



FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

Barnwell County 2005

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 2005 edition includes complete information about children who were reviewed at least once in 2004. It also includes demographics on those children who entered foster care late in the year and were not reviewed until 2005, but does not yet incorporate them into progress measures or areas of concern.

DEMOGRAPHICS

For Barnwell County the number of foster care children reviewed decreased between 2004 and 2003 to 30, which is a recent low. The number of children entering care decreased slightly over previous years, and the number leaving care increased significantly in 2004.

Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2004, Barnwell County				
	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	30	36	29	32
Change from Prior Year	-6	7		
Number Entering	10	12	7	8
Number Leaving	16	5	10	10

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2004, Barnwell County						
	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL CHILDREN	30		10		16	
Race						
African-American	22	73%	5	50%	10	63%
Caucasian	6	20%	4	40%	6	37%
Other	2	7%	1	10%		
Gender						
Male	15	50%	4	40%	7	44%
Female	15	50%	6	60%	9	56%
Age						
5 and Younger	12	40%	4	40%	10	63%
6 to 9	4	13%	1	10%	3	19%
10 to 15	6	20%	3	30%	2	13%
16 and older	8	27%	2	20%	1	5%

AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2004, Review Board members held 50 reviews. Of the 50 reviews held, 70% had at least one area of concern cited by the local Review Board. The most often cited legal violations were *No Timely Permanency Planning Hearing* and *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 *Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan*.

Frequently Cited Areas of Concern, 2002 - 2004, Barnwell County			
	2004	2003	2002
<u>Legal:</u>			
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	15	5	21
No Timely Merits Hearing	7	1	
No Face to Face Contact	6	6	8
No Court Order at Review	1	4	
No Thorough Adoption Assessment		1	1
Other Statutory Issues	6	5	5
<u>Program:</u>			
No Progress Report	7	11	11
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	9	4	19
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	18	6	7
No Advance Packets	9	10	1
Interested Parties Not Invited	1	4	
No Timely FCRB Hearing	2		3
TOTAL	81	57	76

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 three 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 2004, Barnwell County reduced the average length of time in care to 1.78 years, down from a high of 3.7 years in 2002.

NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

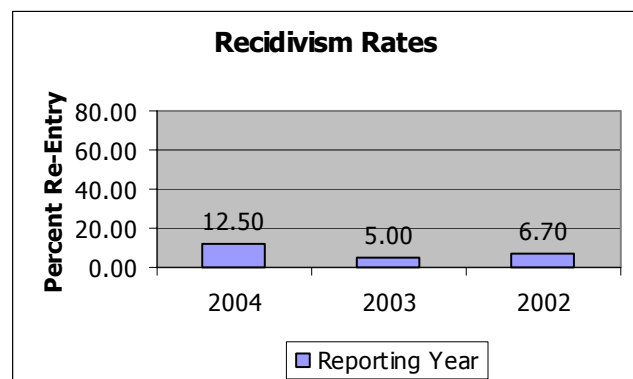
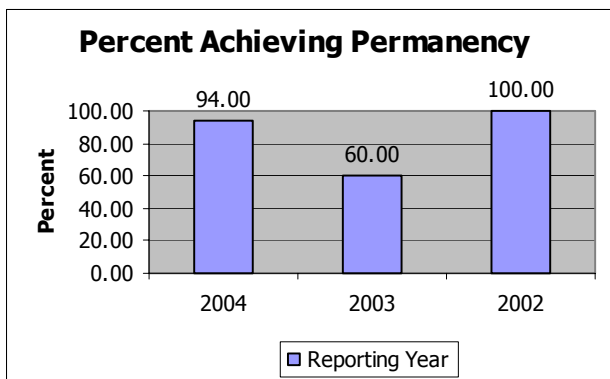
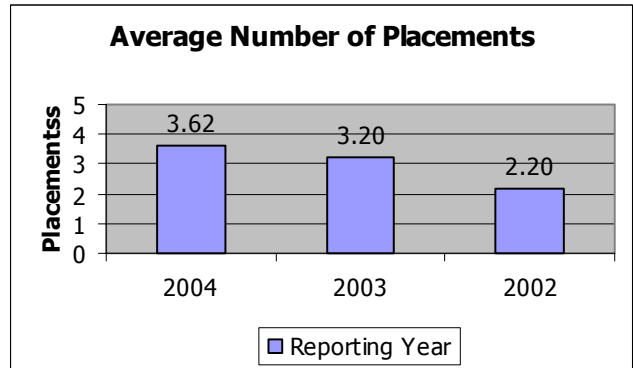
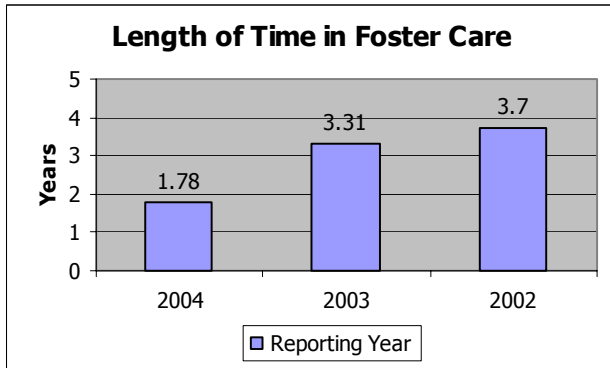
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2004, Barnwell County's average number of placements was 3.62, a 39% increase from 2002.

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 2004 of the 16 children leaving care, eight were adopted and seven 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 custody more than once. In 2004, only 12% of children entering foster care in Barnwell County had previously been in custody. This is a sharp decrease from 5% in 2003. 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:
 Lisa Vosburgh, Data and Research Manager or to Denise Barker, Division Director
 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>