

FactSheet

Child Welfare

Children who have experienced child abuse or neglect are at greater risk for poor school performance, behavior problems and mental health issues. They are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system or become parents as teens. As adults they are more likely to be homeless, unemployed, and have poor health.

Parenting is a difficult job. Parents who live in poverty, are young, socially isolated, or struggling with mental illness, domestic violence, and/or substance abuse, often need help to safely care for their children. Targeted preventive services can strengthen families while reducing child abuse and neglect and avoiding costly out-of-home placements. Family Assessment Response (FAR) allows counties an alternative to the traditional investigative response by engaging family members in finding solutions to meet their needs. Nineteen counties now offer a FAR response.

When a child cannot be safely cared for at home, temporary placement with a relative or in foster care is needed. When a child cannot be returned home within a reasonable time period, other options for a permanent family are identified, such as adoption or guardianship.



Key Facts

- ▶ The number of reports of suspected child abuse and neglect received by the State Central Register (“Hotline”) continues to increase each year. In 2009, about 165,000 reports were registered and investigated.
- ▶ The number of children in foster care has dropped to a historically low level of 24,600 at the end of 2009, a decrease of 5% in a year and a decline of 25% since 2003.
- ▶ Most children (about two-thirds) placed in foster care return to live with their families, while about 17% are adopted and 11% are discharged to independent living (“age out”).
- ▶ Since its inception in 2008, 8,000 reports have been assigned to the FAR track in New York. National studies have demonstrated that the average FAR case can save \$1,288 without compromising short and long-term child safety.
- ▶ African-American and Latino children enter the child welfare system at a disproportionate rate than white children and are more likely to enter foster care placement.

We Can Do Better

- ▶ The funding formula for preventive services must be restored to 65 state/35 local share. At its current state share of 62%, funding does not meet the demand for services and can result in increases in more costly out-of-home placements.
- ▶ Additionally, preventive funding for all at-risk children, not just for those involved in child welfare, can provide needed services to families before situations rise to a level for a report to the State Central Register.
- ▶ For foster children, more supports are needed to help these children address the trauma they have experienced, to support their success in school, and to stay connected to family members. Older youth require support to successfully transition to adulthood.
- ▶ New York State also must invest in its child welfare workforce to decrease caseload sizes, to increase the quality of the work provided, and to improve child safety.