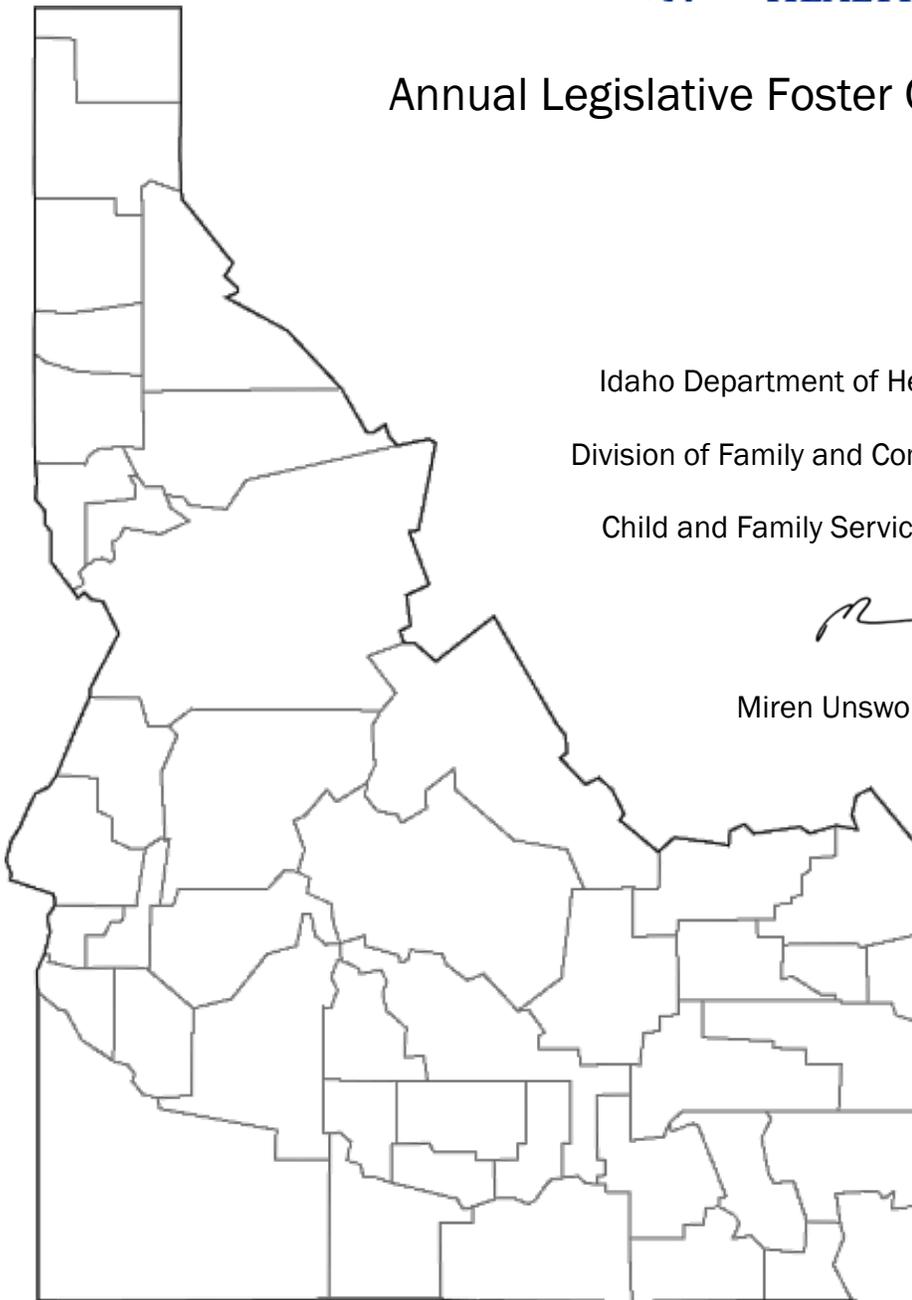IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

Annual Legislative Foster Care Report
for SFY 2019

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

Division of Family and Community Services

Child and Family Services (CFS) Program

Miren Unsworth, Administrator
January 16, 2020

This report can be viewed on the Department of Health and Welfare's website at this URL:

[http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Children/AbuseNeglect/tabid/74/Default.aspx]

Contents

Background

The Annual Foster Care Report published by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Child and Family Services (CFS) program is intended to provide the Idaho Legislature with information and relevant data regarding Idaho's foster care system. This report is provided pursuant to Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1646, which states:

> *The state department of health and welfare shall submit an annual report regarding the foster care program to the germane standing committees of the legislature no later than ten (10) days following the start of each regular session. On or before February 15 of each year, the state department of health and welfare shall appear before the germane standing committees to present the report. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, the number of children that are in the department's legal custody pursuant to this chapter, the number of such children who have been placed in foster care, how many times such children have been moved to different foster care homes and the reasons for such moves, best practices in foster care, goals to improve the foster care system in Idaho to ensure best practices are adhered to, a description of progress made with regard to the previous year's goals to improve the foster care system and any other information relating to foster care that the legislature requests. If a member of the legislature requests additional information between the time the report is received by the legislature and the time the department appears to present the report, then the department shall supplement its report to include such additional information.*

In accordance with the above cited Idaho code, this report provides available child welfare data as collected in the Department's existing automated system (iCare) and necessary data analysis. It also includes, at the end of the report, two additional dimensions of information related to Child Welfare:

1) Incorporating, where appropriate, data, activities, and outcomes from the Department's Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative and
2) Incorporating, where appropriate, summary responses to the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) findings from their 2017 and 2018 reports.

Overview of the Child and Family Services Program

Child and Family Services' primary commitment and responsibility is the safety, well-being, and permanency of children who are victims of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment. As an agency, we believe that the best approach to support and protect children is to strengthen families, so they can safely parent their children and meet the child's needs for permanency and well-being.

This family-centered approach is reflected in our daily work with families and is supported by federal law, state law, and public policies that place a high priority on family unity, involvement, and privacy.

CFS program responsibilities fall into four broad areas:

- Receiving reports of abuse or neglect
- Assessing allegations of abuse and neglect
- Providing ongoing case management services to children (in-home or out-of-home placements)
- Ensuring children have safety and permanency in their own homes or other permanent homes

Receiving Reports of Abuse or Neglect

The Child and Family Services program has a Centralized Intake Unit in Boise to which all reports of child abuse or neglect throughout the state are directed. Each report is assessed to determine whether the allegations fall under the statutory definitions of abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Once that determination is made, the report is prioritized for a response. Referrals involving a life-threatening and/or emergency situation require an immediate response. Other reports receive a priority which requires a response within either 24 or 72 hours. On all reports requiring an immediate response, CFS coordinates the response with local law enforcement. CFS staff take and respond to child abuse and neglect reports 24/7 across the state.

During state fiscal year 2019, CFS received a total of 23,108 referrals regarding concerns of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Of these, 11,562 were assigned for a safety assessment. From those assessments, 1,407 children were placed in foster care. The number of referrals, assessments, and foster care placements varies by year with a generally upward trend. Graph 1 illustrates referrals received, assessments assigned, and the number of children placed in foster care by state fiscal year over the past five years. The number of referrals decreased slightly in SFY 2019 from the volume in SFY 2018, but the number of safety assessments increased (continuing the trend from SFY 2017 to SFY 2018); the number of children placed in foster care only increased slightly from SFY 2018 to SFY 2019. The annual numbers reported here represent total unduplicated counts for each activity and vary slightly from monthly counts and averages used in regular performance management/predictive analysis reports.
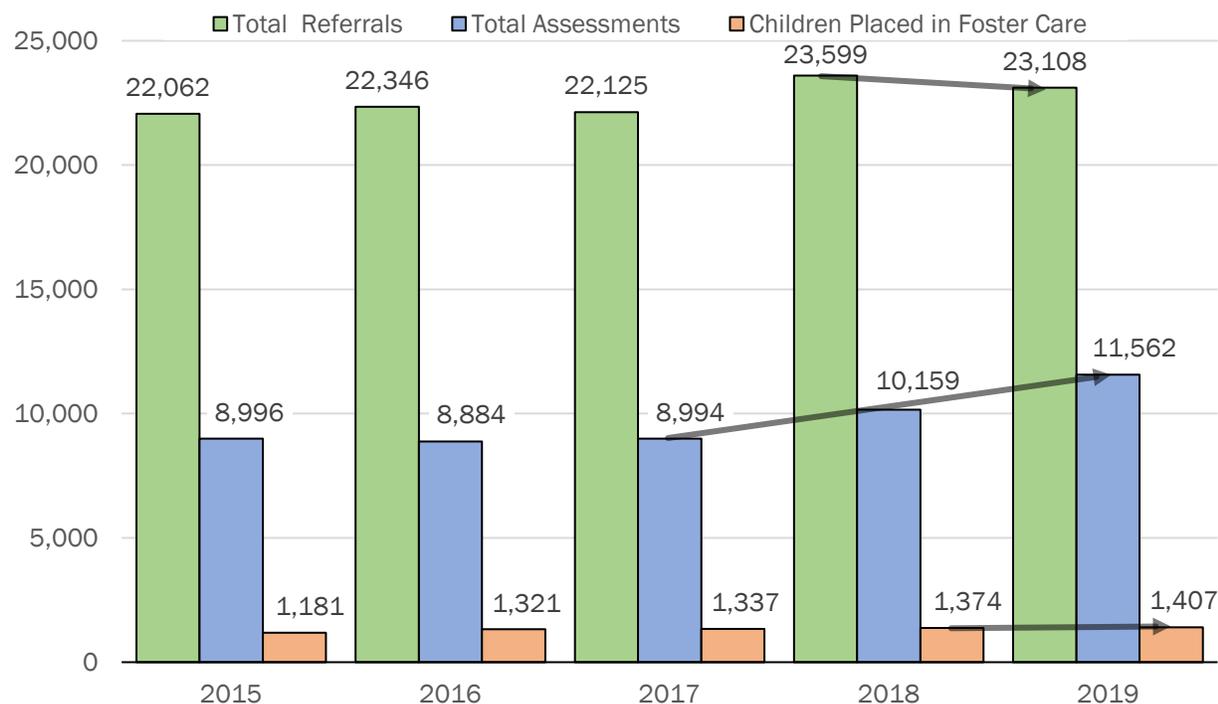
Graph 1: Referrals, Assessments, and Children Placed in Foster Care by State Fiscal Year

Most of the referrals received by CFS are due to neglect; neglect is also the primary reason children are removed from their homes. Cases of neglect may include inadequate supervision, or situations in which the physical environment poses health or safety hazards that directly affect the health and safety of a child, and often involve a parent's unmet mental health or substance use issues.

The number of referrals by maltreatment type over the past five state fiscal years is shown in Table 1 The majority of referrals, about 53% in SFY 2019 (12,175 of the 23,108 total), are deemed "Information and Referral," a designation for those referrals not acted upon because they do not meet the statutory guidelines for abuse, neglect, or abandonment. In these situations, a referral may be made to other entities or agencies based on the unique circumstances of each situation.

Table 1: Referrals by Maltreatment Types					
Referral Type	Number of Referrals by Referral Type by State Fiscal Year				
	SFY 2015	SFY 2016	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019
Information & Referral	13,066	13,462	13,131	13,440	12,175
Neglect	6,335	6,256	6,452	7,265	7,925
Physical Abuse	2,209	2,080	2,001	2,231	2,230
Sexual Abuse	431	545	539	660	775
Other	21	3	2	3	3
Total	22,062	22,346	22,125	23,599	23,108

CFS tracks the source of all maltreatment reports. The source of maltreatment reports over the past five state fiscal years is shown in Table 2. School personnel and parents continued to be the primary sources reporting maltreatment with close to 31% of referrals (18.8% + 12.0%); with more than half of all referrals (53%) coming from schools, parents, private agencies, and law enforcement.

Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1605(1) provides mandatory reporting requirements in the state of Idaho for physicians, hospital staff, coroners, schools, daycares, and any other persons having reason to believe a child has been subjected to maltreatment. These reports must be made to law enforcement or the Department. An exception is made for "duly ordained minister of religion." Failure to report as required in this section of Idaho Code is a misdemeanor.

Table 2: Sources of Maltreatment Referrals										
Referral Source	Number and Percent of Referrals from each Referral Source by State Fiscal Year									
	SFY 2015		SFY 2016		SFY 2017		SFY 2018		SFY 2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
School Personnel	3,484	15.8%	3,726	16.7%	3,709	16.8%	4,411	18.7%	4,338	18.8%
Parent/Substitute	3,182	14.4%	2,839	12.7%	2,839	12.8%	2,829	12.0%	2,775	12.0%
Private Agency	2,506	11.4%	2,337	10.5%	2,367	10.7%	2,522	10.7%	2,778	12.0%
Law Enforcement	2,321	10.5%	2,294	10.3%	2,447	11.1%	2,444	10.4%	2,412	10.4%
Relative	2,180	9.9%	2,477	11.1%	2,105	9.5%	2,171	9.2%	1,951	8.4%
Friend/Neighbor	1,669	7.6%	1,670	7.5%	1,702	7.7%	1,838	7.8%	1,495	6.5%
Hospital	1,155	5.2%	1,322	5.9%	1,280	5.8%	1,598	6.8%	1,780	7.7%
Child Protection	981	4.4%	946	4.2%	1,037	4.7%	1,054	4.5%	1,160	5.0%
Anonymous	1,108	5.0%	859	3.8%	1,009	4.6%	1,048	4.4%	1,133	4.9%
Medical	695	3.2%	860	3.8%	934	4.2%	781	3.3%	766	3.3%
Other	2,781	12.6%	3,016	13.5%	2,696	12.2%	2,903	12.3%	2,520	10.9%
Total	22,062		22,346		22,125		23,599		23,108	

Assessing Child Safety

A Comprehensive Safety Assessment is completed for all child protection referrals that meet Child and Family Services Priority Response Guidelines for assessment. The primary purpose of the assessment is to ensure the child's safety and determine whether the child and family are in need of services to address identified safety threats. The Comprehensive Safety Assessment includes a robust information collection process and includes a face to face contact and interview with the child. Information is also collected by the social worker through interviews with the parents/caregivers and relevant collateral contacts such as extended family members, law enforcement, school staff, medical professionals, and service providers. The assessment includes application of standardized criteria, along with social worker's critical analysis of the information and conclusion regarding the child's safety.

Upon completion of a Comprehensive Safety Assessment, the agency must determine whether maltreatment has occurred and whether the child is safe or unsafe. Whenever a child is determined to be unsafe the case remains open for services. If the child is determined to be safe the case is closed with no additional intervention.

Whenever possible, efforts are made to safely maintain children in their homes. However, when a safety threat exists, a safety plan must be put into place to manage the child's safety. Actions in a safety plan must address the safety threat to the child and are specific to the family's circumstances. Safety actions might include respite care, supervision and monitoring, resource acquisition, and homemaker services. If the child is assessed to be in immediate danger, law enforcement is charged with the decision for removal. When a child is removed, CFS makes placement arrangements for the child.

Removal from the Home

Efforts are made to minimize the trauma of removing a child from the home by an immediate search for any relatives who could serve as a placement resource for the child or children. The Idaho Child Protective Act requires that the Department first considers, consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child, placement with a fit and willing relative. If a suitable relative cannot be found, the child can be placed with individuals with a significant relationship with the child, referred to as Fictive Kin (Fictive Kin is a term used to refer to individuals that are unrelated by either birth or marriage, but have an emotionally significant relationship with the child that would take on the characteristics of a family relationship) or a non-relative foster care placement. There are only three methods by which a child can be removed from his/her home in Idaho:

1) Law enforcement makes the determination a child is in a dangerous situation and therefore they declare the child to be in imminent danger
2) A petition is filed with the court by the Department indicating it is unsafe for the child to remain in their home; a judge then determines whether to enter an Order of Removal
3) A Rule 16 Expansion Order (Rule 16 of the Idaho Juvenile Rules allows for the court to expand a Juvenile Corrections Act proceeding into a Child Protective Act proceeding when the court has reasonable cause to believe that the juvenile living within the state comes within the jurisdiction of the Child Protective Act)

When a child is removed from their home that case enters the court system. When a child is in the court system, or moving through the court system, the Idaho Child Protective Act gives the court responsibility for determining whether the removal of the child is warranted and for making other key decisions regarding the child.

Point-in-Time count of Children in Foster Care: A total of 1,407 children entered foster care in SFY 2019 because of maltreatment or an unstable home environment (as illustrated previously in Graph 1) but that is not the count of all children in foster care. The number of children in foster care, counted on June 30 of each year, for the past five state fiscal years, is shown in Graph 2. Since 2015, the point-in-time number of children in foster care has increased by about 38% (1,291 in SFY 2015 to 1,788 in SFY 2019). While the average annual growth rate had been close to 12% from SFY 2015 to SFY 2018, SFY 2019's growth rate was lower than SFY 2018 (8.1% vs. 3.6%).
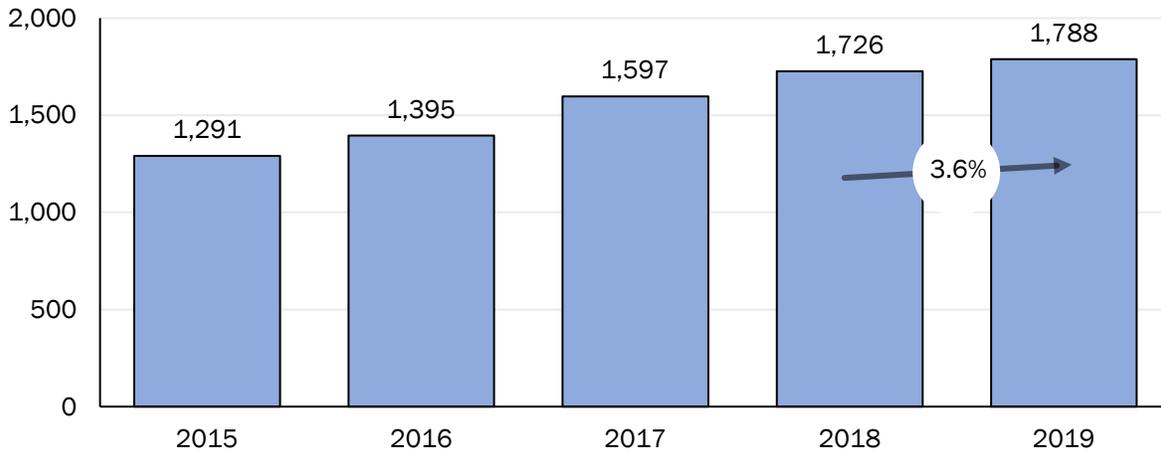
Graph 2: Point in Time (June 30) count of Children in Foster Care by State Fiscal Years

Total 'State Fiscal Year' count of Children in Foster Care: Over the course of an entire state fiscal year the unduplicated total number of children in foster care is greater than the single point-in-time count shown in Graph 2. The unduplicated count of children in each of the past five state fiscal years (if time in care was greater than 24 hours) is illustrated below in Graph 3. Since 2015 the number of children served in foster care has increased by about 27% (2,434 in SFY 2015 to 3,111 in SFY 2019).
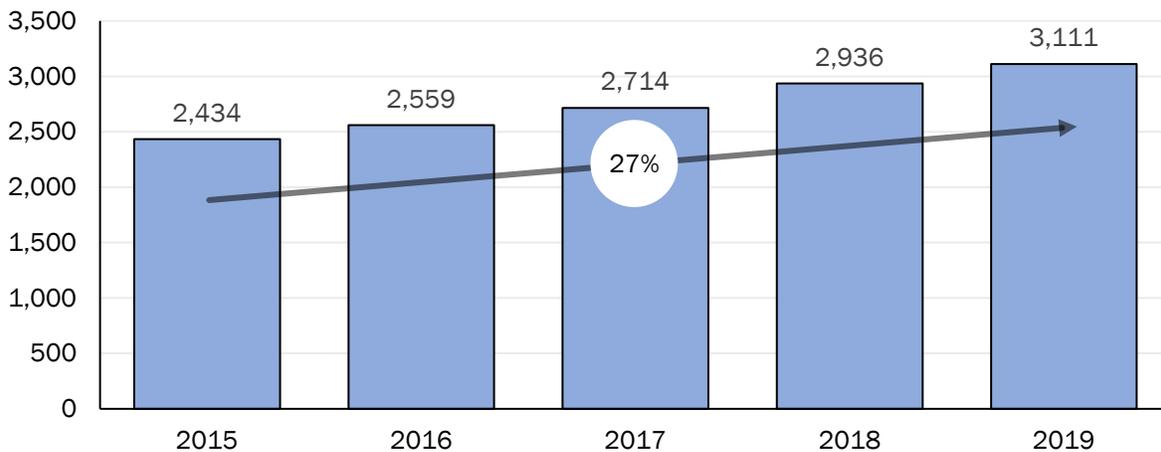

Graph 3: Children Served in Foster Care for State Fiscal Years

The reasons for removal of a child from their home over the past five state fiscal years is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Child Removal Reasons										
Number of and Reason for Child Removal by State Fiscal Year										
Removal Reasons	SFY 2015		SFY 2016		SFY 2017		SFY 2018		SFY 2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Neglect	947	80.2%	1,084	82.1%	1,126	84.2%	1,129	82.2%	1,145	81.4%
Physical Abuse	163	13.8%	146	11.1%	127	9.5%	139	10.1%	141	10.0%
Sexual Abuse	19	1.6%	37	2.8%	43	3.2%	60	4.4%	62	4.4%
Homeless	19	1.6%	22	1.7%	28	2.1%	30	2.2%	37	2.6%
Abandonment	31	2.6%	28	2.1%	13	1.0%	16	1.2%	20	1.4%
Voluntary Placement	2	0.2%	4	0.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%
Total	1,181		1,321		1,337		1,374		1,407	

During state fiscal year 2019, 1,362 children exited foster care. Of these children, 874 (64%) were reunified with their parents/caregiver. The "Other Jurisdiction" reported in Graph 4 could include children placed in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Corrections or another agency/jurisdiction, or the transfer of custody to a child's tribe.
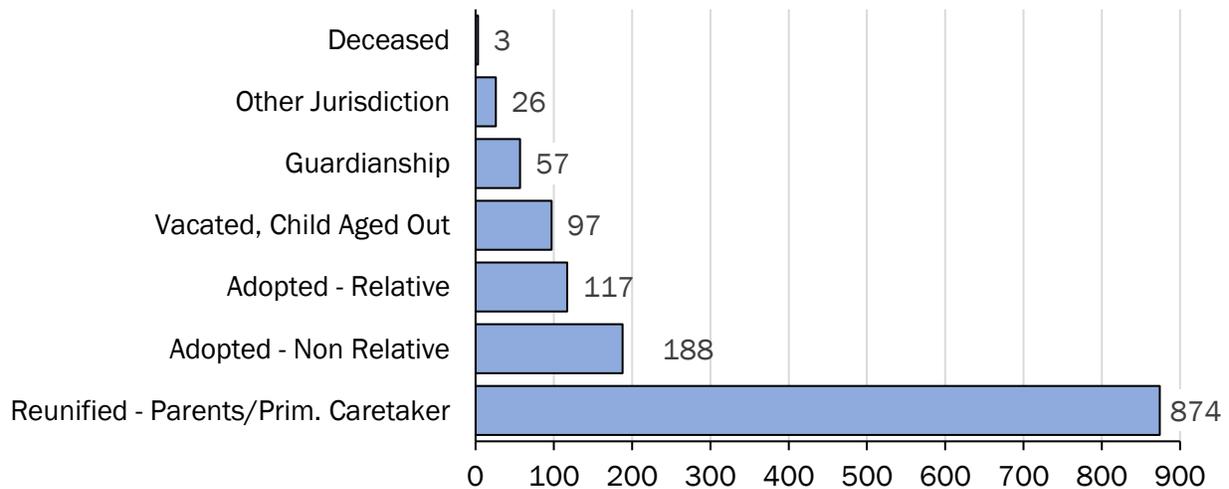
Graph 4: Children Exiting Foster Care in SFY 2019

Placements in Foster Care
The child's best interests are the primary consideration in all placements. CFS defines "eight 'best interest' factors" which identify the current and potential individual needs of a child. The factors are the child's:

1) Emotional/behavioral needs
2) Medical/physical needs
3) Educational/developmental needs
4) Cultural/religious needs
5) Trauma history and past experiences
6) Relationships with parents, relatives, siblings, and current caretakers
7) Interests and community connections
8) Family placement preferences

CFS workers are mindful of the importance of maintaining relative and sibling connections, and the impact of placement changes on a child's attachment and overall development when making placement recommendations and policy decisions. Therefore, no single best interest factor is considered more or less important than the others. The weight placed on any one factor is highly dependent on the identified needs of a particular child or sibling group.

Using the SFY 2019 point in time count of children in foster care (see previous Graph 2 showing 1,788 children in foster care as of June 30, 2019), Table 4 shows the placement types made for those children. Non-relative foster care placement was the largest placement type (668 or 37% of all children).

Table 4: Child Placements in Foster Care		
Number and Percent of Child Placements as of June 30, 2019		
Placement Type	Number	Percent
Non-Relative	668	37%
Relative	443	25%
Home Visit	204	11%
Fictive Kin	163	9%
Congregate	115	6%
Pre-Adoptive	89	5%
Pre-Adoptive Relative	65	4%
Treatment Home	27	2%
Other	14	1%
Total		100%

Placement Changes in Foster Care

CFS practices emphasize placement stability and limiting the number of moves for children in foster care. When children experience placement changes, they can develop distress, loss, and an absence of belonging, all of which can result in feelings of distrust and a fear of forming healthy relationships and attachments with others. A planned placement change is the foreseen placement of a child with a relative, fictive kin, non-relative foster parent, or group home or residential care. The social worker and provider(s) have made advanced arrangements for the placement of a child. Reasons for planned placement changes include:

- Placement with siblings
- Placement with a non-relative foster family
- Placement with a relative/fictive kin
- Child's treatment needs
- Permanency placement (includes pre-adoptive placement and guardianship)

Planned moves include a transition plan to assist the child with the move. The child's current relationship with the new caregiver, the child's emotional and developmental needs, the proximity of the new placement, and the willingness and ability of the two families to engage in the transition can impact the transition plan.

An unplanned placement change is an unexpected disruption in the child's placement. The following are examples of unplanned placement changes:

- Foster family's request
- Child's treatment needs requiring a higher level of care
- A safety issue in the foster home (allegations of abuse or neglect)

- Detention
- Hospitalization

To reduce foster parent requests for placement changes, CFS makes efforts to provide supportive services or other resources to assist foster families to care for children and avoid placement disruptions. Examples of supportive services include: increased respite, foster parent personal counseling, mentoring from an experienced foster parent, and education/training regarding how to meet a child's specialized need. In some instances, foster families may be unable to meet a child's needs due to significant behavioral issues and request that the child be moved.

During the 2016 legislative session changes were made to the Child Protective Act regarding notification of placement changes. In SFY 2017, CFS began sending written notification to foster parents regarding placement changes. CFS is committed to preventing unannounced moves, unless there are safety concerns, and to ensuring clear communications and expectations with foster parents regarding placement changes.

Moving children in foster care can be very disruptive. In SFY 2019 the total unduplicated count of children in foster care was 3,111 (Table 3). Table 5 below shows the number of placement changes made for those children. A full 89% of the children served had no change or only one change. Of these children, 71% had no placement change while in foster care. Two or more changes were experienced by 11% or 348 children.

Table 5: Foster Care Placement Changes		
Number and Percent of Children experiencing foster care changes in SFY 2019		
Placement Changes	Number	Percent
No change	2,203	71%
One change	560	18%
Children with less than 2 changes	2,763	89%
Two changes	212	7%
More than 2 changes	136	4%
Children with 2 or more changes	348	11%
Total children served	3,111	100%

Table 6 below provides a breakdown of the reasons for a foster care placement change in SFY 2019. Because a child can experience more than one placement change while in foster care the total number of reasons, 2,102, does not match the number of children, 908, who experienced one or more placement changes during SFY 2019. The largest category of change was due to requests by the Foster Parent (902 or 42.9%). Of the 67 placement changes for "Alleged Abuse or Neglect," 57 were immediate moves to ensure a child's safety.

Table 6: Foster Care Placement Change Reasons		
Number and Percent of Foster Placement changes by reason in SFY 2019		
Change Reason	Number	Percent
Foster Parent Request (see Table 7)	902	42.9%
Placed with Relative	260	12.4%
Less-restrictive Placement	233	11.1%
Higher Level of Care	147	7.0%
Fictive Kin Placement	107	5.1%
Pre-Adoptive Placement	107	5.1%
Placed with Sibling	75	3.6%
Hospital	75	3.6%
Alleged Abuse or Neglect	67	3.2%
DJC Custody	55	2.6%
Non-Safety License Concern	46	2.2%
Extended Home Visit Ended	24	1.1%
ICWA Compliant/Tribal Approved	4	0.2%
Runaway	0	0.0%
Total	2,102	100.0%

Table 7 below provides additional detail on the 902 placement changes requested by foster parents in SFY 2019 (Table 6) for why the request for a placement change was made. Temporary Placement, as shown in Table 7, are those where foster parents were willing to shelter a child for a brief period, such as a single night or a weekend.

Table 7: Foster Parent Requests for Change		
Number and Percent of Foster Parent "Requested Change" by reason in SFY 2019		
Foster Parent Request Change Reasons	Number	Percent
Personal Reasons	323	36%
Difficulty in Managing Child's Behaviors	264	29%
Temporary Placement Only	315	35%
Total	902	99%

Provision of Ongoing Case Management Services

Once a child has been placed in foster care, social workers monitor the family's progress in achieving the objectives spelled out in the service plan, and regularly assess the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child. Case management responsibilities include:

- Making monthly contact with children, parents, and foster families
- Communicating with service providers to ensure family members are receiving services
- Transporting or making transportation arrangements for children and their families

- Arranging and supervising visits between children and parents, and between children and their siblings
- Working on the alternative plan, which may include ongoing contacts with relatives, and home studies of relatives residing in-state and out-of-state
- Conducting specialized recruitment to locate an adoptive family for children unable to remain with the foster parents
- Preparing required court reports and testifying in court hearings
- Documenting casework activities into CFS's child welfare information system (iCare)

Periodic Court Hearings

Federal and state law require a court hearing to review the case progress must be held no later than six months from the date of removal. Hearings may be held more frequently at the discretion of the court.

At 12 months from the date of removal, a permanency hearing must be held. At that time, CFS presents its recommendation for permanency. The permanency options include:

- Reunification
- Legal guardianship with a relative or non-relative
- Adoption by a relative or non-relative
- Another planned permanent living arrangement (this is only a permanency option for youth age sixteen (16) years and older)

For every child who has been in out-of-home care for at least 15 of the last 22 months, the state is obligated by state and federal law to file a petition to terminate parental rights. If compelling reasons exist for not terminating the parents' rights, those reasons must be approved by the court; otherwise the court will order the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights. Parents may choose to voluntarily terminate their parental rights, or their rights may be removed through an involuntary court process.

Permanency Decision Making

Child and Family Services is responsible for placing a child in foster care in a safe environment until such time permanency is established.

Between the sixth and twelfth month of a child being in foster care, if the permanency recommendation is something other than reunify with parent, CFS implements the Placement Selection process. The goal of this process is to place a child in a stable environment as quickly as possible to minimize negative impacts. The process considers relatives, fictive kin, and current foster parents who have expressed interest in being a permanent placement option and have an approved home study. Pursuant to CFS' standard, placement selections are made by committees who review the home studies and the child's best interest (see the "eight 'best interest' factors" previously noted). When multiple families are being considered for permanency, selection committee participants include: case worker, adoption worker, supervisor, and child welfare chief; Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/guardian ad litem; and tribal representation (if child is identified as a member of a specific tribe). Also present is a third-party department representative who understands practice but is not familiar with the specific case circumstances or a community representative.

Field Program Managers are responsible for making initial permanent placement recommendations, considering the input of the Permanent Placement Committee. A relative, current foster parent, or fictive kin who was considered, but not selected for a child's permanent placement by the Permanent Placement Committee may request a Permanent Placement Review. This process consists of a thorough review of the initial placement recommendation by a team of individuals from outside of the region where the case is managed, and the initial selection occurred. After this review, the Division Administrator makes the final placement recommendation.

Ultimately, determinations relating to where and with whom children are placed are subject to judicial review by the court, and when contested by any party, judicial approval. The court also finalizes all adoptions and guardianships.

Foster Care Improvements

Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative Driven Improvements

The Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative is a three-year effort that began in SFY 2019 (July 2018) and will conclude at the end of SFY 2021 (June 2021). This initiative uses one-time enhanced with annually approved federal funding matched with annually approved state funding to make business and technology changes to improve Child Welfare outcomes in Idaho. Deliverables and expected outcomes include:

Table 8: Child Welfare Transformation Initiative - Deliverables and Expected Outcomes	
Deliverable	Expected Outcomes
Redesigned Business Processes for Safety Assessment, Case Management, and Permanency to improve effectiveness and timeliness	Improve timeliness of safety assessment decisions and documentation
	Decrease the average length of stay (LOS) a child spends in foster care by 10 percent
CCWIS compliant, modern, and secure case management system (ESPI in Microsoft Dynamics and Azure cloud) with case management automation, new interfaces, and remote/mobile access to case-related information	Improve safety and case management decision making, relative to statewide priorities, actionable tasks, and timeliness for courts, advocates, and families
	Improve digital document use and increase the use of complete and timely notifications to advocates and families
	Use new interfaces and provide on-demand access to information for social workers as required by federal CCWIS
Redesigned Foster Parent interactions including recruitment, communication, and information sharing to support children in care	Give Foster Parents access to a new Foster Parent portal to read ESPI case information to support children in the care of Foster Parents
	Improve the experience of Foster Parents and increase Foster Parent recruitment and retention
Improved Community Engagement with partners to increase appropriate sharing of information	Build new interfaces with partners to exchange information on children to improve responsiveness to children across systems
Real-time performance management tools using ESPI and Tableau (BI software)	Staff understand performance standards and resource management necessary to improve and maintain appropriate staffing levels to support CFS workloads

Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) Driven Improvements (responses to findings)

In both SFY 2017 and SFY 2018, the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) investigated issues within Idaho's Child Welfare (CW) system. The SFY 2017 evaluation, though broad, was narrowed by answering five questions:

1. How is CW designed to place children and youth in appropriate homes in a timely manner?
2. How does CW determine timely placement of children and youth in appropriate homes?
3. How does CW promote stakeholder confidence for appropriate placement of children and youth?
4. How successful is CW at placing children and youth in appropriate homes in a timely manner?
5. How do any gaps or weaknesses in policy or practice affect the functionality of the CW system?

In addition, OPE's SFY 2018 report specifically focused on minimizing adverse effects by exploring how to best:

- Divert children and youth from entering foster care
- Prevent children and youth from crossing between the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems
- Prepare youth who are transitioning to independent living as adults

Table 9 summarizes CFS Program activities in SFY 2019 in response to OPE recommendations in six categories.

Table 9: Responses to the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) Recommendations
1. Resource Family Recruitment and Retention: To improve the recruitment of resource families with specific emphasis on region 5 given the area is in the greatest need of foster parent resources. In addition, we recommend Child and Family Services develop a robust foster parent retention plan.
Region 5 leadership and staff engaged in an intense recruitment plan that resulted in eighty-seven (87) foster parent inquiries and twenty-seven (27) newly licensed homes.
SFY 2108 - SFY 2019 - Idaho has and will focus on implementing several strategies to strengthen our resource family recruitment and retention plans. These strategies are: **Recruitment** • Resource family mapping to target recruitment efforts to match resource parent needs of specific geographic areas or ethnic groups (2019). • Adding recruitment resources to our recruitment contract (2019). • Re-establishing Regional Recruitment Committees made up of local community partners that will develop and implement recruitment plans (2019). • Redesign the foster parent application process to be more streamlined, reducing the time from application to licensure providing potential foster parents with a clear communication and support structure (2020). **Retention** • Development of evaluative measures for both initial and ongoing resource parent training (2020). • Implementation of Professional Family Development Plans (PFDP) will gather data specific to the individual ongoing training needs of resource families, confirmation of completion and adherence with structured ongoing training requirements as well as integrating a supportive resource/tool for resource families that will further assist in the retention of resource families (2020).

Table 9: Responses to the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) Recommendations
2. Workforce: • Continue with social worker retention efforts including identifying staffing shortages and develop a plan for addressing those shortages; • Work with the Legislature to develop a multiyear plan for ensuring staffing levels are sufficient to manage workloads; • Begin an ongoing assessment of its organizational culture and take steps to remedy problematic aspects. • If necessary, Child and Family Services should seek independent, external assistance in identifying and addressing organizational culture challenges.
A supervisor workgroup, working with an external technical assistance completed a statewide Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment (COHA) and Training Assessment to identify department workforce culture strengths (2018).
CFS has contracted with a vendor to assist in streamlining processes and assessing and refining workload allocation models and performance management (2019).
The department has raised the social worker workforce to 80% of compensation as a method to promote retention (2019).
3. Stakeholder Engagement: Child and Family Services continue working with partners and stakeholders to explore opportunities for enhancing external processes.
The department completed an assessment of current strengths and gaps of how stakeholder feedback is used to inform and implement business efficiencies (2019).
Using information gathered from the of strengths and gaps assessment, CFS is developing a process to effectively engage key stakeholders to analyze data, advance strategic initiatives, and inform the goals and objectives.
4. Oversight: Formation of a formal, system wide oversight entity with authority to ensure ongoing accountability, visibility, and accessibility for all child welfare partners and stakeholders.
During the SFY 2018 legislative session, the citizens' review panels were moved to the Health Districts to facilitate the review of child welfare cases and make system improvement recommendations to a newly established legislative oversight committee. The courts provided training to panel members in September 2018. The department continues to support panels by coordinating the access to child welfare records in the department.
5. Improve data collection and reporting capabilities: Child and Family Services should substantially expand and improve its data system to enable the needed data collection and reporting capabilities for diversion safety actions. Child and Family Services is in the process of modernizing its child protection data system.
CFS will use Tableau as its Business Intelligence (BI) tool and is currently migrating existing operational and performance reports to Tableau; making data more available to field staff.
An integrated component of the new CCWIS automation and process changes is a mandatory data quality plan to identify means to "mistake proof" data collection. For example, creating check screens for workers to "validate" data in subsequent child/family contacts to ensure information is accurate and up to date.
The new CCWIS automated system will use mobile technology to provide data to workers when they are working remotely and/or meeting with families or children in the family's home.

Table 9: Responses to the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) Recommendations
6. Safety Practice: Improve CPS ability to prevent children from entering foster care through consistent application of the safety model and addressing differences in regional management. Child and Family Services should develop a plan for improving child protection partners' engagement and consistency in efforts to prevent children from being placed unnecessarily in foster care
In response to the 2017 OPE findings about inconsistent accountability, management, and practice, Child and Family Services (1) began developing and implementing a coaching model that outlines and measures key competencies and expectations for workers and supervisors to promote consistency and (2) created a plan for monitoring the completion of safety assessments, which included accountability measures for overdue assessments and a project to create a safety assessment fidelity tool.
In SFY 2018 a committee was created comprised of department staff, a Deputy Attorney General, staff from the administrative office of the court, and magistrate judges to identify practice gaps in the system.
In 2019 the joint Department and Courts Committee delivered a statewide training for department social workers and court partners targeting keeping children safely in their home and ensuring children are able to return home as early as possible.
An evaluation tool was designed to measure statewide effectiveness of the fidelity of the application of the comprehensive safety assessment and safety model.
In April 2019, CFS implemented a safety redesign which focused on making timely safety decisions and ensuring the appropriate level of intervention.