

# MICHIGAN'S "STRONG FAMILIES/SAFE CHILDREN" INITIATIVE



## Interim Evaluation Summary 1995 - 1998

"Strong Families/Safe Children" (SF/SC) is Michigan's implementation of the federal "Family Preservation and Family Support Services" program (Public Law 103-66) reauthorized under the "Adoption & Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-89). The program is an amendment to the Social Security Act as a new subpart, Title IV-B, subpart 2, ratified under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is a summary of the “Interim Evaluation Report” for Michigan’s *Strong Families/Safe Children* initiative. The summary is intended as accessible information and feedback to stakeholders about the first years of Michigan’s collaborative planning and implementation of the federal “Family Preservation and Family Support Services Act.”

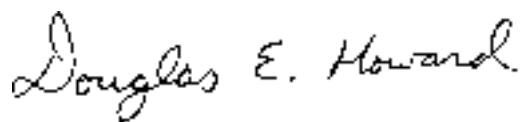
The summary report was put together by staff at the Michigan Family Independence Agency and is based on the Agency’s complete interim evaluation report provided by Dr. Cynthia Cameron, Director and Sherry Whalen, Senior Project Manager, Michigan Public Health Institute, Systems Reform Division, Okemos, Michigan.

A diverse group of local and state stakeholders were the core of the statewide program evaluation effort for *Strong Families/Safe Children*. I am grateful to the many evaluation workgroup contributors that include: Dr. Cameron and Ms. Whalen, Sally Hiner, Michigan Public Health Institute; Mary Scobic and Sandy Herman, Michigan Department of Community Health; Bonnie Graham, Office of Services to the Aging; Laurie Ludington, Cheryl Sibilsky, Paul Spata, and Susan Kelly, Michigan Family Independence Agency; Elizabeth O’Dell, St. Joseph County Human Services Commission; Gail Stimson, Genesee County Family Coordinating Council; and many other participating local collaborative representatives. All contributors brought a unique and valued perspective to the evaluation workgroup.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the many people who have gathered in Michigan communities to participate in Family coordinating councils to plan and implement a continuum of services for children and families. Thank you to the many community based SF/SC Coordinators and local staff who gathered data and reported it in a timely fashion. I am grateful to the State Advisory Group who spent many hours holding focus groups throughout the state of Michigan developing the vision for SF/SC. This effort has been a team approach crossing various systems. The results have impacted the lives of thousands of Michigan’s children and families.

Finally, thanks to Karen Smith, Mary Mehren, Carol Wolenberg, Michael Gillespie, Gale Norman, and Sheri Falvay for their assistance and comments in the review of the report.

For many, this summary report will meet information needs about Michigan’s SF/SC program evaluation efforts. The full Interim Report is available on the Strong Families/Safe Children web page, through the Michigan Family Independence Agency, Division of Child and Family Services home page.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas E. Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug Howard  
Director, Michigan Family Independence Agency

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## OVERVIEW

Federal legislation intended to:

- Promote family strength and stability
- Enhance parental functioning
- Protect children through the development and expansion of family preservation and community-based family support services
- Provide a new opportunity for states and eligible Indian tribes to review current strategies for meeting the service needs of children and their families
- Identify service gaps and barriers
- Develop and carry out a comprehensive five-year plan for providing a continuum of services to families and their children.

A broad based, inclusive State Advisory Group was convened in January 1994. Using information from public hearings and focus groups, the State Advisory Group set the vision and structure for "Strong Families/Safe Children."

Michigan's Governor Engler and the Family Independence Agency Director allocated approximately \$16 million additional funds to the five-year, \$35 million federal allocation to enable *all* 83 Michigan counties to participate in the SF/SC initiative.

Implementation of the SF/SC program required that each county establish a Family Coordinating Council (FCC). Using a broad-based, inclusive community planning process, the FCC was to develop a coordinated family preservation and family support services plan. The FCC was required to include major stakeholders in its membership and planning process, including parents and consumers of services.

Michigan's 83 counties initiated SF/SC planning and service delivery over a three-year period.

The majority (at least 80%) of these funds were targeted for direct services to children and families.

## Outcomes

The State of Michigan committed to a set of minimum core program outcomes to measure positive results for children and families. These outcomes were measured quarterly across communities for the statewide SF/SC program evaluation. Following are the required state outcomes:

- Reduce out-of-home placements, repeat placements, and length of stay in placements
- Increase adoption placements
- Increase child immunizations
- Increase services to seniors and other relatives caring for minor children.

Additionally, the state committed to annually tracking progress on locally determined service outcomes as identified in the plans of the county-based collaboratives.



# PROCESS EVALUATION

## Types of Services Purchased

Figure 1 summarizes the types of services purchased by SF/SC funds in Fiscal Year 1998 and the percentage of funds expended per type of service. The highest expenditures were for Community/School Based Services (19%), Service Coordination/Administration (includes local planning and program administration costs) (16%), Wrap-around services (15%), and Family/Home Based Services (14%).

Each type of service represents a variety of specific service programs designed to meet child and family needs as identified in approved SF/SC service plans.

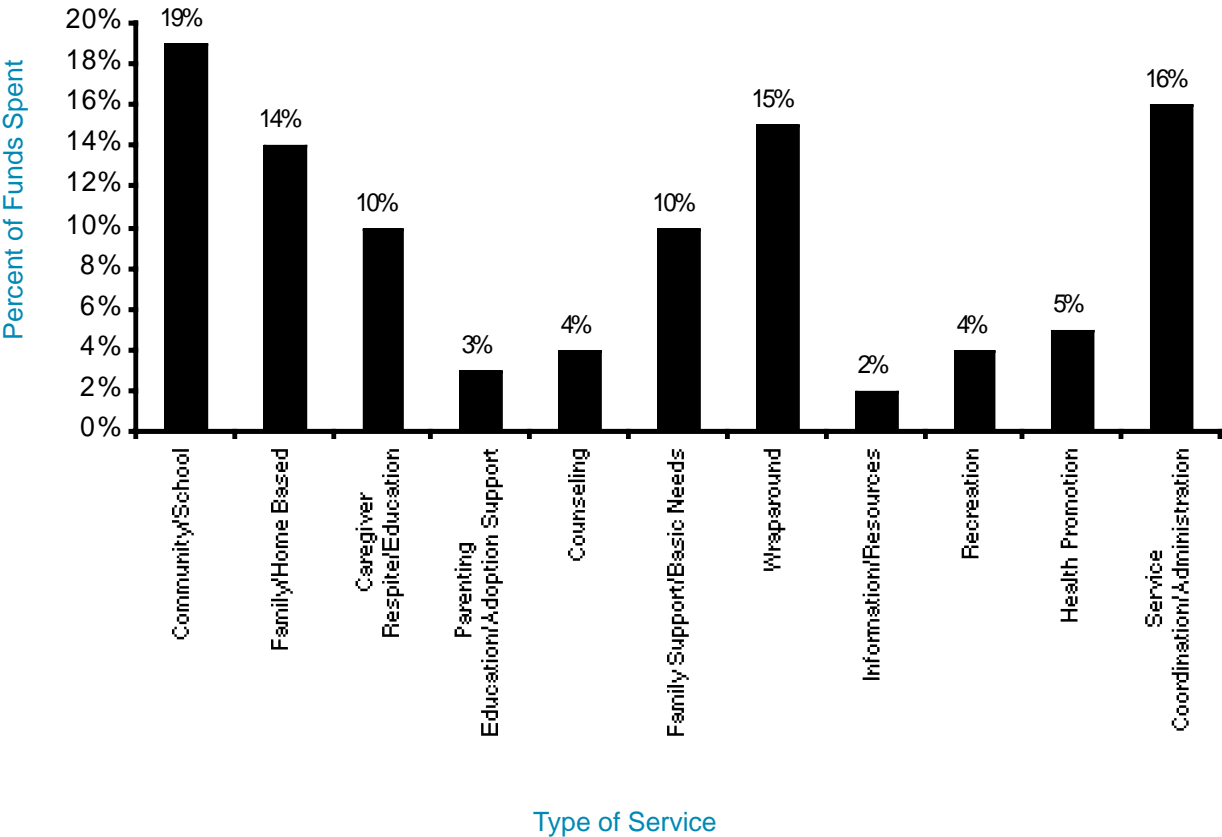


Figure 1. Percentage of Funds Spent by Type of Service

## Numbers Served

Reports from county-based collaboratives show increases in the total number of children and/or families served from 3,816 in Fiscal Year 1995 to 193,832 in Fiscal Year 1998. These numbers are a varied and duplicated count, i.e., some programs provide several different service components (home visiting, support group, parenting class) and a family who participates in more than one service component may be counted multiple times. Services addressed in this report include some that are funded from multiple funding sources, that include SF/SC. Other services are counting “hits” on a resource information web page or one time assistance and referral program. The numbers shown in Figure 2 are indicative of the numbers of children and families touched by the SF/SC program.

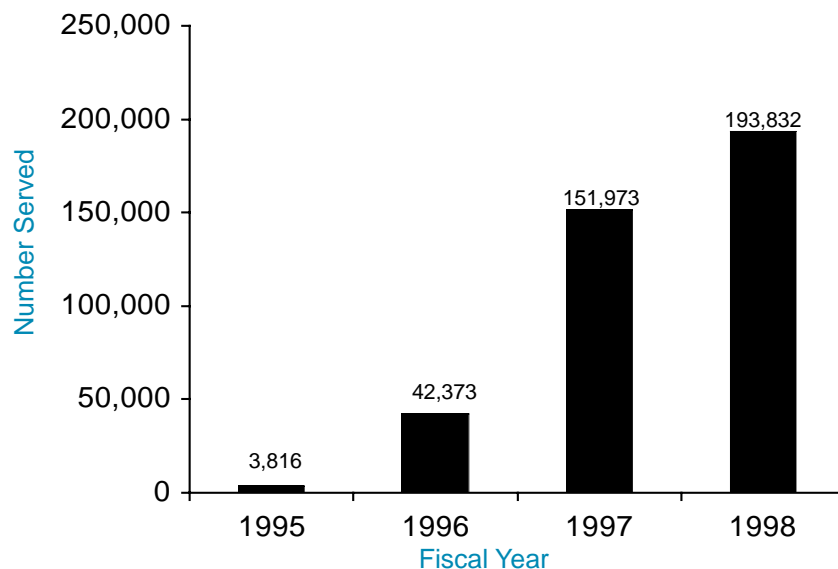


Figure 2. Number Served by Fiscal Year

## SF/SC Survey

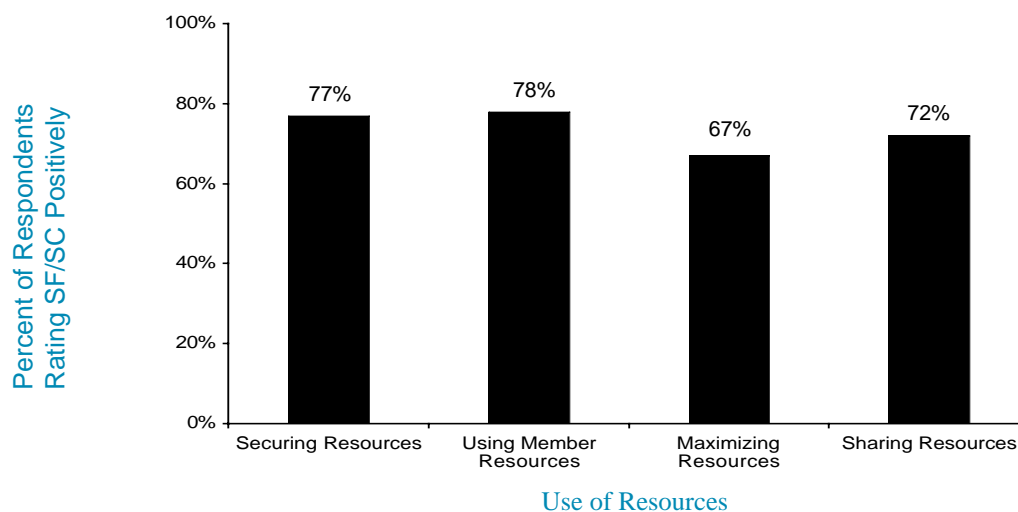
In December 1998, the SF/SC survey was distributed to FCC chairpersons and other FCC members. The 589 returned surveys represented all 79 local collaboratives (includes all 83 counties). Each group of stakeholders had a high response rate. The SF/SC survey examined perceptions of the following:

- Effectiveness of SF/SC groups using a four point scale from “not very effective” to “very effective”
- Impact of SF/SC on the community using a four-point scale from “not at all” to “a great deal”
- Effectiveness of state/local interactions using a four point scale from “not very effective” to “very effective”

## Resources

**“When more organizations are able to examine budgets of programs, there are questions like: are you getting results? Why are you spending money on something if you don’t get participants? .....And there are plenty of people at the table to help problem solve through these issues.” *SF/SC Member From Cooperative Extension***

Respondents rated SF/SC helpfulness to communities in securing, using, maximizing, and sharing resources. From 67% to 78% of respondents rated SF/SC positively in these areas.



**Figure 3.** Ratings for Use of Resources

## Service Delivery System

The survey asked about SF/SC impact on the service delivery system. The following figure presents respondent results on items about the impact on the service delivery system:

- Services have improved (80%)
- Service delivery system has been redesigned (49%)
- Services are more efficient (56%)
- Services are less duplicative (62%)



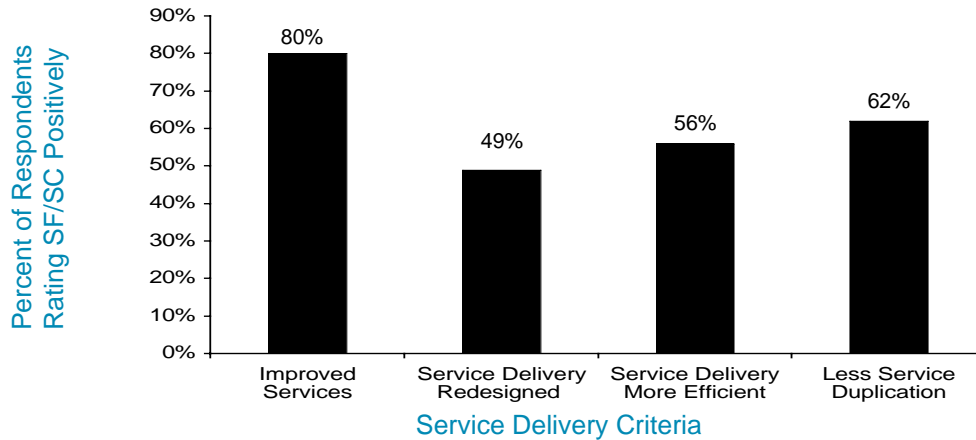


Figure 4. Ratings for Service Delivery Criteria

### Benefit to Community

The “Benefit to Community” items asked respondents to rate SF/SC effectiveness in promoting community efforts to work together on child and family issues (92%). Respondents believe they are better equipped to work collectively on child and family issues (87%). They believe the community has greater awareness of child and family issues (69%) and has greater understanding of child and family needs (76%). Respondents believe SF/SC promoted local responsibility for children and families (72%). Over 90% of respondents rate SF/SC as having great, moderate or some effect on every item in this category.

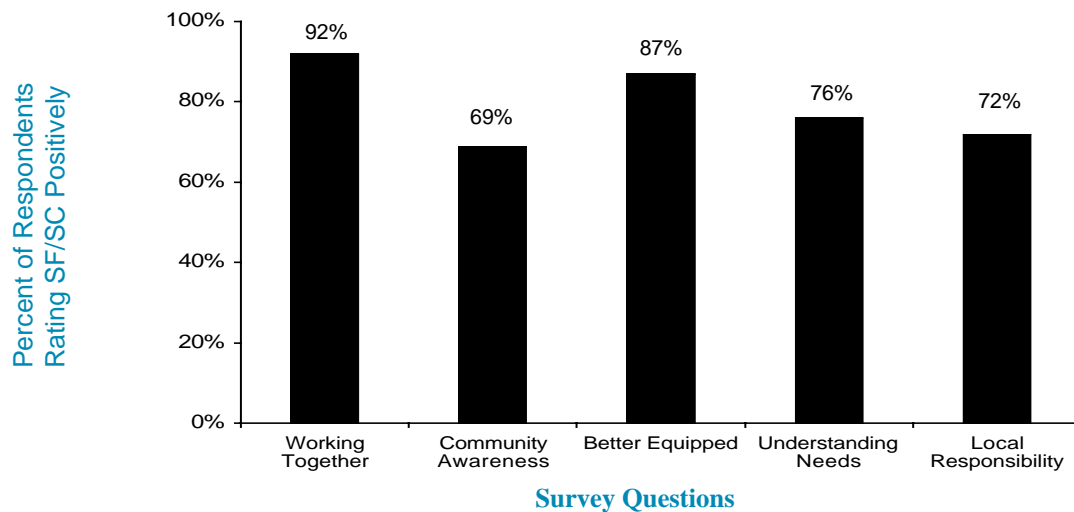


Figure 5. Benefit to Community Survey Responses

**“The important thing about SF/SC isn’t just the money. It is the opportunity to develop, maintain, and be held accountable for the lives of children and families at the community level.” *County commissioner***

## OUTCOME EVALUATION

The SF/SC statewide program evaluation tracks changes in the required outcomes listed below:

- Reduce the number of out-of-home placements
- Increase adoption placements
- Increase the number of childhood immunizations
- Increase community based services to seniors or other relatives acting as primary caregivers to children under the age of 18.

### State-Required Outcome: Reduce the Number of Out-of-Home Placements

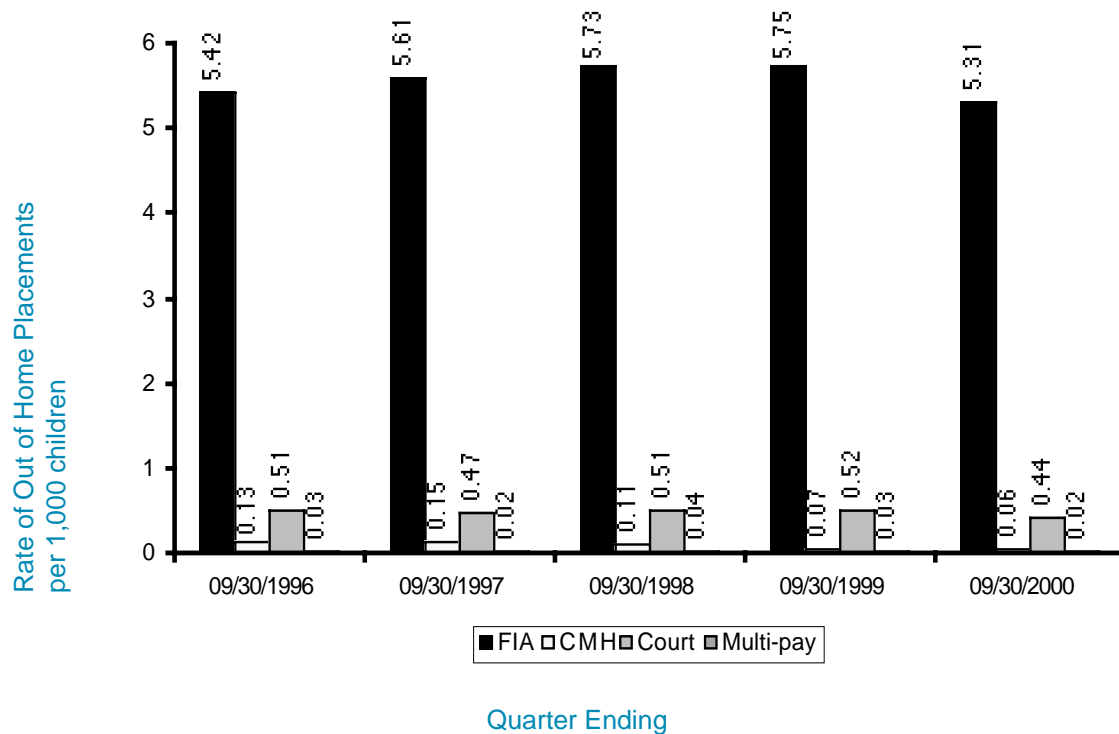
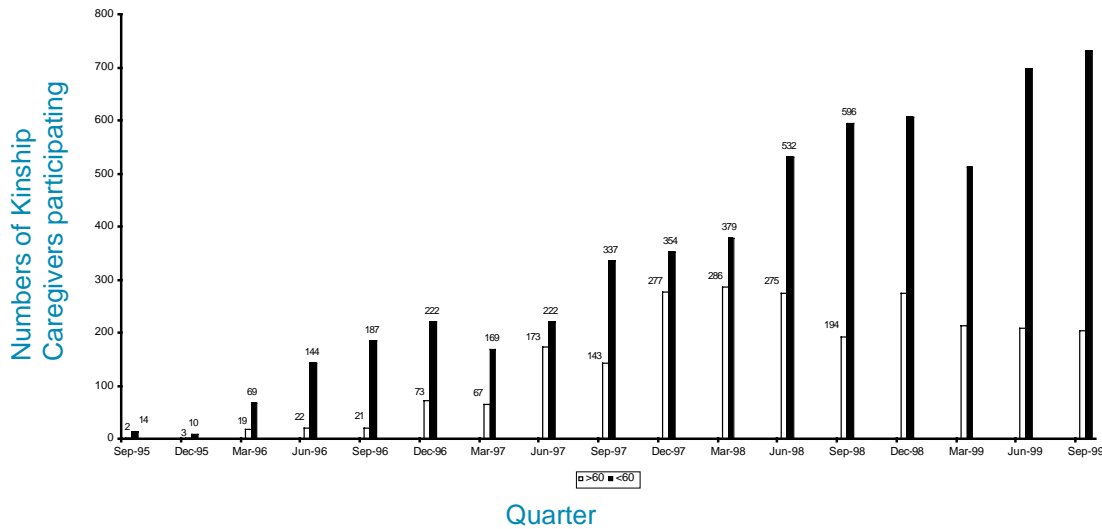


Figure 6: Rate of Out of Home Placements per 1000 Children

SF/SC tracked data for out-of-home placement rates of children by local mental health agencies, juvenile court ordered delinquency and abuse/neglect. Court data requires a hand count. The state trend for total out of home placements rate appears to be relatively flat with an increase between 1996 and 1999 from slightly less than 6 per 1000 to slightly over 6 per 1000.

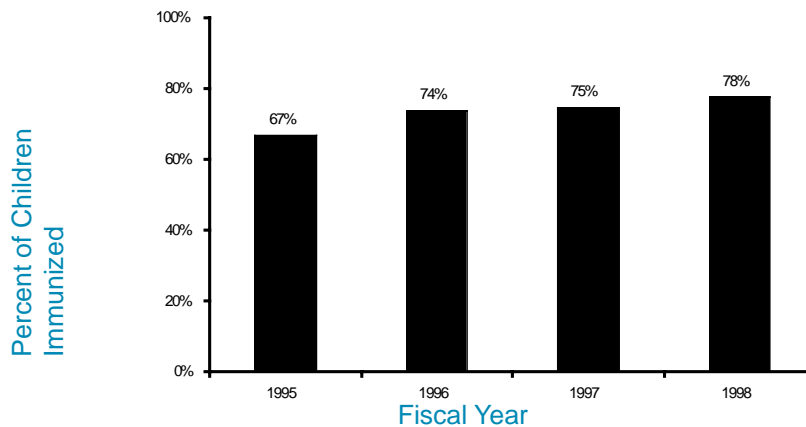
**State Required Outcome: Increase community based services to seniors or other relatives acting as primary caregivers to children under the age of 18.**



**Figure 7. Number and Age of Kinship Caregivers Participating in SF/SC Services by Quarter**

Between 1995 and 1998 the number of reported kinship caregivers that received services funded by SF/SC increased from under 50 to over 800. The number of kinship caregivers participating in SF/SC services continues to increase.

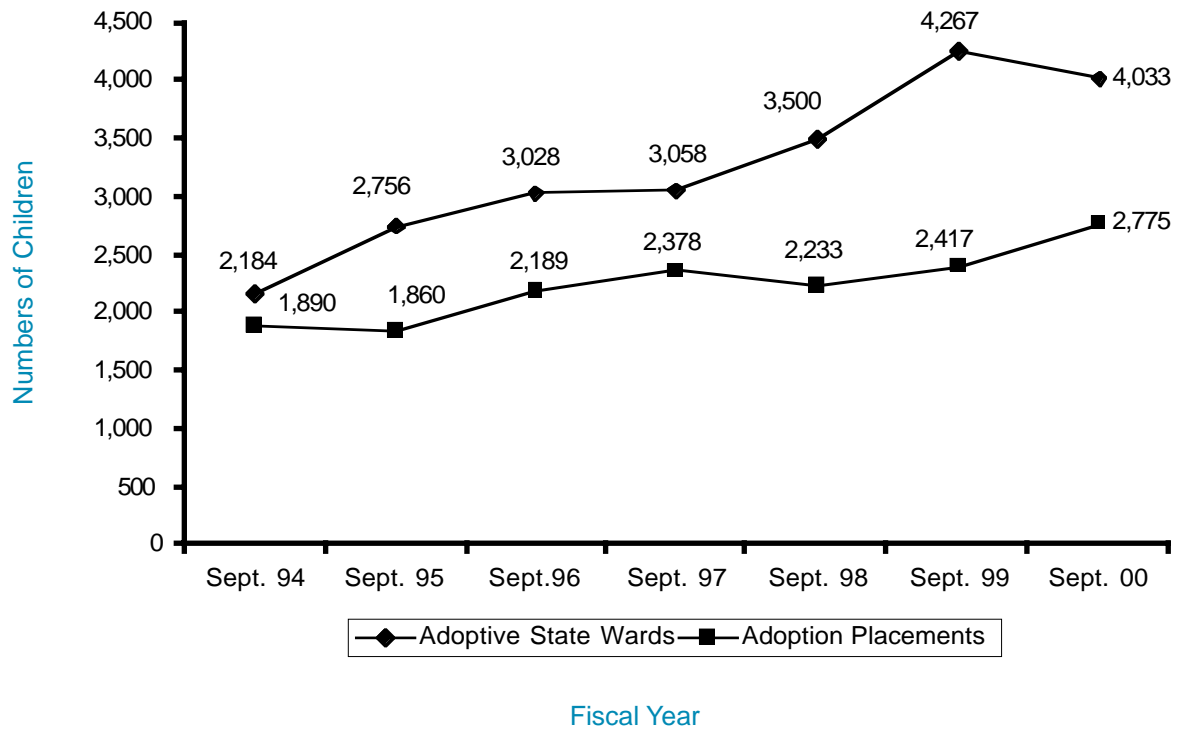
**State Required Outcome: Increase child immunizations.**



**Figure 8. Estimated 4:3:1:3 Vaccination Coverage Among Michigan Children 19-35 Months of Age**

Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) provided estimated statewide immunization data for this report. A statewide, automated database for immunizations, the Michigan Childhood Immunization Registry (MCIR), now exists. MCIR will be used for future reports. Between 1995 and 1998 MDCH reports an increase from 67% to 78% of children 19-35 months of age fully immunized.

## State Required Outcome: Increase adoption placements.



**Figure 9.** Number of Permanent Wards on the Last Day of Quarter for Whom Adoption is a Goal and the Number of Adoption Placements Per Quarter.

Between 1995 and 2000, adoptions in Michigan increased from 1860 to 2275.





Quantity: 800  
Cost: \$874.91 (\$1.094 ea.)  
Authority: FIA Director

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