

The 2020 Data Briefs highlight and track long-term trends associated with progress towards the 2020 Strategy goals. Their purpose is to help internal and external stakeholders analyze key trends with respect to our shared goals.

Northeastern Florida (Duval and Alachua counties) by the numbers:

- Number of children in out-of-home care: Alachua—444; Duval—1,273 (October 2008)
- Number of children in population: Alachua—47,337; Duval—226,823 (October 2008)
- Approximate percentage of Florida's foster care population in Alachua and Duval Counties: 7.8% (October 2008)
- Approximate percentage of Florida's child population in Alachua and Duval counties: 6.5% (2008)
- Rate of children in out-of-home care per 1,000 children: Alachua—9.4; Duval—5.6 (October 2008)
- Number of children entering care: Alachua—319; Duval—1,098 (FY 2008)
- Rate of children entering care per 1,000 children: Alachua—6.7; Duval—4.8 (FY 2008)

FLORIDA (NORTHEASTERN) 2020 Data Brief

How has the Foster Care Redesign pilot in Florida helped to maintain children safely in their home and prevent them from entering foster care?

What is the issue and how is it related to our 2020 Strategy?

Casey Family Programs and the State of Florida both are committed to reducing the number of children in out-of-home care. Seeing the need to focus on reduction and based on empirical data, Alachua and Duval counties in the northeastern region of Florida launched an ambitious Foster Care Redesign project. The project has four key goals: 1) safely reduce the number of children in care through intensive family support; 2) assure a safe and permanent home for every child who comes to the attention of the child welfare system; 3) align results with Casey Family Programs' 2020 Strategy, along with an emphasis on diversity and eliminating disproportionality; and 4) meet or exceed the State of Florida's goal of a 50 percent reduction of children in care by 2012.

Since the launch of the Foster Care Redesign project in October 2007, Alachua and Duval counties have made considerable progress. That is significant since system level change usually requires sustained effort over a longer length of time.

What do the numbers tell us?

Data was the initial impetus behind northeastern Florida's Foster Care Redesign project. The data collected showcases the dramatic improvements that have been made since the project started. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate increases in the number of children removed from their homes and consequently the number of children in out-of-home care in Duval County and in Alachua County. A reduction is notable in both counties following the introduction of the Foster Care Redesign project in October 2007.

Efforts are being made all along the continuum of the child welfare system in pursuit of a 50 percent reduction. Florida is one of the final two states (California was the other) to receive a Title IV-E waiver. The waiver allowed Florida to spend money more flexibly and, as a result, devote resources to prevention and other programs that were critical to reducing the number of children coming into care. A few of the key initiatives credited with the reduction to date:

- **Commitment of Leadership:** Efforts in both counties have been championed by the senior leadership at the Department of Children and Families and community-based care providers in Florida. Leaders have made clear the importance of this work and quickly carried out a comprehensive communications plan to promote its success.

Figure 1: Duval County:
Removals and Active Out-of-Home

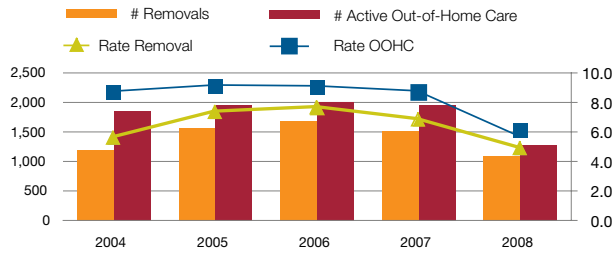
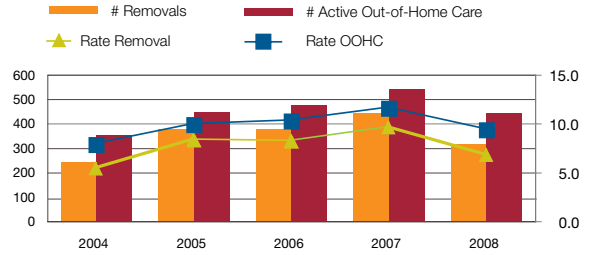


Figure 2: Alachua County:
Removals and Active Out-of-Home



- **Culture Change:** Extensive training has been provided to all levels of staff about the project and its targeted goal. In both counties, senior leaders have addressed multiple community groups and forums on this new direction and built a receptive audience eager to support needed changes.
- **Continuous Quality Improvement:** Another key has been the active solicitation of staff input and feedback during the project, especially during procedure and process changes. The incorporation of staff feedback has boosted support for the changes.
- **Team Decision Making:** Both counties have implemented significant changes in their review of high-risk investigations and case plans. Both assemble teams of staff with varying areas of expertise to ensure the individual needs of the family are met while safely maintaining children in their own homes and promoting a family's timely engagement in services. Duval's Integrated Practice Team has a core standing membership, while Alachua's teams are created on a case by case basis. Decision Team Consultants are now integrated into these team processes to provide leadership and facilitate the teams.
- **Diversion Services:** The project provides appropriately needed services to families based on family needs and strengths. This work is done within the first 24 hours of an investigation to stabilize families and assure children remain in their homes.

- **Neighborhood Resource Centers:** Centers are located in areas with high rates of child abuse to offer prevention programs and services to families, with referrals to support successful family functioning. Alachua County Resource Center is scheduled to open in Spring 2009, with the support of other agencies, and will offer programs to strengthen families and build stability.
- **Partnership with Casey Family Programs:** Given the ambitious reduction goals of both Casey Family Programs and the State of Florida, a partnership was created to connect Florida to Casey's national reduction strategy.

What's next?

Duval and Alachua counties are committed to sustaining the reduction achieved thus far and continuing to work toward further reduction in the number of children in foster care. Both counties plan to identify more specifically the practices that have inspired a reduction and expand those efforts even more broadly. In doing so, they also will identify additional needs or places for improvement in pursuit of the 50 percent reduction they plan to achieve by 2012.

Data Source: Florida's Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice, Child Welfare Services Trend Reports.

Note: Years are calculated to correspond with the federal fiscal year, October through September.