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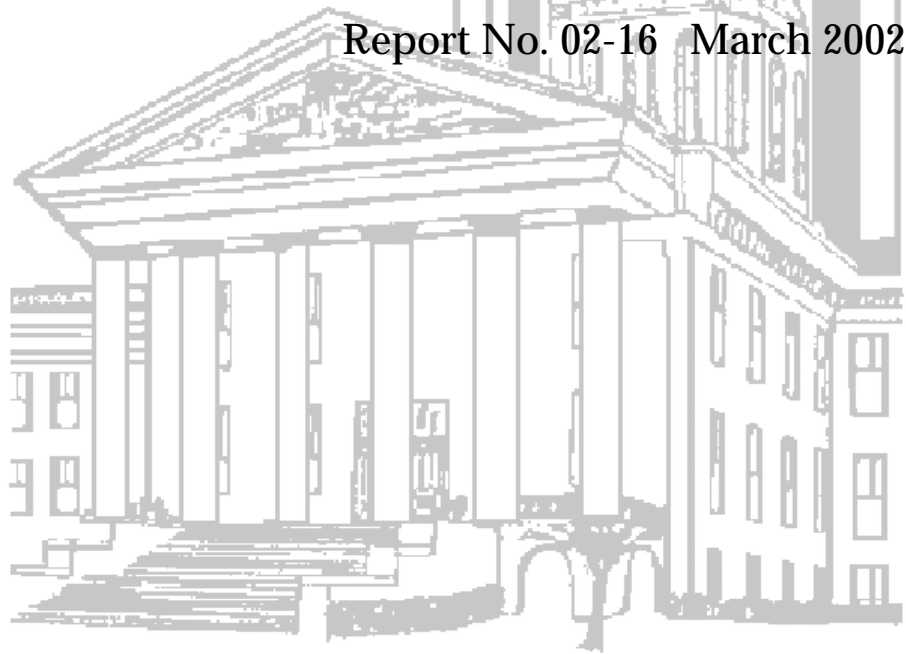
Progress Report of
Justification Review

Child Protection Program
Department of the Children and Families

*Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability*

an office of the Florida Legislature

The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
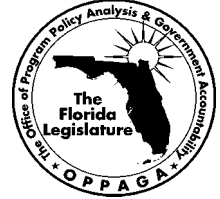
John W. Turcotte, Director

March 2002

The President of the Senate,
the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
and the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

I directed our office to examine the *Child Protection Program* administered by the Department of Children and Families. OPPAGA reports findings and recommendations as required by the Government Performance and Accountability Act of 1994. Nancy Dufoe, Cynthia Davis, Brenda Hughes, and Claire Mazur conducted the examination under the supervision of Frank Alvarez.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff of the Department of the Children and Families for its cooperation and the many courtesies shown us during the course of the examination.

Sincerely,

John W. Turcotte
Director

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Executive Summary

Justification Review of the Child Protection Program

Purpose

The 2001 Legislature directed OPPAGA to review the status of the Department of Children and Families' Child Protection Program. [1] Our review assesses the program's performance in

- meeting key client outcome measures and legislative goals for the Florida Abuse Hotline, protective investigations, foster care, and adoptions (see Chapter 2);
- recruiting foster homes and identifying the need for additional foster homes (see Chapter 3);
- reducing the turnover rate of family services counselors staff and developing and implementing strategies to retain staff (see Chapter 4);
- implementing the HomeSafeNet information system (see Chapter 5); and
- implementing OPPAGA's recommendations from the March 2001 justification review of the program (see Appendix A).

It also presents district specific performance statistics (see Appendix B).

Background

The purpose of the Child Protection Program is to provide for the care, safety, and protection of abused and neglected children in an environment that fosters healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. The program's goals are to protect children from harm caused by abuse and neglect and to ensure a permanent and stable living arrangement for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Program services are administered through a central program office in Tallahassee, the Florida Abuse Hotline, local district offices, five county sheriffs' offices, and community-based care providers. The program provides five major services—the Florida Abuse Hotline, protective investigations, in-home services, out-of-home services, and adoptions.

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[1] Chapter 2001-68, *Laws of Florida.*

In Fiscal Year 2000-01, 422,945 calls were made to the Florida Abuse Hotline reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, of which 176,635 were serious enough to be investigated. During the same time period, the program identified 111,593 victims of abuse and neglect, provided protective supervision to 16,534 children, provided out-of-home services to 31,964 children, and placed 2,142 children in adoptive homes.

The Legislature appropriated $789,040,921 for the program for Fiscal Year 2001-02; of which $177.7 million (23%) were general revenue funds and $611.3 million (77%) were from trust funds.

Program Performance

Our March 2001 review of the department's Child Protection Program identified several deficiencies with program performance. [2] The program was not timely in responding to calls to the Florida Abuse Hotline, seeing alleged victims face-to-face, or closing investigations. In addition, the program did not meet its legislative performance standards for preventing reoccurrences of child abuse and neglect and generally did not achieve its goal to ensure that abused and neglected children were provided safe, permanent, and stable living arrangements in a timely manner. Impediments to the program's ability to meet legislative goals included high staff turnover, varied performance across districts, and a difficult client population.

In this review we found that although the program's performance has improved in many areas, it is still not meeting some goals. The performance of the Florida Abuse Hotline has significantly improved, due in part to increased staffing and a reduction in the number of calls received. Although the program has reduced the number of cases open longer than 60 days, the program does not meet legislative timeliness goals for initiating and closing protective investigations. The program is doing a better job achieving permanency for children and getting children out of foster care within 12 months. The program also substantially met the Legislature's goal to minimize the number of children who are returned to foster care. As program officials expected, the average length of stay for children remaining in foster care has steadily increased as more children leave care earlier. The program also increased the percentage of finalized adoptions for children legally available for adoption.

The program has implemented several strategies to more effectively recruit and retain foster care homes. It increased outreach efforts by working with corporations, local businesses, and community providers to offer support to foster children and parents; and has also partnered with local media outlets to target recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive

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[2] *Justification Review: Child Protection Program,* Report No. 01-14, March 2001.

parents. These strategies have helped the program recruit new foster care homes. Between Fiscal Year 1997-98 and Fiscal Year 2000-01 the number of homes increased 28% and the licensed capacity increased by 25% during the same time period. The program has also succeeded in reducing the number of homes that are over their licensed capacity, although this problem continues. The number of homes over licensed capacity decreased 30% from 839 in August 2000 to 590 in August 2001. Gaps and overcrowding are related in part to some foster parents' inability or unwillingness to care for the number of children they are licensed to foster. Another factor that contributes to shortages and overcrowding is that the program has difficulty keeping foster parents long term. A 2001 Chiles Center report found that approximately 40% of foster parents have been foster parents for two years or less.

Family services counselor turnover remains higher than state and national averages, despite an improvement over the previous year's turnover rate. The high turnover rate increases the number and percentage of relatively inexperienced family services counselors. Statewide, the family services counselor position with the least amount of experience was the protective investigator position. Limitations in state personnel data prevented the program from providing turnover data for this position.

After planning delays, the department is in the process of implementing HomeSafenet. However, the process of transitioning to HomeSafenet resulted in gaps in data for Fiscal Year 2000-01 needed to measure some key client outcomes. The department does not anticipate having complete data in HomeSafenet for certain performance measures until August 2002. Between 1994 and 1999, the department spent $40.8 million during the planning phase of HomeSafenet. In November 1999, the department projected total implementation costs for HomeSafenet to be $210.5 million. However, the department revised this projection in July 2001 to $230.2 million. The department plans to complete implementation of the system by Fiscal Year 2005-06.

Agency Response

The Secretary of the Department of Children and Families provided a written response to our preliminary and tentative findings and recommendations. (See Appendix C, page 72, for her response.)

Introduction

Purpose

The 2001 Legislature directed OPPAGA to review the status of the Department of Children and Families' child protection program. [3] Our review assesses six areas:

- the program's performance in meeting key client outcome measures and legislative goals for the Florida Abuse Hotline, protective investigations, foster care, and adoptions (see Chapter 2);
- the program's performance in recruiting foster homes and need for additional foster homes (see Chapter 3);
- the turnover rate of the family services counselors staff and program strategies to retain staff (see Chapter 4);
- the department's progress in implementing the HomeSafeNet information system (see Chapter 5); and
- the program's progress in implementing OPPAGA's recommendations from the March 2001 justification review of the program (see Appendix A).

It also presents district specific performance statistics (see Appendix B).

Background

Program description

The purpose of the child protection program is to provide for the care, safety, and protection of abused and neglected children in an environment that fosters healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. The program's goals are to protect children from harm caused by abuse and neglect and to ensure a permanent and stable living arrangement for children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

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[3] Chapter 2001-68, *Laws of Florida.*

The program provides five major services to achieve these goals—the Florida Abuse Hotline, protective investigations, in-home services, out-of-home services, and adoptions.

- The Florida Abuse Hotline serves as the central point for receiving and assessing information about suspected abuse or neglect of children and other vulnerable citizens, including disabled or elderly adults. The public may report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of persons living or located in Florida by using a toll-free telephone line or by sending a written report on a toll-free FAX line or through the mail. Calls that meet screening criteria are classified as reports and referred to the program's district offices for onsite protective investigation; cases in which a child is in imminent danger must be investigated immediately, while all other cases must be investigated within 24 hours.

- Protective investigations are conducted for each reported case and consist of face-to-face interviews with the child, siblings, parents, and other adults in the household and an onsite assessment of the child's residence. The three main purposes of investigations are to determine whether there is any indication that a child in the family or household has been abused, abandoned, or neglected and who is responsible for the maltreatment, what the immediate and long-term risks are for each child in the household, and what additional services are necessary.

- In-home services are intended to protect abused children who remain in their own homes. In-home services can be voluntary, but may be court-ordered in more serious cases, and include protective supervision; intensive crisis counseling; and the family builders program. Other in-home services may include substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, childcare, homemaker services, cash or in-kind assistance to meet families' needs for food, clothing, housing, or transportation, and other related support services designed to maintain the family unit.

- Out-of-home services fall into three categories: relative care, non-relative care, and foster care.

  - Relative care services enable high-risk children who are unable to remain in their homes to be placed in the care of relatives, including grandparents, siblings, first cousins, nephews, and nieces.

  - Non-relative care services enable children who are unable to be placed with relatives to be placed in the care of an unrelated adult. These adults must be known and approved of by the family.

  - Foster care services are the most intensive out-of-home service option for children who are at high risk for continued abuse or neglect. The primary types of foster care placements are family foster homes, which are private families or non-profit agencies

that are licensed and supervised to provide foster care; emergency shelter services; residential group homes; and subsidized independent living arrangements.

- Adoption services are intended to provide permanent adoptive homes for children who cannot be returned to their own families. To place these children in safe, permanent homes, the program is responsible for providing legal services to terminate parental rights; finding adoptive families; supervising adoptive placements; paying court costs; providing health services and paying monthly cash subsidies for some children.

Child protection services are administered through a central program office in Tallahassee, the Florida Abuse Hotline, local district offices, five county Sheriff's Offices, and community-based care providers.

The program's volume of calls and cases during the last two and one-half fiscal years has varied (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1
The Volume of Cases in the Child Protective Services Program
Has Varied During the Last Two and One-Half Fiscal Years

	Fiscal Year 1999-00	Fiscal Year 2000-01	July - December 2001
Number of hotline calls	469,334	422,945	212,507
Number of protective investigations	164,464	176,635	90,373
Number of victims of abuse and neglect	76,494	111,593	N/A[1]
Number of children in protective supervision[2]	16,584	16,534	22,760
Number of children in out-of-home placement[3]	29,168	31,964	33,048
Number of children placed in adoptive homes	1,625	2,142	633[4]

[1]According to program staff, current fiscal year data on the number of victims will not be available until the end of the fiscal year.

[2]Data is for the month of December of each fiscal year to allow comparison with most current data for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

[3]Out-of-home placement includes children placed in foster care, with relatives, and with non-relatives. Data is for the month of December of each fiscal year to allow comparison with most current data for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

[4]Children placed in adoptive homes from July through October 2001.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

The program was appropriated $789,040,921 for Fiscal Year 2001-02. State general revenue appropriations account for 23% and appropriations from trust funds account for 77% of the program's appropriated budget (see Exhibit 2). For Fiscal Year 2001-02, the Legislature authorized 5,603 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to administer the program.

Exhibit 2
77% of the Child Protection Program's Funding Is From Trust Funds

General Revenue
$177,713,827
23%

Trust Funds
$611,327,094
77%
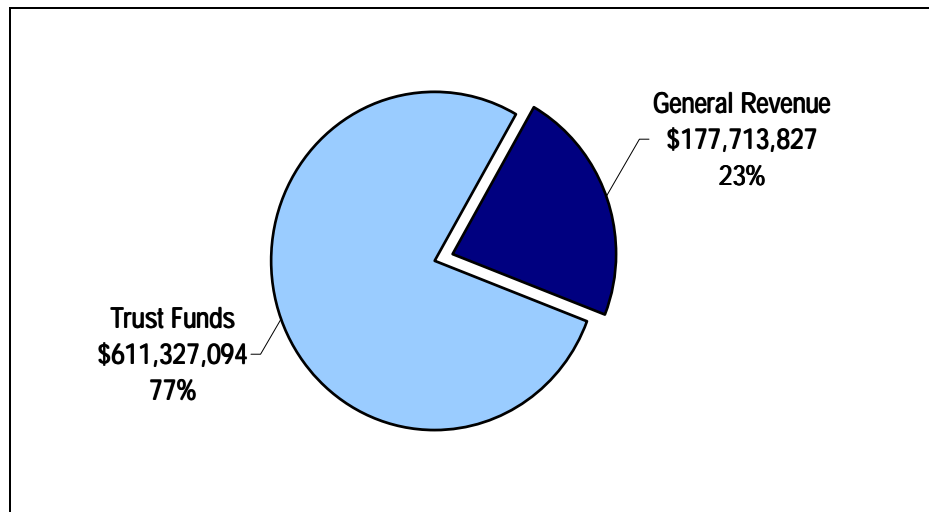
Source: 2001 General Appropriations Act as of January 4, 2002.

Chapter 2

Program Performance Improving in Many Areas, But Is Still Not Meeting Some Goals

Our March 2001 review of the department's child protection program identified several deficiencies with program performance. [4] The program was not timely in responding to calls to the Florida Abuse Hotline, seeing alleged victims face-to-face, or closing investigations. In addition, the program did not meet its legislative performance standards for preventing reoccurrences of child abuse and neglect and generally did not achieve its goal to ensure that abused and neglected children were provided safe, permanent, and stable living arrangements in a timely manner. Impediments to the program's ability to meet legislative goals included high staff turnover, varied performance across districts, and a difficult client population.

To assess the status of the program's performance in achieving its goals, we analyzed performance-based program budgeting (PB²) measures as well as other performance data from the program. We found that the program has improved in many areas, but is still not meeting some goals. However, the program has worked aggressively to address the problems identified in our earlier report. Specifically, we made the determinations discussed below.

- The performance of the Florida Abuse Hotline has significantly improved, due in part to increased staffing and a reduction in the number of calls received. Callers abandoned 7.7% of calls in Fiscal Year 2000-01, and 4.6% of calls in the first half of Fiscal Year 2001-02, which is far below the 23.4% abandoned call rate for Fiscal Year 1999-00.

- The program does not meet legislative timeliness goals for initiating and closing protective investigations. During Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program commenced 92.3% of the investigations within 24 hours, saw 52.4% of alleged victims within 24 hours, and closed 52.4% of the investigations within 60 days.

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[4] *Justification Review: Child Protection Program*, Report No. 01-14, March 2001.

- The program has reduced the number of cases open longer than 60 days. The backlog fell by 41.2% from 51,338 cases in January 2001 to 30,183 cases in February 2002.

- The program found that its methodology for measuring reabuse is flawed, resulting in inaccurate performance data. The program designed its existing information system in 1988 prior to the Legislature's requiring the program to measure its performance on the reoccurrences of abuse. Therefore, the information system captures the date the Hotline received an abuse report rather than the date the abuse or neglect actually occurred. When program management conducted a special review of client case files, the program found that 94.5% of children in foster care were not reabused compared to the 90.8% originally reported.

- The program is doing a better job achieving permanency for children and getting children out of foster care within 12 months. The program met the Legislative goal that 30% of children leave foster care within 12 months. As the program expects, the average length of stay for children remaining in foster care has steadily increased as more children leave care earlier. The program also substantially met the Legislature's goal during Fiscal Year 2000-01 to minimize the number of children who are returned to foster care, with 3.3% of (65) children returning to foster care after unsuccessfully being reunited with their families.

- The program finalized adoptions for 84% (2,008) of children legally available for adoption in Fiscal Year 2000-01, which is an improvement over the prior year's performance of 66%. Moreover, the amount of time children remaining in foster care wait for adoptive homes has increased from 42.4 months in June 2000 to 47.3 months in April 2001.

Florida Abuse Hotline performance has significantly improved after staff increases and a decrease in calls

The Florida Abuse Hotline is the central point for receiving and assessing information about suspected abuse or neglect of children and other vulnerable citizens. The Hotline staff answers calls to determine whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been harmed or may be in danger of being harmed. Calls that meet specified criteria are classified as reports and referred to the program's district offices for onsite protective investigations. A caller who is kept waiting too long for Hotline staff to answer may hang up and not make the initial critical contact with the program. The program needs to prevent this from happening because its primary mission is to intervene to protect abused and neglected children.

To monitor whether the Hotline staff answers calls quickly, the Legislature established a performance measure of the percentage of calls that are abandoned. The Legislature has modified the standard for this measure over the last three fiscal years. The standard for Fiscal Year 1999-00 was that "less than 2% of calls to the Hotline would be abandoned by the callers prior to Hotline counselors responding to the call." For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the standard was "less than 7%" and for Fiscal Year 2001-02, the standard is "less than 5%."

Hotline performance has improved significantly since our last review and is now meeting the legislative standard

Since our March 2001 report, the Hotline's performance has improved significantly. During Fiscal Year 1999-00, callers abandoned 23.4% (109,910) calls made to the Hotline. The Hotline's performance improved in Fiscal Year 2000-01; callers abandoned 7.7% (32,580 out of 422,945) calls, almost meeting the 7% standard. For the first half of the 2001-02 fiscal year, the Hotline's abandoned call rate was 4.6%. If this trend continues, the program will meet its performance goal that less than 5% of calls are abandoned. Exhibit 3 provides detail on the Hotline's performance over the last six years.

Exhibit 3
Since Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the Hotline Has Received Fewer Calls and Has Significantly Improved Its Abandoned Call Rate
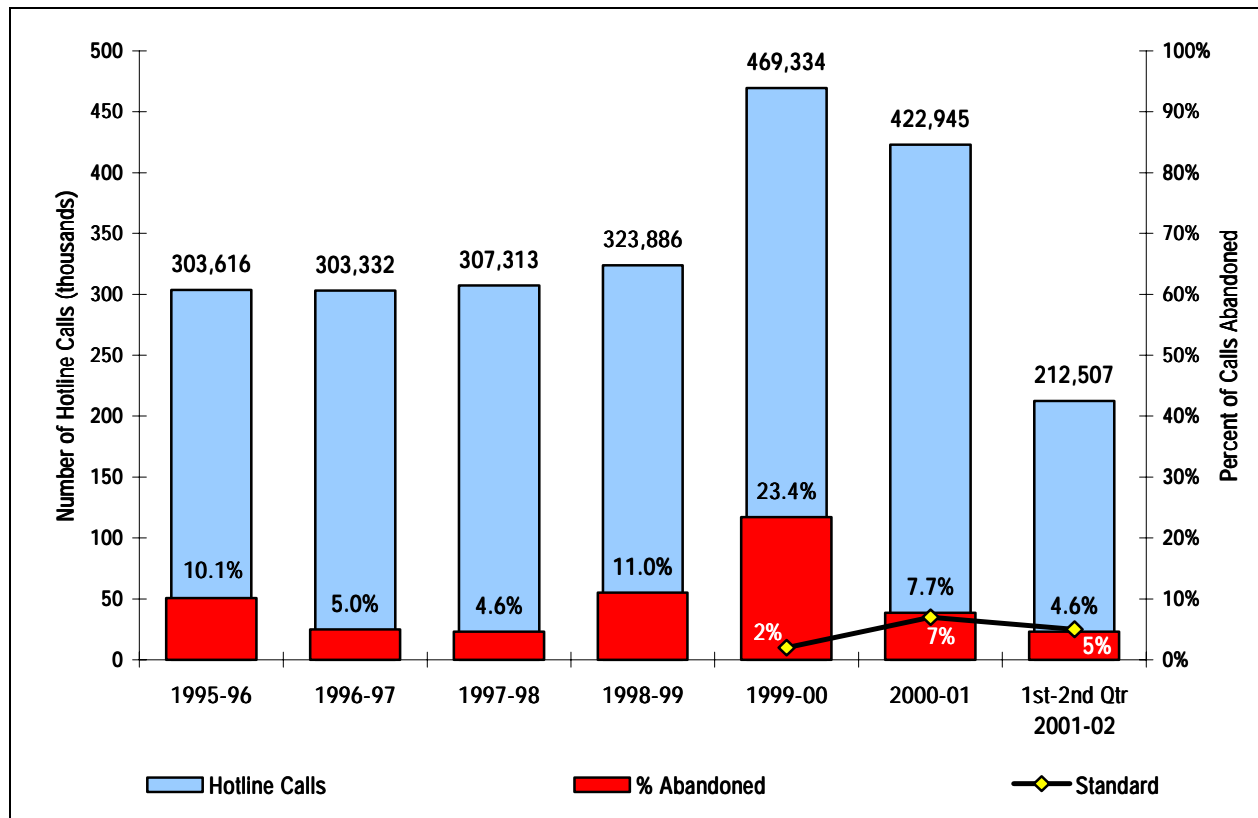
Source: Department of Children and Families.

Hotline benefited from additional staff and fewer calls

Two factors contributed to the improved performance—additional staff and fewer calls. Since October 1999, the Legislature has authorized 57 new Hotline counselor positions, which increased the number of counselor positions to 144. This meets the Hotline's staffing formula, which estimates that 143 counselor positions are needed to operate at an optimal level. The Hotline also received 10% fewer calls in Fiscal Year 2000-01 than in the previous year. The decrease in calls during Fiscal Year 2000-01 could be due to a leveling off after a large increase in calls the previous fiscal year resulting from several high-profile child deaths.

Program substantially met timeliness goals for starting investigations, but it is not closing cases in a timely manner

To help protect children from abuse and neglect, the program must conduct timely protective investigations. Protective investigations are conducted for each reported case and consist of face-to-face interviews with the child, siblings, parents, and other adults in the household and an onsite assessment of the child's residence. When a child's safety is at risk, it is important that a protective investigation be initiated quickly to assess the situation and begin services to prevent further harm. Protective investigations must also be closed in accordance with prescribed time frames to ensure that certain minimum requirements have been met, such as whether the child is at risk of further harm, and whether the child or family need continuing services to prevent further harm to the child.

To monitor whether the program conducts timely investigations, we reviewed three key measures of performance. In Fiscal Year 1998-99, the Legislature established a measure that required protective investigators to see all alleged victims of abuse and neglect within 24 hours. Program staff asserted that it was not feasible to see all alleged victims within this time frame primarily because some families are difficult to locate because information callers provide to the Hotline is incomplete. Therefore, in Fiscal Year 2001-02, the Legislature replaced the measure requiring investigators to see all victims with a new measure requiring investigators to commence all investigations within 24 hours. [5] The third measure assesses whether investigators close cases in a timely manner. The Legislature set a goal that investigators close 100% of their investigations within 60 days. [6]

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[5] Seeing an alleged victim means the investigator made face-to-face contact. Commenced is defined as the point at which an investigator begins the investigation.

[6] Prior to Fiscal Year 2000-01, protective investigators were required to close cases within 30 days.

Program performs well commencing investigations, but does not meet standard

Investigations commenced more timely. The program measures commencement from the point the protective investigator attempts to make contact with the alleged victim. The investigator does not have to make face-to-face contact with the alleged victim in order for the case to be defined as commenced. The commencement measure is important because it provides management with information on whether the investigator has taken steps necessary to initiate an investigation.

The program does better commencing investigations than seeing alleged victims face-to-face, but has not met its legislative goal. The legislative standard for this measure is that protective investigators must commence 100% of the investigations within 24 hours. In the first seven months of Fiscal Year 2001-02, staff commenced 95.7% of investigations within 24 hours, a slight improvement from the 92.3% rate attained in Fiscal Year 2000-01 (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4
The Program Has Improved Its Performance Commencing Investigations Within 24 Hours
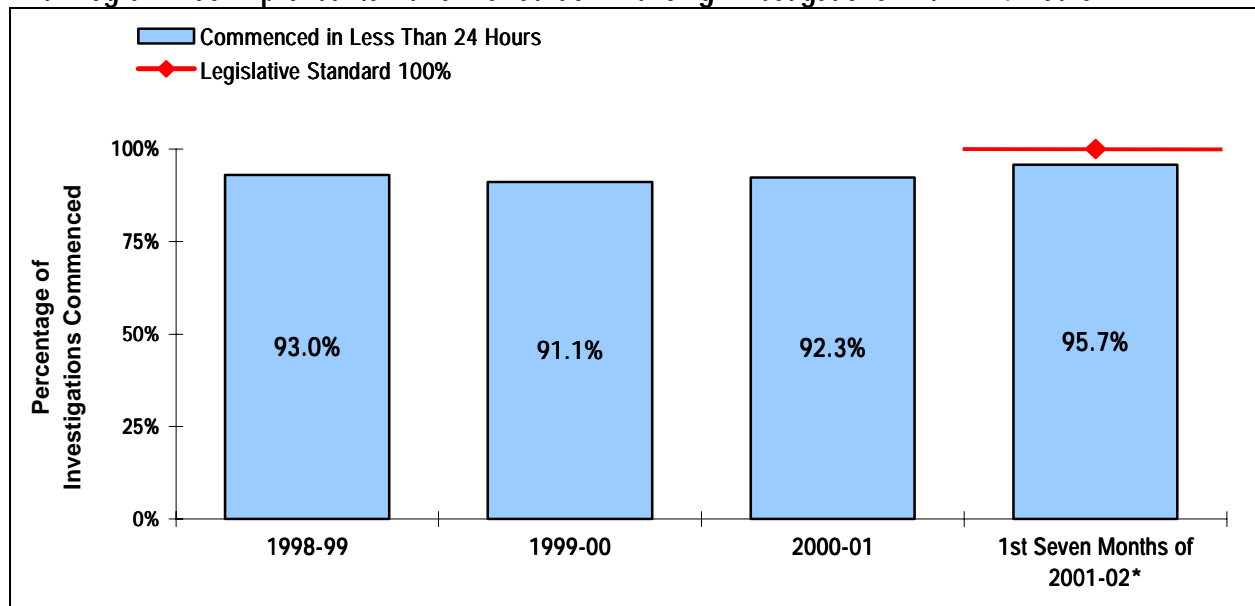
*Performance results for the first seven months of Fiscal Year 2001-02 includes reports opened in May and June 2001. Some of these reports were included in Fiscal Year 2000-01 performance due to a change in the program's methodology.
Source: Department of Children and Families.

Protective investigators saw slightly more than one-half of alleged victims within 24 hours

Alleged victims not seen timely. The program did not meet its prior timeliness goal for seeing alleged victims. In Fiscal Year 2000-01, protective investigators saw 52.4% of alleged victims within 24 hours. This was lower than the 53.6% of alleged victims seen within 24 hours the prior fiscal year, and far below the legislative standard that all victims be seen within this time period. Although no longer a legislative measure, in the first seven months of Fiscal Year 2001-02 protective investigators saw 52.3% of alleged victims within 24 hours (see Exhibit 5).

Program Performance Improving in Many Areas,
But Is Still Not Meeting Some Goals

Exhibit 5
The Program Did Not Meet the Prior Goal to See All Alleged Victims Within 24 Hours

*Program officials report that data for the first half of Fiscal Year 2001-02 is incomplete because some investigators are not entering information on when victims were seen. In addition, performance results for the first seven months of Fiscal Year 2001-02 includes reports opened in May and June 2001. Some of these reports were included in Fiscal Year 2000-01 performance due to a change in the program's methodology.

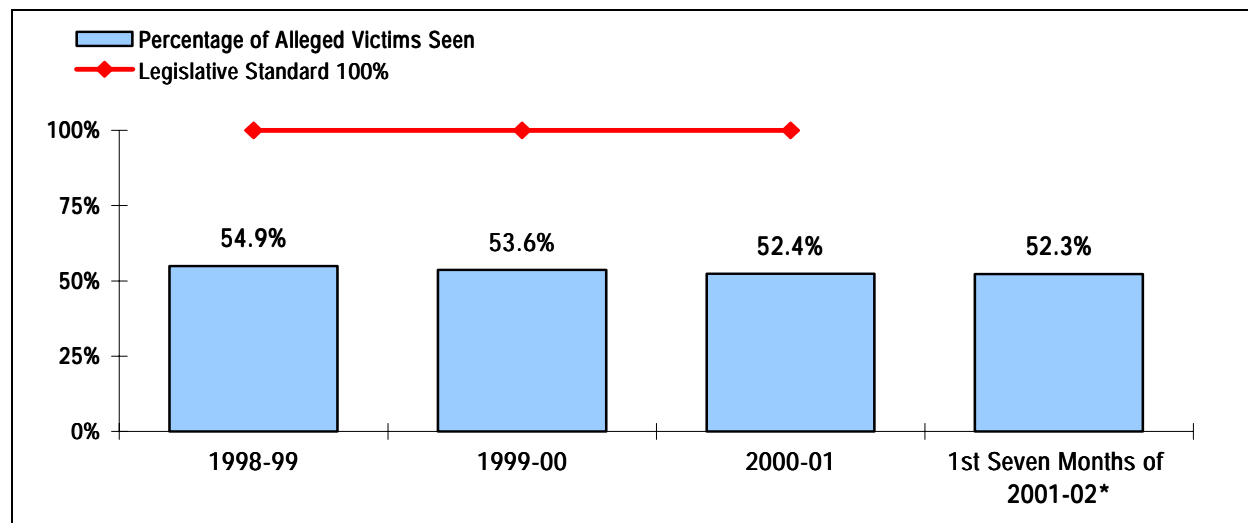Source: Department of Children and Families.

Program not closing investigations in a timely manner

Case closure not timely. Historically, the program has had difficulty closing investigations within statutory timeframes. Before investigators can close a case, they must conduct all statutorily required investigation tasks. These tasks include determining if any child in the family has been abused or neglected, assessing the long-term risk to each child, and identifying the services necessary to safeguard and ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Although the program has improved its performance in closing investigations, it has not met its legislative standard. During the 1999-00 Fiscal Year, 37.6% (38,929 of the 103,455 investigations) were closed within the statutory timeframe of 30 days. [7] In Fiscal Year 2000-01, the percentage of cases closed within the new timeframe of 60 days increased to 52.4% (see Exhibit 6). The program changed its methodology for calculating this measure in Fiscal Year 2001-02, and its current performance data are not comparable with the prior year's data. Program officials indicated that this change allows them to focus better on current monthly performance and increase staff accountability. Based on the new methodology, the program closed 42.4% of cases within 60 days during the first six months of the current fiscal year, far below the legislative standard.

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[7] The 2000 Legislature changed the statutory timeframe for closing investigation cases from 30 to 60 days beginning Fiscal Year 2000-01.

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Exhibit 6
The Program Increased the Percentage of Cases Closed
Within Statutory Timeframes Beginning in Fiscal Year 2000-01

☐ Later than time standard	
■ Within time standard	

Percentage of Cases Closed

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01*
Later than time standard	33,571 (30.0%)	49,538 (43.0%)	64,526 (62.4%)	72,820 (47.6%)
Within time standard	78,432 (70.0%)	43,997 (47.0%)	38,929 (37.6%)	80,251 (52.4%)
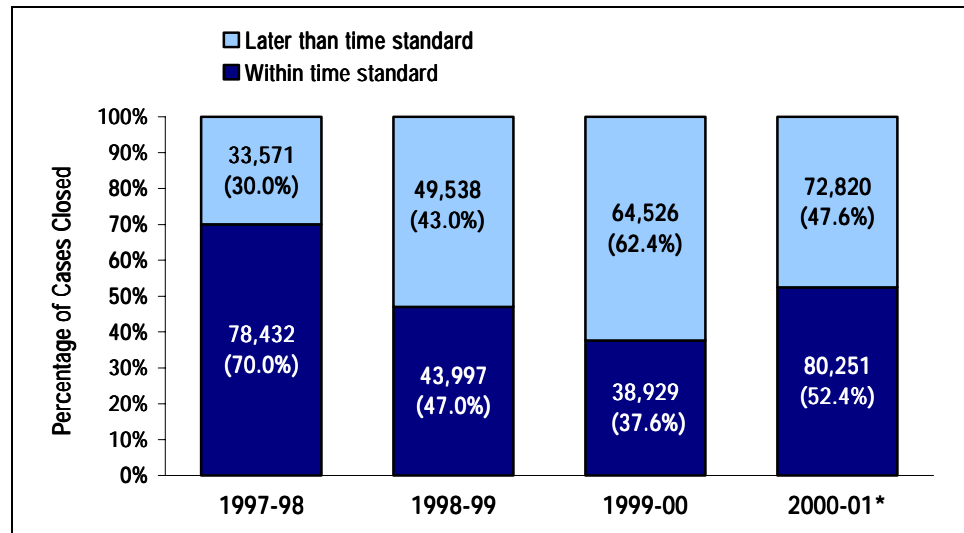
*New 60-day time standard for case closure implemented in Fiscal Year 2000-01.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

The program has used multiple new strategies for improving performance

The program acted to improve its performance on case closure. First, management increased its focus on timely case closure. For example, managers review case closure reports daily. Also, the program office staff conducts monthly conference calls with protective investigation staff to review policies related to case closure. Second, the program updated a policy in May 2001 to allow supervisors to close cases without some investigative activities if there is clearly no evidence that there was abuse or neglect. This allows investigators to close unfounded cases quickly.

The program lacks complete data on reasons why cases are not closed in 60 days

The program does not report complete information on reasons why cases remain open beyond the statutory timeframe. Program procedures do not require protective investigative staff to document the reasons for cases remaining open longer than statutory timeframes. As a result, this information was not reported for 62.6% and 65.8% of cases, respectively, for Fiscal Years 1999-00 and 2000-01. Program staff was unable to provide us with current data on reasons why cases were not closed in a timely manner because they discontinued statewide reporting for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

There are several reasons cited why cases are not closed in 60 days. For those cases for which a reason was given, the most frequent reason was that the investigation had been completed, but was pending closure because the supervisor had not officially closed the case or data had not been entered into the system. Other reasons include waiting for legal action from child welfare legal services and disposition decisions from

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judges, and waiting for local law enforcement agencies and child protection teams to gather evidence. See Appendix B for reasons cases were not closed in 60 days by district for Fiscal Year 2000-01.

The program reduced the number of backlogged cases

When the program does not close investigations in a timely manner, a backlog of cases results. The program defines backlog as investigations that are open longer than 60 days. The backlog is problematic because high caseloads may adversely affect investigators' ability to initiate new cases in 24 hours and may place children in danger of future harm.

As shown in Exhibit 7, the backlog of cases has decreased since the high of 51,338 in January 2001.

Exhibit 7
Backlog Cases Dropped Almost 41.2% Since January 2001
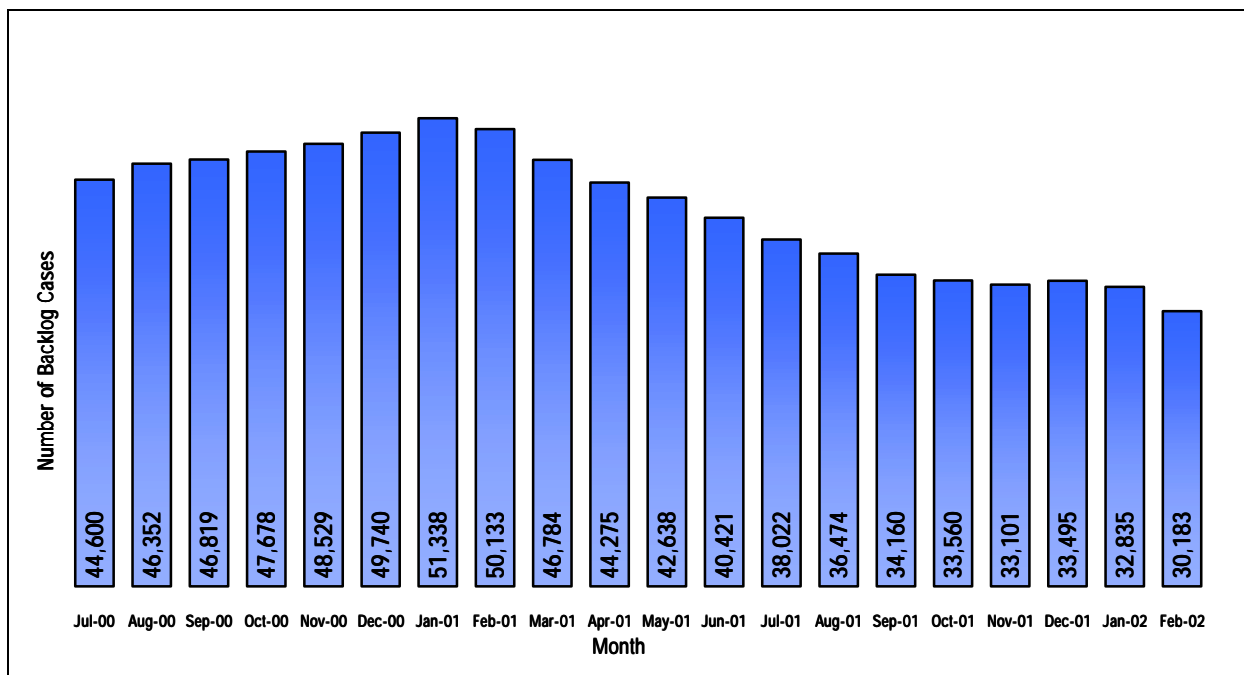
Source: Department of Children and Families.

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The program has implemented strategies to reduce backlog

To reduce the backlog, the program targeted additional resources in the districts with the highest number of backlog cases. The program began contracting with the Florida Task Force for the Protection of Abused and Neglected Children, Inc., in October 2000. The company was initially contracted to assist the program in closing open backlogged cases in District 7. Districts 3, 11,13, 15, and the Pasco County Sheriff's Office also contracted with the company to reduce its backlog of cases. The company's staff received the same training and certification as the program's staff in order to ensure that they are prepared to perform all of the investigation functions needed to initiate and close the backlogged cases

The program also implemented a new strategy that helps determine which cases should receive priority attention. In February 2001, the program implemented a new methodology that places backlog cases into five categories, a ranking process that reflects the level of risk to the child. Investigators determine which priority category a case should be assigned to by applying a point system to various criteria related to child safety. Child safety criteria include the age of the youngest victim, existence of prior abuse reports, victims seen, the type of maltreatment reported, the response priority assigned by the hotline counselor, and the type of reporter.

Despite these efforts, the program estimates that it will not reach its goal to reduce the backlog to 15,000 cases by June 30, 2002. According to program management, there are legitimate reasons why some cases are kept open longer than 60 days. For example, judicial cases can be delayed by the court docket, and/or attorneys may request continuances. Law enforcement may also request that a case remain open. As a result, these cases may be open longer than 60 days and be counted as backlog.

The program found that its methodology for measuring reabuse is flawed, resulting in inaccurate performance data

A primary goal of the program is to prevent abused and neglected children from being further victimized by providing services to children and their families. Some services are provided in the child's home and include protective supervision, intensive crisis counseling, and the Family Builders Program. In cases where a child cannot safely remain in his/her own home, the child is placed in a licensed foster care setting, with a relative, or with another adult approved by the courts.

The Legislature has established two performance measures to assess whether the program helps to prevent abused and neglected children from being further harmed. The first measure is that 97% of children will not be reabused or neglected during service provision. The second measure is that 95% of children will have no findings of abuse or neglect within one year after closure of program services.

However, the program found that its methodology for reporting performance for the two reabuse measures is not accurate. The program designed its existing information system in 1988 prior to the Legislature's requiring the program to measure its performance on the reoccurrence of abuse. Therefore, the information system captures the date the Hotline received an abuse report rather than the date the abuse or neglect actually occurred. These dates can differ because some incidences of abuse are reported after the abuse occurred. For example, a child may confide in a foster parent about abuse that occurred months before being placed in foster care. The foster parent is required to report the incident to the Hotline. The program's methodology uses the date the foster parent called the Hotline, rather than the date the alleged abuse occurred. Consequently, the number of children the program counts as being reabused is inaccurate. The program plans to incorporate an abuse incident date into its new information system, HomeSafenet.

Fewer children were abused during foster care than the program originally reported

Due to concerns about the accuracy of its performance data, program management conducted a special review of client case files. To determine the actual reabuse rate for children in foster care, program staff reviewed case files for each of the 1,413 foster care clients who were identified as having been reabused from April 2000 through March 2001. This review found that 566 of these children were abused before they entered foster care. This means that 847 children were reabused while in foster care, not 1,413 as originally reported by the program. When these cases are removed from the abuse rate calculation, the program's performance improved from the 90.8% reported using the program's original methodology to 94.5%. Although improved, the program does not meet the legislative goal that 97% of children will not be reabused or neglected during service provision.

Moreover, the methodology the program uses to report reabuse statistics also means that data on reabuse one year after case closure is not valid. Program management has not conducted a special review of case files to determine the actual reabuse rate for this population. As a result, we cannot report the program's performance in achieving the legislative goal that 95% of children will have no findings of abuse or neglect within one year after closure of program services.

The program improved its performance achieving permanency for abused and neglected children

A primary program goal is to ensure that child abuse victims live in safe, stable, and permanent home environments. Program services are often designed to reunify children with their families once child safety issues have been resolved in their homes. Out-of-home services include providing care in a licensed foster care setting and providing protective supervision services for children who are placed with relatives or other adults approved by the court. However, when reunification is not appropriate, the program must find adoptive homes or other permanent and stable living arrangements for children. The program provides adoption post-placement services to ensure that all needed supports are in place for a child and their adoptive parents prior to an adoption being finalized.

The Legislature has set three goals to assess the program's success at achieving permanency for children. First, to assess the program's timeliness in achieving permanency, the Legislature set the standard that at least 30% of the children will leave foster care within 12 months. Second, to monitor how well the program reunifies children with their families, the Legislature set the standard that no more than 3% of children will need to return to foster care within one year of being returned home. Not meeting the standard may indicate that the program is reunifying families too soon to the detriment of children's safety or that the services provided to the parent(s) were not effective in removing the factors that endangered children. Third, to monitor the program's ability to find adoptive homes for children, the Legislature set the standard that the program should finalize adoptions for 90% of the children who are legally available for adoption each year.

More children are leaving foster care within 12 months

The program met the legislative goal that 30% of children exit foster care within 12 months. [8] Foster care is intended to be a short-term intervention for abused and neglected children. The program is focusing its efforts on children entering foster care in order to improve its performance on this measure. In Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program met the legislative standard with 30.9% of the children exiting foster care within 12 months. [9] This is an improvement over the performance of 23.2% in the prior fiscal year.

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[8] The legislative standard for Fiscal Year 2001-02 is 40%.

[9] Fiscal Year 2000-01 data includes 467 children whose exit from foster care was also included in the prior year's performance data. In addition, the program's performance on this measure includes children who left foster care after reaching 18 years of age, died, ran away, or were placed in a juvenile detention or adult corrections facility.

The program also improved its performance in minimizing the number of children who are returned to foster care after they are reunited with their families although the data needs to be interpreted with reservation. In Fiscal Year 1999-00, 4.8% (74) children who reunited with their families were subsequently returned to foster care, an increase of 1.6% percentage points over the prior fiscal year. The program reported that it substantially met the Legislature's goal during Fiscal Year 2000-01, with 3.3% (65) children returning to foster care after unsuccessfully being reunited with their families (see Exhibit 8). However, caution should be taken in comparing Fiscal Year 2000-01 performance to previous years because the annual numbers reported by the program include 432 children that were counted in the Fiscal Year 1999-00 performance. In addition, Fiscal Year 2000-01 performance data is incomplete because four districts were transitioning to HomeSafenet.

Exhibit 8
The Program Reported That the Percentage of Children Returned
to Foster Care Within One Year of Being Reunited With Their Families
Decreased in Fiscal Year 2000-01
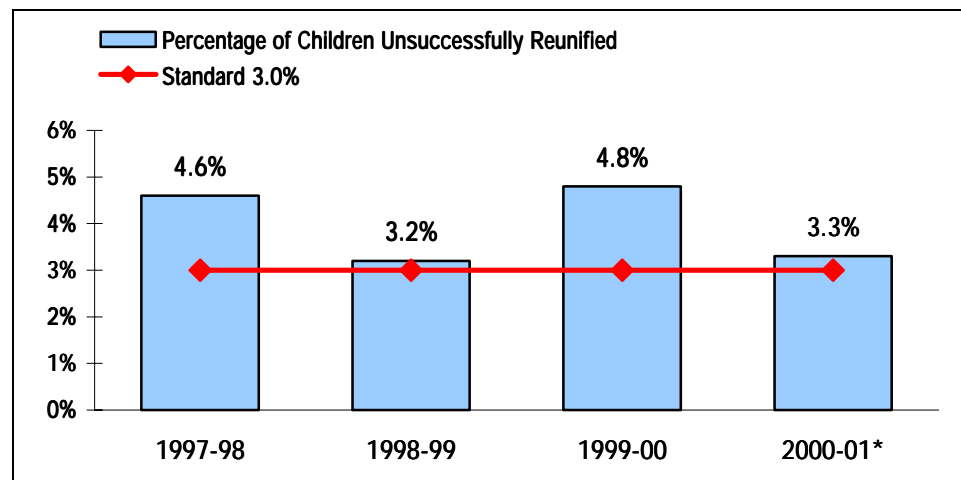
*Data is for March 2000 through March 2001. The program did not have complete Fiscal Year 2000-01 data due to districts transition to HomeSafenet as noted in the text.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

The average length of stay for some children remaining in foster care has increased

While not a legislative performance measure, the length of children's stay in foster care is an important indicator of the program's success in establishing permanent living arrangements for children in a timely manner. The average length of stay for children remaining in foster care has been steadily increasing over the last three years. The average foster care stay for children with a goal of returning home increased from 17.9 months in June 1998 to 24 months in April 2001, lower than the national

average of 32 months. [10, 11] Program officials attribute the increase in the length of stay to the program's improved performance in getting children who recently entered care out sooner. As a result, children who have been in care for longer periods would represent a larger portion of children remaining in care thereby increasing the average length of stay.

We examined the characteristics of the children remaining in foster care with the goal of returning home. Program data for January 2001 showed that most, 5,306, of the children remaining in foster care with a goal of returning home had been in care less than two years (see Exhibit 9). However, there were 2,159 children who had been in care over two years, with 305 of them in care six years or more. Of children in care six years or more, 58.0% were black, 54.1% were male, 61.0% entered care at 5 years of age or younger, and 74.1% are over the age of 11. The federal Administration for Children and Families reports that minority children, children with disabilities, and adolescents are often considered as having special needs and have historically spent longer periods in foster care than other children. [12]

Exhibit 9

In January 2001 the Majority of Children Remaining in Foster Care With a Goal of Returning Home Had Been in Care Less Than Two Years [1]
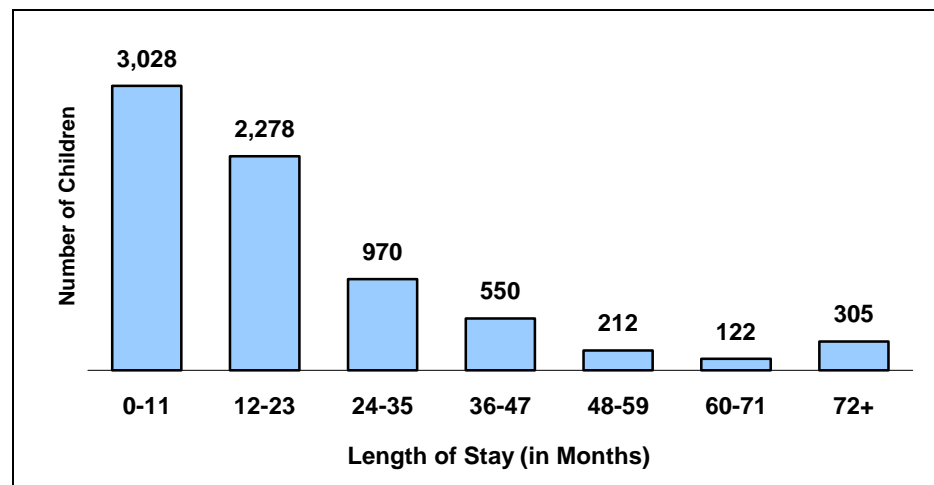
[1] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.
Source: Department of Children and Families.

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[10] Based on the most recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services national estimate as of June 2001.

[11] The program was unable to provide us with complete current data due to gaps discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

[12] *Child Welfare Outcomes*, Administration for Children and Families, 1998 Annual Report.

Because the portion of children remaining in care affects the average length of stay, the program also reports median length of stay. The median is less affected by outlying values—extremely brief or extremely long periods of stay. [13] According to a report by the Florida Mental Health Institute the median length of stay for children exiting foster care was at a high of 19.1 months in Fiscal Year 1996-97, but decreased by 41.4% to an estimated 11.2 months in Fiscal Year 2000-01. [14]

Number of adoptions continued to increase; but average amount of time children wait for adoptive homes has also increased

When children cannot be safely returned to their own families, the program attempts to find them permanent adoptive homes. The program focuses its placement efforts on special needs children who are difficult to place because they are older, belong to a minority group, have siblings, or are physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabled. The program provides legal services to terminate the parental rights of the child's parents so they can place a child in an adoptive placement. Once the legal process and adoption proceedings are complete, the adoption is finalized.

The program has improved its performance in finalizing adoptions, although it has not met the Legislature's goal of finalizing adoptions for 90% of children who are legally available for adoption. As shown in Exhibit 10, the program finalized adoptions for 84% (2,008) of the children legally available for adoption during Fiscal Year 2000-01, which is an improvement over the prior year's performance of 66% (1,504).

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[13] The median represents the middle value of a distribution; half the values lie at or above the median, and half lie at or below it.

[14] *The Information Utilization Project: A Profile of Children in Florida's Child Protection System Fiscal Year 1999-00;* Florida Mental Health Institute.

Exhibit 10
Program Has Increased the Percentage of Eligible Children
Adopted Over the Last Three Years
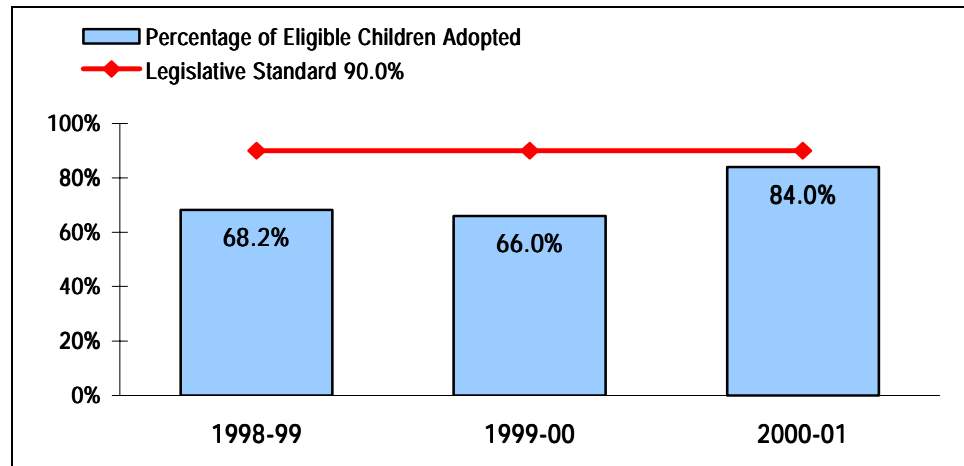
Source: Department of Children and Families.

As shown in Exhibit 11, the program has increased the number of terminations of parental rights, placements of children in adoptive homes, and finalized adoptions. The number of terminations of parental rights increased 44.1% from Fiscal Year 1999-00 to Fiscal Year 2000-01. Consequently, more children were available for adoption and adoptive placements increased by 31.8% and adoption finalizations increased by 33.5% during the same time period. The federal Administration for Children and Families recently gave the program a $119,938 bonus award for increasing the number of finalized adoptions during federal Fiscal Year 2000.

Exhibit 11
Terminations of Parental Rights, Adoption Placements, and Finalizations Have Increased
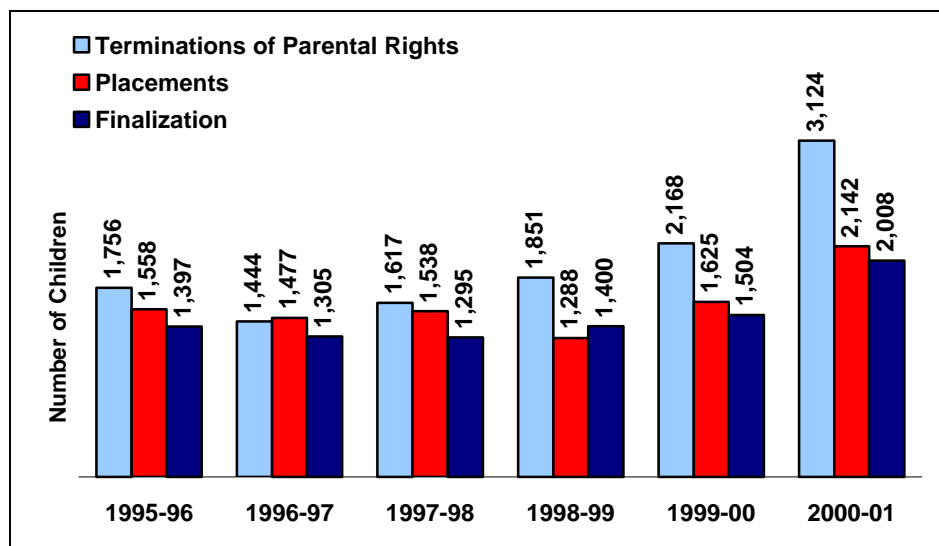
Source: Department of Children and Families.

However, the average length of stay for children remaining in foster care who are waiting for adoptive placement increased from 42.4 months in June 2000 to 47.3 months in April 2001. [15] The national average length of stay for children awaiting adoption was 44 months. [16] In our prior report, we found that the average length of stay for children awaiting adoption had remained fairly stable, between 42 and 43 months from Fiscal Year 1997-98 through 1999-00. The program reports that the majority of the children still awaiting adoptive placement in January 2001 had been in foster care for more than two years (see Exhibit 12).

We examined the characteristics of the children remaining in foster care with the goal of adoption. Program data for January 2001 showed that about half, 2,285, of the children remaining in foster care with a goal of adoption had been in care less than three years (see Exhibit 12). However, there were 2,186 children who had been in care over three years, with 700 of them in care six years or more. Of those in care six years or more, 70.3% were black, 56.7% were male, 80.7% entered care at five years of age or younger, and 59.3% are over the age of 11.

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[15] The data for April 2001 is the most recent and most complete data available from the program prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2000-01.

[16] Based on the most recent national estimate as of June 2001.

Exhibit 12

In January 2001 the Majority of Children Remaining In Foster Care Who Are Awaiting Adoptive Home Placement Had Been in Care 24 Months or Longer[1]
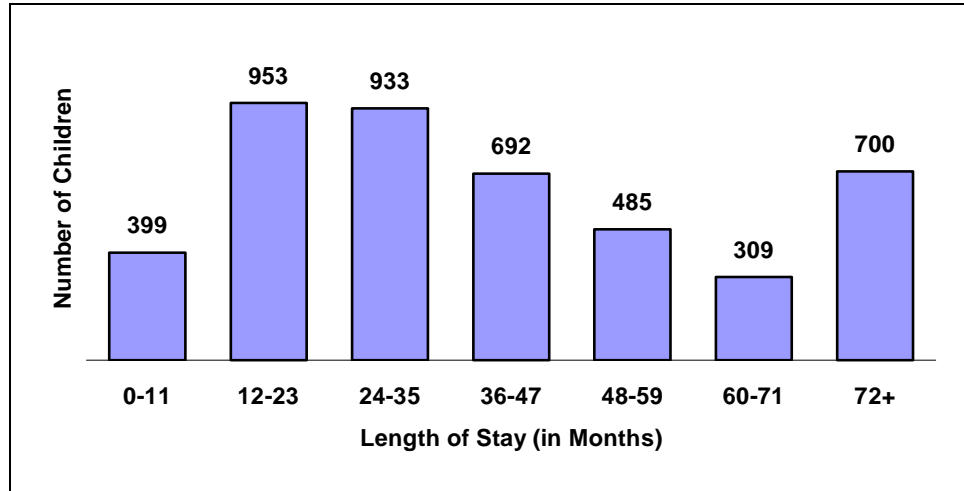
[1] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

Number of Foster Homes Increased, But More Homes Are Needed for Hard-to-Serve Children

The program is acting on several strategies to more effectively recruit and retain foster care homes. It increased outreach efforts by working with corporations, local businesses, and community providers to offer support to foster children and parents. The program has also partnered with local media outlets to target recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive parents.

These strategies have helped the program recruit new foster care homes. The number of licensed family foster homes has increased in recent years. [17] Exhibit 13 shows that the number of family foster care homes increased. Between Fiscal Year 1997-98 and Fiscal Year 2000-01 the number of homes increased 28% and the licensed capacity increased by 25% during the same time period. [18]

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[17] Family foster homes include the program's family safety foster homes and emergency shelter/foster home dual license homes, as well as child placing agency foster homes.

[18] The program defines capacity as the maximum number of children each home is licensed to serve.

Exhibit 13
The Number and Capacity of Family Foster Homes Has Increased
Between Fiscal Year 1997-98 and Fiscal Year 2000-01
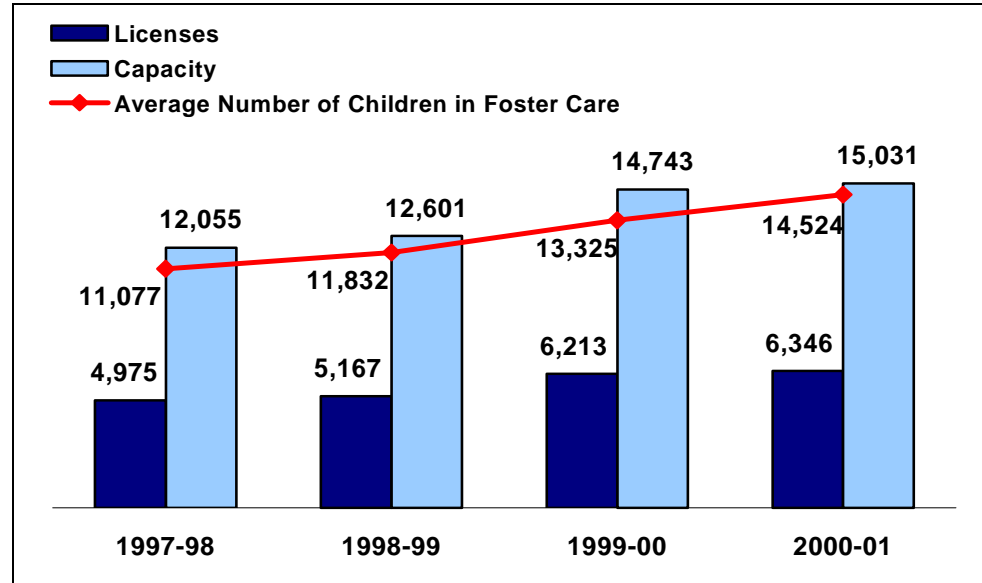
Note: The average number of children in foster care is based on 9 months of data for Fiscal Year 1997-98, 11 months for Fiscal Year 1998-99, 12 months for Fiscal Year 1999-00, and 7 months for Fiscal Year 2000-01.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

The number of foster homes over capacity has decreased

The program has succeeded in reducing the number of homes that are over their licensed capacity, although this problem continues. The program bases the licensed capacity on the physical structure, skills, and characteristics of the foster parents, and the number of persons living in the home. Exhibit 14 shows that the number of homes over licensed capacity decreased 30% from 839 in August 2000 to 590 in August 2001.

Exhibit 14
The Number of Foster Homes That Are Over Their Licensed Capacity
Decreased Between August 1999 and August 2001
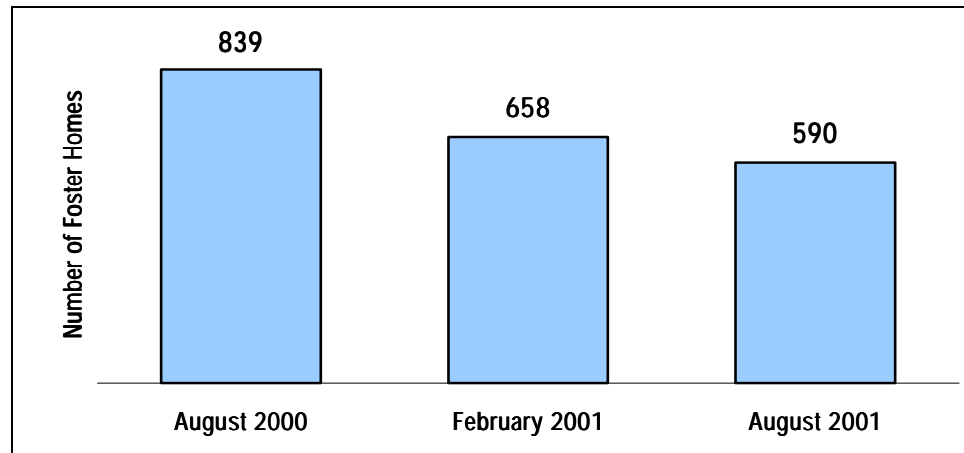
Source: Department of Children and Families.

There are gaps in the program's ability to meet the needs of hard-to-serve foster children

In addition to the problems that can occur when homes are overcrowded, the program needs more homes to care for hard-to-serve children. A 2001 Chiles Center study found that nearly one-third of foster children have severe emotional and behavioral problems and may require therapeutic care. The Chiles Center report estimated that approximately 1,500 more homes are needed to provide appropriate placements for the children. [19] Ideally, the number of children per home should be based on factors such as the age of the children served and the severity of their problems.

Gaps and overcrowding are related in part to some foster parents inability or unwillingness to care for the number of children that they are licensed to serve. Program data from August 2001 shows that 19% (810) of licensed foster homes were serving no children and 52% (2,231) served fewer children than they were licensed to serve. For example, if a home is licensed to serve five children, but the foster parents only want to serve a maximum of two children, the "real capacity" of that home is lower than the licensed capacity. As a result, the program's data on family foster home capacity may overstate the number of placements available.

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[19] *Medical, Developmental and Behavioral Problems of Foster Children and the Capacity of Foster Care Providers in Florida – Final Report,* The Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center For Healthy Mothers and Babies - University of South Florida and the Department of Health Policy and Epidemiology Institute for Health Policy Research – University of Florida, 2001.

Another factor that contributes to shortages and overcrowding is that the program has difficulty keeping foster parents. The 2001 Chiles Center report also found that approximately 40% of foster parents have been foster parents for two years or less. In addition, during Fiscal Year 1999-00, 1,124 family foster homes did not renew their licenses. This number increased during Fiscal Year 2000-01 when 1,607 family foster homes did not renew their licenses. [20] Two reasons noted in survey results from a 2000 Chiles Center report show that foster parents were discouraged by problems with the bureaucracy and absence of support by program counselors. [21] However, program officials were encouraged that the Chiles Center report also found that foster parents have an average age of 47 years, have higher than average incomes, and show strong commitment to children in their care.

The program has recently implemented an initiative to help foster parents cope with hard-to-manage foster children. It has hired behavior analysts to teach foster parents behavior management training to help them cope better with hard-to-manage foster children. These analysts hold training classes, provide in-home follow-up training, develop behavioral assessments, and develop intervention plans. According to program documents, behavior analysts worked with over 500 clients and made over 450 site visits to foster, adoptive, and biological homes in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2001-02. However, given that many children entering foster care have medical and/or psychological problems that make them difficult to serve, the program will likely continue to have difficulties in retaining family foster homes.

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[20] Data for 2000-01 is from the program's draft *Licensing Capacity Report.*

[21] *Florida Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Perspectives of Stakeholders on the Critical Factors Affecting Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents*, Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies, July 2000.

Challenges Remain in Retaining Staff

As many other states, Florida has had problems retaining qualified child protection staff. A report issued by the Child Welfare League of America in 2001 found that state and public child welfare agencies faced other challenges in attracting, training, and retaining qualified child protection staff. [22] Florida's program assigns family services counselors to work as protective investigators, protective supervision workers, foster care workers, and adoptions counselors. The counselors work directly with children and their families to ensure child safety and services provision.

Family services counselor turnover remains higher than state and national averages. As shown in Exhibit 15, the rate of family services counselor turnover for Fiscal Year 2000-01 was 29.7%. This is an improvement over the previous fiscal year's turnover rate of 34.5%. [23] However, the rate is still significantly higher than the 7% average turnover rate among all Florida state employees for calendar year 2000, and exceeds the national average turnover rate among child protective workers of 20%. (See Appendix B for family services counselor turnover by district.)

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[22] *The Child Welfare Workforce Challenge: Preliminary Study,* Child Welfare League of America, May 2001.

[23] Turnover data presented in this report is different than the data presented in our March 2001 justification review because the Department of Management Services changed its methodology for calculating turnover rates.

Exhibit 15
Family Services Counselor Turnover Rate Is Significantly Higher
Than the Statewide Average Turnover Rate for State Employees in Florida [24]
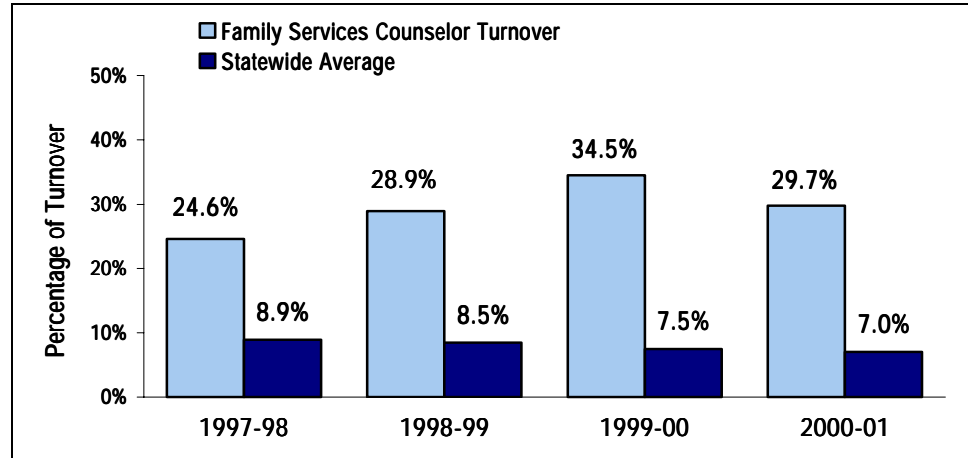
Source: Department of Children and Families and Department of Management Services.

The high turnover rate increases the number and percentage of relatively inexperienced family services counselors. In November 2001, 33.7% of family services counselors had worked for the department for less than one year. Statewide, the family services counselor position with the least amount of experience was protective investigator with 46.2% having less than one year of experience with the department (see Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16
Almost Half of Protective Investigators Had Less Than One Year of Experience
With the Department in November 2001
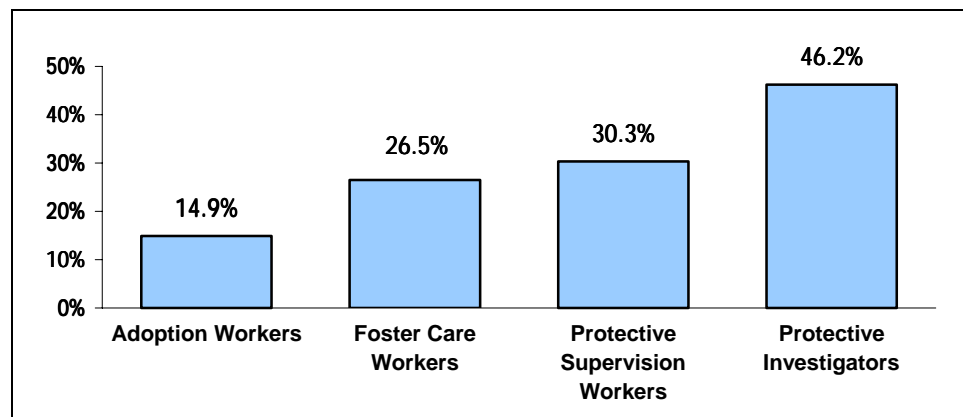
Source: Department of Children and Families.

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[24] Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

The program was unable to provide us with turnover information specifically for protective investigators. As part of the mandate for OPPAGA to review the status of the program, Ch. 2001-68, *Laws of Florida*, requires us to report the turnover rate of the child protective investigator staff. However, neither the state's personnel information system nor the program captures turnover data at this level of detail. We were able to obtain turnover information for Fiscal Year 1999-00 and 2000-01 from two of the five sheriffs' offices that conduct protective investigations. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office reported a 40% turnover rate for the two years and Broward County reported a 22% and 23% rate, respectively.

High turnover and lack of experience of family services counselors continue to impede the program's ability to work effectively with families. For example, when a counselor leaves, the remaining counselors' and supervisors' workload is increased. Turnover also adversely affects case continuity because when a counselor leaves, a new counselor is assigned to the case. A change in staff can mean less stability for the child, as a new counselor has to become familiar with the child's history and develop a relationship with the child and the family. Further, staff inexperience can be problematic because newer staff is not as productive initially because they are assigned fewer cases.

Numerous factors have been cited as contributing to the difficulty in retaining staff. These factors include hard-to-serve client populations, staff shortages, frequent revisions to program laws, and low to modest compensation given the stress associated with the work. The Child Welfare League of America found that among state agencies surveyed, the most prevalent barriers to retaining child protective staff were high caseloads and challenging work.

In our 2001 report, we recommended that the program target its resources to eliminate barriers that are within its control such as assessing conditions that may have a major impact on job satisfaction, such as improved technology. We also recommended that the program should identify the best practices for recruitment and retention among the districts and private providers and use them as models for the districts.

Thus far, the program has implemented some of these initiatives. The program is providing wireless laptops to protective investigators in order to facilitate decision making in the field. Moreover, the department is working with state universities to continue to recruit social work students. The department has initiated an incentive program to increase the number of counselors with a social work degree by providing students financial incentives in return for service with the department upon graduation.

After Planning Delays, HomeSafenet Is Being Implemented, But Has Resulted in Gaps in 2000-01 Data

After several years of planning and development, the department began implementing its newest information system, HomeSafenet, in November 2000. In 1993, the federal government began providing funding for states to develop statewide automated child welfare information systems. The federal government wanted to ensure that states were capturing uniform data that would be electronically available for federal monitoring of state performance. In addition, the federal government also wanted states to have a comprehensive case management system that would fully support child welfare staff. To assist states in fulfilling this mandate, the federal government financed 75% of each state's expenditures related to the development of a system through 1998 then decreased financing to 50% after 1998.

HomeSafenet was designed to meet these requirements, improve the program's accountability and delivery of child protection services, and replace the department's three existing information systems. After several delays, the system is in the first stages of implementation. However, the transition to HomeSafenet has created a number of gaps in the program's performance data for the last fiscal year. Program officials report that complete performance data for Fiscal Year 2001-02 will be available by August 2002. The department plans to complete implementation of the system by 2004.

HomeSafenet was designed to automate many child welfare functions through standardized data collection and case management tools. The system is being designed to provide investigators, supervisors and management with on-line real time information on the progress and characteristics of each case. The system is also intended to improve case management, case planning, and financial processing. To accomplish this, the system will provide support to department staff and community-based providers by automating the numerous policies and procedures that help guide the delivery of services and inform management reporting requirements.

The program has identified several benefits that will improve the program's efficiency and accountability once the system is fully implemented. The system will

- integrate the functions of the program's three existing information systems, the client information system (CIS), the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System (FAHIS), and the Interim Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS);

- replace existing archaic paper files with electronic case files and tracking systems; this improvement will enable staff to be more efficient, help to prevent mistakes resulting from gaps in information, and more readily identify patterns of abuse over time;

- provide standardized case management guidance to workers through the use of decision support tools; these tools will assist child protection investigators in identifying risk factors that may affect a child's safety and identify interventions;

- provide management with on-line management reports that will describe the performance of specific districts and units; and

- enhance the collection and analysis of client outcome and service data for policymaking.

The HomeSafenet system is being implemented in phases

The federal government provided for the design, development and installation of HomeSafenet on a phased basis. The federal phases include planning, implementation, partially operational, and operational. The department has completed the planning and implementation phases and is currently classified in the partially operational phase. It plans to complete implementation of HomeSafenet by 2004 in five releases, the first of which began in November 2000.

The department spent $40.8 million during the planning phase of HomeSafenet between 1994 and 1999. In November 1999, the department projected the total additional cost through Fiscal Year 2004-05 would be $169.7 million, bringing the total cost to $210.5 million. However, in July 2001, the department increased this projection to $230.2 million. (See Exhibit 17.)

Exhibit 17
Department Estimates Completed Cost of HomeSafenet at $230.2 Million

HomeSafenet Cost Components ($ Millions)

Requirements Analysis $3.2	**Monitor $1.2**		
	Change Control Budget $2.2	**Project Management $11.5**	**Risk Management Budget $2.5**
	Project Analysis & Training $6.0		
	DEVELOPMENT - $72.1		
	Development Release 1	**Quality Delivery System (QDS)** ... **Financial & Work Flow**	**Development Support**
	Abuse Hotline	**Management & Reporting** ... **Data Conversion Interfaces**	**Integration & Maintenance**
Hardware & Comm. S/W $22.8	**System Hardware – Commercial Software – Support Staff $44.7**		
State Staff Salaries/Exp $14.9	**State Staff Salaries & Expense $49.1**		
1994 - 1999: $40.9	**1999 – 2005: $189.3**		

Total 1999 – 2005: $230.2

Source: Department of Children and Families and OPPAGA.

The department began initial development of HomeSafenet in the early 1990s. The federal government approved the development of the new information system in Fiscal Year 1993-94. Beginning the next year, the department hired information and technology staff, purchased and installed network servers and more than 5,000 computers, and trained front-line workers on general computer use.

The program experienced several delays during the planning phase of the project. The department contracted with a private firm in Fiscal Year 1994-95 to plan and design the system. However, the vendor experienced delays and did not complete the planning contract until 1996-97, one year later than planned. In Fiscal Year 1996-97, department staff began developing a request for proposal (RFP) for the implementation phase of the new system. However, the RFP was delayed until Fiscal Year 1998-99 because of comments made by the federal government and the Governor's Office. Although two vendors responded to the RFP, the department was not successful in reaching an agreement with either vendor. The department then pursued procuring services for the implementation phase of the system through the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) process, but the federal government did not approve this approach.

As a result, the department decided to implement the system in-house in Fiscal Year 1999-00.

In November 2000, the department began implementing Release 1, the first component of HomeSafenet, in one district. All districts were phased into the system by October 2001, and Release 1 is now complete. Release 1 contains basic case management, demographic information on clients, and child placement information. It also contains information on federally required child outcomes measures.

HomeSafenet implementation began in 2000, but some client outcome data is not available

However, the process of transitioning to HomeSafenet resulted in gaps in data needed to measure some key client outcomes. The department began phasing out use of CIS during Fiscal Year 2000-01 when it started transitioning to HomeSafenet. However, the department does not anticipate having complete data in HomeSafenet for certain performance measures until Release 2 is implemented in 2002. As a result, the department cannot provide a full year of statewide information on the status of children in care during Fiscal Year 2000-01. Program officials report that complete performance data for Fiscal Year 2001-02 will be available by August 2002. For example, the department does not have statewide data for this two-year period on the number of children who are reabused and the number of children who are returned to foster care.

The department plans to complete implementation of the system over the next four fiscal years. The second release is scheduled to begin in early 2002. This component of HomeSafenet will provide enhanced case management capabilities by incorporating the program's Child Safety Assessment. The Child Safety Assessment is the program's tool to document child safety factors as well as decisions related to services, removals and placements, investigative findings, and other investigation activities. The other releases, scheduled to begin in August 2003, will include contract management, financial management, eligibility determinations, the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System (FAHIS), and the adoption exchange. When these releases are complete all performance information will be available from HomeSafenet.

Appendix A
Status of OPPAGA Recommendations

Chapter 2001-68, *Laws of Florida,* provides that OPPAGA assess the progress made in implementing its recommendations from the March 2001 justification review of the Child Protection Program. Our recommendations and program's actions are summarized in Table A-1.

Table A-1
Summary of the Program's Implementation of Recommendations from
OPPAGA's 2001 Child Protection Program Justification Review

OPPAGA Recommendations	Program Action		
Hotline Operations	*Implemented*	*Partial Action*	*Did Not Implement*
We recommended that the program:			
▪ Continue to monitor the hotline's call response rates to determine if the increase in staff has had a positive influence on performance.	*(Implemented)* The program has implemented this recommendation and has continued to monitor its call response rate.		
Protective Investigations			
We recommended that the program:			
▪ Begin tracking the time frame that it takes protective investigators to see alleged victims designated as critical, immediate-need cases and use this information to ensure that protective investigators prioritize their time to ensure alleged victims deemed to be at higher risk are seen first.	*(Did not implement)* The program can track which victims have not been seen, but has not implemented our recommendation to track how much time it takes to see alleged victims designated as critical, immediate cases.		
▪ Ensure that child protective investigators comply with the procedure to record complete and accurate information on reasons why investigations are not closed within 60 days.	*(Did not implement)* The program has not implemented this recommendation and has discontinued reporting the reasons for delays in closing cases at the state level. Program management cited two reasons for discontinuing reporting this information. First, it believes that requiring investigators to report reasons gave investigators an excuse for not closing cases on time. The second reason was that the codes were not informative or descriptive.		
▪ Remain committed to developing the capacity to automatically track key phases in protective investigations, so program management will be more easily able to determine whether key case activities have been completed and what services are still needed.	*(Implemented)* The program is in the process of implementing this recommendation. Release 2 of HomeSafenet will document the flow of child abuse investigation activities conducted by child protective investigators. The system will produce management reports that describe the performance of a district or unit related to the use of the Child Safety Assessment.		
▪ Consider adopting additional strategies for reducing backlogs	*(Implemented)* The program has implemented this recommendation and has continued to develop new strategies for reducing its backlog of cases. The program focuses on closing highest risk cases first. In addition, Release 2 of HomeSafenet will provide tools to help manage backlog.		

OPPAGA Recommendations	Program Action
In-Home Supervision	
We recommended that the program:	
▪ Continue to support the effort of implementing a new child assessment instrument that will be part of HomeSafenet and see that it is fully implemented.	*(Implemented)* The program is in the process of implementing this recommendation. According to program management, Release 2 of HomeSafenet will document the flow of child abuse investigation activities conducted by child protective investigators.
▪ Use information from the child assessment instrument about specific family characteristics that are present in cases where reabuse occurs and determine whether strategies for preventing reabuse are effective or need to be redesigned.	*(Implemented)* The program is in the process of implementing this recommendation. According to program management, Release 2 of HomeSafenet will assist staff with safety decisions. It will provide enhanced case management features providing the tools and family information necessary for counselors to make key decisions related to child safety. However, it remains to be seen whether this information will be available on an aggregate basis per our recommendation.
Out of Home Supervision and Adoptions	
We recommended that the program:	
▪ Continue its efforts to increase the supply of foster and adoptive homes.	*(Implemented)* The program has implemented several initiatives to increase the supply of foster and adoptive homes. These include ▪ new contracted foster care and adoption staff was hired and trained in Fiscal Year 2000-01; ▪ foster parent liaisons have been identified in each district to support foster parents; ▪ a staff person has recently been hired in central office to work with the state foster adoptive parent association and to provide technical assistance to district foster parent liaisons; ▪ a staff person in central office has been moved from other functions to focus on recruitment and retention issues. A statewide plan for recruitment and retention is under development; and ▪ the Behavior Analysis Program is helping foster parents cope with hard to manage foster children.
▪ Monitor and evaluate the recruitment activities conducted by each district and provide technical assistance needed by the districts.	*(Did not implement)* The program has not established a statewide approach for monitoring and evaluating district recruitment activities. Program management indicated that this will be included in the statewide recruitment and retention plan, which is under development.
Employee Retention	
We recommended that the program:	*(Implemented)*
▪ Target its resources to eliminate barriers that are within its control such as implementing the lifestyle work life enhancement program that is designed to assess office conditions and office supplies that may have a major influence on job satisfaction.	The program has implemented some of these initiatives. The program is providing wireless laptops to protective investigators in order to facilitate decision making in the field. Moreover, the department is working with state universities to continue to recruit social work students. The department has initiated an incentive program to increase the number of counselors with a social work degree by providing students financial incentives in return for service with the department upon graduation.

OPPAGA Recommendations	Program Action
▪ Identify the best recruitment and retention practices of the service districts and private providers and use them as models for all districts.	*(Did not implement)* The program has not implemented this recommendation. However, several districts have implemented local initiatives designed to improve staff recruitment and retention. For example, District 11 advertises open positions on the internet and District 13 initiated a staff appreciation day.
Community-Based Care	
We recommended that the Legislature: ▪ Consider amending s. 409.1671, *Florida Statutes,* to allow lead agencies more flexibility to build capacity and infrastructure over time. The Legislature should consider making an additional revision to Ch. 409, *Florida Statutes,* and expand the definition of a lead agency to include the department's district offices.	*(Implemented)* Effective July 2001, s. 1(c)1 of 409.1671 the Legislature amended the statute: If attempts to competitively procure services through an eligible lead community-based provider as defined in paragraph (b) do not produce a capable and willing agency, the department shall develop a plan in collaboration with the local community alliance. The plan must detail how the community will continue to implement privatization through competitively procuring either the specific components of foster care and related services or comprehensive services for defined eligible populations of children and families from qualified licensed agencies as part of its efforts to develop the local capacity for a community-based system of coordinated care. The plan must ensure local control over the management and administration of the service provision in accordance with the intent of this section and may include recognized best business practices, including some form of public or private partnerships. In the absence of a community alliance, the plan must be submitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for their comments.
We recommended that the program: ▪ Implement a system for monitoring the quality of provider services.	*(Implemented)* The program is taking steps to implement our recommendations. It reported they implemented three activities to improve monitoring. First, it has contracted for annual evaluations of community-based care (CBC) programs. Second, the program has convened an Oversight and Accountability Workgroup to improve the coordination and effectiveness of all of the current Lead Agency monitoring activities. The Office of Contracted Client Services is soliciting feedback from the workgroup on its new operating procedures for CBC contract monitoring. Third, the program implemented System of Care Reviews (SOCR). This is an in-depth case review method that uses a performance appraisal process to find out how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well local services are working for those children and families. Starting in January 2002, further training and implementation of SOCR is planned for Lead Agencies.

Source: Department of Children and Families.

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District-Level Information Related to the Child Protection Program in Florida

Chapter 2001-68, *Laws of Florida*, requires OPPAGA to provide district-level information on many of the performance-related issues that we covered in this report. The following pages present data for Fiscal Years 1999-00, 2000-01 and, when available, the first half of Fiscal Year 2001-02. The information includes

- the number of child abuse and neglect reports received;
- the number of children that protective investigators identified as victims of abuse or neglect;
- the number and percentage of investigations not closed within the statutory timeframes of 30 days in Fiscal Year 1999-00 and 60 days beginning in Fiscal Year 2000-01;
- reasons investigations were not closed within the 60-day timeframe in Fiscal Year 2000-01;
- the number of children in foster care and relative care;
- the number of adoptions finalized;
- turnover rates for DCF family services counselors; and
- caseload ratios for DCF family services counselors working in protective investigations, in-home supervision and out-of-home supervision.

Statewide
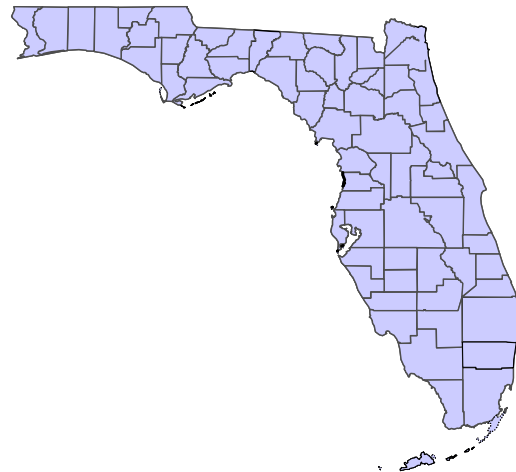
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	164,464	176,635	90,373
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect [1]	76,494	111,593	Not available [2]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	53.6%	52.4%	52.1%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframe	64,526 62.4%	72,820 47.6%	44,765 57.6%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [3]

Reason left blank	68,662	65.8%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	2,301	2.2%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	3,028	2.9%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	6,304	6.0%
Witness not available	2,963	2.8%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	268	0.3%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	20,753	19.9%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [4]	2000-01 [5]	July-December 2001 [6]
Number of children in foster care	14,901	14,727	13,884
Number of children in relative care	16,428	15,641	12,016

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	23.2%	30.9%	Not available [2]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	4.8%	3.3%	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	20	22[7]	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	42	45[7]	Not available [2]
Number of finalized adoptions	1,504	2,008	632 [8]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	34.5%	29.7%	27.9% [9]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.1	12.0	11.2 [10]
▪ In-home supervision	21.5	17.2	Not available [2]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	21.7	20.0	Not available [2]

[1] In order for a child to be identified as a victim, there must be at least one finding of verified or some indication of abuse, neglect, or threatened harm.

[2] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[3] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[5] Due to program's transition to HomeSafenet, the most complete statewide data for Fiscal Year 2000-01 was March 2001 and did not include District 3. District-level detail figures will not equal state total because the districts transitioned to HomeSafenet over several months and district details reflect different months.

[6] Based on active client count in December 2001. The HomeSafenet system that was used for this client count did not have placement location information for 53 children in foster care and 6 children in relative care. This does not include 322 children placed in adoptive homes or the 6,826 children that are in out-of-home care and HomeSafenet does not identify whether these children are in foster care, relative care, or in an adoptive home.

[7] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[8] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[9] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[10] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

Suncoast Region[1]

Counties:
    DeSoto, Hillsborough, Manatee,
    Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota
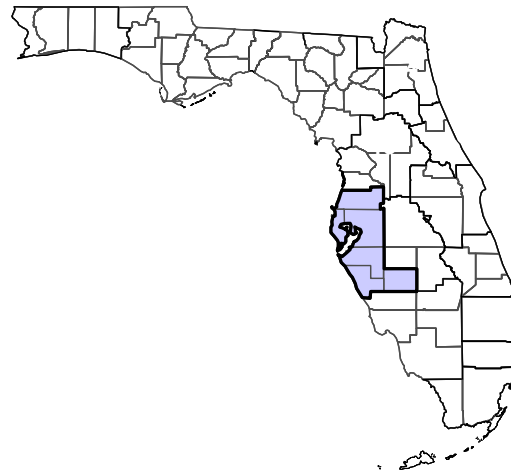
Child Protective Investigations

	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received [2]	
▪ DeSoto County	239
▪ Hillsborough County	5,790
▪ Manatee County	1,624
▪ Sarasota County	1,268
▪ Pasco County	2,284
▪ Pinellas County	4,977
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours by:	
▪ DCF protective investigators in DeSoto, Hillsborough, and Sarasota counties	60.3%
▪ Manatee County Sheriff's Office	51.9%
▪ Pasco County Sheriff's Office	58.1%
▪ Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	55.2%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframe by	
▪ DCF investigators in DeSoto, Hillsborough, and Sarasota counties	2,549 38.7%
▪ Manatee County Sheriff's Office [2]	679 49.6%
▪ Pasco County Sheriff's Office [2]	1,220 77.6%
▪ Pinellas County Sheriff's Office [2]	2,265 54.7%

Foster Care

	July-December 2001 [3]
Number of children in foster care	2,851
Number of children in relative care	2,095

Permanency

	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	Not available [4]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	Not available [4]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	Not available [4]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	Not available [4]
Number of finalized adoptions	95 [5]

Staffing

	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	31.5% [6]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)	
▪ Protective investigations	10.8 [7]
▪ In-home supervision	Not available [4]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	Not available [4]

[1] The Suncoast Region was formed in Fiscal Year 2000-01 and consists of six counties that formerly made up Districts 5 and 6, and part of District 8. The program began aggregating performance data for the counties within the region in Fiscal Year 2001-02. Information for prior fiscal years can be found in this appendix separately for each district.

[2] The number of reports received for Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, and Pasco counties and the number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes for Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas counties are also included in the details provided for Districts 5 and 6.

[3] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[4] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[5] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001

[6] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[7] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 1

Counties:
    Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton
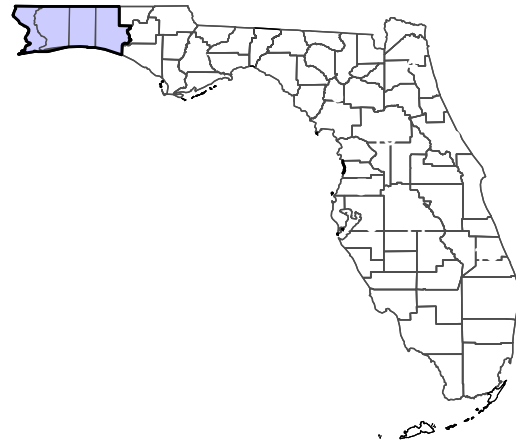
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	8,435	8,889	4,604
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	4,810	4,776	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	64.5%	65.4%	61.6%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	2,911 42.7%	1,119 15.5%	2,325 57.4%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	431	14.9%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	60	2.1%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	306	10.6%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	256	8.8%
Witness not available	193	6.7%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	3	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	1,647	56.9%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	448	464	480
Number of children in relative care	676	614	659

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	32.7%	33.8%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	1.6%	6.4%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	12	13[4]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	34	34[4]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	44	61	26[6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	14.9%	15.6%	17.4%[7]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.1	11.8	11.1[8]
▪ In-home supervision	20.4	13.4	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	22.3	18.4	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[7] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[8] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 2

Counties:
   Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf,
   Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty,
   Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, and Washington
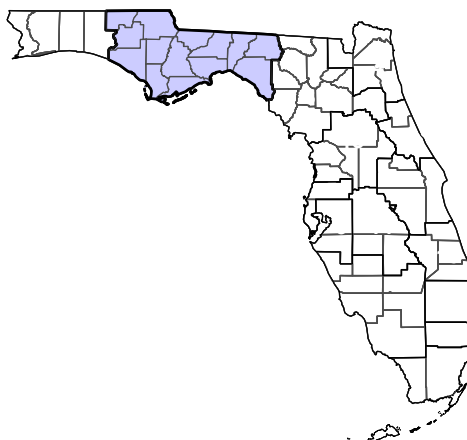
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	7,764	8,579	4,527
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	4,642	4,692	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	66.3%	66.0%	65.0%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	2,059 31.5%	121 1.7%	321 8.2%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	1,778	71.2%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	31	1.2%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	236	9.4%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	175	7.0%
Witness not available	97	3.9%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	1	0.0%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	180	7.2%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	460	520	417
Number of children in relative care	457	407	330

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	41.0%	50.6%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	0.0%	0.0%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	16	16 [4]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	32	36 [4]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	91	92	36 [6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	19.2%	22.5%	25.0% [7]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.4	12.4	11.8 [8]
▪ In-home supervision	21.0	15.7	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	19.0	15.3	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 20 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[7] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[8] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 3

Counties:
    Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist,
    Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Putnam,
    Suwannee, and Union
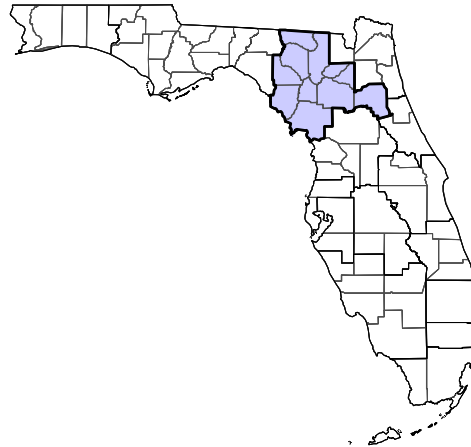
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	6,269	7,095	3,657
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	2,850	3,790	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	56.7%	53.8%	49.9%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	2,853 70.4%	2,344 42.8%	1,885 64.7%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	2,079	57.9%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	69	0.9%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	7	0.2%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	157	4.4%
Witness not available	6	0.2%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	4	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	1,266	35.3%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	712	711	602
Number of children in relative care	644	611	583

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	38.5%	46.1%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	8.6%	6.9%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	13	13 [4]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	43	42 [4]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	84	133	61 [6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	24.7%	22.1%	14.4% [7]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.0	12.6	11.3 [8]
▪ In-home supervision	20.9	20.4	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	20.2	19.4	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001

[7] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[8] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 4

Counties:
    Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau,
    and St. Johns
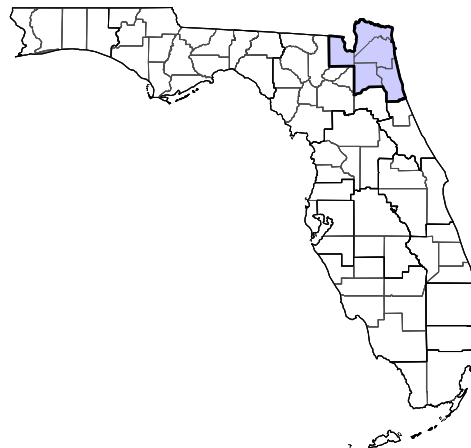
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Child abuse/neglect reports received	13,488	14,738	7,790
Identified victims of child abuse/neglect	7,078	9,103	Not available[1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	49.8%	50.5%	45.0%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	7,634 73.1%	7,068 56.9%	4,469 67.7%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	8,843	89.6%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	0	0.1%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	133	1.3%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	786	8.0%
Witness not available	4	0.0%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	1	0.0%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	97	1.0%

Foster Care

	1999-00[3]	2000-01[4]	July-December 2001[5]
Number of children in foster care			
▪ DCF	892	1,005	1,293
▪ Privatization demonstration	374	406	Not applicable
Number of children in relative care			
▪ DCF	1,387	1,440	1,163
▪ Privatization demonstration	8	19	Not applicable

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ DCF	29.7%	27.4%	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization demonstration	9.2%	15.8%	Not applicable
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ DCF	0.8%	1.9%	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization demonstration	16.7%	25.0%	Not applicable
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)			
▪ DCF	19	23[4]	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization demonstration	32	31[4]	Not applicable
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)			
▪ DCF	47	49[4]	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization demonstration	77	86[4]	Not applicable
Number of finalized adoptions	50	100	29[6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	12.8%	17.0%	26.6% [7]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.2	12.1	11.7[8]
▪ In-home supervision	20.2	28.3	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	22.9	23.4	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[3] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[7] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[8] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 5

Counties:
   Pasco and Pinellas[1]
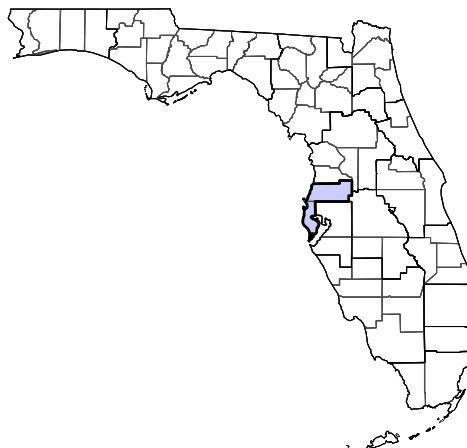
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	13,659	13,974	7,261
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	5,264	7,640	Not available [2]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours by:			
▪ DCF protective investigators	53.3%	43.6%	Not applicable
▪ Pasco County Sheriff's Office	55.9%	57.6%	58.1%
▪ Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	55.7%	54.0%	55.2%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes by:			
▪ DCF protective investigators	4,154 81.1%	188 92.2%	Not applicable
▪ Pasco County Sheriff's Office	114 61.6%	982 63.2%	1,220 77.6%
▪ Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	1,641 72.3%	5,847 63.0%	2,265 54.7%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [3]

	DCF Investigators	Pasco Sheriff's Office	Pinellas Sheriff's Office
Reason left blank	122 62.9%	979 76.8%	4,727 62.4%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	1 0.5%	80 6.3%	51 0.7%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	0 0.0%	26 2.0%	20 0.3%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	47 24.2%	41 3.2%	510 6.7%
Witness not available	8 4.1%	10 0.8%	33 0.4%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	69 0.9%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	16 8.2%	139 10.9%	2,169 28.6%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [4]	2000-01 [5]	July-December 2001 [6]
Number of children in foster care			
▪ DCF	844	51	
▪ Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	894	See Suncoast Region
Number of children in relative care			
▪ DCF	932	1,052	
▪ Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	Not applicable	See Suncoast Region

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ DCF	26.3%	63.7%	Not available [2]
▪Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	10.4%	Not available [2]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ DCF	2.4%	4.0%	Not available [2]
▪ Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	9.0%	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)			
▪ DCF	23	22[7]	Not available [2]
▪ Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	18[7]	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)			
▪ DCF	38	45[7]	Not available [2]
▪ Pasco and Pinellas community-based care provider	Not applicable	33[7]	Not available [2]
Number of finalized adoptions	132	121	See Suncoast Region [6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	65.5%	94.4%	See Suncoast Region [6]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.9	11.3	See Suncoast Region [6]
▪ In-home supervision	22.3	21.2	Not available [2]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	24.1	22.9	Not available [2]

[1] In Fiscal Year 2000-01, this district became part of the Suncoast Region.

[2] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[3] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[5] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year July-December 2001-02 data is not available separately for District 5. It is now part of the Suncoast Region.

[7] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

District 6

Counties:
    Hillsborough and Manatee [1]
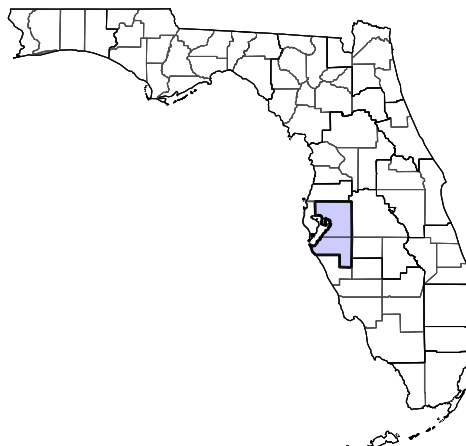
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	13,909	14,848	7,414
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	8,137	10,584	Not available [2]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours by:			
▪ DCF child protective investigators in Hillsborough County	56.1%	58.2%	See Suncoast Region [3]
▪ Manatee County Sheriff's Office	56.8%	53.8%	51.9%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes by:			
▪ DCF child protective investigators in Hillsborough County	5,470 66.3%	2,941 29.3%	Not available [2]
▪ Manatee County Sheriff's Office	1,271 64.5%	1,519 51.8%	679 49.6%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [4]

	DCF Investigators		Manatee County Sheriff's Office	
Reason left blank	5,394	83.9%	434	21.7%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	87	1.4%	260	13.0%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	125	1.9%	595	29.8%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	597	9.3%	223	11.2%
Witness not available	70	1.1%	120	6.0%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	11	0.2%	3	0.2%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	147	2.3%	361	18.1%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [5]	2000-01 [6]	July-December 2001 [7]
Number of children in foster care			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	1,498	1,122	
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	341	303	See Suncoast Region
Number of children in relative care			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	897	1,209	
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	256	262	See Suncoast Region

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	24.0 %	26.8 %	Not available [2]
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	83.3%	44.7%	Not available [2]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	9.0 %	8.6%	Not available [2]
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	100%	13.0%	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	15	21 [7]	Not available [2]
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	18	18 [7]	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)			
▪ DCF in Hillsborough County	45	50 [7]	Not available [2]
▪ Manatee County community-based care provider	44	56 [7]	Not available [2]
Number of finalized adoptions	180	186	See Suncoast Region [6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	29.6%	18.7%	See Suncoast Region [6]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.4	11.6	See Suncoast Region [6]
▪ In-home supervision	22.8	17.9	Not available [2]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	16.8	17.7	Not available [2]

[1] In Fiscal Year 2000-01, this district became part of the Suncoast Region.

[2] Data is not available currently due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[5] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[6] Fiscal Year July-December 2001-02 data is not available separately for District 6. It is now part of the Suncoast Region.

[7] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

District 7

Counties:
Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole
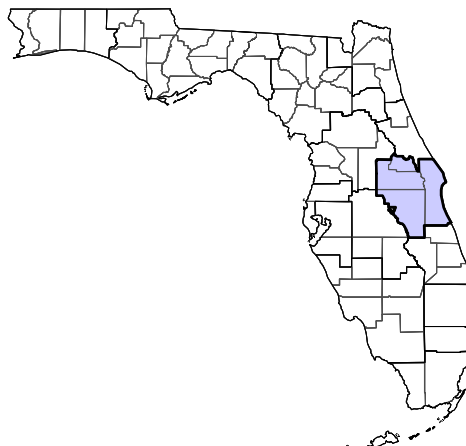
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	23,601	24,568	12,534
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	6,173	17,655	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours by:			
▪ DCF investigators	52.8%	48.3%	50.2%
▪ Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Not applicable	55.2%	58.3%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes by:			
▪ DCF investigators	3,699 53.2%	9,945 46.0%	6,799 71.8%
▪ Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Not applicable	581 47.2%	613 49.7%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

	DCF Investigators	Seminole County Sheriff's Office
Reason left blank	7,341 52.4%	441 49.7%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	989 7.1%	7 0.7%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	533 3.8%	0 0.0%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	458 3.3%	19 2.1%
Witness not available	368 2.6%	1 0.1%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	49 0.4%	0 0.0%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	4,262 30.4%	420 47.3%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	2,330	1,871	1,637
Number of children in relative care	2,626	1,695	1,098

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	15.7%	34.8%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	7.7%	4.0 %	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	22	26 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	36	38 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	106	232	76 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	56.8%	39.1%	31.1% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.8	11.6	10.9 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	21.9	13.3	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	26.3	15.8	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2002.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 8

Counties:
   Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee, and Sarasota
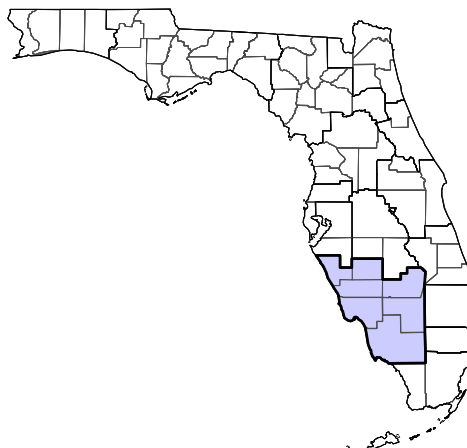
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	9,994	11,081	3,845
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	3,067	4,527	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	60.2%	60.8%	61.1%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	4,871 65.9%	5,070 53.7%	1,822 54.0%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	5,250	71.6%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	174	2.4%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	256	3.5%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	578	7.9%
Witness not available	19	0.3%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	5	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	1,055	14.4%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care			
▪ DCF	491	627	474
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	198	245	Not available
Number of children in relative care			
▪ DCF	401	444	434
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	182	228	Not available

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ DCF	38.7%	41.2%	Not available [1]
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	5.7%	19.5%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ DCF	0.0%	1.0%	Not available [1]
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	0.0%	0.0%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)			
▪ DCF	13	12 [5]	Not available [1]
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	10	9 [5]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)			
▪ DCF	32	28 [5]	Not available [1]
▪ Sarasota County community-based care provider	32	34 [5]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	94	88	27 [6]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	33.2%	31.2%	22.9% [7]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.1	12.3	11.1 [8]
▪ In-home supervision	18.8	17.6	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	18.2	19.6	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in March 2001.

[5] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[6] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2002. Suncoast Region data includes adoptions finalized in DeSoto and Sarasota counties.

[7] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[8] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 9

Counties:
  Palm Beach
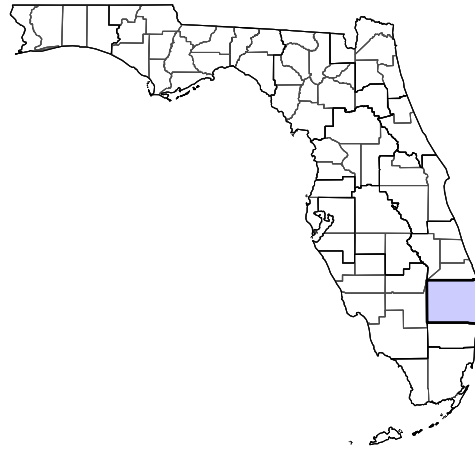
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	9,309	10,582	5,303
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	5,857	6,589	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	47.6%	45.5%	41.7%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes	4,378 57.7%	3,360 40.9%	3,131 67.9%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	4,333	82.4%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	17	0.3%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	54	1.0%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	243	4.6%
Witness not available	38	0.7%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	6	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	566	10.8%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	688	635	669
Number of children in relative care	665	753	760

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	29.6%	21.2%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	1.6%	0.0%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	25	25 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	40	44 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	63	72	49 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	21.0%	27.4%	33.9% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.0	12.8	10.9 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	20.0	27.1	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	19.3	19.0	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in May 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 10

Counties:
  Broward
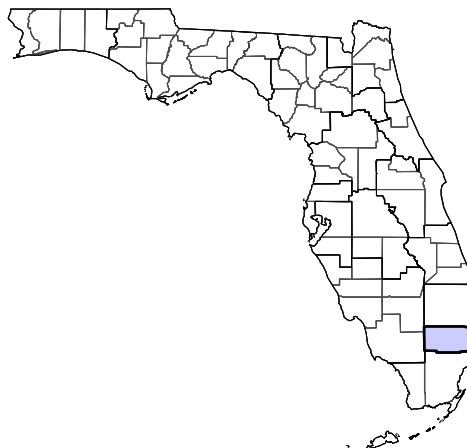
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	13,465	14,839	7,155
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect by:			
▪ DCF child protective investigators	5,355	548	Not available [1]
▪ Broward County Sheriff's Office	1,186	10,805	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours by:			
▪ DCF child protective investigators	34.9%	27.3%	Not applicable
▪ Broward County Sheriff's Office	54.6%	45.8%	48.5%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes by:			
▪ DCF child protective investigators	3,808 64.7%	362 64.2%	Not applicable
▪ Broward County Sheriff's Office	1,156 61.4%	8,292 56.2%	2,462 37.3%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

	DCF Investigators		Broward County Sheriff's Office	
Reason left blank	197	43.2%	5,392	52.6%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	76	16.7%	42	0.4%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	50	11.0%	36	0.4%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	43	9.4%	212	2.1%
Witness not available	15	3.3%	239	2.3%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	2	0.4%	82	0.8%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	73	16.0	4,251	41.5%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	1,542	1,555	1,323
Number of children in relative care	1,855	1,511	1,079

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	10.8%	18.8%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	4.7%	1.4%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	21	22 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	40	45 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	95	126	40 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	31.3%	18.9%	28.0% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	17.6	12.8	10.5 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	21.8	15.3	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	19.9	19.4	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 11[1]

Counties:
  Dade and Monroe
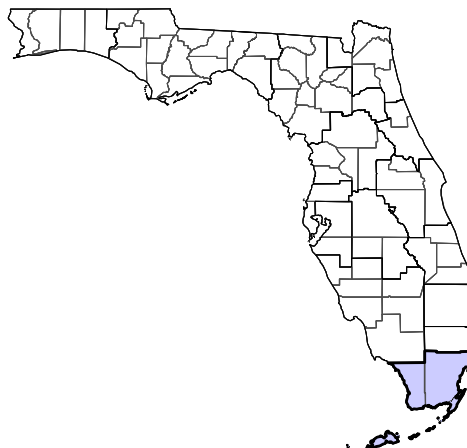
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00		2000-01		July-December 2001	
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received						
▪ Dade County		14,476		14,907		7,686
▪ Monroe County		908		909		520
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect in:						
▪ Dade County		7,336		8,840		Not available [2]
▪ Monroe County		507		654		Not available [2]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours						
▪ Dade County		43.4%		46.0%		45.4%
▪ Monroe County		61.3%		60.6%		56.6%
Number and percentage of investigations *not* closed within statutory timeframes						
▪ Dade County	6,025	59.7%	5,753	48.4%	4,671	68.8%
▪ Monroe County	389	67.1%	324	42.2%	356	85.6%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [3]

	Dade		Monroe	
Reason left blank	6,213	79.7%	57	12.2
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	63	0.8%	1	0.2%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	80	1.0%	10	2.1%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	400	5.1%	23	4.9%
Witness not available	8	0.1%	1	0.2%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	4	0.1%	0	0.0%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	1,025	13.2%	374	80.3%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [4]	2000-01 [5]	July-December 2001 [6]
Number of children in foster care			2,057
▪ Dade County	1,887	2,404	
▪ Monroe County	38	28	
Number of children in relative care			1,361
▪ Dade County	2,057	2,235	
▪ Monroe County	48	38	

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ Dade County	11.5%	16.4%	Not available [2]
▪ Monroe County	28.6%	58.1%	Not available [2]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ Dade County	2.2%	0.7%	Not available [2]
▪ Monroe County	0.0%	0.0%	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)			
▪ Dade County	33	36 [7]	Not available [2]
▪ Monroe County	10	9 [7]	Not available [2]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)			
▪ Dade County	54	51 [7]	Not available [2]
▪ Monroe County	26	25 [7]	Not available [2]
Number of finalized adoptions	303	485	60 [8]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	32.1%	29.7%	17.4% [9]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.1	11.5	11.0 [10]
▪ In-home supervision	20.0	19.6	Not available [2]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	19.2	23.1	Not available [2]

[1] We are presenting data separately for Dade and Monroe counties because the program tracks most performance measures for this district at a county-level.

[2] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[3] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[5] Based on active client count in May 2001.

[6] Based on active client count in December 2001. This is the total for District 11, separate county-level data not available.

[7] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[8] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[9] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[10] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 12

Counties:
  Flagler and Volusia
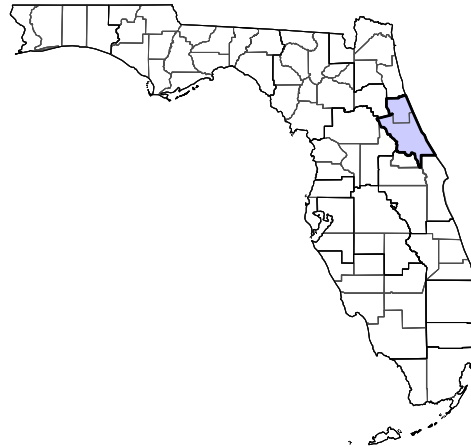
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	6,146	6,585	3,323
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	2,813	3,985	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	53.5%	52.5%	54.3%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes	2,906 72.8%	3,523 59.4%	1,192 41.8%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	1,887	44.4%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	44	1.0%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	47	1.1%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	118	2.8%
Witness not available	138	3.3%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	1	0.0%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	2,011	47.4%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	359	481	446
Number of children in relative care	436	471	340

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	16.9%	20.1%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	0.0%	0.0%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	19	20 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	24	31 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	49	88	45 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	44.9%	27.4%	61.2% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.7	12.0	10.8 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	23.7	18.1	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	27.8	22.3	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 13

Counties:
    Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter
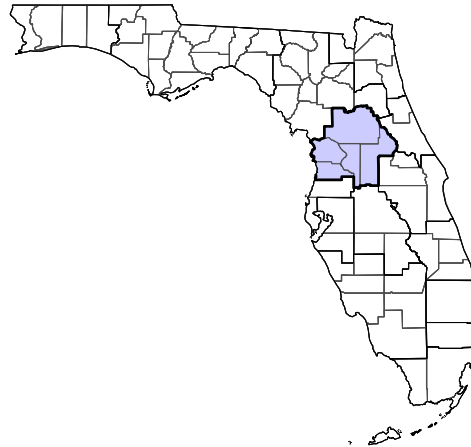
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	8,968	9,972	5,101
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	5,304	6,925	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	54.0%	49.9%	48.5%
Number and percentage of investigations not closed within statutory timeframes	4,198 71.8%	5,513 62.9%	3,538 78.1%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	3,934	57.8%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victims(s)	40	0.6%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	397	5.8%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	557	8.2%
Witness not available	1,439	21.2%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	19	0.3%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	417	6.1%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	871	913	733
Number of children in relative care	997	1,085	652

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months			
▪ DCF	30.3%	38.0%	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization pilot in Lake County	25.0%	Not applicable	Not applicable
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family			
▪ DCF	7.0%	2.5%	Not available [1]
▪ Privatization pilot in Lake County	21.6%	0.0%	Not applicable
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	20	23 [6]	Not available[1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	39	43 [6]	Not available[1]
Number of finalized adoptions	59	70	20 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	35.1%	24.9%	25.1% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	15.0	12.0	11.7 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	23.0	14.0	Not available[1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	26.2	17.1	Not available[1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in June 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 14

Counties:
    Hardee, Highlands, and Polk
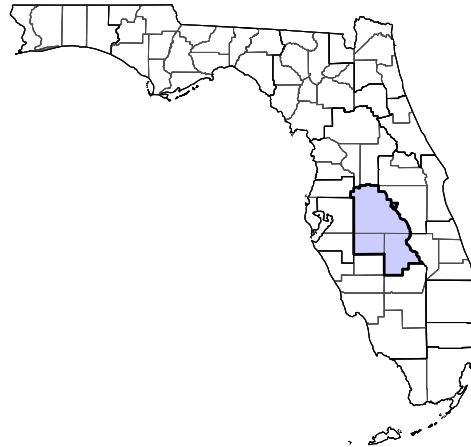
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	9,780	10,070	5,413
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	4,231	7,911	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	56.6%	50.7%	50.5%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	3,423 67.8%	6,074 59.7%	2,969 66.9%

Reasons Investigations Were Not Closed in a Timely Manner During Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	6,452	82.8%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	194	2.5%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	83	1.1%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	712	9.1%
Witness not available	151	1.9%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	5	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	196	2.5%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	551	587	487
Number of children in relative care	1,418	1,522	955

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	19.8%	33.0%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	6.7%	5.3%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	25	24 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	45	50 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	110	85	51 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	44.5%	25.9%	36.5% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	16.3	11.8	11.8 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	23.6	15.1	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	27.9	30.3	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in May 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimates for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

District 15

Counties:
    Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee,
    and St. Lucie
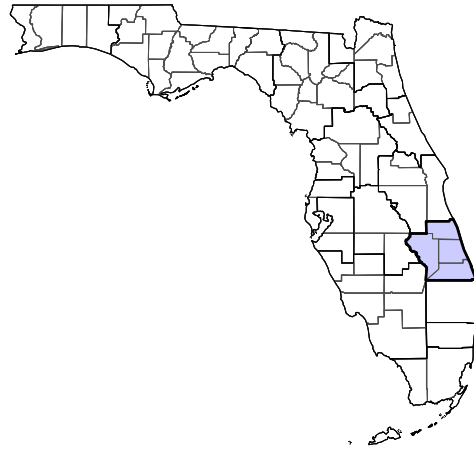
Child Protective Investigations

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Number of child abuse/neglect reports received	4,293	4,999	2,733
Number of victims of child abuse/neglect	1,884	2,569	Not available [1]
Percentage of alleged victims seen within 24 hours	61.7%	54.7%	52.3%
Number and percentage of investigations <u>not</u> closed within statutory timeframes	1,566 60.9%	1,894 52.2%	1,499 65.7%

Reasons investigations were not closed in a timely manner during Fiscal Year 2000-01 [2]

Reason left blank	2,378	89.5%
Program received an additional report of abuse or neglect involving alleged victim(s)	6	0.2%
Awaiting evidence from law enforcement investigation	34	1.3%
Program is waiting to close case pending legal actions	149	5.6%
Witness not available	5	0.2%
Investigators could not locate alleged victim(s)	3	0.1%
Investigation completed but case not closed pending administrative actions	81	3.0%

Foster Care

	1999-00 [3]	2000-01 [4]	July-December 2001 [5]
Number of children in foster care	377	367	362
Number of children in relative care	486	557	501

Permanency

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Percentage of children that exited foster care within 12 months	44.1%	43.0%	Not available [1]
Percentage of children that returned to foster care within one year of being reunited with family	4.6%	0.0%	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of being reunited with his/her family (in months)	18	21 [6]	Not available [1]
Average length of stay for children remaining in care with permanency goal of adoption (in months)	53	55 [6]	Not available [1]
Number of finalized adoptions	44	69	17 [7]

Staffing

	1999-00	2000-01	July-December 2001
Turnover rate for DCF family services counselors	44.0%	30.2%	47.7% [8]
Caseload ratios (cases per counselor)			
▪ Protective investigations	14.3	13.0	14.1 [9]
▪ In-home supervision	24.8	15.9	Not available [1]
▪ Out-of-home supervision	25.8	26.2	Not available [1]

[1] Data is currently not available due to the program's transition to HomeSafenet. According to program staff, this information will not be available until the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 or early Fiscal Year 2002-03.

[2] During Fiscal Year 2000-01 the program continued to track the reasons investigations were not closed using the previous time standard of 30 days, despite the change to a 60-day time standard in July 2000.

[3] Based on active client count in June 2000.

[4] Based on active client count in March 2001.

[5] Based on active client count in December 2001.

[6] January 2001 is the most complete data available for the state due to the districts' gradual transition to HomeSafenet.

[7] Fiscal Year 2001-02 through October 2001.

[8] Projected annual turnover rate, based on data from August to December 2001. Data includes those employees who have left the department to work for community-based care providers. However, the department did not provide the percentage of turnover attributable to community-based care.

[9] Based on program staff estimate.

Response from the Department of Children and Families

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families for her review and response.

The Secretary's written response is reprinted herein beginning on page 73.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF

CHILDREN
& FAMILIES

Jeb Bush
Governor

Kathleen A. Kearney
Secretary

February 25, 2002

Mr. John W. Turcotte, Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis
 and Government Accountability
111 West Madison Street, Room 312
Claude Pepper Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Mr. Turcotte:

Thank you for giving the Department of Children and Families the opportunity to review and respond to the draft report, **"The Child Protection Program."** Overall, the report documented significant improvements in all areas of the program. The following is our response to statements in the report that we found to be in need of clarification or explanation.

Page 3, last paragraph: The OPPAGA analysis of appropriations for this year was completed prior to budget amendments which brought the budget in line with legislative actions. The most current numbers are $787,573,366 and 5,566 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for FY 2001-02.

Page 3, Exhibit 1: Although the numbers in Exhibit 1 are correct as stated, readers of the report should not use them to illustrate trends over time. For example, the numbers of victims of abuse and neglect can not be compared from one year to the next because that statistic is derived from closed investigations. Since we made so much progress in closing backlogged investigations in FY 2000-01 that were opened in FY 1999-00 and before (see Exhibit 7, page 12), this data cannot be used to compare the relative incidence of abuse/neglect.

Page 8, first paragraph: The huge improvement in Hotline performance can be attributed to more than additional staff and fewer calls. In fact, the fewer calls are to some extent the result of the improvement in performance. As the abandoned call rate goes down, the need for people to call back also goes down, resulting in fewer calls. Increased staffing was of primary importance but advancements in telephone technology, training, resource management and screening procedures also contributed to the improved performance.

Page 10, second paragraph: It should be noted that the new methodology for calculating the percent of investigations closed within 60 days is more restrictive than the previous methodology in counting a case closed. It is now more difficult to count a case as closed. We went from using the date the investigative
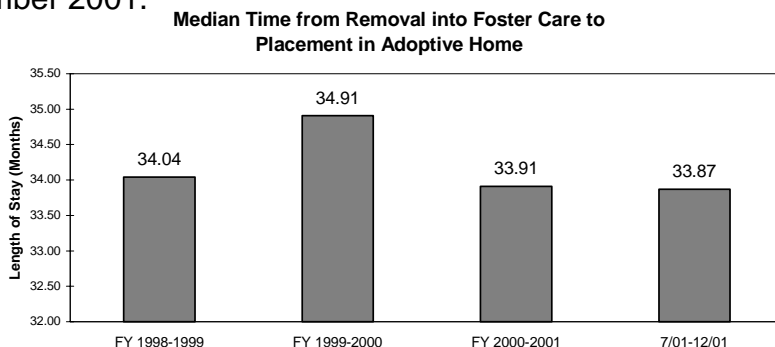
The Department of Children and Families is committed to working in partnership
with local communities to ensure safety, well-being and self-sufficiency for the people we serve.

activities were completed to using the date all data entry is completed. Although this makes our performance look worse, we made the change because the new methodology is more meaningful since investigative information can not be approved and is not available to other staff until all data is entered.

Page 17, second paragraph: The report cites the 1998 publication of the Administration for Children and Families, *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998: Annual Report to Congress.* We are proud to report that the latest report to Congress, *Child Welfare Outcomes 1999: Annual Report to Congress,* credits Florida with the lowest length of stay in foster care in the nation (page III-6).

Page 20, first paragraph: The report provides the average length of stay for children remaining in foster care with a goal of adoption. Alone, this is a meaningless measure since it does not account for the length of stay for children who have been successfully adopted. The following chart shows the median time from foster care entrance to adoptive placement for children whose adoptions were finalized in FY 98-99 through December 2001. The median length of stay was 33.87 months for children whose adoptions were finalized in July - December 2001.

Median Time from Removal into Foster Care to Placement in Adoptive Home

	FY 1998-1999	FY 1999-2000	FY 2000-2001	7/01-12/01
Length of Stay (Months)	34.04	34.91	33.91	33.87

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to this report. If you have any questions or need additional clarification, please contact Mike Watkins, Director of Family Safety (488-8762).

Very truly yours,

/s/
Kathleen A. Kearney
Secretary