



PENNSYLVANIA  
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## **2023 State of Child Welfare – Data Sources and Explanation**

### **General data information**

#### **Background**

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children issued its first annual "State of Child Welfare" report in 2009 to educate and monitor, using 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 the commonwealth's 67 counties, including information on Child Protective Services (CPS) and General Protective Services (GPS) reports, foster care placements, children leaving or re-entering foster care, and efforts to help children achieve permanency.

The **2023 State of Child Welfare** report provides a five-year perspective on the performance of the child welfare system. This report shows the commonwealth and its counties' progress toward providing safe, stable, and permanent families for every child.

#### **Foster Care**

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

#### **Timeframe**

Most indicators within the report capture an entire 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 number 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 the proportion of two percentages.

The formula is  $(X_{\text{Year5}} - X_{\text{Year1}}) / X_{\text{Year1}}$  where X represents the value.

If the value is a number, the calculation provides the rate of change from the first year.

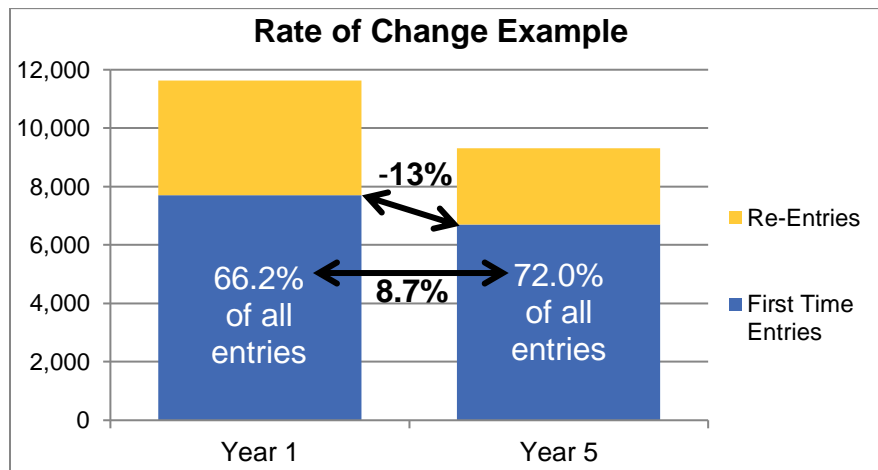
Example: Assume that first-time entries decreased from 7,699 in Year 1 to 6,698 in Year 5.

$$\begin{aligned} &(6,698-7,699) / 7,699 \\ &(-1,001) / 6,698 \\ &-.1300 \text{ or } -13.00\% \end{aligned}$$

If the value is a percentage, the calculation provides the change in proportion from Year 1.  
 Example: Assume the first-time entries in Year 1 represented 66.2% of all entries. In Year 5, 6,698 represented 72%.

$$\begin{aligned} &(72.0\% - 66.2\%) / 66.2\% \\ &(5.8\%) / 66.2\% \\ &0.087 \text{ or } 8.7\% \end{aligned}$$

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.



Rounding can be deceiving when comparing exceedingly small percentages. For example, assume the proportion of first-time entries placed in pre-adoptive homes in Year 1 is displayed as 0.2%. The actual value is 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).

$$\begin{aligned} &(0.254\% - 0.156\%) / 0.156\% && \text{VS.} && (0.3\% - 0.2\%) / 0.2\% \\ &(0.098\%) / 0.156\% && && (0.1\%) / 0.2\% \\ &0.6282 \text{ or } 62.8\% && && 0.5 \text{ or } 50\% \end{aligned}$$

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

### **Data Suppression**

To ensure privacy and protect against identifying individuals, counts of 10 or less are suppressed. This is also true for any percentage or rate that relates to a count less than 11. When possible, a range is provided.

In some instances, a percentage or rate related to a count greater than ten must also be suppressed (or changed to a range) so that another rate cannot be determined through calculation.

**Scope and Size**

Care should be taken in making generalized statements related to small numbers of children to avoid assuming a significance that cannot be supported by a small dataset.

**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 types (rural, rural-mix, urban-mix, urban) were updated with the 2022 data. Data prior to 2022 is based on the county type using 2010 Census population density. Data in 2022 is based on the county type using urban and rural information from the 2020 Census.

**2018-2021 County Type**

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

**2022 County Type**

<b>Rural</b> <i>Less than 25% urban housing units</i>	<b>Rural-Mix</b> <i>25% to 49% urban housing units</i>	<b>Urban-Mix</b> <i>50% to 74% urban housing units</i>	<b>Urban</b> <i>75% or more urban housing units</i>
Bedford	Adams	Beaver	Allegheny
Cameron	Armstrong	Berks	Blair
Clarion	Bradford	Butler	Bucks
Forest	Carbon	Cambria	Chester
Fulton	Clearfield	Centre	Cumberland
Greene	Clinton	Columbia	Dauphin
Huntingdon	Crawford	Franklin	Delaware
Juniata	Elk	Lawrence	Erie
Perry	Fayette	Lycoming	Lackawanna
Pike	Indiana	Mercer	Lancaster
Potter	Jefferson	Northumberland	Lebanon
Somerset	McKean	Schuylkill	Lehigh
Sullivan	Mifflin	Washington	Luzerne
Susquehanna	Monroe	Westmoreland	Montgomery
Tioga	Montour	York	Northampton
Wayne	Snyder		Philadelphia
Wyoming	Union		
	Venango		
	Warren		

## Report Indicators

### **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)**

#### **Child Abuse and Neglect Reports**

This indicator provides the total number of suspected child abuse and neglect reports throughout the year.

Pennsylvania has a differential response system for reporting and responding to child abuse and neglect reports. Reports are classified as either CPS reports or General Protective Services (GPS) reports. CPS reports include sexual abuse, physical abuse, or serious physical neglect. GPS reports include less severe reports of general neglect such as lack of adequate housing, parental substance abuse, truancy, and parent-child conflict. 2015 was the first year the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) collected GPS reports. In prior years, this information was not required to be submitted to DHS and was maintained only by county children and youth agencies.

Prior to 2016, the CPS report date was based on the date of status determination of the referral. From 2016 to the present, the number reflected is based on the referral's date.

The rate per 1,000 children was calculated by dividing the suspected child abuse cases by the 2010 Census child population from birth through age 17 for data prior to 2022 and by the 2020 Census child population from birth through age 17 for 2022 data.

**SOURCE:** 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 *Annual Child Protective Services Reports*, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 Census and 2020 Census.

#### **Child Abuse and Neglect Substantiations**

This indicator notes the percentage of child abuse and neglect reports that are substantiated as defined by being indicated or founded reports. 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:** 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 *Annual Child Protective Services Reports*, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families.

#### **Repeated Child Abuse and Neglect**

This indicator shows the rate of children who experience more than one incident of substantiated child abuse and neglect. There are occasions when subsequent instances of substantiated abuse and neglect occur, and counties are aware of the initial instance.

**SOURCE:** 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 *Annual Child Protective Services Reports*, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families.

## **GENERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICES (GPS)**

### **GPS Reports and Valid GPS Reports**

The **GPS Reports** indicator is the total number of reported concerns of general neglect, not meeting the definition of child abuse. General neglect concerns may include parental substance abuse, inadequate shelter or supervision, parent-child conflict, or truancy concerns. The **Valid GPS Reports** indicator includes GPS reports where an allegation was found to have merit. These reports are assessed by the county children and youth agency and may be accepted for in-home services or referred to other community agencies for services. The goal of receiving and assessing GPS reports is to allow county children and youth agencies to provide services to prevent abuse or neglect to children, provide or arrange for and monitor the provision of those services, and preserve and stabilize family life wherever appropriate.

**SOURCE:** Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; *2021 and 2022 Annual Child Protective Services Report*.

### **Children with Valid Allegations**

This indicator reflects the number of children on valid reports with valid GPS allegations. This means the report of general neglect included allegations that were found to have merit. Only the children associated to the valid allegation(s) are counted. Since it is possible that a child can be included on multiple valid GPS reports, overcounting may occur.

**SOURCE:** Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; *2021 and 2022 Annual Child Protective Services Report*.

### **Unduplicated Number of Children Served**

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 GPS, 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 DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families. Counties 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.

Fayette County did not provide data for the April-June 2020 quarter which caused the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services to not provide a statewide total for 2020.

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

## **FOSTER CARE – SERVED**

### **Unduplicated Number of Children Served**

This indicator illustrates the total unduplicated 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 distinct number of children by the 2010 Census child population from birth through age 20 for data prior to 2022 and by the 2020 Census child population from birth through age 20 for 2022 data. 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 were 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 and older).

**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 grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race was unable to be determined.

**Sex:** This represents the child's legal 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 children can be placed in while in the foster care system. Pre-adoptive settings and foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and often referred to as congregate care.

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:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 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:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 at any point 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 for data prior to 2022 and by the 2020 Census child population from birth through age 20 for 2022 data. 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 and older).

**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 grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race was unable to be determined.

**Sex:** This represents the child's legal sex.

**First reported placement setting:** This indicator shows the first reported placement of children who entered foster care for the first time during the reporting period. Placement settings are the different environments 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 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:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 at the time of re-entry.

**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 and older).

**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 grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race was unable to be determined.

**Sex:** This represents the child's legal sex.

**Placement setting at re-entry:** This indicator shows the reported placement where children who re-entered foster care were placed upon return. Placement settings are the different environments 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 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:** PPC's analysis of data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

## **FOSTER CARE – PLACEMENT REASONS**

### **Top Five Placement Reasons**

This indicator shows the top five reasons for placement into out-of-home care. This indicator can be duplicated as a child can have multiple reasons for placement and would be counted in each category. Available placement reasons include abandonment, caretaker inability to cope due to illness or other reasons, child alcohol abuse, child disability, child drug abuse, child's behavior problem, death of parent(s), incarceration of parent(s), inadequate housing, neglect, parent alcohol abuse, parent drug abuse, physical abuse, relinquishment, sexual abuse.

**Of All Children in Foster Care During the Year:** The top five placement reasons for all children in foster care at any time during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30).

**Of First-Time Entries into Foster Care:** The top five placement reasons for all children who entered foster care for the first time at any point during the reporting period (10/1 – 9/30).

**Of Re-Entries into Foster Care:** The top five placement reasons for all 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.



**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 percentage 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 typically is to reunify the child with his or her parents or caregivers as soon as possible. When reunification is not possible, courts require child welfare agencies to work toward finding another family through adoption, legal guardianship or placement with a fit and willing relative. Agencies work to place the child in Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) only if those permanency goals are also ruled out. When APPLA is the goal, it typically translates into long-term foster care.

The federal AFCARS reporting system has not been updated to reflect the elimination of 'long term foster care' and 'emancipation' as appropriate permanency goals for children and youth in foster care, or the addition of 'Another Planned, Permanent Living Arrangement' (APPLA) in their place. Therefore, this report combines 'long term foster care' and 'emancipation' under the category of APPLA to best reflect the total number of children in foster care without a family-based permanency goal.

**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 were 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**

This indicator shows the percentage of exits by reason for children with a goal of APPLA who discharged from foster care during the reporting period. It also provides the median length of time (in months) for these children to be discharged. Discharge reasons of reunification, adoption, guardianship and living with other relatives are considered exits to permanent arrangements. Emancipation, transfer to another agency, and runaway are exits to non-permanent arrangements.

**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 percentage 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 living with other relatives are considered exits to permanent arrangements. Emancipation, transfer to another agency, and runaway are exits to non-permanent arrangements.

**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by 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 unduplicated number of children remaining in foster care at the end of the year (9/30) and the median length of stay (in months) for those children.

**Age:** Age represents the child's age on the last day of the reporting period (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 and older).

**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 grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race was unable to be determined.

**Sex:** This represents the child's legal sex.

**Latest placement setting:** This indicator shows the most recent placement setting for children remaining in foster care. Placement settings are the different environments children can be placed in while in 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 often referred to as congregate care.

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:** PPC's analysis of data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

## **DISPROPORTIONALITY**

This section shows which race/ethnicity categories are present in the child welfare system as compared to the general population. Only children with known ethnicities are included in this analysis. 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 records did not indicate more than one category. This grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race could not be determined.

### **CPS/GPS Race and Ethnicity**

This indicator shows a breakdown of Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals, including substantiated and children with valid General Protective Services (GPS) allegations by the child's listed race and ethnicity for one year. This indicator can be a duplicated count as a child can be included on more than one referral during the period and would be counted each time. DHS could not provide GPS and valid GPS reports by race and ethnicity for 2022. Comparisons are made to the 2020 Census child population from birth through age 17 by the same race and ethnicity categories to show where disproportionality exists.

**SOURCE:** Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2020 Census.

### **Foster Care Race and Ethnicity**

This indicator shows the foster care population flow breakdown over one year by the child's race and ethnicity. The 2020 Census child population from birth through age 20 by the same race and ethnicity categories is also provided for comparison.

**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2020 Census.

### **Racial Disproportionality Index**

This index is calculated by comparing the foster care population flow over one year by the child's race and ethnicity to the 2020 Census child population from birth through age 20 by the same race and ethnicity categories. It is a commonly used, research-based approach (ex. [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/racial\\_disproportionality.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/racial_disproportionality.pdf) and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23440532\\_Measuring\\_Racial\\_Disparity\\_in\\_Child\\_Welfare](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23440532_Measuring_Racial_Disparity_in_Child_Welfare)). An index of less than 1.0 indicates underrepresentation of that race category during that point in foster care. An index of 1.0 indicates no disproportionality. An index of 1.1 and greater indicates overrepresentation of the race category during that point in foster care. For example, an index of 3.0 means that the race group is represented three times its rate in the general child population.

**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2020 Census.

### **Children Remaining in Care by Specific Latest Placement Settings**

This indicator shows a breakdown of the family-based placements and congregate care placements by the child's race and ethnicity for children remaining in foster care on 9/30/22. For comparison purposes, the breakdown by race and ethnicity of all children remaining in foster care on 9/30/22 is provided.

**SOURCE:** PPC's data analysis provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

## **FOSTER CARE – DISPARITY**

This section shows whether children of different race/ethnicity categories are present in the child welfare system at the same rate. Only children with known ethnicities are included in this analysis. 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 records did not indicate more than one category. This grouping includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and children whose race could not be determined.

### **Racial Disparity Index**

This index is calculated by comparing the racial disproportionality index for one race group to the disproportionality index of another race group for the same period of the foster care population flow. An index was not calculated if one of the race categories was less than 200 children during that point in the foster care population flow. This is a commonly used, research-based approach to comparing the lack of equality between two race groups in foster care (ex. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23440532\\_Measuring\\_Racial\\_Disparity\\_in\\_Child\\_Welfare](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23440532_Measuring_Racial_Disparity_in_Child_Welfare)). For comparison purposes, disparity ratios less than 1.5 show low or no disparity; ratios 1.5 up to 2.5 show moderate disparity; ratios 2.5 up to 3.5 show high disparity; and disparity ratios 3.5 and greater show extreme disparity. For example, a disparity ratio of 3.0 for re-entries means that the first race group is three times more likely than the second race group to re-enter foster care.

**SOURCE:** PPC's analysis of data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2020 Census.

## **FOSTER CARE – STABILITY**

### **Foster Care Placement Stability**

This indicator notes the percentage of children in foster care between 12 and 24 months and 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:** 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:** 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 occurred 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 who re-entered foster care to determine whether the previous 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 their foster placement, the county may close out the child's foster care setting for payment purposes. 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 return home permanently.

**SOURCE:** Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

###