

FOSTER CARE OVERVIEW

November 2015

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015
5,190	5,303	5,719	6,167	6,517

- There are two numbers that influence the total number of children in out-of-home placement—the number of those entering the system (removals) and the number of those exiting the system (exits) to permanency: reintegration, adoption, emancipation, custodianship/guardianship, or transfer (to KDOC-JS or tribal authority). In order to see a decrease, or no increase, in the total number of children in foster care, the number of exits must equal or exceed the number of entries.
- The average number of children entering foster case in a given month has held steady for the past two fiscal years:

SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015
284	302	331	317	317

- However, over the past four years, the average number of those exiting foster care on a given month has not kept pace with the number of those entering, therefore, the increase in the number of children in foster care.

SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015
283	287	285	283	286

- In September 2015, 377 children were removed from their homes. During the same month, 278 children exited foster care.
- The most frequent abuse/neglect reason or removal into foster care is physical neglect.
- Approximately 32 percent of children are placed with a relative, 58 percent are in foster homes, 5 percent are in a group home setting.
- More than 57 percent of children in foster care will be reintegrated with their family.
- There are currently 1,056 children awaiting adoption (September 2015). These are children who have had parental rights terminated on both parents, have a permanency goal of adoption and are not yet in a pre-adoptive home placement. (33 percent).
- Children ages 1 to 3 comprise the largest age group of children in out-of-home placement (20.7 percent). The median age of a child in foster care is eight.
- The average length of stay in foster care for those who are reintegrated is nine months; for those adopted, 33 months. This has held steady for the past four years.
- During fiscal year 2015, 765 adoptions were finalized. 54 percent of children have a foster parent as an adoptive resource. The adoption finalization number is a 99 adoptions increase over the previous fiscal year..

ROLES IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

- The Kansas Department for Children and Families does not remove children from their homes. DCF makes a recommendation to the court which issues the order for removal.
- It's always DCF's goal to keep children in their homes, with their families, when that is a safe option. DCF works to minimize trauma on children.
- DCF is one entity within the State's child welfare system. Children remain in foster care due to multiple reasons. DCF strives to work expeditiously to help them achieve permanency.
- Per statute, law enforcement shall take a child into police protective custody (PPC) if the officer reasonably believes child will be harmed if not immediately removed from residence where child is found; has probable cause to believe child is a missing person; or reasonably believes child is a victim of HT. Hearing is held no later than 72 hours after child is taken into PPC. The child is not in DCF custody at this time.
- The county or district prosecuting attorney files the petition alleging child is a child in need of care (CINC).
- The judge of the appropriate court controls the process pursuant to the CINC Code. The judge presiding over the case follows the CINC Code and makes decisions regarding the child including, but not limited to, custody and placement and accepts recommendations of DCF and the Child Welfare Case Manager Provider (CWCMP) once the child is in foster care.
- DCF is responsible for intake and assessment related to allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. If the judge places the child into custody of the Secretary of DCF, the child comes into foster care.
- DCF contracts with KVC and St. Francis Community Services to provide Family Preservation, Reintegration and Adoption services on its behalf.
- A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) represents the child in court in CINC action and is to be guided by the best interests of the child.
- Parents' attorneys are appointed to represent the parents in court in the CINC action.
- A Court Service Officer (CSO) may not work with CINC cases in every court, but they do work with CINC actions in some courts. They are not available in every judicial district statewide.
- A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer who works with CINC cases, but they are not available in every court statewide.

THE FUTURE OF FOSTER CARE IN KANSAS

- DCF has worked with the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment and held diligent recruitment meetings with community partners, stakeholders and others to develop a plan to increase the pool of quality foster homes in Kansas.
- DCF is also working to retain and recruit social workers throughout the state. DCF is looking at increasing salaries, and continued improvement of staff's technology—smartphones and tablets, so they can quickly access help if they are in a dangerous situation.
 - Effective July 1, 2015, DCF acquired foster care home licensing from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. This was done in an effort to better monitor the entire foster care system as we serve children in need of care, their families and foster parents.
- In 2014, DCF hired a Foster Parent and Youth Ombudsman. She spends her time researching concerns of foster parents and serving as a liaison between our agency, the contractors and the families.
 - She's a licensed social worker and has a passion for ensuring that children and foster parents are treated fairly and quickly.
- DCF will continue work to increase permanency for older youth and sibling groups.
- DCF is working to identify successful connections for youth who are aging out of care (mentors).