



*Working for Kentucky's Future . . .  
Our Children*

**Citizen Foster Care Review Board**  
**2002 ANNUAL REPORT**



**M**ore than 5,500 children are currently in the custody of the Cabinet for Families and Children because they have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect or dependency.

The Kentucky Juvenile Code requires the Citizen Foster Care Review Board to conduct reviews on behalf of these children. The Administrative Office of the Courts takes pride in supporting the Citizen Foster Care Review Board and the efforts of more than 140 local boards throughout the commonwealth. Last year alone, the boards conducted 16,899 reviews of 7,800 children. In that regard, Citizen Foster Care Review Boards have provided safety, security and stability for thousands of Kentucky's children.

*Joseph E. Lambert*  
*Chief Justice*  
*Supreme Court of Kentucky*

# *FY 2002 CFCRB Annual Report*

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*From the General Manager's Perspective:*  
**Highlights and Summary**  
*FY 2002*

*Patrick Yewell*  
*General Manager, Department of Dependent Children*  
*Administrative Office of the Courts*

I am pleased to present the 2002 annual report for the Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board. Each year the CFCRB conducts a review of Kentucky's children in out-of-home care and publishes the latest information on the state of Kentucky's foster care system.

This year's review revealed a number of significant findings. The following highlights provide an overview of the FY 2002 annual report, but I invite you to read the entire report as it provides a thoughtful and detailed look at the operations of the CFCRB.

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- Last year the CFCRB conducted 16,899 reviews of 7,800 children, compared to 14,173 reviews conducted the previous year. This represents an increase of 19 percent.
  - It was reported that the average length of stay experienced by children in foster care is 36.1 months. However, the Cabinet for Families and Children reported that the median length of stay for children in foster care is 15.5 months.
  - Since 1999, the number of children in out-of-home care has decreased by more than 1,000.
  - African-American youth are disproportionately represented in Kentucky's foster care system. African-American youth make up just 9 percent

of Kentucky's juvenile population, yet they make up more than 22 percent of Kentucky's foster care population.

- Minority youth experience longer stays in foster care than Caucasian youth. While Caucasian youth spend an average of 30.6 months, minority youth spend an average of 44.6 months in foster care.
- CFCRBs have reported that children do not receive all needed educational services only 1.5 percent of the time and do not attend all medical and counseling appointments only .6 percent of the time.
- This year 16.9 percent of the children reviewed were adopted, while last year 14.3 percent of the children reviewed were adopted.
- Children who are adopted experience an average of 45 months in foster care before they are adopted.
- CFCRBs reported that more than 50 percent of the case plans are not signed by the parents or parent.
- A total of 2,971 files were either not provided or not up to date. This is a 60 percent increase over last year's total of 1,858.

# Dependent Children's Services Department

## An Overview

**F**Y 2002 was an eventful year for the Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board. This report provides information about CFCRB activities along with recommendations and statistics relating to the cases reviewed by CFCRBs around the state during the past fiscal year. This report also includes an overview of the Administrative Office of the Courts' Dependent Children's Services Department, a discussion of the Court Improvement Project and Guardian *Ad Litem* Training program, and a detailed presentation of the CFCRBs.

### Dependent Children's Services

Dependent Children's Services oversees and supports child advocacy boards and initiatives that expedite the permanent placement of Kentucky's abused and neglected children. It promotes education and accountability among professionals who provide services to dependent children.

Dependent Children's Services also recruits, trains and provides services to volunteers for CFCRBs, administers the Kentucky Court Improvement Project (CIP) and coordinates education programs for the Guardian *Ad Litem* Training program.

### Court Improvement Project

The mission of the Court Improvement Project is to evaluate abuse, neglect and dependency courts to develop best practice guidelines and technology to help courts streamline and improve the placement process for children and their permanent custodians.

Over the next year, the CIP will focus on five primary areas — evaluation, Guardian *Ad Litem* Training, support to the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, the statewide tracking system and the "one legal voice" initiative.

### Evaluation

In conjunction with an accredited university, the CIP will conduct an evaluation of Kentucky's court

system over the next year. The goal of this research project is to use qualitative and quantitative research methods to present findings, conclusions and recommendations relating to:

- a) The requirements set forth by the Kentucky Juvenile Code and the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997, with an emphasis on time lines, and
- b) The 45 federal performance indicators relating to the legal and judicial issues suggested by the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs).

The Adoption and Safe Families Act has been incorporated into Kentucky law for more than four years and the federal Child and Family Services Reviews are to be conducted in Kentucky in the spring of 2003. Thus, the time is right for this evaluation.

### Court Appointed Special Advocates

The Court Improvement Project will provide support to the Kentucky Appointed Special Advocate program over the next year. CASA volunteers are trained to represent children in dependency, neglect and abuse proceedings. CASA volunteers attend court hearings, monitor the child and visit with the child. This is an exceptionally worthwhile program that provides the child with an additional voice in the courtroom.

Currently, there are 47 counties with either an established CASA program or an interest in starting a CASA program. With the executive director as the only staff person, it has become increasingly difficult to adequately meet the training needs for this number of counties.

In addition, Kentucky CASA will adopt statewide standards for CASA programs in Kentucky, which will mean a greater need for training and technical support to help programs meet these standards. By supporting the CASA program, the CIP ensures that more children will benefit from having a CASA volunteer while in foster care.

## — Guardian Ad Litem Program —

A guardian *ad litem* (GAL) is an attorney appointed by the court to represent the child's best interests in a dependency, neglect or abuse proceeding. Kentucky law states that a GAL shall be appointed in every dependency, neglect and abuse case.

The Court Improvement Project supports a GAL training program designed to organize and coordinate training for those serving as a guardian *ad litem*, to compile and provide materials to GALs, and to serve as a resource person for GALs. The training program is coordinated by a GAL education specialist who also acts as a liaison with Citizen Foster Care Review Board volunteers as well as the Cabinet for Families and Children, the courts and other children's advocacy groups.

The current GAL training is based on a curriculum created for District and Family courts. This training gives the child's attorney an overview of Kentucky statutory and case law while providing an overview of federal law that requires reasonable efforts to keep families together and provide children with safe and permanent homes.

Attorneys are also introduced to the dynamics of child abuse and neglect, including child development theory and techniques to use when communicating with children. The mission of the training is to promote competent GAL practice within Kentucky's Juvenile Court system pursuant to KRS 620 et seq. The GAL program also trains and educates attorneys who are appointed to represent children regarding termination of parental rights proceedings. The overall goal of the GAL program is to promote permanency for children who enter the foster care system by affording them better legal representation.

The GAL training took place in eight different locations last year, including Family Courts, District Courts and at the Kentucky Bar Association's District Bar training. As a result, more than 250 attorneys were trained in the last year alone.

## — Tracking System —

Thanks to the Court Improvement Project, Kentucky has successfully developed a statewide tracking system which consists of data pertaining to children who have entered the custody and care of Kentucky's

Cabinet for Families and Children (CFC). Kentucky's tracking system was developed in 1997 and houses data relating to more than 20,000 children who have been involved with our court system and social services due to abuse, neglect and dependency.

The sources for the data now include the unified court information system (KYCourts), court orders, CFC case plans, Excel files of children in out-of-home care shared by CFC, CFC's information system and Citizen Foster Care Review Board reviews. The tracking system contains several variables relating to children in our foster care system, including name, date of birth, race, sex, Social Security number, CFC number, court case number, case type, permanency plan, date of entry into foster care, date permanency hearing should be held, date of exit out of foster care, to whom the child is released, length of stay in foster care and county of custody.

The tracking system also tracks CFCRB volunteer data and contains codes that track the board's activity and conditions of files reviewed. That data is presented in a subsequent section of this report.

## — Dependency, Neglect, Abuse Forms —

During the past year, the CIP assisted in improving the forms used by the courts in abuse, neglect and dependency cases. The Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children, along with the CIP, recently established a forms work group. The work group was charged with:

- Encouraging form standardization throughout the state.
- Examining possible statute reform on form usage.
- Ensuring that information collected on court forms is compliant with Kentucky statutes, ASFA and Title IV-E reimbursement requirements.

New forms have been drafted and released this year. Project staff members have already begun forms training for judges and clerks. Family Court clerks were trained at this year's Family Court Conference. Judges from around the state were trained at the judicial training track of the annual Kentucky Bar Association meeting. At this meeting, Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert spoke to the judges about the significance and importance of using the new forms.

## One Child, One Legal Voice

The CIP's "one child, one legal voice" initiative is an effort to provide every child removed from his or her home with efficient and effective legal representation from the Commonwealth's Attorney's office. This initiative is based on the premise that every child should have the same attorney working diligently on behalf of his or her best interest from the time of removal through adoption or reunification.

A risk assessment matrix is used by courts in Laurel and Knox counties to identify those cases that are most likely to lead to termination of parental rights proceedings. The matrix identifies children age eight and younger who are at the highest risk for lingering in the foster care system. The Commonwealth's Attorney's office is paying close attention to these cases and is applying the "one child, one legal voice" ethos through its legal practices and out-of-court contacts with the children.

The process requires the Cabinet for Families and Children to complete the matrix at the initial screen-

ing. If the Cabinet for Families and Children determines that the child meets the criteria of being high risk, then a social worker will call both the Administrative Office of the Courts' field coordinator's office and the Commonwealth's Attorney's office. At this time, a meeting is scheduled to review the case and decide if the child will become a grant case. If it is decided that the child is defined as high risk, then the Commonwealth's Attorney's office will handle the case in place of the Cabinet's attorney throughout the entire court process until reunification with the parents or termination of parental rights.

Using the Commonwealth's Attorney as opposed to the Cabinet's attorney has eliminated numerous delays and legal hurdles. The Commonwealth's Attorney is filing all paperwork on time, which ensures that cases are heard at a more rapid pace. The Commonwealth's Attorney also has a strong working relationship with the Cabinet. This means that when social workers appear in court, they are more prepared to present the appropriate information regarding these cases. This helps the court process move more swiftly and assists the judge in his or her understanding of the cases.

## CFCRB Regional Reports

*Continued from page 16*

### Region 7

*Submitted by Debbie Laferty*

Over the past year, CFCRBs in Eastern Kentucky have grown significantly. Boards are located in every county, and are meeting and exceeding statutory requirements. Six trainings have been conducted in this region and have yielded 35 new volunteers.

Eastern Kentucky has proven to be one of the most difficult areas in Kentucky from which to recruit new volunteers. Pike, Wolfe, Knott and Breathitt counties all have new boards. Johnson, Lawrence, Estill, Floyd, Greenup, Magoffin, Lee and Owsley counties had a few volunteers and were not meeting on a regular basis. However, all are currently meeting monthly with additional volunteers on each board. I have conducted 209 site visits in Region 7.

Interested party reviews are now taking place in Powell County. One review assured a 17-year-old female in foster care a change in her case plan and a

safe and secure placement. Both Family and District Court judges in this region have had extensive involvement with CFCRBs in their respective districts and circuits. I have also been providing quarterly reports to judges in this region. Judges have been eager to provide their comments and suggestions for their respective boards.

### Region 8 Update

*Submitted by Billy Stover*

I began working as the coordinator for Region 8 in December 2001. Since that time, I have conducted 90 site visits and traveled more than 7,700 miles. All boards in Region 8 are in compliance with statutory requirements.

Two initial trainings for new and current volunteers have been conducted and 93 volunteers have completed training. An appreciation ceremony was conducted in Hardin County. At the ceremony, two District judges met with all volunteers and expressed appreciation for all the hard work done by the CFCRB. Also, interested party reviews are now being conducted regularly in Hardin County.

# FY 2002 Significant Findings and Conclusions

## State of the CFCRB

Case reviews are required at least once every six months or until the child is no longer in the custody of the cabinet or until an adoption proceeding becomes final. Reviews occur when:

- Findings, recommendations and comments pertaining to children in foster care are generated and provided to judges and the Cabinet for Families and Children, and/or
- The status of a child in foster care or his or her file is determined and reported to the Central Office.

### CFCRB Activity Highlights

- During FY 2002, the review boards conducted 16,899 reviews of 7,800 children compared to 14,173 reviews of 6,514 children in FY 2001. This represents an increase of 19 percent.
- Children were reviewed an average of 2.2 times during the year.
- Of the children reviewed, 3,344 of those were released. The remaining 4,456 children reviewed were still actively in foster care as of Aug. 15, 2002.
- Of those reviewed, 492 children's files were not available and the files of 2,479 were not up to date. Therefore, a total of 2,971 files were either not provided or were not current. This is a 60 percent increase over last year's total of 1,858.
- During FY 2002, the review boards reported a total of 963 board meetings to the Central Office. This is up from last year's total of 918 board meetings.
- On average, each board conducted 6.7 meetings.

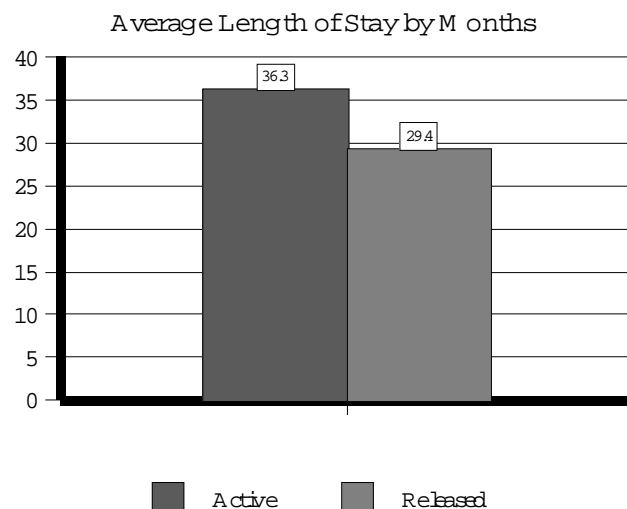
### CFCRB Case Statistics

CFCRB statistics represent all of the children whose cases were reviewed by local boards between July 1,

2001, and July 1, 2002. Children in temporary custody for less than 45 days were excluded from the analysis. All calculations and percentages are based on the number of cases that had sufficient information for computation.

Statistics presented in this report refer to "active" and "released" children. Children specified as "active" were in foster care as of Aug. 1, 2002, and were reviewed at some point during the fiscal year. Children specified as "released" were no longer in the custody of the state as of Aug. 1, 2002, and were reviewed at some point during the fiscal year.

There are several comparisons between CFCRB and Cabinet for Families and Children statistics in the following pages. The comparisons are based on children the CFCRB specified as "active" and children specified as "active" by the CFC. The CFC considers "active" children to be those who were in foster care on the last day of the federal fiscal year 2001. All CFC statistics were gathered from the June 30, 2002, Kentucky Child and Family Services Review Data Profile.



- According to CFCRB data, children stay, on average, a little more than 36 months in foster care. The median length of stay for active children is 28.6 months.

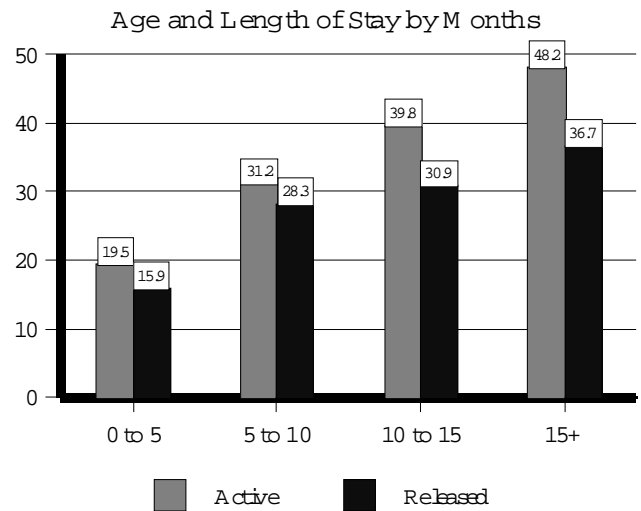


- In the Kentucky Child and Family Services Review Data Profile, CFC reports that the median length of stay for active children is 15.5 months.

- There is a significant discrepancy in the length of stay figures reported by the CFCRB and CFC. A possible explanation is that children who are in custody for less than 45 days accounted for the CFC calculation for median length of stay. Therefore, at the time of the calculation, all children who had been in custody for only 24 hours or more were part of the analysis. The CFCRB calculation for the average length of stay and median length of stay includes the analysis of those children who have been in the custody of the CFC for 45 days or longer.

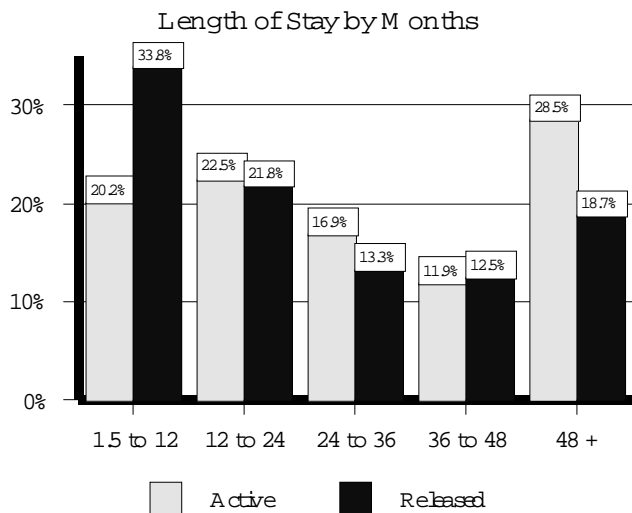
- More than 70 percent of the active children had been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months as of Aug. 1, 2002.

- Children in this category (15 of the last 22 months) had spent an average of 46 months in foster care as of Aug. 1, 2002.



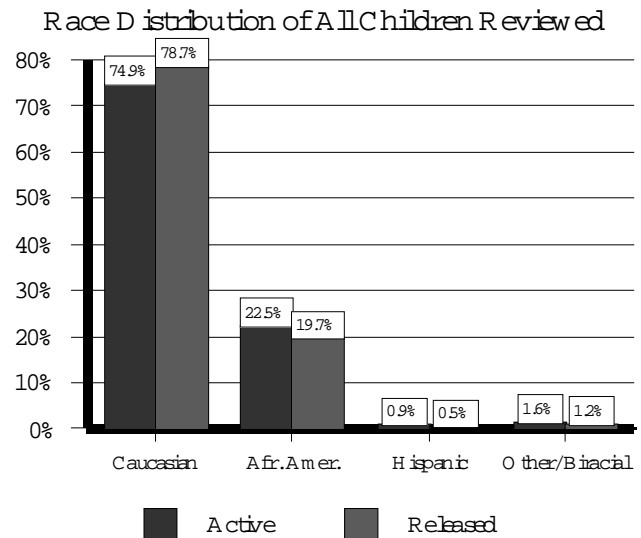
- If a child is at least 15 years old or older and is in foster care, he or she may expect to stay in foster care for more than three and a half years.

- If a child is at least 10 years old or older and enters into foster care, he or she may expect to stay in foster care for at least three years.

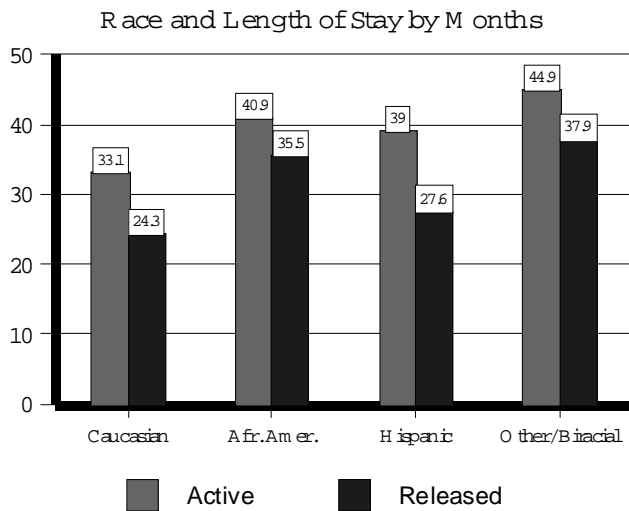


- More than 30 percent of the children in Kentucky's foster care system are 15 years of age or older.

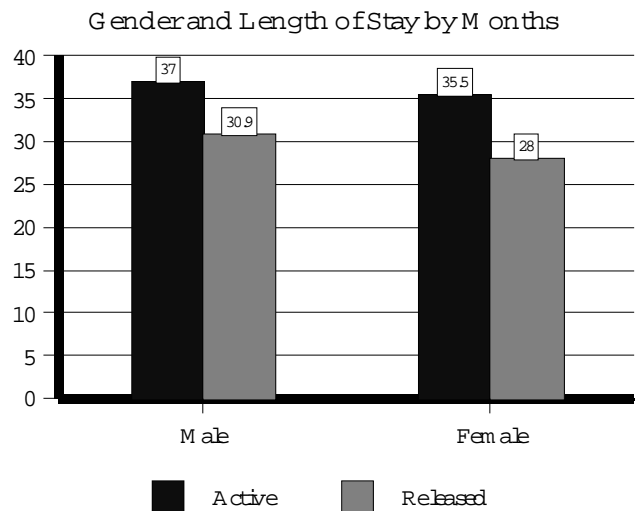
- More than 56 percent of the children in Kentucky's foster care system are 10 years of age or older.



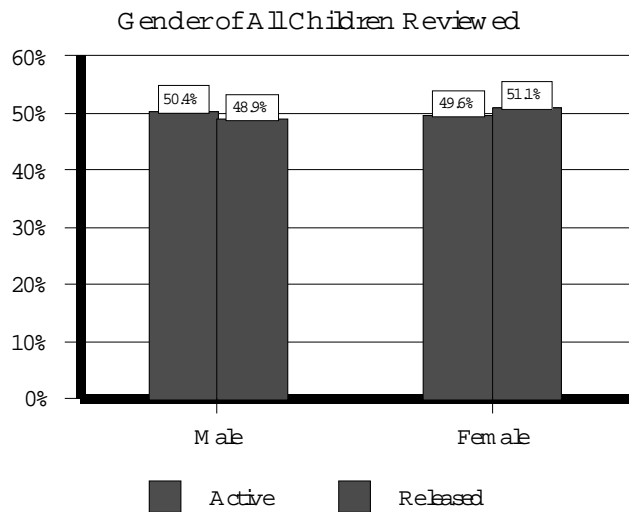
- African-American children are disproportionately represented in Kentucky's foster care system. African-American youth make up 9 percent of Kentucky's juvenile population yet they make up 22 percent of Kentucky's foster care population.



- Minority youth experience longer stays in foster care than Caucasian youth. While Caucasian youth spend an average of 30.6 months, minority youth spend an average of 44.6 months in foster care.

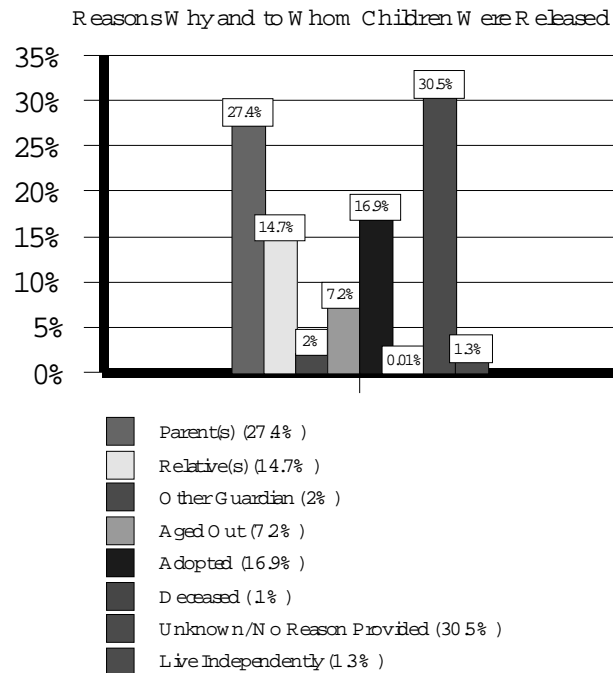


- There are no significant discrepancies in the average length of stay in foster care for male and female children.



- Both male and female children are equally represented in the foster care system.

- It does not appear that gender is a factor relating to the permanent placement of children.



- Almost 17 percent of the children reviewed were adopted. This is up from last year's total of 14.3 percent.

- The average length of time experienced by these children between entry into care and adoption was 45 months. The Cabinet for Families and Children reports that the median number of months to discharge for adopted children is 40.5 months.

### Case Types

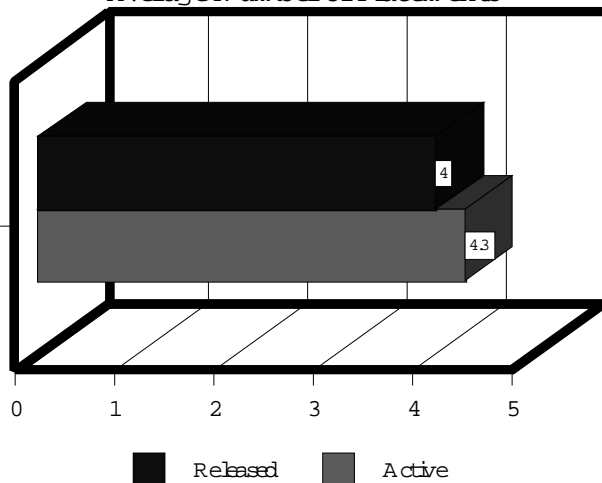
#### Active Children

Case Type	Percentage
Abuse	11.9 percent
Neglect	35.0 percent
Dependency	39.2 percent
Abuse and Neglect	11.8 percent
Status	2.2 percent

#### Released Children

Case Type	Percentage
Abuse	10.5 percent
Neglect	31.8 percent
Dependency	41.2 percent
Abuse and Neglect	11.2 percent
Status	5.2 percent

Average Number of Placements



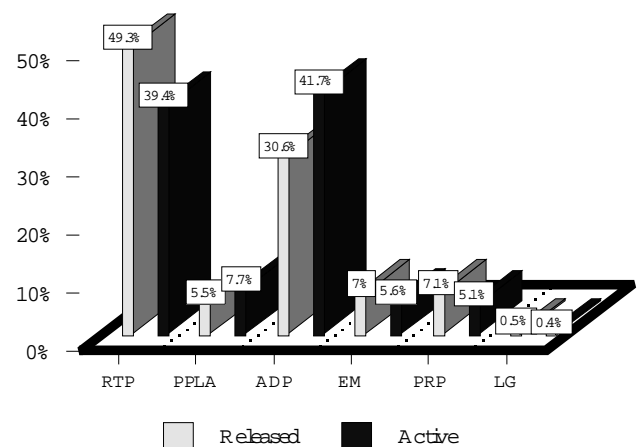
- The CFC reports that 63.7 percent of active children have experienced two or less placements while the CFCRB reports that 48.1 percent of active children have experienced two or less placements.
- The CFC reports that 20.4 percent of active children have experienced three to four placements while the CFCRB reports that 21.5 percent of active children have experienced three to four placements.

### Permanency Plans

#### Permanency Plan Abbreviations

RTP	Return to Parent
ADP	Adoption
PRP	Permanent Relative Placement
PPLA	Planned Permanent Living Arrangement
LG	Legal Guardianship
EM	Emancipation

Permanency Plans



- Review boards report that adoption, at 41.7 percent, is the most common permanency plan for active children, while return to parent is the second most common permanency plan at 39.4 percent. These numbers reflect the practice of concurrent planning as well as ASFA.
- CFC reports that 43.1 percent of active children have a permanency plan of return to parent while 30.3 percent have a permanency plan of adoption. However, both sources indicate that return to parent and adoption are the most commonly pursued permanency plans.

#### Volunteer Agreement and Disagreement With Permanency Plans: Active Children

Permanency Plan	Agree	Disagree
RTP	70.1 percent	29.9 percent
ADP	96.8 percent	3.2 percent
PRP	84.9 percent	15.1 percent
PPLA	97.6 percent	2.4 percent
LG	94.4 percent	5.6 percent
EM	96.3 percent	3.7 percent

### Volunteer Agreement and Disagreement With Permanency Plans: Inactive Children

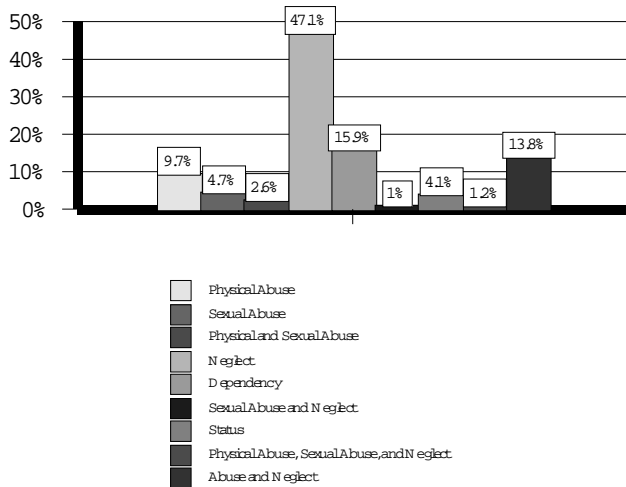
Permanency Plan	Agree	Disagree
RTP	87.3 percent	12.7 percent
ADP	96.4 percent	3.6 percent
PRP	95.1 percent	4.9 percent
PPLA	95.2 percent	4.8 percent
LG	100 percent	0 percent

- Volunteers disagreed with the permanency plan for the child an average of 5.2 percent of the time.
- Volunteer reviewers are most likely to disagree with the permanency plan of return to parent.

### Statewide Sample Data

A sample pertaining to 2,100 of the children reviewed was used to report reasons for removal, reasons for moves, whether or not children moved more than three times during a six-month period, medical and counseling needs, educational needs and sibling visitation. Data was collected from 27 percent of the review boards' completed reviews.

Reasons for Removal

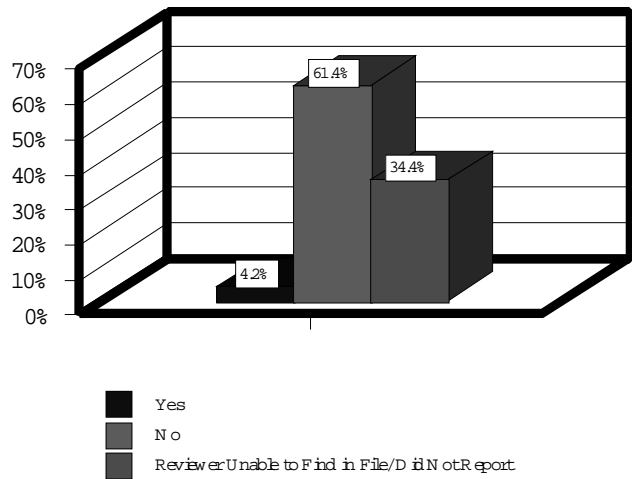


- CFCRB reports that neglect is the most common reason children are removed from their homes while the courts are most likely to make a finding of dependency. Dependency is the most common court case type for children actively in foster care while neglect is the second most common court case type.

### Reasons for Placement Changes

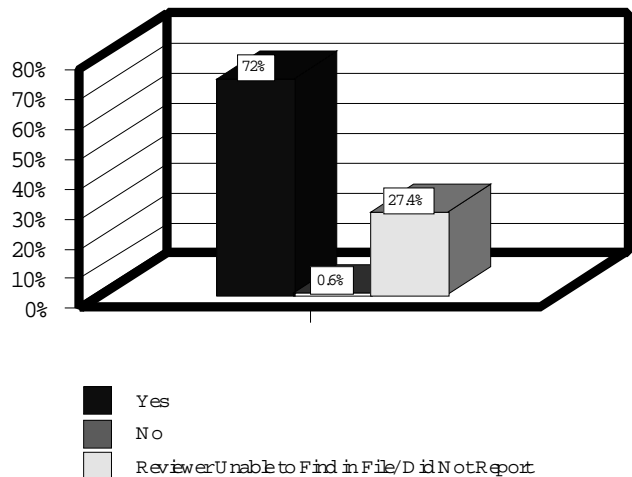
Reason	Percentage
Behavior Problems	17 percent
Relative Unavailable	.5 percent
Returned Home	.6 percent
Inability of Foster Parents	.2 percent
Child's Needs	15.5 percent
No Moves	1.2 percent
Not Reported/Not Found in File	65 percent

Moved More Than 3 Times During 6 Month Period

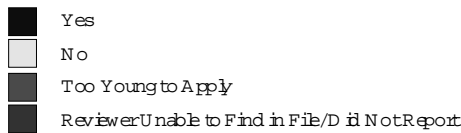
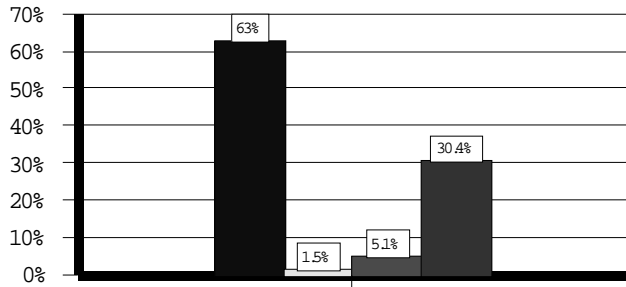


- Children experience an average of 4.3 placements in foster care. However, 52 percent of children experience three or more placement changes during their episodes in foster care. On a positive note, review boards report that only 4.2 percent have experienced more than three placement changes during a six-month period.

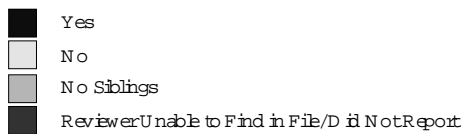
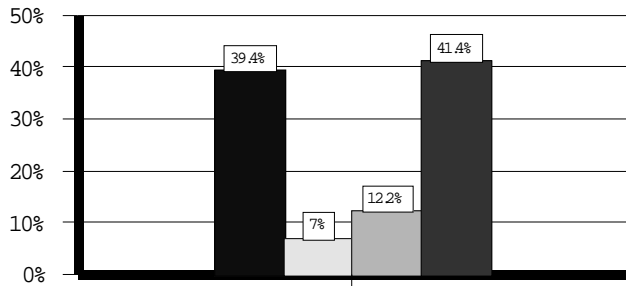
Child Attending All Medical and Counseling Appointments



Child Receiving A ILN eeded Educational Services



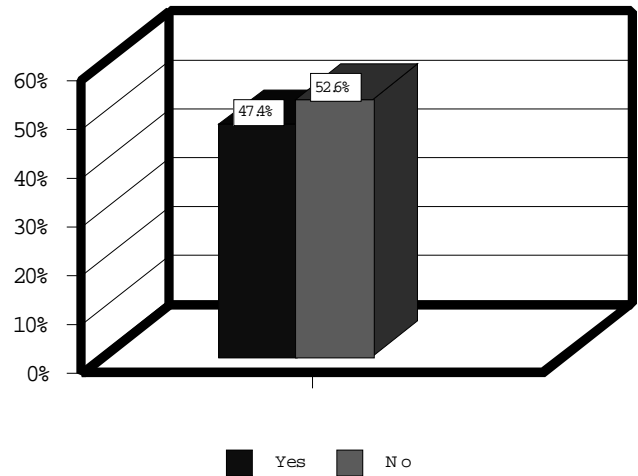
Sibling Visitation Occurring



### Plan Signed by Parent(s)

Last year the CFCRB updated its review form to include a new finding to be made from the board during its review. This finding indicates to the judge whether or not the parent(s) signed the case plan. The following chart depicts the results of this finding. The figures are based on the available “yes” and “no” responses on the sample of reviews.

Parent(s) Sign Case Plan



- The CFCRB plans to work closely with the CFC to determine the significance of this issue. However, the fact that parents are not signing case plans half of the time may provide a reason for the delays that children often experience while in foster care.

## Thank you to the CFCRB Committees

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board provides an invaluable service to the state's disadvantaged children. Kentucky's children are safer, healthier and more secure because of the dedication and efforts put forth by the CFCRB.

The CFCRB consists of seven committees that ensure the boards operate smoothly and in the best interest of the children they serve. The Dependent Children's Services Department expresses its sincere appreciation to these committees:

- Executive Committee  
*Chaired by Elizabeth Lucas*
- Conference Committee  
*Chaired by Anita Williams*
- Legislative Committee  
*Chaired by Elizabeth Lucas*
- Nominating Committee  
*Chaired by Doug Burnham*
- Public Relations Committee  
*Chaired by Sheila Dalton*
- Recognition Committee  
*Chaired by Linda Roberts*
- Training Committee  
*Chaired by Dolores Smith*

# Citizen Foster Care Review Board

## Volunteers at Work

Children have many basic rights that need to be protected and preserved. These rights include, but are not limited, to:

- Food, clothing and shelter
- To be free from physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- To develop physically, mentally and emotionally to their potential
- To be educated
- To have a safe, secure and stable family

Unfortunately, the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) do not always protect and ensure these rights, thus removal of the child from the parent(s) or guardian(s) may be necessary. Subsequently, the child may be ordered by District Court or Family Court to be placed in the custody and commitment of the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children for placement in foster care. At the end of his or her episode in foster care, a child may be returned to the home of removal, adopted, or placed permanently with a relative(s) or other guardian(s).

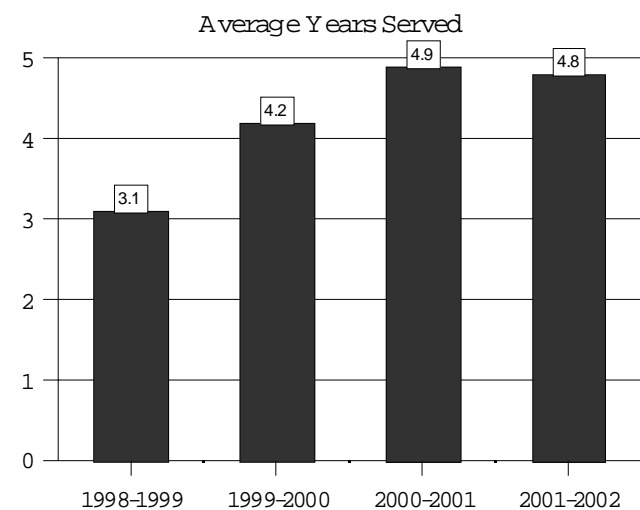
In the 1980s, several child advocacy groups became involved in examining the length of time Kentucky's maltreated children were spending in foster care. They discovered that children were lingering in foster care, a phenomenon now known as foster care drift. As a result, in 1982 the Kentucky General Assembly passed legislation creating the Citizen Foster Care Review Board. This legislation provided District Court judges with the statutory power to appoint community volunteers to serve on review boards. Between 1982 and 1984, 11 review boards were created. There are currently more than 140 local boards located in all judicial districts in Kentucky.

Citizen Foster Care Review Boards are mandated under KRS 620 to provide an in-depth case review of every child who is committed to the Cabinet for Families and Children. Case reviews must occur at least every six months until the child is released from his or her commitment to the Cabinet for Families and Children and permanently placed.

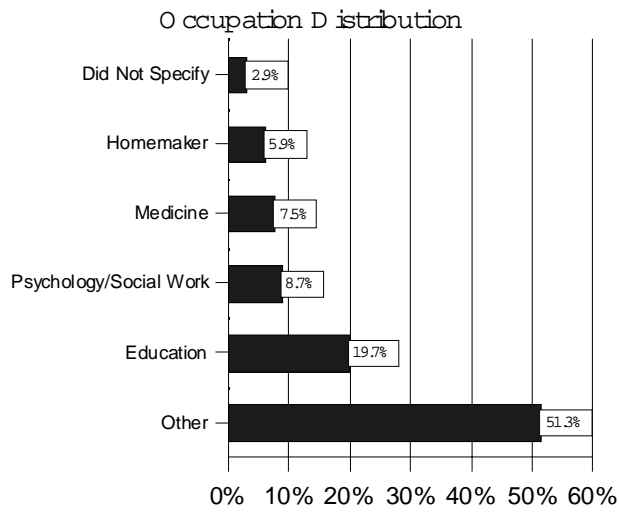
However, the standard is to review cases quarterly. Although boards are required by statute to meet quarterly, several local boards meet on a monthly basis. During each review, findings and recommendations are made to the judge assigned to the case. Board members may also document any observations or questions that they have for the social worker assigned to the case. Copies of reviews become part of the child's case file and are also used to gather data for statistics that are required to be presented in this report.

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board currently has a volunteer base of 692 individuals serving on more than 140 local boards throughout Kentucky. Each review board must consist of at least three volunteers. All volunteer reviewers must attend an initial training session to become certified. A minimum of six continuing training credit hours must be obtained annually by board members following their first year of service. The Administrative Office of the Courts works with other volunteers to recruit, train and provide continual support to the volunteers.

Active volunteers have served an average of 4.8 years since being appointed. Of the volunteers, 286 (41 percent) have served more than five years and 86 (12 percent) have served more than 10 years.

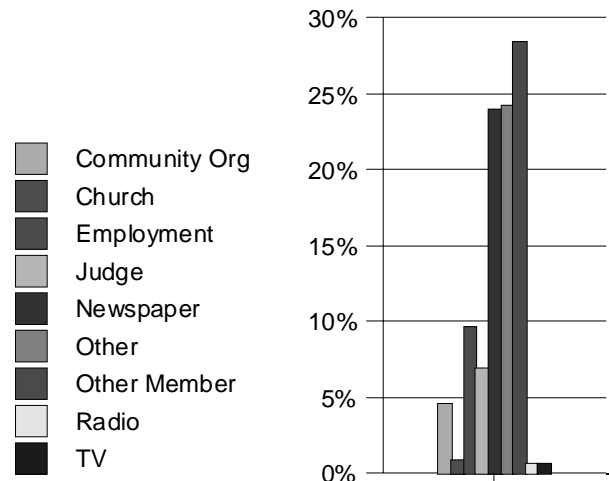


When practical, at least two members of each review board should come from the professions of law, medicine, psychology, social work and education. Many volunteers are retired and this is reflected in the high percentage of volunteers who specify they are in the “other” category. The average age of CFCRB volunteers is 49. Only 45 of the volunteers are age 30 or younger.



- Of the 602 CFCRB active volunteers, 565 (93.9 percent) are Caucasian, 34 (5.6 percent) are African-American, two (.3 percent) are Hispanic and one (.2 percent) is of another race. These statistics indicate that the CFCRB should implement new recruitment strategies to attract more non-Caucasian individuals to serve on the review boards.
- As for the gender mix, 565 (82.7 percent) of the volunteers are female and 118 (17.3 percent) are male.
- Volunteers are most likely to hear about the CFCRB from other board members. Newspaper ads also seem to be effective in volunteer recruitment.

How Volunteers Hear About the CFCRB



The Citizen Foster Care Review Board in its entirety consists of support staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts, auxiliary committees consisting of at least one staff person and numerous volunteers, 144 review boards and the State Citizen Foster Care Review Board, which consists of all board chairpersons. Providing direction and support are a state chairperson, vice chairperson and an executive committee comprised of volunteer representatives from each of the eight judicial court regions and AOC staff.

Other statutory duties of the Citizen Foster Care Review Board include:

- Establishing, approving and providing training for local board members.
- Establishing reporting procedures to be followed by local boards and publishing an annual report that compiles data reported by local boards. The data includes how the needs of children are being met, the number of times children are moved and the reason for the moves, the average length of time in care, whether or not sibling visitation is occurring, and the total number and frequency of reviews.
- Evaluating and making annual recommendations to the Supreme Court, the governor and the Legislative Research Commission regarding the laws of the commonwealth affecting permanence for children in out-of-home placement, and the investigation of allegations of abuse and neglect. The Citizen Foster

Care Review Board must further present its effectiveness and reasons for the review of children in the custody of the Cabinet.

### ——— **Points of Interest and Findings** ———

Last year alone, CFCRBs conducted 16,899 reviews of dependency, neglect and abuse cases. In that regard, CFCRBs are able to provide valuable insight about Kentucky's foster care system. Throughout the last fiscal year, volunteers and support staff have discussed several issues. The following information provides highlights of these issues, along with several findings and recommendations.

#### ***Statute Awareness***

The CFCRB Legislative Committee wants to increase awareness of two important statutory guidelines:

**1. District Court has concurrent jurisdiction with that of Circuit Court in determining permanent placement (KRS 620.027).**

District Court judges have the authority to order the permanent placement of a child. This statute has led to the development of a new form — the permanent custody order.

**2. The Cabinet for Families and Children is required to notify the court at least 60 days in advance of the date that the permanency hearing is to be held (KRS 610.125).**

This procedure is essential to ensure that children have permanency hearings conducted on their behalf within the time frames prescribed by state and federal law.

#### ***The Permanency Hearing***

The permanency hearing is one of the most important events in the permanent process for a child. It is at this hearing that the court must determine what the permanency plan is for the child. It was mentioned earlier that the Court Improvement Project will be conducting an evaluation over the next year. The evaluator selected for this project will be researching the entire court process, but will particularly focus on the analysis of the permanency hearing. Input from CFCRBs around the state is crucial to the integrity of the evaluation.

Local boards are now providing permanency hearing information in their reports to judges. A finding of whether the permanency hearing is not scheduled or is past due is provided to the judge. This issue will be tracked over the course of the next year and the results of the study will be presented in next year's annual report.

#### ***Social Worker Changes***

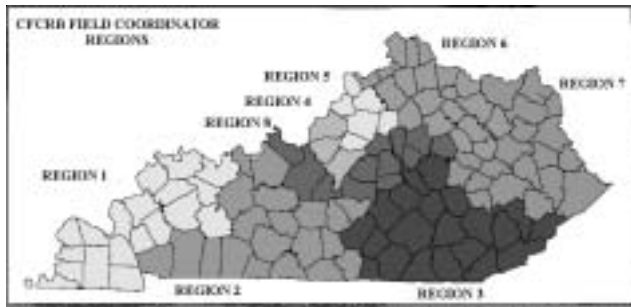
Many reviewers have found that a child may experience several different social workers throughout their stay in foster care. The CFCRB supports one consistent caseworker throughout a child's episode in foster care. Over the next year, the review boards will track the number of social worker changes for each case and the results will be presented in the FY 2003 annual report.



# *CFCRB Statewide Regional Updates*

## *Field Coordinator Reports*

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board in Kentucky is divided into eight regions with a field coordinator appointed to oversee the activities within each region.



### **Region 1 Update**

*Submitted by Dolores Smith*

During FY 2002, there has been quite a bit of activity and change in Region 1. Fortunately, this area has received additional staff support, which has improved the service to volunteers in the area. Prior to receiving increased support, Region 1 consisted of 34 Citizen Foster Care Review Boards. This region now consists of 19 boards.

As a result, this area has seen increased trainings and board meeting attendance. I have traveled more than 19,000 miles and attended 115 board meetings. During the past year, 54 new and experienced volunteers received trainings at initial and regional training sessions. In addition to the initial trainings, a session was held regarding the continuous quality assessment instrument used by the Cabinet for Families and Children to investigate a referral and assess risk to the children in the home.

All of the Region 1 boards are active and in compliance with statutory guidelines. This fiscal year marked the introduction of the interested party review process into this region. Every four months, one of the Daviess County CFCRBs conduct interested party reviews for those cases determined by the board to be problematic or for those cases that are approaching the permanency review. At these reviews, the board

asks questions to the caseworker, parents, parents' attorney, guardian *ad litem* and other parties involved in the case. A written report is compiled detailing the board's findings and recommendations.

CFCRB involvement with the community in this region has been extensive over the past year as well. We designed a "life book" project to preserve the memories and relationships developed while a child is in foster care. In October 2001, a golf scramble was sponsored in conjunction with a retired Circuit judge. More than \$1,700 was raised and the proceeds were used to conduct activities such as a foster family fun night during the holidays and a summer picnic at Holiday World Amusement Park.

### **Region 2 Update**

*Submitted by Kari Hutchison*

It has been a great year for the South Central Region. The past fiscal year has seen significant strides made in training, recruitment and statutory compliance.

Region 2 added two new boards last year, which created a need for additional volunteers. As a result, two regional meetings were held in Glasgow and Bowling Green. Barren and Metcalfe counties were sharing a single set of board members, as were Green and Taylor counties. However, the caseloads in each of these four counties required more support from additional board members and these boards are now operating independently from each other.

Interested party reviews have been occurring on a regular basis in Region 2 and all boards are operating in compliance with statutory guidelines.

### **Region 3 Update**

*Submitted by Michael Broughton*

Region 3 consists of 22 counties in Southeastern Kentucky. Prior to the addition of new staff, the coordinator for this region was responsible for 44 counties. Currently, there are 25 CFCRBs operating

in Region 3 and I am able to attend almost every board meeting.

During the past fiscal year, more than 30 board members were recruited and trained for placement on review boards throughout the area. Interested party reviews are taking place on a continual basis in this region as well.

I am also responsible for “the one legal voice” program. This initiative is based on the premise that every child should have the same attorney working diligently for his or her best interest. A risk assessment matrix is used to identify those children who are at the highest risk of lingering in the foster care system. It is these children who enter into the program. Over the past three years, termination of parents rights has occurred for more than 65 children in Laurel and Knox counties. Cases are simply being heard at a more rapid pace.

#### **Region 4 Update** *Submitted by Karma Childress*

Region 4 has seen some much-needed change during the past fiscal year. The CFCRB board structure in Jefferson County has completely changed, and 24 new volunteers have been recruited and trained for placement on boards. Interested party reviews are also being conducted regularly in this region.

In Jefferson County, boards have historically been assigned to a respective Cabinet team. This scenario caused problems with boards because cases would transfer from one team to another. A particular board would become familiar with a case, it would transfer to another team and the board would never see it again. Boards wanted to review children from entry to permanency.

As a result, boards are currently assigned to Family Court judges who hear cases from opening until closing, so the same board is able to review the case from opening until closing as well. This has resulted in more effective reviews, an improved relationship between boards and judges, and increased volunteer satisfaction.

Various recruitment strategies have also been employed in this region. I have been working in conjunction with social work departments and

various colleges to recruit students for CFCRBs in the region. I have also written articles which have been printed in the newsletters of several organizations. We have also held luncheons to make the community more aware of the CFCRB program.

#### **Region 5 Update** *Submitted by Amy Smitha*

Region 5 boards have done quite well over the past fiscal year. All boards have a sufficient number of volunteers who attend board meetings on a consistent basis. Two large initial regional trainings were held during the year. More than 90 volunteers were trained. The majority of the volunteers were eager to start reviewing cases immediately following the trainings.

As in other regions, interested party reviews are being conducted in Region 5. The Shelby County review board conducted its first interested party review during the past year.

#### **Region 6 Update** *Submitted by Bruce Jones*

This region is comprised of 36 counties with 33 local boards. Caseloads are smaller in the rural counties and much larger in the urban areas. For this reason, rural boards usually meet every other month or quarterly and urban boards meet on a monthly basis.

During the past year, I spent a significant amount of time in Kenton and Campbell counties. In this urban area, the caseload has increased and a new board had to be created to accommodate the increase.

A front page article in *The Kentucky Post* featured the Campbell County CFCRB and helped to greatly increase public awareness of the child abuse problem and bring attention to volunteer recruitment. I have also worked extensively with the Kentucky Homemaker’s Association to recruit volunteers. Three trainings were held over the past fiscal year with more than 100 volunteers recruited and trained. I made more than 100 site visits and traveled extensively through the region to ensure the functioning of the boards.

*Continued on page 5*

# ***Kentucky Citizen Foster Care Review Board***

## ***2002 Recommendations***

- # Increase the intent to release notification requirement from 14 days to 45 days. Require that, before a child is released, a signed court order (with or without further hearing) must be sent to the CFCRB Central Office.
- # Advocate for more timely processing of termination of parental rights cases. From identifying paternal interests immediately (such as locating biological parents so all claims may be heard initially) to finalizing the presentation summary, the events associated with TPR need to be approached with the children's sense of time in mind.
- # Expedite the preadoptive placement as well as the adoption process following the termination of parental rights.
- # Work with the Administrative Office of the Courts to support the implementation of Family Courts and CASA programs in each judicial district/circuit, where possible.
- # Collaborate with the Administrative Office of the Courts to facilitate more training on children's issues for judges, clerks and guardians *ad litem*.
- # Use the permanency plan as the guiding document in case files. Everyone involved in the process should look to this plan to determine what must be done to achieve permanency for the child. Other case documentation, including the running record, case plan and safety plan, just to name a few, should be weighed against the permanency plan.
- # Support a consistent caseworker from commitment to release. The implication is that if there is one worker, the child should move more quickly to a permanent solution. Conversely, if there are a number of social workers on a case, months are lost in periods of worker transition. The CFCRB is now tracking the number of social workers on a case to determine if this is a valid concern.
- # Advocate continued independent review by the CFCRB of children initially committed as dependent, abused and/or neglected.
- # Work with the Citizen Review Panels to examine, enhance and refine the reporting process and procedures with respect to dependent, abused and/or neglected children.
- # Work with the Cabinet for Families and Children to ensure children have realistic, achievable permanency goals within 12 months of entering foster care.
- # Promote adequate funding to address staffing issues in the CFC. These monies should be used to hire, train and retain social workers as well as paralegals to assist with the TPR process.



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