



## Report: More child abuse cases reported in York County in 2010

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York, PA - Total child abuse reports rose slightly in York County in 2010, but substantiated reports of abuse decreased, according to a report released Wednesday by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

York County ChildLine received 1,113 reports in 2010, up from 1,093 in 2009 and 1,098 in 2008, the report states. Substantiated reports, which require proof of abuse, fell to 128 in 2010 -- down from 147 in 2009 and 148 in 2008.

But more reports isn't always a bad thing, said Deborah Harrison with the York County Children's Advocacy Center. Part of the increase could be from organizations and community leaders stepping up to educate people on how to recognize and report abuse, she said.

Most of York County's outreach was sparked after a June 10 community summit to remember the death of 2-year-old Darisabel Baez, who died April 6, 2008, after being beaten by her mother's boyfriend, Harve Johnson.

Darisabel's body was covered in 72 bruises and lacerations. Johnson was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. Darisabel's mother, Neida Elizabeth Baez, pleaded guilty to third-degree murder for not intervening and was sentenced to five to 10 years in state prison.

About 250 police, medical personnel, lawmakers and child advocates attended the June summit.

"We'll never be able to heal all the wounds," James DeBord of YorkCounts said Wednesday. "Since the summit, almost all those people at the event said they never knew how to deal with information about abuse."

YorkCounts has been urging local groups to select a countywide program similar to ones used across the nation that have had significant success in preventing and treating child abuse in their

communities.

The nonprofit Child Abuse/Prevention Outreach Committee has been working closely with YorkCounts to select a program, as well as holding community events to raise awareness of abuse.

"The (change in) numbers, even though slight, contributes to the work for awareness of abuse," said Caroline Tyrrell, spokeswoman for CAPOC. "The more information out there, the more people are likely to report abuse."

While the number of reports in York County rose, child abuse numbers across the state decreased.

The 2010 Annual Child Abuse Report showed 24,615 reports of suspected abuse in the state last year, down from the 25,342 in 2009 and 25,655 in 2008. The number of substantiated reports also declined statewide.

The York County Children's Advocacy Center hopes to provide annual training for their multidisciplinary team -- composed of police departments, the district attorney's office, school officials and other community leaders -- in new protocol and customs for reporting abuse.

"We don't necessarily see reports as a bad thing," Harrison said. "Reporting is the first step to making a change."  
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As part of National Child Abuse Prevention month, several organizations throughout Pennsylvania wrote Gov. Tom Corbett and leaders of the General Assembly to ask that they recognize the efforts of the Protect Our Children Committee.

Locally, the York County Children's Advocacy Center, Dr. David Turkewitz with York Hospital and York County Cribs for Kids plan to apply for federal Children's Justice Act funds in May.

The funds would be used to improve the investigation and treatment of child abuse, according to a news release.

For more information, visit [protectpachildren.org](http://protectpachildren.org).

## Suspect child abuse?

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