



FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

Lexington County

2005

(2004 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 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 Lexington County, the number of foster care children reviewed has increased by nearly 20% since 2002. In 2004, the number of children entering care increased slightly, and the number leaving care decreased by eight.

| Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2004, Lexington County | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|---------|
| | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 | Average |
| Number of Children Reviewed | 174 | 157 | 140 | 157 |
| Change from Prior Year | 17 | 17 | | |
| Number Entering | 66 | 65 | 28 | 53 |
| Number Leaving | 47 | 55 | 36 | 46 |

| Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2004, Lexington County | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|------------------|---------|
| | Children Reviewed | | Children Entering | | Children Leaving | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| ALL CHILDREN | 174 | 100% | 66 | 100% | 47 | 100% |
| Race | | | | | | |
| African-American | 42 | 24% | 14 | 21.2% | 14 | 29.8% |
| Caucasian | 114 | 66% | 47 | 71.2% | 29 | 61.7% |
| Other | 18 | 10% | 5 | 7.6% | 4 | 8.5% |
| Gender | | | | | | |
| Male | 96 | 55% | 32 | 48.5% | 27 | 57.4% |
| Female | 78 | 45% | 34 | 51.5% | 20 | 42.6% |
| Age | | | | | | |
| 5 and Younger | 60 | 34.5% | 32 | 48.5% | 17 | 36.2% |
| 6 to 9 | 30 | 17.2% | 16 | 24.2% | 4 | 8.5% |
| 10 to 15 | 49 | 28.2% | 13 | 19.7% | 11 | 23.4% |
| 16 and older | 35 | 20.1% | 5 | 7.6% | 15 | 31.9% |

AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2004, Review Board members held 12 meetings and 299 reviews. Of the 299 reviews held, 226 (76%) 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 - 2004, Lexington County | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 |
| Legal: | | | |
| No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing | 79 | 56 | 56 |
| No Timely Probable Cause Hearing | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| No Timely Merits Hearing | 57 | 45 | 44 |
| No Face to Face Contact | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order | 65 | 20 | 15 |
| No Thorough Adoption Assessment/Specific Child Recruitment | 6 | 29 | 37 |
| Other Statutory Violations | 19 | 18 | 18 |
| Program: | | | |
| No Progress Report | 35 | 26 | 58 |
| Lack of Progress Permanency Plan | 29 | 29 | 54 |
| No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan | 40 | 17 | 60 |
| Interested Parties Not Invited | 15 | 5 | 9 |
| No Timely FCRB Hearing | 15 | 1 | 13 |
| No Advance Packet | 15 | 5 | 21 |
| Other Policy/Procedure Issues | 25 | 35 | 32 |
| TOTAL | 406 | 290 | 425 |
| Percent of Reviews with Areas of Concern | 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 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, the average length of time a child spent in care decreased to 2.7 years.

NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

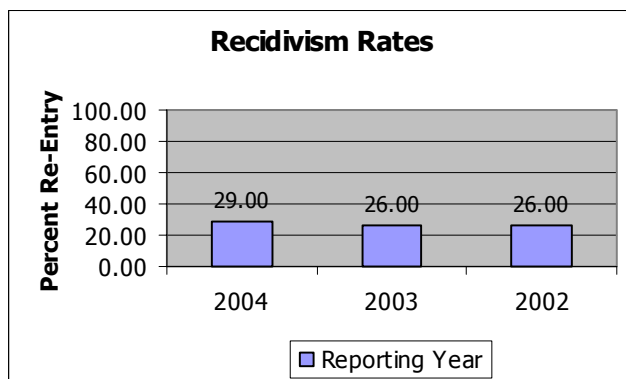
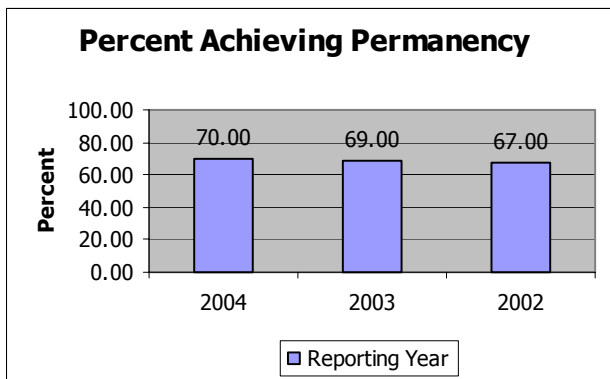
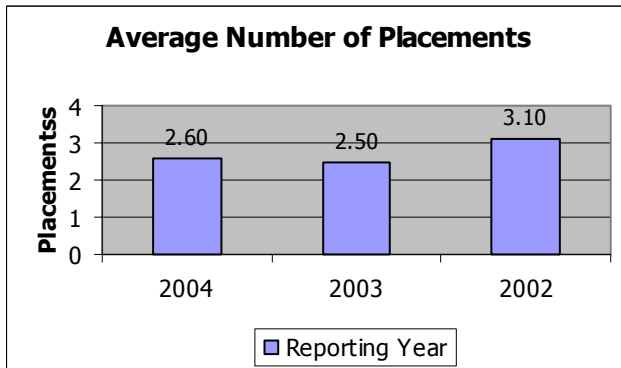
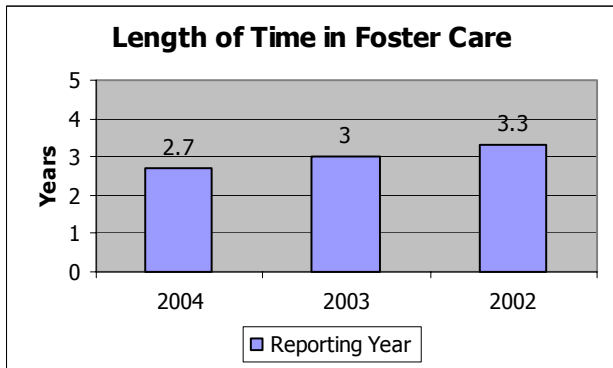
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2004, children in foster care averaged 2.6 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 2004 of the 47 children leaving care, 13 were adopted and 20 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 2004, 29% of the children entering foster care in Lexington County had previously been in custody. This is an increase from 26% in 2003. For children re-entering foster care, the previous location matters. Last year, 88% 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>