

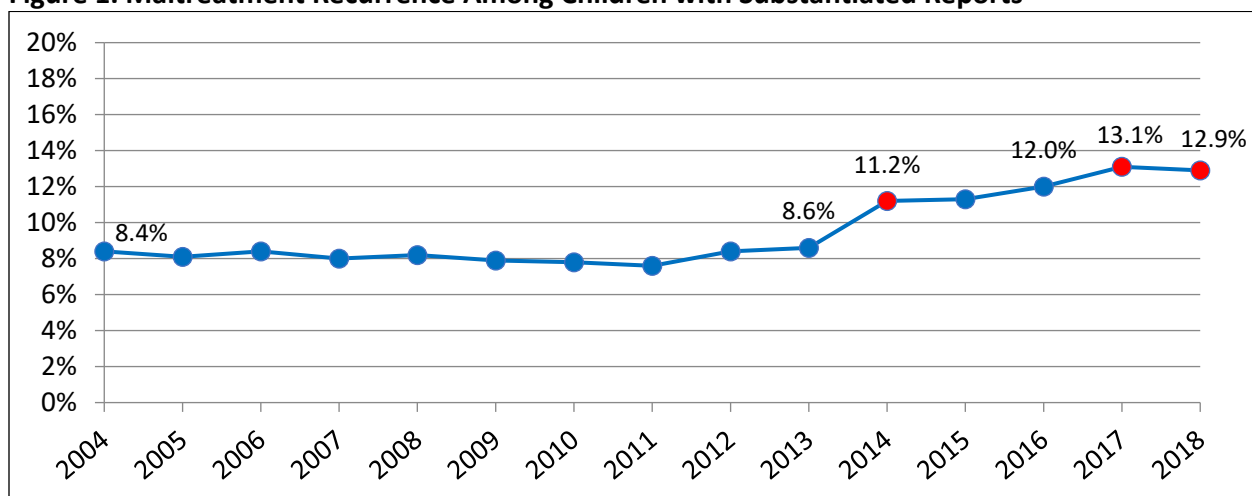
Five Findings from the 2020 *B.H.* Monitoring Report

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for assuring the safety, family permanence, and well-being of the children who have been investigated for abuse or neglect or who have been removed from their homes and placed into substitute care. For over two decades, the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) has produced an annual monitoring report that tracks the performance of the Illinois child welfare system on over 40 measures of child safety, family continuity, placement stability, permanence, as well as new indicators involving racial disproportionality. The full report, which is available on the CFRC website, examines each measure over the past seven years and provides detailed tables and figures that examine differences among child age and racial groups. This brief highlights five noteworthy findings from the most recent report, which tracks performance through FY2019.

1. Warning Sign: Maltreatment Recurrence Remains at Historically High Levels

Once a child is involved in a substantiated report of child maltreatment, the child welfare system assumes partial responsibility for assuring his or her safety from additional abuse or neglect. One measure of child safety is maltreatment recurrence, defined in the current report as the percentage of children who have a substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of a prior substantiated report. The rate was fairly level (around 8.5%) for many years but began to increase in FY2014. Recurrence rates have continued to climb since then, reaching their highest levels during the last two years (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Maltreatment Recurrence Among Children with Substantiated Reports

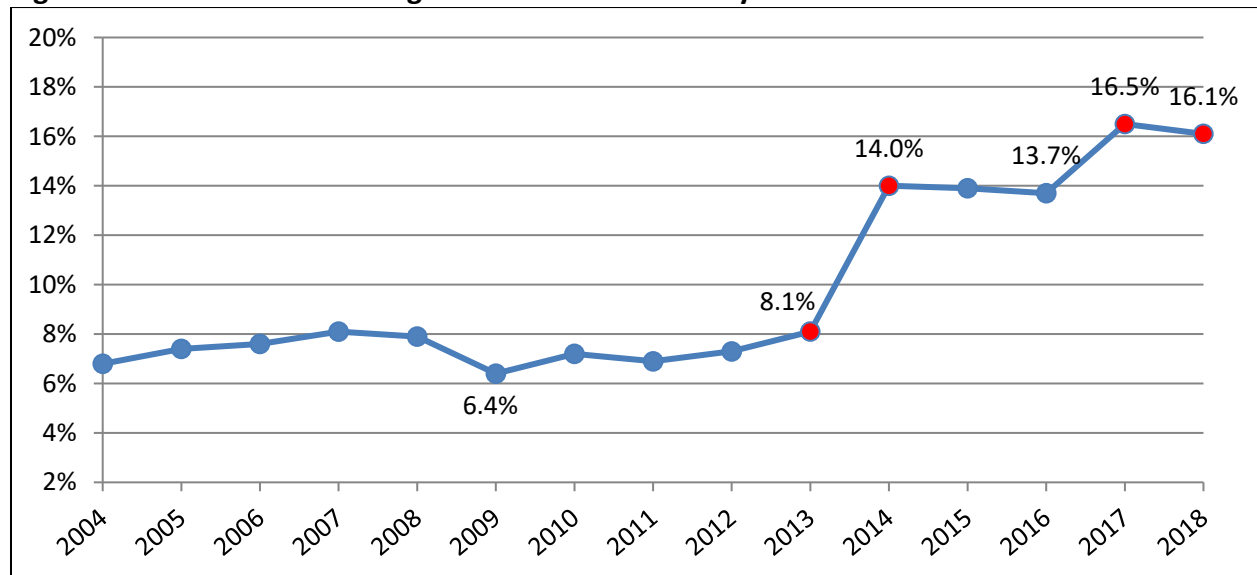


2. Warning Sign: Maltreatment Among Children in Intact Families at Historically High Levels

In some instances, DCFS will substantiate child maltreatment but decide that it is in the best interest of the child to remain at home while the family receives supportive services rather than place the child into substitute care. Families in these intact family cases are of special interest because their history of substantiated maltreatment places them at increased risk of repeat maltreatment compared to families with no history of maltreatment. Safety among children in intact family cases is measured by examining the percentage who experience a substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of their case open date.

Figure 2 shows the rate of maltreatment among children in intact family cases over the past 15 years drastically increased in the past five years. Maltreatment rates were fairly stable (around 7-8%) for about 10 years, but increased dramatically to 14.0% in FY2015. There was a smaller, but notable, increase in the past two years, and the maltreatment rate is now over 16%.

Figure 2. Maltreatment Among Children in Intact Family Cases



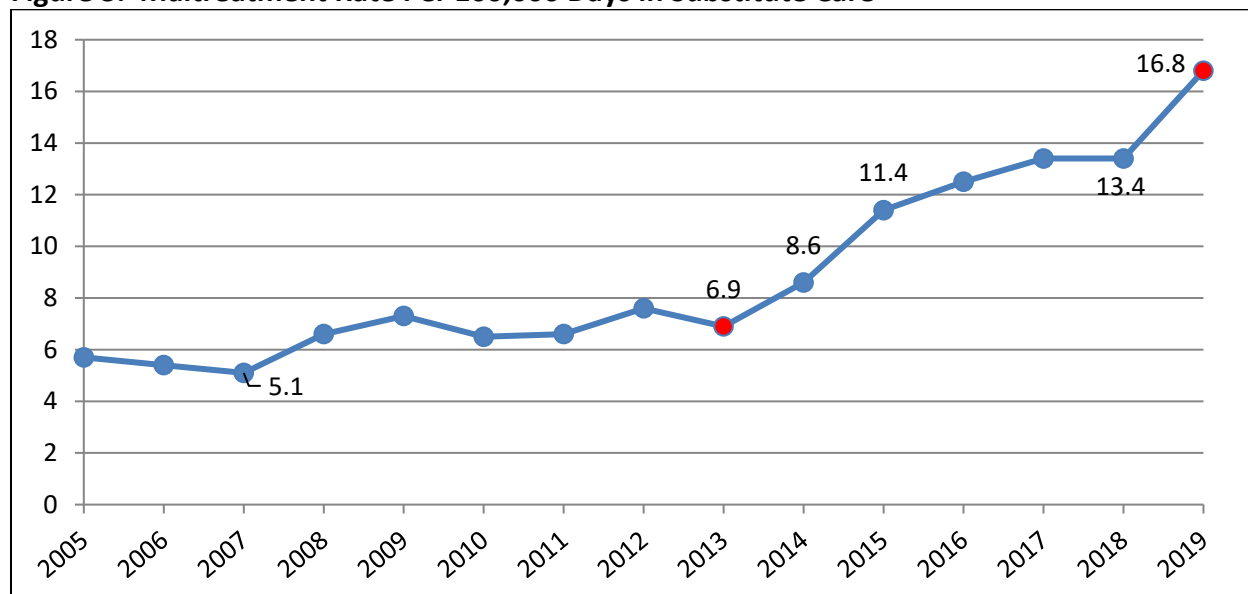
3. Warning Sign: Maltreatment of Children in Substitute Care Reaches Record High Levels

Children should only be removed from their parents' care and placed into substitute care when it is necessary to protect their well-being and safety, and it is essential that children are safe while they are in state care. To measure maltreatment in substitute care, CFRC uses the measure developed for Round 3 of the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR).¹ This measure looks at the children in substitute care during the fiscal year and calculates the total number of days these children were in substitute care. Then, the total number of substantiated reports of maltreatment for these children is determined. In order to make the results easier to interpret, the results are multiplied by 100,000 and are described as the rate of maltreatment per 100,000 days of substitute care. Using this measure, rates of substantiated maltreatment of

¹ Children's Bureau (n.d.). CFSR Round 3 Statewide Data Indicator Series: Maltreatment in Foster Care. Retrieved on August 10, 2020 from <https://training.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources/3105>

children in substitute care have been steadily increasing since 2013 (6.9 per 100,000 days) and reached an unprecedented high in 2019 (16.8 per 100,000 days) (see Figure 3).

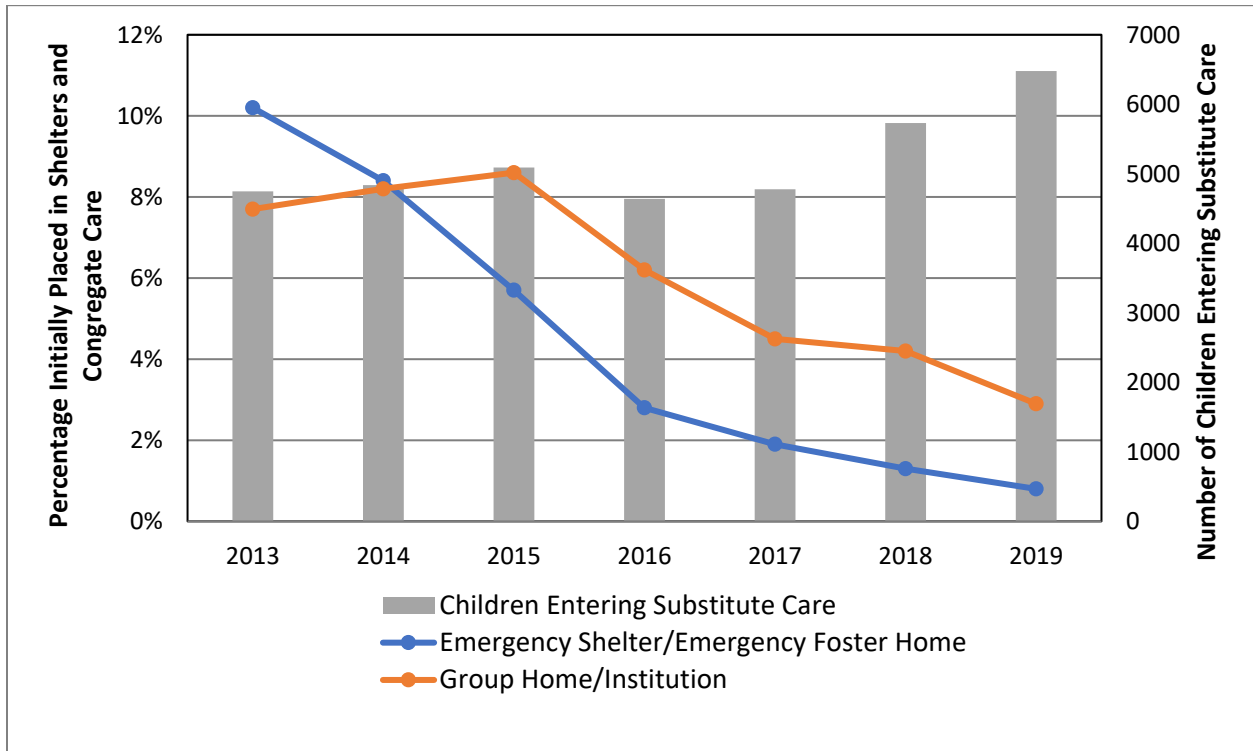
Figure 3. Maltreatment Rate Per 100,000 Days in Substitute Care



4. Notable Improvement: Initial Placements in Emergency Shelters and Congregate Care Have Decreased

The number of children entering substitute care during the year has increased significantly in the past two fiscal years; from 4,778 in FY2017 to 6,479 in FY2019. In the past, when the number of children entering care increased rapidly, it led to an increased number of children being placed in emergency shelters, emergency foster homes, group homes, and institutions, especially in their initial placements. Examination of the percentage of children initially placed in these placement types during FY2018 and FY2019 does not show an increase in their use and in fact shows the opposite (see Figure 4). The percentage of children and youth initially placed in emergency shelters and emergency foster homes has decreased over the past seven years and was at its lowest point (0.8%) in FY2019. Likewise, initial placements in group homes and institutions have also decreased to their lowest point in the past seven years (2.9% in FY2019). It is impressive that the Department has been able to decrease the percentage of children placed in these more restrictive placement types even as the number of children entering care has increased.

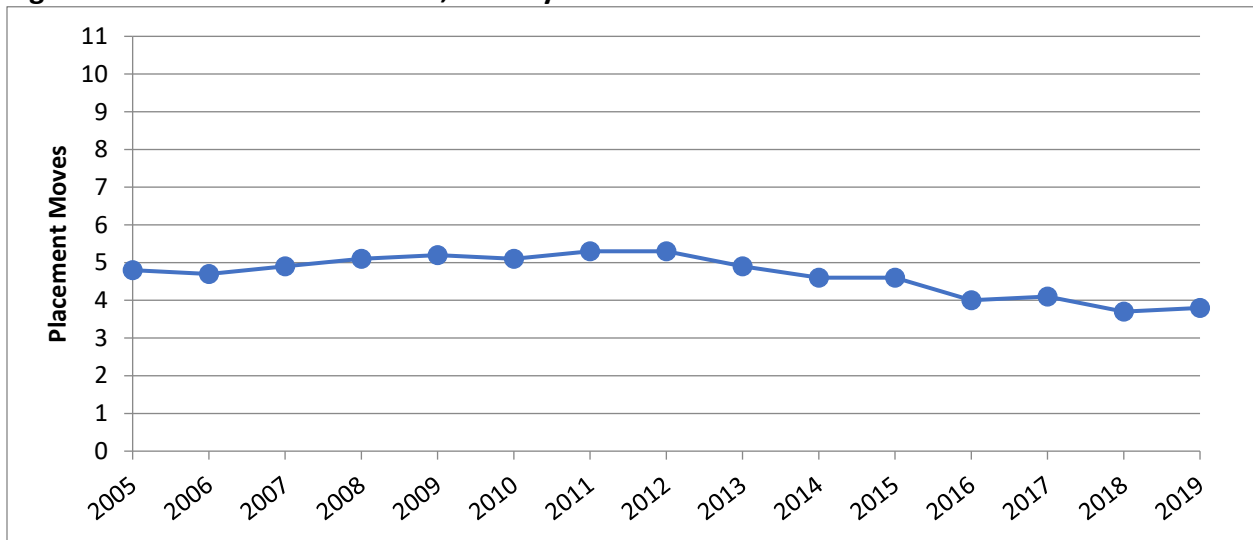
Figure 4. Initial Placements in Emergency Shelters/Foster Homes, Group Homes, and Institutions



5. Notable Improvement: Placement Instability Among Older Children Has Decreased

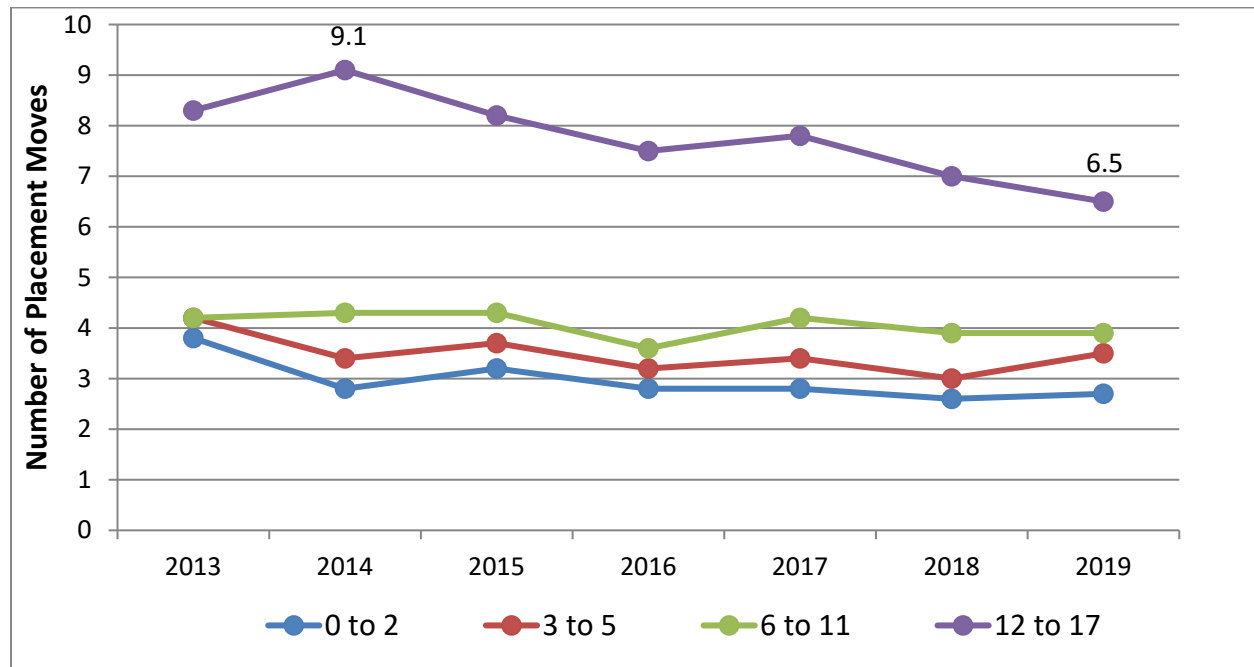
The *B.H.* monitoring report uses a measure of placement stability developed for the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR), which is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of substitute care among all children who enter substitute care in a 12-month period. Using this definition, the placement moves per 1,000 days reached its highest point in 2012 (5.3 moves per 1,000 days) and has been gradually decreasing since then (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Placement Moves Per 1,000 Days in Substitute Care



When placement stability is examined by the age of the children in substitute care, the results show that the greatest improvement in placement stability has occurred among children ages 12 to 17 years. The number of placement moves among children in this age group has fallen from over 9 in FY2014 to 6.5 in FY2019 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Placement Moves per 1,000 Days in Substitute Care by Age



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Related Publications

Children and Family Research Center. (2020). *Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois: FY2020 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree*. Urbana, IL: Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.