

Duration of Stay in Foster Care
(FY 2020 Appropriation Act - Public Act 67 of 2019)

March 1, 2020

Sec. 501. (1) *A goal is established that not more than 25% of all children in foster care at any given time during the current fiscal year, if in the best interest of the child, will have been in foster care for 24 months or more.*

(2) ***By March 1 of the current fiscal year, the department shall provide to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on the department budget, the senate and house fiscal agencies, the senate and house policy offices, and the state budget office a report describing the steps that will be taken to achieve the specific goal established in this section and on the percentage of children who currently are in foster care and who have been in foster care a total of 24 or more months.***



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As of December 31, 2019, 27.9 percent of children in foster care have been in care 24 months or more. Michigan continues to exceed the federal standard for length of stay for children in care. The department continues to evaluate efforts and looks for new opportunities to provide timely permanency for children in foster care. The following initiatives are the primary strategies underway to achieve the goal specified within this section.

Strengthening Our Focus on Children and Families

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) continued to implement strategies to ensure long-term, systemic reforms in Michigan's child welfare system. Assessment of fidelity and training of the MiTEAM case practice model began during FY 2018 and continued through FY 2019 with the implementation of a new quality assurance structure and local quality improvement processes.

MDHHS continues to implement a statewide continuous quality improvement process through the work of the Quality Improvement Council (QIC). QIC includes the work of sub-teams that address issues identified in the following areas: permanency, safety, well-being, placement, service array, training, communications, and data.

MDHHS continues to maintain a performance-based child welfare system in Kent County. In partnership with private agency providers and other stakeholders, current efforts include: foster care and adoption contract outcome measures that are performance based and aligned with evidence based best practice and adoption contracts containing incentives for meeting performance objectives timely. Contract outcome measures that are performance based and align with evidence based best practice are currently being developed in collaboration with service providers for inclusion in the FY 2021 contracts.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment & Retention Efforts

A sufficient number and adequate array of licensed foster parents across the state are essential to facilitate timely permanence for children in out-of-home care. Efforts to recruit and retain foster parents are:

- Partnership with faith and community organizations.
- Foster parent navigators.
- Adoptive parent navigators.
- A two-day conference to provide training and support to foster, adoptive, and kinship parents.
- Four one-day trainings for licensing and adoption staff focusing on targeted recruitment and recruiting foster and adoptive homes for older youth.
- Partnership with the Capacity Building Center for States.
- Continuation of contracts to provide regional recruitment and training services throughout the state.
- Developed and implemented annual adoptive and foster parent retention and recruitment plans that identified local and state-wide licensing goals and recruitment and retention efforts.

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- Partnership with Family Enrichment Center, Adoptive Family Support Network, Kids Belong, MSU Kinship Care Center, Fostering Forward of Michigan, The Muslim Foster Care Association, and other foster parent led programs and organizations.

Permanency Resource Monitors (PRMs)

The PRMs are permanency experts for local child placing agencies and consult on complex cases that are experiencing barriers or a delay in achieving permanency. The PRMs raise awareness of the importance of establishing permanency for each child and youth in the child welfare system. The PRMs conduct trainings for the private agencies, MDHHS staff, residential staff, foster parents, and other stakeholders in the areas of diligent relative search; case file mining; determining an appropriate permanency goal; permanency goal approval procedures and the guardianship approval process. The PRMs have knowledge of community resources and practice new approaches to planning for children who have been in care for extended periods of time. PRMs team with the case managers to identify strategies to achieve permanency goals for children and youth. The PRMs are responsible for conducting special reviews regarding each child or youth awaiting reunification for over nine months, have a goal of adoption without an identified family at 3 months post termination, or with older youth who are working toward achieving specific permanency goals. During FY 2019, the PRMs made over 20,000 contacts with supervisors, specialists, caregivers, youth, and others that assisted more than 5,000 of Michigan's youth in foster care.

Performance-Based Adoption Contracts

Over 90% of child welfare adoptions in Michigan are completed by contracted private adoption agencies.

Adoption performance outcomes per current contracts:

- Fewer than 5% of placements for adoption will end in disruption.
- Fewer than 5% of finalized adoptions will end in dissolution.
- By September 30 of the fiscal year, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who were legally free for adoption on September 30 of the previous fiscal year, shall have adoptions finalized.
- By September 30 of the fiscal year, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who were legally free for adoption on September 30 of the previous fiscal year, will have the adoption petition filed with the court.

Adoption Resource Consultants (ARCs)

MDHHS contracts with Judson Center and Orchards Children's Services to provide ARC services state-wide. These specialized consultants review all cases following termination of parental rights when the child has a goal of adoption for more than one year and does not have an identified adoptive family. The ARCs have demonstrated adoption experience and have received training by national experts on adoption best practices. The ARCs review the individual recruitment plan for each child and determine if all possible efforts to achieve adoption have been completed. They work with the assigned staff to expand recruitment efforts, locate extended family members that may be appropriate for adoptive

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placement, and involve youth in their adoption planning. Intensive recruitment services are also provided through the ARC contracts.

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) Match Support Program

The MARE Match Support program is a state-wide service for families who have been matched with a child from the MARE website and who are in the process of moving forward with an adoption. The MARE Match Support program has specialists who provide up to 90 days of services to families by providing them with referrals to support groups, educational training opportunities, and community resources. The specialists are a great support for the family throughout the adoption process.

MARE Waiting Family Forums

To assist adoptive parents through the match process, the MARE Adoption Navigators host Waiting Family Forums across the state. Prospective adoptive parents learn what happens after they submit inquiries on the MARE website, find out what they can do to make the most of their wait time, learn ways to strengthen their inquiries, get tips on how to effectively advocate for their family, and meet other waiting families. Families who are approved to adopt and families who are in the process of completing their home study are all welcome to participate.