

State of Child Welfare 2010 Data Sources and Explanation

General data information

2010 State of Child Welfare compares two years of data on a set of key child welfare performance indicators. The report is designed for the reader to note change in and across local, county type and state data from one year to the next.

County Type

The statewide report and the county reports include county type and state total. Comparing data at the county level is most appropriate when comparing a county against another one of the same type. County type (rural, rural mix, urban mix, urban) is based on 2000 Census population density.

Rural	Rural Mix	Urban Mix	Urban
Adams	Armstrong	Beaver	Allegheny
Bedford	Butler	Berks	Bucks
Bradford	Cambria	Blair	Chester
Cameron	Carbon	Centre	Dauphin
Clarion	Fayette	Cumberland	Delaware
Clearfield	Franklin	Erie	Lackawanna
Clinton	Lawrence	Lancaster	Lehigh
Columbia	Lycoming	Lebanon	Luzerne
Crawford	Mercer	Washington	Montgomery
Elk	Perry	Westmoreland	Northampton
Forest	Schuylkill	York	Philadelphia
Fulton	Somerset		
Greene	Susquehanna		
Huntingdon	Wayne		
Indiana	Wyoming		
Jefferson			
Juniata			
McKean			
Mifflin			
Monroe			
Montour			
Northumberland			
Pike			
Potter			
Snyder			
Sullivan			
Tioga			
Union			
Venango			
Warren			

Scope and Size

Care should be taken in making statements related to small numbers of children.

Foster Care

In the context of this report, foster care is used to describe all children in substitute or out-of-home care except when specifically looking at children in care by placement setting. In the context of placement setting, foster care is used to describe a home or family-based placement setting.

Report Indicators

Child Abuse Reports

This indicator provides the total number of suspected child abuse reports throughout the year in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has a differential response system for reporting and responding to child abuse and neglect reports. Reports are classified, depending on their degree of severity, as either Child Protective Service reports or General Protective Service reports. Child Protective Service reports include sexual abuse, physical abuse, or serious physical neglect. General Protective Service reports include less severe reports of general neglect (e.g. lack of adequate housing, truancy, parent-child conflict, etc). Only Child Protective Service reports are tracked in the ChildLine and Abuse Registry, and these are the reports noted in the *State of Child Welfare* report. General Protective Service reports are forwarded to county children and youth agencies by ChildLine for assessment, or are reported directly to the county agency by the public. County Children and Youth Agencies provide many families with services in the Commonwealth following General Protective Service assessments.

- The rate per 1000 children was calculated dividing the suspected cases by the 2000 Census child population from birth through age 17.
- **SOURCE:** *2008 and 2009 Child Abuse Reports* extracted from the ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1/08 – 12/31/08 and 1/1/09 – 12/31/09), Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families, U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

Child Abuse Substantiations

This indicator notes the percentage of child abuse reports that are substantiated. Substantiated cases of child abuse are incidents of abuse that have been determined to meet Pennsylvania's definition of child abuse per the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. Following a child protective services investigation a determination is made as to whether the child abuse report is substantiated. This determination can be made by the county child welfare agency (referred to as an indicated report) or by the courts (referred to as a founded report).

SOURCE: *2008 and 2009 Child Abuse Reports* extracted from ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1/08 – 12/31/08 and 1/1/09 – 12/31/09), Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Repeated Child Abuse

This indicator shows the rate of children who experience more than one incident of substantiated child abuse. Ideally this would be subsequent instances of substantiated abuse where counties were aware of the initial instances of abuse. "During the course of an investigation, it is possible that other previously unreported incidents become known.

For example, an investigation can reveal another incident of abuse which was never before disclosed by the child or the family. These previously unreported incidents are registered with ChildLine and handled as separate reports. Also, a child may be abused in one county then move to another county and become a victim of abuse again. This would be considered reabuse whether or not the original county agency referred the matter to the new county agency. In both examples, such reports would be reabuse of the child. Therefore, it is not accurate to assume that the victim and the family were known to the county agency in all instances where a child was a victim of multiple incidents of abuse. The statistics on reabuse should be understood within this context (Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, 2008 Annual Child Abuse Report).” There is no time limitation on using the “repeated” designation, except that the repeated incident was identified in Childline in the reporting year. It is important to note that repeated child abuse may include overstated data.

SOURCE: 2008 and 2009 Child Abuse Reports extracted from ChildLine and Abuse Registry (1/1/08 – 12/31/08 and 1/1/09 – 12/31/09), Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

In-home Services

In order to get a complete picture of the child welfare system, reliable data is needed for every key decision point from the initial report of child abuse or neglect through children exiting the system. While Pennsylvania has made great strides to improve its data collection efforts, reliable data is still lacking for general protective services, in-home services and evidence-based practice delivered with Special Grants funding.

The in-home services indicator should reflect the number of children receiving services in their home to address issues of abuse and neglect. This data is tracked by a relatively new database (CY-28 file submitted by counties to Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families), which is still under review and refinement. In addition, the local collection of the data is believed to vary from one jurisdiction to another resulting in reporting inaccuracies. The combination of these factors makes the use of this data unreliable. Therefore, no in-home services data are included in this report.

Children Entering Foster Care

This indicator shows the total number of children who entered foster care placement between 4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2009) and 4/1/09 – 3/31/10 (2010), as well as the percentage of children who entered foster care during the year for the first time. This can be a duplicated count as a single child can enter placement more than one time during the period. First-time entries, however, are unduplicated.

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Children in Foster Care

This indicator illustrates the unduplicated total number of children in foster care placement between 4/1/08 and 3/31/09 (2009) and 4/1/09 – 3/31/10 (2010), and breaks out children in care by age, race/ethnicity, and placement setting.

Age: Age represents the child’s age at the end of the period (3/31/09 (2009) or 3/31/10 (2010)) if the child was in placement at the end of the period or the child’s age when he or she left foster care during the year.

Race and ethnicity: Race and ethnicity breakouts include white, African American, Other and Latino. Latino is an ethnicity and not a race. The race percentages do not add to total population as children can be reported under multiple races. However, only eight counties have the ability to capture multiple races in their data systems presently, so the reporting of multiple races is relatively small. The “Other” category includes children who were not white and not African American, including a small number of Asian, American Indian, and Unable to Determine.

Placement setting: This indicator shows the latest placement setting that children are in during the year (4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2009) or 4/1/09 – 3/31/10 (2010)). Placement settings are the different environments that children are placed in when they enter the foster care system. Pre-adoptive settings as well as foster family settings (both relative and non-relative) are family-based placement settings. Group homes and institutions are more restrictive placement settings and are often referred to as congregate care settings. One should note that in 2010 the state saw an increase in the use of trial home visits and in the number of children on a runaway status. This should also be kept in mind when reviewing local data and how these changes interplay with data on the use of other placement settings. As noted below under re-entry, there are differences in how counties code a runaway status due to how it may impact their payment and data systems.

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Timely Reunification with Parents or Relatives

This indicator shows the percentage of all children who entered foster care for the first time in a 12-month period (4/1/07 – 3/31/08 (2009) or 4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2010)) and were discharged (specifically children who were in foster care over eight days) to reunification with their parents or relatives in less than 12 months from the date of removal (4/9/07 – 3/31/09 (2009) or 4/9/08 – 3/31/10 (2010)).

It is important when reviewing reunification data to recognize its interrelationship with re-entry data. Ideally children who must enter foster care will be reunified quickly and permanently with their birth parents or relatives – and not experience re-entry into foster care.

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Re-entry into Foster Care

This indicator shows the percentage of all children who were discharged to reunification with their parents or other relatives in a 12-month period (4/1/07 – 3/31/08 (2009) or 4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2010)) and re-entered foster care in less than 12 months following their reunification (4/2/07 – 3/31/09 (2009) or 4/2/08 – 3/31/10 (2010)). The data system does not allow the capture of enough information on children discharged from care who re-entered foster care within the first year (4/1/07 – 3/31/08 (2009) or 4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2010)) to determine whether that discharge was a reunification to parents or relatives or discharge for another reason. This may result in an over-reporting of reunifications (and subsequent re-entries). Some counties may also have an over-count of re-entries because of nuances in their billing systems. Examples of this include when a child is a runaway from their foster placement the county may close out the child's foster care setting for purposes of payment, which also may register as the child left foster care. When the child is found the county notes the child's placement setting for payment, which may also register as a re-entry. A similar example can occur in some counties that stop foster care setting payment for a temporary trial home visit.

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Children Leaving Foster Care

This indicator shows the number of children leaving foster care between 4/1/08 and 3/31/09 (2009) or 4/1/09 and 3/31/10 (2010) by discharge reason and the median length of time in foster care (in months) for those children to be discharged. This can be a duplicated count as a child can exit multiple times during the reporting period.

Reunification, adoption, guardianship and live with other relatives are considered permanency outcomes. Emancipation, transfer to another agency, runaway and death of a child are not. It also shows the unduplicated number of children remaining in care at the end of the year (3/31/09) or (3/31/10) and the median length of stay for those children. As noted under placement setting, counties vary in how they report runaways.

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Foster Care Placement Stability

This indicator notes the percentage of children in foster care between 12 and 24 months who experienced three or more placement settings. The file is comprised of all children in foster care between 12 and 24 months served during the timeframe of 4/1/08 – 3/31/09 (2009) or 4/1/09 – 3/31/10 (2010).

SOURCE: AFCARS Longitudinal File produced by Hornby Zeller Associates for Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families

Caseworker Visits

The indicator represents the percentage of children who were visited on a monthly basis by a county or private agency child welfare worker. This percentage was determined

from a statewide sample of children in foster care that was calculated by taking the number of full calendar months caseworkers conducted monthly visits, divided by the number of full calendar months that children in the sample were in care. The sample was extracted from the AFCARS longitudinal file (sample comprised of children discharged in the first AFCARS reporting period, children discharged in second reporting period, and children in care on the last day of the second period). Pennsylvania is currently meeting the federal standard for monthly casework visitation.

SOURCE: Statewide sample 10/1/07 – 9/30/08 (2009) or 10/1/08 – 9/30/09 (2010) collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families