

# 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>

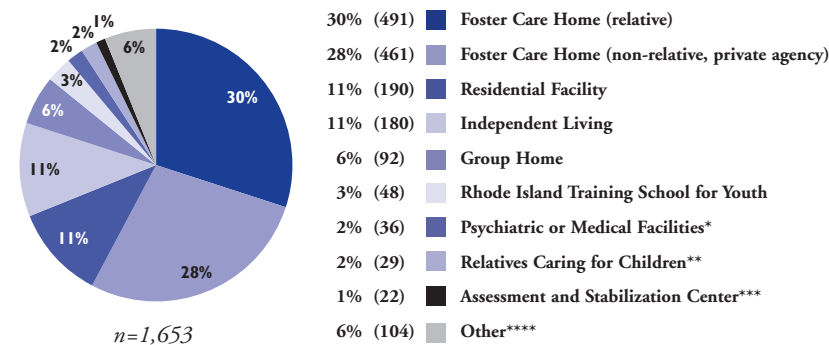
Children in out-of-home care can experience multiple placements, lose contact with family members and

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>

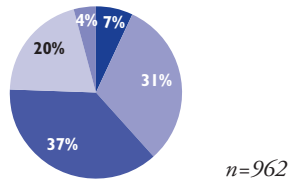
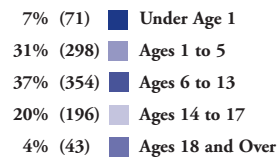
★ The total DCYF caseload also included 70 children in out-of-state placements/other agency custody, one participating in Job Corps, one serving a prison sentence, and 10 youth in other placements.<sup>13</sup>

★ 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>

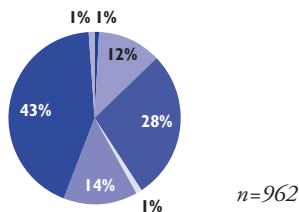
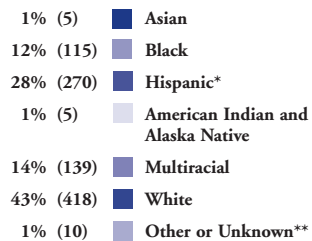
# Children in Out-of-Home Placement

## Children in Out-of-Home Placement, by Type of Setting, Age, and Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

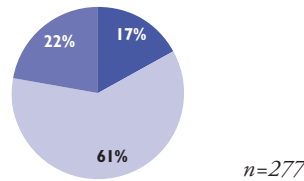
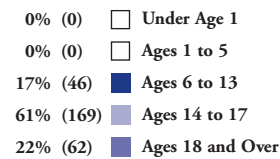
In Foster Care Homes by Age



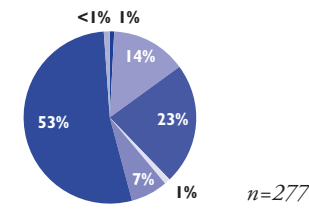
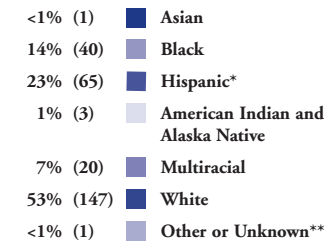
In Foster Care Homes by Race and Ethnicity



In Group Homes and Residential Facilities by Age



In Group Homes and Residential Facilities by Race and Ethnicity



\*Hispanic children may be of any of the race categories. \*\*Other or Unknown also includes those who "Declined to Disclose" their race/ethnicity.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2023-2024. Pie charts show data for a single point-in-time: Foster Care Homes on January 2, 2024 and Group Homes and Residential Facilities on December 31, 2023. Data may not match the chart on previous page due to different report dates. Residential facilities do not include psychiatric hospitals, medical hospitals, the Rhode Island Training School, out-of-state/other agency custody or residential facility placements pending contract. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## Ensuring Children Grow Up in Families

★ Whenever safely possible, it is important to support families so children can remain with their parents. The *Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)* of 2018 enables states to use funds from the entitlement of Title IV-E of the *Social Security Act* that pays for child welfare, for services to prevent the use of foster care in cases of maltreatment. States can spend money on services to address mental health issues, in-home parent skill-based programs, and substance use treatment for parents and relatives caring for children. Rhode Island received approval begin implementing the *FFPSA* over five years starting in FFY 2022. In 2023 the *FFPSA* was updated to simplify the licensing process for kinship placements, protect LGBTQ+ children in foster care, and expand access to legal representation.<sup>16,17</sup>

★ If children cannot remain safely at home with family supports, out-of-home placement with a kinship foster family may be the best option. Children in kinship foster families have been shown to have fewer mental health and behavioral issues, as well as increased educational and placement stability.<sup>18</sup> The *Fostering Connections Act* promotes kinship care and family connections by requiring states to notify relatives when a child is placed in foster care and providing funding for states offering kinship guardianship assistance payments.<sup>19</sup> Rhode Island defines kin broadly and includes any adult who has a close and caring relationship with the child.<sup>20</sup> On December 1, 2023, of the 952 children in foster care placements in Rhode Island, 52% (491) were in kinship foster families.<sup>21</sup>

★ Children in foster families experience better outcomes related to placement stability, education, and delinquency compared to children in congregate care settings.<sup>22</sup> Some youth who require intensive services for mental health needs can benefit from the care provided in a treatment foster care home, which is often more cost effective than residential treatment homes and provides the structure and familiarity of a home environment.<sup>23</sup>

★ Adolescents are more likely to be placed in group homes and residential facilities than younger children. In Rhode Island on December 31, 2023, of the 277 children placed in groups homes and residential facilities, 83% (231) were ages 14 and older.<sup>24</sup>

★ Black children are twice as likely to be in both foster care and congregate care placements compared to their representation in the population. Multiracial children are also more than one and a half times more likely to be in foster care.<sup>25,26</sup>

(References are on page 186)