

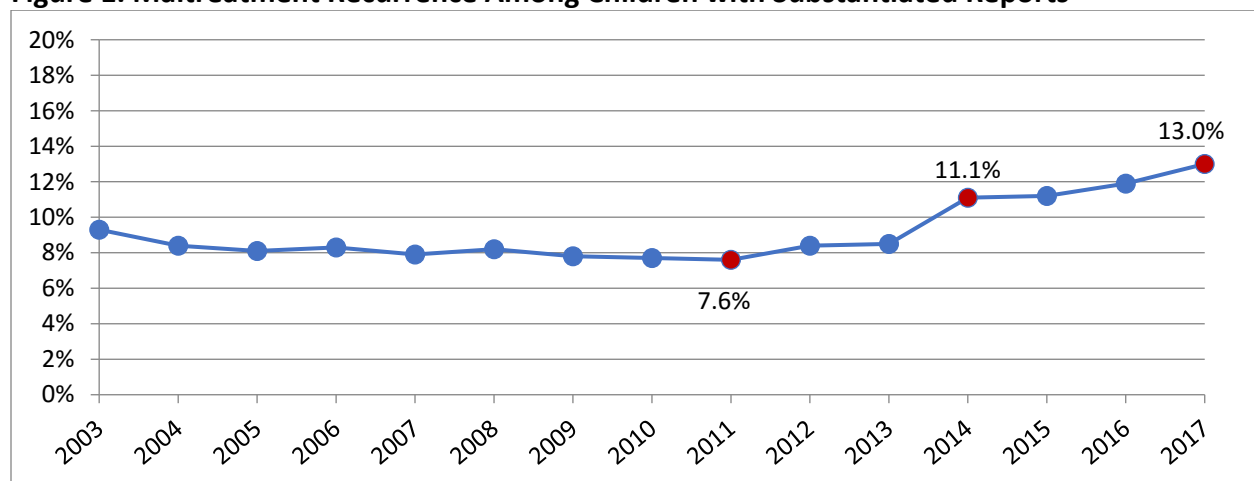
Five Findings from the 2019 *B.H.* Monitoring Report

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for assuring the safety, family permanency, and well-being of the children who have been investigated for abuse or neglect or who have been removed from their homes and placed into substitute care. For over two decades, the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) has produced an annual monitoring report that tracks the performance of the Illinois child welfare system on over 40 different measures of safety, placement restrictiveness, placement stability, and timely, stable, and permanent family relationships. The full report, which is available on the CFRC website, examines each measure over the past seven years and provides detailed tables and figures that examine differences among child age and racial groups. This brief highlights five noteworthy findings from the most recent report, which tracks performance through June 2018.

1. *Maltreatment Recurrence Continues to Increase*

Once a child is involved in a substantiated report of child maltreatment, the child welfare system assumes partial responsibility for assuring his or her safety from additional abuse or neglect. One of the most common measures of child safety is maltreatment recurrence, defined in the current report as the percentage of children who have a substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of a prior substantiated report. Maltreatment recurrence has increased from 7.6% in 2011 to 13.0% in 2017, its highest point in 15 years (Figure 1).

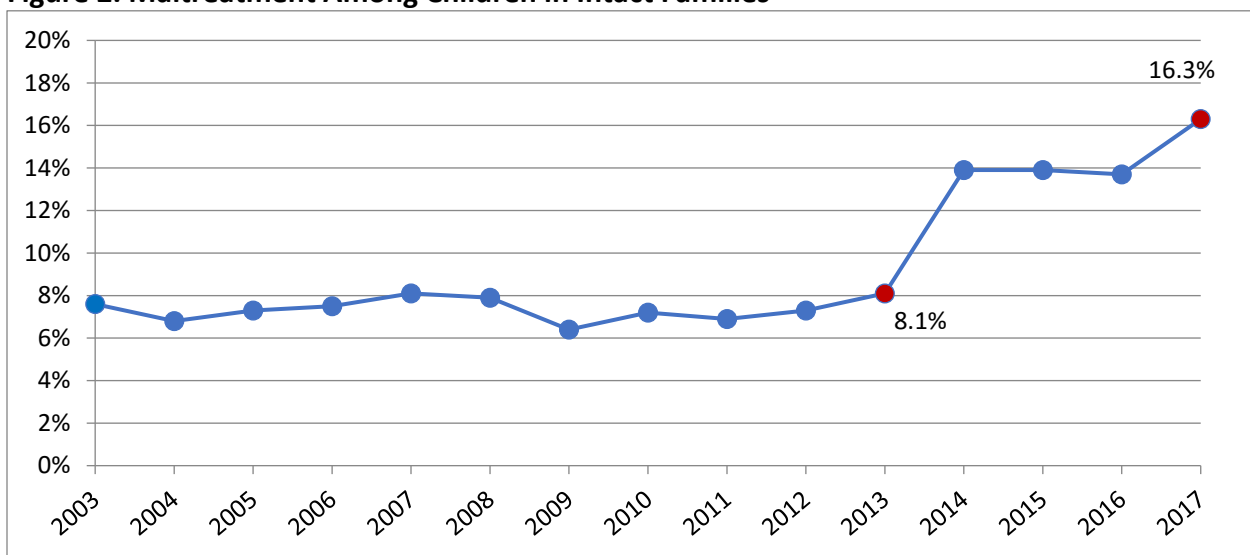
Figure 1. Maltreatment Recurrence Among Children with Substantiated Reports



2. Maltreatment Among Children in Intact Families Reaches Highest Levels in 15 Years

In some instances, DCFS will substantiate child maltreatment but decide that it is in the best interest of the child to remain at home while the family receives supportive services rather than place him or her into substitute care. Families in these intact family cases are of special interest to the Department because their history of substantiated maltreatment places them at increased risk of repeat maltreatment compared to families with no history of maltreatment. Safety among children in intact family cases is measured by examining the percentage who experience a substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of their case open date (see Figure 2). Maltreatment among children in intact family cases has more than doubled in the past five years, from 8.1% in 2013 to 16.3% in 2017. This increase is a cause of concern.

Figure 2. Maltreatment Among Children in Intact Families



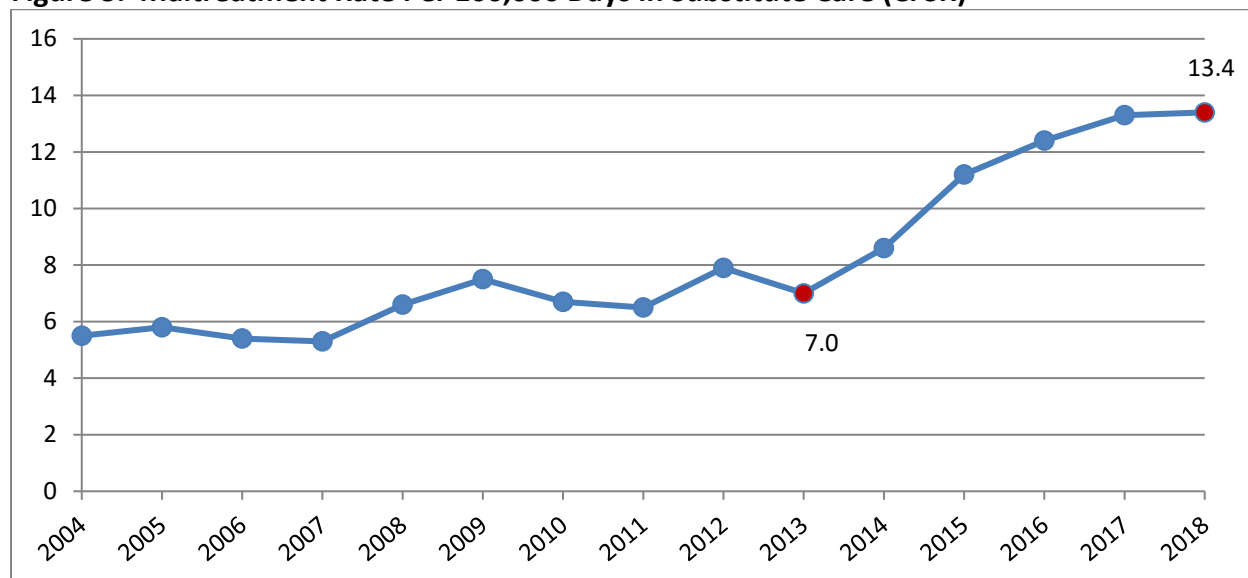
3. Maltreatment of Children in Substitute Care Reaches New High Levels

Children should only be removed from their parents' care and placed into substitute care when it is necessary to protect their well-being and safety, and it is essential that children are safe while they are in state care. To measure maltreatment in substitute care, the CFRC uses the measure developed for Round 3 of the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR).¹ This measure looks at the children in substitute care during the fiscal year and calculates the total number of days these children were in substitute care. Then, the total number of substantiated reports of maltreatment for these children is determined. In order to make the results easier to interpret, the results are multiplied by 100,000 and are described as the rate of maltreatment per 100,000 days of substitute care.

¹ Children's Bureau (n.d.). CFSR Round 3 Statewide Data Indicator Series: Maltreatment in Foster Care. Retrieved on March 20, 2019 from <https://training.cfsportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources/3105>

Using this measure, rates of substantiated maltreatment for children in substitute care have been steadily increasing since 2013 and reached a new high level in 2018 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Maltreatment Rate Per 100,000 Days in Substitute Care (CFSR)



4. Use of Restrictive Placement Settings Decreases

When it is in the best interest of children to be placed in substitute care, it is both federal and state policy to place them in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible. Preference is given to kinship foster homes, followed by traditional and specialized foster homes. Congregate care settings (group homes and various types of institutional settings) are less desirable placements for children. Emergency shelters and foster homes are used when other types of placements cannot be arranged and should only be used for 30 days or less. Previous *B.H.* monitoring reports raised concerns about the increasing or high use of congregate care and emergency shelter placements, especially as a child's initial placement in substitute care. However, examination of children's initial placement types in the current report finds that the percentage of children initially placed in emergency shelters or foster homes was at its lowest point in the past 7 years (1.3%) in 2018 (see Figure 4). The percentage of children initially placed in group homes or institutions in 2018 was also the lowest it has been in the past 7 years (Figure 4). The use of congregate care settings for child placements at the end of the fiscal year has also decreased over the past seven years, although to a lesser extent (from 8.3% in 2012 to 6.0% in 2018; see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Initial Placement Types

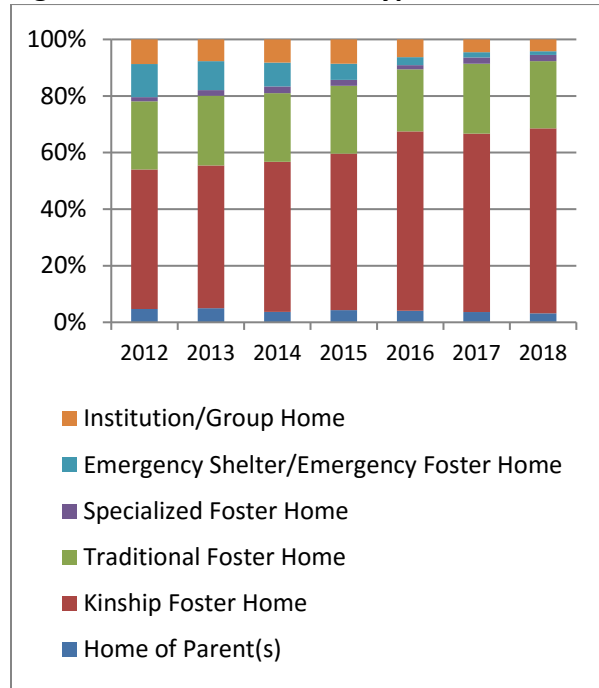
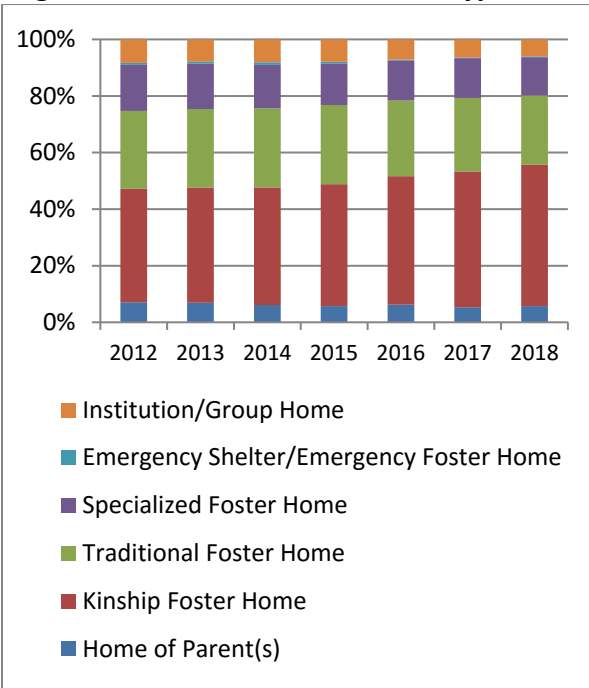


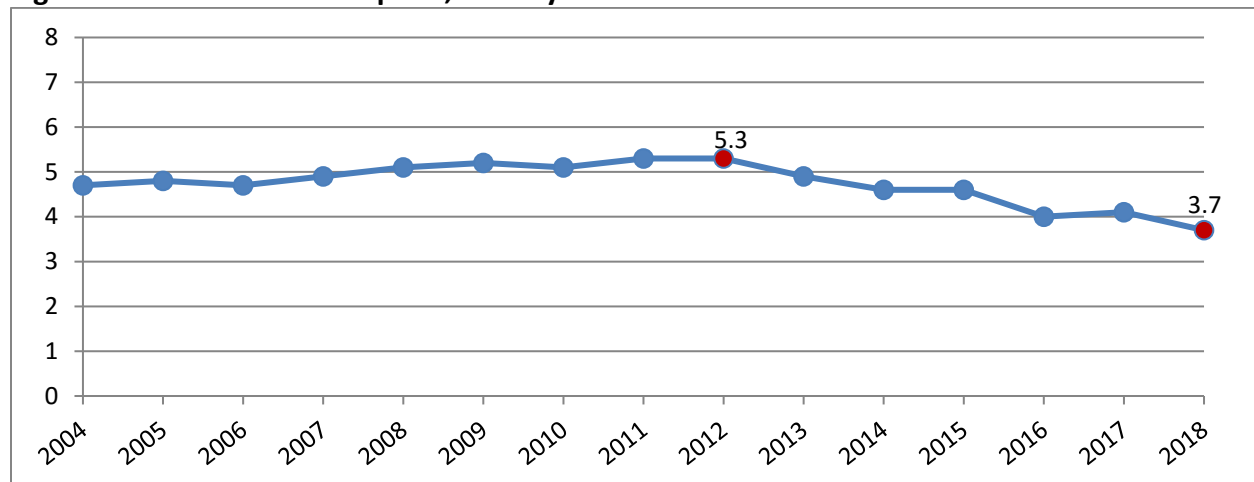
Figure 5. End-of-Year Placement Types



5. Placement Stability Continues to Improve

When children are placed into substitute care, it is usually beneficial for their well-being to remain in the same placement if possible; this is known as placement stability. To measure placement stability, the *B.H.* report adapts the measure used by the CFSR which is defined as the number of placement moves per 1,000 days of substitute care among all children who enter care in a 12-month period. Since this definition measures placement *moves*, lower numbers are more desirable than higher numbers. As shown in Figure 6, placement stability was stable for many years—around 5 moves per 1,000 days. Since 2012, the number of moves per 1,000 days has been gradually decreasing and is now at its lowest rate in 15 years (3.7 in 2018).

Figure 6. Placement Moves per 1,000 Days in Substitute Care



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Related Publications

Children and Family Research Center. (2019). *Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois: FY2019 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree*. Urbana, IL: Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.