



## Department for Children and Families–Family Services Division

Child Welfare and Youth Justice

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DCF Family Services Director of Operations

# Family Services Division

- Child Abuse and Neglect Intake/Emergency Services
- Child Safety Interventions – Investigations and Assessments
- Family Support Services to High Risk Families
- Juvenile Probation
- Children in Custody
  - Abuse/neglect
  - Delinquency
  - Child Behavior

# **Our Primary Focus: Child Safety**



**Engaged relationships are a tool to  
increase child safety.**

# Family Services Practice Model

**Mission:** *We partner with families and the community to promote safety, permanence, well-being and law abidance.*

**We Achieve Our Mission By:**

*Safely stabilizing and preserving families;*

*and if that is not possible;*

*Safely caring for children/youth and reunifying;*

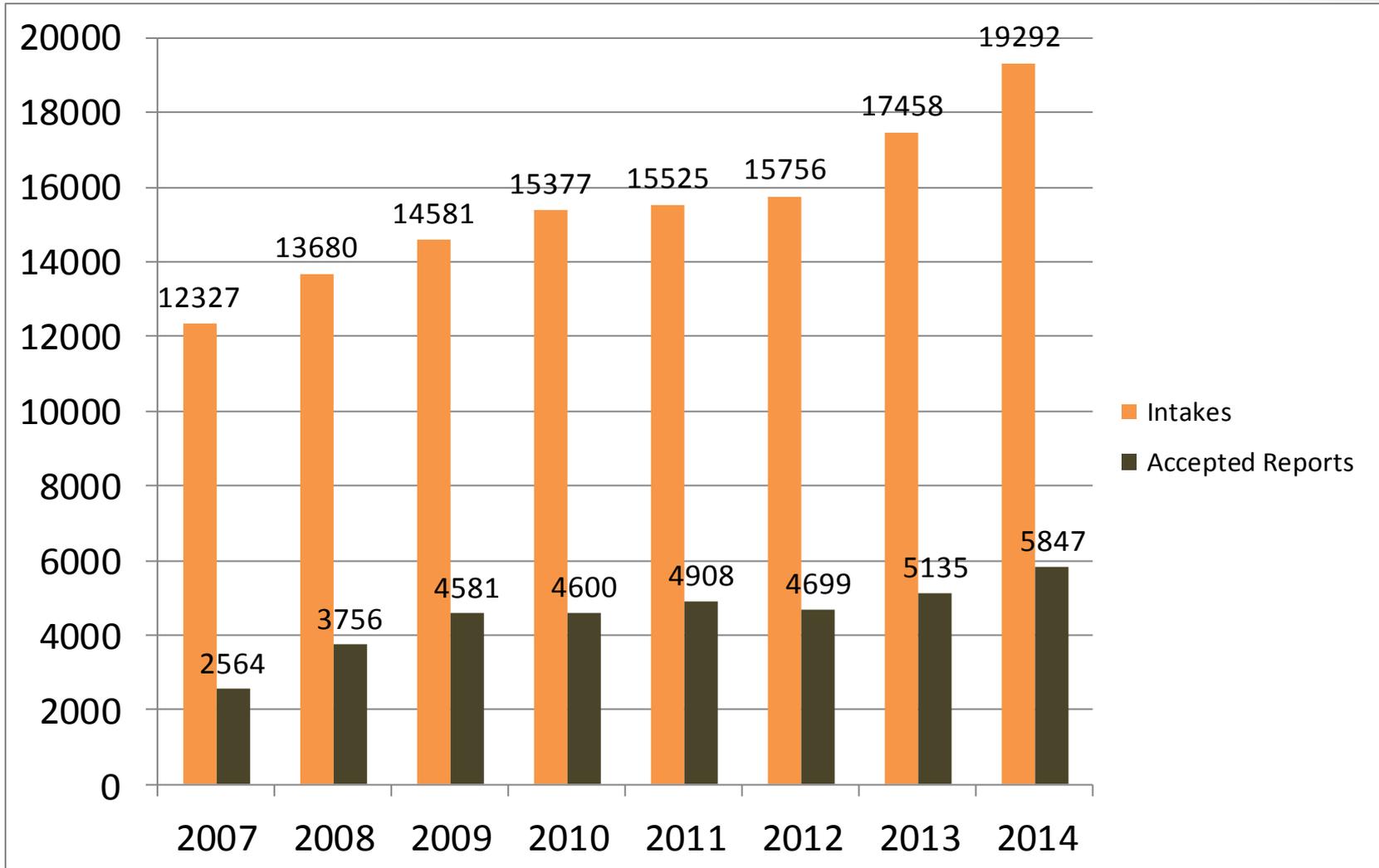
*and if that is not possible;*

*Safely supporting the development of permanency and lifelong connections for children/youth*

# Governing Statutes

- Title 33, Chapter 49
  - Child Abuse and Neglect Definitions
  - Child Abuse Investigation and Assessment Requirements
  - Administrative Appeal Processes
  - Disclosure of Information
- Title 33, Chapter 51, 52, and 53
  - Judicial Procedures Related to Children in Need of Care and Supervision (CHINs)
- 15a VSA on Adoption Proceedings

# Centralized Intake and Emergency Services



# Decision Point: Is the Child Safe?

The first priority of the social worker is to answer the question

## Is the child safe now?

- If not, what needs to be done to promote safety?
- Is out of home placement necessary?
- If the child must leave home, is a familiar person available to provide short-term care?
- Is DCF custody a necessary element to promote safety?

Structured Decision Making  
Assessment of Danger and Safety  
Is The Child Safe?

# Decision Point: Offering Ongoing Services

The ***Family Risk Assessment Tool*** estimates the probability of future maltreatment in the household. The higher the risk, the more important it is to engage the family in identifying supports and services to prevent harm.

Structured Decision Making  
Risk Assessment  
What Is The Risk of Future Maltreatment?

# If the child is safe now:

## Family Support Cases

- A Family Support Case is opened if:
  - The family is at high or very high risk as indicated by the final risk level on the Family Risk Assessment; or
  - The family has a danger issue that could not be resolved during the child safety intervention, **regardless of risk level**; or
  - The family requires FSD involvement to ensure engagement with services or other support or monitoring.
- District social workers provide services to families who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. This support is targeted at the reduction of risk and the promotion of protective capacities.

**475 families point in time in March 2015**

# If the child is not safe now :

## Working With The Court

- In any type of case, a child can come into DCF custody due to concern for their safety – AT ANY TIME. This may happen during the Child Safety Intervention or may occur during an Family Support Case
- Only a police officer may take a child into physical custody.
- The officer must take the child home, or to a designated shelter, or to the court.
- Only a judge may transfer custody to DCF.
- During work hours, DCF usually initiates a court hearing. After hours, the police usually recommends custody; the hearing is usually held by phone.

# Reasons to Seek Court Oversight

- **Children in Need of Care & Supervision (CHINS)**
  - Abuse/Neglect – CHINS A or B
  - Child Behavior (but not just for treatment)– CHINS C
  - Truancy – CHINS D
- **Delinquency**

# What Hearings Are Held?

- Emergency Care Hearing (if indicated) – can be held immediately, 24/7
- Temporary Care Hearing – within 72 hours
  - Does the child still need to be in DCF custody?
  - Can the child be discharged to a parent or relative, with or without conditions.
- Hearing on the Merits
  - The “trial”
  - Is the child in need of care or supervision or delinquent as defined in statute?
- Disposition Hearing
  - In whose custody will the child be?
  - What is the case plan goal and the plan for services?

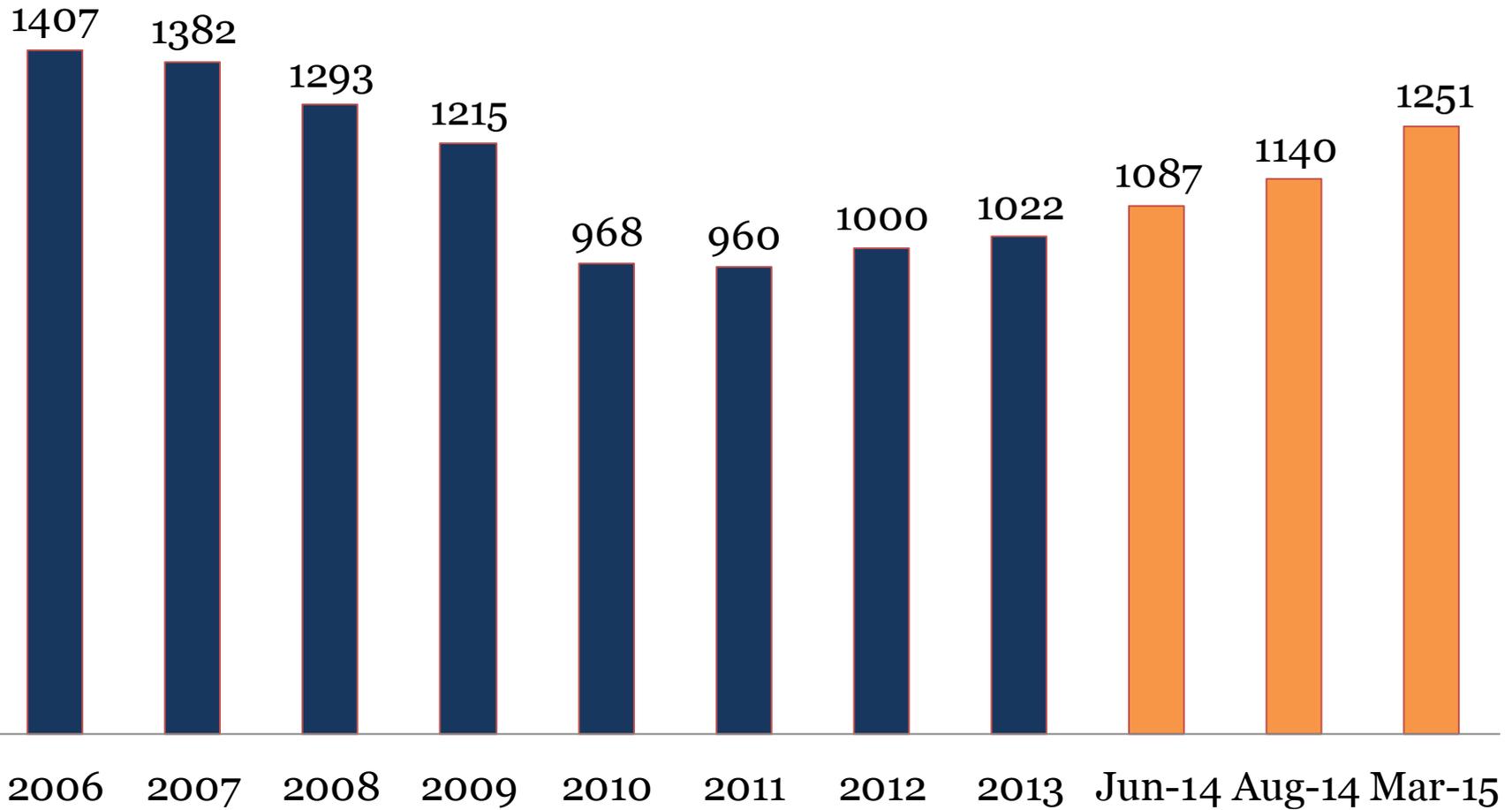
# Orders for Family Contact

- Parent-child contact is ordered unless contact would jeopardize physical safety or emotional well-being of the child.
- Grounds for terminating contact:
  - Parent has (without good cause) failed to maintain contact with the child with detrimental impact on the emotional well-being of the child; or,
  - Continued parent-child contact will have a detrimental impact on the physical or emotional well-being of the child.

# Monitoring Progress

- Post-Disposition Review in Court – 60 days after disposition.
- Case plan update and administrative review every 6 months.
- Court hearing to review longer term goal for permanency every 12 months.
  - Federal law requires DCF to seek termination of parental rights for children in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months, absent a documented compelling reason why that is not in the child's best interest.

# DCF Custody Trend Over Time



# Ages of Children in DCF Custody

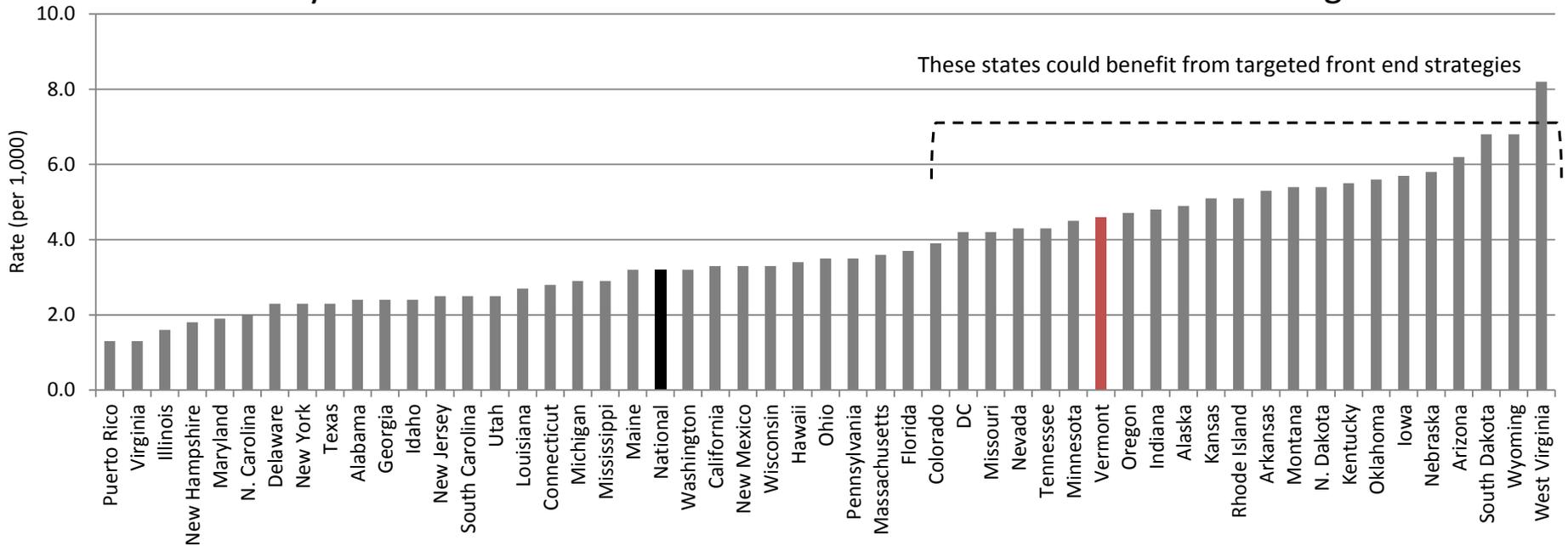
Age Group	6/30/14	12/1/14	3/6/15
0-5	336	411	511
6-11	228	238	303
12-17	481	479	437
Total	1045	1128	1251

Age Group	6/30/14	12/1/14	3/6/15
0-5	32%	36%	41%
6-11	22%	21%	24%
12-17	46%	42%	35%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The entry rate in VT(4.6 per 1,000 in FY12) is higher than the national rate (3.2 per 1,000 in FY11).

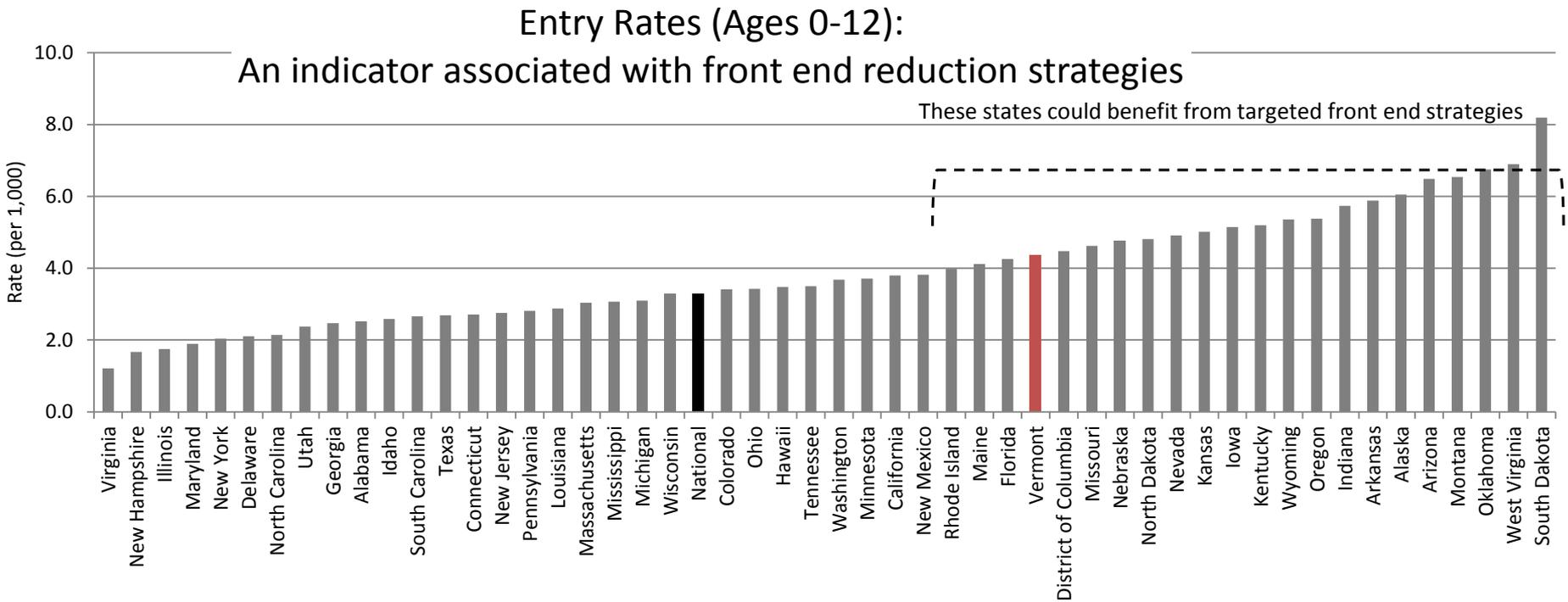
However...not all states include Juvenile Justice entries...

Entry Rates: An indicator associated with front end reduction strategies



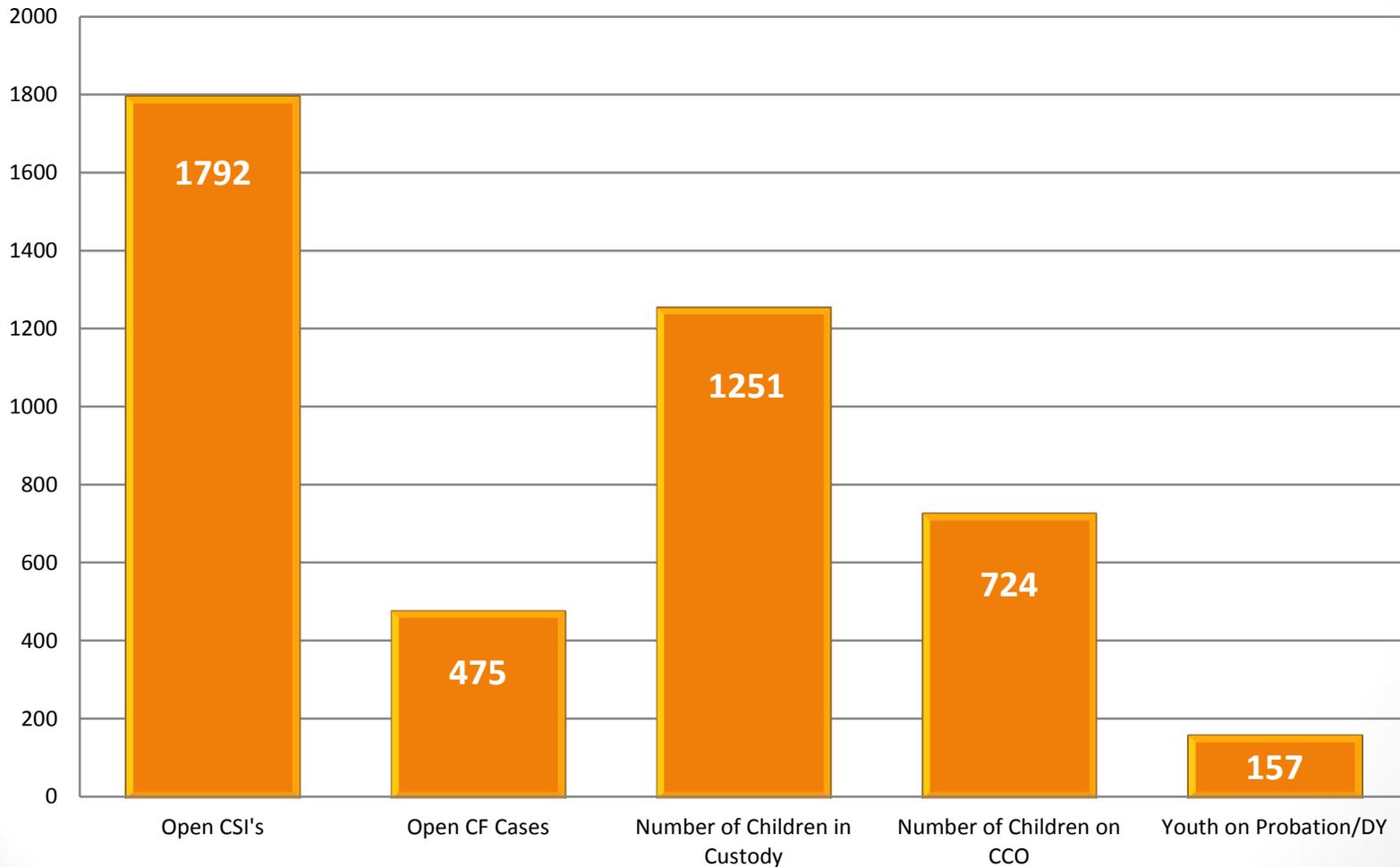
Entry rate is the number of children (ages 0-17) entering care during the year for every 1,000 in the general population.  
 Data source is FY12 AFCARS (FY11 in PR, CT, NM, SD and National) CA data from CWS/CMS

# Even for just younger children (ages 0-12), VT has an entry rate that is higher than the national rate.

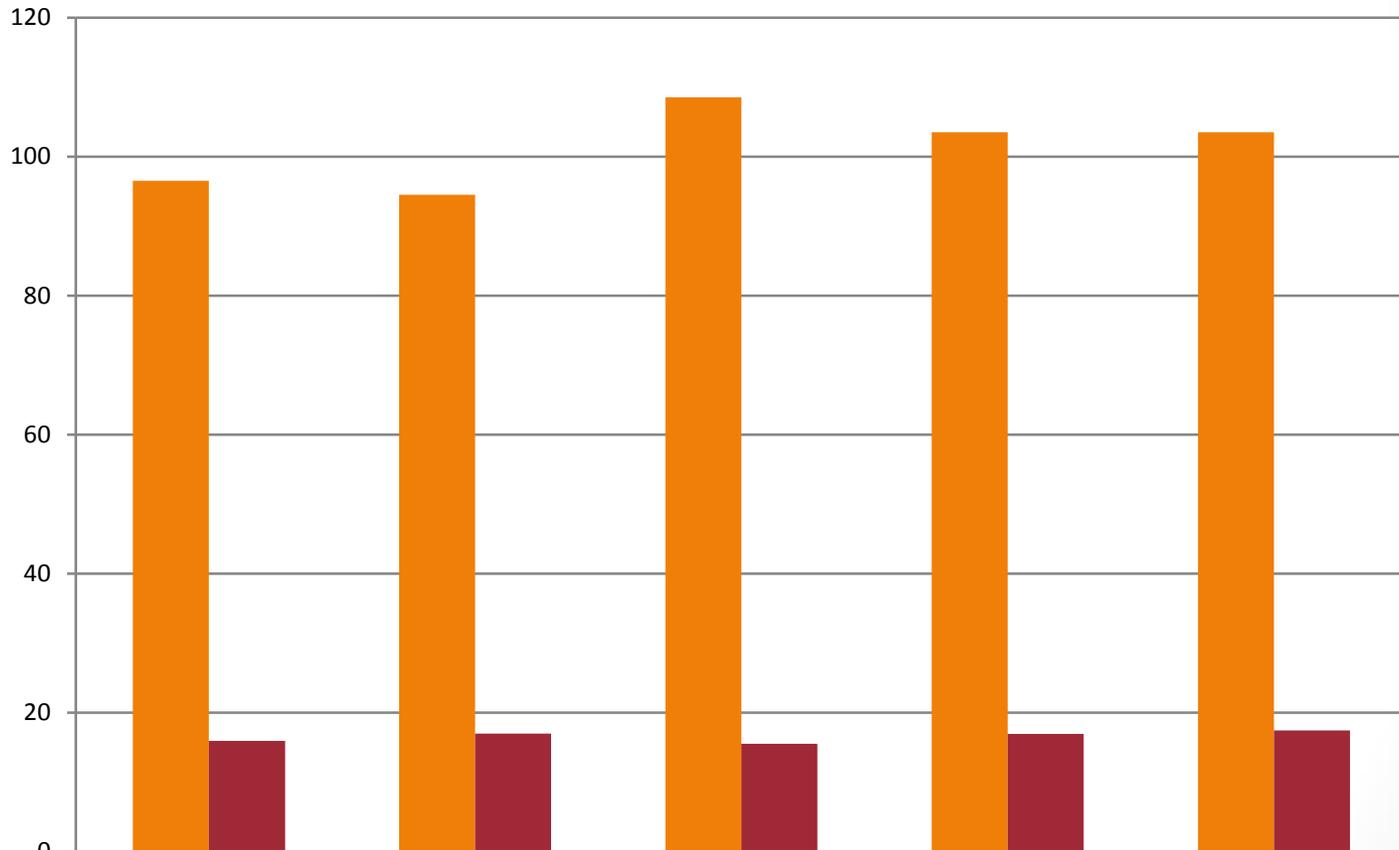


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# What Does Our Current Work Look Like?



# Caseload – Avg Families/Worker



	1/7/2014	4/2/2014	9/4/2014	1/20/2015	3/6/2015
# Ongoing FTEs	96.5	94.5	108.5	103.5	103.5
Families/FTE	15.9	17.0	15.5	16.9	17.4