

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 foster care homes, group homes, residential facilities, shelter care, and medical facilities. Permanent placements include reunification with the family, adoption or guardianship.

SIGNIFICANCE

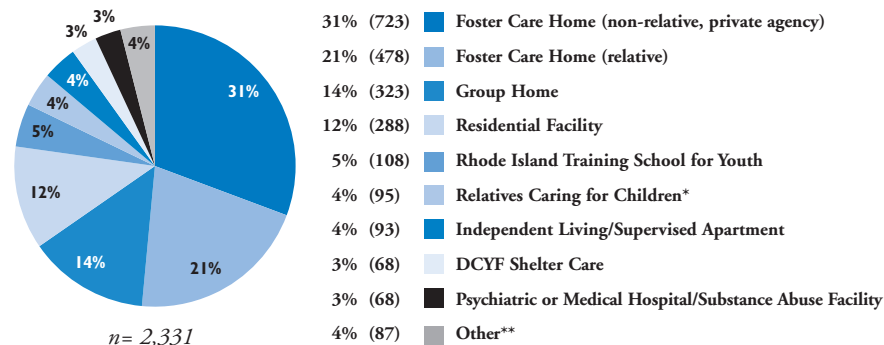
Children need stability, permanency and safety for healthy development. Removal from the home may be necessary for a child's safety and well-being; however, it is disruptive and can compromise their developmental progress. Children who have been abused or neglected are particularly in need of a safe, stable and permanent environment that provides for their well-being. Permanency planning efforts should begin as soon as the child enters the child welfare system so that children can attain a permanent placement as soon as possible.¹² 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

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.⁴ Children in out-of-home care suffer more frequent and more serious medical, developmental, and mental health problems than their peers.^{5,6} Long-term stays in care can lead to 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, require special education services, repeat a grade, and drop out of school.⁸

Appropriate supports and services can ensure that all youth maximize their potential and are prepared for higher education and work.⁹

Research shows that 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 care longer, are less likely to be adopted or reunited 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.¹⁰

Children in Out-of-Home Placement, Rhode Island, December 31, 2009



* *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 (68), pre-adoptive homes (10), minors with mother in shelter/group home/residential facility (4), step parents (3) and trial home visits (2).*

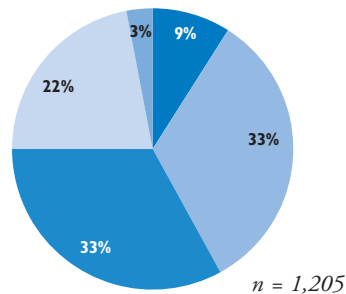
- ◆ **As of December 31, 2009, there were 2,331 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placements, a 30% decrease from 3,311 in 2006.**
- ◆ **The total caseload of DCYF on December 31, 2009 was 7,677, including 2,506 children living in their homes under DCYF supervision and 2,769 children living in adoption placements. This is an 18% decrease in the DCYF caseload, down from 9,414 in 2006.**
- ◆ **The total DCYF caseload also includes 49 children in out-of-state placements/other agency custody; eight children receiving respite care services; six youth in a prison other than the Rhode Island Training School; and eight children in other placements.**
- ◆ **On December 31, 2009, 93 Rhode Island youth were in an independent living arrangement or supervised apartment setting, a decline of 54% from 203 youth in 2006. Just under one-half (45) of the 93 youth in independent living arrangements were ages 18 and older.**

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2006 and 2009.

Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Placement, by Type of Setting and Age, Rhode Island, January 5, 2010

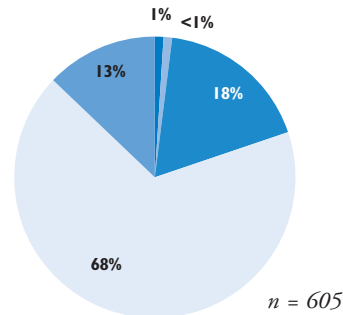
In Foster Care Homes

9% (112)	Under Age 1
33% (397)	Ages 1 to 5
33% (394)	Ages 6 to 13
22% (269)	Ages 14 to 17
3% (33)	Ages 18 and Older



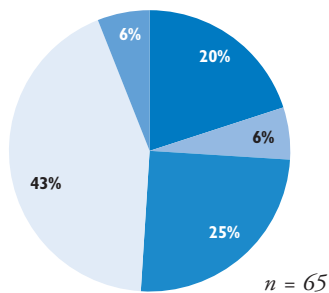
In Group Homes and Residential Facilities*

1% (5)	Under Age 1
<1% (3)	Ages 1 to 5
18% (108)	Ages 6 to 13
68% (410)	Ages 14 to 17
13% (79)	Ages 18 and Older



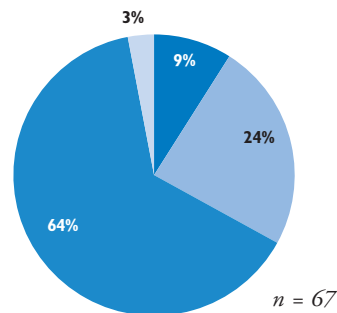
In Medical Facilities**

20% (13)	Under Age 1
6% (4)	Ages 1 to 5
25% (16)	Ages 6 to 13
43% (28)	Ages 14 to 17
6% (4)	Ages 18 and Older



In Shelter Care

9% (6)	Ages 1 to 5
24% (16)	Ages 6 to 13
64% (43)	Ages 14 to 17
3% (2)	Ages 18 and Older



*Residential facilities do not include psychiatric hospitals, medical hospitals or the Rhode Island Training School.
 **Medical facilities include medical hospitals (19), psychiatric hospitals (30), and substance abuse treatment facilities (16).

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), January 5, 2010. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Data do not match chart on previous page due to different report dates.

Safety, Permanency and Well-Being

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.¹¹ Rhode Island's guardianship assistance program defines kin quite broadly and includes any adult who has a close and caring relationship with the child, including godparents, caretakers, close family friends, neighbors, and clergy.¹²

Placement Stability

◆ In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009, 11.6% of the 1,684 children who had been in out-of-home care for less than one year had experienced three or more placements, down from 13.0% in FFY 2005. The national standard is 13.3%. Three or more placements were experienced by 38.0% of the 828 children who were in care between 12 and 24 months, up from 31.4% in FFY 2005. Almost two-thirds (65.3%) of the 1,180 children who had been in care for 24 months or more experienced three or more placements, down from 68.0% in FFY 2005.¹³

Recurrence of Abuse While in Foster Care

◆ Of the 1,407 Rhode Island children who were victims of abuse or neglect during FFY 2009 (whether or not they were removed from the home), 7.0% experienced one or more recurrences of abuse or neglect within six months, down from a recent peak of 13.3% in FFY 2007. The national standard is 6.1% or fewer.¹⁴

Shelter Care

◆ The number of children in shelter care in Rhode Island fell from 106 on December 31, 2007 to 83 on December 31, 2008 to 67 on December 31, 2009. Of the 67 children in DCYF shelter care on January 5, 2010, six were young children under age six; 16 were ages six to 13; and 45 were ages 14 and older.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 Lutz, L. L. (2003). *Achieving permanence for children in the child welfare system: Pioneering possibilities amidst daunting challenges*. Retrieved March 3, 2009 from www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/downloads/achieving-permanence.pdf

(continued on page 169)