



FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

Florence 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 Florence County, the number of foster care children reviewed increased in 2005. The number of children entering care increased significantly, and the number of children leaving care also increased in 2005.

Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2005, Florence County					
	2005	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	79	69	108	129	96
Change from Prior Year	+10	-39	-21		
Number Entering	22	4	5	28	15
Number Leaving	20	19	40	44	31

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2005, Florence County						
	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL CHILDREN	79	100%	22	100%	20	100%
Race						
African-American	53	67%	10	45%	9	45%
Caucasian	25	32%	12	55%	10	50%
Other	1	1%			1	5%
Gender						
Male	41	52%	11	50%	6	30%
Female	38	48%	11	50%	14	70%
Age						
5 and Younger	19	24%	10	45%	7	35%
6 to 9	4	5%	2	9%		
10 to 15	29	37%	9	41%	2	10%
16 and older	27	34%	1	5%	11	55%

AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2005, Review Board members held 10 meetings and 122 reviews. Of the 122 reviews held, 70 (57%) 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 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 current/Incomplete Case Plan*.

Frequently Cited Areas of Concern, 2002 - 2005, Florence County				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
Legal:				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	14	28	33	26
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing	4	2	3	0
No Timely Merits Hearing	25	6	9	16
No Face to Face Contact	3	4	4	12
No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order	2	0	6	9
No Thorough Adoption Assessment/Specific Child Recruitment	8	0	0	13
Other Statutory Violations	5	22	11	29
Program:				
No Progress Report	10	15	16	23
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	9	11	8	12
No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	20	9	16	27
Interested Parties Not Invited	3	1	11	5
No Timely FCRB Hearing	5	0	1	6
No Advance Packet	1	2	5	14
Other Policy/Procedure Issues	17	4	1	11
TOTAL	126	104	124	203
Percent of Reviews with Areas of Concern	57%	61%	45%	58%

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 3.2 years.

NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

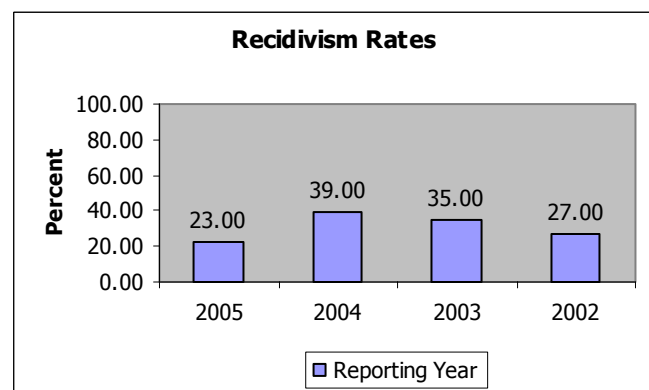
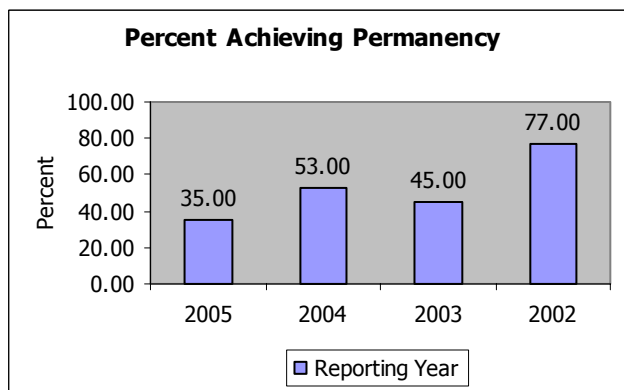
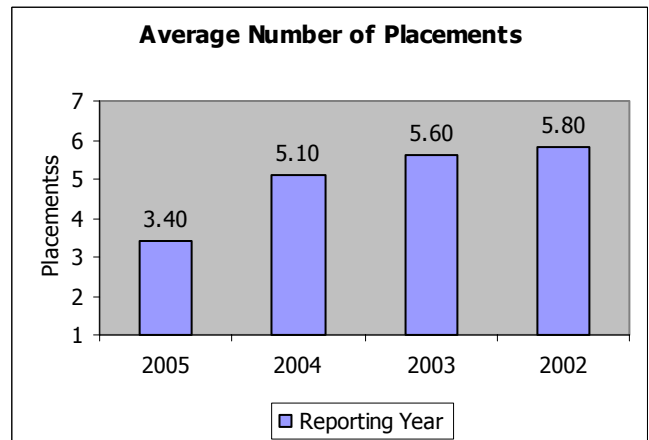
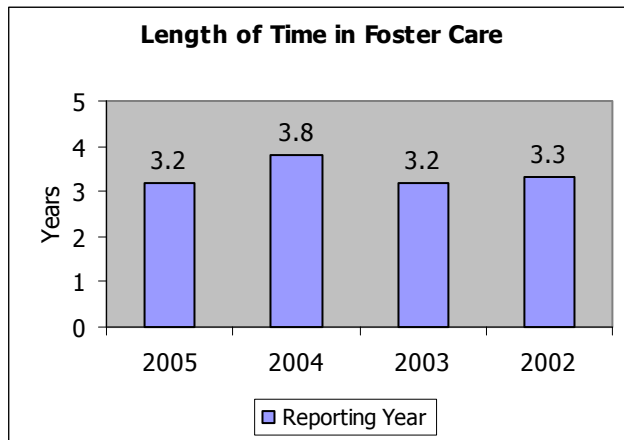
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2005, children in foster care in Florence County averaged 3.4 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 20 children leaving care, one child was adopted and six 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, 23% of the children entering foster care in Florence County had previously been in custody. This is a substantial decrease from 39% 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 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>