

# Child Abuse: Queensland: 2004-2005



In the 2004-2005 financial year, Kids Help Line counsellors responded to 842 contacts from children and young people in Queensland with concerns about child abuse. This included 764 telephone, 46 email and 32 real-time webcounselling contacts where child abuse was recorded as the young person's main or secondary concern. These contacts accounted for 7.5% of all counselling contacts from the state - 27% higher than the national rate of 5.9%.

The following report is based on 659 phone, web and email counselling contacts where child abuse was the young person's main concern.

It is important to appreciate that the KHL problem classification of 'child abuse' is a reflection of the content of the contact rather than a counsellor's assessment of the child's situation. It is not possible to make adequate assessments of abuse by telephone or online but rather KHL counsellors seek to identify situations of risk that require further assessment and referral to appropriate services.

## Client Profile

Females made 84% of contacts concerning child abuse while males made 16%.

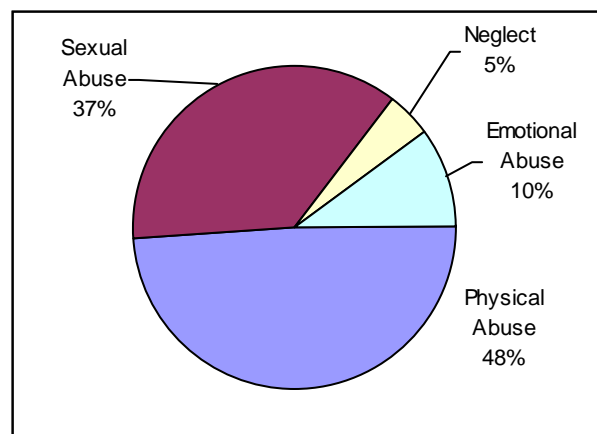
Queensland children of all ages had concerns about child abuse with 52% aged 10 to 14 years and 44% aged between 15 and 18. The table below shows the proportion of calls from each gender and age group.

AGE	FEMALES	MALES
5 - 9	3.2%	1.4%
10 - 14	42.6%	9.3%
15 - 18	38.4%	5.1%

The majority of neglect, physical abuse and emotional abuse concerns were from children younger than 15 years (71%, 68% & 68% respectively) while 66% of sexual abuse concerns were made by older callers aged 15 to 18 years.

## Types of Abuse

The majority of child abuse contacts concerned physical and sexual abuse. Emotional abuse and neglect, however, were still significant issues for children in this state.



## Physical Abuse

In the 12-month period Kids Help Line received 322 contacts from Queensland children and young people concerning physical abuse.

Physical abuse is defined as: "caller identifies behaviour of family member or caregiver that has caused harm. Includes a range of behaviours from slapping to actions that cause bruising or other injury."

The largest proportion (51%) of contacts about physical abuse related to ongoing abuse (occasional or regular). A further 8% of young people stated they were at risk of injury at the time of their call. For 17%, the abuse was no longer current but issues resulting from the abuse were unresolved. The remaining young people were seeking information (9%) or reporting an isolated incident of abuse (15%).



## Neglect

In the 12-month period KHL counsellors received 31 contacts from children and young people relating to neglect.

Neglect is defined as "caller identifies lack of basic necessities within their family including food, shelter, reasonable living conditions, emotional security, adequate supervision, medical and dental care, educational support, money, etc."

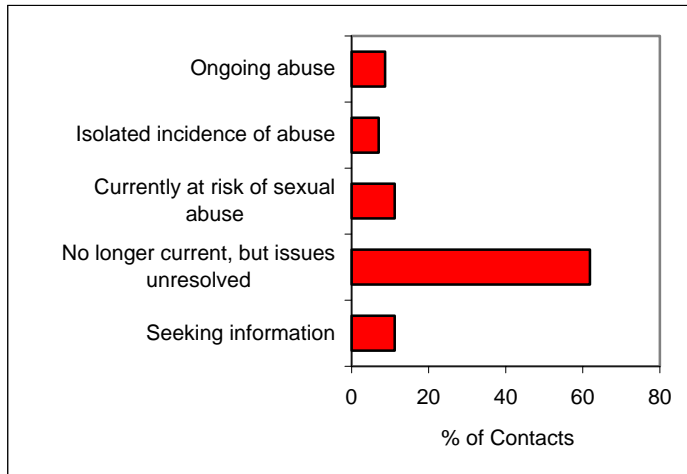
The largest proportion of children contacting about neglect reported frequent lack of necessities (39%) or were occasionally lacking in care (35%). One child reported severe hunger or severe need while the remaining children were seeking information.

Note: When a child seeks help from Kids Help Line about multiple types of abuse (i.e., physical and emotional abuse), the contact is logged/recorded in the area in which the majority of counselling took place.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as: “exploitation of child by family member for sexual gratification or stimulation. Characterised by secrecy, and distortion of adult/child relationship. Includes a range of behaviours from touching, voyeurism, penetration, etc.”

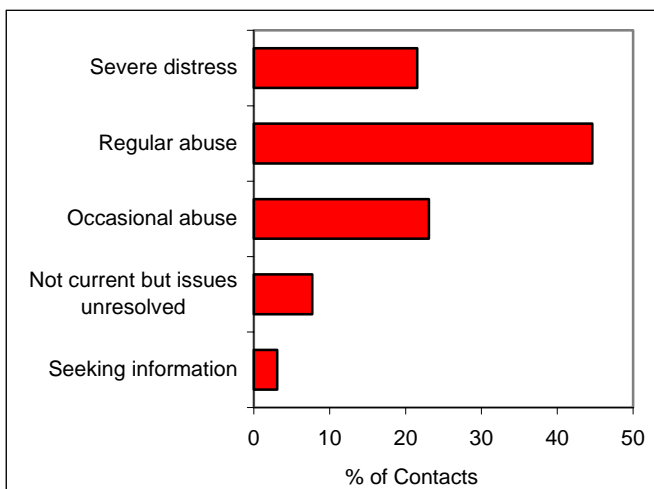
In the past year KHL received 241 calls from Queensland children concerning sexual abuse. Nine percent of these young people reported ongoing sexual abuse (occasional or regular) to their counsellor while 7% reported an isolated incidence of abuse. For 62%, the abuse was no longer current but issues resulting from the abuse were unresolved. The remaining young people reported a current risk of sexual abuse (11%) or were seeking information (11%). The graph below shows the nature and severity of sexual abuse contacts.



## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is defined as “a range of behaviours from excessive and unreasonable demands, constant yelling, criticism, belittling, teasing, ignoring, humiliating, holding back praise/affection, demeaning punishment, belief the child is evil, etc. Confined to family members.”

The largest proportion (45%) of the 65 young people who contacted about emotional abuse stated they were experiencing regular emotional abuse while 22% were severely distressed at the time of their contact.



## Outcome of Contacts

During this twelve-month period 30% of children and young people contacting about child abuse were referred to another service or agency - double the rate for all other concerns. A further 15% of young people were given a non-specific referral such as to their doctor, teacher, school/guidance counsellor or mental health worker.

The rate of referral varied based on the type of abuse with children concerned about neglect (45%) and physical abuse (34%) most frequently offered a referral. Sexual abuse issues followed (25% referred) and 23% of children with emotional abuse concerns were referred to another service or agency.

In 7% of contacts, counsellors intended offering a referral but were unable to because either no appropriate service was available or the young person disconnected before a referral could be made. In 1% of cases (all via email) the young person was encouraged to access via KHL’s real-time services (telephone or web). For the remaining 47% of young people, the nature of their issue did not require a referral.

More than a quarter (28%) of young people who contacted KHL (telephone or web only) about child abuse agreed to reconnect with their counsellor again on a specific date and time.

Kids Help Line has developed and maintains a referral protocol with child protection agencies in each state, which is designed to ensure seamless and child-centred referral of children when our staff enact their Duty of Care reporting responsibilities.

Duty-of-Care responses were involved in 43 of the child abuse contacts from Queensland. Kids Help Line facilitated 42 external liaisons (including 22 “three-way” telephone conversations), mostly with Crisis Care and regional offices of the Department of Child Safety.

## For more information

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

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