

New York CAN Child Welfare



Fact Sheet

New York State has long been a leader in providing services and supports to children when their families were unable to do so. The state pioneered the field of child welfare in the 1880s and again in 1970 with passage of the first modern comprehensive child protection law. The 1979 State Child Welfare Reform Act shifted emphasis from foster care as a matter of routine preference to seeking the stability of permanent homes—either with the birth family or adopted family. In 2006 significant legislation was passed again to strengthen child protection in New York State.

The child welfare system came in contact with approximately 400,000 children in 2006, a fraction of all children in New York State. Unless their child welfare experience is constructive and helpful, they are likely to need additional services from systems such as mental health and juvenile justice at a far greater cost to the taxpayer.

Key Facts*

- 153,615 Child Protective reports were received in 2002 and in 2004 the number was 140,662, a drop of 9%. Less than 1/3 of those reports are confirmed as a result of an investigation.
- 1/6 or 17% of all families for whom a Child Protective report was made in 2004 received services. The remaining 83% received only an investigation.
- Since 2000, the number of children in foster care has dropped dramatically. Children who are under the age of 2 or between the ages of 14 to 17 for whom a Child Protective report was made are 50% more likely to be placed in foster care.
- Preventive services increased from 2000 to 2002. The use of these services declined slightly in 2003 and again in 2004.
- 3 out of 5 children placed in foster care are reunited with their families, 23% are placed for adoption; the rest remain in foster care, are discharged from foster care, or are placed with other state agencies.

What's Needed:

Several counties will offer Family Assessment Response in the coming years. That will offer children and families access to an array of preventive services and supports before their situation reaches a crisis with a report for child maltreatment. New York needs to find ways to expand the number of counties offering this approach and continue to support preventive services which has led to reductions in the need for foster care. The entire child welfare system needs to be comprehensively reviewed.

*For source information, refer to *Growing Up In New York, Charting the Next Generation of Workers, Citizens, and Leaders*. SCAA 2006.