



# FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

## Darlington 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 Darlington County, the number of foster care children reviewed increased by one in 2005. The number of children entering care increased by four, and the number leaving care increased by eight in 2005.

**Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2005, Darlington County**

	2005	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	60	59	60	72	63
Change from Prior Year	+1	-1	-12		
Number Entering	18	14	13	20	16
Number Leaving	20	12	27	23	21

**Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2005, Darlington County**

	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>ALL CHILDREN</b>	60	100%	18	100%	20	100%
<b>Race</b>						
African-American	32	53.33%	11	61%	9	45%
Caucasian	23	38.33%	5	28%	11	55%
Other	5	8.33%	2	11%		
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	35	58%	10	56%	15	75%
Female	25	42%	8	44%	5	25%
<b>Age</b>						
5 and Younger	18	30%	9	50%	10	50%
6 to 9	11	18.33%	3	17%	2	10%
10 to 15	23	38.33%	5	28%	4	20%
16 and older	8	13.33%	1	5%	4	20%

## AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2005, Review Board members held 12 meetings and 85 reviews. Of the 85 reviews held, 50 (59%) had at least one area of concern cited by the local Review Board. The most often cited legal violation was *No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance with Court Order*. The most often cited program violations were *No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan* and *No Progress Report*.

<b>Frequently Cited Areas of Concern, 2002 - 2005, Darlington County</b>				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
<b>Legal:</b>				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	4	6	7	4
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing				
No Timely Merits Hearing	13	7	7	17
No Face to Face Contact		7		
No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order	14	15	21	6
No Thorough Adoption Assessment/Specific Child Recruitment	4	10	3	
Other Statutory Violations	5	8	9	3
<b>Program:</b>				
No Progress Report	17	15	7	11
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	1	10	10	3
No Current/Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	17	38	13	4
Interested Parties Not Invited	2	4	3	1
No Timely FCRB Hearing	1	3		4
No Advance Packet	1	3	5	
Other Policy/Procedure Issues	8	17	15	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Percent of Reviews with Areas of Concern</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>40%</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 Darlington County was 3.3 years.

### NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

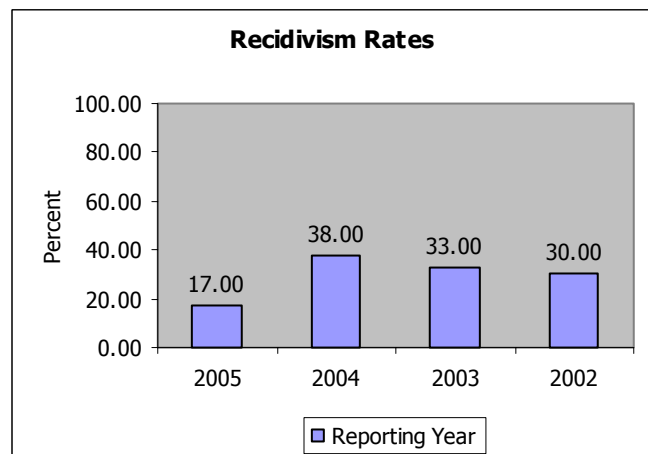
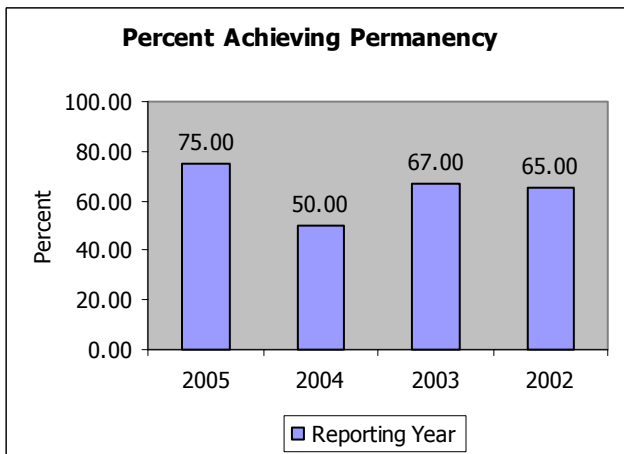
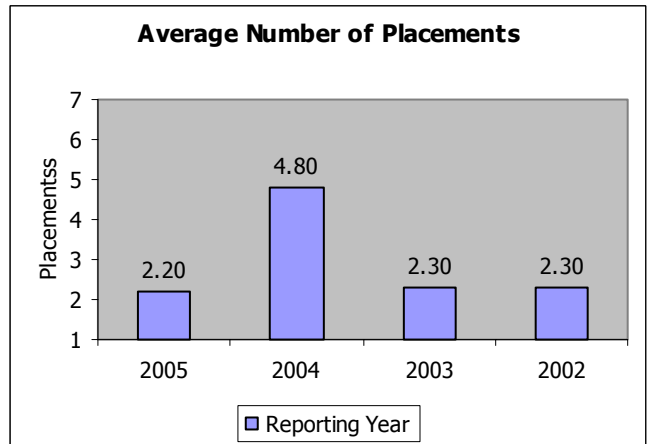
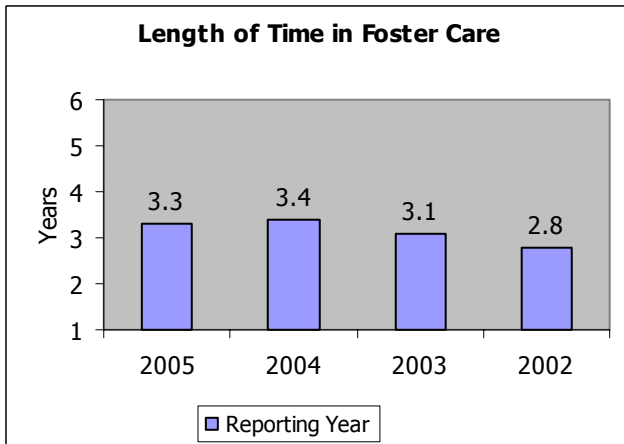
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. In 2005, Darlington County's average number of placements was 2.2.

### 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, no children were adopted and fifteen were 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, 17% of the children entering foster care in Darlington County had previously been in custody. This is a decrease from 38% in 2004. For children re-entering foster care, the previous location matters. In 2005, 67% 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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 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>