

# Safe From the Start Fact Sheet – FY 2015

Public and personal safety are essential building blocks of individual success and community prosperity. For almost 15 years, Illinois has been at the forefront of one such aspect of safety: Childhood Exposure to Violence.

The financial costs of children's exposure to violence are astronomical. The financial burden on other public systems, including child welfare, social services, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and education is staggering when combined with the loss of productivity over children's lifetimes.<sup>1</sup>

Without intervention, young children exposed to violence are at risk for cognitive delays, emotional and social difficulties that can lead to additional victimization and later juvenile justice involvement.

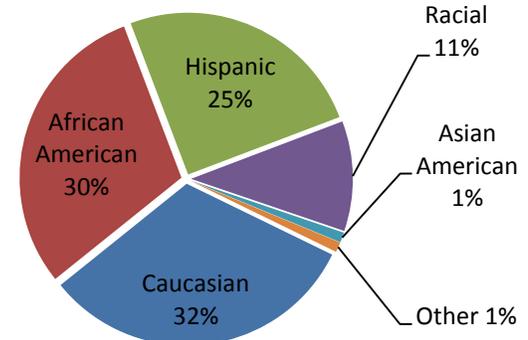
*Safe From the Start* (SFS) programs focus on collaborating with state and community agencies to provide individual, family and community level supports. It is a unique, multi-disciplinary, research driven and targeted intervention that reaches urban, suburban and rural Illinois families.

In FY 15, nine SFS grantees received funding to identify, assess, and serve children (primarily ages 0-5) who have been exposed to and traumatized by violence. Program components include direct services, collaboration and coalition building, and public education.

In FY15, *Safe From the Start* grantees provided **8,598** direct service hours to **1,967** children and families. Another **33,827** individuals were impacted through trainings, community presentations and events. 23% of children were exposed to multiple types of violence, with referrals due to domestic violence (82%), child abuse (16%), sexual abuse (6%), and community violence (8%).

- Most children (57%) came from families with annual household incomes of \$15,000 or less.
- The average age of children identified for services was 4.7 years of age.
- 52% of children were male, while 48% were female.
- Across all sites, the average child was exposed to more than six risk factors. Caregivers reported that the most common risk factors for violence were parent/caregiver distress (62%), poverty (61%), and father in jail (55%).
- Families attended on average 10-12 sessions.

## Ethnicity (self identified)



## Impact of Violence on Children and Caregivers

The most recent evaluation report demonstrated how exposure to violence can have a detrimental impact children's behavioral functioning and caregiver's levels of stress.<sup>2</sup> At intake:

- 36% of children were identified as at-risk for developmental delays
- 43% of children experienced significant emotional and behavioral problems: clinging behavior (46%), sleep difficulties and night terrors (39%), and aggression towards siblings (43%), parents (38%) and peers (30%)
- 45% of caregivers experienced significant amounts of parental stress

## Impact of Services

- 34% improvement in child behavior
- 26% improvement on parental stress

<sup>1</sup> Listenbee, R. L., Jr., et al. 2012. Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> Schewe, P.A., Chohade, S., et al. (2015). *Safe From the Start*, Year 13 Report: 2001-2014. Chicago, IL: Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Violence at the University of Illinois at Chicago.