

STATE OF COLORADO



Colorado Department of Human Services

people who help people

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Reggie Bicha
Executive Director

December 1, 2011

Representative Cheri Gerou
Chair, Joint Budget Committee
Legislative Services Building, 3rd floor
200 East 14th Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Representative Gerou:

This report is sent pursuant to 19-3-214, C.R.S., which requires:

“Placement Reporting. (1) Each county department shall maintain and update on a monthly basis a report of the number of children who have been removed from their homes and placed in the temporary legal custody of the county department for the preceding month. The report shall indicate whether a child who has been placed out of the home has been placed with relatives. (2) The state department shall submit an annual report to the joint budget committee of the general assembly no later than December 1 of each year that compiles the monthly reports of the number of children who have been placed out of the home in each county or city and county for the preceding year as required pursuant to subsection (1) of this section”.

The counties accomplish the required reporting by entering information into the State’s automated system, Trails. The attached data report was accessed from Trails for the information analyzed in this letter. The timeframe for the Trails report is September 1, 2010 - August 31, 2011 and provides cumulative data for each county. The categories that are listed are as follows:

Column 1: *Identified county:*

Column 2: *Number of children:* This is an *unduplicated* count of children who were removed from their home at some point during the year.

Column 3: *Number of removals:* This is the *duplicated* count of the number of children who were removed from their home at some point during the year. More than one removal occurred for some of the children during the timeframe of the report.

During the reporting period, there were 5,089 children (*duplicated count*) that were removed. This is a decrease from the previous year (5,421). Of these children, 51% (2,608) were placed in *county custody*.

Annual report	2011	2010	2009	2006	2007
Duplicated count of removals	5,089	5,421	5,742	6,160	6,271
Number of children placed in county custody	2,608	2,847	3,065	3,477	3,473
Percent of children placed in county custody	51%	53%	53%	56%	55%

Of 5,089 children (*duplicated count*) that were removed, 26% or 1,305 children were placed into *kinship care as the first service entered*. In comparison to 2010, this represents an increase of 173 children. Kinship families are required to have fingerprint-based criminal background checks, an inquiry regarding any confirmed child abuse and neglect in all states of residence for the past five years, and an assessment of their appropriateness to meet the needs of the relative children placed in their care. Legal custody of the children is generally awarded to these families by the court upon recommendation by the county department.

Caretakers may apply for Medicaid and child-only Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) benefits. Monthly TANF benefits are \$128, with the exception a several county departments that established a higher rate of minimum benefit for families. The caretakers are not required to have legal custody, though they must provide documentation to demonstrate that they are responsible for the care of child. Prior to January 2011 non-relative caretakers were ineligible to apply on behalf of the child for child-only TANF benefits. Revised rules made it possible for more families to benefit from the monthly payment on behalf of the child or children in their care.

Two percent (2%) or 123 of the children that were removed (*duplicated count*) were placed into *kinship foster care as the first service entered*. The number of children that were placed in this type of service declined annually from 2007-2009, with a slight increase in 2010 as identified in the table below. This is consistent with a decline in the general out-of-home population since 2007. The decline may be partially explained by strategies that county departments employ to engage the custodial family in safety planning so that the child can remain safely in the family home with services, or in some circumstances an identified kin do not want to or cannot meet the requirements of a kinship family foster care home.

When a child is removed from the family home, the county department attempts to place the child with an appropriate relative or individual known to the child. Within sixty days from removal the county department and the kinship caregiver determine whether the arrangement is the best option. Sometimes the kinship caregiver is a temporary resource while the county department identifies, locates, and notifies additional appropriate relatives as potential temporary and/or permanent options for the child. Generally the kinship caregiver becomes the legal custodian of the child and applies for child-only

TANF and Medicaid benefits as outlined previously. Alternatively, the county department may certify the relative or individual known to the child for kinship family foster care. Certification requirements for family foster care must be met in order to be eligible for foster care maintenance reimbursements and the county department retains legal custody. Non-safety exceptions to the foster care requirements may be approved through an appeal process. Of the two alternatives *kinship care* and *kinship foster care as*

the first service entered, the former is used most frequently while the county department and the kinship caregiver determines the best option.

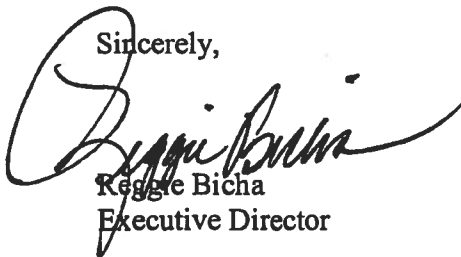
When an emergency out-of-home placement is necessary for a child due to imminent safety issues and a relative or individual known to the child cannot be located immediately for out-of-home placement, the child is placed in a non-relative family foster care home. Federal and state laws require the county departments to conduct intensive family finding activities to locate all potential relatives that can care for the child within thirty days following a child's removal. When an appropriate relative agrees to become either a kinship caregiver or a kinship family foster care provider, this is the next (second) service entered into Trails and is not reflected in this report.

Annual report	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Duplicated count of child removals	5,089	5,421	5,742	6,160	6,271
Number of children with a first service of kinship care	1,305	1,132	1,230	1,113	996
Percent of children with a first service of kinship care	26%	21%	21%	18%	16%
Number of children with a first service entered in kinship foster care	123	177	168	231	284
Percent of children with a first service entered in kinship foster care	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Total percent of children with first service entered in kinship care and kinship foster care	28%	24%	24%	22%	20%

In summary, from September 1, 2010-August 31, 2011, approximately 332 fewer children were removed from their homes (*duplicated count*) compared to the previous reporting period. Of the 5,089 removals (*duplicated count*), 28% percent of the children were placed into either *kinship care* or *kinship foster care as the first service entered*. This demonstrates a trend of increased use since 2007, while at the same time the number of removals has steadily decreased.

If you have further questions, please contact Mary Griffin at 303-866-3546 or by email at mary.griffin@state.co.us.

Sincerely,



Reggie Bicha
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Senator Mary Hodge, Vice-Chair
Senator Kent Lambert
Senator Pat Steadman
Representative Jon Becker
Representative Claire Levy

State Legislative Report
From: 9/1/2010 To: 8/31/2011

County ID/Name	Number of Children	Number of Removals	Placed in County Custody	First Service Entered	
				Kinship Care	Kinship Foster Care
38 Logan	48	52	32	5	6
39 Mesa	159	162	72	42	8
40 Mineral	0	0	0	0	0
41 Moffat	13	15	10	0	5
42 Montezuma	24	24	20	7	1
43 Montrose	79	83	45	0	5
44 Morgan	26	27	8	0	1
45 Otero	22	22	10	9	0
46 Ouray	1	1	0	0	0
47 Park	7	7	5	1	0
48 Phillips	6	6	0	2	3
49 Pitkin	0	0	0	0	0
50 Prowers	7	7	0	0	0
51 Pueblo	250	264	155	88	0
52 Rio Blanco	17	17	4	0	3
53 Rio Grande	4	4	0	0	1
54 Routt	7	10	5	0	0
55 Saguache	6	8	3	0	0
56 San Juan	0	0	0	0	0
57 San Miguel	0	0	0	0	0
58 Sedgwick	1	1	0	0	0
59 Summit	10	10	4	3	0
60 Teller	29	30	13	1	0
61 Washington	14	14	5	10	0
62 Weld	202	218	95	4	0
63 Yuma	11	11	2	0	0
80 Broomfield	19	20	8	4	5
State Totals	4,833	5,089	2,608	1,305	123

Note : As the State Total for Number of Children represents distinct individual