

Commission on Children in Foster Care

December 9, 2024

Secretary Ross Hunter

www.dcyf.wa.gov



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

DCYF has reduced the number of children in out of home care by half



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Aug. 14, 2024

Washington Reduces the Number of Children in Out-Of-Home Care by Nearly Half

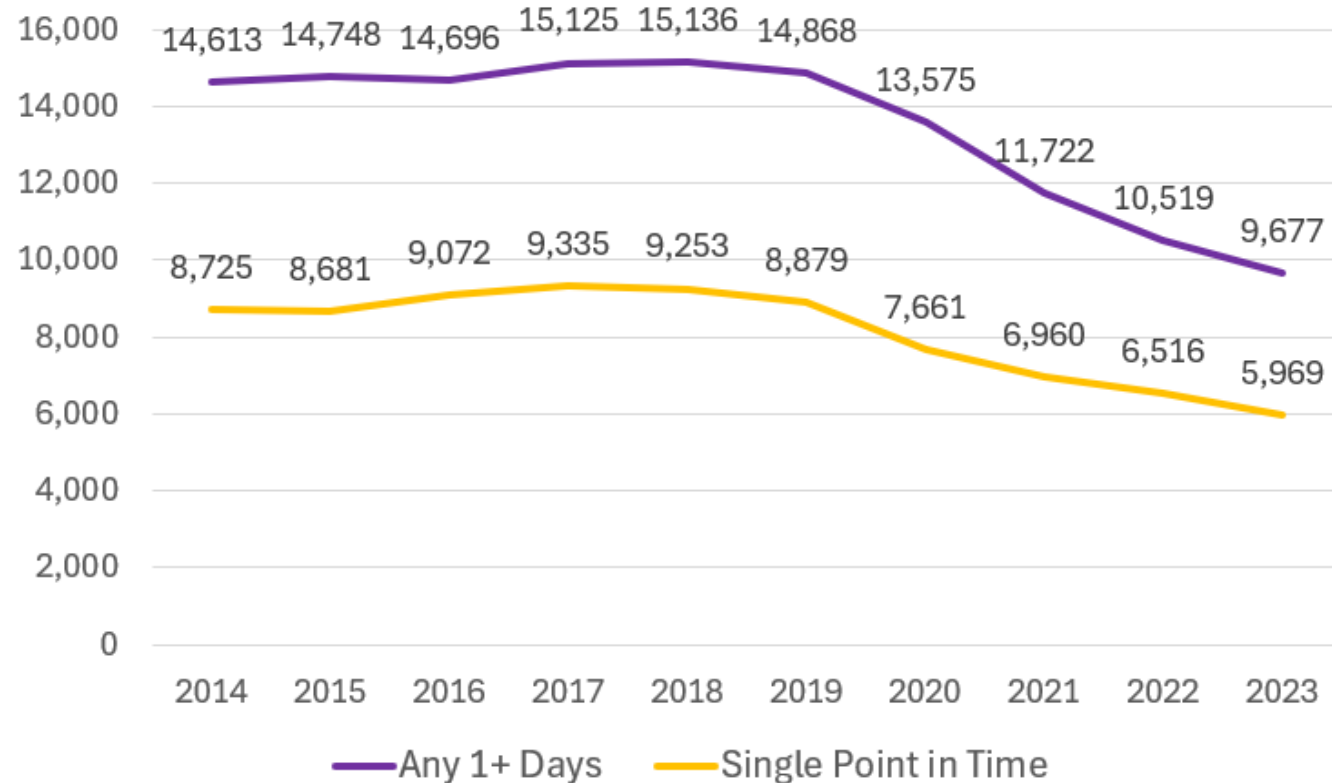
Olympia, WA — The number of children in out-of-home care is now only about half of what it was when the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created.

There are now 4,971 children and youth in out-of-home care in Washington State. This is the lowest it's been since the 80s and a sharp contrast from the 9,171 it was in 2018.

"Outcomes like this demonstrate our agency's commitment to keeping families together and children and youth safe," said DCYF Secretary Ross Hunter. "Although the number of reports we are receiving remain consistent, we are seeing fewer children and youth in out-of-home care as families are being referred to support services rather than having children removed from their homes."

DCYF continues to see the same number of child abuse and neglect reports that require face-to-face responses and has received the same number of calls — nearly 92,000 calls to report suspected child abuse or neglect were made in 2023, compared to a little over 93,000 in 2018.

Children & Youth in Out-of-Home Care FY 2014-2023



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[DCYF Media Release Aug 14, 2024](#)

Data from DCYF Agency Performance Page

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/reduce-out-of-home-care>

DCYF has dramatically increased kinship placement and licensing:

2019:

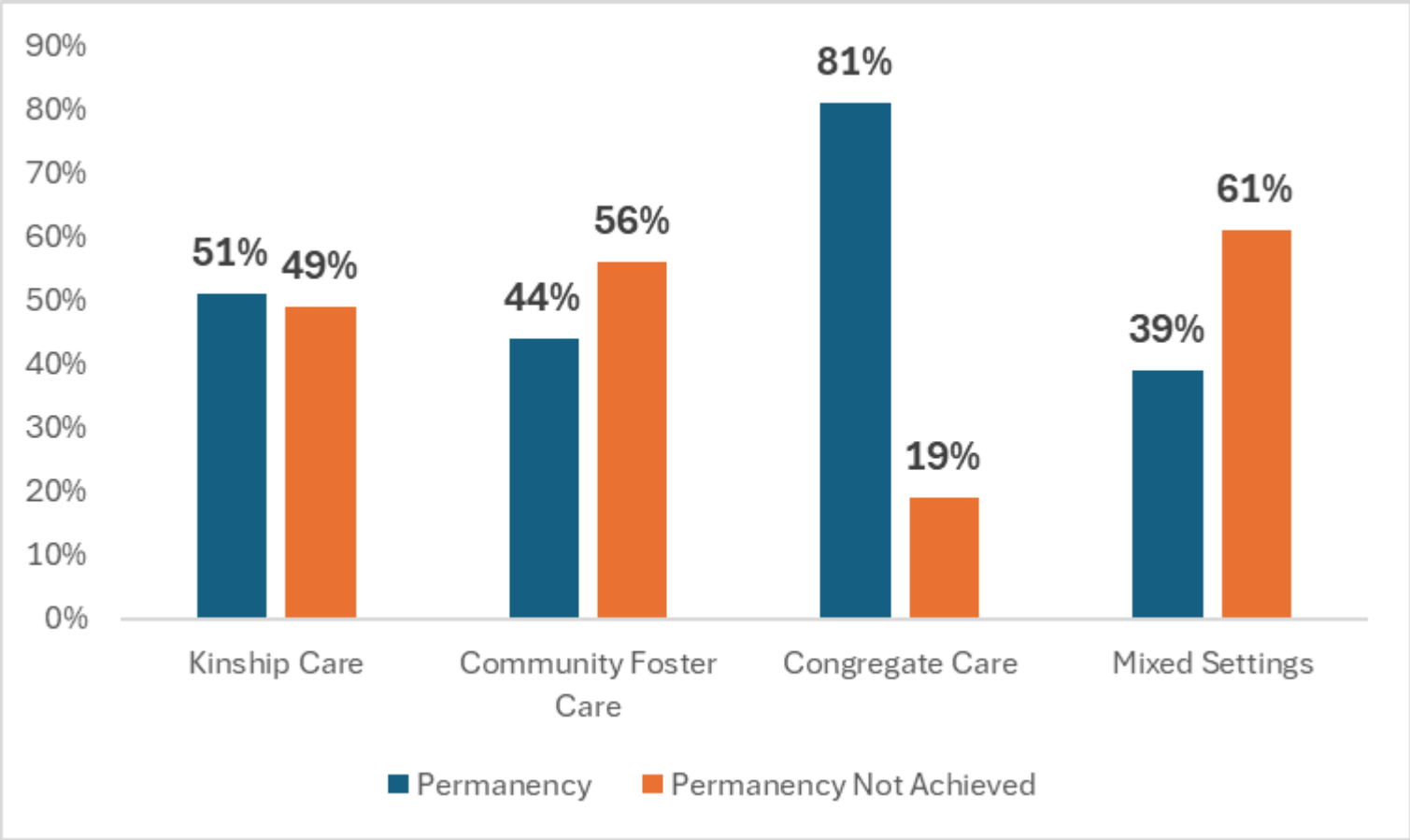
- 45% of children placed with kinship caregivers
- 12% of kinship homes licensed

Today:

- 57% placed with kin
- 59% of kinship caregivers licensed



More children are placed with kin than community foster care and a higher percentage are achieve permanency within 12 months



Placement Setting	Number
Kinship Care	1,249
Community Foster Care	625
Congregate Care	99
Mixed Settings	318

The Keeping Families Together Act

Passed in 2021 with an effective date of July 1, 2023

The intent of the Legislature was to:

- Safely reduce the number of children in foster care
- Reduce racial disproportionality in the child welfare system
- Support placement with relatives when children must be placed out of home

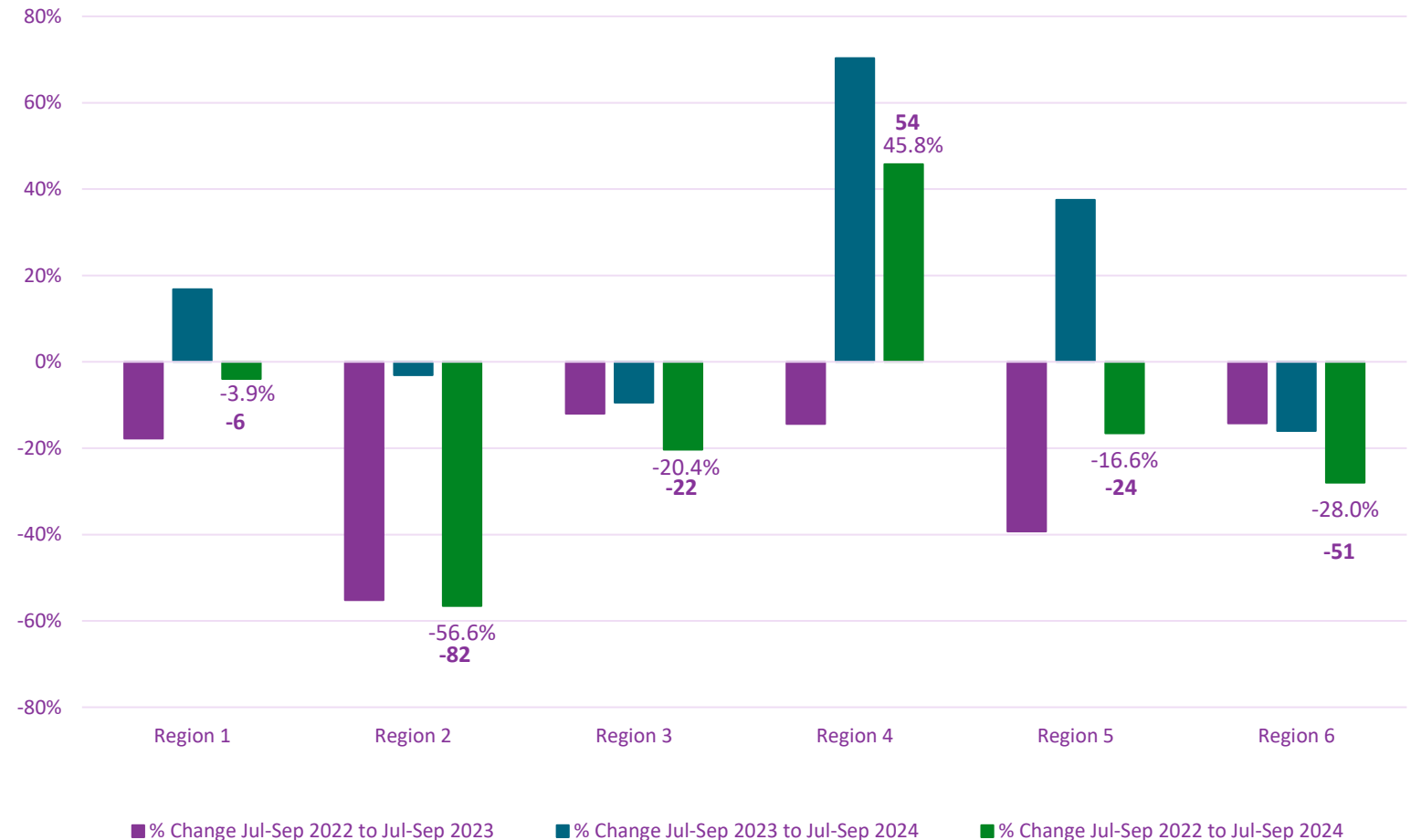
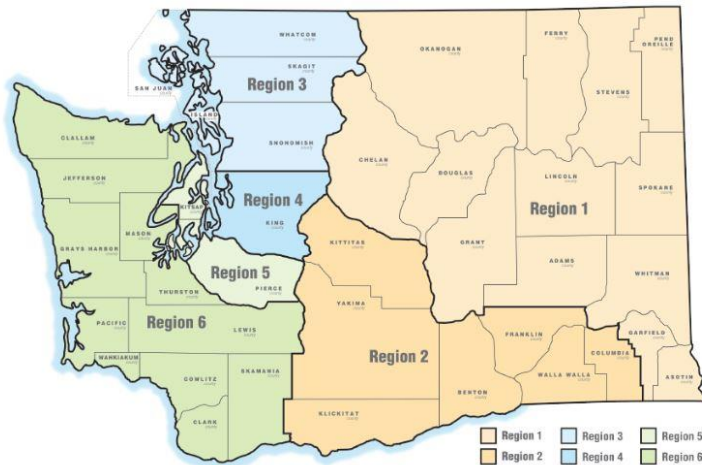


Entries into care have decreased by 16.5% since the new law went into effect

SFY2023-2025 Percent Change in Children Entering Care by Region, July 1-September 30

Statewide:

- Yakima has shown a 55% reduction in removals since 7/1/23
- While King County has shown a decrease in removals since SFY 2024 they are still removing a higher percent than SFY 2023.



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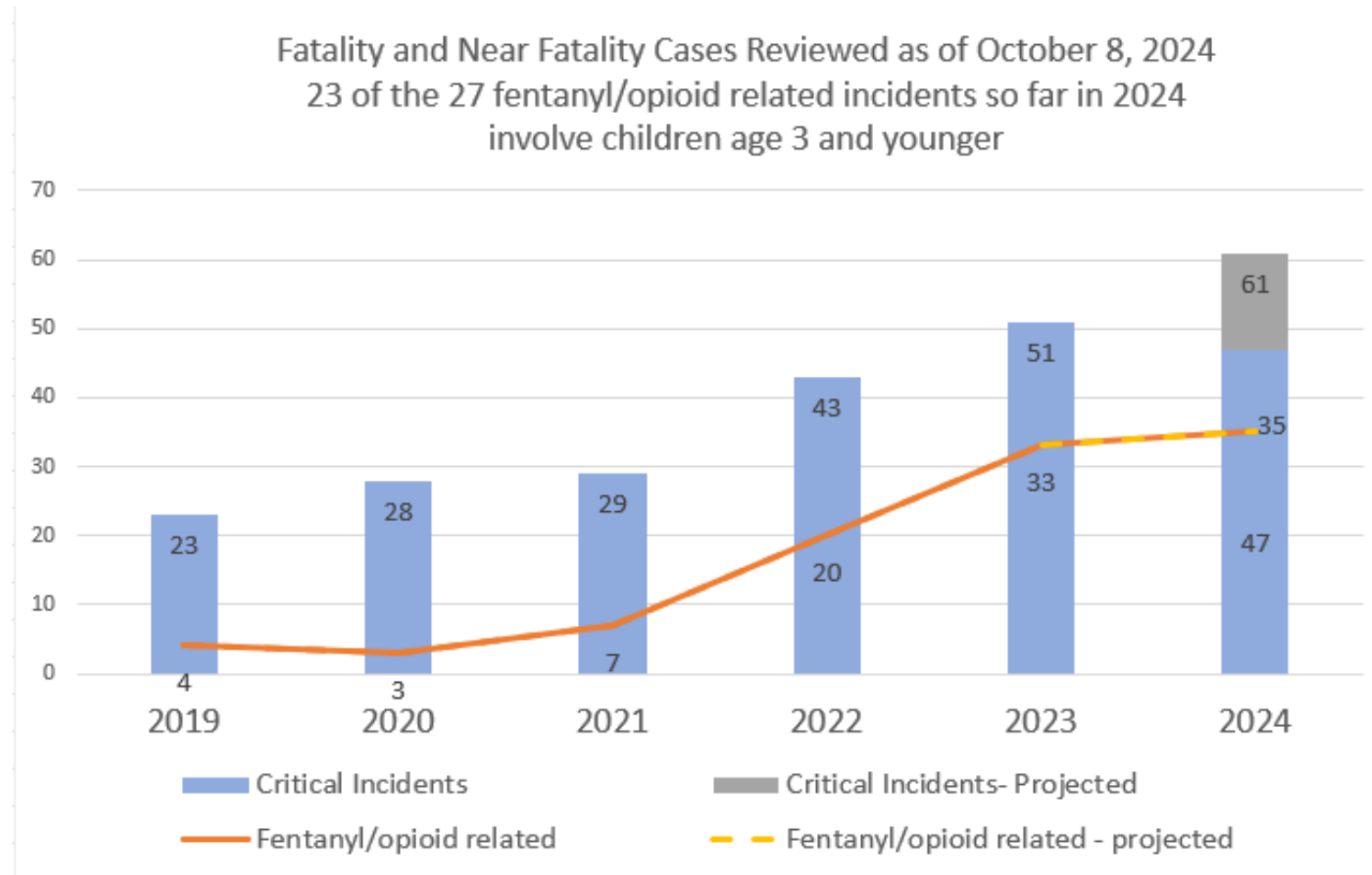
¹2025 estimate adjusted for known data lag, observed 2025 count=719
DCYF OIAA (October 2024). CW Reporting Portal,
Out of Home Exits and Entries
[July 2022-September 2024].

While entries into care have increased since last year, they continue to be lower than before the Keeping Families Together Act was implemented. Families served through FVS continue to increase.

All entries into care			
	July 1 - Sep 30, 2022	July 1 - Sep 30, 2023	July 1 - Sep 30, 2024
Voluntary Placements	143	123	93
Protective Custodies	438	342	373
Court Approved Placements	281	169	256
TOTAL REMOVALS	862	634	722
Cases Receiving Services			
Family Voluntary Services	704	743	814
*2023/25 data are observed, not adjusted for known data lag, so may increase somewhat as more case data are entered into FamLink ** Family Voluntary Services identifies the distinct count of families served by FVS during the time frame identified			

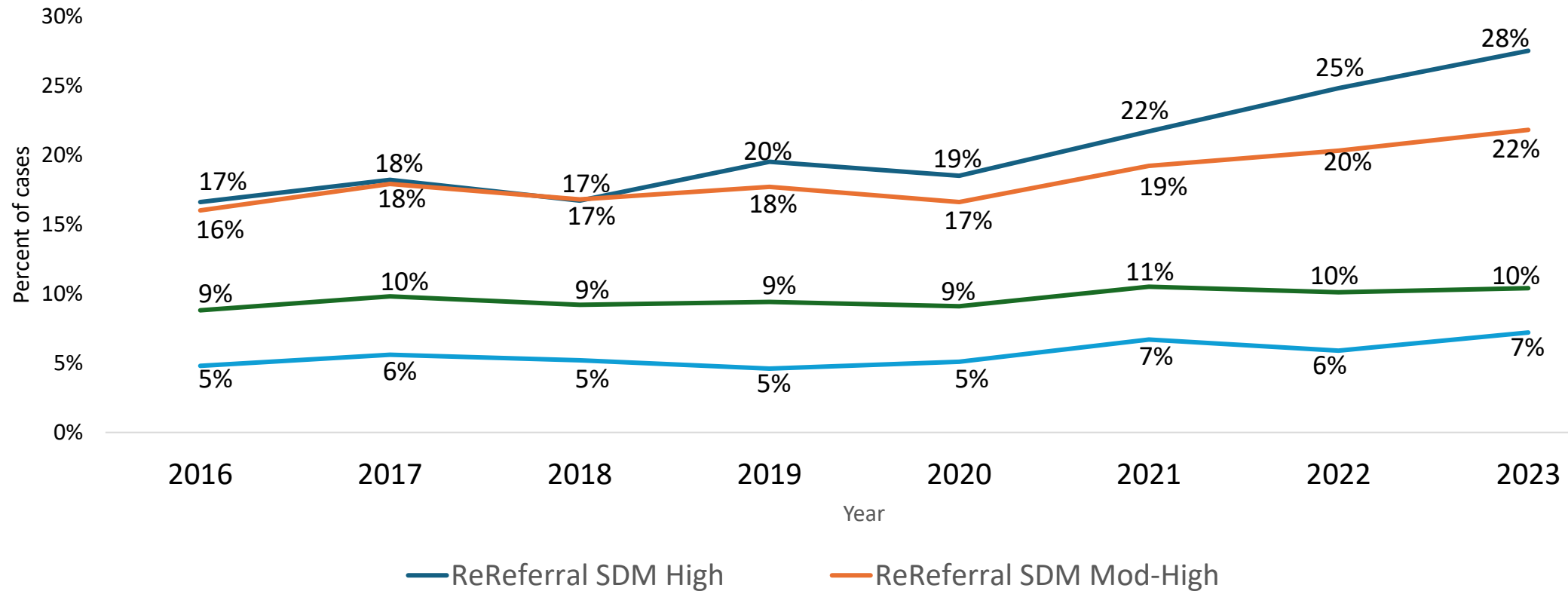


Fentanyl continues to be a major cause of critical incidents among children in Washington State



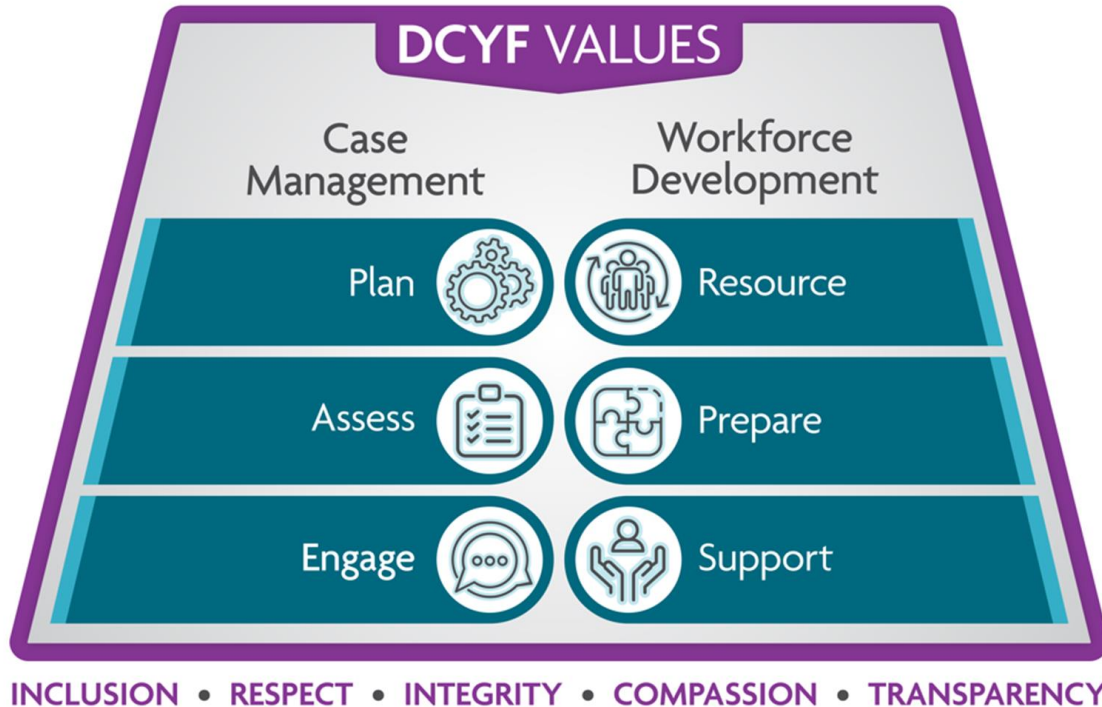
DCYF has seen an increase in cases coming back to the child welfare system after the case was closed

Percent of cases with a new screened-in intake within 90 days of the SDM being completed



DCYF Assessment Redesign Project:

FAMILY PRACTICE MODEL FRAMEWORK



Partnership with Chapin Hall to develop a new assessment tool that will:

- Better flag safety threats and link to the Safety Threshold
- Assess the family's strengths and needs
- Support the caseworker to better identify risks
- Incorporate Motivational Interviewing principles for engaging families.
- Allow the family to identify their own goals for their family.
- Map directly to the development of the case plan for the child



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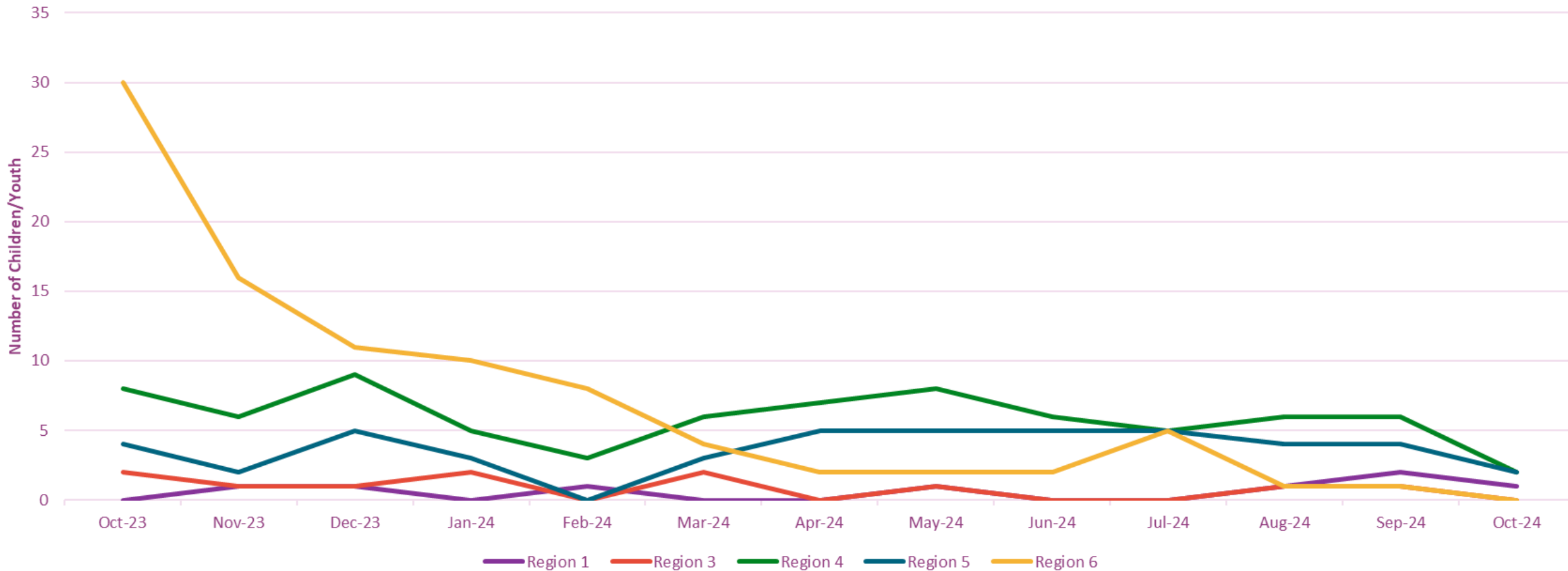
Families First Prevention and Services Act Community Pathways

- DCYF will submit next 5-year FFPSA Prevention Plan by the end of December
 - [FFPSA Prevention Plan DRAFT](#) currently posted for public comment
- DCYF [Community Pathway Decision Package](#), build out 2 community pathways that could potentially be funded w/FFPSA
 - Family Resource Centers in high-need areas of the state, serving families adjacent (very close) to child welfare
 - Help Me Grow – for Plan of Safe Care and substance-exposed infants



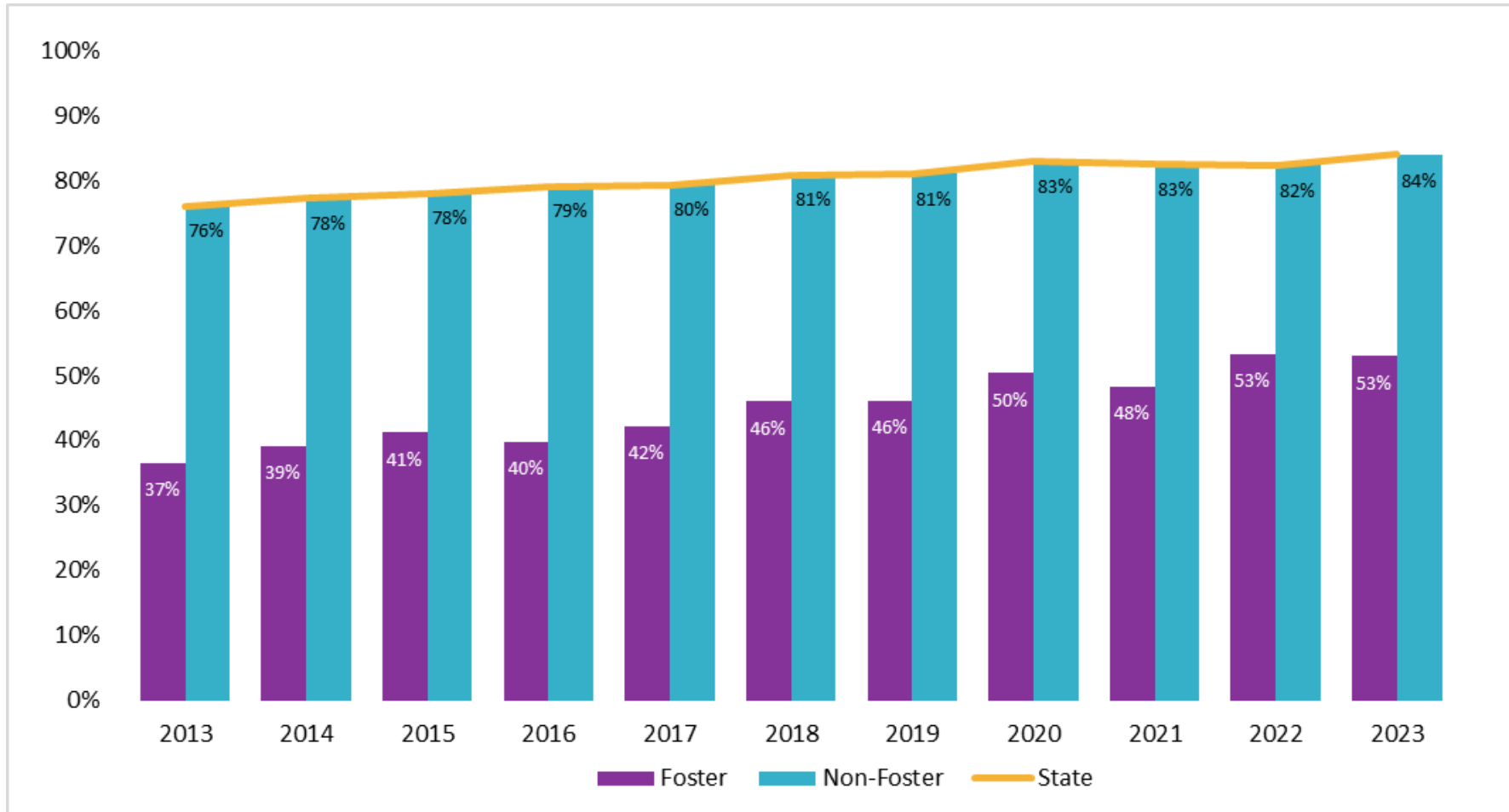
DCYF has dramatically reduced the number of children and youth who have experienced a placement exception or night to night placement

October 2023 – October 2024



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The Four-Year Graduation Rate, by Foster Care Status, has increased

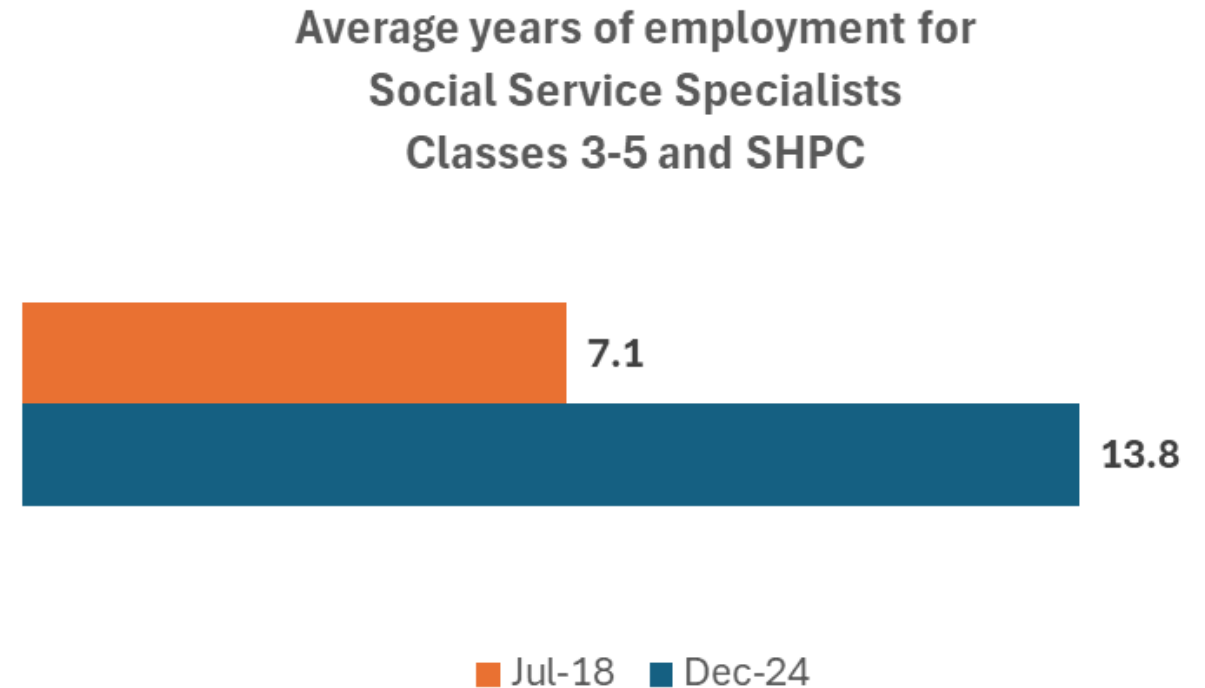
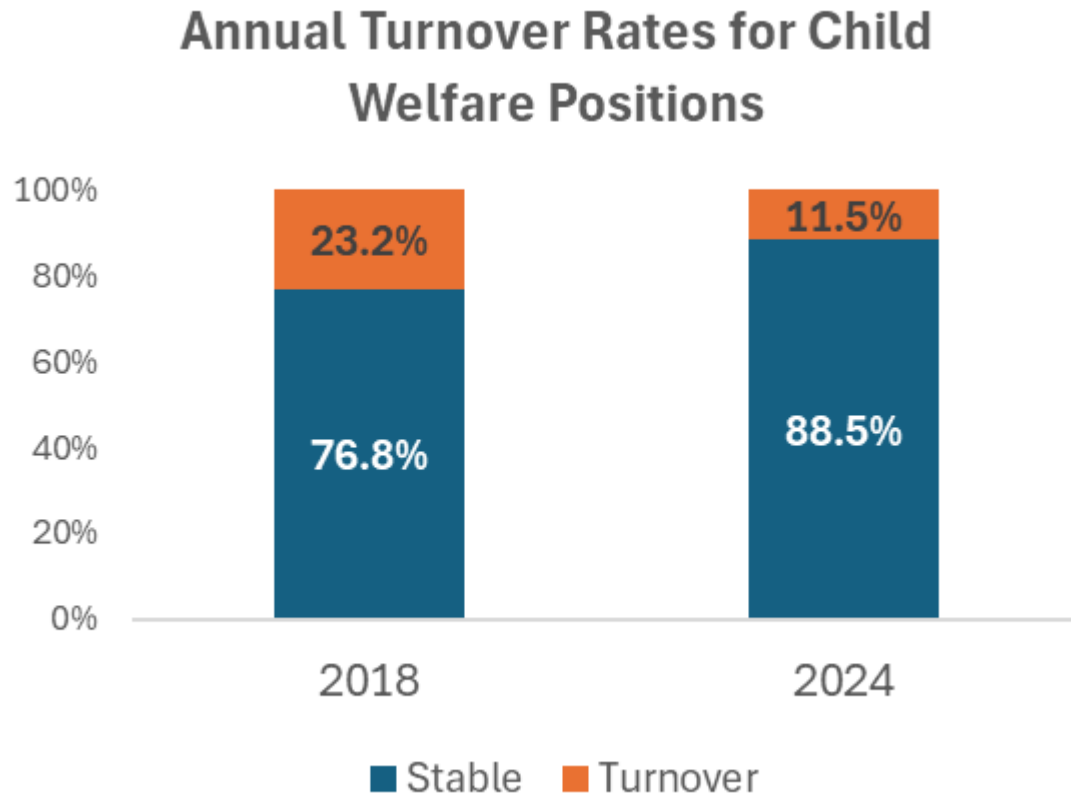


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Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
(2024). Report card graduation [2013-2023].

Notes: Graduation rates are calculated using the
“adjusted cohort” methodology. This method tracks a
group of students

Child Welfare Staff Turnover Has Decreased, but we have a Newer Workforce than we did in 2018.



Questions?

