

Illinois Children Placed in Out-of-State Group Homes or Institutions

Children and Family Research Center

October 2023

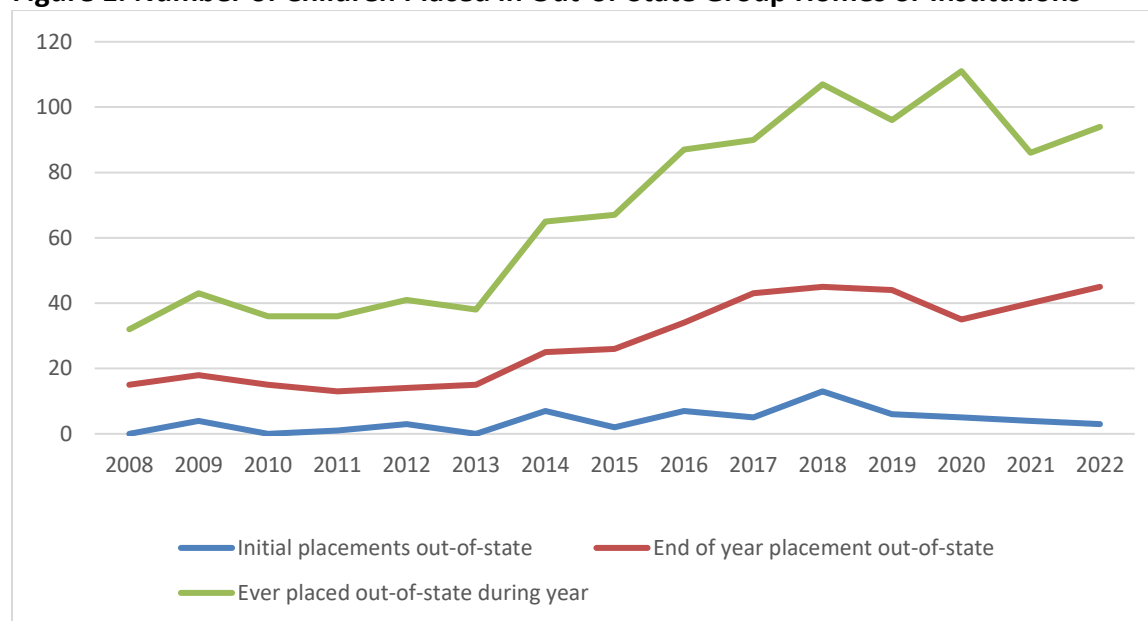
Federal law mandates children living in substitute care be placed in close proximity to their parents' home unless their best interests would be better served by a more distant setting. Additional monitoring requirements are required for children who are placed outside of the state in which the parents reside.¹ From its inception through FY2010, the annual *Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree* included an indicator for out-of-state placement of children. However, this indicator was discontinued because the number of children in out-of-state placements had dwindled to near zero for several years.

An investigative report by *The Chicago Tribune* in 2020 highlighted Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) increased use of placements in out-of-state mental health institutions for children in care (Jackson & Eldeib, 2020). The article cites data from the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicating that the number of children Illinois DCFS placed in out-of-state care grew from 19 in 2011 to 56 in 2018. *The Tribune's* reporting emphasized the limited capacity of DCFS to monitor the care and safety of children placed out-of-state, and it described incidents in which children placed out-of-state were maltreated in care.

In response to the concerns raised by *The Chicago Tribune* report, the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) began to re-examine the number of children placed in out-of-state group homes and institutions: 1) in their initial placements; 2) at the end of each fiscal year; and 3) at any time during the fiscal year (see Figure 1). The number of children placed in an out-of-state institution in their initial placement has been small in the past 15 years; there were only three children initially placed out of state in 2022. The number of children placed in out-of-state institutions at the end of the fiscal year has been increasing since 2014 and the number in 2022 (n = 45) was three times more than in 2008 (n = 15). The number of children ever placed out of state during the year increased from 67 in 2016 to 111 in 2020, but then decreased to 94 in 2022.

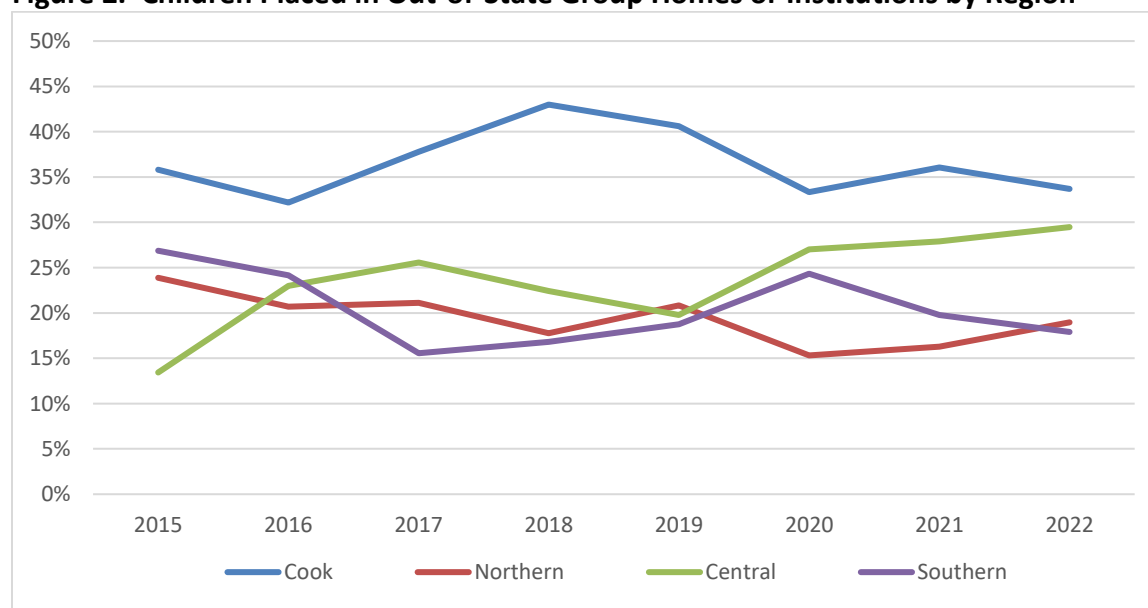
¹ U.S. Social Security Act, Sec. 475. [42 U.S.C. 675].

Figure 1. Number of Children Placed in Out-of-State Group Homes or Institutions



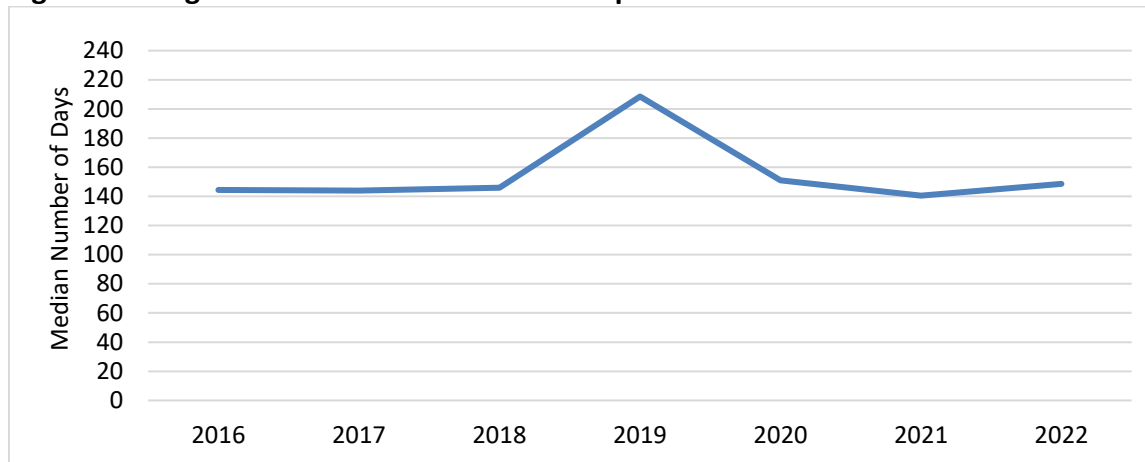
To understand the use of out-of-state group homes and institutions, additional analyses examined the children ever placed out-of-state during the fiscal year. In 2022, the majority of these children were placed in Tennessee (28.7%), Wisconsin (19.1%), or Indiana (10.6%). Also, most of them were 12 to 17 years old (89.5%), and either Black (43.2%) or White (49.5%). Children from the Cook region were most likely to be placed out-of-state as compared to the other regions. Of the children placed in out-of-state group homes and institutions in 2022, 34% were from the Cook region, followed by 29% from the Central region, 19% from the Northern region, and 18% from the Southern region (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Children Placed in Out-of-State Group Homes or Institutions by Region



To examine the length of time children are in out-of-state placements, the median number of days that children stayed in out-of-state care during that fiscal year was calculated.² The results in Figure 3 show that the median number of days in out-of-state care was between 141 and 209 over the past seven years. In other words, 50% or more of these children spent more than 4.5 months in out-of-state institutions during the year.

Figure 3. Length of Time in Out-of-State Group Homes or Institutions



Although very few children are placed in out-of-state placements each year, our analyses show that the number of children placed in out-of-state group homes and institutions has increased since 2013. In addition to more children being placed out-of-state in the past ten years, 50% or more of these children spent more than four-and-a-half months in out-of-state placements during the year. The CFRC will continue to monitor the number of children placed outside Illinois in future *B.H.* monitoring reports.

Recommended Citation

Children and Family Research Center. (2023). *Illinois children placed in out-of-state group homes or institutions*. Urbana, IL: Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The information and opinions expressed herein reflect solely the position of the authors and should not be construed to indicate the support or endorsement of its content by the funding agency.

² Because the number of days is constrained to the fiscal year, the maximum stay for each year is 365 days. Some children stay in out-of-state placements longer than one year; their total length of stay would be different from the number reported here.

Related Publications

Children and Family Research Center. (2023). *Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois: FY2023 Monitoring Report of the BH Consent Decree*.

https://cfrc.illinois.edu/pubs/rp_20231016_FY2023MonitoringReportOfTheBHConsentDecree.pdf

References

Jackson, D., & Eldeib, D. (March 12, 2020). Hurt instead of helped: Foster children victimized in out-of-state facilities where oversight is lacking. *Chicago Tribune*.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/investigations/ct-foster-children-sent-out-of-state-illinois-dcfs-20200311-lqmwptbnrrc3nkygenhelm6nri-htmlstory.html>