



# FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

## Dorchester 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 Dorchester County, the number of foster care children reviewed decreased slightly in 2005. The number of children entering care decreased significantly, and the number leaving care increased in 2005.

Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2005, Dorchester County					
	2005	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	70	73	54	38	59
Change from Prior Year	-3	+19	+16		
Number Entering	7	20	23	11	15
Number Leaving	32	27	19	17	24

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2005, Dorchester County						
	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>ALL CHILDREN</b>	70	100%	7	100%	32	100%
<b>Race</b>						
African-American	25	36%	1	14%	8	25%
Caucasian	37	53%	6	86%	23	72%
Other	8	11%			1	3%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	40	57%			17	53%
Female	3	43%	7	100%	15	47%
<b>Age</b>						
5 and Younger	20	29%	2	28.5%	10	31%
6 to 9	10	14%	2	28.5%	6	19%
10 to 15	21	30%	3	43%	7	22%
16 and older	19	27%			9	28%

## AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2005, Review Board members held 9 meetings and 114 reviews. Of the 114 reviews held, 103 (90%) had at least one area of concern cited by the local Review Board. The most often cited legal violation was *No Timely Merits Hearing*. The most often cited program violation was *No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan*.

<b>Frequently Cited Areas of Concern, 2002 - 2005, Dorchester County</b>				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
<b>Legal:</b>				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	32	23	20	7
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing	4	6	11	1
No Timely Merits Hearing	39	37	26	9
No Face to Face Contact	18	13	12	13
No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order	17	50	20	11
No Thorough Adoption Assessment/Specific Child Recruitment	14	5	5	1
Other Statutory Violations	10	11	5	0
<b>Program:</b>				
No Progress Report	18	27	14	18
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	9	9	2	6
No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	56	70	40	19
Interested Parties Not Invited	23	9	7	7
No Timely FCRB Hearing	4	14	16	1
No Advance Packet	14	11	6	19
Other Policy/Procedure Issues	13	31	38	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Percent of Reviews with Areas of Concern</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>95%</b>

## 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 in Dorchester County decreased to 1.9 years.

### NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

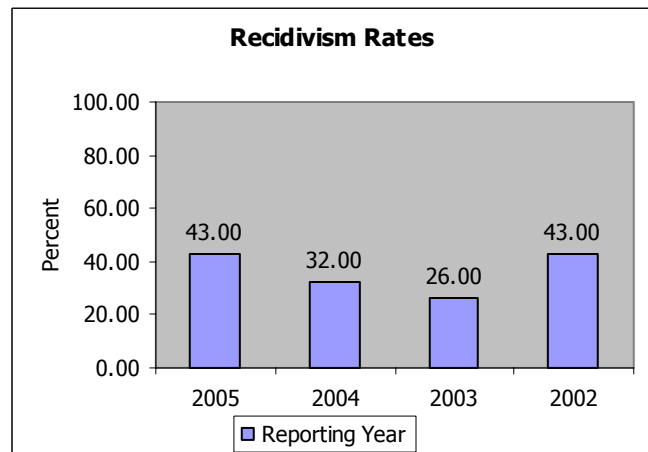
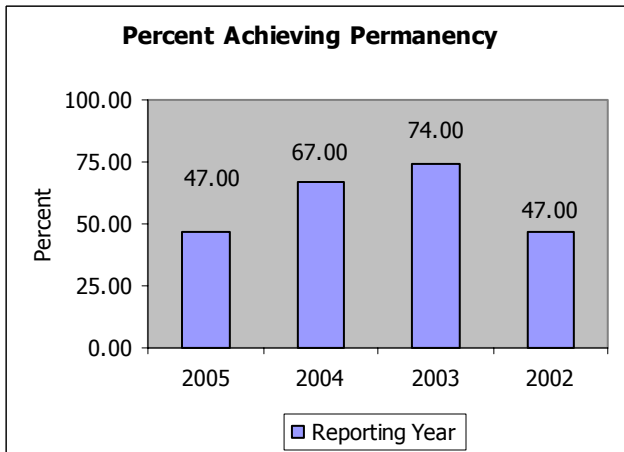
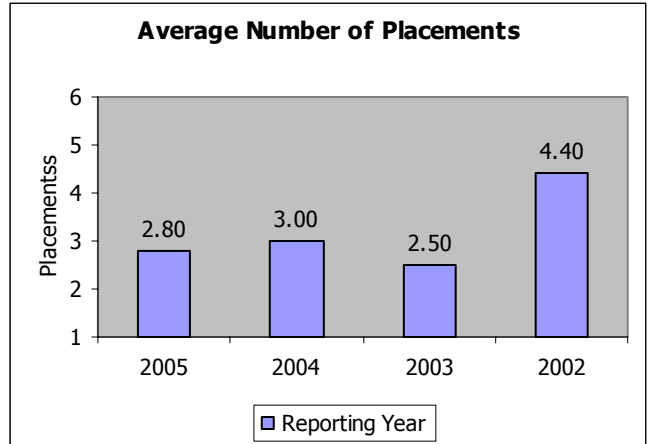
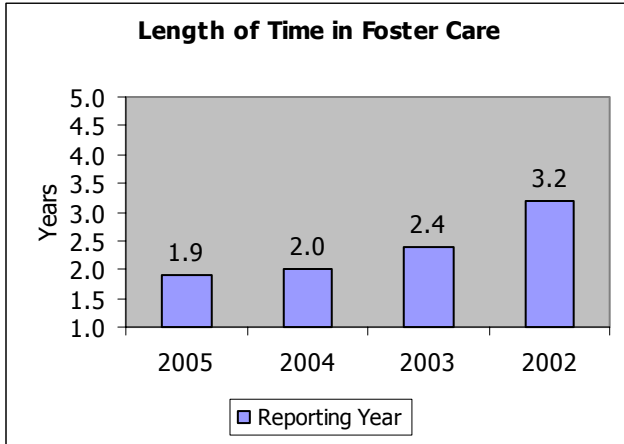
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2005, Dorchester County's average number of placements decreased to 2.8.

### 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 32 children leaving care, three were adopted and 12 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, 43% of the children entering foster care in Dorchester County had previously been in custody. This is an increase from 32% in 2004. For children re-entering foster care, the previous location matters. Last year, all of the children re-entering care were in the custody of their adoptive or natural 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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 Division of Foster Care Review, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201 Phone: (803) 734-0480 Fax: (803) 734-1223.  
 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>