

CHAPTER 3: CASELOAD TRENDS

ProtectOhio has allowed the 14 demonstration counties to make or explore changes in all aspects of the PSCA service arena. In addition, other initiatives, statewide and county-specific, are affecting all 28 counties in the evaluation. Since the initiatives can be so broadly applied, one strategy of the evaluation is to monitor the caseload sizes in each county, from at least two years prior to the demonstration through the Waiver period. The Participant Outcomes study team is using statewide FACSIS data for this analysis. In using this secondary data, which is data entered and uploaded from each of the 28 county PCSAs, it is important to understand that the one system is actually one system with 28 variations in usage.

Caseload counts are useful to identify differences in PCSAs' use of FACSIS, the relative size of PSCA workloads, and changes in the volume of children served through the baseline and waiver periods. While changes in caseload indicators do not offer insight into why workload volume has changed, it is nonetheless a familiar statistic for PSCA staff, suggesting that some external or internal systemic change is coming to the surface. For example, an increase in the number of children in placement over the three years of the Waiver certainly has workload implications; however, to understand the long-term budgetary impact would require longitudinal considerations of admissions and length of stay.

This chapter describes caseload trends from two years prior to the Waiver, through three years of the Waiver period. It begins with a description of the FACSIS system, its strengths and weaknesses as a data source and as a representation of the caseflow in the PCSAs. Then data is presented on the volume of services provided by the 14 demonstration and 14 comparison counties. Areas covered include child abuse and neglect reports, caseloads for ongoing services, custody caseloads, and placement caseloads.

3.1 ANALYTIC APPROACH

3.1.1 Use of FACSIS Data for Analysis

This chapter relies primarily on the electronic administrative data available through ODJFS and county systems. The report uses FACSIS data provided from the state administrative data and data entered by individual counties. All analysis is based on data files obtained from ODJFS in March, 2001 regarding child welfare activity through February, 2001.

FACSIS software is designed to collect information on children and families receiving services in the State of Ohio. Micro-FACSIS is the county version of the FACSIS system. Data are collected by counties and entered into their own Micro-FACSIS system. Then, the information is sent electronically to the state's FACSIS system.

Most counties in Ohio have their own Micro-FACSIS software with which to record data. However, four counties in this evaluation (Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Summit) have their own unique data management systems separate from Micro-FACSIS with which to collect data. In much the same way as other county data are delivered, the information from these systems is sent to the state electronically and converted into FACSIS data by the state.

3.1.2 Framework for Comparison of Baseline and Waiver Periods

A core strategy for understanding the changes in the Ohio child welfare service delivery system affected by the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, ProtectOhio, is the analysis of data on cases, clients, and children served in the child welfare systems as contained in ODJFS' FACSIS. This chapter presents statistical data on services to children in the period of time two years prior to the beginning of the project as the *baseline data*. The baseline data provide a statistical description of child welfare performance indicators and caseloads prior to the beginning of the project. These data are the basis for the definition of outcome measures to assess changes in children and families during the evaluation period. In addition, this chapter compares the baseline performance indicators and caseloads to these same indicators developed from data compiled after the project began on October 1, 1997, through the first three fiscal years of the demonstration; this is referred to as the *Waiver period*. By comparing baseline data and waiver data, the study team can identify and analyze the effects and changes that may have occurred due to changes in service delivery related to implementation of ProtectOhio.

The Participant Outcomes study includes all children and all cases recorded on FACSIS as being served during the two periods by the 28 participating PCSAs. For a child and family to be included in the baseline or first three-year waiver period, either (1) an incident of child abuse/neglect had to have been reported within the specified dates of the baseline or first three years of the demonstration; (2) a person had to be a victim, perpetrator, or caretaker in a child abuse and neglect incident reported within the specified dates; (3) a case (including a family member or child) had to have been open for services within the baseline or first three-year period; or (4) a child had to have been in placement or custody within the specified dates. To maintain the historical data on all children and cases that met any one of these criteria, the study team pulled into data files the service history for all these cases, for all time prior to October 1, 1995, (or October 1, 1997 for the Waiver period), as recorded in FACSIS. This allows the team to classify families and children served based on their historical service patterns over time, from their entry into the child welfare system until they leave the system, and their possible return to the system. It also allows for the development of performance indicators and service outcomes to track changes that may result from the Waiver.

The study team created its files from 27 CPOE files extracted from the FACSIS database. The 27 files contained data on clients served by all counties in the state since the beginning of data recording on FACSIS, up to data entered as of March, 2001. The files contain the data variables recorded on FACSIS that provide demographic profiles of clients served; information about abuse and neglect incidents, victims, perpetrators, and caretakers; information on case openings and closures for ongoing services; information on out-of-home placements, goals, long-term care, adoption, placement resources and facility licensing; and information about court-related activity such as custody, custody appeals, adjudication, dispositional, shelter care hearings, reasonable efforts, and protective supervision. The study team analyzed the data using the statistical software, SAS. The FACSIS identification number "cnref" is used as the unique identifier for each client.

The analysis begins with a description of the volume of services provided in each county and variation in service characteristics by county. In all discussion, the unit is the county or county group: demonstration group or comparison group. The caseload indicators presented are based on those developed in the first year evaluation report¹, with changes noted, if required. Indicators are presented in four areas: (1) child abuse reports (incidents), (2) ongoing caseloads, (3) custody, and (4) placement.

Each section of this chapter presents the findings systematically, offering first a definition of the topic being explored, then overall findings, and finally, a summary of all the findings on the topic.

3.2 CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTS

Practitioners frequently talk about child abuse and neglect reports as the front door into the child welfare system. In Ohio, PCSAs receive two types of referrals: reports of child abuse and neglect (incidents) and other requests for services. The other requests for services can come from families or the general community, but most come from the courts for dependent, delinquent, or unruly children.

Analysis in this section, using FACSIS data, describes the abuse/neglect caseload using the number of abuse/neglect incidents accepted by each county for investigation and the percentage of children in incidents who are targeted as high safety or future risk of maltreatment.

3.2.1 Number of Child Abuse Incidents by Year and County

Definition

In Ohio, each report of child abuse and neglect accepted by a county is recorded in FACSIS as an incident. Table 1-1 in Appendix 1 reports the number of child abuse and neglect incidents by county by year.

In the Second Annual Report², the study team acknowledged that counties vary in their acceptance of new reports. Some counties pre-screen referrals and do not accept low risk cases as reports. At the other extreme, some counties, including the metro county Summit, count every referral as a separate incident.³

Findings

Decreases in the number of incidents have been observed over the 5 years of the evaluation. The number of incidents fell in the demonstration counties between the two years of the baseline period, while the number remained about the same in the comparison counties over the same period. During the three years of the Waiver period, the number of incidents slowly fell for both

¹ First Annual Report: Evaluation of Ohio's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project "ProtectOhio", Salem, OR: HSRI contract report, June 1999.

² Second Annual Report: Evaluation of Ohio's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project "ProtectOhio", Salem, OR: HSRI contract report, August 2000.

³ Summit County changed their practices in FY 1999.

the demonstration and comparison counties, reaching lows of 24,998 in the demonstration counties and 14,903 in the comparison counties. This aggregate trend is reflected in individual counties: most counties in the demonstration and the comparison groups experienced declines in the number of incidents, as shown in Chart 3.1. Nine demonstration counties and 10 comparison counties showed decreases in the number of incidents per year, between the end of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period.

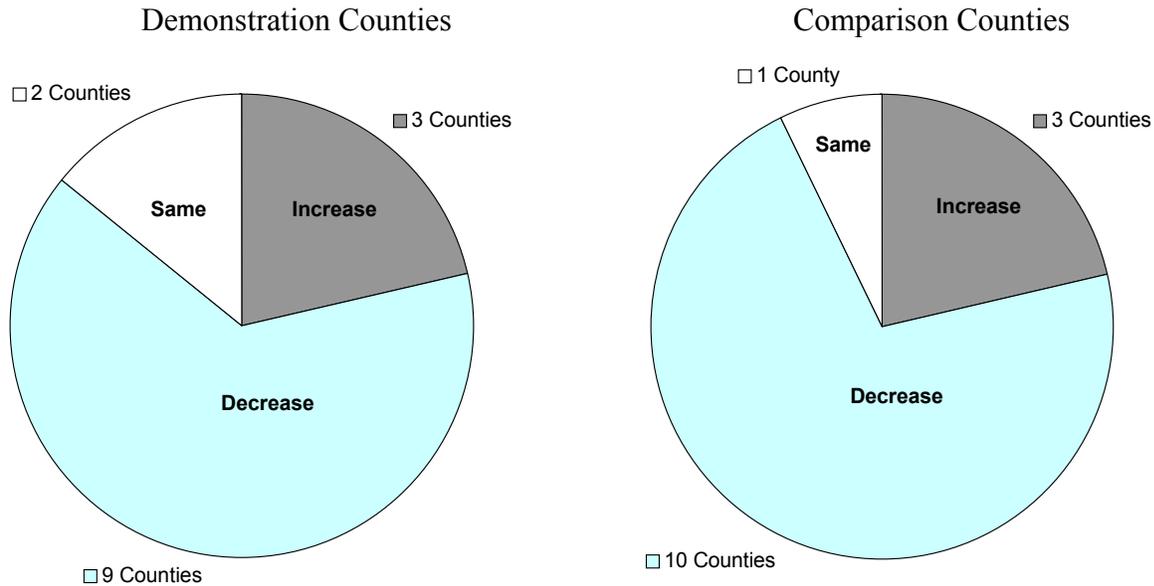


Chart 3.1 Change in number of incidents between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

The overall number of incidents fell steadily during the Waiver period for both the demonstration and comparison groups. The demonstration counties overall decreased incidents 12 percent between the end of the first year of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period (from 28,503 to 24,998 incidents). The comparison counties had a larger overall decrease of 31 percent between these same years (from 21,620 to 14,903 incidents). The largest decreases in incidents in the demonstration counties occurred in Clark (49%), Medina (27%), and Portage (27%) counties, while the greatest decreases in the comparison counties occurred in Summit (54%), Trumbull (92%) and Warren (60%) counties.

Summary

The study team observed a decline in the number of incidents in the demonstration and comparison counties since the beginning of the Waiver. While no initiatives have been specifically directed at reducing the number of reports, several counties reported organizational efforts to increase the “screening out” of cases. It is also important to note that the marked decrease in incidents in Summit County may be due to changes in their reporting system that improves the accuracy of their data.

3.2.2 Percentage of Targeted Cases

Definition

By state law each report accepted must be investigated and the outcome documented. Since 1997, state implementation of the Family Risk Assessment Model (FRAM) has required that an intensive case review be conducted for each incident.

ODJFS issued procedural changes for FACSIS to fit the risk assessment system, instituted statewide. Under the risk assessment methodology, most cases no longer require a determination of substantiation or indication in FACSIS;⁴ instead a risk level is determined.⁵ In FACSIS, counties now enter “case resolution completed” as the disposition and the risk determination. This change in recording procedure has affected the ways in which the study team can aggregate and compare the outcomes of incidents. Counties have implemented these changes in the risk assessment system at varying rates, but presently a majority of the counties involved in the evaluation are fully complying with the state mandate (table 3.1).

Use of Case Resolution. During the baseline period, which ended in September 1997, counties made very little use of risk assessment,” case resolution”⁶. In fact, only seven of the 28 counties (three demonstration and four comparison counties) used it at all, and for these use was marginal, accounting for only one percent of the total incidents investigated in the 28 counties.

During the Waiver period, counties made a large shift in their use of case resolution. As of September 30, 2000, 22 counties had reached “full use” of case resolution, meaning that 80 percent or more of their outcomes were recorded as case resolutions. Four counties, three of them comparison sites, remained as limited users, and two counties, one a demonstration county, were still demonstrating mixed use of case resolutions after the third year of the Waiver period.

Table 3.1 County Use of Case Resolution

	DURING THE WAIVER PERIOD	
	Comparison Counties	Waiver Counties
Limited Use	Montgomery, Summit, Trumbull	Franklin ⁷
Mixed Use	Hocking	Crawford
Full Use	Allen, Butler, Clermont, Columbiana, Hancock, Mahoning, Miami, Scioto, Warren, Wood	Ashtabula, Belmont, Clark, Fairfield, Greene, Hamilton, Lorain, Medina, Muskingum, Portage, Richland, Stark

⁴ Documentation of confirmed maltreatment is required in the FRAM report.

⁵ Indication and substantiation are still required for reports where the victim is a child in foster care. Incidents that occurred in all settings, including foster care placements, are included in this analysis.

⁶ as reflected by the use of the case resolution FACSIS event.

⁷ Franklin County uses the FRAM, but continued data entering disposition for each incident. FRAM data is not transmitted to the statewide FACSIS system.

Evaluation Strategy. Looking for differences between groups and change over time required a new approach. The initial focus shifted from documenting confirmation of child abuse or neglect occurring to identifying the *risk* of abuse or neglect occurring or reoccurring.

Using FACSIS under the former traditional system, the study team identified cases with confirmed abuse or neglect (and victims in cases) as either indicated or substantiated. To provide a consistent categorization of all cases, the study team designed a method to identify as “targeted” cases all those classified as either indicated/substantiated or having a higher risk level under the case resolution rubric. Figure 3.1 shows that targeted cases include all cases in the shaded areas; B and C encompass all cases and victims in incidents indicated or substantiated, while A and C cover all cases assigned a low-moderate or higher risk level⁸. Cases with disposition of unsubstantiated or not located would likely receive less attention and services from the agency.⁹ The result of this definitional effort is that a greater area of the matrix is considered “targeted” than under the traditional approach. The net of protective services is wider for children in families under the FRAM system.

Figure 3.1 Children in Targeted Incidents (shaded) by Risk and Case Disposition

		Disposition of Children in Incident				
		Missing	Unsubstantiated	Not Located	Substantiated	Indicated
RISK LEVEL	Missing	xxxxxx			B	
	Low					
	Low-Moderate	A			C	
	Moderate					
	High-Moderate					
	High					

While the disposition codes are used for legally documenting abuse or neglect, and the risk assessment model helps a worker develop a framework for the safety of a child and the service needs of its family, both approaches require a worker and supporting supervisory staff to identify a serious problem or behavior. If a serious situation is identified, then the child/family will be included in the matrix of incidents. The family is targeted because some type of abuse or neglect has happened or might happen to the child and, therefore, the family is more likely to use the services of the PCSA. The family will in most likelihood require more intensive services, including possible monitoring, possible court intervention, and more case time or attention by the PCSA. For the purposes of this analysis, this specially identified group of abused, neglected, and at-risk children are termed “targeted children”. It includes victims in incidents where abuse or neglect has been confirmed or is likely to occur or reoccur.

⁸ Discussions were held with Waiver county representatives about the use of the risk categories. The study team accepted the consensus of counties staff that low risk cases should not be part of the service net. This assumption will be revisited in later reports.

⁹ Children in incidents that are recorded as having missing FRAM and disposition information are excluded from this discussion.

Findings:

Between the last year of the baseline period and the third year of the Waiver period, the percentage of children who are targeted has increased in the demonstration counties and decreased in the comparison counties. In the aggregate, the percentage of children who were targeted increased by 5 percent in the demonstration counties, while dropping by 10 percent in the comparison counties. County-specific data, however, shows a less dramatic contrast: Chart 3.2 shows that the counties in the demonstration group were split, with seven experiencing increases in the percentage of targeted children and six experiencing decreases over the Waiver period. Only one county, Richland, remained the same. The largest increase among the demonstration counties occurred in Fairfield County, where the percentage of targeted children grew by 15 percentage points; while the largest decrease was observed in Ashtabula County, where the percentage of targeted children decreased by 26 percentage points over the Waiver period¹⁰. Similar variability is evident among the comparison counties, with eight counties experiencing an increase in the percentage of targeted children, four a decrease, and two remaining the same.¹¹

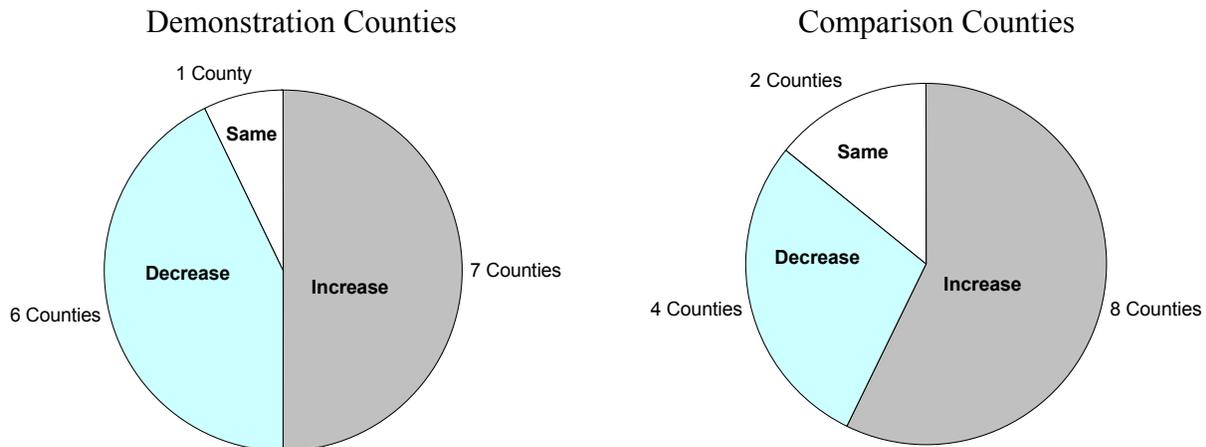


Chart 3.2 Change in number of children in incidents between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Year 3 findings on incidents and targeting are consistent with study team observations from year one and year two, suggesting that counties are focusing on front-end diversion. Many PCSAs are decreasing the number of incidents they accept and they are increasing the percentage of targeted children in incidents. This shift is occurring in both demonstration and comparison

¹⁰ Tables 1-2a, 1-2b, 1-2c, 1-2d, and 1-2e in Appendix 1 present the percentage of targeted children by Federal Fiscal Year for 1996 through 2000.

¹¹ The largest decline was observed in Summit County where the percentage of targeted children fell by 47 percentage points between the last year of the baseline period and the third year of the Waiver period. This change was likely due to the change in the way they reported referrals to FACSIS.

counties, suggesting it is not related to ProtectOhio, but more likely the impact of the FRAM process.

3.3 CASELOADS FOR ONGOING SERVICES

3.3.1 Number of Children in Ongoing Cases

The number of children in each PCSA's caseload is an important statistic, counting the volume of the county's children receiving services from the PCSA at a given point in time. The larger the caseload, the greater the workforce needed to handle service delivery and case management.

Definition:

Counties open a case in FACSIS for each child and family. Each client in the family is identified with that case. The count of active cases at a point in time indicates the active workload for child welfare staff in each county office. This section discusses changes in caseloads for ongoing services. Table 1-3 in Appendix 1 presents the active caseload on the last day of each program year, ending with September 30, 2000, the final day of the third year of the Waiver period.

Findings:

Since the start of the baseline period, comparison county caseload sizes have decreased by 7 percent. However, it has not been a steady decline over the five-year period; a steady increase was observed in the comparison counties during the two years of the baseline period and the first year of the Waiver period, then the number of children in ongoing cases began to decrease, returning to somewhat fewer children as at the beginning of the baseline period. Similarly in demonstration counties, the net change over five years is a 19 percent increase, but most of that growth occurred during the Waiver period (from 20,787 children at the end of the baseline period to 24,657 children at the end of the third year of the Waiver period).

Chart 3.3 shows the pattern experienced by individual counties. Since the Waiver began, a majority of the demonstration counties and half of the comparison counties experienced increases in the number of children in ongoing cases.

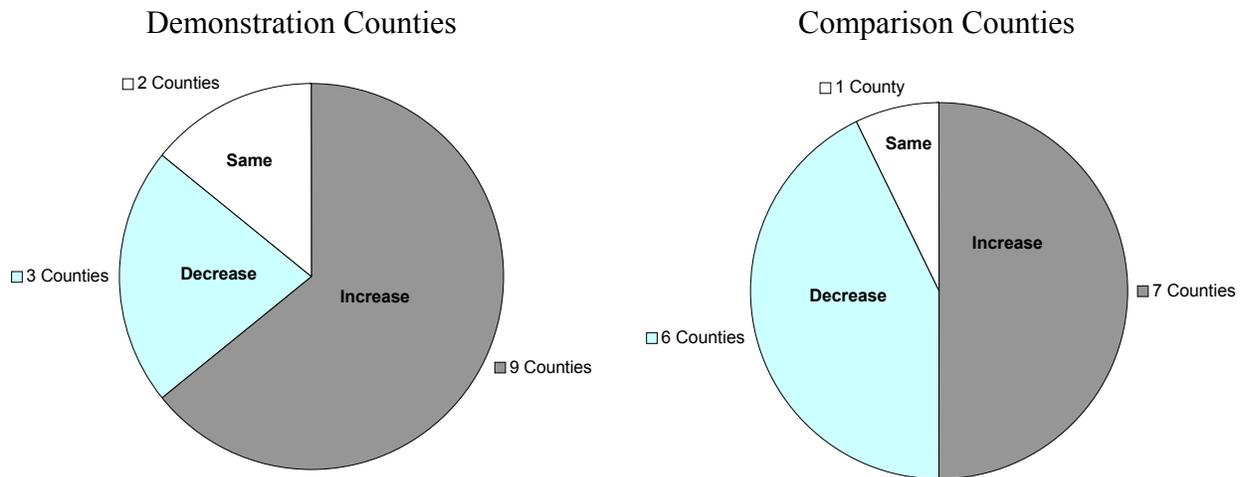


Chart 3.3 Change in number of children in ongoing cases between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

During the Waiver period, the overall number of children in ongoing cases increased by 19 percent in the demonstration counties and decreased by 10 percent in the comparison counties.

Ongoing caseloads can include both abuse/neglect and non-abuse/neglect cases. In addition, the aggregate caseload includes a mix of new, continuing and reopened cases.¹² The changes in caseload volume can reflect a change in the percentage of abuse/neglect cases or the case mix. Eleven of 16 demonstration counties are seeing more children each year. This has some cost and administrative implications, as each child and case must be managed by a caseworker. However, it is the outcomes for children in ongoing caseloads that is more crucial. Is case duration shorter, on average? Do ongoing cases utilize less frequent placement services? Chapter 4 begins to address some of these issues.

3.4 CUSTODY

3.4.1 Number of Children in Custody at the End of the Year

Counties have legal responsibility for children in their custody. Each child in custody requires procedural actions by caseworkers and court personnel. Looking at point-in-time counts provides a snapshot of the custody workload level.

¹² Indicators of case mix and case type were presented in previous reports.

Definition:

The study team identified the caseload of children in custody as all children with open custody episodes at the end of each program year during the baseline and waiver periods. Table 1-4 in Appendix 1 presents data from October 1, 1995 and then for the end of each program year through September 30, 2000.

Findings:

From the baseline period through the end of the third program year of the Waiver, the number of children in custody increased overall, for both demonstration and comparison counties. However, the pattern of year-to-year change varied: in demonstration counties, the number of children in custody decreased between the first two years of the baseline period and then increased steadily during the Waiver period to a high of 7,041 children. The overall comparison group custody population increased slowly over both years of the baseline period and the first two years of the Waiver period, then decreased slightly during the third year of the Waiver period, to 4,645 children.

Chart 3.4 illustrates the variability among the counties. Like the aggregate performance, most individual demonstration and comparison counties (8 and 10, respectively) experienced an increase in the number of children in custody. The largest increases were observed in Hancock (48%), Miami (44%), Summit (36%), and Warren (68%) counties, all comparison sites (see Appendix 1, table 1-4).

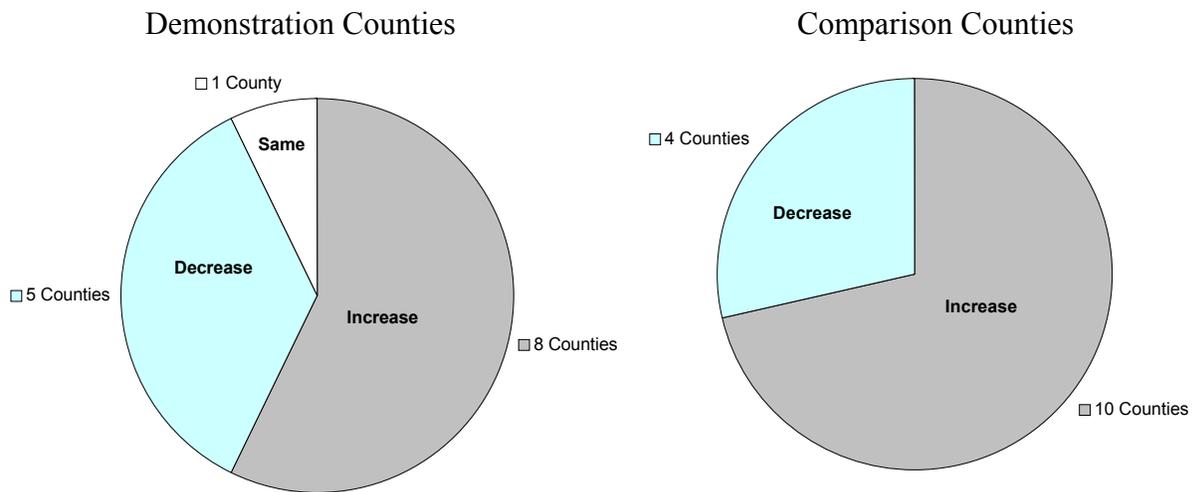


Chart 3.4 Change in number of children in custody between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Both the demonstration and comparison counties have experienced increases in the number of children in custody, and those aggregate increases are reflected in the vast majority of individual counties.

3.5 PLACEMENTS

In describing placement for a child during the baseline and waiver periods, the study team used the FACSIS data file to follow each child through each episode. An episode, using Ohio's CPOE terminology¹³, is a full stay in substitute care from the date the child is removed from his/her home to the date the child returns home or is discharged out of substitute care (finalized adoption, reaching age of majority, etc.). In between these two dates, the child might stay in the same particular facility or switch from one setting to another. This section examines findings related to episodes in placement and different placement settings.

3.5.1 Number of Children in Placement at the End of the Year

The count of children in placement at a particular point in time is a familiar caseload count. It offers a measure of the staff coverage that counties need to maintain adequate casework practice.

Definition:

The counts include all children in a placement episode on the last day of each program year from September 30, 1995 through September 30, 2000. The counts include all children in all custody types (including court) and placement settings.

Findings:

Table 1-5 in Appendix 1 shows the total number of children in placement for each year of the baseline and waiver periods. The demonstration and comparison groups followed different patterns during the baseline period, with the number of children in placement rising slightly in the comparison counties -- from 3,829 children at the end of the first year to 4,042 at the end of the second year -- while remaining about the same for the demonstration counties -- about 6,500 children. During the three years of the Waiver period, however, both demonstration and comparison counties experienced growth in the number of children in placement. Between the end of the second year of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period, the number of placements in the demonstration counties steadily increased by 11 percent (from 6,459 to 7,152 children). The comparison counties also experienced an increase of 7 percent over the three years of the Waiver period, with the number of children in placement increasing from 4,042 children at the end of the second year of the baseline period to 4,321 at the end of the third year of the Waiver period.

Although the overall number of children in placement in the demonstration group grew between the end of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period, the direction of change in the individual demonstration counties was mixed. Chart 3.5 shows that seven demonstration counties experienced an increase in the number of children in placement, while five had decreases and two remained the same. In the comparison counties, however, a clear majority of the counties experienced an increase in the number of children in placement.

¹³ In much of the child welfare literature this is called a "spell".

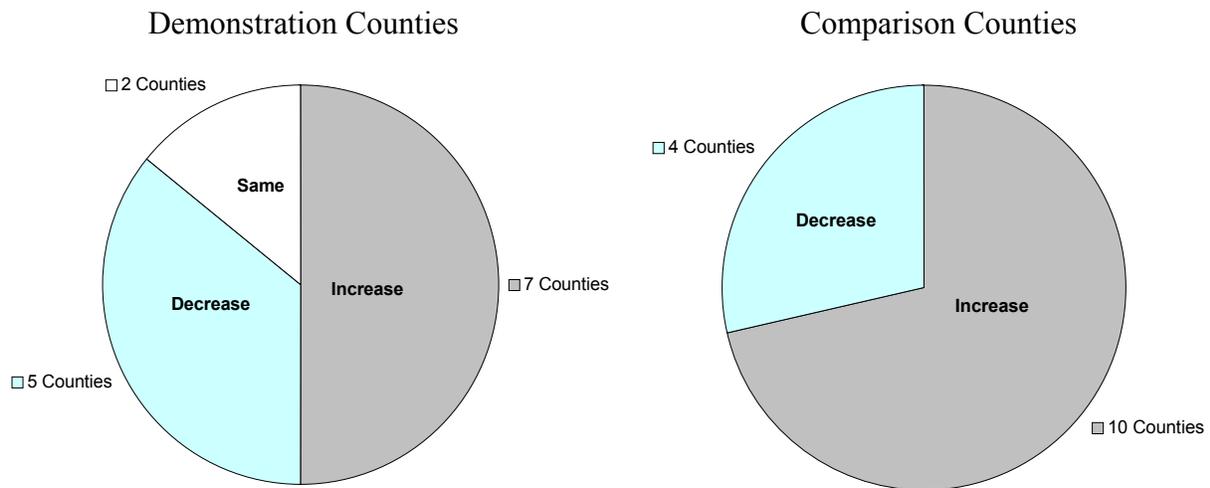


Chart 3.5 Change in number of children in placement between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

The overall number of children in placement has increased since the end of the first year of the baseline period for both the demonstration and comparison counties. More comparison counties than demonstration counties followed this overall pattern.

3.5.2 Number of Children in Placement Types by Year

A child requiring substitute care is placed in a facility with a specified level of services and staff. The type of facility a child enters during an episode depends on several factors including availability; professional judgment, especially of casework staff; judges involved in the custody decisions; and the child’s adjustment and willingness, especially for older children. A count of children in a placement type presents a picture of each county’s likelihood to use each type. For this presentation, analysis focuses on two categories of placements:

- Non-licensed relative homes; and
- Group homes and children’s residential centers (CRCs).

Number of Children in Relative Care

Definition:

In an effort to find permanent settings quickly for children in PCSA custody, both demonstration and comparison counties are pushing workers to explore opportunities to place children with relatives. Finding a relative home for a child is viewed as supporting the best interest of the child, as well as enabling the county to become less involved in the case and ultimately reducing placement days.

As discussed in previous reports, counties involve relatives in protective care of children, with variation in who gets custody (county PCSA or relative), training of relatives, payment to relatives, and supervision of relatives.

During phone interviews in 2001, the Process study team learned about variation in the primary emphasis in county's use of relatives. As Table 3.2 indicates, over half of the counties in the comparison group, many of them smaller counties, place children directly with relatives for protective reasons. It is likely that custody issues between birth families and relatives are resolved during ongoing care planning.

Table 3.2 Most frequent approach by PCSA to use of relatives

Most frequent approach	Demonstration	Comparison
Informal placement with relative directly	Muskingum	Allen, Columbiana, Hancock, Hocking, Mahoning, Miami, Trumbull
Custody to relative after short time	Belmont, Clark, Crawford, Greene, Medina, Richland, Stark	Butler, Clermont, Montgomery, Scioto, Wood
Placement with relative, custody to PCSA	Ashtabula, Fairfield, Franklin, Hamilton, Portage	Summit, Warren
Data not ascertained	Lorain	

By contrast, demonstration counties are more likely to have PCSA involvement and custody. Seven (of 13) demonstration counties most often first take custody, then transfer custody to the relative. It is notable, however, that five demonstration counties, including both metro counties, prefer to place with relatives, but maintain custody with the PCSA. Only two counties in the comparison group preferred this strategy, one of them a metro county.

Findings:

Overall, the number of children in relative care increased by 15 percent between the end of the second year of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period, in both the demonstration and comparison counties (see table 1-6 in Appendix 1). In the demonstration group, nine counties experienced increases in the number of children in relative care (Chart 3.6). In contrast, only six counties in the comparison group experienced a growth in the number of children in relative care. Large increases in the comparison counties were observed in Allen and Warren Counties. In addition, decreases were observed in five demonstration and four comparison counties.

Several counties, including Crawford in the demonstration group and Columbiana, Hancock, Hocking, and Trumbull counties in the comparison group, rarely or never use the relative care event code in FACSIS. With the exception of Crawford, all of these counties indicated that they prefer to place children directly with relatives (table 3.2), avoiding any entry of that placement into FACSIS. For Crawford and perhaps some of the other counties as well, they may place few

children in relative care, or they may be recording relative placements in a separate event in FACSIS.

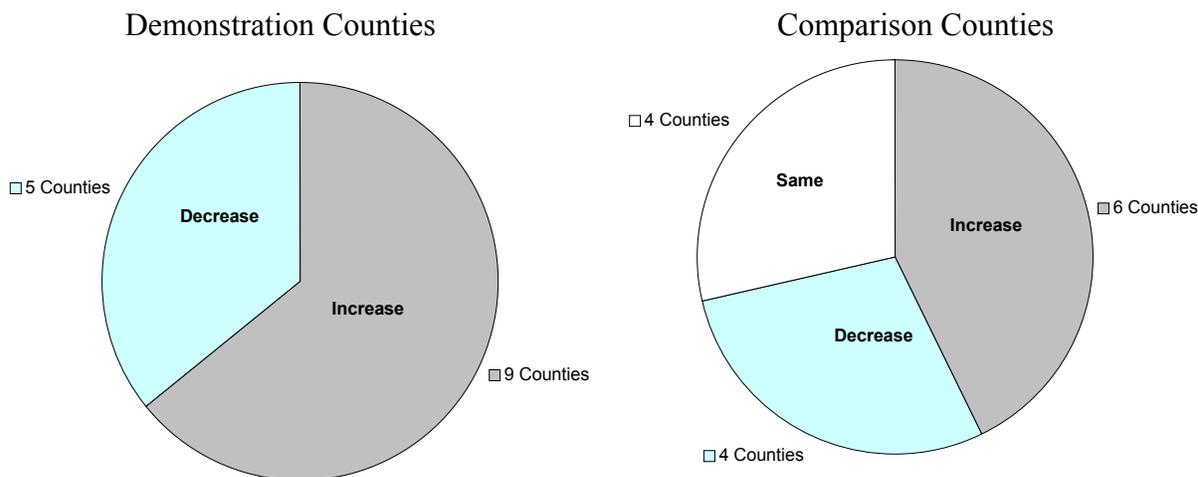


Chart 3.6 Change in number of children in non-licensed relative care between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Over the three years of the Waiver period, the comparison counties experienced the same amount of growth in the number of children in non-licensed relative homes (15%) as the demonstration counties. Several counties, however, especially in the comparison group, are either not using non-licensed relatives or are not recording their relative placements in this FACSIS event.

Number of Children in Group Care (Group Homes and CRCs)

One objective of ProtectOhio is to reduce the use of group care, because it is the most expensive and most restrictive for children. In the first year of the evaluation, the study team found that PCSAs assign the same facility differently -- one PCSA might label it in FACSIS as a group home, while another might call it a CRC.

The number of children in group homes and CRCs at a point in time is a good volume indicator. It shows how many beds for these high-need children each PCSA needs.

Definition:

This analysis combines both group homes and CRCs. Table 1-7 in Appendix 1 shows the number of children in placement in group care at the end of each year of the baseline and waiver periods by group and by county.

Findings:

Both the demonstration and comparison counties showed similar increases in their use of group care. In the demonstration counties, the number of children in group homes and CRCs increased from 885 at the end of the last year of the baseline period to 1,120 at the end of the third year of the Waiver period, a 27 percent increase. Similarly in the comparison counties, the number of

children increased from 491 at the end of the last year of the baseline period to 625 at the end of the third year of the Waiver period, a 27 percent increase.

Chart 3.7 indicates that the aggregate increase in group home use is reflected in most comparison counties (8) and in many demonstration counties (6). On the other hand, seven demonstration counties experienced decreases and one remained the same, while three comparison counties experienced decreases and three counties experienced little or no change.

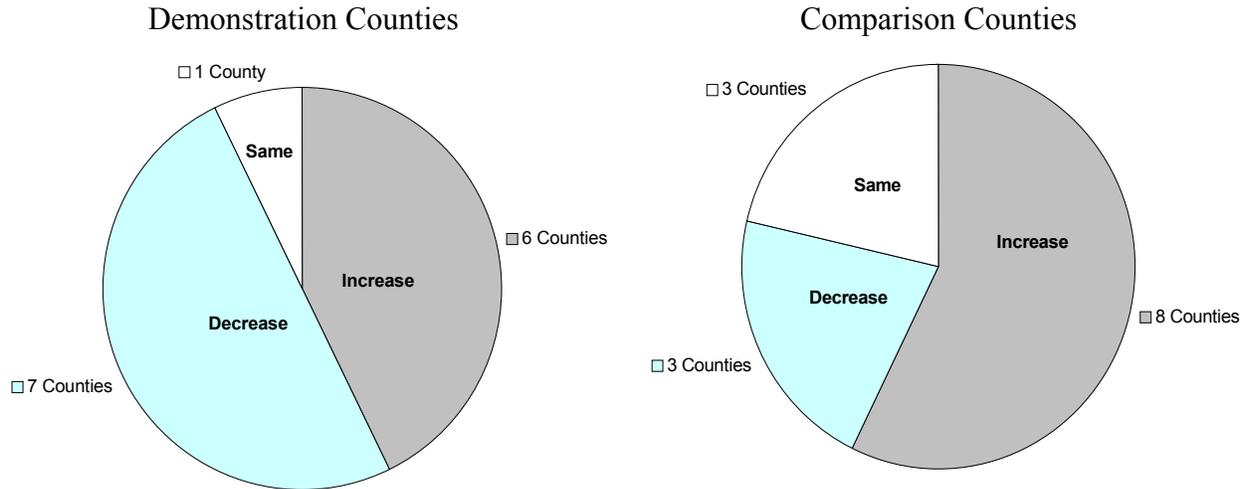


Chart 3.7 Change in number of children in group homes and CRCs between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Counties in both the demonstration and comparison groups appear to be increasing the number of children they place in group homes and CRCs.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES FINDINGS

In the Year 1 Report, the Participant Outcome team identified an extensive list of outcome measures using available FACSIS data. In the Year 2 Report, outcome data was presented on the seven priority outcomes. These outcomes, identified as crucial for success of the Waiver by the 14 demonstration counties, focus on the three important areas of permanency, placement stability and safety. In the future evaluation reports, the study team will report on and expand all these measures.

Using three years of Waiver data, this report focuses on analysis of safety and permanency. The outcomes explored are listed in the box below.

Safety

- Recidivism rate of all targeted children 6 and 12 months
- Recidivism rate of children in closed cases within 6 and 12 months

Permanency

- Use of in-home services versus placement services
- Adoptions
- Permanent custody
- Duration of ongoing cases and placement

4.1 HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

Is the Waiver successful for children in the demonstration counties? Counties answered this question in many ways. The fourteen demonstration counties focused on the two areas mentioned above: safety and permanency. Are children not being harmed by the initiative? Are children staying home or achieving permanency faster if they are removed? Here is a summary of findings using three years of data from the Waiver.

Safety: Using recidivism rates as a measure of safety, children are not being hurt by the Waiver. Changes in the recidivism rate of abuse/neglect appear similar for the demonstration and comparison groups. Eleven of 14 demonstration groups maintained or decreased the recidivism rates of all “targeted” or high risk cases. Similarly, 10 of 14 comparison counties also maintained or decreased their recidivism rate. While both groups showed a recidivism rate of 4 percent during the third year of the Waiver, the comparison group dropped from 7 percent during FFY 97 prior to the Waiver and the demonstration group reduced only slightly from 5 percent.

With regard to safety after cases are closed, overall, the demonstration counties maintained an 8 percent recidivism rate from the baseline to the third year of the Waiver period. The comparison group showed an overall drop from 10 percent to 6 percent.

Permanency: Improving permanency for children through the Waiver is still showing mixed outcomes after the third year of the Waiver. The demonstration counties are seeing more children as clients, resulting primarily from the increase in non-abuse/neglect cases, which likely are court or service referrals. Most of the comparison counties are seeing fewer children and fewer in placement.

For children in placement, the push for permanency by counties was expected to increase the number of completed adoptions. Indeed, 10 of the demonstration counties and 9 of the comparison counties increased their number of new adoptions over the three years of the Waiver period. Similarly for children in permanent commitment, including mainly children whose parental custody had been terminated, the number has increased in nine demonstration counties and eight comparison counties over the same period. If homes are not found for these children, this could spiral into increased long-term placement caseloads.

Most demonstration counties hoped to decrease the number of children in long-term foster care, now called planned permanent living arrangements. In this, they succeeded: 11 of the 14 demonstration counties decreased these populations over the three years of the Waiver, while only six of the 14 comparison counties showed decreases, while seven actually increased.

Case and Placement Duration: Taking a look at the characteristics of children and how it affects case and placement duration shows several important relationships. For in-home cases, being in a comparison county appears to decrease the duration during the Waiver period, a turnaround of what was happening prior to the Waiver. Urbanicity, age of the child and several of the reform indices, reflecting service delivery changes, also appear significant for duration of in-home cases.

For foster care (placement) duration, overall there has been no observable significant impact of the Waiver on placement duration.

For the two large demonstration counties, there has been a significant Waiver effect, resulting in shorter duration for first placement episodes, when compared to the large comparison counties. The duration of foster care stays increased in the large comparison groups after the Waiver period began. For smaller counties, there was no effect observed.

These trends in safety and permanency will continue to unfold, as the Waiver reaches its fourth and fifth years of activity and new data can be incorporated.

4.2 SAFETY

Activities to reduce placement costs cannot be at the risk of safety to children. Representatives of all ProtectOhio counties agreed that Waiver initiatives could not result in increased recidivism of child abuse or neglect. Children in custody should not be returned home too quickly or supervision removed too quickly from families receiving ongoing services.

To measure this outcome, both recidivism rate of all incidents and recidivism of closed cases are reported in the following sections.

4.2.1 Recidivism Rate Within 6 and 12 Months by Year

Definition:

The recidivism rate is calculated using the definition of targeted cases described in Chapter 3. As defined in Chapter 3, children targeted for service are those children in indicated or substantiated incidents or children in cases identified with moderate to high risk. The recidivism rate is a county system outcome. As the Waiver counties continue to integrate new ProtectOhio services and organizational/cultural changes, are they able to maintain the same level of success at helping children and families and preventing them from returning in a new targeted incident?

The base for the recidivism rate includes all targeted children in incidents for the first time. The study team then looked to see if these children returned in a second incident targeted for services within 6 months or within 1 year. For this analysis, only the 6 month recidivism is discussed.¹⁴ The data is discussed below for the demonstration and comparison groups by Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). The baseline period is FFY 1996 and 1997; the Waiver period to date is FFY 1998, 1999, and 2000. All cases are included, regardless of the place of abuse or neglect. It includes cases both open and closed at the time of the new and subsequent incidents.

Statistics for groups and individual counties are provided in Appendix 1, Table 1-8.

Findings:

During the Waiver period, the overall rate of recidivism in 6 months remained about the same in the demonstration counties, while decreasing considerably in the comparison counties (from 7 percent at the end of the baseline period to 4 percent in the third year of the Waiver period). However, Chart 4.1 shows that the experience of individual counties varies considerably. Nine demonstration counties showed decreases in recidivism within six months, while three of the remaining counties experienced increases and two continued the same rate of recidivism. Several demonstration counties, including Ashtabula, Belmont, Clark, and Portage, showed large decreases. Fairfield and Lorain Counties had the largest increases—the rate of recidivism more than doubled in the third year of the Waiver.

¹⁴ It is possible that the recidivism rate within six months is confounded by different counties' practices in recording separate referrals as separate incidents. If the county includes two incidents for two referrals that are about the same occurrence, in our calculations, the second referral, even within a few days, will count as a recidivistic victim. Recidivism within six to twelve months is likely to be less influenced by these differences in practice.

In the comparison group, seven counties experienced a decrease in recidivism rates and four counties had increases. Three counties remained the same over the Waiver period. Summit County, where the rate of recidivism in 6 months fell from 13 percent to 3 percent over the Waiver period, had the largest decrease. This dramatic decrease in Summit County’s rate of recidivism is likely related to their changes in reporting and may also have had a strong effect on the overall decrease in recidivism in the comparison counties.

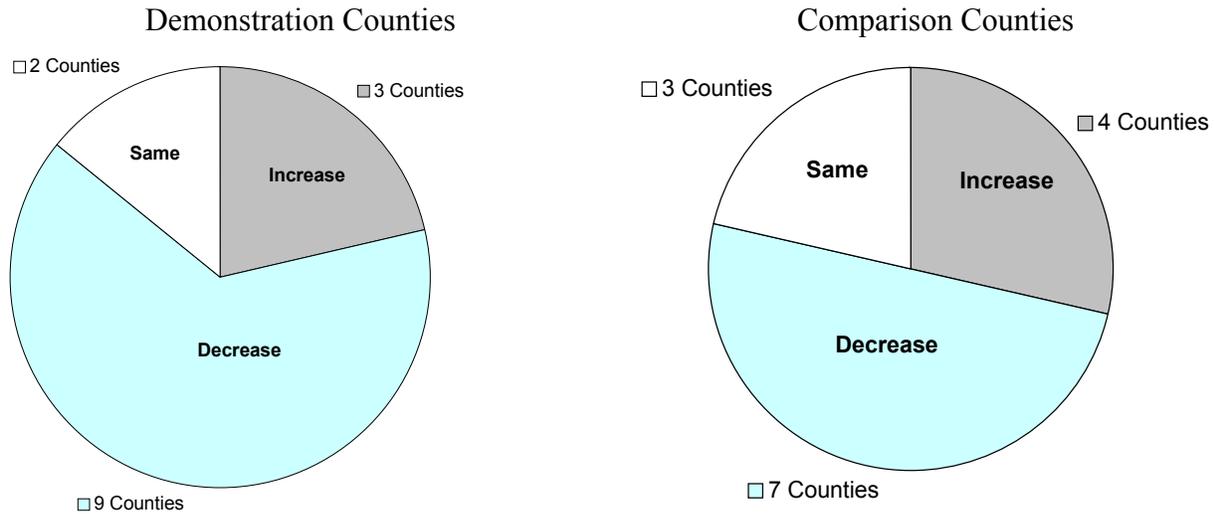


Chart 4.1 Change in rate of recidivism within 6 months between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Using this outcome measure, the Waiver appears not to be causing harm. Eleven of 14 demonstration counties maintained their recidivism rate. Two counties, Lorain and Fairfield, showed increases. However, as seen next in 4.2.2, Fairfield County dropped greatly in their recidivism rate for closed cases. Further analysis is needed to see if Fairfield has made deliberate efforts to keep risky cases open longer to avoid reoccurrence of abuse or neglect.

Determining an acceptable level of recidivism is ultimately a PCSA, state, and community responsibility. Frequently, states gauge themselves against other similar states, using national statistics. The new outcome measure, recidivism of targeted cases, is unique to Ohio. In fact, since it relies on each PCSA’s application of FRAM, it is arguable that this rate is county-specific. The counties that have had drastic swings over the Waiver period need further follow-up.

4.2.2 Recidivism Rate for Closed Cases by Year

Are cases being closed too quickly, putting children at risk? A second measure looks at the percentage of cases that close where children become victims at a later date.

Definition:

Using FACSIS, the study team identified children in all closed cases during each period. The team then looked to see if the child appeared in a new targeted incident. Appendix 1, Table 1-9 shows the recidivism rates of closed cases within 6 and 12 months.

Findings:

Analysis of the patterns of recidivism of cases in the demonstration counties revealed that only modest changes have occurred between the baseline and waiver periods. The demonstration counties remained about the same, dropping from a 9 percent recidivism rate in the second year of the baseline period to an 8 percent recidivism rate in the third year of the Waiver period. In contrast, the study team observed a substantial drop in the comparison counties between the end of the baseline and the third year of the Waiver period (from 10% in FFY1997 to 6% in FFY2000).

A large number of study counties experienced a decrease in recidivism rates of closed cases during the Waiver period, as shown in Chart 4.2. Seven counties in the demonstration group and nine comparison counties experienced a drop in recidivism rates. Crawford and Fairfield counties had the largest decreases in the demonstration group, where the rate of recidivism fell from 10 percent and 12 percent in FFY1997 to two percent and one percent in FFY2000 respectively. Summit County experienced the largest drop in the comparison counties, moving from a 19 percent recidivism rate in FFY1997 to a 10 percent recidivism rate in FFY2000. However, as noted earlier, changes in Summit County may be due to changes in their reporting system.

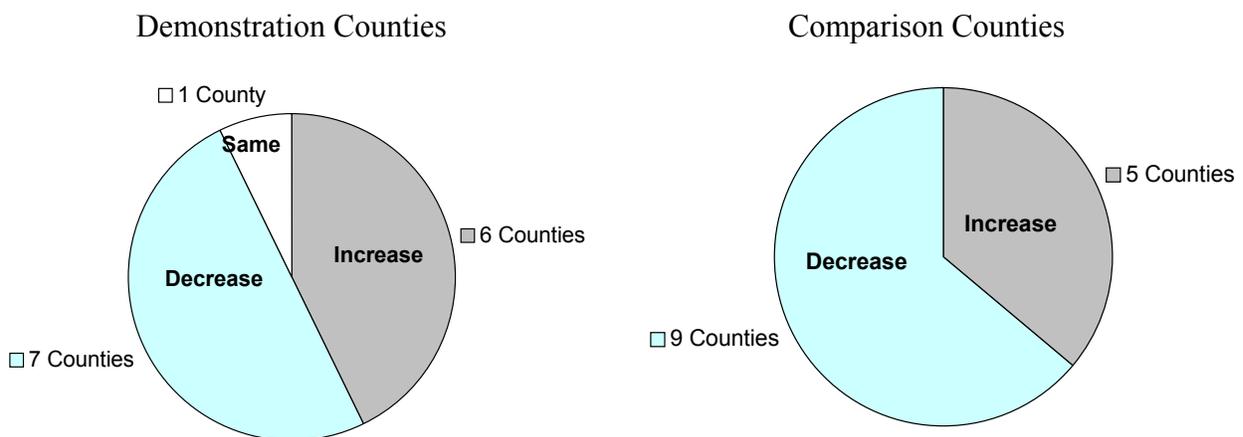


Chart 4.2 Change in rate of recidivism within 6 months of closed cases between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Overall, the study team observed a larger decrease in the 6-month recidivism rate for closed cases in the comparison counties when compared to the demonstration counties between the last year of the baseline period and the third year of the Waiver period. The demonstration counties decreased slightly from 11 percent to 9 percent during the baseline period and then remained relatively stable during the Waiver period, only falling from 9 percent at the end of the baseline period to 8 percent in the third year of the Waiver period.

Of bigger concern is the increase in recidivism rate of closed cases in six demonstration counties and five comparison counties. Is this an indication of cases being closed too quickly? Or is it a side effect of the change in definition for some counties from indication/substantiation to “targeted children in incidents”?

4.3 PERMANENCY

Reducing the length of stay for children in foster care is the conventional wisdom for improving the well-being of children in custody. Avoiding placement and shortening time in out-of-home placement limits the disruption of being separated from family.

From the system perspective, increasing the use of in-home service avoids the experience of placement, but leaves the child at some degree of potential risk. To ameliorate this risk, the case plan for in-home cases can require extensive services and elaborate coordination by the case manager. This balancing of child needs and PCSA resources must be considered when monitoring outcomes. This section examines the shift toward the use of in-home services.

In this section, the expectations of increased use of in-home services and increases in completed adoptions and decreased use of permanent custody are examined. In addition, a more detailed analysis of characteristics that affect case and placement duration is presented.

4.3.1 Increased Use of In-home Services

Definition:

To measure the project’s objective of reducing out-of-home placements and improving permanency for children, the study team has monitored the number of cases with children in placement versus the number of cases served through in-home services. A decrease in the number of children using foster care is a major objective of the project, and, correspondingly, increases should be realized in the number of cases receiving in-home services. This trend appears to be occurring.

The population used for the data in Appendix I, Tables 1-10a and 1-10b includes clients in all ongoing case types. A client is classified as a placement client if she/he was in an out-of-home placement during the year. Clients are classified as receiving in-home services if they had no placement records during the year. A child is considered part of an abuse/neglect case if she/he was ever a victim in an incident. The abuse/neglect incident tends to occur at the beginning of a child’s contact with the PCSA, as reflected in FACSIS. Non-abuse/neglect clients were identified as those whose case number did not match any victim’s case number.

Findings:

Clients Served Each Year: Overall, the number of children served as clients in ongoing cases rose in the demonstration counties. The demonstration counties experienced a steady increase over the baseline and Waiver periods each year, ending with a high of 37,329 children in FFY2000. In the comparison counties, however, the number of clients served overall climbed gradually during the baseline period and in the first year of the Waiver period, but then leveled off in FFY1999 and finally fell by 10 percent in FFY2000. These contrasting trends largely reflect the behavior of the metro counties: increases in children served by the two demonstration metro counties, and a drop over the same period by the two comparison metro counties.

Abuse/Neglect Clients Served: When examining the number of abuse/neglect clients, the study team observed that the most notable changes occurred in the third year of the Waiver period (FFY2000). The comparison counties experienced a significant decrease, while the demonstration counties remained relatively steady. Prior to that, during the baseline period and the first two years of the Waiver period, the number of abuse/neglect clients in the comparison counties remained relatively stable, increasing slightly. This number fell dramatically, however, in the final year of the Waiver period (from 17,180 in FFY1999 to 14,850 in FFY2000). The study team did not observe this same pattern in the demonstration counties, where the number of abuse/neglect clients only increased slightly during the baseline and the Waiver periods.

Non-abuse/Neglect Clients: The demonstration counties showed a large increase in the number of non-abuse/neglect clients during the Waiver period. The number of non-abuse/neglect children in the demonstration counties jumped by close to 28 percent, increasing from 6,773 in FFY1997 to 9,348 in FFY2000. In the comparison counties, only a slight increase occurred during the Waiver period, rising from 5,692 in FFY1997 to 6,447 in FFY2000, a 13 percent increase. The largest increases in the demonstration group occurred in Franklin, Greene, and Hamilton Counties. For the comparison counties, the most interesting shift occurred in Trumbull, where in-home cases increased 50 percent.

In-home Service Clients: The decrease in the number of abuse/neglect children in the comparison group appears to be most evident when examining the use of in-home services. In the comparison counties, the number of abuse/neglect children served in-home decreased from 7,487 in FFY1999 to 5,974 in FFY2000. While the number of abuse/neglect children served in placement also decreased (from 9,693 in FFY1999 to 8,876 in FFY2000), the decrease was not as large as in the number of abuse/neglect children served in-home. This pattern was fairly constant throughout the baseline and Waiver periods. By contrast, in the demonstration counties, the number of abuse/neglect children served in-home remained relatively steady (moving only slightly from 10,530 in FFY1999 to 11,239 in FFY2000). In addition, the number of children identified as abuse/neglect and served in-placement also remained the same (from 16,697 in FFY1999 to 16,742 in FFY2000).

Trumbull County showed an interesting change over the Waiver Period. The PSCA increased children seen by 13 percent. More children were seen in-home without an abuse/neglect incident, while abuse/neglect in-home and in placement both were reduced drastically.

Summary:

Section 3.2 indicated that abuse/neglect incidents have dropped in 19 of 28 counties in the evaluation. Thus, the reduction in the number of clients served as abuse/neglect clients is not surprising. However, the demonstration county increases in the number of non-abuse/neglect clients signify that these counties are serving a similar or greater number of clients in the last year of the Waiver period. All the comparison counties are serving similar or fewer numbers of clients overall. Is this a phenomenon of clients staying longer in the system or of clients in the demonstration group coming in through other entry doors than an incident referral?

In the demonstration group, there has been a shift to serving more non-abuse/neglect clients in placement. Duration of abuse/neglect and non-abuse/neglect will be examined in more detail in Section 4.3.4 for both children in placement and children in ongoing cases of all types. Are children who might have been served through the abuse/neglect pathway now being served more through a court referral or other non-abuse/neglect entry? That question is more difficult and can only be examined now using qualitative information, as example.

4.3.2 Increased Adoptions

Definition:

Finding an adoptive home for a child in PCSA permanent custody is the most desirable permanency option. However, finding a home that fits the needs of a particular child can be a difficult task. In an effort to develop better access to adoptive homes, several counties joined the AdoptOhio initiative. They believe it will reduce the amount of time that children remain in PCSA custody while awaiting adoptive homes. Similarly, Federal ASFA requirements push all PCSAs to shorten length of stay.

In Appendix 1, Table 1-11, the number of new eligible children receiving adoption subsidies is reported by year in the baseline and in the Waiver period. Tracking the number of new adoption subsidies provides a picture of adoptions finalized each year.

Findings:

The number of adoptions completed in the demonstration counties increased substantially between the end of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period. The overall number of adoptions in the demonstration counties increased by 40 percent, influenced by large increases in several counties including Ashtabula (from 9 to 20), Clark (from 16 to 43), Greene (from 5 to 22) and Portage (from 9 to 18). The comparison counties also experienced a substantial increase in adoptions (32%) between the last year of the baseline period and the third year of the Waiver period. The largest increases among the comparison counties included Allen (from 5 to 17), Columbiana (from 3 to 11), and Miami (from 5 to 16).

Overall, a majority of both the demonstration and comparison counties experienced increases in the number of new children eligible for adoption. Chart 4.3 shows substantial increases in ten demonstration counties and nine comparison counties. Only two demonstration counties, Fairfield and Muskingum, and four comparison counties, Hocking, Scioto, Trumbull and Wood, experienced decreases in the number of children eligible for adoption.

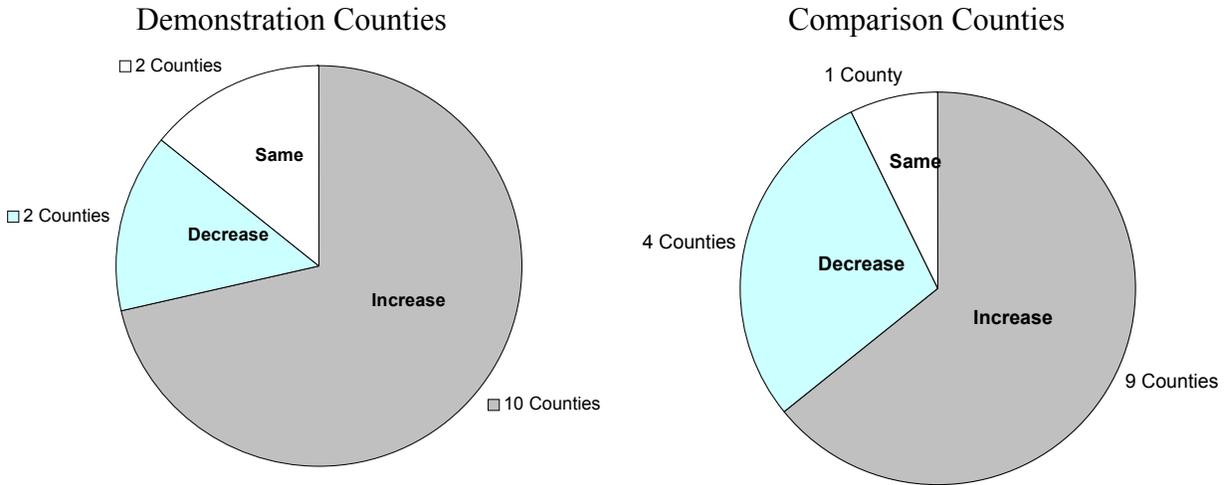


Chart 4.3 Change in number of new children eligible for adoption subsidy between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Both demonstration and comparison county groups have increased the number of children eligible for adoption subsidy. Ten of the demonstration counties and nine comparison counties experienced notable increases in the number of adoptions. It is likely that ASFA and AdoptOhio are equally pressuring all counties in the state.

4.3.3 Increased Use of Permanent Custody

Permanency initiatives have always been a central activity of the PCSAs, for both demonstration and comparison counties alike. Through such efforts, children are removed from foster care and given the opportunity to stabilize relationships with a caregiver. Simultaneously, permanency actions reduce the level of PCSA responsibility for care of the child. Permanency becomes a particular focus for the demonstration counties, as they explore ways to use flexible Title IV-E funds. Indeed, among the 14 demonstration counties, six counties have chosen to use IV-E funds directly on permanency-related activities. ProtectOhio counties are using several strategies to increase their permanency options: supplementing adoption subsidies, providing financial incentives to non-related guardians, expanding independent living programs, paying for treatment of children in court custody, and providing post-PCSA intervention services (see chapter 2).

Definition:

In FACSIS, custody type is used to track court outcomes. Permanent custody refers to children whose parents’ custody has been terminated. They are children usually available for adoption. In addition, children in Permanent Planned Living Arrangements (PPLA) are older children in long-term foster care.

Findings:

The study team examined both the number of children in permanent commitment (Table 1-12 in Appendix 1) and the number of children in Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA) (Table 1-13 in Appendix 1). Overall, both the demonstration and comparison counties experienced increases in the number of children in permanent commitment during the Waiver period - - a 35 percent increase among demonstration counties, and a 28 percent increase among comparison counties. As Chart 4.4 indicates, nine of the demonstration counties and eight of the comparison counties experienced increases in the number of children in permanent commitment.

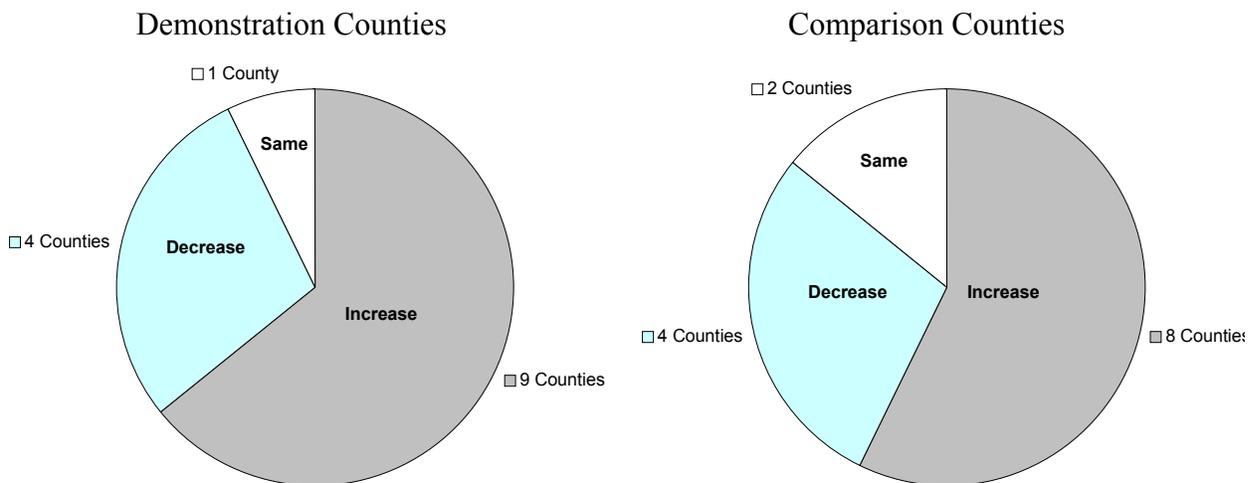


Chart 4.4 Change in number of children in permanent commitment between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Results were more mixed when examining the number of children in PPLA. During the baseline period, the number of children in PPLA only changed slightly in the demonstration group, and between the end of the baseline period and the end of the third year of the Waiver period, the number of children increased by only 4 percent. In the comparison counties, the number of children in PPLA also remained relatively unchanged during the baseline period, decreasing by only 5 percent. During the Waiver period, however, the study team observed a steady increase in the comparison group during all three years (28% overall); particular growth occurred between the end of the baseline period and the first year of the Waiver period where the number of children in PPLA increased by 18 percent.

Chart 4.5 shows that eleven demonstration counties experienced decreases in the number of children in PPLA during the Waiver period. Only two demonstration counties (Franklin (124%) and Portage (5%)), experienced an increase. On the other hand, seven comparison counties showed increases and six of the remaining comparison counties showed decreases.

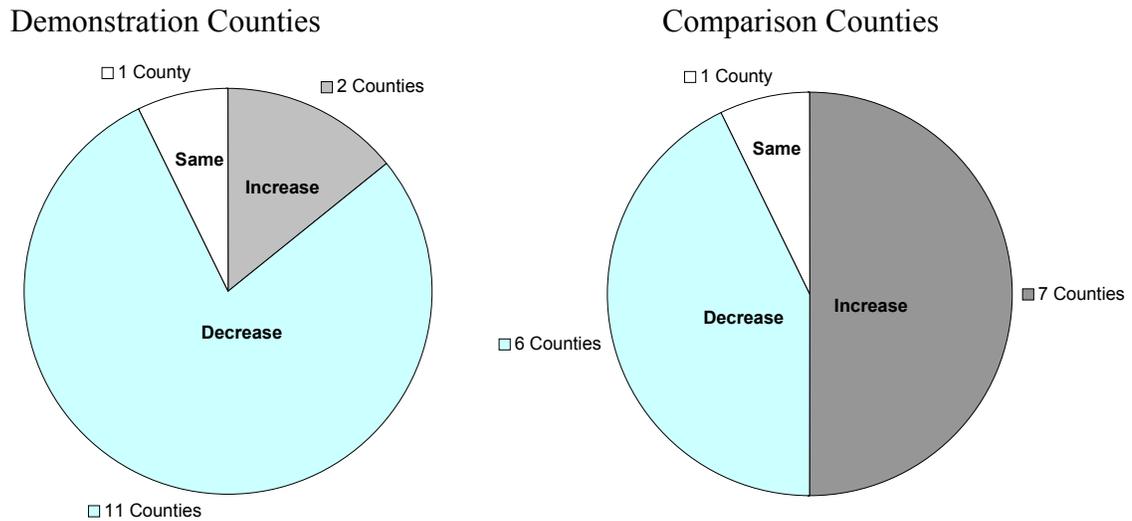


Chart 4.5 Change in number of children in permanent planned living arrangements between end of baseline period and third year of Waiver period

Summary:

Both the demonstration and comparison counties experienced increases in the number of children in permanent commitment during the Waiver period. The number of children in PPLA, however, remained relatively the same in the demonstration group, while increasing by almost one-third in the comparison group. The greatest increase of children in PPLA occurred in Franklin County.

4.3.4 Duration

An important outcome, targeted by all demonstration counties, is a decrease in case duration and placement duration. Its impact is important when determining the effects of changes in program and service delivery policies on the outcomes of children and families involved in the child welfare system; it also serves as a measure of cost effectiveness. The goal of studying case and placement duration in this report is not to interpret the results to say shorter case time or a shorter foster care placement is better, but to better understand how case and placement time is affected by case and child characteristics.

The analysis that follows represents the team’s first look at case and placement duration using survival analysis methodology. Survival refers to the likelihood of “surviving” a stay in placement or an open case, i.e., the likelihood of a longer stay. In future reports this type of

analysis will proceed to more in-depth study as the Waiver period extends and new FACSIS data elements and created variables are added.¹⁵

Duration of Ongoing Case

Definition:

The study team sought to determine the effects of changes in policies and procedures on the length of an ongoing case. An ongoing case in this analysis begins at the point when a worker determines that services to a child and family are needed. This can occur during or after an investigation of abuse/neglect, or through a court order for services. Ongoing cases include in-home and placement cases, whether they involve abuse and/or neglect or not. The statistical model calculates the probability or likelihood that the case will remain open and the characteristics and factors that have statistical significance in affecting when the case will close. The team analyzed the length of first case episodes only. A summary interpretation is reported in this section.

Data Used. The file creation was the first step in preparation for the analysis. The file contains case episode records for all children who were opened in an ongoing case for the first time in Federal Fiscal Years 1991 through 2001 in the 28 demonstration and comparison counties.¹⁶

Case Duration Analysis:

The data analysis proceeded with two types of statistical procedures.¹⁷ The study used survival analysis, a methodology originally developed for epidemiology, but now frequently used to examine children's experiences in the child welfare system. "Survival" in the context of this study means continuation in an open case and "survival time" means length of time case remains open. This type of analysis allows exploration of the relationship between the predictor variables, including characteristics of the children and counties, and the primary dependent variable, duration of an ongoing case. Simply put, the analysis helps explain what causes shorter and longer case duration.

The team analyzed the data for the entire population as a whole, by demonstration and comparison counties, and by individual counties for each year of entry cohort. Two findings

¹⁵ It should be noted that the comparative periods of time, prior to Waiver and during Waiver are not equal and cases and placements have not had equal chances of survival. This being the case, a reader should interpret the findings as preliminary in the evaluation of the "Protect Ohio" Waiver.

¹⁶ Table 1-14 in Appendix I provides the data elements for case duration. Further steps in the file creation included deletion of records that had missing values on statistically significant variables such as age, sex, and race. In Appendix I, Table 1-15 provides the total number of children in each cohort of first case episodes, fiscal years 1991 to 2001 by county with "**closed case**" and a case "**still open**" based on the end of the child's last or current case episode. In Appendix I, Tables 1-15a, 1-15b, and 1-15c provide a count of the number of children who had their first case opening in each year. In these tables, a "**closed case**" or a case "**still open**" is based on the end of the first case episode. Table 1-16, "Variables in In-Home Case Analysis by County," and Table 1-17, "County-Specific Variables in In-Home Case Analysis by County," provides the "n of cases" for the survival analysis of case duration, as well as the mean and median length of first case episodes. Table 1-18 in Appendix I provides the statistically significant variables for the survival analysis of case duration.

¹⁷ The first statistical procedure was to use t-tests and chi-square statistics to compare those cases that remained open and those that had closed. Survival analysis, the second type of statistical procedure first involved performing Cox regression analyses on sets of predictor variables. See Appendix VIII for further detail.

emerged from the first layer of analysis. The first observation is relatively obvious: cases involving the placement of a child have a longer duration than those that are strictly in-home cases. If left in the same model, the placement cases will hide the influence of other case characteristics. For this reason, cases with placements are treated separately.

The second finding is the importance of county size. The differences are pronounced between the four very large metro counties (Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Summit), called “large” in this analysis, and all other counties, called “smaller” in this analysis. To test the importance of county size, the study team separately analyzed the data for each of the larger counties, and tested for statistically significant variables. Each of the larger counties had similar relationships in the statistically significant variables.¹⁸ As a quick glance at Table 4.1 reveals, the smaller county group (in each pair of columns) shows a very different pattern of significant variables.

Table 4.1 Significant Variables in Survival Analysis of Length of First Case Episode

	In-Home Cases			
	Prior to Waiver		After Waiver	
	Smaller (n=27,136)	Large (n=37,114)	Smaller (n=10,994)	Large (n=21,036)
Model Variables	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant
Demo vs. Comp	✓		✓	
Urbanicity	✓		✓	
Age	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex, Female	✓			
Race, Black	✓	✓	✓	✓
Race, Other		✓		✓
Abuse/Neglect	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relative Place.				
Waiver				
Collaboration*	✓	✓	✓	
Internal organization*	✓			
Juvenile Court*	✓		✓	
Leadership*	✓			✓
Managed Care*	✓	✓		
Service Availability*		✓	✓	✓
Team Conferencing*	✓		✓	

*Indices created from the process study findings.

While some of the smaller counties differed in which variables were statistically significant in the individual county analysis, these differences do not change the overall analysis of the smaller counties. Additionally, the total numbers of children in first time cases in the smallest counties were not large enough individually to see any significant differences.

To eliminate the effect of placement vs. in-home case, and large county vs. smaller county, the cases were stratified by these categories and analyzed as separate groups. The statistically

¹⁸ Testing the larger of the smaller counties individually (like Stark and Portage) had no effect or marked differences on the relationships identified in the smaller county group.

significant variables found in the analysis are displayed in Table 4.1 above. In addition, analysis includes the separation of in-home cases by first case episodes prior to the Waiver and first case episodes after the Waiver, to see if different characteristics of cases become significant, when predicting duration.

This section briefly describes findings in the survival analysis of in-home cases. Placement (foster care) length of stay is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Smaller County Experiences—In-Home Case Duration: Many variables discovered in the analysis significantly impact the duration of in-home cases. Table 4.2 distinguishes those variables that are associated with shorter case duration or longer case duration.¹⁹ The important variables are shown for both periods, prior to and after the Waiver was initiated.

Table 4.2 Smaller Counties, Effect on Case Duration Prior to and After Waiver

<i>Smaller Counties—In-Home Case Duration</i>		
Relative Risk	Significant Variable Prior to Waiver	Significant Variable After Waiver
Longer Case Duration (RR <1.00)	Group (comparison/demonstration) Race of Child (Black) Abuse/Neglect Juvenile Court Index Collaboration Index Leadership Index Managed Care Index	Urbanicity Race of Child (Black) Abuse/Neglect Juvenile Court Index Service Availability Index
Shorter Case Duration (RR >1.00)	Urbanicity Age of Child Sex of Child Team Conferencing Index Internal Organization Index	Group (comparison/demonstration) Age of Child Collaboration Index Team Conferencing Index

Some of the significant variables in Table 4.2 have a stronger effect than others on in-home case duration (See Appendix 1, Table 18-a). The variable found to have the greatest effect is county group. Prior to the Waiver period, children in new cases in smaller comparison counties experienced a longer in-home case duration than smaller demonstration counties. The opposite experience occurs during the Waiver period (right-hand column). In-home cases in the smaller comparison counties experienced shorter duration than cases in the demonstration counties.

¹⁹ Each variable has a different degree of significance. The reader is directed to Appendix VIII for the size of the relative risk.

Like county group, one other variable demonstrated a particularly strong effect on case duration which reversed over time. Cases in smaller urban counties tended to have shorter duration prior to the Waiver, but longer duration after the Waiver began.

Three variables retained their strong influence prior to and after the Waiver: race, abuse/neglect, and juvenile court index. Black children were more likely to have a longer in-home case duration compared to all other race categories combined. If the in-home case involved abuse and neglect, the case duration was likely to be longer in both periods. In addition, better relations with the Juvenile Court extended case time, perhaps reflecting greater attention to individual case needs.

Large County Experiences – In-Home Case Duration: In large counties, many variables and covariates are found to have significant influence on the duration of in-home cases open prior to the Waiver. These include both child demographic characteristics and certain scale indices — collaboration efforts, managed care, and service availability. During the Waiver, a somewhat different set of variables were found to be statistically significant in duration of in-home cases (Table 4.3). Whether an in-home case opened for service in a large demonstration county or a large comparison county did not demonstrate a significant variation in the length of a case before or after the Waiver.

Table 4.3 Large Counties, Effect on Case Duration by Significant Variables, Prior to and After Waiver

<i>Large Counties—In-Home Case Duration</i>		
Relative Risk	Significant Variable Prior to Waiver	Significant Variable After Waiver
Longer Case Duration (RR <1.00)	Race of Child (Black) Service Availability Index	Race of Child (Black) Service Availability Index
Shorter Case Duration (RR >1.00)	Age of Child Race of Child (Other) Abuse/Neglect Collaboration Index Managed Care Index Team Conferencing Index	Age of Child Race of Child (Other) Abuse/Neglect Leadership Index

The strongest of the significant variables remained the same, both before and after the Waiver. Two race variables – being black and being neither black nor white (other) – had opposite effects on case duration, both before and after the Waiver. In-home cases involving abuse/neglect had shorter duration than other cases. Also, increased service availability increased the likelihood of a case remaining open.

Some contrasts appear when examining the effect of some of the other system reform indices²⁰. Both collaboration and managed care efforts appear to reduce in-home case duration prior to the Waiver, but were not statistically significant during the Waiver. The leadership index, however, does reduce the length of a case during the Waiver period

Foster Care—Length of Stay

Another important part of the Waiver evaluation is to determine the effects of changes in policies and procedures on the length of time children spend in foster care. In order to evaluate any effects the Waiver may have had on duration in foster care, the study team compared changes in the lengths of new first placements in the demonstration and comparison counties. The study team gave priority to new first placements instead of ongoing or repeated placements for this report.

Despite the matching of demonstration and comparison counties, there were differences in the mix of children entering their first placements, both before and after the Waiver began. Some of the changes in the case mix might be due to the Waiver, but the team decided this question would need to be addressed in a later report. Therefore, statistical modeling was used to remove as much as possible of the differences in length of stay between demonstration and comparison counties due to differences in their case mixes. Of course, there are many ways in which the case mixes in the two sets of counties varied both from each other and over time. Only a few of these were measured in the FACSIS data. The variables considered include age, race, sex, reason for placement (abuse or neglect versus something else), and placement resource used for the first night (relative versus some other resource). The models also removed differences due to differential growth in placement volumes in large urban counties, small urban counties, and rural counties.²¹

The fact that the Waiver followed closely on the heels of ASFA and several state and PCSA permanency initiatives created some additional complexities. ASFA went into effect in 1997. The Waiver went into effect on October 1, 1997, but some counties built their Waiver activities on initiatives that began prior to that time. In, addition, it is unlikely that counties made very many new Waiver changes in their operating procedures before January 1, 1998. Therefore the study team redefined the date associated with the Waiver for this section of the report. The team chose to focus on January 1, 1997, as a reference date between national, state and PCSA

²⁰ Appendix I, Table 19 provides a list of the significant variables that affect the duration of in-home cases in each county.

²¹ The team considered using additional variables about the child and about the county but decided against them for two reasons. The additional child-specific variables suffered from a lack of temporal specificity. It was not clear that their values were fixed at the beginning of the placement. The team thought that the introduction of time-varying covariates would unduly complicate the analysis. Additional county variables were rejected because they were essentially entering a specific effect for every county into the models. The team wanted to average across the counties so as to compare demonstration counties with comparison counties. This could not be done with a separate effect for every county.

permanency initiatives [hereafter called Ohio permanency initiatives] and Waiver implementations.²²

The team used proportional hazards modeling to evaluate first placement duration. This type of modeling was indicated because many of the first placements made after 1996 had not ended by the cutoff date for the analysis file. The analysis file consisted of placement records for all children who entered out-of-home care for the first time between October 1, 1990 and February 28, 2001. The records were censored for those children who were still in their first placement on March 1, 2001.²³

Initial Analysis:

During preliminary analyses, the team looked at simple entrance and exit rates as well as the median length²⁴ of first placements by year²⁵ in large and small counties (Table 4.4). This analysis provides some context to the changes in duration by county size, but does not separate demonstration counties from comparison counties

²² However, for the Year 4 report, the team chose to move to January 1, 1998, as the most important demarcation date between the pre-waiver period and the Waiver period.

²³ Table 1-20 in Appendix I provides the data elements for foster care duration contained in the file. In Appendix I, Table 1-21 divides the population of children by first placement prior to fiscal year 1991, whose first placement in care occurred in fiscal years 1991 through 2001. In this table, a child who “**exited care**” or a child who is “**still in care**” is based on the end of the child’s last or current placement episode. Table 21a, Table 21b and Table 21c provide the history of the number of children who entered care by year of first placement episode. Table 1-22 shows child characteristics by county.

²⁴ The median duration or length of stay is the amount of time it takes for half of the children to exit care, assuming an infinite duration for all censored cases.

²⁵ Years are given as federal fiscal years, which start on October 1 of the preceding calendar year. For example, FFY 1997 started on October 1, 1996.

Table 4.4 Length of First Placement Episode by Large and Smaller Counties, and by Year

FFY	Large Counties				Smaller Counties			
	Entered Care	Exited Care by 2/01	% Exited Care	Median Length of Placement (Days)	Entered Care	Exited Care by 2/01	% Exited Care	Median Length of Placement (Days)
1991	3,762	3,728	99	114	2,883	2,852	99	203
1992	3,797	3,752	99	137	2,886	2,867	99	197
1993	3,369	3,291	98	87	2,334	2,301	99	183
1994	3,991	3,883	97	93	2,385	2,349	98	216
1995	3,676	3,516	96	122	2,605	2,519	97	195
1996	3,474	3,305	95	87	2,570	2,483	97	190
1997	4,106	3,804	93	86	2,263	2,131	94	166
1998	4,367	3,919	90	90	2,318	2,100	91	180
1999	4,221	3,534	84	90	2,458	1,991	81	198
2000	3,951	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,475	N/A	N/A	N/A

* FY 2000 discharge data is not included due to data lag in reporting to FACSIS. The Team assumes, based on interview with PSCA staff, that it takes three months to enter all the data.

This aggregate data suggests that differences existed between large and smaller counties prior to the Waiver. For large counties, the number of new children entering care increased as Ohio permanency initiatives went into effect in FFY 1997. In fact, the average number of new entrants during the first 4 years of the initiatives (1997-2000) was 13 percent higher than the average number in the preceding 5 year period. Conversely, smaller counties show an 9 percent decrease when comparing these same time periods.

The differences in the median length of stay by county size are particularly striking. The median length of the first placement is much greater in the small counties than for the large ones. This is true for every year examined. For example, in FFY 1999, half of the children in the larger counties leave care within 90 days, while for the smaller counties it is 198 days, more than twice as long. Additionally, the median placement durations appear to have changed during the Ohio permanency initiatives/Waiver period in the large counties while staying fairly constant in the small counties. So it appears that the large and small counties are diverging from each other.

Secondary Analysis Findings²⁶:

Statistical modeling showed a significant difference between the large demonstration counties and the large comparison counties with respect to changes in placement duration – when controlling for changes in the case mix with respect to age, race, sex, abuse and neglect, and use of relative for first placement night. Placement duration appears to have stayed fairly constant in

²⁶ The team revised the methodology used in this section in March 2002. A summary of these preliminary results is presented here. A more comprehensive discussion is presented in the Year 4 report.

the large demonstration counties while increasing in the large comparison counties. In fact, the adjusted daily rate of exit for children in the large demonstration counties was 32 percent greater than in the comparison counties. A decreased length of placement can be interpreted as positive progress toward meeting one of the common goals of the Ohio permanency initiatives and the Waiver, which is to “speed permanency.” Since placement durations actually increased in the large comparison counties, it seems reasonable to attribute the change to the Waiver although competing explanations are also possible.²⁷ No similar effect could be found in the small counties, but perhaps such an effect will develop with more time.

Of course, shorter stays are a good outcome only if the children who have been removed from placement more quickly were sent to appropriate settings. In the Year 4 report, the team will examine any effects of the Waiver on shifting children from one type of exit to another such as from being reunited with their parents to being given permanently to other relatives. The team will also look at the re-entry rate for children reunited with their parents to make sure that faster discharges have not resulted in a revolving door phenomenon.

The statistical modeling also provides estimates of how child characteristics influence the length of the placement. This information is not relevant to the Waiver evaluation but is presented in the full model (See Table 1-23 of Appendix 1).

Table 4.5 Significant Variables in Survival Analysis of Length of First Placement Episode

During Permanency Initiatives and Waiver	Effect on Length of First Placement
Children exiting first placement	No effect
Children exiting first placement in large demonstration counties	Shorter time in care

Summary:

For large demonstration counties, the Waiver has shortened the length of stay. This is a positive finding for the Wavier provided that the children who have been removed from placement more quickly do not also re-enter placement more quickly. The team will evaluate re-enty for the Year 4 report. No effect was found in small counties (urban and rural), but the team will also look at another year’s data for the Year 4 report to see if any effects emerge.

²⁷ For example, if there was a change in the relationship between the juvenile courts and the child protective services in the large demonstration counties that caused more or fewer disruptive children to enter foster care, this could lead to differences in placement duration. The team was able to control on abuse/neglect cases as opposed to other types of cases, but important changes in the character of placed children could still have been missed.

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