

Permanency Enhancement

Benchmark Assessment (2011):

*Trends in Entry into Foster Care*

*by Region (2001 – 2010)*

**Summary**

Illinois has seen a decline in numbers of entries into foster care over the past decade. In 2001 5,828 children entered foster care. In 2010 this number was 4,989. This is a decline of 14%.

The regions differed in entry patterns. The three Cook regions saw significant reductions. In Cook Central and Cook South, most of the children entering care are African American. Both regions saw dramatic declines in African American children entering care.

Cook North is more diverse in entries. This region also saw a significant decline in African American entries. In 2010, for the first time in a decade, the numbers of Caucasian children entering care were higher than the number of African American children.

The case outside the Chicago metro area is different. Each of the three regions saw an ***increase*** in numbers of children entering care. The difference is largely accounted for by the increase in Caucasian children. Yet while numbers of Caucasian children entries were increasing in each downstate region, numbers of African American entries stayed the same or declined slightly.

## Trends in Entry into Care in Illinois

In our efforts to understand disparity it is important to consider trends in care over time as well as trends in entry into care by race and ethnicity.

While any involvement with the child welfare system has the potential to be disruptive to families, having a child removed and placed in foster care is the most disruptive to family life. In this section we review Statewide and regional entries into care over a ten year period.

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Derived from data from the Child and Family Research Center, 2011

Numbers of children entering care per year have declined from 5,828 to 4,989, a decrease of **14%** over the ten year period**.** The decline is **due to reduction of numbers of** ***African American children*** entering care. These have declined dramatically, from 3,277 to 2,139, a decline of **35%.**

The numbers of Caucasian youth have **risen** from 2,009 to 2,473, an increase of **23%.** Beginning in 2008, the numbers of Caucasian children entering care were greater than the numbers of African American children.Significant over-representation of African American children in care remains, but has declined.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 - 2010

Northern region has seen an increase in entries by year from 2001 to 2010, with 9% more youth entering care in 2010.

While increases occurred across groups, the **highest percent increase was among Caucasian children**, from 406 in 2001 to 496 in 2010, an increase of 22%.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 – 2010

Southern region saw a significant increase in entries into care, from 663 to 917, or 38%.

Overall, there was ***no*** increase in African American entries, but **significant increase in Caucasian entries**, from 423 to 670, or an increase of 58%.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 - 2010

Central region saw an increase in entries into care, from 1,485 to 1,646, or 11%.

All of this increase was due to **increases in Caucasian entries**, from 836 to 1,044, or 25%.

Beginning in 2008, rates of African American entries declined markedly. While rates over the 10 years went down only slightly (1%), rates from the high of 2007 had declined 11% in 2010.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 - 2010

Cook North saw significant decreases in entries into care, from 346 children in 2001 to 225 in 2010, or 35%.

The difference occurred among ***African American youth*,** where numbers declined from 179 to 75, or 42%.

Caucasian youth entries surpassed African American youth entries in 2010.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 - 2010

Cook South saw significant declines in numbers of entries into care, from 1,283 in 2001 to just 692 in 2010, a decline of 46%.

The vast majority of children entering care are African American**. Declines in African American entries were dramatic, from 1,144 in 2001 to 602 in 2010, a reduction of 52%.**

Numbers of children entering care declined in every racial/ethnic category.

# Trends in Entry into Foster Care by Region: 2001 – 2010

Cook Central saw significant declines in numbers of entries into care, from 774 in 2001 to just 364 in 2010, a decline of 53%.

The vast majority of children entering care are African American**. Declines in African American entries were dramatic, from 593 in 2001 to 226 in 2010, a reduction of 62%.**

Numbers of Hispanic entries also decreased, from 100 to 55, or 45%.

Disproportionality and Disparity in Central Region

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s the Permanency Enhancement Project (PEP) has evolved in Central Region, we have moved from a fairly simplistic to a more nuanced consideration of racial/ethnic over-representation. Initially we looked at percentages of children by racial/ethnic group in the population of the region or in individual counties and compared these to the percentage of youth in care and leaving care. This year we examined disproportionality and disparity across several points:

* Reports
* Indications
* Entries into care
* Children/youth in care

The first three were examined over the course of a year, the fourth at a single point in time – the last day of the fiscal year in 2010.

Most of the counties in Central Region are rural, and their populations are overwhelming non-Hispanic and White. In this report we examine the 7 large population counties where racial (and to a much lesser extent) ethnic diversity exists. These are Champaign, Macon, McLean, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon and Vermilion Counties.

The data represented on the following graphs examine overrepresentation of African American children in two ways: through bar graphs and through a single number representing the degree of disparity. The graphs provide a visual representation of disparity differences, something our action teams found to be more helpful in interpreting the data.

The second way of examining the data is through **the disparity ratio**. There are several ways to reflect differences through ratios (e.g. racial disproportionality ratios, risk ratios, weighted risk ratios). The measure selected compares African American to White children – the largest minority group to the dominant group. If the resulting number is 1or close to 1 there is no disparity. A number of 1.5 would mean that African American children were 50% more likely than White children to be reported, 2.0 would mean that they are twice as likely and so on.

While there is as of yet no clear standard on what constitutes serious disparity using this ratio, for our purposes we consider 1.5 to 2.49 to be moderate disparity, 2.5 to 3.49. to be high disparity, and 3.5 and above to be extreme disparity.

# Decision Point One: Accepted Reports

3.23 1.92 2.74 2.13 2.63 2.69 1.71

\*Disparity ratio on this variable = number of African American children reported divided by number of African American children in population over number of White children reported divided by number of White children in the population.

In each of the counties, African American children were much more likely to be reported than White children. For example, in Champaign County African American children were over three times more likely to be reported than were white children

The degree of risk varied over the counties, with African American children in Macon, Vermilion and Peoria counties having moderate risk, and Rock Island, Sangamon and Champaign county having high risk to be reported.

# Decision Point Two: Indicated Reports

1.40 1.02 1.23 1.25 1.32 1.13 1.12

\*Disparity ratio on this variable = (number of African American children indicated divided by number of African American children reported) over (number of White children indicated divided by number of White children reported).

At the indication level there is much less difference than at the reporting level. In Macon County there is almost no difference for African American and White children and there is very low risk in Sangamon and Vermilion Counties. Even in Champaign County, where the risk is highest, it does not reach the “moderate” level.

# Decision Point Three: Entry into Care

1.04 1.28 1.54 1.64 1.34 2.35 3.02

\*Disparity ratio on this variable = (number of African American children entering care divided by number of African American children indicated) over( number of White children entering care divided by number of White children indicated).

Once again, there are clear differences across counties when it comes to risk of being removed from home and placed into care. In Champaign County African American and White children have nearly identical risk to be placed once indicated. Risk is also low in Macon, Rock Island, McLean and Peoria counties. In Sangamon, where the ratio is 2.35, risk is moderate. However in Vermilion County the risk for African American children as compared to White children to be removed and placed in care is high.

# Children and Youth in Care

5.40 2.57 5.44 3.95 4.66 6.00 4.44

\*Disparity ratio on this variable =( number of African American children in care on June 30, 2010 divided by number of African American children in population) over (number of White children in care on June 30, 2010 divided by number of White children in the population).

Here we examine the percent of the child population by race which is in care as of June 30, 2010. While previous graphs illustrate risk for a single year, this graph represents what we call cumulative disparity. Children may have been in care for one day or five years. This way of looking at the data demonstrates that while there was less disparity at certain points across decision points in FY 10, African American children carry the legacy of overrepresentation.

By this reckoning, African American children are at much greater risk to be in care than are white children and in most counties this risk is extreme.

# Child Population vs. Foster Care Population by Race

This graph illustrates disparity in another way. Unlike the last graph, which shows the risk for a child of a given race to be in care, this graph shows the percent of children in a given county who are African American or White and compares this to the percent of the children in care who are African American or White.

E.g. 15% of the child population in Vermilion county is African American, compared to 48% of the in care population. White children are 73% of the child population but only 51% of the in care population.

## Summary

Counties vary dramatically in the extent to which African American children are over-represented. Below we summarize decision points and outcomes to illustrate the difference and identify the areas in which counties have the most difficulty.

**Disparity Ratios by County and Decision Point/ Outcome**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **County** | **Reports** | **Indications** | **Entries** | **Percent Population in Care** |
| Champaign | 3.23 | 1.40 | 1.04 | 5.40 |
| Macon | 1.92 | 1.02 | 1.28 | 2.57 |
| McLean | 2.74 | 1.23 | 1.54 | 5.44 |
| Peoria | 2.13 | 1.25 | 1.64 | 3.95 |
| Rock Island | 2.63 | 1.32 | 1.34 | 4.66 |
| Sangamon | 2.69 | 1.13 | 2.35 | 6.0 |
| Vermilion | 1.71 | 1.12 | 3.02 | 4.44 |

Red = extremely high disparity (3.5 or above)

Orange = high disparity (2.5 to 3.49)

Yellow = moderate disparity (1.5 to 2.49)

White = No or little disparity (under 1.5)

From this table it is clear that in FY10 all counties had moderate to high disparity at the reporting stage, but that children and families were treated equally or similarly at the indication stage. In 4 counties disparity existed at the entry stage, with one counting having high disparity. Where overrepresentation is most dramatic is in the percent of the overall population in care from the African American or White groups. African American children in every county were at much higher risk of being in care than White children.