

**FOSTER CARE BIENNIAL REPORT:
DECEMBER 31, 2022**

Prepared by:
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Bureau of Research, Evaluation and Performance Analytics
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**Office of Children
and Family Services**

Introduction

In January 2021, Chapter 11 of the Laws of 2021 was enacted, requiring the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to make information publicly available on its website regarding youth placed in foster care settings and the recruitment of foster parents. The act requires this information to be broken out by local departments of social services (LDSS) and specified foster care setting types, identified within the law as including, but not limited to: foster boarding homes, approved relative homes, group homes, group residences, agency-operated boarding homes, supervised independent living arrangements and childcare institutions. Information must be posted biannually, beginning December 31, 2021. Specific areas delineated in the law and the information compiled and posted by OCFS in response are described below. Documents listed below can be found on the OCFS webpage (<https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>) under the section Foster Care Biannual Report.

Total Number of Children Placed in Foster Care Settings (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This table provides a statewide look at the number of children in LDSS care and custody, or custody and guardianship, broken out by foster care setting and children in OCFS commissioner custody cared for in a foster care setting. Setting counts for the current report are provided for two points-in-time (December 31, 2021 and June 30, 2022) and show how the number of children residing in a specific setting-type changed over the six-month period.

Unaccompanied Children Census Report (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This document provides point-in-time census data reflecting the number of unaccompanied children in the custody of the United States Office of Refugee Resettlement placed in voluntary authorized agencies within New York State. These children are not in foster care but are cared for by these voluntary authorized agencies through a contract, grant, or other agreement with the federal government. Data are posted twice a year in December and June.

Select Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This series of tables provides county-specific looks at the petition, education and prior foster care history of children in care and custody or custody and guardianship on the last day of the six-month reporting period (June 30 or December 31). Information on children’s family court involvement is presented first, with the article type associated with the child’s most recent family court hearing presented. Next, children’s receipt of special education services during the current school year is captured, with the number of children with early intervention (EI) and individualized education plans (IEP) noted. Prior foster care experience is captured by examining each child’s lifetime involvement in the child welfare system. If the child was admitted to and discharged from New York State foster care before the start of the current foster care episode, this variable is set to “yes.”

Certified/Approved Foster Homes (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This statewide table provides information on the total number of foster homes certified/approved to care for a child in foster care as of the last day of the current six-month reporting period compared to the last day of the prior six-month reporting period.

Preventive Services Authorizations and Subsequent Foster Care Admissions (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This statewide table provides information on the number of children living in the community authorized to receive preventive services during the first (10/1/-3/31) or second half (4/1-9/30) of the prior federal fiscal year and later entered foster care within six and 12 months of their service authorization. Prior federal fiscal year is used to select the sample for this analysis to allow each child in the reporting sample to have a full 12 months of follow-up time by the time of the report of this publication. The final column in the table shows the cumulative total of children entering foster care within 12 months of their authorization.

Approved QRTPs (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/sppd/family-first.php>)

A list of all residential programs recognized by New York State as a qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) is provided. Data are updated monthly as needed; if no new QRTPs have been designated in the prior month, the list remains the same.

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Efforts

In preparation for the implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, OCFS has engaged in the following activities to support the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents by LDSSs and voluntary authorized agencies (VAs).

- LDSSs must intensify efforts to maintain children in home-based settings whenever possible. These efforts include identification and engagement of kinship resources and increased recruitment and retention of foster homes for children who do not have appropriate kinship resources. OCFS provided Family First transition funds to help LDSSs recruit and retain current and prospective foster families, including kinship caregivers.
- OCFS organized a presentation for LDSS directors of services on how to leverage digital media to efficiently recruit foster and adoptive homes. The presenters were staff from Brand New and FosterMore. Two companies that collaborated to develop a highly effective digital advertising campaign to recruit new individuals and families to become foster parents that is free to entities such as LDSSs and VAs. The digital media program is aimed at expanding to a new audience beyond the reach of traditional marketing. OCFS informed LDSSs that they could use some of their Family First transition funds to work with companies similar to these as a strategy for recruiting more foster and adoptive families.
- Recruitment and Retention Plan – OCFS has mandated that each LDSS and VA submit to their appropriate OCFS regional office a three-year Recruitment and Retention Plan with an update at the 18-month point. The plan must include district-specific data that indicates the demographics of the children coming into care and the demographics of the foster homes they have certified/approved. This data is then analyzed by the district to determine what types of foster homes are needed to meet the needs of the children coming into care (homes willing to take teens, babies or sibling groups). The plan must also describe the strategies that the LDSS or VA will employ to enhance their recruitment efforts to address any disparity between the needs of the children entering care and the types of foster homes that are certified. The plan must also focus on how

the LDSS or VA will increase the use of kinship foster care and reduce congregate care placements

- OCFS is actively exploring a state-of-the-art software tool the agency believes will promote greater efficiency in assisting prospective foster and adoptive parents, as well as corresponding caseworkers, to track progress in completing all necessary steps to become certified or approved.
- OCFS has also provided information to LDSSs about a free service called Grant Me Hope that will assist LDSSs in highlighting children who are freed for adoption, with the goal of finding an adoptive resource for the child. Multiple LDSSs have signed an MOU with Grant Me Hope.