



FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

Lexington County

2006

(2005 Data)

A Publication of the South Carolina Governor's Office – Division of Foster Care Review

OVERVIEW

Facts About Foster Kids is intended to provide annual data about children in foster care for every county in South Carolina. It covers: **Demographics** -- how many children there are in foster care, their characteristics and whether their prevalence is increasing or decreasing; **Areas of Concern** -- legal and program shortcomings identified at monthly citizen reviews; and **Progress Measures** -- length of time in care, number of placements, achieving permanency, and recidivism rates. Information is collected from local volunteer citizen review boards that review the cases of all children who have been in foster care at least four months; each case is then reviewed every six months thereafter until the child leaves care. The 2006 edition includes complete information about children who were reviewed at least once in 2005. It also includes demographics on those children who entered foster care late in the year and were not reviewed until 2006, but does not yet incorporate them into progress measures or areas of concern.

DEMOGRAPHICS

For Lexington County, the number of foster care children reviewed has increased by nearly 22% since 2002. In 2005, the number of children entering care decreased, and the number leaving care also decreased.

Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2005, Lexington County

	2005	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	179	174	157	140	162
Change from Prior Year	+5	17	17		
Number Entering	53	66	65	28	53
Number Leaving	42	47	55	36	45

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2005, Lexington County

	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL CHILDREN	179	100%	53	100%	42	100%
Race						
African-American	41	23%	15	28%	27	64%
Caucasian	122	68%	29	55%	6	14%
Other	16	9%	9	17%	9	22%
Gender						
Male	99	55%	32	60%	26	62%
Female	80	45%	21	40%	16	38%
Age						
5 and Younger	58	33%	29	55%	5	12%
6 to 9	38	21%	11	21%	8	19%
10 to 15	45	25%	13	24%	14	33%
16 and older	38	21%			15	36%

AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2005, Review Board members held 13 meetings and 306 reviews. Of the 306 reviews held, 245 (80%) had at least one area of concern cited by the local Review Board. The most often cited legal violation was *No Timely Permanency Hearing*. The failure to hold permanency planning hearings according to time frames outlined by state and federal law unnecessarily lengthens the time children remain in foster care. The most often cited program violation was *No Progress Report*.

Frequently Cited Areas of Concern, 2002 - 2005, Lexington County				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
Legal:				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	98	79	56	56
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing	0	1	1	0
No Timely Merits Hearing	76	57	45	44
No Face to Face Contact	6	5	3	8
No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order	50	65	20	15
No Thorough Adoption Assessment/Specific Child Recruitment	13	6	29	37
Other Statutory Violations	19	19	18	18
Program:				
No Progress Report	70	35	26	58
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	45	29	29	54
No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	47	40	17	60
Interested Parties Not Invited	24	15	5	9
No Timely FCRB Hearing	14	15	1	13
No Advance Packet	21	15	5	21
Other Policy/Procedure Issues	18	25	35	32
TOTAL	501	406	290	425
Percent of Reviews with Areas of Concern	80%	76%	65%	80%

PROGRESS MEASURES

Four main indicators are used to measure progress towards better outcomes for children in foster care. For each, comparison data for the previous four years are provided.

LENGTH OF TIME IN CARE:

The longer a child is away from their home or a nurturing family environment, the more damaging it can be to the normal development of the child. For this reason, a major goal of the Review Board is to ensure that children achieve permanency as quickly as possible. In 2005, the average length of time a child spent in care was 2.8 years.

NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

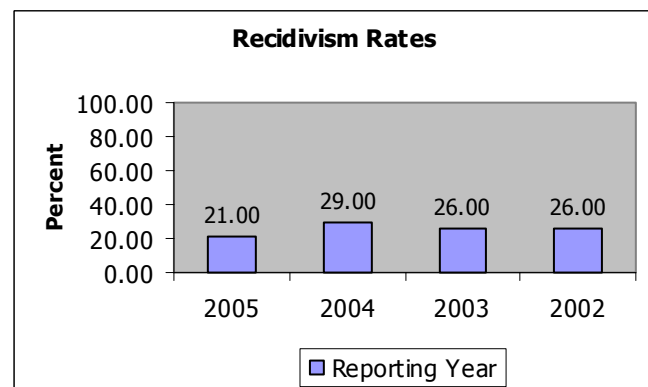
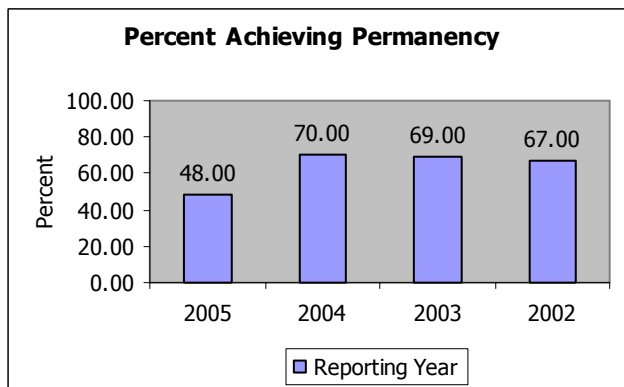
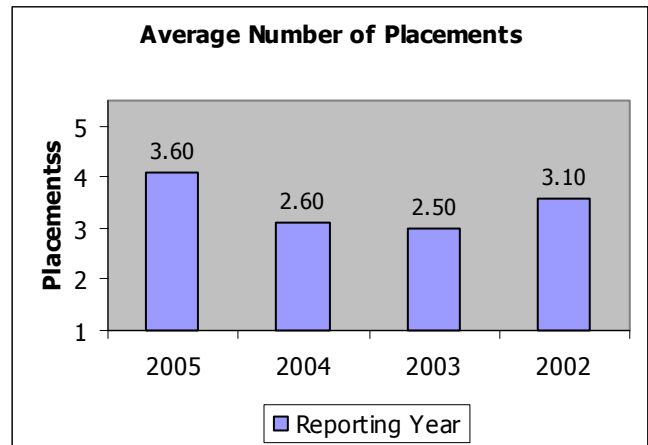
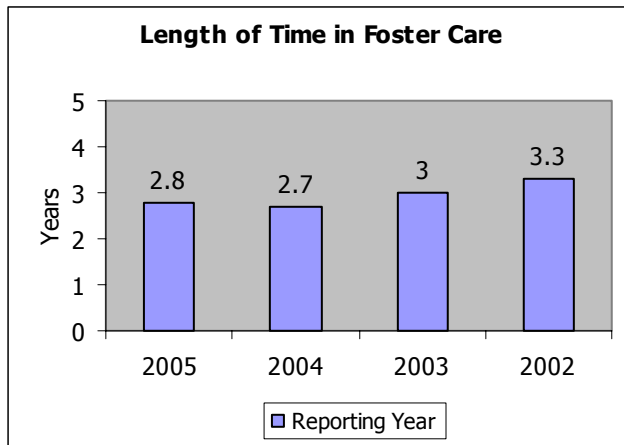
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2005, children in foster care increased to an average of 3.6 placements.

PERCENT ACHIEVING PERMANENCY:

Permanency for a child means placement with a "forever family." A child can achieve legal permanency upon leaving the foster care system either by returning home to their natural parent or by being adopted. In 2005 of the 42 children leaving care, 10 were adopted and 10 returned home to their natural parent.

RECIDIVISM RATES:

Children who re-enter care are some of the most vulnerable children in foster care because they have been in the custody of DSS more than once. In 2005, 21% of the children entering foster care in Lexington County had previously been in custody. This is an decrease from 29% in 2004. For children re-entering foster care, the previous location matters. Last year, all but one of the children re-entering care were in the custody of their parents or another relative.



Inquiries about this report and requests for copies of this and other counties' reports should be made to:
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 Comparable reports for other counties and for the state can also be found on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.govoep.state.sc.us/children/foster.htm>