



**Testimony Re: FY 2020 Department of Children, Youth and Families Budget
 Senate Finance Committee
 April 23, 2019
 Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director**

Mr. Vice Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support to increase funding in the FY 2020 budget for the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

DCYF is responsible for protecting and providing care of children who have experienced abuse and neglect, have behavioral health needs, and youth involved in the juvenile justice system. As the Committee is aware, DCYF has undergone significant budget reductions over the past several years. Given the critical role that DCYF plays in protecting our state’s children, it is important that the agency and its contracted providers have adequate resources to effectively protect and provide services to children and families.

As the table shows, there has been an increase in child maltreatment reports, completed investigations, and confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect during the past 10 years with a large jump in all three from 2017 to 2018.

**DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline Calls
 for Reports of Abuse and/or Neglect, Investigations,*
 and Indicated Investigations, Rhode Island, 2008-2018**

YEAR	TOTAL # UNDUPLICATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS	% AND # OF REPORTS WITH COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS	# OF INDICATED INVESTIGATIONS
2008	12,204	51% (6,214)	1,913
2009	12,189	52% (6,362)	2,075
2010	13,069	53% (6,956)	2,392
2011	13,382	49% (6,520)	2,225
2012	13,540	50% (6,784)	2,266
2013	13,905	50% (6,975)	2,294
2014	14,735	51% (7,573)	2,413
2015	14,402	45% (6,470)	2,227
2016	14,942	40% (5,935)	2,074
2017	15,945	42% (6,628)	2,404
2018	21,837	38% (8,296)	2,430

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, 2008-2018.

**One investigation can be generated by multiple hotline calls. Investigations can result in a finding of indicated, unfounded, or unable to complete (as when essential party cannot be found).*

For the past few years the Governor’s budget has recommended level funding for DCYF. However last year and this year, a supplemental budget request has been necessary. We think funding for DCYF has to increase to at least the total of the FY 2019 plus the supplemental.

Any successful system that transitions from congregate care to foster care in families, needs community-based, family-centered supports to be sure foster family placements are successful. The best way to approach this system transformation would be for the money saved from a reduction in congregate care placements to be invested in foster care recruitment, development, and the necessary, community-based tailored services needed to make those foster family placements successful, plus an increase in funding for DCYF due to increased overall investigations and caseload.

There is also a welcome focus by the Director on prevention which requires resources for the Family Care Community Partnerships (FCCP's).

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly urges the General Assembly to continue to monitor the rollout and implementation of the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) program to ensure young adults are receiving comprehensive clinical services and supports, appropriate housing, and opportunities for educational and career advancement. It is critical that VEC participants are supported to ensure successful transitions into adulthood.

We would like more information about the proposed \$3.7 million in savings from all funds for accelerating placements of youth age 18 to 21 into the VEC program from independent living and semi-independent living placements. We know that since passage of VEC effective July 1, 2018 37 young people have approved court petitions to enter the VEC program and we want to ensure they receive adequate funding for housing, and the tailored supports and services they need to be successful. We also want to be sure that young people who are approaching their 18th birthday and youth who previously aged out of DCYF at age 18 but who may be eligible for VEC are outreached to and given information about possible participation in VEC.

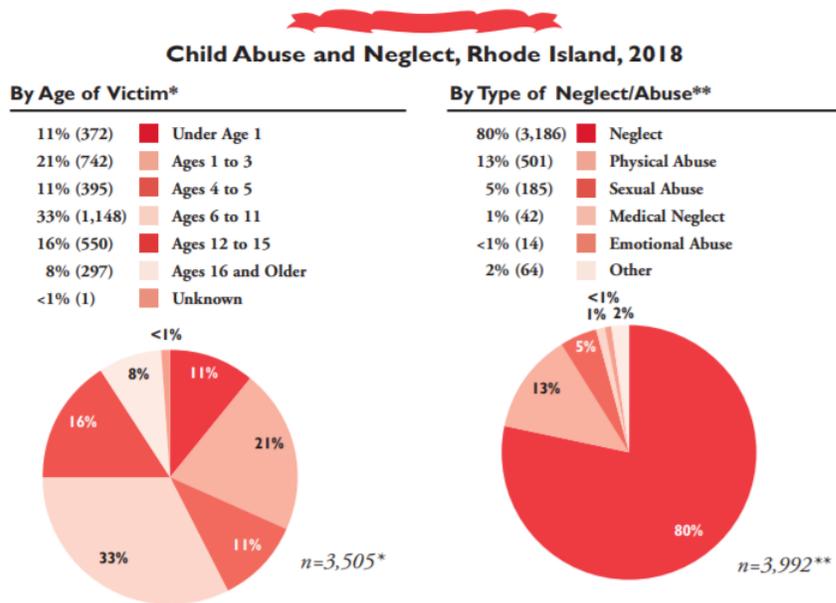
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports using the increase in the DCYF budget to increase foster family capacity and to increase the number of front-line caseworkers in order to further reduce caseloads and for community based prevention services. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT recommends increased funding in the FY 2020 Budget in order to better support this life or death work.

As you consider the DCYF budget, we would like to share some data from the *Rhode Island Count Factbook* that show trends regarding child abuse and neglect in our state.

Child maltreatment reports to DCYF, completed investigations, and indicated investigations increased in 2018.

- In 2018, the number (8,296) of reports with completed investigations increased while the number (2,430) of indicated investigations also increased.
- Of the 21,837 maltreatment reports made to the child abuse hotline in 2018, 52% (11,300) were classified as “information/ referrals.” Information/referrals are reports made to the Child Protective Services Hotline that contain a concern about the well-being of a child but do not meet the criteria for an investigation.

Child abuse and neglect rate in Rhode Island



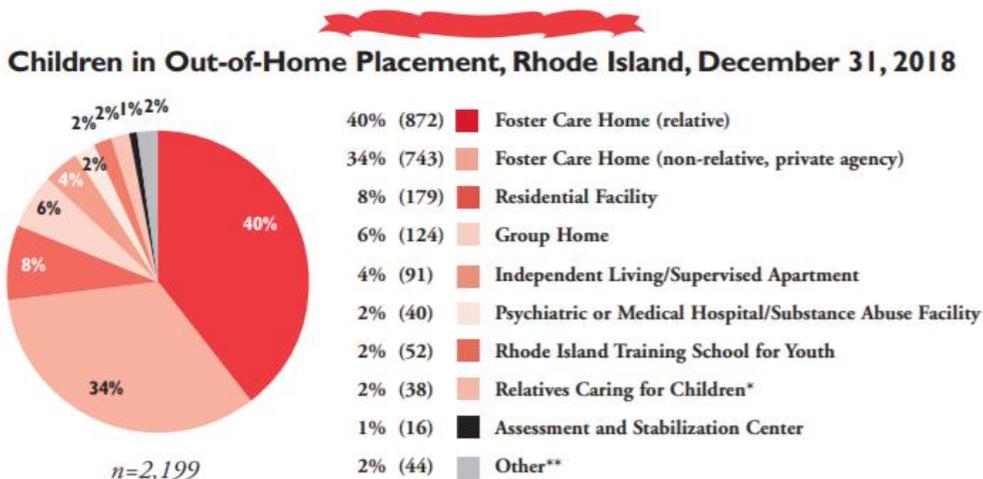
- Of the 3,505 unduplicated child victims, about half (49%) of the victims were young children under age six and almost one-third (32%) were ages three and younger.
- Of the 3,992 instances of child abuse and/or neglect in Rhode Island in 2018, 80% (3,186) were for neglect.
- In Rhode Island in 2018, the child abuse and neglect rate (based on the number of child victims of indicated case of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children) was 14.6 per 1,000 children, the same rate as in 2017.
- The three communities with the highest child and abuse rates in 2018 were Woonsocket (35.7), Pawtucket (24.7), and West Warwick (23.1).

Emergency Department Visits and Hospitalizations Due to Child Abuse and/or Neglect, 2017

- In 2017 there were 107 emergency department visits due to child abuse and neglect and 18 hospitalizations due to child abuse and neglect.

Children in Out-of-Home Placements

- As of December 31, 2018, there were 2,199 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placements; compared to 2,151 children in December 2017.
- The percentage of children in out-of-home placement who were in a relative foster care home was 40% on December 31, 2018, the same as it was on December 31, 2017.



**Relatives caring for children are classified as an out-of-home placement by DCYF, despite the fact that these relatives did not receive monetary payments from DCYF to care for the children and the children were never removed and never needed to be removed from the relatives' homes. In these cases, the relative caring for the child initiated contact with DCYF to receive assistance from the agency.*

***The placement category "Other" includes: runaway youth in DCYF care or those with unauthorized absences (35), pre-adoptive homes (6), and minors with their mother in shelter/group home/residential facility (3).*

- On December 31, 2018, 1,615 children were living in foster family placements and 303 children were living in a residential facility or group home, compared to 1,558 children living in a foster family placement and 293 children living in a residential facility or group home on December 31, 2017.

Less children and youth in the care of DCYF were adopted.

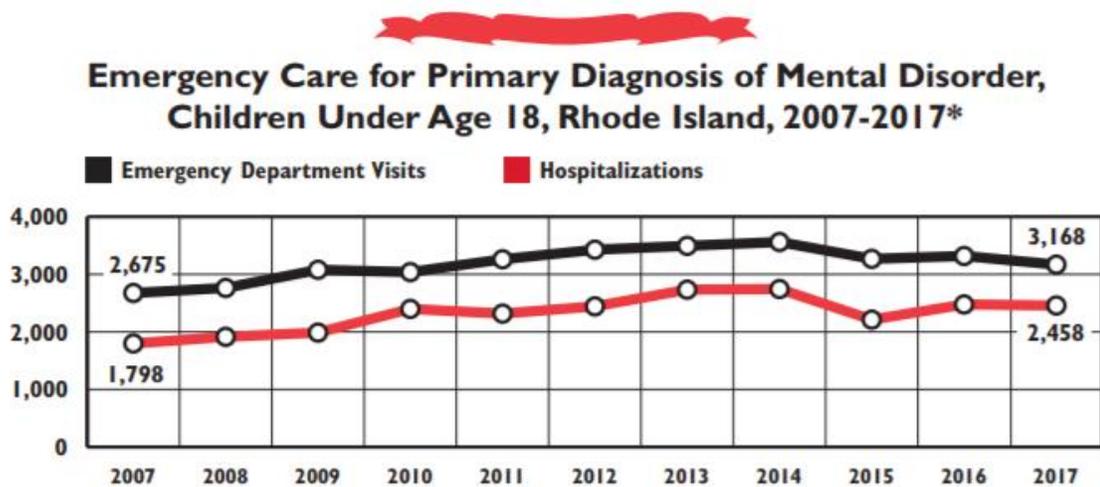
- During 2018, 255 children in the care of DCYF were adopted in Rhode Island, down from 261 in 2017.

Youth continue to age out of foster care without permanency.

- During State Fiscal Year 2017 (the most recent year for which this data point is available), 77 Rhode Island youth exited foster care never having gained permanency through reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

Children’s Behavioral Health

Children’s mental health needs to be a key area of focus as you consider the proposed DCYF budget. We continue to track the number of children and youth in hospitals for mental or behavioral health related issues. It is important that we provide children and youth with access to quality, evidence-based mental health services by allocating appropriate funding with attention to early intervention and prevention to decrease the number of children requiring mental health hospitalizations.



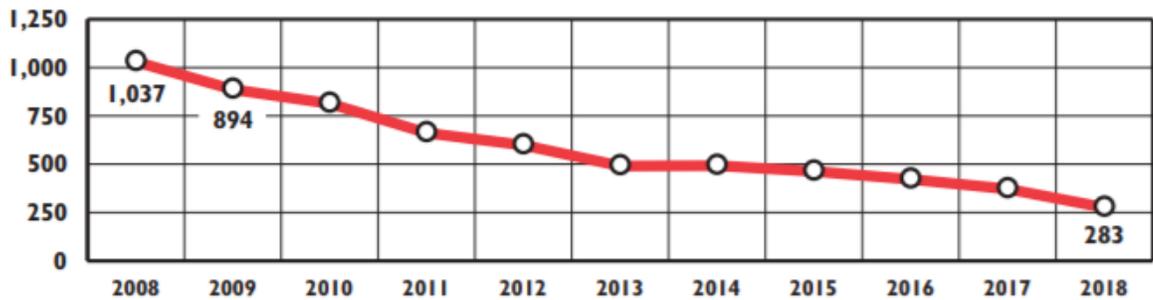
Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2007-2017. *Data are for emergency department visits and hospitalizations, not children. Children may visit emergency department or be hospitalized more than once. Trend line is comparable to Factbooks since 2012. Note: Effective October 1, 2015, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes changed from the 9th classification to the 10th classification, which may impact comparability across the years.

- In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2018, 465 Rhode Island children and youth awaited psychiatric inpatient admission for an average of 1.4 days on medical floors at Hasbro Children’s Hospital similar to 462 children in FFY 2017.
- In 2017, there were 3,168 emergency department visits and 2,458 hospitalizations of Rhode Island children under age 18 with a primary diagnosis of mental disorder.

The number of youth in the care or custody of the Rhode Island Training School continues to decline.

- Between 2008 and 2018, the annual total number of youth in the care and custody of the Training School at any point during the year declined from 1,037 to 283, decreasing by nearly one hundred youth between 2017 and 2018.

**Youth in the Care and Custody of the Rhode Island Training School,
Calendar Years 2008-2018**



- The population of youth at the Training School has declined by 68% since 2009, the year after the population was capped at 148 boys and 12 girls on any given day.
- **Short lengths of stay:** Many youth are detained for short periods of time and released at their first court appearance (usually the following business day). Of the 344 discharges from the Training School during 2018, 24% resulted in stays of two days or less, 31% resulted in stays of three days to two weeks, and 45% resulted in stays of more than two weeks.
- **Racial and Ethnic Disparities Remain:** Youth of color are disproportionately more likely than White youth to be detained or sentenced to the Training School. During 2018, Black youth made up 28% of youth at the Training School, while making up 6% of the child population.
- **Statutory Minimum Age for Juvenile Incarceration:** Rhode Island is one of 12 states that have no statutory minimum age for holding children in secure confinement and no minimum age of delinquency jurisdiction. During 2018, there were four children age 12 and 36 youth ages 13-14 held at the Training School.

We thank the members of the Senate Finance Committee and the General Assembly for their long-standing support to ensuring that children, youth, and families that are involved with DCYF. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.