

OUR GOAL:

Provide stable, nurturing, and permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care.

Lily's life started out rough. Lily's two sisters were already being raised by an aunt and neither Lily's biological mom, Angie nor her aunt was in a position to care for Lily. Angie's cousin, Stacy ran into Lily's struggling mom and learned that Lily had been placed into foster care. Stacy pulled out a pencil and paper and began writing down every bit of information she could about Lily. She couldn't bear the thought of that little girl, her own family, being raised by a foster family if there was any possible way to keep her. Stacy said, "I thought this is a huge family, what do you mean we have someone in foster care?"

Stacy had just started working as a nurse and was a single mother. She didn't think that single moms were eligible to adopt children so while she was eager to keep Lily in the family, she was doubtful it would happen. When Stacy learned that she could adopt Lily, she made every effort, fulfilled every obligation, she just "went for it" whole heartedly.

Lily's family piled into the courthouse for her adoption. Lily and Stacy were there with Stacy's six-year-old daughter, Andrea. The two girls were dressed in colorful dresses and patent leather shoes. Lily's biological sisters were there with the aunt who was raising them.

Lily who was by now, three-years-old told Stacy she wanted to see the judge. As the judge finalized the adoption, Stacy peppered her daughter with kisses. Stacy wanted a larger family and now her dream had come true. Andrea, also had her dream come true. "I had been begging for a little brother or sister," she said.



The decision to remove a child from the only home he or she has ever known is taken very seriously. No matter how difficult a child’s living experience may be, removing them from their home is more often than not, a painful experience. In every case, there are specific legal criteria which must be met and often multiple agencies and individuals are involved in the decision-making process.

The number of children placed into out-of-home care has continually increased since Fiscal Year 1999 and in the most recent reporting period, the Administration saw the greatest number of children placed into out-of-home care since data tracking began.

Often social and economic factors such as an unstable economy, rising unemployment rates and substance abuse contribute to parental stressors and may lessen otherwise stable parents’ ability to safely care for their children. War time military deployment stress is also tied to child-abuse increase. According to a 2007 report “the rate of child maltreatment in families of enlisted soldiers was 42 percent higher when military spouses were off at war than when they were at home.”¹

In Washington State and throughout the nation, the “Methamphetamine epidemic is a ‘national crisis’ impacting children and their parents’ ability to care for them.”

According to the Washington State Attorney General’s Office Meth Statistics report, Parents on Meth Equal Neglected Children. The report states that “Meth-using parents helped drive a 62 percent increase in the foster care population over the past decade and fewer than 30 percent of Meth-addicted parents in Washington regain custody of their children.”²

The Children’s Administration continues to work toward increasing resources to care for these children and to implement the most successful evidenced based practices in an effort to provide services and supports to struggling families.

The following performance measures are used:

- Children reunified with their families.
- Children reunified within 12 months of placement.
- Children adopted.
- Children adopted within 24 months of placement.
- Children placed in guardianships.
- Length of stay for children in care.
- Children reentering care.
- Children with no more than two placements.
- Minority children in care for more than two years.
- Children placed with relatives.

Children Cared for in Out-of-Home Placement*



—●— Number of Children in Out-of-Home Placement

¹Psychiatric News September 7, 2007 Volume 42, Number 17, Page 8 [Military Deployment Stress Tied to Child-Abuse Increase](#).

²Meth Statistics in Washington, Washington State Attorney General, <http://www.atg.wa.gov/page.aspx?id=11704>.

*Count of children in out-of-home care on the last day of the fiscal year, excluding children in guardianships. Source: July 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children reunified with their families

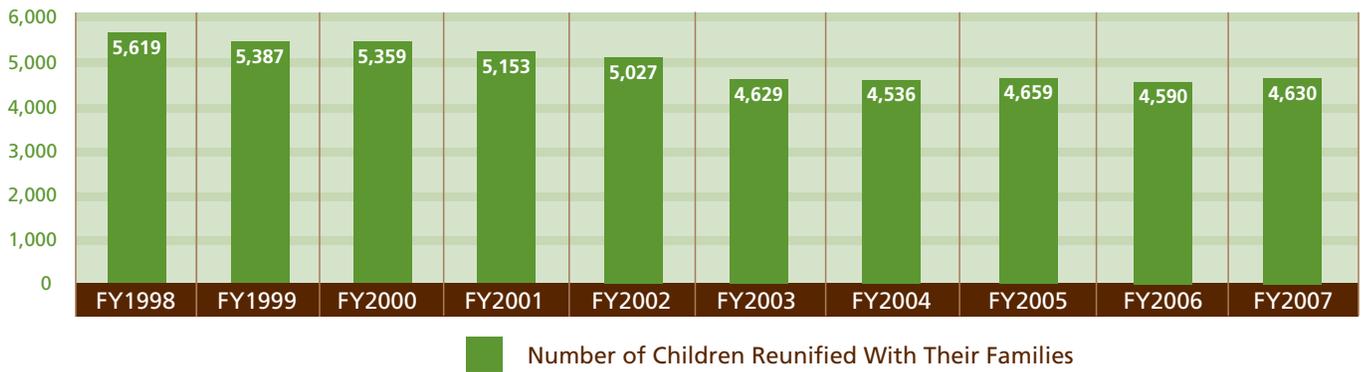


The Children’s Administration seeks family reunification as the preferred permanency option whenever it is safe and in the best interest of the child or children involved.

The number of children reunified with their families decreased significantly between Fiscal Years 1998 and 2003, and has remained steady since. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted a study of this trend in 2004.¹ It found that one factor which may have contributed to the decrease in number of reunifications is a shift in the makeup of the Administration’s caseload toward cases where reunification is more challenging to achieve,

including: more infants placed in care, more children placed for neglect or parental substance abuse, and more children placed with relatives.

Children Reunified*



¹Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2004), [Decline in Washington’s Family Reunifications: What Influenced This Trend?](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/04-05-3901-ES.pdf) Document Number 04-05-3901, www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/04-05-3901-ES.pdf

*Unduplicated count of children placed in out-of-home care who were reunified with their families. Children may be placed in out-of-home care and reunified with their families more than once during a fiscal year, and previous Children’s Administration Performance Reports used duplicated counts. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children reunified within 12 months of placement

The Children’s Administration works with families and communities to return children to their homes whenever to do so is safe and in the best interest of the child or children concerned.

In Fiscal Year 2007, the Children’s Administration embarked upon a Child Protective Services (CPS) and Child Welfare Services (CWS) redesign in an effort to improve safety and permanency outcomes for vulnerable children.

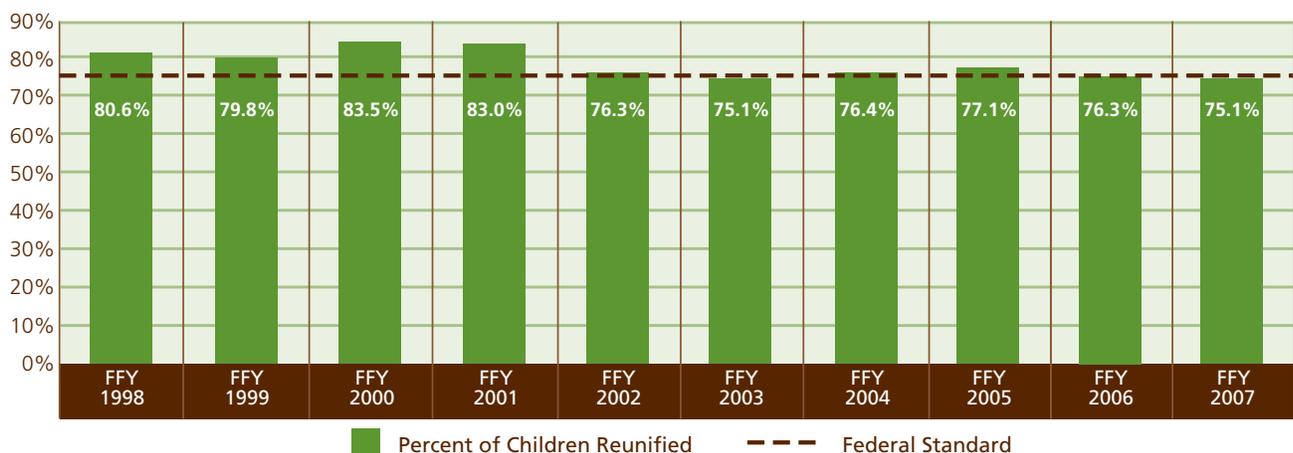
This increased emphasis upon safety included enhancements to safety planning, reunification assessment and transition planning, and improved decision-making processes with reference to returning children back to homes from which they had been removed for reasons of abuse or neglect.

The high percentage of neglect cases where issues may take longer to resolve can delay permanency. In some cases, the time invested in improving safety for children may also impact reunification timeframes.

The federal standard requires that at least 76.2 percent of children for whom reunification is the best permanent outcome be reunified within 12 months of out of home placement. This standard reflects the importance of timely permanence for children.

Washington State has historically done well with reference to this measure; however, the most recent reported period shows a slight drop in the percent of timely reunifications, falling below the federal standard for the first time in four years.

Children Reunified Within 12 Months of Placement*



*Percent of children reunified with their parents within 12 months of placement into out-of-home care. The federal standard is 76.2 percent or higher. Source: federal fiscal year data as of September 2007 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Prior to FFY 2007, data was based upon June counts as in most cases, September data was not available at the time this report was submitted.

OBJECTIVE: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children adopted

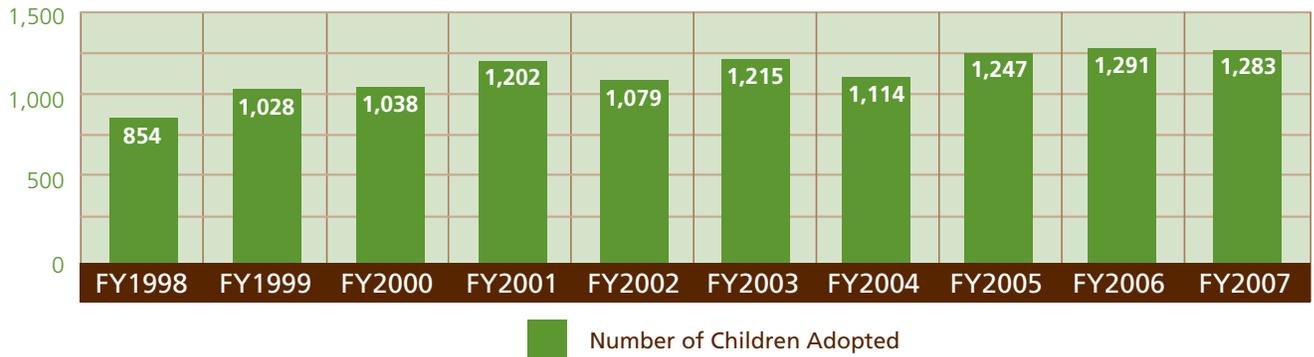


Children, for whom family reunification is not possible, want and need stability and permanency in their lives. These children often say that they want families who will love them no matter what, they want a place to call their own; they want a “real” home.

The Administration works to find families who have the desire and the ability to parent children who often come into care with a fair amount of hurt and a measure of mistrust.

The number of adoptions finalized in Fiscal Year 2007 decreased slightly when compared to the previous year; however, the ten-year trend shows a dramatic increase in the number of completed adoptions.

Children Adopted*



*Number of children placed in out-of-home care with an accomplished permanent plan of adoption as of the end of the fiscal year. Source: October 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children adopted within 24 months of placement

Children who enter care when they are older than age five and children of color as well as those who are members of sibling groups or who have special needs often stay in foster care longer than individual healthy very young children.

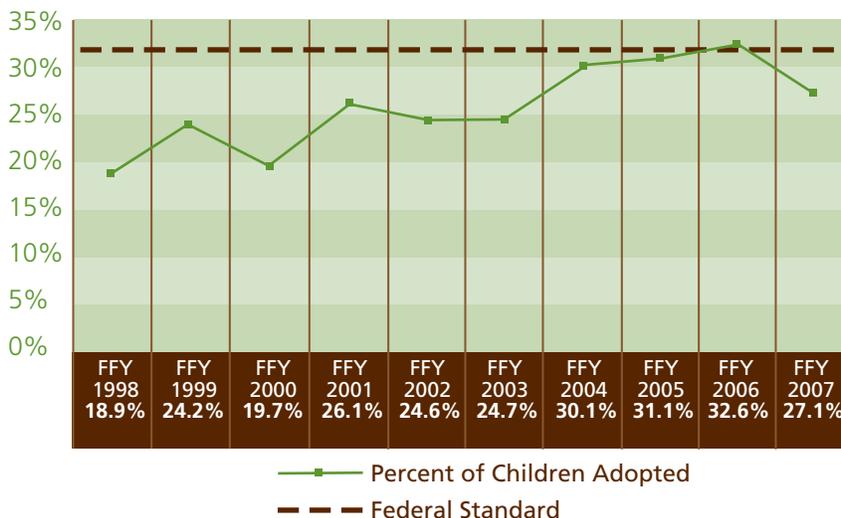
In Washington state and throughout the nation, efforts are underway to prevent any child from spending a long period of time in foster care. Through a process called “concurrent planning” social workers begin looking for adoptive families while working to support birth parents in the hope that they may be able to regain custody of their children. Concurrent planning allows children to be placed with an adoptive family prior to becoming legally available for adoption. This promotes permanency for children/youth who are not able to be reunited with their birth parents by placing them with a suitable family earlier in the dependency process.

As the number of children in out-of-home care with complex needs continues to increase, the timeliness of adoptions may continue to decrease.

Additionally, whenever there is a gap between available resources and work required, safety takes precedence and permanency may lag.

Washington state has historically failed to meet the federal target with reference to this measure. After reaching the target for the first time in Federal Fiscal Year 2006, the state rate of timely adoption fell in the most recent reporting period.

Children Adopted Within 24 Months of Placement*



*Percent of children with a permanency plan of adoption who were adopted within 24 months of placement into out-of-home care. The federal standard is 32 percent or higher. Source: federal fiscal year data as of September 2007 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

OBJECTIVE: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children placed in guardianships

There are some children for whom reunification is not possible and adoption is contrary to their best interest or cultural mores. In some cases a child’s racial or cultural origin may prohibit adoption.

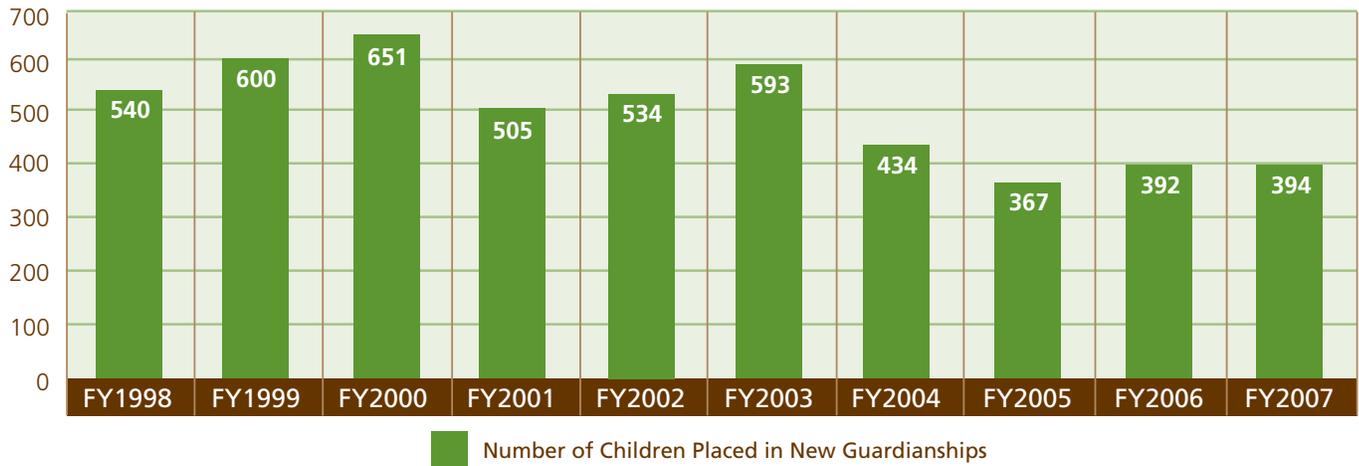
There are also those children and youth for whom reunification is not possible but significant family ties remain. In addition, many older children voice opposition to adoption but still want a safe, stable, and permanent place to live.

For these children and youth, guardianship placements are often the permanency plan of choice.

The number of children placed in new guardianships has remained relatively level for the past two years following a significant drop beginning in 2004. The Children’s Administration makes every effort to secure reunification, adoption, or third-party custody whenever possible which may be a contributing factor to the decrease in new guardianship placements.



Children Placed in Guardianships*



*Number of children placed in out-of-home care with an accomplished permanent plan of placement in a guardianship granted through either the Superior Court or Juvenile Court system. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

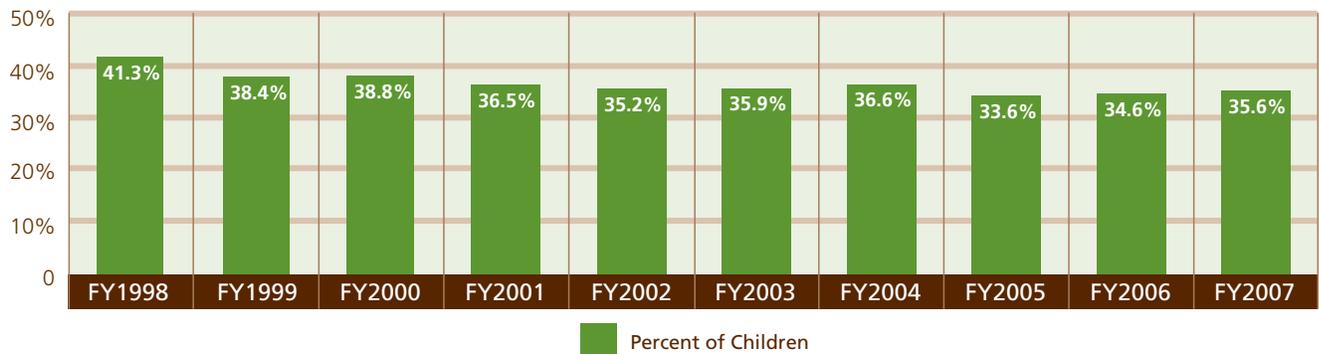
OBJECTIVE: Decrease length of stay without increasing reentry
MEASURED BY: Length of stay for children in care

Children’s Administration staff must pursue stable and permanent homes for the children in their care while keeping safety at the forefront of every decision. As increased emphasis is placed upon safety planning, reunification assessment and transition planning for children returning home and home studies and background checks for potential adoptive homes, the time children spend in out of home care may increase.

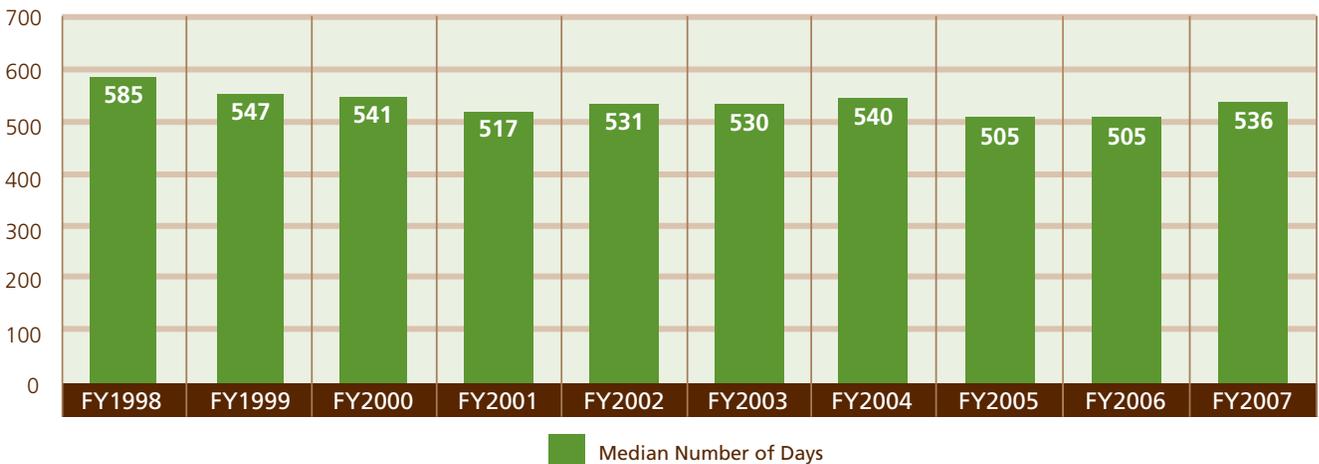
While the percent of children who have been in care longer than two years has decreased significantly from 41.3 percent in Fiscal Year 1998, there was a slight increase in length of stay in the most recent reporting period.

The median number of days children spent in out-of-home care also increased in the most recent period.

Children in Care for More Than 2 Years*



Median Number of Days Children are Placed in Care**



*Percent of children in the Administration’s custody in out-of-home care for more than 60 days, who have a cumulative time in care during their current placement episode of more than two years. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

**Median cumulative time in care for all children in care for more than 60 days. This measure is calculated based upon the population of children in care for more than 60 days to more clearly depict the status of children for whom the Administration is actively conducting permanency planning. Sixty days was the chosen “cut off” point because children who stay in care at least 60 days must have a permanency plan completed at this point. If children placed for very short periods of time were included in this measure, it would inaccurately skew the understanding of the percent of children who are placed for much longer periods of time. Source: July 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Decrease length of stay without increasing reentry
MEASURED BY: Children reentering care

Significant thought, care, and effort go into the decisions made on a child’s behalf at every stage of the dependency process.

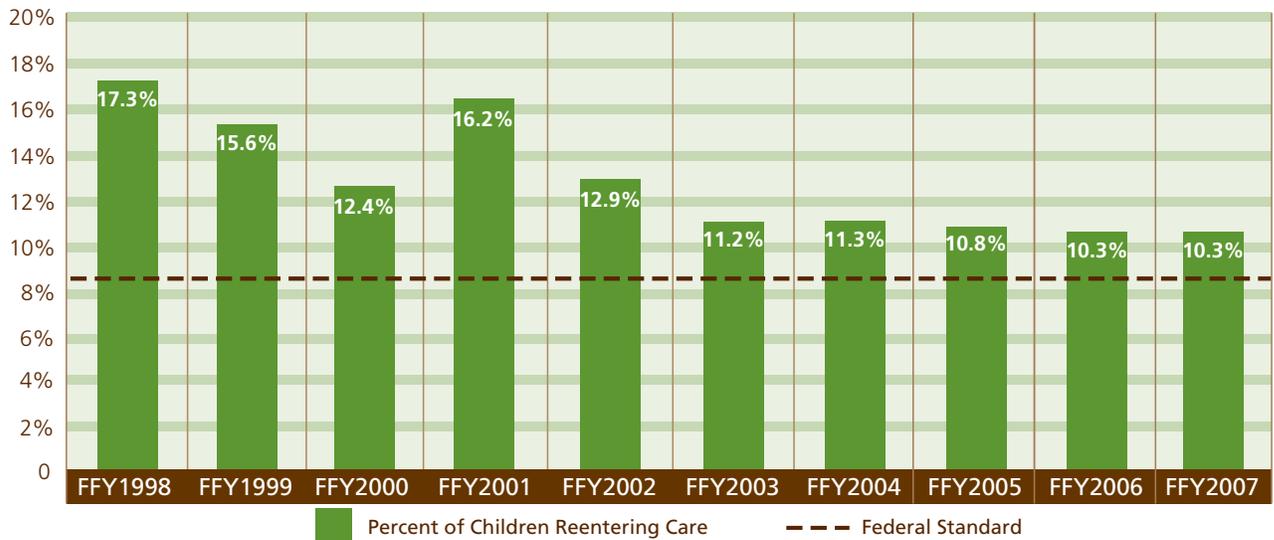
The decision to remove a child from their home and family is not one that is taken lightly and the Administration does not act alone in such cases. The authority of Child Protective Services (CPS) extends only as far as recommending to the courts that a child would likely be safer in the home of a substitute caregiver than in their own home. Courts, not CPS, have the ultimate authority to remove children from their parents.

Likewise, the decision to return children to the homes from which they have been removed is serious and much effort must go into assessing a family’s readiness for a child to return home, implementing safety planning, and following up with a family for months after a child returns home.

The Administration implements safety strategies and family supports designed to keep children safe so they will not need to come back into state care following reunification with their families.

The federal standard requires that no more than 8.6 percent of children who have been returned home will come back into care for reasons of abuse or neglect. Washington state has never met the federal standard in the ten years reported. The Administration has demonstrated the lowest rate of re-entry on record for the past two consecutive years.

Children Reentering Care Within 12 Months of Reunification*



*Percent of children who reentered out-of-home care within 12 months of reunification with their parents, regardless of length of stay. The federal standard is 8.6 percent or less. Source: federal fiscal year data as of June 2007 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

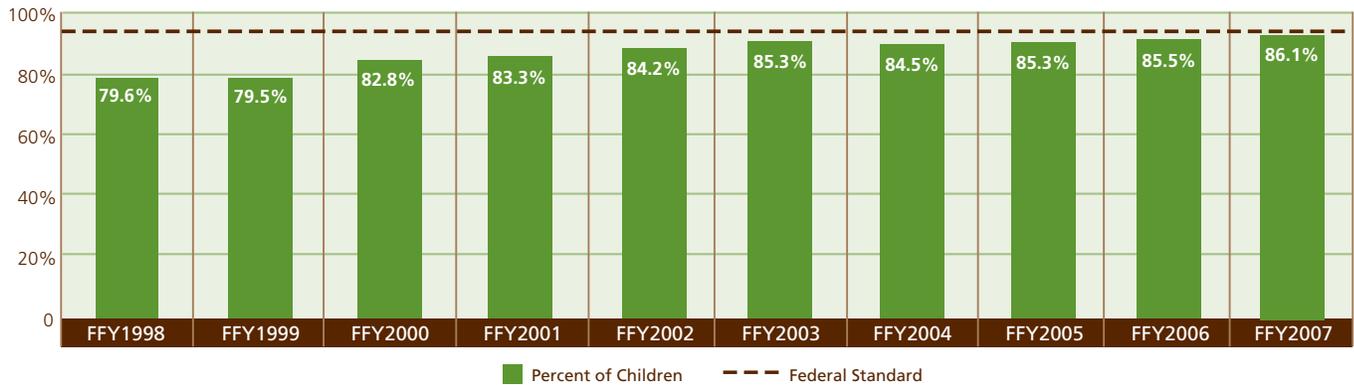
OBJECTIVE: Increase stability for children in out-of-home care
MEASURED BY: Children with no more than two placements

Children placed into out-of-home care must adjust to new faces, new rules, and a new routine. Those children who experience multiple placement moves often experience challenges in adapting to new environments and establishing trusting connections with new families. Moreover, these children and youth often struggle in school as a result of multiple placements.

The Administration works to help lessen the impact of placement moves by working toward reducing the number of times a child must move. When children must be moved because it is in their best interest, the Administration strives to keep children in their home schools and to maintain as many healthy family and community ties as possible.

The Children’s Administration has demonstrated continual progress toward the federal standard of at least 86.7 percent of children in care will experience two or fewer placement moves since Federal Fiscal Year 1998.

Children With No More Than Two Placements*



*Percent of children who have only one or two principle places or homes of residence (placement events) during their first 12 months in care (or exiting from care within 12 months), excluding respite care, hospital stays, on-the-run, and similar types of placements which do not represent a deliberate change of residence. The federal standard is 86.7 percent or higher. Source: federal fiscal year data as of June 2007 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

OBJECTIVE: Decrease over-representation of minority children in care
MEASURED BY: Minority children in care for more than two years

Children of African American and Native American heritage come into state care at higher rates than Caucasian children and tend to stay in care for longer periods of time.

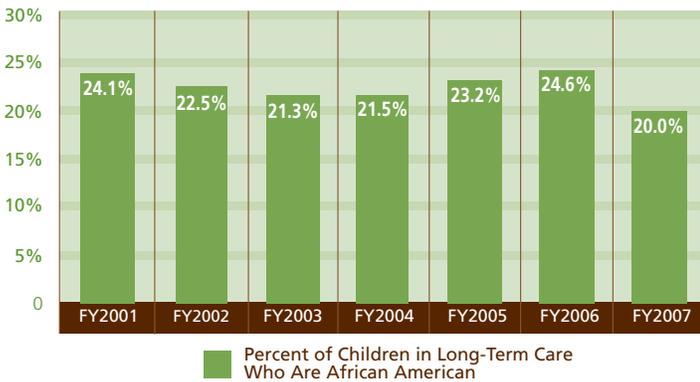
This trend toward over-representation of minority children in out-of-home care is not just an issue in Washington but throughout the United States.

A recent Report to the Chairman of the United States Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives submitted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) showed that nationally, “blacks make up about 15 percent of the childhood population, yet account for 34 percent of children in foster care. Black children on average stay in foster care nine months longer than white children”, according to the report.

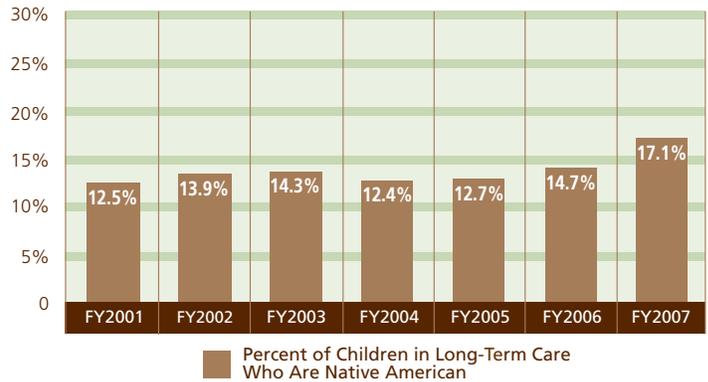
In Washington state, efforts are under way to address over-representation of minority children in care through diversity training for new foster parents, training to social workers and investigators, and hiring personnel reflective of the child demographics of children and families in our the state.

In Fiscal Year 2007, the percent of African American children in long term care decreased to the lowest rate in the seven years of reporting shown. However, the percent of Native American children in long term care increased markedly in the most recent reporting period. In partnership with Tribes, the Children’s Administration developed an Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Case Review model and performed case reviews throughout Fiscal Year 2007 in order to gain a better understanding of the unmet needs of Native American children in out-of-home care and to develop strategies for better serving these children.

African American Children in Care for More Than 2 Years*



Native American Children in Care for More Than 2 Years**



¹ African American Children in Foster Care. Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care. United States Government Accountability Office Report to the Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives. GAO-07-816 July 2007.

*Percent of children who have been placed in out-of-home care for two years or longer who are not in their permanent home and are African American. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

**Percent of children whom have been placed in out-of-home care for two years or longer who are not in their permanent home and are Native American. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Increase relative placements
MEASURED BY: Children placed with relatives

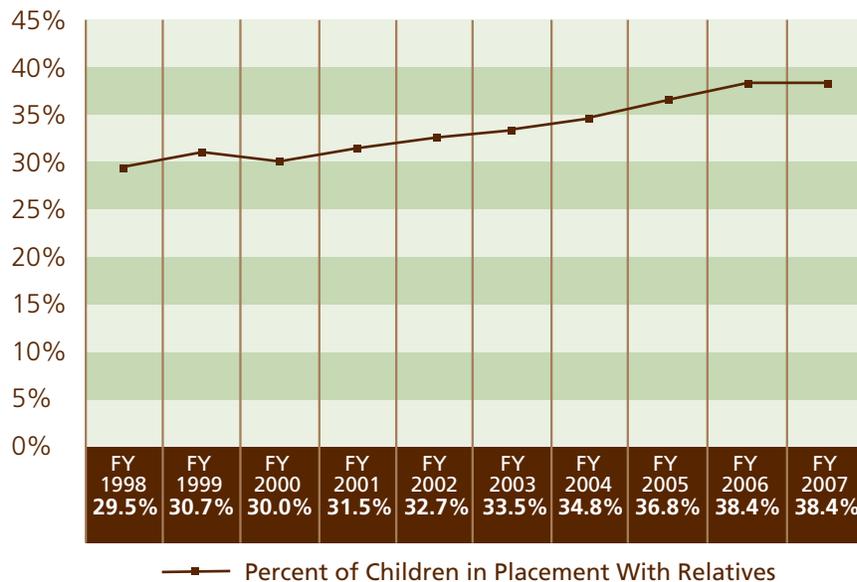
Whenever children must be removed from their own homes due to parental abuse or neglect, every effort is made to place them with family members if it is safe and in the best interest of the child to do so.

Preserving family connections, maintaining language and cultural customs, and securing a sense of familiarity can contribute greatly to a child's sense of belonging and stability.

Over the ten year period shown, the Children's Administration has demonstrated a 30 percent increase in the percent of children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives.



Children in Placement With Relatives*



*The percent of children in placement with a relative on the last day of the fiscal year. Source: July 2007 CAMIS download.

Are the things that these children are waiting for really too much to ask?

Of the six children featured in last year's report, four have been placed into permanent homes and two are still waiting.

In Washington State, and throughout the nation it is for:

- A safe place, A family that is kind,
- A family to trust, A family to love,
- A place to call my own, A place to call "home" that Children Wait.



The Children's Administration and our regional and national partners are working to help find these children and others like them, a family to love them, a place of their own.

If you would like to open your heart and home to these or other waiting children please any of the following:

- Washington Adoption Resource Network**..... www.warekids.org
1-800-927-9411
- Northwest Adoption Exchange*** www.nwae.org
1-800-927-9411
- Northwest Resource Associates** www.nwresource.org/af.htm
- Families Like Ours** www.familieslikeours.org
(206) 441-7602
- Adopt U.S. Kids**..... www.adoptuskids.org
1-888-200-4005

* Information about waiting children included on this page is excerpted from the Northwest Adoption Exchange Website.

We've all met children and youth who are eagerly waiting in anticipation for some new thing or some big event. Children often speak with barely contained glee of participating in upcoming sporting events, the coveted addition to their video game system, the latest and greatest walking, talking, dancing, toy, their first date, prom, and that long coveted driver's license.

What about children in foster care? What are they waiting for? If you listen to what these children are waiting for it really isn't all that much in the grand scheme of things. Daniela is waiting for somewhere that she can be safe and can stay and where her culture can be celebrated. Ricky is waiting for a family to love him and help make him the best person he can be. Lisa is waiting for a place to call her own. Brent is waiting for a family who will like him and love him for who he is.

No bells, no whistles, no big ticket items. These young people just want a home, a place, a sense of belonging and the knowledge that they are wanted and loved. A "forever family" is the one thing for which these and so many other Washington Children wait.

Daniela* is a 14-year-old girl who has been waiting nearly four years. She would love to live in a Spanish/English bilingual home where she can listen to Mexican music and celebrate cultural holidays. Daniela has had some broken trust in her young life and she says, "I just want to find somewhere where I know I can be safe and I know I can stay there and I can trust people." Daniela is proud of herself and her Mexican heritage and is hoping for a family that will love her and celebrate her culture.

Nasia (pronounced Nay-ja) **and Kenneth** are 7 and 4-year-old sister and brother and have been waiting for more than three years. Nasia loves having a little brother and she is very protective of him. Kenneth may have an Autism Spectrum disorder and while he doesn't speak, he is very attached to his big sister. Nasia wants a family to love and care for her and for Kenneth and she wants to live where a person can, "love your mom and dad and brother."

Karina is an artistic 15-year-old girl who has been waiting several years. Whenever Karina sees paintings of families, she asks, "Can't I have a family like them?" Karina stated, "I would love to be adopted because then I can actually have a place that I can call 'home'."

Brent is a 12-year-old boy who has been waiting for seven years. He is a bright boy who stated, "Getting adopted would mean I could actually settle and not keep moving my stuff." He went on to say that being adopted is important because "I know I can actually have a family who will like me and love me for who I am. It might take a while but you still get a family who will actually like you."

Ricky is a 15-year-old athletic boy who has been waiting his whole life. Ricky wants an active family, preferably with a mom and dad but "definitely a dad." He would also like brothers with whom he could play sports and board games.

Lisa is a 14-year-old girl who is passionate about the environment. She writes poetry and loves animals. Lisa wants a family that "is kind and doesn't yell and loves animals." Lisa poignantly summed up her quest for a family by saying, "I only have a few more years of childhood; one day it will all be gone. It will be hard if I've never had a place to call my own."