

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Department: Social Services

HB Section(s): 11.305

Division: Children's Division

Program is found in the following core budget(s): Children's Field Staff and Operations

1a. What strategic priority does this program address?

Effective, supported, and accountable workforce.

1b. What does this program do?

The Children's Division (CD) highest priorities are to ensure the safety of children and move children from the state's custody to permanency. The Division protects Missouri's most vulnerable children by responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect; assisting families to help children remain in or return home safely; ensure safe out-of-home placements for children placed in the Division's custody; and locate permanent homes for children who cannot return home.

CD direct service staff, supervisory, administrative, and clerical support the programs administered. The Division's administrative structure provides that the Division Director or Deputy Director will supervise regional administrative staff, and they in turn will manage the Division's local county offices which are organized into judicial circuits. Regional staff are responsible for all programs operated by the Division within their respective region. Each Circuit Manager has similar responsibility for that circuit's staff, and employs supervisory and clerical staff to facilitate the management of these programs. A typical circuit structure would have a unit or units of Children's Service Workers, a Social Service Supervisor(s), clerical staff, and a Circuit Manager.

Administrative staff are engaged in activities related to program monitoring and evaluation, personnel management and appraisals, training, and automated system support. These positions are responsible for quality of service provision and for monitoring of case activities to assure accuracy. They also provide significant on-the-job training to new employees. Supervisory staff are allocated based on a ratio of one (1) to no more than seven (7) workers. Clerical staff assist clients entering the local offices, organize and coordinate workflow, and perform data entry functions.

Children's Service Workers investigate child abuse and neglect reports, perform family assessments, provide permanency planning for children, and ensure that permanency will have achieved expeditiously. The Children's Service Worker is an advocate for the children, and an integral partner with the juvenile court. They assure the safety of the child, and provide for the needs of the children and their families in a manner that serves the child's best interest. According to Section 210.112, RSMo, it was the intent and goal of the General Assembly to have the CD attain accreditation by the Council on Accreditation (COA). As of November 2009, COA announced that CD was fully accredited. CD has remained accredited since. Attaining and maintaining accreditation demonstrates to consumers and stakeholders that the CD is adhering to nationally recognized standards. COA supports sound policy and reasonable caseload sizes to help ensure the safety and welfare of children. The following is a brief discussion of the vital responsibilities of the Children's Service Worker to include targeted strategies for engagement with families, structured decision making, and trauma-informed practice.

Responding to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect: A Children's Service Worker initiates an investigation or family assessment into allegations of child abuse or neglect within 24 hours of the report to the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline. If the report indicates behavior that may constitute a criminal violation, the report is screened as an investigation, and a co-investigation will be conducted with local law enforcement. Should the findings from the investigation determine that abuse/neglect did occur, the perpetrator is placed on the Central Registry. Services are accessible to the family as appropriate. The other child abuse/neglect reports that are not criminal; are then addressed through a family assessment. The primary purpose of the comprehensive family assessment is to assess the child's safety and the family's need for services. The agency seeks to form a collaborative relationship with the family and their community to build on existing strengths. Through this process, the focus is on long-term success for the family, rather than on an individual incident.

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Family-Centered Services: If the result of the investigation or family assessment concludes that the child is in danger, the worker collaborates with law enforcement and/or the Juvenile Court to take immediate steps to protect the child and begins working with the family to prevent any further abuse or neglect. Treatment services are put into place to help prevent the reoccurrence of abuse or neglect and to help the family regain custody in instances where the removal of the child(ren) was necessary.

Alternative Care: In many instances, the protection of the child requires the removal of the child from the home and placement in an alternate living arrangement. The Children's Service Worker makes arrangements for this placement, monitors the placement, and when appropriate makes plans for the subsequent return of the child to their natural home.

Recruitment and Retention: CD contracts for all recruitment, recommendations for licensure/approval, and retention of resource homes in Jackson County and the Northwest portion of the state. The contract began as a pilot, as required by a report of the Task Force on Recruitment, Licensing and Retention of Foster Care and Adoptive Homes, and has continued since. CD is also piloting an enhanced effort for recruiting, licensing, and retaining foster and adoptive homes in the southern regions of the state.

The Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit (CA/NHU): The hotline accepts confidential reports of suspected child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Reports are received through a toll-free nationwide telephone line which is answered seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Members of certain occupational groups, such as teachers, social workers, and physicians are mandated by law (mandated reporters) to make reports to the hotline. The reporters can make reports that are non-emergency in nature through a web-based on-line application. Any person may report and anonymous reports are accepted from individuals who are not mandated by occupation to report through the toll-free telephone line. Missouri law requires mandated reporters to identify themselves when making a report. The toll-free number is 1-800-392-3738. In addition, all schools are required by law to post signs containing a child-friendly acronym for the child abuse hotline. That phone number is 1-844-CAN-TELL. In 2018, the phone system was updated from analog to digital with additional call management capabilities such as expanding the queue size to 50 callers versus 12 and adding a callback option for mandated reporters.

Mobility Project: CD provides iPads to approximately 1,500 frontline staff statewide. CD staff use the Family and Children Electronic Services (FACES) application and virtual desktop (VDI) to enter and save case data while out in the field. In addition, staff use the iPad to access email, calendars, FaceTime to supplement visits between incarcerated parents and children, GPS for locating homes, internet access to search for local services to serve family needs, the Child Protector application including talk to text, and free texting applications that allow staff to use the iPad to text with clients. All iPads are equipped with data plans. Wi-Fi access has been installed in all Children's Division offices.

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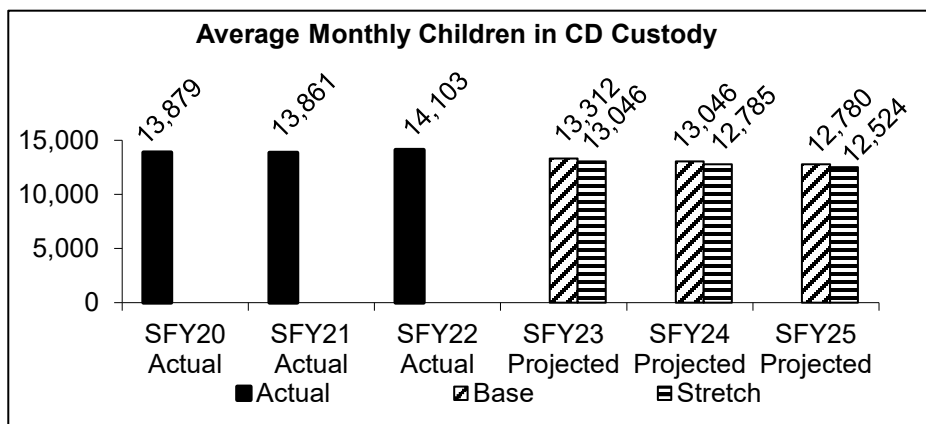
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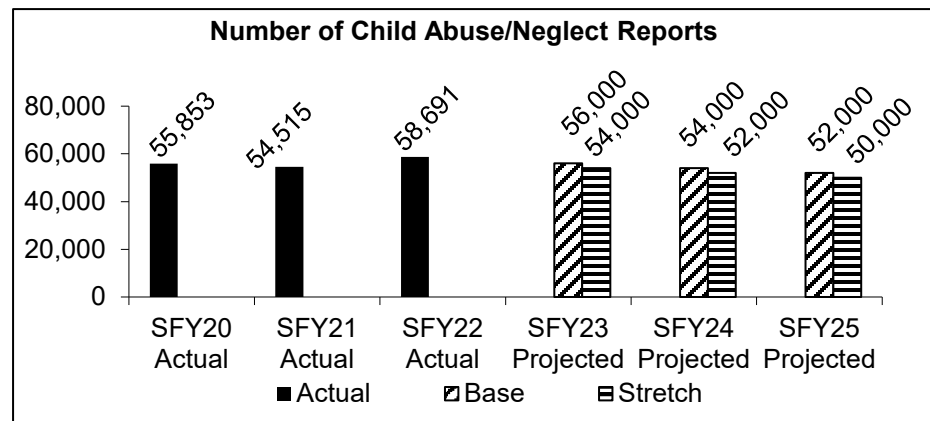
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2a. Provide an activity measure(s) for the program.

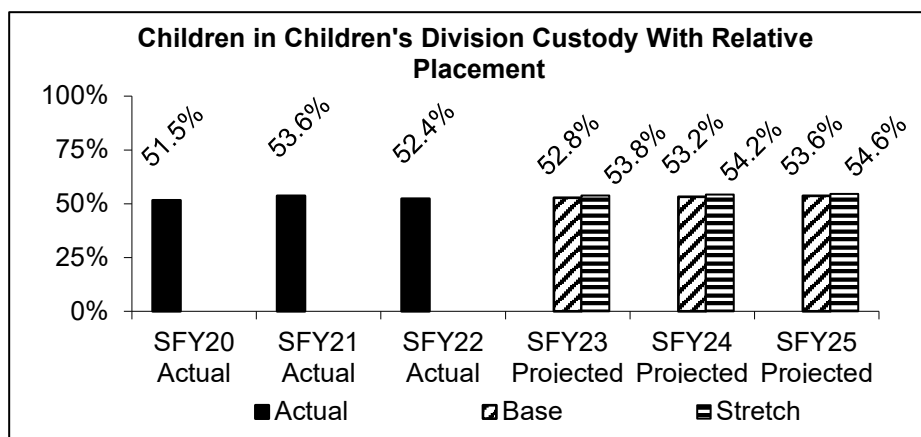


Children in care and custody of Children's Division

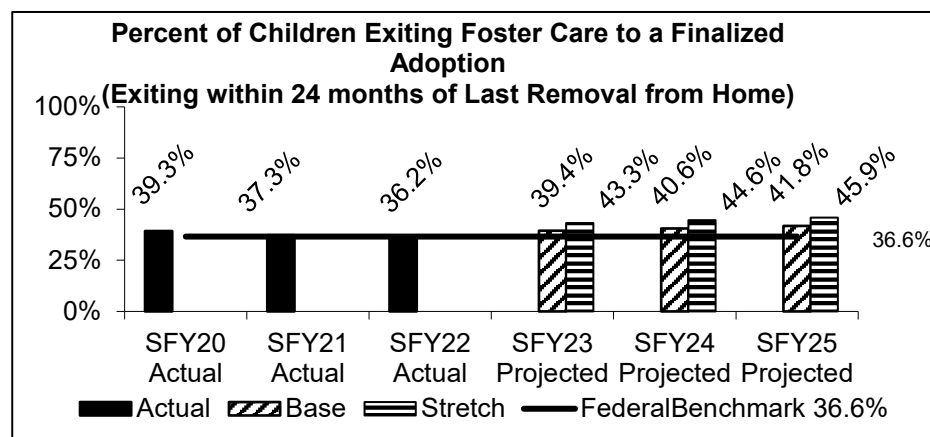


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2b. Provide a measure(s) of the program's quality.



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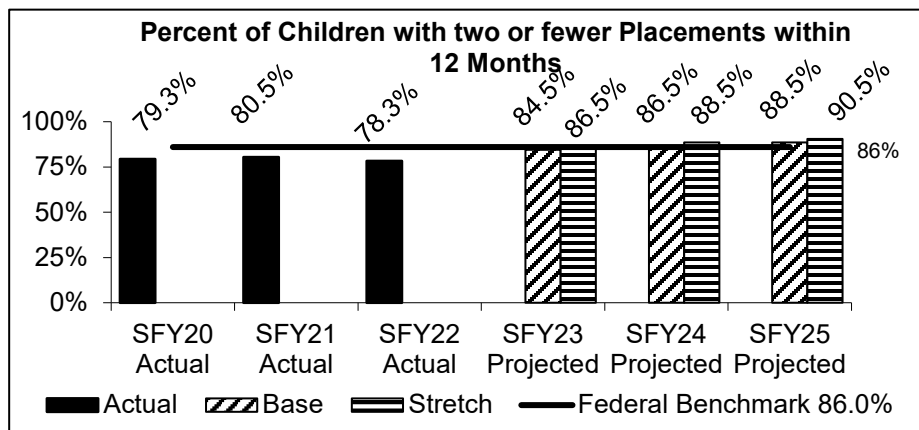
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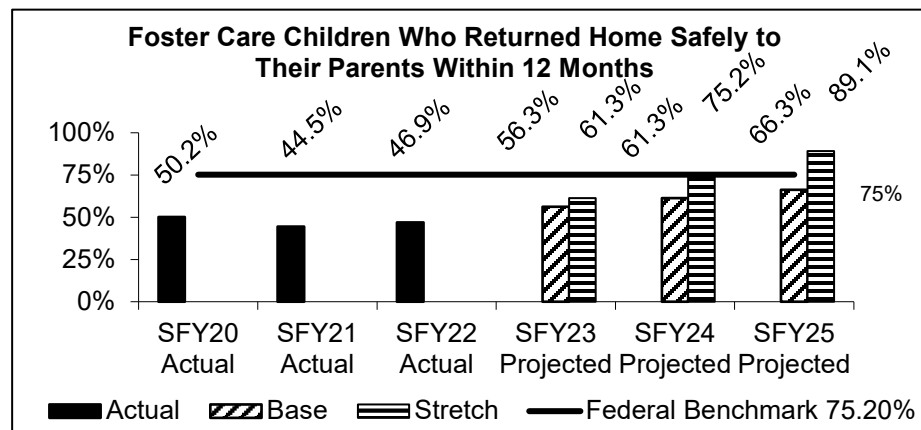
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2c. Provide a measure(s) of the program's impact.

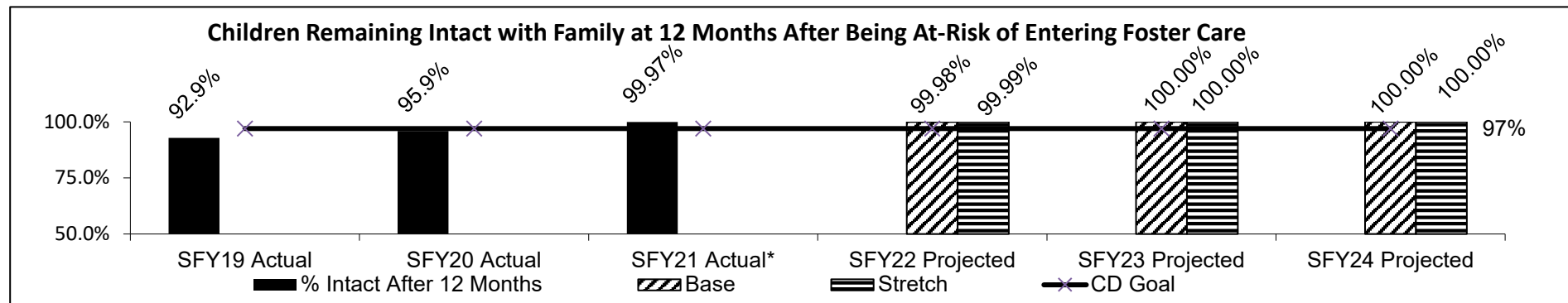


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2d. Provide a measure(s) of the program's efficiency.



*SFY data is one year behind and SFY22 will not be available until December 2023.

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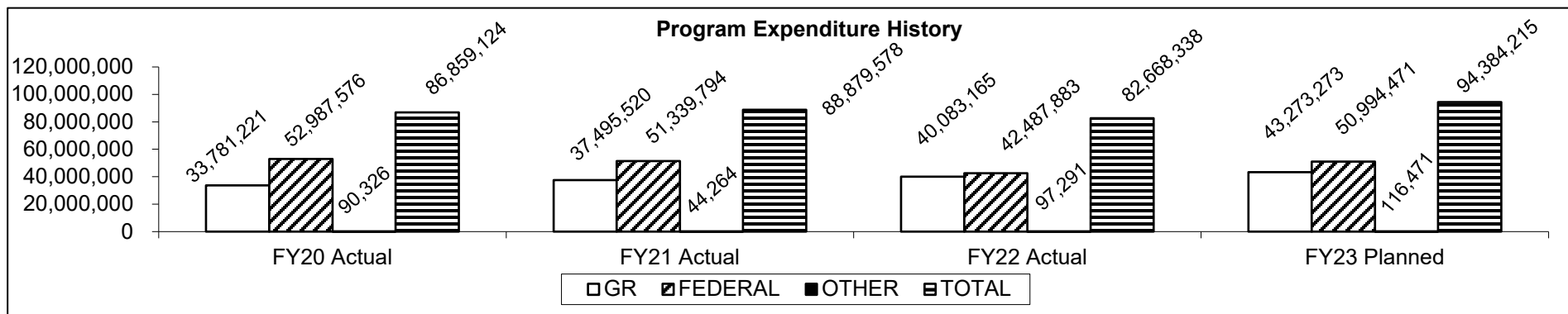
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3. Provide actual expenditures for the prior three fiscal years and planned expenditures for the current fiscal year. (Note: Amounts do not include fringe benefit costs.)



Planned FY 2023 expenditures are net of reverted and reserves.

4. What are the sources of the "Other " funds?

Health Initiatives Fund (0275)

5. What is the authorization for this program, i.e., federal or state statute, etc.? (Include the federal program number, if applicable.)

State Statute(s): Sections 207.010, 207.020, and 208.400, RSMo.; Federal: 42 USC Sections 670 and 5101.

6. Are there federal matching requirements? If yes, please explain.

Children's Division administrative reimbursement is based on the Children's Division random moment time study rate of approximately 47.00% federal (53.00% state match), which is reimbursable at the IV-E administrative rate of 50% (50% state match) for IV-E allowable expenditures. The time study rate is determined by polling a select number of Children's Division staff to determine the amount of time spent on particular programs. The time spent on each program and the earnings for these programs are used to determine a federal reimbursement rate.

7. Is this a federally mandated program? If yes, please explain.

The federal Child Welfare Act and the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act obligate Missouri to care for children who are abused and neglected. Line staff and operations activities related to these obligations would be considered mandatory.