

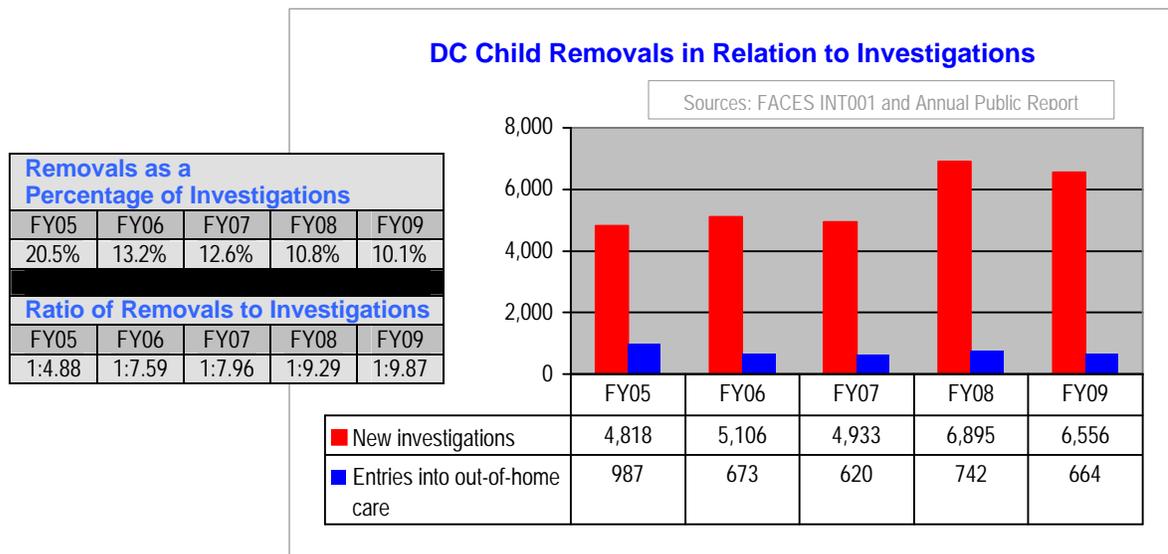


District Cuts Rate of Child Welfare Removals in Half System Keeps More Families Together Safely

Despite an increasing volume of calls to the 24-hour hotline for reporting child abuse and neglect and of investigations into allegations of child abuse and neglect, the District of Columbia has cut the rate of removal of children from their homes in half over the past four years. In FY05, removals as a percentage of investigations were 20.5 percent, which dropped steadily to 10.1 percent in FY09.

In January 2008, the tragic deaths of four District girls at the hands of their mother spurred a dramatic surge in calls to the District hotline. This, in turn, led to concerns about over-removal of children. In fact, in FY08 as compared to FY07:

- Investigations increased by 40 percent while removals increased by only 20 percent.
- A total of 1,962 more investigations resulted in removal of 122 more children.
- The overall rate of child removal continued to decline from 12.6 percent in FY07 to 10.8 percent in FY08.



As the chart above shows, volume of calls remained higher than in the past throughout FY09. Still, the rate of child removal continued to drop—from 10.8 percent in FY08 to 10.1 percent in FY09. The DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) attributes the declining removal rate to:

- Improved quality of investigations.
- Introduction of Structured Decision Making (SDM)[®], an evidence-based best-practice approach to assessing child safety and risk that CFSA began using in 2007.
- Referral of families assessed at low to moderate risk (based on SDM[®]) to the community-based Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives for services, preventing their entry into the child welfare system.
- Establishment of social worker units that serve only in-home cases (families remaining together while involved with the child welfare system).

“CFSA is implementing practices that could accomplish two goals critical to every child welfare agency: keeping children safe and preventing them from languishing in foster care,” said David Sanders, executive vice president of Systems Improvement, Casey Family Programs.