

# Reduction in Child Abuse Cases

The Department of Human Services (DHS) announced this month that the rate of child abuse and neglect has declined the past two years in Iowa. DHS accredits the reduction to many reasons including increased efforts to prevent re-abuse and continued efforts to strengthen abuse prevention efforts at the local level.

“Denial of critical care,” or neglect, continue to be the most common form of abuse. DHS abuse investigators conducted over 23,000 assessments for child abuse last year, down 2% from the previous year. An assessment is started when complaints from

the public meet the legal guidelines for sending an investigator.

Of all the assessments, child abuse or neglect was found in 7,981 cases. A majority of the cases, 6,141 were “founded,” meaning the perpetrator was placed on the child abuse registry. An additional 1,840 cases were “confirmed,” meaning the abuse or neglect was isolated, minor, and unlikely to reoccur, with the perpetrator not placed on the registry.

This year the Legislature passed Senate File 101, which establishes a shaken baby pre-

vention program. The goal of the program is to educate parents, and persons responsible for the care of a child, about the dangers to children three years of age or younger caused by shaken baby syndrome and to discuss ways to reduce the syndrome's risks. The new program will take effect July 1, 2009.

Everyone has the ability to report child abuse. The Iowa Child Abuse Hotline is available 24 hours a day at 1-800-362-2178. If a child is in imminent danger, you should call 911 immediately.