

State of New Mexico

CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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September 1, 2021

Shelly Bucher
SCAC
PO Box 3204
Mesilla Park NM 88047

Dear Ms. Bucher:

The purpose of NM Statute 32A-8-2, the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act, is to provide a permanent system for independent and objective monitoring of children placed in the custody of the department by examining the policies, procedures, and practices of the department and, where appropriate, specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the department is effectively discharging its child protection responsibilities.

The NM Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) embraces the purpose of the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act and welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Substitute Care Advisory Council's yearly report, having our response published in that report, and to enhance collaboration between the council and the department.

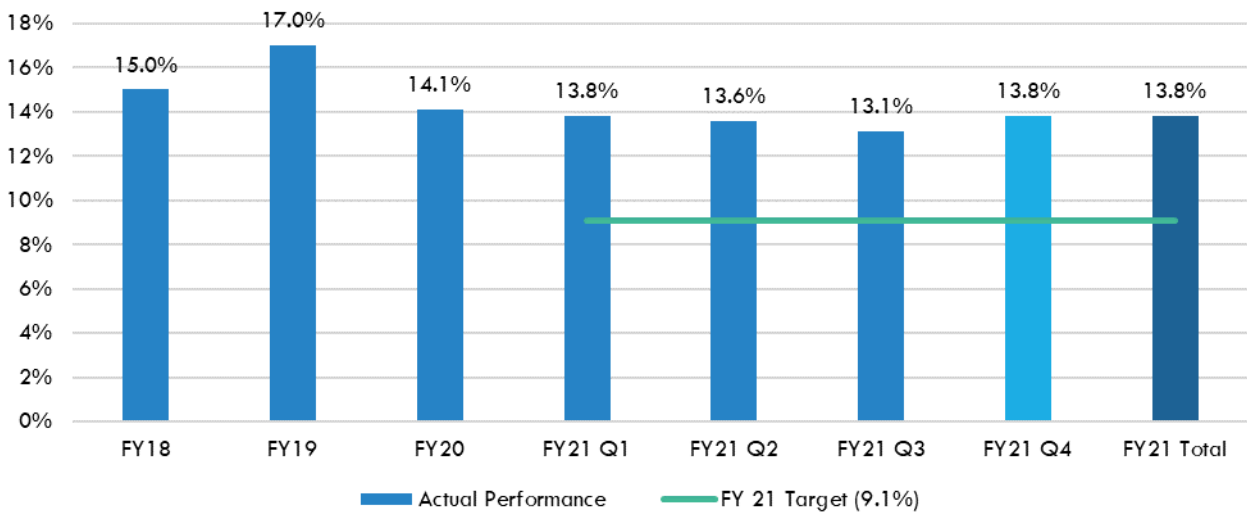
CYFD successfully exited Round 4 of that process and would encourage SCAC to review the CFSR tool and consider incorporating these items into its review process. CYFD would also like to engage in further discussion regarding how reviews are now conducted by SCAC. The Child and Family Services Review is a case review process which measures different domains of a case to adequately assess Safety, Permanency and Well Being.

CYFD recognizes the benefit of and need for family and community-based settings in reducing the amount of time children spend in the Receiving Center. Recruitment for foster homes willing to take and keep teenagers is being developed (62% of young people at the Receiving Center are between 12-18 years of age.) CYFD is also working to create more crisis stabilization beds, Host Homes for teens, and incentives for Treatment Foster Care agencies to place teens. In addition, CYFD is working to support current resource families with Wraparound and Family Support Services to maintain current placements.

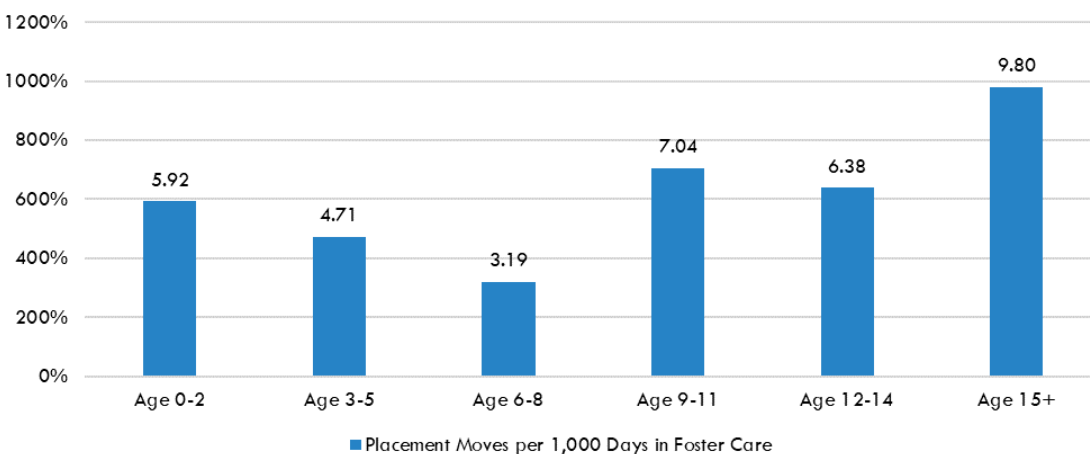
While progress is being made in many areas, even in the face of the ongoing pandemic, numerous reported measures indicate much remains to achieve the goals articulated in our strategic plan. CYFD invites and welcomes community input to help the department sustain its commitment to providing the best possible resources and support for children and families throughout New Mexico’s communities.

The following data is provided to demonstrate some improvement in outcomes.

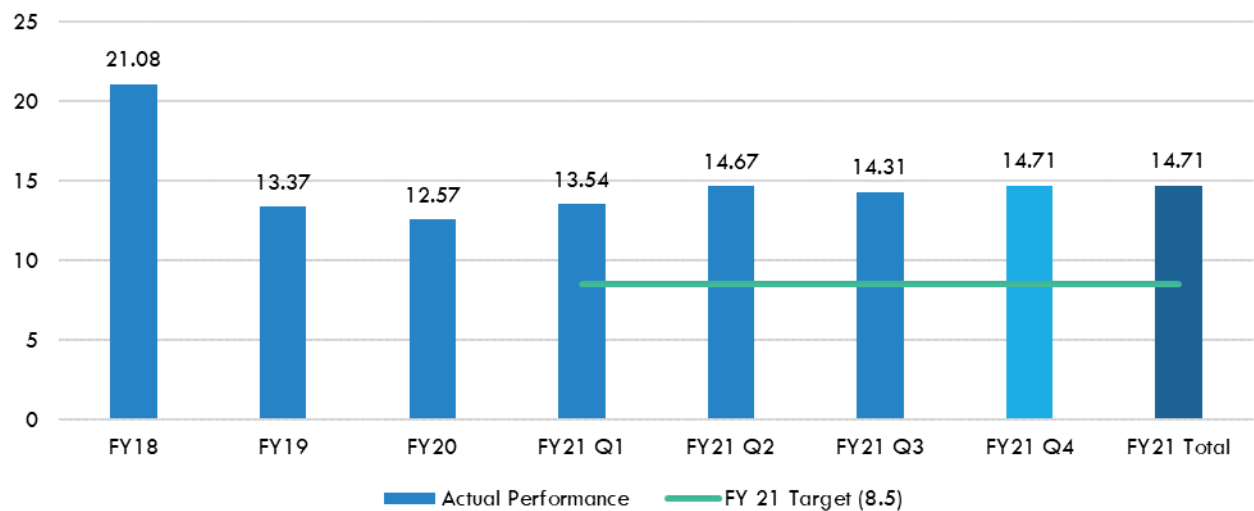
Placement moves per 1,000 days in foster care (based on a rolling 12-month entry cohort):



Foster care placement changes are more frequent for youth 15 years of age or older as indicated below (placement moves rate based on a 12-month entry cohort ending August 31, 2021, by age at entry):



Substantiated maltreatment incidents per 100,000 days in foster care:



CYFD has seen a decrease in foster care maltreatment from 2018 and a slight increase from 2020. CYFD is working to ensure children are not maltreated after contact with the child welfare agency by improving the quality of home visits, providing more support to resource families, implementing Quality Parenting Initiative, and increasing placement of children with kin. CYFD is testing a Management Information System to exclude allegations of historical abuse which account for 20-30% of the incidents.

CYFD and the New Mexico Public Education Department collaborated on the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act as part of a statutorily required taskforce. Members of the committee included a District Court Judge, foster parent, school personnel from Santa Fe and Espanola public schools, as well as CYFD and PED representatives.

Additional responses to the SCAC report:

- Reimbursement is provided to SCAC upon receipt of invoice. CYFD has paid \$111,548.96 for FY 20.
- CYFD welcomes the opportunity to be voting members and would request adequate notice for meetings.
- CYFD supports including additional SCAC members and would request that the ethnic and cultural membership reflect that of the population of children in foster care.
- CYFD welcomes more frequent reports from the SCAC and is committed to providing follow up including responses to the reports.
- Changes are being made to court reports to address: visitation frequency and quality as well as psychotropic medication monitoring and reporting.
- In meetings after this report, SCAC has indicated improvements in responsiveness by CYFD for documents and information.

CYFD caseworkers engage in cross-functional, inter-agency teams to support every child and their family. All cases involve at least one parent, the child, GaL, respondent attorney, judge, caseworker and casework supervisor. Some teams also include resource parents, CASA, youth attorney, teacher, therapist, additional family members, and other appropriate partners. CYFD recognizes the skill, knowledge, and experience necessary to provide the quality of services children and families need, and is currently working to hire and train qualified staff to meet the demands of that work in service to the community.

We look forward to collaborating with the SCAC and all other partners who share our commitment to improving the lives of children, youth, and families throughout New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariana Padilla". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mariana Padilla
Interim Cabinet Secretary
Children, Youth and Families Department