

# Children in Out-of-Home Placement

## DEFINITION

Children in out-of-home placement is the number of children who have been removed from their families and are in the care of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) while awaiting permanency. Out-of-home placements include foster care homes, group homes, assessment and stabilization centers, residential facilities, and medical facilities. Permanency can be achieved through reunification with the family, adoption, or guardianship.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Children need stability, permanency, and safety for healthy development. Whenever possible, it is best for children and families to remain together. Removal from the home may be necessary for the child's safety and well-being; however, critical connections and a sense of permanency may be lost when a child is placed out-of-home.<sup>1</sup> Permanency planning efforts should begin as soon as a child enters the child welfare system so that a permanent living situation can be secured as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup> The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Fostering Connections Act)* promotes permanency through supports for relative guardianship and incentives for adoption.<sup>3</sup>

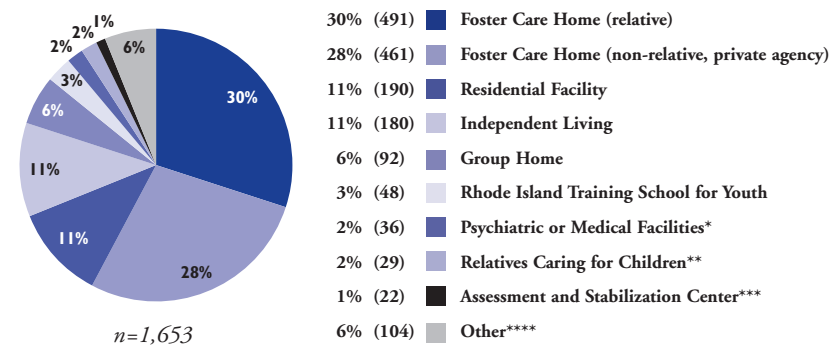
Children in out-of-home care can experience multiple placements, lose contact with family members and

siblings, and may have overlooked educational, physical, and mental health needs.<sup>4</sup> They suffer more frequent and more serious medical, developmental, and mental health problems than their peers.<sup>5</sup> Mental and behavioral health is the largest unmet health need.<sup>6</sup> Long-term stays in care can cause emotional, behavioral, or educational problems that can negatively impact children's long-term well-being and success.<sup>7</sup> Children in foster care are about twice as likely as their peers to be absent from school or be suspended and are nearly three times more likely than their peers to be expelled. Appropriate supports and services can help youth in care maximize their potential and ensure that they are prepared for higher education and work.<sup>8</sup> As of the 2017-2018 school year in Rhode Island, data on reading and math proficiency and high school graduation is publicly available for students in foster care.<sup>9</sup>

Children of Color are overrepresented at various points in the child welfare system, including reporting, screening, investigation, and assessment, and child welfare systems often fail to find and retain foster and adoptive Families of Color. Children of Color in child welfare systems are more likely to be removed from their homes, remain in the child welfare system longer, have parental rights terminated, and are less likely to reunify with their families.<sup>10</sup>



Children in Out-of-Home Placement, Rhode Island, December 1, 2023



\*Medical facilities data include medical hospitals (13) and psychiatric hospitals (23).

\*\*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 contacted DCYF to receive assistance from the agency.

\*\*\*Assessment and Stabilization Centers are described as an emergency placement.

\*\*\*\*The placement category "Other" includes out-of-state/other agency (70), runaway youth in DCYF care or those with unauthorized absences (21), Job Corps (1), prison (1), substance use treatment facility (1), and other (10).

Source: RI Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2023. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

★ As of December 1, 2023, there were 1,653 children under age 21 in the care of DCYF who were in out-of-home placements.<sup>11</sup>

★ The total DCYF caseload on December 1, 2023 was 6,253, including 2,102 children living in their homes under DCYF supervision, an increase from 2022 (1,974), and 2,498 children living in adoption settings.<sup>12</sup>

★ The total DCYF caseload also included 70 children in out-of-state placements/other agency custody, one participating in Job Corps, one serving a prison sentence, and 10 youth in other placements.<sup>13</sup>

★ On December 1, 2023, 282 children were living in a residential facility or group home, a slight increase from 265 children on December 31, 2022. The percentage of children in out-of-home placement who were in a relative foster care home decreased from 35% (634) on December 31, 2022 to 30% (491) on December 1, 2023.<sup>14,15</sup>