

Building Connections for Kentucky's Children



Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board

2020 Annual Report



CFCRB volunteers continue advocacy during COVID-19 pandemic



Chief Justice of Kentucky
John D. Minton Jr.

In spite of the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers ensured that children in care continued to have their cases reviewed in a timely manner.

The volunteers quickly moved from in-person to remote operations during this public health crisis, cementing their reputation for being undeterred, hard-working advocates for Kentucky's children.

These citizens of all ages and professional backgrounds donate their time to review the case of every child in care due to dependency, neglect and abuse. These reviews are required by law, with the judge receiving recom-

mendations on the best option for giving a child a safe and permanent home.

This service is all the more important as Kentucky continues to report a large number of children in the custody of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. During Fiscal Year 2020, there were 13,838 children in care, with 744 CFCRB volunteers reviewing 23,641 cases.

The Department of Family & Juvenile Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts oversees this important program and I appreciate the court staff who support it.

I hope you will enjoy reading the 2020 CFCRB Annual Report. To learn how to be a CFCRB volunteer, visit kycourts.gov, click on Family & Juvenile Services under Court Programs and then click on Citizen Foster Care Review Board.

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Progress Report on Kentucky Children in Foster Care

Fiscal Year 2020: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Tom Stevenson
State Chair
Citizen Foster Care Review Board

It is my pleasure to present the 2020 Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board Annual Report.

This report takes a detailed look at the children served by the CFCRB program, the activities of the review boards, and the support services provided by the Department of Family & Juvenile Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

CFCRB volunteers carry out the mandated review of children in out-of-home care as required by federal law. They provide a direct service to judges by giving findings and recommendations to the court on every child reviewed by the local boards. The intent is to improve services for children while they're in out-of-home care and work to attain permanency for them in a timely manner.

The CFCRB also provides legislative support by submitting recommendations for policy reform to improve outcomes for Kentucky's children.

The COVID-19 pandemic required the CFCRB to adapt its procedures so the program could continue to meet federal and state requirements for child welfare. Staff and volunteers began working remotely and handling interested party reviews, case file reviews and court hearings virtually.

Although we made many changes in a short time, the modifications actually had a positive effect on our families. For example, volunteers noted increased participation from the parties involved in interested party reviews. And when the Cabinet for Health and Family Services began providing telehealth services to families and children, it helped overcome previous barriers to attendance.

The nationwide focus on racial injustice has empowered us to dig deeper in our approach to addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the child welfare system. With the disparate number of children of color in foster care, we must make smart, data-based decisions about how to achieve better outcomes.

This year presented a unique set of challenges and I'm incredibly proud of our courageous CFCRB volunteers who rose to the occasion to serve the children of Kentucky.

Snapshot of Kentucky's Foster Care System

CFCRB Reviews. In FY 2020, 744 CFCRB volunteers conducted 12,008 paper reviews and 11,633 interested party reviews for a total of 23,641 reviews of 13,838 children. In FY 2019, there were 760 volunteers who conducted 27,530 reviews of 13,737 children.

Length of Stay. The average length of stay for children in care was 21.5 months, a slight increase over the 17.5 months reported in FY 2019.

Reunification. Of the children reviewed by the CFCRB, 36 percent were released through reunification to parents or primary caregivers in FY 2020. Another 25 percent were released through placement with relatives. These numbers remain consistent with FY 2019.

Exiting Care. In FY 2020, 12% of youth aged out of care, which remained consistent with FY 2019.

Ages of Children Served. Of the children reviewed by the CFCRB, those age 5 and younger remain the largest age group at 34%, with ages 11 to 15 at 23% and ages 6 to 10 at 22%.

Number of Placements. Children experienced an average of 1.98 placements per commitment, a slight decrease from the 2.02 placements in FY 2019. This figure is meeting the federal expectation of no more than 2 placements until a child achieves permanency.

Finalized Adoption. In FY 2020, 25% of children achieved adoption, a slight increase over 22% in FY 2019. Children with a finalized adoption spent 35.5 months in care, which was consistent with FY 2019.

Interested Party Reviews. In FY 2020, CFCRB volunteers conducted 11,633 IPRs on 7,357 children.

CFCRB Meetings. The number of boards using IPR as the standard for reviewing all cases remained at 74%, the same as in 2019. However, the use of IPR has grown from 59% in 2015.

Barriers to Permanency. In FY 2020, CFCRB boards reported that the top three barriers to permanency were substance use disorder, chronic mental health issues and domestic violence.

CFCRB volunteers take child advocacy to Frankfort

2021 Recommendations for Legislative and Policy Reform

The Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board is required by Kentucky Revised Statute 620.320(5) to evaluate and make annual recommendations to the Supreme Court of Kentucky, the governor and the Legislative Research Commission regarding the laws, practices, policies and procedures that affect permanence for children in out-of-home placement.

The CFCRB State Board approved the following legislative recommendations for 2021:

CFCRB Board Membership

Recommends amending KRS 620.190(2)(e) to allow non-Department for Community Based Services employees in the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to serve on local CFCRB boards.

Statewide Expansion of Family Court

Supports a future judicial redistricting plan that brings Family Court to every county in the commonwealth. The CFCRB has historically regarded the statewide expansion of Family Court as a high priority due to improved outcomes for families and children who have access to the expanded services provided by Family Court.

Equitable and Affordable Broadband Service Delivery

Recommends that the KentuckyWired broadband project provide equity in service delivery so that all Kentucky families and children can afford access to the internet and successfully participate in online services, including child welfare, educational and medical platforms.

Address Disproportionality and Disparity

Supports legislative and policy efforts that require child-serving agencies to gather data and use it to address disproportionality and disparity affecting children and families. This can be done through annual strategic plans and reduction goals. The recommendations are to:

- Review and update criteria identifying youth risk factors that may lead to negative activities such as gang recruitment and involvement.

- Create and promote strength-based, asset-building services and trainings to assist families and youth affected by these behaviors.
- Collect and share data related to these activities.

CFCRB volunteers met with legislators on Children's Advocacy Day

Several CFCRB volunteers met with legislators at the Capitol in Frankfort Jan. 23 for the 2020 Children's Advocacy Day.

The event continued an annual tradition that began in 2004 as a way to let advocates across the state join forces on behalf of the safety, health, education and economic well-being of children and families.

The CFCRB was one of the sponsors of the event.

CFCRB Mission

To ensure safe, permanent, timely placement of Kentucky's children in out-of-home care.

CFCRB Vision

With respect to the children in care:

To ensure adequate and necessary services are provided to families and children with the utmost importance given to safety, well-being and permanency.

With respect to the judges we serve:

To provide timely, accurate and sufficiently detailed information about children in care so as to promote knowledgeable permanency decisions.

With respect to the CFCRB volunteers:

To promote awareness and understanding regarding children's issues through educational opportunities at the local, regional and state levels.

With respect to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services:

To provide meaningful, respectful feedback regarding paths to permanency.

Public weighs in on foster care system at regional forums

The Kentucky General Assembly passed House Bill 1 in 2018 to reform Kentucky's foster care system by removing barriers to children being placed in permanent homes.

HB 1 amended KRS 620.270 to require the Citizen Foster Care Review Board to participate in regional community forums at least twice a year and present the findings to the Supreme Court, governor and legislature. These forums allow the public to discuss their concerns and identify barriers to the safety, well-being and timely permanency of children in care.

The following summary of findings from the Fall 2019 CFCRB Regional Forums is based on concerns and recommendations from the public and have been categorized by party or stakeholder group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Spring 2020 forums were cancelled and the CFCRB began conducting virtual forums in July 2020, the start of FY 2021.

Note: These comments do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Kentucky Court of Justice elected officials and employees.

Fall 2019 Regional Forums: Issues & Concerns

Children

- Provide medical/educational services for children already adopted.
- Lack of resources for services, such as play therapy.
- Foster/adoptive parents need to participate in therapy to better understand the child.
- Address trauma when child initially enters care.
- Need frequent assessments for children in congregate care settings so they don't linger in this type of placement.
- Adoption process too lengthy; negatively impacts children waiting in care who are legally free to be adopted.

Foster & Adoptive Parents

- Need more respite for foster parents.
- Need more medically complex foster homes.
- Guardian ad litem to be accessible to foster parents with concerns.
- Need more resources for adoptive parents, such as support groups.
- Foster parents need centralized location for support, such as a social media page.
- Length of DCBS foster parent training is excessive.
- Empower foster parents by including legislative updates on their rights during foster parent training.

Biological Parents

- Need access to family preservation/reunification services.
- Lack of family engagement in case planning.
- Need more focus on parent's trauma to improve long-term outcomes for children.
- Need more parent mentors.

Department for Community Based Services

- Social workers overwhelmed with large caseloads causing many to leave DCBS.
- Acknowledge/assist social workers who have secondary trauma from the job.
- More START parental sobriety programs would be beneficial.
- Explore creating a second shift for DCBS staff to improve service delivery and work environment.

- Need more therapeutic foster homes.
- Need more programs/placements for Department for Juvenile Justice youth who have also been placed with DCBS. Certain placement criteria can result in some youth being placed far from their families, making reunification more difficult.
- DCBS needs to determine staff caseloads based on level of child's needs; staff with high-risk cases should have fewer cases than those with lower-risk cases.
- DCBS should attempt to place children in foster homes near biological parents to improve reunification services.
- DCBS to refine internal case transfer process so new case workers can make smooth transition with child/family.

Relatives/Kinship Care

- Better communication between DCBS and relative caregivers/fictive kin regarding benefits/supports.
- Relative placements should receive same payment as foster parents.

Judges & Court Personnel

- Guardians ad litem need to be more accountable.
- Increase foster parents' participation in child's court hearings.
- More flexibility in court-ordered visitation with biological parents.
- Need to streamline termination of parental rights appeals process as it often takes more than a year to be decided.
- Expand Family Court to make it available statewide.
- Provide legal representation for DCBS in DNA court hearings.

Overall Comments & Suggestions

- Substance use/poverty continue to contribute to removals.
- Parents who criminally abuse their children should be charged and prosecuted.
- Vulnerable families need assistance navigating child welfare and court systems.
- DCBS and courts waiting to see results of Family First legislation.

CFCRB Overview by the Numbers

Out-of-Home Care Demographics

What are the ages of children in foster care?

In FY 2020, the youngest child reviewed by CFCRB volunteers was 5 months old and the oldest was 26 years old (due to extended commitment). The average age remained constant at 10 years. Of the children reviewed by the CFCRB, those age 5 and younger remain the largest age group at 34%, with ages 11 to 15 at 23% and ages 6 to 10 at 22%. The age analysis is based on children who were in out-of-home care on June 30, 2020, and includes children who were released from the custody of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services anytime during the fiscal year.

What gender are children in out-of-home care?

The gender of children in out-of-home care is almost evenly split, with 52% male and 48% female.

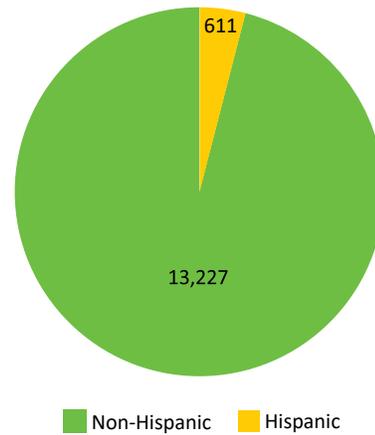
What race are children in foster care?

Of the children in foster care, 73% are Caucasian, 12% are African American, 5% are unable to be determined, 7% are other and 3% are mixed races. The other races include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. In addition, 5% of the children in foster care have Hispanic ethnicity.

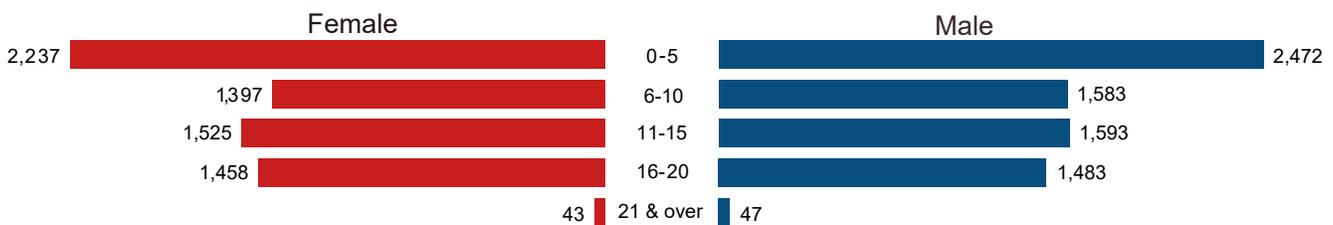
African American youth represent only 9% of Kentucky's population but 12% of children in foster care, which demonstrates the overrepresentation of children of color in foster care. Our goal is to address disproportionality in the child welfare system by focusing on changes in policy and practice at specific contact points.

Note: In March 2018, the CATS system updated its race codes to allow the selection of multiple race types. However, this only affects children who have entered care from March 2018 to the present.

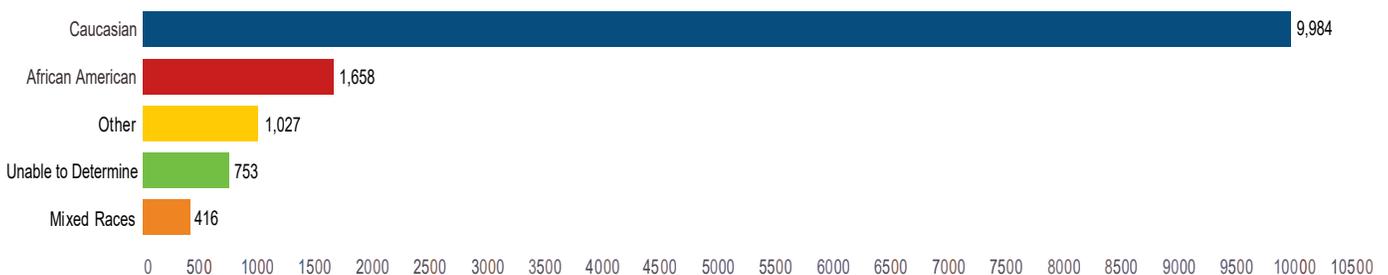
Foster Care Children by Ethnicity



Foster Care Children by Age and Gender



Foster Care Children by Race



Time in Out-of-Home Care

What is the average length of stay by age group for children in out-of-home care?

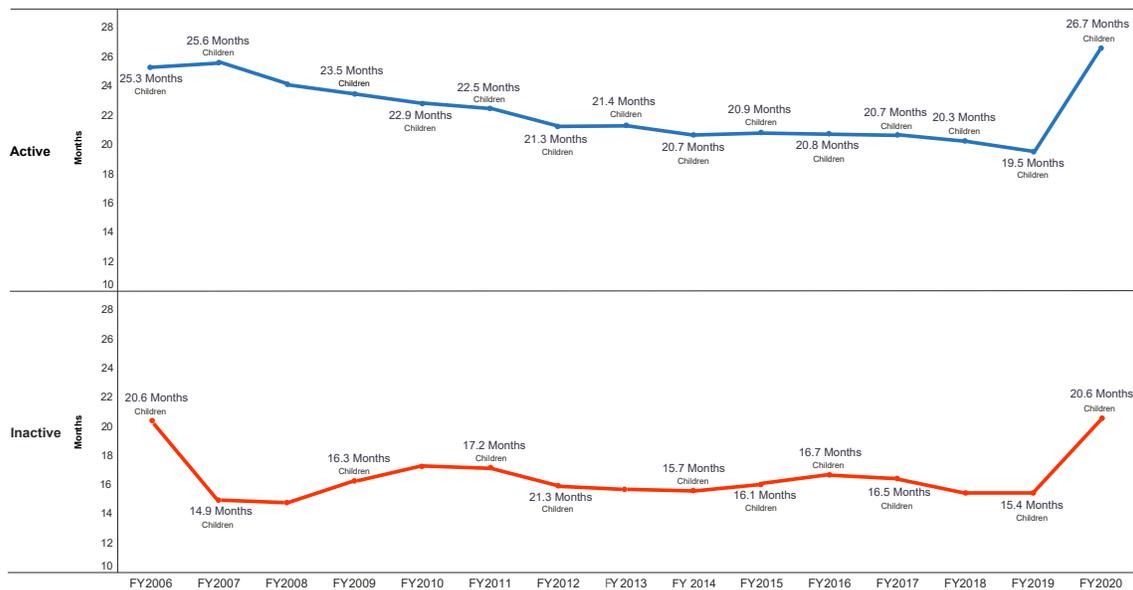
Active children – children who were still in care at the end of FY 2020 – experienced an average length of stay of 27 months. Inactive children – children released at anytime during the fiscal year – experienced an average length of stay of 21 months. The overall average length of stay for FY 2020 was 23.9 months, which is an increase from the average length of stay of 17.5 months in FY 2019.

Children over age 16 continue to remain in care longer than younger children and are experiencing an average of 34 months in care compared with 17 months in care for children age 5 and younger.

It should be noted that in calculating the average length of stay, children who were in care less than 24 hours are counted as “zero” for the length of time in care. These are children who may have been in the process of being removed from the home when a suitable relative assumed custody of the child. When taking into account these zeros, it may actually skew the average to the lower end of the spectrum.

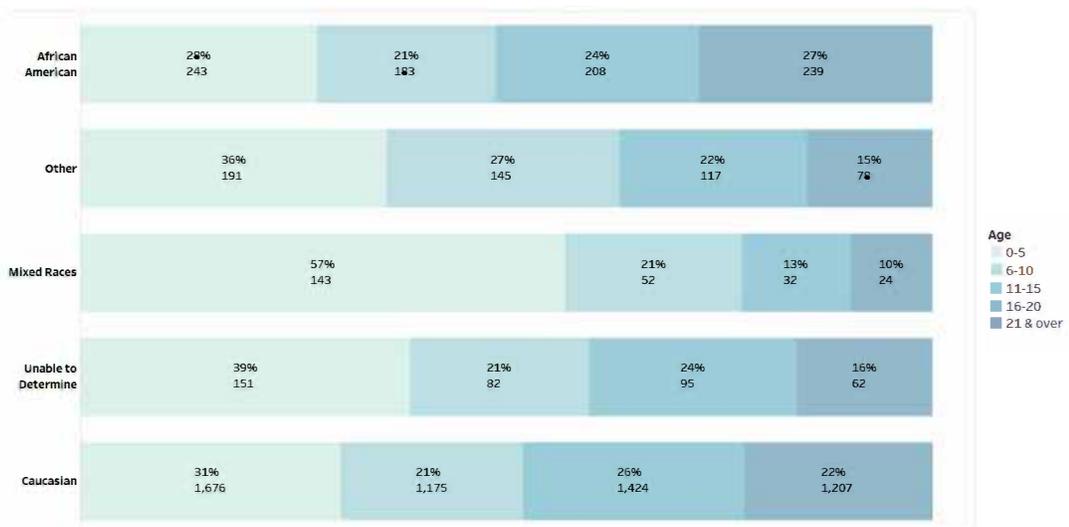
Note: Statistics captured in this chart represent all children whose cases were reviewed between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020. The term “active children” describes those whose cases were reviewed during the fiscal year and who were still in care on June 30, 2020. “Inactive children” describes those whose cases were reviewed during the fiscal year but were released prior to June 30, 2020.

Average Length of Stay in Months



Race and Age of Children Reviewed

Children Active in Care as of June 30, 2020



Exiting Out-of-Home Care

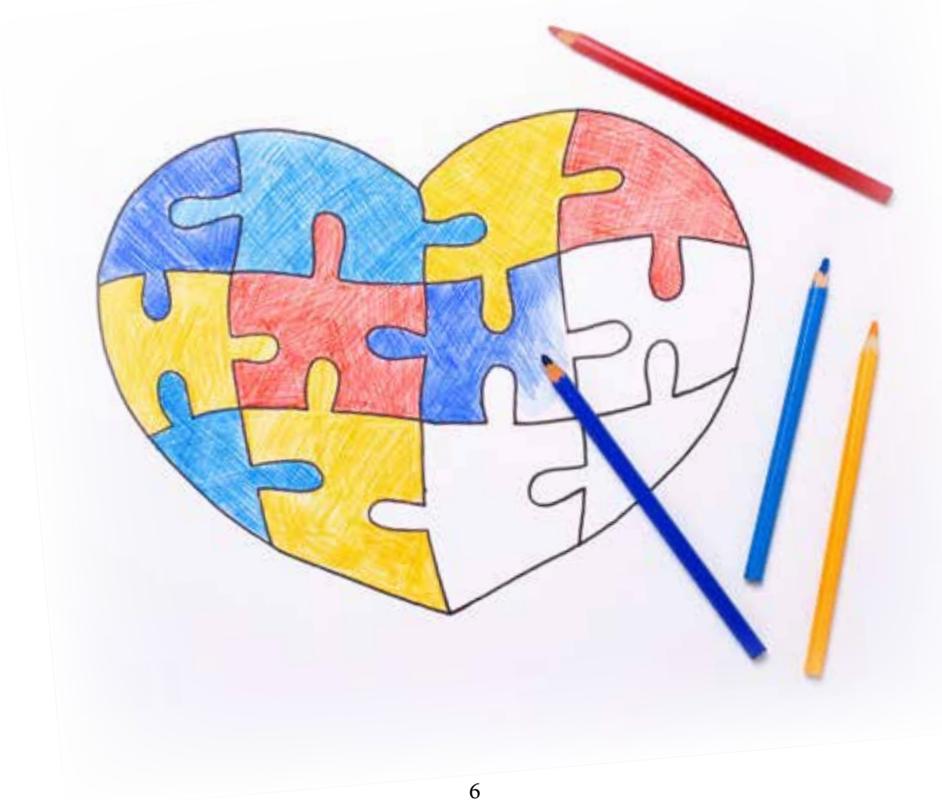
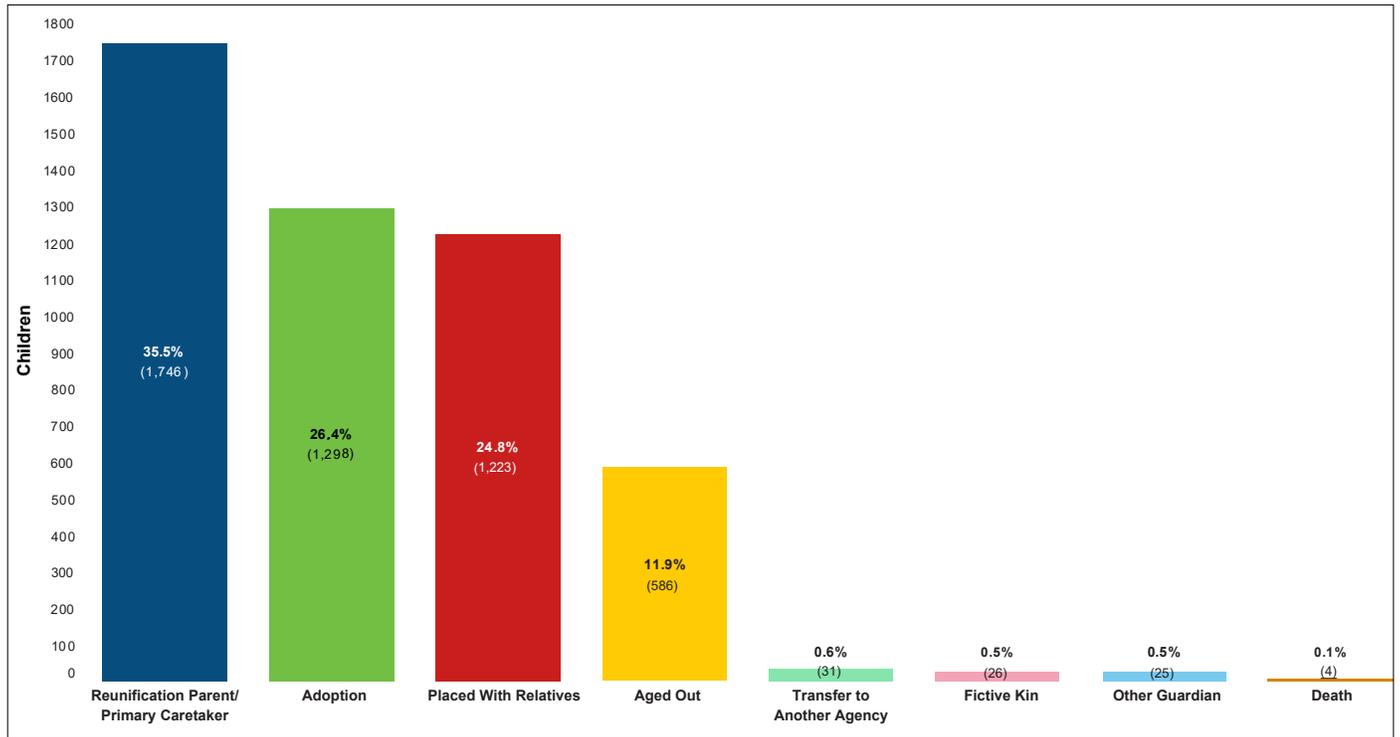
Why are children released from out-of-home care?

The majority of children – 36 percent – was released from care through reunification with parents or primary guardians.

The next largest group of children exiting care – 26 percent – was through adoption.

These percentages are fairly consistent with FY 2019.

Foster Care Children by Exit Type

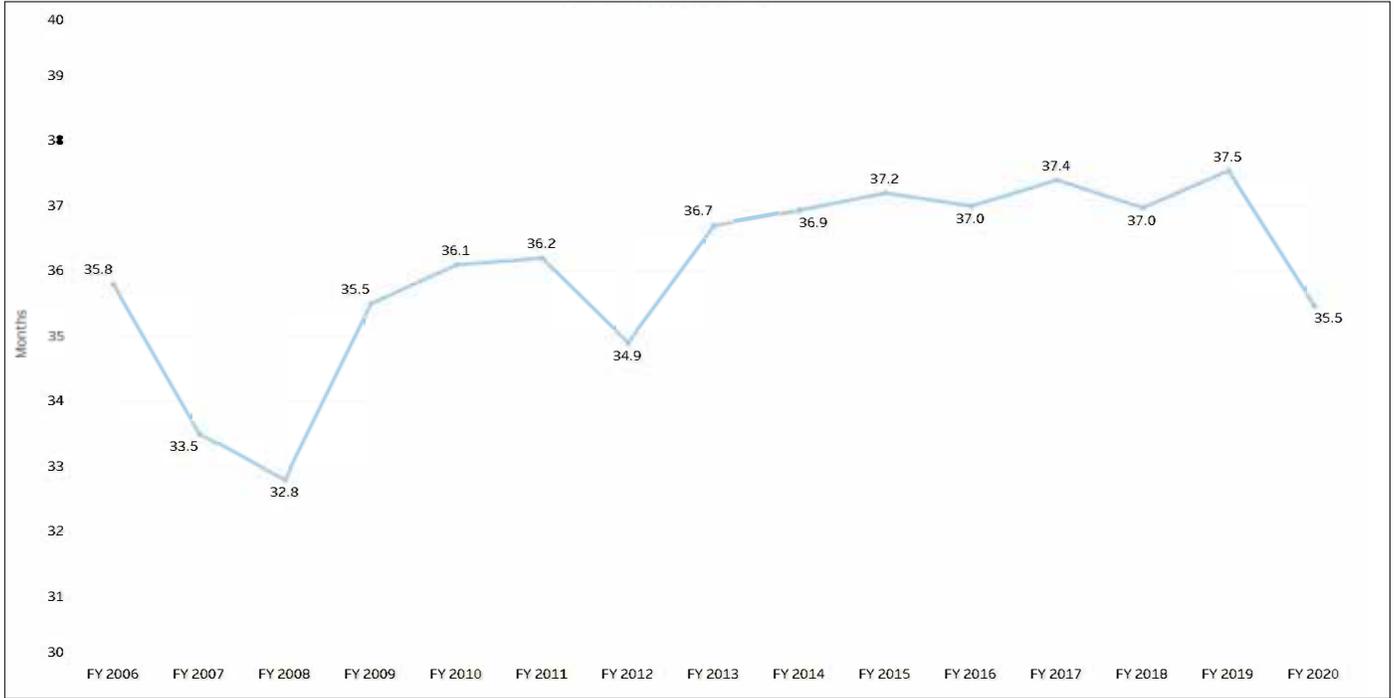


What percentage of children in out-of-home care were adopted?

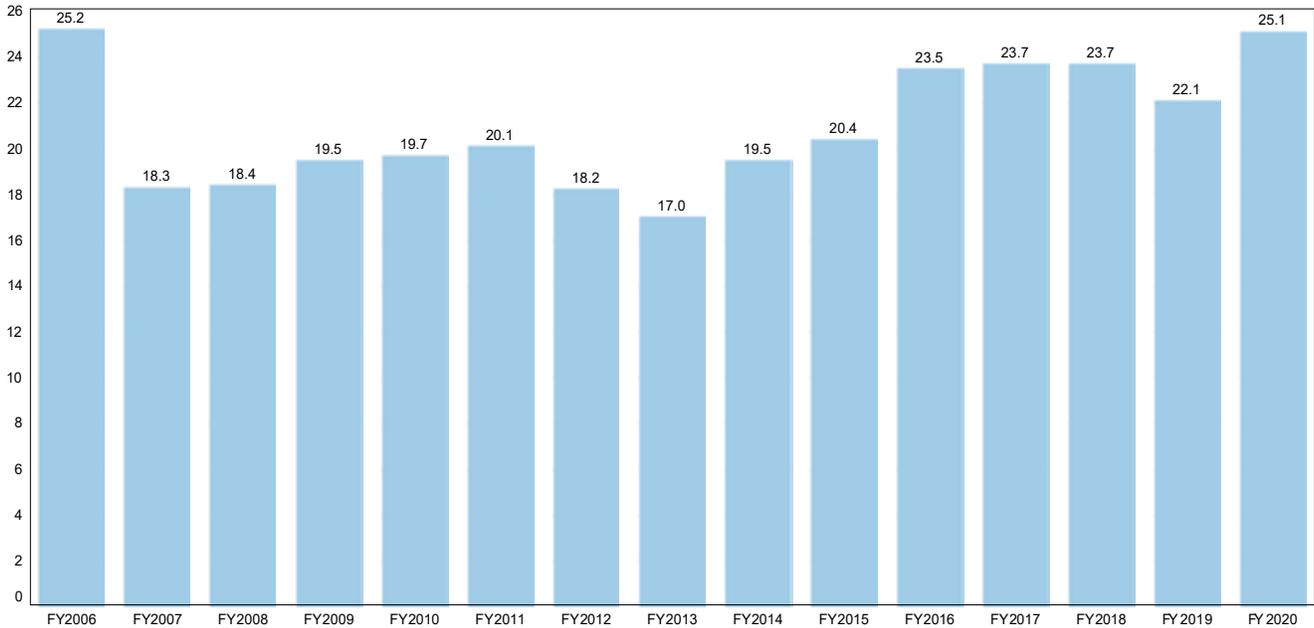
Children who exited care because of a finalized adoption spent 35.5 months in care prior to adoption.

Of the children released from care in FY 2020, 26% achieved permanency through adoption, a slight increase over 22% in FY 2019.

Average Months to Finalized Adoption



Percentage of Adoptions Per Fiscal Year



* Data Source: The Children's Automated Tracking System, the electronic case management system for AOC Citizen Foster Care Review Boards.
 * Statistics in this chart represent all children whose cases were reviewed between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

Placement Stability

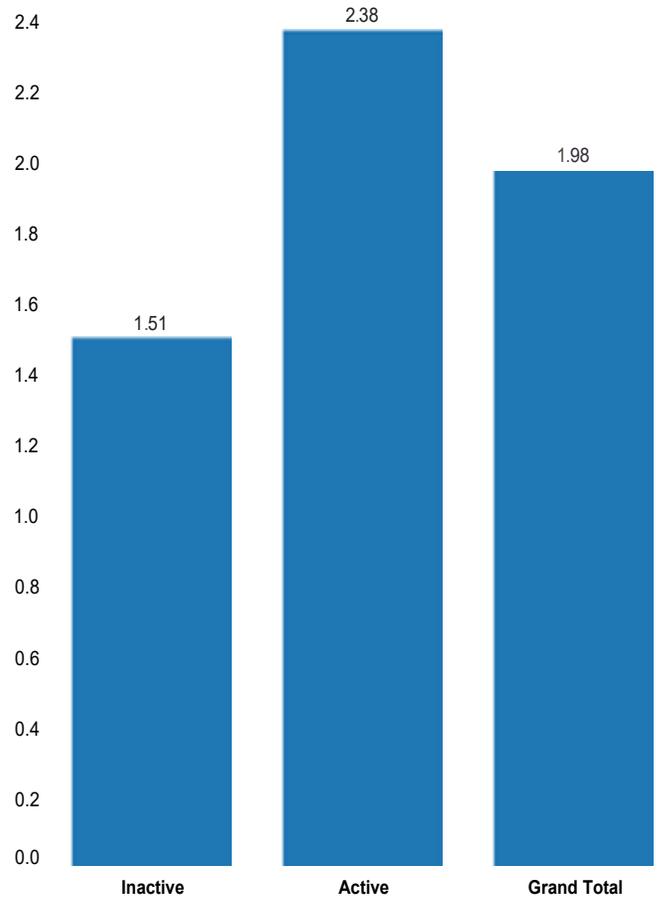
What do fewer out-of-home placements mean for children in foster care?

Fewer placements create stability and lessen the trauma for children in care. Children experienced an average of 1.98 placements per commitment in FY 2020, a slight decrease over 2.0 placements in FY 2019.

While that number could improve, it still meets the federal expectation of 2 placements for a child in out-of-home care.

The number of placements per commitment for children who were released from care was 1.5, which stayed the same as in FY 2019.

Average Placements Per Child



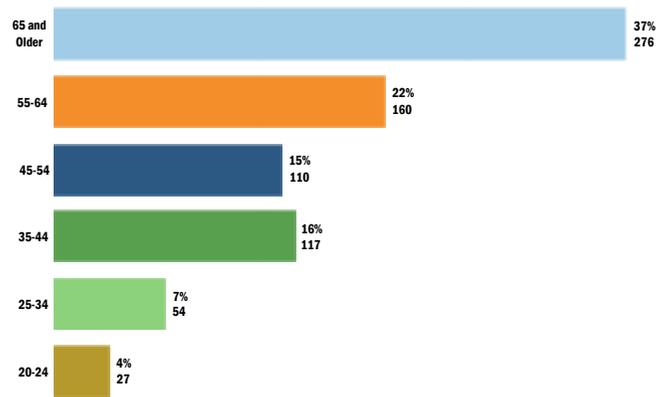
Profile of CFCRB Volunteers

Who are the CFCRB Volunteers?

CFCRB volunteers come from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, but all share a genuine concern for children and their welfare.

Of the 744 volunteers, 85% are female and 42% have backgrounds in education, medicine, law, social work and psychology. They range in age from 18 to 90, with an average age of 54. Of the volunteers, 91% are Caucasian, 8% are African American and 1% are considered other. The average length of service is six years, which demonstrates their commitment to the children they serve.

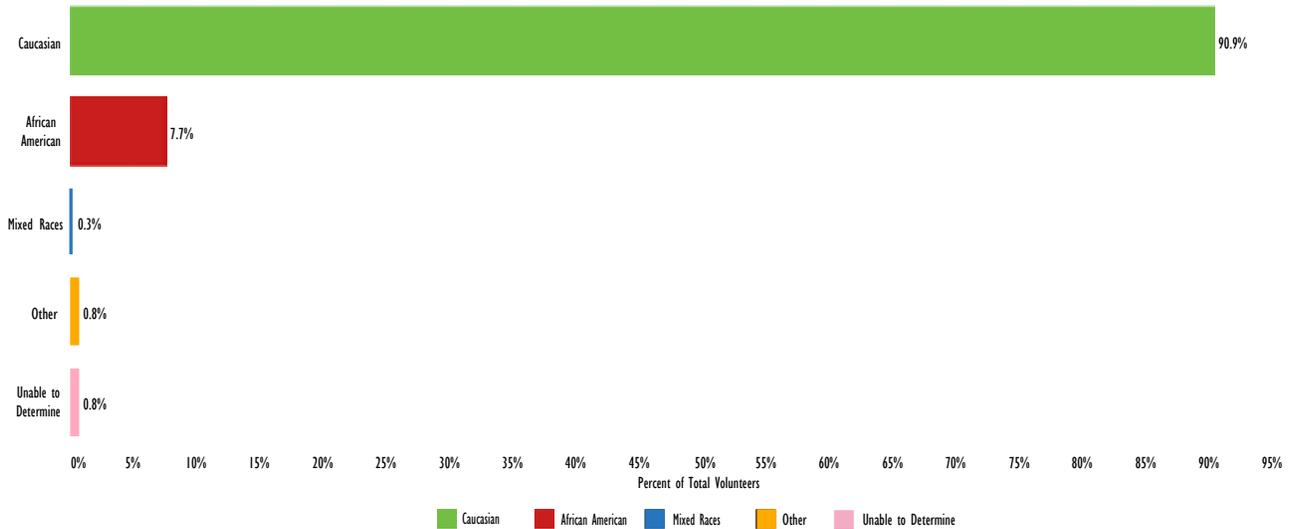
Volunteers by Age Group



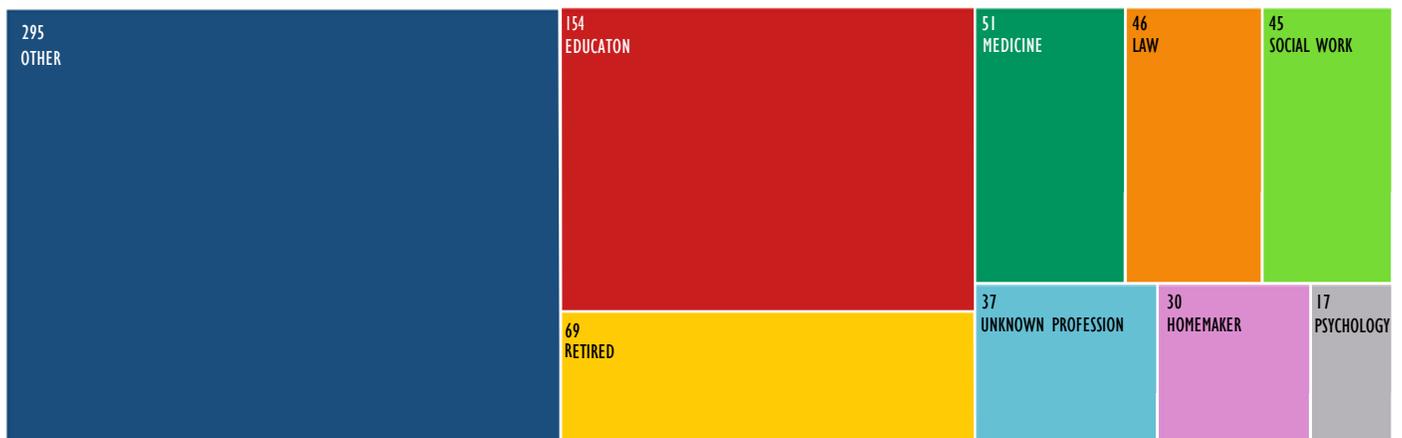
Volunteers by Gender



Volunteers by Race



Volunteers by Profession



Activity for FY 2020: Case Review Boards & Interested Party Review Boards

Board Name	Case Review Boards		Interested Party Review Boards		Grand Total	
	Children	Reviews	Children	Reviews	Children	Reviews
ADAIR	16	16	28	46	41	62
ALLEN	68	68	80	127	131	195
ANDERSON	65	105			65	105
BALLARD/CARLISLE			60	92	60	92
BARREN	304	451			304	451
BARREN IPR	1	1	14	14	15	15
BATH/MENIFEE	73	124			73	124
BELL	67	112			67	112
BOONE/GALLATIN	183	373			183	373
BOURBON	47	70			47	70
BOYD	253	413			253	413
BOYD IPR	19	19	36	46	48	65
BOYLE IPR	10	10	100	170	101	180
BREATHITT	15	15	45	72	53	87
BRECKINRIDGE	6	6	70	115	71	121
BULLITT	10	10	90	126	91	136
BULLITT B	7	7	82	122	88	129
BUTLER	10	10	116	166	122	176
CALDWELL/LYON			39	58	39	58
CALLOWAY			116	186	116	186
CAMPBELL 1	94	153	1	1	94	154
CAMPBELL 2	164	287			164	287
CAMPBELL 4 IPR	13	13	72	99	73	112
CARROLL	96	158			96	158
CARTER IPR	42	43	83	132	101	175
CASEY	12	12	12	19	21	31
CHRISTIAN	18	18	115	172	120	190
CHRISTIAN B IPR			104	166	104	166
CLARK	163	260	1	1	164	261
CLARK IPR	7	8	60	114	62	122
CLAY IPR	80	86	63	112	122	198
CLINTON	20	20			20	20
CLINTON IPR	14	14	32	54	38	68
CRITTENDEN			35	58	35	58
DAVISS A			43	66	43	66
DAVISS B	3	3	89	138	90	141
DAVISS C			70	106	70	106
EDMONSON	30	30	36	55	58	85
ELLIOTT/MORGAN IPR	22	22	57	96	68	118
ESTILL IPR	7	7	66	114	66	121
FAYETTE 1 IPR	15	15	102	150	102	165
FAYETTE 2 IPR	16	16	48	70	59	86
FAYETTE 4 IPR	37	38	48	65	74	103
FAYETTE A	79	122			79	122
FAYETTE B	35	73			35	73
FAYETTE C	77	125			77	125
FAYETTE D	99	172			99	174
FAYETTE E IPR			59	107	59	107
FAYETTE F IPR	6	6	37	51	39	57
FAYETTE G IPR	32	32	33	48	54	80
FAYETTE H	50	77	1	1	50	78
FAYETTE I IPR	18	19	47	59	57	78
FAYETTE I PAPER BOARD	45	52	1	1	45	53
FAYETTE J	54	117			54	117
FAYETTE K	76	82			76	82
FAYETTE L	68	100			68	100
FLEMING/ROBERTSON	52	75			52	75
FLOYD	71	80	76	107	119	187
FRANKLIN	154	265			154	265
FRANKLIN IPR	10	10	16	28	23	38
FULTON/HICKMAN			36	71	36	71
GARRARD IPR	22	22	36	62	44	84
GRANT	117	179			117	179
GRAVES			109	161	109	161
GRAVES B			16	20	16	20
GRAYSON	107	136	82	82	153	218
GRAYSON A	23	23	55	78	64	101
Grayson B			5	5	5	5
GREEN	2	2	4	13	6	15
GREENUP/LEWIS IPR	13	13	91	142	102	155
HANCOCK			11	19	11	19
HARDIN A	48	48	127	167	165	215
HARDIN B	54	54	137	198	181	252
HARDIN C	57	59	129	184	178	243
HARDIN D	88	88	139	182	213	270
HARLAN IPR	18	19	37	59	49	78
HARRISON IPR	24	24	58	71	76	95
HARRISON/NICHOLAS IPR			49	49	49	49
HART	39	39	37	60	73	99
HENDERSON	12	12	88	132	88	144
HENRY IPR	17	17	23	28	31	45
HOPKINS			90	146	90	146
JACKSON IPR	58	59	43	59	77	118
JEFFERSON 1	175	404	5	5	175	409
JEFFERSON 1/3 IPR			42	42	42	42
JEFFERSON 2	192	319	1	1	192	320
JEFFERSON 3	116	239	1	1	116	240
JEFFERSON 4	164	292			164	292
JEFFERSON 5	13	13	70	114	77	127
JEFFERSON 5A	7	7	72	124	79	131

continued on page 11

Interested Party Review Boards: Activity for FY 2020

continued from page 10

Board Name	Case Review Boards		Interested Party Review Boards		Grand Total	
	Children	Reviews	Children	Reviews	Children	Reviews
JEFFERSON 6	181	332	1	1	182	333
JEFFERSON 7	9	9	91	138	93	147
JEFFERSON 7A	1	1	93	140	93	141
JEFFERSON 8			101	147	101	147
JEFFERSON 8A	4	4	75	123	76	127
JEFFERSON 9	174	278	1	1	175	279
JEFFERSON 10	190	297	2	2	190	299
JEFFERSON 10 IPR	10	10	60	88	68	98
JESSAMINE IPR	96	124	107	136	161	260
JOHNSON IPR	21	22	62	115	74	137
KENTON 1 IPR	17	17	64	104	73	121
KENTON 2	190	278			190	278
KENTON 3-Campbell	133	212			133	212
KENTON 4 IPR	9	9	59	93	63	102
KENTON 5 IPR	27	28	49	66	67	94
KENTON 6	139	195			139	195
KENTON 7-Campbell	268	448			268	448
KENTON 8 IPR	29	29	58	81	72	110
KENTON STATUS IPR	15	15	22	40	35	55
KNOTT/PERRY IPR	27	28	34	58	48	86
KNOX IPR	72	84	67	104	109	188
LARUE	14	14	13	18	21	32
LAUREL IPR	101	104	148	258	216	362
LAWRENCE IPR	11	11	35	60	40	71
LEE/OWSLEY IPR	1	1	21	36	22	37
LESLIE	30	31	22	34	43	65
LETCHER	15	15	26	47	35	62
LINCOLN IPR	57	65	45	54	82	119
LIVINGSTON			12	20	12	20
LOGAN			70	112	70	112
MADISON A IPR	49	50	129	173	157	223
MADISON B	135	211	1	1	136	212
MADISON C	144	223			144	223
MAGOFFIN IPR	12	12	34	52	40	64
MARION/WASHINGTON IPR	21	21	31	46	43	67
MARSHALL	1	1	44	80	45	81
Marshall B			40	65	40	65
MARTIN IPR	11	11	27	44	31	55
MASON/BRACKEN	131	210			131	210
MCCRACKEN A IPR			59	105	59	105
MCCRACKEN B	2	2	63	95	63	97
MCCREARY	32	32	84	157	101	189
MCLEAN			22	33	22	33
MEADE	66	67	123	210	167	277
MERCER IPR	2	2	63	101	64	103
METCALFE	32	32	34	45	50	77
MONROE/CUMBERLAND	13	13	42	66	49	79
MONTGOMERY IPR	40	43	137	216	162	259
MUHLENBERG	14	14	48	73	54	87
NELSON	18	18	35	55	45	73
NICHOLAS IPR	17	17	15	18	30	35
OHIO			176	263	176	263
OLDHAM IPR	14	17	34	63	42	80
OWEN	40	99			40	99
PENDLETON IPR	18	18	32	53	47	71
PERRY	76	136	2	2	77	138
PIKE IPR	102	114	55	70	130	184
POWELL IPR	36	39	56	91	72	130
PULASKI IPR	99	103	91	138	159	241
PULASKI IPR B	28	30	29	36	49	66
ROCKCASTLE IPR	31	31	33	65	56	96
ROWAN A IPR	5	5	46	72	50	77
ROWAN B IPR	3	3	41	66	43	69
RUSSELL	58	68	73	111	107	179
SCOTT	135	220			135	220
SHELBY	106	182			106	182
SHELBY IPR	5	5	20	22	21	27
SIMPSON	24	24	34	56	52	80
SPENCER IPR	23	23	18	26	35	49
TAYLOR	43	49	24	30	56	79
TODD			40	63	40	63
TRIGG	2	2	29	46	31	48
TRIMBLE IPR	17	18	22	30	30	48
UNION			51	81	51	81
WARREN A	97	104			97	104
WARREN A IPR	28	28	48	76	63	104
WARREN B	18	18	56	93	64	111
WARREN C	211	294			211	294
WARREN C IPR	17	17	43	71	54	88
WARREN D IPR	14	14	52	90	61	104
WARREN E IPR	2	2	16	16	16	18
WAYNE	11	12	32	50	41	62
WEBSTER			24	41	24	41
WHITLEY IPR	96	99	126	230	181	329
WOLFE	17	17	42	64	52	81
WOODFORD	45	89			45	89



CFCRB volunteers keep up great work in spite of COVID-19

During a trying year that found us coping with the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed attention on racial inequality, the first word that came to mind when thinking of Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers was “resilient.” Our volunteers and staff put forth every effort to continue advocating for Kentucky’s children in the midst of a crisis and the results were amazing. Their ability to adapt and innovate was exemplary and I will always be thankful for their commitment to children and families in both good times and bad.

As anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Rachel Bingham, Executive Officer

Department of Family & Juvenile Services, Administrative Office of the Courts

Training programs help volunteers stay current, effective

Through training programs offered by the Administrative Office of the Courts, 678 Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers earned 3,220 hours of initial and continuing education in FY 2020. These trainings included:

- CFCRB regional trainings
- Initial and interested party review dual-track trainings
- Chair/vice chair trainings
- Legal trainings for dependency, neglect and abuse cases
- Local trainings focused on children’s issues and approved by local chairs

The regional trainings give CFCRB volunteers six hours of required annual continuing education and are designed to enhance their effectiveness as child advocates. The FY 2020 programs focused on helping volunteers understand the new legislative mandates for improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

The AOC also conducted a round of specialized trainings

in summer 2019 that were sponsored by the Kentucky Court of Justice’s RESTORE Initiative.

The goal of RESTORE – Responsive Education to Support Treatment in Opioid Recovery Efforts – is to expand the KCOJ’s efforts to give judges, circuit court clerks and court personnel the best practices and tools they need to effectively handle cases involving individuals with opioid and substance use disorders. Participants learned about the stigma of addiction, what supports are necessary to sustain long-term recovery and much more. Guest speakers discussed substance use disorder and its impact on youth and families in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

The CFCRB State Board held its annual meeting Nov. 16, 2019. There were 54 chairs of the local review boards in attendance, which gave them the opportunity to participate in the board meeting and in the advanced chair/vice chair training.

More children benefit from an interested party review

Interested party review is an interactive review process that involves Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers, parents, care providers, service providers, Department for Community Based Services personnel, Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteers, and attorneys for children and parents.

The IPR focuses on case plans for the parents and their child and the progress being made to secure permanency for the child. After completing the mandatory review, the Family Services coordinator compiles a comprehensive report of findings and recommendations and submits it to the judge responsible for the case.

In FY 2020, CFCRB volunteers conducted 11,633 of these intensive reviews for 7,357 children, a 7% increase over the number of children who received IPR last year.

The use of IPR as the standard for reviewing cases has grown exponentially since it was implemented in 2009. In its first year, only 16% of the CFCRB boards used IPR, compared with 74% in both FY 2019 and 2020. That means that 122 boards representing 108 counties now use IPR.



Celebrating Positive Outcomes for Children

It truly takes a village to help a child grow and thrive. This section highlights success stories, however big or small, of children and families who have experienced positive impacts despite their involvement in the child welfare system. We appreciate the CFCRB volunteers and staff, judges and Cabinet for Health and Family Services staff for creating the village that makes this good news possible.

Christian County B IPR Board

In May 2020, Christian B IPR Board Chair Savannah Young scheduled an IPR for two children whose mother resides in Germany. The mother reached out to the board's coordinator to confirm that she would attend via the conference call process being used for interested party reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The board was pleased that the mother called in from Germany to take part in the review, as she is working the case plan to have her children returned to her. This was truly a first – an international IPR thanks to this mother participating from Germany.

Clark County IPR Board

After a young boy entered care in August 2017, it wasn't possible for him and his sister to return to their family after termination of parental rights was granted in September 2019.

This child struggled with behaviors that caused placement disruption and was placed in a six homes. He was separated from his sister who had been adopted. He finally found a family who understands his struggles and has sought additional training to provide the best care for him. He found a foster brother who shares a similar past and they help each other. Now the family is ready to adopt him and build a future together. He's finally found a forever home.

McCracken Family Court Judge Henschel

The Department of Family & Juvenile Services works with the Division of Research & Statistics at the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide important data to judges. These data reports allow judges to prioritize hearings of children who are in preadoptive/adoptive placements, in a trial home visit or are nearing age 18. As a result, children are being adopted and achieving permanency more quickly.

When McCracken Family Court Judge Deanna Wise Henschel received our email providing this data on May 15, 2020, she checked on one of the children listed and noticed the adoption petition was filed in March and the guardian ad litem report was the only thing lacking.



Family Court Case Manager Heather Carvell, left, and Family Court Judge Deanna Wise Henschel prepare for court in McCracken County.

Judge Henschel followed up with the attorney and this child's adoption took place May 27 via Skype. This is just one example of how the new triage case management process is being used successfully.

Fayette County J Paper Board

A CFCRB volunteer completed a review on a child interested in gender transition. The judge was unaware of this until receiving the review. Sometimes the smallest bit of information can produce a large change. The judge's statement shows how valuable these reports are. Judges read them, act on them and appreciate the work of volunteers.

"A volunteer's review flagged that this child is thinking about gender transition, which has never been mentioned in all of the many years the child's case has been in court," the judge said. "As a direct consequence of the review, I have appointed a special guardian ad litem for this child, an attorney who provides legal services to LGBTQ kids in care. It is so important that we try to address the concerns for all of the kids in care and this case exemplifies the crucial role of the CFCRB process; were it not for this volunteer's report, I might have never known about this child's situation. So, please thank him for me."

Daviess County C IPR Board

The Daviess C IPR Board would like to applaud the success of a young man their IPR board has reviewed for the last four years. Now age 20, he was recommitted to care when he turned 18. He is now a sophomore at the University of Louisville and has already completed 77 credit hours and maintains a 3.7 GPA. He has used independent living services to improve his life. He has also learned the importance of strong, positive relationships and has distanced himself from negative relationships.

CFCRB volunteers also serve communities in other ways

In addition to reviewing cases of children in out-of-home care, some volunteers for the Citizen Foster Care Review Board go the extra mile by serving other organizations as well. The Union County IPR Board is a great example of how volunteers contribute to their communities.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky recognized Union County's We Educate to End Child Abuse and Neglect program with a 2020 Partners in Prevention Award.

UCWEECAN is one of six exemplary partners that PCAK honored in 2020 for going above and beyond in service to families and children in their region.

In Union County, retired and professional social services providers, educators, CFCRB volunteers and others interested in child welfare are the driving force behind UCWEECAN, which began eight years ago. UCWEECAN supports local families, children and schools by encouraging the county's residents to get involved in local efforts to prevent child abuse and protect children.

Lark Buckman, who organizes and leads UCWEECAN, is also vice chair of the Union County CFCRB. "It is our



CFCRB State Chair Tom Stevenson, left, and Union County CFCRB Vice Chair Lark Buckman are active in preventing child abuse in Union County.

sincere hope that the work of UCWEECAN will impact future generations of Union County leaders and families," Buckman said.

CFCRB State Chair Tom Stevenson is also a UCWEECAN member. Buckman and Stevenson accepted the PCAK award when it was presented virtually on Oct. 28, 2020.

Child and Family Services Reviews rate Kentucky's child welfare system

The Children's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services conducts periodic reviews to assess how well states have conformed to federal child welfare requirements. The Children's Bureau also helps state child welfare agencies identify program strengths and areas that need improvement.

The Child and Family Services Reviews are based on statewide data indicators that provide performance information on a state's child safety and permanency outcomes.

These regular reviews ensure that officials with Kentucky's child welfare system remain aware of areas needing attention so they can focus their efforts and oversight on improving outcomes for children and families.

The Children's Bureau conducted Round 3 reviews in all 50 states between 2015-2018 and Kentucky rated better than the national performance on some data

indicators and below the national performance on others.

Kentucky fared better than national standards in these categories:

- Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care.
- Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 or more months.

Kentucky rated lower than national standards in these categories:

- Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months.
- Reentry to foster care in 12 months.

Kentucky and other states are preparing for Round 4 of the CFSR to begin in Federal Fiscal Year 2022.

Volunteers explain why they have a heart for children in care

Giving a voice to our youngest citizens takes compassion and concern for the welfare of others. We asked some of the Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers why they're so devoted to this important work. Here's what they told us.



Cletus Poat
Chair of McCracken A IPR Board & State Vice-Chair

I was asked to volunteer almost nine years ago. At the time, I was looking for a way to give back to my community. I couldn't have chosen a better way than serving as a member of the CFCRB. The children

in out-of-home care are some of the most vulnerable members of our society and urgently need our help and support. We work to ensure their needs are being met and they are given the opportunity to thrive and succeed. We can truly make a difference in the lives we touch; I find that very rewarding.



Tody Coffey
Serves on 8 Boards

I personally volunteer because I am interested in children. Because I can be an adoptive parent or foster parent at this stage in my life, I am able to contribute to the children who are in care.



Rosalyn Patton-Pelt
Serves on Madison A IPR & Fayette G IPR Boards

My passion for child advocacy is based on the ideology behind this quote – 'Nothing done for children is ever wasted.' Being an adoptive mother of five children has given me experience in the foster care

arena and has exposed me to the most beautiful parts as well as the darkest ones of the system. No one likes to talk about the darkness of the system, but it exists.

Therefore, every child needs a champion running ahead of them, putting out fires along the way. I have the privilege of serving for the CFCRB as well as CASA of Madison and Clark counties. Making children's well-being a priority is how we protect and nurture the future of humankind. Serving on the CFCRB continues to be a wonderful experience for me that I plan to maintain for years to come.

Dean Prather
Chair of Pulaski B & Wayne IPR Boards

I worked for the Cabinet for Health and Family Services for 31 and a half years. I retired in 2000 and was asked to serve on the Citizen Foster Care Review Board. Fourteen years later and I'm still here. I have always served in any way I could to help children.



In addition to the CFCRB, I served with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program in Pulaski County and I have also been involved with children activities within my church. I always work for the betterment of children because they have always held a very special place in my heart. I had been married for 13 years without children until we adopted a child from the foster care system. I only hope that what I do will change the life of a child for the better.

Mary Boss
Chair of Clark IPR Board

I decided to become a volunteer after retiring and looking for a way to help others. A friend suggested the foster care review board. It was a very shaky start, but I decided to stick it out. I have seen my county go through many growth pains.

I truly believe everyone should experience an interested party review. It would open their eyes to the volume of children that pass through the system every year and help them realize the struggles of doing what's best for all children with limited funding, lack of resources and staffing.

I continue to volunteer in hopes that the judges look at and consider our recommendations for the children. We have seen that our presence has made a difference with the staff at the DCBS.

This is not a pat-yourself-on-the-back type of volunteering. I have left many times frustrated and mentally exhausted, but there is always a day of summer shine when you see a child return home or get adopted, or see a troubled young person finally find their place in this crazy world.

Recognizing Dedication of Longtime CFCRB volunteers

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board owes its success to the 744 volunteers who donate their time to advocating for Kentucky's children. We are grateful for their dedication and want to recognize several volunteers with many years of service.



Faith Atmore
Vice Chair of Boyle IPR
17 Years of Service

I have served on the Boyle County board since February 2003. I have been around long enough to see the review boards transition from case file reviews to interested party reviews. In 2012, I took on the role of vice chair for Boyle County and can honestly say that I am committed to helping these children and families.



Brenda Brasher
Chair of Webster County IPR
34 Years of Service

Thirty-four years ago, I received a call from then Webster District Judge C. Rene' Williams, as she was aware of my community and school involvement. I had previously shared with Judge Williams that my siblings and I came to Kentucky to live with our grandmother when I was 6, as our parents felt she could provide better care for us. My experience led to my desire to help other children and youth to have a better life, and hence my involvement in the CFCRB program. My board was one of the first in the state to start using the interested party review process. I believe this program has helped change lives, as well as reunite families.



Susan Joiner
Chair of Caldwell/Lyon IPR
24 Years of Service

I feel honored and privileged to have served for 24 years on what is now the Caldwell/Lyon Citizen Foster Care Review Board. This board is a necessary staple in our community to help children. I serve on this board because I want to see children reunited with their families or in their forever home. I look forward to continuing to serve and hopefully make a difference in a child's life.



Patricia McMullin
Chair of Calloway IPR
21 Years of Service

I have served on Calloway County's Citizen Foster Care Review Board for 21 years. Before serving on the CFCRB, I taught at the middle school level for Murray Independent School System.

After retirement, I was asked by a friend and board member if I would be willing to serve on Calloway County's board. During my 21 years, I have observed many positive and beneficial changes in Kentucky's foster care system. I have also witnessed the dedicated and tireless efforts of social workers and Cabinet for Health and Family Services members who, along with CFCRB members, are strong advocates for Kentucky's foster children.



Sandra Moran
Chair of Green & Taylor IPR Boards
13 Years of Service

I retired from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services in 2006 after 34 years of service and have been volunteering ever since. I saw the CFCRB volunteer position as a way to continue to help children and families. I was thrilled to start reviewing cases on the Pulaski County Board using the interested party review method. Being able to see and speak with the interested parties gives board members a better perspective on the case and helps with recommendations to the judge. I would highly recommend that all boards go to the IPR method.



Richard Vincent
Vice Chair of Union IPR
22 Years of Service

I retired in 1991 after serving as a principal for 26 years and in 1998 I was approached about serving as a CFCRB volunteer on the Union County Board. Being an educator, I have a love for children, especially the "underdog" children who need someone else looking out for them. The good feeling you get when you see a child successfully reunited with their parents or adopted into a good family is priceless. My wife and I adopted our two children, who are now grown with families of their own. You could say the CFCRB is a natural fit for me ... it answers my heart's calling.

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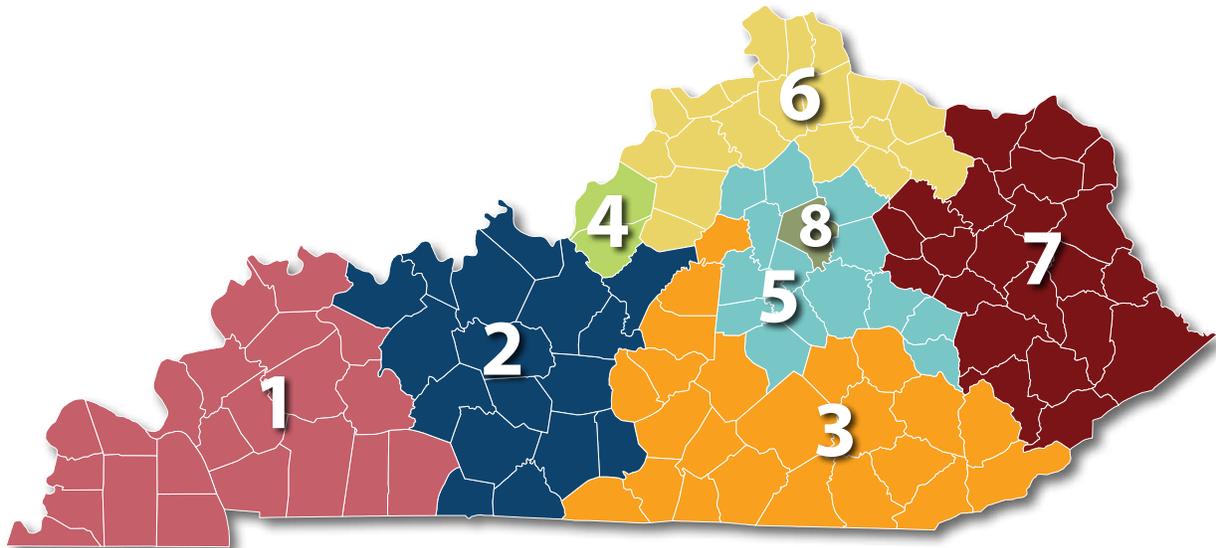
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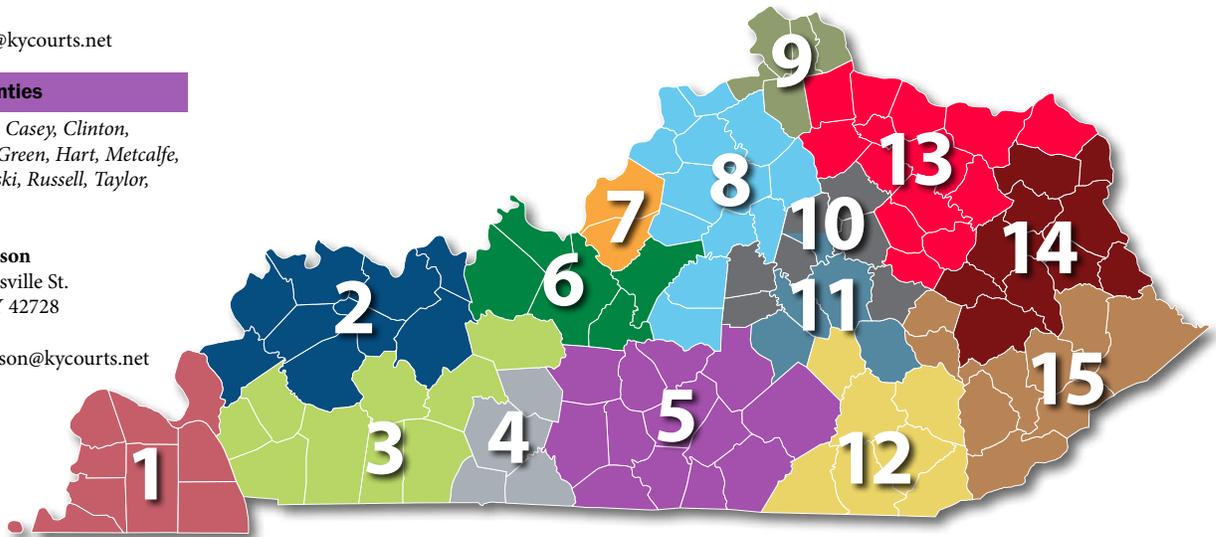
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