

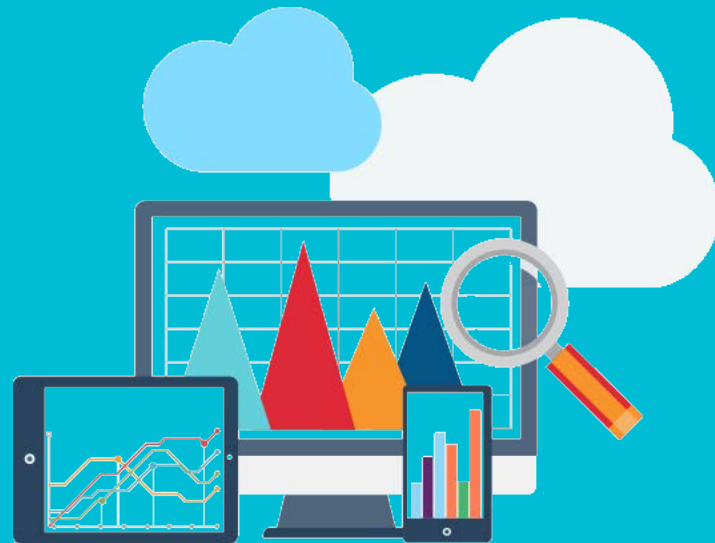
# ASSESSMENT & FINDINGS RECOMMENDATION



**bcdss**

baltimore city department  
of social services

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION  
Center for Systems Innovation



# Dr. Walters invited Casey's Center for Systems Innovation (CSI) to conduct a full assessment of BCDSS outcomes

## Assessment Question:

Based on BCDSS's strengths and challenges, what strategic direction should the Department take?

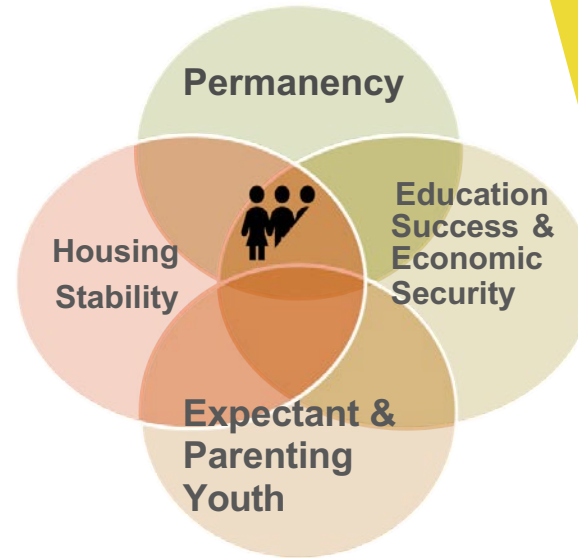
- How are children, youth, young adults and families involved with BCDSS doing? Are they better off as a result of this involvement?
- What are the drivers of positive and negative outcomes for BCDSS?
- What are the recommended strategies and priorities to improve outcomes?

# Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

## Initiative's Population Result (call-to-action):

All young people 14 to 26 who have spent a day in foster care after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday have the relationships, resources and opportunities to ensure well-being and success.

The Initiative's work is focused on making measurable impact in four indicator areas →



## Best Practice Principles

Youth  
Engagement

Equity &  
Inclusion

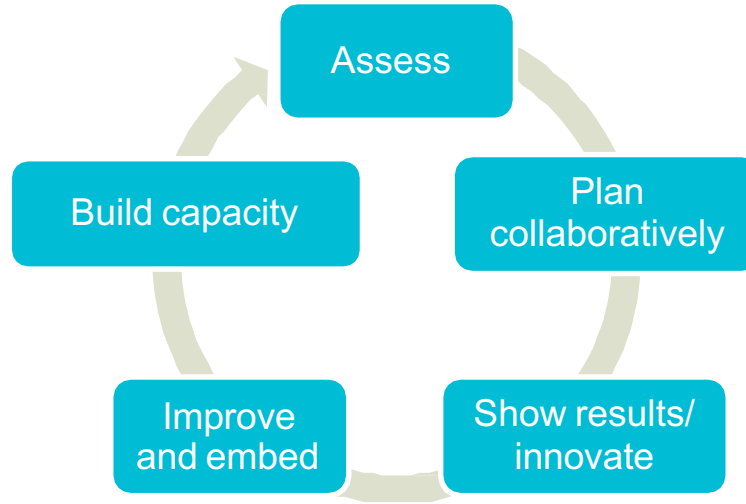
Data & Self-  
Evaluation

Community  
Partnerships

Policy &  
Advocacy

# Child Welfare Strategy Group

Intensive consulting with public agencies to implement innovative, equitable solutions



## Key Outcomes

Safety	Permanency	Well-being	Equity
Young people are safe from maltreatment, with a focus on prevention	Young people have lifelong families, connections with kin and siblings and live in families	Families and young people have the relationships and opportunities needed to thrive, and a voice in decision-making about their lives	Young people of all races, ethnicities, ages, genders, abilities and sexual identities experience positive results

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 CSI leveraged both quantitative and qualitative methods  
 to assess Baltimore City's child welfare system

Data Analysis

- In-depth analysis of Baltimore City: AFCARS data, Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care data, CHESSIE data, Human Resources data

Policy & Document  
 Review

- Maryland Placement Policy: SSA 10-11
- FIMs: SSA 10-08
- APPLA: SSA-CW 16-10
- Kinship Navigator Services: SSA-CW 15-2
- Child Fatality/Critical Incident Policy: SSA 10-05
- Guardianship Assistance Program SSA-CW 15-3
- Local Supervisory Review Process SSA 09-17
- Family Services Planning SSA-CW 18-11
- Voluntary Placements, circular Letter 04-0 (2003)
- APPLA form
- Lawsuit filings
- LJ Consent Decree
- LJ Reports (57, 58, 59, 60 & 61)
- MD Performance Improvement Plan

Focus Groups  
 (45 individuals)

- CPS Workers
- CPS Supervisors
- New Workers
- Permanency Workers
- Permanency Supervisors
- Ready by 21 Workers
- Youth Advisory Board

Individual and Group  
 Interviews  
 (31 Individuals)

- Senior Leadership Team (child welfare related areas)
- Child Welfare Program Managers
- Legal: Judge In Charge Juvenile Docket, CASA, Plaintiff's Attorney, IVAs,
- Other Stakeholders: Birth Parents, Advocates for Children, Citizen's Review Board, Child Fatality Review, Family League, Fostering Change Network, Foster Parent Resource Organization, Kennedy Krieger, Union Representative

Staff Feedback

- Reviewed HR Exit Interview Responses (143 respondents, of which 51 were former Child Welfare Division staff)
- Reviewed staff engagement survey conducted by BCDSS (688 respondents, of which 262 were Child Welfare Division staff)

# OPPORTUNITY MOMENT



Quotes from interviews:

“Randi being here is a plus for the agency. No director wants to take a deep dive, the way Randi has begun to do. I am confident in Randi’s ability to make changes. Our staff is dedicated.”

**“The timing is ripe. I am very optimistic with Department leadership. Inviting Casey in is a big step.”**

“I believe we have a lot of committed people. People, when given the tools that they need, are so responsive. It helps when we give them the why. There is a vision and we are moving, and we are going to get some momentum. I realize it is going to be hard.”

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Child Welfare Program Managers recognize the factors causing performance issues and have concrete ideas about improvements

## If you had \$500,000 for the agency to spend how would you use it?



### Culture/Morale

- “Workers are clear that they are exposed to trauma and yet agency culture doesn’t allow people to adequately take care of themselves. Morale is low, so other managers and I have tried implementing pizza parties, but I think it takes a lot more to really have an impact.”
- “Use funds to renovate the building so it doesn’t feel like a dungeon, which would help with staff morale.”
- “We need more support for staff like peer support groups because vicarious trauma is real, and the work can be really tough. Mentorship and peer support happens mostly informally right now..”



### Leadership

“We need training in how to be leaders. Most of us enter the field to help people, not to be leaders. When they are promoted, many supervisors are still too aligned with the workers instead of the role of accountability.”



## If you had \$500,000 for the agency to spend how would you use it?



### Workforce Training & Retention

- “First, I would use it on the workforce to help us retain the staff coming through the door. I would spend money on the training for new staff.”
- “I would also invest in training like how to talk to people, problem solving, and other key skills that we take for granted. Basic training is important. I would also spend money celebrating staff!”



### Prevention

- “Re-training our teams to work on strengthening families and restricting foster care/out of home.”



### Services/Placement

- “I would spend it on creative options for placements and services. We overuse one-to-one services, instead of something more creative and specific to that young person.”
- “Placement moves can be traumatizing, and the process is not set up for the child’s success. We shouldn’t have a cookie cutter approach to all the different kids coming through the front door. We need to offer services and placements to kids based on their needs.”

# OUTCOMES



## We analyzed data for performance on **key outcomes** at major points of interaction with BCDSS



### Safety & Entry into care

- Entries
- Child fatalities

### Experience within care

- Family and youth connection and engagement
- Family-based placements
- Placement stability

### Exit from care

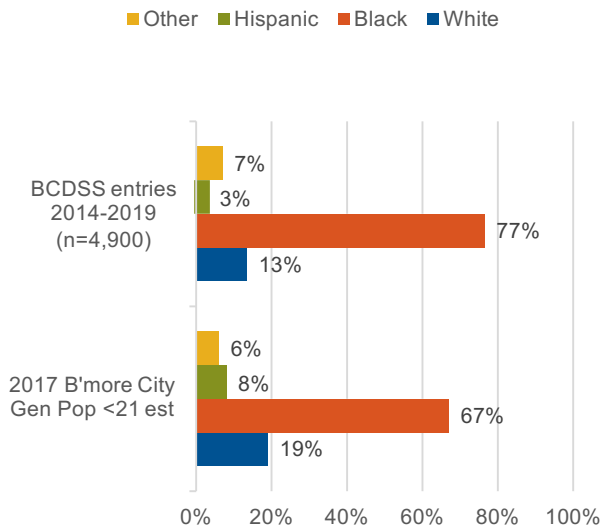
- Exits to permanency and non-permanency
- Reentries
- Disparity in outcomes

**Outcomes:** the status, experiences or well-being of children and youth served by child welfare

**Equitable outcomes:** *all* children and youth experience positive outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, ability and sexual identity

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 Black children and youth disproportionately  
 enter foster care in Baltimore City

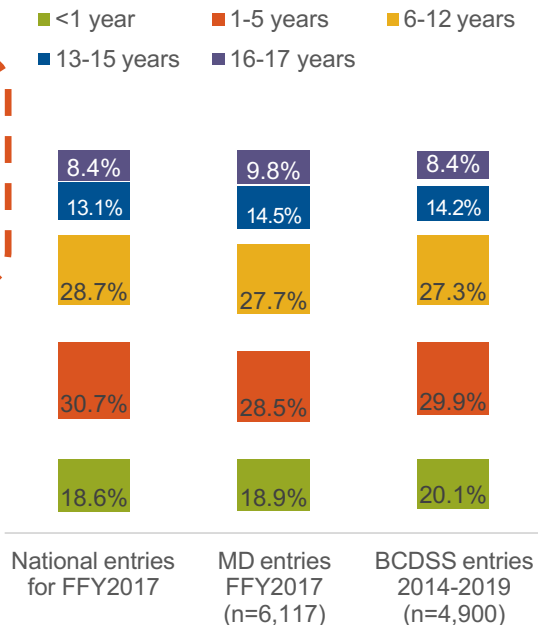
Entries by Race and Ethnicity  
 Compared to Baltimore General Population



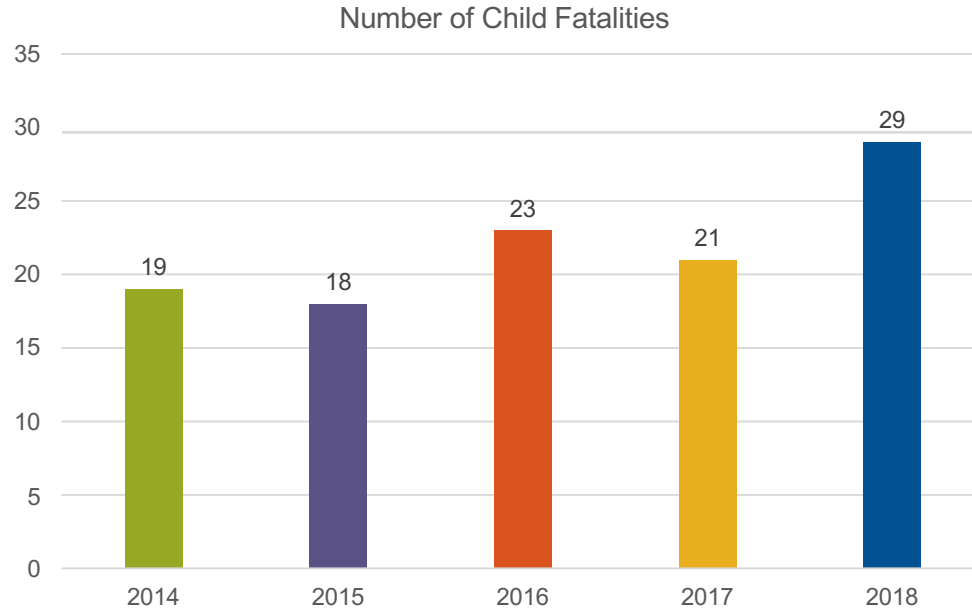
Race categories reflect federal terminology, not AECF's view of those we serve

Slightly more infants enter in Baltimore

National, Maryland and Baltimore Entries Disaggregated by Age

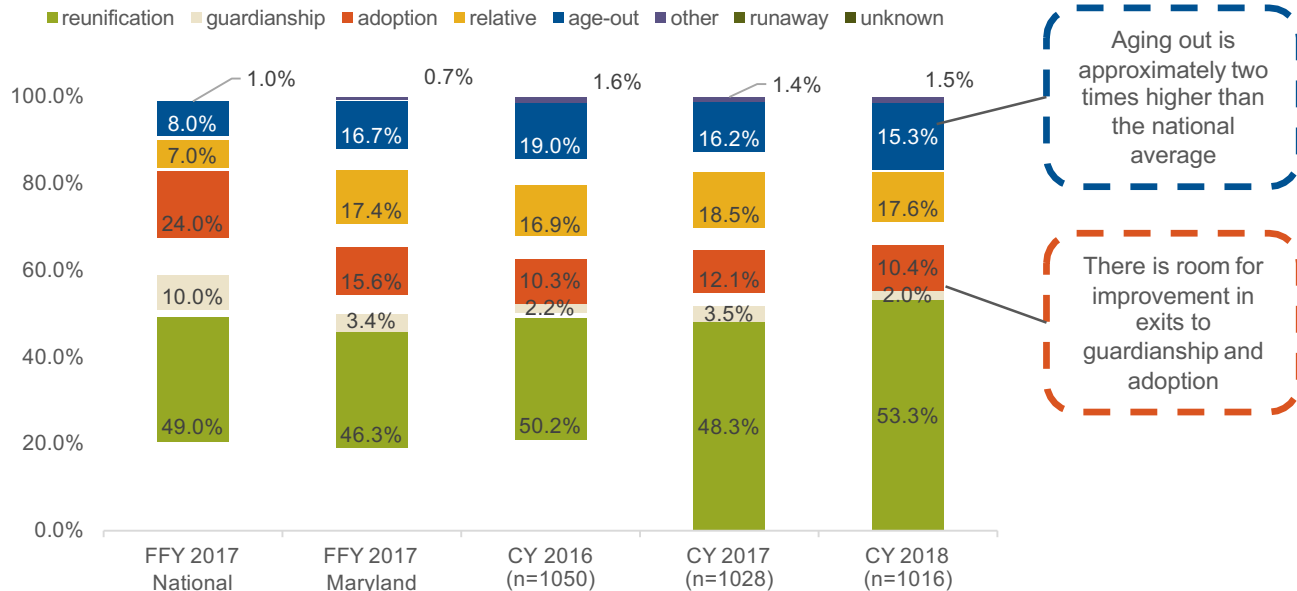


Any child fatality is disturbing and requires individual and systemic review and action to prevent further tragedies



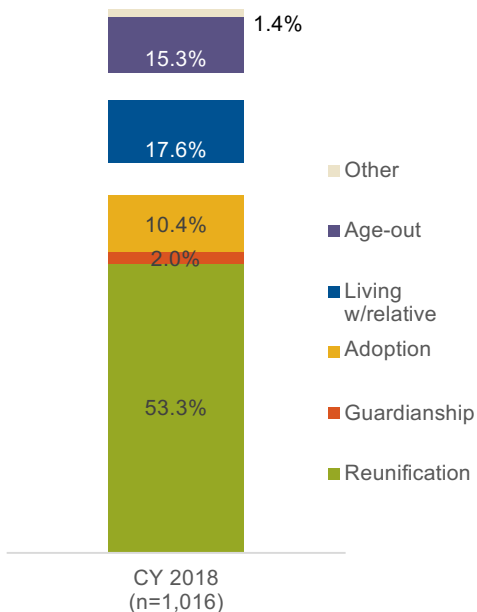
Case 1:84-cv-04409-ELH Document 652-10 Filed 04/07/21 Page 14 of 38  
 Baltimore City has made some progress with reunification, but aging-out remains significantly higher than the national average

National, Maryland and Baltimore Exits from Foster Care

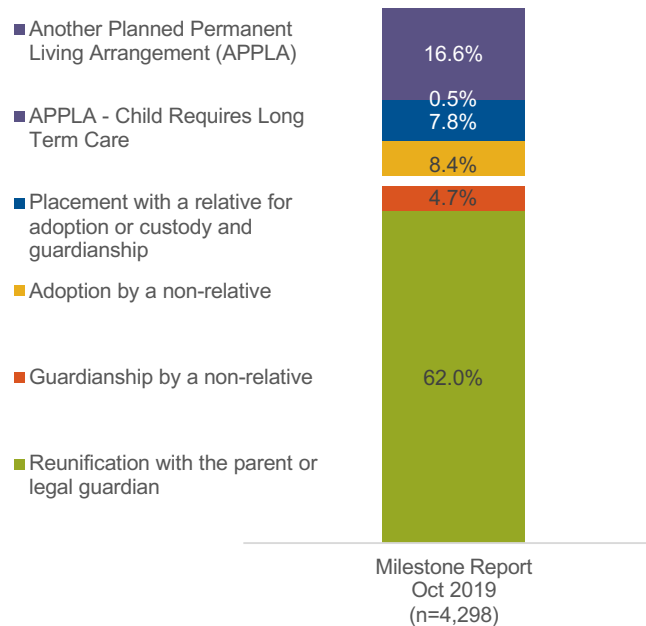


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 Permanency plans for children, youth and young adults currently in care point towards producing similar outcomes as previous years

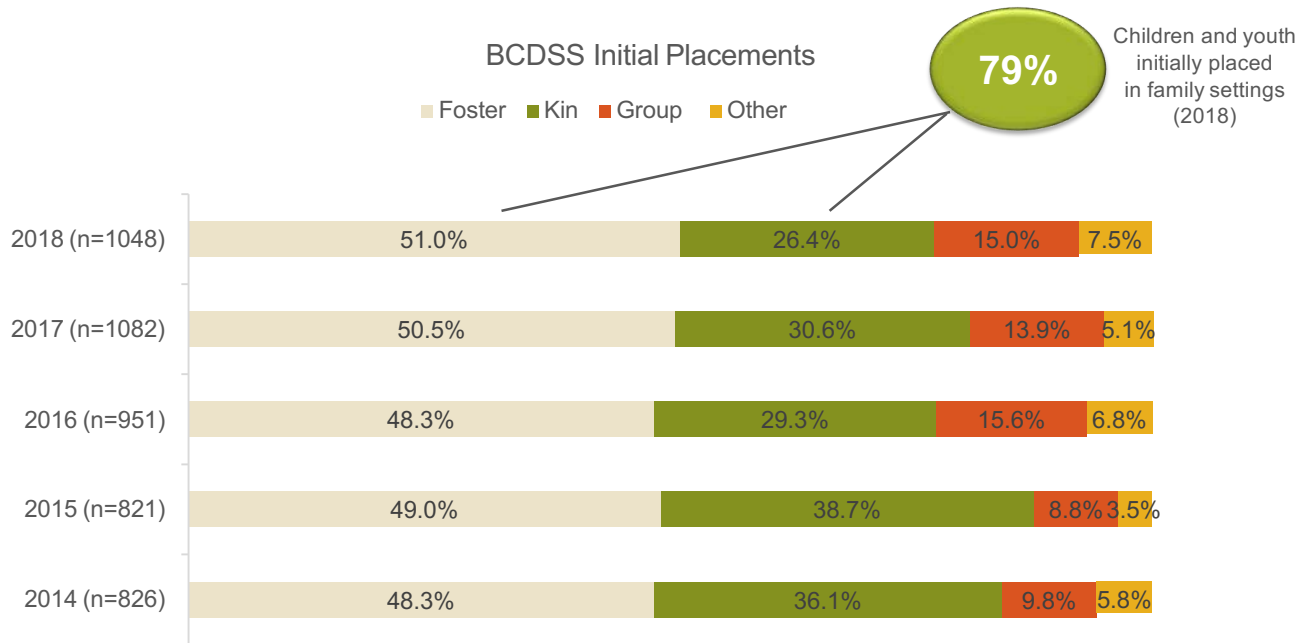
Exits from Foster Care



Permanency Goals

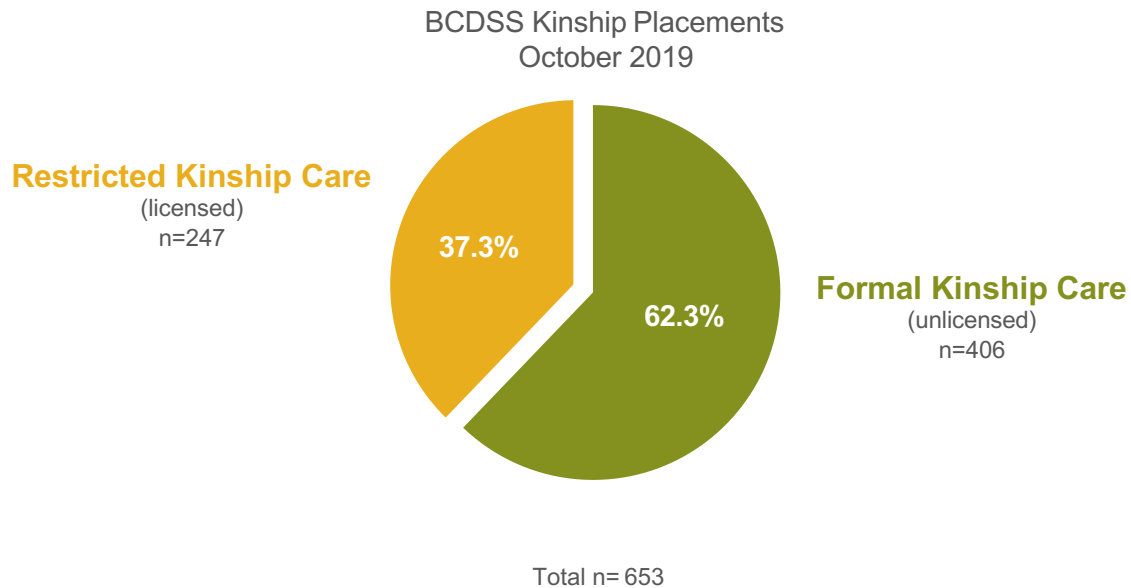


## The majority of children and youth in BCDSS foster care are placed in family settings



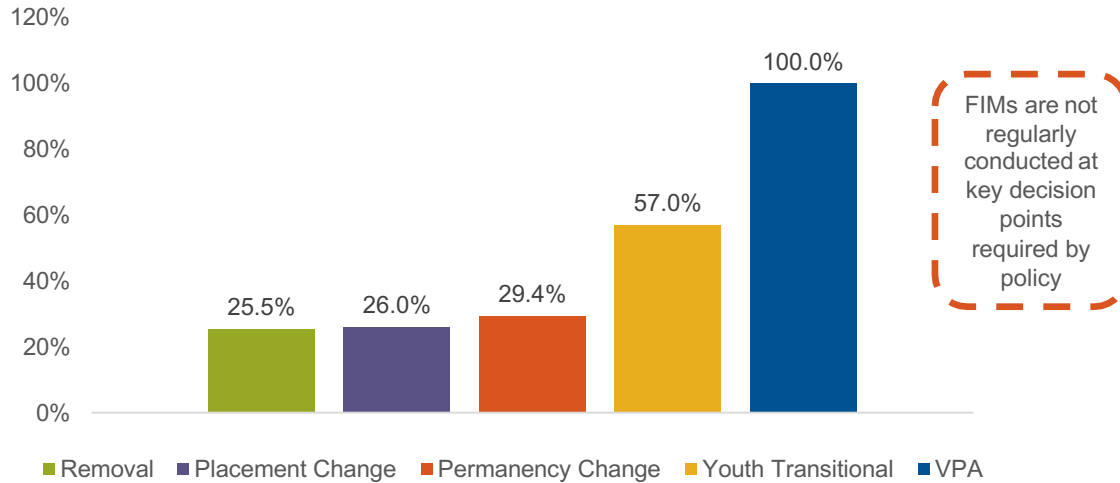


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Although 36% of all BCDSS placements are with kin today,  
the majority of those relatives are not licensed



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There is room for improvement in connection and engagement for families, children and youth while they are involved with BCDSS

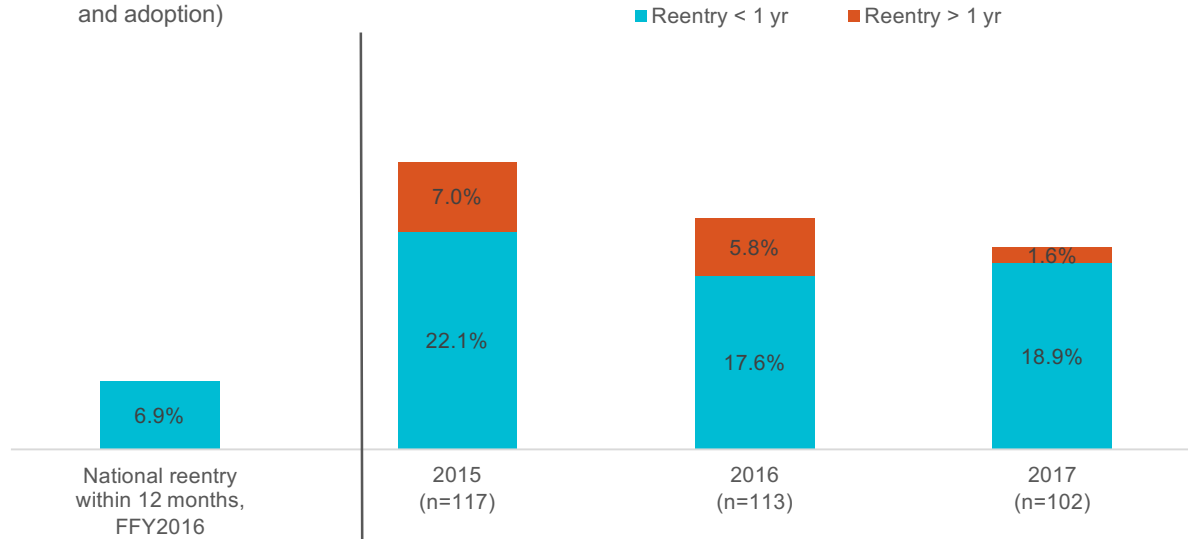
Sample Data from Report on BCDSS Family Involvement Meetings  
(from University of MD School of Social Work and MD DHS)



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Reentry from reunification is significantly higher for BCDSS  
than the rest of the nation

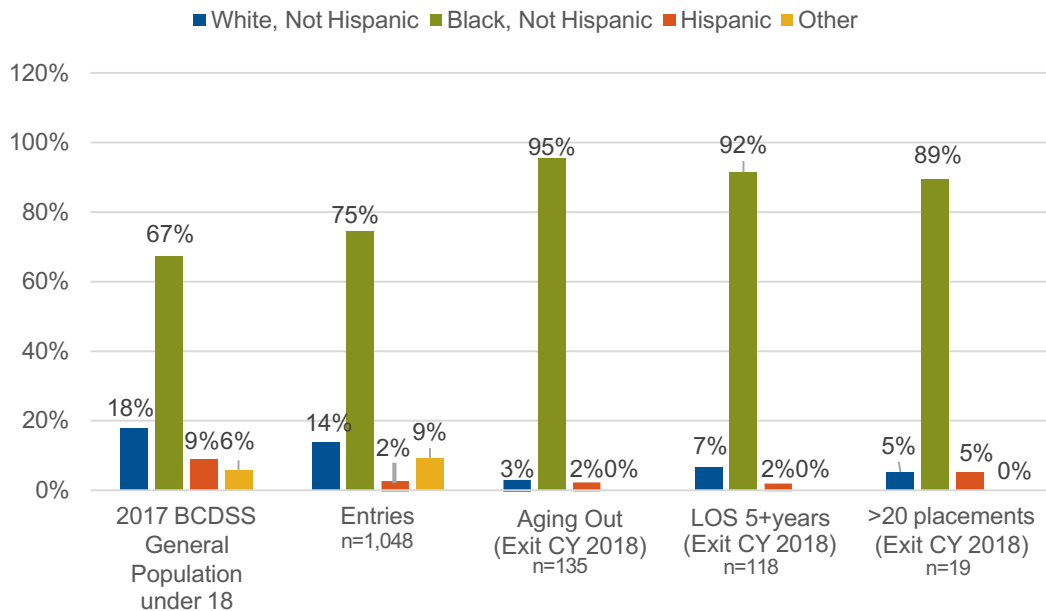
National Reentry from  
Any Prior Foster Care Episode  
(includes reunification, guardianship  
and adoption)

BCDSS Reentry from Reunification



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 Black youth experience disparate outcomes for entering foster care, aging out, long stays and high placement instability

Experience of Foster Care by Race and Ethnicity



Race categories reflect federal terminology, not AECF's view of those we serve

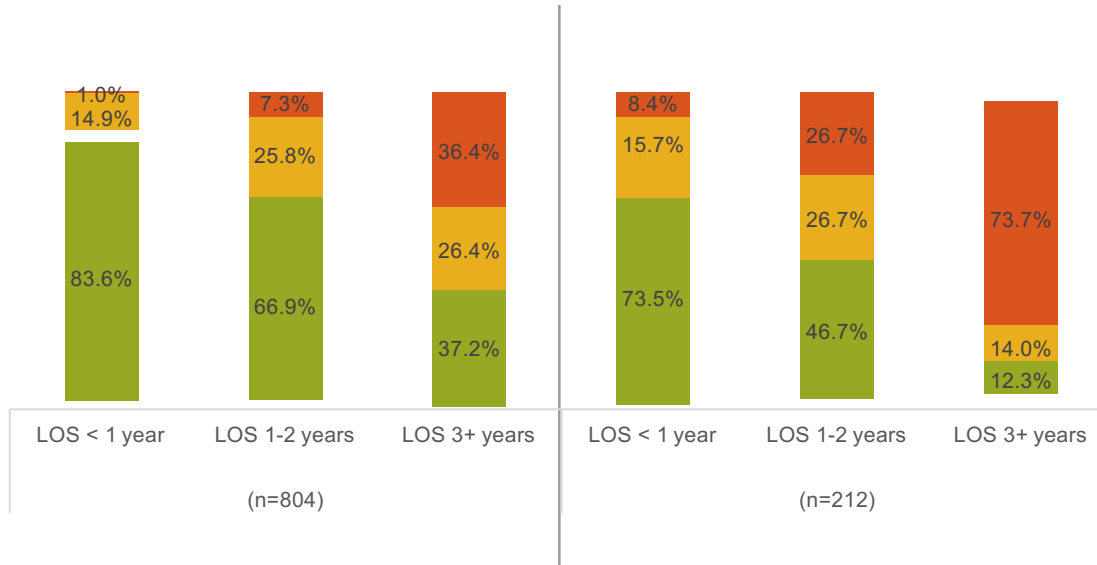
Case 1:84-cv-04409-ELH Document 652-10 Filed 04/07/21 Page 21 of 38  
 Increased placement changes correlate to lengths of stay, and older youth experience significant placement instability

Number of Placements by Lengths of Stay

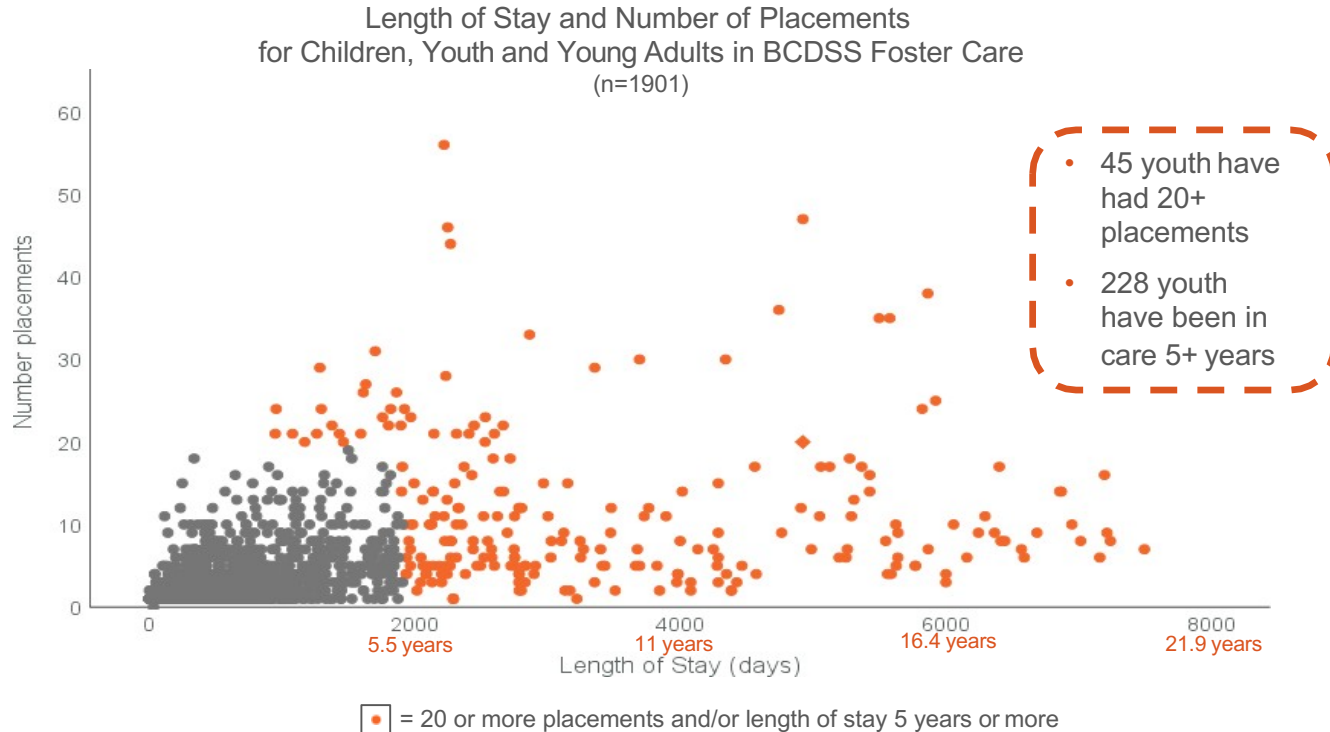
Children 0-12  
 (Exited in CY2018)

Youth 13-20  
 (Exited in CY2018)

■ 1-2 placements ■ 3-4 placements ■ 5+ placements



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Numerous youth are experiencing frequent placement disruptions  
and extremely long lengths of stay





# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

# Many **factors** are contributing to negative outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families involved with BCDSS





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Workforce issues, especially retention of new workers, emerged  
as the most urgent concern in the assessment



### Workforce

- Low retention, especially of new workers
- Need for greater coordination and collaboration between HR and Programs

### Training

- Six-week new worker training does not provide adequate preparation for the role
- Inconsistent on-the-job training in programs for new workers
- Ongoing training not oriented to development in role

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BCDSS is not enacting Maryland Social Services Administration's  
Integrated Practice Model principles and values in practice



### **Values, principles & practice model**

- Not using overarching practice model to guide frontline practice and supervision
- Initial permanency goal is focused on reunification, but tends to be determined by calendar versus family readiness
- Not enough emphasis on guardianship and adoption when reunification is not possible; aging out not generally viewed as negative outcome

### **Family, child and youth, young adult engagement**

- Family Involvement Meetings underutilized/lacking capacity
- Visits between parents and children not maximized to impact reunification
- Youth Advisory Board not serving in advisory role

### **Placement/supports/ service array**

- Kinship caregivers not receiving adequate supports
- Not enough foster families/lack of placement matching
- Need for supports/services targeted to strengthen families to prevent entry and support reunification

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BCDSS needs to elevate outcomes for children, youth, young adults  
and families as the primary measure of success



### **Outcome focus**

- Performance management primarily directed toward compliance and process measures
- Insufficient emphasis on outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families
- Limited data analysis and report capacity

### **Supervision**

- Supervision, while generally supportive, is not focused on outcomes and professional development, and frequently is inconsistent in expectations and direction
- Supervisors often not trained/oriented to role



### **Climate and Culture**

- Lack of formalized and welcoming onboarding and orientation process
- Not enough attention to frontline staff stress or self-care
- Scarcity of the resources needed for workers to do their jobs (cars, laptops, quality office space)
- Low morale

### **Collaborative Leadership**

- Lack of feedback loops between Senior Leadership and Programs
- Insufficient collaboration between programs within Child Welfare Division
- Frequent and sometimes tumultuous top leadership changes have led to discouragement and distrust



### **Community and Stakeholder Partnerships**

- Court hearing delays/no court reports
- Contentious relationship with LJ representatives
- Re-building relationships with providers and advocates



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, CSI recommends BCDSS to:

1. Improve worker retention as an urgent priority.
2. Choose one outcome area to focus improvement efforts, in addition to child fatalities.
3. Develop capacity for data analysis and performance management that includes both process and outcome measures.

## 1. Improve worker retention as an urgent priority.

*Improving retention is critical for lasting practice and outcome improvement. It will require building a positive work environment and establishing a competency-based culture.*

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Map process from recruiting to retaining social workers to identify high-leverage areas for improvement.

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Convene cross-Department workgroup to plan and execute improvements.

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Institute competency-based hiring and behavioral-based interviewing for new social workers.

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Establish supervisory training and coaching, then develop competency-based on-the-job training for new workers.

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Develop position-tracking and other HR reporting measures and integrate with retention improvement efforts.



2. Choose one outcome area to focus improvement efforts,  
in additional to child fatalities.

*Given the considerable number of outcome challenges, the scope of practice reform needs to be prioritized. Improvements should incorporate practice model and organization values in planning, implementation and measurement.*

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Continue efforts to reduce the likelihood of child fatalities and choose one other outcome area for intensive improvement.

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For child fatality outcome area, strengthen immediate critical incident review, CQI-oriented case look-back process and active participation in community-based Child Fatality Review.

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Train/retrain workers and supervisors in initial and ongoing assessment of safety and risk.

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Engage Child Welfare Program Managers, all level of BCDSS staff and key stakeholders in work planning and implementation.

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Identify and monitor key measures to track improvements and obstacles.

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3. Develop capacity for data analysis and performance management that includes both process and outcome measures.

*Current performance management efforts are limited in scope (primarily emphasizing outputs and compliance) and need to expand to encompass outcomes for children, youth, young adults and their families.*

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Improve current reports: Streamline Milestone Report to more usable format and revise Monthly Child Welfare Trends Report to reflect most relevant process and outcome measures.

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Develop new outcome report, including indicators about equitable outcomes.

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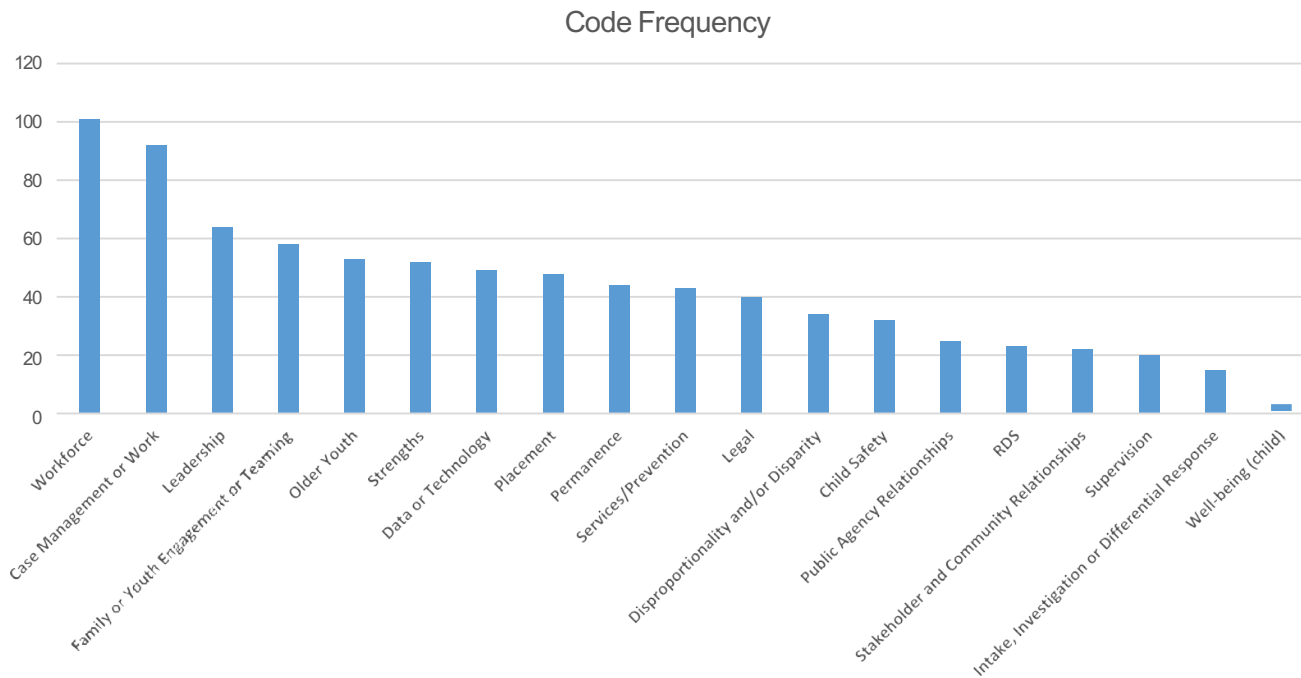
Train and coach Child Welfare Department Program Managers, Unit Managers and Supervisors on managing to outcomes.

# APPENDIX

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These were the most frequent topics counted in our qualitative  
analysis of interviews and focus groups

Rank	Topic
1	Workforce
2	Case Management or Work
3	Leadership
4	Family or Youth Engagement or Teaming
5	Older Youth
6	Strengths
7	Data or Technology
8	Placement
9	Permanence
10	Services/Prevention

All interviews and focus groups were coded by topic



**THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

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