

Massachusetts
Department
of Children
and Families

Foster Care Review Report FY2024

Fidelity and Determination Data: Jul-2023-to-Jun-2024

Release Date:
July 2025



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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Vision

All children have the right to grow up in a nurturing home, free from abuse and neglect, with access to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education.

Mission

Strive to protect children from abuse and neglect and, in partnership with families and communities, ensure children are able to grow and thrive in a safe and nurturing environment.

Goals

Work toward establishing the safety, permanency and well-being of the Commonwealth's children by: stabilizing and preserving families, providing quality temporary alternative care when necessary, safely reunifying families, and, when necessary and appropriate, creating new families through kinship, guardianship, or adoption.

Executive Summary

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 18B Section 6A, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) submits the FY2024 Foster Care Review (FCR) report. When children cannot remain safely at home, DCF acts immediately to identify a safe foster care placement. FCR serves the critical purposes of monitoring efforts to plan for and achieve permanency for children, reassuring the Department is meeting children's needs while they are in foster care, and engaging with parents working to reunify with their children. With this legislative report, DCF provides a comprehensive public view of FCR performance data and how child-serving organizations can support permanent homes for children.

Removing a child from his or her family home is one of the most difficult decisions DCF makes. While the agency serves 80% of children in their family home, 20% are placed in foster care or other out-of-home placements because of serious abuse and/or neglect. Given its significance, maintaining a strong and robust system of FCR is a departmental priority.

DCF began its overhaul of Foster Care Review in 2018 in collaboration with the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) and members of the Legislature. In March 2019, DCF revised the Foster Care Review Policy¹ and related regulations² to:

- Emphasize permanency planning at every review
- Clarify the roles of DCF social workers and parents' attorneys in preparing parents for the review
- Establish a process for stakeholders, including parents'/child's attorneys, to transmit documents to DCF 10 days in advance to ensure they are incorporated into the review
- Enhance recruitment and training for Volunteer Case Reviewers who, along with the DCF Foster Care Reviewer and a DCF manager or supervisor, serve as members of the 3-party panels that decide the outcomes of FCRs

To operationalize the revisions, the Department made corresponding changes to its i-FamilyNet system to establish metrics for measuring outcomes and adherence to the FCR policy. Additionally, FCRs are included in the Department's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts to produce quantitative and qualitative information about case practice, case outcomes, and systems processes.

Because participation is paramount to FCRs, the Department has fully transitioned to virtual reviews. Foster parents, group care providers, parent/child attorneys, and others with intimate knowledge of the family are invited to the FCRs and provide valuable feedback to the panel. FCRs were held in-person at Area Offices until the COVID-19 pandemic required the Commonwealth to pivot to video conferencing. The convenience of meeting remotely significantly increased FCR attendance and provided new flexibility for Volunteer Case Reviewers to participate in reviews for children involved with multiple Area Offices.

A three-party panel review with a Volunteer Case Reviewer, a DCF Foster Care Reviewer, and a supervisor or manager from the child's local area office results in FCRs with greater perspective and depth. In FY2024, there was a 6.3% increase in three-party panel reviews compared to FY2020. To that end, DCF continues to grow and diversify the Volunteer Case Reviewer program with a [webpage on Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/doc/webpage-on-mass-gov) that includes an online volunteer application, recruitment materials, and volunteer training.

When an FCR is conducted by a three-party panel, and there is a lack of agreement among panel members on a given determination, a majority of two prevails. The opinion of the FCR Panel member with a differing

¹ Foster Care Review Policy: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/foster-care-review-policy-0/download>

² 110 CMP 6.00: Case Reviews <https://www.mass.gov/doc/110-cmr-6-case-reviews/download>

determination is documented as a Minority Opinion. Of the 11,375 reviews approved in FY2024, there were 543 (4.8%) reviews with Minority Opinions. This represents an increase of 381 reviews with Minority Opinions compared to FY2020.

All youth ages 14-17 and young adults ages 18-22 receiving voluntary services from DCF are invited and encouraged to participate in their FCR. Between FY2020 and FY2024, attendance for these youth and young adults (in placement) declined by 31.3%, concurrent with students' return to in-person learning and the resumption of after-school activities and work. The FCRU tries to schedule reviews for youth and young adults after school or work hours and continues to collaborate with Area Offices to increase participation.

In FY2024, the Department conducted 11,242 Foster Care Reviews, of which 88.4% were completed on time (i.e., initial review occurred within 6 months of entry into foster care; if subsequent review, it occurred within 6-months of the last FCR). The decline in this productivity measure compared to FY2020 is attributable to pandemic-related workforce retention and recruitment challenges that resulted in increased vacancies in the FCRU. Though subject to normal turnover, as of April 2024, the FCRU was fully staffed, and timeliness is rebounding.

Another important component of the FCR is the assessment of supportive services provided to children and their families. Following a home removal, DCF first tries to reunify children with their biological parents, who engage in services to build their capacity to safely care for their children. While FCRs indicate the majority of child service needs are being met, 20.1% of parents report systemic barriers to housing, individual and family counseling, transportation, parent evaluation/education services, domestic violence services, and substance use treatment, among other supports, while their children are in DCF's care.

Throughout FY2022, DCF collaborated with the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to sit in on a random sample of FCRs and to assess policy and IT systems improvements. In March and April of 2022, the OCA's former legal counsel attended 64 FCRs to determine whether policy changes were implemented and to confirm that the desired outcome of improved reviews was achieved.

In FY2023 and throughout FY2024, the collaboration continued with DCF providing the OCA with all safety alerts identified in FCRs. OCA staff tracked the Department's completion of follow-up activities and participated in the training of new Volunteer Case Reviewers. DCF will continue to work with the OCA to improve the quality of FCRs. Childhood cannot be put on hold, and every child deserves a timely resolution of a permanent family or a lifelong connection to support them into adulthood. A strong FCR system is imperative to meeting that goal.

DATA SUMMARY

Children, Youth, Young Adults and Families Served

At the start of FY2024, 22,913 families were being served by the Department of Children and Families (20,686 clinical cases and 2,227 adoption cases). These cases contained 80,019 individuals, 38,548 children (0-17), 2,073 young adults (18 & up), and 39,398 adults (i.e., parents/caregivers).³ (Tables/Figures 1-2, p.1)

The 2,073 young adults (18 & up) were served by DCF prior to their 18th birthday. To remain open with DCF beyond age 18, these young adults signed a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA). A young adult can sign a VPA at age 18 and remain open with the Department up through age 22. Young adults who decline DCF services at age 18 may later request services by signing a VPA prior to turning 23.

Children and Youth in Foster Care

DCF strives to safely stabilize families, and 80% of children and youth (0-17) open with the Department at the start of FY2024 safely remained at home. When a child's safety is at serious risk, children may be placed in out-of-home care (foster care or group care). At the start of FY2024, DCF had 9,297 children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home placement. Of these, 7,692 (82.7%) were children and youth (0-17), and 1,605 (17.3%) were young adults (18 & up). (Table/Figure 3, p.1)

Notwithstanding the 9,297 children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home care at the start of FY2024, there were new entries and exits from care throughout the year. As such, a total of 12,810 unique children, youth, and young adults were in out-of-home care during FY2024. Of these, some 10,886 were in placement for sufficient duration to convene a Foster Care Review. In total, 11,242 FCRs were convened in FY2024. (Table 4, p.2)

A Permanency Plan is established for children and youth (0-17) in DCF's care. This Permanency Plan seeks to ensure that each child has a nurturing family—preferably one that is permanent—within a timeframe supportive of their needs.

Foster Care Review Introduction

Federal law requires child welfare agencies nationwide to conduct Foster Care Reviews at least once every six months on behalf of children in out-of-home placements. Massachusetts state law established the FCRU as a distinct and independent unit of DCF in 1984⁴. The information learned from the FCR is a valuable component of the Department's quality improvement and complements the oversight role of the courts in individual cases.

An FCR is conducted by a three-party panel. This panel assesses the circumstances of the child's current placement, the services they are receiving and progress toward their permanency goal. The three-party panel makes formal binding determinations about child safety, whether the foster care placement is still appropriate for the child, progress toward the achievement of the Permanency Plan, and the projected date for achieving permanency.

These binding determinations and the panel's non-binding recommendations are incorporated into the review by the Area Office serving the child. FCR recommendations may result in modifications to a child's Permanency Plan or placement, including but not limited to a new foster care placement, a change in the frequency of a child's

³ Total families include all individuals with an active case status on the last day of the fiscal year and who were in a case with a family assessment or an action plan. These selection criteria exclude consumers not in placement who have an active case status that is pending the outcome of an investigation.

⁴ M.G.L. c. 18B, § 6A

contact with their biological family, or a change in the child’s permanency goal. It is ultimately the responsibility of the courts to award permanent custody of children and youth.

Scheduling and Timeliness

Effort is made to convene FCRs in the month they are due. Nonetheless, consideration is given to the ability of the parent/invited party, child and parent’s attorney, the FCR Reviewer, and DCF Area Office staff to participate. The Foster Care Review Unit convened 11,242 reviews in FY2024, of which 88.4% were convened on time. While the Department had been evidencing an increase in the timeliness of convened FCRs (SFY2020 = 90.8%), the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the scheduling and convening of FCRs (SFY2021 = 58.4%). This was most notable early on in the pandemic. Shifting to a virtual platform for convening reviews removed many obstacles to convening reviews during the pandemic and thereafter. However, workforce retention and recruitment challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic—resulting in increased vacancies within the FCRU. (Table 5, p.4)

Concurrent with concerted efforts to backfill vacant FCR positions, the Department allocated funding for an additional FCR team. The FCRU consists of 8 units (plus 1 volunteer recruitment/support unit), each staffed with a manager and 5-6 case reviewers. The timeliness of convened FCRs is approaching pre-pandemic levels.

FCR Meeting Panel Composition

FCRs are conducted by three-party panels whose members must not carry responsibility for case management, oversight, or service delivery for the case under review. A panel consists of a Case Reviewer from DCF’s Foster Care Review Unit (FCRU) who convenes the meeting, a manager or supervisor from the child’s DCF Area Office who is not directly responsible for the case under review, and a Volunteer Case Reviewer from the community who is trained by the FCRU. Volunteer Case Reviewers are recruited to represent, to the maximum extent feasible, the various socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groups of the community served by DCF. Three-party panels allow for greater independence and depth of review, and DCF is working to increase FCRs with all three panel members present. This is evident in the observed 6.3% increase in three-party panel reviews convened in FY2024 (i.e., 77.7% of panels had three members) compared to FY2020 (i.e., 73.1%). (Table 9, p.6)

Mandated FCR Participants

To promote the inclusion of a variety of perspectives, several parties are invited and included in the FCR. These include parents/guardians, children in placement who are age 14 and older, foster parents, group care providers, parent, and child attorneys, DCF social workers and supervisors, family resource, adoption, and adolescent outreach social workers. Young adults who turn 18 in foster care and continue to engage in supportive services from the Department up through age 22 also receive and participate in FCRs. During FY2024, overall participation increased significantly through the continued use of virtual reviews conducted via video conference technology—for example, in the case of a child’s attorney participation, there was a 69.2% increase. (Table 10, p.6)

DCF Action Plan

When DCF begins working with a family, a comprehensive Family Assessment and Action Plan (FAAP) is jointly completed with the family. The Family Assessment and subsequent Action Plan prioritizes child safety and parental capacities and centers on engaging family members in an integrated and dynamic process of exploring their unique strengths and needs for two important and related purposes:

1. Determining whether DCF must remain involved with the family to safeguard child safety and well-being, and
2. For families who must stay involved with DCF, jointly developing a plan to support the family in strengthening their capacity to meet the safety, permanency, and well-being of each child.

In 92.6% of the reviews, FCR panel members found that the Action Plan addressed all identified concerns to reduce risk and achieve desired outcomes. DCF's visits with family members were found to focus on the Action Plan in 82.4% of the reviews. Collateral contacts were used to assist in assessing the family's progress in 85.9% of reviews. The Action Plan was written in the primary language of the family/young adult in 97.9% of applicable reviews. (Table 11, p. 8)

Placement Activities

Placement Activities is one of the domains explored and rated by the FCR panel during the FCR. DCF is required to complete all tasks and activities recommended at the Initial Placement Review—also known as the 6-Week Placement Review—for achieving child safety, permanency, and well-being. "Follow-up-activities" from the Initial Placement Review were completed by DCF prior to the FCR meeting in 81.3% of applicable reviews. The Department enhanced its Initial Placement Review process during FY2021 and focused on developing a collaborative process for assessing the immediate needs of the child in placement and creating a plan to return the child safely to their home. This process includes clear directives to identify follow up activities and develop recommendations. In 92.6% of applicable reviews, FCR panels found that relatives were notified within 30-days of a child's placement. (Table 12, p.8)

Social Worker Contact and Parent-Child Visitation

The Foster Care Review process analyzes DCF social worker contact with placed children, families, and foster parents/group care providers. DCF social workers were found to have maintained contact with 95.2% of assigned children, youth, and young adults. Contact with parents/caregivers was maintained in 46.9% of reviews. Social worker contact with foster parents and group care providers was maintained in 96.1% of reviews. Visits between parents and their children were found to be maintained in 80.9% of reviews. (Tables 13-14, p.9)

DCF is anticipating that this measure will improve with the release of a revised Protective Case Practice Policy in FY2025 which emphasizes the requirements for social workers to make collateral contacts in conjunction with monthly visits and sets requirements for documenting case activities, including social worker dictation and referrals to services in the community, in the electronic case record.

Health, Education, and Well-Being Needs

FCRs ascertain whether health, education and well-being needs are being met. Medical needs were met in 93.8% of reviews, and dental needs in 85.9%. Rogers Guardianship Orders were found for 93.6% of children in DCF custody placed on antipsychotic medications. (Table 15, p.10)

Of children under three years of age deemed eligible following an Early Intervention assessment, the FCR Panel ascertained that 87.6% were receiving Early Intervention services. Of children, youth, and young adults determined to be appropriate for enrollment in an educational program, 97.4% were enrolled in an educational or vocational program. Of children, youth, and young adults determined to be appropriate for enrollment in an educational program—based on available information at the review, 90.5% were found to have necessary educational supports in place (e.g., appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) as needed, education surrogate parent for support and advocacy as needed, stable educational setting, vocational training as appropriate). (Table 15, p.10)

A permanent lifelong connection (i.e., an adult already known to the child/youth who has made a commitment to be a permanent support) was in place for 96.4% of the reviewed children and youth. (Table 15, p.10)

Youth/Young Adults

Of placed youth and young adults for whom employment was deemed appropriate, 39.7% were employed. Placed youth and young adults should be receiving Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA) training to assist in developing the life skills needed to live independently and transition successfully to adulthood. This was found to be the case for 76.2% of reviewed youth and young adults. In 64.5% of the reviews, youth and young adults agreed with the FCR panel's Permanency Plan determination. (Table 16, p.10)

Systemic Barriers Identified through the FCR

The FCR Panel identifies specific systemic barriers for addressing the areas of focus and achieving safety, permanency, and well-being. Of the reviewed children, youth, and young adults, 13.6% were found to have one-or-more systemic barriers. In 4.1% of the reviews, access to individual counseling was identified as a systemic barrier for children. Of reviewed parents/caregivers, 20.1% were found to have one-or-more systemic barriers. In 8.0% of the reviews, access to housing was identified as a systemic barrier. (Tables 17-18, p.11)

FCR Determinations

Safety Concerns: At the completion of the FCR, the FCR Panel makes determinations (formal decisions) regarding what is working well, what is not working, and what needs to change in order to achieve the child, youth, or young adult's Permanency Plan by a projected date. Determinations are binding on the Area Office and guide the next period of action planning, decision-making, and casework with the child, youth, young adult, and family. Safety concerns of varying degrees may be identified at a review. Safety concerns may be due to the child demonstrating behaviors that are unsafe, parent/caregiver capacity concerns (e.g., substance use relapse by a parent/youth), or that the foster parent/group care provider is not able to keep the child/youth safe.

If a safety concern is identified during the review, the Area Director/designee responsible for the case is immediately notified. The Area Director is required to respond to a notice of safety concern within one working day with the Office's plan to resolve the safety concern. A safety concern was identified in 1.6% of the reviews convened during FY2024. (Table 19a, p.12)

Action Plan Engagement: For FCRs convened in FY2024, 67.0% of reviewed parents/caregivers participated and/or engaged in the actions, tasks, services, or supports outlined in the FAAP. Reviews further revealed that 56.4% of parents/caregivers demonstrated the changes specified in their Action Plan for promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children—including demonstrable behavioral changes needed to reduce or eliminate the identified dangers/risks. For reviewed youth aged 14 and older, 81.5% were determined to have participated in the actions, tasks, services, or supports outlined in the Action Plan. Furthermore, 80.1% demonstrated the changes specified in their Action Plan to achieve outcomes promoting their safety, permanency, and well-being. (Table 19b-c, p.13)

Placement Necessary: This determination of whether a placement is necessary is anchored by concerns of imminent risk/danger. For 98.2% of children, youth, and young adults, their placement status—whether "in placement" or "not in placement" on the day of the FCR—was determined to be appropriate. (Table 19d, p.14)

Appropriateness of Placement: The FCR Panel makes determinations regarding whether the approved placement is designed to meet the specific needs of the child, youth, and young adult. For 94.6% of reviews, the foster parent/group care provider was determined to be meeting the child/youth/young adult's needs. (Table 19e, p.14)

Placement Expectations: The FCR Panel makes determinations regarding whether the foster parent/group care provider adhered to the Child Placement Agreement and fulfilled all expectations for meeting the child, youth, or

young adult's needs. For 99.1% of reviews, the foster parent/group care provider was determined to be meeting their needs. (Table 19f, p.15)

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard: The FCR Panel makes determinations regarding whether the Department took steps to ensure that the foster parent/group care provider followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. For 99.6% of reviews, the FCR Panel determined that DCF worked with the foster parent/group care provider to ensure caregivers followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. For 98.9% of reviews, the FCR Panel determined that DCF made efforts to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child, youth, or young adult regular ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities. (Tables 19g-h, p.15-16)

Addressing Family Needs: For 89.9% of reviews, the FCR Panel determined that DCF completed the tasks required by policy to address the needs of the family in order to support the child, youth, or young adult's safety and well-being and to achieve the Permanency Plan. (Table 19i, p.16)

Permanency Plan Progress: The FCR Panel makes determinations regarding whether necessary actions and essential changes for achieving the Permanency Plan were demonstrated. These include consideration of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) guidelines. The FCR Panel determined that 90.8% of the reviewed Permanency Plans should be maintained. Conversely, 9.2% of reviewed Permanency Plans received an Alternative Permanency Plan determination requiring an Area Office review and/or a Permanency Planning Conference (PPC). (Table 19j, p.17)

Minority Opinions

When an FCR is conducted by a three-party panel and there is lack of agreement among panel members on a given determination, a majority of two prevails. The opinion of the FCR Panel member with a differing determination is documented as a minority opinion.⁵ Of 11,375 FCRs approved in FY2024 (includes FCRs convened in late FY2023), there were 543 FCRs with a minority opinion. (Table 20, p.18)

Foster Care Review Follow-Up Activities

The FCRU has three formal opportunities to follow up and address the findings of the FCR. Each opportunity serves as a feedback mechanism for improving case-specific practice. The first is within the FCR meeting itself, including the robust conversation about the case and what has happened since the last FCR. The second opportunity is through the alert notice and FCR memo processes. All items flagged in the alert notice and FCR memo require resolution by the Area Office. The feedback loop is closed once the FCRU or manager receives notification that the issues have been resolved or a plan is in place for resolving the alert and memo. The third opportunity is through the written FCR report which is transmitted to multiple parties including the Area Office. This memorializes the identified strengths and areas needing improvement and serves as an additional opportunity for relevant parties to address any concerns. This report is used at the subsequent FCR to identify areas that need to be reviewed or assessed during the FCR. The Area Office is then charged with addressing any issues or determinations requiring remedial action.

Please find additional information on FCR follow-up activities on p.18-19.

⁵ When a Foster Care Review is conducted by a two-party panel and there is lack of agreement among panel members on a given determination, the case reviewer's determination is entered into the electronic case record. The opinion of the Foster Care review panel member with a differing determination is documented as a minority opinion.

I. DCF SERVED POPULATION

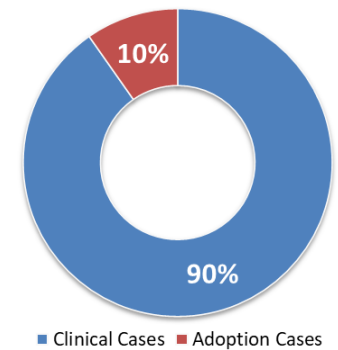
The Department strives to safely stabilize families at home. When this is not possible, children may be placed in out-of-home care (foster care or group care) for their safety and well-being. If parental reunification is not possible, the Department seeks to find new permanent families through kinship, guardianship, or adoption.

○ Case Counts

As summarized in Table/Figure 1, at the start of FY2024, DCF had 22,913 open cases. Of these, 90.3% (20,686) were clinical cases and 9.7% (2,227) were adoption cases.

TABLE 1. Case Counts Start of FY2024		FY2024 Start	
Clinical Cases	20,686	90.3%	
Adoption Cases	2,227	9.7%	
Case Count Start of Fiscal Year		22,913	

FIGURE 1. Start of FY24

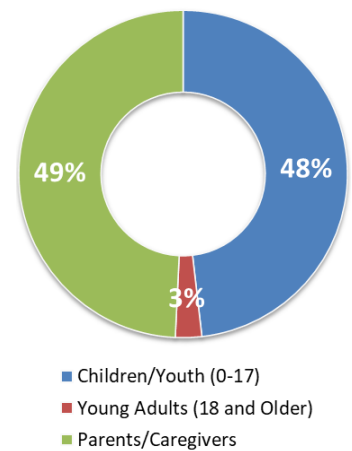


○ Child/Youth/Young Adult and Parent/Caregiver Counts

Table/Figure 2 show that at the start of FY2024, DCF had 80,019 open consumers. Consumers with the identified role type of “adult” (i.e., parent/caregiver) accounted for 48.2% (39,398) of total open consumers. Consumers with the identified role type of “child” accounted for 50.8% (40,621) of total open consumers. Consumers with the role type of “child” range from children/youth aged 0-17 years, to “young adults” who voluntarily remain open with DCF from the ages of 18-22 years.

TABLE 2. Child/Youth/Young Adult and Parent/Caregiver Counts		FY2024 Start	
Consumer Role Type = Adult (i.e., Parents/Caregivers)	39,398	48.2%	
Consumer Role Type = Child	40,621	50.8%	
Children/Youth 0-17	38,548	48.2%	
Young Adults 18 & Older	2,073	2.6%	
Total Consumer Count Start of Fiscal Year		80,019	

FIGURE 2. Start of FY24

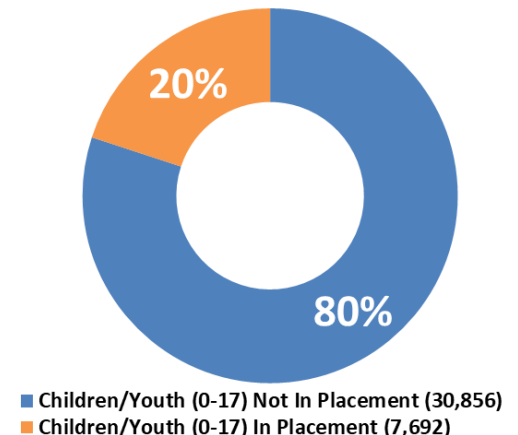


○ Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement

DCF provides services to safely stabilize families (80% of child/youth caseload – Figure 3). When that is not possible, children/youth may be placed in out-of-home care (20% of child/youth caseload – Figure 3) to safeguard their safety and well-being. Table 3 shows that at the start of FY2024, DCF had 9,297 children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home placement. Of these, 82.7% (7,692) were children and youth (0-17 years of age) and 17.3% (1,605) were young adults (18 & older).

TABLE 3. Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement		FY2024 Start	
Children/Youth 0-17	7,692	82.7%	
Young Adults 18 & older	1,605	17.3%	
Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement Start of Fiscal Year		9,297	

FIGURE 3. In Placement vs. Not In Placement



II. FOSTER CARE REVIEW OVERVIEW

Federal law requires that DCF operate a system of Foster Care Review (FCR) dedicated to engaging key participants in a timely and periodic review of all cases involving children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home care. The purpose of FCR is to assess the progress being made to address the reason(s) for the Department's involvement with the family and to examine and make recommendations regarding efforts to safely achieve permanency for the child, youth, or young adult. It complements the oversight role of the judiciary in individual cases.

Pursuant to MGL c. 18B, §6A, FCRs are conducted by the Foster Care Review Unit, a distinct and independent unit within the Department that operates outside of DCF's day-to-day delivery of casework services. The FCRU is dedicated to quality oversight of the Department's case decisions. It contributes aggregate data and information that is needed to support the Department's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts.

- **Foster Care Review Policy**

The Department's Foster Care Review Policy⁶ stipulates that:

- Cases involving children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home placement⁷ are reviewed by the FCRU no less frequently than once every six months
- FCRs are conducted for families when at least one child, youth, or young adult in the family under the age of 22 is in placement

- **Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement with a Convened FCR**

Notwithstanding the 9,297 children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home care at the start of FY2024 (Table 3, p.1), there were new entries and exits from care throughout the year. Table 4 shows that there were 12,810 unique children, youth, and young adults in out-of-home care over the course of FY2024. Of these 10,886 were in placement for sufficient duration to convene an initial or subsequent FCR. In total, the FCRU convened 11,242 FCRs in FY2024. FCRs are conducted at the family level and therefore may involve one or more children/youth.

TABLE 4. Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement with a Convened FCR

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Unique Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement at Any Time ⁽¹⁾	15,584	14,781	14,424	13,696	12,810
Unique Children/Youth/Young Adults with a Convened FCR ⁽²⁾	12,864	12,068	11,829	11,306	10,886
Total Foster Care Review Meetings Convened	12,420	12,329	10,561	11,052	11,242

⁽¹⁾ Unduplicated count of children/youth/young adults in placement for at minimum one day during the fiscal year. While FCRs are scheduled every six months of placement, children/youth/young adults may exit placement prior to the triggering of their first or subsequent FCRs.

⁽²⁾ While a child/youth/young adult may be reviewed two or more times during a twelve-month period, Table 4 presents an unduplicated count of reviewed children/youth/young adults.

⁶ Foster Care Review Policy #86-009 – Effective: 11/01/1985; Revision: 03/04/2019.

⁷ A child, youth, or young adult is in placement when they are in Department custody through a court order, a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA), or a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA), and are living outside the home of their parent(s) or guardian(s).

- **Foster Care Review Considerations**

Each review considers the following issues, as applicable:

- The necessity of the Department's involvement with the family and the appropriateness of the child, youth, or young adult's placement—including a review of assessed needs for safety, permanency, and well-being
- Participation in the written Family Assessment and Action Plan (FAAP) and the observable changes the family has made during the period under review, to reduce or alleviate the danger or need for placement or to achieve desired outcomes
- The extent of progress made toward achievement of the child, youth, or young adult's Permanency Plan, which includes a review of any changes made to the child, youth, or young adult's Permanency Plan and its current status
- The child, youth, or young adult's Permanency Plan and the projected date by which the child, youth or young adult will achieve permanency
- Recommendations, when needed, for action planning during the next six months

The outcome of the FCR is a set of determinations and may include related recommendations that provide guidance for the next period of action planning, decision-making, and casework. Parents, foster parents, youth, and young adults may challenge determinations made by the Foster Care Review Panel if they disagree with the decision, as can attorneys representing young adults and children ages 22 and under.

III. SCHEDULING

- Timeliness of Convened FCR Meetings**

The initial FCR is scheduled to occur by the sixth calendar month following the date the first child, youth, or young adult in the family enters placement. Subsequent FCRs are scheduled every six months from the initial FCR date, as long as a child, youth, or young adult through age 22 remains in placement. The period under review (PUR) for subsequent FCRs covers the period of time since the prior review.

In any given month, the FCRU convenes reviews carried over from prior months, reviews due in the current month, and reviews coming due in the next month. As evidenced in Table 5, the FCRU convened 11,242 reviews during FY2024, of which, 88.4% (9,937) were convened timely (i.e., initial review occurred within 6-months of entry into foster care; if subsequent review, it occurred within 6-months of the last FCR). When a review cannot be convened in the month it is due (e.g., illness or schedule conflicts such as court hearings for participating parties), the FCRU makes every effort to schedule the review in the following month. As such, 1,305 of the 11,242 convened reviews were carried over from prior months.

While the Department had been evidencing an increase in timeliness of convened FCRs (SFY2020 = 90.8%), the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the scheduling and convening of FCRs (SFY2021 = 58.4%). This was most notable early on in the pandemic. FCRs were not convened between 3/13-3/26/2020 while the FCRU developed and rolled out a plan for convening videoconference reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. Scheduling challenges continued through early April of FY2020 as the FCRU shifted to virtual FCRs. The FCRU gradually ramped up to pre-pandemic workflow but this resulted in a larger amount of convened FCRs that were actually due in prior months.

Shifting to a virtual platform for convening reviews removed many obstacles to convening reviews during the pandemic and thereafter. Subsequently, workforce retention and recruitment challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic-resulting in increased vacancies within the FCRU. Concurrent with concerted efforts to backfill vacant FCR positions, the Department allocated funding for an additional FCR team. The FCRU now consists of 8 units (plus 1 volunteer recruitment/support unit), each staffed with a manager and 5-6 case reviewers. The timeliness of convened FCRs is approaching pre-pandemic levels.

TABLE 5. Timeliness of Convened FCR Meetings	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
FCR Meetings Convened (denominator)	12,420	12,329	10,561	11,052	11,242
FCR Meetings Convened Timely (numerator)	11,282	7,204	7,798	9,591	9,937
FCR Meetings Convened (due in prior months)	1,138	5,125	2,763	1,461	1,305
% FCR Meetings Convened that were Timely	90.8%	58.4%	73.8%	86.8%	88.4%

- Children/Youth/Young Adults Reviewed**

The safety, permanency, and well-being of all children, youth, and young adults open in a DCF case are reviewed at an FCR—not just those in out-of-home placement. As such, an FCR may involve one or more children within a family/case. Table 6 shows that 9,372 children/youth (0-17), and 1,514 young adults (18-22) were reviewed by the FCRU during FY2024.

TABLE 6. Children/Youth/Young Adults Reviewed	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Unique Children/Youth – Age 0-17	11,449	10,432	10,302	9,898	9,372
Unique Young Adults – Age 18-22	1,415	1,636	1,527	1,408	1,514
Total Children/Youth/Young Adults Reviewed	12,864	12,068	11,829	11,306	10,886

• Duration of FCR Meetings

As summarized in Table 7, reviews were completed within an average of 61 minutes during FY2024.

TABLE 7. Duration in Minutes of FCR Meetings	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Average Duration in Minutes	56	62	64	62	61
Median Duration in Minutes	50	59	60	59	56

While FCR meetings are generally convened within a one-hour window, FCR Case Reviewers hold many responsibilities prior to, during, and after the review. These include:

- Pre-reviewing sufficient documentation in the electronic and physical case record
- Providing Panel members with a copy of the Action Plan(s) in effect during the period under review, and when applicable, a copy of the last Foster Care Review report
- Chairing the FCR meeting
- Ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to have their views heard
- Facilitating alternative participation methods for invitees as needed (e.g., tele/videoconference)
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic FCRs were convened utilizing videoconference technology
- Ensuring the Youth Readiness Assessment Tool, when applicable, is reviewed by the panel
- Sharing any materials or information received from invitees who are not able to be present at the FCR
- Documenting the FCR and forwarding Area Office alerts/memos/notifications as needed

• Timeliness of FCR Report Completion

Following the Foster Care Review, the FCR Case Reviewer is responsible for:

- Summarizing all determinations and recommendations
- Identifying each panel members agreement/disagreement with the determinations
- Documenting this information in the electronic case record within 10 working days of the review date

The FCR manager reviews/approves documentation of the FCR in the i-FamilyNet electronic case record within 30 working days of the review date. The FCRU manager notifies the assigned social worker when the report is completed and forwards copies of the FCR report within 7 working days of approval to the following parties:

- Parents/guardians
- Adult guardian for an incapacitated person
- Youth 14 years of age and older, and young adults
- Child, youth, or young adult's attorneys
- Parent's attorneys
- Foster parents and group care providers
- Guardian ad litem, if assigned

The Department rolled-out an enhanced i-FamilyNet FCR module in 2019. As noted in Table 8, 64.2% (7,306) of the 11,375 FCRs approved within FY2024 were approved on, or prior to the report due date.

TABLE 8. Timeliness of FCR Report Completion	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total FCR Reports Approved (denominator) ⁽¹⁾	13,651	11,872	11,130	10,352	11,375
FCR Reports Approved – Timely (numerator)	9,491	10,005	8,350	6,566	7,306
% of FCR Reports Approved Timely ⁽²⁾	69.5%	84.3%	75.0%	63.4%	64.2%

⁽¹⁾ Approvals may be higher than convened review count due to efforts to finalize reports pending completion carried over from the prior fiscal year.

⁽²⁾ FCR Reports Approved Timely = within 30 working days of the FCR meeting (timeliness was impacted in FY22-23 by FCRU manager turnover and leaves)

IV. ATTENDANCE

• FCR Meeting Panel Composition

An FCR is conducted by a three-party panel whose members must not carry responsibility for case management, oversight, or service delivery for the case under review. The panel consists of:

- Member of the FCRU (i.e., Case Reviewer) who convenes the meeting
- Second Party Case Reviewer, who is a manager or supervisor from the Area Office who is not the manager or supervisor assigned to the case under review
- Volunteer Case Reviewer, a citizen who has been recruited and trained by the FCRU
 - Volunteer Case Reviewers are recruited to represent, to the maximum extent feasible, the various socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groups of the community served by the Department

Table 9 shows the FCR meeting panel composition for FY2020-24. While second party attendance was affected by Area Office turnover and leaves, data reflects the impact of the Department's concerted efforts to increase three-party panels. The active ongoing recruitment of volunteer panel members has led to a 17.4% increase in volunteer panel member attendance and 6.3% increase in three-party panels.

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	Increase FY2020 to FY2024
FCRs with a Volunteer Panel Member in Attendance	79.0%	93.9%	92.5%	93.5%	92.8%	+17.4%
FCRs with a Second Party Panel Member in Attendance	90.5%	93.6%	91.9%	88.7%	83.3%	-8.0%
FCRs with a Three-Party Panel ⁽¹⁾	73.1%	87.9%	84.9%	83.1%	77.7%	+6.3%

⁽¹⁾ Three-Party Panel = Volunteer Panel Member, Second Party, and Case Reviewer (an FCR cannot be convened without a Case Reviewer)

• Mandated FCR Participant – Invited and Attended

To promote the inclusion of a variety of perspectives the following parties, when applicable, are included in the Foster Care Review and provided with sufficient notice of the review date:

- Parents/guardians, including putative or unwed fathers
- Youth 14 years of age and older, and young adults
- Foster parents and group care providers
- Child, youth, young adult, and parent attorneys
- Social workers and supervisors assigned to the family
- DCF attorneys
- Family resource, adoption, and adolescent outreach social workers, as assigned

Table 10 presents mandated FCR participant invitee and attendee rates for FY2020 and FY2024. With the exception of *youth/young adults*, attendance increased across participant types with the utilization of videoconference technology introduced in FY2020, Q4. FCRU managers, reviewers, and administrative staff are working in collaboration with Area Offices to encourage youth/young adult participation.

	FY2020		FY2024		Attended % Increase FY2020 to FY2024
	Invited	Attended	Invited	Attended	
Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – in placement	99.7%	34.1%	99.9%	23.5%	-31.3%
Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – not in placement*	96.3%	8.1%	98.4%	7.7%	-4.5%
Child/Youth/Young Adult's Attorney	98.2%	29.2%	99.2%	49.3%	+69.2%
Parent/Legal Guardian	98.6%	55.7%	97.3%	59.9%	+7.5%
Parent's Attorney	95.7%	34.9%	96.9%	56.8%	+62.8%
DCF Case Representative (e.g., social worker, supervisor, APM)	100%	98.7%	100%	99.2%	+0.5%
Placement Resource (i.e., foster parent/group care provider)	87.2%	67.6%	75.9%	79.3%	+17.2%

*Non-placed siblings of children/youth in placement may be invited to the FCR. Young adults who terminate their voluntary placement agreement may be invited to a FCR in an effort to ensure that they have necessary documents, services, and information.

V. REVIEW PROCESS

○ DCF Action Plan

When the Department begins working with a family, a comprehensive Family Assessment and Action Plan (FAAP) is jointly completed with the family. Family assessment and action planning prioritizes child safety and centers on engaging family members in an integrated and dynamic process of exploring their unique strengths and needs for two important and related purposes:

- Determining whether the Department must remain involved with the family to safeguard child safety and well-being; and
- For families who must stay involved, jointly developing a plan to support the family in strengthening their capacity to meet the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of each child.

Family assessment and action planning identifies and engages all family members who have a role to play in the child/youth's safety, permanency, and well-being. These include all parents, guardians, individuals residing in the home (i.e., kin and non-kin), children/youth in DCF placement, minor siblings residing out of the home and/or others identified by the family as important to them. When the FAAP involves a young adult who is sustaining connection or re-engaging with the Department after leaving care or custody at age 18, the young adult is the focus and other family members are involved only when the young adult agrees.

Family assessment is the Department's family-focused, participatory process of gathering information about the family's history, functioning, strengths and needs, and about how well the safety, permanency, and well-being needs are being met for the child/youth. The FAAP must identify each child/youth's Permanency Plan. Based on the information contained in the Family Assessment and the Permanency Plan for each child/youth, the Action Plan specifies, at a minimum:

- Time period of the plan (usually 6 months)
- Area(s) of focus based on the findings of the Department's Family Assessment of parental capacity and child/youth safety, permanency, and well-being that indicate why continued DCF involvement is needed
- For each priority area of focus, the observable changes that are needed to maintain child/youth safety and to achieve the jointly identified goals in the Action Plan
- Actions/tasks/services/supports identified to address the observable changes needed for each open consumer, the Department, and any other identified participant(s) in the Action Plan (e.g., group care provider, foster parent, Kin Collateral, etc.)

When the child/youth is in placement, the Action Plan includes the Parent-Child Visitation Plan and supplemental placement-related information such as:

- Explanation of why the child/youth came into placement, the circumstances of the removal, and how the child is adjusting in the placement
- Whether siblings are placed together, and if not, why not. Also, the specifics of the sibling visitation schedule (when relevant)
- Whether the placement is with kin, and if not, why not. Also, what efforts were made to locate kin, including to whom written notification was sent
- Plan for visitation with grandparent(s) and/or other kin (when relevant)
- Whether the school-age child/youth will remain in the school of origin and what options have been considered with the Local Education Agency (LEA) to determine and support the child/youth's educational best interests
- Specific details regarding the child/youth's Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) status or tribal affiliation, race, culture, placement history, health, and education information

If the Action Plan is for a youth aged 14 or older, the social worker may review the Youth Readiness Assessment when applicable, which includes tasks, services, or supports to promote the youth’s life skill development and readiness for transitioning to adulthood.

As summarized in Table 11, an Action Plan was in effect during the period under review for 99.0% of the reviews convened during FY2024.

TABLE 11. DCF Action Plan...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Was there a DCF Action Plan in effect during the period under review?	99.2%	99.5%	98.9%	98.4%	99.0%
Does the Action Plan address all identified concerns to reduce risk(s) and achieve desired outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per the DCF Family Assessment and Action Planning Policy (#2017-01), the Action Plan should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the reason(s) for the family’s involvement with the Department Include the areas of focus, as identified through the Family Assessment Include the actions, tasks, services, and supports required to accomplish the goals identified with the family in order to maintain child safety and well-being, achieve the child’s Permanency Plan, and/or to close the case If all identified concerns are not included in the Action Plan, the FCR Panel recommends updating the Action Plan. 	91.6%	93.5%	88.6%	91.4%	92.6%
Did DCF’s visits with family members focus on the Action Plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCF social worker visits with family members should focus on the Action Plan actions, tasks, services, and supports that must be accomplished via the Action Plan in order to maintain child safety and well-being, achieve the child’s Permanency Plan, and/or to close the case. 	86.0%	86.4%	82.3%	82.3%	82.4%
Is the Action Plan written in the primary language of the family/young adult? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For bilingual family members, the ability to read and understand the Action Plan in English is assessed through direct inquiry during the FCR. If the family does not understand the Action Plan in English, the FCR Panel recommends that the Action Plan be translated into the family’s primary language. 	97.4%	97.8%	97.5%	98.0%	97.9%
Was collateral contact used to assist in assessing the family’s progress? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient contact with collaterals should be maintained and utilized for ongoing assessment of the family’s progress and emerging needs. 	91.7%	89.4%	84.5%	84.7%	85.9%

○ Placement Activities

Placement Activities is one of the domains explored and rated by the FCR panel during the FCR. The Department is required to complete all tasks and activities recommended at the Initial Placement Review— also known as the 6-Week Placement Review— for achieving child safety, permanency, and well-being. As summarized in Table 12, 81.3% of the “follow up activities” from the Initial Placement Review were completed by DCF prior to the FCR meeting.

DCF policy specifies that relatives are to be notified within 30 days of a child’s placement. As evidenced in Table 12, in 92.6% of applicable reviews, relatives were notified within 30-days of a child’s placement in FY2024.

TABLE 12. Placement Activities...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Were “Follow Up Activities” from the Initial Placement Review completed by DCF? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along with mining the electronic case record for documentation, DCF’s completion of “follow-up activities” is assessed through direct inquiry of the social work team, family, and key participants during the FCR meeting. 	77.2%	76.7%	74.1%	76.2%	81.3%
Were relatives notified of child/youth’s placement within 30-days? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursuant to MGL c. 119, §23C: Whenever the Department places a child/youth in foster care, the Department shall immediately commence a search to locate any relative of the child/youth, including the parents of siblings who have custody of the siblings, or another adult who has played a significant positive role in that child/ youth’s life in order to determine whether the child/youth may be safely placed with that relative or adult if, in the judgment of the Department, that placement would be in the best interest of the child/youth. Written notice is required within 30 days after the child/youth is removed from the parent’s custody unless the kin or other adult could not be approved as a foster parent due to known family or domestic violence. 	91.5%	93.4%	92.1%	94.4%	92.6%

○ Social Worker Contact

DCF social worker contact with placed children, families, and foster parents/group care providers is reviewed at each FCR.

Table 13 summarizes the review finding:

TABLE 13. Social Worker Contact...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
For children/youth/young adults in placement on the FCR review date, did the DCF social worker maintain required contact with assigned children/youth/young adults during the review period? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCF social worker face-to-face contact with a child/youth/young adult in placement is required by policy at a minimum of once-per-month. 	97.3%	98.2%	96.7%	96.2%	95.2%
Did the DCF social worker maintain required contact with the parents/caregivers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCF social worker contact with a parent/caregiver is required at a minimum of once per month. Per policy, in discussion with the family and in consultation with the supervisor, the social worker determines the frequency, location, and method of the contacts. 	52.4%	52.5%	45.6%	44.9%	46.9%
Did the child/youth's social worker maintain required contact with foster parents/group care providers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCF social worker contact with foster parents or group care providers is required at a minimum of once-per-month. Per policy, the DCF social worker in discussion with the family, foster parent or group care provider, and in consultation with the supervisor, determines the frequency, location, and method of the contacts. 	96.8%	98.4%	96.8%	96.2%	96.1%

○ Parent-Child Visitation

The FCR Panel ascertains if visits between parents and their children/youth are being maintained by the Department.

Table 14 summarizes the review findings:

TABLE 14. Parent-Child Visitation...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Were visits maintained between parents/caregivers and their placed children/youth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per DCF Permanency Planning Policy (#2013-01), regular and ongoing visitation between the parent/caregiver and child/youth is to be arranged throughout the child's placement—as long as there are no clinical or safety contraindications. In general, parent and child/youth visitation should take place at minimum once-per-week unless a different schedule is indicated by the child/youth's age, the needs of the child/youth, the safety of the child/youth, or if parental rights have been terminated by the court. 	81.0%	77.8%	78.6%	83.0%	80.9%

○ Health, Education and Well-Being Needs

FCRs ascertain whether health and well-being needs are being met. Table 15 summarizes the percentage of medical and educational needs met by the Department and the percentage of children with a permanent lifelong connection, a measure of well-being:

TABLE 15. Health, Education and Well-Being Needs...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
HEALTH					
Medical needs met for all open consumer children/youth/young adults? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For each child/youth/young adult reviewed, the FCR Panel ascertains whether the child/youth/young adult received all routine and any needed follow-up medical care. Routine medical care is to be provided according to the age-specific schedule indicated in the Bright Futures/American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care (aka Periodicity Schedule). 	94.0%	93.8%	93.8%	93.8%	93.8%
Dental needs met for all open consumer children/youth/young adults? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For children/youth/young adults (3-22), routine dental exams are required every six months. For every child/youth/young adult (3-22), the FCR Panel ascertains whether the child/youth/young adult received all routine and any needed follow-up dental care. 	86.7%	81.9%	84.3%	85.4%	85.9%
For children/youth in DCF custody receiving antipsychotic medications, is there a Rogers Order? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Rogers Order is required for each child/youth in the custody of DCF through a Care and Protection (C&P) petition or through Probate Court, who is currently prescribed antipsychotic medication. 	93.5%	93.0%	93.9%	93.7%	93.6%
EDUCATION					
If applicable, is child in DCF placement receiving Early Intervention services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires DCF to refer families to Early Intervention if there is a supported 51B (abuse and/or neglect) investigation on a child who is under 3 years of age. DCF also supports access to Early Intervention services for any other family with a child under the age of 3 when it appears that such services might be beneficial. Under these circumstances, DCF works with the family to determine whether the family will contact the Early Intervention services provider directly or whether DCF will complete a referral. For children within the appropriate age cohort who were deemed eligible following an Early Intervention assessment, the FCR Panel ascertains whether the children are receiving Early Intervention services. 	92.4%	87.5%	89.2%	88.5%	87.6%
If applicable, is child/youth/young adult in DCF placement enrolled in an educational program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult (3-22) determined to be appropriate for enrollment in an educational program, the FCR Panel ascertains whether the child/youth/young adult is enrolled in an educational or vocational program. 	97.7%	97.7%	97.6%	97.3%	97.4%
Are educational needs being met for children/youth/young adults in DCF placement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult (3-22) determined to be appropriate for enrollment in an educational program—based on available information at the review—the FCR Panel ascertains whether educational supports are in place as needed (e.g., appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) as needed, education surrogate parent for support and advocacy as needed, stability of the educational setting, vocational training as appropriate). 	90.6%	89.5%	89.8%	89.6%	90.5%
WELL-BEING					
Does child/youth/young adult in DCF placement have a permanent, lifelong connection? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FCR Panel ascertains if a permanent lifelong connection (i.e., someone who has made a commitment to be a permanent support for the child/youth) has been established. The lifelong connection may include family and other significant individuals in the child/youth/young adult's life—it need not be an adoptive parent or guardian. 	96.6%	96.8%	97.1%	96.4%	96.4%

○ Youth/Young Adults

Table 16 provides reviewed details for youth/young adults in DCF placement.

TABLE 16. Youth/Young Adults in DCF Placement...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Is youth/young adult employed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answered for placed youth/young adults (14-22) for whom employment is appropriate. 	37.8%	32.7%	38.9%	39.0%	39.7%
Is youth/young adult receiving life skills training? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placed youth/young adults (14-22) should be receiving training such as Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA) to assist in developing the life skills needed to live independently and transition successfully into adulthood. 	80.2%	82.6%	79.9%	78.9%	76.2%
Does youth/young adult agree with Permanency Plan determined to be most appropriate by the FCR panel? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the youth/young adult (14-22) is not present at the FCR, their agreement regarding the Permanency Plan is sought within the electronic case record, as well as from family and key participants at the review. 	73.4%	73.0%	68.1%	67.4%	64.5%

○ Systemic Barriers – Child/Youth/Young Adult

The FCR Panel identifies specific systemic barriers to achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and young adults. As noted in Table 17, 13.6% of reviewed children/youth/young adults had one or more systemic barriers identified in FY2024 FCRs.

TABLE 17. Systemic Barriers – Child/Youth/Young Adult		FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
CHILDREN/YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS WITH ONE OR MORE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS.		10.6%	12.1%	19.2%	20.5%	13.6%
Ranked Top 12 Systemic Barriers:						
	Individual (child) Counseling	2.2%	1.8%	4.3%	6.1%	4.1%
	Individual (adolescent) Counseling	0.6%	0.5%	1.5%	2.0%	1.3%
	Access to Housing	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%
	Family Counseling/Treatment	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%
	Psychiatric Evaluation	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
	Child Care	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
	Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Services	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
	Life Skills Training	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
	Intensive In-Home Family Intervention	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
	Transportation Services	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
	Department of Mental Health (DMH) Services	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
	Job Skills Training	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%

○ Systemic Barriers – Parent/Caregiver

The FCR Panel identifies specific systemic barriers for parents and caregivers working on reunification and achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for their children. As noted in Table 18, 20.1% of parents/caregivers in reviewed cases had one-or-more systemic barriers identified in FY2024 FCRs.

TABLE 18. Systemic Barriers – Parent/Caregiver		FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WITH ONE OR MORE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS.		24.3%	24.3%	24.4%	24.2%	20.1%
Ranked Top 12 Systemic Barriers:						
	Access to Housing	6.5%	6.2%	6.7%	7.7%	8.0%
	Individual Counseling	2.6%	2.6%	3.2%	3.5%	2.5%
	Transportation Services	1.8%	0.9%	1.2%	1.6%	1.4%
	Parenting Evaluation	1.1%	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%
	Family Counseling Treatment	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
	Insurance for Treatment	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%
	Parenting Education Services	1.6%	1.8%	1.0%	1.0%	0.6%
	Domestic Violence Treatment	1.0%	1.6%	0.9%	1.0%	0.5%
	Psychiatric Evaluation	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%
	Substance Use Treatment	1.3%	1.7%	1.0%	0.9%	0.3%
	Parent Aide	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
	Bilingual Counseling/Treatment	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

VI. FCR DETERMINATIONS

Determinations

At the completion of the FCR, the FCR Panel makes determinations (formal decisions) regarding what is working well, what is not, and what needs to change in order to achieve the child, youth, or young adult’s Permanency Plan by a projected date. Determinations are binding on the Area Office and guide the next period of action planning, decision-making, and casework with the child, youth, young adult, and family.

Determinations made by the Foster Care Review panel include:

- Whether concerns for the child, youth, or young adult’s safety were identified through the review process
- Whether the child, youth, or young adult’s placement is necessary as of the review date
- Whether the child, youth, or young adult’s current placement is appropriate
- Whether the placement resource (i.e., foster parent/group care provider) fulfilled expectations to meet the child, youth, or young adult’s needs
- Whether the Department has taken steps to ensure the child, youth, or young adult’s placement resource followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard
- Whether the Department has taken steps to ascertain whether the placement resource offered the child, youth, or young adult regular ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities—working to help develop their special talent/interest/gift
- Whether the Department adequately addressed the needs of the family
- The participation of each individual as follows for the period under review:
 - Did the parent/guardian, youth, or young adult participate in the Action Plan?
 - Did the parent/caregiver demonstrate behavioral changes to reduce or alleviate danger, or need for placement, or to achieve desired outcomes?
 - Did the youth or young adult demonstrate observable changes to achieve desired outcomes for their safety, permanency, and well-being?
- The extent of progress made toward achievement of the child, youth, or young adult’s Permanency Plan
- The child, youth, or young adult’s most appropriate Permanency Plan determined by the FCR panel
- The projected date for achieving the child, youth, or young adult’s Permanency Plan

Safety concerns of varying degrees may be identified at an FCR meeting. Safety concerns may be due to the child demonstrating unsafe behaviors, a reduction in parent/caregiver capacity (e.g., recent substance use relapse by a parent/youth), or that the foster parent/group care provider is not able to keep the child/youth safe.

If a safety concern is identified during the FCR, the FCRU Case Reviewer immediately informs the FCRU manager, who sends an alert notice to the Area Director/designee responsible for the case. This notice necessitates a response by the Area Director within one working day. The FCRU manager also follows-up with the Area Director /designee to ensure action is taken to secure the safety of the child/youth. Please see pp.18-19 for additional details.

Table 19a indicates that a safety concern was identified in 1.6% of the reviews convened during FY2024.

TABLE 19a. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19a. Were concerns for the child/youth/young adult’s safety identified through the review process?	3.1%	2.1%	2.4%	2.1%	1.6%
○ Safety concerns require an immediate alert notification to the Area Director.					

Table 19b indicates that for FY2024, 67.0% of reviewed parents/caregivers participated and/or engaged in the actions, tasks, services, or supports outlined in the Action Plan. Reviews further revealed that 56.4% of parents /caregivers demonstrated the changes specified in their Action Plan for promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children—including demonstrable behavioral changes needed to reduce or eliminate the identified needs/dangers/risks.

TABLE 19b. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19b1. Did the parent/caregiver participate/engage in the activities outlined in the Action Plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth (0-18) whose parent/caregiver maintains parental rights—based on available information at the review—the FCR Panel determines whether the parent participated in the actions, tasks, services, and supports, identified in the Action Plan. This determination is not intended to be a rating of compliance with tasks. A determination is not made if the parent is incapacitated or has a disability status such that they are unable to participate. 	72.5%	69.6%	67.5%	68.1%	67.0%
19b2. Did the parent/caregiver demonstrate observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the child/youth's safety and well-being? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A “yes” is selected if the parent/caregiver demonstrated behavioral changes which support the outcomes that promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth. A “yes” answer indicates that progress was made to increase parental capacities but does not necessarily indicate that all areas of focus have been resolved. A determination is not made if the parent is incapacitated or has a disability status such that they are unable to participate. 	59.1%	55.7%	54.3%	54.9%	56.4%

Table 19c indicates that for FY2024, 81.5% of reviewed youth aged 14 and older participated in the actions, tasks, services, or supports outlined in the Action Plan. Furthermore, 80.1% demonstrated the changes specified in their Action Plan for supporting the achievement of outcomes promoting their safety, permanency, and well-being.

TABLE 19c. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19c1. Did the youth/young adult (14-22) participate in the Action Plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on available information at the review, the FCR Panel determines whether the youth participated in the actions, tasks, services, and supports identified in the Action Plan. This determination is not intended to be a rating of compliance with tasks. A determination is not made if the youth/young adult is incapacitated or has a disability status such that they are unable to participate. 	83.2%	85.4%	82.7%	80.5%	81.5%
19c2. Did the youth/young adult (14-22) demonstrate observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the youth/young adult's safety and well-being? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A “yes” is selected if the youth/young adult demonstrated behavioral changes which support the outcomes that promote their safety, permanency, and well-being. A “yes” answer indicates that progress was made to achieve desired outcomes but does not necessarily indicate that all areas of focus have been resolved. A determination is not made if the youth/young adult is incapacitated or has a disability status such that they are unable to participate. 	79.4%	83.9%	80.8%	79.2%	80.1%

Table 19d summarizes FCR Panel determinations regarding whether placement is necessary as of the date of the FCR. This determination is anchored by concerns of imminent risk/danger. Table 19d indicates that for 98.2% of children/youth/young adults, their placement status—whether “in placement” or “not in placement” on the day of the FCR—was determined to be appropriate. Placement was determined not to be necessary for 0.1% of the children/youth/young adults in placement. Placement was determined to be necessary, for 0.4% of the children /youth/young adults not in placement at the time of the FCR.

On the FCR date, 1.3% of the reviewed children/youth/young adults were missing (0.7%, whereabouts unknown) or absent (0.6%, whereabouts known) from an approved placement.

TABLE 19d. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19d. IS PLACEMENT NECESSARY AS OF TODAY?					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult reviewed—based on all available information at the review—the FCR Panel determines whether placement is necessary as of the review date. Necessity of placement may be due to either concerns of imminent risk/danger related to the absence of parental capacity, child/youth/young adult’s needs/behavior, or a permanency plan has not yet been achieved. 					
Yes – child/youth/young adult is in placement.	83.8%	85.4%	85.1%	86.6%	85.7%
Not in placement – child/youth/young adult does not need placement.*	14.7%	13.5%	13.2%	12.2%	12.5%
PLACEMENT NEED AFFIRMED	98.6%	98.9%	98.3%	98.7%	98.2%
Child/youth/young adult in placement – placement not necessary.	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Child/youth/young adult not in placement – but should be in placement.	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%
Child/youth/young adult Missing (whereabouts unknown) from approved placement.	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%
Child/youth/young adult Absent (whereabouts known) from approved placement.	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%

*Reasons for potentially selecting this determination: FCRs convened for children/youth who recently attained permanency. Non-placed siblings of children/youth in placement. Young adults who terminate their voluntary placement agreement invited to a Foster Care Review in an effort to ensure that they have necessary documents, services, and information.

Table 19e summarizes the FCR Panel’s determination regarding whether the approved placement is designed to meet the specific needs of the child/youth/young adult. For 94.6% of reviews convened during FY2024, the foster parent/group care provider was determined to be meeting the child/youth/young adult’s needs.

TABLE 19e. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19e. Is current placement appropriate?					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult in placement—based on all available information at the review—the panel determines whether the child/youth/young adult’s current placement is appropriate. Factors to be considered in determining if a placement is appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child/youth/young adult’s best interests—including those related to safety, permanency, and well-being Continuity of significant relationships Least restrictive setting available to meet the child/youth/young adult’s individual needs If the FCR Panel determines a placement is inappropriate, documentation is provided as to why the placement is inappropriate and whether the panel recommends that the child/youth/young adult should remain in the current placement or be moved to an alternate placement. 	97.0%	96.9%	95.9%	95.4%	94.6%

NOTE: If the needs of the child/youth/young adult cannot be met by the foster parent/group care provider, or if these needs are not addressed and/or resolved, the FCR Case Reviewer submits an FCR Memo to the Area Director/designee within one working day of the review outlining the identified concerns.

Table 19f summarizes the FCR Panel’s determination regarding whether the foster parent/group care provider adhered to the Child Placement Agreement and fulfilled all expectations for meeting child/youth/young adult needs. For 99.1% of reviews convened during FY2024, the foster parent/group care provider was determined to be meeting their needs.

TABLE 19f. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19f. Has the foster parent/group care provider fulfilled all placement expectations to meet the child/youth/young adult needs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult in placement—based on all available information at the review—the FCR Panel determines whether the foster parent/group care provider provided for the child/youth/young adult’s safety, permanency, and well-being. Expectations of the foster parent/group care provider include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a safe environment Promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being Assisting the child/youth/young adult in maximizing their potential Meeting the child/youth/young adult’s individual needs related to their racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious background Supporting reunification with the family, or an alternative permanent plan as indicated on the Action Plan 	98.7%	99.1%	99.0%	99.1%	99.1%

Table 19g summarizes the FCR Panel’s determination regarding whether the Department took steps to ensure that the foster parent/group care provider followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

- This standard is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child/youth/young adult while at the same time encouraging their emotional and developmental growth, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child/youth/young adult in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities (42 U.S. Code § 675).*

For 99.6% of reviews convened during FY2024, the FCR Panel determined that DCF worked with the foster parent/group care provider to ensure the resource followed the *Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*.

TABLE 19g. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19g. Has DCF taken steps to ensure child/youth/young adult’s foster parent ⁽¹⁾ followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Yes” is selected if DCF has worked with the foster parents to ensure that the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard was followed (i.e., careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety and best interest of children/youth/young adults while at the same time encouraging their emotional and developmental growth). 	99.1%	99.5%	99.3%	99.3%	99.6%

⁽¹⁾ Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is presently limited to children/youth/young adults placed in a family setting (i.e., departmental foster home or contracted foster care).

Table 19h indicates that for 98.9% of reviews convened during FY2024, the FCR Panel determined that DCF made efforts to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child/youth/young adult regular ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities.

TABLE 19h. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19h. Has DCF taken steps to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child/youth/young adult regular opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, working to help develop the child/youth/young adult's special talent/interest/gift? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child/youth/young adult in foster care placement (including contracted foster care), the FCR Panel determines whether DCF took steps to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child/youth/young adult regular ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, working to help develop this child/youth/young adult's special talent/interest/gift. 	97.8%	98.0%	97.9%	98.4%	98.9%

Age or developmentally appropriate activities include:

- Activities or items that are generally accepted as suitable for children/youth/young adults of the same chronological age or level of maturity, or that are determined to be developmentally-appropriate for a specific individual—based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group (42 U.S. Code § 675).*

Table 19i summarizes the FCR Panel's determination regarding whether the Department completed tasks required by policy, including but not limited to:

- Meeting with family members
- Assessing family needs
- Engaging the family in the development of an Action Plan that identifies what must be accomplished in order to attain and maintain child/youth/young adult:
 - Safety
 - Permanency
 - Well-Being
 - Case closing
- Giving youth 14+ an opportunity to identify two persons to assist them in the development of the Action Plan
- Ensuring a birth certificate has been secured for the child/youth/young adult
- Ensuring the father named on the birth certificate, and/or any named father is assessed and included in Action Planning
- Recommending paternity testing as needed
- Completing needed referrals

For 88.9% of reviews convened during FY2024, the FCR Panel determined that DCF completed the tasks required by policy to address the needs of the family in order to support child/youth/young adult safety and well-being, and the tasks related to achieving the Permanency Plan for the child/youth/young adult.

TABLE 19i. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19i. Has DCF completed the necessary steps to address the needs of the family, during the period under review?	90.7%	92.6%	87.7%	87.1%	89.9%

Table 19j summarizes FCR Panel determinations regarding whether necessary actions and essential changes for achieving the Permanency Plan were demonstrated. These include consideration of federal ASFA guidelines such as:

- Reasonable efforts provided in a timely manner to reunify the family
- Filing of a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) for children/youth under age 18 who have been in care for 15 of the past 22 months—unless there is a documented exception
- Timely recruitment

Table 19j indicates that for FCRs convened during FY2024, the FCR Panel determined that 90.8% of the reviewed Permanency Plans should be maintained. Conversely, 9.2% were determined to require an Area Office review and/or a Permanency Planning Conference (PPC).

TABLE 19j. Determinations...	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
19j. The extent of progress made toward achievement of the permanency plan.					
○ Were necessary actions and essential changes for achieving the child/youth/young adult's Permanency Plan demonstrated?					
MAINTAIN PERMANENCY PLAN	92.0%	92.8%	92.1%	91.9%	90.8%
Permanency Plan Achieved	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Sufficient/Maintain Permanency Plan	42.7%	42.7%	39.8%	38.9%	42.3%
Insufficient/Maintain Permanency Plan	45.8%	46.7%	48.9%	49.0%	45.1%
Permanency Plan Changed within the last 45 days	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.9%	3.3%
CHANGE PERMANENCY PLAN	8.0%	7.2%	7.9%	8.1%	9.2%
Insufficient/Change Permanency Plan	6.7%	5.9%	6.6%	6.8%	7.9%
Permanency Plan does not reflect casework direction	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Circumstances Changed and Permanency Plan is no longer relevant	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%

DETERMINATION – Maintain Permanency Plan (90.8%)

- Sufficient: Of the children/youth/young adults reviewed during FY2024, 0.1% had a Permanency Plan determined to have been achieved and 42.3% had a Permanency Plan determined to be sufficient and therefore should be maintained. A sufficient Permanency Plan is one in which the following criteria are met:
 - most but not all of the essential changes have been achieved to accomplish the Permanency Plan
 - tasks have been identified to achieve the remaining essential changes
 - progress is being made toward reducing or eliminating identified needs/dangers/risk
- Insufficient: In 45.1% of reviews, the FCR determined that there was insufficient progress towards the Permanency Plan but determined that circumstances warranted allowing additional time to complete tasks and demonstrate change within the existing Permanency Plan.
- Of the Permanency Plans active at the time of the FCR, 3.3% were in effect for 45 calendar days or less. As such, FCR Panel could not review progress and make a determination.

DETERMINATION – Change Permanency Plan (9.2%)

- The FCR Panel determined that 7.9% of the reviewed Permanency Plans should be changed.
 - Though DCF provided services and despite allowing reasonable time, necessary or essential changes for achieving the Permanency Plan were not made, or successfully completed, and a new Permanency Plan is needed to meet the child/youth/young adult's need for permanency.
- The FCR Panel determined that 0.6% of the reviewed Permanency Plans should be changed because the Permanency Plans did not reflect casework direction.
- The FCR Panel determined that in 0.7% of the reviews convened during FY2024, circumstances had changed and therefore the Permanency Plan was no longer relevant and should be changed.

VII. MINORITY OPINIONS

When an FCR is conducted by a three-party panel and there is lack of agreement among panel members on a given determination, a majority of two prevails. The opinion of the FCR panel member with a differing determination is documented as a **minority opinion**.⁸

Table 20 shows that there were 543 FCRs with a minority opinion in FY2024.

TABLE 20. Minority Opinions by Panel Member	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
FCR Reports Approved	13,651	11,872	11,130	10,352	11,375
FCRs with a Minority Opinion <i>- An FCR may result in multiple determinations and/or multiple panel members with a minority opinion.</i>	162 (1.2%)	341 (2.9%)	435 (3.9%)	574 (5.5%)	543 (4.8%)
• FCR Case Reviewer held Minority Opinion	76	153	243	322	333
• Second Party held Minority Opinion	57	105	118	129	101
• Volunteer Panel Member held Minority Opinion	29	83	74	123	109

VIII. FOSTER CARE REVIEW FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The FCRU has three formal opportunities to follow up and address the findings of the FCR. Each opportunity serves as a feedback mechanism for improving case-specific practice.

1. The first is within the FCR meeting itself, including the robust conversation about the case and what has happened since the last FCR.
2. The second opportunity is through the alert notice and FCR memo processes. All Items flagged in the alert notice and FCR memo require resolution by the Area Office. The feedback loop is closed once the FCRU or manager receives notification that the issues have been resolved and/or a plan is in place for resolving the alert and memo.
3. The third opportunity is through the written FCR report which is transmitted to multiple parties including the Area Office. This memorializes the identified strengths and areas needing improvement and serves as an additional opportunity for relevant parties to address any concerns. This report is used at the subsequent FCR to identify areas that need to be reviewed or assessed during the FCR. The Area Office is then charged with addressing any issues or determinations requiring remedial action.

FCR Documentation: Immediately following the FCR, the case reviewer is responsible for summarizing all determinations and recommendations; identifying each panelist's agreement or disagreement with each of the determinations; and documenting this information in the electronic case record. The FCR manager reviews and approves the documentation of the FCR in the electronic case record and notifies and distributes the copies to the assigned Social Worker, parent(s)/guardian(s); adult guardian for an incapacitated person; youth or young adult; child, youth or young adult's attorney; parent's attorney; the placement resource; and the guardian ad litem, if assigned. The assigned social worker is responsible for working with the family, youth, and young adult to update the Action Plan for the next six months based on the FCR's determinations.

⁸ When a Foster Care Review is conducted by a two-party panel and there is lack of agreement among panel members on a given determination, the case reviewer's determination is entered into the electronic case record. The opinion of the Foster Care review panel member with a differing determination is documented as a minority opinion.

Permanency Planning Conference: If the determination is made that a child, youth, or young adult's Permanency Plan be changed or when a majority opinion cannot be reached by a three-member panel, the Area Director /designee coordinates with the regional counsel to convene a Permanency Planning Conference.

Alert Notice: If concerns for a child, youth, or young adult's safety are identified during an FCR, the case reviewer immediately notifies the FCRU manager of the concern. The FCRU manager sends an Alert Notice immediately to the Area Director. The Area Director responsible for the case is required to document a response to the Alert Notice within one working day. The feedback loop is considered closed once the FCRU manager receives notification that the issues have been resolved and/or a plan is in place for resolving the alert. The FCRU is working with IT to develop a systematic approach for automating the tracking of safety concern alert resolution. This will permit the development and reporting of metrics. Until then, the FCRU is responsible for ensuring follow-up on all safety concern alerts.

FCR Memo: For all other concerns identified during a Foster Care Review, the case reviewer completes a Foster Care Review Memo (FCR Memo) that describes the concerns. Issues identified for an FCR Memo include, but are not limited to:

- clinical issues regarding the child or youth's placement that need immediate review;
- visitation issues, including insufficient visits to the child(ren), youth, or young adult by the social worker;
- concerns regarding medical needs;
- 51A filed by the case reviewer;
- significant delay/barrier to achieving permanency for the child(ren), youth or young adult;
- issues related to Interstate Compact;
- no legal custody of a child or youth in placement;
- no active Voluntary Placement Agreement for a young adult in placement; and
- no approved licensed home study of a family resource.

The FCR Memo is then sent within one working day to the Area Director responsible for the case and any other agency manager who can assist in the resolution of the issue identified. The FCR Memo is also reviewed by an FCRU manager to determine if an Alert Notice is needed. The Area Director responsible for the case must document a response to the FCR Memo within 30 calendar days and indicate the action taken to resolve the issue.

For situations where concerns were identified at the last FCR and no action was taken, the FCRU Director sends a notice to the Area Director or regional counsel based on the items identified by the FCR within 10 calendar days after the Foster Care Review. The Area Director or regional counsel must then document a response to the notice within 30 calendar days and indicate any new action taken to resolve the concern first identified and what barriers, if any, are present that prevent the resolution of the concern.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

Appendix A

Section	Metric	Denominator	Numerator
I. DCF Served Population			
Case Counts	1. Case Counts Start of FY	Total count of clinical and adoption cases at the start of fiscal year.	1a. Of total cases, the count that were clinical cases. 1b. Of the total cases, the count that were adoption cases.
Child/Youth/Young Adult and Parent/Caregiver Counts	2. Child/Youth/Young Adult and Parent/ Caregiver Counts	Total count of consumer children/youth/young adults and parents/caregivers served at the start of the fiscal year.	2a. Of total consumers, the count of adults (parents/caregivers). 2b. Of total consumers, the count of children/youth (0-17). 2c. Of total consumers, the count of young adults (18 and older).
Children/Youth/Young Adults In Placement	3. Children/Youth/Young Adults In Placement	Total count of consumer children/ youth/young adults (0-22) in placement at the start of the fiscal year.	3a. Of total consumers in placement, the count of children/youth (0-17). 3b. Of consumers in placement, the count of young adults (18-22).
II. Foster Care Review Overview			
Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement with an FCR	4a. Unique Children/Youth/Young Adults in Placement At Any Time	Unduplicated count of children/youth/young adults in placement for a minimum one day during the fiscal year.	
	4b. Unique Children/Youth/Young Adults with a Convened FCR	Unduplicated count of children/youth/young adults with an FCR convened during the fiscal year.	
	4c. Total Foster Care Review Meetings Convened	Count of FCR meetings convened during the fiscal year.	
III. Scheduling & Timeliness			
	5. Scheduled and Convened FCR Meetings	Count of FCR meetings scheduled within the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count convened within the month.
	6. Children/Youth/Young Adults Reviewed	Unique (unduplicated) count of children/youth and young adults subject to a convened FCR.	
	7. Duration of FCR Meetings	Average and median duration (in minutes) of FCR meetings convened during the month.	
	8. Timeliness of FCR Report Completion	Count of FCR Reports approved by an FCR manager within the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count approved on, or prior to the report due date. <i>- FCR Reports are due within 30 working days of the date the review is convened.</i>
IV. Attendance			
FCR Meeting Panel Composition	9a. FCRs with a Volunteer Panel Member in Attendance	For approved FCRs, the count convened within the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with a Volunteer Panel Member in attendance.
	9b. FCRs with a Second Party Panel Member in Attendance	For approved FCRs, the count convened within the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with a Second Party Panel Member in attendance.
	9c. FCRs with a Three-Party Panel	For approved FCRs, the count convened within the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with all three panel members in attendance.
Mandated FCR Participant – Invited and Attended	10a1. Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – In placement - INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14 to 22) in out-of-home placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count INVITED to the FCR.

GLOSSARY

Appendix A

Section	Metric	Denominator	Numerator
	10a2. Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – In placement - ATTENDED	For approved FCRs, the count of INVITED youth/young adults (14 to 22) in out-of-home placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of those who ATTENDED.
	10b1. Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – Not in Placement – INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14 to 22) not in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count INVITED to the FCR.
	10b2. Youth/Young Adult (14-22) – Not in Placement – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs, the count of INVITED youth/young adults (14 to 22) not in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of those who ATTENDED.
	10c1. Child/Youth/Young Adult's Attorney – INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count with an attorney associated with a child/youth/young adult (0-22).	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an INVITED attorney.
	10c2. Child/Youth/Young Adult's Attorney – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs with an attorney associated with a child/youth/young adult (0-22), the count with an INVITED attorney.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an attorney who ATTENDED.
	10d1. Parent/Guardian (Any) – INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count with an associated parent/legal guardian. <i>- Limited to FCRs with a child/youth (0-17) whose parents/legal guardians' Parental Rights have not been terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an INVITED parent/legal guardian.
	10d2. Parent/Guardian (Any) – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs with an associated parent/legal guardian, the count with an INVITED parent/legal guardian. <i>- Limited to FCRs with a child/youth (0-17) whose parents/legal guardians' Parental Rights have not been terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with a parent/legal guardian who ATTENDED.
	10e1. Parent's Attorney – INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count with an attorney associated with a parent/legal guardian. <i>- Limited to FCRs with a child/youth (0-17) whose parents/legal guardians' Parental Rights have not been terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an INVITED attorney.
	10e2. Parent's Attorney – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs with an attorney associated with a parent/legal guardian, the count with an INVITED attorney. <i>- Limited to FCRs with a child/youth (0-17) whose parents/legal guardians' Parental Rights have not been terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an attorney who ATTENDED.
	10f1. DCF Case Representative – INVITED	Fixed at 100%, because the DCF i-FamilyNet auto-generates invitations to DCF Case Representatives associated with Foster Care Reviews. <i>- DCF Case Representative role types include: DCF social worker assigned to the parents/children/youth/young adults, DCF social worker assigned to a child/youth in an adoption case, supervisor, and family resource worker assigned to the foster parent(s).</i>	
	10f2. DCF Case Representative – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs, the count with an INVITED DCF Case Representative.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with a DCF Case Representative who ATTENDED.
	10g1. Placement Resource (i.e., foster parent/group care provider) – INVITED	For approved FCRs, the count with a Placement Resource associated with the case. <i>- Placement Resources include: foster/pre-adoptive parents, group care representatives, and relatives providing substitute care.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an INVITED Placement Resource.
	10g2. Placement Resource (i.e., foster parent/group care provider) – ATTENDED	For approved FCRs, the count with an INVITED Placement Resource.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with a Placement Resource who ATTENDED.

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V. Review Process DCF Action Plan	11a. Was there a DCF Action Plan in effect during the period under review?	Count of approved FCRs for the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review.
	11b. Does the Action Plan address all identified concerns to reduce risk(s) and achieve desired outcomes?	Count of approved FCRs with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count with Action Plans that address all identified concerns to reduce risk(s) and achieve desired outcomes.
	11c. Did DCF's visits with family members focus on the Action Plan?	Count of approved FCRs with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where DCF's visits with family members focused on the Action Plan.
	11d. Is the Action Plan written in the primary language of the family/young adult?	Count of approved FCRs with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where the Action Plan was written in the primary language of the family/young adult.
	11e. Was collateral contact used to assist in assessing the family's progress?	Count of approved FCRs with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where collateral contact was used to assist in assessing the family's progress.
Placement Activities	12a. Were "Follow-Up Activities" from the Initial Placement Review completed by DCF?	Count of approved <i>initial</i> FCRs for the month. <i>- An initial FCR is conducted within the first six months of an out-of-home placement.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where the Department's "Follow-Up Activities" established at the Initial Placement Review were completed by DCF.
	12b. Were relatives notified of child/youth's placement within 30-days?	Count of approved <i>initial</i> FCRs for the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where the Department notified relatives of the child/youth's placement within 30-days of placement.
Social Worker Contact	13a. For children/youth/young adults in placement on the FCR review date, did the DCF social worker maintain required contact with assigned children/youth during the review period?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where, at minimum, monthly face-to-face contact with the DCF social worker (or ICPC agency) was maintained.
	13b. Did the DCF social worker maintain required contact with the parents/caregivers?	Count of approved FCRs for the month. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated a parent was incapacitated, deceased, unknown, resided out of state, had their parental rights terminated, or documented a safety exception to the policy requirement.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where, at minimum, monthly contact with the parents/caregivers was maintained by the DCF social worker.
	13c. Did the child/youth/young adult's social worker maintain required contact with foster parents/group care providers?	Count of approved FCRs for the month. <i>- Excludes responses where the child/youth was missing from placement.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where, at minimum, monthly contact with the foster parent/group care providers was maintained by the DCF social worker.

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Parent-Child Visitation	14. Were visits maintained between parents/caregivers and their placed children/youth?	Count of approved FCRs for the month where one or more parents/caregivers were eligible for a visit. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated a parent was incapacitated, deceased, unknown, resided out of state, had their parental rights terminated, or there was a temporary or permanent court order suspending visitation.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where, at minimum, monthly visitation between the parents/caregivers and their placed children/youth was maintained.
Health Needs	15. Medical needs met for all open consumer children/youth/young adults?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where medical needs were met during the period under review.
	15b. Dental needs met for all open consumer children/youth young adults (3-22)?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (3-22) on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where dental needs were met during the period under review.
	15c. For children/youth in DCF custody receiving antipsychotic medication, is there a Rogers Order?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth (0-17) on the date of the FCR who are prescribed antipsychotic medication.	Of the children/youth in the denominator, the count where a Rogers Order is in place.
Education Needs	15d. If applicable, is child in DCF placement receiving Early Intervention services?	For approved FCRs, the count of children (0-3) in placement on the date of the FCR who are deemed eligible for Early Intervention through an Early Intervention assessment.	Of the children in the denominator, the count receiving Early Intervention services.
	15e. If applicable, is child/youth/young adult in DCF placement enrolled in an educational program?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (3-22) in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count enrolled in an educational program.
	15f. Are educational needs being met for children/youth/young adults in DCF placement?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (3-22) in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where educational needs are being met.
Well-Being Needs	15g. Does child/youth/young adult in DCF Placement have a permanent, lifelong connection?	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count with a permanent, lifelong connection—an individual who has made a commitment to be a permanent support for the child/youth/young adult (e.g., family or other significant individuals in the child/youth/young adult's life).
Youth/Young Adults in DCF Placement	16a. Is youth/young adult employed?	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14-22) in placement on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes youth/young adults with severe limitations/disability.</i>	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count employed.
	16b. Is youth/young adult receiving life skills training?	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14-22) in placement on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes youth/young adults with severe limitations/disability.</i>	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count receiving life skills training.

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	16c. Does youth/young adult agree with Permanency Plan determined to be most appropriate by the FCR panel?	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14-22) in placement on the date of the FCR.	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count in agreement with the Permanency Plan determined to be most appropriate by the FCR Panel.
Systemic Barriers – Child/Youth/Young Adult	17. Children/Youth/Young adults with one or more Systemic Barriers.	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count with one or more identified Systemic Barriers (includes <i>other systemic barrier</i>).
Systemic Barriers – Parent/Caregiver	18. Parents/Caregivers with one or more Systemic Barriers.	For approved FCRs, the count of associated parents/caregivers on the date of the FCR.	Of the parents/caregivers in the denominator, the count with one or more identified Systemic Barriers (includes <i>other systemic barrier</i>).
VI. FCR Determinations			
Safety Concerns	19a. Were concerns for the child/youth/young adult's safety identified through the review process?	Count of approved FCRs for the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where the FCR Panel identified safety concern.
Action Plan Engagement – Parent/Caregiver	19b1. Did the parent/caregiver participate/engage in the activities outlined in the Action Plan?	Count of approved FCRs for the month with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review AND an associated parent/caregiver. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated a parent was incapacitated, deceased, unknown, or had their parental rights terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that a parent/caregiver participated/engaged in the activities outlined in the Action Plan.
	19b2. Did the parent/caregiver demonstrate observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the child/youth's safety and well-being?	Count of approved FCRs for the month with an Action Plan in effect during the period under review AND an associated parent/caregiver. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated a parent was incapacitated, deceased, unknown, or had their parental rights terminated.</i>	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the parent/caregiver demonstrated observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the child/youth's safety and well-being.
Action Plan Engagement – Youth/Young Adult	19c1. Did the youth/young adult (14-22) participate in the Action Plan?	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14-22) with an Action Plan in effect on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated that the youth/young adult was incapacitated.</i>	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the youth/young adults participated in the Action Plan.
	19c2. Did the youth/young adult (14-22) demonstrate observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the youth/young adult's safety and well-being?	For approved FCRs, the count of youth/young adults (14-22) with an Action Plan in effect on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses that indicated that the youth/young adult was incapacitated.</i>	Of the youth/young adults in the denominator, the count where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the youth/young adults demonstrated observable changes that reduce or alleviate danger, or the need for placement, or achieve the desired outcomes to improve the child/ youth's safety and well-being.
Is placement necessary as of today?	19d1. Yes – child/youth/young adult is in placement.	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of responses in which a determination

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	<p>19d2. Not in placement – child/youth/young adult does not need placement.</p> <p>19d3. Child/youth/young adult in placement – placement not necessary.</p> <p>19d4. Child/youth/young adult not in placement – but should be in placement.</p> <p>19d5. Child/youth/young adult Missing (whereabouts unknown) from approved placement.</p> <p>19d6. Child/youth/young adult Absent (whereabouts known) from approved placement.</p>		was made by the FCR Panel for each response choice.
Appropriateness of Placement	19e. Is current placement appropriate?	For approved FCRs, the count of placed children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses where the child/youth is missing/absent from approved placement.</i>	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of responses where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the placement was appropriate.
Placement Expectations	19f. Has the foster parent /group care provider fulfilled all placement expectations to meet the child/youth/young adult's needs?	For approved FCRs with a placed child/youth/young adult (0-22), the count of associated foster parents/group care providers on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses where the child/youth is missing/absent from approved placement.</i>	Of the foster parents/group care providers in the denominator, the count of responses where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the resource fulfilled all placement expectations to meet the child/youth/young adult's needs.
Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard	19g. Has DCF taken steps to ensure child/youth/young adult's foster parent followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard?	For approved FCRs, the count of placed children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses where the child/youth is missing/absent from approved placement.</i> <i>- Placement type presently limited to family settings (i.e., departmental foster homes or contracted foster care).</i>	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of responses where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that the foster parent followed the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
	19h. Has DCF taken steps to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child/youth/young adult regular opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, working to help develop the child/youth/young adult's special talent/interest/gift?	For approved FCRs with a placed child/youth/young adult (0-22), the count of associated foster parents on the date of the FCR. <i>- Excludes responses where the child/youth is missing/absent from approved placement.</i> <i>- Placement type presently limited to family settings (i.e., departmental foster homes or contracted foster care).</i>	Of the foster parents in the denominator, the count of responses where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that DCF took steps to ascertain whether the foster parent offered the child/youth/young adult regular opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, working to help develop this child/youth/young adult's special talent/interest/gift.
Addressing Family Needs	19i. Has DCF completed the necessary steps to address the needs of the family, during the period under review?	Count of approved FCRs for the month.	Of the FCRs in the denominator, the count of responses where a determination was made by the FCR Panel that DCF completed the necessary steps to address the needs of the family, during the period under review.

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Permanency Plan Progress	19j1. Permanency Plan Achieved	For approved FCRs, the count of children/youth/young adults (0-22) on the date of the FCR.	Of the children/youth/young adults in the denominator, the count of responses in which a determination was made by the FCR Panel for each response choice.
	19j2. Sufficient/Maintain Permanency Plan.		
	19j3. Insufficient / Maintain Permanency Plan		
	19j4. Permanency Plan Changed Within the Last 45 Days		
	19j5. Insufficient/Change Permanency Plan		
	19j6. Permanency Plan Does Not Reflect Casework Direction		
	19j7. Circumstances Changed and Permanency Plan is No Longer Relevant		
VII. Minority Opinions			
	20. Minority Opinions by Panel Member and Determinations	For FCRs approved during the month: 20a. Count of FCRs with, at minimum, one minority opinion 20b. Count of minority opinions by FCR Panel member	

