

Child Welfare Outcomes 2020

Report to Congress

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau



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Executive Summary

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report is created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to meet requirements of section 203(a) of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA).¹ ASFA created section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act), which requires HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.² *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998* was the first Report created in the *Child Welfare Outcomes series of Reports*. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2020*, is the 21st Report since the series' inception.

The Child Welfare Outcomes Reports provide information on national performance as well as the performance of individual states in seven outcome categories.³ Prior to the first Report, the Children's Bureau (CB) within HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) identified these outcomes in close consultation with state and local child welfare agency administrators, child advocacy organizations, child welfare researchers, state legislators, and other experts in the child welfare field. Beginning with this Report, Outcome 1 (reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect) was modified to report recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of a prior incident. The original outcome measure reported recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period. This adjustment was made to align with the current measure used in the Child and Family Services Reviews. The following are the national outcomes established by HHS through the consultation process mentioned above:

- Outcome 1:** Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect
- Outcome 2:** Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care
- Outcome 3:** Increase permanency for children in foster care
- Outcome 4:** Reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry
- Outcome 5:** Reduce time in foster care to adoption
- Outcome 6:** Increase placement stability
- Outcome 7:** Reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions

These outcomes reflect the importance of performance objectives in child welfare practice in and around the time of ASFA's passage. In recent years, CB, Congress, and the child welfare field have begun to recognize and emphasize the critical importance of a full continuum of prevention services and approaches as essential to child welfare practice. This may lead to HHS considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future.

In addition to detailing state performance in the current outcome categories, this Report also includes findings of analyses conducted across states and over time. Data for most of the measures in this Report come from two national child welfare reporting systems—the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

¹ See appendix A for the current specifications of section 479A of the Social Security Act, as created by ASFA and amended by Pub. L. 109–288, Pub. L. 112–34, Pub. L. 113–183, and Pub. L. 115–123.

² Title IV-E has been amended on several occasions. Its funds support foster care; adoption assistance; kinship guardianship assistance; and, at the option of a state, kinship navigator programs and/or time-limited prevention services for candidates of foster care, pregnant or parenting foster youth, and the parents or kin caregivers of those children and youth. Title IV-B funds support preventative and protective services for children. For more information on policies and guidance provided to states, see the [Policy/Program Issuances page](#) on the CB website.

³ For the purposes of this Report, the designation of "state" includes the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Therefore, the Report provides information on a total of 52 states, depending on the number of states that submitted adequate data for a particular measure. Tribal Title IV-E agencies are not included in this Report. It is important to note, however, that states report information on all children for whom the state has responsibility for placement, care, and supervision, and in some cases these children may be tribal children. Currently, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System does not have an indicator to distinguish which states are reporting tribal information or an identifier for tribal children.

Contextual Factors

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report presents data on child welfare-related contextual factors relevant to understanding and interpreting state performance on the measures. The following is a summary of the 2020 data for these contextual factors.⁴

Foster care information overview

- Nationally, there were approximately 407,000 children in foster care on the last day of 2020. During that year, an estimated 217,000 children entered foster care, and approximately 224,000 children exited foster care.⁵ Among the states, the foster care entry rate ranged from 0.9 children per 1,000 in a state's child population to 13.2 children per 1,000 in a state's population.⁶
- Each year since 2018, the number of children in foster care on the last day of the year decreased from the prior year. From 2018 to 2019, there was an approximately 1.8-percent decrease, and from 2019 to 2020, there was a 4.7-percent decrease.⁷
- Of the children who entered foster care in 2020, the majority had a reason for removal that included neglect (either alone—25.6 percent— or in combination with another reason other than physical or sexual abuse—30.3 percent). Physical or sexual abuse (alone) accounted for 16.0 percent of the removals, and drug abuse (alone) accounted for 8.5 percent. Removal reasons involving child behavior problems and caretaker's inability to cope accounted for 4.0 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively.
- The majority of children entering care in 2020 were identified as White (about 46 percent). The entry population identified as Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino represented 20 and 21 percent, respectively. Children identified with multiple races was 8 percent—approximately. American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander represented less than one percent each, of the foster care entry population.

Child victims' information overview

- During 2020, approximately 618,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.^{8,9} The overall national child victim rate was 8.4 child victims per 1,000 children in the population.¹⁰ State child victim rates varied dramatically, ranging from 1.7 child victims per 1,000 children to 19.0 child victims per 1,000 children.¹¹

State Performance on Outcome Measures

This Report includes a synopsis of key findings on the 12 measures established to assess performance on the seven national outcomes previously identified. These measures are described in detail in appendix B. For all measures, national performance was determined by the medians across states that meet data-quality thresholds. Table 1,

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal fiscal years (October 1–September 30). Additionally, unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal fiscal year 2020.

⁵ The foster care data for children in care on the last day of the year, entries, and exits were obtained from [Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2011-2020](#). These data may differ from data presented in later sections of this Report because of differences in data-quality thresholds.

⁶ The foster care entry rate was calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000.

⁷ For more information, see [Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2011-2020](#). The data used in that report were current as of October 04, 2021.

⁸ This Report uses a unique count for child victims, which tallies a child only once regardless of the number of times the child was found to be a victim during the reporting year.

⁹ For the purposes of this Report, a "victim of child maltreatment" is defined as a child for whom an incident of abuse or neglect has been substantiated or indicated by an investigation or assessment. This includes a child who died as a result of child abuse or neglect. Prior to 2015, children with dispositions of "alternative response victim" were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports use the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in the Child Maltreatment reports. The total number of child victims in this Report were rounded to the nearest 1,000.

¹⁰ The national child victim rate was calculated by dividing the total number of child victims (618,399) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS data (73,368,194) and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000. This calculation includes children under the age of 18.

¹¹ A state's rate of child victims is defined as the number of child victims reported to NCANDS per 1,000 children in the state's population.

at the end of the Executive Summary, displays these measures and their medians for 2016–2020.¹² Change in state performance over time was assessed by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.¹³ Consistent with HHS’s historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percentage change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) was used as a general indicator that meaningful change in performance on the measures occurred. Therefore, for the purposes of the analyses presented in this Report, if the percentage change in performance from 2016 to 2020 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination was that there was no change in performance. Additionally, please note that lower values in this Report indicate better performance for the following measures: 1.1 (recurrence of maltreatment), 2.1 (maltreatment in foster care), 3.4 (exits to emancipation for children who entered care before age 12), 4.2 (reentry into foster care), and 7.1 (placement of young children in group homes and institutions). Consequently, when referring to changes in performance in these measures over time, negative values indicate a measurement decrease but an improvement in performance; conversely, positive values indicate a measurement increase but a decline in performance. For all remaining measures, positive values indicate improvements in performance, and negative values indicate declines in performance. Table 2, at the end of the Executive Summary, is a summary snapshot to assist the reader in easily and quickly identifying where changes in performance for each state improved (darker cell shade), declined (lighter cell shade), or experienced no change (no cell shading) for each measure.

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

- In 2019, state performance with regard to the percentage of child victims experiencing a recurrence of child maltreatment within a 12-month period (measure 1.1) was 7.5 percent.
- States with higher child victim rates tended to have higher maltreatment recurrence rates within a 12-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.77$).¹⁴ Similarly, the percentage of children who were victims of neglect was moderately correlated with the percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a 12-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.49$).
- National performance over time on the recurrence of child maltreatment improved between 2016 (median=8.5 percent) and 2019 (median=7.8 percent), with about as many states reporting an improvement in performance (19) as a decline in performance (18).

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

- In 2020, the national median with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) was 0.28 percent, and state medians ranged from 0.00 percent to 2.23 percent of children in care¹⁵
- The national median regarding the percentage of children who experienced maltreatment while in foster care increased from 0.20 percent in 2016 to 0.28 percent in 2020, with 63 percent of states reporting a decline in performance.

Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care

- In 2020, states were mostly successful in achieving permanency (i.e., discharge to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship) for all children exiting foster care (measure 3.1), with a national median of 90.3 percent.
- States were less successful in achieving permanent homes for children exiting foster care who had a diagnosed disability (measure 3.2, median=82.1 percent) and for children who had entered care when they were older than

¹² In this Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure. In the 2020 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2020 only. However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated using only data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant fiscal years (2016–2020). This was done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons of medians between years used the latter calculation. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

¹³ Percentage change was calculated by subtracting the “old” data from the “new” data, dividing that result by the old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, the national median on measure 3.1 was 89.3 percent in 2016 and 90.3 percent in 2020, and so the resulting increase is 1.1 percent $\{[(90.3-89.3)/89.3] \times 100=1.1\}$.

¹⁴ The strength of relationships in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports is assessed using correlation coefficients, specifically Pearson’s r , which can range in value from -1 to $+1$.

¹⁵ Due to the relatively few cases of child maltreatment in foster care, performance on this measure is presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

age 12 (measure 3.3, median=62.9 percent).¹⁶

- The median percentage of children who emancipated from foster care and who also were age 12 or younger when they entered care (measure 3.4) declined 12.6 percent since 2016, with 56 percent of states demonstrating improved performance on this measure.
- From 2016 to 2020, state performance declined for placing American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, and children of two or more races into permanent homes (measure 3.5). There was an increase in the median percentage of Asian children (from 87.5 percent to 89.3 percent), Black or African American children (from 85.7 percent to 86.3 percent), and White children (from 90.7 percent to 91.4 percent) exiting care to permanent placements.

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

- In 38 states (75 percent), at least half of reunifications occurred within 12 months from the time of entry into foster care (measure 4.1). The national median in 2020 for this outcome was 60.9 percent. The national median over time has declined consistently over the past 5 years, with a 7.9-percent decrease since 2016.
- Of all children who entered foster care during 2020, a median of 7.2 percent had reentered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode (measure 4.2). This was a 1.4-percent increase from the 7.1 percent median in 2016, with 21 states showing increases during this period.

Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption

- In 2020, states continued to struggle with achieving timely adoptions. Nationally, the median for children discharged to a finalized adoption within 12 months of the latest removal (measure 5.1a) was 2.5 percent, and more than half of states (70 percent) saw a decline in performance between 2016 and 2020.
- For adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from entry into foster care (measure 5.1b), national performance declined 11.3 percent between 2016 and 2020, with more than half (65 percent) of states demonstrating a decline.

Outcome 6: Increase placement stability

- In 2020, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months remained in a stable placement (i.e., having two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode) (measure 6.1a), with a national median of 84.5 percent.
- States were less successful in achieving placement stability the longer a child spent in foster care. The median across states for children who were in care between 12 and 24 months (measure 6.1b) was 65.4 percent, and for children in care at least 24 months (measure 6.1c), it was 40.0 percent.
- Between 2016 and 2020, states showed little change in placement stability for children in care under 24 months. However, for children in care at least 24 months, the national median increased by 2.6 percent—from 39.0 to 40.0 percent—with nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of states demonstrating an improvement in performance.

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

- For half of states (50 percent), 2.6 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions in 2020 (measure 7.1).
- Overall, states continued to demonstrate improvement on this measure. The median decreased from 3.2 percent in 2016 to 2.6 percent in 2020 (an 18.8-percent decline), and 35 states (69 percent) demonstrated an

¹⁶ For the purpose of AFCARS, a diagnosed disability includes mental retardation, visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, or other medically diagnosed conditions requiring special care. For more information on the definitions and requirements for a disability, see [AFCARS Technical Bulletin #2: Disability Information](#), which was last revised February 2012.

improvement in performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Investigation

In reviewing the key findings in all seven outcome areas, it is clear there are both areas of strength and areas in need of improvement with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children who come into contact with state child welfare systems. While AFCARS and NCANDS data provide some limited initial insight into many of these issues, all of these areas deserve additional investigation in order for the child welfare field to gain further understanding and move forward. The following are examples of specific areas that may benefit from additional research attention:

- The number of children in foster care on the last day of the year decreased during the last 3 years (2018, 2019, and 2020). It will be important to monitor these numbers in future reports to see if this will become a sustained decrease, which could partially be due to the availability of optional prevention funding¹⁷ and implementation efforts.
- From 2016 to 2020, there was a decline in the national performance regarding maltreatment in foster care, with 63 percent of states showing decreased performance during that time. Although the maltreatment in foster care measure is very sensitive to slight changes because of the small number of children who are maltreated in care, it is important to monitor if this finding becomes a continuing trend. To address this, agencies should continue to monitor their practices and periodically review and update current trainings, enhance screening for foster parents, and ensure staff have the resources and capabilities needed to adequately care for children in their caseloads who are in out-of-home care.
- While the national median in achieving permanency for children with a diagnosed disability remained high, state performance on finding permanent homes for older children continues to be a challenge. Agencies should review their data to consider what additional barriers may prevent older youth from achieving permanency.
- Despite reunifications constituting more than half of all exits from foster care, the national performance on the percentage of children exiting to reunification who reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care has declined over the last 5 years, with over five times as many states demonstrating a decline in performance than showing an improvement. When reunification is not in the best interest of the child, adoption should be pursued. However, data indicate that finalizing adoption in less than 2 years from entry is unlikely in most states. Agencies should continue to monitor these outcomes and to identify and review specific barriers to achieving timely reunifications and adoptions.
- In 2020, states showed improvement in achieving stable placement settings for children in foster care less than 12 months and those in care between 12 and 24 months. States may want to examine the population of children in care at least 24 months to identify possible barriers to improved performance specific to this population.
- Although the national median of young children placed in group homes or institutions has declined since 2016, it is important to note that 11 states declined in performance (i.e., more children were placed in congregate care). Therefore, it would be useful to determine what strategies may assist states that continue to struggle in this area.
- Table 2 displays the changes in performance for each state between 2016 and 2020 across the measures and select subcategories of measures. Seven states showed improvement in at least half (seven or more) of the measures, with states ranging from improving on one to nine measures. While many states are making progress on these permanency and safety outcomes, it is important for states to continue to monitor ongoing practice efforts and identify which strategies may be associated with improved outcomes. They then may be able to determine whether they—or other states—can replicate those strategies to stem or reverse declining

¹⁷ The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Pub. L. 115–123), which was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act, provides optional Title IV-E prevention funding for states. For more information on FFPSA, see the [What's New in Laws & Policies page](#) on the CB website. See the [Title IV-E Prevention Program page](#) on the CB website for more information about that program.

performance in any remaining outcomes.

Data and analyses presented throughout this Report offer additional details regarding the foster care population and overall national performance on the seven primary outcomes. Outcomes-based visuals in the Report display both single-year performance and state performance over time from 2016 to 2020.

Although the COVID-19 health crisis began in early 2020, this Report does not evaluate the specific circumstances that could account for changes in performance at the state level, including any potential impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on child welfare operating systems. However, some states did provide comments that cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a contributing factor in performance (see chapter VI). Of the 11 states that opted to submit data commentaries, only 3 states mentioned the pandemic as a limiting factor on their performance in certain areas. One state reported that it continued to see improvements in some areas despite the challenges. The following are highlights from the states' comments:

- Connecticut reported that the 2020 data for in-placement caseworker visits seemed low because, although the state was able to document virtual contact, the SACWIS system did not have the capability at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to capture if the child was in their placement setting at the time of the visit. The state reported that this has been corrected and will be reflected in future submissions.
- The District of Columbia continued to report a decrease in the number of children in care but experienced an increase in the median lengths of stay during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Rhode Island reported that the closure of the courts during the pandemic impacted both the terminations of parental rights that were granted and the number of adoptions completed during 2020. In addition, the state reported a significant decrease in the percentage of children exiting to reunification from 2019 to 2020.
- Washington State reported that the state continued to observe a reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care despite the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although only a few states mentioned challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Child Maltreatment 2020* includes a more robust commentary section in which states report challenges they faced pertaining to the NCANDS data collection.¹⁸ This Report only uses NCANDS data for safety measures 1 and 2; therefore, NCANDS data commentaries in *Child Maltreatment 2020* regarding COVID-19 and other issues should not be generalized to the collection of AFCARS data if they are not mentioned specifically by the state providing the comment.

Table 1. State Medians on Outcome Measures, 2016–2020

Outcome measures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change in median, 2016-2020
Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during a 12-month period, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 12-month of the initial victimization? (N=48) ^c	8.5%	8.2%	7.7%	7.8%	-- ^a	-8.2% ^b
Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? (N=48) ^c	0.20%	0.27%	0.24%	0.26%	0.28%	40.00%

¹⁸ For more information, see Appendix D: State Commentary of [Child Maltreatment 2020](#).

Table 1. State Medians on Outcome Measures, 2016–2020

Outcome measures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change in median, 2016-2020
Measure 3.1: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=50)	89.3%	90.3%	90.5%	90.5%	90.3%	1.1%
Measure 3.2: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were identified as having a diagnosed disability, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=44)	82.1%	81.5%	82.6%	83.2%	82.9%	1.0%
Measure 3.3: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=50)	65.3%	64.5%	62.9%	64.3%	62.7%	-4.0%
Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care? (N=50) ^c	16.7%	16.6%	15.5%	15.0%	14.6%	-12.6%
Measure 4.1: Of all children reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care during the year, what percentage were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care? (N=50)	66.1%	64.6%	63.8%	62.7%	60.9%	-7.9%
Measure 4.2: Of all children who entered foster care during the year, what percentage reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? (N=50) ^c	7.1%	7.4%	6.9%	7.3%	7.2%	1.4%
Measure 5.1a: Of all children discharged from foster care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=50)	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%	3.1%	2.5%	-32.4%
Measure 5.1b: Of all children discharged from care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=50)	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%	26.8%	25.8%	-11.3%
Measure 6.1a: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for less than 12 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=50)	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%	83.0%	84.5%	0.6%
Measure 6.1b: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=50)	65.2%	65.6%	65.8%	64.9%	65.4%	0.3%
Measure 6.1c: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=50)	39.0%	41.1%	41.1%	41.0%	40.0%	2.6%
Measure 7.1: Of all children who entered foster care during the year and were age 12 or younger at the time of their most recent placement, what percentage were placed in a group home or an institution? (N=50) ^c	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	2.6%	-18.8%

^a At the time of this analysis, data were not available to calculate the recurrence of maltreatment for children who were victims of maltreatment in 2020.

^b For measure 1.1, the percentage change is 2016–2019 rather than 2016–2020.

^c For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

Notes.

—Lower values in this Report indicate better performance for the following measures: 1.1, 2.1, 3.4, 4.2, and 7.1. Consequently, when referring to changes in performance in these measures over time, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a measurement decrease but an improvement in performance (dark gray); conversely, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a measurement increase but a decline in performance (light gray). For all remaining measures (measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 4.1, 5.1a, 5.1b, 6.1a, 6.1b, 6.1c), positive values indicate improvements in performance (dark gray), and negative values indicate declines in performance (light gray). For all measures, values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

—Data for this table include all states that met the relevant data-quality criteria for all years. Data for measure 3.5 is presented separately in table III–5 in this Report.

Table 2. State Percentage Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2016–2020

State	1.1a	2.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2	5.1a	5.1b	6.1a	6.1b	6.1c	7.1
Alabama	21.3%	190.9%	1.6%	-7.1%	-3.9%	-61.5%	-8.9%	3.0%	0.3%	8.0%	-0.9%	8.6%	17.8%	-46.8%
Alaska	-6.4%	53.8%	-5.1%	-10.6%	-8.8%	-10.7%	16.6%	2.8%	251.0%	-52.6%	0.9%	-3.8%	7.2%	48.3%
Arizona	11.2%	16.7%	2.8%	-2.5%	11.0%	51.6%	-1.0%	-14.2%	46.1%	3.1%	2.2%	-0.3%	-14.9%	-20.4%
Arkansas	2.2%	16.7%	-1.8%	-2.5%	-14.2%	11.4%	-8.7%	-5.6%	-30.4%	-6.0%	4.9%	11.4%	-15.4%	-76.0%
California	-2.0%	31.6%	1.8%	2.4%	-4.6%	-4.6%	-2.1%	-12.8%	-27.9%	-6.6%	5.1%	10.8%	12.3%	-35.3%
Colorado	-4.5%	-48.3%	-0.8%	DQ	-13.9%	-53.8%	-8.3%	-12.5%	-8.1%	-29.0%	-1.9%	12.5%	23.9%	-57.8%
Connecticut	-19.1%	-77.9%	5.3%	3.6%	11.6%	18.4%	-21.8%	37.1%	-76.3%	-17.8%	-2.8%	-2.3%	11.7%	-59.5%
Delaware	-24.1%	NA	-10.3%	-8.7%	-24.4%	24.3%	24.9%	-1.3%	-2.9%	-7.9%	3.7%	-9.0%	-22.2%	-31.0%
District of Columbia	10.7%	-42.5%	1.4%	71.4%	-0.5%	-34.8%	-15.7%	37.7%	-27.2%	40.4%	-6.9%	-21.7%	24.3%	113.8%
Florida	-14.3%	-80.0%	0.7%	-2.2%	-2.2%	-34.9%	-14.2%	3.5%	-40.0%	-14.4%	1.5%	-3.3%	3.8%	-46.7%
Georgia	-35.1%	DQ	-1.5%	0.5%	-14.6%	39.6%	-26.7%	-4.5%	-34.3%	-25.5%	4.5%	15.6%	15.4%	-39.2%
Hawaii	DQ	-63.9%	-0.8%	-0.5%	-11.3%	-59.1%	-11.5%	1.5%	-45.5%	-0.9%	-2.3%	11.0%	7.3%	-37.6%
Idaho	-26.5%	0.0%	-4.8%	3.7%	-12.8%	-56.4%	-4.3%	-34.7%	18.3%	-12.6%	-3.3%	-6.8%	6.2%	-6.3%
Illinois	15.4%	52.7%	-7.8%	-28.7%	-15.1%	15.8%	88.1%	-19.6%	-19.1%	16.7%	8.3%	9.5%	22.2%	-29.3%
Indiana	-6.4%	20.0%	0.2%	3.3%	-2.7%	-20.6%	-11.6%	37.5%	-1.8%	-36.9%	-0.5%	0.6%	1.3%	-47.7%
Iowa	19.9%	183.3%	3.0%	10.3%	-0.3%	-29.8%	-19.1%	-0.3%	-7.1%	-7.3%	1.4%	5.9%	27.4%	-0.2%
Kansas	-10.9%	-21.1%	-0.6%	-2.8%	-7.7%	5.3%	-16.8%	15.1%	-45.4%	-18.3%	3.7%	-3.6%	-8.0%	42.8%
Kentucky	-6.7%	-32.5%	0.6%	0.1%	1.9%	13.4%	-8.0%	-13.2%	13.7%	58.4%	-2.2%	1.5%	9.0%	-37.6%
Louisiana	-28.2%	DQ	-4.1%	-0.7%	-24.1%	-37.3%	-9.1%	-8.8%	-63.7%	-15.9%	-2.0%	-4.8%	-9.4%	-27.8%
Maine	27.3%	23.2%	3.0%	15.0%	44.9%	15.0%	33.4%	120.6%	-18.7%	51.4%	-2.4%	-5.4%	1.9%	-25.5%
Maryland	-4.2%	123.3%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
Massachusetts	-1.2%	-16.1%	0.1%	DQ	-3.1%	12.8%	-8.2%	-6.1%	-56.4%	-18.4%	11.8%	1.4%	-17.4%	0.0%
Michigan	2.9%	-23.2%	2.2%	-2.3%	-4.9%	-34.1%	-19.9%	40.6%	-47.7%	-6.6%	1.7%	2.9%	12.0%	-59.6%
Minnesota	-34.8%	-22.1%	0.5%	-0.4%	-5.8%	9.8%	-13.7%	-2.3%	-10.4%	-23.5%	0.7%	7.6%	8.2%	14.5%
Mississippi	5.3%	89.0%	2.9%	4.0%	5.3%	128.0%	-12.5%	-11.1%	-78.1%	9.0%	-1.7%	4.6%	18.4%	-59.8%
Missouri	-30.7%	12.0%	-1.0%	-2.8%	-3.3%	15.2%	-13.2%	-30.1%	26.6%	-14.6%	2.3%	2.6%	4.2%	-14.7%
Montana	9.2%	94.4%	2.8%	DQ	3.4%	-3.2%	-7.2%	60.6%	201.8%	4.0%	2.1%	1.3%	12.7%	-26.2%
Nebraska	-4.3%	23.1%	-0.7%	0.6%	-3.5%	-64.3%	-3.0%	25.1%	51.5%	-30.7%	0.7%	-3.3%	-3.8%	-41.1%
Nevada	-16.0%	65.0%	-1.8%	12.7%	-7.9%	-13.3%	-5.0%	-33.0%	-51.4%	-14.9%	2.7%	7.6%	10.4%	-57.5%

Table 2. State Percentage Change in Performance by Outcome Measure, 2016–2020

State	1.1a	2.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2	5.1a	5.1b	6.1a	6.1b	6.1c	7.1
New Hampshire	6.2%	NA	8.6%	-1.6%	2.3%	-62.0%	16.5%	75.9%	-69.5%	82.8%	-4.3%	1.8%	4.9%	49.9%
New Jersey	-18.8%	85.7%	-2.0%	-1.0%	-9.7%	13.6%	-18.0%	-12.5%	-44.7%	7.9%	2.7%	2.8%	-0.7%	15.1%
New Mexico	-8.7%	188.9%	-3.3%	-8.1%	-9.6%	67.4%	-12.3%	-4.9%	-100.0%	-18.3%	2.3%	3.8%	14.1%	-17.7%
New York	-6.0%	-44.4%	-9.1%	-21.2%	-27.5%	-15.8%	-7.9%	-7.7%	6.7%	8.3%	0.0%	-1.1%	0.6%	5.6%
North Carolina	DQ	DQ	6.1%	9.0%	24.9%	84.0%	-10.6%	123.3%	-6.6%	-5.6%	-4.1%	-5.0%	-13.2%	3.2%
North Dakota	-43.2%	NA	13.6%	19.0%	24.6%	129.2%	-4.8%	-16.1%	-68.7%	-48.9%	-7.0%	8.3%	21.0%	-44.8%
Ohio	5.6%	-28.8%	-1.7%	-5.6%	-14.5%	-51.8%	-10.2%	39.8%	-21.8%	-14.8%	0.0%	2.5%	10.7%	9.3%
Oklahoma	-3.7%	-31.3%	1.1%	1.3%	-3.3%	-4.0%	8.3%	-6.0%	2.4%	26.9%	5.1%	18.8%	16.0%	1.8%
Oregon	5.1%	-75.9%	2.9%	-3.5%	-2.9%	-40.9%	-7.4%	-25.0%	114.0%	-18.1%	-0.4%	2.2%	6.3%	34.1%
Pennsylvania	DQ	28.6%	3.6%	DQ	-9.2%	-36.5%	-9.0%	2.6%	0.3%	-15.5%	2.6%	6.2%	15.9%	-31.8%
Rhode Island	8.1%	36.9%	-4.6%	-12.0%	-30.9%	-39.0%	-45.5%	-56.7%	-37.8%	-31.5%	1.6%	3.4%	13.7%	-31.8%
South Carolina	6.5%	56.4%	-1.1%	DQ	-3.7%	-41.7%	-7.4%	12.3%	-22.3%	-27.5%	-9.7%	-9.7%	-11.7%	-66.5%
South Dakota	19.6%	261.5%	3.1%	DQ	-12.3%	-70.2%	-8.8%	7.5%	-47.8%	79.6%	-2.2%	-10.8%	26.0%	-30.2%
Tennessee	9.1%	123.1%	-0.2%	12.9%	-2.2%	-5.5%	-10.0%	-4.2%	-30.7%	-2.0%	-1.5%	-5.5%	-8.8%	-10.9%
Texas	3.1%	41.9%	-0.5%	-1.4%	-7.6%	-35.7%	-13.7%	34.4%	-27.6%	0.7%	0.3%	-2.3%	-4.3%	-6.7%
Utah	-8.1%	200.0%	4.0%	25.0%	3.6%	-18.0%	-9.9%	-2.3%	-18.1%	-10.3%	1.8%	10.4%	44.7%	13.8%
Vermont	-33.9%	NA	-1.7%	13.1%	-9.0%	166.7%	-10.0%	-14.7%	-69.1%	-51.5%	-5.7%	-0.2%	14.9%	-33.2%
Virginia	34.6%	-26.9%	11.3%	13.4%	13.1%	-7.8%	2.8%	50.1%	-26.3%	10.7%	2.0%	0.4%	-6.7%	-32.2%
Washington	-2.5%	-18.2%	0.6%	1.5%	-2.6%	-36.8%	-8.8%	42.7%	-56.0%	-37.9%	4.8%	3.9%	-1.1%	93.7%
West Virginia	55.1%	154.5%	0.8%	1.5%	-0.5%	-49.0%	-7.4%	-29.0%	0.2%	-7.7%	-0.1%	3.8%	20.6%	-35.5%
Wisconsin	-4.2%	42.9%	-0.6%	6.5%	-6.1%	-25.2%	-7.8%	8.0%	-38.1%	-37.7%	1.4%	2.4%	12.4%	-12.2%
Wyoming	27.7%	67.5%	3.5%	0.7%	5.3%	NA	7.0%	-14.9%	-77.3%	-5.6%	-1.7%	-4.4%	10.1%	-46.3%
Puerto Rico	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ

^a For measure 1.1, the percentage change is 2016–2019 rather than 2016–2020.

Notes.

—This table excludes measure 3.5. State-level information on this measure can be found on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#), and national performance is included in chapter III of this Report.

—A change of +/-5.0 percent is considered a change in performance. Values shaded in dark gray indicate an improvement in performance, values shaded in light gray indicate a decline in performance, and values with no shading indicate no change in performance.

—Lower values in this Report indicate better performance for the following measures: 1.1, 2.1, 3.4, 4.2, and 7.1. Consequently, when referring to changes in performance in these measures over time, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a measurement decrease but an improvement in performance (dark gray); conversely, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a measurement increase but a decline in performance (light gray). For all remaining measures (measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 4.1, 5.1a, 5.1b, 6.1a, 6.1b, 6.1c), positive values indicate improvements in performance (dark gray), and negative values indicate declines in performance (light gray). For all measures, values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

—Percentage-change calculations were done without rounding.

—Cells marked with “DQ” were excluded from analyses due to incomplete data or data-quality issues.

—Cells marked with “NA” indicate a percentage change could not be calculated because the percentage for the first year (2016) was 0.00 percent.

Child Welfare Outcomes Data Site

Additional child welfare-related context data and state data regarding the seven national measures are available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#). The Child Welfare Outcomes data site allows for significantly faster release of these data than is possible via the publication of the full Report. The data site features AFCARS and NCANDS data that have been reviewed and approved by the states for inclusion in the Report and that are updated annually.

With the data site, users have the ability to conduct the following activities:

- View one state's data or simultaneously compare data for multiple states, including by ACF region
- Compare data for a single state across multiple years
- View state context, demographic, and outcome data in tables grouped by type of data
- View additional context and demographic data for states not included in the Report, including two distinct breakdowns of race and ethnicity data
- Choose to view data in a table or graph
- Export the data into a variety of formats, including copying or printing customized data directly from the site, exporting data into Excel, and saving data as a PDF or CSV file
- Search for data by topic of interest
- View static state data pages previously included in the full Reports

For questions or more information about the Child Welfare Outcomes data site, please contact CB at CBDataTeam@acf.hhs.gov.

Introduction to the Child Welfare Outcomes: Data and Analysis

The Child Welfare Outcomes Report is created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to meet the requirements of section 203(a) of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). ASFA added section 479A of the Social Security Act (the Act), which requires HHS to issue an annual report that assesses state performance in operating child protection and child welfare programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.^{19,20} The Act has been amended several times to expand child welfare data collection:

- The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288) required states to report data on monthly caseworker visits.²¹
- The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Pub. L. 112–34) amended the requirements on monthly caseworker visit data.²²
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (Pub. L. 113–183) required data to be reported on children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting or who were placed in a child care institution or other non-foster family home settings.²³
- The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Pub. L. 115–123) amended the data requirements regarding children placed in a child care institution or other non-foster family home settings.²⁴

Child Welfare Outcomes 1998 was the first Report created in the Child Welfare Outcomes series. The present Report, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2020*, is the 21st Report since the series' inception.

Outcome Measures

The Child Welfare Outcomes Reports provide information on national performance, as well as the performance of individual states, in seven outcome categories.²⁵ Prior to the first Report, the Children's Bureau (CB) within HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) identified these outcomes in close consultation with state and local child welfare agency administrators, child advocacy organizations, child welfare researchers, state legislators, and other experts in the child welfare field. The outcomes reflect a consensus of these groups regarding important performance objectives for child welfare practice. The following are the seven national outcomes established by HHS through this consultation process:

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

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

Outcome 3: Increase permanency for children in foster care

¹⁹ See appendix A for the current specifications of section 479A of the Act, as created by ASFA and amended by Pub. L. 109–288, Pub. L. 112–34, Pub. L. 113–183, and Pub. L. 115–123.

²⁰ Title IV-B funds support preventative and protective services for children. Title IV-E funds support foster care; adoption assistance; kinship guardianship assistance; and, at the option of a state, kinship navigator programs and/or time-limited prevention services for candidates of foster care, pregnant or parenting foster youth, and the parents or kin caregivers of those children and youth. For more information on policies and guidance provided to states, see the [Policy/Program Issuances page](#) on the CB website.

²¹ More information can be found in [ACYF-CB-IM-06-05](#).

²² More information can be found in [ACYF-CB-IM-11-06](#).

²³ More information can be found in [ACYF-CB-IM-14-03](#).

²⁴ More information can be found in [ACYF-CB-IM-18-02](#).

²⁵ For the purposes of this Report, the designation of "state" includes the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Therefore, the Report provides information on up to a total of 52 states, depending on the number of states that submitted adequate data for a particular measure.

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

Outcome 5: Reduce time in foster care to adoption

Outcome 6: Increase placement stability

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

These outcomes reflect the importance of performance objectives in child welfare practice in and around the time of ASFA's passage. In recent years, CB, Congress, and the child welfare field have begun to recognize and emphasize the critical importance of a full continuum of prevention services and approaches as essential to child welfare practice. This may lead to HHS considering the creation and addition of prevention-oriented performance objectives in the future. Additionally, there has been increasing interest in better understanding the significant variations in outcomes that specific subpopulations experience in foster care. Therefore, performance objectives that show why and where these variations occur may also be adopted as part of a larger effort to understand and address disparities that may lead to inequities in child welfare outcomes.

Relationship to the Child and Family Services Review

While measures used in this Report share some similarity with the data indicators used as part of HHS's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, the measures are not the same as the CFSR data indicators, except for measure 1.1 (the recurrence of maltreatment), which is the same as the CFSR measure.²⁶ The CFSRs were authorized through the 1994 amendments to the Act, which require HHS to review state child and family service programs to ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements in Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. The reviews are also used to determine the experiences of children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services and to assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The reviews focus on outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being, and one aspect of this review process uses a defined set of data indicators to assess performance. Additional information about the CFSRs, including information on the data indicators used, can be found on the [CFSRs page](#) of the CB website. Readers should exercise caution when comparing performance on the Child Welfare Outcomes Report measures and CFSR performance because the measures differ in a number of respects, including data-quality inclusion and exclusion criteria and calculations.

Context Data

This Report presents data pertaining to state performance on the measures as well as on certain child welfare-related contextual factors. These context data are relevant to understanding and interpreting performance on the measures featured in these Reports. The contextual factors include the following:

- Estimated child population statistics by state, including the number of children under the age of 18 and child poverty data²⁷
- Caseworker visits data for children in foster care, including the percentage of children in foster care visited monthly by their caseworker and the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the home of the child²⁸
- The numbers of children in foster care at the end of the fiscal year (FY) and who entered and exited foster care during the FY

²⁶ See appendix B for the full list of outcomes and measures.

²⁷ These data come from the U.S. Census Bureau and reflect estimates rather than actual numbers. These data are based on the calendar year and not the fiscal year.

²⁸ Section 479A(a)(6) of the Act requires HHS to report data on caseworker visits in this Report. Requirements for caseworker visits data were revised in Pub. L. 112-34 and are currently defined under sections 424(f)(1) and (2) of the Act. Beginning in 2012, states began using a revised methodology for reporting caseworker visits data as outlined in Program Instruction [ACYF-CB-PI-12-01](#), which was issued on January 6, 2012. For more information, see appendix C.

- The number of children waiting for adoption, the number of waiting children adopted, and the number of children for whom an adoption was finalized during the FY

Data Sources

Data for the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures and the majority of the context data in this Report come from NCANDS and AFCARS.²⁹ States submit NCANDS data voluntarily, but they are required by regulation to submit AFCARS data. The specific NCANDS and AFCARS data elements used to calculate each outcome measure are outlined in appendix D.

Pursuant to section 479A of the Act, caseworker visit data are included in this Report. Data for the caseworker visits requirements are not part of NCANDS and AFCARS, but states are required to submit them separately each December. Some states elected to use a sampling procedure approved by CB rather than reporting information on all children in foster care.

This Report also uses child population data, which are provided by the U.S. Census Bureau on an annual basis. Total child population estimates are derived by calculating expected population change from the most recent decennial census data. Child poverty data are from the 1-year estimates of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an ongoing survey that annually samples a small percentage of the population to provide communities with information relevant to their service provision and investments.³⁰

The data used in this Report may vary slightly from other sources if a state resubmitted data after HHS prepared the data for this Report.³¹

National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort that encourages states to collect and analyze data pertaining to children who come to the attention of public child protective services (CPS) agencies as alleged victims of abuse or neglect. NCANDS was a result of a directive in the 1988 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to establish a national data-collection and analysis program on child abuse and neglect.³² The data are submitted voluntarily by the states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. NCANDS data are published annually in the Child Maltreatment report series.³³ A summary of the most recent report, *Child Maltreatment 2020*, is presented in appendix E.

The NCANDS Child File is a data file that states submit annually that contains detailed case information about each child who is the subject of an investigation or assessment in response to a maltreatment allegation. Any child who is associated with a report and who has received a disposition during the year is included in the Child File. Although a disposition usually refers to a finding regarding the allegation, it also can include reports that were closed without a finding.

The Child File is the primary data source for the safety-related data included in this Report. While alternate safety-data sources sometimes are allowed for the purposes of the CFSRs, they are not used here.

²⁹ Unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal FYs (October 1–September 30). Additionally, unless otherwise specified, the data used in this Report are for federal FY 2020.

³⁰ Additional information on the methodology used to calculate child population estimates can be found on the [Methodology page](#) of the Census Bureau's website. For additional information on the methodology used to collect and calculate child poverty data, visit the [American Community Survey page](#) of the Census Bureau website.

³¹ For this Report, AFCARS data were prepared on October 4, 2021; NCANDS data were prepared on April 1, 2021; census data were prepared on October 14, 2020 (except 2020 experimental poverty data were prepared on December 6, 2021); and caseworker visits data were prepared on June 17, 2021.

³² More information about CAPTA can be found on the [About CAPTA: A Legislative History section](#) of the CB website.

³³ Some results presented in this Report may not be the same as those presented in the Child Maltreatment reports due to differences in data inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

Most data included in this Report come from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).³⁴ Title IV-E agencies are required to submit case-level information to AFCARS twice a year on all children who are under their care and responsibility for placement, children who are covered by an interagency agreement with another public agency that receives Title IV-E funds, and children who have been adopted with Title IV-E agency involvement. The requirements for the AFCARS 1993 rule are codified in federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40.

Data Analyses in the Report

Chapters II through V of this Report present key findings of analyses conducted across states. These findings pertain to national performance on measures in 2020 (2019 for measure 1.1), variations across states in performance, changes in performance over time, and the relationships between contextual factors and state performance.

Calculation of national medians

In this Report, two separate national medians were computed for each measure. In the 2020 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2020 only.³⁵ (In the 2020 Range of State Performance tables, national medians for measure 1.1 were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2019). However, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated only using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2016–2020). Similarly, in the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians for measure 1.1 were calculated only using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all the relevant FYs (2016–2019). This was done to provide a more accurate calculation of change over time. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons of medians between years use the data-inclusion criteria of the latter calculation. Therefore, the number of states (N) included in each of these calculations may vary, and these two medians may vary slightly.

Percentage change calculations

Change in state performance over time was determined by calculating a percentage change in performance on the measures.³⁶ Consistent with HHS's historical approach to the analyses in these Reports, a percentage change of 5.0 or greater in either direction (i.e., positive or negative) is used as a general indicator that a meaningful change in performance on the measures occurred. Therefore, for purposes of the analyses presented in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, if the percentage change in performance from 2016 to 2020 was less than 5.0 in either direction, the determination was that there was "no change" in performance.

Since some changes in data over time may appear small in absolute terms, the Report presents percentage change data to highlight the fact that they may still represent large proportional changes.

³⁴ See appendix F for AFCARS Report No. 28.

³⁵ See appendix G for more information on methodology and data-quality thresholds, including reasons state data were excluded from analyses.

³⁶ Percentage change was calculated by subtracting the "old" data from the "new" data, dividing that result by the old data, and multiplying it by 100. For example, the national median on measure 3.1 was 89.3 percent in 2016 and 90.3 percent in 2020, and so the resulting increase is 1.1 percent $\{[(90.3-89.1)/89.3] \times 100=1.1\}$.

Correlations

The strength of relationships between measures and context variables was assessed using correlation coefficients, specifically Pearson's r . This coefficient can range from -1 to $+1$. In the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, these coefficients are interpreted in accordance with J. P. Guilford's suggested interpretations for correlation coefficient values:³⁷

- A coefficient of 0.0 to plus or minus 0.20 indicates a very low or negligible correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.20–0.40 indicates a low correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.40–0.70 indicates a moderate correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.70–0.90 indicates a high correlation.
- A coefficient of plus or minus 0.90–1.00 indicates a very high correlation.

Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data Site

The [Child Welfare Outcomes Report data site](#) is a web-based tool that allows users to view Child Welfare Outcomes Report data and create customized outputs according to individual needs. Users can isolate and view the variables in which they are most interested, compare data across states and years, choose from a variety of different data-output displays, and export data reports into Excel and printer-friendly formats. The website also enables users to access data not currently available in the full Report, including the following:

- Estimated general child-population statistics with regard to the race and ethnicity of children
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race and ethnicity, and maltreatment type) of child maltreatment victims
- Mean and median response times of CPS to allegations of maltreatment
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race and ethnicity, and median length of stay) of children in foster care at the start of the FY, children in care at the end of the FY, and children who entered and exited foster care during the FY
- Characteristics (i.e., age, race, and ethnicity) of children waiting for adoption and of children with finalized adoptions
- Alternate categorical breakdowns for all race and ethnicity data³⁸

The website allows for the release of Report data in a timelier manner than is possible through the full Report publication process. Data updates to the site occur annually after the data have been reviewed by the states and prior to the release of the full Report. Site functionality is updated on a regular basis to provide users with new and increased capabilities for data use and reporting.

³⁷ Guilford, J. P. (1956). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

³⁸ The traditional race and ethnicity breakdown displays non-Hispanic or Latino race categories and a category of Hispanic or Latino children of any race. The alternate breakdown treats race and ethnicity as two separate categories that are not mutually exclusive and displays race categories that are combined with a Hispanic or Latino or non-Hispanic or Latino designation.

Chapter I: Child Welfare Outcomes Demographic and Contextual Data

In addition to reporting on specific child welfare measures, this Report also includes data and information on a range of child populations, including the overall national child population, state child populations, and subgroups within states. To provide context for the child welfare outcomes information contained in subsequent chapters, this chapter provides an overview of the child population under age 18, including those living in poverty, in foster care, waiting for adoption, and who have been adopted.

National Child Population

In 2020, the national population of children under the age of 18 was estimated to be 73,368,194. The three states with the largest populations under the age of 18 were California (8,791,234), Texas (7,435,132), and Florida (4,250,732). The three states with the smallest populations under the age of 18 were Vermont (113,166), the District of Columbia (129,588), and Wyoming (133,091).

Nationally, 15.7 percent of children under the age of 18 were estimated to be living in poverty in 2020. Poverty rates for children varied widely across states, ranging from 7.3 percent to 26.1 percent, and 21 states (41 percent) had poverty rates above the national average. Although there is some evidence that children in low-income or impoverished areas may be more likely to be reported as victims of maltreatment (especially neglect), it is not clear that this translates to more children in poverty being removed from their homes and placed in foster care.³⁹ In 2020, there was virtually no correlation between states' foster care entry rates and their estimated proportion of the child population living in poverty (Pearson's $r=0.01$).

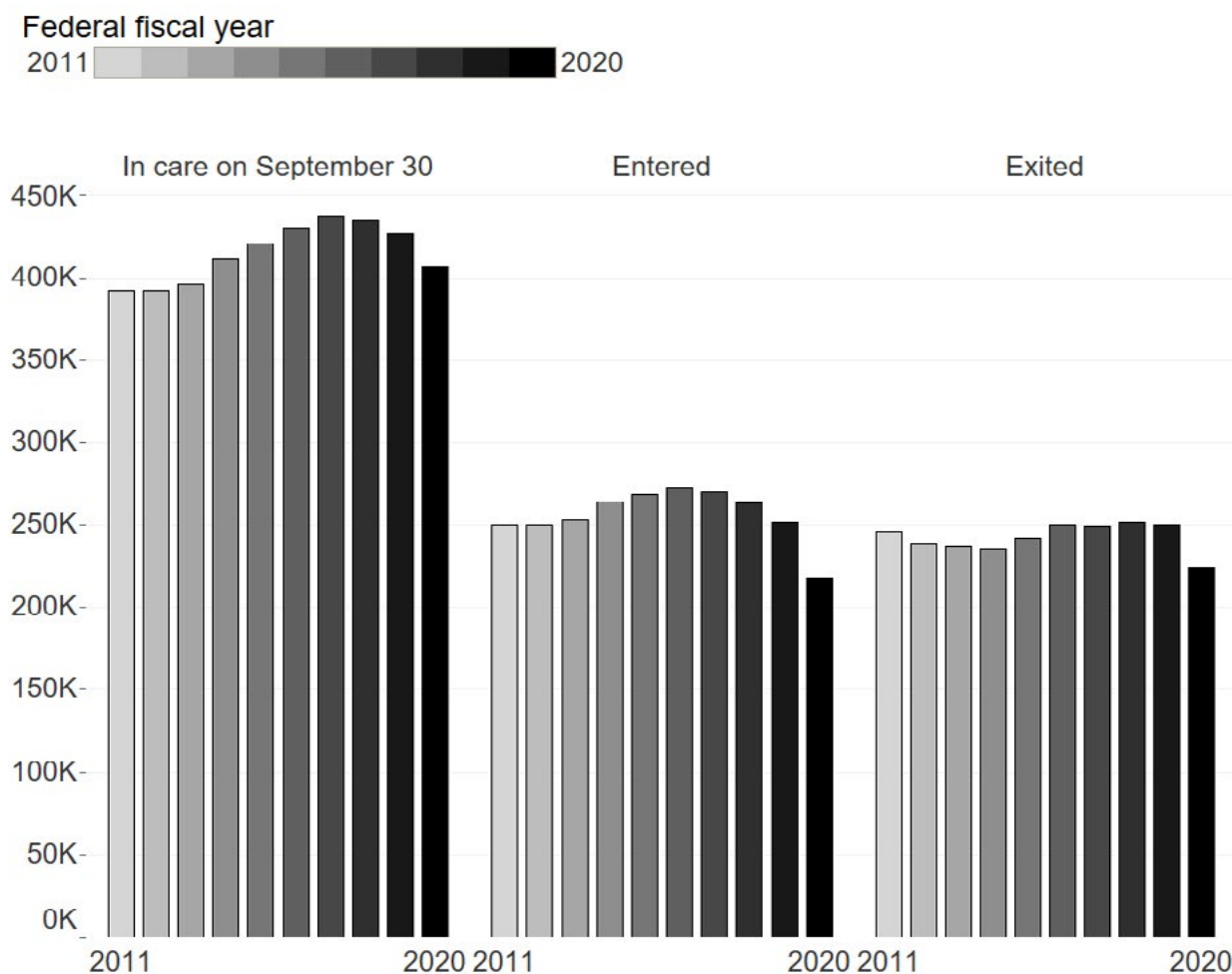
Children in Foster Care

Nationwide, approximately 407,000 children were in foster care on the last day of FY 2020.⁴⁰ Figure I-1 shows that from 2012 until 2017, the number of children in care on the last day of the FY has steadily increased. However, beginning in 2018, the number of children in care on the last day of the FY has been decreasing. The decrease from 2017 to 2018 was less than 1 percent (0.5 percent), the decrease observed from 2018 to 2019 was 1.8 percent, and the decrease from 2019 to 2020 was 4.7 percent, for an overall decrease of approximately 6.9 percent since 2017. Although the number of children in care on the last day of the FY has consistently decreased since 2018, the decrease observed from 2019 to 2020 was more than twice the decrease observed from 2018 to 2019. The 2020 decrease may be partially attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁹ For example, see ["Income Inequality and Child Maltreatment in the United States"](#) or ["Addressing the Underlying Issue of Poverty in Child-Neglect Cases."](#)

⁴⁰ Data from [Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2011–2020](#) were used for this section of the Report, including Figure I-1. Those data are current as of June 28, 2022. Due to differences in sources, these data may not be consistent with other data displayed throughout the Report.

Figure I-1. NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE, 2011–2020 (N=51)



Note.—Due to data quality concerns, many of which are associated with the lingering effects of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's data are only included for the years 2019 and 2020. Puerto Rico is in the process of addressing the quality of its excluded data.

Of the children in foster care on the last day of FY 2020, about half (51.3 percent) were age 7 or younger, 35.0 percent were between the ages of 8 and 15, and 13.7 percent were age 16 or older. Nationally, the breakdown of the races and ethnicities of children in care was 43.3 percent White, 22.3 percent Black or African American, 21.8 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7.8 percent two or more races, 2.8 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.5 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Additional data regarding the age, race, and ethnicity for children in care on the first and last days of the FY, and those who entered and exited care during the FY, are available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

AFCARS data show that the number of children in care on the last day of the FY has decreased for the last 3 years (2018, 2019, and 2020).

Entry into Foster Care

In 2020, an estimated 215,000 children entered foster care nationally. This section provides additional data about these children.

Race/ethnicity and age distribution

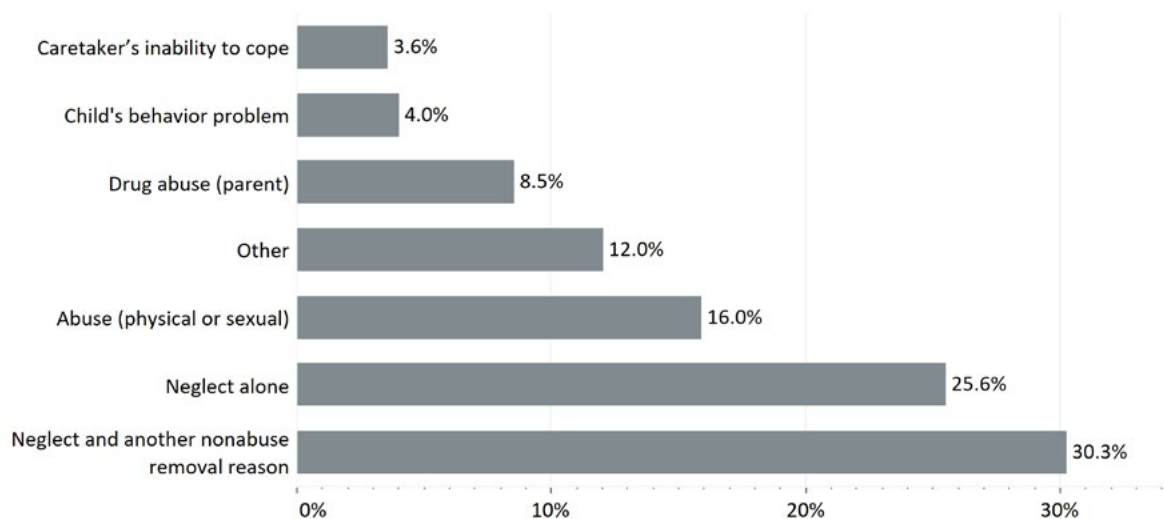
The demographic distribution of those children entering care is similar to that of the in-care population. The race and ethnicity of the children who entered care during FY 2020 was 45.7 percent White, 20.1 percent Black or African American, 21.3 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7.5 percent two or more races, 2.3 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.6 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

Nationally, more than half (58.8 percent) were age 7 or younger, 32.1 percent were between the ages of 8 and 15, and 9.1 percent were age 16 or older.

Circumstances associated with removal

The majority of children who entered foster care in 2020 had a reason for removal that included neglect (either alone—25.6 percent— or in combination with another reason other than physical or sexual abuse—30.3 percent) (see figure I-2). Nearly one-tenth (8.5 percent) of children entering care were reported with parental drug use as the only reason associated with removal. Sexual or physical abuse accounted for 16.0 percent of removals, and child behavior problems (alone) and caretaker's inability to cope (alone) accounted for 4.0 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively, of removals. For a more complete analysis of all removal reasons, see appendix F.

Figure I-2. CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH REMOVAL, 2020 (N=52)

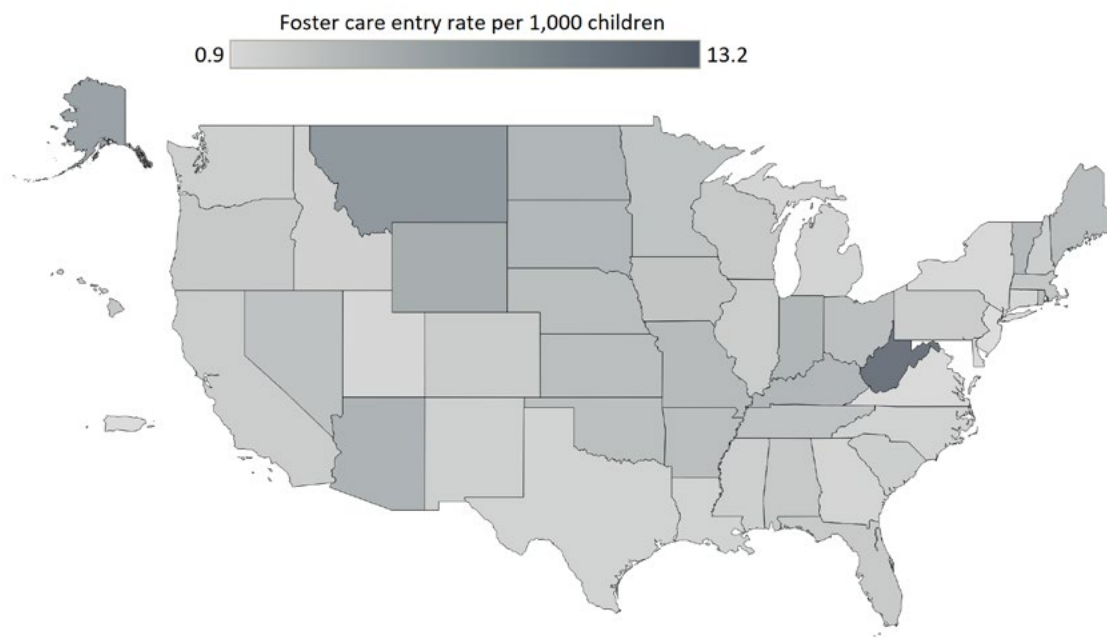


Entry rates

States differed considerably with respect to the rate of foster care entry, defined as the number of children entering foster care in a year per 1,000 children in the state population (see figure I-3).⁴¹ The foster care entry rate in 2020 ranged from 0.9 children (New Jersey) to 13.2 children (West Virginia) per 1,000 in the population. During 2016 and 2017, the median entry rate remained flat at 4.1; however, beginning with 2018 until 2020, the entry rate began decreasing slightly—3.9 in 2018, 3.7 in 2019, and 3.2 in 2020. Over the past 5 years, the median entry rate across states decreased 22.0 percent—from 4.1 children per 1,000 in the population in 2016 to 3.2 children per 1,000 in the population in 2020.

The reasons for variations in the rates of foster care entry are difficult to determine using federal administrative data. They may be due to differences across states in policies regarding under what circumstances children are removed from the home and placed in foster care. The existence and availability of services designed to support families and enable children to remain in the home also may affect the number of children who enter foster care within a state. As noted in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, this variation is unlikely to be attributed to differences in the rate of child victims in a state. There was a low correlation between foster care entry rates and child victim rates in 2020 (Pearson's $r=0.39$).

Figure I-3. MAP OF FOSTER CARE ENTRY RATES PER 1,000 CHILDREN BY STATE, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—For the data presented in this map, please see Figure I-10.

⁴¹ The foster care entry rate was calculated by dividing the total number of children entering foster care in a state by the total child population in that state and multiplying the resulting number by 1,000.

Entry rates by race and ethnicity

The national foster care entry rate by race and ethnicity in 2020 ranged from a high of 8.1 (American Indian or Alaska Native) to a low of 0.4 (Asian) per 1,000 children in the child population of that race. The entry rates per 1,000 children of that race or category for the remaining categories were 5.0 for children of two or more races, 4.3 for Black or African American children, 4.1 for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children, 2.7 for White children, and 2.4 for Hispanic or Latino children. Compared to White children, American Indian or Alaska Native children were 3.0 times more likely to be placed in foster care, and Black or African American children were 1.6 times more likely than White children to be placed in care. Asian and Hispanic or Latino children entered care at lower rates than White children; they were 0.1 and 0.9 times as likely to enter care, respectively.⁴²

Children Waiting for Adoption and Children Adopted⁴³

At the start of 2020, just over 122,000 children and youth were identified as waiting for adoption.⁴⁴ Of that group, slightly over 56,000, or 46 percent, had been placed in an adoptive home by the end of the year. The range in performance across the states varied widely, with a high of 74 percent (Iowa) to a low of 14 percent (Puerto Rico). Table I–1 (at the end of chapter) shows the number of children waiting for adoption and the number of children adopted within 6 months and within 1 year for 2020.

Additionally, because the data for the “waiting” population do not differentiate between children and youth who have been waiting for long periods of time and children who may have recently received a goal of adoption or had their parents’ parental rights terminated, it is useful to examine the length of time from “legal freedom” (i.e., the date of the termination of parental rights) to adoption in order to gain a more complete understanding of when children are adopted from foster care. There were approximately 67,000 children and youth for whom the process of establishing legal freedom had occurred during 2019. By the end of 2020, 66 percent of those children were discharged to adoption within 1 year of attaining legal freedom. State percentages ranged from 28 percent (Puerto Rico) to 95 percent (District of Columbia). (See figure I–11 at the end of the chapter for more details.)

Lastly, as in prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the number of children adopted from foster care in a given year is provided as context. In 2020, approximately 58,000 children and youth were adopted from foster care, a 12.5-percent decrease over the more than 66,000 children adopted from foster care in 2019.

Summary

The child populations described in this chapter provide context for understanding and interpreting information on child welfare outcomes contained in subsequent chapters. Additional visualizations of select demographics described in this chapter are displayed at the end of the chapter. Further demographic information on child populations—such as state data on race, ethnicity, and age (including those states excluded from analyses and counts in this Report due to data-quality problems)—are available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

⁴² The rate of disproportionality was calculated by dividing the rate of the race/ethnicity of interest by the rate of the base race (in this analysis, White). For more information on entry rates and rates of disproportionality in entries for 2020—including state-level data, medians across states, and information about the analyses—visit the [State-Specific Foster Care Data 2020 page](#) on the CB website.

⁴³ Please note that the number of children waiting for adoption reported in the first paragraph of this section refers to children waiting at the start of the FY and not at the end of the FY (as reported in other sections in this Report). In addition, the number of children adopted reported in the first paragraph also differs from the number of children reported as adopted in the third paragraph of this section, which uses children who were identified as waiting as the base population and evaluates how many were adopted at the end of the 12-month period.

⁴⁴ There is no federal definition for a child “waiting for adoption.” The definition used in the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports includes children through age 17 who have a goal (as indicated in AFCARS) of adoption and/or whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated. It excludes children 16 years old and older whose parents’ parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation. A state’s own definition may differ from that used here. For the most current data, see the [Data and Statistics: AFCARS page](#) on the CB website.

Figure I-4. ESTIMATED CHILD POPULATION UNDER AGE 18, 2020 (N=52)

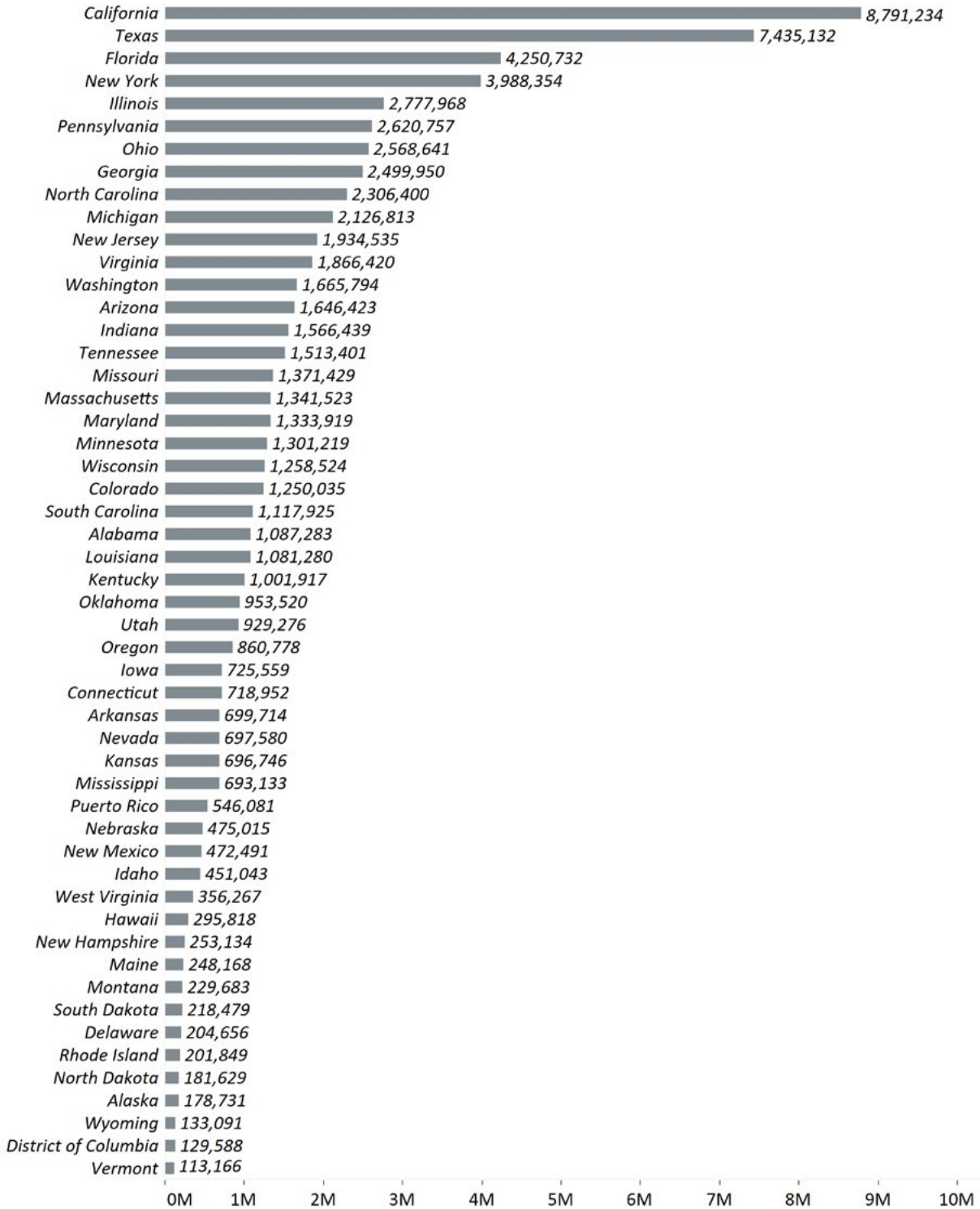
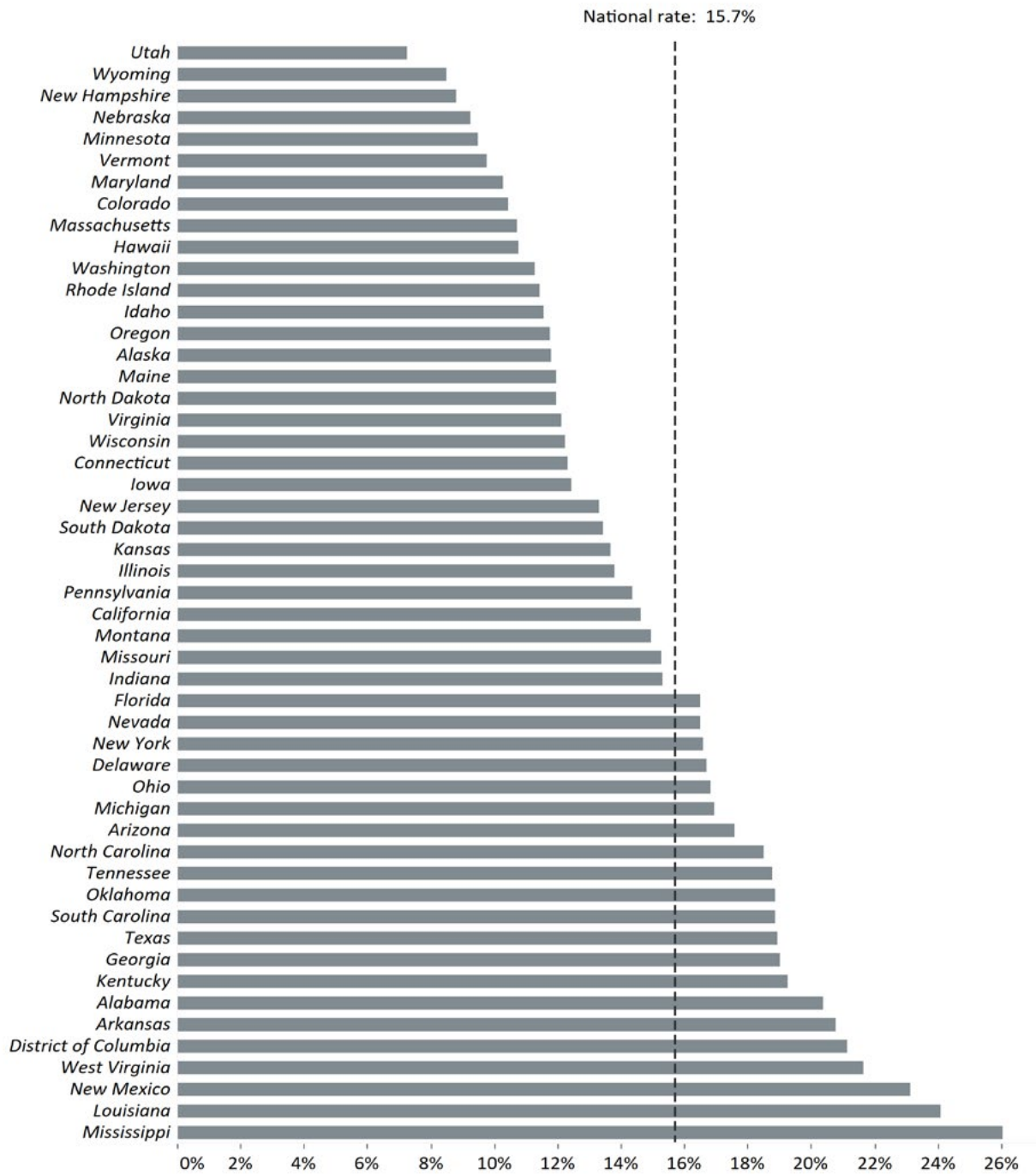


Figure I-5. ESTIMATED PROPORTION OF THE CHILD POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Poverty data for Puerto Rico were not available.

Figure I-6.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FY, 2020 (N=51)

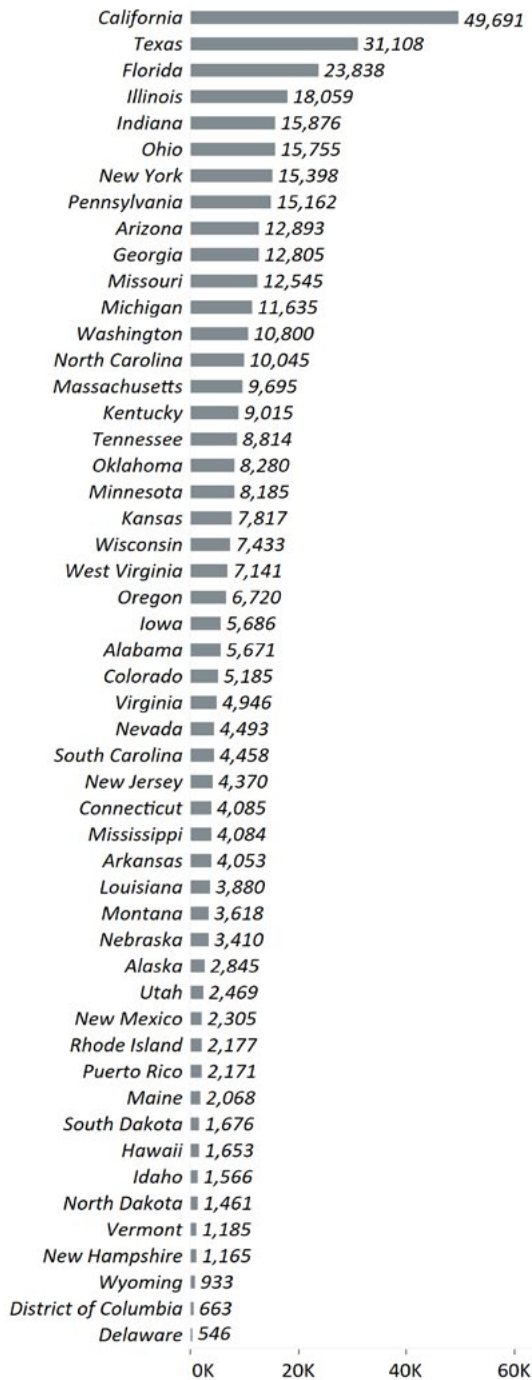
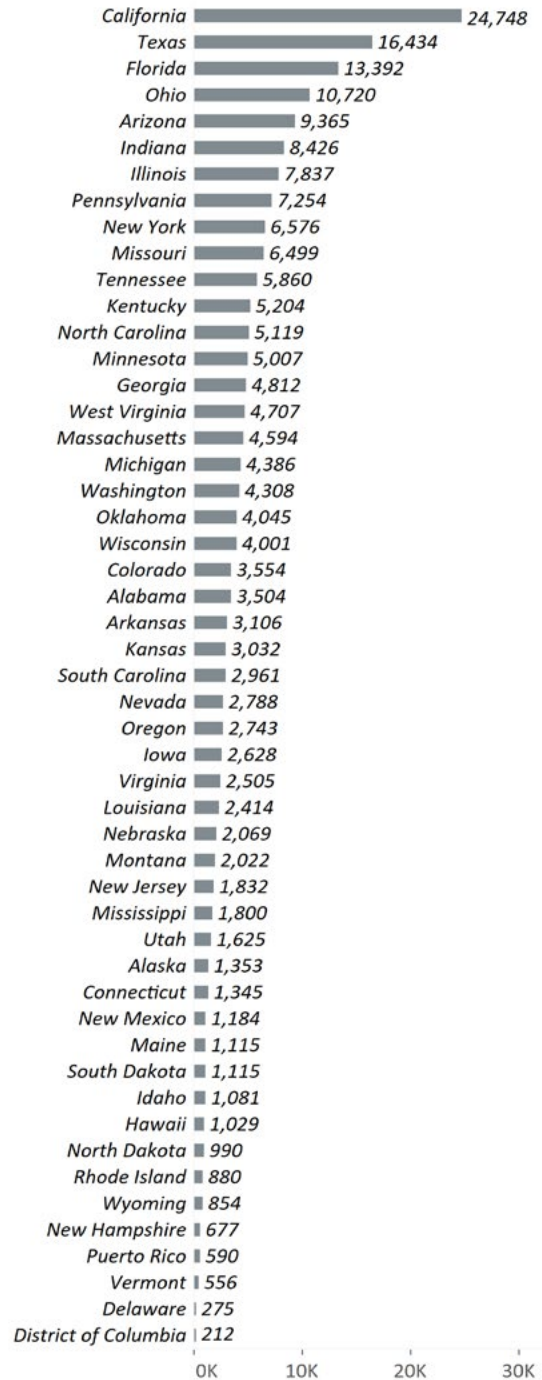


Figure I-7.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE IN THE FY, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I-8.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE IN THE FY, 2020 (N=51)

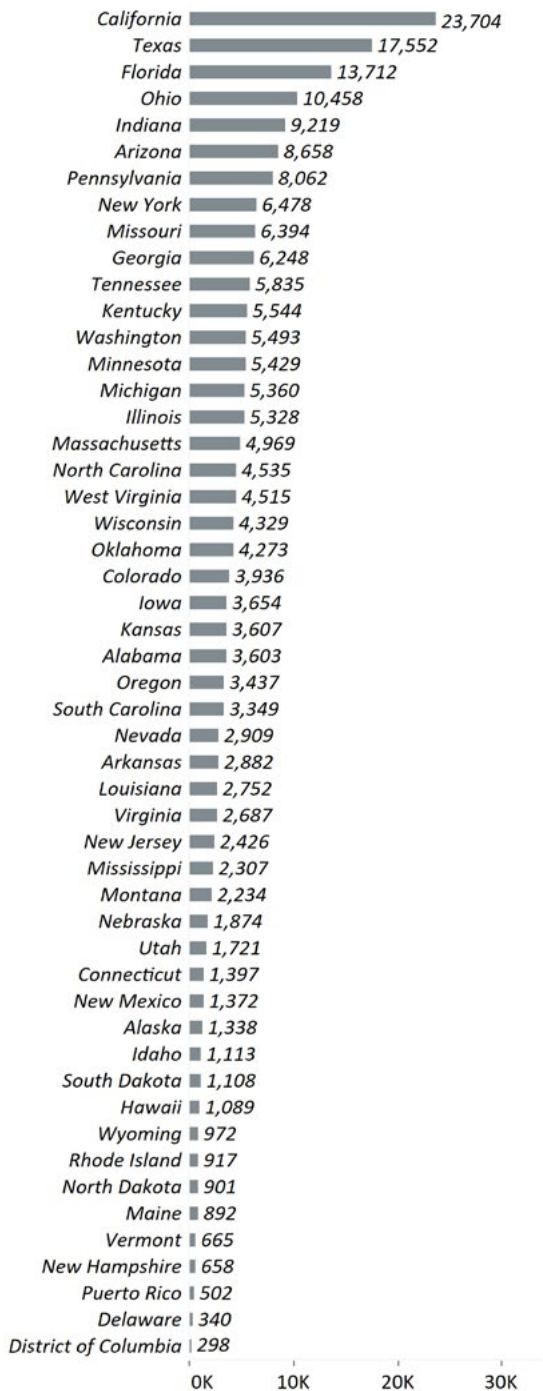
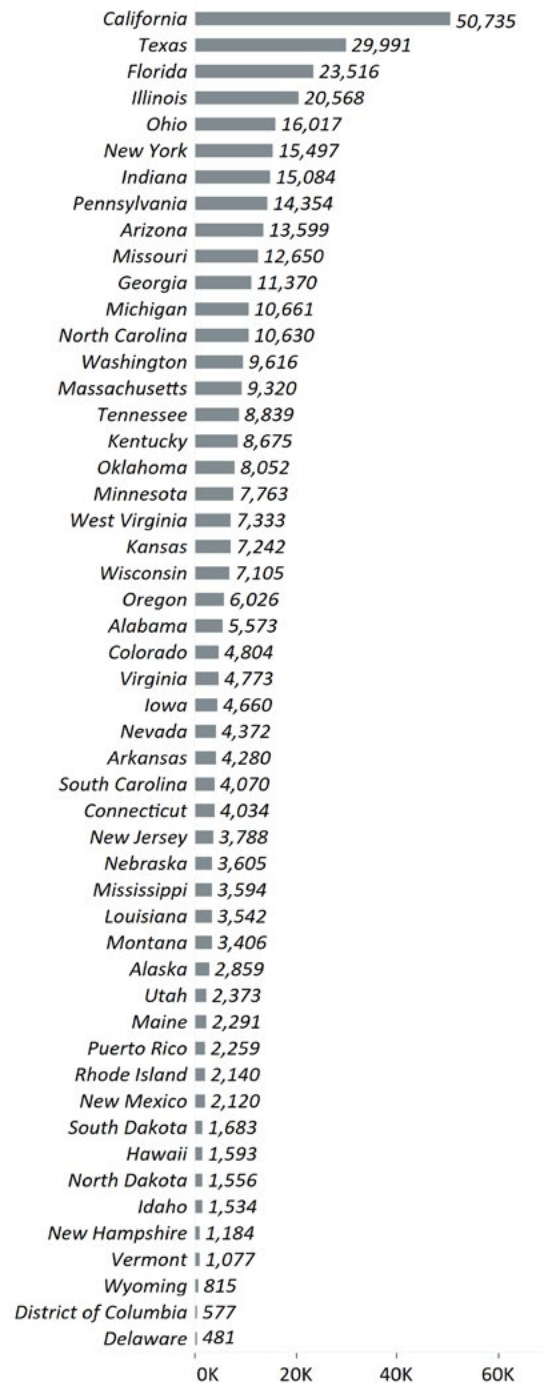


Figure I-9.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FY, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure I-10.

FOSTER CARE ENTRY RATE PER 1,000 CHILDREN, 2020 (N=51)

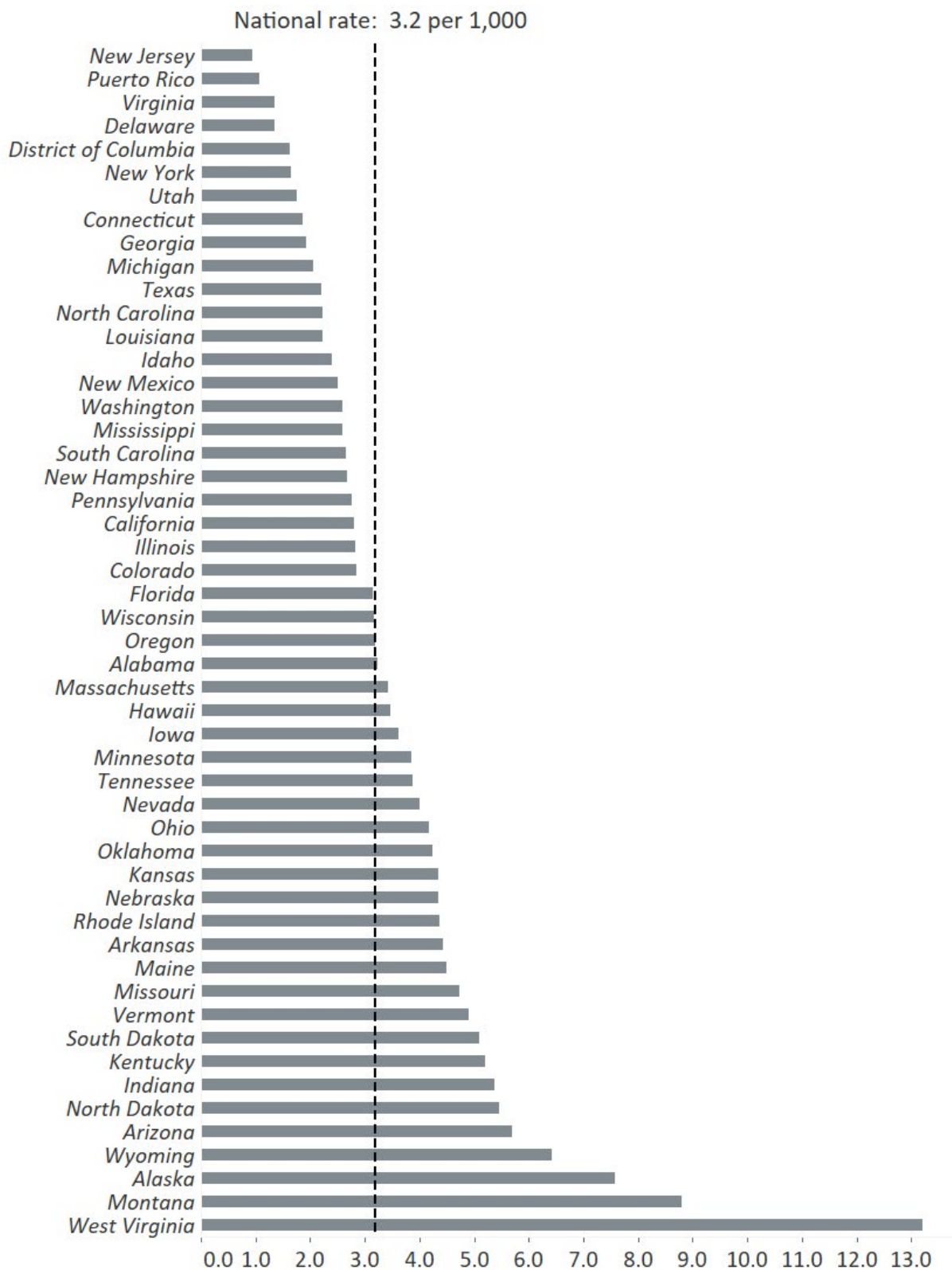


Figure I-11.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ADOPTED WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF LEGAL FREEDOM ATTAINED IN 2019
(N=52)

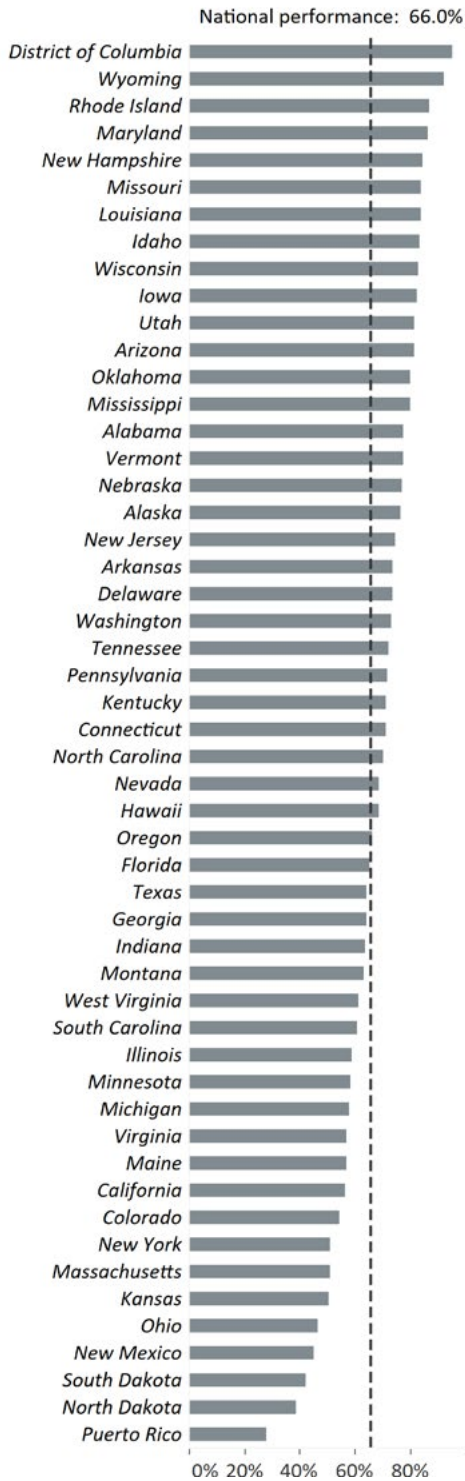
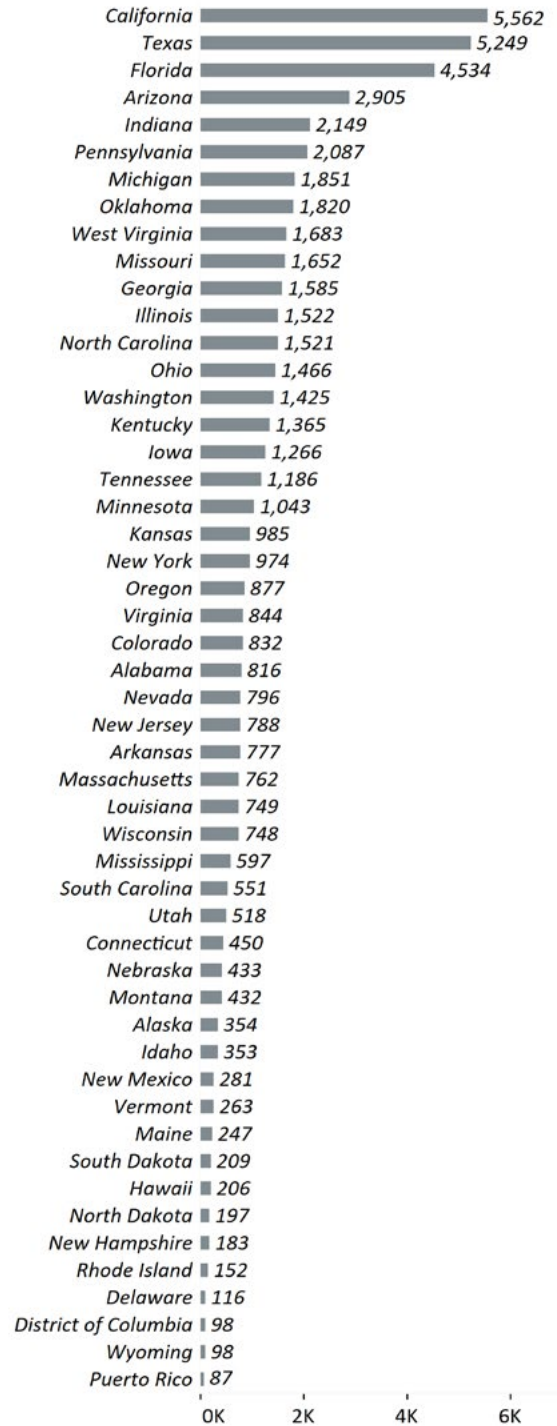


Figure I-12.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ADOPTED, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality threshold

Table I-1. Number of Waiting Children Adopted, 2020 (N=52)

State	Total waiting on first day of 2020 (Oct. 1, 2019)	Within 6 months (by Mar. 31, 2020)	Within 12 months (by Sept. 30, 2020)	Within 6 months (by Mar. 31, 2020)	Within 12 months (by Sept. 30, 2020)
Alabama	1,675	381	796	22.7%	47.5%
Alaska	948	234	405	24.7%	42.7%
Arizona	3,829	1,498	2,445	39.1%	63.9%
Arkansas	1,174	421	650	35.9%	55.4%
California	14,064	3,419	5,557	24.3%	39.5%
Colorado	935	277	451	29.6%	48.2%
Connecticut	1,512	272	387	18.0%	25.6%
Delaware	160	57	93	35.6%	58.1%
District of Columbia	202	64	104	31.7%	51.5%
Florida	9,159	2,593	4,664	28.3%	50.9%
Georgia	3,436	912	1,598	26.5%	46.5%
Hawaii	270	102	151	37.8%	55.9%
Idaho	515	166	321	32.2%	62.3%
Illinois	2,751	745	1,178	27.1%	42.8%
Indiana	4,294	1,236	2,138	28.8%	49.8%
Iowa	1,340	613	986	45.7%	73.6%
Kansas	2,339	553	990	23.6%	42.3%
Kentucky	3,140	809	1,532	25.8%	48.8%
Louisiana	1,336	426	718	31.9%	53.7%
Maine	507	126	227	24.9%	44.8%
Maryland	328	110	124	33.5%	37.8%
Massachusetts	3,638	579	963	15.9%	26.5%
Michigan	3,790	1,131	1,884	29.8%	49.7%
Minnesota	1,939	556	992	28.7%	51.2%
Mississippi	1,516	389	660	25.7%	43.5%
Missouri	2,690	753	1,332	28.0%	49.5%
Montana	1,012	304	483	30.0%	47.7%
Nebraska	684	236	365	34.5%	53.4%
Nevada	1,662	496	857	29.8%	51.6%
New Hampshire	248	101	134	40.7%	54.0%
New Jersey	1,884	547	878	29.0%	46.6%
New Mexico	1,194	198	421	16.6%	35.3%
New York	3,729	738	1,009	19.8%	27.1%
North Carolina	2,696	728	1,171	27.0%	43.4%
North Dakota	420	100	165	23.8%	39.3%
Ohio	3,627	848	1,501	23.4%	41.4%
Oklahoma	3,775	1,047	1,861	27.7%	49.3%
Oregon	1,567	549	931	35.0%	59.4%
Pennsylvania	3,362	1,143	1,641	34.0%	48.8%
Puerto Rico	399	38	54	9.5%	13.5%
Rhode Island	357	93	133	26.1%	37.3%
South Carolina	1,557	376	661	24.1%	42.5%
South Dakota	385	115	181	29.9%	47.0%
Tennessee	1,631	475	853	29.1%	52.3%
Texas	12,856	3,540	6,393	27.5%	49.7%
Utah	684	279	394	40.8%	57.6%
Vermont	330	127	199	38.5%	60.3%
Virginia	1,894	467	798	24.7%	42.1%
Washington	3,464	833	1,535	24.0%	44.3%
West Virginia	3,333	832	1,674	25.0%	50.2%
Wisconsin	1,536	466	726	30.3%	47.3%
Wyoming	148	40	75	27.0%	50.7%

Table I-2. Number of Children Adopted, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Alabama	503	504	712	738	816
Alaska	312	366	353	396	354
Arizona	3,654	4,298	3,926	3,373	2,905
Arkansas	758	971	1,001	984	777
California	6,542	6,524	6,966	6,981	5,562
Colorado	839	948	910	919	832
Connecticut	529	488	497	661	450
Delaware	99	108	116	129	116
District of Columbia	110	91	100	98	98
Florida	3,573	3,831	4,455	4,714	4,534
Georgia	1,121	1,401	1,469	1,668	1,585
Hawaii	129	152	189	206	206
Idaho	185	258	245	328	353
Illinois	1,546	1,777	1,754	1,747	1,522
Indiana	1,536	1,964	2,016	2,489	2,149
Iowa	992	1,006	1,074	1,228	1,266
Kansas	870	674	936	1,227	985
Kentucky	1,104	1,128	1,124	1,368	1,365
Louisiana	727	766	905	895	749
Maine	399	456	395	294	247
Massachusetts	669	657	826	998	762
Michigan	2,078	1,970	1,991	2,161	1,851
Minnesota	899	946	1,284	1,347	1,043
Mississippi	400	364	431	719	597
Missouri	1,591	1,541	1,798	1,820	1,652
Montana	260	274	396	482	432
Nebraska	483	546	564	560	433
Nevada	796	740	760	805	796
New Hampshire	87	108	211	278	183
New Jersey	1,185	1,106	1,054	1,162	788
New Mexico	306	311	297	336	281
New York	1,949	1,789	1,697	1,648	974
North Carolina	1,501	1,528	1,522	1,546	1,521
North Dakota	132	162	172	197	197
Ohio	1,449	1,538	1,566	1,665	1,466
Oklahoma	2,487	2,593	2,238	2,086	1,820
Oregon	768	707	679	792	877
Pennsylvania	1,917	2,077	2,628	2,849	2,087
Rhode Island	279	250	254	184	152
South Carolina	433	487	435	529	551
South Dakota	110	181	183	211	209
Tennessee	1,225	1,260	1,248	1,166	1,186
Texas	5,723	5,361	5,748	6,105	5,249
Utah	632	665	818	639	518
Vermont	216	287	262	260	263
Virginia	627	801	879	769	844
Washington	1,387	1,345	1,331	1,509	1,425
West Virginia	940	1,070	1,410	1,699	1,683
Wisconsin	669	692	755	711	748
Wyoming	89	82	75	120	98

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter II: Keeping Children Safe

Public child welfare agencies are responsible for ensuring children who have been found to be victims of abuse or neglect are protected from further harm. Whether children are placed in foster care or maintained in their homes, the child welfare agency's first concern must be to ensure their safety. Outcome 1 (reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect) and outcome 2 (reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care) encompass these safety goals for children and youth.

This chapter provides information on contextual factors related to child safety as well as on the following two safety measures:

- Measure 1.1: The percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a 12-month period
- Measure 2.1: The percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member

Child Victims and Child Fatalities

HHS collects and analyzes data from NCANDS on children who come into contact with public CPS agencies as alleged victims of abuse or neglect. Although submission of data to NCANDS is voluntary for states, HHS strongly encourages participation and provides technical assistance to help with data collection and reporting. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2020.

Although the NCANDS submission is voluntary, it is strongly encouraged. All states submitted NCANDS data for 2020.

Child victims

During 2020, 618,000 children were confirmed to be victims of maltreatment.^{45,46} The most common maltreatment type reported was neglect, which was included in 81.9 percent of substantiated allegations.⁴⁷ Physical abuse and sexual abuse were the next most common maltreatment types—included in 17.0 percent and 9.6 percent of reported incidents of maltreatment, respectively.

Additional data about child victims—including age, race, and ethnicity—and CPS response time are available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

Psychological maltreatment accounted for 6.6 percent, and medical neglect accounted for 2.1 percent. In 2018, states began reporting sex trafficking as a separate maltreatment type. Thirty-five states reported at least one child who had been a victim of sex trafficking in 2020. This maltreatment type was reported for less than 1 percent of all child victims nationally. Table II–1 shows the total numbers of child victims and the national child victim rates for 2016 through 2020.

⁴⁵ This Report uses a unique count for child victims, which tallies a child only once regardless of the number of times they were found to be a victim during the reporting year.

⁴⁶ For the purposes of this Report, a “victim of child maltreatment” is defined as a child for whom an incident of abuse or neglect has been substantiated or indicated by an investigation or assessment. This includes a child who died of child abuse or neglect. Prior to 2015, children with dispositions of “alternative response victim” were also included as victims. It is important to note that the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports use the total reported number of child victims as opposed to a national estimate of child victims, which often is reported in the Child Maltreatment reports. The total number of child victims in this Report were rounded to the nearest 1,000.

⁴⁷ Any form of child maltreatment can occur separately but can also occur in combination, and a child can be identified as the victim of more than one type of maltreatment. For more information, see the [National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System \(NCANDS\) Child File Codebook](#), which was last revised in November 2019.

Table II–1. Child Victims, 2016–2020 (N=52)

Measures	2016 ^a	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total child victims	671,000	674,000	677,000	656,000	618,000
National child victim rate^b	9.1	9.1	9.2	8.9	8.4

^a Fewer than 52 states reported data in 2016. The national estimate was calculated by multiplying the national child victim rate by the national child population and dividing by 1,000.
^b The national child victim rate was calculated by dividing the number of child victims from reporting states by the child population for reporting states and multiplying by 1,000.
 Note.—The data in this table represent unique counts of child victims (i.e., a child only may be reported as a victim once per reporting year). The total number of child victims was rounded to the nearest 1,000.

The national child victim rate decreased from 9.1 child victims per 1,000 children in 2016 to 8.4 child victims per 1,000 children in 2020—a decrease of 7.4 percent (see table II–1). There are many factors that could be related to the decrease in the rate of child victims, such as changes to screening procedures or policies. Additionally, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first months of 2020 may have affected that rate.⁴⁸ The rate of neglect decreased from 7.3 percent per 1,000 children in 2016 to 6.9 percent in 2020. Similarly, the rate of physical abuse dropped from 1.7 percent in 2016 to 1.4 percent in 2020. Conversely, the national rate per 1,000 children in the population who experienced psychological maltreatment increased slightly from 2016 to 2020—0.5 percent to 0.6 percent. The national rates for both medical and sexual abuse remained unchanged for the same period.⁴⁹

Similar to previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied widely across states. In 2020, they ranged from 1.7 child victims per 1,000 children in the state’s population to 19.0 child victims per 1,000 children in the state’s population (see figures II–1 and II–2, the latter of which is located at the end of the chapter). There are several possible explanations for this variation. One explanation is that state definitions of “child maltreatment” vary.⁵⁰ States with broader definitions of what constitutes child maltreatment may have higher victim rates than states with narrower definitions. Variations in the level of evidence required for substantiation also may contribute to different child victim rates among states.⁵¹ In addition, when discussing 2020 data, it is important to reflect on the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the child welfare system. States’ data commentaries about the NCANDS data provide some insights about this—for example, challenges (e.g., staffing, health concerns), accommodations (e.g., virtual environments for service delivery), and deviations in data collection patterns (e.g., decrease in reports).

Another factor that limits comparability of child victim rates across states is the use of alternative response approaches.⁵² In alternative response approaches, child welfare agencies respond to reports of maltreatment with a referral for a family assessment rather than with a formal investigation. This typically occurs when a decision is made that there are no immediate safety concerns for the child and that the maltreatment allegation involves low or moderate risk. When a referral is made for a family assessment instead of an investigation, there is often no determination made regarding the allegations of maltreatment; therefore, the child is not classified as a victim.⁵³

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, child victim rates varied dramatically across states in 2020, ranging from 1.7 victims per 1,000 children to 19.0 victims per 1,000 children.

⁴⁸ See chapter 7 of the [Child Maltreatment 2020](#) report for a more detailed analysis on the impact of the pandemic on CPS. The report also includes comments from states about how child welfare agencies managed operations during the pandemic. For additional information, see [“Calculating the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Child Abuse and Neglect in the U.S.”](#) in *Child Abuse & Neglect*.

⁴⁹ The rate for sexual abuse in each of 2016 and 2020 was 0.8 child victims per 1,000 children. Similarly, the rate for medical neglect in each of 2016 and 2020 was 0.6 child victims per 1,000 children.

⁵⁰ More information about variations in state definitions of child abuse and neglect can be found in [Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect](#) by Child Welfare Information Gateway.

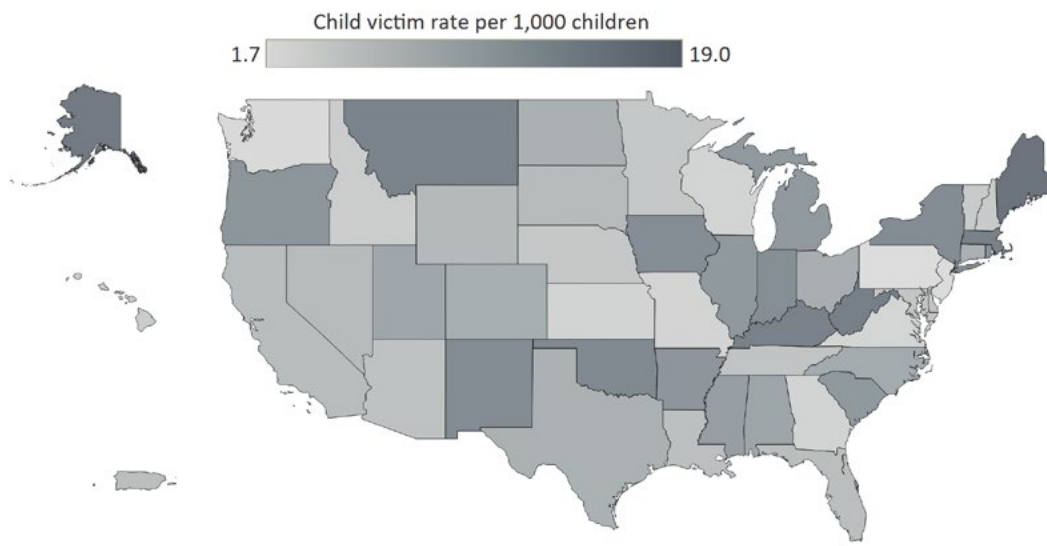
⁵¹ The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) database is a comprehensive resource that provides information on child maltreatment definitions across states as well as related policy practices. A data profile is available for each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. For more information see the [State Profiles page](#) of the SCAN website.

⁵² The term “alternative response” is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as “differential response,” “dual track response,” and “multitrack response.” These terms tend to refer to the provision of a response other than an investigation when there is an allegation of maltreatment. Throughout this Report, the term “alternative response” is used. For more information on alternative response, see Information Gateway’s [Differential Response in Child Protective Services webpage](#).

⁵³ Some states make a distinction between those referrals for which services were required or mandated and those referrals for which services were not needed or were voluntary. In these cases, some states have chosen to report the referrals to NCANDS as either “alternative response victim” for those cases in which services were mandated or “alternative response non-victim” for those cases in which services were voluntary or not needed.

Even within states that have implemented alternative response systems, comparing outcomes for children across local jurisdictions is challenging due to the varying degrees of implementation across the state. Although some states are implementing their systems statewide, others are gradually adding alternative response approaches to select jurisdictions. These methodological challenges mean that caution is warranted in comparing states that use alternative response approaches to those that are not. Similarly, when a state begins using this type of approach, examining changes in performance over time within the state may prove difficult due to the shifting responses to allegations of maltreatment.

Figure II-1. MAP OF CHILD VICTIM RATES PER 1,000 CHILDREN BY STATE, 2020 (N=52)



Note.—For the data presented in this map, please see Figure II-2.

Child fatalities

During 2020, 1,713 child fatalities were reported by states, and the national child fatality rate was 2.33 per 100,000 children in the population.⁵⁴ Like child victim rates, child fatality rates varied widely by state. In 2020, child fatality rates varied between 0.00 child fatalities per 100,000 children and 5.49 child fatalities per 100,000 children. Table II-2 shows the total number of child fatalities and the national child fatality rates for 2016–2020.

Table II-2. Child Fatalities, 2016–2020					
Measures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	(N=51)	(N=51)	(N=51)	(N=51)	(N=52)
Total child fatalities	1,708	1,691	1,751	1,825	1,713
National child fatality rate^a	2.33	2.28	2.41	2.48	2.33

^a This rate is per 100,000 children.

As indicated in table II-2, the rate of child fatalities increased each year from 2017 to 2019, but from 2019 to 2020, the rate of fatalities decreased from 2.48 to 2.33—back down to the rate that was reported in 2016. Given the relatively low number of child fatalities reported each year, the national rate is sensitive to multiple factors, including the number of states reporting data, changes in the national population estimates, and changes in state and federal policies that may affect reporting practices.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The national child fatality rate was calculated by dividing the number of child fatalities reported by states (1,713) by the child population for all states that submitted NCANDS child fatality data (73,368,194) and multiplying that number by 100,000. Due to the relatively few cases of child fatalities, rates of child fatalities are presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

⁵⁵ For additional information, refer to [Child Maltreatment 2020](#).

Range of State Performance on Safety-Related Outcome Measures

Child safety is addressed through outcome 1 (reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect) and outcome 2 (reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care). Table II–3 summarizes states’ performance in 2020 (for measure 2.1) and in 2019 (for measure 1.1) on the measures that reflect these outcomes. Cases identified as “alternative response victim” were not included in the calculation of these two safety measures; only substantiated and indicated cases were included.

**Table II–3. Range of State Performance, 2020
Outcomes 1 and 2: Keeping Children Safe**

Outcome measures	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during a 12-month period, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 12-month of the initial victimization? (N=49) ^{a,b}	5.1%	7.5%	10.4%	2.7%–18.1%
Measure 2.1: Of all children who were in foster care during the year, what percentage were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? (N=50) ^a	0.18%	0.28%	0.50%	0.00%–2.23%

^a For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance.

^b This measure evaluates the recurrence of maltreatment in 2019.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

Recurrence of maltreatment

Recurrence of child maltreatment is associated with increased risk of a number of significant negative outcomes for children, including developmental delay, cognitive and socioemotional problems, and entry into the juvenile justice system.⁵⁶ Additionally, recurrence adds additional burden to child welfare caseloads and available resources. The national median for maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1) for children who were victims in 2019

was 7.5 percent. (Recurrence data for 2020 were not available for this Report.) Individual state performance ranged from 2.7 percent to 18.1 percent. A number of variables may have impacted this range in performance across states, including variations in child victim rates, the variability in which the pandemic spread out within the United States, and state implementation of stay-at-home orders. From March 1 to May 31 of 2020, 2,355 (73 percent) of the 3,233 U.S. counties had implemented stay-at-home orders.⁵⁷ With the closure of many institutions, children were less likely to be in contact with individuals that most frequently report child maltreatment, such as mandated reporters (e.g., school personnel, health-care providers).⁵⁸ As reported in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, Pearson’s correlation indicated a high correlation between a state’s individual child victim rate and the rate of recurrence within a 12-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.77$).

Consistent with findings in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, states with higher child victim rates also tended to have higher recurrence rates.

⁵⁶ Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10(3), 161–178. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2013.788947>

⁵⁷ Moreland, A., Herlihy, C., Tynan, M. A., Sunshine, G., McCord, R. F., Hilton, C., Poovey, J., Werner, A. K., Jones, C. D., Fulmer, E. B., Gundlapalli, A. V., Strosnider, H., Potvien, A., Garcia, M. C., Honeycutt, S., Baldwin, G., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Law Program, & CDC COVID-19 Response Team. (2020). Timing of state and territorial COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and changes in population movement — United States, March 1–May 31, 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69, 1198–1203. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6935a2.htm>

⁵⁸ Rapoport, E., Reisert, H., Schoeman, E., & Adesman, A. (2021). Reporting of child maltreatment during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in New York City from March to May 2020. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 116(part 2), 104719. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104719>

The variation in state performance may also be related to differences across states regarding the types of child maltreatment reported. Most notably, states with high percentages of victims due to neglect tended to have a high percentage of maltreatment recurrence within a 12-month period (Pearson’s $r=0.49$). In contrast, there was a low, negative correlation between states’ performance on measure 1.1 and the percentage of victims due to physical abuse (Pearson’s $r=-0.25$). There was a moderate, negative correlation between measure 1.1 and the percentage of victims of sexual abuse (Pearson’s $r=-0.39$). One possible explanation is that substantiated allegations of physical or sexual abuse are more likely to be followed by legal actions against the perpetrator, including actions designed to prevent additional unsupervised contact. In contrast, substantiated allegations of neglect may not result in similar actions unless the neglect is considered particularly severe.

Maltreatment of children in foster care

The 2020 data shown in table II–3 indicate a very low occurrence of maltreatment of children while in foster care (measure 2.1). The national median was 0.28 percent, but the range across states varied from 0.00 percent to 2.23 percent.⁵⁹ Two states (Delaware and New Hampshire) reported zero cases of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff. The following two states reported an occurrence of maltreatment while a child was in foster care of more than 2.00 percent: Mississippi (2.23 percent) and Rhode Island (2.19 percent). The variation among states may be influenced by several factors, including, but not limited to, the extent to which training and services are offered to support foster families and facility staff members; differences in casework practices; the levels of interaction caseworkers have with families, which may help them identify instances of maltreatment; the quality and consistency of caseworker visits and the effective implementation of maltreatment prevention and treatment services.

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Maltreatment Recurrence and Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care

Table II–4 presents the national medians across states for 2016–2019 for measure 1.1 and the national medians across states for 2016–2020 for measure 2.1, as well as the number of states that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance, as determined by a percentage-change calculation.

Table II–4. State Medians and Changes in Performance Over Time, 2016–2020 Outcomes 1 and 2: Keeping Children Safe							
Outcome measures ^a	Median by year					Improved in performance ^b	Declined in performance ^b
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Measure 1.1: Percentage of child victims who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within a 12-month of the initial victimization (N=48)	8.5%	8.2%	7.7%	7.8%	-- ^c	18 states (38%) ^c	19 states (40%) ^c
Measure 2.1: Percentage of all children in foster care who were maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member (N=48) ^d	0.20%	0.27%	0.24%	0.26%	0.28%	16 states (33%)	30 states (63%)

^a For these measures, a lower number indicates better performance. Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table II–3 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure in conducting analyses for this Report, when there was a percentage change less than 5.0 percent in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c At the time of this analysis, data were not available to calculate the recurrence of maltreatment for children who were victims of maltreatment in 2020.

^d For measure 1.1, the percentage change to determine an improvement or decline in performance is for 2016–2019 rather than for 2016–2020.

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

⁵⁹ Due to the relatively few cases of child maltreatment in foster care, performance on this measure is presented using two decimal places to improve comparability.

As shown in table II–4, the median 4-year performance across states regarding the recurrence of child maltreatment (measure 1.1) decreased by 8.2 percent between 2016 and 2019, which showed a national improvement in performance. About as many states reported an improvement in performance (18) as reported a decline (19).

In contrast, the national 5-year national median regarding the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) showed a decline. From 2016 to 2020, the national median increased from 0.20 percent to 0.28 percent. Individual state performance between 2016 and 2020 on measures of maltreatment recurrence (measure 1.1) and the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1) are displayed in tables II–5 and II–6 (presented at the end of the chapter).

The percentage of all children in foster care who experienced maltreatment while in care increased between 2016 and 2020.

Summary of Findings Regarding Keeping Children Safe

National performance on the two safety-related measures (recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care) was mixed between 2016 and 2020. The national median on measure 1.1 (maltreatment recurrence) decreased slightly over the past 4 years, showing an increase in performance, and the national median for measure 2.1 (maltreatment of children in care), despite fluctuations from year-to-year, showed an overall increase from 2016 to 2020, showing a decrease in performance. It is difficult to compare states on their performance on these safety measures for the reasons previously discussed. Additionally, because of the relatively small number of child victims each year, individual state performance over time is highly sensitive to small changes in the number of victims.

For both of these safety measures, it is important to keep in mind that, while the percentages of maltreatment may be numerically small, these events have serious implications for the safety and well-being of children. Children who are maltreated, either at home or in foster care, can experience a wide variety of consequences, such as physical and mental health problems and issues with cognitive development and academic achievement.⁶⁰ Furthermore, maltreatment recurrence is associated with an increase in psychological distress in children.⁶¹ Conversely, because children who already have mental or physical problems may be at higher risk for maltreatment,⁶² it also is important to note that analyses in this Report do not imply causal relationships between physical and mental health problems and maltreatment recurrence.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to child safety, including child victim and fatality rates as well as state performance on outcomes 1 and 2. The [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#) includes additional contextual data related to child maltreatment and child safety, including the following: age, race, ethnicity, and maltreatment type of child victims; mean and median CPS response times; and individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data.

⁶⁰ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long-term-consequences/>

⁶¹ Adams, Z. W., Moreland, A., Cohen, J. R., Lee, R. C., Hanson, R. F., Danielson, C. K., Self-Brown, S., & Briggs, E. C. (2016). Polyvictimization: Latent profiles and mental health outcomes in a clinical sample of adolescents. *Psychology of Violence, 6*(1), 145–155. <https://www.doi.org/10.1037/a0039713>

⁶² For additional information, refer to Information Gateway's [The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities](#).

Figure II-2.

CHILD VICTIM RATE PER 1,000 CHILDREN,
2020 (N=52)

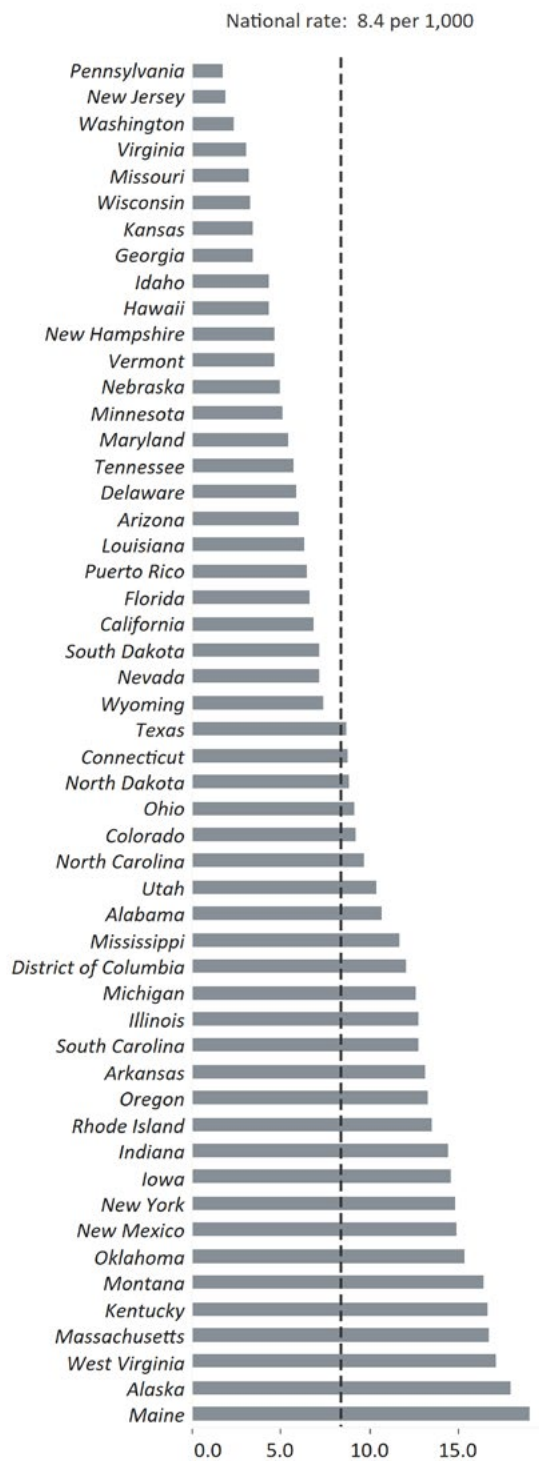
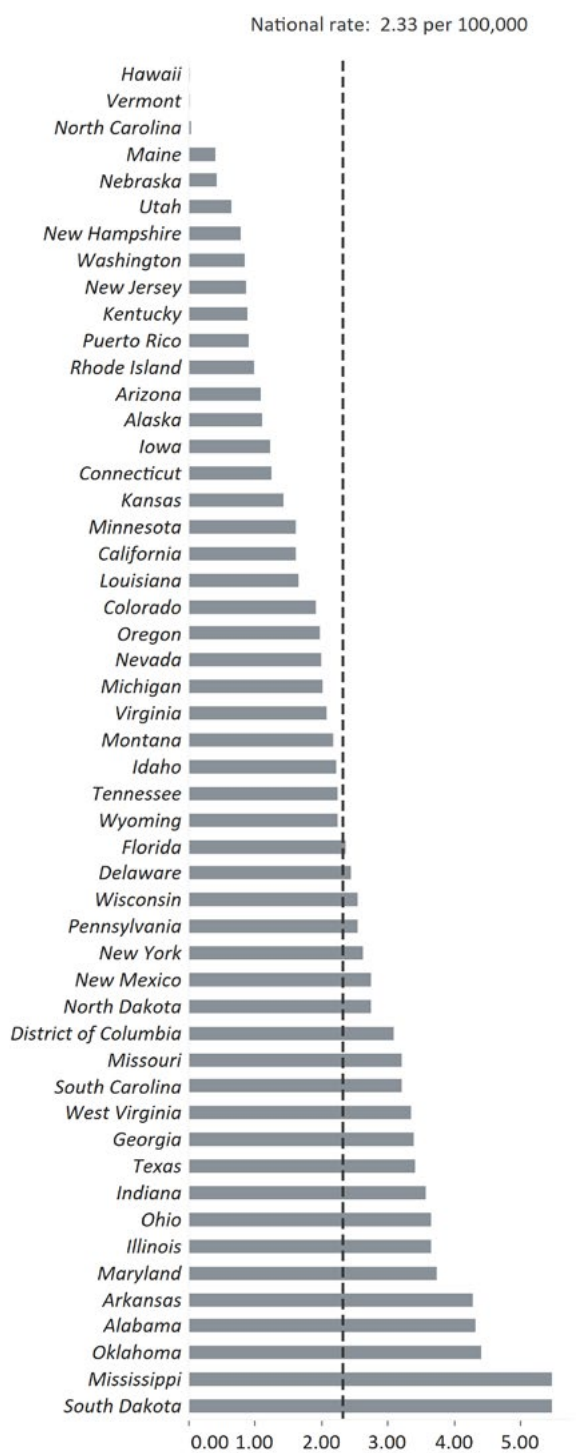


Figure II-3.

CHILD FATALITY RATE PER 100,000 CHILDREN,
2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure II-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING A RECURRENCE OF MALTREATMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS, 2019 (N=49)

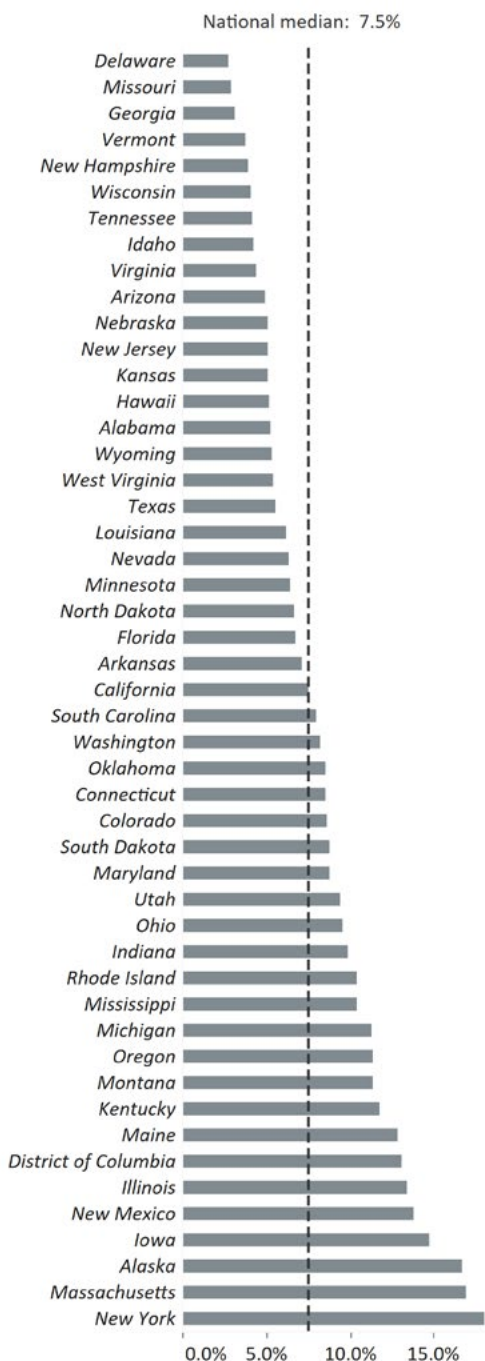
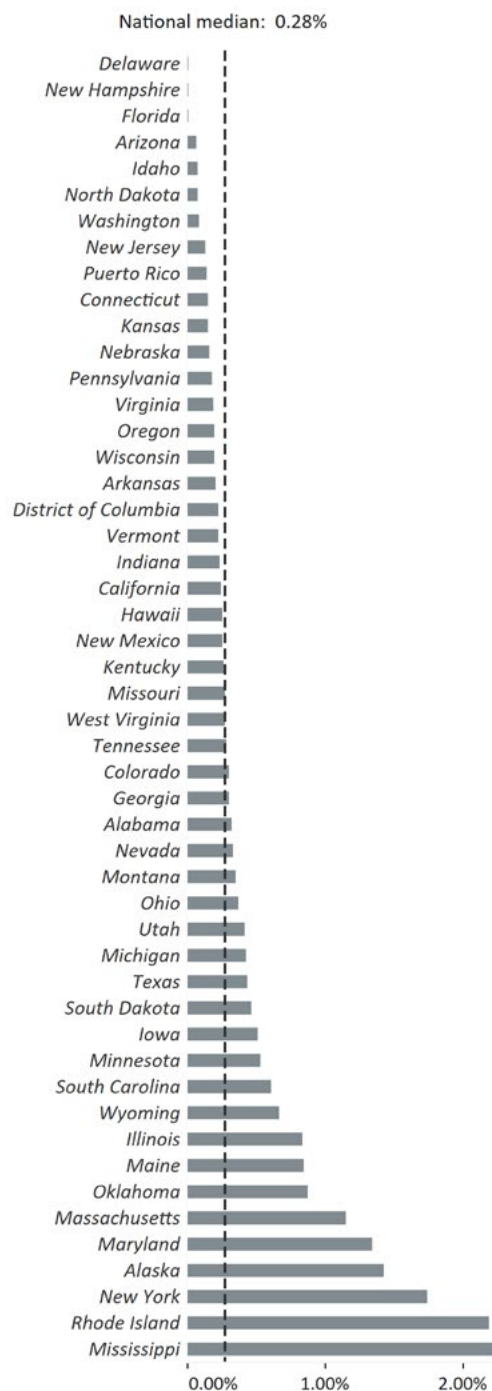


Figure II-5.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING MALTREATMENT IN FOSTER CARE, 2020 (N=50)



Notes.
 —Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.
 —A lower value indicates better performance.

Notes.
 —Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.
 —A lower value indicates better performance.

Table II-5. Percentage of Children Experiencing a Recurrence of Maltreatment Within 12 Months of the initial victimization, 2016–2020 (N=48)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ^a	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2019 ^b
Alabama	4.3%	4.5%	4.8%	5.3%	--	21.3%
Alaska	17.9%	14.8%	17.4%	16.7%	--	-6.4%
Arizona	4.4%	5.0%	5.5%	4.9%	--	11.2%
Arkansas	7.0%	5.5%	6.8%	7.1%	--	2.2%
California	7.7%	8.2%	7.9%	7.5%	--	-2.0%
Colorado	9.0%	8.9%	8.3%	8.6%	--	-4.5%
Connecticut	10.6%	10.1%	9.0%	8.6%	--	-19.1%
Delaware	3.6%	3.9%	3.6%	2.7%	--	-24.1%
District of Columbia	11.8%	12.9%	16.5%	13.1%	--	10.7%
Florida	7.9%	7.8%	7.1%	6.7%	--	-14.3%
Georgia	4.9%	3.4%	3.5%	3.1%	--	-35.1%
Idaho	5.8%	4.4%	4.7%	4.2%	--	-26.5%
Illinois	11.6%	12.6%	12.6%	13.4%	--	15.4%
Indiana	10.6%	9.8%	9.6%	9.9%	--	-6.4%
Iowa	12.3%	14.5%	15.2%	14.7%	--	19.9%
Kansas	5.7%	6.1%	6.8%	5.1%	--	-10.9%
Kentucky	12.6%	14.9%	13.8%	11.8%	--	-6.7%
Louisiana	8.6%	8.7%	6.6%	6.2%	--	-28.2%
Maine	10.1%	10.4%	11.8%	12.8%	--	27.3%
Maryland	9.2%	10.3%	9.9%	8.8%	--	-4.2%
Massachusetts	17.1%	16.7%	17.0%	16.9%	--	-1.2%
Michigan	11.0%	11.3%	10.8%	11.3%	--	2.9%
Minnesota	9.9%	9.9%	7.2%	6.4%	--	-34.8%
Mississippi	9.9%	9.3%	10.5%	10.4%	--	5.3%
Missouri	4.2%	3.4%	3.8%	2.9%	--	-30.7%
Montana	10.4%	11.5%	11.7%	11.4%	--	9.2%
Nebraska	5.3%	6.2%	6.3%	5.1%	--	-4.3%
Nevada	7.6%	6.8%	7.4%	6.4%	--	-16.0%
New Hampshire	3.7%	3.2%	3.6%	3.9%	--	6.2%
New Jersey	6.3%	5.8%	4.9%	5.1%	--	-18.8%
New Mexico	15.1%	14.1%	14.5%	13.8%	--	-8.7%
New York	19.2%	19.1%	18.1%	18.1%	--	-6.0%
North Dakota	11.8%	7.3%	7.3%	6.7%	--	-43.2%
Ohio	9.1%	9.7%	10.1%	9.6%	--	5.6%
Oklahoma	8.8%	8.2%	8.6%	8.5%	--	-3.7%
Oregon	10.8%	11.0%	10.9%	11.4%	--	5.1%
Rhode Island	9.6%	11.1%	10.3%	10.4%	--	8.1%
South Carolina	7.5%	8.2%	9.3%	8.0%	--	6.5%
South Dakota	7.3%	7.9%	7.3%	8.8%	--	19.6%
Tennessee	3.8%	3.7%	3.9%	4.2%	--	9.1%
Texas	5.4%	5.7%	5.5%	5.5%	--	3.1%
Utah	10.3%	10.4%	10.4%	9.4%	--	-8.1%
Vermont	5.7%	5.5%	5.4%	3.8%	--	-33.9%
Virginia	3.3%	4.3%	4.5%	4.4%	--	34.6%
Washington	8.4%	8.1%	9.6%	8.2%	--	-2.5%
West Virginia	3.5%	7.4%	7.0%	5.4%	--	55.1%
Wisconsin	4.2%	4.9%	4.1%	4.1%	--	-4.2%
Wyoming	4.2%	3.9%	4.7%	5.3%	--	27.7%

^a Data were not available to calculate the recurrence of maltreatment of children who were victims of maltreatment in 2020.

^b A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table II-6. Percentage of Children Experiencing Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2016–2020 (N=48)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	0.11%	0.30%	0.17%	0.27%	0.32%	190.9%
Alaska	0.93%	0.88%	1.51%	0.78%	1.43%	53.8%
Arizona	0.06%	0.14%	0.12%	0.12%	0.07%	16.7%
Arkansas	0.18%	0.23%	0.13%	0.15%	0.21%	16.7%
California	0.19%	0.18%	0.19%	0.19%	0.25%	31.6%
Colorado	0.58%	0.49%	0.47%	0.46%	0.30%	-48.3%
Connecticut	0.68%	1.27%	0.03%	0.24%	0.15%	-77.9%
Delaware	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.22%	0.00%	NA
District of Columbia	0.40%	0.27%	0.56%	0.28%	0.23%	-42.5%
Florida	0.05%	0.04%	0.01%	0.02%	0.01%	-80.0%
Hawaii	0.72%	0.11%	0.11%	0.59%	0.26%	-63.9%
Idaho	0.08%	0.04%	0.00%	0.07%	0.08%	0.0%
Illinois	0.55%	0.75%	0.60%	0.72%	0.84%	52.7%
Indiana	0.20%	0.26%	0.20%	0.25%	0.24%	20.0%
Iowa	0.18%	0.22%	0.48%	0.38%	0.51%	183.3%
Kansas	0.19%	0.65%	0.16%	0.25%	0.15%	-21.1%
Kentucky	0.40%	0.51%	0.50%	0.20%	0.27%	-32.5%
Maine	0.69%	0.57%	0.75%	0.70%	0.85%	23.2%
Maryland	0.60%	0.47%	0.55%	0.54%	1.34%	123.3%
Massachusetts	1.37%	1.00%	1.22%	0.96%	1.15%	-16.1%
Michigan	0.56%	0.88%	0.71%	0.88%	0.43%	-23.2%
Minnesota	0.68%	0.81%	0.70%	0.37%	0.53%	-22.1%
Mississippi	1.18%	1.14%	1.26%	1.55%	2.23%	89.0%
Missouri	0.25%	0.28%	0.27%	0.39%	0.28%	12.0%
Montana	0.18%	0.39%	0.84%	0.55%	0.35%	94.4%
Nebraska	0.13%	0.23%	0.15%	0.21%	0.16%	23.1%
Nevada	0.20%	0.21%	0.24%	0.39%	0.33%	65.0%
New Hampshire	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	0.05%	0.00%	NA
New Jersey	0.07%	0.12%	0.32%	0.28%	0.13%	85.7%
New Mexico	0.09%	0.11%	0.19%	0.03%	0.26%	188.9%
New York	3.13%	3.28%	1.68%	1.50%	1.74%	-44.4%
North Dakota	0.00%	0.00%	0.15%	0.12%	0.08%	NA
Ohio	0.52%	0.42%	0.43%	0.49%	0.37%	-28.8%
Oklahoma	1.28%	1.23%	1.09%	0.69%	0.88%	-31.3%
Oregon	0.83%	0.95%	0.74%	0.86%	0.20%	-75.9%
Pennsylvania	0.14%	0.20%	0.11%	0.14%	0.18%	28.6%
Rhode Island	1.60%	2.06%	1.80%	2.06%	2.19%	36.9%
South Carolina	0.39%	0.50%	0.67%	0.41%	0.61%	56.4%
South Dakota	0.13%	0.16%	0.04%	0.26%	0.47%	261.5%
Tennessee	0.13%	0.14%	0.19%	0.17%	0.29%	123.1%
Texas	0.31%	0.27%	0.23%	0.24%	0.44%	41.9%
Utah	0.14%	0.43%	0.43%	0.20%	0.42%	200.0%
Vermont	0.00%	0.10%	0.15%	0.15%	0.23%	NA
Virginia	0.26%	0.20%	0.13%	0.25%	0.19%	-26.9%
Washington	0.11%	0.08%	0.07%	0.06%	0.09%	-18.2%
West Virginia	0.11%	0.21%	0.11%	0.14%	0.28%	154.5%
Wisconsin	0.14%	0.12%	0.26%	0.11%	0.20%	42.9%
Wyoming	0.40%	0.24%	0.24%	0.00%	0.67%	67.5%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.— Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter III: Finding Permanent Homes for Children in Foster Care

When foster care is necessary to ensure a child’s safety and well-being, state child welfare agencies are tasked with the responsibility of working with families and the courts to return children to their homes or to find other permanent homes in a timely manner.⁶³ Outcome 3 (increase permanency for children in foster care) encompasses these permanency goals for children and youth. This chapter presents key findings on state performance toward this outcome by considering children who have exited foster care and assessing state data on the percentage who achieve permanency and the percentage who exit to emancipation. For the Child Welfare Outcomes Report data indicators, a child achieves permanency when they are reported as discharged from foster care to one of the following arrangements:

- Reunified with parents or primary caretakers
- Living with other relatives⁶⁴
- Guardianship⁶⁵
- Legally adopted

State and national performance on exits to permanency for children in foster care is assessed using the following measures:

- Measure 3.1: The percentage of all children exiting foster care who exited to a permanent home
- Measure 3.2: The percentage of all children exiting foster care with a diagnosed disability who were discharged to a permanent home
- Measure 3.3: The percentage of all children exiting foster care who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 and who were discharged to a permanent home
- Measure 3.4: The percentage of all children who emancipated from foster care and who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger
- Measure 3.5: The percentage of children by racial or ethnic category who exited either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship⁶⁶

⁶³ For the purposes of this Report, “foster care” refers to a variety of out-of-home placement settings in which children are placed away from their parents or guardians under the placement and care responsibility of the state child welfare agency for at least 24 hours. This includes foster family homes, group homes, shelters, residential treatment facilities, and similar placements. For more information, see [Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review](#).

⁶⁴ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, the discharge reasons of “reunification with parents or primary caretakers” and “living with other relatives” are combined into the category of “reunification.”

⁶⁵ Legal guardians include relatives and nonrelatives.

⁶⁶ Due to the structure of this measure, data regarding (1) the range of state performance and (2) national medians and change in performance over time were included in separate tables. Additionally, in this Report, this measure is only reported at the national level. To view state-by-state data on this measure, please visit the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

Children Exiting Foster Care

Nationally, approximately 223,000 children exited foster care in 2020. Across states, the median length of stay for children exiting care ranged from 8.1 months to 26.5 months. Nearly all states (50) reported a median length of stay less than 24 months for children exiting care, and five states reported a median length of stay less than 12 months for children exiting foster care. Chapter IV discusses outcomes designed to address the timeliness of these exits.

Table III–1 provides a breakdown of the foster care discharge reasons reported for these children. Nationally, 89.0 percent of all children exiting foster care during 2020 were discharged to a permanent home (i.e., were discharged to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship).⁶⁷ Although that percentage is high, it is important to keep in mind that a central goal in child welfare is to find permanent, secure homes for 100 percent of children who must enter foster care.

In 2020, 89.0 percent of all children who exited foster care during the year were discharged to a permanent home.

Table III–1. Foster Care Discharge Reasons, 2020 (N=51)

Discharge reason	Number of children	Percentage of total exits ^a
Adoption	56,391	25.3%
Emancipation	19,665	8.8%
Guardianship	23,121	10.4%
Reunification	119,028	53.4%
Other ^b	4,832	2.2%

^a The percentage of total exits was calculated based on 223,037 children exiting care in 2020. The percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

^b "Other" includes the discharge reasons of runaway, death, or transfer to another agency as well as missing data.

Nationally, approximately 20,000 youth exited foster care in 2020 with a discharge reason of emancipation.⁶⁸ These are youth for whom the state was unable to find a permanent home. Over the past 5 years, with the exception of 2018, the percentage of children exiting to emancipation has remained over 8 percent (8.5 percent in 2016, 8.4 percent in 2017, 7.6 percent in 2018, 8.2 percent in 2019, and 8.8 percent in 2020). The percentage change from 2016 to 2020 represented an overall increase of 3.5 percent. The national median was 7.5 in both 2016 and 2020.⁶⁹

There was considerable variation between states in 2020 regarding the percentages of children exiting foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation. The states with the highest percentages of emancipation were New York (24.5 percent), Delaware (23.2 percent), Virginia (20.2 percent), and Rhode Island (16.2 percent). The states with the lowest percentages were Puerto Rico (0.8 percent), Wyoming (1.4 percent), and West Virginia (2.1 percent).

Since 2016, the percentage of all children emancipating from foster care has increased by 3.5 percent.

One possibility for this variation across states is the differences across states in the ages of children entering foster care (i.e., a state with proportionally more older youth entering foster care would have a higher percentage of the state's foster youth exiting to emancipation). However, there was a low positive correlation between the percentage of youth in a state discharged from foster care who were emancipated and the percentage of children who entered foster care in the state who were age 12 or older (Pearson's $r=0.37$).

⁶⁷ This percentage uses the total numbers reported across all states, as presented in table III–1. This should not be confused with the national median on measure 3.1, which is the median across states.

⁶⁸ For more information regarding the AFCARS definition of emancipation, see [Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review](#).

⁶⁹ These percentages refer to the median across states for all children exiting foster care to emancipation. This should not be confused with the median for outcome measure 3.4, which examines the subpopulation of children who were discharged to emancipation after entering care at age 12 or younger.

Range of Performance in Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Table III–2 displays state performance in 2020 on measures regarding finding permanent homes for children in foster care. Table III–3 provides data about the racial and ethnic categories of children who left care to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home).

**Table III–2. Range of State Performance, 2020
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care**

Outcome measures	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
Measure 3.1: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51)	85.8%	90.3%	91.8%	73.9%–98.8%
Measure 3.2: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were identified as having a diagnosed disability, what percentage left to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=49)	75.1%	82.1%	88.3%	55.8%–100%
Measure 3.3: Of all children who exited foster care during the year and were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, what percentage left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51)	56.9%	62.9%	71.0%	36.6%–96.1%
Measure 3.4: Of all children exiting foster care during the year to emancipation, what percentage were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into care? (N=51) ^a	9.6%	14.5%	20.1%	4.3%–62.9%

^a For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

**Table III–3. Range of State Performance, 2020
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care**

Measure 3.5: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage by racial/ethnic category left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=51)	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
American Indian or Alaska Native	50.0%	83.3%	92.3%	0.0%–100.0%
Asian	76.7%	89.3%	100.0%	0.0%–100.0%
Black or African American	82.5%	86.3%	91.4%	69.7%–100.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	85.2%	89.3%	92.6%	70.2%–98.9%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	58.3%	91.7%	100.0%	0.0%–100.0%
White	88.9%	91.4%	93.0%	74.5%–100.0%
Two or more races	88.0%	90.8%	94.0%	0.0%–100.0%

Note.—All races exclude children of Hispanic or Latino origin. Children of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be any race.

Measures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 assess permanency for children at the time of discharge from foster care, and measure 3.5 assesses permanency by race and ethnicity categories. The national median across states for all children who exited foster care to permanency during 2020 (measure 3.1) was 90.3 percent. State medians ranged from 73.9 percent to 98.8 percent. Only the following three states reported permanency rates below 80.0 percent: New York (73.9 percent), Delaware (75.9 percent), and Virginia (77.2 percent).

Children with disabilities

For the purpose of AFCARS and this Report, a child is determined to have a disability if a qualified professional has clinically diagnosed the child as having one of the following conditions: mental retardation, visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, or other medically diagnosed conditions requiring special care.⁷⁰ As indicated in table III–2, states tended to be considerably more successful in 2020 in finding permanent homes for the general foster care population exiting foster care (national median: 90.3 percent) than for children with diagnosed disabilities who exited foster care (national median: 82.1 percent). State medians regarding permanent homes for children with disabilities varied considerably in 2020, ranging from 55.8 percent to 100.0 percent, with five states' medians on this measure being the same or higher than their medians for measure 3.1 (permanency for all children).⁷¹ Additionally, there was a high correlation between state performance in achieving permanency across all children who exited foster care with their performance on this measure (Pearson's $r=0.73$). The disparity between achieving permanency for all children exiting care and for children with disabilities has been a consistent finding in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports.⁷² Because children with diagnosed disabilities may need higher levels of care, they may be more likely to be placed in residential treatment facilities, which may be better equipped to provide such care, and are, therefore, less likely to achieve permanent homes with families. The findings presented in this Report suggest that agencies should continue to review their data and current practices to consider whether there are ways to increase placing these children in permanent homes.

Older youth in foster care

Another long-standing pattern that continues in this Report is the difficulty states have in establishing permanency for children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12. The national median regarding exits to permanency by older youth, defined as children who were older than age 12 at the time of their most recent entry into care, was only 62.9 percent.⁷³ There was a high correlation between a state's success in 2020 at achieving permanency across all children that exited foster care (measure 3.1) and their success in achieving permanency for older youth (Pearson's $r=0.87$).

Older youth in foster care may face numerous age-specific barriers to permanency.⁷⁴ For example, there may be a shortage of families who are willing and able to provide permanent homes for older youth. This could be due to multiple factors, but one likely contributor is the higher rate of risky behavior among older youth in foster care. Older youth transitioning from foster care have relatively higher rates of substance use referrals, incarceration, and giving birth to or fathering a child.⁷⁵ In addition, youth with special health-care needs might require more resources, and there may be a lack of families willing and able to provide them with the support they need. For example, children with diagnoses of emotional disturbance and comorbid conditions are more likely to have removal reasons involving child behavior problems compared to children without those diagnoses⁷⁶, which may mean these children and their foster families may require additional resources to secure placement stability.

Overall, states are less successful in establishing permanency for children with disabilities and children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 than they were for the total population of children exiting care.

⁷⁰ For more information on disabilities and AFCARS, including complete definitions and conditions that may be mapped to AFCARS, see [AFCARS Technical Bulletin #2: Disability Information](#), which was last revised in February 2012.

⁷¹ The five states were Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Michigan, and Puerto Rico.

⁷² CB released two data briefs that explore foster care outcomes of children and youth with diagnosed conditions in foster care: [Analysis According to Special Health Care Needs Status](#) and [Analysis by the Type of Diagnosis or Diagnoses the Child Has](#).

⁷³ The number of older children in foster care may include youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

⁷⁴ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care*. HHS, ACF, CB. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>

⁷⁵ For more information, see the [National Youth in Transition Database Data Briefs page](#) on the CB website.

⁷⁶ Hernández Baullosa, T., White, T., & Haight, J. (2022). *Analysis by the type of diagnosis or diagnoses the child has*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Data Analytic and Reporting Team. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/data-brief2-analysis-by-diagnosis-type.pdf>

Additionally, there may also be agency practices that act as barriers to permanency for older youth. Specifically, child welfare agencies may lack the commitment needed to establish permanency options for older youth in care, with staff perhaps believing these individuals to be unadoptable.⁷⁷ Furthermore, some agencies may focus on providing independent living services to these youth rather than finding permanency options. Although these types of services are an important component of preparing youth for adulthood, they are not sufficient for connecting them with permanent families.⁷⁸

Finally, older youth might show some resistance to permanency planning. If permanency planning involves the termination of their birth parents' rights, older youth might be hesitant to form ties with new families, as many still have emotional ties to their birth families. These youth also may be unaware of the long-term consequences of not having a family to turn to during their young adult years, which may cause feelings of apathy toward permanency.⁷⁹

Youth emancipating from foster care

Measure 3.4 examines the amount of time children were in foster care before emancipation. The data in table III–2 show that, in half of the states, 14.5 percent or more of the children who were emancipated from foster care in 2020 were age 12 or younger at their entry into foster care (a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Individual state medians varied widely, from 4.3 percent to 62.9 percent.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that emancipations—regardless of age at entry—are a relatively small proportion of all exits from care for any given state, which can cause large fluctuations in state performance in a single year and over time. For example, 15 states had fewer than 100 children exiting care in 2020 with a discharge reason of emancipation, with Wyoming reporting only 14 such children. This effect will be especially important to keep in mind in future Reports if, as previously discussed, the total number of children emancipating from foster care for some states continue to decline.

Race and ethnicity of children exiting to permanency

Measure 3.5 assesses the percentage of children exiting to a permanent home by race and ethnicity (see table III–3). The national median across states for children exiting to permanency during 2020 was 83.3 percent for American Indian or Alaska Native children, 89.3 percent for Asian children, 86.3 percent for Black or African American children, 89.3 percent for Hispanic or Latino children (of any race), 91.7 percent for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children, 91.4 percent for White children, and 90.8 percent for children of two or more races. For a breakout by state and exit reasons for this measure, visit the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Achieving Permanency

Table III–4 presents the medians across states for 2016–2020 on the measures pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care. The table also presents a summary of the changes in state performance between 2016 and 2020 on these measures. These medians and changes in performance over time should be viewed together to gain a better understanding of trends over time.

⁷⁷ Groh, A. (2009). *It's time to make older child adoption a reality: Because every child and youth deserves a family*. North American Council on Adoptable Children. <https://www.nacac.org/resource/its-time-to-make-older-child-adoption-a-reality-because-every-child-and-youth-deserves-a-family/>

⁷⁸ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *Promoting permanency for older youth in out-of-home care*. HHS, ACF, CB. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-permanency>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Table III-4. State Medians and Changes in Performance Over Time, 2016–2020
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Outcome measures ^a	Median by year					Improved in performance ^b	Declined in performance ^b
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Measure 3.1: Percentage of all children who exited foster care to a permanent home (N=50)	89.3%	90.3%	90.5%	90.5%	90.3%	5 states (10%)	4 states (8%)
Measure 3.2: Percentage of all children with a diagnosed disability exiting foster care who were discharged to a permanent home (N=44)	82.1%	81.5%	82.6%	83.2%	82.9%	11 states (25%)	7 states (16%)
Measure 3.3: Percentage of all children who entered foster care when they were older than age 12 who were discharged to a permanent home (N=50)	65.3%	64.0%	62.7%	64.0%	62.7%	8 states (16%)	22 states (44%)
Measure 3.4: Percentage of all children emancipated from foster care who entered foster care when they were age 12 or younger (N=50) ^c	16.7%	16.6%	15.5%	15.0%	14.6%	28 states (56%)	18 states (36%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table III-2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for the analyses conducted for this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table III-2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

Table III-5 presents data about the state medians regarding the percentages of children, by racial and ethnic categories, that left care to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

Table III-5. State Medians Performance and Changes in Performance Over Time, 2016–2020
Outcome 3: Increase Permanency for Children in Foster Care

Measure 3.5: Of all children who exited foster care during the year, what percentage by racial/ethnic category left either to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship (i.e., were discharged to a permanent home)? (N=50) ^a	Median by year					Improved in performance ^b	Declined in performance ^b
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
American Indian or Alaska Native	86.4% ^{cc}	88.0%	83.3%	84.6%	83.5%	18 states (35%)	12 states (24%)
Asian	87.5%	86.7%	93.2%	85.7%	89.3%	18 states (35%)	14 states (27%)
Black or African American	85.7%	86.0%	86.7%	86.9%	86.3%	11 states (22%)	9 states (18%)
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	90.9%	90.5%	90.4%	90.8%	89.3%	4 states (8%)	10 states (20%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	100.0%	100.0%	93.3%	100.0%	91.7%	8 states (16%)	8 states (16%)
White	90.7%	91.0%	91.8%	91.6%	91.4%	4 states (8%)	4 states (8%)
Two or more races	91.4%	92.0%	92.0%	91.3%	90.8%	8 states (16%)	4 states (8%)

^a All races exclude children of Hispanic or Latino origin. Children of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be any race. Full descriptions for this measure can be found in table III-2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for the analyses conducted for this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table III-3 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As indicated in table III–4 and table III–6 (at the end of this chapter), states continued to be successful in finding permanent homes for children discharged from foster care (measure 3.1). The national median has increased slightly since 2016, though the overall 1.1-percent increase over time does not meet the threshold of meaningful change utilized in this Report. Because of the generally high performance by states on this measure, meaningful change is less likely to occur over the relatively short 5-year timeframe under review for this Report. This is evidenced by 41 states (82 percent) reporting no change in performance and 5 states (10 percent) demonstrating an improvement in performance.

As previously discussed, states have not been as successful in achieving permanency for children exiting with disabilities (measure 3.2) compared with their performance for all children. For example, the national median in 2020 for measure 3.1 was 90.3 percent while the national median for measure 3.2 was 82.9 percent. The national median showed a 1.0-percent increase between 2016 (82.1 percent) and 2020 (82.9 percent). Prior Child Welfare Outcomes Reports also noted a reliable, although not meaningful, yearly improvement on this measure, with slightly more states showing an improvement in performance than a decline.

In contrast, state performance on measure 3.3 (permanency for older children) continued to be a challenge for states. The national median has remained relatively flat over time, fluctuating from 65.3 percent in 2016 to 62.7 percent in 2020—an overall decrease of 4.0 percent. Furthermore, more states (44 percent) demonstrated a decline in performance than an improvement (16 percent) during that period.

One of the most notable changes in performance between 2016 and 2020 was in the percentage of children who emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger (measure 3.4). As presented in table III–4, 28 states (56 percent) demonstrated improved performance between 2016 and 2020 on this measure. The national median improved from 16.7 percent to 14.6 percent—a meaningful improvement in performance of 12.6 percent. This finding reflects a continuing trend noted in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, although the magnitude of change may be decreasing.⁸⁰

Between 2016 and 2020, the median percentage of children emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger declined by 12.6 percent—with 28 states demonstrating an improvement in performance.

For measure 3.5 (see table III–5), which reports on the race and ethnicity of children exiting to permanency, a decrease in the national median was observed regarding American Indian or Alaska Native children (3.4 percent), Hispanic or Latino children (1.8 percent), and for children of two or more races (0.7 percent). The following race and ethnicity categories showed an improvement in performance over the 5-year period: Asian children (2.1 percent), Black or African American children (0.7 percent), and White children (0.8 percent). These changes in performance, however, were less than 5 percent, which is considered not meaningful based on the standard procedure used in this Report. The national median regarding Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children, though, decreased by 8.3 from 2016 to 2020, which is considered a meaningful change in performance, but the total number of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander experiencing an exit type was less than 600 in 2016 and slightly over 600 in 2020.

⁸⁰ The following are the 5-year percentage decreases noted in prior Reports for the percentage of children who emancipated from foster care who had entered care when they were age 12 or younger (measure 3.4): 28.4 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2016*, 24.9 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2017*, 21.0 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2018*, and 19.4 percent in *Child Welfare Outcomes Report 2019*.

Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care

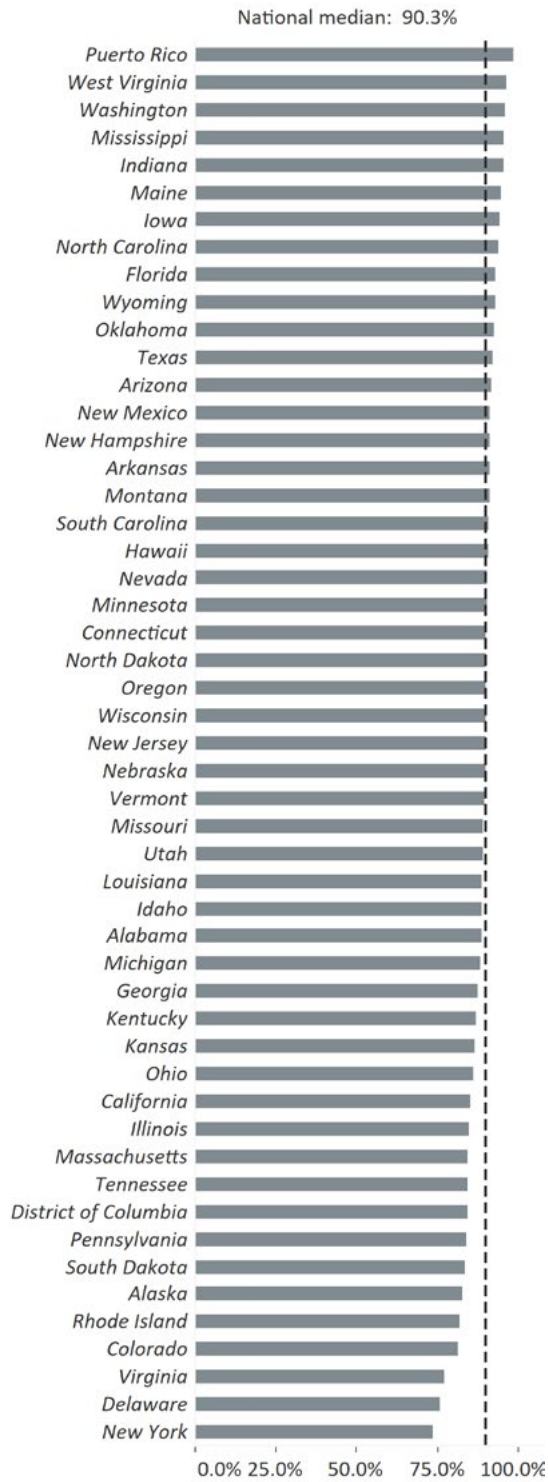
In 2020, 89.0 percent of all children exiting foster care were discharged to permanency. Similarly, the national medians for achieving permanency for children exiting foster care (measure 3.1) during the period of 2016–2020 remained consistently high, including 90.3 percent in 2020. Additionally, most states continued to show progress in reducing the percentage of children exiting foster care to emancipation. This includes 56 percent of states demonstrating a reduction in the percentage of children emancipating from foster care who entered foster care at age 12 or younger (measure 3.4).

States continued to show some improvement in finding permanent homes for exiting children with disabilities who exit care to permanency (measure 3.2), but there was negligible change in performance regarding older children achieving permanency (measure 3.3). Data for measure 3.5 shows states have experienced some improvement in finding permanent homes for Black or African American, Asian, and White children. However, states seemed to struggle in achieving permanency for American Indian or Alaska Native children; Hispanic or Latino children; children of two or more races, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children. Overall, there is still room for improvement for outcome 3, and efforts are still needed to continue to reduce the disparities observed in permanency outcomes for children with disabilities, those who entered foster care when they were older than age 12, and by race and ethnicity. State program administrators, policymakers, and researchers in the child welfare field should heighten their efforts on detecting and addressing possible barriers to permanency for children in foster care who have disabilities, who entered care when they were older, or who are of a race or ethnicity that agencies have struggled to achieve permanency for.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to state data on outcome 3 (increase permanency for children in foster care). The [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#) has additional contextual information regarding finding permanent homes for children in foster care, including child age, race, and ethnicity and the median length of stay of children in care, entering care, and exiting care. Individual state data, including those states excluded from analyses and counts in this Report due to incomplete or inadequate data, are also available.

Figure III-1.

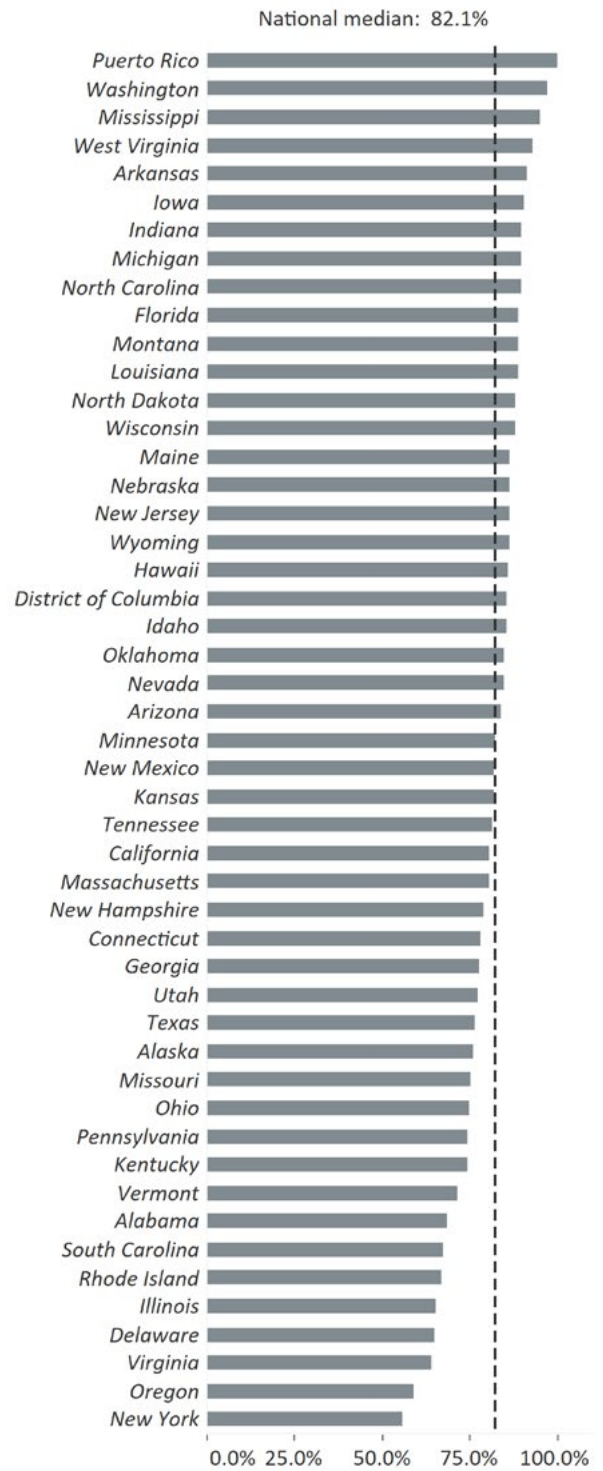
PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN WHO EXIT TO PERMANENCY, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure III-2.

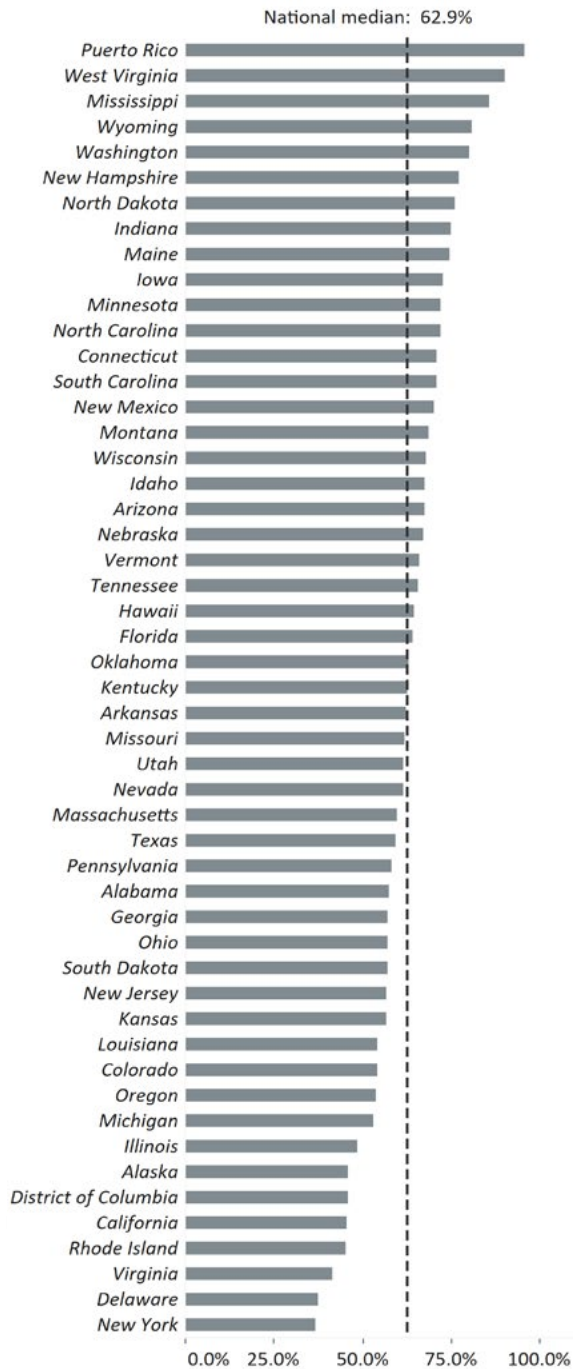
PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN WITH A DIAGNOSED DISABILITY WHO EXIT TO PERMANENCY, 2020 (N=49)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure III-3.

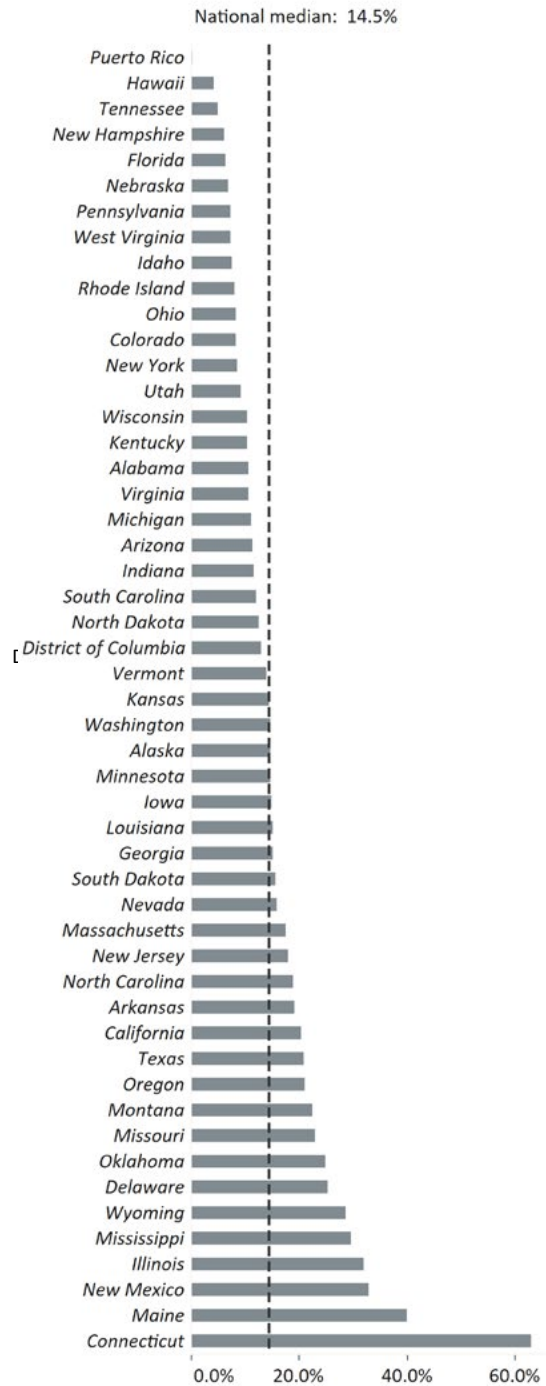
PERCENTAGE OF EXITING CHILDREN AGE 12 AND OLDER WHO EXIT TO PERMANENCY, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure III-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO EMANCIPATION WHO ENTERED AT AGE 12 OR YOUNGER, 2020 (N=51)



Notes.
—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.
—A lower value indicates better performance.

Table III-6. Outcome 3.1: Percentage of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	87.5%	87.3%	89.4%	89.0%	88.9%	1.6%
Alaska	87.5%	86.2%	88.6%	86.4%	83.0%	-5.1%
Arizona	89.6%	90.3%	89.7%	89.4%	92.1%	2.8%
Arkansas	93.1%	93.1%	92.5%	92.3%	91.4%	-1.8%
California	83.8%	84.8%	90.5%	85.9%	85.3%	1.8%
Colorado	82.3%	84.3%	83.8%	81.9%	81.6%	-0.8%
Connecticut	85.8%	90.8%	86.5%	90.2%	90.4%	5.3%
Delaware	84.6%	85.6%	70.5%	75.1%	75.9%	-10.3%
District of Columbia	83.4%	81.1%	85.9%	84.1%	84.6%	1.4%
Florida	92.7%	92.8%	92.6%	94.0%	93.3%	0.7%
Georgia	89.0%	88.9%	88.8%	88.8%	87.6%	-1.5%
Hawaii	91.6%	89.9%	89.9%	91.4%	90.9%	-0.8%
Idaho	93.5%	92.7%	90.9%	91.5%	89.0%	-4.8%
Illinois	92.2%	93.6%	89.5%	87.3%	85.0%	-7.8%
Indiana	95.6%	95.7%	95.8%	96.1%	95.8%	0.2%
Iowa	91.9%	92.7%	93.7%	93.9%	94.6%	3.0%
Kansas	87.4%	85.2%	87.1%	87.7%	86.9%	-0.6%
Kentucky	86.7%	87.0%	88.2%	88.8%	87.2%	0.6%
Louisiana	92.9%	91.0%	90.6%	91.2%	89.1%	-4.1%
Maine	92.1%	93.7%	92.4%	93.8%	94.8%	3.0%
Massachusetts	84.7%	85.2%	85.7%	86.3%	84.8%	0.1%
Michigan	86.6%	85.8%	86.1%	87.4%	88.5%	2.2%
Minnesota	90.3%	90.8%	91.5%	91.4%	90.8%	0.5%
Mississippi	93.3%	94.4%	95.9%	96.6%	95.9%	2.9%
Missouri	90.4%	90.0%	90.3%	90.2%	89.5%	-1.0%
Montana	88.8%	91.9%	91.5%	91.2%	91.3%	2.8%
Nebraska	90.8%	91.2%	92.4%	91.3%	90.2%	-0.7%
Nevada	92.4%	90.9%	93.0%	92.3%	90.8%	-1.8%
New Hampshire	84.3%	81.8%	91.1%	91.9%	91.5%	8.6%
New Jersey	92.1%	91.7%	92.0%	92.3%	90.3%	-2.0%
New Mexico	94.6%	93.3%	92.6%	93.9%	91.5%	-3.3%
New York	81.3%	81.1%	81.8%	81.7%	73.9%	-9.1%
North Carolina	88.5%	93.7%	93.0%	94.1%	93.9%	6.1%
North Dakota	79.5%	83.7%	82.8%	83.5%	90.3%	13.6%
Ohio	87.8%	87.9%	89.9%	87.6%	86.3%	-1.7%
Oklahoma	91.8%	92.5%	92.2%	93.9%	92.8%	1.1%
Oregon	87.8%	88.8%	90.4%	90.5%	90.3%	2.9%
Pennsylvania	81.3%	85.5%	87.1%	84.8%	84.2%	3.6%
Rhode Island	85.8%	84.6%	85.0%	79.1%	81.9%	-4.6%
South Carolina	92.2%	92.2%	92.2%	92.7%	91.3%	-1.1%
South Dakota	81.3%	84.3%	83.0%	83.3%	83.8%	3.1%
Tennessee	84.9%	83.9%	83.9%	85.6%	84.7%	-0.2%
Texas	92.9%	92.8%	93.5%	93.5%	92.4%	-0.5%
Utah	86.0%	88.2%	89.0%	91.1%	89.4%	4.0%
Vermont	91.3%	91.9%	92.4%	89.0%	89.8%	-1.7%
Virginia	69.4%	79.0%	72.0%	75.2%	77.2%	11.3%
Washington	95.5%	95.4%	95.3%	96.2%	96.1%	0.6%
West Virginia	96.1%	95.9%	97.3%	96.9%	96.9%	0.8%

Table III–6. Outcome 3.1: Percentage of Children Exiting to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Wisconsin	90.8%	90.7%	90.5%	90.4%	90.3%	–0.6%
Wyoming	90.0%	90.3%	92.3%	93.0%	93.1%	3.5%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III–7. Outcome 3.2: Percentage of Exiting Children With Diagnosed Disabilities Who Exit to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=44)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	74.0%	68.1%	70.0%	70.6%	68.7%	–7.1%
Alaska	84.9%	86.4%	90.2%	84.7%	75.9%	–10.6%
Arizona	85.9%	84.6%	80.9%	80.9%	83.8%	–2.5%
Arkansas	93.8%	93.7%	93.3%	92.4%	91.4%	–2.5%
California	78.8%	79.5%	87.9%	81.7%	80.8%	2.4%
Connecticut	75.5%	75.9%	72.1%	77.9%	78.2%	3.6%
Delaware	71.2%	71.3%	57.5%	63.5%	65.0%	–8.7%
District of Columbia	50.0%	22.2%	72.7%	81.3%	85.7%	71.4%
Florida	91.0%	92.5%	91.1%	89.4%	89.0%	–2.2%
Georgia	77.2%	76.8%	76.7%	77.0%	77.6%	0.5%
Hawaii	86.5%	86.6%	87.4%	88.7%	86.1%	–0.5%
Idaho	82.4%	89.4%	85.2%	88.8%	85.5%	3.7%
Illinois	91.7%	90.0%	77.4%	67.1%	65.4%	–28.7%
Indiana	87.0%	87.3%	88.0%	90.0%	89.9%	3.3%
Iowa	82.0%	84.6%	88.0%	88.8%	90.4%	10.3%
Kansas	84.2%	78.2%	82.4%	83.6%	81.8%	–2.8%
Kentucky	74.3%	74.3%	73.1%	76.9%	74.3%	0.1%
Louisiana	89.4%	87.9%	88.8%	89.2%	88.7%	–0.7%
Maine	75.3%	81.2%	79.9%	83.3%	86.6%	15.0%
Michigan	92.0%	93.9%	94.0%	91.3%	89.9%	–2.3%
Minnesota	82.4%	81.8%	84.0%	82.4%	82.1%	–0.4%
Mississippi	91.6%	92.2%	92.5%	94.8%	95.2%	4.0%
Missouri	77.2%	77.6%	82.0%	73.0%	75.1%	–2.8%
Nebraska	86.1%	88.0%	91.0%	90.7%	86.6%	0.6%
Nevada	75.2%	77.7%	72.8%	85.3%	84.7%	12.7%
New Hampshire	80.1%	76.8%	82.7%	81.3%	78.8%	–1.6%
New Jersey	87.4%	88.5%	88.3%	88.9%	86.6%	–1.0%
New Mexico	89.3%	84.3%	87.3%	86.9%	82.0%	–8.1%
New York	70.8%	69.4%	69.3%	68.0%	55.8%	–21.2%
North Carolina	82.2%	88.6%	83.0%	89.1%	89.6%	9.0%
North Dakota	74.2%	74.5%	72.1%	77.0%	88.3%	19.0%
Ohio	79.4%	78.5%	81.8%	79.0%	75.0%	–5.6%
Oklahoma	83.6%	85.3%	85.4%	85.0%	84.7%	1.3%
Oregon	61.1%	55.2%	62.2%	53.0%	59.0%	–3.5%
Rhode Island	76.3%	71.3%	75.8%	59.5%	67.2%	–12.0%
Tennessee	72.3%	73.6%	72.6%	81.2%	81.6%	12.9%
Texas	77.6%	77.7%	79.4%	80.7%	76.5%	–1.4%
Utah	61.9%	44.6%	51.8%	83.1%	77.3%	25.0%

Table III-7. Outcome 3.2: Percentage of Exiting Children With Diagnosed Disabilities Who Exit to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=44)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Vermont	63.2%	79.3%	68.0%	50.0%	71.4%	13.1%
Virginia	56.7%	68.5%	58.8%	61.1%	64.3%	13.4%
Washington	95.6%	96.3%	95.5%	96.9%	97.0%	1.5%
West Virginia	91.4%	90.2%	93.6%	89.9%	92.8%	1.5%
Wisconsin	82.8%	82.9%	86.5%	84.8%	88.2%	6.5%
Wyoming	86.0%	86.3%	87.4%	84.1%	86.6%	0.7%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III-8. Outcome 3.3: Percentage of Children Exiting at Age 12 and Older Who Exit to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	60.0%	56.0%	59.4%	58.8%	57.7%	-3.9%
Alaska	50.7%	52.5%	52.3%	54.7%	46.2%	-8.8%
Arizona	60.9%	61.2%	60.1%	59.3%	67.6%	11.0%
Arkansas	72.8%	67.5%	68.9%	64.7%	62.5%	-14.2%
California	47.9%	47.7%	56.9%	44.5%	45.7%	-4.6%
Colorado	62.9%	62.7%	60.4%	56.3%	54.1%	-13.9%
Connecticut	63.7%	62.4%	50.7%	63.4%	71.1%	11.6%
Delaware	49.5%	48.4%	35.9%	32.7%	37.4%	-24.4%
District of Columbia	46.2%	45.3%	51.2%	51.9%	45.9%	-0.5%
Florida	65.6%	66.1%	63.2%	66.2%	64.2%	-2.2%
Georgia	67.2%	63.9%	61.3%	60.6%	57.4%	-14.6%
Hawaii	73.1%	66.2%	69.8%	70.0%	64.8%	-11.3%
Idaho	77.5%	68.9%	62.4%	65.0%	67.6%	-12.8%
Illinois	57.3%	60.7%	46.6%	45.4%	48.6%	-15.1%
Indiana	77.3%	76.9%	76.8%	77.4%	75.2%	-2.7%
Iowa	73.2%	70.8%	71.7%	71.5%	72.9%	-0.3%
Kansas	61.6%	58.6%	63.4%	58.9%	56.9%	-7.7%
Kentucky	61.7%	62.2%	64.1%	64.7%	62.9%	1.9%
Louisiana	71.4%	64.0%	59.4%	64.0%	54.2%	-24.1%
Maine	51.6%	63.7%	46.6%	63.0%	74.8%	44.9%
Massachusetts	61.8%	61.1%	60.9%	61.4%	59.9%	-3.1%
Michigan	56.0%	52.1%	51.7%	54.6%	53.2%	-4.9%
Minnesota	76.6%	75.0%	74.1%	72.6%	72.2%	-5.8%
Mississippi	81.5%	84.6%	86.1%	85.7%	85.8%	5.3%
Missouri	64.1%	62.5%	61.8%	60.3%	61.9%	-3.3%
Montana	66.4%	69.6%	67.1%	70.7%	68.6%	3.4%
Nebraska	69.6%	71.3%	75.4%	70.6%	67.2%	-3.5%
Nevada	66.9%	65.8%	69.1%	64.8%	61.6%	-7.9%
New Hampshire	75.6%	65.5%	79.7%	79.6%	77.4%	2.3%
New Jersey	63.2%	63.3%	62.5%	63.1%	57.0%	-9.7%
New Mexico	77.5%	70.7%	73.0%	72.8%	70.1%	-9.6%
New York	50.5%	49.4%	47.9%	47.3%	36.6%	-27.5%
North Carolina	57.7%	72.6%	69.0%	72.9%	72.0%	24.9%

Table III–8. Outcome 3.3: Percentage of Children Exiting at Age 12 and Older Who Exit to Permanency, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
North Dakota	61.1%	65.2%	57.7%	59.4%	76.2%	24.6%
Ohio	67.1%	64.0%	66.8%	60.7%	57.4%	–14.5%
Oklahoma	65.4%	64.9%	62.5%	68.8%	63.3%	–3.3%
Oregon	55.5%	56.3%	59.3%	56.1%	53.8%	–2.9%
Pennsylvania	64.4%	67.1%	65.7%	59.5%	58.4%	–9.2%
Rhode Island	65.3%	58.6%	58.2%	43.1%	45.2%	–30.9%
South Carolina	73.6%	71.8%	74.2%	74.4%	70.9%	–3.7%
South Dakota	65.2%	65.7%	60.9%	66.9%	57.2%	–12.3%
Tennessee	67.1%	65.3%	65.1%	67.1%	65.6%	–2.2%
Texas	64.3%	62.6%	63.1%	63.0%	59.4%	–7.6%
Utah	59.7%	62.3%	62.7%	66.8%	61.9%	3.6%
Vermont	72.6%	72.1%	71.9%	68.5%	66.0%	–9.0%
Virginia	36.7%	49.8%	35.2%	37.2%	41.5%	13.1%
Washington	82.3%	82.7%	82.1%	82.2%	80.2%	–2.6%
West Virginia	90.7%	89.6%	92.5%	91.2%	90.2%	–0.5%
Wisconsin	72.4%	71.4%	68.2%	68.3%	68.0%	–6.1%
Wyoming	76.9%	74.9%	80.4%	80.6%	80.9%	5.3%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table III–9. Outcome 3.4: Percentage of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered Care Under Age 12, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	27.5%	18.4%	17.9%	16.5%	10.6%	–61.5%
Alaska	16.4%	18.4%	15.2%	18.8%	14.7%	–10.7%
Arizona	7.5%	8.5%	7.4%	9.6%	11.4%	51.6%
Arkansas	17.3%	16.3%	17.4%	16.4%	19.3%	11.4%
California	21.4%	21.9%	19.6%	21.7%	20.4%	–4.6%
Colorado	18.1%	13.9%	14.2%	13.0%	8.4%	–53.8%
Connecticut	53.2%	42.9%	45.0%	48.6%	62.9%	18.4%
Delaware	20.4%	18.9%	10.0%	12.3%	25.3%	24.3%
District of Columbia	20.0%	20.0%	18.4%	15.0%	13.0%	–34.8%
Florida	9.9%	11.7%	12.2%	7.2%	6.4%	–34.9%
Georgia	10.9%	11.9%	8.6%	14.9%	15.2%	39.6%
Hawaii	10.6%	6.1%	12.7%	6.8%	4.3%	–59.1%
Idaho	17.6%	6.3%	6.0%	8.0%	7.7%	–56.4%
Illinois	27.6%	34.2%	27.6%	30.4%	31.9%	15.8%
Indiana	14.5%	12.5%	12.8%	12.9%	11.5%	–20.6%
Iowa	21.4%	23.1%	17.0%	21.8%	15.0%	–29.8%
Kansas	13.8%	13.6%	15.9%	12.5%	14.5%	5.3%
Kentucky	9.2%	8.4%	10.5%	10.2%	10.5%	13.4%
Louisiana	24.1%	20.1%	18.7%	23.7%	15.1%	–37.3%
Maine	34.8%	33.9%	28.6%	33.3%	40.0%	15.0%
Massachusetts	15.5%	15.1%	17.8%	15.4%	17.5%	12.8%
Michigan	16.9%	17.0%	13.3%	16.0%	11.2%	–34.1%

Table III–9. Outcome 3.4: Percentage of Children Exiting to Emancipation Who Entered Care Under Age 12, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Minnesota	13.5%	18.6%	14.3%	13.4%	14.8%	9.8%
Mississippi	12.9%	16.9%	23.5%	19.4%	29.5%	128.0%
Missouri	19.9%	20.0%	20.8%	17.5%	22.9%	15.2%
Montana	23.3%	20.6%	19.1%	17.7%	22.5%	–3.2%
Nebraska	19.4%	13.8%	12.2%	10.1%	6.9%	–64.3%
Nevada	18.3%	18.1%	21.3%	15.4%	15.9%	–13.3%
New Hampshire	16.1%	10.3%	13.2%	8.7%	6.1%	–62.0%
New Jersey	15.8%	18.4%	15.8%	15.8%	17.9%	13.6%
New Mexico	19.7%	18.8%	21.4%	19.8%	33.0%	67.4%
New York	10.2%	9.3%	9.7%	10.1%	8.6%	–15.8%
North Carolina	10.3%	12.1%	15.2%	23.4%	19.0%	84.0%
North Dakota	5.5%	10.0%	16.2%	12.7%	12.5%	129.2%
Ohio	17.2%	13.3%	12.7%	9.0%	8.3%	–51.8%
Oklahoma	25.9%	25.1%	22.7%	29.8%	24.8%	–4.0%
Oregon	35.5%	32.4%	27.5%	23.6%	21.0%	–40.9%
Pennsylvania	11.4%	8.5%	8.0%	7.2%	7.3%	–36.5%
Rhode Island	13.2%	17.1%	12.7%	12.8%	8.1%	–39.0%
South Carolina	20.7%	16.1%	17.1%	15.0%	12.1%	–41.7%
South Dakota	52.4%	39.1%	15.8%	27.4%	15.6%	–70.2%
Tennessee	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	7.1%	5.0%	–5.5%
Texas	32.5%	26.3%	24.4%	24.6%	20.9%	–35.7%
Utah	11.4%	10.5%	12.4%	13.0%	9.4%	–18.0%
Vermont	5.3%	24.0%	8.7%	13.0%	14.0%	166.7%
Virginia	11.6%	14.8%	11.2%	10.0%	10.7%	–7.8%
Washington	23.2%	25.9%	23.6%	19.4%	14.7%	–36.8%
West Virginia	14.3%	7.1%	3.3%	15.0%	7.3%	–49.0%
Wisconsin	14.0%	16.1%	12.2%	13.1%	10.5%	–25.2%
Wyoming	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	9.1%	28.6%	NA

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter IV: Achieving Timely Reunifications and Adoptions for Children in Foster Care

While chapter III broadly discusses the issue of permanency and notes special issues for the diverse population of children in foster care, this chapter focuses more specifically on the goal of achieving permanency through reunification and adoption. It also focuses on the timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care, as reinforced and supported by federal policies and laws. Outcome 4 (reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry) and outcome 5 (reduce time in foster care to adoption) encompass this goal for children and youth. Because the percentages of children who are discharged from foster care to guardianship are very small in almost all states, the timeliness of guardianships is not specifically addressed in this chapter.

This chapter provides information on contextual factors related to caseworker visits and presents national results for the following measures:

- Measure 4.1: The percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care
- Measure 4.2: The percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode
- Measure 5.1a: The percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care
- Measure 5.1b: The percentage of children discharged to adoption at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry into foster care

Caseworker Visits

Achieving permanency in a timely manner for children in foster care can be linked in part to the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children.⁸¹ During the first and second rounds of the CFSRs, an association was found between measures involving caseworker visits and positive outcomes for children in foster care.⁸² For example, frequent contact between the caseworker and the child (as indicated by positive ratings on item 19 in the round 2 CFSR onsite review instrument) was associated with substantial achievement on timely permanency.

Based in part on these findings, the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288) amended Title IV-B of the Act to include requirements for states to collect data on monthly caseworker visits for children in foster care.⁸³ The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) extended these requirements, which are now in section 424(f)(1)(A) and (2)(A) and section 479A(a)(6) of the Act.⁸⁴ Starting in

⁸¹ Beginning with this Report and going forward, caseworker visits values are rounded and may differ slightly from values reported in prior Reports.

⁸² For more information related to this finding, refer to [Findings From the Initial Child and Family Service Reviews: 2001–2004](#) (slides 17, 18, and 40) and [Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, Aggregate Report, Round 2, Fiscal Years 2007–2010](#) (p. 57).

⁸³ More information on the Child and Family Services Improvement Act can be found on the CB website in [ACYF-CB-IM-06-05](#).

⁸⁴ More information on the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act can be found on the CB website in [ACYF-CB-IM-11-06](#). For detailed information on the

2012, states were required to begin meeting the following new performance standards for caseworker visits:

- The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a FY must be at least 90 percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care. In 2015, this target increased to 95 percent.
- At least 50 percent of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a FY must occur in the child’s residence.

Data for monthly caseworker visits and visits in the home for 2016–2020 are shown in table IV–1.⁸⁵ These data include the percentages of children in foster care visited each full month they were in care as well as the proportion of those visits that occurred in the homes where the children were then living. In general, to meet the requirements of section 422(b)(17) of the Act regarding monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care, visits must be conducted face to face. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CB updated its guidance in March 2020 through a [letter to child welfare leaders](#) and a revision to the [Child Welfare Policy Manual](#) (7.3 Title IV-B, Programmatic Requirements, question 8) to allow the use of videoconferencing under limited circumstances. The policy now specifies that a visit conducted by means of videoconferencing with the child may be counted as a monthly caseworker visit during the declared emergency period during the COVID-19 pandemic or when a child’s or a caseworker’s severe health condition warrants limiting person-to-person contact. Caseworker visits conducted via videoconferences must still be conducted in accordance with the requirements listed in the Act and must include an evaluation of the child’s safety in each session. In addition, during the declared emergency period for the COVID-19 pandemic only, a caseworker visit conducted by means of videoconferencing in which the child participated from their residence may be counted as a visit in the child’s residence. If multiple visits were made to a child during the month, either in person or via qualifying videoconferencing, and at least one of those visits occurred in the child’s residence, the state could count and report that one monthly visit occurred in the residence of the child.

Table IV–1. Monthly Caseworker Visits and Visits in the Home, 2016–2020

Measures	National median				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of children receiving monthly caseworker visits (N=52)	95%	95%	96%	96%	95%
Percentage of monthly visits that occurred in the home of the child (N=52)	88%	88%	87%	87%	88%

As indicated in table IV–1, the national median regarding the percentage of children in foster care receiving a caseworker visit at least once each month while in care met or exceeded the national standard (95 percent) each year. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the median state performance was 95 percent in 2020, with 32 states meeting or exceeding the national standard (see figure IV–1 at the end of this chapter). Three of the 32 states that met or exceeded the standard in 2020 had not met it in 2019. Six of the 20 states that did not meet the national standard in 2020 had met it in 2019. The stability on the national median for this measure in 2020 could be partially attributed to the allowance of conducting caseworker visits through videoconferences.

The national median in 2020 for the percentage of monthly visits occurring in the child’s home was 88 percent—well above the national standard of 50 percent. No states fell below the 50-percent standard in any year from 2016 to 2020.

collection and reporting of caseworker visits data prior to FY 2012, see [ACYF-CB-PI-08-03](#).

⁸⁵ More information on the caseworker visits measures can be found in appendix C of this Report. Additional guidance on the revised requirements for reporting the caseworker visits measures is outlined in Program Instruction [ACYF-CB-PI-12-01](#), which was issued January 6, 2012.

Timeliness of Reunifications

Historically, the majority of children who exit from foster care are discharged to reunification. In 2020, reunifications represented 53.4 percent of all exits from foster care (see table III-1). Outcome 4 (reduce time in foster care to reunification without increasing reentry) addresses the need for timely reunifications.⁸⁶ The wording of this outcome is intended to ensure reunifications are not viewed as timely if they also are not permanent (i.e., if the child reenters foster care within 12 months of being reunified). For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, a reunification is considered to be timely if it occurs in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (measure 4.1). A state's timely reunification is better understood when considering how many children who enter foster care are reentering within a short period of time of their exit. Measure 4.2 assesses the percentage of children entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. Table IV-2 presents summary data regarding state performance in 2020 on timeliness of reunification without increasing reentries.

**Table IV-2. Range of State Medians, 2020
Outcome 4: Achieving Timely Reunifications**

Outcome measures	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
Measure 4.1: Of all children reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care during the year, what percentage were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care? (N=51)	50.2%	60.9%	67.3%	35.0%–78.8%
Measure 4.2: Of all children who entered foster care during the year, what percentage reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? (N=51) ^a	5.8%	7.2%	9.3%	2.5%–16.8%

^a For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

The 2020 data shown in table IV-2 indicate that, in many states, a majority of children discharged to reunification were reunified in a timely manner. The national median was 60.9 percent, and state medians ranged from 35.0 percent to 78.8 percent. For 38 states, more than half of the reunifications that occurred were timely (see figure IV-3 at the end of this chapter).

Additionally, as shown in table IV-2, the national median for children who entered foster care in 2020 and who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode was 7.2 percent. There was a wide range in state medians—from 2.5 percent to 16.8 percent. Reentries—within any length of time of a prior foster care episode—accounted for 19.2 percent of all entries in 2020. Multiple changes in caregivers, especially for younger children, can affect healthy development and impair a child's ability to form interpersonal relationships.⁸⁷ Thus, it is important for states to continue working to prevent reentries into foster care.

There was a moderate correlation between performance on measure 4.2 and the proportion of children in a state who entered care at age 12 or older (Pearson's $r=0.51$). As discussed in chapter III, older children in care achieve permanency at a lower rate compared to the general foster care population. The challenges that these youth present to child welfare systems may be quite different from those encountered with younger children. States may want to consider what strategies and services could be provided to older children in care and their families to reduce the likelihood of reentering care after exit.

⁸⁶ For the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, children are considered reunified if the discharge reason provided in AFCARS is either (1) reunified with parent or primary caretaker or (2) living with other relatives.

⁸⁷ Carnochan, S., Rizik-Baer, D., & Austin, M. (2013). Preventing re-entry into foster care. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10(3), 196–209. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2013.788949>

Changes Over Time in State Performance With Regard to Achieving Timely Reunifications

Table IV–3 shows the changes over time in the national median for achieving timely reunifications for children in foster care. This table also shows the number of states that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance, as determined by a percentage-change calculation.

Outcome measures ^a	Median by year					Improved in performance ^b	Declined in performance ^b
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Measure 4.1: Percentage of reunifications that occurred in less than 12 months from the time of entry into foster care (N=50)	66.1%	64.6%	63.8%	62.7%	60.9%	7 states (14%)	37 states (74%)
Measure 4.2: Percentage of children entering foster care who reentered care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode (N=50) ^c	7.1%	7.4%	6.9%	7.3%	7.2%	21 states (42%)	17 states (34%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV–2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for data analysis in this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table IV–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As illustrated in table IV–3, the national median over time on achieving timely reunifications has declined throughout the past 5 years, with a 7.9-percent decline in performance over that period. From 2016 to 2020, 74 percent of states showed a decline in performance, and 14 percent of states improved. Again, the COVID-19 pandemic may have been a potential factor in states’ declining performance. Possible barriers to reunification—such as decreased child-parent interactions, technical limitations in virtual sessions, and pandemic-related stress reported by child welfare workers—have been reported due to the pandemic.⁸⁸ Similarly, there was a decline in state performance from 2016 to 2020 on the percentage of children reentering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode. The national median increased 1.4 percent between 2016 and 2020, with 34 percent of states declining in performance.

Timeliness of Adoptions

While the majority of children exiting foster care are reunified with their families and not adopted, adoptions still account for approximately one-quarter of all exits from foster care (see table III–1). When a decision is made that adoption is in the best interests of the child (and agreed upon by the youth, if age appropriate), the adoption should proceed rapidly so the child can be placed quickly in a secure, caring, and safe environment.

As referenced in the beginning of this chapter, the timeliness of achieving permanency for children in foster care is critical to their well-being. ASFA amended section 475(5)(E) of the Act to require that a state file a petition to terminate the parents’ parental rights and concurrently pursue adoption as a permanency goal for any child who has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months unless the child is living with a relative, the agency has not provided services to address the circumstances associated with the child’s removal, or the agency documents a

⁸⁸ Goldberg, A. E., Brodzinsky, D., Singer, J., & Crozier, P. The impact of COVID-19 on child welfare-involved families: Implications for parent–child reunification and child welfare professionals. *Developmental Child Welfare*, 3, 203–224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25161032211045257>

compelling reason why such action would not be in the best interests of the child. In accordance with Section 475(5)(F) of the Act, a child is considered to have “entered foster care” (for purposes of starting the clock for the 15 of 22 months) upon the earlier of the following:

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

A 17-month timeframe was used for calculations associated with this Report’s related measures (i.e., those regarding timely adoptions and terminations of parental rights) because AFCARS does not collect information pertaining to the date of the first judicial finding. The timeframe was calculated by adding 60 days (to account for the second scenario for having “entered foster care”) and 15 months to the date of the child’s removal.

In 2020, approximately 58,000 children exited foster care to adoption, and approximately 117,000 children were categorized as waiting for adoption on the last day of the FY. Performance on outcome 5 (reduce time in foster care to adoption) is captured in measure 5.1, which addresses the timeliness of adoptions. Table IV–4 presents summary data showing the range of state performance in 2020 on this measure.

**Table IV–4. Range of State Performance, 2020
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions**

Outcome measure ^a	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
Measure 5.1a: Of all children discharged from foster care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=51)	1.1%	2.5%	4.6%	0.0%–22.9%
Measure 5.1b: Of all children discharged from care during the year to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home? (N=51)	18.0%	25.8%	34.6%	10.3%–50.0%

^a Measure 5.1 was among the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a variety of time periods. Other time periods composing measure 5.1 are not shown in this table. State performance on each of the time periods is available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#). See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table IV–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

Outcome measure 5.1 focuses on the length of time in foster care for children who were discharged to adoption. Performance on this measure in 2020 suggests achieving timely adoptions was a challenge for all but a few states. As shown in table IV–4, it was rare in most states for adoptions to occur in less than 12 months from the child’s entry into foster care. The national median was only 2.5 percent and ranged from 0.0 percent to 22.9 percent.

Changes Over Time in State Performance With Regard to Timeliness of Adoptions

The medians across states from 2016 through 2020 for achieving timely adoptions for children in foster care are reported in table IV–5, which also presents the number of states that showed an improvement or decline in performance during the same timeframe. Change in state performance over time was computed by using a percentage-change calculation.

Table IV-5. State Medians and Changes in Performance Over Time, 2016–2020
Outcome 5: Achieving Timely Adoptions

Outcome measures ^{a b}	Median by year					Improved in performance ^c	Declined in performance ^c
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Measure 5.1a: Percentage of children discharged to adoption in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=50)	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%	3.1%	2.5%	9 states (18%)	35 states (70%)
Measure 5.1b: Percentage of children discharged to adoption at least 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry into foster care (N=50)	29.1%	29.4%	28.7%	26.8%	25.8%	12 states (24%)	33 states (65%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table IV-4 and appendix B.

^b Measure 5.1 was among the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures established in 1998. It is a calculation of discharges to adoption for a variety of time periods. Other time periods composing measure 5.1 are not shown in this table. State performance on each of the time periods is available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#). See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

^c In accordance with standard procedure for data analysis in this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table IV-4 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

For measure 5.1a (the percentage of adoptions occurring in less than 12 months), the national median from 2016 to 2020 decreased from 3.7 percent to 2.5 percent—a meaningful 34.4-percent decrease. However, year-to-year performance was inconsistent. In addition, a greater proportion of states reported a decline in performance (70 percent) compared with the proportion that showed improved performance (18 percent). Although previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports have reported a decrease in this measure, the 34.4-percent decrease from 2016 to 2020 may be reflective of the shutdown of the courts due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁹ For measure 5.1b (the percentage of adoptions occurring at least 12 months but less than 24 months from a child’s entry into care), there was an 11.3-percent decrease in the national median between 2016 and 2020, which is considered a meaningful change in performance based on the criteria used in this Report. Similarly, more states showed a decline in performance (65 percent) than an improvement (24 percent). Overall, achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering care remained a challenge for all but a few states.

The 2020 data indicate that achieving timely adoptions within 24 months of entering foster care remained a challenge for all but a few states, with 65 percent of states demonstrating a decline in performance.

Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Reunifications and Adoptions in a Timely Manner

As noted in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, states demonstrated declining performance over a 5-year period in achieving reunifications in a timely manner (measure 4.1). However, the national median on measure 4.2 (the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode) showed some improvement—1.4 percent, with 21 states showing improved performance. The national median for achieving adoptions within 12 months of entry (measure 5.1a) decreased 32.4 percent from 2016 to 2020. In addition, over three-fifths of states also showed a decline in the percentage of children discharged to adoption in more than 12 months but less than 24 months from the date of entry (measure 5.1b). Although performance has mostly declined

⁸⁹ For example, there was a 34.1-percent decrease on measure 5.1a from 2014 to 2018 and a 6.1-percent decrease from 2015 to 2019.

over time, it is worth noting that a few states have showed consistent improvements in measures 5.1a and 5.1b. Overall, results reveal that performance on both adoptions and reunifications is declining, and it will be important for states to monitor these outcomes as they strive to move children to timely permanency.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to achieving reunifications and adoptions in a timely manner, including caseworker visits data and state performance on outcomes 4 and 5. More information on achieving reunification and adoption in a timely manner—data on reentries to care, breakdown by lengths of stay, and state data (including states excluded from analyses and counts due to incomplete or inadequate data)—is available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#).

Figure IV-1.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN RECEIVING MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISITS, 2020 (N=52)

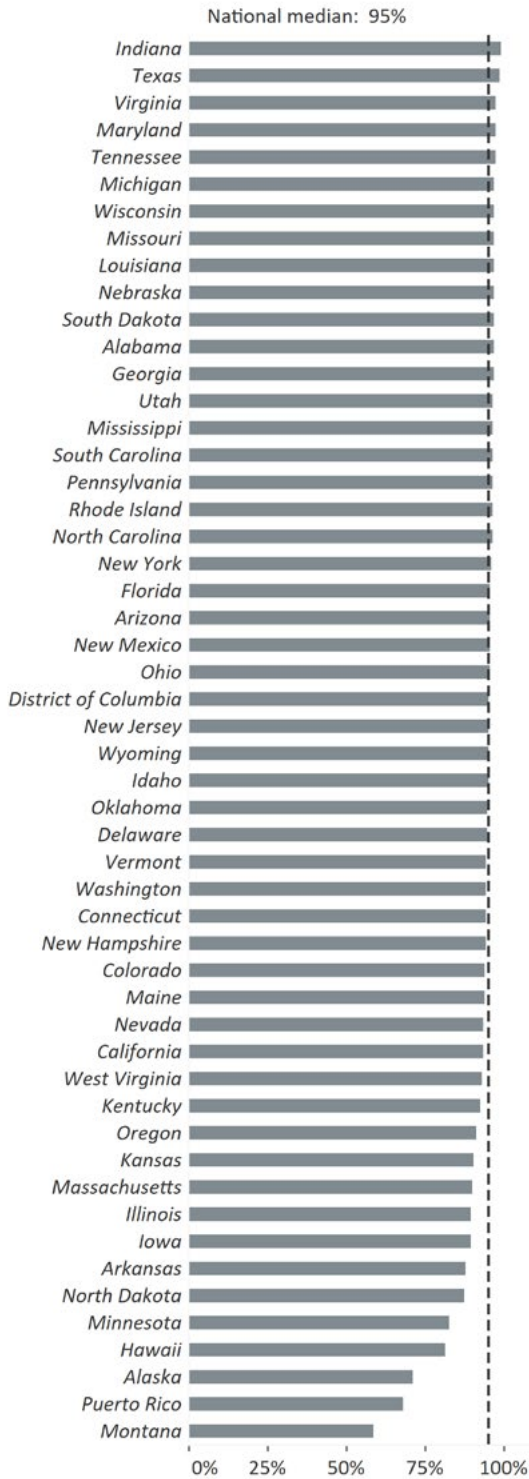


Figure IV-2.

PERCENTAGE OF MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISITS OCCURRING IN THE HOME OF THE CHILD, 2020 (N=52)

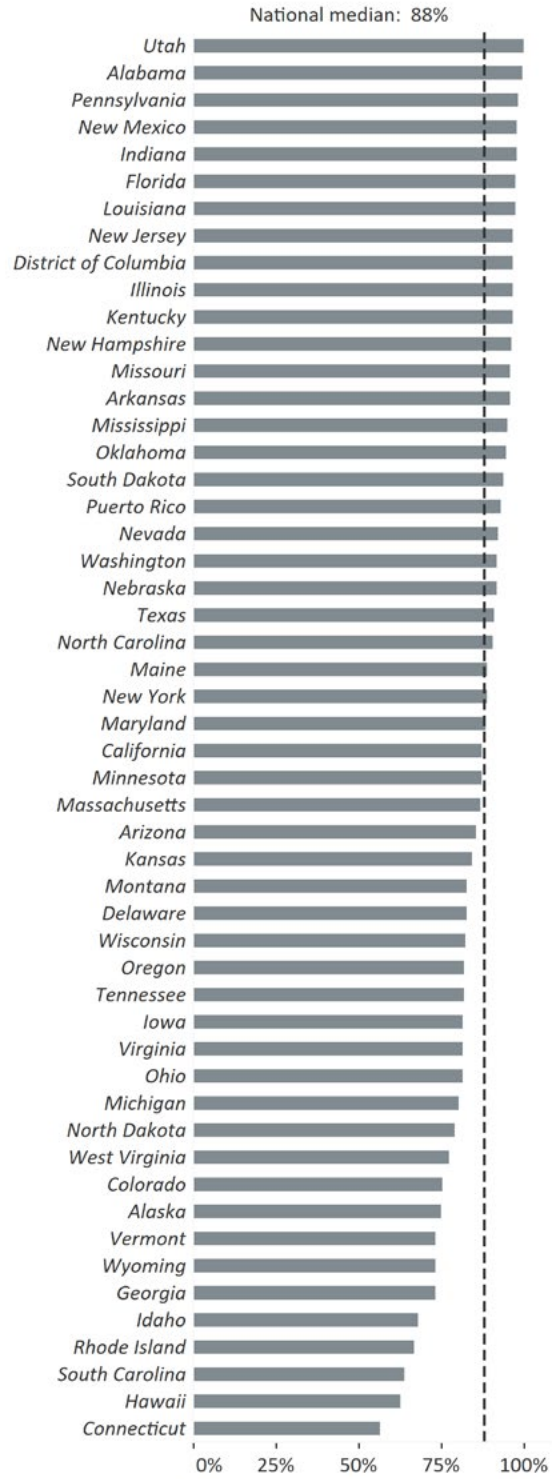
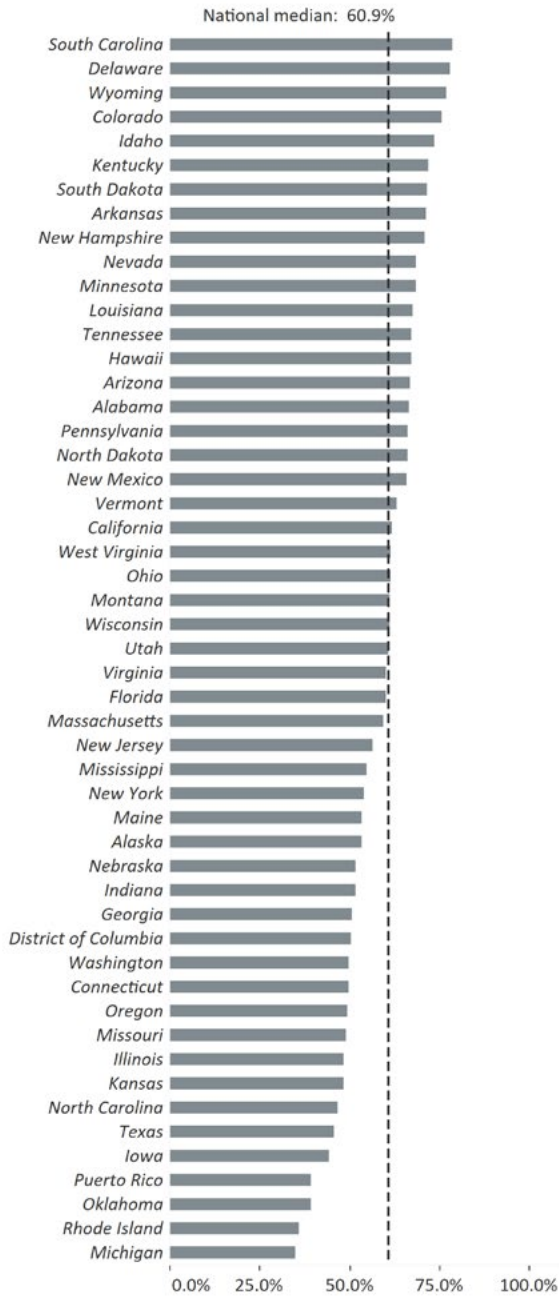


Figure IV-3.

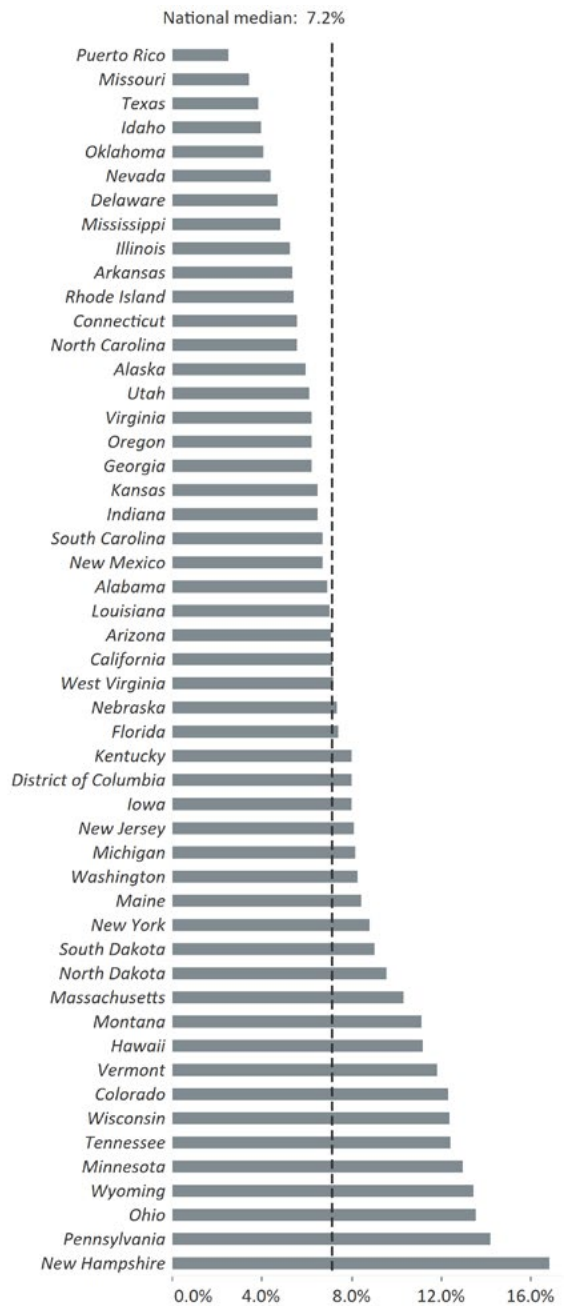
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REUNIFIED IN LESS THAN 12 MONTHS FROM ENTERING CARE, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure IV-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REENTERING CARE WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF A PRIOR FOSTER CARE EPISODE, 2020 (N=51)



Notes.
 —Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.
 —A lower value indicates better performance

Figure IV-5.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO ADOPTION WHO WERE IN CARE LESS THAN 12 MONTHS, 2020 (N=51)

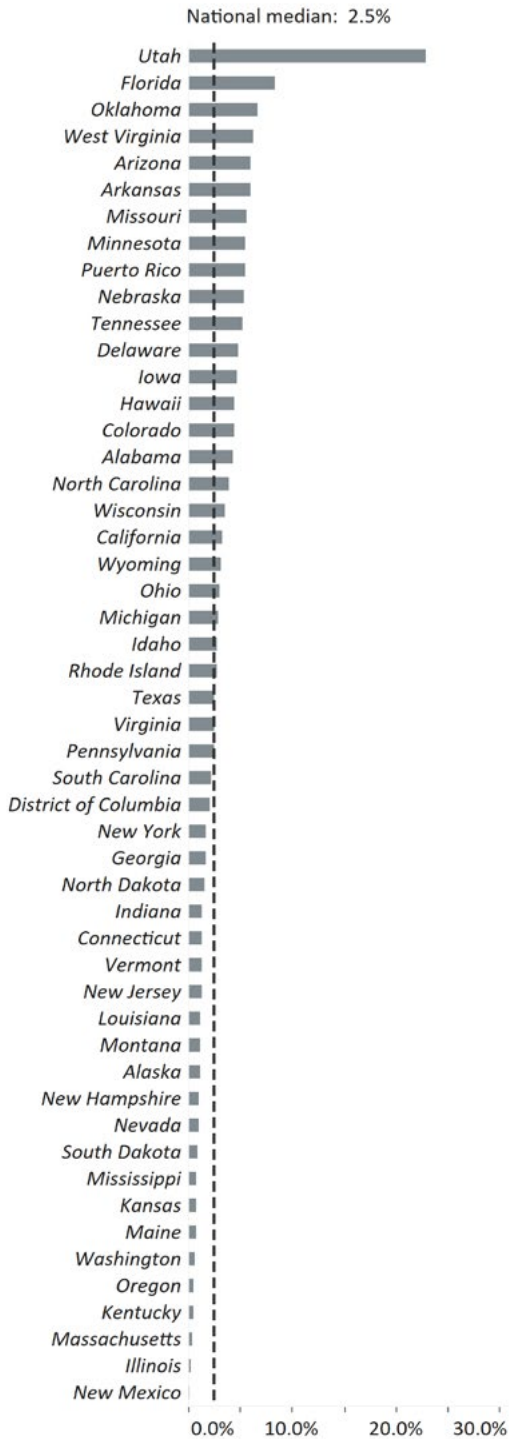
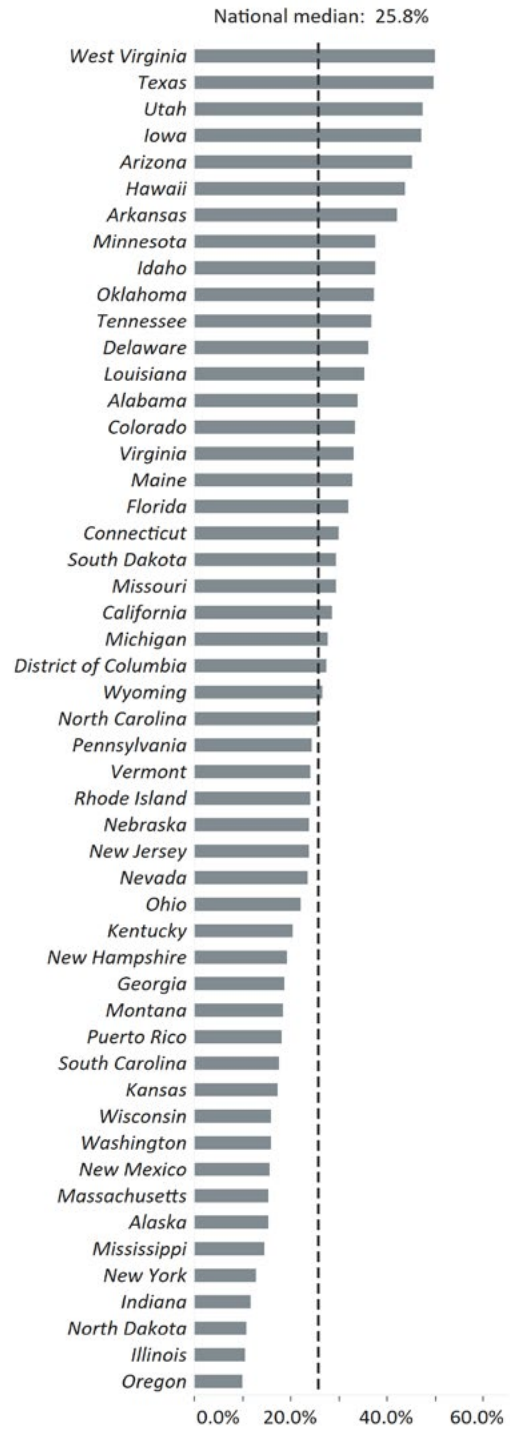


Figure IV-6.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN EXITING TO ADOPTION WHO WERE IN CARE MORE THAN 12 MONTHS BUT LESS THAN 24 MONTHS, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–6. Outcome 4.1: Percentage of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	73.2%	72.0%	69.2%	68.6%	66.7%	-8.9%
Alaska	45.9%	50.6%	47.9%	47.3%	53.5%	16.6%
Arizona	67.6%	64.1%	63.6%	66.5%	66.9%	-1.0%
Arkansas	78.1%	74.8%	70.2%	71.3%	71.3%	-8.7%
California	63.2%	63.9%	63.2%	63.0%	61.9%	-2.1%
Colorado	82.4%	81.5%	82.5%	79.3%	75.6%	-8.3%
Connecticut	63.6%	60.3%	59.9%	56.9%	49.8%	-21.8%
Delaware	62.3%	65.8%	73.0%	63.1%	77.9%	24.9%
District of Columbia	59.8%	53.1%	48.8%	61.3%	50.4%	-15.7%
Florida	70.0%	68.2%	67.4%	63.4%	60.1%	-14.2%
Georgia	69.4%	59.1%	58.0%	53.0%	50.8%	-26.7%
Hawaii	76.0%	70.6%	76.4%	75.8%	67.2%	-11.5%
Idaho	77.1%	72.9%	74.0%	73.0%	73.8%	-4.3%
Illinois	25.8%	28.7%	32.2%	36.0%	48.6%	88.1%
Indiana	58.5%	59.7%	57.1%	54.5%	51.7%	-11.6%
Iowa	55.0%	56.0%	53.3%	49.4%	44.4%	-19.1%
Kansas	58.1%	58.6%	55.2%	53.8%	48.3%	-16.8%
Kentucky	78.4%	79.9%	81.9%	78.4%	72.1%	-8.0%
Louisiana	74.3%	71.5%	75.5%	69.6%	67.5%	-9.1%
Maine	40.2%	43.1%	53.4%	61.8%	53.6%	33.4%
Massachusetts	64.7%	64.4%	62.8%	60.3%	59.4%	-8.2%
Michigan	43.7%	44.9%	46.2%	40.3%	35.0%	-19.9%
Minnesota	79.4%	74.4%	74.3%	71.1%	68.6%	-13.7%
Mississippi	62.6%	59.2%	49.3%	55.2%	54.8%	-12.5%
Missouri	56.5%	55.3%	51.1%	51.8%	49.0%	-13.2%
Montana	66.1%	59.1%	56.3%	62.0%	61.4%	-7.2%
Nebraska	53.6%	51.6%	46.7%	51.4%	52.0%	-3.0%
Nevada	72.3%	73.8%	72.7%	72.3%	68.7%	-5.0%
New Hampshire	61.1%	61.6%	71.7%	68.6%	71.1%	16.5%
New Jersey	68.8%	66.1%	70.5%	63.9%	56.5%	-18.0%
New Mexico	75.2%	77.2%	75.1%	70.3%	65.9%	-12.3%
New York	58.9%	61.3%	61.1%	60.3%	54.3%	-7.9%
North Carolina	52.1%	54.2%	48.1%	48.0%	46.6%	-10.6%
North Dakota	69.6%	71.2%	74.6%	70.0%	66.2%	-4.8%
Ohio	68.4%	69.1%	67.9%	64.1%	61.5%	-10.2%
Oklahoma	36.2%	38.2%	39.9%	38.6%	39.2%	8.3%
Oregon	53.5%	52.8%	52.6%	47.6%	49.6%	-7.4%
Pennsylvania	72.7%	71.8%	71.7%	68.8%	66.2%	-9.0%
Rhode Island	66.0%	65.1%	69.2%	53.6%	36.0%	-45.5%
South Carolina	85.1%	83.4%	81.4%	82.7%	78.8%	-7.4%
South Dakota	78.7%	70.3%	70.4%	75.0%	71.7%	-8.8%
Tennessee	74.7%	74.4%	76.2%	69.6%	67.3%	-10.0%
Texas	52.9%	51.3%	52.3%	48.8%	45.7%	-13.7%
Utah	67.6%	70.2%	63.8%	63.8%	60.9%	-9.9%
Vermont	70.4%	64.6%	70.5%	63.3%	63.4%	-10.0%
Virginia	58.6%	59.5%	62.5%	60.4%	60.3%	2.8%
Washington	54.8%	55.2%	54.5%	53.4%	49.9%	-8.8%
West Virginia	66.5%	68.1%	65.9%	62.3%	61.6%	-7.4%

Table IV–6. Outcome 4.1: Percentage of Children Reunified in Less Than 12 Months From Entering Care, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Wisconsin	66.5%	67.1%	65.7%	64.3%	61.3%	-7.8%
Wyoming	71.9%	73.7%	74.4%	77.9%	76.9%	7.0%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–7. Outcome 4.2: Percentage of Children Reentering Foster Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Episode, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	6.8%	6.9%	6.7%	6.8%	7.0%	3.0%
Alaska	5.8%	6.4%	6.7%	7.3%	6.0%	2.8%
Arizona	8.3%	8.8%	8.7%	7.4%	7.1%	-14.2%
Arkansas	5.7%	6.0%	6.5%	5.6%	5.4%	-5.6%
California	8.2%	7.6%	8.0%	7.3%	7.2%	-12.8%
Colorado	14.1%	14.8%	15.5%	14.4%	12.4%	-12.5%
Connecticut	4.1%	4.2%	4.4%	4.7%	5.6%	37.1%
Delaware	4.8%	9.5%	8.4%	5.0%	4.7%	-1.3%
District of Columbia	5.8%	9.0%	6.3%	7.5%	8.0%	37.7%
Florida	7.2%	6.6%	7.1%	8.8%	7.4%	3.5%
Georgia	6.5%	6.3%	6.2%	6.4%	6.2%	-4.5%
Hawaii	11.0%	11.7%	11.2%	8.9%	11.2%	1.5%
Idaho	6.1%	6.0%	4.9%	4.3%	4.0%	-34.7%
Illinois	6.6%	5.5%	5.2%	5.5%	5.3%	-19.6%
Indiana	4.8%	6.5%	6.8%	7.5%	6.5%	37.5%
Iowa	8.1%	8.8%	6.5%	7.1%	8.0%	-0.3%
Kansas	5.6%	5.8%	5.3%	6.5%	6.5%	15.1%
Kentucky	9.2%	9.8%	7.9%	8.7%	8.0%	-13.2%
Louisiana	7.7%	8.1%	6.0%	6.6%	7.0%	-8.8%
Maine	3.8%	3.0%	5.5%	4.7%	8.4%	120.6%
Massachusetts	11.0%	11.2%	11.5%	11.6%	10.4%	-6.1%
Michigan	5.8%	5.9%	6.1%	6.0%	8.2%	40.6%
Minnesota	13.3%	13.3%	13.7%	14.6%	13.0%	-2.3%
Mississippi	5.4%	6.5%	6.3%	4.7%	4.8%	-11.1%
Missouri	4.9%	4.6%	4.1%	4.5%	3.4%	-30.1%
Montana	6.9%	7.4%	8.0%	9.4%	11.1%	60.6%
Nebraska	5.9%	6.5%	5.8%	8.1%	7.4%	25.1%
Nevada	6.6%	6.1%	4.9%	4.1%	4.4%	-33.0%
New Hampshire	9.6%	14.2%	16.7%	15.5%	16.8%	75.9%
New Jersey	9.3%	9.4%	9.2%	9.6%	8.1%	-12.5%
New Mexico	7.1%	8.6%	8.7%	8.4%	6.8%	-4.9%
New York	9.6%	9.4%	6.9%	9.1%	8.9%	-7.7%
North Carolina	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%	5.6%	5.6%	123.3%
North Dakota	11.4%	10.2%	10.8%	11.3%	9.6%	-16.1%
Ohio	9.7%	8.9%	10.9%	12.6%	13.6%	39.8%
Oklahoma	4.4%	3.9%	3.3%	4.5%	4.1%	-6.0%
Oregon	8.3%	5.9%	7.3%	7.1%	6.2%	-25.0%

Table IV–7. Outcome 4.2: Percentage of Children Reentering Foster Care Within 12 Months of a Prior Episode, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Pennsylvania	13.9%	13.3%	14.6%	13.6%	14.2%	2.6%
Rhode Island	12.6%	10.5%	9.5%	8.4%	5.5%	-56.7%
South Carolina	6.0%	6.5%	6.9%	7.3%	6.8%	12.3%
South Dakota	8.4%	6.3%	7.7%	9.4%	9.1%	7.5%
Tennessee	13.0%	12.2%	11.6%	11.9%	12.4%	-4.2%
Texas	2.9%	3.2%	3.4%	3.6%	3.9%	34.4%
Utah	6.3%	4.6%	6.3%	5.6%	6.2%	-2.3%
Vermont	13.9%	10.1%	10.4%	10.9%	11.9%	-14.7%
Virginia	4.1%	4.5%	6.8%	7.0%	6.2%	50.1%
Washington	5.8%	6.7%	6.4%	6.6%	8.3%	42.7%
West Virginia	10.1%	7.5%	7.3%	8.2%	7.2%	-29.0%
Wisconsin	11.5%	9.7%	10.8%	11.1%	12.4%	8.0%
Wyoming	15.8%	12.0%	12.4%	13.7%	13.5%	-14.9%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–8. Outcome 5.1a: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in Less Than 12 Months, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	4.3%	5.3%	3.8%	3.3%	4.3%	0.3%
Alaska	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	1.0%	1.1%	251.0%
Arizona	4.1%	5.0%	6.2%	6.2%	6.0%	46.1%
Arkansas	8.6%	6.1%	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%	-30.4%
California	4.5%	3.9%	3.4%	4.0%	3.3%	-27.9%
Colorado	4.8%	6.3%	5.9%	6.3%	4.4%	-8.1%
Connecticut	5.6%	4.5%	4.8%	4.4%	1.3%	-76.3%
Delaware	5.1%	7.3%	7.9%	3.3%	4.9%	-2.9%
District of Columbia	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	2.0%	-27.2%
Florida	13.9%	12.7%	10.5%	10.3%	8.4%	-40.0%
Georgia	2.6%	2.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.7%	-34.3%
Hawaii	8.1%	6.1%	6.7%	2.5%	4.4%	-45.5%
Idaho	2.3%	1.6%	2.1%	3.3%	2.8%	18.3%
Illinois	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	-19.1%
Indiana	1.4%	0.9%	1.5%	1.1%	1.3%	-1.8%
Iowa	5.1%	5.3%	4.3%	3.7%	4.8%	-7.1%
Kansas	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	1.0%	0.8%	-45.4%
Kentucky	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	13.7%
Louisiana	3.3%	0.8%	1.2%	1.8%	1.2%	-63.7%
Maine	1.0%	1.8%	2.0%	1.7%	0.8%	-18.7%
Massachusetts	0.9%	1.2%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%	-56.4%
Michigan	5.5%	4.4%	3.5%	3.5%	2.9%	-47.7%
Minnesota	6.2%	4.7%	5.6%	6.1%	5.5%	-10.4%
Mississippi	3.8%	1.4%	1.4%	1.0%	0.8%	-78.1%
Missouri	4.4%	6.2%	5.3%	6.5%	5.6%	26.6%
Montana	0.4%	3.3%	1.0%	1.9%	1.2%	201.8%
Nebraska	3.5%	5.6%	4.3%	4.7%	5.3%	51.5%

Table IV–8. Outcome 5.1a: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in Less Than 12 Months, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Nevada	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	2.2%	1.0%	–51.4%
New Hampshire	3.5%	1.0%	0.5%	0.7%	1.1%	–69.5%
New Jersey	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	2.5%	1.3%	–44.7%
New Mexico	0.6%	1.3%	0.7%	1.1%	0.0%	–100.0%
New York	1.6%	2.0%	1.6%	2.2%	1.7%	6.7%
North Carolina	4.2%	5.2%	3.6%	3.2%	4.0%	–6.6%
North Dakota	5.1%	4.2%	0.6%	0.5%	1.6%	–68.7%
Ohio	3.8%	4.2%	4.5%	3.4%	3.0%	–21.8%
Oklahoma	6.5%	6.2%	7.1%	9.0%	6.7%	2.4%
Oregon	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	114.0%
Pennsylvania	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%	0.3%
Rhode Island	4.3%	4.8%	3.5%	6.0%	2.7%	–37.8%
South Carolina	2.8%	2.1%	1.6%	2.1%	2.2%	–22.3%
South Dakota	1.8%	1.1%	2.2%	2.4%	1.0%	–47.8%
Tennessee	7.6%	8.6%	9.8%	8.3%	5.3%	–30.7%
Texas	3.5%	3.5%	2.8%	2.7%	2.5%	–27.6%
Utah	28.0%	27.0%	24.1%	23.1%	22.9%	–18.1%
Vermont	4.2%	3.4%	1.7%	4.8%	1.3%	–69.1%
Virginia	3.4%	2.2%	3.9%	3.6%	2.5%	–26.3%
Washington	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	0.6%	–56.0%
West Virginia	6.2%	6.3%	7.1%	8.1%	6.2%	0.2%
Wisconsin	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	3.2%	3.5%	–38.1%
Wyoming	13.6%	4.9%	2.7%	3.3%	3.1%	–77.3%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table IV–9. Outcome 5.1b: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	31.4%	36.5%	35.3%	36.2%	34.0%	8.0%
Alaska	32.5%	14.6%	16.9%	18.2%	15.4%	–52.6%
Arizona	43.9%	44.9%	43.3%	43.3%	45.2%	3.1%
Arkansas	44.8%	50.5%	47.3%	39.0%	42.1%	–6.0%
California	30.8%	29.4%	29.8%	29.7%	28.7%	–6.6%
Colorado	47.3%	50.3%	41.3%	38.8%	33.6%	–29.0%
Connecticut	36.8%	41.3%	35.8%	26.7%	30.2%	–17.8%
Delaware	39.4%	37.6%	36.0%	30.6%	36.3%	–7.9%
District of Columbia	19.6%	12.6%	26.3%	19.6%	27.6%	40.4%
Florida	37.5%	38.6%	36.3%	34.4%	32.1%	–14.4%
Georgia	25.3%	22.3%	19.8%	15.6%	18.9%	–25.5%
Hawaii	44.3%	41.8%	41.7%	31.2%	43.9%	–0.9%
Idaho	43.0%	34.6%	38.0%	32.9%	37.6%	–12.6%
Illinois	9.2%	9.7%	12.7%	12.5%	10.7%	16.7%
Indiana	18.9%	18.1%	16.6%	13.8%	11.9%	–36.9%
Iowa	50.9%	56.0%	51.7%	51.8%	47.1%	–7.3%

Table IV–9. Outcome 5.1b: Percentage of Children Exiting to Adoption in More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Kansas	21.5%	19.3%	17.3%	16.3%	17.6%	–18.3%
Kentucky	13.0%	15.9%	14.5%	18.3%	20.6%	58.4%
Louisiana	42.0%	30.6%	29.2%	35.3%	35.3%	–15.9%
Maine	21.8%	28.6%	35.8%	32.5%	32.9%	51.4%
Massachusetts	19.0%	13.5%	11.9%	13.3%	15.5%	–18.4%
Michigan	29.9%	31.7%	33.6%	30.0%	28.0%	–6.6%
Minnesota	49.5%	48.3%	40.1%	41.2%	37.8%	–23.5%
Mississippi	13.4%	19.5%	15.5%	16.0%	14.6%	9.0%
Missouri	34.5%	29.3%	31.6%	32.9%	29.4%	–14.6%
Montana	17.9%	20.4%	15.6%	19.6%	18.7%	4.0%
Nebraska	34.6%	25.5%	32.9%	27.0%	24.0%	–30.7%
Nevada	27.7%	30.6%	26.2%	25.0%	23.5%	–14.9%
New Hampshire	10.6%	29.4%	34.3%	29.4%	19.4%	82.8%
New Jersey	22.1%	21.5%	21.5%	19.1%	23.8%	7.9%
New Mexico	19.3%	26.4%	21.8%	18.0%	15.8%	–18.3%
New York	11.9%	11.2%	11.4%	14.2%	12.9%	8.3%
North Carolina	27.3%	28.1%	28.0%	24.7%	25.8%	–5.6%
North Dakota	21.7%	17.5%	15.4%	21.4%	11.1%	–48.9%
Ohio	26.2%	27.2%	27.6%	27.3%	22.3%	–14.8%
Oklahoma	29.5%	34.1%	38.3%	37.8%	37.4%	26.9%
Oregon	12.5%	10.3%	11.4%	11.9%	10.3%	–18.1%
Pennsylvania	29.1%	28.7%	26.6%	23.8%	24.6%	–15.5%
Rhode Island	35.3%	36.3%	35.2%	35.0%	24.2%	–31.5%
South Carolina	24.6%	19.8%	20.4%	18.0%	17.8%	–27.5%
South Dakota	16.5%	35.6%	25.5%	19.6%	29.7%	79.6%
Tennessee	37.5%	38.8%	38.5%	37.1%	36.8%	–2.0%
Texas	49.5%	50.0%	53.8%	52.6%	49.9%	0.7%
Utah	53.1%	58.6%	56.2%	52.5%	47.6%	–10.3%
Vermont	50.0%	35.7%	28.7%	37.9%	24.2%	–51.5%
Virginia	30.1%	30.2%	29.9%	31.2%	33.3%	10.7%
Washington	25.6%	21.2%	21.2%	16.6%	15.9%	–37.9%
West Virginia	54.2%	50.3%	51.9%	54.4%	50.0%	–7.7%
Wisconsin	25.6%	22.3%	18.8%	21.5%	15.9%	–37.7%
Wyoming	28.4%	30.5%	20.0%	23.8%	26.8%	–5.6%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter V: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

The state child welfare agency is responsible for ensuring a child is in a stable placement setting while in foster care. The appropriateness of a placement setting also is important to the well-being of children in foster care. Placement setting stability is addressed in outcome 6 (increase placement stability for children in foster care). For the purposes of the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, placement setting stability is defined as a child having had two or fewer placement settings in a single foster care episode.⁹⁰ Placement setting appropriateness is addressed in outcome 7 (reduce placements of young children in group homes or institutions). Outcome 7 is evaluated by examining the degree to which children age 12 or younger are placed in family foster homes rather than group homes or institutions.

This chapter presents national results for the following measures:

- Measure 6.1a: The percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 6.1b: The percentage of children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 6.1c: The percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings
- Measure 7.1: The percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions

Children in Group Homes and Institutions

FFPSA was enacted in 2018 and amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. Among other updates to child welfare policy, it provided more federal resources to help families stay together and established limits on federal foster care reimbursement for youth placed in non-foster family home settings (i.e., group homes and institutions).⁹¹ According to the AFCARS definitions, group homes generally have between 7 and 12 children, and institutions are typically larger and may include residential treatment facilities or child care institutions. There are some instances in which a group home or institution is determined to be the most appropriate placement to meet the

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

⁹⁰ A single foster care episode begins on the date when a child is removed from the home and ends when the child is discharged from foster care (i.e., is no longer under the care and placement responsibility of the state). For the purposes of this Report, the count of placement settings does not include temporary stays in hospitals, camps, respite care, or institutional placements. For additional information, please see the [Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review](#).

⁹¹ Currently, AFCARS does not have information regarding the placement setting provisions as amended by FFPSA regarding the details of prior placements and foster care episodes, services provided, and pregnancy or parenting status. For additional information on FFPSA data collection, see the [Title IV-E Prevention Program page](#) on the CB website.

needs of a child. For example, young children may need a particular type of care to meet certain physical or mental health needs that a group home or institution is best equipped to provide. However, the driving assumption behind outcome 7 is that, while group homes or institutions may be appropriate for some children in foster care, younger children are likely to have their needs better met in a family setting.

Approximately 39,000 children and youth had a current placement setting reported as being in congregate care (i.e., either a group home or institution) in 2020. Figure V–1 (at the end of this chapter) displays the percentage of children in congregate care by state on the last day of the FY. Overall, a median of 9.8 percent of children across states were in congregate care at the end of 2020.

Table V–1 displays the median state performance on a number of characteristics and indicators for children in either a group home or institution. For both group home and institution settings, most states had more males than females in those settings. The median age of entry was 13 years across states for both settings. The national median lengths of stay for children in their current placement setting was the same for children in group homes and in institutions—4.3 months. Nearly half of all children in congregate care had a diagnosed disability, with national medians of 43 percent for group homes and 48 percent for institutions. The proportions varied widely across states. Lastly, a relatively small percentage of children in either setting had a case goal of long-term foster care.⁹² As states implement policies and strategies in response to updates in federal child welfare policy as a result of FFPSA, it will be important to monitor how the population of children in congregate care changes over time.

Table V–1. Characteristics of Children in Group Homes or Institutions, 2020 (N=52)

Characteristics	Group home	Institution
Male ^a	59% (0–100%)	59% (29–79%)
Female ^a	40% (0–100%)	41% (21–71%)
Age at entry (years)	13	13
Length of stay in care (months)	15.1	15.2
Length of stay in current setting (months)	4.3	4.3
Diagnosed disability ^a	43% (0–100%)	48% (0–96%)
Case goal of long-term foster care ^a	1 % (0–26%)	2% (0–20%)

^a Data displayed are the medians across states, followed by the range of state performance in parentheses.
 Note.—This table displays data for children in foster care on the last day of the FY.

Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

Table V–2 presents the findings on state performance regarding placement stability (measure 6.1) and placements of young children in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). For outcome measure 6.1, data are presented that measure placement stability for multiple timeframes regarding length of stay in foster care.

⁹² As discussed in chapter III, when foster care is necessary to ensure children’s safety and well-being, the goal of state child welfare agencies is to return children to their homes or to find other permanent homes in a timely manner. States report to AFCARS the most-recent case plan goal of long-term foster care when specific factors or conditions make it not appropriate or possible to return the child home or place the child for adoption, with a relative, or with a legal guardian. For more information on reporting case plan goals, see [AFCARS Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements](#), which was last revised in February 2012.

**Table V–2. Range of State Performance, 2020
Outcomes 6 and 7: Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings**

Outcome measures	25th percentile	National median (50th percentile)	75th percentile	Range
Measure 6.1a: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for less than 12 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51)	80.6%	84.5%	87.9%	66.0%–90.9%
Measure 6.1b: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51)	58.6%	65.4%	72.0%	50.2%–77.7%
Measure 6.1c: Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for at least 24 months, what percentage had no more than two placement settings? (N=51)	34.1%	40.0%	45.2%	18.1%–57.0%
Measure 7.1: Of all children who entered foster care during the year and were age 12 or younger at the time of their most recent placement, what percentage were placed in a group home or an institution? (N=51) ^a	1.7%	2.6%	3.9%	0.5%–34.1%

^a For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.
Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available.

As shown in table V–2, the majority of children in foster care for less than 12 months across all states experienced no more than two placement settings in 2020, with a national median of 84.5 percent. It is encouraging that more than four out of five children remain in stable placements during their first year in foster care. While there may be times when a new placement setting will be in the best interest of the child, such as a move to a placement that better reflects the permanency goals and service needs of the child, it is generally important for states to continue to do as much as they can to keep placement setting counts to a minimum. Across the time periods composing measure 6.1, the median across states for children having no more than two placements decreased as the length of time in foster care increased: 84.5 percent for less than 12 months in care, 65.4 percent for between 12 months and 24 months in care, and 40.0 percent for 24 months or longer in care.

Direct comparisons between these measures are difficult to make. First, these measures count all of a child's placement settings (regardless of in which years they occurred) up until discharge from foster care or until the end of the reporting period rather than just those that occurred during the year of interest. In addition, the demographics of children included in each measure vary. For example, the population of children in care less than 12 months includes infants and very young children, whereas, by definition, the measure for children in care 24 months or longer limits the population to age 2 and older. Age is an important factor to consider when assessing placement stability.

Additionally, the relationship between time in care and placement setting stability is more nuanced than it may initially appear. Research has shown that many factors affect placement stability. For example, there is a link between placement stability and factors such as the age of the child, placement setting type, the presence of child behavioral problems, and the availability of programs and services for children and resource families.⁹³ Research also indicates that children who experience early placement stability experience fewer behavioral problems and better outcomes.⁹⁴

⁹³ Noonan, K., Rubin, D., Mekonnen, R., Zlotnik, S., & O'Reilly, A. (2009). Securing child safety, well-being, and permanency through placement stability in foster care. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PolicyLab. <https://policylab.chop.edu/evidence-action-brief/securing-child-safety-well-being-and-permanency-through-placement-stability>

⁹⁴ Rubin, D. M., O'Reilly, A. L., Luan, X., & Localio, R. (2007). The impact of placement stability on behavioral well-being for children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 119, 336–44. <https://www.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-1995>

In about half of states in 2020, 2.6 percent or less of children entering foster care under the age of 12 were placed in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). The low national median on this measure indicates positive national performance overall.

Changes Over Time in State Performance on Measures of Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care

Table V–3 displays the change in the national median over time on measures pertaining to achieving stable and appropriate placement settings for children in foster care. This table also shows the number of states that demonstrated an improvement or decline in performance on these measures.

Outcome measures ^a	Median by year					Improved in performance ^b	Declined in performance ^b
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Measure 6.1a: Percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=50) ^c	84.0%	84.4%	83.5%	83.0%	84.5%	4 states (8%)	4 states (8%)
Measure 6.1b: Percentage of children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=50) ^c	65.2%	65.6%	65.8%	64.9%	65.4%	14 states (27%)	7 states (14%)
Measure 6.1c: Percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings (N=50) ^c	39.0%	41.1%	41.1%	41.0%	40.0%	30 states (59%)	10 states (20%)
Measure 7.1: Percentage of children entering foster care at age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (N=50) ^d	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	2.6%	35 states (69%)	11 states (22%)

^a Full descriptions for the measures in this table can be found in table V–2 and appendix B.

^b In accordance with standard procedure for data analysis in this Report, when there was a percentage change of less than 5.0 in either direction (positive or negative), a determination was made that there was no change in performance.

^c Other time periods composing measure 6.1 are not shown in this table. See appendix B for more information on how the measure is defined.

^d For this measure, a lower number indicates better performance.

Note.—Data for this table include all states for which adequate data were available for all relevant years and may be different from the data included in table V–2 due to differences in the numbers of states included for each analysis.

As indicated in table V–3, there was little change in achieving placement stability for children in care less than 24 months between 2016 and 2020. For children in care less than 12 months (measure 6.1a), the national median increased 0.6 percent, with as many states reporting an improvement in performance (8 percent) as a decline (8 percent). The majority of states (84 percent) demonstrated no change in performance. Similarly, a small improvement was observed in the national median for children in care more than 12 months but less than 24 months (measure 6.1b), with an increase of 0.3 percent over the 5 years. Although more than half (59 percent) of states demonstrated no change in performance, more states who demonstrated an improvement (27 percent) than a decrease (14 percent) in this measure.

The national median over time related to the percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or longer who experienced two or fewer placement settings (measure 6.1c) has remained relatively flat over time, with a change from 2016 to 2020 of 2.6 percent. While the percentage change from 2016 to 2020 was not a meaningful change,

it is worth highlighting that nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of states demonstrated improvement on this measure, and only 10 states (20 percent) declined in performance. While states have been less successful overall at achieving placement-setting stability for children in care less than 12 months, the overall improvement of performance on this measure at the longer timeframes is encouraging.

The national median for achieving placement stability for children who have been in care for 24 months or longer improved by 2.6 percent between 2016 and 2020.

In 2020, there was an improvement in the percentage of children age 12 or younger who were placed in group homes or institutions (measure 7.1). The national median decreased from 3.2 percent in 2016 to 2.6 percent in 2020—an 18.8-percent decline over 5 years. Additionally, the majority of states (69 percent) reported an improvement in performance, and 22 percent of states reported a decline in performance. This continues a trend reported in previous Child Welfare Outcomes Reports.

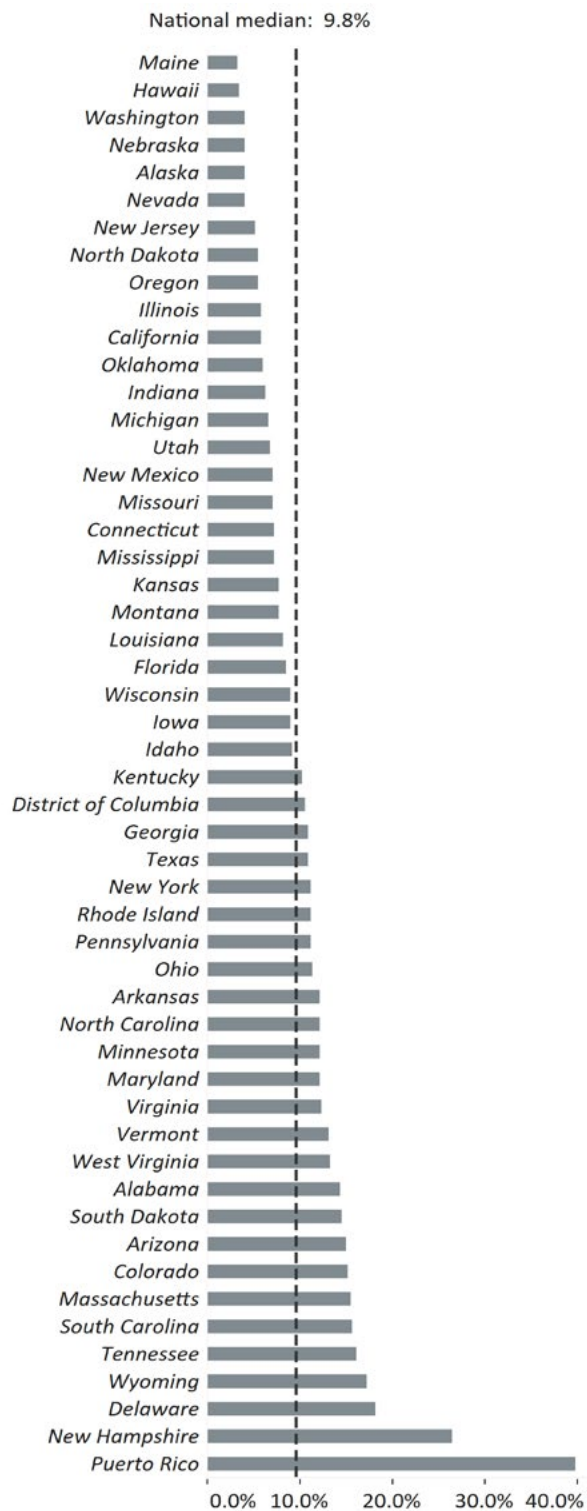
Summary of Findings Regarding Achieving Stable and Appropriate Placements for Children in Foster Care

Although states have been fairly successful in achieving placement stability for children in foster care for less than 12 months, the percentage of children who have placement stability declines the longer they are in foster care. It is promising, however, that states have demonstrated some improvement in achieving placement setting stability for children in care longer than 12 months, especially for those children in care for 24 months or longer. It is also encouraging that the use of group homes and institutions for children aged 12 and younger continued to decline and that over two-thirds of states have shown meaningful improvement over the past 5 years on this measure. With the enactment of FFPSA, it will be important to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of children in various foster care placement settings. Information on children who are placed in congregate care settings will continue to be included in these Reports to monitor state progress on placing children in family settings and reducing the number of children who are placed in congregate care settings.

The end of this chapter displays outcomes-based visuals related to achieving stable and appropriate placements for children in foster care, including state performance on outcomes 6 and 7. The [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#) includes additional information on achieving stable and appropriate placements for children as well as state data, including data on children in congregate care and for states excluded from analyses due to incomplete or inadequate data.

Figure V-1.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FY WITH A PLACEMENT IN A GROUP HOME OR INSTITUTION, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure V-2.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE LESS THAN 12 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2020 (N=51)

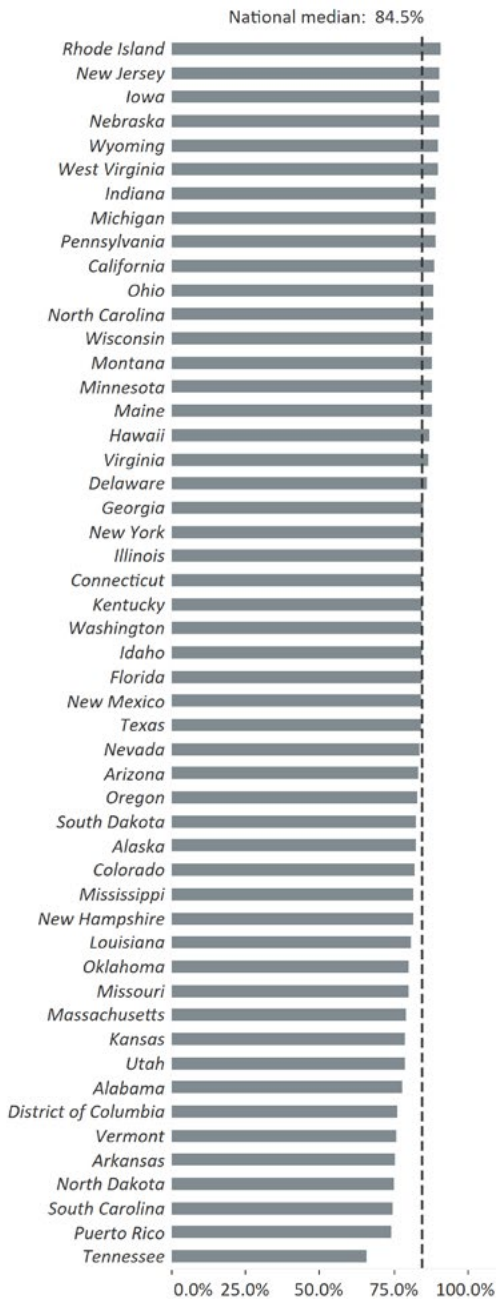
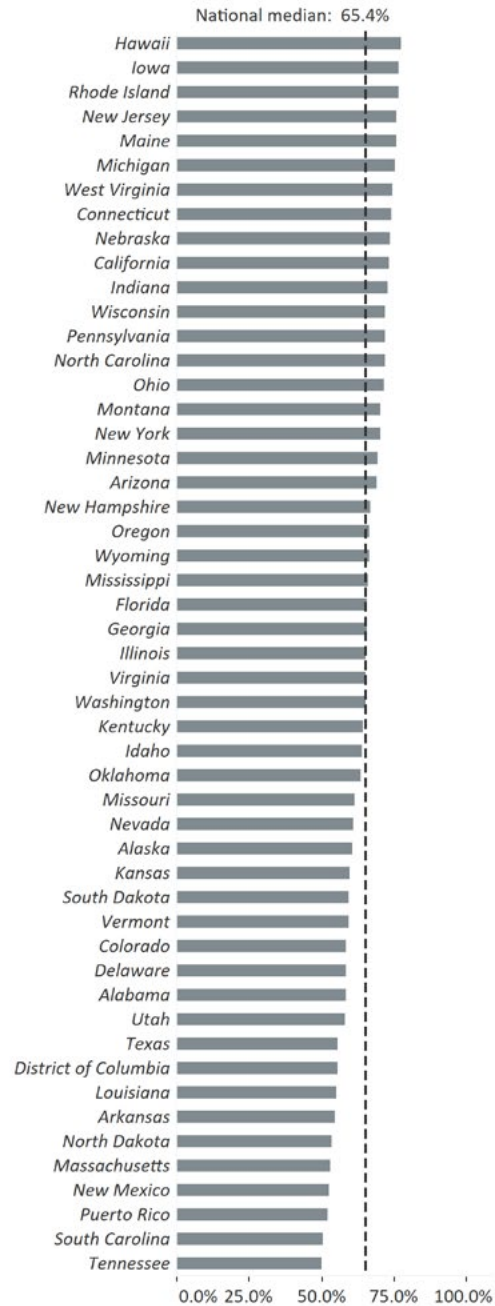


Figure V-3.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE MORE THAN 12 MONTHS BUT LESS THAN 24 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2020 (N=51)



Note. —Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Note. —Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Figure V-4.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE MORE THAN 24 MONTHS WITH TWO OR FEWER PLACEMENT SETTINGS, 2020 (N=51)

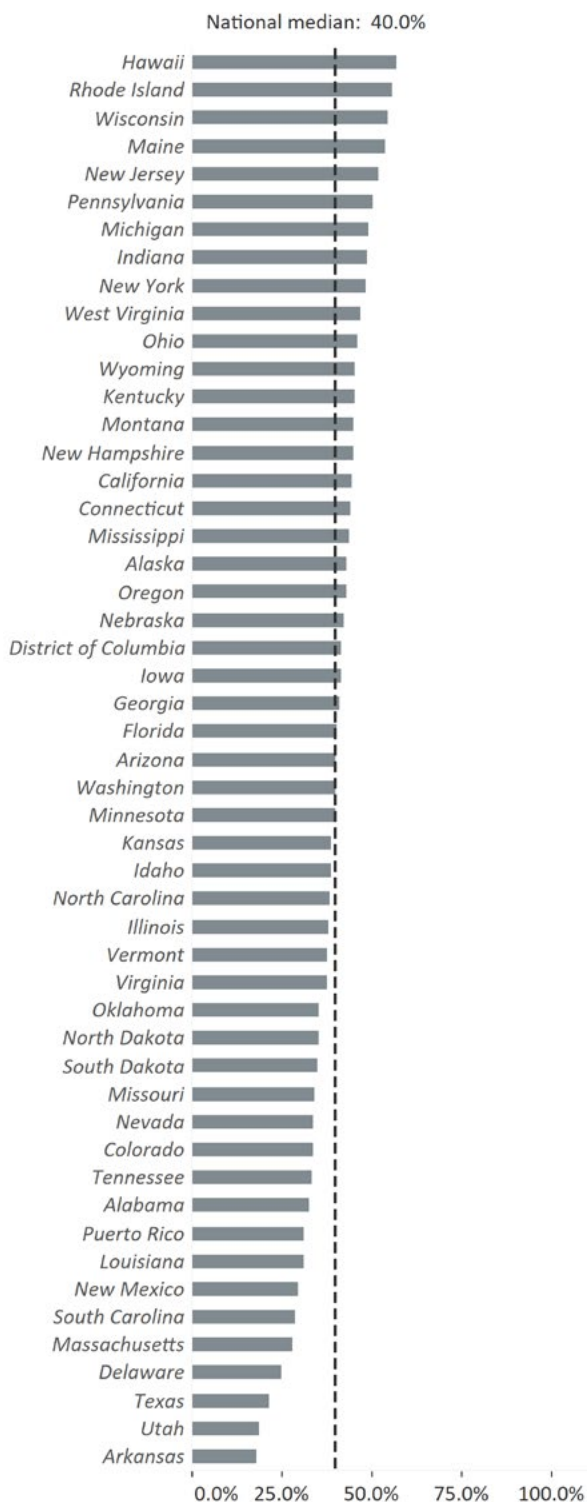


Figure V-5.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGE 12 AND UNDER PLACED IN GROUP HOMES OR INSTITUTIONS, 2020 (N=51)



Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Notes.
—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.
—A lower value indicates better performance.

Table V-4. Outcome 6.1a: Percentage of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	78.8%	76.9%	78.2%	78.1%	78.1%	-0.9%
Alaska	82.0%	82.6%	83.1%	78.2%	82.7%	0.9%
Arizona	81.6%	82.5%	83.5%	83.6%	83.4%	2.2%
Arkansas	72.1%	74.1%	77.3%	76.6%	75.6%	4.9%
California	84.6%	87.9%	87.8%	87.8%	88.9%	5.1%
Colorado	83.8%	83.2%	82.1%	82.9%	82.2%	-1.9%
Connecticut	87.3%	82.0%	81.8%	83.9%	84.8%	-2.8%
Delaware	83.3%	84.8%	84.7%	83.6%	86.4%	3.7%
District of Columbia	81.9%	84.6%	80.6%	70.7%	76.2%	-6.9%
Florida	83.2%	82.2%	81.3%	81.7%	84.5%	1.5%
Georgia	81.5%	81.5%	82.2%	83.2%	85.1%	4.5%
Hawaii	89.1%	89.4%	85.6%	87.6%	87.0%	-2.3%
Idaho	87.4%	87.6%	85.1%	83.0%	84.5%	-3.3%
Illinois	78.4%	76.9%	76.3%	81.6%	84.9%	8.3%
Indiana	89.8%	89.5%	89.0%	89.4%	89.4%	-0.5%
Iowa	89.3%	90.1%	89.3%	91.1%	90.6%	1.4%
Kansas	76.2%	72.4%	69.9%	73.6%	79.0%	3.7%
Kentucky	86.7%	85.5%	85.6%	85.0%	84.8%	-2.2%
Louisiana	82.7%	82.6%	80.9%	80.4%	81.0%	-2.0%
Maine	89.9%	91.0%	87.3%	87.2%	87.8%	-2.4%
Massachusetts	70.8%	68.5%	69.7%	73.2%	79.1%	11.8%
Michigan	87.7%	87.2%	86.1%	87.7%	89.2%	1.7%
Minnesota	87.2%	87.7%	88.3%	88.2%	87.8%	0.7%
Mississippi	83.2%	84.1%	85.2%	84.0%	81.8%	-1.7%
Missouri	78.2%	80.2%	79.2%	78.6%	80.0%	2.3%
Montana	86.0%	86.2%	87.1%	87.1%	87.9%	2.1%
Nebraska	89.9%	89.8%	89.8%	90.2%	90.5%	0.7%
Nevada	81.6%	81.5%	82.6%	81.9%	83.8%	2.7%
New Hampshire	85.3%	84.5%	83.9%	85.1%	81.6%	-4.3%
New Jersey	88.2%	87.3%	86.9%	87.4%	90.6%	2.7%
New Mexico	82.3%	84.4%	82.6%	81.3%	84.2%	2.3%
New York	85.0%	85.0%	84.0%	83.0%	85.0%	0.0%
North Carolina	92.1%	91.0%	90.5%	88.5%	88.4%	-4.1%
North Dakota	80.6%	81.3%	78.8%	80.7%	75.0%	-7.0%
Ohio	88.5%	89.2%	88.9%	89.3%	88.5%	0.0%
Oklahoma	76.3%	77.4%	81.4%	80.2%	80.2%	5.1%
Oregon	83.3%	82.0%	80.6%	80.9%	82.9%	-0.4%
Pennsylvania	86.8%	87.1%	87.9%	86.8%	89.1%	2.6%
Rhode Island	89.5%	88.9%	87.5%	89.8%	90.9%	1.6%
South Carolina	82.7%	82.4%	81.5%	77.1%	74.7%	-9.7%
South Dakota	84.7%	83.0%	85.6%	81.6%	82.8%	-2.2%
Tennessee	67.0%	67.9%	67.8%	68.6%	66.0%	-1.5%
Texas	84.0%	83.5%	83.1%	82.8%	84.2%	0.3%
Utah	77.5%	78.3%	79.7%	79.6%	78.9%	1.8%
Vermont	80.6%	74.3%	78.9%	75.1%	76.0%	-5.7%
Virginia	85.1%	84.9%	83.5%	82.3%	86.8%	2.0%
Washington	80.8%	81.5%	83.3%	81.1%	84.6%	4.8%
West Virginia	90.0%	91.0%	90.0%	90.7%	89.9%	-0.1%

Table V-4. Outcome 6.1a: Percentage of Children in Care Less Than 12 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Wisconsin	86.7%	87.8%	88.3%	86.4%	87.9%	1.4%
Wyoming	91.7%	93.0%	90.6%	90.1%	90.1%	-1.7%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V-5. Outcome 6.1b: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	54.0%	52.2%	55.4%	57.4%	58.6%	8.6%
Alaska	62.9%	65.1%	66.9%	65.4%	60.5%	-3.8%
Arizona	69.4%	65.1%	68.3%	67.4%	69.2%	-0.3%
Arkansas	49.3%	47.1%	51.2%	53.3%	55.0%	11.4%
California	66.1%	70.1%	70.8%	71.4%	73.2%	10.8%
Colorado	52.2%	51.6%	51.3%	52.3%	58.7%	12.5%
Connecticut	75.7%	73.1%	67.7%	71.7%	74.0%	-2.3%
Delaware	64.4%	59.5%	63.8%	58.0%	58.6%	-9.0%
District of Columbia	71.0%	63.4%	65.0%	64.8%	55.6%	-21.7%
Florida	68.2%	66.8%	65.2%	64.8%	65.9%	-3.3%
Georgia	56.8%	61.2%	63.5%	63.5%	65.7%	15.6%
Hawaii	70.0%	73.2%	78.8%	73.8%	77.7%	11.0%
Idaho	68.5%	68.4%	65.9%	63.0%	63.9%	-6.8%
Illinois	59.7%	60.3%	61.3%	63.4%	65.4%	9.5%
Indiana	72.4%	72.9%	73.4%	74.0%	72.9%	0.6%
Iowa	72.4%	74.0%	74.3%	74.3%	76.7%	5.9%
Kansas	62.0%	60.2%	57.8%	55.4%	59.7%	-3.6%
Kentucky	63.4%	63.5%	61.9%	63.4%	64.4%	1.5%
Louisiana	57.9%	58.1%	57.2%	56.1%	55.2%	-4.8%
Maine	80.0%	80.0%	83.2%	77.3%	75.7%	-5.4%
Massachusetts	52.6%	48.5%	46.1%	48.8%	53.3%	1.4%
Michigan	73.3%	73.7%	71.8%	72.5%	75.5%	2.9%
Minnesota	64.5%	65.8%	67.6%	70.4%	69.5%	7.6%
Mississippi	63.1%	66.9%	65.8%	65.5%	66.0%	4.6%
Missouri	60.0%	61.5%	63.4%	62.8%	61.5%	2.6%
Montana	69.6%	68.5%	69.0%	70.6%	70.5%	1.3%
Nebraska	76.2%	74.7%	74.3%	73.8%	73.7%	-3.3%
Nevada	56.8%	54.9%	57.8%	61.8%	61.2%	7.6%
New Hampshire	65.7%	68.2%	71.5%	67.3%	66.9%	1.8%
New Jersey	73.7%	74.4%	73.9%	73.9%	75.8%	2.8%
New Mexico	50.6%	51.9%	54.4%	48.4%	52.5%	3.8%
New York	71.0%	70.8%	71.5%	68.7%	70.2%	-1.1%
North Carolina	75.7%	77.2%	76.0%	72.5%	71.9%	-5.0%
North Dakota	49.6%	51.3%	52.5%	58.1%	53.7%	8.3%
Ohio	69.9%	70.3%	70.2%	70.7%	71.7%	2.5%
Oklahoma	53.5%	58.1%	59.1%	63.1%	63.5%	18.8%
Oregon	65.2%	65.6%	66.2%	66.0%	66.6%	2.2%
Pennsylvania	68.0%	68.5%	69.4%	70.4%	72.2%	6.2%

Table V-5. Outcome 6.1b: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 12 Months but Less Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Rhode Island	74.0%	74.9%	73.3%	76.6%	76.5%	3.4%
South Carolina	55.9%	53.8%	53.8%	53.9%	50.4%	-9.7%
South Dakota	66.5%	67.8%	61.6%	59.5%	59.3%	-10.8%
Tennessee	53.1%	51.5%	50.3%	50.2%	50.2%	-5.5%
Texas	57.0%	56.8%	56.0%	56.2%	55.6%	-2.3%
Utah	52.6%	53.3%	56.2%	55.4%	58.1%	10.4%
Vermont	59.4%	60.2%	57.0%	60.6%	59.3%	-0.2%
Virginia	65.0%	65.6%	64.7%	62.7%	65.2%	0.4%
Washington	62.7%	63.1%	63.0%	65.1%	65.1%	3.9%
West Virginia	71.8%	72.9%	76.0%	75.7%	74.5%	3.8%
Wisconsin	70.6%	72.0%	72.7%	74.6%	72.2%	2.4%
Wyoming	69.5%	70.6%	73.5%	70.1%	66.4%	-4.4%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V-6. Outcome 6.1c: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	27.7%	31.7%	32.0%	32.1%	32.7%	17.8%
Alaska	40.3%	42.3%	42.5%	41.6%	43.2%	7.2%
Arizona	47.0%	44.7%	41.1%	40.3%	40.0%	-14.9%
Arkansas	21.4%	23.6%	19.7%	18.6%	18.1%	-15.4%
California	39.6%	42.4%	42.5%	42.6%	44.5%	12.3%
Colorado	27.2%	26.5%	27.2%	27.6%	33.7%	23.9%
Connecticut	39.7%	39.5%	40.5%	43.3%	44.3%	11.7%
Delaware	32.1%	31.9%	29.9%	30.2%	25.0%	-22.2%
District of Columbia	33.5%	42.2%	38.3%	35.3%	41.6%	24.3%
Florida	39.0%	41.5%	42.9%	43.3%	40.5%	3.8%
Georgia	35.7%	36.8%	38.3%	39.0%	41.2%	15.4%
Hawaii	53.1%	53.3%	51.9%	57.9%	57.0%	7.3%
Idaho	36.5%	40.9%	43.9%	44.5%	38.8%	6.2%
Illinois	31.3%	30.4%	30.7%	34.8%	38.2%	22.2%
Indiana	48.3%	49.7%	50.5%	50.3%	49.0%	1.3%
Iowa	32.6%	37.2%	40.9%	40.8%	41.5%	27.4%
Kansas	42.4%	41.1%	43.0%	41.2%	39.0%	-8.0%
Kentucky	41.5%	43.5%	41.4%	42.7%	45.2%	9.0%
Louisiana	34.2%	36.5%	37.7%	34.0%	31.0%	-9.4%
Maine	52.8%	52.6%	49.3%	51.1%	53.8%	1.9%
Massachusetts	34.1%	33.9%	32.5%	30.0%	28.2%	-17.4%
Michigan	44.1%	46.6%	47.4%	48.2%	49.4%	12.0%
Minnesota	36.8%	37.3%	38.7%	38.2%	39.9%	8.2%
Mississippi	36.9%	42.6%	45.8%	45.5%	43.7%	18.4%
Missouri	32.9%	32.6%	33.9%	33.1%	34.3%	4.2%
Montana	40.1%	44.9%	46.7%	46.7%	45.1%	12.7%
Nebraska	43.9%	43.1%	44.5%	44.3%	42.2%	-3.8%
Nevada	30.7%	29.1%	29.3%	30.7%	33.9%	10.4%

Table V-6. Outcome 6.1c: Percentage of Children in Care More Than 24 Months With Two or Fewer Placement Settings, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
New Hampshire	42.8%	47.8%	54.6%	50.8%	44.9%	4.9%
New Jersey	52.4%	53.1%	52.2%	51.2%	52.1%	-0.7%
New Mexico	25.9%	28.7%	29.6%	31.4%	29.6%	14.1%
New York	48.2%	47.8%	46.9%	47.3%	48.4%	0.6%
North Carolina	44.4%	45.0%	42.4%	45.6%	38.5%	-13.2%
North Dakota	29.2%	27.4%	29.7%	32.6%	35.4%	21.0%
Ohio	41.7%	44.9%	44.8%	44.0%	46.2%	10.7%
Oklahoma	30.5%	28.7%	30.9%	33.1%	35.4%	16.0%
Oregon	40.6%	41.3%	41.5%	43.0%	43.1%	6.3%
Pennsylvania	43.3%	44.1%	46.3%	47.3%	50.2%	15.9%
Rhode Island	49.0%	49.6%	49.9%	48.5%	55.7%	13.7%
South Carolina	32.7%	33.5%	27.7%	28.7%	28.9%	-11.7%
South Dakota	27.7%	31.8%	34.1%	34.0%	34.9%	26.0%
Tennessee	36.6%	35.0%	36.6%	35.2%	33.4%	-8.8%
Texas	22.6%	21.7%	23.2%	21.7%	21.6%	-4.3%
Utah	13.0%	15.5%	16.7%	19.6%	18.8%	44.7%
Vermont	32.9%	36.6%	36.4%	33.0%	37.8%	14.9%
Virginia	40.2%	40.5%	39.8%	37.6%	37.5%	-6.7%
Washington	40.4%	39.6%	39.5%	39.7%	39.9%	-1.1%
West Virginia	38.9%	42.2%	44.3%	46.1%	46.9%	20.6%
Wisconsin	48.5%	49.5%	50.0%	51.8%	54.6%	12.4%
Wyoming	41.2%	47.6%	48.0%	50.0%	45.4%	10.1%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, positive values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), negative values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Table V-7. Outcome 7.1: Percentage of Children Age 12 or Younger in Group Homes or Institutions, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Alabama	5.0%	5.2%	4.4%	2.6%	2.7%	-46.8%
Alaska	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	1.4%	2.0%	48.3%
Arizona	9.8%	8.0%	6.2%	7.5%	7.8%	-20.4%
Arkansas	12.2%	8.8%	8.0%	4.8%	2.9%	-76.0%
California	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%	1.9%	1.6%	-35.3%
Colorado	4.0%	3.7%	2.5%	1.9%	1.7%	-57.8%
Connecticut	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	0.5%	-59.5%
Delaware	4.7%	1.9%	6.2%	3.4%	3.2%	-31.0%
District of Columbia	0.7%	0.9%	1.6%	3.5%	1.4%	113.8%
Florida	5.1%	5.2%	4.5%	3.8%	2.7%	-46.7%
Georgia	3.2%	2.6%	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	-39.2%
Hawaii	5.1%	4.7%	5.7%	5.0%	3.2%	-37.6%
Idaho	2.6%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%	2.5%	-6.3%
Illinois	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%	1.0%	-29.3%
Indiana	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	1.5%	1.2%	-47.7%
Iowa	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%	-0.2%
Kansas	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	2.7%	2.1%	42.8%
Kentucky	4.7%	3.5%	4.0%	3.5%	2.9%	-37.6%
Louisiana	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	0.9%	-27.8%

Table V-7. Outcome 7.1: Percentage of Children Age 12 or Younger in Group Homes or Institutions, 2016–2020 (N=50)

State	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage change in performance, 2016–2020 ^a
Maine	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%	0.8%	-25.5%
Massachusetts	5.9%	6.1%	5.3%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%
Michigan	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	1.9%	0.8%	-59.6%
Minnesota	4.9%	5.1%	4.6%	5.3%	5.6%	14.5%
Mississippi	5.7%	3.9%	3.6%	2.8%	2.3%	-59.8%
Missouri	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	2.9%	2.9%	-14.7%
Montana	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	2.6%	2.3%	-26.2%
Nebraska	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%	-41.1%
Nevada	13.2%	8.9%	8.5%	7.9%	5.6%	-57.5%
New Hampshire	5.3%	4.4%	7.8%	12.3%	8.0%	49.9%
New Jersey	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	1.0%	1.0%	15.1%
New Mexico	5.4%	4.9%	3.6%	2.8%	4.5%	-17.7%
New York	7.4%	8.7%	8.3%	8.4%	7.8%	5.6%
North Carolina	4.5%	4.2%	3.6%	4.7%	4.7%	3.2%
North Dakota	2.2%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%	1.2%	-44.8%
Ohio	2.6%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.8%	9.3%
Oklahoma	1.8%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.8%	1.8%
Oregon	1.3%	2.8%	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%	34.1%
Pennsylvania	3.1%	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	2.1%	-31.8%
Rhode Island	4.5%	3.1%	2.3%	2.8%	3.1%	-31.8%
South Carolina	16.7%	9.8%	9.7%	6.8%	5.6%	-66.5%
South Dakota	9.3%	9.7%	6.8%	7.8%	6.5%	-30.2%
Tennessee	3.2%	2.7%	2.8%	3.0%	2.8%	-10.9%
Texas	5.0%	5.2%	4.9%	4.9%	4.6%	-6.7%
Utah	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%	1.1%	13.8%
Vermont	5.1%	3.0%	3.6%	4.2%	3.4%	-33.2%
Virginia	4.8%	5.9%	4.2%	4.2%	3.3%	-32.2%
Washington	2.5%	3.7%	5.3%	6.1%	4.8%	93.7%
West Virginia	3.6%	2.8%	3.2%	2.9%	2.3%	-35.5%
Wisconsin	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%	2.6%	2.6%	-12.2%
Wyoming	3.6%	2.6%	3.1%	3.2%	2.0%	-46.3%

^a A change in performance of +/-5.0 percent is considered an improvement in performance. In this table, negative values greater than 5-percent indicate an improvement in performance (dark gray), positive values greater than 5-percent indicate a decline in performance (light gray), and values less than 5-percent in either direction indicate no change in performance (no shading).

Note.—Data include all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds.

Chapter VI: State Comments on Performance Relevant to the Seven National Child Welfare Outcomes

State-specific performance over time on outcomes, as well as relevant state context data, are available on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#). Prior to the release of the data on the data site and the report, states were given the opportunity to comment on their data. What follows are the state comments from those states that opted to provide context and comment on their state data. The comments have been printed exactly as they were submitted by the states.

Connecticut

State Comment

Trenea Mazzotta, Bureau Chief
Bureau of Strategic Planning
Connecticut Department of Children and Families

The following are Connecticut's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2020: Report to Congress* and its related data site <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

Connecticut has been in the midst of significant practice change over the past ten years, with major areas of focus on our Differential Response System (DRS), and both In-Home and Out-of-Home Protective Services. Connecticut historically responded to all reports of child abuse and neglect through a formal Investigation and if there was a determination of reasonable cause to believe that abuse/neglect occurred, allegations were substantiated. In March of 2012 CT established a Family Assessment Response (FAR) for low to moderate risk cases. A response initially designated FAR can change tracks to Investigation should such factors arise, but the reverse is not allowed. FAR grew from ~ 25% of accepted reports in CY2012, to >54% in CY2021. However, CT has not yet chosen to include FAR reports and responses in NCANDS submissions. This may create an impression that the volume of reports received in CT has declined since 2012, when in fact the reverse is true. In CY2012 CT received >46,000 reports, while in CY2021 almost 60,000 reports were received. CT's highest volume year for reports was CY2019 with >67,000 reports received. CT plans to include FAR data after implementation of CCWIS modules for Person, Careline and Intake.

Within this same timeframe, CT has also implemented other major policy and practice improvements, including:

- Increased investment in Continuous Quality Improvement analysis/reporting
- Right-sized usage of Congregate Care to less than 10% of children-in-placement
- Implemented our [Strengthening Families Practice Model](#) and [Child Safety Practice Model](#)
- Delivered training on [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services](#)
- Focused on [Racial Justice](#) including DCF [Safe and Sound Culture](#)
- Required [Considered-Removal Family Team Meetings](#) prior to removing children, or immediately thereafter in emergent situations, to prevent entry or facilitate timely/safe permanency
- Began our [Fatherhood Initiative](#) and Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Teams
- Developed contracted diversion programs for children with substantial behavioral health needs ([Voluntary Care Management](#)), and for families reported but not substantiated for abuse/neglect ([Integrated Family Care and Support](#))

CT's performance on In-Placement Caseworker Visitation for FFY2020 appears uncharacteristically low, resulting from limitations in the legacy SACWIS system which did not have a narrative type to document virtual in-placement visits at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. CT was able to document virtual contact but could not confirm if the child was in their placement setting during the visit. This has since been corrected and will be addressed in future submissions.

The net result of these initiatives and policy/practice changes has been a net reduction in the population of families being served by In-Home Child Protective Services by 40%, and children in DCF care by over 25%, in the past five years. Performance on most outcome measures has also improved during that time, but we continue to increase focused efforts to achieve Timely Permanency for children entering care.

Delaware

State Comment

Trenee R. Parker, Director

Division of Family Services

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

The following are Delaware's comments on the state data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress*.

The *Child Welfare Outcomes* report for this time period continues to show a significant decline in foster care placements between 2016 and 2020. Delaware contributes the decrease of children in foster care to our continued use of Safety Organized Practice and Family Search and Engagement strategies. Delaware diligently uses Structured Decision Making (SOM)[®] tools such as caregiver safety assessments to not only determine risk and safety concerns, but also to develop caregiver safety agreements (safety plans) to prevent removal or re-entry. When possible, Delaware also has a Team Decision Making meeting prior to every child placement. These efforts often result in identifying relatives and other community resources and allows a families' natural support system to assist them in providing for their children's safety and well-being. Of children in foster care, Delaware had 100% have no maltreatment in foster care for 2020. The number of children receiving a monthly visit met federal goal of 95%, with 83% being seen in the placement setting.

Delaware has consistently shown less than 10% re-entry in foster care. Of children exiting foster care, there is a decrease in the average length of time in foster care. Teenagers, specifically 16- and 17-year-olds, continue to make up a majority of Delaware's foster care population. Consequently, the majority of these teens age out of foster care. Very similar to national statistics, there is also a disproportionate number of African American children in foster care compared to overall population.

The number of maltreatment victims has slightly decreased. Delaware has expanded our Differential Response which enables the state to address low risk cases of child abuse and neglect, ensure safety, and address risk without a finding of maltreatment. Delaware also uses a SDM[®] screening tool for all maltreatment reports that screens in incidents of abuse or neglect but also those with a high risk of maltreatment thus allowing Delaware to utilize prevention strategies. Delaware's rate of reoccurrence of maltreatment within the first 12 months is 2.7% and continues to improve. Delaware uses SOM[®] tools to determine risk level and assess the strengths and needs of families and children. Family Team Meetings are used to establish support networks. Delaware has shown a significant decrease in response time. Delaware has focused much effort to improve response time including the establishment of units based on priority response times (24 hours, 72 hours, and within 10 days).

In 2018, Delaware implemented a new data system. This system is still a work in progress. Data quality errors primarily related to discharge reasons are present in earlier AFCARS reports. Delaware plans to resubmit AFCARS reports from the onset of our new system once these errors have been corrected.

District of Columbia

State Comment

Robert L. Matthews

Director

Child and Family Services Agency

The following are the District of Columbia's comments on the State data presented in Child Welfare Outcomes 2020: Report to Congress and its related data site: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite>.

The District of Columbia is pleased to report the continued decrease in the foster care population between 2016 and 2020 by 30.1 percent from 826 children to 577 children. Within the same time period, the data reflects an increase in the median length of time in care by 3.3 months. The District's median length of stay ranged between 14.6 and 19.2 months across the five years. The District experienced an increase in the median length of stay (from 14.6 to 19.2 months) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the District's foster care population declined over the past five years, the proportion of children awaiting adoption has varied with an increase in fiscal years 2019 and 2020. Almost 30 percent of the District's children await adoption. The District continues to focus on improving documenting concerted efforts or exceptions to ensure the termination of parental rights are filed in a timely manner and continues to work with the DC Family Court on this issue. A range of 91 to 110 children were adopted between 2016 and 2020. The overall rate of children who exit to adoption increased by 7.5 percentage points between 2016 and 2020. During the same time period, a decrease was observed for children exiting to reunification by 7.4 percentage points.

Lastly, two key areas of focus for the District are recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment in foster care. Children without a recurrence of maltreatment (within 12 months) decreased slightly between 2016 and 2020 from 89.2 percent to 86.9 percent. Within the same time period, the percentage of children who experienced recurrence of maltreatment increased from 10.8 percent to 13.1 percent. The District has completed an extensive review of the data to identify and address the increased rates in the recurrence of maltreatment. The District continues to maintain strong performance in reducing the incidence of children experiencing maltreatment in foster care. The rate decreased between 2016 and 2020 with 99 percent of children continue not to experience maltreatment while in foster care.

Illinois

State Comment

Marc. D Smith

Director

Illinois Department of DCFS, Children and Family Services

The vision for child welfare in Illinois includes a partnership of public and private agencies and the court system working together as a proactive system focused on prevention and as a responsive system when child maltreatment occurs. Public and private partners work together as one team aligned by the same values and core practices to serve children and families from a Family-centered, Trauma-informed, and Strengths-based (FTS) approach.

Illinois continues to take active steps to improve children's safety and time to permanency through enhanced supports to supervisors, increased focus on critical thinking in safety assessments, continuous quality improvement efforts focused on casework practice, and increased efforts to license relative caregivers. Illinois recognizes the importance of data-driven decision-making and is investing in making data more available for direct service teams with an emphasis on reducing recurrence of maltreatment and increasing timely permanency.

In reviewing the Illinois data in the 2020 Child Welfare Outcomes report, it is important to know the following about the data elements listed below:

- Sex trafficking maltreatment type: Illinois' definition for the abuse/neglect allegation of Sex Trafficking is a part of a broader definition of Human trafficking that also includes labor exploitation and blatant disregard of a caregiver's responsibilities that result in a child being trafficked. At this time, Illinois cannot extract data specific to Sex trafficking. This maltreatment type is reported under the NCANDS maltreatment type of Other.
- Time to investigation: Illinois' definition of investigation start date/time is the date/time of the first actual in-person contact or attempted in-person contact (a.k.a. Good Faith Attempts) listed for the last alleged victim in the investigation. Based on the NCANDS instructions to report only on the actual contacts, Illinois does not provide the investigation start date/time for the NCANDS submission of the child maltreatment data.
- Exits of children with a diagnosed disability: In Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Illinois began a process to review and map the medical disability and diagnostic codes to the relevant AFCARS data elements, which has resulted in more accurate disability information.

Illinois is committed to improving the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for child welfare involved children and families. Likewise, the state continues to improve its data quality and is committed to providing the most accurate data possible through its AFCARS and NCANDS submissions.

Indiana

State Comment

Terry J. Stigdon, MSN, RN

Director

Indiana Department of Child Services

General

In July 2012, Indiana instituted a new child welfare information system: The Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK). The Department of Child Services (DCS) developed new extraction code and mapping documents to collect and organize data for federal reporting. Continuous improvement efforts have been made to refine data collection and mapping processes through system modifications and enhancements, including launching a new intake system in February 2016. MaGIK is an umbrella system that has incorporated services, billing, case management and the overall data management, organization and extraction.

Reports

If a report meets statutory criteria for child abuse or neglect (CA/N) (Indiana Policy [Policy] 3.8), the DCS hotline staff may recommend to screen in the case and assign the report to the local office as needing immediate, 24-hour, 48-hour, or 5-day response time depending on the type of allegation(s). As of July 1, 2019, legislation increased immediate response times from one hour to two hours. The local office makes the final decision to screen in or screen out.

DCS does not refer allegations of CA/N for assessment if they do not:

- Meet the statutory definition of CA/N.
- Contain sufficient information to either identify or locate the child and/or family to initiate an assessment (Policy 3.6).

The following types of referrals do not receive an assessment:

- Screen out:
 - These referrals meet one or both conditions listed above. Reports may be forwarded to law enforcement for review. If a participant has open involvement with the agency, the family case manager (FCM), FCM supervisor and local office are notified of the decision.
- Service request:
 - Calls consist of Safe Haven reports and requests for DCS to assist (e.g., courtesy interview for another state child protection agency).
- Information and referral:
 - Report source provides information to DCS regarding an open involvement or requests information (e.g., food pantry information, legal aid, etc.).

Children

As of January 2018, the hotline ceased automatically recommending assessment of all reports with alleged victims under 3. This same month, the hotline implemented an additional supervisor review of all reports recommended for screen out involving alleged victims under 3.

On May 1, 2019, DCS began Plan of Safe Care entry into MaGIK and gave guidance on which children and families meet the criteria.

Fatalities

Fatalities are included in the FFY the assessment was approved by DCS' Central Fatality Unit (CEU). In FFY 2019, CEU improved processes, allowing DCS to finalize lingering fatality assessments and lessen the time to complete new assessments. This resulted in a higher number of fatality assessments being approved in FFY 2019.

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

- Children under the age of 3:
 - The child's death is sudden, unexpected or unexplained, or there are allegations of CA/N
- Children age 3 or older:
 - The child's death involves allegations of CA/N

Reports for fatalities can come from multiple sources, including DCS, law enforcement, fire investigators, emergency medical personnel, coroners, health departments, or hospitals.

Michigan

State Comment

Demetrius Starling, Executive Director
Children's Service Agency
Michigan Department Of Health And Human Services

Michigan's comments on the state data presented in the *Child Welfare Outcomes 2016-2020: Report to Congress*

Child Welfare Vision

All Michigan children are safe from abuse and neglect and families have the services and supports they need to thrive

Child Welfare Mission

It is our mission to ensure safety for Michigan children who come to the Children's Services Agency's attention through timely provision of preventive, early intervention and foster care services that build on the child and family's strengths and lead to timely permanency. Our professional, respectful staff and agency partners will work to address and remediate family trauma, access to services, and strengthen families and their communities.

Michigan's Data

Michigan continues to utilize targeted improvement strategies to ensure children in foster care do not experience another maltreatment while in care.

Michigan continues to observe the number of children exiting foster care to be higher than the number of children entering foster care a consistent trend since 2014.

Children awaiting adoption but whose parents' legal rights have not been terminated is directly impacted by courts statewide not holding in-person jury trials. Parents are given the legal right to have a jury trial for termination proceedings.

Michigan has observed when children in foster care are placed with relatives, they do not achieve reunification within 12 months. Parent are provided more time to work service plans to overcome the challenges. As Michigan has worked to increase relative placements, the time to permanency has increased.

Michigan has reduced the number of children placed in congregate care institutions utilizing a contracted assessment provider as the state implements the provisions of Quality Residential Treatment Programs under the Family First Prevention Services Plan.

Michigan is committed to accurate data submissions through NCANDS and AFCARS. Use of data quality reports has resulted in the reduction of missing data as the state prepares to meet AFCARS 2.0 requirements.

Minnesota

State Comment

Jamie Sorenson, Director
Child Safety and Permanency Division
Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments regarding Minnesota's National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, census and caseworker visit data for inclusion in the *2020 Child Welfare Outcomes Report*.

Following review by department staff, additional contextual information is provided regarding decreases in the number of child maltreatment victims and children in foster care, and continued rates of disproportionality.

Following a period of significant increases, Minnesota has seen a 23 percent decline in the number of child maltreatment victims since FFY 2017. However, the number of child maltreatment victims remained steady from FFY 2020 to FFY 2021.

Since FFY 2017, Minnesota also experienced a 19 percent decrease in the number of children in foster care, including an almost eight percent decrease from FFY 2019 to FFY 2020. However, the median length of stay in care has continued to increase since FFY 2015. Caretaker substance use continues to be the highest reported reason for children entering out-of-home placement.

Disproportionality remains a significant concern for children in Minnesota's child protection and foster care systems. Minnesota continues to actively explore different ways to support families in both preventing involvement in the child protection system, and allowing children to safely remain in their home. Examples of such efforts include:

- Implementation of a case review process to assess and ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act
- Continued support of the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative project, which allows for a tribally- based child welfare delivery system
- Creation of the department's African American Child Well-being Unit which focuses on understanding and addressing the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American children and families in Minnesota's child protection and foster care systems, and oversees culturally affirming prevention and family preservation strategies as a child welfare response
- Investment in community based organizations to provide culturally appropriate services and assist the department in identifying institutional and systemic policy and practice barriers to better serve families experiencing the most significant disparities.

New Jersey

State Comment

Carmen Diaz-Petti, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Child Protection & Permanency
New Jersey Department of Children and Families

The following are New Jersey's comments on the State data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2020: Report to Congress*.

Data from FFY 2020 shows both a decrease in the number of unique reports and a decrease in the number of substantiated victims: 4.9% of reports were substantiated in FFY 2020 compared to 6.0% of reports substantiated in FFY 2019. While this indicates a decrease in the number of substantiated victims, it remains consistent with prior years and shows a continued trend in the decrease of victimization rates.

With respect to visits, New Jersey's compliance level of 95% met the federal Monthly Caseworker Visits MVC target of 95% for FFY 2020. New Jersey's compliance level of 97 % exceeded the federal Visits In-Home VIH target of 50 % for FFY 2020.

New Jersey's census of children in care continues to decline, a trend that is informed by entry/exit rates and permanency outcomes. The foster care entry rate decreased from 1.4 per 1,000 in 2019 to 0.9 per 1,000 in 2020. Fewer children entered foster care in 2020 than in 2019 (1,832 in 2020 and 2,679 in 2019). The number of children who exited foster care decreased in 2020: 2,426 children were discharged in 2020 and 3,700 children were discharged in 2019— a trend that may be partially explained by the reduction in census/children eligible for discharge. New Jersey's commitment toward achieving permanency for children is ongoing. Ninety percent of children in care exited to permanency through adoption, guardianship, or reunification.

New Jersey also continues to strive for placement stability and exceeds the National Standard: 91% of children in care less than 12 months, 76% of children in care between 12 months but less than 24 months, and 52% of children in care 24 months or longer experience two or fewer placement settings during their time in out of home care.

Finally, the number of children age 12 years or younger that were placed in a group home or institutional setting accounted for 1% in 2020.

Rhode Island

State Comment

Kevin Aucoin

Acting Director

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

The following are Rhode Island's comments on the state data for 2016-2020:

- 2020 data includes several months during which the state was operating under limitations due to the pandemic. All CPS reports continued to be investigated during this time. Family visitation and the availability of services were impacted. The Rhode Island court system was also closed for a period.
- Child Fatalities: Rhode Island reports child fatalities in the year that the investigation is completed which may not be the year in which the fatality occurred.
- Child Maltreatment Victims: Rhode Island experienced a significant increase in FFY2018 in the number of child maltreatment victims due to a very public trial of a school professional who was convicted of failing to report child abuse. Call volume returned to normal levels in FFY2020.
- Total Children Adopted: Closing of the courts due to the pandemic caused delays and judges extended the amount of time for reasonable efforts to be made for reunification before they would move forward with the TPR. This delay impacted the number of TPRs granted and the number of adoptions that were able to be completed in FFY2020.
- Time to Reunification: RI saw a significant decrease in the percentage of youth exiting to reunification within 12 months from 53.6% in FFY2019 to 36.9% in FFY2020. This decrease is the result of the limitations in the delivery of services due to the pandemic and the ability to safely return child home.
- Reentry into Foster Care: Rhode Island has reduced the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a prior episode from 12.6% in FFY2016 to 5.5% in FFY2020. This is due, in part, to the reporting of children in trial home visits. Previously, the state reported children as reunified when they physically returned home.

Washington

State Comment

Ross Hunter

Secretary

Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families

The following are Washington State's comments on the state data presented in *Child Welfare Outcomes 2020: Report to Congress*.

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is a cabinet-level agency focused on the well-being of children. DCYF encompasses several services previously offered through the state Children's Administration (CA), Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR), Department of Early Learning (DEL), Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ), and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).

Child and family safety, timely permanency, and well-being are at the forefront of every aspect of our work. DCYF is committed to improving outcomes for children, youth and families in Washington State. Washington State is committed to safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care. This requires intentional focus and strong practice to keep children safely in their own homes, as well as to ensure children achieve safe, timely exits from out-of-home care. We have intentionally aligned our priorities across major initiatives and activities including the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), Program Improvement Plan (PIP), the Permanency from Day One (PFD1) Grant, the Child Welfare Family Practice Model, and the DCYF Strategic and Racial Equity Plan.

We intend to improve outcomes through prioritizing the following activities and services:

- Design and development of a Child Welfare Family Practice Model.
- Adopting racial equity and social justice as core agency values to become an anti-racist organization.
- Improve availability of high quality services to prevent children and youth from entering care, strengthen families to avoid removal, address children's needs related to trauma, support the culture and identity of children and youth, and increase timely permanency.
- Strengthening continuous quality improvement systems across the agency.
- Re-evaluate our assessment system and change the use of assessments where they are known to contribute to disproportionate outcomes.
- Safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care and reducing length of care for children who are in out-of-home care through implementation of prevention efforts, timely and consistent permanency planning meetings, improving service availability, and collaboration with judicial partners.
- Supporting our workforce as our most valuable resource. Creating a positive and supportive culture will improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Despite challenges faced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Washington State continues to see a reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care. Washington State continues to be devoted to keeping children safely with their families and increase the use and support of relative and kinship resources if children enter out-of-home care.

The Governor and Washington State Legislature are committed to management accountability and performance measurement. The DCYF is focused on supporting children, youth and families in achieving better outcomes and reports publicly on agency performance related to education, health, and resilience outcomes.

Wisconsin

State Comment

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

The vision of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) is that all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. In accordance with this vision, Wisconsin is reorienting the child welfare system to a new purpose: strengthening all Wisconsin families to raise their children. Research and history, along with significant changes in federal policy and funding priorities, support that children belong with their families. And in living out the DCF vision stated above, we are challenged to reorient the child welfare system to a new purpose: strengthening all Wisconsin families to raise their children.

Wisconsin's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered in 71 counties and state-administered in Milwaukee. The effort to strengthen all Wisconsin families to raise their children is supported by the following aims:

- **Safely transform the child welfare and youth justice system to dramatically increase the proportion of children supported in their homes and communities.** In order to accomplish this, we are committed to: (1) Identifying, recruiting, and supporting relatives and like-kin in caring for all children and youth who cannot safely be maintained in their home; (2) Decreasing the utilization of out-of-home care by improving resources and services to serve more children, youth, and families safely in their home; (3) improve the permanency plan process and outputs, particularly for family and legal system partners; and (4) Elevating and supporting the role of individuals with lived experiences.
- **Safely re-orient the use of facility-based settings.** In order to accomplish this, we are committed to: (1) Reducing the use of congregate care by shifting the utilization of congregate care to short-term clinical interventions based on the assessed needs of the child or youth; (2) Reducing the number of children sent to out-of-state clinical-care settings; (3) Dedicating additional resources to support vulnerable and historically underserved youth, specifically teenage girls, kids with complex needs, and youth transitioning out of the foster care system; and (4) establish a child-centric, sustainable and trauma-informed system to achieve better outcomes for youth in congregate care.
- **Improve and develop the Youth Justice (YJ) infrastructure to support alignment with best practice.** DCF continues to improve and develop the YJ infrastructure to support alignment with best practice by: (1) Support YJ workers with training and coaching for best practice and use of the standardized assessment for youth entering the system; (2) Establishing a statewide YJ data system to evaluate and share data, and use that data to inform policy and program decisions; and (3) Including the voices of YJ-involved youth in policy and program development.
- Finally, the shifts in practice outlined above will be further supported and deepened by re-structuring component pieces of the infrastructure that support child welfare and youth justice in Wisconsin. Development of a new worker training model that better reflects the needs of our workforce and system is central to this vision, as is the identification of new strategies and technologies that will increase the time a worker has to serve children, youth, and families.

Through these efforts, we strive to engage with children, youth, and families so that we can keep children where they belong – with their families.

Appendix A

Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Pub. L. 105 –89)

SEC. 203. Performance of States in Protecting Children.

(a) ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE PERFORMANCE.—Part E of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 670 et seq.) is amended by addition at the end of the following:

Sec. 479A. Annual Report.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with governors, state legislatures, state and local public officials responsible for administering child welfare programs, and child welfare advocates, shall—

(1) develop a set of outcome measures (including length of stay in foster care, number of foster care placements, and number of adoptions) that can be used to assess the performance of states in operating child protection and child welfare programs pursuant to Parts B and E to ensure the safety of children;

(2) to the maximum extent possible, the outcome measures should be developed from data available from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System;

(3) develop a system for rating the performance of states with respect to the outcome measures, and provide to the states an explanation of the rating system and how scores are determined under the rating system;

(4) prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to ensure that states provide to the Secretary the data necessary to determine state performance with respect to each outcome measure, as a condition of the state receiving funds under this part;

(5) on May 1, 1999, and annually thereafter, prepare and submit to the Congress a report on the performance of each state on each outcome measure, which shall examine the reasons for high performance and low performance and, where possible, make recommendations as to how state performance could be improved;

(6) include in the report submitted pursuant to paragraph (5) for fiscal year 2007 or any succeeding fiscal year, state-by-state data on—¹

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

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

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

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

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

(A) children in foster care who have been placed in a child care institution or other setting that is not a foster family home, including —

(i) with respect to each such placement—

(I) the type of the placement setting, including whether the placement is shelter care, a group home and if so, the range of the child population in the home, a residential treatment facility, a hospital or institution providing medical, rehabilitative, or psychiatric care, a setting specializing in providing prenatal, post-partum, or parenting supports, or some other kind of child-care institution and if so, what kind;

(II) the number of children in the placement setting and the age, race, ethnicity, and gender of each of the children;

(III) for each child in the placement setting, the length of the placement of the child in the setting, whether the placement of the child in the setting is the first placement of the child and if not, the number and type of previous placements of the child, and whether the child has special needs or another diagnosed mental or physical illness or condition; and

(IV) the extent of any specialized education, treatment, counseling, or other services provided in the setting; and

(ii) separately, the number and ages of children in the placements who have a permanency plan of another planned permanent living arrangement; and

(B) children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting.

(b) CONSULTATION ON OTHER ISSUES.—The Secretary shall consult with states and organizations with an interest in child welfare, including organizations that provide adoption and foster care services, and shall take into account requests from Members of Congress, in selecting other issues to be analyzed and reported on under this section using data available to the Secretary, including data reported by states through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and to the National Youth in Transition Database.

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

Appendix B

Child Welfare Outcomes Report: Outcomes and Measures

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

Measure 1.1: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during a 12-month period, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 12-month of the initial victimization?¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix C

Caseworker Visits

States have been required to meet performance standards and submit data on monthly caseworker visits for a fiscal year (FY) since FY 2007.¹ These requirements were initiated through the passage of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–288), which amended Title IV-B of the Social Security Act (the Act). This amendment also included new funding to partially support monthly caseworker visits (MCVs) with children who are in state foster care. The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Pub. L. 112–34) extended the requirements for states to collect and report information on MCVs in FY 2012 and in each FY thereafter.² Funding under Title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Act for MCVs with children in foster care is provided in accordance with Section 433(e) of the Act.

Reporting Population and Methodology

The reporting population subject to the caseworker visits requirements includes all children under age 18 for at least the first day of the FY (October 1) who have been in foster care for at least 1 full calendar month during the FY.

Calculation of MCVs

To calculate the percentage of required visits to children in foster care that were made on a monthly basis, the following data are required:³

- Denominator: This is the aggregate number of complete calendar months all children in the reporting population spent in care. This denominator, expressed in “visit months,” is aggregated for all children and refers to the number of months in which visits should have occurred..
- Numerator: This is the aggregate number of monthly caseworker visits made to children in the reporting population. If a child is visited more than once in a month, only one visit is counted.

For example, if a state had 1,000 children in its foster care caseworker visits reporting population, and if these children were in care the entire 12-month period, then each child should have been visited each month they were in care. Therefore, the aggregate number of “visit months” those 1,000 children should have been visited would be 12,000 for the year. That would be the MCV denominator.

The numerator would be the aggregate number of required visit months where at least one actual caseworker visit was made to each of those children. For the purpose of this example, a total of 10,000 visits occurred (not the expected 12,000) during the year for the 1,000 children in the reporting population. To calculate the correct numerator for MCVs, a further assessment must be made to count only one visit for each month for each visited child. Thus, if 100 of these children were visited twice in 6 of the months of the year, a deduction of 600 (100x6) must be made to exclude multiple visits during the same month. Therefore, the total for the numerator is 9,400 (10,000–600) actual “visit months” for the year.

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

² Beginning in FY 2012, states were required to use a revised methodology for calculating caseworker visits. For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data for FY 2007–2011, see [Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-08-03](#). For detailed information on the collection and reporting of caseworker visits data for FY 2012 and beyond, see [Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-12-01](#).

³ Note that even though a state may keep some children in foster care beyond age 17, only children under age 18 on the first day of the FY are included in this calculation.

The MCV percentage is calculated by dividing the numerator by the denominator and multiplying that product by 100 [(numerator/denominator)x100]. This calculation is expressed as a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole number. In this example, the MCV percentage is 78.3 [(9,400/12,000)x100].

Calculation of Children Receiving Monthly Visits in the Home

To calculate the percentage of monthly visits that occur in the home (VIHs), the following data are required:

- Denominator: This is the number of MCVs made for children in the reporting population, which will be the same number as the numerator for the MCV calculation. The number in this denominator is expressed as the number of “visit months” aggregated for all the children (but limited to counting only one visit per child per month).
- Numerator: This is the number of monthly visits made to children in the reporting population that occurred in the child’s home.⁴ Note that the numerator is expressed as “visit months,” and it is aggregated for all the visits to all the children in the foster care reporting population (but limited to only counting one visit per child per month).

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

Data-Collection Methodology

States may choose to report caseworker visits data based on their total foster care population or based on sample data. States that choose to submit sample data must use a sampling methodology that has been approved by their Children’s Bureau Regional Office in consultation with the Administration for Children, Youth and Families’ Office of Data Analytics and Reporting Team. The following table shows the states that elected to submit sample data for 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and/or 2020.

Table. States That Submitted Sample Data					
State	Used sample in 2016	Used sample in 2017	Used sample in 2018	Used sample in 2019	Used sample in 2020
Georgia					X
Hawaii	X	X	X	X	
Michigan	X				
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	X

⁴ A child’s home is defined as the home where the child is residing, whether in-state or out-of-state, and can include the foster placement setting.

Appendix D

Child Welfare Outcomes Report: Data Sources and Elements¹

Context Information	
Items	Data Sources and Elements
Context Statistics	
Total children under 18 years	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Race/ethnicity (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Child population in poverty (%)	U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Caseworker visits for children in foster care	State-submitted data in conjunction with states' Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports
Child Maltreatment Data (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)	
Children who are the subject of an investigated report alleging child maltreatment	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Children's Bureau, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS Summary Data Component (SDC): Item 3.1, Children Subject of a Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation or Assessment by Disposition
Total child maltreatment victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS SDC: Sum of Item 3.1A, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Substantiated; 3.1B, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Indicated; and 3.1C, Children for Whom the Allegation of Maltreatment Was Given an Alternative Response That Identified Child Victim(s)
Child fatalities	Three possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Element 34, Maltreatment Death (2) NCANDS Agency File: Element 4.1, Child Maltreatment Fatalities Not Reported in the Child File (3) NCANDS SDC: Item 5.1, Child Victims Who Died as a Result of Maltreatment
Age of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Element 12, Child Age at Report; or a combination of Element 6, Report Date, and Element 13, Child Date of Birth (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.2, Child Victims by Age
Race/ethnicity of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 15 through 20, Child Race; and Element 21, Child Ethnicity (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.4, Child Victims by Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity; and Item 4.5, Child Victims by Race
Maltreatment types of child victims	Two possible data sources: (1) NCANDS Child File: Elements 26 through 33, Maltreatment Type, Maltreatment Disposition Level (2) NCANDS SDC: Item 4.1, Child Victims by Type of Maltreatment
Response time	Mean response time in hours is computed from the Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24. Median response time in hours is computed from the NCANDS Child File records using the Report Date, Field 6, and the Investigation Start Date, Field 7. The result is converted to hours by multiplying by 24.

¹ All of the data may be found on the [Child Welfare Outcomes data site](#). Not all of the data listed are included in the printed Child Welfare Outcomes Report. For a full list of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data elements, see [AFCARS Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements](#), which was revised in February 2012. See the [Children's Bureau website](#) for more information regarding National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System data elements.

Context Information

Items	Data Sources and Elements
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Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System)

Total number (for each fiscal year [FY]) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30 	HHS/ACF/ACYF/Children’s Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
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Median length of stay (for each FY) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In care on 10/1 • Exited care • In care on 9/30 	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
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Age of children (for each FY) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30 	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 21, Date of Latest Removal; and Element 56, Date of Discharge From Foster Care
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Race/ethnicity of children (for each FY) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In care on 10/1 • Entered care • Exited care • In care on 9/30 	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 8, Race; and Element 9, Hispanic Origin
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Characteristics of Children Waiting for Adoption on 9/30 (AFCARS)

Total waiting children	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother’s Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father’s Termination of Parental Rights
Number of waiting children whose parents’ rights have been terminated	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 47, Date of Mother’s Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father’s Termination of Parental Rights
Age of children waiting for adoption	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother’s Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father’s Termination of Parental Rights
Race/ethnicity of children waiting for adoption	AFCARS Foster Care File: Element 8, Race; Element 9, Hispanic Origin; Element 6, Date of Birth; Element 35, Death of Parent; Element 43, Most Recent Case Plan Goal; Element 47, Date of Mother’s Termination of Parental Rights; and Element 48, Date of Father’s Termination of Parental Rights

Characteristics of Children Adopted (AFCARS)

Total children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Age of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 5, Child’s Date of Birth; and Element 21, Date Adoption Legalized
Race/ethnicity of children adopted	AFCARS Adoption File: Element 4, State Involvement; Element 7, Race; and Element 8, Hispanic Origin

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

Appendix E

Child Maltreatment 2020: Summary of Key Findings¹

The following are key findings from *Child Maltreatment 2020*.² The statistics in the Child Maltreatment series of reports are based on data submitted to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The full *Child Maltreatment 2020* report is available on the [Children’s Bureau website](#).

Overview

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have child abuse and neglect reporting laws that mandate certain professionals and institutions refer suspected maltreatment to a child protective services (CPS) agency. Each state has its own definitions of child abuse and neglect that are based on standards set by federal law. Federal legislation provides a foundation for states by identifying a set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (P.L. 100–294), as amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111–320), retained the existing definition of child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum:

Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (P.L. 114–22) added a requirement to include sex trafficking victims in the definition of child abuse and neglect.

What is NCANDS?

NCANDS is a federally sponsored effort that collects and analyzes annual data on child abuse and neglect. The 1988 CAPTA amendments directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a national data collection and analysis program. The data are collected and analyzed by the Children’s Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families of the HHS Administration for Children and Families.

The data are submitted voluntarily by the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The first report from NCANDS was based on data for 1990. *Child Maltreatment 2020* is the 31st issuance of this annual publication.

How are the data used?

NCANDS data are used for the Child Maltreatment report series. In addition, the data are a critical source of information for many publications, reports, and activities of the federal government and other groups. For example, NCANDS data are used in the annual publications *Child Welfare Outcomes: Reports to Congress*. More information about these reports and programs are available on the [Children’s Bureau website](#).

¹ Data for *Child Maltreatment 2020* reported here are for federal fiscal year 2020.

² All data presented in this appendix are for federal fiscal year 2020 (October 1, 2019–September 30, 2020).

What data are collected?

Once an allegation (called a referral) of abuse and neglect is received by a CPS agency, it is either screened in for a response by CPS or screened out. A screened-in referral is called a report. CPS agencies respond to all reports. In most states, the majority of reports receive investigations, which determines if a child was maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment and establishes whether an intervention is needed. Some reports receive alternative responses, which focus primarily upon the needs of the family and do not determine if a child was maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment.

NCANDS collects case-level data on all children who received a CPS agency response in the form of an investigation response or an alternative response. Case-level data (meaning individual child record data) include information about the characteristics of screened-in referrals (reports) of abuse and neglect made to CPS agencies, the children involved, the types of maltreatment they suffered, the dispositions of the CPS responses, the risk factors of the child and the caregivers, the services that are provided, and the perpetrators. NCANDS collects agency-level aggregate statistics in a separate data submission called the Agency File.

Where are the data available?

The Child Maltreatment reports are available on the [Children's Bureau website](#). If you have questions or require additional information about this report, contact Child Welfare Information Gateway at info@childwelfare.gov or 1-800-394-3366. Restricted use files of NCANDS data are archived at the [National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect](#) (NDACAN) at Cornell University. Researchers interested in using these data for statistical analyses may contact NDACAN by phone at 607-255-7799 or by email at ndacan@cornell.edu.

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

For 2020, CPS agencies across the country received an estimated 3.9 million referrals alleging the maltreatment of 7.1 million children. The national rate of screened-in referrals (reports) was 28.9 per 1,000 children in the national population. Among the 47 states that reported both screened-in and screened-out referrals, 54.2 percent of referrals were screened-in and 45.8 percent were screened out.

Who reported child maltreatment?

For 2020, professionals submitted 66.7 percent of reports alleging child abuse and neglect. A professional is a person who had contact with the alleged child maltreatment victim as part of their job. This includes teachers, police officers, lawyers, and social services staff. The highest percentages of reports were from legal and law enforcement personnel (20.9 percent), education personnel (17.2 percent), and medical personnel (11.6 percent).

Nonprofessionals, including friends, neighbors, and relatives, submitted fewer than one-fifth (17.0 percent) of reports. Unclassified sources submitted the remaining reports (16.3 percent). Unclassified reports included those from anonymous, "other," and unknown report sources. States use the code "other" for any report source that does not have an NCANDS designated code.

Who were the child victims?

For 2020, there were nationally 618,000 (rounded) victims of child abuse and neglect. The victim rate was 8.4 victims per 1,000 children in the population. Victim demographics included the following:

- Children younger than 1 year old had the highest rate of victimization at 25.1 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.
- The victimization rate for girls was 8.9 per 1,000 girls in the population, and the victimization rate for boys was 7.9 per 1,000 boys in the population.
- American Indian or Alaska Native children had the highest rate of victimization at 15.5 per 1,000 children in the population of the same race or ethnicity, and African-American children had the second highest rate at 13.2 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity.

What were the most common types of maltreatment?

NCANDS collects data on all maltreatment type allegations; however, only those cases of maltreatment with a disposition of substantiated or indicated are included in the Child Maltreatment reports. A child may be determined to be a victim multiple times within the same federal fiscal year and up to four different maltreatment types in each victim report. This means the totals may equal more than 100 percent.

A victim who had more than one type of maltreatment is counted once per type. These data do not present the number of occurrences of maltreatment for any type. For 2020, 76.1 percent of victims were neglected, 16.5 percent were physically abused, 9.4 percent were sexually abused, and 0.2 percent were sex trafficked.

How many children died from abuse or neglect?

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For 2020, a national estimate of 1,750 children died from abuse and neglect at a rate of 2.38 per 100,000 children in the population. (See chapter 4 of this Report for more information.) The following presents more information about child fatalities:

- The youngest children are the most vulnerable to maltreatment, with children younger than 1 year accounting for 46.4 percent of child fatalities, for a rate of 23.03 per 100,000 children in the population of the same age.
- Boys had a higher child fatality rate (2.99 per 100,000 boys in the population) compared with girls (2.05 per 100,000 girls in the population).
- The rate of African-American child fatalities (5.90 per 100,000 African-American children) was 3.1 times greater than the rate for White children (1.90 per 100,000 White children) and 3.6 times greater than the rate for Hispanic children (1.65 per 100,000 Hispanic children).
- The rate of African-American child fatalities (5.06 per 100,000 African-American children) was 2.3 times greater than the rate for White children (2.18 per 100,000 White children) and 2.7 times greater than the rate for Hispanic children (1.89 per 100,000 Hispanic children).

Who abused or neglected children?

A perpetrator is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child. Fifty-two states reported 483,285 perpetrators. Analyses of case-level data show the following:

- More than four-fifths of perpetrators (83.2 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 44.
- More than one-half of perpetrators (52.0 percent) were female, and 47.1 percent of perpetrators were male. The three largest percentages of perpetrators by race or ethnicity were White (48.4 percent), African American (20.8 percent), and Hispanic (20.1 percent).
- The majority of perpetrators (77.2 percent) were a parent to their victim.

Who received services?

CPS agencies provide services to children and their families, both in their homes and while in foster care. They may provide services to prevent future instances of child maltreatment or remedy conditions that brought the children and their families to the attention of the agency. The following provides information about services provided during 2020:

- Forty-six states reported 1,963,369 children received prevention services.
- Agencies provided postresponse services to 1,159,294 children.
- Approximately two-thirds of victims (59.7 percent) and one-third of nonvictims (27.1 percent) received postresponse services.

Appendix F

The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2020 Estimates as of October 04, 2021 - No. 28

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2020 data²

Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	429,961	436,552	434,909	426,566	407,493
Number entered foster care during the FY	273,174	270,200	262,902	252,352	216,838
Number exited foster care during the FY	250,494	248,882	251,640	249,675	224,396
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	680,287	685,399	686,508	676,168	631,832
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	116,722	124,004	126,196	123,809	117,470
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	57,176	59,497	63,091	66,208	57,881
Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated as of the last day of the FY	65,533	69,921	71,907	71,860	63,815

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2020 N=407,493

Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number	
Mean	8.4	Male	51%	209,063	
Median	7.7	Female	49%	198,387	
Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	29,105	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	16,559
1 Year	9%	35,289	Foster Family Home (Relative)	34%	137,356
2 Years	8%	31,240	Foster Family Home (Non Relative)	45%	182,386
3 Years	7%	27,170	Group Home	4%	15,975
4 Years	6%	24,214	Institution	6%	22,824
5 Years	5%	22,300	Supervised Independent Living	2%	8,022
6 Years	5%	20,445	Runaway	1%	4,831
7 Years	5%	19,322	Trial Home Visit	4%	18,250
8 Years	4%	18,042	Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
9 Years	4%	17,166	Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	54%	216,876
10 Years	4%	16,683	Live with Other Relative(s)	4%	14,153
11 Years	4%	16,928	Adoption	28%	110,278
12 Years	4%	17,426	Long Term Foster Care	2%	6,989
13 Years	4%	17,803	Emancipation	4%	17,299
14 Years	5%	18,622	Guardianship	4%	16,445
15 Years	5%	19,723	Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	4%	16,818
16 Years	5%	21,080			
17 Years	5%	22,046			
18 Years	1%	5,779			
19 Years	1%	3,773			
20 Years	1%	3,093			

¹ 'FY' refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1st through September 30th.

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by October 04, 2021 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g., number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group). Note: Due to data quality concerns, many of which are associated with the lingering effects of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's data are only included for the years 2019 and 2020 (foster care), and 2018 through 2020 (adoption). PR is in the process of addressing the quality of their excluded data.

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	9,851
Asian	1%	2,061
Black or African American	23%	92,237
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1,070
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	88,111
White	43%	175,870
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	5,597
Two or More Races	8%	31,669

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

Sex	Months
Mean	21.0
Median	14.6

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	18,703
1 - 5 Months	17%	69,655
6 - 11 Months	20%	82,934
12 - 17 Months	17%	67,618
18 - 23 Months	11%	45,591
24 - 29 Months	8%	34,498
30 - 35 Months	6%	22,733
3 - 4 Years	11%	42,788
5 Years or More	6%	22,971

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2020 N=216,838

Age at Entry	Years
Mean	7.1
Median	6.0

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	20%	43,694
1 Year	7%	15,792
2 Years	6%	13,964
3 Years	6%	12,588
4 Years	5%	11,403
5 Years	5%	10,637
6 Years	5%	9,925
7 Years	4%	9,339
8 Years	4%	8,466
9 Years	4%	8,035
10 Years	4%	8,078
11 Years	4%	8,045
12 Years	4%	8,480
13 Years	4%	8,972
14 Years	4%	9,499
15 Years	5%	10,035
16 Years	5%	9,927
17 Years	3%	7,085
18 Years	1%	1,650
19 Years	0%	760
20 Years	0%	430

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	4,983
Asian	1%	1,325
Black or African American	20%	44,215
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	606
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	45,983
White	46%	98,680
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,090
Two or More Races	8%	16,245

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

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	64%	139,255
Drug Abuse (Parent)	35%	75,761
Caretaker Inability To Cope	13%	28,771
Physical Abuse	13%	27,277
Housing	9%	20,534
Child Behavior Problem	8%	16,298
Parent Incarceration	6%	13,314
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	6%	12,827
Abandonment	5%	9,866
Sexual Abuse	4%	8,604
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	4,736
Child Disability	2%	3,595
Parent Death	1%	2,147
Relinquishment	1%	1,919
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	826

NOTE: These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries.

Children Exiting Foster Care during FY 2020 N=224,396

Age at Exit	Years
Mean	8.7
Median	7.8

Age at Exit	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	8,965
1 Year	8%	18,430
2 Years	9%	18,931
3 Years	7%	16,208
4 Years	6%	14,353
5 Years	6%	13,110
6 Years	5%	11,910
7 Years	5%	11,062
8 Years	5%	10,194
9 Years	4%	9,491
10 Years	4%	9,283
11 Years	4%	8,838
12 Years	4%	8,485
13 Years	4%	8,565
14 Years	4%	8,360
15 Years	4%	8,647
16 Years	4%	9,140
17 Years	4%	8,615
18 Years	7%	16,564
19 Years	1%	1,713
20 Years	0%	1,231

Time in Care	Months
Mean	20.5
Median	15.9

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	8%	16,482
1 - 5 Months	14%	28,632
6 - 11 Months	18%	41,735
12 - 17 Months	17%	38,107
18 - 23 Months	13%	29,814
24 - 29 Months	10%	21,897
30 - 35 Months	6%	14,722
3 - 4 Years	10%	24,098
5 Years or More	4%	8,663

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	4,997
Asian	1%	1,336
Black or African American	21%	46,433
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	628
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	46,475
White	46%	103,546
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,268
Two or More Races	8%	17,303

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

Reason for Discharge	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	48%	107,333
Living with Other Relative(s)	6%	12,463
Adoption	25%	56,568
Emancipation	9%	20,010
Guardianship	10%	23,160
Transfer to Another Agency	1%	2,263
Runaway	0%	528
Death of Child	0%	360

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2020 N=117,470

Age as of September 30th	Years
Mean	7.9
Median	7.3

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	3%	3,854
1 Year	10%	11,267
2 Years	9%	10,659
3 Years	8%	9,108
4 Years	7%	8,009
5 Years	6%	7,369
6 Years	6%	6,616
7 Years	5%	6,285
8 Years	5%	6,007
9 Years	5%	5,799
10 Years	5%	5,535
11 Years	5%	5,669
12 Years	5%	5,803
13 Years	5%	5,642
14 Years	5%	5,632
15 Years	5%	5,517
16 Years	4%	4,939
17 Years	3%	3,760

Placement Type	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	12%	14,469
Foster Family Home (Relative)	27%	31,067
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	52%	60,589
Group Home	3%	3,831
Institution	5%	5,887
Supervised Independent Living	0%	107
Runaway	1%	689
Trial Home Visit	0%	568

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	61,297
Female	48%	56,166

Time in Care	Months
Mean	32.7
Median	26.9

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	439
1 - 5 Months	3%	3,390
6 - 11 Months	8%	9,477
12 - 17 Months	15%	17,950
18 - 23 Months	16%	18,343
24 - 29 Months	15%	17,599
30 - 35 Months	11%	12,503
3 - 4 Years	21%	25,238
5 Years or More	11%	12,531

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Years
Mean	5.2
Median	4.3

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	26%	30,687
1 Year	8%	9,358
2 Years	7%	8,365
3 Years	7%	7,652
4 Years	6%	7,169
5 Years	6%	6,986
6 Years	6%	6,706
7 Years	5%	6,355
8 Years	5%	6,012
9 Years	5%	5,760
10 Years	4%	5,197
11 Years	4%	4,777
12 Years	4%	4,128
13 Years	3%	3,565
14 Years	2%	2,523
15 Years	1%	1,463
16 Years	1%	655
17 Years	0%	95

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,311
Asian	0%	472
Black or African American	22%	25,257
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	245
Hispanic (of any race)	23%	26,520
White	44%	51,128
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,240
Two or More Races	9%	10,079

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

Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=71,335), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2020	
Time Since TPR	Months
Mean	20.1
Median	12.0

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

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2020⁴ N=57,881

Age at Adoption	Years
Mean	6.5
Median	5.3

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,040
1 Year	12%	6,834
2 Years	14%	8,194
3 Years	11%	6,204
4 Years	9%	4,999
5 Years	8%	4,372
6 Years	7%	3,867
7 Years	6%	3,328
8 Years	5%	2,927
9 Years	5%	2,680
10 Years	4%	2,548
11 Years	4%	2,335
12 Years	3%	2,011
13 Years	3%	1,801
14 Years	2%	1,545
15 Years	2%	1,167
16 Years	2%	1,081
17 Years	1%	823
18 Years	0%	97
19 Years	0%	16
20 Years	0%	7

Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	39,052
Unmarried Couple	3%	1,858
Single Female	25%	14,135
Single Male	3%	1,974

Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	11%	5,972
Foster Parent	54%	30,423
Stepparent	0%	100
Other Relative	35%	19,456

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Months
Mean	12.1
Median	9.2

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	3%	1,584
1 - 5 Months	26%	14,843
6 - 11 Months	35%	20,069
12 - 17 Months	18%	10,284
18 - 23 Months	8%	4,696
24 - 29 Months	4%	2,175
30 - 35 Months	2%	1,176
3 - 4 Years	2%	1,529
5 Years or More	1%	494

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	936
Asian	0%	206
Black or African American	17%	9,588
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	156
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	11,631
White	51%	29,325
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	691
Two or More Races	9%	5,304

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

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	51%	29,714
Female	49%	28,142

Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Yes	94%	53,716
No	6%	3,453

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

FY 2020 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

After the release of the FY 2016 AFCARS Report, the Children's Bureau brought to the attention of the reader our continuing efforts to address AFCARS data quality and highlighted the issue of "dropped cases" (i.e., cases that appear in one six-month AFCARS submission without a date of discharge and do not appear in the subsequent six-month submission). The following link's "Technical Discussion" tab provides a more detailed description of the dropped cases issue:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>

Early in our efforts to understand the dropped cases issue, it was understood that the majority fell into a category of those exiting care. However, more recent analyses include a category of instances in which record numbers change (i.e., child records undergo a merge process; hence, the child's record is in the subsequent submission, but with a different record number). The records merge process typically happens when a child's information exists in the State's information system, but the child is inadvertently assigned a new record number, sometimes due to a re-entry into care. We do not believe the two aforementioned categories account for all dropped cases and will continue to work toward addressing the issue.

We have historically addressed the dropped cases by excluding these records from our AFCARS estimates, and we believe this has ameliorated most negative effects on the annual estimates.

Although there has been some decrease in the numbers of dropped cases, we have begun formally addressing the issue with each applicable State, beginning with the FY 2017 AFCARS data. To the extent practicable and reasonable, we will attempt to address prior years' data. Thus, there may be some differences between historical numbers presented in this report compared to previous reports.

Appendix G

Data-Quality Criteria

In the Child Welfare Outcomes Reports, two separate national medians are computed for each outcome measure. The following summarizes the data-quality checks performed for each state's data for each fiscal year (FY). In the 2020 Range of State Performance tables, national medians were calculated using data from all states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds in 2019 only. In the Median State Performance and Change in Performance Over Time tables, national medians were calculated using data from the states that met the relevant data-quality thresholds for all relevant FYs (2016–2020).

Criteria: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) IDs

Description: Percentage of records that do not match for a given record number in the next 6-month period

Denominator: Number of children reported in the first 6-month file for the FY

Numerator: Number of children with AFCARS IDs that do not match in the next 6-month file for the FY

Threshold: >50 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1
- Calculations for entry rate, children in care, entries, exits, children waiting for adoption, and children adopted

Criteria: Dropped records

Description: Record is missing a date of discharge, suggesting the child is still in care but a record for this same child in the next 6-month period does not exist

Denominator: Number of children reported in the first 6-month file for the FY

Numerator: Number of children reported without discharge dates in the first 6-month file for the FY who do not appear in the subsequent 6-month file for the FY

Threshold: >10 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1
- Calculations for entry rate, children in care, entries, exits, children waiting for adoption, and children adopted

Criteria: Missing child disability status

Description: Percentage of records missing data for child disability status

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for their disability status

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 3.2

Criteria: Missing date of birth

Description: Percentage of records with a missing date of birth

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing their date of birth

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.3 and 7.1

Criteria: Missing date of latest removal

Description: Percentage of records with a missing date of latest removal

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing the date of latest removal

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1

Criteria: Missing discharge reason

Description: Percentage of records where the date of discharge from the most recent foster care episode exists but the reason for discharge is missing

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of records where the date of discharge exists but the discharge reason is missing

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, and 5.1

Criteria: Missing number of placement settings

Description: Percentage of records with a missing number of placement settings

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing the number of placement settings

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 6.1

Criteria: Missing current placement setting

Description: Percentage of records missing the current placement setting

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for their current placement setting

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 7.1

Criteria: Missing current placement setting date

Description: Percentage of records missing the date for the current placement setting

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of children missing data for the date of their current placement setting

Threshold: >15 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measures 6.1 and 7.1

Criteria: Child IDs for victims match across years

Description: Percent of unique victims in a NCANDS Child File that have a match in the next NCANDS Child File

Denominator: Number of unique victims reported in a NCANDS Child File

Numerator: Of children in the denominator, the number of victims also reported in the next NCANDS Child File

Threshold: <1 percent

Note: Individual records are not excluded from indicator calculations unless the overall percentage of matching child victim IDs is less than 1 percent.

Criteria: Child IDs match across years but dates of birth/age and sex do not

Description: Among victims, percent of unique Child IDs that match across years, but: (a) sex does not match, (b) date of birth does not match (only applicable to children under the age of one), or (c) age difference between years is outside of expected range Percent of records that have matching IDs across years, but dates of birth/age and sex do not

Denominator: Among victims, number of unique NCANDS Child IDs that match across two consecutive NCANDS Child Files

Numerator: Of NCANDS Child IDs in the denominator, number of those IDs with a different sex or an age difference between years that is outside of the expected range. For children under the age of 1, this also includes those IDs with differing dates of birth

Threshold: >5 percent

Notes: (1) An age difference outside of the expected range occurs when the child's age difference between the 2 years is less than 0 or greater than 3; (2) Children missing sex or age at report are not included in this DQ check; (3) Children under age 1 without date of birth are excluded from this DQ check and related indicator calculations

Criteria: Missing age for victims

Description: Percent of victims with a missing age

Denominator: Number of victims in NCANDS Child File

Numerator: Of children in the denominator, number of children missing child age

Threshold: >5 percent

Note: NCANDS validation process automates calculation of child victim age by subtracting date of birth from report date, when date of birth is included in the submission

States that exceed the data-quality thresholds are excluded from the following:

- Measure 1.1

Criteria: Missing data on perpetrator relationship if 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship

Description: Percentage of records that do not have perpetrator relationship data and at least 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship to the child

Denominator: Number of children reported in a FY file

Numerator: Number of cases that are missing perpetrator relationship data if at least 95 percent of perpetrators have a known relationship to the child

Threshold: >25 percent

States that exceed the data-quality threshold are excluded from the following:

- Measure 2.1