

Permanency

Children who have experienced abuse and neglect at the hands of those whom they most trust often take a lifetime to recover. It is an unfortunate fact that children are often further impacted by multiple placements and the sense of uncertainty and alienation that is the inevitable accompaniment to time spent in the homes of strangers. Washington state is dedicated to improving every child's sense of belonging, stability and security through a variety of permanent placement options.

In the past decade children coming into state care have increasingly complex issues that make permanency planning all the more challenging. Maternal alcohol abuse during pregnancy and resultant organic childhood disorders, prenatal exposure to drugs, mental illness, fragmented family systems and escalating economic hardships all negatively impact children.

As the needs of children have grown increasingly complex, the Children's Administration has worked diligently to provide permanent homes that best address the needs of individual children.

Permanency objectives include:

- Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care
- Decrease length of stay without increasing re-entry
- Increase stability for children in out-of-home care
- Decrease over-representation of minority children in care
- Increase relative placements
- Preserve connections with parents, siblings, and other significant people

Eight different measures are currently used to monitor these objectives and gauge success in achieving permanency for children:

- Children returned to their parents, adopted, or placed in guardianships
- Length of time to achieve permanency goal of reunification
- Length of stay for children in care
- Children re-entering care
- Children with no more than two placements
- African American children in care longer than two years
- Children placed with extended family members
- Children visiting with their parents

The administration continually strives to factor safety into every permanency plan. While reunification is the option most sought after, it is often in a child's best interest to postpone reunification in an effort to ensure safety assessment and planning is in place.

Number of Children in Out-of-Home Care*



* Count of children in out-of-home care without a permanent plan completed, who remain in care for more than 60 days, excluding children in legal custody of tribes or private agencies.

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