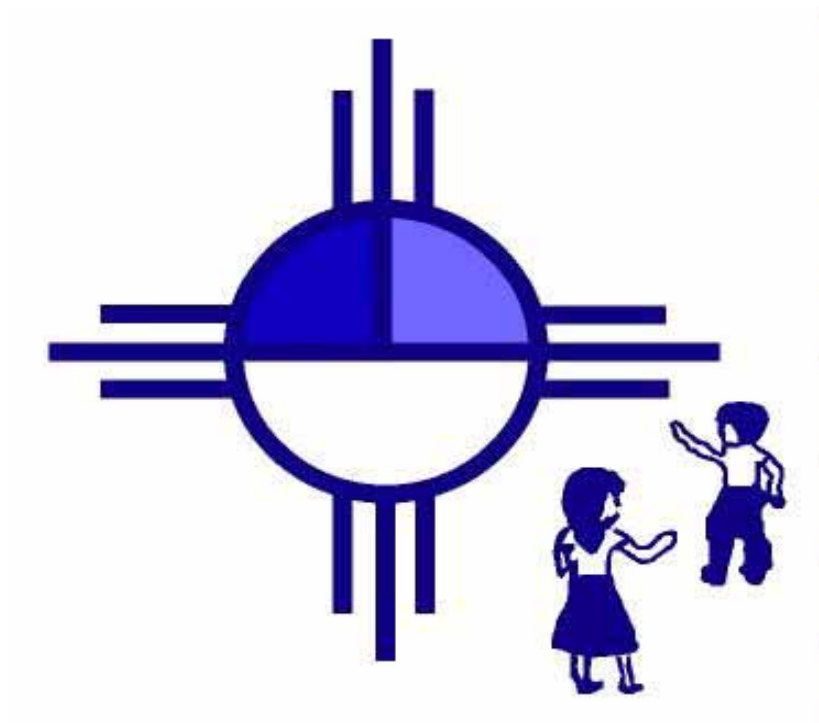


# New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board

## ***2006 Annual Report & Recommendations***



Our vision is a comprehensive child welfare system that protects children, creates permanency, and maximizes well-being; a system in which children receive the best possible services and are promptly placed in loving, nurturing, permanent homes.





# NEW MEXICO CASA NETWORK

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Dear Friends,

## Board of Directors

**Joe Chambers**  
*President*  
*Community Member*

**Ralph Morris**  
*Vice President*  
*Community Member*

**Dave Conway**  
*Secretary*  
*Community Member*

**Marie Aberant**  
*Treasurer*  
*Program Council Rep.*

**Carrie-Leigh Cloutier**  
*Program Council Rep.*

**Mary Ann Shaening**  
*Program Council Rep.*

**Antoinette Pachecho**  
*Community Member*

**Rosemary Maestas-Swazo**  
*Community Member*

Thousands of children in New Mexico were abused and neglected this year. Enough children to fill University Stadium were treated badly enough by their parents or caregivers that concerned citizens reported their observations to the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). Some of these reports ended up as court cases, where teams of concerned New Mexicans (judges, attorneys, social workers, counselors, treatment providers, Court Appointed Special Advocates etc.) struggled to find safety, permanence, and a nurturing future for our most vulnerable children.

New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Boards (a project of the New Mexico CASA Network) reviewed the cases of 1,665 abused and neglected children in 2004. Last year, 180 committed volunteer review board members conducted case reviews in communities all around New Mexico.

Not every report becomes a court case, because CYFD often responds to reports with services that help children and families before the case gets that far. Therefore, data collected from CRB reviews only represents substantiated cases heard by judges. The data is presented here to inform New Mexicans about the damage being done to its children by abuse and neglect. The report will also suggest systematic improvements that we hope will result in better public policy, better working relationships among workers in the field, and (ultimately) better outcomes for children.

The New Mexico CASA Network is proud to be the contractual steward of this project. We are committed to conducting high quality research and providing the best possible information to advocates and decision-makers at every level. We deeply appreciate the widespread community support that the Citizen Review Boards have received in the past, and we and look forward to ongoing support as we continuously strive to improve the system for our children.

Sincerely,

Brian O'Connell  
Executive Director  
New Mexico CASA Network



# Did You Know...

*Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005*

**1,397** children have substance abusing parents.

**1,288** children came into custody with prior reports to CYFD indicating possible abuse or neglect.

**1,221** children were diagnosed with behavioral and/or emotional problems.



**993** children were affected by one or both parents' unemployment and/or inadequate financial resources.

**977** children had educational and/or developmental delays.

**864** children were affected by one or both parents being homeless and/or having inadequate housing.

**844** children were affected by parental domestic violence.

**353** children had physical and/or medical problems.

**319** children were sexually abused.



**238** children were abandoned by their parents.

**62** children had sex offending issues.

**30** children were on runaway status or had a history of running away while in state custody.

# Annual Report and Recommendations Concerning New Mexico's Abused and Neglected Children

**January 2006**

Submitted by:

New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board  
Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC)

Pursuant to New Mexico Revised Statutes  
Sections 32A-8-1 thru 32A-8-7 NMSA 1978

## **The Citizen Review Board shall:**

***"...make recommendations to the department, the courts, and the legislature...regarding statutes, policies and procedures relating to substitute care..." (Section 32-8-4 NMSA 1978)***

The New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB) was legislatively created in 1983 "to provide a permanent system for independent and objective monitoring of children placed in the custody of the department." CRB's mission is to fulfill the directives of the New Mexico Legislature, pursuant to the Citizens Substitute Care Act (Section 32-A-8 NMSA 1978).

## **Specifically, the law requires that CRB:**

1. *Make recommendations to the department, the courts, and the legislature regarding statutes, policies and procedures relating to substitute care. (Section 32-8-4 NMSA 1978)*
2. *Prior to any judicial review by the court...CRB shall review any dispositional order or the continuation of the order and the department's progress report on the child and submit a report to the court. (Section 32-8-6 NMSA 1978)*

This report contains data describing children reviewed by the Citizen Review Board (CRB). These are by no means all of the cases that are managed by New Mexico's Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD). Many children referred to CYFD for abuse and neglect are returned home prior to the court action that triggers a citizen review, and are therefore not reviewed by CRB. In addition, CRB does not review cases receiving voluntary services or cases under investigation. Thus, the statistics and other descriptive information in this report are limited to the cases of children in the state's child welfare system which are reviewed by CRB.

This report also contains a significant amount of aggregate data that is primarily drawn from CRB observations. This report does not provide a complete picture or a full system perspective of the status of the child welfare system in New Mexico. It reflects only data currently collected by CRB. Data have not been systematically collected about the role and contributions of many of the other participants in the process (such as the courts, the attorneys, and the service providers).

## Special Thanks ...

*To Sandra Khan, a long-time CRB member on Boards #2 & #29, who volunteered many afternoons mulling over files to check and double check the data, we thank you. Your commitment to CRB increased the integrity of the data and was invaluable to the quality of this report.*

*To the CRB office staff, especially Charlotte Black and Rebekah Herrera, our gratitude for never once complaining when asked to drop everything to research the details of a case or to provide your expertise to enrich this report.*

*To CRB's board facilitators, without whom there would be no data available to compile this report, we thank you. You spent tireless hours asking the relevant questions at CRB reviews and searching children's records to gather the information that made this report possible.*

*To Rita Aronson (Board #8) and Jane Ronca-Washburn (Board # 29) of the Reports and Publications Committee, thank you for the hours you volunteered on short notice to critically edit and improve this report. Your observations and suggestions have contributed greatly to the flow of this final report.*

*Finally to Mark Dyke, LMSW, PhD, New Mexico Highlands University Research Professor, we offer our thanks for your unlimited enthusiasm for our project and your expert assistance in the analysis and application of our data, which positively effects the lives of children impacted by abuse and neglect. You shared your real world experience as a social worker and provided perspectives on the relevance of our data. With your continued help we look forward to making more effective recommendations concerning the children in substitute care in New Mexico.*

# Contents

Letter from New Mexico CASA Network Executive Director .....	3
Did You Know .....	5
CRB Statutes .....	6
Special Thanks .....	7
Section I - Executive Summary and Recommendations .....	13
Section II - Information about the Citizen Review Board (CRB) .....	19
Statewide Advisory Committee/Subcommittees	
CRB Volunteers	
What Our Volunteers Say ...	
Frequently Asked Questions	
New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund	
Section III - What Happens to Children in the Abuse and Neglect System .....	27
Legal Events and Timelines Affecting the Child	
Teresa's Story	
Section IV - Statewide CRB Data .....	33
Total Number of Children Reviewed (All Counties)	
Total Number of Reviews (Nine-Year Comparison)	
Race/Ethnicity of Children in Custody	
Ages of Children in Custody	
Ages of Children in Custody for Neglect or Physical Abuse	
Reasons Children Enter System	
Average Time in Custody by Types of Abuse	
Factors Contributing to Neglect	
Factors Contributing to Physical Abuse	
Factors Contributing to Sexual Abuse	
CYFD's Permanency Plan for Each Child	
Number of Treatment Social Workers per Child	
Types of Placements per Child	
Why does the Number of Placements Matter?	
Number of Placements per Child	
Factors Related to Number of Placements for Children	
Length of Custody for Children in Custody	
Factors Related to Number of Years Children Remain in Custody	
Access to Psychological Therapy	
Reason for Case Closures	

Section V - County Specific Board Member Observations .....	57
<b>Bernalillo</b> - Boards #2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 29	
<b>Catron (North)</b> - Board #24	
<b>Catron (South)</b> - Board #26	
<b>Chaves</b> - Boards #13 and 22	
<b>Cibola</b> - Board #23	
<b>Colfax</b> - Board #21	
<b>Curry</b> - Board #1	
<b>DeBaca</b> - Board #28	
<b>Dona Ana</b> - Boards #10 and 31	
<b>Eddy</b> - Board #14	
<b>Grant</b> - Board #26	
<b>Guadalupe</b> - Board #20	
<b>Harding</b> - Board #28	
<b>Hidalgo</b> - Board #26	
<b>Lea</b> - Board #15	
<b>Lincoln</b> - Board #16	
<b>Los Alamos</b> - Boards #7 and 33	
<b>Luna</b> - Board #11	
<b>McKinley</b> - Board #17	
<b>Mora</b> - Board #20	
<b>Otero</b> - Board #16	
<b>Quay</b> - Board #28	
<b>Rio Arriba</b> - Boards #7 and 33	
<b>Roosevelt</b> - Board #1	
<b>San Juan</b> - Boards #9 and 30	
<b>San Miguel</b> - Board #20	
<b>Sandoval</b> - Board #12	
<b>Santa Fe</b> - Boards #25 and 32	
<b>Sierra</b> - Board #18	
<b>Socorro</b> - Board #24	
<b>Taos</b> - Board #19	
<b>Torrance</b> - Board #34	
<b>Union</b> - Board #21	
<b>Valencia</b> - Board #27	
Section VI - Statewide Comparison of Observations .....	85
What's Working and What's Not Working in Local Areas	
Section VII .....	89
Acronyms	
Definitions	
CRB Publications	
Statewide Advisory Committee, Subcommittees and Staff	



# **Section I**

## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**



# **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

## **New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board**

### **Statewide Advisory Committee**

#### **2006 Annual Report**

Between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005, 180 volunteers of the 34 local Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Boards (CRB) of New Mexico held 2,629 case reviews. These cases affect the lives of 1,891 children whose cases may have been reviewed more than once during the fiscal year. This report contains data describing these children. These are by no means all of the cases that are managed by New Mexico's Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD). Many children referred to CYFD for abuse and neglect are returned home prior to the court action that triggers a citizen review, and are therefore not reviewed by CRB. In addition, CRB does not review cases receiving voluntary services or cases under investigation. Thus, the statistics and other descriptive information in this report are limited to those cases of children in the state's child welfare system reviewed by CRB.

### **Data and Trends from the CRB Statewide Reviews of 1,891 Children:**

#### **Top 5 Systemic Strengths Observed by CRB Board Members**

- ⇒ 71% of CRB board members believe treatment social worker involvement in cases is a strength in children's cases.
- ⇒ 62% of CRB board members believe children's permanency plans are appropriate and effective.
- ⇒ 53% of CRB board members believe guardian ad litem involvement is a strength for children.
- ⇒ 44% of CRB board members believe CASA volunteer involvement is a strength for children.
- ⇒ 35% of CRB board members believe legal timelines have a positive impact on children in custody.

#### **Top 5 Systemic Concerns Observed by CRB Board Members**

- ⇒ 81% of CRB board members cite lack of accountability for sexual abusers among their top concerns.
- ⇒ 62% of CRB board members cite high treatment social worker turnover among their top concerns.
- ⇒ 59% of CRB board members believe too many reports are made on families before actions are taken.
- ⇒ 50% of CRB board members cite lack of treatment resources in their areas among their top concerns.
- ⇒ 41% of CRB board members cite inadequate/inappropriate treatment resources among their top concerns.

## Challenges for Children in Foster Care

- ⇒ 1,221 children were diagnosed with behavioral and/or emotional problems.
- ⇒ 977 children had educational and/or developmental delays.
- ⇒ 353 children had physical and/or medical problems.
- ⇒ 319 children were sexually abused or had a history of sexual abuse.
- ⇒ 183 children had a history of involvement with the criminal justice system.

## Challenges for Parents of Children in Foster Care

- ⇒ 1,397 children have substance abusing parents.
- ⇒ 1,101 children were affected by a parent's history of involvement with the criminal justice system.
- ⇒ 993 children were affected by parental unemployment and/or inadequate financial resources.
- ⇒ 899 children were affected by parental domestic violence.
- ⇒ 864 children were affected by parental homelessness, inadequate housing, and/or transience.

## **SYSTEM GOALS: CRB Recommendations for New Mexico**

1. **Provide appropriate earlier support and/or intervention to children and families to prevent chronic, severe abuse and neglect.** *Of the 1,891 children reviewed by New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB), 68% came into state custody with a history of prior reports to CYFD for possible abuse and neglect.*

1A. Continue to develop and support prevention and early intervention services to families.

1B. Increase in-home services to support families and to prevent further abuse and neglect.

1C. Utilize CYFD Team Decision Making process to assess risk and to increase community participation by health care providers, treatment providers, schools, child care providers, etc. in supporting families progress toward safety and well-being.

2. **Reduce movement of children from placement to placement.** *CRB data shows that of the 1,891 children reviewed, 47% have had one to two placements, 34% have had three to five, 9% have had six to eight, and 10% have had over nine placements.*

2A. Increase the number of foster homes and treatment foster homes through aggressive recruitment efforts to best meet the varied needs of the children in state's custody to help minimize the number of placement changes. More variety of homes means more potential healthy placements and fewer placement changes. Continue to increase responsiveness to potential foster parents through the toll free line staffed with trained workers 24 hours/7 days a week/365 days a year.

2B. Increase support to current foster homes: Increase foster parent reimbursement rates that have not been increased for over 10 years. Ensure that foster parents are provided with a complete and accurate description of children's needs. Increase training and support for foster parents to help them cope with the increasingly complex and severe needs of the children in their care.

2C. Ensure that pre-adoptive parents are provided with a complete and accurate description of children's needs. Increase training and support for pre-adoptive parents to help them cope with the increasingly complex and severe needs of the children they adopt. Ensure post-adoptive supports are in place before adoption is finalized to reduce the potential for disrupted adoptions.

2D. Continue efforts to decrease treatment social worker turnover and thereby provide continuity for children and families. CRB research indicates that treatment social worker turnover is related to the number of placements children experience in custody.

2E. Continue to work with Value Options and the Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative to increase other placement options and develop or enhance placements for children with behavioral and mental health needs.

2F. Continue efforts to minimize the trauma children experience when they are moved between placements. Continue and expand procedures to help children and families transition through pending moves including exploring ways to have children remain in a consistent educational setting and neighborhood.

**3. Reduce social worker turnover and vacancy rates.** *Analysis of CRB data shows significant relationships between treatment social worker turnover and both the number of years children remain in custody and the number of placements they experience while in custody.*

3A. Continue to expand the pool of potential applicants for front line positions to include those qualified persons with related degrees and/or licensures. CRB supports CYFD's recent decision to change the working titles of relevant CYFD Protective Services positions. All workers are designated as "Protective Services Workers", and workers who are assigned cases of children in custody are designated as "Permanency Planning Workers".

3B. Continue to provide pay differential to treatment social workers (now permanency planning workers) in hard-to-recruit areas of the state. Continue to provide a temporary salary increase for the additional workload in offices experiencing a 28% or greater vacancy.

3C. Increase the number of treatment social worker positions (now permanency planning workers), particularly where caseloads have increased dramatically in the last two years.

**4. Increase services for substance abusers.** *Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB, 1,397 children had one or more parents who abused substances.*

4A. Continue to work with Value Options and the Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative to increase the availability and variety of services (inpatient, outpatient, after-care, etc.) around the state. Explore and fund other services that would make substance abuse services more accessible to clients, such as transportation, particularly in the more rural areas.

4B. Expand and establish dependency drug courts in all judicial districts to support parents and hold them accountable in their efforts to overcome their addictions and to become effective parents.

**5. Increase services to help parents develop a more stable living situation for themselves and their children.** *Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB, 993 children were affected by parental unemployment and/or inadequate financial resources, 844 children were affected by parental domestic violence, and 864 children were affected by parental homelessness, inadequate housing, and/or transience.*

6. **Increase services to meet the complex needs of the children in state's custody.** *Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB, 1,221 children were diagnosed with behavioral and/or emotional problems, 977 children had educational and/or developmental delays, and 353 children had physical and/or medical problems.*

6A. Continue to work with Value Options and the Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative to increase the availability and variety of services to meet the behavioral and/or emotional needs of the children in care.

6B. Increase information and collaboration with the schools to provide appropriate services to meet the needs of foster children and to minimize school moves and the gaps in services school changes can entail.

6C. Explore expanding the number of special clinics around the state that specialize in the medical care of foster children.

7. **Address child sexual abuse.** *Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB, 319 children had been sexually abused. Over 80% of the CRB boards reported being very concerned with the lack of accountability of sexual offenders.*

7A. Revise policies, procedures, statutes, and state funding streams to better integrate and enforce statewide the various agencies and systems to (1) hold offenders accountable to their victims and the community at-large and (2) provide services to victims and offenders.

7B. Establish multi-disciplinary teams in each judicial district to assist child victims and coordinate the development of protocols for the investigation of child sexual abuse.

8. **Continue investments in quality Guardians ad Litem, Youth Attorneys, and Respondent Attorneys.** *Over 50% of the CRB boards believe guardian ad litem involvement is a positive resource for children.*

Support, through funding and other means, the work of the attorneys involved in the abuse and neglect system. The NM Supreme Court approved *Performance Standards for Court-Appointed Attorneys in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* illustrates the many complex duties of these attorneys, especially given increases in caseloads and the expedited timelines in cases. In addition to an increase in funding, an increase in accountability of work performance is highly recommended.

9. **Continue to increase support to the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs around the state to provide more children with a CASA volunteer.** *Over 44% of the CRB boards believe that CASA volunteer involvement is a positive resource for children. In addition, 38% of the CRB boards believe there are not enough CASA volunteers for difficult cases.*

10. **Establish children's court judgeships and/or special masters in each judicial district.**

Support, through funding and other necessary means, the establishment of children's court judgeships and/or special masters in each judicial district to handle the complex abuse and neglect cases, particularly given increasing caseloads.

## **Section II**

# **About the Citizen Review Board (CRB)**



# Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC)

The **Citizens Substitute Care Review Act** requires the establishment of a CRB Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) composed of three persons with expertise in the area of substitute care (public members) appointed by the Governor or the Department Finance and Administration, regional representatives, officers, and one representative from each local board. The SAC is authorized to adopt reasonable rules that include guidelines for the determination of the appropriate type of review and the information needed to adequately monitor cases. The committee must make annual recommendations to CYFD, the courts, and the legislature on statutes, policies, and procedures relating to substitute care. SAC fulfills this mandate by preparing an annual legislative report with recommendations regarding the abuse and neglect system. This report is widely distributed throughout the state to participants in the abuse and neglect system. In addition, the SAC has several subcommittees to assist in performing mandated duties.

## SAC Subcommittees

There are four SAC subcommittees each with an assigned chair. All subcommittee chairs are, by virtue of their position, members of the Executive SAC.

### There are currently four subcommittees of the Statewide Advisory Committee:

- **Research and Investigation** (*Francine Kern*, Santa Fe, Board #25) – Develops, gathers, and analyzes independent research on special topics as they arise. Data is utilized by the Reports and Publications subcommittee for use in interim and annual reports.
- **Reports and Publications** (*Rita Aronson*, Albuquerque, Board #8) – Assists CRB staff with interim reports and the CRB Annual Report and Recommendations. It also develops the CRB Newsletter for distribution statewide.
- **Training and Education** (*Jill Root*, Albuquerque, Board #3 and *Terri Newman*, Hobbs, Board #15) – Develops and implements curriculum for new member orientation training, ongoing member training, and training modules for the CRB website.
- **New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund** (*Joan Alessi*, Santa Fe, Board # 32) – Raises funds and public awareness for the New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund (NMFFCF). The fund provides awards to meet the wishes/needs of individual foster children that are not funded by CYFD or other programs. More information about NMFFCF is available at [www.nmcrb.org](http://www.nmcrb.org) or by contacting CRB at **1-866-857-2976**.

# CRB Volunteers

**From artists to professors  
our volunteers have one thing in common...  
they are powerful voices for New Mexico's  
abused and neglected children.**

These **180** concerned citizens  
volunteered more than **18,000** hours to make a difference in  
the lives of abused and neglected children and to improve the  
foster care system.

## **Did you know...**

- The average board member spends **100** hours per year reviewing cases.
- The average board member spends **16** hours per year in training.
- Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) representatives contribute an additional **20** hours per year in their advisory role.
- Executive SAC representatives/officers volunteer **30** more hours per year providing additional advisory duties.

The Citizen Review Board members come from all walks of life and represent communities throughout the state of New Mexico. Some of our current volunteer professions include:

Artists	Industrial Relations	School Teachers
Bankers	Journalists	Secretaries
Bioresearchers	Machinists	Stock Brokers
Bookkeepers	Medical Technologists	Students
Business Owners	Military	Tax Consultants
Chiropractors	Nurses	Treatment Foster Parents
Clinical Social Workers	Priests/Pastors/Clergy	Waitresses
College Advisors	Paralegals	
Counselors/Therapists	Professors	
Editors	Office Managers	
Foster Parents	Real Estate Brokers	
Homemakers	Receptionists	

## What Our Volunteers Say...

**82%** of boards believe there is **lack of accountability for perpetrators of sexual abuse.**

**71%** of boards believe that there is **good treatment social worker case involvement.**

**70%** of boards believe that **treatment social worker turnover is too high.**

**59%** of boards believe there are **too many reports to CYFD about a family before action is taken.**

**53%** of boards believe that there is **good guardian ad litem case involvement.**

**50%** of boards believe that there is a **lack of treatment resources** in their areas.

**44%** of boards believe that there is **good CASA volunteer case involvement.**

**38%** believe there are **not enough CASA volunteers for difficult cases.**

**29%** believe **treatment social worker caseloads levels are at a manageable level.**

# Frequently Asked Questions about the New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board

- **What is the Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB)?**

CRB consists of over 30 boards around the state made up of concerned community volunteers who, on a monthly basis, review cases of children in state custody due to abuse and neglect.

These community volunteers are trained to review cases and formulate relevant recommendations. They are required to view training videos, an experienced board member is assigned to them as a mentor, and participate in annual training, both on site with each local board, and in larger settings (such as regional training and statewide conferences.)

- **What happens during the Review Board session?**

The CRB members read case information provided by the treatment social worker and others involved in the case before the review day. By doing this preparation, the volunteers are ready to listen to the interested parties and ask informed, clarifying questions.

Each interested party is asked to speak about the child's current situation and what they believe is in the best interest of the child. CRB members listen and ask questions in order to make appropriate recommendations for the child's care.

- **Who attends the Review Board sessions?**

Attendees include people involved in the child's case. These interested parties may include treatment social workers, treatment social worker supervisors, parents, foster parents, guardian ad litem, youth attorneys, CYFD attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA volunteers), parents' attorneys, other relatives of the child, treatment providers, representatives from the tribe if a Native American child is involved, and the child (when age-appropriate).

- **What happens after a Review Board session?**

After a case is reviewed, the Board members deliberate with a staff member to prepare a report that presents those factors that appear to be either hindering or facilitating the child's expeditious placement in a permanent, safe, and loving home. Additionally, the Board's report includes recommended actions, which may include changing CYFD's permanency plan.

The completed report is then sent to the following parties: the judge presiding over the case, the treatment social worker, the treatment social worker's supervisor, all attorneys involved in the case, the CASA volunteer (if one has been appointed), the foster parents, and the tribe if a Native American child is involved.

# Frequently Asked Questions about Systemwide Initiatives

- **How does the CRB generate recommendations for system improvement?**

After each case review, comprehensive data is gathered on each child in custody. This data is entered into the CRB database. All data is confidential, and is only used to track trends and make systemic observations and recommendations. This data serves as the basis for this and other CRB reports.

The CRB Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC), as determined by statute, is comprised of a representative from each local board, SAC officers and regional representatives, and three public members. SAC meets throughout the year and monitors what is happening to the children in custody by hearing from the local board representatives and by reviewing data.

- **How does the CRB bring attention to these important issues?**

The CRB and SAC perform various public education functions. SAC identifies relevant data elements and issues affecting the children and the system during the fiscal year, and reports the data and anecdotal information through CRB Interim Reports that spotlight a single issue. SAC also uses its expertise to assist in the CRB Annual Report and Recommendations that reports statewide and county information. In addition, CRB maintains a website ([www.nmcrb.org](http://www.nmcrb.org)) that includes information, data, and links to relevant sites. The CRB and SAC are frequently called upon to testify before legislative committees on its data, observations, and recommendations.

- **Does the CRB facilitate any independent research that is separate from the review day?**

The SAC identifies issues that need further research and the Research and Investigation subcommittee gathers the needed data. The data is reviewed by SAC as well as by outside experts to develop the best methods to obtain pertinent information. Methods utilized have included surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The data is then gathered from around the state, analyzed, and distributed through the CRB Interim Reports and CRB Annual Report and Recommendations.

- **Does the CRB do other work?**

The CRB is governed by its Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC). Subcommittees of SAC work on various projects. For example, New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund (NMFFCF) was created in September of 2003 to help meet certain needs of New Mexico's foster children that are not funded by state or other programs.

More information about NMFFCF is available at [www.nmcrb.org](http://www.nmcrb.org) or by contacting CRB at **1-866-857-2976**.



**Background:** In September 2003, the Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) of the New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB) created the New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund (NMFFCF). After reviewing the cases of abused and neglected children, CRB volunteers felt the need to be part of the solution by enriching the lives of children in foster care and supporting their growth. In April 2003, CRB volunteers initiated the Duffels and Diapers drive that collected and distributed over 3,100 pieces of luggage and 14,200 diapers to foster children around the state. This event was the precursor to the creation of the New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund.

**About NMFFCF:** The project issues awards to children in foster care that support and maximize their potential. The Fund meets its objectives thanks to CRB volunteers that assist in all aspects of the Fund's functioning. Funding for NMFFCF comes in the form of volunteer-driven fundraising activities, donations, and grants. Due to the Fund being volunteer driven and its relationship with CRB, administrative costs remain extremely low and it is estimated that 90% of all funds received go directly to foster children. During the short time NMFFCF has existed, half of New Mexico's counties have taken advantage of the Funds benefits. As more counties participate and more requests for awards are made, the larger the Fund needs to grow.

While the State seeks to do as much as it can to encourage and support the health and well-being of the children in its custody, there is much it does not or cannot provide for these children. NMFFCF seeks to supplement the State's limited resources. Though foster parents are reimbursed for a portion of the costs associated with caring for the New Mexico's children, the resources of these volunteers are stretched thin. As they discuss in the [CRB Interim Report on Foster Parenting in New Mexico](#), foster parents struggle to provide more than the essentials for the children they house and nurture. The effect of the Fund on foster parents, treatment social workers, guardian ad litems, CASA volunteers, and others has been an increase in morale, as it provides music lessons, bikes, or tutoring, which were previously unavailable.

**Awards:** The Fund issues awards for a variety of items and services throughout New Mexico. In fiscal year 2004 – 2005, awards were provided for the items mentioned above in addition to yearbooks, sports fees, NM State Fair admission, and a variety of other items not covered by the State.

	FY 2004	FY 2005	Percentage of increase
<b>Awards</b>	48	111	230%
<b>Value of awards</b>	\$10,994	\$19,383	176%

In its short existence NMFFCF has been an amazing success. The response has been overwhelming and is filling an unmet need for children. Without the ongoing support of individual and business contributions, we cannot continue to fill this gap. Included in this Annual Report is an envelope to contribute to NMFFCF. As in the African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. Nowhere is that more true than in the foster care system. Any contribution you can make has a direct impact on New Mexico's children. Thank you.

For additional information, see: **New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund Fiscal Year 2004 - 2005 Annual Report**, December 2005.

For additional information, see our interim report: **CRB Interim Report on Foster Parenting in New Mexico**, August 2005.

# **Section III**

## **What Happens to Children in the Abuse and Neglect System**



# Legal Events and Timelines Affecting the Child

**Child Enters Custody**

**Day 1**

**Custody Hearing**

**Day 10**

Judge decides whether there is justification for the child to remain in CYFD custody.

**Adjudication/Disposition**

**Month 2**

Judge listens to evidence and decides if the child has been abused and/or neglected. If the judge decides the child has been abused and/or neglected, the judge orders a treatment plan be developed.

**Initial Judicial Review**

**Month 4**

Judge checks the progress of the treatment plan. Changes may be made if everyone agrees.

**NM Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board**

**Month 9**

Members of the local Citizen Review Board meet and review the case with interested parties and submit their recommendations and concerns to the judge overseeing the case.

**\*Cases are then reviewed every six months by the Citizen Review Board.**

**Permanency Hearing**

**Month 10**

Judge decides if the child can return home safely. If the child cannot be returned home, a subsequent permanency hearing will be held.

**Subsequent Permanency Hearing**

**Month 13**

Judge decides if the plan should be changed to adoption or some other permanent arrangement.

**Annual Permanency Hearings and Judicial Reviews**

Held throughout the life of a case to determine progress, to order further treatment, and to ultimately obtain permanency for each child.

It is easy to forget as we read the numbers and review the data that each number in this report represents a child that has been abused and/or neglected and whose life has been permanently changed. While reading this report, please remember that each number also represents a child's complex life that is interwoven with a community and is disrupted by abusive and/or neglectful parents and his/her removal from the home of that parent.

Report child abuse and neglect to  
CYFD's Statewide Central Intake at 1-800-797-3260.

# Teresa's Story

## CRB Data in the Context of a Child's Life

Teresa's story is a fictional composite of children reviewed by CRB.



**DAY 1, Child Enters Custody** – Teresa was eight years old when she was taken into state's custody because of neglect and physical abuse by her mother. The Statewide Central Intake (SCI) unit of the Children, Youth, and Families Department received a call reporting that Teresa had come to school with bruises and what looked like a burn on her leg. This was the second report Teresa's teacher made to Statewide Central Intake in the last six months and he was growing more concerned about Teresa and her home situation<sup>1</sup>.

**DAY 10, Custody Hearing** – Teresa's mother, Gloria, has a long history of alcohol and drug abuse<sup>2</sup>. Teresa's father, Anthony, is currently incarcerated and is not expected to be released for several years<sup>3</sup>. In the investigation, it was discovered that Teresa has missed a lot of school and when she was at school she was often hungry, dirty, and had many physical complaints. Teresa and her mother had a history of living in motels and with relatives<sup>4</sup>. In addition, Gloria's problems with substance abuse have made it difficult for her to hold a job<sup>5</sup>.

**MONTH 2, Adjudication/Disposition** – Teresa moved from her emergency foster home to another foster home. A therapist who evaluated Teresa is concerned that she was sexually abused while in her mother's care<sup>6</sup>. Her foster parents also have concerns; there have been times when her sexual knowledge is far above what is normal for a child her age. The judge ordered a treatment plan that will address Teresa's abuse and neglect and her mother's substance abuse problems. The permanency plan for Teresa is reunification with her mother.

**MONTH 4, Initial Judicial Review** – Teresa has been attending play therapy and has started to disclose a history of sexual abuse by one of her mother's live-in boyfriends. The foster home is having difficulty with Teresa's sexualized behaviors; she has been touching adults and children inappropriately<sup>7</sup>. They are fearful that Teresa will hurt their five year old daughter and they have asked that Teresa be removed from their home.

It has been observed that Teresa is behind others in her age group in academic and social development. Teresa's school evaluated her because of suspicions, given her mother's history of substance abuse, that Teresa may be developmentally delayed<sup>8</sup>. The school is providing special education services, and speech and physical therapies to help Teresa progress in school.

While Teresa appears to be getting the help she needs, Teresa's mother is struggling. Gloria was evaluated and a referral was made to an inpatient substance abuse treatment program. She put off going for several weeks until her attorney told her that the permanency plan for Teresa could change from reunification to adoption. With federal and state laws, Gloria now has less than a year to prove that she can change and become the mother Teresa needs.

**MONTH 9, Citizen Review Board** – At the Citizen Review Board meeting of Teresa's case, the interested parties attending the review talked about Gloria not attending treatment. Gloria has been seen out on the streets abusing drugs. Christopher, the second treatment social worker on the case in nine months, was finally able to talk to Teresa's father<sup>9</sup>. Anthony has several more years before he will be eligible for parole. The Department is seriously considering changing Teresa's permanency plan to adoption and filing for the termination of Gloria's parental rights.

Lisa, Teresa's Guardian ad Litem (GAL), could not attend the CRB review but sent a letter providing input on the status of Teresa's case. Lisa has had difficulty keeping up with Teresa's case due to the number of children she represents. Through the work of an active Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA volunteer), they have learned of an aunt in Colorado who might be interested in adopting Teresa. The Department will need to have a home study done in Colorado to evaluate the aunt and her situation. The first permanency hearing is coming in a few weeks and decisions must be made.

In their report to the judge, the local CRB made strong recommendations related to three issues of great concern to the board members. Gloria's lack of progress toward alleviating the conditions that led Teresa to enter custody has them worried that she is not capable of caring for her daughter. The board is also concerned that Teresa's behavioral and emotional problems may cause another move, perhaps permanently damaging her ability to trust caregivers<sup>10</sup>. Finally, board members are concerned that Teresa's sexual abuser and Gloria have not been held accountable for their maltreatment of Teresa.

**MONTH 10, Permanency Hearing** – Ten months, three moves, and two treatment social workers after custody, the permanency plan continues to be reunification. Unless Gloria makes significant changes in her life, the permanency plan will change to adoption. Three months from now Teresa's team of treatment social worker, guardian ad litem, and CASA volunteer will meet with the judge at the Subsequent Permanency Hearing to discuss this change of plan.

Teresa's mother has had a rough time. She could not get into an inpatient substance abuse program that she desperately needed to fight her substance abuse problem and outpatient treatment was insufficient to really help. To make matters worse, she has called her daughter a liar when confronted with the allegations that a boyfriend had sexually abused Teresa. Gloria has been missing since the first permanency hearing; no one has seen her. Teresa still worries about her and, like so many children in care, wishes she could return home to her mother.

Teresa's story illustrates a common scenario of children reviewed by CRB members. Her story is intended to highlight the real world relevance of the data contained in this report of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB in Fiscal Year 2005.

<sup>1</sup> 1,288 children (68%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 had prior reports to CFYD before being taken into custody.

<sup>2</sup> 1,397 children (74%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 had one or more substance abusing parents.

<sup>3</sup> 1,101 children (58%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 had one or more parents who have a history of involvement in the criminal justice system.

<sup>4</sup> 864 children (46%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 were impacted by inadequate housing or homelessness.

<sup>5</sup> 993 children (53%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 were impacted by inadequate financial resources or parental unemployment.

<sup>6</sup> 319 children (17%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 were victims of sexual abuse.

<sup>7</sup> 1,221 children (65%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 have been identified as having behavioral/emotional issues.

<sup>8</sup> 977 children (52%) reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 have been identified as having educational/developmental issues.

<sup>9</sup> Children reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 experienced an average of 2.6 treatment social workers during their time in custody.

<sup>10</sup> Children reviewed by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005 had an average of four placements while in custody.



# **Section IV**

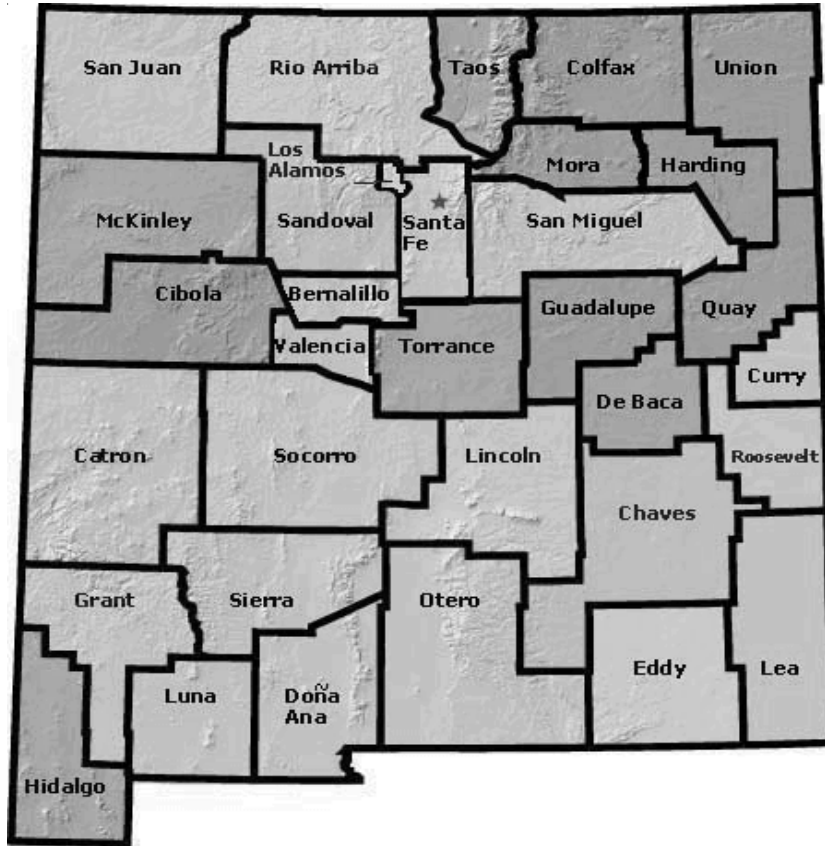
## **Statewide CRB Data**



## CRB Reviews in New Mexico

Fiscal Year 2005: July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005

**2,629 total reviews\* involving 1,891 children**



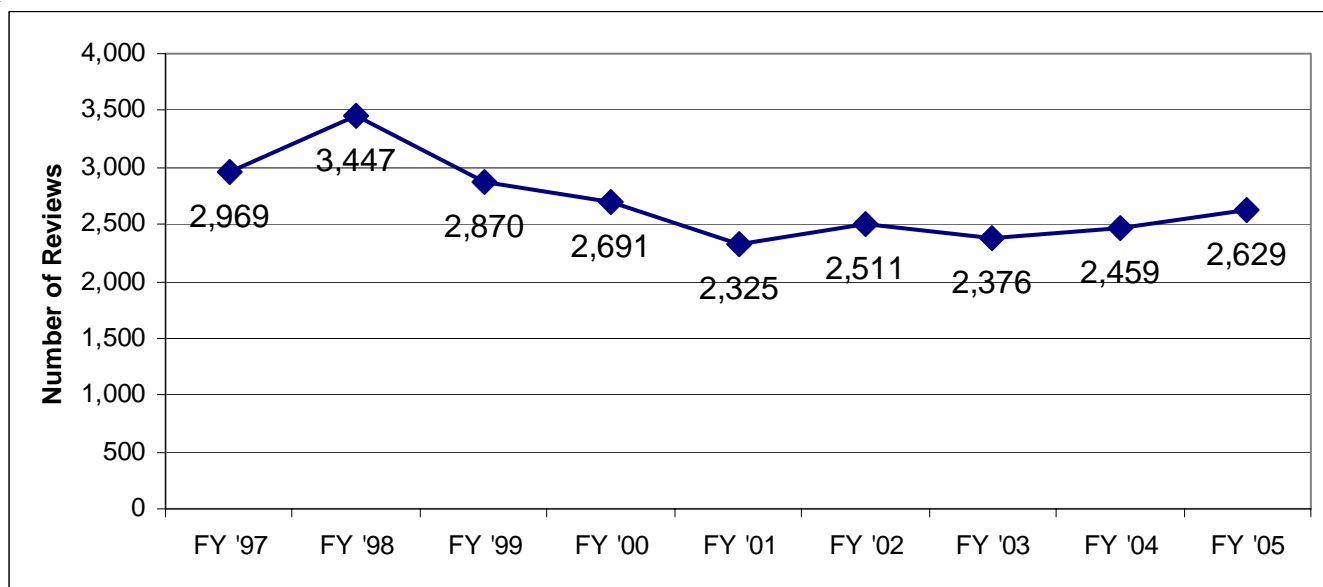
### Total Reviews by County

Bernalillo	<b>612</b>	Lincoln and Otero	<b>87</b>
N. Catron and Socorro	<b>6</b>	Los Alamos and Rio Arriba	<b>90</b>
S. Catron, Grant, and Hidalgo	<b>105</b>	Luna	<b>93</b>
Chaves	<b>153</b>	McKinley	<b>59</b>
Cibola	<b>57</b>	San Juan	<b>213</b>
Colfax and Union	<b>48</b>	Sandoval	<b>50</b>
Curry and Roosevelt	<b>115</b>	Santa Fe	<b>165</b>
De Baca, Harding, and Quay	<b>21</b>	Sierra	<b>37</b>
Dona Ana	<b>233</b>	Taos	<b>39</b>
Eddy	<b>91</b>	Torrance	<b>37</b>
Guadalupe, Mora, and San Miguel	<b>90</b>	Valencia	<b>74</b>
Lea	<b>154</b>		

**\*Some children are reviewed more than once per year.**



## Total Number of CRB Reviews of Children Fiscal Years: 1997 - 2005



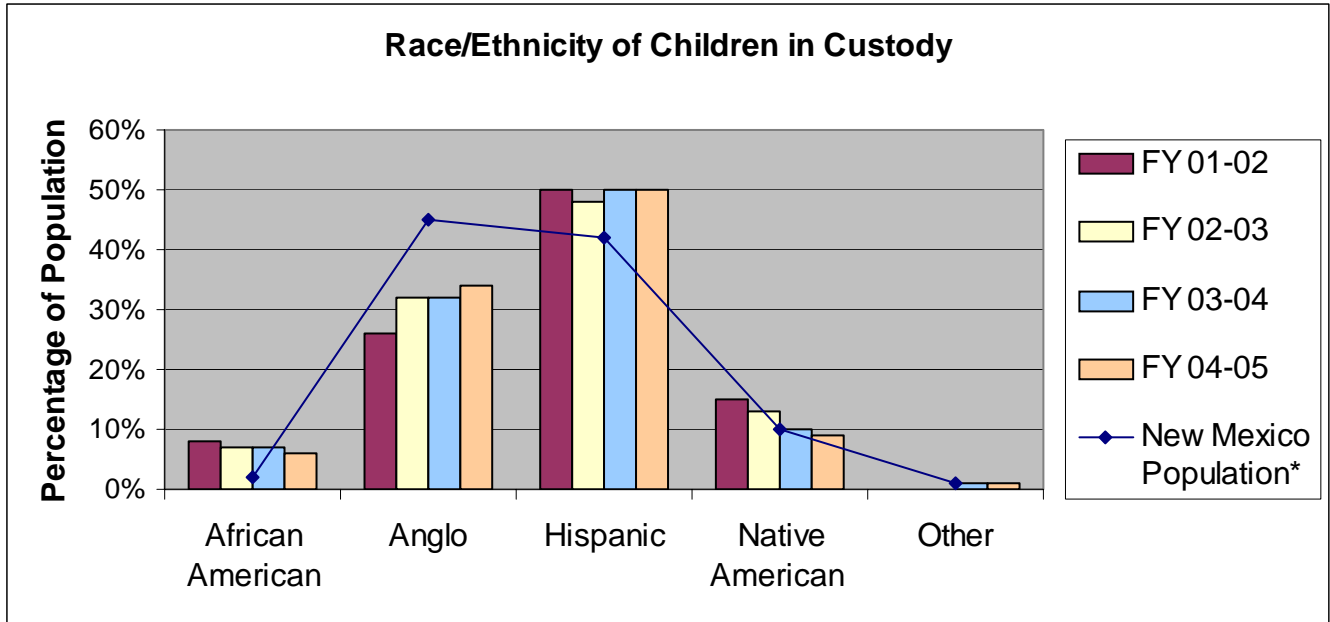
CRB reviewed the highest number of children's cases in Fiscal Year 1998. Following that peak was a slight downward trend in reviews until Fiscal Year 2004 when the number of reviews began to increase again. CRB believes that the five-year decline may have been attributed to the following factors:

- ◆ Fewer children were being taken into custody. **CYFD maintains a Statewide Central Intake (SCI) system to track abuse and neglect reports (1-800-797-3260, call to report child abuse and/or neglect.)** CRB members, and many others, were concerned for the first several years of SCI that CYFD's threshold for investigation of cases was too high and that, consequently, some children who should have been investigated and taken into custody were not. This resulted in lower caseloads.
- ◆ Expedited legal timelines were instituted on July 1, 1997. Children began moving through the system toward permanency faster; therefore CRB reviewed the same case fewer times.

In recent years there has once again been an increase in the number of reviews conducted by CRB. The reason for this is not yet absolutely clear. A number of factors may be playing a role in this increase. Statewide Central Intake, with community input and based on the New Mexico Children's Code, developed screening instruments to standardize and bring consistency to the screening decision. CYFD reports that SCI has continued to receive an increase in calls from previous years. In addition, CYFD estimates that higher numbers of children are being brought into custody due to the neglectful effects of parental methamphetamine use and other factors. Economic stressors may also be contributing to the number of children that enter custody due to neglect. Until further investigation into reasons for this increase can be conducted, no conclusive statements can be made with regards to the increase in reviews over the last two years. An increase in effective communication between CYFD and CRB has resulted in better monitoring of a greater percentage of children in CYFD custody.

*For additional information, see our interim report: **Spotlight On: The Statewide Central Intake Unit of the Children, Youth, and Families Department, August 2001.***

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Race/Ethnicity of Children in Custody**

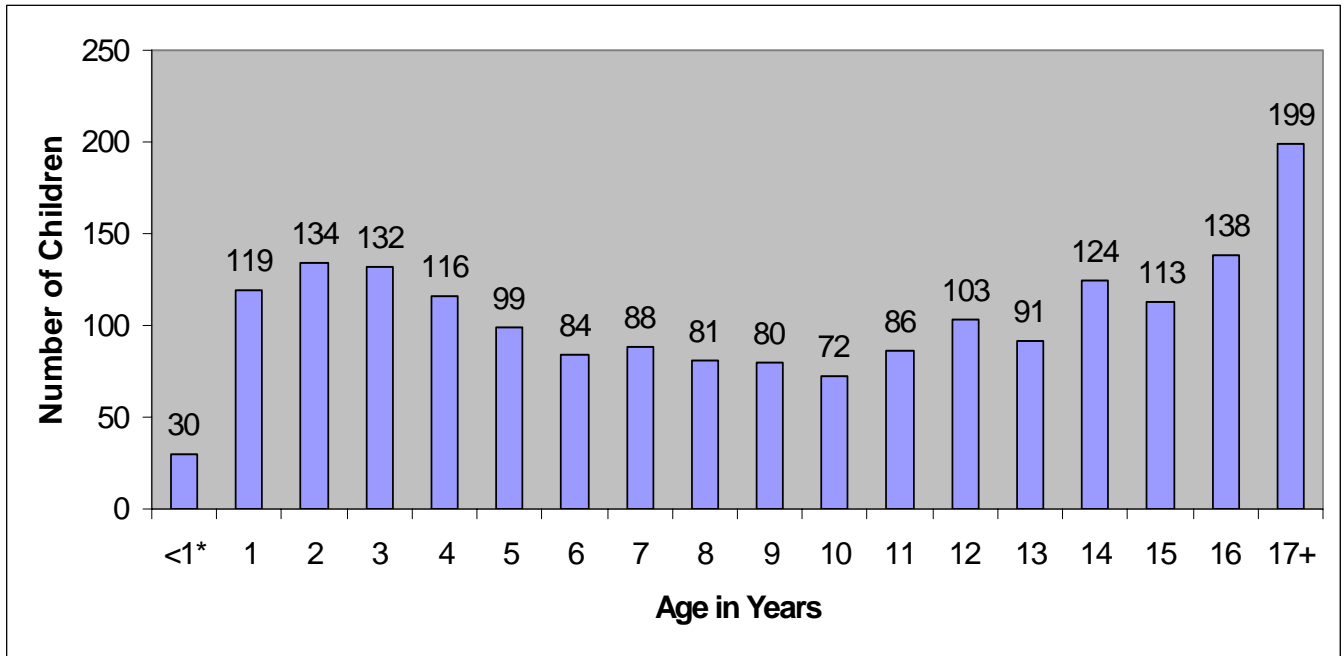


While this chart indicates that some racial/ethnic groups are under-represented and others are over-represented in the abuse and neglect system relative to their populations in the state as a whole, it is not appropriate to make generalizations about racial/ethnic groups and their treatment of children. More research is needed on the relationship between socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and maltreatment of children. While income and social status do not determine whether or not a parent will maltreat their children, it may impact whether or not parents have the resources to quickly address the problems that caused their child/ren to enter custody. Should such parents remedy the circumstances that brought their child/ren to the attention of the Children, Youth, and Families Department prior to the first Citizen Review Board meeting, their information would not be included in the data gathered by CRB.

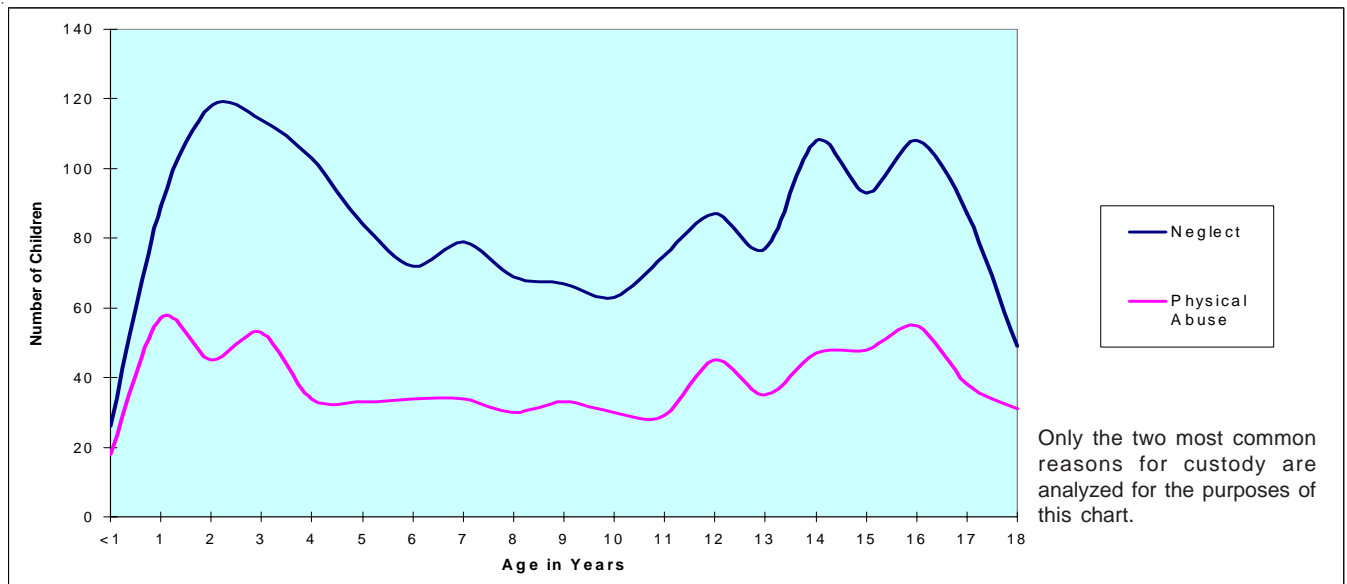
**About the Data:**

★U.S. Census Bureau 2000 data used to determine current New Mexico racial/ethnic populations.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Ages of Children in Custody at Last Review**

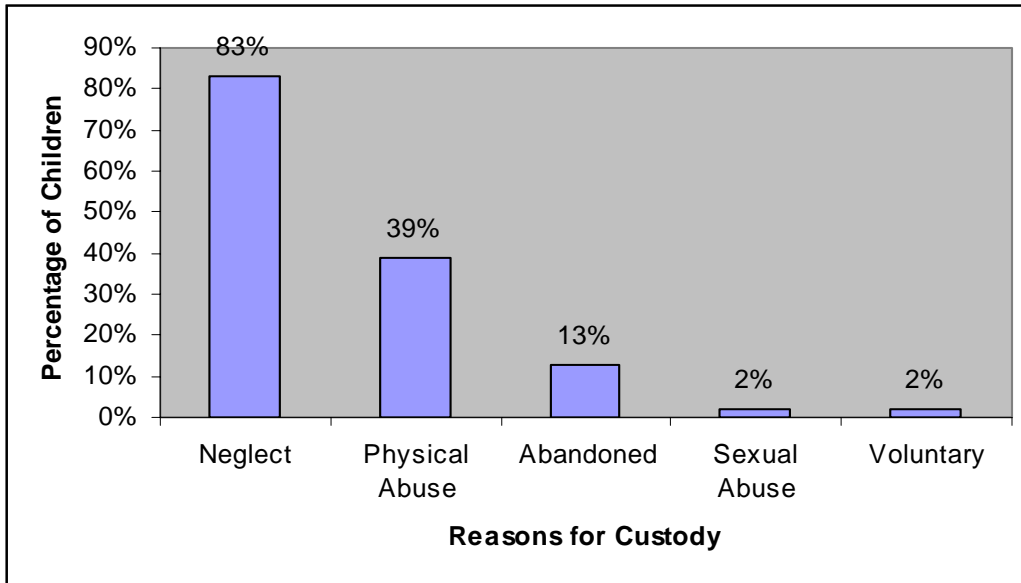


Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Ages of Children in Custody for Neglect or Physical Abuse at Last Review**



\* The number of infants reviewed by CRB may be low because CRB typically first reviews cases only after the child has been in custody eight to nine months.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Reasons Children Enter the Abuse and Neglect System**



Children enter the custody of CYFD because they are abused and/or neglected. More than one reason may be identified for any child.

- Abandonment**      Child left alone or with others for an extended period of time without appropriate parental support or communication.
- Neglect**              The lack of proper parental care and control necessary to the child's well-being or the parent's inability to appropriately care for the child and/or provide for the child's daily needs.
- Physical Abuse**      The non-accidental physical harm of a child including but not limited to beatings, shaking, burning, choking, malnutrition, failure to thrive, and other excessive physical actions.
- Sexual Abuse**        The sexual maltreatment of a child that includes but is not limited to criminal sexual contact, incest, any inappropriate touching, any type of exposure to sexual activity, and/or sexual penetration of a child.

**29 children reviewed by CRB in Fiscal Year 2005 experienced disrupted adoptions or guardianships.**

About the Data:  
 ★ As there are occasionally multiple reasons for custody, percentages represent the number of children that were identified as experiencing each type of abuse or neglect at the time of custody. For this reason, percentages do not total 100% in this chart.

*Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB*  
**Average Time in Custody by Types of Abuse**

On average children who come into custody due to sexual or physical abuse remain in the system longer than those who enter due to neglect.

*Did you know ...*

there is a difference in the average time children remain in custody and the reason they entered custody?

Children who enter custody due to **sexual abuse**

❖ remain in custody an average of **2 years and 4 months**

Children who enter custody due to **physical abuse**

❖ remain in custody an average of **2 years and 3 months**

Children who enter custody due to **neglect**

❖ remain in custody an average of **1 year and 11 months**

Some children come into the state's custody due to a single type of abuse and/or neglect. Others are taken into custody due to several types of maltreatment. A common scenario according to CRB board members is that children come into custody for neglect and will later disclose that they have also been physically and/or sexually abused.

While the reason for custody is an important factor in understanding the lives of abused and neglected children, it is equally important to look at the other factors that impact their lives. Factors such as emotional/mental illness of parents or children, substance abuse, and inadequate housing or financial resources have a tremendous impact on the success or failure of these families to establish healthy and stable permanency for children.

# Factors Contributing to Neglect

**1,569 children (83%) reviewed by CRB came into CYFD custody due to neglect**

## Discussion:

While neglect is often the reason children enter CYFD custody, other circumstances and abuses that have disrupted the lives of these children are often discovered later in the process. CRB members report that it is not uncommon for children to enter custody due to neglect and later find that the child was also a victim of physical or sexual abuse.

Neglect is often overlooked by the media and the general public. This point is all the more saddening when one understands that neglect is often one of the most damaging types of child maltreatment, due to a child's rapid development and physical growth. It is often a slow and steady decay of the safe and healthy lives of children that leads neglect to be so damaging to children.

## Forms of Neglect:

- physical and/or emotional abandonment of a child
- lack of safe and adequate food and housing for a child due to the faults, habits, failure, or refusal of a parent
- educational neglect
- medical neglect
- parent's failure to protect a child from physical or sexual abuse
- inability to parent effectively due to incarceration or hospitalization
- inability to parent effectively due to mental or emotional illness
- inability to parent effectively due to physical disability
- inability to parent effectively due to developmental disability or other incapacity

### About the Data:

★Forms of neglect compiled from Section 32A-4-2 NMSA 1978.

# Factors Contributing to Neglect

## Parent Factors:

The definition of neglect is broad relative to physical and sexual abuse and incorporates the failure to protect children against these types of abuse. It is therefore easy to understand why neglect is such a complex type of child maltreatment. Many factors come in to play when considering the neglectful treatment of children.

Based on data collected by the CRB during the Fiscal Year 2005, the following factors were associated with the 1,569 children brought into custody due to neglect:

- **1,230 children (78%)** had one or more substance abusing parents\*
- **953 children (61%)** had one or more parents who had been involved in the criminal justice system
- **875 children (56%)** were impacted by inadequate financial resources or parental unemployment
- **766 children (49%)** were impacted by inadequate or unsafe housing or homelessness
- **464 children (30%)** were impacted by one or more parent's mental or emotional illness
- **277 children (18%)** were impacted by one or more parent's being low functioning or developmentally disabled
- **155 children (10%)** were impacted by the death of one or more parents

*For additional information, see our interim report: **Spotlight On: Drugs and Alcohol: The Tragic Story for Abused & Neglected Children**, March 2002.*

### About the Data:

★Figures related to parental factors are likely to be lower than the actual numbers because this information is often unavailable to the CRB board facilitators who gather this information. Therefore, only the most conservative figures collected by CRB are presented for the purposes of this report.

# Factors Contributing to Physical Abuse

**731 children (39%) reviewed by CRB  
had been physically abused.**

## Discussion:

As the second most common reason for custody, physical abuse cannot be overlooked in its significance to the lives of children. When the average citizen thinks of abuse, it is often physical abuse that first crosses his/her mind. The most severe cases of physical abuse of children often lead the headlines, be they cases of shaken baby syndrome, children found with broken bones, or in the most horrible cases, death. Physical abuse is more than the accidental harming of a child. It is more than the occasional spanking. Physical abuse sends the message to children that their parent can and will hurt them. These children learn harmful lessons about life and their value in the world by such treatment. The necessity to heal physical wounds is only part of the legacy such abuse has on children. When considering physical abuse it is important to remember the psychological scars that remain after a child is removed from the abusive environment. For more information on the importance of treatment, refer to CRB's analysis on access to psychological therapy and children in this section.

## Forms of Physical Abuse:

- skin bruising
- bleeding
- malnutrition
- failure to thrive
- burns
- bone fractures
- subdermal hematoma
- soft tissue swelling
- death

... of a child when there is not a justifiable explanation, or the explanation runs counter to the condition, or the condition appears to be caused by other than accidental events.

## Parent Factors:

Based on data collected by the CRB during the Fiscal Year 2005, the following can be said about the violence experienced by the children reviewed by CRB:

- **844 children (45%)** were impacted by one or more parent's domestic violence

### About the Data:

- ★ Figures related to parental factors are likely to be lower than the actual numbers because this information is often unavailable to the CRB board facilitators who gather this information. Therefore, only the most conservative figures collected by CRB are presented for the purposes of this report.
- ★ Forms of physical abuse compiled from Section 32A-4-2 NMSA 1978.

# Factors Contributing to Sexual Abuse

**319 children (16%) reviewed by CRB  
had been sexually abused.**

## Discussion:

When considering sexual abuse and children in the abuse and neglect system, it is important to look beyond sexual abuse as the reason for custody. In the data collected by CRB during Fiscal Year 2005, only two percent (2%) of children entered CYFD custody because of sexual abuse. However, when we look closer we find that 16% of the children CRB reviewed had been sexually abused. It is important that we not overestimate the relevance of reason for custody and ignore the other factors that disrupt children's lives. As stated in the discussion on neglect, disclosure of sexual abuse often occurs after a child has entered custody for other reasons. Also, the failure to protect children from physical and sexual abuse is included in the definition of neglect. Therefore, the presence of sexual or physical abuse may not be clearly identified by the term neglect and should be specifically addressed.

**Of the 36 children entering custody for sexual abuse,  
75% also involved neglect.**

**Thirty-nine percent of children entering custody for  
sexual abuse also involved physical abuse.**

## Data Related to Sexual Abuse:

Based on data collected by the CRB during the Fiscal Year 2005, the following can be said about the children reviewed by the CRB:

- **319 children (16%)** were sexually abused
- **214 children (11%)** had one or more sex offending parents
- **62 children (3%)** were identified as having sex offending issues

**82% of boards believe that sex offenders are not being held accountable for their actions.**

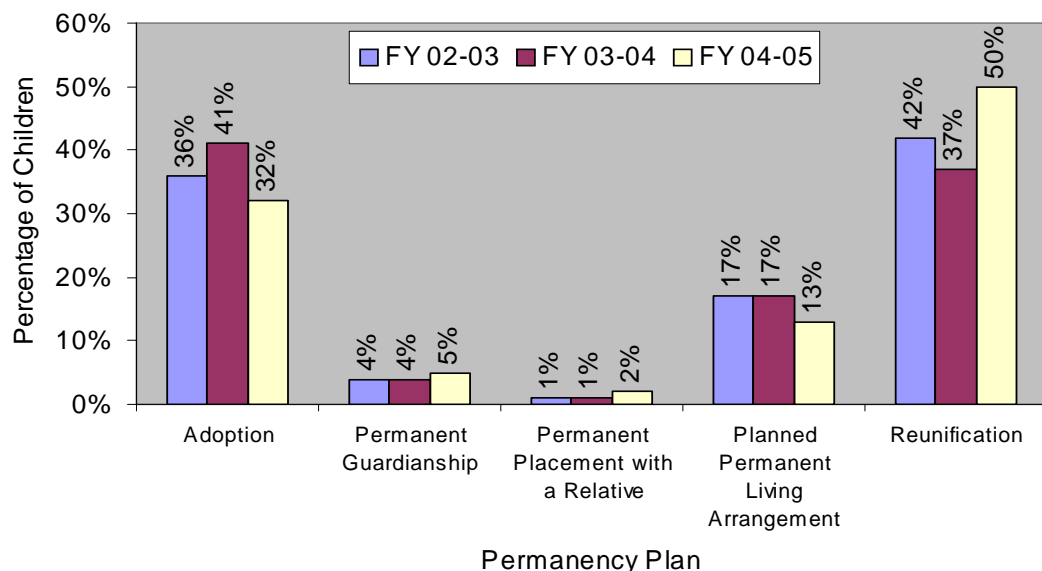
More board member concerns and observations can be found in Section VI.

*For additional information, see our interim report: **Spotlight On: Child Sexual Abuse and Sex Offender Accountability**, October 2002.*

### About the Data:

★Figures related to parental factors are likely to be lower than the actual numbers because this information is often unavailable to the CRB board facilitators who gather this information. Therefore, only the most conservative figures collected by CRB are presented for the purposes of this report.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**CYFD's Permanency Plan at Last Review**



The primary goal and optimal permanency plan is for children that have been maltreated to be reunified with their families when it is safe and healthy to do so.

**62% of local review boards believe that CYFD's permanency plans are appropriate for children.**

More board member concerns and observations can be found in Section VI.

**Adoption:** A permanency plan to create the legal relation of parent and child between child and adults other than the child's biological parents.

**Guardianship/Permanent Guardianship:** A permanency plan for a child that creates the legal relationship of guardianship between a child and an adult other than the child's biological parents.

**Permanent Placement with a Relative:** A permanency plan to permanently place a child in the home of his/her relative.

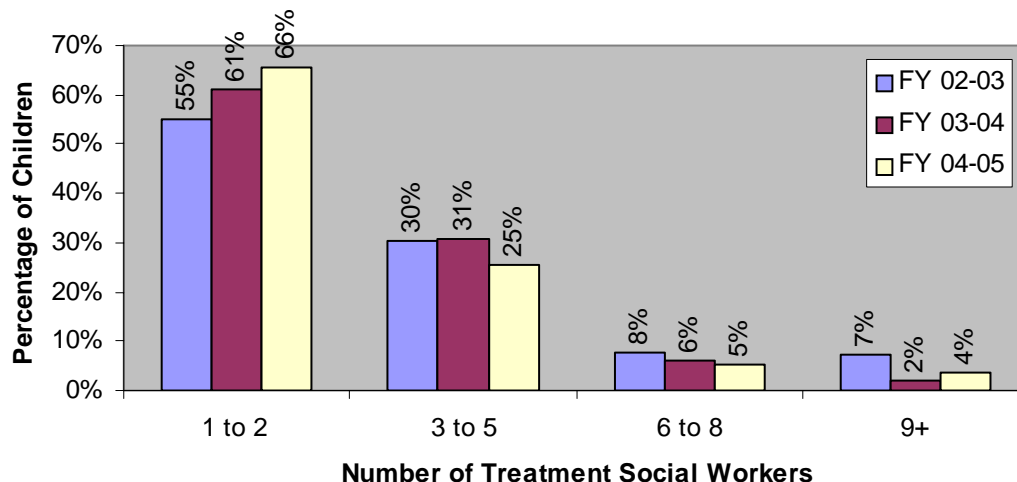
**Planned Permanent Living Arrangement:** A permanency plan to provide physical and emotional permanency for a youth who resides in an out-of-home placement.

**Reunification:** A permanency plan to return a child to the home of his/her parent or where the child remains in the physical custody of his/her parent.

About the Data:

★Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Number of Treatment Social Workers Child Experienced  
at Last Review**



Since entering custody **3** children had **15** treatment social workers.

**62% of local review boards identify high treatment social worker turnover as one of their top concerns.**

More board member concerns and observations can be found in Section VI.

**The treatment social worker is *the* pivotal person in the child's case. S/he is the one who:**

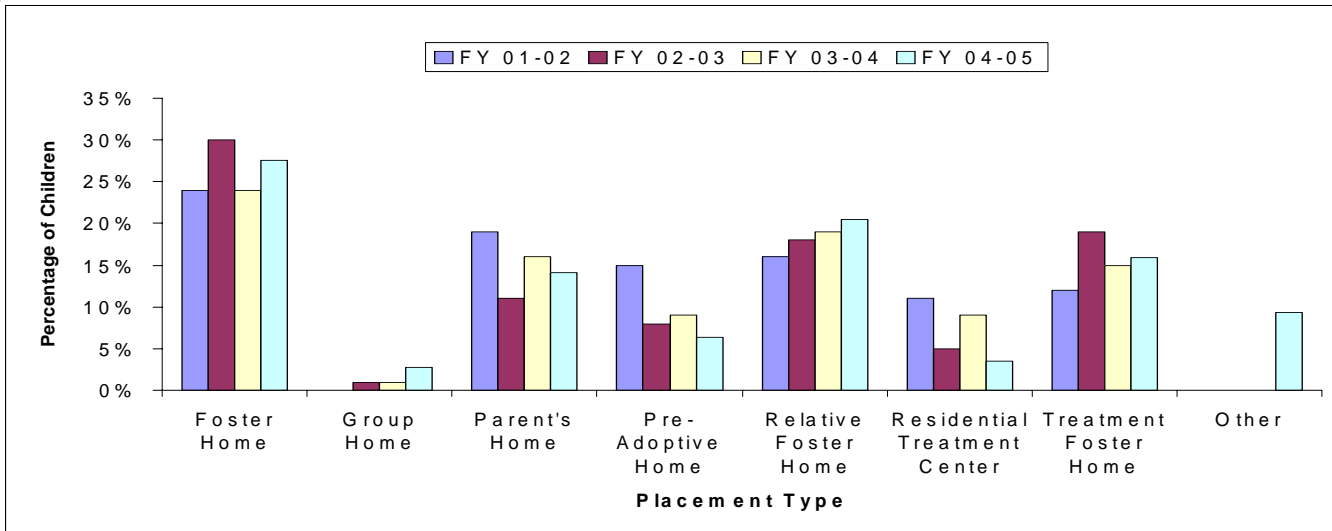
- Manages the case (including being in contact with the parents, child, foster parents, and service providers).
- Works to ensure that parent and child receive necessary therapy and services.
- Monitors child and parent visits.
- Visits the children, often providing transportation to appointments.
- Helps the foster parents address the child's needs and finds new placements when appropriate.
- Attends essential meetings (i.e., court hearings and CRB reviews).

**Treatment social worker turnover:**

Analysis of CRB Fiscal Year 2005 data shows significant relationships between treatment social worker turnover and both the number of years children remain in custody and the number of placements they experience while in custody. More information on the impact of treatment social worker turnover can be found in this report under Factors Impacting Number of Placements for Children and Factors Impacting Number of Years Children Remain in Custody.

*For additional information, see our interim report: **Spotlight On: The Turnover Among Social Workers at the Children, Youth, and Families Department**, August 2000.*

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Child's Placement Type at Last Review**



**Types of placements for children in custody:**

- **Foster Home:** A home that has been licensed and trained by CYFD to care for foster children until a permanent placement can be secured.
- **Group Home:** A placement where a number of children live in a supervised setting. Treatment is often provided outside of this setting. Treatment that is provided in group homes is less specialized than at Residential Treatment Centers or Psychiatric Hospitals.
- **Parent's Home:** A child remains in the parent's home while in the legal custody of the state. The parent continues to follow a treatment plan to remedy abuse and neglect and to regain full custody of the child.
- **Pre-Adoptive Home:** A family which is in the process of adopting one or more child.
- **Relative Foster Home:** A relative that has been licensed and trained by CYFD to care for foster children.
- **Residential Treatment Center (RTC):** A specialized center, less restrictive than a psychiatric hospital but more restrictive than a group home. Children reside at the RTC while receiving treatment for psychological disorders, substance abuse, and emotional/behavioral problems.
- **Treatment Foster Home:** A foster home that has been licensed by a treatment foster care agency. These homes assist children with severe emotional and behavioral problems. They have more requirements and receive additional training and support than do regular foster homes.
- **Other:** A placement that may include but is not limited to emergency shelters, juvenile justice facilities, independent living arrangements, psychiatric facilities, and children on runaway status.

# Why does the Number of Placements Matter?

Placements are often considered one of the most important factors that impact the lives and futures of children in the abuse and neglect system. When a child is placed in a safe and loving home, the child has the opportunity to fulfill his/her potential, heal from the trauma they experienced in an abusive or neglectful home, and learn to trust that his/her physical and emotional needs will be met. When placements disrupt this healing process may be stunted.

Imagine the experience of children in typical military families. These families may move once every four years. Children often struggle with finding their way in new schools and communities, frequently struggling to make friends and establish themselves as individuals in their new environments. Fortunately for these children and their families, they have one another to create a sense of consistency and normalcy during this disruptive time.

Now imagine the average child CRB reviewed in Fiscal Year 2005 who, instead of making one move every four years, had four moves in two years. These children, unlike military children, do not have the consistency of a single family culture to provide stability, security, and a sense of well-being in the midst of already traumatic experiences. Regardless of how dedicated and loving placements may be, the experience of disrupting a child's home life to move to another carries long-term consequences for children. In recognition of this fact, the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) creates a legal structure that requires states to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by the foster care system. National standards are based upon state's compliance at the 75th percentile that 86.7% of the children in foster care for less than 12 months have two or fewer placements.

Each time a child is moved to a new placement there is the possibility:

- they will have to change schools
- they will lose critical social bonds with friends, family, and trusted adults
- they will have to learn new household rules and family cultures that include minor language differences, food differences, and more
- they will struggle to create bonds with new families

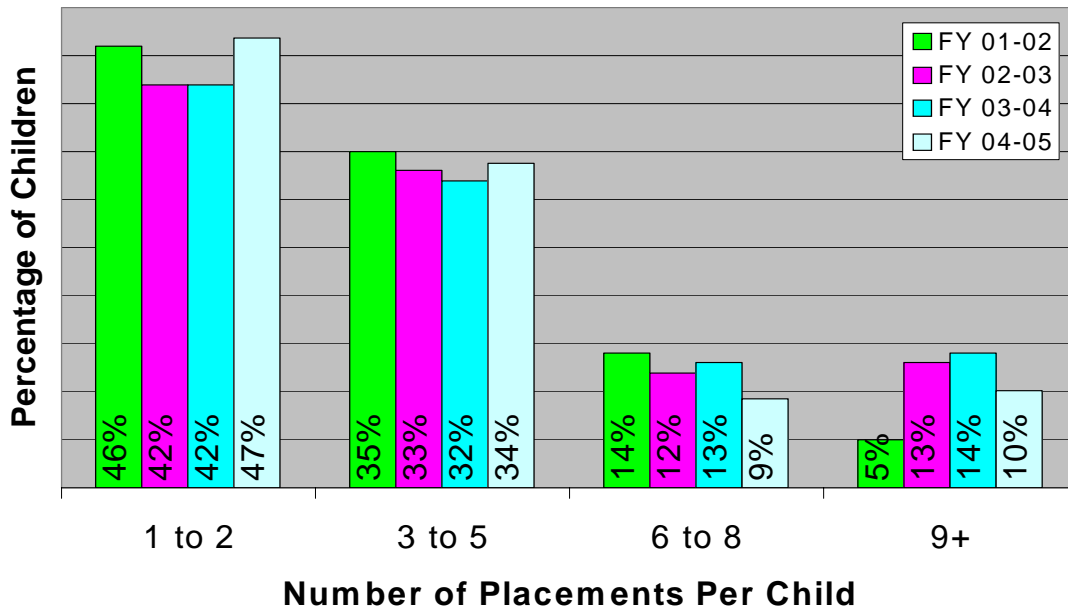
Three-Year Comparison of Other Types of Placements				
	<u>Runaways</u>	<u>Independent Living Programs</u>	<u>Incarcerated</u>	<u>Psychiatric Facility</u>
FY 02-03	19 children	7 children	6 children	7 children
FY 03-04	10 children	19 children	8 children	10 children
FY 04-05	30 children	42 children	24 children	12 children

#### About the Data:

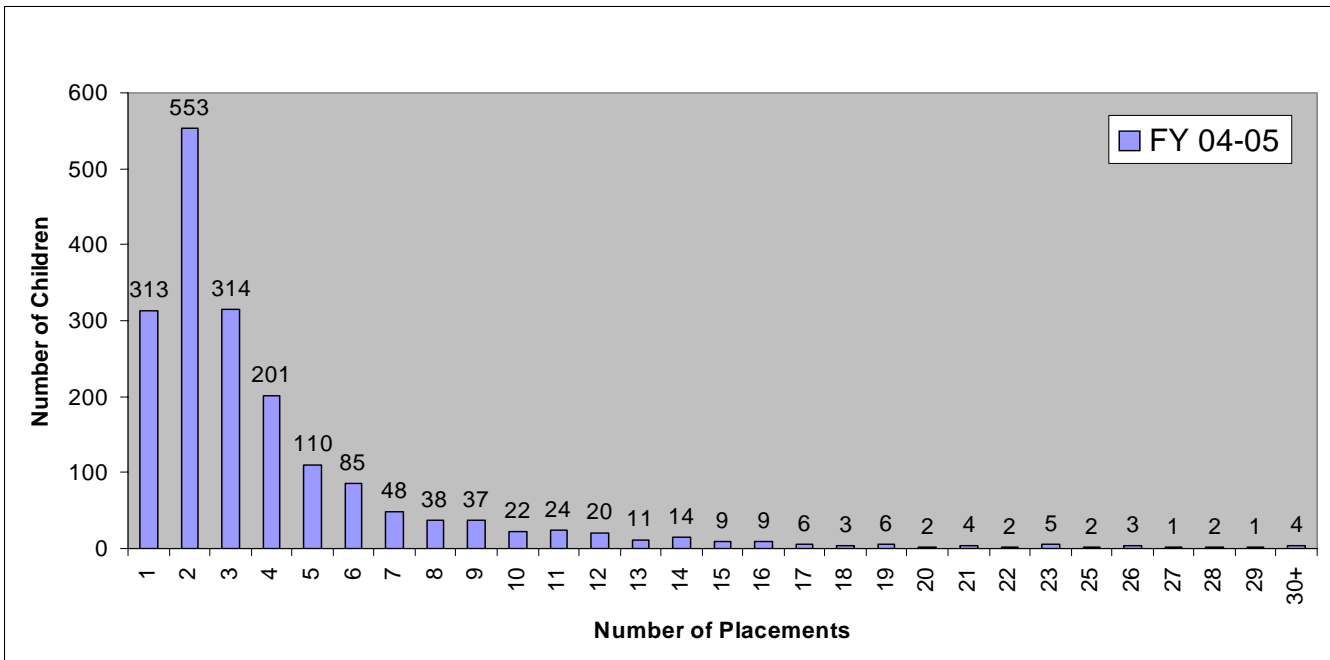
- ★ Other placements include emergency shelters, juvenile justice facilities, independent living arrangements, psychiatric facilities, and runaway status.
- ★ The category of other placements was not included in analysis on a comparative level prior to CRB Fiscal Year 2005. Thus prior years will not indicate a percentage relative to Fiscal Year 2005.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB

## Number of Placements Since Custody at Last Review



Both charts are compiled using the same data for Fiscal Year 2005 on number of placements per child at last CRB review. While the majority of children are experiencing five or fewer placements while in custody, there is still great concern for the child that had as many as 37 placements in light of the trauma caused by numerous placements.



# Factors Related to Number of Placements for Children

**Three factors significantly related to number of placements children experience in custody:**

- ① **number of years in custody**
- ② **number of treatment social workers a child experiences**
- ③ **child's age**

## Summary:

Increasing the stability of foster care placements is a priority of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA.) ASFA envisions that children in substitute care should have no more than two placements in the first year of custody. In order to speak to this standard, CRB has analyzed a number of factors that are related to the number of placements children experience in custody. The number of years a child spends in custody, the number of treatment social workers a child experiences, and the child's age each have a statistically significant relationship to the number of placements a child will experience. CRB data suggests that as the number of years in custody increases so does the number of placements. In addition, an increase in the number of treatment social workers a child experiences is related to an increase in the number of placements, while a smaller number of treatment social workers is strongly related to fewer placements. As the child's age increases, the data suggests, the number of placements that child experiences would also increase.

## Analysis:

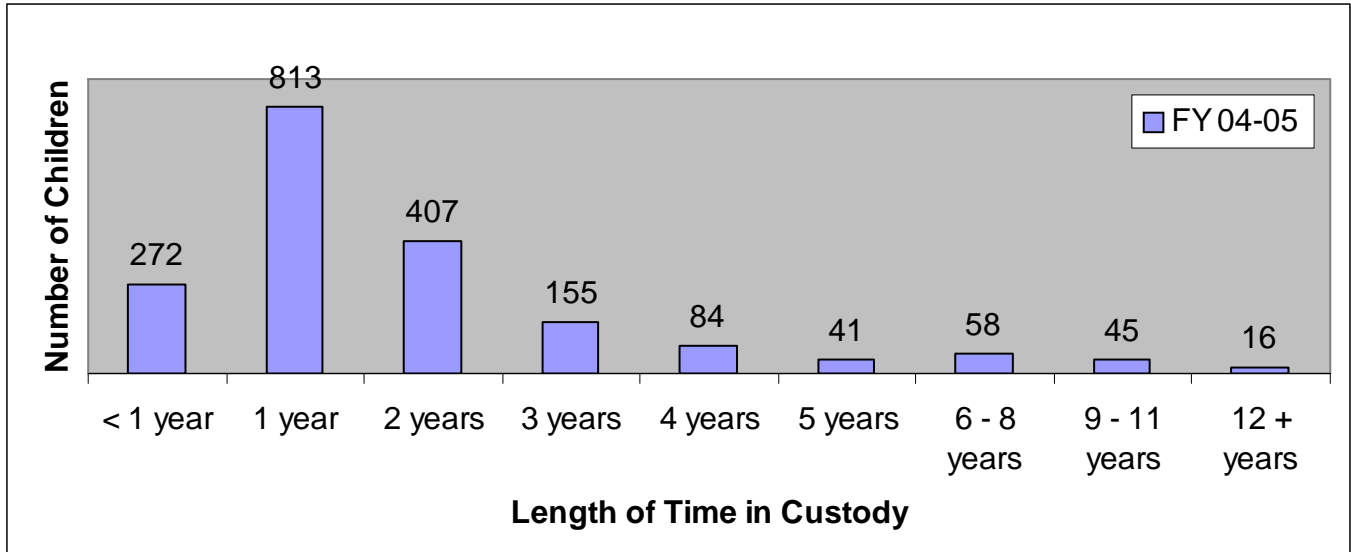
A correlational analysis of CRB Fiscal Year 2005 data shows that a child's number of years in custody is more strongly related to the number of placements than is the number of treatment social workers the child experiences. While the number of treatment social workers is strongly related to the number of placements, the number of years in custody is more strongly related to the number of placements. Relative to number of social workers, a child's age is slightly less related to the number of placements. The number of treatment social workers is significantly related to the number of placements a child experiences even when we remove the variance it shares with years in custody and child's age.

## Discussion:

While years in custody and age may seem obvious factors in determining the number of placements a child experiences, the significance of treatment social worker turnover for children is highlighted by this analysis. Just as high numbers of placements negatively impact children, the impact of treatment social worker turnover cannot be overemphasized for children. This analysis indicates that increased turnover of treatment social workers is strongly related with children experiencing more placements. Like placement changes, treatment social worker turnover has a negative impact on children through loss of historical case and family knowledge and through disrupted trust and bonding between child and treatment social worker. By reducing the number of social worker/child disruptions the trauma a child experiences can be reduced. It is possible that by reducing treatment social worker turnover the number of years children spend in custody would also be reduced, leading to more positive outcomes for New Mexico's children. For more information about CRB's recommendations, please refer to Section I: Executive Summary and Recommendations in this report.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB

## Length of Custody for Children in Custody at Last Review



The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) anticipates each child will be permanently placed within 22 months absent any compelling reason. While the vast majority of children (79%) reviewed by CRB have been in custody two (2) years or less, there is concern for the child that remains in custody for as many 16 years.

- Children that enter custody due to **sexual abuse**
  - ❖ remain in custody an average of **2 years and 4 months**
- Children that enter custody due to **physical abuse**
  - ❖ remain in custody an average of **2 years and 3 months**
- Children that enter custody due to **neglect**
  - ❖ remain in custody an average of **1 year and 11 months**

# Factors Related to Number of Years Children Remain in Custody

**Three factors that significantly related to number of years children remain in custody:**

- ① **number of treatment social workers a child experiences**
- ② **number of placements**
- ③ **child's age**

## Summary:

In addition to focusing on increasing stability of foster care placements, the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) also lists reducing the years children spend in custody as a priority. ASFA recommends that children be placed in permanent homes within two years of entering custody. The following is intended to analyze factors that may hinder or expedite the time children remain in substitute care. CRB's analysis found that the number of treatment social workers a child experiences, the number of placements a child has, and the child's age all have statistically significant relationships to the number of years a child remains in custody. As the number of years a child spends in custody increases, so does the number of treatment workers responsible for managing the child's care. Also, fewer treatment social workers relates to fewer years in custody for children. Interestingly, the same applies to the number of placements a child experiences. An increase in number of placements relates to an increase in years a child remains in custody and an increase in the number of different treatment workers responsible for his/her care.

## Analysis:

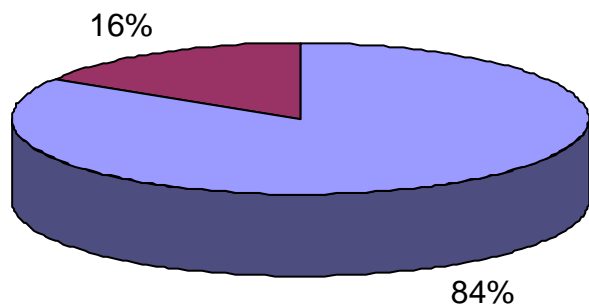
A correlational analysis of CRB Fiscal Year 2005 data shows that the number of treatment social workers a child has had and the number of placements a child experiences in custody are more strongly related to number of years in custody than age. While age is strongly related to number of years in custody, the number of treatment social workers and the number of placements are much more strongly related. All three relationships are statistically significant. In addition, the number of treatment social workers is significantly related to the number of years a child spends in custody even when we remove the variance it shares with child's age and number of placements.

## Discussion:

Interestingly, it is the number of treatment social workers that is most strongly related to number of years in custody, followed by number of placements. Of the three factors, age has the weakest relationship with number of years in custody. While it may seem obvious that more treatment social workers, more placements, and children's age would be related to length of time children spend in custody, the strength of each relationship suggests that stability (both placement stability and treatment social worker stability) for children in custody becomes less likely the longer they remain in the state's care. While some factors may be outside CYFD control, this analysis speaks to the important role of treatment social workers in the lives of children in the abuse and neglect system. It is generally accepted that reducing the length of time children remain in custody and reducing the number of placements they experience leads to more positive outcomes for children. CRB's analysis indicates that treatment social worker turnover is related to children experiencing both increased numbers of placements and more years in custody and is obviously related to child's care being the responsibility of numerous treatment workers. Therefore, CRB supports efforts to reduce treatment social worker turnover in an effort to achieve better outcomes for children. For more information about CRB's recommendations, please refer to Section I: Executive Summary and Recommendations in this report.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Children Identified with Behavioral and/or Emotional Problems  
Receiving Psychological Therapy at Last Review**

■ Receiving Therapy ■ Not Receiving Therapy



1,221 children reviewed by CRB were identified to have *behavioral and/or emotional problems*.

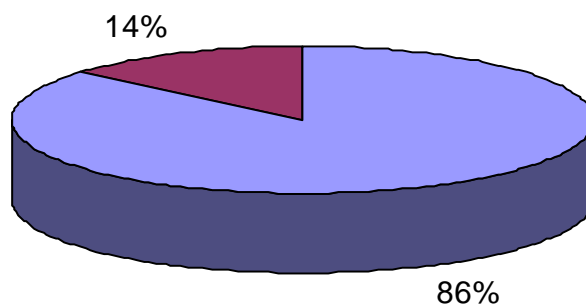
176 of those children were *not receiving psychological treatment*.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Children Identified as Sexually Abused  
Receiving Psychological Therapy at Last Review**

■ Receiving Therapy ■ Not Receiving Therapy

314 children reviewed by CRB were *sexually abused*.

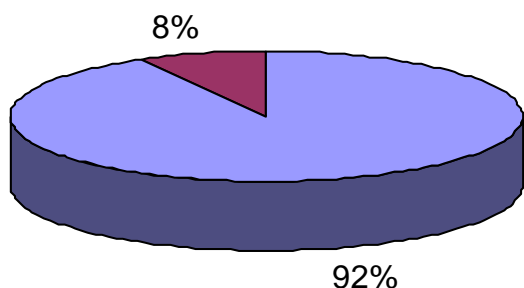
43 of those children were *not receiving psychological treatment*.



*Children that have been sexually abused ranged in age from infants to 17 years old.*

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Children with Sex Offending Issues  
Receiving Psychological Therapy at Last Review**

■ Receiving Therapy ■ Not Receiving Therapy



Of the **62** children with sex offending issues, **5** were *not* receiving psychological treatment.

Children with sex offending issues ranged in age at last review from 6 - 18 years old. At this time CRB cannot determine the age at which the child began perpetrating against other children.

### Treatment Matters

Why does treatment matter? In this analysis we cannot say whether psychological treatment was ordered by the treatment plan. We cannot say whether or not children have received psychological treatment in the past. We cannot speak to the quality of psychological treatment children received. We cannot attest to how long a child has received psychological treatment. Nor can we make any solid statements about whether or not the needs of these children were met by receiving psychological treatment. Why then discuss psychological treatment at all?

While none of the above statements can be made by the CRB without further data collection, treatment is known to be an important part of healing, especially for abused and neglected children. The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) highlights this point by measuring a child's well-being in terms of access to appropriate treatment.

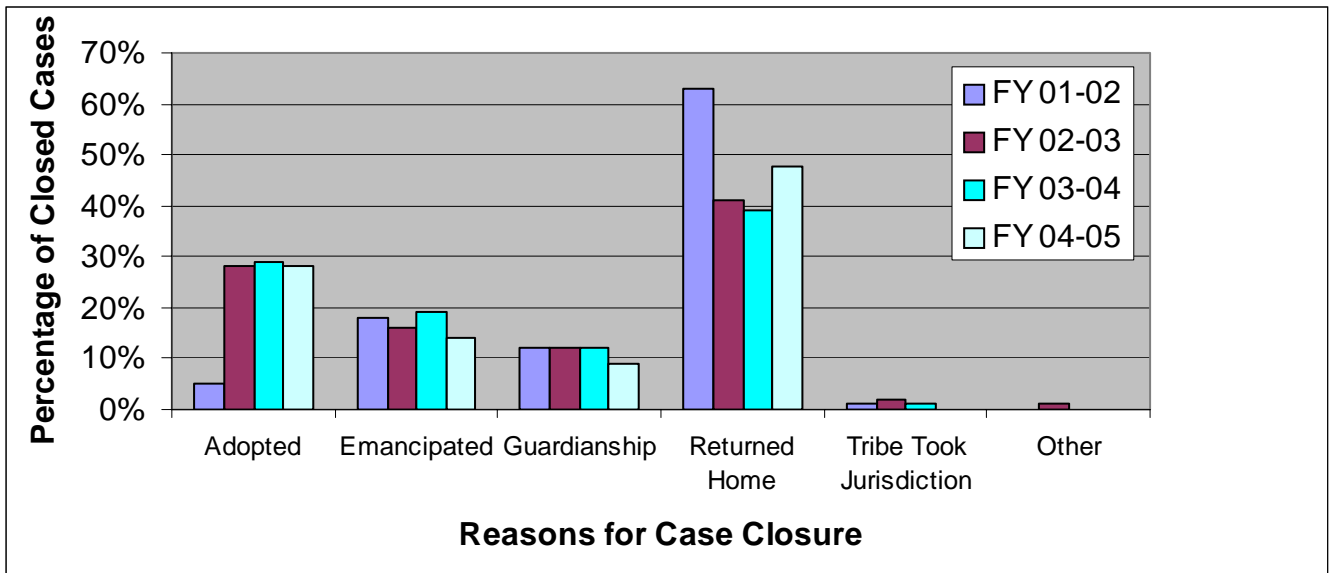
Successful treatment plays a critical role in:

- quality of life
- healing
- prevention of future harmful activities to the child's self and others into the future
- successfully locating and maintaining healthy permanency for children
- physical and emotional health and well-being
- safety
- reducing the length of time in custody, while those that do not receive adequate treatment may require higher levels of care as they age
- reducing the number of treatment social workers
- saving taxpayer dollars in terms of prevention of future medical, mental, and criminal costs

For additional information, see our interim report: **Spotlight On: Child Sexual Abuse and Sex Offender Accountability**, October 2002.

Of the 1,891 children reviewed by CRB  
**Reason for Case Closure**

- ◊ Of the 1,891 children’s cases reviewed by CRB this fiscal year, **438** were closed.
- ◊ Of those 438, **48%** of the children were **returned home** and **28%** were **adopted**.



**Common Reasons for Case Closure:**

**Adoption:** A permanency plan to create the legal relation of parent and child between child and adults other than the child’s biological parents.

**Guardianship/Permanent Guardianship:** A permanency plan for a child that creates the legal relationship of guardianship between a child and an adult other than the child’s biological parents.

**Reunification/Return Home:** A permanency plan to return a child to the home of his/her parent or where the child remains in the physical custody of his/her parent.

About the Data:

★Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.