

Fewer children in foster care

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Pennsylvania is doing a good job of safely reducing the number of children in foster care, according to a new report from Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

The State of the Child report found almost 90 percent of counties, including Allegheny, reduced their foster care placements over the past year, resulting in 12 percent fewer than last year.

The state decreased by 8 percent the number of children placed in group homes or institutions, where they tend to have less contact with their birth families, more behavioral problems and less likelihood of permanent placement. Also, 11 percent more children were reunited with their birth families in a timely manner.

The state held fairly steady in the number of youths who stay in the child welfare system until they "age out" at age 18, never having found permanent family connections. However, the report said, the roughly 7 percent figure is still too high.

Allegheny County reunited 4 percent more first-time foster-care children with their families. But it also saw a nearly 4 percent rise in "bounce-back" cases, where reunited children wound up back in foster care in under a year.

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