

# 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 homes, placements with relatives or friends, group homes, shelter care, residential treatment, and medical facilities. Permanent placement includes reunification with the family, adoption or guardianship.

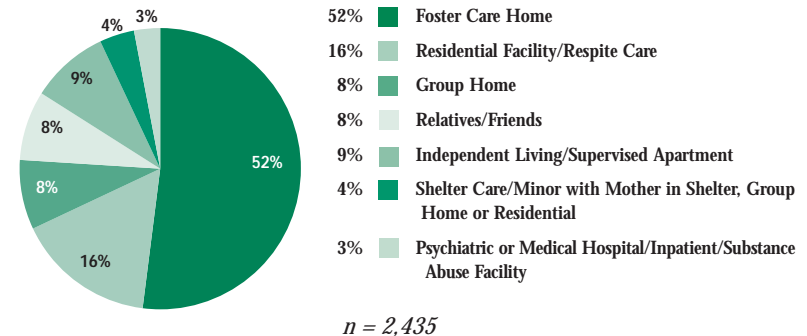
## SIGNIFICANCE

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 educational, physical, and mental health needs that are overlooked.<sup>2</sup> Older children may linger in care until adulthood.

Long-term stays in temporary out-of-home placement can negatively affect children, causing emotional, behavioral or educational problems that adversely affect their future well-being and self-sufficiency.<sup>3</sup> Children in out-of-home care suffer more frequent and more serious medical, developmental, and mental health problems than nearly any other group of children. Effective strategies to promote the optimal development of children in out-of-home placements include: assessment on system entry; a comprehensive system of care to address identified health (physical, mental, emotional, behavioral) and educational needs immediately; family involvement; training for caregivers; coordinated services and funding strategies; and a managed care model that addresses the complex needs of children in the child welfare system.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

National research indicates that youth in state custody have high aspirations, including college education, but experience serious educational difficulties. Adequate remedial and special education services are needed to ensure that each youth maximizes his or her potential and is prepared for the employment market.<sup>7</sup>

Children in Out-of Home Placement, December 2004



◆ As of December 31, 2004, there were 2,435 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placement.

◆ The total caseload of DCYF on December 31, 2004 was 7,985 including: 2,902 children living in their homes (with a parent, guardian or step-parent) under DCYF supervision; 2,315 children in adoption placements, most receiving subsidized adoption supports; 178 children/youth in detention at the Training School or in prison; 20 children in the care of another state agency; and 9 children in Job Corps or other placements. An additional 126 children and youth in the care of DCYF were classified as unauthorized absence/runaways.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2004.

## Night-to-Night Placements

◆ Night-to-night placements refer to the temporary nightly placement of youths under the care of DCYF who are awaiting longer-term placements. Night-to-night placements are the subject of prolonged litigation between DCYF and the Office of the Child Advocate, which succeeded in minimizing such placements.

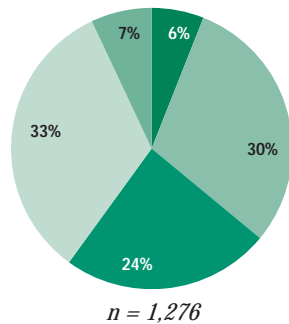
◆ In 2004, there were 13 children placed in night-to-night placements for a total of 13 bed nights. This is a significant reduction in night-to-night placements since 2003, when an average of 13 children per week were placed in night-to-night placements for a total of 1,547 bed nights. There have been no night-to-night placements since June of 2004.<sup>8</sup>

# Children in Out-of-Home Placement

## Children in Foster Care Homes, Rhode Island, 2005

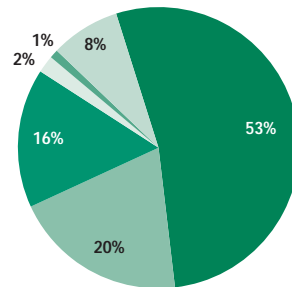
### By Age

6% (82)	Under Age 1
30% (378)	Ages 1 to 5
24% (301)	Ages 6 to 11
33% (425)	Ages 12 to 17
7% (90)	Over Age 18



### By Race and Ethnicity

53% (677)	White
20% (251)	Black
16% (206)	Hispanic
2% (21)	Asian
1% (19)	American Indian/Alaskan/ Pacific Islander
8% (102)	Unknown/Multiracial/Other



- ◆ As of January 2, 2005, there were 1,276 children in foster care homes. Of these, 542 (42%) were in relative foster homes, 477 (37%) were in non-relative foster homes, 257 (20%) were at private agencies. In Rhode Island and nationally there is an ongoing shortage of foster parents.<sup>9,10</sup>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), January 2005.

### References for Indicator

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Lovejoy, A. (2000). *A place to call home: State efforts to increase adoptions and improve foster care placements*. Washington, DC: National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices.

<sup>4</sup> *Meeting the health care needs of children in the foster care system*. (2002). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center.

<sup>5</sup> Dicker, S., Gordon, E., & Knitzer, J. (2001). *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.

<sup>6</sup> Vandivere, S., Chalk, R., & Moore, K. A. (2003). *Children in foster homes: How are they faring?* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

<sup>7</sup> McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, LXXXII(4), 475-495.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Child Advocate, January 2004 and 2005. Night-to-night placements are not an unduplicated count of children, as some children are placed in night-to-night more than once during the year.

<sup>9</sup> *Recruiting foster parents*. (May 2002). Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

<sup>10</sup> *Retaining foster parents*. (May 2002). Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

<sup>11,12</sup> The Consultation Center. (2004). *Safety, permanency and well-being in Rhode Island: Child Welfare Outcomes Annual Report for 2003*. New Haven, CT: The Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine.

<sup>13</sup> Stuckes Chipunga, S. & Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2004). Meeting the challenges of contemporary foster care. *The Future of Children*, 14(1), 75-93.

## Safety, Permanency and Well-Being

- ◆ The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) recognizes that the broad goals of child protection systems are child safety, permanency and well-being. Preventing the recurrence of abuse or neglect, ensuring the safety of children in out-of-home placements and maximizing the stability of placements are the paramount concerns which the Act seeks to address.

- ◆ Of the 1,599 Rhode Island children who were victims of abuse or neglect during the first six months of Federal Fiscal Year 2003 (whether or not they were removed from the home), 11.1% (177) experienced one or more recurrences of abuse or neglect within 6 months, down from 12.2% in 1999.<sup>11</sup>

- ◆ In Federal Fiscal Year 2003, 22% of the 1,751 children who had been in out-of-home care for less than one year had experienced 3 or more placements (compared with 23% in 1999). Three or more placements were experienced by 38% of children who had been in care between 12 and 23 months, the same level as in 1999; 59% of children who had been in care for 24-35 months experienced three or more placements (compared with 53% in 1999).<sup>12</sup>

- ◆ 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 there for longer periods of time, to receive fewer familial visits, fewer contacts with caseworkers, fewer written case plans, and fewer developmental assessments.<sup>13</sup>