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FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS South Carolina

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Download date	2024-10-13 05:30:43
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10827/16269



FACTS ABOUT FOSTER KIDS

South Carolina

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 South Carolina, the number of foster care children reviewed increased slightly in 2005. The number of children entering care has increased by 19% since 2002, and the number leaving care decreased slightly in 2005.

Children in Foster Care, 2002 – 2005, South Carolina					
	2005	2004	2003	2002	Average
Number of Children Reviewed	4,853	4,802	4,812	4,858	4,831
Change from Prior Year	+51	-10	46		
Number Entering	1,751	1,695	1,604	1,412	1,615
Number Leaving	1,525	1,559	1,448	1,639	1,543

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care, 2005, South Carolina						
	Children Reviewed		Children Entering		Children Leaving	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL CHILDREN	4,853	100%	1,751	100%	1,525	100%
Race						
African-American	2,378	49%	646	37%	728	47.7%
Caucasian	2,126	44%	811	46%	696	45.7%
Other	349	7%	294	17%	101	6.6%
Gender						
Male	2,461	51%	846	48%	744	48.8%
Female	2,392	49%	905	52%	781	51.2%
Age						
5 and Younger	1,427	29.4%	820	47%	472	31%
6 to 9	759	15.7%	289	16%	265	17.4%
10 to 15	1,584	32.6%	528	30%	330	21.6%
16 and older	1,083	22.3%	114	7%	458	30%

AREAS OF CONCERN

In 2005, Review Board members held 431 meetings and 8,317 reviews. Of the reviews held, 5,163 (62%) had at least one area of concern cited by the local Review Board. The most often cited legal violation was *No Timely Permanency Plan 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 - 2005, South Carolina				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
Legal:				
No Timely Permanency Plan Hearing	1,180	1,306	1,242	1,132
No Timely Probable Cause Hearing	114	154	160	88
No Timely Merits Hearing	936	844	925	948
No Face to Face Contact	298	583	510	644
No Court Order at Review/Non-Compliance w/Court Order	907	1,011	710	483
No Thorough Adoption Assessment	340	391	251	261
Adoption Complaint Not Filed Timely	18	45	30	27
Other Statutory Violations	591	756	674	533
Program:				
No Progress Report	1,548	1,468	1,304	1,173
Lack of Progress Permanency Plan	886	1,105	965	812
Incomplete or No Case Plan/Inappropriate Case Plan	1,116	1,006	784	855
Interested Parties Not Invited	347	365	296	286
No Timely FCRB Hearing	229	223	198	183
No Advance Packet	507	440	477	328
Other Policy/Procedure Issues	799	1,009	799	565
TOTAL	9,816	10,706	9,325	8,318

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 decreased slightly to 3.6 years.

NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS:

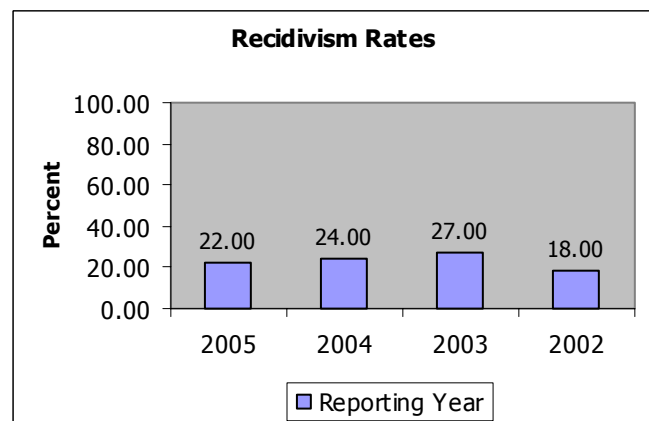
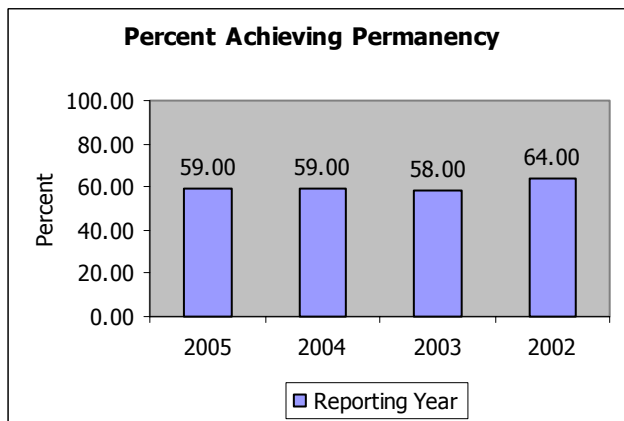
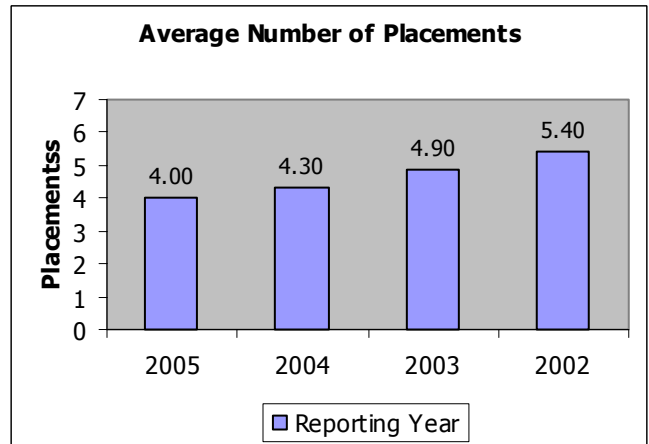
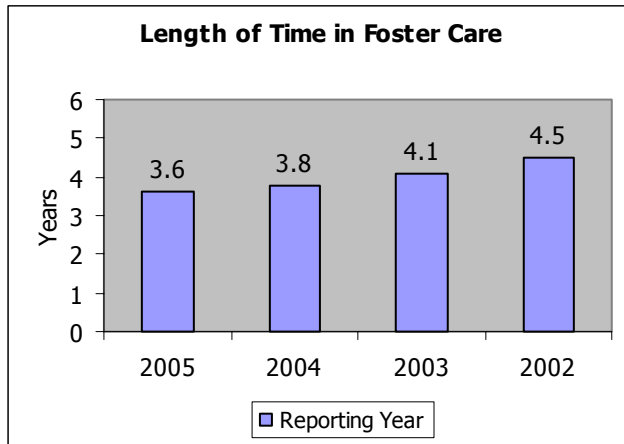
Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child. Additional changes in placement once in the foster care system can be detrimental to children's development, affecting their ability to learn, establish relationships and develop as stable, secure individuals. The number of placements for a foster child continues to decline with an average of 4.0 in 2005.

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 1,525 children leaving care, 27% were adopted and 32% 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, of the 1,751 entering foster care, 22% had previously been in foster care. Re-entries have consistently declined since 2003. For children re-entering foster care, the previous location matters. In 2005, 90% 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>