County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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June 12, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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From: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

APRIL 18, 2006 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #79.1: IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES 2006-07 BUDGET REQUEST FOR NEW STAFF

On April 18, 2006, the Board instructed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in conjunction with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), to:

1. Report back two weeks prior to the June Budget Deliberations with an explanation on how the overall impact of the proposed 466 additional staff will be measured, in addition to all other issues raised;
2. Report with basic numbers and not necessarily with percentages or averages, on how many children are getting out of the foster care system for the increased funding being provided for the proposed 466 additional staff positions; and
3. The feasibility of approving a portion of the staff items in June, and revisiting the need for the remaining items at mid-fiscal year, in January 2007.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, DCFS established as its three outcome goals for the abused and neglected children under its supervision and their families, improved safety and permanency; and a reduced reliance on detention. The purpose of the request for 466 additional staff for FY 2006-07 is to enable DCFS to continue realizing significant improvements in its Safety and Permanency outcomes. For the past number of years, DCFS has realized much improvement in outcomes for children and families within its existing resources. However, DCFS is confident that the addition of staff resources will enable the acceleration of even greater gains through full and/or countywide implementation of its successful strength-based, family-focused initiatives, which ensure a network of support for children as well as for the adults who care for them.

The specific Permanency and Safety goals, for which DCFS targets improvements by expanding its existing programs through additional staff, are:

(1) **PERMANENCY**:
(a) A reduction of the number of children/youth in Long-Term Foster Care;
(b) A reduction of the time that children/youth spend in out-of-home care; and
(2) **SAFETY**: An increase in overall child safety and a reduction in the rate of abuse and neglect of children/youth in relative out-of-home care.

OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC PERMANENCY IMPROVEMENT GOALS

The Department's goal is to provide adequate services to children and families that will enable children to remain safely in or return back to their homes; or to achieve timely permanency. The main issue of concern related to permanency is in shortening timelines to family reunification or, alternatively, to adoption or legal guardianship.

GOAL: A Reduction of the Number of Children/Youth in Long-Term Foster Care

Although family reunification is the department's first permanency option, when a child is not able to safely reunify with his/her family of origin within a specific period of time as dictated by State Child Welfare laws, DCFS is mandated to establish alternative permanency for the child. Historically, the Department established alternative permanency for children and youth through adoption, legal guardianship and long-term foster care (LTFC).

There is now a national awareness that too many youth are languishing in expensive out-of-home care and exiting dependency with poor outcomes across the country. As a result, in an effort to address this reality in L.A. County, the Department has moved away from defining LTFC as an alternative permanency option in favor of establishing a much higher level of permanency for the children and youth under its supervision through adoption or legal guardianship.

The following 5-year data summary will demonstrate both progress to date in reducing the number of children/youth under LTFC; and the anticipated accelerated progress that the additional staff resources included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget will enable. For greater detail, please see Attachment "A" of this report.

LTFC	July 2001	March 2006	Progress - July 2001 to March 2006 (57 months)	Projected December 2007	Projected Progress – April 2006 to December 2007 (21 months)
Number of Children/Youth	20,775	11,970	42% Reduction	9,998	17% Additional Reduction
Number and Percentage of Children/Youth Under Age 12	11,417 (55%)	5,133 (43%)	55% Reduction	3,529 (35%)	31% Additional Reduction

GOAL: A Reduction of the Time that Children/Youth Spend in Out-of-Home Care

Historically, the Department operated through a series of sequential service delivery phases throughout the life of a case, beginning from initial detention to termination of supervision. Since 2003, the Department has moved away from the sequential model in favor of a model of simultaneous service delivery, in which the roles of responsible staff have changed. This operational shift ultimately began the reduction in the time that children spend in out-of-home placement; and shortened the timelines for children and youth to either reunify with their families of origin or to attain alternative permanency.

The following 5-year data summary will demonstrate both progress to date in shortening out-of-home care time and the anticipated accelerated progress that the additional staff resources included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget will enable. For greater detail, please see Attachment "B" of this report.

	July 2001	March 2006	Progress - July 2001 to March 2006 (57 months)	Projected December 2007	Projected Progress – April 2006 to December 2007 (21 months)
Median Number of Days in Out-of-Home Care	1,246 Days	609 Days	51% Reduction	399 Days	35% Additional Reduction

OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENT GOAL

The Department's mandate is the protection of children who have been abused and neglected by their caregivers. The main issue of concern related to safety is the need to reduce the rates of child fatalities and abuse/neglect in out-of-home care.

GOAL: An Increase in Overall Child Safety and a Reduction in the Rate of Abuse and Neglect of Children/Youth in Relative Out-of-Home Care

As of April 2006, DCFS supervises 20,713 children and youth in out-of-home placements. Of these:

- 11,038 (54%) are placed in the homes of their relatives or non-related extended family members;
- 5,899 (28%) are placed in Foster Family Agency-certified homes;
- 2,071 (10%) are placed in State-licensed foster homes or small family homes;
- 1,705 (8%) are placed in State-licensed group homes.

The following 5-year data summary will demonstrate both progress to date in reducing the rates of abuse and/or neglect in out-of-home care; and the anticipated accelerated progress that the additional staff resources included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget will enable. It is important to note that, until July 2005, DCFS did not track abuse in relative out-of-home care separately from abuse in all out-of-home care facilities.

Therefore, data prior to July 2005 may not be consistent with that which is currently collected. For greater detail, please see Attachment "C" of this report.

	CY 2001	CY 2005	Progress - January 2001 to December 2005 (60 months)	Projected December 2007	Projected Progress – January 2006 to December 2007 (24 months)
Number of Children/Youth Abused in Relative Out-of-Home Care	303	282	7% Reduction	261	8% Additional Reduction

DCFS STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In order to realize improvements in safety and permanency and a reduction in reliance on detention, DCFS has identified five (5) departmental strategies. These are:

- Point of Engagement
- Concurrent Planning Redesign
- Permanency Partners Program
- Team Decision Making
- Structured Decision Making

Through the successes of these strength-based, family-focused strategies that were implemented within its existing resources, DCFS has been able to achieve the safety and permanency improvements summarized above. However, although some of these strategies are fully implemented and operational countywide, DCFS proposes that accelerated continued improvements in safety and permanency require full implementation and/or countywide expansion of all of the strategies through the additional resources included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget.

Continued Improvements in Permanency

Of the departmental strategies above, Team Decision Making is utilized as a critical component of Concurrent Planning Redesign and Permanency Partners Program. These programs share the goal of achieving a reduced reliance on out-of-home care by returning children home or into an alternate legal permanent home more quickly, thus decreasing the time it takes to achieve legal permanency.

ADDITIONAL TEAM DECISION MAKING (TDM) STAFF: The intent of TDM is to ensure that case-related decisions at various points throughout the life of a case are made based upon adequate information from a child's family, his/her support systems and community partners. Additionally, TDM is utilized to improve service planning and access in order to mitigate risk and safety factors. Nationally reported TDM outcomes have included fewer replacements and faster reunifications as a result of greater immediate access to individualized services.

Existing departmental resources currently allow for TDM meetings when a child is at risk of detention from his/her home. However, TDM can offer solutions that result in greater placement stability when utilized throughout the life of a case, thus decreasing the likelihood that a child will languish in foster care, i.e., when a child is at risk of out-of-home placement disruption, when children are returning home and/or when there are proposed changes in a child's permanency plan.

ADDITIONAL CONCURRENT PLANNING REDESIGN (CPR) STAFF: While concurrent planning policies had been in place in DCFS since becoming law in 1997, children continued to remain in care far too long. Under the CPR pilots implemented in 2004 and 2005, DCFS concurrently develops and implements an appropriate alternative permanency plan for a child while departmental reunification efforts are simultaneously underway. When adoption is the appropriate alternative plan, CPR is initiated early in the life of the case with the intent of having the adoption home study completed prior to the Termination of Parental Rights hearing, thus decreasing the time between Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption Finalization. To ensure consistency and continuity for children and families, the case-carrying Children's Social Worker remains in full charge of case management services through to adoption finalization and termination of jurisdiction. However, to ensure a reduction in the child's time in out-of home care and toward permanency, the Adoption Social Worker enters the case at an earlier stage and assumes full responsibility for all adoption-related activities.

In Calendar Year 2005, DCFS finalized the adoptions of 2,151 children. Of these, 39 children were serviced under the CPR Pilot. For the 2,112 non-CPR adoption cases, the average amount of time between the child's entry into out-of-home care to adoption finalization was 50.3 months. However, for the 39 CPR cases, the average time was 35.6 months (a 29.2% decrease).

ADDITIONAL PERMANENCY PARTNERS PROGRAM (P-3) STAFF: P-3 is an innovative program that aids children ages 12 and older under LTFC in exiting to permanency. In 2004, the initial P-3 pilot involving a sample of 50 youth was conducted in the DCFS Lakewood Regional Office by the Consortium for Children through a contract with the California Department of Social Services. Prior to the development of P-3, all 50 youths may have languished foster care with virtually no chance of legal permanency. However, with P-3 services, 21 of the 50 participating youth (42%) gained an improved potential to exit dependency into a more stable and brighter future. Of the 50 youth:

- 2 youth (4%) returned home;
- 1 youth (2%) is waiting for his adoption to be finalized;
- 4 youth (8%) have had Legal Guardianships granted;
- 2 youth (4%) have court dates set for Legal Guardianship;
- 10 youth (20%) signed mentorship agreements; and
- 2 youth (4%) stepped down from group home care into the home of relatives.

Based on the lessons learned through the initial pilot, DCFS expanded the P-3 program and utilized retired DCFS staff to shift from a contracted to an internal program. To date, the expanded P-3 program is beginning to realize successful exits of older youth to legally permanency. Based on January 2006 data, of the 515 youth currently receiving P-3 services, 57 (11%) have been paired with a mentor; and 148 (29%) have a newly implemented permanency plan. Of these 148 youth with a permanency plan:

- 36 (24%) reunified or are in the process of reunification with one or more parent;
- 43 (29%) are in the process of adoption; and
- 69 (47%) have been appointed a legal guardian or were in the process of having a guardian appointed.

DCFS anticipates that the additional resources included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget will enable the Department to expand P-3 services to 2000 youth by July 2007, resulting in 580 youth (29%) having legally permanent plans activated; and 1,420 youth (71%) being paired with mentors.

Continued Improvements in Safety

As of April 2006, DCFS supervises 11,038 children and youth who are placed in the homes of relative caregivers. Additionally, 8,291 children and youth are under the KinGAP program, a financial relationship between relative caregivers and DCFS that does not include departmental supervision. The expansion of TDM, CPR and P-3 increases the utilization of relative and non-relative extended family caregivers as desired permanency placement resources for children.

ADDITIONAL KINSHIP SUPPORT STAFF: The Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and Assembly Bill 1695 mandate that the homes of relative and non-relative extended family members must meet the same standards as those of licensed foster homes pursuant to the State's Community Care Licensing provisions. As a result, relative and non-relative extended family caregivers require increased departmental support to meet and maintain ASFA standards.

The DCFS Kinship Support Division staff work in collaboration with regional staff and specialized programs to:

- Assess a potential relative and non-relative extended family caregiver's availability and suitability as a kin placement resource;
- Match the child's needs with the caregiver's abilities;
- Assess the ongoing safety of children in relative care; and
- Provide the necessary support and guidance to caregivers to prevent abuse and/or neglect of children in relative care.

ADDITIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF: Working in conjunction with the County's Department of Human Resources, as well as a coalition of County employees and Union representatives, DCFS voluntarily embarked upon a Performance Evaluation Revision Pilot Program for Children's Social Workers (CSWs). This new and improved performance evaluation system is based on work plans that identify the critical services to be delivered and relevant strategies to reach desired goals. The evaluation criteria are tied directly to the work that is essential to the department's outcome goals of reducing reliance on detentions and timelines to permanency, and increasing the safety of children.

DCFS will launch the new CSW Performance Evaluation system during upcoming months. The evaluation system emphasizes meeting timelines and clearly expressing work place expectations and goals to employees. The work plan will equip managers with the tools needed to detect training needs and to improve individual worker performance and accountability. Tailoring the evaluation instrument specifically for the classification will improve the quality of the evaluation forms and make the process more effective. The new system will make the performance evaluation process more meaningful for workers and managers in terms of how their work relates to achieving improvements in departmental outcome measures.

PLAN TO PHASE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF CONCURRENT PLANNING REDESIGN STAFF

In April 2006, the Board approved interim ordinance authority for the hiring of 301 of the 466 staff in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget. We have reviewed the possibility of staggering the hiring of the remaining 165 staff, the largest portion of which constitutes the staffing necessary to ensure full countywide implementation of CPR.

More than half of the requested additional positions for CPR expansion require a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. Historically, MSW graduates are a highly valued resource throughout the County, State and nation; and there is much competition by employers to hire MSWs. The optimal time to hire MSWs in large numbers is upon graduation, typically July and August. If DCFS does not hire the full complement immediately upon graduation, MSW recruitment will be difficult and significantly delay full CPR expansion.

Therefore, after much consideration and review of different staffing configurations, DCFS believes that the Department's ability to roll out CPR successfully would be substantially compromised without Board approval to fill 108 MSW positions, of which 93 are CSWs and 15 are SCSWs, on July 1, 2006. For the remaining 57 non-MSW and support positions, hiring authority in November 2006 is feasible. However, the staggered hiring schedule will effect the structure of CPR roll-out.

Several components of CPR roll-out can commence with the hiring of the 108 MSWs. The remainder of the roll-out to all 18 DCFS offices will extend through March 2007, as follows: In addition to the 5 DCFS offices that have already piloted and implemented

CPR, by August 2006, 5 additional DCFS offices will implement CPR utilizing the 60 CPR staff that the Board approved in April 2006. The remaining 8 DCFS offices will implement CPR in two phases, the first phase utilizing the 108 MSWs; and the second phase utilizing the remaining staff allocated in November 2006. Full countywide CPR implementation will be completed by March 2007.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The full implementation of these strength-based, family-focused initiatives will ensure a network of support for the children and adults who care for them and is consistent with the County's Strategic Plan Goal 5 (Children and Families' Well-Being). We are confident that the staff included in the FY 2006-07 Proposed County Budget will improve DCFS' ability to make the best decisions about children and families, avoid unnecessary placements and provide timely permanency for dependent children. The additional staff will allow DCFS to realize continued significant improvements in its outcomes for children and families.

For any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 351-5600; or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

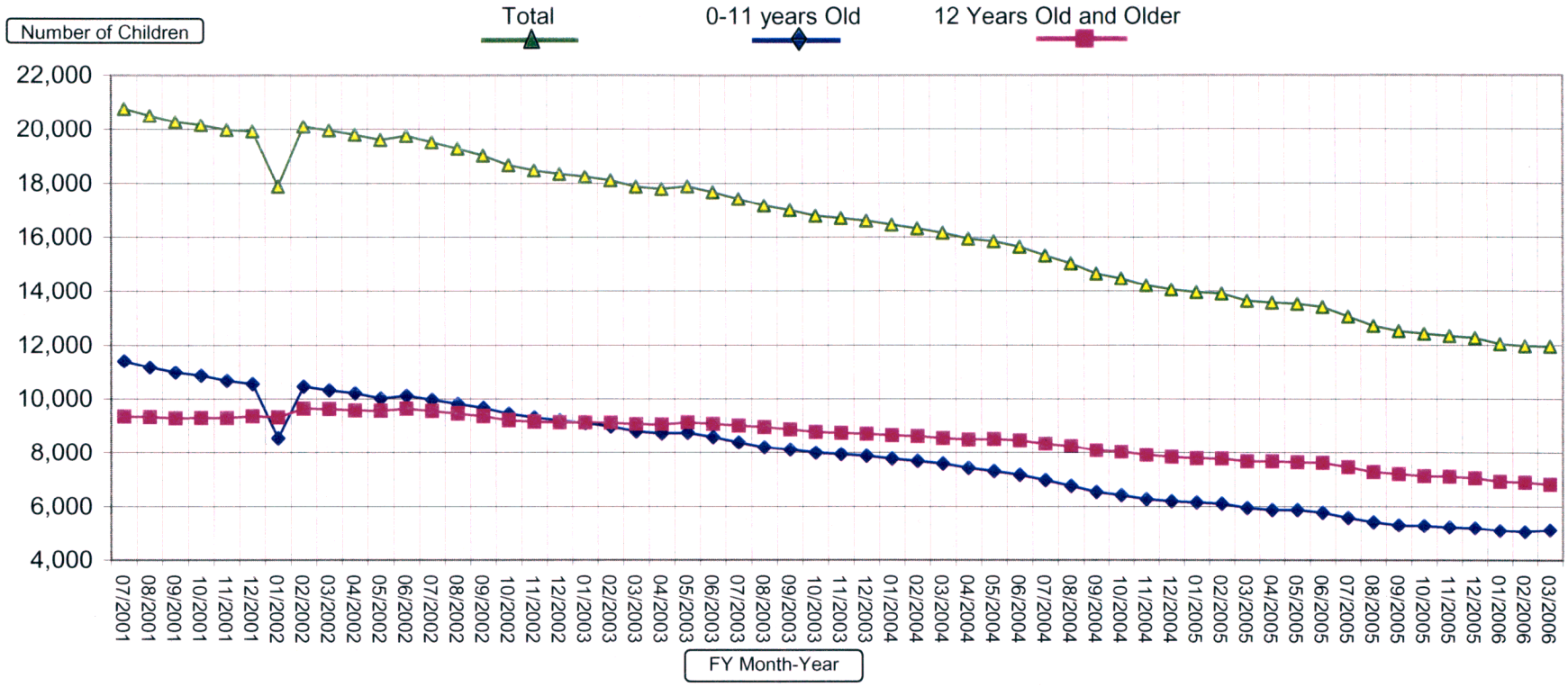
DS:JS:MHM:aw

Attachments

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Number of Children in Long Term Foster Care

Attachment A

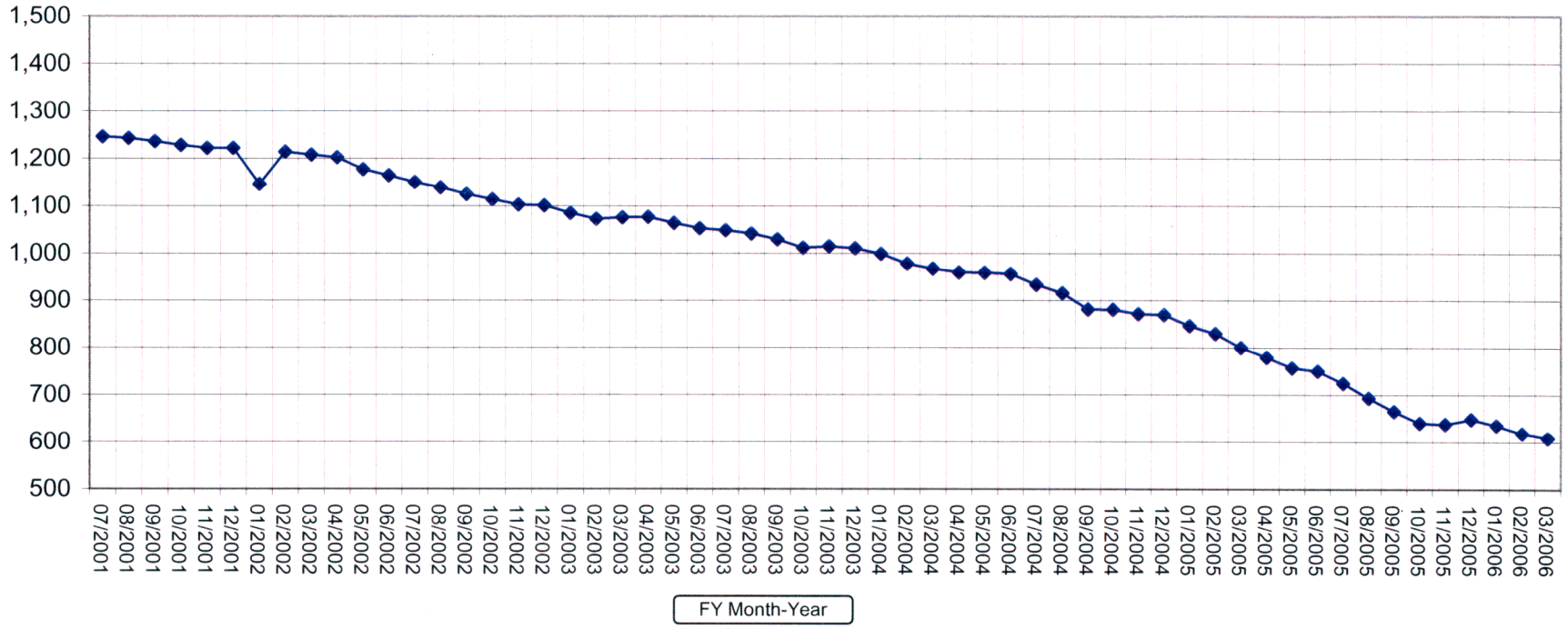


FY-Age / Month	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
FY 01-02												
0-11 Years Old	11,417	11,175	10,988	10,861	10,672	10,558	8,547	10,457	10,322	10,214	10,023	10,114
12 Years Old and Over	9,358	9,340	9,293	9,304	9,309	9,369	9,331	9,649	9,634	9,579	9,577	9,645
Total	20,775	20,515	20,281	20,165	19,981	19,927	17,878	20,106	19,956	19,793	19,600	19,759
FY 02-03												
0-11 Years Old	9,966	9,819	9,665	9,454	9,316	9,208	9,113	8,983	8,804	8,726	8,745	8,587
12 Years Old and Over	9,557	9,466	9,364	9,215	9,170	9,141	9,146	9,131	9,083	9,071	9,146	9,094
Total	19,523	19,285	19,029	18,669	18,486	18,349	18,259	18,114	17,887	17,797	17,891	17,681
FY 03-04												
0-11 Years Old	8,390	8,202	8,114	7,997	7,942	7,880	7,779	7,686	7,593	7,437	7,314	7,174
12 Years Old and Over	9,030	8,973	8,887	8,796	8,763	8,725	8,679	8,640	8,564	8,509	8,533	8,476
Total	17,420	17,175	17,001	16,793	16,705	16,605	16,458	16,326	16,157	15,946	15,847	15,650
FY 04-05												
0-11 Years Old	6,980	6,771	6,549	6,428	6,282	6,201	6,156	6,121	5,962	5,887	5,886	5,783
12 Years Old and Over	8,350	8,267	8,111	8,051	7,941	7,863	7,812	7,793	7,685	7,692	7,656	7,639
Total	15,330	15,038	14,660	14,479	14,223	14,064	13,968	13,914	13,647	13,579	13,542	13,422
FY 05-06												
0-11 Years Old	5,594	5,436	5,315	5,295	5,239	5,204	5,108	5,067	5,133			
12 Years Old and Over	7,475	7,291	7,223	7,140	7,119	7,073	6,945	6,914	6,837			
Total	13,069	12,727	12,538	12,435	12,358	12,277	12,053	11,981	11,970			

In August 2004, DCFS changed its method of counting the number of children in out-of-home placement to exclude children in Guardian homes. These children already achieved permanency.

Median Number of Days in Care

Attachment B

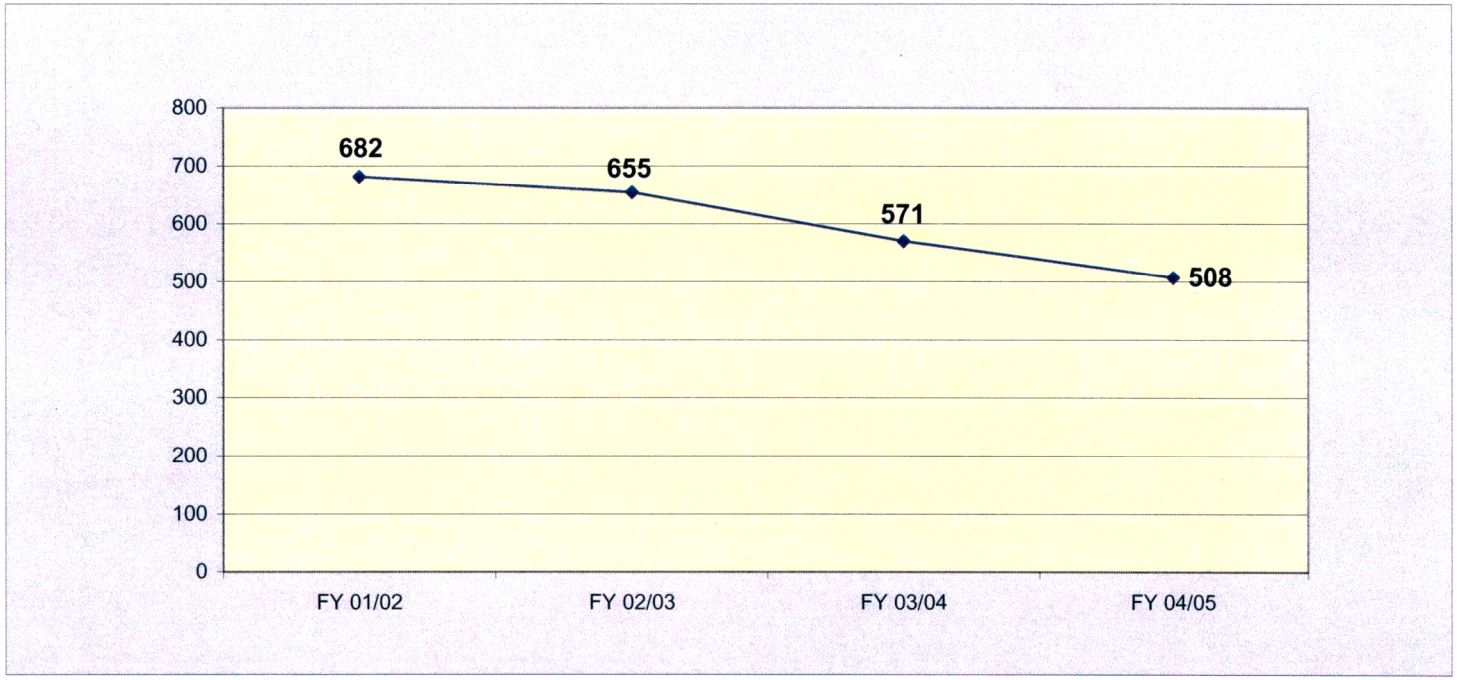


FY- Median Days / Month	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
FY 01-02 Median Days	1,246	1,243	1,236	1,228	1,222	1,222	1,146	1,214	1,208	1,202	1,177	1,164
FY 02-03 Median Days	1,150	1,139	1,125	1,114	1,103	1,101	1,085	1,073	1,076	1,077	1,064	1,053
FY 03-04 Median Days	1,049	1,042	1,030	1,012	1,015	1,011	999	978	968	960	959	957
FY 04-05 Median Days	934	916	882	881	872	870	847	830	801	780	758	751
FY 05-06 Median Days	725	694	666	641	639	649	636	619	609			

The Median number of days in foster care is taking the number of children in out-of-home care and computing the number of days each child is in placement. To determine the median number, divide the higher number of the sample by the lower number of the sample. Almost have the population will have values higher than the median, half will have lower.

Number of Children Abused in Out-of-Home Care

Attachment C



	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
FY 01/02	89	54	58	52	58	43	78	65	50	44	47	44	682
FY 02/03	56	55	67	61	42	63	63	40	54	62	42	50	655
FY 03/04	56	55	45	42	37	41	40	40	64	58	52	41	571
FY 04/05	34	43	48	22	36	32	49	60	57	37	43	47	508
FY 05/06	35	37	31	39	27	27	45	28					269

* Abuse in Foster Care figures are for the following placement types: FH, FFA, RH, SFH