D., made the following comments regarding the [recently released federal *Child Maltreatment* report](#). The report showed a decline in the rate of kids being identified as abuse and neglect victims in 2010 as compared to rates in 2008. Some are claiming this means that there are fewer kids being abused and neglected.

“In light of the economic hardship families are experiencing in the aftermath of the Great Recession, it doesn’t make sense that fewer kids are being abused and neglected. We know that poverty is one of the best predictors of child abuse and neglect, and with the Great Recession more families have been pushed into poverty.

“A more likely explanation for falling rates of identified maltreatment is that budget cuts are forcing state agencies to selectively spend their limited resources on fewer cases. And, in fact, the *Child Maltreatment* report shows state child welfare agencies are investigating fewer abuse and neglect reports and, when they do investigate, are less likely to identify kids as a victim. So it probably isn’t that there’s less child abuse and neglect; it is more likely that with budget cuts, state agencies can do less to identify and address it.

“Significantly, the report shows that, as compared to 2008, children identified as victims in 2010 are more likely to have been physically abused or come from homes where domestic violence is a risk factor. This supports the idea that with limited resources, state agencies are responding only to the worst cases rather than that child maltreatment overall is falling.”

Data from the annual federal <i>Child Maltreatment</i> reports		
	2008	2010
Reports screened in for further action	62.5%	61.0%
Investigations with a substantiated finding	22.3%	22.0%
Victims with physical abuse finding	16.1%	17.6%
Victims with a domestic violence caregiver risk factor	24.1%	25.7%
Victims who receive post-investigation services	63.3%	61.2%

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