

HIC Database Codebook

Version 1.0
July 8, 2024

Case detail

id

Unique case identifier.

Possible values:

#000001 - #100000

title

Refers to the original title of HIC case narrative.

Possible values:

String of title

source_date

The date on which the original HIC case narrative was published.

Possible values:

ISO date

incident_date

The single terminating event — usually the death, final escape, or specific incident of abuse or neglect — that led to authority involvement and media coverage.

When discovery of remains brings a case to light, this date reflects the date of discovery rather than the date of death.

Note that escapes of a parent or public-schooled child count as escapes, even though it was not an escape of a homeschooled child.

For kidnappings, the incident date is the kidnapping date, not the rescue/surrender date, even if the latter is what led to media coverage. However, the came-to-light date and authority intervention date still center on the rescue.

For armed standoffs with authorities after the parent(s) have been arrested, the incident date is the beginning of the armed standoff, since that's what led to media coverage and typically there is no "big" preceding incident. (However, for the one kidnapping case that involved an armed standoff, the kidnapping date is the incident date.)

For other cases with no clear incident date, the fallback is the authority intervention date. If there was no authority intervention date or the authority intervention date is unknown, the fallback is the came-to-light date.

Possible values:

ISO date

99998: qualitatively coded; notes available upon request

final_came_to_light_date

The date authorities (law enforcement or social services) were made aware of the incident recorded in incident_date.

Possible values:

ISO date

99997: not given in available media coverage

99998: qualitatively coded; notes available upon request

authority_intervention_date

Date authorities made an effective intervention, typically by arresting the parents or removing children. Not necessarily the date on which authorities first acted (for example, if parents went missing and were arrested later, the date is the arrest date, not the start of the search).

When siblings were not reported to be abused and were not removed, the removal of the abused siblings is considered the authority intervention date.

For non-fatality cases, the authority action date typically represents the "end date" for the abused children. For fatality cases, when there are siblings the action date represents the end date for any surviving abused children; when there are no siblings, the action date is the arrest date.

Possible values:

ISO date

99990: no removal (though sometimes intervention)

99991: partial and/or temporary removals, see notes for more info

99992: intervention occurred, year unknown

99996: no one left to arrest/remove

99997: not given in media coverage

99998: qualitatively coded; notes available upon request

death_date

If the case involved a single fatality of a child, or multiple fatalities of children occurring on the same day, this is that day.

For dates involving uncertainty, see also death_daterange_earliest and death_daterange_latest.

Possible values:

ISO date

99990: no fatalities of children

99992: year unknown

99993: multiple fatalities on different dates, see notes

99998: see notes

death_daterange_earliest

Earliest possible death date, when exact death date is unknown.

Possible values:

ISO date

99990: no fatalities of children

99991: exact death date known

99993: multiple fatalities on different dates, see notes

99994: no information on range available

99998: qualitatively coded; notes available upon request

death_daterange_latest

Latest possible death date, when exact death date is unknown.

Possible values:

ISO date

99990: no fatalities of children

99991: exact death date known

99993: multiple fatalities on different dates, see notes

99994: qualitatively coded; notes available upon request

ref_state

The US state or territory in which abuse took place.

Possible values:

US state & territory names

Multistate

extended_abuse_neglect

Variable tracking whether abuse/neglect extended beyond incident reflected in incident_date.

Possible values:

1 - yes

2 - unknown

total_fatalities

Number of total fatalities associated with the case.

Possible values:

Integer

homeschooled_fatalities

Number of fatalities of homeschooled children associated with the case.

Possible values:

Integer

fatality

Possible values:

TRUE
FALSE

withdrawn

Whether or not the victim(s) was/were withdrawn from school before the incident took place.

Possible values:

TRUE
FALSE

prior_ss

Whether or not the victim(s)' family had contact with social services prior to the incident. Here, "contact" with social services encompasses any investigation by social services, whether it yields an unsubstantiated or substantiated report, an intervention, the removal of the children, or contact is attempted but the family flees. Cases that fall under multiple categories (e.g., several tips were filed and one investigation took place; victims were fostered by perpetrators who went on to be the subjects of investigations) are coded as "at least one known contact" if an investigation took place.

Possible values:

- 1 - no known agency contact
- 2 - at least one known tip
- 3 - at least one known contact
- 4 - assumed contact via foster

final_came_to_light_category

Nature of the incident which brought the case to light. Detailed information on coding scheme available upon request.

Possible values:

- 1 - specific incident involving homeschooled person
- 2 - specific incident, other household member
- 3 - death of victim [see also category 9]
- 4 - discovery of remains

- 5 - development of medical symptoms from ongoing neglect/abuse, no known specific cause
- 6 - unknown - information unreported, paywalled, or unavailable
- 7 - authorities tipped off/welfare check, no other categories apply
- 8 - reporting circumstances known, specific prompting abuse/neglect incident unknown
- 9 - unresponsive, not breathing, or in cardiac arrest
- 10 - Other or unclassifiable

reporting_circumstances

Action taken which aided in abuse coming to light. Detailed information on coding scheme available upon request.

Possible values:

- 1a - Non-professional reports
- 1b - Professional reports
- 1c - Direct intervention from authorities
- 2a - Victim reaches out to non-professional
- 2b - Victim reaches out to professional
- 2c - Victim reaches out to authorities
- 3 - Victim runs away
- 4a - No report: death/life-threatening medical symptoms/discovery of remains
- 4b - No report: circumstances irrelevant to victim
- 5a - Reported after the fact by victim
- 5b - Reported after the fact by other victim
- 5c - Reported after the fact by perpetrator
- 5d - Reported after the fact under other circumstances
- 5e - Report made, but not of abuse
- 6 - Unknown or n/a

categories

id

Unique case identifier.

Possible values:

#000001 - #100000

title

Refers to the original title of HIC case narrative.

category

Refers to categories of abuse mentioned in media coverage or court documentation of a case. A case can have multiple values.

Possible values:

Food deprivation

Imprisonment

Medical neglect

Physical abuse

Sexual abuse