



Child Welfare Outcomes 2015

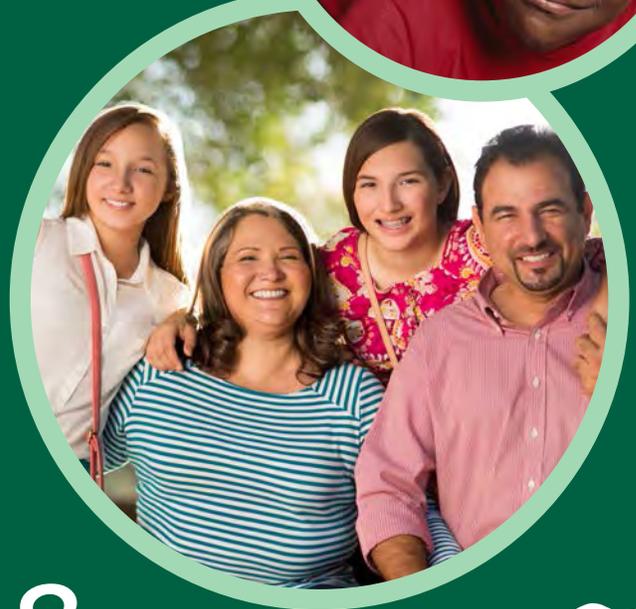
Report to Congress



SAFETY

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WELL-BEING



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau



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Executive Summary

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report is created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to meet requirements of Section 203(a) of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA).¹ ASFA created Section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act) to require HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.² *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998* was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015*, is the 16th Report since the series' inception.

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report provides information on national performance as well as the performance of individual states in seven outcome categories.³ Prior to the first Report, the Children's Bureau, within the HHS' Administration for Children and Families, identified these outcomes in close consultation with state and local child welfare agency administrators, child advocacy organizations, child welfare researchers, state legislators, and other experts in the child welfare field. The outcomes reflect a consensus of these groups regarding important performance objectives for child welfare practice. The following are the seven national outcomes established by HHS through this consultation process:

- Outcome 1:** Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect
- Outcome 2:** Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care
- Outcome 3:** Increase permanency for children in foster care
- Outcome 4:** Reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry
- Outcome 5:** Reduce time in foster care to adoption
- Outcome 6:** Increase placement stability
- Outcome 7:** Reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions

In addition to reporting on state performance in these outcome categories, this Report also includes findings of analyses conducted across states and across time. Data for most of the measures in this Report come from two national child welfare-related data systems—the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report presents data on child welfare-related contextual factors relevant to understanding and interpreting state performance on the outcome measures. The following is a summary of 2015 data for these contextual factors.⁴

Characteristics of child victims⁵

- During 2015, approximately 683,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.⁶ The overall national child victim rate was 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in the population.⁷ State child victim rates varied dramatically, ranging from 1.4 child victims per 1,000 children to 22.4 child victims per 1,000 children.⁸

Foster care information overview

- Nationally, there were approximately 428,000 children in foster care on the last day of 2015. During that year, an estimated 270,000 children entered foster care, and 243,000 children exited foster care. Among the states, the foster care entry rate ranged from 1.5 children per 1,000 in a state's population to 10.4 children per 1,000 in a state's population.⁹

Between 2006 and 2015, the number of children in care on the last day of the FY decreased by 15.2 percent, from 505,000 to 428,000.

¹ See appendix A for the current specifications of Section 479A of the Social Security Act, as created by ASFA and amended by Pub. L. 112–34 and Pub. L. 113–183.

² Federal Title IV-E funds support foster care, adoption assistance, and kinship guardianship assistance. Title IV-E has been amended on several occasions. For a more detailed understanding of the history and changes over time, please see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/title-iv-e-legislation-policy>. Title IV-B provides preventative and protective services for children.

³ In this Report, the designation of "state" includes the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Therefore, the Report provides information on a total of 52 states, depending on the number of states that submitted adequate data for a particular measure.

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal fiscal years (October 1–September 30). Additionally, unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for 2015.

⁵ This Report uses a unique count for child victims, which tallies a child only once regardless of the number of times the child was found to be a victim during the reporting year.

⁶ For the purposes of this Report, a "victim of child maltreatment" is defined as a child for whom an incident of abuse or neglect has been substantiated or indicated by an investigation or assessment. This includes a child who died of child abuse or neglect. This is a change from prior years when children with dispositions of "alternative response victim" were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Report uses the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in Child Maltreatment. The total number of child victims reported in this Report is rounded to the nearest 1,000.

⁷ The national child victim rate is calculated by dividing the total number of child victims (683,487) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS data (74,382,502) and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000. This calculation includes children under the age of 18.

⁸ A state's rate of child victims is defined as the number of child victims reported to NCANDS per 1,000 children in the state's population.

⁹ The foster care entry rate is calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000.

- Between 2006 and 2015, the number of children in care on the last day of the fiscal year (FY) decreased by 15.2 percent, from 505,000 to 428,000.¹⁰ The number of children in foster care approximated 400,000 from 2010 through 2013 but increased to 428,000 in 2015.
- Nationally, 243,000 children exited foster care in 2015. Of these children, 214,000 (88 percent) were discharged to a permanent home (i.e., they were discharged to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship).

Additional child welfare-related context data is presented on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site, which is available at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

STATE PERFORMANCE ON OUTCOME MEASURES

This Report includes a synopsis of key findings on the 12 measures established to assess performance on the 7 national outcomes identified above. These measures are displayed in table 1 at the end of this executive summary. These measures are described in detail in appendix B. For all measures, national performance is determined by median performance across states that meet data-quality thresholds.

State performances in 2015 for outcome measures referenced in this executive summary include only those states for which adequate data are available for 2015. National performances over time include only those states for which adequate data are available for 2011–2015; table 1 displays these medians.¹¹

Change in state performance over time is assessed by calculating a percent change in performance on the measures.¹² Consistent with HHS’s historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percent change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) is used as a general indicator that meaningful change in performance on the outcome measures occurred. Therefore, for the purposes of the analyses presented in this Report, if the percent change in performance from 2011 to 2015 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination is that there was “no change” in performance.

Outcome 1: Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect

- In 2015, state performance varied considerably with regard to the percentage of child victims experiencing a recurrence of child maltreatment within a six-month period (measure 1.1, range=0.8 percent to 13.2 percent; median=5.0 percent).
- States with higher victim rates tended to have higher maltreatment recurrence rates within a six-month period (Pearson’s $r=.64$).¹³ In addition, consistent with previous Reports, states with a relatively high percentage of children who were victims of neglect (as opposed to other forms of maltreatment) also had some tendency to have a moderately high percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a six-month period (Pearson’s $r=.47$).
- Performance with regard to recurrence of child maltreatment (measure 1.1) showed no change between 2011 and 2015. The median went from 5.2 percent in 2011 to 5.0 percent in 2015, a 3.8-percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). A larger number of states (23 states) demonstrated an improvement in performance on this measure than showed a decline in performance (21 states).

States with higher child victim rates also tend to have higher maltreatment recurrence rates.

Outcome 2: Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care

- During 2015, state performance regarding the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) ranged from 0.00 percent to 1.58 percent, with a median of 0.28 percent.
- Between 2011 and 2015, national performance with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) improved. Twenty-two states improved in performance between 2011 and 2015, while 18 declined in performance. The national median declined from 0.30 percent in 2011 to 0.26 percent in 2015, a decline of 13.3 percent (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure).

Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care

- In 2015, states were fairly successful in achieving a permanent home for all children exiting foster care (measure 3.1, median=89.4 percent). However, states were less successful in achieving permanent homes for children exiting foster care who had a diagnosed disability (measure 3.2, median=79.2 percent), and even less successful in finding permanent

¹⁰ For more information, see *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2006–FY 2015* on the Children’s Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>. The data used in that report were updated as of July 2016.

¹¹ In the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure for 2015. In the 2015 Range of State Performance tables, national medians are calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2015 only. However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians are calculated for 2015 and only include data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2011–2015). This is done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

¹² Percent change is calculated by subtracting “old” data from “new” data, dividing that result by old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, maltreatment recurrence was 5.2 percent in 2011 and 5.0 percent in 2015, and so the resulting decrease is 3.8 percent $\{[(5.0-5.2)/5.2] \times 100 = 3.8\}$.

¹³ The strength of relationships in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports is assessed using correlation coefficients, specifically Pearson’s r , which can range in value from -1 to $+1$.

homes for children exiting foster care who entered care when they were older than age 12 (measure 3.3, median=66.2 percent).

- In about one-half of states, 20.0 percent or more of the children who emancipated from foster care were age 12 or younger when they entered foster care (measure 3.4).

In 2015, 82.0 percent of children entering foster care were new entries.

Outcome 4: Reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry

- The 2015 data suggest that, in many states, a majority of children discharged to reunification were reunified in a timely manner. Across states, the median percentage of reunifications occurring in less than 12 months was 67.8 percent (measure 4.1).
- Between 2011 and 2015, more states declined in their performance related to achieving timely reunifications (17 states) than improved (9 states).
- In 2015, a median of 7.3 percent of children reentered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode (measure 4.2), and 9.9 percent of children reentered foster care more than 12 months after a prior foster care episode.

Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption

- In 2015, all but a few states struggled to achieve timely adoptions within 12 months of children entering foster care. Across states, the median percentage of adoptions occurring within 12 months of children entering care was 3.3 percent (measure 5.1a). Moreover, 65 percent of states (32 states) demonstrated a decline in performance between 2011 and 2015, while only 24 percent of states (12 states) improved.
- The median percentage of adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from children entering care (measure 5.1b) was much higher in 2015 (30.8 percent) than in 2011 (28.8 percent). Fifty-three percent of states (26 states) demonstrated improved performance in this indicator from 2011 to 2015.

More than half of states showed improved performance between 2011 and 2015 in the percentage of adoptions occurring at least 12 months, but less than 24 months, from the date of entry into foster care.

Outcome 6: Increase placement stability

- In this Report, adequate placement stability is defined as limiting the number of placement settings for a child to no more than two for a single foster care episode. Among children with less than 12 months of time spent in foster care, the majority remained in stable placements during that time (measure 6.1a, median=84.8 percent in 2015).
- The percentage of children with adequate placement stability decreased with more time spent in foster care. The median across states in 2015 was 63.2 percent for children who had been in foster care between 12 and 24 months (measure 6.1b) and 35.9 percent for children who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer (measure 6.1c).
- There was little change in the median percentage of children in care between 12 and 24 months experiencing two or fewer placement settings (measure 6.1b) from 2011 to 2015 (62.6 percent to 63.2 percent, a 1.0-percent increase). For this measure, 14 states improved in performance, while 8 declined.
- There was improvement in performance on measure 6.1c, the percentage of children in care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings. For this measure, the median increased from 32.3 percent in 2011 to 35.8 percent in 2015, a 10.8-percent increase. Furthermore, 36 states (75 percent) demonstrated improvement on this measure, while only 7 states declined in performance.

Outcome 7: Reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions

- For over half of the states, 4.0 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions in 2015. Data also indicate that there were only five states where the percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions was above 10 percent.¹⁴
- Previous Reports have shown significant improvements over time on measure 7.1, and this trend continued between 2011 and 2015 when the median decreased from 4.3 to 3.8 percent, an 11.6 percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). During the five-year span, 25 states showed improved performance on this measure, and 19 declined in performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

In reviewing the key findings in all seven outcome areas, it is clear there are both areas of strength and areas in need of improvement with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children who come into contact with state child welfare systems. While AFCARS and NCANDS data provide some limited initial insight into many of these issues, all of these areas deserve additional investigation in order to gain further understanding and move the child welfare field forward. Areas needing additional attention include the following:

¹⁴ The five States were Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oregon, and South Carolina.

- States continue to be less successful in finding permanent homes for children with disabilities and for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12, as compared to the general foster care population. Agencies should review their data and current practices to consider what additional barriers may be preventing children with disabilities and older youth from being placed into permanent homes.
- Between 2011 and 2015, there was a decline in performance on the measure related to timeliness of reunification without increasing reentry. It is important to note that there may be a variety of factors that contribute to lower performance on this measure, and these factors may vary considerably between states. However, for those states that struggle in this area, a careful review of specific barriers would be beneficial.
- Overall, national performance on timeliness of adoptions has remained relatively stable since 2011, and it continues to be a challenge for most states. States should continue to monitor performance on measures related to the timeliness of adoption and work to improve upon their efforts to ensure that children are placed quickly in secure, caring, and safe environments.
- Between 2011 and 2015, there was little change in the national performance on placement stability for children in care for less than 12 months or for more than 12 months but less than 24 months. Although national performance on placement stability for children in care for more than 24 months has improved, the national median remains low (35.8 percent). States should strive to continue to improve placement stability for children in care, particularly for children in care more than 24 months. The percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions has continued to decline, but there are a several states that still struggle in this area. It would be useful to determine which specific strategies may have contributed to these improvements so that these practices can be shared with those states looking for additional assistance.

Data and analysis presented throughout the Child Welfare Outcomes Report offer additional details regarding overall national performance. New outcome-based visuals in the Report display both single-year performance and performance over time from 2011 to 2015.

Table 1. Outcome Measures' Median State Performance, 2011–2015

Outcome Measures ¹⁵	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the year, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? (N=51 states)*	5.2%	5.1%	5.3%	4.9%	5.0%
Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? (N=45 states)*	0.30%	0.30%	0.34%	0.25%	0.26%
Measure 3.1: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=49 states)	87.3%	87.5%	89.4%	89.4%	89.6%
Measure 3.2: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were identified as having a diagnosed disability, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=45 states)	77.7%	77.9%	78.5%	78.8%	80.1%
Measure 3.3: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=49 states)	65.4%	65.8%	65.6%	64.2%	66.2%
Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care? (N=49 states)*	26.3%	23.6%	22.5%	20.0%	18.6%
Measure 4.1: Of all children reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care during the year, what percentage were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care? (N=49 states)	67.2%	65.5%	67.4%	66.4%	67.8%
Measure 4.2: Of all children who entered foster care during the year, what percentage reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? (N=49 states)	8.0%	8.0%	8.3%	7.1%	7.3%
Measure 5.1a: Of all children discharged from foster care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=49 states)	3.6%	4.4%	3.2%	4.1%	3.3%
Measure 5.1b: Of all children discharged from care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date the latest removal from home? (N=49 states)	28.8%	30.2%	31.3%	29.8%	30.8%
Measure 6.1a: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for less than 12 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=48 states)	85.9%	85.1%	85.7%	85.7%	84.2%
Measure 6.1b: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=48 states)	62.6%	63.6%	64.5%	64.9%	63.2%
Measure 6.1c: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=48 states)	32.3%	33.9%	34.0%	34.9%	35.8%
Measure 7.1: Of all children who entered foster care during the year and were age 12 or younger at the time of their most recent placement, what percentage were placed in a group home or an institution? (N=47 states)*	4.3%	4.2%	3.9%	4.2%	3.8%

*For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

¹⁵ Data for this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality criteria for all years.

CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES DATA SITE

The Child Welfare Outcomes data site provides users with the ability to view and manipulate the state data in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports and allows for significantly faster release of these data than is possible via the publication of the full Report. The site features AFCARS and NCANDS data that have been reviewed and approved by the states for inclusion in the Report. Data updates to the site occur annually.

In 2016, the Child Welfare Outcomes data site underwent a series of updates to improve users' experiences on the site, including the ease of searching and displaying data.

With the data site, users have the ability to conduct the following activities:

- View one state's data or simultaneously compare data for multiple states, including by Administration for Children and Families region.
- Compare data for a single state across years or view data for one or multiple states from a single year.
- View state context, demographic, and outcome data in tables grouped by type of data.
- View additional context and demographic data for states not included in the Report, including two distinct breakdowns of race and ethnicity data.
- Choose to view data in a table or graph.
- Export the data into a variety of formats, including copying or printing customized data directly from the site, exporting data into Excel, and saving data as a PDF or CSV file.
- Search for data by topic of interest and view the pages where the specific data are located.
- View static state data pages, including state comments previously included in the full Reports.

The Child Welfare Outcomes data site can be accessed at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

For questions or more information about the Child Welfare Outcomes data site, please contact the Children's Bureau at CBDataTeam@acf.hhs.gov.

Introduction to the Child Welfare Outcomes, Data, and Analysis

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report is created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to meet the requirements of Section 203(a) of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). ASFA created Section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act) to require HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act, which was later amended by Pub. L. 112–34 and Pub. L. 113–183.¹⁶ ¹⁷ The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act, Pub. L. 112–34, required the Child Welfare Outcomes Report to include state information on monthly caseworker visits. The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, Pub. L. 113–183, required data on children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting, or placed in a child care institution or other non-foster family home setting. *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998* was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015*, is the 16th Report since the series' inception.

OUTCOME MEASURES

The Child Welfare Outcomes Reports provide information on national performance as well as the performance of individual states in seven outcome categories.¹⁸ Prior to the first Report, HHS' Children's Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families identified these outcomes in close consultation with state and local child welfare agency administrators, child advocacy organizations, child welfare researchers, state legislators, and other experts in the child welfare field. The outcomes reflect a consensus of these groups regarding important performance objectives for child welfare practice. The following are the seven national outcomes established by HHS through this consultation process:

- Outcome 1:** Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect
- Outcome 2:** Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care
- Outcome 3:** Increase permanency for children in foster care
- Outcome 4:** Reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry
- Outcome 5:** Reduce time in foster care to adoption
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- Outcome 7:** Reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions

Note that while the measures used in this Report share some similarity with the data indicators used as part of HHS's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, the measures are not the same.¹⁹ The CFSRs were authorized through the 1994 amendments to the Act and require HHS to review state child and family service programs to ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements in Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. The reviews are also used to determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services and to assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The reviews focus on outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being, and one aspect of this review process uses a defined set of data indicators to assess performance. While the specific data indicators used in the CFSRs have gone through revisions, their premise has remained consistent. Additional information about the CFSRs, including information on the data indicators used, may be found on the Children's Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews>. Readers should exercise caution when comparing performance on the Child Welfare Outcomes Report measures and CFSR performance because the measures differ in a number of respects, including data-quality inclusion and exclusion criteria and differences in calculations.

CONTEXT DATA

This Report presents data pertaining to state performance on the outcome measures as well as on certain child welfare-related contextual factors. These context data are relevant to understanding and interpreting performance on the outcome measures featured in these Reports. The contextual factors include the following:

- Estimated child population statistics, including the total number of children under age 18 and child poverty data.²⁰
- Caseworker visits data for children in foster care, including the percentage of children in foster care visited monthly by

¹⁶ See appendix A for the current specifications of Section 479A of the Social Security Act, as created by ASFA and amended by Pub. L. 112–34 and Pub. L. 113–183.

¹⁷ Federal Title IV-E funds support foster care, adoption assistance, and kinship guardianship assistance. Title IV-E has been amended on several occasions. For a more detailed understanding of the history and changes over time, please see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/title-iv-e-legislation-policy>. Title IV-B provides preventative and protective services for children.

¹⁸ In this Report, the designation of "state" includes the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Therefore, the Report provides information on up to a total of 52 states, depending on the number of states that submitted adequate data for a particular measure.

¹⁹ See appendix B for the full list of outcomes and measures.

²⁰ These data come from the U.S. Census Bureau and reflect estimates rather than actual numbers. These data are based on the calendar year and not the fiscal year.

their caseworker and the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the home of the child.²¹

- The numbers of children in foster care at the start of the fiscal year (FY), children in care at the end of the FY, and children who entered and exited foster care during the FY.
- The number of children waiting for adoption at the end of the FY.
- The number of children for whom an adoption was finalized during the FY.

DATA SOURCES²²

Data for the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures and the majority of the context data in this Report come from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). NCANDS data are submitted voluntarily by states, but states are required by regulation to submit AFCARS data. The specific NCANDS and AFCARS data elements used to calculate each outcome measure are outlined in appendix D.

Data for the caseworker visits requirements are not part of NCANDS and AFCARS but are required to be submitted separately by states each December. Some states elected to use a sampling procedure approved by HHS's Children's Bureau rather than reporting information on all children in foster care. As referenced in the previous section of this chapter, data on caseworker visits are required to be included in this Report by Section 479A of the Act.

This Report also uses child population data, which are provided by the U.S. Census Bureau on an annual basis. Total child population estimates are derived by calculating expected population change from the most recent decennial census data. Child poverty data are from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an ongoing survey that annually samples a small percentage of the population in order to provide communities with information relevant to their service provision and investments.²³

The data used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Report may vary slightly from other sources if a state resubmitted data after HHS prepared the data for this Report.²⁴

National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort that encourages states to collect and analyze data pertaining to children who come to the attention of public child protective services agencies as alleged victims of abuse or neglect. NCANDS was a result of a directive included in the 1988 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to establish a national data-collection and analysis program on child abuse and neglect.²⁵ The data are submitted voluntarily by the states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (referred to collectively as the states in this report). NCANDS data are published annually in the Child Maltreatment report series.²⁶ A summary of the most recent report, *Child Maltreatment 2015*, is presented in appendix E.

The NCANDS Child File is a data file that states submit annually. In 2015, each state submitted an NCANDS Child File, which contains detailed case information about each child who is the subject of an investigation or assessment in response to a maltreatment allegation. Any child who is associated with a report and who has received a disposition during the year is included in the Child File. Although a disposition usually refers to a finding regarding the allegation, it also can include reports that were closed without a finding.

The Child File is the primary data source for the safety-related data included in this Report. While alternate safety data sources sometimes are allowed for the purposes of the CFSRs, they are not used here.

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

Most data included in this Report come from AFCARS.²⁷ Title IV-E agencies are required to submit case-level information to AFCARS twice a year on all children who are under their care and responsibility for placement, children who are covered by an interagency agreement with another public agency and receiving Title IV-E funds, and children who have been adopted with Title IV-E agency involvement. The requirements for AFCARS are codified in federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40.

²¹ Section 479A(6) of the Act requires HHS to report data on caseworker visits in this annual outcomes Report. Requirements for caseworker visits data were revised in Pub. L. 112–34 and are currently defined under Sections 424(f)(1) and (2) of the Act. In 2012, states began using the revised methodology for reporting caseworker visits data, which is outlined in Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01, issued January 6, 2012. It is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1201>. For more information, see appendix C.

²² Unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal fiscal years (October 1–September 30). Additionally, unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for 2015.

²³ Additional information on the methodology used to calculate child population estimates can be found on the Census Bureau's website at <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/methodology.html>. Additional information on the methodology used to collect and calculate child poverty data can be found on the American Community Survey section of the Census Bureau's website at <http://www.census.gov/acs>.

²⁴ For this Report, AFCARS data were prepared on June 8, 2016; NCANDS data were prepared on August 19, 2016; Census data were prepared on July 1, 2016; and caseworker visits data were prepared on May 5, 2016.

²⁵ More information about CAPTA can be found on the Children's Bureau website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy.jsp?idFlag=2.

²⁶ Some results presented in this Report may not be precisely the same as those presented in the Child Maltreatment reports due to differences in data inclusion and exclusion criteria.

²⁷ See appendix F for the AFCARS Report No. 23.

DATA ANALYSES IN THE CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES REPORT

Chapters II through V of this Report present key findings of analyses conducted across states. These findings pertain to variations across states in performance on the outcome measures, changes in performance on the measures over time, and the relationships between contextual factors and state performance. In addition, there are occasional instances in which certain state data are excluded from cross-state analyses due to data-quality problems. Therefore, the total number of states included may vary for each analysis.²⁸

Percent Change Calculations

Change in state performance over time is assessed by calculating a percent change in performance on the measures.²⁹ Consistent with HHS's historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percent change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) is used as a general indicator that meaningful change in performance on the outcome measures occurred. Therefore, for purposes of the analyses presented in the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, if the percent change in performance from 2011 to 2015 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination is that there was "no change" in performance.

The concept of percent change over time is used in this Report to highlight the fact that some changes may appear small in absolute terms but represent large proportional changes

Correlations

Strength of relationships between measures and context variables is assessed using correlation coefficients, specifically Pearson's *r*. This coefficient can range from -1 to +1. In the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, these coefficients are interpreted in accordance with J. P. Guilford's suggested interpretations for correlation coefficient values.³⁰ These are as follows:

- A coefficient of 0.0 up to plus or minus .20 indicates a very low or negligible correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus .20–.40 indicates a low correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus .40–.70 indicates a moderate correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus .70–.90 indicates a high correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus .90–1.00 indicates a very high correlation.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS AND TRENDS IN CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES 2015 REPORT TO CONGRESS

The findings in this Report generally remain consistent with trends from previous years' Reports. Nationally, there were slight improvements in measures related to child safety, including the percentage of child victims experiencing a recurrence of child maltreatment within a six-month period and the percentage of children in foster care who were victims of maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member over the past five years. Additionally, there was some improvement in national performance related to permanency for children with disabilities, the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode, and the percentage of children adopted in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from entering care.

There was little change in national performance related to the percentage of children exiting foster care to permanency, including the percentage of children exiting foster care to permanency who entered foster care at age 12 or older from 2011 to 2015. Additionally, there was little change in national performance in the percentages of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into care, of children in care for less than 12 months, and of children in care for more than 12 months but less than 24 months who have two or fewer placement settings.

Nationally, there were significant improvements related to performance on several measures, including the percentage of children who were emancipated from foster care who entered care when they were age 12 or younger, placement stability for those children in care for more than 24 months, and the percentage of children age 12 or younger placed in a group home or institution. The percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months from entry into care was the only measure where there was a considerable decline in national performance.

²⁸ In the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure for 2015. In the 2015 Range of State Performance tables, national medians are calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2015 only. However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians are calculated for 2015 and only include data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2011–2015). This is done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

²⁹ Percent change is calculated by subtracting "old" data from "new" data, dividing that result by the old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, maltreatment recurrence was 5.2 percent in 2011 and 5.0 percent in 2015, and so the resulting decrease is 3.8 percent $\{[(5.0-5.2)/5.2] \times 100 = 3.8\}$.

³⁰ Guilford, J. P. (1956). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

THE CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES REPORT DATA SITE

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>) is a web-based tool that allows users to view Child Welfare Outcomes Report data and create customized outputs according to individual needs. Users can isolate and view the variables in which they are most interested, compare data across states, choose from a variety of different data-output displays, and export data reports into Excel and printer-friendly formats. The website also enables users to access data not currently available in the full Report, including the following measures:

- Estimated general child population statistics with regard to the race/ethnicity of children.
- Characteristics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, maltreatment type) of child maltreatment victims.
- Mean and median response times.
- Characteristics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, median length of stay) of children in foster care at the start of the FY, children in care at the end of the year, and children who entered and exited foster care.
- Characteristics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) of children waiting for adoption and of children with finalized adoptions.
- Alternate categorical breakdowns for all race/ethnicity data.³¹

The website allows for the release of Report data in a timelier manner than is possible through the full-report publication process. Data updates to the site occur annually after the data have been reviewed by the states and prior to the release of the full Report. Site functionality is updated on a regular basis to provide users with new and increased capabilities for data use and reporting.

³¹ The traditional race and ethnicity breakdown displays non-Hispanic race categories and a category of Hispanic children of any race. The alternate breakdown treats race and ethnicity as two separate categories that are not mutually exclusive and displays race categories that are combined with a Hispanic or non-Hispanic designation.

I: Child Welfare Outcomes Demographic Data

In addition to reporting on specific child welfare outcome measures, the Child Welfare Outcomes Report also includes data and information on a range of child populations, including the overall national child population, state child populations, and subgroups within states. This chapter provides an overview of state-by-state child populations under age 18, child populations living in poverty, children in foster care, children waiting for adoption, and adopted children in order to provide context for the child welfare outcomes information contained in subsequent chapters.

NATIONAL CHILD POPULATION

In 2015, the total population of children under the age of 18 was estimated to be 74,382,502. The three States with the largest populations under the age of 18 were California (9,120,916), Texas (7,211,771), and New York (4,210,817). These States also had three of the four largest populations of children in foster care. The three States with the smallest populations under the age of 18 were the District of Columbia (118,107), Vermont (119,923), and Wyoming (138,895). Similarly, the District of Columbia and Wyoming were second and fourth in rank, respectively, for the smallest foster care populations.

Nationally, 20.7 percent of children under the age of 18 were estimated to live in poverty in 2015. Poverty rates for children vary widely across states, ranging from 10.7 percent to 58.3 percent, and 23 states (44 percent) have poverty rates above the national average of 20.7 percent. Although there is evidence of a relationship between income and child maltreatment, there is no meaningful correlation between states' foster care entry rates and their estimated proportion of the child population living in poverty for 2015 (Pearson's $r = -.16$).³²

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

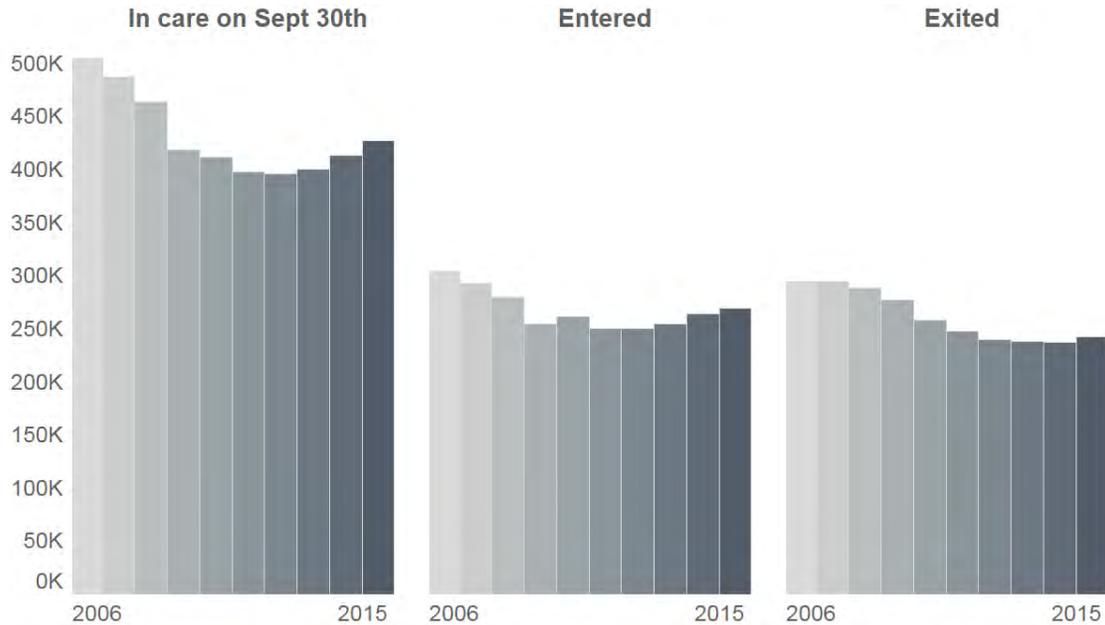
On the last day of 2015, approximately 428,000 children were in foster care nationwide. Previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports have noted a downward trend in the number of children in foster care. Recent foster care data suggest that the previous decline in the number of children in foster care has leveled off and that the number of children in foster care is rising. Figure I–1 shows a dramatic decline in the number of children in foster care on the last day of the FY between 2006 and 2015. That number declined from 505,000 in 2006 to 428,000 in 2015, a 15.2-percent decrease.³³ The number of children in foster care approximated 400,000 from 2011 through 2013, but increased in 2014 and reached about 428,000 in 2015. Note that the data displayed in the table are from an HHS report, *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2006–FY 2015*, and are current as of July 2016.³⁴

³² For example, see Eckenrode J., Smith E. G., McCarthy M. E., & Dineen M. (2014). Income inequality and child maltreatment in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 133(3), 454–461. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-1707.

³³ For more information, see *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2005–FY 2014* on the Children's Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>. The data used in that report were updated as of July 2015.

³⁴ The *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2006–FY 2015* data were used for this section of the Report because they are more recent than the data used for the rest of this Report and more accurately demonstrate the significant fluctuations occurring in the foster care population over time. Due to differences in sources, these data may not be consistent with other data displayed throughout the Report.

Figure I–1. Number of Children in Care, 2006–2015 (N=52 States)



The AFCARS data do not provide enough information to identify possible factors associated with the decline in the number of children in foster care. However, a number of states have been making deliberate efforts to safely reduce the number of children in care through various programmatic and policy initiatives.³⁵ For example, some states have been providing more in-home services to families, increasing efforts to identify relative homes when out-of-home care is necessary, hiring more child protective services (CPS) staff, or implementing greater use of family group decision-making meetings.³⁶

Longer range AFCARS data show that, between 2006 and 2015, the number of children in care on the last day of the FY decreased by 15.2 percent, from 505,000 to 428,000.

Of the children in foster care on the last day of FY 2015, about half (50.4 percent) were age 7 or younger, and 15.4 percent of children in foster care on the last day of the FY were age 16 or older. The national median percentages of children in care on the last day of 2015 by race were 0.4 percent Alaska Native/American Indian, 0.3 percent Asian, 18.9 percent Black, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 9.7 percent Hispanic (of any race), 48.3 percent White, and 5.7 percent two or more races. Additional data for the age and race of children in care are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>. Additional information about longer term demographic trends is available in the HHS report *Recent Demographic Trends in Foster Care*.³⁷

FOSTER CARE ENTRY RATES

States differed considerably in 2015 with respect to both the number of children in foster care and the rate of foster care entry, defined as the number of children entering foster care per 1,000 children in the state population (figure I–2).³⁸ The foster care child entry rate ranged from 1.5 to 10.4 children per 1,000 children in the population, and the median across states was 3.7 children per 1,000 children in the population (N=51 states).³⁹

The reasons for variations in the rate of foster care entry are difficult to determine. The variation cannot be attributed to differences in the rates of child victims in a state because the correlation between foster care entry rates and child victim rates in 2015 was low (Pearson’s $r=.21$). This observation also was made in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports. Variations in entry rates may be due to differences across states in policies regarding under what circumstances children are removed from the home and placed in foster care. The existence and availability of services designed to support families and enable children to remain in the home also may affect the number of children who enter foster care within a state.

³⁵ See the following for examples: (1) Freundlich, M. (2010). *Legislative strategies to safely reduce the number of children in foster care*. Retrieved from http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cyf/strategies_reducing_the_number_of_children_in_foster_care.pdf; and (2) National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. (2010). *State efforts to safely reduce the number of children in foster care*. Retrieved from <http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-ehsw-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/state-efforts-to-safely-reduce-t.html>.

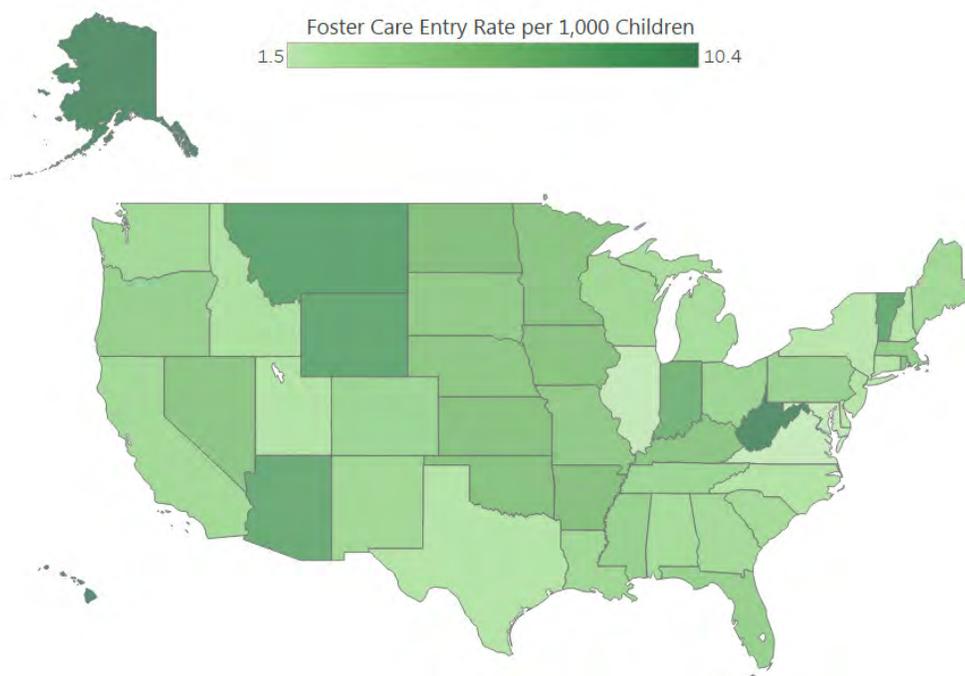
³⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2011). *TANF and child welfare programs: Increased data sharing could improve access to benefits and services* (GAO-12-2). Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-2>.

³⁷ For more information, see *Recent Demographic Trends in Foster Care* on the Children’s Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/data-brief-trends-in-foster-care-1>.

³⁸ Rate of entry is calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying by 1,000 [(N entering FC/child population) x1,000].

³⁹ As previously noted, some values in this Report may differ from those displayed in the policy chapter. This is due to the inclusion of the most currently available data in the policy chapter, which may include data resubmissions from states that were received after the preparation date for the remainder of the Report or revised population estimates from the Census Bureau.

Figure I–2. Map of Foster Care Entry Rates by State, 2015 (N=51 States)



CHILDREN WAITING FOR ADOPTION AND CHILDREN ADOPTED

In 2015, approximately 112,000 children were classified as waiting for adoption.⁴⁰ Of those children waiting for adoption, approximately 56 percent, or 62,400 children, were from families in which the parental rights had been terminated. Approximately 53,500 children were adopted in 2015. Although the number of children waiting for adoption from 2011 to 2015 almost consistently exceeded the number of children adopted in all states, 19 states were able to decrease the gap by five percent or more over the five-year period, as shown in table I–3.

SUMMARY

The child populations described in this chapter provide context for understanding and interpreting information on child welfare outcomes contained in subsequent chapters. Additional visualizations of select demographics described in this chapter are displayed at the end of the chapter. Additional demographic information on the child populations—including data on race, ethnicity, and age—and individual state data—including those states excluded from analyses and counts due to data-quality problems—are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

⁴⁰ There is no federal definition for a child “waiting for adoption.” The definition used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Report includes children through age 17 who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated. It excludes children 16 years old and older whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation. A state’s own definition may differ from that used here. Note that these data are frequently updated. Please see the Children’s Bureau website for the most updated data at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research>.

Figure I-3. Estimated Child Population Under Age 18, 2015 (N=52 States)

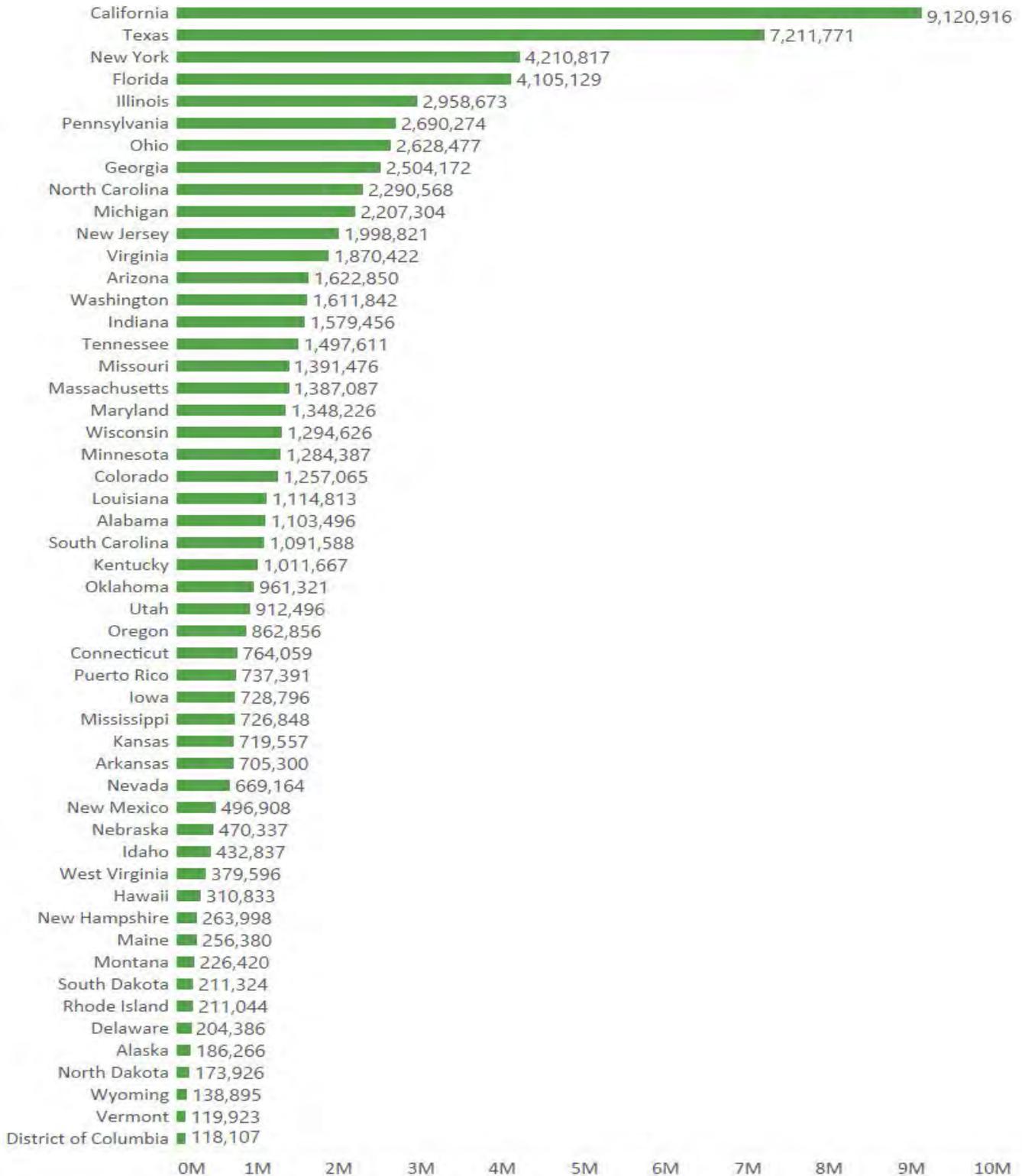


Figure I-4. Estimated Proportion of Child Population Living in Poverty, 2015 (N=52 States)

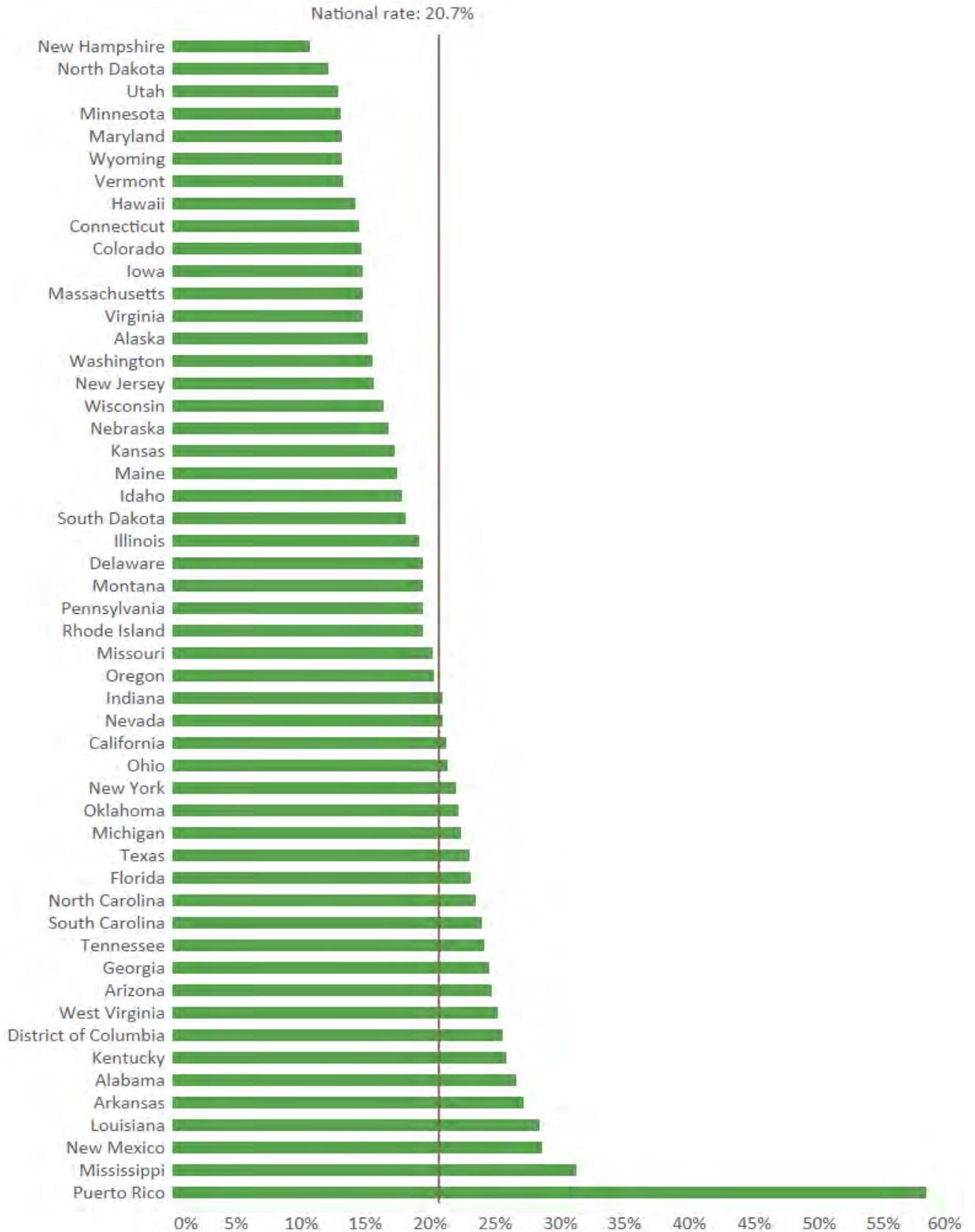


Figure I-5. Number of Children in Foster Care on the First Day of the FY (10/1), 2015 (N=51 States)*



Figure I-6. Number of Children Entering Foster Care in the FY, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Data in these charts include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I-7. Number of Children Exiting Foster Care in the FY, 2015 (N=51 States)*

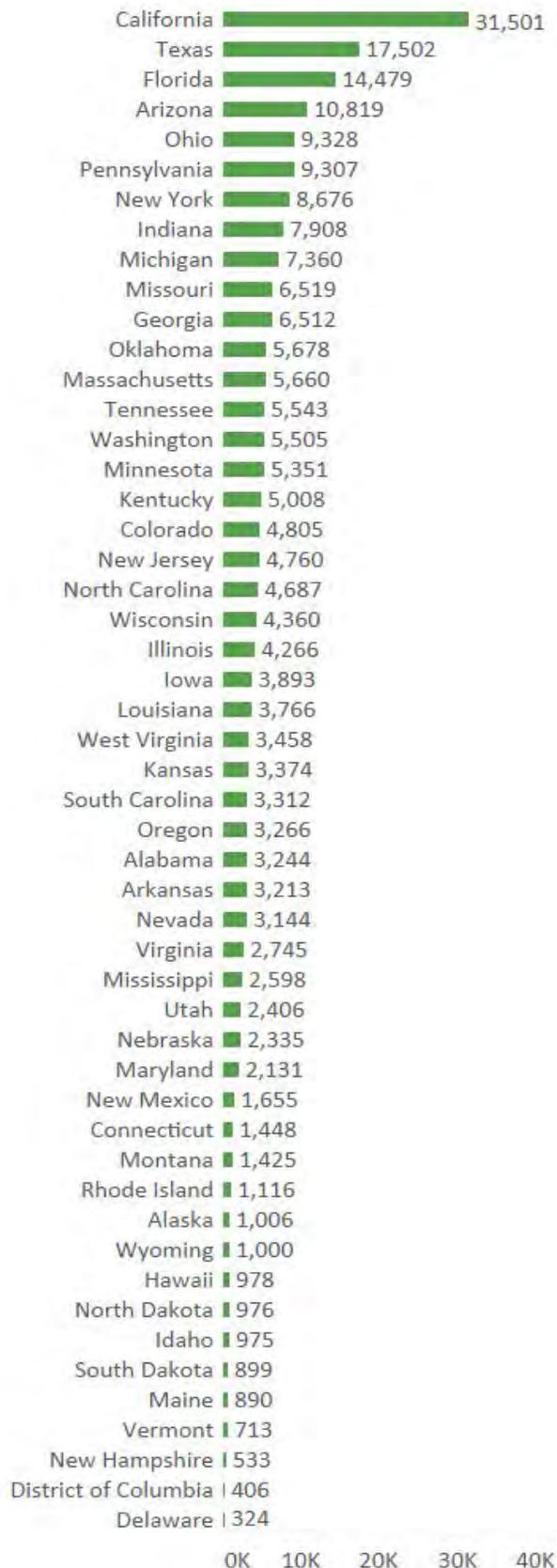
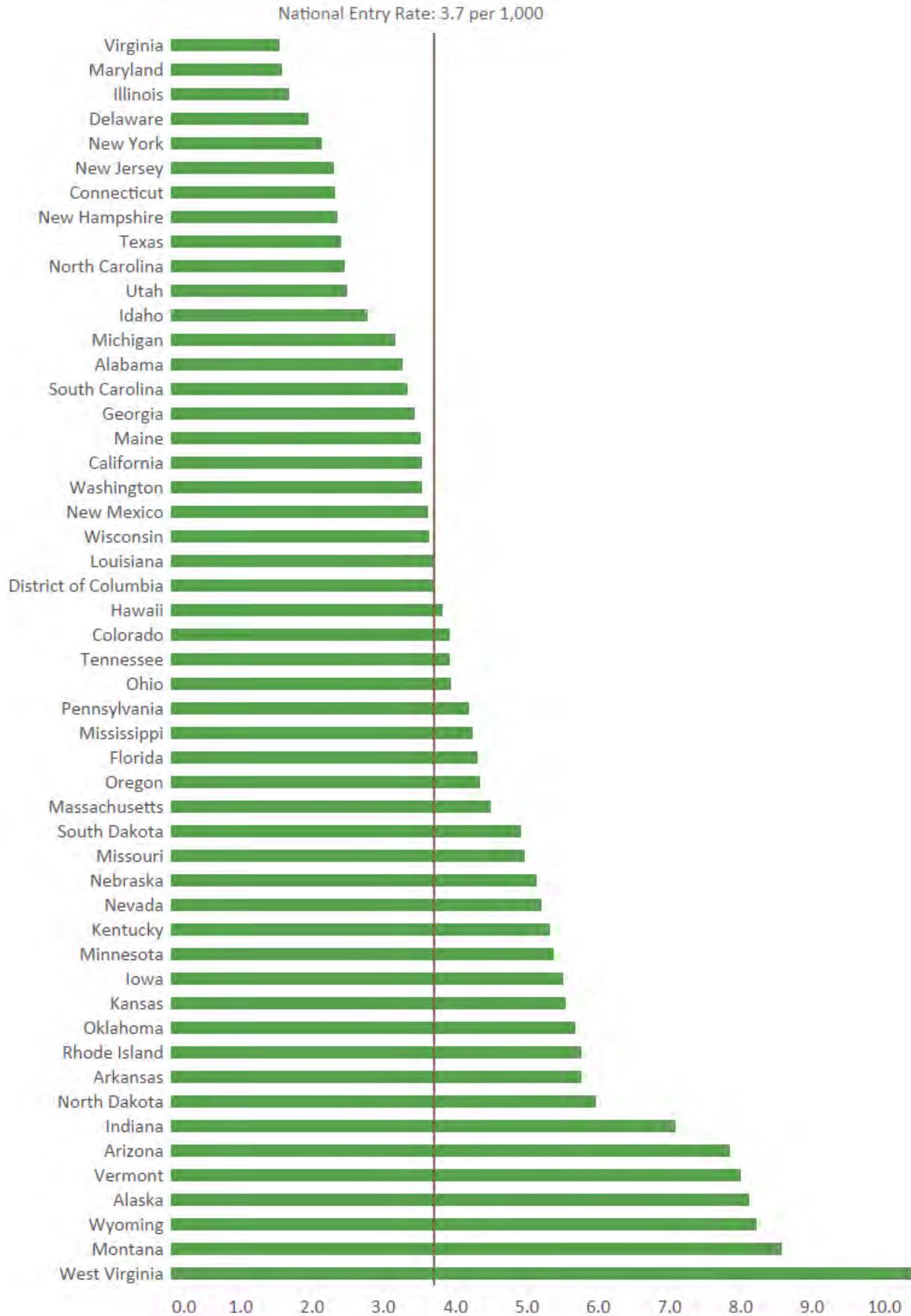


Figure I-8. Number of Children in Foster Care on the Last Day of the FY (9/30), 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Data included in these charts include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I-9. Foster Care Entry Rate per 1,000 Children, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Note: Data in this chart include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I–10. Number of Children Waiting for Adoption, 2015 (N=51 States)*



Figure I–11. Number of Children Adopted, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Note: Data in these charts includes all states that met the data-quality thresholds.

Table I-1. Number of Children Waiting for Adoption, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Alabama	1,297	1,156	1,077	1,028	1,020
Alaska	721	807	866	704	783
Arizona	2,823	2,915	3,581	3,642	4,062
Arkansas	1,414	1,024	994	1,034	1,125
California	14,631	13,136	15,668	14,098	14,181
Colorado	1,100	917	897	1,010	927
Connecticut	1,347	1,385	1,166	1,343	1,197
Delaware	244	243	218	202	223
Florida	5,047	5,192	3,692	5,669	6,033
Georgia	1,567	1,648	1,799	1,984	2,546
Hawaii	298	223	154	187	142
Idaho	341	278	333	338	326
Illinois	5,356	4,861	4,749	4,197	3,225
Indiana	2,886	3,109	2,605	2,742	2,971
Iowa	1,090	964	966	1,050	1,004
Kansas	1,821	1,853	1,843	2,116	2,340
Kentucky	1,918	2,103	2,227	2,420	2,579
Louisiana	1,165	1,090	961	1,038	1,220
Maine	511	480	564	590	666
Maryland	899	560	498	464	510
Massachusetts	2,675	2,469	2,492	2,771	3,052
Michigan	4,241	3,586	3,337	4,916	4,789
Minnesota	1,143	1,191	1,219	1,190	1,285
Mississippi	880	955	1,000	1,184	1,437
Missouri	2,057	2,067	2,162	2,326	2,514
Montana	462	403	498	587	580
Nebraska	831	904	705	690	715
Nevada	1,979	1,888	1,963	2,071	2,005
New Hampshire	167	182	189	159	148
New Jersey	2,294	2,230	2,443	2,593	2,698
New Mexico	786	834	880	990	1,134
New York	6,438	6,061	5,843	5,464	5,187
North Carolina	2,237	2,071	2,172	2,416	2,745
North Dakota	230	212	239	266	296
Ohio	3,453	2,655	2,976	2,942	3,010
Oklahoma	2,957	2,803	3,242	3,975	4,288
Oregon	1,830	1,874	1,854	1,879	1,729
Rhode Island	267	222	250	212	303
South Carolina	1,415	1,336	1,226	1,211	1,213
South Dakota	385	407	361	338	309
Tennessee	2,028	2,517	2,671	2,665	2,757
Texas	14,943	13,295	13,140	13,409	12,814
Utah	567	570	612	629	594
Vermont	197	230	220	234	305
Virginia	1,372	1,520	1,503	1,532	1,708
Washington	2,783	2,861	3,101	3,213	3,075
West Virginia	1,490	1,415	1,381	1,420	1,461
Wisconsin	1,163	1,129	1,153	1,148	1,267
Wyoming	208	163	88	81	69

*Data in this table include all states that met the data-quality thresholds for all years. Note: There is no federal definition for a child waiting to be adopted. The definition used in this table includes children through age 17 who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. It excludes children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation. A state's own definition may differ from that used here.

Table I-2. Number of Children Adopted, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Alabama	447	587	518	548	512
Alaska	293	309	328	367	357
Arizona	2,275	2,275	2,522	3,090	3,236
Arkansas	591	703	691	743	740
California	5,710	5,938	5,322	5,471	6,079
Colorado	934	905	782	769	820
Connecticut	611	490	490	502	573
Delaware	95	91	112	84	79
Florida	2,945	3,294	3,415	3,267	3,431
Georgia	1,071	915	1,031	887	912
Hawaii	198	187	160	121	176
Idaho	261	273	206	218	223
Illinois	1,214	1,845	1,395	1,655	1,788
Indiana	1,556	1,713	961	850	1,152
Iowa	864	1,032	917	878	1,017
Kansas	781	764	674	695	783
Kentucky	824	784	797	909	961
Louisiana	641	655	731	622	662
Maine	296	291	214	295	328
Maryland	539	455	355	344	294
Massachusetts	724	754	799	589	623
Michigan	2,506	2,559	2,374	2,137	1,765
Minnesota	572	520	583	642	735
Mississippi	358	425	354	314	312
Missouri	1,212	1,228	1,231	1,291	1,357
Montana	238	225	165	234	310
Nebraska	413	417	586	461	533
Nevada	827	766	721	729	799
New Hampshire	144	96	110	120	118
New Jersey	1,089	1,023	927	1,024	1,072
New Mexico	351	345	310	315	295
New York	2,214	2,182	2,184	1,997	1,933
North Carolina	1,463	1,329	1,222	1,164	1,311
North Dakota	119	155	104	96	133
Ohio	1,420	1,250	1,244	1,406	1,334
Oklahoma	1,294	1,533	1,286	1,382	2,159
Oregon	664	683	768	847	835
Rhode Island	201	191	162	202	211
South Carolina	588	776	506	449	403
South Dakota	168	126	177	159	121
Tennessee	772	813	1,159	1,161	1,113
Texas	4,718	5,039	5,443	5,221	5,457
Utah	577	562	586	605	695
Vermont	134	172	179	161	189
Virginia	755	639	709	632	562
Washington	1,583	1,227	1,328	1,362	1,484
West Virginia	698	632	877	852	893
Wisconsin	717	761	800	735	643
Wyoming	73	81	86	75	74

*Data in this table include all states that met the data-quality thresholds for all years.

Table I-3. Percent Change in the Difference Between the Numbers of Children Waiting for Adoption and Children Adopted, 2011–2015 (N=49)*

State	Percent Change in the Difference Between the Numbers of Children Waiting for Adoption and Children Adopted, 2011–2015
Alabama	-40.2%
Alaska	-0.5%
Arizona	50.7%
Arkansas	-53.2%
California	-9.2%
Colorado	-35.5%
Connecticut	-15.2%
Delaware	-3.4%
Florida	23.8%
Georgia	229.4%
Hawaii	-134.0%
Idaho	28.8%
Illinois	-65.3%
Indiana	36.8%
Iowa	-105.8%
Kansas	49.7%
Kentucky	47.9%
Louisiana	6.5%
Maine	57.2%
Maryland	-40.0%
Massachusetts	24.5%
Michigan	74.3%
Minnesota	-3.7%
Mississippi	115.5%
Missouri	36.9%
Montana	20.5%
Nebraska	-56.5%
Nevada	4.7%
New Hampshire	30.4%
New Jersey	34.9%
New Mexico	92.9%
New York	-23.0%
North Carolina	85.3%
North Dakota	46.8%
Ohio	-17.6%
Oklahoma	28.0%
Oregon	-23.3%
Rhode Island	39.4%
South Carolina	-2.1%
South Dakota	-13.4%
Tennessee	30.9%
Texas	-28.0%
Utah	910.0%
Vermont	84.1%
Virginia	85.7%
Washington	32.6%
West Virginia	-28.3%
Wisconsin	39.9%
Wyoming	-103.7%

*Data in this table include all states that met the data-quality thresholds for all years.

II: Keeping Children Safe

Public child welfare agencies are responsible for ensuring that children who have been found to be victims of abuse or neglect are protected from further harm. Whether the child is placed in out-of-home care or maintained in the home, the child welfare agency's first concern must be to ensure the safety of the child.

This chapter provides information on some contextual factors related to child safety as well as on the following two safety measures:

- Measure 1.1: The percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a six-month period.
- Measure 2.1: The percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Although the NCANDS submission is voluntary, it is strongly encouraged. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2015.

Unless otherwise noted, data reported in this chapter come from NCANDS and are for 2011–2015. HHS collects and analyzes data from NCANDS on children who come into contact with public CPS agencies as alleged victims of abuse or neglect. Although submission of data to NCANDS is voluntary for states, HHS strongly encourages participation and provides technical assistance to help with data collection and reporting. Participation has increased over the past several years, and all states submitted NCANDS data for 2015.

CHILD VICTIMS AND CHILD FATALITIES⁴¹

Child Victims

During 2015, approximately 683,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.⁴² The overall national child victim rate was 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in the population.⁴³

Table II–1 shows the total number of child victims and the national child victim rate for 2011–2015.

Indicator	2011 (N=51 States)	2012 (N=52 States)	2013 (N=52 States)	2014 (N=52 States)	2015 (N=52 States)
Total Child Victims**	651,000	656,000	656,000	676,000	683,000
National Child Victim Rate	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	9.2

*The data in this table represent unique counts of child victims (i.e., a child only may be reported as a victim once).

**The total number of child victims is rounded to the nearest 1,000.

As indicated in table II–1, after the national child victim rate remained relatively stable between 2011 and 2013, the child victimization rate increased significantly in 2014 and reached the highest rate in the five-year time period in 2015. Future years' data are required to determine whether this increase in the child victimization rate is a trend.

Additional data about child victims, including age, race, and ethnicity, are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

As was discussed in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied dramatically across states. In 2015, they ranged from 1.4 child victims per 1,000 children to 22.4 child victims per 1,000 children (figure II–1).⁴⁴ There are a number of possible explanations for this variation. One explanation is that states vary in their definitions of “child maltreatment.”⁴⁵ States with broader definitions of what constitutes child maltreatment may have higher victim rates than states with narrower definitions. Variations in the level of evidence required for substantiation also may contribute to different child victim rates among states.

⁴¹ This Report uses a unique count for child victims, which tallies a child only once regardless of the number of times he or she was found to be a victim during the reporting year.

⁴² For the purposes of this Report, a “victim of child maltreatment” is defined as a child for whom an incident of abuse or neglect has been substantiated or indicated by an investigation or assessment. This includes a child who died of child abuse or neglect. This is a change from prior years when children with dispositions of “alternative response victim” were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Report uses the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in Child Maltreatment. The total number of child victims reported in this Report is rounded to the nearest 1,000.

⁴³ The national child victim rate is calculated by dividing the total number of child victims (683,487) by the total child population for all states that submitted NCANDS data (74,382,502) and multiplying by 1,000.

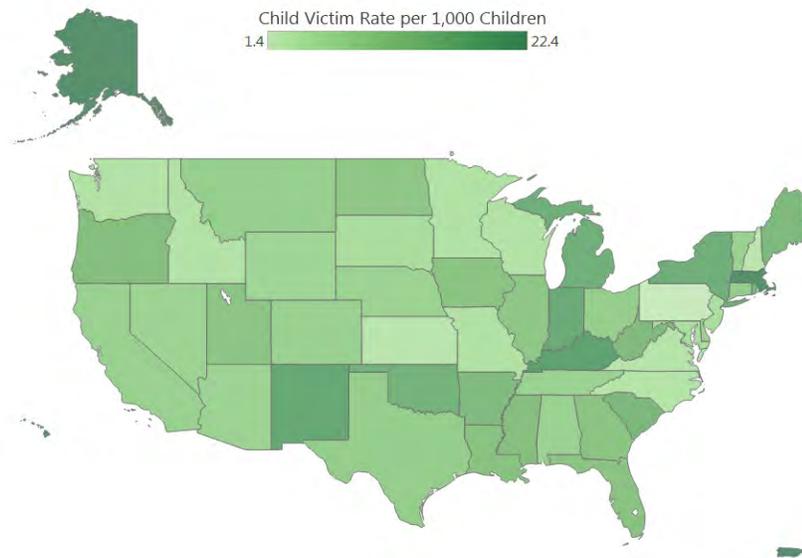
⁴⁴ A state's rate of child victims is defined as the number of child victims reported to NCANDS per 1,000 children in the state's population.

⁴⁵ More information about variations in state definitions of child abuse and neglect can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/define/>.

Some additional factors limit the comparability of child victim rates across states. One such factor is the use of alternative response approaches.⁴⁶ In alternative response approaches, child welfare agencies respond with a referral for a family assessment rather than with a formal investigation when a decision is made that there are no immediate safety concerns for the child and that the maltreatment allegation involves low or moderate risk. When a referral is made for a family assessment instead of an investigation, it is often the case that no determination is made as to the allegations of maltreatment, and therefore the child is not classified as a victim.⁴⁷ Even within states that have implemented alternative response systems, comparing outcomes for children across local jurisdictions is challenging due to the varying degrees of implementation across the state. Although some states are implementing their systems statewide, others are gradually adding alternative response approaches to select jurisdictions.⁴⁸ These methodological challenges mean that caution is warranted in comparing states that are using alternative response approaches to those that are not. Similarly, when a state begins using this type of approach, examining changes in performance over time within the state may prove difficult due to the shifting responses to allegations of maltreatment.

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes reports, child victim rates varied dramatically across states in 2015, ranging from 1.4 child victims per 1,000 children to 22.4 child victims per 1,000 children.

Figure II–1: Map of Child Victim Rates per 1,000 Children by State, 2015 (N=52)



Child Fatalities

During 2015, approximately 1,600 child fatalities were reported. The overall child fatality rate was 2.25 per 100,000 children in the population.⁴⁹ Like child victim rates, child fatality rates varied widely by state. In 2015, child fatality rates varied between 0.00 child fatalities per 100,000 children and 5.67 child fatalities per 100,000 children. Table II–2 shows the total number of child fatalities and the national child fatality rate for 2011–2015.

Table II–2. Child Fatalities, 2011–2015

Indicator	2011 (N=52 States)	2012 (N=51 States)	2013 (N=51 States)	2014 (N=51 States)	2015 (N=49 States)
Total Child Victims*	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
National Child Fatality Rate	2.11	2.18	2.09	2.14	2.25

*The total number of child fatalities is rounded to the nearest 100.

As indicated in Table II–2, the child fatality rate fluctuated between 2011 and 2015. There may be a number of reasons for the variation and lack of clear directional trend. Given the relatively low frequency of child fatalities, the national rate is sensitive

⁴⁶ The term “alternative response” is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as “differential response,” “dual track response,” and “multitrack response.” These terms tend to refer to the provision of a response other than an investigation in regard to an allegation of maltreatment. Throughout this Report, the term “alternative response” is used. For more information on alternative response, see *Differential Response to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue-briefs/differential-response/>.

⁴⁷ Some states make a distinction between those referrals for which services were required or mandated and those referrals for which services were not needed or were voluntary. In these cases, some states have chosen to report the referrals to NCANDS as either “alternative response victim” for those in which services were mandated or “alternative response nonvictim” for those in which services were voluntary or not needed.

⁴⁸ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2008). *Differential response to reports of child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved from http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue_briefs/differential_response/differential_response.pdf.

⁴⁹ The national child fatality rate is calculated by dividing the number of child fatalities reported by states (1,585) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS child fatality data (70,448,467) and multiplying by 100,000.

to which states report data and to changes in the national population estimates produced by the Census Bureau. Additionally, changes in policy, such as the passage of the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Pub. L. 112–34) in 2010, may have led to better reporting and account for possible increases in child fatality rates.⁵⁰

RANGE OF STATE PERFORMANCE IN 2015 ON SAFETY-RELATED OUTCOME MEASURES

State performance with regard to children’s safety is addressed through outcome 1 (reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect) and outcome 2 (reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care). Table II–3 summarizes state performance in 2015 on the measures pertaining to these outcomes. Note that cases identified as “alternative response victim” are not included in the calculation of these two safety outcome measures; only substantiated and indicated cases are included.

**Table II–3. Range of State Performance, 2015
Outcomes 1 and 2: Keeping Children Safe**

Outcome Measures*	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range (Percent)
Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the year, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? (N=52 states)**	3.7%	5.0%	6.4%	0.8–13.2%
Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? (N=47 states)**	0.11%	0.28%	0.52%	0.00–1.58%

*Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available.

**For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

Recurrence of maltreatment

A number of variables impact the range in performance across states (range=0.8 percent to 13.2 percent) with respect to maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1), including variations in child victim rates across states. In general, states with higher child victim rates also tended to have higher rates of recurrence within a six-month period (Pearson’s $r=.64$ in 2015). A similar finding was reported in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports.

States with higher child victim rates also tended to have higher recurrence rates.

The range in performance with regard to maltreatment recurrence in 2015 also appears to be related to differences across states with regard to the types of child maltreatment reported. Most notably, states with a higher percentage of children who were victims of neglect also tended to have a higher percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a six-month period (Pearson’s $r=.47$).

Maltreatment of children in foster care

Table II–3 shows the range in state performance regarding the maltreatment of children while in foster care (range=0.00 percent to 1.58 percent). This variation among states may be influenced by a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the extent to which training and services are offered to support foster families and facility staff members, variations in casework practices, and the level of interaction the caseworker has with the family.

CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE ON MEASURES OF MALTREATMENT RECURRENCE AND MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The median performance across states for the years 2011–2015 on measures of maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1) and maltreatment in foster care (measure 2.1) are presented in tables II–5 and II–6, which also present findings regarding the change in state performance on these measures. To determine the change in state performance for measures 1.1 and 2.1, performance in 2015 was compared to performance in 2011. Change in performance was computed by using a percent-change calculation.

⁵⁰ For additional information, please refer to *Child Maltreatment 2015*, which is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2015>.

**Table II–4. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2011–2015*
Outcomes 1 and 2: Keeping Children Safe**

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year (Percent)***					States That Improved in Performance, 2011–2015	States That Declined in Performance, 2011–2015
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Measure 1.1: Percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period (N=51 states)****	5.2%	5.1%	5.3%	4.9%	5.0%	23 states (45%)	21 states (41%)
Measure 2.1: The percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member (N=45 states)****	0.30%	0.30%	0.34%	0.25%	0.26%	22 states (49%)	18 states (40%)

*In accordance with standard procedure in this Report, when there was a percent change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was “no change” in performance.

**Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table II–3 and appendix B. Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all relevant years.

***The 2015 data included in this table may be different from the data included in table II–3 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

****For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

As shown in table II–4, performance with regard to recurrence of child maltreatment (measure 1.1) slightly improved between 2011 and 2015. The median went from 5.2 percent in 2011 to 5.0 percent in 2015, a 3.8-percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Furthermore, a slightly higher percentage of states demonstrated an improvement in performance on this measure (45 percent) than showed a decline in performance (41 percent).

National performance improved with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1). Between 2011 and 2015, 49 percent of states improved in performance, 40 percent declined in performance, and 11 percent showed no meaningful change. The national median rate decreased from 0.30 in 2011 to 0.26 in 2015, a 13.3-percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure).

Between 2011 and 2015, state performance on the two safety-related outcome measures generally improved.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

National performance for the two safety-related outcome measures, recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care, generally improved between 2011 and 2015. For both of these safety measures, it is important to keep in mind that, while the percentages of maltreatment may be numerically small, these events have serious implications for the safety and well-being of children. Children who are maltreated, either at home or in care, can experience a wide variety of consequences, ranging from physical and mental health problems to issues with cognitive development and academic achievement.⁵¹ Furthermore, maltreatment recurrence is associated with an increase in trauma symptoms in children.⁵²

The end of this chapter displays outcome-based visuals related to keeping children safe, including child victim and fatality rates and state performance on outcomes 1.1 and 2.1. The Child Welfare Outcomes data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>) includes additional context data related to child maltreatment and child safety, including the following: the age, race, ethnicity, and maltreatment type of child victims; CPS responses; CPS response time; and individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data.

⁵¹ Goldman, J., Salus, M. K., Wolcott, D., & Kennedy, K. Y. (2003). *A coordinated response to child abuse and neglect: The foundation for practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/foundation/>.

⁵² Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R. K., & Turner, H. A. (2007). Polyvictimization and trauma in a national longitudinal cohort. *Development and Psychopathology*, 19, 149–166.

Figure II–2. Child Victim Rate per 1,000 Children, 2015 (N=52 States)

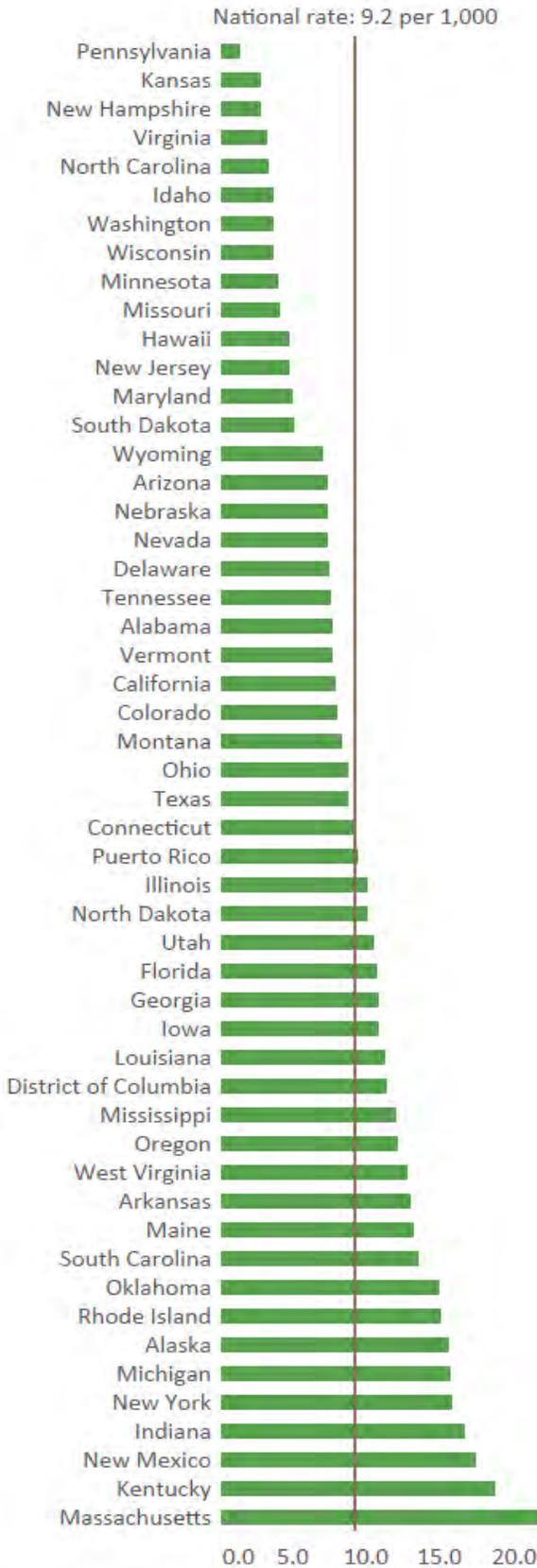
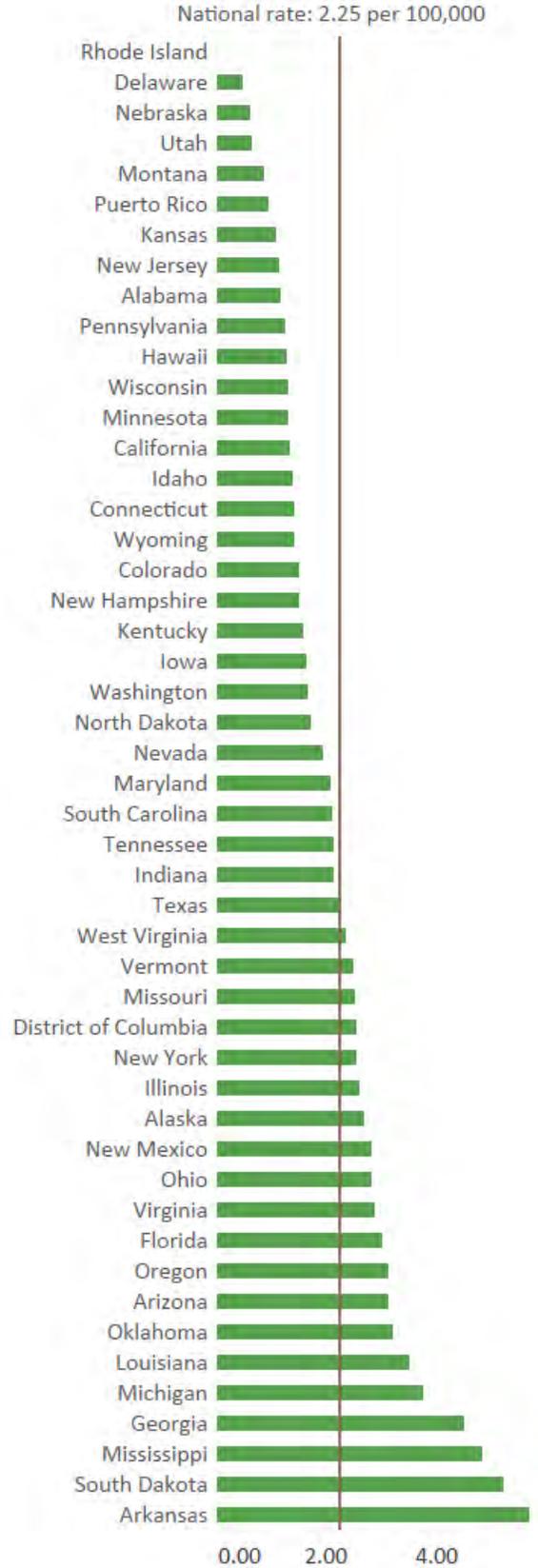


Figure II–3. Child Fatality Rate per 100,000 Children, 2015 (N=49 States)*



*Data in these charts includes all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure II-4. Percent of Children Experiencing a Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 6 Months, 2015 (N=52 States)

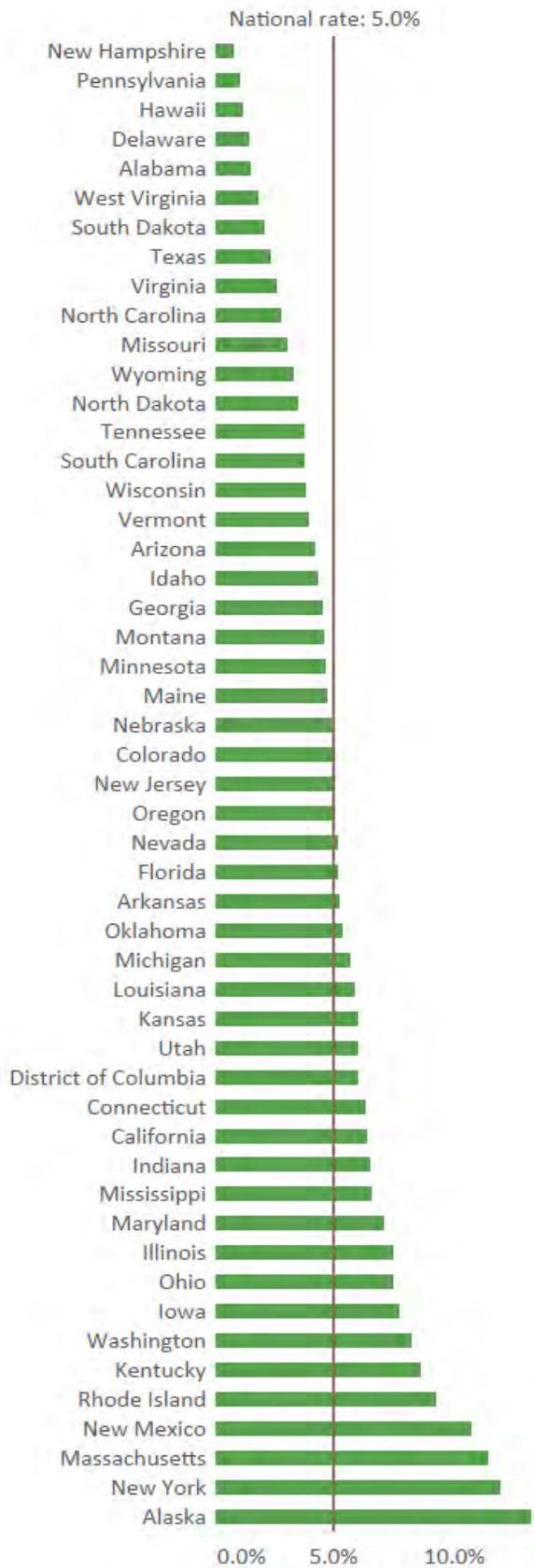
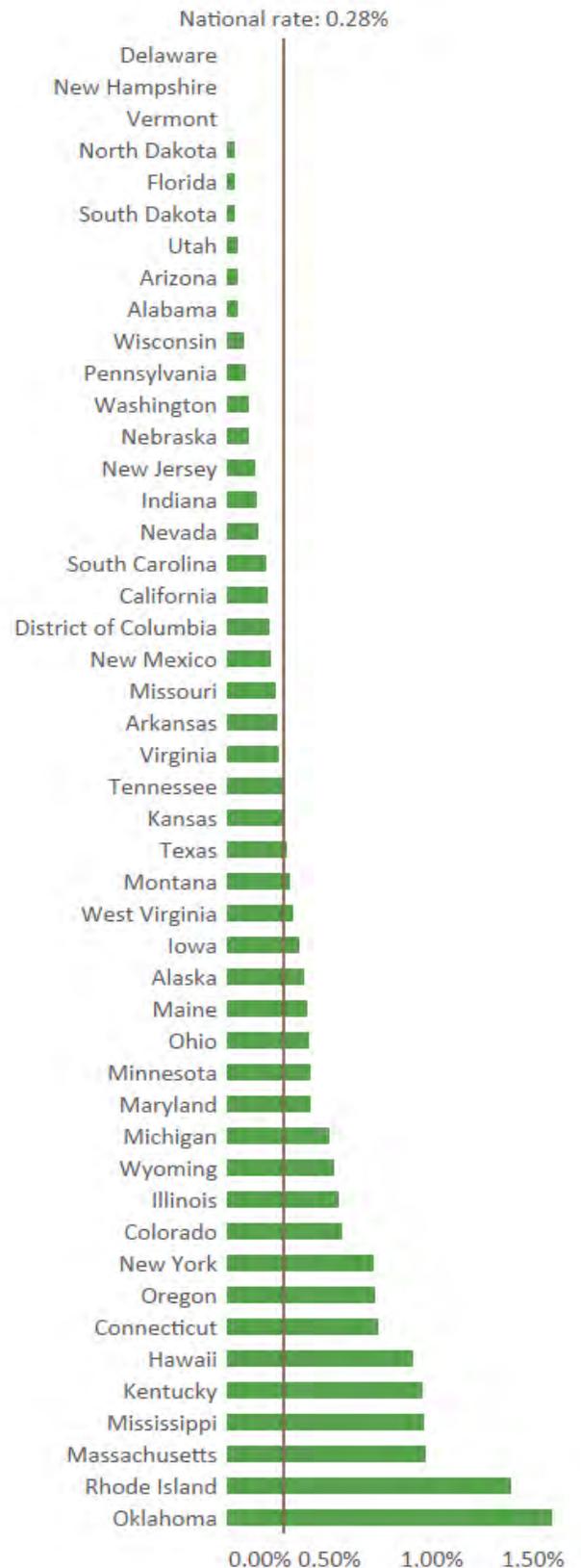


Figure II-5. Percent of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2015 (N=52 States)



*Data in these charts includes all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds. Note: For these measures, a lower value indicates better performance.

Table II–5. Percent of Children Experiencing a Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 6 Months, 2011–2015 (N=51 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	1.1%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	38.1%
Alaska	8.2%	12.2%	12.9%	13.9%	13.2%	61.3%
Arizona	4.6%	4.6%	5.4%	3.8%	4.2%	-8.0%
Arkansas	7.7%	6.4%	5.7%	5.5%	5.2%	-32.0%
California	7.0%	6.7%	6.3%	6.4%	6.4%	-9.1%
Colorado	4.5%	4.4%	4.5%	4.9%	5.0%	11.4%
Connecticut	6.6%	5.6%	6.1%	6.3%	6.3%	-5.2%
Delaware	2.2%	2.5%	3.1%	2.1%	1.5%	-32.9%
District of Columbia	6.2%	4.5%	5.3%	5.5%	6.0%	-3.0%
Florida	7.2%	7.2%	5.9%	4.9%	5.2%	-27.6%
Georgia	3.2%	3.3%	4.2%	4.9%	4.5%	40.0%
Hawaii	2.4%	1.9%	1.1%	2.1%	1.2%	-47.7%
Idaho	3.3%	3.8%	2.9%	3.1%	4.3%	32.3%
Illinois	4.6%	6.2%	5.1%	7.1%	7.4%	62.2%
Indiana	6.7%	6.8%	7.1%	7.6%	6.5%	-3.4%
Iowa	8.5%	7.3%	8.0%	7.4%	7.7%	-9.1%
Kansas	6.0%	3.4%	2.9%	2.7%	6.0%	-0.8%
Kentucky	5.1%	6.2%	5.9%	8.2%	8.6%	68.1%
Louisiana	5.2%	5.3%	6.5%	5.8%	5.8%	11.6%
Maine	4.3%	6.3%	6.3%	6.1%	4.7%	10.7%
Maryland	6.9%	7.1%	7.2%	7.0%	7.1%	2.7%
Massachusetts	8.1%	8.5%	9.0%	12.9%	11.4%	40.9%
Michigan	6.8%	7.2%	6.7%	6.5%	5.7%	-16.6%
Minnesota	5.6%	3.8%	3.5%	3.9%	4.7%	-17.2%
Mississippi	7.4%	6.8%	6.5%	6.2%	6.6%	-10.9%
Missouri	3.3%	2.1%	3.4%	3.6%	3.0%	-7.3%
Montana	3.8%	3.4%	4.3%	1.5%	4.6%	21.9%
Nebraska	7.7%	7.4%	6.2%	4.9%	4.9%	-35.6%
Nevada	6.4%	4.8%	3.8%	4.8%	5.1%	-19.3%
New Hampshire	4.7%	1.7%	1.8%	0.7%	0.8%	-82.0%
New Jersey	5.2%	5.1%	5.8%	5.5%	5.0%	-3.0%
New Mexico	9.9%	9.0%	11.5%	12.7%	10.7%	7.8%
New York	12.2%	12.4%	11.7%	11.6%	11.9%	-2.1%
North Carolina	3.3%	2.1%	1.9%	2.9%	2.8%	-15.6%
North Dakota	1.4%	2.6%	4.6%	2.8%	3.5%	148.0%
Ohio	7.7%	7.6%	6.9%	7.2%	7.5%	-2.7%
Oklahoma	6.9%	6.2%	8.5%	6.9%	5.3%	-22.2%
Pennsylvania	2.0%	2.6%	1.9%	2.1%	1.1%	-44.0%
Puerto Rico	4.5%	5.1%	4.6%	3.9%	5.3%	17.8%
Rhode Island	8.5%	6.9%	8.2%	8.8%	9.3%	9.5%
South Carolina	3.4%	2.8%	2.5%	2.9%	3.8%	11.7%
South Dakota	5.6%	5.6%	4.5%	3.7%	2.1%	-62.5%
Tennessee	3.0%	2.7%	2.4%	2.8%	3.7%	25.4%
Texas	2.9%	2.9%	3.0%	2.8%	2.4%	-17.0%
Utah	5.6%	4.6%	6.3%	6.3%	6.0%	6.9%
Vermont	4.8%	6.3%	8.2%	5.8%	4.0%	-17.9%
Virginia	2.3%	2.7%	3.1%	2.0%	2.6%	16.5%
Washington	5.8%	7.5%	7.9%	9.7%	8.2%	42.2%
West Virginia	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	1.6%	1.9%	-21.6%
Wisconsin	4.6%	4.4%	4.0%	4.9%	3.8%	-16.8%
Wyoming	1.0%	1.4%	0.8%	3.4%	3.3%	244.8%

*Data in this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance. Note: For this outcome, a lower value indicates improved performance.

Table II–6. Outcome 2.1: Percent of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2011–2015 (N=45 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	0.18%	0.18%	0.09%	0.17%	0.06%	-64.6%
Alaska	0.41%	0.92%	0.99%	0.39%	0.38%	-7.2%
Arizona	0.09%	0.08%	0.21%	0.11%	0.06%	-36.3%
Arkansas	0.19%	0.13%	0.16%	0.18%	0.25%	35.8%
California	0.30%	0.23%	0.25%	0.25%	0.21%	-31.2%
Colorado	0.66%	0.41%	0.74%	1.42%	0.56%	-14.4%
Connecticut	0.73%	0.49%	0.93%	0.87%	0.74%	1.7%
Delaware	0.08%	0.15%	0.43%	0.00%	0.00%	-100.0%
District of Columbia	0.19%	0.35%	0.52%	0.42%	0.22%	12.9%
Florida	0.66%	0.61%	0.98%	0.06%	0.04%	-93.4%
Hawaii	0.59%	0.14%	0.34%	0.57%	0.91%	54.4%
Illinois	0.32%	0.35%	0.38%	0.48%	0.55%	73.2%
Indiana	0.23%	0.13%	0.13%	0.08%	0.15%	-32.6%
Iowa	0.54%	0.35%	0.35%	0.25%	0.36%	-34.2%
Kansas	0.11%	0.20%	0.29%	0.16%	0.29%	172.5%
Maine	0.34%	0.14%	0.49%	0.30%	0.40%	18.4%
Maryland	0.69%	0.48%	0.46%	0.37%	0.41%	-39.9%
Massachusetts	0.70%	0.93%	1.05%	1.27%	0.97%	37.6%
Michigan	0.87%	0.66%	0.69%	0.53%	0.50%	-42.0%
Minnesota	0.34%	0.41%	0.25%	0.31%	0.41%	22.4%
Mississippi	1.59%	1.60%	0.94%	1.07%	0.96%	-39.5%
Missouri	0.22%	0.25%	0.34%	0.27%	0.24%	8.2%
Montana	0.18%	0.30%	0.18%	0.11%	0.31%	71.4%
Nebraska	0.28%	0.46%	0.36%	0.23%	0.11%	-59.3%
Nevada	0.41%	0.66%	0.47%	0.27%	0.16%	-61.8%
New Hampshire	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	NA
New Jersey	0.13%	0.23%	0.34%	0.13%	0.15%	17.0%
New Mexico	0.36%	0.62%	0.32%	0.07%	0.22%	-38.9%
New York	1.38%	1.19%	0.90%	0.63%	0.72%	-48.0%
North Dakota	0.06%	0.59%	0.10%	0.09%	0.04%	-24.4%
Ohio	0.39%	0.50%	0.56%	0.40%	0.40%	2.7%
Oklahoma	0.48%	0.89%	1.19%	1.27%	1.58%	229.3%
Pennsylvania	0.07%	0.14%	0.11%	0.12%	0.10%	52.2%
Rhode Island	1.23%	1.04%	1.13%	1.23%	1.38%	11.9%
South Carolina	0.41%	0.43%	0.43%	0.58%	0.20%	-51.2%
South Dakota	0.00%	0.00%	0.09%	0.05%	0.05%	NA
Tennessee	0.11%	0.07%	0.11%	0.14%	0.28%	143.0%
Texas	0.19%	0.27%	0.29%	0.32%	0.30%	51.9%
Utah	0.39%	0.08%	0.25%	0.30%	0.06%	-85.1%
Vermont	0.19%	0.00%	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	-100.0%
Virginia	0.26%	0.16%	0.21%	0.23%	0.26%	-0.3%
Washington	0.19%	0.33%	0.32%	0.16%	0.11%	-40.2%
West Virginia	0.19%	0.20%	0.27%	0.49%	0.33%	69.5%
Wisconsin	0.34%	0.12%	0.07%	0.12%	0.09%	-74.3%
Wyoming	0.05%	0.00%	0.00%	0.05%	0.53%	880.9%

*Data in this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

III: Finding Permanent Homes for Children in Foster Care

State child welfare agencies are tasked with the responsibility of working with families and the courts to return children to their homes or to find other permanent homes in a timely manner when foster care is necessary to ensure a child’s safety and well-being.⁵³ Outcome 3 (increase permanency for children in foster care) encompasses these permanency goals for children and youth.

This chapter presents national permanency results for the general foster care population, children with disabilities who are in foster care, and children who have been in foster care for long periods of time. Contextual information regarding the age and race/ethnicity of children in care, entering care, and exiting care is available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

For the purpose of the Child Welfare Outcomes Report data indicators, a child achieves permanency when he or she is reported as discharged from foster care to one of the following arrangements:

- Reunified with parents or primary caretakers⁵⁴
- Living with other relatives
- Living with a legal guardian⁵⁵
- Legally adopted

State performance in finding permanent homes for children is assessed using the following data for each state: (1) the number of children in foster care, (2) the percentage of children in foster care who achieve permanency, and (3) the percentage of children in foster care who exit to emancipation. This chapter presents key findings of the analyses of these data across states. The source of most of the data presented in this chapter is AFCARS.⁵⁶

RANGE OF PERFORMANCE IN ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Nationally, approximately 242,000 children exited foster care in 2015. Table III–1 provides a breakdown of the foster care discharge reasons reported for these children.

Table III–1. Foster Care Discharge Reasons, 2015 (N=51 States)*

Discharge Reason**	Number of Children	Percent of Total Exits (N=242,000)
Adoption	53,000	21.9%
Emancipation	21,000	8.7%
Guardianship	22,000	9.1%
Reunification	139,000	57.4%
Other	6,000	2.5%
Total	242,000	100%

*All numbers presented in this table are rounded to the nearest thousand.

**Other discharge reasons include runaway, death, and missing discharge reason.

According to table III–1, 88.4 percent of the children exiting foster care were discharged to a permanent home in 2015 (i.e., were discharged to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship). State performance with regard to finding permanent homes for children in foster care is addressed through a number of outcome measures, as shown in table III–2.

⁵³ For the purposes of this Report, “foster care” refers to a variety of out-of-home placement settings in which children are placed away from their parents or guardians in 24-hour substitute care and under the placement and responsibility of the state child welfare agency for at least 24 hours, including foster family homes, group homes, shelters, residential treatment facilities, and similar placements (see 45 CFR 1355, Appendix A, Section II).

⁵⁴ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, the discharge reasons of “reunification with parents or primary caretakers” and “living with other relatives” are combined into the category of “reunification.”

⁵⁵ Legal guardian includes relatives and nonrelatives.

⁵⁶ Data used in this Report may be different from other sources for a number of reasons, especially the timing of data collection. All AFCARS data used in this Report are current as of June 8, 2016.

Table III–2. Range of State Performance, 2015
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Outcome Measures*	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range (Percent)
Measure 3.1: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51 states)	83.9%	89.4%	92.2%	69.0–96.1%
Measure 3.2: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were identified as having a diagnosed disability, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=50 states)	72.5%	79.2%	86.1%	46.1–95.6%
Measure 3.3: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51states)	59.6%	66.2%	73.5%	36.4–90.6%
Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care? (N=51 states)**	14.6%	18.6%	25.4%	4.0–43.8%

*Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all of the relevant years.

**For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Measures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 assess permanency for children at the time of discharge from foster care. The data in table III–4 suggest that states were generally successful in 2015 in achieving permanent homes for children discharged from foster care. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that a central goal in child welfare is to find permanent, secure homes for 100 percent of children who must enter foster care.

Children with disabilities⁵⁷

For 2015, a long-standing pattern continues in which states tend to be considerably more successful in finding permanent homes for the general foster care population (with a median success rate of 89.4 percent) than for children with diagnosed disabilities (with a median success rate of 79.2 percent; see measures 3.1 and 3.2 in table III–2). This disparity has been a consistent finding in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports. Because children with diagnosed disabilities often need higher levels of care, they are more likely to be placed in residential treatment centers and are therefore less likely to achieve permanent placements with families. The current finding in this Report on the difficulties in establishing permanency for children with disabilities suggests that agencies should continue to review their data and current practices to consider whether there are ways to increase placing these children in permanent homes.

Older youth in foster care

Another demographic for whom states struggle to establish permanency is children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12. Within the general foster care population, 89.4 percent of children exited to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship in 2015, but the percent of older youth exiting to permanency was only 66.2 (see measures 3.1 and 3.3 in table III–2).

As seen in prior Reports, states are less successful in establishing permanency for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 as compared to the entire foster care population.

Older children in foster care may face a number of age-specific barriers to permanency.⁵⁸ For example, there may be a shortage of families who are willing and able to provide permanent homes for older youth. This could be due to a number of factors, but one likely contributor is the high rate of risky behavior among older youth in foster care. Compared to younger foster youth, older youth transitioning from foster care have relatively high rates of substance use referrals, incarceration, giving birth to a child, or fathering a child.⁵⁹ These high-risk youth require more resources, and there may be a lack of families willing and able to provide them with the services they need.

Analysts have also identified agency practices that may act as barriers to permanency for older youth. Specifically, child welfare agencies may lack the commitment needed to establish permanency options for older youth in care and believe these individuals are unadoptable.⁶⁰ Additionally, some agencies may be focusing on providing independent living services to youth rather than finding permanency options. Although these types of services are an important component of preparing youth for adulthood, they are not sufficient for connecting them with permanent families.⁶¹

Finally, youth might show some resistance to permanency planning. If permanency planning involves the termination of their birth parents' rights, youth might be hesitant to form ties with new families, as many youth still have emotional ties to their birth families. Youth also may be unaware of the long-term consequences of not having a family to turn to during their young adult years, which may cause feelings of apathy toward permanency.⁶²

⁵⁷ For more information on specific NCANDS and AFCARS data element definitions, see appendix D.

⁵⁸ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Enhancing permanency for youth in out-of-home care*. Retrieved from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/focus/enhancing/index.cfm>.

⁵⁹ For more information, see the National Youth in Transition Database data briefs on the Children's Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/data-briefs>.

⁶⁰ North American Council on Adoptable Children. (2009). *It's time to make older child adoption a reality: Because every child and youth deserves a family*. Retrieved from <http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/MakeOlderChildAdoptionReality.pdf>.

⁶¹ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Enhancing permanency for youth in out-of-home care*. Retrieved from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/focus/enhancing/index.cfm>.

⁶² Ibid.

Youth emancipating from foster care

Measure 3.4 focuses on youth who reach age 18 or exit foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation. These are youth for whom the state was unable to find a permanent home. Nationally, approximately 21,000 youth were emancipated from foster care in 2015. One of the issues addressed by these measures is the amount of time children were in foster care before emancipation.

The percentage of children exiting foster care who were reported to AFCARS as having a discharge reason of emancipation varies considerably across states.

There was considerable variation across states regarding the percentage of children exiting foster care who were reported to AFCARS as having a discharge reason of emancipation. In 2015, the States with the lowest percentages of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation were Wyoming (1.2 percent), West Virginia (2.1 percent), Indiana (3.1 percent), and Mississippi (3.1 percent). The States with the highest percentages were Delaware (26.9 percent), Maryland (19.9 percent), and Virginia (18.3 percent). In 2015, the median across states for children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation was 8.6 percent.⁶³

It might be expected that the variation across states in the percentage of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation would be due to differences across states in the ages of children entering foster care (i.e., there should be a strong correlation between a state having a high number of youth entering foster care and a state having a high percentage of foster youth exiting to emancipation). However, there was a relatively low correlation between the percentage of youth discharged from foster care who were emancipated and the percentage of children entering foster care in the state who were age 12 or older (Pearson's $r=.37$).

The data shown in table III–2 suggest that, in nearly half the states, 18.6 percent or more of the children who were emancipated from foster care in 2015 were in foster care for long periods of time before they were emancipated (measure 3.4).

CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE ON MEASURES OF ACHIEVING PERMANENCY

Table III–3 presents the median performances across states for 2011–2015 on measures pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care. The table also presents a summary of the change in state performance between 2011 and 2015 on these measures. Change in performance over time was computed by using a percent-change calculation. These median performances and changes in performance over time should be viewed together in order to gain a better understanding of trends over time.

Table III–3. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2011–2015*
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year (Percent)***					States That Improved in Performance 2011–2015	States That Declined in Performance 2011–2015
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Measure 3.1: Percentage of all children who exited foster care to a permanent home (N=49 states)	87.3%	87.5%	89.4%	89.4%	89.6%	7 states (14%)	3 states (6%)
Measure 3.2: Percentage of all children with a diagnosed disability exiting foster care who were discharged to a permanent home (N=45 states)	77.7%	77.9%	78.5%	78.8%	80.1%	18 states (40%)	8 states (18%)
Measure 3.3: Percentage of all children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 who were discharged to a permanent home (N=49 states)	65.4%	65.8%	65.6%	64.2%	66.2%	15 states (31%)	13 states (27%)
Measure 3.4: Percentage of all children emancipated from foster care who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger (N=49 states) ****	26.3%	23.6%	22.5%	20.0%	18.6%	40 states (82%)	6 states (12%)

*In accordance with standard procedure in this Report, when there was a percent change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was “no change” in performance.

**The definitions for the measures in all cross-year comparison tables in this Report have been shortened due to the complexity of the tables. Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table III–2 or appendix B. Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all of the relevant years.

***The 2015 data included in this table may be different from the data included in table III–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

****For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

As shown in table III–3, one of the most notable changes in performance between 2011 and 2015 is in the percentage of children who emancipated from foster care who entered care when they were age 12 or younger (measure 3.4). For this measure, 82 percent of states demonstrated improved performance between 2011 and 2015, and the national median improved from 26.3 percent to 18.6 percent, a 29.3-percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable on this measure).

Between 2011 and 2015, 82 percent of states showed improved performance in the percentage of children emancipated from foster care who entered care when they were age 12 or younger.

⁶³ The median of 8.6 percent refers to the median across states for all children exiting foster care to emancipation. This should not be confused with the median for measure 3.4, which is the subpopulation of the total number of children discharged to emancipation.

There was improvement in the percentage of children with a diagnosed disability exiting to permanency (measure 3.2). For this measure, two-fifths of states (40 percent) showed improved performance, and the national median went from 77.7 percent in 2011 to 80.1 percent in 2015, a 3.1-percent increase.

There also was a slight improvement in the percentage of children exiting foster care to a permanent home (measure 3.1), though the majority (80 percent) of states did not show a change in performance. Additionally, there was little change across states in finding permanent homes for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 (measure 3.3), with the national median increasing slightly (1.2 percent) from 2011 to 2015.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Some positive findings emerged from the data between 2011 and 2015 regarding the achievement of permanency for children in foster care. Similar to findings from previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the measure assessing permanency for children at the time of discharge from foster care indicates that, across the states, the majority of children exiting foster care in 2015 were discharged to permanent homes (measure 3.1, median=89.6 percent).

Notably, most states showed progress in reducing the percentages of children exiting foster care to emancipation. A large number of states demonstrated a reduction in the percentage of children emancipating from foster care who entered foster care at age 12 or younger (measure 3.4, 82 percent of states showed improvement). Historically, many states have struggled in this area. It is encouraging to note that many states are making progress in their efforts to find permanent homes for children in care for longer periods of time, and improvement in this measure may be a reflection of those efforts. However, there is still room for improvement, and this continues to be an area that calls for some additional consideration from state program administrators and policymakers.

In addition to the promising results in exits to emancipation, states have shown some improvement in finding permanent homes for children with disabilities (an increase from 77.7 percent in 2011 to 80.1 percent in 2015) and for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 (an increase from 65.4 percent in 2011 to 66.2 percent in 2015). Although efforts are still needed to continue to close the gap on disparities in achieving permanency for these two groups of children compared to the overall foster care population, these recent trends are encouraging.

The end of this chapter displays outcome-based visuals related to finding permanent homes for children in foster care, including state performance on outcomes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. Additional information, including exits from care by race and ethnicity and individual state data, are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

Figure III–1. Percent of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2015 (N=51 States)*

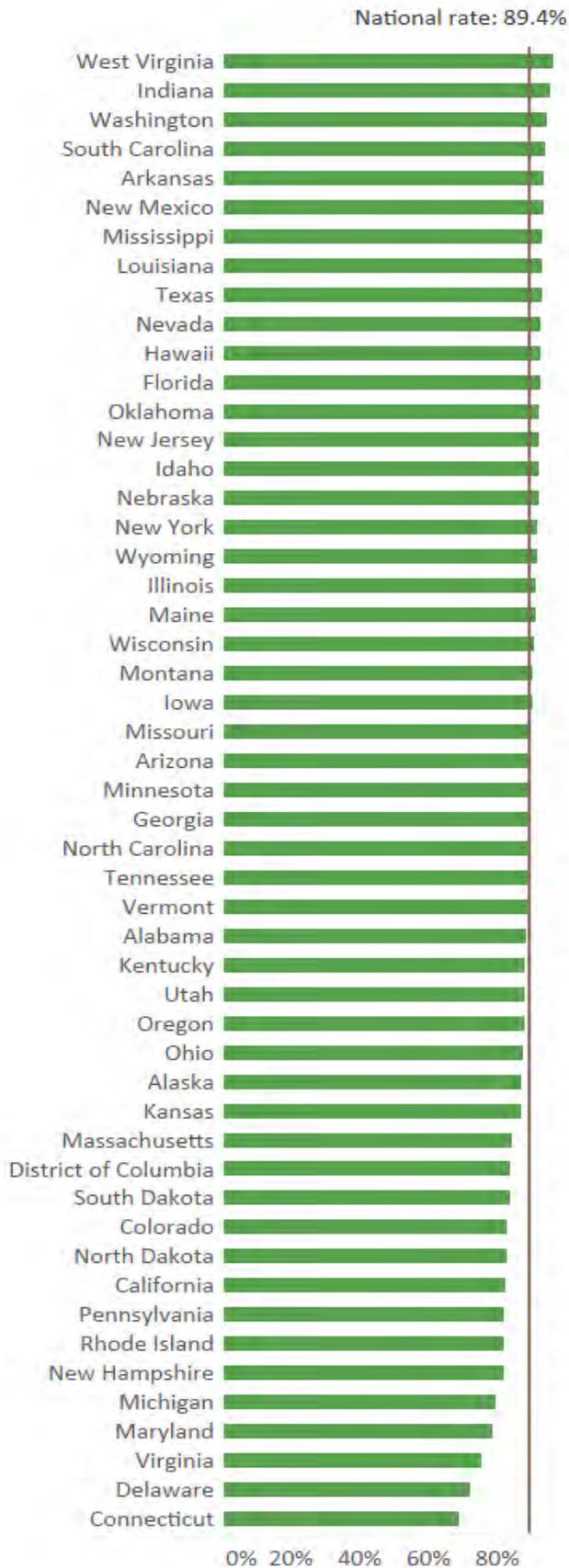
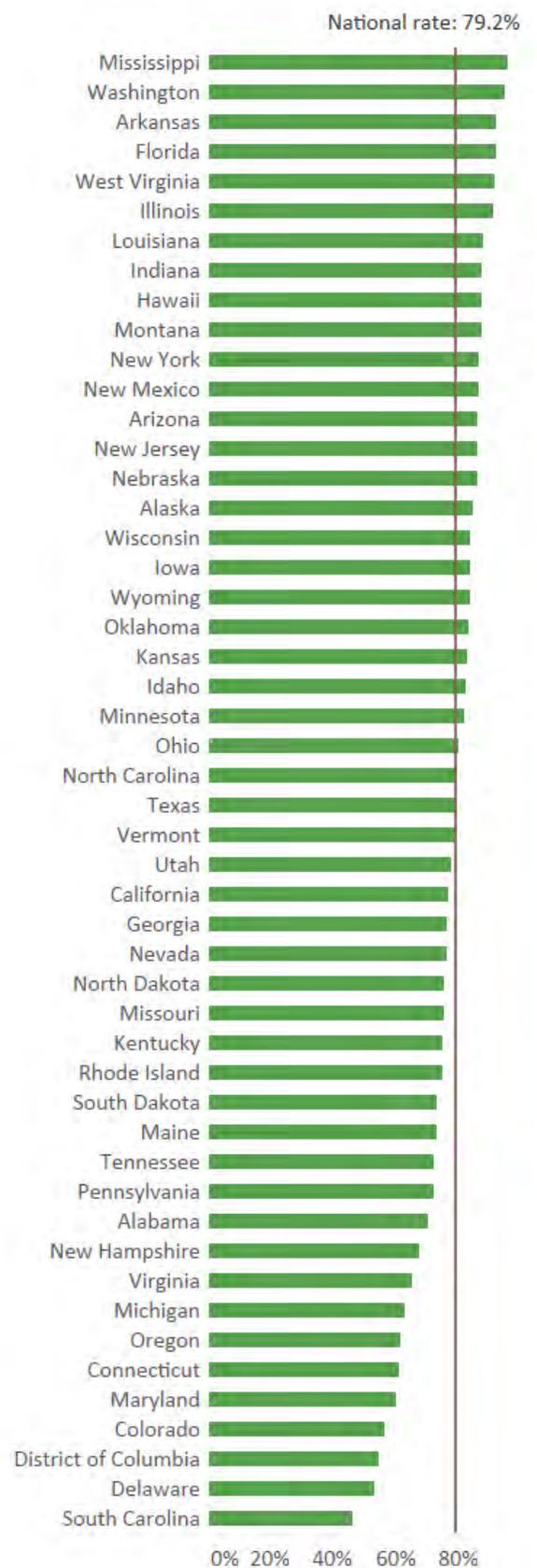


Figure III–2. Percent of Children With a Diagnosed Disability Exiting to Permanency, 2015 (N=50 States)*



*Data in these charts include all states that met the data-quality thresholds.

Figure III-3. Percent of Children Age 12 and Older Exiting to Permanency, 2015 (N=51 States)*

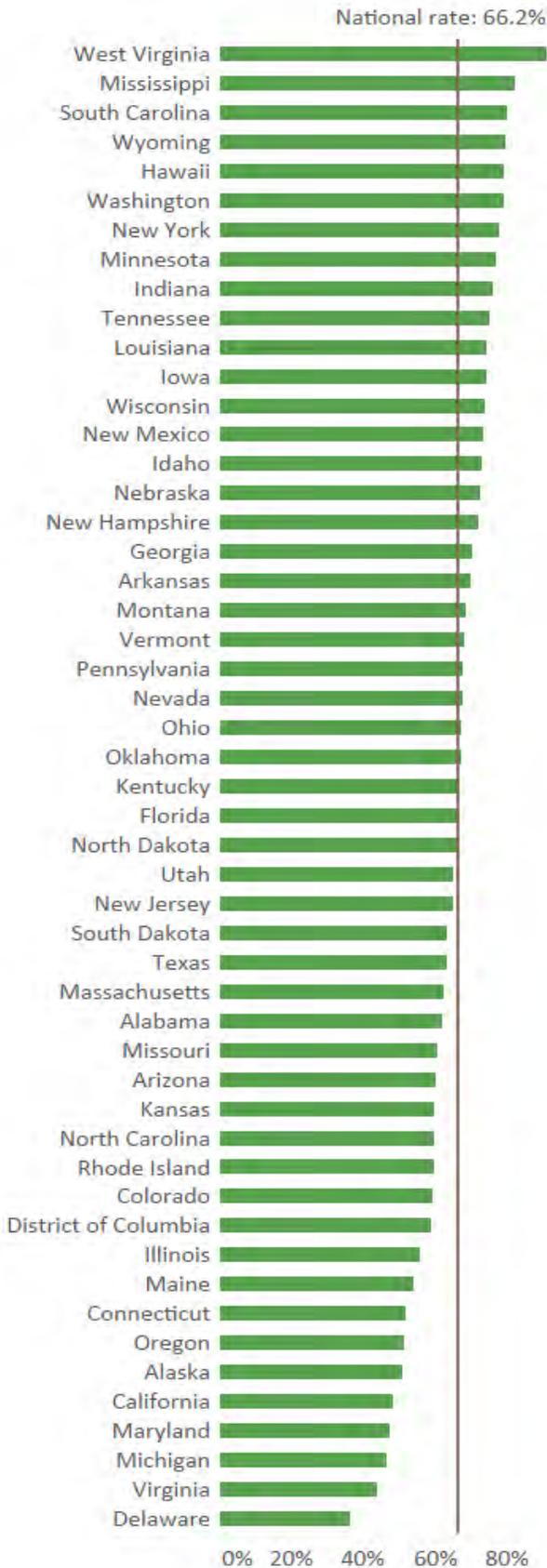
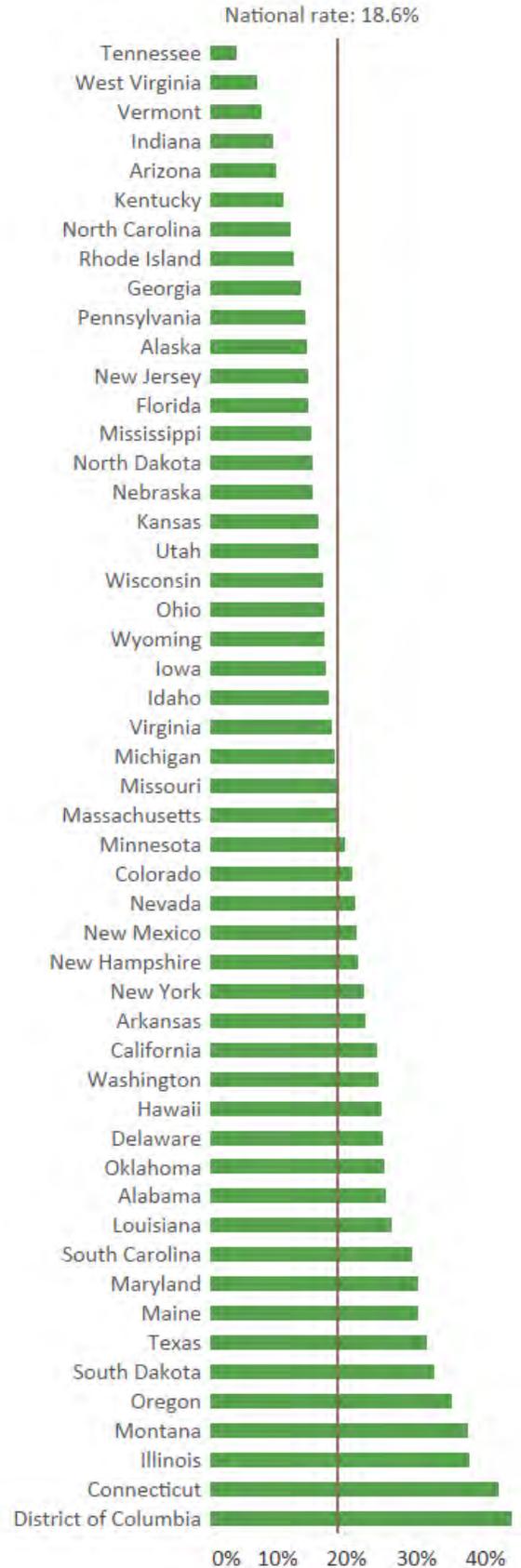


Figure III-4. Percent of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered at Age 12 or Younger, 2015 (N=51 States)*, **



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.
 **For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

Table III–4. Outcome 3.1: Percent of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	80.3%	81.3%	83.9%	78.9%	88.5%	10.2%
Alaska	89.7%	87.4%	89.5%	91.0%	86.9%	-3.1%
Arizona	87.3%	86.8%	89.3%	89.0%	89.6%	2.6%
Arkansas	93.0%	93.0%	93.5%	93.6%	93.3%	0.3%
California	83.2%	84.6%	81.0%	81.4%	82.3%	-1.1%
Colorado	84.6%	85.4%	84.6%	83.1%	82.8%	-2.1%
Connecticut	82.5%	76.7%	74.1%	72.1%	69.0%	-16.4%
Delaware	76.5%	82.8%	77.7%	78.6%	71.9%	-6.0%
Florida	90.5%	91.4%	92.5%	92.0%	92.4%	2.0%
Georgia	87.9%	89.0%	89.6%	89.4%	89.1%	1.4%
Hawaii	90.2%	91.1%	91.3%	89.4%	92.4%	2.5%
Idaho	90.1%	90.4%	92.3%	92.9%	92.0%	2.2%
Illinois	90.3%	90.7%	90.2%	90.9%	91.3%	1.1%
Indiana	88.9%	92.1%	94.2%	92.9%	95.2%	7.0%
Iowa	90.1%	90.2%	90.4%	91.3%	90.0%	-0.1%
Kansas	85.2%	85.2%	85.5%	86.6%	86.8%	1.9%
Kentucky	86.6%	87.3%	86.2%	87.2%	87.9%	1.5%
Louisiana	91.7%	91.3%	93.5%	91.0%	93.1%	1.5%
Maine	89.6%	88.0%	88.1%	91.6%	91.2%	1.9%
Maryland	78.1%	80.0%	80.7%	81.0%	78.7%	0.8%
Massachusetts	81.4%	82.6%	83.0%	82.0%	84.0%	3.2%
Michigan	86.7%	87.5%	87.1%	81.9%	79.5%	-8.3%
Minnesota	88.3%	88.1%	89.6%	90.3%	89.4%	1.3%
Mississippi	94.8%	94.1%	94.0%	94.2%	93.1%	-1.8%
Missouri	87.3%	88.4%	88.8%	88.0%	89.7%	2.9%
Montana	88.2%	85.7%	91.3%	91.4%	90.1%	2.1%
Nebraska	87.3%	85.9%	88.0%	79.4%	92.0%	5.4%
Nevada	90.5%	90.7%	90.4%	91.8%	92.5%	2.2%
New Hampshire	82.9%	85.7%	83.1%	82.8%	81.6%	-1.6%
New Jersey	87.4%	89.4%	90.3%	91.0%	92.2%	5.5%
New Mexico	92.2%	93.6%	94.7%	93.9%	93.3%	1.1%
New York	82.7%	82.9%	82.8%	84.6%	91.8%	11.0%
North Carolina	87.2%	87.5%	88.5%	87.9%	88.9%	2.0%
North Dakota	80.1%	81.5%	81.3%	80.3%	82.8%	3.4%
Ohio	83.8%	81.5%	84.8%	86.9%	87.4%	4.3%
Oklahoma	88.4%	89.4%	89.4%	90.2%	92.3%	4.4%
Oregon	87.1%	87.4%	90.3%	89.6%	87.8%	0.8%
Rhode Island	82.5%	82.7%	85.7%	80.8%	81.8%	-0.8%
South Carolina	89.0%	92.4%	91.4%	92.2%	93.9%	5.6%
South Dakota	77.5%	74.1%	82.7%	81.7%	83.6%	8.0%
Tennessee	87.6%	90.2%	90.9%	89.6%	88.7%	1.3%
Texas	90.4%	91.8%	91.9%	91.9%	92.9%	2.8%
Utah	84.3%	84.6%	85.2%	86.3%	87.8%	4.2%
Vermont	86.7%	86.7%	85.6%	87.2%	88.6%	2.2%
Virginia	72.3%	67.7%	71.9%	73.7%	75.1%	3.9%
Washington	90.8%	92.2%	92.9%	93.1%	94.6%	4.2%
West Virginia	95.5%	96.0%	97.2%	95.9%	96.1%	0.6%
Wisconsin	87.1%	87.5%	89.8%	90.4%	90.8%	4.2%
Wyoming	89.8%	90.2%	89.7%	89.4%	91.4%	1.8%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table III–5. Outcome 3.2: Percent of Children With Diagnosed Disabilities Exiting to Permanency, 2011–2015 (N=45 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	55.1%	61.9%	63.1%	84.2%	70.2%	27.3%
Alaska	84.3%	85.0%	85.5%	84.7%	84.8%	0.6%
Arkansas	92.0%	94.1%	91.6%	76.6%	92.1%	0.2%
Colorado	62.9%	71.1%	69.1%	53.7%	56.3%	-10.5%
Connecticut	66.6%	63.5%	54.0%	68.0%	61.0%	-8.4%
Delaware	62.7%	72.1%	61.9%	25.0%	53.4%	-14.9%
Florida	82.0%	85.2%	88.0%	79.9%	91.9%	12.0%
Georgia	81.4%	82.7%	81.6%	88.6%	76.5%	-6.0%
Hawaii	82.9%	82.2%	85.4%	89.4%	87.3%	5.3%
Idaho	81.2%	83.8%	81.1%	90.6%	82.4%	1.5%
Illinois	85.6%	90.2%	89.3%	85.0%	91.3%	6.6%
Indiana	81.1%	89.8%	89.5%	82.8%	87.7%	8.1%
Iowa	78.0%	81.4%	79.4%	82.5%	83.7%	7.3%
Kansas	81.7%	82.0%	81.9%	74.1%	82.6%	1.1%
Kentucky	78.2%	76.8%	74.2%	86.5%	75.1%	-4.0%
Louisiana	75.8%	71.7%	82.3%	71.2%	88.1%	16.2%
Maine	75.7%	73.2%	69.6%	62.8%	73.1%	-3.5%
Maryland	61.5%	65.5%	64.5%	70.0%	60.1%	-2.2%
Michigan	78.7%	79.9%	79.6%	81.7%	62.8%	-20.2%
Minnesota	80.7%	80.9%	82.2%	93.2%	82.1%	1.7%
Mississippi	90.4%	92.4%	94.0%	73.8%	95.6%	5.8%
Missouri	77.9%	79.6%	76.0%	87.3%	75.2%	-3.5%
Montana	83.3%	81.3%	82.7%	67.6%	87.2%	4.7%
Nebraska	81.7%	77.9%	82.7%	71.8%	85.9%	5.1
Nevada	76.7%	78.7%	77.3%	81.4%	76.3%	-0.6%
New Hampshire	53.2%	75.0%	43.1%	79.0%	67.4%	26.6%
New Jersey	76.2%	78.9%	80.5%	87.1%	86.1%	13.0%
New Mexico	87.7%	88.1%	91.1%	74.8%	86.6%	-1.2%
North Carolina	76.1%	74.1%	73.6%	80.4%	86.7%	13.8%
North Dakota	75.8%	77.7%	77.7%	69.0%	79.6%	5.0%
Ohio	72.4%	73.5%	70.3%	75.5%	75.5%	4.2%
Oklahoma	67.7%	67.6%	73.3%	78.8%	80.1%	18.2%
Oregon	76.8%	76.4%	76.4%	69.0%	83.4%	8.7%
Rhode Island	72.2%	67.6%	69.9%	72.7%	61.5%	-14.8%
South Carolina	73.1%	69.1%	78.5%	48.9%	74.9%	2.5%
Tennessee	48.8%	64.1%	58.4%	72.0%	46.1%	-5.6%
Texas	74.9%	75.7%	77.8%	78.1%	72.4%	-3.4%
Utah	77.7%	77.8%	77.0%	77.7%	78.9%	1.6%
Vermont	75.3%	76.4%	75.3%	50.0%	77.7%	3.2%
Virginia	48.5%	64.7%	71.4%	63.9%	78.6%	62.1%
Washington	55.5%	56.3%	59.4%	91.9%	65.1%	17.3%
West Virginia	81.9%	84.2%	91.0%	91.5%	94.6%	15.5%
Wisconsin	91.7%	92.6%	94.5%	84.8%	91.5%	-0.2%
Wyoming	79.4%	80.5%	84.2%	83.2%	83.7%	5.5%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table III–6. Outcome 3.3: Percent of Children Age 12 and Older Exiting to Permanency, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	52.4%	54.7%	50.6%	60.4%	61.8%	17.9%
Alaska	56.8%	49.5%	52.2%	57.3%	50.7%	-10.7%
Arizona	58.6%	56.5%	62.0%	59.7%	60.2%	2.8%
Arkansas	71.9%	73.4%	74.0%	73.3%	69.7%	-3.0%
California	57.2%	56.6%	50.0%	47.4%	48.2%	-15.7%
Colorado	67.5%	68.0%	66.4%	62.4%	59.4%	-12.1%
Connecticut	66.0%	71.9%	56.4%	58.3%	51.8%	-21.6%
Delaware	42.0%	57.2%	45.1%	48.5%	36.4%	-13.1%
Florida	61.6%	63.4%	67.4%	65.8%	66.2%	7.5%
Georgia	66.7%	68.1%	68.9%	70.0%	70.0%	4.9%
Hawaii	74.7%	77.3%	75.6%	72.4%	78.9%	5.7%
Idaho	70.2%	69.4%	71.0%	73.1%	72.8%	3.6%
Illinois	59.5%	53.8%	54.0%	53.0%	55.7%	-6.4%
Indiana	64.0%	74.6%	75.9%	67.2%	75.9%	18.6%
Iowa	79.3%	77.4%	76.8%	77.5%	74.0%	-6.7%
Kansas	62.8%	60.1%	59.9%	59.2%	59.9%	-4.7%
Kentucky	65.4%	65.8%	61.1%	63.6%	66.4%	1.6%
Louisiana	74.5%	71.8%	77.4%	67.2%	74.3%	-0.2%
Maine	64.5%	54.1%	50.5%	58.2%	53.9%	-16.4%
Maryland	52.2%	54.1%	52.4%	50.3%	47.4%	-9.3%
Massachusetts	65.2%	66.5%	67.0%	62.5%	62.4%	-4.3%
Michigan	66.8%	64.5%	62.0%	57.9%	46.5%	-30.3%
Minnesota	78.4%	77.4%	79.1%	79.5%	76.7%	-2.1%
Mississippi	85.1%	81.6%	83.6%	80.9%	82.1%	-3.6%
Missouri	60.6%	61.2%	60.0%	58.4%	60.6%	-0.1%
Montana	71.6%	58.3%	69.1%	73.4%	68.4%	-4.5%
Nebraska	75.3%	73.1%	73.6%	59.0%	72.3%	-4.0%
Nevada	60.4%	58.5%	61.0%	66.1%	67.5%	11.8%
New Hampshire	57.1%	67.2%	62.8%	71.7%	71.9%	25.8%
New Jersey	58.5%	63.7%	65.6%	64.3%	64.8%	10.7%
New Mexico	71.3%	76.4%	80.1%	77.9%	73.4%	2.9%
New York	65.4%	64.6%	61.7%	65.9%	77.7%	18.8%
North Carolina	58.0%	59.3%	57.2%	58.3%	59.7%	3.0%
North Dakota	67.8%	65.8%	62.7%	59.8%	66.0%	-2.6%
Ohio	61.9%	62.8%	65.2%	64.7%	67.1%	8.4%
Oklahoma	59.1%	62.9%	62.1%	63.1%	60.3%	2.0%
Oregon	59.4%	60.7%	63.6%	57.7%	51.4%	-13.4%
Rhode Island	68.4%	67.8%	71.3%	61.4%	59.5%	-13.0%
South Carolina	66.6%	74.0%	69.9%	73.6%	79.7%	19.6%
South Dakota	63.4%	59.1%	68.8%	64.2%	63.4%	-0.1%
Tennessee	75.4%	79.2%	79.3%	77.1%	74.8%	-0.8%
Texas	52.7%	56.9%	58.6%	58.2%	63.1%	19.7%
Utah	56.4%	60.0%	61.7%	63.2%	64.9%	15.0%
Vermont	75.1%	71.5%	66.7%	66.3%	68.2%	-9.2%
Virginia	37.6%	34.8%	42.1%	41.0%	43.7%	16.3%
Washington	69.2%	70.9%	73.4%	73.4%	78.8%	13.8%
West Virginia	91.5%	92.3%	94.2%	91.4%	90.6%	-0.9%
Wisconsin	69.3%	68.9%	72.7%	73.3%	73.5%	6.1%
Wyoming	79.4%	79.8%	79.5%	75.6%	79.2%	-0.3%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table III–7. Outcome 3.4: Percent of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered Care Under Age 12, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	26.7%	26.6%	27.0%	24.7%	25.7%	-4.1%
Alaska	30.3%	26.4%	25.0%	29.0%	14.3%	-52.9%
Arizona	13.6%	9.1%	9.4%	8.4%	9.8%	-28.1%
Arkansas	18.3%	20.2%	24.8%	22.7%	22.5%	23.5%
California	37.3%	30.6%	29.7%	26.8%	24.4%	-34.6%
Colorado	20.5%	19.4%	15.4%	21.8%	20.7%	1.3%
Connecticut	38.0%	45.8%	30.5%	31.3%	42.0%	10.6%
Delaware	16.8%	21.3%	22.7%	29.2%	25.3%	50.1%
Florida	25.0%	20.4%	18.8%	18.3%	14.5%	-42.0%
Georgia	25.2%	17.5%	14.2%	13.2%	13.4%	-46.8%
Hawaii	26.3%	28.6%	32.8%	20.0%	25.0%	-5.0%
Idaho	32.6%	11.4%	20.6%	11.5%	17.5%	-46.5%
Illinois	46.4%	47.2%	41.4%	46.0%	37.6%	-19.0%
Indiana	20.3%	26.4%	21.3%	13.0%	9.4%	-53.7%
Iowa	23.7%	19.9%	18.3%	15.5%	17.0%	-28.1%
Kansas	19.8%	15.5%	15.2%	11.6%	15.8%	-20.4%
Kentucky	12.9%	11.3%	11.8%	11.8%	10.8%	-16.2%
Louisiana	31.6%	26.4%	31.2%	22.6%	26.5%	-16.2%
Maine	46.3%	41.6%	29.7%	35.5%	30.3%	-34.7%
Maryland	43.8%	39.7%	36.8%	33.1%	30.2%	-31.0%
Massachusetts	24.3%	23.6%	20.6%	18.9%	18.9%	-22.0%
Michigan	33.8%	28.8%	21.5%	21.5%	18.3%	-45.8%
Minnesota	21.9%	21.5%	19.5%	23.7%	19.7%	-10.2%
Mississippi	22.5%	22.1%	23.9%	12.5%	14.8%	-34.2%
Missouri	28.8%	23.3%	21.3%	19.1%	18.6%	-35.3%
Montana	52.1%	36.8%	37.0%	28.8%	37.5%	-28.0%
Nebraska	10.9%	11.5%	8.9%	13.1%	15.0%	37.8%
Nevada	24.8%	21.5%	20.8%	20.6%	21.3%	-14.3%
New Hampshire	38.0%	34.6%	32.7%	10.7%	21.7%	-42.9%
New Jersey	23.7%	24.7%	20.3%	18.0%	14.4%	-39.5%
New Mexico	23.2%	29.5%	18.0%	26.7%	21.3%	-8.2%
New York	31.4%	28.8%	24.4%	26.5%	22.4%	-28.8%
North Carolina	15.7%	19.0%	12.7%	12.0%	11.8%	-25.1%
North Dakota	16.1%	11.9%	9.4%	8.8%	14.9%	-7.5%
Ohio	28.1%	36.5%	25.9%	18.3%	16.7%	-40.7%
Oklahoma	39.0%	36.3%	34.2%	28.7%	25.5%	-34.6%
Oregon	44.8%	39.2%	34.0%	36.1%	35.1%	-21.8%
Rhode Island	27.0%	26.4%	24.4%	14.8%	12.3%	-54.5%
South Carolina	31.4%	29.7%	27.0%	25.7%	29.3%	-6.6%
South Dakota	41.0%	37.9%	32.2%	42.3%	32.7%	-20.4%
Tennessee	5.3%	3.0%	3.7%	6.0%	4.0%	-23.9%
Texas	39.5%	39.2%	36.9%	34.0%	31.6%	-20.0%
Utah	14.4%	17.4%	13.6%	9.6%	15.9%	10.5%
Vermont	28.8%	20.6%	10.4%	10.4%	7.6%	-73.7%
Virginia	26.4%	21.3%	23.4%	19.5%	17.7%	-32.8%
Washington	27.3%	24.7%	25.8%	27.2%	24.6%	-9.8%
West Virginia	11.3%	19.4%	22.5%	19.1%	7.0%	-37.8%
Wisconsin	21.7%	22.5%	19.8%	21.0%	16.5%	-23.8%
Wyoming	7.7%	0.0%	8.3%	12.5%	16.7%	116.7%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

IV: Achieving Timely Reunifications and Adoptions for Children in Foster Care

While chapter III broadly discussed the issue of permanency and noted some special issues for the diverse population of children in foster care, this chapter focuses more specifically on the achievement of permanency through reunification and adoption.⁶⁴ Timeliness of guardianships is not addressed in this chapter because the percentage of children who are discharged from foster care to guardianship is very small in almost all states.

The timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care is critical to their well-being.⁶⁵ This is reinforced and supported by federal policies and laws, such as ASFA, that stress the importance of the timely identification of permanent homes for children taken into foster care.

CASEWORKER VISITS

Achieving permanency in a timely manner for children in foster care can be linked in part to the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children. During the first and second rounds of the CFSRs, an association was found between caseworker visits measures and positive outcomes for children in foster care. For example, frequent contact between the caseworker and the child (as indicated by positive ratings on item 19 in the round 2 CFSR onsite review instrument) was associated with better ratings on CFSR permanency outcome 1 (children have permanency and stability in their living situations).⁶⁶ Based in part on these findings, the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288) amended Title IV-B of the Act to include requirements for states to collect data on monthly caseworker visits for children in foster care.⁶⁷

The caseworker visits data presented in the Child Welfare Outcomes Report include the percentage of children in foster care visited each full month they were in care, as well as the proportion of those visits that occurred in the homes where the children were then living. Data for monthly caseworker visits and visits in the home for 2012–2015 are shown in table IV–1.

Table IV–1. Monthly Caseworker Visits and Visits in the Home, 2012–2015

Measure	Median (Percent)			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
The percentage of children receiving monthly caseworker visits (N=52 states)	94%	95%	95%	95%
The percentage of the monthly visits that occurred in the home of the child (N=51 states)	85%	87%	86%	88%

Note that states reported caseworker visits data from 2007 to 2011 under the original reporting requirements.⁶⁸ The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) modified those requirements, which are now in Sections 424(f)(1)(A) and (2) of the Act.⁶⁹ The statute established the following performance standards for caseworker visits in 2015 and afterwards:

- The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a FY must not be less than 95 percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care.
- At least 50 percent of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a FY must occur in the child’s residence.

In 2012, states were required to begin meeting these new performance requirements and using the new methodology for calculating caseworker visits data.⁷⁰ Because the new methodology limits data comparisons with prior years, caseworker visits data from 2011 are not included in this Report. The data regarding caseworker visits presented in this Report are not CFSR onsite case review data but are derived from the data that states were required to report under the new monthly caseworker visits requirements in Pub. L. 112–34.

⁶⁴ The data presented throughout this chapter come from AFCARS, to which all states report.

⁶⁵ Lutz, L. L. (2003). *Achieving permanence for children in the child welfare system: Pioneering possibilities amidst daunting challenges*. Retrieved from <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/achieving-permanence.pdf>.

⁶⁶ The CFSR onsite case review instrument was revised for CFSR round 3, which began in 2015. For reference, the CFSR round 2 instrument can be found on the Children’s Bureau website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/tools_guide/proce_manual.htm. Detailed information concerning item 19 and its relationship to various other measures in the CFSR onsite reviews can be found on page 35 in the following publication: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/results/genfindings04/genfindings04.pdf>.

⁶⁷ More information about the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 can be found on the Children’s Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/pl-109-288>.

⁶⁸ More information on the caseworker visits measures can be found in appendix C of this Report. Information on previous caseworker visits data collection and reporting requirements can be found in Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-08-03, issued April 18, 2008. It is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi0803>.

⁶⁹ More information about the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 can be found on the Children’s Bureau website in Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-11-06, issued October 6, 2011. It is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/im1106>.

⁷⁰ More information about the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 can be found on the Children’s Bureau website in Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-11-06, issued October 6, 2011. It is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/im1106>.

In 2015, 18 states (35 percent) did not meet the national standard of 95 percent of children in foster care receiving a caseworker visit at least once each month while in care. The national median for the percent of monthly visits occurring in the child's home was 88 percent in 2015, well above the national standard of 50 percent. One State (Utah) reported 100 percent of monthly visits to children in foster care occurred in the child's residence, and no states fell below the 50-percent standard.

TIMELINESS OF REUNIFICATIONS⁷¹

The assessment of timeliness of reunification is addressed through outcome 4 (reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry). The wording of this outcome is intended to ensure that reunifications are not viewed as timely if they also are not permanent (i.e., if the child reenters foster care within 12 months of being reunified). Since a state's reunification speed is understood best when it is also known how many of those children reentered foster care within a short period of time, a measure of reentry is also included.

Table IV–2 presents summary data regarding state performance in 2015 on timeliness of reunification without increasing reentries.

Outcome Measures*	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range (Percent)
Measure 4.1: Of all children reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care during the year, what percentage were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care? (N=51 states)	55.9%	67.8%	73.2%	32.1–86.2%
Measure 4.2: Of all children who entered foster care during the year, what percentage reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? (N=51 states)**	5.6%	7.3%	9.2%	1.0–17.5%

*Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available.

**For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

The 2015 data shown in table IV–2 indicate that, in many states, a majority of children discharged to reunification were reunified in a timely manner. For the purposes of the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, a reunification is considered to be timely if it occurs in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care. Additionally, table IV–2 shows that 7.3 percent of children entering foster care in 2015 were reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. There was a wide range of performance across states in the proportion of children reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode, from 1.0 percent to 17.5 percent.

CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE WITH REGARD TO ACHIEVING TIMELY REUNIFICATIONS

Table IV–3 shows the change over time in the national median for state performance on achieving timely reunifications for children in foster care. This table also shows the number of states with an improvement or decline in performance, as determined by a percent change calculation.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					States That Improved in Performance	States That Declined in Performance
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011–2015	2011–2015
Measure 4.1: Percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care (N=49 states)	67.2%	65.5%	67.4%	66.4%	67.8%	9 states (18%)	17 states (35%)
Measure 4.2: Percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? (N=49 states)****	8.0%	8.0%	8.3%	7.1%	7.3%	31 states (63%)	13 states (27%)

*In accordance with standard procedure in this Report, when there was a percent change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was "no change" in performance.

**The definitions for the measures in all cross-year comparison tables in this Report have been shortened due to the complexity of the tables. Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV–2 or appendix B. Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all relevant years.

***The 2015 data included in this table may be different from the data included in table IV–2 due to differences in the number of states included for each analysis.

****For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

As illustrated in table IV–3, there was little change in state performance on the percentage of reunifications occurring in less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care from 2011 to 2015 (0.9 percent increase from 2011 to 2015), with 35 percent of states declining in performance and 18 percent improving in that period. There was an improvement in state performance on the percentage of children reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode from 2011 to 2015, with an 8.8-percent decline from 2011 to 2015 (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Over half of

⁷¹ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Report, children are considered reunified if the discharge reason provided to AFCARS is either (1) reunified with parent or primary caretaker or (2) living with other relatives.

states (63 percent) improved in performance from 2011 to 2015 in the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode.

TIMELINESS OF ADOPTIONS

The majority of children exiting foster care are reunified with their families, not adopted (see table III–1). However, when a decision is made that adoption is in the best interest of the child, adoption should proceed rapidly so that the child is able to be placed quickly in a secure, caring, and safe environment.

As referenced in the beginning of this chapter, timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care is critical to their well-being. ASFA amended Section 475(5)(E) of the Act to require that a state file a petition to terminate the parents’ parental rights and concurrently pursue adoption as a permanency goal for any child who has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, unless the agency documents a compelling reason why such action would not be in the best interests of the child. In accordance with Section 475(5)(F) of the Act, a child is considered to have “entered foster care” (for purposes of starting the clock for the 15 of 22 months) on the earlier of the following:

- The first judicial finding that the child has been subjected to abuse and/or neglect.
- The date that is 60 days (2 months) after the date on which the child is removed from the home.

For the purposes of calculating this Report’s related outcome measures, a 17-month timeframe was used because AFCARS does not collect information pertaining to the date of the first judicial finding. HHS calculates this timeframe by adding 60 days (to account for the second scenario for being considered having “entered foster care”) and 15 months (to account for the ASFA guidance) to the date of the child’s removal.

In 2015, 54,000 children exited foster care to adoption, and approximately 113,000 children were waiting for adoption.⁷² Outcome measure 5.1 addresses the timeliness of adoptions. Table IV–4 presents summary data showing the range of state performance in 2015 on this measure.

**Table IV–4. Range of State Performance, 2015
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions**

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range (Percent)
Measure 5.1a: Of all children discharged from foster care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=51 states)*	2.0%	3.3%	4.9%	0.0–28.2%
Measure 5.1b: Of all children discharged from care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date the latest removal from home? (N=51 states)*	24.9%	30.1%	35.7%	7.3–52.9%

*Measure 5.1 was among the original outcome measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a range of time periods. Other variations of measure 5.1 representing other time periods are not shown in this table. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

Outcome measure 5.1 focuses on the length of time in foster care for children who are discharged to adoption. Performance on these measures in 2015 suggests achieving timely adoptions is a challenge for all but a few states. As shown in table IV–4, in 2015, it was unusual in most states for adoptions to occur in less than 12 months from the child’s entry into foster care. The national median was only 3.3 percent. In two States, however, the percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months was more than 10.0 percent. These States were Utah (28.2 percent) and Florida (15.0 percent). States were more successful at achieving adoptions occurring in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the child’s entry into foster care, with a national median of 30.1 percent in 2015.

CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE WITH REGARD TO TIMELINESS OF ADOPTIONS

The median performance across states for the years 2011 through 2015 pertaining to achieving timely adoptions for children in foster care is presented in table IV–5, which also presents a breakdown of the number of states showing an improvement or decline in performance between 2011 and 2015. Change in median state performance over time was computed by using a percent-change calculation.

⁷² There is no federal definition for a child “waiting for adoption.” The definition used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Report includes children through age 17 who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated. It excludes children 16 years old and older whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation. A state’s own definition may differ from that used here. Note that these data are frequently updated. Please see the Children’s Bureau website for the most updated data at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research>.

Table IV–5. Median State Performance and Change Over Time, 2011–2015*
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					States That Improved in Performance	States That Declined in Performance
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011–2015	2011–2015
Measure 5.1a: Percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=49 states)****	3.6%	4.4%	3.2%	4.1%	3.3%	12 states (24%)	32 states (65%)
Measure 5.1b: Percentage of children discharged to adoption at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=49 states)****	28.8%	30.2%	31.3%	29.8%	30.8%	26 states (53%)	14 states (29%)

*In accordance with standard procedure in this Report, when there was a percent change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was “no change” in performance.

**The definitions for the measures in all cross-year comparison tables in this Report have been shortened due to the complexity of the tables. Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV–4 or appendix B. Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all relevant years.

***The 2015 data included in this table may be different from the data included in table IV–4 due to differences in the number of states included for each analysis.

****Measure 5.1 was among the original outcome measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a range of time periods. Other variations of measure 5.1 representing other time periods are not shown in this table. However, state performance on each of the time periods is available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

For the percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months (measure 5.1a), the national median from 2011 to 2015 declined slightly from 3.6 percent to 3.3 percent. More telling, however, is the percentage of states that declined in performance (65 percent) as compared to the percentage that showed improved performance (24 percent). For the percentage of adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from a child’s entry into care (measure 5.1b), there was a 7.0-percent increase in the national median from 2011 to 2015. In contrast to adoptions occurring in less than 12 months from a child’s entry into care, 53 percent of states demonstrated improved performance in the percent of adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from entry into care.

More than half of states showed improved performance between 2011 and 2015 in the percentage of children discharged to adoption at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry into foster care.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING ACHIEVING REUNIFICATIONS AND ADOPTIONS IN A TIMELY MANNER

Achieving permanency for children in foster care in a timely manner remains a challenge for a number of states, and national performance has fluctuated in both reunification and adoption measures over the past five years. In 2015, the national median percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry to care was 67.8 percent. While there was little change in the national median between 2011 and 2015, one-third of states (33 percent) declined in performance on this outcome. However, the majority of states (60 percent) improved in performance in the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode from 2011 to 2015.

Similarly, achieving adoptions in a timely manner has shown mixed performance. In 2015, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of states declined in performance in the percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care. However, the data also suggest that states have improved in performance from 2011 to 2015 on the percentage of children discharged to adoption in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry, and 53 percent of states demonstrated improvement in this measure from 2011 to 2015.

The end of this chapter displays outcome-based visuals related to achieving reunifications and adoptions in a timely manner, including caseworker visits data and state performance on outcomes 4 and 5. More information on achieving reunifications and adoptions in a timely manner, including data on reentries to care, breakdowns by different lengths of stay, and state data including states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data, is available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

Figure IV–1. Percent of Children Receiving Monthly Caseworker Visits, 2015 (N=52 States)

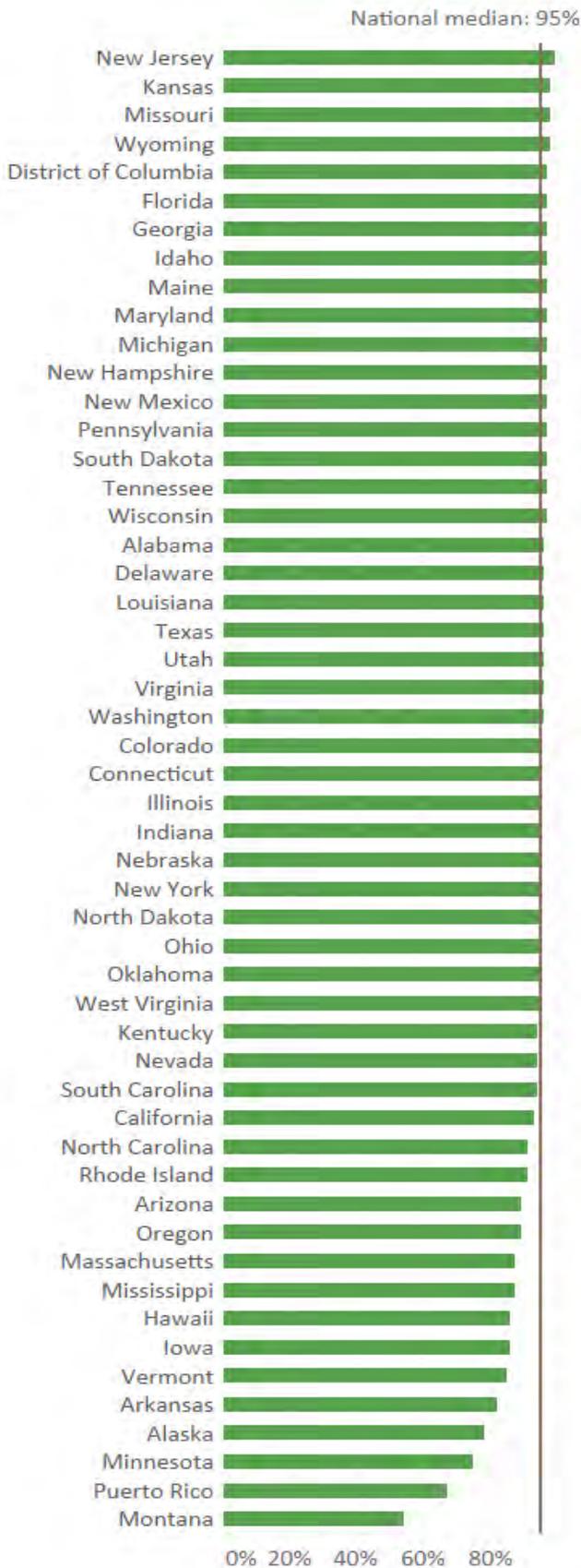
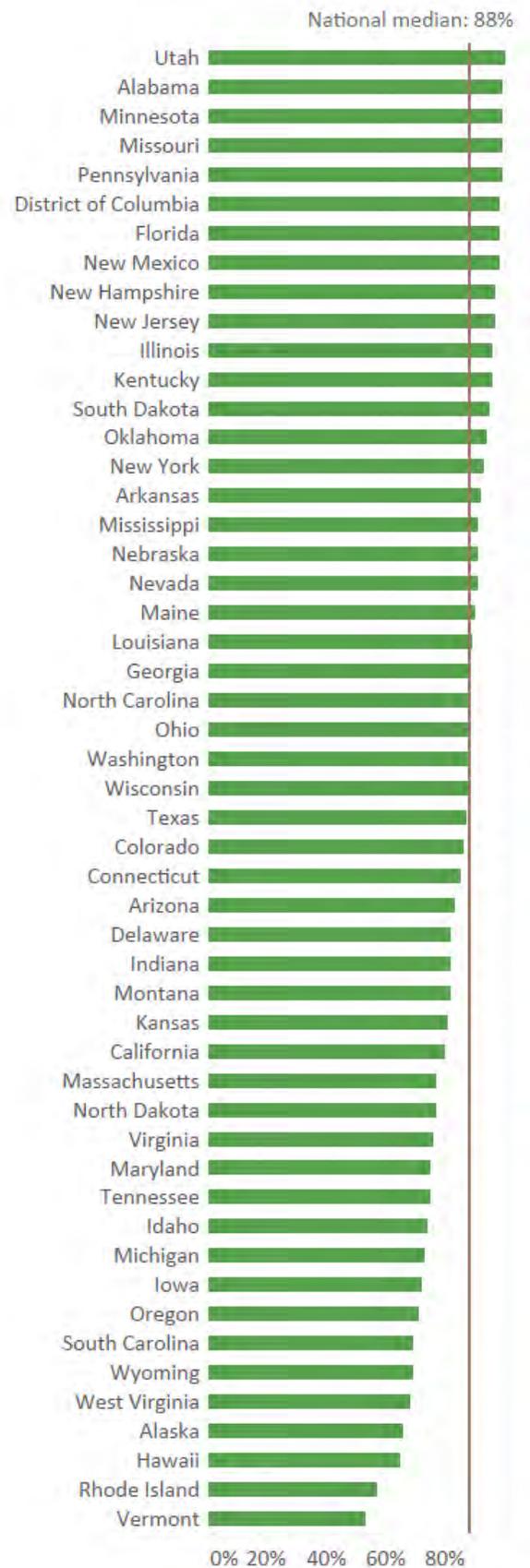


Figure IV–2. Percent of Monthly Caseworker Visits Occurring in the Home of the Child, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.

Figure IV–3. Percent of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months from Entering Care, 2015 (N=51 States)*

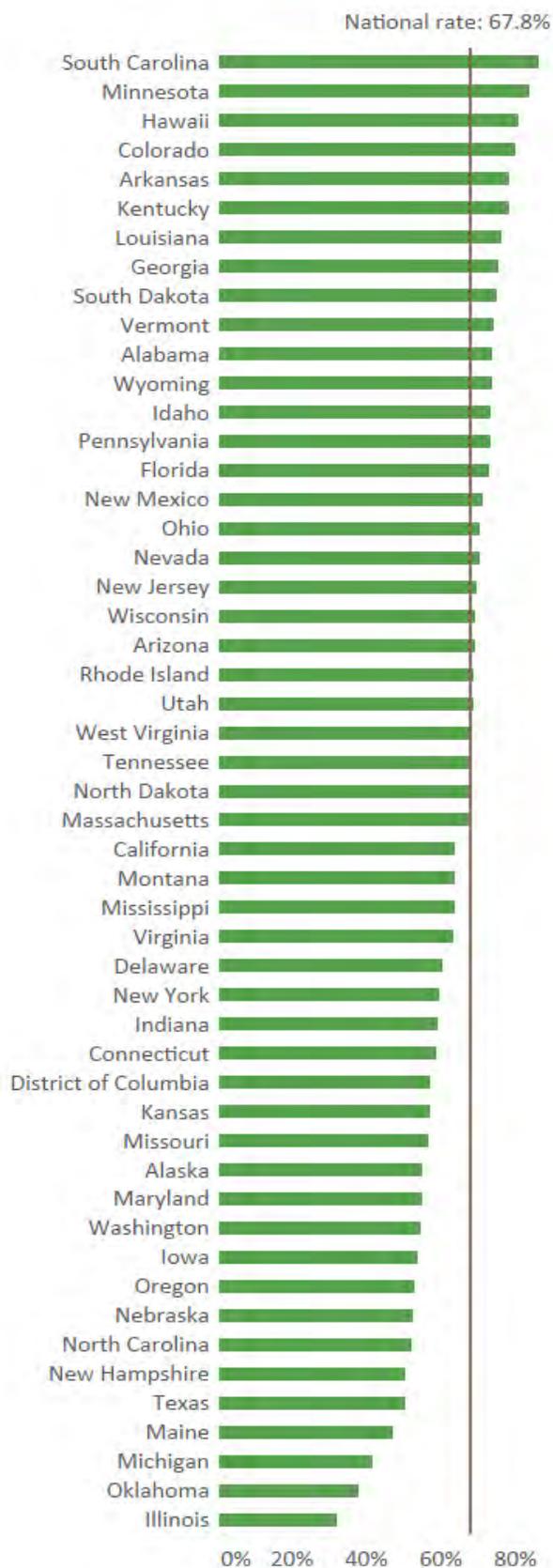
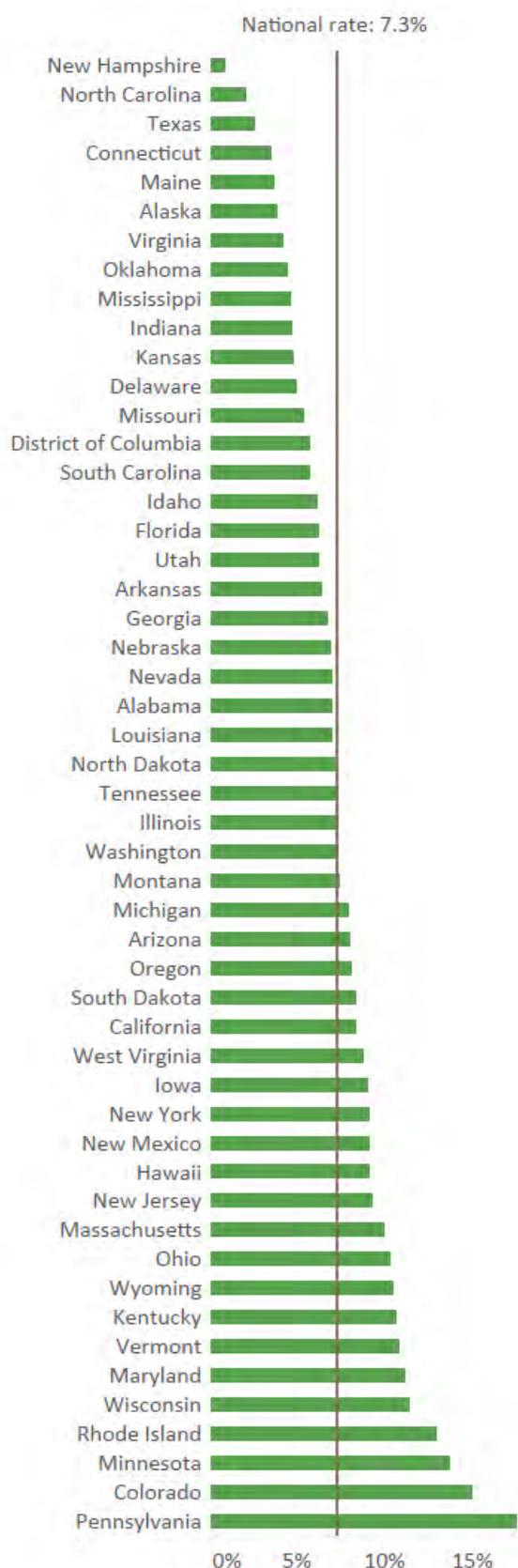


Figure IV–4. Percent of Children Reentering Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Foster Care Episode, 2015 (N=51 States)*, **



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.

**For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

Figure IV-5. Percent of Children Exiting to Adoption Who Were in Care Less Than 12 Months, 2015 (N=51 States)*

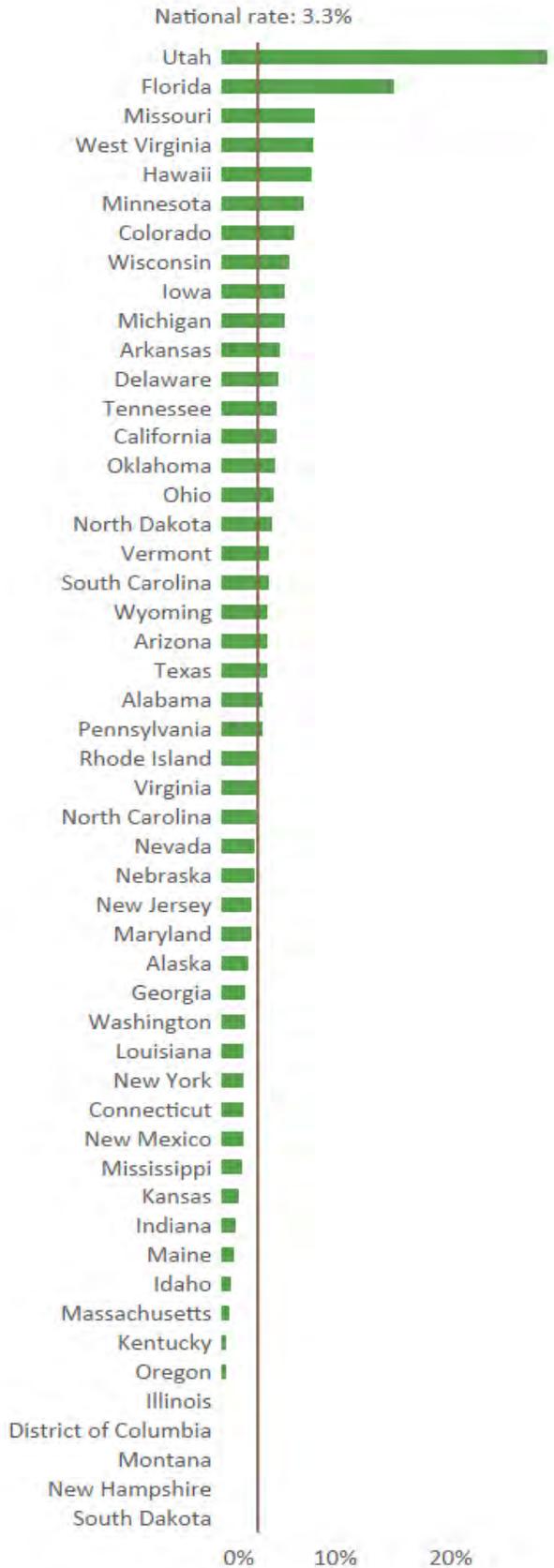
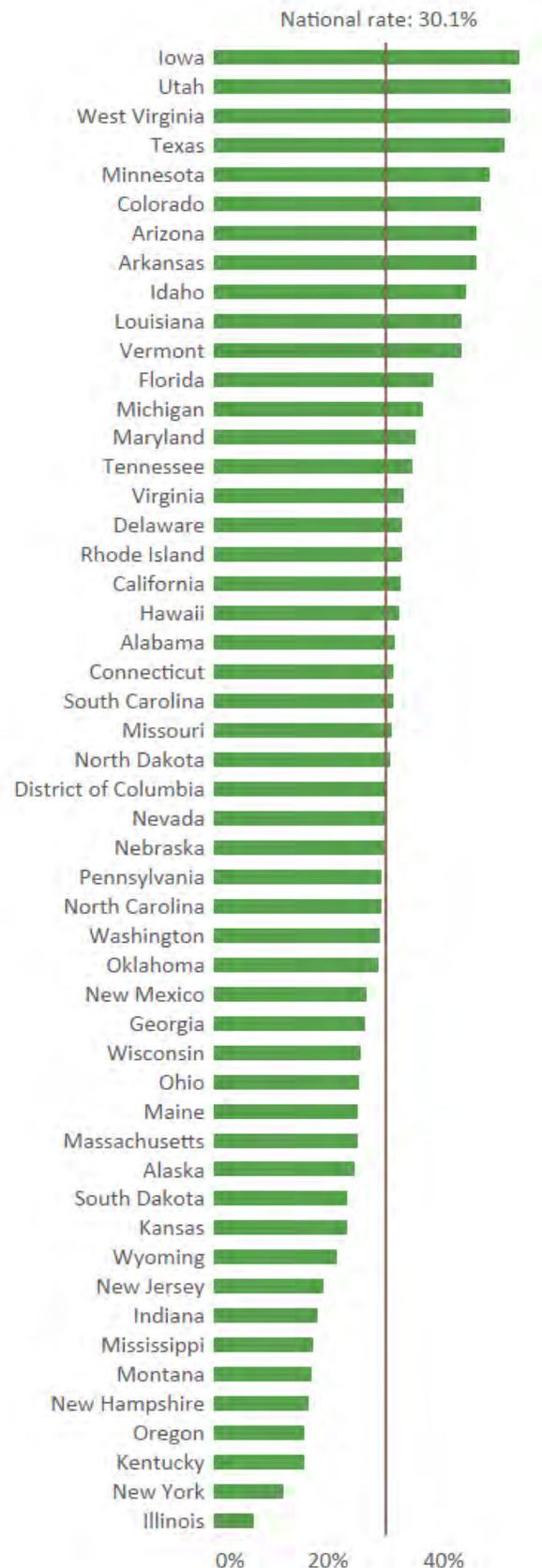


Figure IV-6. Percent of Children Exiting to Adoption Who Were in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–5. Outcome 4.1: Percent of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	66.9%	63.0%	67.7%	71.7%	73.9%	10.5%
Alaska	46.3%	49.4%	49.0%	49.8%	54.9%	18.6%
Arizona	76.1%	76.2%	72.8%	72.4%	69.2%	-9.2%
Arkansas	81.6%	82.8%	81.9%	81.6%	78.5%	-3.8%
California	66.2%	65.1%	65.8%	65.5%	63.9%	-3.5%
Colorado	76.7%	77.1%	76.0%	76.8%	79.9%	4.2%
Connecticut	61.7%	48.1%	56.0%	63.1%	58.8%	-4.7%
Delaware	72.6%	65.5%	63.5%	52.3%	60.4%	-16.9%
Florida	75.4%	74.1%	71.6%	76.2%	73.1%	-3.0%
Georgia	74.5%	73.1%	70.8%	75.7%	75.3%	1.1%
Hawaii	84.2%	80.9%	84.0%	83.1%	80.9%	-3.9%
Idaho	80.6%	72.6%	73.8%	74.1%	73.3%	-9.1%
Illinois	21.0%	27.7%	27.8%	29.3%	32.1%	52.8%
Indiana	65.3%	62.1%	58.0%	58.9%	59.1%	-9.5%
Iowa	59.5%	54.9%	56.0%	54.2%	53.9%	-9.4%
Kansas	53.0%	56.8%	64.1%	60.1%	57.2%	7.9%
Kentucky	74.8%	79.3%	79.9%	81.3%	78.2%	4.5%
Louisiana	71.5%	73.5%	73.9%	76.6%	76.4%	6.9%
Maine	47.9%	51.2%	60.9%	53.0%	47.0%	-1.8%
Maryland	54.4%	54.5%	52.5%	53.0%	54.8%	0.8%
Massachusetts	70.1%	68.1%	68.7%	72.8%	67.4%	-4.0%
Michigan	39.1%	38.3%	44.3%	42.0%	41.7%	6.4%
Minnesota	88.2%	89.3%	88.3%	86.2%	84.0%	-4.8%
Mississippi	64.6%	60.9%	62.0%	66.4%	63.6%	-1.6%
Missouri	63.1%	63.6%	60.7%	58.7%	56.9%	-9.9%
Montana	62.8%	63.5%	65.8%	62.5%	63.6%	1.3%
Nebraska	52.7%	48.6%	44.7%	48.2%	52.6%	-0.1%
Nevada	61.0%	55.3%	63.7%	63.2%	70.3%	15.2%
New Hampshire	72.0%	79.2%	76.9%	45.4%	50.3%	-30.1%
New Jersey	70.4%	76.7%	75.1%	73.2%	69.6%	-1.2%
New Mexico	79.3%	76.2%	75.8%	78.7%	71.4%	-10.0%
New York	57.2%	56.9%	56.3%	56.8%	59.7%	4.3%
North Carolina	55.8%	54.9%	56.8%	54.7%	52.3%	-6.2%
North Dakota	68.4%	64.5%	64.3%	71.1%	67.8%	-0.8%
Ohio	74.3%	73.0%	72.2%	70.9%	70.5%	-5.0%
Oklahoma	52.4%	54.5%	46.0%	43.3%	37.8%	-27.9%
Oregon	59.5%	54.7%	51.3%	49.3%	53.0%	-10.9%
Rhode Island	69.1%	72.4%	77.8%	74.6%	68.8%	-0.4%
South Carolina	78.1%	76.9%	82.6%	86.0%	86.2%	10.4%
South Dakota	82.7%	75.8%	75.4%	78.0%	75.0%	-9.3%
Tennessee	74.4%	72.3%	70.5%	66.3%	68.0%	-8.5%
Texas	49.6%	48.9%	49.2%	47.6%	50.3%	1.4%
Utah	69.3%	74.4%	69.2%	70.7%	68.7%	-0.9%
Vermont	64.6%	67.1%	69.0%	72.6%	74.2%	14.9%
Virginia	60.3%	60.8%	60.9%	64.0%	63.2%	4.8%
Washington	67.2%	57.0%	56.6%	58.2%	54.5%	-19.0%
West Virginia	66.6%	66.0%	67.4%	69.0%	68.6%	3.0%
Wisconsin	74.7%	71.9%	71.9%	71.8%	69.2%	-7.2%
Wyoming	79.1%	76.6%	74.2%	77.2%	73.7%	-6.8%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table IV–6. Outcome 4.2: Percent of Children Reentering Foster Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Episode, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	8.0%	6.8%	8.7%	8.3%	7.1%	-12.1%
Alaska	5.3%	3.9%	4.8%	5.0%	3.9%	-25.8%
Arizona	8.7%	8.0%	8.8%	8.1%	8.0%	-7.4%
Arkansas	9.5%	7.7%	7.8%	7.0%	6.5%	-31.6%
California	8.7%	9.2%	8.3%	8.2%	8.4%	-2.7%
Colorado	16.1%	15.7%	15.6%	14.1%	15.0%	-6.8%
Connecticut	5.1%	5.1%	5.8%	5.5%	3.6%	-29.8%
Delaware	1.9%	3.9%	4.0%	3.5%	5.0%	170.5%
Florida	7.3%	7.8%	8.8%	7.0%	6.2%	-14.9%
Georgia	6.0%	6.9%	7.0%	6.5%	6.8%	14.1%
Hawaii	7.4%	8.9%	10.7%	9.2%	9.2%	23.6%
Idaho	7.5%	6.5%	4.8%	6.8%	6.2%	-17.6%
Illinois	10.3%	8.8%	7.7%	7.3%	7.3%	-28.7%
Indiana	6.8%	6.0%	4.6%	4.3%	4.8%	-29.8%
Iowa	11.8%	10.5%	8.8%	10.7%	9.1%	-23.5%
Kansas	4.1%	4.7%	4.9%	5.9%	4.9%	19.6%
Kentucky	9.4%	10.0%	10.0%	9.9%	10.7%	13.9%
Louisiana	8.9%	8.8%	8.7%	6.3%	7.1%	-20.5%
Maine	6.5%	4.7%	2.6%	4.8%	3.8%	-42.2%
Maryland	10.1%	11.0%	11.3%	11.5%	11.2%	10.7%
Massachusetts	12.5%	12.3%	11.7%	9.3%	10.0%	-19.5%
Michigan	3.8%	3.0%	2.9%	5.1%	8.0%	110.6%
Minnesota	19.0%	19.8%	16.2%	15.6%	13.7%	-27.8%
Mississippi	4.2%	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%	4.6%	9.9%
Missouri	6.6%	5.9%	5.2%	4.5%	5.4%	-18.3%
Montana	7.8%	8.1%	6.2%	6.9%	7.4%	-4.6%
Nebraska	8.8%	6.4%	6.8%	6.7%	7.0%	-20.3%
Nevada	4.8%	4.9%	5.6%	6.7%	7.0%	46.2%
New Hampshire	17.0%	12.9%	9.5%	2.7%	1.0%	-94.3%
New Jersey	8.3%	8.3%	10.1%	10.6%	9.3%	12.0%
New Mexico	6.4%	7.1%	7.4%	7.9%	9.1%	43.8%
New York	12.0%	12.0%	9.8%	10.0%	9.1%	-24.1%
North Carolina	2.3%	2.8%	2.6%	2.3%	2.1%	-4.7%
North Dakota	11.8%	8.2%	9.4%	9.0%	7.2%	-38.6%
Ohio	9.7%	11.0%	11.1%	9.8%	10.3%	6.6%
Oklahoma	5.2%	4.3%	4.4%	3.7%	4.5%	-13.4%
Oregon	8.2%	8.0%	9.1%	8.0%	8.2%	-0.1%
Rhode Island	16.1%	18.2%	14.4%	13.1%	13.0%	-19.1%
South Carolina	7.1%	6.8%	5.8%	5.6%	5.8%	-19.4%
South Dakota	11.6%	13.6%	9.4%	10.6%	8.4%	-27.7%
Tennessee	7.9%	8.2%	8.5%	9.1%	7.3%	-7.5%
Texas	2.8%	3.4%	3.5%	3.0%	2.7%	-5.5%
Utah	6.8%	5.9%	7.1%	7.1%	6.3%	-7.8%
Vermont	10.8%	12.0%	9.6%	10.3%	10.9%	0.1%
Virginia	5.0%	4.6%	4.6%	3.8%	4.2%	-14.8%
Washington	5.9%	6.0%	6.8%	5.9%	7.4%	26.1%
West Virginia	10.8%	10.2%	11.2%	9.9%	8.8%	-19.0%
Wisconsin	12.9%	13.8%	11.0%	10.4%	11.4%	-11.6%
Wyoming	12.1%	11.4%	13.6%	15.4%	10.5%	-13.0%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table IV–7. Outcome 5.1a: Percent of Children Exiting to Adoption in Less Than 12 Months, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	2.3%	3.1%	3.0%	4.7%	3.7%	62.4%
Alaska	3.4%	0.7%	1.9%	1.6%	2.5%	-25.9%
Arizona	4.7%	6.0%	5.8%	4.7%	4.0%	-13.1%
Arkansas	8.1%	6.8%	7.6%	8.7%	5.1%	-36.7%
California	4.9%	5.0%	5.5%	4.6%	4.9%	1.2%
Colorado	10.1%	10.4%	8.5%	6.7%	6.5%	-35.7%
Connecticut	3.6%	4.6%	2.6%	4.1%	2.0%	-42.7%
Delaware	3.2%	4.4%	2.7%	4.8%	5.1%	60.3%
Florida	12.3%	15.6%	14.6%	15.4%	15.0%	22.5%
Georgia	5.2%	5.3%	5.5%	2.5%	2.2%	-56.4%
Hawaii	8.8%	4.4%	8.7%	7.6%	8.0%	-9.6%
Idaho	3.9%	6.3%	3.0%	6.2%	1.0%	-74.9%
Illinois	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	-52.5%
Indiana	3.6%	3.0%	1.8%	3.2%	1.4%	-61.6%
Iowa	8.2%	6.9%	6.3%	7.9%	5.6%	-31.5%
Kansas	1.9%	3.0%	1.9%	2.1%	1.7%	-13.6%
Kentucky	0.7%	1.2%	0.6%	0.9%	0.5%	-28.0%
Louisiana	1.9%	1.7%	1.8%	4.0%	2.1%	13.0%
Maine	1.4%	1.0%	0.5%	4.2%	1.2%	-8.9%
Maryland	2.4%	2.4%	2.8%	3.7%	2.7%	10.8%
Massachusetts	0.7%	1.1%	1.6%	1.0%	0.8%	14.7%
Michigan	3.5%	5.8%	7.1%	7.1%	5.6%	59.6%
Minnesota	8.0%	8.4%	8.3%	8.2%	7.3%	-9.1%
Mississippi	3.3%	2.4%	2.5%	1.6%	1.9%	-41.6%
Missouri	11.3%	7.4%	7.5%	6.1%	8.1%	-28.1%
Montana	1.7%	2.2%	3.0%	2.1%	0.0%	-100.0%
Nebraska	7.1%	4.5%	4.4%	4.1%	3.1%	-57.3%
Nevada	1.2%	2.0%	2.0%	1.3%	3.1%	149.8%
New Hampshire	4.1%	4.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	-100.0%
New Jersey	2.8%	3.6%	2.1%	1.9%	2.7%	-4.8%
New Mexico	3.1%	2.5%	1.9%	2.2%	2.0%	-35.8%
New York	2.1%	1.1%	1.9%	1.9%	2.1%	-0.4%
North Carolina	6.6%	7.9%	5.3%	4.9%	3.1%	-52.5%
North Dakota	4.5%	2.6%	5.0%	2.9%	4.5%	0.2%
Ohio	5.1%	5.6%	6.6%	5.5%	4.6%	-10.4%
Oklahoma	3.7%	5.1%	5.4%	4.1%	4.7%	28.7%
Oregon	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	-20.1%
Rhode Island	6.9%	9.1%	5.6%	5.4%	3.3%	-51.7%
South Carolina	3.7%	4.9%	3.9%	4.7%	4.3%	13.6%
South Dakota	1.8%	3.2%	0.6%	1.9%	0.0%	-100.0%
Tennessee	6.7%	7.7%	7.8%	9.5%	4.9%	-26.4%
Texas	3.5%	3.5%	3.2%	3.2%	4.0%	14.5%
Utah	38.4%	33.5%	34.4%	28.3%	28.2%	-26.5%
Vermont	12.0%	7.0%	8.5%	4.3%	4.3%	-64.6%
Virginia	3.2%	2.7%	2.4%	2.1%	3.3%	2.9%
Washington	2.4%	2.7%	2.2%	1.7%	2.2%	-9.9%
West Virginia	2.8%	5.7%	4.5%	6.3%	8.1%	193.1%
Wisconsin	7.2%	9.0%	13.8%	10.0%	6.0%	-17.2%
Wyoming	10.8%	9.1%	12.9%	1.4%	4.1%	-62.5%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table IV–8. Outcome 5.1b: Percent of Children Exiting to Adoption in More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2011–2015 (N=49 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	14.1%	19.8%	24.0%	21.1%	31.4%	123.3%
Alaska	21.8%	27.4%	26.2%	34.2%	24.7%	13.2%
Arizona	42.4%	47.9%	50.6%	51.1%	45.5%	7.5%
Arkansas	34.4%	39.8%	42.7%	48.0%	47.1%	36.9%
California	28.1%	32.1%	31.9%	33.3%	32.4%	15.5%
Colorado	46.8%	45.0%	43.0%	51.6%	46.5%	-0.7%
Connecticut	32.7%	30.3%	25.2%	30.6%	31.3%	-4.3%
Delaware	31.6%	27.5%	40.5%	28.6%	32.9%	4.2%
Florida	40.0%	39.3%	41.6%	35.9%	38.2%	-4.5%
Georgia	29.7%	34.1%	32.6%	29.5%	26.4%	-11.2%
Hawaii	30.1%	20.8%	31.1%	33.6%	32.4%	7.6%
Idaho	37.3%	49.8%	50.7%	40.3%	43.8%	17.7%
Illinois	7.5%	7.6%	8.2%	6.1%	7.3%	-3.2%
Indiana	26.4%	26.1%	24.2%	21.7%	18.2%	-31.2%
Iowa	49.1%	54.4%	52.6%	49.7%	52.9%	7.8%
Kansas	24.1%	34.1%	31.7%	28.2%	23.3%	-3.4%
Kentucky	20.4%	19.9%	19.9%	19.8%	15.8%	-22.4%
Louisiana	24.6%	27.1%	29.0%	32.9%	43.1%	75.3%
Maine	35.1%	30.2%	36.2%	34.3%	25.2%	-28.2%
Maryland	11.6%	21.4%	22.1%	28.0%	35.1%	202.0%
Massachusetts	21.2%	23.1%	36.0%	29.4%	25.1%	18.6%
Michigan	31.0%	32.3%	34.2%	41.1%	36.4%	17.4%
Minnesota	39.8%	43.6%	42.9%	51.4%	48.0%	20.8%
Mississippi	22.7%	23.4%	18.2%	20.1%	17.4%	-23.1%
Missouri	34.6%	32.9%	33.6%	31.0%	30.9%	-10.6%
Montana	24.9%	20.5%	22.3%	16.4%	17.3%	-30.7%
Nebraska	28.8%	27.3%	27.2%	26.1%	29.8%	3.3%
Nevada	16.8%	23.3%	25.9%	28.6%	29.8%	77.0%
New Hampshire	29.5%	36.4%	20.5%	28.2%	16.7%	-43.4%
New Jersey	22.8%	21.1%	22.9%	21.8%	19.3%	-15.5%
New Mexico	28.9%	31.4%	31.3%	31.4%	26.6%	-8.0%
New York	11.1%	9.1%	9.9%	12.7%	12.3%	11.3%
North Carolina	27.2%	31.4%	33.1%	29.3%	29.2%	7.7%
North Dakota	24.3%	25.9%	38.0%	22.1%	30.8%	26.7%
Ohio	25.8%	26.9%	28.2%	29.8%	25.4%	-1.9%
Oklahoma	24.1%	32.9%	34.6%	28.8%	28.8%	19.7%
Oregon	17.3%	12.3%	11.9%	14.5%	16.0%	-7.2%
Rhode Island	31.9%	36.9%	28.4%	36.6%	32.7%	2.6%
South Carolina	21.3%	23.7%	26.8%	29.4%	31.3%	47.0%
South Dakota	32.9%	28.6%	25.4%	33.5%	23.3%	-29.2%
Tennessee	40.6%	43.0%	38.3%	34.5%	34.6%	-14.9%
Texas	42.6%	45.9%	45.6%	46.6%	50.3%	18.1%
Utah	46.9%	50.9%	48.7%	49.4%	51.6%	10.0%
Vermont	31.6%	54.4%	48.3%	55.6%	43.1%	36.4%
Virginia	24.1%	29.1%	30.4%	34.6%	32.9%	36.5%
Washington	27.0%	35.1%	28.3%	27.4%	28.9%	6.9%
West Virginia	34.3%	39.8%	47.5%	47.7%	51.6%	50.1%
Wisconsin	23.5%	21.7%	21.3%	22.9%	25.5%	8.6%
Wyoming	32.4%	22.1%	34.1%	27.1%	21.6%	-33.3%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

V: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

The state child welfare agency is responsible for ensuring a child is in a stable placement setting while in foster care. The appropriateness of a placement setting also is important to the well-being of children in foster care.⁷³ Placement setting stability is addressed in outcome 6 (increase placement stability for children in foster care), and in this and prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, placement setting stability is defined as a child having had two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode.⁷⁴ Placement setting appropriateness is addressed in outcome 7 (reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions).

Outcome 7 is evaluated by examining the degree to which children age 12 or younger are placed in family foster homes rather than group homes or institutions. According to AFCARS definitions, group homes generally have between 7 and 12 children, and institutions are typically larger and may include such facilities as residential treatment facilities or child care institutions. There are some instances in which a group home or institution is determined to be the most appropriate placement to meet the needs of a child. For example, young children may need a particular type of care to meet certain physical or mental health needs. However, the driving assumption behind this outcome measure is that, while group homes or institutions may be appropriate for some children in foster care, younger children are likely to have their needs better met in a family setting.⁷⁵

There are some children in foster care for whom a foster family setting will not meet their highly specialized needs. However, a family setting commonly will be the most appropriate, especially for young children.

Table V–1 presents the findings of state performance on placement stability (measure 6.1) and placements of young children in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). For outcome measure 6.1, data are presented that measure placement stability for multiple timeframes for length of stay in foster care (i.e., less than 12 months, 12 months to less than 24 months, and 24 months or more).

**Table V–1. Range of State Performance, 2015
Outcomes 6 and 7: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings**

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range (Percent)
Measure 6.1a: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for less than 12 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51 states)*	80.9%	84.8%	87.5%	69.4–91.8%
Measure 6.1b: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51 states)*	58.6%	63.2%	68.6%	44.9–79.6%
Measure 6.1c: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51 states)*	30.1%	35.9%	42.0%	14.2–52.8%
Measure 7.1: Of all children who entered foster care during the year and were age 12 or younger at the time of their most recent placement, what percentage were placed in a group home or an institution? (N=50 states)**	2.4%	3.7%	5.4%	0.0–22.9%

*Other variations of measure 6.1 representing other time periods are not shown in this table. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

**For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

As shown in table V–1, in most states, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months experienced no more than two placement settings in 2015 (measure 6.1a, median=84.8 percent). It is encouraging that more than four out of five children remain in stable placements during the first year in foster care. While there may be times when a new placement setting will be in the best interest of the child, such as a move to a placement that better reflects the permanency goals and service needs of the child, it is generally important for states to continue to do as much as they can to keep placement setting counts to a minimum.

Although most states appear to be generally successful in achieving placement stability for children in foster care for less than 12 months, states tend to be far less successful in keeping the number of placement settings low for children in foster care for longer periods of time. As shown in table V–1, the median across states declined from 84.8 percent for children in foster care for less than 12 months to 63.2 percent for children in foster care for 12 months and 24 months. The median declined even further to 35.9 percent for children in foster care for 24 months or longer.

⁷³ For the purposes of this Report, “foster care” refers to a variety of out-of-home placement settings in which children are placed away from their parents or guardians in 24-hour substitute care and under the placement and responsibility of the state child welfare agency for at least 24 hours, including foster family homes, group homes, shelters, residential treatment facilities, and similar placements (see 45 CFR 1355, Appendix A, Section II).

⁷⁴ A single foster care episode begins on the date when a child is removed from the home and ends when the child is discharged from foster care (i.e., is no longer under the care and placement responsibility of the state). The count of placement settings does not include temporary stays in hospitals, camps, respite care, or institutional placements.

⁷⁵ The Children’s Bureau released a data brief in 2015 on the use of group homes and institutions (i.e., congregate care placements) in child welfare that underscores the importance of placing children age 12 and younger in settings that are most appropriate to meet their needs, including (and especially) family-like settings. The brief can be accessed on the Children’s Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/congregate-care-brief>.

Please note that direct comparisons between these measures are difficult to make. First, these measures count all placement settings up until discharge from care or the end of the period, not only those that occurred during the year of interest. In addition, the demographics of children included in each measure vary. For example, the population of children in care less than 12 months includes infants and very young children, whereas the measure for children in care 24 months or longer limits the population to age 2 and older. Age is an important factor to consider when assessing placement stability.

It is important to note that the relationship between time in care and placement setting stability is more nuanced than it may initially appear. Research suggests a link between placement stability and variables such as the age of the child, placement setting type, the presence of child behavioral problems, and the availability of programs and services for children and resource families.⁷⁶ Research also indicates that children who experience early placement stability experience fewer behavioral problems and better outcomes.⁷⁷ Therefore, time in care is likely also linked to other variables that have an impact on its relationship to placement stability.

The data in table V-1 also indicate that in about one-half of the states in 2015, 3.7 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions. The low median on this measure indicates positive national performance overall. This is further supported by data indicating that there were only five states in which the percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions was above 10 percent.⁷⁸

CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE ON MEASURES OF ACHIEVING STABLE AND APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Table V-2 provides the change in the national median over time on measures pertaining to achieving stable and appropriate placement settings for children in foster care. This table also shows the number of states with an improvement or decline in performance on these measures.

**Table V-2. Median State Performance and Change Over Time, 2011–2015*
Outcomes 6 and 7: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings**

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year (Percent)***					States That Improved in Performance	States That Declined in Performance
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011–2015	2011–2015
Measure 6.1a: Percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=48 states)****	85.9%	85.1%	85.7%	85.7%	84.2%	7 states (15%)	6 states (13%)
Measure 6.1b: Percentage of children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=48 states)****	62.6%	63.6%	64.5%	64.9%	63.2%	14 states (29%)	8 states (17%)
Measure 6.1c: Percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=48 states)****	32.3%	33.9%	34.0%	34.9%	35.8%	36 states (75%)	7 states (15%)
Measure 7.1: Percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (N=47 states)*****	4.3%	4.2%	3.9%	4.2%	3.8%	25 states (53%)	19 states (40%)

*In accordance with standard procedure in this Report, when there was a percent change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was “no change” in performance.

**The definitions for the measures in all cross-year comparison tables in this Report have been shortened due to the complexity of the tables. Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table V-1 or appendix B. Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available for all of the relevant years.

***The 2015 data included in this table may be different from the data included in table V-1 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

****Other variations of measure 6.1 representing other time periods are not shown in this table. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

*****For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

As indicated by table V-2, there was very little change between 2011 and 2015 in the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced two or fewer placement settings (measure 6.1a). During this time, the median for this measure decreased only minimally, and 72 percent of states did not exhibit significant performance changes in either the positive or negative direction. Similarly, there was little change between 2011 and 2015 in the percentage of children in foster care for more than 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings (measure 6.1b). Between 2011 and 2015 the national median increased slightly, from 62.6 percent to 63.2 percent, a 1.0 percent decline. Additionally, more than half of states did not demonstrate significant performance changes in either direction.

Table V-2 shows strong improvement over time related to the increases in the percentages of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings (measure 6.1c). The national median for this measure

⁷⁶ Noonan, K., Rubin, D., Mekonnen, R., Zlotnik, S., & O'Reilly, A. (2009). Securing child safety, well-being, and permanency through placement stability in foster care. *Evidence to Action*, 1. Retrieved from <http://stoneleighfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20to%20Action%20No%201.pdf>

⁷⁷ Rubin, D. M., O'Reilly, A. L., Luan, X., & Localio, R. (2007). The impact of placement stability on behavioral well-being for children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 119(2), 336–44.

⁷⁸ The five States were Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oregon, and South Carolina.

increased from 32.3 percent in 2011 to 35.8 in 2015, a 10.8-percent increase. Furthermore, 75 percent of states demonstrated improvement on this measure, while only 15 percent declined in performance.

Previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports have shown improvements over time on measure 7.1, the percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who are placed in group homes or institutions. This overall improvement continued between 2011 and 2015, when the median decreased from 4.3 percent to 3.8 percent, an 11.6-percent decline. During the five-year span, 53 percent of states showed improved performance on this measure, and 40 percent declined in performance. Note that for this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING ACHIEVING STABLE AND APPROPRIATE PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

A consistent finding of the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports is that, although states are fairly successful in achieving placement stability for children in foster care for less than 12 months, the percentage of children who have placement stability declines the longer the children are in foster care. It is promising, however, that states have generally demonstrated improvement in achieving placement setting stability for children in care longer than 12 months, particularly for those children who have been in care for 24 months or longer.

Thirty-six states showed improvement in placement stability from 2011 to 2015 for children who have been in care for 24 months or longer.

It is also encouraging that the use of group homes and institutions for children aged 12 and younger is continuing to decline and that over half of the states have shown meaningful improvement over the past five years on this measure.

The end of this chapter displays outcome-based visuals related to achieving stable and appropriate placements for children in foster care, including state performance on outcomes 6 and 7.1. Additional information on achieving stable and appropriate placements for children and state data, including states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data, is available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

Figure V-1. Percent of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015 (N=51 States)*

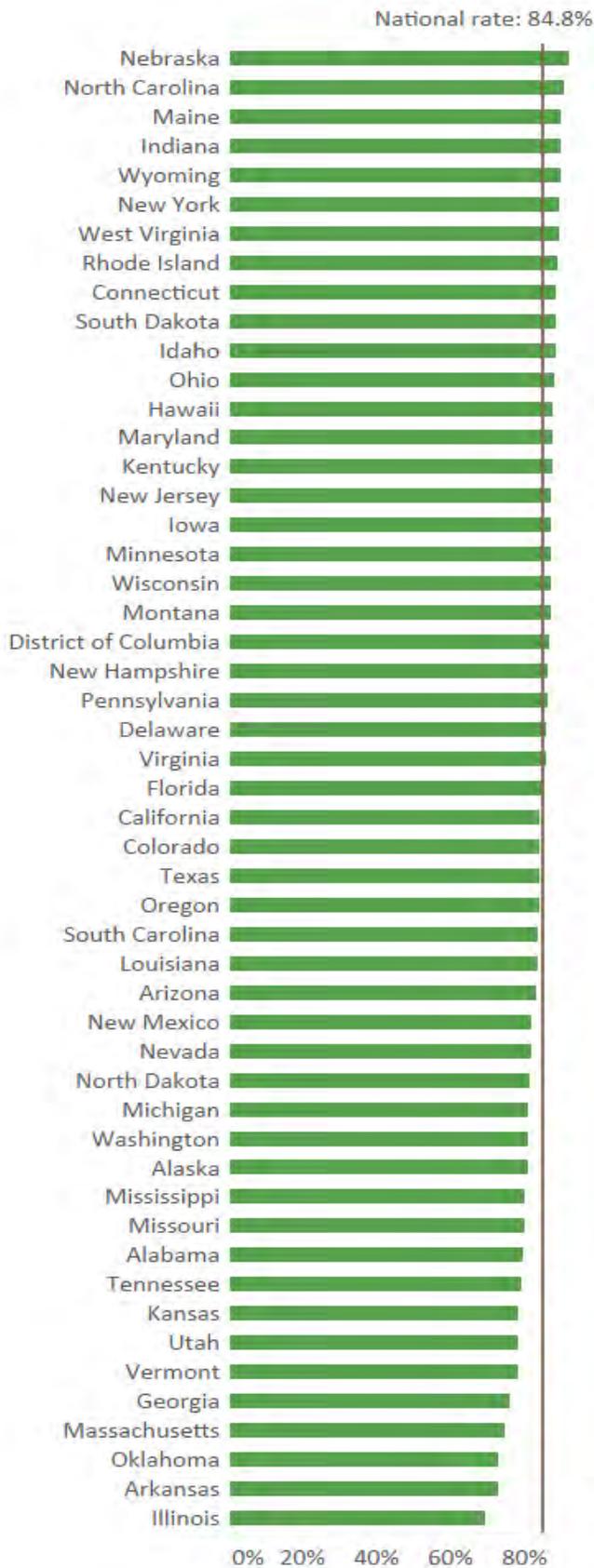
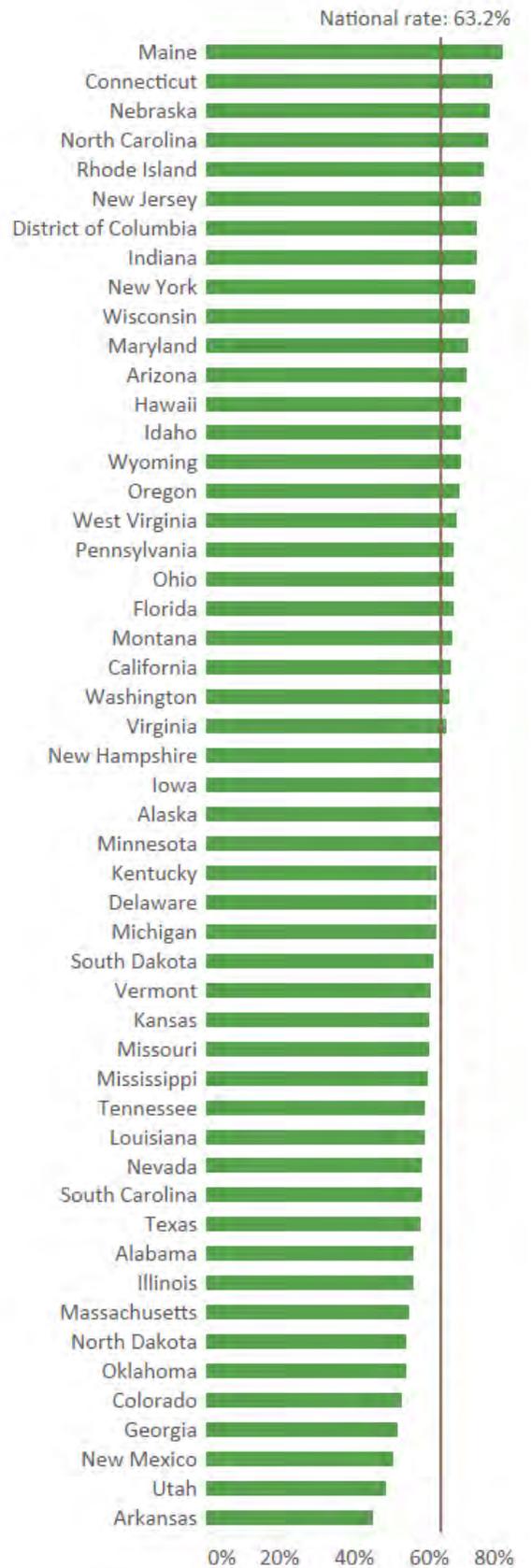


Figure V-2. Percent of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015 (N=51 States)*



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.

Figure V-3. Percent of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015 (N=51 States)*

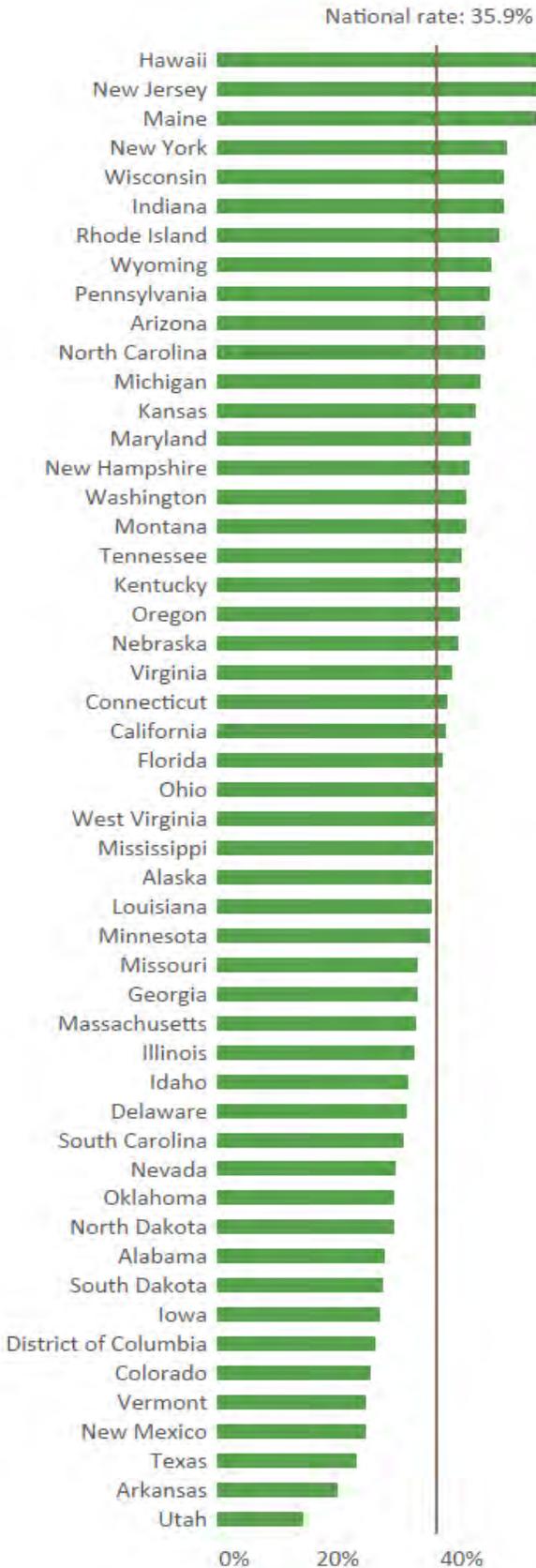
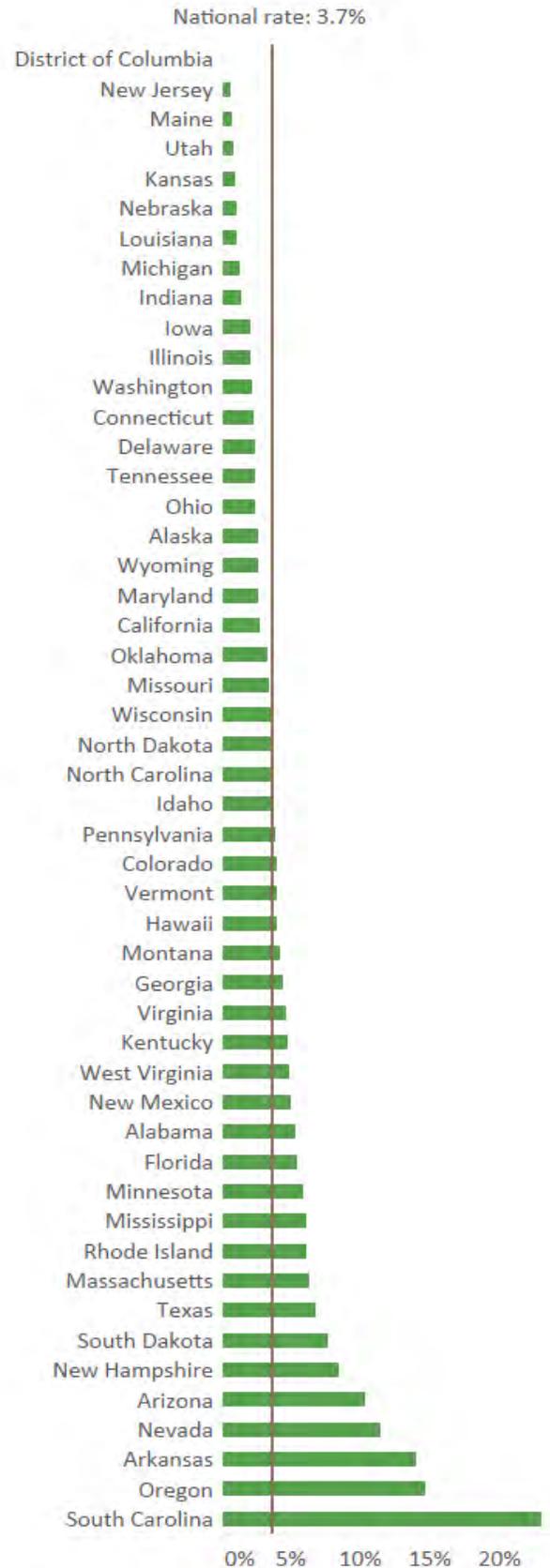


Figure V-4. Percent of Children Age 12 and Under Placed in Group Homes or Institutions, 2015 (N=50 States)*,**



*Data in these charts include all states that met data-quality thresholds.
 **For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

Table V-3. Outcome 6.1a: Percent of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2011–2015 (N=48 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	76.5%	77.5%	75.9%	79.2%	79.5%	4.0%
Alaska	75.4%	80.7%	83.0%	81.6%	80.8%	7.2%
Arizona	87.0%	86.7%	85.2%	83.3%	83.2%	-4.4%
Arkansas	75.9%	77.0%	77.3%	75.0%	72.7%	-4.2%
California	84.0%	84.1%	84.8%	84.7%	84.2%	0.2%
Colorado	84.7%	85.1%	84.8%	84.0%	84.2%	-0.7%
Delaware	83.1%	80.5%	84.0%	86.3%	85.7%	3.1%
Florida	86.0%	85.7%	87.4%	85.4%	84.8%	-1.3%
Georgia	80.6%	80.2%	78.5%	79.0%	75.8%	-5.9%
Hawaii	91.6%	89.0%	90.2%	87.3%	87.5%	-4.5%
Idaho	90.2%	86.9%	87.1%	89.2%	88.3%	-2.2%
Illinois	46.9%	48.4%	52.0%	58.9%	69.4%	47.9%
Indiana	89.0%	88.4%	89.5%	89.6%	89.8%	0.9%
Iowa	87.6%	86.7%	87.5%	86.2%	87.2%	-0.5%
Kansas	83.2%	83.8%	82.0%	79.5%	78.3%	-5.9%
Kentucky	88.4%	88.5%	88.5%	88.1%	87.3%	-1.2%
Louisiana	79.2%	83.9%	83.9%	82.8%	83.5%	5.5%
Maine	83.0%	87.9%	87.5%	89.2%	89.9%	8.2%
Maryland	88.3%	85.3%	86.7%	87.8%	87.5%	-0.9%
Massachusetts	78.7%	81.0%	80.2%	76.9%	74.5%	-5.3%
Michigan	88.5%	87.8%	88.0%	87.5%	81.0%	-8.4%
Minnesota	86.9%	86.3%	87.1%	87.4%	87.1%	0.2%
Mississippi	78.5%	80.5%	80.5%	80.0%	80.1%	2.1%
Missouri	70.1%	76.3%	73.6%	79.7%	79.8%	13.9%
Montana	87.3%	88.1%	87.9%	86.9%	86.8%	-0.5%
Nebraska	85.8%	84.9%	86.3%	88.9%	91.8%	7.0%
Nevada	81.6%	83.1%	82.8%	79.9%	81.6%	0.0%
New Hampshire	82.3%	82.6%	81.4%	86.2%	86.3%	4.8%
New Jersey	87.8%	89.0%	88.3%	88.3%	87.3%	-0.6%
New Mexico	87.5%	85.0%	83.6%	82.7%	81.7%	-6.7%
New York	90.4%	90.7%	90.3%	90.5%	89.4%	-1.1%
North Carolina	91.6%	91.6%	91.4%	91.4%	90.5%	-1.2%
North Dakota	82.3%	74.5%	80.2%	79.5%	81.4%	-1.1%
Ohio	90.9%	88.7%	88.1%	87.8%	88.0%	-3.2%
Oklahoma	74.1%	71.8%	74.3%	77.3%	72.8%	-1.8%
Oregon	88.2%	86.9%	86.9%	86.5%	84.0%	-4.8%
Rhode Island	87.6%	88.4%	88.7%	88.2%	88.9%	1.5%
South Carolina	81.4%	83.8%	86.5%	84.8%	83.6%	2.8%
South Dakota	86.8%	87.2%	86.7%	87.4%	88.4%	1.9%
Tennessee	82.3%	79.5%	79.5%	77.9%	79.2%	-3.8%
Texas	83.3%	83.7%	84.4%	85.0%	84.1%	1.0%
Utah	80.1%	78.5%	76.1%	73.3%	78.2%	-2.3%
Vermont	71.7%	72.3%	75.6%	78.7%	78.0%	8.8%
Virginia	89.0%	88.4%	86.2%	86.0%	85.7%	-3.8%
Washington	86.4%	86.9%	84.6%	83.3%	81.0%	-6.2%
West Virginia	86.7%	87.8%	88.2%	87.4%	89.4%	3.1%
Wisconsin	87.5%	85.0%	87.1%	86.7%	87.1%	-0.5%
Wyoming	86.9%	91.3%	88.3%	90.7%	89.7%	3.3%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table V-4. Outcome 6.1b: Percent of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2011–2015 (N=48 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	54.6%	54.2%	57.3%	55.5%	56.0%	2.6%
Alaska	61.9%	54.1%	58.9%	67.6%	63.2%	2.1%
Arizona	69.7%	70.8%	70.7%	68.8%	70.2%	0.8%
Arkansas	44.9%	48.0%	50.2%	48.2%	44.9%	0.0%
California	63.4%	63.1%	64.1%	65.4%	65.7%	3.6%
Colorado	62.7%	63.1%	54.4%	55.9%	52.8%	-15.8%
Delaware	69.2%	61.4%	62.1%	66.0%	62.1%	-10.3%
Florida	65.1%	64.7%	65.8%	65.8%	66.7%	2.5%
Georgia	54.9%	57.0%	54.7%	53.7%	51.7%	-5.9%
Hawaii	69.2%	71.0%	72.8%	70.1%	68.6%	-0.9%
Idaho	61.3%	63.0%	67.3%	66.9%	68.6%	11.9%
Illinois	41.6%	42.7%	44.2%	48.2%	55.7%	33.9%
Indiana	67.2%	71.8%	69.4%	72.2%	72.7%	8.3%
Iowa	64.1%	64.6%	63.5%	63.9%	63.2%	-1.3%
Kansas	63.5%	66.4%	64.9%	64.4%	60.0%	-5.5%
Kentucky	64.4%	65.8%	66.2%	64.5%	62.2%	-3.4%
Louisiana	56.6%	55.1%	60.7%	61.3%	58.8%	3.9%
Maine	68.6%	64.9%	74.8%	76.9%	79.6%	16.0%
Maryland	70.4%	70.2%	70.8%	70.2%	70.3%	-0.2%
Massachusetts	49.1%	53.3%	56.7%	57.1%	54.5%	11.0%
Michigan	74.3%	73.8%	73.6%	71.1%	61.8%	-16.8%
Minnesota	62.4%	58.0%	59.0%	62.9%	63.2%	1.4%
Mississippi	52.5%	51.4%	57.2%	58.8%	59.5%	13.4%
Missouri	53.9%	57.1%	57.0%	62.0%	60.0%	11.3%
Montana	64.9%	66.1%	67.9%	67.9%	66.3%	2.2%
Nebraska	58.6%	64.2%	65.8%	68.8%	76.3%	30.2%
Nevada	61.6%	57.9%	61.1%	59.3%	58.3%	-5.4%
New Hampshire	64.3%	72.0%	67.1%	63.3%	63.7%	-0.9%
New Jersey	72.5%	71.5%	72.5%	72.2%	73.8%	1.8%
New Mexico	57.7%	56.6%	50.8%	48.7%	50.3%	-12.7%
New York	72.3%	71.4%	73.7%	73.7%	72.5%	0.3%
North Carolina	76.7%	76.0%	76.0%	75.5%	75.7%	-1.3%
North Dakota	52.5%	53.2%	51.1%	50.7%	53.9%	2.6%
Ohio	72.1%	67.3%	66.1%	68.5%	66.7%	-7.5%
Oklahoma	47.6%	49.6%	50.8%	54.0%	53.8%	13.1%
Oregon	69.4%	70.3%	71.3%	69.5%	68.1%	-1.9%
Rhode Island	62.5%	64.2%	69.3%	75.5%	74.8%	19.8%
South Carolina	48.8%	52.8%	56.1%	58.2%	58.1%	19.0%
South Dakota	60.2%	51.9%	57.0%	62.9%	61.1%	1.6%
Tennessee	58.9%	61.6%	60.8%	60.9%	59.0%	0.3%
Texas	56.5%	57.9%	57.6%	57.6%	57.8%	2.2%
Utah	50.2%	49.8%	44.1%	44.0%	48.7%	-2.9%
Vermont	45.4%	44.6%	43.4%	50.4%	60.4%	33.1%
Virginia	66.9%	64.8%	65.9%	66.2%	64.7%	-3.3%
Washington	67.6%	67.9%	67.6%	66.3%	65.6%	-3.0%
West Virginia	65.2%	64.1%	68.1%	67.6%	67.5%	3.6%
Wisconsin	66.8%	67.7%	67.0%	70.4%	70.7%	5.9%
Wyoming	58.9%	64.1%	69.4%	67.0%	68.5%	16.3%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table V-5. Outcome 6.1c: Percent of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2011–2015 (N=48 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	31.0%	29.7%	27.0%	28.2%	27.5%	-11.3%
Alaska	28.3%	31.8%	28.6%	30.2%	35.2%	24.4%
Arizona	39.9%	41.0%	43.7%	42.2%	44.0%	10.1%
Arkansas	20.3%	20.6%	22.3%	21.0%	19.9%	-2.1%
California	33.1%	34.0%	34.2%	35.7%	37.6%	13.7%
Colorado	30.5%	33.8%	23.2%	25.0%	25.2%	-17.3%
Delaware	28.0%	35.8%	32.3%	32.0%	31.3%	11.8%
Florida	26.6%	28.9%	33.1%	34.5%	37.1%	39.7%
Georgia	27.4%	30.0%	32.7%	32.5%	32.9%	20.3%
Hawaii	43.1%	46.1%	44.4%	49.3%	52.8%	22.3%
Idaho	28.8%	26.2%	27.2%	33.0%	31.3%	8.8%
Illinois	30.9%	29.4%	29.4%	31.2%	32.5%	5.3%
Indiana	38.5%	36.6%	39.3%	43.0%	46.9%	21.7%
Iowa	26.5%	27.2%	25.8%	27.2%	26.9%	1.4%
Kansas	27.3%	35.3%	39.4%	41.7%	42.3%	55.0%
Kentucky	32.8%	38.1%	40.0%	44.0%	39.9%	21.7%
Louisiana	35.6%	36.5%	33.9%	34.1%	35.2%	-1.3%
Maine	35.1%	35.6%	36.2%	44.2%	52.4%	49.5%
Maryland	46.4%	40.6%	40.3%	42.3%	41.7%	-10.1%
Massachusetts	24.2%	25.1%	25.4%	29.2%	32.7%	35.0%
Michigan	44.6%	47.4%	48.3%	43.4%	43.0%	-3.6%
Minnesota	31.3%	33.0%	32.8%	32.0%	35.0%	11.7%
Mississippi	29.7%	30.6%	30.6%	33.6%	35.6%	19.7%
Missouri	25.8%	30.2%	30.5%	33.4%	33.0%	28.2%
Montana	33.8%	37.1%	39.7%	41.8%	40.9%	21.0%
Nebraska	29.0%	33.5%	35.7%	33.5%	39.5%	36.5%
Nevada	31.8%	30.3%	29.3%	33.1%	29.4%	-7.6%
New Hampshire	35.1%	30.3%	41.6%	41.8%	41.5%	18.2%
New Jersey	45.8%	47.9%	50.6%	53.2%	52.8%	15.2%
New Mexico	20.9%	21.6%	23.1%	22.1%	24.4%	16.7%
New York	44.1%	44.7%	44.9%	46.4%	47.5%	7.8%
North Carolina	41.2%	42.7%	43.5%	43.9%	43.9%	6.6%
North Dakota	44.7%	40.3%	32.8%	40.5%	29.1%	-35.0%
Ohio	39.6%	36.3%	34.5%	35.2%	35.9%	-9.4%
Oklahoma	21.8%	23.0%	24.9%	27.6%	29.2%	33.8%
Oregon	35.2%	39.7%	40.5%	41.1%	39.9%	13.3%
Rhode Island	34.6%	33.9%	38.6%	41.5%	46.2%	33.8%
South Carolina	26.2%	23.6%	23.4%	27.1%	30.8%	17.5%
South Dakota	19.0%	24.5%	26.1%	26.8%	27.4%	44.8%
Tennessee	33.4%	37.6%	41.6%	39.1%	40.1%	20.2%
Texas	21.2%	22.6%	23.4%	23.3%	22.9%	7.8%
Utah	12.0%	13.5%	15.5%	15.7%	14.2%	18.0%
Vermont	24.7%	23.9%	22.0%	25.4%	24.6%	-0.5%
Virginia	36.2%	35.5%	36.4%	37.7%	38.6%	6.6%
Washington	37.1%	39.4%	40.8%	41.3%	41.0%	10.4%
West Virginia	37.9%	35.8%	36.3%	38.5%	35.7%	-5.8%
Wisconsin	44.5%	45.2%	45.3%	45.8%	47.0%	5.5%
Wyoming	34.5%	37.4%	37.0%	38.8%	44.9%	30.3%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table V-6. Outcome 7.1: Percent of Children Age 12 or Younger in Group Homes or Institutions, 2011–2015 (N=47 States)*

State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percent Change in Performance, 2011–2015**
Alabama	4.3%	4.0%	3.9%	4.8%	5.3%	23.1%
Alaska	2.1%	2.7%	3.1%	2.3%	2.6%	27.6%
Arizona	6.3%	8.0%	8.7%	8.4%	10.4%	65.4%
Arkansas	13.6%	15.5%	13.5%	14.1%	14.0%	3.0%
California	2.7%	3.0%	2.4%	2.6%	2.8%	1.9%
Colorado	4.6%	4.0%	3.1%	3.1%	4.0%	-13.3%
Delaware	2.0%	4.9%	2.8%	7.8%	2.4%	23.6%
Florida	5.6%	5.7%	5.0%	5.4%	5.4%	-4.0%
Georgia	5.0%	4.2%	4.2%	3.9%	4.4%	-12.4%
Hawaii	10.3%	7.9%	8.9%	6.0%	4.0%	-60.7%
Idaho	4.7%	3.9%	3.3%	2.9%	3.8%	-19.8%
Illinois	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%	2.8%	2.1%	-12.1%
Indiana	2.0%	1.8%	1.9%	1.6%	1.5%	-27.5%
Iowa	3.8%	2.4%	2.9%	2.9%	2.1%	-45.6%
Kansas	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%	23.3%
Kentucky	5.2%	4.5%	4.4%	5.2%	4.8%	-7.3%
Louisiana	1.2%	0.8%	1.2%	0.9%	1.2%	-6.2%
Maine	4.4%	4.5%	0.8%	1.5%	0.7%	-82.8%
Maryland	2.9%	3.4%	2.7%	3.0%	2.7%	-6.9%
Massachusetts	5.9%	6.1%	6.2%	5.3%	6.3%	7.1%
Michigan	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%	-11.9%
Minnesota	12.8%	12.5%	8.0%	7.7%	5.8%	-54.3%
Mississippi	6.7%	5.6%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	-8.8%
Missouri	2.8%	4.4%	4.4%	4.2%	3.5%	25.0%
Montana	8.7%	6.9%	5.8%	5.4%	4.2%	-51.4%
Nebraska	2.4%	2.3%	1.5%	0.8%	1.1%	-55.3%
Nevada	6.8%	5.4%	6.3%	9.4%	11.4%	66.9%
New Hampshire	6.5%	4.7%	8.1%	8.5%	8.4%	29.7%
New Jersey	1.7%	2.0%	1.9%	1.4%	0.7%	-57.5%
New Mexico	3.9%	4.6%	5.5%	4.1%	5.0%	28.4%
North Carolina	2.6%	3.6%	3.3%	4.3%	3.7%	40.2%
North Dakota	8.0%	8.1%	6.9%	4.2%	3.6%	-55.5%
Ohio	2.2%	2.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.5%	13.4%
Oklahoma	11.0%	9.6%	7.0%	5.3%	3.3%	-70.0%
Oregon	0.8%	1.1%	1.0%	13.1%	14.6%	1,667.8%
Rhode Island	11.4%	7.5%	7.7%	6.9%	6.1%	-46.3%
South Carolina	20.3%	21.2%	22.0%	21.9%	22.9%	13.1%
South Dakota	14.8%	10.7%	8.6%	9.3%	7.7%	-48.1%
Tennessee	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%	2.6%	2.5%	24.7%
Texas	7.6%	7.7%	7.5%	8.0%	6.8%	-10.1%
Utah	2.3%	1.7%	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	-63.3%
Vermont	6.7%	7.3%	6.2%	5.0%	4.0%	-39.5%
Virginia	3.8%	3.9%	4.0%	3.5%	4.6%	22.0%
Washington	1.2%	2.1%	1.7%	1.6%	2.2%	87.2%
West Virginia	3.6%	3.9%	3.6%	4.6%	4.9%	35.5%
Wisconsin	3.3%	4.0%	3.7%	3.2%	3.5%	7.0%
Wyoming	5.6%	6.0%	4.6%	3.1%	2.7%	-52.1%

*Data in this table include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds for all years.

**A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in green indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in red indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

VI: State Comments on Performance Relevant to the Seven National Child Welfare Outcomes

The previous chapters provide key findings from analyses of performance across states over time relevant to the seven national child welfare outcomes. State-specific performance over time on these outcomes, as well as relevant state context data, are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

Prior to the release of the data on the data site and the report, states were given the opportunity to comment on their data. What follows are the state comments from those states that opted to provide context and comment on their state data. The comments have been printed exactly as they were submitted by the states. The comments are also available online on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site.

Alabama

STATE COMMENT

**John James, Deputy Commissioner
Children and Family Services
Alabama Department of Human Services**

The following are Alabama's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Recurrence of Maltreatment within 6 Months continues to be very low with an average of 1.5 for the reported period. This has been an area of strength of Alabama for a number of years.

Child maltreatment victims fluctuated over the 5 year period, while the number of investigated reports has increased significantly. For children with indicated reports, the maltreatment type with the highest percentage was Physical Abuse. This allegation included substantial risk due to substance abuse, domestic violence and drug exposure at birth as well as physical injuries.

Child fatalities showed a decrease in the last two years of this report period, after a high in 2013. Maltreatment in Foster care was less than 1 percent through the 5 year reporting period.

The foster care entry rate showed a slight increase in 2015 from prior years. The number of foster children in care on 9/30 showed a decreasing trend to a low in 2013. Since that time the number has steadily increased. While there may be many factors, data shows an increase in entries due to Parental Substance Abuse.

The state has placed emphasis on permanency through adoption. We have maintained over 500 adoptions each year since 2012. This has significantly decreased the number of children waiting for adoption. Length of time to Adoption has improved for the time period of in care over 36 months.

The percentage of exits of Children Older than Age 12 at Entry Into Foster Care to Emancipation decreased and exits to Adoption and Reunification increased in 2014 and 2015 as compared to prior years in the reporting period.

Caseworker Visit data was based on a sample of the foster care population for 2011–2014. For 2015 the total population was used. Alabama continued to meet the federal requirement for visitation for both receiving monthly visits and receiving the visit in the home.

Data shows an increase in the percentage of reunifications within 24 months and an increase in the total number of reunifications. During the same time period, children reentering care remained steady.

Changes made in our SACWIS data collection system in 2014 improved the accuracy of placement data for 2014 and 2015. A slight increase in the use of congregate care was noted and became an area of priority in our CFSP.

District of Columbia

STATE COMMENT

Brenda Donald, Director
District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency

The following are the District of Columbia's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

We observed that the data reflect positively on key practice areas toward which we have directed resources over the course of the reporting period. We are pleased that re-entries into foster care and time to adoption continue to trend downward while reunifications are rising for children who entered care at age 12 and up. Data also shows that placement stability continues to improve.

The data reflect CFSA's need to improve the timeliness of terminations of parental rights (TPR) for children awaiting adoption. Our 2016 on-site Child and Family Services Review also highlighted our challenges in this area. We are working with the DC Court Improvement Project and the District's legal community to finalize a Program Improvement Plan to address this area.

Lastly, much of our FY 2014 data was disqualified (DQ) from the report due to data quality issues pertaining to our removal, at the behest of the Children's Bureau (CB), of youth over 18 years of age from our AFCARS submission. We had a lengthy dialogue with the CB as to how best to account for this population in our AFCARS reporting. The issue has since been resolved and the applicable AFCARS files have been submitted with our negotiated corrections.

George Sheldon, Director
Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

The following are Illinois' comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

1. Illinois resubmitted data for fiscal years 2010 through 2014 to reflect changes, per a court order; this order required that a specific neglect allegation finding be changed from Indicated (Substantiated) to Unfounded (Unsubstantiated). As a result of complying with the court order, and resubmission of data, the numbers now show a decreased number of child victims for FY 10 through FY 13. Without knowledge of the court order impact, and resubmission of data, a review of the yearly data may be misleading, as it appears there is a spike in numbers for FY 14 and FY 15. In actuality, the removal of child victim numbers for 2010 through 2014 lowered what would have been the numbers. This explains the appearance of a spike in FY14 and FY15 in the following areas of the report:
 - Illinois Context Data
 - Item A Context Statistics, Child Welfare Summary, Child maltreatment victims
 - Item B Child Maltreatment Data, Overview Maltreatment Information, Total child maltreatment victims
 - Item B Child Maltreatment Data, Maltreatment Types of Child Victims, Neglect
 - Illinois Outcomes Data
 - Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 6 Months
 - 2.1 Maltreatment in Foster Care
2. Illinois revised policy in 2014 on child deaths reported to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline related to safe sleep. The policy change resulted in fewer investigations being accepted for investigations that involved child fatalities involving safe sleep. The 2014 change reflects a decrease in the FY2015 data around fatalities. This policy has since been reversed. The variation can be seen in the following areas of the report:
 - Illinois Context Data
 - Item B Child Maltreatment Data
 - Overview Maltreatment Information
 - Child Fatalities

Wendy A Rickman, LISW, Administrator
Division of Adult, Children and Family Services
Iowa Department of Human Services

The following are Iowa's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The Iowa Department of Human Services continues to improve outcomes for children and families served. Iowa reduced the number of child victims of abuse despite an increase in the child population. The number of children in foster care has lowered from its 2011 peak. Iowa has also reduced the number of children whose parents' rights have been terminated and are waiting for adoption. Family team decision-making, collaborative efforts with the courts and stakeholders, and strong public/private partnerships improve outcomes for children and families. Key areas that challenge our system include complex family characteristics, mainly the intersection of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence by parents, placement stability for children in care, increase in caseload growth, and declining IV-E funding.

Section B (Child Maltreatment Data): The rate of abuse in Iowa has been decreasing over the last several years due to our continued efforts to improve assignment of cases at intake, and to develop alternatives to assist families and prevent the need for removal of children from their homes.

Section C (Children in Foster Care): Iowa's foster care population has decreased since its peak in 2013. However, the median length of stay has increased slightly. Iowa continues to see steady numbers in the age break-down of its foster care population, with steady representation of infants and teens.

Sections D and E (Adoption): Iowa's population of children adopted annually bounced back from its low in 2014.

Outcome Measure 1.1: Iowa's top priority is child safety. We have continued to focus on strengthening risk and safety assessment, developing strong safety plans, and engaging providers in safety and risk discussions.

Outcome Measure 2.1: The number of children who experience maltreatment in foster care continues to remain very low in Iowa.

Outcome Measure 3.1: Reduction in the number of children exiting foster care reflects the reduction in children entering foster care. Iowa contributes this success to focused prevention efforts, as well as a system that addresses complex family needs by providing targeted services appropriate to family situations. By 2015, Iowa saw an increase in the percentage of children adopted and a decrease in children reunified. While this closely mirrors 2012, it may also reflect the increasing complexity faced by Iowa as mental health, addiction, and domestic violence continue to challenge the child welfare system.

Outcome Measure 4.2: The number of children re-entering foster care continues to be a challenge in Iowa. The state is focusing on engaging relatives and increasing the use of family team decision making as part of our strategy to move foster children to more lasting permanent settings.

Pam Cotton, Director
Division of Protection and Permanency
Kentucky's Department for Community Based Services

The following are Kentucky's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Effective 1/17/2014, Kentucky made several revisions to business practice and modifications to the SACWIS that have affected various data submissions. Kentucky implemented a new investigation/assessment approach and created a new tool to assist staff in completing more thorough assessments. With the implementation of the new assessment and documentation tool (ADT), Kentucky now collects data in a different manner, as well as collecting new data. Medical neglect is now collected and reported separately from basic neglect, providing a more accurate portrayal of maltreatment throughout the state; race and age/date of birth reporting are now mandatory in the SACWIS.

Kentucky's ultimate goal continues to be a full replacement of the state's SACWIS with a modernized, web-based, Microsoft .NET platform. In 2014, the department updated and migrated to .NET the screens where workers enter information related to investigations, individual information, contacts staff safety issues, and administrative activities. In 2015, the department migrated screens related to case planning and periodic reviews. In April 2017, the department migrated screens related to payments and OOHC. The department anticipates full modernization in a .NET format by the end of 2017.

Kentucky does not have an alternative or differential response. In 2014, the state began utilizing a new approach to the investigation response (IR) and the alternative response (AR). Before the change in the business process, the intake worker made the decision regarding IR/AR at intake. With the new approach, the assessment worker makes the IR/AR determination at the completion of the assessment. In other words, IR/AR is now a finding, rather than an assessment path. Kentucky's name for the IR is investigation and for AR is "family in need of services." Kentucky's business practice does allow multiple maltreatment levels to be present in a single report. For example, one report could have a disposition/finding of unsubstantiated and services needed if it was determined that maltreatment did not occur, but the family needed services from the agency.

In FFY 2016, Kentucky removed the dispositional finding of 'Services Not Needed' from the standards of practice (SOP) and from SACWIS. Kentucky currently has the following dispositional findings for investigations/assessments: Death/Near Death Substantiated, Found/Substantiated, Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, and Services Needed. Kentucky's business practice does allow for multiple maltreatment levels to be present in a single report. For example, one report could have a disposition/finding of unsubstantiated and services needed if it was determined that maltreatment did not occur, but the family needed services from the agency.

Kentucky also now more accurately reports the true maltreatment level between the individual victim and the individual perpetrator, rather than the maltreatment level for one victim being spread across all victims in a case (based on a hierarchy).

Kentucky has shown a steady increase in children in out of home care over the past several years. Kentucky, along with many other states, has seen an increase in families with substance abuse risk factors related to the opioid epidemic. Additionally, even though diligent recruitment efforts continue, the number of available foster homes has declined.

Maryland

STATE COMMENT

Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW, Executive Director
Social Services Administration
Maryland Department of Human Services

The following are Maryland's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The *Child Welfare Outcomes* report for this time period continues to reflect a substantial downward trend in foster care placements, which in Maryland has been underway since 2007, while not adversely impacting child safety (the six month recurrence rate has remained at its 7% average throughout this time frame). During these years, Maryland was implementing its Place Matters initiative, featuring the Family-Centered Practice model, which focuses attention on families' natural support systems to bolster their capacity to care for their children, and develops service plans based on comprehensive assessments. Family Involvement Meetings encourage family participation in making decisions about the needs of their children, as well as decisions about reunification or making other permanent exits from foster care, including guardianship placement or adoptive placement. These efforts often result in identifying relatives and other community resources for families struggling with child maltreatment. The State expects continued success with its Family-Centered Practice Model.

Maryland has also implemented Alternative Response which enables the State to address low risk cases of child abuse and neglect. Alternative Response permits the State to intervene with families to ensure safety and address risk without the stigma of a finding of maltreatment being attached to the parent. This approach enables Maryland to engage families who face challenges in a way that emphasizes the State's commitment to support and strengthen parents and caregivers, and connect them with agency and community resources that will help them raise their children.

Maryland's continuing commitment to supporting and strengthening families has been bolstered through federal approval of its IV-E Waiver demonstration known as Families Blossom. The IV-E Waiver enables Maryland to extend its vision to prevent and divert children and families from foster care, reduce the need for foster care, and have timely and lasting permanency for the children and families we serve. Families Blossom is focused on extending Maryland's success with family centered services by using trauma-informed assessment and evidence-based practices, increasing data analytics capabilities to monitor trends and progress, and applying implementation science to create an organization that will inculcate collaboration and partnership on all levels and hold us all accountable as we serve children and families.

Maryland has already experienced considerable success with its Place Matters initiative featuring Family Centered Practice. Alternative Response and the new Families Blossom demonstration will increase the State's positive impact on the children and families served. Changes made in our SACWIS data collection system in 2014 improved the accuracy of placement data for 2014 and 2015. A slight increase in the use of congregate care was noted and became an area of priority in our CFSP.

Michigan

**Herman McCall, Ed.D, Executive Director
Children's Service Agency
Michigan Department of Human Services**

The following are Michigan's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Child Welfare Vision

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will lead the state in supporting our children, youth and families to reach their full potential.

Child Welfare Mission

Child welfare professionals will demonstrate an unwavering commitment to engage and partner with families we serve to ensure safety, permanency and well-being through a trauma informed approach.

The vision and mission are achieved through the following guiding principles:

- Safety is the first priority of the child welfare system.
- Families, children, youth and caregivers will be treated with dignity and respect while having a voice in decisions that affect them.
- The ideal place for children is with their families; therefore, we will ensure children remain in their own homes whenever safely possible.
- When placement away from the family is necessary, children will be placed in the most family-like setting and placed with siblings whenever possible.
- The impact of traumatic stress on child and family development is recognized and used to inform intervention strategies.
- The well-being of children is recognized and promoted by building relationships, developing child competencies and strengthening formal and informal community resources.
- Permanent connections with siblings and caring and supportive adults will be preserved and encouraged.
- Children will be reunited with their families and siblings as soon as safely possible.
- Community stakeholders and tribes will be actively engaged to protect children and support families.
- Leadership will be demonstrated within all levels of the child welfare system.
- Decision making will be outcome-based, research-driven and continuously evaluated for improvement.

Michigan is dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our NCANDS and AFCARS submissions.

Improvements to MISACWIS system allows Michigan to improve the accuracy of data reporting. The total number of children in foster care for FY 2015 has continued to decrease which has led to a natural decrease in the number of adoptions in MI. One factor that has played a role in this decrease has been Michigan's implementation of a case practice model that focuses on the core principles of: Teaming, Engagement, Assessment and Mentoring. Utilizing these practice competencies supports positive outcomes for children, including a reduction in removals, as well as successful and sustainable reunification when removal has been necessary.

Although Michigan did not meet the standard for timeliness to reunification, Michigan continues to exceed the median for children re-entering foster care within twelve months of reunification. Michigan believes it is important to reunify children with their families as quickly as possible.

Michigan continues to focus efforts on improving our state's performance in outcomes related to child safety, permanency and well-being.

Jamie Sorenson, Director
Child Safety and Permanency Division
Minnesota Department of Human Services

The following are Minnesota's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments regarding Minnesota's National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), as well as census and caseworker visit data for inclusion in the 2011– 2015 Child Welfare Outcomes Report. Upon review, staff members are providing additional contextual information and explanations specific to three data elements, including an increase in the number of:

- Children who were the subject of an investigated report alleging child maltreatment
- Child maltreatment victims in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015
- Children in care on Sept. 30, 2015.

As identified in NCANDS data, Minnesota had a substantial increase in the number of children who were subjects of investigated reports alleging child maltreatment, and the number of child maltreatment victims in FFY 2015. There are several possible reasons for this increase. The Governor's Task Force for the Protection of Children, created in fall 2014, issued a number of recommendations regarding Minnesota's child protection system in early 2015. These recommendations resulted in changes to Minnesota's Intake, Screening and Response Path Guidelines, as well as changes in statute related to guidelines which made it more likely that a child protection report would be screened in for assessment or investigation. Also, Minnesota experienced, and is continuing to experience, a worrisome rise in the abuse of opioids. The child protection system has seen a corresponding increase in the number of children reported for alleged maltreatment as a result of prenatal exposure.

The rise in the number of children who are subjects of investigated reports alleging child maltreatment, and the rise in abuse of opioids in Minnesota, are having an impact on the number of children entering out-of-home care, and the length of time that children are staying in care. This resulted in a higher number of children in care on Sept. 30, 2015, as reflected in AFCARS data. There has been a significant increase in the number of children entering out-of-home care for the primary reason of parental drug abuse; opioid addiction is pernicious and can be difficult to treat, making it more likely that children will need to remain in care longer while their parents receive treatment.

Missouri

STATE COMMENT

Tim Decker, Director
Children's Division
Missouri Department of Social Services

The following are Missouri's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Missouri continues to be dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our NCANDS and AFCARS transmissions. We persist in our efforts to enhance our data systems to more thoroughly detail compliance with the mandates of ASFA and to better serve families.

Child safety is a priority for the Children's Division. Missouri experienced an increase in the number of children with a maltreatment type of neglect for 2011–2015. Missouri's child abuse law defines neglect as a failure to provide, by those responsible for the care, custody and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, nutrition, medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the child's well-being.

Missouri has experienced an increase in the foster care population. While Missouri has seen an increase of children entering care for the first time, there has been a decrease in children re-entering care within twelve months of a prior episode. The rate of entries is exceeding the rate of exits; however, exits to guardianship have continued to increase during 2011–2015. The seeming discrepancy in Section D, between the number of children awaiting adoption and the number of children having a termination of parental rights, is reflective of the practice in some Missouri courts to delay termination of parental rights until an adoptive home has been found for a specific child or sibling group. Often these courts terminate parental rights and finalize adoptions in the same court proceeding.

Despite the increased number of foster children, Missouri achieved 98% on the frequency of caseworker visits with children during 2012–2015. Missouri has continually improved the percent of children having visits by caseworkers since 2008. A performance measure report as well as a tracking tool in the SACWIS system allow for staff to maintain high frequency of visits with children in out-of-home care. Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement efforts additionally address the quality of visits.

Missouri has implemented a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process which monitors and identifies areas of strength and areas needing improvement at both the statewide and local levels. The CQI process monitors all aspects of the service delivery from child abuse and neglect reports to permanency. The Division continually strives to improve our ability to serve youth and families in our care.

**Lisa von Pier, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Child Protection & Permanency
New Jersey Department of Children and Families**

The following are New Jersey's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

NJ investigates all reports of child abuse and neglect. In 2013, new regulations took effect modifying the Department of Children and Families' dispositions following child abuse and neglect investigations. A new system of investigation was created and based on four tiers; Substantiated, Established, Not Established and Unfounded. Both Substantiated and Established findings are categorized as substantiated in NCANDS where the child has been a victim of abuse or neglect. As a result, NJ anticipated a continued increase in the overall number of Substantiated reports for 2015 compared with historical trends. The number of unique children who were the subject of an investigated report due to maltreatment decreased slightly from 2014 to 2015 (75,691 in 2014 and 74,546 in 2015). Thirteen percent of these children were victims of maltreatment in 2015 in comparison to 16% percent in 2014.

NJ achieved 99% compliance in the number of monthly Caseworker Visits with children in foster care for 2015.

The foster care entry rate decreased from 2.5 in 2014 to 2.3 in 2015. Fewer children entered foster care in 2015 than in 2014 (5,056 in 2014 and 4,594 in 2015). The median length of stay for children in care on the first day of the year continues to decrease from 15 months in 2011 to 13 months in 2015. Slightly more children exited care in 2015 (4,742 in 2014 and 4,760 in 2015).

NJ's commitment toward achieving permanency for children is ongoing. Ninety-two percent of children in care exited to permanency through adoption, guardianship or reunification exceeding the 89% National Median.

The number of children re-entering foster care decreased from 1,056 in 2014 to 973 in 2015. The number of children re-entering foster care within 12 months decreased from 535 in 2014 to 427 in 2015. Seventy-nine percent of the children that entered care in 2015 entered for the first time.

NJ continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to permanency for older youth in care as the number of children who entered care older than 12 years of age and who exited to adoption, guardianship or reunification increased by 6% over five years, from 59% in 2011 to 65% in 2015.

NJ continues to strive for placement stability and exceeds the National Standard having 87% of children in care less than 12 months, 74% of children in care 12 to 24 months, and 53% of children in care 24 months or longer in 2 or fewer placement settings.

Finally, the number of children age 12 years or younger that are placed in a group home or institutional setting decreased to less than 1% in 2015.

New Mexico

STATE COMMENT

Francine Anaya, Division Director
New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department

The following are New Mexico's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The mission of New Mexico's Children Youth and Families Department is to improve the quality of life for our children. The Department is implementing a program improvement plan to positively impact multiple child welfare outcomes. Key strategies target assessment and safety planning, placement stability, family engagement, and staff training. New Mexico is committed to continuous quality improvement and data informed decision making.

Caseworker Visits

New Mexico consistently visits children at least monthly in their home environment and this has been an identified strength in practice over several years. Additional staff training and coaching related to engagement and staffing is being implemented to further promote the quality of these visits.

Overview of Maltreatment Information (Child Fatalities)

The number of child fatalities (14) in 2015 is closer to the historical norm. There were seven fatalities reported in both 2013 and 2014. Because there were so few fatalities overall, the number may appear to fluctuate due to the length of time these investigations remain open as well as when they occur in the reporting period. New Mexico has implemented two new programs aimed at reducing child fatalities. These include a safe sleep initiative which includes distribution of baby boxes for newborns to prevent layover deaths and at risk child care. This initiative provides free child care for up to 180 days for any child determined to be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Time to Investigation

New Mexico has seen an increase in time to investigation since 2013. In response the Department piloted a strategy requiring supervisors to meet with staff at assignment of all investigations to develop an initiation strategy. Two of the three pilot counties demonstrated decreased response time. This strategy has since been scaled statewide.

Time to Reunification

A relatively high percentage of children in New Mexico exit care in less than 12 months of entry (71.4% in 2015). New Mexico has a large number of children who are considered short stayers in foster care, entering and exiting foster care in less than 8 days. The vast majority of these children are placed in care as the result of emergency protective holds placed by law enforcement. The holds are subsequently released when a safety plan and services to the family can be provided. New Mexico is working to update current safety and risk assessments and provide enhanced staff training to ensure rigorous assessment and decision making.

Placement Stability

In order to improve overall placement stability, New Mexico is focused on recruitment and retention of foster parents. Specific initiatives include recruitment and focused support for relative foster parents, assigned navigators to assist prospective foster parents through the licensure process, and targeted training opportunities for new and established foster parents.

**Laurie Price, Interim Director
Office of Child Welfare Programs
Oregon Department of Human Services**

The following are Oregon's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

At this time, Oregon is pleased to report that the data coming from AFCARS and NCANDS has been updated to reflect accurate information for the foster care population for the data reported in the *Child Welfare Outcomes* report. Oregon does continue to work on reporting certain elements, which largely do not impact this report.

However, in 2016 Oregon realized its revision to programming to meet AIP requirements led to a gross overstatement of who was served in a group home placement setting starting in 2014. This programming was revised again in 2016 to more accurately reflect this data element, with current group home levels more similar to the prior periods.

The following data notes are important to understand when interpreting Oregon's NCANDS data:

- Prior to 2012, the number of children subjects of an investigated report alleging child maltreatment is an estimate. The Oregon legacy system did not collect data at the child level on non-victims.
- Oregon's maltreatment type "threat of harm" is captured in the category of "Other."
- In Oregon, all reports of child abuse/neglect that are referred for investigation are assigned a response time. There are two types of response times in Oregon "within 24 hours" and "within 5 days."

Also, Oregon began a phased implementation of a two track response system called Differential Response (DR) in May of 2014. As of September 30, 2015, there were nine of Oregon's 36 counties using the system. The two types of response tracks within the DR system are Traditional Response (TR) and Alternative Response (AR). Data is reported in the NCANDS Child File for all screened-in Child Protective Services (CPS) reports, regardless of Differential Response Track. Alternative Response Track CPS reports will have Report and Maltreatment Dispositions of "Alternative response nonvictim" as the response option.

Oregon is committed to providing the most accurate data possible through AFCARS and NCANDS transmissions.

Cathy Utz, Deputy Secretary
Office of Children, Youth and Family
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

The following are Pennsylvania's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

- Overview Maltreatment Information

Major changes to Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) became effective December 31, 2014. The changes included expansion of the definitions of "child abuse" and "perpetrator" and clarified mandatory child abuse reporting processes. The law now requires a mandated reporter to make a direct report to the child abuse hotline rather than reporting up a chain of command within their organization. The amendments to the definition of "child abuse", specifically the inclusion of additional categories of abuse and a lower threshold for substantiating a report of child abuse, led to an increase in the number of reports of alleged abuse, as well as the substantiation of these reports. The definition of perpetrator was also expanded to capture additional categories of individuals as perpetrators when they abuse a child. To address these changes, Pennsylvania implemented a new Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) in December 2014. The 2015 NCANDS child file incorporated three months of data collected under the previous statute and nine months of data under the new statute.

- Race/Ethnicity of Child Victims

Changes to the CPSL in 2014 included the collection of race/ethnicity data on child victims and other subjects of the report. Prior to these changes, data on the race/ethnicity of victims were not available.

- Time to Investigation

Although response time is not reported at the state level, the CPSL mandates that upon receipt of a report of suspected child abuse, the investigating agency shall:

- immediately commence an appropriate investigation and see the child immediately if emergency protective custody is required or has been taken, or
- if it cannot be determined from the report whether emergency protective custody is needed, the agency must see the child within 24 hours of the receipt of the report.

The county agency documents all contacts with the alleged victim.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and county children and youth agencies (CCYAs) have also established a locally driven continuous quality improvement (CQI) process, which includes quality service reviews (QSRs). The QSR process is based on our practice model and standards, and formalizes an internal and external and quality reviews. Two indicators measured during the reviews are safety of the child. Implementation of CQI and QSRs are individualized by county in collaboration with the regional DHS staff and technical assistance providers/collaborators that support the county. QSRs allow CCYAs to identify strengths, needs, and resulting action steps for improvements.

- Children Reentering Foster Care

Pennsylvania has identified foster care reentry as an area needing improvement. As part of our yearly Needs-Based Plan and Budget process, CCYAs are provided with county-specific data packages. These include information in regard to population flow, reunification, adoption, permanency, and reentry. CCYAs are required to establish goals for improving outcomes in areas needing improvement.

Rhode Island

STATE COMMENT

Trista D. Piccola, Director
Children and Family Services
Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

The following are Rhode Island's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

- **Child Fatalities:** Rhode Island reports child fatalities in the year that the investigation is completed which may not be the year in which the fatality occurred. RI did not indicate any allegation of child death in CY15.
- **Maltreatment Type:** The percentage of youth indicated for emotional abuse increased from 0.3% (CY13) to 19.8% (CY14) to 41.1% (CY15). This change is the result of Rhode Island adding a specific allegation of 'domestic violence' in 2014. Previously, incidents involving domestic violence were recorded under the allegation of 'other neglect'. As a separate allegation, domestic violence is now reported to NCANDS under emotional abuse. Calendar year 2015 is the first full year in which the new allegation type was utilized.
- **Re-entry into Foster Care:** RI does not have state statute or policy allowing for a trial home visit. Therefore, reunification and re-entry is based on the physical, and not legal, reunification of the child. As a result, RI will appear to have an artificially higher rate of re-entry compared to states with trial home visits. RI continues to work on its re-entry performance and re-entry is at its lowest level in 5 years .
- **Young children in group homes:** RI has reduced the percentage of young children in group homes from 18.4% in FFY 2010 to 5.9% in FFY 2015. We continue to work diligently to reduce the number of young children in group home placements.

Washington

STATE COMMENT

Jennifer A. Strus, Assistant Secretary
Children's Administration
Washington Department of Social and Health Services

The following are Washington's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Child safety is at the forefront of every aspect of our work as we endeavor to:

- Maintain children in their own homes and prevent out-of-home placement
- Serve and support children during the time they are in out-of-home care
- Return children home safely as quickly as possible
- Support children in homes with relatives
- Secure permanent families for children who cannot safely return home
- Decrease the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system

For this reporting period, the percent of children not maltreated while in foster care increased to 99.89%. Reoccurrence of maltreatment within six months was reduced from 9.7% in 2014 to 8.2% in 2015. Washington has strong performance related to Exits of Children from Foster Care (98.8%) and Exits of Children Older Than Age 12 at Entry (96.6%).

Washington State is taking active steps to continue to improve safe, timely outcomes for children through:

- Implementation of Washington's Title IV-E Waiver demonstration project which involves the implementation of a differential response pathway we call Family Assessment Response (FAR).
- Close monitoring of timeliness of initial face-to-face contact with alleged child victims
- Focused attention on engagement with children and families in shared planning meetings to facilitate timely identification and implementation of appropriate permanency plans

Washington, like many states, is experiencing challenges that are impacting outcomes throughout the system. These difficulties have included a dramatic increase in referrals to our system, particularly in those cases requiring an immediate response, families and children presenting with increased complexity, and an increase in Child and Family Welfare Services caseloads. Washington regrettably is also not immune to the opioid crisis impacting our country right now. Social safety net reductions at the state and national level have increased the number of problems facing our families while decreasing available resources.

Efforts to review, analyze and plan to improve the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and their families are ongoing. Updated training on safety and risk assessment and intervention is being provided for caseworkers and supervisors, and efforts to streamline and reduce caseworker workload are in process.

The Governor and Washington State Legislature are committed to management accountability and performance measurement. Children's Administration tracks performance and reports publicly on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and uses data for decision-making.

West Virginia

STATE COMMENT

**Linda Watts, Acting Commissioner
Bureau for Children and Families
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources**

The following are West Virginia's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources believes its increased CPS referrals and substantiations, and higher number of children and youth, particularly infants, entering care including congregate care is due to the state's drug epidemic. The epidemic is also creating shortages of appropriate foster homes.

According to a June 2015 article in the Washington Times, West Virginia has the highest rate of overdose deaths in the U.S. West Virginia's drug overdose death rate was more than double the national average, the report says. Citing statistics from the CDC, it found that West Virginia's rate far surpasses the second-highest state, New Mexico, which was at 28.2 deaths per 100,000. The national average was 13.4.

The reasons why vary, but they are intertwined, said Dr. Rahul Gupta, West Virginia's state health officer. He cited the impoverished region's history of poor education, along with the isolation of people and communities in its rugged mountainous terrain. There's a limited offering of substance abuse programs, though it's growing, but services may be far away and hard to reach.

Fredi-Ellen Bove, Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

The following are Wisconsin's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress* and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Wisconsin's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered in 71 counties and state-administered in Milwaukee. Wisconsin's current focus areas are:

- **Promoting Trauma-Informed Approaches:** Scientific research has shown that traumatic experiences in childhood have a “toxic effect” and inhibit the healthy development of a child’s brain. As a result, a child’s cognitive development, social skills, behavior, and physical health are significantly impaired. Wisconsin is incorporating trauma-informed principles into our child welfare system, through training of DCF staff, child welfare workers, birth, foster, and adoptive parents, and facilitating the adoption of these principles in other state and local systems.
- **Strengthening In-home Safety:** Wisconsin is engaged in training child welfare workers and our court partners in how to engage in robust safety assessment and planning, including whether and how supports and services can be implemented to maintain a child safely in his or her own home whenever possible.
- **Reducing Re-entry:** Children in Wisconsin re-enter out-of-home care at a rate that far exceeds the federal standard. To reduce the re-entry rate and improve outcomes for children and families, Wisconsin has implemented the Post-reunification Support (PS) Program to provide services and supports to families in the initial twelve months after reunification. This program, which began in February 2014, is a Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration program.
- **Improving Health Outcomes:** DCF partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to implement Care4Kids, a medical home program for eligible children. The program, which began in January 2014, provides comprehensive and coordinated health care for children in out-of-home care in a way that reflects their unique health needs and trauma experiences. The program is improving children’s quality, access, and timeliness of health care.
- **Achieving Educational Success for Children in Out-of-Home Care:** In collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, local child welfare agencies and school districts, DCF is working on improving the educational outcomes for youth in foster care through: establishment of data exchanges between the child welfare and school systems; development of practices to promote timely information-sharing between the child welfare and school workers; research on the educational outcomes of these children; and development of policies to support educational stability and success.
- **Aligning the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems:** DCF became responsible for state oversight of the community-based juvenile justice system in January 2016. DCF is seeking to improve collaboration between the systems and incorporate in the juvenile justice system the family-centered, trauma-informed, and youth empowerment principles utilized in the child welfare systems.
- **Supporting Youth Transition to Adulthood:** Youth who age out of foster care face significant challenges. Wisconsin’s Bureau of Youth Services is implementing a new regional service delivery system for independent living services and focusing all youth services on the goals of strengthening permanent connections, education, training and employment, housing, and social and emotional well-being outcomes for current and former foster youth.

Appendix A

Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Pub. L. 105–89)

SEC. 203. Performance of States in Protecting Children.

(a) ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE PERFORMANCE.—Part E of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 670 et seq.) is amended by addition at the end of the following:

Sec 479A. Annual Report.

The Secretary, in consultation with Governors, State legislatures, State and local public officials responsible for administering child welfare programs, and child welfare advocates, shall—

(1) develop a set of outcome measures (including length of stay in foster care, number of foster care placements, and number of adoptions) that can be used to assess the performance of States in operating child protection and child welfare programs pursuant to parts B and E to ensure the safety of children;

(2) to the maximum extent possible, the outcome measures should be developed from data available from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System;

(3) develop a system for rating the performance of States with respect to the outcome measures, and provide to the States an explanation of the rating system and how scores are determined under the rating system;

(4) prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to ensure that States provide to the Secretary the data necessary to determine State performance with respect to each outcome measure, as a condition of the State receiving funds under this part;

(5) on May 1, 1999, and annually thereafter, prepare and submit to the Congress a report on the performance of each State on each outcome measure, which shall examine the reasons for high performance and low performance and, where possible, make recommendations as to how State performance could be improved;

(6) include in the report submitted pursuant to paragraph (5) for fiscal year 2007 or any succeeding fiscal year, State-by-State data on—

(A) the percentage of children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who were visited on a monthly basis by the caseworker handling the case of the child;

(B) the total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care under the responsibility of the State during a fiscal year as a percentage of the total number of the visits that would occur during the fiscal year if each child were so visited once every month while in such care; and

(C) the percentage of the visits that occurred in the residence of the child; and

(7)¹ include in the report submitted pursuant to paragraph (5) for fiscal year 2016 or any succeeding fiscal year, State-by-State data on—

(A) children in foster care who have been placed in a child care institution or other setting that is not a foster family home, including —

(i) the number of children in the placements and their ages, including separately, the number and ages of children who have a permanency plan of another planned permanent living arrangement;

(ii) the duration of the placement in the settings (including for children who have a permanency plan of another planned permanent living arrangement);

(iii) the types of child care institutions used (including group homes, residential treatment, shelters, or other congregate care settings);

(iv) with respect to each child care institution or other setting that is not a foster family home, the number of children in foster care residing in each such institution or non-foster family home;

¹ Section 115 of Pub. L. 113—183 added Sections 479A(a)(7) and (b).

(v) any clinically diagnosed special need of such children; and

(vi) the extent of any specialized education, treatment, counseling, or other services provided in the settings; and

(B) children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting.

(b) CONSULTATION ON OTHER ISSUES.—The Secretary shall consult with States and organizations with an interest in child welfare, including organizations that provide adoption and foster care services, and shall take into account requests from Members of Congress, in selecting other issues to be analyzed and reported on under this section using data available to the Secretary, including data reported by States through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and to the National Youth in Transition Database.

Appendix B

Child Welfare Outcomes Report: Outcomes and Measures

Outcome 1: Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect

Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the year, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period?¹

Outcome 2: Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care

Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff?

Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care

Measure 3.1: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship?

Measure 3.2: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were identified as having a diagnosed disability, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship?

Measure 3.3: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship?

Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care?

Measure 3.5: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage by racial/ethnic category left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship?

Outcome 4: Reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry

Measure 4.1: Of all children reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care during the year, what percentage were reunified in the following time periods?

- (a) Less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care
- (b) At least 12 months but less than 24 months
- (c) At least 24 months but less than 36 months
- (d) At least 36 months but less than 48 months
- (e) 48 or more months

Measure 4.2: Of all children who entered foster care during the year, what percentage reentered care in the following time periods?

- (a) Within 12 months of a prior foster care episode
- (b) More than 12 months after a prior foster care episode

Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption

Measure 5.1: Of all children discharged from foster care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in the following time periods?

- (a) Less than 12 months from the time of latest removal from home
- (b) At least 12 months but less than 24 months
- (c) At least 24 months but less than 36 months
- (d) At least 36 months but less than 48 months
- (e) 48 or more months

¹ In this Report, all references to “year” indicate a Federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Although alternate types of years (e.g., calendar years) are never used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the Child and Family Services Reviews sometimes use alternate 12-month time periods to track progress over time.

Outcome 6: Increase placement stability

Measure 6.1: Of all children served in foster care during the year who had been in care for the time periods listed below, what percentage had no more than two placement settings during that time period?

- (a) Less than 12 months from the time of latest removal from home
- (b) At least 12 months but less than 24 months
- (c) At least 24 months but less than 36 months
- (d) At least 36 months but less than 48 months
- (e) 48 or more months

Outcome 7: Reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions

Measure 7.1: Of all children who entered foster care during the year and were age 12 or younger at the time of their most recent placement, what percentage were placed in a group home or an institution?

Appendix C

Caseworker Visits

States have been required to meet performance standards and submit data on monthly caseworker visits for a fiscal year (FY) since FY 2007.¹ These requirements were initiated through the passage of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288), which amended Title IV-B of the Social Security Act (the Act). This amendment also included new funding to partially support monthly caseworker visits (MCVs) with children who are in state foster care. The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) extended the requirements for states to collect and report information on MCVs in FY 2012 and in each FY thereafter. However, starting with FY 2012 data, states must meet revised performance standards and use a new data reporting methodology as outlined in Sections 424(f)(1) and (2) of the Act. Funding under Title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Act for MCVs with children in foster care is provided in accordance with Section 433(e) of the Act.

While the calculation methodology of the measures has changed for the MCVs data, similar data are collected, and both the old and new calculation methodologies seek to assess the adequacy of caseworker visits of children in foster care. The measures still assess the following:

- The frequency of the visits
- Whether or not the visits were conducted in the child’s residence

Reporting Population

The reporting population subject to the caseworker visits requirements includes all children under age 18 for at least the first day of the FY (October 1) who have been in foster care for at least 1 full calendar month during the FY. Additional reporting population clarifications can be found in Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01. This reporting population remains unchanged between the old and new requirements.

Changes in Methodology

Due to a change in calculation methodology, comparisons cannot be made between the FY 2007–2011 data and results from FY 2012 and beyond. The focus of the old methodology was on individual children, and it counted each child as having been properly served only if visits were made in each full month the child was in foster care during the FY. If a state missed one monthly visit, no credit was given for having visited the child during the other 11 months of the year. The revised calculation takes a broader view and examines the entire reporting population of children in foster care for a state to determine the adequacy of the visiting pattern as a whole.

The first of the two measures (MCVs) considers the percentage of visits to children in foster care that were made on a monthly basis. Then, a calculation is made to determine the percentage of those monthly visits that occurred in the residence of the child (visits in the home, or VIH). Due to the change in the calculation, the Child Welfare Outcomes Report for 2015 only reports on caseworker visits data for 2012–2015. Data from prior years can be found on the Child Welfare Outcomes Report data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>). More details on the reporting approach, including references, are provided within this appendix.

Data Reporting Methodology

This section focuses on the methodology for the new calculations. For more detailed information about the calculations, refer to the following Program Instructions.

For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data for FYs 2007–2011, see Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-08-03, which was issued on April 18, 2008. It is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi0803.pdf>.

For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data for FY 2012 and beyond, see Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01, which was issued on January 6, 2012. It is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1201.pdf>.

¹ The FY is the 12-month period beginning October 1 and ending September 30.

Calculation of MCVs²

To calculate the percentage of required visits to children in foster care that were made on a monthly basis, the following data are required:

Denominator: the aggregate number of complete calendar months all children in the reporting population spent in care. This denominator, expressed in “visit months,” is aggregated for all children and refers to the number of months in which visits should have occurred.

Numerator: the aggregate number of monthly caseworker visits made to children in the reporting population. If a child is visited more than once in a month, only one visit is counted.

For example, if a state had 1,000 children in its foster care caseworker visits reporting population, and if these children were in care the entire 12-month period, then each child should have been visited each month he or she was in care. Therefore, the aggregate number of “visit months” those 1,000 children should have been visited would be 12,000 for the year. That would be the MCV denominator.

The numerator would be the aggregate number of required visit months where at least one actual caseworker visit was made to each of those children. For the purpose of this example, a total of 10,000 visits occurred (not the expected 12,000) during the year for the 1,000 children in the reporting population. To calculate the correct numerator for MCVs, a further assessment must be made to count only one visit for each month for each visited child. Thus, if 100 of these children were visited twice in 6 of the months of the year, a deduction of 600 (100x6) must be made to exclude multiple visits during the same month. Therefore, the total for the numerator is 9,400 (10,000-600) actual “visit months” for the year.

The MCV percentage is calculated by dividing the numerator by the denominator and multiplying that product by 100 [(numerator/denominator)x100]. This calculation is expressed as a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole number. In this example, the MCV percentage is 78.3 [(9,400/12,000)x100].

Calculation of Children Receiving VIH

To calculate the percentage of monthly visits that occur in the home, the following data are required:

Denominator: the number of MCVs made for children in the reporting population, which will be the same number as the numerator for the MCV calculation. The number in this denominator is expressed as the number of “visit months” aggregated for all the children (but limited to counting only one visit per child per month).

Numerator: the number of monthly visits made to children in the reporting population that occurred in the child’s home.³ Note that the numerator is expressed as “visit months,” and it is aggregated for all the visits to all the children in the foster care reporting population (but limited to only counting one visit per child per month).

The VIH percentage is calculated by dividing the numerator by the denominator and multiplying that product by 100 [(numerator/denominator)x100]. This calculation is expressed as a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole number.

Data Collection Methodology

States may choose to report caseworker visits data based on their total foster care population or based on sample data. States that choose to submit sample data must use a sampling methodology that has been approved by their Children’s Bureau Regional Office in consultation with the Administration for Children, Youth and Families’ Office of Data, Analysis, Research and Evaluation. Table 1 shows the states that elected to submit sample data for 2012, 2013, 2014, and/or 2015.

Table 1. States That Submitted Sample Data

State	Used Sample in 2012	Used Sample in 2013	Used Sample in 2014	Used Sample in 2015
Alabama	X	X	X	
Hawaii	X	X	X	X
Idaho	X			
Michigan	X	X	X	X
Mississippi			X	
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X

² Note that even though a state may keep some children in foster care beyond age 17, only children under age 18 on the first day of the FY are included in this calculation.

³ A child’s home is defined as the home where the child is residing, whether in-state or out-of-state, and can include the foster placement setting.

Appendix D

Child Welfare Outcomes Report: Data Sources and Elements¹

Context Information

Items	Data Sources and Elements
<i>Context Statistics</i>	
Total children under 18 years	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Race/ethnicity (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Child population in poverty (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Caseworker visits for children in foster care	States submit data in conjunction with Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports
<i>Child Maltreatment Data (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)</i>	
Children subject of an investigated report alleging child maltreatment	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), ACF/ACYF, Children's Bureau, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS Summary Data Component (SDC): Item 3.1, Children Subject of a CPS Investigation or Assessment by Disposition
Total child maltreatment victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS SDC: Sum of Item 3.1A, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Substantiated; 3.1B, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Indicated; and 3.1C, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Given an Alternative Response That Identified Child Victim(s)
Child fatalities	Three possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Element 34, Maltreatment Death (2) NCANDS Agency File: Element 4.1 (3) NCANDS SDC: Item 5.1, Child Victims Who Died as a Result of Maltreatment
Age of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Element 12, Child Age at Report; or a combination of Element 6, Report Date, and Element 13, Child Date of Birth (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.2, Child Victims By Age
Race/ethnicity of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 15 through 20, Child Race; and Element 21, Child Ethnicity (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.4, Child Victims by Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Item 4.5, Child Victims by Race
Maltreatment types of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 26 through 33, Maltreatment Type, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.1, Child Victims by Type of Maltreatment
Response time	Mean response time in hours is computed from the Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24. Median response time in hours is computed from the NCANDS Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24.
<i>Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System)</i>	
Total number (for each fiscal year [FY]) • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30	HHS/ACF/ACYF/Children's Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal, and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
Median length of stay (for each FY) • In care on 10/1 • Exited care • In care on 9/30	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal, and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
Age of children (for each FY) • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
Race/ethnicity of children (for each FY) • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 8, Race, and Element 9, Hispanic Origin

¹ All of the data may be found on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>. Not all of the data listed are included in the printed report.

<i>Characteristics of Children Waiting for Adoption on 9/30 (AFCARS)</i>	
Total waiting children	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother's Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father's Termination of Parental Rights
Number of waiting children whose parents' rights have been terminated	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 47, Date of Mother's Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father's Termination of Parental Rights
Age of children waiting for adoption	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother's Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father's Termination of Parental Rights
Race/ethnicity of children waiting for adoption	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 8, Race; Element 9, Hispanic Origin; Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother's Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father's Termination of Parental Rights
<i>Characteristics of Children Adopted (AFCARS)</i>	
Total children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Age of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 5, Child's Date of Birth; and Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Race/ethnicity of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 7, Race; and Element 8, Hispanic Origin

Outcome Information

Outcome Measures	Data Sources and Elements
<i>Outcome 1. Reduce Recurrence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (NCANDS)</i>	
1.1 Recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months	NCANDS Child File: Field 4, Child ID; Field 6, Report Date; Fields 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level(s); and Field 34, Maltreatment Death
<i>Outcome 2. Reduce the Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (NCANDS and AFCARS)</i>	
2.1 Maltreatment in foster care	AFCARS Annual Foster Care Database: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal, and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care NCANDS Child File: Field 4, Child ID; Field 6, Report Date; Fields 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level(s); Field 34, Maltreatment Death; and Fields 89,108, 127, Perpetrator Relationship
<i>Outcome 3. Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care (AFCARS)</i>	
3.1 Exits of children from foster care	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care, and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
3.2 Exits of children with a diagnosed disability	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 10, Child Diagnosed With Disabilities; Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care; and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
3.3 Exits of children older than age 12 at entry	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care; and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
3.4 Exits to emancipation	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care, and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
3.5 Exits by race/ethnicity	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 8, Race; Element 9, Hispanic Origin; Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care; and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
<i>Outcome 4. Reduce Time to Reunification Without Increasing Reentry (AFCARS)</i>	
4.1 Time to reunification	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care; and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
4.2 Children reentering foster care	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 19, Total Number of Removals; Element 20, Date of Discharge From Last Foster Care Episode; and Element 21, Date of Latest Removal
<i>Outcome 5. Reduce Time in Foster Care to Adoption (AFCARS)</i>	
5.1 Time to adoption	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care; and Element 58, Reasons for Discharge
<i>Outcome 6. Increase Placement Stability (AFCARS)</i>	
6.1 Number of placements by time in care	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; Element 23, Date of Placement in Current Placement Setting; Element 24, Number of Previous Settings in Episode; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
<i>Outcome 7. Reduce Placement of Young Children in Group Homes or Institutions (AFCARS)</i>	
7.1 Most recent placement settings of children age 12 or younger who entered care during FY	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; Element 23, Date of Placement in Current Placement Setting; and Element 41, Current Placement Setting

Appendix E

Child Maltreatment 2015: Summary of Key Findings

The following are key findings from *Child Maltreatment 2015*. The statistics in the Child Maltreatment series of reports are based on data submitted to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

The full *Child Maltreatment 2015* report is available on the Children's Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2015>.

Overview

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have child abuse and neglect reporting laws that mandate certain professionals and institutions to refer suspected maltreatment to a child protective services (CPS) agency.

Each state has its own definitions of child abuse and neglect that are based on standards set by federal law. Federal legislation provides a foundation for states by identifying a set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C. § 5101), as amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111-320), defines the existing definition of child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum:

Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

Most states recognize four major types of maltreatment: neglect, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment, and sexual abuse. Although any of the forms of child maltreatment may be found separately, they also can occur in combination.

What is NCANDS?

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort to collect and analyze annual data on child abuse and neglect. The 1988 CAPTA amendments directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a national data-collection and analysis program. The Children's Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families of the HHS Administration for Children and Families collects and analyzes the data.

The data are submitted voluntarily by the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The first report from NCANDS was based on data for 1990. This report for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 data is the 26th issuance of the annual publication.

How are the data used?

NCANDS data are used for the Child Maltreatment report series. In addition, data collected by NCANDS are a critical source of information for many publications, reports, and activities of the federal government and other groups. Data from NCANDS are used in the Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress and to measure the performance of several federal programs.

What data are collected?

Once an allegation (called a referral) of abuse or neglect is received by a CPS agency, it is either screened in for a response by CPS or it is screened out. A screened-in referral is called a report. CPS agencies respond to all reports. In most states, the majority of reports receive investigations, which determines if a child was maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment and establishes whether an intervention is needed. Some reports receive alternative responses, which focus primarily upon the needs of the family and do not determine if a child was maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment.

NCANDS collects case-level data on all children who received a CPS agency response in the form of an investigation response or an alternative response. Case-level data include information about the characteristics of screened-in referrals (reports) of abuse and neglect that are made to CPS agencies, the children involved, the types of maltreatment they suffered, the

dispositions of the CPS responses, the risk factors of the children and caregivers, the services that are provided, and the perpetrators.

Where are the data available?

The Child Maltreatment reports are available on the Children’s Bureau website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>.

If you have questions or require additional information about this report, please contact Child Welfare Information Gateway at info@childwelfare.gov or 800–394–3366. Restricted-use files of NCANDS data are archived at the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) at Cornell University. Researchers who are interested in using these data for statistical analyses may contact NDACAN by phone at 607–255–7799 or by email at ndacan@cornell.edu.

How many allegations of maltreatment were reported and received an investigation response or alternative response?

During FFY 2015, CPS agencies received an estimated 4.0 million referrals involving approximately 7.2 million children. Among the 44 states that reported both screened-in and screened-out referrals, 58.2 percent of referrals were screened in, and 41.8 percent of referrals were screened out. For FFY 2015, 2.2 million referrals were screened in for a CPS response. The national rate of screened-in referrals (reports) was 30.1 per 1,000 children in the national population.

Who reported child maltreatment?

For 2015, professionals made approximately three-fifths (63.4 percent) of reports alleging child abuse and neglect. The term professional means that the person had contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of his or her job. This term includes teachers, police officers, lawyers, and social services staff. The highest percentages of reports came from education personnel (18.4 percent), legal and law enforcement personnel (18.2 percent), and social services personnel (10.9 percent).

Nonprofessionals—including friends, neighbors, and relatives—submitted one-fifth of reports (18.2 percent). Unclassified sources submitted the remaining one-fifth of reports (18.3 percent). Unclassified includes anonymous, “other,” and unknown report sources. States use the code “other” for any report source that does not have an NCANDS designated code.

Who were the child victims?

Fifty-two states submitted data to NCANDS about the dispositions of children who received one or more CPS responses. For FFY 2015, approximately 3.4 million children were the subjects of at least one report. More than four-fifths of these children (83.9 percent) were the subject of only one report, 12.5 percent were the subject of two reports, and 3.6 percent were the subject of three or more reports. Approximately one-fifth of children were found to be victims with substantiated (17.3 percent) or indicated (0.7 percent) dispositions. The remaining children were determined to be nonvictims of maltreatment. For FFY 2015, there were a nationally reported 683,000 (rounded) victims of child abuse and neglect. The victim rate was 9.2 victims per 1,000 children in the population. Victim demographics include the following:

- Children in their first year of life had the highest rate of victimization at 24.2 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.
- The majority of victims consisted of three races or ethnicities—White (43.2 percent), Hispanic (23.6 percent), and African-American (21.4 percent).
- More than nine-tenths (93.3 percent) of victims were found to be victims in one report, and 6.7 percent were found to be victims in more than one report.

What were the most common types of maltreatment?

As in prior years, the greatest percentages of children suffered from neglect (75.3 percent) and physical abuse (17.2 percent). A child may have suffered from multiple forms of maltreatment. A victim who suffered more than one type of maltreatment was counted only once per type.

How many children died from abuse or neglect?

A child fatality is the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For FFY 2015, 49 states reported 1,585 fatalities. Based on these data, a nationally estimated 1,670 children died from abuse and neglect. The following are findings based on analyses regarding child fatalities for which case-level data were obtained:

- The national rate of child fatalities was 2.25 deaths per 100,000 children.
- Nearly three-quarters (74.8 percent) of all child fatalities were younger than 3 years old.
- Boys had a higher child fatality rate than girls at 2.42 boys per 100,000 boys in the population. Girls had a child fatality rate of 2.09 per 100,000 girls in the population.
- More than four-fifths (87.4 percent) of child fatalities were composed of White (42.3 percent), African-American (30.6 percent), and Hispanic (14.5 percent) victims.
- Nearly four-fifths (77.7 percent) of child fatalities involved at least one parent.

Who abused and neglected children?

A perpetrator is the person who is responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child. Fifty-one states reported 522,476 perpetrators. The following are findings based on the analyses performed regarding perpetrators for whom case-level data were available:

- More than four-fifths (83.4 percent) of perpetrators were between the ages of 18 and 44 years.
- More than one-half (54.1 percent) of perpetrators were women, 45.0 percent of perpetrators were men, and 0.9 percent were of unknown sex.
- The three largest percentages of perpetrator race/ethnicity were White (48.7 percent), African-American (20.0 percent), or Hispanic (19.5 percent).
- Less than one-tenth (7.0 percent) of perpetrators were involved in more than one report.
- More than three-fifths (61.5 percent) of perpetrators maltreated one victim, more than one-fifth (21.5 percent) maltreated two victims, and the remaining 17 percent maltreated three or more victims.

Who received services?

CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in their homes and in foster care. Reasons for providing services may include (1) preventing future instances of child maltreatment and (2) remedying conditions that brought the children and their families to the attention of the agency. The following are additional details about services provided during FFY 2015:

- Forty-seven states reported approximately 2.3 million children received prevention services.
- Approximately 1.3 million children received postresponse services from a CPS agency.
- Nearly two-thirds (61.9 percent) of victims and one-third (29.7 percent) of nonvictims received postresponse services.

Appendix F

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>

The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2015 Estimates as of June 2016 • No. 23

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2015 data²

Numbers At A Glance

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	397,605	397,301	401,213	414,429	427,910
Number entered foster care during FY	251,450	251,354	254,712	264,555	269,509
Number exited foster care during FY	247,543	239,535	238,930	237,554	243,060
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	106,440	101,935	104,387	108,189	111,820
Number waiting to be adopted whose parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated during FY	61,904	58,187	58,638	61,070	62,378
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during FY	50,913	52,025	50,820	50,625	53,549

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2015 • N=427,910

Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number
Mean	8.6	Male	52%	222,849
Median	7.8	Female	48%	204,999

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	29,684	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	15,107
1 Year	8%	35,642	Foster Family Home (Relative)	30%	127,821
2 Years	7%	31,340	Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	45%	191,842
3 Years	6%	27,633	Group Home	6%	24,021
4 Years	6%	24,613	Institution	8%	32,204
5 Years	5%	22,825	Supervised Independent Living	1%	4,107
6 Years	5%	22,469	Runaway	1%	4,648
7 Years	5%	21,526	Trial Home Visit	5%	22,974

Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Principal Caretaker(s)	55%	227,955
Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,408
Adoption	25%	102,798
Long Term Foster Care	3%	13,546
Emancipation	4%	17,188
Guardianship	3%	14,214
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	6%	23,573

¹ 'FY' refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1st through September 30th.

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by June 8, 2016 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g. number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group).

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	10,130
Asian	1%	2,232
Black or African American	24%	103,376
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	850
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	91,105
White	43%	182,711
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	7,990
Two or more Races	7%	28,751

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Time in Care	Months
Mean	20.4
Median	12.6

Time in Care (Months)	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	6%	23,846
1 - 5 Months	22%	95,999
6 - 11 Months	20%	85,865
12 - 17 Months	15%	65,321
18 - 23 Months	10%	42,721
24 - 29 Months	7%	30,751
30 - 35 Months	4%	19,227
3 - 4 Years	9%	37,130
5 Years or More	6%	27,000

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2015 • N=269,509

Age at Entry	Years
Mean	7.3
Median	6.3

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	18%	47,219
1 Year	7%	20,077
2 Years	7%	17,793
3 Years	6%	15,767
4 Years	5%	14,416
5 Years	5%	14,027
6 Years	5%	13,559
7 Years	5%	12,702
8 Years	4%	11,665
9 Years	4%	10,312
10 Years	3%	9,354
11 Years	3%	8,871
12 Years	3%	9,317
13 Years	4%	10,640
14 Years	5%	12,582
15 Years	5%	14,578
16 Years	6%	14,826
17 Years	4%	10,375
18 Years	0%	1,011
19 Years	0%	296
20 Years	0%	97

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	6,350
Asian	1%	1,653
Black or African American	23%	60,733
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	712
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	54,001
White	45%	122,088
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	5,803
Two or more Races	6%	17,264

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Reasons for Removal*	Percent	Number
Neglect	61%	161,791
Drug Abuse Parent	32%	85,937
Caretaker Inability to Cope	14%	37,243
Physical Abuse	13%	34,647
Child Behavior Problem	11%	30,124
Inadequate Housing	10%	27,002
Parent Incarceration	8%	21,006
Alcohol Abuse Parent	6%	14,978
Abandonment	5%	12,363
Sexual Abuse	4%	10,330
Drug Abuse Child	2%	6,085
Child Disability	2%	4,514
Relinquishment	1%	2,569
Parent Death	1%	2,019
Alcohol Abuse Child	0%	1,320

NOTE: These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries.

Children Exiting Foster Care during FY 2015 • N=243,060

Age at Exit	Years
Mean	8.9
Median	7.9

Age at Exit	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	5%	10,967
1 Year	8%	19,377
2 Years	8%	19,593
3 Years	7%	16,789
4 Years	6%	15,109
5 Years	6%	13,796
6 Years	6%	13,385
7 Years	5%	12,669
8 Years	5%	11,594
9 Years	4%	10,129
10 Years	4%	9,128
11 Years	3%	8,137
12 Years	3%	7,985
13 Years	3%	7,940
14 Years	4%	8,911
15 Years	4%	10,168
16 Years	5%	11,853
17 Years	5%	11,698
18 Years	7%	18,005
19 Years	2%	4,246
20 Years	0%	743

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic

Time in Care	Months
Mean	19.0
Median	13.5

Time in care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	11%	25,640
1 - 5 Months	15%	36,927
6 - 11 Months	20%	47,865
12 - 17 Months	16%	39,727
18 - 23 Months	12%	28,826
24 - 29 Months	8%	19,714
30 - 35 Months	5%	13,172
3 - 4 Years	9%	20,715
5 Years or More	4%	10,047

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	5,249
Asian	1%	1,598
Black or African American	23%	54,795
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	519
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,667
White	45%	109,132
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,105
Two or more Races	6%	15,596

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race

Reasons for Discharge	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	51%	123,894
Living with Other Relative(s)	6%	15,621
Adoption	22%	52,931
Emancipation	9%	20,789
Guardianship	9%	22,303
Transfer to Another Agency	2%	4,363
Runaway	0%	985
Death of Child	0%	336

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2015 • N=111,820

Age as of September 30th	Years
Mean	7.6
Median	6.8

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Years
Mean	5.0
Median	4.1

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	3,980
1 Year	10%	10,915
2 Years	9%	10,517
3 Years	8%	8,983
4 Years	7%	7,900
5 Years	6%	7,145
6 Years	6%	7,053
7 Years	6%	6,672
8 Years	6%	6,180
9 Years	5%	5,832
10 Years	5%	5,322
11 Years	4%	4,797
12 Years	4%	4,652
13 Years	4%	4,539
14 Years	4%	4,781
15 Years	4%	4,899
16 Years	4%	4,287
17 Years	3%	3,366

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	25%	28,356
1 Year	9%	9,788
2 Years	8%	8,674
3 Years	7%	7,842
4 Years	7%	7,545
5 Years	7%	7,386
6 Years	6%	6,949
7 Years	6%	6,175
8 Years	5%	5,477
9 Years	4%	4,874
10 Years	4%	4,420
11 Years	4%	3,956
12 Years	3%	3,380
13 Years	3%	2,937
14 Years	2%	2,044
15 Years	1%	1,364
16 Years	1%	560
17 Years	0%	86

Placement type	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	12%	13,433
Foster Family Home (Relative)	25%	28,296
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	52%	58,119
Group Home	4%	4,033
Institution	5%	5,932
Supervised Independent Living	0%	94
Runaway	0%	431
Trial Home Visit	1%	714

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	2,112
Asian	0%	462
Black or African American	23%	25,510
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	131
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	25,093
White	43%	48,195
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,673
Two or more Races	8%	8,600

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	53%	58,746
Female	47%	53,069

¹ Waiting children are identified as children who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. Children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation have been excluded from the estimate.

Time in Care	Months
Mean	31.7
Median	25.0

Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=62,378), Time elapsed since termination of parental rights as of September 30, 2015

Time since TPR	Months
Mean	20.5
Media	10.0

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	384
1 - 5 Months	4%	4,110
6 - 11 Months	9%	10,585
12 - 17 Months	17%	19,043
18 - 23 Months	17%	18,866
24 - 29 Months	15%	16,253
30 - 35 Months	10%	10,674
3 - 4 Years	18%	20,484
5 Years or More	10%	11,421

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 20154 • N=53,549

Age of Adoption	Years
Mean	6.2
Median	5.2

Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Months
Mean	11.9
Median	8.7

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,096
1 Year	12%	6,453
2 Years	14%	7,624
3 Years	11%	5,912
4 Years	9%	4,886
5 Years	8%	4,249
6 Years	7%	3,801
7 Years	6%	3,458
8 Years	6%	3,004
9 Years	5%	2,493
10 Years	4%	2,132
11 Years	3%	1,809
12 Years	3%	1,513
13 Years	2%	1,331
14 Years	2%	1,160
15 Years	2%	919
16 Years	2%	872
17 Years	1%	666
18 Years	0%	136
19 Years	0%	17
20 Years	0%	10

Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	2%	1,207
1-5 Months	29%	15,517
6-11 Months	35%	18,447
12-17 Months	17%	8,876
18-23 Months	7%	3,848
24-29 Months	4%	1,949
30-35 Months	2%	1,014
3-4 Years	2%	1,298
5 Years or more	1%	580

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	898
Asian	0%	203
Black or African American	18%	9,764
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	79
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	11,683
White	48%	25,870
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	714
Two or more Races	8%	4,316

⁴ Note that the adoption data reported in this section are from the AFCARS Adoption file. Therefore, the number of adoptions reported here may not equal the number reported as discharges to adoption from foster care.

Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	35,829
Unmarried Couple	3%	1,735
Single Female	26%	13,671
Single Male	3%	1,623

Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	14%	7,316
Foster Parent	52%	26,983
Stepparent	0%	46
Other Relative	34%	17,853

NOTE: For the purposes of this table, relatives who were also foster parents are classified only as relatives.

Sex of Child	Percent	Number
Male	51%	27,237
Female	49%	26,307

Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Yes	92%	49,284
No	8%	4,222

