

Assessment Findings and Recommendations

January 2020

Baltimore City
Department of Social Services

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
Center for Systems Innovation



Dr. Walters invited Casey's Center for Systems Innovation (CSI) to conduct a full assessment of BCDSS outcomes

Assessment question:

Based on BCDSS's strengths and challenges, what strategic direction should the Department take?

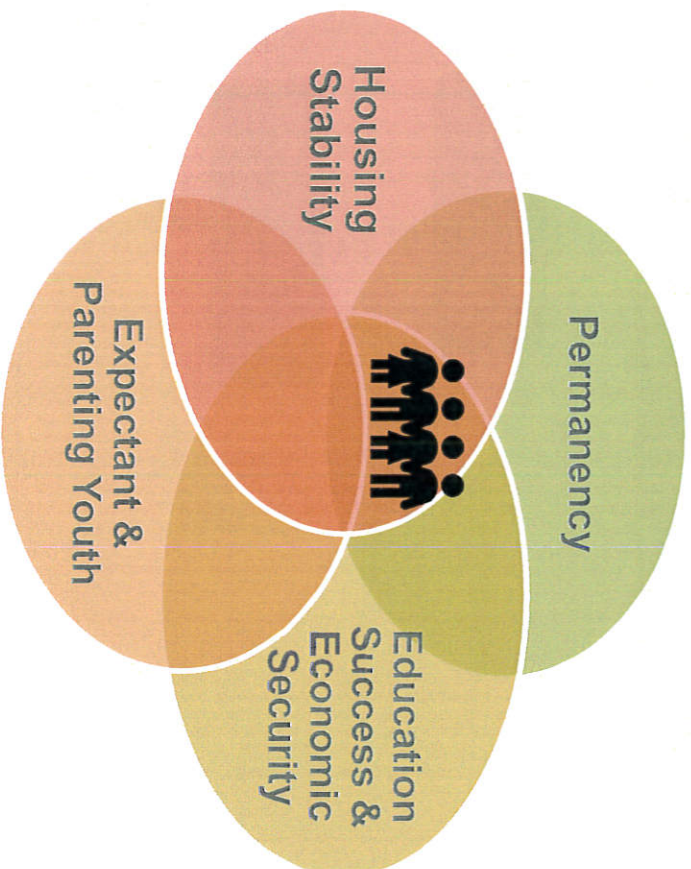
- How are children, youth, young adults and families involved with BCDSS doing? Are they better off as a result of this involvement?
- What are the drivers of positive and negative outcomes for BCDSS?
- What are the recommended strategies and priorities to improve outcomes?

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

Initiative's Population Result (call-to-action):

All young people 14 to 26 who have spent a day in foster care after their 14th birthday have the relationships, resources and opportunities to ensure well-being and success.

The Initiative's work is focused on making measurable impact in four indicator areas →



Best Practice Principles

Youth Engagement

Equity & Inclusion

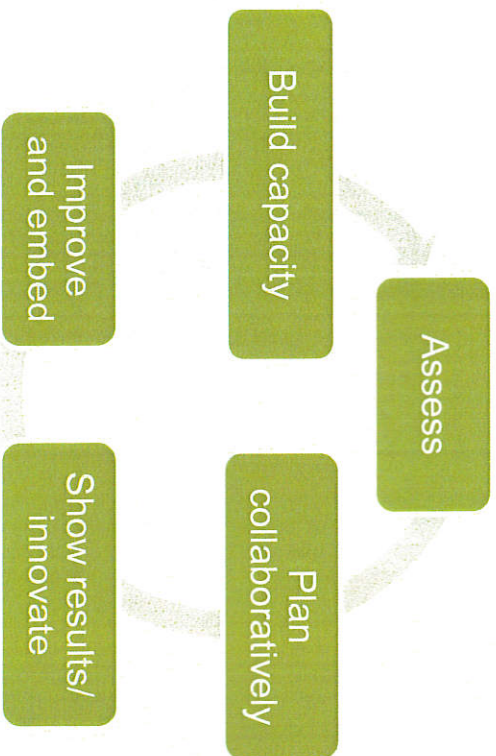
Data & Self-Evaluation

Community Partnerships

Policy & Advocacy

Child Welfare Strategy Group

Intensive consulting with public agencies to implement innovative, equitable solutions



Key Outcomes

Safety	Permanency	Well-being	Equity
Young people are safe from maltreatment, with a focus on prevention	Young people have lifelong families, connections with kin and siblings and live in families	Families and young people have the relationships and opportunities needed to thrive, and a voice in decision-making about their lives	Young people of all races, ethnicities, ages, genders, abilities and sexual identities experience positive results

CSI leveraged both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess Baltimore City's child welfare system

Data Analysis

- In-depth analysis of Baltimore City: AFCARS data, Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care data, CHESSIE data, Human Resources data

Policy & Document Review

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maryland Placement Policy: SSA 10-11 • FIMS: SSA 10-08 • APPLA: SSA-CW 16-10 • Kinship Navigator Services: SSA-CW 15-2 • Child Fatality/Critical Incident Policy: SSA 10-05 • Guardianship Assistance Program SSA-CW 15-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Supervisory Review Process SSA 09-17 • Family Services Planning SSA-CW 18-11 • Voluntary Placements, circular Letter 04-0 (2003) • APPLA form • LJ lawsuit filings • LJ Consent Decree • LJ Reports (57, 58, 59, 60 & 61) • MD Performance Improvement Plan |
|--|--|

Focus Groups (45 individuals)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPS Workers • CPS Supervisors • New Workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Workers • Permanency Supervisors • Ready by 21 Workers • Youth Advisory Board |
|---|---|

Individual and Group Interviews (31 Individuals)

- Senior Leadership Team (child welfare related areas)
- Child Welfare Program Managers
- Legal: Judge In Charge Juvenile Docket, CASA, Plaintiff's Attorney, IVAs,
- Other Stakeholders: Birth Parents, Advocates for Children, Citizen's Review Board, Child Fatality Review, Family League, Fostering Change Network, Foster Parent Resource Organization, Kennedy Krieger, Union Representative

Staff Feedback

- Reviewed HR Exit Interview Responses (143 respondents, of which 51 were former Child Welfare Division staff)
- Reviewed staff engagement survey conducted by BCDSS, October 2019 (688 respondents, of which 262 self-identified as Child Welfare Division staff)

OPPORTUNITY
MOMENT

BCDSS staff and stakeholders shared many observations about strengths and hopes for the future

Quotes from interviews:

“Randi being here is a plus for the agency. No director wants to take a deep dive, the way Randi has begun to do. I am confident in Randi’s ability to make changes. Our staff is dedicated.”

“The timing is ripe. I am very optimistic with Department leadership. Inviting Casey in is a big step.”

“I believe we have a lot of committed people. People, when given the tools that they need, are so responsive. It helps when we give them the why. There is a vision and we are moving, and we are going to get some momentum. I realize it is going to be hard.”

Child Welfare Program Managers recognize the factors causing performance issues and have concrete ideas about improvements

If you had \$500,000 for the agency to spend how would you use it?

Culture/Morale

- “Workers are clear that they are exposed to trauma and yet agency culture doesn’t allow people to adequately take care of themselves. Morale is low, so other managers and I have tried implementing pizza parties, but I think it takes a lot more to really have an impact.”
- “Use funds to renovate the building so it doesn’t feel like a dungeon, which would help with staff morale.”
- “We need more support for staff like peer support groups because vicarious trauma is real, and the work can be really tough. Mentorship and peer support happens mostly informally right now.”



Leadership

“We need training in how to be leaders. Most of us enter the field to help people, not to be leaders. When they are promoted, many supervisors are still too aligned with the workers instead of the role of accountability.”



Child Welfare Program Managers recognize the factors causing performance issues and have concrete ideas about improvements

If you had \$500,000 for the agency to spend how would you use it?

Workforce Training & Retention

- "First, I would use it on the workforce to help us retain the staff coming through the door. I would spend money on the training for new staff."
- "I would also invest in training like how to talk to people, problem solving, and other key skills that we take for granted. Basic training is important. I would also spend money celebrating staff!"



Prevention

- "Re-training our teams to work on strengthening families and restricting foster care/out of home."



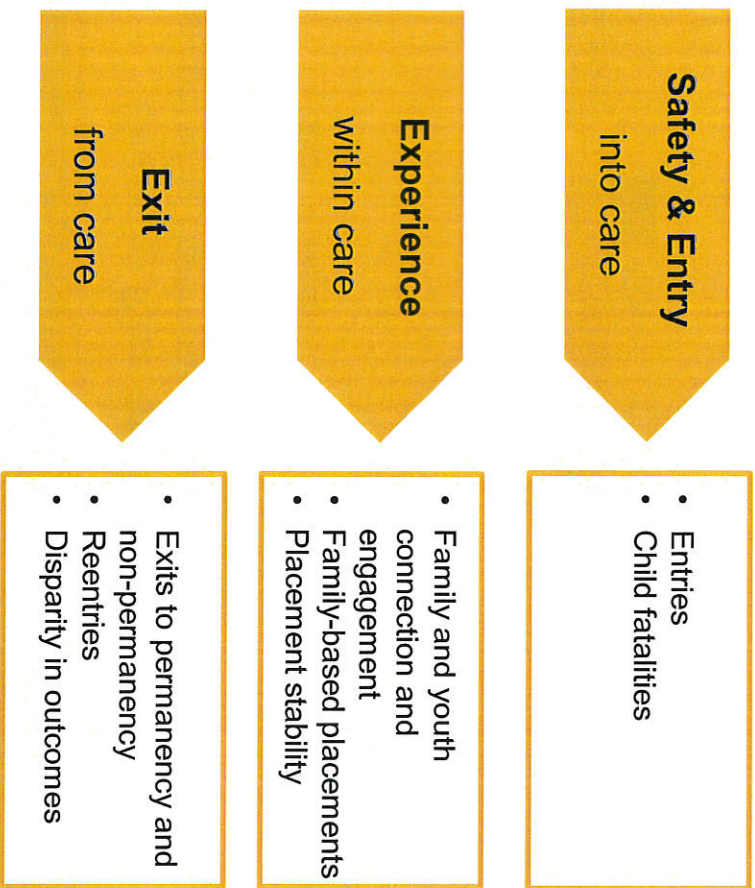
Services/Placement

- "I would spend it on creative options for placements and services. We overuse one-to-one services, instead of something more creative and specific to that young person."
- "Placement moves can be traumatizing, and the process is not set up for the child's success. We shouldn't have a cookie cutter approach to all the different kids coming through the front door. We need to offer services and placements to kids based on their needs."



OUTCOMES

We analyzed data for performance on key outcomes at major points of interaction with BCDSS

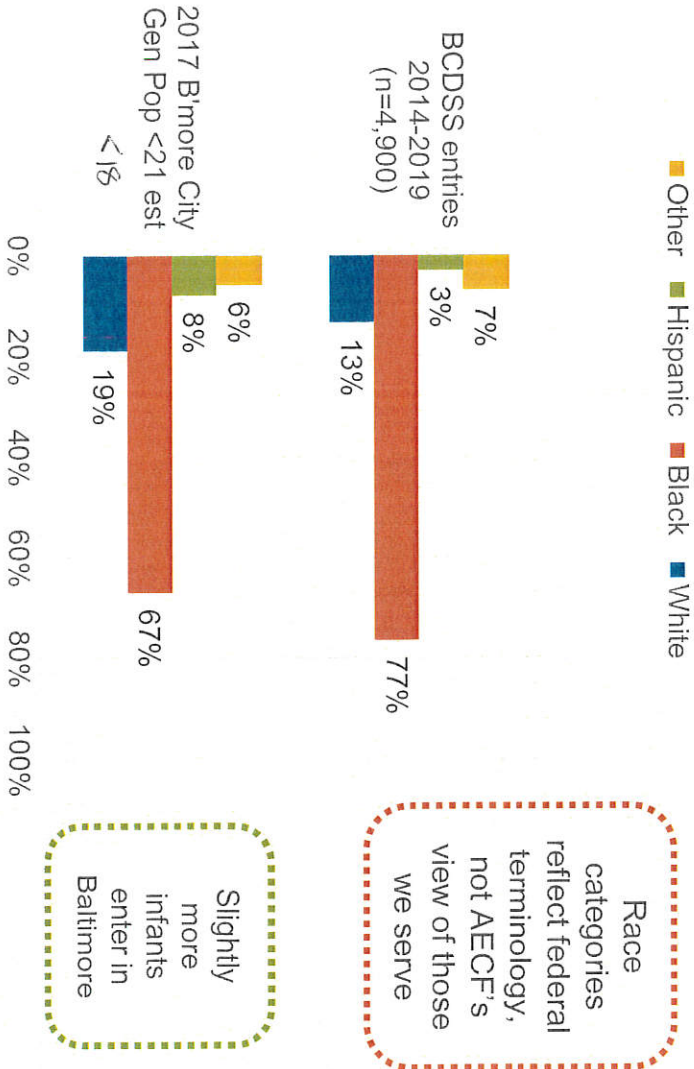


Outcomes: the status, experiences or well-being of children and youth served by child welfare

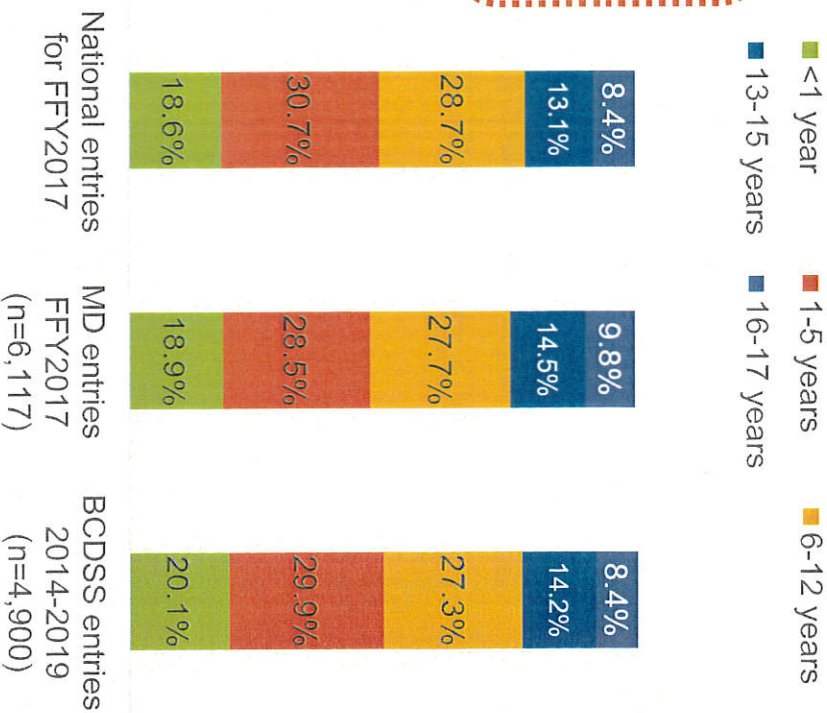
Equitable outcomes: all children and youth experience positive outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, ability and sexual identity

Black children and youth disproportionately enter foster care in Baltimore City

Entries by Race and Ethnicity Compared to Baltimore General Population

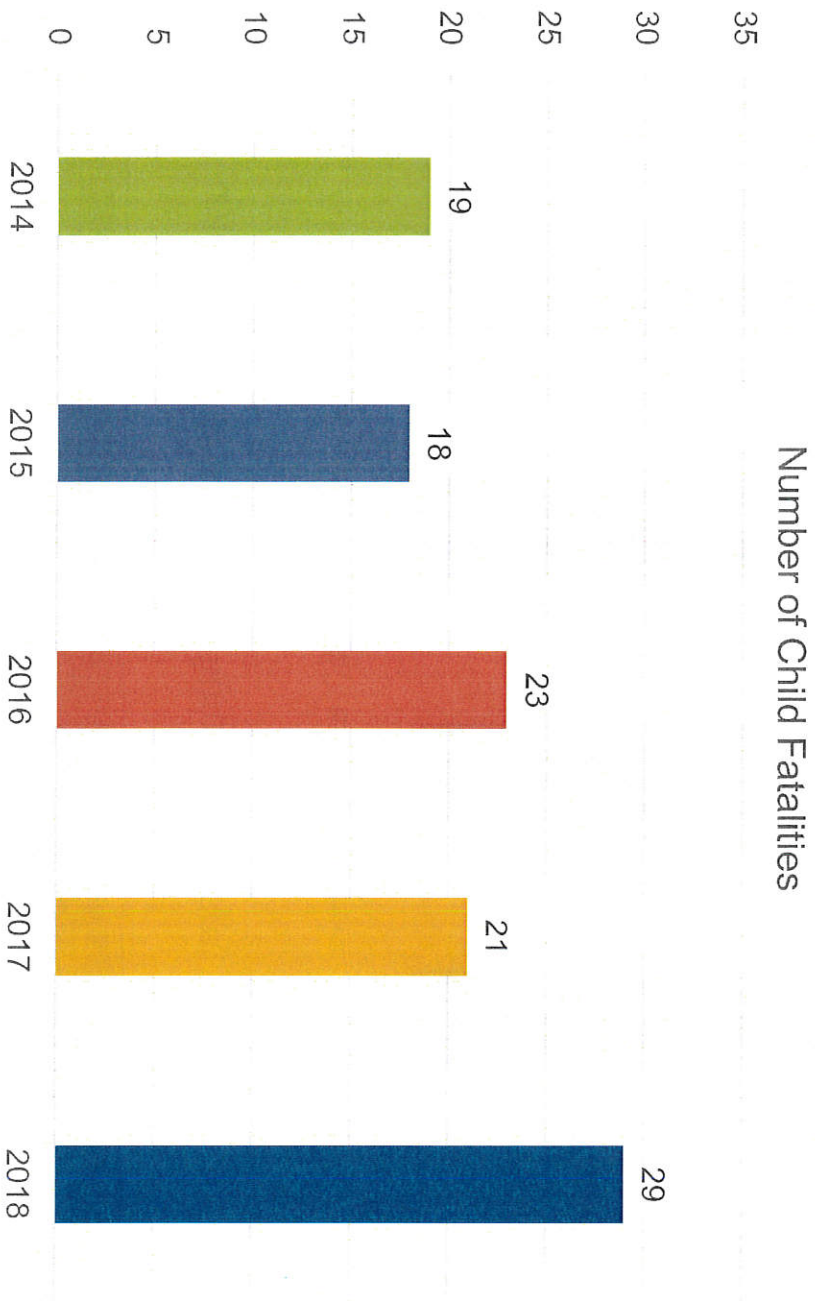


National, Maryland and Baltimore Entries Disaggregated by Age



Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, 2014-2019; AFCARS Public Use Files FFY2017; US Census Data FFY2017

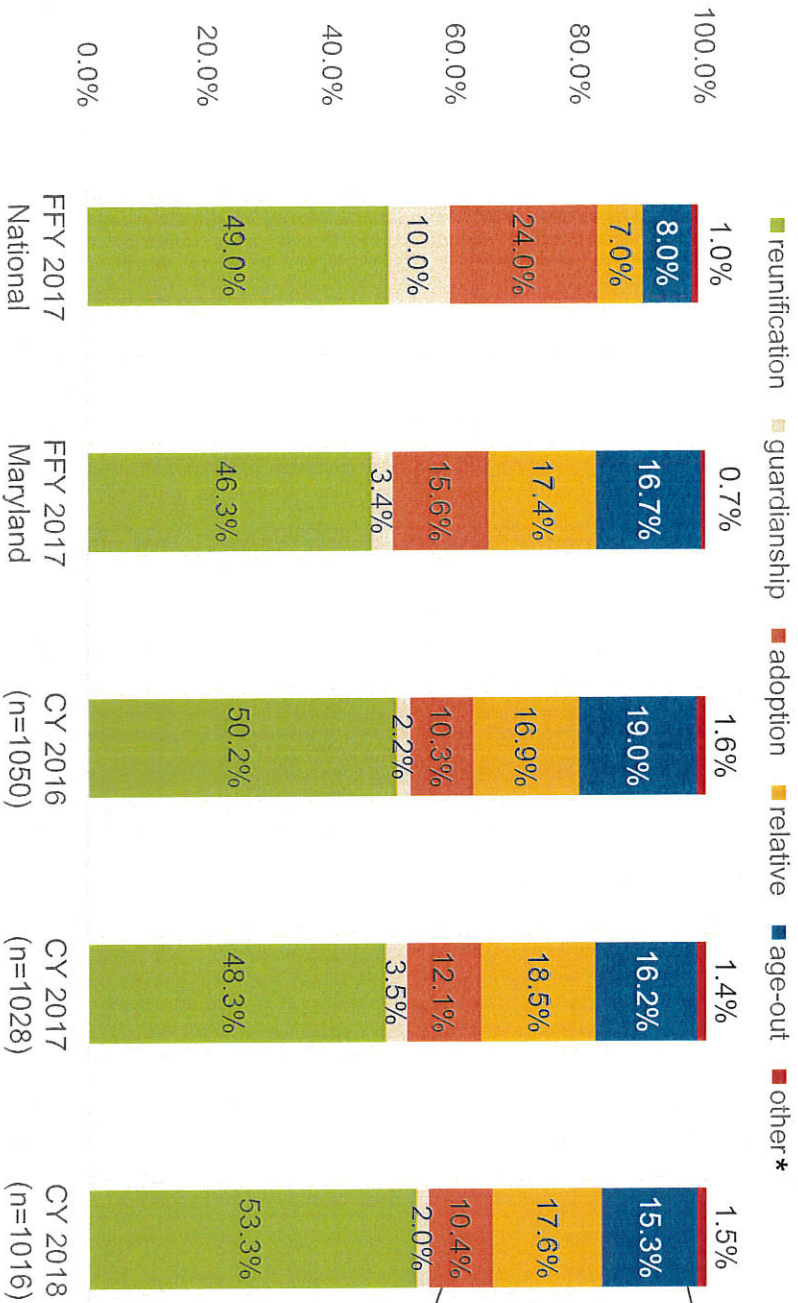
Any child fatality is deeply disturbing and requires individual and systemic review and action to prevent further tragedies



Source: BCDSS Fatality Review Matrix

Baltimore City has made some progress with reunification, but aging-out remains significantly higher than the national average

National, Maryland and Baltimore Exits from Foster Care



Aging out is approximately two times higher than the national average

There is room for improvement in exits to guardianship and adoption

Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, 2014-2019
 *Other category includes other, runaway and unknown

Permanency plans for children, youth and young adults currently in care point towards producing similar outcomes as previous years

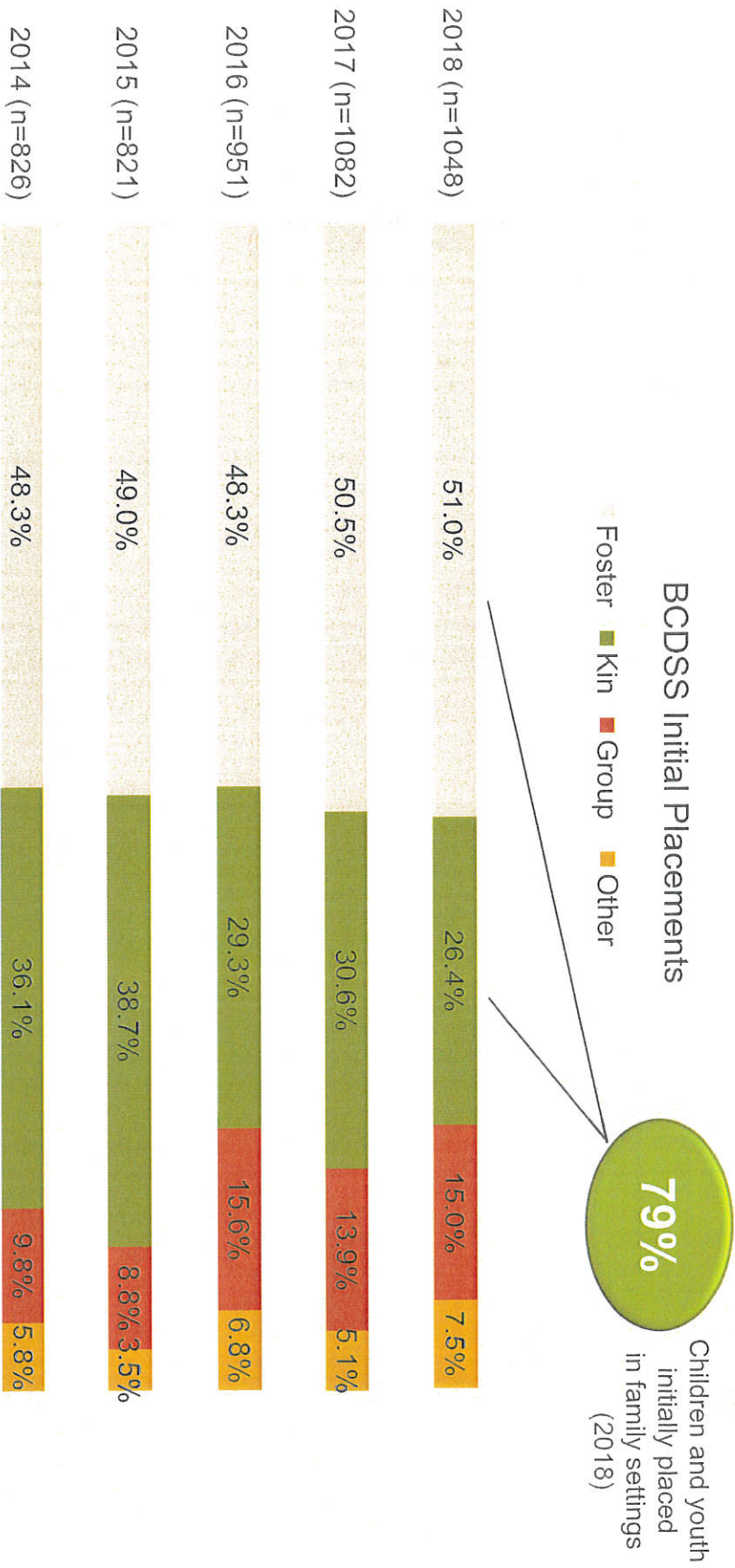


CY 2018
(n=1,016)

Milestone Report
Oct 2019
(n=4,298)

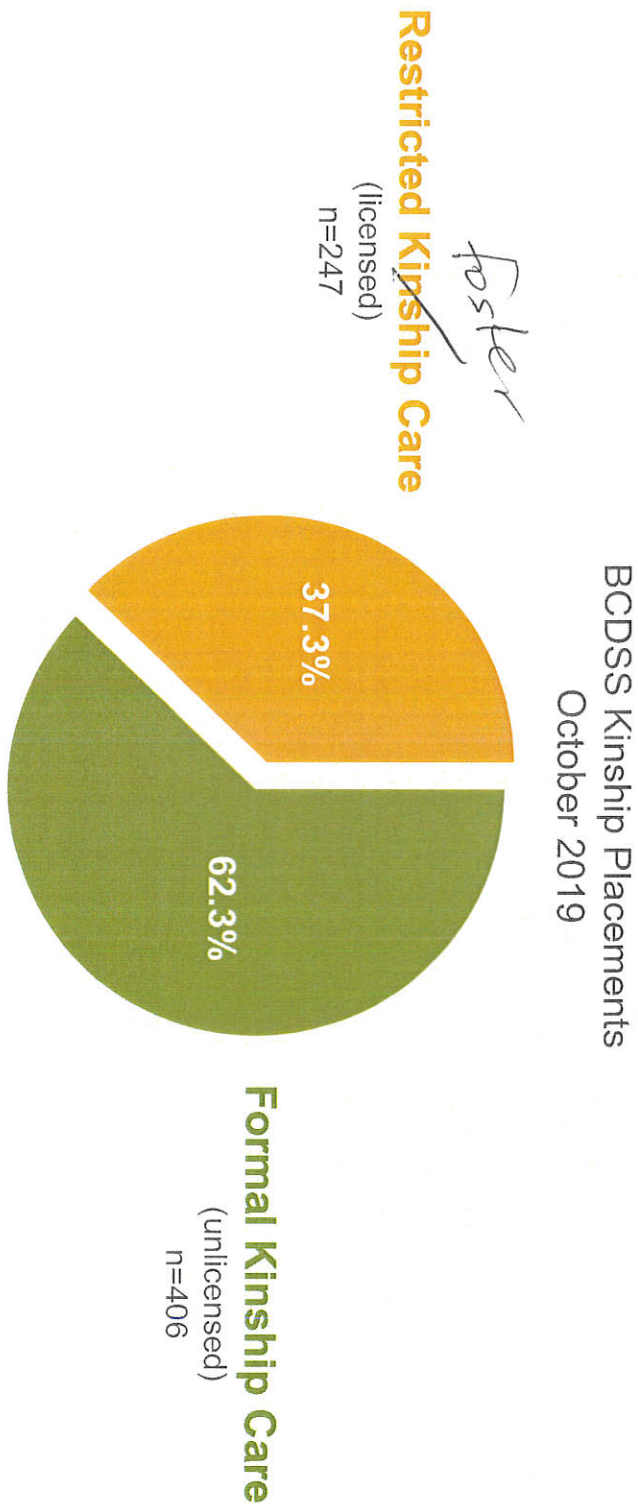
Sources: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, 2014-2019; Monthly OOH Milestone Report, October 2019

The majority of children and youth in BCDSS foster care are placed in family settings



Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, CY2014-CY2018

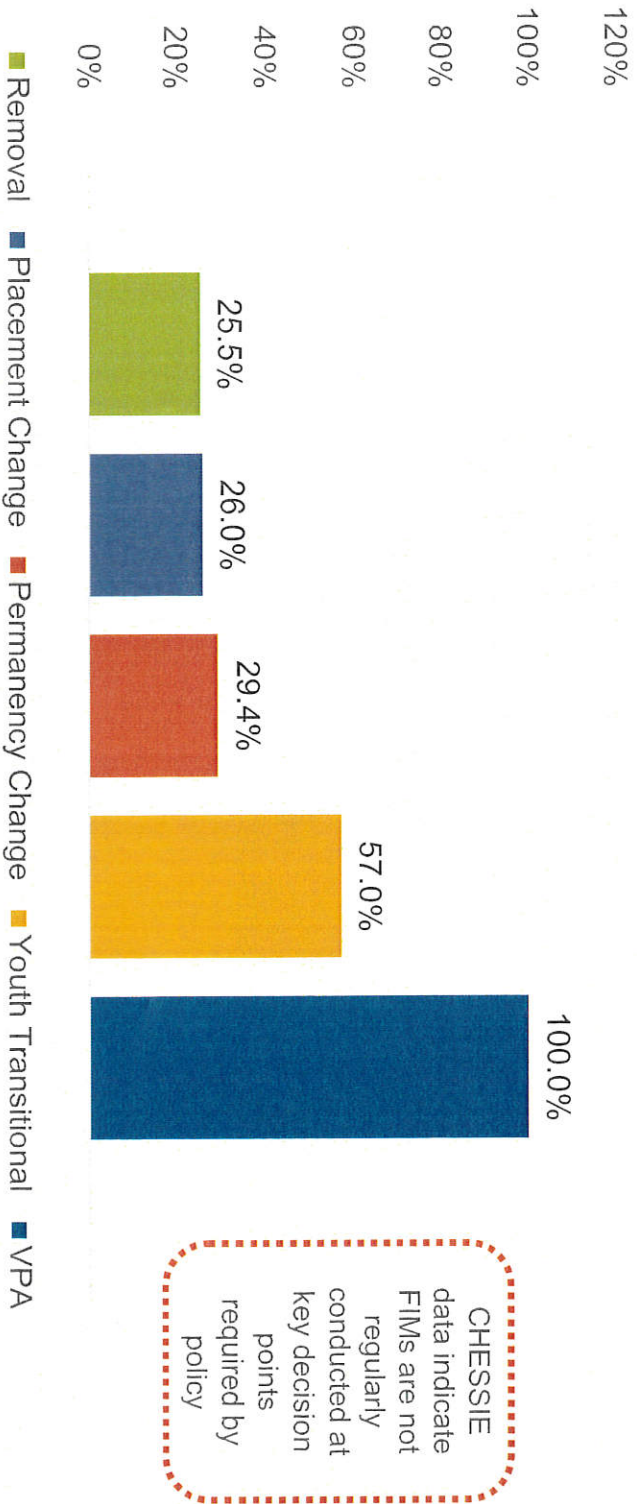
Although 36% of all BCDSS placements are with kin today, the majority of those relatives are not licensed



Source: Monthly OOH Milestone Report, October 2019

There is room for improvement in connection and engagement for families, children and youth while they are involved with BCDSS

Sample Data from Report on BCDSS Family Involvement Meetings
 (from University of MD School of Social Work and MD DHS)



Source: Baltimore City Family Involvement Meeting Report, July 2019, University of MD School of Social Work and MD DHS

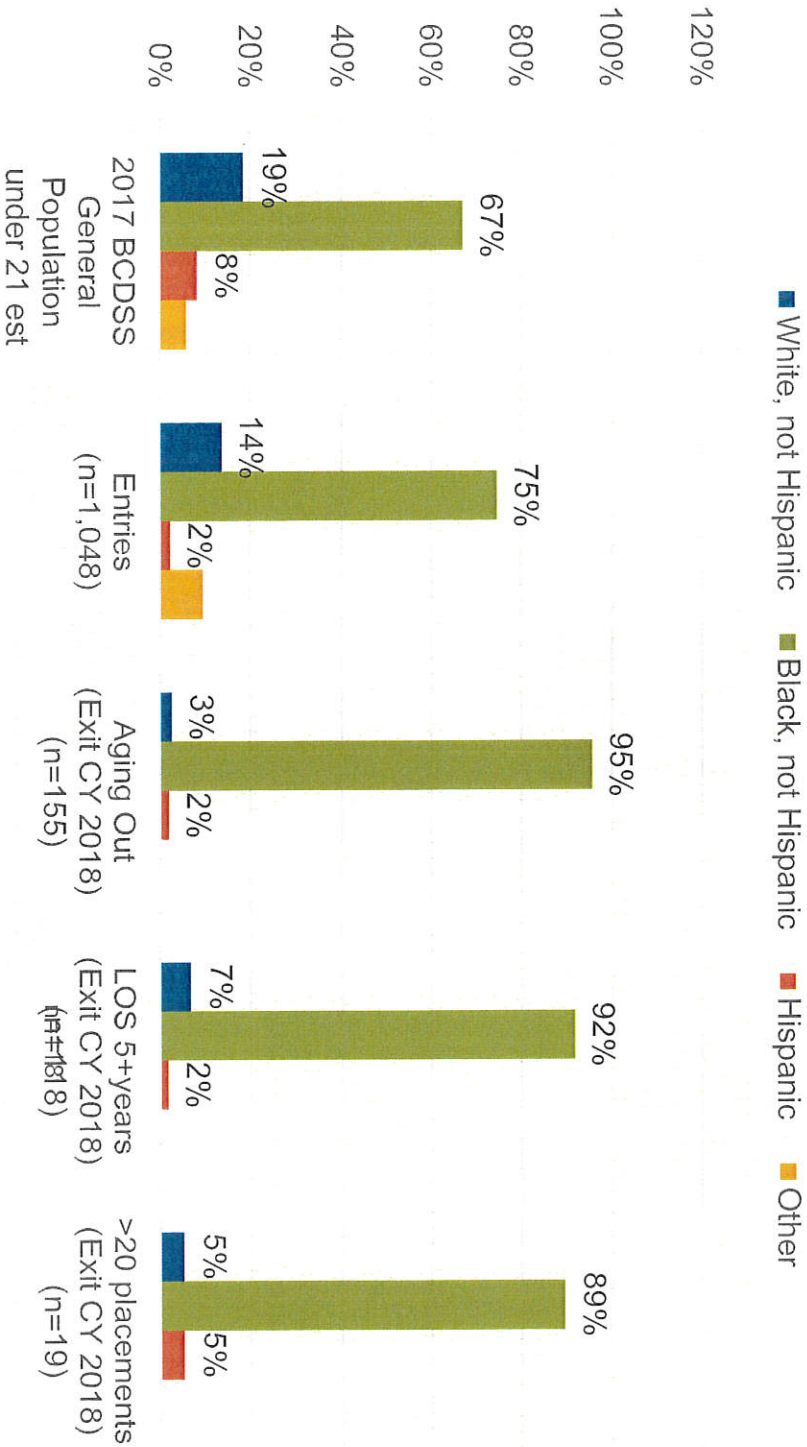
Reentry from reunification is significantly higher for BCDSS than the rest of the nation



Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, 2013-2019; Child Welfare Outcomes 2016 Report to Congress
 *There is no national benchmark for reentry within 12 months from reunification only.

Black youth experience disparate outcomes for entering foster care, aging out, long stays and high placement instability

Experience of Foster Care by Race and Ethnicity

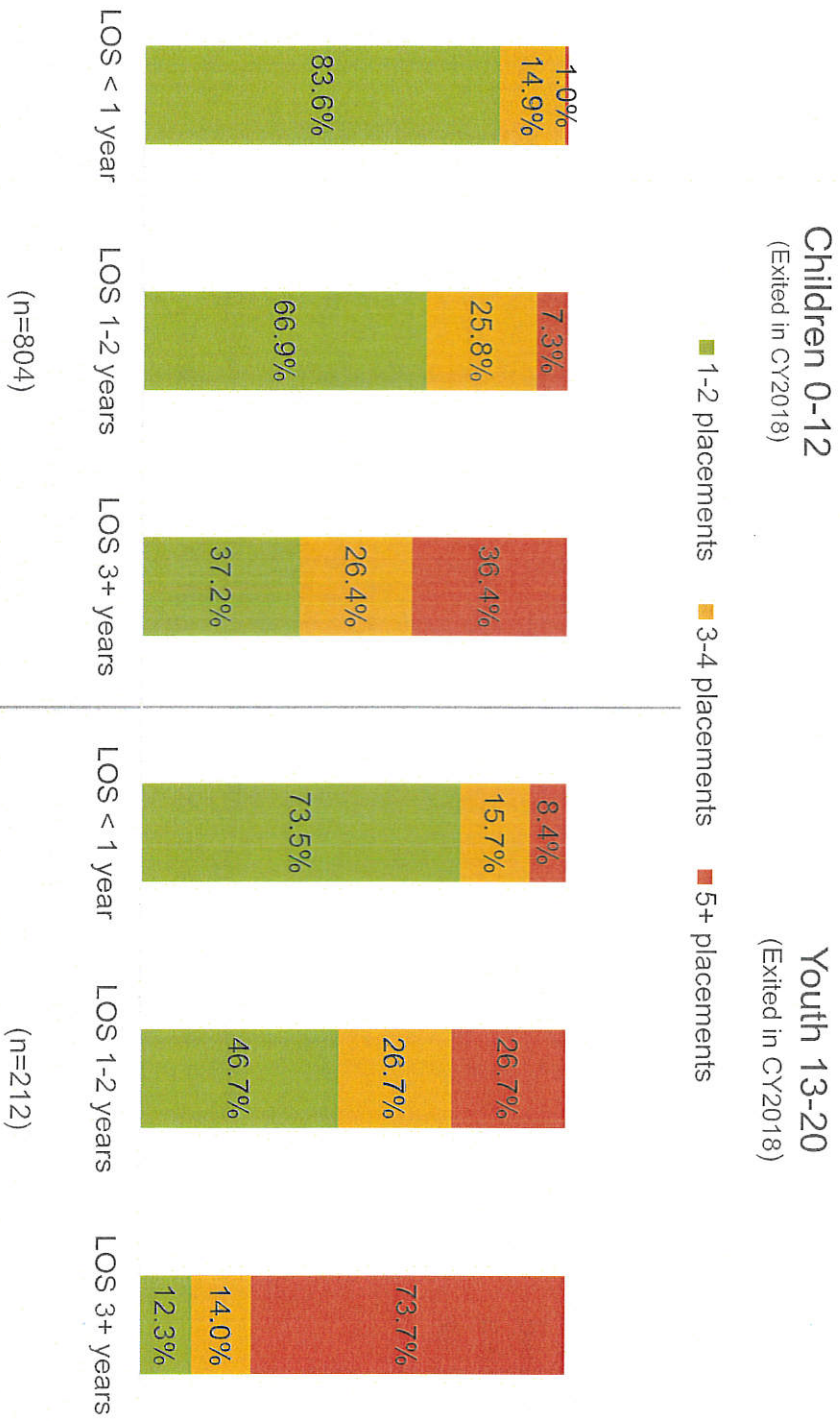


Race categories reflect federal terminology, not AECF's view of those we serve

Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive

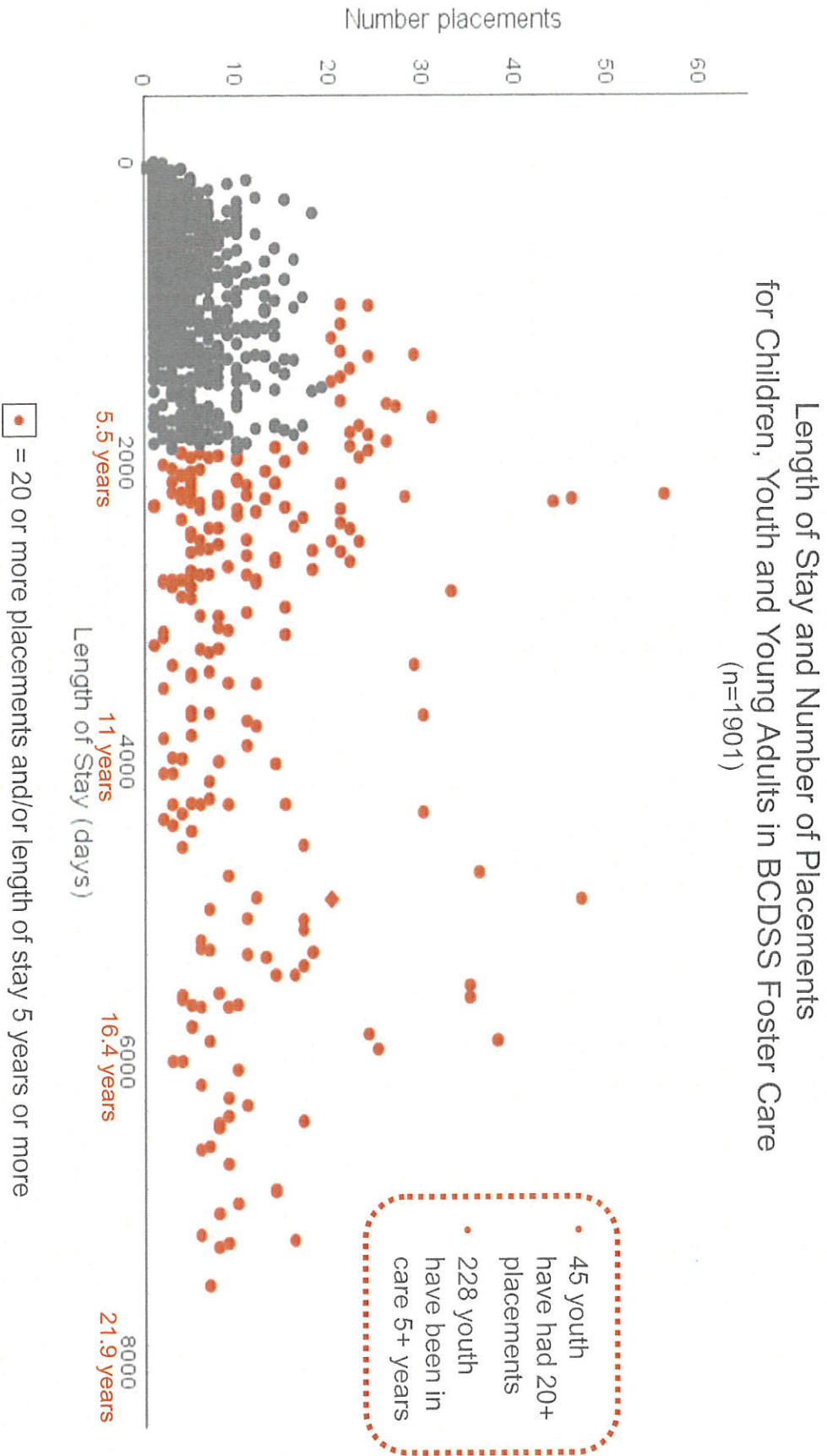
Increased placement changes correlate to lengths of stay, and older youth experience significant placement instability

Number of Placements by Lengths of Stay



Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, CY2018 exiters

Numerous youth are experiencing frequent placement disruptions and extremely long lengths of stay



Source: Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive, 2014-2019; AFCARS Public Use Files FFY2017

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Many factors are contributing to negative outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families involved with BCDSS



Workforce issues, especially retention of new workers, emerged as the most urgent concern in the assessment



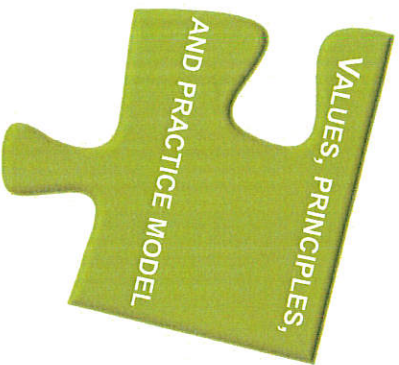
Workforce

- Low retention, especially of new workers
- Need for greater coordination and collaboration between HR and Programs

Training

- Six-week new worker training does not provide adequate preparation for the role
- Inconsistent on-the-job training in programs for new workers
- Ongoing training not oriented to development in role

BCDSS is currently not utilizing a practice model with overarching principles and values to guide practice



Values, principles & practice model

- Frontline practice and supervision is not directed by an established practice model
- Initial permanency goal is focused on reunification, but tends to be determined by calendar versus family readiness
- Not enough emphasis on guardianship and adoption when reunification is not possible; aging out not generally viewed as negative outcome

Family, child and youth, young adult engagement

- Family Involvement Meetings underutilized/lacking capacity
- Visits between parents and children not maximized to impact reunification
- Youth Advisory Board not serving in advisory role

Placement/supports/ service array

- Kinship caregivers not receiving adequate supports
- Not enough foster families/lack of placement matching
- Need for supports/services targeted to strengthen families to prevent entry and support reunification

BCDSS needs to elevate outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families as the primary measure of success



Outcome focus

- Performance management primarily directed toward compliance and process measures
- Insufficient emphasis on outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families
- Limited data analysis and report capacity

Supervision

- Supervision, while generally supportive, is not focused on outcomes and professional development, and frequently is inconsistent in expectations and direction
- Supervisors often not trained/oriented to role

BCDSS organizational climate and culture have discouraged active engagement



Climate and Culture

- Lack of formalized and welcoming onboarding and orientation process
- Not enough attention to frontline staff stress or self-care
- Scarcity of the resources needed for workers to do their jobs (cars, laptops, quality office space, state of the art technology and data/reports on demand)
- Low morale

Collaborative Leadership

- Lack of feedback loops between Senior Leadership and Programs
- Insufficient collaboration between programs within Child Welfare Division
- Frequent and sometimes tumultuous top leadership changes have led to discouragement and distrust

BCDSS leadership needs to continue to improve relationships
with community stakeholders



Community and Stakeholder Partnerships

- Court hearing delays/no court reports
- Challenging relationship with LJ representatives
- Re-building relationships with providers and advocates

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, CSI recommends BCDSS to:

1. Improve worker retention as an urgent priority.
2. Choose one outcome area to focus improvement efforts, in addition to child fatalities.
3. Develop capacity for data analysis and performance management that includes both process and outcome measures.

1. Improve worker retention as an urgent priority.

Improving retention is critical for lasting practice and outcome improvement. It will require building a positive work environment and establishing a competency-based culture.

Map process from recruiting to retaining social workers to identify high-leverage areas for improvement.

Convene cross-Department workgroup to plan and execute improvements.

Institute competency-based hiring and behavioral-based interviewing for new social workers.

Establish supervisory training and coaching, then develop competency-based on-the-job training for new workers.

Develop position-tracking and other HR reporting measures and integrate with retention improvement efforts.

2. Choose one outcome area to focus improvement efforts, in additional to child fatalities.

Given the considerable number of outcome challenges, the scope of practice reform needs to be prioritized. Improvements should incorporate practice model and organization values in planning, implementation and measurement.

Continue efforts to reduce the likelihood of child fatalities and choose one other outcome area for intensive improvement.

For child fatality outcome area, strengthen immediate critical incident review, CQI-oriented case look-back process and active participation in community-based Child Fatality Review.

Train/retrain workers and supervisors in initial and ongoing assessment of safety and risk.

Engage Child Welfare Program Managers, all level of BCDSS staff and key stakeholders in work planning and implementation.

Identify and monitor key measures to track improvements and obstacles.

3. Develop capacity for data analysis and performance management that includes both process and outcome measures.

Current performance management efforts are limited in scope (primarily emphasizing outputs and compliance) and need to expand to encompass outcomes for children, youth, young adults and their families.

Improve current reports: Streamline Milestone Report to more usable format and revise Monthly Child Welfare Trends Report to reflect most relevant process and outcome measures.

Develop new outcome report, including indicators about equitable outcomes.

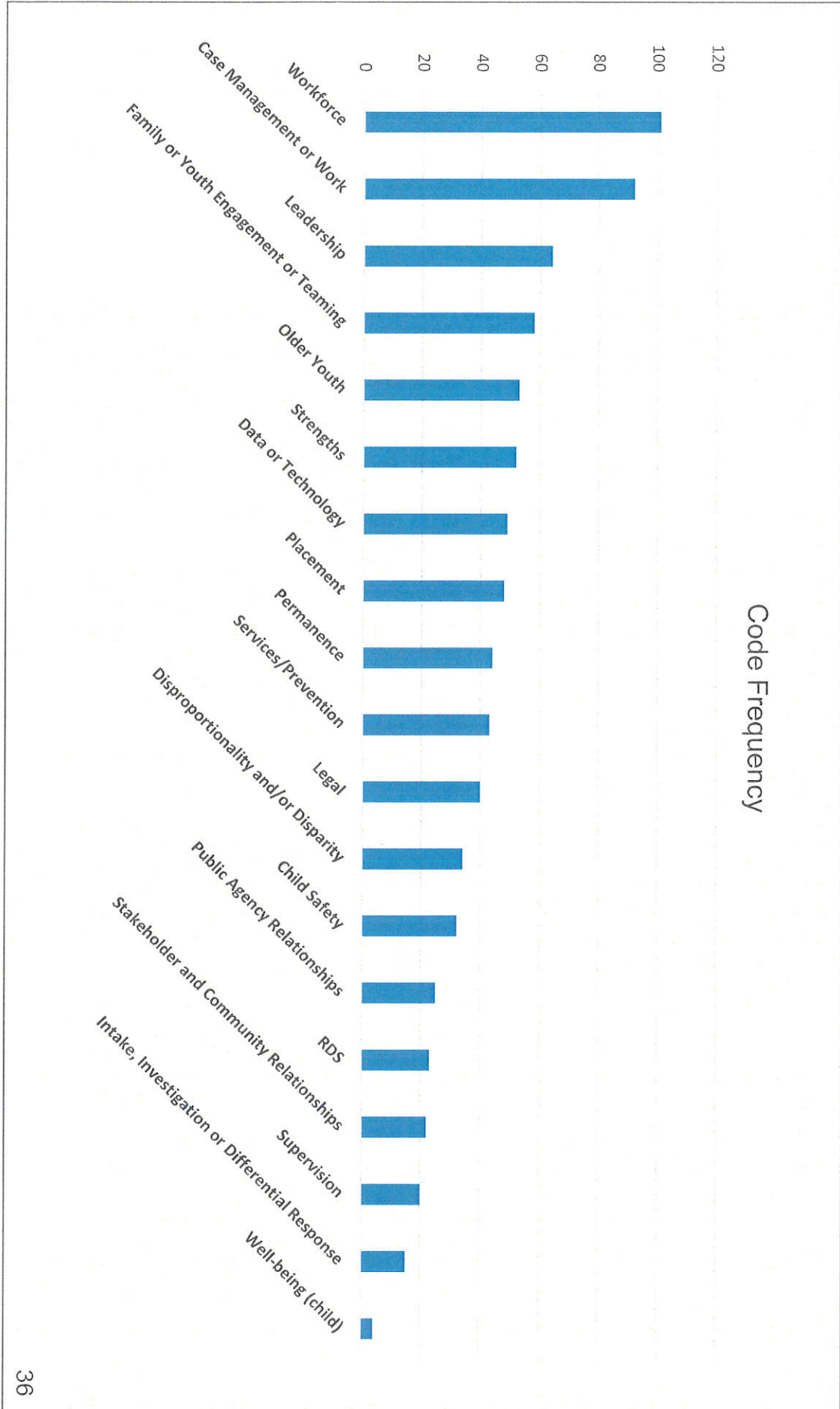
Train and coach Child Welfare Division Program Managers, Unit Managers and Supervisors on managing to outcomes.

APPENDIX

These were the most frequent topics counted in our qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups

Rank	Topic
1	Workforce
2	Case Management or Work
3	Leadership
4	Family or Youth Engagement or Teaming
5	Older Youth
6	Strengths
7	Data or Technology
8	Placement
9	Permanence
10	Services/Prevention

All interviews and focus groups were coded by topic



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Developing solutions to build a brighter future for children, families and communities

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