

**2004 SOCIAL WORKER SAFETY INCIDENT  
SUMMARY REPORT  
January – December 2004**

Social work professionals are dedicated, helping agents who work towards improving quality of life outcomes for all children and families within their communities.

A child welfare agency employee can expect some client resistance because the focus for services entails an intensive, detailed view of many intimate family matters. Even though a degree of resistance to services is an accepted dimension of social work in a public agency, a clear distinction must be made between resistance and aggressive behavior which constitutes a danger to staff.

Through PCSAO’s leadership, we have been collecting and reporting on Worker Safety Infractions across the state since 2002. PCSAO recently released the 2004 Ohio Aggregate Data Report on Child Welfare Worker Safety Incidents. From this data gathering process, we have learned the following:

- In 2004 there were 63 county agencies who participated in submitting worker safety incident report to PCSAO (100% from major metro counties, 87% from large counties, 78% from metro counties, 71% from medium counties, 65% from small counties, and 57% from medium-small counties)
- There were 44 of 63 counties who reported that there were incidents that occurred at their agencies.
- There were 299 incidents reported to PCSAO which occurred in all county cohort groups (metro counties: 95, major metro counties: 72, medium counties: 54, large counties: 41, small counties: 20, and medium-small counties: 17).
- The data indicates that verbal and/or written aggression was the preferred mode of striking out (140 reports for verbal/written threats, and 123 reports for verbal aggression).
- The predominant aggressors were clients (192 reported for adult clients, and 29 reported for child/youth clients).
- The top three locations where infractions occurred were on agency grounds (96 reports), by phone and/or e-mail (64 reports), and in the homes of clients (63 reports).
- The predominant worker safety incident triggers occurred during visitations as part of child abuse and neglect investigations (47 reports), parent child visitation (45 reports), and routine home visits (44 reports). Although visitations triggered the highest number of incident reports, there were not significant difference between the type of trigger and the number of incidents reported.
- Caseworkers endured physical incidents, including being bitten by dogs, kicked, punched pushed, having their hairs pulled and being stalked by clients. Workers were verbally attacked and threatened with death, poison, and bodily harm as well as having threats made to their home, property, and family by their clients. In several instances in which clients or those associated with the clients threatened to bomb the agencies’ buildings or a caseworker’s home. There were some reports of the clients actually damaging the agencies’ property by punching a hole on the wall or throwing chairs.

**The table below shows a number of counties who submitted a report to PCSAO and number of incidents reported from 2002 to 2004.**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Numbers of participating county</b>	62	69	63
<b>Number of incident reported</b>	309	232	299

Information about PCSAO Child Protection Services Standards for Effective Practice and the Worker Safety Reports are available online at [http://www.pcsao.org/safety\\_incident\\_report.htm](http://www.pcsao.org/safety_incident_report.htm).