

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DIVISION OF FOSTER CARE REVIEW

1999-2000 ANNUAL REPORT



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world; indeed,
it's the only thing that ever does."
Margaret Mead*



State of South Carolina
Office of the Governor

Jim Hodges
Governor

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE
POLICY AND PROGRAMS

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Honorable Jim Hodges
and Members of the General Assembly

On behalf of the State Board of Directors, I am pleased to report the activities of the Division of Foster Care Review for 1999. From January 1, 1999, through December 31, 1999, local volunteer review board members conducted 8,151 reviews on 4,690 children who remained in the foster care system longer than four consecutive months. Review board volunteers were diligent in their efforts to determine the steps taken by the Department of Social Services towards permanence for these children.

As required by statute, the Division has encouraged the return of children to their natural parents when appropriate; has promoted and encouraged the Department of Social Services to place children with persons suitable and eligible as adoptive parents; has advised foster parents of their rights to petition the Family Court for termination of parental rights and adoption; and has recommended that all efforts be exerted by the Department of Social Services to secure permanent homes for these children.

The Division is committed to continued efforts to improve the delivery of services to foster children and their families in South Carolina. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 734-0480 if you have any questions pertaining to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dennis T. Barker".

Dennis T. Barker
Division Director

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as of December 31, 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Who was important to you growing up? For most of us, the answer is simple: the people in our family. Unfortunately, many children in South Carolina do not have this simple answer. Through no fault of their own, family becomes a confusing concept with many different meanings and many different faces. From January 1, 1999, to December 31, 1999, the Foster Care Review Board reviewed 4,690 children whose lives revolved around the confusing atmosphere of foster care. Although foster care was designed to be a temporary situation for children who must be removed from their homes, too many of these children lose their childhood waiting for permanent families. As of December 31, 1999, 1,739 children reviewed had already spent more than two years in foster care. Forty-seven percent (47%) of these children were less than twelve years old.

The Foster Care Review Board provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Review Board looks at the entire system affecting the children and their families, identifies deficiencies, and advocates for due process and quality service delivery. During 1999, post-review referrals and advocacy efforts were initiated 1,846 times for children reviewed by local boards. These efforts were made to address identified concerns and to advocate for permanence for children in our foster care system.

There are thirty-six local review boards across the state that conduct semi-annual case reviews of all children who have resided in foster care more than four consecutive months. There is at least one local review board in each judicial circuit. The number of boards is determined by the number of children who are in foster care in each circuit. Each local board is comprised of five members who must be residents of the circuit they represent. The 180 local board members are appointed to serve on local boards by the Governor upon the recommendation of their legislative delegations. Utilizing local citizens in the review process for children in foster care promotes community awareness and responsibility for addressing the problem of child abuse and neglect.

The Foster Care Review Board is supported by a seven member State Board. The State Board meets quarterly and is responsible for reviewing and coordinating the activities of the local review boards and making

recommendations in an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly with regard to foster care policies, procedures, and identified deficiencies of agencies which arrange for foster care of children. The State Board makes recommendations regarding the foster care system based on trends noted subsequent to the statistical analysis of deficiencies identified during individual case reviews conducted by local review boards. The State Board is also responsible for promulgating regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, to carry out the mission of the organization.

Pursuant to a contract with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Review Board has developed and implemented a Medicaid Quality Assurance review process for children placed in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. This quality review system has been incorporated into the Review Board's current structure and has been operational since 1992. During 1999, twenty-seven percent (27%) of the children reviewed by local boards were in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid.

Participation in court proceedings to present the recommendations issued by local review boards and address barriers impeding progress has proven an effective way to advocate for permanency for children lingering in the foster care system. The Review Board has legal standing in Family Court as a party in interest. During 1999, Review Board legal staff participated in sixty-four (64) court proceedings involving children reviewed by local boards.

Each year, pursuant to statute, the State Board of Directors makes recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly with regard to the foster care system in South Carolina. These recommendations are based on a combined analysis of foster care cases reviewed by the thirty-six local review boards and data collected through related research. The first recommendation made for 1999-2000 repeats the recommendation presented in the 1998-1999 report. This recommendation again speaks to the need for enhanced adherence to recent statutory revisions to the South Carolina Children's Code. The efforts of the many individuals who worked hard for reform of child welfare legislation will be lost if those charged to uphold and enforce these laws continue to ignore them. Without a unified effort on the part of all child-serving systems, the growing frustrations will continue to hinder the goal of permanent homes for foster children in South Carolina.

The Review Board remains committed to working collaboratively with the Department of Social Services, Guardian *ad Litem* Programs, local Foster Parent Associations, and other child welfare entities to address systemic issues impacting the child welfare system. To recruit more advocates for children and families we will all need to give the public a more vivid and accurate picture of the foster care system in South Carolina. When all is said and done, each one of us must become personally responsible for these children's lives. We must realize that these children become a part of the future we have planned for our own children. If we value an atmosphere of trust and understanding, then we must first choose to create such an atmosphere for our children: all of our children. To do this, we must work together. Only then will we make a difference in the lives of children and families across South Carolina.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Division of Foster Care Review provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division utilizes panels of community volunteers to promote safe, permanent homes for children in foster care in a timely manner and to increase public awareness regarding the impact of child abuse and neglect.



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

During the early 1970's in South Carolina, many child welfare professionals and citizen groups began advocacy efforts on behalf of children in the foster care system. These efforts began as a result of their concern over the plight of the child adrift in the foster care system. The ultimate accomplishment of these efforts was the establishment of the South Carolina Children's Foster Care Review Board System in 1974, the first such organization in the nation.

Six major private organizations between 1970 and 1974 spearheaded the initial efforts to obtain permanent homes for children in foster care. These organizations were the American Civil Liberties Union, the South Carolina Council for Human Rights, the South Carolina League of Women Voters, the Midlands Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the South Carolina Youth Workers Association and Helping Hands of Aiken County. Child psychiatrists, child psychologists, social work professors, law professors, and various church leaders also participated as private citizens to help give direction to the project.

Research to document the condition of foster care in South Carolina was a primary focus of these organizations. Four studies were done in cooperation with Representative Carolyn Frederick, Vice-Chairperson of the South Carolina General Assembly's Study Committee on Legal and Legislative Matters Pertaining to Children. The results of these four studies showed the following:

- Seventy-six percent (76%) of the children in the Department of Social Services foster care program would neither return home nor be adopted under the existing system. Services were not being provided to the parents by the system to facilitate return home, and no efforts were made to free many children eligible for adoption under the abandonment statute.
- A survey of fourteen private and three public institutions, formerly known as orphanages, showed that the Department of Social Services placed forty-three percent (43%) of the children while private placements accounted for fifty-seven percent (57%) of the children placed. Twenty to fifty percent (20-50%) of these children were eligible for adoption under the abandonment statute; however, none of

these institutions stated that adoption was one of their services. In addition, most of these institutions offered no services to families to enable these children to return home.

- Forty-three percent (43%) of the children in foster care had been in two or more foster placements and eighteen percent (18%) had been in three or more.
- No method existed to keep track of children in foster care. The courts expressed concern about children being lost in the system. Even when children were freed for adoption, the courts had no way of knowing if the children had been placed adoptively.
- The cost to taxpayers for keeping children in foster care was growing steadily with no resolution in sight.
- Children were suffering irreparable psychological damage as victims of foster care drift.

The findings from these studies clearly indicated the need for a system to monitor the cases of children in foster care to achieve appropriate permanent placements for these children. Thus, a statewide foster care review board system was legislated by the 1974 General Assembly. In March of 1975, Governor James Edwards, by Executive Order, established the Office of Child Advocacy as a division of the Office of the Governor. This Executive Order charged that the Office of Child Advocacy establish and coordinate the Children's Foster Care Review Board System and act as ombudsman on behalf of the abused, neglected, abandoned, and dependent children of the State. The initial funding for the Review Board System, as part of the Office of Child Advocacy, was shared by the State and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

The Children's Foster Care Review Board System was fully funded by the General Assembly as a separate state agency in 1977. The Office of Child Advocacy existed as a program of the Review Board System until 1980, at which time it was returned to the Governor's Office. While a part of the Review Board System, the Office of Child Advocacy conducted an ombudsman program for children in general and a training program in the prevention and identification of child abuse and neglect for hospitals and other organizations upon request.

In 1985, the Review Board System was placed under proviso legislation in order to restructure and reorganize the Agency. Permanent legislation

and regulations passed by the General Assembly in 1986 restored the Agency to permanent status. South Carolina state government restructuring in July 1993 returned the Foster Care Review Board to the Governor's Office as a separate division under the Office of Executive Policy and Programs.

The Division of Foster Care Review is currently comprised of a staff of twenty-one serving thirty-six review boards across the State. The Review Board System reviews the cases of approximately 5,000 children in foster care bi-annually; statistically evaluates the state of foster care in South Carolina; and makes recommendations to the Governor, the General Assembly and child-caring facilities as outlined by South Carolina law.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THE DIVISION

Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, of the South Carolina Code of Laws, creates the Children's Foster Care Review Board System and establishes the Division to administer case reviews. The Division is supported by a State Board which consists of seven members, all of whom must be past or present members of a local review board. There must be one member from each congressional district and one member from the State at-large, all appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Members of the State Board serve four-year terms and until their successors are appointed and qualify. A chairperson is elected from the membership of the State Board for a two-year term.

The State Board is responsible for:

- the promulgation of regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, pursuant to the provisions of South Carolina Code of Laws Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, relating to the functions, policies, and procedures of the Review Board System;
- the promulgation of regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, to provide for review of necessary reports and other information required from state, county and private agencies and institutions, and to report to the Family Court on the status of court ordered treatment plans;
- the dissemination of the annual report to the Governor and General Assembly which includes recommendations regarding foster care policies, procedures, and any deficiencies of public and private agencies and institutions which arrange for foster care for children, and the activities of the Review Board System;
- the review and coordination of the activities of the local review boards; and
- the creation or dissolution of local review boards as necessary to maintain appropriate caseloads for each board.

There are thirty-six local review boards, each composed of five members, with at least one local board in each of the sixteen judicial circuits

throughout the state. Board members are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of their respective legislative delegations. South Carolina Code Section 20-7-2385 provides that the appointments from Dorchester and Georgetown counties are governed by provisions of Act 512 and Act 515 of 1996, respectively, which allows their county councils to make recommendations.

The functions and duties of local review board members are as follows:

1. To review every six months, but no less frequently than once every six months, the cases of children who have resided in public foster care for a period of more than four consecutive months and to review every six months the cases of children who have resided in private foster care for a period of more than six consecutive months to determine what efforts have been made by the supervising agency or child-caring facility to acquire a permanent home for the child.
2. In private foster care cases, review boards will recommend continued placement in the child-caring facility unless the parents are able to resume care, in at least those instances when:
 - children are privately placed in privately owned facilities or group homes; and
 - a notarized Affidavit of Summary Review is executed by the child-caring facility and is valid on its face; and
 - the Affidavit of Summary Review is submitted to the board every six months. It must be accepted by the board if it attests to the statutorily mandated conditions and is valid on its face.¹
3. Except as provided in subsection 2 above, local review boards are to encourage the return of children to their natural parents. However, if during a case review the local review board determines that this return is not in the best interest of the child, they must recommend to the appropriate agency that action be taken for a maximum effort to place the child for adoption.

¹ Effective January 1, 1994, children privately placed in private children's homes were no longer reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board. Statutory authority was granted to the Review Board in Proviso #6DD.39 of the Fiscal Year 93/94 budget to cease these reviews. The General Assembly believed it to be a more appropriate use of state dollars to focus reviews on the cases of children who are in the custody of the State rather than private cases.

4. To promote and encourage all agencies and facilities involved in placing children in foster care to place children with persons suitable and eligible as adoptive parents.
5. To advise foster parents of their right to petition the Family Court for termination of parental rights and for adoption and to encourage foster parents to initiate these proceedings in an appropriate case when it has been determined by the local review board that return to the natural parent is not in the best interest of the child.
6. To recommend that a child-caring facility or agency exert all possible efforts to make arrangements for permanent foster care or guardianship for children for whom return to natural parents or adoption is not feasible or possible as determined during a case review by the local review board.
7. To report to the State Office of the Department of Social Services and other adoptive or foster care agencies any deficiencies in these agencies' efforts to secure permanent homes for children. These deficiencies are identified in the local boards' reviews of these cases.

Case findings or recommendations of a local review board are advisory. Any person or agency aggrieved by an action or recommendation of a local review board, may seek relief by petition to the family court of that county, which then issues a rule to show cause that states why the action or recommendation of the local review board should not be set aside or modified. The Foster Care Review Board also may participate in judicial reviews of a child's case, but will file a motion to intervene if it intends to become a party to the action.

No person may be employed by the Division or serve on the state or a local foster care review board if the person:

1. is the subject of an indicated report or affirmative determination of abuse or neglect as maintained by the Department of Social Services in the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect pursuant to Section 20-7-680; or,
2. has been convicted or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to an "offense against the person" as provided for in Title 16, Chapter 3; or, an "offense against morality or decency" as provided for in Title 16,

Chapter 15; or, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, as provided for in Section 16-17-490.

Before a person is employed by the Review Board or before an appointment or reappointment is made to the State Board or a local foster care review board, the Review Board submits the name of the potential employee or board member to the Department of Social Services for a background check of indicated reports or affirmative determinations from the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect and to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division for a criminal records background check to verify the applicant's status.

1999-2000 FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to South Carolina Code Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, the South Carolina Board of Directors for the Review of Foster Care of Children annually makes recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly with regard to the foster care policies, procedures, and practices of public agencies which arrange for the foster care of children. These recommendations are determined through analysis of foster care cases reviewed by the thirty-six local review boards and data collected through research and studies.

The personal, first-hand interviews of caseworkers, children, parents, foster parents, and other interested parties give local board members an in-depth look at individual cases. The statistical data compiled from the review of foster care cases allows the local boards to develop a general view of how the system operates on behalf of the individual child. The State Board presents the combined analysis of 1999 review-related information and information obtained from the Review Board's participation in other aspects of the child welfare system as the 1999-2000 annual recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION I

The Review Board again recommends that the South Carolina Department of Social Services, the Family Court, and guardians *ad litem* appointed to represent children in abuse and neglect proceedings in South Carolina, strictly adhere to the statutory requirements of South Carolina Children's Code.

In 1999, thirty nine percent (39%) of children reviewed did not have timely merits or permanency planning hearings. The lack of timely merits and permanency planning hearings lengthens the time children remain in foster care. It is impossible to obtain a permanent placement for a child when statutorily mandated hearings do not take place within the time frames outlined by state and federal law.

MERITS HEARINGS

South Carolina Code Sections 20-7-610 and 20-7-736 require the merits hearing to be held within 35 days of a child entering foster care. At the hearing on the merits of the case, the court determines if the child should be removed from the custody of the parent or guardian. If the court orders removal from the home, the court must approve a placement plan. Failure to hold a timely merits hearing impedes a parent's ability to remedy the conditions which led to the removal of the child, or in the alternative, delays seeking termination of parental rights or another plan.

- In 1999, seventeen (17%) of all children reviewed by local boards did not have a timely merits hearing.
- Of all Areas of Concern tracked by the Review Board, failure to have a timely merits hearing occurred one out of ten times.
- There was a sixty-one percent (61%) increase in the number of times no timely merits hearing was cited by the Review Board in 1999 when compared to 1997 Review Board data.

IS IT GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN?

Tasha, Tequila, Tamara, Theo, Ty, and Titus range in age from four to fourteen years. Prior to the children entering foster care eighteen months ago due to physical neglect, the Department of Social Services in Kentucky and South Carolina provided in-home treatment services to the family. The birth parents have made no effort to rehabilitate. They have not visited or paid support. The birth father is currently residing in Ohio. The location of the birth mother is unknown. The Review Board has recommended termination of parental rights and adoption at the last two reviews. The Department of Social Services continues to pursue the plan of return home. The Merits hearing, which should have been held within 35 days of the children entering foster care, has not been completed. The hearing has been scheduled and continued four times. No progress can be made toward a permanent plan for these children until a decision is made regarding the merits of the removal. As a result of the Merits hearing not being held, this sibling group of six remains in the limbo of foster care with no progress toward a permanent goal.

PERMANENCY PLANNING HEARINGS

South Carolina Code Section 20-7-766, Public Law 96-272 Section 471(1)(16) and Public Law 96-272 Section 475(5)(C) require the permanency planning hearing to be held no later than one year after the date that the child was first placed in foster care. At the initial permanency planning hearing, the court reviews the status of the child and the progress being made to return the child to the home or to reach another permanent plan. Time frames for subsequent permanency planning hearings depend on the child's permanent plan. Delays in permanency planning hearings result in extending the time a child spends in foster care. At the permanency planning hearing, the court determines if the child should return home, if a six-month extension to work towards return home should be allowed, whether termination of parental rights should be initiated or whether another plan should be implemented.

- In 1999, twenty-four percent (24%) of all children reviewed by local boards did not have a timely permanency planning hearing.
- Failure to have a timely permanency planning hearing made up twelve percent (12%) of all Areas of Concern tracked by the Review Board in 1999.
- There was a thirteen percent (13%) increase in the number of times no timely permanency planning hearing was cited in 1999 when compared to 1997 data.

IS IT GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN?

Five-year-old Johnny has been in foster care all of his life. He entered foster care at birth when his mother, who was a minor and in foster care herself, could not care for him. The birth mother has a history of mental illness, disruptive behavior, and criminal activity. Prior to her recent emancipation, she experienced numerous foster care placements and psychiatric admissions. She is currently unemployed and residing with her birth father who is a known sexual offender. The identity of Johnny's biological father is unknown.

The Permanency Planning hearing that was held 18 months ago resulted in the Court ordering the Department of Social Services to file a complaint for termination of parental rights within sixty days. To date,

the termination of parental rights hearing has not been scheduled. Johnny should have had another Permanency Planning hearing six months ago; however, this hearing has not been held. The hearing has been scheduled and continued on two occasions. As a result of the Permanency Planning hearing not being held, the Court is unaware and cannot address the lack of progress toward the permanent plan.

RECOMMENDATION II

The Review Board recommends that the Department of Social Services enhance its training program to specifically address case planning as it relates to promoting and securing permanent homes for children.

In 1999, one out of two children reviewed had either case planning issues, lack of progress towards their permanent plan, and/or no progress reports in their case file. These three elements of permanency planning greatly impact the time a child spends in foster care.

CASE PLANNING ISSUES

The case plan document is critical to permanency planning as it serves as the road map for successfully moving children through the foster care system. The case plan should be developed with birth parents and other relevant parties. The case plan should address the issues that brought the child into foster care and clearly outline the expectations of all parties in order to implement the designated permanent plan within the set period of time. The case plan is an active document, and its goal should be consistently reflected throughout the child's case file.

There are five Areas of Concern the Review Board tracks that address case planning: (1) No Current Case Plan; (2) No Case Plan Within 60 Days; (3) Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan; (4) Lapse in Case Planning; and, (5) Case Plan Expired. In 1999, one out of two children had case planning issues impacting their cases' status.

- Nineteen percent (19%) of Program Areas of Concern and eleven percent (11%) of all Areas of Concern for 1999 involved the case plan document that is to be prepared for each child in foster care.

- Nearly one out of five children (18%) reviewed in 1999 had either an insufficient case plan or no case plan since their last review.
- Eleven percent (11%) of these children still had insufficient case plans at their next review, six months later.
- There has been no change in the number of times these five Program Areas of Concern were issued in 1999 when compared to 1997.

IS IT GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN?

Casey is two years old. She entered foster care a year ago when her parents were arrested for domestic violence. The agency had been involved with this family prior to the arrest due to physical neglect associated with substance abuse. The caseworker developed a case plan with the goal of returning Casey home; however, the case plan and the treatment objectives were never discussed with the birth mother and birth father.

As a result, the parents have been uncertain as to what they needed to do in order to have Casey returned home. The parents have visited Casey, but have not contributed any child support. They have recently obtained adequate housing. Neither parent has received counseling for substance abuse or the issues surrounding domestic violence.

As a result of the case plan not being developed and implemented with the birth parents, one year has passed with little progress toward the goal of return home. Had the case plan been developed and discussed with the parents, the agency might have reason to return Casey home at this point. Conversely, had the parents chosen not to comply with their treatment objectives, the agency would have documentation to justify changing the plan to termination of parental rights and adoption.

As the current situation exists, neither plan can be implemented and Casey must remain in foster care.

NO PROGRESS REPORTS FROM SERVICE PROVIDERS

In order to make sound case planning decisions, the agency should request and receive progress reports on a foster child and/or family member who receives a treatment service from an outside provider. The

information provided in these reports is utilized by the agency to make important case management decisions.

- In 1999, one out of five children reviewed was missing at least one of the progress reports that should have been available for the purpose of planning.
- This problem continued to exist for thirteen percent (13%) of these children six months later.
- Twenty-percent (20%) of all Areas of Concern tracked by the Review Board was the unavailability of a service provider's progress report.
- There has been a twenty-five percent (25%) increase in the number of times "No Progress Report" was cited in 1999 as compared to 1997 data.

IS IT GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN?

Martina is fourteen years old. She entered foster care six months ago due to physical abuse and neglect by her birth mother. The agency is working toward the plan of return home for Martina. Efforts by the agency to locate Martina's birth father have been unsuccessful. The birth mother has acknowledged her problems and has participated in anger management and substance abuse therapy for the past five months.

The agency has not received any progress reports from the outside agencies regarding the birth mother's progress. As a result, time is passing and the agency is uncertain as to whether or not progress is being made toward the plan of return home or if they need to begin assessing other permanent options for Martina.

LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD PERMANENT PLAN

Many children linger in foster care with a lack of progress toward their permanent plan. In order to protect foster children, the law requires that the status of each child be reviewed every six months to determine the safety of the child, the continuing need for placement in foster care, the extent of compliance with the case plan, the extent of progress toward

alleviating the need for foster care, and a date the child may be returned home, placed for adoption or legal guardianship.

- A lack of progress toward the permanent plan was cited for thirteen percent (13%) of all children reviewed by local boards in 1999.
- Local boards cited a lack of progress for twenty-nine percent (29%) of these same children at their subsequent review six months later.
- Nineteen (19%) of all Program Areas of Concern and ten percent (10%) of the total Areas of Concern tracked in 1999 was a lack of progress made toward the permanent plan.
- There has been a one-hundred and fifty percent (150%) increase in the number of times “Lack of progress towards permanent plan” was cited in 1999 when compared to 1997 data.

IS IT GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN?

Sarah entered foster care eight years ago at the age of three weeks due to threat of physical neglect associated with the mother’s mental condition. Two years later, Sarah’s brother, David, entered foster care. He was only three days old at the time. Based on the mother’s psychiatric condition and the birth parents’ failure to rehabilitate, the agency chose to pursue the plan of termination of parental rights and adoption.

Regional Adoption staff became involved with these children and an adoptive family was identified. The termination of parental rights hearing, held 14 months later, resulted in the Court terminating the parental rights on the birth father; but not the birth mother. The Court did not believe that the agency presented evidence to prove that the mother’s present condition made her unlikely to provide a minimal level of care for the children. Therefore, the agency changed the plan back to return to the birth mother. Six months later, the agency returned the children to the birth mother. Both children re-entered foster care within one month due to physical neglect.

Eighteen months have passed since these children re-entered foster care, and the agency continues to work with the mother on a plan of return home, despite the mother having made no effort to change her situation. Sarah and David are now six and eight years of age. They have been in foster care all their young lives. The systemic lack of progress toward a

permanent plan continues to deny Sarah and David their right to a permanent and stable home.

MAKING IT BETTER FOR THE CHILDREN

Although the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 and the 1998 amendments to the South Carolina Children's Code have been enacted, Legal Areas of Concern in 1999 comprised forty-four percent (44%) of the Areas of Concern cited by the Review Board. To reduce the time children spend in the foster care system, greater strides need to be taken to ensure that merits and permanency planning hearings are held timely in order for children to achieve safe, permanent homes.

Through sound case planning and collaborative efforts, children can be moved through the foster care system safely and swiftly, with the end result being permanent and stable homes. The Department of Social Services cannot accomplish this task alone. These children belong to the community. Our answers lie in public and private agencies, schools, churches, and neighborhoods working in tandem to address each of the issue impacting our children and families. We as a society have much to gain by working together and everything to lose by failing to do so.

LOCAL FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

The 180 volunteers who serve on local foster care review boards are the power that drives the Division of Foster Care Review. The commitment and dedication afforded to the child welfare system in South Carolina by these concerned community advocates is unmatched. During 1999, members serving on local foster care review boards donated 9,772 hours of volunteer service to children and families in South Carolina through their work on local boards. These volunteer hours do not include the many other ways that local board members advocate for children, families, and system reform outside of their monthly meetings.

There are four major areas in which citizen involvement in the third-party review process is beneficial. First, the citizens involved in an ongoing program of foster care review help to educate their local communities as to the needs of children and families in their areas. A second important component is the strong advocacy skills used by these

volunteers to bring change to a large, unwieldy bureaucracy. Informed citizens form a constituency for foster children, for the state legislature, leaders of state government agencies, the family court, their local communities, and their own families. Third, the citizen reviewer brings an objective view to the case review process by having a perspective that reflects no vested interest in any one dimension of the system. Finally, citizen participation in the child review process draws the community focus to children's issues. This involvement effectively broadens the base of accountability for all public and private service providers operating on behalf of children in South Carolina.

The unique position afforded to board members through their service on local boards allows them to penetrate the veil of confidentiality that hides children in foster care and to then appropriately advocate on their behalf. The South Carolina citizen review system is an outstanding example of the way public/private partnerships can work together toward a common goal.

See Appendix A for a list of Local Review Board Chairpersons for 1999. See also, Appendix B for a Local Review Board Position Description which outlines the purpose, duties, and eligibility requirements for local review board members. Appendix C lists Review Board Members as of December 31, 1999.

STATISTICS RELATED TO 1999 REVIEW BOARD MEMBERSHIP
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1999

CATEGORY	1999 TOTALS	% OF 1999 TOTAL
Number of Local Board Seats	180	100%
Active Members	157	87%
Appointment Vacancies	23	13%
Expired Terms	46	29%
Members Attending 2/3 of Meetings	90	57%
Perfect Attendance	49	31%
Female Board Members	119	76%
Male Board Members	38	24%
Minority Board Members	57	36%
Non-Minority Board Members	100	64%

1999 REVIEW BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Each year the State Board of Directors recognizes one individual serving on a local review board who has gone above and beyond their routine service as a board member to improve the lives of children in South Carolina. This person is nominated for this honor by local board members and staff. The qualifications of nominees are reviewed by a selection committee comprised of one State Board member, two review board members who were previously selected as Review Board Member of the Year, and three staff members. The committee then presents a qualified individual to the State Board for approval.

The person chosen as Review Board Member of the Year receives special recognition from the Review Board and special coverage of the award presentation is featured in the Review Board newsletter. The name of each yearly recipient is added to a continuing wall plaque maintained in the Review Board office.

Mr. Herbert Washington of Review Board 4A in Marlboro and Dillon Counties was selected as the 1999 Review Board Member of the Year. Herbert has served as a faithful and dedicated local board member since his original appointment to Board 4A in 1996. Herbert is a strong “behind the scenes” advocate for children and has gone “above and beyond” the call of duty in his efforts to be a strong advocate for children in Marlboro and Dillon Counties. Governor Jim Hodges presented Herbert Washington with the 1999 Review Board Member of the Year Award.



Pictured from left to right: Marlboro county Representative Doug Jennings, Herbert Washington, and Governor Jim Hodges

1999 REVIEW BOARD COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

The Foster Care Review Board has many volunteers who express a desire to do more for foster children in their communities than review cases each month. Local review board members have resources and connections that reach far beyond the five people who comprise each board. During 1999, many board members engaged these resources through joint service projects in an effort to provide additional benefits to the children in care.

Many local review boards worked with their communities, churches, civic groups, friends, families, and their county Departments of Social Services to develop service projects and to show special appreciation to county caseworkers. These efforts were made in an attempt to utilize the wealth of resources statewide to accomplish great things for children in foster care. A few examples of the service projects initiated and developed by local review boards during 1999 are listed below:

- Donations were collected for the South Carolina Foster Parents “Suitcases for Foster Children” drive.

- Advocacy efforts to recruit adoptive and foster parents for children were made around the state by local review board members.
- Quilts were donated to a children's home for each child initially placed.
- Memberships to a local YMCA were donated for foster children, with matching memberships provided by the YMCA.
- Christmas donations of all types were gathered and delivered by local review board members.
- Numerous drop-ins were given around the state by local review boards to say "thank you" to local Department of Social Services staff for the hard work they do for children on a daily basis.

There are many other examples of such community contributions by local review board members. These listed are just a few ways in which citizen reviewers contribute their time and talents for children in South Carolina.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

To carry out our mission of providing an external system of accountability for children and families involved with the foster care system, specific information concerning the placement of children in foster care has been tracked for a number of years by the Review Board. The following section provides information obtained from reviews conducted by local review boards in 1999. Additionally, comparative statistics dating back to 1990 and earlier are provided in order to gain a better understanding of the trends over the past decade, as well as forecasting what can be expected in the near future.

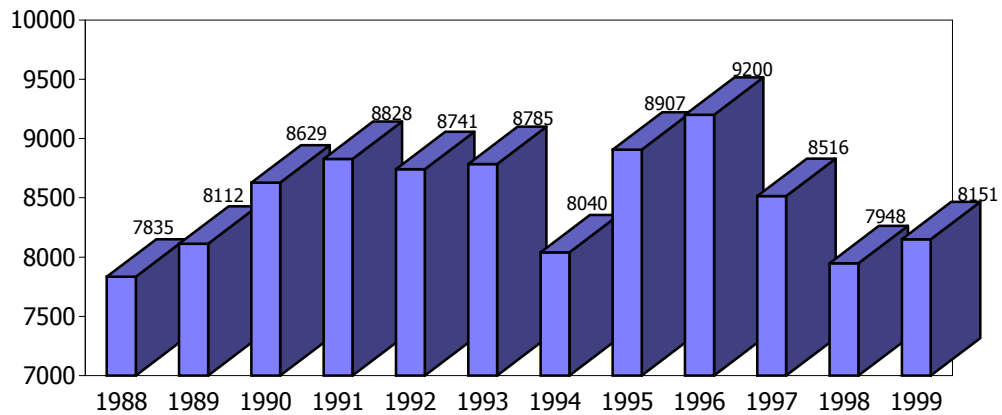
REVIEWS CONDUCTED BY LOCAL REVIEW BOARDS

The Review Board conducted a total of 8,151 reviews in 1999 on a total of 4,690 children in public foster care.² This is a three percent (3%) increase over the number of reviews conducted by local boards compared to 1998 data.

Table I shows the number of reviews conducted by local review boards since 1988. The year with the largest number of reviews conducted by local boards occurred in 1996. The least number of reviews was conducted in 1988, the first year this statistic was tracked. There is a fairly consistent pattern in the number of reviews being conducted since 1988. Based on this pattern, the number of reviews conducted by local review boards will most likely increase over the next year or two.

² Effective January 1, 1994, children privately placed in private children's homes were no longer reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board. Statutory authority was granted to the Review Board in Proviso #6DD.39 of the Fiscal Year 93/94 budget to cease these reviews. The General Assembly believed it to be a more appropriate use of state dollars to focus reviews on the cases of children who are in the custody of the State rather than private cases.

Table I
 REVIEWS CONDUCTED BY FCRB
 Comparative Statistics 1988-1999



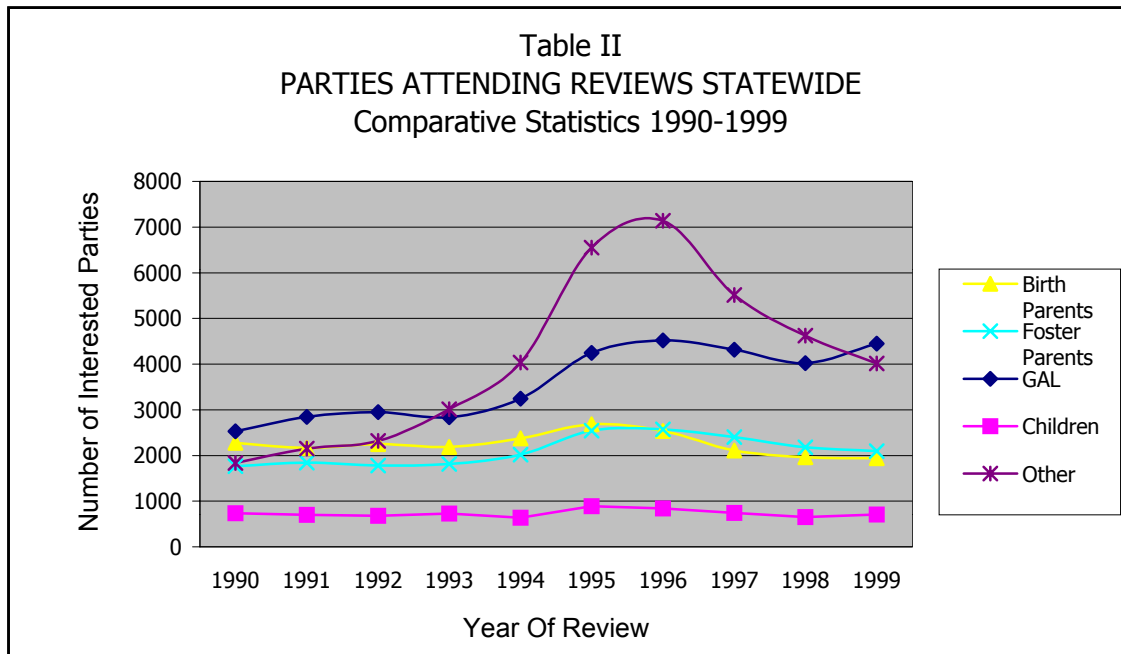
PARTICIPATION BY INTERESTED PARTIES AT LOCAL REVIEWS

Interested parties are parents, foster parents, guardians *ad litem*, foster children, and others who may be involved with a child's placement in foster care. Interested parties are invited by the Department of Social Services. Those who attend reviews provide the local boards with important information used to make recommendations.

During 1999, a total of 13,210 interested parties attended local review board meetings. This total reflects a two percent (2%) decrease over the total number of interested parties attending reviews during 1998. For the first time, the number of guardians *ad litem* surpassed the number of "other" interested parties in attendance at 1999 reviews, comprising thirty-four percent (34%) of all attendees. "Other" interested parties made up thirty percent (30%) of all attendees.

Table II compares the number of interested parties attending reviews statewide since 1990. There has been a forty-four percent (44%) increase since 1990 in the attendance of **all** interested parties. "Other" interested parties, such as relatives, service and treatment providers have seen the largest increase in attendance, more than doubling since 1990.

Guardians *ad litem* have seen the next greatest increase in attendance since 1990, increasing by seventy-six percent (76%).



Since 1990, Foster parents' attendance increased by nineteen percent (19%). Attendance by birth parents and foster children are the only two groups of interested parties which have declined since 1990. Birth parents' attendance declined by fifteen percent (15%) and foster children's attendance declined by four percent (4%).

RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY LOCAL REVIEW BOARDS

Local review boards carefully consider input from all interested parties, as well as written materials prepared for the review, prior to making a recommendation on each child's case. After board members have heard from all parties present for the review, all parties are excused and the board meets privately to formulate the recommendation for the child. Board members are required by statute to consider the most appropriate permanent recommendation possible for each child. They also determine

if all parties involved in the child's case are taking the steps necessary to achieve the plan in a timely manner. Local review boards and the Department of Social Services were in agreement as to the best permanent plan in eighty percent (80%) of the children's cases reviewed during 1999, down one percent (1%) from 1998.

If additional information is needed for the board members to make a permanent recommendation, no recommendation is made and the review is continued. Additionally, if no information is provided to board members, no recommendation is made and the review is not held. Reviews that are continued or not held are rescheduled within one to two months of the original review date. For each child reviewed, local review boards issue a written recommendation for a permanent placement.

Table III describes the frequency, type, and percentage for each of the recommendations issued by local review boards on children reviewed during 1999. A recommendation was made in ninety-six percent (96%) of the reviews scheduled. In four percent (4%) of the reviews, sufficient information was not provided for local review boards to make a decision. In 1999, those reviews that resulted in a recommendation not being made were most often because a case was continued.

The most often recommended plan made in 1999 by local review boards was the termination of parental rights, made in thirty-seven percent (37%) of the reviews. The recommendation that a child should be adopted³ was the second most recommended plan, made in twenty-one percent (21%) of the reviews. Return to parent was the third most frequent recommendation, making up seventeen percent (17%) of all reviews, followed by permanent foster care (11%) and independent living (9%). The recommendations made least often for 1999 were non-parent legal custody (1%), permanent group home (<1%), residential treatment (<1%) and some other recommendation (<1%).

³ The recommendation of adoption is only made for children whose parents' have had their rights terminated.

TABLE III

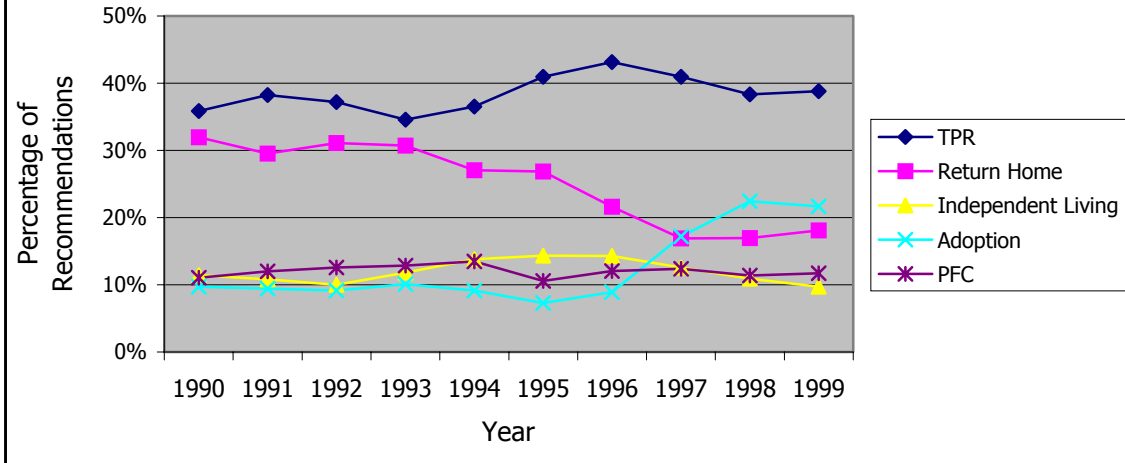
STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS
January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999

Recommendation	Number of Recommendations	Percent of Reviews
Termination of Parental Rights	2,998	37%
Adoption	1,673	21%
Return to Parent	1,399	17%
Permanent Foster Care	904	11%
Independent Living	750	9%
Non-Parent Legal Custody	71	1%
Permanent Group Home	33	<1%
Residential Treatment	20	<1%
Other	3	<1%
Recommendations Subtotal	7,851	96%
No Recommendation		
Case Continued	199	3%
No Review Held	101	1%
No Recommendation Subtotal	300	4%
TOTAL NUMBER OF REVIEWS	8,151	100%

Table IV compares the percentage of the four plans most recommended by local review boards during the past decade. Since 1990, the recommendation that a child be placed adoptively has more than doubled. Additionally, the recommendation to terminate a parent's right has increased, by seventeen percent (17%). Recommendations to return a child home has decreased by half since 1990. This data identifies a larger number of children in the foster care population who are free for adoption and waiting to have their placements in forever families finalized.

Two plans recommended by the review board which do not result in a child having a permanent, stable home once they leave the foster care system, are independent living and permanent foster care. Since 1990, the recommendation for independent living has decreased by eight percent (8%), while the recommendation for permanent foster care has increased by fifteen percent (15%).

Table IV
 STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS
 Comparative Statistics 1990-1999



AREAS OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL REVIEW BOARDS

A major focus of the Division of Foster Care Review is to help systems work for children. Therefore, the identification and analysis of significant barriers or concerns which may prevent timely, permanent placement are essential. Areas of Concern are defined as violations of federal law, state law or public agency policy which have been determined by the Review Board to be significant barriers in the provision of permanency planning services to children in foster care. The Areas of Concern definitions are found in Appendix D.

Although the Department of Social Services holds custody and service delivery responsibility for the 4,690 children in public foster care reviewed by the boards in 1999, the Department of Social Services is not responsible for all of the barriers or deficiencies mentioned in this report. Service delivery to foster children involves the complex interaction of many systems, any one of which may be a contributing factor which prolongs a child's stay in foster care.

For purposes of data analysis, the nineteen Areas of Concern tracked by the Foster Care Review Board during 1999 are divided into two categories, Legal and Program.

LEGAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Areas of Concern identified as Legal Areas of Concern include violations of federal statutory requirements related to Public Law 96-272; violations of state law in regard to timeliness of court hearings and adoption proceedings; and non-compliance with court orders.

PROGRAM AREAS OF CONCERN

Areas of Concern identified as Program Areas of Concern include violations of programmatic policies and procedures established by public agencies related to the delivery of child welfare services. Areas of Concern of this type deal with violations of public agency policy regarding service delivery to foster children and their families. These programmatic Areas of Concern reflect inadequacies in the delivery of services to foster children.

STATEWIDE AREAS OF CONCERN
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS
1998 - 1999

AREA OF CONCERN	Jan 1, 1998 - Dec 31, 1998		Jan 1, 1999 - Dec 31, 1999	
	Number of State AOC	Percent of State AOC	Number of State AOC	Percent of State AOC
Legal				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	1,278	13%	1,268	12%
No Timely Merit Hearing	763	8%	905	9%
No Face-to-Face Contact	842	9%	891	9%
No Court Order at Review	517	5%	534	5%
No Thorough Adoption Assessment	258	3%	240	2%
Non-Compliance with Court Order	202	2%	209	2%
Other Statutory Violation	56	1%	133	1%
No Child Specific Recruitment	114	1%	128	1%
No Timely FCRB	102	1%	126	1%
Adoption Complaint Not Filed Timely	75	1%	93	1%
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing	96	1%	92	1%
Adoption Not Consummated Timely	4	<1%	7	<1%
Legal Subtotal	4,307	45%	4,626	44%
Program				
P: No Progress Reports	1,172	12%	1,158	11%
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	881	9%	1,086	10%
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	871	9%	840	8%
P: No Advance Packets	394	4%	763	7%
Interested Parties Not Invited	330	3%	347	3%
P: TPR Summary not Submit Timely	282	3%	326	3%
P: No Copy of Pleadings	312	3%	286	3%
P: Conflict Permanent Plan	216	2%	176	2%
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	169	2%	141	1%
P: No Diligent Search	131	1%	102	1%
P: No Timely Referral to Adoption	87	1%	96	1%
P: Other Policy/Procedure	107	1%	94	1%
No Current Case Plan	102	1%	89	1%
No Case Plan Within 60 Days	45	<1%	80	1%
Other	58	1%	76	1%
P: Lapse in Case Planning	87	1%	55	1%
P: Case Plan Expired	21	0%	42	<1%
P: No Psych Reports at Review	13	0%	17	<1%
Program Subtotal	5,278	55%	5,774	56%
TOTAL AREAS OF CONCERN	9,585	100%	10,400	100%

“P:” denotes Policy/procedure violation

COUNTY-WIDE AREAS OF CONCERN
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS
1998 - 1999

	1998		1999			1998		1999	
	% of Reviews w/AOC	% of Children w/AOC	% of Reviews w/AOC	% of Children w/AOC		% of Reviews w/AOC	% of Children w/AOC	% of Reviews w/AOC	% of Children w/AOC
County					County				
Abbeville	65%	87%	67%	67%	Greenwood	72%	84%	43%	68%
Aiken	55%	66%	55%	55%	Hampton	58%	61%	81%	87%
Allendale	53%	67%	57%	57%	Horry	47%	61%	49%	65%
Anderson	74%	85%	70%	70%	Jasper	50%	100%	75%	83%
Bamberg	7%	8%	17%	17%	Kershaw	42%	55%	47%	57%
Barnwell	25%	31%	42%	42%	Lancaster	41%	58%	32%	41%
Beaufort	80%	91%	80%	80%	Laurens	97%	98%	76%	96%
Berkeley	85%	96%	77%	77%	Lee	0%	0%	13%	22%
Calhoun	61%	74%	38%	38%	Lexington	72%	85%	69%	85%
Charleston	84%	94%	90%	90%	Marion	39%	54%	23%	30%
Cherokee	54%	67%	42%	42%	Marlboro	24%	33%	32%	40%
Chester	56%	64%	62%	62%	McCormick	71%	88%	63%	75%
Chesterfield	60%	64%	52%	52%	Newberry	89%	100%	88%	93%
Clarendon	60%	78%	51%	51%	Oconee	78%	90%	77%	85%
Colleton	69%	81%	66%	66%	Orangeburg	41%	51%	38%	51%
Darlington	52%	58%	47%	47%	Pickens	70%	82%	73%	83%
Dillon	50%	63%	74%	82%	Richland	78%	88%	75%	86%
Dorchester	86%	95%	89%	91%	Saluda	23%	37%	26%	38%
Edgefield	37%	47%	25%	33%	Spartanburg	59%	76%	60%	74%
Fairfield	34%	54%	45%	61%	Sumter	53%	75%	44%	63%
Florence	47%	63%	55%	70%	Union	29%	40%	33%	67%
Georgetown	59%	74%	57%	70%	Williamsburg	45%	52%	45%	59%
Greenville	68%	81%	81%	92%	York	49%	64%	46%	64%
Adoption Region					Adoption Region				
Region I	36%	38%	47%	60%	Region V	62%	68%	56%	60%
Region II	38%	48%	45%	50%	Region VI	70%	77%	66%	77%
Region III	57%	69%	60%	71%	Region VII	79%	84%	77%	86%
Region IV	35%	44%	42%	58%					

ADVOCACY - CASE REFERRAL PROCESS

Review board coordinators may initiate personal follow-up on cases in their assigned caseloads as needed. Data for 1999 indicates that multiple referrals for 781 children received individual attention from coordinators on specific issues following reviews. In addition to the individual follow-up done by review board coordinators, the Division of Foster Care Review operates a three-tiered referral process to facilitate additional advocacy efforts on behalf of children reviewed by local review boards. The ability of local review boards to advocate individually on behalf of children in foster care in South Carolina is vital to the overall effectiveness of the review system.

LEGAL REFERRALS

The Review Board legal staff includes the General Counsel for the Division and one staff attorney. These staff members represent and advise the local review boards and staff on legal matters. Any legal action recommended by the local review board must be initiated by the State Review Board Office and is subject to approved policies and procedures. Local review boards refer any children's cases they feel necessary to the State Office staff for assessment. Legal staff received 675 cases referred for legal advocacy. Through participation in Family Court hearings and individual legal follow-up on cases, the Review Board is able to educate and advocate through interaction with judges, attorneys, and other individuals who may impact the child's case. Attorneys for the Division are active with various groups who focus on children's issues and function as legal counsel to all local review boards and the State Board.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFERRALS

The Division of Foster Care Review seeks to resolve issues through administrative channels if at all possible prior to seeking Family Court intervention. Two Project Administrators facilitate a large part of the complex follow-up necessary on individual cases. Letters and telephone calls to senior level staff, case staffings and other administrative functions are handled by these staff members in an effort to resolve issues of concern to local review boards.

THERAPEUTIC/MEDICAID REFERRALS

The Division of Foster Care Review operates a quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements. The program was initiated pursuant to a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services and has been operational since April 1992. Local review boards who have concerns about the quality of treatment or the appropriateness of a therapeutic placement may make a referral to the Medicaid Review Specialist. The Medicaid Review Specialist may arrange a separate Medicaid staffing with appropriate parties, or conduct additional inquiries relative to the case.

During 1999, review board staff initiated post-review referrals and advocacy efforts a total of 1,846 times on children reviewed by local boards. Some children reviewed had a variety of referrals made on their behalf. This data reflects no change from the number of referrals initiated by review board staff when compared to 1998 numbers. Table V describes the number and type of administrative referrals handled by review board staff during 1999.

TABLE V

REVIEW BOARD REFERRALS BY TYPE
January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999

TYPE OF REFERRAL	FREQUENCY
RBC Individual Follow-up	932
Legal Staff	675
Administrative	142
Therapeutic/Medicaid	97
TOTAL	1,846

DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The Division of Foster Care Review implemented an in-house computer information system in 1987. Information obtained at each review is entered into this system. Each year changes and revisions are made, as necessary, in data collection methods, in order to enhance the system and to provide better utilization of data. Questions related to data comparison should be referred to the Governor's Office, Division of Foster Care Review. The following sections detail the status, age, race and gender of children in foster care, in addition to where and why children are placed, and other factors related to their stay in foster care.

STATUS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

During 1999, 896 children entered the Review Board data system and were reviewed for the first time by local boards; 1,329 were closed out of the Review Board data system; and 4,686 children remained active in the Review Board data system. Table A-1 illustrates the status of children in foster care in 1999.

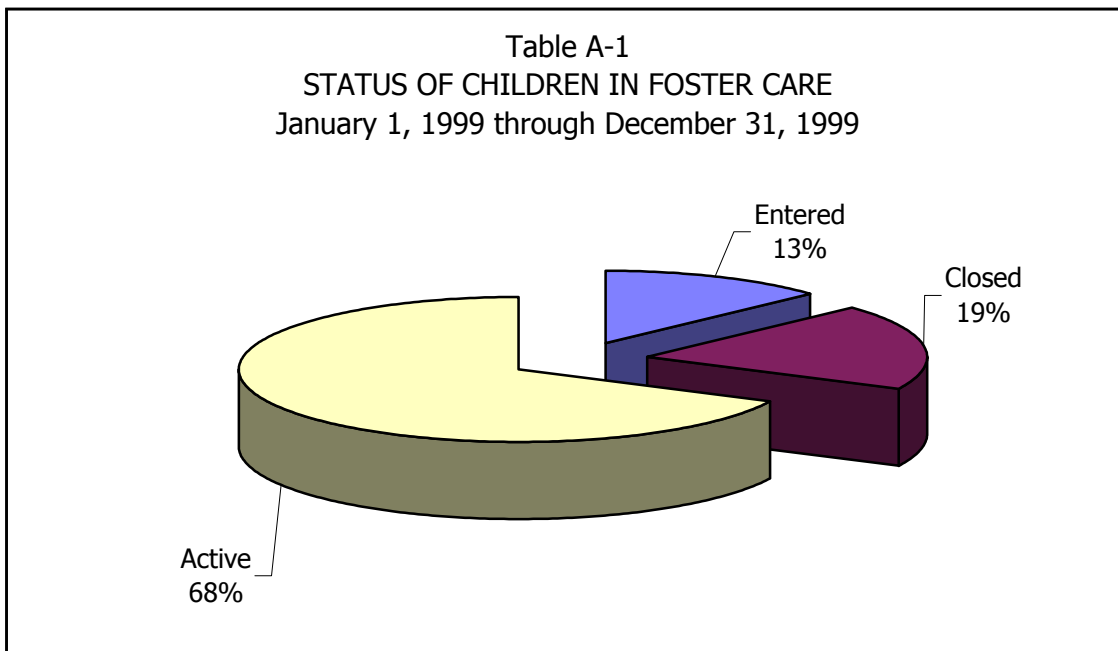
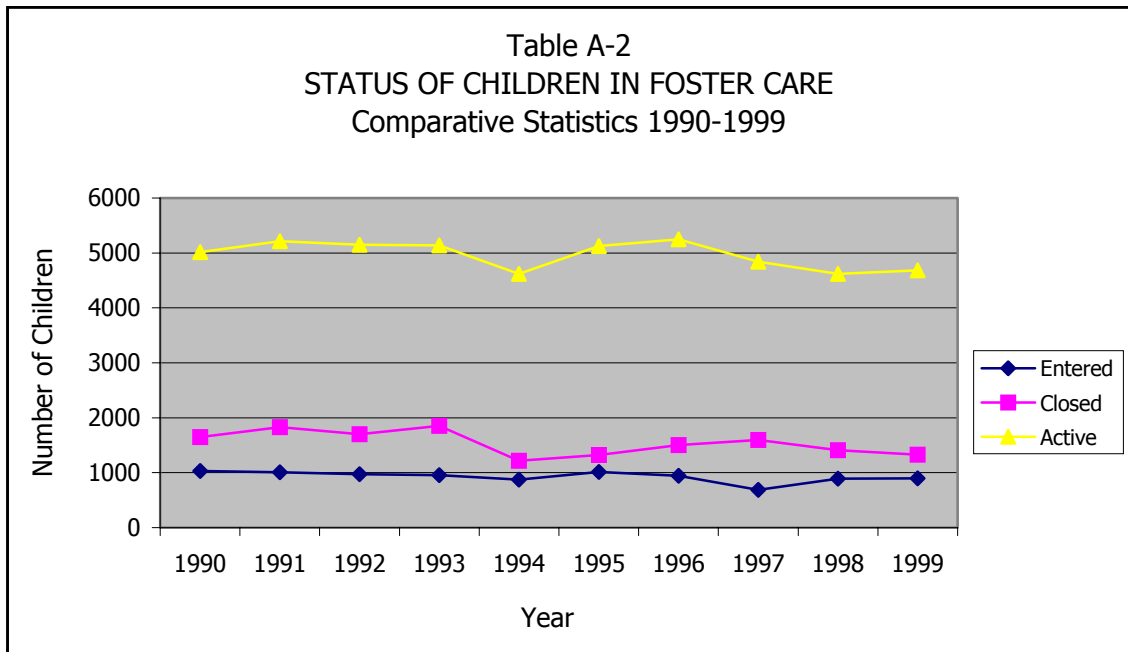


Table A-2 illustrates the status of children in foster care over the past ten years. At the end of the decade, there are thirteen percent (13%) fewer children who entered care, twenty percent (20%) fewer children who left care and seven percent (7%) fewer children who remained active in foster care since 1990. In looking at data since 1990, the number of children who entered care did not fluctuate greatly, varying between approximately 900 and 1,000 children. The year 1997 appears to be an exception, where only 690 children entered care. Statistical forecasting suggests that we can expect approximately the same number of children, or slightly less, to enter care each year over the next several years.

The number of children who left care since 1990 appears to be fairly cyclical, meaning there are periods of several years where more children leave followed by periods of several years where fewer children leave. Based on this pattern, we can expect this cycle to continue. Since 1999 appears to be the end of a cycle where fewer children leave, we can expect the number of children leaving care to increase over the next several years.

Since 1990, the number of children who remained active in care during a reporting period appears to be cyclical, as well. In fact, it closely mirrors the pattern of children who left care. Statistical forecasting suggests that the number of children who remain actively will most likely increase slightly each year for the next several years.

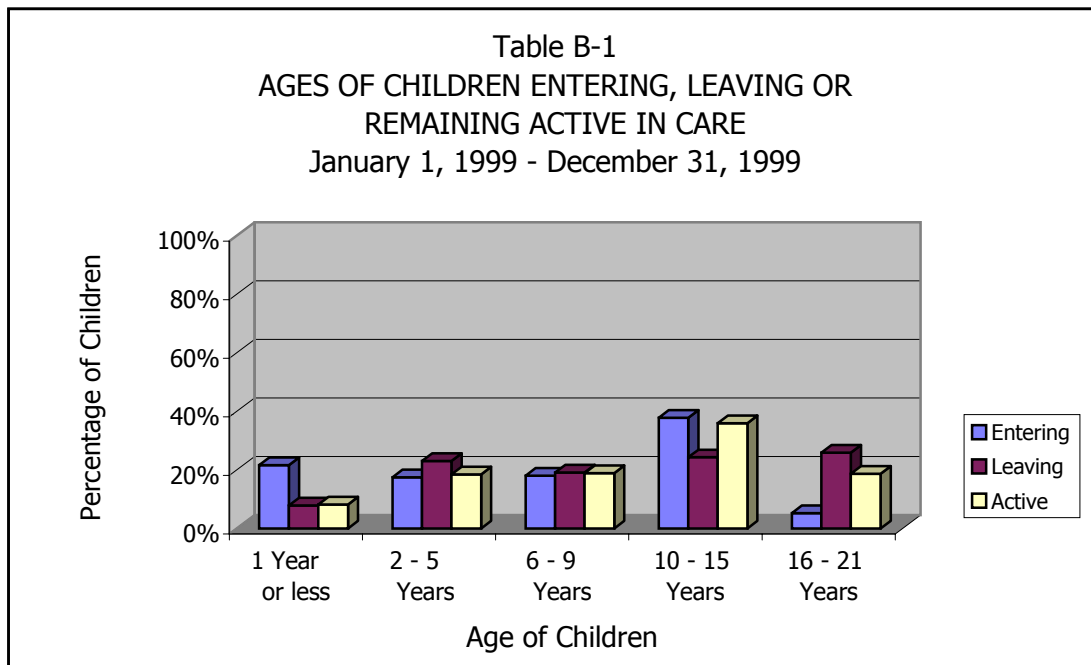


AGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Table B-1 shows the age of children entering, leaving and remaining active in foster care in 1999. Children who were more likely to either enter or remain active in the system were those children between ten and fifteen years of age. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the children who entered foster care, and thirty-six percent (36%) of the children who remained active in 1999 were between the ages of ten and fifteen years of age. Only twenty-four percent (24%) of the children leaving, however, were between ten and fifteen years of age.

The children most likely to leave the foster care system are children between sixteen and twenty-one years of age, comprising twenty-six percent (26%) of all children who left care in 1999. Yet this age group was the smallest group to enter foster care last year, comprising just five percent (5%) of all children entering.

The next largest group to enter foster care in 1999 were children one year of age or younger, comprising twenty-two percent (22%) of all children who entered care. However, only eight percent (8%) of the children who left last year were this age. This data suggests that children who are one year old or younger or a young teen are those children who are staying longer in the foster care system.



Tables B-2 through B-6 provide age data on the status of children who entered, left or remained active in foster care since 1990. The data from these tables suggest that while each of the five age groups had fewer children who were in foster care in 1999 compared to 1990, there are less children actually leaving the system and remaining longer in the system.

Table B-2 shows the number of children under one year of age who were in foster care each year over the past decade. Since 1990, the total number of children in foster care declined by ten percent (10%). Since 1990, twenty-one percent (21%) fewer children entered the system and fifteen percent (15%) fewer children remained active in care. Forty-percent (40%) fewer children in this age group, however, left the system in 1999 compared to 1990 data.

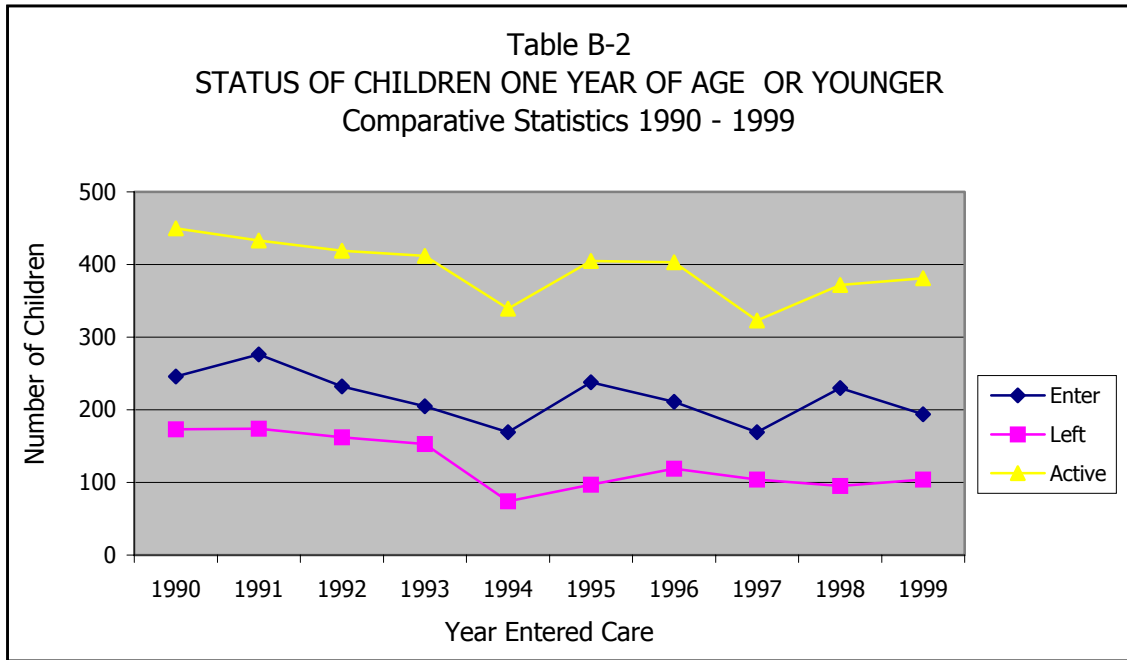


Table B-3 indicates that there are fifteen percent (15%) fewer children between two and five years of age who were in foster care at the end of the decade than at the beginning. There was a twenty-four percent (24%) decrease in the number of children in this age group who entered care in 1999 compared to 1990, and a fifteen percent (15%) decrease in the number of these children who remained active in care. However, ten percent (10%) fewer children in this age group left care in 1999 compared to 1990 data.

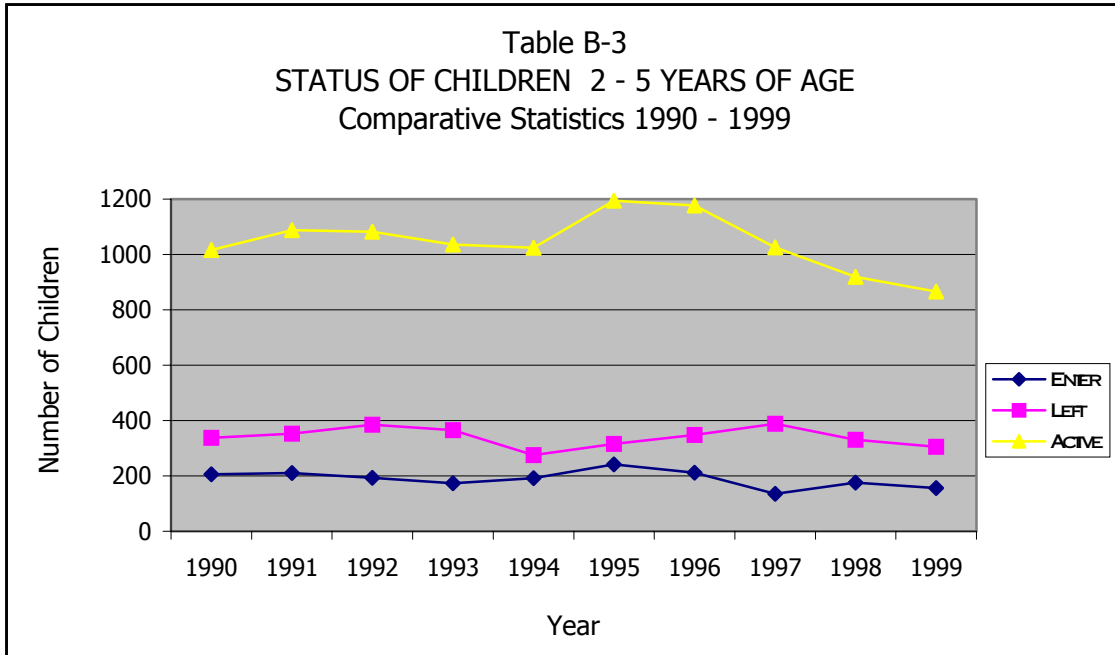


Table B-4 shows that the number of foster children between six and nine years of age has decreased twelve percent (12%) compared to 1990 data. There was a twenty-two percent (22%) decrease in the number of children in this age group who entered the system in 1999, compared 1990 data, and a nine percent (9%) decrease in the those who remained active in care. There was, however, a seventeen percent (17%) decrease in these children who left foster care in 1999, compared to 1990 data.

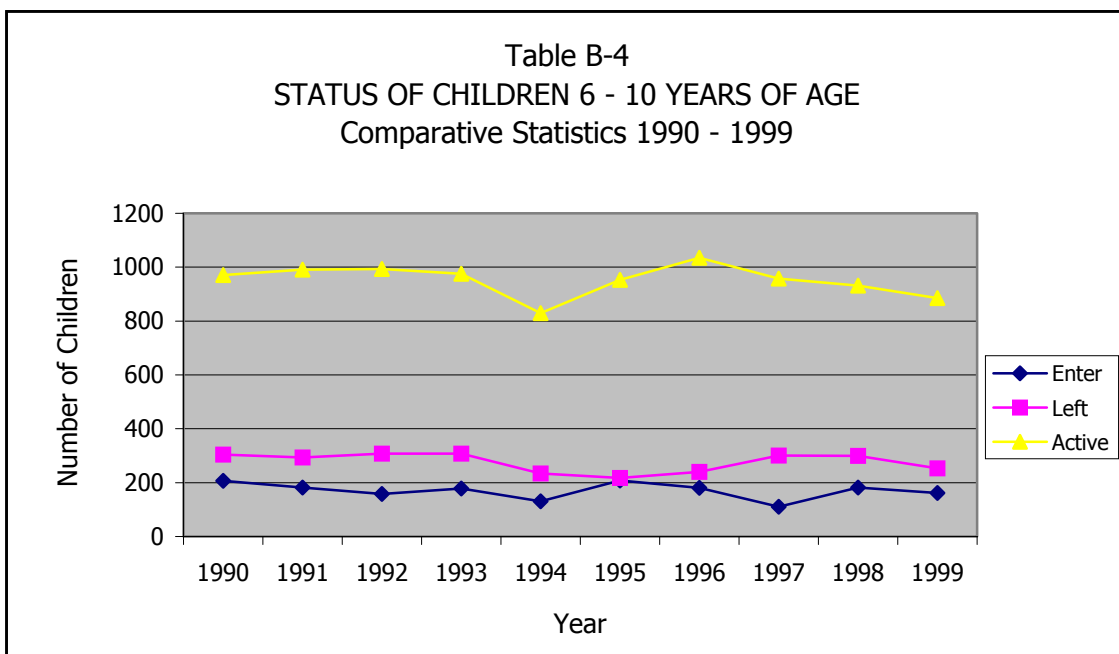


Table B-5 indicates that the number of children in foster care between the ages of ten and fifteen decreased by seven percent (7%) in 1999, compared to 1990 data. There was a two percent (2%) increase in the number of children in this age group who entered the system in 1999 compared to these children in 1990, and a one percent (1%) decline in the number of these children who remained active in care. However, there was a thirty-two percent (32%) decrease in the number of children between ten and fifteen years of age who left foster care in 1999, compared to 1990 data.

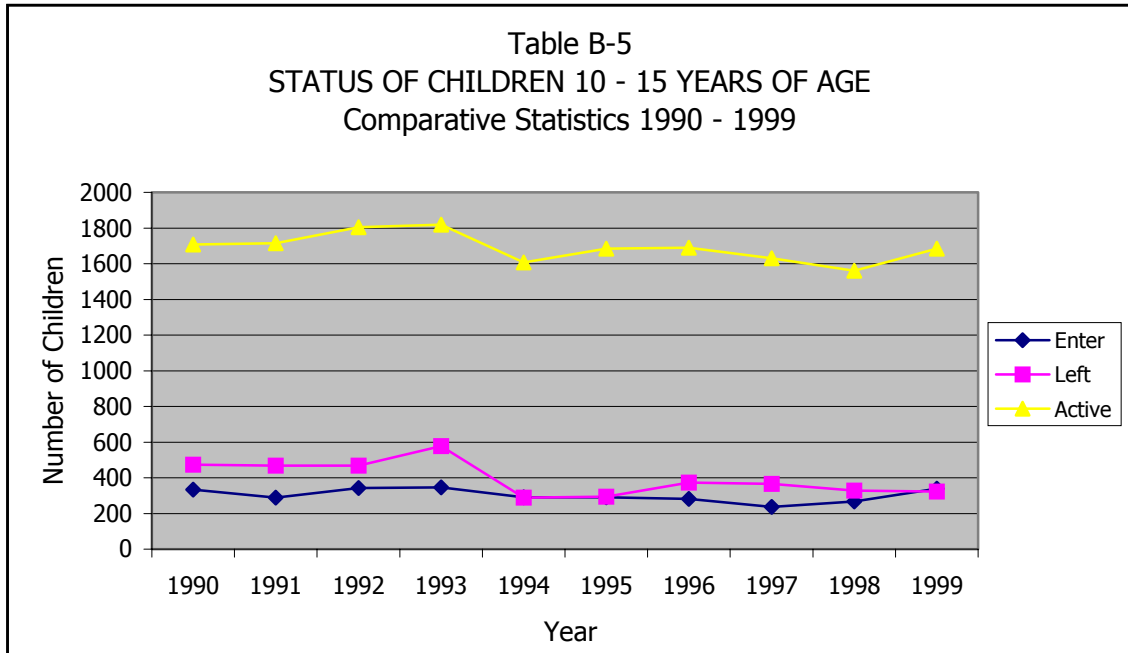
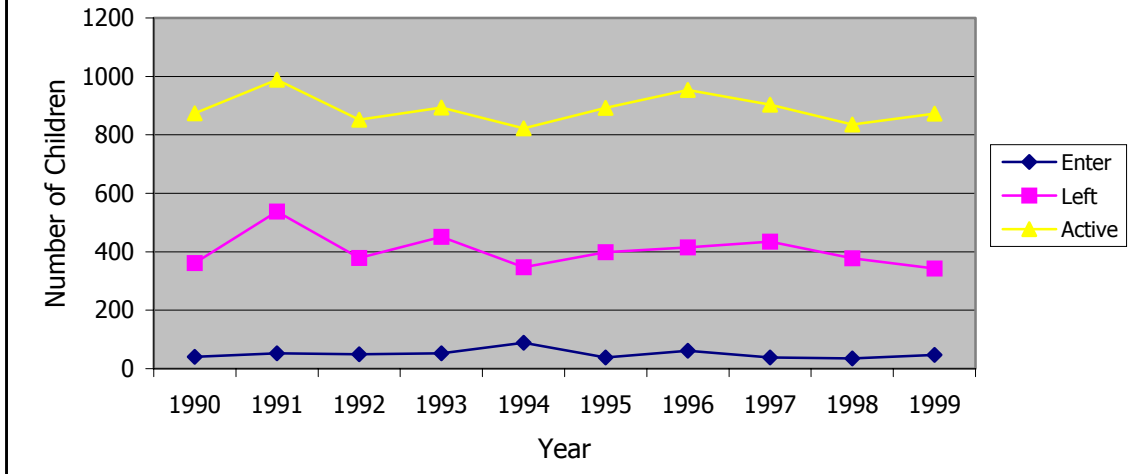


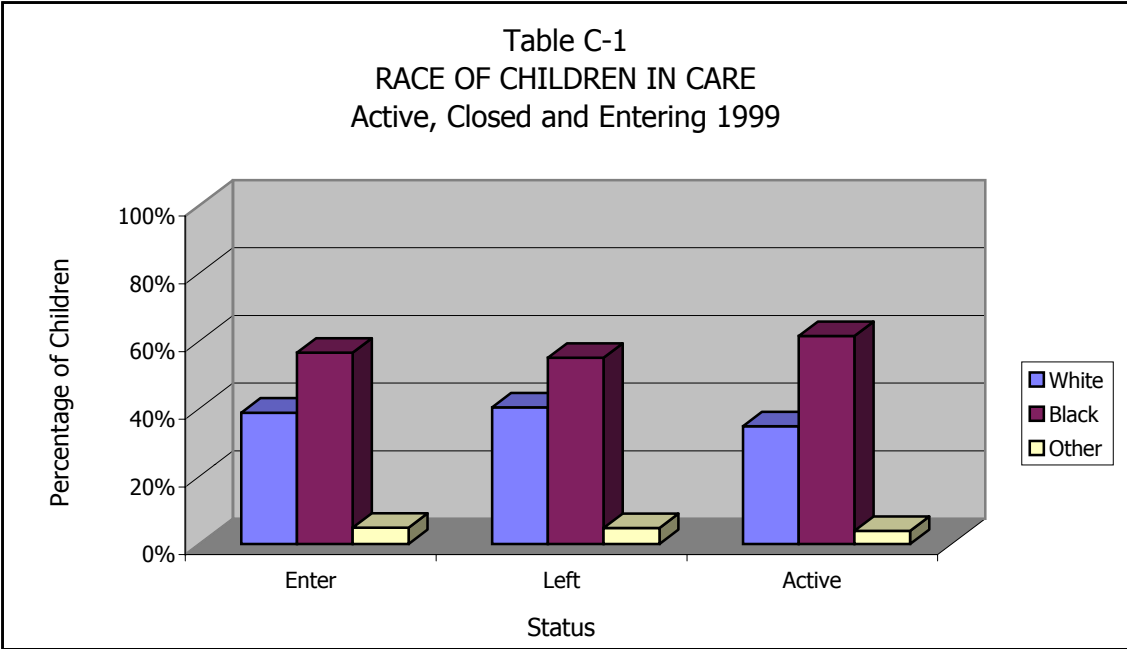
Table B-6 shows that the oldest group of children in care for the past decade also declined slightly, by one percent (1%). However, since 1990, there has been a fifteen percent (15%) increase in the number of children between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one who entered care, and no change in the number of these children who remained active. Five percent (5%) fewer children left care in 1999, compared to 1990 data.

Table B-6
 STATUS OF CHILDREN 16 - 21 YEARS OF AGE
 Comparative Statistics 1990 - 1999



RACE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Table C-1 shows the race of children who were in foster care in 1999 and their status, either active (neither entering or leaving the system), closed (leaving the foster care system), or entering the foster care system during 1999. Review Board data indicates that the same number of children – black, white and all other races – all entered care at about the same rate they left care. However, the majority of children in foster care are black. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the children who entered foster care in 1999 were black, compared to thirty-nine percent (39%) who were white and five percent (5%) who were some other race or bi-racial.



Tables C-2 through C-4 depict the status of each race tracked by the Review Board since 1992. Table C-2 illustrates that nineteen percent (19%) fewer black children left the system in 1999, when compared to 1992 data. There was a seven percent (7%) decrease in the number of black children who entered the system in 1999, compared to 1992 data, and a three percent (3%) decrease in those who remained active in care.

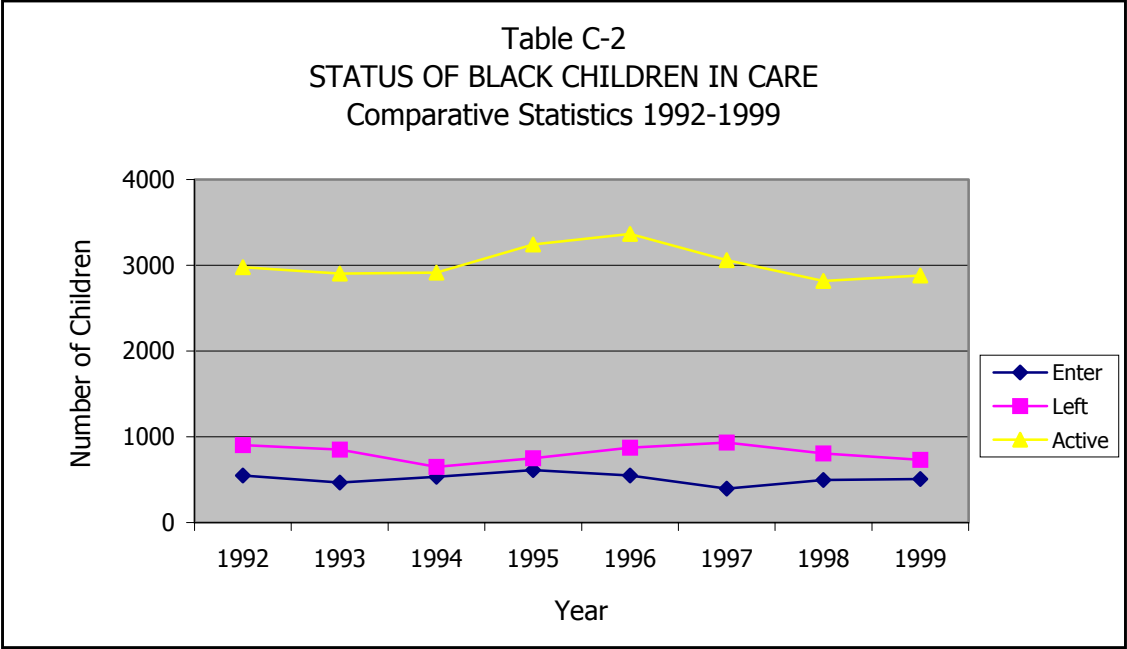


Table C-3 illustrates there are twenty percent (20%) fewer white children in the foster care system in 1999, compared to 1992 data. Thirteen percent (13%) fewer children entered the system in 1999 when compared to 1992 data, and nineteen percent (19%) fewer white children remaining active in care. However, twenty-nine percent (29%) fewer white children left foster care in 1999, compared to 1992 data.

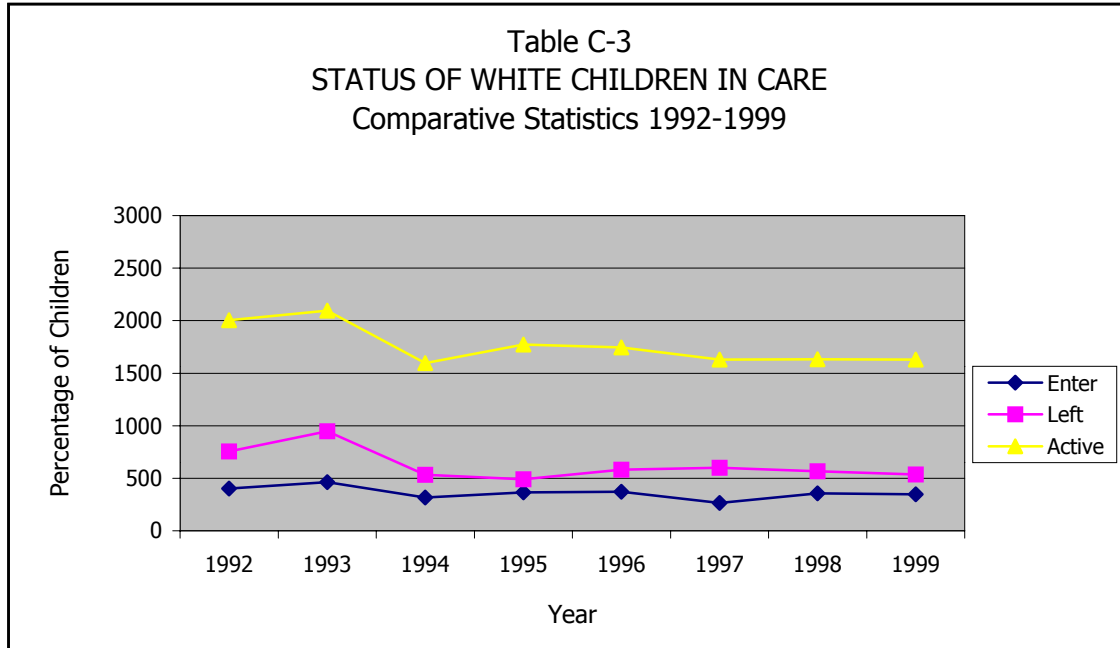
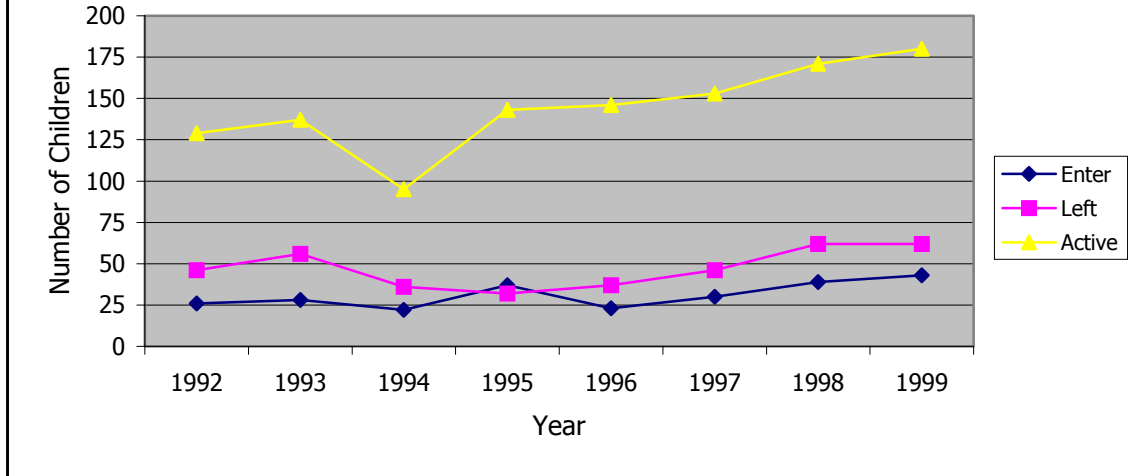


Table C-4 shows that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children of other races who were in foster care in 1999, compared to 1992 data. However, the actual number of children of other races is still quite small compared to the number of white and black children in care, comprising only five percent (5%) of all children in care.

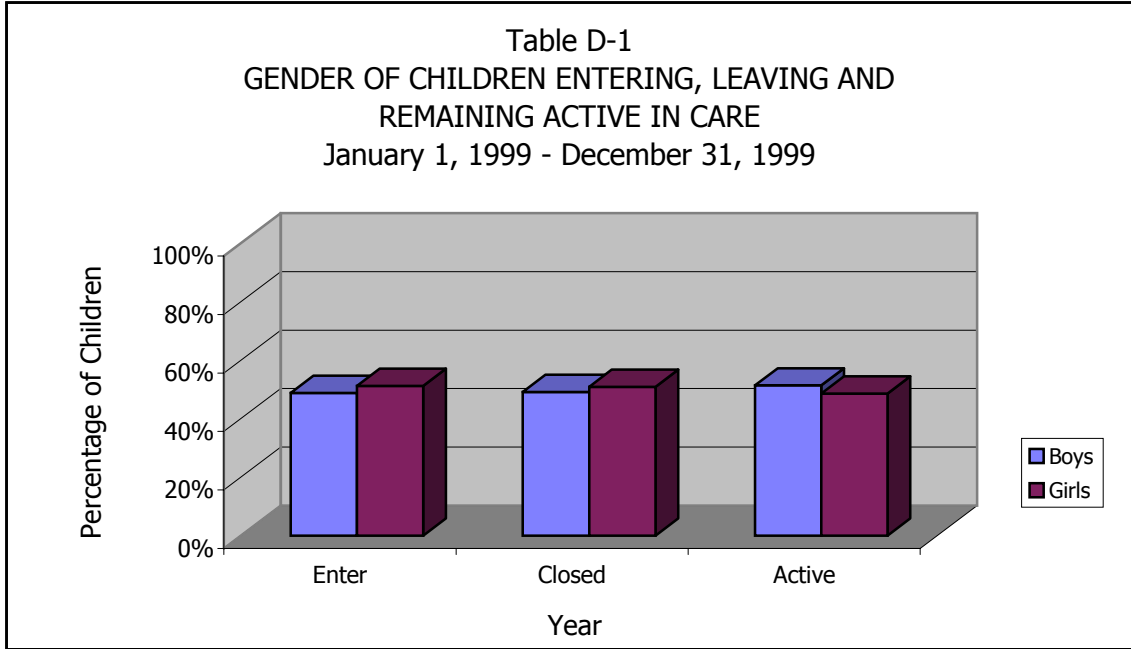
Since 1992, there has been a forty-two percent (42%) increase in the number of children of other races in foster care. There was an increase of sixty-five percent (65%) of the number of these children who entered care in 1999, compared to 1992 data, and a forty percent (40%) increase in those who remained active in care. However, there was a thirty-five percent (35%) increase in the number of children of other races who left care in 1999, compared to 1992 data.

Table C-4
 STATUS OF OTHER RACES IN CARE
 Comparative Statistics 1992-1999



GENDER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Table D-1 depicts the gender of children who were reviewed and remained active during 1999. As in previous years, the percentage of males and females active in the foster care population is almost equal. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the children who were reviewed and remained active in the system were male and forty-nine percent (49%) were female.



Tables D-2 and D-3 depict the status of boys and girls in foster care since 1992. Table D-2 shows that ten percent (10%) fewer boys were in the foster care system in 1999, compared to 1992 data. There was nine percent (9%) fewer boys entering the system in 1999, compared to 1992, and seven percent (7%) fewer boys remaining active in care. However, twenty-two percent (22%) fewer boys left the system in 1999, compared to 1992.

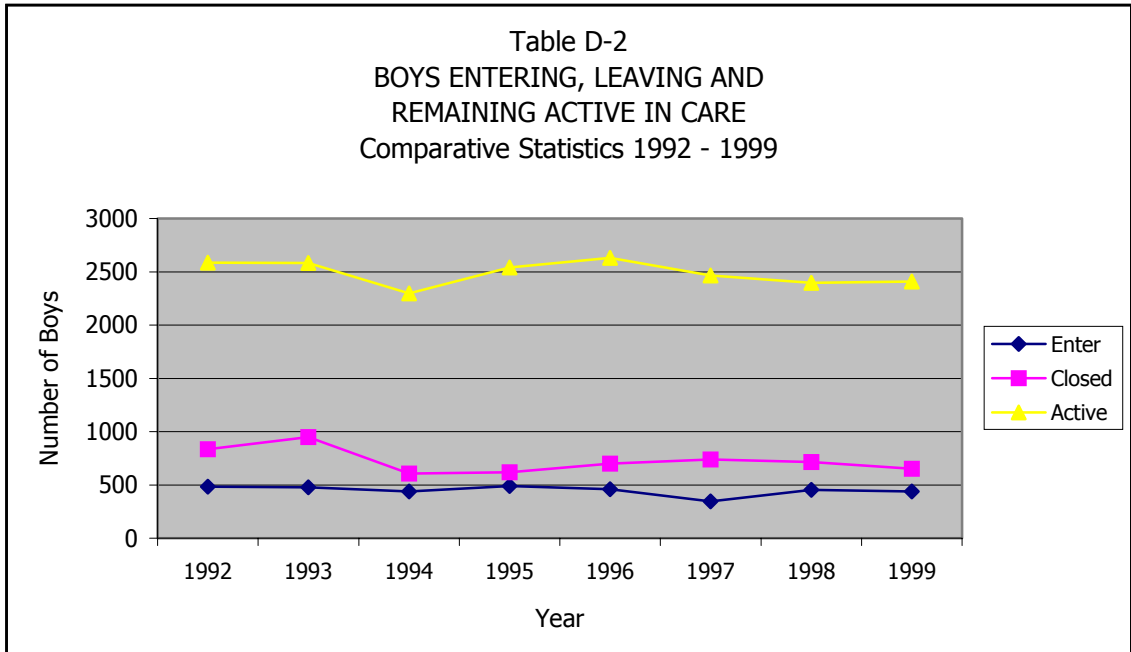
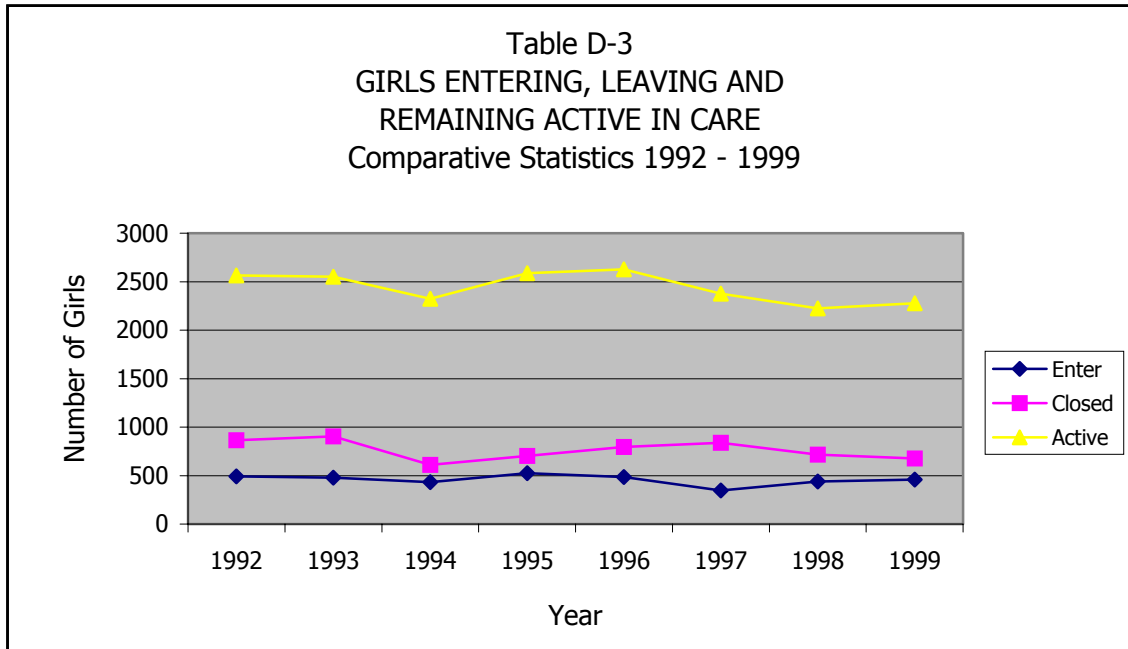


Table D-3 shows a very similar picture for girls in foster care. The number of girls entering the system decreased thirteen percent (13%) in 1999, compared to 1992 data. There was a seven percent (7%) decrease in the number of girls who entered the foster care system in 1999, compared to 1992 data, and an eleven percent (11%) decrease in the number of girls who remained active. However, there was a twenty-two percent (22%) decrease in the number of girls who left the system in 1999 compared to 1992.

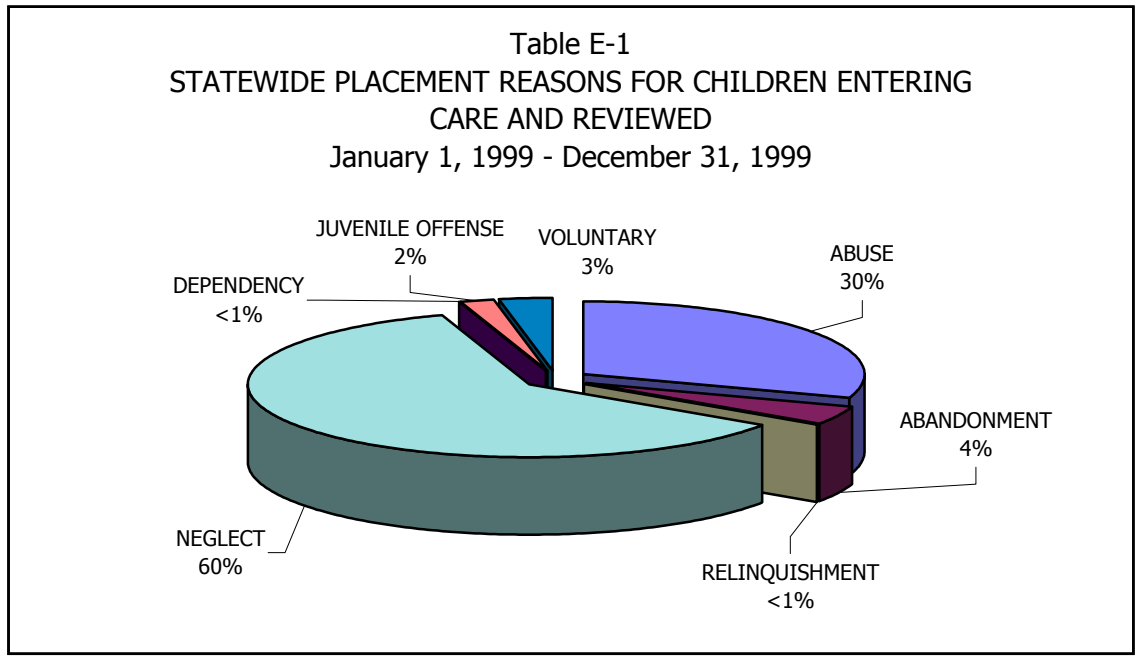


PLACEMENT REASONS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The Foster Care Review Board is legally mandated to review all children who have been in public foster care for a period of more than four consecutive months. The Department of Social Services holds legal custody of children placed in public foster care.

During 1999, children reviewed in South Carolina entered foster care in one of the four following ways: 1) 846 were placed involuntarily through the Family Court as a result of neglect, abuse, abandonment or dependency; 2) 25 were voluntarily placed by their custodial parents; 3) 20 entered as a result of a juvenile offense; and 4) 5 were voluntarily relinquished for the purpose of adoption.

The next series of tables detail statewide data on placement reasons for 1999 as well as data for the past decade. Table E-1 presents statewide data on the percentage for each type of placement. The percentage of children described in Table E-1 combines the categories of physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.



The individual categories for each type of abuse are designated with associated percentages in Table E-2. Statistical data generated by the Review Board annually continues to indicate that neglect, at sixty percent (60%), an increase of seven percent (7%) from 1998, continues to be the most frequent reason for placement of children in foster care in South Carolina.

Table E-2
STATEWIDE PLACEMENT REASONS FOR
CHILDREN ENTERING CARE AND REVIEWED
January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999 *

Placement Reason	1998		1999	
	Number of Reasons	Percent of State	Number of Reasons	Percent of State
Neglect	476	53%	538	60%
Abuse/Physical	137	15%	109	12%
Threat of Physical Abuse	79	9%	84	9%
Abuse/Sexual	34	4%	50	6%
Abandonment	33	4%	33	4%
Voluntary	57	6%	25	3%
Threat of Sexual Abuse	26	3%	24	3%
Juvenile Offense	19	2%	20	2%
Dependency	21	2%	7	1%
Relinquishment	8	1%	5	1%
Abuse/Emotional	1	0%	1	0%
TOTAL PLACEMENT REASONS	891	100%	896	100%

*Reflects only children reviewed by the Review Board for the first time during 1999.

Table E-3 depicts the placements reasons for children being placed involuntarily into care and reviewed by the Review Board since 1990. The data suggests that children are being involuntarily placed in the foster care system primarily because of neglect. There was a thirty-four percent (34%) increase in the number of children placed in care due to neglect in 1999 when compared to 1990. Additionally, the number of children placed into care as a result of abandonment has almost tripled, increasing by 175% since 1990. The number of children entering care due to abuse and dependency have both dropped since the beginning of this decade, sixteen percent (16%) and eighty-nine percent (89%), respectively.

Table E-3
 PLACEMENT REASONS FOR
 CHILDREN ENTERING CARE INVOLUNTARILY
 Comparative Statistics 1992 - 1999

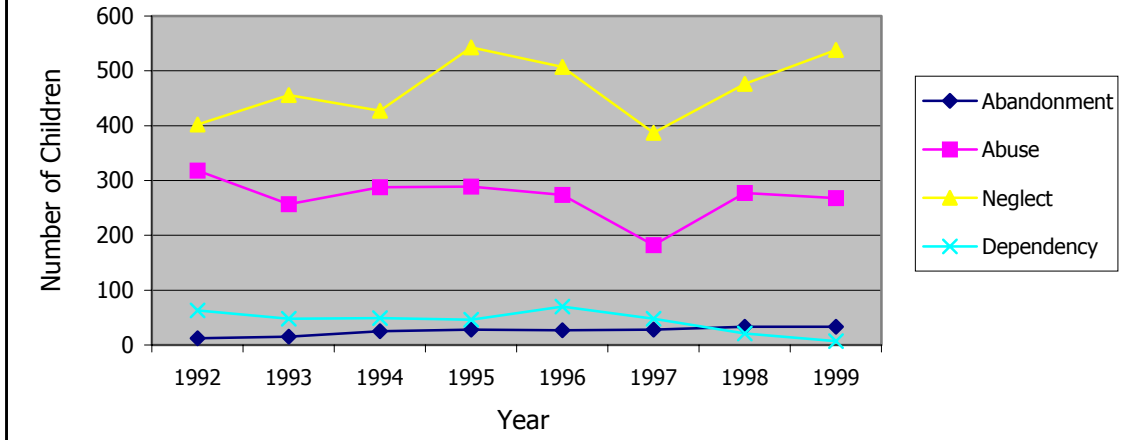
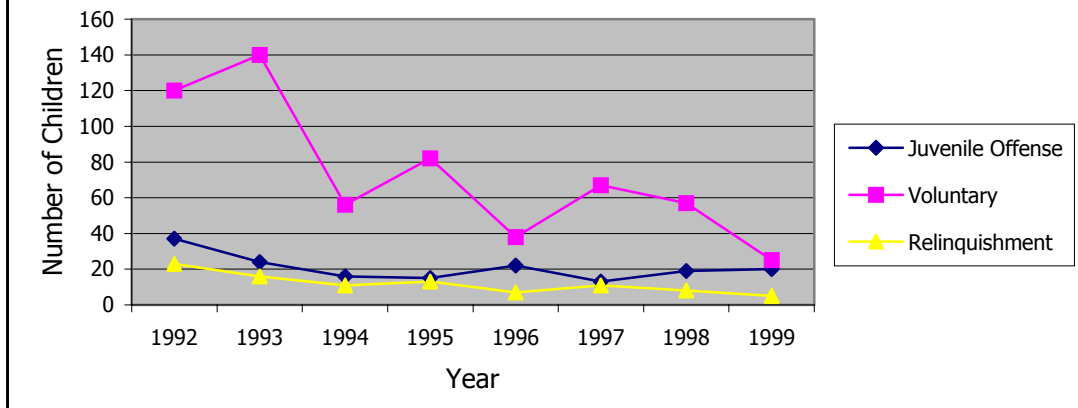


Table E-4 depicts the number of children placed voluntarily by their parents, the number of children whose parents relinquished their rights, or those children who committed juvenile offense. The number of children in each of the three categories have decreased dramatically over the decade, with the number of voluntary placements decreasing by seventy-nine percent (79%) from 23 in 1990 to just 5 in 1999. The number of placements due to relinquishments of rights by parents decreased by seventy-eight percent (78%) from 120 in 1990, to 25 in 1999. The number of placements due to juvenile offense dropped almost in half, from 47 in 1990 to 20 in 1999.

Table E-4
 PLACEMENT REASONS FOR CHILDREN ENTERING CARE OTHER
 THAN INVOLUNTARY
 Comparative Statistics 1992 - 1999



TEEN PREGNANCY AND FOSTER CARE

Teen pregnancy is an on-going concern for the State, and careful attention must be given to the impact that teen pregnancy has on the foster care population in South Carolina. Review Board data for 1999 indicates that 63 children had mothers who were less than eighteen years of age. In most cases, the mother of the child was also in foster care. While this number was not a significant percentage of the active foster care population during 1999, the impact on both the young mothers, and the children born to them, can be far reaching.

Data on children in foster care with teenage mothers will continue to be tracked by the Review Board in the coming years to follow the impact of this population and efforts made to address abuse issues.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND FOSTER CARE

The number of substance abuse related placements of children in the foster care system has been tracked statistically by the Review Board since 1990. Substance abuse continues to be a significant factor in the reasons children were placed in foster care in 1999. Table F reflects the number of children affected by substance abuse and reviewed by the Review Board in 1999. The Review Board divides these types into three categories: alcohol, drugs or both. Review Board data for 1999 indicates

that substance abuse was a contributing factor in the placements for 450 of the 891 children (51%) who entered foster care and were reviewed for the first time during 1999.

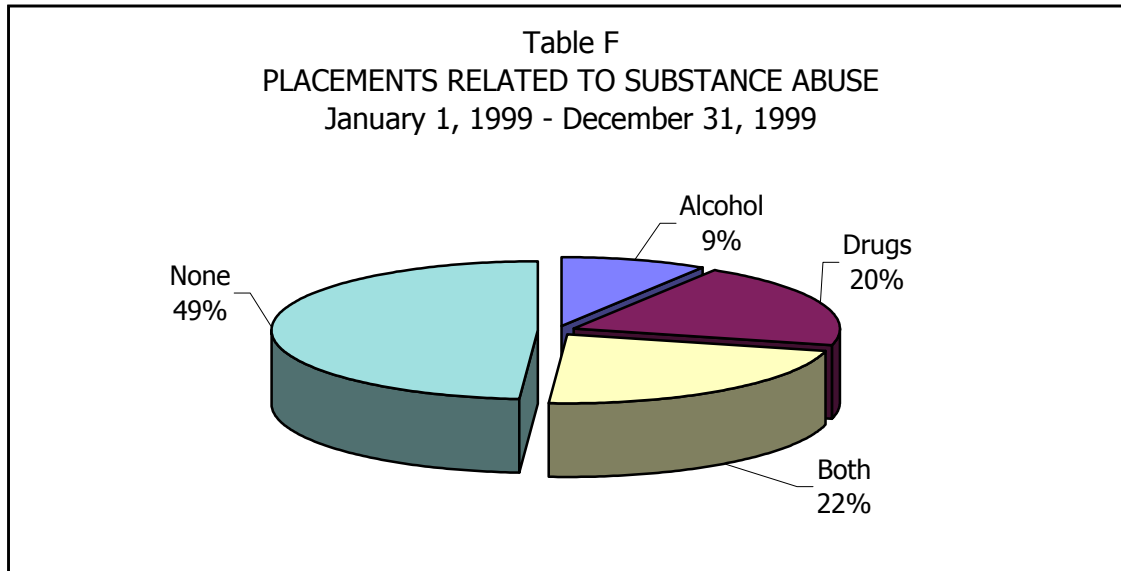
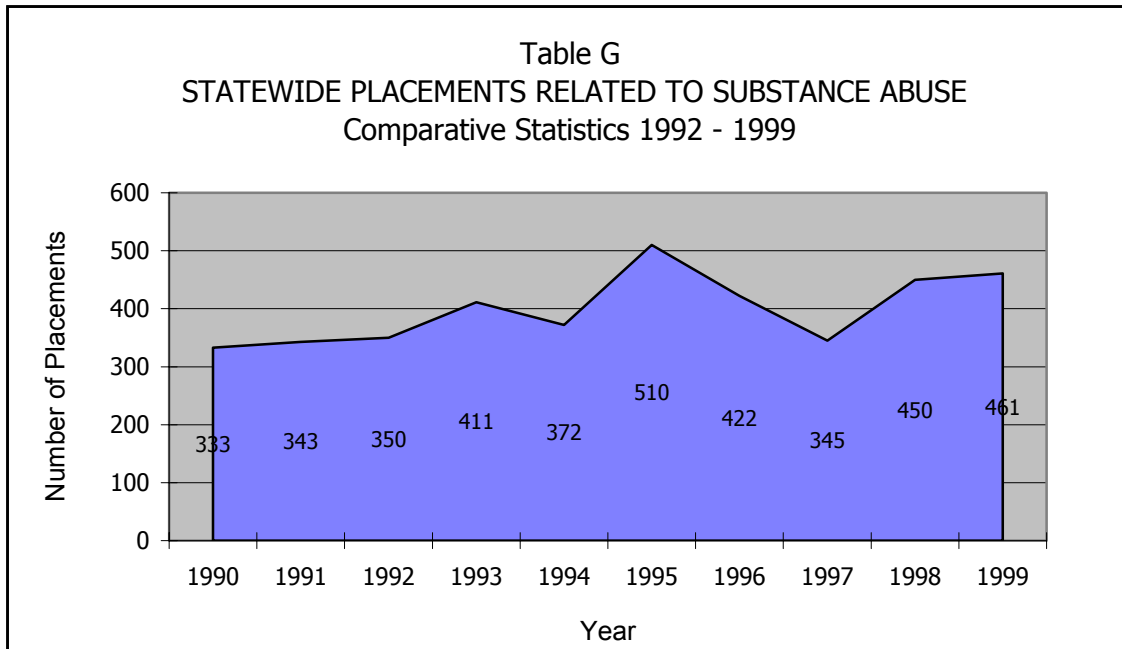


Table G provides data on placements related to substance abuse from 1990 to 1999. This data suggests that substance abuse by parents has become more of a contributing factor throughout the decade. There has been a thirty-eight percent (38%) increase in the number of placements related to substance abuse in 1999 compared to 1990.

The powerful impact of drugs and alcohol on the children of this country reached epidemic proportions during the 1980's and has continued to grow since that time. This crisis has had a devastating effect on families, and particularly on the children who have been the silent victims of prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol. In the United States, it is estimated that between 550,000 and 750,000 of the children born each year have been exposed to drugs or alcohol prior to birth. In addition to the biological risk that prenatal alcohol or drug exposure poses to these children, they are at increased risk of child abuse and neglect by parents, whose need for drugs, takes priority over the care of their infants and children.⁴

⁴ National Resource Center for Respite and Crisis Care Services – Fact Sheet Number 49



NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE

Children removed from their families and placed in foster care frequently experience more than one placement while in care. Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child and additional moves once in the foster care system can be detrimental to the child's development. The younger the child, the more critical the need for stability in one foster home.

Table H-1 shows the number of placements for children leaving foster care in 1999. Review Board data indicates that in 1999, most children who left care had experienced between one and three placements. However, as Table H-2 illustrates, children have been experiencing more placements over the decade. There was a thirty percent (30%) decrease in the number of children experiencing between one and three placements in 1999, compared to 1990 data. Additionally, there was a thirty percent increase in the number of children who experienced seven or more placements in 1999, compared to 1990 data. Finally, seventeen percent (17%) more children experienced between four and six placements in 1999, compared to 1990.

Table H-1
NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN LEAVING CARE
 January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999

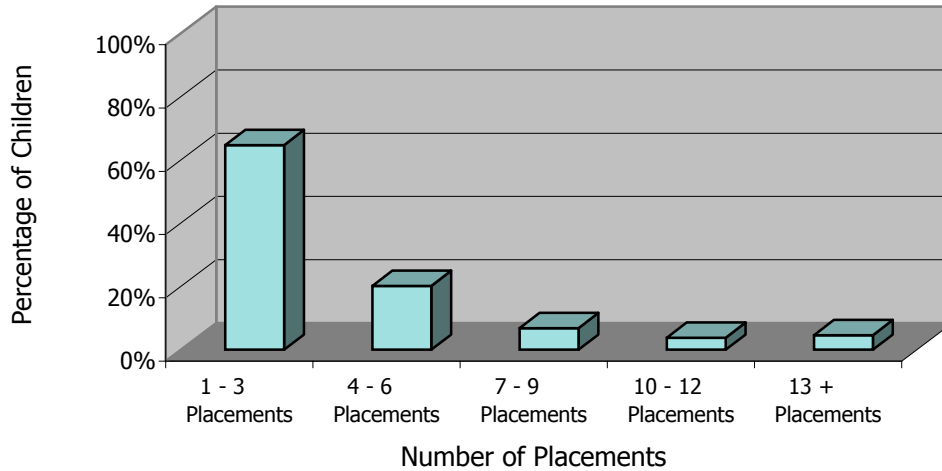
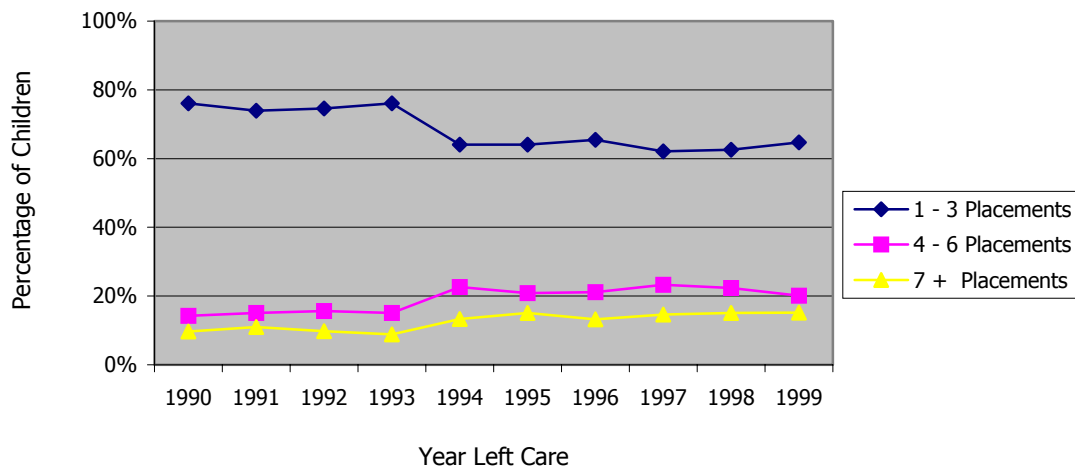


Table H-2
Number of Placements for Children Leaving Care
 Comparative Statistics 1990-1999



CLOSING REASONS FOR CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE

The number of children in the Review Board system who left care in 1999 was 1,327. Thirty-five percent (35%) of these children were returned to their parents. Thirty-one percent (31%) were legally adopted, twelve

percent (12%) had legal custody transferred to relatives or other individuals, five children, less than 1%, died during 1999 and twenty percent (20%) left the system by emancipation. Less than one percent of those leaving the system during 1999 left for reasons other than the five categories tracked by the Review Board. Table I-1 shows the closing reasons for children who left the foster care system in 1999.

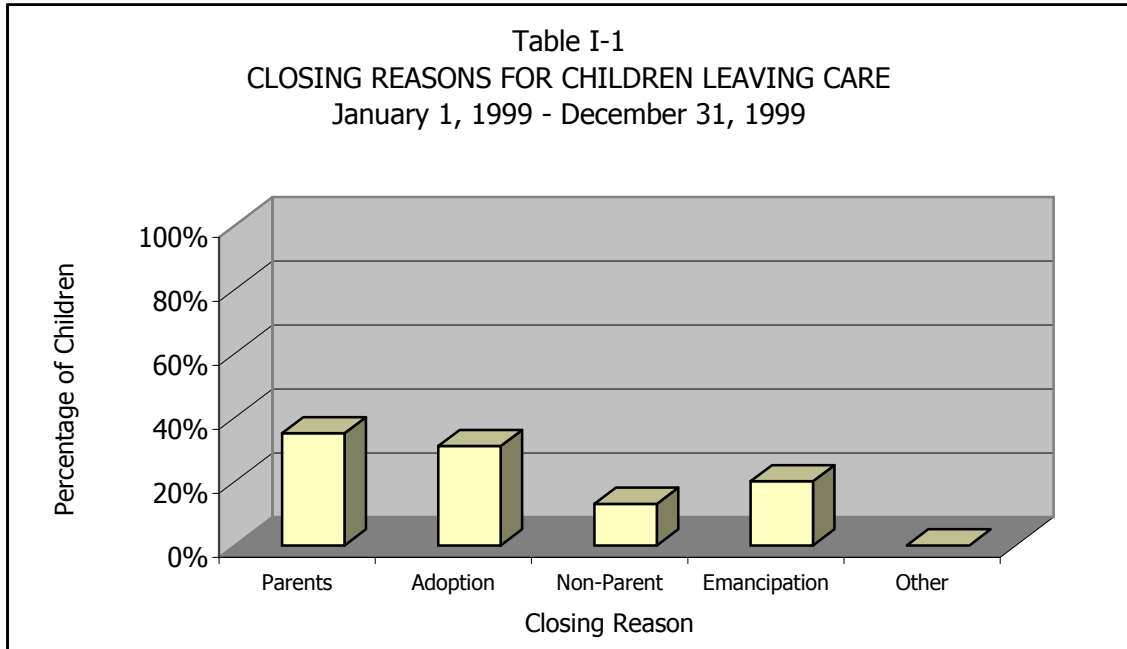
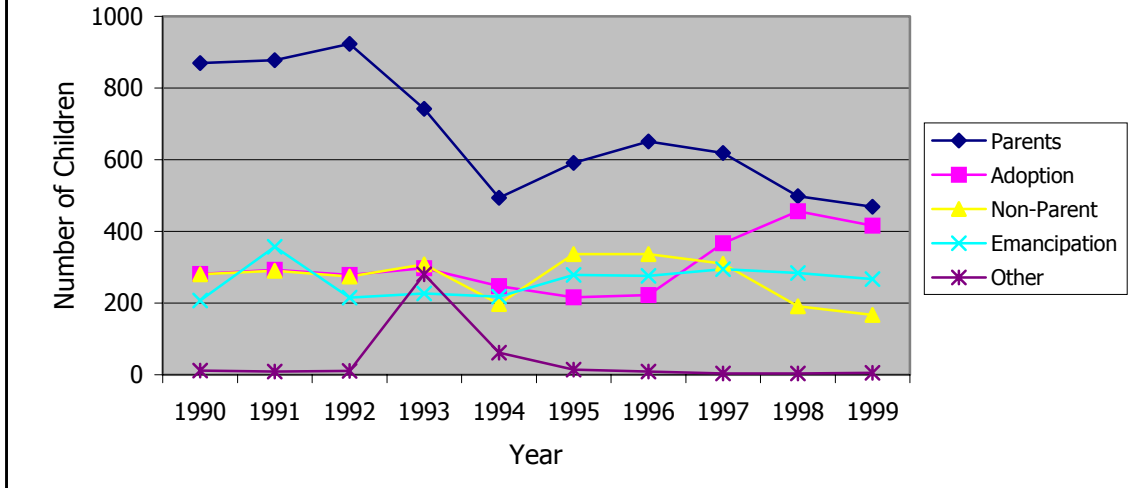


Table I-2 depicts the closing reasons for children leaving care since 1990. Adoption and returning to birth parents are the only two permanent legal plans for children who leave foster care. During the past decade, there has been a dramatic change in the number of children leaving foster care to be adopted, as well as those who were returned home. There was a forty-eight percent (48%) increase in the number of children who were adopted in 1999, compared to 1990, while a decrease of forty-six percent (46%) in the number of children who returned home.

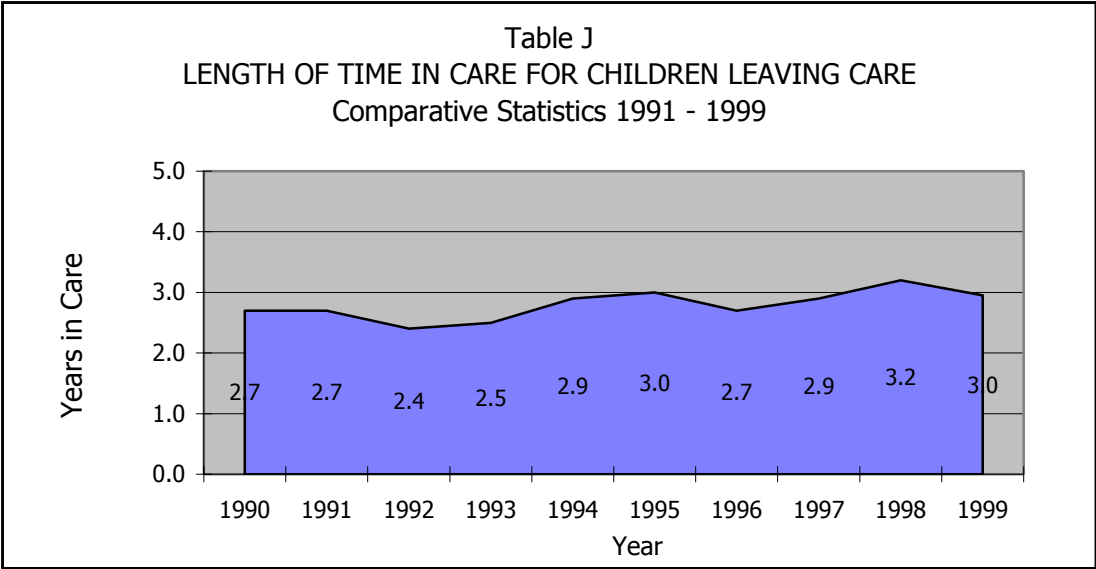
The past decade also has seen more children never getting their “forever family.” There was a twenty-nine percent (29%) increase in the number of children aging out of foster care in 1999 compared to 1990.

Table I-2
 CLOSING REASONS FOR CHILDREN LEAVING CARE
 Comparative Statistics 1990 - 1999



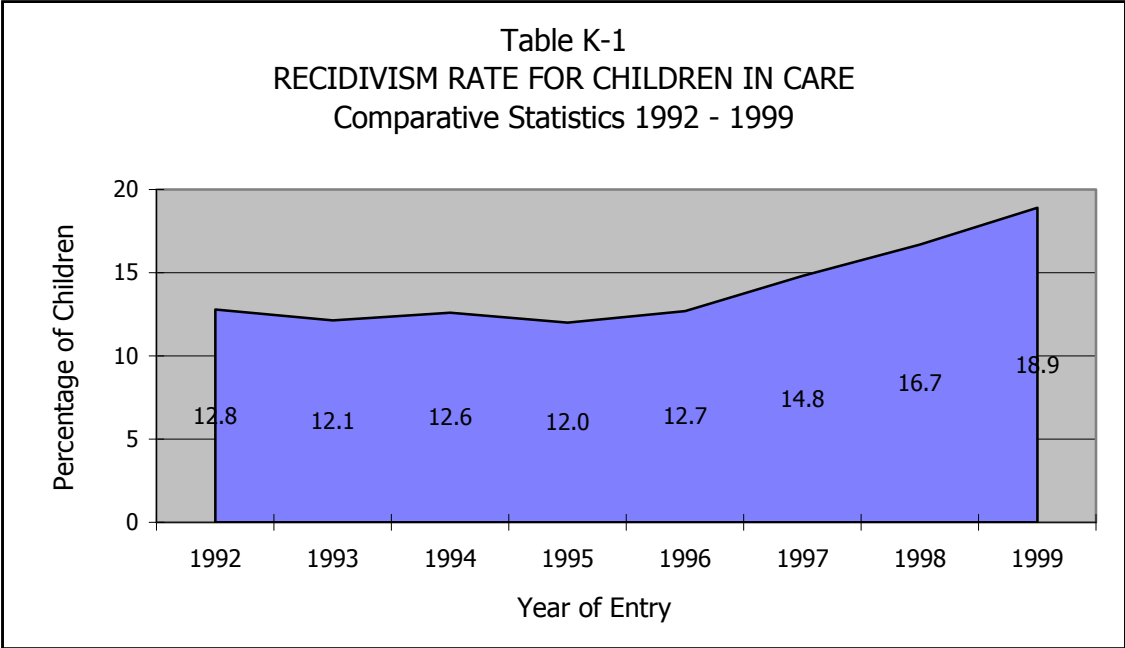
LENGTH OF STAY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

A major goal of foster care review is to achieve a permanent placement for a child as soon as possible; therefore, it is important to measure the length of time a child spends in care. Table J shows that children are spending approximately four months longer in care in 1999 than their counterparts did in 1990. Review Board data shows that the average length of time that a child spends in foster care has increased from 2.7 years in 1990 to 3.0 years in 1999. This data applies only to children who were reviewed by the Review Board and who subsequently left the Review Board system. As of December 31, 1999, 1,739 children reviewed (37%) had been in foster care over twenty-four months.



RE-ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE

Re-entry into foster care can occur for a variety of reasons. Table K-1 shows the recidivism rate for children in care for at least four consecutive months and reviewed by the Review Board, since 1992. The data suggests that more and more children are coming back into foster care. There was a six percent (6%) increase in the number of children re-entering care in 1999, compared to 1992 data.



There is very little longitudinal data to document what happens to children once they leave the foster care system. A closer examination of the reasons that children re-enter the foster care system serves to better indicate the real permanency of placements located for children leaving the system.

Review Board data for 1999 indicates a broad percentage range in the type of disruptions for children reviewed who re-entered foster care during 1999. Table K-2 shows that fifty-seven percent (57%) of the children reviewed by local boards who re-entered during 1999 returned to foster care after having been placed with their parents. This represents a twelve percent (12%) increase over 1998 data. Twenty-five percent (25%) re-entered after having been placed with a relative or someone who was not their parent, a decrease of thirteen percent (13%) from 1998. Six percent (6%) re-entered care from disrupted adoptive placements, up three percent (3%) from 1998. Finally, one percent (1%) re-entered care from other types of placements, down one percent (1%) from 1998. This data indicates that the permanent plan of adoption seems to be the most stable plan for children who leave the foster care system.

TABLE K-2
Placement Disruption Type for Children
Re-entering Foster Care
January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999

Disruption Type	Frequency	% of Placement Disruptions
Placement w/Parents	127	69%
Placement w/Relatives	46	25%
Adoptive Placement	11	6%
Other Type of Placement	1	<1%
TOTAL	185	100%

THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID FOSTER HOMES

The Division of Foster Care Review operates a quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements. Local review boards who identify concerns about permanent plans for children in therapeutic placements, the quality of treatment, or the appropriateness of a therapeutic placement during their regular review of the child's case, may make a referral to the Medicaid Review Specialist. The Medicaid Review Specialist will then conduct additional inquiries relative to the case and, if necessary, arrange a separate Medicaid staffing with appropriate parties.

The Division of Foster Care Review operates this quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements through a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services. This program has been operational since 1992.

In addition to referrals for local review boards, the Medicaid Review System is involved with other interagency collaborative efforts on behalf of emotionally disturbed children. The Medicaid Review Specialist is a regular participant in a program assistance effort that offers training and technical assistance to private providers who are providing therapeutic services to children. Routine reviews drawn from a sample population of children in select therapeutic placements also are conducted throughout the year.

The majority of children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements are managed by the Managed Treatment Services (MTS) division of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The client to staff ratio is much smaller than that of regular DSS, and MTS staff are trained to work specifically with emotionally disturbed children. These factors allow for more effective and efficient treatment of children in Medicaid funded placements.

The goals of the Medicaid Review System are to: ensure that placement of emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children under the age of twenty-one (21) in residential treatment is appropriate; ensure that the level of care provided to each child is offered in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet the child's treatment needs; make certain that the

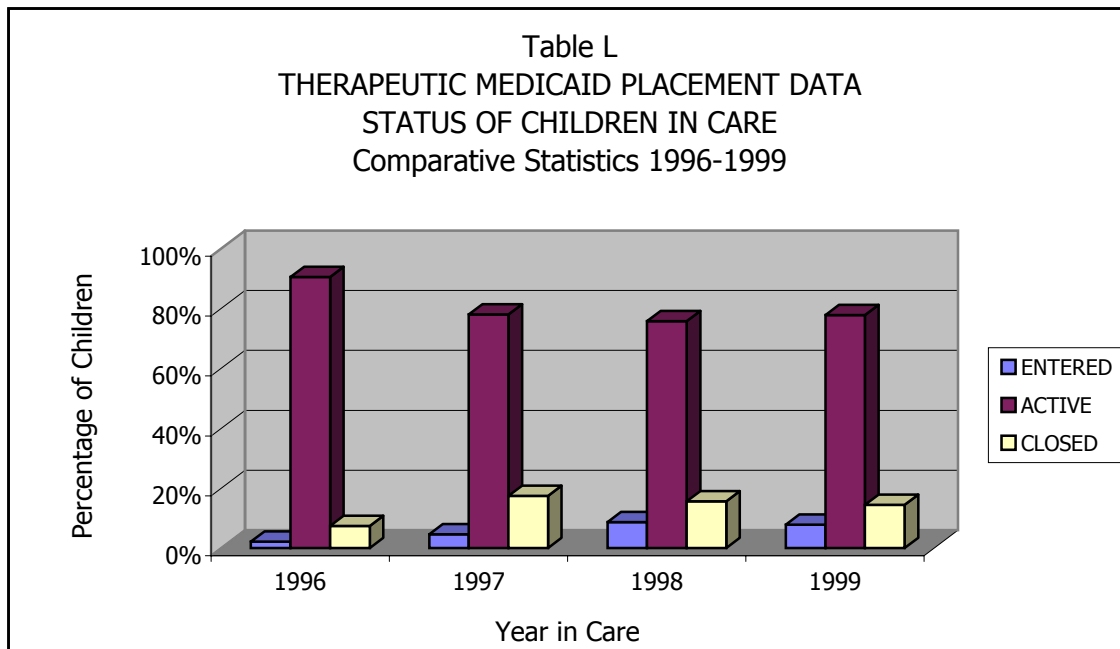
parties responsible for the care, supervision and treatment of the child regularly communicate with one another and evaluate the child's progress and continuing need for treatment; and, ensure that permanency planning is addressed as a part of the child's therapeutic treatment plan. This system was incorporated into the current structure of the Review Board and provides regular six-month review for all children in public foster care residing in therapeutic placements and tracks progress towards achievement of case management goals for each child.

The next section contains statistical information collected on children who were placed in therapeutic placements from 1996, the year we began reporting on this information, to 1999.

1999 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA

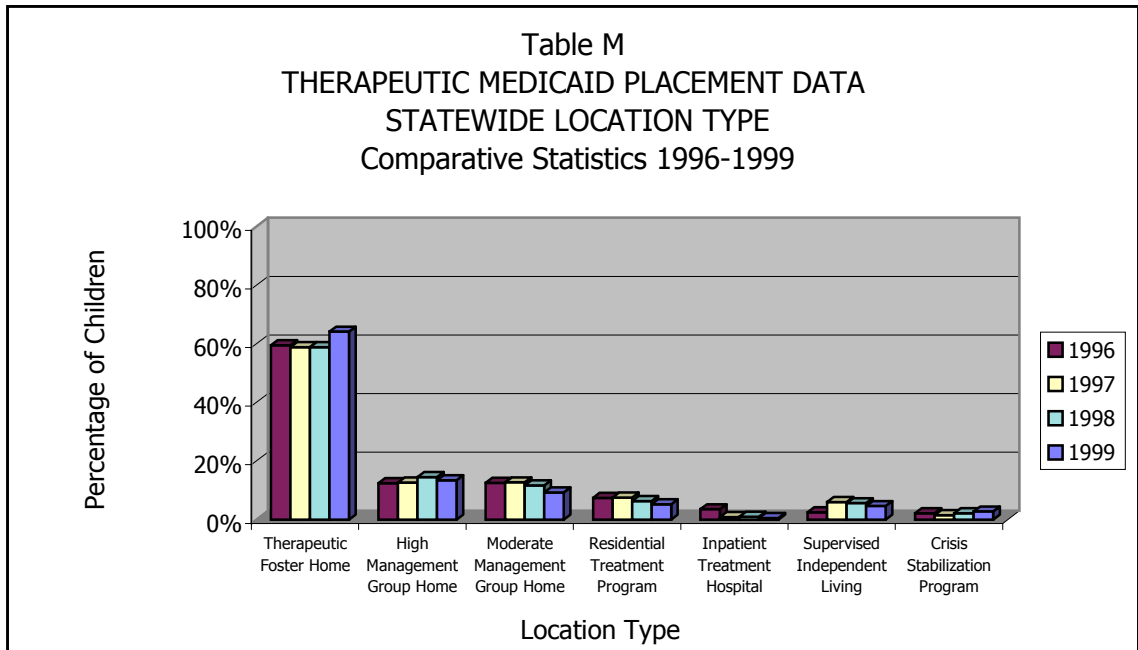
Children in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid represent twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total number of active children reviewed by local boards during 1999, representing a two percent (2%) increase when compared to 1998 data. During 1999, local review boards conducted 2,178 reviews on a total of 1,245 children residing in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. This is a ten percent (10%) increase in the number of reviews conducted by local review board members, compared to 1998 data. Additionally, there was a sixteen percent (16%) increase in the total number of children reviewed compared to 1998.

Table L shows the status of children in therapeutic placements during 1999. There was a substantial increase in the number of children who have entered therapeutic Medicaid placements since 1996, more than tripling in size. The number of children who left therapeutic placements has also seen a large increase, with almost twice as many children leaving these placements in 1999, compared to 1996 data. The number of active children in 1999 has not changed since 1996. This data suggests that the population of foster children in therapeutic placements has increased in size since 1996.



The Review Board monitors children in several different types of therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid. These placements range

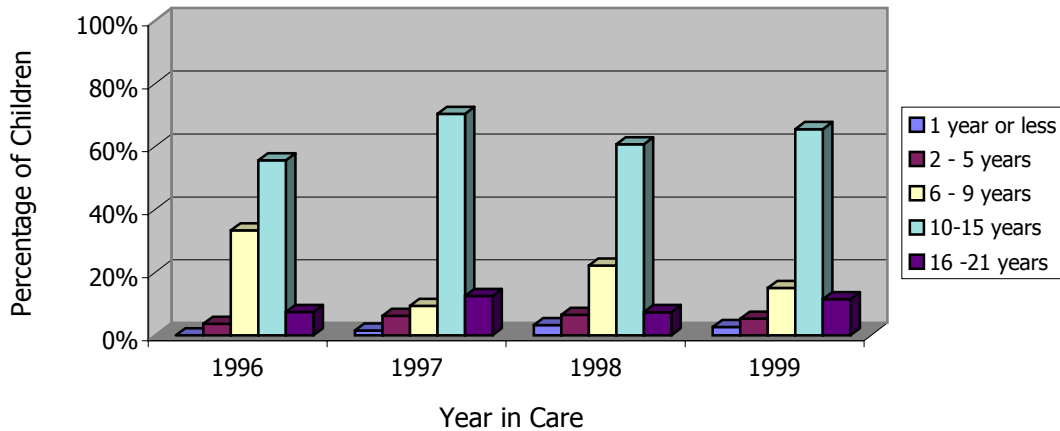
from the least restrictive therapeutic foster home settings to in-patient hospitalization for severely emotionally disturbed children. Table M describes the number and percentage of children in each of the different types of Medicaid placements tracked by the Review Board. The most likely placement for a child in a Medicaid placement is a therapeutic foster home, which comprised sixty-four percent (64%) of all Medicaid placements in 1999. The least likely placement for these children is an Inpatient Treatment Hospital. There has been no significant change in the number of children placed in each type of facility when compared to 1996 data.



Tables N, O, and P present information on the status of children in therapeutic placements who either entered care, left care or remained active in care. This information compares the number of children in therapeutic placements by selected age groups between 1996 and 1999.

As in the regular foster care population, Table N indicates that the largest number of children who entered the therapeutic population and were added to the Review Board data system are in the ten to fifteen-year-old age bracket. There were four times the number of children entering the therapeutic population in this age bracket when compared to 1996 data.

Table N
 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA
 AGE OF CHILDREN ENTERING CARE
 Comparative Statistics 1996-1999



Data presented in Table O indicates that children in therapeutic placements who remained active in the Review Board data are most likely to be between the ages of ten and fifteen, which in 1999, comprised fifty three percent (53%) of the active therapeutic placement population. This is consistent with Review Board data on children in the regular foster care population.

Table O
 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA
 AGE OF CHILDREN ACTIVE IN CARE
 Comparative Statistics 1996-1999

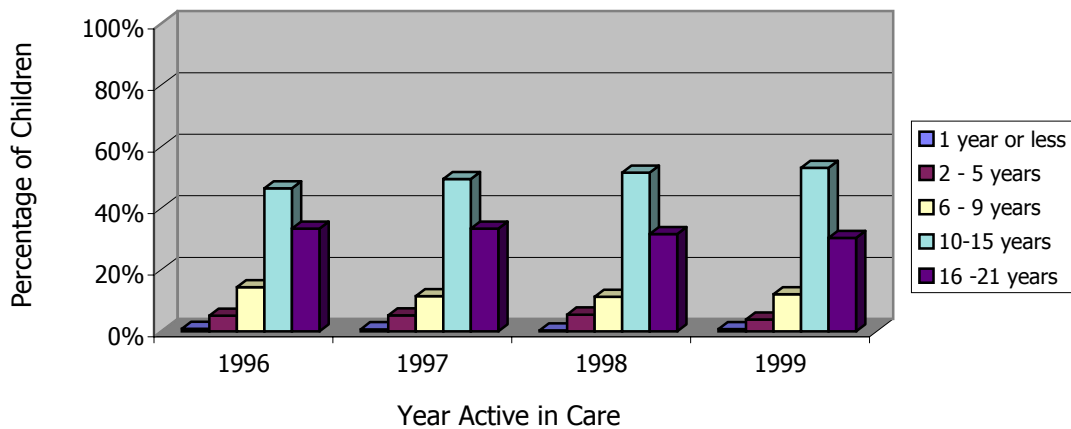
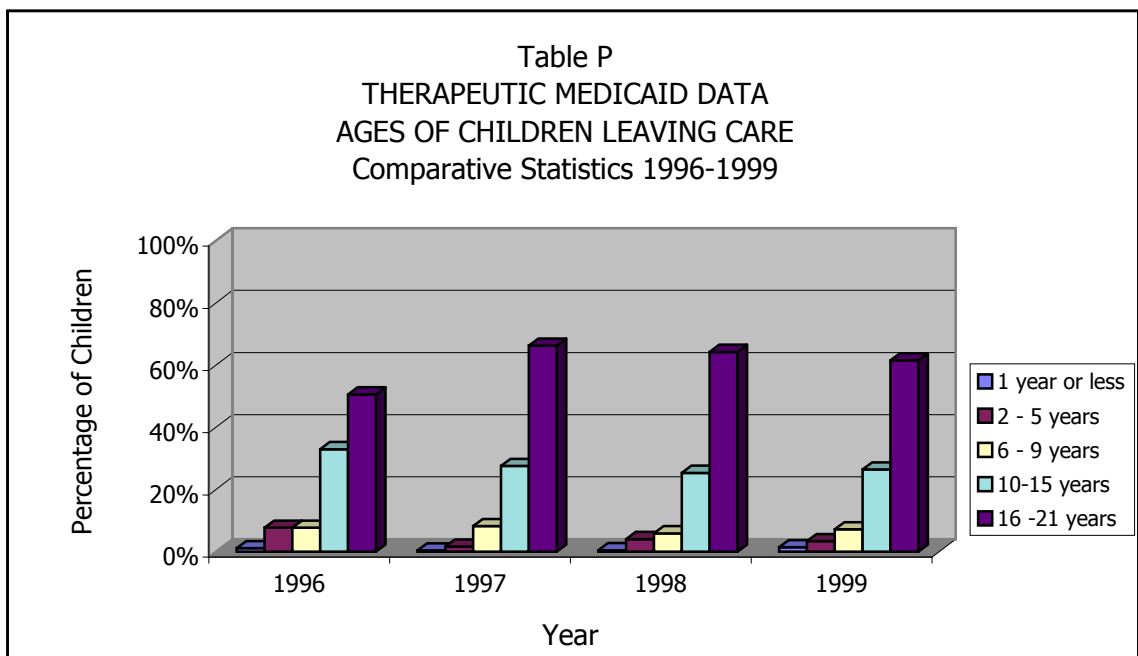


Table P depicts the age of children in therapeutic placements who left care or turned eighteen and were closed out of the Review Board system between 1996 and 1999. Children in the oldest age group are most likely to leave therapeutic placements. When considered as a separate population, the percentage of children who emancipate out of therapeutic placements, fifty-two percent (52%), is more than thirty percent (30%) the percentage of the children who emancipate out of the general foster care population. The overall percentage of children emancipating out of the therapeutic population increased by fifteen percent (15%) when compared to 1997 percentages.



One difference in the population of children in therapeutic placements, when compared to the general foster care population, is that there continues to be a higher percentage of males in the active therapeutic population as compared to females. In the general foster care population, the percentage of children of each sex is almost equally balanced. However, for the past two years, there have been ten percent (10%) more boys than girls in the therapeutic population. Data for 1999 shows boys and girls entering and remaining active in foster care at the same frequency as in 1998. However, data indicates that for 1999, more boys left the therapeutic population, compared to 1998 data.

Table Q provides comparative data on the status of boys and girls in therapeutic placements for 1998 and 1999. Data suggests that boys who were in therapeutic placements entered and left the system at about the same rate in 1998 and in 1999, as did the girls.

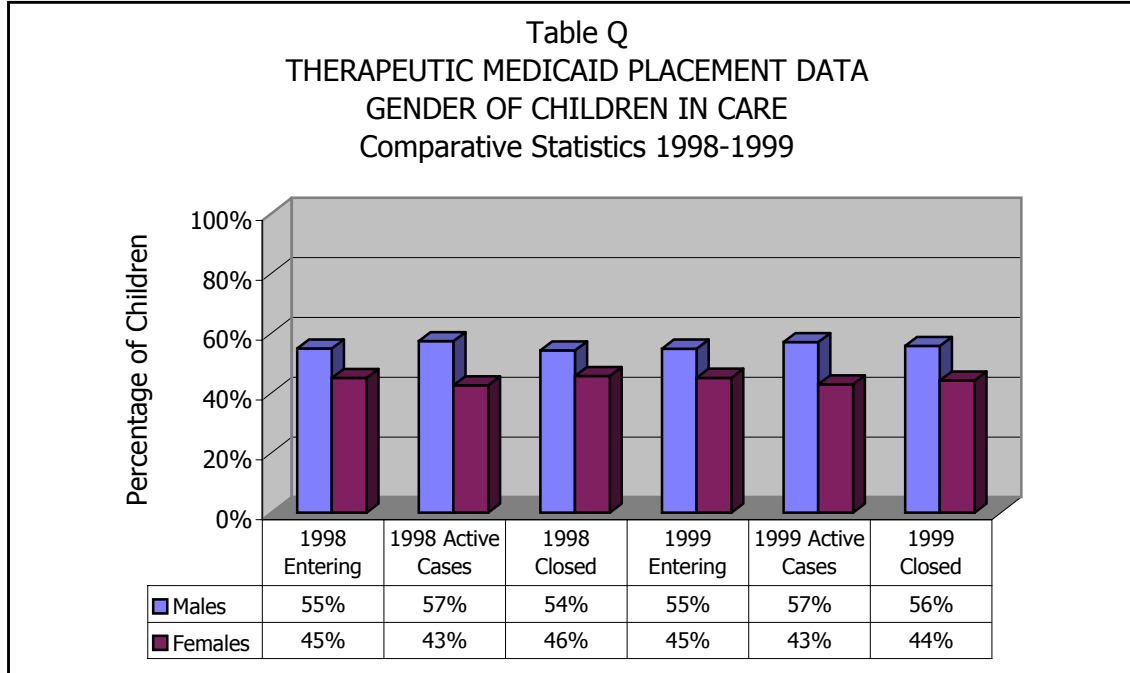
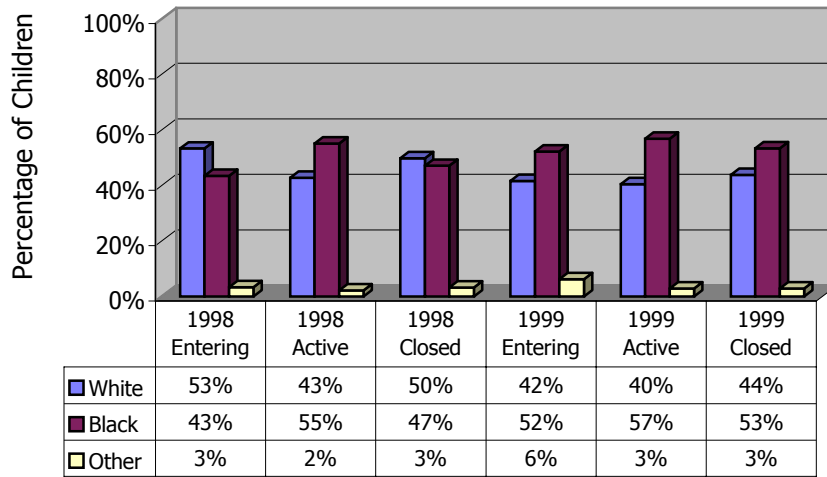


Table R describes the racial breakdown of children in therapeutic placements for 1998 and 1999. There were more black children who entered foster care and were in therapeutic placements in 1999, when compared to 1998 data, while the number of white children who entered care in 1999 decreased from 1998. As in 1998, when compared with the breakdown by sex in Table Q, black males remain active in therapeutically placed population at a higher rate than black females. However, black males leave at a higher rate than black females.

Table R
 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA
 RACE OF CHILDREN IN CARE
 Comparative Statistics 1998-1999



The number of foster care placements experienced by children in therapeutic settings must be carefully monitored by those responsible for case management. Any move for a child can have long-lasting, dramatic effects, and these effects can be compounded when considering a child with emotional problems. Stability should be a primary focus of the treatment process for children in therapeutic settings. These children, will need the security and guidance a permanent family can provide.

Data presented in Table S compares the number of different placements experienced by children in the therapeutic population who left care between 1997 and 1999. While the general population of foster care children experience between one and three placements, therapeutically placed children experience more placements. The number of therapeutically placed children who experienced between four and nine placements decreased by forty-two percent (42%) in 1999, when compared to 1997 data. However, there was a fifteen percent (15%) increase in the number of children who experienced more than ten placements before leaving therapeutic foster care in 1999, compared to 1997 data.

Children in therapeutic placements leaving care during 1999 averaged approximately one year longer in foster care (4.2 years) than those

leaving care in the regular foster care population (3.0 years). The average length of time in foster care for children in therapeutic placements remaining active in the Review Board data system as of December 31, 1999, was also twelve months longer than those active children in the regular foster care population.

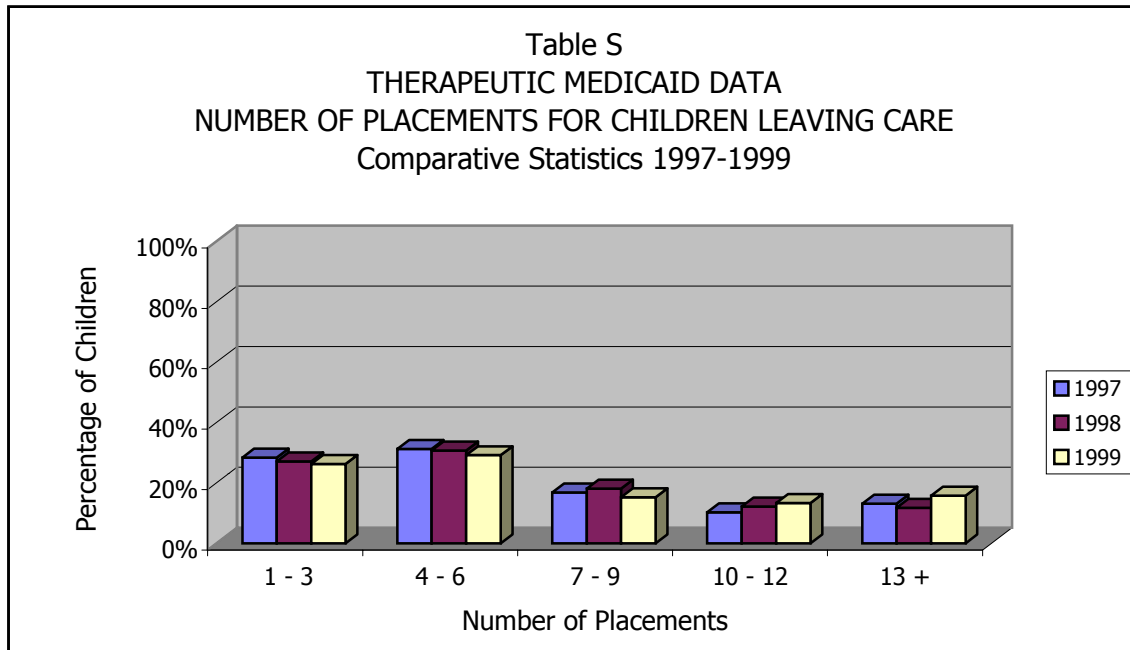


Table T compares the reasons children in therapeutic placements left foster care between 1996 and 1999. Thirty-five percent (35%) of children in therapeutic placements who left the system in 1999 returned home. This percentage is equal to the percentage of children in the general foster care population who left the system and returned home. While the data remains unchanged from 1998, there were half as many children who returned home in 1999, compared to 1996 data.

Two percent (2%) of children in therapeutic placements who left the foster care system were placed in adoptive homes. While 1998 was the first year that Review Board data has reflected permanent, adoptive placements for children in this population, this percentage was down five percent (5%) in 1999.

Fifty two percent (52%) of the children in therapeutic placements who left care in 1999 emancipated out of the system. This is over thirty percent (30%) more than the general foster care population. Emancipation

continues to be the most frequent reason children in leave therapeutic placement.

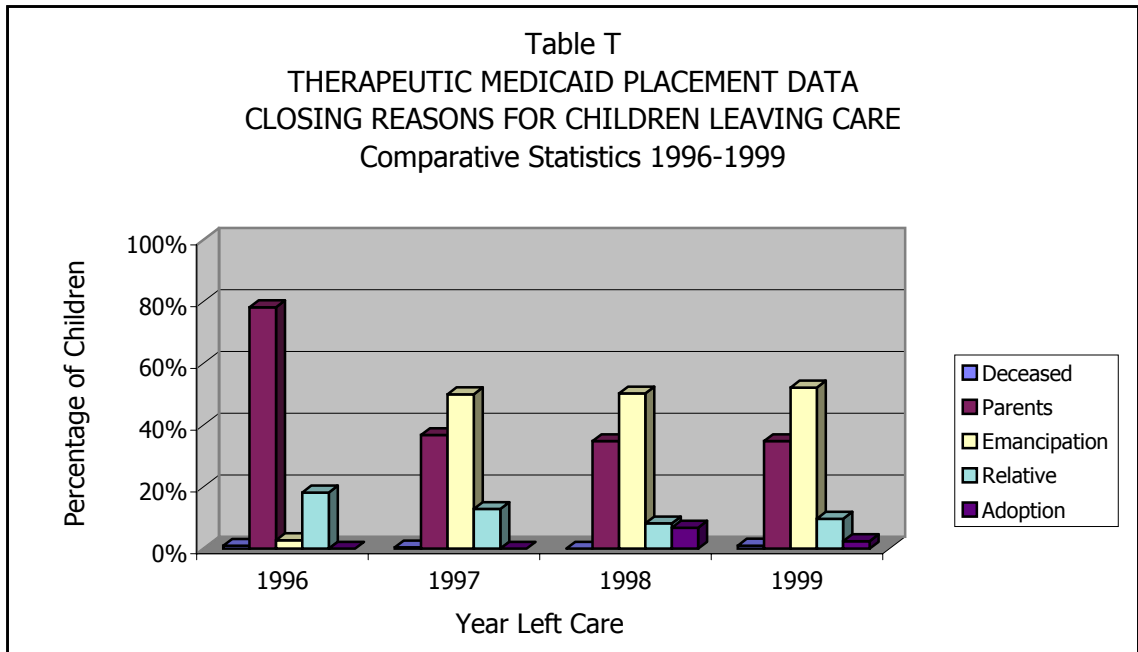


Table U describes the number of therapeutic Medicaid placements in each county and Area Adoption Region. Union County had the highest percentage of children in therapeutic placements during 1999 (100%) while Abbeville County did not have any children in therapeutic placements during 1999.

TABLE U

THERAPEUTIC PLACEMENT BY COUNTY
January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999

	# Children Reviewed	# Children Reviewed in TP	% Children in TP		# Children Reviewed	# Children Reviewed in TP	% Children in TP
County				County			
Abbeville	9	0	0%	Greenwood	44	13	30%
Aiken	156	71	46%	Hampton	23	2	9%
Allendale	23	2	9%	Horry	172	75	44%
Anderson	231	58	25%	Jasper	6	2	33%
Bamberg	24	6	25%	Kershaw	37	1	3%
Barnwell	20	12	60%	Lancaster	51	14	27%
Beaufort	82	30	37%	Laurens	46	16	35%
Berkeley	161	54	34%	Lee	27	15	56%
Calhoun	15	3	20%	Lexington	111	43	39%
Charleston	435	126	29%	Marion	33	5	15%
Cherokee	31	14	45%	Marlboro	45	13	29%
Chester	58	22	38%	McCormick	4	3	75%
Chesterfield	37	19	51%	Newberry	40	22	55%
Clarendon	50	12	24%	Oconee	124	8	6%
Colleton	62	7	11%	Orangeburg	61	16	26%
Darlington	57	17	30%	Pickens	54	13	24%
Dillon	38	11	29%	Richland	426	138	32%
Dorchester	47	10	21%	Saluda	21	9	43%
Edgefield	27	9	33%	Spartanburg	243	69	28%
Fairfield	23	8	35%	Sumter	113	15	13%
Florence	103	28	27%	Union	3	3	100%
Georgetown	30	7	23%	Williamsburg	27	3	11%
Greenville	334	94	28%	York	135	45	33%
Adoption Region				Adoption Region			
Region I	47	6	13%	Region V	57	7	12%
Region II	94	12	13%	Region VI	178	20	11%
Region III	119	23	19%	Region VII	299	18	6%
Region IV	197	16	8%				

The Medicaid Quality Assurance System conducted follow-up staffings on sixty-nine (69) children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements during 1999. Of the children reviewed during these staffings, the Medicaid Review Specialist determined that ninety percent (90%) required residential (therapeutic) treatment services, eighty-eight percent (88%) were placed in settings where they were receiving the appropriate level and intensity of care they required and sixty-five percent (65%) were in placements appropriate for their needs.⁵

Another function of the Medicaid Quality Assurance Review System is to track Areas of Concern identified during Medicaid staffings. These Areas of Concern are noted for the purpose of focusing on problems which may impede or adversely affect the treatment of children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements and result in the recoupment of Medicaid funding. Definitions for these Areas of Concern are in Appendix F.

Table V compares the frequency and percentages of Areas of Concern identified during Medicaid staffings during 1998 and 1999. The most significant increase indicated by this data was in the category of permanency planning, up thirty-three percent (33%) from 1998. However, the frequency of the category “treatment planning” declined twelve percent (12%).

TABLE V
THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID DATA AREAS OF CONCERN
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS 1998, 1999

AREA OF CONCERN	1998		1999	
	# of AOC	% of AOC	# of AOC	% of AOC
Permanency Planning	13	17%	21	30%
Treatment Plan	30	40%	19	28%
Communication	12	16%	11	16%
Delivery of Services	13	17%	10	14%
Other	0	0%	4	6%
Discharge/Transitional Planning	2	3%	2	3%
Visitation	4	5%	2	3%
Monitoring/Medication	1	1%	0	0%
Total	75	100%	69	100%

⁵ Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. In some cases, information received was insufficient to make accurate assessments on several children from each category.

IN CONCLUSION

A WORD FROM THE CHILDREN

The most important players in the child welfare system are seldom heard. What do the children think? How do the children feel? Again this year, the Division of Foster Care Review wants to give the children a chance to be heard. Several of the following articles and poems are reprinted from South Carolina YOUth Connected, a publication of the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

"My caseworker told me we are going to find someone (a family) for you soon. To me when they told me soon, I thought they were talking about the next couple of months or the next couple of days. Then soon became a year, a year became a year and a half, then two years and so on."

Jason - in foster care for 10 years.

I Wonder

By Precious, 14, Turbeville

I wonder if somebody knows
Where the big sky really goes
Where it starts and where it ends
And if the earth and sky are friends

I wonder how the sun can play
The morning trick it does each day
Making day come out of night
Changing dark to yellow light

I wonder why I lie
In my bed and watch the sky
And feel the darkness gently creep
Around me as I go to sleep

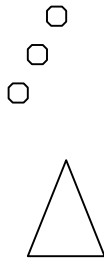
Lost Soul

By Sharmaine

You don't care
You don't share
I was told
I might have a lost soul!
Could that be me
You see I'm like that now
I really don't know how
I wish I would mold
This lost soul.

Child Abuse

By Chris



I wake up in the morning
Fear in my eyes,
When I see you,
I do what is wise

I hide under my bed
With knife in my hand,
'Cause when you strike me,
I wish you in another land,

You pick me up and
throw me to the wall,
You're the one I hate
Most of all

If you'd stop and care
about me,
My heart filled with love
Would be

"I think adoption is about a parent who would like to have a child and they can't. So they go to a foster home and find a child that they would like. They sign papers and find out about the child and they take the child home with them and teach the child manners and how to love.

Crista, 8

Getting adopted is like sitting down after standing up for a long time
Former Foster child

10 Laws of Love

By Brandon

1. Love them, for loving you.
2. Find the right person.
3. Praise God for bringing them to you.
4. Age ain't nothing to remember.
5. Love is unconditional.
6. Love yourself first.
7. Love does not hate.
8. Love is the foundation of heaven.
9. Love Jesus Christ.
10. Follow the first 9, #10 will come to you.