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Lorain County Children Services CQI annual report 2023



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Mission: In partnership with the community, the staff, foster parents, and volunteers of Lorain County Children Services are committed to the safety and well-being of abused, neglected, and dependent children and will provide the highest quality protection, permanency, and prevention services for children and families.

CORE VALUES

The child is our client-Children do best in a family-Children should be better off with our involvement-We should be involved with a child only as long as necessary- We value keeping siblings together- We value a diverse and inclusive workspace and respect the diversity and equity needs of the families and children we serve- We value being a trauma informed agency-We value independent and critical thinking-We value continuous improvement and accept change-We value seeing children to ensure safety-All children are valued and protected



Lorain County Data

During 2023, Lorain County Children Services (LCCS) staff continued to achieve positive outcomes for children and families throughout Lorain County. Staff worked with children and their families to ensure that children were safe, had a plan for permanency and had their basic and special needs met. The work done by support staff, caseworkers and supervisors showed dedication to Lorain County Children Services mission.

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The child population of Lorain County is reported at 70,413 (ROM Results Oriented Management reporting system), this accounts for 22% of the total population in the county. About 15,000 children or 22% of children in Lorain County live in poverty. LCCS received reports with concerns regarding child abuse and neglect for 5187 children or about 7.5% of children in the county. Staff at the agency screened in cases involving about 2187 children or 3.2% of the county's child population.



Operational achievements

Strategic Plan-



The 2021-2023 Strategic Plan was completed. During 2023, staff continued to work on achieving the strategic planning goals. The initiatives of the plan included 1) Diversity, Inclusion, Family, and Individual Rights, 2) Responding to Trauma/Advance Trauma-Informed and Resilient Professionalism and 3) Family First Act Implementation and Innovation.

·The Diversity group reviewed data on racial disproportionality of the children receiving agency services. The group members were part of a cohort of other Public Child Welfare Agencies who worked with the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) to think through our practice in Race/Equity and Inclusion at Lorain County Children Services (LCCS).

·The staff members who worked on the Responding to Trauma group increased staff education on how trauma affects the children and families that we serve and how secondary trauma can affect the lives of the staff at the agency. Debriefing groups were offered to staff at the agency to help mitigate secondary trauma and process feelings in relation to the work they do. LCCS administration created a Trauma caseworker position to support children that are separated from their families. Some of the children that are in the custody of LCCS have experience complex trauma and this can result in emotional and/ or behavioral issues for those children. The goal for the Trauma caseworker position is to prevent disruptions from kinship and foster homes.

·The Family First Act Implementation and Innovation group completed work including staff training and drafting language into procedures that align with the Family First Prevention Services Act. This group monitored the work going on at the state level with OhioRISE (a specialized managed care program that focuses on children and youth who have complex behavioral health and multisystem needs.

·The management group began work on the next strategic plan toward the end of 2023. This plan will focus on increases positive outcomes at is relates to safety, permanency and well-being for the children and families that we work with.

Operational achievements cont.


Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP)–

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KGAP is a financial assistance program for licensed kinship caregivers who become legal custodians of children. This new program became part of the practice in the state of Ohio in January of 2023. LCCS initiated KGAP at the same time. While this program is an excellent opportunity for the kinship families that LCCS works with, the program did require staff at LCCS to adjust in practice. Historically, LCCS staff filed for kinship caregivers to receive temporary custody of children while caseworkers worked with parents on reunification. The KGAP program requires kinship caregivers to become licensed foster parents while the agency receives temporary custody of a children and placing that child in the kinship caregivers' home. The kinship caregiver needs to complete a home study and have a child placed in their home for at least 6 months before they receive legal custody of a child. After the kinship caregiver is awarded legal custody, that caregiver is eligible for monthly financial assistance until the child turn 18.

The staff in Family Based Care (FBC) completed work with KGAP in 2023 to ensure home studies were completed timely for kinship providers. The staff supported kinship caregivers and helped them navigate the various programs they could be eligible for or benefit from. The Direct Services (DS) staff had additional responsibilities in oversight of increased numbers of children coming into the custody of LCCS.



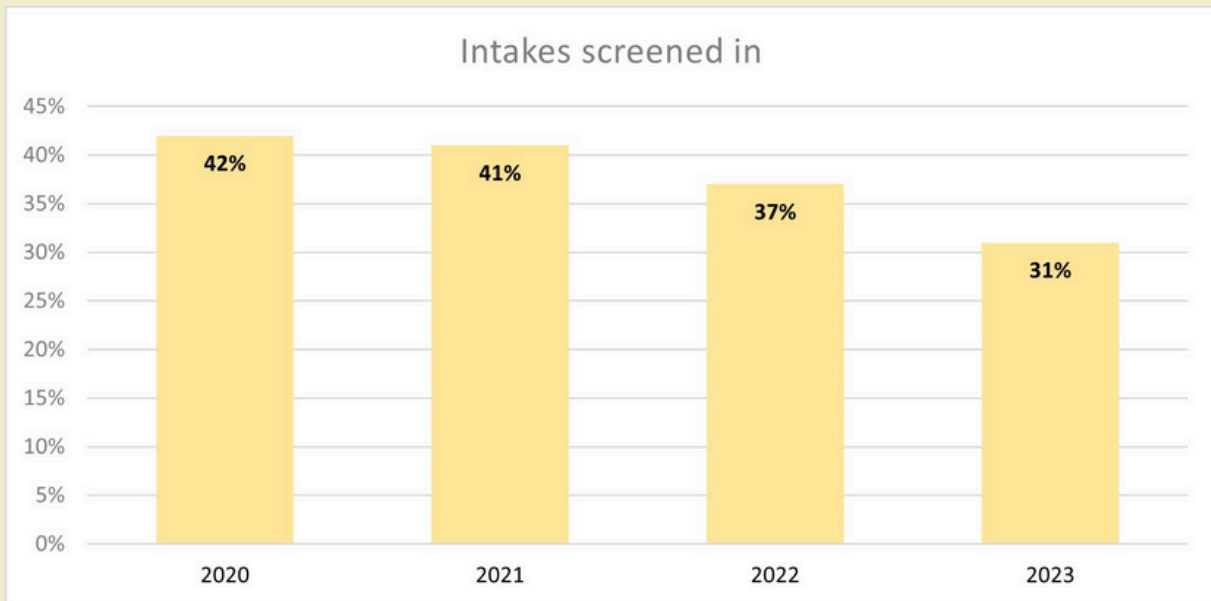
All Management Leadership Training- In 2023, all management team participated in a 12-month leadership course with Tim Nolan from the Human Services Leadership Institute. Through this training program, the management team talked about the vision, mission, and values of the agency. Other topics included professional competence and working as a leader within the agency and motivating staff. Tim facilitated conversation and problem solving with various leadership topics throughout the 12-month course.

Best Practice Oversight from ODJFS- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services monitored two important data points in the work including documenting face-to-face visits for the children and adults that we work with as well as completing intake assessments within the state required timeframe. With both data points, ODJFS monitors each agency to ensure that the face-to-face visits are documented, and intake cases have a timely resolution at least 95% of the time. Lorain County Children Services caseworkers ensured that both measures exceeded 95% each month in 2023. Meeting this goal took effort from not only caseworkers but the Direct Services Supervisors as well.

Council On Accreditation- COA- Staff finished the accreditation process to earn COA reaccreditation. The achievement was a result of the staff's hard work in completing a self-study and review of the COA standards/expectation of practice within a child welfare agency. COA sets standards of best practice in Child Welfare. In total there are over 350 standards that need to be met during the COA accreditation process. Each area of the agency is reviewed including administration, fiscal, human services, CQI, foster care, direct services and, risk management of the agency. When the agency received its final report, staff learned that they had met each standard with no areas to improve practice. This is an achievement that all staff should be proud of.

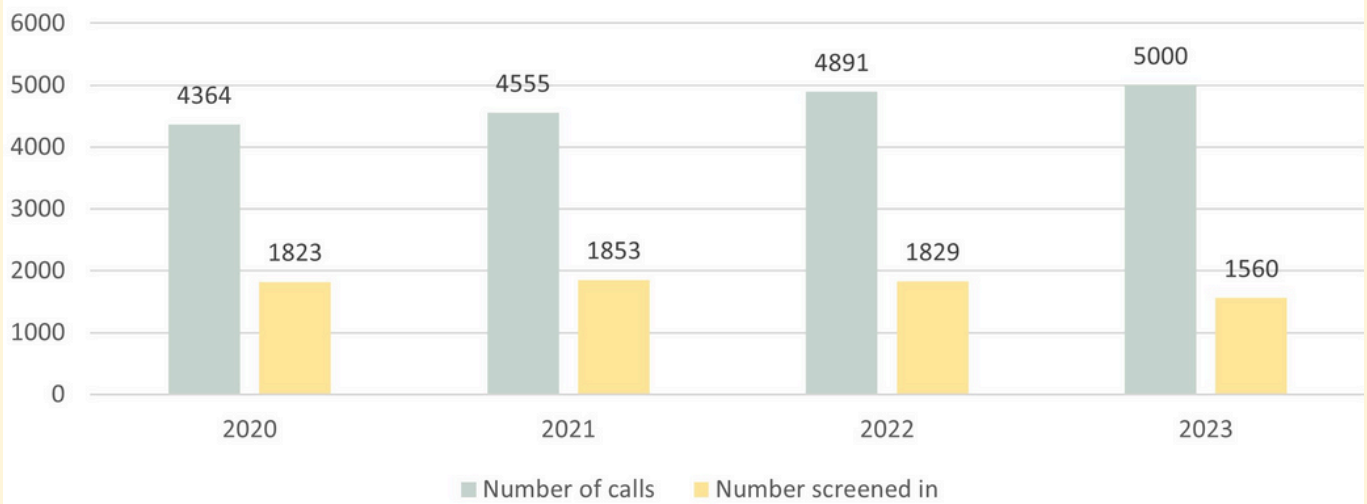
Work with children, kin, and resource caregivers

Intake Screening- Percentage of intakes screened in has steadily declined over the past several years. In 2020, 1853 (42%) reports of child abuse/neglect were screened in. In 2023 the number of reports that were screened in was 1560. To compare, the state screened in 45% of reports in 2020 and 35% in 2023. The actual number of calls made to the referral specialist and hotline staff has increased since 2020. From 2020 to 2023, there was a 14.5% increase in the number of calls to the referral specialists or hotline staff. Mandated reporters account for roughly 75% of all reports made to the agency.

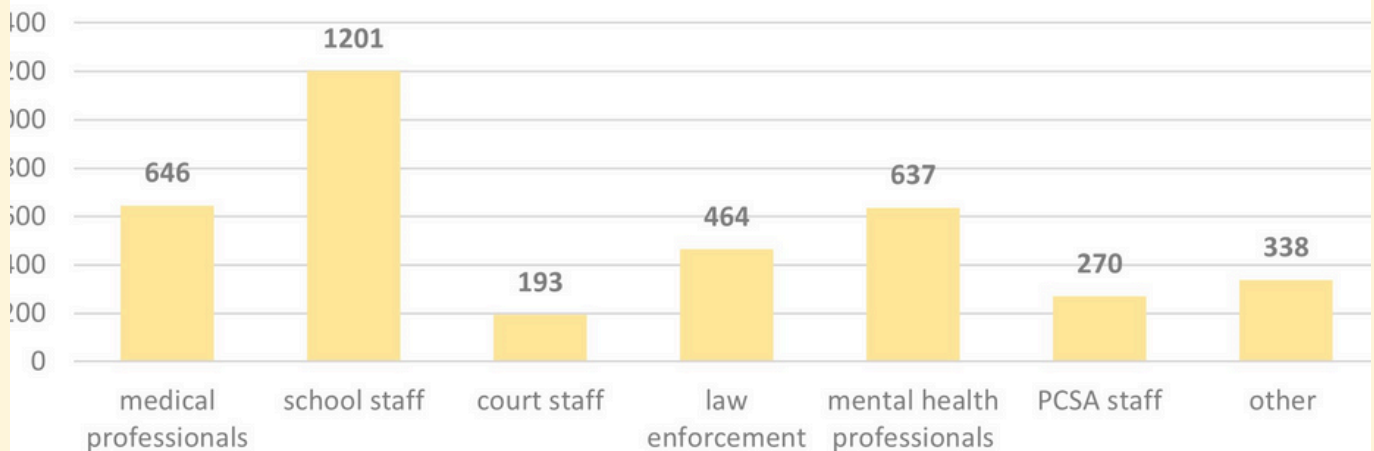




Number of reports made/number screened in



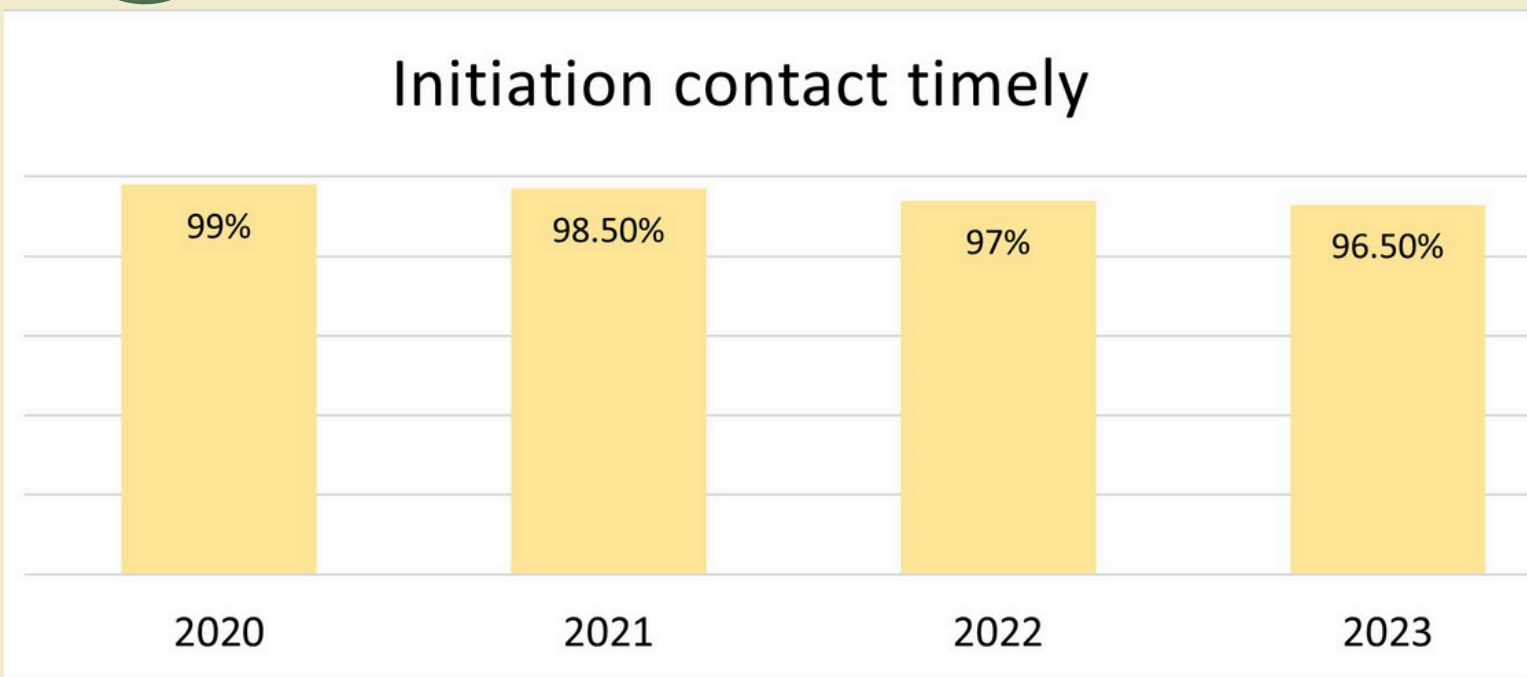
Mandated reporters making referrals



Intake Outcomes

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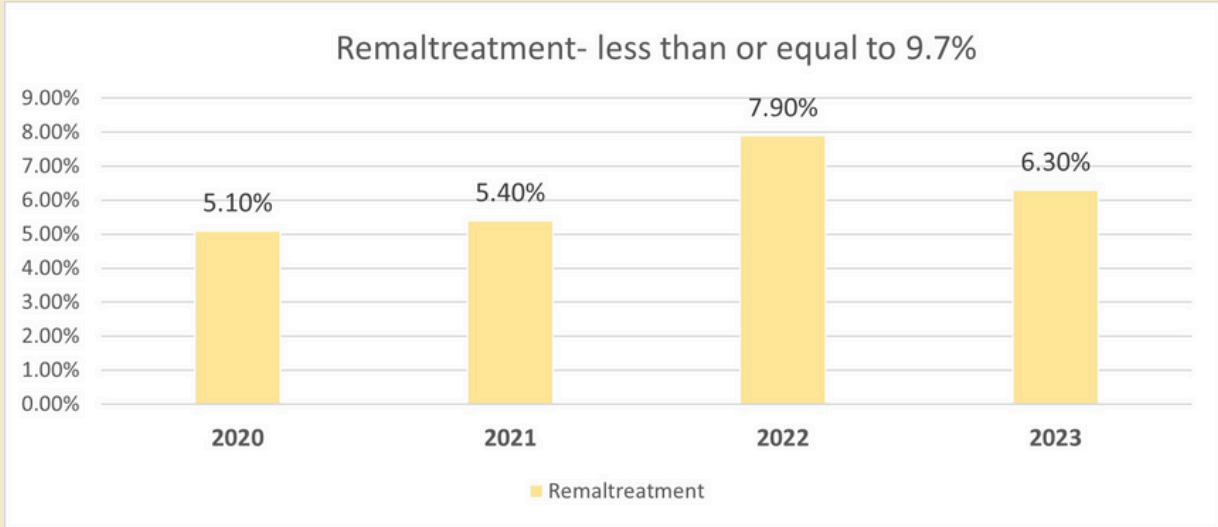
Initiation contact timely



Child Remaltreatment- Lorain County Children Services staff strive to ensure safety of children. The Federal Government has an expectation that no more that 9.7% of the children that LCCS investigate in the intake phase have multiple substantiated or indicated dispositions. When children are remaltreated, the federal government and state that oversee our practice question whether staff have accurately assessed safety. LCCS staff have been able to meet this standard consistently since 2016. When drilling down to individual months, there have been instances when this mark was not achieved but when looking at a yearly perspective, LCCS excels. This number has gone up slightly since the change in practice with our children and families but not significantly so.

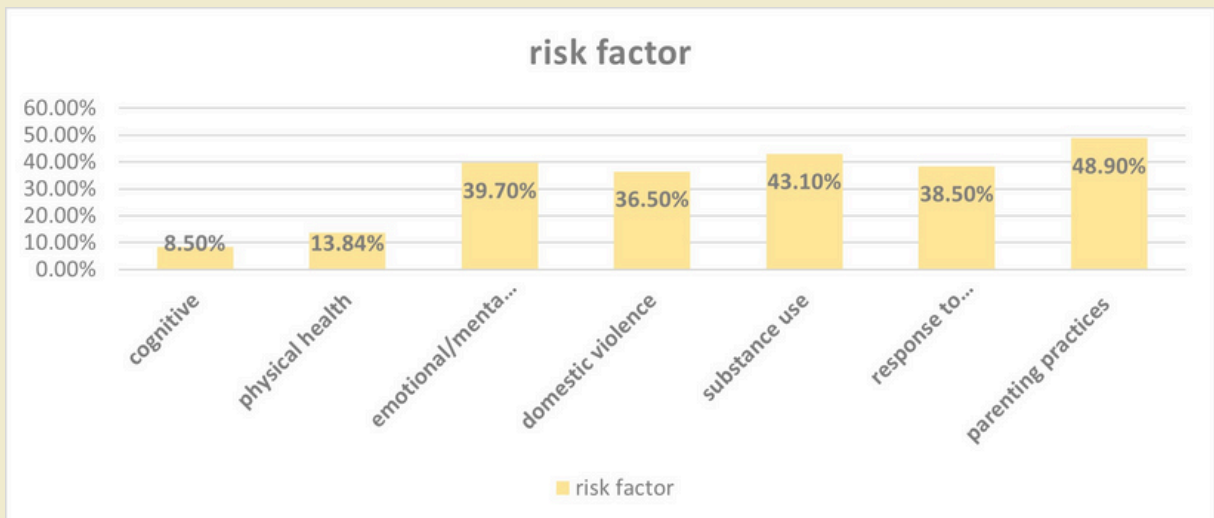
When looking at both the remaltreatment and the report recurrence, LCCS staff have demonstrated an ability to assess safety and prevent reengagement with LCCS. The presumption is that the staff have assessed and linked children and families to needed services in the community and to decrease the need to report another concern to LCCS.

Intake Outcomes



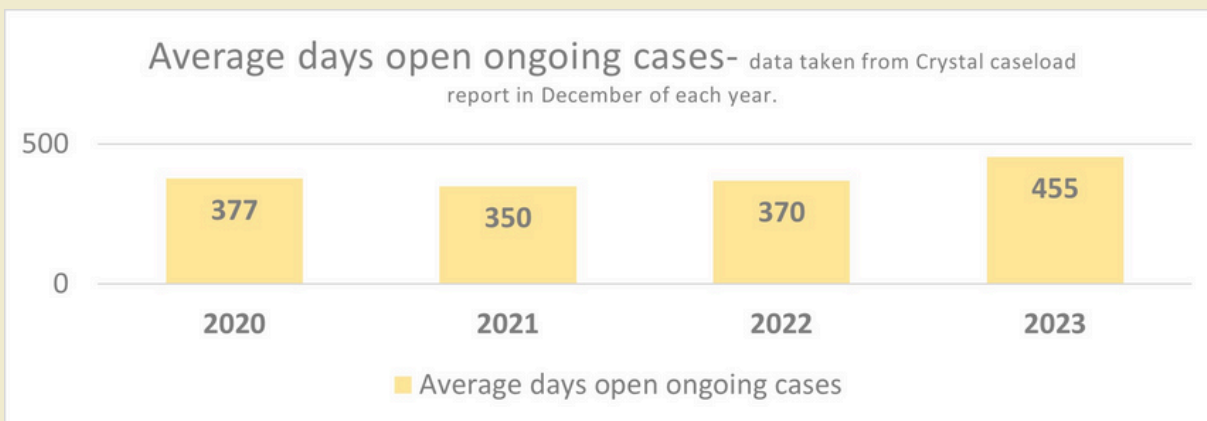
Family Assessment Risk Contributors

Intake workers complete an extensive assessment on the children and families that they work with within 30-45 days of open a case with a family. During the assessment, multiple strengths and areas of risk are review with each family member. The caseworker that is completing the assessment reviews strengths and concerns of the adults that are living with children. In 2023, 1315 assessments were completed. The below chart contains information on the risk factors that caseworkers noted with the adults that were being assessed. This information helps the casework team to determine what services and supports the family could benefit from. Of the 1315 assessments completed, caseworkers recommended case closures for 538 families. 508 families were recommended to have their cases closed with referrals to community services and 269 families were recommended to have their cases transferred for ongoing services.



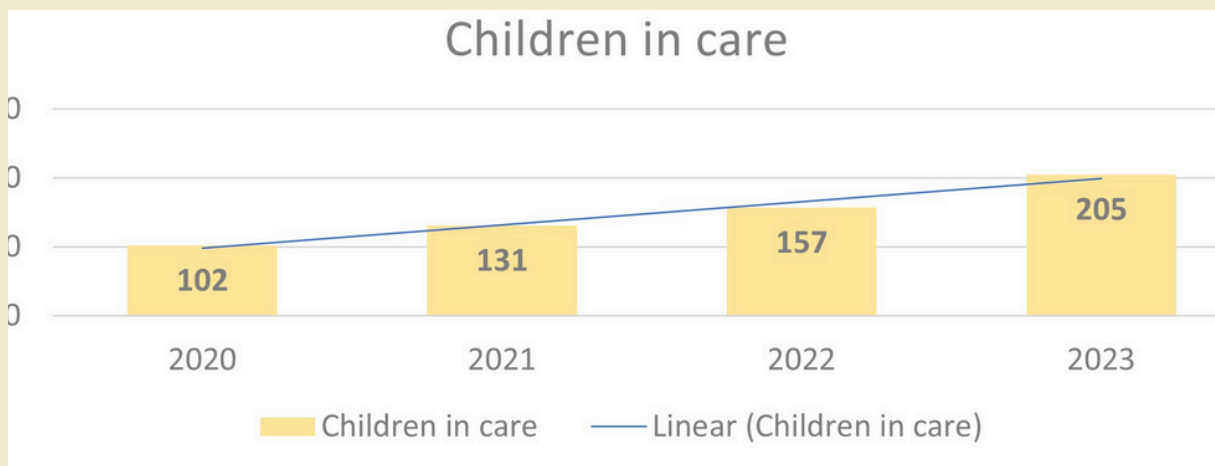
Average number of days open

The average number of days that LCCS staff is involved with a family is getting longer. In 2022, the average number of days for an ongoing case to be open was 370 days. In 2023, that number climbed to 455 days. This is an increase of 23%. This is a significant increase in the time that LCCS is involved with a family. One of the concerns about this jump is how our involvement impacts families. LCCS staff should be involved with children and families only as long as necessary. This means that timely assessments, filings and linking to services needs to be a priority. Children are in custody or under court supervision longer and have ongoing cases open longer than previous years.



Children in care- The number of children in care has increased by 100% since 2020. The prevailing reason for this increase is due to the Kinship Guardian Assistance Program KGAP. KGAP is financial assistance and Medicaid funded through federal and state dollars to licensed kinship care providers. In 2020, 17 children in LCCS custody were placed with a relative. In 2023, 65 children were placed with relatives. This number is expected to climb. While this is a good program for the kin that care for the children in need, it does increase the number of children that are brought into LCCS custody.

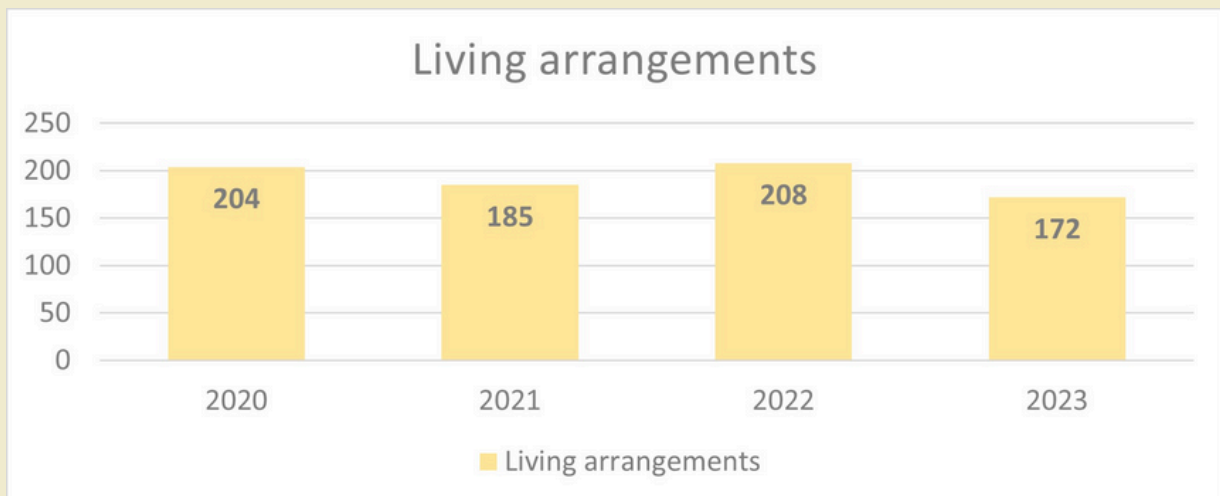
Taking the children in custody that are placed with kin out of the equation, LCCS has increased the number of children in care by 37% (*102 children in 2020, 205 children in 2023 minus the 65 children in kinship homes, resulting in 140 children in care). This is a significant increase and places more labor on the caseworkers, case aides and supervisors overseeing these children in their placements.



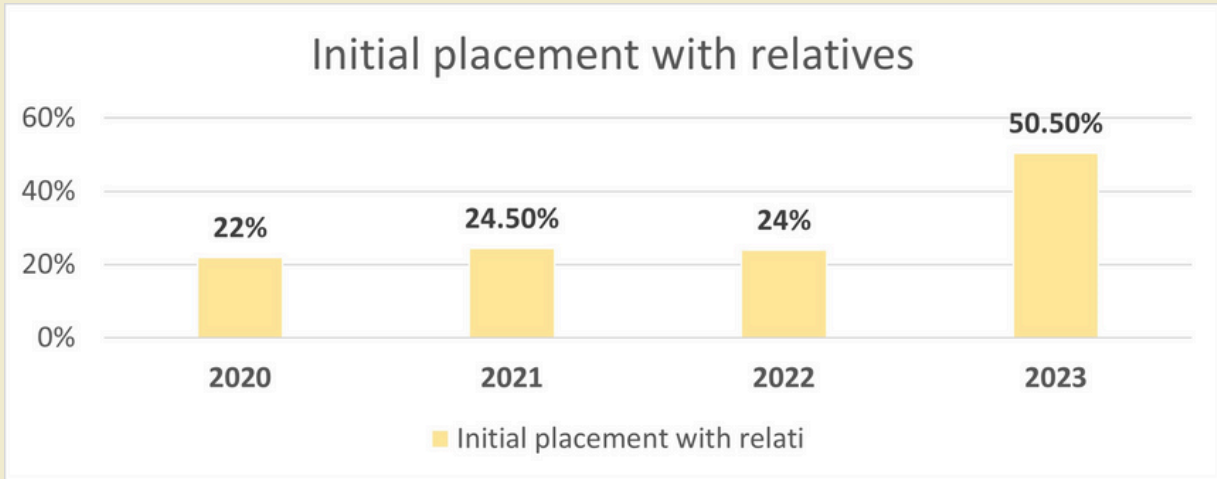
Enter/Exit from agency custody- In the first half of 2023, LCCS had 62 children enter the custody of the agency and exited 29 children. The second half of the year, 73 children entered custody with 55 children exiting agency custody. The data suggests that the agency will continue to bring children into custody at a similar rate. Compared to 2020, children in agency custody increased by 62%. Children exiting custody decreased by 7.5%. In 2023, less children exited custody than in previous years.



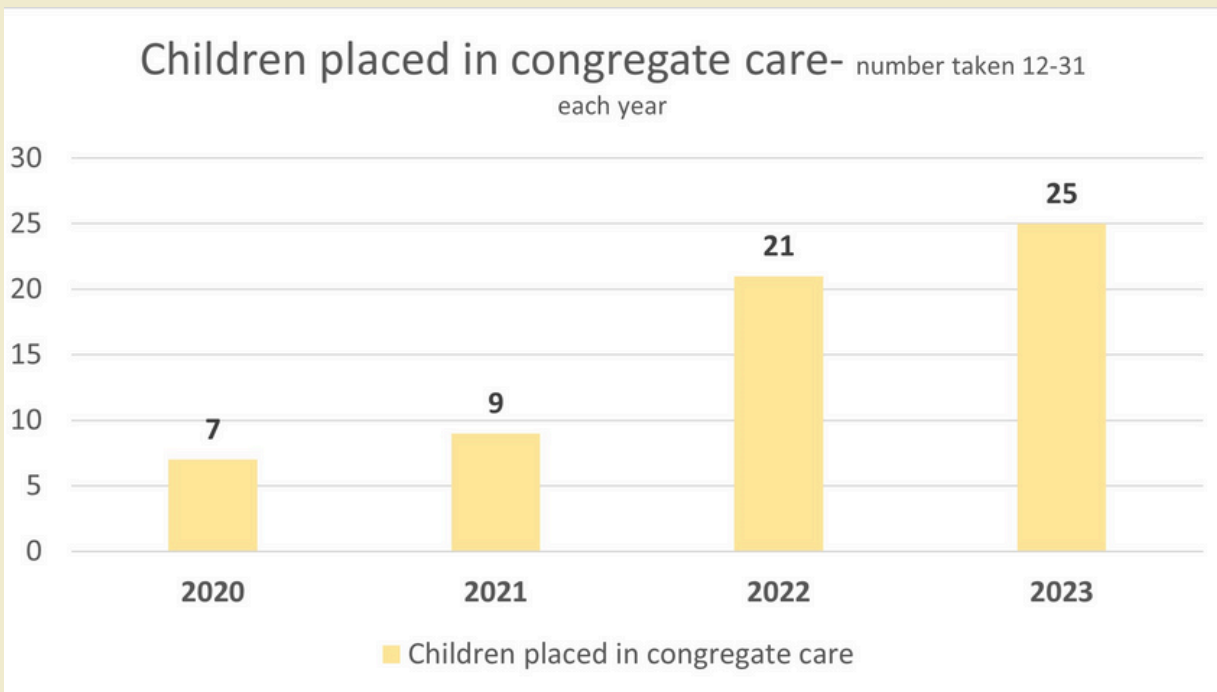
Living arrangements- Children in living arrangements include those children on safety plans or children in the temporary custody of relatives/kin. The number is of children in living arrangements was captured as a point in time measure. For the chart below, the number of children in living arrangements was taken on December 31st of each year. This number has remained fairly consistent over the last several years. In 2023, there were 172 children in a living arrangement compared to 208 in 2022. This represented a 17% decrease. The prediction is that this number will continue to decrease as more children enter agency custody through the KGAP program.



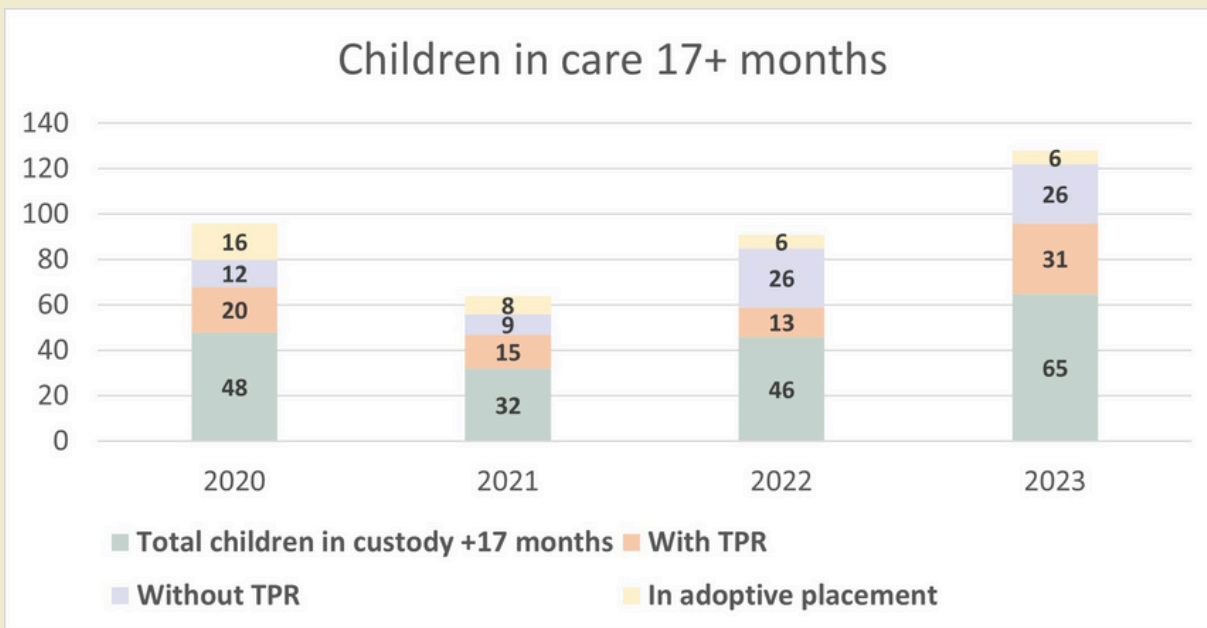
Children placed with kin- Children in agency custody and living with relatives/kin has increased significantly over the years with the highest jump between the years 2022 to 2023. This increase is due to the KGAP program being implemented in this timeframe. More information on this data measure will be known as agency continues to implement KGAP.



Children placed in congregate care- Children placed in group homes and residential placements make up 12% of children in agency custody. These children are placed throughout the state including Hamilton, Franklin, Lucas, Allen, Montgomery, and Wayne Counties. The oversight of these youth is time consuming to the staff who travel to ensure that youth's basic and special needs are met. The children in congregate care tend to have a higher level of need than the children placed in a foster/kinship home.

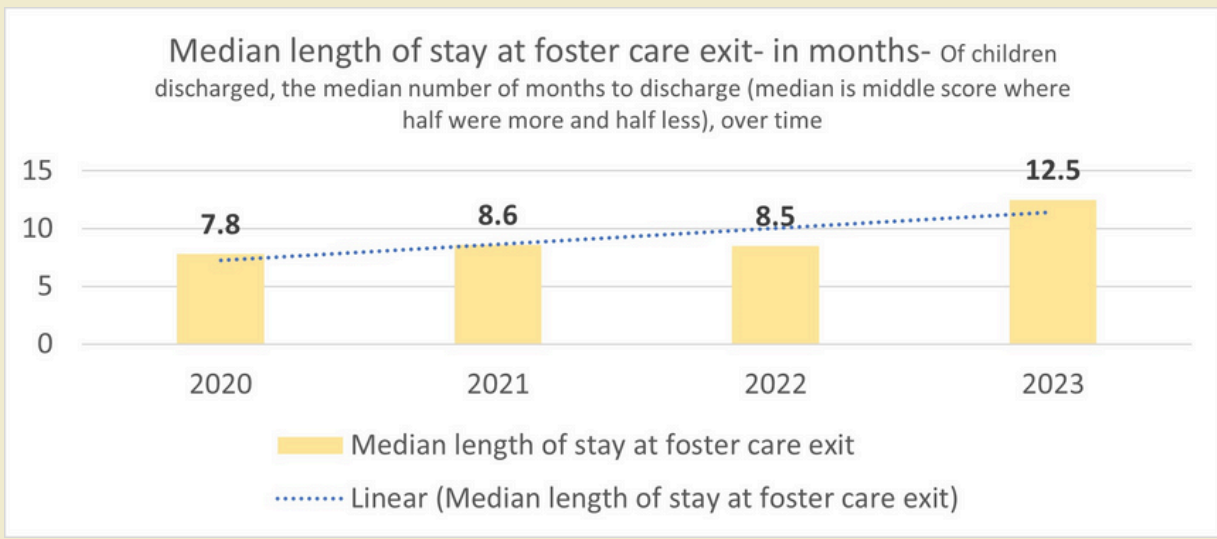


Length of time in care- One of the values of the staff at Lorain County Children Services is achieving permanency for children as efficiently as possible, preferably within 12 months. This goal is becoming more difficult to achieve. The chart below details children in custody over 17 months. This chart gives information on how well agencies can manage timeliness for children in care. In 2020, 48 children were in custody of 17+ months. In 2023, there were 65 children in custody for 17+ months, showing a 35% increase. In 2020, of the children in care for 17 months or more, 20 children (41%) had cases with parental rights having been terminated, 16 children (33%) were placed in adoptive homes and 12 children (25%) had cases where parental right remained intact. In 2023, 31 children (47%) had a case with parental rights being terminated, 6 children (12%) were in adoptive placements and 26 children (40%) were involved with cases where parental rights remained.





Median length of time in care- The median length of time a child remains in care is getting longer. Looking at the chart below, there was a significant increase between 2022 and 2023. This information is only charted for those children who have discharged from care and does not account for all children in custody. For the 85 children discharged from foster care in 2023, their median length of time in care was 12.5 months.



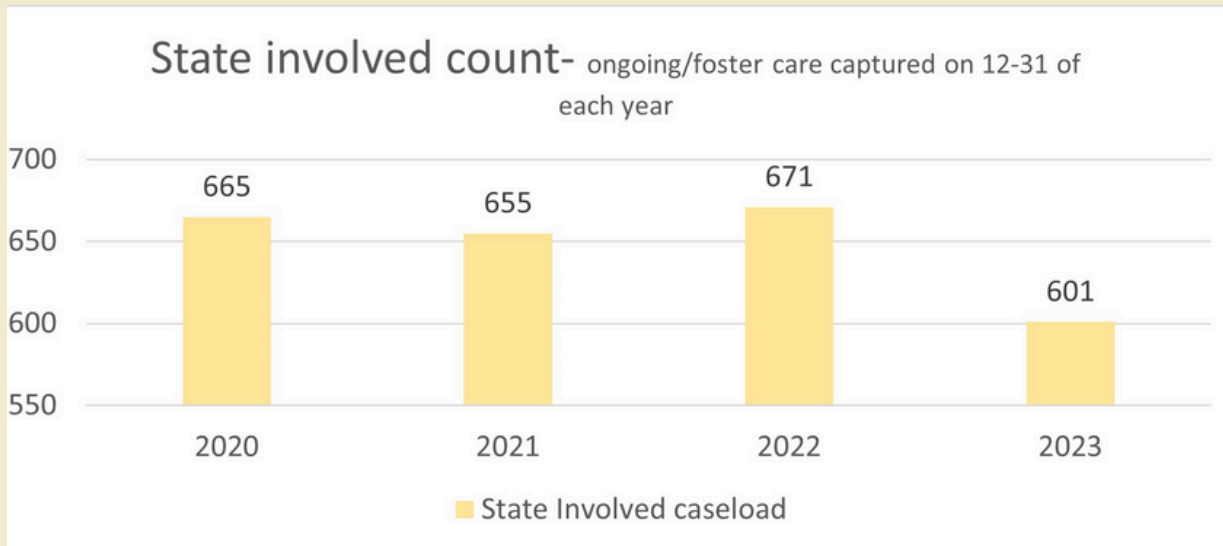
Family Team Meetings

Family Team Meetings are held to ensure that parents, children, providers and supports to the family have a space to talk about their involvement with the agency. This is a time for families and agency staff to review the case plan that the family is working, talk about child safety, permanency and family well-being and troubleshoot any areas of concern. In 2023, the family team meeting facilitators held 760 meetings for a total of 428 families.





Number of children involved with LCCS- The number of children involved with ongoing and foster caseloads has decreased from 2020 by 9.5%. As of this report, there are 36 children with a case category of adoption, 103 children with an Alternative Response Ongoing case, and 467 children with an ongoing case that would involve possible temporary custody and custody. For 2023, LCCS has fewer children that are involved with ongoing services but significantly more children in custody than previous years.



Federal Indicators

