

KANSAS DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM OVERSIGHT

SECRETARY LAURA HOWARD | 10.27.2025

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HOWARD v. MCINTYRE SETTLEMENT UPDATE

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 REPORT

SETTLEMENT HISTORY



- The McIntyre lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court of Kansas in November of 2018 under the Colyer Administration. Secretary Howard and her team negotiated with Plaintiffs and agreed to a settlement plan in July 2020. It was approved by the federal court in Jan. 2021.
- Settlement Focuses on:
 - Accountability
 - Reporting and implementation
 - Practice improvements
 - Outcomes
- The fourth status report was released September 22, 2025

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS UNDERWAY



The 2024 report shows DCF and its partners have met eight of the obligations agreed to under the settlement agreement.

The eight include maintaining the four previously met obligations under Accountability and Reporting Implementation.

DCF also saw performance increases or maintained progress on five obligations.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS

Licensed Capacity: DCF shall ensure that no placement exceeds its licensed capacity without an approved exception

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- **2024 outcome:** Met commitment in 2023 and maintained in 2024.
DCF will exit out of the commitment for 2025.

DCF Shall not delay authorization and provision of medically necessary mental health treatment without regard to placement stability

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- **2024 Outcome:** Decreased the number of youth experiencing delays in mental health services due to placement instability to **11%, an improvement from 20% in 2023.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS

Ensure Crisis intervention services available to Class members statewide.

- **2024 outcome:** Met commitment DCF Family Helpline, 988 crisis services available

DCF shall end the practice of utilizing any non-child welfare housing or temporary accommodations absent of extraordinary circumstances.

- **2024 Outcome:** Failure to Place totals increased in CY2024

DCF shall end the practice of Night-to-Night Placements and end the practice of Short-Term Placements.

- **2024 outcome:** Short term placements decreased slightly from CY2023 to in CY2024. DCF maintained progress from previous year with a slight increase in performance.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: OUTCOMES

Initial Mental Health & Trauma Screens – Children and youth shall receive timely initial screening within 30 days upon entry into foster care.

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- **Settlement Goal:** 90%
 - **2024 Outcome:** 94% of screens were conducted within 30 days upon entry into foster care.

Mental & Behavioral Health Needs– During a 12-month period, those in custody shall have had their mental and behavioral health needs addressed.

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- **Settlement Goal:** 90%
 - **2024 Outcome:** Performance in Period 4 **increased 14%**, from 52% to 66%.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: OUTCOMES

Placement stability – During a 12-month period 90% of children and youth were in a stable placement.



- **Settlement Goal:** 90%
- **2024 outcome:** 92%. DCF Exceeded the 2-year target of 85%.

Placement moves: Children and youth to have one or fewer placement moves in a 12-month period.



- **Settlement Goal:** 90%
- **2024 outcome:** Maintained progress from previous year of 83%.

Moves per 1,000 days: During a 12-month period youth shall have a rate of placement moves that does not exceed a rate of 4.44 of moves per 1,000 days in care.



- **Settlement Goal:** 4.44
- **2024 outcome:** Performance rate is 7.24, down from 7.94 in 2023.

CONTINUING FORWARD



While great progress has been made, DCF continues pushing forward to address remaining obligations.

DCF meets monthly with case management providers (CMP), child placing agencies and congregate care facility operators.

The group collaboratively reviews settlement metrics, plans for improvements, and discusses strategies for practice improvements.

The group is currently focused on ending the practice of overnight placements and creating strategies to reduce and eliminate short-term and night-to-night placement.

DCF also meets regularly with neutral and plaintiff parties.

CONTINUING FORWARD – SEDGWICK CO



While the overall need for foster care has decreased by 26% in Kansas since 2019, Sedgwick County has continued to increase.

1 in 4 youth in the Kansas foster care system are from Sedgwick County.

- There are 3 Children's Behavior Interventionist providers that serve Sedgwick (DCCCA, EHC and MHA)
- Soon – A DCCCA Family Preservation staff member will accompany the DCF child protection specialist to a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) to offer support to families who do not feel they can care for their child after discharge.

CONTINUING FORWARD – SEDGWICK CO



DCF's Wichita region has been working closely with community organizations in Sedgwick County to reduce the need for foster care and stabilize the current system of care in the county. Emberhope has augmented their approach with:

- Using prevention service approaches such as Family Preservation, Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy(PCIT) to support about 50 families whose goal is reunification.
- Partnering with Mental Health America of South-Central Kansas (MHA) for crisis intervention and support for youth with high acuity needs.
- Added 4 staff who are case carrying and act as a Behavior Interventionist Team (hub team) to support families whose children are experiencing overnight placements or failure to place. They work with about 5 youth at a time.

CONTINUING FORWARD



The report found a decline in performance related to ‘ending the practice of temporary housing or failure to place (FTP)’.

- Agencies like EmberHope began using the Placement Stability Team Decision Making Meetings (PS-TDM) to support discussions about placements, including resources to support stability and timely permanency.
- Our focus remains on ensuring youth experience the greatest possible stability and are connected with individualized services that build stability and support successful transitions to adulthood
- DCF and Ember Hope are collaborating in Sedgwick County to expand capacity and improve support.

FOSTER CARE UPDATES

HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND RESPONSE

HOUSE BILL 2075 IMPLEMENTATION



On July 1, 2025, DCF began initiating contact with families every day of the week, including holidays, when there is a report from a law enforcement officer about a child who might be a victim of abuse or neglect.

DCF now responds within 24 hours by initiating contact of individuals named and responding back to the referring law enforcement agency.

- **State-wide, DCF has seen a 13% reduction in Police Protective Custody (PPC)**
 - Kansas City experienced a slight increase
 - Northeast and Southeast both saw reductions
 - Wichita still experiences 50% of all PPC instances but showed a reduction of 33%

PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK CONTRACT

PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK GRANT

In October 2024, DCF completed a grant award to the University of Kansas for the Parent Support Network. The goal of the Network is to support parents and families by providing direct mentorship to navigate the child welfare system throughout the time a child is placed in out of home custody.

These mentors are parents or legal caregivers who have already navigated the foster care system and have had a successful reintegration of their children for at least six months.

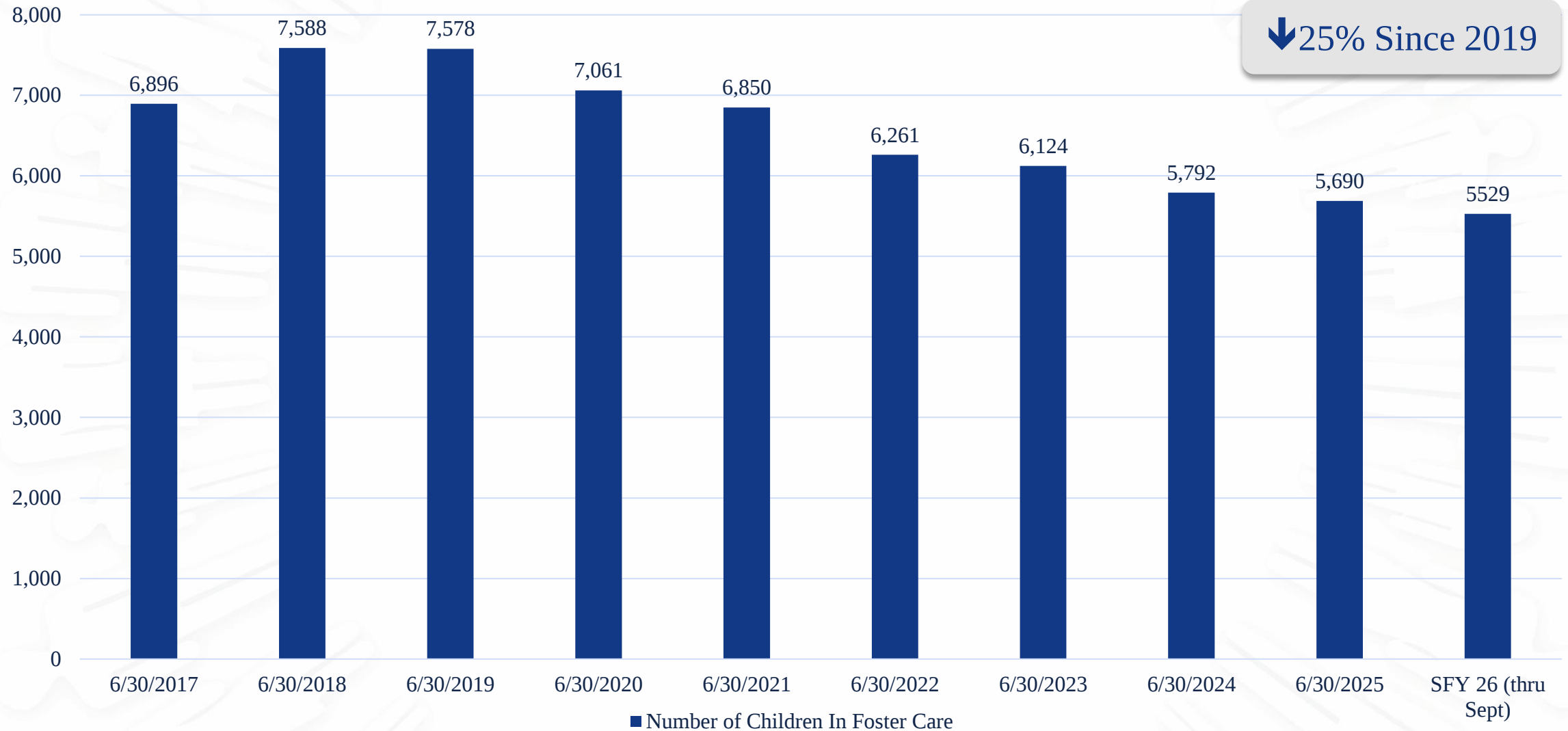
KU has filled the Parent Empowerment Peers roles across the state, with exception of Area 1. The Network has begun receiving referrals, and the parent empowerment peers will be assigned to cases once their training has been completed.

REQUESTED QUARTERLY DATA

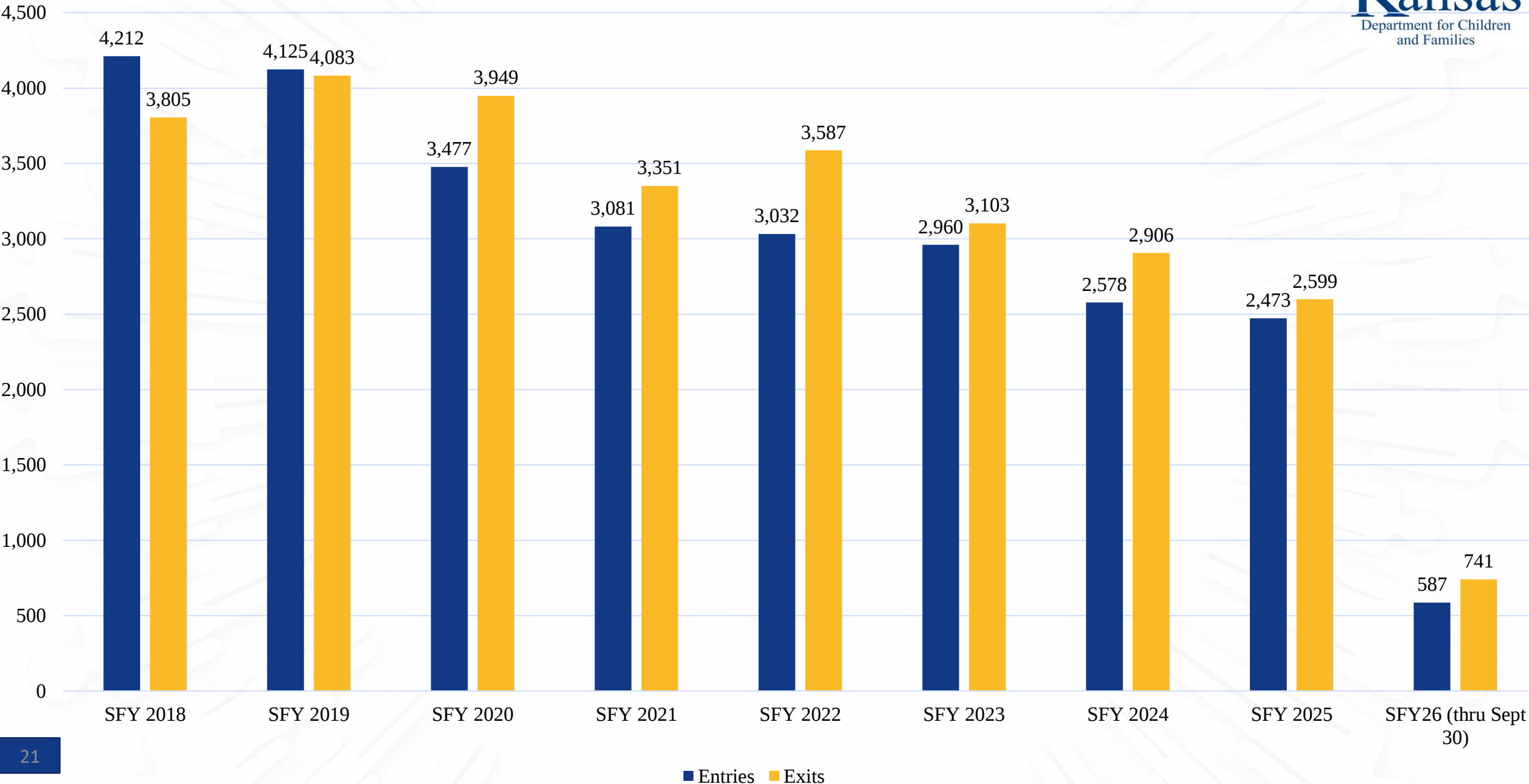
[SEE PDF REPORT](#)

BY THE NUMBERS

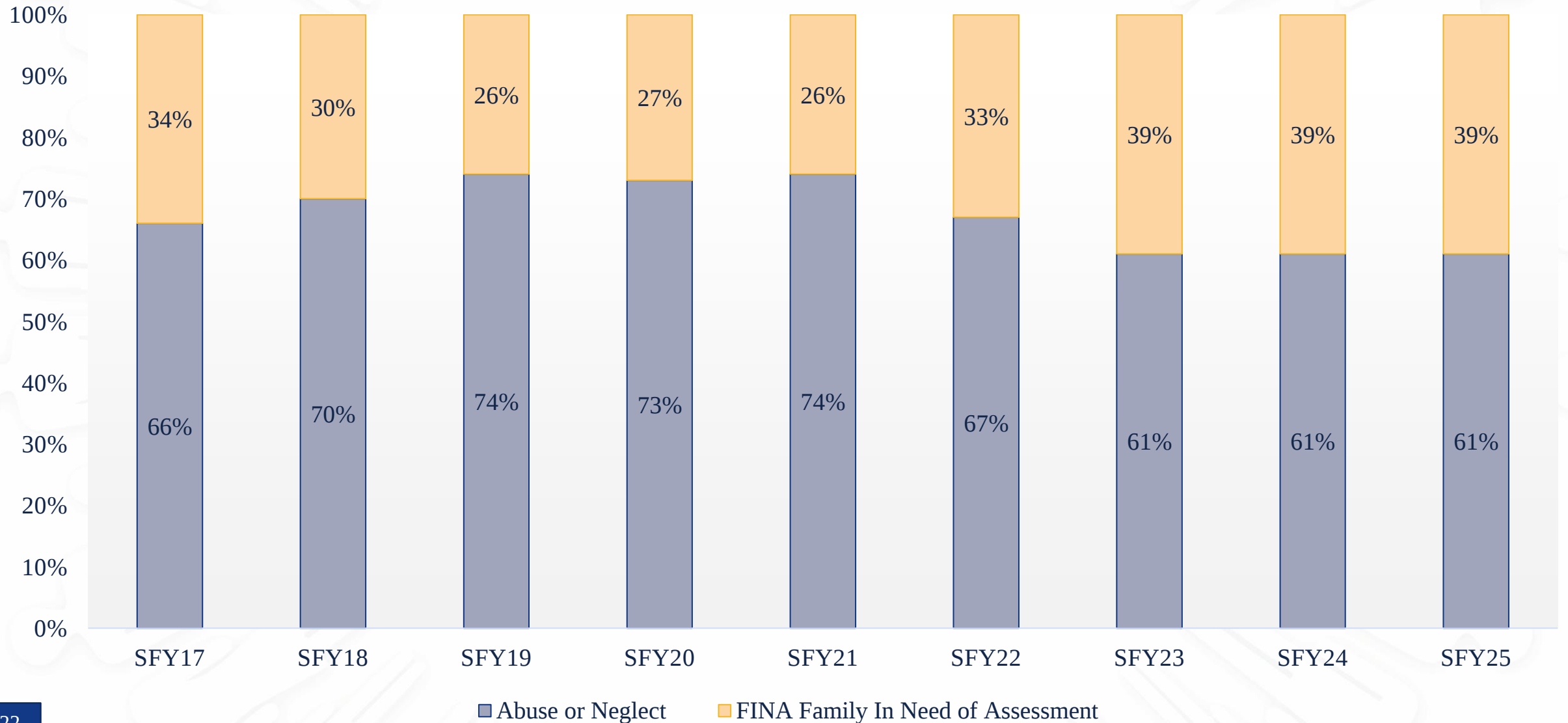
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



CHILDREN ENTERING & EXITING FOSTER CARE ACROSS YEARS



STATEWIDE CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE PRIMARY REMOVAL REASON



QUESTIONS?
