

Are decisions to substantiate impacted by caseworkers' perceptions of domestic violence or parental substance misuse?

VICTOR, B. G., GROGAN-KAYLOR, A., RYAN, J. P., PERRON, B. E., & GILBERT, T. T. (2018). DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND THE DECISION TO SUBSTANTIATE CHILD MALTREATMENT. *CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT*, 79, 31-41.

What can we learn from this study?

Both domestic violence and parental substance misuse are overrepresented among families involved with child welfare. This study assessed **how caseworkers' perceptions of domestic violence and parental substance misuse influenced their decision to substantiate** in cases where these experiences were not linked to the reported maltreatment.

Study details:

- **Population:** 501,060 allegations from 122,658 first-time investigations of child maltreatment in which the allegation did not include domestic violence or substance misuse
- **Data source:** Administrative records from a large Midwestern child welfare agency
- **Methodology:** Multilevel modeling
- **Dates:** Decisions made between 2009 and 2013

What are the critical findings?

- Identification of parental substance misuse alone increased the probability of substantiation by 150%, while identification of domestic violence alone increased the probability of substantiation by 50%.
- Co-identification of domestic violence and parental substance misuse increased the probability of substantiation by nearly 20%.
- Results suggest that caseworkers are most influenced by parental substance misuse when making the decision to substantiate an allegation of maltreatment unrelated to either behavior.

Predicted probability of substantiation

BY TYPE OF RISK FACTOR(S) IDENTIFIED



Why is this important for our work?

States may find that it is more efficient and cost effective to develop public health models of intervention for families experiencing domestic violence or substance use to avoid formal entry into the child welfare system. In addition, it may be important to understand the extent to which caseworkers use other allegation types as a proxy to substantiate parental substance use or exposure to domestic violence in cases when those behaviors are not linked to the maltreatment allegation. In these cases, targeted training of caseworkers may be necessary.

This summary synthesizes the findings of a single research study. To learn more, please review additional [resources on substance use disorder and child welfare](#), including: [What is the impact of substance abuse on child welfare?](#) and [What are some of the strategies being used to reunite families with substance use disorders?](#)

For additional information about this article, [see the abstract](#) or email KMResources@casey.org.