

Child Welfare Outcomes 2019

Report to Congress

Safety · Permanency · 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), which requires 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 Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports. The present Report, Child Welfare Outcomes 2019, is the 20th Report since the series' inception.

The Child Welfare Outcomes Reports provide 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 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 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

These outcomes reflect the importance of performance objectives in child welfare practice in and around the time of ASFA's passage. In recent years, the Children's Bureau, Congress, and the child welfare field have begun to recognize and emphasize the critical importance of a full continuum of prevention services and approaches as essential child welfare practice. This may lead to HHS considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future.

In addition to detailing state performance in the current 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 reporting systems—the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

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. 109–288, Pub. L. 112–34, Pub. L. 113–183, and Pub. L. 115–123.

² Title IV-E has been amended on several occasions. Its funds support foster care; adoption assistance; kinship guardianship assistance; and, at the option of a state, kinship navigator programs and/or time-limited prevention services for candidates of foster care, pregnant or parenting foster youth, and the parents or kin caregivers of those children and youth. Title IV-B funds support preventative and protective services for children. For more information on policies and guidance provided to states, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/policy-program-issuances>.

³ For the purposes of 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. Tribal Title IV-E agencies are not included in this Report. It is important to note, however, that states report information on all children for whom the state has responsibility for placement, care, and supervision, and in some cases these children may be tribal children. Currently, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) does not have an indicator to distinguish which states are reporting tribal information or an identifier for tribal children.

Contextual Factors

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report presents data on child welfare-related contextual factors relevant to understanding and interpreting state performance on the measures. The following is a summary of the 2019 data for these contextual factors.⁴

Foster care information overview

- Nationally, there were approximately 424,000 children in foster care on the last day of 2019. During that year, an estimated 251,000 children entered foster care, and 249,000 children exited foster care.⁵ Among the states, the foster care entry rate ranged from 1.4 children per 1,000 in a state's population to 14.0 children per 1,000 in a state's population.⁶
- The number of children in foster care on the last day of the year decreased from the prior year for both 2018 and 2019. The decrease observed from 2017 to 2019 was approximately 3 percent.⁷
- Of the children who entered foster care in 2019, the majority had a reason for removal that included neglect (either alone—24.7 percent— or in combination with another reason other than physical or sexual abuse—30.1 percent). Physical or sexual abuse (alone) accounted for 16.0 percent of the removals, and drug abuse (alone) accounted for 8.1 percent.

Child victims' information overview

- During 2019, approximately 656,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.^{8,9} The overall national child victim rate was 8.9 child victims per 1,000 children in the population.¹⁰ State child victim rates varied dramatically, ranging from 1.8 child victims per 1,000 children to 20.1 child victims per 1,000 children.¹¹

State Performance on Outcome Measures

This Report includes a synopsis of key findings on the 12 measures established to assess performance on the seven national outcomes previously identified. 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. Table 1, at the end of the Executive Summary, displays these measures and their medians for 2015–2019.¹² Change in

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 federal fiscal year 2019.

⁵ These foster care entry and exit data were obtained from Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2010–FY 2019, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>. They may differ with data presented in later sections of this Report because of differences in data-quality thresholds.

⁶ The foster care entry rate was 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.

⁷ For more information, see *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2010–FY 2019* on the Children's Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>. The data used in that report were current as of June 2020.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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. Prior to 2015, children with dispositions of "alternative response victim" were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports use the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in the Child Maltreatment reports. The total number of child victims in this Report were rounded to the nearest 1,000.

¹⁰ The national child victim rate was calculated by dividing the total number of child victims (656,243) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS data (73,611,881) and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000. This calculation includes children under the age of 18.

¹¹ 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.

¹² In this Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure. In the 2019 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2019 only. However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated using only data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2015–2019). This was done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons of medians between years used the latter calculation. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

state performance over time was assessed by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.¹³ Consistent with HHS' historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percentage change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) was used as a general indicator that meaningful change in performance on the measures occurred. Therefore, for the purposes of the analyses presented in this Report, if the percentage change in performance from 2015 to 2019 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination was that there was no change in performance.

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

- In 2019, state performance with regard to the percentage of child victims experiencing a recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period (measure 1.1) was 5.1 percent.
- States with higher child victim rates tended to have higher maltreatment recurrence rates within a 6-month period (Pearson's $r=0.68$).¹⁴ Similarly, the percentage of children who were victims of neglect was moderately correlated with the percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period (Pearson's $r=0.46$).
- National performance over time on the recurrence of child maltreatment declined between 2015 (median=5.0 percent) and 2019 (median=5.2 percent), with about as many states reporting an improvement in performance (21) as a decline in performance (20).

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

- In 2019, the national median performance with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) was 0.27 percent and state performance ranged from 0.00 to 2.06 percent.¹⁵
- The national median performance regarding the percentage of children who experienced maltreatment while in foster care decreased from 0.29 percent in 2015 to 0.26 percent in 2019, reflecting a 10.3-percent decrease.

Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care

- In 2019, states were mostly successful in achieving permanency (i.e., discharge to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship) for all children exiting foster care (measure 3.1), with a median performance of 90.3 percent.
- States were less successful in achieving permanent homes for children exiting foster care who had a diagnosed disability (measure 3.2, median= 82.7 percent) and for children who had entered care when they were older than age 12 (measure 3.3, median= 64.3 percent).¹⁶
- The median percentage of children who emancipated from foster care and who also were age 12 or younger when they entered care (measure 3.4) declined 19.4 percent since 2015, with 69 percent of states demonstrating improved performance on this measure.
- From 2015 to 2019, state performance declined for placing American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children into permanent homes (measure 3.5). There was an increase in the median percentage of White children (from 90.4 to 91.4 percent), Black or African-American children (from 84.2 to 87.0 percent), and Hispanic children (from 90.6 to 90.7 percent) exiting care to permanent placements.

¹³ Percentage change was calculated by subtracting the "old" data from the "new" data, dividing that result by the old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, median performance on measure 3.1 was 89.1 percent in 2015 and 90.2 percent in 2019, and so the resulting increase is 1.2 percent $\{[(90.2-89.1)/89.1] \times 100=1.2\}$.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Due to the relatively few cases of child maltreatment in foster care, performance on this measure is presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

¹⁶ For the purpose of AFCARS, a diagnosed disability includes mental retardation, visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, or other medically diagnosed conditions requiring special care. For more information on the definitions and requirements for a disability, see AFCARS Technical Bulletin #2: Disability Information (last revised February 2012) at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-tb2>.

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

- In 43 states (83 percent), at least half of reunifications occurred within 12 months from the time of entry into foster care (measure 4.1). The median performance was 62.6 percent. National performance over time has declined consistently over the past 5 years, with a 7.1-percent decrease since 2015.
- Of all children who entered foster care during 2019, a median of 7.3 percent had reentered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode (measure 4.2). The national median increased slightly from 7.3 percent in 2015 to 7.4 percent in 2019—an overall increase of 1.4 percent—with 21 states showing a greater proportion of children in the entry group having had a prior episode in care.

Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption

- States continued to struggle with achieving timely adoptions in 2019, with a median of 3.1 percent of children discharged to a finalized adoption within 12 months of the latest removal (measure 5.1a). Additionally, more than half of states (59 percent) declined in performance between 2015 and 2019.
- For adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from entry into foster care (measure 5.1b), national performance declined 11.4 percent between 2015 and 2019, with more than half (59 percent) of states demonstrating a decline in performance.

Outcome 6: Increase placement stability

- In 2019, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months demonstrated placement stability (i.e., having had two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode) (measure 6.1a), with a median performance of 83.0 percent.
- States were less successful in demonstrating placement stability the longer a child spent in foster care. The median across states for children who were in care between 12 and 24 months (measure 6.1b) was 64.9 percent, and for children in care at least 24 months (measure 6.1c), it was 40.6 percent.
- Between 2015 and 2019, states showed little change in demonstrating placement stability for children in care under 24 months. However, for children in care at least 24 months, the national median increased by 12.5 percent—from 35.9 to 40.4 percent—with nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of states demonstrating an improvement in performance.

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

- For half the states (50 percent), 2.9 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions in 2019 (measure 7.1).
- Overall, states continued to demonstrate improvement on this measure, decreasing from 3.7 percent in 2015 to 2.9 percent in 2019—a 21.6-percent decline—with 32 states (63 percent) demonstrating an improvement 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 for the child welfare field to gain further understanding and move forward. Areas needing additional attention include the following:

- The number of children in foster care on the last day of the year decreased during the last 2 years (2018 and 2019). It will be important to monitor these numbers in future reports to see if this will become a sustained decrease that may be partially due to the availability of optional prevention funding¹⁷ and implementation efforts.
- While the national median performance in achieving permanency for all children and for children with a diagnosed disability remained high, state performance on finding permanent homes for older children continues to be a challenge. Agencies should review their data to consider what additional barriers may prevent older youth from achieving permanency.
- Despite reunifications constituting more than half of all exits from foster care, the national performance has mostly declined over the last 5 years, with over four times as many states demonstrating a decline in performance than showing an improvement. Agencies should identify and review specific barriers to achieving timely reunifications.
- When reunification is not in the best interest of the child, adoption should be pursued. However, data indicate that achieving timely adoptions still is a challenge for most states. Among children who were adopted, the proportion who were adopted less than 12 months from entry declined for a majority of states between 2015 and 2019—with 30 states showing a decline in improvement. Similarly, over half of states reported a decline in the proportion of adoptions that occurred between 12 and 24 months from entry.
- As previously noted, state performance on the proportion of children exiting to reunification and adoption has decreased. It will be important for states to monitor these outcomes as they strive to move children to timely permanency.
- States have been mostly successful in achieving stable placement settings for children in foster care less than 12 months and have shown strong improvement on this measure for children in care at least 24 months. States may want to examine the population of children in care between 12 and 24 months to identify possible barriers to improved performance specific to this population.
- Although the national percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions has declined since 2015, it is important to note that 15 states declined in performance (i.e., more children were placed in congregate care). Therefore, it would be useful to determine what specific strategies may assist states that continue to struggle in this area.
- Table 2 displays the changes in performance for each state between 2015 and 2019 across the measures and select subcategories of measures. Seven states showed improvement in at least half (seven or more) of the measures, with states ranging from improving on one to nine measures. While many states are making progress on these permanency and safety outcomes, it is important for states to continue to monitor ongoing practice efforts and identify which strategies may be associated with improved outcomes. They then may be able to determine whether they—or other states—can replicate those strategies to stem or reverse declining performance in any remaining outcomes.

¹⁷ The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Pub. L. 115–123), which was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act, provides prevention funding for states. For more information on FFPSA, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/whats-new>.

Data and analyses presented throughout this Report offer additional details regarding the foster care population and overall national performance on the seven primary outcomes. Outcomes-based visuals in the Report display both single-year performance and state performance over time from 2015 to 2019.

Table 1. Median State Performance on Outcome Measures, 2015–2019

Outcome measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
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) ^a	5.0%	5.1%	5.3%	5.5%	5.2%
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) ^a	0.29%	0.20%	0.27%	0.26%	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=51)	89.1%	89.0%	90.3%	90.3%	90.2%
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=44)	79.8%	82.1%	81.5%	82.2%	83.2%
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=51)	66.0%	65.2%	64.0%	62.7%	64.0%
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) ^a	18.6%	16.9%	16.9%	15.8%	15.0%
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)	67.8%	66.1%	64.6%	63.8%	63.0%
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) ^a	7.3%	7.1%	7.3%	6.9%	7.4%
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)	3.3%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%	3.1%
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 of the latest removal from home? (N=51)	30.8%	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%	27.3%
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)	84.8%	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%	83.0%
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)	63.3%	65.1%	65.8%	65.8%	64.8%
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)	35.9%	39.0%	41.1%	41.1%	40.4%
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=51) ^a	3.7%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%

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

Note.— Data for this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality criteria for all years. Data for measure 3.5 are presented separately in table III–5 in the Report.

Table 2. State Percentage Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2015–2019

State	1.1	2.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2	5.1a	5.1b	6.1a	6.1b	6.1c	7.1
Alabama	59.7%	326.5%	0.6%	0.5%	–4.9%	–35.6%	–7.1%	–3.5%	–10.7%	15.2%	–1.8%	2.5%	16.8%	–50.3%
Alaska	–9.0%	104.6%	–0.6%	–0.2%	8.0%	31.3%	–13.8%	86.8%	–59.5%	–26.5%	–3.2%	3.5%	18.1%	–47.3%
Arizona	–4.3%	99.9%	–0.3%	–6.1%	–1.4%	–1.6%	–3.9%	–8.0%	53.4%	–4.9%	0.5%	–4.0%	–8.4%	–27.4%
Arkansas	3.3%	–37.9%	–1.1%	0.3%	–7.2%	–27.4%	–9.2%	–12.9%	16.4%	–17.2%	5.4%	18.7%	–6.4%	–65.3%
California	–4.4%	–11.5%	4.4%	6.4%	–7.8%	–11.3%	–1.4%	–13.7%	–20.0%	–8.4%	4.4%	8.8%	13.4%	–32.9%
Colorado	19.1%	–18.2%	–1.1%	DQ	–5.1%	–37.3%	–0.8%	–4.2%	–3.6%	–16.5%	–1.5%	–1.0%	9.3%	–51.2%
Connecticut	5.8%	–67.2%	29.5%	22.8%	16.3%	12.5%	–2.5%	30.1%	170.7%	10.0%	–6.3%	–11.0%	7.0%	–61.2%
Delaware	–75.4%	N/A	4.5%	18.9%	–10.2%	–51.2%	4.5%	–0.4%	–34.7%	–7.1%	–2.5%	–6.6%	–3.2%	40.5%
District of Columbia	42.6%	22.0%	8.2%	78.8%	13.6%	–62.7%	6.1%	30.5%	N/A	–36.8%	–18.0%	–8.6%	22.8%	N/A
Florida	–15.3%	–58.8%	1.7%	–2.7%	0.1%	–50.1%	–13.3%	41.4%	–31.2%	–9.9%	–3.7%	–2.8%	16.6%	–29.2%
Georgia	–60.4%	DQ	–0.3%	0.6%	–13.3%	11.2%	–29.6%	–6.6%	–37.4%	–40.8%	9.6%	23.0%	18.5%	–54.6%
Hawaii	125.1%	–34.2%	–1.1%	1.6%	–11.3%	–72.6%	–6.4%	–3.1%	–68.9%	–3.7%	0.2%	7.6%	9.7%	23.9%
Idaho	–41.6%	DQ	–0.6%	7.8%	–10.7%	–53.9%	–0.4%	–30.0%	230.6%	–25.0%	–6.0%	–8.1%	42.1%	–18.2%
Illinois	27.4%	25.8%	–4.3%	–26.5%	–18.6%	–19.2%	12.2%	–25.5%	204.3%	72.2%	17.6%	13.9%	7.1%	–28.2%
Indiana	17.5%	64.0%	1.0%	2.7%	2.0%	37.4%	–7.8%	57.0%	–24.6%	–24.1%	–0.4%	1.8%	7.4%	5.3%
Iowa	40.5%	6.1%	3.6%	5.3%	–5.1%	23.3%	–7.7%	–21.7%	–34.6%	–2.8%	4.4%	17.4%	51.7%	2.2%
Kansas	–5.4%	–15.0%	1.1%	1.2%	–1.7%	–20.8%	–5.9%	32.6%	–40.2%	–30.3%	–6.0%	–7.8%	–2.6%	156.0%
Kentucky	–4.5%	–78.8%	1.1%	2.5%	–2.7%	–5.8%	0.3%	–18.7%	–2.0%	15.9%	–2.6%	1.9%	7.0%	–26.7%
Louisiana	–41.0%	DQ*	–2.0%	1.3%	–13.9%	–10.6%	–8.9%	–7.1%	–15.2%	–18.1%	–3.7%	–4.7%	–3.2%	–18.7%
Maine	70.0%	76.0%	2.8%	14.1%	16.9%	10.1%	31.4%	25.6%	39.1%	28.9%	–2.9%	–2.8%	–2.5%	61.6%
Maryland	–2.7%	29.5%	2.2%	10.9%	–7.2%	–33.9%	–6.5%	–20.6%	–37.1%	–40.9%	–3.3%	–2.6%	9.6%	21.2%
Massachusetts	–7.2%	–1.0%	2.9%	DQ*	–1.2%	–19.8%	–10.6%	15.5%	–25.5%	–47.1%	–1.7%	–10.5%	–8.3%	–7.0%
Michigan	25.2%	62.6%	7.8%	79.0%	11.5%	–28.5%	14.3%	60.5%	–36.0%	–11.4%	–0.5%	0.4%	13.4%	73.1%
Minnesota	–27.2%	–10.4%	2.2%	0.4%	–5.4%	–31.8%	–15.3%	7.0%	–16.3%	–14.2%	1.2%	11.4%	9.3%	–9.3%
Mississippi	10.2%	60.8%	3.8%	–0.9%	4.4%	31.3%	–13.2%	1.6%	–50.1%	–8.1%	4.8%	10.0%	27.7%	–53.2%
Missouri	–41.4%	63.2%	0.5%	–2.9%	–0.4%	–6.1%	–8.9%	–16.4%	–20.2%	6.4%	–1.5%	4.7%	0.3%	–16.0%
Montana	39.0%	77.6%	1.2%	DQ	3.4%	–52.7%	–2.6%	26.2%	N/A	13.7%	0.3%	6.4%	14.2%	–37.6%
Nebraska	–46.3%	80.9%	1.3%	5.3%	–1.0%	–26.5%	–2.5%	20.6%	53.1%	–9.4%	–1.9%	–5.1%	12.6%	–38.6%
Nevada	3.1%	147.2%	–0.2%	11.9%	–4.0%	–27.4%	2.9%	–41.5%	–26.8%	–16.2%	0.5%	5.9%	4.5%	–30.7%

Table 2. State Percentage Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2015–2019

State	1.1	2.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2	5.1a	5.1b	6.1a	6.1b	6.1c	7.1
New Hampshire	–1.3%	N/A	7.0%	DQ	3.1%	–57.1%	20.2%	55.5%	N/A	56.0%	1.7%	10.0%	25.1%	20.6%
New Jersey	–28.7%	93.7%	0.1%	3.3%	–2.5%	10.0%	–8.1%	2.7%	–8.1%	–0.9%	0.2%	0.1%	–2.9%	34.4%
New Mexico	13.6%	–88.3%	0.7%	0.3%	–0.8%	–7.4%	–1.5%	–8.5%	–45.9%	–32.5%	–0.5%	–3.8%	28.3%	–42.7%
New York	2.7%	98.0%	–4.4%	–11.0%	–21.5%	–1.8%	0.2%	–3.3%	–0.2%	13.2%	–3.1%	–3.6%	–2.3%	64.2%
North Carolina	–67.0%	DQ*	5.7%	12.0%	22.1%	98.9%	–8.1%	161.5%	1.9%	–15.5%	–2.2%	–4.2%	3.8%	28.3%
North Dakota	–42.1%	177.8%	0.9%	2.1%	–10.1%	–14.7%	3.3%	56.9%	–88.5%	–30.7%	–0.9%	7.8%	12.1%	–45.1%
Ohio	10.7%	20.9%	0.2%	–1.3%	–9.5%	–46.2%	–9.2%	22.8%	–27.2%	7.7%	1.5%	6.0%	22.4%	6.8%
Oklahoma	–1.8%	–55.9%	1.7%	1.9%	14.1%	17.1%	2.1%	0.5%	90.2%	31.2%	10.2%	17.5%	13.3%	–53.5%
Oregon	25.2%	23.0%	3.1%	–16.0%	–2.7%	–29.2%	–16.3%	–19.4%	–46.3%	–24.0%	–3.8%	–3.1%	8.4%	–9.7%
Pennsylvania	–9.2%	53.0%	3.4%	DQ	–12.0%	–48.7%	–6.0%	–22.2%	–28.1%	–18.8%	0.7%	5.5%	5.9%	–21.4%
Rhode Island	–23.2%	51.8%	–4.0%	–20.8%	–28.7%	0.0%	–22.2%	–35.6%	81.2%	6.9%	1.1%	2.3%	4.8%	–56.6%
South Carolina	40.0%	105.9%	–1.3%	DQ	–6.7%	–48.9%	–4.0%	26.3%	–50.3%	–42.3%	–7.8%	–7.3%	–6.7%	–70.1%
South Dakota	79.4%	458.1%	–0.4%	DQ	5.5%	–16.0%	0.0%	12.1%	N/A	–15.9%	–7.7%	–2.6%	24.1%	1.8%
Tennessee	–27.3%	–45.0%	0.0%	19.2%	–0.8%	346.9%	–4.7%	–4.2%	49.9%	3.5%	–2.8%	–5.2%	–6.9%	20.9%
Texas	7.3%	–18.3%	0.6%	2.3%	–0.1%	–22.2%	–3.0%	34.3%	–33.0%	4.5%	–1.5%	–2.8%	–5.0%	–27.5%
Utah	–18.7%	235.3%	3.7%	6.9%	2.9%	–18.4%	–7.0%	–10.6%	–18.2%	1.7%	1.8%	13.7%	38.1%	–40.2%
Vermont	–25.8%	N/A	0.4%	–36.4%	0.4%	72.2%	–14.6%	0.1%	13.9%	–12.1%	–3.7%	0.3%	34.2%	2.6%
Virginia	3.5%	–1.7%	0.2%	–6.1%	–14.8%	–43.3%	–4.5%	65.2%	9.1%	–5.3%	–3.9%	–3.0%	–2.7%	–10.1%
Washington	18.1%	–45.8%	1.8%	2.4%	4.3%	–21.1%	–2.0%	–10.6%	–53.8%	–42.4%	0.1%	–0.9%	–3.1%	172.7%
West Virginia	166.1%	–55.9%	0.8%	–2.1%	0.1%	100.5%	–9.3%	–6.2%	0.9%	5.5%	1.3%	10.3%	27.2%	–40.9%
Wisconsin	–10.2%	21.2%	–0.4%	0.9%	–7.1%	–21.7%	–7.0%	–2.1%	–46.7%	–15.7%	–10.1%	–28.0%	–47.3%	–28.6%
Wyoming	–34.0%	–100.0%	1.7%	0.7%	1.7%	–45.5%	5.6%	30.5%	–19.1%	9.9%	0.4%	2.3%	11.3%	21.0%
Puerto Rico	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ

Notes.

–This table excludes measure 3.5. State-level information on this measure can be found on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwdatasite/>), and national performance is included in chapter III of the Report.

–A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

–Percentage change calculations were done without rounding.

–Cells marked with “DQ” were excluded from analyses due to incomplete data or data-quality issues.

Child Welfare Outcomes Data Site

Additional child welfare-related context data and state data regarding the seven national measures are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site, which is available at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>. The Child Welfare Outcomes data site allows for significantly faster release of these data than is possible via the publication of the full Report. The data site features AFCARS and NCANDS data that have been reviewed and approved by the states for inclusion in the Report and that are updated annually.

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 multiple years
- 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
- View static state data pages previously included in the full Reports

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 added section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act), which requires 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.^{18 19} The Act has been amended several times to expand child welfare data collection:

- The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288) required states to report data on monthly caseworker visits.²⁰
- The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Pub. L. 112–34) amended the requirements on monthly caseworker visit data.²¹
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (Pub. L. 113–183) required data to be reported on children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting or who were placed in a child care institution or other non-foster family home settings.²²
- The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Pub. L. 115–123) amended the data requirements on children placed in a child care institution or other non-foster family home settings.²³

Child Welfare Outcomes 1998 was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2019*, is the 20th 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.²⁴ Prior to the first Report, the Children's Bureau within HHS's 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

¹⁸ See appendix A for the current specifications of section 479A of the Social Security Act, as created by ASFA and amended by Pub. L. 109–288, Pub. L. 112–34, Pub. L. 113–183, and Pub. L. 115–123.

¹⁹ Title IV-B funds support preventative and protective services for children. Title IV-E funds support foster care; adoption assistance; kinship guardianship assistance; and, at the option of a state, kinship navigator programs and/or time-limited prevention services for candidates of foster care, pregnant or parenting foster youth, and the parents or kin caregivers of those children and youth. For more information on policies and guidance provided to states, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/policy-program-issuances>.

²⁰ More information can be found in ACYF-CB-IM-06-05 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im0605>.

²¹ More information can be found in ACYF-CB-IM-11-06 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1106>.

²² More information can be found in ACYF-CB-IM-14-03 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1403>.

²³ More information can be found in ACYF-CB-IM-18-02 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1802>.

²⁴ For the purposes of 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

- 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

These outcomes reflect the importance of performance objectives in child welfare practice in and around the time of ASFA's passage. In recent years, the Children's Bureau, Congress, and the child welfare field have begun to recognize and emphasize the critical importance of a full continuum of prevention services and approaches as essential child welfare practice. This may lead to HHS considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future. Similarly, these stakeholders have come to understand the significant variations in outcomes that specific subpopulations experience in foster care. Therefore, performance objectives that show why and where these variations occur may also be adopted as part of a larger effort to understand and address disparities that may lead to inequities in child welfare outcomes.

Relationship to the Child and Family Services Review

While the measures used in this Report share some similarity with the data indicators used as part of HHS' Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, the measures are not the same.²⁵ 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 the experiences of 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. Additional information about the CFSRs, including information on the data indicators used, can be found on the Children's Bureau website at <https://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 calculations.

Context Data

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

- Estimated child population statistics by state, including the number of children under the age of 18 and child poverty data²⁶
- Caseworker visits data for children in foster care, including the percentage of children in foster care visited monthly by their caseworker and the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the home of the child²⁷

²⁵ See appendix B for the full list of outcomes and measures.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Section 479A(a)(6) of the Act requires HHS to report data on caseworker visits in this 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. Beginning in 2012, states began using a revised methodology for reporting caseworker visits data as outlined in Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01, which was issued on January 6, 2012. It is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1201>. For more information, see appendix C.

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

Data Sources

Data for the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures and the majority of the context data in this Report come from the NCANDS and AFCARS.²⁸ States submit NCANDS data voluntarily, but they 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.

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

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 1-year estimates of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an ongoing survey that annually samples a small percentage of the population to provide communities with information relevant to their service provision and investments.²⁹

The data used in this Report may vary slightly from other sources if a state resubmitted data after HHS prepared the data for this Report.³⁰

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 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.³¹ The data are submitted voluntarily by the states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. NCANDS data are published annually in the Child Maltreatment report series.³² A summary of the most recent report, Child Maltreatment 2019, is presented in appendix E.

The NCANDS Child File is a data file that states submit annually that 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.

²⁸ 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 federal fiscal year 2019.

²⁹ Additional information on the methodology used to calculate child population estimates can be found on the Census Bureau's website at <https://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 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

³⁰ For this Report, AFCARS data were prepared on June 23, 2020; NCANDS data were prepared on August 21, 2020; census data were prepared on October 14, 2020; and caseworker visits data were prepared on June 15, 2020.

³¹ More information about CAPTA can be found on the Children's Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/about-capta-a-legislative-history>.

³² 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.

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.³³ 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 that receives 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.

Data Analyses in the Report

Chapters II through V of this Report present key findings of analyses conducted across states. These findings pertain to national performance on measures in 2019, variations across states in performance, changes in performance over time, and the relationships between contextual factors and state performance. In this Report, national performance on measures is reported as the median performance across states, unless otherwise specified.

Calculation of national medians

In this Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure. In the 2019 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2019 only.³⁴ However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated only using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2015–2019). This was done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons of medians between years use the data-inclusion criteria of the latter calculation. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

Percentage Change Calculations

Change in state performance over time was determined by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.³⁵ Consistent with HHS' historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percentage change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) is used as a general indicator that a meaningful change in performance on the measures occurred. Therefore, for purposes of the analyses presented in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, if the percentage change in performance from 2015 to 2019 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination was that there was "no change" in performance.

The concept of percentage 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.

³³ See appendix F for AFCARS Report No. 27.

³⁴ See appendix G for more information on methodology and data-quality thresholds, including reasons state data were excluded from analyses.

³⁵ Percentage change was calculated by subtracting the "old" data from the "new" data, dividing that result by the old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, median performance on measure 3.1 was 89.1 percent in 2015 and 90.2 percent in 2019, and so the resulting increase is 1.2 percent $\{[(90.2-89.1)/89.1] \times 100=1.2\}$.

Correlations

The strength of relationships between measures and context variables was assessed using correlation coefficients, specifically Pearson's r . This coefficient can range from -1 to $+1$. In the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, these coefficients are interpreted in accordance with J. P. Guilford's suggested interpretations for correlation coefficient values:³⁶

- A coefficient of 0.0 to plus or minus 0.20 indicates a very low or negligible correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.20–0.40 indicates a low correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.40–0.70 indicates a moderate correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.70–0.90 indicates a high correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.90–1.00 indicates a very high correlation.

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 and years, 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:

- Estimated general child-population statistics with regard to the race and ethnicity of children
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race and ethnicity, and maltreatment type) of child maltreatment victims
- Mean and median response times of child protective services (CPS) to allegations of maltreatment
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race and ethnicity, and median length of stay) of children in foster care at the start of the FY, children in care at the end of the FY, and children who entered and exited foster care during the FY
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race, and ethnicity) of children waiting for adoption and of children with finalized adoptions
- Alternate categorical breakdowns for all race and ethnicity data³⁷

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.

³⁶ Guilford, J. P. (1956). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

³⁷ 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.

Chapter I: Child Welfare Outcomes

Demographic and Contextual Data

In addition to reporting on specific child welfare measures, this 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. To provide context for the child welfare outcomes information contained in subsequent chapters, this chapter provides an overview of the child population under age 18, including those living in poverty, in foster care, waiting for adoption, and who have been adopted.

National Child Population

In 2019, the total population of children under the age of 18 was estimated to be 73,611,881. The three states with the largest populations under the age of 18 were California (8,894,641), Texas (7,399,810), and Florida (4,229,929). The three states with the smallest populations under the age of 18 were Vermont (114,005), the District of Columbia (128,168), and Wyoming (133,734).

Nationally, 16.8 percent of children under the age of 18 were estimated to be living in poverty in 2019. Poverty rates for children varied widely across states, ranging from 7.1 to 56.8 percent, and 23 states (44 percent) had poverty rates above the national average. Although there is evidence of a relationship between income and child maltreatment, there was virtually no correlation between states' foster care entry rates and their estimated proportion of the child population living in poverty for 2019 (Pearson's $r=-0.14$).³⁸

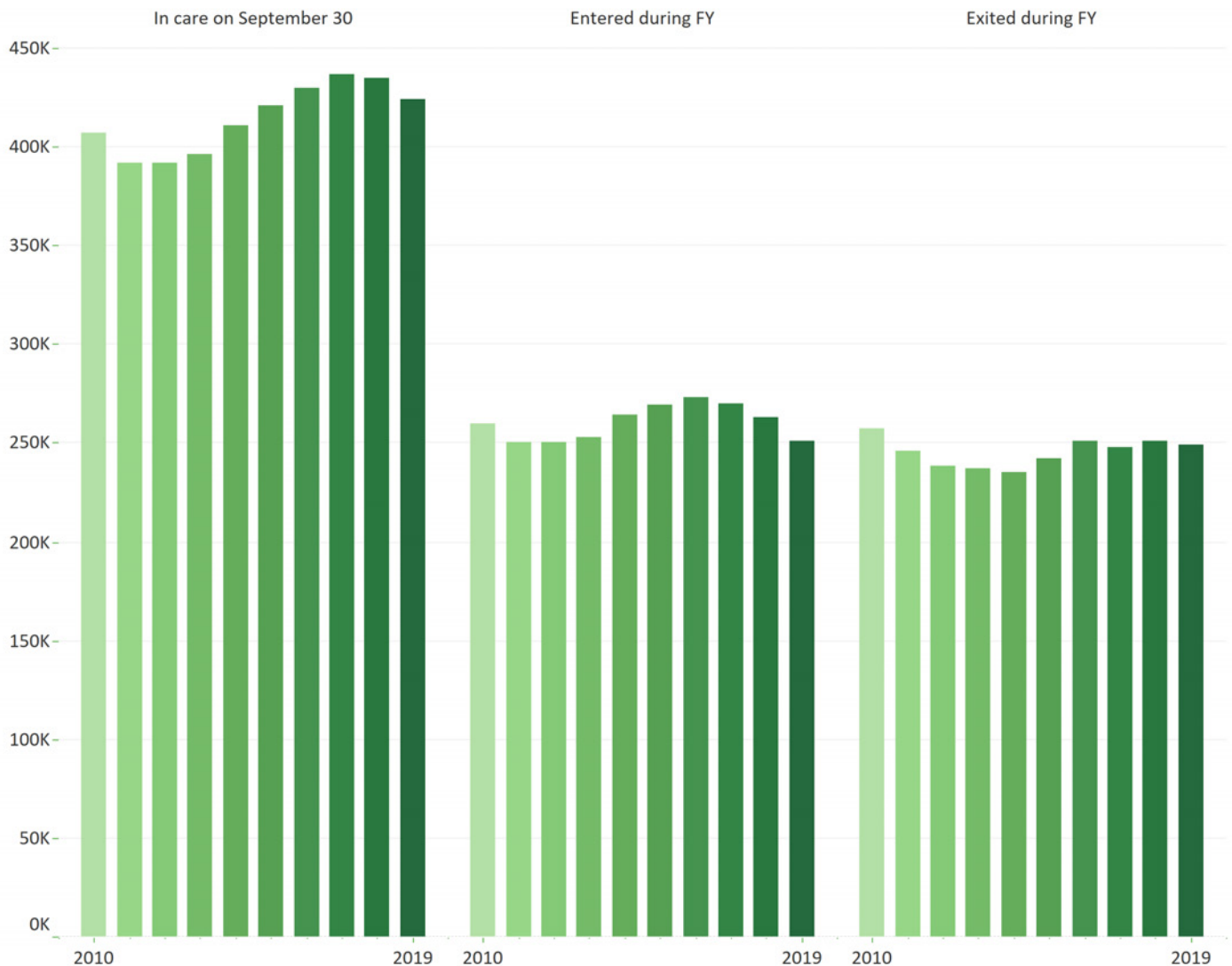
Children in Foster Care

Nationwide, approximately 424,000 children were in foster care on the last day of 2019.³⁹ Figure I-1 shows that from 2012 until 2017, the number of children in care on the last day of the FY has steadily increased, which includes increases from the prior of 2.4 percent in 2015, 2.1 percent in 2016, and 1.6 percent in 2017. However, during the last 2 years for which data were available—2018 and 2019—the number of children in care decreased. The decrease from 2017 to 2018 was less than 1 percent (0.5), and the decrease observed from 2018 to 2019 was 2.5 percent, which accounts for an overall decrease of approximately 3.0 percent since 2017.

³⁸ 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. <https://www.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-1707>

³⁹ The Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2010–FY 2019 data were used for this section of the Report, including Figure I-1. Those data are current as of June 2020. Due to differences in sources, these data may not be consistent with other data displayed throughout the Report. For more information, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>.

Figure I-1. NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE, 2010–2019 (N=51)



Note.—HHS has requested Puerto Rico resubmit its AFCARS data. Therefore, Puerto Rico's data were excluded from this analysis.

Of the children in foster care on the last day of FY 2019, about half (51.1 percent) were age 7 or younger, 35.2 percent were between the ages of 8 and 15, and 13.7 percent were age 16 or older. Nationally, the race and ethnicity of children in care was 43.6 percent White, 22.8 percent Black or African American, 21.1 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7.6 percent Two or More Races, 2.4 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.5 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Additional data regarding the age, race, and ethnicity for children in care on the first and last days of the FY, and those who entered and exited care during the FY, are available on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

AFCARS data show that the number of children in care on the last day of the FY decreased for the last 2 years (2018 and 2019).

Entry into Foster Care

In 2019, an estimated 251,000 children entered foster care nationally. This section provides additional data about these children.

Race/ethnicity and age distribution

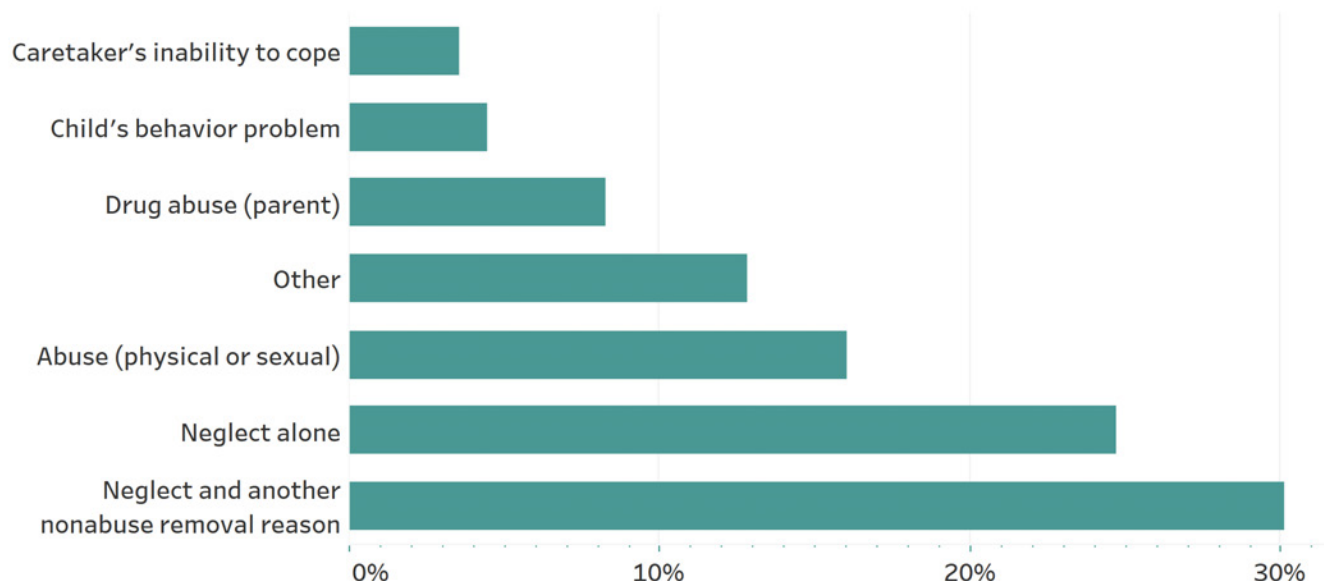
Similar to the demographic distribution of the in-care population, the race and ethnicity of the children who entered care during FY 2019 was 45.4 percent White, 21.0 percent Black or African American, 20.9 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7.2 percent Two or More Races, 2.2 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.6 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Nationally, more than half (57.6 percent) were age 7 or younger, 33.1 percent were between the ages of 8 and 15, and 9.3 percent were age 16 or older.

Circumstances associated with removal

The majority of children who entered foster care in 2019 had a reason for removal that included neglect (either alone—24.7 percent— or in combination with another reason other than physical or sexual abuse—30.1 percent) (see figure I–2). Nearly one-tenth (8.1 percent) of children entering care were reported with parental drug use as the only reason associated with removal. Sexual or physical abuse accounted for 16.0 percent of the removals, and child behavior problems and caretaker’s inability to cope accounted for 4.5 and 3.5 percent, respectively, of removals. For a full analysis of all removal reasons, see appendix F.

Figure I–2. CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH REMOVAL, 2019 (N=52)

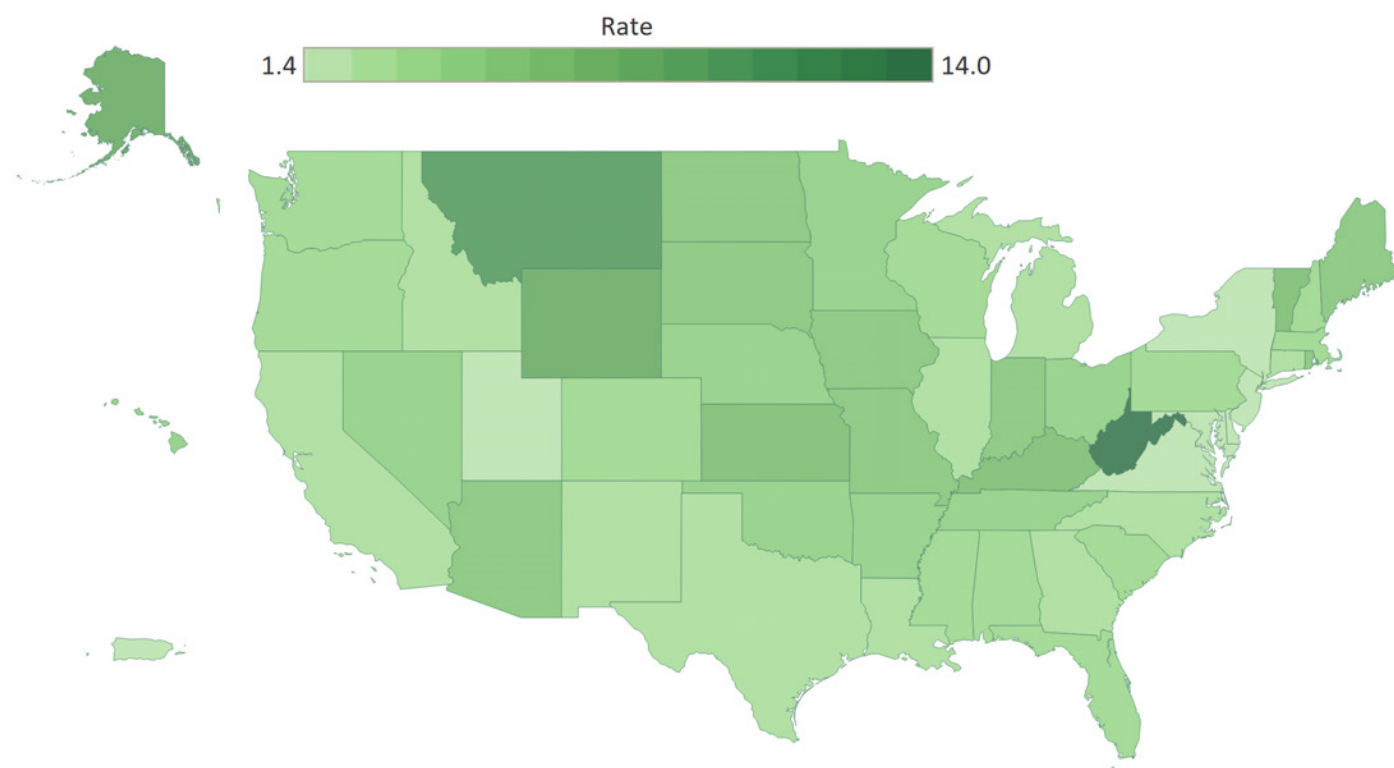


Entry rates

States differed considerably 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 (see figure I-3).⁴⁰ The foster care entry rate in 2019 ranged from 1.4 children (New Jersey and Maryland) to 14.0 children (West Virginia) per 1,000 in the population. There was not much variability in the year-to-year entry rate. However, over the past 5 years, the median entry rate across states decreased 5.1 percent—from 3.9 to 3.7 children per 1,000 in the population.

The reasons for variations in the rates of foster care entry are difficult to determine using federal administrative data. They 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. As noted in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, this variation is unlikely to be attributed to differences in the rate of child victims in a state. There was a low correlation between foster care entry rates and child victim rates in 2019 (Pearson's $r=0.38$).

Figure I-3. MAP OF FOSTER CARE ENTRY RATES PER 1,000 CHILDREN BY STATE, 2019 (N=52)



⁴⁰ The foster care entry rate was 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.

Entry rates by race and ethnicity

The national foster care entry rate by race and ethnicity in 2019 ranged from a high of 9.1 (American Indian/Alaska Native) to a low of 0.4 (Asian) per one thousand children in the child population of that race. The entry rates for the remaining categories were 5.6 for children of Two or More Races, 5.3 for Black or African-American children, 5.3 for Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander children, 3.1 for White children, and 2.8 for Hispanic children. Compared to White children, American Indian/Alaska Native children were almost three times as likely (2.9 times) to be placed in foster care, and Black or African-American children were 1.7 times more likely than White children to be placed in care. Asian and Hispanic children entered care at lower rates than White children; they were 0.1 and 0.9 times as likely to enter care, respectively.⁴¹

Children Waiting for Adoption and Children Adopted

Just over 122,000 children and youth were identified as waiting for adoption at the start of 2019.⁴² Of that group, nearly 54,000, or 44 percent, had been placed in an adoptive home by the end of the year. The range in performance across the states varied widely, with a high of 70 percent to a low of 0 percent. Table I-1 (at the end of chapter) shows the number of children waiting for adoption and the number of children adopted within 6 months and within 1 year for 2019.

Additionally, because the “waiting” population does not differentiate between children and youth who have been waiting for long periods of time and children who may recently have received a goal of adoption or had their parents’ parental rights terminated, it is useful to examine the length of time from “legal freedom” (i.e., date of the termination of parental rights) to adoption in order to gain a more complete understanding of when children are adopted from foster care. There were approximately 68,000 children and youth for whom the process of establishing legal freedom had occurred during 2018. By the end of 2019, 66 percent of those children were discharged to adoption within 1 year of attaining legal freedom. State percentages ranged from 46 to 99 percent (see Figure I-11, at the end of the chapter).

Lastly, as in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the number of children adopted from foster care in a given year is provided as context. In 2019, 66,000 children and youth were adopted from foster care, a 4.8 percent increase over the 63,000 children adopted from foster care in 2018.

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 child populations—such as state data on race, ethnicity, and age (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/>.

⁴¹ The rate of disproportionality was calculated by dividing the rate of the race of interest by the rate of the base race (in this analysis, White). For more information on entry rates and rates of disproportionality in entries for 2019—including state-level data, median across states, and information about the analyses—visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/training-technical-assistance/state-foster-care-data-2019>.

⁴² There is no federal definition for a child “waiting for adoption.” The definition used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports includes children through age 17 who have a goal (as indicated in AFCARS) 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. For the most current data, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>.

Figure I-4. ESTIMATED CHILD POPULATION UNDER AGE 18, 2019 (N=52)

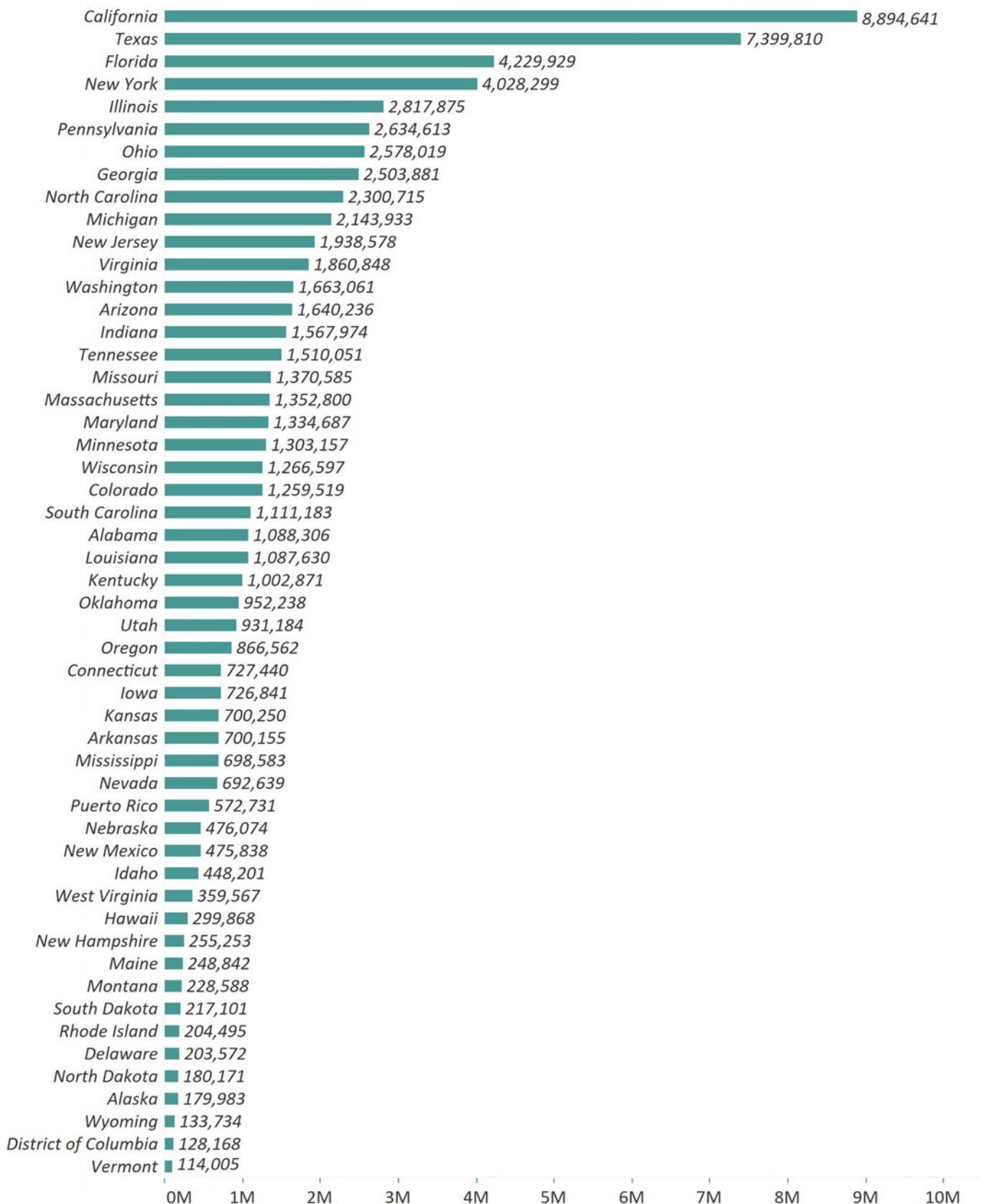


Figure I–5. ESTIMATED PROPORTION OF CHILD POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY, 2019 (N=52)

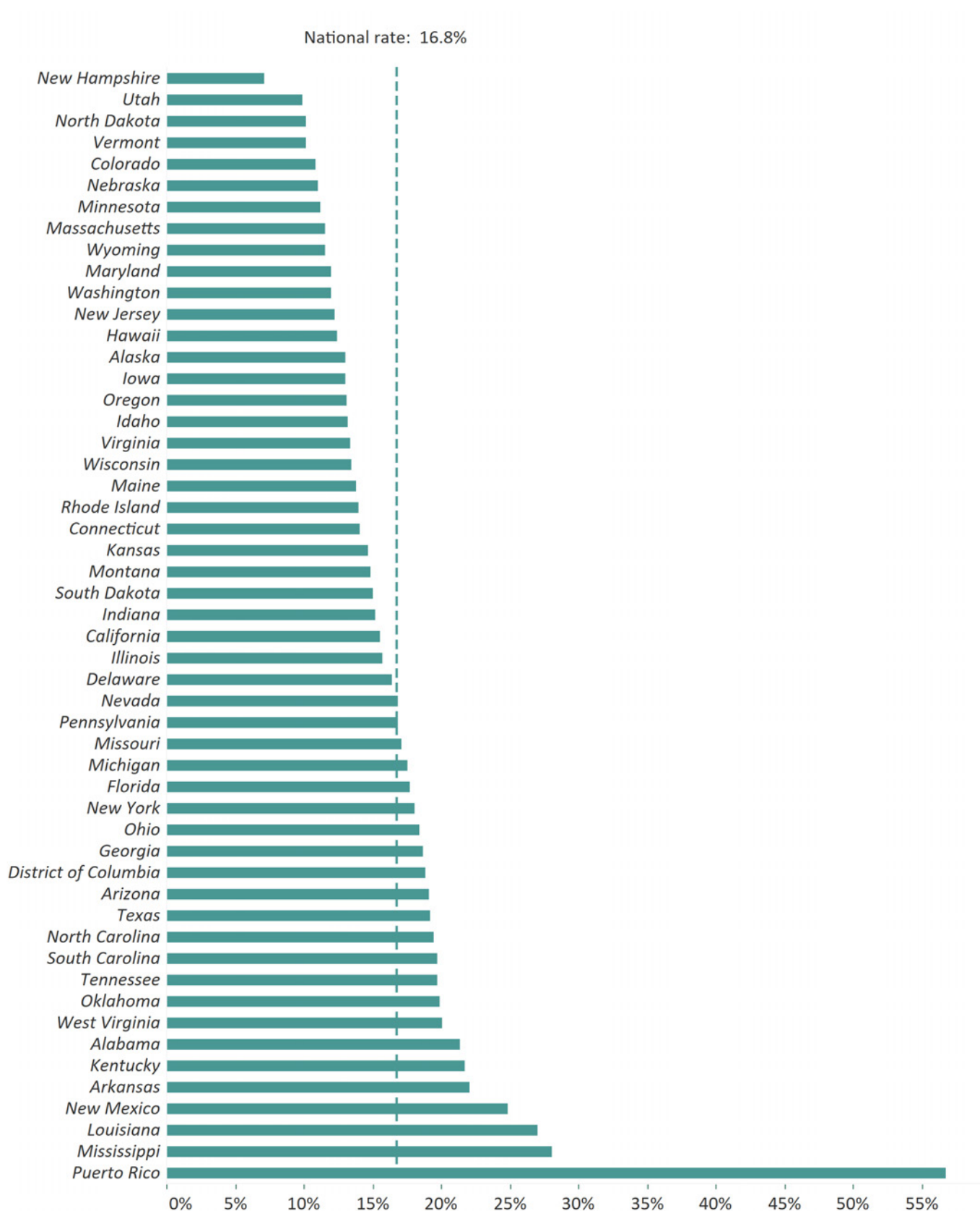


Figure I-6.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FY (10/1), 2019 (N=52)

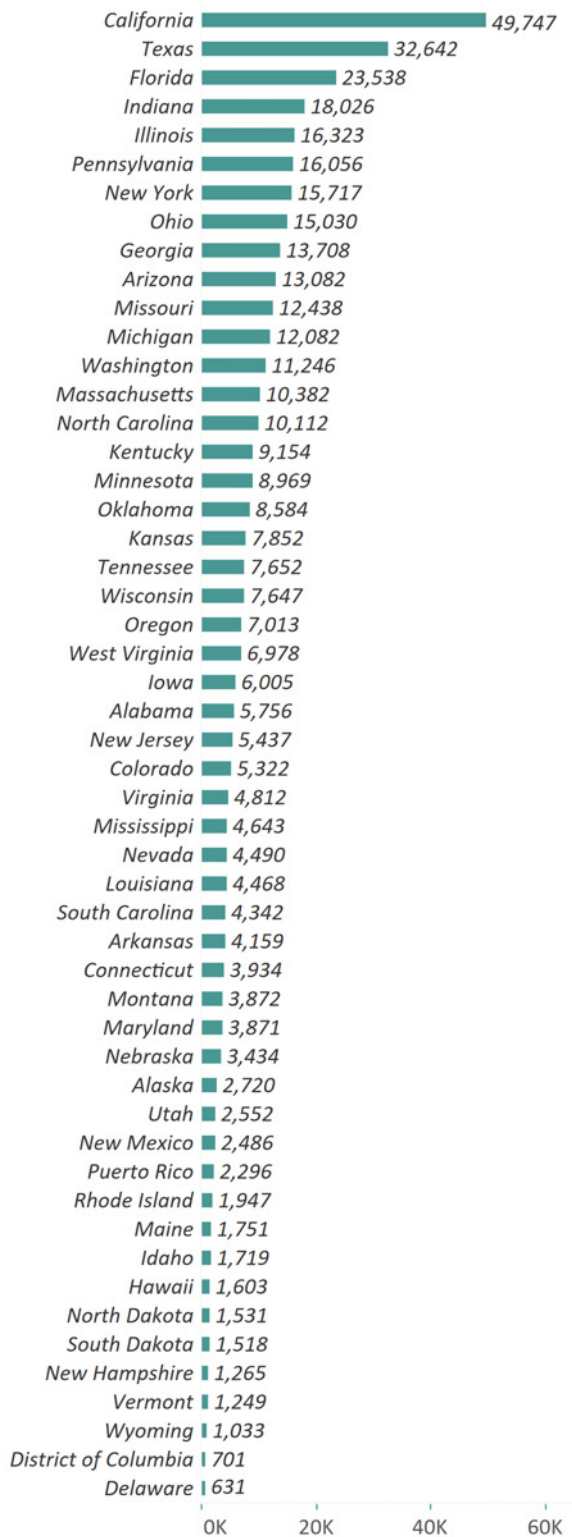


Figure I-7.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE IN THE FY, 2019 (N=52)

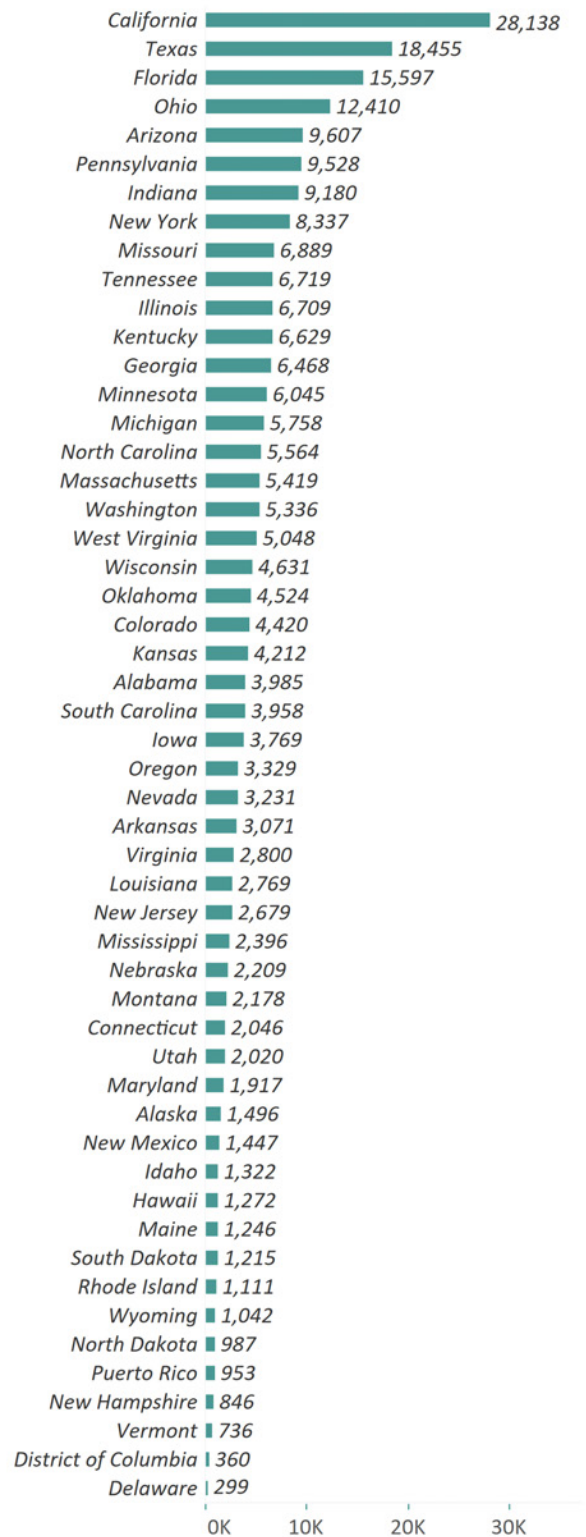


Figure I–8.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE
IN THE FY, 2019 (N=52)

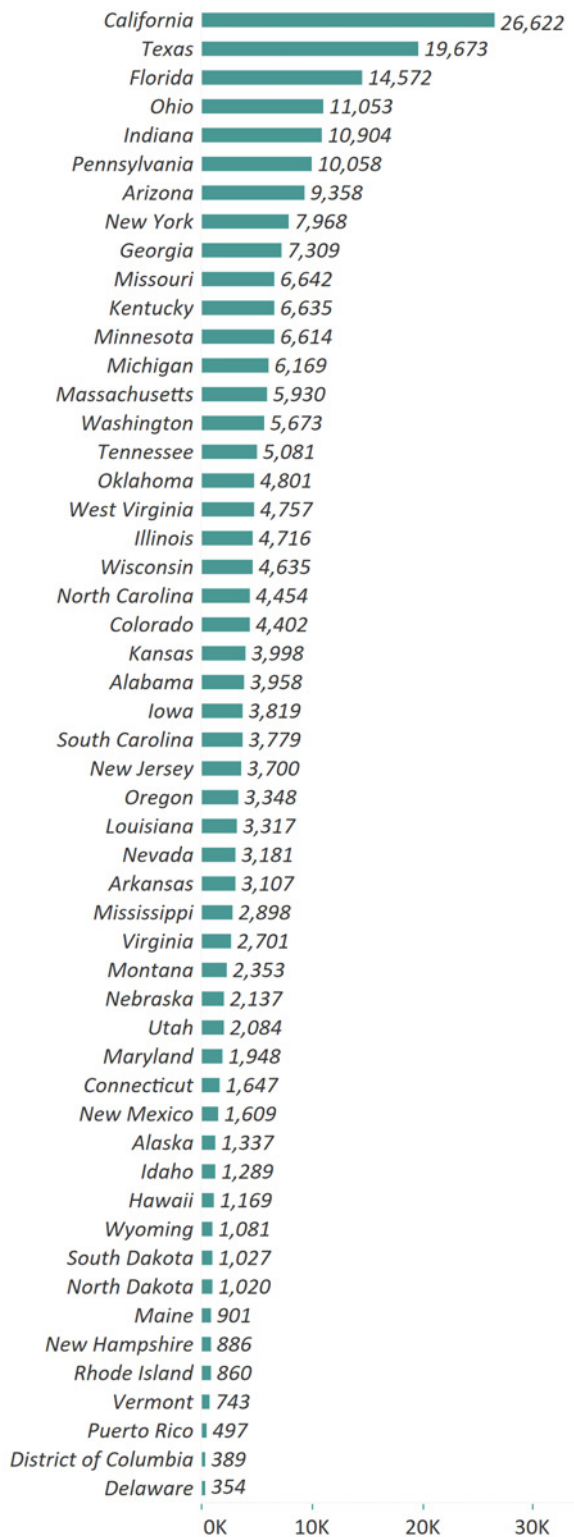


Figure I–9.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ON
THE LAST DAY OF THE FY (9/30), 2019 (N=52)

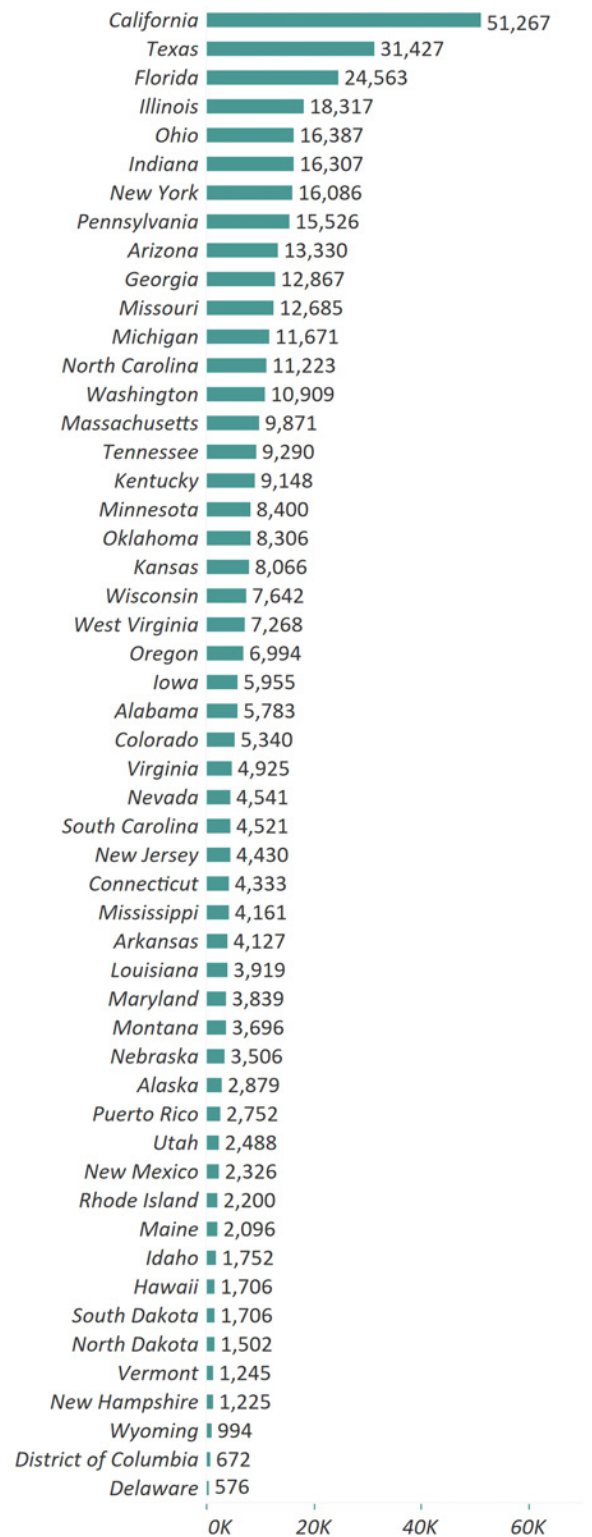


Figure I-10. FOSTER CARE ENTRY RATE PER 1,000 CHILDREN, 2019 (N=52)

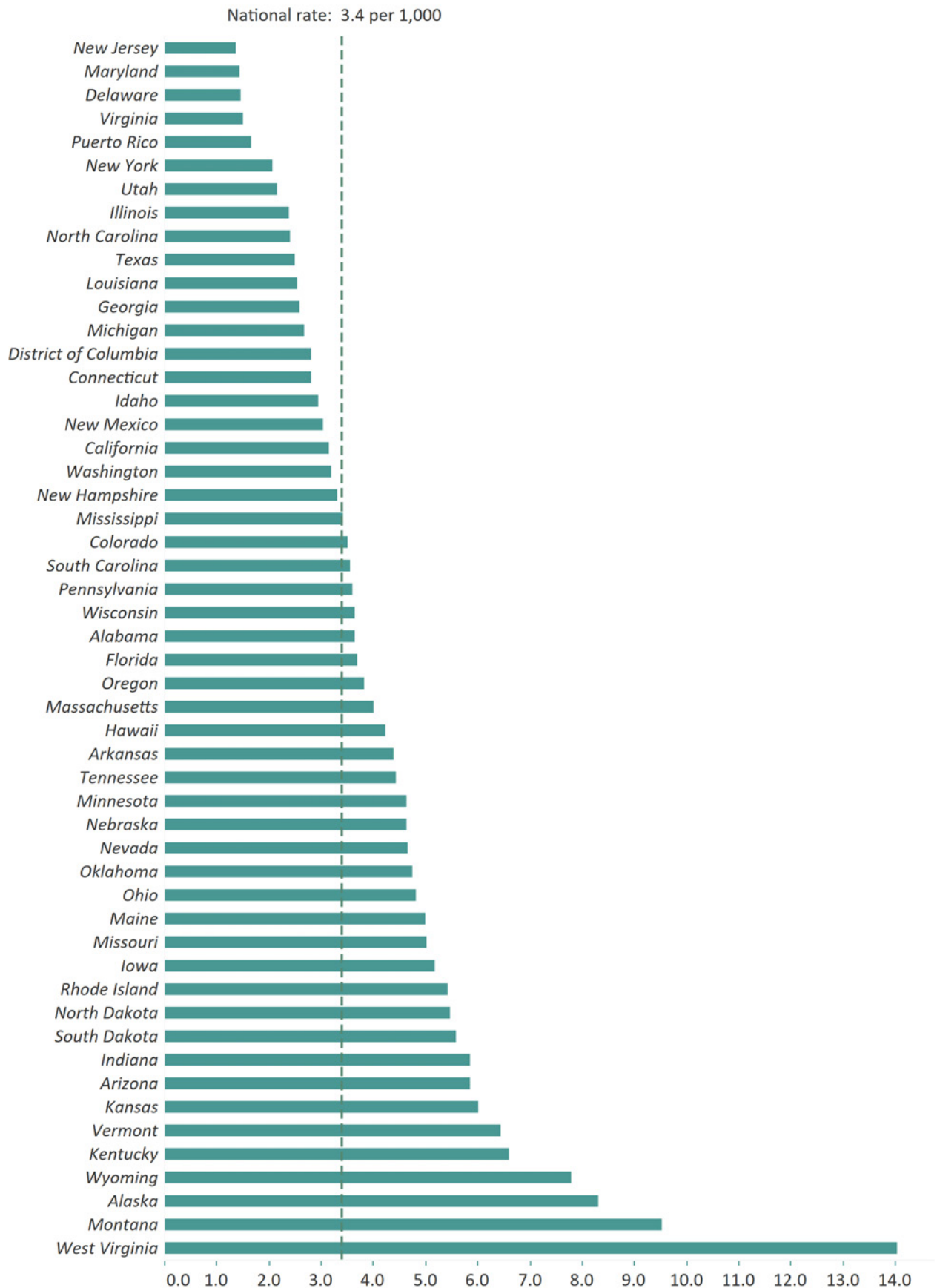


Figure I-11.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ADOPTED WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF LEGAL FREEDOM ATTAINED IN 2018 (N=52)

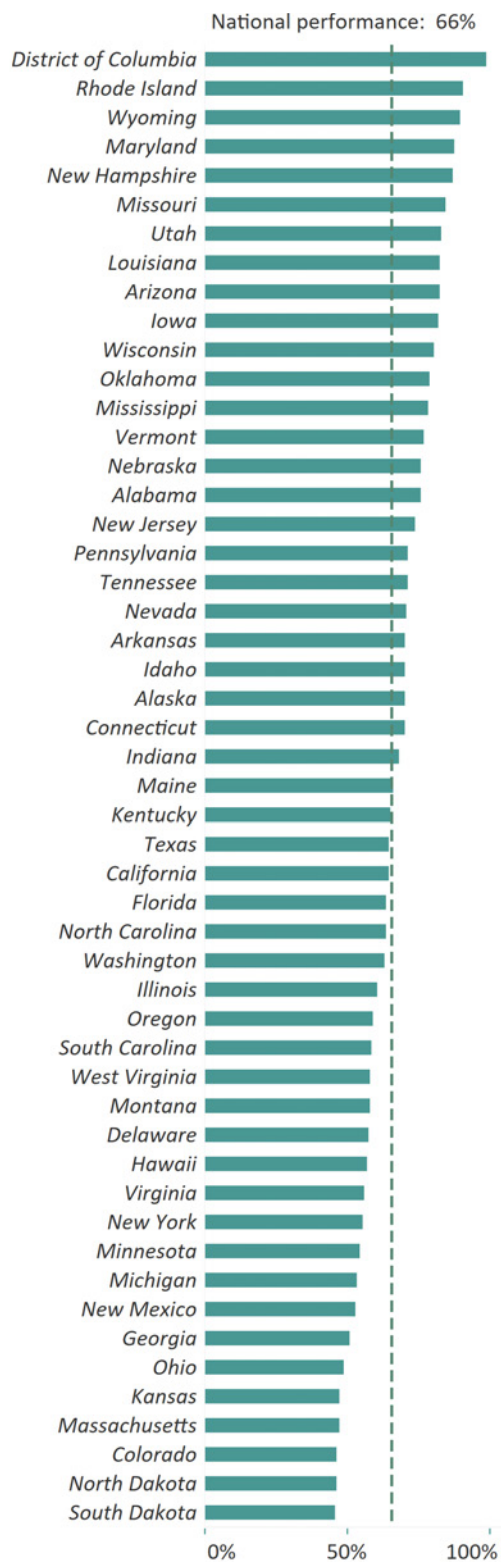
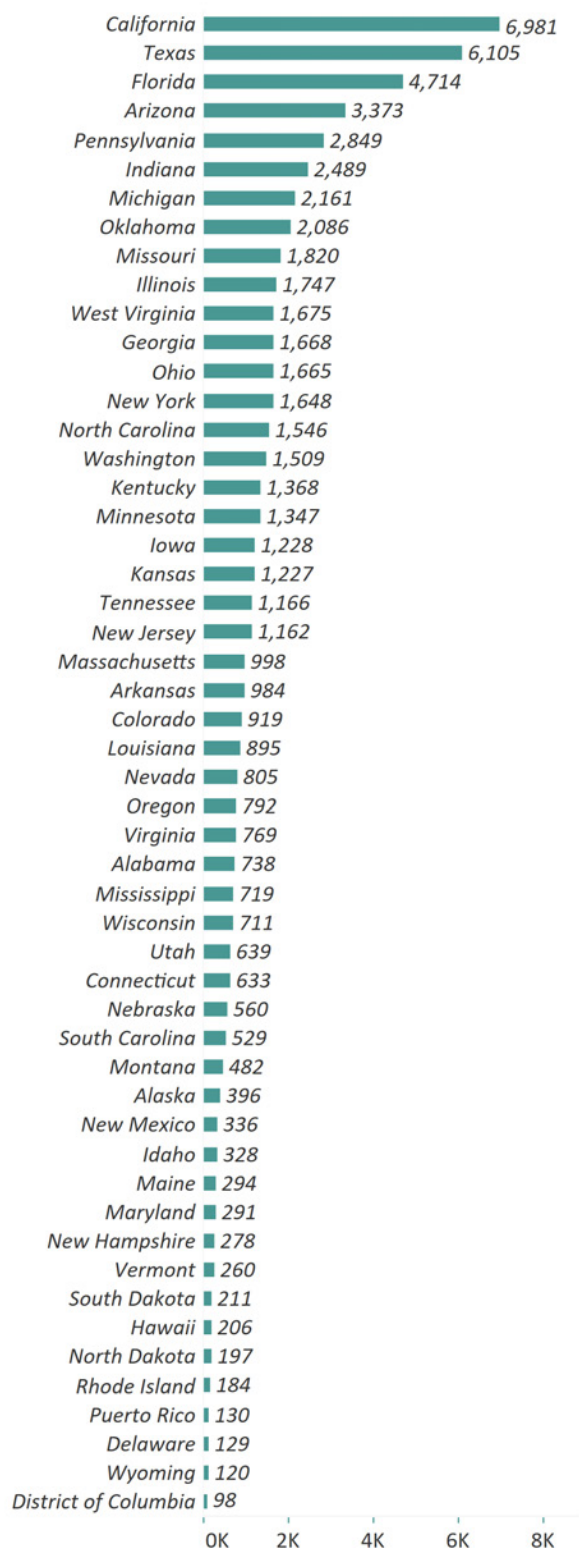


Figure I-12.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ADOPTED, 2019 (N=52)



Note.—Puerto Rico reported zero adoptions; therefore, it is not displayed in this graph

Table I-1. Number of Waiting Children Adopted, 2019 (N=52)

State	Total number waiting on the first day of FY 2019 (10/1/2018)	Number within 6 months (by 3/31/2019)	Number within 12 months (by 9/30/2019)	Percentage within 6 months (by 3/31/2019)	Percentage within 12 months (by 9/30/2019)
Alabama	1,321	288	566	21.8%	42.8%
Alaska	1,003	199	350	19.8%	34.9%
Arizona	4,160	1,644	2,662	39.5%	64.0%
Arkansas	1,343	436	684	32.5%	50.9%
California	14,195	3,282	6,297	23.1%	44.4%
Colorado	913	249	415	27.3%	45.5%
Connecticut	1,042	135	317	13.0%	30.4%
Delaware	224	59	96	26.3%	42.9%
District of Columbia	181	47	88	26.0%	48.6%
Florida	8,789	2,160	3,937	24.6%	44.8%
Georgia	3,610	599	1,117	16.6%	30.9%
Hawaii	262	57	115	21.8%	43.9%
Idaho	391	130	251	33.2%	64.2%
Illinois	2,690	767	1,379	28.5%	51.3%
Indiana	4,754	1,176	2,164	24.7%	45.5%
Iowa	1,187	541	832	45.6%	70.1%
Kansas	2,578	598	1,074	23.2%	41.7%
Kentucky	2,819	649	1,237	23.0%	43.9%
Louisiana	1,390	375	662	27.0%	47.6%
Maine	479	150	243	31.3%	50.7%
Maryland	368	131	206	35.6%	56.0%
Massachusetts	3,358	437	922	13.0%	27.5%
Michigan	3,870	1,038	1,904	26.8%	49.2%
Minnesota	2,009	626	1,040	31.2%	51.8%
Mississippi	1,664	310	659	18.6%	39.6%
Missouri	2,695	712	1,227	26.4%	45.5%
Montana	972	263	394	27.1%	40.5%
Nebraska	813	244	445	30.0%	54.7%
Nevada	1,662	398	734	23.9%	44.2%
New Hampshire	266	126	176	47.4%	66.2%
New Jersey	2,249	599	1,074	26.6%	47.8%
New Mexico	1,204	181	348	15.0%	28.9%
New York	3,992	791	1,492	19.8%	37.4%
North Carolina	2,674	529	990	19.8%	37.0%
North Dakota	428	89	173	20.8%	40.4%
Ohio	3,474	785	1,374	22.6%	39.6%
Oklahoma	3,978	977	1,812	24.6%	45.6%
Oregon	1,653	332	701	20.1%	42.4%
Pennsylvania	3,663	1,141	1,998	31.1%	54.5%
Puerto Rico	336	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
Rhode Island	316	82	123	25.9%	38.9%
South Carolina	1,581	268	473	17.0%	29.9%
South Dakota	354	98	175	27.7%	49.4%
Tennessee	1,373	396	624	28.8%	45.4%
Texas	13,718	3,174	5,510	23.1%	40.2%
Utah	725	236	389	32.6%	53.7%
Vermont	321	116	173	36.1%	53.9%
Virginia	1,719	335	705	19.5%	41.0%
Washington	3,706	693	1,399	18.7%	37.7%
West Virginia	2,340	730	1,355	31.2%	57.9%
Wisconsin	1,395	323	549	23.2%	39.4%
Wyoming	115	40	67	34.8%	58.3%

Table I-2. Number of Children Adopted, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Alabama	512	503	504	712	738
Alaska	357	312	366	353	396
Arizona	3,236	3,654	4,298	3,926	3,373
Arkansas	740	758	971	1,001	984
California	6,079	6,542	6,524	6,966	6,981
Colorado	820	839	948	910	919
Connecticut	573	529	488	497	633
Delaware	79	99	108	116	129
District of Columbia	106	110	91	100	98
Florida	3,431	3,573	3,831	4,455	4,714
Georgia	912	1,121	1,401	1,469	1,668
Hawaii	176	129	152	189	206
Idaho	223	185	258	245	328
Illinois	1,788	1,546	1,777	1,754	1,747
Indiana	1,152	1,536	1,964	2,016	2,489
Iowa	1,017	992	1,006	1,074	1,228
Kansas	783	870	674	936	1,227
Kentucky	961	1,104	1,128	1,124	1,368
Louisiana	662	727	766	905	895
Maine	328	399	456	395	294
Maryland	294	361	348	353	291
Massachusetts	623	669	657	826	998
Michigan	1,772	2,078	1,970	1,991	2,161
Minnesota	735	899	946	1,284	1,347
Mississippi	312	400	364	431	719
Missouri	1,357	1,591	1,541	1,798	1,820
Montana	310	260	274	396	482
Nebraska	533	483	546	564	560
Nevada	799	796	740	760	805
New Hampshire	118	87	108	211	278
New Jersey	1,072	1,185	1,106	1,054	1,162
New Mexico	295	306	311	297	336
New York	1,933	1,949	1,762	1,697	1,648
North Carolina	1,311	1,501	1,528	1,522	1,546
North Dakota	133	132	162	172	197
Ohio	1,334	1,449	1,538	1,566	1,665
Oklahoma	2,159	2,487	2,593	2,238	2,086
Oregon	835	768	707	679	792
Pennsylvania	1,832	1,917	2,077	2,628	2,849
Rhode Island	211	279	250	254	184
South Carolina	403	433	487	435	529
South Dakota	121	110	181	183	211
Tennessee	1,112	1,225	1,260	1,248	1,166
Texas	5,457	5,723	5,361	5,748	6,105
Utah	695	632	665	818	639
Vermont	189	216	287	262	260
Virginia	562	627	801	879	769
Washington	1,484	1,387	1,345	1,331	1,509
West Virginia	893	940	1,069	1,399	1,675
Wisconsin	643	669	692	755	711
Wyoming	74	89	82	75	120

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter 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 foster care or maintained in the home, the child welfare agency's first concern must be to ensure the safety of the child. 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) encompass these safety goals for children and youth.

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 6-month period
- Measure 2.1: The percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member

Child Victims and Child Fatalities

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. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2019.

Although the NCANDS submission is voluntary, it is strongly encouraged. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2019.

Child Victims

During 2019, approximately 656,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.^{43 44} The most common maltreatment type reported was neglect, which was included in 80.1 percent of substantiated allegations.⁴⁵ Physical abuse and sexual abuse were the next most common maltreatment types—included in 18.1 and 9.5 percent of reported incidents of maltreatment, respectively. In FY 2018, States began reporting sex trafficking as a separate maltreatment type. Twenty-nine states reported at least one child who had been a victim of sex trafficking in 2019. This maltreatment type was reported for less than 1 percent of all child victims nationally. Table II–1 shows the total numbers of child victims and the national child victim rates for 2015 through 2019.

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

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ 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. Prior to 2015, children with dispositions of "alternative response victim" were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports use the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in the Child Maltreatment reports. The total number of child victims reported in this Report were rounded to the nearest 1,000.

⁴⁵ Any form of child maltreatment may be found separately but can also occur in combination, and a child can be identified as the victim of more than one type of maltreatment. For more information, see the NCANDS Child File codebook, revised in November 2019, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/ncands-child-file>.

Table II–1. Child Victims, 2015–2019 (N=52)

Measures	2015	2016 ^a	2017	2018	2019
Total Child Victims ^b	683,000	671,000	674,000	677,000	656,000
National Child Victim Rate ^c	9.2	9.1	9.1	9.2	8.9

^a Fewer than 52 states reported data in 2016. The national estimate was calculated by multiplying the national child victim rate by the national child population and dividing by 1,000.

^b The data in this table represent unique counts of child victims (i.e., a child only may be reported as a victim once per reporting year). The total number of child victims was rounded to the nearest 1,000.

^c The national child victim rate was calculated by dividing the number of child victims from reporting states by the child population for reporting states and multiplying by 1,000.

The national child victim rate decreased from 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in 2015 to 8.9 child victims per 1,000 children in 2019—a decrease of 3.3 percent (see table II–1). The rate of neglect decreased from 7.4 instances per 1,000 children in 2015 to 7.2 instances in 2019. Conversely, the rates for both physical and sexual abuse remained unchanged for the same time period.⁴⁶

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied dramatically across states in 2017, ranging from 1.7 victims per 1,000 children to 22.2 victims per 1,000 children.

Similar to previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied widely across states. In 2019, they ranged from 1.8 child victims to 20.1 child victims per 1,000 children in the state's population (see figures II–1 and II–2, the latter of which is located at the end of the chapter). There are a number of possible explanations for this variation. One explanation is that state definitions of "child maltreatment" vary.⁴⁷ 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.

Some additional factors limit the comparability of child victim rates across states. One such factor is the use of alternative response approaches.⁴⁸ In alternative response approaches, child welfare agencies respond with a referral for a family assessment rather than with a formal investigation. This typically occurs when a decision is made that there are no immediate safety concerns for the child and the maltreatment allegation involves low or moderate risk. When a referral is made for a family assessment instead of an investigation, there is often no determination made regarding the allegations of maltreatment; therefore, the child is not classified as a victim.⁴⁹ 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. These methodological challenges mean that caution is warranted in comparing states that use 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.

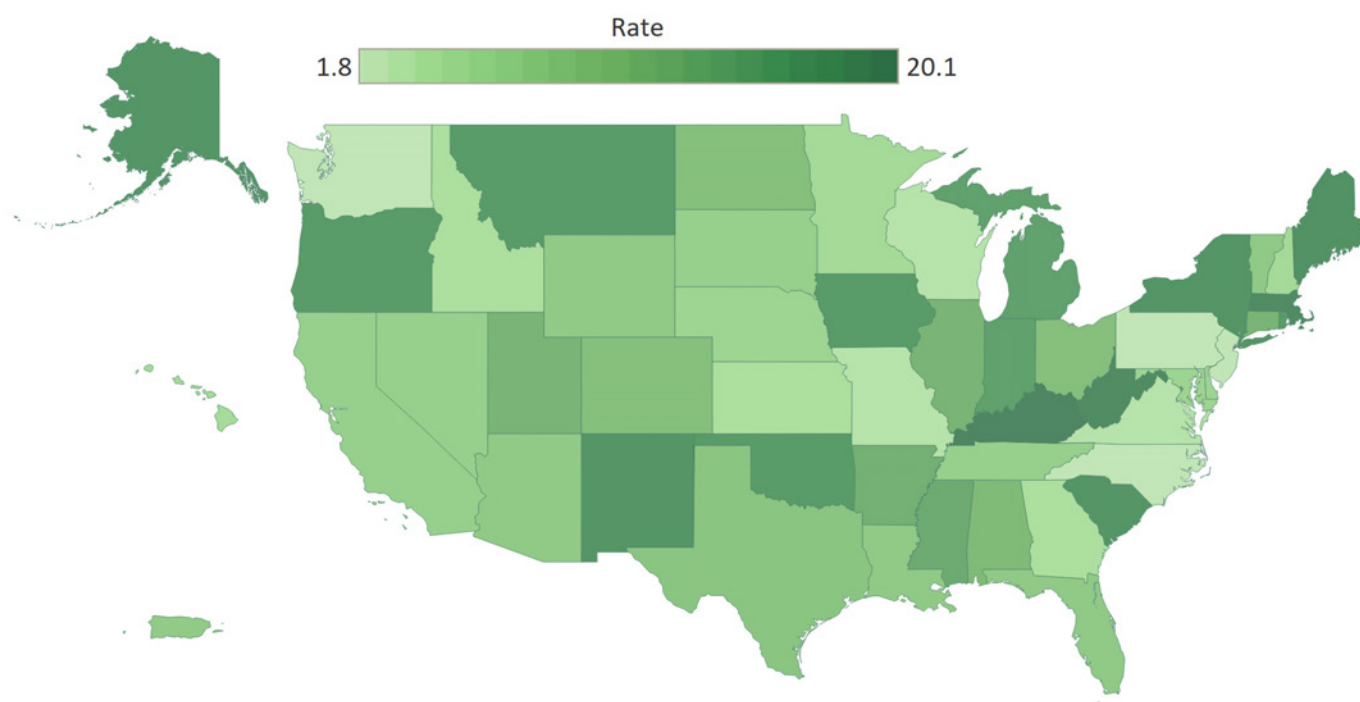
⁴⁶ The rates for physical abuse in 2015 and 2019 were 1.6 child victims per 1,000 children. Similarly, the rate for physical abuse was 0.8 child victims per 1,000 children for those years.

⁴⁷ 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/>.

⁴⁸ 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 when there is an allegation of maltreatment. Throughout this Report, the term "alternative response" is used. For more information on alternative response, see Information Gateway's Differential Response in Child Protective Services webpage at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/alternative/>.

⁴⁹ 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 cases in which services were mandated or "alternative response non-victim" for those cases in which services were voluntary or not needed.

Figure II–1: MAP OF CHILD VICTIM RATES PER 1,000 CHILDREN BY STATE, 2019 (N=52)



Child Fatalities

During 2019, 1,809 child fatalities were reported by states, and the national child fatality rate was 2.50 per 100,000 children in the population.⁵⁰ Like child victim rates, child fatality rates varied widely by state. In 2019, child fatality rates varied between 0.00 child fatalities per 100,000 children and 6.26 child fatalities per 100,000 children. Table II–2 shows the total number of child fatalities and the national child fatality rates for 2015–2019.

Measures	2015 (N=51)	2016 (N=50)	2017 (N=50)	2018 (N=50)	2019 (N=52)
Total Child Fatalities	1,603	1,708	1,677	1,751	1,809
National Child Fatality Rate^a	2.23	2.33	2.31	2.41	2.50

^a This rate is per 100,000 children.

As indicated in table II–2, the rate of child fatalities has increased each year over the past 5 years with the exception of a very slight decrease from 2016 to 2017. There was a 12.1-percent increase from 2015 to 2019. Given the relatively low number of child fatalities reported each year, the national rate is sensitive to a number of factors, including the number of states reporting data, changes in the national population estimates, and changes in state and federal policies that may affect reporting practices.⁵¹

⁵⁰ The national child fatality rate was calculated by dividing the number of child fatalities reported by states (1,809) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS child fatality data (72,259,081) and multiplying that number by 100,000. Due to the relatively few cases of child fatalities, rates of child fatalities are presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

⁵¹ For additional information, refer to *Child Maltreatment 2019*, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2019>.

Range of State Performance on Safety-Related Outcome Measures

Child 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 states’ performance in 2019 on the measures that reflect these outcomes. Cases identified as “alternative response victim” were not included in the calculation of these two safety measures; only substantiated and indicated cases were included.

**Table II–3. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcomes 1 and 2: Keeping Children Safe**

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
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) ^a	2.80%	5.10%	7.20%	0.4–12.3%
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=51) ^a	0.16%	0.27%	0.51%	0.00–2.06%

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

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

Recurrence of maltreatment

Recurrence of child maltreatment is associated with increased risk of a number of significant negative outcomes for children, including developmental delay, cognitive and socioemotional problems, and entry into the juvenile justice system. Additionally, recurrence adds additional burden to child welfare caseloads and available resources.⁵² The national median for maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1) in 2019 was 5.1 percent. Individual state performance ranged from 0.4 to 12.3 percent. A number of variables may have impacted this range in performance across states, including variations in child victim rates. As reported in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, a state’s individual child victim rate was moderately correlated with the rate of recurrence within a 6-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.68$).

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, states with higher child victim rates also tended to have higher recurrence rates.

The variation in state performance may also be related to differences across states with regard to the types of child maltreatment reported. Most notably, states with high percentages of victims due to neglect tended to have a high percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.46$). In contrast, there was a very low, negative correlation between states’ performance on measure 1.1 and the percentages of victims due to physical abuse (Pearson’s $r=-0.17$). There was a low, negative correlation between measure 1.1 and percentages of victims of sexual abuse (Pearson’s $r=-0.31$). One possible explanation is that substantiated allegations of physical or sexual abuse are more likely to be followed by legal actions against the perpetrator, including actions designed to prevent additional unsupervised contact. In contrast, substantiated allegations of neglect may not result in similar actions unless the neglect is considered particularly severe.

⁵² Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10(3), 161–178. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2013.788947>

Maltreatment of children in foster care

The 2019 data shown in table II–3 indicate a very low occurrence of maltreatment of children while in foster care (measure 2.1). The national median performance was 0.27 percent, but the range of performance across states varied from 0.00 to 2.06 percent.⁵³ One state (Wyoming) reported zero cases of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff. The following three states reported more than 1.00 percent: New York (1.50), Mississippi (1.55 percent), and Rhode Island (2.06 percent). The 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, differences in casework practices, the levels of interaction caseworkers have with families to spotlight instances of maltreatment, the quality and consistency of caseworkers visits, and the effective implementation of maltreatment prevention and treatment services.

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Maltreatment Recurrence and Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care

Table II–4 presents the median performance across states for 2015–2019 on these safety measures, as well as the number of states that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance, as determined by a percentage-change calculation.

Outcome Measures ^a	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^b	Declined in Performance ^b
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Measure 1.1: Percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period. (N=51) ^c	5.0%	5.1%	5.3%	5.5%	5.2%	21 states (41%)	20 states (39%)
Measure 2.1: Percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member. (N=47) ^c	0.29%	0.20%	0.27%	0.26%	0.26%	16 states (34%)	26 states (55%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table II–3 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure in conducting analyses for this Report, when there was a percentage change less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table II–3 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As shown in table II–4, the median 5-year performance across states with regard to recurrence of child maltreatment (measure 1.1) increased by 4.0 percent between 2015 and 2019, showing a decline in performance. About as many states (21) reported an improvement in performance as reported a decline (20). An improvement in performance was observed in 2019 with respect to the previous year.

In contrast, the national 5-year median performance with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) showed an improvement. From 2015 to 2019, the national median rate dropped from 0.29 to 0.26—a 10.3-percent decrease. Individual state performances between 2015 and 2019 on measures of maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1) and the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) are displayed in tables II–5 and II–6 (presented at the end of the chapter).

The percentage of all children in foster care who experienced maltreatment while in care decreased by 10.3 between 2015 and 2019.

⁵³ Due to the relatively few cases of child maltreatment in foster care, performance on this measure is presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

Summary of Findings Regarding Keeping Children Safe

National performance on the two safety-related measures (recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care) was mixed between 2015 and 2019. National performance on measure 1.1 (maltreatment recurrence) has steadily worsened over the past 4 years but showed a decrease from 2018 to 2019. Performance on measure 2.1, despite fluctuations from year-to-year, showed improvement from 2015 to 2019. It is difficult to compare states on their performance on these safety measures for the reasons previously discussed. Additionally, because of the relatively small number of child victims each year, individual state performance over time is highly sensitive to small changes in performance.

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 foster care, can experience a wide variety of consequences, ranging from physical and mental health problems to issues with cognitive development and academic achievement.⁵⁴ Furthermore, maltreatment recurrence is associated with an increase in trauma symptoms in children.⁵⁵ Conversely, because children who already have mental or physical problems may be at higher risk for maltreatment,⁵⁶ it also is important to note that analyses in this Report do not imply causal relationships between physical and mental health problems and maltreatment recurrence.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to child safety, including child victim and fatality rates as well as state performance on outcomes 1 and 2. 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: age, race, ethnicity, and maltreatment type of child victims; mean and median CPS response times; and individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data.

⁵⁴ Goldman, J., Salus, M. K., Wolcott, D., & Kennedy, K. Y. (2003). *A coordinated response to child abuse and neglect: The foundation for practice*. HHS, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/foundation/>.

⁵⁵ Adams, Z. W., Moreland, A., Cohen, J. R., Lee, R. C., Hanson, R. F., Danielson, C. K., Self-Brown, S., & Briggs, E. C. (2016). Polyvictimization: Latent profiles and mental health outcomes in a clinical sample of adolescents. *Psychology of Violence*, 6(1), 145–155. <https://www.doi.org/10.1037/a0039713>

⁵⁶ For additional information, refer to *The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities*, which is available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/prevenres/focus/>.

Figure II–2.

CHILD VICTIM RATE PER 1,000 CHILDREN,
2019 (N=52)

National rate: 8.9 per 1,000

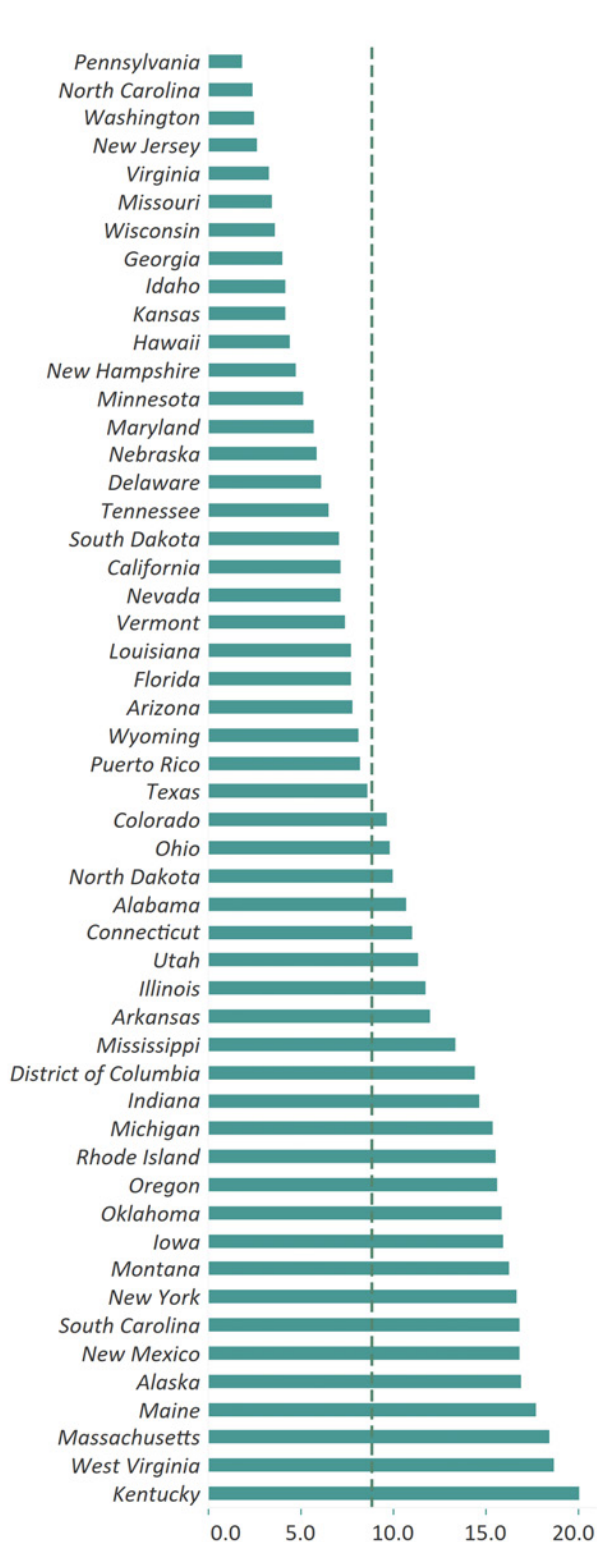
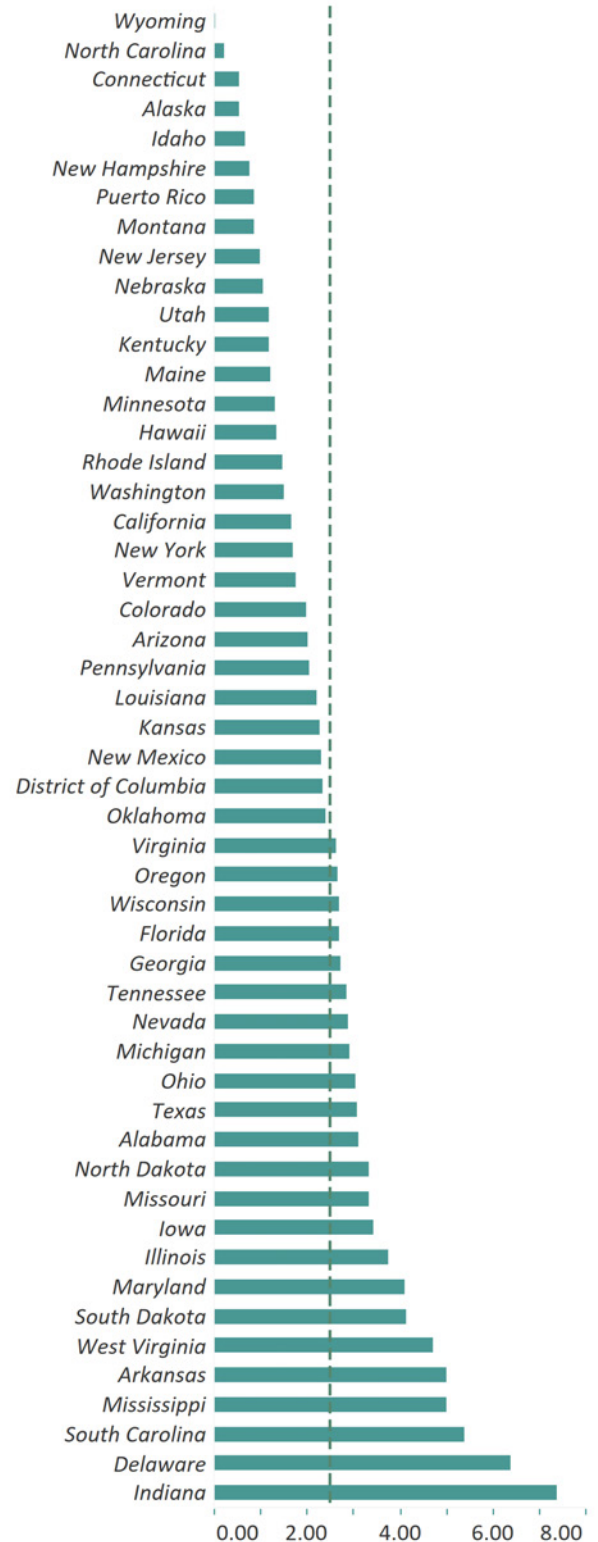


Figure II–3.

CHILD FATALITY RATE PER 100,000 CHILDREN,
2019 (N=51)

National rate: 2.50 per 100,000



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds

Figure II-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING A
RECURRENCE OF MALTREATMENT WITHIN
6 MONTHS, 2019 (N=52)

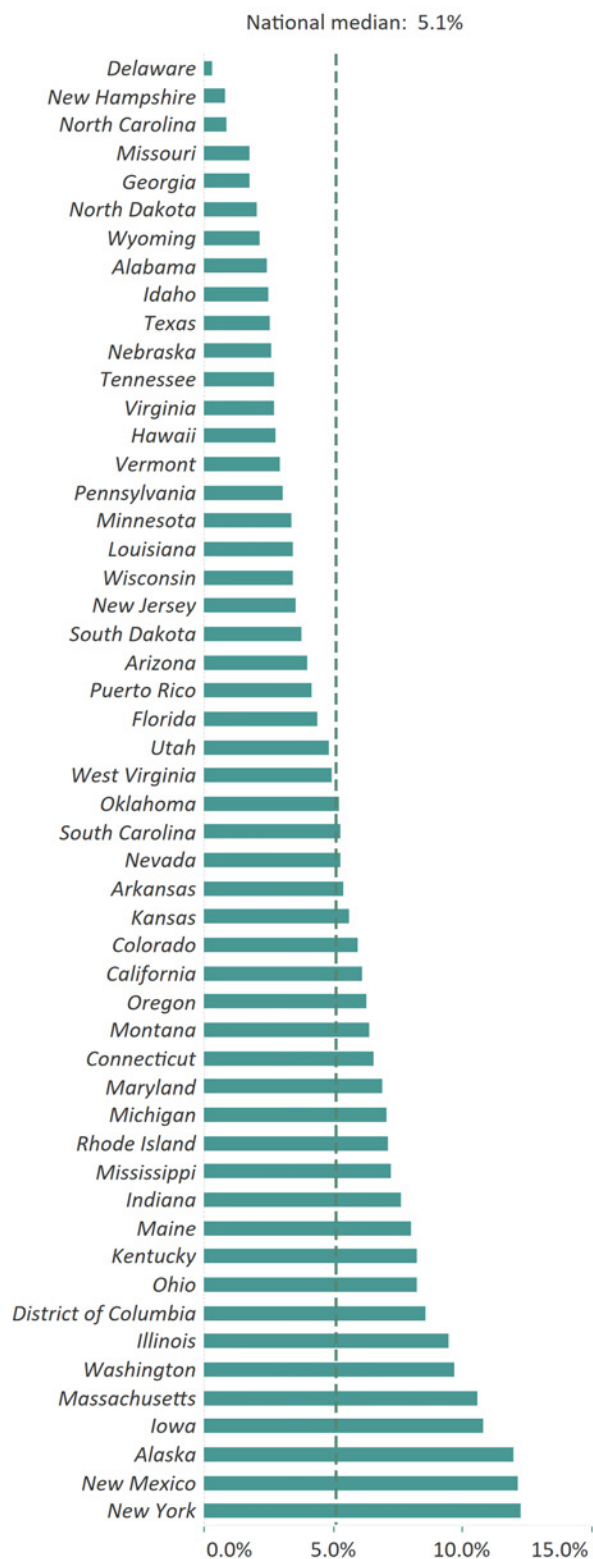
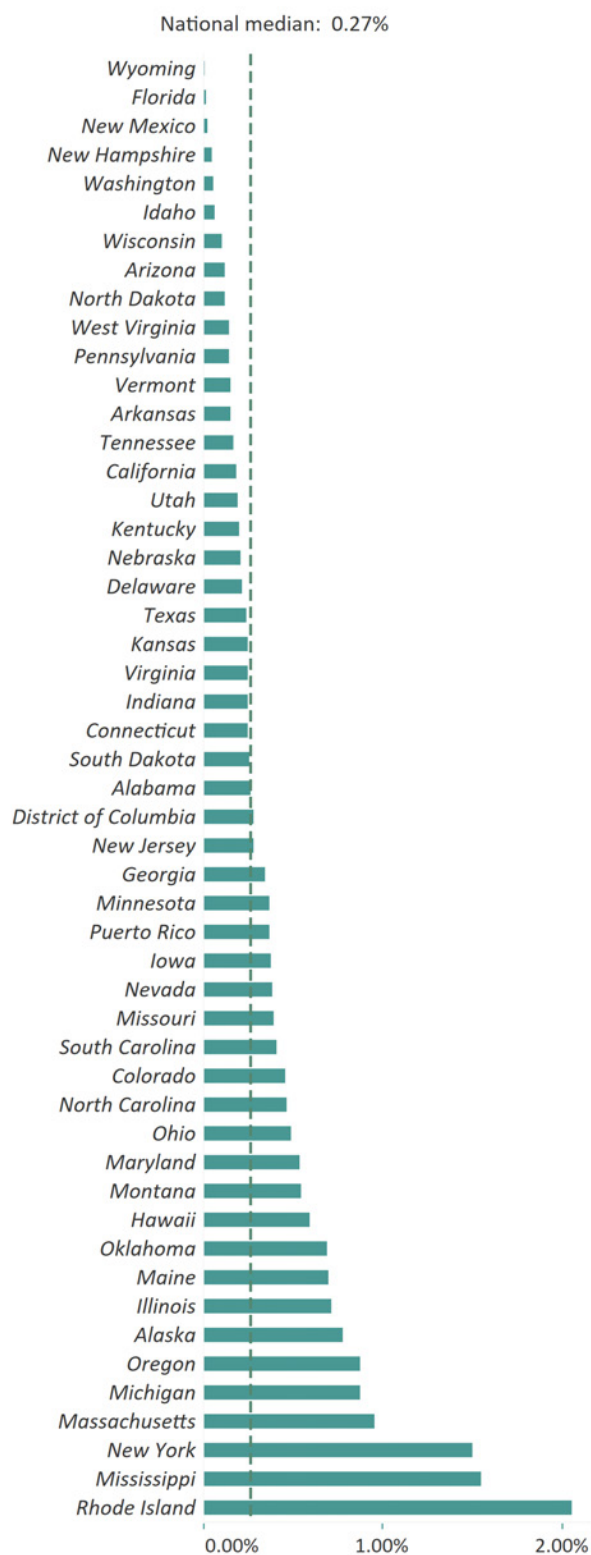


Figure II-5.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING
MALTREATMENT IN FOSTER CARE,
2019 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table II–5. Percentage of Children Experiencing a Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 6 Months, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	1.5%	2.2%	2.2%	2.4%	2.5%	59.7%
Alaska	13.2%	13.1%	11.8%	12.1%	12.0%	–9.0%
Arizona	4.2%	2.5%	1.9%	3.7%	4.0%	–4.3%
Arkansas	5.2%	5.7%	4.5%	5.0%	5.4%	3.3%
California	6.4%	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%	6.1%	–4.4%
Colorado	5.0%	6.0%	6.3%	5.6%	6.0%	19.1%
Connecticut	6.2%	7.4%	7.0%	6.5%	6.6%	5.8%
Delaware	1.5%	2.5%	1.9%	2.3%	0.4%	–75.4%
District of Columbia	6.0%	5.3%	8.2%	9.7%	8.6%	42.6%
Florida	5.2%	4.8%	5.6%	4.3%	4.4%	–15.3%
Georgia	4.5%	4.7%	2.2%	2.9%	1.8%	–60.4%
Hawaii	1.2%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%	2.8%	125.1%
Idaho	4.3%	3.9%	3.5%	3.2%	2.5%	–41.6%
Illinois	7.4%	7.5%	8.5%	8.8%	9.5%	27.4%
Indiana	6.5%	6.6%	7.0%	6.1%	7.6%	17.5%
Iowa	7.7%	8.0%	9.3%	13.0%	10.8%	40.5%
Kansas	6.0%	3.2%	4.1%	6.3%	5.7%	–5.4%
Kentucky	8.6%	7.8%	10.4%	9.2%	8.2%	–4.5%
Louisiana	5.8%	5.7%	6.3%	4.3%	3.4%	–41.0%
Maine	4.7%	4.5%	5.3%	6.2%	8.0%	70.0%
Maryland	7.1%	7.0%	7.7%	8.8%	6.9%	–2.7%
Massachusetts	11.4%	11.2%	10.4%	10.8%	10.6%	–7.2%
Michigan	5.7%	5.7%	6.7%	6.7%	7.1%	25.2%
Minnesota	4.7%	6.7%	7.1%	4.6%	3.4%	–27.2%
Mississippi	6.6%	6.6%	6.5%	6.9%	7.3%	10.2%
Missouri	3.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.4%	1.8%	–41.4%
Montana	4.6%	5.2%	6.1%	7.1%	6.4%	39.0%
Nebraska	4.9%	1.8%	3.9%	3.7%	2.6%	–46.3%
Nevada	5.1%	3.9%	5.1%	5.7%	5.3%	3.1%
New Hampshire	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%	0.8%	–1.3%
New Jersey	5.0%	4.5%	4.4%	3.9%	3.6%	–28.7%
New Mexico	10.7%	12.0%	12.1%	11.0%	12.2%	13.6%
New York	11.9%	12.4%	12.8%	12.2%	12.3%	2.7%
North Carolina	2.8%	1.9%	2.9%	1.9%	0.9%	–67.0%
North Dakota	3.5%	5.1%	3.1%	1.8%	2.0%	–42.1%
Ohio	7.5%	6.7%	8.5%	7.8%	8.3%	10.7%
Oklahoma	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%	5.4%	5.2%	–1.8%
Oregon	5.1%	5.6%	6.0%	5.5%	6.3%	25.2%
Pennsylvania	3.4%	3.0%	2.8%	2.8%	3.1%	–9.2%
Rhode Island	9.3%	6.8%	6.9%	6.7%	7.1%	–23.2%
South Carolina	3.8%	4.8%	3.4%	6.8%	5.3%	40.0%
South Dakota	2.1%	4.4%	3.2%	3.5%	3.8%	79.4%
Tennessee	3.7%	2.1%	2.4%	2.3%	2.7%	–27.3%
Texas	2.4%	3.0%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	7.3%
Utah	6.0%	5.9%	6.3%	5.7%	4.9%	–18.7%
Vermont	4.0%	3.8%	4.4%	2.5%	2.9%	–25.8%
Virginia	2.6%	2.5%	2.8%	3.3%	2.7%	3.5%
Washington	8.2%	8.9%	9.0%	11.7%	9.7%	18.1%
West Virginia	1.9%	2.0%	5.5%	5.6%	5.0%	166.1%
Wisconsin	3.8%	4.1%	4.2%	3.6%	3.5%	–10.2%
Wyoming	3.3%	2.1%	1.7%	2.2%	2.2%	–34.0%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Table II-6. Percentage of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2015–2019 (N=47)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	0.06%	0.11%	0.30%	0.17%	0.27%	326.5%
Alaska	0.38%	0.93%	0.88%	1.51%	0.78%	104.6%
Arizona	0.06%	0.06%	0.14%	0.12%	0.12%	99.9%
Arkansas	0.24%	0.18%	0.23%	0.13%	0.15%	–37.9%
California	0.20%	0.19%	0.18%	0.19%	0.18%	–11.5%
Colorado	0.56%	0.58%	0.49%	0.47%	0.46%	–18.2%
Connecticut	0.77%	0.68%	1.27%	0.03%	0.25%	–67.2%
Delaware	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.22%	N/A
District of Columbia	0.23%	0.40%	0.27%	0.56%	0.28%	22.0%
Florida	0.04%	0.05%	0.04%	0.01%	0.02%	–58.8%
Hawaii	0.90%	0.72%	0.11%	0.11%	0.59%	–34.2%
Illinois	0.57%	0.55%	0.75%	0.60%	0.72%	25.8%
Indiana	0.15%	0.20%	0.26%	0.20%	0.25%	64.0%
Iowa	0.36%	0.18%	0.22%	0.48%	0.38%	6.1%
Kansas	0.29%	0.19%	0.65%	0.16%	0.25%	–15.0%
Kentucky	0.96%	0.40%	0.51%	0.50%	0.20%	–78.8%
Maine	0.40%	0.69%	0.57%	0.75%	0.70%	76.0%
Maryland	0.41%	0.60%	0.47%	0.55%	0.54%	29.5%
Massachusetts	0.97%	1.37%	1.00%	1.22%	0.96%	–1.0%
Michigan	0.54%	0.56%	0.88%	0.71%	0.88%	62.6%
Minnesota	0.41%	0.68%	0.81%	0.70%	0.37%	–10.4%
Mississippi	0.96%	1.18%	1.14%	1.26%	1.55%	60.8%
Missouri	0.24%	0.25%	0.28%	0.27%	0.39%	63.2%
Montana	0.31%	0.18%	0.39%	0.84%	0.55%	77.6%
Nebraska	0.12%	0.13%	0.23%	0.15%	0.21%	80.9%
Nevada	0.16%	0.20%	0.21%	0.27%	0.39%	147.2%
New Hampshire	0.00%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	0.05%	N/A
New Jersey	0.15%	0.07%	0.12%	0.32%	0.28%	93.7%
New Mexico	0.22%	0.09%	0.11%	0.19%	0.03%	–88.3%
New York	0.76%	3.13%	3.28%	1.68%	1.50%	98.0%
North Dakota	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.15%	0.12%	177.8%
Ohio	0.40%	0.52%	0.42%	0.43%	0.49%	20.9%
Oklahoma	1.57%	1.28%	1.23%	1.09%	0.69%	–55.9%
Oregon	0.72%	0.83%	0.98%	0.76%	0.88%	23.0%
Pennsylvania	0.09%	0.14%	0.20%	0.11%	0.14%	53.0%
Rhode Island	1.36%	1.60%	2.06%	1.80%	2.06%	51.8%
South Carolina	0.20%	0.39%	0.50%	0.67%	0.41%	105.9%
South Dakota	0.05%	0.13%	0.16%	0.04%	0.26%	458.1%
Tennessee	0.30%	0.13%	0.14%	0.19%	0.17%	–45.0%
Texas	0.29%	0.31%	0.27%	0.23%	0.24%	–18.3%
Utah	0.06%	0.14%	0.43%	0.43%	0.20%	235.3%
Vermont	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.15%	0.15%	N/A
Virginia	0.25%	0.26%	0.20%	0.13%	0.25%	–1.7%
Washington	0.11%	0.11%	0.08%	0.07%	0.06%	–45.8%
West Virginia	0.32%	0.11%	0.21%	0.11%	0.14%	–55.9%
Wisconsin	0.09%	0.14%	0.12%	0.26%	0.11%	21.2%
Wyoming	0.53%	0.40%	0.24%	0.24%	0.00%	–100.0%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.— Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter III: Finding Permanent Homes for Children in Foster Care

When foster care is necessary to ensure a child's safety and well-being, 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.⁵⁷ Outcome 3 (increase permanency for children in foster care) encompasses these permanency goals for children and youth. This chapter presents key findings on state performance toward this outcome by considering children who have exited foster care and assessing state data on the percentage who achieve permanency and the percentage who exit to emancipation. For 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 caretakers
- Living with other relatives⁵⁸
- Guardianship⁵⁹
- Legally adopted

State and national performance on exits to permanency for children in foster care are assessed using the following measures:

- Measure 3.1: The percentage of all children exiting foster care who exited to a permanent home
- Measure 3.2: The percentage of all children exiting foster care with a diagnosed disability who were discharged to a permanent home
- Measure 3.3: The percentage of all children exiting foster care who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 and who were discharged to a permanent home
- Measure 3.4: The percentage of all children who emancipated from foster care and who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger
- Measure 3.5: The percentage of children by racial or ethnic category who exited either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship⁶⁰

⁵⁷ 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 under the placement and care responsibility of the state child welfare agency for at least 24 hours. This includes foster family homes, group homes, shelters, residential treatment facilities, and similar placements. For more information, see *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-review-guide>.

⁵⁸ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the discharge reasons of "reunification with parents or primary caretakers" and "living with other relatives" are combined into the category of "reunification."

⁵⁹ Legal guardians include relatives and nonrelatives.

⁶⁰ Due to the structure of this measure, data regarding (1) the range of state performance and (2) the median state performance and change in performance over time were included in separate tables. Additionally, in this Report, this measure is only reported at the national level. To view state by state data on this measure, please visit the data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

Children Exiting Foster Care

Nationally, approximately 249,000 children exited foster care in 2019. Across states, the median length of stay for children exiting care ranged from 6.1 months to 30.9 months. However, nearly all states (50) reported a median length of stay less than 24 months for children exiting care, and 11 states reported a median length of stay less than 12 months for children exiting foster care. Chapter IV discusses outcomes designed to address the timeliness of these exits.

In 2019, 89.7 percent of all children who exited foster care during the year were discharged to a permanent home.

Table III–1 provides a breakdown of the foster care discharge reasons reported for these children. Nationally, 89.7 percent of all children exiting foster care during 2019 were discharged to a permanent home (i.e., were discharged to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship).⁶¹ Although that percentage is high, 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.

Table III–3. Foster Care Discharge Reasons, 2019 (N=52)

Discharge reason	Number of children	Percentage of total exits ^a (N=249,166)
Adoption	64,415	25.9%
Emancipation	20,455	8.2%
Guardianship	26,103	10.5%
Reunification	132,915	53.3%
Other ^b	5,278	2.1%

^a The percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

^b “Other” includes the discharge reasons of runaway, death, transfer to another agency, or missing data.

Nationally, approximately 20,000 youth exited foster care in 2019 with a discharge reason of emancipation.⁶² These are youth for whom the state was unable to find a permanent home. The percentage of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation steadily decreased from 2015 to 2018 (8.7, 8.5, 8.4, and 7.6 percent, respectively). In 2019, there was an increase to 8.2 percent.

Over the 5 years, however, the percentage of children exiting to emancipation decreased from 8.7 percent in 2015 to 8.2 percent in 2019—an overall decrease of 5.7 percent.

Since 2015, the percentage of all children emancipating from foster care has decreased by 5.7 percent.

The median performance across the states in 2019 for children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation was 6.7 percent—a 13.0-percent decrease since 2015 (7.7 percent).⁶³ Still, there was considerable variation between states in 2019 regarding the percentages of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation. The states with the highest percentages of emancipation were Delaware (22.9 percent), Virginia (22.5 percent), Maryland (17.7 percent), and Rhode Island (17.2 percent). The states with the lowest percentages were Wyoming (1.0 percent), West Virginia (1.8 percent), Puerto Rico (2.0 percent), and Mississippi (2.5 percent).

⁶¹ This percentage uses the total numbers reported across all states, as presented in table III–1. This should not be confused with national performance on measure 3.1, which is the median performance across states.

⁶² For more information regarding the AFCARS definition of emancipation, see *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-review-guide>.

⁶³ These percentages refer to the median across states for all children exiting foster care to emancipation. This should not be confused with the median for outcome measure 3.4, which examines the subpopulation of children who were discharged to emancipation after entering care at age 12 or younger.

One possibility for this variation across states might be due to differences across states in the ages of children entering foster care (i.e., a state with proportionally more older youth entering foster care would have a higher percentage of the state's foster youth exiting to emancipation). However, there was a low positive correlation between the percentage of youth in a state discharged from foster care who were emancipated and the percentage of children who entered foster care in the state who were age 12 or older (Pearson's $r=0.29$).

Range of Performance in Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Table III–2 displays state performance in 2019 on measures regarding finding permanent homes for children in foster care. Table III–3 provides data about the racial and ethnic categories of children who left care to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home).

Table III–2. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
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=52)	86.5%	90.3%	92.8%	75.1–97.2%
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=48)	76.4%	82.7%	88.8%	50.0–96.9%
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=52)	58.8%	64.3%	70.7%	32.7–94.1%
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=52) ^a	11.8%	15.0%	19.8%	6.8–47.3%

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

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

Table III–3. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster 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 (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=52)	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
American Indian/Alaska Native	61.7%	82.4%	95.2%	0.0–100.0%
Asian	65.6%	84.3%	96.5%	0.0–100.0%
Black or African American	82.0%	86.9%	91.2%	0.0–100.0%
Hispanic (of any race)	88.0%	90.8%	93.1%	68.4–97.2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	93.1%	100.0%	0.0–100.0%
White	88.9%	91.4%	93.6%	77.0–100.0%
Two or More Races	88.7%	91.3%	94.7%	75.0–100.0%

Note—All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race

Measures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 assess permanency for children at the time of discharge from foster care, and measure 3.5 assesses permanency by race and ethnicity categories. The national median performance across states for all children who exited foster care to permanency during 2019 (measure 3.1) was 90.3 percent. State performance ranged from 75.1 to 97.2 percent. Only the following three states reported permanency rates below 80.0 percent: Delaware (75.1 percent), Virginia (75.2 percent), and Rhode Island (79.1 percent).

Children with disabilities

For the purpose of AFCARS and this Report, a child is determined to have a disability if a qualified professional has clinically diagnosed the child as having one of the following conditions: mental retardation, visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, or other medically diagnosed conditions requiring special care.⁶⁴ As indicated in table III–2, in 2019, states tended to be considerably more successful in finding permanent homes for the general foster care population exiting foster care (median performance: 90.3 percent) than for children with diagnosed disabilities who exited foster care (median performance: 82.7 percent). State performance regarding permanent homes for children with disabilities varied considerably in 2019, ranging from 50.0 to 96.9 percent, with three states performing at least equally as well on this measure as measure 3.1 (permanency for all children).⁶⁵ Additionally, there was a moderate correlation between state performance in achieving permanency across all children who exited foster care with their performance on this measure (Pearson's $r=0.68$).

The disparity between achieving permanency for all children exiting care and for children with disabilities has been a consistent finding in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports. Because children with diagnosed disabilities may need higher levels of care, they may be more likely to be placed in residential treatment facilities that may be better equipped to provide such care and are, therefore, less likely to achieve permanent homes with families. These findings suggest 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 long-standing pattern that continues in this Report is the difficulty states have in establishing permanency for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12. The national median performance regarding exits to permanency by older youth, defined as children who were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, was only 64.3 percent.⁶⁶ There was a high correlation between a state's success in 2019 at achieving permanency across all children that exited foster care (measure 3.1) and their success in achieving permanency for older youth (Pearson's $r=0.85$).

States are less successful in establishing permanency for children with disabilities and children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 than they were for the total population of children exiting care.

⁶⁴ For more information on disability and AFCARS, including complete definitions and conditions that may be mapped to AFCARS, see *AFCARS Technical Bulletin #2: Disability Information*, revised in February 2012, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-tb2>.

⁶⁵ The three states were Arkansas, Michigan, and Washington.

⁶⁶ The number of older children in care may include youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system. These youth are included in the reporting population.

Older children in foster care may face numerous age-specific barriers to permanency.⁶⁷ 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 multiple factors, but one likely contributor is the higher rate of risky behavior among older youth in foster care. Older youth transitioning from foster care have relatively higher rates of substance use referrals, incarceration, and giving birth to or fathering a child.⁶⁸ These youth require more resources, and there may be a lack of families willing and able to provide them with the support they need.

Additionally, there may also be agency practices that 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, with staff believing these individuals to be unadoptable.⁶⁹ Furthermore, some agencies may focus on providing independent living services to these 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.⁷⁰

Finally, older youth might show some resistance to permanency planning. If permanency planning involves the termination of their birth parents' rights, older youth might be hesitant to form ties with new families, as many still have emotional ties to their birth families. These 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.⁷¹

Youth emancipating from foster care

Measure 3.4 examines the amount of time children were in foster care before emancipation. The data in table III–2 show that, in half the states, 15.0 percent or more of the children who were emancipated from foster care in 2019 were age 12 or younger at their entry into foster care (a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Individual state performance varied widely, from 6.8 to 47.3 percent. It is important to keep in mind, however, that emancipations are a relatively small proportion of all exits from care for any given state. For example, Wyoming reported only 11 children exiting care in 2019 with a discharge reason of emancipation, and a total of 16 states had fewer than 100 children. Thus, individual state performance can vary widely within a single year and across time depending on the exit circumstances of relatively few children. This will be especially important to keep in mind in future reports if, as previously discussed, the total number and proportion of children emancipating from foster care continue to decline.

Race and ethnicity of children exiting to permanency

Measure 3.5 assesses the percentage of children exiting to a permanent home by race and ethnicity (see table III–3). The national median performance across states for children exiting to permanency during 2019 was 82.4 percent for American Indian or Alaska Native children, 84.3 percent for Asian children, 86.9 percent for Black or African-American children, 90.8 percent for Hispanic children (of any race), 91.4 percent for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children, 91.4 for White children, and 91.3 percent for children of Two or More Races. For a breakout by state and exit reasons for this measure, visit the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>.

⁶⁷ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>

⁶⁸ For more information, see the National Youth in Transition Database data briefs on the Children's Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/data-briefs>.

⁶⁹ Groh, A. (2009). It's time to make older child adoption a reality: Because every child and youth deserves a family. North American Council on Adoptable Children. <https://www.nacac.org/resource/its-time-to-make-older-child-adoption-a-reality-because-every-child-and-youth-deserves-a-family/>

⁷⁰ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>

⁷¹ Ibid.

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Achieving Permanency

Table III–4 presents the median performances across states for 2015–2019 on the measures pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care. The table also presents a summary of the changes in state performance between 2015 and 2019 on these measures. These median performances and changes in performance over time should be viewed together to gain a better understanding of trends over time.

Table III–4. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2015–2019 Outcomes 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care							
Outcome Measures ^a	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^b	Declined in Performance ^b
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Measure 3.1: Percentage of all children who exited foster care to a permanent home (N=51)	89.1%	89.0%	90.3%	90.3%	90.2%	5 states (10%)	0 states (0%)
Measure 3.2: Percentage of all children with a diagnosed disability exiting foster care who were discharged to a permanent home (N=43)	79.8%	82.1%	81.5%	82.2%	83.2%	14 states (32%)	6 states (14%)
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=51)	66.0%	65.2%	64.0%	62.7%	64.0%	8 states (16%)	20 states (39%)
Measure 3.4: Percentage of all children emancipated from foster care who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger (N=51) ^c	18.6%	16.9%	16.9%	15.8%	15.0%	35 states (69%)	13 states (25%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table III–2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for the analyses conducted for this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table III–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

Table III–5 presents data about the median performance by states regarding the percentage of children by racial and ethnic categories that left care to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

Table III–5. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2015–2019 Outcomes 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster 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 (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51) ^a	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^b	Declined in Performance ^b
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
American Indian/Alaska Native	85.3%	86.5%	86.6%	83.3%	83.3%	12 states (24%)	11 states (22%)
Asian	90.2%	87.5%	87.0%	93.2%	85.3%	10 states (20%)	21 states (41%)
Black or African American	84.2%	85.7%	86.0%	86.7%	87.0%	13 states (25%)	7 states (14%)
Hispanic (of any race)	90.6%	90.9%	90.5%	90.4%	90.7%	6 states (12%)	7 states (13%)
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%	91.4%	9 states (18%)	8 states (16%)
White	90.4%	90.7%	91.0%	91.8%	91.4%	3 states (6%)	0 states (0%)
Two or More Races	91.3%	91.4%	92.0%	91.5%	91.3%	7 states (14%)	4 states (8%)

^a All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race. Full descriptions for this measure can be found in table III–2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for the analyses conducted for this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table III–3 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As indicated in table III–4 and table III–6 (at the end of this chapter), states continued to be successful in finding permanent homes for children discharged from foster care (measure 3.1). The national median performance has increased slightly since 2015, though the overall 1.2-percent increase over time does not meet the threshold of meaningful change utilized in this Report. Because of the generally high performance by states on this measure, significant change is less likely to occur over the relatively short 5-year timeframe under review for this Report. This is further evidenced by 46 states (90 percent) reporting no change in performance and 5 states (10 percent) demonstrating an improvement in performance. No declines in performance were observed.

While states have not been as successful in achieving permanency for children exiting with disabilities (measure 3.2) compared with their performance for all children, the national median performance showed a 4.3-percent increase between 2015 (79.8 percent) and 2019 (83.2 percent). Prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports also noted a reliable, if not large, yearly improvement on this measure, with more states showing an improvement in performance than a decline.

In contrast, state performance on measure 3.3 (permanency for older children) continues to be a challenge for states. The national median performance has remained relatively flat over time, fluctuating from 66.0 percent in 2015 to 64.0 percent in 2019—an overall decrease of 3.0 percent. Furthermore, more states (39 percent) demonstrated a decline in performance than an improvement (16 percent).

As presented in table III–4, one of the most notable changes in performance between 2015 and 2019 was in the percentage of children who emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger (measure 3.4). For this measure, 35 states (69 percent) demonstrated improved performance between 2015 and 2019. The national median improved from 18.6 to 15.0 percent—a 19.4-percent decrease. This finding reflects a continuing trend noted in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, although the magnitude of change may be decreasing.⁷²

Between 2015 and 2019, the median percentage of children emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger declined by 19.4 percent—with 35 states demonstrating an improvement in performance.

For measure 3.5 (table III–5), which reports on the race and ethnicity of children exiting to permanency, a decrease in performance was observed for American Indian or Alaska Native children (2.3 percent), Asian children (5.4 percent), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children (8.6 percent). No change was observed for the placement of children of Two or More Races. For the remaining race and ethnicity categories, there was an improvement in performance over the 5-year period, with a 3.3-percent increase for Black or African-American children, a 0.1-percent increase for Hispanic children, and a 1.1-percent increase for White children. The improvement, however, was less than 5 percent, which is considered not significant based on the standard procedure used in this report to measure a change in performance.

⁷² The following are the 5-year percentage decreases noted in prior Reports for the percentage of children who emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger (measure 3.4): 29.3 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2015*, 28.4 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2016*, 24.9 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2017*, and 21.0 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2018*.

Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care

In 2019, 89.7 percent of all children exiting foster care were discharged to permanency. The 2015–2019 data on the measures used to assess this outcome generally reflected this positive finding. The national median performance on achieving permanency among all children who exited foster care (measure 3.1) was 90.3 percent. Additionally, most states continued to show progress in reducing the percentage of children exiting foster care to emancipation. This includes 69 percent of states demonstrating a reduction in the percentage of children emancipating from foster care who entered foster care at age 12 or younger (measure 3.4). Additionally, many states are making progress in their efforts to find permanent homes for children in foster care for longer periods of time, and improvement in this measure may reflect those efforts.

States continued to show improvement in finding permanent homes for exiting children with disabilities who exit care to permanency (measure 3.2), but there was negligible change in performance for older children achieving permanency (measure 3.3). For measure 3.5, states showed some nonsignificant improvement in finding permanent homes for children who were Black or African American, Hispanic, and White. However, states seemed to struggle in achieving permanency for children who were American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, as well as for children of Two or More Races. Overall, there is still room for improvement, and efforts are still needed to continue closing the gap in disparities for measures 3.2, 3.3, and 3.5. These are areas that call for additional consideration from state program administrators and policymakers.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to state performance on outcome 3 (increase permanency for children in foster care). The Child Welfare Outcomes data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>) has additional context information regarding finding permanent homes for children in foster care, including child age, race, and ethnicity and the median length of stay of children in care, entering care, and exiting care. Individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts in this Report due to incomplete or inadequate data, are also available.

Figure III-1.

PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN WHO
EXITS TO PERMANENCY, 2019 (N=52)

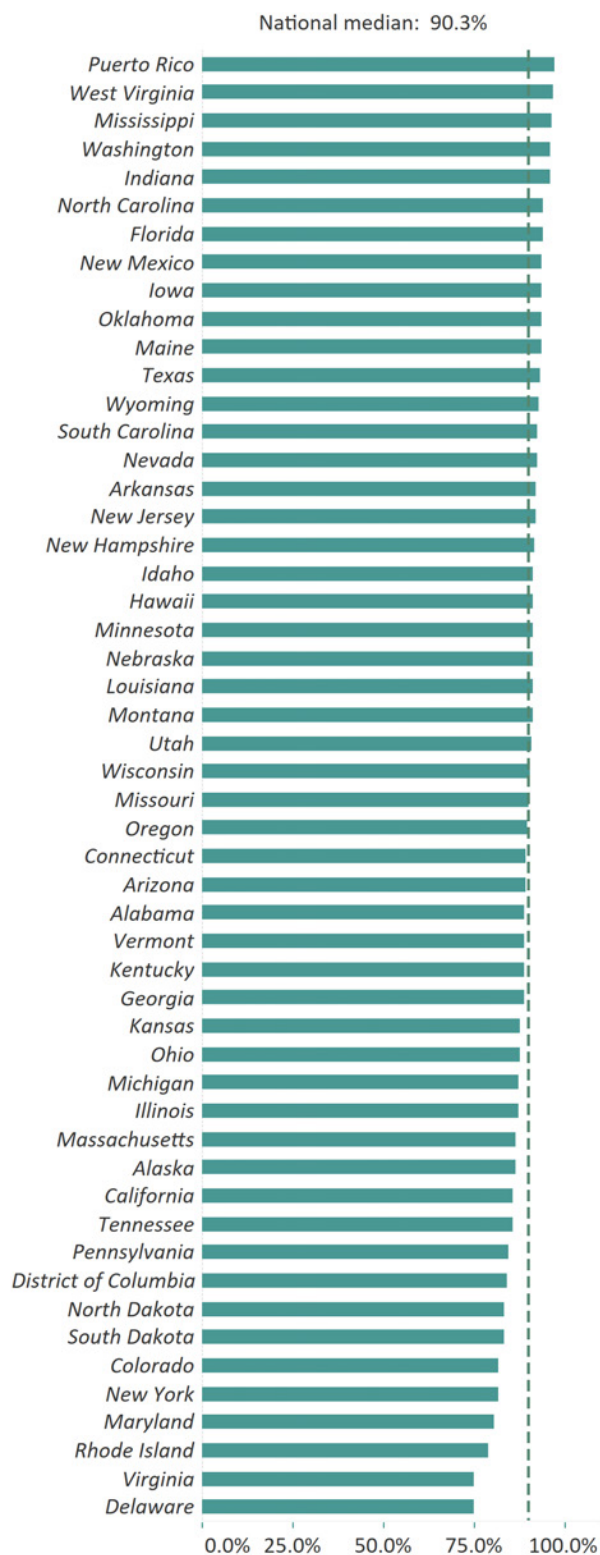
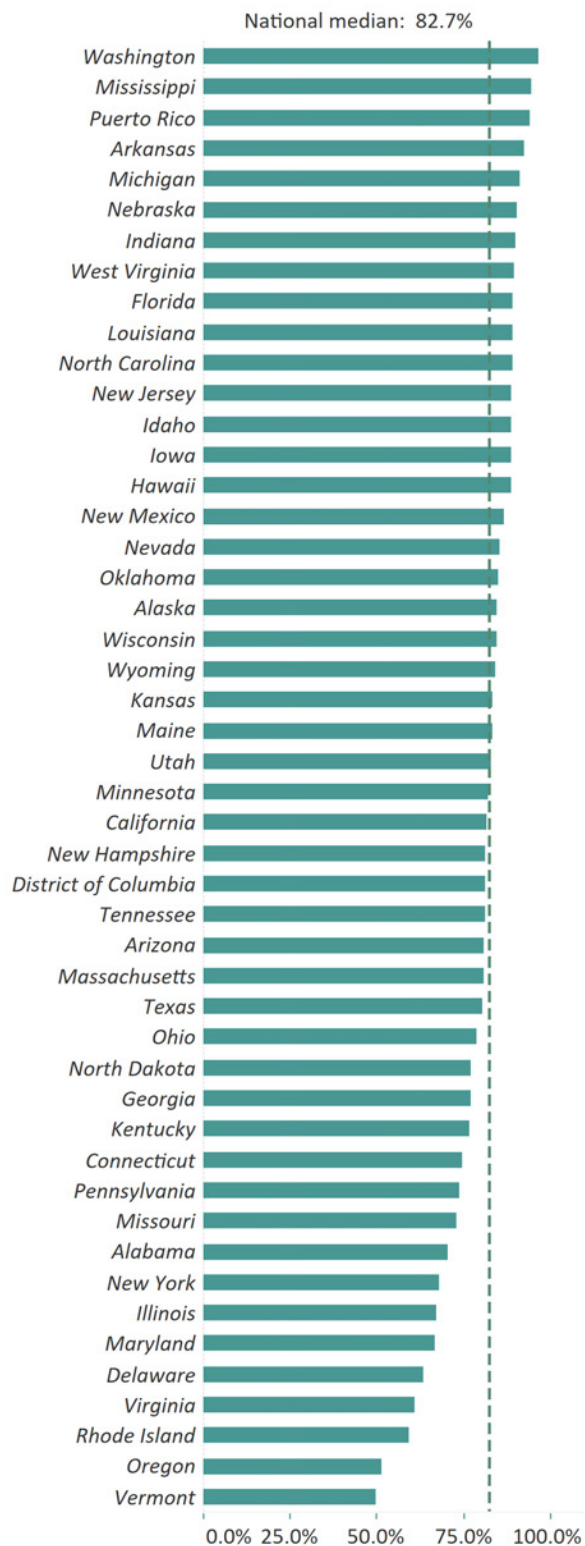


Figure III-2.

PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN WITH
A DIAGNOSED DISABILITY WHO EXIT TO
PERMANENCY, 2019 (N=48)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure III-3.

PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN AGE 12
AND OLDER WHO EXIT TO PERMANENCY,
2019 (N=52)

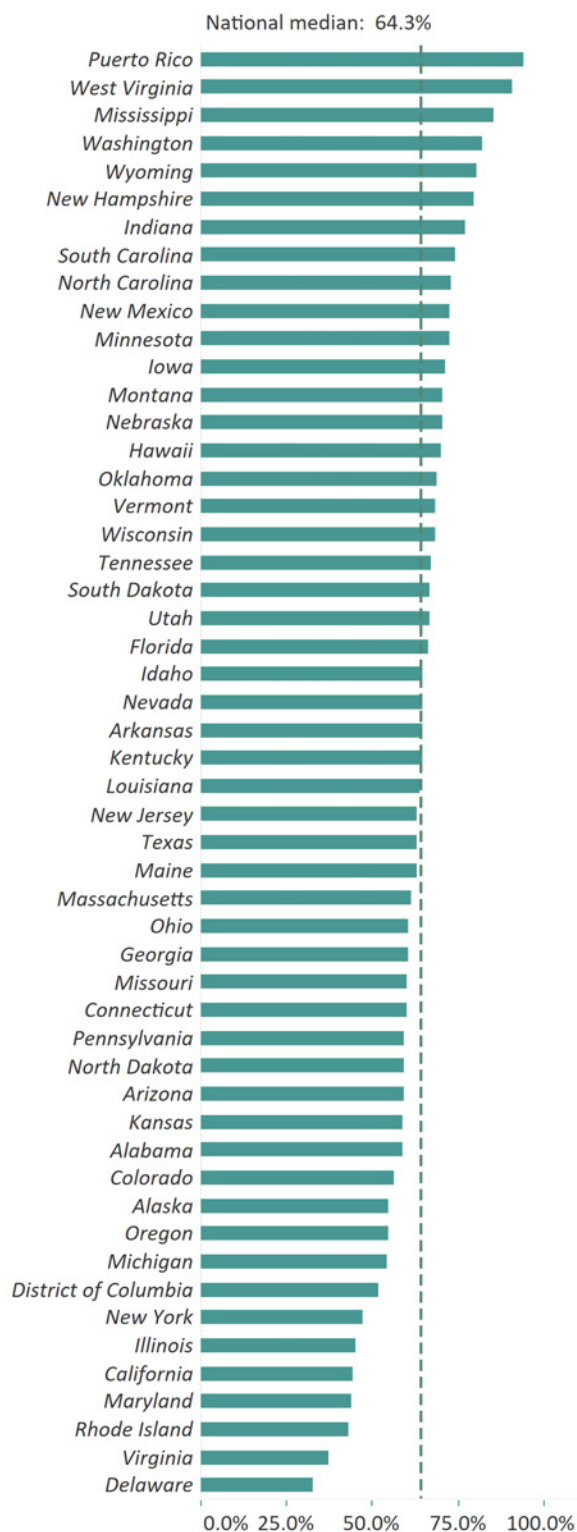
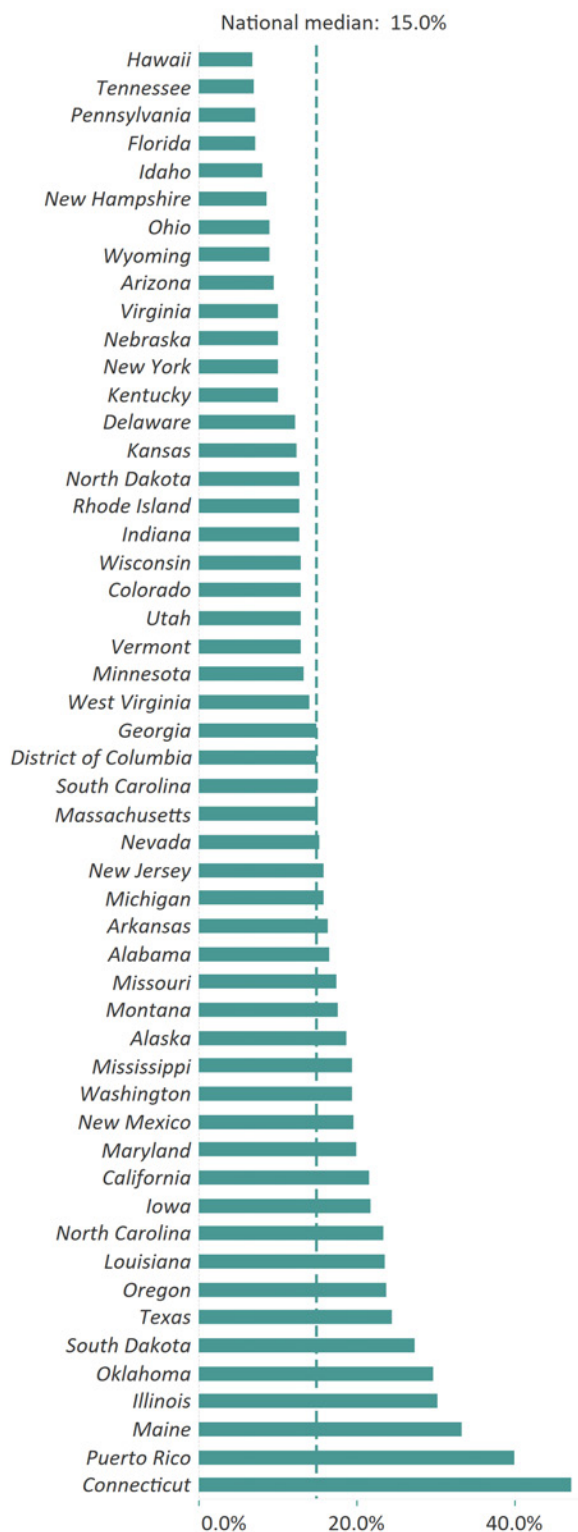


Figure III-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO
EMANCIPATION WHO ENTERED AT AGE 12 OR YOUNGER,
2019 (N=52)



Note.—For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

Table III–6. Outcome 3.1: Percentage of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	88.5%	87.5%	87.3%	89.4%	89.0%	0.6%
Alaska	86.9%	87.5%	86.2%	88.6%	86.4%	–0.6%
Arizona	89.6%	89.6%	90.3%	89.7%	89.4%	–0.3%
Arkansas	93.3%	93.1%	93.1%	92.5%	92.3%	–1.1%
California	82.3%	83.8%	84.8%	90.5%	85.9%	4.4%
Colorado	82.8%	82.3%	84.3%	83.8%	81.9%	–1.1%
Connecticut	69.0%	85.8%	90.8%	86.5%	89.4%	29.5%
Delaware	71.9%	84.6%	85.6%	70.5%	75.1%	4.5%
District of Columbia	77.7%	83.4%	81.1%	85.9%	84.1%	8.2%
Florida	92.4%	92.7%	92.8%	92.6%	94.0%	1.7%
Georgia	89.1%	89.0%	88.9%	88.8%	88.8%	–0.3%
Hawaii	92.4%	91.6%	89.9%	89.9%	91.4%	–1.1%
Idaho	92.0%	93.5%	92.7%	90.9%	91.5%	–0.6%
Illinois	91.3%	92.2%	93.6%	89.5%	87.3%	–4.3%
Indiana	95.2%	95.6%	95.7%	95.8%	96.1%	1.0%
Iowa	90.6%	91.9%	92.7%	93.7%	93.9%	3.6%
Kansas	86.8%	87.4%	85.2%	87.1%	87.7%	1.1%
Kentucky	87.9%	86.7%	87.0%	88.2%	88.8%	1.1%
Louisiana	93.1%	92.9%	91.0%	90.6%	91.2%	–2.0%
Maine	91.2%	92.1%	93.7%	92.4%	93.8%	2.8%
Maryland	78.7%	81.2%	82.6%	81.0%	80.5%	2.2%
Massachusetts	84.0%	84.7%	85.2%	85.7%	86.5%	2.9%
Michigan	81.0%	86.6%	85.8%	86.1%	87.4%	7.8%
Minnesota	89.4%	90.3%	90.8%	91.5%	91.4%	2.2%
Mississippi	93.1%	93.3%	94.4%	95.9%	96.6%	3.8%
Missouri	89.7%	90.4%	90.0%	90.3%	90.2%	0.5%
Montana	90.1%	88.8%	91.9%	91.5%	91.2%	1.2%
Nebraska	90.1%	90.8%	91.2%	92.4%	91.3%	1.3%
Nevada	92.5%	92.4%	90.9%	93.0%	92.3%	–0.2%
New Hampshire	85.8%	84.3%	81.8%	91.1%	91.9%	7.0%
New Jersey	92.2%	92.1%	91.7%	92.0%	92.3%	0.1%
New Mexico	93.3%	94.6%	93.3%	92.6%	93.9%	0.7%
New York	85.5%	81.3%	81.1%	81.8%	81.7%	–4.4%
North Carolina	88.9%	88.5%	93.7%	93.0%	94.1%	5.7%
North Dakota	82.8%	79.5%	83.7%	82.8%	83.5%	0.9%
Ohio	87.4%	87.8%	87.9%	89.9%	87.6%	0.2%
Oklahoma	92.3%	91.8%	92.5%	92.2%	93.9%	1.7%
Oregon	87.2%	87.8%	87.5%	89.5%	89.9%	3.1%
Pennsylvania	82.0%	81.3%	85.5%	87.1%	84.8%	3.4%
Rhode Island	82.3%	85.8%	84.6%	85.0%	79.1%	–4.0%
South Carolina	93.9%	92.2%	92.2%	92.2%	92.7%	–1.3%
South Dakota	83.6%	81.3%	84.3%	83.0%	83.3%	–0.4%
Tennessee	85.6%	84.9%	83.9%	83.9%	85.6%	0.0%
Texas	92.9%	92.9%	92.8%	93.5%	93.5%	0.6%
Utah	87.8%	86.0%	88.2%	89.0%	91.1%	3.7%
Vermont	88.6%	91.3%	91.9%	92.4%	89.0%	0.4%
Virginia	75.1%	69.4%	79.0%	72.0%	75.2%	0.2%
Washington	94.6%	95.5%	95.4%	95.3%	96.2%	1.8%
West Virginia	96.1%	96.0%	95.7%	97.3%	96.8%	0.8%
Wisconsin	90.8%	90.8%	90.7%	90.5%	90.4%	–0.4%
Wyoming	91.4%	90.0%	90.3%	92.3%	93.0%	1.7%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. The teal color in this table indicates an improvement in performance. There was not a significant decrease in performance on this measure.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III–7. Outcome 3.2: Percentage of Exiting Children With Diagnosed Disabilities Who Exit to Permanency, 2015–2019 (N=44)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	70.2%	74.0%	68.1%	69.5%	70.6%	0.5%
Alaska	84.8%	84.9%	86.4%	90.2%	84.7%	–0.2%
Arizona	86.2%	85.9%	84.6%	80.9%	80.9%	–6.1%
Arkansas	92.1%	93.8%	93.7%	93.3%	92.4%	0.3%
California	76.8%	78.8%	79.5%	87.9%	81.7%	6.4%
Connecticut	61.0%	75.5%	75.9%	72.1%	74.9%	22.8%
Delaware	53.4%	71.2%	71.3%	57.5%	63.5%	18.9%
District of Columbia	45.5%	50.0%	22.2%	72.7%	81.3%	78.8%
Florida	91.9%	91.0%	92.5%	91.1%	89.4%	–2.7%
Georgia	76.5%	77.2%	76.8%	76.7%	77.0%	0.6%
Hawaii	87.3%	86.5%	86.6%	87.4%	88.7%	1.6%
Idaho	82.4%	82.4%	89.4%	85.2%	88.8%	7.8%
Illinois	91.3%	91.7%	90.0%	77.4%	67.1%	–26.5%
Indiana	87.7%	87.0%	87.3%	88.0%	90.0%	2.7%
Iowa	84.3%	82.0%	84.6%	88.0%	88.8%	5.3%
Kansas	82.6%	84.2%	78.2%	82.4%	83.6%	1.2%
Kentucky	75.1%	74.3%	74.3%	73.1%	76.9%	2.5%
Louisiana	88.1%	89.4%	87.9%	88.8%	89.2%	1.3%
Maine	73.1%	75.3%	81.2%	79.9%	83.3%	14.1%
Maryland	60.1%	62.5%	66.5%	60.2%	66.7%	10.9%
Michigan	50.9%	92.0%	93.9%	94.0%	91.1%	79.0%
Minnesota	82.1%	82.4%	81.8%	84.0%	82.4%	0.4%
Mississippi	95.6%	91.6%	92.2%	92.5%	94.8%	–0.9%
Missouri	75.2%	77.2%	77.6%	82.0%	73.0%	–2.9%
Nebraska	86.1%	86.1%	88.0%	91.0%	90.7%	5.3%
Nevada	76.3%	75.2%	77.7%	72.8%	85.3%	11.9%
New Jersey	86.1%	87.4%	88.5%	88.3%	88.9%	3.3%
New Mexico	86.6%	89.3%	84.3%	87.3%	86.9%	0.3%
New York	76.4%	70.8%	69.4%	69.3%	68.0%	–11.0%
North Carolina	79.6%	82.2%	88.6%	83.0%	89.1%	12.0%
North Dakota	75.5%	74.2%	74.5%	72.1%	77.0%	2.1%
Ohio	80.1%	79.4%	78.5%	81.8%	79.0%	–1.3%
Oklahoma	83.4%	83.6%	85.3%	85.4%	85.0%	1.9%
Oregon	61.4%	61.1%	51.9%	57.3%	51.6%	–16.0%
Rhode Island	75.1%	76.3%	71.3%	75.8%	59.5%	–20.8%
Tennessee	68.1%	72.3%	73.6%	72.6%	81.2%	19.2%
Texas	78.9%	77.6%	77.7%	79.4%	80.7%	2.3%
Utah	77.7%	61.9%	44.6%	51.8%	83.1%	6.9%
Vermont	78.6%	63.2%	79.3%	68.0%	50.0%	–36.4%
Virginia	65.1%	56.7%	68.5%	58.8%	61.1%	–6.1%
Washington	94.6%	95.6%	96.3%	95.5%	96.9%	2.4%
West Virginia	91.5%	91.0%	89.5%	93.4%	89.6%	–2.1%
Wisconsin	83.7%	82.8%	82.9%	86.5%	84.5%	0.9%
Wyoming	83.6%	86.0%	86.3%	87.4%	84.1%	0.7%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III–8. Outcome 3.3: Percentage of Children Exiting at Age 12 and Older Who Exit to Permanency, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	61.8%	60.0%	56.0%	58.9%	58.8%	–4.9%
Alaska	50.7%	50.7%	52.5%	52.3%	54.7%	8.0%
Arizona	60.2%	60.9%	61.2%	60.1%	59.3%	–1.4%
Arkansas	69.7%	72.8%	67.5%	68.9%	64.7%	–7.2%
California	48.2%	47.9%	47.7%	56.9%	44.5%	–7.8%
Colorado	59.4%	62.9%	62.7%	60.4%	56.3%	–5.1%
Connecticut	51.8%	63.7%	62.4%	50.7%	60.2%	16.3%
Delaware	36.4%	49.5%	48.4%	35.9%	32.7%	–10.2%
District of Columbia	45.6%	46.2%	45.3%	51.2%	51.9%	13.6%
Florida	66.2%	65.6%	66.1%	63.2%	66.2%	0.1%
Georgia	70.0%	67.2%	63.9%	61.3%	60.6%	–13.3%
Hawaii	78.9%	73.1%	66.2%	69.8%	70.0%	–11.3%
Idaho	72.8%	77.5%	68.9%	62.4%	65.0%	–10.7%
Illinois	55.7%	57.3%	60.7%	46.6%	45.4%	–18.6%
Indiana	75.9%	77.3%	76.9%	76.8%	77.4%	2.0%
Iowa	75.3%	73.2%	70.8%	71.7%	71.5%	–5.1%
Kansas	59.9%	61.6%	58.6%	63.4%	58.9%	–1.7%
Kentucky	66.4%	61.7%	62.2%	64.1%	64.7%	–2.7%
Louisiana	74.3%	71.4%	64.0%	59.4%	64.0%	–13.9%
Maine	53.9%	51.6%	63.7%	46.6%	63.0%	16.9%
Maryland	47.4%	51.7%	52.4%	48.2%	43.9%	–7.2%
Massachusetts	62.4%	61.8%	61.1%	60.9%	61.6%	–1.2%
Michigan	48.9%	56.0%	52.1%	51.7%	54.5%	11.5%
Minnesota	76.7%	76.6%	75.0%	74.1%	72.6%	–5.4%
Mississippi	82.1%	81.5%	84.6%	86.1%	85.7%	4.4%
Missouri	60.6%	64.1%	62.5%	61.8%	60.3%	–0.4%
Montana	68.4%	66.4%	69.6%	67.1%	70.7%	3.4%
Nebraska	71.4%	69.6%	71.3%	75.4%	70.6%	–1.0%
Nevada	67.5%	66.9%	65.8%	69.1%	64.8%	–4.0%
New Hampshire	77.2%	75.6%	65.5%	79.7%	79.6%	3.1%
New Jersey	64.8%	63.2%	63.3%	62.5%	63.1%	–2.5%
New Mexico	73.4%	77.5%	70.7%	73.0%	72.8%	–0.8%
New York	60.3%	50.5%	49.4%	47.9%	47.3%	–21.5%
North Carolina	59.7%	57.7%	72.6%	69.0%	72.9%	22.1%
North Dakota	66.0%	61.1%	65.2%	57.7%	59.4%	–10.1%
Ohio	67.1%	67.1%	64.0%	66.8%	60.7%	–9.5%
Oklahoma	60.3%	65.4%	64.9%	62.5%	68.8%	14.1%
Oregon	56.1%	55.5%	54.0%	56.8%	54.6%	–2.7%
Pennsylvania	67.6%	64.4%	67.1%	65.7%	59.5%	–12.0%
Rhode Island	60.5%	65.3%	58.6%	58.2%	43.1%	–28.7%
South Carolina	79.7%	73.6%	71.8%	74.2%	74.4%	–6.7%
South Dakota	63.4%	65.2%	65.7%	60.9%	66.9%	5.5%
Tennessee	67.6%	67.1%	65.3%	65.1%	67.1%	–0.8%
Texas	63.1%	64.3%	62.6%	63.1%	63.0%	–0.1%
Utah	64.9%	59.7%	62.3%	62.7%	66.8%	2.9%
Vermont	68.2%	72.6%	72.1%	71.9%	68.5%	0.4%
Virginia	43.7%	36.7%	49.8%	35.2%	37.2%	–14.8%
Washington	78.8%	82.3%	82.7%	82.1%	82.2%	4.3%
West Virginia	90.6%	90.3%	88.7%	92.2%	90.8%	0.1%
Wisconsin	73.5%	72.4%	71.4%	68.3%	68.3%	–7.1%
Wyoming	79.2%	76.9%	74.9%	80.4%	80.6%	1.7%

^a A change of +/–5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III–9. Outcome 3.4: Percentage of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered Care Under Age 12, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	25.7%	27.5%	18.6%	18.0%	16.5%	–35.6%
Alaska	14.3%	16.4%	18.4%	15.2%	18.8%	31.3%
Arizona	9.8%	7.5%	8.5%	7.4%	9.6%	–1.6%
Arkansas	22.5%	17.3%	16.3%	17.4%	16.4%	–27.4%
California	24.4%	21.4%	21.9%	19.6%	21.7%	–11.3%
Colorado	20.7%	18.1%	13.9%	14.2%	13.0%	–37.3%
Connecticut	42.0%	53.2%	42.9%	45.0%	47.3%	12.5%
Delaware	25.3%	20.4%	18.9%	10.0%	12.3%	–51.2%
District of Columbia	40.2%	20.0%	20.0%	18.4%	15.0%	–62.7%
Florida	14.5%	9.9%	11.7%	12.2%	7.2%	–50.1%
Georgia	13.4%	10.9%	11.9%	8.6%	14.9%	11.2%
Hawaii	25.0%	10.6%	6.1%	12.7%	6.8%	–72.6%
Idaho	17.5%	17.6%	6.3%	6.0%	8.0%	–53.9%
Illinois	37.6%	27.6%	34.2%	27.6%	30.4%	–19.2%
Indiana	9.4%	14.5%	12.5%	12.8%	12.9%	37.4%
Iowa	17.7%	21.4%	23.1%	17.0%	21.8%	23.3%
Kansas	15.8%	13.8%	13.6%	15.9%	12.5%	–20.8%
Kentucky	10.8%	9.2%	8.4%	10.5%	10.2%	–5.8%
Louisiana	26.5%	24.1%	20.1%	18.7%	23.7%	–10.6%
Maine	30.3%	34.8%	33.9%	28.6%	33.3%	10.1%
Maryland	30.2%	33.8%	28.3%	28.3%	20.0%	–33.9%
Massachusetts	18.9%	15.5%	15.1%	17.8%	15.1%	–19.8%
Michigan	22.3%	16.9%	17.0%	13.3%	15.9%	–28.5%
Minnesota	19.7%	13.5%	18.6%	14.3%	13.4%	–31.8%
Mississippi	14.8%	12.9%	16.9%	23.5%	19.4%	31.3%
Missouri	18.6%	19.9%	20.0%	20.8%	17.5%	–6.1%
Montana	37.5%	23.3%	20.6%	19.1%	17.7%	–52.7%
Nebraska	13.7%	19.4%	13.8%	12.2%	10.1%	–26.5%
Nevada	21.3%	18.3%	18.1%	21.3%	15.4%	–27.4%
New Hampshire	20.3%	16.1%	10.3%	13.2%	8.7%	–57.1%
New Jersey	14.4%	15.8%	18.4%	15.8%	15.8%	10.0%
New Mexico	21.3%	19.7%	18.8%	21.4%	19.8%	–7.4%
New York	10.3%	10.2%	9.3%	9.7%	10.1%	–1.8%
North Carolina	11.8%	10.3%	12.1%	15.2%	23.4%	98.9%
North Dakota	14.9%	5.5%	10.0%	16.2%	12.7%	–14.7%
Ohio	16.7%	17.2%	13.3%	12.7%	9.0%	–46.2%
Oklahoma	25.5%	25.9%	25.1%	22.7%	29.8%	17.1%
Oregon	33.7%	35.5%	31.7%	27.8%	23.9%	–29.2%
Pennsylvania	14.0%	11.4%	8.5%	8.0%	7.2%	–48.7%
Rhode Island	12.8%	13.2%	17.1%	12.7%	12.8%	0.0%
South Carolina	29.3%	20.7%	16.1%	17.1%	15.0%	–48.9%
South Dakota	32.7%	52.4%	39.1%	15.8%	27.4%	–16.0%
Tennessee	1.6%	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	7.1%	346.9%
Texas	31.6%	32.5%	26.3%	24.4%	24.6%	–22.2%
Utah	15.9%	11.4%	10.5%	12.4%	13.0%	–18.4%
Vermont	7.6%	5.3%	24.0%	8.7%	13.0%	72.2%
Virginia	17.7%	11.6%	14.8%	11.2%	10.0%	–43.3%
Washington	24.6%	23.2%	25.9%	23.6%	19.4%	–21.1%
West Virginia	7.0%	13.6%	6.5%	3.3%	14.1%	100.5%
Wisconsin	16.5%	14.0%	16.1%	12.2%	12.9%	–21.7%
Wyoming	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	9.1%	–45.5%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

While chapter III broadly discusses the issue of permanency and notes 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. It also focuses on the timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care, as reinforced and supported by federal policies and laws, such as ASFA. Outcome 4 (reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry) and outcome 5 (reduce time in foster care to adoption) encompass this goal for children and youth. Because the percentages of children who are discharged from foster care to guardianship are very small in almost all states, the timeliness of guardianships is not specifically addressed in this chapter.

This chapter provides information on contextual factors related to caseworker visits and presents national results for the following measures:

- Measure 4.1: The percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care
- Measure 4.2: The percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode
- Measure 5.1a: The percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care
- Measure 5.1b: The percentage of children discharged to adoption at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry 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 measures involving caseworker visits 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 substantial achievement on timely permanency.⁷³

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.⁷⁴ The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) extended

⁷³ More information concerning caseworker visits from round 1 of the CFSRs can be found in *Findings From the Initial Child and Family Service Reviews: 2001–2004* at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/findings_from_the_initial_cfsr.pdf (slides 17, 18, and 40), and more information from round 2 can be found in *Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, Aggregate Report, Round 2, Fiscal Years 2007–2010* at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fcfsr_report_0.pdf (p. 57).

⁷⁴ More information on the Child and Family Services Improvement Act can be found on the Children's Bureau website in ACYF-CB-IM-06-05, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im0605>.

these requirements, which are now in section 424(f)(1)(A) and (2)(A) and section 479A(a)(6) of the Act.⁷⁵ Starting in 2012, states were required to begin meeting the following new performance standards for caseworker visits:

- The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a FY must be at least 90 percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care. In 2015, this target increased to 95 percent.
- 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.

Data for monthly caseworker visits and visits in the home for 2015–2019 are shown in table IV–1.⁷⁶ These data include the percentages 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.

Table IV–1. Monthly Caseworker Visits and Visits in the Home, 2015–2019					
Measures	Median Performance by Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of children receiving monthly caseworker visits (N=52)	95.3%	95.3%	95.3%	95.5%	95.6%
Percentage of monthly visits that occurred in the home of the child (N=52)	87.3%	87.8%	87.5%	86.6%	86.9%

As indicated in table IV–1, the national median regarding the percentage of children in foster care receiving a caseworker visit at least once each month while in care exceeded the national standard (95 percent) each year. In 2019, the median state performance was 95.6 percent, with 35 states meeting the national standard (see figure IV–1 at the end of this chapter). Three of the 35 states that met or exceeded the threshold in 2019 had not met it in 2018. Three of the 17 states that did not meet the national standard in 2019 had met it in 2018.

The national median in 2019 for the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the child's home was 86.9 percent—well above the national standard of 50 percent. No states fell below the 50-percent standard in any year from 2015 to 2019.

Timeliness of Reunifications

Historically, the majority of children who exit from foster care are discharged to reunification. In 2019, reunifications represented 53.3 percent of all exits from foster care (see table III–1). Outcome 4 (reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry) addresses the need to assess the timeliness of these reunifications.⁷⁷ 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). For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, a reunification is considered to be timely if it occurs in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (measure 4.1). A state's reunification speed is better understood when considering how many children who enter foster care are reentering within a short period of time. Measure 4.2 assesses the percentage of children entering

⁷⁵ More information on the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act can be found on the Children's Bureau website in ACYF-CB-IM-11-06, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1106>. For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data prior to FY 2012, see ACYF-CB-PI-08-03 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi0803>.

⁷⁶ More information on the caseworker visits measures can be found in appendix C of this Report. Additional detailed guidance on the revised requirements for reporting the caseworker visits measures is outlined in Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01, which was issued January 6, 2012. It is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1201>.

care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. Table IV–2 presents summary data regarding state performance in 2019 on timeliness of reunification without increasing reentries.

Table IV–2. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcome 4: Achieving Timely Reunifications

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
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=52)	53.3%	62.6%	69.6%	36.0–82.7%
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=52) ^a	5.6%	7.3%	9.4%	0.5–15.5%

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

The 2019 data shown in table IV–2 indicate that, in many states, a majority of children discharged to reunification were reunified in a timely manner. The median performance was 62.6 percent, and state performance ranged from 36.0 to 82.7 percent. For 43 states, more than half of reunifications were timely (see figure IV–3 at the end of this chapter).

Additionally, table IV–2 shows a median performance of 7.3 percent for children who entered foster care in 2019 and who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. There was a wide range of performance across states—from 0.5 to 15.5 percent. Reentries—within any length of time of a prior foster care episode—accounted for approximately one-fifth (19.4 percent) of all entries in 2019. Multiple changes in caregivers, especially for younger children, can affect healthy development and impair a child’s ability to form interpersonal relationships.⁷⁸ Thus, it is important for states to continue working to prevent reentries into foster care.

One consideration for states’ performance on this measure 4.2 is the proportion of older children entering a state’s care. There was a moderate correlation between performance on this measure and the proportion of children in a state who entered care at age 12 or older (Pearson’s $r=0.49$). As discussed in chapter III, older children in care achieve permanency at a lower rate compared to the general foster care population. The challenges that these youth present to child welfare systems may be quite different from those encountered with younger children. States may want to consider what strategies and services could be provided to older children in care and their families to reduce the likelihood of reentering care.

Changes Over Time in State Performance With Regard to Achieving Timely Reunifications

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

⁷⁷ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, children are considered reunified if the discharge reason provided in AFCARS is either (1) reunified with parent or primary caretaker or (2) living with other relatives.

⁷⁸ Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing re-entry into foster care. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10(3), 196–209. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2013.788949>

Table IV-3. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2015–2019
Outcome 4: Achieving Timely Reunifications

Outcome Measures ^a	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^b	Declined in Performance ^b
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Measure 4.1: Percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care (N=51)	67.8%	66.1%	64.6%	63.8%	63.0%	6 states (12%)	25 states (49%)
Measure 4.2: Percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode (N=51) ^c	7.3%	7.1%	7.3%	6.9%	7.4%	19 states (37%)	21 states (41%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV-2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for the analyses conducted for this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table III-2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As illustrated in table IV-3, the national median performance over time on achieving timely reunifications has declined consistently over the past 5 years, with a 7.1-percent decline in performance over that period. From 2015 to 2019, 49 percent of states showed a decline in performance, and 12 percent of states improved. Similarly, there was a decline in state performance from 2015 to 2019 on the percentage of children reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. The national median increased 1.4 percent between 2015 and 2019, with 41 percent of states declining in performance.

Timeliness of Adoptions

While the majority of children exiting foster care are reunified with their families and not adopted, adoptions still account for approximately one-quarter of all exits from foster care (see table III-1). When a decision is made that adoption is in the best interest of the child (and agreed upon by the youth, if age appropriate), the adoption should proceed rapidly so the child can be placed quickly in a secure, caring, and safe environment.

As referenced in the beginning of this chapter, the 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 child is living with a relative, the agency has not provided services to address the circumstances associated with the child's removal, or 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) upon 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 after the date on which the child is removed from the home

A 17-month timeframe was used for calculations associated with this Report's related measures (i.e., those regarding timely adoptions and terminations of parental rights) because AFCARS does not collect information pertaining to the date of the first judicial finding. The timeframe was calculated by adding 60 days (to account for the second scenario for having "entered foster care") and 15 months (to account for the ASFA guidance) to the date of the child's removal.

In 2019, approximately 64,000 children exited foster care to adoption, and approximately 123,000 children were categorized as waiting for adoption on the last day of the FY. Performance on outcome 5 (reduce time in foster care to adoption) is captured in measure 5.1, which addresses the timeliness of adoptions. Table IV–4 presents summary data showing the range of state performance in 2019 on this measure.

Table IV–4. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions

Outcome Measures ^a	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
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)	1.6%	3.1%	4.8%	0.3–23.1%
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 of the latest removal from home? (N=51)	18.7%	27.3%	35.2%	12.2–54.4%

^a Measure 5.1 was among the original measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a variety of time periods. Other time periods composing measure 5.1 are not shown in this table. 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.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table IV–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

Outcome Measure 5.1 focuses on the length of time in foster care for children who were discharged to adoption. Performance on this measure in 2019 suggests achieving timely adoptions was a challenge for all but a few states. As shown in table IV–4, it was rare 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 3.1 percent and ranged from 0.3 to 23.1 percent. Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes on this this measure, only two states—Utah and Florida—reported that at least 10.0 percent of adoptions in 2019 occurred in less than 12 months (see figure IV–5 at the end of this chapter).

States were more likely to complete adoptions between 12 and 23 months from the child’s entry into foster care, with a national median of 27.3 percent in 2019. The following four states reported at least 50.0 percent of adoptions having occurred during this time period: Iowa (51.8 percent), Texas (52.6 percent), Utah (52.5 percent), and West Virginia (54.4). Also consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports—2017 and 2018—these four states reported that at least 50 percent of their adoptions occurred in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the child’s entry into foster care: Iowa (51.8 percent), Texas (52.6 percent), Utah (52.5 percent), and West Virginia (54.4).

Changes Over Time in State Performance With Regard to Timeliness of Adoptions

The median performance across states from 2015 through 2019 pertaining to achieving timely adoptions for children in foster care is reported in table IV–5, which also presents the number of states that showed an improvement or decline in performance during the same timeframe. Change in median state performance over time was computed by using a percentage-change calculation.

Table IV-5. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2015–2019
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions

Outcome Measures ^{a b}	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^c	Declined in Performance ^c
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Measure 5.1a: Percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=51)	3.3%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%	3.1%	12 states (24%)	30 states (59%)
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=51)	30.8%	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%	27.3%	14 states (27%)	30 states (59%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV-4 and appendix B.

^b Measure 5.1 was among the original measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a variety of time periods. Other time periods composing measure 5.1 are not shown in this table. 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.

^c In accordance with standard procedure for data analysis in this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table IV-4 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

For the percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months (measure 5.1a), the national median from 2015 to 2019 decreased slightly from 3.3 to 3.1 percent—a 6.1-percent decrease. However, year-by-year performance was inconsistent. In addition, a greater proportion of states reported a decline in performance (59 percent) compared with the proportion 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 an 11.4-percent overall decrease in the national median between 2015 and 2019. Similarly, more states showed a decline in performance (59 percent) than an improvement (27 percent). Overall, achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering care remained a challenge for all but a few states.

The 2019 data indicate that achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering foster care remained a challenge for all but a few states.

Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Reunifications and Adoptions in a Timely Manner

States demonstrated declining performance over time in achieving reunifications in a timely manner (measure 4.1). However, national performance on the companion measure of the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode (measure 4.2) showed some improvement—1.4 percent, with 19 states showing improved performance. The national median performance on achieving adoptions within 12 months of entry (measure 5.1a) demonstrated a 6.1-percent decrease since 2015. In addition, over half of states also showed a decline in performance for the percentage of children discharged to adoption in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry (measure 5.1b). Although the magnitude of performance has mostly declined over time, it is worth noting that a few states have showed consistent results in both measures 5.1a and 5.1b, so it might be useful for other states to review policies and strategies implemented in those states with better performance. Overall, results reveal that performance on both adoptions and reunifications is declining, and it will be important for states to monitor these outcomes as they strive to move children to timely permanency.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-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 reunification and adoption in a timely manner—data on reentries to care, breakdown by 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.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN RECEIVING
MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISITS,
2019 (N=52)

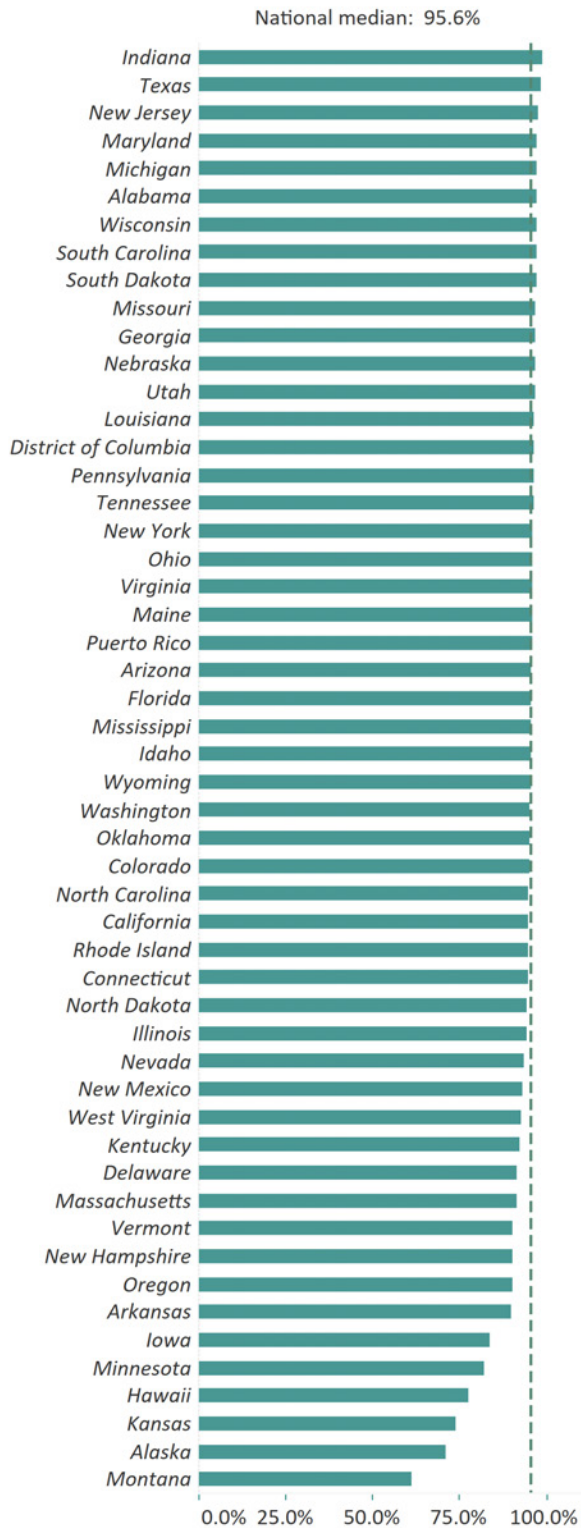


Figure IV-2.

PERCENTAGE OF MONTHLY
CASEWORKER VISITS OCCURRING IN THE
HOME OF THE CHILD, 2019 (N=52)

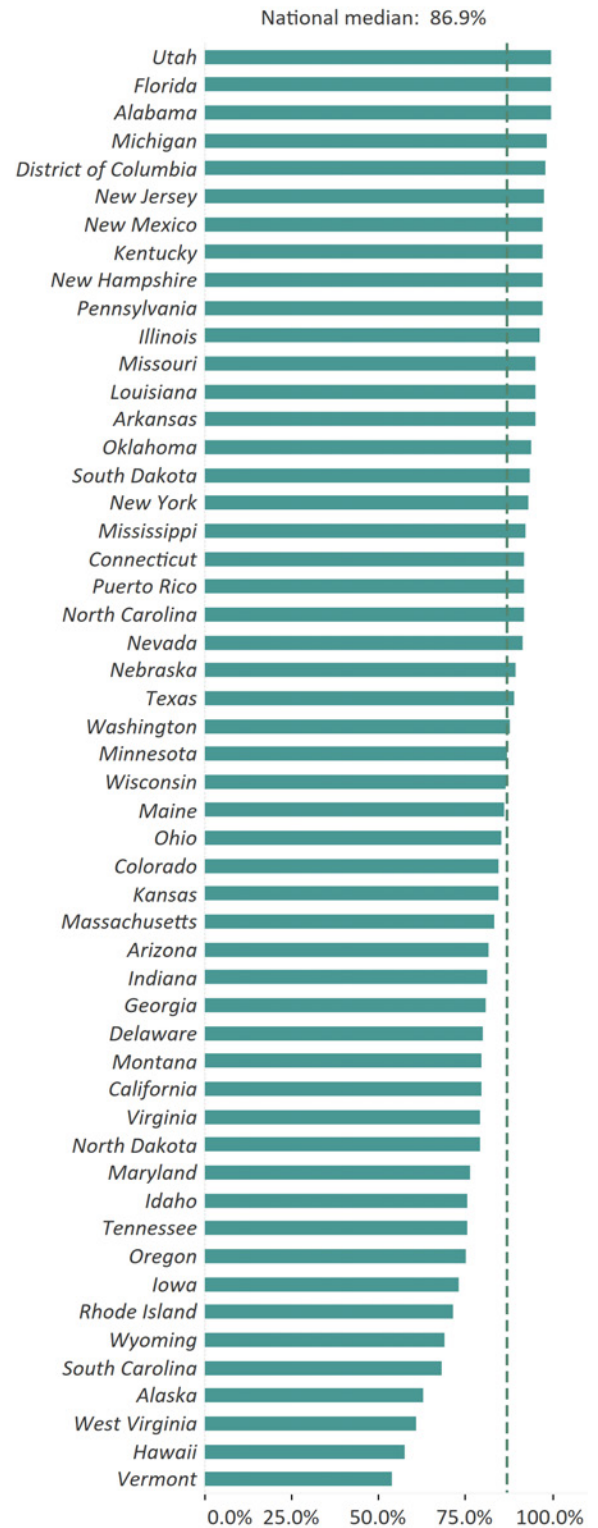


Figure IV-3.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REUNIFIED IN LESS
THAN 12 MONTHS FROM ENTERING CARE,
2019 (N=52)

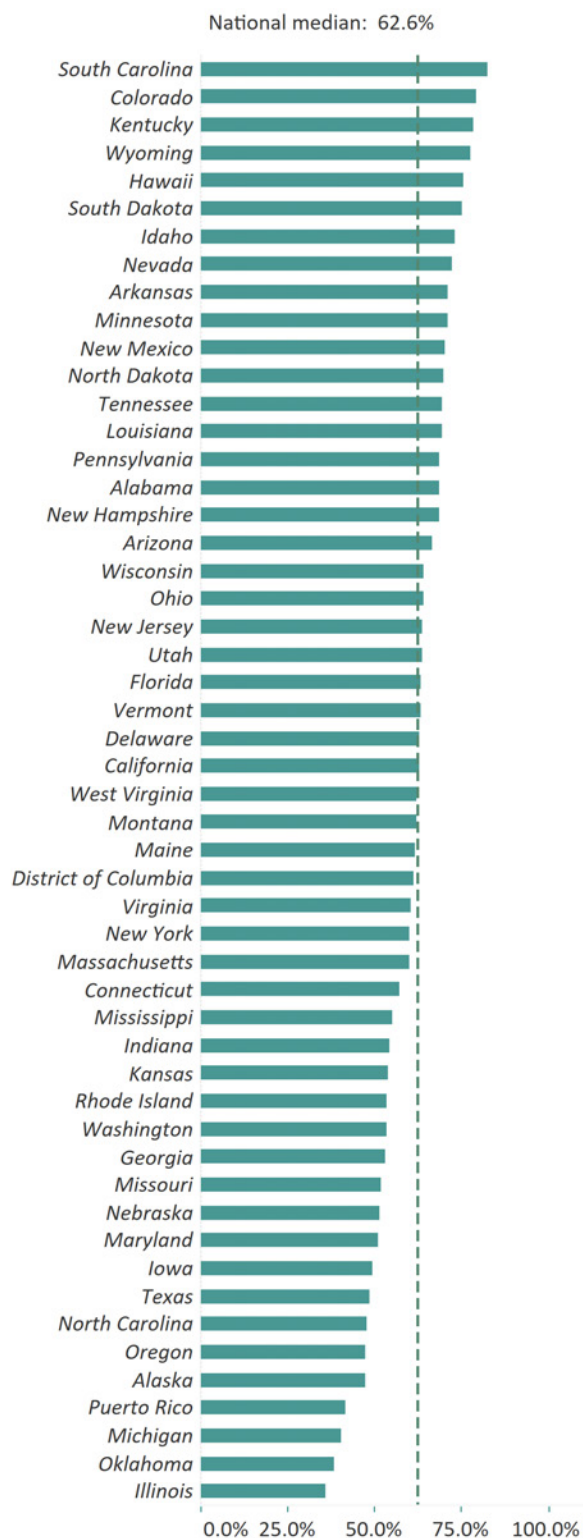
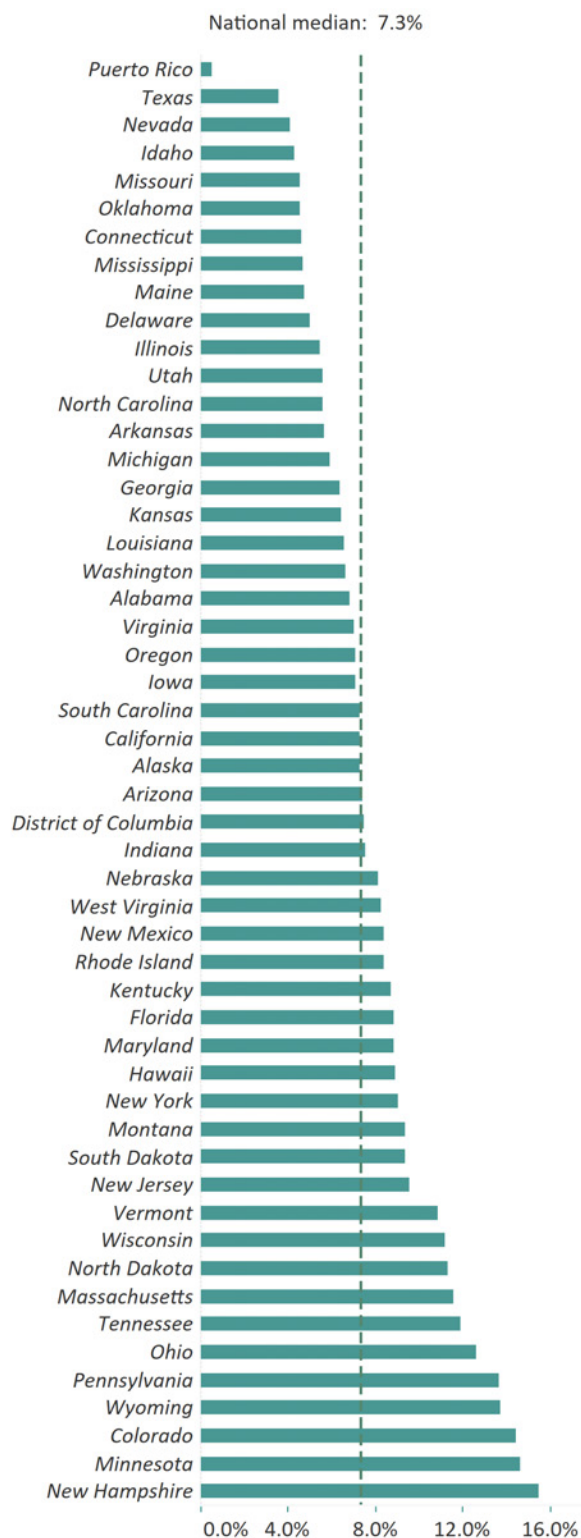


Figure IV-4.

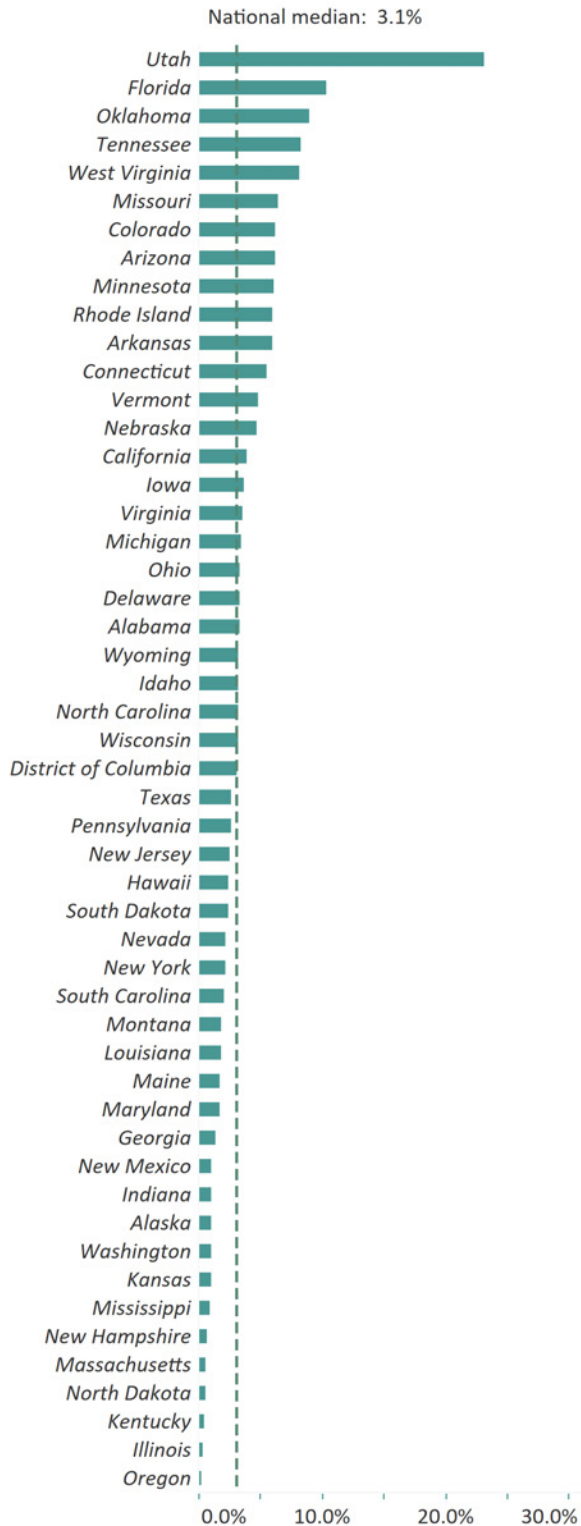
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REENTERING CARE
WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF A PRIOR FOSTER CARE
EPISODE, 2019 (N=52)



Note.—For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

Figure IV-5.

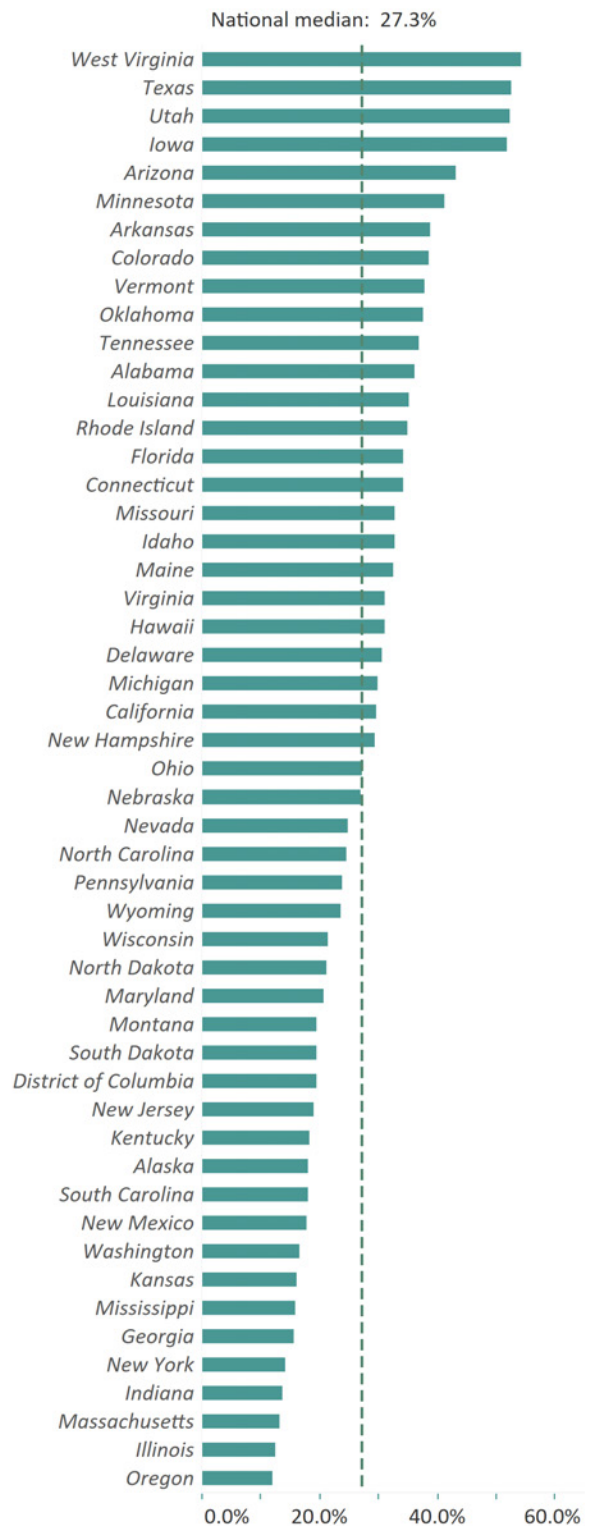
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO
ADOPTION WHO WERE IN CARE LESS THAN 12
MONTHS, 2019 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure IV-6.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO
ADOPTION WHO WERE IN CARE MORE THAN 12
MONTHS BUT LESS THAN 24 MONTHS, 2019 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–6. Outcome 4.1: Percentage of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	73.9%	73.2%	72.0%	69.2%	68.6%	–7.1%
Alaska	54.9%	45.9%	50.6%	47.9%	47.3%	–13.8%
Arizona	69.2%	67.6%	64.1%	63.6%	66.5%	–3.9%
Arkansas	78.5%	78.1%	74.8%	70.2%	71.3%	–9.2%
California	63.9%	63.2%	63.9%	63.2%	63.0%	–1.4%
Colorado	79.9%	82.4%	81.5%	82.5%	79.3%	–0.8%
Connecticut	58.8%	63.6%	60.3%	59.9%	57.3%	–2.5%
Delaware	60.4%	62.3%	65.8%	73.0%	63.1%	4.5%
District of Columbia	57.8%	59.8%	53.1%	48.8%	61.3%	6.1%
Florida	73.1%	70.0%	68.2%	67.4%	63.4%	–13.3%
Georgia	75.3%	69.4%	59.1%	58.0%	53.0%	–29.6%
Hawaii	80.9%	76.0%	70.6%	76.4%	75.8%	–6.4%
Idaho	73.3%	77.1%	72.9%	74.0%	73.0%	–0.4%
Illinois	32.1%	25.8%	28.7%	32.2%	36.0%	12.2%
Indiana	59.1%	58.5%	59.7%	57.1%	54.5%	–7.8%
Iowa	53.5%	55.0%	56.0%	53.3%	49.4%	–7.7%
Kansas	57.2%	58.1%	58.6%	55.2%	53.8%	–5.9%
Kentucky	78.2%	78.4%	79.9%	81.9%	78.4%	0.3%
Louisiana	76.4%	74.3%	71.5%	75.5%	69.6%	–8.9%
Maine	47.0%	40.2%	43.1%	53.4%	61.8%	31.4%
Maryland	54.8%	60.2%	64.6%	59.6%	51.3%	–6.5%
Massachusetts	67.4%	64.7%	64.4%	62.8%	60.3%	–10.6%
Michigan	35.3%	43.7%	44.9%	46.2%	40.3%	14.3%
Minnesota	84.0%	79.4%	74.4%	74.3%	71.1%	–15.3%
Mississippi	63.6%	62.6%	59.2%	49.3%	55.2%	–13.2%
Missouri	56.9%	56.5%	55.3%	51.1%	51.8%	–8.9%
Montana	63.6%	66.1%	59.1%	56.3%	62.0%	–2.6%
Nebraska	52.7%	53.6%	51.6%	46.7%	51.4%	–2.5%
Nevada	70.3%	72.3%	73.8%	72.7%	72.3%	2.9%
New Hampshire	57.1%	61.1%	61.6%	71.7%	68.6%	20.2%
New Jersey	69.6%	68.8%	66.1%	70.5%	63.9%	–8.1%
New Mexico	71.4%	75.2%	77.2%	75.1%	70.3%	–1.5%
New York	60.2%	58.9%	61.3%	61.1%	60.3%	0.2%
North Carolina	52.3%	52.1%	54.2%	48.1%	48.0%	–8.1%
North Dakota	67.8%	69.6%	71.2%	74.6%	70.0%	3.3%
Ohio	70.5%	68.4%	69.1%	67.9%	64.1%	–9.2%
Oklahoma	37.8%	36.2%	38.2%	39.9%	38.6%	2.1%
Oregon	56.5%	53.4%	53.0%	52.8%	47.3%	–16.3%
Pennsylvania	73.2%	72.7%	71.8%	71.7%	68.8%	–6.0%
Rhode Island	68.8%	66.0%	65.1%	69.2%	53.6%	–22.2%
South Carolina	86.2%	85.1%	83.4%	81.4%	82.7%	–4.0%
South Dakota	75.0%	78.7%	70.3%	70.4%	75.0%	0.0%
Tennessee	73.1%	74.7%	74.4%	76.2%	69.6%	–4.7%
Texas	50.3%	52.9%	51.3%	52.3%	48.8%	–3.0%
Utah	68.7%	67.6%	70.2%	63.8%	63.8%	–7.0%
Vermont	74.2%	70.4%	64.6%	70.5%	63.3%	–14.6%
Virginia	63.2%	58.6%	59.5%	62.5%	60.4%	–4.5%
Washington	54.5%	54.8%	55.2%	54.5%	53.4%	–2.0%
West Virginia	68.6%	66.1%	67.7%	65.7%	62.2%	–9.3%
Wisconsin	69.2%	66.5%	67.1%	65.7%	64.4%	–7.0%
Wyoming	73.7%	71.9%	73.7%	74.4%	77.9%	5.6%

^a A change of +/–5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–7. Outcome 4.2: Percentage of Children Reentering Foster Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Episode, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	7.1%	6.8%	6.9%	6.7%	6.8%	–3.5%
Alaska	3.9%	5.8%	6.4%	6.7%	7.3%	86.8%
Arizona	8.0%	8.3%	8.8%	8.7%	7.4%	–8.0%
Arkansas	6.5%	5.7%	6.0%	6.5%	5.6%	–12.9%
California	8.4%	8.2%	7.6%	8.0%	7.3%	–13.7%
Colorado	15.0%	14.1%	14.8%	15.5%	14.4%	–4.2%
Connecticut	3.6%	4.1%	4.2%	4.4%	4.6%	30.1%
Delaware	5.0%	4.8%	9.5%	8.4%	5.0%	–0.4%
District of Columbia	5.7%	5.8%	9.0%	6.3%	7.5%	30.5%
Florida	6.2%	7.2%	6.6%	7.1%	8.8%	41.4%
Georgia	6.8%	6.5%	6.3%	6.2%	6.4%	–6.6%
Hawaii	9.2%	11.0%	11.7%	11.2%	8.9%	–3.1%
Idaho	6.2%	6.1%	6.0%	4.9%	4.3%	–30.0%
Illinois	7.3%	6.6%	5.5%	5.2%	5.5%	–25.5%
Indiana	4.8%	4.8%	6.5%	6.8%	7.5%	57.0%
Iowa	9.1%	8.1%	8.8%	6.5%	7.1%	–21.7%
Kansas	4.9%	5.6%	5.8%	5.3%	6.5%	32.6%
Kentucky	10.7%	9.2%	9.8%	7.9%	8.7%	–18.7%
Louisiana	7.1%	7.7%	8.1%	6.0%	6.6%	–7.1%
Maine	3.8%	3.8%	3.0%	5.5%	4.7%	25.6%
Maryland	11.2%	10.5%	9.7%	10.4%	8.9%	–20.6%
Massachusetts	10.0%	11.0%	11.2%	11.5%	11.6%	15.5%
Michigan	3.7%	5.8%	5.9%	6.1%	5.9%	60.5%
Minnesota	13.7%	13.3%	13.3%	13.7%	14.6%	7.0%
Mississippi	4.6%	5.4%	6.5%	6.3%	4.7%	1.6%
Missouri	5.4%	4.9%	4.6%	4.1%	4.5%	–16.4%
Montana	7.4%	6.9%	7.4%	8.0%	9.4%	26.2%
Nebraska	6.7%	5.9%	6.5%	5.8%	8.1%	20.6%
Nevada	7.0%	6.6%	6.1%	4.9%	4.1%	–41.5%
New Hampshire	10.0%	9.6%	14.2%	16.7%	15.5%	55.5%
New Jersey	9.3%	9.3%	9.4%	9.2%	9.6%	2.7%
New Mexico	9.1%	7.1%	8.6%	8.7%	8.4%	–8.5%
New York	9.4%	9.6%	9.4%	6.9%	9.1%	–3.3%
North Carolina	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%	5.6%	161.5%
North Dakota	7.2%	11.4%	10.2%	10.8%	11.3%	56.9%
Ohio	10.3%	9.7%	8.9%	10.9%	12.6%	22.8%
Oklahoma	4.5%	4.4%	3.9%	3.3%	4.5%	0.5%
Oregon	8.8%	8.2%	5.9%	7.4%	7.1%	–19.4%
Pennsylvania	17.5%	13.9%	13.3%	14.6%	13.6%	–22.2%
Rhode Island	13.0%	12.6%	10.5%	9.5%	8.4%	–35.6%
South Carolina	5.8%	6.0%	6.5%	6.9%	7.3%	26.3%
South Dakota	8.4%	8.4%	6.3%	7.7%	9.4%	12.1%
Tennessee	12.4%	13.0%	12.2%	11.6%	11.9%	–4.2%
Texas	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%	3.4%	3.6%	34.3%
Utah	6.3%	6.3%	4.6%	6.3%	5.6%	–10.6%
Vermont	10.9%	13.9%	10.1%	10.4%	10.9%	0.1%
Virginia	4.2%	4.1%	4.5%	6.8%	7.0%	65.2%
Washington	7.4%	5.8%	6.7%	6.4%	6.6%	–10.6%
West Virginia	8.8%	10.0%	7.3%	7.4%	8.2%	–6.2%
Wisconsin	11.4%	11.5%	9.7%	10.8%	11.2%	–2.1%
Wyoming	10.5%	15.8%	12.0%	12.4%	13.7%	30.5%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
 Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–8. Outcome 5.1a: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in Less Than 12 Months, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	3.7%	4.3%	5.3%	3.8%	3.3%	–10.7%
Alaska	2.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	1.0%	–59.5%
Arizona	4.0%	4.1%	5.0%	6.2%	6.2%	53.4%
Arkansas	5.1%	8.6%	6.1%	5.9%	6.0%	16.4%
California	4.9%	4.5%	3.9%	3.4%	4.0%	–20.0%
Colorado	6.5%	4.8%	6.3%	5.9%	6.3%	–3.6%
Connecticut	2.0%	5.6%	4.5%	4.8%	5.5%	170.7%
Delaware	5.1%	5.1%	7.3%	7.9%	3.3%	–34.7%
District of Columbia	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	N/A
Florida	15.0%	13.9%	12.7%	10.5%	10.3%	–31.2%
Georgia	2.2%	2.6%	2.8%	1.6%	1.4%	–37.4%
Hawaii	8.0%	8.1%	6.1%	6.7%	2.5%	–68.9%
Idaho	1.0%	2.3%	1.6%	2.1%	3.3%	230.6%
Illinois	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	204.3%
Indiana	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	1.5%	1.1%	–24.6%
Iowa	5.6%	5.1%	5.3%	4.3%	3.7%	–34.6%
Kansas	1.7%	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	1.0%	–40.2%
Kentucky	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.5%	–2.0%
Louisiana	2.1%	3.3%	0.8%	1.2%	1.8%	–15.2%
Maine	1.2%	1.0%	1.8%	2.0%	1.7%	39.1%
Maryland	2.7%	3.7%	2.3%	2.9%	1.7%	–37.1%
Massachusetts	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	0.7%	0.6%	–25.5%
Michigan	5.5%	5.5%	4.4%	3.5%	3.5%	–36.0%
Minnesota	7.3%	6.2%	4.7%	5.6%	6.1%	–16.3%
Mississippi	1.9%	3.8%	1.4%	1.4%	1.0%	–50.1%
Missouri	8.1%	4.4%	6.2%	5.3%	6.5%	–20.2%
Montana	0.0%	0.4%	3.3%	1.0%	1.9%	N/A
Nebraska	3.1%	3.5%	5.6%	4.3%	4.7%	53.1%
Nevada	3.1%	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	2.2%	–26.8%
New Hampshire	0.0%	3.5%	1.0%	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%
New Jersey	2.7%	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	2.5%	–8.1%
New Mexico	2.0%	0.6%	1.3%	0.7%	1.1%	–45.9%
New York	2.2%	1.6%	2.0%	1.6%	2.2%	–0.2%
North Carolina	3.1%	4.2%	5.2%	3.6%	3.2%	1.9%
North Dakota	4.5%	5.1%	4.2%	0.6%	0.5%	–88.5%
Ohio	4.6%	3.8%	4.2%	4.5%	3.4%	–27.2%
Oklahoma	4.7%	6.5%	6.2%	7.1%	9.0%	90.2%
Oregon	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	–46.3%
Pennsylvania	3.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.6%	–28.1%
Rhode Island	3.3%	4.3%	4.8%	3.5%	6.0%	81.2%
South Carolina	4.3%	2.8%	2.1%	1.6%	2.1%	–50.3%
South Dakota	0.0%	1.8%	1.1%	2.2%	2.4%	N/A
Tennessee	5.5%	7.6%	8.6%	9.8%	8.3%	49.9%
Texas	4.0%	3.5%	3.5%	2.8%	2.7%	–33.0%
Utah	28.2%	28.0%	27.0%	24.1%	23.1%	–18.2%
Vermont	4.3%	4.2%	3.4%	1.7%	4.8%	13.9%
Virginia	3.3%	3.4%	2.2%	3.9%	3.6%	9.1%
Washington	2.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	–53.8%
West Virginia	8.1%	6.3%	6.3%	7.1%	8.1%	0.9%
Wisconsin	6.0%	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	3.2%	–46.7%
Wyoming	4.1%	13.6%	4.9%	2.7%	3.3%	–19.1%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
 Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–9. Outcome 5.1b: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	31.4%	31.4%	36.5%	35.3%	36.2%	15.2%
Alaska	24.7%	32.5%	14.6%	16.9%	18.2%	–26.5%
Arizona	45.5%	43.9%	44.9%	43.3%	43.3%	–4.9%
Arkansas	47.1%	44.8%	50.5%	47.3%	39.0%	–17.2%
California	32.4%	30.8%	29.4%	29.8%	29.7%	–8.4%
Colorado	46.5%	47.3%	50.3%	41.3%	38.8%	–16.5%
Connecticut	31.3%	36.8%	41.3%	35.8%	34.4%	10.0%
Delaware	32.9%	39.4%	37.6%	36.0%	30.6%	–7.1%
District of Columbia	31.0%	19.6%	12.6%	26.3%	19.6%	–36.8%
Florida	38.2%	37.5%	38.6%	36.3%	34.4%	–9.9%
Georgia	26.4%	25.3%	22.3%	19.8%	15.6%	–40.8%
Hawaii	32.4%	44.3%	41.8%	41.7%	31.2%	–3.7%
Idaho	43.8%	43.0%	34.6%	38.0%	32.9%	–25.0%
Illinois	7.3%	9.2%	9.7%	12.7%	12.5%	72.2%
Indiana	18.2%	18.9%	18.1%	16.6%	13.8%	–24.1%
Iowa	53.3%	50.9%	56.0%	51.7%	51.8%	–2.8%
Kansas	23.3%	21.5%	19.3%	17.3%	16.3%	–30.3%
Kentucky	15.8%	13.0%	15.9%	14.5%	18.3%	15.9%
Louisiana	43.1%	42.0%	30.6%	29.2%	35.3%	–18.1%
Maine	25.2%	21.8%	28.6%	35.8%	32.5%	28.9%
Maryland	35.1%	24.7%	25.9%	27.7%	20.7%	–40.9%
Massachusetts	25.1%	19.0%	13.5%	11.9%	13.3%	–47.1%
Michigan	33.8%	29.9%	31.7%	33.6%	30.0%	–11.4%
Minnesota	48.0%	49.5%	48.3%	40.1%	41.2%	–14.2%
Mississippi	17.4%	13.4%	19.5%	15.5%	16.0%	–8.1%
Missouri	30.9%	34.5%	29.3%	31.6%	32.9%	6.4%
Montana	17.3%	17.9%	20.4%	15.6%	19.6%	13.7%
Nebraska	29.8%	34.6%	25.5%	32.9%	27.0%	–9.4%
Nevada	29.8%	27.7%	30.6%	26.2%	25.0%	–16.2%
New Hampshire	18.9%	10.6%	29.4%	34.3%	29.4%	56.0%
New Jersey	19.3%	22.1%	21.5%	21.5%	19.1%	–0.9%
New Mexico	26.6%	19.3%	26.4%	21.8%	18.0%	–32.5%
New York	12.5%	11.9%	11.2%	11.4%	14.2%	13.2%
North Carolina	29.2%	27.3%	28.1%	28.0%	24.7%	–15.5%
North Dakota	30.8%	21.7%	17.5%	15.4%	21.4%	–30.7%
Ohio	25.4%	26.2%	27.2%	27.6%	27.3%	7.7%
Oklahoma	28.8%	29.5%	34.1%	38.3%	37.8%	31.2%
Oregon	16.0%	12.5%	10.5%	11.6%	12.2%	–24.0%
Pennsylvania	29.3%	29.1%	28.7%	26.6%	23.8%	–18.8%
Rhode Island	32.7%	35.3%	36.3%	35.2%	35.0%	6.9%
South Carolina	31.3%	24.6%	19.8%	20.4%	18.0%	–42.3%
South Dakota	23.3%	16.5%	35.6%	25.5%	19.6%	–15.9%
Tennessee	35.8%	37.5%	38.8%	38.5%	37.1%	3.5%
Texas	50.3%	49.5%	50.0%	53.8%	52.6%	4.5%
Utah	51.6%	53.1%	58.6%	56.2%	52.5%	1.7%
Vermont	43.1%	50.0%	35.7%	28.7%	37.9%	–12.1%
Virginia	32.9%	30.1%	30.2%	29.9%	31.2%	–5.3%
Washington	28.9%	25.6%	21.2%	21.2%	16.6%	–42.4%
West Virginia	51.6%	54.1%	50.3%	51.9%	54.4%	5.5%
Wisconsin	25.5%	25.6%	22.3%	18.8%	21.5%	–15.7%
Wyoming	21.6%	28.4%	30.5%	20.0%	23.8%	9.9%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
 Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter 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. Placement setting stability is addressed in outcome 6 (increase placement stability for children in foster care). For the purposes of the 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.⁷⁹ 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.

This chapter presents national results for the following measures:

- Measure 6.1a: The percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 6.1b: The percentage of children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 6.1c: The percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 7.1: The percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions

Children in Group Homes and Institutions

FFPSA was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. Among other updates to child welfare policy, it provided more federal resources to help families stay together and established limits on federal foster care reimbursement for youth placed in non-foster family home settings (i.e., group homes and institutions).^{80 81} According to the AFCARS definitions, group homes generally have between 7 and 12 children, and institutions are typically larger and may include residential treatment facilities or child care institutions. There are some instances in which a group home or institution is

The 2019 data indicate that achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering foster care remained a challenge for all but a few states.

⁷⁹ 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). For the purposes of this Report, the count of placement settings does not include temporary stays in hospitals, camps, respite care, or institutional placements. For additional information, please see the *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/guide-afcars-assessment-review>).

⁸⁰ For more information on FFPSA, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/whats-new>.

⁸¹ Currently, AFCARS does not have information regarding the placement setting provisions as amended by FFPSA, including data regarding details of prior placements and foster care episodes, services provided, and pregnancy or parenting status. For additional information on FFPSA data collection, please see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/title-iv-e-prevention-program>.

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 that a group home or institution is best equipped to provide. However, the driving assumption behind outcome 7 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.⁸²

Approximately 45,000 children and youth had a current placement setting reported as being in congregate care (i.e., either a group home or institution) in 2019. Figure V–1 (at the end of this chapter) displays the percentage of children in congregate care by state on the last day of the FY. Overall, a median of 10.1 percent of children across states were in congregate care at the end of 2019.

Table V–1 displays the median state performance on a number of characteristics and indicators for children in either a group home or institution. For both group home and institution settings, most states had more males than females in foster care. The median age of entry was 13 years across states for both settings. The median lengths of stay for children in their current placement setting was 3.7 months for children in group homes and 3.8 months for children in institutions. Nearly half of all children in congregate care had a diagnosed disability, with medians of 44 percent for group homes and 48 percent for institutions. The proportions varied widely across states. Lastly, a relatively small percentage of children in either setting had a case goal of long-term foster care.⁸³ As states implement policies and strategies in response to updates in federal child welfare policy as a result of FFPSA, it will be important to monitor how the population of children in congregate care changes over time.

Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

Table V–1. Characteristics of Children in Group Homes or Institutions, 2019 (N=52)

Characteristics	Group Home	Institution
Male ^a	59% (0–100%)	60% (49–80%)
Female ^a	41% (0–59%)	40% (20–51%)
Age at entry (years)	13	13
Length of stay in care (months)	15.1	15.2
Length of stay in current setting (months)	3.7	3.8
Diagnosed disability ^a	44% (0–100%)	48% (0–94%)
Case goal of long-term foster care ^a	1% (0–25%)	2% (0–19%)

^a Data displayed are the median performance across states, followed by the range of state performance in parentheses.

Note.—This table displays data for children in foster care on the last day of the FY.

Table V–2 presents the findings on state performance regarding 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 regarding length of stay in foster care.

⁸² 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 underscored 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, *A National Look at the Use of Congregate Care in Child Welfare*, can be accessed on the Children’s Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/congregate-care-brief>.

⁸³ As discussed in chapter III, when foster care is necessary to ensure children’s safety and well-being, the goal of state child welfare agencies is to return children to their homes or to find other permanent homes in a timely manner. States report to AFCARS the goal of long-term foster care when specific factors or conditions make it not appropriate or possible to return the child home or place the child for adoption, with a relative, or with a legal guardian. For more information on case plan goals, see *AFCARS Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements*, revised in February 2012, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-tb1>.

Table V–2. Range of State Performance, 2019
Outcomes 6 and 7: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings

Outcome Measures	25th Percentile	National Median (50th Percentile)	75th Percentile	Range
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=52)	80.4%	83.0%	87.5%	68.6–93.4%
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=52)	58.1%	64.9%	70.6%	48.4–82.3%
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=52)	33.1%	40.6%	45.6%	18.6–59.2%
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=52) ^a	1.9%	2.9%	4.8%	0.5–29.9%

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

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

As shown in table V–2, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months across all states experienced no more than two placement settings in 2019, with a national median performance of 83.0 percent. It is encouraging that more than four out of five children remain in stable placements during their 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.

Across the time periods composing measure 6.1, the median across states decreases as the length of time in foster care increases. As shown in table V–2, the median declined from 83.0 percent for children in foster care for less than 12 months to 64.9 percent for children in foster care between 12 months and 24 months. The median declined even further among children in foster care for 24 months or longer to 40.6 percent.

Direct comparisons between these measures are difficult to make. First, these measures count all of a child's placement settings (regardless of in which years they occurred) up until discharge from foster care or until the end of the reporting period rather than just 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, by definition, 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.

Additionally, 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 factors 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.⁸⁴ Research also indicates that children who experience early placement stability experience fewer behavioral problems and better outcomes.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ 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*. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PolicyLab. <https://policylab.chop.edu/evidence-action-brief/securing-child-safety-well-being-and-permanency-through-placement-stability>.

⁸⁵ 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. <https://www.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-1995>

In about one-half of states in 2019, 2.9 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). The low median on this measure indicates positive national performance overall.

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

Table V–3 displays 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 that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance on these measures.

Table V–3. Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time, 2015–2019 Outcomes 6 and 7: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings							
Outcome Measures ^a	Median Performance by Year					Improved in Performance ^b	Declined in Performance ^b
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Measure 5.1a: Percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=51) ^c	84.8%	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%	83.0%	4 states (8%)	7 states (14%)
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=51) ^c	63.3%	65.1%	65.8%	65.8%	64.8%	17 states (33%)	10 states (20%)
Measure 6.1c: Percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=51) ^c	35.9%	39.0%	41.1%	41.1%	40.4%	32 states (63%)	7 states (14%)
Measure 7.1: Percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (N=51) ^d	3.7%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	32 states (63%)	15 states (29%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table V–2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for data analysis in this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c Other time periods composing measure 6.1 are not shown in this table. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

^d For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table V–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As indicated in table V–3, between 2015 and 2019, there was little change in achieving placement stability for children in care less than 24 months. For children in care less than 12 months (measure 6.1a), the national median decreased by 2.1 percent, with the majority of states (78 percent) demonstrating no meaningful change in performance. However, a small improvement was observed in the median performance for children in care more than 12 months but less than 24 months (measure 6.1b), with an increase of 2.4 percent over the 5 years.

In contrast, there was a strong improvement over time related to the percentage 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 increased from 35.9 percent in 2015 to 40.4 percent in 2019—a 12.5-percent increase. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of states demonstrated improvement

National performance on achieving placement stability for children who have been in care for 24 months or longer improved by 12.5 percent between 2015 and 2019.

on this measure, and only seven states (14 percent) declined in performance. While states have been less successful overall at achieving placement-setting stability for children in care less than 12 months, the overall improvement of performance on this measure at the longer timeframes is encouraging.

In 2019, there was an improvement in the percentage of children age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). The national median decreased from 3.7 percent in 2015 to 2.9 percent in 2019—a 21.6-percent decline over 5 years. Additionally, the majority of states (63 percent) reported an improvement in performance, and 29 percent reported a decline in performance. This continues a trend reported in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports.

Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placements for Children in Foster Care

According to the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, although states have been 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 they are in foster care. It is promising, however, that states have demonstrated improvement in achieving placement setting stability for children in care longer than 12 months, especially for those children 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 continued to decline and that almost two-thirds of states have shown meaningful improvement over the past 5 years on this measure. With the enactment of FFPSA, it will be important to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of children in various foster care placement settings. Information on children who are placed in congregate care settings will continue to be included in these Reports to monitor state progress on placing children in family settings and reducing the number of children who are placed in congregate care settings.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to achieving stable and appropriate placements for children in foster care, including state performance on outcomes 6 and 7. The Child Welfare Outcomes data site (<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>) includes additional information on achieving stable and appropriate placements for children as well as state data, including data on children in congregate care and for states excluded from analyses due to incomplete or inadequate data.

Figure V-1. PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FY (9/30) WITH A PLACEMENT IN A GROUP HOME OR INSTITUTION, 2019 (N=52)

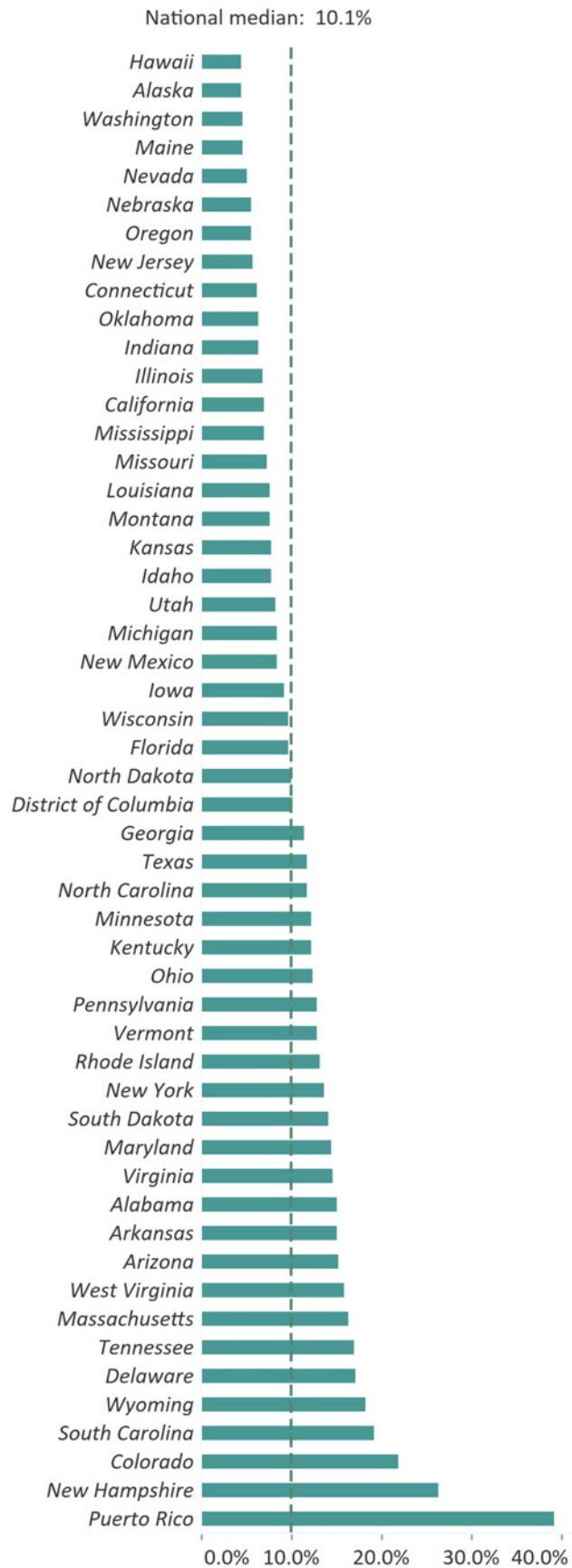


Figure V-2.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE LESS THAN 12 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2019 (N=52)

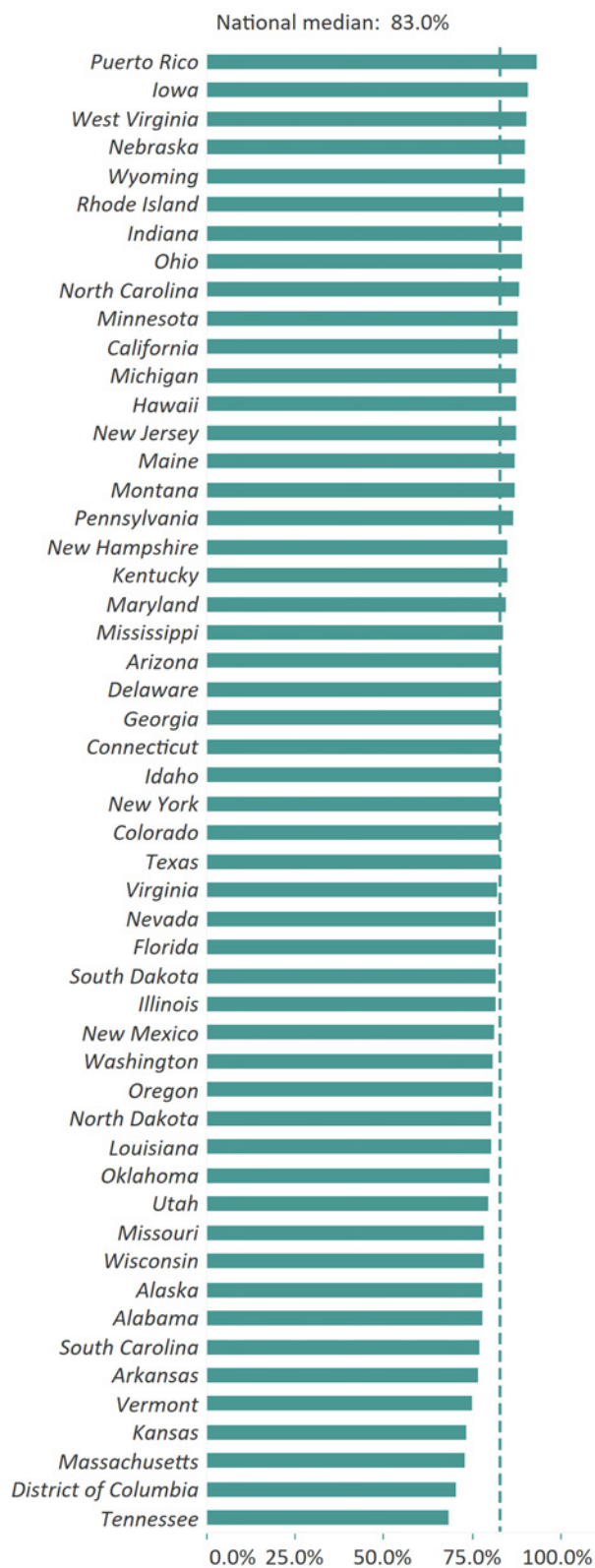


Figure V-3.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE MORE THAN 12 MONTHS BUT LESS THAN 24 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2019 (N=52)

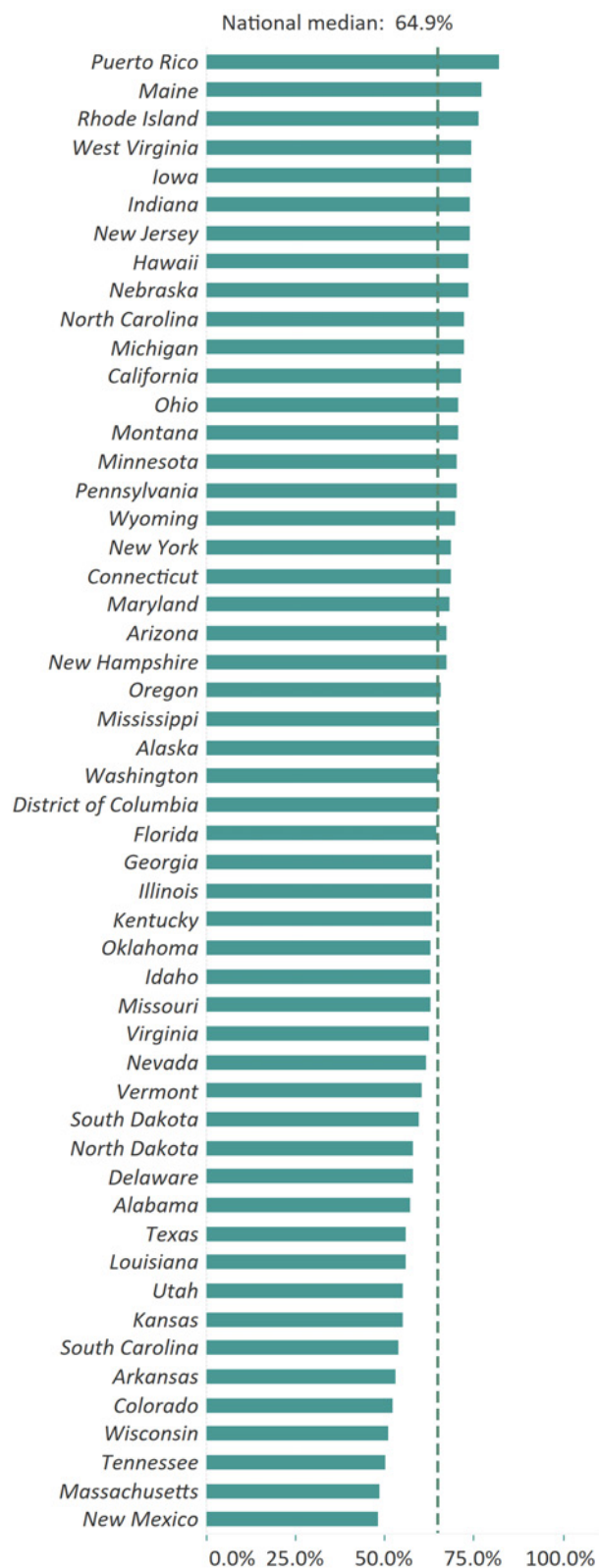


Figure V-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE MORE THAN 24 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2019 (N=52)

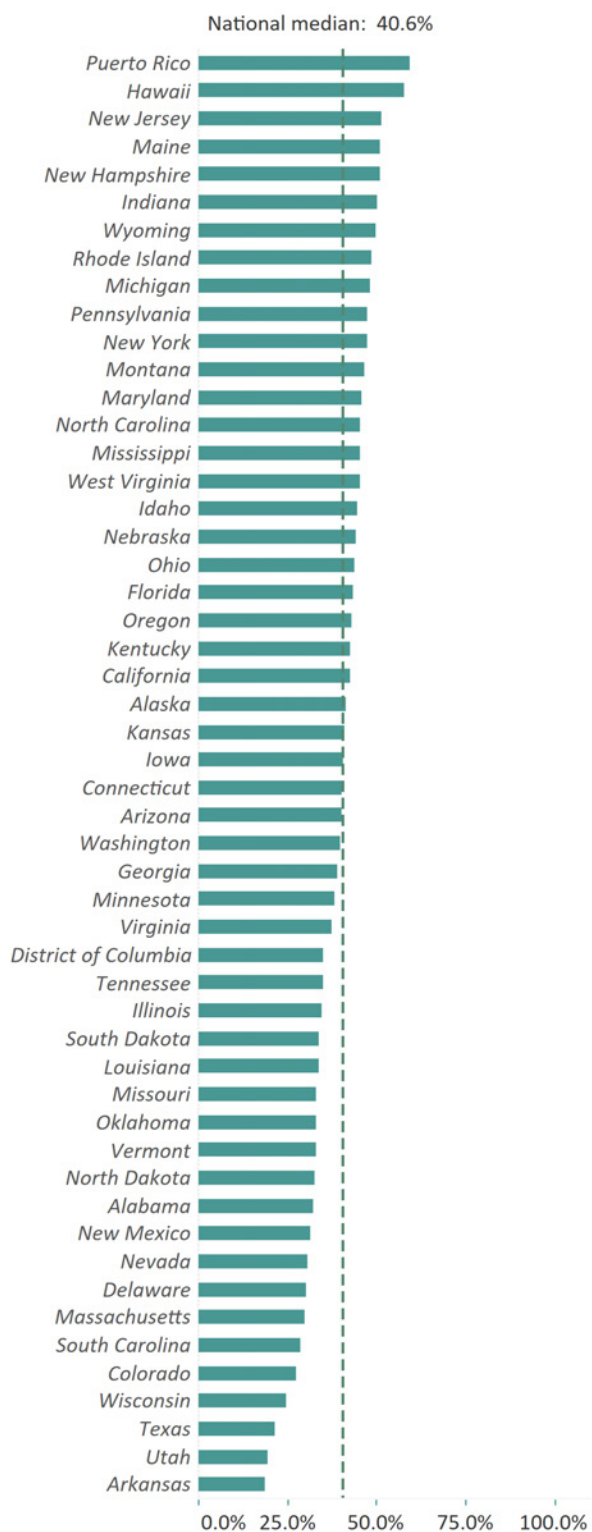
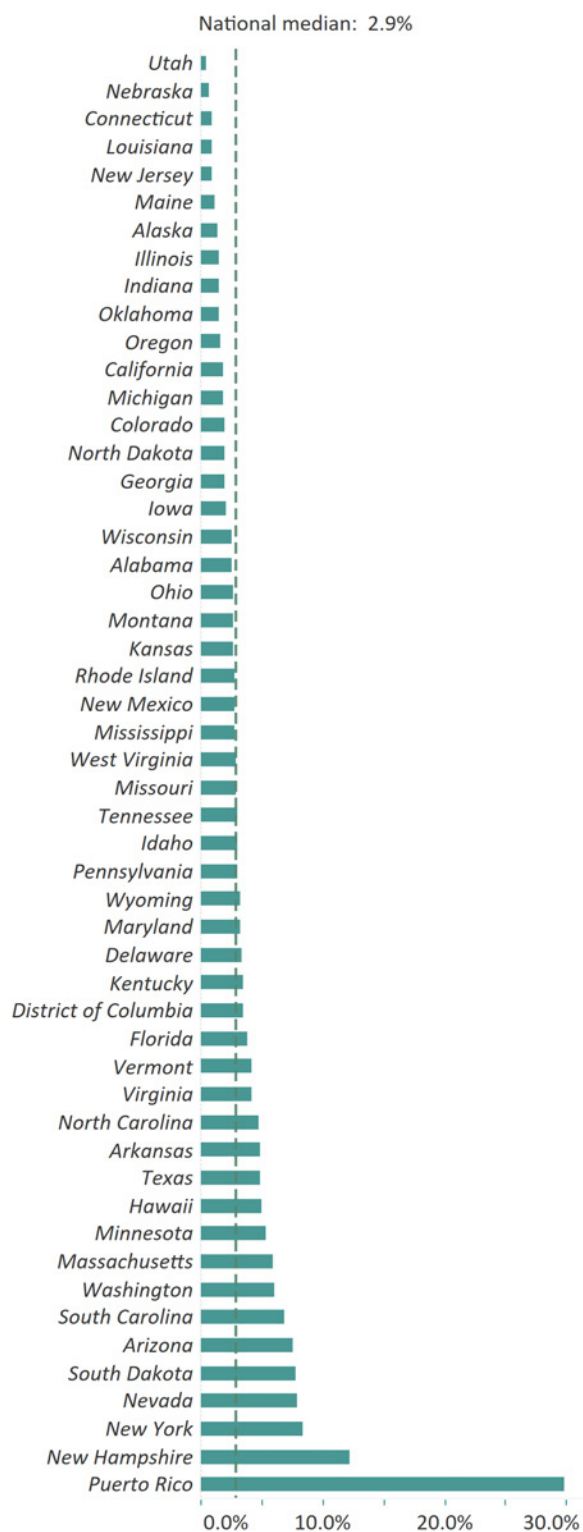


Figure V-5.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGE 12 AND UNDER PLACED IN GROUP HOMES OR INSTITUTIONS, 2019 (N=52)



Note.—For this measure, a lower value indicated better performance.

Table V–4. Outcome 6.1a: Percentage of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	79.5%	78.8%	76.9%	78.3%	78.1%	–1.8%
Alaska	80.8%	82.0%	82.6%	83.1%	78.2%	–3.2%
Arizona	83.2%	81.6%	82.5%	83.5%	83.6%	0.5%
Arkansas	72.7%	72.1%	74.1%	77.3%	76.6%	5.4%
California	84.2%	84.6%	87.9%	87.8%	87.8%	4.4%
Colorado	84.2%	83.8%	83.2%	82.1%	82.9%	–1.5%
Connecticut	88.6%	87.3%	82.0%	81.9%	83.0%	–6.3%
Delaware	85.7%	83.3%	84.8%	84.7%	83.6%	–2.5%
District of Columbia	86.1%	81.9%	84.6%	80.6%	70.7%	–18.0%
Florida	84.8%	83.2%	82.2%	81.3%	81.7%	–3.7%
Georgia	75.8%	81.5%	81.5%	82.2%	83.2%	9.6%
Hawaii	87.5%	89.1%	89.4%	85.6%	87.6%	0.2%
Idaho	88.3%	87.4%	87.6%	85.1%	83.0%	–6.0%
Illinois	69.4%	78.4%	76.9%	76.3%	81.6%	17.6%
Indiana	89.8%	89.8%	89.5%	89.0%	89.4%	–0.4%
Iowa	87.2%	89.3%	90.1%	89.3%	91.1%	4.4%
Kansas	78.3%	76.2%	72.4%	69.9%	73.6%	–6.0%
Kentucky	87.3%	86.7%	85.5%	85.6%	85.0%	–2.6%
Louisiana	83.5%	82.7%	82.6%	80.9%	80.4%	–3.7%
Maine	89.9%	89.9%	91.0%	87.3%	87.2%	–2.9%
Maryland	87.5%	87.3%	85.9%	84.8%	84.6%	–3.3%
Massachusetts	74.5%	70.8%	68.5%	69.7%	73.2%	–1.7%
Michigan	88.1%	87.7%	87.2%	86.1%	87.7%	–0.5%
Minnesota	87.1%	87.2%	87.7%	88.3%	88.2%	1.2%
Mississippi	80.1%	83.2%	84.1%	85.2%	84.0%	4.8%
Missouri	79.8%	78.2%	80.2%	79.2%	78.6%	–1.5%
Montana	86.8%	86.0%	86.2%	87.1%	87.1%	0.3%
Nebraska	91.9%	89.9%	89.8%	89.8%	90.2%	–1.9%
Nevada	81.5%	81.6%	81.5%	82.6%	81.9%	0.5%
New Hampshire	83.7%	85.3%	84.5%	83.9%	85.1%	1.7%
New Jersey	87.3%	88.2%	87.3%	86.9%	87.4%	0.2%
New Mexico	81.7%	82.3%	84.4%	82.6%	81.3%	–0.5%
New York	85.6%	85.0%	85.0%	84.0%	83.0%	–3.1%
North Carolina	90.5%	92.1%	91.0%	90.5%	88.5%	–2.2%
North Dakota	81.4%	80.6%	81.3%	78.8%	80.7%	–0.9%
Ohio	88.0%	88.5%	89.2%	88.9%	89.3%	1.5%
Oklahoma	72.8%	76.3%	77.4%	81.4%	80.2%	10.2%
Oregon	84.0%	83.3%	82.1%	80.6%	80.8%	–3.8%
Pennsylvania	86.2%	86.8%	87.1%	87.9%	86.8%	0.7%
Rhode Island	88.8%	89.5%	88.9%	87.5%	89.8%	1.1%
South Carolina	83.6%	82.7%	82.4%	81.5%	77.1%	–7.8%
South Dakota	88.4%	84.7%	83.0%	85.6%	81.6%	–7.7%
Tennessee	70.6%	67.0%	67.9%	67.8%	68.6%	–2.8%
Texas	84.1%	84.0%	83.5%	83.1%	82.8%	–1.5%
Utah	78.2%	77.5%	78.3%	79.7%	79.6%	1.8%
Vermont	78.0%	80.6%	74.3%	78.9%	75.1%	–3.7%
Virginia	85.7%	85.1%	84.9%	83.5%	82.3%	–3.9%
Washington	81.0%	80.8%	81.5%	83.3%	81.1%	0.1%
West Virginia	89.4%	89.3%	90.9%	89.7%	90.5%	1.3%
Wisconsin	87.1%	86.7%	87.8%	88.1%	78.3%	–10.1%
Wyoming	89.7%	91.7%	93.0%	90.6%	90.1%	0.4%

^a A change of +/–5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V–5. Outcome 6.1b: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	56.0%	54.0%	52.2%	55.4%	57.4%	2.5%
Alaska	63.2%	62.9%	65.1%	66.9%	65.4%	3.5%
Arizona	70.2%	69.4%	65.1%	68.3%	67.4%	–4.0%
Arkansas	44.9%	49.3%	47.1%	51.2%	53.3%	18.7%
California	65.7%	66.1%	70.1%	70.8%	71.4%	8.8%
Colorado	52.8%	52.2%	51.6%	51.3%	52.3%	–1.0%
Connecticut	77.1%	75.7%	73.1%	67.7%	68.6%	–11.0%
Delaware	62.1%	64.4%	59.5%	63.8%	58.0%	–6.6%
District of Columbia	70.9%	71.0%	63.4%	65.0%	64.8%	–8.6%
Florida	66.7%	68.2%	66.8%	65.2%	64.8%	–2.8%
Georgia	51.7%	56.8%	61.2%	63.5%	63.5%	23.0%
Hawaii	68.6%	70.0%	73.2%	78.8%	73.8%	7.6%
Idaho	68.6%	68.5%	68.4%	65.9%	63.0%	–8.1%
Illinois	55.7%	59.7%	60.3%	61.3%	63.4%	13.9%
Indiana	72.7%	72.4%	72.9%	73.4%	74.0%	1.8%
Iowa	63.3%	72.4%	74.0%	74.3%	74.3%	17.4%
Kansas	60.0%	62.0%	60.2%	57.8%	55.4%	–7.8%
Kentucky	62.2%	63.4%	63.5%	61.9%	63.4%	1.9%
Louisiana	58.8%	57.9%	58.1%	57.2%	56.1%	–4.7%
Maine	79.6%	80.0%	80.0%	83.2%	77.3%	–2.8%
Maryland	70.3%	71.3%	71.0%	68.3%	68.5%	–2.6%
Massachusetts	54.5%	52.6%	48.5%	46.1%	48.8%	–10.5%
Michigan	72.2%	73.3%	73.7%	71.8%	72.4%	0.4%
Minnesota	63.2%	64.5%	65.8%	67.6%	70.4%	11.4%
Mississippi	59.5%	63.1%	66.9%	65.8%	65.5%	10.0%
Missouri	60.0%	60.0%	61.5%	63.4%	62.8%	4.7%
Montana	66.3%	69.6%	68.5%	69.0%	70.6%	6.4%
Nebraska	77.8%	76.2%	74.7%	74.3%	73.8%	–5.1%
Nevada	58.3%	56.8%	54.9%	57.8%	61.8%	5.9%
New Hampshire	61.2%	65.7%	68.2%	71.5%	67.3%	10.0%
New Jersey	73.8%	73.7%	74.4%	73.9%	73.9%	0.1%
New Mexico	50.3%	50.6%	51.9%	54.4%	48.4%	–3.8%
New York	71.2%	71.0%	70.8%	71.5%	68.7%	–3.6%
North Carolina	75.7%	75.7%	77.2%	76.0%	72.5%	–4.2%
North Dakota	53.9%	49.6%	51.3%	52.5%	58.1%	7.8%
Ohio	66.7%	69.9%	70.3%	70.2%	70.7%	6.0%
Oklahoma	53.8%	53.5%	58.1%	59.1%	63.1%	17.5%
Oregon	68.0%	65.1%	65.9%	66.0%	65.9%	–3.1%
Pennsylvania	66.8%	68.0%	68.5%	69.4%	70.4%	5.5%
Rhode Island	74.9%	74.0%	74.9%	73.3%	76.6%	2.3%
South Carolina	58.1%	55.9%	53.8%	53.8%	53.9%	–7.3%
South Dakota	61.1%	66.5%	67.8%	61.6%	59.5%	–2.6%
Tennessee	52.9%	53.1%	51.5%	50.3%	50.2%	–5.2%
Texas	57.8%	57.0%	56.8%	56.0%	56.2%	–2.8%
Utah	48.7%	52.6%	53.3%	56.2%	55.4%	13.7%
Vermont	60.4%	59.4%	60.2%	57.0%	60.6%	0.3%
Virginia	64.7%	65.0%	65.6%	64.7%	62.7%	–3.0%
Washington	65.6%	62.7%	63.1%	63.0%	65.1%	–0.9%
West Virginia	67.5%	70.1%	71.4%	75.3%	74.5%	10.3%
Wisconsin	70.7%	70.6%	72.0%	72.0%	51.0%	–28.0%
Wyoming	68.5%	69.5%	70.6%	73.5%	70.1%	2.3%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V–6. Outcome 6.1c: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	27.5%	27.7%	31.7%	32.0%	32.1%	16.8%
Alaska	35.2%	40.3%	42.3%	42.5%	41.6%	18.1%
Arizona	44.0%	47.0%	44.7%	41.1%	40.3%	–8.4%
Arkansas	19.9%	21.4%	23.6%	19.7%	18.6%	–6.4%
California	37.6%	39.6%	42.4%	42.5%	42.6%	13.4%
Colorado	25.2%	27.2%	26.5%	27.2%	27.6%	9.3%
Connecticut	37.7%	39.7%	39.5%	40.5%	40.4%	7.0%
Delaware	31.3%	32.1%	31.9%	29.9%	30.2%	–3.2%
District of Columbia	28.7%	33.5%	42.2%	38.3%	35.3%	22.8%
Florida	37.1%	39.0%	41.5%	42.9%	43.3%	16.6%
Georgia	32.9%	35.7%	36.8%	38.3%	39.0%	18.5%
Hawaii	52.8%	53.1%	53.3%	51.9%	57.9%	9.7%
Idaho	31.3%	36.5%	40.9%	43.9%	44.5%	42.1%
Illinois	32.5%	31.3%	30.4%	30.7%	34.8%	7.1%
Indiana	46.9%	48.3%	49.7%	50.5%	50.3%	7.4%
Iowa	26.9%	32.6%	37.2%	40.9%	40.8%	51.7%
Kansas	42.3%	42.4%	41.1%	43.0%	41.2%	–2.6%
Kentucky	39.9%	41.5%	43.5%	41.4%	42.7%	7.0%
Louisiana	35.2%	34.2%	36.5%	37.7%	34.0%	–3.2%
Maine	52.4%	52.8%	52.6%	49.3%	51.1%	–2.5%
Maryland	41.7%	42.7%	44.7%	44.9%	45.7%	9.6%
Massachusetts	32.7%	34.1%	33.9%	32.5%	30.0%	–8.3%
Michigan	42.5%	44.1%	46.6%	47.4%	48.2%	13.4%
Minnesota	35.0%	36.8%	37.3%	38.7%	38.2%	9.3%
Mississippi	35.6%	36.9%	42.6%	45.8%	45.5%	27.7%
Missouri	33.0%	32.9%	32.6%	33.9%	33.1%	0.3%
Montana	40.9%	40.1%	44.9%	46.7%	46.7%	14.2%
Nebraska	39.3%	43.9%	43.1%	44.5%	44.3%	12.6%
Nevada	29.4%	30.7%	29.1%	29.3%	30.7%	4.5%
New Hampshire	40.6%	42.8%	47.8%	54.6%	50.8%	25.1%
New Jersey	52.8%	52.4%	53.1%	52.2%	51.2%	–2.9%
New Mexico	24.4%	25.9%	28.7%	29.6%	31.4%	28.3%
New York	48.4%	48.2%	47.8%	46.9%	47.3%	–2.3%
North Carolina	43.9%	44.4%	45.0%	42.4%	45.6%	3.8%
North Dakota	29.1%	29.2%	27.4%	29.7%	32.6%	12.1%
Ohio	35.9%	41.7%	44.9%	44.8%	44.0%	22.4%
Oklahoma	29.2%	30.5%	28.7%	30.9%	33.1%	13.3%
Oregon	39.6%	40.5%	41.5%	41.5%	42.9%	8.4%
Pennsylvania	44.6%	43.3%	44.1%	46.3%	47.3%	5.9%
Rhode Island	46.2%	49.0%	49.6%	49.9%	48.5%	4.8%
South Carolina	30.8%	32.7%	33.5%	27.7%	28.7%	–6.7%
South Dakota	27.4%	27.7%	31.8%	34.1%	34.0%	24.1%
Tennessee	37.8%	36.6%	35.0%	36.6%	35.2%	–6.9%
Texas	22.9%	22.6%	21.7%	23.2%	21.7%	–5.0%
Utah	14.2%	13.0%	15.5%	16.7%	19.6%	38.1%
Vermont	24.6%	32.9%	36.6%	36.4%	33.0%	34.2%
Virginia	38.6%	40.2%	40.5%	39.8%	37.6%	–2.7%
Washington	41.0%	40.4%	39.6%	39.5%	39.7%	–3.1%
West Virginia	35.7%	37.1%	41.5%	43.0%	45.4%	27.2%
Wisconsin	47.0%	48.5%	49.5%	49.2%	24.8%	–47.3%
Wyoming	44.9%	41.2%	47.6%	48.0%	50.0%	11.3%

^a A change of +/–5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.
 Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V-7. Outcome 7.1: Percentage of Children Age 12 or Younger in Group Homes or Institutions, 2015–2019 (N=51)

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percent Change in Performance, 2015–2019 ^a
Alabama	5.3%	5.0%	5.3%	4.4%	2.6%	–50.3%
Alaska	2.6%	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	1.4%	–47.3%
Arizona	10.4%	9.8%	8.0%	6.2%	7.5%	–27.4%
Arkansas	14.0%	12.2%	8.8%	8.0%	4.8%	–65.3%
California	2.8%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%	1.9%	–32.9%
Colorado	4.0%	4.0%	3.7%	2.5%	1.9%	–51.2%
Connecticut	2.4%	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	–61.2%
Delaware	2.4%	4.7%	1.9%	6.2%	3.4%	40.5%
District of Columbia	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%	1.6%	3.5%	N/A
Florida	5.4%	5.1%	5.2%	4.5%	3.8%	–29.2%
Georgia	4.4%	3.2%	2.6%	2.1%	2.0%	–54.6%
Hawaii	4.0%	5.1%	4.7%	5.7%	5.0%	23.9%
Idaho	3.8%	2.6%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%	–18.2%
Illinois	2.1%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%	–28.2%
Indiana	1.5%	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	1.5%	5.3%
Iowa	2.0%	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%
Kansas	1.0%	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	2.7%	156.0%
Kentucky	4.8%	4.7%	3.5%	4.0%	3.5%	–26.7%
Louisiana	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	–18.7%
Maine	0.7%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%	61.6%
Maryland	2.7%	1.9%	2.6%	3.1%	3.3%	21.2%
Massachusetts	6.3%	5.9%	6.1%	5.3%	5.9%	–7.0%
Michigan	1.1%	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	1.9%	73.1%
Minnesota	5.8%	4.9%	5.1%	4.6%	5.3%	–9.3%
Mississippi	6.1%	5.7%	3.9%	3.6%	2.8%	–53.2%
Missouri	3.5%	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	2.9%	–16.0%
Montana	4.2%	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	2.6%	–37.6%
Nebraska	1.1%	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%	–38.6%
Nevada	11.4%	13.2%	8.9%	8.5%	7.9%	–30.7%
New Hampshire	10.2%	5.3%	4.4%	7.8%	12.3%	20.6%
New Jersey	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	1.0%	34.4%
New Mexico	5.0%	5.4%	4.9%	3.6%	2.8%	–42.7%
New York	5.1%	7.4%	8.7%	8.3%	8.4%	64.2%
North Carolina	3.7%	4.5%	4.2%	3.6%	4.7%	28.3%
North Dakota	3.6%	2.2%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%	–45.1%
Ohio	2.5%	2.6%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	6.8%
Oklahoma	3.3%	1.8%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	–53.5%
Oregon	1.7%	1.3%	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	–9.7%
Pennsylvania	3.9%	3.1%	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	–21.4%
Rhode Island	6.5%	4.5%	3.1%	2.3%	2.8%	–56.6%
South Carolina	22.9%	16.7%	9.8%	9.7%	6.8%	–70.1%
South Dakota	7.7%	9.3%	9.7%	6.8%	7.8%	1.8%
Tennessee	2.5%	3.2%	2.7%	2.8%	3.0%	20.9%
Texas	6.8%	5.0%	5.2%	4.9%	4.9%	–27.5%
Utah	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%	–40.2%
Vermont	4.0%	5.1%	3.0%	3.6%	4.2%	2.6%
Virginia	4.6%	4.8%	5.9%	4.2%	4.2%	–10.1%
Washington	2.2%	2.5%	3.7%	5.3%	6.1%	172.7%
West Virginia	4.9%	3.4%	2.8%	3.3%	2.9%	–40.9%
Wisconsin	3.5%	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%	2.5%	–28.6%
Wyoming	2.7%	3.6%	2.6%	3.1%	3.2%	21.0%

^a A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark teal indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light teal indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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.

Alabama

State Comment

Jan Casteel, Director
Family Service Division
Alabama Department of Human Resources

The following are Alabama's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015-2019: Report to Congress*:

The Alabama Department of Human Resources remains dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our federal data submissions. We continue to update and enhance our data collection systems regularly so that vital information is available for utilization in developing agency initiatives toward better outcomes for the children and families that we serve.

Alabama has experienced an increase in the foster care population during the FY2015-FY2019 period. Despite this increase, Alabama has maintained a 5 year average of 96% on frequency of caseworker visits with children and 99% of those visits have occurred within the child's home.

Alabama has worked hard to help children achieve permanency during these review periods with more than 2,900 children receiving permanency through adoption between FY2015 and FY2019. During the same period an average of 70% of children were reunified with a parent or relative.

Child Safety remains Alabama's top priority. We continue to direct resources toward strengthening risk and safety assessments through partnering with providers, development of additional resources and continued training for our front-line workers.

Recurrence of Maltreatment remains low with an average of 2.2 for the reporting periods. Maltreatment in Foster Care has also remained low over the periods in review with an average of less than 1%.

The Alabama Department of Human Resources remains committed to utilizing our data to improve the safety, permanency, and well being outcomes for the children and families of our state.

Delaware

State Comment

Trenee R. Parker, Director

Division of Family Services

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

The following are Delaware's comments on the state data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress*.

The Child Welfare Outcomes report for this time period shows a significant decline in foster care placements between 2017 and 2019. As the number of children in foster care decreases, there also is an increase in the number of children that have been adopted. Delaware contributes the decrease of children in foster care to our use of Safety Organized Practice and Family Search and Engagement strategies. Delaware diligently uses Structured Decision Making (SDM)[®] tools such as caregiver safety assessments to not only determine risk and safety concerns, but also to develop caregiver safety agreements (safety plans) to prevent removal or re-entry. When possible, Delaware also has a Team Decision Making meeting prior to every child placement. These efforts often result in identifying relatives and other community resources and allows a families' natural support system to assist them in providing for their children's safety and wellbeing. Of children in foster care, Delaware had 100% have no maltreatment between 2014-2018, and 99.78% have no maltreatment in 2019. Delaware has consistently shown less than 10% reentry in foster care. There is a slight increase in the average length of time in foster care, but an increase in the number of children receiving monthly home visits with the majority of visits, 80%, occurring in the placement setting. Teenagers continue to make up a majority of Delaware's foster care population. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of children with three or more placements. Very similar to national statistics, there is also a disproportionate number of African American children in foster care compared to overall population.

The number of maltreatment victims has remained the same from last period, 6.1. Throughout this timeframe, 99.6% of victims was a first time occurrence. Delaware's rate of reoccurrence of maltreatment within the first 6 months has consistently been very low, 2.5% or less. Delaware has implemented Differential Response which enables the state to address low risk cases of child abuse and neglect. This allows interventions to ensure safety and address risk without a finding of maltreatment. Delaware also uses the SDM[®] screening tool for all maltreatment reports that screens in incidents of abuse or neglect but also those with a high risk of maltreatment thus allowing Delaware to utilize prevention strategies. Due to increased vacancies resulting in higher caseloads, Delaware has shown an increase in response time. In 2018, Delaware implemented a new data system, FOCUS. This system is still a work in progress, but improvements continue to be made in the system. Data quality errors primarily related to discharge reasons are present in AFCARS reports that are still being addressed in the system. Delaware plans to resubmit AFCARS reports from the onset of our new system once these errors have been corrected.

Illinois

State Comment

Marc. D Smith

Acting Director

Illinois Department of DCFS, Children and Family Services

The vision for child welfare in Illinois includes a partnership of public and private agencies and the court system working together as a proactive system focused on prevention and as a responsive system when child maltreatment occurs. Public and private partners work together as one team aligned by the same values and core practices to serve children and families from a Family-centered, Trauma-informed, and Strengths-based (FTS) approach.

Illinois continues to take active steps to improve children's safety and time to permanency through enhanced supports to supervisors, increased focus on critical thinking in safety assessments, continuous quality improvement efforts focused on casework practice, and increased efforts to license relative caregivers. Illinois recognizes the importance of data-driven decision-making and is investing in making data more available for direct service teams with an emphasis on reducing recurrence of maltreatment and increasing timely permanency.

In reviewing the Illinois data in the 2019 Child Welfare Outcomes report, it is important to know the following about the data elements listed below:

- Sex trafficking maltreatment type: Illinois definition for the abuse/neglect allegation of Sex Trafficking is a part of a broader definition of Human trafficking that also includes labor exploitation and blatant disregard of a caregiver's responsibilities that result in a child being trafficked. At this time, Illinois cannot extract data specific to Sex trafficking. This maltreatment type is reported under the NCANDS maltreatment type of Other.
- Time to investigation: Illinois' definition of investigation start date/time is the date/time of the first actual inperson contact or attempted in-person contact (a.k.a. Good Faith Attempts) listed for the last alleged victim in the investigation. Based on the NCANDS instructions to report only on the actual contacts, Illinois does not provide the investigation start date/time for the NCANDS submission of the child maltreatment data.
- Exits of children with a diagnosed disability: In Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Illinois began a process to review and map the medical disability and diagnostic codes to the relevant AFCARS data elements, which has resulted in more accurate disability information.

Illinois is committed to improving the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for child welfare involved children and families. Likewise, the state continues to improve its data quality and is committed to providing the most accurate data possible through its AFCARS and NCANDS submissions.

Indiana

State Comment

Terry J. Stigdon, MSN, RN

Director

Indiana Department of Child Services

General

In July 2012, Indiana instituted a new child welfare information system: The Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK). The Department of Child Services (DCS) also developed new extraction code and mapping documents to collect and organize data for federal reporting. Continuous improvement efforts have been made to refine data collection and mapping processes through system modifications and enhancements, including launching a new intake system in February 2016. MaGIK is an umbrella system that has incorporated services, billing, case management and the overall data management, organization and extraction.

Reports

If a report meets statutory criteria for child abuse or neglect (CA/N) (Indiana Policy [Policy] 3.8), the DCS hotline staff may recommend to screen in the case and assign the report to the local office as needing immediate, 24-hour, 48-hour, or 5-day response time depending on the type of allegation(s). As of July 1, 2019, legislation increased immediate response times from one hour to two hours. The local office makes the final decision to screen in or screen out.

DCS does not refer allegations of CA/N for assessment if they do not:

- Meet the statutory definition of CA/N.
- Contain sufficient information to either identify or locate the child and/or family to initiate an assessment (Policy 3.6).

The following types of referrals do not receive an assessment:

- Screen out:
 - These referrals meet one or both conditions listed above. Reports may be forwarded to law enforcement for their review. If a participant has open involvement with the agency, the family case manager (FCM), FCM supervisor and local office are notified of the decision.
- Service request:
 - Calls consist of Safe Haven reports and requests for DCS to assist (e.g., courtesy interview for another state child protection agency).
- Information and referral:
 - Report source provides information to DCS regarding an open involvement or requests information (e.g., food pantry information, legal aid, etc.).

Children

As of January 2018, the Hotline ceased automatically recommending assessment of all reports with alleged victims under 3. This same month, the hotline implemented an additional supervisor review of all reports recommended for screen out involving alleged victims under 3.

On May 1, 2019, DCS began Plan of Safe Care entry into MaGIK and gave guidance on which children and families meet the criteria.

Fatalities

Fatalities are included in the FFY the assessment was approved by DCS' Central Fatality Unit (CEU). In FFY2019, CEU improved processes, allowing DCS to finalize lingering fatality assessments and lessen the time to complete new assessments. This resulted in a higher number of fatality assessments being approved in FFY2019.

DCS completes a review of all child fatalities that fit the following circumstances:

- Children under the age of 3:
 - The child's death is sudden, unexpected or unexplained, or there are allegations of CA/N
- Children age 3 or older:
 - The child's death involves allegations of CA/N

Reports for fatalities can come from multiple sources, including DCS, law enforcement, fire investigators, emergency medical personnel, coroners, health departments, or hospitals.

Kansas

State Comment

**Deanne Dinkel, Director of Performance Improvement
Prevention and Protection Services
Kansas Department for Children & Families**

The following is from Kansas on the State's data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes FFY 2015-2019*.

Caseworker Visits: In FFY 2019, Kansas had a decline in the worker child visits performance. New grantee partners started with new grants in October of 2019 which created some system issues. Kansas has since corrected these issues.

Maltreatment Types of Child Victims: In FFY 2018 lack of supervision was mapped from the "Other" maltreatment type category to the "Neglect" maltreatment type category.

Massachusetts

State Comment

Linda S. Spears, Commissioner
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

Massachusetts Comments for Inclusion in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2019: Report to Congress*

Maltreatment Types of Victims

Since 2014, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) has been engaged in a comprehensive effort to address Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of children and youth that has included:

- Updating multiple policies to integrate identification, understanding, responding to, and addressing human trafficking.
 - Accepting reports of allegations against non-caretaker alleged perpetrators.
 - a. The Department's protective intake policy, implemented in 2016, was updated to incorporate the agency's decision to receive and screen reports and investigate trafficking allegations against both caretakers and non-caretakers.
 - b. Since the implementation of this policy, the identified perpetrators have mostly been non-relatives—the relationships are identified in our system as "unknown" or "other person."
- Training child welfare staff, residential group home staff, and community partners to identify children who are being trafficked or at risk of being trafficked.
- Implementing a Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Team model consisting of the state's Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), DCF, law enforcement representatives, and numerous community partners.
 - Child Advocacy Centers cover the entire state and use a multi-disciplinary team approach to provide services for children and families impacted by abuse. Each center employs a Human Trafficking Coordinator who coordinates the child welfare, community, and law enforcement investigations and service responses to reduce re-victimization, improve the process of prosecution, and ensure the best possible outcomes for children.
 - The approach provides access to supportive services through the child welfare agency while law enforcement leads the criminal investigation of the child's alleged trafficker.

Adoption

There was a 20% increase in the number of children adopted in FFY2019 over FFY2018, following several reforms intended to safely expedite adoptions. The Department hired 19 additional attorneys, established new ways of tracking a child's case through the juvenile courts, and instituted weekly meetings for legal and clinical teams to address barriers to finalization. Policy and practice reforms prioritize permanency throughout the life of a case, for example, at the child's initial foster care placement review or at Foster Care Review.

Placement Stability

Placement stability continued to significantly improve with ongoing work to safely place children with kin and to strengthen foster parent communication and support. For children in care for less than 12 months, placement stability (children with 2 or fewer placements) has increased year over year since FFY2017.

In late 2017, the Department initiated Family Find, a pilot program dedicating one social worker in an office to focus on locating family members or other caring adults the child already knows. Family Find has expanded from three DCF offices to 11 and kin placements are currently at a historic high. The Department engages foster parents with forums and webinars , established a statewide foster parent e-list, expanded trainings and support groups for current foster parents, and introduced an Intranet exclusively for licensed foster partners where they can find agency news, training opportunities and other resources.

Caseworker Visits

The rate of children in foster care receiving monthly visits and receiving visits in the home (placement location) has continued to increase year over year since FFY2016, as the Department hired 300 additional frontline social workers and 100 managers to increase oversight, added more than 100 social worker technicians to assist with transportation and visitation, implemented caseload management strategies that brought caseloads to historic lows, and modernized key operations to streamline workload.

Michigan

State Comment

Stacie Bladen, Senior Deputy Director
Children's Service Agency
Michigan Department Of Health And Human Services

Michigan's comments on the state data presented in the *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015-2019: Report to Congress*

Child Welfare Vision

All Michigan's children are safe from abuse and neglect and families have the services and supports they need to thrive.

Child Welfare Mission

It is our mission to ensure safety for Michigan children who come to the Children's Services Agency's attention through timely provision of preventive, early intervention and foster care services that build on the child and family's strengths and lead to timely permanency. Our professional, respectful staff and agency partners will work to address and remediate family trauma, access to services, and strengthen families and their communities.

Michigan's Data

Michigan has implemented innovative strategies identified following the state's third Child and Family Services Review aimed to improve outcomes related to child safety, permanency, and well-being.

Michigan has implemented specialized continuous quality improvement reviews to better understand and address gaps targeted at improving safety for children in care. As a result, 99.12% of Michigan's children in foster care do not experience another maltreatment while in care.

In addition, Michigan has implemented Team Decision Meetings, following the evidenced based practice model, for all families facing a situation when out-of-home placement has been deemed necessary or placement changes are being considered.

Michigan provides the most accurate data possible through NCANDS and AFCARS submissions. Data collection has improved as field staff master the case management system implemented in 2014 and make use of data quality reports resulting in a reduction of missing data from 27.6% to 0.2%.

Michigan continues to observe consistent decline in the number of children entering foster care since 2014.

Minnesota

State Comment

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

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments regarding Minnesota's National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, census and caseworker visit data for inclusion in the *2019 Child Welfare Outcomes Report*.

Following review by department staff, additional contextual information is provided regarding decreases in the number of child maltreatment victims and children in foster care, and continued rates of disproportionality.

From FFY 2015 to FFY 2017 Minnesota saw a 70 percent increase in the number of child maltreatment victims. This increase came following statutory changes that resulted in a higher percentage of child maltreatment reports being screened in for a child protection response and determinations of maltreatment. Since FFY 2017, the number of child maltreatment victims has been on the decline, including a 13 percent decrease from FFY 2018 to FFY 2019. The decline of child maltreatment victims is a reflection of the child protection system finding balance after a period of significant system changes.

Minnesota also continued to experience a decline in the number of children in foster care; however, the median length of stay in care has been on the rise since FFY 2015. Caretaker substance use continues to be the highest reported reason for children entering out-of-home placement. The challenges that result from drug addiction make it difficult to achieve permanency for children in care more timely. The use of Trial Home Visits (THV) in the reunification process has also increased; however, the length of time that children spend on average in a THV has remained constant at approximately two months.

Disproportionality remains a significant concern for children in Minnesota's child protection and foster care systems. Minnesota is actively exploring different ways to support families both in preventing involvement in the child protection system, and allowing children to safely remain in their home. Examples of such efforts include:

- Implementation of a case review process to assess and ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act
- Continued support of the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative project, which allows for a tribally-based child welfare delivery system
- Creation of the department's African American Child Well-being Unit which focuses on understanding and addressing the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American children and families in Minnesota's child protection and foster care systems, and oversees culturally affirming prevention and family preservation strategies as a child welfare response
- Investment in community based organizations to provide culturally appropriate services and assist the department in identifying institutional and systemic policy and practice barriers to better serve families experiencing the most significant disparities.
- This opportunity to provide comments is appreciated.

Missouri

State Comment

Joanie Rogers, Interim Director
Children's Division
Missouri Department of Social Services

The following are Missouri's comments on the data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015-2019: Report to Congress*.

Missouri remains dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our -National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) submissions. The state persists in efforts to enhance data systems that thoroughly detail compliance with the mandates of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA) to serve families.

Child safety is top priority for the Children's Division. Missouri has implemented a new call center, online reporting for mandated reports which has reduced wait times and improved the capacity to answer all calls to the central hotline center.

One notation for NCANDS data submission relating to initial contact with the victim child is that Missouri has a state policy to allow for professionals with certain designations, such as doctors and law enforcement to assist and support workers. These professionals are known as multi-disciplinary team (MDT) members and may assist in making initial contact with victims. However, MDT contacts are not included in the data submission per NCANDS reporting protocols.

With regard to foster care services, Missouri continues to address challenges in the areas of timely permanency, court delays in termination of parental rights until an adoptive resource has been found, and areas of the state where cases are not moving in a timely manner.

In 2018, Missouri entered in to their Round 3 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan. One promising strategy implemented was the Permanency Attorney Initiative (PAI). PAI was initiated in multiple sites across the state to address bottlenecks and barriers to permanency. Data from implemented sites shows the program has proven successful in moving children to permanency, and also preventing instances of children entering care.

Missouri achieved 97% on the frequency of worker/child visits during FFY 20. Missouri has maintained the benchmark since 2008. The state uses the Child and Family Services Review process to assess quality of visitation.

Missouri has a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process in place and remains focused on identifying areas of strength and improvement opportunities at both statewide and local levels. The process monitors all aspects of service delivery from child abuse/neglect reports to permanency. The Division continually strives to improve our capacity to serve children and families who come to the attention of our agency.

New Jersey

State Comment

Carmen Diaz-Petti, 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 2019: Report to Congress*.

FFY2019 data show an increase in the number of unique reports and a decrease in the number of substantiated victims: 6.0% of reports were substantiated in FFY 2019 compared to 7.1% of reports substantiated in FFY 2018. This decrease in the volume of substantiated victims is consistent with a trend experienced across multiple prior years.

With respect to visits, New Jersey's compliance level of 98% exceeded the federal Monthly Caseworker Visits (MVC) Target of 95% for FFY 2019. New Jersey's compliance level of 98% also exceeded the federal Visits In-Home (VIH) Target of 50% for FFY 2019.

New Jersey's census of children in care continues to decline, a trend that is informed by entry/exit rates and permanency outcomes. The foster care entry rate decreased from 1.8 per 1,000 in 2018 to 1.4 per 1,000 in 2019. Fewer children entered foster care in 2019 than in 2018 (2,679 in 2019 and 3,540 in 2018). The number of children who exited foster care decreased in 2019: 3,700 children were discharged in 2019 and 3,863 children were discharged in 2018— a trend that may be partially explained by the reduction in census/children eligible for discharge. New Jersey's commitment to achieving permanency for children is ongoing. Ninety-two percent of children in care exited to permanency through adoption, guardianship or reunification and the number of children re-entering foster care decreased from 3,540 in 2018 to 2,679 in 2019. New Jersey continues to work toward strong permanency outcomes for older youth in care; the number of children who entered care older than 12 years of age and who exited to adoption, guardianship or reunification remains steady at 63%.

New Jersey also continues to strive for placement stability and exceeds the National Standard: 87% of children in care less than 12 months, 74% of children in care 12 to 24 months, and 51% of children in care 24 months or longer experience two or fewer placement settings during their time in out of home care.

New Jersey also strives to reduce the placement of young children in institutional settings. In 2019, 1% of the children under 12 years of age were placed in a group home or institution.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide commentary on New Jersey's child welfare data.

Utah

State Comment

Diane Moore, Division Director
Division of Child and Family Services
Utah Department of Human Services

The State of Utah, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), submits the following comments regarding the Utah Data contained in the *Child Welfare Outcomes 2019: Report to Congress*.

Utah's Division of Child and Family Services works to ensure that services are provided in home-based settings whenever possible, in the most normalized setting appropriate to the child's and family's needs. Whenever appropriate, prevention services and in-home services are employed to safely reduce the need for foster care, and to increase the capacity of parents to protect and care for their children in the home. When foster care is necessary, we work first to reunify families and, when reunification is not an option, to minimize time spent in foster care and help children (particularly those under the age of 5) to safely achieve permanency as quickly as possible.

In 2019 Utah continued to have the highest percentage in the nation of children discharged from foster care to finalized adoption within 12 months, and were in the upper quartile for adoptions between 12 and 24 months. Utah also had a low percentage of children who entered foster care before age 12 exiting foster care to emancipation (meaning more foster cases end before children "age out" of the system), and an excellent record for helping children aged 12 and younger into placements other than group homes or institutions. We are also pleased with relatively low rates of foster re-entry. However, Utah still faced challenges in achieving placement stability, with relatively few children compared to the national median experiencing two or fewer placements while in care (particularly for those in care for 24 months or longer).

In *Child Welfare Outcomes 2015* Utah was the only state reporting 100% (rounded) of children receiving caseworker visits in their home out of 96% receiving monthly visits, performance which continued through 2019.

Washington

State Comment

Jody Becker, MSW, Ph.D.

Deputy Secretary

Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families

The following are Washington State's comments on the state data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2019: Report to Congress*.

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is a cabinet-level agency focused on the well-being of children. DCYF encompasses several services previously offered through the state Children's Administration (CA), Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR), Department of Early Learning (DEL), Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ), and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).

Child and family safety, timely permanency, and well-being are at the forefront of every aspect of our work. DCYF is committed to improving outcomes for children in Washington State and safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care. This requires intentional focus and strong practice to keep children safely in their own homes, as well as to ensure children achieve safe, timely exits from out-of-home care. We have intentionally aligned our priorities across major initiatives and activities including the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), Program Improvement Plan (PIP), the Permanency From Day One (PFD1) Grant, the Child Welfare Family Practice Model, the DCYF Strategic Plan, and the DCYF Racial Equity Plan.

We intend to improve outcomes through prioritizing the following activities and services:

- Consistent, comprehensive, and timely assessments of safety and risk. We know that early and ongoing identification of safety threats and risk factors, implementation of services to meet individualized needs, and the development of case plans in collaboration with children, youth and families improves outcomes.
- Prevention and expansion of our array of services with implementation of evidence-based services through the FFPSA plan.
- Quality and availability of provider services through implementation of Performance-Based Contracting (PBC).
- Initial and ongoing meaningful engagement with children, youth, parents, caregivers, and stakeholders. Early and consistent family engagement is key to assessing safety, identifying needs, implementing services, and achieving permanency outcomes.
- Safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care and reducing length of care for children who are in out-of-home care through implementation of prevention efforts, timely and consistent permanency planning meetings, improving service availability, and collaboration with judicial partners.

- Developing the skills and competencies of our workforce while providing support and empowerment. Our workforce is our most valuable resource. Creating a positive and supportive culture will improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.
- Eliminating racial disproportionalities in the DCYF system and advancing racial equity.
- Washington State has seen a reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care, a decrease in the number of children awaiting adoption and an increase in the number of children adopted and achieving guardianship. Washington State continues to be devoted to keeping children safely with their families and safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care.
- The Governor and Washington State Legislature are committed to management accountability and performance measurement. The DCYF is focused on supporting children, youth and families in achieving better outcomes and reports publicly on agency performance related to education, health, and resilience outcomes.

Wisconsin

State Comment

Wendy Henderson, Division Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

The vision of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) is that all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. In accordance with this vision, Wisconsin is reorienting the child welfare system to a new purpose: strengthening all Wisconsin families to raise their children. Research and history, along with significant changes in federal policy and funding priorities, support that children belong with their families. And in living out the DCF vision stated above, we are challenged to reorient the child welfare system to a new purpose: strengthening all Wisconsin families to raise their children.

Wisconsin's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered in 71 counties and state-administered in Milwaukee. The effort to strengthen all Wisconsin families to raise their children is supported by the following aims:

- **Safely transform the child welfare and youth justice system to dramatically increase the proportion of children supported in their homes and communities.** In order to accomplish this, we are committed to: (1) Identifying, recruiting, and supporting relatives and like-kin in caring for all children and youth who cannot safely be maintained in their home; (2) Decreasing the utilization of out-of-home care by improving resources and services to serve more children, youth, and families safely in their home; and (3) Elevating and supporting the role of individuals with lived experiences.
- **Safely re-orient the use of facility-based settings.** In order to accomplish this, we are committed to: (1) Reducing the use of congregate care by shifting the utilization of congregate care to short-term clinical interventions based on the assessed needs of the child or youth; (2) Reducing the number of children sent to out-of-state clinical-care settings; and (3) Dedicating additional resources to support vulnerable and historically underserved youth, specifically teenage girls, kids with complex needs, and youth transitioning out of the foster care system.
- **Improve and develop the Youth Justice (YJ) infrastructure to support alignment with best practice.** DCF continues to improve and develop the Youth Justice infrastructure to support alignment with best practice by: (1) Establishing statewide standards including a standardized assessment for youth entering the system; (2) Establishing a statewide YJ data system to monitor and evaluate performance and inform policy and program decisions; and (3) Including the voices of YJ-involved youth in policy and program development.
- Finally, the shifts in practice outlined above will be further supported and deepened by re-structuring component pieces of the infrastructure that support child welfare and youth justice in Wisconsin. Development of a new worker training model that better reflects the needs of our workforce and system is central to this vision, as is the identification of new strategies and technologies that will increase the time a worker has to serve children, youth, and families.

Through these efforts, we strive to engage with children, youth, and families so that we can keep children where they belong – with their families.

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.

(a) IN GENERAL.—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—¹

(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

¹ Section 7 of Pub. L. 109–288 added Section 479A(a)(6) and was later amended by Section 106 of Pub. L. 112–34.

(7) include in the report submitted pursuant to paragraph (5) for fiscal year 2016 or any succeeding fiscal year, state-by-state data on—²

(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) with respect to each such placement—

(I) the type of the placement setting, including whether the placement is shelter care, a group home and if so, the range of the child population in the home, a residential treatment facility, a hospital or institution providing medical, rehabilitative, or psychiatric care, a setting specializing in providing prenatal, post-partum, or parenting supports, or some other kind of child-care institution and if so, what kind;

(II) the number of children in the placement setting and the age, race, ethnicity, and gender of each of the children;

(III) for each child in the placement setting, the length of the placement of the child in the setting, whether the placement of the child in the setting is the first placement of the child and if not, the number and type of previous placements of the child, and whether the child has special needs or another diagnosed mental or physical illness or condition; and

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

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

² Section 115 of Pub. L. 113–183 added Sections 479A(a)(7) and (b), later amended by Section 50744 of Pub. L. 115–123.

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

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.

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

• **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.² 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.

Reporting Population and Methodology

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.

Calculation of MCVs

To calculate the percentage of required visits to children in foster care that were made on a monthly basis, the following data are required:³

- **Denominator:** This is 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:** This is 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.

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

² Beginning in FY 2012, states were required to use a revised methodology for calculating caseworker visits. For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data for FY 2007–2011, see Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-08-03 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi0803>. 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 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1201>.

³ 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.

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 Monthly Visits in the Home

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

- Denominator: This is 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: This is the number of monthly visits made to children in the reporting population that occurred in the child’s home.⁴ 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 Analytics and Reporting Team. The following table shows the states that elected to submit sample data for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and/or 2019.

Table. States That Submitted Sample Data					
State	Used Sample in 2015	Used Sample in 2016	Used Sample in 2017	Used Sample in 2018	Used Sample in 2019
Hawaii	X	X	X	X	X
Michigan	X	X			
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	X

⁴ 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
Context Statistics	
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	State-submitted data in conjunction with states' Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports
Child Maltreatment Data (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)	
Children who are the subject of an investigated report alleging child maltreatment	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth and Families (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 Child Protective Services (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, Child Maltreatment Fatalities Not Reported in the Child File (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.
Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System)	
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 Child Welfare Outcomes Report. For a full list of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data elements, see *AFCARS Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements*, revised in February 2012, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-tb1>. For more information regarding National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System data elements, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/ncands>.

Characteristics of Children Waiting for Adoption on 9/30 (AFCARS)	
Total waiting children	AFCARS Foster Care File: 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
Characteristics of Children Adopted (AFCARS)	
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
Outcome 1. Reduce Recurrence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (NCANDS)	
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
Outcome 2. Reduce the Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (NCANDS and AFCARS)	
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, and 127, Perpetrator Relationship
Outcome 3. Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care (AFCARS)	
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
Outcome 4. Reduce Time to Reunification Without Increasing Reentry (AFCARS)	
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
Outcome 5. Reduce Time in Foster Care to Adoption (AFCARS)	
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
Outcome 6. Increase Placement Stability (AFCARS)	
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
Outcome 7. Reduce Placement of Young Children in Group Homes or Institutions (AFCARS)	
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 2019: Summary of Key Findings

The following are key findings from *Child Maltreatment 2019*. 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 2019* report is available on the Children’s Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2019>.

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 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) (P.L. 100–294), as amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111–320), retained the existing definition of child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum, the following:

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.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (P.L. 114–22) added a requirement to include sex trafficking victims in the definition of child abuse and neglect

What is NCANDS?

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort that collects and analyzes 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 data are collected and analyzed by the Children’s Bureau within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families of the HHS Administration for Children and Families.

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. *Child Maltreatment 2019* data is the 30th issuance of this annual publication.

How are the data used?

NCANDS data are used for the Child Maltreatment report series. In addition, the data are a critical source of information for many publications, reports, and activities of the federal government and other groups. For example, NCANDS data are used in the annual Child Welfare Outcomes Reports to Congress. More information about these reports and programs are available on the Children’s Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb>.

What data are collected?

Once an allegation (called a referral) of abuse and neglect is received by a CPS agency, it is either screened in for a response by CPS or 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 (meaning individual child record data) include information about the characteristics of screened-in referrals (reports) of abuse and neglect made to CPS agencies, the children involved, the types of maltreatment they suffered, the dispositions of the CPS responses, the risk factors of the child and the 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 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>. If you have questions or require additional information about this report, contact Child Welfare Information Gateway at info@childwelfare.gov or 1-800-394-3366. Restricted-use files of NCANDS data are archived at the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) at Cornell University (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>). Researchers 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?

For 2019¹, CPS agencies across the country received an estimated 4.4 million referrals alleging the maltreatment of approximately 7.9 million children. The national rate of screened-in referrals (reports) was 32.2 per 1,000 children in the national population. Among the 45 states that reported both screened-in and screened-out referrals, 54.5 percent of referrals were screened in, and 45.5 percent were screened out.

Who reported child maltreatment?

For 2019, professionals submitted 68.6 percent of reports alleging child abuse and neglect. A professional is a person who had contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of his or her job. This includes teachers, police officers, lawyers, and social services staff. The highest percentages of reports were from education personnel (21.0 percent), legal and law enforcement personnel (19.1 percent), and medical personnel (11.0 percent).

Nonprofessionals—including friends, neighbors, and relatives—submitted fewer than one-fifth (15.7 percent) of reports. Unclassified sources submitted the remaining reports (15.7 percent). Unclassified reports include those from anonymous, "other," and unknown report sources. States use the code "other" for any report source that does not have an NCANDS designated code. See appendix D in Child Maltreatment 2019 for additional information provided by the states as to what is included in "other."

¹ Data for Child Maltreatment 2019 reported here are for federal fiscal year 2019.

Who were the child victims?

For 2019, there were nationally approximately 656,000 victims of child abuse and neglect. The victim rate was 8.9 victims per 1,000 children in the population. Victim demographics included the following:

- Children in their first year of life had the highest rate of victimization: 25.7 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.
- The victimization rate for girls was 9.4 per 1,000 girls in the population, and the victimization rate for boys was 8.4 per 1,000 boys in the population.
- American Indian or Alaska Native children had the highest rate of victimization (14.8 per 1,000 children in the population of the same race or ethnicity). African-American children had the second highest rate (13.7 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity).

What were the most common types of maltreatment?

The type of abuse and neglect suffered by victims may be analyzed multiple ways. The two analyses presented in Child Maltreatment 2019 answer different, but equally important, questions about maltreatment:

- Counting categories: In this method, a victim is counted once for each substantiated maltreatment type—but only a maximum of once per type. For 2019, 74.9 percent of victims were neglected, 17.5 percent were physically abused, and 9.3 percent were sexually abused. This answers the question of how many different types (categories) of maltreatment victims suffered.
- Counting single types: In this method, the focus is on those victims who suffered a single type of maltreatment. Any victim who had two or more substantiated maltreatment types are counted in the multiple maltreatment type category. For 2019, 84.5 percent of victims suffered from a single maltreatment type. Approximately three-fifths (61.0 percent) of all victims were neglected only, 10.3 percent were physically abused only, and 7.2 percent were sexually abused only. This answers the question of how many victims suffered a single type of maltreatment only and what those were.

How many children died from abuse or neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For 2019, an estimated 1,840 children died nationally from abuse or neglect, a rate of 2.50 per 100,000 children in the population. The following is additional information about children who died from abuse or neglect:

- The youngest children were the most vulnerable to maltreatment, with 45.4 percent of child fatalities occurring among children younger than 1 year. The fatality rate for this age group was 22.94 per 100,000 children in the population of the same age.
- Boys had a higher child fatality rate—2.98 per 100,000 boys in the population— compared with girls—2.20 per 100,000 girls in the population.
- The rate of African-American child fatalities (5.06 per 100,000 African-American children) was 2.3 times greater than the rate for White children (2.18 per 100,000 White children) and 2.7 times greater than the rate for Hispanic children (1.89 per 100,000 Hispanic children).

Who abused or neglected children?

A perpetrator is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child. Fifty-two states reported 525,319 perpetrators. An analyses of the case-level data showed the following:

- More than four-fifths (83.0 percent) of perpetrators were between the ages of 18 and 44 years old.
- More than one-half (53.0 percent) of perpetrators were female, and 46.1 percent of perpetrators were male.
- The three largest percentages of perpetrators were White (48.9 percent), African American (21.1 percent), and Hispanic (19.7 percent).
- The majority (77.5 percent) of perpetrators were a parent to their victim.

Who received services?

CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in their homes and while the children are in foster care. They may provide services to prevent future instances of child maltreatment or remedy conditions that brought the children and their family to the attention of the agency. The following provides information about services provided during 2019:

- Forty-seven states reported that approximately 1.9 million children received prevention services.
- Approximately 1.3 million children received postresponse services from a CPS agency.
- Approximately three-fifths (60.8 percent) of victims and more than one-quarter (27.7 percent) of nonvictims received postresponse services.

Appendix F

The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY 2019 Estimates¹ as of June 23, 2020 - No.27

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2019 data²

Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	421,418	430,101	436,656	435,031	423,997
Number entered foster care during the FY	268,860	273,332	270,081	262,791	251,359
Number exited foster care during the FY	242,051	250,500	248,386	251,161	248,669
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	663,406	680,433	685,007	686,151	672,594
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	109,776	116,391	123,450	125,285	122,216
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	53,536	57,176	59,469	62,997	66,035
Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated as of the last day of the FY	62,230	65,447	69,724	71,480	71,335

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2019 N 423,997

Age as of September 30th			Years		
Mean			8.4		
Median			7.7		
Age as of September 30th		Percent	Number		
Less than 1 Year		7%	30,626		
1 Year		9%	36,425		
2 Years		8%	31,949		
3 Years		7%	28,056		
4 Years		6%	25,430		
5 Years		5%	23,026		
6 Years		5%	21,427		
7 Years		5%	20,096		
8 Years		5%	19,076		
9 Years		4%	18,232		
10 Years		4%	18,114		
11 Years		4%	18,156		
12 Years		4%	17,853		
13 Years		4%	18,155		
14 Years		4%	18,844		
15 Years		5%	20,429		
16 Years		5%	22,453		
17 Years		5%	22,849		
18 Years		1%	5,829		
19 Years		1%	3,743		
20 Years		1%	3,093		

Sex		Percent	Number
Male		52%	218,415
Female		48%	205,523
Most Recent Placement Setting		Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home		4%	17,933
Foster Family Home (Relative)		32%	133,405
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)		46%	195,352
Group Home		4%	17,991
Institution		6%	25,832
Supervised Independent Living		2%	7,924
Runaway		1%	4,115
Trial Home Visit		5%	20,337
Case Plan Goal		Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)		55%	226,724
Live with Other Relative(s)		3%	13,873
Adoption		28%	113,950
Long Term Foster Care		2%	7,398
Emancipation		4%	16,880
Guardianship		4%	16,095
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established		4%	17,915

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 23, 2020 are included in this report. The Department has requested Puerto Rico resubmit their AFCARS data; therefore, PR data are excluded from this Report, including in the "Numbers at a Glance" counts. 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/Alaska Native	2%	10,152
Asian	1%	2,179
Black or African American	23%	97,142
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1,135
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	87,625
White	44%	185,825
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	6,148
Two or More Races	8%	32,284

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

Sex	Months	
Mean	19.6	
Median	13.3	
Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	21,145
1 - 5 Months	21%	90,922
6 - 11 Months	20%	83,617
12 - 17 Months	16%	66,290
18 - 23 Months	11%	45,400
24 - 29 Months	8%	33,317
30 - 35 Months	5%	21,750
3 - 4 Years	9%	39,910
5 Years or More	5%	21,646

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2019 N 251,359

Age at Entry	Years	
Mean	7.2	
Median	6.3	
Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	19%	47,147
1 Year	7%	18,199
2 Years	6%	16,120
3 Years	6%	14,702
4 Years	5%	13,534
5 Years	5%	12,576
6 Years	5%	11,738
7 Years	4%	10,948
8 Years	4%	10,234
9 Years	4%	10,047
10 Years	4%	9,764
11 Years	4%	9,739
12 Years	4%	10,022
13 Years	4%	10,319
14 Years	4%	11,065
15 Years	5%	11,934
16 Years	5%	11,653
17 Years	3%	8,256
18 Years	1%	1,967
19 Years	0%	880
20 Years	0%	488

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,596
Asian	1%	1,617
Black or African American	21%	53,089
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	774
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,780
White	46%	114,462
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,730
Two or More Races	7%	18,055

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

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	63%	158,258
Drug Abuse (Parent)	34%	86,694
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	34,594
Physical Abuse	13%	32,008
Housing	10%	25,658
Child Behavior Problem	8%	20,871
Parent Incarceration	7%	17,669
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	5%	13,637
Abandonment	5%	11,424
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,782
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	5,500
Child Disability	2%	3,969
Relinquishment	1%	2,350
Parent Death	1%	2,141
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	991

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 2019 N 248,669

Age at Exit	Years
Mean	8.6
Median	7.6

Age at Exit	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	10,681
1 Year	9%	20,979
2 Years	9%	21,454
3 Years	8%	18,508
4 Years	7%	16,236
5 Years	6%	14,632
6 Years	5%	13,389
7 Years	5%	12,126
8 Years	5%	11,521
9 Years	4%	10,970
10 Years	4%	10,494
11 Years	4%	9,910
12 Years	4%	9,218
13 Years	4%	8,987
14 Years	4%	8,884
15 Years	4%	9,149
16 Years	4%	9,864
17 Years	4%	9,152
18 Years	7%	17,563
19 Years	1%	1,692
20 Years	0%	1,210

Time in Care	Months
Mean	20.0
Median	15.5

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	8%	20,195
1 - 5 Months	14%	34,586
6 - 11 Months	18%	45,368
12 - 17 Months	17%	41,154
18 - 23 Months	13%	32,414
24 - 29 Months	10%	23,600
30 - 35 Months	6%	15,883
3 - 4 Years	10%	25,801
5 Years or More	4%	9,368

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,549
Asian	1%	1,480
Black or African American	21%	52,099
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	632
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,550
White	46%	114,978
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,459
Two or More Races	7%	18,135

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

Reason for Discharge	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	47%	117,010
Living with Other Relative(s)	6%	15,422
Adoption	26%	64,415
Emancipation	8%	20,445
Guardianship	11%	26,103
Transfer to Another Agency	1%	2,726
Runaway	0%	608
Death of Child	0%	385

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2019 N 122,216

Age as of September 30th			Age at Entry into Foster Care		
Years			Years		
Mean			5.2		
Median			4.3		
Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,390	Less than 1 Year	26%	31,200
1 Year	10%	11,646	1 Year	8%	9,842
2 Years	9%	11,245	2 Years	7%	8,924
3 Years	8%	9,539	3 Years	7%	8,060
4 Years	7%	8,491	4 Years	6%	7,689
5 Years	6%	7,668	5 Years	6%	7,293
6 Years	6%	7,033	6 Years	6%	7,055
7 Years	5%	6,623	7 Years	6%	6,745
8 Years	5%	6,281	8 Years	5%	6,308
9 Years	5%	6,105	9 Years	5%	5,992
10 Years	5%	6,086	10 Years	4%	5,437
11 Years	5%	6,060	11 Years	4%	4,916
12 Years	5%	5,871	12 Years	4%	4,293
13 Years	5%	5,686	13 Years	3%	3,598
14 Years	5%	5,518	14 Years	2%	2,568
15 Years	4%	5,443	15 Years	1%	1,546
16 Years	4%	4,489	16 Years	1%	638
17 Years	3%	3,642	17 Years	0%	91
Placement Type	Percent	Number	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	13%	15,782	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,287
Foster Family Home (Relative)	25%	30,781	Asian	0%	487
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	53%	64,067	Black or African American	22%	26,378
Group Home	3%	3,896	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	251
Institution	5%	6,258	Hispanic (of any race)	22%	26,815
Supervised Independent Living	0%	108	White	44%	54,065
Runaway	0%	529	Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,371
Trial Home Visit	1%	623	Two or More Races	8%	10,291
Sex	Percent	Number	NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.		
Male	52%	64,082			
Female	48%	58,129	Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=71,335), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2019		
Time in Care	Months		Time Since TPR	Months	
Male	31.2		Mean	17.7	
Female	25.6		Median	9.0	
Time in Care	Percent	Number			
Less than 1 Month	0%	504			
1 - 5 Months	3%	4,115			
6 - 11 Months	9%	10,918			
12 - 17 Months	16%	19,863			
18 - 23 Months	17%	20,220			
24 - 29 Months	15%	18,115			
30 - 35 Months	10%	12,542			
3 - 4 Years	20%	24,406			
5 Years or More	9%	11,533			

³ 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.

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2019⁴ N 66,035

Age at Adoption	Years	
Mean	6.4	
Median	5.2	
Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,307
1 Year	12%	7,903
2 Years	14%	9,378
3 Years	11%	7,242
4 Years	9%	6,044
5 Years	8%	5,007
6 Years	7%	4,349
7 Years	6%	3,823
8 Years	5%	3,373
9 Years	5%	3,088
10 Years	4%	2,886
11 Years	4%	2,623
12 Years	3%	2,236
13 Years	3%	1,908
14 Years	2%	1,485
15 Years	2%	1,187
16 Years	2%	1,144
17 Years	1%	931
18 Years	0%	88
19 Years	0%	18
20 Years	0%	6
Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	44,223
Unmarried Couple	3%	2,232
Single Female	26%	16,817
Single Male	3%	2,220
Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	44,223
Unmarried Couple	3%	2,232
Single Female	26%	16,817
Single Male	3%	2,220
Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	11%	7,242
Foster Parent	52%	33,357
Stepparent	0%	93
Other Relative	36%	23,202

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Months	
Mean	11.8	
Median	8.9	
Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	3%	1,736
1 - 5 Months	28%	18,316
6 - 11 Months	35%	22,503
12 - 17 Months	17%	11,204
18 - 23 Months	8%	5,110
24 - 29 Months	4%	2,454
30 - 35 Months	2%	1,330
3 - 4 Years	2%	1,603
5 Years or More	1%	559
Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,107
Asian	0%	266
Black or African American	18%	11,663
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	118
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	13,494
White	50%	32,835
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	782
Two or More Races	9%	5,707
NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.		
Sex	Percent	Number
Male	51%	33,627
Female	49%	32,394
Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Yes	93%	61,434
No	7%	4,555

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.

FY 2019 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

After the release of the FY 2016 AFCARS Report, the Children's Bureau brought to the attention of the reader our continuing efforts to address AFCARS data quality and highlighted the issue of "dropped cases" (i.e., cases that appear in one six-month AFCARS submission without a date of discharge and do not appear in the subsequent six-month submission). The following link's "Technical Discussion" tab provides a more detailed description of the dropped cases issue:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>

Early in our efforts to understand the dropped cases issue, it was understood that the majority fell into a category of those exiting care. However, more recent analyses include a category of instances in which record numbers change (i.e., child records undergo a merge process; hence, the child's record is in the subsequent submission, but with a different record number). The records merge process typically happens when a child's information exists in the State's information system, but the child is inadvertently assigned a new record number, sometimes due to a re-entry into care. We do not believe the two aforementioned categories account for all dropped cases and will continue to work toward addressing the issue.

We have historically addressed the dropped cases by excluding these records from our AFCARS estimates, and we believe this has ameliorated most negative effects on the annual estimates.

Although there has been some decrease in the numbers of dropped cases, we have begun formally addressing the issue with each applicable State, beginning with the FY 2017 AFCARS data. To the extent practicable and reasonable, we will attempt to address prior years' data. Thus, there may be some differences between historical numbers presented in this report compared to previous reports.

Appendix G

Data-Quality Criteria

In the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, two separate national medians are computed for each outcome measure. The following summarizes the data-quality checks performed for each state's data for each fiscal year (FY). In the 2019 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2019 only. In the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all relevant FYs (2015–2019).

Criteria: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) IDs

Description: Percentage of records that do not match for a given record number in the next 6-month period

Denominator: Number of children reported in the first 6-month file for the FY

Numerator: Number of children with AFCARS IDs that do not match in the next 6-month file for the FY

Threshold: 50 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1
- Calculations for entry rate, children in care, entries, exits, children waiting for adoption, and children adopted

Criteria: Dropped records

Description: Record is missing a date of discharge, suggesting the child is still in care but a record for this same child in the next 6-month period does not exist

Denominator: Number of children reported in the first 6-month file for the FY

Numerator: Number of children reported without discharge dates in the first 6-month file for the FY who do not appear in the subsequent 6-month file for the FY

Threshold: 10 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1
- Calculations for entry rate, children in care, entries, exits, children waiting for adoption, and children adopted

Criteria: Missing child disability status

Description: Percentage of records missing data for child disability status

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for their disability status

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 3.2

Criteria: Missing date of birth

Description: Percentage of records with a missing date of birth

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing their date of birth

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.3 and 7.1

Criteria: Missing date of latest removal

Description: Percentage of records with a missing date of latest removal

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing the date of latest removal

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1

Criteria: Missing discharge reason

Description: Percentage of records where the date of discharge from the most recent foster care episode exists but the reason for discharge is missing

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of records where the date of discharge exists but the discharge reason is missing

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, and 5.1

Criteria: Missing number of placement settings

Description: Percentage of records with a missing number of placement settings

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing the number of placement settings

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 6.1

Criteria: Missing current placement setting

Description: Percentage of records missing the current placement setting

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for their current placement setting

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 7.1

Criteria: Missing current placement setting date

Description: Percentage of records missing the date for the current placement setting

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for the date of their current placement setting

Threshold: 15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 6.1 and 7.1

Criteria: Missing data on perpetrator relationship if 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship

Description: Percentage of records that do not have perpetrator relationship data and at least 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship to the child

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of cases that are missing perpetrator relationship data if at least 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship to the child

Threshold: 25 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 2.1