

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 permanent placement. Out-of-home placements include relative, non-relative and private agency foster homes, and placements with step parents, group homes, shelter care, residential treatment facilities, and medical facilities. Permanent placement includes reunification with the family, adoption or guardianship.

SIGNIFICANCE

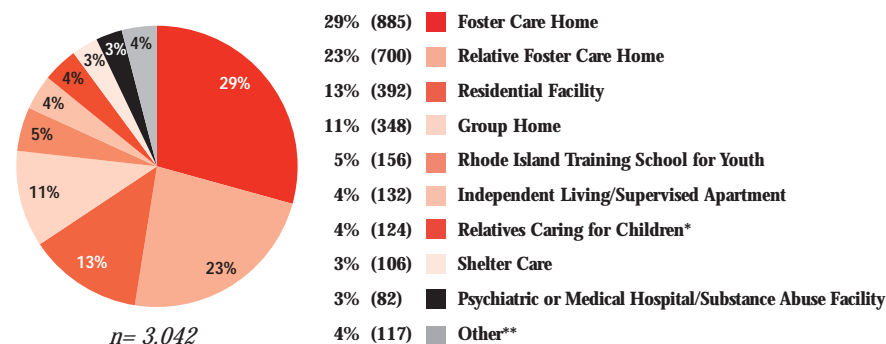
Children need stability, permanency and safety in order to develop and flourish. Removal from the home may be necessary for the child's safety and well-being; however, it is disruptive and compromises a child's developmental progress.¹ Children who have been abused or neglected are particularly in need of a safe, stable and permanent environment which provides for their well-being. Yet Rhode Island children in out-of-home care frequently experience multiple placements, lose contact with family members, and often have overlooked educational, physical, and mental health needs.²

Children in out-of-home care suffer more frequent and more serious medical, developmental, and mental health problems than their peers.^{3,4} Long-term stays in out-of-home placements can negatively affect children, causing emotional, behavioral or educational problems that adversely affect their future well-being and self-sufficiency.⁵

Effective strategies to promote the optimal development of children in out-of-home placements include: assessment on system entry; a comprehensive care system to immediately address physical, mental, emotional, behavioral and educational needs; family involvement; training for caregivers; coordinated services and funding strategies; and a managed care model to address the complex needs of children in the child welfare system.^{6,7}

National research indicates that youth in the child welfare system have high aspirations, including completing a college education, but many experience serious educational difficulties. Adequate remedial and special education services are needed to ensure each youth maximizes his or her potential and is prepared for future education and the employment market.⁸

Children in Out-of Home Placement, December 31, 2007



* *Relative caring for children are classified as an out-of-home placement by DCYF, despite the fact that these relatives do 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 (85), pre-adoptive homes (20), minors with mother in shelter/group home/residential facility (10), and step parents (2).*

◆ **As of December 31, 2007, there were 3,042 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placements, an 8% decrease from 2006 (3,311). More than half (52%) of children in out-of-home placements on December 31, 2007 were in foster care, 44% of whom were in relative foster care homes.**

◆ **The total caseload of DCYF on December 31, 2007 was 8,843 including: 3,138 children living in their homes under DCYF supervision; 2,663 children living in adoption placements, all except one receiving subsidized adoption supports; 34 children in out-of-state placements/placements with another agency; 9 children receiving respite care services; and 21 youth in Job Corps, prison or other placements.**

◆ **Older youth in placement often transition to adulthood while still in care. On December 31, 2007, 132 Rhode Island youth were in an independent living arrangement or supervised apartment setting under the care of DCYF, down from 203 in 2006. Of youth in funded independent living programs in 2007, 43% were 19-21 years old.**

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), December 31, 2006 & December 31, 2007.

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Night-to-Night Placements

◆ Night-to-night placements refer to the temporary nightly placement of children in the care of DCYF who are awaiting longer-term placements. In 2007 (excluding September and October), there were 163 children placed in night-to-night placements for a total of 179 bed nights.⁹

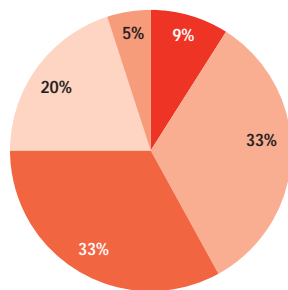
Children in Foster Care Homes, Rhode Island, January 2, 2008

By Age

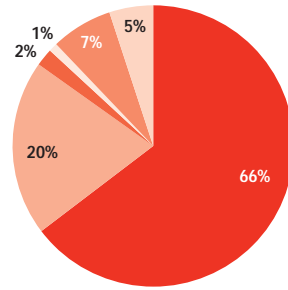
9% (148)	Under Age 1
33% (524)	Ages 1 to 5
33% (525)	Ages 6 to 13
20% (313)	Ages 14 to 17
5% (77)	Ages 18 and over

By Race and Ethnicity

66% (1,045)	White
20% (314)	Black
2% (24)	Asian
1% (17)	Native American
7% (115)	Multiracial
5% (72)	Unknown/Other



n = 1,587



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), January 2, 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. There were 361 (23%) Hispanic children and youth in foster care in Rhode Island on January 2, 2008. Hispanic children can be of any race.

◆ On January 2, 2008, there were 1,587 children in foster care homes. Of these, 702 (44%) were in relative foster homes, 538 (34%) were in non-relative foster homes, and 347 (22%) were at private agencies.¹⁰ Children of color are overrepresented in foster care. There is an ongoing shortage of foster parents in Rhode Island and nationally, especially parents of color.¹¹

Safety, Permanency and Well-Being

◆ The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) recognizes that the broad goals of child protection systems are preventing the recurrence of abuse or neglect, ensuring the safety of children in out-of-home placements, and maximizing the stability of placements.¹²

◆ Of the 1,758 Rhode Island children who were victims of abuse or neglect during federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007 (whether or not they were removed from the home), 13% experienced one or more recurrences of abuse or neglect within 6 months, up from 11% in FFY 2003. The national standard is 6% or fewer.¹³

◆ In FFY 2007, 16% of the 2,039 children who had been in out-of-home care for less than 1 year had experienced 3 or more placements, down from 29% in FFY 2003. Three or more placements were experienced by 36% of children who had been in care between 12 and 23 months, down from 42% in FFY 2003; 64% of children who had been in care for 24 or more months experienced three or more placements (compared with 73% in FFY 2003).¹⁴

◆ Research shows disparate treatment of children of color as they enter the foster care system and while they are in the system. Black and Hispanic families are more likely than non-Hispanic White families under similar circumstances to be reported for child abuse and neglect and to have their children removed and placed in foster care. Once in foster care, children of color are more likely than non-Hispanic White children to remain in placement for longer periods of time and to receive fewer familial visits, fewer contacts with caseworkers, fewer written case plans, and fewer developmental or psychological assessments.¹⁵

References

¹ Harden, B. J. (2004). Safety and stability for foster children: A developmental perspective. *The Future of Children*, 14(1), 31-47.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2004). *Final report: Rhode Island child and family services review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

^{3,8} Dicker, S., Gordon, E. & Knitzer, J. (2002). *Improving the odds for healthy development of young children in foster care*. New York, NY: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, National Center for Children in Poverty.

⁴ Vandivere, S., Chalk, R. & Moore, K. A. (2003). *Children in foster homes: How are they faring?* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

⁵ *A place to call home: State efforts to increase adoptions and improve foster care placements*. (2000). Washington, DC: National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices.

⁷ *Meeting the health care needs of children in the foster care system*. (2002). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.

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