

Massachusetts  
Department  
of Children  
and Families

# Annual Report FY2024

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Descriptive and Outcome Data: FY2020 – FY2024

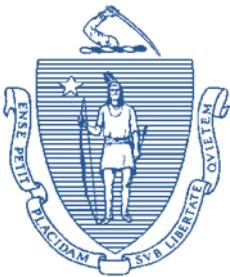
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STAVERNE MILLER  
COMMISSIONER

February 2026

On behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), I am pleased to present the DCF Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2024. This report embodies our ongoing commitment to providing the public with an expansive overview of the metrics used by Massachusetts and the federal government to monitor child safety.

Under the Healey Driscoll Administration, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services has led a robust strategic planning process. DCF has been provided the opportunity to look over a 3-year time horizon to define strategic objectives. DCF incorporated a “strategy map” approach, which meant defining each agency’s mission/vision as well as constituent objectives, metrics for success, and priority initiatives.

This year’s annual report and reports in future years will reflect the work aligned with this strategic plan. Our goals and objectives follow the major themes of child welfare; safety, permanency, and well-being. We have also embedded an equity lens to all of this work. For example, by promoting a “family-first” culture and providing tools to help Area Offices place children in kinship homes as their first or second placement, we are seeing across-the-board increases with all race/ethnicity groups. It is our hope that these efforts lead to more successful reunifications or permanency with kin.

We have seen tremendous success with the launch of our online [interactive data dashboard](#). It offers a greater perspective on child protective services in Massachusetts with multiple filters that allow users to select timeframes and demographics that interest them. We believe this dashboard enhances system wide collaboration that DCF depends on to keep children safe and to achieve the best outcomes possible for the children and families we serve.

DCF is filing this report pursuant to reporting requirements included in Item 4800-0015 of section 2 of chapter 28 of the acts of 2023, MGL c.18B, §7(e), c.18B §23, c.18B §24, c.18B §25, c.119 §23(f), c.119 §23(h), c.119 §39½, c.119 §51D.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Staverne Miller".

Staverne Miller, Commissioner

## DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Vision

*All children have the right to grow up in a nurturing home, free from abuse and neglect, with access to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education.*

### Mission

*Strive to protect children from abuse and neglect and, in partnership with families and communities, ensure children are able to grow and thrive in a safe and nurturing environment.*

### Goals

*Work toward establishing the safety, permanency, and well-being of the Commonwealth's children by stabilizing and preserving families, providing quality temporary alternative care, when necessary, safely reunifying families, and, when necessary and appropriate, creating new families through kinship, guardianship, or adoption.*

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The FY2024 Annual Report of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers a comprehensive view of children and families involved with child protective services in the Commonwealth from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, and the four prior state fiscal years (FY2020-FY2023). It includes federal outcome measures used to evaluate child welfare agencies nationwide and key metrics aligned with the policies, practices, and priorities for the children and families in Massachusetts.

The data shows more stable foster care placements, more children in kin foster care, significant caseload reduction, increased engagement of transition age youth, and fewer children returning to foster care after reuniting with their families. Notably, the five years encompassed in this report includes the COVID-19 pandemic when reports of suspected child abuse and neglect plunged due to closures and safety precautions. This had a rippling effect on agency operations and some metrics, particularly in FY2020 and FY2021.

DCF reviews all reports of suspected abuse and neglect, known as 51As, to identify children in need of a protective response. Parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and mental health are the most common factors that bring families to the Department's attention. In FY2024, the Department received 92,819 51A reports compared to 83,630 in FY2020.

If an allegation meets the criteria of abuse or neglect, or if a child's safety is at imminent risk, the Department initiates an investigation to determine whether a child has been abused and/or neglected. When a case opens, the Department provides case management and makes referrals to supportive services for families. DCF monitors for recurrence of abuse and neglect for 12 months after the initial report. Almost 85% of children abused or neglected in FY2023 did not experience a recurrence of maltreatment in FY2024. Between FY2015 and FY2024 the Department saw a 26% decline in the recurrence of maltreatment as the Department continues to see the impacts of policy changes and increased staffing levels across the agency.

Most children with open cases are served at home with their families with approximately 20% in foster care for their safety. A five-year downward trend resulted in 1,400 fewer children being in foster care at the end of FY2024 compared to FY2020. All states must report "placement stability" in foster care by tracking the number of times a child moves per 1,000 placement days (a federal measure). Placement stability improved by 22% in FY2024 compared to FY2018 and a 1.3% improvement was seen from FY2023 to FY2024. While placements stabilized significantly FY2020 and FY2021, data from the following three years point to the pandemic driving fewer placement moves.

Placement stability improves when more children can be placed in kin foster homes with relatives or others who are like family as soon as they enter foster care. The Department's concerted efforts resulted in an historic high of 33% of children being placed with kin as their first or second foster care placement in FY2024. Additionally, there was marked decline in racial disproportionality in kinship placement, especially among Black children. In FY2024, 30% of Black children were initially placed with kin compared to 19% in FY2023.

From the time children enter foster care, the Department begins work to identify a safe, permanent home for the child. For most children, permanency is achieved through reunification with their biological families within a year of their entering foster care. The federal government requires the Department to follow these children for 12 months after they return home and report if a child re-enters foster care. Every year since FY2020, the number of children returning to foster care within 12 months has declined from 2,032 children in FY2020 to 1,070 children in FY2024, indicating children are safer when they return home.

When reunification is not safe, the Department searches for an adoptive home or a guardian for children. The Department finalized 871 adoptions in FY2024, a 21% increase compared to FY2020. The five-year high for adoptions can be attributed to the reopening of the courts following pandemic-related closures and the joint efforts of DCF and the court to safely expedite adoptions.

Timelier adoptions can help Massachusetts align more closely with national permanency benchmarks. The time a child spends in foster care, from entry to permanency is measured as a Home Removal Episodes (HRE) and Placement Length of Stay (LOS). Under federal guidelines, timely permanency is no longer than 24 months in foster care. In FY2024, 61% of Massachusetts children were in foster care for under two years compared to 62% in FY2020. The LOS measures the time a child spends in placement until DCF custody ends. The median LOS for children who exited foster care in FY2024 was 20.2 months, nearly six months longer than in FY2020. The median time to adoption, while trending downward since FY2021, is 39.9 months. In the coming year, the Department will devote additional resources to matching children with pre-adoptive families.

## **Looking Ahead**

DCF's goal for children and youth of all ages is to stabilize with their families as safely and expeditiously as possible, while continuing to invest in resources for children who face longer paths to permanency. Partnerships formed during FY2024 with the National Center for Diligent Recruitment and the Dave Thomas Foundation continue into FY2025. They will yield new strategies for recruitment and retention of foster, adoptive, and kinship families as well as provide training and ongoing support for child-focused recruiters who will work primarily on behalf of children in group care.

All children should have access to a quality education while they are in foster care and DCF has a number of partners that help support children and youth. For example, during FY2024 DCF gained access to school districts' electronic records and began using data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) to identify children and youth who are struggling academically. DCF uses the data to engage with school personnel, foster parents, congregate care providers and others involved with the case who can offer further support as needed. While the Department works to boost graduation rates, there has been improvement. The 2022-2023 four-year graduation rate cited in this report was 58.3%, a 16% increase since 2012. During the 2023-2024 school year, 386 young people in foster care receiving or receiving young adult services graduated from high school.

For many years, DCF has been targeting transition age youth with supportive services until their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The Department offers financial assistance and programming that includes life skills development, employment facilitation, and access to education and vocational training support. An internal work group is deep into restructuring our approach to engage young adults and encourage them to continue receiving services from DCF beyond age 18. Increasing access to safe and stable housing for this age group is an ongoing collaborative effort with sister state agencies, including the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and local housing authorities across the state.

Following a re-procurement of the Department's Support & Stabilization services, a new and expanded slate of interventions focused on preventing future abuse and neglect began in April 2025. Under the new contract, providers are required to monitor the effectiveness of their services. Input from families with lived experience helped create a service array that meets the unique needs of children and parents. The Department remains committed to building on this engagement to strengthen practice and policy. In addition to Support & Stabilization services, DCF's network of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) serve thousands of Massachusetts parents and children in 33 communities, providing preventative services and support to any family in need of assistance.

Over the last five years staffing levels remained consistent with the exception of FY2021 when the Department experienced a spike in post-pandemic resignations. FY2024 ended with over 4,200 employees and we will continue efforts to recruit and retain a skilled and diverse workforce through professional development training, employee wellness initiatives, and leadership development opportunities.

Child safety and well-being is not the work of one agency. DCF collaborates with an assemblage of sister-state agencies, providers, child-serving professionals and community organizations to fulfill its mission to protect children from abuse and neglect. We look forward to continuing this work to build the Department's capacity to achieve the best possible outcomes for Massachusetts children and their families.

## **FY2024 Annual Report Data Summary**

In this report, descriptive and outcome data are presented over rolling five-year time periods in both tabular and graphical formats. Demographic stratification is provided for key variables, along with narrative statements that define and describe the data elements and observed trends.

### **• Cases and Consumers**

At the end of FY2024, 20,411 families were being served by DCF (18,324 clinical cases and 2,087 adoption cases). These cases involve 70,086 (unduplicated) children and adults: 33,743 children (0-17), 1,987 young adults (18 & older), and 34,383 adults.<sup>1</sup> (Table 1, p.1; Table 3, p.2)

The 1,987 young adults (18 & older) were served by the Department prior to their 18th birthday and continued to receive services from DCF after they turned 18. To remain open with DCF beyond age 18, these young adults signed a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA). A young adult can sign a VPA at age 18 and remain open with the Department through age 22. Young adults who decline DCF services at age 18 may later request services by signing a VPA prior to turning 23. In FY2024, 707 youth turned 18 while in care. Of these, 77% remained open with the Department. (Table 37a, p.41)

White, Hispanic/Latinx, and Black children and adults account for most consumers served by the Department.<sup>2</sup> English is the primary language spoken amongst consumers, with Spanish being the next most prevalent language. (Table 7, p.4; Table 9, p.5)

### **• Children in Placement**

The Department strives to safely stabilize families at home and 79% of children (0-17) open with the Department at the end of FY2024 safely remained at home. When this is not possible, children may be placed in out-of-home care (foster care or group care) to safeguard their safety and well-being. At the end of FY2024, DCF had 8,572 children and young adults in out-of-home placement. Of these, 6,953 (81%) were children (0-17) and 1,619 (19%) were young adults (18 & older). Between FY2020 and FY2024, children (0-17) in placement decreased by 17% (1,461). White (35%), Hispanic/Latinx (33%), and Black (15%) children (0-17) account for the majority of children in the Department's care. (Table 10, p.6; Figure 12, p.7; Table 14, p.9)

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<sup>1</sup> Total families include all individuals with an active case status on the last day of the fiscal year and who were in a case with a family assessment or an action plan. These selection criteria exclude consumers not in placement who have an active case status that is pending the outcome of an investigation. The sum of the child, young adult, and adult counts may be greater than the unduplicated total count because a consumer may be open as an "Adult" in one case and a "Child" in another case.

<sup>2</sup> Following federal guidelines, DCF reports on the following broad racial/ethnic groupings: Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Multi-Racial, Native American, Pacific Islander, and White.

A permanency plan is established for children and young adults in the Department's care. This permanency plan seeks to ensure that each child has a nurturing family – preferably one that is permanent – within a timeframe supportive of their needs. At the end of FY2024, 93% of children (0-17) with a specified permanency plan goal who were in DCF placement had a permanency plan that met the federal standard for permanency (i.e., family reunification, adoption, guardianship, stabilize intact family, or permanent care with kin). The majority had a permanency plan of family reunification (34%) or adoption (42%). (Table/Figure 15, p.10)

At the end of FY2024, 79% of placed children (0-17) were living in family foster home settings: Departmental Foster Care (DFC) or Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC). DCF prioritizes kin placement. Accordingly, 60% of children (0-17) placed in DFC foster homes were placed with kin. The overall kinship placement rate for children (0-17) in out-of-home placement was 40%. Kinship placement rates have been increasing over the past several years. (Table/Figure 16; Figures 16a-b, p.13)

DCF keeps siblings together whenever possible. In 78% of cases with a minimum of two siblings placed in a DFC foster home at the end of FY2024, two or more of the siblings were placed together. Furthermore, 66% of those cases had all siblings placed in the same foster home—an increase of 4% compared to FY2020. (Table 17; Figures 17a-b, p.16)

The Department tracks several placement-related metrics. An understanding of these metrics is dependent upon knowing two key terms-of-art: *Home Removal Episode* (HRE) is the period between the start and end of DCF placement custody. *Placement Length-of-Stay* (LOS) measures the time between the start and end of DCF custody in placement. The average LOS for children exiting care in FY2024 was 25.4 months. For children still in care at the end of FY2024, the average LOS at that point-in-time was 27.4 months. (Table 19, p.17)

Children in placement may experience one or more moves during an HRE. The Department works to minimize a child's placement changes through the provision of community-based individual and family supportive services. Relative to FY2023, a larger share of the children entering care in FY2024 experienced placement stability (i.e., no more than two placement settings within the first 12 months of out-of-home care). The FY2024 placement stability rate of 75.0% is a 1.3% improvement over the FY2023 rate (74.0%). (Table/Figure 20, p.18)

The Department tracks a federal measure of *Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days* for children (0-17) who were in care at any time during the year. In FY2024, children (0-17) evidenced 7.23 *Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days*. This reflects a 22.4% improvement compared to FY2018 (9.32 placement moves per 1,000 placement days). (Table/Figure 21, p.18)

The Department also tracks the number of first-time entries into out-of-home care as well as re-entries into out-of-home care. In FY2024, 3,380 unique children (0-17) entered out-of-home care. Of these, 2,577 (76%) were first-time entries and 541 (16%) were re-entries beyond 12 months of their exit from care. Combined, DCF found that 92.2% of the children entering care had not been discharged from care during the prior 12 months. (Table/Figure 22, p.20)

In FY2024, 3,357 children exited from DCF out-of-home placement. Data reveal that 92% of children who exited out-of-home care in FY2024 achieved permanency. Of note, children who entered care at age 12 or younger achieved permanency at a significantly higher rate (98.3%) than children who entered out-of-home care at age 13 or older (71.7%). Children who were age 13 or older at the time of their entry into care were less likely to exit to adoption or guardianship. (Table/Figure 23; Tables/Figures 23a-b-c, pp.21-22)

- **Child Maltreatment (i.e., Child Abuse and/or Neglect)**

When DCF receives a report of abuse and/or neglect, called a 51A report, from either a mandated reporter or another concerned person, DCF is required to evaluate the allegations and determine the safety of the children. Some families come to the attention of the Department outside the 51A process: Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) cases referred by the Juvenile Court, cases referred by the Probate and Family Court, newborns surrendered under the Safe Haven Act, and voluntary requests for services by a parent or family. Cases that fall outside the 51A process are generally referred directly for Family Assessment and Action Planning and do not follow the protective intake protocol.

In FY2024, DCF received 93,771 intakes (i.e., Protective 51As, Safe Haven, Voluntary, and CRA/Court Referral), of which 99% (92,819) came to the attention of the Department through the 51A reporting process. A 51A may involve one or more children. Safe Haven, voluntary, CRA, and court referrals accounted for 1% (952) of all FY2024 intakes. This pattern of intake distribution was reflected throughout the FY2020-FY2024 reporting period and is comparable to the distribution observed in prior years. While intake counts are below those of FY2019 (96,879), intakes are up from the COVID-19 pandemic-related decreases observed from FY2020-FY2021. (Table 25; Figures 25a-b, p.27)

Upon receiving a 51A report, the Department must first gather sufficient information to determine whether the allegation meets DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect, whether there is immediate danger to the safety of a child, whether DCF involvement is warranted, and, if so, the most appropriate approach to the investigation.

The Department begins its screening process immediately upon receipt of a report. During the screening process, DCF obtains information from the person filing the report and contacts professionals involved with the family, such as doctors or teachers, who may be able to provide information about the child's condition or well-being. DCF may also contact the family if appropriate.

If the report is "screened-in," it is assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) Response, also known as a 51B Response, to determine whether there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child has been abused and/or neglected. "Screened-in" reports may require an immediate emergency response or a non-emergency response. Some 51A reports may not meet DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect and are "screened out."

If the Department determines that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, has been a victim of human trafficking, has suffered serious physical abuse and/or injury, or has died as a result of abuse and/or neglect, DCF must notify local law enforcement as well as the district attorney, who has the authority to file criminal charges.

Of the 92,819 protective intakes (51As) received in FY2024 alleging child maltreatment, 45,141 (49%) were "screened-in" for a CPS Response. Of the "screened out" 51As (47,678), 6,448 were referred to the district attorney where additional investigations may occur (e.g., the report did not involve a child, the allegations are not within the Department's mandate concerning child abuse and neglect, and/or an alleged perpetrator has been identified and was not a caregiver). It should be noted that "screened-in" 51As may also be referred to the district attorney. (Table 26; Figures 26a-b, p.28)

"Screened-in" 51As are assigned for a CPS Response to determine whether there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child has been abused and/or neglected. "Reasonable cause to believe" means a collection of facts, knowledge, or observations that tend to support or are consistent with the allegations and, when viewed in light of the surrounding circumstances and the credibility of the persons providing the information, would lead a reasonable person to conclude that a child has been abused or neglected. The response includes an investigation of the validity of the allegations received, a determination of current danger and future risk to the child, and an

assessment of the capacity of parents/caregivers to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of their child.

Given that an instance of alleged maltreatment may be referred to the Department by several mandated/non-mandated reporters, multiple 51A intakes may be rolled into one protective response. As such, the Department completed 35,631 responses involving one or more children in FY2024. Of these, there were 14,884 (41.8%) support decisions and 5,287 (14.8%) substantiated concern decisions. The remaining 15,460 (43.4%) were unsupported. These determinations are defined on page 30. (Table/Figure 27, p.30; Table/Figure 28, p.32)

A 51A report may contain one or more allegations of abuse and/or neglect and may involve one or more children. In FY2024, the most frequently present allegation types were neglect (72.9%), physical abuse (22.5%), and sexual abuse (10.6%). Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) and SEN-Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (SEN-NAS) were alleged in 1.2% of 51A reports. (Table 29a, p.34)

During a 51B response, the Department determines whether there is “reasonable cause to believe” that a child has been a victim of maltreatment. Emergency responses must be completed within five business days. Non-emergency responses must be completed within 15 business days. Each of the abuse and/or neglect allegations within a 51A report is investigated and a decision is made for each allegation type. In FY2024, the most frequently supported allegations were neglect (87.9%), physical abuse (10.7%), SEN/SEN-NAS (4.1%), and sexual abuse (3.7%). (Table 29b, p.34)

A child may have been a victim of one or more types of maltreatment. There were 21,888 children (unduplicated child count) found to have experienced maltreatment in FY2024. Of these unique child victims, 88.0% were victims of neglect, 8.1% were victims of physical abuse, 2.8% were SEN/SEN-NAS newborns, and 2.6% were victims of sexual abuse. (Table 29c, p.34)

- Performance/Process Outcome Metrics – Safety**

The reduction of the *Recurrence of Maltreatment* is an important federal measure of the safety and well-being of children and families. As such, the Department monitors the recurrence of maltreatment on open and closed cases on a quarterly and annual basis as a component of its performance management and accountability system. This indicator measures whether the agency was successful in preventing subsequent maltreatment of a child if the child was the subject of a supported report of maltreatment.

In the two-year period ending FY2024, 84.84% of the children who experienced an occurrence of maltreatment in FY2023 did not experience a recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of their initial maltreatment. Of note, there were fewer child victims in the FY2023-24 cohort than in each of the four prior cohort years (i.e., FY2019-20 to FY2022-23). (Table/Figure 30, p.35)

The Department also tracks the number of children who experienced supported maltreatment while residing in an out-of-home placement setting. An additional federal measure is *Victimization Rate per 100,000 Days in Care*. In FY2024, data show that for every 100,000 days of placement, 20.91 maltreatment events were supported for DCF placed children. Maltreatment may occur after the child is reunified with parents while legal custody remains with the Department, while the child is visiting with parents within a placement episode, in the community, or in the placement setting. (Tables/Figures 31-31b, p.36)

- **Performance/Process Outcome Metrics – Permanency**

*Rate of Reunification within 12 Months* of entering care is a federal measure of time to permanency. The *Rate of Reunification within 12 Months* improved in FY2024 compared to FY2023. (Table/Figure 32, p. 37)

Re-entry to DCF custody is generally inversely correlated with time to reunification, meaning that the longer it takes to achieve permanency, the less likely that a child is to re-enter DCF custody. Thus, although the time to reunification has increased compared to FY2020, the rates of re-entry within 12 months for children who exited to reunification in FY2021-24 have been consistently lower than FY2020. (Table/Figure 33, p.37)

The Department actively works to achieve permanency through adoption when reunification cannot be safely accommodated. Though FY2020 evidenced 850 adoptions, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted adoption legalizations in the last quarter of FY2020. This impact was particularly evidenced in the 720 adoptions legalized in FY2021. While lower than pre-pandemic counts, the 871 adoptions in FY2024 reflect a 20.0% (151) increase over FY2021. (Table/Figure 34, p.39)

Exits to guardianship are also a measure of permanency. Though guardianships have increased in recent years, like other permanency measures, guardianships declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. While lower than pre-pandemic counts, the 335 guardianships in FY2024 reflect a 34.0% (85) increase over FY2021 (250). (Table/Figure 36, p.40)

The Department provides outreach and transition services to young adults when they turn 18. DCF provided these services to 2,381 unique young adults in FY2024. In FY2024, 77% of youth who turned 18 chose to continue their engagement with the department, a 4.7% increase over FY2020. (Tables/Figure 37-37a, p.41)

- **Performance/Process Outcome Metrics – Wellbeing**

Access to appropriate and timely medical services is important to child well-being. Data collected from FY2016-FY2024 reflect year-over-year progress through FY2019 toward meeting the agency's requirement that each child entering care should receive an initial medical screening and a comprehensive medical evaluation. FY2020-FY2022 medical visits were impacted by decreased access to medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Improvement was noted in FY2023-FY2024 with medical visits moving beyond pre-pandemic rates in FY2024.

Largely credited to the creation of a full-time DCF medical director position and the onboarding of medical social workers in all 29 DCF Area Offices, a significant increase in medical visit compliance has been observed. In FY2024, completion rates of medical screenings and comprehensive medical evaluations increased by 266% compared to FY2016. Timeliness of medical visits in FY2024 increased by 283% over FY2016. (Table/Figure 38, p.42)

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) calculates and reports on graduation rates as part of overall efforts to improve educational outcomes for students in the Commonwealth. Adopting DESE's methodology to calculate the four-year graduation rate, the Department tracks a cohort of students in custody from 9th grade through high school and then divides the number of students who graduate within four years by the total number in the cohort. This rate provides the percentage of the cohort that graduates in four years or less. While graduation rates are below DCF targets, the data reveal that the four-year graduation rate for children in DCF custody has improved by 16.1%—from 50.3% in the 2011-2012 school year to 58.4% in the 2022-2023 school year. Recognizing that many students need longer than four years to graduate from high school and that it is important to acknowledge this major accomplishment, the Department (and DESE) calculates a five-year graduation rate. The five-year graduation rate for children in DCF custody in the 2018-2019 school year was 68.2%. In the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, the five-year graduation rates declined to 66.8% and 62.3% respectively, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic achievement. The 2021-2022 school year five-year graduation rate of 67.4% is approaching the pre-pandemic rates. (Table/Figure 39, p.43)

DESE reports on students identified as High Needs. A student qualifies as High Needs if they are designated as either low income/economically disadvantaged, English learner/former English learner, or a student with disabilities/IEP. In school year 2023-24, 98.9% of children in DCF custody were identified by DESE as High Needs students. This is in contrast to 55.8% for all Massachusetts students. (Table 39a, p. 43)

In the 2023-24 school year, children in DCF custody attended 88.3% of their enrolled school days. This was somewhat comparable to the 91.5% attendance rate for Massachusetts students identified by DESE as High Needs students and within 4.7% of the 93.0% attendance rate for all Massachusetts students. Children in DCF custody had more school suspensions and emergency removals than other Massachusetts students. (Tables 39a-b-c, pp.43-44)

- Child/Youth Fatalities**

DCF Area Offices may receive notification of child/youth deaths through a 51A intake or through other means. Area Offices proceed to collect available facts including DCF history (if any) and notify the DCF Central Office through the Department's *Central Office Incident Notification* (COIN) process. In FY2024, 106 child/youth fatalities were brought to the attention of the Department. Of these: 28 (26%) were open in a DCF case or a 51B response, 39 (37%) had a prior history with the Department, and 39 (37%) had no history with the Department.

The majority of child/youth deaths that come to the attention of the Department are not determined to be the result of maltreatment. Manners of death include accidental, community violence, inflicted personal injury, chronic or acute medical condition, neglect, overdose (alcohol and/or drugs), suicide, Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), and other/undetermined manner of death. (Tables 40a-b, p.45)

- Operations – Budget, Service Costs, Staffing Trends, and Caseload Workload**

Reversing an 11.9% downward trend in budgetary appropriations during the period of FY2010-FY2012, the DCF enacted budget began increasing in FY2013, and by FY2025 (\$1,528,901,858) was 107% greater than FY2012 (\$737,077,781). The steepest gains have been made in the past ten years. These budgetary appropriations have supported significant increases in staffing (23%) between FY2015 and FY2024 and increases in services (34%) between FY2020 and FY2024. (Table/Figure 42, p.46; Table 43, p.47; Tables/Figure 44-44a, p.48)

During FY2020-FY2024:

- Significant investments were made including:
  - Foster care rate increase every year (\$18.6M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - 766 Residential School rate increase every year (\$16.4M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - Chapter 257 provider rate increases (\$25.7M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - Expansion of Support and Stabilization services to include foster parents (\$10.5M investment over FY2020-FY2021)
- There was also significant growth in services such as:
  - Adoption subsidy (\$20.0M over the course of 5 years)
  - Guardianship subsidy (\$3.3M over the course of 5 years)
  - Support and Stabilization services (\$52.0M over the course of 5 years)

Current DCF staffing levels have significantly increased relative to July 2015 staffing levels. Social worker staffing levels have increased by 15% and staffing levels for all other bargaining units have increased by 67%. Recognizing that managerial oversight capacity had been decreasing since 2008, the Department engaged in a purposeful effort to re-establish managerial ratios to support agency operations. Accordingly, by July 2024, managerial staffing levels

increased by 69% relative to July 2015. These managerial staffing levels were utilized to re-establish a fifth region (Central Region), decouple Area Offices, and appropriately staff the DCF Central Office. (Tables/Figure 44-44a, p.48)

Caseload is a proxy measure of workload. High caseloads can result in overburdened social workers and potentially underserved families. Increased budgetary appropriations have supported the Department's efforts to reduce staff workload by hiring additional clinical staff, including more than 600 frontline social workers since FY2015, and increasing the managerial and supervisory oversight essential for identifying cases appropriate for safe closing. The FY2020 and FY2021 12-month average weighted caseload ratios of 14.74:1 and 14.82:1 for DCF intake, response, ongoing, and adoption social workers were below the negotiated caseload ratio of no more than 15.00:1 (15 families).

With shifting national workforce trends following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department saw increases in worker caseloads, especially in the first half of FY2022. By FY2024, the 12-month average weighted caseload ratio of 15.40:1 was moving closer to the negotiated 15:1 ratio. (Tables 45-45a, p.49)



## I. CASE COUNTS

### • Case Counts Fiscal Year End

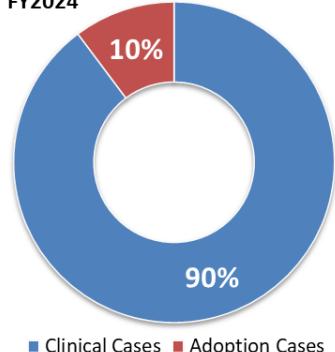
As summarized in Table/Figure 1 below, at the close of state FY2024 (6/30/2024), DCF had 20,411 open cases. Of these, 90% (18,324) were clinical cases and 10% (2,087) were adoption cases.

TABLE 1. Case Counts Fiscal Year End

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Clinical Cases	22,088	23,938	22,232	20,686	18,324
Adoption Cases	2,385	2,369	2,361	2,227	2,087
Case Count Fiscal Year End	24,473	26,307	24,593	22,913	20,411

FY2024 case counts are 17% (4,062) below the FY2020 case counts.

FIGURE 1. Case Distribution  
FY2024



### • Case Openings/Closings/Re-Openings

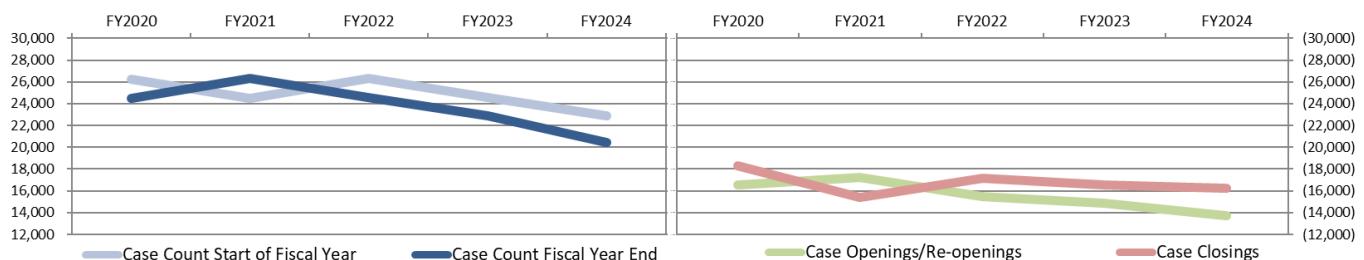
Table/Figure 2 present caseload over the past five fiscal years as a function of case openings, closings, and re-openings. DCF cases may remain open for a brief or extended period of time, during which the primary goal is to stabilize the family and mitigate risk of harm to children. During any given year, cases may close and subsequently re-open for either protective or non-protective reasons.

TABLE 2. Case Openings/Closings/Re-Openings

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Case Count Start of Fiscal Year	26,235	24,473	26,307	24,593	22,913
Case Openings	9,348	9,347	8,577	8,228	7,607
Case Closings	(18,273)	(15,375)	(17,193)	(16,556)	(16,241)
Case Re-Openings	7,163	7,862	6,902	6,648	6,132
Case Count Fiscal Year End	24,473	26,307	24,593	22,913	20,411
Unduplicated Count of Cases Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year	41,508	40,467	40,568	38,279	35,639

- **Case Count Start of Fiscal Year:** Total count of cases open with DCF at the start of the fiscal year.
- **Case Openings:** Total count of cases that “open for the first time” with DCF at any time during the fiscal year. These are unique case counts.
- **Case Closings:** Total count of DCF cases that “close” at any time during the fiscal year. These may not be unique case counts, as a case may close, re-open, and subsequently close within a fiscal year.
- **Case Re-openings:** A case “re-opening” is defined as a DCF case that closed prior to or during the current fiscal year and subsequently re-opened during the current fiscal year. These may not be unique case counts, as a case may have re-opened multiple times during a given fiscal year.
- **Unduplicated Count of Cases Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year:** Unique count of cases open for at minimum one day within the fiscal year.

FIGURE 2. Case Count Trends – Openings/Closings/Re-Openings



## II. CONSUMER COUNTS

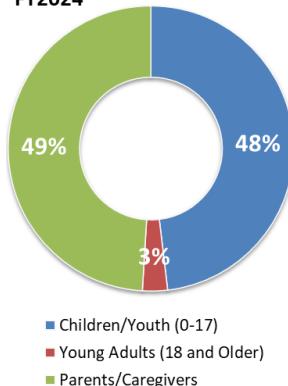
### • Consumer Counts Fiscal Year End

Table/Figure 3 show that at the end of FY2024, DCF had 70,086 open consumers (unduplicated). Consumers with the identified role type of “adult” (i.e., parent/caregiver) accounted for 34,383 of the total open consumers. Consumers with the identified role type of “child” accounted for 35,730 of the total open consumers and ranged from children aged 0-17 years (94%), to “young adults” (6%) who voluntarily remain open with DCF from the ages of 18-22 years.

**TABLE 3. Consumer Counts Fiscal Year End**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Consumer Role Type = Adult (i.e., Parents/Caregivers)	43,915	47,066	42,996	39,398	34,383
Consumer Role Type = Child	43,469	46,736	43,457	40,621	35,730
Children 0-17	41,342	44,465	41,263	38,548	33,743
Young Adults 18 & Older	2,127	2,271	2,194	2,073	1,987
Total Consumer Count Fiscal Year End	87,384	93,802	86,453	80,019	70,113
Unduplicated Consumer Count Fiscal Year End <sup>(1)</sup>	86,315	93,385	86,093	79,980	70,086

**FIGURE 3. Consumers FY2024**



<sup>(1)</sup> **Unduplicated Consumer Count Fiscal Year End:** A consumer may be open as an “Adult” in one case and a “Child” in another case. In FY2023, DCF updated its methodology to capture duplicated and unduplicated consumer counts. Previous fiscal years have been recast for consistency with this updated methodology.

**NOTE:** Consumer counts are dependent on data entry. Minor fluctuations in point-in-time counts calculated immediately after a quarter and several months later are to be expected.

### • Consumer Children, Young Adults, and Adults – Openings/Closings/Re-Openings

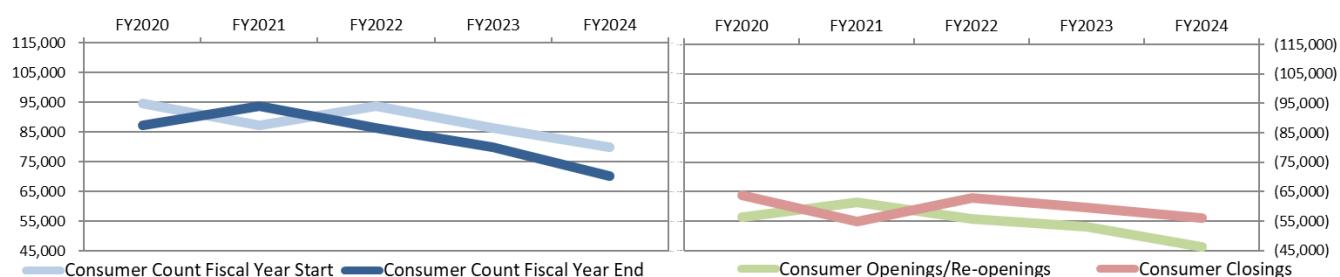
Table/Figure 4 present the consumer growth dynamics over the past five fiscal years as a function of consumer openings, closings, and re-openings.

**TABLE 4. Consumer Openings/Closings/Re-openings**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Consumer Count Start of Fiscal Year	94,688	87,384	93,802	86,453	80,019
Consumer Openings	18,256	19,041	17,388	17,630	14,547
Consumer Closings	(63,628)	(54,829)	(62,965)	(59,586)	(56,095)
Consumer Re-Openings	38,068	42,206	38,228	35,522	31,642
Consumer Count Fiscal Year End	87,384	93,802	86,453	80,019	70,113
Unduplicated Count of Consumers Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year <sup>(1)</sup>	118,435	120,362	116,641	108,680	98,647

<sup>(1)</sup> **Unduplicated Count of Consumers Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year:** Unique count of consumers open for at minimum one day within the year.

**FIGURE 4. Consumer Trends – Openings/Closings/Re-Openings**



- **Consumer Children (of any age) – Openings/Closings/Re-Openings**

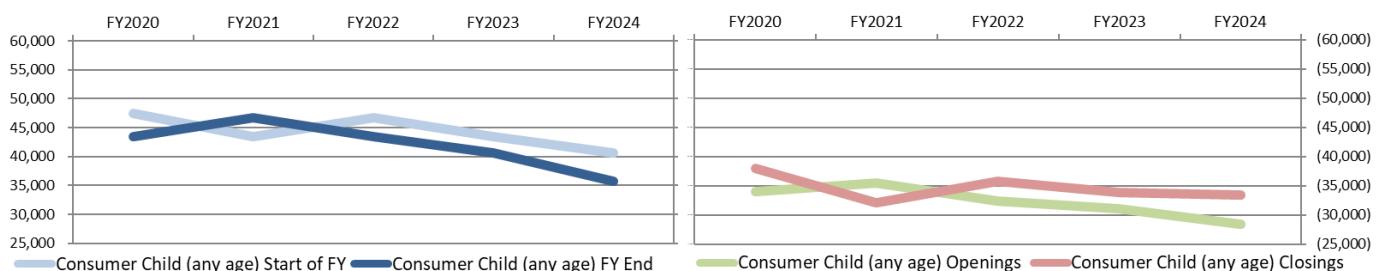
Table/Figure 5 present the consumer child (of any age) growth dynamics over the past five fiscal years as a function of consumer openings, closings, and re-openings.

**TABLE 5. Consumer Child (of any age) Openings/Closings/Re-openings**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Consumer Child (of any age) Count Start of Fiscal Year	47,471	43,469	46,736	43,457	40,621
Consumer Child (of any age) Openings	12,544	12,746	11,687	11,199	10,077
Consumer Child (of any age) Closings	(37,967)	(32,175)	(35,732)	(33,888)	(33,375)
Consumer Child (of any age) Re-Openings	21,421	22,696	20,766	19,853	18,407
<b>Consumer Children (of any age) Count Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>43,469</b>	<b>46,736</b>	<b>43,457</b>	<b>40,621</b>	<b>35,730</b>
Unduplicated Count of Consumer Child (of any age) Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year <sup>(1)</sup>	75,463	73,296	73,645	69,282	64,264

<sup>(1)</sup> **Unduplicated Count of Consumer Child (of any age) Open at Any Time during the Fiscal Year:** Unique count of child consumers (of any age) open for services (i.e., open in an assessment or in a clinical/adoption case) at minimum one day within the Fiscal Year.

**FIGURE 5. Consumer Children (of any age) Trends – Openings/Closings/Re-Openings**



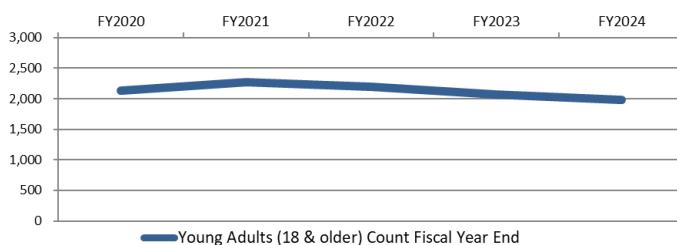
- **Consumer Young Adults (18 & Older) Counts**

Table/Figure 6 present the consumer young adults (18 & older) counts at the close of each of the past five fiscal years. Each of these young adults (18 & older) was served by the Department prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. In order to remain open with the Department beyond age 18, these young adults signed a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA). A young adult may sign a VPA at age 18 and remain open with the Department. Young adults who do not sign a VPA at age 18 can later receive services by signing a VPA prior to turning 23-years-old.

**TABLE 6. Consumer Young Adults (18 & Older) Counts**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Consumer Young Adults (18 & older) Count Fiscal Year End	2,127	2,271	2,194	2,073	1,987

**FIGURE 6. Consumer Young Adults (18 & Older) Trends**



- **Consumer Children, Young Adults, and Adults – Demographics-Race/Ethnicity**

Table 7 shows that at the end of FY2024, White (33%), Hispanic/Latinx (36%), and Black (14%) children (0-17) accounted for the vast majority of children served by the Department. A somewhat comparable distribution is observed for young adults (18 & older) as well as adult consumers.

**TABLE 7. Race/Ethnicity FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18 & Older)		Adults	
	White	11,134	33%	710	36%	14,015	41%
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	12,160	36%	655	33%	10,367	30%
	Black	4,671	14%	351	18%	5,289	15%
	Asian	371	1%	35	2%	468	1%
	Native American	70	*	2	*	53	*
	Pacific Islander	3	*	-	-	16	*
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	2,402	7%	157	8%	899	3%
	Unable to Determine/Declined	1,329	4%	71	4%	1,769	5%
	Missing	1,603	5%	6	*	1,507	4%
<b>Total Consumers Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>33,743</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,987</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34,383</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 1% after rounding.

**FIGURE 7. Consumer Children (0-17) Open with DCF by Race/Ethnicity FY2024**

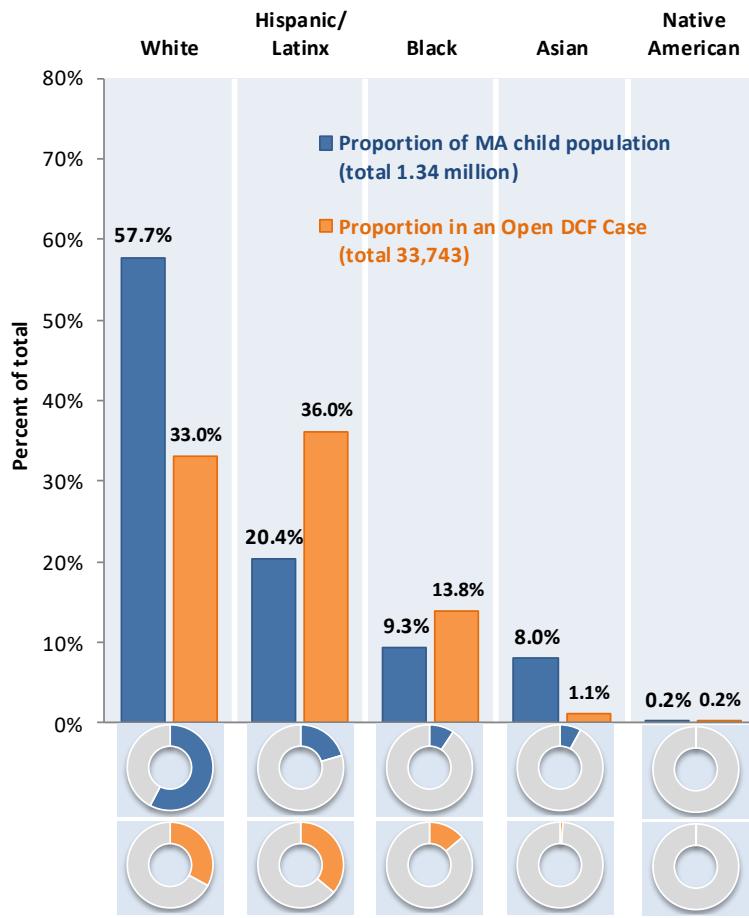


Figure 7 and Table 8 show the proportion of children open with the Department by race and ethnicity compared to the proportion of the child population in Massachusetts.

The *Rate-of-Disproportionality* (RoD) is an indicator of inequality. In Table 8, RoDs are calculated by dividing the actual DCF open case rate for a given race/ethnicity by the Massachusetts child population rate for that specific race/ethnicity.

- *RoDs > 1.0 indicate overrepresentation.*
- *RoDs < 1.0 indicate underrepresentation.*

*Relative Rate Index* (RRI) compares the rate of White children to the rate for children of color.

**TABLE 8. DCF Served Population**

	RoD	RRI
White	0.6	n/a
Hispanic/Latinx	1.8	3.1x
Black	1.5	2.6x
Asian	0.1	0.2x
Native American	1.2	2.0x

- **Consumer Children, Young Adults, and Adults – Demographics-Primary Language**

Table 9 shows that at the end of FY2024, the vast majority of consumers open in a DCF case were primary English speakers. The next most commonly identified primary language was Spanish.

**TABLE 9. Primary Language FY2024**

	Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18 & Older)		Adults	
American Sign Language	18	*	-	-	26	*
Arabic	27	*	5	*	58	*
Cape Verdean Creole	84	*	4	*	193	1%
Chinese	23	*	3	*	49	*
English	30,089	89%	1,721	87%	27,800	81%
French	12	*	3	*	26	*
Haitian Creole	314	1%	22	1%	566	2%
Khmer (Cambodian)	14	*	-	-	49	*
Portuguese	581	2%	14	1%	912	3%
Russian	28	*	1	*	36	*
Spanish	2,383	7%	185	9%	4,178	12%
Vietnamese	12	*	1	*	52	*
Other	158	*	28	1%	438	1%
<b>Total Consumers Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>33,743</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,987</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34,383</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

### III. CONSUMERS IN PLACEMENT

The Department provides services to safely stabilize families (79% of caseload). When that is not possible, children (0-17) may be placed in out-of-home care (21% of caseload) to safeguard their safety and well-being. Table 10 shows that at the end of FY2024, DCF had 8,572 consumer children/young adults in out-of-home placement. Of these, 6,953 (81%) were children (0-17 years of age) and 1,619 (19%) were young adults (18 & older). Compared to FY2020, 17% (1,461) fewer children (0-17 years of age) were in placement at the end of FY2024.

<b>TABLE 10. Children/Young Adults in Placement</b>		<b>FY2020</b>	<b>FY2021</b>	<b>FY2022</b>	<b>FY2023</b>	<b>FY2024</b>
Children (0-17)		8,414	8,464	8,143	7,692	6,953
Young Adults (18 & older)		1,592	1,706	1,632	1,605	1,619
<b>Children/Young Adults in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>10,006</b>	<b>10,170</b>	<b>9,775</b>	<b>9,297</b>	<b>8,572</b>

- Age Group Distribution for Children and Young Adults in Placement**

Table 11 shows that children under the age of six years account for 34% of the children (0-17) in placement. For context, young children are the most at-risk for protective concerns.

	<b>Children (0-17)</b>		<b>Young Adults (18 &amp; Older)</b>		
	Age Group	Count	Age Group	Count	
0 – 2 Years Old	1,196	17%	18 – 19 Years Old	842	52%
3 – 5 Years Old	1,149	17%	20 – 21 Years Old	628	39%
6 – 11 Years Old	1,876	27%	22 – 23 Years Old	146	9%
12 – 17 Years Old	2,732	39%	24 and Older	3	*
Unspecified	-	-		-	-
<b>Total in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>6,953</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>1,619</b>	<b>100%</b>

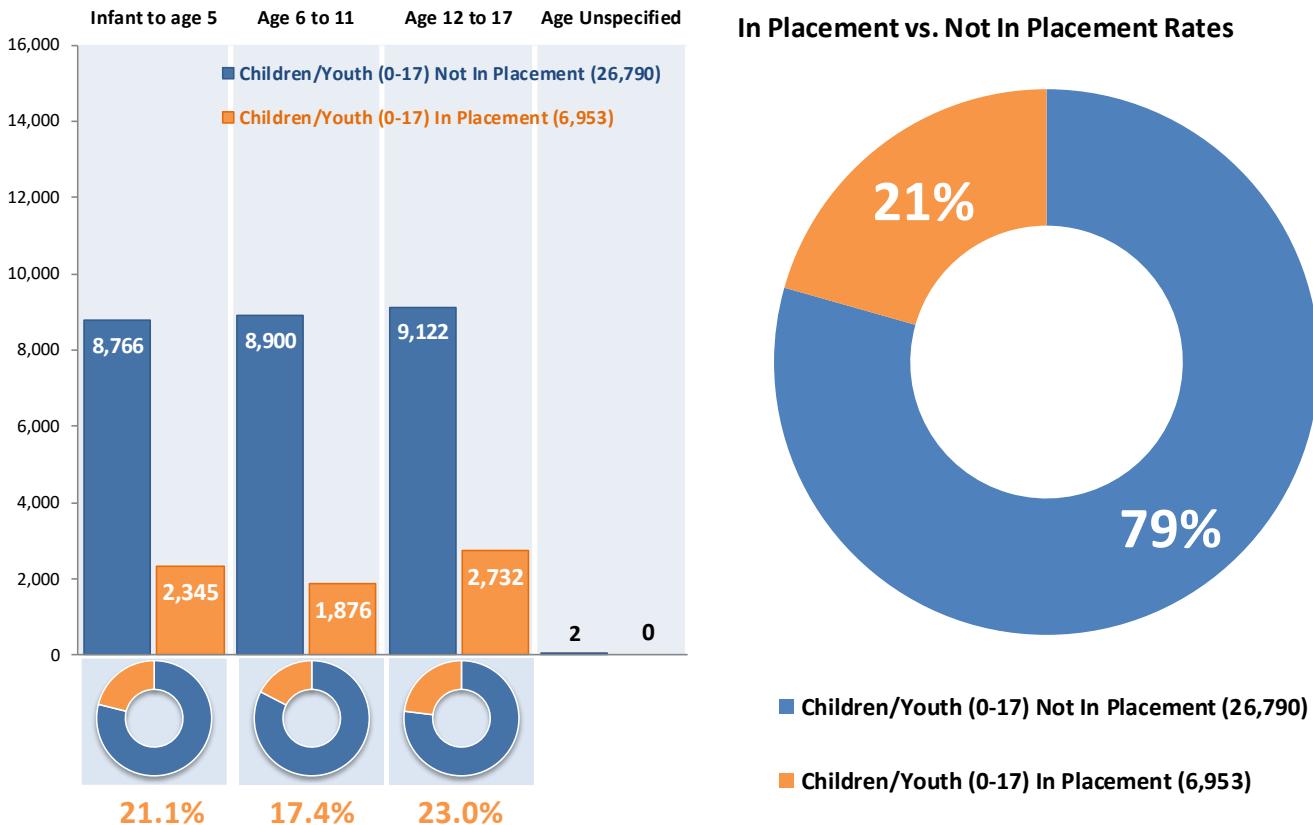
\*Less than 1% after rounding.

- **Children (0-17) in Placement as a Rate of Total Children Served**

Figure 12 shows that 21% (6,953/33,743) of children (0-17) in an open case were placed out-of-home at the end of FY2024.

- For children (0-5) in a DCF open case, 21% (2,345/11,111) were in an out-of-home placement.
- For children (6-11) in a DCF open case, 17% (1,876 /10,776) were in an out-of-home placement.
- For youth (12-17) in a DCF open case, 23% (2,732/11,854) were in an out-of-home placement.

**FIGURE 12. Consumer Children (0-17) in Placement as a Percent of Total Children Served**



- **Children and Young Adults in Placement – Demographics-Birth Sex**

Table 13 shows that children (0-17) in placement are fairly evenly distributed within the demographic of birth sex.

**TABLE 13. Birth Sex FY2024**

	Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18 & Older)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Female	3,422	49%	900	56%
Male	3,528	51%	717	44%
Intersex	1	*	2	*
Missing (not recorded)	2	*	-	-
<b>Total in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>6,953</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

- **Children, Youth, and Young Adults in Placement – Gender Identity/Expression**

Table 13a shows the documented gender identity/expression of children, youth, and young adults in placement at the end of FY2024.

**TABLE 13a. Gender Identity/Expression of Children, Youth, and Young Adults in Placement**

	Children (3-10 yrs.)^	Early Adolescence (11-14 yrs.)	Middle Adolescence (15-17 yrs.)	Late Adolescence (18 & older)	All Age Groups^
Androgynous	-	.1%	.1%	.1%	.1%
Female	42.7%	46.1%	46.5%	50.6%	45.9%
Gender Nonconforming	.2%	.5%	.5%	.7%	.5%
Genderqueer	-	.1%	.1%	.1%	.1%
Male	47.0%	46.4%	41.8%	42.2%	44.7%
Non-Binary	.1%	.5%	1.8%	.6%	.7%
Questioning	.1%	.7%	.9%	.5%	.5%
Transgender (Female to Male)	-	.5%	1.0%	1.7%	.7%
Transgender (Male to Female)	*	.2%	.5%	.4%	.3%
Two Spirit	-	-	-	-	-
Not Listed/Other	3.6%	1.4%	1.8%	.8%	2.2%
Does Not Wish to Answer	3.9%	3.1%	3.5%	1.9%	3.2%
Not Documented	2.4%	.6%	1.4%	.3%	1.4%
<b>Total in Placement (3 and older) FY2024 End</b>	<b>2,710</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>1,645</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>7,376</b>

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

^Excludes children less than 3 years-of-age.

*Gender identity is an individual's internal view of their gender, one's innermost sense of being male, female, both, or neither. Gender expression is the manner in which a person expresses their gender through clothing, appearance, behavior, speech, etc.*

Note: The capacity to collect gender identity/expression as a structured data element was introduced in 2017 with the implementation of the Family Assessment and Action Planning Policy and became a mandatory field for children 3+ years of age in 2022. Gender identity/expression is self-reported. The Department is working to improve data collection quality.

- **Children, Youth, and Young Adults in Placement – Sexual Orientation**

Table 13b shows the documented sexual orientation of children, youth, and young adults in placement at the end of FY2024.

**TABLE 13b. Sexual Orientation of Children, Youth, and Young Adults in Placement**

	Children (3-10 yrs.)^	Early Adolescence (11-14 yrs.)	Middle Adolescence (15-17 yrs.)	Late Adolescence (18 & older)	All Age Groups^
Asexual	.7%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%	1.0%
Bisexual	.1%	1.5%	6.0%	5.3%	2.8%
Gay	-	.5%	.9%	2.2%	.8%
Lesbian	-	.5%	.8%	2.2%	.7%
Pansexual/Omnisexual	-	.5%	1.4%	1.2%	.7%
Queer	-	.1%	.4%	.4%	.2%
Questioning	.1%	2.6%	3.0%	1.4%	1.5%
Straight/Heterosexual	45.3%	50.9%	53.6%	62.9%	52.1%
Not Listed/Other	20.7%	14.1%	10.9%	8.1%	14.5%
Does Not Wish to Answer	30.2%	27.2%	20.3%	14.6%	24.0%
Not Documented	3.0%	1.0%	1.7%	.4%	1.7%
<b>Total in Placement FY2024 End</b>	<b>2,710</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>1,645</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>7,376</b>

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

^Excludes children less than 3 years-of-age.

*Sexual orientation describes patterns of sexual, romantic, and emotional attraction—and one's sense of identity based on those attractions.*

Note: The capacity to collect sexual orientation as a structured data element was introduced in 2017 with the implementation of the Family Assessment and Action Planning Policy and became a mandatory field for children 3+ years of age in 2022. Sexual Orientation is self-reported. The Department is working to improve data collection quality.

- **Children and Young Adults in Placement – Demographics-Race/Ethnicity**

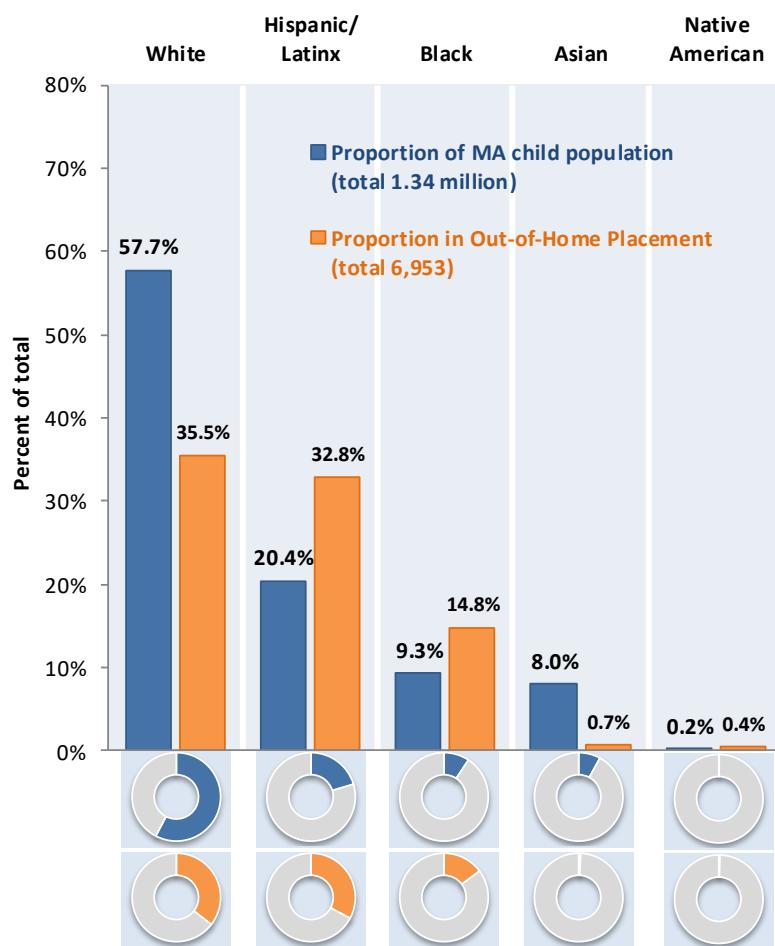
Table 14 shows that at the end of FY2024, White (35%), Hispanic/Latinx (33%), and Black (15%) children (0-17) accounted for the majority of children in placement. A similar distribution is also observed for young adults (18 & older).

**TABLE 14. Race/Ethnicity of Children, Youth, and Young Adults in Placement<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18 & Older)	
White		2,468	35%	581	36%
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)		2,283	33%	525	32%
Black		1,032	15%	293	18%
Asian		51	1%	26	2%
Native American		30	*	1	*
Pacific Islander		2	*	-	-
Multi-Racial (two or more races)		859	12%	136	8%
Unable to Determine/Declined		222	3%	57	4%
Missing		6	*	-	-
Total in Placement FY2024 End		6,953	100%	1,619	100%

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 1% after rounding.

**FIGURE 14. Consumer Children (0-17) in Out-of-Home Placement by Race/Ethnicity**



**TABLE 14a. Out-of-Home Placement**

	RoD	RRI
White	0.6	n/a
Hispanic/Latinx	1.6	2.6x
Black	1.6	2.6x
Asian	0.1	0.1x
Native American	2.4	3.9x

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Permanency Plan Distribution for Children (0-17) in Placement**

Table/Figure 15 show that 93% (6,331) of children (0-17) with a specified permanency plan goal who were in placement at the end of FY2024 had a permanency plan goal that met the federal standard for permanency (i.e., Family Reunification, Adoption, Guardianship, Stabilize Intact Family, and Permanent Care with Kin).

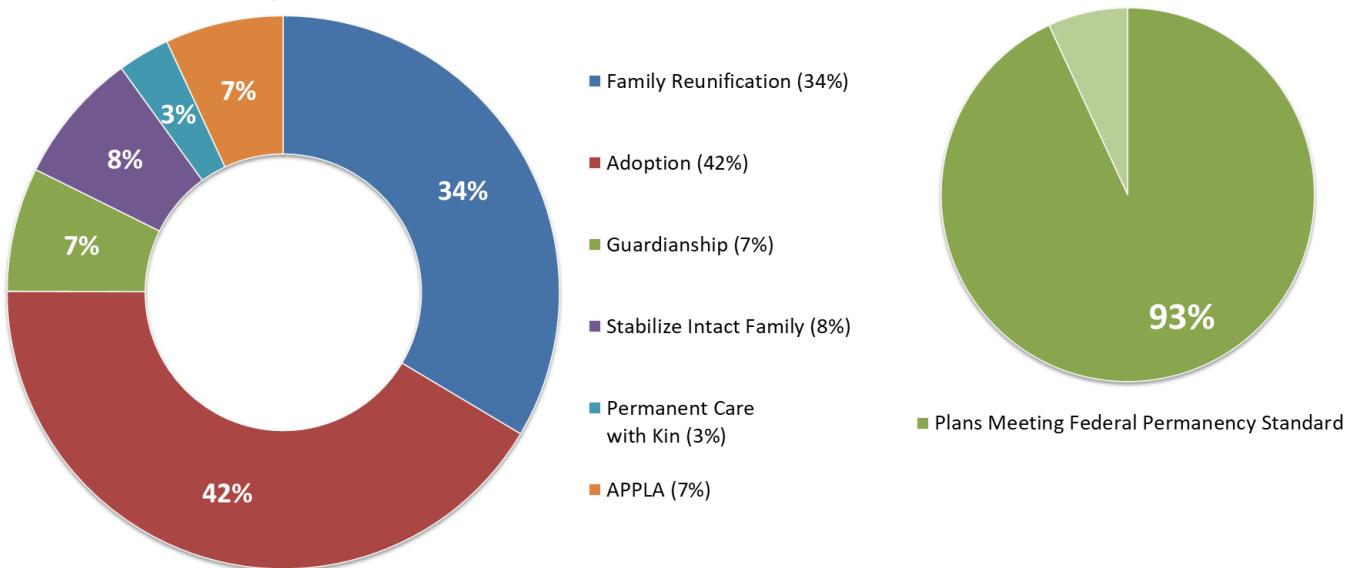
**TABLE 15. Permanency Plan: Children (0-17)**

	FY2020		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024	
Family Reunification	3,128	38%	3,094	37%	3,037	38%	2,717	36%	2,282	34%
	3,244	39%	3,184	38%	3,075	39%	3,058	41%	2,824	42%
	761	9%	720	9%	632	8%	568	8%	493	7%
	536	6%	677	8%	612	8%	533	7%	525	8%
	274	3%	239	3%	234	3%	226	3%	207	3%
	384	5%	360	4%	390	5%	426	6%	471	7%
Unspecified as of report run date (excluded from rate calculation)	87	n/a	190	n/a	163	n/a	164	n/a	151	n/a
Children in Placement Fiscal Year End	8,414		8,464		8,143		7,692		6,953	

<sup>(1)</sup> **APPLA:** Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement— The child welfare agency (DCF) maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. APPLA is a permanency option considered only when other options such as reunification, relative placement, adoption, or legal guardianship have been ruled out.

*The summation of percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding in Table 15/Figure 15.*

**FIGURE 15. Permanency Plan for Children (0-17) FY2024**



- **Racial/Ethnic Distribution by Permanency Plan for Children (0-17) in Placement**

Table/Figure 15a show the racial/ethnic distribution by permanency plan for children in placement at the end of FY2024.

**TABLE 15a. Permanency Plan**

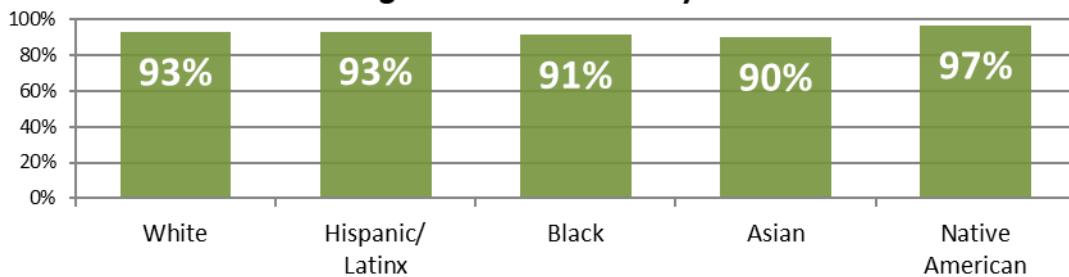
**Race/Ethnicity FY2024**

	White	Hispanic /Latinx	Black	Asian	Native American					
Family Reunification	810	33%	773	35%	347	35%	20	40%	10	33%
Adoption	1,003	41%	911	41%	367	37%	11	22%	15	50%
Guardianship	185	8%	148	7%	75	8%	7	14%	3	10%
Stabilize Intact Family	179	7%	191	9%	89	9%	5	10%	1	3%
Permanent Care with Kin	77	3%	64	3%	30	3%	2	4%	-	-
APPLA	171	7%	150	7%	87	9%	5	10%	1	3%
Unspecified as of report run date (excluded from rate calculation)	43	n/a	46	n/a	37	n/a	1	n/a	-	n/a
<b>Children in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>2,468</b>		<b>2,283</b>		<b>1,032</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>30</b>	

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

**FIGURE 15a. Plans Meeting Federal Permanency Standard**



- **Permanency Plan Distribution for Young Adults (18 & Older) in Placement**

Table 15b shows that 15% (236) of young adults (18 & older) with a specified permanency plan goal who were in placement at the end of FY2024 had a permanency plan goal that met the federal standard for permanency (i.e., Family Reunification, Adoption, Guardianship, Stabilize Intact Family, and Permanent Care with Kin).

**TABLE 15b. Permanency Plan for**

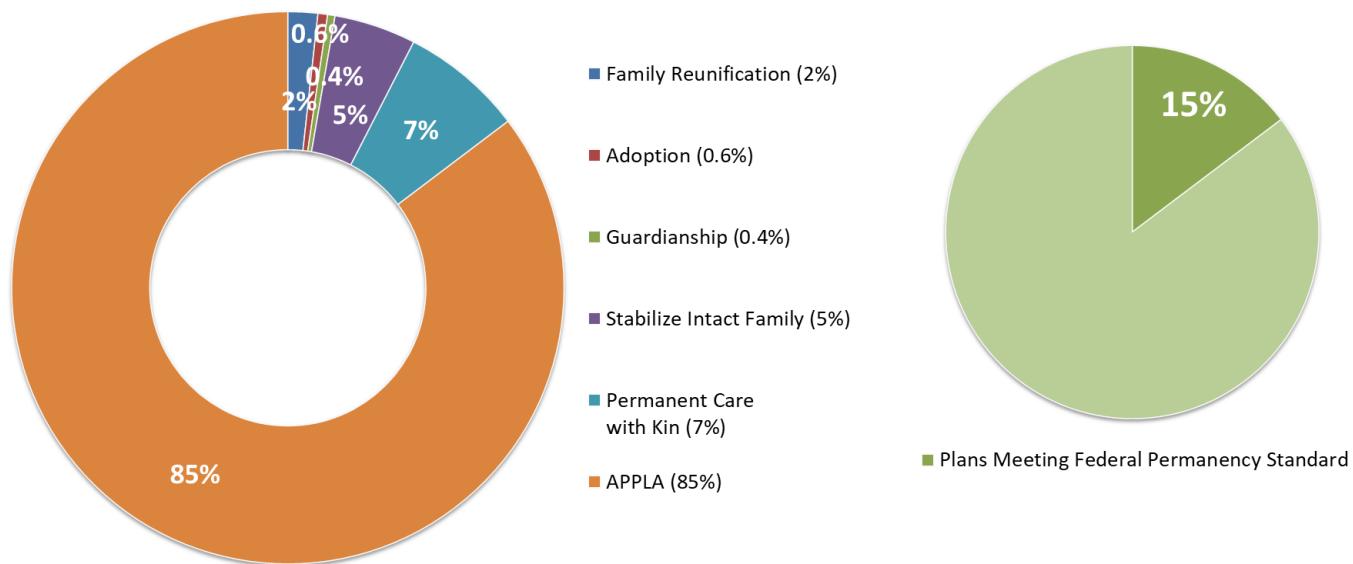
**Young Adults (18 & Older)**

	FY2020		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024	
Family Reunification	56	4%	55	3%	51	3%	42	3%	28	2%
Adoption	5	*	9	1%	8	*	8	*	9	1%
Guardianship	7	*	14	1%	12	1%	10	1%	7	*
Stabilize Intact Family	225	14%	177	10%	111	7%	89	6%	77	5%
Permanent Care with Kin	91	6%	122	7%	142	9%	135	8%	115	7%
APPLA	1,191	76%	1,311	78%	1,291	80%	1,308	82%	1,370	85%
Unspecified as of report run date (excluded from rate calculation)	17	n/a	18	n/a	17	n/a	13	n/a	13	n/a
<b>Young Adults (18 &amp; Older) in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>1,592</b>		<b>1,706</b>		<b>1,632</b>		<b>1,605</b>		<b>1,619</b>	

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

<sup>(1)</sup> **APPLA:** *Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement— The child welfare agency (DCF) maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. APPLA is a permanency option considered only when other options such as reunification, relative placement, adoption, or legal guardianship have been ruled out.*

**FIGURE 15b. Permanency Plan for Young Adults (18 & >) FY2024**



- **Children and Young Adults by Placement Type**

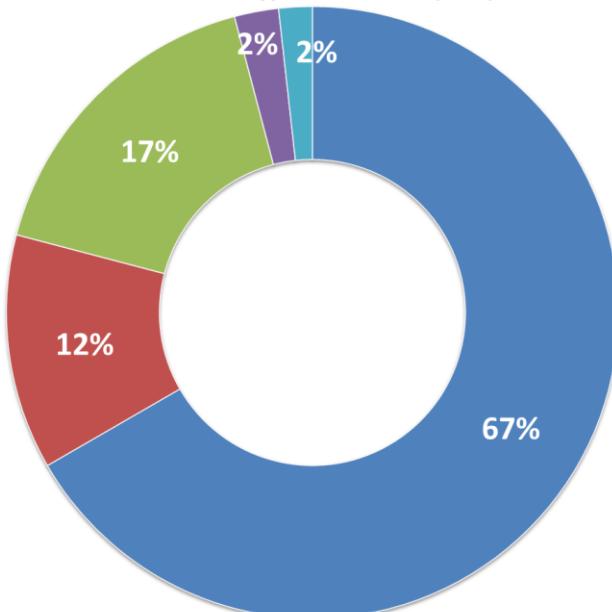
Table/Figure 16 show that at the end of FY2024, 79% of placed children (0-17) were living in family-type settings: Departmental Foster Care (DFC) or Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC). Recognizing that children experience greater emotional and placement stability when safely placed with kin, DCF has prioritized kin placement. Accordingly, Figure 16a shows that 60% of children (0-17) placed in DFC foster homes were placed with kin. The overall kinship placement rate (Figure 16b) for all children (0-17) in out-of-home placement (of any type) was 40%.

**TABLE 16. Placement Type FY2024**

	Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18 & Older)	
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Kinship	2,788	40%	135	8%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Unrelated	1,484	21%	76	5%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Pre-adoptive	360	5%	3	*
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Independent Living	3	*	777	48%
Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC) – Contracted	864	12%	128	8%
Congregate Care – Treatment Residence	549	8%	125	8%
Congregate Care – Medically Complex Residence	10	*	1	*
Congregate Care – Residential School	352	5%	82	5%
Congregate Care – Emergency Residence	235	3%	2	*
Congregate Care – Youth and Young Adult	23	*	254	16%
Non-Referral Location (e.g., hospital, other state agency)	162	2%	30	2%
Missing/Absent from Approved Placement	123	2%	6	*
<b>Total in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>6,953</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>100%</b>

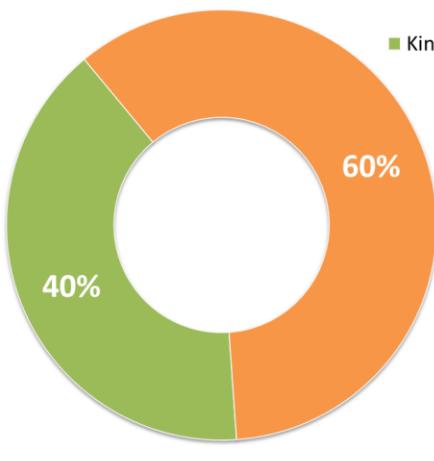
\*Less than 1% after rounding.

**FIGURE 16. Placement Type for Children (0-17)**



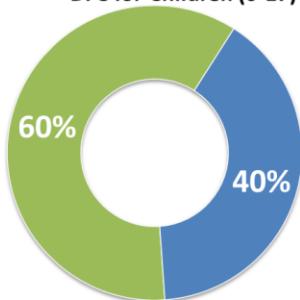
█ DFC - Departmental Foster Care (67%)  
█ CFC - Comprehensive Foster Care (12%)  
█ Congregate Care (17%)  
█ Non-Referral Location (other institution/state agency) (2%)  
█ Missing/Absent from Approved Placement (2%)

**FIGURE 16b. Kin Placement as a % of ALL Placed Children (0-17)**



█ Kin Placement Rate  
█ Non-Kin Placement

**FIGURE 16a. Kin Placement as a % of DFC for Children (0-17)**



█ Kin Placement Rate  
█ Non-Kin DFC Rate

- Children (0-17) Five-year Distribution by Placement Type**

Table 16c shows that the utilization of Departmental and Comprehensive Foster Care placement compared to Congregate Care has been relatively stable within the past five years.

**TABLE 16c. Placement Type 5-Year**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024					
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Kinship	3,203	38%	3,232	38%	3,169	39%	3,001	39%	2,788	40%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Unrelated	1,880	22%	1,898	22%	1,886	23%	1,747	23%	1,484	21%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Pre-adoptive	515	6%	503	6%	501	6%	457	6%	360	5%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Indep. Living	3	*	2	*	2	*	3	*	3	*
Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC) – Contracted	1,310	16%	1,190	14%	1,081	13%	962	13%	864	12%
Congregate Care – Treatment Residence	653	8%	693	8%	563	7%	583	8%	549	8%
Congregate Care – Medically Complex Residence	16	*	9	*	8	*	7	*	10	*
Congregate Care – Residential School	428	5%	364	4%	331	4%	351	5%	352	5%
Congregate Care – Emergency Residence	201	2%	281	3%	255	3%	232	3%	235	3%
Congregate Care – Youth and Young Adult	8	*	7	*	20	*	22	*	23	*
Non-Referral Location (e.g., hospital, state agency)	110	1%	175	2%	191	2%	186	2%	162	2%
Missing/Absent from Approved Placement	87	1%	110	1%	136	2%	141	2%	123	2%
<b>Total in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>8,414</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,464</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,143</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,692</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,953</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

- Children (0-17) Racial/Ethnic Distribution by Placement Type**

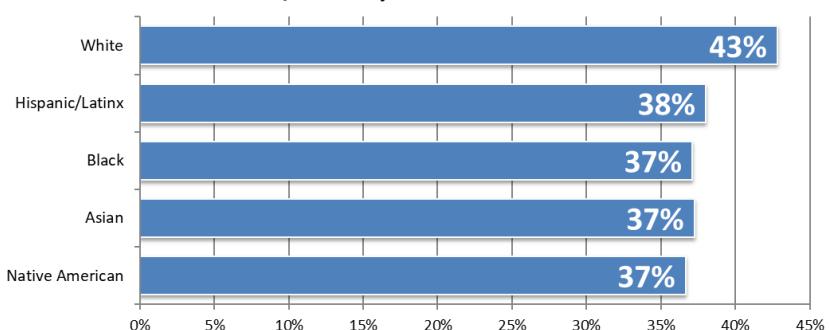
Table 16d presents the racial/ethnic distribution for children (0-17) by placement type at end of FY2024.

**TABLE 16d. Placement Type Race/Ethnicity FY2024**

	White	Hispanic /Latinx	Black	Asian	Native American					
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Kinship	1,057	43%	868	38%	383	37%	19	37%	11	37%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Unrelated	502	20%	496	22%	216	21%	13	25%	14	47%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Pre-adoptive	134	5%	120	5%	32	3%	-	-	2	7%
Departmental Foster Care (DFC) – Indep. Living	2	*	-	-	1	*	-	-	-	-
Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC) – Contracted	257	10%	336	15%	144	14%	6	12%	-	-
Congregate Care – Treatment Residence	198	8%	166	7%	99	10%	6	12%	2	7%
Congregate Care – Medically Complex Residence	4	*	6	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Congregate Care – Residential School	149	6%	101	4%	47	5%	3	6%	1	3%
Congregate Care – Emergency Residence	76	3%	73	3%	44	4%	-	-	-	-
Congregate Care – Youth and Young Adult	5	*	7	*	3	*	2	4%	-	-
Non-Referral Location (e.g., hospital, state agency)	61	2%	48	2%	35	3%	1	2%	-	-
Missing/Absent from Approved Placement	23	1%	62	3%	28	3%	1	2%	-	-
<b>Total in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>2,468</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,283</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 16d presents kin placement within race/ethnicity.

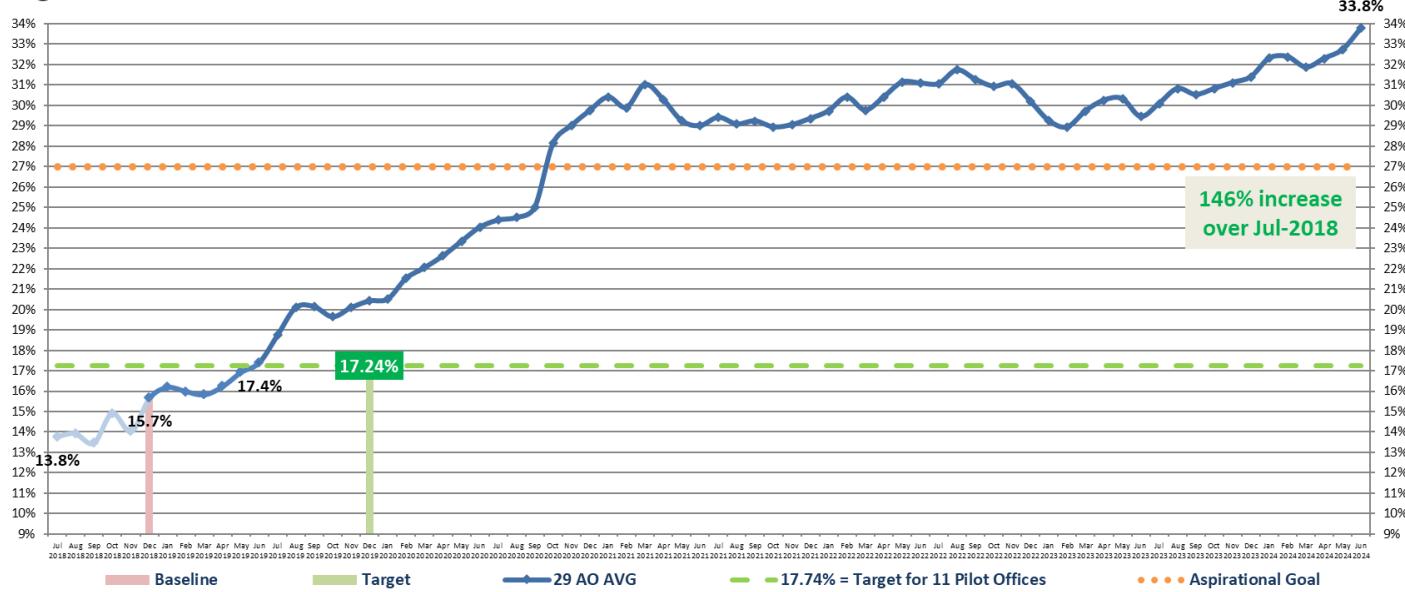
**FIGURE 16d. Kin Placement as a % of Placed Children (0-17) within Race/Ethnicity**



- Initial Placement with Kin – Kin First**

National research shows the most stable and successful foster care placements are children cared for by family. Since July 2018, the placement of children in kinship foster homes immediately following the home removal increased by 146% statewide (Figure 16e). In FY2024, 60% of all children in Departmental Foster Care (DFC) were placed with kin (see Figure 16A).

**Figure 16e. Percent of Initial Placements with Kin - Statewide**



- Initial Placement with Kin by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 16f shows that 40% of White children (0-17) who entered out-of-home placement in FY2024 were placed with kin upon entry into care. This contrasts with 29% for Hispanic/Latinx, 30% for Black, and 45% for Asian children.

When narrowing the entry cohort to children (0-17) whose first placement setting was Departmental Foster Care (DFC), 46% of White children were placed with kin upon entry into care. This contrasts with 37% for Hispanic/Latinx, 37% for Black, and 56% for Asian children.

**TABLE 16f. Kin as the Initial Placement Setting for Children Entering Care in FY2024**

	White	Hispanic /Latinx	Black	Asian	All Children
Entries who were placed with Kin as their Initial Placement	40%	29%	30%	45%	34%
Entries into DFC who were placed with Kin as their Initial Placement	46%	37%	37%	56%	41%

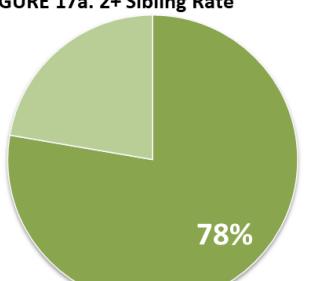
- **Sibling Placements**

Recognizing that co-location of siblings is generally best for child well-being, DCF keeps siblings together whenever possible. Table 17 and Figures 17a-b show that the “all DFC sibling placement rate” increased by 4% between FY2020 and FY2024.

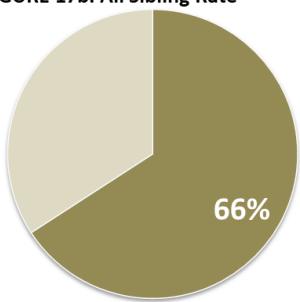
**TABLE 17. Sibling Placement Rates**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Cases with 2 or More Siblings in DFC Placement (denominator)	1,232	1,213	1,196	1,099	951
Cases with 2 or More Siblings in Same DFC Home (numerator)	961	957	918	869	739
<b>2 or more Sibling Placement Rate Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>78%</b>
Cases with all Siblings in Same DFC Home (numerator)	762	767	762	721	626
<b>ALL DFC Placed Sibling Placement Rate Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>

**FIGURE 17a. 2+ Sibling Rate**



**FIGURE 17b. All Sibling Rate**



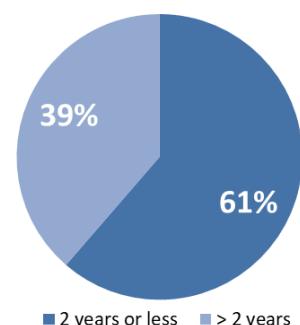
- **Continuous Time in Placement**

The period between the start and end of DCF placement custody is known as a *Home Removal Episode* (HRE). *Continuous Time in Placement* is defined as the timespan between the start and end of an HRE (see definition on p.54). Table 18 and Figures 18a-b-c reveal that at the end of FY2024, 61% of children (0-17) had a continuous time in out-of-home placement of two years or less.

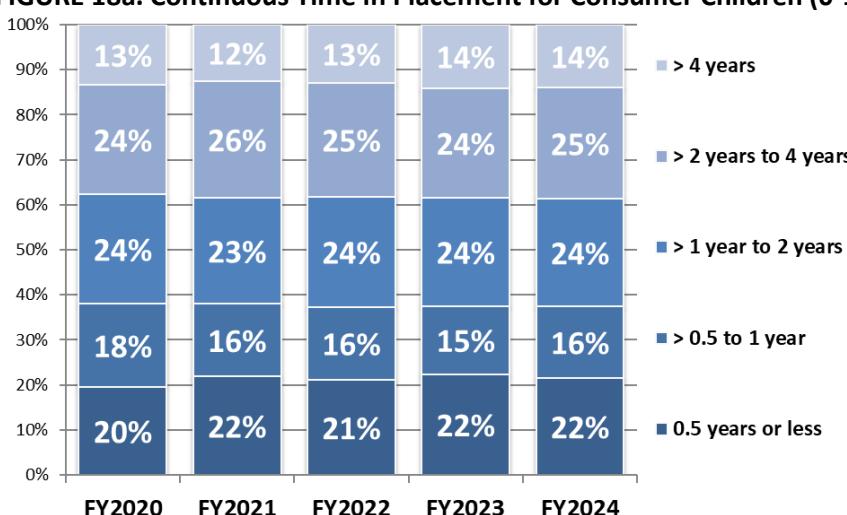
**TABLE 18. Continuous Time in Placement**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
0.5 years or less	1,643	1,846	1,718	1,722	1,495
> 0.5 years to 1 year	1,553	1,373	1,323	1,165	1,109
> 1 year to 2 years	2,051	1,987	1,990	1,846	1,662
> 2 years to 4 years	2,042	2,201	2,065	1,878	1,712
> 4 years	1,125	1,057	1,047	1,081	975
<b>Total Children (0-17) in Placement Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>8,414</b>	<b>8,464</b>	<b>8,143</b>	<b>7,692</b>	<b>6,953</b>

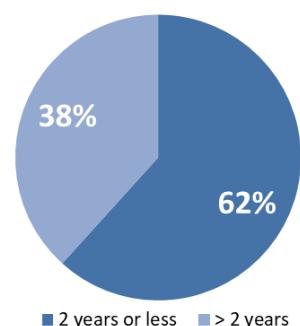
**FIGURE 18b. FY2024**



**FIGURE 18a. Continuous Time in Placement for Consumer Children (0-17)**



**FIGURE 18c. FY2020-24**

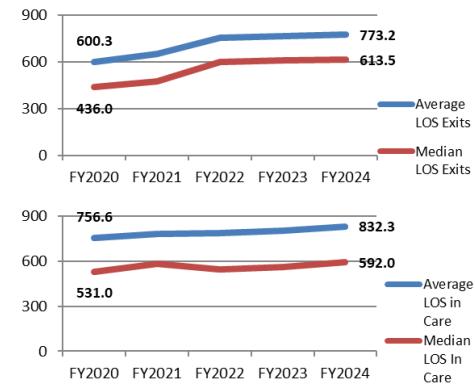


- **Placement Length-of-Stay**

Table/Figure 19 present the annual average/median *Placement Length-of-Stay* (LOS) in days for children who exited care (closed HRE) as well as for children who were in out-of-home care (open HRE) on the last day of the fiscal year. LOS increased in FY2024.

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Average LOS Days for Children Exiting Care by FY End	600.3	651.7	754.1	764.8	773.2
Average LOS in Months	19.7	21.4	24.8	25.1	25.4
Median LOS Days for Children Exiting Care by FY End	436	474	599.5	610	613.5
Median LOS in Months	14.3	15.6	19.7	20.0	20.2
Average LOS Days for Children in Care at FY End	756.6	781.0	789.5	804.5	832.3
Average LOS in Months	24.9	25.7	25.9	26.4	27.4
Median LOS Days for Children in Care at FY End	531	581	543	561	592
Median LOS in Months	17.5	19.1	17.9	18.4	19.5

<sup>(1)</sup>Length-of-stay values exclude youth who turned 18 on or before their discharge from care and those who turned 18 before the end of the fiscal year and remained in care.



- **Placement Length-of-Stay by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 19a presents the annual average/median Placement Length-of-Stay (LOS) in days for children who exited care (closed HRE) as well as for children who were in out-of-home care (open HRE) on the last day of the fiscal year by race/ethnicity.

TABLE 19a. Placement Length-of-Stay by Race/Ethnicity<sup>(1)</sup>

	White	Hispanic /Latinx	Black	Asian	Native American
Average LOS Days for Children Exiting Care by FY End	755.77	786.68	820.98	554.83	526.94
Average LOS in Months	24.8	25.8	27.0	18.2	17.3
Median LOS Days for Children Exiting Care by FY End	629	583	592	308.5	433.5
Median LOS in Months	20.7	19.1	19.4	10.1	14.2
Children Exiting Care by FY End	<b>1,303</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>
Average LOS Days for Children in Care at FY End	811.10	841.52	862.44	770.21	752.18
Average LOS in Months	26.6	27.6	28.3	25.3	24.7
Median LOS Days for Children in Care at FY End	573	619	545	560	472.5
Median LOS in Months	18.8	20.3	17.9	18.4	15.5
Children in Care at FY End	<b>2,468</b>	<b>2,283</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>30</b>

<sup>(1)</sup>Length-of-stay values exclude youth who turned 18 on or before their discharge from care and those who turned 18 before the end of the fiscal year and remained in care.

#### IV. PLACEMENT STABILITY

Children in placement may experience one or more moves during an HRE. Placement instability is generally disruptive to a child's emotional, social, and academic well-being. Placement instability also tends to increase the time to permanency (i.e., reunification, adoption, guardianship, and permanent care with kin).

- **Placement Stability for Children (0-17) in Placement for Less than 12 Months**

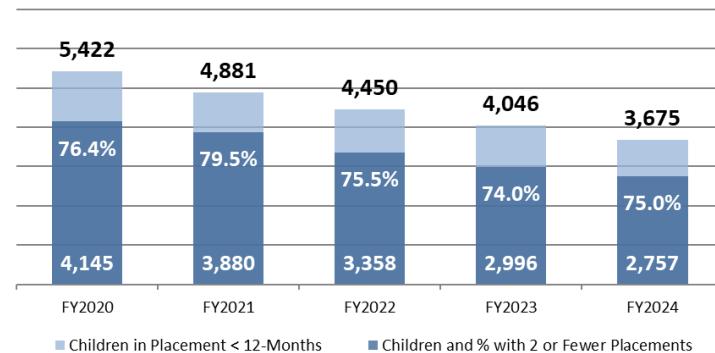
Table/Figure 20 show that, of all the children (0-17) served in a placement setting during FY2024 who were in placement for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, 75.0%, had two or fewer placement settings.

**TABLE 20. Placement Stability for Children (0-17) in Placement Less Than 12 months**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Children in Placement < 12 Months (denominator)	5,422	4,881	4,450	4,046	3,675
Children with 2 or Fewer Placements (numerator)	4,145	3,880	3,358	2,996	2,757
CFSR2 Measure 4.1: Of all children who were served in placement during the 12-month period ending with the Fiscal Year, and who were in placement for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?	76.4%	79.5%	75.5%	74.0%	75.0%

*National median: 83.3%, 75th percentile: 86.0% (higher rate is preferable)*

**FIGURE 20. Children (0-17) in Placement Less Than 12 Months and % with Two or Fewer Placement Settings**



- **Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days for Children (0-17) In Care for Less than 12 Months**

Table/Figure 21 show the number and rate per 1,000 placement days for children (0-17) who entered care during the specified fiscal year.

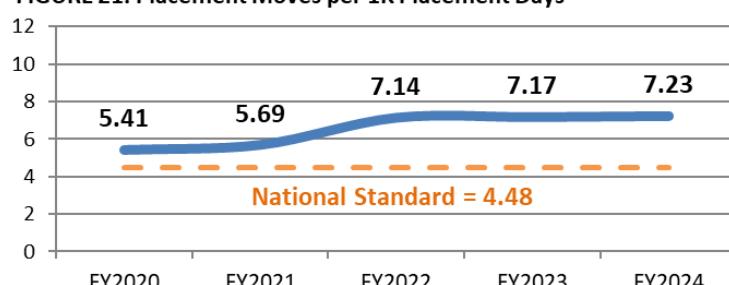
**TABLE 21. Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total Number of Placement Days (denominator)	780,760	642,653	622,966	558,562	521,235
Total Number of Placement Moves (numerator)	4,225	3,654	4,448	4,005	3,768
CFSR3 Placement Stability: Of all children (0-17) who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care?	5.41	5.69	7.14	7.17	7.23

*National Standard: 4.48 (lower rate is preferable)*

NOTE: Values for FY2019-20 were recast in FY2021 to correct a data issue.

**FIGURE 21. Placement Moves per 1K Placement Days**



- **Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 21a shows the number of placement moves per 1,000 placement days for children (0-17) who entered care during FY2024 by race/ethnicity.

**TABLE 21a. Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Race/Ethnicity**

	White	Hispanic /Latinx	Black	Asian	Native American
Total Number of Placement Days (denominator)	181,712	177,794	75,382	4,895	3,070
Total Number of Placement Moves (numerator)	1,024	1,376	769	32	22
<b>CFSR3 Placement Stability: Of all children (0-17) who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care?</b>	<b>5.64</b>	<b>7.74</b>	<b>10.20</b>	<b>6.54</b>	<b>7.17</b>
<i>National Standard: 4.48 (lower rate is preferable)</i>					

- **Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Birth Sex**

Table 21b shows the number of placement moves per 1,000 placement days for children (0-17) who entered care during FY2024 by birth sex.

**TABLE 21b. Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Birth Sex**

	Female	Male
Total Number of Placement Days (denominator)	264,390	256,845
Total Number of Placement Moves (numerator)	2,043	1,725
<b>CFSR3 Placement Stability: Of all children (0-17) who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care?</b>	<b>7.73</b>	<b>6.72</b>
<i>National Standard: 4.48 (lower rate is preferable)</i>		

- **Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Age Group**

Table 21c shows the number of placement moves per 1,000 placement days for children (0-17) who entered care during FY2024 by age group.

**TABLE 21c. Placement Moves per 1,000 Placement Days by Age Group**

	Children 0-5	Children 6-11	Youth 12-17
Total Number of Placement Days (denominator)	199,473	116,082	205,680
Total Number of Placement Moves (numerator)	1,148	1,011	1,609
<b>CFSR3 Placement Stability: Of all children (0-17) who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care?</b>	<b>5.76</b>	<b>8.71</b>	<b>7.82</b>
<i>National Standard: 4.48 (lower rate is preferable)</i>			

## V. PLACEMENT ENTRIES/RE-ENTRIES INTO CARE FOR CHILDREN (0-17)

As found in Table/Figure 22, 3,380 unique children (0-17) entered out-of-home care during FY2024. Of these, 92.2% (3,118) were either:

- New entries who had never been in DCF out-of-home care (2,577), or
- Re-entered care more than 12 months after their most recent HRE (541)

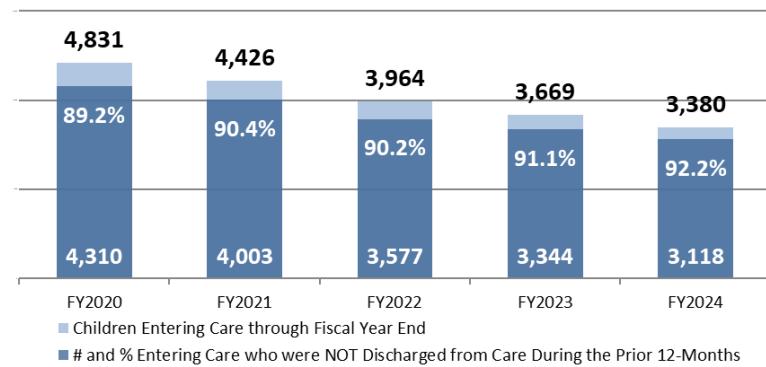
The remaining 7.8% (262) children re-entered care within 12 months of their most recent HRE.

**TABLE 22. Children (0-17) Entering Care**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Children Entering Care through Fiscal Year End (denominator)	4,831	4,426	3,964	3,669	3,380
First Time Entry into Care (numerator)	3,620	3,354	2,950	2,739	2,577
Re-Entry in More than 12 Months (numerator)	690	649	627	605	541
Re-Entry Within 12 Months	521	423	387	325	262
% of Children Entering Care who were NOT Discharged from Care During the Prior 12 Months. <sup>(1)</sup>	89.2%	90.4%	90.2%	91.1%	92.2%

<sup>(1)</sup> Higher rate is preferable.

**FIGURE 22. Children Entering Care and % NOT Discharged from Care during Prior 12 Months**



## VI. PLACEMENT EXITS

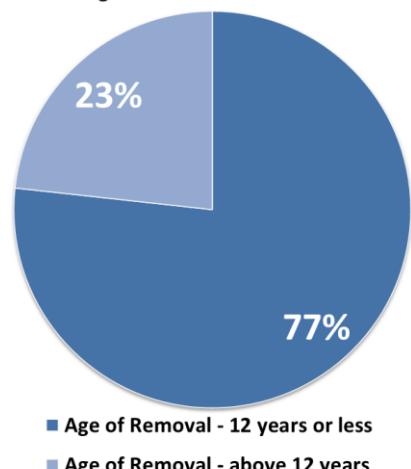
- **Exits from Care for Children (0-17)**

Table/Figure 23 show that 3,357 children exited out-of-home placement in FY2024. Of these 3,357 exits, 77% (2,576) were children who entered out-of-home care at 12 years of age or younger.

**TABLE 23. Exits from Care** FY2020 FY2021 FY2022 FY2023 FY2024

Age of Removal – 12-years or less	3,643	3,195	2,915	2,635	2,576
Age of Removal – above 12-years	1,588	1,271	1,183	898	781
ALL Exits from Care	5,231	4,466	4,098	3,533	3,357

**FIGURE 23. Age of Removal - FY2024 Exits**



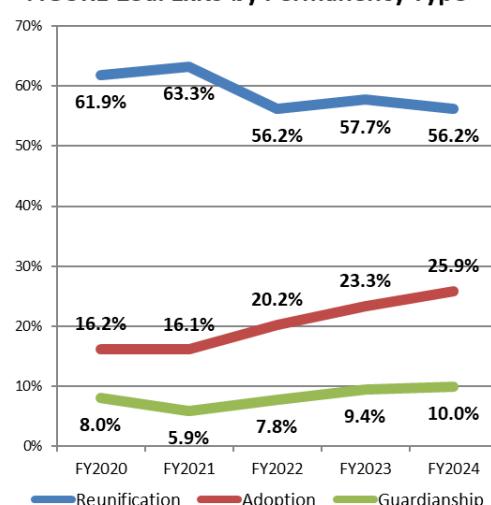
- **Exit Reasons for Children (0-17) that Exited from Care**

When children enter DCF out-of-home care, concerted efforts are made to safely achieve permanency through reunification, adoption, and guardianship. Tables/Figures 23a-b reveal that 92% of children that exited out-of-home care in FY2024 achieved permanency.

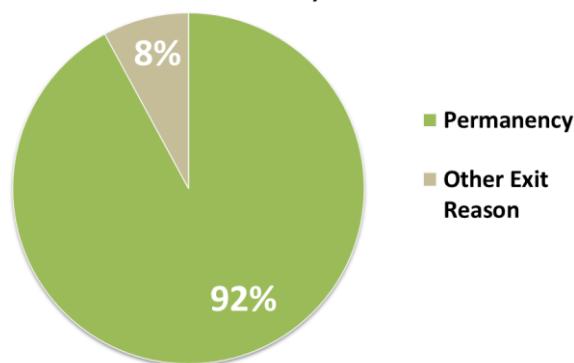
**TABLE 23a. Care Exit Reasons:**

Age of Removal - ALL	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Reunification – <i>permanency</i>	61.9%	63.3%	56.2%	57.7%	56.2%
Adoption – <i>permanency</i>	16.2%	16.1%	20.2%	23.3%	25.9%
Guardianship – <i>permanency</i>	8.0%	5.9%	7.8%	9.4%	10.0%
Transfer to Other Agency	.1%	.2%	.1%	.1%	.1%
Emancipation	13.6%	14.4%	15.6%	9.5%	7.7%
Death of Child – <i>all causes</i>	.1%	.2%	<.1%	<.1%	<.1%
<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**FIGURE 23a. Exits by Permanency Type**



**FIGURE 23b. Exits to Permanency**



**TABLE 23b. Care Exit Reasons:**

Age of Removal	FY2020		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024	
	12 or Less	Above 12								
Reunification	63.5%	58.2%	66.4%	55.2%	58.1%	51.7%	56.3%	61.9%	54.0%	63.6%
Adoption	23.2%	.3%	22.4%	.2%	28.3%	.4%	31.0%	.8%	33.6%	.8%
Guardianship	10.0%	3.2%	7.1%	2.8%	9.1%	4.2%	10.6%	5.7%	10.8%	7.3%
ALL OTHER EXIT REASONS	3.3%	38.3%	4.0%	41.7%	4.6%	43.6%	2.1%	31.6%	1.7%	28.3%

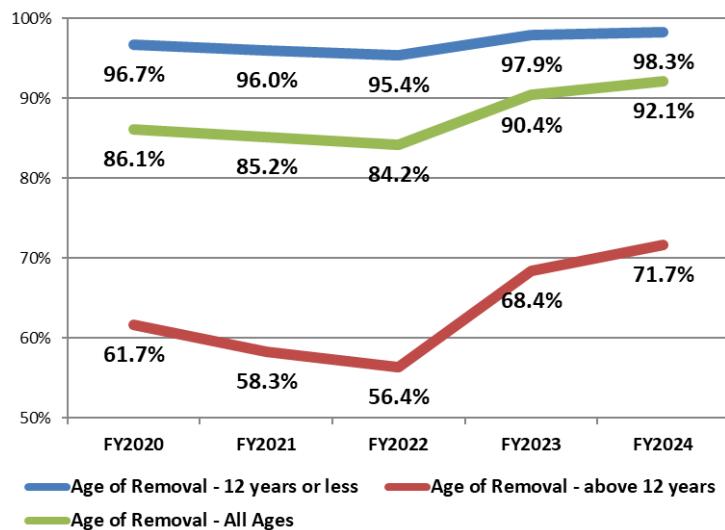
- **Exit Reasons for Children (0-17) Who Exited from Care by Age of Removal**

**TABLE 23c. Exits to Permanency:**

Reunification/Adoption/Guardianship	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Age of Removal – 12 years or less	96.7%	96.0%	95.4%	97.9%	98.3%
Age of Removal – above 12 years	61.7%	58.3%	56.4%	68.4%	71.7%
<b>Age of Removal – All Ages</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	<b>85.2%</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	<b>90.4%</b>	<b>92.1%</b>

*Higher rate is preferable.*

**FIGURE 23c. Permanency by Age of Removal**



While 92.1% of children (0-17) that exited out-of-home care in FY2024 exited to permanency, Table /Figure 23c show that children who entered care at age 12 years or less achieved permanency at a higher rate (98.3%) than children who entered out-of-home care at age 13 or older (71.7%). Further, Table 23b (p.21) reveals that children ages 13 or older at the time of entry into care were less likely to exit to adoption or guardianship than children entering care at age 12 years or less.

- **Exits from Care by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 24 presents exits from care by race/ethnicity as a rate of children in placement at the start of the fiscal year.

**TABLE 24. Exits from Care by Race/Ethnicity – RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

	White	Children (0-17) in Placement Start of FY2024		Children (0-17) Exiting in FY2024		RoD	RRI
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	2,488	32.3%	1,114	33.2%	1.0	1.0x	
Black	1,110	14.4%	435	13.0%	0.9	0.9x	
Asian	61	.8%	33	1.0%	1.2	1.2x	
Native American	32	.4%	17	.5%	1.2	1.2x	
Pacific Islander	2	*	1	*	1.1	1.1x	
Multi-Racial (two or more races)	899	11.7%	364	10.8%	0.9	0.9x	
Unable to Determine/Declined	233	3%	90	2.7%	n/a	n/a	
Missing	4	.1%	-	-	n/a	n/a	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,692</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,357</b>	<b>100%</b>			

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Exits from Care to Reunification by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 24a presents exits from care to reunification by race/ethnicity as a rate of all exits from placement in the fiscal year.

**TABLE 24a. Exits to Reunification by Race/Ethnicity – RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children (0-17) Exiting in FY2024		Children (0-17) Exits to Reunification		RoD	RRI
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
	White	1,303	38.8%	664	35.2%	0.9	n/a
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	1,114	33.2%	687	36.4%	1.1	1.2x
	Black	435	13.0%	244	12.9%	1.0	1.1x
	Asian	33	1.0%	22	1.2%	1.2	1.3x
	Native American	17	.5%	9	.5%	0.9	1.0x
	Pacific Islander	1	*	1	.1%	1.8	2.0x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	364	10.8%	200	10.6%	1.0	1.1x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	90	2.7%	60	3.2%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a
<b>Total Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>3,357</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Exits from Care to Adoption by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 24b presents exits from care to adoption by race/ethnicity as a rate of all exits from placement in the fiscal year.

**TABLE 24b. Exits to Adoption by Race/Ethnicity – RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children (0-17) Exiting in FY2024		Children (0-17) Exits to Adoption		RoD	RRI
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
	White	1,303	38.8%	390	44.8%	1.2	n/a
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	1,114	33.2%	266	30.5%	0.9	0.8x
	Black	435	13.0%	92	10.6%	0.8	0.7x
	Asian	33	1.0%	-	-	0.0	0.0x
	Native American	17	.5%	5	.6%	1.1	1.0x
	Pacific Islander	1	*	-	-	0.0	0.0x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	364	10.8%	101	11.6%	1.1	0.9x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	90	2.7%	17	2.0%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a
<b>Total Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>3,357</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Exits from Care to Guardianship by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 24c presents exits from care to guardianship by race/ethnicity as a rate of all exits from placement in the fiscal year.

**TABLE 24c. Exits to Guardianship by Race/Ethnicity  
– RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

	White	Children (0-17) Exiting in FY2024		Children (0-17) Exits to Guardianship		RoD	RRI
		1,303	38.8%	154	46.0%		
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	1,114	33.2%	76	22.7%	0.7	0.6x
	Black	435	13.0%	50	14.9%	1.2	1.0x
	Asian	33	1.0%	8	2.4%	2.4	2.1x
	Native American	17	.5%	1	.3%	0.6	0.5x
	Pacific Islander	1	*	-	-	0.0	0.0x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	364	10.8%	42	12.5%	1.2	1.0x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	90	2.7%	4	1.2%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a
<b>Total Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>3,357</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Exits from Care to Aging Out by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 24d presents exits from care to emancipation (i.e., aging out of foster care) by race/ethnicity as a rate of all exits from placement in the fiscal year.

**TABLE 24d. Exits to Emancipation by Race/Ethnicity  
– RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

	White	Children (0-17) Exiting in FY2024		Exits to Emancipation		RoD	RRI
		1,303	38.8%	94	36.4%		
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	1,114	33.2%	84	32.6%	1.0	1.0x
	Black	435	13.0%	47	18.2%	1.4	1.5x
	Asian	33	1.0%	3	1.2%	1.2	1.3x
	Native American	17	.5%	1	.4%	0.8	0.8x
	Pacific Islander	1	*	-	-	0.0	0.0x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	364	10.8%	20	7.8%	0.7	0.8x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	90	2.7%	9	3.5%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a
<b>Total Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>3,357</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

## VII. CHILD MALTREATMENT

The Department responds to allegations of abuse and neglect reported by professionals and the public. When a case is opened, DCF works collaboratively with families to assess their needs, connects families with services in the community, and works with them to ensure children can grow and thrive in a safe, supportive, and stable home.

When DCF receives a report of abuse and/or neglect, called a 51A report, from either a mandated reporter or another concerned person, DCF is required to evaluate the allegations and determine the safety of the children. Some families come to the attention of the Department outside the 51A process: Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) cases referred by the Juvenile Court, cases referred by the Probate and Family Court, babies surrendered under the Safe Haven Act, and voluntary requests for services by a parent/family. These cases are generally referred directly for Family Assessment and Action Planning and do not follow the protective intake protocol.

### Defining Terms

#### ***Child Abuse***

This definition is not dependent upon location. Abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting.

- The non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse of a child.
- The victimization of a child through sexual exploitation or human trafficking, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver.

#### ***Child Neglect***

Failure by a caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability, and growth or other essential care, including malnutrition or failure to thrive; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition.

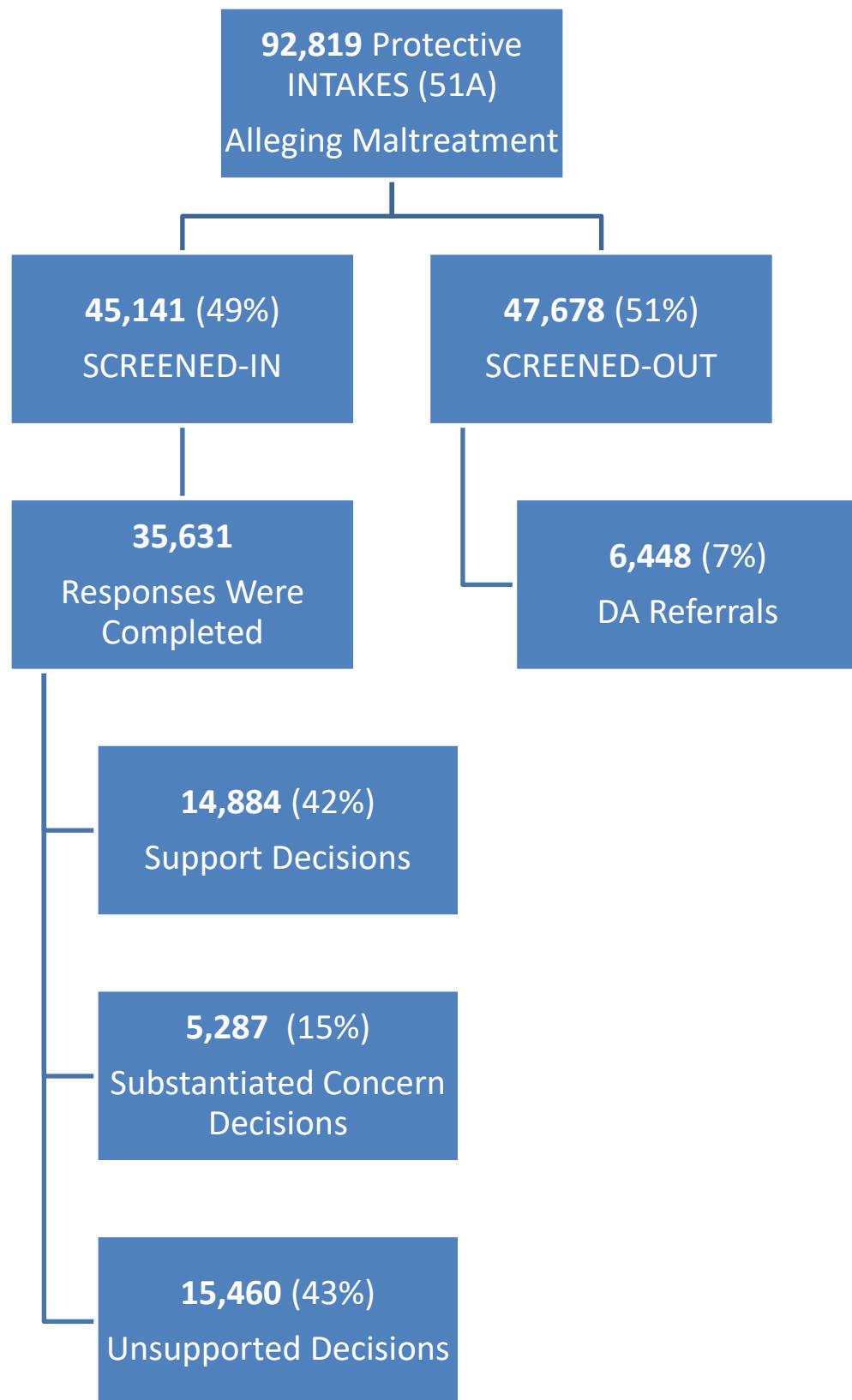
#### ***Caregiver***

- A child's parent, stepparent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with responsibility for a child's health or welfare
- Any other person entrusted with responsibility for a child's welfare, whether in the child's home, a relative's home, a school setting, a childcare setting (including babysitting), a foster home, a group care facility, or any other comparable setting. As such "caregiver" includes, but is not limited to:
  - School teachers
  - Babysitters
  - School bus drivers
  - Camp counselors

The "caregiver" definition should be construed broadly and inclusively to encompass any person who at the time in question is entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the child. This specifically includes a caregiver who is him/herself a child such as a babysitter under age 18.

- **Protective Intake (51A) Statistics at a Glance FY2024**

## Protective Intakes



## Response Determinations

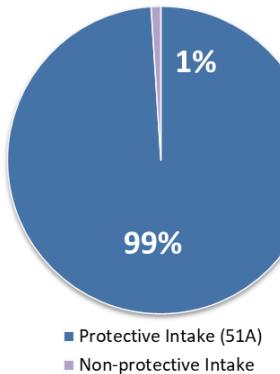
- **Intake Distribution**

Table 25 and Figures 25a-b present the DCF intake distribution for protective and non-protective intakes. Protective intakes decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY2024, DCF received 93,771 intakes, of which 99% (92,819) came to the attention of the Department through the 51A report process. Safe Haven, voluntary, Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) petitions, and court referrals accounted for 1% (952) of all FY2024 intakes.

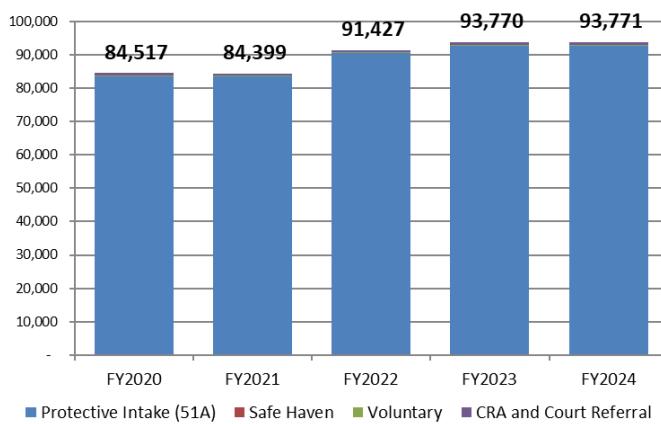
**TABLE 25. Intake Distribution**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Protective Intakes (51As)	83,630	83,644	90,558	92,758	92,819
Safe Haven	2	1	-	3	1
Voluntary	248	239	223	213	187
CRA and Court Referral	637	515	646	796	764
<b>Intake Distribution FY End</b>	<b>84,517</b>	<b>84,399</b>	<b>91,427</b>	<b>93,770</b>	<b>93,771</b>

**FIGURE 25a. FY2024 Intake Distribution**



**FIGURE 25b. Intake Distribution**



- **Protective Intakes (51A Reports)**

Upon receiving a report of abuse and/or neglect (51A), the Department must first gather sufficient information to determine whether the allegation meets DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect, whether there is immediate danger to the safety of a child, whether DCF involvement is warranted and how best to approach the Department's initial response.

The Department begins its screening process immediately upon receipt of a report. During the screening process DCF obtains information from the person filing the report and contacts professionals involved with the family, such as doctors or teachers who may be able to provide information about the child's condition. DCF may also contact the family if appropriate.

If the report is "screened-in," it is assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) Response to determine whether there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child has been abused and/or neglected. "Screened-in" reports require either an immediate five-day emergency response, or a non-emergency response. Some 51A reports may not meet DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect and are "screened out."

If the Department determines that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, has been a victim of human trafficking, has suffered serious physical abuse and/or injury, or has died as a result of abuse and/or

neglect, DCF must notify local law enforcement as well as the district attorney, who has the authority to file criminal charges. A “screened out” report may also be referred to the district attorney (e.g., the report did not involve a child, or the allegations are not within the Department’s mandate concerning child abuse and neglect, and/or an alleged perpetrator has been identified and was not a caregiver).

**Timeframes for completing a 51A Screening:**

- **Screening:** Begins immediately for all reports.
  - Screening for an emergency response is to be completed within two hours.
  - Screening for a non-emergency response is to be completed within one business day but may be extended for one additional business day in limited circumstances.

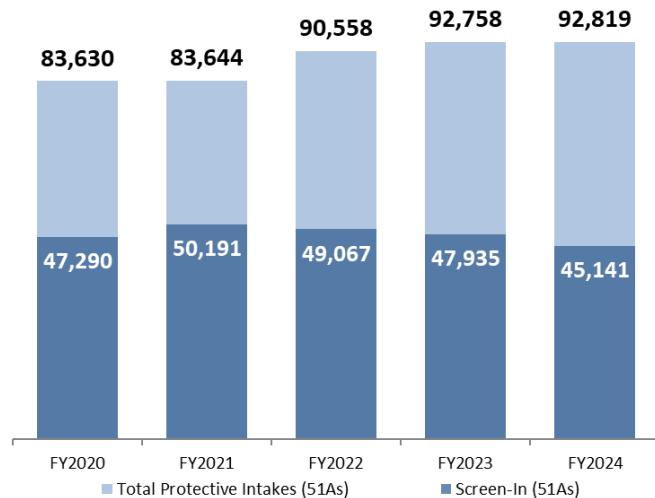
• **Protective Intakes (51As) – Screening and District Attorney (DA) Referral Rates**

Corresponding to a decrease in reporting by mandated reporters (e.g., school personnel) during the COVID-19 pandemic, Table 26 and Figures 26a-b reflect a 12.6% decrease in protective intakes in FY2020 (-12,031) and FY2021 (-12,017) relative to FY2019 (95,661). By FY2024, the decrease is within 3.0% (-2,842) relative to FY2019.

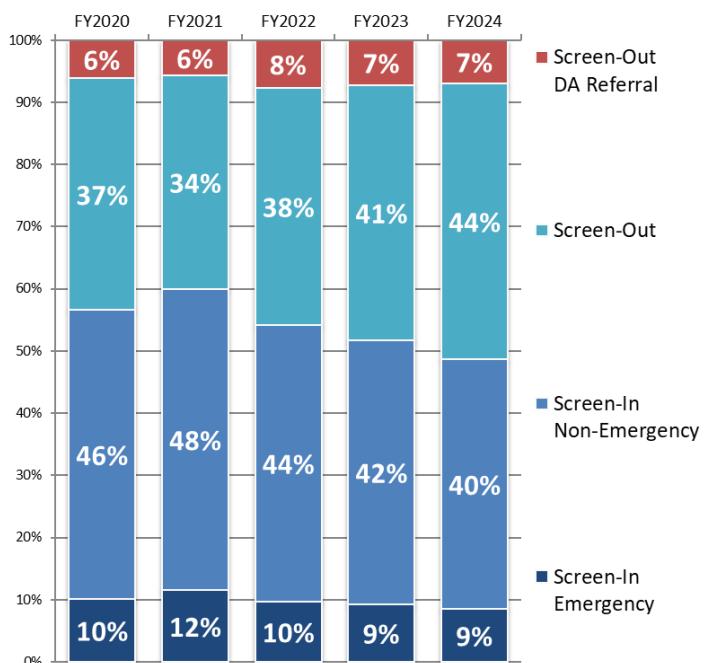
**TABLE 26. Protective Intakes (51As)**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Screen-In Emergency	8,502	9,629	8,785	8,638	7,924
Screen-In Non-Emergency	38,788	40,562	40,282	39,297	37,217
Screen-Out	31,194	28,661	34,512	38,130	41,230
Screen-Out DA Referral	5,146	4,792	6,979	6,693	6,448
<b>Protective Intakes (51As) Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>83,630</b>	<b>83,644</b>	<b>90,558</b>	<b>92,758</b>	<b>92,819</b>

**FIGURE 26a. Screened-In 51a Intakes**



**FIGURE 26b. Screening and DA Referral Rates**



- **Protective Intakes (51As) by Race/Ethnicity**

Table/Figure 26c show the proportion of children named in protective intakes by race/ethnicity compared to the proportion in the Massachusetts' child population. While Black and Hispanic/Latinx children are 2.5x more likely to be referred to the Department through a 51A report in comparison to White children, the screen-in rates are near equivalent across race and ethnicity when compared to relative rates of 51A reporting.

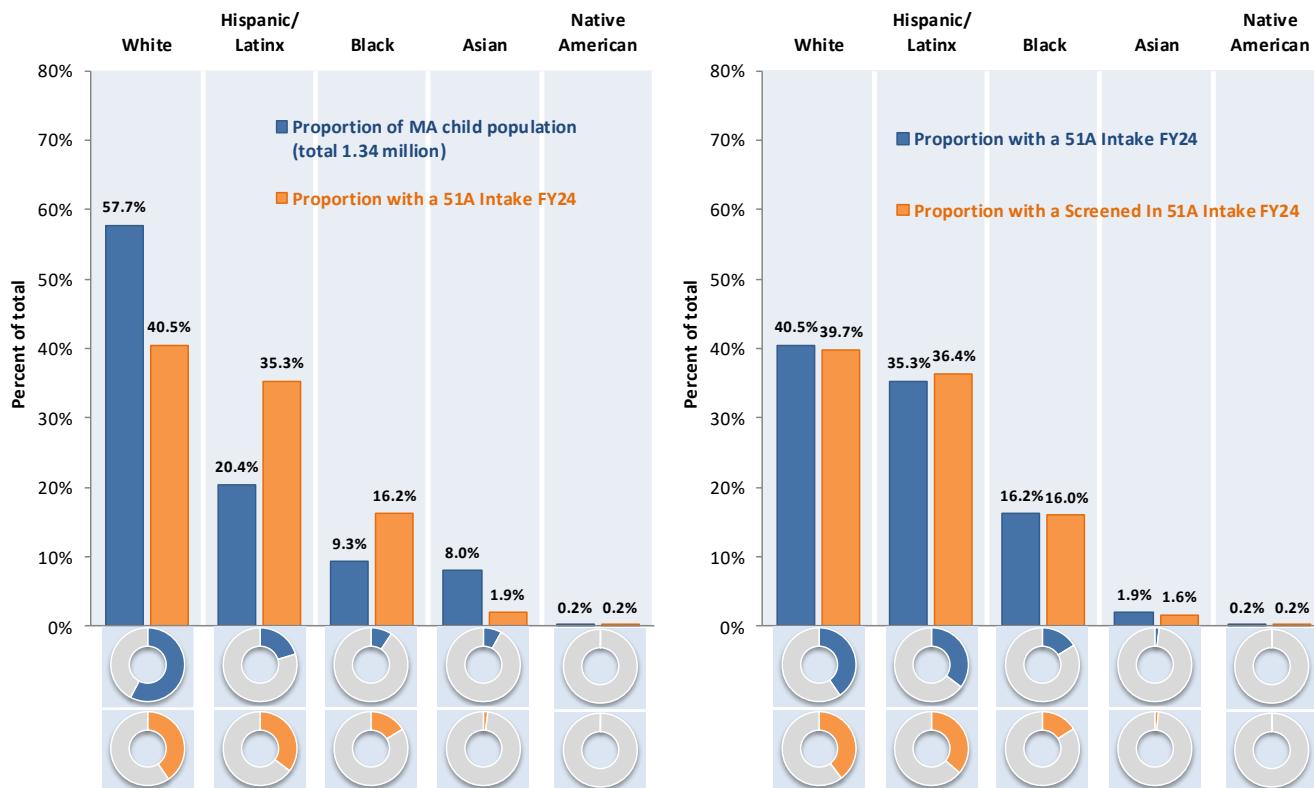
**TABLE 26c. Protective Intakes by Race/Ethnicity  
– Unduplicated by Child FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		51A Intake Distribution	RoD	RRI	Screened In 51A Intake Distribution	RoD	RRI
	White	40.5%	0.7	n/a	39.7%	1.0	n/a
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	35.3%	1.7	2.5x	36.4%	1.0	1.1x
	Black	16.2%	1.7	2.5x	16.0%	1.0	1.0x
	Asian	1.9%	0.2	0.3x	1.6%	0.8	0.9x
	Native American	.2%	0.8	1.2x	.2%	1.1	1.2x
	Pacific Islander	*	-	-	*	-	-
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	5.9%	-	-	6.1%	-	-
		100%			100%		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

**FIGURE 26c. Protective Intakes by Race/Ethnicity – Unduplicated by Child FY2024**



- **Protective Responses (51Bs)**

“Screened-in” 51A reports are assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) Response (51B Response) to determine whether there is “reasonable cause to believe” that a child has been abused and/or neglected. “Reasonable cause to believe” means a collection of facts, knowledge, or observations which tend to support or are consistent with the allegations and when viewed in light of the surrounding circumstances and the credibility of the persons providing the information, would lead a reasonable person to conclude that a child has been abused or neglected. The response includes an investigation of the validity of the allegation(s) received, a determination of current danger and future risk to the child, and an assessment of the capacity of the parent(s)/caregiver(s) to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of their child.

**At the conclusion of the CPS Response, a determination is made as to whether the report is:**

- **Unsupported** – There is not “reasonable cause to believe” that a child was abused and/or neglected, or that the child’s safety or well-being is being compromised; OR the person believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect was not a caregiver, unless the abuse or neglect involves sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking where the caregiver distinction is not applied.
- **Supported** – There is “reasonable cause to believe” that a child was, or is at substantial risk of being abused and/or neglected; AND the actions or inactions by the parent(s)/caregiver(s) place the child in danger or present substantial risk to the child’s safety or well-being; OR a person was responsible for the child being a victim of sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking.
- **Substantiated Concern** – There is “reasonable cause to believe” that a child was neglected; AND the parent(s)/caregiver(s) create moderate risk and there is a presence of contributing factors that increase the likelihood of being neglected.

**Timeframes for completing a CPS Response:**

- **Emergency Response** – Must begin within two hours and be completed within five business days of the report.
- **Non-emergency Response** – Must begin within two business days and be completed within 15 business days of the report.

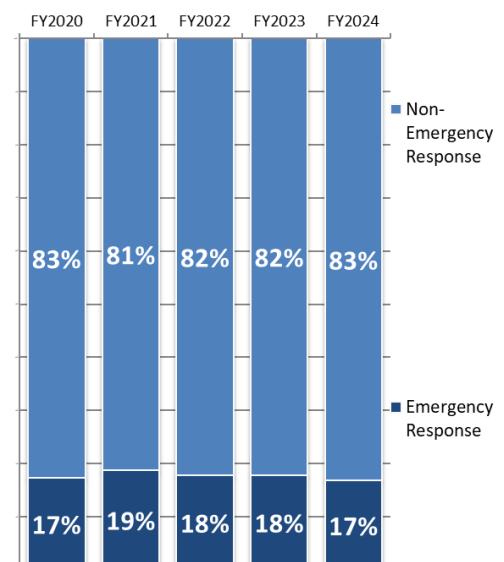
- **Protective Responses (51Bs) – Emergency/Non-Emergency**

Table/Figure 27 show response type for 51A reports.

**TABLE 27. Protective Responses**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Emergency Response	6,652	7,391	7,027	6,808	5,971
Non-Emergency Response	31,873	31,995	32,544	31,389	29,660
<b>Protective Responses FY End</b>	<b>38,525</b>	<b>39,386</b>	<b>39,571</b>	<b>38,197</b>	<b>35,631</b>

**FIGURE 27. Response Type**



- **Protective Responses (51Bs) – Emergency/Non-Emergency by Race/Ethnicity**

Table/Figure 27a display the proportion of children subject to an Emergency or a Non-Emergency protective response by race and ethnicity compared to the proportion of children with a protective intake (51A).

**TABLE 27a. Protective Responses (51Bs) – Emergency /Non-Emergency by Race/Ethnicity – Unduplicated by Child FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

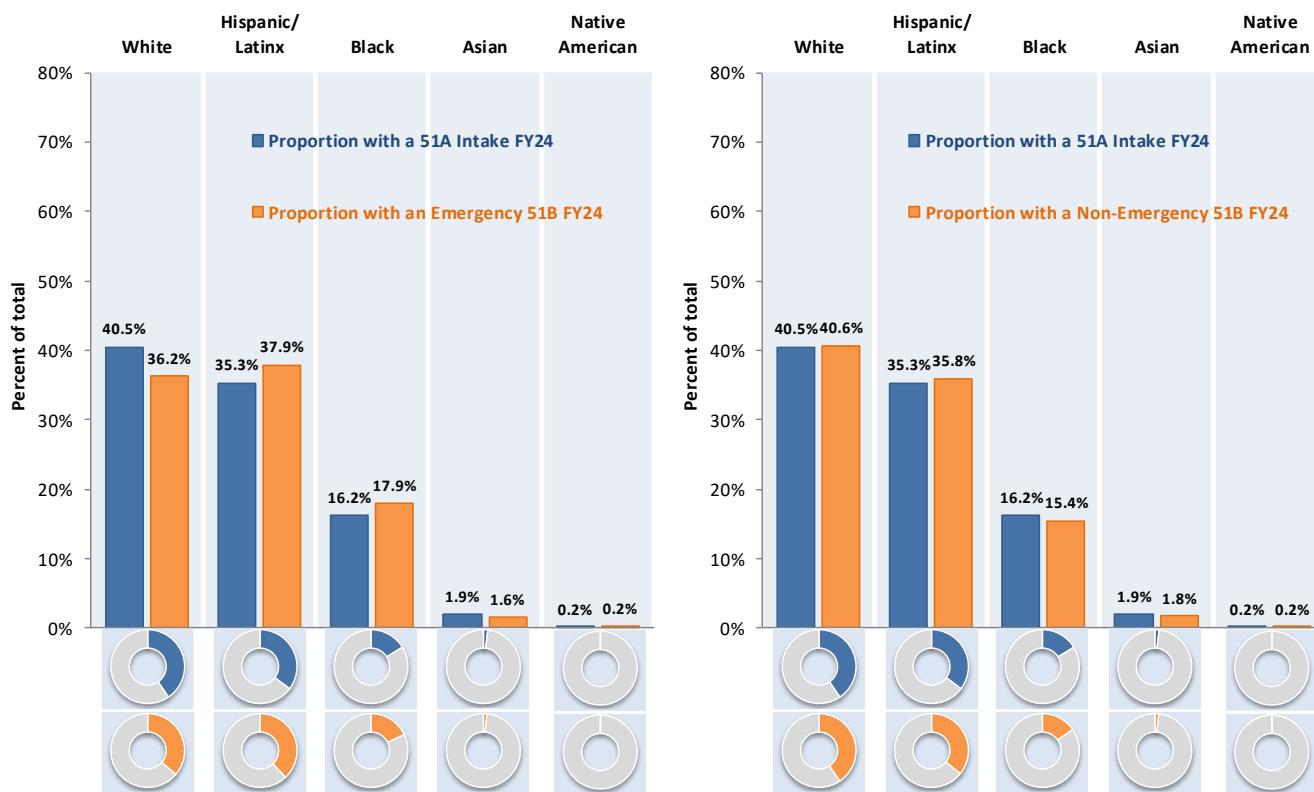
	51B Response Emergency	RoD	RRI	51B Response Non-Emergency	RoD	RRI
White	36.2%	0.9	n/a	40.6%	1.0	n/a
	37.9%	1.1	1.2x	35.8%	1.0	1.0x
	17.9%	1.1	1.2x	15.4%	1.0	1.0x
	1.6%	0.8	0.9x	1.8%	0.9	0.9x
	.2%	1.2	1.4x	.2%	1.1	1.1x
	-	-	-	*	-	-
	6.2%	-	-	6.2%	-	-

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

**FIGURE 27a. Responses (51Bs) – Emergency/Non-Emergency by Race/Ethnicity – FY2024**



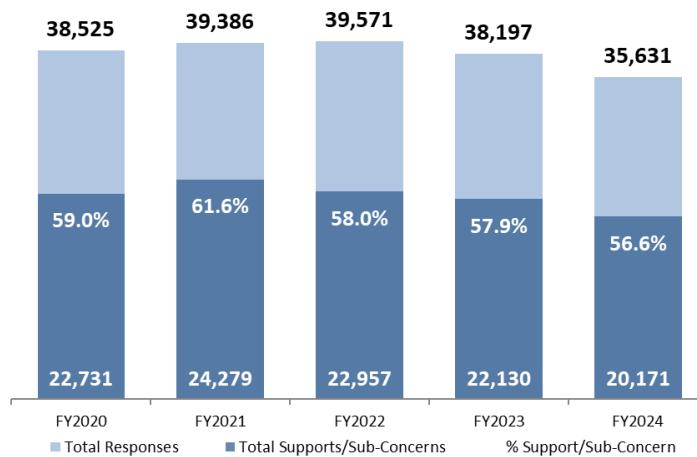
- **Protective Responses (51Bs) – Determinations**

Table/Figure 28 show a 58.6% average combined support/substantiated-concern rate for screened-in reports over the five-year time span of FY2020-24.

**TABLE 28. Protective Responses**

Support/Concern Counts	FY2020		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024	
Investigation – Support Decision	16,583	43.0%	16,350	41.5%	16,151	40.8%	15,622	40.9%	14,884	41.8%
Investigation – Substantiated Concern	6,148	16.0%	7,929	20.1%	6,806	17.2%	6,508	17.0%	5,287	14.8%
Total Supported/Substantiated-Concern	22,731	59.0%	24,279	61.6%	22,957	58.0%	22,130	57.9%	20,171	56.6%

**FIGURE 28. Response Determinations**



- **Protective Response (51B) Determinations by Race/Ethnicity**

Table/Figure 28a display the proportion of response (51B) determinations of children subject to a protective response by race and ethnicity compared to the proportion of children with a protective intake (51A). While Black and Hispanic/Latinx children are 2.5x more likely to be referred to the Department through a 51A report in comparison to White children (see Table/Figure 26c), support and substantiated concern rates are near equivalent across race and ethnicity when compared to relative rates of 51A reporting.

**TABLE 28a. Response Determinations by Race/Ethnicity – Unduplicated by Child FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

	51B Response Support Distribution	51B Response Substantiated Concern Distribution		51B Response Substantiated Concern Distribution		
		RoD	RRI	RoD	RRI	
White	40.3%	1.0	n/a	40.6%	1.0	n/a
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	36.2%	1.0	1.0x	34.0%	1.0	1.0x
Black	14.8%	0.9	0.9x	16.7%	1.0	1.0x
Asian	1.4%	0.7	0.7x	2.1%	1.1	1.1x
Native American	.3%	1.8	1.8x	-	-	-
Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-Racial (two or more races)	7.1%	-	-	6.7%	-	-
	100%		100%			

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

**FIGURE 28a. Response Determinations by Race/Ethnicity – FY2024**



• **Protective Responses (51Bs) – Timeliness of Responses**

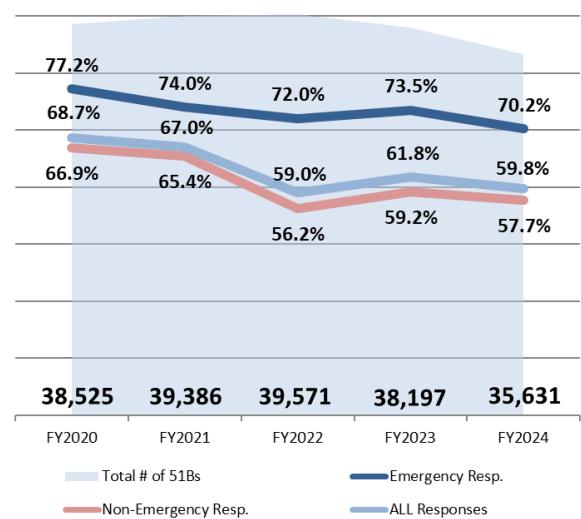
Table/Figure 29 show timeliness of completing emergency and non-emergency responses.

**TABLE 29. Timeliness of Responses**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Emergency Response	77.2%	74.0%	72.0%	73.5%	70.2%
Non-Emergency Response	66.9%	65.4%	56.2%	59.2%	57.7%
Timeliness of ALL Responses	68.7%	67.0%	59.0%	61.8%	59.8%

*Higher rates are preferable.*

**FIGURE 29. Timeliness of Responses**



- **Protective Intakes (51As), Responses (51Bs), and Child Victims – Allegations**

**TABLE 29a. Count of Intakes (51As) and Allegations**

	FY2024	%
Neglect	67,624	72.9%
Physical Abuse	20,852	22.5%
Sexual Abuse	9,804	10.6%
Human Trafficking-Labor	14	*
Human Trafficking-Sexually Exploited Child	1,341	1.4%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN)	1,085	1.2%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) -Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)	42	*
Invalid Allegation	1,309	1.4%
<b>Total 51A Reports <sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>92,819</b>	

As evidenced in Table 29a, 72.9% of the 92,819 reports of child maltreatment included an allegation of neglect. Physical abuse was evident in 22.5% of reports, sexual abuse in 10.6%, and SEN/SEN-NAS in 1.2%.

<sup>(1)</sup> An Intake (51A) may include one-or-more allegations.

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

**TABLE 29b. Count of Supported Responses (51Bs) and Allegations**

	FY2024	%
Neglect	13,080	87.9%
Physical Abuse	1,590	10.7%
Sexual Abuse	544	3.7%
Human Trafficking-Labor	6	*
Human Trafficking-Sexually Exploited Child	335	2.3%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN)	570	3.8%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) -Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)	34	.2%
Invalid Allegation	-	-
<b>Total Supported 51B Responses <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>14,884</b>	

Table 29b reveals that 87.9% of the 14,884 supported responses included a finding of neglect. Physical abuse was evident in 10.7% of the supported responses, SEN/SEN-NAS in 4.1%, and sexual abuse in 3.7%.

<sup>(2)</sup> A response (51B) may include one-or-more supported allegations. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

**TABLE 29c. Unduplicated Child Victims by Supported Allegation <sup>(3)</sup>**

	FY2024	%
Neglect	19,253	88.0%
Physical Abuse	1,768	8.1%
Sexual Abuse	570	2.6%
Human Trafficking-Labor	6	*
Human Trafficking-Sexually Exploited Child	308	1.4%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN)	578	2.6%
Neglect-Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) -Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)	34	.2%
Invalid Allegation	-	-
<b>Unduplicated Child Victims <sup>(4)</sup></b>	<b>21,888</b>	

Table 29c shows that 88.0% of 21,888 unique children found to have experienced maltreatment were victims of neglect. Physical abuse was evidenced for 8.1% of the child victims, SEN/SEN-NAS for 2.8%, and sexual abuse for 2.6%.

<sup>(3)</sup> A child victim may have one or more supported allegations. \*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

<sup>(4)</sup> A child victim may have one or more supported allegations within a specific allegation type.

These counts are unduplicated (i.e., a child with 2 or more supported NEGLECT allegations is only counted once in this table).

## VIII. PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOME METRICS

### • Safety Outcome 1 - Recurrence of Maltreatment – CFSR-3<sup>3</sup>

The reduction of the *Recurrence of Maltreatment* (i.e., abuse and/or neglect) is an important federal measure of the Departments' success in promoting the safety of children and families. As such, the Department monitors recurrence of maltreatment on open and closed cases on a quarterly basis as a component of its performance management and accountability system. This indicator measures whether the agency was successful in preventing subsequent maltreatment of a child if the child was the subject of a supported maltreatment report.

**Safety Outcome 1 – Recurrence of maltreatment** tracks a cohort of children (0-17) with an occurrence of substantiated maltreatment within the first 12 months of a 24-month reporting period and identifies those children (0-17) who experience a subsequent substantiated recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of the initial maltreatment event.

**Denominator:** The number of children with at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in a 12-month period.

**Numerator:** Of the children in the denominator, the number of children who had another substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within 12 months of their initial report.

This federal CFSR-3 safety outcome measure includes children who are in an open DCF case as well as those not in open cases.

Table/Figure 30 reveal that in the two-year period ending FY2024, 15.16% (3,260) of the 21,501 children who experienced an occurrence of maltreatment in FY2023, experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of their initial report. Alternatively, 84.84% did not experience recurrence of maltreatment.

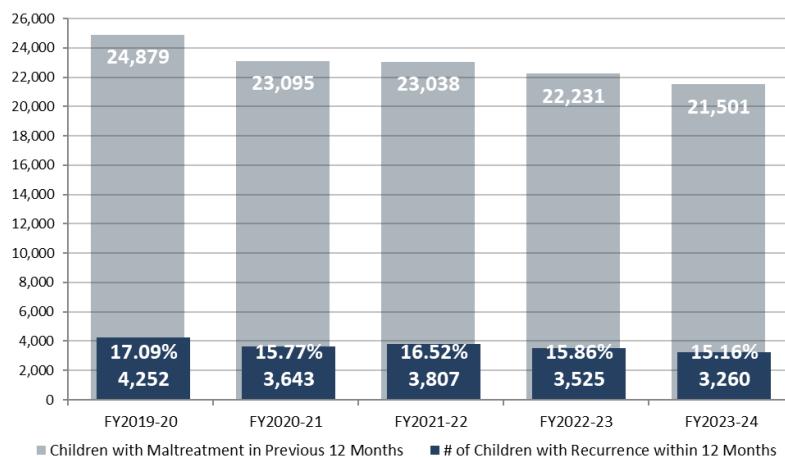
**TABLE 30. Recurrence of Maltreatment – CFSR3**

	FY2019-20	FY2020-21	FY2021-22	FY2022-23	FY2023-24
Children with Maltreatment during the Previous 12 months (denominator)	24,879	23,095	23,038	22,231	21,501
Children Who did not Experience Recurrence within 12 months	20,627	19,452	19,231	18,706	18,241
Children with Recurrence within 12 months (numerator)	4,252	3,643	3,807	3,525	3,260
% of Children Who Experienced Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 Months	17.09%	15.77%	16.52%	15.86%	15.16%

**National performance: 9.7% (lower rate is preferable)**

NOTE: This updated federal CFSR3 indicator replaces the CFSR2 indicator found in MA DCF Annual Reports prior to FY2023.

**FIGURE 30. Children Who Experienced Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 Months**



<sup>3</sup> This updated federal CFSR3 indicator replaces the CFSR2 indicator found in MA DCF Annual Reports prior to FY2023.

- Safety Outcome 2 – Maltreatment in Foster Care – CFSR-2 & CFSR-3**

This federal measure follows a cohort of children/youth (0-17) in the custody of the Department who resided in an out-of-home placement setting at any time during a specified 12-month period (denominator = unduplicated count of children in the cohort). The numerator consists of those children in the denominator who do not experience substantiated maltreatment (i.e., abuse and/or neglect) by a substitute care provider (e.g., foster parent or group care staff) during the 12-month period. Both numerator and denominator consist of unique child counts (i.e., children who experience multiple maltreatment events during the 12-month period are counted once in the denominator and once in the numerator).

**Safety Outcome 2 – Maltreatment in Foster Care:** Of all children in foster care during a 12-month period, what percentage were the subject of substantiated maltreatment by a foster parent/group care staff?

- Denominator:** Number of children in foster care (i.e., out-of-home) at any time during a 12-month period.
- Numerator:** Of the children in the denominator, the number with a substantiated maltreatment by a foster parent or group care staff within the 12-month period. For **absence of maltreatment in foster care** the numerator is the number without a substantiated maltreatment within the 12-month period.

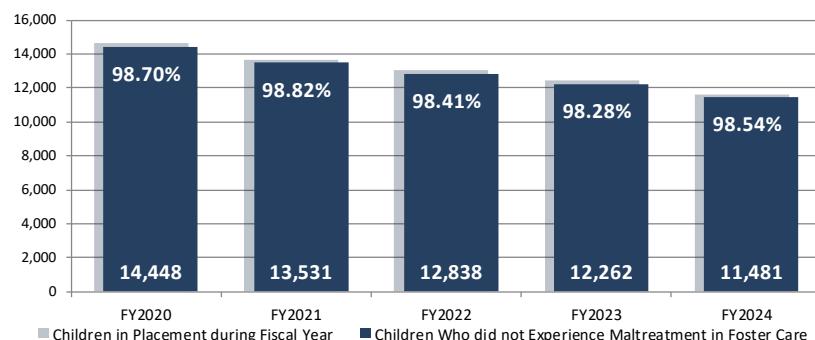
This Federal CFSR-2 safety outcome measure includes only those children/youth who are in the custody and care (out-of-home placement) of the Department at the time of their maltreatment.

Table/Figure 31 reveal that 98.54% (11,481 / 11,651) of the children who were in an out-of-home placement at any time during FY2024 did not experience maltreatment by a substitute care provider.

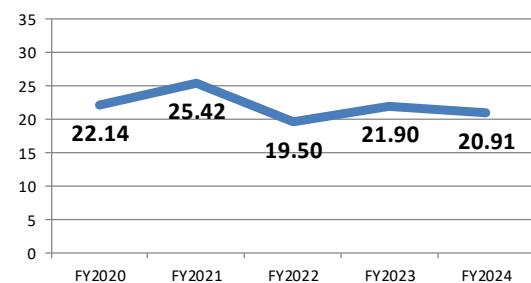
**TABLE 31. Maltreatment in Foster Care – CFSR2**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Children in Placement at Any Time During the Fiscal Year (denominator)	14,639	13,692	13,045	12,476	11,651
Children Who did not Experience Maltreatment in Foster Care (numerator)	14,448	13,531	12,838	12,262	11,481
Children Who Experienced Maltreatment in Foster Care	191	161	207	214	170
% of Children Who did not Experience Maltreatment in Foster Care	98.70%	98.82%	98.41%	98.28%	98.54%

**FIGURE 31. Children Who Did Not Experience Maltreatment in Foster Care**



**FIGURE 31b. Victimization per 100K Days in Care**



**TABLE 31b. Victimization\* Rate per 100K Days in Care – CFSR3**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total # of Placement Days (denominator)	3,532,506	3,363,334	3,297,648	3,164,175	2,989,042
Total # of Victimization (numerator)	782	855	643	693	625
Victimization* per 100,000 Days in Care	22.14	25.42	19.50	21.90	20.91

Table/Figure 31b present an FY2024 victim rate of 20.91 per 100,000 days of DCF care.

*\*Victimization may have been perpetrated by someone other than the resource provider (e.g., parent or other member of the community).*

NOTE: Values were recast for FY2020-FY2023 to better align with federal CFSR3 syntax.

- **Permanency Outcome – Reunification in 12 Months – CFSR-2**

Table/Figure 32 show that 59.6 % of the children/youth who reunified in FY2024, reunified within 12 months of entering care. The median time to reunification was 9.5 months.

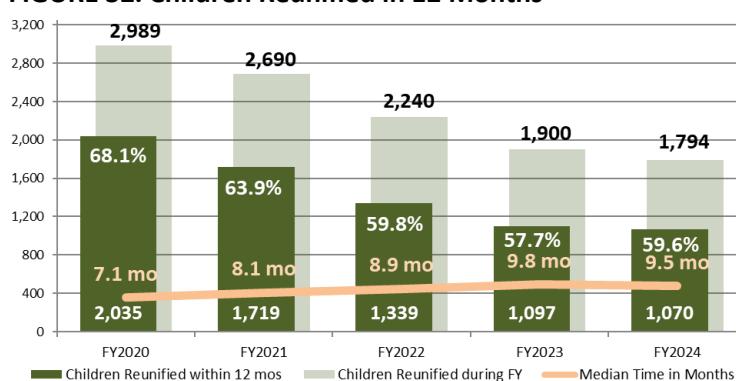
**TABLE 32. Children Reunified in 12 Months – CFSR2**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
*Children Reunified During the Fiscal Year (denominator)	2,989	2,690	2,240	1,900	1,794
Children Reunified within 12 months (numerator)	2,035	1,719	1,339	1,097	1,070
<b>Measure 1.1: Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the 12-month period ending with the fiscal year, and who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home?</b>	<b>68.1%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>59.6%</b>
<b>Measure 1.2: Median Time to Reunification in Months</b>	<b>7.1 mos.</b>	<b>8.1 mos.</b>	<b>8.9 mos.</b>	<b>9.8 mos.</b>	<b>9.5 mos.</b>

*Measure 1.1 – National median: 69.9%, 75th percentile: 75.2% (higher rate is preferable)* \*By definition, this is a subset of Table 24a/34b reunifications.

*Measure 1.2 – National median: 6.5 months, 25th percentile: 5.4 months (lower median is preferable)*

**FIGURE 32. Children Reunified in 12 Months**



- **Permanency Outcome – Re-Entries – CFSR-2**

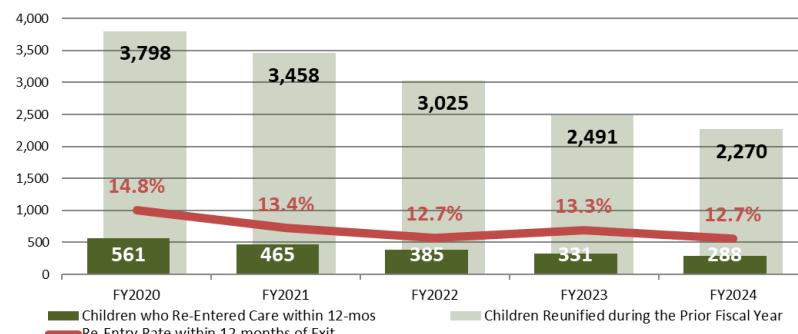
Table/Figure 33 show that 12.7% of the children/youth who reunified in FY2023 re-entered out-of-home care within 12 months of their reunification.

**TABLE 33. Foster Care Re-Entries – CFSR2**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Children Reunified During the Prior Fiscal Year (denominator)	3,798	3,458	3,025	2,491	2,270
Children Who Re-Entered Foster Care within 12 months (numerator)	561	465	385	331	288
<b>Measure 1.4: Of all children who were discharged from foster care to reunification in the 12-month period prior to the 12-month period ending with the selected fiscal year, what percent re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of discharge?</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>

*Measure 1.4 – National median: 15.0%, 25th percentile: 9.9% (lower rate is preferable)*

**FIGURE 33. Foster Care Re-Entries within 12 months of Reunification**



- **Permanency Outcome – Exits to Permanency by Race/Ethnicity**

Table 33a shows exits from care to permanency by race/ethnicity as compared to children in placement at the start of the fiscal year.

**TABLE 33a. Exits to Permanency by Race/Ethnicity  
– RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children (0-17) in Placement Start of FY2024		Children (0-17) Exiting to Permanency in FY2024		RoD	RRI
	White	2,863	37.2%	1,208	39.1%	1.0	n/a
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	2,488	32.3%	1,029	33.3%	1.0	1.0x
	Black	1,110	14.4%	386	12.5%	0.9	0.8x
	Asian	61	.8%	30	1.0%	1.2	1.2x
	Native American	32	.4%	15	.5%	1.2	1.1x
	Pacific Islander	2	*	1	-	1.2	1.2x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	899	11.7%	343	11.1%	0.9	0.9x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	233	3.0%	81	2.6%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	4	.1	-	-	n/a	n/a
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,692</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,093</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Reunification by Race/Ethnicity – Rate-of-Disproportionality**

Table 33b shows exits to reunification by race/ethnicity as compared to children with a goal of reunification at the start of the fiscal year.

**TABLE 33b. Reunifications by Race/Ethnicity  
– RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children with Goal of Reunification Start of FY2024		Children Reunified in FY2024		RoD	RRI
	White	1,035	38.1%	664	35.2%	0.9	n/a
	Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	883	32.5%	687	36.4%	1.1	1.2x
	Black	403	14.8%	244	12.9%	0.9	0.9x
	Asian	27	1.0%	22	1.2%	1.2	1.3x
	Native American	13	.5%	9	.5%	1.0	1.1x
	Pacific Islander	1	*	1	.1%	1.4	1.6x
	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	245	9.0%	200	10.6%	1.2	1.3x
	Unable to Determine/Declined	109	4.0%	60	3.2%	n/a	n/a
	Missing	1	*	-	-	n/a	n/a
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,717</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>100%</b>		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Permanency Outcome – Adoptions – CFSR-2**

Table/Figure 34 show that notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic-related suspension of adoption legalizations between March 16 and May 4, 2020, 850 adoptions were legalized in FY2020. The pandemic's impact on adoption legalizations was most evident in FY2021. FY2024 ended with 871 adoption legalizations – 151 more adoptions than FY2021.

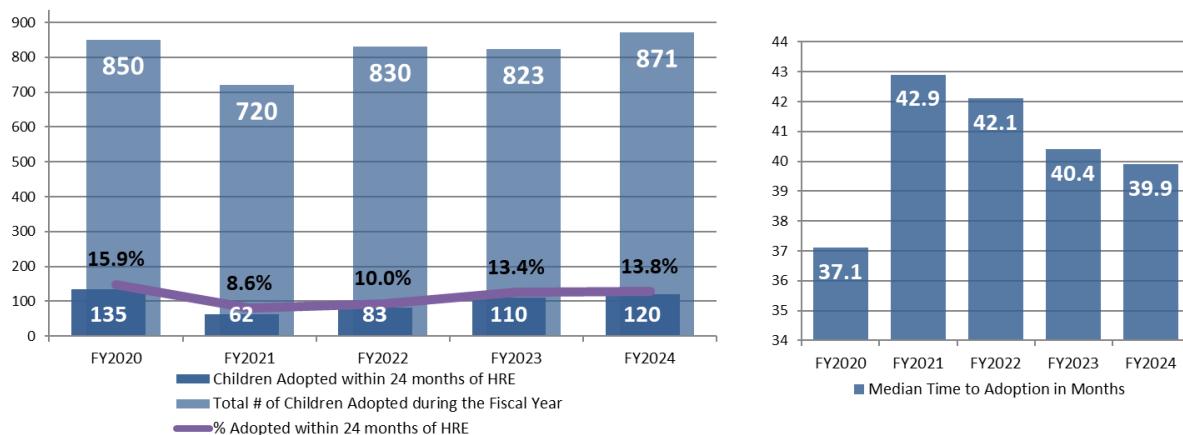
**TABLE 34. Timeliness of Adoptions – CFSR2**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total # of Children (0-17) Adopted During the Fiscal Year (denominator)	850	720	830	823	871
Children (0-17) Adopted within 24 Months of Home Removal (numerator)	135	62	83	110	120
<b>Measure 2.1: Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the 12-month period ending with the selected Fiscal Year, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home?</b>	15.9%	8.6%	10.0%	13.4%	13.8%
<b>Measure 2.2: Median Time to Adoption in Months</b>	37.1 mos.	42.9 mos.	42.1 mos.	40.4 mos.	39.9 mos.

**Measure 2.1 – National median: 26.8%, 75th percentile: 33.6% (higher rate is preferable)**

**Measure 2.2 – National median: 32.4 months, 25th percentile: 27.3 months (lower median is preferable)**

**FIGURE 34. Timeliness of Adoptions**



- **Adoptions by Race/Ethnicity – Rate-of-Disproportionality**

Table 35 shows exits to adoption by race/ethnicity as compared to children with a goal of adoption at the start of the fiscal year.

**TABLE 35. Adoptions by Race/Ethnicity – RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

	White	Children with Goal of Adoption Start of FY2024		Children Adopted in FY2024		RoD	RRI
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
Hispanic/Latinx (any race)	White	1,147	36.3%	390	44.8%	1.2	n/a
Hispanic/Latinx (any race)	Hispanic/Latinx (any race)	1,051	33.3%	266	30.5%	0.9	0.7x
Black	Black	412	13.0%	92	10.6%	0.8	0.7x
Asian	Asian	13	.4%	-	-	0.0	0.0x
Native American	Native American	17	.5%	5	.6%	1.1	0.9x
Pacific Islander	Pacific Islander	1	*	-	-	0.0	0.0x
Multi-Racial (two or more races)	Multi-Racial (two or more races)	440	13.9%	101	11.6%	0.8	0.7x
Unable to Determine/Declined	Unable to Determine/Declined	78	2.5%	17	2.0%	n/a	n/a
Missing	Missing	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a
	Total	3,159	100%	871	100%		

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

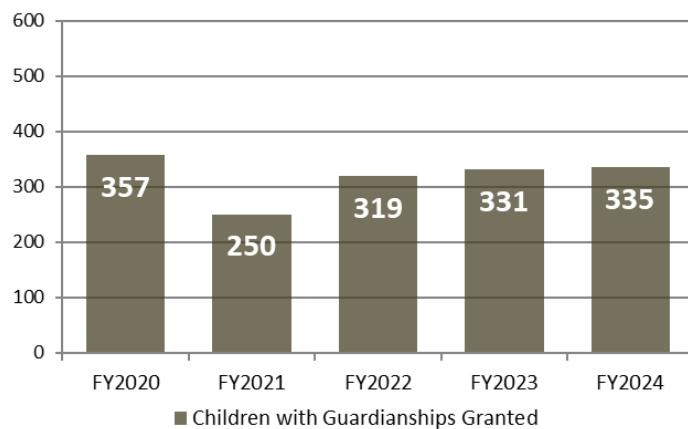
- **Permanency Outcome – Guardianships Granted**

As reflected in Table/Figure 36, 335 guardianships were granted in FY2024. While lower than pre-pandemic counts, the 335 guardianships in FY2024 reflect a 34% increase over FY2021.

**TABLE 36. Guardianships**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Children with Guardianships Granted	357	250	319	331	335

**FIGURE 36. Guardianships Granted**



- **Guardianships Granted by Race/Ethnicity – Rate-of-Disproportionality**

Table 36a shows exits to guardianship by race/ethnicity as compared to children with a goal of guardianship at the start of the fiscal year.

**TABLE 36a. Guardianships Granted**

**by Race/Ethnicity  
– RoD and RRI FY2024<sup>(1)</sup>**

		Children with Goal of Guardianship Start of FY2024	Children Granted Guardianships in FY2024	RoD	RRI
White		231	39.7%	154	46.0%
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)		168	28.9%	76	22.7%
Black		85	14.6%	50	14.9%
Asian		6	1.0%	8	2.4%
Native American		2	.3%	1	.3%
Pacific Islander		-	-	-	-
Multi-Racial (two or more races)		80	13.7%	42	12.5%
Unable to Determine/Declined		10	1.7%	4	1.2%
Missing		-	-	-	n/a
<b>Total Fiscal Year End</b>		<b>582</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding. Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

- **Permanency Outcome – Young Adult Outreach/Transition Services**

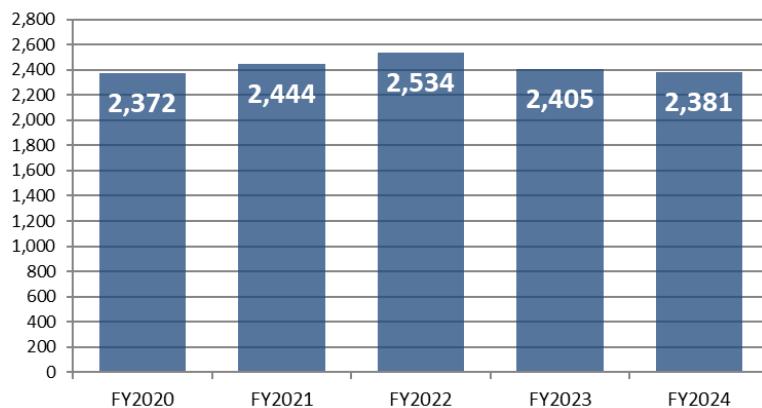
DCF provides outreach/transition services to young adults transitioning out of care. Table/Figure 37 show that DCF provided outreach/transition services to 2,381 unique young adults in FY2024.

**TABLE 37. Young Adult (18 and older) Outreach/Transition Services**

Young Adults (18 and older) Provided Outreach/Transition Services	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
2,372	2,444	2,534	2,405	2,381	

NOTE: Values were recast for FY2020-FY2023 to limit the counts to child consumers ages 18-24.

**FIGURE 37. Young Adult Outreach/Transition Svrs.**



**Outreach/Transition Services include:**

- Follow Along services
- Stepping Out services
- Independent Living services
- State College Preparation
- Teen Parenting services
- Support and Stabilization services

- **Permanency Outcome – Transition Age Youth Remaining in Care After Turning 18**

Table 37a shows that in FY2024, 77% of transition aged youth voluntarily remained in care at age 18 or returned to care within the fiscal year. As shown in Table 37b, youth of color who turned 18 while in care were 0.9x – 1.3x as likely to remain/return to care and 0.0x – 1.3x as likely to leave care in FY2024 than White youth.

**TABLE 37a. Transition Age Youth Remaining**

		FY2020		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024	
Youth Who Turned 18 in Fiscal Year (denominator)		754		674		700		692		707	
Youth Who Turned 18 and Remained/Returned to Care in FY		555	74%	507	75%	509	73%	539	78%	545	77%
Youth Who Turned 18 and Left Care in FY		199	26%	167	25%	191	27%	153	22%	162	23%
Youth Who Turned 18 and Left Care in FY, Who Returned to Care in a Subsequent FY		14	7%	15	9%	21	11%	14	9%	aging	

**TABLE 37b. Transition Age Youth – RoD and RRI FY2024**

	Youth Who Turned 18 and Remained/Returned to Care in FY2024		Youth Who Turned 18 and Left Care in FY2024	
	RoD	RRI	RoD	RRI
White	1.0	n/a	0.9	n/a
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	0.9	0.9x	1.2	1.3x
Black	1.0	1.0x	0.9	1.0x
Asian	1.3	1.3x	0.0	0.0x
Multi-Racial (two or more races)	1.0	1.0x	0.9	0.9x

<sup>(1)</sup> All races exclude children of Hispanic/Latinx origin

Refer to page 59 for a definition of RoD and RRI.

NOTE: Low Ns for Native American and Pacific Islander.

- **Well-being – Medical (7 & 30 day) Rates & Timeliness**

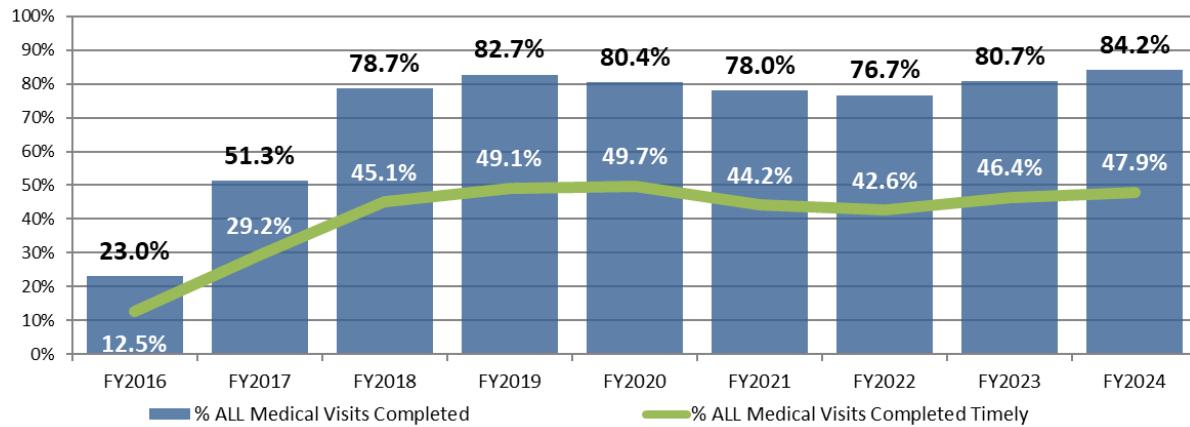
Table/Figure 38 reflect year-over-year progress through FY2019 toward meeting the agency's policy requirement that each child entering care should receive an initial screening and a comprehensive medical evaluation. FY2020-FY2022 medical visits were impacted by decreased access to medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TABLE 38. Medical Visits  
(7 & 30 day)**

	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total Medical Visits Due (denominator)	12,905	11,636	11,280	10,109	9,303	8,484	7,959	7,254	6,589
Total Medical Visits Completed (numerator)	2,973	5,964	8,879	8,360	7,479	6,615	6,104	5,854	5,551
Medical Visits Completed Timely (numerator)	1,615	3,395	5,090	4,967	4,619	3,747	3,393	3,363	3,157
% of ALL Medical Visits Completed	23.0%	51.3%	78.7%	82.7%	80.4%	78.0%	76.7%	80.7%	84.2%
% Medical Visits Completed Timely	12.5%	29.2%	45.1%	49.1%	49.7%	44.2%	42.6%	46.4%	47.9%

*Higher rates are preferable.*

**FIGURE 38. Medical Visits Completed & Timeliness**



Though impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Figure 38 presents increased medical visit compliance in FY2024 compared to FY2016.

- Completion rates increased by 266%
- Timeliness of medical visits increased by 283%

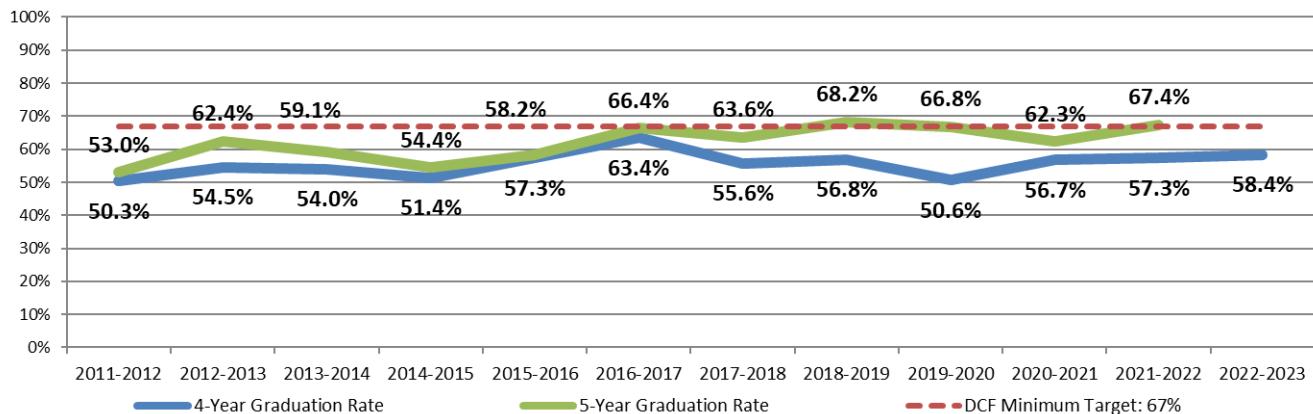
**Note:** Creation of a full-time DCF Medical Director position and hiring Medical Social Workers for all 29 DCF Area Offices have contributed to this trend.

- **Well-being – Education-Graduation Rates**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) calculates and reports on graduation rates as part of overall efforts to improve educational outcomes for students in the Commonwealth. Adopting DESE's methodology to calculate the four-year graduation rate, the Department tracks a cohort of students in custody from 9th grade through high school and then divides the number of students who graduate within four years by the total number in the cohort. This rate provides the percentage of the cohort that graduates in four years or less. Recognizing that many students need longer than four years to graduate from high school, and that it is important to recognize this major accomplishment regardless of the time to graduation, the Department (and DESE) calculates a five-year graduation rate.

<b>TABLE 39.</b> <b>Graduation Rates</b>	DCF	Minimum Target	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023
	Four-Year Rate													
<b>Four-Year Rate</b>	≥ 67.0%	50.3%	54.5%	54.0%	51.4%	57.3%	63.4%	55.6%	56.8%	50.6%	56.7%	57.3%	58.4%	
<b>Five-Year Rate</b>	not established	53.0%	62.4%	59.1%	54.4%	54.4%	58.2%	66.4%	63.6%	68.2%	66.8%	62.3%	67.4%	aging

**FIGURE 39. Four- and Five-Year Graduation Rates**



- **Well-being – Education-Students with High Needs**

Table 39a reveals that during school year 2023-24, 98.9% of children in DCF custody were identified by DESE as High Needs students. This is in contrast to 55.8% for all Massachusetts students.

**TABLE 39a. Students with High Needs**

	Massachusetts All Students 2023-24	DCF Custody Students 2023-24
	Students with High Needs	High Need Factors
Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged <sup>1</sup>	42.2%	96.5%
English Learner	13.1%	10.3%
Former English Learner	26.0%	17.0%
Student with Disability <sup>2</sup>	20.2%	51.3%

<sup>1</sup> As of SY22-23 a student qualifies as Economically Disadvantaged if they participate "in one or more of the following state-administered programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC); the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) foster care program."

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the percent of enrolled students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

- **Well-being – Education-School Attendance Rates**

Table 39b shows that children in DCF custody attended 88.3% of their enrolled school days during school year 2023-24. The attendance rate for all Massachusetts students was 93.0%, and 91.5% for Massachusetts students identified by DESE as High Needs students.

TABLE 39b. School Attendance Rates	Massachusetts All Students 2023-24	Massachusetts Students with High Needs 2023-24	Students in DCF Custody 2023-24
Student Attendance Rates	93.0%	91.5%	88.3%

- **Well-being – Education-Safety Disciplinary Action**

Table 39c presents school year 2023-24 safety disciplinary actions for all Massachusetts students, Massachusetts students identified by DESE as High Needs students, and children in DCF custody.

TABLE 39c. Safety Disciplinary Action	Massachusetts All Students 2023-24	Massachusetts Students with High Needs 2023-24	Students in DCF Custody 2023-24
In-School Suspension	1.4%	1.9%	3.6%
Out-of-School Suspension	2.4%	3.6%	10.4%
Expulsion	*	*	.1%
Removed to Alternate Setting	*	*	*
Emergency Removal	.3%	.5%	1.9%
Students with a School-Based Arrest	*	*	*
Students with a Non-Arrest Law Enforcement Referral	*	*	.1%

\*Less than 0.1% after rounding.

## IX. CHILD/YOUTH FATALITIES

### • Child/Youth Fatalities by Family History with DCF

DCF Area Offices may receive notification of child/youth deaths through a 51A intake or through other means. Area Offices proceed to collect available facts including DCF history (if any) and notify the DCF Central Office. Table 40a presents DCF history for child/youth fatalities reported to DCF. In FY2024, 106 child/youth fatalities were brought to the attention of the Department. Of these: 28 (26%) were open in a case or a response, 39 (37%) had a prior history with the Department, and 39 (37%) had no history with the Department.

**TABLE 40a. Child/Youth Fatalities by Family History with DCF**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Open Case at Time of Fatality <sup>1</sup>	24	19	31	30	27
Open in a Response at Time of Fatality	1	3	1	-	1
Case Closed within 6 Months of Fatality	2	3	2	1	2
Case Closed more than 6 Months Prior to Fatality	8	13	13	8	18
Previous 51A or Response	8	9	7	14	19
No Previous DCF History at Time of Incident Leading to Fatality	30	40	40	31	39
<b>Total Child/Youth (0-17) Fatalities</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>106</b>

<sup>1</sup>Open Case at Time of Fatality includes Care and Protection, CRA, and Voluntary Cases.

### • Child/Youth Fatalities by Manner of Death

The majority of child/youth deaths that come to the attention of the Department are not determined to be the result of maltreatment. Table 40b presents the manner of death for child/youth fatalities reported to DCF.

**TABLE 40b. Child/Youth Fatalities by Manner of Death**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Accidental – includes MV accidents, drownings, falls, fires, etc.	15	11	10	12	15
Community Violence	1	3	1	2	7
Inflicted Physical Injury	4	1	2	5	6
Medical – chronic or acute medical condition	13	12	21	22	29
Neglect	-	2	-	-	1
Overdose – includes alcohol and/or drugs	3	4	7	4	4
Suicide	5	7	3	3	-
Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) – includes unsafe sleep	17	25	15	16	24
Other – includes undetermined/pending medical examiner finding	15	22	35	20	20
<b>Total Child/Youth (0-17) Fatalities</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>106</b>

NOTE: Manner of death may or may not be based on the medical examiner's (ME) determination. Absent a clear determination by the ME, the manner of death is ascertained by a review of the conditions at the time of death.

## X. OPERATIONS

### • Budget

The trend revealed in Table/Figure 42 reflects significant 107% increases in DCF funding between FY2012 and FY2025, with the steepest gains being made in the past two years. These increases supported increased service cost (p.47), staffing (p.48), and facilitated workload reduction for staff (p.49).

**TABLE 42. Budget**

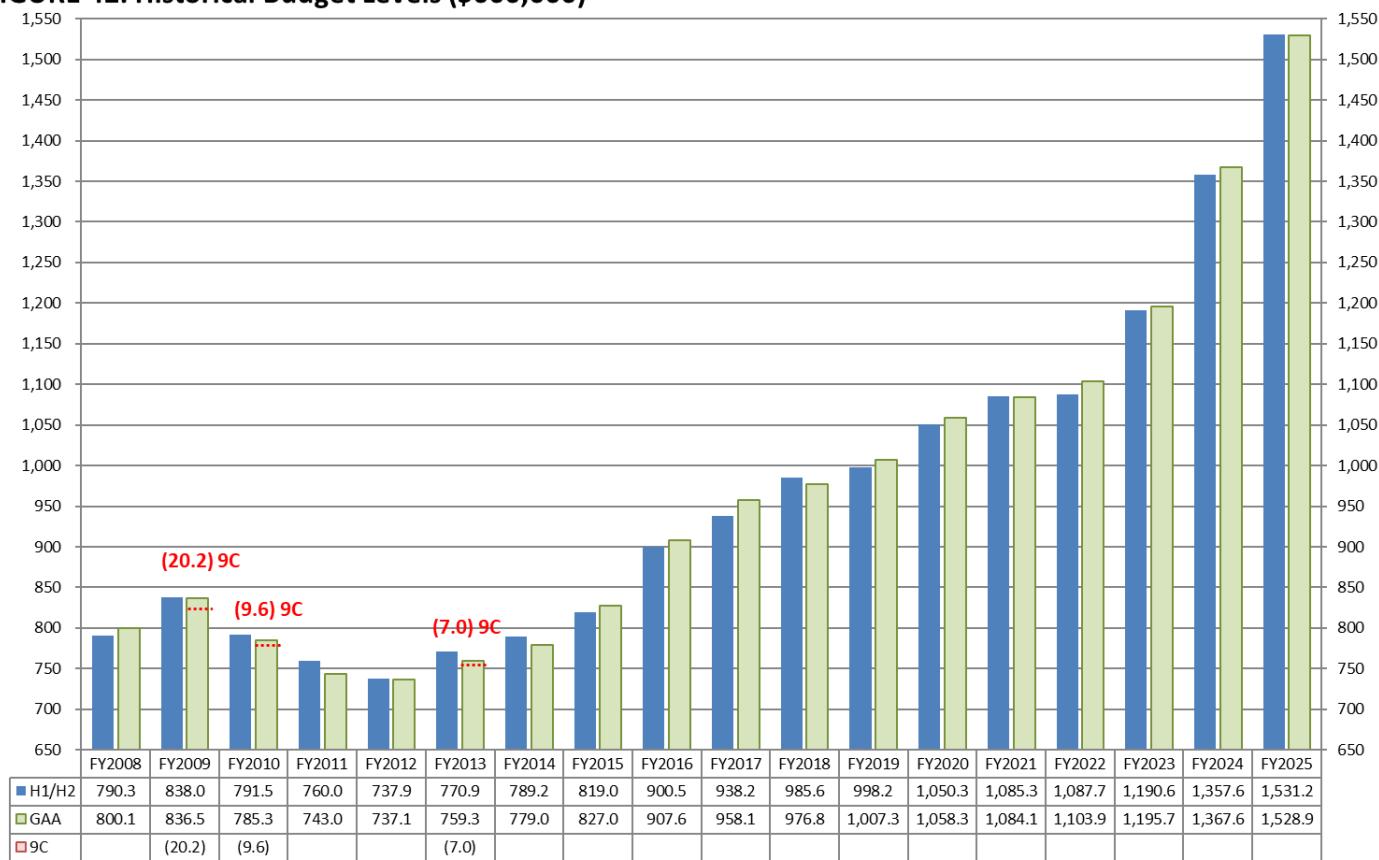
	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
H1/H2	790,253,582	837,971,012	791,463,548	759,968,559	737,860,098	770,874,703	789,244,696	818,984,881	900,518,423
GAA	800,095,093	836,477,528	785,259,603	742,987,038	737,077,781	759,310,881	778,991,325	827,008,493	907,625,914
9C		(20,185,196)	(9,583,245)			(7,043,000)			
	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
H1/H2	938,191,906	985,597,540	998,215,540	1,050,279,338	1,085,313,753	1,087,728,624	1,190,611,726	1,357,574,571	1,531,181,877
GAA	958,081,728	976,750,150	1,007,346,982	1,058,279,339	1,084,138,227	1,103,929,461	1,195,705,610	1,367,640,850	1,528,901,858
9C									

**H1/H2:** Governor's proposed budget

**GAA:** General Appropriations Act – The budget for a fiscal year enacted by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. The Massachusetts General Laws require that annual budgets are in balance.

**9C:** MGL c.29, §9C requires that when projected revenue is less than projected spending, the governor must act to ensure that the budget is brought into balance. The administration may announce 9C cuts at any time that it determines that revenues are likely to be insufficient to pay for all authorized spending.

**FIGURE 42. Historical Budget Levels (\$000,000)**



- **Service Costs**

Table 43 shows a 34% (\$198.6M) increase in service expenditures between FY2020 and FY2024. During this time period:

- Significant investments were made including:
  - Foster care rate increase every year (\$18.6M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - 766 Residential School rate increase every year (\$16.4M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - Chapter 257 provider rate increases (\$25.7M investment over the course of 5 years)
  - Expansion of Support and Stabilization services to include foster parents (\$10.5M investment over FY2020-21)
- There was also significant growth in services such as:
  - Adoption subsidy (\$20.0M over the course of 5 years)
  - Guardianship subsidy (\$3.3M over the course of 5 years)
  - Support and Stabilization services (\$52.0M over the course of 5 years)

**TABLE 43. Service Costs (\$)**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024*	FY2020 to FY2024
<b>Placement</b>	<b>390,888,843.12</b>	<b>386,384,438.83</b>	<b>393,905,301.90</b>	<b>432,949,251.63</b>	<b>509,976,062.95</b>	<b>30%</b>
Departmental Foster Care	80,080,943.92	83,055,835.67	85,452,561.02	94,252,052.68	92,572,616.04	16%
Foster Care – CFC-IFC (contracted)	69,558,398.00	65,130,030.42	59,532,613.13	58,771,165.67	53,316,300.13	-23%
FRFC – Complex Med. Foster Care	1,077,417.25	1,006,941.24	803,959.76	925,454.33	887,188.57	-18%
CC Network – Treatment Residence	-	-	68,136,522.44	133,388,853.95	170,825,990.92	**
CC Network – Medically Complex Res.	-	-	1,451,398.16	1,952,222.69	2,426,290.54	**
CC Network – Residential School	-	-	38,243,054.93	72,331,044.36	84,468,748.76	**
CC Network – Emergency Residence	-	-	26,636,819.29	52,908,033.93	80,863,808.42	**
CC Network – Youth and Young Adult	-	-	8,334,865.78	18,420,424.02	24,615,119.57	**
^Congregate Care – Group Home	114,555,965.53	114,729,899.77	51,066,547.66	-	-	**
^Congregate Care – Continuum	7,764,219.30	7,340,198.78	1,258,290.36	-	-	**
^Congregate Care – Res. School	74,590,285.17	71,143,366.80	30,505,748.54	-	-	**
^Congregate Care – STARR	42,466,437.98	43,307,379.45	22,192,957.00	-	-	**
^Congregate Care – Teen Parenting	795,175.97	670,786.70	289,963.83	-	-	**
<b>Other</b>	<b>200,380,432.98</b>	<b>212,737,260.69</b>	<b>234,404,348.89</b>	<b>253,359,620.23</b>	<b>279,870,907.34</b>	<b>40%</b>
Adoption Subsidies	78,764,778.26	81,193,563.81	85,373,546.69	90,472,238.09	98,802,163.23	25%
Guardianship Subsidies	33,877,296.51	33,412,044.18	33,958,108.91	34,955,010.43	37,163,614.77	10%
Foster Care Support Services	125,569.71	327,485.16	403,815.90	435,797.38	330,843.47	163%
CC Network – Child Specific Add-On	-	-	1,018,873.37	3,439,527.45	4,251,204.91	**
^Congregate Care – Placement Add-On	2,932,030.12	2,693,930.54	1,308,567.66	-	-	**
Parenting Capacity Evaluation	-	-	74,148.73	873,289.96	930,855.16	**
Respite	24,859.16	16,077.96	2,977.40	-	-	**
Support & Stabilization	82,170,677.19	91,556,403.40	107,639,389.36	118,285,308.11	134,208,966.86	63%
Support Services (other)	2,485,222.03	3,537,755.64	4,624,920.87	4,898,448.81	4,183,258.94	68%
<b>TOTAL SERVICE COSTS</b>	<b>591,269,276.10</b>	<b>599,121,699.52</b>	<b>628,309,650.79</b>	<b>686,308,871.86</b>	<b>789,846,970.29</b>	<b>34%</b>

\*FY2024 service costs may not be final at time of report production and will be updated in the FY2025 report.

<sup>^</sup>The congregate care placement taxonomy was replaced by the Congregate Care Network (CC Network) midyear FY2022.

\*\*Year-over-year comparisons across these service costs are not possible given the midyear FY2022 taxonomy changes.

- Staffing Trends**

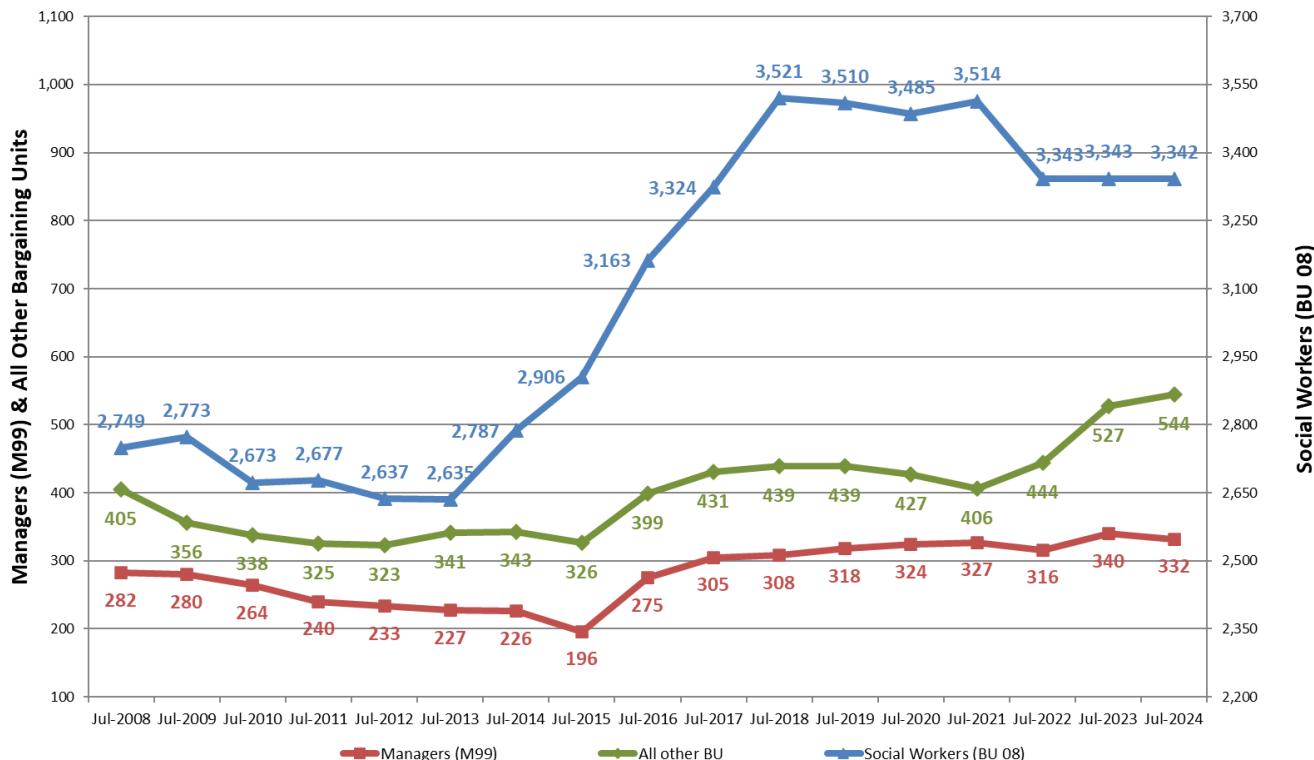
Tables 44/44a and Figure 44 show that DCF staffing has significantly increased relative to July 2015 staffing levels. Social Worker staffing levels increased by 15%, and staffing levels for all other bargaining units (BU) have increased by 67%. Recognizing that managerial oversight capacity had been decreasing since 2008 and losing significant ground relative to the expanding non-managerial staffing levels, the Department engaged in a purposeful effort to re-establish managerial ratios which supported the agency's needs. Accordingly, by July 2024, managerial staffing levels increased by 69% relative to July 2015. These managerial staffing levels were utilized to re-establish a fifth region (Central MA Region), decouple Area Offices, and appropriately staff the DCF Central Office.

**TABLE 44. Staffing**

	Managers (M99)	All Other Bargaining Units	Social Workers (Bargaining Unit 08)	TOTAL
Jul-2008	282	405	2,749	3,436
Jul-2009	280	356	2,773	3,409
Jul-2010	264	338	2,673	3,275
Jul-2011	240	325	2,677	3,242
Jul-2012	233	323	2,637	3,193
Jul-2013	227	341	2,635	3,203
Jul-2014	226	343	2,787	3,356
Jul-2015	196	326	2,906	3,428
Jul-2016	275	399	3,163	3,837
Jul-2017	305	431	3,324	4,060
Jul-2018	308	439	3,521	4,268
Jul-2019	318	439	3,510	4,267
Jul-2020	324	427	3,485	4,236
Jul-2021	327	406	3,514	4,247
Jul-2022	316	444	3,343	4,103
Jul-2023	340	527	3,343	4,210
Jul-2024	332	544	3,342	4,218

Staffing counts are rounded FTEs.

**FIGURE 44. Staffing Trends**



**TABLE 44a. Percent Change**

	Jul-2015 to Jul-2024
Managers (M99)	69%
All Other Bargaining Units (NAGE & MNA)	67%
Social Workers (BU 08)	15%
<b>ALL DCF STAFF</b>	<b>23%</b>

**NOTE:** DCF ramped up Social Worker FTEs over the past several years to meet identified staffing needs. Reaching appropriate FTE levels, hiring moved to a *maintenance mode* in FY2019. The 172 social worker FTE delta shown at the end of FY24 compared to FY21 reflects recruitment and retention challenges post COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Caseload/Workload**

Table 45 shows the total weighted caseloads and ratios for FY2020-FY2024. Improvement is noted in FY2024 compared to the prior two years.

**TABLE 45. Weighted Caseload**<sup>(1)</sup> – excludes Family Resource

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
<b>Weighted Caseload Ratio – End of Fiscal Year</b>	<b>13.73:1</b>	<b>16.73:1</b>	<b>16.55:1</b>	<b>16.39:1</b>	<b>14.89:1</b>
Total Weighted Caseload – End of Fiscal Year (denominator)	29,386.42	33,591.72	31,271.62	29,503.36	25,926.70
FTE Count of Case Carrying Workers – End of Fiscal Year (numerator)	2,139.76	2,007.66	1,889.80	1,799.84	1,741.42
<b>Weighted Caseload Ratio – 12-Month Average</b>	<b>14.74:1</b>	<b>14.82:1</b>	<b>16.36:1</b>	<b>15.92:1</b>	<b>15.40:1</b>
Total Weighted Caseload – 12-month average (denominator)	31,241.81	30,941.78	31,207.94	29,321.27	27,432.82
FTE Count of Case Carrying Workers – 12-month average (numerator)	2,119.29	2,088.30	1,907.13	1,842.30	1,781.90

<sup>(1)</sup> Weighted Caseloads (recast in FY2020 to 15:1) are pro-rated by each worker's FTE (full-time equivalency) value. **NOTE: 15:1 = 15 families**

Weighted caseloads represent the cumulative sum of workload values credited to the worker functions of intake worker (screeners), response worker (investigators), ongoing social workers, and adoption workers. Table 45a displays how weighted credit is assigned by function:

**TABLE 45a. Weighted Credit by Agency Function**

	Full Caseload per 1.0 FTE	Credit	Ratio
Intake Worker	55 intakes per month	0.273	15.00:1
Response Worker	10 investigations per month	1.5	15.00:1
Ongoing Case Management	15 families at any time	1.0	15.00:1
Adoption Case Management	15 adoption cases at any time	1.0	15.00:1

# APPENDIX

## GLOSSARY

### Appendix A

<b>51A Report</b>	<p>A 51A is a report alleging maltreatment (abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, and/or human trafficking) of one or more children under the age of 18 in the Commonwealth. The Department's hotline or intake units conduct a screening process to determine whether a report is appropriate for further action.</p> <p>There are two phases of protective intake: the screening of reports; and a response to any report that is "screened-in". The purpose of screening is to gather sufficient information to determine whether a DCF response is necessary or might be necessary to ensure a child's safety and well-being. Screening is a key part of the overall process of reporting, identifying, and assessing risks to child safety, permanency, and well-being. It is the first step in determining the Department's subsequent actions and intervention with the family. Activities for screening a report of child maltreatment are designed to determine, based on facts in the report and those gathered during screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If there is an immediate concern for child safety</li> <li>● If a "reportable condition" under MGL c. 119 § 51A exists</li> </ul> <p>A "reportable condition" exists when there is information that a child may have been abused and/or neglected or may be at risk of being abused and/or neglected by a caregiver, or that a child may have been or may be at risk of sexual exploitation or human trafficking.</p> <p>Reports determined to be emergencies must be "screened-in" immediately and a response must be initiated within two hours. The screening of reports determined not to be emergencies must be completed within one working day. In very limited circumstances, where it is necessary to complete activities critical to making the screening decision, screening of a non-emergency report may be extended for up to one additional working day with approval from a manager.</p> <p>Based on the information received, collected, and analyzed during the screening process the report will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Screened-in" for response</li> <li>● "Screened out"</li> <li>● "Screened out" with a district attorney referral</li> </ul>
<b>9C</b>	<p>MGL c.29, §9C requires that when projected revenue is less than projected spending, the governor must act to ensure that the budget is brought into balance. The administration may announce 9C cuts at any time that it determines that revenues are likely to be insufficient to pay for all authorized spending.</p>
<b>Abuse (allegation)</b>	<p>Abuse means the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under age 18 which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual. Abuse is not dependent upon location (e.g., abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting.)</p>
<b>Adoption (permanency through)</b>	<p>The purpose of permanency through adoption is to prepare a child to become a permanent member of a lifelong family other than the child's original birth family. Adoption is a process by which a court establishes a legal relationship of parent and child with the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their birth parents. The permanency plan of adoption does not prevent maintaining valued, lifelong connections to birth parents/siblings/kin and other important individuals in children's' lives.</p>
<b>Adoptions Legalized</b>	<p>Adoption involves the creation of the parent-child relationship between individuals who are not naturally so related. The adopted child is given the rights, privileges, and duties of a child and heir by the adoptive family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finalized adoption (i.e., legalization)</li> </ul>

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APPLA (permanency through)	<p>Permanency through Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA): The purpose is to establish with the youth who is age 16 years or older a lifelong permanent connection, as well as life skills training and a stable living environment that will support his or her development into and throughout adulthood. This permanency plan is for youth (or young adults) whose best interests for achieving permanency would not be served through reunification, adoption, guardianship, or care with kin. Through this permanency plan, the youth will continue to achieve the highest possible level of family connection, including physical, emotional, and legal permanency. The Department will continue to provide services and support the youth's safety, permanency, and well-being.</p>
Care with Kin (permanency through)	<p>Permanency through Care with Kin: The purpose is to provide the child with a committed, nurturing, and lifelong relationship in a licensed kinship family setting. The Department defines kin as those persons related by either blood, marriage, or adoption (i.e., adult sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, first cousin) or significant other adult to whom the child and/or parent(s) ascribe the role of family based on cultural and affectional ties. The kinship family reinforces the child's racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage and strengthens and promotes continuity of familial relationships and will establish permanency for the child. The Department will continue to provide services to support the child's safety, permanency, and well-being until such time as the kin receives a permanent custody or other final custody order.</p>
Caregiver / Caretaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A child's parent, stepparent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with the responsibility for a child's health or welfare</li> <li>● Any other person entrusted with responsibility for a child's welfare, whether in the child's home, a relative's home, a school setting, a childcare setting (including babysitting), a foster home, a group care facility, or any other comparable setting. As such "caregiver" includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School teachers</li> <li>● Babysitters</li> <li>● School bus drivers</li> <li>● Camp counselors</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The "caregiver" definition should be construed broadly and inclusively to encompass any person who at the time in question is entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the child. This specifically includes a caregiver who is him/herself a child, such as a babysitter under age 18.</p>
Caseload	<p>The number of cases (children or families) assigned to an individual worker in a given time period. Caseload reflects a ratio of cases (or consumers) to staff members and may be measured for an individual worker, all workers assigned to a specific type of case, or all workers in a specified area (e.g., agency or region).</p>
Case Management Services	<p>Activities for the arrangement, coordination, and monitoring of services to meet the needs of children and their families.</p>
Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)	<p>The Federal Children's Bureau conducts the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs), which are periodic reviews of state child welfare systems, to achieve three goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements</li> <li>● Determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services</li> <li>● Assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes</li> </ul> <p>After a CFSR is completed, states develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address areas in their child welfare services that need improvement.</p>
Child Protective Services Agency (CPS)	<p>An official agency of a state having the responsibility to receive and respond to allegations of suspected child abuse and neglect, determine the validity of the allegations, and provide services to protect and serve children and their families.</p>

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Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) Intake	Courts can refer a child to DCF if a child is committed by the juvenile court and found in need of foster care or a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) case. CRA cases involve youth that have committed status offenses such as repeatedly running away from home, disobeying school rules, or skipping school. Finally, if there is concern that a child may run away or otherwise not appear in court for their case, the judge can give temporary custody of the child to DCF.
Comprehensive Foster Care (CFC)	Foster homes that offer more intense therapeutic care and supports setting for children with more complex needs. This service is only provided by licensed foster care agencies in accordance with the licensing requirements of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and DCF.
Clinical Case	A clinical case consists of all members of a family (e.g., parents and children) or young adult open with DCF and assigned to a social worker for an assessment or for case management.
Congregate Care	Congregate care is a term for placement settings that consists of 24-hour supervision for children in a varying degree of highly structured settings such as group homes, residential childcare communities, childcare institutions, residential treatment facilities, or maternity homes.
Congregate Care – Continuum	Provides an array of community-based wraparound services that are designed to maintain youth within their homes and support families as the primary caregivers. This includes in-home family treatment, parent support, youth mentoring, youth and family outreach, care coordination, and linkage with both formal and informal community resources and supports. For youth who cannot be maintained safely at home, services available within Continuum include long-term and short-term, out-of-home care (e.g., group home, pre-independent living, intensive foster care, or respite).
Congregate Care Network – Emergency Residence	Two congregate care, out-of-home treatment service models designed to accept emergency intakes on a 24/7 basis to meet the needs for immediate placement for youth with behavioral needs (moderate to severe) that reflect a lack of self-regulation.
Congregate Care – Group Home	Group homes provide an array of out-of-home treatment services supporting youth and their families (in cases where the families are available) when the youth cannot function safely at home or in a family setting. Group home services provide flexible individualized treatment, rehabilitation, and support/supervision services that vary in intensity based upon individual youth and family needs.
Congregate Care Network – Medically Complex Residence	Two congregate care, out-of-home treatment service models for youth with complex medical needs that cannot be managed in a home setting due to the need for 24/7 direct skilled nursing or medical equipment. Youth will have a range of other challenges, which may include sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, or physical impairments. One of the models serves youth who also have behavioral health challenges.
Congregate Care Network – Residential School	Congregate care, out-of-home treatment services that are integrated with an on-site special education school. Youth receiving residential school services need a self-contained, integrated treatment, and educational program due to severity of behavioral risk to self or others preventing them from safely attending school off-site.

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Congregate Care – STARR	Stabilization and Rapid Reintegration (STARR) programs are for youth needing immediate/emergency temporary placement and/or stabilization services, as well as for youth who require more intense services. All youth referred will receive stabilization services, while some youth will require additional assessment, treatment, and family reintegration services
Congregate Care – Teen Parenting	Congregate Care program which provides teen parents and their children a safe place to reside where they are able to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to become competent parents and lead productive, independent lives. Program staff ensures that teen parents are connected with resources in the community such as education, medical care, childcare, and counseling.
Congregate Care Network – Residence	Four congregate care, out-of-home treatment service models for youth with behavioral needs (moderate to severe) that reflect a lack of self-regulation. Specialized models address a specific need or group (e.g., CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children), intellectual disabilities, Autism Spectrum).
Congregate Care Network – Youth and Young Adult	Four congregate care, out-of-home treatment service models for older adolescents and young adults to increase their skill set towards independently navigating community living and increasing self-sufficiency. Youth and Young Adult includes a model specifically for pregnant and parenting youth.
Consumer Role Type	Individuals involved with the Department are identified as consumers. There are two primary consumer types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers with the identified role type of "adult"</li> <li>• Consumers with the identified role type of "child." Consumers with the role type of "child" range from children ages 17 and under to "young adults" who voluntarily remain open with DCF from the ages of 18-22 years.</li> </ul>
Continuous Time in Placement	The timespan between the start and end of a Home Removal Episode (HRE). The continuous time in placement is calculated from the current HRE start date and either the HRE end date or the last day of the quarter, whichever comes first. Breaks in service of less than 30 days are considered continuous and all days in placement are summed together by child. The days out of placement are not included in the sum. A child may have multiple placements during this period.
Court Referral Intake	Sometimes the courts refer children and families to DCF. Court referrals can come from cases where a parent voluntarily surrenders a child or if a child has been abandoned by a parent or guardian.
Custody	Child in the custody of the department means a child placed in the Department's custody through court order, including an order under a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) petition, formerly known as CHINS, or through adoption surrender.
Danger	A condition in which a caregiver's actions or behaviors have resulted in harm to a child or may result in harm to a child in the immediate future.
Departmental Foster Care (DFC)	Foster care placements provide stability and safety for children/youth that have been brought into the protective care of the state. These foster care placements may be with family or extended family, or through unrelated caretakers who have completed training and are approved as licensed foster parents assigned to a DCF social worker.
DFC – Kinship Foster Care	Foster care placements provided by persons related by either blood, marriage, or adoption (e.g., adult sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, first cousin) or other adult to whom the child and/or parent(s) ascribe the role of family based on cultural and affectional ties or individual family values. This can include a person who the family or child has a strong bond with and is significant in their life (e.g., teacher or parent(s) of the placed child's friend).

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DFC – Independent Living	Services may be provided at either scattered or centralized (e.g., apartment) sites with staff that provide outreach and care coordination to young adults and are available for face-to-face crisis intervention 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This model serves young adults 17.5 or older who are not able to be served in a family setting due to their clinical needs, but who are able to live on their own with support; independently manage community access; have attained a sufficient level of independent living skills to enable them to live without on-site staffing; require and are able to utilize staff support to strengthen these independent skills; exhibit a strong level of self-regulation; are enrolled in school or a GED program; or have completed the above and are working or involved in vocational training.
DFC – Pre-Adoptive Foster Care	A resource that has been identified as the child's permanent family. The person(s) has been approved for the adoption and is a licensed adoptive family. The child is required to be in that specific home for a minimum of six months before the adoption can be finalized.
DFC – Unrelated Foster Care	An individual(s) who has been licensed by the Department as a partnership resource to provide foster/pre-adoptive care for a child usually not previously known to the individual(s).
District Attorney (DA) Referral	If the Department determines that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, has been a victim of human trafficking, has suffered serious physical abuse and/or injury, or has died as a result of abuse and/or neglect, DCF must notify local law enforcement as well as the district attorney, who has the authority to file criminal charges.
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control that one partner exercises over another in an intimate relationship. While relationships involving domestic violence may differ in terms of the severity of abuse, control is the primary goal of offenders. Domestic violence is not defined by a single incident of violence or only by violent acts.
Family Assessment and Action Plan	The Family Assessment and Action Planning Policy provides guidance on conducting clinical assessments and creating "action plans." The policy went into effect on February 6, 2017 and replaces DCF's "Assessment Policy # 85-011" and "Service Planning and Referral Policy # 97-003." As part of the new policy, the term "action plan" replaces "service plan."
Fiscal Year	The Commonwealth's fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30 of the following calendar year (e.g., Fiscal Year 2024 ran from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024).
Five-Year Graduation Rate	The percentage of children in DCF custody who graduate from high school within five years.
Four-Year Graduation Rate	The percentage of children in DCF custody who graduate from high school within four years.
General Appropriations Act (GAA)	The budget for a fiscal year enacted by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. The Massachusetts General Laws require that annual budgets are in balance.
Gender Identity	Gender Identity is an individual's internal view of their gender, one's innermost sense of being male, female, both or neither. Gender Expression is the manner in which a person expresses their gender through clothing, appearance, behavior, speech, etc.

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Guardianship (permanency through)	Permanency through guardianship: The purpose is to obtain the highest level of permanency possible for a child when reunification or adoption is not possible. The Department sponsors an individual to receive custody of a child, pursuant to MGL c. 190B, § 5-206, who assumes authority and responsibility for the care of that child. When guardianship is identified as the permanency plan, the best interest of the child has been considered and guardianship has been identified as the highest level of permanency appropriate for the child. The permanency plan of guardianship does not prevent maintaining valued, lifelong connections to birth parents/siblings/kin.
Guardianships Legalized	Finalized guardianship (i.e., legalization)
H1/H2 Budget	Governor's proposed budget
Home Removal Episode (HRE)	The period between the start and end of DCF placement custody is known as a Home Removal Episode (HRE).
Human Trafficking (allegation)	Pursuant to MGL c.233, §20M and MGL c.265, §§50-51 a person who is subjected to harboring, recruitment, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting for the purpose of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex trafficking (i.e., inducement to perform a commercial sex act, forced sexual services, and/or sexually explicit performance)</li> <li>• Labor trafficking (i.e., forced services, involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery)</li> </ul>
i-FamilyNet	The Department's web-based Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). DCF's i-FamilyNet serves as the agency's electronic case management system.
Juvenile Court	The Juvenile Court oversees civil and criminal matters statewide involving children including youthful offender, care and protection, and delinquency.
Maltreatment	The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) definition of child abuse and neglect is, at a minimum: 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 of a child, or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm to a child.
Mandated Reporter	Any person who suspects a child is being abused or neglected should call DCF to make a 51A report (named for its statute, MGL c.119, §51A), but mandated reporters are legally required to inform the Department.  Mandated Reporters are defined by MGL c.119, §51A and include: any physician; medical intern; hospital personnel engaged in the examination, care or treatment of persons; medical examiner; psychologist; emergency medical technician; dentist; nurse; chiropractor; podiatrist; osteopath; public or private school teacher; educational administrator; guidance or family counselor; day care worker; any person paid to care for or work with a child in any public or private facility, home, or program funded by the Commonwealth or licensed pursuant to the provisions of MGL c.28A; voucher management agencies; family day care system; child care food program; probation officer; clerk/magistrate of the district courts; clergy; parole officer; social worker; foster parent; firefighter or police officer; school attendance officer; allied mental health and human services professional as licensed pursuant to the provisions of MGL c. 112, §165; drug and alcoholism counselor; psychiatrist; and clinical social worker.

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Missing/Absent from Approved Placement	Children are "missing" from Department care or custody if their whereabouts are unknown. These include: children who may have been abducted; children who may have run away or be "on the run" from a Department placement whose whereabouts are unknown; children whose whereabouts are unknown whether or not they make periodic contact with the Department, a placement resource, parent(s)/caregiver(s), or custodian; or a child who has come under Department jurisdiction on an emergency basis under MGL c.119, §51B and the child's whereabouts become unknown before the initial court hearing.  Children are "absent from approved placement" if their whereabouts are known but they refuse to return to their approved DCF placement or family home.
Neglect (allegation)	Neglect means failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability, and growth, or other essential care, provided; however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition. This definition is not dependent upon location (i.e., neglect can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting).
Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) (allegation)	A Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) may also be experiencing Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), which are symptoms and signs exhibited by a newborn due to drug withdrawal. NAS is a subset of SEN.
Non-mandated Reporter	Non-mandated reporters are all persons who are not mandated reporters.
Non-Referral Location	Any location other than home in which a child remains in the custody of DCF, but either does not have or is not utilizing a paid placement service. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospitalization</li><li>• Other state agency</li></ul>
Ongoing Social Worker	Ongoing social workers provide the necessary services to help children who are abused and/or neglected. In many situations, social workers interact with children and family members, including siblings, parents, extended relatives, and guardians in order to assess the needs of each child and determine the best course of action for improving the child family environment.  Duties and Responsibilities (these duties are a general summary and not all inclusive): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess, evaluate, conduct initial and ongoing case management of children and family services and needs.</li><li>• Develop, review, update, and ensure implementation of strength-based service plans for each child in care or custody including risk assessment, safety plans, and goals.</li><li>• Complete all documentation in accordance with agency and regulatory requirements.</li><li>• Make home and foster care visits and transport children to healthcare, social services, or other agency-related appointments as required.</li><li>• Maintain ongoing communication with DCF staff and other constituencies and initiate court action when necessary.</li><li>• Empower families to make stable commitments to children by accessing counseling and coordinating visits with biological parents and/or guardians and other relatives, develop a helping relationship, and ensure needed supports and services are provided.</li><li>• Attend weekly supervision, weekly staff meetings, in-service training, and team meetings.</li><li>• Maintain a high degree of professionalism in the community with schools, courts and with referring agencies seeking to build and sustain positive relationships</li></ul>
Open Case	Child/family in the process of a family assessment or with an active action plan.

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<b>Open Consumer</b>	Children, young adults, and adults who are open in a family assessment or have an active action plan.
<b>Outreach</b>	Outreach means those Department activities conducted in the community to make the community aware of the philosophy of the Department, the variety of social services offered by the Department, the ways to obtain Department services, and the Department's desire to work in conjunction with other community resources and agencies to meet children's needs. Outreach activity provides a way for the Department to identify existing resources, duplications, gaps in services, and unmet service needs in the community.
<b>Parental Capacities</b>	The Department uses the Protective Factors Framework to help assess child safety. An understanding of the child(ren)'s age and developmental status as well as the parent/caregiver's culture, abilities and any disabilities (e.g., intellectual, physical, developmental) must be considered when assessing a parent/caregiver's capacity to safely parent their child(ren). The protective factors that must be considered in a determination of parental capacities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: Parent/caregiver understands how to keep the child(ren) safe; uses age/developmentally appropriate discipline methods; and responds to the unique development of the child during different ages and stages.</li> <li>• Building Social and Emotional Competence of Children: Parent/caregiver, through a nurturing and responsive relationship, helps the child(ren) develop the ability to form safe and secure adult and peer relationships and to experience, regulate and express emotions.</li> <li>• Parental Resilience: Parent/caregiver has the ability to make positive changes that sustain child(ren)'s safety and well-being while managing stress and adversity.</li> <li>• Social Connections: Parent/caregiver maintains healthy, safe, and supportive relationships with people, institutions, and the community that provide a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• Concrete Support in Times of Need: Parent/caregiver provides for the family's basic needs and knows how to access and advocate for services that promote safety and well-being for their child(ren)</li> </ul>
<b>Permanency</b>	Ensuring a nurturing family – preferably one that is legally permanent – for every child within a timeframe supportive of their needs.
<b>Physical Injury (allegation)</b>	Death, fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, soft tissue swelling, skin bruising, and any other such nontrivial injury depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred, and the number and location of bruises.
<b>Placement Stability</b>	Children in placement may experience one or more moves during a Home Removal Episode (HRE). Children with fewer moves are considered to have placement stability.
<b>Probate and Family Court</b>	The Probate and Family Court Department has jurisdiction over family-related and probate matters such as divorce, paternity, child support, custody, parenting time, adoption, termination of parental rights, and abuse prevention. The Probate and Family Court also handles wills, estates, trusts, guardianships, conservatorships, and changes of name. The court has 14 divisions.
<b>Protective Case</b>	A DCF "care and protection" case opened as a result of a supported 51A report.

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Protective Intake	Upon receiving a report of abuse and/or neglect (51A), the Department must first gather sufficient information to determine whether the allegation meets DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect, whether there is immediate danger to the safety of a child, whether DCF involvement is warranted, and how best to target the Department's response.  The Department begins its screening process immediately upon receipt of a report. During the screening process DCF obtains information from the person filing the report and also contacts professionals involved with the family, such as doctors or teachers who may be able to provide information about the child's condition or well-being. DCF may also contact the family if appropriate.
Protective Response (Investigation)	"Screened-in" 51A reports are assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) response to determine whether there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child has been abused and/or neglected.
Rate-of-Disproportionality (RoD)	The Rate-of-Disproportionality (RoD) is an indicator of inequality. RoDs are calculated by dividing the percentage of children in a racial/ethnic group at a specific decision-making stage (e.g., 51A report, 51B investigation, foster care placement) by the percentage of children in that same racial/ethnic group in the Massachusetts child census population or in an earlier decision-making stage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RoDs greater than 1.0 indicate overrepresentation</li> <li>• RoDs less than 1.0 indicate underrepresentation</li> </ul>
Reasonable Cause to Believe	A collection of facts, knowledge, or observations which tend to support or are consistent with the allegations and when viewed in light of the surrounding circumstances and the credibility of persons providing relevant information, would lead a reasonable person to conclude that a child has been abused or neglected.
Referral (intake)	Notification to the CPS agency of suspected child maltreatment. This can include more than one child.
Relative Rate Index (RRI)	The RRI compares the observed rate of White children to the observed rate for children of color. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RRIs greater than 1.0 indicate overrepresentation</li> <li>• RRIs less than 1.0 indicate underrepresentation</li> </ul>
Reportable Condition	Information indicating that a child may have been abused and/or neglected may be at risk of being abused and/or neglected by a caregiver, or that a child may have been or may be at risk of sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking.
Response (51B)	The Department assigns "screened-in" 51A reports for completion of a 51B response in accordance with MGL c. 119, § 51 B. Based on the facts gathered during the response, the assessment of parental capacities, the results of the risk assessment tool and clinical judgment, the response worker, in consultation with the supervisor, determines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A finding on the reported allegation(s) or discovered conditions, including a finding on any person(s) responsible</li> <li>• Whether Department intervention is necessary to safeguard child safety and well-being</li> </ul>
Response Worker	A social worker employed by the Department who conducts a response to allegations of abuse and/or neglect under MGL c. 119, § 51B and who has completed the Department's training for response workers.
Reunification of Family (permanency through)	Permanency through reunification of family: The purpose is to reunite the child in out-of-home placement with their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are expected to maintain regular and frequent contact with their child and involvement in their child's educational, physical/mental health, and social activities.

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Risk	The potential for future harm to a child.
Safe Haven Act	Allows a parent to legally surrender newborn infants 7-days-old or younger at a hospital, police station, or manned fire station without facing criminal prosecution. See MGL c.119, §39½ (St. 2004, c.227; amended by St.2007, c.86).
Safety	A condition in which caregiver actions or behaviors protect children from harm.
Screen-In for Response	A 51A report that meets DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect. If a 51A report is "screened-in" it is assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) response to determine whether there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child has been abused and/or neglected. "Screened-in" reports may require an immediate emergency response or a non-emergency response.
Screen-In for Emergency Response	Screening for an emergency response is to be completed within two hours. The response must begin within two hours of the report and completed within five business days.  This is a determination that the report involves a situation where the failure to take immediate action would pose a substantial risk of death, serious emotional or physical injury, or sexual abuse of a child.
Screen-In Non-Emergency Response	Screening for a non-emergency response is to be completed within one business day but may be extended for one additional business day in limited circumstances. The non-emergency response must begin within two days of the report and be completed within fifteen business days.  This is a determination that a child(ren) may have been abused and/or neglected or may be at risk of being abused and/or neglected by a caregiver or that a child has been or may be at risk of sexual exploitation or human trafficking, and that the situation as reported does NOT pose a substantial risk of death, serious emotional, or physical injury, or sexual abuse to a child.
Screen-Out	A 51A report that does NOT meet DCF's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect.  This is a determination that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The report does not involve a child, or the allegations are not within the Department's mandate concerning child abuse and neglect.</li><li>• There was no indication that a child(ren) has been or may have been abused or neglected or may be at risk of being abused and/or neglected by a caregiver.</li><li>• The alleged perpetrator has been identified and was not a caregiver or the child(ren)'s caregiver is safely protecting the child(ren) from the alleged perpetrator, unless the allegations involve sexual exploitation or human trafficking.</li><li>• The specific injury or specific situation being reported is so old that it has no bearing on the current risk to the reported or other child(ren)</li><li>• There are NO other protective concerns, and the only issue is maternal use of appropriately prescribed medication resulting in a Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN), the only substance affecting the newborn(s) was appropriately prescribed medication, and the mother was using the medication(s) as prescribed which can be verified by a qualified medical or other provider</li></ul>
Screen-Out District Attorney Referral	51A reports that do NOT meet the standards for a Departmental response to ensure a child's safety and well-being. Nonetheless, the 51A Report involved (or may have involved) a crime that requires a mandatory (or discretionary) referral to the district attorney and local law enforcement agency.

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Sexual Abuse (allegation)	Any non-accidental act by a caregiver upon a child that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual contact between a caregiver and a child for whom the caregiver is responsible.
Sexually Exploited Child	<p>As defined under MGL c.119, §21, any person under the age of 18 who has been subjected to sexual exploitation because such person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the victim of the crime of sexual servitude pursuant to section 50 of chapter 265 or is the victim of sex trafficking as defined in 22 United States Code 710</li> <li>• Engages, agrees to engage or offers to engage in sexual conduct with another person in exchange for a fee, in violation of subsection (a) of section 53A of chapter 272, or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education, or care.</li> <li>• Is a victim of the crime of inducing a minor into prostitution under section 4A of chapter 272?</li> <li>• Engages in common night walking or common streetwalking under section 53 of chapter 272</li> </ul>
Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation describes patterns of sexual, romantic, and emotional attraction—and one's sense of identity based on those attractions.
Sibling Placement Rate	Rate of siblings placed together (co-placed) in a foster care setting
Stabilization of Family (permanency through)	Permanency through stabilization of family is to strengthen, support, and maintain a family's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child and prevent out-of-home placement of the child. Families with children who have this permanency plan may include those situations in which a child or adolescent requires placement services for 30 calendar days or less or when longer placement is required due to the child's own developmental, medical, or behavioral needs rather than concerns about abuse or neglect by the parents/guardians.
Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) (allegation)	A newborn exposed to alcohol or other drugs in utero, whether or not this exposure is detected at birth through a drug screen or withdrawal symptoms. A SEN may also be experiencing Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), which are symptoms and signs exhibited by a newborn due to drug withdrawal. NAS is a subset of SEN. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) as diagnosed by a qualified licensed medical professional is also a subset of SEN.
Substantial Evidence	Such evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.
Substantial Risk of Injury	A situation arising either through intentional act or omission which, if left unchanged, might result in physical or emotional injury to a child or which might result in sexual abuse to a child.
Substantiated Concern Finding	<p>At the conclusion of the CPS Response, a "determination" is made. A "substantiated concern" finding means that there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child was neglected: AND the actions or inactions by the parent(s)/caregiver(s) create moderate risk and there is a presence of contributing factors that increase the likelihood of being neglected.</p> <p>Department intervention is needed to safeguard child(ren) safety and well-being with one of the following results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new case is opened; or in limited circumstances with approval from a manager, the Department may determine that intervention is not necessary.</li> <li>• When there is a finding of substantiated concern on an open case, the information gathered during response is used by the currently assigned social worker, in consultation with the supervisor, to determine if there has been a change in risk level to the child(ren) that warrants an update to the family's current assessment or action plan and/or change to existing interventions/services.</li> </ul>

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Substitute Care	<p>Substitute care means the provision of planned, temporary 24-hour care when the parent or principal caretaker is unable or unavailable to provide care on a daily basis. Substitute care encompasses the provision of foster care, community residential care, and supervised independent living. The Department shall protect and promote the basic principle that every child has a right to a permanent family by providing substitute care which is time-limited, community-based and in the least restrictive setting possible.</p>
Supported Finding	<p>At the conclusion of the CPS Response, a determination is made. A support finding means that there is "reasonable cause to believe" that a child was, or is at substantial risk of being abused and/or neglected; AND the actions or inactions by the parent(s)/caregiver(s) place the child in danger or present substantial risk to the child's safety or well-being; OR a person was responsible for the child(ren) being a victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking.</p> <p>Department intervention is needed to safeguard child safety and well-being with one of the following results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new case is opened; or in limited circumstances*, with approval from a manager, the Department may determine that intervention is not necessary.</li> <li>• When allegations are supported on an open case, the information gathered during response is used by the currently assigned social worker, in consultation with the supervisor, to determine if there is a change in risk level to the child(ren) that warrants an update to the family's current Family Assessment and Action Plan and/or a change to existing interventions/services.</li> </ul> <p>*In very limited circumstances, with approval from a manager, the Department may make a finding of support and determine that Department intervention is not necessary. For example, the alleged perpetrator was not a family member (e.g., babysitter, bus driver); the parent(s)/caregiver(s) had taken necessary action to keep the child safe; the alleged perpetrator poses no current or potential threat to the reported child(ren) and is out of the home; and the parent(s)/caregiver(s) has taken necessary action to keep the child(ren) safe.</p>
Unsupported Finding	<p>At the conclusion of the CPS Response, a determination is made. An unsupported finding means that there is not "reasonable cause to believe" that a child was abused and/or neglected, or that the child's safety or well-being is being compromised; OR the person believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect was not a caregiver, unless the abuse or neglect involves sexual exploitation or human trafficking where the caregiver distinction is not applied.</p> <p>Department intervention is not needed to safeguard the child's safety and well-being. Although the Department does not open a new case, the family may apply for voluntary services from the Department and/or the Department may refer the family for services in the community if needed.</p> <p>When allegations on an open case are "unsupported," the information gathered during response is used by the currently assigned social worker, in consultation with the supervisor, to determine if there has been a change in risk level to the child(ren) that warrants an update to the family's current assessment and action plan and/or change to existing interventions/services.</p>
Victim (child)	<p>A child for whom the state determined at least one maltreatment (allegation of abuse and/or neglect) was supported or indicated. This includes children who die of child abuse and neglect. This is a change from prior years when children with dispositions of alternative (i.e., differential) response victim were included as victims. It is important to note that a child may be a victim in one report and a non-victim in another report.</p>
Voluntary Intake	<p>In some cases, after an assessment or investigation, DCF finds no evidence for abuse or neglect. In these cases, families can request that DCF open a voluntary case for them so that they can still access services.</p>

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<b>Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA)</b>	A young adult open with the Department prior to turning age 18 may sign a VPA at age 18 and remain open with the Department. Young adults who decline a VPA at age 18 may later request services by returning and signing a VPA prior to turning 23 years-of-age.
<b>Well-Being</b>	Healthy social, physical, and emotional functioning of children and their families. Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children, their siblings, and the adults who care for them are necessary cornerstones of their well-being and healthy development and shape how their physical, emotional, social, behavioral, and cognitive capacities will progress – all of which ultimately affect their health and functioning as adults.
<b>Workload</b>	The amount of work required to successfully manage assigned cases and bring them to resolution. Workload reflects the average time it takes a worker to do the work required for each assigned case and complete other non-casework responsibilities.



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