



# Child Welfare Outcomes 2018

## 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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<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cwo-2018>

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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).<sup>1</sup> ASFA created Section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act) to require HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.<sup>2</sup> *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998* was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018*, is the 19th 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.<sup>3</sup> 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

It is important to note that 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 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 call for considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future.

In addition to reporting on state performance in these 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-related data collections—the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

## CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report presents data on child welfare-related contextual factors relevant to understanding and interpreting state performance on the outcome measures. The following is a summary of the 2018 data for these contextual factors.<sup>4</sup>

### *Foster care information overview*

- Nationally, there were approximately 437,000 children in foster care on the last day of 2018. During that year, an estimated 263,000 children entered foster care, and 250,000 children exited foster care. Among the states, the foster care entry rate ranged from 1.6 children per 1,000 in a state's population to 14.0 children per 1,000 in a state's population.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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/parenting foster youth, and the parent/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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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 AFCARS system does not have an indicator to distinguish which states are reporting Tribal information or an identifier for Tribal children.

<sup>4</sup> 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 2018.

<sup>5</sup> The foster care entry rate is calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000.

- For the first time since 2011 the number of children in foster care on the last day has decreased, but the decrease from 2017 to 2018 was less than 1 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- Of the children that entered foster care in 2018, approximately one quarter (24 percent) entered with neglect reported as the only reason for removal. Sixteen percent of children entering had physical abuse as the only reported reason associated with removal.

### **Characteristics of child victims**

- During 2018, approximately 678,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.<sup>7,8</sup> The overall national child victim rate was 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in the population.<sup>9</sup> State child victim rates varied dramatically, ranging from 1.2 child victims per 1,000 children to 22.9 child victims per 1,000 children.<sup>10</sup>

## **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 2014–2018.<sup>11</sup> Change in state performance over time is assessed by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.<sup>12</sup> Consistent with HHS’s 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 meaningful change in performance on the outcome measures occurred. Therefore, for the purposes of the analyses presented in this Report, if the percentage change in performance from 2014 to 2018 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination is that there was “no change” in performance.

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

- In 2018, 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 5.5 percent.
- States with higher child victim rates tended to have higher maltreatment recurrence rates within a 6-month period (Pearson’s  $r=0.57$ ).<sup>13</sup> 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  $r=0.65$ ).
- National performance over time on the recurrence of child maltreatment declined between 2014 (median=4.9 percent) and 2018 (median=5.5 percent), with about as many states (24 states) reporting an improvement in performance as a decline in performance (22 states).

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

- In 2018, the national median performance with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) was 0.26 percent and ranged from 0.00 percent to 1.8 percent.<sup>14</sup>
- Since 2014, the percentage of children who experienced maltreatment while in foster care remained the same at .26 percent in both 2014 and 2018.

### **Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care**

- In 2018, states were mostly successful in achieving permanency (i.e., discharged 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=82.4 percent) and for children who had entered care when they were older than age 12 (measure 3.3, median=63.1 percent).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2009–FY 2018* 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 updated as of August 2019.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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 is rounded to the nearest 1,000.

<sup>9</sup> The national child victim rate is calculated by dividing the total number of child victims (677,529) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS data (73,993,353) and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000. This calculation includes children under the age of 18.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> In this Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure. In the 2018 Range of State Performance tables, national medians are calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2018 only. However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians are calculated only using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2014–2018). This is done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons of medians between years use the latter calculation. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

<sup>12</sup> Percentage change is 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 89.0 percent in 2014 and 90.3 percent in 2018, and so the resulting increase is 1.5 percent  $\{[(90.3-89.0)/89.0] \times 100=1.5\}$ .

<sup>13</sup> 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  $+1$ .

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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*, revised in February 2012, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-tb2>.

- 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) has declined 21.0 percent since 2014, with 75 percent of states demonstrating improved performance on this measure.

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

- In 43 states (84 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 63.6 percent. National performance over time has declined consistently over the past 5 years, exhibiting an overall decrease of 7.8 percent since 2014.
- States continued to improve on minimizing reentry into foster care (measure 4.2) within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. Of all children who entered foster care during 2018, a median of 7.1 percent had reentered care within 12 months. The national median declined 6.6 percent between 2014 and 2018.

#### ***Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption***

- States continued to struggle with achieving timely adoptions in 2018, with a median of 2.7 percent of children discharged to a finalized adoption within 12 months of the latest removal (measure 5.1a). Additionally, the majority of states (76 percent) declined in performance between 2014 and 2018.
- For adoptions occurring at least 12 months, but less than 24 months from entry into foster care (measure 5.1b), national performance declined by 3.7 percent between 2014 and 2018 with more than half (53 percent) of states demonstrating a decline in performance.

#### ***Outcome 6: Increase placement stability***

- In 2018, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months achieved placement stability (i.e., having had two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode), with a median performance of 83.5 percent (measure 6.1a).
- States were less successful in achieving 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 65.8 percent, and for children in care at least 24 months (measure 6.1c), it was 41.1 percent.
- Between 2014 and 2018, and particularly over the past 3 years, states showed little change in achieving placement stability for children in care under 24 months. However, for children in care at least 24 months, the national median increased by 17.1 percent—from 35.1 percent to 41.1 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), 3.1 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions in 2018 (measure 7.1).
- Overall, states continued to demonstrate improvement on this measure, decreasing from 3.9 percent in 2014 to 3.1 percent in 2018—a 20.5-percent decline—with 33 states (65 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 has decreased for the first time since 2011. It will be important to monitor this number in future reports to see if this will become a sustained decrease that may be, in part, due to the availability of flexible current prevention funding<sup>16</sup> and implementation efforts.

<sup>16</sup> The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Pub. L. 115–123) was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act). For more information on the FFPSA, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/whats-new>.

- While the national median performance in achieving permanency for all children and for children with a diagnosed disability remains 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 be preventing older youth from achieving permanency.
- Despite reunifications constituting more than half of all exits from foster care, the national performance on the percentage of children exiting to reunification who reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care has declined over the last 5 years, with almost twice as many states demonstrating a decline in performance as opposed to an improvement.
- Achieving timely adoptions is still 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 2014 and 2018. Similarly, over half of the states reported a decline in the proportion of adoptions that occurred between 12 and 24 months from entry.
- It is noteworthy that performance in both reunifications and adoptions appears to be declining, and 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.
- The national percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions has declined since 2014. However, close to one quarter of states (22 percent) showed a decline in performance. It would be useful to determine what specific strategies may assist states that continue to struggle in this area.
- Table 2 displays results of improved and declining performance for each state between 2014 and 2018 across all measures. Six states showed improvement in more than half (8 or more) of the outcome measures with states ranging from improving on 2 to 11 measures. On average, states improved in 5 of the 14 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 to identify which strategies may be associated with improved outcomes. States then may be able to determine whether or not those strategies can be replicated to stem or reverse declining performance in any remaining outcomes.

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 2014 to 2018.

**Table 1. Outcome Measures' Median State Performance, 2014–2018**

Outcome Measures <sup>17</sup>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
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)*	4.9%	5.0%	5.1%	5.2%	5.5%
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)*	0.26%	0.29%	0.20%	0.27%	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)	89.0%	89.4%	89.6%	90.3%	90.3%
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=43)	78.8%	80.1%	82.2%	81.8%	82.4%
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)	64.3%	66.2%	65.3%	64.9%	63.1%
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=51)*	20.0%	18.9%	16.9%	16.7%	15.8%
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)	69.0%	67.8%	66.1%	64.6%	63.6%
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)*	7.6%	7.3%	7.1%	7.3%	7.1%
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)	4.1%	3.3%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%
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)	29.8%	30.8%	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%
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)	86.0%	84.8%	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%
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)	65.4%	63.3%	65.1%	65.8%	65.8%
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)	35.1%	35.9%	39.0%	41.1%	41.1%
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)*	3.9%	3.7%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%

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

**Table 2. State Percent Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2014-2018\***

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	40.9%	-2.7%	2.5%	-7.5%	-3.8%	-28.3%	-3.9%	-20.2%	-28.7%	39.9%	-3.3%	-5.5%	-2.1%	9.8%
Alaska	-12.9%	291.2%	-1.9%	7.9%	-5.3%	-53.2%	-3.7%	33.4%	-100.0%	-50.8%	2.2%	-0.8%	40.9%	-22.9%
Arizona	-3.4%	2.5%	0.8%	-4.5%	0.7%	-12.5%	-12.2%	7.7%	31.3%	-15.4%	0.3%	-0.7%	-2.6%	-26.9%
Arkansas	-9.3%	-29.0%	-1.2%	3.0%	-6.0%	-23.4%	-14.0%	-7.1%	-31.8%	-1.3%	3.2%	6.2%	-6.5%	-43.6%
California	-6.4%	-24.1%	11.1%	14.6%	20.0%	-26.7%	-3.5%	-2.6%	-25.7%	-10.4%	3.6%	8.3%	19.1%	-0.1%
Colorado	14.4%	-67.3%	0.9%	DQ*	-3.2%	-34.7%	7.5%	10.3%	-12.3%	-20.1%	-2.2%	-8.2%	8.8%	-20.1%
Connecticut	3.2%	-96.4%	20.0%	34.3%	-13.0%	44.0%	-5.0%	-20.7%	16.9%	17.0%	-9.5%	-8.8%	15.4%	-68.8%
Delaware	9.6%	0.0%	-10.2%	-15.5%	-26.1%	-65.7%	39.7%	139.1%	65.8%	25.9%	-1.9%	-3.3%	-6.6%	-20.8%
District of Columbia	76.6%	12.9%	6.8%	445.5%	23.1%	-57.4%	-15.3%	-17.5%	-100.0%	56.1%	-9.4%	3.9%	51.1%	124.8%
Florida	-13.0%	-79.2%	0.6%	-2.0%	-4.0%	-33.6%	-11.5%	0.6%	-31.8%	1.0%	-4.8%	-0.9%	24.4%	-15.7%
Georgia	-40.8%	DQ*	-0.6%	-4.0%	-12.4%	-35.0%	-23.4%	-4.9%	-37.9%	-33.0%	4.0%	18.2%	18.0%	-44.9%
Hawaii	-71.9%	-80.4%	0.5%	-1.4%	-3.5%	-36.6%	-8.0%	21.7%	-11.9%	24.0%	-1.9%	12.4%	5.2%	-4.8%
Idaho	4.0%	DQ*	-2.2%	-4.7%	-14.6%	-47.5%	-0.1%	-28.1%	-65.3%	-5.6%	-4.6%	-1.5%	32.9%	7.6%
Illinois	23.1%	19.2%	-1.6%	-14.6%	-12.1%	-39.9%	9.9%	-28.5%	-7.3%	106.8%	29.6%	27.2%	-1.6%	-47.9%
Indiana	-19.5%	144.4%	3.2%	3.5%	14.3%	-2.1%	-3.1%	56.2%	-54.6%	-23.6%	-0.7%	1.6%	17.3%	-24.3%
Iowa	76.2%	91.2%	2.6%	6.3%	-7.5%	10.1%	-1.7%	-38.8%	-45.0%	4.2%	3.6%	16.2%	50.4%	-22.0%
Kansas	130.7%	1.9%	0.6%	0.0%	6.9%	37.0%	-8.2%	-10.3%	-68.5%	-38.4%	-12.2%	-10.2%	3.0%	64.9%
Kentucky	11.9%	DQ*	1.2%	-1.4%	0.8%	-10.7%	0.8%	-20.8%	-19.1%	-26.8%	-2.8%	-4.0%	-6.0%	-22.7%

<sup>17</sup> Data for this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality criteria for all years.

**Table 2. State Percent Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2014-2018\***

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
Louisiana	-26.3%	DQ*	-0.5%	2.7%	-11.7%	-17.3%	-1.4%	-4.5%	-69.6%	-11.2%	-2.3%	-6.8%	10.6%	58.3%
Maine	2.0%	150.1%	0.9%	12.1%	-19.9%	-19.5%	0.7%	13.7%	-51.1%	4.5%	-2.1%	8.2%	11.5%	-45.0%
Maryland	25.6%	46.7%	0.1%	-4.1%	-4.3%	-14.5%	12.5%	-10.2%	-21.7%	-1.4%	-3.4%	-2.7%	6.1%	3.2%
Massachusetts	-16.5%	-3.0%	4.6%	DQ*	-2.4%	-5.5%	-13.8%	23.9%	-29.6%	-59.5%	-9.3%	-19.3%	11.4%	0.8%
Michigan	2.7%	34.9%	0.9%	25.4%	-18.5%	-41.4%	10.9%	24.9%	-48.4%	-15.7%	-2.6%	0.4%	8.2%	58.6%
Minnesota	18.7%	132.7%	1.4%	2.8%	-6.8%	-39.8%	-13.8%	-12.2%	-31.3%	-21.9%	1.0%	7.5%	21.0%	-40.0%
Mississippi	10.8%	18.0%	1.8%	-0.7%	6.5%	88.2%	-25.6%	25.2%	-13.0%	-22.6%	6.5%	11.9%	36.4%	-41.9%
Missouri	-6.1%	2.2%	2.7%	11.2%	5.8%	8.9%	-12.9%	-9.1%	-14.1%	2.0%	-0.7%	2.2%	1.5%	-20.3%
Montana	367.0%	653.1%	0.1%	DQ*	-8.5%	-33.8%	-9.8%	16.0%	-52.2%	-4.9%	0.2%	1.7%	11.7%	-43.5%
Nebraska	-13.6%	-20.3%	10.5%	21.0%	13.2%	97.8%	-3.3%	-8.4%	4.4%	25.7%	0.7%	7.3%	29.7%	68.9%
Nevada	19.0%	-5.5%	1.3%	1.4%	4.5%	3.5%	15.1%	-26.7%	43.6%	-8.4%	3.4%	-2.5%	-11.5%	-9.7%
New Hampshire	82.0%	0.0%	5.8%	DQ*	-1.2%	-0.7%	20.0%	5.3%	0.0%	4.1%	-2.3%	10.5%	29.5%	-16.8%
New Jersey	-27.3%	136.8%	1.1%	11.8%	-2.9%	-11.9%	-3.7%	-13.7%	13.1%	-1.4%	-1.6%	2.3%	-1.8%	-3.3%
New Mexico	-13.3%	158.9%	-1.4%	0.3%	-6.3%	-19.6%	-4.6%	10.4%	-67.2%	-30.4%	-0.2%	11.8%	33.8%	-13.1%
New York	5.1%	186.5%	13.7%	DQ*	28.9%	-56.2%	5.8%	-16.0%	-20.8%	-4.3%	-3.4%	-0.6%	3.8%	53.2%
North Carolina	-35.0%	-16.3%	5.9%	3.2%	18.3%	26.9%	-12.2%	-58.4%	-26.8%	-4.6%	-1.0%	0.6%	-3.2%	-15.8%
North Dakota	-36.0%	66.7%	3.1%	4.5%	-3.4%	84.9%	4.9%	20.1%	-77.8%	-30.4%	-0.9%	3.6%	-26.8%	-55.1%
Ohio	7.9%	7.1%	3.5%	8.4%	3.2%	-30.5%	-4.2%	10.8%	-17.0%	-7.4%	1.3%	2.6%	27.4%	11.8%
Oklahoma	-22.1%	-13.6%	2.1%	8.3%	-1.1%	-21.1%	-7.8%	-11.6%	71.8%	33.1%	5.3%	9.5%	12.0%	-71.8%
Oregon	36.9%	0.2%	0.3%	-16.9%	-3.8%	-21.8%	6.0%	-8.2%	-14.8%	-20.1%	-6.9%	-4.9%	1.4%	-25.1%
Pennsylvania	30.3%	-1.8%	5.5%	DQ*	-1.8%	-47.4%	-2.6%	-10.8%	-25.0%	-18.3%	-0.1%	1.3%	4.3%	-6.0%
Rhode Island	-24.1%	48.8%	5.1%	11.1%	-5.2%	-14.2%	-7.2%	-27.3%	-35.4%	-4.0%	-0.8%	-2.9%	20.4%	-67.0%
South Carolina	136.3%	15.1%	0.0%	DQ*	0.9%	-33.3%	-5.3%	24.3%	-66.1%	-30.7%	-3.9%	-7.7%	2.2%	-55.6%
South Dakota	-6.2%	-19.1%	1.5%	DQ*	-5.1%	-62.7%	-9.8%	-27.2%	14.5%	-23.9%	-2.0%	-2.1%	27.2%	-26.9%
Tennessee	-18.2%	19.6%	-3.5%	-0.9%	-8.2%	-10.1%	7.9%	-15.8%	-5.1%	6.8%	-0.7%	-7.8%	0.9%	17.2%
Texas	-5.9%	-25.9%	1.7%	1.6%	8.5%	-28.3%	10.0%	15.5%	-12.3%	15.4%	-2.2%	-2.8%	-0.5%	-38.3%
Utah	-9.8%	44.5%	3.1%	-33.3%	-0.7%	28.3%	-9.7%	-12.3%	-14.9%	13.6%	8.6%	27.6%	6.6%	-39.5%
Vermont	-57.1%	N/A	6.0%	36.0%	8.3%	-16.8%	-2.9%	1.6%	-59.8%	-48.3%	0.2%	13.0%	43.5%	-28.5%
Virginia	62.0%	-43.9%	-2.3%	-7.9%	-14.0%	-42.5%	-2.4%	78.9%	79.7%	-13.5%	-2.9%	-2.3%	5.7%	17.6%
Washington	21.2%	-59.4%	2.3%	3.9%	11.9%	-13.3%	-6.3%	8.1%	-24.1%	-22.4%	-0.1%	-5.0%	-4.2%	242.3%
West Virginia	243.1%	-76.7%	1.4%	2.0%	0.9%	-82.9%	-4.9%	-25.5%	13.2%	8.8%	2.6%	11.3%	11.9%	-27.3%
Wisconsin	-26.0%	119.0%	0.1%	2.0%	-6.8%	-42.2%	-8.6%	3.5%	-55.3%	-17.9%	1.7%	2.2%	7.4%	-28.0%
Wyoming	-35.7%	347.8%	3.2%	5.1%	6.4%	45.5%	-3.6%	-19.9%	86.7%	-26.3%	-0.1%	9.7%	24.0%	1.7%
Puerto Rico	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*	DQ*

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

## CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES DATA SITE

Additional child welfare-related context data and state data regarding the seven national outcome 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](mailto: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), to require HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.<sup>18,19</sup> The Act has been amended several times to expand child welfare data collection:

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.

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

*Child Welfare Outcomes 1998* was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018*, is the 19th 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.<sup>24</sup> 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
- 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

It is important to note that 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 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 call for considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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/parenting foster youth, and the parents/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>.

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

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

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

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

<sup>24</sup> 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.

## 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's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, the measures are not the same.<sup>25</sup> 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; 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 outcome measures as well as on certain child welfare-related contextual factors. These context data are relevant to understanding and interpreting performance on the outcome measures featured in these Reports. The contextual factors include the following:

- Estimated child population statistics by state, including the total number of children under age of 18 and child poverty data<sup>26</sup>
- 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 child<sup>27</sup>
- The numbers of children in foster care at the end of the fiscal year (FY) and children 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 National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix B for the full list of outcomes and measures.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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 the 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.

<sup>28</sup> 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 2018.

<sup>29</sup> 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/>.

<sup>30</sup> For this Report, AFCARS data were prepared on October 2, 2019; NCANDS data were prepared on October 1, 2019; Census data were prepared on November 22, 2019; and caseworker visits data were prepared on May 21, 2019.

## 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.<sup>31</sup> The data are submitted voluntarily by the states, including the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. NCANDS data are published annually in the Child Maltreatment report series.<sup>32</sup> A summary of the most recent report, *Child Maltreatment 2018*, 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.

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.<sup>33</sup> 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 outcome measures in 2018, 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 outcome 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 2018 Range of State Performance tables, national medians are calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2018 only.<sup>34</sup> However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians are calculated only using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2014–2018). This is 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.

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data show that the number of children in care on the last day of the FY decreased for the first time since 2011

### Percentage change calculations

Change in state performance over time is assessed by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.<sup>35</sup> 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 outcome measures occurred. Therefore, for purposes of the analyses presented in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, if the percentage change in performance from 2014 to 2018 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination is that there was "no change" in performance.

### Correlations

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

<sup>31</sup> 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>.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> See appendix F for AFCARS Report No. 26.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix G for more information on methodology and data-quality thresholds, including reasons state data are excluded from analyses.

<sup>35</sup> Percentage change is 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 89.0 percent in 2014 and 90.3 percent in 2018, and so the resulting increase is 1.5 percent  $\{[(90.3-89.0)/89.0] \times 100=1.5\}$ .

<sup>36</sup> Guilford, J. P. (1956). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- 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, 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, 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 data<sup>37</sup>

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.

<sup>37</sup> 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 outcome 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

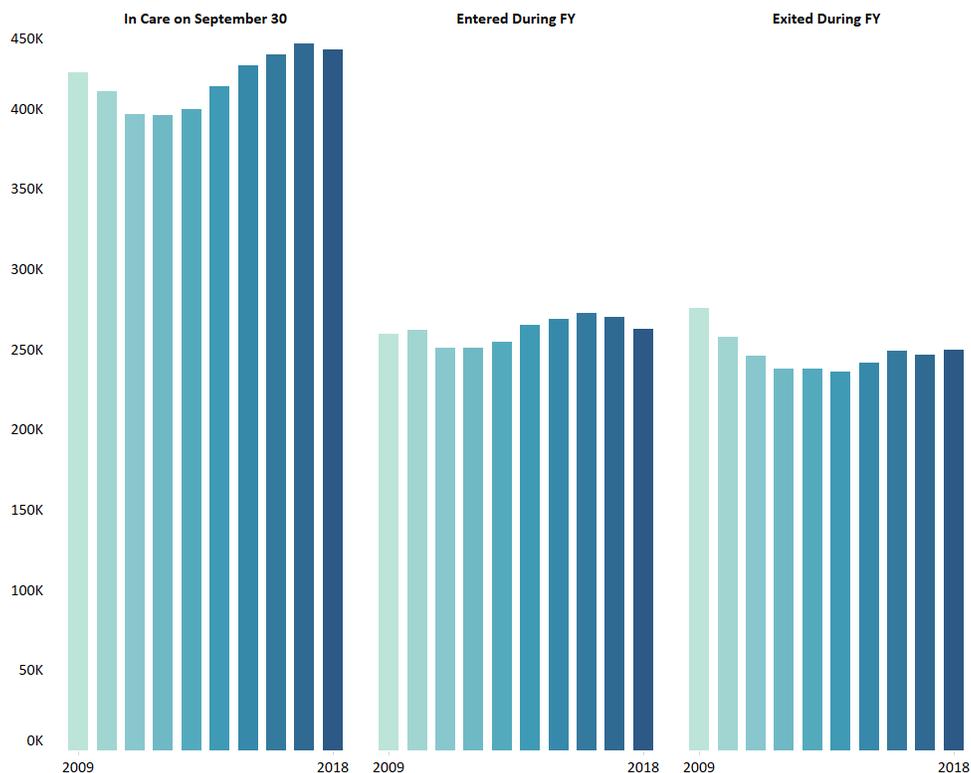
In 2018, the total population of children under the age of 18 was estimated to be 73,399,342. The three states with the largest populations under the age of 18 were California (8,989,955), Texas (7,398,099), and Florida (4,229,081). The three states with the smallest populations under the age of 18 were Vermont (115,973), the District of Columbia (127,494), and Wyoming (134,775).

Nationally, 18.0 percent of children under the age of 18 were estimated to be living in poverty in 2018. Poverty rates for children varied widely across states, ranging from 9.5 percent to 56.9 percent, and 22 states (42 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 2018 (Pearson's  $r=-0.07$ ).<sup>38</sup>

## CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Nationwide, approximately 437,000 children were in foster care on the last day of 2018. Figure I-1 shows this number has decreased for the first time since 2011. The decrease from 2017 to 2018 was less than 1 percent.<sup>39</sup> There was a 1.4-percent increase in 2017 over the previous year, as compared to 2.3 percent in 2016, 3.1 percent in 2015, and 3.5 percent in 2014.

Figure I-1. Number of Children in Care, 2009–2018 (N=52)



<sup>38</sup> For example, see Eckenrode, J., Smith, E. G., McCarthy, M. E., & Dineen, M. (2014). Income inequality and child maltreatment in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 133(3), 454–461. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-1707

<sup>39</sup> The *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2009–FY 2018* data were used for this section of the Report, including Figure I-1, and are current as of August 2019. 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>.

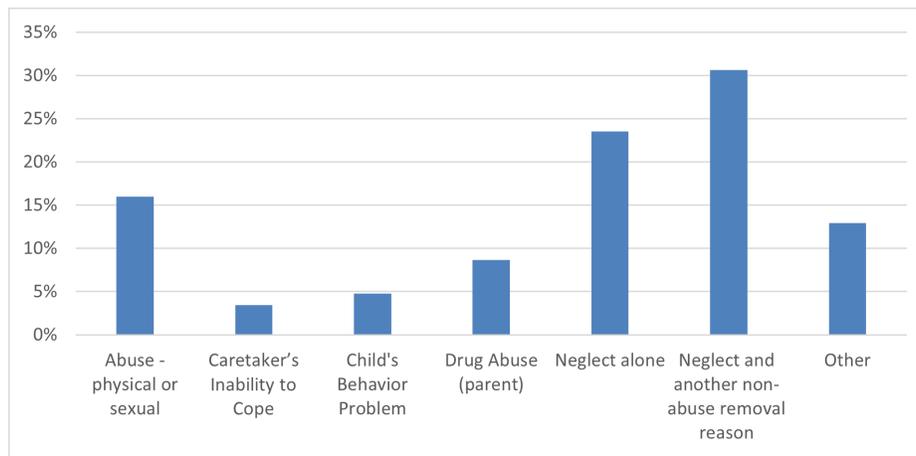
Of the children in foster care on the last day of FY 2018, about half (51.7 percent) were age 7 or younger, and 13.6 percent were age 16 or older. Nationally, the race and ethnicity of children in care were 44.2 percent White, 22.6 percent Black or African-American, 20.7 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7.5 percent two or more races, 2.4 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.5 percent Asian, and 0.2 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Additional data regarding the age, race, and ethnicity for children in care on the first and last day 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/>.

## ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE

### *Circumstances Associated with Removal*

Approximately 263,000 children entered foster care during 2018, the majority of whom had a reason for removal that included neglect (either alone or in combination with another reason other than physical or sexual abuse). Nine percent of children entering were reported with parental drug use as the only reason associated with removal.

**Figure I-2. Circumstances Associated with Removal, 2018**



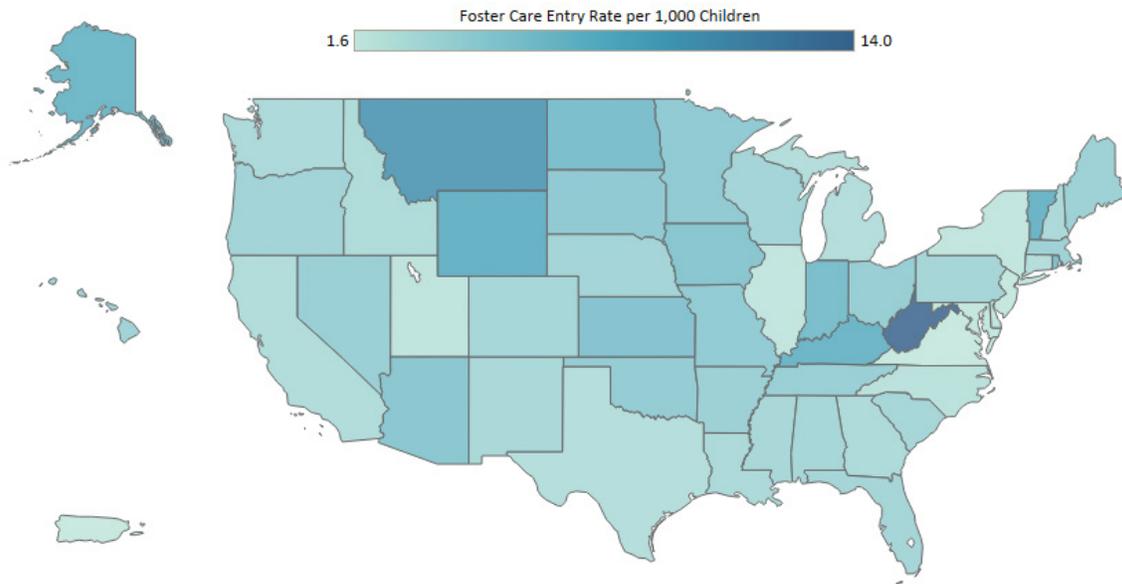
### *Entry Rates*

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).<sup>40</sup> The foster care child entry rate in 2018 ranged from 1.6 children (Virginia) to 13.9 children (West Virginia) per 1,000 in the population. Over the past 5 years, the median entry rate remained relatively flat, with only a slight increase from 3.8 to 3.9 children per 1,000 in the population from 2014 to 2018.

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 moderate correlation between foster care entry rates and child victim rates in 2018 (Pearson's  $r=0.41$ ).

<sup>40</sup> The foster care entry rate is calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000.

**Figure I-3. Map of Foster Care Entry Rates by State, 2018 (N=52)**



### CHILDREN WAITING FOR ADOPTION AND CHILDREN ADOPTED

Just over 121,000 children and youth were identified as waiting for adoption at the start of FY 2018.<sup>41</sup> Of that group, nearly 51,000, or 42 percent, had been placed in an adoptive home by the end of the FY. The range in performance across the states varied widely with a high of 70 percent to a low of 22 percent. Table I-1 shows the number of children waiting for adoption and the number of children adopted within 6 months and within 1 year for 2018.

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., dates of 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 66,000 children and youth for whom the process of establishing “legal freedom” (i.e., terminating parental rights) had occurred during 2017. By the end of 2018, 61 percent of those children were discharged to adoption within one year of attaining legal freedom. State percentages ranged from 34 percent to 94 percent (see Figure I-11).

Lastly, as in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the number of children adopted in a given FY is provided as context. In 2018, 63,000 children and youth were adopted, a 6.0 percent increase over the 59,000 children adopted in 2017.

### 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/>.

<sup>41</sup> 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, 2018 (N=52)

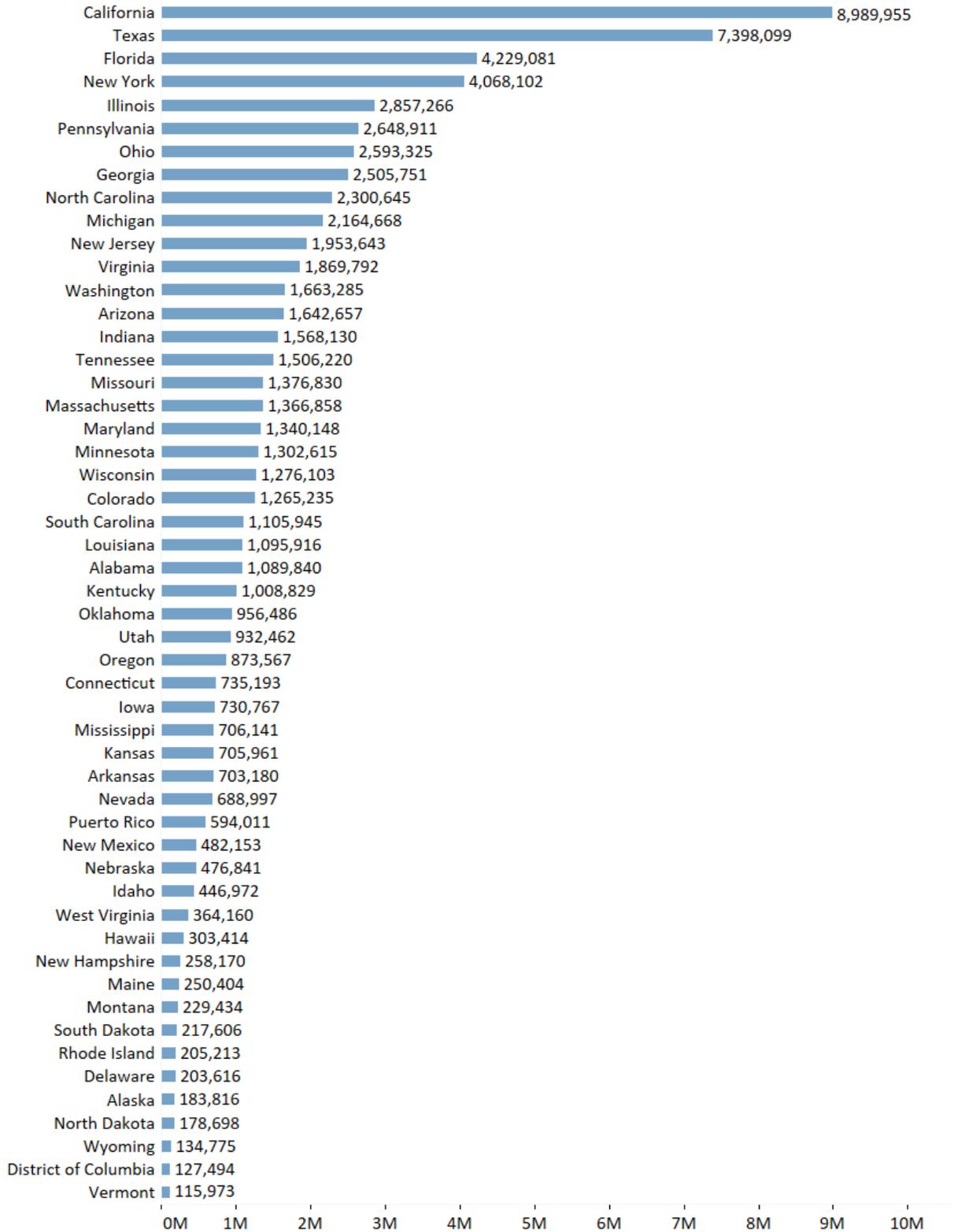


Figure I-5. Estimated Proportion of Child Population Living in Poverty, 2018 (N=52)

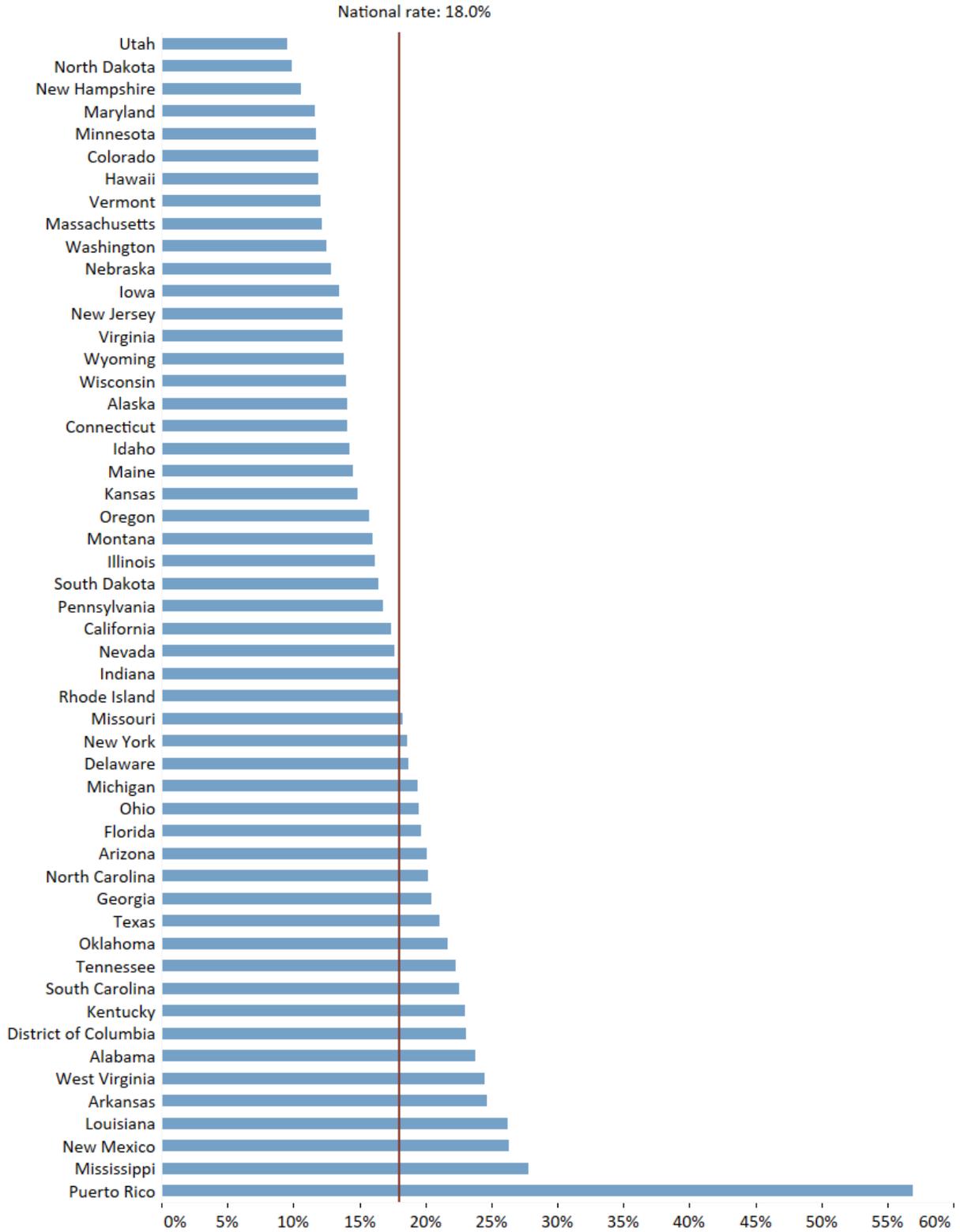


Figure I-6. Number of Children in Foster Care on the First Day of the FY (10/1), 2018 (N=51)\*

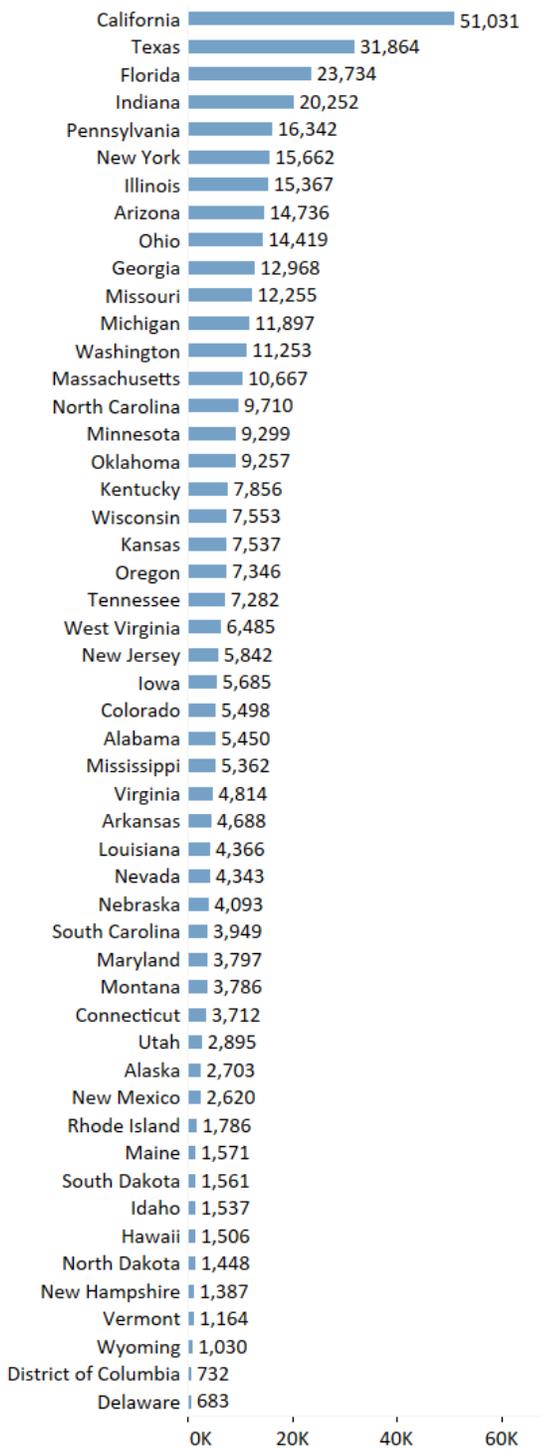
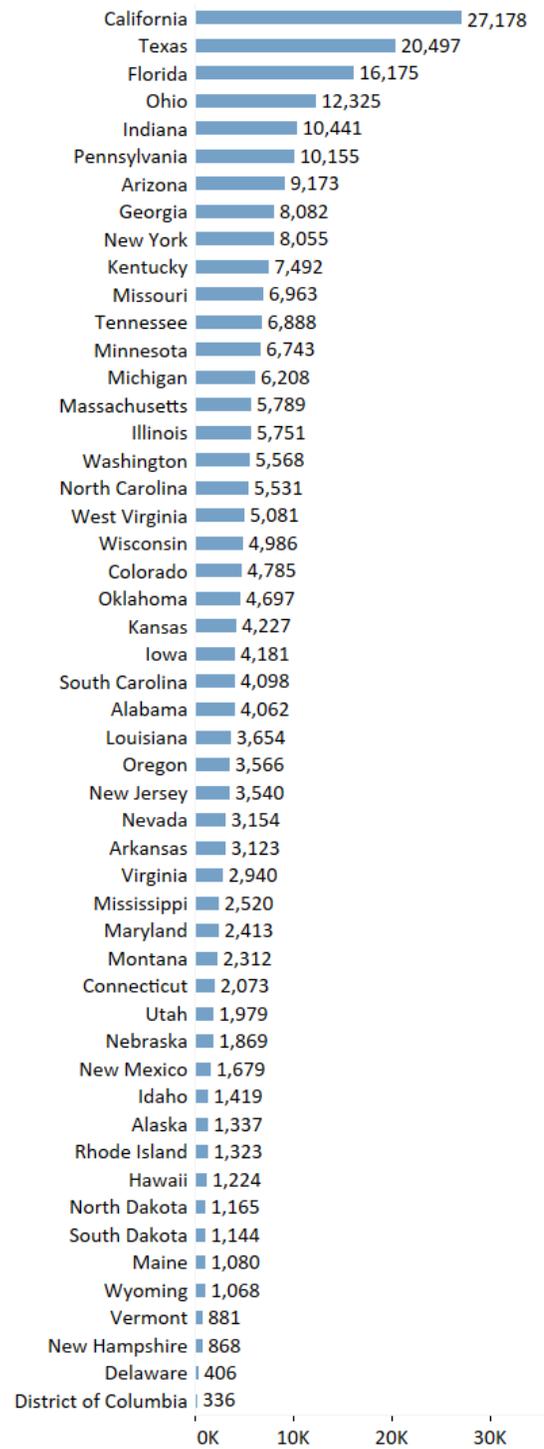
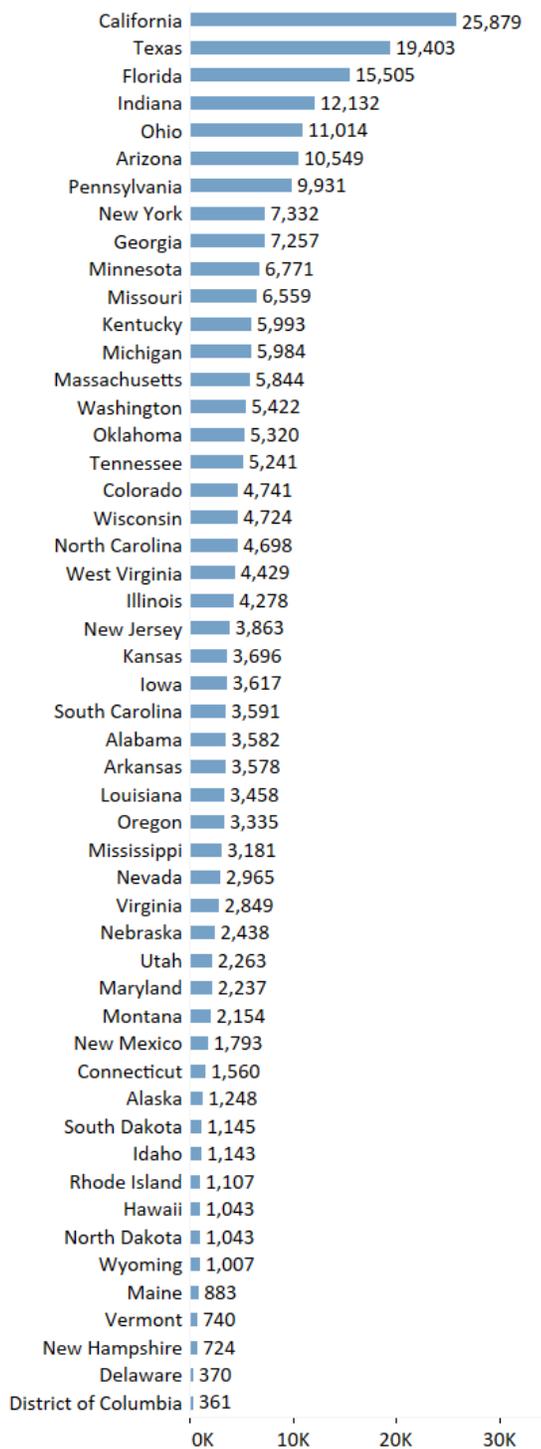


Figure I-7. Number of Children Entering Foster Care in the FY, 2018 (N=51)\*

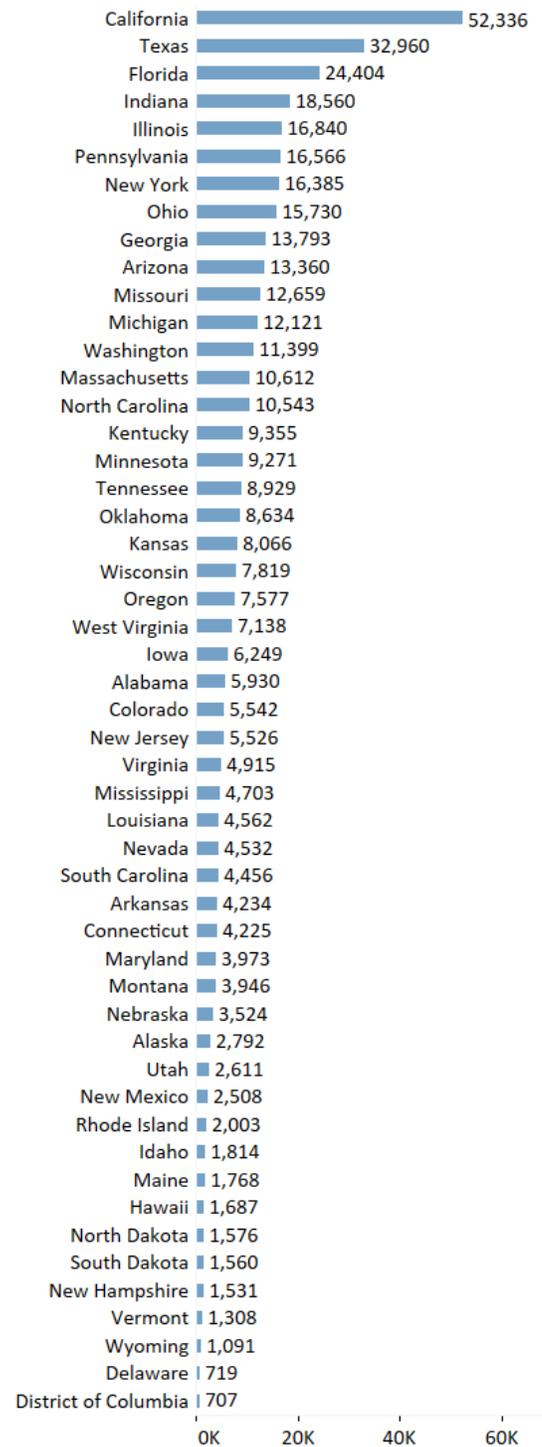


\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Figure I-8. Number of Children Exiting Foster Care in the FY, 2018 (N=51)\***

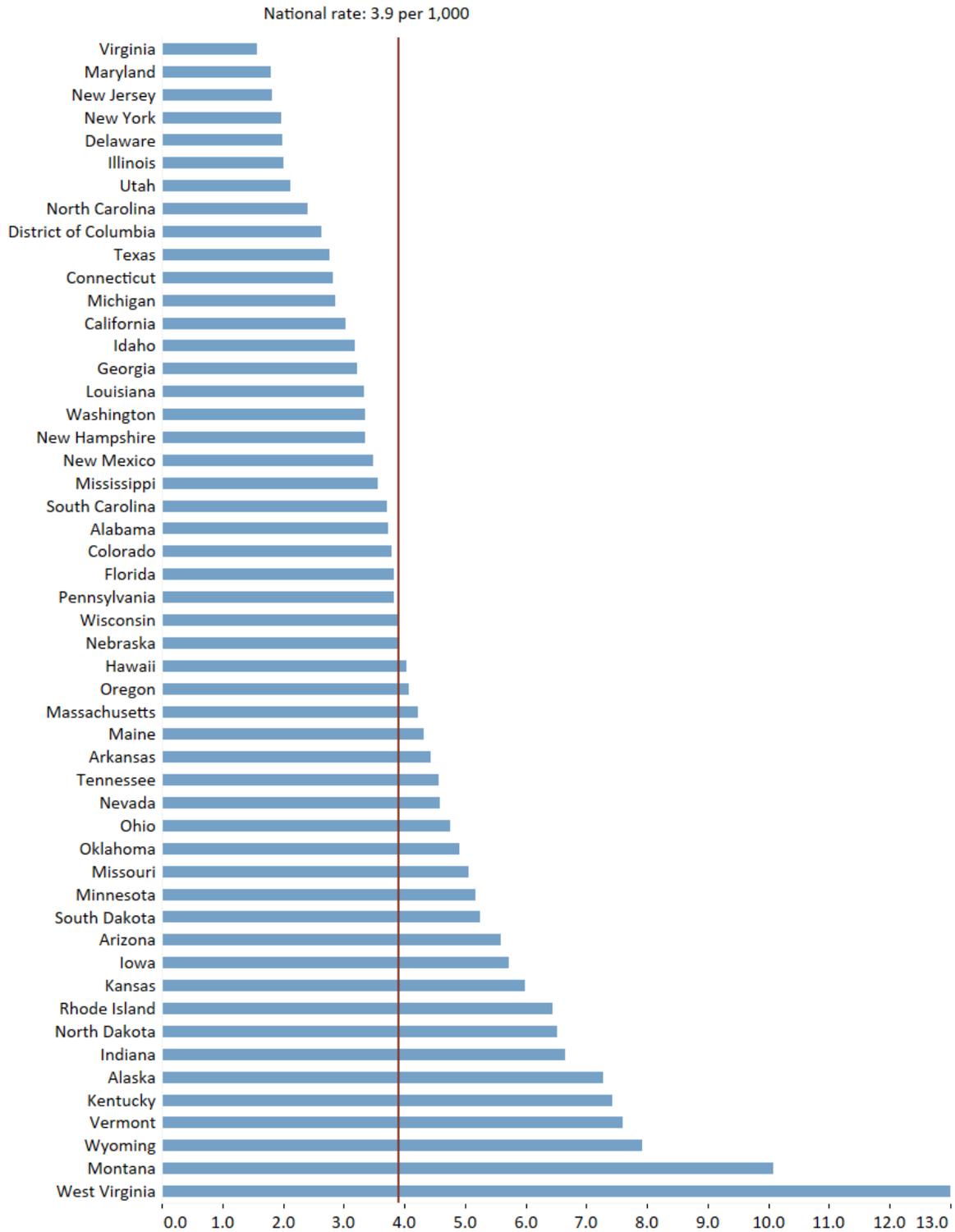


**Figure I-9. Number of Children in Foster Care on the Last Day of the FY (9/30), 2018 (N=51)\***



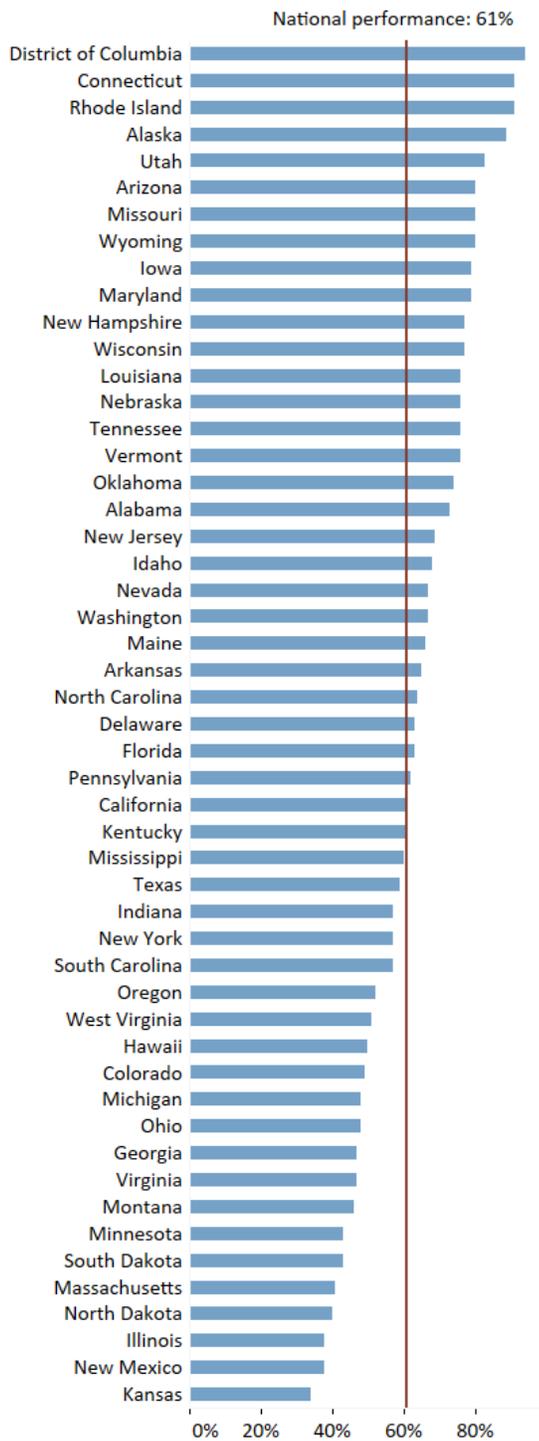
\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I-10. Foster Care Entry Rate per 1,000 Children, 2018 (N=51)\*

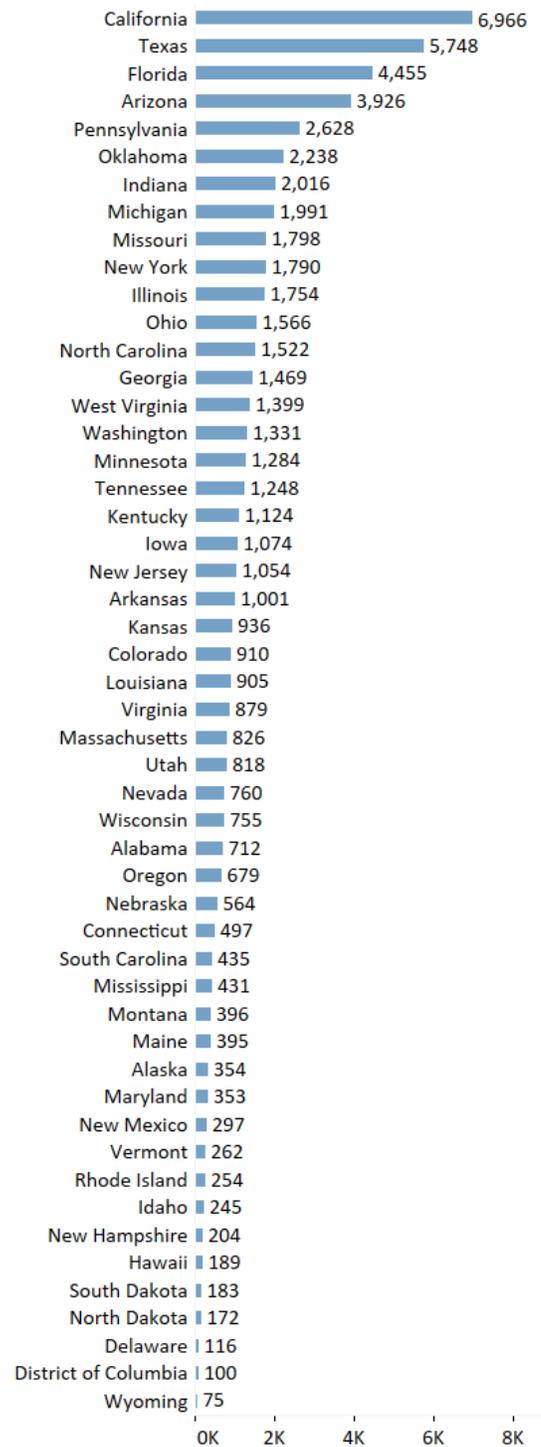


\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Figure I–11. Percentage of Children Adopted Within 12 Months of Legal Freedom Attained in FY 2017 (N=51)\***



**Figure I–12. Number of Children Adopted, 2018 (N=51)\***



\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Table I–1. Number of Waiting Children Adopted, 2018 (N=51)\***

State	Total waiting on first day of FFY 2018 (10/1/2017)	Within six months, by 3/31/2018	Within 12 months, by 9/30/2018	Within six months, by 3/31/2018	Within 12 months, by 9/30/2018
Alabama	1,255	296	562	23.6%	44.8%
Alaska	1,029	167	315	16.2%	30.6%
Arizona	4,736	1,861	3,056	39.3%	64.5%
Arkansas	1,312	438	657	33.4%	50.1%
California	14,576	3,196	6,086	21.9%	41.8%
Colorado	880	246	421	28.0%	47.8%
Connecticut	1,065	263	441	24.7%	41.4%
Delaware	263	59	95	22.4%	36.1%
District of Columbia	190	47	85	24.7%	44.7%
Florida	7,448	1,915	3,309	25.7%	44.4%
Georgia	3,398	579	982	17.0%	28.9%
Hawaii	224	53	93	23.7%	41.5%
Idaho	277	114	163	41.2%	58.8%
Illinois	2,833	719	1,441	25.4%	50.9%
Indiana	4,399	948	1,728	21.6%	39.3%
Iowa	1,097	519	766	47.3%	69.8%
Kansas	2,564	394	866	15.4%	33.8%
Kentucky	2,690	551	1,053	20.5%	39.1%
Louisiana	1,377	366	684	26.6%	49.7%
Maine	569	190	321	33.4%	56.4%
Maryland	476	153	244	32.1%	51.3%
Massachusetts	3,652	405	806	11.1%	22.1%
Michigan	3,593	952	1,692	26.5%	47.1%
Minnesota	1,980	541	1,004	27.3%	50.7%
Mississippi	1,755	303	559	17.3%	31.9%
Missouri	2,758	727	1,266	26.4%	45.9%
Montana	829	161	331	19.4%	39.9%
Nebraska	768	251	399	32.7%	52.0%
Nevada	1,671	328	705	19.6%	42.2%
New Hampshire	201	49	112	24.4%	55.7%
New Jersey	2,473	571	992	23.1%	40.1%
New Mexico	1,414	159	383	11.2%	27.1%
New York	4,429	875	1,638	19.8%	37.0%
North Carolina	2,753	684	1,185	24.8%	43.0%
North Dakota	392	41	118	10.5%	30.1%
Ohio	3,369	719	1,266	21.3%	37.6%
Oklahoma	4,049	1,018	1,919	25.1%	47.4%
Oregon	1,556	311	597	20.0%	38.4%
Pennsylvania	3,633	1,032	1,765	28.4%	48.6%
Rhode Island	314	84	151	26.8%	48.1%
South Carolina	1,466	208	395	14.2%	26.9%
South Dakota	358	74	151	20.7%	42.2%
Tennessee	1,249	410	601	32.8%	48.1%
Texas	13,412	2,797	5,054	20.9%	37.7%
Utah	799	304	479	38.0%	59.9%
Vermont	323	110	177	34.1%	54.8%
Virginia	1,806	405	753	22.4%	41.7%
Washington	3,557	672	1,219	18.9%	34.3%
West Virginia	2,377	629	1,238	26.5%	52.1%
Wisconsin	1,394	318	562	22.8%	40.3%
Wyoming	65	10	19	15.4%	29.2%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Table I-2. Number of Children Adopted, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Alabama	544	512	503	504	712
Alaska	367	357	313	366	354
Arizona	3090	3236	3654	4298	3926
Arkansas	743	740	758	971	1001
California	5471	6079	6542	6524	6966
Colorado	769	820	839	948	910
Connecticut	506	573	529	488	497
Delaware	84	79	99	108	116
District of Columbia	107	106	110	91	100
Florida	3267	3431	3573	3831	4455
Georgia	887	912	1121	1401	1469
Hawaii	121	176	129	152	189
Idaho	218	223	185	258	245
Illinois	1616	1788	1546	1777	1754
Indiana	850	1152	1536	1964	2016
Iowa	878	1017	992	1006	1074
Kansas	695	783	870	674	936
Kentucky	909	961	1104	1128	1124
Louisiana	622	662	727	766	905
Maine	295	328	399	456	395
Maryland	344	294	361	348	353
Massachusetts	589	623	669	657	826
Michigan	2184	1772	2078	1970	1991
Minnesota	642	735	899	946	1284
Mississippi	314	312	400	364	431
Missouri	1291	1357	1591	1541	1798
Montana	234	310	260	274	396
Nebraska	461	533	483	546	564
Nevada	729	799	796	740	760
New Hampshire	120	118	87	107	204
New Jersey	1024	1072	1185	1106	1054
New Mexico	315	295	306	311	297
New York	1997	1933	2010	1785	1790
North Carolina	1176	1311	1501	1528	1522
North Dakota	96	133	132	162	172
Ohio	1406	1334	1449	1538	1566
Oklahoma	1382	2159	2487	2593	2238
Oregon	847	835	768	707	679
Pennsylvania	1849	1832	1917	2077	2628
Rhode Island	202	211	279	250	254
South Carolina	449	403	433	487	435
South Dakota	159	121	110	181	183
Tennessee	1162	1112	1225	1260	1248
Texas	5221	5457	5723	5361	5748
Utah	605	695	632	665	818
Vermont	164	189	216	287	262
Virginia	632	562	627	801	879
Washington	1362	1484	1387	1345	1331
West Virginia	852	893	940	1069	1399
Wisconsin	735	643	669	692	755
Wyoming	75	74	89	82	75

\*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

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) collects and analyzes data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (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 2018.

Although the NCANDS submission is voluntary, it is strongly encouraged. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2018.

### Child victims

During 2018, approximately 678,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.<sup>42 43</sup> The most common maltreatment type reported was neglect, which was included in 80.8 percent of substantiated allegations.<sup>44</sup> Physical abuse and sexual abuse were the next most common maltreatment types—included in 18.6 percent and 9.3 percent of reported incidents of maltreatment, respectively. In FY 2018, States began reporting sex trafficking as a separate maltreatment type. Twenty-six states reported at least one child who had been a victim of sex trafficking, and 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 2014 through 2018.

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/>.

Table II–1. Child Victims, 2014–2018 (N=52)

Measures	2014	2015	2016***	2017	2018
Total Child Victims*	675,000	683,000	671,000	674,000	678,000
National Child Victim Rate**	9.1	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.2

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

\*\*The national child victim rate is calculated by dividing the number of child victims from reporting states by the child population for reporting states and multiplying by 1,000.

\*\*\*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.

The national child victim rate has remained relatively flat over the past 5 years; overall, it has increased from 9.1 child victims per 1,000 children in 2014 to 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in 2018—an increase of 1.1 percent (table II–1). The rate of neglect increased from 7.3 instances per 1,000 children in 2014 to 7.4 instances in 2018, and similar small increases were seen for both physical and sexual abuse maltreatment rates during the same time period.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> 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 is rounded to the nearest 1,000.

<sup>44</sup> 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>.

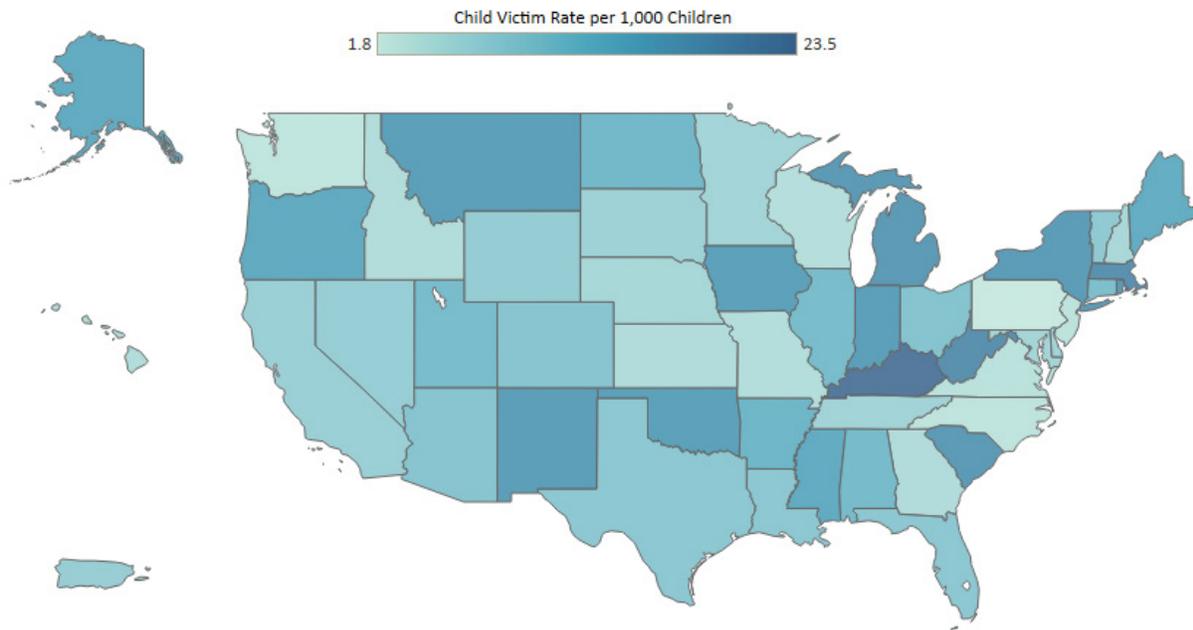
<sup>45</sup> Between 2014 and 2018, the rate of physical abuse increased from 1.6 to 1.7 instances per 1,000 children—a 6.2 percent increase, and from .8 to .9 instances per 1,000 children for sexual abuse. However, given the comparatively low occurrence of both physical and sexual abuse, rates are more sensitive to small changes in state performance. Furthermore, both physical and sexual abuse have experienced a long-term, downward trend that began in the early 1990s. For more information, see the following report: Finkelhor, D., Saito, K., & Jones, L. (2016). *Updated trends in child maltreatment, 2014*. Retrieved from <https://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/Updated%20trends%202014.pdf>.

Similar to previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied widely across states. In 2018, they ranged from 1.8 child victims to 23.5 child victims per 1,000 children in the state’s population (figures II–1 and II–2). There are a number of possible explanations for this variation. One explanation is that states vary in their definitions of “child maltreatment.”<sup>46</sup> 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.

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied dramatically across states in 2018, ranging from 1.8 victims per 1,000 children to 23.5 victims per 1,000 children.

Some additional factors limit the comparability of child victim rates across states. One such factor is the use of alternative response approaches.<sup>47</sup> In alternative response approaches, child welfare agencies respond with a referral for a family assessment rather than with a formal investigation typically 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.

**Figure II–1: Map of Child Victim Rates per 1,000 Children by State, 2018 (N=52)**



<sup>46</sup> 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/>.

<sup>47</sup> 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 *Differential Response to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue-briefs/differential-response/>.

<sup>48</sup> Some states make a distinction between those referrals for which services were required or mandated and those referrals for which services were not needed or were voluntary. In these cases, some states have chosen to report the referrals to NCANDS as either “alternative response victim” for those in which services were mandated or “alternative response non-victim” for those in which services were voluntary or not needed.

## Child fatalities

During 2018, approximately 1,700 child fatalities were reported by states, and the national child fatality rate was 2.35 per 100,000 children in the population.<sup>49</sup> Like child victim rates, child fatality rates varied widely by state. In 2018, 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 2014–2018.

Measures	2014 (N=51)	2015 (N=50)	2016 (N=50)	2017 (N=50)	2018 (N=52)
Total Child Fatalities	1,585	1,603	1,708	1,678	1,738
National Child Fatality Rate*	2.14	2.23	2.30	2.26	2.35

\*This rate is per 100,000 children.

As indicated in Table II–2, the number and rate of child fatalities fluctuated between 2014 and 2018. The rate in 2018 was the highest in the past 5 years, with all 52 states reporting child fatality data. 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 policy that may affect reporting practices.<sup>50</sup>

## 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 2018 on the measures that reflect these outcomes. Cases identified as “alternative response victim” are not included in the calculation of these two safety outcome measures; only substantiated and indicated cases are included.

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)**	3.1%	5.5%	6.8%	0.6–13.0%
Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? (N=51)**	0.14%	0.25%	0.58%	0.00–1.80%

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

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

## Recurrence of maltreatment

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.<sup>51</sup> The national median for maltreatment recurrence (Measure 1.1) in 2018 was 5.5 percent. Individual state performance ranged from 0.6 percent to 13.0 percent. A number of variables may have impacted this range in performance across states, including variations in child victim rates across states. 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  $r=0.57$ ).

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 that reported a higher percentage of victims due to neglect tended to have a higher percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period (Pearson’s  $r=0.65$ ). 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  $r=-0.15$ ). There was a low, negative correlation between Measure 1.1 and percentages of victims of sexual abuse (Pearson’s  $r=-0.25$ ). 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.

<sup>49</sup> The national child fatality rate is calculated by dividing the number of child fatalities reported by states (1,738) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS child fatality data (73,993,353) 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.

<sup>50</sup> For additional information, refer to *Child Maltreatment 2018*, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2018>.

<sup>51</sup> Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10(3), 161–178. doi: 10.1080/15433714.2013.788947.

In contrast, substantiated allegations of neglect may not result in similar actions unless the neglect is considered particularly severe.

### Maltreatment of children in foster care

The 2018 data shown in Table II–3 indicate a very low occurrence of maltreatment of children while in foster care. The national median performance was 0.25 percent, but the range of performance across states varied from 0.00 percent to 1.80 percent.<sup>52</sup> Three states reported zero cases of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff: Delaware, Idaho, and New Hampshire. Six states reported more than 1.00 percent: Alaska (1.51), Massachusetts (1.22 percent), Mississippi (1.26 percent), New York (1.78), Oklahoma (1.09 percent), and Rhode Island (1.80 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, variations in casework practices, and the levels of interaction caseworkers have with families.

## 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 2014–2018 on these safety outcome measures, including the number of states that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance, as determined by a percentage-change calculation.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					Improved in Performance	Declined in Performance
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
Measure 1.1: Percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period. (N=51)****	4.9%	5.0%	5.1%	5.2%	5.5%	24 states (47%)	22 states (43%)
Measure 2.1: Percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member. (N=47)****	0.26%	0.29%	0.20%	0.27%	0.26%	15 states (33%)	22 states (47%)

\*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.

\*\*Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in Table II–3 and Appendix B.

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

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

As shown in Table II–4, the median 5-year performance across states with regard to recurrence of child maltreatment (Measure 1.1) increased between 2014 and 2018, showing a decrease in performance. About as many states (22 states) reported a decline in performance as reported an improvement (24 states).

In contrast, national performance with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (Measure 2.1) showed no change in performance. Between 2014 and 2018, the national median rate remained the same at .26 percent. Individual state performances between 2014 and 2018 on measures of maltreatment recurrence (Measure 1.1) and 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 did not change between 2014 and 2018.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

National performance on the two safety-related outcome measures (recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care) was mixed between 2014 and 2018. National performance on Measure 1.1 (maltreatment recurrence) has steadily worsened over the past 5 years while performance on Measure 2.1 has remained the same despite fluctuations from year-to-year. 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.

<sup>52</sup> 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.

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.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, maltreatment recurrence is associated with an increase in trauma symptoms in children.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, because children who already have mental or physical problems may be at higher risk for maltreatment,<sup>55</sup> it also is important to note that analyses in this Report do not imply causal relationships between physical/mental problems and maltreatment recurrence.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to keeping children safe, 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.

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<sup>53</sup> Goldman, J., Salus, M. K., Wolcott, D., & Kennedy, K. Y. (2003). *A coordinated response to child abuse and neglect: The foundation for practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/foundation/>.

<sup>54</sup> Adams, Z. W., Moreland, A., Cohen, J. R., Lee, R. C., Hanson, R. F., Danielson, C. K., . . . Briggs, E. C. (2016). Polyvictimization: Latent profiles and mental health outcomes in a clinical sample of adolescents. *Psychology of Violence, 6*(1), 145–155. doi: 10.1037/a0039713

<sup>55</sup> For additional information, refer to The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2018>. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/focus.pdf>

Figure II–2. Child Victim Rate per 1,000 Children, 2018 (N=52)

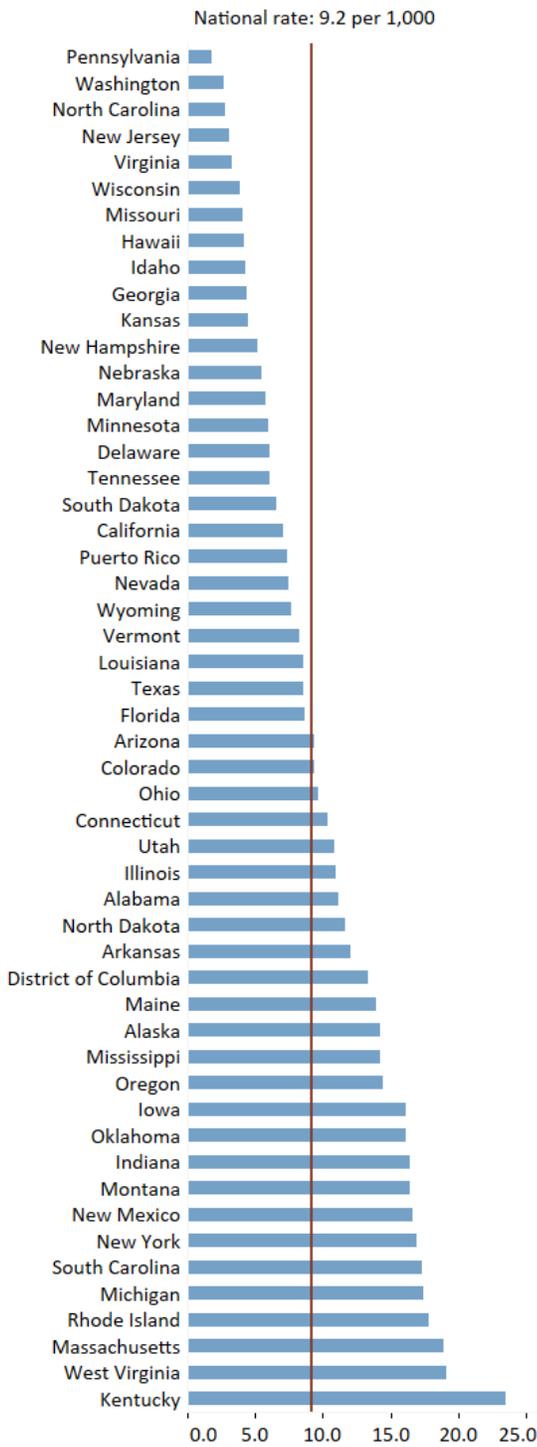


Figure II–3. Child Fatality Rate per 100,000 Children, 2018 (N=52)

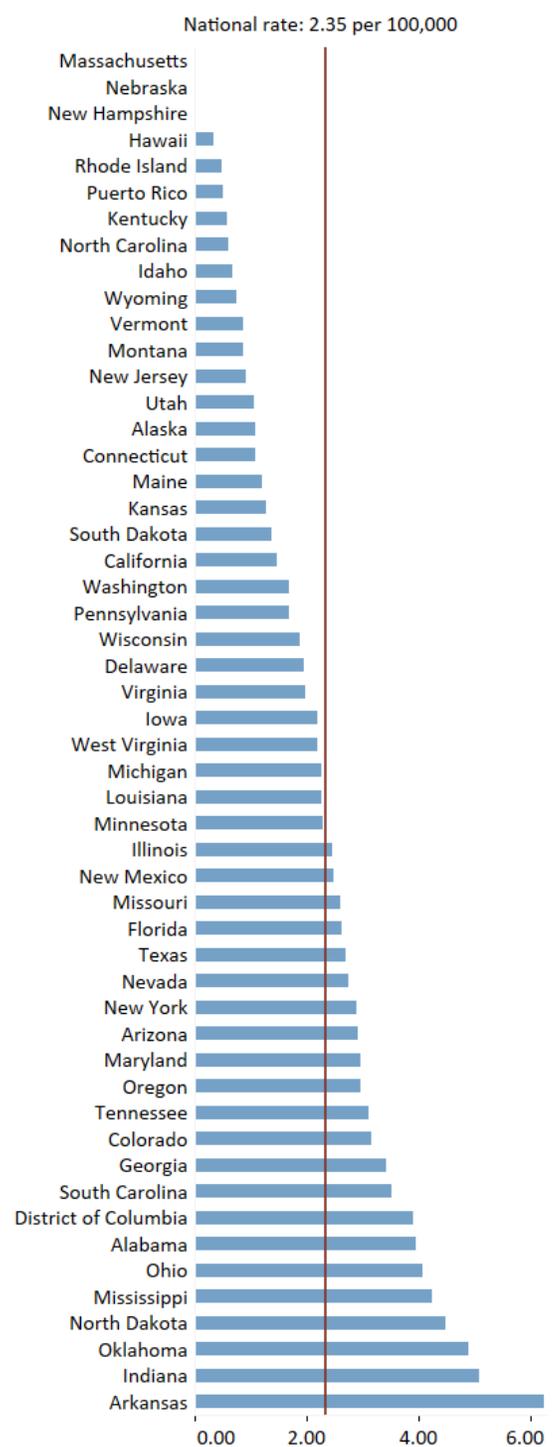


Figure II-4. Percentage of Children Experiencing a Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 6 Months, 2018 (N=52)

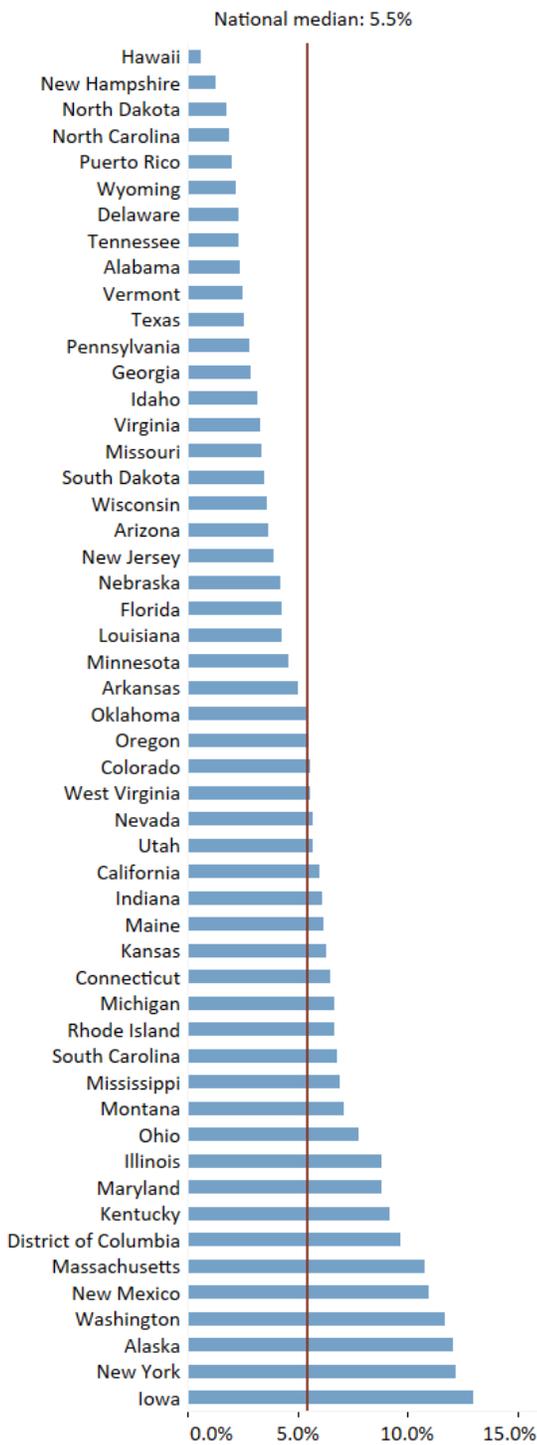
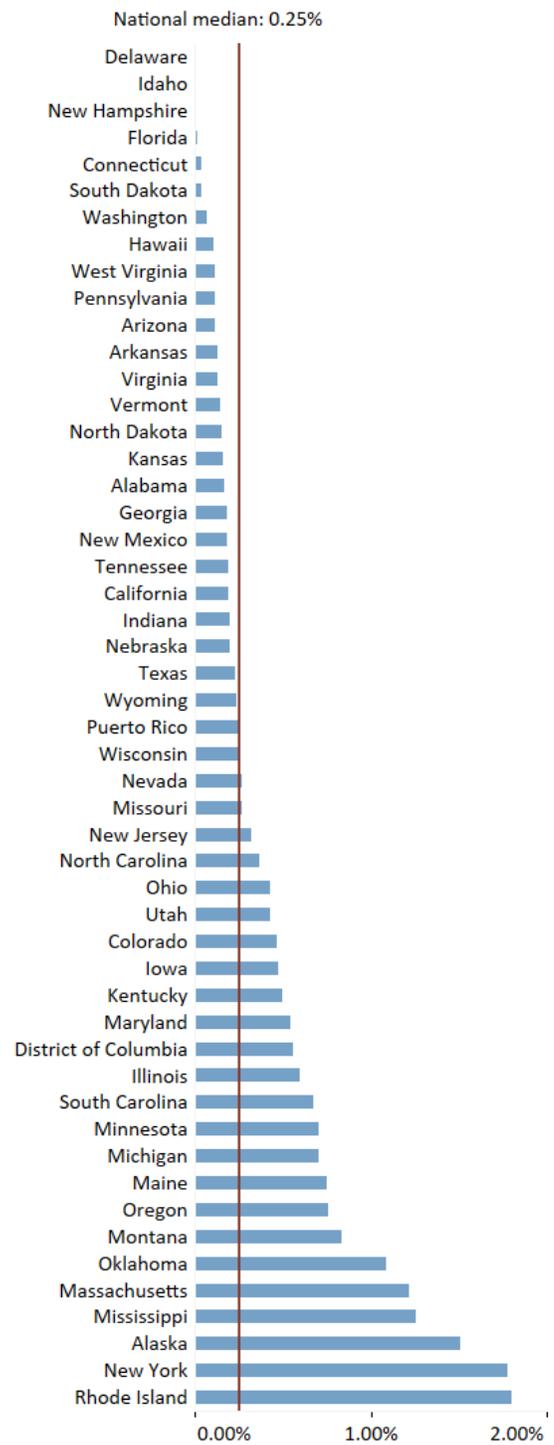


Figure II-5. Percentage of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2018 (N=51)\*



\*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, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	1.7%	1.5%	2.2%	2.2%	2.4%	40.9%
Alaska	13.9%	13.2%	13.1%	11.8%	12.1%	-12.9%
Arizona	3.8%	4.2%	2.5%	1.9%	3.7%	-3.4%
Arkansas	5.5%	5.2%	5.7%	4.5%	5.0%	-9.3%
California	6.4%	6.4%	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%	-6.4%
Colorado	4.9%	5.0%	6.0%	6.3%	5.6%	14.4%
Connecticut	6.3%	6.2%	7.4%	7.0%	6.5%	3.2%
Delaware	2.1%	1.5%	2.5%	1.9%	2.3%	9.6%
District of Columbia	5.5%	6.0%	5.3%	8.2%	9.7%	76.6%
Florida	4.9%	5.2%	4.8%	5.6%	4.3%	-13.0%
Georgia	4.9%	4.5%	4.7%	2.2%	2.9%	-40.8%
Hawaii	2.1%	1.2%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%	-71.9%
Idaho	3.1%	4.3%	3.9%	3.5%	3.2%	4.0%
Illinois	7.1%	7.4%	7.5%	8.5%	8.8%	23.1%
Indiana	7.6%	6.5%	6.6%	7.0%	6.1%	-19.5%
Iowa	7.4%	7.7%	8.0%	9.3%	13.0%	76.2%
Kansas	2.7%	6.0%	3.2%	4.1%	6.3%	130.7%
Kentucky	8.2%	8.6%	7.8%	10.4%	9.2%	11.9%
Louisiana	5.8%	5.8%	5.7%	6.3%	4.3%	-26.3%
Maine	6.1%	4.7%	4.5%	5.3%	6.2%	2.0%
Maryland	7.0%	7.1%	7.0%	7.7%	8.8%	25.6%
Massachusetts	12.9%	11.4%	11.2%	10.4%	10.8%	-16.5%
Michigan	6.5%	5.7%	5.7%	6.7%	6.7%	2.7%
Minnesota	3.9%	4.7%	6.7%	7.1%	4.6%	18.7%
Mississippi	6.2%	6.6%	6.6%	6.5%	6.9%	10.8%
Missouri	3.6%	3.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.4%	-6.1%
Montana	1.5%	4.6%	5.2%	6.1%	7.1%	367.0%
Nebraska	4.9%	4.9%	1.8%	3.9%	4.2%	-13.6%
Nevada	4.8%	5.1%	3.9%	5.1%	5.7%	19.0%
New Hampshire	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%	82.0%
New Jersey	5.4%	5.0%	4.5%	4.4%	3.9%	-27.3%
New Mexico	12.7%	10.7%	12.0%	12.1%	11.0%	-13.3%
New York	11.6%	11.9%	12.4%	12.8%	12.2%	5.1%
North Carolina	2.9%	2.8%	1.9%	2.9%	1.9%	-35.0%
North Dakota	2.8%	3.5%	5.1%	3.1%	1.8%	-36.0%
Ohio	7.2%	7.5%	6.7%	8.5%	7.8%	7.9%
Oklahoma	6.9%	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%	5.4%	-22.1%
Oregon	4.0%	5.1%	5.6%	6.0%	5.5%	36.9%
Pennsylvania	2.1%	3.4%	3.0%	2.8%	2.8%	30.3%
Rhode Island	8.8%	9.3%	6.8%	6.9%	6.7%	-24.1%
South Carolina	2.9%	3.8%	4.8%	3.4%	6.8%	136.3%
South Dakota	3.7%	2.1%	4.4%	3.2%	3.5%	-6.2%
Tennessee	2.8%	3.7%	2.1%	2.4%	2.3%	-18.2%
Texas	2.8%	2.4%	3.0%	2.7%	2.6%	-5.9%
Utah	6.3%	6.0%	5.9%	6.3%	5.7%	-9.8%
Vermont	5.8%	4.0%	3.8%	4.4%	2.5%	-57.1%
Virginia	2.0%	2.6%	2.5%	2.8%	3.3%	62.0%
Washington	9.7%	8.2%	8.9%	9.0%	11.7%	21.2%
West Virginia	1.6%	1.9%	2.0%	4.4%	5.6%	243.1%
Wisconsin	4.9%	3.8%	4.1%	4.2%	3.6%	-26.0%
Wyoming	3.4%	3.3%	2.1%	1.7%	2.2%	-35.7%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table II–6. Percentage of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2014–2018 (N=47)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	0.17%	0.06%	0.11%	0.30%	0.17%	-2.7%
Alaska	0.39%	0.38%	0.93%	0.88%	1.51%	291.2%
Arizona	0.11%	0.06%	0.06%	0.14%	0.12%	2.5%
Arkansas	0.18%	0.24%	0.18%	0.23%	0.13%	-29.0%
California	0.26%	0.20%	0.19%	0.18%	0.19%	-24.1%
Colorado	1.43%	0.56%	0.58%	0.49%	0.47%	-67.3%
Connecticut	0.96%	0.77%	0.68%	1.27%	0.03%	-96.4%
Delaware	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.0%
District of Columbia	0.50%	0.23%	0.40%	0.27%	0.56%	12.9%
Florida	0.06%	0.04%	0.05%	0.04%	0.01%	-79.2%
Hawaii	0.56%	0.90%	0.72%	0.11%	0.11%	-80.4%
Illinois	0.50%	0.57%	0.55%	0.75%	0.60%	19.2%
Indiana	0.08%	0.15%	0.20%	0.26%	0.20%	144.4%
Iowa	0.25%	0.36%	0.18%	0.22%	0.48%	91.2%
Kansas	0.16%	0.29%	0.19%	0.65%	0.16%	1.9%
Maine	0.30%	0.40%	0.69%	0.57%	0.75%	150.1%
Maryland	0.37%	0.41%	0.60%	0.47%	0.55%	46.7%
Massachusetts	1.26%	0.97%	1.37%	1.04%	1.22%	-3.0%
Michigan	0.52%	0.54%	0.56%	0.86%	0.71%	34.9%
Minnesota	0.30%	0.41%	0.68%	0.81%	0.70%	132.7%
Mississippi	1.06%	0.96%	1.18%	1.14%	1.26%	18.0%
Missouri	0.26%	0.24%	0.25%	0.28%	0.27%	2.2%
Montana	0.11%	0.31%	0.18%	0.39%	0.84%	653.1%
Nebraska	0.25%	0.12%	0.13%	0.23%	0.20%	-20.3%
Nevada	0.28%	0.16%	0.20%	0.21%	0.27%	-5.5%
New Hampshire	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	0.0%
New Jersey	0.14%	0.15%	0.07%	0.12%	0.32%	136.8%
New Mexico	0.07%	0.22%	0.09%	0.11%	0.19%	158.9%
New York	0.62%	0.72%	3.37%	3.51%	1.78%	186.5%
North Carolina	0.44%	0.32%	0.33%	0.45%	0.37%	-16.3%
North Dakota	0.09%	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.15%	66.7%
Ohio	0.40%	0.40%	0.52%	0.42%	0.43%	7.1%
Oklahoma	1.26%	1.57%	1.28%	1.23%	1.09%	-13.6%
Oregon	0.76%	0.72%	0.83%	1.05%	0.76%	0.2%
Pennsylvania	0.12%	0.09%	0.14%	0.20%	0.11%	-1.8%
Rhode Island	1.21%	1.36%	1.60%	2.06%	1.80%	48.8%
South Carolina	0.58%	0.20%	0.39%	0.50%	0.67%	15.1%
South Dakota	0.05%	0.05%	0.13%	0.16%	0.04%	-19.1%
Tennessee	0.16%	0.30%	0.13%	0.14%	0.19%	19.6%
Texas	0.31%	0.29%	0.31%	0.27%	0.23%	-25.9%
Utah	0.30%	0.06%	0.14%	0.43%	0.43%	44.5%
Vermont	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.15%	N/A
Virginia	0.23%	0.25%	0.26%	0.20%	0.13%	-43.9%
Washington	0.16%	0.11%	0.11%	0.08%	0.07%	-59.4%
West Virginia	0.48%	0.32%	0.11%	0.21%	0.11%	-76.7%
Wisconsin	0.12%	0.09%	0.14%	0.12%	0.26%	119.0%
Wyoming	0.05%	0.53%	0.40%	0.24%	0.24%	347.8%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

# 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.<sup>56</sup> 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 of who exit to emancipation. For the purpose of the Child Welfare Outcomes Report data indicators, a child achieves permanency when he or she is reported as discharged from foster care to one of the following arrangements:

In 2018, 90.5 percent of all children who exited foster care during the year were discharged to a permanent home—the highest level of permanency to date.

- Reunified with parents or primary caretakers
- Living with other relatives<sup>57</sup>
- Guardianship<sup>58</sup>
- Legally adopted

State and national performance on exits to permanency for children in foster care is 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 who were discharged to a permanent home
- Measure 3.4: The percentage of all children emancipated from foster care who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger

## CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE

Nationally, approximately 250,000 children exited foster care in 2018. Across states, the median length of stay for children exiting care ranged from 5.1 months to 33.9 months. However, nearly all states (50) reported a median length of stay less than 24 months, and 15 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.

Table III–1 provides a breakdown of the foster care discharge reasons reported for these children. Nationally, 90.5 percent of all children exiting foster care during 2018 were discharged to a permanent home (i.e., were discharged to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship).<sup>59</sup> This represents the highest rate of permanency reported by the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports to date. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that a central goal in child welfare is to find permanent, secure homes for 100 percent of children who must enter foster care.

Table III–1. Foster Care Discharge Reasons, 2018 (N=51)

Discharge Reason	Number of Children	Percentage of Total Exits (N=249,980)*
Adoption	61,901	24.8%
Emancipation	17,843	7.1%
Guardianship	26,084	10.4%
Reunification	138,371	55.4%
Other**	5,781	2.3%

\*The percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

\*\*Other includes discharge reasons of runaway, death, transfer to another agency, or missing data.

<sup>56</sup> 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>.

<sup>57</sup> 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.”

<sup>58</sup> Legal guardian includes relatives and nonrelatives.

<sup>59</sup> 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.

Nationally, approximately 18,000 children exited foster care in 2018 with a discharge reason of emancipation.<sup>60</sup> 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 has steadily decreased each year from 9.1 percent of all exits in 2014 to 8.4 percent in 2015, 8.0 percent in 2016, 7.9 percent in 2017, and 7.1 percent in 2018—an overall decrease of 22.0 percent.

Since 2014, the percentage of all children emancipating from foster care has decreased by 22.0 percent.

Similarly, across all states, the median performance in 2018 for children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation was 7.1 percent—a 10.1 percent decrease since 2014 (7.9 percent).<sup>61</sup> Still, there was considerable variation between states in 2018 regarding the percentages of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation. The states with the highest percentages of emancipation were Virginia (22.9 percent), Maryland (17.6 percent), and Massachusetts (13.9 percent). The states with the lowest percentages were Wyoming (1.1 percent), West Virginia (1.4 percent), and New York (1.5 percent).

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 negative 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  $r=-0.28$ ).

### RANGE OF PERFORMANCE IN ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Table III–2 displays state performance in 2018 on outcome measures regarding finding permanent homes for children in foster care.

**Table III–2. Range of State Performance, 2018**  
**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=51)	87.1%	90.3%	92.4%	70.5–97.3%
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=46)	72.9%	81.9%	87.9%	51.8–95.5%
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)	58.6%	63.1%	70.4%	35.2–92.2%
Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care? (N=51)**	12.2%	15.8%	19.4%	3.3–45.0%

\*Data for this table include all states for which adequate data are available.  
\*\*For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Measures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 assess permanency for children at the time of discharge from foster care. The national median performance across states for all children that exited foster care to permanency during 2018 (Measure 3.1) was 90.3 percent. State performance ranged from 70.5 percent to 97.3 percent. Only two states reported permanency rates below 80.0 percent: Delaware (70.5 percent) and Virginia (72.0 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/hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, or other medically diagnosed conditions requiring special care.<sup>62</sup> As indicated in Table III–2, in 2018, 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: 81.9 percent). State performance regarding permanent

Compared to all children exiting care, states are less successful in establishing permanency for children with disabilities and children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12.

<sup>60</sup> For more information regarding the definition of emancipation for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), see *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-review-guide>.

<sup>61</sup> These percentages refers 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.

<sup>62</sup> 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>.

homes for children with disabilities varied considerably in 2018, ranging from 51.8 percent to 95.5 percent, with four states performing at least equally as well on this measure as measure 3.1 (permanency for all children).<sup>63</sup> 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  $r=0.65$ ).

The disparity between achieving permanency for all children exiting care and 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 establishing permanency for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12. The national median performance regarding older youth exiting to permanency, defined as children who were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, was only 63.1 percent.<sup>64</sup> There was a high correlation between a state's success in 2018 at achieving permanency across all children that exited foster care (Measure 3.1) and their success in achieving permanency for older youth (Pearson's  $r=0.77$ ).

Older children in foster care may face a number of age-specific barriers to permanency (e.g., reunification, adoption, or guardianship).<sup>65</sup> For example, there may be a shortage of families who are willing and able to provide permanent homes for older youth. This could be due to a number of factors, but one likely contributor is the 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.<sup>66</sup> 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 unadoptable.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

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.<sup>69</sup>

### ***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, 15.8 percent or more of the children who were emancipated from foster care in 2018 were age 12 or younger at their entry into foster care (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Individual state performance ranged widely, from 3.3 percent to 45.0 percent. It is important to keep in mind 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 2018 with a discharge reason of emancipation, and a total of 15 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.

<sup>63</sup> The four states were Alaska, Arkansas, Michigan, and Washington.

<sup>64</sup> The number of older children in care may include youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system and are included in the reporting population.

<sup>65</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>.

<sup>66</sup> 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>.

<sup>67</sup> Groh, A. (2009). *It's time to make older child adoption a reality: Because every child and youth deserves a family*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacac.org/resource/its-time-to-make-older-child-adoption-a-reality-because-every-child-and-youth-deserves-a-family/>.

<sup>68</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

## CHANGES OVER TIME IN STATE PERFORMANCE ON MEASURES OF ACHIEVING PERMANENCY

Table III–3 presents the median performances across states for 2014–2018 on the measures pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care. The table also presents a summary of the change in state performance between 2014 and 2018 on these measures. These median performances and changes in performance over time should be viewed together in order to gain a better understanding of trends over time.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					Improved in Performance	Declined in Performance
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
Measure 3.1: Percentage of all children who exited foster care to a permanent home. (N=51)	89.0%	89.4%	89.6%	90.3%	90.3%	10 states (20%)	1 state (2%)
Measure 3.2: Percentage of all children with a diagnosed disability exiting foster care who were discharged to a permanent home. (N=43)	78.8%	80.1%	82.2%	81.8%	82.4%	15 states (35%)	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)	64.3%	66.2%	65.3%	64.9%	63.1%	13 states (25%)	19 states (37%)
Measure 3.4: Percentage of all children emancipated from foster care who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger. (N=51)****	20.0%	18.9%	16.9%	16.7%	15.8%	38 states (75%)	10 states (20%)

\*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.

\*\*Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in Table III–2 and Appendix B.

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

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

As indicated in Table III–3 and Table III–4 (at the end of this chapter), states, individually and as a whole, 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 2014, though the overall 1.5-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 40 states (78 percent) reporting no change in performance, 10 states (20 percent) demonstrating an improvement in performance, and only 1 state (2 percent) reporting a decline.

While states have not been as successful in achieving permanency for children exiting with disabilities (Measure 3.2) compared to all children, the national median performance showed a 4.6-percent increase between 2014 (78.8 percent) and 2018 (82.4 percent). Similar to measure 3.1, prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports have noted an overall improvement on this measure, with consistently 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 64.3 percent in 2014 to 63.1 percent in 2018—an overall decrease in performance of 1.9 percent. Furthermore, more states (37 percent) demonstrated a decline in performance than an improvement (25 percent).

As presented in Table III–3, one of the most notable changes in performance between 2014 and 2018 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, 38 states (75 percent) demonstrated improved performance between 2014 and 2018, and the national median improved from 20.0 percent to 15.8 percent—a 21.0-percent decrease. This finding reflects a continuing trend noted in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, although the magnitude of change may be decreasing.<sup>70</sup>

**Between 2014 and 2018, the median percentage of children emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger declined by 21.0 percent—with 38 states demonstrating an improvement in performance.**

<sup>70</sup> Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2015 noted a 29.3-percent decrease, Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2016 noted a 28.4-percent decrease, and Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2017 noted a 24.9-percent decrease on the 5-year performance on Measure 3.3.

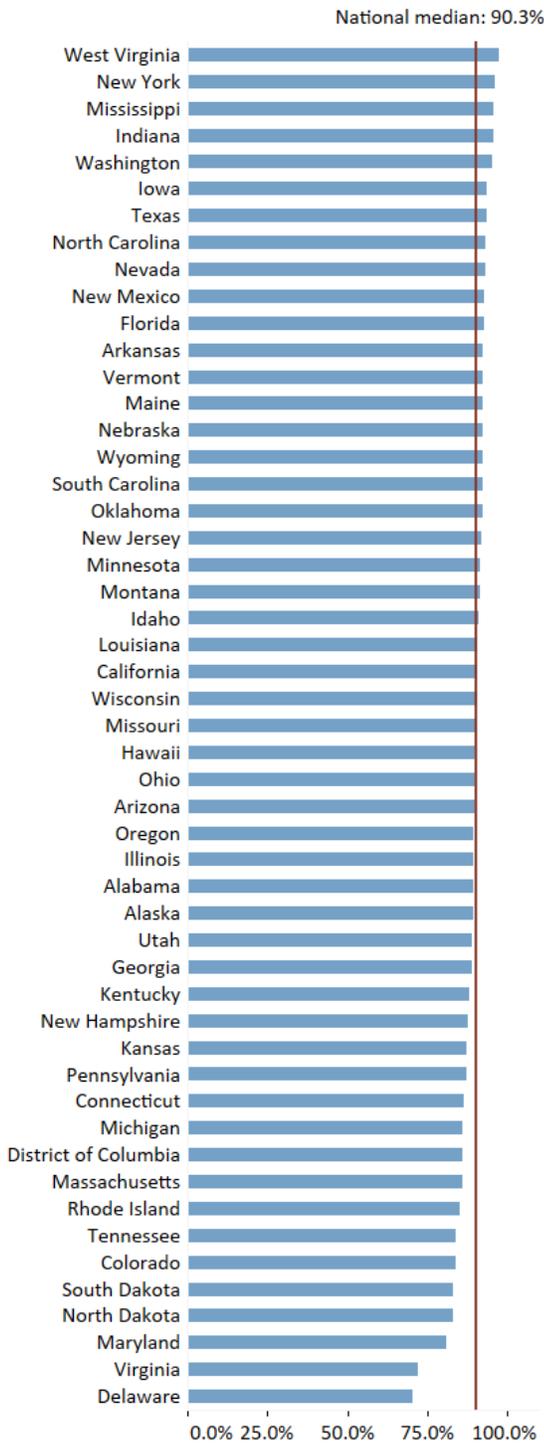
## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

In 2018, 90.5 percent of all children exiting foster care were discharged to permanency. The 2014–2018 data on the measures used to assess this outcome generally reflected this positive finding. The national median performance on achieving permanency among all children that exited foster care (Measure 3.1) increased for the fourth consecutive year to an all-time high for the Child Welfare Outcome Reports. Additionally, most states continued to show progress in reducing the percentage of children exiting foster care to emancipation, including 75 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). 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 be a reflection of those efforts.

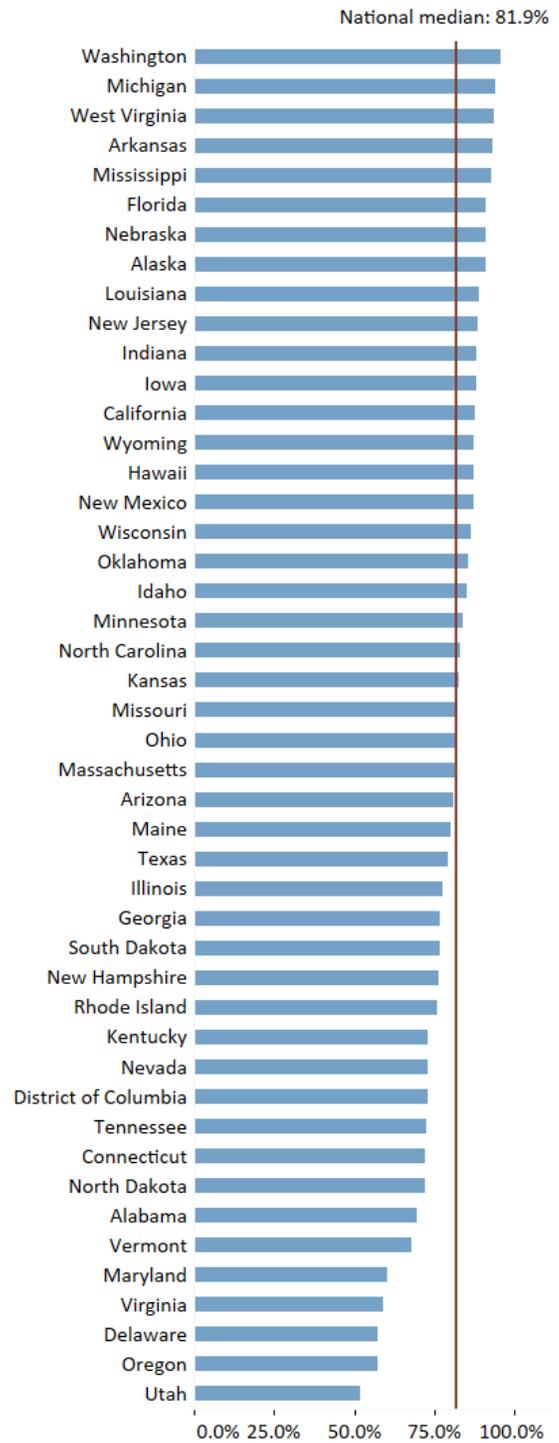
States continued to show improvement in finding permanent homes for children who exit with disabilities (Measure 3.2), but there was negligible change in performance for older children achieving permanency (Measure 3.3). Overall, there is still room for improvement, and efforts are still needed to continue closing the gap in disparities for these two subpopulations. 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 the age, race, and ethnicity, and median length of stay of children in care, entering care, and exiting care. Individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data, are also available.

**Figure III–1. Percentage of Exiting Children Who Exit to Permanency, 2018 (N=51)\***

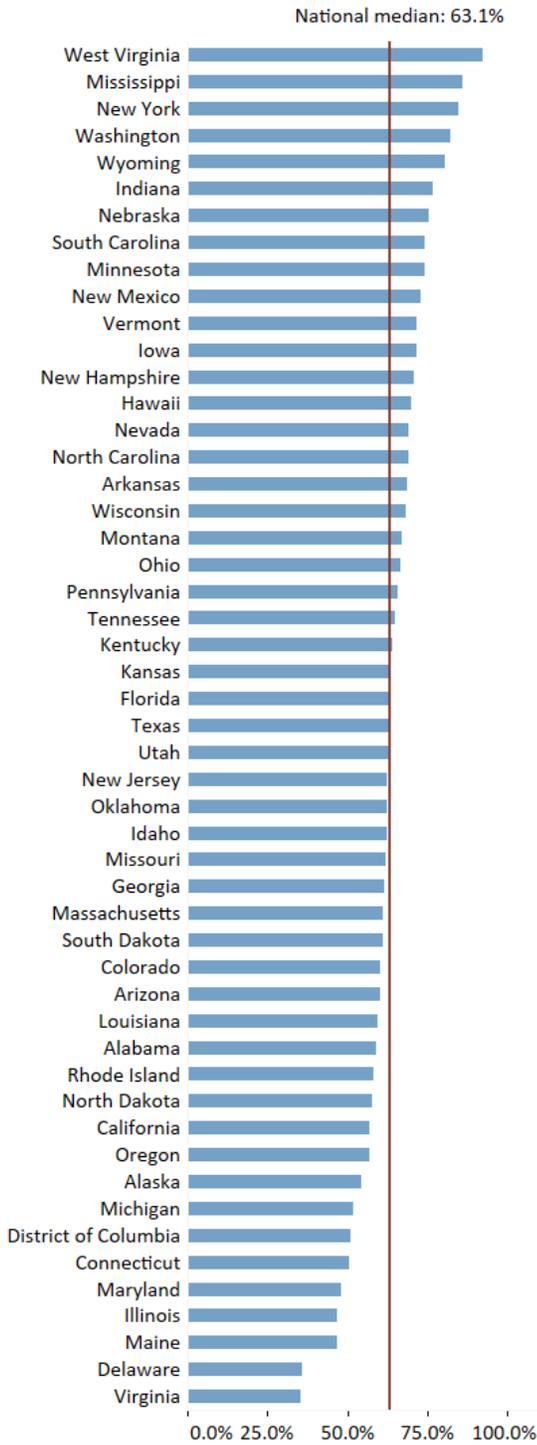


**Figure III–2. Percentage of Exiting Children With a Diagnosed Disability Who Exit to Permanency, 2018 (N=46)\***

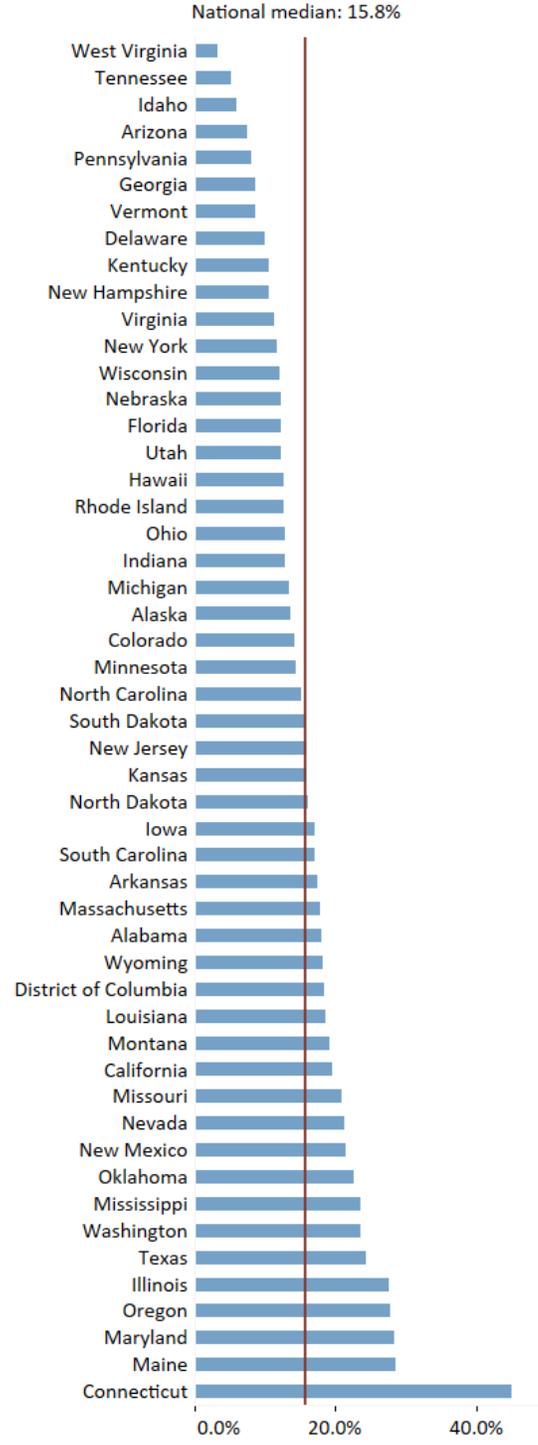


\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Figure III-3. Percentage of Exiting Children Age 12 and Older Who Exit to Permanency, 2018 (N=51)\***



**Figure III-4. Percentage of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered at Age 12 or Younger, 2018 (N=51)\*, \*\***



\* Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table III–4. Outcome 3.1: Percentage of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	87.3%	88.5%	87.5%	87.3%	89.4%	2.5%
Alaska	91.0%	86.9%	87.5%	86.6%	89.3%	-1.9%
Arizona	89.0%	89.6%	89.6%	90.3%	89.7%	0.8%
Arkansas	93.6%	93.3%	93.1%	93.1%	92.5%	-1.2%
California	81.4%	82.3%	83.8%	84.8%	90.5%	11.1%
Colorado	83.1%	82.8%	82.3%	84.3%	83.8%	0.9%
Connecticut	72.1%	69.0%	85.8%	90.8%	86.5%	20.0%
Delaware	78.6%	71.9%	84.6%	85.6%	70.5%	-10.2%
District of Columbia	80.4%	77.7%	83.4%	81.1%	85.9%	6.8%
Florida	92.0%	92.4%	92.7%	92.8%	92.6%	0.6%
Georgia	89.4%	89.1%	89.0%	88.9%	88.8%	-0.6%
Hawaii	89.4%	92.4%	91.6%	89.9%	89.9%	0.5%
Idaho	92.9%	92.0%	93.5%	92.7%	90.9%	-2.2%
Illinois	90.9%	91.3%	92.2%	93.6%	89.5%	-1.6%
Indiana	92.9%	95.2%	95.6%	95.7%	95.8%	3.2%
Iowa	91.3%	90.6%	91.9%	92.7%	93.7%	2.6%
Kansas	86.6%	86.8%	87.4%	85.2%	87.1%	0.6%
Kentucky	87.2%	87.9%	86.7%	87.0%	88.2%	1.2%
Louisiana	91.0%	93.1%	92.9%	91.0%	90.6%	-0.5%
Maine	91.6%	91.2%	92.1%	93.7%	92.4%	0.9%
Maryland	81.0%	78.7%	81.2%	82.6%	81.0%	0.1%
Massachusetts	82.0%	84.0%	84.7%	85.2%	85.8%	4.6%
Michigan	85.3%	81.0%	86.6%	85.8%	86.1%	0.9%
Minnesota	90.3%	89.4%	90.3%	90.8%	91.5%	1.4%
Mississippi	94.2%	93.1%	93.3%	94.4%	95.9%	1.8%
Missouri	88.0%	89.7%	90.4%	90.0%	90.3%	2.7%
Montana	91.4%	90.1%	88.8%	91.9%	91.5%	0.1%
Nebraska	83.6%	90.1%	90.8%	91.2%	92.4%	10.5%
Nevada	91.8%	92.5%	92.4%	90.9%	93.0%	1.3%
New Hampshire	82.9%	85.8%	84.3%	81.8%	87.7%	5.8%
New Jersey	91.0%	92.2%	92.1%	91.7%	92.0%	1.1%
New Mexico	93.9%	93.3%	94.6%	93.3%	92.6%	-1.4%
New York	84.6%	91.7%	96.3%	96.0%	96.2%	13.7%
North Carolina	87.9%	88.9%	88.5%	93.7%	93.0%	5.9%
North Dakota	80.3%	82.8%	79.5%	83.7%	82.8%	3.1%
Ohio	86.9%	87.4%	87.8%	87.9%	89.9%	3.5%
Oklahoma	90.3%	92.3%	91.8%	92.5%	92.2%	2.1%
Oregon	89.2%	87.2%	87.8%	87.5%	89.5%	0.3%
Pennsylvania	82.5%	82.0%	81.3%	85.5%	87.1%	5.5%
Rhode Island	80.8%	82.3%	85.8%	84.6%	85.0%	5.1%
South Carolina	92.2%	93.9%	92.2%	92.2%	92.2%	0.0%
South Dakota	81.7%	83.6%	81.3%	84.3%	83.0%	1.5%
Tennessee	86.9%	85.6%	84.9%	83.9%	83.9%	-3.5%
Texas	91.9%	92.9%	92.9%	92.8%	93.5%	1.7%
Utah	86.3%	87.8%	86.0%	88.2%	89.0%	3.1%
Vermont	87.2%	88.6%	91.3%	91.9%	92.4%	6.0%
Virginia	73.7%	75.1%	69.4%	79.0%	72.0%	-2.3%
Washington	93.1%	94.6%	95.5%	95.4%	95.3%	2.3%
West Virginia	95.9%	96.1%	96.0%	95.7%	97.3%	1.4%
Wisconsin	90.4%	90.8%	90.8%	90.7%	90.5%	0.1%
Wyoming	89.4%	91.4%	90.0%	90.3%	92.3%	3.2%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table III–5. Outcome 3.2: Percentage of Children Exiting With Diagnosed Disabilities Exiting to Permanency, 2014–2018 (N=43)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	75.1%	70.2%	74.0%	68.1%	69.5%	-7.5%
Alaska	84.2%	84.8%	84.9%	86.2%	90.8%	7.9%
Arizona	84.7%	86.2%	85.9%	84.6%	80.9%	-4.5%
Arkansas	90.6%	92.1%	93.8%	93.7%	93.3%	3.0%
California	76.6%	76.8%	78.8%	79.5%	87.9%	14.6%
Connecticut	53.7%	61.0%	75.5%	75.9%	72.1%	34.3%
Delaware	68.0%	53.4%	71.2%	71.3%	57.5%	-15.5%
District of Columbia	13.3%	45.5%	50.0%	22.2%	72.7%	445.5%
Florida	92.9%	91.9%	91.0%	92.5%	91.1%	-2.0%
Georgia	79.9%	76.5%	77.2%	76.8%	76.7%	-4.0%
Hawaii	88.6%	87.3%	86.5%	86.6%	87.4%	-1.4%
Idaho	89.4%	82.4%	82.4%	89.4%	85.2%	-4.7%
Illinois	90.6%	91.3%	91.7%	90.0%	77.4%	-14.6%
Indiana	85.0%	87.7%	87.0%	87.3%	88.0%	3.5%
Iowa	82.8%	84.3%	82.0%	84.6%	88.0%	6.3%
Kansas	82.5%	82.6%	84.2%	78.2%	82.4%	0.0%
Kentucky	74.1%	75.1%	74.3%	74.3%	73.1%	-1.4%
Louisiana	86.5%	88.1%	89.4%	87.9%	88.8%	2.7%
Maine	71.2%	73.1%	75.3%	81.2%	79.9%	12.1%
Maryland	62.8%	60.1%	62.5%	66.5%	60.2%	-4.1%
Michigan	75.0%	50.9%	92.0%	93.9%	94.0%	25.4%
Minnesota	81.7%	82.1%	82.4%	81.8%	84.0%	2.8%
Mississippi	93.2%	95.6%	91.6%	92.2%	92.5%	-0.7%
Missouri	73.8%	75.2%	77.2%	77.6%	82.0%	11.2%
Nebraska	75.2%	86.1%	86.1%	88.0%	91.0%	21.0%
Nevada	71.8%	76.3%	75.2%	77.7%	72.8%	1.4%
New Jersey	79.0%	86.1%	87.4%	88.5%	88.3%	11.8%
New Mexico	87.1%	86.6%	89.3%	84.3%	87.3%	0.3%
North Carolina	80.4%	79.6%	82.2%	88.6%	83.0%	3.2%
North Dakota	69.0%	75.5%	74.2%	74.5%	72.1%	4.5%
Ohio	75.5%	80.1%	79.4%	78.5%	81.8%	8.4%
Oklahoma	78.8%	83.4%	83.6%	85.3%	85.4%	8.3%
Oregon	68.9%	61.4%	61.1%	51.9%	57.3%	-16.9%
Rhode Island	68.3%	75.1%	76.3%	71.3%	75.8%	11.1%
Tennessee	73.2%	68.1%	72.3%	73.6%	72.6%	-0.9%
Texas	78.1%	78.9%	77.6%	77.7%	79.4%	1.6%
Utah	77.7%	77.7%	61.9%	44.6%	51.8%	-33.3%
Vermont	50.0%	78.6%	63.2%	79.3%	68.0%	36.0%
Virginia	63.9%	65.1%	56.7%	68.5%	58.8%	-7.9%
Washington	91.9%	94.6%	95.6%	96.3%	95.5%	3.9%
West Virginia	91.5%	91.5%	91.0%	89.5%	93.4%	2.0%
Wisconsin	84.8%	83.7%	82.8%	82.9%	86.5%	2.0%
Wyoming	83.2%	83.6%	86.0%	86.3%	87.4%	5.1%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table III–6. Outcome 3.3: Percentage of Children Exiting at Age 12 and Older Who Exit to Permanency, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	61.3%	61.8%	60.0%	56.0%	58.9%	-3.8%
Alaska	57.3%	50.7%	50.7%	53.1%	54.2%	-5.3%
Arizona	59.7%	60.2%	60.9%	61.2%	60.1%	0.7%
Arkansas	73.3%	69.7%	72.8%	67.5%	68.9%	-6.0%
California	47.4%	48.2%	47.9%	47.7%	56.9%	20.0%
Colorado	62.4%	59.4%	62.9%	62.7%	60.4%	-3.2%
Connecticut	58.3%	51.8%	63.7%	62.4%	50.7%	-13.0%
Delaware	48.5%	36.4%	49.5%	48.4%	35.9%	-26.1%
District of Columbia	41.6%	45.6%	46.2%	45.3%	51.2%	23.1%
Florida	65.8%	66.2%	65.6%	66.1%	63.2%	-4.0%
Georgia	70.0%	70.0%	67.2%	63.9%	61.3%	-12.4%
Hawaii	72.4%	78.9%	73.1%	66.2%	69.8%	-3.5%
Idaho	73.1%	72.8%	77.5%	68.9%	62.4%	-14.6%
Illinois	53.0%	55.7%	57.3%	60.7%	46.6%	-12.1%
Indiana	67.2%	75.9%	77.3%	76.9%	76.8%	14.3%
Iowa	77.5%	75.3%	73.2%	70.8%	71.7%	-7.5%
Kansas	59.2%	59.9%	61.6%	58.6%	63.4%	6.9%
Kentucky	63.6%	66.4%	61.7%	62.2%	64.1%	0.8%
Louisiana	67.2%	74.3%	71.4%	64.0%	59.4%	-11.7%
Maine	58.2%	53.9%	51.6%	63.7%	46.6%	-19.9%
Maryland	50.3%	47.4%	51.7%	52.4%	48.2%	-4.3%
Massachusetts	62.5%	62.4%	61.8%	61.1%	61.0%	-2.4%
Michigan	63.4%	48.9%	56.0%	52.1%	51.7%	-18.5%
Minnesota	79.5%	76.7%	76.6%	75.0%	74.1%	-6.8%
Mississippi	80.9%	82.1%	81.5%	84.6%	86.1%	6.5%
Missouri	58.4%	60.6%	64.1%	62.5%	61.8%	5.8%
Montana	73.4%	68.4%	66.4%	69.6%	67.1%	-8.5%
Nebraska	66.6%	71.4%	69.6%	71.3%	75.4%	13.2%
Nevada	66.1%	67.5%	66.9%	65.8%	69.1%	4.5%
New Hampshire	71.9%	77.2%	75.6%	65.5%	71.0%	-1.2%
New Jersey	64.3%	64.8%	63.2%	63.3%	62.5%	-2.9%
New Mexico	77.9%	73.4%	77.5%	70.7%	73.0%	-6.3%
New York	65.9%	77.3%	86.6%	85.3%	84.9%	28.9%
North Carolina	58.3%	59.7%	57.7%	72.6%	69.0%	18.3%
North Dakota	59.8%	66.0%	61.1%	65.2%	57.7%	-3.4%
Ohio	64.7%	67.1%	67.1%	64.0%	66.8%	3.2%
Oklahoma	63.2%	60.3%	65.4%	64.9%	62.5%	-1.1%
Oregon	59.0%	56.1%	55.5%	54.0%	56.8%	-3.8%
Pennsylvania	66.9%	67.6%	64.4%	67.1%	65.7%	-1.8%
Rhode Island	61.4%	60.5%	65.3%	58.6%	58.2%	-5.2%
South Carolina	73.6%	79.7%	73.6%	71.8%	74.2%	0.9%
South Dakota	64.2%	63.4%	65.2%	65.7%	60.9%	-5.1%
Tennessee	70.9%	67.6%	67.1%	65.3%	65.1%	-8.2%
Texas	58.2%	63.1%	64.3%	62.6%	63.1%	8.5%
Utah	63.2%	64.9%	59.7%	62.3%	62.7%	-0.7%
Vermont	66.3%	68.2%	72.6%	72.1%	71.9%	8.3%
Virginia	41.0%	43.7%	36.7%	49.8%	35.2%	-14.0%
Washington	73.4%	78.8%	82.3%	82.7%	82.1%	11.9%
West Virginia	91.4%	90.6%	90.3%	88.7%	92.2%	0.9%
Wisconsin	73.3%	73.5%	72.4%	71.4%	68.3%	-6.8%
Wyoming	75.6%	79.2%	76.9%	74.9%	80.4%	6.4%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table III–7. Outcome 3.4: Percentage of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered Care Under Age 12, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	25.1%	25.7%	27.5%	18.6%	18.0%	-28.3%
Alaska	29.0%	14.3%	16.4%	16.5%	13.6%	-53.2%
Arizona	8.4%	9.8%	7.5%	8.5%	7.4%	-12.5%
Arkansas	22.7%	22.5%	17.3%	16.3%	17.4%	-23.4%
California	26.8%	24.4%	21.4%	21.9%	19.6%	-26.7%
Colorado	21.8%	20.7%	18.1%	13.9%	14.2%	-34.7%
Connecticut	31.3%	42.0%	53.2%	42.9%	45.0%	44.0%
Delaware	29.2%	25.3%	20.4%	18.9%	10.0%	-65.7%
District of Columbia	43.1%	40.2%	20.0%	20.0%	18.4%	-57.4%
Florida	18.3%	14.5%	9.9%	11.7%	12.2%	-33.6%
Georgia	13.2%	13.4%	10.9%	11.9%	8.6%	-35.0%
Hawaii	20.0%	25.0%	10.6%	6.1%	12.7%	-36.6%
Idaho	11.5%	17.5%	17.6%	6.3%	6.0%	-47.5%
Illinois	46.0%	37.6%	27.6%	34.2%	27.6%	-39.9%
Indiana	13.0%	9.4%	14.5%	12.5%	12.8%	-2.1%
Iowa	15.5%	17.7%	21.4%	23.1%	17.0%	10.1%
Kansas	11.6%	15.8%	13.8%	13.6%	15.9%	37.0%
Kentucky	11.8%	10.8%	9.2%	8.4%	10.5%	-10.7%
Louisiana	22.6%	26.5%	24.1%	20.1%	18.7%	-17.3%
Maine	35.5%	30.3%	34.8%	33.9%	28.6%	-19.5%
Maryland	33.1%	30.2%	33.8%	28.3%	28.3%	-14.5%
Massachusetts	18.9%	18.9%	15.5%	15.1%	17.8%	-5.5%
Michigan	22.7%	22.3%	16.9%	17.0%	13.3%	-41.4%
Minnesota	23.7%	19.7%	13.5%	18.6%	14.3%	-39.8%
Mississippi	12.5%	14.8%	12.9%	16.9%	23.5%	88.2%
Missouri	19.1%	18.6%	19.9%	20.0%	20.8%	8.9%
Montana	28.8%	37.5%	23.3%	20.6%	19.1%	-33.8%
Nebraska	6.2%	13.7%	19.4%	13.8%	12.2%	97.8%
Nevada	20.6%	21.3%	18.3%	18.1%	21.3%	3.5%
New Hampshire	10.7%	20.3%	16.1%	10.3%	10.6%	-0.7%
New Jersey	18.0%	14.4%	15.8%	18.4%	15.8%	-11.9%
New Mexico	26.7%	21.3%	19.7%	18.8%	21.4%	-19.6%
New York	26.5%	22.0%	13.8%	16.7%	11.6%	-56.2%
North Carolina	12.0%	11.8%	10.3%	12.1%	15.2%	26.9%
North Dakota	8.8%	14.9%	5.5%	10.0%	16.2%	84.9%
Ohio	18.3%	16.7%	17.2%	13.3%	12.7%	-30.5%
Oklahoma	28.7%	25.5%	25.9%	25.1%	22.7%	-21.1%
Oregon	35.5%	33.7%	35.5%	31.7%	27.8%	-21.8%
Pennsylvania	15.2%	14.0%	11.4%	8.5%	8.0%	-47.4%
Rhode Island	14.8%	12.8%	13.2%	17.1%	12.7%	-14.2%
South Carolina	25.7%	29.3%	20.7%	16.1%	17.1%	-33.3%
South Dakota	42.3%	32.7%	52.4%	39.1%	15.8%	-62.7%
Tennessee	5.7%	1.6%	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	-10.1%
Texas	34.0%	31.6%	32.5%	26.3%	24.4%	-28.3%
Utah	9.6%	15.9%	11.4%	10.5%	12.4%	28.3%
Vermont	10.4%	7.6%	5.3%	24.0%	8.7%	-16.8%
Virginia	19.5%	17.7%	11.6%	14.8%	11.2%	-42.5%
Washington	27.2%	24.6%	23.2%	25.9%	23.6%	-13.3%
West Virginia	19.1%	7.0%	13.6%	6.5%	3.3%	-82.9%
Wisconsin	21.0%	16.5%	14.0%	16.1%	12.2%	-42.2%
Wyoming	12.5%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	45.5%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

# 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. The timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care is reinforced and supported by federal policies and laws, such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), that stress the importance of the timely identification of permanent homes for children taken into foster care. 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 Child and Family Services Reviews (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 better ratings on CFSR permanency Outcome 1 (children have permanency and stability in their living situations).<sup>71</sup>

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 Social Security Act (the Act) to include requirements for states to collect data on monthly caseworker visits for children in foster care.<sup>72</sup> The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) extended these requirements, which are now in Section 424(f)(1)(A) and (2)(A) and Section 479A(a)(6) of the Act.<sup>73</sup> 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.

The caseworker visits data presented include the percentage of children in foster care visited each full month they were in care, as well as the proportion of those visits that occurred in the homes where the children were then living. Data for monthly caseworker visits and visits in the home for 2014–2018 are shown in table IV–1.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> More information concerning caseworker visits from round 1 of the CFSRs can be found in General Findings From the Federal Child and Family Services Review at [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/findings\\_from\\_the\\_initial\\_cfsr.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/findings_from_the_initial_cfsr.pdf) (p.35), and more information from round 2 can be found in Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, Aggregate Report, Round 2, Fiscal Years 2007–2010 [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fcfsr\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fcfsr_report_0.pdf) (p.57).

<sup>72</sup> More information can be found on the Children's Bureau website in ACYF-CB-IM-06-05 at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im0605>.

<sup>73</sup> More information can be found on the Children's Bureau website in ACYF-CB-IM-11-06 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, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi0803>.

<sup>74</sup> 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>.

**Table IV–1. Monthly Caseworker Visits and Visits in the Home, 2014–2018**

Measures	Median Performance				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Percentage of children receiving monthly caseworker visits. (N=52)	94.7%	95.3%	95.3%	95.3%	95.5%
Percentage of monthly visits that occurred in the home of the child. (N=52)	86.0%	87.3%	87.8%	87.5%	86.6%

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 each year. In 2018, the median state performance was 95.5 percent, with 35 states meeting the 95-percent target set by the Act (see Figure IV–1 at the end of this chapter). Of the 17 states that did not meet this target, 2 states had met the threshold in 2017 but failed to meet the target in 2018. Of the 35 states that met or exceeded the 95 percent threshold in 2018, 2 states improved over not having met the threshold in 2017.

The national median in 2018 for the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the child’s home was 86.6 percent—well above the national standard of 50 percent. No states fell below the 50-percent standard in 2018 or any previous year.

### TIMELINESS OF REUNIFICATIONS

Historically, the majority of children who exit from foster care during the FY are discharged to reunification. In 2018, reunifications represented 55.2 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.<sup>75</sup> 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 purpose of 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 care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Table IV–2 presents summary data regarding state performance in 2018 on timeliness of reunification without increasing reentries.

**Table IV–2. Range of State Performance, 2018  
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=51)	54.0%	63.6%	72.2%	32.2–82.5%
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)*	6.2%	7.1%	9.5%	1.0–15.5%

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

The 2018 data shown in Table IV–2 indicate, in many states, a majority of children discharged to reunification were reunified in a timely manner. The median performance was 63.6 percent, and state performance ranged from 32.2 percent to 82.5 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 7.1 percent for children who entered foster care in 2018 and who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. There was a wide range of performance across states, from 1.0 percent to 15.5 percent. Reentries—within any length of time of a prior foster care episode—accounted for approximately one-fifth (18.5 percent) of all entries in 2018. Multiple changes in caregivers, especially for younger children, can affect healthy development and impair a child’s ability to form interpersonal relationships.<sup>76</sup> Thus, it is important for states to continue working to prevent reentries into foster care.

<sup>75</sup> For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, children are considered reunified if the discharge reason provided to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) is either (1) reunified with parent or primary caretaker, or (2) living with other relatives.

<sup>76</sup> Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing re-entry into foster care. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 10*(3), 196–209. doi: 10.1080/15433714.2013.788949

One consideration for states' performance on this measure 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 had entered care at age 12 or older (Pearson's  $r=0.60$ ). 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 that target 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.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					Improved in Performance	Declined in Performance
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
Measure 4.1: Percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care. (N=51)	69.0%	67.8%	66.1%	64.6%	63.6%	11 states (22%)	21 states (41%)
Measure 4.2: Percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. (N=51)****	7.6%	7.3%	7.1%	7.3%	7.1%	26 states (51%)	19 states (37%)

\*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.

\*\*Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in Table IV–2 and Appendix B.

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

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

As illustrated in Table IV–3, the national median performance over time on achieving timely reunifications has declined consistently over the past 5 years. Overall, there was 7.8-percent decline in performance over time in state performance. During this period, 41 percent of states showed a decline in performance, and 22 percent improved. In contrast, there was improvement in state performance from 2014 to 2018 on the percentage of children reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. The national median declined 6.6 percent between 2014 and 2018, with just over half of states (51 percent) improving 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 a 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 agency documents a compelling reason why such action would not be in the best interests of the child. In accordance with Section 475(5)(F) of the Act, a child is considered to have “entered foster care” (for purposes of starting the clock for the 15 of 22 months) on the earlier of the following:

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

For the purposes of calculating this Report's related outcome measures, a 17-month timeframe was used because AFCARS does not collect information pertaining to the date of the first judicial finding. The timeframe is 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 2018, approximately 62,000 children exited foster care to adoption, and 125,000 children were categorized as waiting for adoption. Measure 5.1 addresses the timeliness of adoptions encapsulated by Outcome 5 (reduce time in foster care to adoption). Table IV–4 presents summary data showing the range of state performance in 2018 on this measure.

Outcome Measures*	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)	1.3%	2.7%	4.7%	0.0–24.1%
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)	19.9%	28.7%	36.1%	11.6–56.2%

\*Measure 5.1 was among the original outcome 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.

Outcome Measure 5.1 focuses on the length of time in foster care for children who are discharged to adoption. Performance on this measure in 2018 suggests achieving timely adoptions is 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 2.7 percent and ranged from 0.0 percent to 24.1 percent. Only two states—Utah and Florida—reported that at least 10.0 percent of adoptions in 2018 occurred in less than 12 months (see Figure IV–5 at the end of this chapter).

States were more successful at achieving adoptions occurring in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the child’s entry into foster care, with a national median of 28.7 percent in 2018. Four states reported at least 50.0 percent of adoptions having occurred during this time period: Iowa (51.7 percent), Texas (53.8 percent), Utah (56.2 percent), and West Virginia (51.9).

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

The median performance across states from 2014 through 2018 pertaining to achieving timely adoptions for children in foster care is presented in Table IV–5, which also presents the number of states showing 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.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					Improved in Performance	Declined in Performance
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
Measure 5.1a: Percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care. (N=51)****	4.1%	3.3%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%	10 states (20%)	39 states (76%)
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)****	29.8%	30.8%	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%	12 states (24%)	27 states (53%)

\*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.

\*\*Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in Table IV–4 and Appendix B.

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

\*\*\*\*Measure 5.1 was among the original outcome 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.

For the percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months (Measure 5.1a), the national median from 2014 to 2018 decreased significantly from 4.1 percent to 2.7 percent—a 34.1-percent decrease. However, year-by-year performance was inconsistent. In addition, a greater proportion of states reported a decline in performance (76 percent) compared to the proportion that showed improved performance (20 percent). For the percentage of adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from a child’s entry into care (measure 5.1b), there was a 3.7-percent overall decrease in the national median between 2014 and 2018. Similarly, more states showed a decline in performance (53 percent) than an improvement (24 percent). Overall, achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering care remains a challenge for all but a few states.

**The 2018 data indicate that achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering foster care remains 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) improved by 6.6 percent, with over half of the states showing improved performance. The national median performance on achieving adoptions within 12 months of entry (Measure 5.1a) demonstrated a 34.1-percent decrease since 2014. 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). 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, 2018 (N=52)

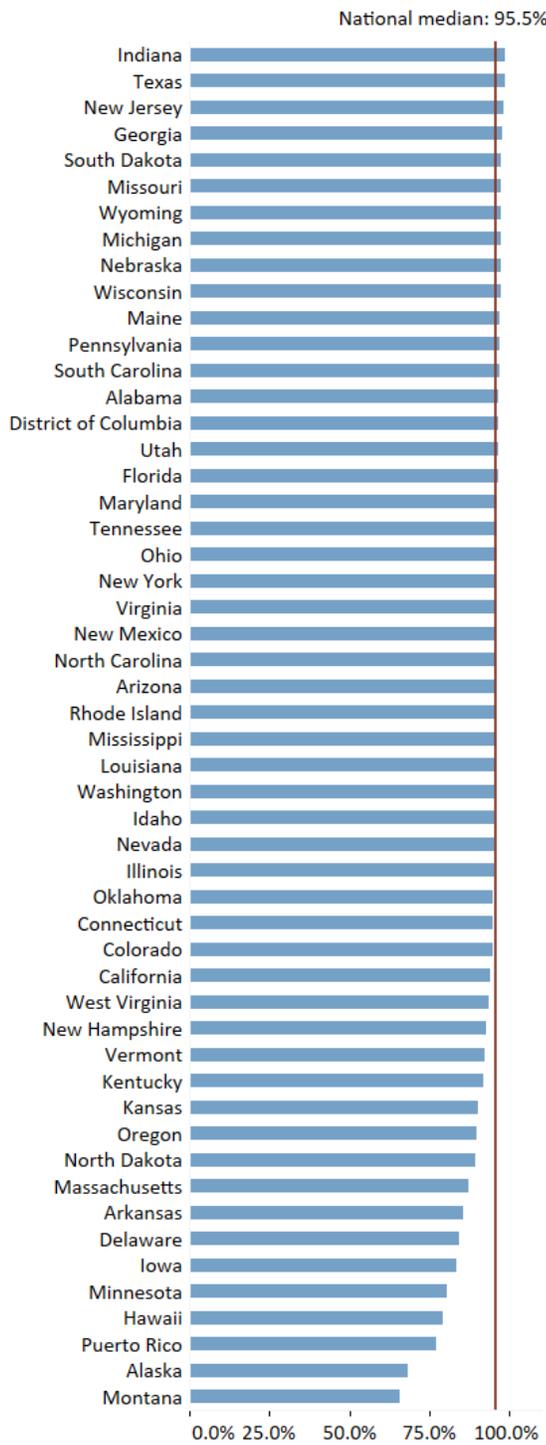


Figure IV–2. Percentage of Monthly Caseworker Visits Occurring in the Home of the Child, 2018 (N=52)

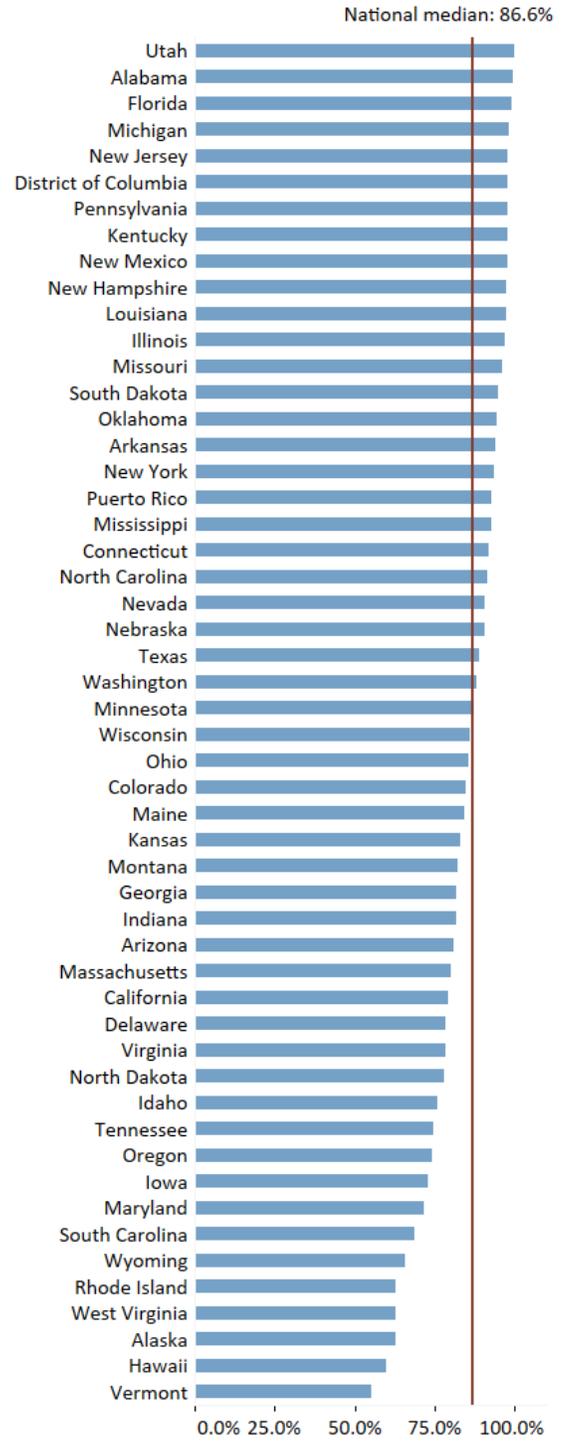


Figure IV–3. Percentage of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2018 (N=51)\*

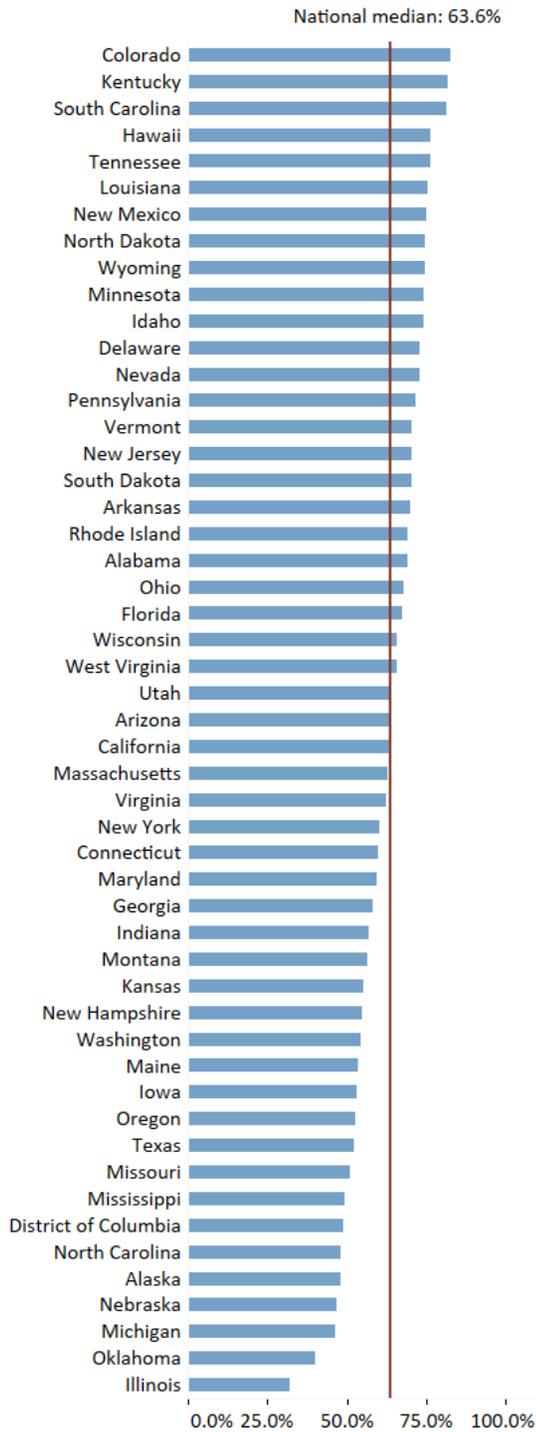
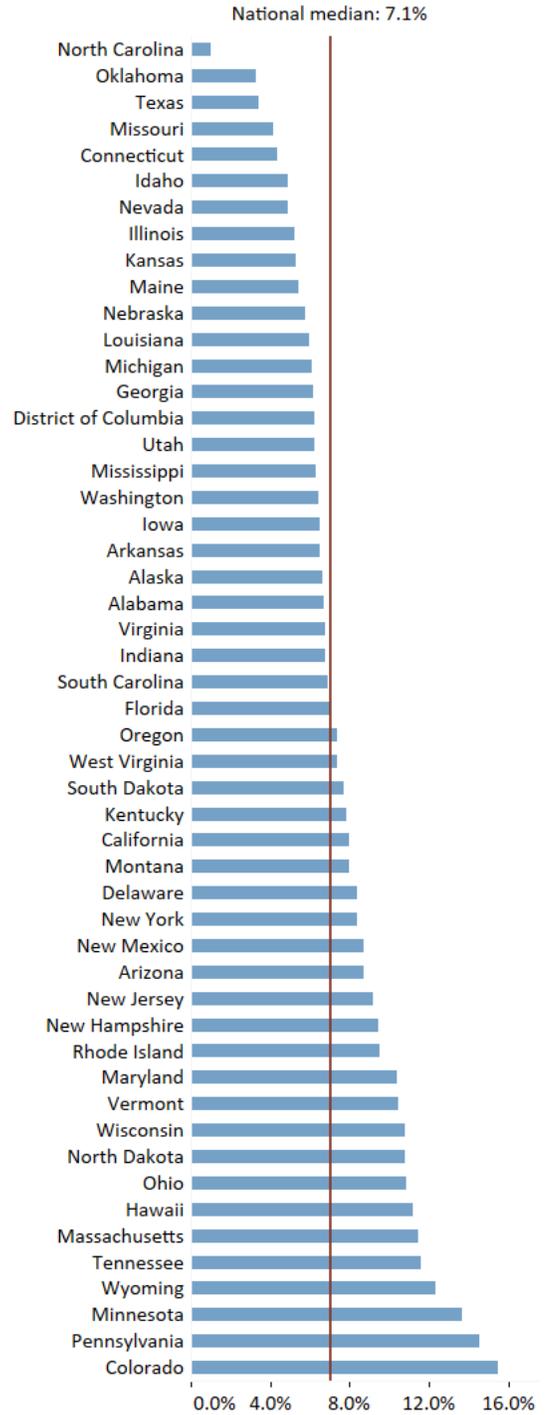


Figure IV–4. Percentage of Children Reentering Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Foster Care Episode, 2018 (N=51)\*\*



\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.  
 \*\*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, 2018 (N=51)\*

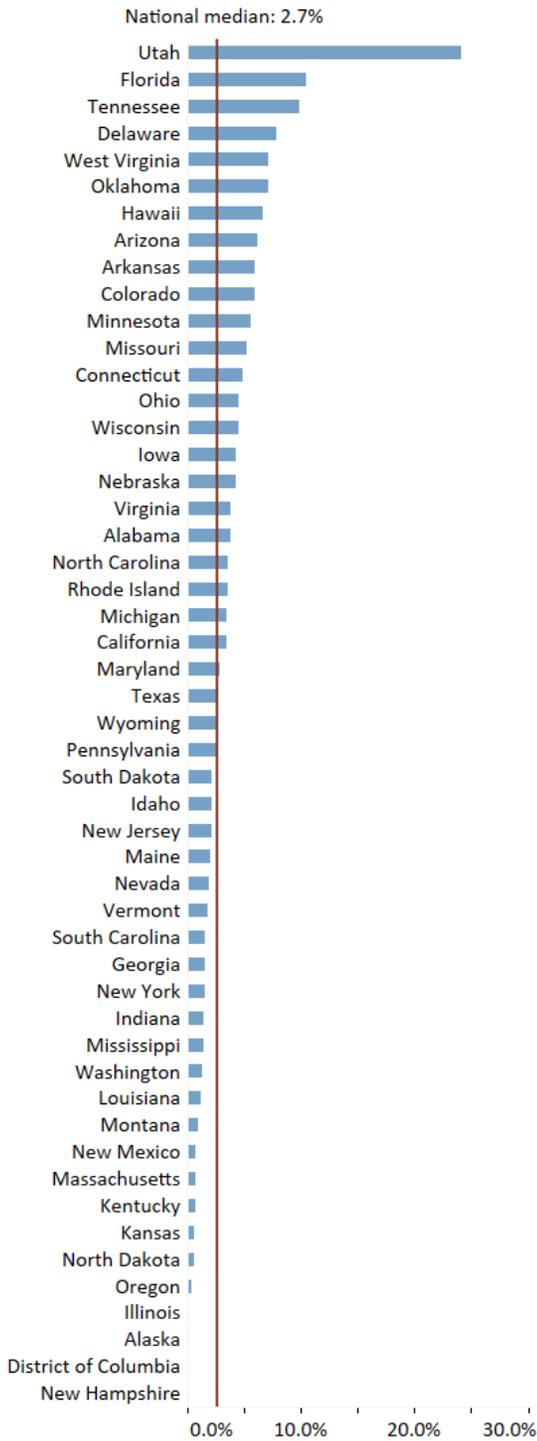
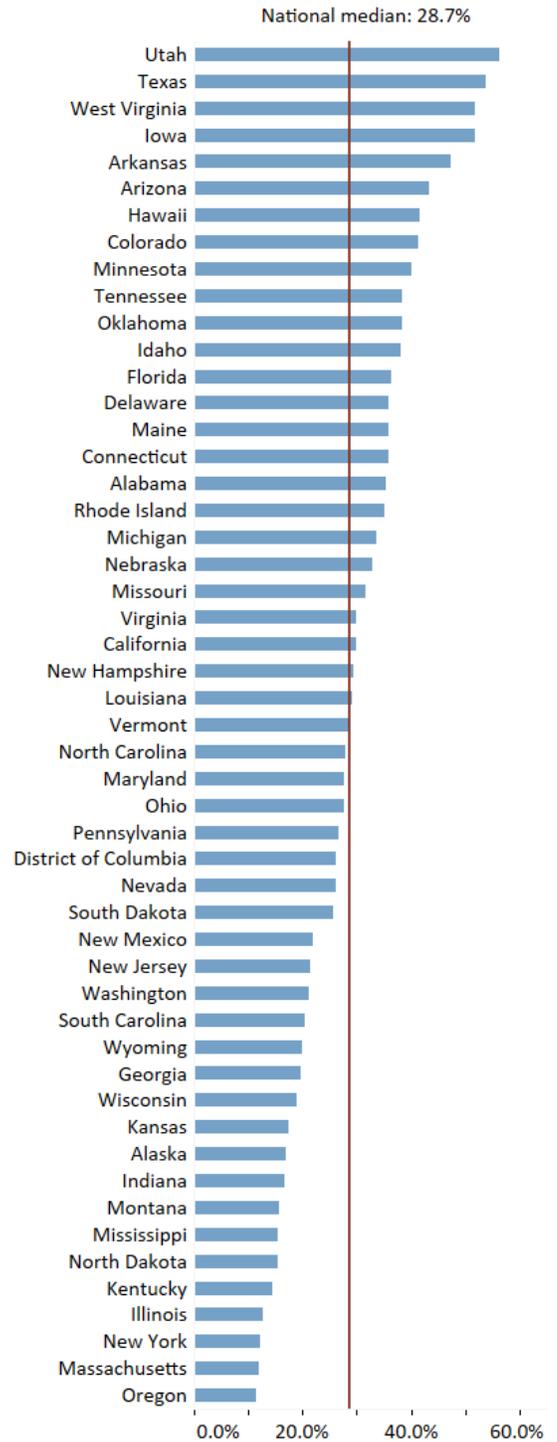


Figure IV-6. Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption Who Were in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2018 (N=51)\*



\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

**Table IV–6. Outcome 4.1: Percentage of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	72.1%	73.9%	73.2%	72.0%	69.2%	-3.9%
Alaska	49.8%	54.9%	45.9%	50.8%	47.9%	-3.7%
Arizona	72.4%	69.2%	67.6%	64.1%	63.6%	-12.2%
Arkansas	81.6%	78.5%	78.1%	74.8%	70.2%	-14.0%
California	65.5%	63.9%	63.2%	63.9%	63.2%	-3.5%
Colorado	76.8%	79.9%	82.4%	81.5%	82.5%	7.5%
Connecticut	63.1%	58.8%	63.6%	60.3%	59.9%	-5.0%
Delaware	52.3%	60.4%	62.3%	65.8%	73.0%	39.7%
District of Columbia	57.5%	57.8%	59.8%	53.1%	48.8%	-15.3%
Florida	76.2%	73.1%	70.0%	68.2%	67.4%	-11.5%
Georgia	75.7%	75.3%	69.4%	59.1%	58.0%	-23.4%
Hawaii	83.1%	80.9%	76.0%	70.6%	76.4%	-8.0%
Idaho	74.1%	73.3%	77.1%	72.9%	74.0%	-0.1%
Illinois	29.3%	32.1%	25.8%	28.7%	32.2%	9.9%
Indiana	58.9%	59.1%	58.5%	59.7%	57.1%	-3.1%
Iowa	54.2%	53.5%	55.0%	56.0%	53.3%	-1.7%
Kansas	60.1%	57.2%	58.1%	58.6%	55.2%	-8.2%
Kentucky	81.3%	78.2%	78.4%	79.9%	81.9%	0.8%
Louisiana	76.6%	76.4%	74.3%	71.5%	75.5%	-1.4%
Maine	53.0%	47.0%	40.2%	43.1%	53.4%	0.7%
Maryland	53.0%	54.8%	60.2%	64.6%	59.6%	12.5%
Massachusetts	72.8%	67.4%	64.7%	64.4%	62.8%	-13.8%
Michigan	41.6%	35.3%	43.7%	44.9%	46.2%	10.9%
Minnesota	86.2%	84.0%	79.4%	74.4%	74.3%	-13.8%
Mississippi	66.4%	63.6%	62.6%	59.2%	49.3%	-25.6%
Missouri	58.7%	56.9%	56.5%	55.3%	51.1%	-12.9%
Montana	62.5%	63.6%	66.1%	59.1%	56.3%	-9.8%
Nebraska	48.3%	52.7%	53.6%	51.6%	46.7%	-3.3%
Nevada	63.2%	70.3%	72.3%	73.8%	72.7%	15.1%
New Hampshire	45.5%	57.1%	61.1%	61.6%	54.7%	20.0%
New Jersey	73.2%	69.6%	68.8%	66.1%	70.5%	-3.7%
New Mexico	78.7%	71.4%	75.2%	77.2%	75.1%	-4.6%
New York	56.8%	59.7%	58.7%	60.6%	60.1%	5.8%
North Carolina	54.7%	52.3%	52.1%	54.2%	48.1%	-12.2%
North Dakota	71.1%	67.8%	69.6%	71.2%	74.6%	4.9%
Ohio	70.9%	70.5%	68.4%	69.1%	67.9%	-4.2%
Oklahoma	43.3%	37.8%	36.2%	38.2%	39.9%	-7.8%
Oregon	49.8%	56.5%	53.4%	53.0%	52.8%	6.0%
Pennsylvania	73.7%	73.2%	72.7%	71.8%	71.7%	-2.6%
Rhode Island	74.6%	68.8%	66.0%	65.1%	69.2%	-7.2%
South Carolina	86.0%	86.2%	85.1%	83.4%	81.4%	-5.3%
South Dakota	78.0%	75.0%	78.7%	70.3%	70.4%	-9.8%
Tennessee	70.6%	73.1%	74.7%	74.4%	76.2%	7.9%
Texas	47.6%	50.3%	52.9%	51.3%	52.3%	10.0%
Utah	70.7%	68.7%	67.6%	70.2%	63.8%	-9.7%
Vermont	72.6%	74.2%	70.4%	64.6%	70.5%	-2.9%
Virginia	64.0%	63.2%	58.6%	59.5%	62.5%	-2.4%
Washington	58.2%	54.5%	54.8%	55.2%	54.5%	-6.3%
West Virginia	69.0%	68.6%	66.1%	67.7%	65.7%	-4.9%
Wisconsin	71.8%	69.2%	66.5%	67.1%	65.7%	-8.6%
Wyoming	77.2%	73.7%	71.9%	73.7%	74.4%	-3.6%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table IV–7. Outcome 4.2: Percentage of Children Reentering Foster Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Episode, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	8.4%	7.1%	6.8%	6.9%	6.7%	-20.2%
Alaska	5.0%	3.9%	5.8%	6.3%	6.7%	33.4%
Arizona	8.1%	8.0%	8.3%	8.8%	8.7%	7.7%
Arkansas	7.0%	6.5%	5.7%	6.0%	6.5%	-7.1%
California	8.2%	8.4%	8.2%	7.6%	8.0%	-2.6%
Colorado	14.1%	15.0%	14.1%	14.8%	15.5%	10.3%
Connecticut	5.5%	3.6%	4.1%	4.2%	4.4%	-20.7%
Delaware	3.5%	5.0%	4.8%	9.5%	8.4%	139.1%
District of Columbia	7.6%	5.7%	5.8%	9.0%	6.3%	-17.5%
Florida	7.0%	6.2%	7.2%	6.6%	7.1%	0.6%
Georgia	6.5%	6.8%	6.5%	6.3%	6.2%	-4.9%
Hawaii	9.2%	9.2%	11.0%	11.7%	11.2%	21.7%
Idaho	6.8%	6.2%	6.1%	6.0%	4.9%	-28.1%
Illinois	7.3%	7.3%	6.6%	5.5%	5.2%	-28.5%
Indiana	4.3%	4.8%	4.8%	6.5%	6.8%	56.2%
Iowa	10.7%	9.1%	8.1%	8.8%	6.5%	-38.8%
Kansas	5.9%	4.9%	5.6%	5.8%	5.3%	-10.3%
Kentucky	9.9%	10.7%	9.2%	9.8%	7.9%	-20.8%
Louisiana	6.3%	7.1%	7.7%	8.1%	6.0%	-4.5%
Maine	4.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.0%	5.5%	13.7%
Maryland	11.5%	11.2%	10.5%	9.7%	10.4%	-10.2%
Massachusetts	9.3%	10.0%	11.0%	11.2%	11.5%	23.9%
Michigan	4.9%	3.7%	5.8%	5.9%	6.1%	24.9%
Minnesota	15.6%	13.7%	13.3%	13.3%	13.7%	-12.2%
Mississippi	5.0%	4.6%	5.4%	6.5%	6.3%	25.2%
Missouri	4.5%	5.4%	4.9%	4.6%	4.1%	-9.1%
Montana	6.9%	7.4%	6.9%	7.4%	8.0%	16.0%
Nebraska	6.3%	6.7%	5.9%	6.5%	5.8%	-8.4%
Nevada	6.7%	7.0%	6.6%	6.1%	4.9%	-26.7%
New Hampshire	9.0%	10.0%	9.6%	11.6%	9.4%	5.3%
New Jersey	10.6%	9.3%	9.3%	9.4%	9.2%	-13.7%
New Mexico	7.9%	9.1%	7.1%	8.6%	8.7%	10.4%
New York	10.0%	9.1%	8.8%	8.6%	8.4%	-16.0%
North Carolina	2.3%	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%	-58.4%
North Dakota	9.0%	7.2%	11.4%	10.2%	10.8%	20.1%
Ohio	9.8%	10.3%	9.7%	8.9%	10.9%	10.8%
Oklahoma	3.7%	4.5%	4.4%	3.9%	3.3%	-11.6%
Oregon	8.0%	8.8%	8.2%	5.9%	7.4%	-8.2%
Pennsylvania	16.3%	17.5%	13.9%	13.3%	14.6%	-10.8%
Rhode Island	13.1%	13.0%	12.6%	10.5%	9.5%	-27.3%
South Carolina	5.6%	5.8%	6.0%	6.5%	6.9%	24.3%
South Dakota	10.6%	8.4%	8.4%	6.3%	7.7%	-27.2%
Tennessee	13.7%	12.4%	13.0%	12.2%	11.6%	-15.8%
Texas	3.0%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%	3.4%	15.5%
Utah	7.1%	6.3%	6.3%	4.6%	6.3%	-12.3%
Vermont	10.3%	10.9%	13.9%	10.1%	10.4%	1.6%
Virginia	3.8%	4.2%	4.1%	4.5%	6.8%	78.9%
Washington	5.9%	7.4%	5.8%	6.7%	6.4%	8.1%
West Virginia	9.9%	8.8%	10.0%	7.3%	7.4%	-25.5%
Wisconsin	10.4%	11.4%	11.5%	9.7%	10.8%	3.5%
Wyoming	15.4%	10.5%	15.8%	12.0%	12.4%	-19.9%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table IV–8. Outcome 5.1a: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in Less Than 12 Months, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	5.3%	3.7%	4.3%	5.3%	3.8%	-28.7%
Alaska	1.6%	2.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	-100.0%
Arizona	4.7%	4.0%	4.1%	5.0%	6.2%	31.3%
Arkansas	8.7%	5.1%	8.6%	6.1%	5.9%	-31.8%
California	4.6%	4.9%	4.5%	3.9%	3.4%	-25.7%
Colorado	6.7%	6.5%	4.8%	6.3%	5.9%	-12.3%
Connecticut	4.1%	2.0%	5.6%	4.5%	4.8%	16.9%
Delaware	4.8%	5.1%	5.1%	7.3%	7.9%	65.8%
District of Columbia	2.8%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	-100.0%
Florida	15.4%	15.0%	13.9%	12.7%	10.5%	-31.8%
Georgia	2.5%	2.2%	2.6%	2.8%	1.6%	-37.9%
Hawaii	7.6%	8.0%	8.1%	6.1%	6.7%	-11.9%
Idaho	6.2%	1.0%	2.3%	1.6%	2.1%	-65.3%
Illinois	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	-7.3%
Indiana	3.2%	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	1.5%	-54.6%
Iowa	7.9%	5.6%	5.1%	5.3%	4.3%	-45.0%
Kansas	2.1%	1.7%	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	-68.5%
Kentucky	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	-19.1%
Louisiana	4.0%	2.1%	3.3%	0.8%	1.2%	-69.6%
Maine	4.2%	1.2%	1.0%	1.8%	2.0%	-51.1%
Maryland	3.7%	2.7%	3.7%	2.3%	2.9%	-21.7%
Massachusetts	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	0.7%	-29.6%
Michigan	6.8%	5.5%	5.5%	4.4%	3.5%	-48.4%
Minnesota	8.2%	7.3%	6.2%	4.7%	5.6%	-31.3%
Mississippi	1.6%	1.9%	3.8%	1.4%	1.4%	-13.0%
Missouri	6.1%	8.1%	4.4%	6.2%	5.3%	-14.1%
Montana	2.1%	0.0%	0.4%	3.3%	1.0%	-52.2%
Nebraska	4.1%	3.1%	3.5%	5.6%	4.3%	4.4%
Nevada	1.3%	3.1%	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	43.6%
New Hampshire	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
New Jersey	1.9%	2.7%	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	13.1%
New Mexico	2.2%	2.0%	0.6%	1.3%	0.7%	-67.2%
New York	1.9%	2.1%	1.6%	2.0%	1.5%	-20.8%
North Carolina	4.9%	3.1%	4.2%	5.2%	3.6%	-26.8%
North Dakota	2.9%	4.5%	5.1%	4.2%	0.6%	-77.8%
Ohio	5.5%	4.6%	3.8%	4.2%	4.5%	-17.0%
Oklahoma	4.1%	4.7%	6.5%	6.2%	7.1%	71.8%
Oregon	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%	0.3%	-14.8%
Pennsylvania	3.5%	3.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	-25.0%
Rhode Island	5.4%	3.3%	4.3%	4.8%	3.5%	-35.4%
South Carolina	4.7%	4.3%	2.8%	2.1%	1.6%	-66.1%
South Dakota	1.9%	0.0%	1.8%	1.1%	2.2%	14.5%
Tennessee	10.3%	5.5%	7.6%	8.6%	9.8%	-5.1%
Texas	3.2%	4.0%	3.5%	3.5%	2.8%	-12.3%
Utah	28.3%	28.2%	28.0%	27.0%	24.1%	-14.9%
Vermont	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%	3.4%	1.7%	-59.8%
Virginia	2.1%	3.3%	3.4%	2.2%	3.9%	79.7%
Washington	1.7%	2.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	-24.1%
West Virginia	6.3%	8.1%	6.3%	6.3%	7.1%	13.2%
Wisconsin	10.0%	6.0%	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	-55.3%
Wyoming	1.4%	4.1%	13.6%	4.9%	2.7%	86.7%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table IV–9. Outcome 5.1b: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	25.2%	31.4%	31.4%	36.5%	35.3%	39.9%
Alaska	34.2%	24.7%	32.5%	14.5%	16.9%	-50.8%
Arizona	51.1%	45.5%	43.9%	44.9%	43.3%	-15.4%
Arkansas	48.0%	47.1%	44.8%	50.5%	47.3%	-1.3%
California	33.3%	32.4%	30.8%	29.4%	29.8%	-10.4%
Colorado	51.6%	46.5%	47.3%	50.3%	41.3%	-20.1%
Connecticut	30.6%	31.3%	36.8%	41.3%	35.8%	17.0%
Delaware	28.6%	32.9%	39.4%	37.6%	36.0%	25.9%
District of Columbia	16.8%	31.0%	19.6%	12.6%	26.3%	56.1%
Florida	35.9%	38.2%	37.5%	38.6%	36.3%	1.0%
Georgia	29.5%	26.4%	25.3%	22.3%	19.8%	-33.0%
Hawaii	33.6%	32.4%	44.3%	41.8%	41.7%	24.0%
Idaho	40.3%	43.8%	43.0%	34.6%	38.0%	-5.6%
Illinois	6.1%	7.3%	9.2%	9.7%	12.7%	106.8%
Indiana	21.7%	18.2%	18.9%	18.1%	16.6%	-23.6%
Iowa	49.7%	53.3%	50.9%	56.0%	51.7%	4.2%
Kansas	28.2%	23.3%	21.5%	19.3%	17.3%	-38.4%
Kentucky	19.8%	15.8%	13.0%	15.9%	14.5%	-26.8%
Louisiana	32.9%	43.1%	42.0%	30.6%	29.2%	-11.2%
Maine	34.3%	25.2%	21.8%	28.6%	35.8%	4.5%
Maryland	28.0%	35.1%	24.7%	25.9%	27.7%	-1.4%
Massachusetts	29.4%	25.1%	19.0%	13.5%	11.9%	-59.5%
Michigan	39.9%	33.8%	29.9%	31.7%	33.6%	-15.7%
Minnesota	51.4%	48.0%	49.5%	48.3%	40.1%	-21.9%
Mississippi	20.1%	17.4%	13.4%	19.5%	15.5%	-22.6%
Missouri	31.0%	30.9%	34.5%	29.3%	31.6%	2.0%
Montana	16.4%	17.3%	17.9%	20.4%	15.6%	-4.9%
Nebraska	26.2%	29.8%	34.6%	25.5%	32.9%	25.7%
Nevada	28.6%	29.8%	27.7%	30.6%	26.2%	-8.4%
New Hampshire	28.2%	18.9%	10.6%	29.4%	29.4%	4.1%
New Jersey	21.8%	19.3%	22.1%	21.5%	21.5%	-1.4%
New Mexico	31.4%	26.6%	19.3%	26.4%	21.8%	-30.4%
New York	12.7%	12.3%	11.8%	11.2%	12.2%	-4.3%
North Carolina	29.3%	29.2%	27.3%	28.1%	28.0%	-4.6%
North Dakota	22.1%	30.8%	21.7%	17.5%	15.4%	-30.4%
Ohio	29.8%	25.4%	26.2%	27.2%	27.6%	-7.4%
Oklahoma	28.8%	28.8%	29.5%	34.1%	38.3%	33.1%
Oregon	14.5%	16.0%	12.5%	10.5%	11.6%	-20.1%
Pennsylvania	32.5%	29.3%	29.1%	28.7%	26.6%	-18.3%
Rhode Island	36.6%	32.7%	35.3%	36.3%	35.2%	-4.0%
South Carolina	29.4%	31.3%	24.6%	19.8%	20.4%	-30.7%
South Dakota	33.5%	23.3%	16.5%	35.6%	25.5%	-23.9%
Tennessee	36.0%	35.8%	37.5%	38.8%	38.5%	6.8%
Texas	46.6%	50.3%	49.5%	50.0%	53.8%	15.4%
Utah	49.4%	51.6%	53.1%	58.6%	56.2%	13.6%
Vermont	55.6%	43.1%	50.0%	35.7%	28.7%	-48.3%
Virginia	34.6%	32.9%	30.1%	30.2%	29.9%	-13.5%
Washington	27.4%	28.9%	25.6%	21.2%	21.2%	-22.4%
West Virginia	47.7%	51.6%	54.1%	50.3%	51.9%	8.8%
Wisconsin	22.9%	25.5%	25.6%	22.3%	18.8%	-17.9%
Wyoming	27.1%	21.6%	28.4%	30.5%	20.0%	-26.3%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

# 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 Report, placement setting stability is defined as a child having had two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode. 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.

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

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

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Pub. L. 115–123) was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (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).<sup>77 78</sup> According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System 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 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.<sup>79</sup>

Approximately 47,000 children and youth had a current placement setting reported as being in congregate care (i.e., either a group home or institution) in 2018. 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 fiscal year (FY). Overall, a median of 10.5 percent of children across states were in congregate care at the end of 2018.

<sup>77</sup> For more information on the Family First Prevention Services Act, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/whats-new>.

<sup>78</sup> Currently, AFCARS does not have information regarding the placement settings provisions as amended by the Family First Prevention Services Act (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>.

<sup>79</sup> The Children’s Bureau released a data brief in 2015 on the use of group homes and institutions (i.e., congregate care placements) in child welfare that underscores the importance of placing children age 12 and younger in settings that are most appropriate to meet their needs, including (and especially) family-like settings. The brief can be accessed on the Children’s Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/congregate-care-brief>.

**Table V–1. Characteristics of Children in Group Homes or Institution, 2018 (N=52)\***

Characteristics**	Group Home	Institution
Male**	60% (0–100%)	60% (52–80%)
Female**	40% (0–64%)	40% (20–48%)
Age at Entry (Years)	13.0	13.0
Length of Stay in Care (Months)	15.0	14.6
Length of Stay in Current Setting (Months)	3.9	3.8
Diagnosed Disability**	38% (0–92%)	44% (0–92%)
Case Goal of Long-Term Foster Care**	1% (0–26%)	3% (0–19%)

\*This table displays data for children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.

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

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 length of stay for children in their current placement setting was 3.9 months for children in group homes and 3.8 months for children in institutions. The proportion of children in congregate care with a diagnosed disability ranged widely across states, with a median of 38 percent for group homes and 44 percent for institutions. Lastly, a relatively small percentage of children in either setting had a case goal of long-term foster care.<sup>80</sup> As states implement policies and strategies in response to updates in federal child welfare policy as a result of the Family First Prevention Services Act, 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–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.

**Table V–2. Range of State Performance, 2018  
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=51)	81.1%	83.5%	87.3%	67.8–90.6%
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)	57.8%	65.8%	71.3%	46.1–83.2%
Measure 6.1c: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51)	33.2%	41.1%	45.4%	16.7–52.7%
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)**	2.0%	3.1%	4.6%	0.8–9.7%

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

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

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 2018, with a national median performance of 83.5 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 83.5 percent for children in foster care for less than 12 months to

<sup>80</sup> 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>.

65.8 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 41.1 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.<sup>81</sup> Research also indicates that children who experience early placement stability experience fewer behavioral problems and better outcomes.<sup>82</sup>

In about one-half of states in 2018, 3.1 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.

Outcome Measures**	Median Performance by Year***					Improved in Performance	Declined in Performance
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
Measure 6.1a: Percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings. (N=51)****	86.0%	84.8%	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%	4 states (8%)	5 states (10%)
Measure 6.1b: Percentage of children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings. (N=51)****	65.4%	63.3%	65.1%	65.8%	65.8%	17 states (33%)	9 states (18%)
Measure 6.1c: Percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings. (N=51)	35.1%	35.9%	39.0%	41.3%	41.1%	32 states (63%)	5 states (10%)
Measure 7.1: Percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions. (N=51)*****	3.9%	3.7%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%	33 states (65%)	12 states (22%)

\*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.

\*\*Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in Table V–2 and Appendix B.

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

\*\*\*\*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.

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

As indicated by Table V–3, between 2014 and 2018, and particularly over the past 3 years, 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 2.9 percent, with the majority of states (82 percent) demonstrating no meaningful change in performance. Similarly, there was minimal change for children in care more than 12 months but less than 24 months (Measure 6.1b), with only an increase of .6 percent over 5 years; however, 33 percent of states demonstrated an improvement in performance during this timeframe.

<sup>81</sup> Noonan, K., Rubin, D., Mekonnen, R., Zlotnik, S., & O’Reilly, A. (2009). Securing child safety, well-being, and permanency through placement stability in foster care. *Evidence to Action*, 1. Retrieved from <https://policylab.chop.edu/evidence-action-brief/securing-child-safety-well-being-and-permanency-through-placement-stability>.

<sup>82</sup> 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. doi: 10.1542/peds.2006-1995

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 35.1 percent in 2014 to 41.1 percent in 2018—a 17.1-percent increase. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of states demonstrated improvement on this measure, and only 5 states (10 percent) declined in performance.

While states have been less successful overall at achieving placement setting stability for children in care longer than 12 months, the overall improvement of performance on this measure at the longer timeframes is encouraging.

**National performance on achieving placement stability for children who have been in care for 24 months or longer improved by 17.1 percent between 2014 and 2018.**

The 2018 data showed improvement on the percentage of children age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (Measure 7.1). The national median decreased from 3.9 percent in 2014 to 3.1 percent in 2018—a 20.5-percent decline over 5 years. Additionally, the majority of states (65 percent) reported an improvement in performance, with 22 percent reporting 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 the states have shown meaningful improvement over the past 5 years on this measure. With the enactment of the Family First Prevention Services Act, 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, 2018 (N=52)**

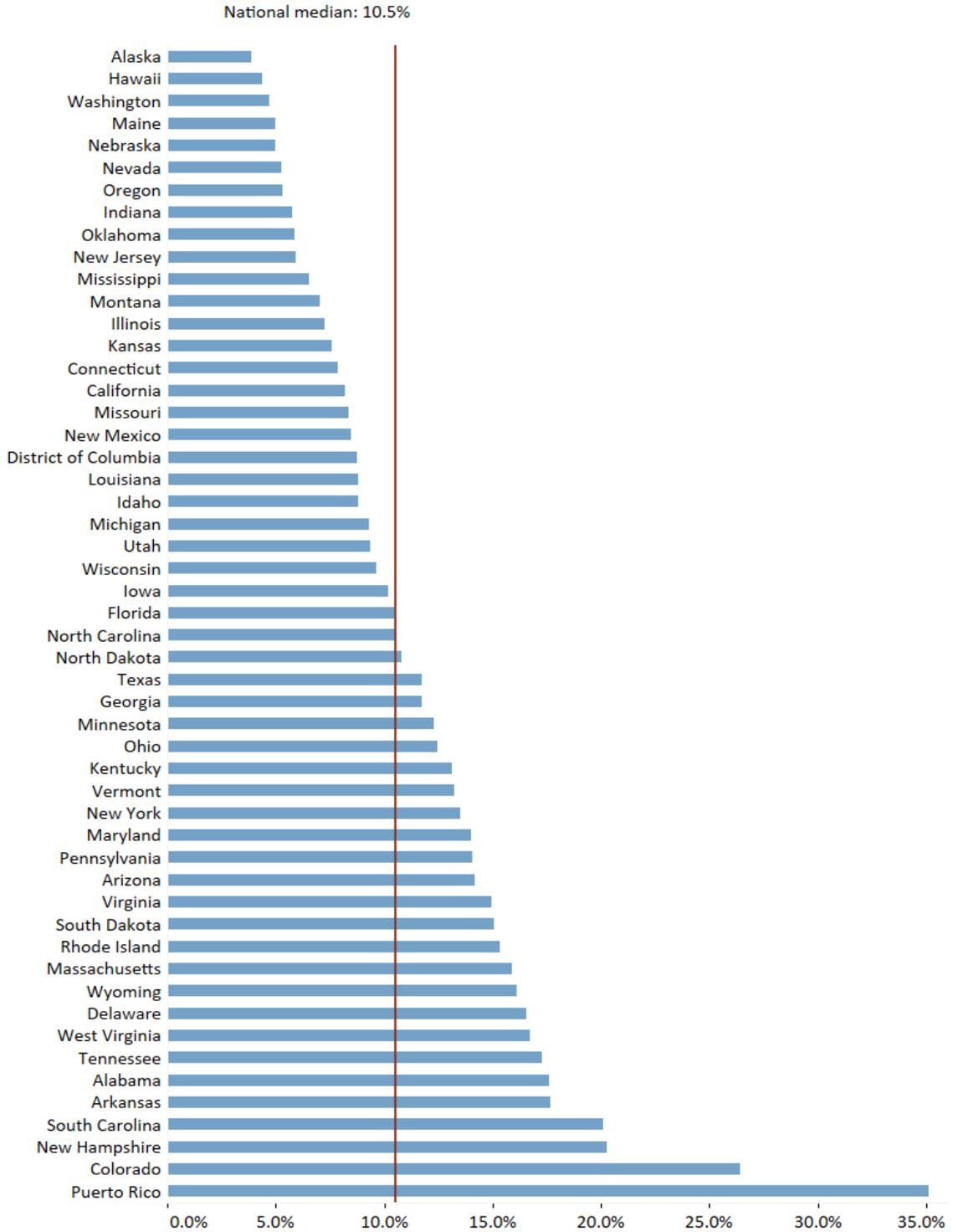


Figure V-2. Percentage of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2018 (N=51)\*

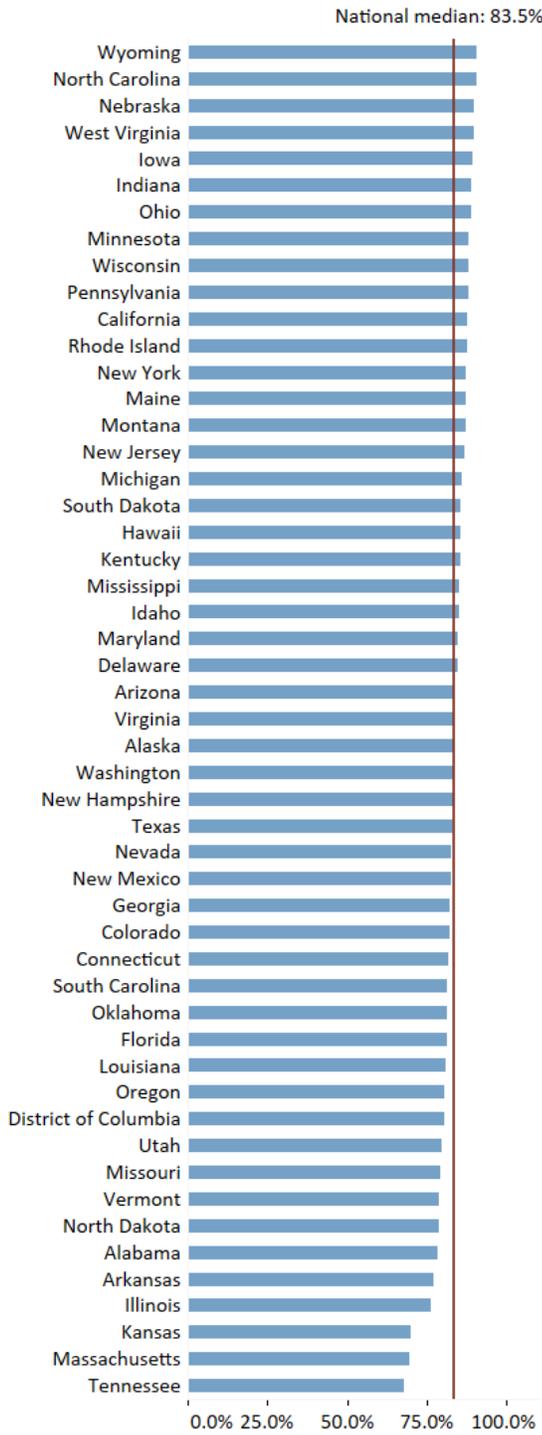
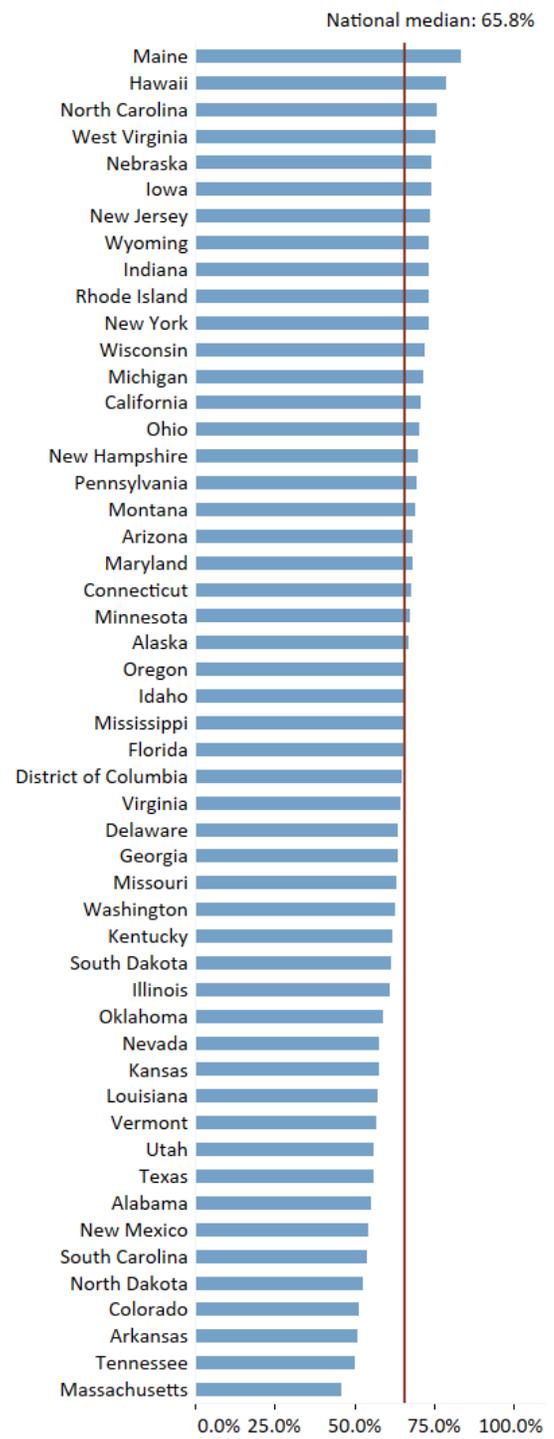


Figure V-3. Percentage of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2018 (N=51)\*



\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure V-4. Percentage of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2018 (N=51)\*

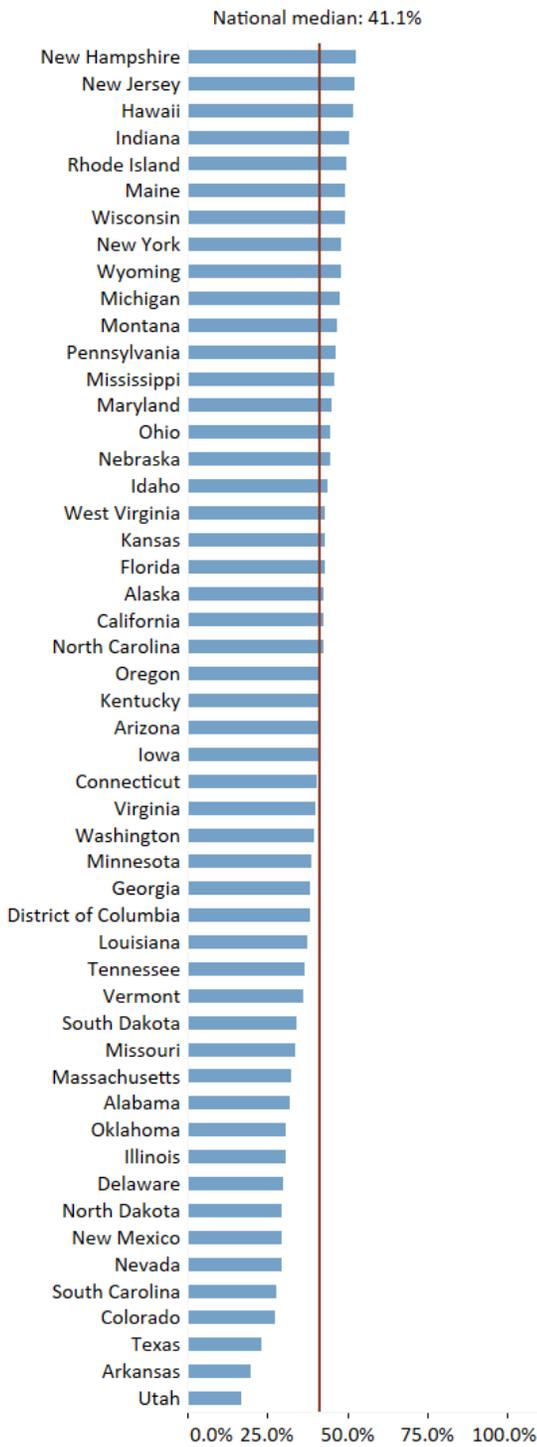
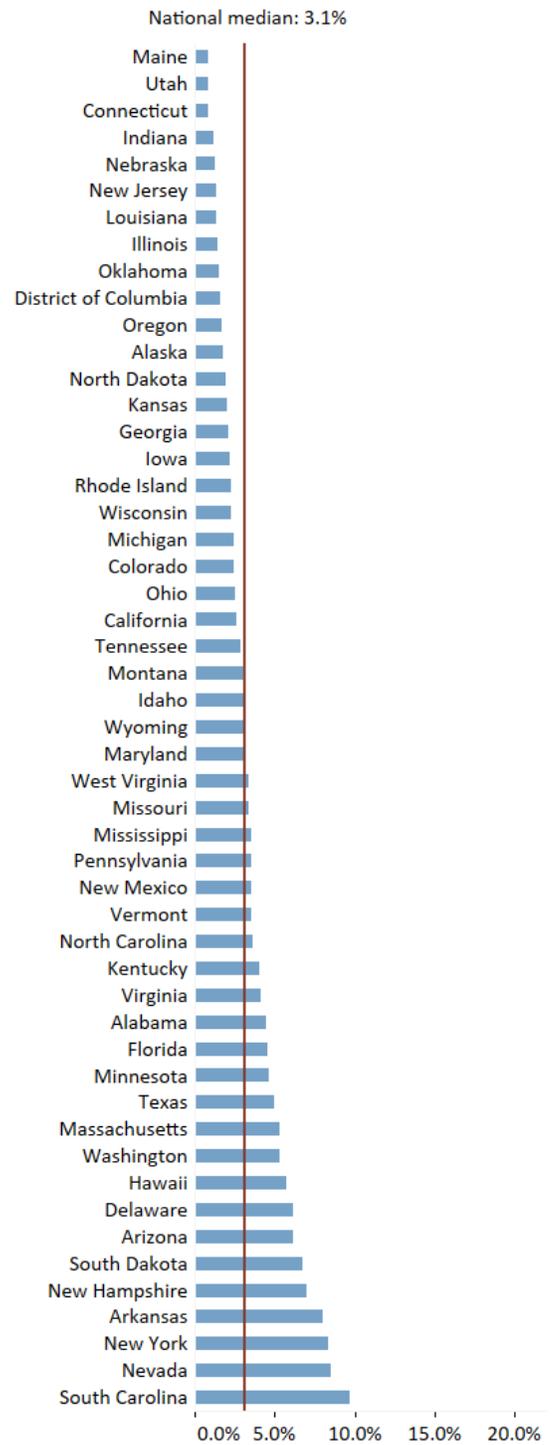


Figure V-5. Percentage of Children Age 12 and Under Placed in Group Homes or Institutions, 2018 (N=51)\*, \*\*



\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.  
 \*\*For this measure, a lower value indicates better performance.

**Table V–4. Outcome 6.1a: Percentage of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	81.0%	79.5%	78.8%	76.9%	78.3%	-3.3%
Alaska	81.6%	80.8%	82.2%	82.5%	83.3%	2.2%
Arizona	83.3%	83.2%	81.6%	82.5%	83.5%	0.3%
Arkansas	75.0%	72.7%	72.1%	74.1%	77.3%	3.2%
California	84.7%	84.2%	84.6%	87.9%	87.8%	3.6%
Colorado	84.0%	84.2%	83.8%	83.2%	82.1%	-2.2%
Connecticut	90.5%	88.6%	87.3%	82.0%	81.9%	-9.5%
Delaware	86.3%	85.7%	83.3%	84.8%	84.7%	-1.9%
District of Columbia	88.9%	86.1%	81.9%	84.6%	80.6%	-9.4%
Florida	85.4%	84.8%	83.2%	82.2%	81.3%	-4.8%
Georgia	79.0%	75.8%	81.5%	81.5%	82.2%	4.0%
Hawaii	87.3%	87.5%	89.1%	89.4%	85.6%	-1.9%
Idaho	89.2%	88.3%	87.4%	87.6%	85.1%	-4.6%
Illinois	58.9%	69.4%	78.4%	76.9%	76.3%	29.6%
Indiana	89.6%	89.8%	89.8%	89.5%	89.0%	-0.7%
Iowa	86.2%	87.2%	89.3%	90.1%	89.3%	3.6%
Kansas	79.5%	78.3%	76.2%	72.4%	69.9%	-12.2%
Kentucky	88.1%	87.3%	86.7%	85.5%	85.6%	-2.8%
Louisiana	82.8%	83.5%	82.7%	82.6%	80.9%	-2.3%
Maine	89.2%	89.9%	89.9%	91.0%	87.3%	-2.1%
Maryland	87.8%	87.5%	87.3%	85.9%	84.8%	-3.4%
Massachusetts	76.9%	74.5%	70.8%	68.5%	69.7%	-9.3%
Michigan	88.4%	88.1%	87.7%	87.2%	86.1%	-2.6%
Minnesota	87.4%	87.1%	87.2%	87.7%	88.3%	1.0%
Mississippi	80.0%	80.1%	83.2%	84.1%	85.2%	6.5%
Missouri	79.7%	79.8%	78.2%	80.2%	79.2%	-0.7%
Montana	86.9%	86.8%	86.0%	86.2%	87.1%	0.2%
Nebraska	89.2%	91.9%	89.9%	89.8%	89.8%	0.7%
Nevada	79.9%	81.5%	81.6%	81.5%	82.6%	3.4%
New Hampshire	85.2%	83.7%	85.3%	85.3%	83.3%	-2.3%
New Jersey	88.3%	87.3%	88.2%	87.3%	86.9%	-1.6%
New Mexico	82.7%	81.7%	82.3%	84.4%	82.6%	-0.2%
New York	90.5%	89.6%	88.7%	88.6%	87.4%	-3.4%
North Carolina	91.4%	90.5%	92.1%	91.0%	90.5%	-1.0%
North Dakota	79.5%	81.4%	80.6%	81.3%	78.8%	-0.9%
Ohio	87.8%	88.0%	88.5%	89.2%	88.9%	1.3%
Oklahoma	77.4%	72.8%	76.3%	77.4%	81.5%	5.3%
Oregon	86.6%	84.0%	83.3%	82.1%	80.6%	-6.9%
Pennsylvania	88.0%	86.2%	86.8%	87.1%	87.9%	-0.1%
Rhode Island	88.2%	88.8%	89.5%	88.9%	87.5%	-0.8%
South Carolina	84.8%	83.6%	82.7%	82.4%	81.5%	-3.9%
South Dakota	87.4%	88.4%	84.7%	83.0%	85.6%	-2.0%
Tennessee	68.3%	70.6%	67.0%	67.9%	67.8%	-0.7%
Texas	85.0%	84.1%	84.0%	83.5%	83.1%	-2.2%
Utah	73.3%	78.2%	77.5%	78.3%	79.7%	8.6%
Vermont	78.7%	78.0%	80.6%	74.3%	78.9%	0.2%
Virginia	86.0%	85.7%	85.1%	84.9%	83.5%	-2.9%
Washington	83.3%	81.0%	80.8%	81.5%	83.3%	-0.1%
West Virginia	87.4%	89.4%	89.3%	90.9%	89.7%	2.6%
Wisconsin	86.7%	87.1%	86.7%	87.8%	88.1%	1.7%
Wyoming	90.7%	89.7%	91.7%	93.0%	90.6%	-0.1%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**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, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	58.6%	56.0%	54.0%	52.2%	55.4%	-5.5%
Alaska	67.6%	63.2%	62.9%	64.8%	67.0%	-0.8%
Arizona	68.8%	70.2%	69.4%	65.1%	68.3%	-0.7%
Arkansas	48.2%	44.9%	49.3%	47.1%	51.2%	6.2%
California	65.4%	65.7%	66.1%	70.1%	70.8%	8.3%
Colorado	55.9%	52.8%	52.2%	51.6%	51.3%	-8.2%
Connecticut	74.2%	77.1%	75.7%	73.1%	67.7%	-8.8%
Delaware	66.0%	62.1%	64.4%	59.5%	63.8%	-3.3%
District of Columbia	62.6%	70.9%	71.0%	63.4%	65.0%	3.9%
Florida	65.8%	66.7%	68.2%	66.8%	65.2%	-0.9%
Georgia	53.7%	51.7%	56.8%	61.2%	63.5%	18.2%
Hawaii	70.1%	68.6%	70.0%	73.2%	78.8%	12.4%
Idaho	66.9%	68.6%	68.5%	68.4%	65.9%	-1.5%
Illinois	48.2%	55.7%	59.7%	60.3%	61.3%	27.2%
Indiana	72.2%	72.7%	72.4%	72.9%	73.4%	1.6%
Iowa	63.9%	63.3%	72.4%	74.0%	74.3%	16.2%
Kansas	64.4%	60.0%	62.0%	60.2%	57.8%	-10.2%
Kentucky	64.5%	62.2%	63.4%	63.5%	61.9%	-4.0%
Louisiana	61.3%	58.8%	57.9%	58.1%	57.2%	-6.8%
Maine	76.9%	79.6%	80.0%	80.0%	83.2%	8.2%
Maryland	70.2%	70.3%	71.3%	71.0%	68.3%	-2.7%
Massachusetts	57.1%	54.5%	52.6%	48.5%	46.1%	-19.3%
Michigan	71.6%	72.2%	73.3%	73.7%	71.8%	0.4%
Minnesota	62.9%	63.2%	64.5%	65.8%	67.6%	7.5%
Mississippi	58.8%	59.5%	63.1%	66.9%	65.8%	11.9%
Missouri	62.0%	60.0%	60.0%	61.5%	63.4%	2.2%
Montana	67.9%	66.3%	69.6%	68.5%	69.0%	1.7%
Nebraska	69.2%	77.8%	76.2%	74.7%	74.3%	7.3%
Nevada	59.3%	58.3%	56.8%	54.9%	57.8%	-2.5%
New Hampshire	63.1%	61.2%	65.7%	66.7%	69.8%	10.5%
New Jersey	72.2%	73.8%	73.7%	74.4%	73.9%	2.3%
New Mexico	48.7%	50.3%	50.6%	51.9%	54.4%	11.8%
New York	73.7%	72.7%	72.7%	72.4%	73.3%	-0.6%
North Carolina	75.5%	75.7%	75.7%	77.2%	76.0%	0.6%
North Dakota	50.7%	53.9%	49.6%	51.3%	52.5%	3.6%
Ohio	68.5%	66.7%	69.9%	70.3%	70.2%	2.6%
Oklahoma	54.0%	53.8%	53.5%	58.1%	59.1%	9.5%
Oregon	69.4%	68.0%	65.1%	65.9%	66.0%	-4.9%
Pennsylvania	68.6%	66.8%	68.0%	68.5%	69.4%	1.3%
Rhode Island	75.5%	74.9%	74.0%	74.9%	73.3%	-2.9%
South Carolina	58.2%	58.1%	55.9%	53.8%	53.8%	-7.7%
South Dakota	62.9%	61.1%	66.5%	67.8%	61.6%	-2.1%
Tennessee	54.5%	52.9%	53.1%	51.5%	50.3%	-7.8%
Texas	57.6%	57.8%	57.0%	56.8%	56.0%	-2.8%
Utah	44.0%	48.7%	52.6%	53.3%	56.2%	27.6%
Vermont	50.4%	60.4%	59.4%	60.2%	57.0%	13.0%
Virginia	66.2%	64.7%	65.0%	65.6%	64.7%	-2.3%
Washington	66.3%	65.6%	62.7%	63.1%	63.0%	-5.0%
West Virginia	67.6%	67.5%	70.1%	71.4%	75.3%	11.3%
Wisconsin	70.4%	70.7%	70.6%	72.0%	72.0%	2.2%
Wyoming	67.0%	68.5%	69.5%	70.6%	73.5%	9.7%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table V–6. Outcome 6.1c: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	32.7%	27.5%	27.7%	31.7%	32.0%	-2.1%
Alaska	30.2%	35.2%	40.3%	42.3%	42.6%	40.9%
Arizona	42.2%	44.0%	47.0%	44.7%	41.1%	-2.6%
Arkansas	21.0%	19.9%	21.4%	23.6%	19.7%	-6.5%
California	35.7%	37.6%	39.6%	42.4%	42.5%	19.1%
Colorado	25.0%	25.2%	27.2%	26.5%	27.2%	8.8%
Connecticut	35.1%	37.7%	39.7%	39.5%	40.5%	15.4%
Delaware	32.0%	31.3%	32.1%	31.9%	29.9%	-6.6%
District of Columbia	25.3%	28.7%	33.5%	42.2%	38.3%	51.1%
Florida	34.5%	37.1%	39.0%	41.5%	42.9%	24.4%
Georgia	32.5%	32.9%	35.7%	36.8%	38.3%	18.0%
Hawaii	49.3%	52.8%	53.1%	53.3%	51.9%	5.2%
Idaho	33.0%	31.3%	36.5%	40.9%	43.9%	32.9%
Illinois	31.2%	32.5%	31.3%	30.4%	30.7%	-1.6%
Indiana	43.0%	46.9%	48.3%	49.7%	50.5%	17.3%
Iowa	27.2%	26.9%	32.6%	37.2%	40.9%	50.4%
Kansas	41.7%	42.3%	42.4%	41.1%	43.0%	3.0%
Kentucky	44.0%	39.9%	41.5%	43.5%	41.4%	-6.0%
Louisiana	34.1%	35.2%	34.2%	36.5%	37.7%	10.6%
Maine	44.2%	52.4%	52.8%	52.6%	49.3%	11.5%
Maryland	42.3%	41.7%	42.7%	44.7%	44.9%	6.1%
Massachusetts	29.2%	32.7%	34.1%	33.9%	32.5%	11.4%
Michigan	43.8%	42.5%	44.1%	46.6%	47.4%	8.2%
Minnesota	32.0%	35.0%	36.8%	37.3%	38.7%	21.0%
Mississippi	33.6%	35.6%	36.9%	42.6%	45.8%	36.4%
Missouri	33.4%	33.0%	32.9%	32.6%	33.9%	1.5%
Montana	41.8%	40.9%	40.1%	44.9%	46.7%	11.7%
Nebraska	34.3%	39.3%	43.9%	43.1%	44.5%	29.7%
Nevada	33.1%	29.4%	30.7%	29.1%	29.3%	-11.5%
New Hampshire	40.7%	40.6%	42.8%	48.2%	52.7%	29.5%
New Jersey	53.2%	52.8%	52.4%	53.1%	52.2%	-1.8%
New Mexico	22.1%	24.4%	25.9%	28.7%	29.6%	33.8%
New York	46.4%	47.9%	49.5%	49.0%	48.1%	3.8%
North Carolina	43.9%	43.9%	44.4%	45.0%	42.4%	-3.2%
North Dakota	40.5%	29.1%	29.2%	27.4%	29.7%	-26.8%
Ohio	35.2%	35.9%	41.7%	44.9%	44.8%	27.4%
Oklahoma	27.6%	29.2%	30.5%	28.7%	30.9%	12.0%
Oregon	40.9%	39.6%	40.5%	41.5%	41.5%	1.4%
Pennsylvania	44.4%	44.6%	43.3%	44.1%	46.3%	4.3%
Rhode Island	41.5%	46.2%	49.0%	49.6%	49.9%	20.4%
South Carolina	27.1%	30.8%	32.7%	33.5%	27.7%	2.2%
South Dakota	26.8%	27.4%	27.7%	31.8%	34.1%	27.2%
Tennessee	36.3%	37.8%	36.6%	35.0%	36.6%	0.9%
Texas	23.3%	22.9%	22.6%	21.7%	23.2%	-0.5%
Utah	15.7%	14.2%	13.0%	15.5%	16.7%	6.6%
Vermont	25.4%	24.6%	32.9%	36.6%	36.4%	43.5%
Virginia	37.7%	38.6%	40.2%	40.5%	39.8%	5.7%
Washington	41.3%	41.0%	40.4%	39.6%	39.5%	-4.2%
West Virginia	38.5%	35.7%	37.1%	41.5%	43.0%	11.9%
Wisconsin	45.8%	47.0%	48.5%	49.5%	49.2%	7.4%
Wyoming	38.8%	44.9%	41.2%	47.6%	48.0%	24.0%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

**Table V–7. Outcome 7.1: Percentage of Children Age 12 or Younger in Group Homes or Institutions, 2014–2018 (N=51)\***

State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change in Performance, 2014–2018**
Alabama	4.0%	5.3%	5.0%	5.3%	4.4%	9.8%
Alaska	2.3%	2.6%	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	-22.9%
Arizona	8.4%	10.4%	9.8%	8.0%	6.2%	-26.9%
Arkansas	14.1%	14.0%	12.2%	8.8%	8.0%	-43.6%
California	2.6%	2.8%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%	-0.1%
Colorado	3.1%	4.0%	4.0%	3.7%	2.5%	-20.1%
Connecticut	2.7%	2.4%	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	-68.8%
Delaware	7.8%	2.4%	4.7%	1.9%	6.2%	-20.8%
District of Columbia	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%	1.6%	124.8%
Florida	5.4%	5.4%	5.1%	5.2%	4.5%	-15.7%
Georgia	3.9%	4.4%	3.2%	2.6%	2.1%	-44.9%
Hawaii	6.0%	4.0%	5.1%	4.7%	5.7%	-4.8%
Idaho	2.9%	3.8%	2.6%	3.0%	3.1%	7.6%
Illinois	2.8%	2.1%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	-47.9%
Indiana	1.6%	1.5%	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	-24.3%
Iowa	2.9%	2.0%	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%	-22.0%
Kansas	1.2%	1.0%	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	64.9%
Kentucky	5.2%	4.8%	4.7%	3.5%	4.0%	-22.7%
Louisiana	0.9%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	58.3%
Maine	1.5%	0.7%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	-45.0%
Maryland	3.0%	2.7%	1.9%	2.6%	3.1%	3.2%
Massachusetts	5.3%	6.3%	5.9%	6.1%	5.3%	0.8%
Michigan	1.5%	1.1%	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	58.6%
Minnesota	7.7%	5.8%	4.9%	5.1%	4.6%	-40.0%
Mississippi	6.1%	6.1%	5.7%	3.9%	3.6%	-41.9%
Missouri	4.2%	3.5%	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	-20.3%
Montana	5.4%	4.2%	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	-43.5%
Nebraska	0.7%	1.1%	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	68.9%
Nevada	9.4%	11.4%	13.2%	8.9%	8.5%	-9.7%
New Hampshire	8.4%	10.2%	5.3%	4.3%	7.0%	-16.8%
New Jersey	1.4%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	-3.3%
New Mexico	4.1%	5.0%	5.4%	4.9%	3.6%	-13.1%
New York	5.4%	6.0%	7.3%	8.7%	8.3%	53.2%
North Carolina	4.3%	3.7%	4.5%	4.2%	3.6%	-15.8%
North Dakota	4.2%	3.6%	2.2%	2.1%	1.9%	-55.1%
Ohio	2.2%	2.5%	2.6%	2.3%	2.5%	11.8%
Oklahoma	5.3%	3.3%	1.8%	1.4%	1.5%	-71.8%
Oregon	2.2%	1.7%	1.3%	1.6%	1.7%	-25.1%
Pennsylvania	3.8%	3.9%	3.1%	3.1%	3.6%	-6.0%
Rhode Island	6.9%	6.5%	4.5%	3.1%	2.3%	-67.0%
South Carolina	21.9%	22.9%	16.7%	9.8%	9.7%	-55.6%
South Dakota	9.3%	7.7%	9.3%	9.7%	6.8%	-26.9%
Tennessee	2.4%	2.5%	3.2%	2.7%	2.8%	17.2%
Texas	8.0%	6.8%	5.0%	5.2%	4.9%	-38.3%
Utah	1.4%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	-39.5%
Vermont	5.0%	4.0%	5.1%	3.0%	3.6%	-28.5%
Virginia	3.5%	4.6%	4.8%	5.9%	4.2%	17.6%
Washington	1.6%	2.2%	2.5%	3.7%	5.3%	242.3%
West Virginia	4.6%	4.9%	3.4%	2.8%	3.3%	-27.3%
Wisconsin	3.2%	3.5%	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%	-28.0%
Wyoming	3.1%	2.7%	3.6%	2.6%	3.1%	1.7%

\*Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

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

# Chapter VI: State Comments

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.

# Colorado

## STATE COMMENT

**Joe Homlar, Director**  
**Division of Child Welfare**  
**Colorado Office of Children, Youth & Families**

The following are Colorado's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The State of Colorado is continuously working towards improving the collection of data and improving programming to improve the welfare of children and families. Colorado recognizes the need for improvements and has taken action to address challenges identified through data.

Colorado has an increase in the length of stay in foster care because of the significant efforts around re-entry ensuring that when children return home that this is done with all the supports in place to meet the family's needs. Kinship care is advocated at the very beginning of cases and often time kinship providers in emergency placements do not have the resources that are needed to care for the children/youth that are placed with them, and the state is actively working on providing assistance. One area under review is when youth who are served by the juvenile justice system that require high levels of care and can be difficult to place leading to run away and returns to care with new placements each time.

Colorado has recognized that re-entry into care is a significant problem and begun to engage in work reviewing all children/youth who re-enter monthly through CSTAT, our department's quality management program. Reviews identified the majority of these cases are either reunifications or kinship placements resulting in two projects: Colorado was awarded Federal funding for a Kinship Navigator grant to support kinship placements and has engaged in a Sustained Permanency Project to provide a data model and coaching model to pilot counties to work to reduce re-entry in Colorado.

Additionally, Colorado has implemented a workgroup regarding the increase in co-sleeping deaths in order to gain a better understanding of this issue and determine appropriate recommendations. Related to delays between Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) and finalization of adoptions, an analysis showed that delays post-TPR were attributed in large part to an extended appeals process. The discovery led to a workgroup appointed by the Colorado Supreme Court to further analyze the issue and provide recommendations.

Colorado has been in the process of modernizing the SACWIS system to increase data entry and quality of data while easing burden on caseworkers. Currently disability information is not captured in our AFCARS foster care data since 2016. We are actively working to find out what changed in 2017, possibly in unforeseen circumstance due to SACWIS modernization. We do however capture the data for children who have been adopted, a much smaller proportion of the foster care population.

The state of Colorado Division of Child Welfare continues efforts towards improvement in practice and data collection using data-driven reviews and evidence-based practices to improve the lives of Colorado's children, youth, and families.

# Delaware

## STATE COMMENT

**Trenee R. Parker, MA, 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 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The *Child Welfare Outcomes* report for this time period shows a decline in foster care placements between 2017 and 2018. 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)<sup>®</sup> 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 well-being. For children that are in foster care, Delaware has had no child maltreatment between 2014-2018. Delaware has also consistently shown less than 10% re-entry in foster care. Teenagers make up a majority of Delaware's foster care population. Teen placements, particularly in group homes and institutions, have shown an increase as our state's juvenile justice system and child mental health treatment services have pushed deinstitutionalization. Very similar to national statistics, there is also a disproportionate number of African American children in foster care compared to overall population.

Delaware has shown a decrease in the number of maltreatment victims. Throughout this timeframe, 98% 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 a SDM<sup>®</sup> 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 and a slight decrease in children receiving monthly visits.

In 2018, Delaware implemented a new data system. This system is still a work in progress. Data quality errors primarily related to discharge reasons are present in AFCARS reports due to placement episode calculation problems that are still being addressed in the system. Delaware plans to resubmit AFCARS report from the onset of our new system once these errors have been corrected. There was also an issue with NCANDs not correctly mapping emotional maltreatment correctly. Thus, the number of neglect maltreatment incidents is inflated.

# Indiana

## STATE COMMENT

**Terry J. Stigdon, MSN, RN, Director**  
**Indiana Department of Child Services**

The following are Indiana's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

In July 2012, Indiana instituted a new child welfare information system: The Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK). Coinciding with the implementation of MaGIK, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) also developed a new extraction code and mapping documents to effectively collect and organize data for federal reporting requirements. Indiana has engaged in continuous improvement efforts to refine the data collection and mapping process through system modifications and overall enhancements, including a new intake system that launched in February 2016. MaGIK is an umbrella system that has further incorporated services, billing, case management, and the overall data management, organization and extraction components.

### Reports

If a report meets the statutory criteria for child abuse or neglect (Indiana Policy Manual 3.8), the DCS Hotline may recommend to screen in and assign the report to the local office as an immediate, 48-hour, or 5-day response time depending on the type of allegation(s). The local office makes the final decision to screen in or screen out.

DCS does not assign for assessment a referral of alleged child abuse or neglect that does not:

- Meet the statutory definition of child abuse and neglect; and/or
- Contain sufficient information to either identify or locate the child and/or family and initiate an assessment (Indiana Policy Manual 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 review. If a participant has open involvement, the family case manager (FCM), FCM supervisor and the local office will be notified of the new screen-out report.
- Service Request: Reports consist of Safe Haven reports and includes where DCS is being requested to assist (e.g., courtesy interview for another state child protection agency).
- Information and Referral: Source provides information to DCS regarding an open involvement or requests general information (e.g., food pantry, legal aid, etc.).

### Children

As of January 2018, the hotline ceased automatically recommending assessment of all reports with alleged victims under the age of 3. This same month, the hotline began doing an additional supervisor review of all reports recommended for screen-out involving alleged victims under 3. The local offices may still choose to change the recommendation to assess or screen out with approval from their chain of command up to the deputy director of field operations.

### Fatalities

Fatalities are included in the federal fiscal year the assessment was approved by DCS Central Fatality Unit.

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

- Children under the age of 1: The child's death is sudden, unexpected or unexplained, or there are allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Children age 1 or older: The child's death involves allegations of abuse or neglect.

Reports for fatalities can be made from multiple sources, including DCS, law enforcement, fire investigators, emergency medical personnel, Coroners, the Health Department, or hospitals.

# Massachusetts

## STATE COMMENT

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

The following are Massachusetts' comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

While there are multiple factors likely contributing to a year over year increase in Sexual Abuse victims from FFY2017 to FFY2018 in Massachusetts, the state would like to highlight two factors in particular: the state's efforts to address Sex Trafficking (which continues to be included in the Sexual Abuse category as more states ramp up reporting) and situations where a victim was counted multiple times for the same incident.

Since 2014, Massachusetts has engaged in a comprehensive approach 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.
    - The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families' new protective intake policy implemented in 2016 included updates to reflect the agency's decision to receive and screen reports, and investigate trafficking allegations against both caretakers and non-caretakers.
    - 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 of child welfare staff and community partners.
- Maintaining an internal intranet page (available to all child welfare staff) that provides tip and fact sheets related to Human Trafficking.
- Implementing a Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Team model that primarily consists of Child Advocacy Centers, DCF, and law enforcement representatives, and includes numerous community partners.
  - Child Advocacy Centers cover the entire state and there is a Human Trafficking Coordinator within each Center that coordinates child welfare, community, and law enforcement investigations and service responses to ensure the best possible outcomes for children, reduce re-victimization, and improve the process of prosecution.

Additionally, in FFY2018 child victims with supported allegations for both Sexual Abuse and Sex Trafficking in the same incident are being counted twice—this was not the case in FFY2017 where both allegation types were reported via NCANDS as sexual abuse rather than separately.

# Michigan

## STATE COMMENT

**JooYeun Chang, Senior Deputy Director  
Children's Services Agency  
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services**

The following are Michigan's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

### **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 continues to focus efforts on improving our state's performance in outcomes related to child safety, permanency and well-being. Michigan is dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our NCANDS and AFCARS submissions.

Michigan continues to exceed the standard for monthly caseworker-child visitations reporting caseworker visits from the AFCARS population.

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 Human Services**

The following are Minnesota's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments regarding Minnesota's National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), as well as census and caseworker visit data for inclusion in the 2014–2018 Child Welfare Outcomes Report.

Upon review by department staff, additional contextual information is being provided regarding increases in the number of children who were subjects of investigated reports, child maltreatment victims, children in placement, and overall time to permanency.

In FFY2018, Minnesota saw a 2.7 percent decrease in the number of children who were subjects of investigated reports alleging child maltreatment when compared to FFY2017, along with a 10.6 percent decrease in the total number of child maltreatment victims. These declining child maltreatment figures contrast with previous years' data that showed substantial increases in the same figures. Since 2014, statutory changes in the child protection system resulted in a higher percentage of child maltreatment reports being screened in for a child protection response, resulting in more children with determinations of maltreatment. These changes also allowed for greater staffing at the local agencies and improved training for staff. The stabilization and decline of child maltreatment cases may be a reflection of the child protection system finding equilibrium after a period of great change. We will continue to monitor this trend.

Minnesota's child welfare system is experiencing a small decrease in the number of children entering out-of-home care, though the length of time they remain in care is increasing. In part, this increase in the length of time that children are in care may also be the result of the heightened sensitivity by the child welfare system in Minnesota, and is likely related to increases in parental drug use. Data reveals the number of children entering care for reasons of parental drug abuse has increased significantly over the past five years, and the challenges that result from drug addiction make it difficult to achieve permanency for children in care quickly. Though the number of children in foster care has remained steady since FFY2017, the number of children adopted from state care reached an all-time high of 1,284 in FFY2018.

# Missouri

## STATE COMMENT

**Reginald McElhannon, Interim Director  
Children's Division  
Missouri Department of Social Services**

The following are Missouri's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Missouri continues to be dedicated to providing the most accurate data possible through our National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) transmissions. We persist in our efforts to enhance our data systems to thoroughly detail compliance with the mandates of Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and to better serve families.

Child safety is a priority for the Children's Division. Over the past couple of years, Missouri has implemented updates to its central hotline call center to improve reporting and wait times. In addition, Missouri now has an active on line reporting system for mandated reporters. This system is called the Online System for Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting or OSCR. This site is designed to allow mandated reporters the ability to report non-emergency child abuse or neglect to the Missouri Children's Division. Currently, thirty percent of reports made to the hotline are done through the automated system.

Missouri has continued to see an increase in the foster care population during the 2014-2018 time period. The state still has challenges in the areas of timely permanency, court delays in termination of parental rights proceedings until an adoptive home has been found, and areas of the state where cases are not moving in a timely manner.

One strategy Missouri has implemented through the program improvement plan is the Permanency Attorney Initiative. The objective of the initiative is to improve reunification times and safely reducing the number of children in care. At present, the initiative is only in certain areas of the state but is expanding as the addition of attorneys has shown to improve the number of cases that have been able to move to permanency and also has prevented some children from entering care.

Despite the increased number of foster children, Missouri achieved 97% on the frequency of caseworker visits with children during FFY-2019. Missouri has continually maintained the percent of children having visits by caseworkers since 2008. A performance measure report as well as a tracking tool in the electronic case management system allows staff to maintain high frequency of visits with children in out-of-home care. Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement efforts additionally address the quality of visits.

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

**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 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

New Jersey investigates all reports of child abuse and neglect. In 2013, new regulations took effect modifying the Department of Children and Families' dispositions following child abuse and neglect investigations. A new system of investigation was created and based on four tiers: Substantiated, Established, Not Established and Unfounded. Both Substantiated and Established findings are categorized as substantiated in NCANDS. The implementation of the 2013 regulations has included ongoing staff training, increased case practice discussions, improved staff analysis, and stronger documentation, and New Jersey has seen a marked decrease in the number of child victims over the years of implementation. This year's State data reflects a trend consistent with the last several years - an increase in the number of reports and a decrease in the number of substantiated victims: 7.1% of reports were substantiated in FFY 2018 compared to 8.2% of reports substantiated in FFY 2017.

With respect to visits, New Jersey's compliance level of 98% exceeded the federal Monthly Caseworker Visits (MVC) Target of 95% for FFY 2018. New Jersey's compliance level of 98% also exceeded the federal Visits In-Home (VIH) Target of 50% for FFY 2018.

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 1.9 in 2017 to 1.8 in 2018. Fewer children entered foster care in 2018 than in 2017 (3,540 in 2018 and 3,726 in 2017). The number of children who exited foster care decreased in 2018: 3,863 children were discharged in 2018 and 4,196 children were discharged in 2017— a trend that may be partially explained by the reduction in census/children eligible for discharge. New Jersey's commitment toward 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 3,726 in 2017 to 3,540 in 2018. 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 steadily 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 52% of children in care 24 months or longer experience two or fewer placement settings during their time in out of home care.

Finally, the number of children age 12 years or younger that were placed in a group home or institutional setting accounted for 1% in 2018.

# New York

## STATE COMMENT

**Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu, Esq., Deputy Commissioner  
Child Welfare and Community Services  
New York State Office of Children and Family Services**

The following are New York's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

New York State (NYS) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report titled "Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress". In our review of the analytics presented for NYS, we noted two elements that we believe inaccurately portray NYS' performance. In both instances, the data elements used by ACF and shared within the report were subsequently revised and updated by NYS to more accurately capture NYS' practice. While we understand that these revised data submissions were received too late to be included in the ACF report, we request that the commentary below be added to the report to advise readers of the updated data.

"New York State (NYS) continues to work closely with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to improve the comprehensiveness and quality of the AFCARS and NCANDS data submission files on which these analyses are based. The analyses presented in this report were generated from submission files provided in 2019. NYS provided updated AFCARS data files in January 2020 that impact two of the data points covered in this report. In the January 2020 files, NYS met the threshold for inclusion in the analysis of exits for children with a disability. A correction was also made to the date of birth field used to calculate age at adoption. As a result, the age distribution of children discharged to adoption in 2016-2018 shared in the current report is inaccurate, and grossly overestimates the number of children under age one, discharged to adoption. Had the updated January 2020 file been used the age distribution of children discharged to adoption in 2016-2018 would have more closely resembled that seen in 2015."

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

The following are Utah's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

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 2018: Report to Congress*.

Utah's Division of Child and Family Services works to ensure that services are provided through home-based settings whenever possible, in the most normalized setting appropriate to the child's and family's needs. When appropriate, prevention 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, DCFS works first to reunify families and, when reunification is not an option, to minimize time spent in foster care and help children to safely achieve permanency as quickly as possible.

In 2018 Utah had its highest percentage in five years of children who discharge from foster care to adoption. While the percentage of children who discharge to adoption, but were in care less than 12 months, slightly decreased in 2018, there was an increase in adoptions of children who had been in care over 24 months. This coincides with Utah's low percentage of children who entered foster care before age 12 and exited foster care due to emancipation. Utah demonstrates 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).

Since *Child Welfare Outcomes 2014*, Utah has reported 100% (rounded) of children receiving caseworker visits in their home and 96% receiving monthly visits. These performances have continued through 2018.

# Washington

## STATE COMMENT

**Jody Becker, MSW, Ph.D., Deputy Secretary**  
**Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families**

The following are Washington's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is the state's newest agency merging the Department of Early Learning, the Children's Administration, and programs offered through Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Office of Juvenile Justice.

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), and our DCYF Strategic Plan.

We intend to improve outcomes through the following activities:

- Prioritizing consistent, thorough, and high quality assessment of safety. We know that early and ongoing identification of safety, implementation of services, and the development of individualized case plans in partnership with families improves outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Prioritizing prevention and expanding our array of services with implementation of evidence-based services through the FFPSA plan.
- Prioritizing initial and ongoing engagement with children, parents, caregivers, and stakeholders. Family engagement is key to assessing safety, identifying needs, implementing services, and achieving permanency outcomes.
- Prioritizing activities related to timely permanency by filing termination petitions timely, completing home studies efficiently, and conducting structured permanency planning meetings.
- Prioritizing our workforce through the development of skills and competencies while providing support and empowerment. We know our workforce is our most valuable resource. Creating a positive and supportive culture will improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Washington State continues to see an increase in referrals to our system, cases requiring an immediate response, families and children presenting with increased complexity and an increase in caseloads.

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.

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

The following are Wisconsin's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2018: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

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. Wisconsin's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered in 71 counties and state-administered in Milwaukee. Central to the current focus areas of the Wisconsin child welfare system is the belief that children belong with their families. 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—<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

(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;

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

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

(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.

# 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?<sup>1</sup>

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

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

### ***Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption***

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

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

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

***Outcome 6: Increase placement stability***

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

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

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

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

# APPENDIX C

## Caseworker Visits

States have been required to meet performance standards and submit data on monthly caseworker visits for a fiscal year (FY) since FY 2007.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup>

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

- The denominator 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.
- The numerator 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.

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 VISITS IN THE HOME (VIHS)

To calculate the percentage of monthly VIHS, the following data are required:

- The denominator 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).
- The numerator is the number of monthly visits made to children in the reporting population that occurred in the child’s home.<sup>4</sup> 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).

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

<sup>2</sup> 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, which is available 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, which is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1201>.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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

## DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

States may choose to report caseworker visits data based on their total foster care population or based on sample data. States that choose to submit sample data must use a sampling methodology that has been approved by their Children’s Bureau Regional Office in consultation with the Administration for Children, Youth and Families’ Office of Data, Analysis, Research and Evaluation. Table 1 shows the states that elected to submit sample data for 2014, 2015, 2016, and/or 2018.

Table 1. States That Submitted Sample Data					
State	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Alabama	X				
Hawaii	X	X	X	X	X
Idaho					
Michigan	X	X	X		
Mississippi	X				
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	X

# APPENDIX D

## Child Welfare Outcomes Report: Data Sources and Elements<sup>1</sup>

### Context Information

Items	Data Sources and Elements
<i>Context Statistics</i>	
Total children under 18 years	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Race/ethnicity (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Child population in poverty (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Caseworker visits for children in foster care	State-submitted data in conjunction with their Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports
<i>Child Maltreatment Data (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)</i>	
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 (3) NCANDS SDC: Item 5.1, Child Victims Who Died as a Result of Maltreatment
Age of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Element 12, Child Age at Report; or a combination of Element 6, Report Date, and Element 13, Child Date of Birth (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.2, Child Victims By Age
Race/ethnicity of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 15 through 20, Child Race; and Element 21, Child Ethnicity (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.4, Child Victims by Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity; and Item 4.5, Child Victims by Race
Maltreatment types of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 26 through 33, Maltreatment Type, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.1, Child Victims by Type of Maltreatment
Response time	Mean response time in hours is computed from the Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24. Median response time in hours is computed from the NCANDS Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24.
<i>Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System)</i>	
Total number (for each fiscal year [FY]) In care on 10/1 Entered care Exited care In care on 9/30	HHS/ACF/ACYF/Children's Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
Median length of stay (for each FY) In care on 10/1 Exited care In care on 9/30	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
Age of children (for each FY) In care on 10/1 Entered care Exited care In care on 9/30	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care

<sup>1</sup> All of the data may be found on the Child Welfare Outcomes data site at <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/>. Not all of the data listed are included in the printed report. For a full list of AFCARS data elements, see AFCARS Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements, revised in February 2012, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcarts-tb1>. For more information regarding NCANDS data elements, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/ncands>.

Items	Data Sources and Elements
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
<i>Characteristics of Children Waiting for Adoption on 9/30 (AFCARS)</i>	
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
<i>Characteristics of Children Adopted (AFCARS)</i>	
Total children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Age of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 5, Child's Date of Birth; and Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Race/ethnicity of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 7, Race; and Element 8, Hispanic Origin

## Outcome Information

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

# APPENDIX E

## ***Child Maltreatment 2018: Summary of Key Findings***

The following are key findings adapted from Child Maltreatment 2018. 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 2018* report is available on the Children’s Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2018>.

### **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 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.

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

### **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 in the HHS Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 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. The Child Maltreatment report for federal fiscal year (FY) 2018 data is the 29th 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 publication *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report 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 that are made to CPS agencies, the children involved, the types of maltreatment they suffered, the dispositions of the CPS responses, the risk factors of the 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/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>. If you have questions or require additional information about this report, please contact Child Welfare Information Gateway at [info@childwelfare.gov](mailto: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. Researchers who are interested in using these data for statistical analyses may contact NDACAN by phone at 607–255–7799 or by email at [ndacan@cornell.edu](mailto:ndacan@cornell.edu).

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

During FFY 2018, CPS agencies received a national estimate of 4.3 million total referrals alleging abuse and neglect involving approximately 7.8 million children. For FFY 2018, 52 states screened in 2.4 million referrals for a CPS response. The national rate of screened-in referrals (reports) is 32.5 per 1,000 children in the national population. Among the 46 states that report both screened-in and screened-out referrals, 56.0 percent of referrals are screened in and 44.0 percent are screened out.

## Who reported child maltreatment?

For FY 2018, professionals submitted 67.3 percent of reports alleging child abuse and neglect. The term professional means that the person has contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of his or her job. This term includes teachers, police officers, lawyers, and social services staff. The highest percentages of reports are from education personnel (20.5%), legal and law enforcement personnel (18.7%), and social services personnel (10.7%).

Nonprofessionals—including friends, neighbors, and relatives—submitted fewer than one-fifth of reports (16.6%). Unclassified sources submitted the remaining reports (16.1%). Unclassified includes anonymous, “other,” and unknown report sources. States use the code “other” for any report source that does not have an NCANDS designated code. See Appendix D, State Commentary, for additional information provided by the states as to what is included in “other.”

## Who were the child victims?

For FFY 2018, there are nationally 678,000 (rounded) victims of child abuse and neglect. The victim rate is 9.2 victims per 1,000 children in the population. (See chapter 3.) Victim demographics include: Children in their first year of life have the highest rate of victimization at 25.3 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.

- Children in their first year of life have the highest rate of victimization at 26.7 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.
- The victimization rate for girls is 9.6 per 1,000 girls in the population, which is higher than boys at 8.7 per 1,000 boys in the population.
- American Indian or Alaska Native children have the highest rate of victimization at 15.2 per 1,000 children in the population of the same race or ethnicity; and African American children have the second highest rate at 14.0 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity.

## What were the most common types of maltreatment?

The victim maltreatment types are analyzed differently for this report than in prior editions to count victims and maltreatment types uniquely (in prior editions, a duplicate count was used). If a victim has two or more maltreatment types, the victim is counted once in the multiple maltreatment category. The FFY 2018 data show 84.5 percent of victims suffered from a single maltreatment type and the remaining 15.5 percent have two or more maltreatment types. Three-fifths (60.8%) of victims are neglected only.

## How many children died from abuse or neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For FFY 2018, a national estimate of 1,770 children died from abuse and neglect at a rate of 2.39 per 100,000 children in the population. (See chapter 4.) The child fatality demographics show:

- The youngest children are the most vulnerable to maltreatment, with 46.6 percent of child fatalities younger than 1 year old and died at a rate of 22.77 per 100,000 children in the population of the same age. Nearly three-fourths (71.8 percent) of all child fatalities were younger than 3 years old.
- Boys have a higher child fatality rate than girls; 2.87 per 100,000 boys in the population, compared with 2.19 per 100,000 girls in the population.
- The rate of African-American child fatalities (5.48 per 100,000 African-American children) is 2.8 times greater than the rate of White children (1.94 per 100,000 White children) and 3.4 times greater than the rate of Hispanic children (1.63 per 100,000 Hispanic children).

### **Who abused or neglected children?**

A perpetrator is the person who is responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child. Fifty-two states reported 546,365 perpetrators. (See chapter 5.) The analyses of case level data show:

- More than four-fifths (83.3%) of perpetrators are between the ages of 18 and 44 years old.
- More than one-half (53.8%) of perpetrators are female and 45.3 percent of perpetrators are male.
- The three largest percentages of perpetrators are White (49.6%), African-American (20.6%), and Hispanic (19.3%).
- The majority (77.5%) of perpetrators are a parent to their victim.

### **Who received services?**

CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in their homes and in foster care. Reasons for providing services may include (1) preventing future instances of child maltreatment and (2) remedying conditions that brought the children and their family to the attention of the agency. (See chapter 6.) During 2018:

- Forty-seven states reported approximately 2.0 million children received prevention services.
- Approximately 1.3 million children (duplicate count) received post-response services from a CPS agency.
- Two-thirds (60.7%) of victims (duplicate count) and one third (29.0%) of nonvictims (duplicate count) received post-response services

# APPENDIX F

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

## The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY<sup>1</sup> 2018 Estimates as of August 22, 2019 - No. 26

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2018 data<sup>2</sup>

### Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	414,259	427,439	434,168	441,071	437,283
Number entered foster care during the FY	264,531	269,091	272,995	269,799	262,956
Number exited foster care during the FY	235,843	242,250	249,027	246,964	250,103
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	650,007	669,557	682,956	687,959	687,345
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	106,636	109,951	116,654	123,754	125,422
Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated during the FY	61,198	62,399	65,474	69,716	71,254
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	50,668	53,555	57,238	59,491	63,123

### Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2018 • N=437,283

Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number	
Mean	8.3	Male	52%	226,156	
Median	7.6	Female	48%	211,083	
Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	31,693	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	17,707
1 Year	9%	37,972	Foster Family Home (Relative)	32%	139,004
2 Years	8%	33,407	Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	46%	198,753
3 Years	7%	29,408	Group Home	4%	19,253
4 Years	6%	26,380	Institution	6%	28,040
5 Years	5%	23,973	Supervised Independent Living	2%	7,214
6 Years	5%	22,076	Runaway	1%	4,247
7 Years	5%	21,009	Trial Home Visit	5%	21,630
Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
8 Years	5%	19,901	Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	56%	236,323
9 Years	4%	19,384	Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,792
10 Years	4%	19,136	Adoption	27%	116,288
11 Years	4%	18,159	Long Term Foster Care	2%	6,645
12 Years	4%	17,571	Emancipation	4%	17,107
13 Years	4%	17,924	Guardianship	4%	16,369
14 Years	4%	18,787	Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	5%	19,408
15 Years	5%	21,029			
16 Years	5%	23,958			
17 Years	5%	23,798			
18 Years	1%	6,266			
19 Years	1%	3,341			
20 Years	1%	2,843			

<sup>1</sup>FY refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1st through September 30th.

<sup>2</sup>Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by August 22, 2019 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g. number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group).

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	10,449
Asian	0%	2,112
Black or African American	23%	99,025
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1,053
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	90,688
White	44%	193,117
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	5,899
Two or More Races	8%	32,882

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

Time in Care	Months
Mean	19.7
Median	13.2

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	21,222
1 - 5 Months	21%	93,706
6 - 11 Months	20%	88,441
12 - 17 Months	16%	68,681
18 - 23 Months	11%	46,812
24 - 29 Months	8%	33,610
30 - 35 Months	5%	21,698
3 - 4 Years	9%	41,005
5 Years or More	5%	22,105

### Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2018 • N=262,956

Age at Entry	Years
Mean	7.1
Median	6.1

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	19%	49,765
1 Year	7%	19,465
2 Years	7%	17,606
3 Years	6%	15,613
4 Years	5%	14,152
5 Years	5%	13,301
6 Years	5%	12,344
7 Years	4%	11,685
8 Years	4%	11,218
9 Years	4%	10,663
10 Years	4%	10,368
11 Years	4%	9,959
12 Years	4%	9,610
13 Years	4%	10,422
14 Years	4%	11,230
15 Years	5%	12,565
16 Years	5%	12,321
17 Years	3%	8,625
18 Years	0%	1,311
19 Years	0%	494
20 Years	0%	213

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,856
Asian	1%	1,567
Black or African American	21%	55,608
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	787
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	52,783
White	47%	121,747
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,689
Two or More Races	7%	18,373

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	62%	163,543
Drug Abuse (Parent)	36%	94,386
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	35,802
Physical Abuse	12%	33,672
Housing	10%	27,323
Child Behavior Problem	9%	22,868
Parent Incarceration	7%	19,719
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	5%	13,871
Abandonment	5%	12,088
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,894
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	6,468
Child Disability	2%	4,399
Relinquishment	1%	2,733
Parent Death	1%	2,389
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	1,032

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 2017 • N=247,631

Age at Entry	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Mean	8.5	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,557
Median	7.5	Asian	1%	1,473
		Black or African American	21%	52,194
		Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	633
		Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,565
		White	46%	115,616
		Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,558
		Two or More Races	7%	18,344

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

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	5%	11,512
1 Year	9%	21,275
2 Years	9%	21,663
3 Years	7%	18,628
4 Years	7%	16,548
5 Years	6%	14,705
6 Years	5%	13,254
7 Years	5%	12,374
8 Years	5%	11,751
9 Years	5%	11,376
10 Years	4%	10,779
11 Years	4%	9,969
12 Years	4%	9,022
13 Years	3%	8,578
14 Years	4%	8,782
15 Years	4%	9,496
16 Years	4%	10,391
17 Years	4%	10,060
18 Years	6%	15,975
19 Years	1%	2,033
20 Years	0%	751

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	49%	121,631
Living with Other Relative(s)	7%	16,862
Adoption	25%	61,901
Emancipation	7%	17,844
Guardianship	11%	26,084
Transfer to Another Agency	1%	2,983
Runaway	0%	736
Death of Child	0%	323

Time in Care	Number
Mean	19.2
Median	14.7

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	9%	21,613
1 - 5 Months	15%	36,559
6 - 11 Months	19%	48,117
12 - 17 Months	17%	41,334
18 - 23 Months	13%	31,571
24 - 29 Months	9%	22,926
30 - 35 Months	6%	15,451
3 - 4 Years	10%	23,900
5-Years or More	3%	8,390

## Children Waiting to be Adopted<sup>3</sup> on September 30, 2017 • N=123,437

Age as of September 30th	Years
Mean	7.7
Median	6.9

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Number
Mean	5.1
Median	4.2

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,638
1 Year	10%	12,249
2 Years	9%	11,814
3 Years	8%	10,169
4 Years	7%	8,826
5 Years	6%	7,960
6 Years	6%	7,289
7 Years	5%	6,885
8 Years	5%	6,517
9 Years	5%	6,429
10 Years	5%	6,367
11 Years	5%	6,021
12 Years	5%	5,747
13 Years	4%	5,434
14 Years	4%	5,231
15 Years	4%	5,326
16 Years	4%	4,864
17 Years	3%	3,656

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	26%	32,258
1 Year	8%	10,597
2 Years	8%	9,499
3 Years	7%	8,408
4 Years	6%	7,932
5 Years	6%	7,517
6 Years	6%	7,200
7 Years	6%	7,028
8 Years	5%	6,425
9 Years	5%	5,942
10 Years	4%	5,391
11 Years	4%	4,787
12 Years	3%	4,080
13 Years	3%	3,543
14 Years	2%	2,552
15 Years	1%	1,517
16 Years	0%	616
17 Years	0%	115

Placement Type	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	12%	15,578
Foster Family Home (Relative)	27%	33,251
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	52%	64,782
Group Home	3%	3,989
Institution	5%	6,305
Supervised Independent Living	0%	108
Runaway	0%	555
Trial Home Visit	1%	678

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,369
Asian	0%	509
Black or African American	22%	27,397
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	209
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	27,765
White	44%	55,278
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,342
Two or More Races	8%	10,122

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

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	65,694
Female	48%	59,721

<sup>3</sup> Waiting children are identified as children who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. Children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation have been excluded from the estimate

Time in Care	Months
Mean	30.8
Median	25.1

Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=71,254), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2018	
Time Since TPR	Months
Mean	17.4
Median	9.0

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	486
1 - 5 Months	3%	4,362
6 - 11 Months	10%	11,952
12 - 17 Months	17%	20,722
18 - 23 Months	17%	20,948
24 - 29 Months	15%	18,610
30 - 35 Months	10%	12,761
3 - 4 Years	19%	24,422
5-Years or More	9%	11,159

### Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2018<sup>4</sup> • N=63,123

Age at Adoption	Years
Mean	6.1
Median	4.9

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Months
Mean	11.6
Median	8.7

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	5%	2,924
1 Year	12%	7,822
2 Years	14%	8,754
3 Years	11%	6,719
4 Years	9%	5,520
5 Years	7%	4,631
6 Years	6%	4,002
7 Years	5%	3,397
8 Years	5%	3,130
9 Years	5%	2,977
10 Years	4%	2,706
11 Years	4%	2,341
12 Years	3%	1,982
13 Years	3%	1,669
14 Years	2%	1,420
15 Years	2%	1,082
16 Years	2%	1,000
17 Years	1%	853
18 Years	0%	84
19 Years	0%	10
20 Years	0%	9

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	3%	1,688
1 - 5 Months	29%	18,178
6 - 11 Months	35%	21,414
12 - 17 Months	17%	10,587
18 - 23 Months	8%	4,729
24 - 29 Months	3%	2,152
30 - 35 Months	2%	1,242
3 - 4 Years	2%	1,439
5-Years or More	1%	530

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,059
Asian	0%	270
Black or African American	17%	10,795
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	113
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	13,327
White	49%	30,924
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	832
Two or More Races	9%	5,614

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

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

Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	42,237
Unmarried Couple	3%	2,173
Single Female	25%	15,704
Single Male	3%	2,0803

Adoption	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	12%	7,373
Foster Parent	52%	31,431
Stepparent	0%	55
Other Relative	35%	21,951

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	49%	31,183
Female	51%	31,935

Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Yes	93%	58,877
No	7%	4,215

## FY 2018 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 Report, 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 2018 Range of State Performance tables, national medians are calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2018 only. In the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians are calculated using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all relevant FYs (2014–2018).

**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

