Foster Care

annual report
2011

National Capital Region

Executive Summary

Each year the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) surveys child welfare systems who are members of COG in the national capital region to collect data, analyze findings, and discover trends occurring in foster care.

COG members in the national capital region are the District of Columbia, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's and Charles Counties and the Cities of Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, and Takoma Park in Maryland, as well as Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church and Manassas and Manassas Park in Virginia. However, child welfare services are primarily administered at the county-level, with the exception of the City of Alexandria. Therefore, the following jurisdictions are included in this report: the District of Columbia, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's and Charles Counties in Maryland, and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William Counties, and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

The 2011 survey focused on the following aspects of child welfare/foster care in the region:
- Child Protective Services Call Volume
- Children in Foster Care
- Prevention Programs and Fostering Connections
- Demographics of Children in Foster Care
- Placement
- Recruitment
- Permanency and Emancipation

The findings of the 2011 survey included:
- A decline in the overall number of children in the foster care system, as well as a one percent decrease in new entries from 2010.
- Seven out of ten children in foster care in the region are African American.
- Teenagers (11 years and above) continue to be overrepresented in the foster care system, and experience longer stays in the system.
- Lower adoption rates across the region, but an increased focus on kinship care.
- Steady rate of emancipation in the past four years with a quarter of foster youth exiting the system without permanency. Twenty-six percent of youth left foster care without permanency in 2011.

To learn more about the survey and findings contact:
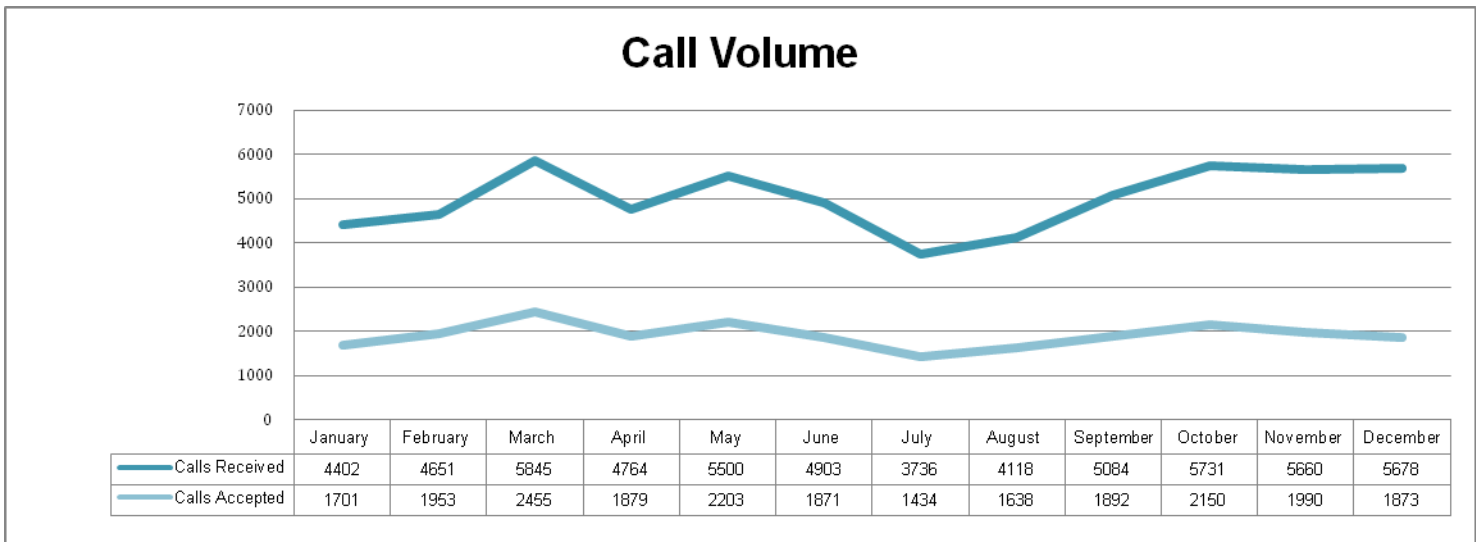Kamilah Bunn,
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In 2011, Child Protective Services (CPS) programs in the national capital region received a total of 60,072 calls alleging child maltreatment. Although a portion of the calls come from concerned citizens, family members or relatives of the children in question, the vast majority of calls were made by mandated reporters, i.e., police, health care practitioners, school or daycare personnel.

Most states have statutory requirements related to abuse and neglect reports. The CPS hotline workers must make a determination if the report meets the criteria for acceptance. In most States the report must involve harm to a child committed by a parent or person responsible for their care, the child must be between the ages of 0-18, and the allegation must rise to the level of abuse or neglect as defined in the jurisdiction. Reports that do not meet the statutory requirements are screened out. Many of these callers receive supportive services through differential response, also known as *dual tract* or *alternative response*, which allows CPS to recognize the variation in the types of child abuse and neglect complaints and utilize more than one method for responding to those complaints.

Call Volume

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Calls Received	4402	4651	5845	4764	5500	4903	3736	4118	5084	5731	5660	5678
Calls Accepted	1701	1953	2455	1879	2203	1871	1434	1638	1892	2150	1990	1873

Analysis of the total number of calls received in 2011 indicates CPS accepted 20,039 reports of alleged child maltreatment for investigation. A smaller number of 5,709 requests did not meet the criteria for investigation, but received supportive services through differential response.

In traditional child welfare practice, caseworkers responded to referrals by initiating an investigation. CPS continues to use traditional investigations for reports of sexual abuse and repeated cases of physical abuse. The practice of differential response, however, is typically employed with low and moderate risk cases that did not meet the safety threshold for an investigation. Instead, families are offered voluntary, community services to enhance their parenting capacity.

Jurisdictions in Virginia and the District of Columbia (as of September 2011) implemented differential response programs. In 2011, Maryland jurisdictions did not have a differential response program although proposed legislation has been offered over the last several years[1].

20,039 reports
## of alleged child maltreatment for investigation

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[1] HB 34, entitled Child Abuse and Neglect – Alternative Response, passed and will be enacted as law effective July 1, 2012. Maryland may implement a differential response program after July 1, 2013 following a year of study and implementation planning.

In 2011, the region's foster care systems had fewer new entries, totaling 1,249 children (regionally, thirty-four percent of children in foster care were new entries). As compared to 2010, new entries decreased by one percent during 2011. This is also the first year that data from Charles County, Maryland has been included in this regional study.

The total number of children in foster care, as calculated by the number of children in the system on the last day of the year (December 31, 2011) was 3,816. The number of children in Foster Care has been declining since 2008. This trend is also consistent with national figures.

Nationally, there has been a four percent decrease in the number of children in foster care. The number decreased from 423,773 in 2009 to 408,425 in 2010. The number of new entries also saw a slight decrease nationwide from 255,418 in 2009 to 2010 with 254,375.[2] Programs emphasizing prevention contributed to the reduction of the overall number of children in area foster care systems.
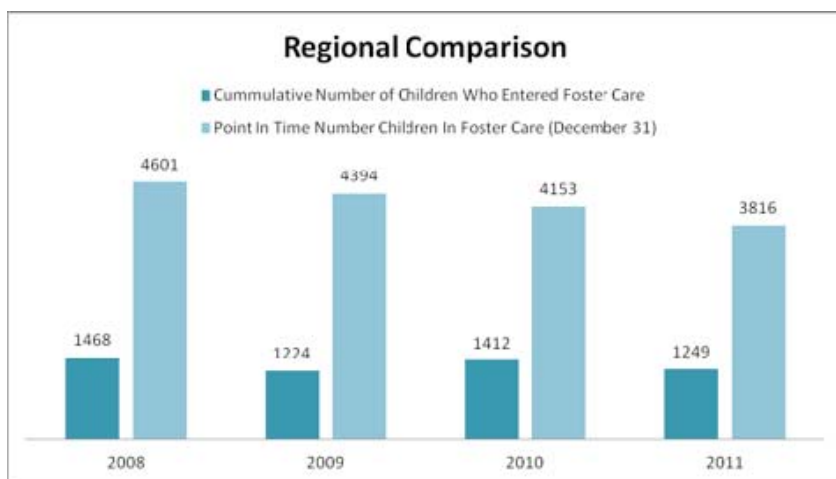
Children in Foster Care					
Jurisdiction	State	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*
District of Columbia	DC	2,264	2,103	2,007	1,744
Charles County	MD	106	113	110	105
Frederick County	MD	140	175	157	142
Montgomery County	MD	575	546	516	498
Prince George's County	MD	608	599	592	595
City of Alexandria	VA	181	167	126	126
Arlington County	VA	147	133	115	101
Fairfax County	VA	394	370	337	326
Loudoun County	VA	87	97	83	64
Prince William County	VA	99	91	110	115
Total	-	4,601	4,394	4,153	3,816
Note: Count as of December 31.					

Regional Comparison
■ Cummulative Number of Children Who Entered Foster Care
■ Point In Time Number Children In Foster Care (December 31)

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[2] Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2010. US Department of Health and Human Services. www.acf.hhs.gov.

Prevention programs engage parents to address issues that may lead to future reports of abuse and neglect. Regional foster care systems are utilizing these methods in cases that lack immediate danger and/or trauma.

There are a number of prevention methods being utilized by agencies throughout the region. Some may employ Family Group Conferencing/Meeting or Intensive Coordinated Services (ICC). These approaches result in referrals made to nurturing parenting programs, alcohol and drug services, mental health services and home-based services. Family Preservation Services (FPS) is another program that connects families that are low-risk to voluntary services through referrals. The District of Columbia utilizes community-based, non-profit neighborhood collaborates to connect families to service-based resources within their wards.

Prevention services are tailored to address each family's issues and prevent abuse and neglect from occurring. Families who receive these preventive referral services are not considered active investigations, or open cases.

Foster Care
assistance for
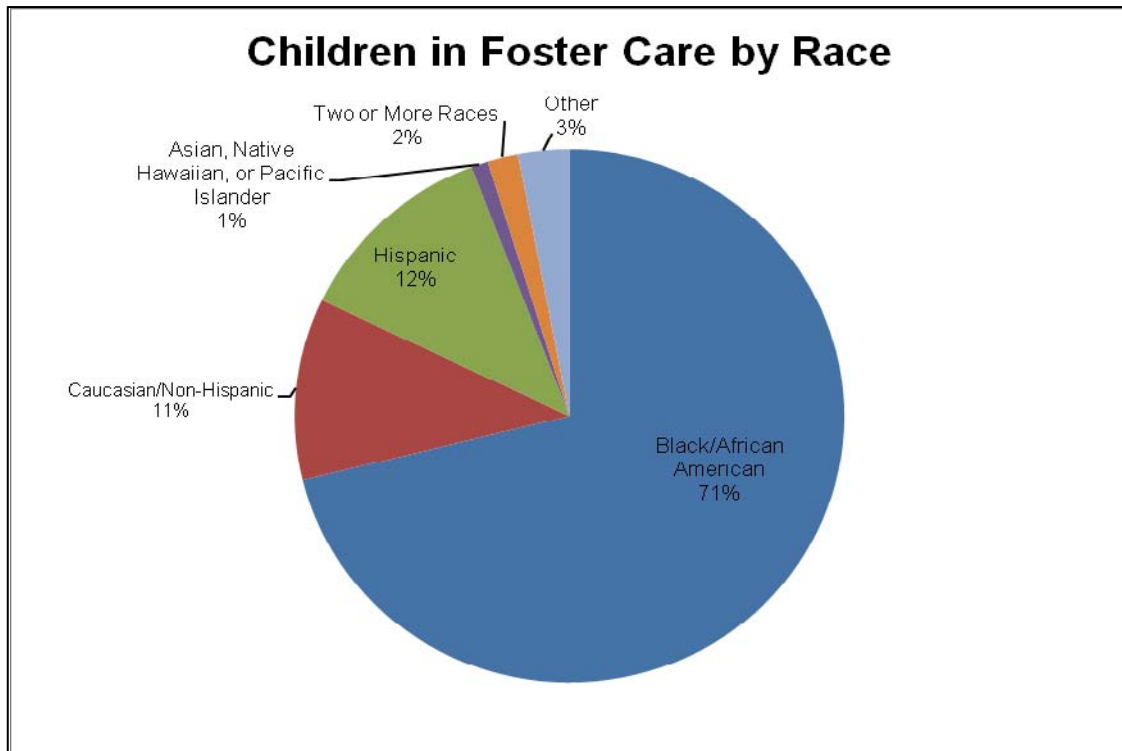## older youth
i n   s c h o o l

The overall decrease in the number of children in the foster care system regionally could also be attributed to aggressive efforts to achieve permanency through kinship and other family support programs. Many of these efforts are supported by the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*, also referred to as *Fostering Connections*.[3] The goal of this legislation is to promote permanency through increased support, health services, educational stability and direct access to federal resources. It also provides monetary resources to support relatives who become legal guardians of foster children and foster care assistance for older youth (up to age 21) who are enrolled in school or active in the workforce and/or other related activities.

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[3] Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, Bill 110-351. www.fosteringconnections.org.

In 2011, the vast majority of young people in foster care, seven out of ten, across jurisdictions in the region were African American. The majority of these young people are also over the age of eleven. The survey revealed that older children (young people 11 years and older) comprise sixty three percent of children in foster care, and African American youth above the age of 11 comprise seventy-four percent of children in foster care in the region. Three percent of children fall in the other category. For the purpose of this study, "other" is defined as a racial makeup other than Hispanic, Caucasian/Non-Hispanic, Black/African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and two or more races.

Children in Foster Care by Race

- Other 3%
- Two or More Races 2%
- Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander 1%
- Hispanic 12%
- Caucasian/Non-Hispanic 11%
- Black/African American 71%

During 2011, the length of stay fluctuates for different age groups; however, teenagers experienced a longer stay in the foster care system. On average, children 10 years old or younger have shorter stays, while "tweens" and teens (age 11 and above) remain in the foster care system with length of time increasing as they get older.

While the overall number of children in the foster care system has declined, in 2011 African American children and youth were involved with the foster care system at disproportionately higher rates. Older African American youth comprised the highest percentage at seventy-four percent. Seven out of ten children waiting to be adopted are African American.
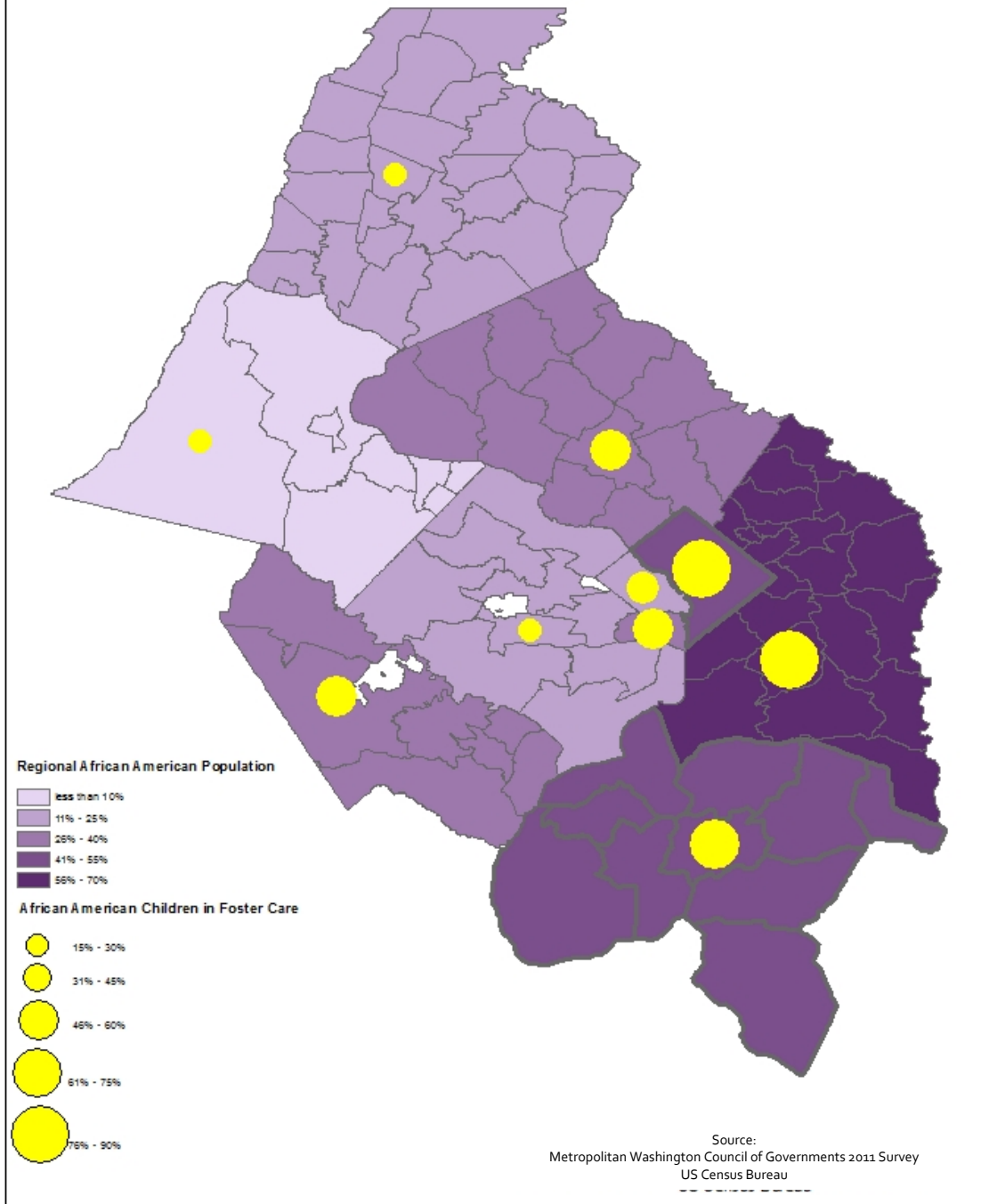
Jurisdiction	State	Total Population	Foster Care Population	African American Population	African American Percentage	African American Foster Care Population	African American Foster Care Percentage
District of Columbia	DC	601,723	1,744	305,125	50.7%	1,489	85.4%
Charles County	MD	233,385	142	20,148	8.6%	40	28.2%
Montgomery County	MD	971,777	498	167,315	17.2%	290	58.2%
Prince George's County	MD	863,420	595	556,620	64.5%	507	85.2%
City of Alexandria	VA	139,966	126	30,491	21.8%	73	58.0%
Arlington County	VA	207,627	101	17,632	8.5%	46	45.5%
Fairfax County	VA	1,081,726	326	99,218	9.2%	113	34.7%
Loudoun County	VA	312,311	64	22,710	7.3%	19	29.7%
Prince William County	VA	402,002	115	81,196	20.2%	71	61.8%

The map on the following page demonstrates the disparity between the percentages of African Americans in the general population (of all ages) compared to the percentage of African American children (between the ages of 0-21) in foster care across the region. The choropleth color radiation represents the percentage of African Americans in the overall population within each jurisdiction. The size of the yellow circles indicates the percentage of African American children in foster care per jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions with higher percentages of African Americans in the overall population have higher numbers of African American children in foster care. However, high percentages of African American children in foster care remain consistent in jurisdictions, with less than ten percent of African Americans in the general population.

Counties and cities are addressing the disparity between African American children in foster care and the African American general population in various ways. One jurisdiction conducted a county-specific study of the dis-proportionality to uncover where the issues lie.This jurisdiction then created multi-disciplinary teams to lead focus groups with community members and social workers.

Percentage of African American Children in Foster Care Compared to Regional African American Population

Regional African American Population

- less than 10%
- 11% - 25%
- 26% - 40%
- 41% - 55%
- 56% - 70%

African American Children in Foster Care

- 15% - 30%
- 31% - 45%
- 46% - 60%
- 61% - 75%
- 76% - 90%

Source:
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 2011 Survey
US Census Bureau

More than half the children (fifty-eight percent) in foster care were living in an agency foster home or a private foster home within their home jurisdiction. During 2011, there was an increased focus on kinship care with thirteen percent of children in foster care living with a relative. Overall regionally there was less use of congregate care and efforts were focused on placing children in family-based settings. Congregate care, often residential care or group care facilities, are more costly to jurisdictions and often lack permanent long-term outcomes.
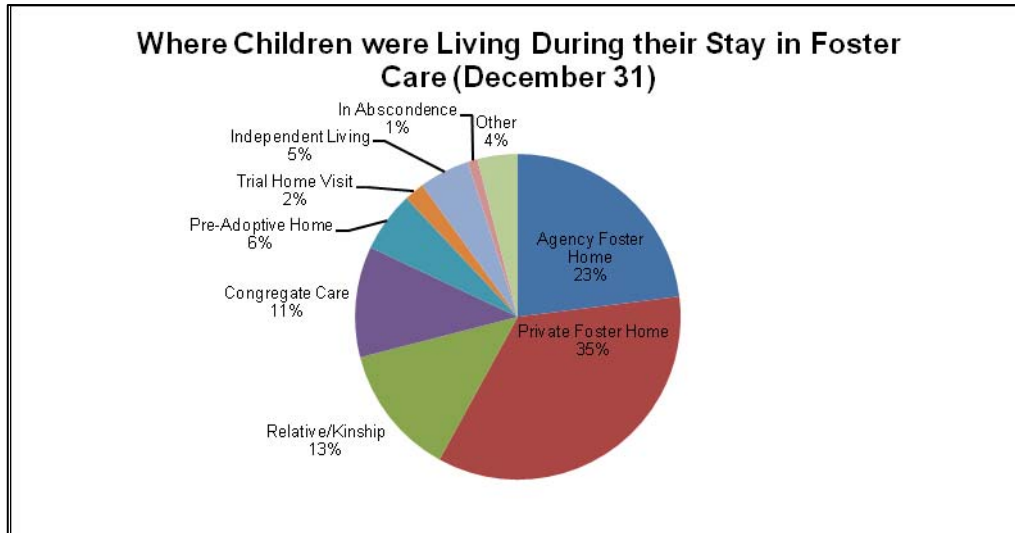
Where were youth living on 12/31/2011 (PERCENTAGE)				
	Inside Jurisdiction		Outside Jurisdiction	
Jurisdiction	With Relative	Without Relative	With Relative	Without Relative
District of Columbia	25%	10%	12%	53%
Charles County	17%	59%	9%	15%
Frederick County	25%	35%	1%	39%
Montgomery County	37%	30%	19%	14%
Prince George's County	5%	67%	1%	27%
City of Alexandria	2%	11%	6%	81%
Arlington County	0%	53%	1%	46%
Fairfax County	3%	37%	6%	54%
Loudoun County	0%	39%	6%	55%
Prince William County	2%	73%	6%	19%
Regional Averages	12%	41%	7%	40%

In 2011, the majority of children, fifty three percent, were placed within their home jurisdiction. Placing children in their home jurisdiction is less disruptive and helps maintain stability. Of the forty-seven percent of children living outside of their jurisdiction, seven percent were living with a relative. Twelve percent of children living within their jurisdiction were placed with a family member.
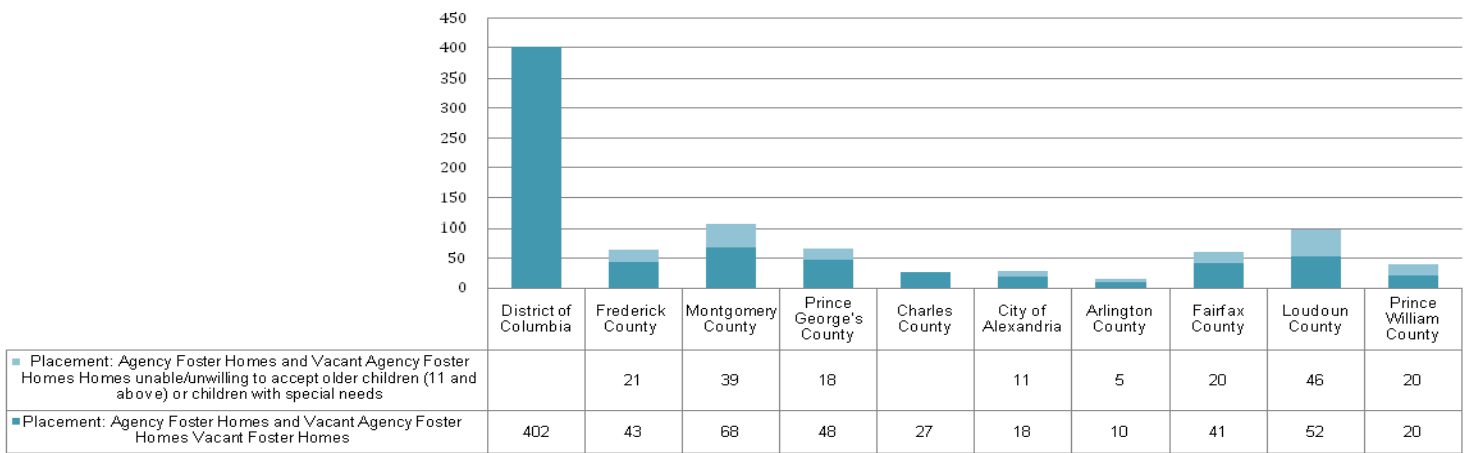
The 2011 survey indicated the region had 1,362 agency foster homes on December 31, 2011. This is twenty-seven percent more homes than 2010, and thirty nine percent fewer homes than 2009 and 2008.

Agency foster homes, also known as resource homes, are recruited by the local child welfare agencies and are usually located within the jurisdiction. For instance, a Prince George's County agency foster home or resource home is located within Prince George's County. Private foster homes are contracted (paid) homes normally outside of the jurisdiction. For example, an Arlington County private foster home or resource home is located outside of Arlington County to receive placement of Arlington County children through contract. Agency foster homes are usually more cost effective, and allow jurisdictions direct involvement in recruitment and oversight of the home and the children placed there.

Agencies across the region recruited 1,498 new parents to become agency foster home providers. All jurisdictions are focused on recruiting homes for teenagers and children with moderate to severe medical needs. Local jurisdictions utilize a range of recruitment strategies, including:
- The Freddie Mac Foundation Wednesday's Child program (coordinated by COG)
- The Annual Freddie Mac Foundation Adoption Expo
- Community events and county fairs Health fairs

Agency Foster Homes and Vacant Foster Homes

	District of Columbia	Frederick County	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Charles County	City of Alexandria	Arlington County	Fairfax County	Loudoun County	Prince William County
Placement: Agency Foster Homes and Vacant Agency Foster Homes Homes unable/unwilling to accept older children (11 and above) or children with special needs		21	39	18		11	5	20	46	20
Placement: Agency Foster Homes and Vacant Agency Foster Homes Vacant Foster Homes	402	43	68	48	27	18	10	41	52	20

*Count as of December 31, 2011/ Reasons for vacancy were unavailable for DC and Charles County

On the last day of the year (December 31) fifty-four percent of agency foster homes were vacant. Contributing factors to vacancy rates can vary from medical reasons, the family needing respite time before another placement or additional people may have moved in the home after completion of the home study. Twenty five percent of vacant homes were due to families being unable or unwilling to accept older children (11 years old and above) and/or children with special needs. Families that desire to only adopt or request short-term placements may also impact their ability to accept teens or children with special needs.
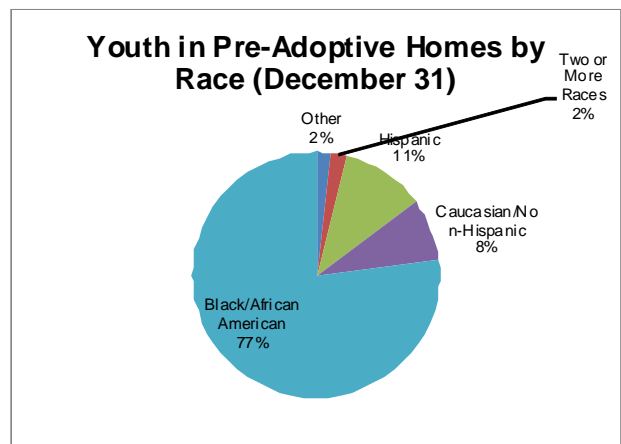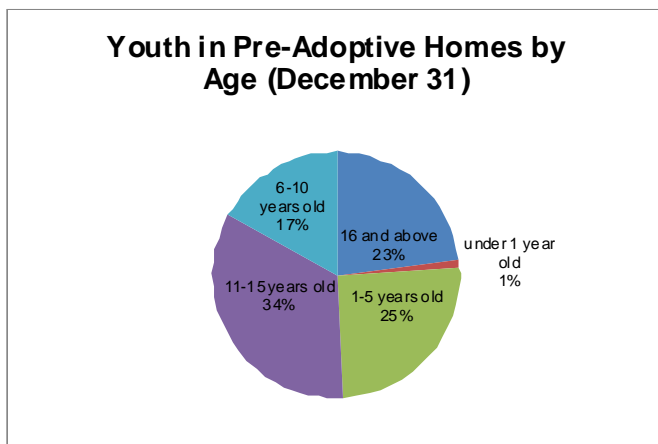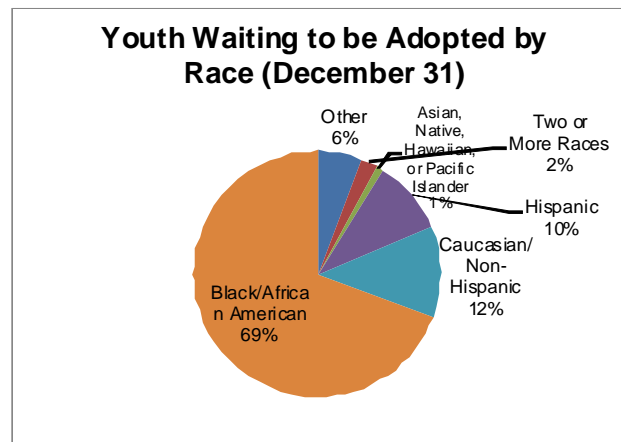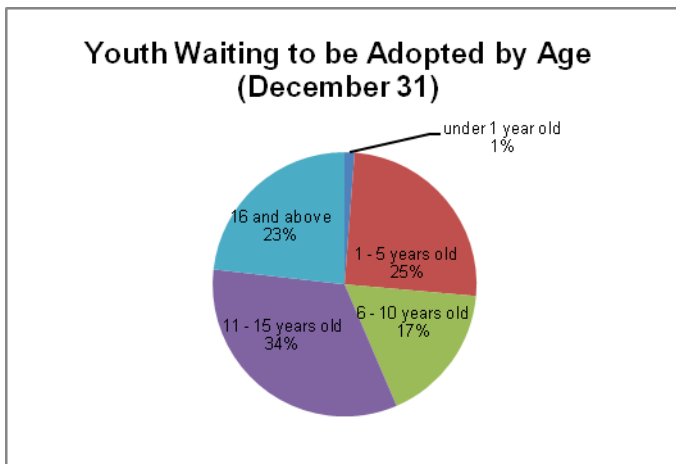
Waiting Children and Children in Pre-Adoptive Homes

Once children enter foster care, the priority is for them to achieve permanency. The initial permanency goal is reunification with the birth families. The second permanency goal is guardianship by a relative or existing foster parent. The third permanency goal is adoption. The final goal is Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement, also known as APPLA or Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement.

An adoption plan is pursued if reunification is not an option, relatives are unable to care for the child and the child agrees, at the age of consent, to an adoption plan. The age of consent in Maryland is 10 years-old, while the age of consent in the District and Virginia is 14 years-old. Children waiting to be adopted are those with an adoption plan who do not have a resource match. Children in pre-adoptive homes are those who have been matched with an adoptive family and are placed in the home awaiting finalization.

Results from the 2011 survey indicate that children 11 years-old and above were the highest percentage of children waiting to be adopted. Yet, more than half of the children in pre-adoptive homes were children 10 years-old and under.

Youth Waiting to be Adopted by Age (December 31)

- under 1 year old 1%
- 1 - 5 years old 25%
- 6 - 10 years old 17%
- 11 - 15 years old 34%
- 16 and above 23%

Youth Waiting to be Adopted by Race (December 31)

- Other 6%
- Asian, Native, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander 1%
- Two or More Races 2%
- Hispanic 10%
- Caucasian/Non-Hispanic 12%
- Black/African American 69%

Youth in Pre-Adoptive Homes by Age (December 31)

- 6-10 years old 17%
- 16 and above 23%
- under 1 year old 1%
- 1-5 years old 25%
- 11-15 years old 34%

Youth in Pre-Adoptive Homes by Race (December 31)

- Two or More Races 2%
- Other 2%
- Hispanic 11%
- Caucasian/Non-Hispanic 8%
- Black/African American 77%

Seventy-four percent of children in foster care achieved permanency in 2011. Permanency may be reunification, guardianship, or adoption. For the purposes of this report, Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement or APPLA is not considered a permanency goal, but rather as permanency unachieved.
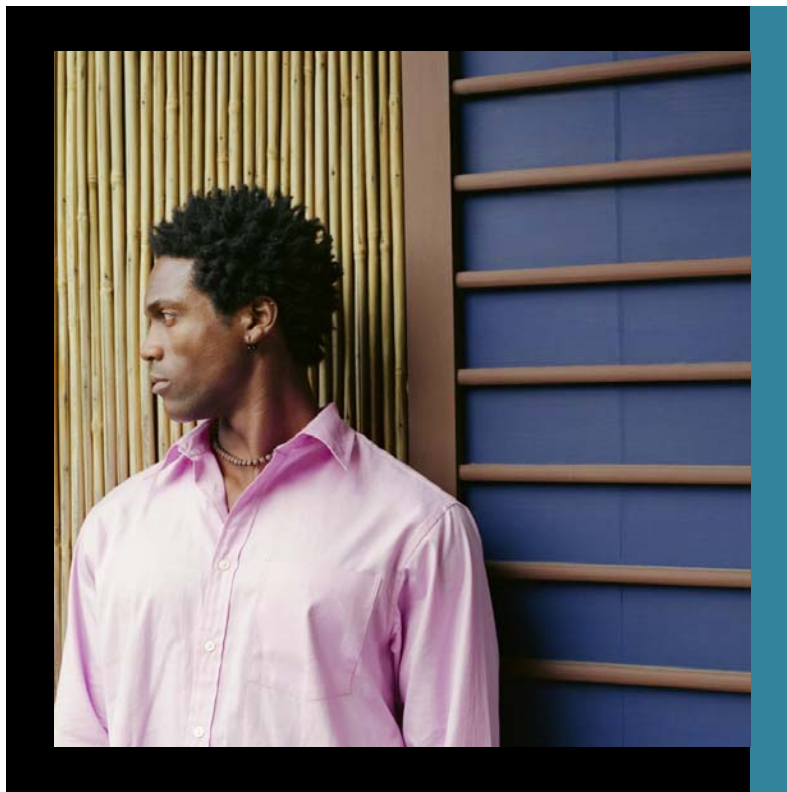
Permanency through reunification, guardianship or adoption has been a consistent trend over the last four years. Fifty-seven percent of children achieved permanency through reunification and eighteen percent found a forever family through adoption. Since 2008, the region has seen higher reunification rates in comparison to adoption rates. As part of efforts to engage families, support services are available to birth families. These services include:

- parent coaching
- financial assistance
- housing assistance
- addictions treatment
- along with general case management

As previously mentioned, for the purposes of this report, APPLA is not considered a permanency goal, but rather permanency unachieved. Although jurisdictions attempt to identify lifelong connections or connect youth with positive role models or kin, it is very commonplace for youth with a goal of APPLA to leave the foster care system without a permanent home. This process is commonly referred to as *emancipation* or *aging out*. Youth emancipation trends also continued to be consistent for the past four years. On average, a quarter of children in foster care aged out of the system without permanency. In 2011, there was a small increase with twenty-six percent of youth leaving foster care without permanency.

"We **successfully reunified a sibling group of 8 children** with their parents after they were in foster care for two years. The children were split up between three different family members. The worker successfully engaged with the childrens'father who was very mistrustful and suspicious of the Department and our intentions. The childrens' mother had previously been peripherally engaged but maintained a relationship with the childrens' father and was not completely engaged because he would not engage. By working with all the extended family and respecting the family and reaching out to the father and slowly establishing rapport and a working relationship with him, things turned around and the children were eventually able to be reunified with **their parents who lived in a remote and very rural area of the county.**
  - Social Worker"

" A young person on my caseload received his Associates in Science Degree from Northern Virginia Community College in December 2011. He is currently pursuing a Bachelors of Arts in Criminal Justice at George Mason University. He has expressed an interest in working for the CIA Uniformed Division (police officers/security guards for the White House), and continues to benefit from the Educational Training Voucher program, which assists with educational expenses. He also completed an internship at the Asia America Initiative (AAI) during his last year in foster care. AAI partners with other Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) to provide humanitarian relief throughout the Asia Pacific region. At the time of his transition from foster care, he was employed part-time by St. Mortiz Security Service earning $12 per hour. Although, reunification was not achieved in this case, his goal is to eventually file for his mother and sister to be able to come into the United States (they live in Pakistan) once he is settled and established. The young person's relationship with his biological father is strained and he has minimal contact with him. It should be noted that the young person and his older brother were removed from biological father's care due to neglect. He and his brother reside in the same apartment building, and stay in close contact during this transition from foster care. " - Social Worker

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments