



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - 040-010-NPO & A REGISTERED CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

NOT FOR PROFIT COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER – 2015/173593/08

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**COVID-19 - REPORT ON CHILDLINE HELP LINE, COUNSELLING SERVICES &
SUNLIGHT SAFE HOUSE PLACEMENTS FOR LEVEL 5, 4, 3, 2 & 1
(INC RELAXED MEASURES AS ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT RAMAPOSA)**

LOCKDOWN PERIODS REPORTED ON:

LEVEL 5: 27th MARCH 2020 – 30th APRIL 2020: 35 DAYS

LEVEL 4: 1st MAY 2020 – 31st MAY 2020: 31 DAYS

LEVEL 3: 1st JUNE – 18th AUGUST 2020: 79 DAYS

LEVEL 2: 19th AUGUST – 20th SEPTEMBER: 32 DAYS

LEVEL 1: 21th SEPTEMBER – 28th DECEMBER: 98 DAYS

(275 DAYS OF AROUND THE CLOCK SERVICE)

SERVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES 24/7 & 365 DAYS - IMPLEMENTING SECTION 28 OF THE
BILL OF RIGHTS (1996)

AND

ESSENTIAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY ETHOS “YOUR CHILD IS MY CHILD”

1. INTRODUCTION – CHILDLINE SERVICES

Childline Gauteng continued to serve vulnerable children and families 24/7 and 365 days a year with telephone counseling on our Help Line and taking children in life threatening circumstances into Sunlight Safe House, including over the Festive Season. Our Community Based Counselling Centres provide psycho-social services and community support in Soweto, Sebokeng, Orange Farm, Tembisa, Katorus, Tembisa and Inner City Johannesburg.

The second wave, with increased daily infections and deaths, has been very hard on communities, struggling with job losses and missing families over Christmas and New Year.

In summary we have delivered the following services during the period under review:

The Help Line answered 194 326 calls 166 197 were captured with 9 161 cases opened and 49 282 counselling sessions with 107 724 testing the Childline response before being brave enough to disclose their problems. COVID-19 is the main priority for 36 309 clients and clients seeking services (often COVID-19 related) at 22 146. All forms of abuse is the second highest category at 3 290 and family problems at 1 819.

The Counselling Team provided 5 129 counselling sessions to 1 467 clients. The highest category of cases being sexual violence; children with behavioural problems; death of loved ones; trauma; family problems and domestic violence.

The Sunlight Safe House admitted 48 children into overnight care and the majority were as a result of neglect. In addition, 723 services (home visits, telephone and face to face counselling) was done with our 43 foster families and 106 children in care and Independent Living adult children who grew up in our care.

The structural inequality in our country results in the impact on vulnerable families being extreme with a great need for psycho-social and economic support.

As we collectively engage to assist the children of our nation, to emerge from the pandemic physically, mentally and emotionally stable, ensuring their positive growth for a sustainable future, Childline is committed to provide hope, counselling, access to protection and support services and information to deliver their basic needs. Together we can ensure a positive outcome for our youth and enhance their resilience to further their future goals.

We thank you for your support of children and hereby report on our analysis of child and family issues, as reported to Childline, since the declaration of the National State of Disaster, 27th March 2020 – 28th December 2020.

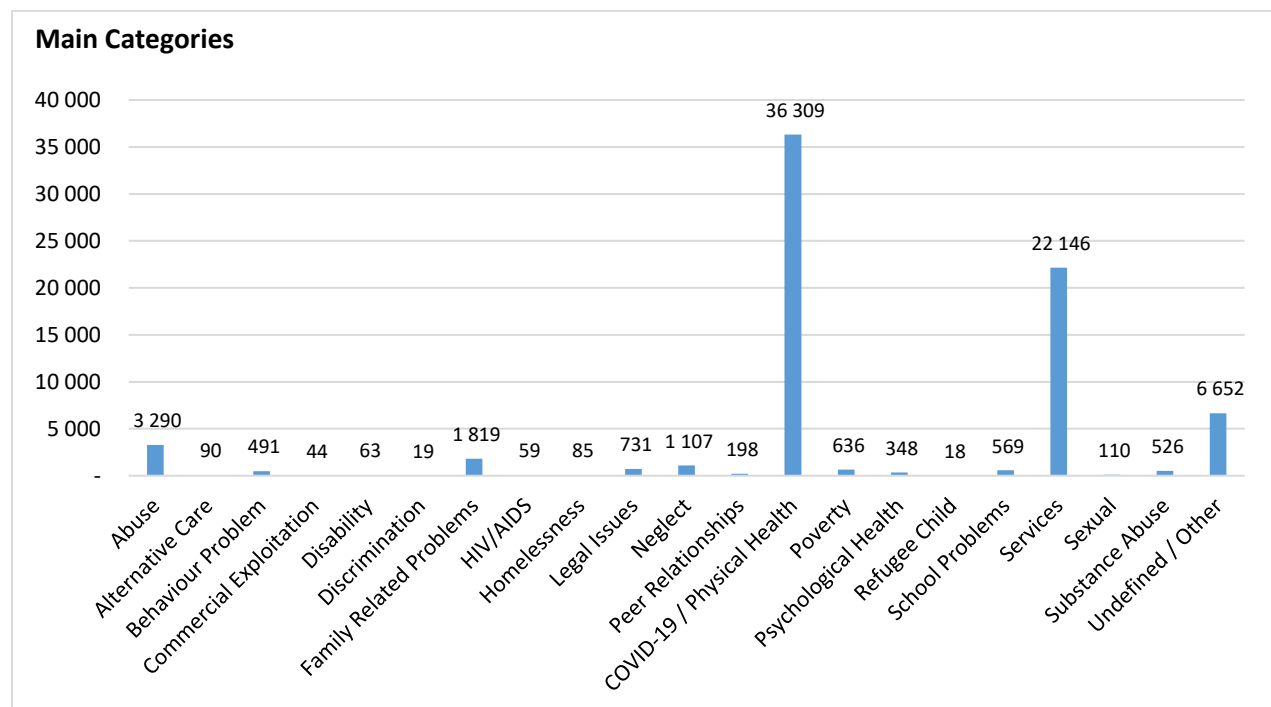
2. CHILDLINE HELP LINE SERVICES

2.1 Number and Categories of Callers Assisted

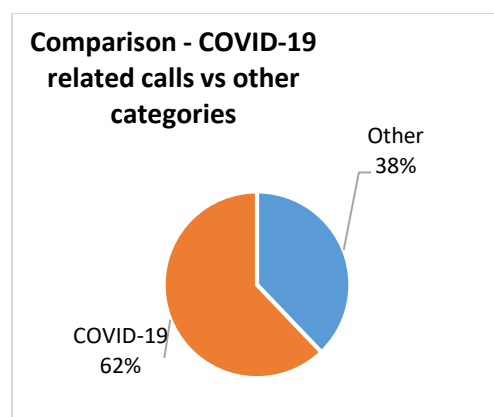
During the period under review, trained and professional counsellors captured 166 197 contacts on our data system categorised, as follows:

- 58 443 interventions - 9161 cases and 49 282 counselling sessions issues
- 67 966 callers were silent or hung up - being unwilling or not ready to discuss their concerns.
- 32 259 callers engaged in testing the counsellor responses which aligns with international research indicating children will phone up to 20 times before they are brave enough to talk. We welcome this opportunity to promote positive relations with young people.

In summary, the highest categories of callers pertained to: Health and COVID-19 (36 312) and services (22 147) which are mostly COVID related; all forms of abuse (3 290); family (1 819) and legal problems (731); neglect (1 107) and poverty (636); substance abuse (526); children with school/educational issues (569) and behavioural problems (491); amongst others.



2.2 COVID-19 Related Cases



Callers demonstrate great anxiety and stress, with an increase in COVID-19 related cases (36 312), linked to requests for services at 22 147, mostly related to the pandemic, i.e. a total of 58 459 clients – 32 816 requiring health info, with 1 767 health problems and 220 needing urgent medical care.

We continually update the Childline Resource Manual on COVID-19 with accurate information as well as lists of emergency services for: Institute for Communicable Diseases, DSD, SAPS, DoH reporting lines, CYCC

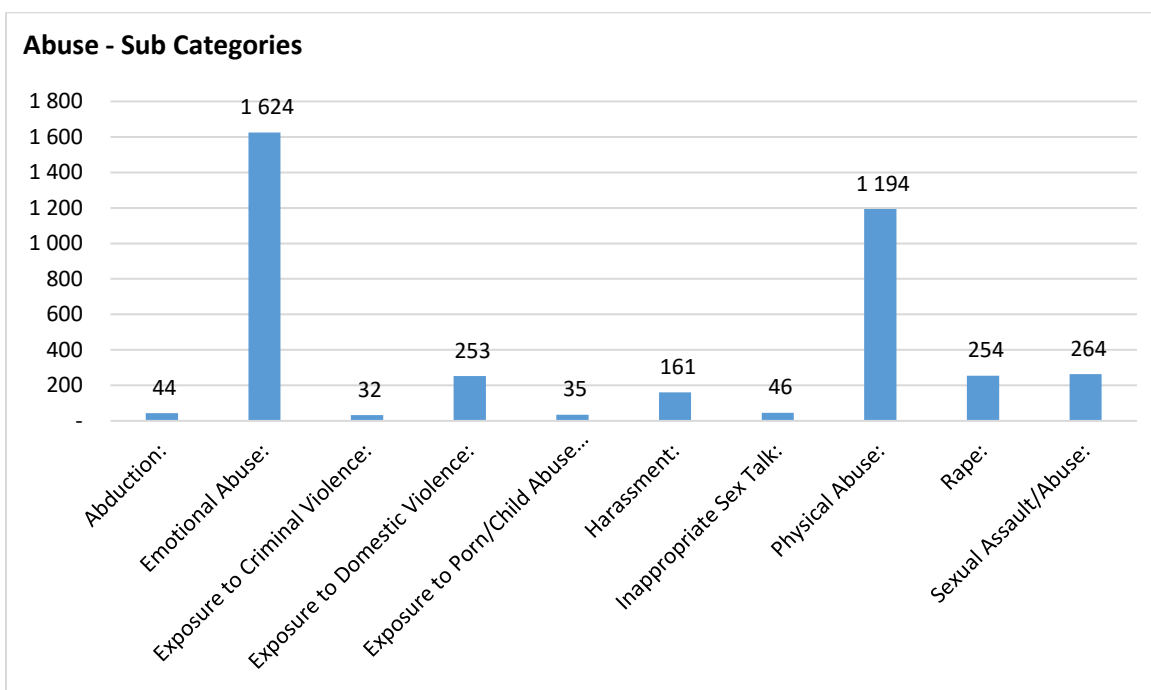
capacity for emergency placement of children, mental and health facilities, Presidential line and services available to communities.

The counsellors dispense valuable COVID-19 information; safety and prevention measures; health information such as symptoms, testing and quarantine sites, ambulance procurement and hospital services for those that are positive; referrals to the food line which is not able to distribute to all; donations of food parcels; and available CYCCs and GBV shelters.

COVID-19 cases include: community members are desperate for food parcels, concerned about their test results, family members being very ill or dying, worried about children playing in the streets without masks; job losses; seeking urgent medical support; children or partners refusing to stay home posing a risk to the family. The pandemic exacerbates all other child and family problems, such as abuse, psychological issues, poverty and neglect, as well as GBV.

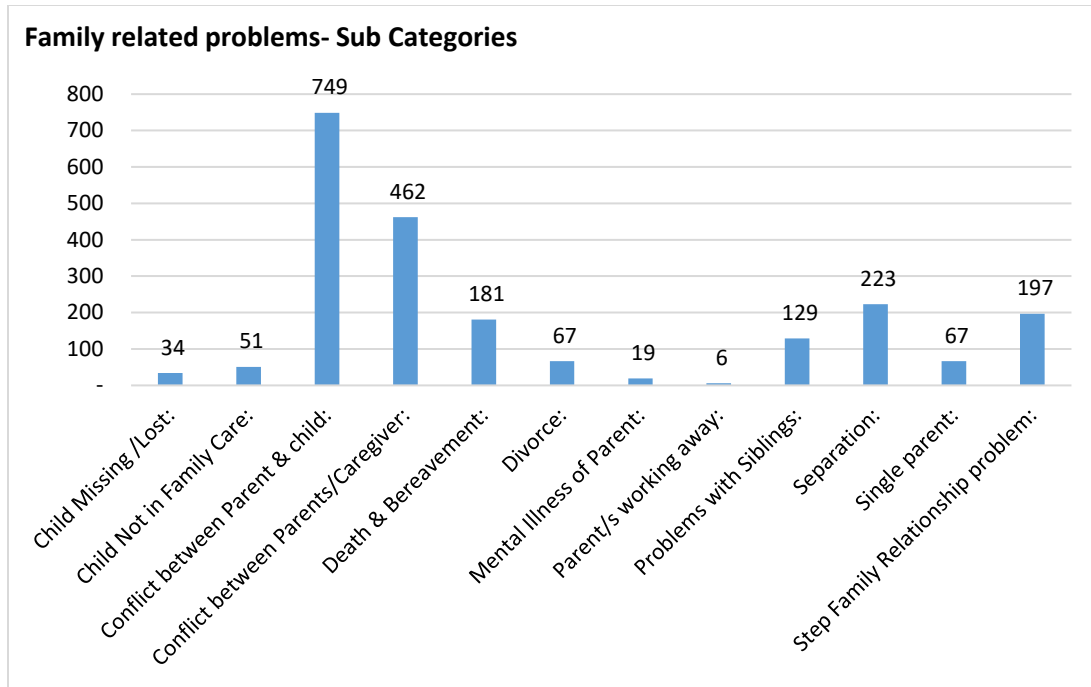
2.3 Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse

Abuse is the second highest category at 3 290 cases and pertains to: physical abuse (1 194); sexual violence – rape, assault, verbal and exposure to porn (760), emotional (1 624), abduction (44) and domestic violence (253). Clients are supported and risk assessment indicates the level of danger, after which, SAPS or child protection services from DSD are sought.



2.4 Family Related Problems

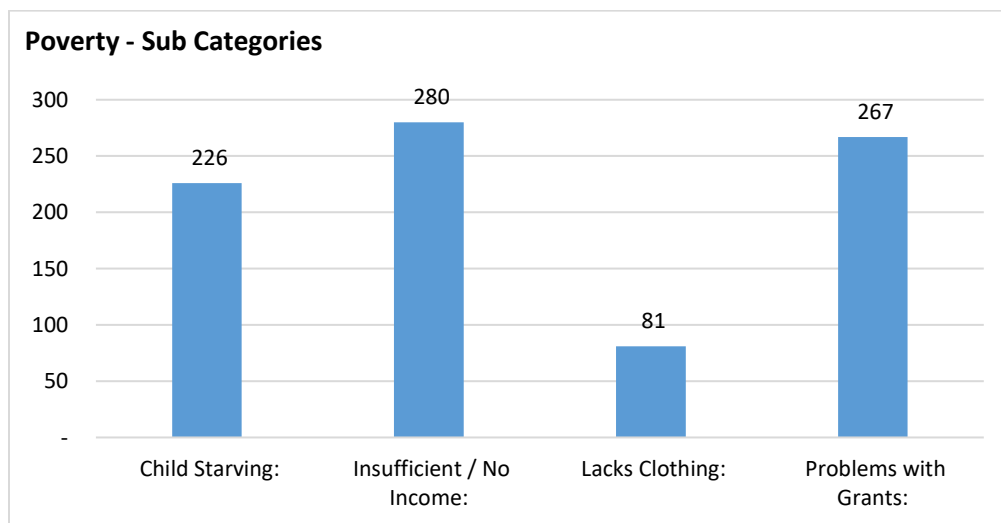
A total of 1 819 **family problems** and 731 related **legal issues**, pertaining to: family aggression; care, parenting plans and custody issues; single mothers struggling with great responsibilities; fathers feeling alienated; increase in corporal punishment; sibling rivalry and bullying; allegations of step fathers treating their non-biological children with contempt; mothers who have given birth in this time feeling very vulnerable; separation from parents; and home fires. This gives rise to 348 **psychological problems** of depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety and parents recalling traumatic childhood experiences which impacts on their parenting.

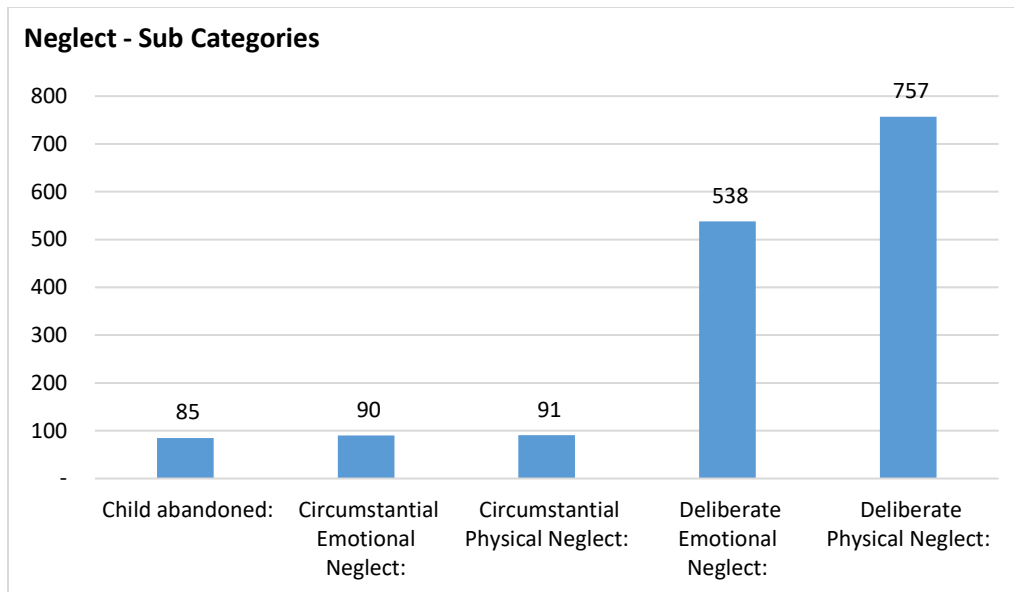


2.5 Poverty Related Concerns

Poverty related issues (636) cases resulting in hunger, homelessness, lack of winter clothes and food insecurity. This is aligned to cases of **neglect** at 1 107. We have been able to source food parcels from the HCI Foundation, Tzu Chi Foundation, Afrika Tikkun and African Children's Feeding Scheme which we distributed to the most desperate of families.

Cases pertaining to neglect and poverty include: toddlers being left alone at home with no care giver; parents out partying; children left with grandparents for extended periods of time, with no support. Concerns regarding aggression by loan sharks; request for assistance in getting IDs from Home Affairs and grants; abuse of the Child Support Grant by parents; delay in grant payments; and, difficulty in accessing the unemployment grant.





2.6 Children with Behavioural Problems

491 children with **behavioural problems**, placing additional pressure on already overwhelmed families is gravely concerning. This behaviour is often a result of early childhood trauma and reflects in: teens refusing to stay at home; run away children; refusal to do chores or school work; disrespecting care givers; and even child physical violence towards family members. **Substance abuse** (526) cases including drinking, smoking dagga and '**nyaope**'. There have been a number of successful cases where counsellors have spoken to disobedient youth where they apologized and promised to behave better. Counselling to address early emotional trauma and tough love is helpful.

2.7 School Related Concerns

Children are concerned about not being able to attend school currently and exam stress has been a major problem. 569 **school problems** and **peer relationships** (198). Many children are so appreciative of the feeding schemes which are currently not operative due to school closures.

The Childline services provide an individualized assessment and risk analysis with all callers. This allows for reflection on the best plan of action for each client based on standard operating procedures for all issues. Solutions are devised with callers to mitigate the tremendous challenges they face. We rely on DSD and the SA Police Services (SAPS) as some child protection services are on skeleton staff and difficult to access. The counsellors have persisted with follow up calls until they are sure that children at risk have a safe solution.

Our focus is to build family resilience with counselling and information that assists them to deal with the challenges of the times. This enhances their coping skills and emotional intelligence and enables children to play a role in supporting their families. We honour our partners in child protection: community members, who often step up and assist the children in need; the health workers, SAPS and DSD who assist in finding solutions to children's problems. The African spirit of humanity is fully operational at this time.

3. CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SERVICES

The counselling services are offered at all Childline Community-Based Centres (CCBCs) in the Johannesburg Inner City, Soweto, Sebokeng, Orange Farm, Katlehong, Tembisa and Diepsloot. These

centres of excellence are easily accessed by clients, and are well-placed for participation in community development events promoting sensitivity to family issues, child rights and responsibilities.

Each office provides professional counselling services, child development, junior leadership projects and a community engagement program. Each centre participates in the child protection community forums and provides unique campaigns to address issues that are pertinent to the community they serve.

Our professional team of trained social workers deal with all child-related problems, including: sexual violence (sexual abuse, rape and attempted rape, and infant rape); physical abuse; emotional abuse; neglect; grief and loss; trauma; witness to violence and domestic violence; assault and bullying; young sexual offenders; behavioural problems; those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; and adult survivors of childhood abuse.

Each client receives individualised counselling based on the initial clinical and risk assessment. This includes: individual, group, family, marital and play therapy. Court preparation / support / advocacy for each child's right to justice, dignity and respect within their communities and the criminal justice system is also provided.

The Counselling Team provided 5 129 counselling sessions to 1 467 clients. The highest category of cases being sexual violence (377); children with behavioural problems (337); death of loved ones (158); trauma (124); family problems (101) and domestic violence (76).

4. SUNLIGHT SAFE HOUSE SERVICES

The Sunlight Safe House (SSH) started in 1997 as an after-hours service for abused and abandoned children. With traditional organisations closed at night and during weekends, many traumatised children stayed at police stations until the welfare agencies opened their doors during office hours. This constituted secondary traumatising for the child. Childline Gauteng set up the SSH at the request of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) in conjunction with the local Child Welfare Societies and Department of Social Development (DSD), whose function it is to provide statutory child protection services.

The SSH provided emergency after hour care for 48 children at our Sunlight Reception Centre and foster care for 106 children and Independent Living grown up SSH children. Social workers or the South African Police Service (SAPS) bring the child/ren into overnight care and they are referred to statutory services for further investigation and suitable placement. They are welcomed by our child and youth care workers and the team is able to assess each child's needs immediately.

The project was extended in 2002 to provide foster care for HIV+ children and young people who are 'difficult' to place. To date we have provided care for approximately **7 636** children.

We also offer training and capacity building to mothers, partner organisations in child and foster care.

5. TRENDS

Analysis of the Childline projects statistics indicate the following:

- 59% increase in the number of calls dialled to the Help Line compared to the same period last year, with a 145% increase in cases opened and 677% increase in the need for counselling / information calls.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated psycho-social- economic challenges across all projects, with an increase of 54 914% of health related calls on the Help Line.

- Help Line calls pertaining to abuse has increase by 36% and has been heightened in all projects with emotional dominating, physical being second highest on Help Line and sexual violence being the highest among the Counselling clients. Our intervention often heals the rifts in families caused by abuse and is very helpful in limiting further behavioural problems in survivors. Domestic violence also features high on all projects.
- Children with behavioural problems increased by 48% and substance abuse up by 35% on the Help Line. Delinquency is usually associated with underlying trauma, feature high in Counselling Services. These youth make themselves very vulnerable to further problems. Helping them to deal with their underlying trauma, often repairs their relationships with their parents, preventing further problems.
- Poverty and neglect are major contributors to heightened family and psychological problems in all the Childline programmes and has increased by 300% on the Help Line

6. MYTHS THE COUNSELLORS ADDRESSED WITH CORRECT INFORMATION

- Children believing that the corona crisis is over
- Suggesting various cures, from the rain to standing in the wind to blow it away
- Child asking the counsellor to wash hands with him and children can't see the point of washing their hands so often
- COVID-19 virus only effects rich white people as they travel a lot
- COVID-19 is spread through the phone or by mosquitoes
- People who test positive will die
- COVID-19 will kill us all in view of the number of people dying every day and God is punishing us
- Red cheeks mean you have COVID-19
- Childline has to fetch them as they are tired of staying at home and this violates their rights
- Only old people get sick from COVID-19 and children don't die from it

7. SUCCESS STORIES

We are heartened by the many children and parents who phone to: thank the counsellors; say a prayer; sing a song; wish our counsellors well and tell us to prevent COVID-19. We continue to be inspired by the resilience of our children, the high levels of care from community members and the support we receive from our extended Childline partners in finding solutions for every caller. We honour the counsellors who have been tirelessly serving on the lines since the beginning of Lockdown, day and night.

8. CHALLENGES

Childline has been able to offer services for the entire period of Lockdown which has been almost **ten months**. Whilst we are privileged to be able to assist, the counsellors are overwhelmed with the extent of suffering in our communities whilst having to deal with their own family's vulnerability to COVID-19. Ensuring staff safety at this time has been a major challenge. We have provided staff transport, changed the roster to ensure greater safety, provided periods of isolation for those exposed, and all PPE required.

Some of our staff tested positive for COVID-19 and apart from transferring the calls to KZN for two days while we tested all counsellors and sanitized the offices and electricity outages for two days, the service has continued uninterrupted.

We currently receive all the national Cell C, Vodacom and Telkom Mobile calls until they install the software to distribute to the province of the caller.

Distributing donated food to those in dire straits has been an additional service we have offered to approximately 1 600 of our clients.

The following issues are of major concern to many of our callers, with levels and extent of violence increasing:

- Fear, stress and anxiety due to the high infection and death rates requires our counsellors to contain the high levels of emotion and assist in making positive choices regarding the way forward
- GBV and child abuse tends to be perpetrated by persons known to them, often within the family
- Economic hardships culminating in hunger is devastating and ensuring access to food parcels or vouchers is critical
- Many family problems are exacerbated at this difficult time and counselling services enable them to deal with these in a more emotionally intelligent manner
- Comparative studies for the same period last year indicate a massive increase in the number of calls and all categories of calls received. Ensuring child safety is a critical service at this stage. We follow up to ensure all children receive the necessary statutory services as per the Child Care Act. We have relied on community members, DSD and SAPS to assist. Many of the GBV shelters and Child and Youth Care Centres are full and finding a place for mothers and abused children is always a challenge
- Troubled children and teenagers are refusing to remain at home and are reportedly abusing substances. Their single mothers are finding it difficult to discipline them. This is putting the entire family at risk. Each case is handled according to the specific needs of the caller to find a solution

9. CONCLUSION

Childline Gauteng is extremely grateful to our partners who have assisted us to extend our capacity on the Help Line, enabling us to provide these vital services.

In summary, Childline Gauteng has assisted 166 197 callers on the Help Line, 1 467 client with Counselling Services and 48 children in life threatening circumstances in the Sunlight Safe House, that is, a total of 167 712 clients in the period under review. This is a **massive increase** compared to the calls received for the same period last year.

Vulnerable families bear the brunt of the pandemic and structural inequality in our country, with increased psycho-social and economic problems of: family functioning undermined by gender based violence, emotional abuse and criminal violence; neglect, hunger and poverty; great anxiety regarding health issues; children behaving inappropriately; and difficulty in accessing support services at this critical time.

We continue to receive great support from community members demonstrating their concern and care for children, often to the point of putting themselves at risk, by taking them into their own homes. We are humbled by their spirit of African Humanity and are proud to be an essential part of “the village raising all children” at this time.

The SA Police Service and DSD have delivered services to children and families at this time. We honour them, the medical workers, the essential services organisations and the many people who have risen up to serve those that are vulnerable at this time.

We thank our partners for your support enabling Childline to render these critical psycho-social and child protection services. Despite the many challenges that we know you are facing in terms of the difficult economic climate and troubling COVID-19 statics.

We trust that we will collectively overcome this traumatic time and a new South Africa will emerge from the lessons learned during COVID-19 where: compassion; equality, dignity and life is assured; a reduction of gross economic inequality; increased services and support for vulnerable people; and a restoration of pride in our country and our people working together to build a great nation demonstrating our African Humanity.

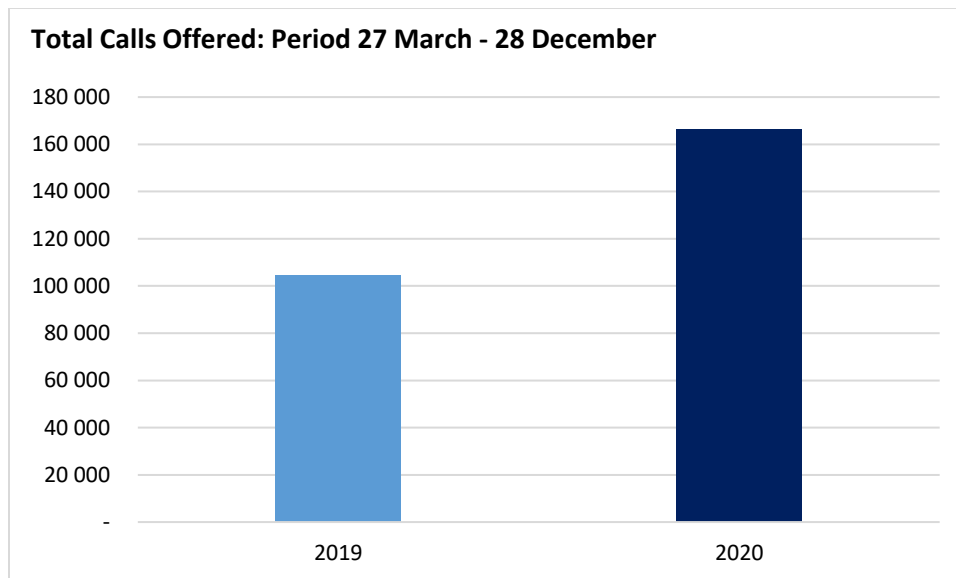
Lynne Cawood
Director
21st January 2021

CHILDLINE GAUTENG

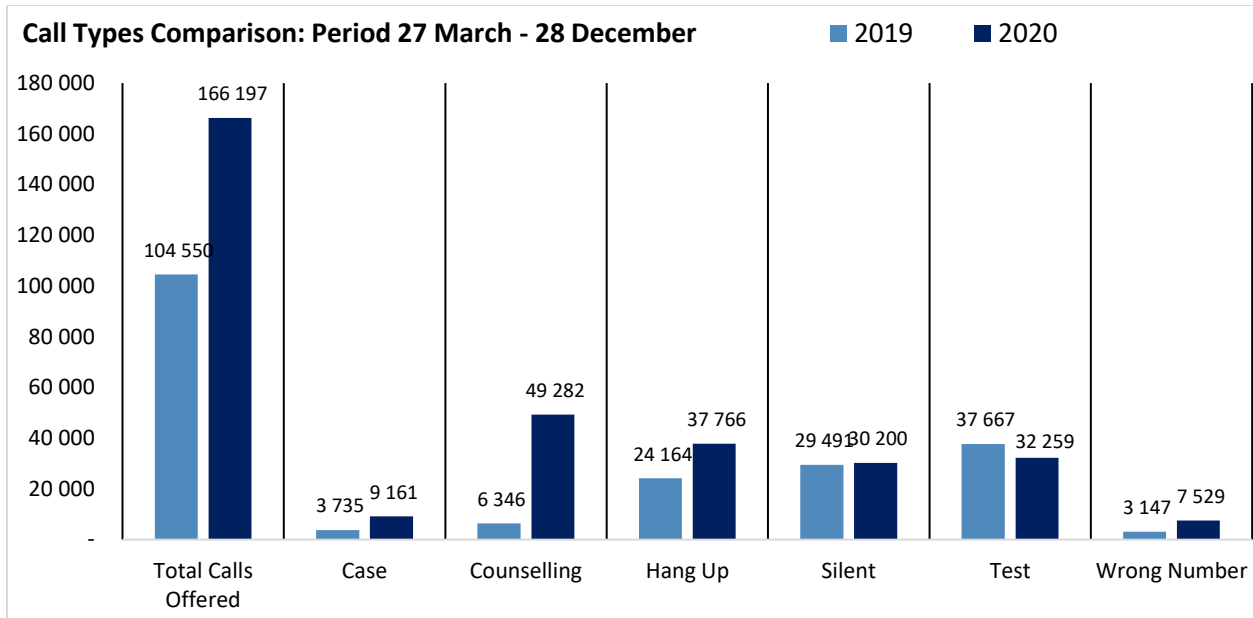
COMPARATIVE HELP LINE STATISTICS REPORT 2019 / 2020

Period: 27/03/2019 – 28/12/2019 compared to 27/03/2020 – 28/12/2020

1. TOTAL CALLS RECEIVED



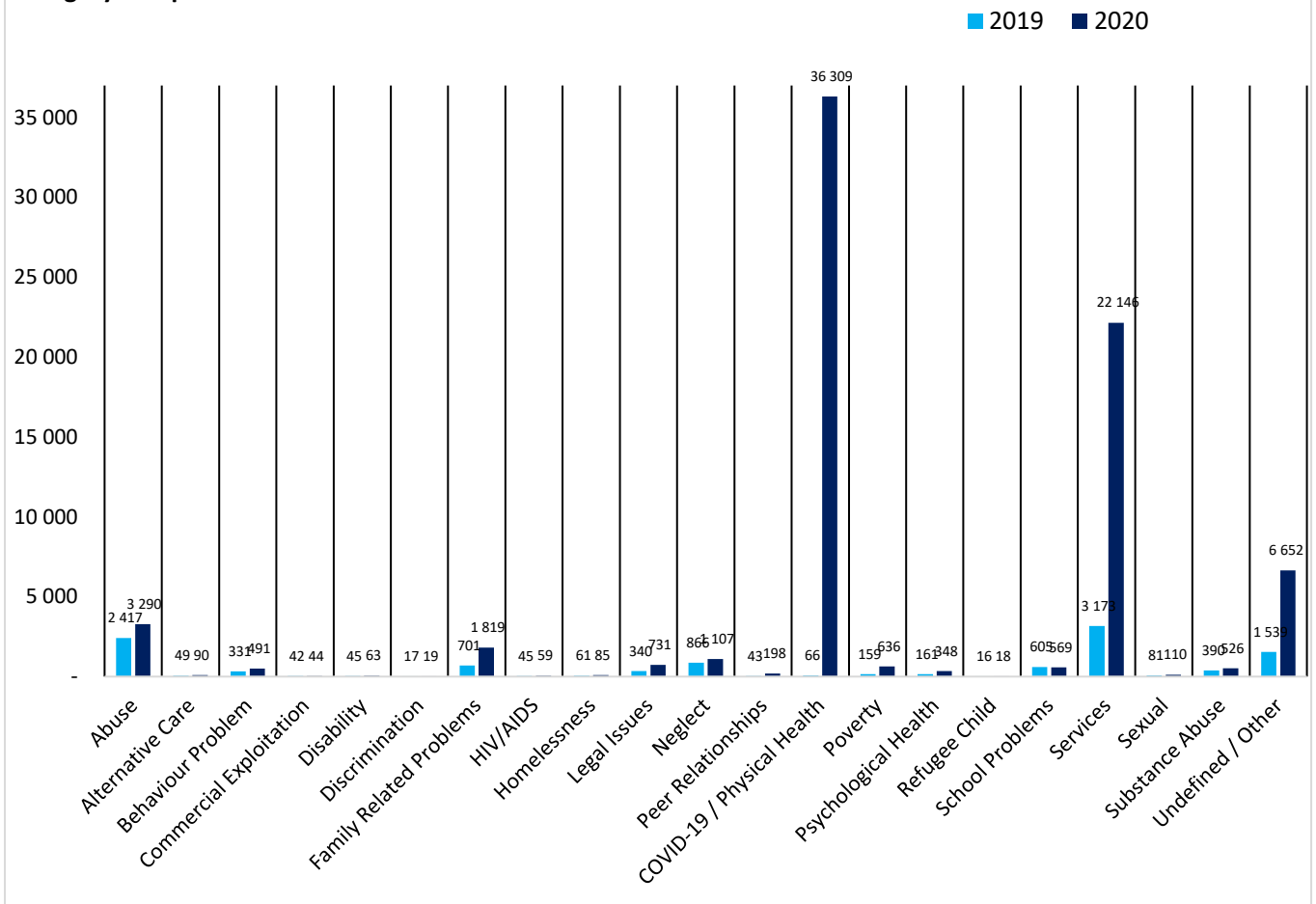
	2019	2020	%
Case	3,735	9,161	145%
Counselling - Want to Talk	6,346	49,282	677%
Hang Up	24,164	37,766	56%
Silent	29,491	30,200	2%
Test	37,667	32,259	-14%
Wrong Number	3,147	7,529	139%
Grand Total	104,550	166,197	59%



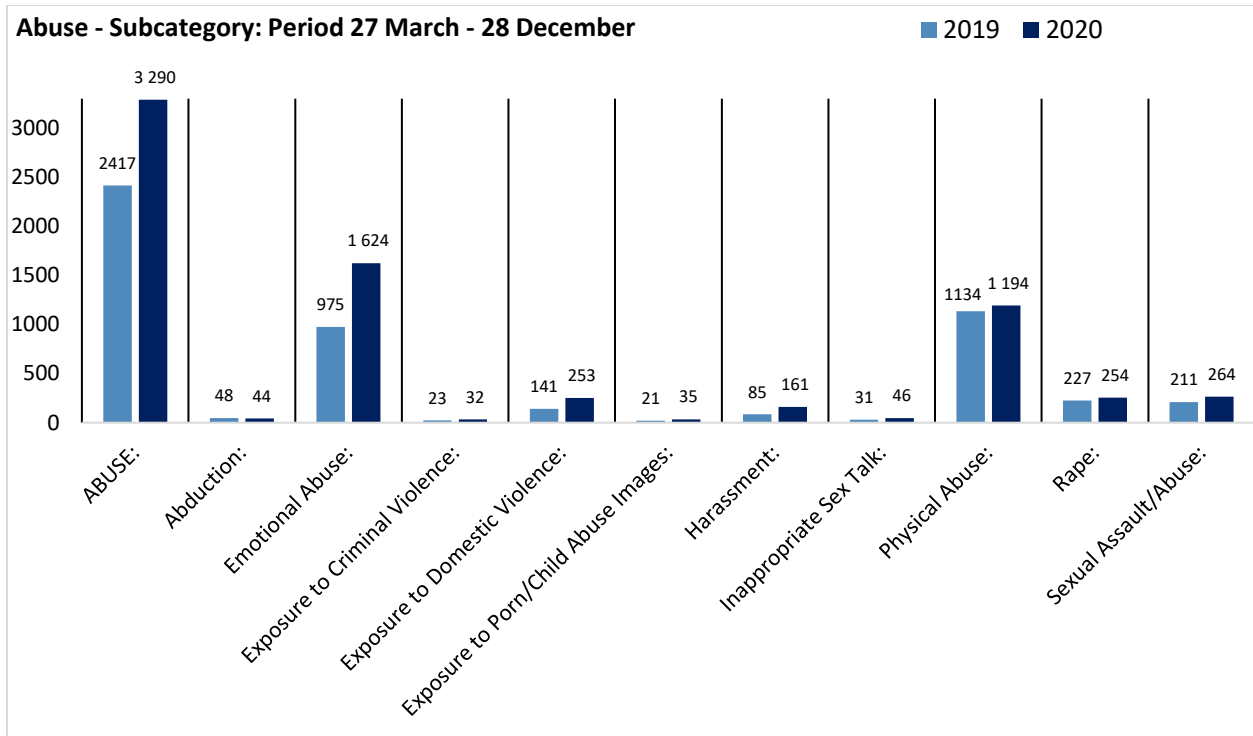
2. CATEGORIES – ALL

	2019	2020	% Increase
ABUSE:	2,417	3,290	36%
ALTERNATIVE CARE:	49	90	84%
BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS:	331	491	48%
COMMERCIALISATION	42	44	5%
DISABILITY:	45	63	40%
DISCRIMINATION:	17	19	12%
FAMILY REL PROB:	701	1,819	159%
HIV/AIDS:	45	59	31%
HOMELESSNES:	61	85	39%
LEGAL ISSUES:	340	731	115%
NEGLECT:	866	1,107	28%
PEER RELATIONSHIPS:	43	198	360%
PHYSICAL HEALTH:	66	36,309	54,914%
POVERTY:	159	636	300%
PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH:	161	348	116%
REFUGEE CHILD:	16	18	13%
SCHOOL PROBLEMS:	605	569	-6%
SERVICES:	3,173	22,146	598%
SEXUAL:	81	110	36%
SUBSTANCE ABUSE:	390	526	35%
UNDEFINED / OTHER:	1539	6,652	332%

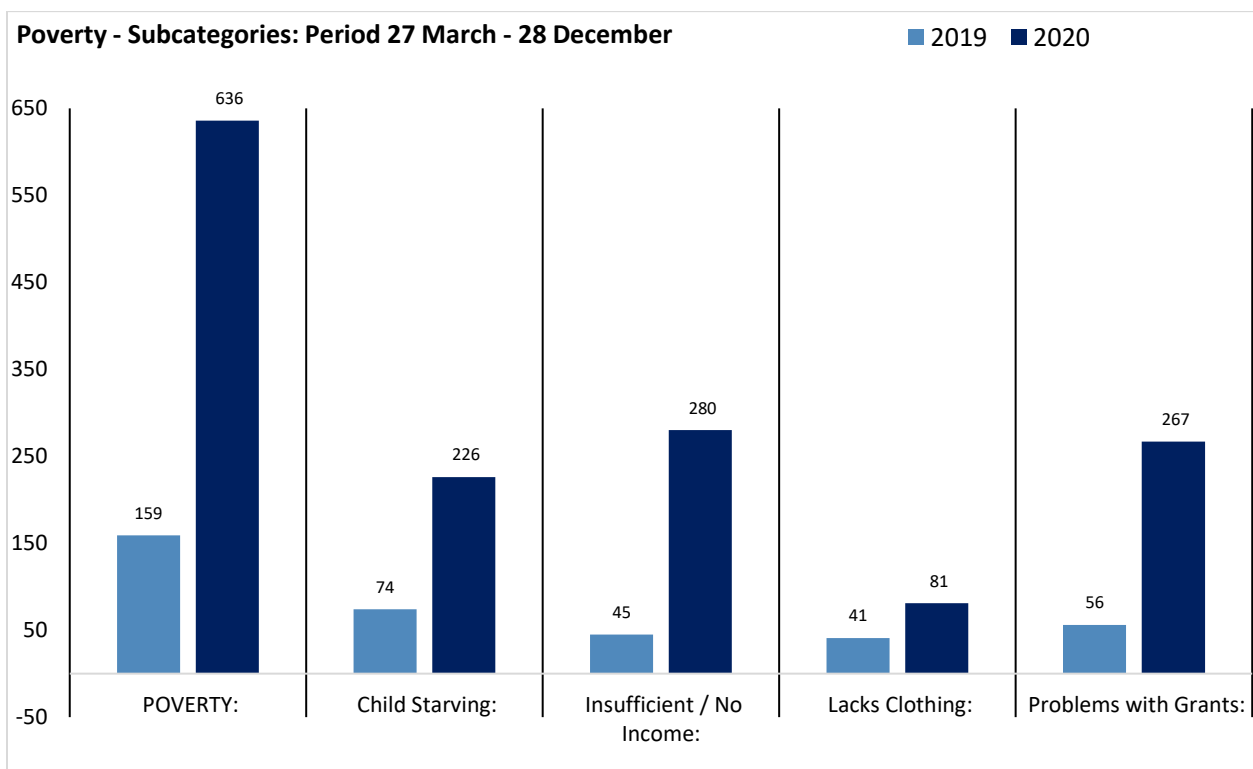
Category Comparison: Period 27 March - 28 December



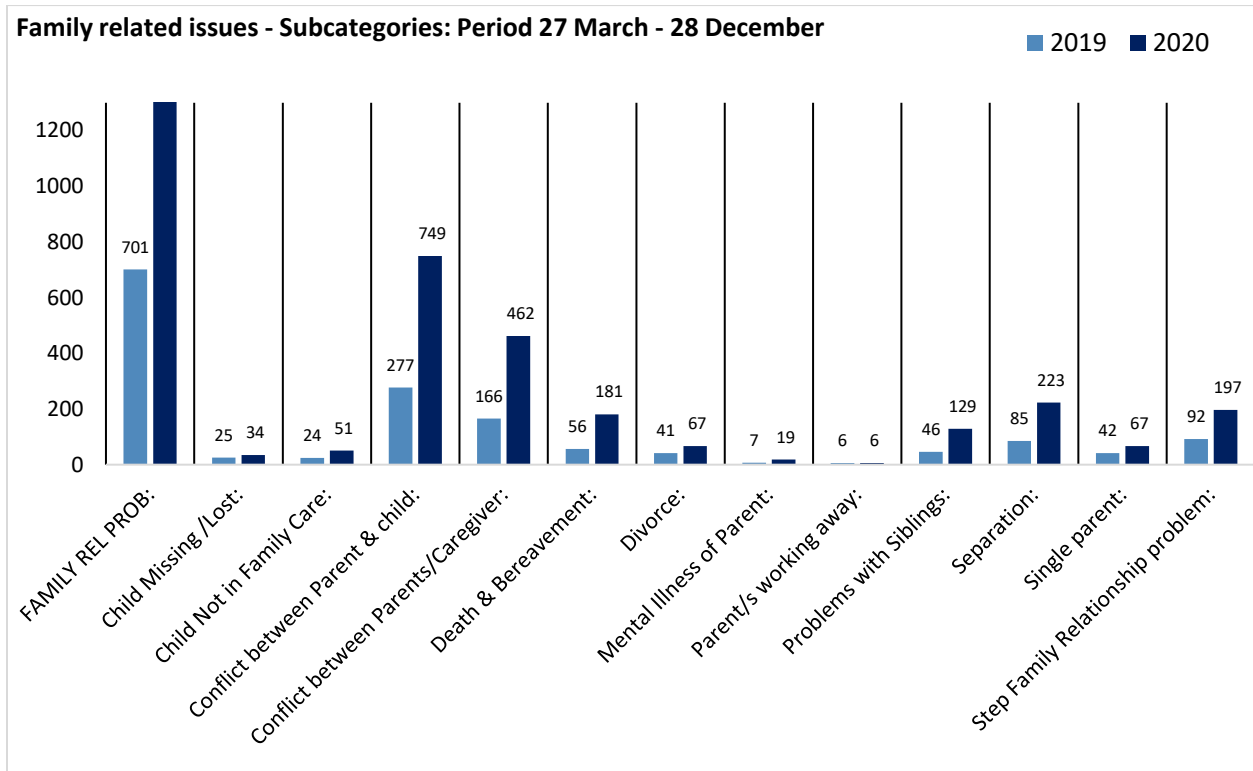
3. ABUSE SUB-CATEGORIES



4. POVERTY SUB-CATEGORIES



5. FAMILY RELATED ISSUES SUB-CATEGORIES



6. SUICIDE / PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Psychological Health- Subcategories: Period 27 March - 28 December

■ 2019
 ■ 2020

