Children in Out-of-Home Placement

DEFINITION

Children in out-of-home placement is the number of children who have been removed from their families and are in the care of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) while awaiting permanency. Out-of-home placements include foster care homes, group homes, shelter care, residential facilities, and medical facilities. Permanency can be achieved through reunification with the family, adoption, or guardianship.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children need stability, permanency, and safety for healthy development. Removal from the home may be necessary for the child’s safety and well-being; however, critical connections and a sense of permanency may be lost when a child is placed out-of-home.1 Permanency planning efforts should begin as soon as a child enters the child welfare system so that a permanent living situation can be achieved as quickly as possible.2 The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Fostering Connections Act) promotes permanency through supports for relative guardianship and incentives for adoption.3

Children of color are overrepresented at all decision points in the child welfare system, including reporting, investigation, substantiation, placement, and exit from care. Minority children in child welfare systems experience significantly worse outcomes, have more placement changes, receive fewer supports, stay in the child welfare system longer, are less likely to be adopted or reunified with their families, have fewer contacts with caseworkers, less access to mental health and substance abuse services and are placed in detention or correctional facilities at higher rates than White children.4

Rhode Island children in out-of-home care often experience multiple placements, lose contact with family members, and may have overlooked educational, physical, and mental health needs.5 Children in out-of-home care suffer more frequent and more serious medical, developmental, and mental health problems than their peers.6 Long-term stays in care can cause emotional, behavioral, or educational problems that can negatively impact children’s long-term well-being and success.7 Children in foster care are more likely than their peers to change schools, be suspended, qualify for special education, repeat a grade and drop out of school.8 Appropriate supports and services can help youth in care maximize their potential and ensure that they are prepared for higher education and work.9

As of December 31, 2014, there were 2,078 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placements, the second straight annual increase.

The total caseload of DCYF on December 31, 2014 was 7,078, including 2,380 children living in their homes under DCYF supervision and 2,541 children living in adoption settings. This total caseload shows a second consecutive annual increase after years of decline, increasing from 7,004 in 2013.

The total DCYF caseload also includes 55 children in out-of-state placements/other agency custody; 14 children receiving respite care services; two youth in a prison other than the Rhode Island Training School; and three children in other placement.

On December 31, 2014, there were 65 youth in an independent living arrangement or supervised apartment setting, a decline of 68% from 203 youth in 2006. The number of youth in these arrangements has declined steadily since 2007, when the maximum age at which youth can remain in foster care in Rhode Island was lowered from age 21 to age 18.

Source: RI Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2006-2014.

Children in Out-of-Home Placement, Rhode Island, December 31, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care Home (relative)</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care Home (non-relative, private agency)</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Facility</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island Training School for Youth</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living/Supervised Apartment</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives Caring for Children*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYF Shelter Care</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric or Medical Hospital/Substance Abuse Facility</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Relatives caring for children are classified as an out-of-home placement by DCYF, despite the fact that these relatives did not receive monetary payments from DCYF to care for the children and the children were never removed and never needed to be removed from the relatives’ homes. In these cases, the relative caring for the child initiated contact with DCYF to receive assistance from the agency.

**The placement category “Other” includes: runaway youth in DCYF care or those with unauthorized absences (52), pre-adoptive homes (3), and minors with mother in shelter/group home/residential facility (1).
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Fostering Connections
- The federal Fostering Connections Act promotes kinship care and family connections by requiring states to notify relatives when a child is placed in foster care and providing funding for states offering kinship guardianship assistance payments. Rhode Island’s guardianship assistance program defines kin broadly and includes any adult who has a close and caring relationship with the child, including godparents, caretakers, close family friends, neighbors, and clergy.

Placement Stability
- In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014, 12.4% of the 1,534 children who had been in out-of-home care for less than one year had experienced three or more placements, up from 11.7% in FFY 2013. Three or more placements were experienced by 25.1% of the 730 children who were in care between 12 and 24 months, down from 31.9% in FFY 2013. Fifty-nine percent of the 749 children who had been in care for 24 months or more experienced three or more placements.

Recurrence of Abuse and Neglect
- Of the 1,711 Rhode Island children who were victims of abuse or neglect during FFY 2014 (whether or not they were removed from the home), 8.8% experienced one or more recurrences of abuse or neglect within six months, up from 8.2% in FFY 2013. The national standard is 6.1% or fewer.

Shelter Care
- The number of children in shelter care (facilities providing emergency care to eight children or less for no more than 90 days each) decreased from 49 on December 31, 2013 to 40 on December 31, 2014. Four of these Rhode Island children in shelter care were under age six; five were ages six to 13; and 31 were age 14 and older.

References

(continued on page 181)


Rhode Island Department of Health. 2009-2013. Data on child deaths are from vital records and data on emergency department visits and hospitalizations are from the Center for Health Data and Analysis, Hospital Discharge Database.


Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children’s Information System (RICHIST), 2005-2014.


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References for Permanency for Children in DCYF Care


