

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, placement with a relative or friend, group home, shelter care, residential treatment, and medical facility. Permanent placement includes reunification with the family, adoption or guardianship.

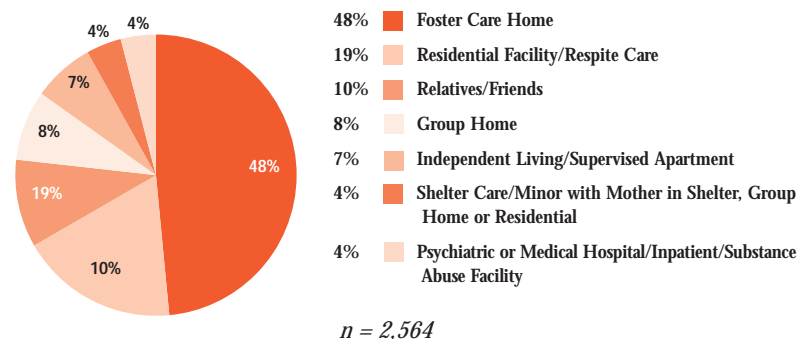
SIGNIFICANCE

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 can be traumatic for both the child and the family.¹ Children who have been abused or neglected are particularly vulnerable and in need of a safe, stable and permanent environment which provides for their well-being. Yet children in out-of-home care frequently remain in temporary placements for extended periods of time, experience multiple placements, lose contact with family members, friends and

neighborhoods, and may experience recurrence of abuse.² 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.³ 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. Nationally, systemic and service barriers prevent many children in state custody from receiving adequate care. Effective strategies to promote the optimal development of children in out-of-home placement 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 and education for caregivers; coordinated services and funding strategies; and using a managed care model that addresses the complex needs of children in the child welfare system.^{4,5}

Children in Out-of Home Placement, December 2002



◆ As of December 31, 2002, there were 2,564 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placement.

◆ The total caseload of DCYF on December 31, 2002 was 8,327 including 2,929 children living in their home (with a parent, guardian or step-parent) under DCYF supervision; 2,449 children receiving subsidized adoption supports; 203 children/youth in detention at the Training School or in prison; 37 children in out-of-state placement/ placement with another agency; and 15 children in Job Corps or other placement. An additional 130 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), 2002.

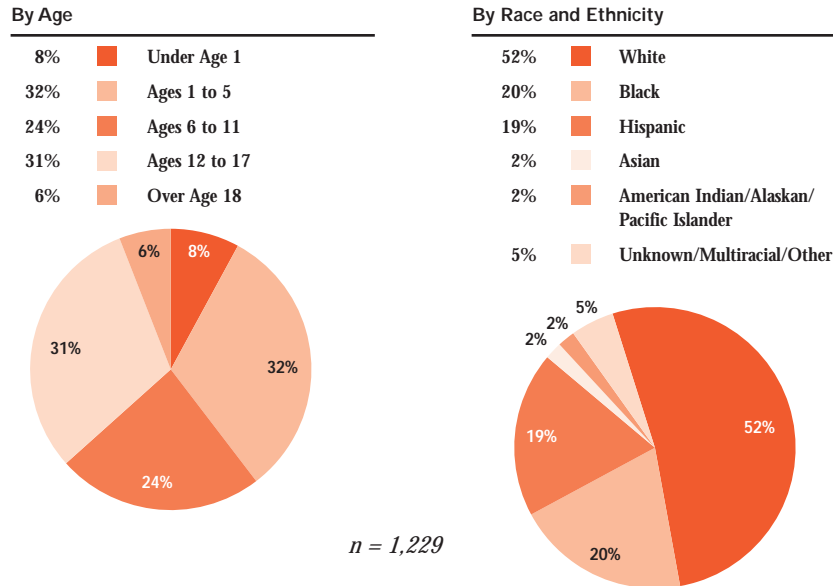
Night-to-Night Placements

◆ 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 currently the subject of pending litigation between the Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Office of the Child Advocate, which seeks to eliminate such placements.

◆ In 2002, 487 children (an average of 18 children per week) were placed in night-to-night placements. This was a total of 2,322 bed nights. i.e., instances when a night-to-night placement is used by a child and paid for by DCYF.⁶

Children in Out-of-Home Placement

Children in Foster Care Homes, Rhode Island, 2003



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), January 2003.

◆ As of January 2, 2003, there were 1,229 children in foster care homes. Of these, 561 (46%) were in non-relative foster homes, 545 (44%) were in relative foster homes, and 123 (10%) were in the care of private agencies. Four additional children were in respite care. In Rhode Island and nationally there is an ongoing shortage of foster parents.^{7,8}

References for Indicator

¹ "Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect" in *The Future of Children*, Vol. 8, No.1 (Spring 1998). Los Altos, CA: Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

² *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998, Annual Report* (2000). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ Lovejoy, Anna (October 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.

⁴ *Health Care Needs of Children in the Foster Care System* (May 2002). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center.

◆ 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 placement, and maximizing stability of placements are the paramount concerns which the Act seeks to address.

◆ Of the 1,624 Rhode Island children who were victims of abuse or neglect during the first six months of federal fiscal year 2001 (whether or not they were removed from the home), 11.0% (179) experienced one or more recurrences of abuse or neglect within 6 months, down from 12.6% in 1998.⁹

◆ In FY 2001, 21% (1,710) of children who had been in out-of-home care for less than one year had experienced 3 or more placements, down from 27% in FY 1998. Three or more placements were experienced by 45% of children who had been in care between 12 and 23 months, down from 47% in 1998; 54% of children who had been in care for 24-35 months experienced three or more placements (no change from 1998).¹⁰

◆ One measure of well-being is the level of educational services and special education supports that children who have special needs are receiving while in DCYF custody. The Educational Surrogate Parent Program at the Office of the Child Advocate advocates for children's special educational needs while in out-of-home care. As of December 2002, the Surrogate Program had 1,028 open cases on children with special educational needs.¹¹

⁵ Knitzer, J. (2001). *Improving the Odds for Healthy Development of Young Children in Foster Care*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

^{6,11} Office of the Child Advocate, January 2003.

⁷ *Recruiting Foster Parents* (2002). Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

⁸ *Retaining Foster Parents* (2002). Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

^{9,10} National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, Detailed Case Data Component, Annual Foster Care Database, January-September, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and FY 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001.