



**Department for Children and Families
Family Services Division**

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Family Services Division

Primary Service Areas

- Operate a 24-hour Child Protection hotline
- Investigate and assess reports of abuse and neglect
- Engage families to meet their goals to increase safety
- Seek court involvement when required to keep children and communities safe
- Supervise youth on probation and help repair harm caused by their behavior
- Identify extended family and community supports
- Support safe placements for children and youth
- License and regulate foster homes, residential treatment programs and child placing and adoption agencies
- Achieve permanency options that are in the best interest of the child/youth
- Collaborate within districts, across districts, and with central office
- Partner with service providers and other state agencies

Family
Services
Division



Primary Focus: Child Safety

Strong relationships are a tool to increase child safety.

The background features several sets of concentric, curved lines in shades of gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of motion and depth. A blue rectangular box with a white border and a small white triangle at the bottom center is positioned on the left side of the page.

Family Services Division

Our Mission

We engage families, foster and kin caregivers, partner agencies, and the community to increase safety and law abidance for Vermont's children and youth.

The logo for the Family Services Division is a blue square with a white speech bubble shape at the bottom. The text "Family Services Division" is written in white, sans-serif font inside the square.

Family Services Division

We achieve our mission by working with families to:

- Keep children and youth safe,
- Keep youth free from delinquent behaviors,

And if that is not possible:

- Caring for children and youth in DCF or conditional custody and attending to their well-being, while working towards safe reunification.

And if that is not possible:

- Achieving other forms of permanency for children and youth in DCF or conditional custody by providing them with safe, supportive, lifelong connections.

Family Services Division

12 District Offices

Central Office

- Two direct service units:
 - Centralized Intake and Emergency Services
 - Residential Licensing and Special Investigations
- Provides support to the field, oversees policy and practice, manages budgets, grants and contracts, maintains communication with federal partners



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Central Office

Operations

- Supervision of District Directors and statewide functions

System of Care Unit

- Supports quality service delivery through the contracted system of care, including foster care, kinship care, adoption, residential care and community services
- Includes adoption unit: with approx. 2,200 children receiving adoption subsidy, and post-adoption supports through the Vermont Adoption Consortium and the Vermont Adoption Registry.

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Central Office

Revenue Enhancement Unit

- Focus on revenues, expenditures, grants and contracts

Policy, Practice & Performance Unit

- Planning (state and federal)
- Policy development
- Practice supports
- Continuous quality improvement and assurance
- Child and Family Services Review

Central Office Direct Services

Residential Licensing & Special Investigations (RLSI)

Licensing of foster homes and residential programs:

	2013	2020
Reports screened	792	792
Reports accepted	162	91
Regulatory interventions	57	123
License applications	592	531
Licenses granted	286	290
License renewals	100	141



Central Office Direct Services

Centralized Intake and Emergency Services Program

- 24/7 call center handling child protection intake
- After hours telephone response to emergencies concerning children in custody, child abuse, etc.; with responsibility to call out local staff when necessary
- Child protection registry checks

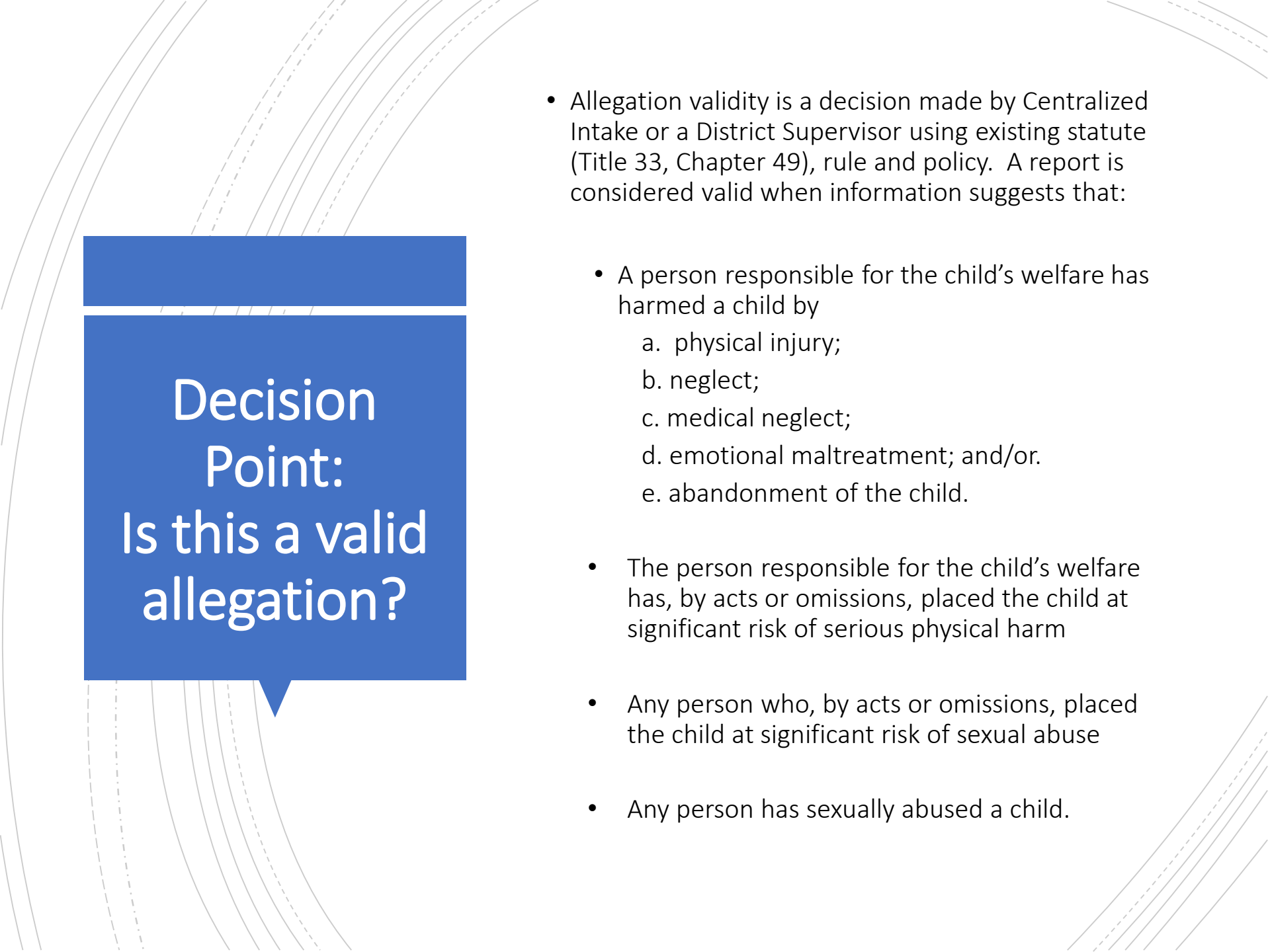


15,722 reports in 2020



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) including delinquency and truancy
- **15a VSA on Adoption Proceedings**



**Decision
Point:
Is this a valid
allegation?**

- Allegation validity is a decision made by Centralized Intake or a District Supervisor using existing statute (Title 33, Chapter 49), rule and policy. A report is considered valid when information suggests that:
 - A person responsible for the child's welfare has harmed a child by
 - a. physical injury;
 - b. neglect;
 - c. medical neglect;
 - d. emotional maltreatment; and/or.
 - e. abandonment of the child.
 - The person responsible for the child's welfare has, by acts or omissions, placed the child at significant risk of serious physical harm
 - Any person who, by acts or omissions, placed the child at significant risk of sexual abuse
 - Any person has sexually abused a child.

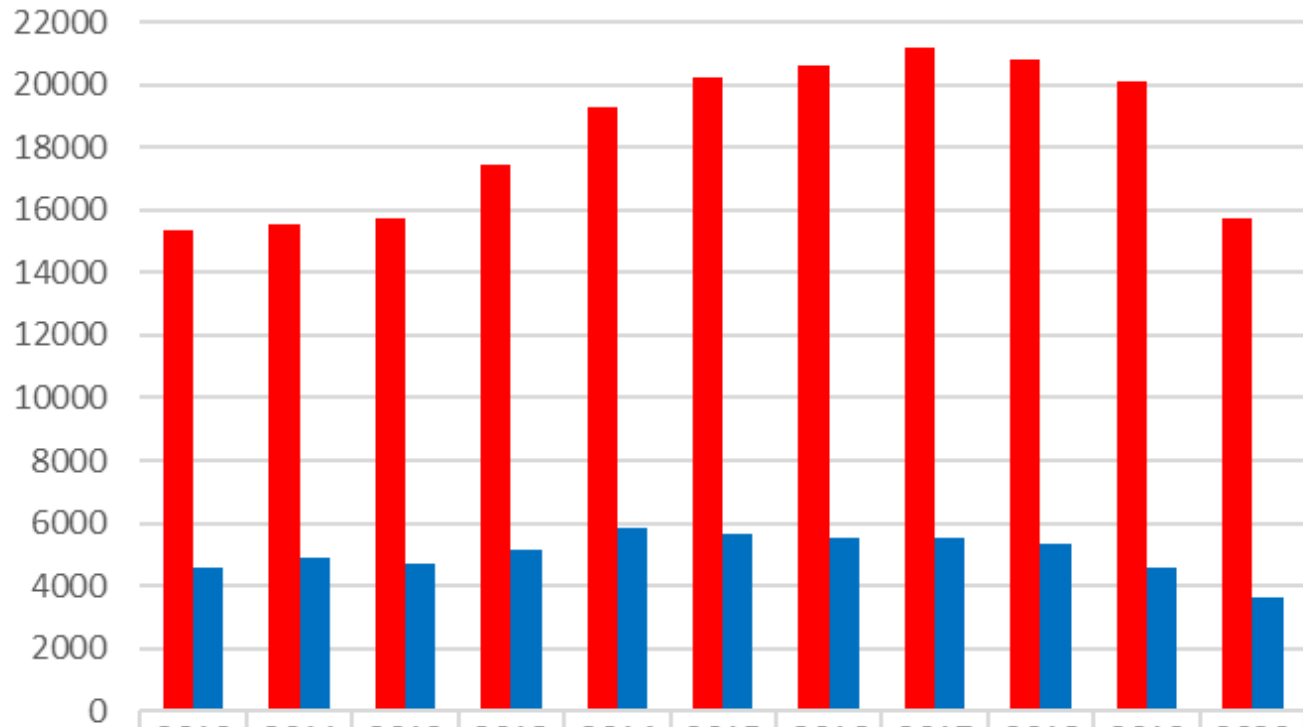
Child Abuse and Neglect: Investigations & Assessments

Specialized staff conduct child abuse investigations and assessments (*often referred to as child safety interventions*), with primary focus on the immediate safety of children..

- Districts conduct most child safety interventions
- DCF Residential Licensing and Special Investigation Unit focuses on regulated facilities and schools.

3,618 in 2020

Trends - Intakes & Accepted Reports



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
■ Intakes	15379	15526	15760	17458	19288	20233	20583	21201	20770	20076	15722
■ Accepted Reports	4601	4911	4699	5135	5846	5630	5509	5527	5327	4605	3618

Data Source: AHS Report Catalog; Intakes by District Report.

Data Note: Total intakes and accepted reports are displayed by CY (1/1/xx-12/31/xx)

Powers and Duties of the Commission

Title 33, Chapter 51 sets forth Powers and Duties of the Commissioner that include:

- (1) To undertake assessments and make reports and recommendations to the Court as authorized by the juvenile judicial proceedings chapters
- (2) To investigate complaints and allegations that a child is in need of care or supervision for the purpose of considering the commencement of proceedings under the juvenile judicial proceedings chapters

CHINS Definition


"Child in need of care or supervision (CHINS)" means a child who:

- (A) has been abandoned or abused by the child's parent, guardian, or custodian.
- (B) is without proper parental care or subsistence, education, medical, or other care necessary for his or her well-being;
- (C) is without or beyond the control of his or her parent, guardian, or custodian; or
- (D) is habitually and without justification truant from compulsory school attendance.

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: 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?

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.

338 families point-in-time end of September 2020

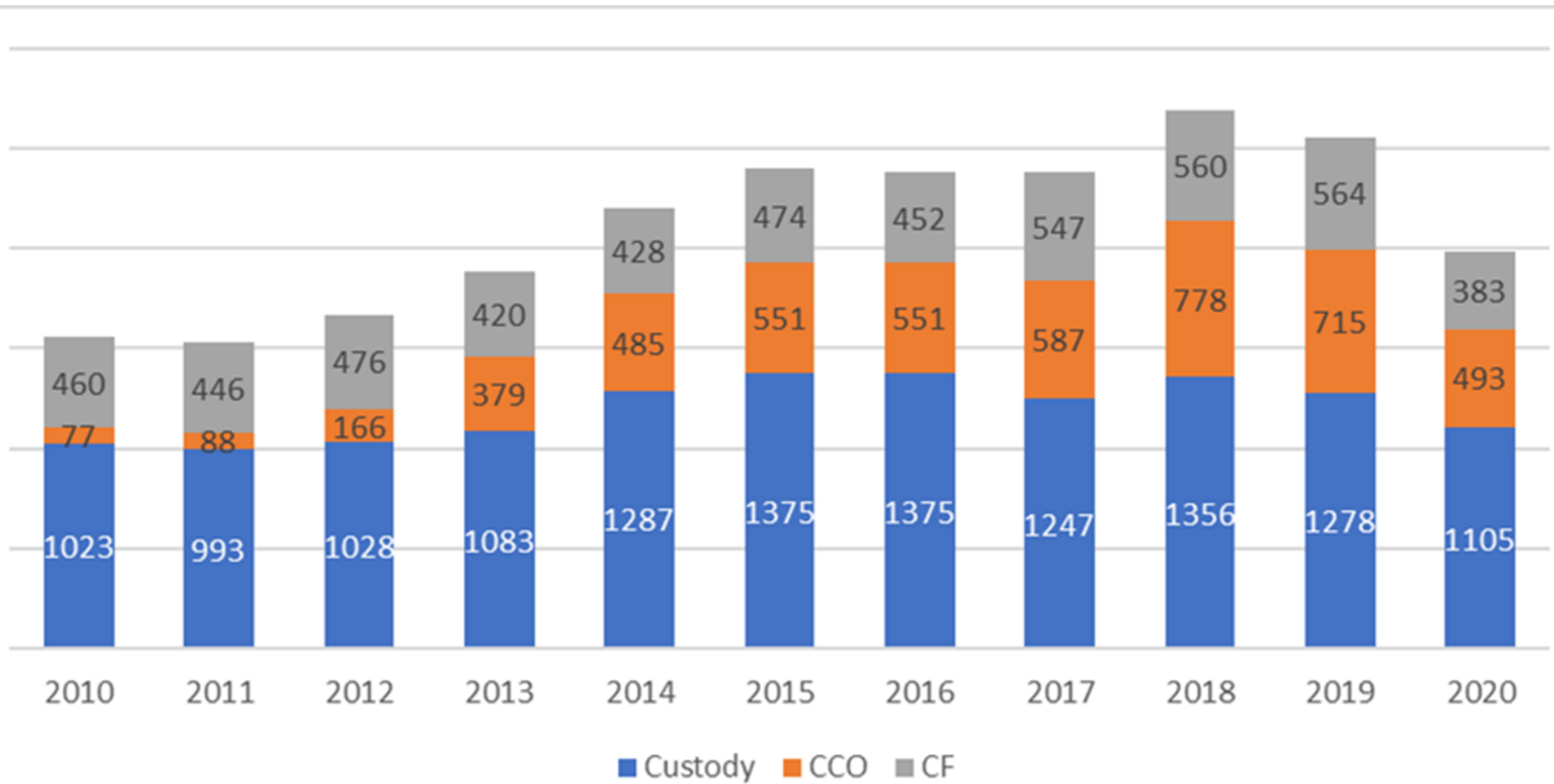
Working With The Court

- 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.



Child/Youth involved with DCF

Custody, Conditional Custody (CCO), Family Support Cases (CF)



Number of Children/Youth in DCF Custody by Age Group

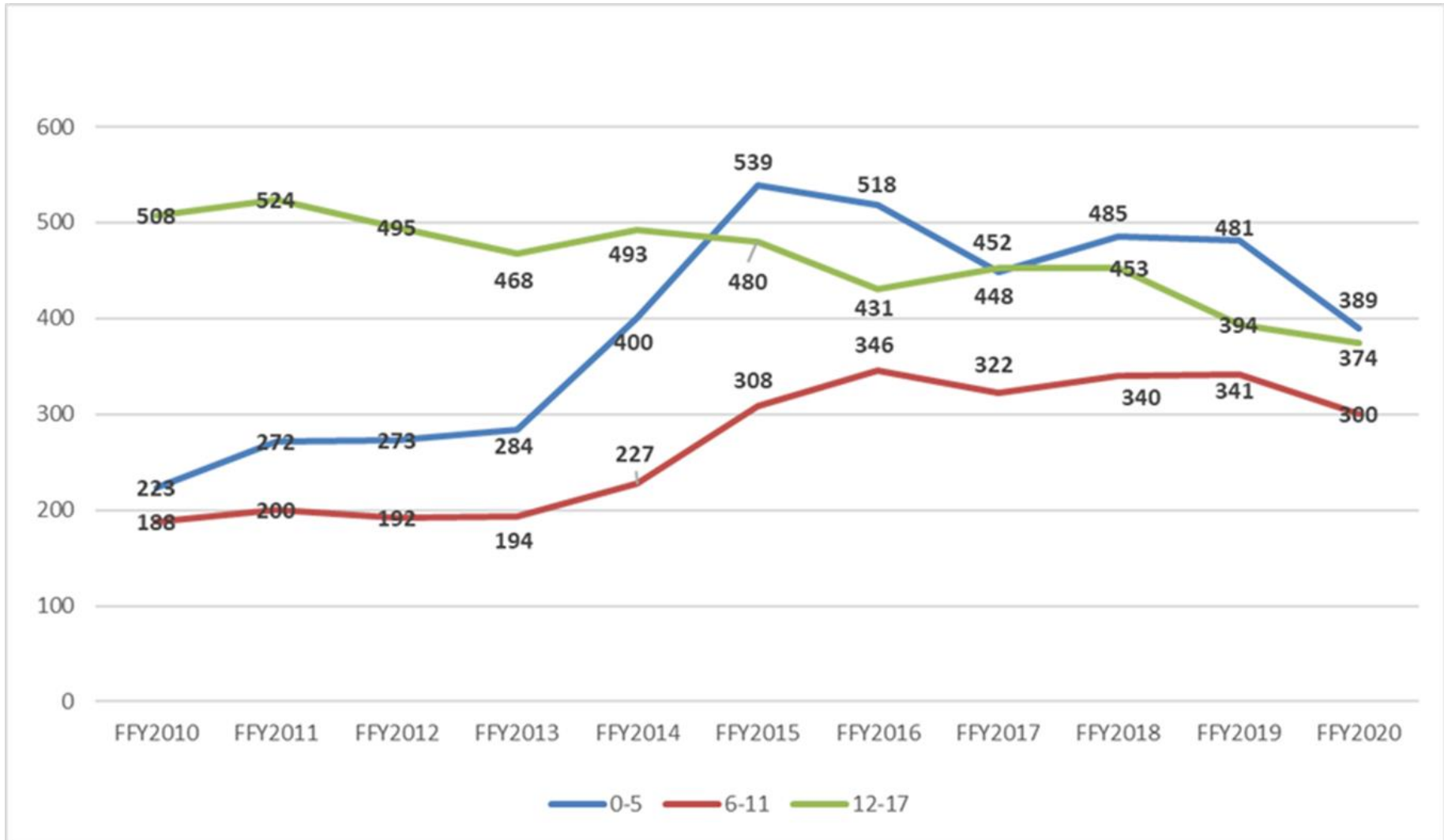


Table 1: Number and Percent of All Kids Ages 0-5 in Custody due to Substance Abuse Issues

Child's Age	Nov-15	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-16	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-17	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-18	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-19	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-20	total % of 0-5 Custody Population
0	59	59.00%	55	66.27%	42	59.15%	32	48.48%	37	52.11%	35	46.67%
1	67	58.77%	58	58.00%	54	64.29%	54	54.55%	38	44.19%	44	56.41%
2	59	67.82%	54	64.29%	62	62.00%	61	62.89%	42	46.15%	27	45.00%
3	59	66.29%	70	73.68%	37	54.41%	52	56.52%	51	62.20%	37	49.33%
4	53	66.25%	53	71.62%	64	68.09%	38	55.07%	43	52.44%	24	51.06%
5	48	69.57%	39	60.94%	37	67.27%	54	58.06%	35	48.61%	35	47.95%
Total	345	64.01%	329	65.80%	296	62.71%	291	56.40%	246	50.83%	202	49.51%

Table 2: Number and Percent of All Kids Ages 0-5 in Custody due to Opiate Abuse Issues

Child's Age	Nov-15	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-16	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-17	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-18	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-19	total % of 0-5 Custody Population	Nov-20	total % of 0-5 Custody Population
0	51	51.00%	46	55.42%	29	40.85%	21	31.82%	31	43.66%	25	33.33%
1	54	47.37%	44	44.00%	43	51.19%	41	42.42%	30	34.88%	36	46.15%
2	49	56.32%	45	53.57%	50	50.00%	47	48.45%	35	38.46%	20	33.33%
3	43	48.31%	53	55.79%	31	45.59%	36	39.13%	36	43.90%	27	36.00%
4	41	51.25%	46	62.16%	50	53.19%	25	36.23%	34	41.46%	13	27.66%
5	38	55.07%	32	50.00%	32	58.18%	42	45.16%	27	37.50%	27	36.99%
Total	276	51.21%	266	53.20%	235	49.79%	212	41.09%	193	39.88%	148	36.27%

Data Source: FSD Full Caseload Report- Report Manager; Children in custody ages 0-5.

Data Note: Confirmation of custody due to opiate abuse is a point-in-time annual survey at the beginning of November each year.

Youth Justice

Unlike child protection agencies in most other states, FSD also serves as the state's youth justice agency.

In this role, we:

- Work with youth whose own behaviors put them at risk;
- Supervise youth who are on probation for committing delinquent acts;
- Assess youth to determine their challenges and strengths;
- Place youth in temporary out-of-home care when necessary;
- Work with the youth and parents towards their safe return home; and
- Find permanent homes for youth who cannot safely return home, preferably with extended family members or known connections.

Family Services Workers are NOT probation officers-rather they are Family Services Workers who are tasked by Vermont statute with overseeing probation conditions as set by the court.

Family Services Workers supervised 147 youth and were involved with 109 youth who are charged with a crime or delinquency but not yet adjudicated in September 2020



Act 201- “Raise The Age”

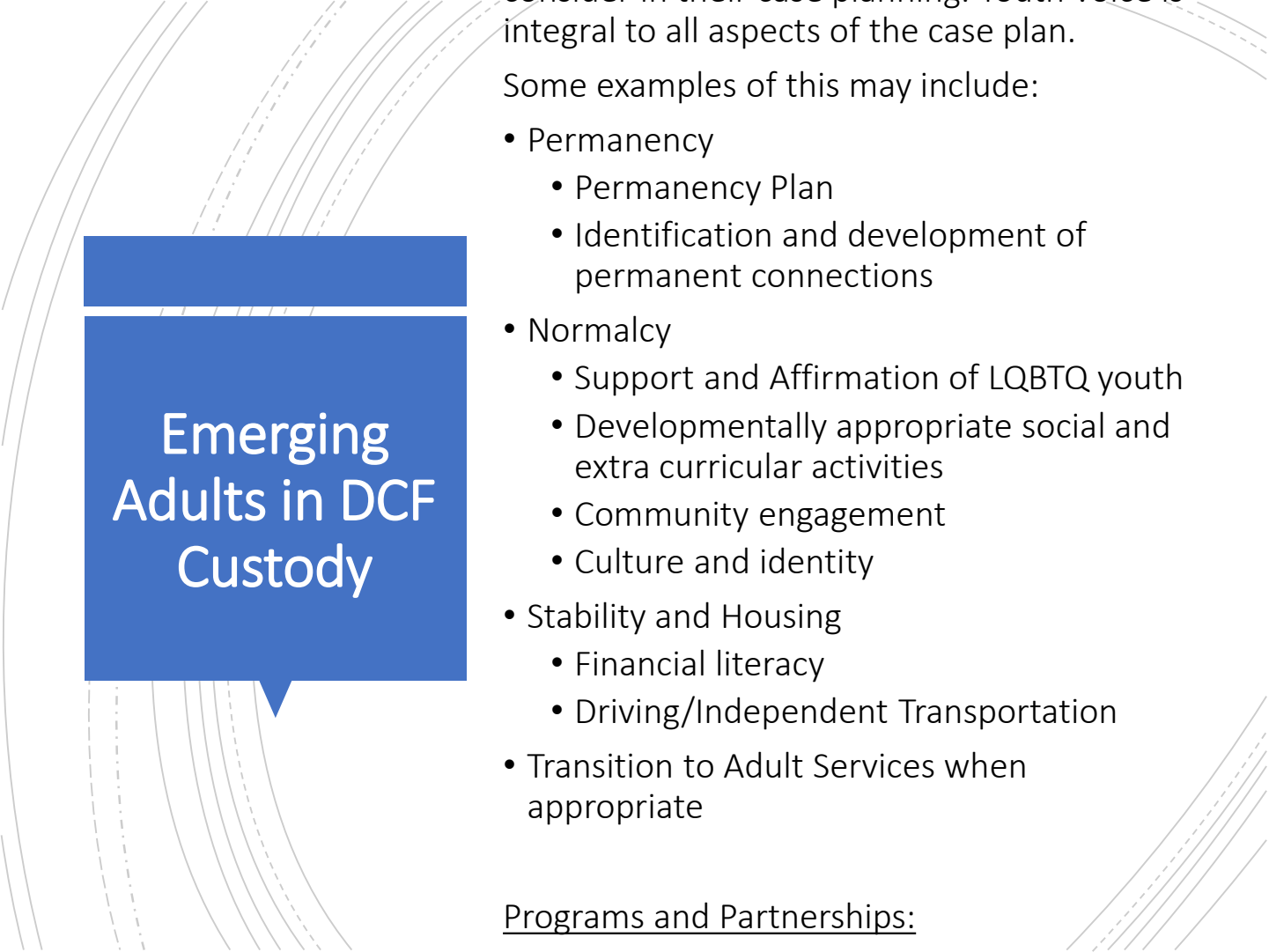
On July 1, 2020, Vermont became the first state in the country to raise the upper age of juvenile jurisdiction of the Family Division of the Superior Court to include most youths aged 18, who are accused of breaking the law. On July 1, 2022, the law will expand further to include youths aged 19.

Research suggests that the “emerging adults” are more effectively served by the juvenile justice system’s rehabilitative approach, as compared to a more punitive adult system.

Youth accused of more serious (“Big 12”) offenses will continue to be served by the Criminal Division.

Objectives:

- Improve opportunities for Diversion
- Maximize the efficiency of Family Court Division
- Ensure a full continuum of Post-Dispositional options
- Support Victims Rights
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Data Analysis



Emerging Adults in DCF Custody

Adolescents in DCF custody have a distinct set of needs and supports that FSW's must consider in their case planning. Youth voice is integral to all aspects of the case plan.

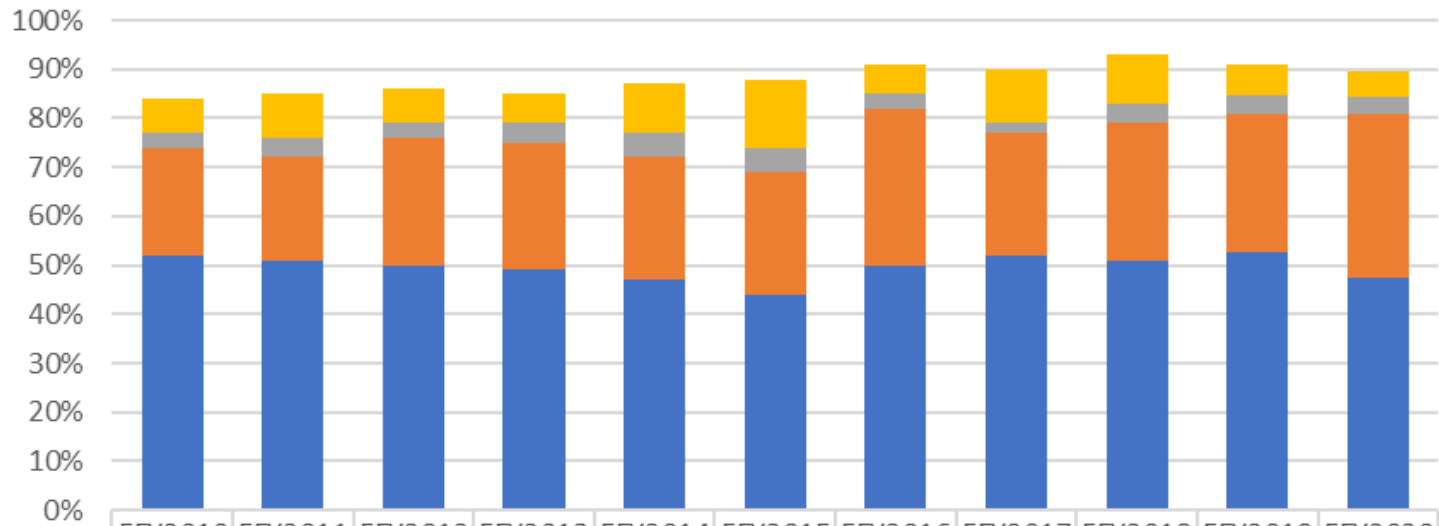
Some examples of this may include:

- Permanency
 - Permanency Plan
 - Identification and development of permanent connections
- Normalcy
 - Support and Affirmation of LGBTQ youth
 - Developmentally appropriate social and extra curricular activities
 - Community engagement
 - Culture and identity
- Stability and Housing
 - Financial literacy
 - Driving/Independent Transportation
- Transition to Adult Services when appropriate

Programs and Partnerships:

- Youth Development Program
- Prevention and Stabilization Services for Youth and Families (PSSYF)

Children in DCF Custody Who Exited to Permanent Placements

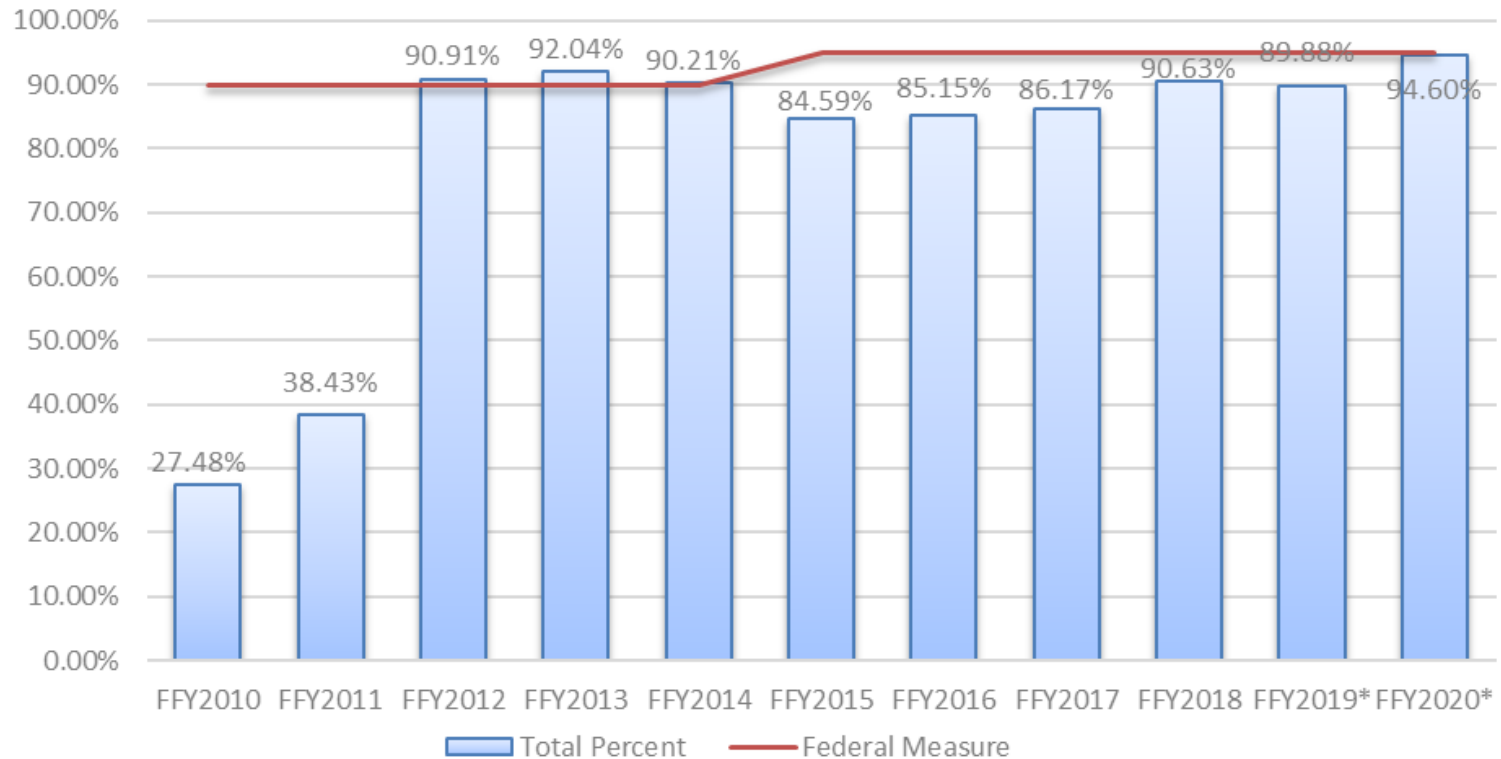


	FFY2010	FFY2011	FFY2012	FFY2013	FFY2014	FFY2015	FFY2016	FFY2017	FFY2018	FFY2019	FFY2020
Relative Custody	7%	9%	7%	6%	10%	14%	6%	11%	10%	6%	5%
Guardianship	3%	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%	3%	2%	4%	4%	3%
Adoption	22%	21%	26%	26%	25%	25%	32%	25%	28%	28%	34%
Reunification	52%	51%	50%	49%	47%	44%	50%	52%	51%	53%	47%

Data Source: FSD Quarterly Management Reports (C8 tab) including Adopt, Parent, OT Parent, GU Non-Rel, GU Rel and Relative.

Data Note: Percentages displayed are an average of all four quarters of each FFY combined. Data displayed includes all children who exited custody. Totals in table will not equal 100 due to other exit reasons not shown here.

Monthly Face-to-Face Contact between the Social Worker and Youth in Custody



Data Source: FSDnet-Social Worker Contact.

Where do Children in Custody Live?

as of September 30, 2020

Foster Care ~ 484

Pre-Adoptive Home ~ 47

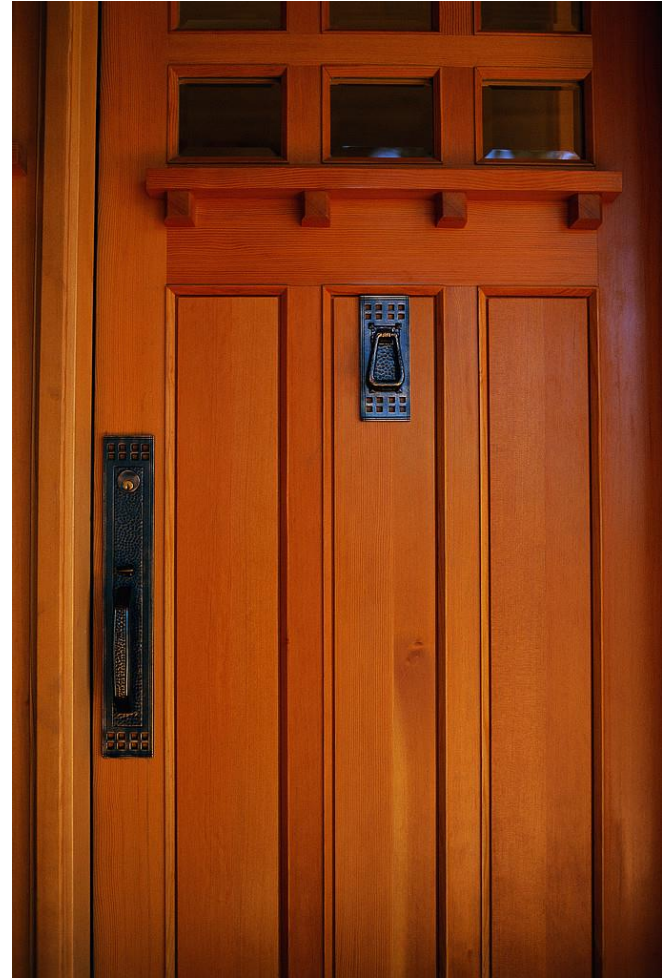
Kin Care ~ 340

Residential Care ~ 144

At Home ~ 65

Independent Living ~ 5

**Of the 1085 children in family-based care,
37% are in kinship care



Questions?

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