

Duration of Stay in Foster Care

(FY 2017 Appropriation Act - Public Act 268 of 2016)

March 1, 2017

Sec. 501. (1) *A goal is established that not more than 27% of all children in foster care at any given time during the current fiscal year 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.*



Michigan Department of
Health & Human Services

RICK SNYDER, GOVERNOR
NICK LYON, DIRECTOR

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As of December 31, 2016, 24.9 percent of children in foster care have been in care 24 months or more. Michigan has and continues to consistently satisfy the federal standard for children in care for long periods of time. The department is constantly evaluating efforts and looking for new opportunities to provide timely permanency for children in foster care. The following initiatives are several of the primary strategies underway during this fiscal year to achieve the goal specified within this section:

Implementation of Strengthening Our Focus on Children and Families

In FY 2016, MDHHS continued to implement a collective set of strategies to implement long-term, systemic reforms in Michigan's child welfare system. That set of strategies, Strengthening Our Focus on Children and Families approach, includes three primary components: an enhanced, trauma-informed MiTEAM (Michigan Teaming Engagement Assessment and Mentoring) practice model, an overarching continuous quality improvement approach and development of a performance-based child welfare system.

MDHHS collaborated with private agency staff in Lenawee, Mecosta/Osceola and Kent Counties in the development and testing of new strategies in practice. The MDHHS and private agency staffs in these four counties have been instrumental in not only developing these strategies alongside Children's Services staff, but are also the first to test the strategies in practice. In FY 2016, Kent County completed a series of in-person supervisor sessions and staff coaching labs. An assessment of model fidelity and effectiveness of these efforts as well as a second round Quality Service Review (QSR) indicated signs of progress. Pre-implementation to post-implementation practice indicator scores improved from 41 percent to 58 percent. Results from these assessments were used in the development of local quality improvement efforts and in the development of a statewide practice model enhancements implementation which is scheduled to conclude in November 2017.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment & Retention Efforts

A sufficient number and adequate array of licensed foster parents across the state is an essential element of a foster care system that is able to facilitate timely permanence for children in out-of-home care. Among the efforts to recruit and retain foster parents are:

- Partnership with faith based communities.
- A faith based summit held in April 2016 for faith and community leaders.
- Developing and monitoring annual adoptive and foster parent retention and recruitment plans, which identify local and state-wide licensing goals and recruitment and retention efforts.

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- Partnership with Michigan Association for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents (MAFAK), Family Enrichment Center, Families on the Move, Adoptive Family Support Network, MSU Kinship Care Center, Fostering Forward of Michigan, and other foster parent led programs and organizations.
- Foster Parent Navigators.
- Adoptive Parent Navigators.
- A two day conference was held in August 2016 for foster, adoptive and kinship parents to provide training and support to foster and adoptive parents.
- A licensing summit was held in July 2016 for licensing staff across the state.
- Partnership with the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment.

Permanency Resource Monitors (PRMs)

The Permanency Resource Monitors (PRMs) are considered the 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, DHHS staff, residential staff, foster parents, and other stakeholders in the areas of diligent relative search; case file mining; how to determine 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 offer consultation at initial placement to work toward making the best assessment of a placement that can provide safety and permanency. 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, or have not achieved another permanency goal timely. During FY 2016, the PRMs made over 22,000 contacts with supervisors, specialists, caregivers, youth, and others that assisted more than 4,000 of Michigan's youth experiencing foster care.

Permanency Forums

Permanency forums are cross disciplinary teaming processes to identify barriers to permanency and find solutions. Team members include the family division judge assigned to adoptions, the MDHHS county director, a lawyer guardian ad litem (L-GAL), a MDHHS and/or private agency caseworker or supervisor, an attorney who represents parents, a court-appointed special advocate, and any other key individuals in the county.

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The permanency forums have three overarching goals:

- Give children the timely permanence they deserved.
- Improve Michigan's permanency outcomes required by the Child and Family Services Review.
- Develop best practice strategies to share with the rest of the state.

Speakers share innovative practices developed and the results achieved using them. These forums set a new standard of collaboration. Under the guidance of strong judicial leadership, stakeholders reached across the branches of government and the boundaries of various occupations to address the needs of foster children and to discuss the administrative and judicial barriers that are delaying the process. This collaboration produces solutions and those solutions produce better outcomes for children. The permanency forum in 2016 was held in September.

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, 2017, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who are legally free for adoption on September 30, 2016, shall have adoptions finalized.
- By September 30, 2017, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who are legally free for adoption on September 30, 2016, 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 Adoption Resource Consultants (ARC) services state-wide. These specialized consultants review all post-termination of parental rights cases 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 placement, and involve the youth in their adoption planning.

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Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) Match Support Program

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 match support specialists who provide up to 90 days of services to families by providing them with referrals to support groups, educational training opportunities, and other referrals to helpful community resources. The match support 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 to their inquiries after they submit them 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 attend.