

# Annual Report on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Florida, 2024

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A Presentation to the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

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# OPPAGA

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

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# Background and Scope

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## Background

- Federal and Florida law criminalize human trafficking of adults and children
  - Labor trafficking
  - Sex trafficking
- Commercial sexual exploitation (CSE): the use of any person under the age of 18 for sexual purposes in exchange for money, goods, or services or the promise of money, goods, or services

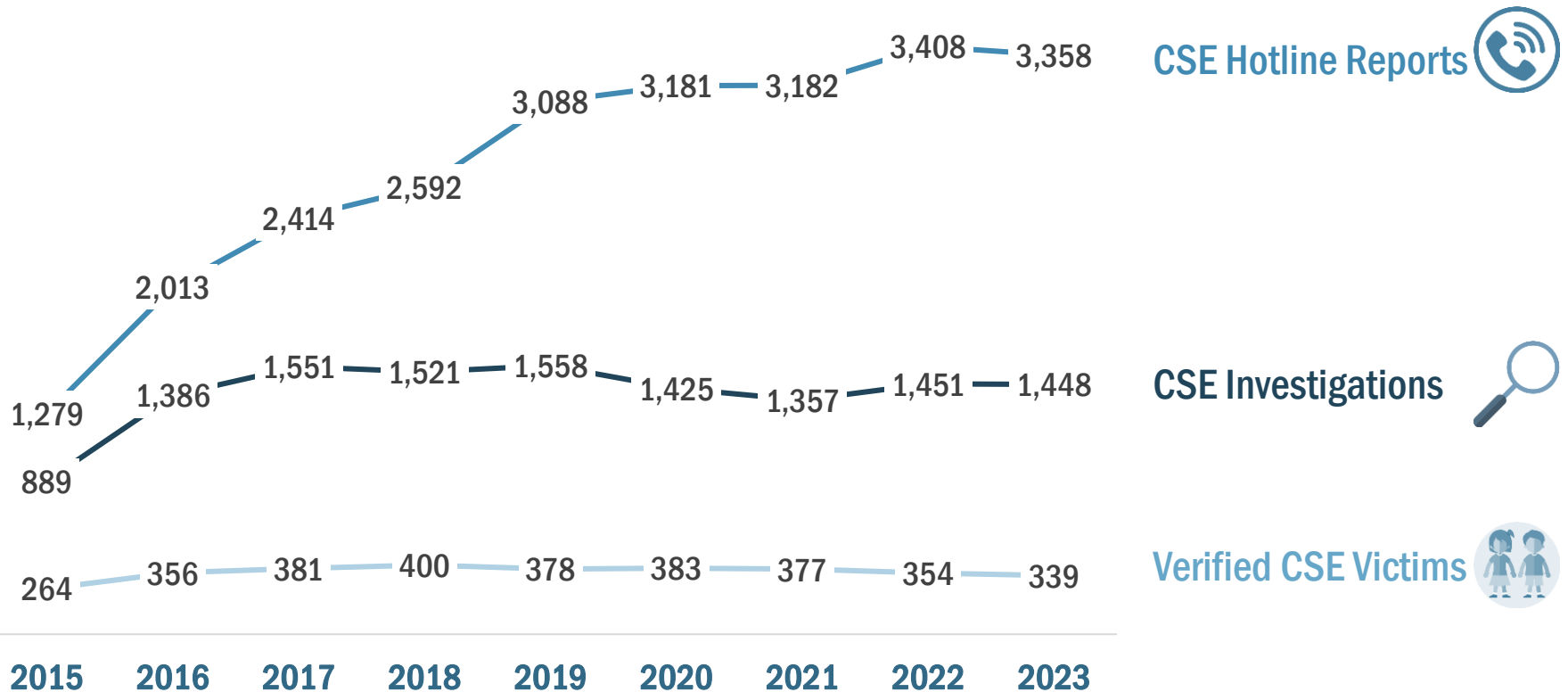
## Scope

- Section 409.16791, *Florida Statutes*, directs OPPAGA to conduct an annual study on CSE of children in Florida
- The 2023 annual report considers the following issues
  - Prevalence
  - Outcomes
  - Placements and Services
  - Agency Updates
  - Recommendations

# Prevalence of Youth Commercial Sexual Exploitation



The number of verified commercially sexually exploited youth decreased slightly in 2023

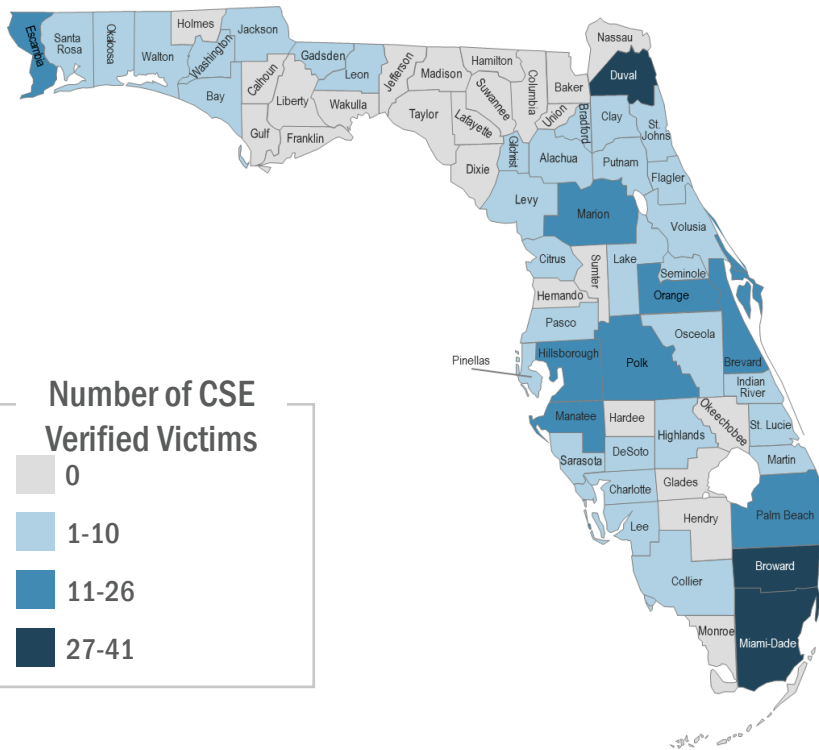


# Geographic Distribution of Verified Youth Victims of CSE

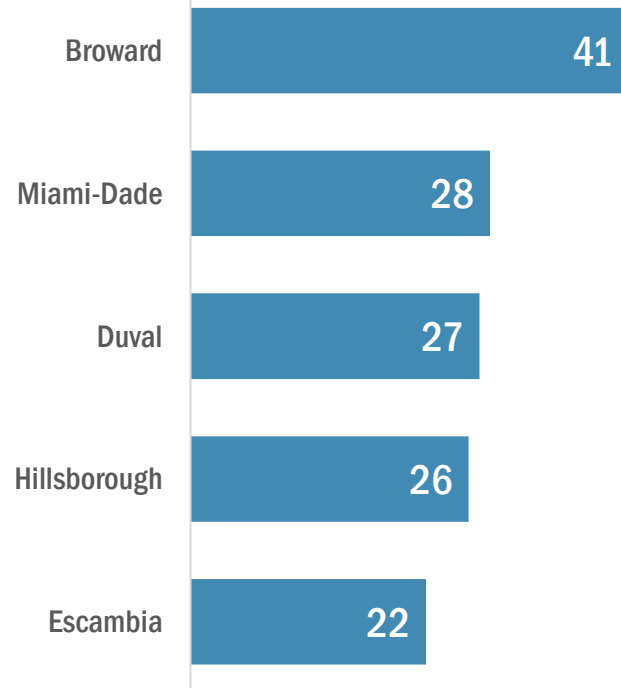


Five counties accounted for over 40% of verified victims in 2023

Verified Youth Victims by County



Counties With the Most Verified Youth Victims

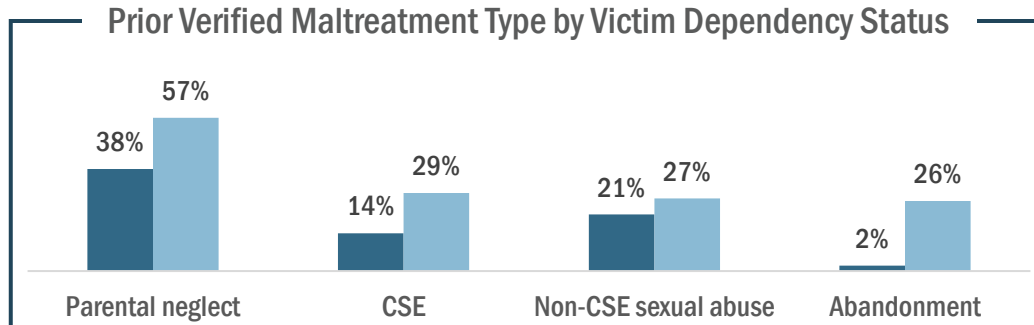
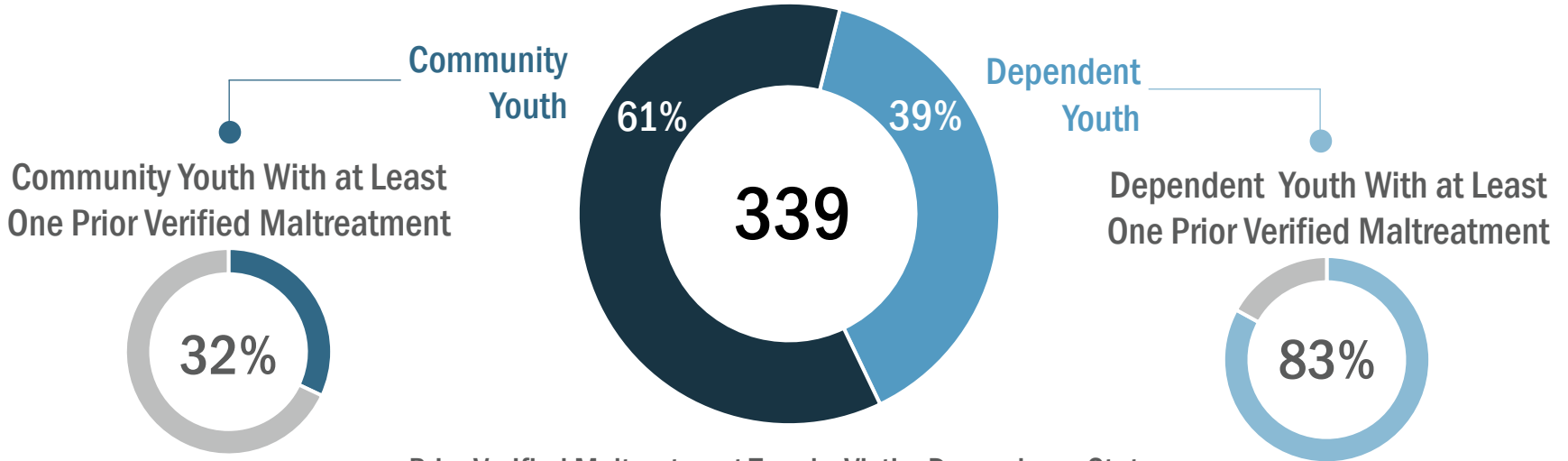


# Verified Victim Characteristics



In 2023, most youth CSE victims were not in the dependency system within 6 months of CSE verification

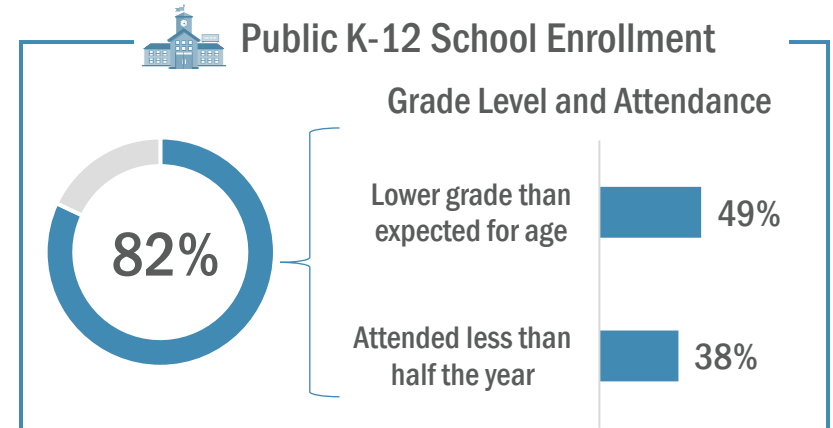
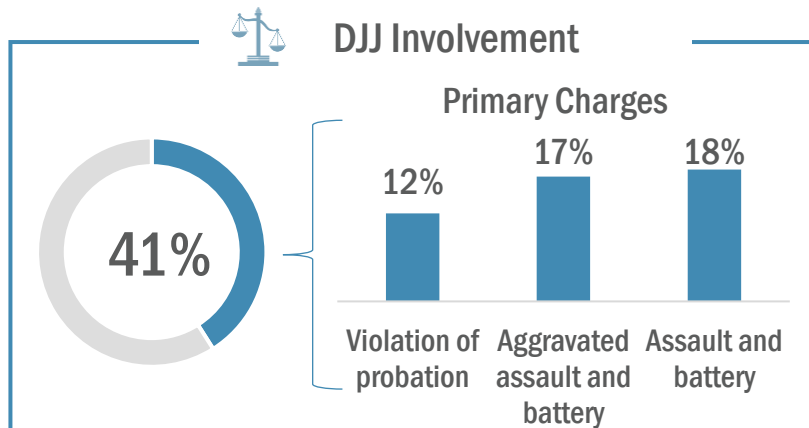
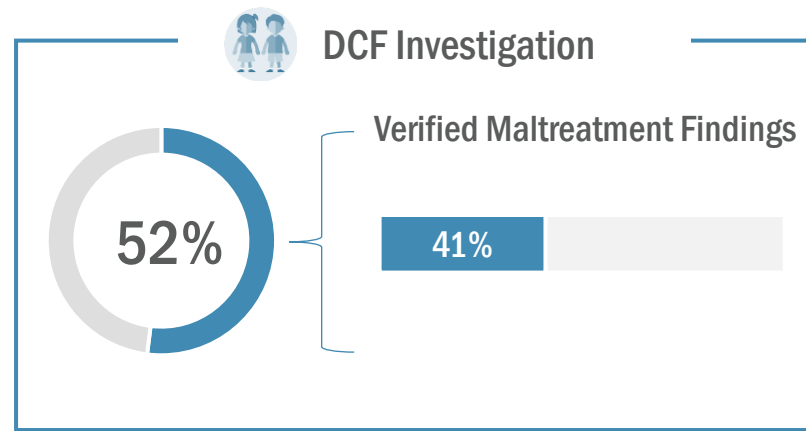
### Victim Dependency Status



# Outcomes One Year After CSE Verification



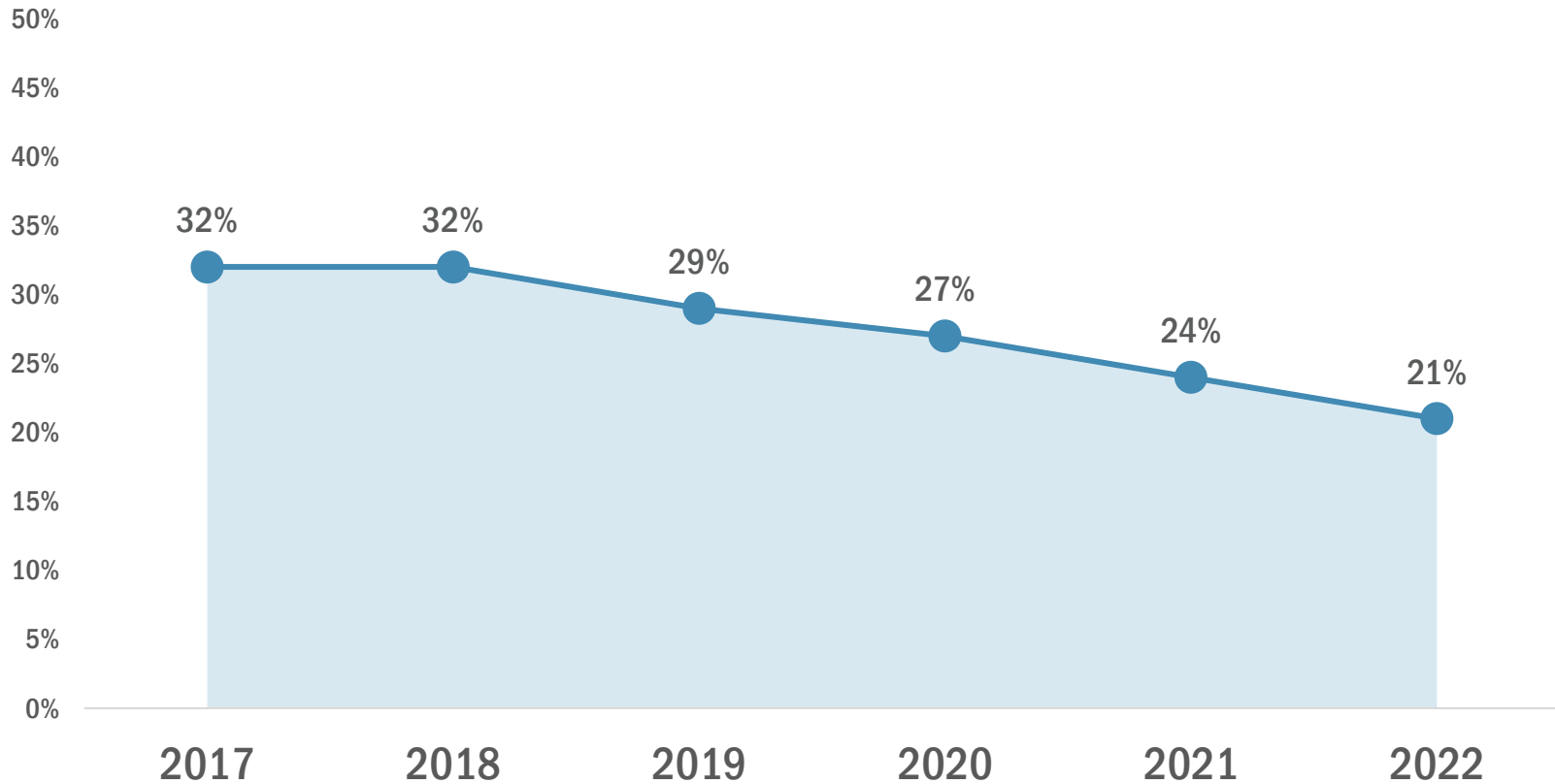
CSE victims had high rates of new Department of Children and Families (DCF) abuse or neglect investigations and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) involvement; most were enrolled in school



# CSE Revictimizations Over Time



The percentage of youth with subsequent verified CSE in the first year after initial verification has been decreasing since 2018



# Placements and Services for CSE Youth



Stakeholders reported ongoing challenges with the placement array and services available to CSE youth



## Placements

- The Department of Children and Families has an array of out-of-home placement settings to meet children's needs when they cannot remain safely at home
- DCF licenses multiple placements to serve CSE-verified or at-risk youth
  - Safe foster homes
  - Tier 1 safe houses
  - Tier 2 safe houses
  - At-risk group homes to serve CSE-verified or at-risk youth
- Stakeholders reported barriers to placing CSE-verified youth
  - Limited placement options
  - Placement selection criteria
  - Youth willingness to accept placement



## Services

- Evidence-based interventions specific to CSE youth are lacking and treatment success is poorly defined
- Services provided for CSE youth include
  - Behavioral health care
  - Care coordination
  - Individual and family therapy
  - Life skills training
- Stakeholders reported limited availability of several services
  - CSE-specific services in DJJ settings
  - Transition to adulthood
  - Access to survivor mentors
  - Legal
  - Specialized therapeutic placements
  - Step-down programs



# Recent Efforts to Increase Placement Capacity



DCF and community-based care lead agencies reported continued efforts to increase overall placement capacity for dependent youth

## Department of Children and Families

- Contract with Citrus Health Network to expand CHANCE program
- License additional CSE placements

## Community-Based Care Lead Agencies

- Recruit traditional foster homes and enhanced traditional foster homes
- Recruit Tier 1 safe houses
- Develop an at-risk group home for youth who are not accepted at other placements
- Increase reimbursement rates to foster parents caring for verified victims of CSE

Citrus Health Network developed Florida's first short-term residential treatment program for youth with intensive behavioral issues, including CSE youth

# Agency Updates



During the review period, state agencies took steps to improve human trafficking awareness, education, and identification

## Department of Children and Families



Moved human trafficking unit to the newly created Office of Community Services



Created an electronic version of the Human Trafficking Screening Tool



Information systems updates anticipated to be completed in spring 2025

## Department of Juvenile Justice



Began requiring all direct care staff to complete pre-service and in-service training related to human trafficking

Updated human trafficking procedures



- Intake facility admissions
- Disclosure of victimization
- Delivery of services
- Human trafficking liaisons
- Youth recruitment of sex trafficking

## Additional Agency Updates



### Office of the Attorney General

- Approved one of four applications for relocation financial assistance
- Approved zero of two applications for victim compensation



### Florida Department of Law Enforcement

- Updated advanced human trafficking training for law enforcement officers



### Department of Business and Professional Regulation

- From July 2023 to May 2024 completed 16,492 initial inspections
- 98.7% compliance rate for required human trafficking signage

# Recommendations

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Agencies could implement recommendations related to placement capacity, services, and data collection



DCF

Continue efforts to expand Tier 1 safe houses and enhance placement capacity

Work to improve mental health related information about CSE-verified youth



DJJ

Collaborate with survivor mentors to improve mentors' ability to enter department facilities

# Contact Information

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