

**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES REALIGNMENT:  
OUTCOME AND EXPENDITURE DATA SUMMARY REPORT  
April 23, 2013**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) continues to serve as the single state agency responsible for the administration and supervision of the Child Welfare Services (CWS) system, a system that is authorized through the federal social security act, Subparts IV-E and IV-B and throughout various chapters of the Welfare and Institutions Code. Fundamental to this responsibility is the formation of programmatic and fiscal policy, provision of training and technical assistance and oversight and monitoring of the CWS system. The oversight of CWS programs, both fiscally and programmatically, continues to be data informed to ensure compliance with state plan requirements, and to guarantee maximization of federal financial participation for these programs.

As a result of the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 636 (Steinberg, Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001), CDSS began utilizing data to oversee county child welfare systems. These programmatic data have provided greater accountability for child and family outcomes across California and serve as the foundation for this annual report to the Legislature required by Senate Bill (SB) 1013 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 35, Statutes of 2012). SB 1013 added Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10104 to require CDSS to annually report to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature, and publicly post on the Department's internet website, a summary of outcome and expenditure data that allows for monitoring of changes over time that may have occurred as a result of the 2011 Realignment of the child welfare system.

The performance measures and process data contained in this report are statewide and reflect a cross section of child welfare practices that impact child and family safety, permanency<sup>1</sup> and well-being, many of which were developed pursuant to AB 636.<sup>2</sup> The data contained in this report were drawn from the Child Welfare System/Case Management System. The most recent data are available in the publically accessible CDSS/UC Berkeley Dynamic Report system: [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/). Additionally, the tables have been replicated for each of the state's 58 counties. County-specific data can be found at: <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG3197.htm>.

The analyses that follow are divided into three sections, a constellation of: 1) safety outcomes, 2) placement and caseload outcomes, and 3) permanency outcomes. The analyses are organized around constellations of outcomes rather than singular measures because child welfare is a complicated system that serves children and families with complex and changing needs. These data operate in concert with one another such that changes in one part of the system can have a significant effect on other areas.

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<sup>1</sup> While the definition of "permanency" is complex and should consider social, emotional and legal aspects, for the purposes of this document, it means exiting foster care to a permanent family through reunification, guardianship or adoption.

<sup>2</sup> Over time changes in the data noted in the report are calculated as percent change or relative change rather than absolute differences in order to account for the varying "sizes" of the units of data.

The CDSS continues to monitor county claiming of federal funds; therefore counties are required to claim actual costs for the realigned programs in the same manner prior to the implementation of 2011 Realignment. The expenditures for all the realigned programs displayed on the [Realignment Expenditures Summary](#) (Attachment A) compare two years of actuals prior to the implementation of 2011 Realignment to the first year of realignment. The percentage from year to year has been identified as follows:

- Less than zero percent change
- Between zero percent and fifty (50) percent change
- Between fifty (50) percent and one hundred (100) percent change
- Above one hundred (100) percent change

The expenditures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10 and FY 2010-11 only capture the non-Federal share that is comprised of state General Fund (GF) and county share. For FY 2011-12, the non-Federal share is comprised of Local Revenue Fund (LRF) and county share since 2011 Realignment shifted the funding from the State to the local governments.

### **Summary of findings**

*Safety Constellation:* As will be described in this report, although referral rates have remained relatively unchanged since 2002, substantiations (referrals that are confirmed through an investigation) and rates of children entering out-of-home care have decreased notably; 21 and 13 percent, respectively. Child welfare practices of investigating referrals within policy timeframes continue to remain above state standards, children continue to be protected from further maltreatment (recurrence of maltreatment has remained stable), and finally, statewide performance of monthly caseworker visits with children continues to improve, increasing 12 percent since 2009.

*Placement and Caseload Constellation:* Of significance is the continued decline of the foster care caseload, declining nearly 50 percent from 107,998 to 55,766 children in care between 2000 and 2012. Since 2009, the number of children for whom their first placement is with a relative has increased by 39 percent, while the proportion of children placed in group homes has decreased 24 percent. Relative homes continue to be the predominant placement for children in care and the proportion of children experiencing placement changes continues to remain stable. Finally, for entries into foster care in calendar years 2006 through 2009, length of stay for the most recent cohort was 27 fewer days in care than the earlier cohort (a six percent decrease).

*Permanency Constellation:* For children entering care for the first time, there have been moderate increases in the proportion of children exiting to reunification within 36 months of entry (a seven percent increase in three years). For children entering care between 2008 and 2011, there has been a moderate (less than 4 percent) improvement in the proportion of those children who reunified within one year; however, the proportion of children re-entering foster care within a year has increased ten percent in the same period of time. While there may be some overlap, the two measures are not restricted to the same group of children.

Examining longitudinal outcome data requires caution and attention to a number of key analytic considerations. The following should be borne in mind when reviewing the data and trends outlined in the report:

- Child welfare is a system and data related to this system are interconnected; measures should not be viewed in isolation.
- Comparing data between various counties on any given measure has limitations due to economic, geographic, and demographic differences that may require different prevention and intervention strategies from one county to the other.
- In small counties, a small number of children, even one family, can create significant shifts in data.
- Performance in any given year needs to be viewed in the context of prior performance.
- Individual county data may differ from statewide data due to local demographics, economics, size, and other factors.

## II. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### A: Safety Constellation

Keeping children safe from abuse and neglect is the foremost priority of California's child welfare system. Child welfare agencies in the state must ensure that children who have been found to be victims of maltreatment are protected from further abuse whether they remain at home or are placed in an out-of-home setting. For children at risk for being removed from their homes, the child welfare agency must appropriately consider providing services to families in crisis to prevent or remedy abuse or neglect with the intent of preserving families and keeping children safely in their own homes, when possible.

A decade ago, a strategy called Differential Response was piloted in 11 counties; today, the majority of counties use the program in some form. Differential Response is a child welfare practice that allows for a broader set of responses when a child welfare agency receives a report of suspected abuse or neglect. Responses include prevention and early intervention, engaging families to address issues of safety and risk, and improving access to a broad range of services for families who are formally involved in the child welfare system and those who choose to participate voluntarily. Secondly, the Department and counties developed and implemented a standardized safety assessment process to ensure the consistent evaluation of a child's immediate safety and risk from county to county, social worker to social worker, and child to child.

#### 1. Referral, Substantiation and Entry Rates

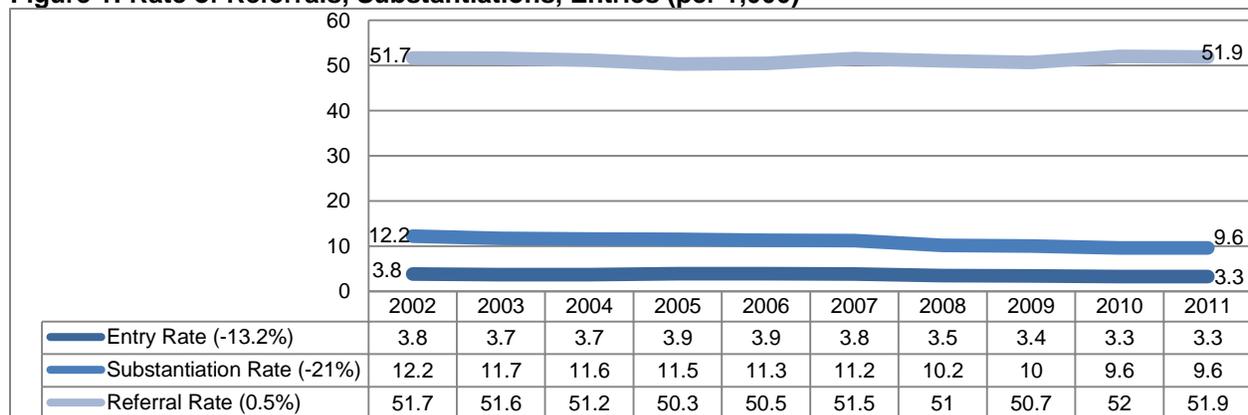
- **Referral rates** tell us how many children with at least one maltreatment allegation are reported to a county. The numbers are per 1,000 children in general child population.
- **Substantiation rates** tell us how many children with an allegation of maltreatment have had that allegation confirmed through an investigation. The numbers are per 1,000 children in the general child population.

- **Entry rate** tells us how many children have entered foster care as a result of a substantiated allegation. The numbers are per 1,000 children in general child population.

Generally, substantiation rates, or rates of confirmed abuse, can highlight systemic and practice issues, evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies, or inform planning for prevention, intervention and treatment of abuse and neglect. For example, analyzing changes in the substantiation rate versus the referral rate has led some counties to discover that their data reflected an unintended change in criteria that social workers use to substantiate an allegation that seemed to be associated with staff reductions (based on anecdotal evidence). Similarly, there have been times when a relative increase in the rate of children entering foster care has been associated with highly publicized child deaths, lawsuits, or media coverage.

Figure 1 below illustrates that while referral rates have remained relatively unchanged since 2002, substantiation rates and rates of entry into foster care have decreased by 21 and 13 percent, respectively. These decreases may be attributed to a combination of factors such as the increased use of standardized safety assessment tools, changing child welfare practice of maintaining children with their families and providing in-home supportive services and strategies that provide alternative services, such as Differential Response.

**Figure 1: Rate of Referrals, Substantiations, Entries (per 1,000)**



Prepared by the staff of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, CSSR, UC Berkeley [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)

## 2. Referrals Evaluated Out

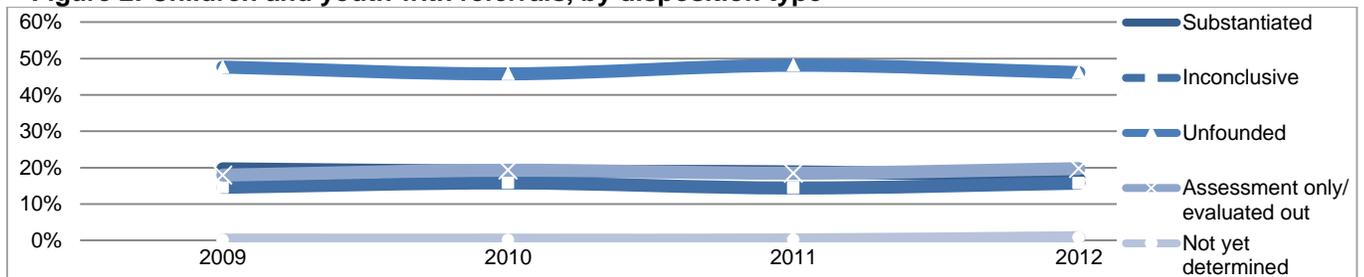
Not all referrals received are investigated by the child welfare agency; in fact, on average, as many referrals are evaluated out as are substantiated (see Figure 2 below). If sufficient evidence does not exist to suspect neglect or abuse, a case is not opened and referred to as evaluated out of the system. The family may be referred to voluntary services in the community. Referrals are evaluated out, that is, not assigned to an Emergency Response (ER) social worker for investigation, for a variety of reasons. Some examples include:

- Insufficient information is provided in the initial report, (e.g., an anonymous person calls the ER hotline to report that “A mom is beating her child in the Wal-Mart parking lot” then hangs up).

- The alleged perpetrator is not a parent or caretaker (in which case the allegation is more appropriately referred to local law enforcement).
- The reported incident does not meet the statutory threshold for child abuse or neglect (e.g., two adolescent siblings in a physical altercation).

Criteria or thresholds influencing ER investigations may vary due to informal and formal changes in local policy or practice, changes in interpretation of state regulations or instructions, training needs and other factors. Routine studies of referral data over time may signal the need for further analysis if the proportion of referrals that are evaluated out in a certain jurisdiction varies significantly over one or more time intervals. Also, analysis of the referrals that are evaluated out can help identify emerging or recurring issues for families in the community that do not meet the threshold for intervention. This can inform the county’s prevention/early intervention and Differential Response efforts in assisting families in mitigating crises before they increase in complexity, or otherwise escalate to a level that requires child welfare intervention.

**Figure 2: Children and youth with referrals, by disposition type**



		Jul 2008-Jun 2009	Jul 2009-Jun 2010	Jul 2010-Jun 2011	Jul 2011-Jun 2012
<b>Substantiated</b>	%	20%	19%	19%	18%
	n	94,606	90,024	89,751	84,746
<b>Inconclusive</b>	%	15%	16%	14%	16%
	n	70,177	74,740	68,615	75,729
<b>Unfounded</b>	%	48%	46%	48%	46%
	n	228,955	216,646	229,213	221,981
<b>Assessment only/evaluated out</b>	%	18%	19%	18%	20%
	n	86,280	91,286	87,921	94,971
<b>Not yet determined<sup>1</sup></b>	%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	n	475	428	652	3,633
<b>Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>480,493</b>	<b>473,124</b>	<b>476,152</b>	<b>481,060</b>

<sup>1</sup>Not yet determined are those allegations that have not been assigned a disposition.

Prepared by the staff of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, CSSR, UC Berkeley [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)

### 3. Recurrence of Maltreatment

**Recurrence of maltreatment** is a federal measure of the proportion of children who did not have another substantiated report within six months following the substantiated maltreatment report during the first six months of the reporting period. Although not federally required, CDSS makes additional data available for a range of follow-up periods from six to 24 months. For this report, Figure 3 shows recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months. As illustrated below, children who were victims of substantiated neglect are more likely than any other allegation type to experience another substantiated maltreatment allegation within the next 12 months. These data have remained fairly unchanged in the last four years.

The measure provides counties and stakeholders with a look at an important outcome for children: freedom from reported abuse or neglect. It is a cursory look, however, as the measure is limited in its ability to establish a causal linkage between one or more prevention or intervention strategies and a county’s relative success on the measure. Use of the measure can potentially help the state and counties identify prevention and intervention strategies that work – or perhaps those that do not work.

**Figure 3: Maltreated during the 6-month period: Percent with No Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 months**



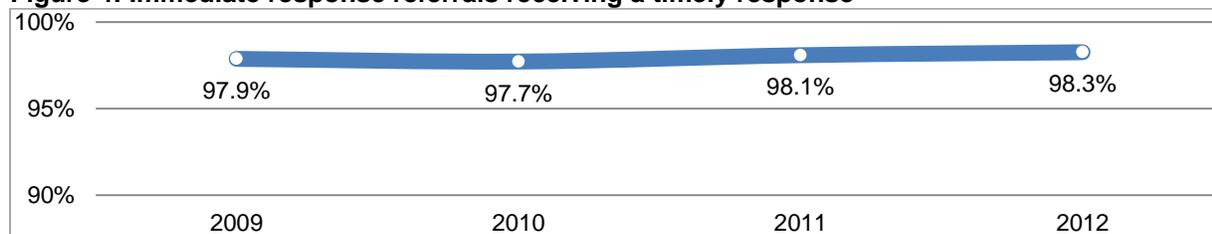
Prepared by CDSS, Research Services Branch, Child Welfare Data Analysis Bureau

#### 4. Timely Response to Child Abuse Investigations

Data for **timely response to child abuse investigations** (immediate and ten-day) are used as oversight tools in measuring performance for state standards and federal monitoring, and tells us whether investigations commenced and contact was made with the alleged child victim within required timeframes. These measures help identify possible causes for success and barriers to improvement and potential solutions and strategies for change. Finally, it may offer insight into the effects of changes in policies and practice, particularly at the local level. For example, some counties enter a referral from the Probate court for a guardianship assessment as an ER referral. These referrals can be left open while the assessment is completed or left open until the probate hearing. These contacts usually happen outside regulatory timeframes for ER and can lead to a county’s failing to meet performance thresholds for this measure.

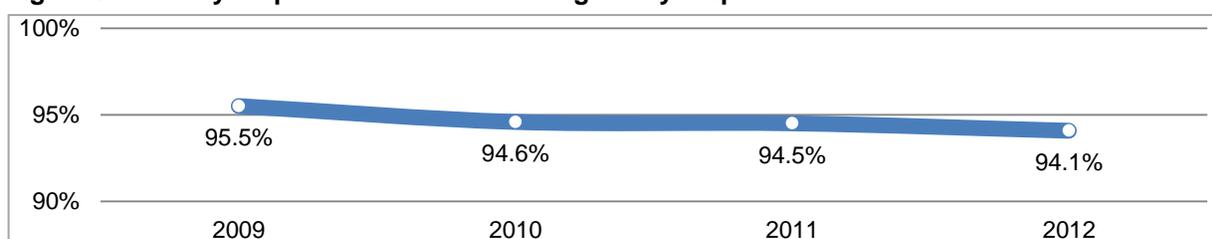
As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the state has continued to perform above the state goal of 90 percent, with immediate responses above 97 percent between 2009 and 2012. Ten-day response referrals have performed above 91 percent during the same time period. The April to June intervals are presented below.

**Figure 4: Immediate response referrals receiving a timely response**



		Apr-Jun 2009	Apr-Jun 2010	Apr-Jun 2011	Apr-Jun 2012
Immediate response referrals receiving a timely response	%	97.9%	97.7%	98.1%	98.3%
	n	17,354	18,846	17,572	18,316
Required immediate response referrals	N	17,731	19,286	17,915	18,641

**Figure 5: Ten-day response referrals receiving timely response**



		Apr-Jun 2009	Apr-Jun 2010	Apr-Jun 2011	Apr-Jun 2012
Ten-day response referrals receiving a timely response	%	95.5%	94.6%	94.5%	94.1%
	n	43,585	42,388	41,858	40,152
Required ten-day response referrals	N	45,636	44,813	44,289	42,678

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## 5. Caseworker Visits with Children

This measure is a two-part federal performance measure that focuses on both timeliness and location of the caseworker's visits for children placed in foster care.

- **Timeliness**<sup>3</sup> measures the percentage of monthly face-to-face caseworker visits made with children in foster care placements.
- **Location** measures the percentage of the visits that were made in the child's residence. Federal law requires that at least 50 percent of monthly visits occur in the residence of the child.

In addition to being a federal requirement, research<sup>4</sup> demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between frequent caseworker visits with foster children and positive outcomes for these children, such as timely achievement of permanency and other indicators of child welfare. As described in Figure 6 below, although the state did not

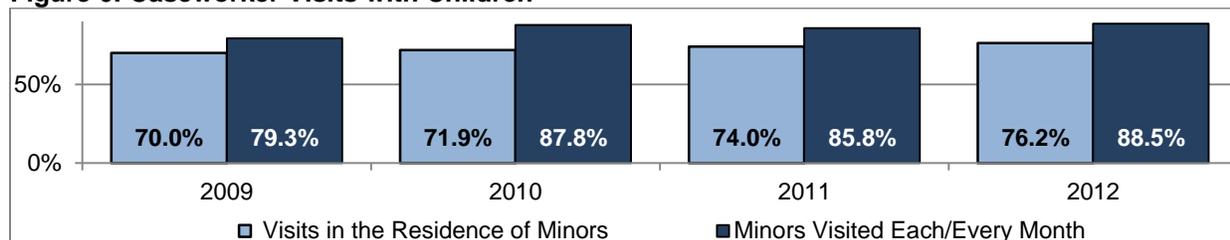
<sup>3</sup> Due to a change in federal requirements, this measure is being modified accordingly. It is now based on the total number of visits that would occur during the fiscal year if each foster child were visited once every month while in care.

In addition, due to the recognized importance of monthly visitation with children who have open cases and remain in their home, modifications are also being made to a state measure to provide supplemental data to the out-of-home population.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/casework/children/visits.cfm>

meet the 90 percent mandate in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011, California has made and continues to make remarkable progress; performance on the proportion of children who are visited each month continues to improve, increasing by 12 percent since 2009. The proportion of visits occurring in the children’s home has increased nine percent during the same time. The federal mandate for children to be visited on a monthly basis will increase to 95 percent by FFY 2015.

**Figure 6: Caseworker Visits with Children**



Prepared by CDSS, Research Services Branch, Child Welfare Data Analysis Bureau

## B: Placement and Caseload Constellation

For children who cannot remain safely in their homes, a constellation of placement and caseload outcomes can provide information on the number of children who are in out-of-home care at any given point in time, their initial and subsequent placements, and their stability in those placements. This information is crucial for counties in managing their resources towards achieving the driving goal for children in foster care -- attaining timely permanency. The types of placements included below are the ones used for the majority of children;<sup>5</sup> they account for over 90 percent of placements.

- Relatives/Kin
- Guardian
- Foster Family Homes
- Foster Family Agency Certified Homes
- Group Homes

## **6. Initial Placements Over Time**

This measure provides information on children’s initial placements when they enter foster care for the first time and how that has changed over time. It does not include children who have re-entered foster care, in other words, they were previously in foster care, left foster care –most likely to return home—and then returned to foster care.

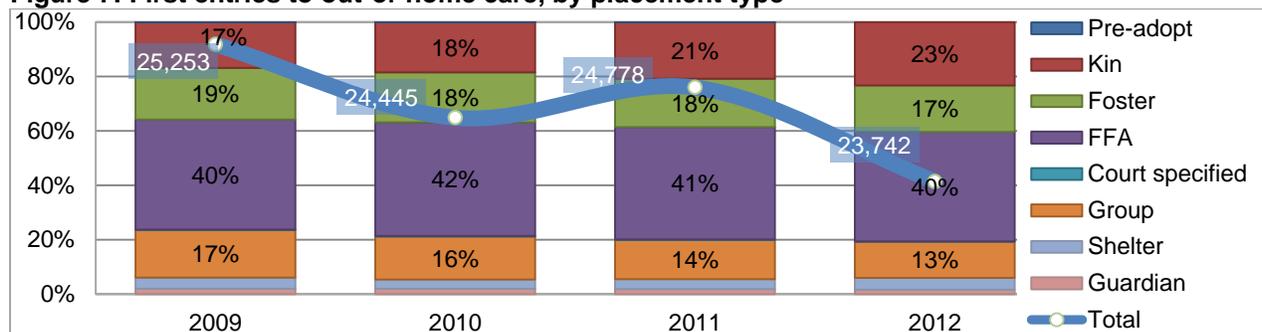
Because being removed from parents is a traumatic event for a child, a child’s initial placement is important to consider. Federal law and best practices suggests the importance of placing children in the least restrictive, most family-like setting. Ideally, this means placement with relatives or close family friends with whom children are already connected.

Since 2009, the percentage of children for whom their first placement is with a relative has increased by 39 percent, while the proportion of children placed in group homes has decreased 24 percent, see Figure 7. Also notable is the use of foster family

<sup>5</sup> Other placement types include: Shelters, court-specified, small family homes, medical facilities, tribe specified homes, and Supervised Independent Living Placements

agencies as first placements; over the past four years, they have accounted for approximately 40 percent of initial placements.

**Figure 7: First entries to out-of-home care, by placement type**



		Jul 2008-Jun 2009	Jul 2009-Jun 2010	Jul 2010-Jun 2011	Jul 2011-Jun 2012
<b>Pre-adopt</b>	%	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
	n	5	1	2	.
<b>Kin</b>	%	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>
	n	4,237	4,509	5,170	5,534
<b>Foster</b>	%	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>
	n	4,796	4,506	4,400	4,053
<b>FFA</b>	%	<b>40%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>40%</b>
	n	10,211	10,193	10,208	9,529
<b>Court specified</b>	%	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	n	39	44	56	45
<b>Group</b>	%	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>
	n	4,414	3,873	3,576	3,165
<b>Shelter</b>	%	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>
	n	1,030	839	891	1,029
<b>Guardian</b>	%	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
	n	521	480	475	387
<b>Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>25,253</b>	<b>24,445</b>	<b>24,778</b>	<b>23,742</b>

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## 7. Point in Time by Placement Type

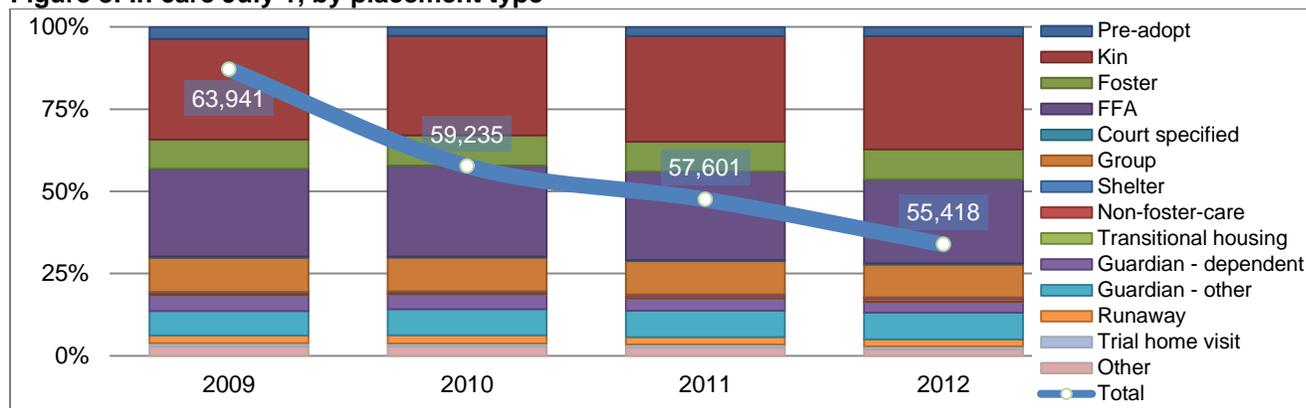
This measure describes the overall foster care caseload over time and the type of placement in which children are living on a specific day, annually. In essence, this is a snapshot in time, repeated over time. Figure 8 below reflects that on any given day more children in foster care are placed with a relative than in any other setting. Also included in the kin category are children who are placed with someone with whom they are familiar, referred to as “Non-related Extended Family Members”.

Over several years, this measure reflects the effect various practice and policy changes may have on the type of placements in which children live. For instance, kinship placements began to decline beginning in 2000 from 44,000 children placed with relatives to 19,000 in 2012<sup>6</sup>. This decline was driven primarily by the implementation of

<sup>6</sup> Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Yee, H., Hightower, L., Lou, C., Peng, C., King, B., Henry, C., & Lawson, J. (2013). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved 4/23/2013, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)>

the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, a program that provides subsidies for children who leave foster care to guardianship with a relative.

**Figure 8: In care July 1, by placement type**



		Jul 1, 2009	Jul 1, 2010	Jul 1, 2011	Jul 1, 2012
<b>Pre-adopt</b>	%	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
	n	2,344	1,612	1,577	1,524
<b>Kin</b>	%	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>35%</b>
	n	19,519	17,929	18,547	19,126
<b>Foster</b>	%	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>
	n	5,735	5,426	5,203	5,072
<b>FFA</b>	%	<b>27%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>25%</b>
	n	17,044	16,388	15,500	14,096
<b>Court specified</b>	%	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	n	260	209	198	199
<b>Group</b>	%	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>
	n	6,611	6,063	5,857	5,573
<b>Shelter</b>	%	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	n	169	140	118	149
<b>Non-foster-care</b>	%	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>
	n	373	378	501	577
<b>Transitional housing</b>	%	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	n	140	97	85	79
<b>Guardian - dependent</b>	%	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>
	n	3,026	2,556	2,113	1,768
<b>Guardian - other</b>	%	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>
	n	4,803	4,743	4,649	4,494
<b>Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>63,941</b>	<b>59,235</b>	<b>57,601</b>	<b>55,418</b>

Prepared by the staff of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, CSSR, UC Berkeley [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)

## 8. Placement Stability

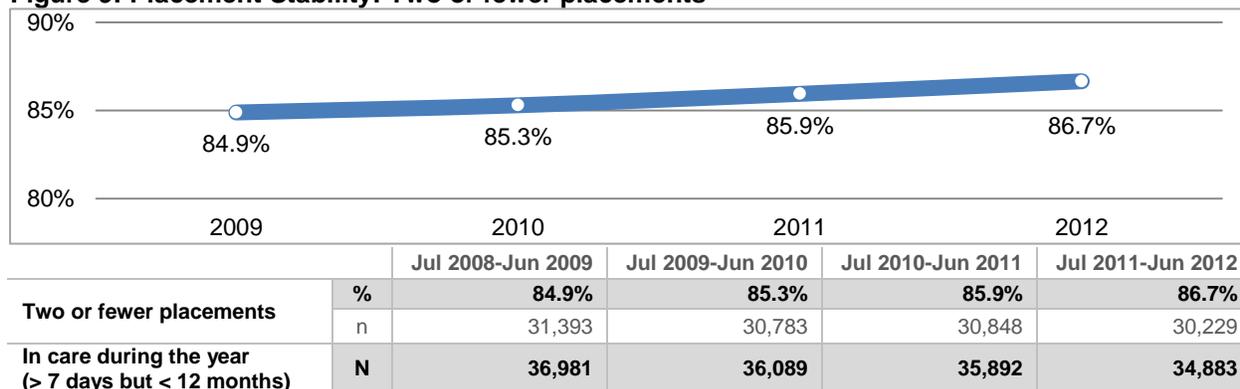
This measure describes the percentage of children who have been in foster care at least eight days and less than 12 months who have had no more than two placements. This is one of three federal performance measures on placement stability; the other two measures calculate varying time intervals: 12-24 months and greater than 24 months.

Because placement changes can be disruptive to children, it is important to pay attention to the number of placement changes. Stability increases a child's ability to develop healthy, secure relationships and maintain educational achievement. It also increases the opportunity for a child to develop positive, caring relationships with their foster caregivers. Such relationships sometimes result in a child becoming a permanent member of the family when returning home is not possible. When using these data, it is

also important to recognize that individual placement changes can be made for positive reasons such as a child moving from a group home to a relative or to a placement to be with siblings.

As shown in Figure 9 below, the state has improved slightly on this measure of placement stability by two percent between 2009 and 2012, achieving the national standard of 86 percent in 2012.

**Figure 9: Placement Stability: Two or fewer placements**



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## 9. Median Length of Stay

This measure describes the median amount of time children spend in foster care. Length of stay is counted in days and describes how much time it takes for half (50 percent) of the children who entered foster care during a calendar year to exit. This measure provides a useful way to summarize, with a single number, what might be considered a “typical” length of stay in foster care. The median differs from the average in that it reduces the effect of outliers such as those children who are in care for very long or very brief periods.

Since foster care is intended to be a temporary intervention for children until they can return home safely or leave foster care to a permanent family, this measure tracks whether children who enter the foster care system exit the system in a timely manner. For children entering in calendar years 2006 through 2009, half of those from the most recent cohort exited 27 days sooner than the earlier cohort, a six percent decrease (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Median length of stay**



Prepared by the staff of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, CSSR, UC Berkeley [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)

### C: Permanency Constellation:

Once children enter out-of-home care, the driving goal of any agency is to provide children with safe, permanent and stable homes. The constellations of permanency outcomes that are provided illustrate the types of exits and lengths of time children spend in foster care prior to their exit for the following reasons:

- Reunification
- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Emancipation (youth that “age out” of foster care)
- Other non-permanency exits such as those children who are adjudicated, incarcerated or ran away.

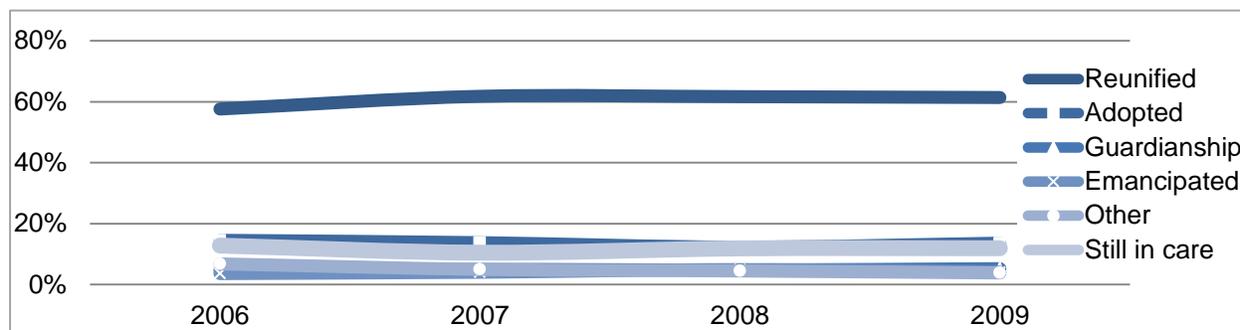
Because it is important that children live with permanent, caring families, when a child has been removed from his or her family, the most desirable goal is to return that child home as soon as it is safe. When that is not possible, the goal is most often to achieve a permanent family through adoption or guardianship.

#### **1. Permanency within 36 months over Time**

This measure describes if and how children achieved a permanent family within 36 months of entering foster care. Specifically, it looks three years later at a cohort of children that entered foster care during a six-month period and identifies the percentage that are still in care or, if they left foster care, what percentages were reunified, adopted, entered a guardianship, emancipated or were discharged for some other reason.

As shown in Figure 11, this measure has been relatively stable over time with approximately 60 percent of children reunifying with their family. About 12 percent of children are still in foster care after 36 months. As indicated below, for children entering during the January through June interval, there has been a moderate increase in the proportion of children exiting to reunification (a seven percent change increase in three years).

**Figure 11: Six-month entry cohort: permanency within 36 months**



		Jan-Jun 2006	Jan-Jun 2007	Jan-Jun 2008	Jan-Jun 2009
<b>Reunified</b>	%	<b>58%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>61%</b>
	n	8,444	9,394	8,001	7,564
<b>Adopted</b>	%	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>
	n	2,127	2,091	1,595	1,673
<b>Guardianship</b>	%	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
	n	687	756	621	643
<b>Emancipated</b>	%	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>
	n	527	613	637	502
<b>Other</b>	%	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>
	n	995	758	578	468
<b>Still in care</b>	%	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
	n	1,873	1,590	1,540	1,469
<b>Entries during 6-month period</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>14,653</b>	<b>15,202</b>	<b>12,972</b>	<b>12,319</b>

Prepared by the staff of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, CSSR, UC Berkeley [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)

## 2. Timeliness and Permanence of Reunification

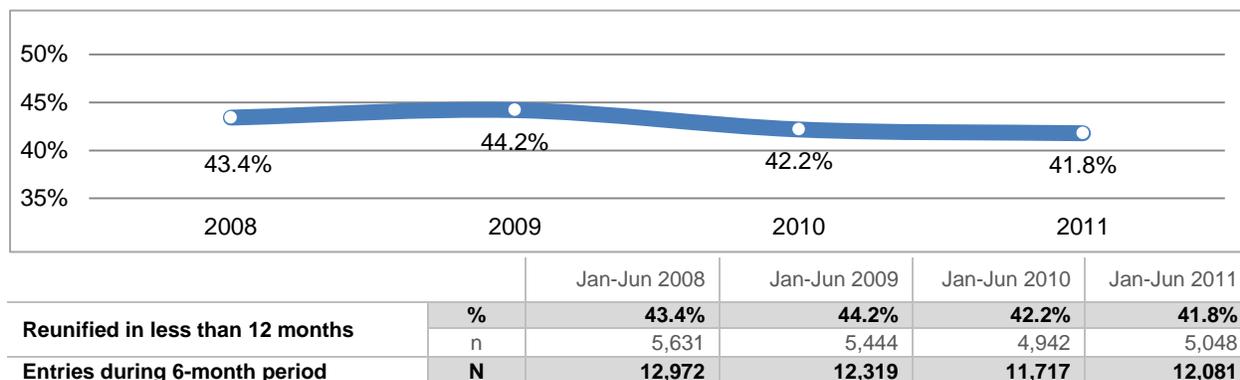
Although the first choice for permanence is to achieve reunification quickly and as safely as possible in order to minimize disruption to the family, reunification cannot be considered a successful outcome on its own. Reunifying children quickly needs to be balanced by ensuring the home is safe and stable. Factors that led to a child being removed must be sufficiently resolved so the child may return and remain at home. Recurrence of abuse or neglect and subsequent interaction with the child welfare system through removal from the home are considered particularly unsuccessful outcomes.

While there is overlap, the two measures are not restricted to the same population of children.

### Reunification within 12 Months

Reunification within 12 months is one of four federal measures on timeliness and permanency of reunification that describes the percentage of children who entered foster care within a six-month period and reunified within 12 months of being removed from their families. Specifically, this population is children (0-17 years old) entering foster care for the first time. The year describes the year of entry to foster care and refers to the January through June interval. As shown in Figure 12 below, there has been little variation in the measure; there has been a modest decrease in the proportion of children who reunified within 12 months (less than four percent) and California has not met the national standard of 48.4 percent.

**Figure 12: Six-month entry cohort: Reunified in less than 12 months**

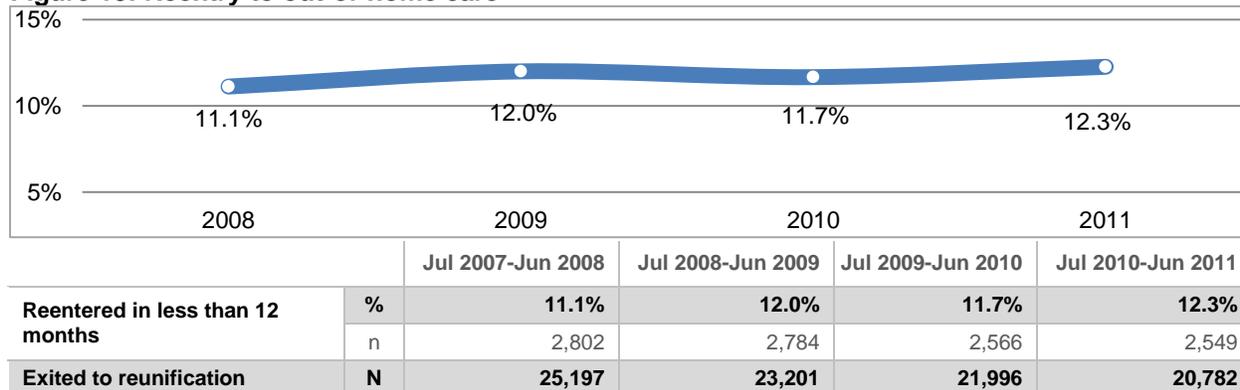


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### Foster Care Reentry Rate Following Reunification

The reentry measure describes the percentage of children reentering foster care within a year of returning to their families. Specifically, this is the percentage of children (0-17 years old) who reentered foster care after leaving foster care to return to their family. The year in Figure 13 is the time period in which children left foster care. Foster care reentry rates following reunification provide helpful information in determining whether or not child welfare policies and practices are effective in successfully transitioning children back into their families of origin and whether the services being provided to the children and families during reunification are effective. As illustrated below, the proportion of children reentering care within a year has increased by ten percent between 2008 and 2011. The national goal for reentry is 9.9 percent of children reentering care 12 months following reunification.

**Figure 13: Reentry to out-of-home care**



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### 3. Status at Exit for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

These data track the status of foster youth at the point they exit foster care at age 18 or older due to having reached the age of majority while still under the jurisdiction of the court. Foster youth who have legally emancipated from foster care under the age of 18 are also included in this measure. The data for 2012 (Figure 14) reflect changes in youth exiting care with the implementation of AB 12, the extension of foster care

benefits beyond age 18. This means fewer youth are exiting foster care; therefore, the number of youth included in these data are fewer. The information gathered from this population is reported in percentages and is grouped into five categories including:

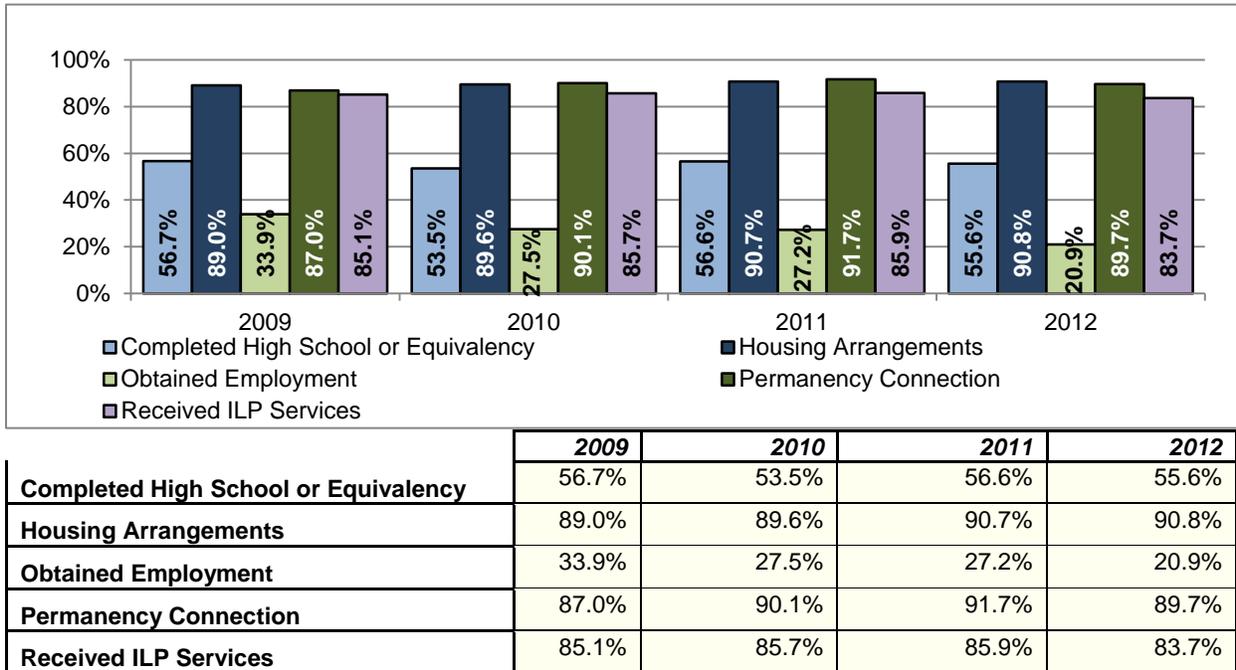
- **Educational Achievement** is a measure of the percent of foster youth who exit with a high school diploma or equivalent. This does not include youth who have obtained proficiency exams or certificates.
- **Employment** is a measure of the percent of foster youth who are employed on a full-time or part-time basis upon leaving foster care. Employment is important as work experience will help youth build résumés for future employment. However, it is not expected that all youth would need full-time employment to support themselves as some may enter college or vocational school.
- **Housing arrangements** is a measure of the percent of foster youth who have any type of housing plan for leaving care, including plans such as living free of rent with friends, living with a biological parent and arrangements for subsidized or transitional housing.
- **Permanency connection** is a measure of percentage of youth who report having at least one adult they can go to for advice, support and guidance.
- **An Independent Living Program (ILP) service** is a measure of the percentage of youth who have received ILP services prior to exiting foster care. Counties are required to offer ILP services at age 16. Youth participation in ILP is voluntary.

As shown in Figure 14 below, although the majority of these outcomes have remained relatively unchanged, there have been notable declines in the number of youth who reported obtaining employment, from nearly 34 percent in 2009 to 21 percent in 2012, representing a 38 percent change decrease in three years. These trends are consistent with national patterns on unemployment<sup>7</sup>. Another contributing factor could be the economic downturn resulting in youth ages 16 to 19 years old experiencing the lowest rate of employment. The greatest rate of decline among this population occurred between 2011 and 2012 (from 27.2 percent to 20.9 percent; 23 percent change decrease). The decline may be attributed to the implementation (or anticipated implementation) of AB 12, whereby a greater number of youth may elect to pursue college or vocational school in lieu of employment as a requirement to participate in the program.

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<sup>7</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistic: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm>

**Figure 14: Status at Exit of Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**



Data Source: SOC 405E, Exit Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Quarterly Statistical.  
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