

DFCS Continuum of Care QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2022

SUMMARY

The evaluation uses a longitudinal cohort model. We compared a group of children who entered foster care between July 1 – Sept 30, 2021 (Cohort 1) with those who entered one year prior, July 1 – Sept 30, 2020 (Baseline). Cohort 1 included children who were cared for at the Welcoming Center, while the Baseline included children cared for at the Keiki Center prior to the Welcoming Center becoming operational.

FINDINGS

- 1. Less children entered foster care in Cohort 1 (71 children) compared to the Baseline (179 children).**
- 2. On average, within the first month of care, children in Cohort 1 stayed in fewer placements or non-foster care facilities than children in the Baseline.**
 - Almost all children in Cohort 1 who moved between places went to less restrictive settings, e.g. from a foster family agency home to a relative home.
 - A higher percentage of Cohort 1 were placed earlier with relatives/non-relative and extended family members (NREFM) or guardians compared to the Baseline.
- 3. The Welcoming Center had better outputs than the Keiki Center for this cohort.**
 - A smaller percentage of Cohort 1 entered a receiving center facility compared to the Baseline.
 - The average stay and overstay at the Welcoming Center were lower than the Keiki Center.
- 4. A higher percentage of children in Cohort 1 had no Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings within 60 days of entering care compared to the Baseline.**

LESSONS LEARNED

1. DFCS and its partners have implemented efforts to improve placement stability, including placement coordination meetings, placement stabilization services, and the 24/7 Acute Placement pilot Program.
2. The availability of satellite homes and placement teaming allowed children to be moved out of the Welcoming Center within the 24-hour window. The Welcoming Center's admission process provided space for the parties involved to explore placement options before a child is placed in the facility.
3. Areas for improvement included: finding placement for older youth with higher or specialized needs, increase collaboration with DFCS and other services to expand service options for children/youth, and facilitating Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings for children who recently entered foster care.

COHORT 1 & BASELINE

The Continuum of Care evaluation uses a longitudinal entry cohort model, where every quarter consists of a new entry cohort and will be compared to a baseline cohort.

Cohort 1 are all children who were removed from their family and entered foster care between July 1, 2021 until September 30, 2021.

Baseline Cohort 1 has the same definition, but with a time frame of one year prior, i.e., July 1, 2020 until September 30, 2020.

This report focuses on children who entered during the time period above and does not include children who were already in foster care. Data were analyzed for 1 month after entering care.

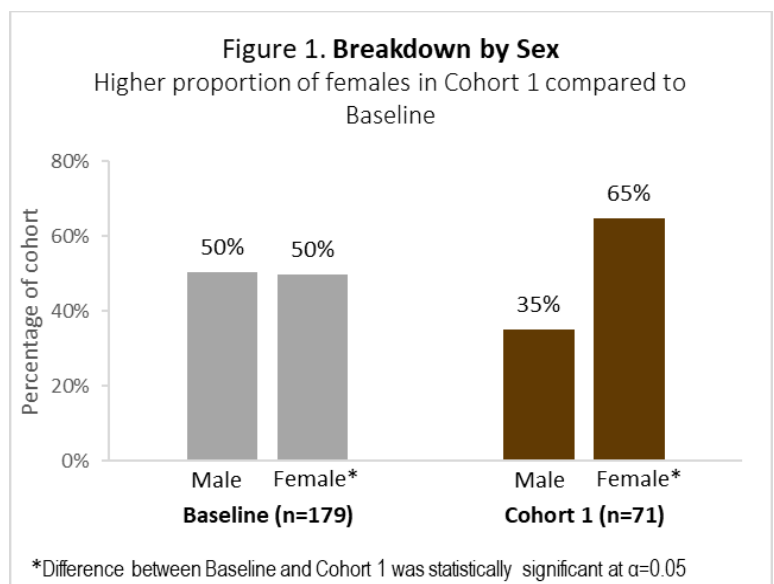
DFCS has made strides in reducing the number of children who were removed from their family and entered foster care. There were significantly less children in Cohort 1 compared to the Baseline.

Less children entered care compared to one year prior



DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Sex:** The proportion of females in Cohort 1, 65%, was higher than the Baseline, 50% (Figure 1). This difference was statistically significant.
- **Age:** The average age of Cohort 1 (9.3 years old) was slightly older than the average age of the Baseline (8 years old).
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Hispanic children continued to be the largest proportion of race/ethnicity in both groups. The proportion of Asian/PI children in Cohort 1 was smaller than the Baseline and the proportion of African Ancestry children in Cohort 1 was larger the Baseline (Table 1). These differences were not statistically significant.



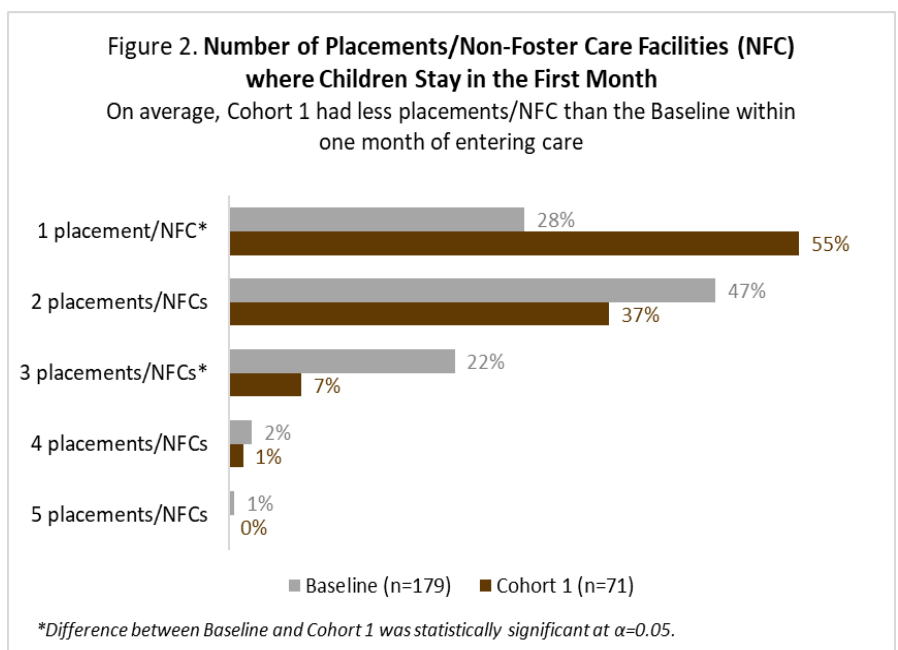
Race/Ethnicity	% Baseline (n = 179)	% Cohort 1 (n = 71)
Hispanic	66%	66%
White	12%	14%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%	6%
African Ancestry	7%	14%
Native American	2%	0%
Declines to State/Unknown	1%	0%

PLACEMENT & NON-FOSTER CARE FACILITIES

After removal from their family, a child stays in a foster care placement or a non-foster care facility. Examples of foster care placements are relative/non-relative and extended family members (NREFM) homes, resource family homes, or a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). Examples of non-foster care facilities are the Welcoming Center, medical facilities, or a juvenile hall. To give a more comprehensive picture of the number and restrictiveness of places where children stay while in care, the analysis below includes data of both foster care placements and non-foster care facilities. The varying degrees of restrictiveness for placements and non-foster care facilities can be found in the Appendix.

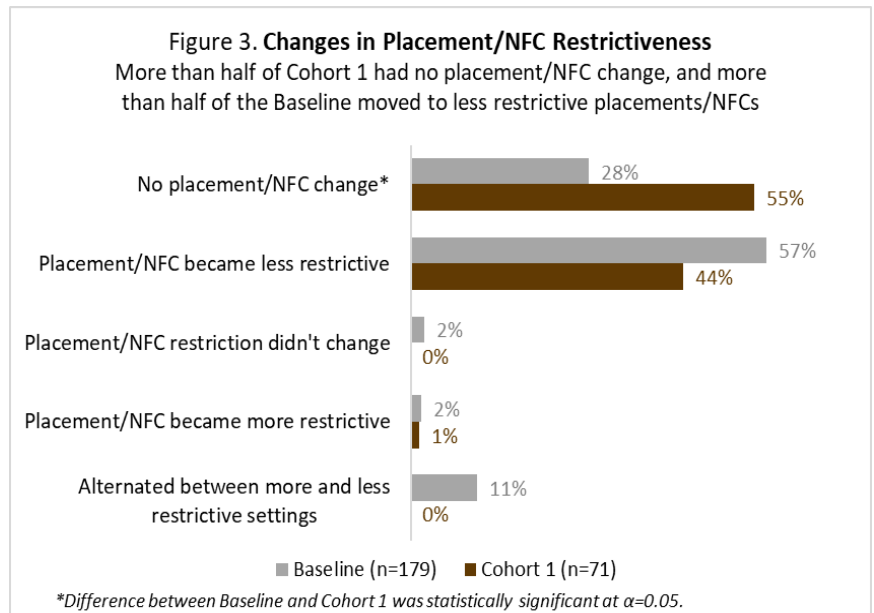
Children in Cohort 1 had less placement/non-foster care facility (NFC) changes compared to Baseline.

- The median placement/NFC count was 1 for Cohort 1 and 2 for the Baseline. This difference was statistically significant.
- In one month, more than half of the children in Cohort 1 only had 1 placement/NFC. The same was true for only 28% of children in the Baseline (Figure 2). This difference was also statistically significant.



Changes in Restrictiveness

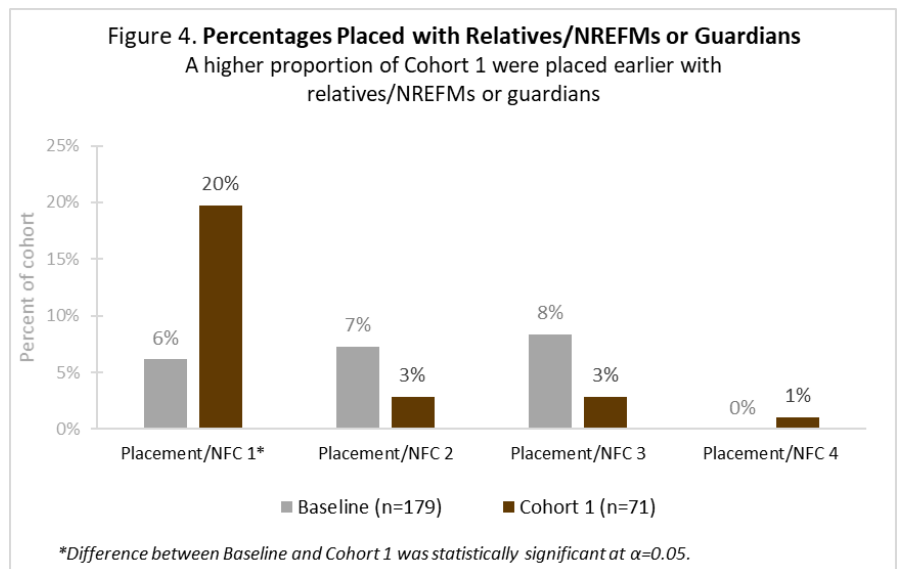
- More than half of the children in Cohort 1 did not have a placement/NFC change, and almost all who had a placement/NFC change moved to less restrictive settings (Figure 3).
- Of the children in the Baseline who had a placement/NFC change, more than half of them moved to less restrictive settings.
- No one in Cohort 1 alternated multiple times between different levels of placement/NFC restrictiveness, compared to 11% of the Baseline who experienced this.



For example, if a child moved from the Keiki Center to a Resource Family Home back to the Keiki Center, this would be considered moving to a less restrictive setting back to a more restrictive setting. See Appendix for levels of placement/NFC restrictiveness.

Relative/Non-Relative and Extended Family Members (NREFM) and Guardian Placements

- The proportions of relative/NREFM and guardian placements was slightly higher in Cohort 1 (27%) than Baseline (21%). This difference was not statistically significant (Figure 4).
- A higher percentage of Cohort 1 were placed earlier with their relatives/NREFMs or guardians. The difference in proportion at the first placement is statistically significant.
- Given the higher Baseline population, more children were placed with relatives/NREFMs or guardians in Baseline than Cohort 1.



Runaway

- For this report, runaway was defined as an event where a child left their placement/NFC facility and resulted in a placement/NFC facility disruption. Within one month of entering care, 4% of the Baseline (7 children) had run away from their placement and none of Cohort 1 had done so.

Programmatic Context

Children in Cohort 1 seem to have less movements between places of stay (placement or non-foster facilities) compared to the Baseline. Discussions with program staff in DFCS and partner organizations indicate that:

- **Placement coordination meetings in DFCS** allowed staff to explore placement options. These meetings, comprised of managers, supervisors, social workers and placement staff, were child-focused and involved assessing barriers to placements as well as exploring placement options, such as staying with relatives or returning to their parents.
- **The 24/7 Acute Placement Pilot Program** expanded options to place children with higher needs in resource family homes who have the capacity to care for them. This program paid additional subsidies to resource families and allowed a child to be placed in a home environment.
- **Stabilization services**, such as the Uplift's 60-day Placement Support Services (PSS) and Seneca's 30-day Immediate Stabilization Services (ISS), were helpful in supporting placement stability.
- COVID-19 may have impacted programs that support relative/NREFM placement, such as Seneca's Relative Notification process. When a child is removed, Seneca would engage in a family finding effort in the first 30 days of entry and provide information to DFCS to identify relatives. However, due to COVID-19 and staffing gaps, among other challenges, the process slowed down through 2021.

THE WELCOMING CENTER

In 2021, DFCS transferred the management of a receiving facility to Seneca and changed the facility name from the Keiki Center to the Welcoming Center. Approximately 75% of the Baseline (135 children) were admitted to the Keiki Center, while 58% of Cohort 1 (41 children) were admitted to the Welcoming Center within one month of entering care. This report focuses on foster care entry, which does not cover *all* children admitted to the facilities.

The average number of days a child stayed at the center was **five times as many** days at the Keiki Center in 2020 (4.5 days) compared to the Welcoming Center in 2021 (0.84 days). Stay at these facilities was limited to 24 hours. The average number of days a child overstayed was **nearly eight times as many** days at the Keiki Center in 2020 (14.1 days) compared to the Welcoming Center in 2021 (1.8 days).

	Baseline (Keiki Center)	Cohort 1 (Welcoming Center)
Children/Youth		
Total number of children who stayed in the facility	135 children	41 children
Percentage of population who stayed in the facility*	75%	58%

Number of children who had repeat stays in the facility within the first month of care	6 children	0
Stay in the Facility		
Average number of days in the facility*	4.5 days	0.84 days
Range of days in the facility	0 – 96 days	0 – 4 days
Overstay in the Facility[†]		
Number of children who overstayed	40 children	5 children
Percentage of children who overstayed*	30%	12%
Average number of days of overstay in the facility	14.1 days	1.8 days

*Difference between Baseline and Cohort 1 was statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

[†]Overstay for Baseline is an estimate as data used did not have times of entry and discharge (see Appendix).

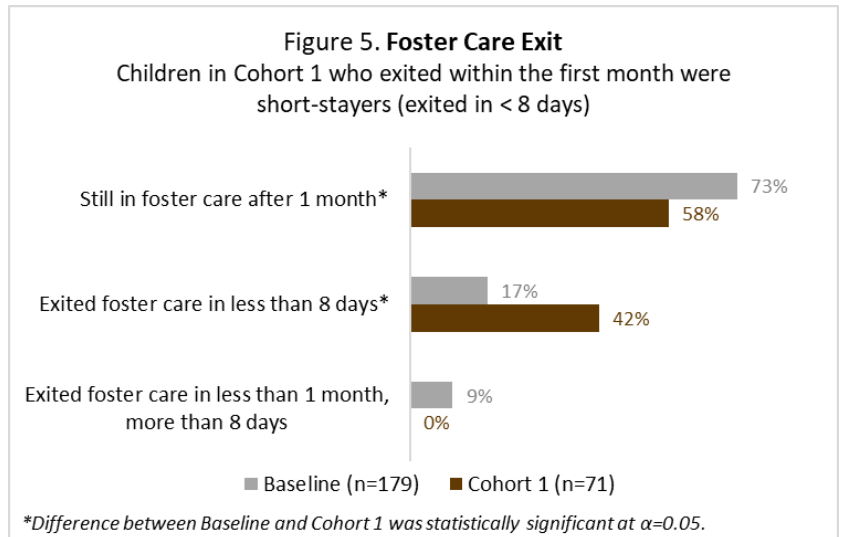
Programmatic Context

Outputs for the Welcoming Center seemed to improve compared to the Keiki Center. Discussions with program staff in DFCS and partner organizations indicate that:

- **The availability of satellite homes or scattered sites** allowed children to be moved out of the Welcoming Center within 24 hours and avoid overstays.
- **DFCS' placement coordination meetings** allowed for a team approach to placement even before a child was placed in the Welcoming Center. For children with higher needs who may have otherwise resulted in overstay at the Welcoming Center, these meetings created an enabling environment for faster placements or the option of bypassing the Welcoming Center altogether.
- **The Welcoming Center's admission process**, combined with teaming around alternative solutions for respite while assessing placement options, allowed for DFCS staff and other parties involved (e.g., law enforcement) to invest time into assessing alternatives to the Welcoming Center, including exploring services or resources that may benefit the child.
- **Link to stability services**, such as Seneca's 30-day ISS and Uplift's 60-day PSS, could be established while youth were at the Welcoming Center. When recognizing youth who might be struggling with transitions, staff immediately opened the service to stabilize the youth's next placement.
- Finding placements after-hours could be a challenge, particularly in adherence to state regulations. For example, a child may not enter placement within the hours of 9 pm to 7 am, or it takes time to ensure that a relative/NREFM meets the requirements to become an emergency relative placement.
- Some areas for improvement include:
 - Finding placements for older youth with higher or specialized needs, which could potentially lead to overstays in the Welcoming Center.
 - Increasing collaboration with county agencies and other providers to expand service options for children.

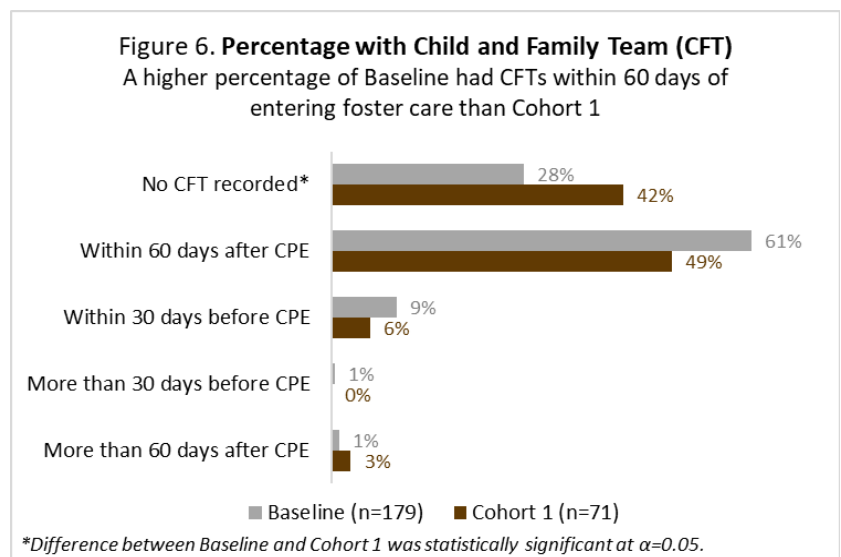
FOSTER CARE HISTORY AND EXIT

- Among Cohort 1, 38% had a prior history of entering foster care, compared to 34% in the Baseline. Correspondingly, 62% and 66% of Cohort 1 and the Baseline, respectively, entered care for the first time.
- The majority of children in both groups were still in care 1 month after entry. Children in Cohort 1 who exited (42%) within the first month, did so within the first 8 days (short-stayers), compared to the Baseline where 17% exited within the first 8 days and 9% exited after 8 days (Figure 5).
- No one in either group exited and re-entered within the first month.



CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM

- A higher percentage of children in Cohort 1 had no Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings recorded within 30 days prior or 60 days after entering care (Figure 6).
- Correspondingly, a smaller percentage of children in Cohort 1 had CFT meetings within 60 days of entering care than children in Baseline.



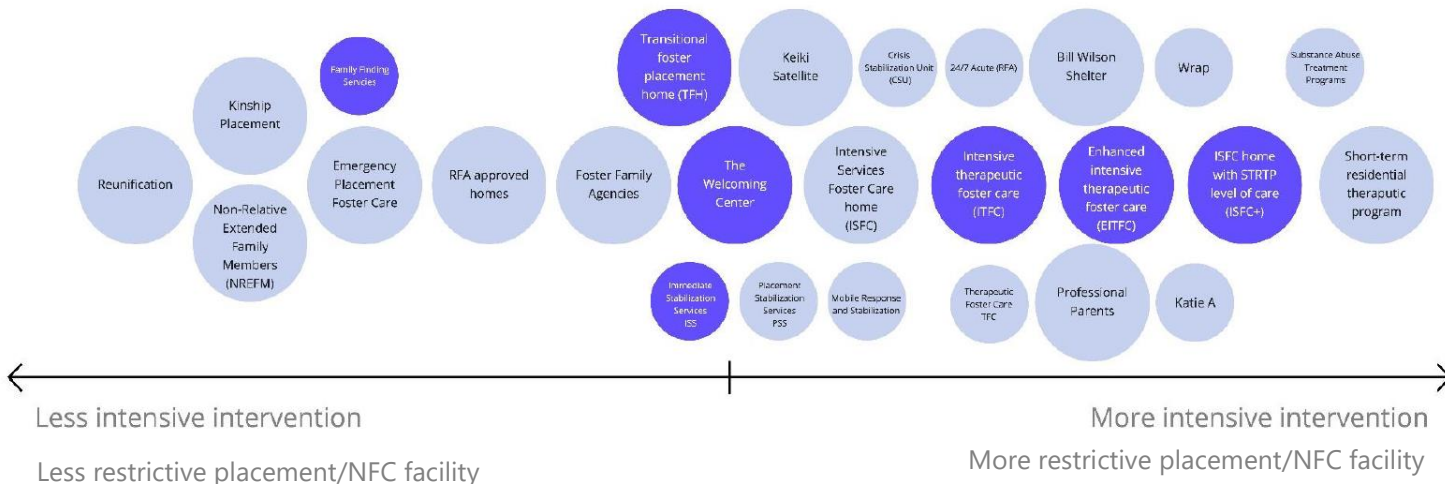
Programmatic Context

- DFCS has begun facilitating CFT meetings at earlier stages of the child welfare process, for example at emergency response or dependency investigation, before a child was removed.
- However, the data indicated that there is room for improvement in providing CFTs for children who recently entered foster care.

APPENDIX

The Continuum of Care Levels of Restrictiveness

The graphic below represents the Continuum of Care. Larger circles represent Placements or Non-Foster Care (NFC) facilities while the smaller circles represent Services. The darker blue indicates those that are new to the Continuum of Care.



Note on data sources for the Keiki Center and the Welcoming Center

- Two different data sources were used to calculate the amount of time a child was admitted to the Keiki Center versus the Welcoming Center. Baseline data were obtained from CWS/CMS. The data only included dates and did not contain exact times of entry and discharge from the Keiki Center.
- Cohort 1 data were obtained from Seneca and included dates as well as exact times of entry and discharge from the Welcoming Center.
- Due to variations in data source and format, differences in the length of stay and overstay between the Baseline and Cohort 1 may be subject to variation.