

Annual Youth in Care Waiting for Placement Report

Report to the General Assembly

December 31, 2025

Per ILCS 505/2.2 DCFS Youth in Care Waiting for Placement Report, the Department of Children and Family Services will provide a report by December 31st of the calendar year, with fiscal year information on the number of youth in emergency placements for longer than thirty days; hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals beyond medical necessity; in a detention center or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facility beyond the release date; in out-of-state residential treatment facilities; not in temporary custody or guardianship of the Department and subject to child protection investigations coded as 84b; in emergency rooms for longer than 24 hours waiting for admission to a psychiatric hospital bed; and, in overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing offices or welcome centers.

Statistics

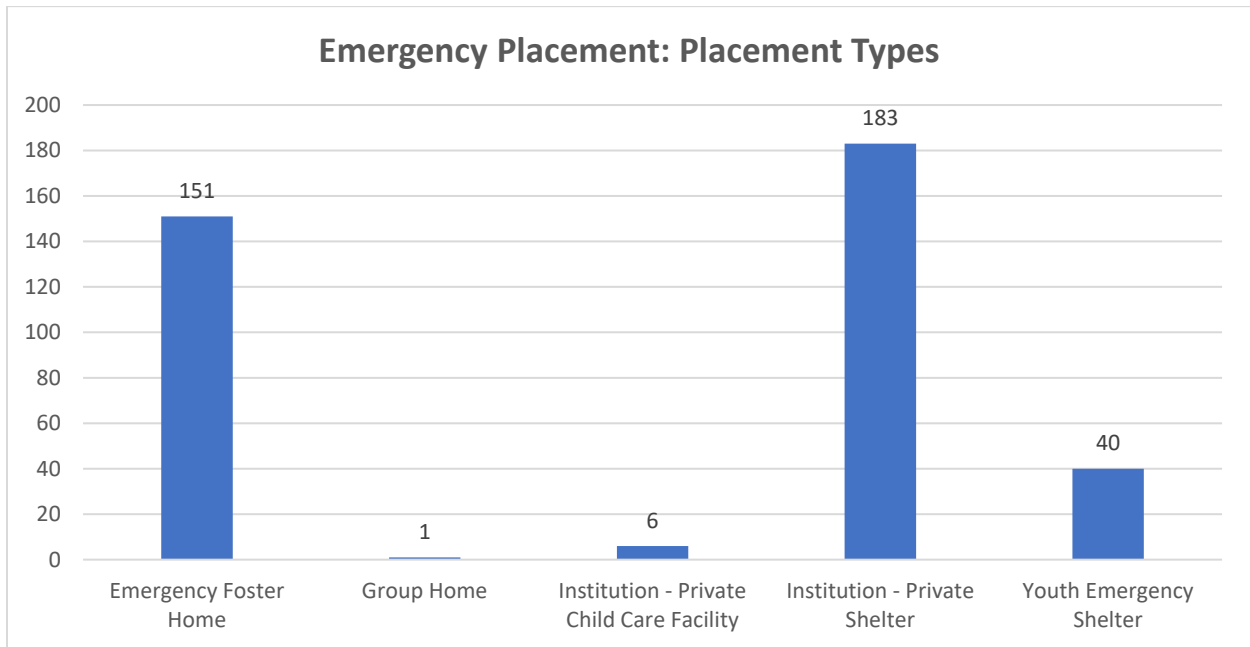
The following cumulative data is for instances of youth in emergency placements (shelters/foster homes) 30 days or more; in psychiatric hospitals beyond medical necessity; in detention center or DJJ facility beyond the release date; in out-of-state residential treatment facilities; in emergency rooms for longer than 24 hours waiting for admission to a psychiatric hospital bed; in overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing offices or welcome centers. The total number of instances of youth across every category from 7/1/2024 to 6/30/2025 was 1807. The overall average age of youth across every category in FY25 was 13.70 years old with male instances making up 50.64% of the overall categorized population.

	Emergency Placement 30+ Days	Psychiatric Hospitals (BMN)	Detention /DJJ	Out of State Residential	Emergency Rooms (24hr+)	Overnight in DCFS/CWCA Offices
Average Age	10.87	12.74	15.5	14.5	12	11.8

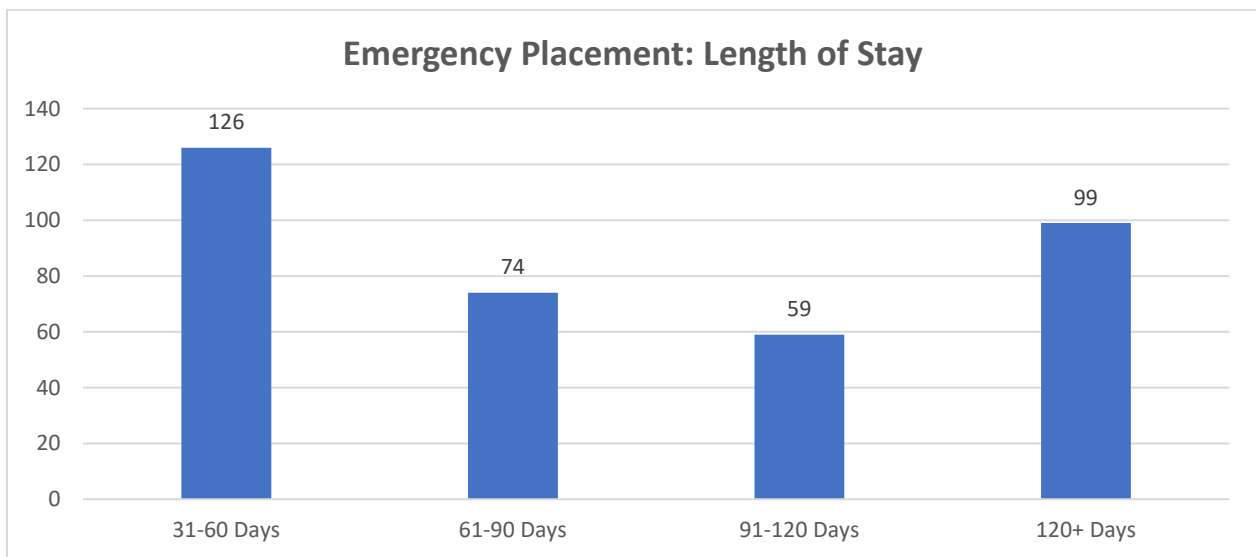
	Emergency Placement 30+ Day	Psychiatric Hospitals (BMN)	Detention /DJJ	Out of State Residential	Emergency Rooms (24hr+)	Overnight in DCFS/CWCA Offices
Male	214	150	42	37	146	326
Female	167	154	13	46	162	346
Transgender/Other					4	
Total	381	304	55	83	312	672

Youth in Emergency Placements (Shelters/Foster Homes) 30 Days or More

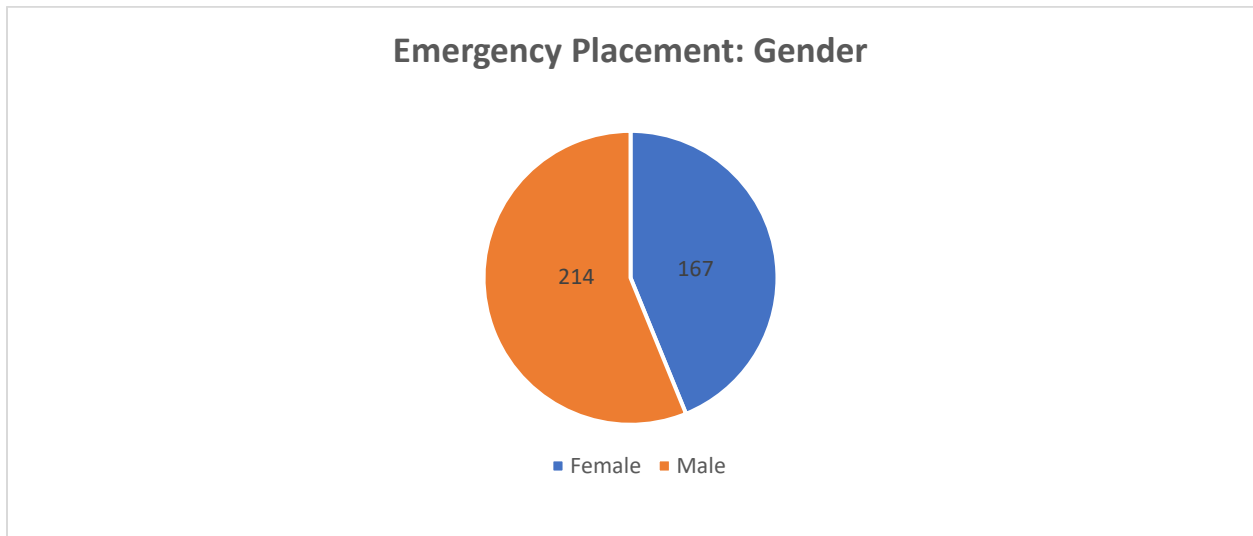
In FY25 there were a total of 381 youth in emergency placements (shelters/foster home) for 30 days or more.



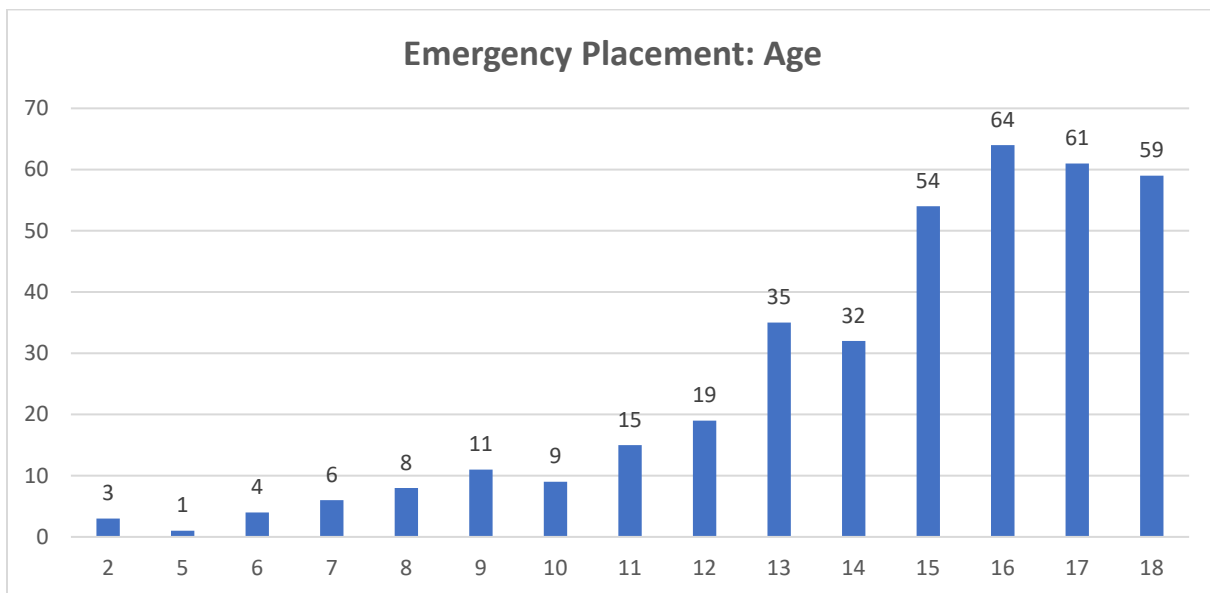
39.63% of youth were in Foster Homes; 58.53% were in a shelter.



33.07% were in emergency placement for 31-60 days.
 19.42% were in emergency placement for 61-90 days.
 15.49% were in emergency placement for 91-120 days.
 25.98% were in emergency placement for 120+ days.



56.17% were male and 43.83% were female.



The average age of youth in Emergency placement was 10.87.
 There were 19.95% youth from the ages of 0-12 in emergency placement.
 There were 64.57% youth from the ages of 13-17 in emergency placement.
 There were 15.49% youth who were 18 years old in emergency placement.

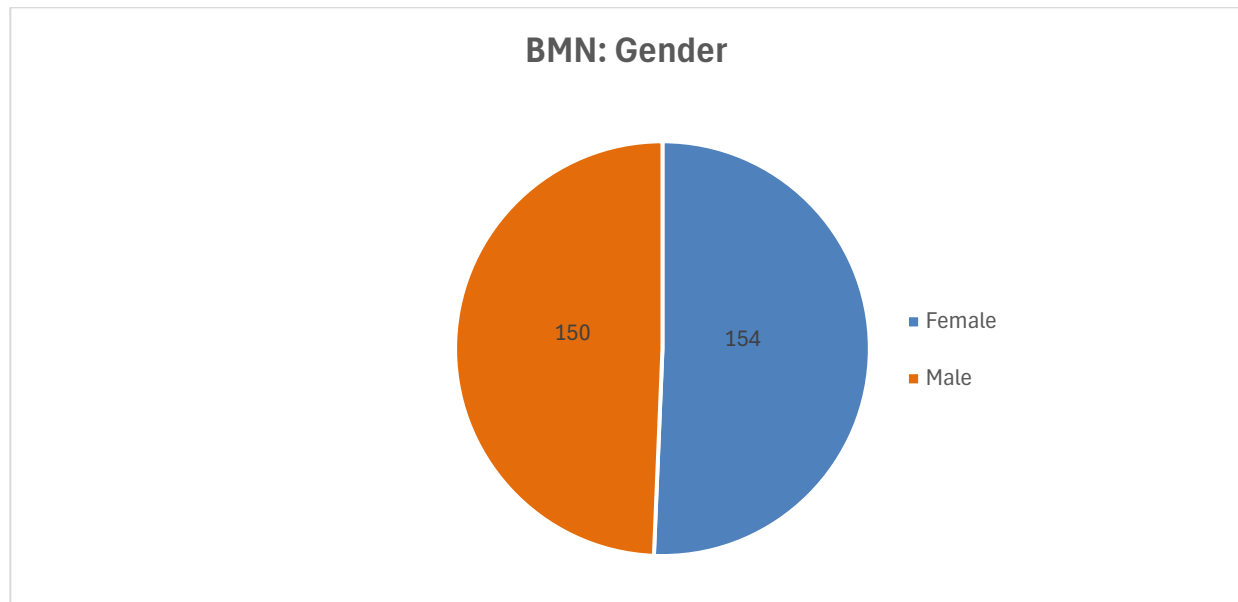
Youth in emergency placements are most placed in either an emergency foster home, or an emergency shelter when there are significant barriers to placements. The top barriers affecting timely placement are behavior disorders including physical and verbal aggression, cognitive abilities including level of IQ and developmental delays; as well as specialized treatment needs including substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual behavior problems.

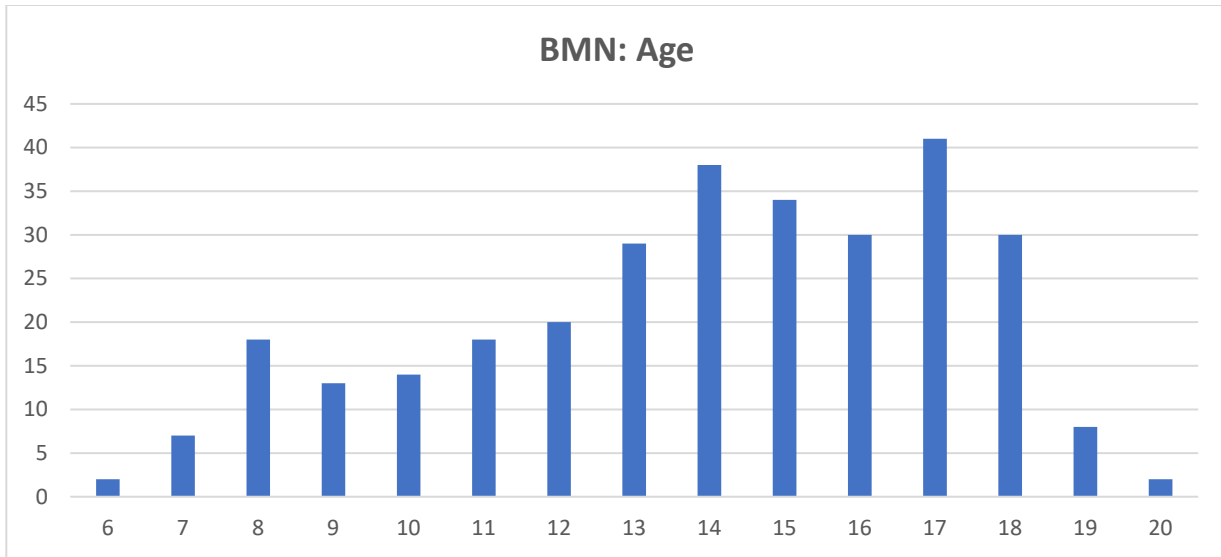
The Department continues efforts to reduce the length of stay in emergency and temporary placements. During FY25, the Department continues to utilize the Emergency Services Team within Child Placement to monitor the use of emergency placement services and work closely with permanency staff to move youth from emergency placement into appropriate longer term living arrangement.

In FY25 the Department developed 28 new shelter beds for youth located in the Cook, Northern and Central Region. The Department also increased Emergency Foster Care (EFC) capacity with two providers in the Cook region. Further development of these emergency services continued into FY26.

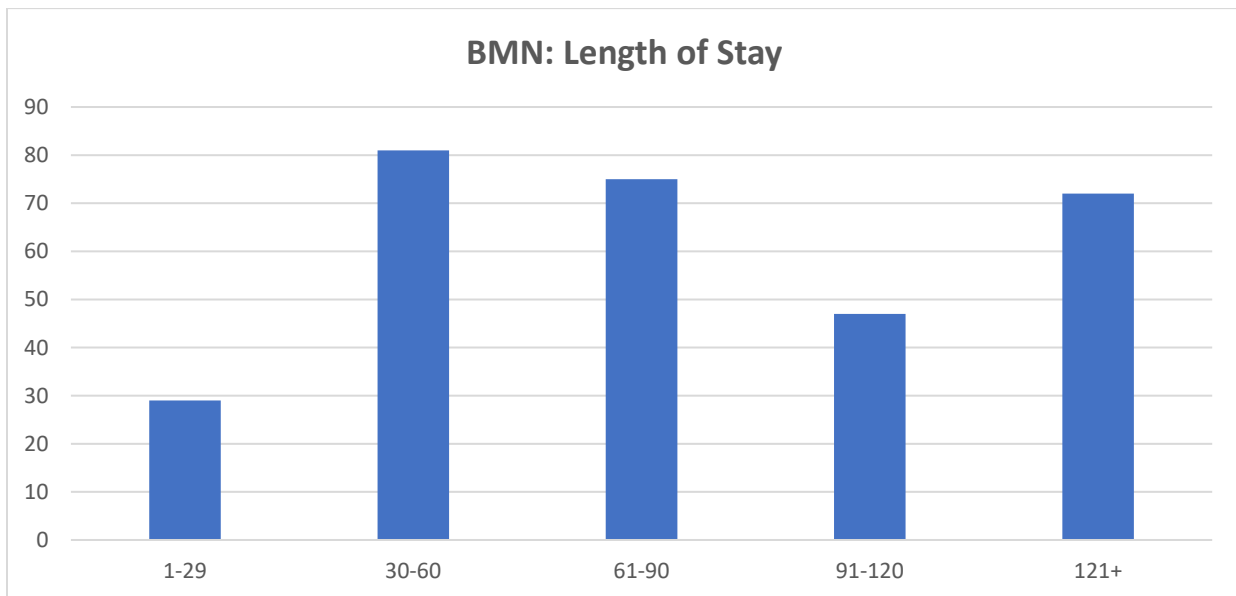
Youth Who Remained in Psychiatric Hospitals Beyond Medical Necessity

In FY25, there were 304 instances hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals beyond medical necessity (BMN). 50.66% of youth were female, and 43.09% of the youth were between the ages of 13 and 16 years old. The average age at the end of FY24 was 13 years old.



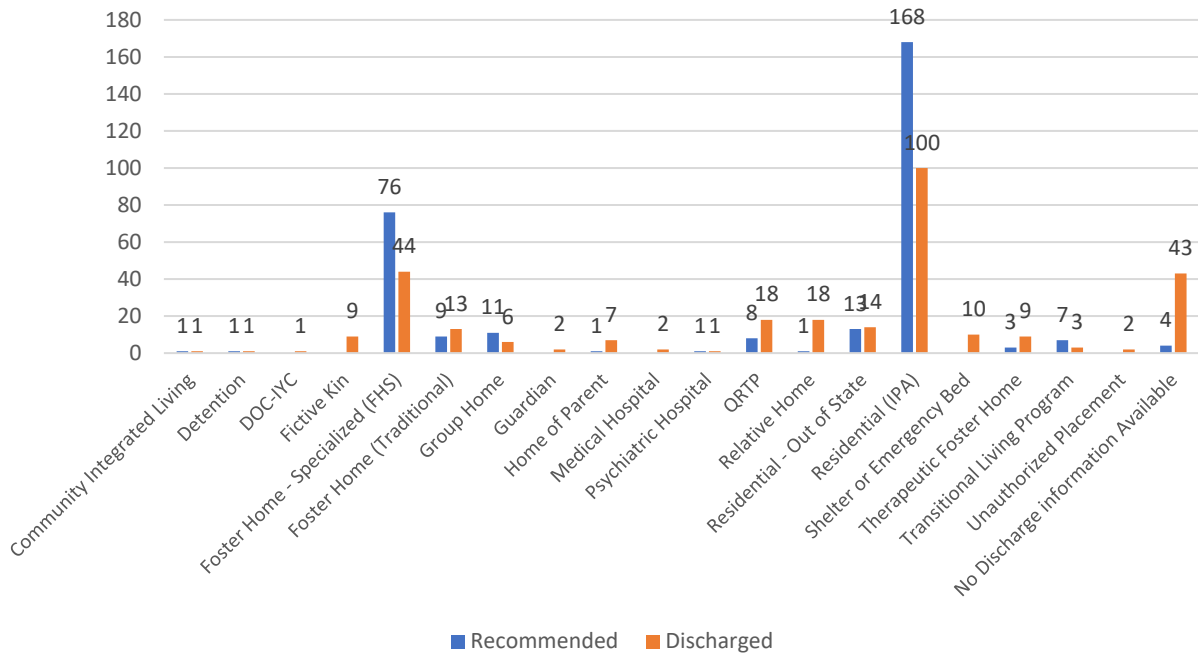


The average length of stay for BMN was 94.27 days in FY25, with 60.86% of youth staying less than 90 days. Barriers to timely placement included youth having intellectual and developmental disabilities, sexually problematic behaviors, history of aggression and property destruction, high end psychiatric acuity and presenting with continued need for intensive mental health treatment or education monitoring; staff shortages; and extensive waitlists.



During FY25, the top recommended and actual placements for level of care were Residential Treatment Centers (55.26%) and Specialized Foster Homes (25%).

BMN: Recommended & Discharged Level of Care



Level of Care	Recommended	Discharged
Community Integrated Living	1	1
Detention	1	1
DOC-IYC	1	1
Fictive Kin	0	9
Foster Home - Specialized (FHS)	76	44
Foster Home (Traditional)	9	13
Group Home	11	6
Guardian	0	2
Home of Parent	1	7
Medical Hospital	0	2
Psychiatric Hospital	1	1
Q RTP	8	18
Relative Home	1	18
Residential - Out of State	13	14
Residential (IPA)	168	100
Shelter or Emergency Bed	0	10
Therapeutic Foster Home	3	9
Transitional Living Program	7	3
Unauthorized Placement	0	2
No Discharge information Available	4	43

The Department is taking several steps to reduce the length of time BMN including working with providers to develop additional therapeutic placements and specialized foster care resources for youth. Therapeutic Bed Development included:

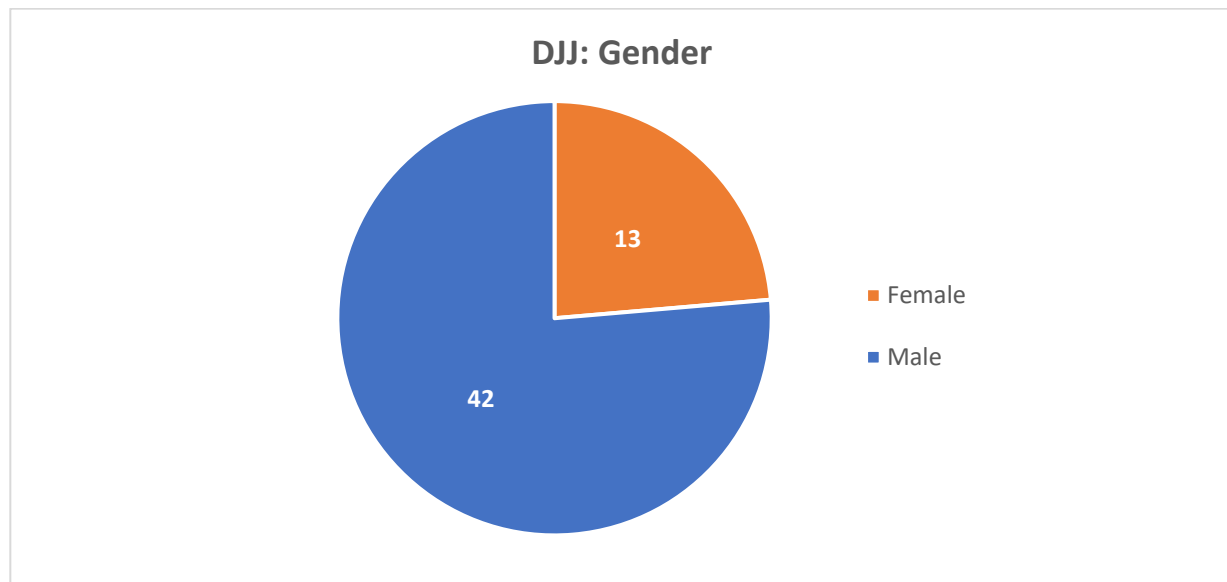
DD Intensive Group Home and QRTP	12 Beds
Group Home for Dually Involved Youth	10 Beds
Medically Complex	10 Beds
Out of State Specialty Providers	7 beds

During FY25, the Department engaged with 4 providers and continue with activities developing 3 contracts to serve youth in Therapeutic Foster Care homes and 1 provider to develop intensive in-home stabilization services.

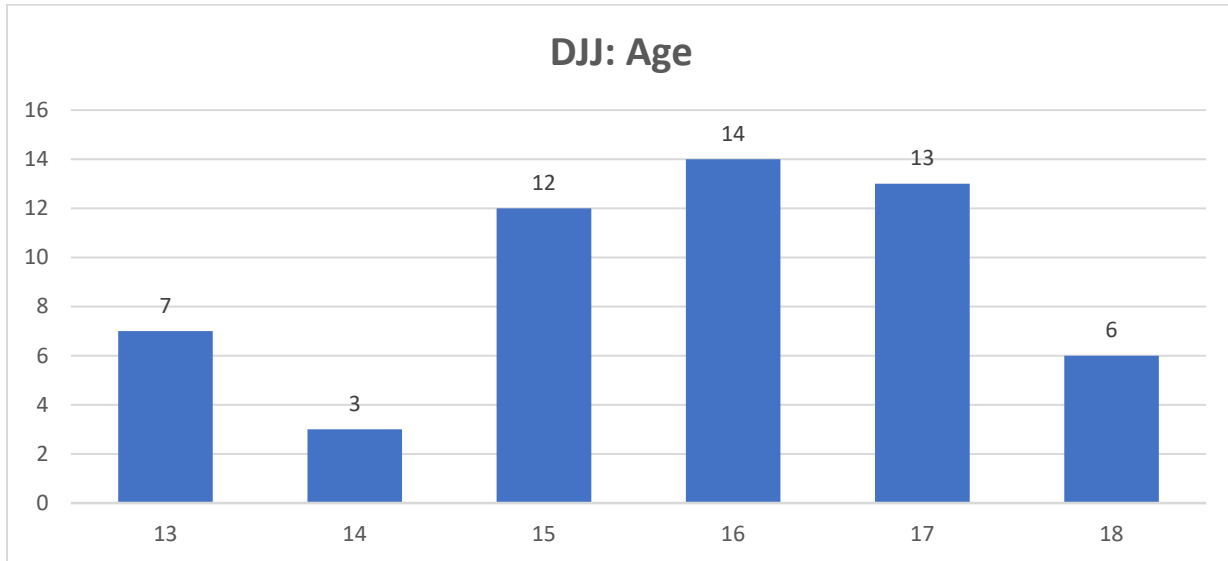
DCFS is active in working with sister agencies via the Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation to fully utilize and develop resources to avoid youth being BMN.

Youth in Detention Center/DJJ Beyond the Release Date

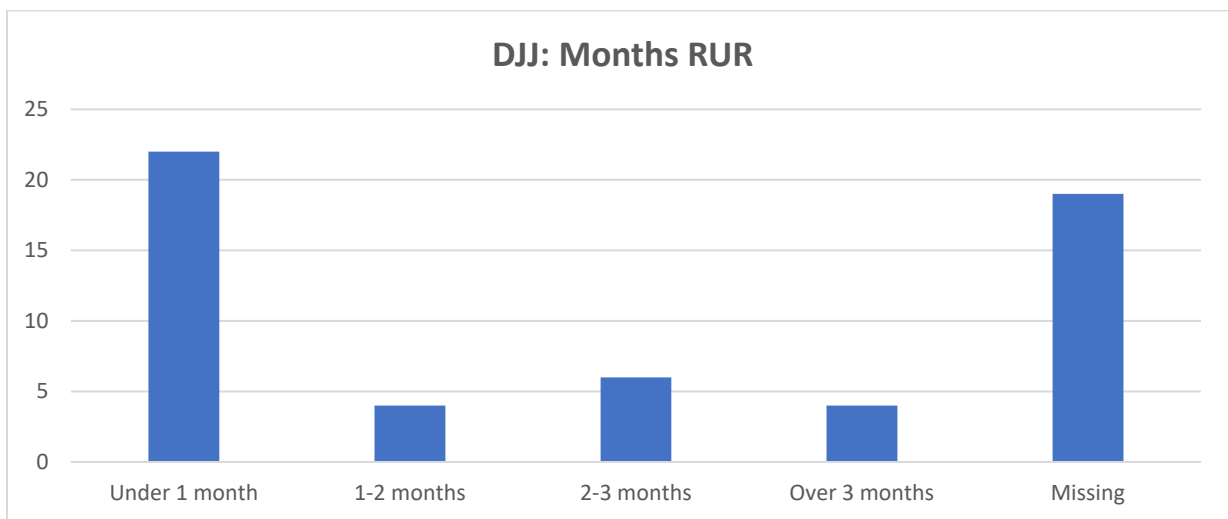
In FY25, there were 57 instances (55 youth) where youth were held in detention beyond their release date. 76.36% of the RUR population were male while 23.64% were female.



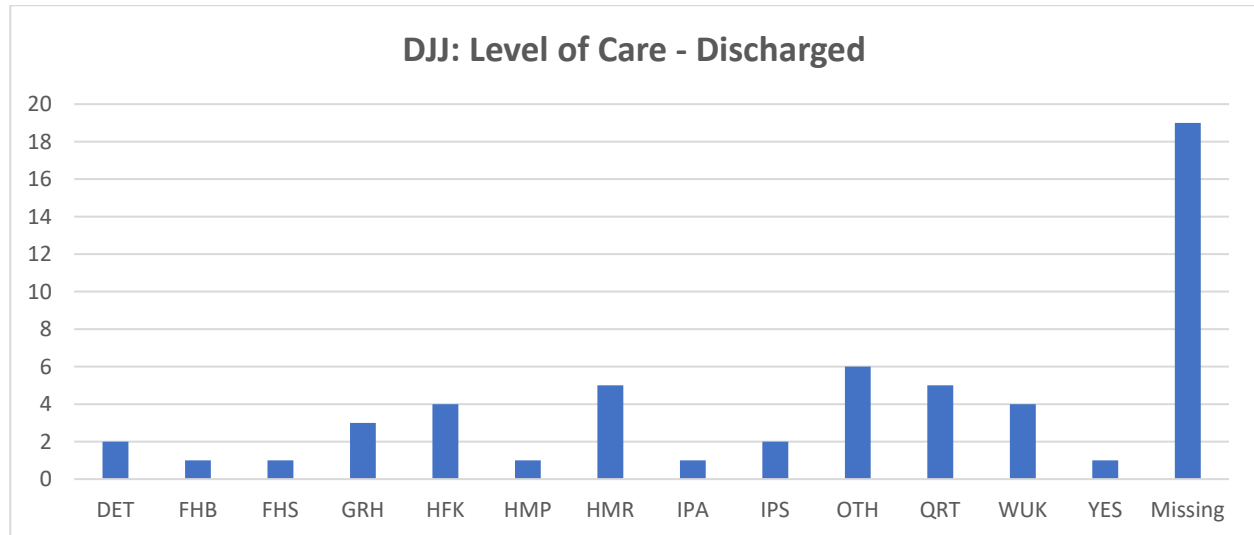
70.91% were between the ages of 15-17 years old. The average age at the end of FY25 was 15.5 years old.



The total length of time each RUR youth remains in a DJJ or DOC facility varies depending on many factors such as: age, gender, time of release, youth behavior, medical needs, and more. During FY25, approximately 58.18% of the total population were placed within three months of their release date. 40% of this population were placed less than one month after their release date, and 47.27% were placed within two months. Aggressive behavior, extensive criminal involvement, acute mental health needs and substance abuse are the primary barriers to timely placement for this population of youth in care.



In FY25, 30.36% of youth were placed in foster homes (traditional, specialized, fictive kin, and relative – FHP, FHS, HFK, HFM, HMR); and 28.57% of the population were placed in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs/PRTFs (in and out of state).

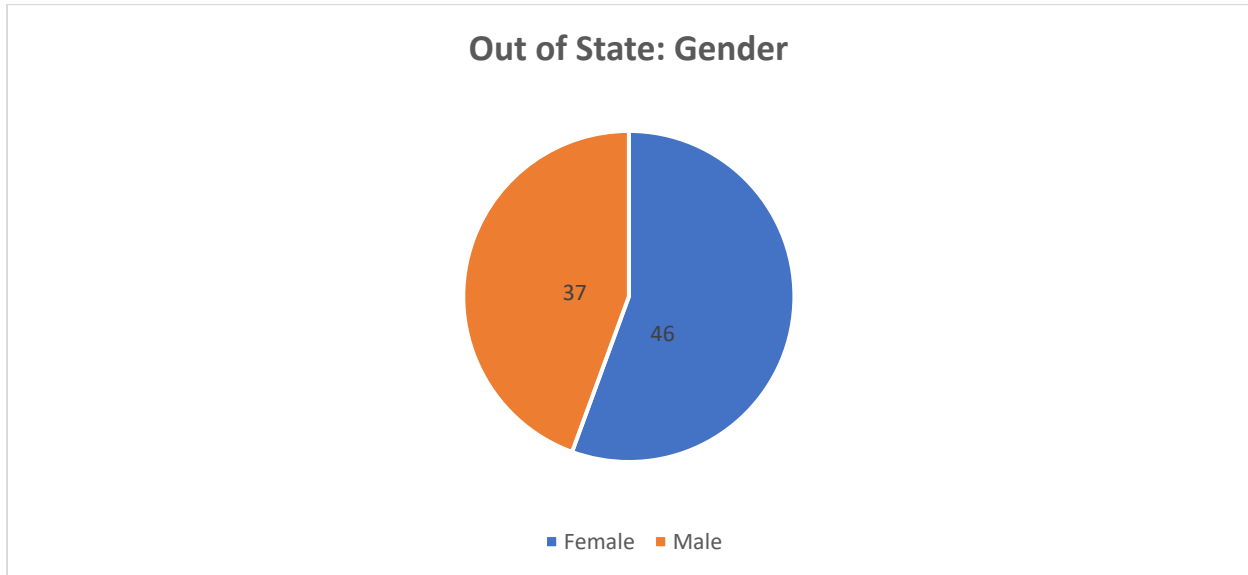


Level of Care: Discharged	
DET	2
FHB	1
FHS	1
GRH	3
HFK	4
HMP	1
HMR	5
IPA	1
IPS	2
OTH	6
QRT	5
WUK	4
YES	1
Missing	19

The Department is taking several steps to reduce the length of time in detention/DJJ including; working with providers to offer services to youth while they are placed in detention centers so they are better prepared for placement interviews; working with providers to develop updated procedures for accepting DJJ youth into their facilities; developing Dually Involved specific placements to successfully place this population of youth.

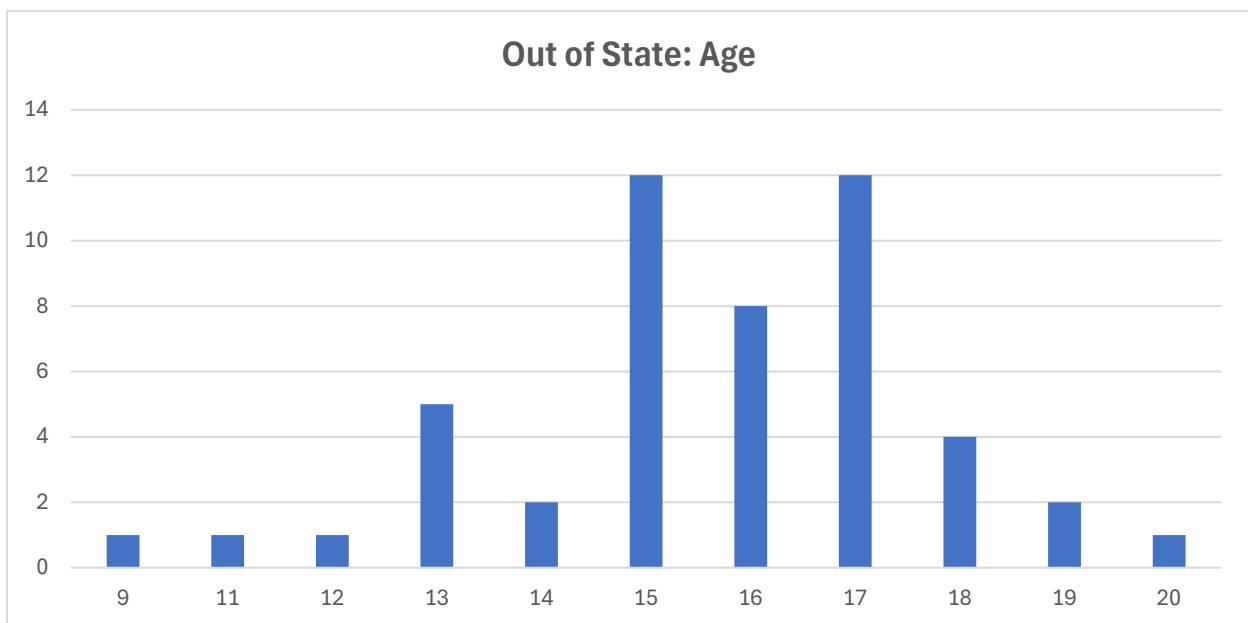
Youth in Out-of-State Residential Treatment Facilities

In FY25, there were 83 instances (79 youth) of youth receiving treatment in out-of-state residential treatment facilities. 55.70% of youth were female and 44.30% were male.



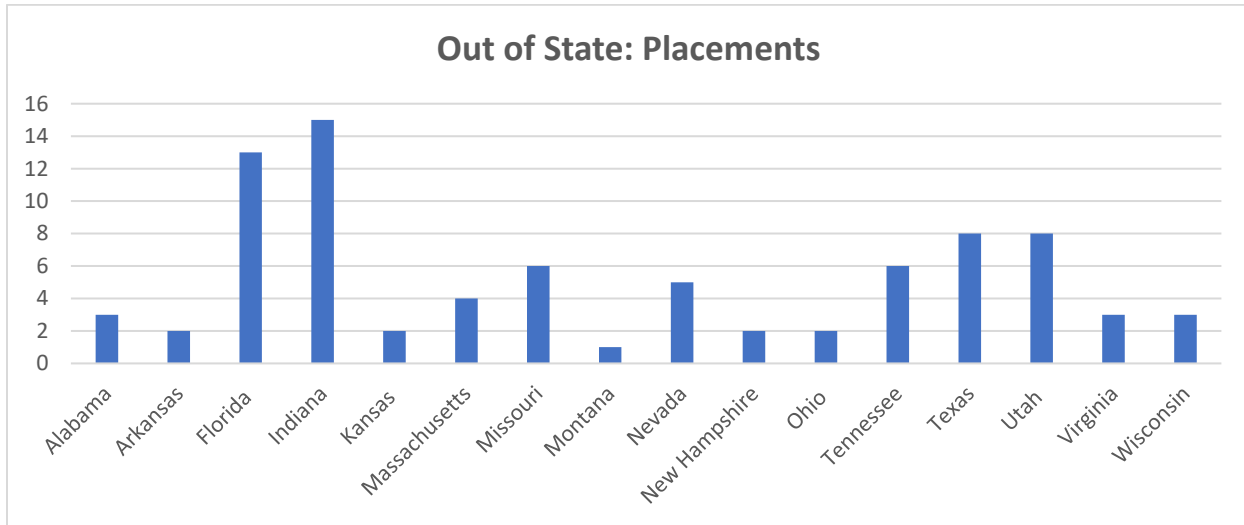
As of July 1, 2025, there were 49 youth that were in out of state programming*. 65.3% of these youth are in between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.

*DCFS contracts with a specialty developmental disability and autism program in Wisconsin. Thirteen youth were at this program in FY 2025 and 12 youth remain. This program is monitored by the DCFS Illinois Monitoring Unit and referrals are made in traditional Illinois program format, however, do require ICPC approval. These youth are not represented in this data.



Youth were referred in-state prior to being referred out-of-state all instances (except for 3 youth who went from one OOS program directly to another OOS program).

Youth were placed in the following 16 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin, with 33.73% being placed in Florida and Indiana.



Forty-five youth were admitted during FY25 and 35 youth discharged (8 youth of which we admitted fiscal year 2025).

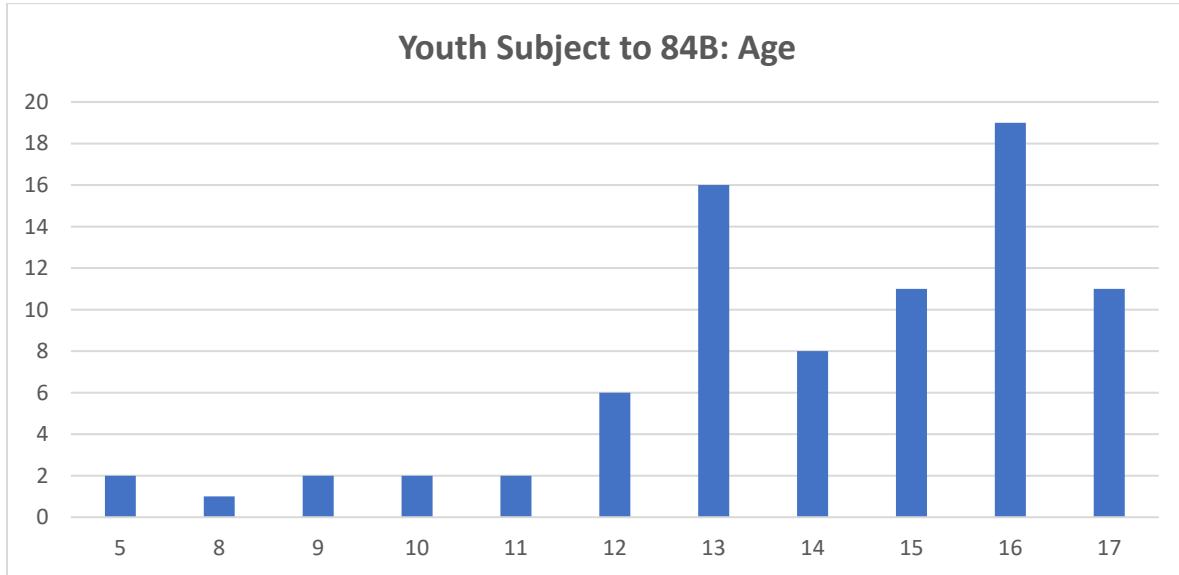
The Department is focused on increasing therapeutic programs that address the needs of our high acuity youth. The Department has made efforts by releasing requests for proposals and seeks program enhancements through existing providers for specialized services. These efforts shall impact services for children who are more likely to be sent out of state because of limited resources within the State of Illinois. The Department believes that as it increases specialized resources within the State, the number of youth needing to receive services out of state will then be reduced.

The data used for out-of-state placements is housed in various systems. Each system is independent of the other and required manual data integration. As with any platform that requires manual entry, there is risk for error or misinterpretation.

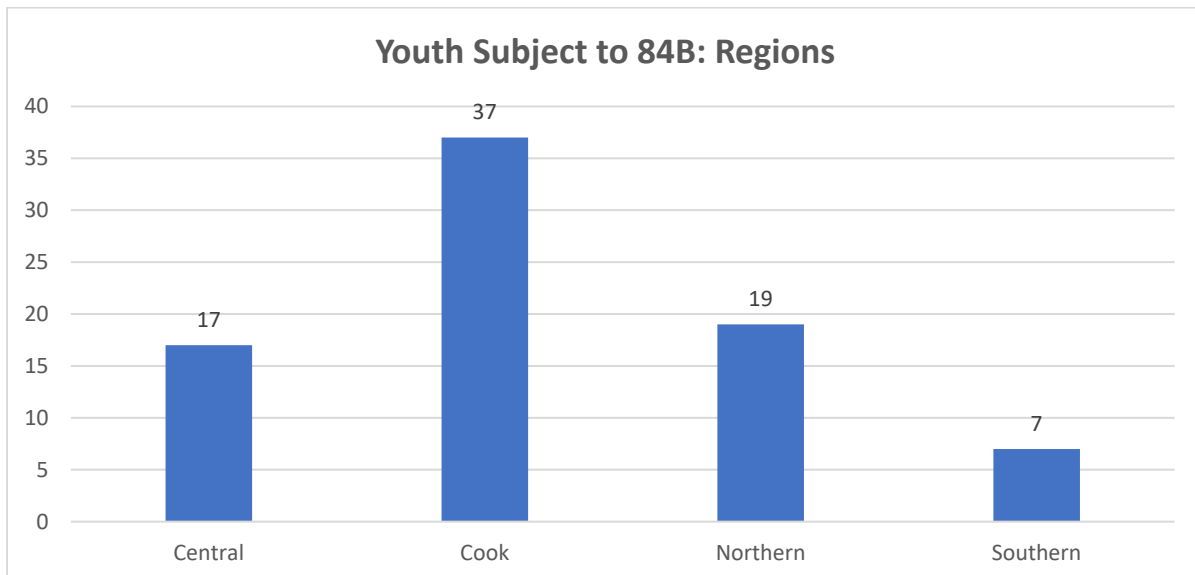
Youth Subject to 84b Child Protection Investigations

From July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 a total of 80 reports involving allegations of Psychiatric Lock-Out were received statewide, due to parent or caregiver denying youth access back home, refusing or failing to make provisions for alternative living arrangements for the youth prior to

the youth discharge from psychiatric hospitalization. Of the 80 youth, there were 7 in Southern Region, 19 in Northern Region, 37 in Cook Region and 17 in Central Region. Average age of youth was 11.81.

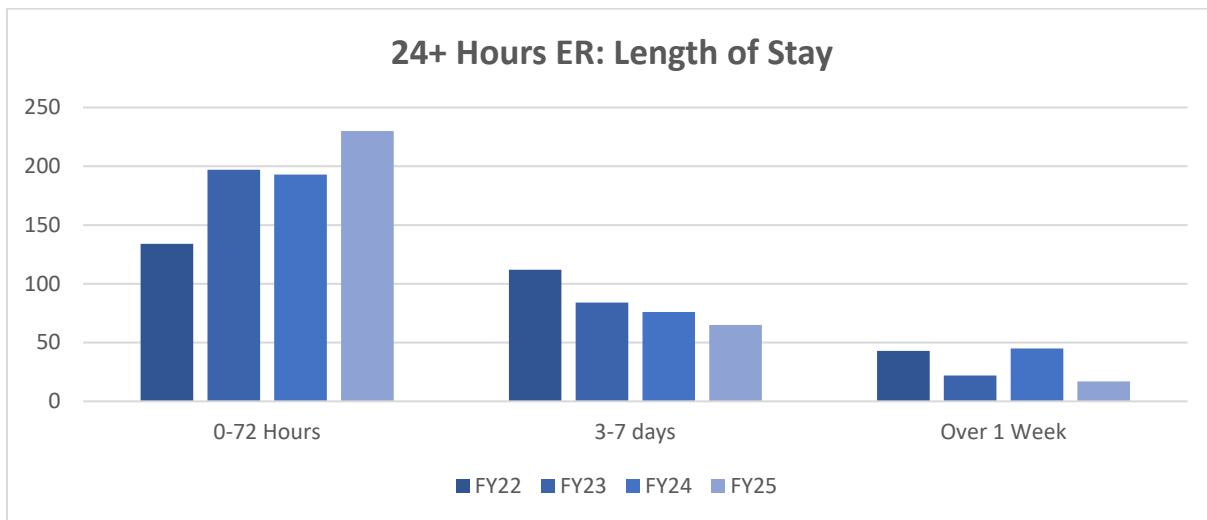


Of the 80 Psychiatric Lock-Out reports, 31 were presented for screening to the State’s Attorney’s Office and 13 involved referrals to Intact Family Services based on identified needs for service intervention.

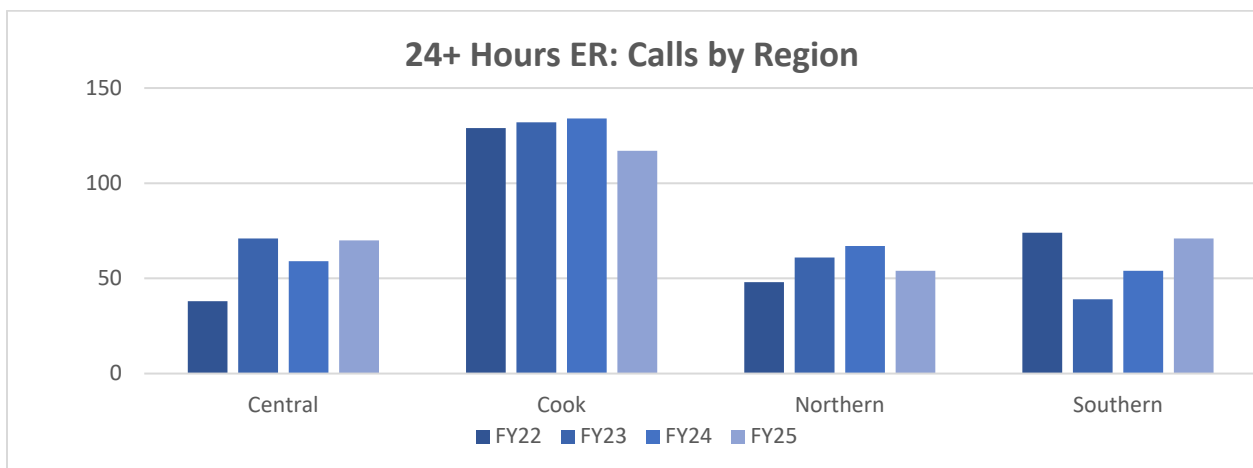


Youth 24+ Hours in Emergency Rooms Awaiting Psychiatric Hospital Bed Admission

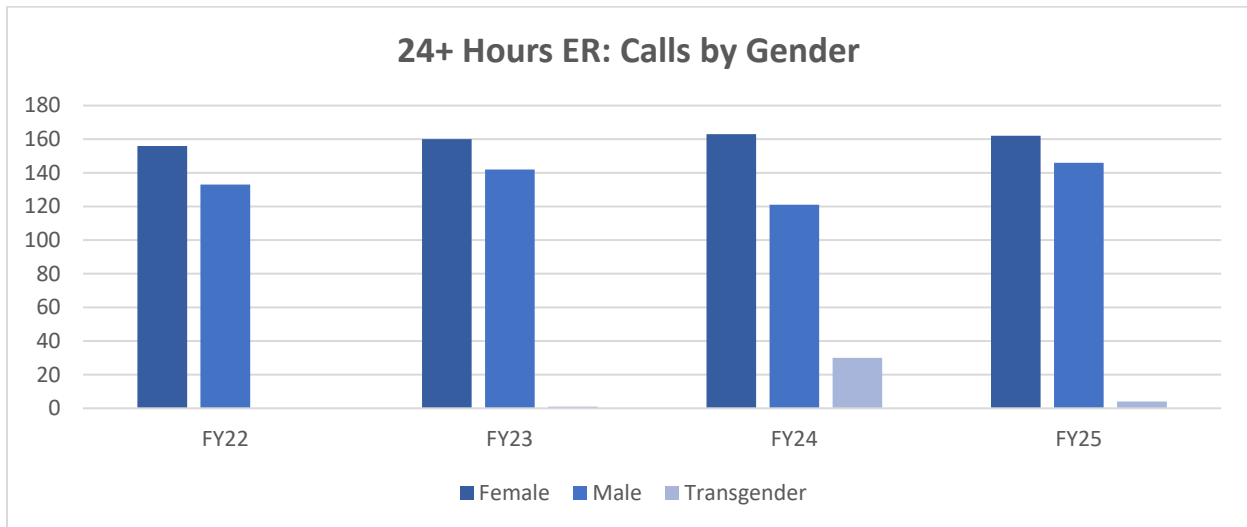
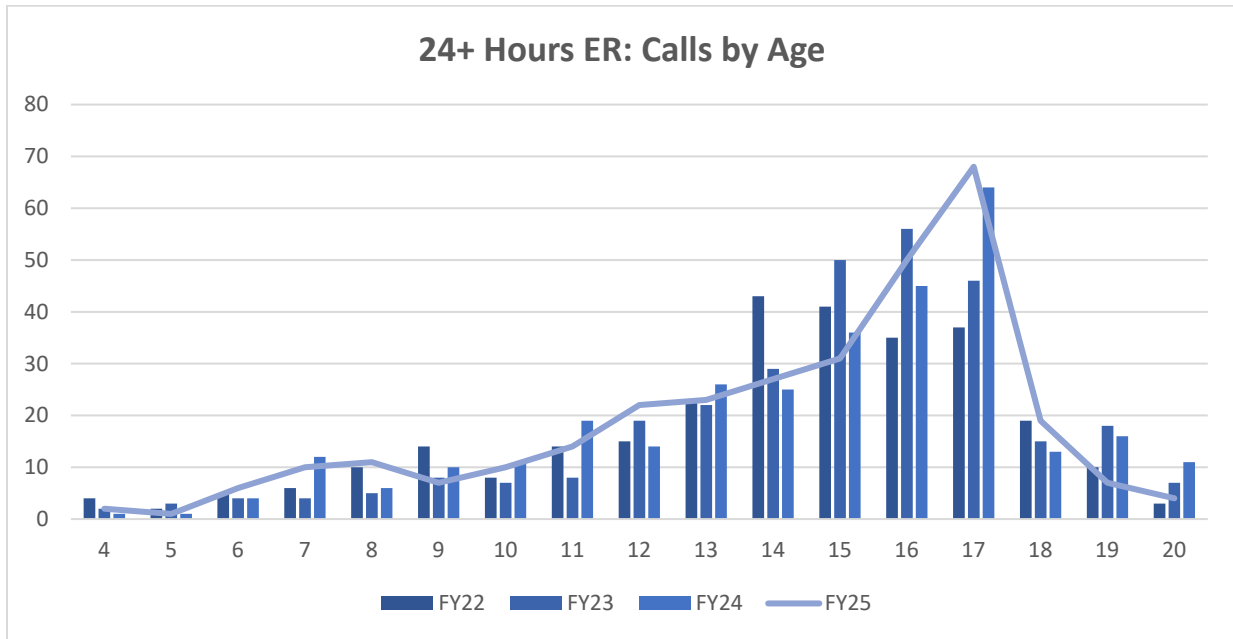
Between July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, 312 youth in care waited over 24 hours in emergency rooms. Seventy Four percent (230) of youth waited under 72 hours, twenty-one percent (65) waited between 3-7 days and five percent (17) waited over one week. When compared to the previous fiscal year there was no notable increase in youth with 314 youth waiting in fiscal year 24 (FY24) and 312 youth waiting in fiscal year 25 (FY25).



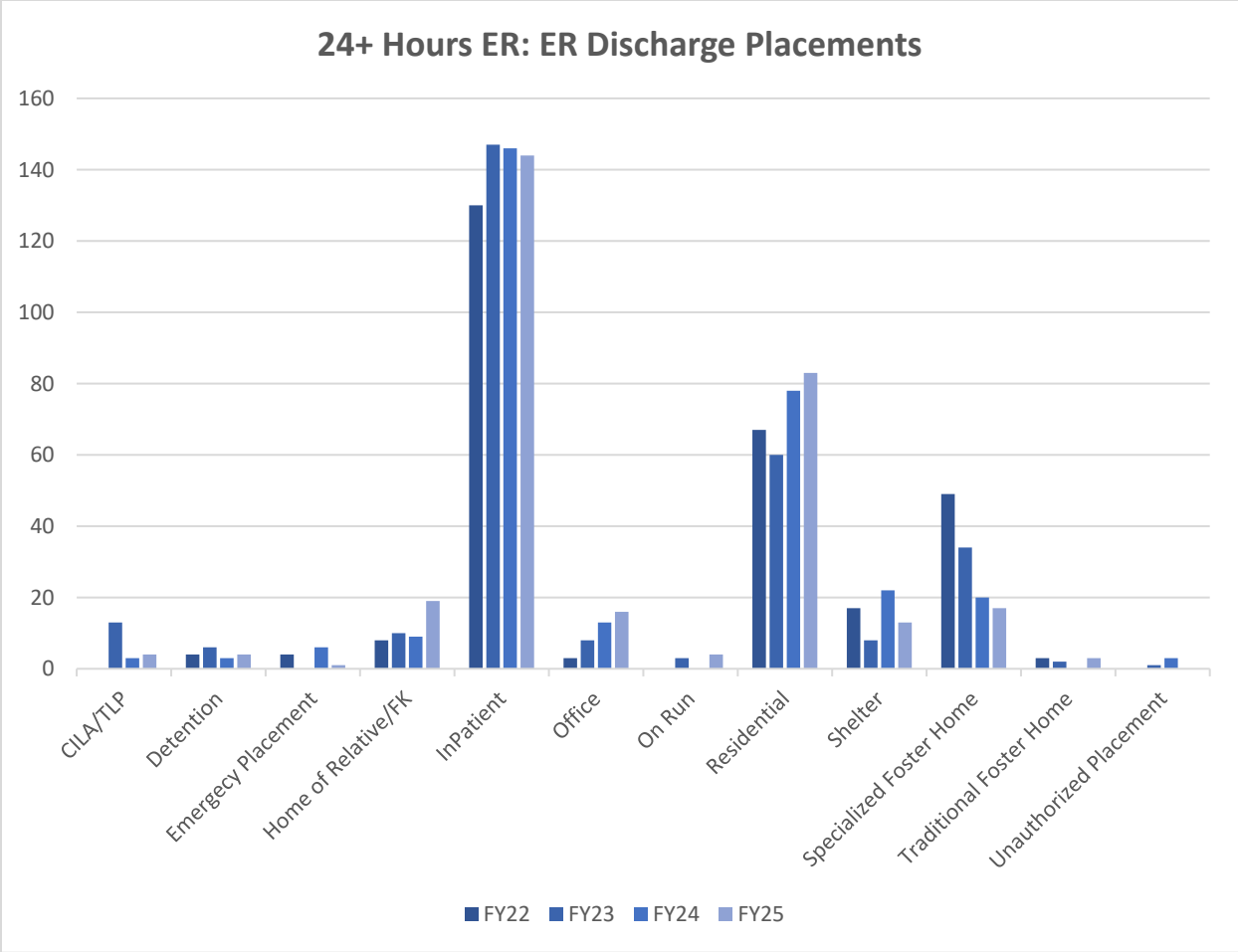
There was minimal change in regional breakdown between fiscal years. The Cook region accounted for 38% of the youth awaiting hospitalization with the remainder of the youth residing in the Northern, Central and Southern region respectively.



The age range of youth for FY25 was between 4 and 21 years of age, with 71% being between the ages of 12 and 17 years old. When evaluated by gender there was a similar variance to years prior. In FY25 52% of youth were female which is similar to years prior, 47% were male which is an increase from FY24, and there were 4 youth who identified as transgender.



The top placements for youth after their time in emergency rooms remain Psychiatric Hospitals (47% of youth) followed by Residential Treatment Centers.

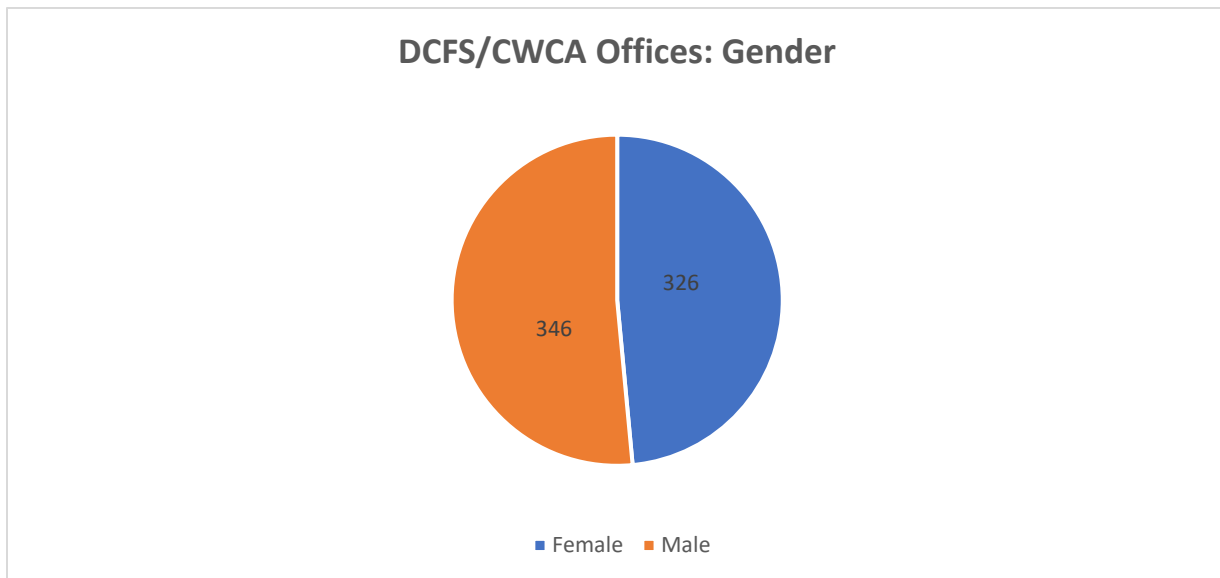


The phenomenon of children waiting for hospitalization in ERs remains an ongoing struggle. There is limited to no data about the “critical incidents to include reporting about PRN medications or restraints” for the following reasons: While ERs are supposed to notify DCFS about the use of Emergency medications and restraints, it is rarely done according to the DCFS Guardian’s Office and Dr. Naylor at UIC who oversees the Psychotropic Medication Consent line. This could occur because most medical facilities are not well versed in the DCFS policies and protocols. All the above information and data live in numerous different systems so it has to be mined across said systems leading to possible underreporting. If a worker does not 906 (placement designation form) a youth into an ER and the youth gets deflected, there is no formal record of this occurrence so it cannot be tracked back very easily. Youthcare reports the information to the DCFS team and DCFS attempts to fill whatever holes or questions there may be, which can make it very challenging to produce a seamless report of one individual child’s experience and interaction.

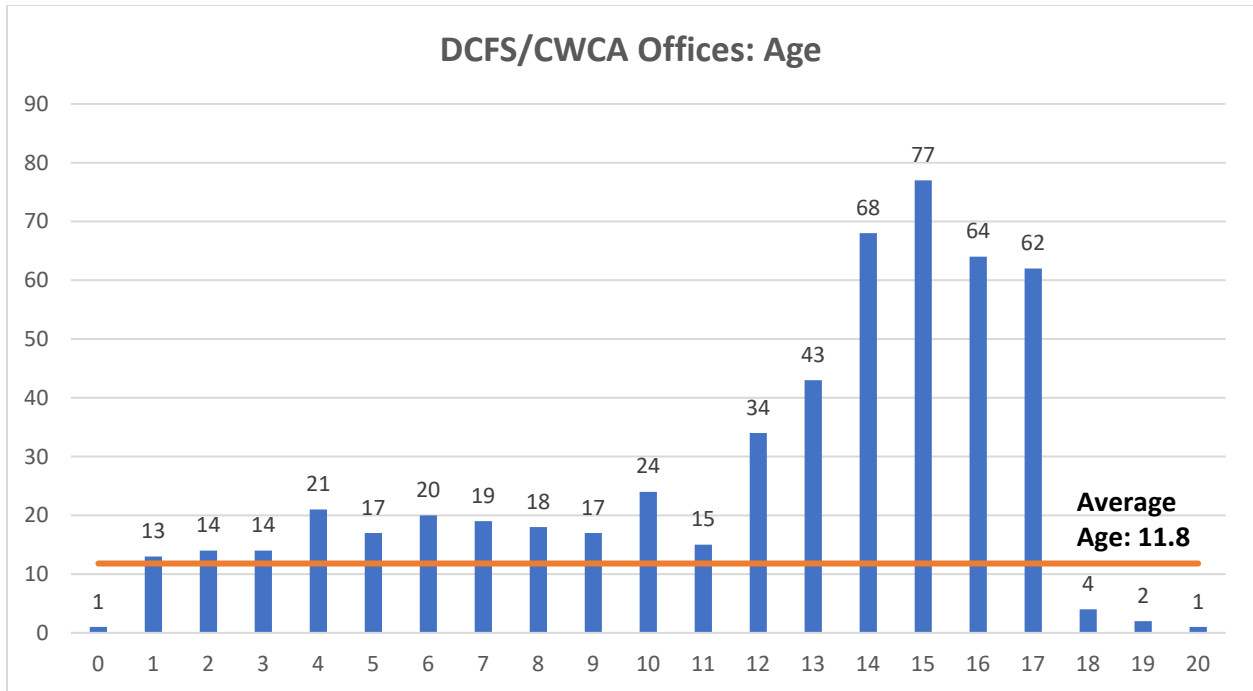
Youth Who Remained Overnight in DCFS, Child Welfare Contributing Agency Offices or Welcome Centers

In FY25 there were 672 episodes (548 youth) who remained overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing agency offices or welcome centers. 51.49% of youth were male while 48.51% were female.

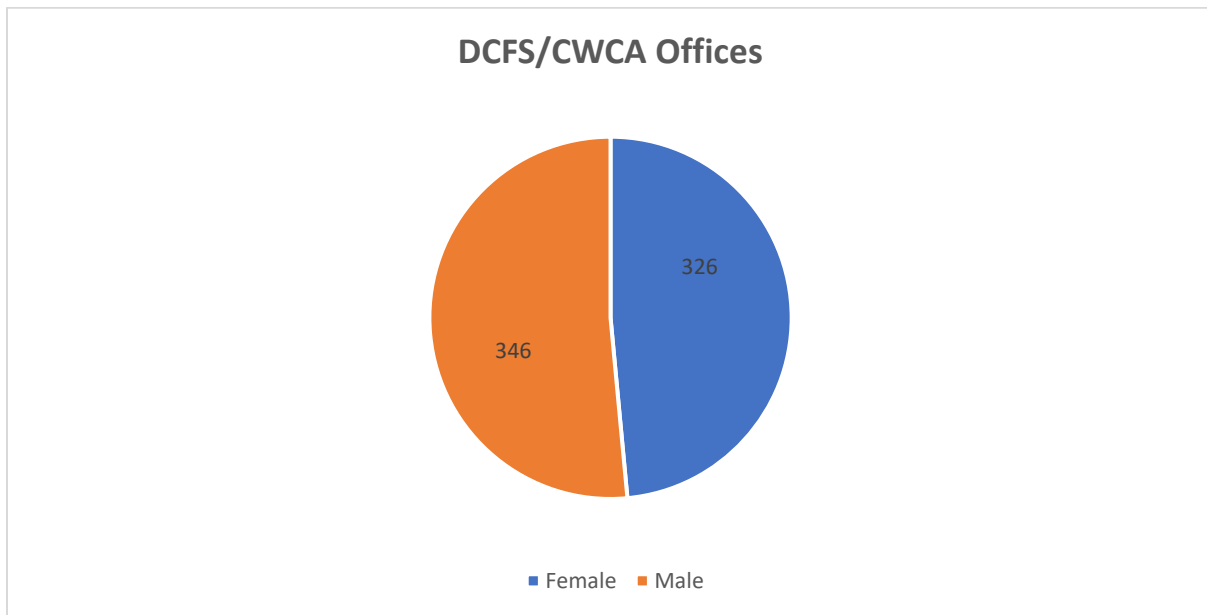
Of note the Department no longer uses the Welcome Center for emergency placement and did not have a youth in that setting type during FY24.



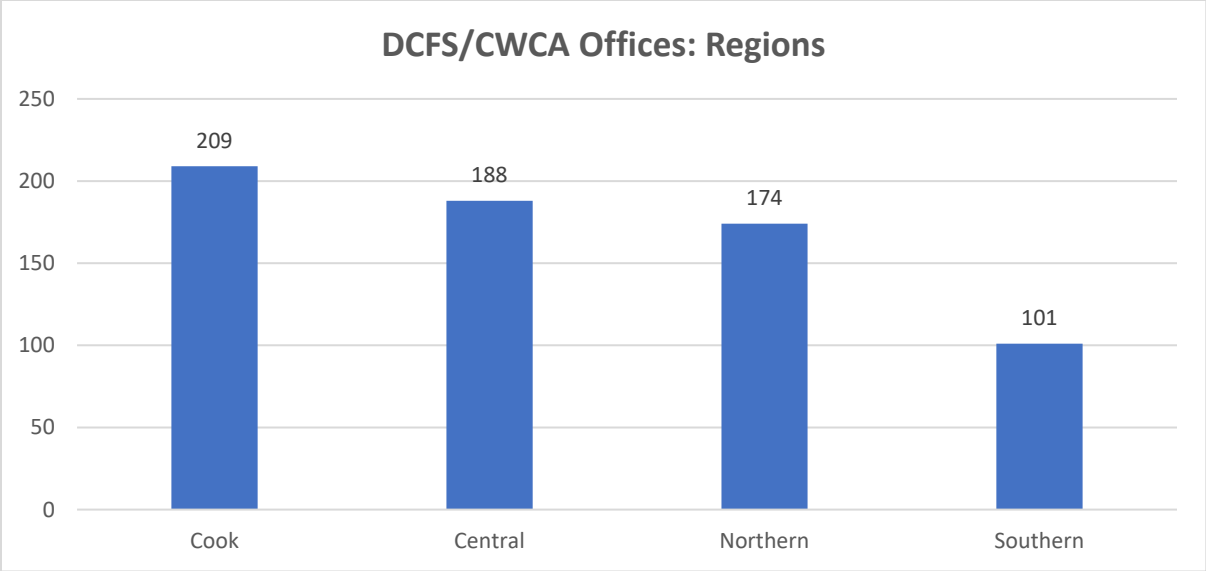
The average age of youth at the end of FY25 was 11.8 years old, and the age range of youth was between 1 and 20 years of age, with 58.58% being from the ages of 13 and older.



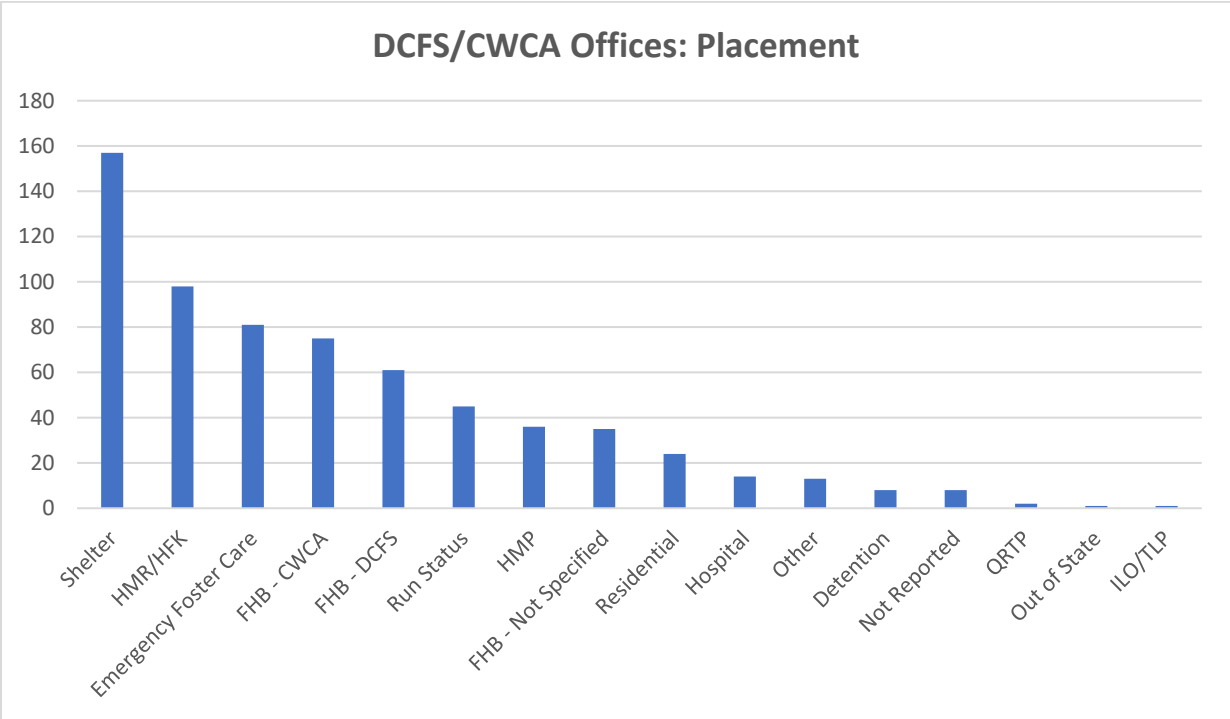
The average length of stay for all youth was 4.52 days. 87.5% (588 youth) stayed in DCFS Offices, while 12.5% (84 youth) stayed in Child Welfare Contributing Agency (CWCA) offices overnight.



Cook region accounted for 31.1% while Central Region accounted for 27.98% of the total number of youth who remained overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing agency offices or welcome centers, with the remainder of the youth in the Northern and Southern regions respectively.



The top placements for youth after staying overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing agency offices or welcome centers were Shelter (23.82%), HMR/HFK (14.87%), Emergency Foster Care (12.29%), and FHB - CWAC (11.38%).



Shelter	157
HMR/HFK	98
Emergency Foster Care	81
FHB - CWCA	75
FHB - DCFS	61
Run Status	45
HMP	36
FHB - Not Specified	35
Residential	24
Hospital	14
Other	13
Detention	8
Not Reported	8
QRTP	2
Out of State	1
ILO/TLP	1

How the Department Collects Information for Report

Information	Sources
Youth in Emergency Placements (Shelters/Foster Homes) 30 Days or More	Multiple systems housed in various system
Youth Who Remained in Psychiatric Hospitals Beyond Medical Necessity	DCFS Psychiatric Hospitalization Database; Child and Youth Information System (CYCIS).
Youth in Detention Center/DJJ Beyond the Release Date	Child and Youth Information System (CYCIS), Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS), and supplemental email correspondence.
Youth in Out-of-State Residential Treatment Facilities	Multiple systems housed in various system.
Youth Subject to 84b Child Protection Investigations	Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS)
Youth 24+ Hours in Emergency Rooms Awaiting Psychiatric Hospital Bed Admission	YouthCare; Multiple systems housed in various system.
Youth Who Remained Overnight in DCFS or child welfare contributing agency offices or welcome centers	Multiple systems housed in various system.

As data is housed in various service systems and by various divisions within DCFS, each system is independent of the other, and in some instances DCFS depends on other state agencies for

needed data for this report. Therefore, for the most part, the process of constructing the Annual Youth in Care Report is manual data integration by several staff, leading to the entire data and final report being put together by the designated staff.

Summary

The Department continues to work diligently to improve the process at each level of care to ensure that youth are matched and moved to an appropriate placement. Additionally, the Department continues with resource development targeting both out of home therapeutic placements as well as programs and services to maintain youth in family settings. The goal is when youth are matched, to have available resources so they can be moved expediently. In addition, the Department continues to work on ways to provide services and support to maintain youth in their current placements and to work with foster parents and caseworkers on an individual basis to address their needs and avoid placement disruptions. Though the Department takes the leads on many of these initiatives, the Department is only successful when stakeholders and partners can support and execute interventions being developed to meet the needs.