

**FOSTER CARE BIENNIAL REPORT:
JUNE 30, 2024**

Prepared by:

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**Office of Children
and Family Services**

Introduction

In January 2021, Chapter 11 of the Laws of 2021 was enacted, requiring the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to make information publicly available on its website regarding youth placed in foster care settings and the recruitment of foster parents. The act requires this information to be broken out by local departments of social services (LDSSs) and specified foster care setting types, identified within the law as including, but not limited to, foster boarding homes, approved relative homes, group homes, group residences, agency-operated boarding homes, supervised independent living arrangements and child care institutions. Information must be posted biannually, beginning December 31, 2021, and continuing through December 31, 2023. Subsequently, Chapter 739 of the Laws of 2023, as amended by Chapter 77 of the Laws of 2024, added subdivision (l) to section 17 of the Social Services Law and extended this reporting requirement. Specific areas delineated in the law and the information compiled and posted by OCFS in response are described below. Documents listed below can be found on the OCFS webpage (<https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>) under the section Foster Care Biannual Report.

Table 1. Total Number of Children Placed in Foster Care Settings (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This table, broken down by foster care setting, provides a statewide look at the number of children in the care and custody, or custody and guardianship, of LDSSs and children being cared for in a foster care setting under the custody of the OCFS commissioner. Setting counts for the current report are provided for two points in time (June 30, 2023, and December 31, 2023) and show how the number of children residing in a specific setting type changed over the six-month period.

Unaccompanied Children Census Report (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This document provides point-in-time census data reflecting the number of unaccompanied children in the custody of the United States Office of Refugee Resettlement placed in voluntary authorized agencies (VAs) within New York State. These children are not in foster care but are cared for by these VAs through a contract, grant, or other agreement with the federal government. Data are posted twice a year in December and June.

Table 2. Select Characteristics of Children in Foster Care (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This series of tables provides county-specific looks at the petition, education, and prior foster care history of children in care and custody or custody and guardianship on the last day of the six-month reporting period (June 30 or December 31). Information on children’s family court involvement is presented first, with the article/section type associated with the child’s most recent family court hearing presented. Next, children’s receipt of special education services during the current school year is captured, with the number of children with early intervention (EI) and individualized education plans (IEP) noted. Prior foster care experience is captured by examining each child’s lifetime involvement in the child welfare system. If the child was admitted to and discharged from the New York State foster care system before the start of the current foster care episode, this variable is set to “yes.”

Table 3. Certified/Approved Foster Homes (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This statewide table provides information on the total number of foster homes certified/approved to care for a child in foster care as of the last day of the current six-month reporting period compared to the last day of the prior six-month reporting period.

Table 4. Preventive Services Authorizations and Subsequent Foster Care Admissions (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/custody>)

This statewide table provides information on the number of children living in the community authorized to receive preventive services during the first (October 1 through March 31) or second half (April 1 through September 30) of the prior federal fiscal year and later entered foster care within six and 12 months of their service authorization. Prior federal fiscal year is used to select the sample for this analysis to allow each child in the reporting sample to have a full 12 months of follow-up time by the time of the report of this publication. The final column in the table shows the cumulative total of children entering foster care within 12 months of their authorization.

Approved QRTPs (available at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/sppd/family-first.php>)

A list of all residential programs recognized by New York State as a qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) is provided. Data are updated monthly as needed; if no new QRTPs have been designated in the prior month, the list remains the same.

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Efforts

As OCFS continues to implement the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, OCFS has engaged in the following activities to support the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents by LDSSs and voluntary agencies.

- OCFS is piloting a state-of-the-art software tool, Binti, that will promote greater efficiency in assisting prospective foster and adoptive parents as well as caseworkers in tracking progress as they complete all necessary steps to become certified or approved. OCFS has real time access to the foster and adoptive parents' documentation and LDSSs/VAs overall reports which will support more comprehensive oversight and monitoring. Currently, there are 45 LDSSs/VAs participating in the pilot with 62 LDSSs/VAs completing onboarding from June to August 2024. A request for proposals will be issued in July 2024 to procure a permanent software vendor.
- OCFS continues to train all LDSSs/VAs home finders as trainers in using the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) model to support prospective foster and adoptive parents. To date over 200 staff have participated in the train-the-trainer series, feedback has been positive. OCFS has developed an FAQ to release to the field to address any outstanding policy questions regarding the move to NTDC effective January 1, 2025.