The state has a duty to care for and protect the children that the state places into foster care, and as matter of public policy, the state assumes an obligation of the highest order to ensure the safety of children in foster care.

— The Duty to Foster Children Reaffirmation Act
BROKEN PROMISES:
California’s Inadequate and Unequal Treatment of its Abused and Neglected Children

prepared by the
National Center for Youth Law
April 2006
This report was prepared by the National Center for Youth Law

National Center for Youth Law

The National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) is a national, non-profit organization that uses the law to improve the lives of poor children. NCYL works to ensure that low-income children have the resources, support, and opportunities they need for a healthy and productive future. Much of NCYL's work is focused on poor children who are additionally challenged by abuse and neglect, disability, or other disadvantage.

NCYL focuses its work in four areas:

- Safety, Stability, and Well-Being of Abused and Neglected Children
- Quality Health and Mental Health Care
- Financial Stability for Low-Income Families and Children
- Juvenile Justice
# Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary ................................................................. 1

II. Introduction ............................................................................. 4
   California’s Child Welfare System ............................................. 5
   Outcome/Performance Measures .............................................. 6
   Methodology ........................................................................... 9

III. Findings .................................................................................. 10
   County Rankings .................................................................... 10
   Safety, Stability, & Permanency .............................................. 16
   Unequal Protection for California Foster Children ...................... 26

IV. Conclusion .............................................................................. 29

V. Recommendations ................................................................. 31

VI. Appendix
Executive Summary

More than 100,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect in California in 2004. During the same period, nearly 39,000 children in California were removed from their homes and placed in foster care — an average of more than 100 children every day. Some spend just a few days in foster care, but many will remain for years or their entire childhoods.

Today, there are approximately 82,000 foster children in California — 20 percent of all foster children in the nation, and the largest foster care population of all 50 states.

In FY 2005-06, California will spend a staggering $4.7 billion on child welfare and foster care services, drawn from state, county, and federal funds.

When parents cannot or will not care for their children, the government assumes the role of parent and is responsible for children’s safety and well-being. This Report seeks to answer the question: How well is the state caring for its most vulnerable children? Is California a responsible parent?

A County System

County child welfare agencies are granted extraordinary powers. They investigate child abuse reports, remove children from their homes without prior court approval, and determine where and with whom a child shall live. They can change a child’s placement repeatedly without any accountability, decide what school a child will attend, and when, where, and how often a child is permitted to visit his or her family. They select the child's physician and therapist. Finally, these county agencies decide what parents must do in order to regain custody of their children. With this extraordinary power comes extraordinary responsibilities. The data reported here provide evidence that counties are not fulfilling their responsibilities to all children.

Study Overview

The National Center for Youth Law examined key child welfare outcomes that indicate whether California’s 58 counties are protecting child abuse victims and meeting the needs of children in foster care. Our Report is based upon 12 performance measures — an equal number of federal and state measures that address the six areas listed below. The state measures were established as a part of California’s 2001 legislative mandate (AB 636) for greater accountability among county child welfare programs. The federal measures are used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) to determine state compliance with federal mandates for child safety, stability, and permanency, and states are sanctioned if they do not meet federal performance standards. The measures are:

- Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect
- Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care
- Foster Care Re-entries
- Stability of Foster Care Placements
- Length of Time to Reunification
- Length of Time to Adoption

These outcome measures provide a gauge to determine how well children are being protected and, when they enter foster care, whether they are moved promptly back to a safe home, whether it be with their biological parents, a relative, adoptive parents, or other permanent placement. For those children who remain in care longer, the measures show whether a county has provided that child with a stable placement. Finally, by tracking the rate at which children re-enter care, the measures provide some indication of whether children are being returned to their families too soon, or if families are not given enough support to allow parents to properly care for their children.

The information used in this Report is drawn from public information compiled by UC Berkeley’s Center for Social Services Research from the state’s Child Welfare Services/Case Management System. UC Berkeley has prepared quarterly reports on each county’s performance on select outcome measures beginning in January 2004. The data presented here is taken from those reports, using each county’s average performance based upon the most recent four quarterly reports. The data is publicly available on the DSS website at http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/CDSSCounty_1954.htm.
Findings
The data in this Report portray a county-run system that protects many children but fails to protect many others. Indeed, reported data show that every county fails to meet at least two federal outcome standards. Four counties that care for more than 12,000 children in care failed every federal measure. All too often, county agencies are failing to keep children safe. It appears that each child’s level of safety and well-being is an accident of geography, hinging on political boundaries rather than on his or her particular needs. Foster children in San Francisco are 50 percent more likely to be abused or neglected within a year of an earlier abuse than children in Los Angeles County, and nearly 200 percent more likely than children in Monterey County.

When counties fail in their responsibilities, children are left unprotected, suffer multiple abuses, and are shuttled from place to place. They grow up without a home or family, and leave the system lacking the skills and resources to live as healthy and independent adults.

Safety
Victims of child abuse and neglect in California are re-victimized at alarming rates. Nearly 4,000 children are victims of abuse or neglect within six months of the agency confirming an earlier abuse. More than 11,000 children are abused or neglected again within one year.

Each year, more than 450 children suffer abuse or neglect in foster care. More than one-third of these victims are age 5 or younger.

Stability
Only 14 of the 58 counties met or exceeded the federal standard. The most recent data reported for this measure indicates that more than 5,000 children had been shuttled through three or more placements during their first year in care.

Permanency
Many counties are failing the children they decide to return home. During the most recent period for which data are available, one of every 10 children placed in foster care had been in care at least once before and came back within one year of leaving care. Almost 4,000 children (3,950) came back into the system. More than one-third of the children (1,351) re-entering care were age 5 or younger.

The Unequal Protection of Children
The poor outcomes for children in the state child welfare system are not limited to one region or group of counties. Even within the same region and among contiguous counties, the data reflect wide disparities in performance.

Fewer cases do not necessarily lead to better performance. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of substantiated child abuse cases in San Francisco dropped from 1,385 to 1,240 children. The number of children entering care decreased from 495 to 383, and the average daily foster care population was down more than 200 children from 2,287 to 2,070. During this same time period, recurrence of abuse or neglect increased, the rate of abuse in foster care was virtually unchanged, multiple placements of children in foster care increased slightly, and the percent of children re-entering foster care increased by 35 percent.

An examination of six Bay Area counties illustrates how contiguous counties provide widely differing levels of protection and care. Contra Costa is in the top best performing counties in the state, Alameda and Marin
are in the middle, and San Francisco is near the bottom. Only six other counties in the state performed worse than San Francisco.

The poor outcomes for children in the state child welfare system are not limited to one region or group of counties. Even within the same region and among contiguous counties, the data reflect wide disparities in performance.

During the last three years, the foster care caseloads of every Bay Area county have decreased. The number of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect also went down in all but two counties — Santa Clara (2,838 to 2,989) and San Mateo (692 to 743). Meanwhile, the rate of abuse/neglect recurrence has gone up in Santa Clara, San Francisco, Alameda, and San Mateo counties, but dropped significantly in Contra Costa and Marin counties.

Children who have been in foster care in San Francisco county are much more likely to be in stable placements than children in Alameda county. The gap is substantial. While more than 80 percent of foster children in San Francisco are in their first or second placement at the one-year point, only about 55 percent in Alameda County have had similar stability.

Conclusion

The figures and percentages in each one of the charts in this Report represent real children who depend solely upon county child welfare agencies for care and protection. Those figures paint a bleak picture of what life is like for many child abuse victims and children in foster care.

In addition to the emotional and physical toll on tens of thousands of children, the state’s failure to provide children with safety and stability exposes it to serious financial liability. Foster care and other child welfare services provided by California state and county agencies are funded in large part with federal tax dollars. This year, California received more than $2.3 billion in federal funds for child welfare services. In return for that money, California must provide a certain level of protection and services to child abuse victims and foster children. Unless California improves its performance, federal penalties of almost $60 million may be imposed in 2007.

In September 2002, the federal government conducted a review of the state’s child welfare system. The review found that California failed to meet all six of the federal standards. The state was required to submit a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and remains under federal review until at least April 2007.

While the state has claimed recent improvements in its child welfare system, the pace of those improvements has been slow and their continuation uncertain. While AB 636 has led to the counties’ adoption of plans for further improvement, the promise of AB 636 was more than just a plan. It was a promise that abused and neglected children would receive greater protection, and a stable and permanent home. It was a promise that their lives would be helped, not further harmed, by the state’s intervention. That promise needs to be kept to this generation of children, not delayed to the next.
Introduction

Each year, nearly half a million children in California are reported as victims of suspected abuse or neglect— one-sixth of all child abuse reports in the United States. In 2004, nearly 39,000 children in California were removed from their homes and placed in foster care—an average of more than 100 children every day. Some children spend just a few days in foster care, but many will remain for years or their entire childhoods.

Today there are approximately 82,000 children in foster care throughout California— 20 percent of all foster children in the nation and the largest foster care population of all 50 states. Almost half of the 82,000 children in foster care as of October 1, 2005 have been in care more than two years. Twenty-five percent—more than 20,000 children—have been in care for more than five years.

When parents cannot or will not care for their children, the government assumes the role of parent and is responsible for their safety and well-being. This report seeks to answer the question: How well are we caring for children who have been abused and neglected? Is California a responsible parent?

Recent improvements in data collection provide a better assessment of how abused and neglected children fare when the government assumes their care. Old ways of assessing how agencies meet the needs of children and families have been replaced. Instead of focusing on process measures—such as whether a child’s case plan form is completed within 60 days—agencies are now measuring how they improve outcomes for children. These measures look at how well agencies protect children from harm, provide stability for children, achieve prompt, safe family reunifications, and obtain adoptive homes for children who cannot return to their parents or guardians. As a result, we know more today than even a few years ago about the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children who enter the child welfare system.

“The true measurement of success will be when California’s communities see and treat foster children as if they were their own. The day that we prevail in our mission will be the day that we monitor the health, education, well-being, and overall success of foster children the same way that we do for our own children.”

— The California Child Welfare Outcomes & Accountability System Report (at 1), April 2003

Using these recently available data, the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) examined key child welfare outcomes that indicate whether California’s 58 counties are protecting child abuse and neglect victims and meeting the needs of children in foster care. This Report is based upon 12 performance measures. Six are measures used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) to determine state compliance with federal mandates for child safety, stability, and permanency. The other six are measures adopted as part of California’s 2001 legislative mandate (AB 636) for greater accountability among county child welfare programs. Using the 12 measures, NCYL ranked the counties from 1 to 58. The report also divides the counties into three groups—large, medium, and small—based upon the number of children in foster care. Rankings within each group are also provided.

1 County Data Reports prepared under AB 636 indicate that 27,165 children entered care in California in 2004. These reports omit a substantial number of children who were removed from home and placed in foster care during the year. First, all children who are re-entering care after reunification with their parents are excluded. Second, all children returned home within five days are excluded. By aggregating data from two charts, we calculated the total number of foster care admissions in 2004 — 33,944 + 4,821 = 38,765. Children with Child Maltreatment Referrals, Substantiations, and Entries and First Entries to Foster Care by Age Group and Entry Year (Children in Care 4 Days or Less) Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Conley, A., Zaman, J., Smith, J., & Dunn, A. (2005). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved March 21, 2006 from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/ (hereinafter ‘UCB Center for Social Services Research’).


3 Id.

4 There are 16 small counties, 28 medium counties, and 14 large counties.
The information used in this report is drawn from public information compiled by UC Berkeley’s Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) from the state’s Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). Beginning in January 2004, CSSR has prepared quarterly reports on each county’s performance on select outcome measures. The data presented here are taken from those reports.\(^5\)

Sadly, the data reviewed here portray a county-administered system that protects many children but fails to protect many others. Indeed, reported data show that every county failed to meet at least two federal outcome standards. Four counties — totaling more than 12,000 children in care — failed every federal measure.

The safety and well-being of the state’s most vulnerable children are an accident of geography hinging on political boundaries rather than children’s needs. Foster children in San Francisco are 50 percent more likely to be abused or neglected within a year of an earlier abuse than children in Los Angeles County and nearly 200 percent more likely than children in Monterey County.

When the counties fail in their responsibilities, children are left unprotected, suffer multiple abuses, and are shuttled from placement to placement. They grow up without a home or a family, and leave the system lacking the skills and resources to live as healthy and independent adults.

Data reviewed here portray a county-administered system that protects many children but fails to protect many others.

There are also fiscal consequences to this continued failure to protect and care for children. California’s budget for child welfare and foster care services is approaching $5 billion a year. Federal funds make up half of the state’s annual budget for child protection, foster care, and adoption. County and state government coffers provide the rest. Unless California does a better job of meeting its obligations to children and families served by its child welfare agencies, the state stands to lose up to $60 million in federal funds that support county efforts to help children.\(^6\)

The inadequate and unequal protection of children in California documented here is unacceptable. Five years ago the California legislature highlighted the need for greater accountability for outcomes and strong state leadership of the program.\(^7\) It is a need that is as strong today as it was then. It is now time to realize the vision of AB 636 and hold child welfare and foster care programs accountable for these unacceptable outcomes.

**California’s Child Welfare System**

California is one of 13 states in which counties, rather than a single state agency, administer child welfare services.\(^8\) The state Department of Social Services (DSS) is empowered to set policy and supervise county programs. However, it is county social services agencies or departments that are primarily responsible for screening and investigating reports of child abuse, providing services to preserve and reunite families, determining placements, monitoring the care and safety of children in foster care, and providing adoption services.\(^9\) Caseworkers and other staff providing child welfare services are county employees. As a result, in California, there are 58 separate child welfare agencies.

Critics have long complained that California’s county-based system fails many of the children it seeks to protect. In a series of reports over the last 15 years, the

\(^5\) Additional data used in this report was taken from other compilations and analyses of the CWS/CMS data conducted by UCB’s Center for Social Services Research. Citations to those UCB analyses are provided throughout the report.


\(^7\) 2001 Cal. Stats. Ch. 678.

\(^8\) In states like California where counties actually administer child welfare services, there must be a single state agency that supervises the administration of all federally funded child welfare programs. 42 U.S.C. 671(a)(2). That agency is the California Department of Social Services.

Little Hoover Commission\(^\text{10}\) has repeatedly called for improvements in the child welfare system. In a letter accompanying the Commission’s most recent report, the Commission Chairman decried the lack of state leadership and oversight and warned,

\[
\text{with no one in charge, the foster care system fumbles forward, and often backward, and costs children and their families their happiness, their prosperity, and even their lives….}^{11}
\]

Most recently, in 2004, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s \textit{California Performance Review Report} described foster care as a “system in crisis” in need of empowered state leadership and better performance measures to gauge county performance.\(^{12}\)

One limitation to the design of California’s foster care services is ambiguity as to who is in charge and responsible for reforming a dysfunctional system.\(^{13}\)

County child welfare agencies are granted extraordinary powers. They investigate child abuse reports, remove children from their homes without prior court approval, and determine where and with whom a child in foster care shall live. They change a child’s placement repeatedly without any accountability, decide what school that child will attend, and when, where, and how often that child will visit with his or her family. They select the child’s physician and therapist. Finally, these county agencies dictate what parents must do in order to regain custody of their children. With this extraordinary power comes extraordinary responsibilities. The data reported in latter sections of this report provide evidence that the child welfare and foster care systems are not fulfilling those responsibilities to all children. It also suggests that the state continues to fail in its obligation to adequately oversee counties’ performance, foster improvements, and provide leadership necessary to improve the system. As long as each county is left to its own devices and there is no strong central state leadership for ensuring accountability in the outcomes for children, California’s foster children and youth will be doomed to the same inequities and dangers that have plagued the system for so many years.

\textbf{Outcome/Performance Measures}

\textbf{Why Is Measuring Performance Important?}

Until recently, public child welfare agencies’ “performance” was measured largely by whether or not they completed certain procedures. Was the investigation of a suspected child abuse report begun within 24 hours? Was a case plan for the child and parents completed within 60 days of the child entering care? Did the worker visit the foster home once a month? These process measures said little about what was happening to children who came to the agency’s attention. They did not show whether children were protected from further harm or, if they entered foster care, how they were faring in out-of-home placement.

The outcome measures reported here provide a gauge to determine how well children are being protected and, when they enter foster care, whether they are moved promptly back to a safe home, whether it be with their biological parents, a relative, adoptive parents, or other permanent home. For those children who remain in care longer, the measures tell us if the agency has provided them with a stable placement. Finally, by tracking the rate at which children re-enter care, these measures provide some assessment of whether children are being returned too soon or families are not being given the support they need to help parents care for their children.

A county’s performance on the measures also provides some indication of whether resources are being used efficiently and effectively. As will be seen later in this

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10 The California Legislature created the Little Hoover Commission in 1962 to assist the Governor and the Legislature in overseeing the expenditure of public funds and promoting efficiency and improving services provided by the departments and agencies of state government. The Commission is a 13-member bipartisan board — five members appointed by the Governor, four members by the Legislature, two Senators, and two Assembly members. Recommendations submitted by the Commission often become legislative proposals.

11 \textit{Still in Our Hands: A Review of Efforts to Reform Foster Care in California} (February 2003).


Report, some counties with increasing caseloads appear to be doing better than counties whose caseloads are diminishing and whose resources are not stretched as thin.

These measures may be used to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in a county’s system and to identify practices that should be sustained, expanded, and strengthened. They may also suggest practices or services that are ineffective and that should be discontinued and replaced with other, more promising or effective practices.

Outcome measures reported here provide a gauge to determine how well children are being protected.

Finally, performance measures help to ensure greater accountability to county government, the legislature, administrators, and the public. Child welfare services are supported by federal, state, and county funds. In FY 2005-2006, California’s budget for child welfare and foster care services exceeded $4.7 billion. State funds made up approximately $1.4 billion of that budget and another $1 billion came from county coffers. A review of county performance on the measures provides an indication of how those funds are being managed.

What Performance Measures Are Most Important?

What are the measures of a “successful” child welfare system? Is there publicly available information that shows how well children in foster care are faring? More specifically, what are the indicators that show whether the state is meeting its responsibilities to the 100,000 victims of child abuse or neglect each year, and as surrogate parent for California’s 82,000 foster children?

Several years ago, performance questions such as these were raised at the federal level, leading to the adoption of a series of outcome measures and standards of care used to assess state child welfare programs. A similar effort occurred in California following enactment of AB 636, The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001. A state workgroup process concluded with the selection of additional state performance measures, many of which parallel the federal measures.

The Differences Between the Federal and State Measures

Though similar, there is a significant difference between many of the federal and state measures. Most of the federal measures look at an exit cohort — i.e. a group of children who left the system during a particular year. For example, the federal measure of exits to adoption reports data on all foster children who were adopted during the year and asks what percentage of those children were adopted in less than two years from the time they entered foster care. The state measure for exits to adoption uses an entry cohort — i.e. a group of children who entered the system during a particular year. For example, it takes all the children who were admitted to foster care during 2003 and follows those children for two years to determine the percentage who were adopted in less than two years from admission.

Different methods of measuring similar outcomes are the result, in part, of the databases available at the federal and state level. Current federal foster care and child abuse databases are not capable of tracking children from one year to the next. California’s system, however, has extraordinary capacity to follow a child in the system over time, thereby providing a broader picture of the system’s functioning.

Despite the criticism of some of the federal measures, millions of federal dollars for the support of California’s child welfare programs hang in the balance. Performance on these measures will be used to determine whether or not California stands to lose close to $60 million in federal funds in April 2007.

14 Hearing on Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Before Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3, Agenda, at 3 (March 9, 2006).

Federal Measures and Standards\textsuperscript{16}

Foster care and other child welfare services provided by California state and county agencies are funded in large part with federal tax dollars. In FY 2005-2006, California received more than $2.3 billion in federal funds for child welfare services.\textsuperscript{17} In return for those federal dollars, California must meet Congressional mandates concerning child protection and foster care services. During the last several years, those mandates have been expanded to include outcome measures for the children and families served by child welfare agencies.

In November 1997, with the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), Congress enacted the most far-reaching amendment to federal child welfare law since 1980.\textsuperscript{18} ASFA required, among other reforms, that the states’ child welfare programs be assessed on the basis of outcomes achieved for children and families served by public agencies.\textsuperscript{19} Congress specified some of the outcomes to be included — length of stay in foster care, number of foster care placements, and number of adoptions — and left it to the federal Health & Human Services agency to adopt further measures.

The Children’s Bureau of USDHHS, the federal agency charged with the task of implementing ASFA, consulted with state officials, advocates and other experts in the field\textsuperscript{20} before publishing a preliminary list of child welfare outcomes and measures in February 1999. In August 1999, USDHHS adopted the following outcome measures:\textsuperscript{21}

- Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect
- Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care
- Foster Care Re-entries
- Stability of Foster Care Placements
- Length of Time To Achieve Reunification
- Length of Time To Achieve Adoption

For each of six outcome measures, HHS established a national standard based on state performance data from 1997 and 1998. The national standard was set for each measure at the outcome value equivalent to the 75th percentile for the combined 50 states. By definition, 25 percent of all states performed better than the national standard for the period 1997 and 1998. None of the standards have been adjusted since originally set.\textsuperscript{22}

The California Measures\textsuperscript{23}

Recognizing the failures of California’s child welfare system, Gov. Gray Davis signed AB 636 in 2001, authored by Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg.\textsuperscript{24} The Act, known as the California Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, mandated that the California Health And Human Services Agency convene a workgroup to develop measurable performance outcomes “consistent with federal child and family review measures....”

California has made considerable progress reducing the number of children in group facilities. Less than 9 percent of children in care are in group or shelter placements. October 1, 2005 Children in Child Welfare Supervised Foster Care by Placement Type. Retrieved March 17, 2006 from UCB Center for Social Services Research.

\textsuperscript{16} An explanation of each of the six federal measures and standards is provided in the Appendix.

\textsuperscript{17} Supra, n. 14


\textsuperscript{19} 42 U.S.C. §679b(1).

\textsuperscript{20} The consultation group included representatives from State, Tribal, and county child welfare agencies; State Governor’s offices; State legislatures; family and juvenile courts; local advocacy organizations; the research community; private nonprofit child and family services agencies; and a public employee organization. Representatives of national organizations such as the American Public Human Services Association, the Child Welfare League of America, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges also were asked to participate in the consultation process. 64 Fed. Reg. 45552 -4553 (August 20, 1999)

\textsuperscript{21} 64 Fed. Reg. 45552 -4553 (August 20, 1999). A seventh outcome measure — Reduce Placements of Young Children in Group Homes or Institutions — was also adopted. Since no national standard was adopted for this measure and it was not included in the federal reviews of state child welfare programs, it was not included in this Report. Data on the numbers/percentages of children by type of placements are included in the county data reports.

\textsuperscript{22} U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Background Paper: Child and Family Services Reviews National Standards, at 2-4

\textsuperscript{23} An explanation/definition of each of the state measures is available at http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSReports/Cfsr.asp#3EA. For further information, go to the individual measures and click on methodology.

\textsuperscript{24} A.B. 636, stats. 2001, ch. 678. In passing AB 636, the legislature specifically found that “the child welfare system, including the state, the counties, and the courts, suffers from the lack of a cohesive structure, state leadership, communication between agencies serving foster children and youth, and clear goals. There is no statewide accountability system for child and family outcomes.” Id.
Between October 2002 and April 2003, the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup held a series of meetings. Workgroup members included CDSS administrators, foster youth, county welfare directors, providers, legislators, social workers, and court representatives. With the assistance of researchers at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and UC Berkeley, the Workgroup developed a comprehensive list of outcomes to measure county and state performance. From that list it identified “the core outcomes that are essential to maintaining an effective system of child welfare services.”

Several factors were used by the Workgroup to select these outcome measures. First, data needed to be available in the current CWS/CMS system. Second, the outcomes would parallel and build upon those developed at the federal level. Third, they had to be reliable and valid.

Recognizing the failures of California’s child welfare system, Gov. Gray Davis signed AB 636 in 2001, authored by Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg.

The state measures complement the federal measures. They include

- Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect within 12 months
- Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect — child left in home
- Length of Time to Exit to Reunification
- Length of Time to Exit to Adoption
- Multiple Foster Care Placements
- Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry

Once some agreement was reached on the state measures to be adopted, both the Workgroup and a broader group of Child Welfare Stakeholders urged the state to establish standards similar to those set by the federal government for each of AB 636 measures. As yet, no state standards have been established.

**Methodology**

The information presented here is drawn from California Department of Social Services (DSS) data as reported in quarterly Outcome & Accountability County Data Reports. The data is publicly available on the DSS website at [http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/CDSSCounty_1954.htm](http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/CDSSCounty_1954.htm). The charts use data from each county’s most recent four quarters of the Outcome & Accountability and Data Reports pertaining to child welfare supervised caseloads. The most recent quarter reported by DSS is January 2006.

The performance data depict the mean of four quarters of 12 reported performance measures for each county. Six are measures used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to determine state compliance with federal mandates for child safety and permanency. The other six are safety and permanency measures adopted as part of California’s 2001 legislative mandate (AB 636) for greater accountability among county child welfare programs.

Of the 12 measures presented, four address the safety of children who are victims of child abuse or neglect. One federal and two state measures assess whether child victims are abused or neglected again within six or 12 months of the first maltreatment. One federal measure reports the percentage of children in care who are confirmed victims of abuse or neglect while in a foster home. Two measures — one federal and one state —

26 California Department of Social Services, *The California Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System*, at 11 (April 2003) (hereinafter ‘AB 636 April 2003 Report’). In addition to core outcomes, the Workgroup created a list of additional measures to be phased in. They identified both short and long-term “enriched measures.” The Workgroup expected that new outcomes would be added to these initial, core measures. **AB 636 April 2003 Report** at 12. To date, none of these measures have been added to the process.

27 Id.

28 There are additional state measures beyond the five listed here that complement the federal measures. This Report looks only at the state measures for which there is a similar federal measure.

29 **AB 636 April 2003 Report**, at 13

30 According to the Child Welfare Stakeholders group, those standards were to be “based on the distributions of County performance in the quarterly reports as well as the federal standards.” Child Welfare Services Stakeholder Group, *CWS Redesign: The Future of California’s Child Welfare Services; Final Report*, at 140 (2003).

31 **AB 636 required the establishment of “Compliance Thresholds.”**
address stability — how frequently foster children move from placement to placement. The remaining six measures — three federal and three state — pertain to permanency. Some of these evaluate how quickly children are adopted or reunified with their families. Others examine the rate of re-entry into foster care for children who were reunited with their parents.

The charts present county performance arrayed by number of children in care (lowest to highest moving from left to right) using July 1, 2005 figures as reported by DSS. For charts grouped by size, small counties have 101 children in care or less, and large counties have 1,000 or more. Medium counties have more than 101 and less than 1,000 children in care based on 2005 figures. Performance is compared with state average performance for state measures, and with national federal standards for federal measures. Performance improves from bottom to top in all charts.

The county with the highest ranking had the highest average performance across 12 measures

Rankings were produced using a performance index that measures the average percentage difference from state average performance over four reporting periods. Below average performance is represented as a negative percentage and above-average performance as a positive percentage. Overall rankings were calculated by averaging each county’s performance index scores for all measures, and comparing the total scores among all counties. The county with the highest ranking had the highest average performance for all 12 measures. A ranking was also calculated based on state measures only.

Findings:
California Fails to Adequately Protect and Care for Victims of Child Abuse and Neglect

This section of the report is divided into three parts. The first provides the counties’ rankings. Rankings are included from several different perspectives. First, counties are ranked on their overall (federal and state) performance. Second, each county’s rank is separately reported for overall state measures. Finally, within each of the two other rankings — composite federal and state, and state individually — counties are ranked against the other counties in their group (large, medium, or small).

The second part of this section highlights some of the findings for each of the three major areas addressed by the measures — Safety, Stability, and Permanency. Under each topic, a representative chart or two are displayed.

The third part discusses some of the disparities among county performance, illustrating California’s system of unequal protection and care. A specific focus on counties within the Bay Area is provided.

The Appendix to the report contains a complete set of charts reporting county performance for each of the 12 federal and state measures. The first chart in each set permits the reader to compare any county’s performance against all other counties. A vertical line separates the counties into three groups based on number of children in foster care. Behind this chart there are three additional charts — one each for small, medium, and large counties. It should be noted that the large counties care for approximately 86 percent of all children in foster care while the small counties have less than 1 percent of the foster care population. Twenty-five percent of all substantiated cases of abuse or neglect and more than a third (35 percent) of all children in foster care are in Los Angeles.

County Rankings

The outcome data obtained from the County Data Reports and presented in the charts in the Appendix allow a comparison of counties’ performance on fundamental measures of child welfare services. They allow residents in one county to understand where their
county stands relative to other counties. They also sug-
gest counties in which effective and/or innovative child
welfare practices are in place, as well as those counties
where relative performance is weaker and current prac-
tices may not be working.

This section provides each county’s ranking in two
groups. The first set of four charts ranks counties
based on their performance on all 12 measures. In light
of the criticism of some of the federal measures, a sec-
ond group of charts is provided. This second group
ranks counties based only on their performance on
state measures. NCYL did not attempt to weight any
of the measures. Neither USDHHS nor California’s
Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup suggested
such a weighting system. Therefore, the rankings
which follow reflect no value added or subtracted.

Some may suggest that counties with larger caseloads
should not be held to the same standard as counties
with smaller caseloads. In setting the national stan-
dards, USDHHS considered this issue and explored
setting multiple standards based on caseload size.
However, after testing state performance on some
measures, USDHHS,

found no correlation between the variables. In
short, caseload size was not useful in explaining
the variation in State performance with respect
to the national standards, so it was not consid-
ered in setting the national standards.  

While NCYL agrees that caseload size should not
lower the performance expectation for counties, an
alternate ranking is provided — one that ranks coun-
ties within their size group. Using this ranking scheme,
counties can see how they compare with other counties
in their same size group.

For each of the 12 measures — six federal and six state
— each county was assigned a performance rank
between 1 and 58 based on its average performance as
reported in the four most recent County Quarterly
Data Reports. No. 1 represents the best performance
and the highest rank. No. 58 represents the worst per-
formance. An overall ranking for each of the 58 coun-
ties was obtained by averaging each county’s perform-
ance on each of the 12 measures. County rankings
using only the six state measures are also provided. For
both the combined overall and state rankings, there are
three additional charts. Each of these provides the

![Chart 1: Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): All Counties Smallest to Largest →](chart.png)

County Ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #58 is the worst performing county

Chart 2
Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): *Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Chart 3
Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): *Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

*R: Medium counties have more than 101 and less than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #28 is the worst performing county
Chart 4
Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): *Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

* Small counties have 101 children in care or less
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #16 is the worst performing county

Chart 5
Ranking (State Measures Only): All Counties
Smallest to Largest →

County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #58 is the worst performing county
**Chart 6**

Ranking (State Measures Only): *Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Large counties have more 1,000 or more children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #14 is the worst performing county

**Chart 7**

Ranking (State Measures Only): *Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

*Medium counties have more than 101 and less than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #28 is the worst performing county
rankings of the counties within their size group. For example, among the 14 large counties, Contra Costa County is ranked No. 1 and San Francisco No. 14.

In its County Data Reports, DSS expressly cautions against comparisons of performance among counties, due to differences in demographics, resources, and practice.\(^{33}\)NCYL agrees that one should be careful about concluding too much from these comparisons. However, county comparisons are informative and can lead to useful programmatic changes.\(^{34}\) Indeed, AB 636 was enacted to establish greater accountability among the counties and to allow for comparisons among them. By doing so, it encourages counties to identify the factors that influence both positive and negative performance. If demographics, resources, or practice are responsible for performance variables, then program strategies should be adjusted according to relevant demographics or practices.

As is apparent from examining these rankings and the charts in the Appendix, there is no bright line based on urban or rural, or large or small that explains the vast disparity of performance between the counties. Small

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\(^{33}\) Child Welfare Services, Outcome and Accountability County Data Report; California (Child Welfare Supervised Caseload) at 2 (January 2006): Comparison of data across counties should be done with caution. First, counties may have different management practices. Though data is recorded on one statewide database (CWS/CMS), differences in data entry and updates may influence outcome measures. Second, the social and economic contexts within which child welfare services are provided vary widely among the 58 counties of California.

\(^{34}\) Richard P. Barth, Barbara Needell, *Using Performance Indicators with Child Welfare Policy Makers and Managers*, at 3 (Presentation at Evaluating State Policy: The Effective Use of Administrative Data, Joint Center for Poverty Research Conference June 16-17, 1997)

As with all performance assessments comparison between administrative units is important...Therefore when we present performance indicators on child welfare dynamics we have four standard groupings: big counties, small counties, Los Angeles and statewide (Needell et al., 1996b). We create regional reports so that all individual counties in a region can compare themselves not only to big, small and L.A. groupings but also to individual counties within their region and to their regional averages or the accumulative regional performance funding.
counties perform well on some measures and poorly on others. Large counties do not perform poorly on all measures and among large counties there is considerable inconsistency.

Safety, Stability & Permanency

Overall Performance on Federal Standards

Chart 9 reports the number of counties, arranged by size, that meet the federal standards. Rather than use data from a single quarterly report, the findings here, as for all other charts, are based upon an average of data from the four most recent quarterly reports.

A disturbingly small number of counties are meeting the federal standard for repeat abuse — a measure that tracks the incidence within the first six-months of an earlier incident. Not a single large county — making up 80 percent of all child abuse/neglect reports per year — met this standard. The low number of counties meeting the re-entry standard compared with the larger number of counties achieving prompt reunification suggests that some agencies may be returning children home too quickly. Many of these children are being re-abused and then are returned to foster care. Less than one-quarter of the counties appear to provide stability to children in foster care — even to those children who have been in care less than one year. Although counties’ best performance is for abuse in foster care (almost two-thirds of the counties met the federal standard), California’s performance on this measure is likely much worse than the chart indicates, for reasons explained below. At the same time, a majority of counties are promptly finding adoptive homes and a significant number are reunifying children with their families quickly.

A disturbingly small number of counties are meeting the federal standard for repeat abuse.

Some counties not only continue to fail the federal standards, but comparisons between their performance in the first quarterly report with the most recent report show worsening outcomes for children. Sacramento County is a case in point. On the state measure of recurrence of abuse or neglect — one that follows a child for 12 months after the first substantiated report — Sacramento’s rate is currently at 17.9 percent. When data were first reported on this measure (for period July 1, 2001 — June 30, 2002) Sacramento’s recurrence rate was at 16.2 percent. In two years’ time, maltreatment recurrence in Sacramento County has worsened by almost 12 percent. Similarly, the rate of abuse in foster care in Sacramento County has risen dramatically — more than threefold (.22 percent to .76 percent) — in two years. Its rate of foster children’s reunification with parents has remained virtually unchanged between July 2001 and June 30, 2004 (56.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>All Counties</th>
<th>Small Counties (16)</th>
<th>Medium Counties (28)</th>
<th>Large Counties (14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeat Abuse</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse in FC</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunification</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-entry</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 Sacramento has a six-month maltreatment recurrence rate of 11.3 percent. The federal standard is 6.1 percent or less.
percent vs. 56.5 percent). At the same time, the percentage of children experiencing stability while in care has gone down (51.9 percent to 48.3 percent).

**Overall Performance on State Measures**

The state measures do not have standards by which to gauge performance. Although this Report shows the state average in the charts for each measure, the current average is not an acceptable level of performance. For example, the four quarter state average of children abused again within one year of a prior incident is almost 13 percent. Thirteen out of every 100 children suffering another abuse or neglect within a year cannot be tolerated. The state average for reunification of children within one year is only slightly more than one-third of all children placed in foster care. The fact that two-thirds of children have not been returned home one year after entering care is also unacceptable.

In the absence of standards for the state measures, NCYL looked at recent reports of improvements over time. To calculate these improvements, statewide data reported in the first report issued in January 2004 are compared with data reported in the most recent report issued in January 2006. Using these two end points, the most significant improvement on the state measures is in adoptions. This is also the federal measure on which counties have the best performance. The rate of children being adopted within two years of entry into care went from 5 percent to 6.6 percent — a 29 percent improvement. Improvements on most of the other measures have been much more modest. Recurrence of abuse and neglect decreased 4.5 percent, foster care reentry rates dropped only 3.4 percent, and the rate of reunification within 12 months improved a slight 1.4 percent. No state measure exists for abuse in foster care, but the federal measure showed virtually no change during the same two-year period.

Of course, the extent of improvements among individual counties varies. Furthermore, NCYL has not seen any analysis suggesting that the data for this two-year period provide sufficient evidence of a trend or likelihood of continuing improvement. Even with these improvements, thousands of children go unprotected, are shuttled from placement to placement, and linger in care for years without returning to families or finding a permanent home.

**Safety**

**Thousands of Children AreVictims of Repeat Abuse or Neglect Every Year**

Victims of child abuse and neglect in California are revictimized at alarming rates. Nearly 4,000 children are victims of abuse or neglect within six months of the agency substantiating an earlier abuse. More than 11,000 children are abused or neglected again within one year.

Of the 3,834 children suffering repeat abuse or neglect within six months, almost 600 were infants. The rate of re-abuse or neglect at six months is highest among children between one and two years old. Almost one in every 10 victims in this age group were abused or neglected again within six months of the agency confirming an earlier incident of abuse or neglect. The largest number of victims — 1,100 — was in the 6- to 10-year-old age group. The re-abuse rate among White, Native American, and Black children is similar (9.8 percent, 10 percent, and 10 percent) while the lowest rate is among Asian (6.4 percent) and Hispanic (8.3 percent) children. Fifty-three percent were boys, 47 percent girls.

The report contains data on three measures of child abuse/neglect recurrence — one is federal, and the other two are state measures developed as part of the AB 636 implementation. [Appendix pp. 8-9, 21-24]
Chart 10 shows counties’ performance on the federal measure of abuse/neglect recurrence. Only six of California’s 58 counties met the federal standard (6.1 percent or less) for repeat abuse. Every single large county — i.e. counties with more than 1,000 children in foster care — failed to meet the standard. In Sacramento, the worst performing of the large counties, more than one-third of the children re-victimized were 5 years old or younger.40

Victims of multiple abuses or incidents of neglect warrant special concern and attention. Chronic neglect “is potentially more damaging to the development of a child than physical abuse.”41 Studies have found an array of developmental problems associated with long-term neglect. Research that followed child abuse victims over time found that as the frequency and severity of maltreatment increased, the frequency of delinquent behavior increased. The number of arrests among juveniles who had experienced multiple incidents of abuse as children was twice as high as the number among juveniles who had experienced less frequent maltreatment.42

While the numbers reported here are disturbing, there is still much more that is not known about the re-victimization of children in the state. First of all, there are nine categories of abuse and neglect in California including sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, and general neglect.43 Unfortunately, the types of abuses suffered by children who have been victims of repeat abuse or neglect is impossible to determine. Are child victims of physical abuse suffering repeat incidents of such abuse, or is the subsequent substantiated report for neglect or exploitation? It is unknown.

43 Data on types of abuse/neglect include sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, general neglect, exploitation, emotional abuse, caretaker absence/incapacity, at-risk/sibling abused, and at substantial risk.
Second, the measures of recurrence reflected in the federal and state charts include only children for whom an investigator ruled the report substantiated.\textsuperscript{44} For the most recent 12-month period, there were 109,418 victims of substantiated abuse. However, for another 96,415 children last year, reports of abuse were ruled inconclusive.\textsuperscript{45} In those cases the investigator determined that there was insufficient evidence to “substantiate”\textsuperscript{46} the report. None of the children in these inconclusive reports are counted in this figure.\textsuperscript{47}

Third, during the last couple of years, 11 of California’s counties\textsuperscript{48} — the so-called “pilot counties” — instituted a system of differential responses to child abuse/neglect reports. Under this differential response system, the agency does not investigate some reports as it typically would. Even though “the report meets statutory definitions of abuse and neglect,” county staff may determine that the child is at low to moderate risk of future harm, and that the family is likely to make changes.\textsuperscript{49} The county agency then works with the family and community-based organizations to identify strengths and needs. No finding concerning the report — substantiated, inconclusive, or unfounded — is made. Consequently, in those 11 counties, the actual incidence of abuse or neglect is not reflected in their statistics. Since NCYL does not know the number of reports diverted to this differential response in each of the 11 counties, it is not possible to determine the extent to which they affect the recurrence measures.

\textbf{Hundreds of Children Are Abused in Foster Care Every Year}

Last year, more than 450 children were victims of abuse or neglect in foster care.\textsuperscript{50} More than one-third of these victims were 5 years old or younger. A majority (56 percent) were girls. More than one-third of the victims were Black and 42 percent were Hispanic. To these children — removed from their parent’s home for protection — a fundamental promise has been broken.

There is only a single (federal) measure of child safety in foster care.\textsuperscript{51} [Appendix pp. 10-11] Chart 11 reports the performance of the large counties on this measure. Only five of the 14 counties in this group met the national standard. The state has not developed a complementary or supplementary measure for this important indicator.\textsuperscript{52}

Given the legislature’s declaration that safety of children in foster care is “an obligation of the highest order”,\textsuperscript{53} much more needs to be known about the numbers of abuse and neglect victims. State legislation enacted in 2003 required that counties report basic information about children who die in foster care.\textsuperscript{54}

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\textsuperscript{44} Counts of Children with one or more referrals for October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005. Retrieved March 17, 2006. UCB Center for Social Services Research.

\textsuperscript{45} “Inconclusive” means a report that is determined by the investigator who conducted the investigation not to be “unfounded”, but that there is insufficient evidence to determine whether child abuse or neglect has occurred. Penal Code §11165.12

\textsuperscript{46} “Substantiated” means a report that is determined by the investigator who conducted the investigation to constitute child abuse or neglect [as defined in statute] based upon evidence that makes it more likely than not that child abuse or neglect has occurred.

\textsuperscript{47} Reports that are neither substantiated nor inconclusive are ruled unfounded. “Unfounded” means a report that is determined by the investigator who conducted the investigation to be false, to be inherently improbable, to involve an accidental injury, or not to constitute child abuse or neglect as defined in the statute. Penal Code §11165.12

\textsuperscript{48} Contra Costa, Glenn, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Placer, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Stanislaus, Tehama, and Trinity.

\textsuperscript{49} California Dep’t of Social Services, Overview: Differential Response in California, at 2 (7/28/05)

\textsuperscript{50} The federal measure on this counts the incidence of abuse during a nine-month period. Based on the most recent data (Maltreatment results (non-kin Foster Homes and FFA only) January 1 through September 30, 2005) indicating 348 foster child victims, NCYL estimates that there are 464 victims annually.

\textsuperscript{51} All children who were in foster care during the nine-month period are included, regardless of the amount of time spent in care during this period. Children who were in care for a day, a week, or the entire nine months are included.

\textsuperscript{52} Other measures of child safety in foster care might include the number of homes/facilities for which licensing violations are reported and confirmed; the number of homes/facilities closed due to licensing violations.

\textsuperscript{53} AB 1151 (2003), CA stats. 2001, Ch. 847

\textsuperscript{54} AB 1151 (2003) “The Duty to Foster Children Reaffirmation Act” now codified at CA. GOV’T CODE §6252.6. Only the name, date of birth, and date of death are disclosable under the Public Records Act.
Children who have been the victims of abuse or neglect who then suffer the additional trauma of being uprooted from family, neighborhood, and school and placed in a stranger’s foster home need stability. For thousands of children placed in foster care in California, this is not the case. Foster care for these children exacerbates the instability many lived through before entering care. An earlier report focusing on youth leaving foster care at age 18 found that one-third of youth leaving care had at least five placements.56

There are two measures of placement stability — one federal and one state. Each measures stability in a different way and for a somewhat different population. [Appendix pp.12-13, 25-26]

The federal measure looks at all children in care during a 12-month period and applies a standard requiring

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55 CA. PEN. CODE §11174.34 (l) [SB 525 (1999)]

that 86.7 percent of those children must have experienced no more than two placements. The children included in this measure have been in foster care for widely varying amounts of time — some for a day, others a few weeks, and some for an entire year. Only 14 of the 58 counties met or exceeded the federal standard. Out of the large counties, Los Angeles and San Francisco met the standard, although Alameda and Contra Costa are relatively close to meeting it.

The state measure asks a different question and therefore looks at a different group of children. It asks how many placements children who have been in care for a year experience. It excludes all children who have been in care less than a year and those who have been in care more than a year. Chart 12 reports the data for all counties on this state measure. In 11 of the 14 largest counties, more than one-third of the children who have reached the one-year mark in care have already been shuttled around to their third, fourth or even greater number of placements.

The most recent data reported for this measure\textsuperscript{57} indicate that one-third — more than 5,000 children — have already been shuttled through three or more placements, even though they have been in care only one year.

A significant percentage of the children being moved from place to place are very young. During 2004, more than 1,800 children two years of age or younger were in three or more placements, even though they had been in foster care less than a year. Another 2,500 children between 3 and 10 years old suffered the same instability.\textsuperscript{58}

Frequent changes in placement for children in foster care are associated with a number of disturbing outcomes. A National Institute of Justice sponsored study found

Children who were moved three or more times had significantly higher arrest rates (almost twice as high) for all types of criminal behaviors

\textsuperscript{57} October 1, 2003 to July 30, 2004, First Entries: Frequency and Proportion of Children Still in Care 12 Months after Entering First Spell Who are in Placement 1 or 2. Retrieved March 17, 2006, UCB Center for Social Services Research.

\textsuperscript{58} Of the Children Served Who Have Been in Foster Care Less Than 12 Months From the Time of Latest Removal From the Home, What Percentage Has No More Than Two Placement Settings? Retrieved March 17, 2006, UCB Center for Social Services Research.
— juvenile, adult, and violent — than children who were moved fewer than three times.\footnote{59}

Changes in placement often lead to changes in the child’s school placement\footnote{60} that in turn lead to prolonged absences from school\footnote{61} and lower levels of academic achievement.\footnote{62} Volatile placement histories also have a negative impact on children’s mental health and behavior problems.\footnote{63}

Permanency

**Foster Care is A Revolving Door for Many Children**

Before returning a child home from foster care, the child welfare agency must carefully assess the changes parents have made, put supports in place to sustain those changes, and evaluate the safety of the home.

The rate at which children returned home re-enter care is yet another gauge of the system’s care and protection of vulnerable children. Children who re-enter foster care suffer doubly — they must cope with the re-victimization resulting in their placement back in foster care, as well as the trauma of being removed from family and familiar surroundings again.

During the most recent period for which data are available (October 2004 through September 2005), one of every 10 children entering foster care was re-entering care less than 12 months after a prior episode in care.\footnote{64} Almost 4,000 children (3,950) came back into the system. More than one-third of the children (1,351) re-entering care were 5 years old or younger. The number of boys and girls was similar. There were significant differences among children of color. Rates

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\footnote{59}{Cathy S. Widom, Michael G. Maxfield, An Update on the Cycle of Violence, National Institute of Justice Research in Brief, at 6 (February 2001)}

\footnote{60}{Mark E. Courtney, Sherri Terao & Noel Bost, Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Conditions of Youth Preparing to Leave State Care, at 41-42 (Chapin Hall Center for Children University of Chicago 2004).}

\footnote{61}{Id. Table 38}

\footnote{62}{Majida Mehana & Arthur J. Reynolds, School Mobility and Achievement, 26 Children & Youth Services Review 93 (2004)}

\footnote{63}{Rae Newton, Alan Litrownik, & John Landsverk, Children and Youth in Foster Care: Disentangling the Relationship Between Problem Behaviors and Number of Placements, 24 Child Abuse & Neglect 1363 (2000); Casey Family Programs, Improving Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study (2005)}

\footnote{64}{Foster Care Reentry — First Agency: Of all children who entered care during the year, what percentage re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? Retrieved March 17, 2006, UCB Center for Social Services Research.}
of re-entry for Hispanic and Asian children were 7.8 percent and 8.5 percent, respectively. Native American children had the highest rate of re-entry — 14.7 percent — followed by Black children — 13.2 percent — and White children — 11.6 percent.

Two measures — one federal, one state — provide a picture of how frequently and how quickly children reunited with their families end up back in foster care. As Chart 13 indicates, most counties fail the federal standard for this measure.

The re-entry rate for children using the state measure is equally bleak — 12.9 percent of children returned home came back into care less than a year after reunification. In several of the large counties in the state — San Francisco and Alameda counties — more than 20 percent of the children reunited with their families are returning to care within a year.

The most recent state measure data indicate that one in every five infants who were re-unified with their parents re-entered care within 12 months. Fifty-eight percent of all children re-entering care were 5 years old or younger.

Many children are finding adoptive homes

For children who cannot be reunited with their families, the agency is charged with finding another permanent, preferably adoptive home. Counties have made considerable progress in locating adoptive homes for foster children.

There are two measures — one federal, one state — of the rate at which children in foster care are adopted. The federal measure looks at all children adopted during the year and asks what percentage of that total were adopted within two years of coming into care.

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65 The state measure is regarded as a somewhat more accurate measure of failed reunifications since the federal measure tracks children who come back into care after a discharge from care for any reason — e.g. adoption, runaway, guardianship. Personal Communication with Barbara Needell, March 16, 2006.

66 October 1, 2002 to September 30, 2003 First Entries: Total Reunified within 12 Months — and Children Re-entering Care within 6 and 12 Months After Reunification by Age at Entry (Children in Care 5 Days or More). Retrieved March 17, 2006, UCB Center for Social Services Research. There is a significant difference on re-entry rates at 12 months between kin and non-kin placements — kin (9.1 percent) vs. non-kin (13 percent)

67 Id.

68 Children may achieve permanency in other ways — e.g. guardianship with a relative. Neither federal nor state measures have been developed for those alternative permanent placements.
CHART 15
Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: Federal Measure (3D)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

CHART 16
Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3Aa)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
The federal standard for this measure requires that 32 percent or more of the finalized adoptions must occur within two years of the child’s entry into foster care. This measure is the federal measure on which the counties have performed the best. [Appendix pp. 29-30] Thirty-three counties met or exceeded the federal standard. A majority of the large counties, though not the three largest — Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Bernardino — met the standard.

**Counties have made considerable progress in locating adoptive homes for foster children.**

The state measure takes all children entering care during a 12-month period (an entry cohort) and follows them to the point they have been in care for two years. Chart 16 indicates the percentage of children in this entry cohort who were adopted within two years of entry into foster care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Adoptions from Foster Care</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7,863</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>6,975</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under federal law enacted in 1997, (ASFA) states are eligible for adoption incentive bonuses if they increased the number of foster children adopted over the previous year. In 2002, California was awarded more than $4.3 million in bonuses. However, California did not keep up the pace of adoptions sufficiently in the last few years to qualify for the federal bonus.

**Reunifications with Families Slow to Occur**

Federal law requires that child welfare agencies must make reasonable efforts to reunite children in foster care with their parents. California law also requires that family reunification services be provided “for expeditious reunification of the child with his or her family.”

There are two measures of reunification rates — one federal and one state. Each measures family reunification in a different way and uses a somewhat different population.

The federal measure looks at all children who are reunited with their families during the year — an exit cohort — and calculates the percentage of those children who were out of home for no longer than 12 months.

The state measure looks at all children who entered care in a certain year (an entry cohort) and follows those who are returned within a year. Chart 18 illustrates counties’ performance on this state measure.

While there are 40 counties above the state average, substantially fewer — 19 — are returning even half of the children within a year of their removal from home. The state’s two largest counties, Los Angeles and San Diego, are below the state average. Sacramento is the only large county to break the 50 percent mark. With the exception of small Sierra County (10 children in foster care), Fresno is the worst performing of all counties, reuniting less than 20 percent of foster children with their families.

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69 Outcome Per Year By County of Removal. Retrieved March 17, 2006, UCB Center for Social Services Research.

70 42 U.S.C. §673b.

71 HHS News, HHS Awards $17.5 Million in Bonuses to States for Increasing the Number of Adoptions of Foster Children (September 24, 2002).

72 42 U.S.C. §671(a)(15)

73 CA. WELF. & INST. CODE §16000(a)
Unequal Protection for California Foster Children

The poor outcomes that children who depend upon California’s child welfare system experience are not limited to one region or to one group of counties — i.e. large, small, or medium. Even within the same region and among contiguous counties, the data reflect wide disparities in performance.

There are many possible explanations for the differences reported among the counties here. Some suggest that data entry may account for some of the disparity. Others attribute differences in performance to differences in demographics. The amount and nature of resources available in each county also varies. Careful study of the wide variation in performance among counties and identification of factors contributing to the variation are called for. Such a study is beyond the scope of this Report.  

Chart 19 reflects the overall rankings of the large counties on all measures — federal and state. Even within this group of counties there are significant differences. For example, the two counties on either side of Contra Costa County — San Francisco and San Joaquin — rank considerably worse than Contra Costa. Similarly, two adjacent (in size of foster care population) counties — Santa Clara and Fresno — are separated in rank by 16 places.

Similar disparities within this group are apparent when comparing them on each of the individual measures as well. For example, Contra Costa County’s rate of abuse/neglect recurrence is below 10 percent, while San Francisco and Sacramento both hover around 17 percent. Looking at the chart on reunification within a year of entering foster care (state measure), Sacramento, at 55 percent, is well above the state average (36 percent) while Fresno, at about 17 percent, and Los Angeles, at 24 percent, are substantially below it.

Review of the data suggests that the disparity among counties is not necessarily linked to caseload. Fewer cases do not necessarily lead to better performance. For example, between 2002 and 2004 the number of sub-

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The county self-assessments required under AB 636 begin to shed some light on the obstacles counties face in improving performance, as well as the strengths they have to build upon in order to better outcomes for children and families.
stantiated child abuse cases in San Francisco dropped from 1,385 to 1,240 children. The number of children entering care decreased from 495 to 383 children. During this same time period, recurrence of maltreatment increased, the rate of abuse in foster care was virtually unchanged, multiple placements of children in foster care increased slightly, and the percent of children re-entering foster care increased 35 percent.

Fresno County is another example of the apparent incongruity of falling caseloads and worsening performance. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of substantiated child abuse cases in Fresno dropped from 3,419 to 3,116 children. The number of children entering care decreased from 721 to 635 children. During this same time period recurrence of maltreatment went up 31 percent, and abuse in foster care went up 65 percent. Foster care re-entries dropped significantly, but given the substantial increases in maltreatment recurrence, keeping re-entries down may not be serving children’s needs for safety.

Increasing caseloads, however, do not lead inexorably to poorer outcomes. In Riverside county, for example, the number of child abuse/neglect victims went from 7,860 to 8,563; foster care entries increased from 2,230 to 2,583, and foster care population went from 4,607 to 5,262. While Riverside’s caseload grew, however, its rate of abuse recurrence went down, abuse in foster care remained unchanged, reunifications with family occurred more quickly, and adoptions increased.

Disparities Among Bay Area Counties

An examination of the Bay Area counties illustrates how counties right across the Bay from one another provide widely different levels of protection and care. Chart 20 displays the overall rankings of the Bay Area counties. Contra Costa is in the top ten in the state, Alameda and Marin are in the middle, and San Francisco is near the bottom. Only six other counties performed below San Francisco. San Francisco is ranked last among large counties in the state (counties with more than 1,000 children in care).

Contra Costa is in the top ten in the state.
San Francisco is ranked last among the state’s large counties.
During the last three years, the foster care caseloads of every Bay Area County have decreased. The number of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect also went down in all but two counties — Santa Clara (2,838 to 2,989) and San Mateo (692 to 743).

Meanwhile, the rate of abuse/neglect recurrence has gone up in Santa Clara (10.4 percent to 11.4 percent) (state measure), San Francisco (16 percent to 16.9 percent), Alameda (10.1 percent to 12.1 percent), and San Mateo counties (9.8 percent to 11.4 percent). However, the rate of abuse/neglect dropped significantly in Contra Costa (11.1 percent to 9.8 percent) and Marin (14.5 percent to 11.1 percent). Of the six counties in the Bay Area, four counties — San Mateo, Santa Clara, Marin, and Alameda — surpass the federal standard on abuse in foster care. Three counties in the region — San Mateo, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara — met the federal standard for adoptions. The same three counties exceeded the state average for adoptions within two years of entering care. Only two — San Francisco and Marin — met the federal standard on placement stability. Children who have been in foster care in San Francisco are much more likely to be in stable placements than children in Alameda county. The gap is substantial. While more than 80 percent of foster children in San Francisco are in their first or second placement at the one-year point, only about 55 percent in Alameda County have had similar stability. All but one of the six counties — Marin — is below the state average for failed reunifications. But again, there are substantial differences just among these six counties. The rate of foster care re-entry in Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties is similar — around 14 percent — while in San Francisco and Alameda counties, more than one in every five (23 percent) children returned home ends up back in care within a year.

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75 Marin (127 to 94), San Mateo (507 to 473), Contra Costa (2026 to 1864), Alameda (4002 to 2977), San Francisco (2287 to 2070), and Santa Clara (2269 to 2131).
Conclusion

The figures and percentages in this Report represent the lives of tens of thousands of children who depend upon the government for care and protection. These same figures paint a bleak picture of the lives of many victims of child abuse and neglect.

State officials have hailed recent improvements in statewide performance across most of the measures discussed here. Some of these improvements have been modest, some de minimis, and a few significant. But the pace of change is too slow. Another generation of children will be left behind if a greater sense of urgency is not brought to bear. Nor is there necessarily reason to believe that even the current pace of improvements will be sustained or the pace quickened. While some suggest that the rate of improvement will likely increase, NCYL has not seen any analysis to support that projection.

There are significant fiscal consequences on the horizon. Unless California does a better job of meeting its obligations to abused and neglected children, the state stands to lose up to $60 million in federal funds. In September 2002, a federally mandated Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was conducted of California’s child welfare system. A final report was issued in January 2003. California failed to meet the national standards for all six outcome measures. The state subsequently submitted a federally required Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and remains under federal review until at least April 2007. If the state fails to achieve the level of improvement specified in the PIP, it is subject to fiscal sanctions. The Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) estimates that California could face up to $60 million in penalties.

The courts’ role in promoting or inhibiting improvements in outcomes for children cannot be ignored. Approximately 29 percent of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases lead to the filing of a juvenile court dependency petition. In 2003, dependency petitions were filed for over 38,000 children in California. Courts, through regularly scheduled reviews of cases, have an opportunity and obligation to monitor the health and safety of the children they decide should be cared for by county child welfare agencies. They may expedite adoptions or stall permanency for children. Some courts may encourage the involvement of relatives and caregivers in hearings so that judges’ decisions are well informed. Other courts may severely limit their participation. Given the importance of the courts’ decisions, some basic court performance measures should be established. Guidelines developed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the recommendations of the Pew Commission, and existing resources provide a starting point for the discussion of measures for California’s dependency courts.

Some of the early promises of AB 636 have been realized. In February 2004, DSS implemented the California Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System. Following the first quarterly reports of county performance on federal and state outcome measures, each county completed a self-assessment of its child welfare programs. Using that assessment, each county prepared a System Improvement Plan (SIP) to be implemented over the next three years. The SIPs have all been completed and are now being carried out.

But the real promise of AB 636 was more than just a plan. It was a promise that children would receive greater protection, stable and permanent homes, and that their lives would be enhanced by the government’s intervention. Much more needs to be done. In the final section of this Report, NCYL sets forth some of the next steps in ensuring that that promise is kept.

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76. The CFSRs began in 2001 and were completed for all states by the end of 2004.
78. The state subsequently submitted a federally required Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and remains under federal review until at least September 2006. If the state fails to achieve the level of improvement specified in the PIP, it is subject to fiscal sanctions.
79. The level of improvement required to avoid the federal sanctions does not require that the state meet the federal standards by 2007. In most instances the PIP goal, even if achieved, will not bring California up to the federal standards. See Appendix for PIP goals.
80. The targets agreed to in the PIP, even if reached, will not bring California up to the national standards in most measures.
81. Administrative Office of the Courts Center for Families, Children & The Courts, Research
Recommendations

In order to accomplish and sustain true system reform, and to achieve improved outcomes and better lives for children, there must be commitments to new leadership, improved measures of care, and the adoption and implementation of standards of care. NCYL recommends the following:

1. **Establish a statewide Child Welfare Council responsible for establishing uniform services and treatment, and addressing the hurdles faced by the many agencies, governmental bodies, and systems that impact children, youth, and families at risk of abuse and neglect.** The Council would consist of agencies, departments, courts, judges, foster youth, and other stakeholders. It would be co-chaired by a statewide leader of Child Welfare and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The primary role of the Council would be to improve coordination and communication among agencies charged with serving children and families in the child welfare system. It would do this by increasing collaboration among governmental agencies and courts responsible for addressing the needs of children and families.

2. **Establish a Statewide Leader for Child Welfare and Foster Care Coordination in the California Health and Human Services Agency.** He or she would be responsible for statewide leadership, performance, and coordination of child welfare efforts across federal, state, and county agencies and courts. This new position would elevate visibility and create a clear point of accountability. The person in this position would have direct authority over the Department of Social Services (DSS) and other California Health And Human Services Agency departments that provide child welfare services. The leader would also be responsible for ensuring statewide uniformity of child welfare and foster care services and treatment, and the reliability of child welfare agency data tracking.

3. **Expand the outcome measures in AB 636 to include child well-being outcomes.** These would measure youth transition to adulthood; out-of-county placements; self-sufficiency skills training; school stability, attendance, and performance; children’s physical, developmental, and mental health status and needs; the provision of services necessary to support children’s health, housing, and other needs, and other relevant outcomes. The current measures fail to include some important indicators of child well-being. There are no data on foster children’s academic achievement or on whether their health and mental health care needs are being met. The only information available on their preparedness to live independently and be self-supporting is anecdotal and unreliable.

   The failure to adopt these types of child well-being indicators is largely due to the limitations of the current CWS/CMS database, which tracks statewide child welfare and foster care case information. However, the information needed to assess these outcomes is available in other data systems. Most medical care for children in foster care is paid for by Medi-Cal and data are maintained on the MEDS database. School districts collect and maintain attendance and standardized test scores for all students, including children in foster care.

   State and local child welfare agencies should establish data-sharing agreements with health departments and school districts unless or until the CWS/CMS database is modified to collect education, medical, and mental health data. This would allow the exchange of critical information so that the academic achievement and health status of foster children can be measured.

4. **Require the Judicial Council to establish outcome measures and standards consistent with the performance measures developed pursuant to AB 636.** Performance standards should apply to all agencies serving abused and neglected children. The CWS/CMS is designed to track only social services agency performance. But the courts play a key role as gatekeepers to the system. They are critical in determining the life course of a child in foster care. The court is required to monitor how children in
the system are faring. The court holds the agency accountable for achieving a timely return home or finding the child an alternative permanent placement.

Our call for standards here is supported by recommendations of the national Pew Commission on Foster Care. California’s state court administrator was one of the members of the Commission. In its 2004 report, the Commission called for improvements in the court’s handling of child abuse and foster care cases. The changes that were recommended include reducing delays in court proceedings, providing parties with adequate representation, and improving the overall quality of the court’s decision-making.

The Office of Children, Family and the Courts within the Administrative Office of the Courts has expertise that should be called upon in establishing performance measures for the courts.

5. Establish performance standards for all of the California Child Welfare and System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB636) Outcomes. Unlike the federal performance and outcome measures, which include minimal standards of performance, the state has not established performance targets for the counties. These standards are necessary in order to improve child welfare services from county to county. However, these standards should not be set at the lowest common denominator. Mediocrity is not the level of care to which counties should move. The community should set a high standard of care for the children served by our child welfare system.
Appendix

County Rankings
  Combined (Federal and State Performance Measures) .......... A-3
  State Performance Measures .................................. A-5
Bay Area County Rankings ........................................ A-7

Federal Performance Measures
  Safety ................................................................. A-8
  Stability ........................................................... A-12
  Permanency ....................................................... A-14

Federal Standards .................................................. A-20

State Performance Measures
  Safety ................................................................. A-21
  Stability ........................................................... A-25
  Permanency ....................................................... A-27
County Rankings Combined
(Federal and State Performance Measures)

Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): All Counties
Smallest to Largest →

Small Counties
Medium Counties
Large Counties

RANK NUMBER

County ranked #1 is the best performing county,
County ranked #58 is the worst performing county

Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): *Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

RANK NUMBER

* More than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #14 is the worst performing county
County Rankings Combined
(Federal and State Performance Measures)

Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest

*More than 101 and less than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #16 is the worst performing county

Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): *Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest

* 101 children in care or less
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #16 is the worst performing county
County Rankings:
State Performance Measures

Ranking (State Measures Only): All Counties
Smallest to Largest →

Small Counties

Medium Counties

Large Counties

County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #58 is the worst performing county

Ranking (State Measures Only): *Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Rank Number

*TMore than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #14 is the worst performing county.
County Rankings:
State Performance Measures (cont.)

**Ranking (State Measures Only): *Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care**
Smallest to Largest →

- Del Norte
- Napa
- Tuolumne
- Siskiyou
- Lake
- Shasta
- Sutter
- Yuba
- El Dorado
- Kings
- Kern
- Imperial
- Maricopa
- Sutter
- Placer
- Plumas
- Yolo
- San Benito
- San Luis Obispo
- Santa Cruz
- Santa Barbara
- San Diego
- San Mateo
- Santa Clara
- Santa Barbara
- Sonoma
- Orange
- Merced
- San Joaquin
- Kern
- Monterey
- Santa Cruz
- Maricopa
- Riverside

*More than 101 and less than 1,000 children in care
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #28 is the worst performing county

**Ranking (State Measures Only): *Small Counties by Number of Children in Care**
Smallest to Largest →

- Alpine
- Mono
- Sierra
- Modoc
- Inyo
- Trinity
- Plumas
- Amador
- Mariposa
- San Benito
- San Luis Obispo
- Colusa
- Calaveras

* 101 children in care or less
County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #16 is the worst performing county
Bay Area County Rankings

Overall Ranking (State and Federal Measures): Bay Area Counties
Smallest to Largest →

County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #6 is the worst performing county

Ranking (State Measures Only): Bay Area Counties
Smallest to Largest →

County ranked #1 is the best performing county
County ranked #6 is the worst performing county
**Federal Performance Measures: Safety**

**Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 6 Months: Federal Measure (1A)**

*All Counties by Number of Children in Care*

*Smallest to Largest →*

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures:
Safety (cont.)

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 6 Months: Federal Measure (1A)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 6 Months: Federal Measure (1A)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Children Abused or Neglected in Foster Care: Federal Measure (1C)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

* Federal Standard 0.57%

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Abused or Neglected in Foster Care: Federal Measure (1C)
Large Counties by number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

* Federal Standard 0.57%

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures:
Safety (cont).

Children Abused or Neglected in Foster Care: Federal Measure (1C)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Abused or Neglected in Foster Care: Federal Measure (1C)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures: Stability

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3B)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3B)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures: Stability (cont)

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3B)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3B)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures: Permanency (cont.)

Children Returned Home Within 1 Year of Entering Care: Federal Measure (3E)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Returned Home Within 1 Year of Entering Care: Federal Measure (3E)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures:
Permanency (cont.)

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: Federal Measure (3D)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: Federal Measure (3D)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures: Permanency (cont.)

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: Federal Measure (3D)

Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: Federal Measure (3D)

Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures: Permanency (cont.)

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard. Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
Federal Performance Measures:
Permanency (cont.)

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3F)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year: Federal Measure (3F)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the Federal Standard.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the Federal Standard.
# Federal Standards

Source: Background Paper, Child and Family Services Reviews

## National Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>National Standard (%)</th>
<th>PIP Goal*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children who were victims of substantiated child abuse during the first six months of the period under review, 6.1 % or less had another substantiated report within six months.</td>
<td>≤ 6.1 %</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence of child abuse or neglect in foster care</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children in foster care in the State during the period under review (nine months) the percentage of children who were substantiated victims of maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff is 0.57 % or less</td>
<td>≤ 0.57 %</td>
<td>0.53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care Re-entries</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children who entered foster care during the year under review, 8.6 % or fewer of those children re-entered care within 12 months of a prior episode in foster care</td>
<td>≤ 8.6 %</td>
<td>9.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability of Foster Care Placements</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children who have been in foster care less than twelve months, 86.7 % or more children had no more than two placements</td>
<td>≥ 86.7 %</td>
<td>86.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Time to Achieve Reunification</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children who were reunified with their parents during the year under review, 76.2 % or more were reunited less than twelve months after entering foster care.</td>
<td>≥ 76.2 %</td>
<td>57.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Time to Achieve Adoption</td>
<td>A state meets the standard if, of all children who exited foster care during the year under review to be adopted, 32 % or more children exited care in less than 24 months from the time they entered foster care.</td>
<td>≥ 32 %</td>
<td>20.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*California Program Improvement Plan Final Quarterly Report. Reporting Period April-June 2005. PIP goals are negotiated between California and federal authorities. The state can achieve a PIP goal and still fail to meet the national standard.*
State Performance Measures:
Safety

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 1 Year: State Measure (1B)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 1 Year: State Measure (1B)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures: Safety (cont.)

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 1 Year: State Measure (1B)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Abused or Neglected Again Within 1 Year: State Measure (1B)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures: Safety (cont.)

Children Abused or Neglected Again In Their Own Homes Within 1 Year: State Measure (2A)
(Subset of State Measure (1B)): All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Abused or Neglected Again In Their Own Homes Within 1 Year: State Measure (2A)
(Subset of State Measure (1B)): Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
**State Performance Measures:**
**Safety (cont.)**

### Children Abused or Neglected Again In Their Own Homes Within 1 Year: State Measure (2A)
(Subset of State Measure (1B)): Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

### Children Abused or Neglected Again In Their Own Homes Within 1 Year: State Measure (2A)
(Subset of State Measure (1B)): Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: State Measure (3C)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: State Measure (3C)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures:
Stability (cont.)

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: State Measure (3C)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children with No More than Two Placements Within 1 Year: State Measure (3C)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures: Permanency

Children Reunified Within 1 Year of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3A)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Children Reunified Within 1 Year of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3A)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures: Permanency (cont.)

Children Reunified Within 1 Year of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3A)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Children Reunified Within 1 Year of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3A)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average. Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures: Permanency (cont.)

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3Aa)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Percent of children adopted within 2 Years

Small Counties | Medium Counties | Large Counties

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3Aa)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Percent of children adopted within 2 Years

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures:
Permanency (cont.)

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3Aa)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Adopted Within 2 Years of Entering Foster Care: State Measure (3Aa)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures:
Permanency (cont.)

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year of Returning Home: State Measure (3G)
All Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year of Returning Home: State Measure (3G)
Large Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest →

Counts above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counts below the line are performing worse than the state average.
State Performance Measures:
Permanency (cont.)

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year of Returning Home: State Measure (3G)
Medium Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest ➔

Children Re-entering Foster Care Within 1 Year of Returning Home: State Measure (3G)
Small Counties by Number of Children in Care
Smallest to Largest ➔

Counties above the line are performing better than the state average.
Counties below the line are performing worse than the state average.