



CA Children's Administration

Report to the Legislature

Children's Services Annual Quality Assurance Report

Child Welfare Services
RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.031(5)

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Executive Summary

Protecting the children of Washington state from abuse and neglect is the Administration's top priority.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (CA) was established in an effort to help families and communities protect vulnerable children from abuse and neglect.

Protecting the children of Washington state from abuse and neglect is the Administration's top priority. The Administration recognizes that only after the safety of a given child is addressed can the necessary services and supports be applied toward the preservation and improved well-being of that child's family.

The Administration must meet numerous federal, legislative, and judicial mandates in the course of daily operations. Moreover, there are other entities which require high levels of performance accountability. The Children's Administration itself, also engages in continuous self assessment to find ways to improve the quality of life for children and families, enhance business processes, and act as good stewards of state resources.

This report, the twelfth annual **Children's Services Annual Quality Assurance Report**, details performance outcome data in compliance with RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.031(5), in order to demonstrate progress in the following specific service areas:

Child Protective Services (CPS) response time

The administration responds quickly to allegations of abuse or neglect and implements safeguards to protect children who have been abused or neglected from further abuse or neglect at the hands of their caregivers.

Children's health and safety in out-of-home care

The administration monitors children in out-of-home care, performs health and safety checks on licensed facilities, and works to provide safe placements to children who have been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect so they are not abused or neglected in licensed care.

Adherence to permanency planning guidelines

The administration works toward placing children in permanent homes as quickly as possible and tracks progress with reference to reunification within 12 months and adoption within 24 months.

Children's length of stay in out-of-home placement

The administration seeks to limit the amount of time children spend in out-of-home care prior to reunification or other permanency plan completion.

Data in this report is for Fiscal Year 2008 from July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, except where specifically noted.

Children's Administration monitors a number of other performance outcomes which are detailed in the Children's Administration Performance Report. Together,

these reports include information on performance outcomes for the agency's four priority areas of:

- **Safety**
- **Permanency**
- **Well-being**
- **Supporting client outcomes**

Performance Measures in This Report

The Administration monitors federal performance outcomes, has developed a variety of supplemental performance measurement tools, and continues to refine methods for assessing performance and improving outcomes for children and families.

The following measures are included in this report:

- For every quarter of Fiscal Year 2008, the administration performed better than the performance target of seeing 90 percent of children in emergent CPS referrals within 24 hours of referral receipt. In three of four fiscal quarters of FY 2008, the Administration saw more than 95 percent of children within the target time frame.
- In Fiscal Year 2008, social workers saw more than 93 percent of children in non-emergent referrals within 72 hours of the referral for every quarter of the fiscal year exceeding the 90 percent target.
- In Federal Fiscal Year 2006, the federal standard for non-recurrence of abuse increased from 93.9 percent to 94.6 percent. This means that 94.6 percent of children who have a founded referral abuse or neglect will not experience another new founded referral of abuse or neglect within six months of the previous one. While the Administration has never met the federal standard for this measure, we continue to make progress. In FFY 2007 performance again improved to 92.7 Percent, the highest non-recurrence rate on record.
- The federal standard for the percent of children protected from abuse in licensed care also increased from 99.43% in FFY05 to 99.68% FFY06. Washington state has historically done well on this measure. In FFY08, 99.77 percent of children in licensed care were protected from abuse in out-of-home placement, exceeding the new target.
- Washington state statute requires that no less than ten percent of total foster homes shall be monitored on a random sample basis annually. In FY 2008 13.0 percent of licensed foster homes were monitored for continued licensing compliance.
- Over the past few years, the Administration has implemented ongoing changes with reference to requirements for social worker visits with children in out-of-home care. Historically, social workers were required to visit children in their out-of-home placements each quarter. In FY08 94 percent of children were seen every 90 days. This requirement will change so all children must be visited by their social workers once every 30 days. In FY08 74.8 percent of children in In-home dependencies were seen every 30 days. The second group

implemented was young children placed with unlicensed relatives. 73.23 percent of those children received monthly visits in FY08. This measure continues to change to correlate more closely with the federal standard. The state compliance target for this measure is 95 percent by June 2009. The federal target for this measure is 90 percent of children will be seen monthly for every month of a year by federal fiscal year 2011.

- The Administration continued to experience a decline in timely reunifications for children in out-of-home care. This downward trend can be linked in part to increased efforts to ensure safety when returning children home. In FY08 73 percent of children with a plan of reunification were reunified within 12 months of placement. While the timeliness of reunifications decreased, the total number of reunifications increased to the highest count in six years.
- The rate of timely adoptions has also demonstrated a two-year decline. As regions place increased emphasis upon finding adoptive homes for the most hard to place children including those who have been in out-of-home placement for long periods of time, this measure is likely to decline. In FY08, 24.5 percent of children with a permanent plan of adoption were adopted within 24 months of placement.
- For the third year, both the percent of children in out-of-home care for more than two years and the median number of days children spent in care increased in FY 2008.
- The percent of children in Washington state who reenter out-of-home care within 12 months of reunification with their families has never met the federal standard of 8.6 percent. After two years of the lowest reentry rate on record, the state reentry rate increased slightly from 10.3 percent in FFY 07 to 10.6 percent in FFY 08.
- The proportion of African American children in long term care increased from 20 percent in FY 07 to 21.2 percent in FY 08. The percent of Native American children in long term care remained unchanged at 17.1 percent.
- The percent of children for whom meaningful familial ties have been preserved through relative placements increased from 38.4 percent in FY 07 to 38.7 percent in FY 08.

The Administration either met or made improvements toward federal standards and program improvement goals in several areas related to child safety and permanency in Fiscal Year 2008.

In those areas where performance fell short of federal standards, the Administration continues to pursue policy and practice strategies designed to protect children and support families.

Summary Status of Selected Initiatives

The Administration is currently addressing program and practice improvement strategies identified in the **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)**, The **Braam Foster Care Lawsuit**, and the **Governor's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP)** program. In addition, a **Workload Study** performed in 2007 helped inform practice changes in key areas of staff workload and work efficiencies.

Children's Administration recognized the need for improved statewide consistency in child welfare practices. Agency personnel and key stakeholders throughout the state organized to thoroughly research and adopt a statewide **Practice Model**. This new model, when fully implemented, will raise standards, mobilize resources, and better prepare staff for the work of intervening on behalf of vulnerable children.

In addition, in an effort to provide an integrated information management system, the administration has embarked upon a three year process of acquiring and implementing a new **Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)**.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), a federal review of state child welfare systems, has seven outcome areas related to the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families, and seven (7) related to systemic factors. The CFSR also has six (6) data indicators with national performance standards.

In February 2004 the CFSR review determined that Washington State had failed to meet any of the seven (7) outcome standards related to safety, permanency and well-being of children, and only four (4) of the seven related to systemic factors.

In the two years following the CFSR, the Administration successfully completed a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The next cycle of CFSR for Washington state begins with preparations in the coming fiscal year.

CFSR II

The Child and Family Services Site Review is scheduled for the week of September 13, 2010. The Administration will begin to prepare for the CFSR with Phase I, **the Statewide Assessment**, in the summer of 2009.

The areas of focus remain Safety, Permanency and Well-being which are broken into 7 outcome factors and 7 Systemic factors.

There are strong expectations for collaboration across systems and with community stakeholders. There is specific emphasis on collaboration with courts, youth, and tribes.

The Commission on Children in Foster Care established in 2005 by the Washington Supreme Court, Co-chaired by now retired Justice Bobbe Bridge and Assistant Secretary Cheryl Stephani will provide a high level of oversight and consultation. A Statewide Collaboration Steering Committee will be established to lead the CFSR

assessment process. Membership on the steering committee will represent internal and external stakeholders.

Between CFSR site visits, the Administration has maintained focus on practice improvement through the initiatives references here as well as the Quality Assurance - Case Review Program.

BRAAM FOSTER CARE LAWSUIT

In July of 2004, a settlement was reached in the Braam Foster Care lawsuit that included numerous provisions for improving the well-being of children in the custody of the Administration's Division of Children and Family Services. A key component of the settlement agreement was the establishment of an Oversight Panel that was given the responsibility to develop benchmarks and monitor the Department's progress on implementation of the settlement.

The oversight panel released the First Implementation Plan in February of 2006 and Revised Implementation Plan in July 2008. The Panel issued its First Monitoring Report in March of the same year for the period of July 24, 2004 through December 31, 2005. The Department submits semi-annual progress reports in August and February. The panel issued Decision Reports in June, September, and December of 2006, and in August of 2007. The panel also issued its second monitoring report in September 2006, third monitoring report in April 2007, fourth monitoring report in October of 2007, and fifth monitoring report in October 2008.

In its Third Monitoring Report the panel issued its first review of the Department's progress on achieving the benchmark targets, issuing findings on 28 of the 52 benchmarks due during the monitoring period. In the 4th Monitoring Report, issued October 4, 2007, the Panel found that the Department had completed 42 of 82 Action Steps set forth in the implementation plan. In its Fifth Monitoring Report, the Oversight Panel found that four additional action steps had been completed and that the Department had met six benchmarks. Sixteen benchmarks required compliance plans (one was already approved). The Department is currently in the compliance planning process in collaboration with the plaintiffs and the Oversight Panel.

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE (GMAP)

The Administration delivered four Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) presentations related to services provided to vulnerable children in Fiscal Year 2008.

The GMAP process provides an opportunity for Children's Administration to discuss performance measures and workload data directly with the Governor. These reports address areas in which the agency is doing well, making progress, or needs to improve performance, and where additional resources are needed in order to best serve Washington's vulnerable children and their families.

The contents of the administration's presentations are available on the Governor's GMAP website: <http://www.accountability.wa.gov/>

This process provides transparency and accountability not only on the part of Children's Administration but for all state agencies. Governor Gregoire and a panel

of advisors ask challenging questions, make recommendations about how to improve outcomes, and may allocate resources where necessary.

WORKLOAD STUDY

In FY08, the Administration actively addressed the issues highlighted in the November 2007 Workload Study through several different action plans.

- CA began work with the Washington Federation of State Employees to address social worker workload as directed in the 2008 budget bill, ESHB2687. Their task was to “devise methods by which to alleviate from the social workers’ workload lower priority tasks.”
- Regions developed workload reduction plans that included many strategies to streamline work, and move work from social workers to other staff.
- A workgroup began to identify ways to fill vacant social worker positions faster so other social workers and supervisors do not have to cover these vacancies for very long.
- The policy transformation project was started, which included a review of all policy to eliminate any duplication, streamline processes and steps, and put on the CA website for easy access for staff.

PRACTICE MODEL

The Children's Administration is in the process of implementing Solution Based Casework (SBC) as the practice model to provide an overarching framework for child welfare practice in Washington State.

SBC provides a family centered philosophy and theory of practice that gives a unifying direction to the day-to-day practice and policies of the agency. It builds upon solution focused interventions developed in mental health and substance abuse treatment and applies them in a child welfare setting. Social work is conducted within the context of the family's developmental stage, focusing on the daily life tasks of the family and helping the family to normalize their challenges. SBC also utilizes techniques developed in substance abuse treatment to prevent relapse.

Three pilot sites have received training and coaching in Solution Based Casework. Training and in-field coaching of staff is expected to begin in the spring of 2009 and continue through 2010. Ongoing training and coaching will be provided by a core of seven staff funded through legislative appropriation. Additional coaches have been funded through a grant from the Casey Family Programs for the initial implementation stage.

The development and implementation of a comprehensive Practice Model involves the following over the next 3 years:

- Training and one-on-one coaching of staff in developing and increasing clinical skills which build on family strengths and support engagement while, at the same time, making decisions about child safety (2/08 & ongoing)
- Training managers in Solution Focused Management (11/07 & ongoing)
- Peer consultation groups for both Solution Focused Management and Solution Based Casework (2/08 & ongoing)

STATEWIDE AUTOMATED CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM (SACWIS)

FamLink is Children's Administration's (CA) new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). The name reflects the integrated support FamLink will give to our work providing services to children, their families, service providers, and our many other child welfare partners.

FamLink will provide automated tools to:

- Increase social workers' productivity by making relevant information easily accessible for more informed and timely decisions.
- Increase compliance with required and new program and practice activities such as those in the Braam settlement agreement.
- Provide managers with meaningful data to evaluate the effectiveness of the CA service programs.

All of these tools support our primary goals for children--safety, well-being, and permanency.

Major Accomplishments

FamLink created for CA a model of project governance that supports the multiple needs of the project. The project is supported by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) for decision making and programmatic guidance. An Intelligence Team (IT) has weekly conference calls to learn about business process changes and provide input on project recommendations going before the PAG. The Implementation Leadership Team (ILT) supports the implementation of FamLink through the many facets of change management.

Representation from each of the six regions and headquarters divisions comprise the ILT. The team meets weekly in support of the various activities necessary to ensure the local offices are ready for FamLink go-live. Some of the basic activities they are engaged with are:

- Communications - weekly email messaging in support of organizational readiness
- Data readiness - data clean-up efforts to ensure staff work is ready for go-live and in support of data conversion efforts
- Managing training resources - securing facilities for training; dedicating staff to be trainers; ensuring all staff have completed individual training plans; and coordination of staff
- Collaborate on Readiness plans - participate in the review and development of implementation plans that meet the business needs for CA

Sound business practices included the engagement of staff in a pilot to test FamLink. The pilot offered staff three weeks to test workflow and business processes as they relate to the new system. Three offices - one rural, one urban and one after hours - participated in testing implementation procedures and the readiness of support services. Added results of the testing included identifying data conversion and functionality incidents. The staff helped execute business operations to ensure that functional requirements were met; test business process redesigns; document problems or incidents they encountered, and participate in the incident resolution process.

The engagement with this wide range of individuals at Children's Administration continues to lead Children's Administration to a successful implementation of FamLink.

FamLink is scheduled to Go-Live in the first quarter of 2009.

Safety

Goal: Children will be safe from abuse and neglect

The primary purpose of the Children's Administration is to ensure that children are safe from harm. The Administration relies on caring family members, watchful educators, concerned community members, and responsive medical practitioners and law enforcement officers to notify CPS when any child appears to be the victim of abuse or neglect.

Washington state has a mandatory reporter law RCW.26.44.030, which requires professionals in law enforcement, corrections, the medical field, education, childcare, and social services who believe abuse or neglect has occurred to report such incidents.

In addition, the Administration hears from concerned neighbors, grandparents, and others who, while not legally bound to report, respond to the moral and ethical obligation to keep children safe by placing that often very difficult call to CPS.

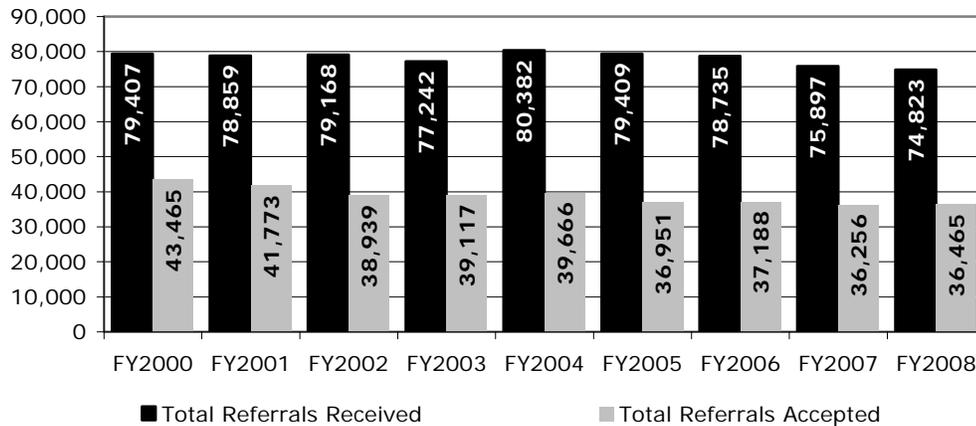
In Fiscal Year 2008, those calls from caring individuals resulted in nearly 75,000 referrals on behalf of children who they believed to be in harm's way. Of those referrals, more than 36,000 met the legal criteria for abuse or neglect and were investigated by the Administration.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Referrals*

Nearly 8,000 families with children deemed at low to moderately low risk of harm were offered alternative intervention services in Fiscal Year 2008. Of these, over 1,800 families were referred to the Alternative Response System (ARS).

Alternative Response Services are offered by community-based contracted providers to families who are in conflict but who require the least intrusive intervention to help ensure child safety and restore family stability.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Referrals*



*Number of referrals received per fiscal year. Includes Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Child Protective Services referrals. Source: EMIS report.

Objective: Initiate timely investigations
Measured by: Children seen face-to-face by a social worker following a referral accepted for investigation

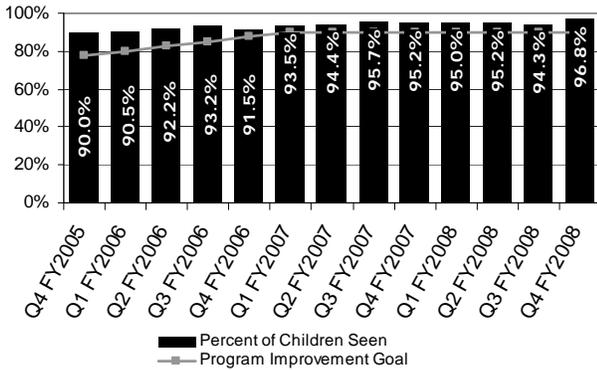
Whenever a Children’s Administration (CA) intake worker receives a call about a child who is possibly being harmed by a caregiver, that worker must determine if the allegations meet legal criteria for abuse and neglect. In addition, intake workers must assess the time frame in which an investigating social worker must make face-to-face contact with that child.

Washington state laws are prescriptive about what constitutes abuse or neglect, the Administration’s ability to investigate, and if so how quickly.

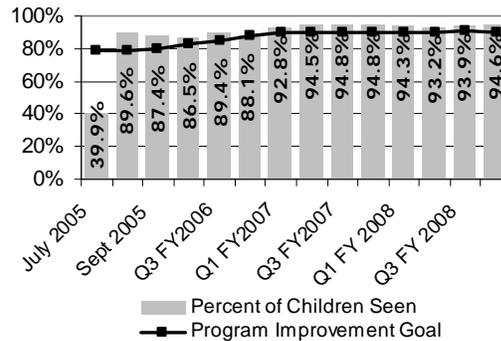
Children who are at risk of imminent harm must be seen within 24 hours of receipt of a referral. Children for whom abuse or neglect is likely to have occurred but who are not at risk of imminent harm must be seen within 72 hours of a referral.

Children’s Administration has met or exceeded the target goal for face-to-face contact in emergent referrals since 2006. The Administration has met or exceeded the goal for face to face contact in non-emergent referrals since 2007.

Children in Emergent Referrals Seen Within 24 Hours*



Children in Non-Emergent Referrals Seen Within 72 Hours**



*Percent of children in emergent referrals seen or attempted within 24 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS referrals. The federal Program Improvement Plan goal was 90 percent by September 2006. Source: October 2008 CAMIS download.

**Percent of children in non-emergent referrals seen or attempted within 72 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS referrals. The federal Program Improvement Plan goal was 90 percent by September 2006. Source: October 2008 CAMIS download.

Objective: Reduce recurrence of abuse or neglect
Measured by: Children who do not experience re-abuse

The Administration works to ensure that all children who come to the attention of social workers as the result of abuse or neglect are protected from further caregiver abuse.

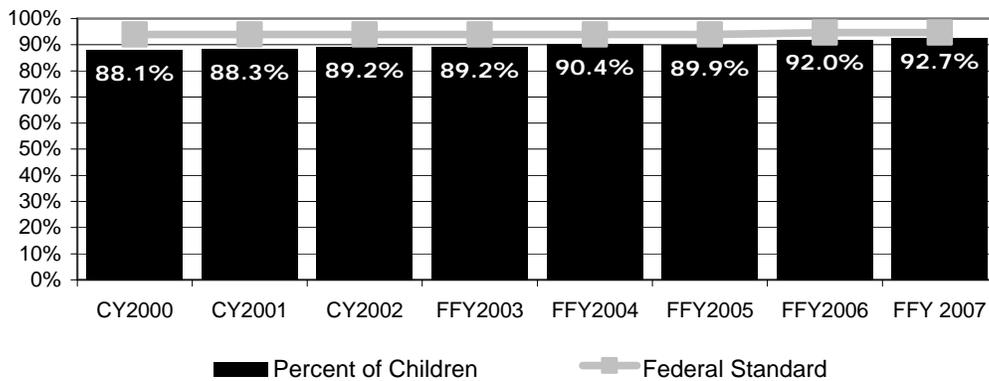
The federal government recently increased the standard for this measure from 93.9 percent to 94.6 percent of children who experience a founded referral of abuse will be free from any additional founded referrals within the six month period following the initial finding.

The Administration has fallen short of the target on this measure since data tracking began but has made progress toward achieving that goal.

There is a statistical correlation between increased timeliness of social worker visits with alleged victims of abuse and the improvement in protecting children from incidents of re-abuse**.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2007, the Administration demonstrated the highest rate of success for this measure on record.

Children Who Did Not Experience Re-Abuse*



*Percent of children with a founded referral of abuse or neglect who were free from an additional founded referral of abuse or neglect within six months of the initial referral. "Founded" means that an investigation concluded that the maltreatment was more likely than not to have occurred. For referrals with multiple allegations, the referral is considered founded if any of the allegations are founded. The federal standard is 94.6 percent or more children will be free from additional founded allegations of abuse. In 2002, the federal government changed the required reporting period from calendar year to federal fiscal year. In 2007, the federal government required that states report the percent of children **free from** additional founded allegations of abuse rather than those who were re-abused. Source: federal fiscal year 2007 data submitted to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

** Effects of the 24/72 Hour Initial Face-to-Face Investigation Policy on the Revictimization of Children. David B Marshall PhD, October 27, 2006

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care

Measured by: Children who are free from abuse or neglect in out-of-home care

Those wishing to serve as substitute caregivers for children who have experienced abuse or neglect, must demonstrate the caring, commitment, and competency necessary to fulfill state licensing requirements.

Every applicant to become a licensed foster parent, must attend training, pass rigorous background checks, and ensure that their living environment is a suitable child placement setting.

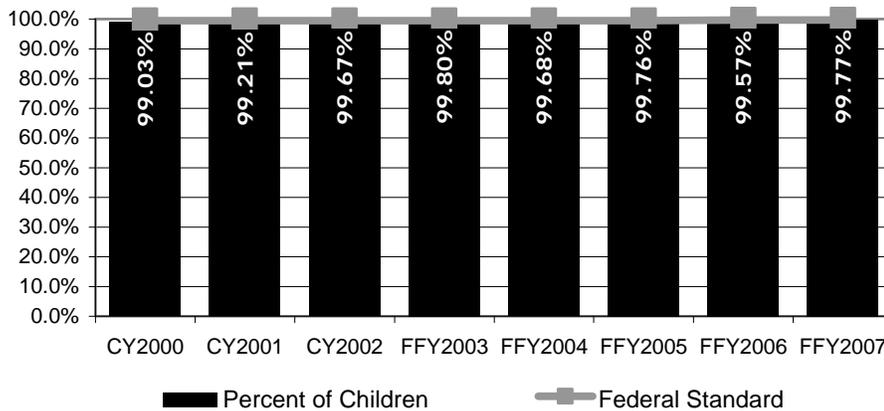
The goal of removing a child from an abusive home is to improve their well-being by decreasing the likelihood that they will be subjected to harm by those responsible for their care.

The state and federal governments have extremely high standards when it comes to protecting children from abuse or neglect in out-of-home care. While Washington state has historically done well with reference to this measure, in FFY2006, the federal standard increased from 99.43 percent to 99.68 percent and the Administration fell short of the new standard at that time.

For the most recent reporting period, Federal Fiscal Year 2007, the Administration performed better than the more stringent federal standard.

While the allowance for the percent of children abused in licensed care is 0.32 percent, the ultimate goal is that no child in Washington state licensed care will experience abuse or neglect in his or her out-of-home placement.

Children Free From Abuse or Neglect While in Out-of-Home Care*



*Percent of children in out-of-home care without a founded referral of abuse or neglect. The new federal standard is 99.68 percent or more. Source: federal fiscal year 2007 data submitted to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care
Measured by: Foster homes receiving health and safety checks

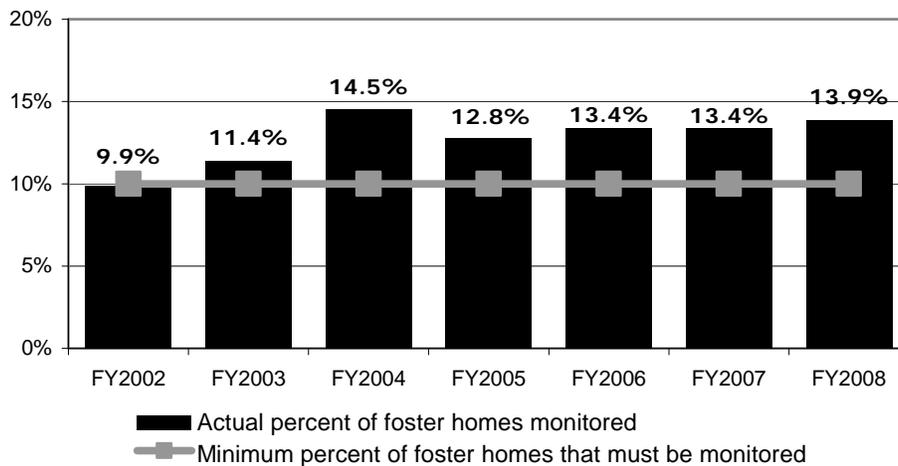
Not only must foster parents meet strict licensing standards, so must the physical dwellings into which children are placed. Often these homes are held to safety standards and emergency preparedness requirements well above those of a typical home. Fireplaces and wood stoves must be completely fenced, medications must be locked up at all times, multiple level homes must demonstrate effective evacuation plans, and foster parents must be trained in a variety of health and safety courses.

Licensors thoroughly inspect and evaluate the condition of homes and facilities to make sure that no hazards have developed since a license was issued or since a previous health and safety check.

Washington state statute requires that "Monitoring shall be done by the department on a random sample basis of no less than ten percent of the total licensed family foster homes licensed by the administration on July 1 of each year," and reported annually. (RCW 74.13.260; RCW 74.13.031(5))

The Children's Administration has exceeded the state requirement of ten percent of homes monitored since Fiscal Year 2003.

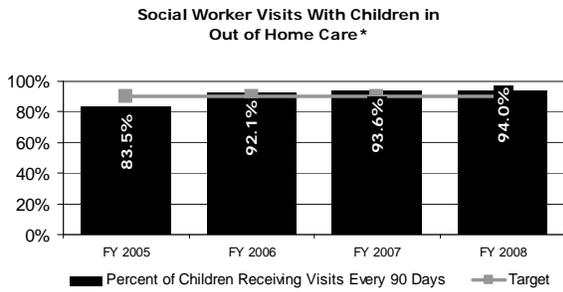
Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Foster Homes Monitored Annually*



*Percentage of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) foster homes with a health and safety check completed by the Division of Licensed Resources annually. Source: September 2008 CAMIS download.

Objective: Increase worker visits with children
Measured by: Children visited every 90 days and increased to every 30 days by their social worker

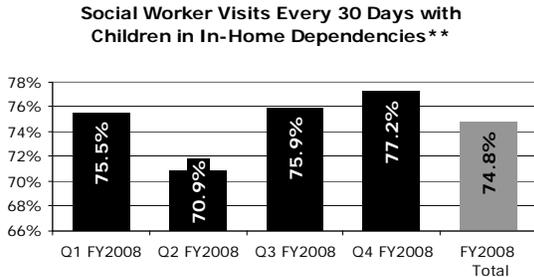
Over the past several years, the Administration has implemented changes in how often it requires social workers to visit children placed in out-of-home care. To better ensure safety, well-being, and permanency for children; and to work toward federal and Braam compliance, the Administration has worked diligently to phase-in new requirements for monthly visits.



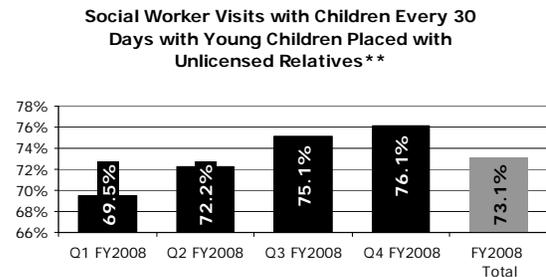
Historically, social workers were required to visit children placed in out-of-home care every 90 days. In FY08 94 percent of children were seen every quarter.

The Administration has phased-in more stringent monthly visitation requirements, focusing first on those children and families who are most vulnerable.

Phase 1: In FY05 the Administration began requiring monthly social worker visits with dependent children placed in their own homes. In FY08 74.8 percent of those children were visited every month.



Phase 2: In FY07 social workers were required to make monthly visits with young children, less than six years of age, placed with unlicensed relatives. In FY08 73.2 percent of these children received



monthly visits; however, improvement was seen during the year from 69.5 percent visited during the first quarter of the year to 76.1 percent visited each month by the last quarter of the year.

The performance measure reflected here is the percentage of children needing a visit who received a visit during a single month. In future reports CA will change this measure to correlate more closely with federal requirements based upon the federal Title IV-B measure which tracks the percent of children who have had a monthly visit each and every month they needed a visit. If a visit is missed or late for any reason, the child will be reported in the category of CA not meeting the monthly visitation requirement for the entire year for that child. The federal target for this measure is 90 percent by Federal Fiscal Year 2011 and the state compliance target set by the Braam Panel is 95 percent by June 2009.

*Percent of children in out-of-home placement who are seen face-to-face by their social worker in their caregiver's home at least once within the last 90 days. Source: September 2008 CAMIS download.

** July 2008 Data reported in GMAP

Permanency

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

Objective: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care

Measured by: Children reunified within 12 months of placement

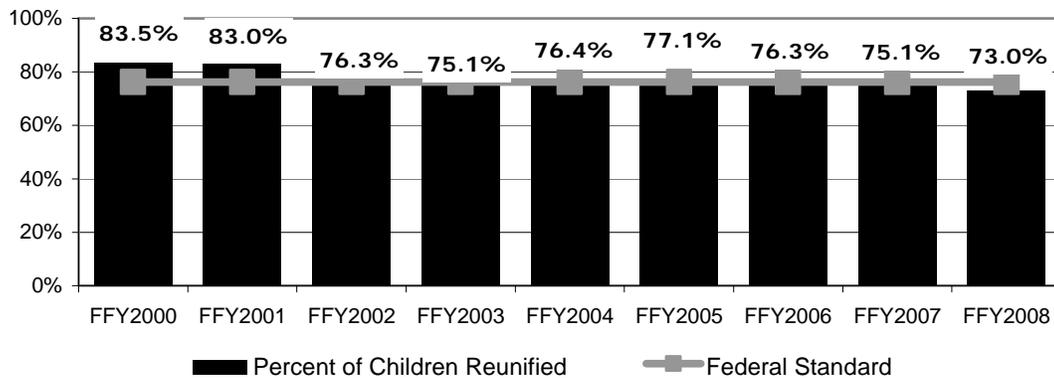
Whenever it is safe and in the best interest of the child or children involved, the Children's Administration seeks to reunify children with the families from which they were removed as quickly as possible.

The Administration works with families and communities to assess safety and to implement reunification planning prior to returning any child to a home where he or she was removed for reasons of abuse or neglect.

Washington state has historically done well with this measure; however, when priorities compete, child safety is always paramount and the rate of timely reunification may decline as a result.

In Fiscal Year 2008, the Administration failed to meet federal standard for timely reunification of 76.2 percent or higher.

Reunification 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 2008 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 within 24 months of placement

All children need and deserve safe, stable, and loving permanent families.

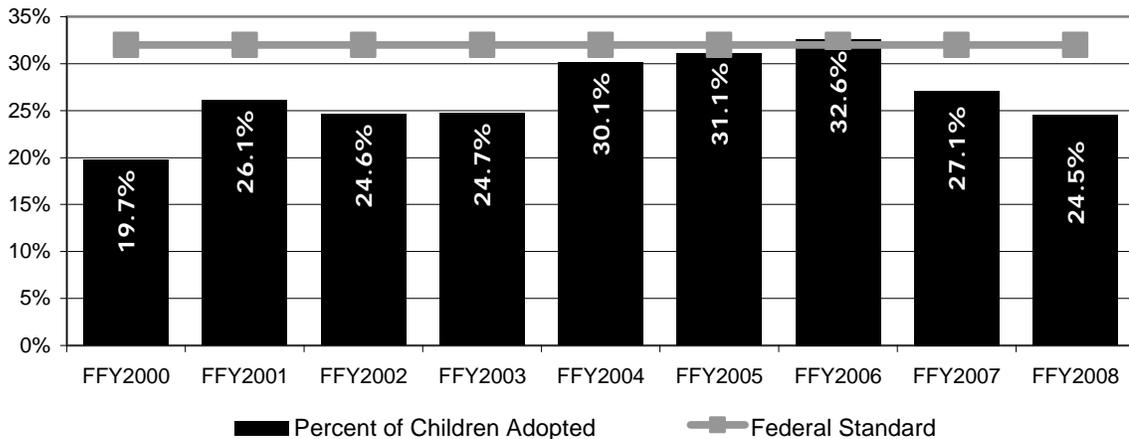
When children enter the foster care system as the result of caregiver abuse or neglect, immediate efforts are employed to help those caregivers safely parent their children. At the same time, the Administration engages in a process of concurrent planning to find an alternative permanent home should reunification efforts fail.

The goal of concurrent planning is to prevent children from languishing in temporary foster care by making diligent efforts to secure safety and permanency regardless of whether or not a child returns home.

Children who enter state care after the age of five, children of color, sibling groups, and children with special physical, mental, or behavioral needs tend to stay in foster care longer than very young, healthy children. The prior are often described as “harder to place” children.

This measure does not reflect the total number of children moving toward permanency; rather it monitors the number of months to achieve permanency. As increased work is done to secure permanency for “harder to place children” while maintaining efforts to ensure timely permanency for new children entering the system, the overall percentage of children adopted within 24 months declines.

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 2008 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Objective: Decrease length of stay without increasing reentry
Measured by: Length of stay for children in care

The Children’s Administration (CA) must make every effort to ensure that children transition to safe permanent placements regardless of whether they return home, are placed with relatives, or are adopted. The time it takes to ensure child safety and to secure the most suitable and stable placement for a given child varies depending upon the specific needs of that child.

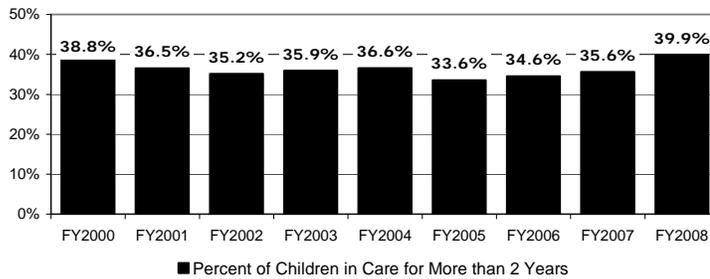
The Administration works to ensure that no child remains in temporary care for any longer than necessary. Efforts are also made to ensure that once children are in permanent placements, they don’t return to care due to additional incidents of abuse or neglect.

In Fiscal year 2008, the Administration reported both the highest percent of children in care for more than two years and children experiencing the longest median time in care over the nine year period reported.

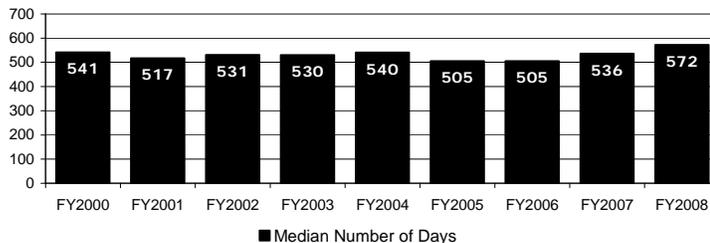
Trends in the proportion of removals that are for very young children and for children placed due to neglect may be associated with the observed increases in length-of-stay. The families of these children often require multiple, longer term supports to equip them to adequately parent.

The neglect legislation passed in 2005 and effective in 2007 increased the emphasis on providing support services to families exhibiting chronic neglect. CA involvement with these families often requires long term intervention resulting in longer lengths of stay for children placed in out of home care.

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 2008 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 2008 CAMIS download.

Objective: Decrease length-of-stay without increasing reentry
Measured by: Children reentering care

The Children’s Administration must conduct careful reunification assessment and safety planning prior to returning any child to a home from which he or she was removed due to parental maltreatment.

The Administration must have reasonable assurance that a family has improved its ability to provide for a child’s basic needs, nurture that child, and discipline the child in a manner that is appropriate and consistent with a child’s developmental age.

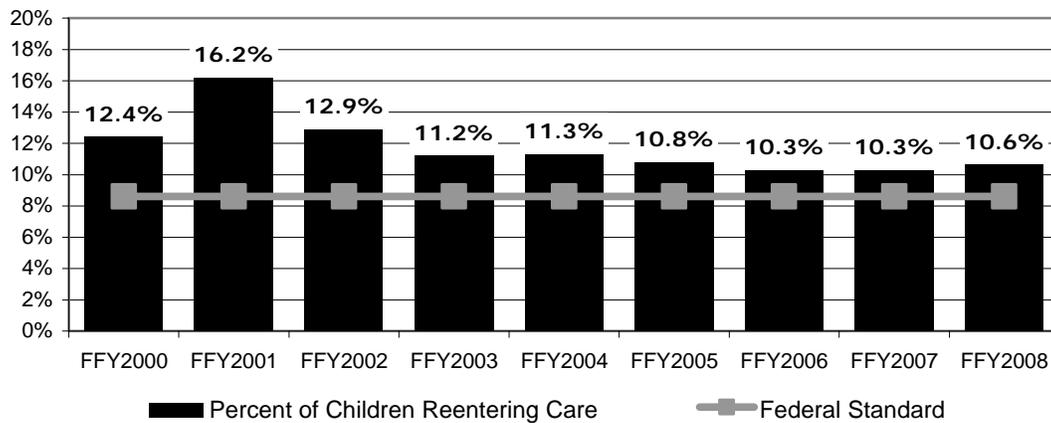
Likewise, families often require ongoing support and access to community resources after children are returned home.

The Administration remains engaged with families for varying periods of time following reunification based upon individual family needs.

The Administration works with families and communities to prevent placing children into out-of-home care who have previously been placed in care.

The federal standard requires that no more than 8.6 percent of children in out-of-home care will re-enter care within 12 months of reunification with their families. Washington state has demonstrated re-entry rates of between 10.3 percent and 16.2 percent for the nine year period shown with an average performance of 11.8 percent.

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 2008 submitted to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Objective: Decrease over-representation of African American and Native American children in care
Measured by: African American and Native American children in care for more than two years

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

The overrepresentation of African American and Native American children in the child welfare system is not just a statewide concern but is an issue affecting children of color throughout the country.

In 2008 the Administration published a report titled "Racial Disproportionality in Washington State" addressing some of the key questions and concerns about youth representing specific racial and ethnic groups in child welfare. Some of the major findings from that report include:

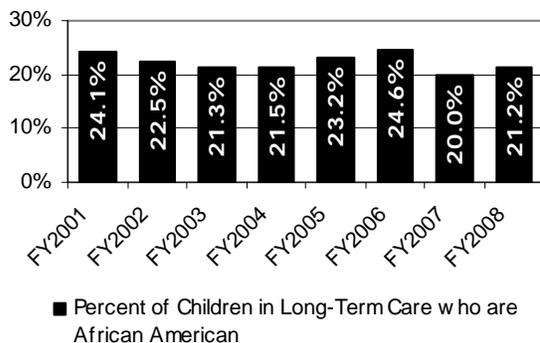
- The greatest disproportionality for children of color occurs when:
- The initial referral to Child Protective Services (CPS) is made.
 - The decision to remove the child from home is made.
 - A child is in care for over two years.

Additionally the report found that when compared with White children referred to CPS, after referrals:

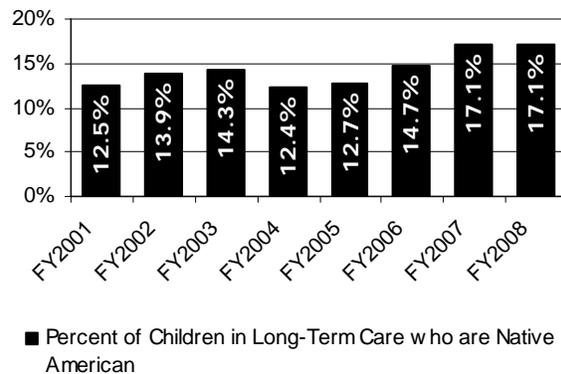
- Indian children are 1.6 times as likely to be removed from home and 2.2 times as likely to remain in foster care for over two years.
- Black children are 1.2 times more likely to be removed from home and 1.5 times more likely to remain in care for over two years.
- Hispanic children were no more likely to be removed from home or to remain in care for over two years.

In Washington state efforts are under way to address over-representation of minority children in care. Some of these efforts include: 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.

African American Children in Care for More Than 2 Years*



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



*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 20078CAMIS 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 2008 CAMIS download.

Objective: Increase relative placements
Measured by: Children placed with relatives

The Administration strives to lessen the challenges that children who are removed from their homes are met with when moving into unfamiliar surroundings.

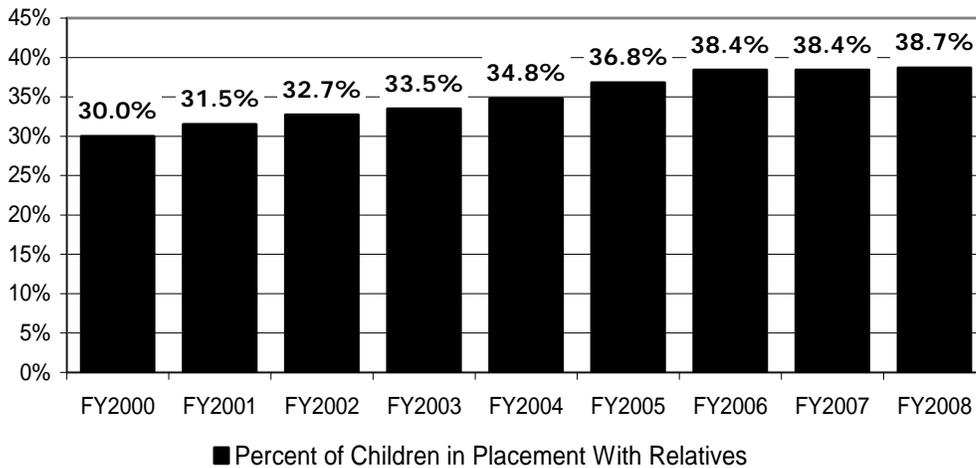
Whenever it is safe and in the best interest of the child or children involved, the Administration makes concerted efforts to identify family members who are able and willing to care for their relatives.

In Fiscal Year 2008, Children's Administration implemented new legislation allowing for broader definition of "family" so that suitable individuals known to children in state custody could also be included as possible resources for those children.

When children can be safely placed with people who are familiar to them in surroundings that reflect their culture, in communities where their language is spoken and their customs are practiced, they experience a greater sense of belonging and stability.

The percent of children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives has consistently increased over the nine year period shown.

Children in Placement with Relatives*



*The percent of children in placement with a relative on the last day of the fiscal year. Source: July 2008 CAMIS download.