State of Child Welfare - 2016
Data Sources and Explanation

General data information

Background

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children issued its first annual "State of Child Welfare" report in 2009 as a way to educate and monitor, through the use of data, how well Pennsylvania's child welfare system is performing in meeting the needs of children and families impacted by the system.

Each year, the report includes comprehensive data for each of the commonwealth's 67 counties, including information on foster care placements, children leaving or re-entering foster care, and efforts to reunify children with parents.

The *2016 State of Child Welfare* report provides a five-year perspective on the performance of the child welfare system. This report provides a perspective on the progress the commonwealth and its counties are making towards the goal of providing safe, stable and permanent families for all children in Pennsylvania.

Foster Care

In the context of this report, foster care is used to describe all children in substitute or out-of-home care except for the sections of the report that examines specific placement setting types. In the context of placement settings, foster care is used to describe specific family-based relative and non-relative care.

Time Period

The majority of indicators within the report capture a full year. For instance, all children served, entering and leaving foster care during the year are included in the figures. It is worth noting that county children and youth agencies often review and cite measures that only include the numbers of children served on a given day or point in time, as is found in the remaining in care indicator.

Percent Change

The percent change compares the first year and the fifth year. This value demonstrates the rate of change between two numbers or the change in proportion of two percentages.
The formula is $(X_{Year5} - X_{Year1}) / X_{Year1}$ where X represents the value.

If the value is a number, the calculation provides the rate of change from the first year.
Example: The number of first time entries decreased from 7,699 in Year 1 to 6,698 in Year 5.
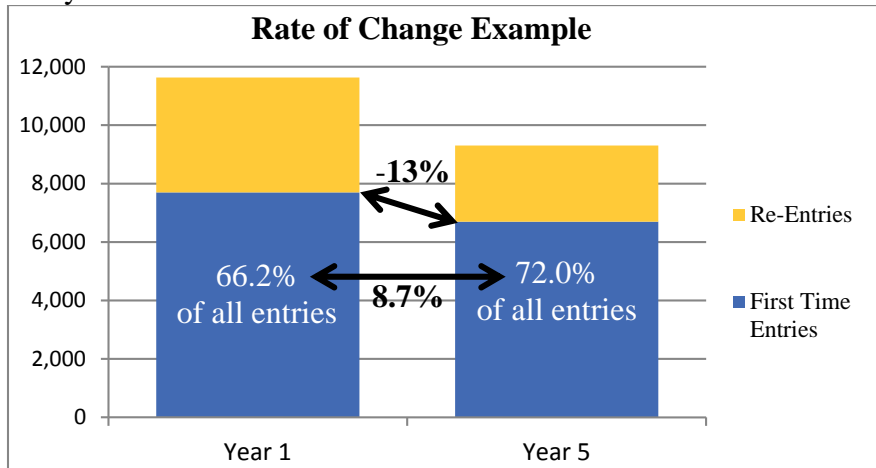
       (6,698-7,699) / 7,699
       (-1,001) / 6,698
       -.1300 or -13.00%

If the value is a percentage, the calculation provides the change in proportion from Year 1.

Example: The first time entries in Year 1 represented 66.2% of all entries. In Year 5, the 6,698 represented 72%.

(72.0% - 66.2%) / 66.2%
(5.8%) / 66.2%
0.087 or 8.7%

So, even though the number of first time entries decreased by 13%, the proportion of first time entries increased by 8.7% from Year 1 to Year 5.

Rate of Change Example

Rounding can be deceiving when comparing very small percentages. For example, the proportion of first time entries that were initially placed in pre-adoptive homes in Year 1 is displayed as 0.2%. This value is actually 0.156%. In Year 5, the proportion of first time entries initially placed in pre-adoptive homes increased to 0.254% (or 0.3% when rounded).

(0.254% - 0.156%) / 0.156%   VS.   (0.3% - 0.2%) / 0.2%
(0.098%) / 0.156%   (0.1%) / 0.2%
0.6282 or 62.8%   0.5 or 50%

The actual rate of change is displayed instead of using the rounded value.

Scope and Size
Care should be taken in making generalized statements related to small numbers of children in order to avoid assuming a significance that cannot be supported by a small data set.

County Type

Comparing data at the county level is most appropriate when comparing a county against another one of the same type. The four county type reports and each county report include county type and state totals. County type (rural, rural-mix, urban-mix, urban) is based on 2010 Census population density.

Rural	Rural-Mix	Urban-Mix	Urban
No Urbanized Population	*Up to 49% Urbanized*	*50% to 74% Urbanized*	*75% or More Urbanized*
Bradford	Adams	Beaver	Allegheny
Cameron	Armstrong	Berks	Bucks
Clarion	Bedford	Blair	Chester
Clearfield	Butler	Centre	Dauphin
Clinton	Cambria	Columbia	Delaware
Crawford	Carbon	Cumberland	Lackawanna
Elk	Fayette	Erie	Lancaster
Forest	Franklin	Lebanon	Lehigh
Fulton	Lawrence	Washington	Luzerne
Greene	Lycoming	Westmoreland	Montgomery
Huntingdon	Mercer	York	Northampton
Indiana	Monroe		Philadelphia
Jefferson	Montour		
Juniata	Northumberland		
McKean	Perry		
Mifflin	Schuylkill		
Pike	Somerset		
Potter	Susquehanna		
Snyder	Wayne		
Sullivan	Wyoming		
Tioga			
Union			
Venango			
Warren			

Report Indicators

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child Abuse Reports
This indicator provides the total number of suspected child abuse reports throughout the year in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has a differential response system for reporting and responding to child abuse and neglect reports. Reports are classified, depending on their degree of severity, as either Child Protective Services reports or General Protective Services reports. Child Protective Services reports include sexual abuse, physical abuse, or serious physical neglect. General Protective Services reports include less severe reports of general neglect such as lack of adequate housing, truancy, parent-child conflict, etc. Only Child Protective Services reports are noted in the *State of Child Welfare* report as these are the only cases tracked in the ChildLine and Abuse Registry. General Protective Services reports are reported directly to the county agency by the public or forwarded to county children and youth agencies by ChildLine for assessment. In the commonwealth, county children and youth agencies provide many families with services following General Protective Services assessments.

The rate per 1,000 children was calculated by dividing the suspected cases of child abuse by the 2010 Census child population from birth through age 17.

SOURCE: *2010, 2011, 2012, 2013* and *2014 Child Abuse Reports* extracted from the ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1 – 12/31), Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 Census.

Child Abuse Substantiations
This indicator notes the percentage of child abuse reports that are substantiated. Substantiated cases of child abuse are incidents of abuse that have been determined to meet Pennsylvania's definition of child abuse per the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. Following a child protective services investigation, a determination is made as to whether the child abuse report is substantiated. This determination can be made by the county child welfare agency (referred to as an indicated report) or by the courts (referred to as a founded report).

SOURCE: *2010, 2011, 2012, 2013* and *2014 Child Abuse Reports* extracted from the ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1 – 12/31), Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Repeated Child Abuse
This indicator shows the rate of children who experience more than one incident of substantiated child abuse. There are occasions when subsequent instances of substantiated abuse occur and counties are aware of the initial instance of abuse. This is not always the case, as indicated by the following passage from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Service's 2013 Annual Child Abuse Report:

"During the course of an investigation, it is possible that other previously unreported incidents become known. For example, an investigation can reveal another incident of abuse that was never before disclosed by the child or the family for a number of reasons. These previously unreported incidents are registered with ChildLine and handled as separate reports. Also, a child may be abused in one county then move to another county and become a victim of abuse again. This would be considered reabuse whether or not the original county agency referred the matter to the new county agency. In both examples, such reports would be…re-abuse of the child. Therefore, it is not accurate to assume that the victim and the family were known to the county agency in all instances where a child was a victim of multiple incidents of abuse. The statistics on reabuse should be understood within this context."

SOURCE: *2010, 2011, 2012, 2013* and *2014 Child Abuse Reports* extracted from the ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1 – 12/31), Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

IN-HOME SERVICES

Unduplicated Number of Children Served
In order to obtain a complete picture of the child welfare system, reliable data is needed for every key decision point from the initial report of child abuse or neglect through children exiting the system. While Pennsylvania has made great strides to improve its data collection efforts, reliable data is still lacking for General Protective Services, in-home services and evidence-based practices delivered through Special Grants funding through the Needs Based Plan and Budget.

The in-home services indicator should reflect the number of children who received services provided to both parents and children, to address concerns related to child safety and well-being to enable the children to remain safely in their own home. This data point is tracked by the CY-28 file submitted by counties to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children, Youth and Families. Historically the quality of CY-28 data submitted by counties has varied between jurisdictions, resulting in some reporting inaccuracies. Over the last several years, state and local efforts to improve information technology has helped refine the quality of CY-28 data submissions. Counties now use one of several state-approved information technology systems to strengthen data entry and submission. After discussions with DHS, it was decided the number of children served during the year is the most reliable indicator to quantify the number of children receiving in-home services. The number listed is consistent with their reporting.

SOURCE: CY-28 reports to the Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families and Hornby Zeller Associates.

FOSTER CARE – SERVED

Unduplicated Number of Children Served
This indicator illustrates the total <u>unduplicated</u> number of children in foster care placement at any time during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30). The rate per 1,000 children was calculated by dividing the unduplicated number of children by the 2010 Census child population from birth through age 20. Children served are also broken out by age, race/ethnicity, gender and placement setting where the child was most recently disposed.

> **Age:** Age represents the child's age on the last day of service during the year. This could be the child's age when discharged or on 9/30, if the child was still in foster care. The seven age groups are equivalent in range for simple comparisons. Additional categories are provided for infants (birth through age 1) and youth (age 13 through 20).
>
> **Race and ethnicity:** Breakouts include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Other, Non-Hispanic Two or More Races and Hispanic or Latino. The "Non-Hispanic Other" category includes children who were not Hispanic, not White, not Black or African American, and whose record did not indicate more than one category. This category includes a

small number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Unable to Determine.

Gender: Gender represents the child's sex.

Latest placement setting: This indicator shows where children who were served during the year were most recently placed. Placement settings are the different environments that children can be placed in when they enter the foster care system. Pre-adoptive settings, as well as foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and are often referred to as congregate care settings.

One should note that there are some inconsistencies across the counties in the use of trial home visits and in the number of children on a runaway status, often due to the impact of county payment and data systems.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Children Entering Foster Care
This indicator shows the total number of children who entered foster care placement during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30). This indicator can be a duplicated count as a child can enter placement more than once during the period and would be counted each time.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – FIRST TIME ENTRIES

Children Entering for the First Time
This indicator shows the unduplicated count, rate per 1,000 children and percentage of children who entered foster care placement for the first time any time during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30). The rate per 1,000 was calculated by dividing the total number of first time entries by the 2010 Census child population from birth through age 20. First time entries are also broken out by age, race/ethnicity, gender and placement setting where the child was first disposed.

Age: Age represents the child's age when first placed in foster care. The seven age groups are equivalent in range for simple comparisons. Additional categories are provided for infants (birth through age 1) and youth (age 13 through 20).

Race and ethnicity: Breakouts include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Other, Non-Hispanic Two or More Races and Hispanic or Latino. The "Non-Hispanic Other" category includes children who were not Hispanic, not White, not Black or African American, and whose record did not indicate more than one category. This category includes a

small number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Unable to Determine.

Gender: Gender represents the child's sex.

First placement setting: This indicator shows where children who entered foster care for the first time were initially placed. Placement settings are the different environments that children can be placed in when they enter the foster care system. Pre-adoptive settings, as well as foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and are often referred to as congregate care settings.

One should note that there are some inconsistencies across the counties in the use of trial home visits and in the number of children on a runaway status, often due to the impact of county payment and data systems.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – RE-ENTRIES

Children Re-Entering Foster Care

This indicator shows the count and percentage of children who returned to out-of-home placement any time during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30) after a prior discharge from foster care. This indicator can be a duplicated count as a child can re-enter placement more than once during the period and would be counted each time. Re-entries are also broken out by age, race/ethnicity, gender and placement setting.

Age: Age represents the child's age when placed back into foster care. The seven age groups are equivalent in range for simple comparisons. Additional categories are provided for infants (birth through age 1) and youth (age 13 through 20).

Race and ethnicity: Breakouts include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Other, Non-Hispanic Two or More Races and Hispanic or Latino. The "Non-Hispanic Other" category includes children who were not Hispanic, not White, not Black or African American, and whose record did not indicate more than one category. This category includes a small number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Unable to Determine.

Gender: Gender represents the child's sex.

Placement setting at re-entry: This indicator shows where children who re-entered foster care were first placed upon return. Placement settings are the different environments that children can be placed in when they enter the foster

care system. Pre-adoptive settings, as well as foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and are often referred to as congregate care settings.

One should note that there are some inconsistencies across the counties in the use of trial home visits and in the number of children on a runaway status, often due to the impact of county payment and data systems.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – GOALS

Percent of Children by Case Plan Goal
This indicator shows the percent of all children served in foster care between 10/1 – 9/30 by their most recent case plan goal. Every child and youth in foster care has a court-ordered goal or outcome, which is typically to reunify the child with his or her parents or caregivers as soon as possible. When reunification is not possible, the courts require child welfare agencies to work toward finding another family through adoption, legal guardianship or a fit and willing relative. If those permanency goals are also ruled out, courts require the agencies to work to Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). When APPLA is the goal, it typically translates into long-term foster care.

> **APPLA by Age as % of Age Group Served:** Age represents the child's age on the last day of service during the year. This could be the child's age when discharged or on 9/30, if the child was still in foster care. The percentage represents the proportion of all children served in foster care within that age group that have a goal of APPLA.

> **APPLA by Discharge Reason:** The percent of exits by reason and the median length of time (in months) for those children with a goal of APPLA to be discharged from foster care are provided. Discharge reasons of reunification, adoption, guardianship and live with other relatives are considered exits to permanent arrangements. Emancipation, transfer to another agency, and runaway are exits to non-permanent arrangements.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – EXITS

Children Exiting Foster Care
This indicator shows the number of children leaving foster care between 10/1 – 9/30. The percent listed under the total reflects the number of children served during the year who left placement.

This number can be a duplicated count as a child can exit multiple times during the reporting period.

> **Discharge reason:** The percent of exits by reason and the median length of time (in months) for those children to be discharged from foster care are provided. Discharge reasons of reunification, adoption, guardianship and live with other relatives are considered exits to permanent arrangements. Emancipation, transfer to another agency, and runaway are exits to non-permanent arrangements.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – REMAINING IN CARE

Children Remaining in Foster Care
This section shows the underlined number of children remaining in foster care at the end of the year (9/30) and the median length of stay for those children.

> **Age:** Age represents the child's age on the last day of the reporting period, if the child was in placement on 9/30. The seven age groups are equivalent in range for simple comparisons. Additional categories are provided for infants (birth through age 1) and youth (age 13 through 20).

> **Race and ethnicity:** Breakouts include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Other, Non-Hispanic Two or More Races and Hispanic or Latino. The "Non-Hispanic Other" category includes children who were not Hispanic, not White, not Black or African American, and whose record did not indicate more than one category. This category includes a small number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Unable to Determine.

> **Gender:** Gender represents the child's sex for those children remaining in foster care on 9/30.

> **Placement setting:** This indicator shows the latest/current placement setting for children remaining in foster care. Placement settings are the different environments that children can be placed in when they enter the foster care system. Pre-adoptive settings, as well as foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and are often referred to as congregate care settings.

> One should note that there are some inconsistencies across the counties in the use of trial home visits and in the number of children on a runaway status, often due to the impact of county payment and data systems.

SOURCE: AFCARS longitudinal file produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – STABILITY

Foster Care Placement Stability
This indicator notes the percentage of children in foster care between 12 and 24 months who experienced three or more placement settings. The files are comprised of all children in foster care between 12 and 24 months served during the year (10/1 – 9/30).

SOURCE: Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – TIMELY REUNIFICATION

Timely Reunification with Parents or Relatives
This indicator shows the percentage of all children who entered foster care for the first time in a 12-month period (10/1 – 9/30) and were discharged to reunification with their parents or relatives in less than 12 months from the date of removal. Children must have been in foster care eight days or more to be included in this indicator.

It is important when reviewing reunification data to recognize the interrelationship with re-entry/failed reunification data. Ideally, children who must enter foster care will be reunified quickly and permanently with their birth parents or relatives – and not experience re-entry into foster care.

SOURCE: Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

FOSTER CARE – FAILED REUNIFICATION

Failed 1-Year Reunification (Re-entry following reunification)
This indicator shows the percentage of all children who were discharged to reunification with their parents or other relatives before their 18th birthday in a 12-month period (10/1 – 9/30), and subsequently re-entered foster care in less than 12 months following their reunification. Young adults up to age 21 are counted as a re-entry if the initial discharge was before they turned 18, and reunified with their parents or other relatives. The data system does not allow the capture of enough information on children discharged from care who re-entered foster care to determine whether that discharge was a reunification to parents or relatives. This may result in an over-reporting of reunifications and subsequent re-entries.

Some counties may also have an overcount of re-entries because of nuances in their billing systems. For example, when a child has run away from his or her foster placement, the county may close out the child's foster care setting for purposes of payment. This action may result in the child being registered as leaving foster care. When the child is found, the county notes the child's placement setting for payment purposes, which may also register the child as a re-entry.

A similar example can occur in some counties that stop the foster care setting payment during a temporary trial home visit. Trial home visits are often used to support the reunification of children in foster care with their birth parents or relatives and typically occur as children are being prepared to permanently return home.

SOURCE: Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.