

Annual Report

Court Year 2019 - 2020



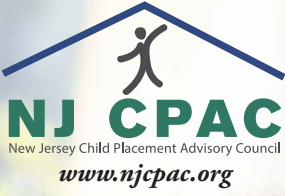




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27	Of children and youth with active and pending cases in 2020, most were Black
28	On June 30, 2020, most children in foster care had experienced out-of-home placement for at least one year
28	Most children entering foster care in 2018 for the first-time experienced two or less placements in the first year
29	Two years after family reunification, 21 percent of children and youth returned to foster care
33	Of children in placement for more than three years, most were living in a family setting, but not with relatives
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New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council Executive Board

Executive Board

Chair	Lorene S. Wilkerson	Middlesex County
Vice Chair	Eunice I. Salton	Middlesex County
Secretary	Adele Polomski	Ocean County
Treasurer	Penelope Rone	Ocean County

Voting Members

Lila Bernstein	Morris County
Ummil-Khair Sameerah Lewis-Diaab	Middlesex County
Ronald Keith England	Essex County
Judith Foley	Salem County
Michael Krasner	Union County
Sandra Wilson Moss	Passaic County
Mary Parham	Middlesex County
Frank E. Petrucci	Essex County
Mary “Twinkie” Polizzi (current Treasurer)	Bergen County

Non-Voting Members

Emeritus		
	Connie D. Jenkins-Buwa	Middlesex County
	William T. Noll	Monmouth County
	Susan Rodgers	Mercer County
Honorary		
	Darrell L. Armstrong	Mercer County
	Greg Rapport	Mercer County



Letter from the Chair

To the Esteemed Members of the New Jersey Supreme Court, Governor and Legislators:
Court Year 2020 proved to be challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a virtual shutdown of the state. As court and New Jersey Department of Children and Families' (DCF) staff moved to operating remotely, the challenge was to ensure that the children and families of New Jersey continued to receive the services they needed.

Of particular concern to New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (NJ CPAC) and child welfare stakeholders throughout New Jersey was the safety and well-being of children who were, for the most part, engaged in remote learning from home due to the closure of their schools. As schools are a primary source of abuse/neglect referrals, there was concern that incidences of abuse and neglect would go unnoticed. Fortunately, that concern did not materialize. Through the use of video calls, FaceTime and other available technology, the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) maintained contact with the families under their supervision. By employing appropriate social distancing protocols, visits with parents and siblings were able to be maintained. NJ CPAC congratulates the DCF on ensuring that the children of New Jersey remained safe and secure during this unprecedented crisis.

During this pandemic, we as a community have become more resilient and creative in our approaches to servicing New Jersey's families. The function of key stakeholders – caseworkers, judges, resource parents, adoptive parents and others – has been impacted, but they have risen to the challenge and are to be commended. This annual report provides some clues as to the effect the pandemic has had on the timeliness of family reunifications, adoptions and kinship guardianships.

In August 2020, NJ CPAC became aware, through our relationship with Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), of a possible reduction in funding to the DCF. Recognizing that any reduction in funding could result in reduced services to New Jersey's most vulnerable families, NJ CPAC submitted letters to the New Jersey State Assembly Appropriations and Senate Budget Committees requesting they prioritize the well-being of children by fully funding DCF. NJ CPAC thanks the New Jersey State Legislature for maintaining the budget of DCF at its current level. As a result, DCF has been able to provide the necessary services to families in need.

NJ CPAC is aware that Child Placement Reviews (CPRs) have not occurred uniformly throughout the state due to the pandemic. Whereas the CPR Act mandated that the reviews be conducted by CPR boards consisting of citizen volunteers, in some vicinages they were held by judges. We are confident that as soon as feasible, the Judiciary will ensure that all CPR boards will be able to conduct reviews. Resuming CPRs will enable CPR boards to provide recommendations to judges that will ensure that the children of New Jersey are safe and secure.

NJ CPAC commends the Judiciary, the DCF and all child welfare stakeholders for their dedication to ensuring that New Jersey children and families have continued to be served during this difficult time.

Lorene S. Wilkerson

Chair, New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council



NJ CPAC Trainings for Court Year 2020

NJ CPAC provides training events on various topics to enhance the knowledge of all child welfare stakeholders and provide CPR board volunteers with required learning credits.

Training events Court Year

On Oct. 1, 2019, NJ CPAC held a training workshop, *The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences*, at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. Susan Esquilin, Ph.D., ABPP-Clinical, presented an overview of a study conducted by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that examined the link between 10 types of childhood trauma and well-being later in life. The audience of social workers, educators, advocates and volunteers learned how to recognize Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in their clients and the impact on behavior and physical and mental health.

NJ CPAC cancelled its April 2020 annual conference due to COVID-19. On June 18, 2020, a virtual webinar that drew 500 registrants was held. Pat Stanislaski, director of Partnering for Prevention, LLC, conducted the presentation, *Why Some Bounce Back and Some Never Do: The Phenomenon of Resilience*. Participants asked thoughtful questions that produced conversation about how systems can more effectively support individuals who have experienced ACEs. This was the first NJ CPAC training session to be recorded and posted on NJ CPAC's website.

NJ CPAC Collaborative Partnerships and Memberships

NJ CPAC Partners Moving Forward Committee

Established by NJ CPAC in 2018 to reduce gaps in services and distribution affecting children and families in New Jersey, the Partners Moving Forward Committee continued to meet and address issues through 2019 and 2020. Comprised of more than 20 agencies, non-profits and government entities that work with marginalized families throughout the state, the committee determined from data collected that inadequate housing and homelessness emerged as the central issues affecting children. The Partners Moving Forward Committee worked with NJ CPAC to develop a survey on how the child welfare community can better coordinate efforts to prevent and address homelessness affecting New Jersey families, children and youth. Entitled Closing Service Gaps, the survey was distributed by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). Survey respondents were requested to use pre-COVID-19 data. The survey concluded in July 2020 with 52 agencies participating in the survey.

Children in Court Improvement Committee (CICIC) and Race Equity Subcommittee

NJ CPAC Chair Lorene S. Wilkerson represents the NJ CPAC Executive Board on the CICIC. Under the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the CICIC meets regularly to plan and coordinate improvements to Children in Court (CIC) cases so that cases move more efficiently and timely through the process. This impacts how children move through the system to achieve reunification and permanency. The CICIC, in collaboration with the DCF, is addressing the overrepresentation of Black children in family court and identifying how disparate treatment impacts their chance for success. Wilkerson, as a member of the Race Equity Subcommittee of CICIC, is working to identify and recommend solutions to inequities in court policies and processes that impact timely permanency for children in placement.

NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

At the request of NJ CPAC, the New Jersey State Legislature amended *N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.75* to add NJ CPAC to the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, increasing its membership from 29 to 30. As the mandates of NJ CPAC are similar to that of the task force, it was appropriate that NJ CPAC become a member. Wilkerson is the representative to the task force.

Other groups with NJ CPAC representation

All NJ CPAC Executive Board members are required to volunteer on county CPR boards. As a result, NJ CPAC has representatives on 11 CPR boards. Two board members also volunteer as mediators for the New Jersey municipal court system in Middlesex and Ocean counties, and another as a long-standing member of Essex County Model Court.

NJ CPAC's reach extends beyond New Jersey state entities, with current board members volunteering for other groups serving families and children, including the Special Olympics, National Council of Jewish Women, Impact 100, Capitol Cities Youth Violence Coalition, Trenton Youth Investment Council and Homeless Youth Subcommittee, Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey, Mediators Beyond Borders International, Youth Services Advisory Committee and the Rachel Coalition.



Trends in New Jersey Foster Care

Facts, Figures and Analyses

This report measures the performance of the child welfare and protection system pertaining to children in out-of-home placement during the court year (CY) period July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. It provides accountability through public transparency and makes recommendations for improvements as per NJ CPAC's mandates under the CPR Act. NJ CPAC relies on data from the Judiciary, the DCF and other government sources to identify issues and trends and form recommendations.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic during the first quarter of 2020, and the unprecedented actions taken to mitigate its spread, resulted in operations abruptly shifting in mid-March 2020. This report excludes or identifies data that might be incomplete, missing or applied inconsistently from county to county as a result.

Additionally, sources that collect data by calendar year (January – December), might not reflect the additional hardships and challenges on families created by the COVID-19 public health crisis. Data collection dates are included to provide these contexts when considering data implications.

This report does not include or consider new information and events that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic after the closure of CY 2020 on June 30, 2020. NJ CPAC anticipates an improved understanding of the pandemic's toll on the emotional and physical well-being of New Jersey's children as CY 2021 unfolds, subject to the pandemic's severity, magnitude and duration. The full effects might not be known for years.

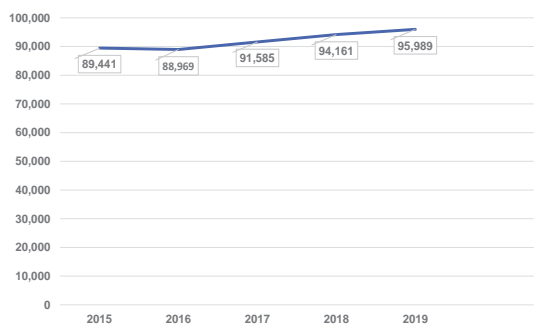
Child Abuse/Neglect referrals grew

In recent years, the DCF has begun placing greater emphasis on strengthening family bonds and working with communities to identify and help at-risk families before they are in crisis. Chart 1 indicates that the number of children and youth receiving services from the DCF increased during the 2018 calendar year by 5,090 and the number of children receiving services in an out-of-home living arrangement decreased by 648, from 6,191 to 5,543.

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was passed in 2018. The DCF has not yet formally implemented FFPSA. Beginning in early 2019, New Jersey began to shift federal funds from treatment programs to evidence-based prevention services and programs for children at imminent risk of entering foster care. The DCF also redirected funds to parenting and other programs for biological parents, expectant and parenting youth, resource parents, grandparents and other kinship caregivers.



Chart 1:
Number of children and youth referred to the CP&P for an abuse/neglect allegation 2015 - 2019

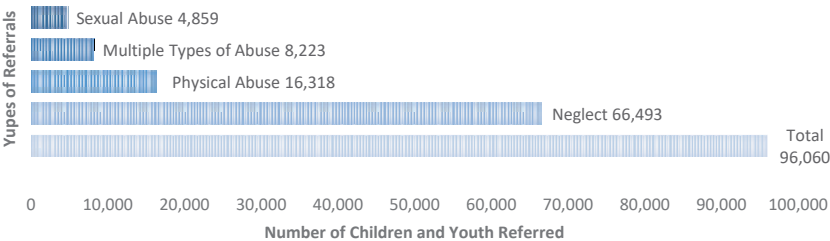


Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Total Hotline Referrals.
Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.

Most referrals involved child neglect, not abuse

The majority of allegations referred to the CP&P for investigation in calendar year 2019 involved child neglect, not child abuse.

Chart 2:
Number of referrals to CP&P by allegation type in 2019



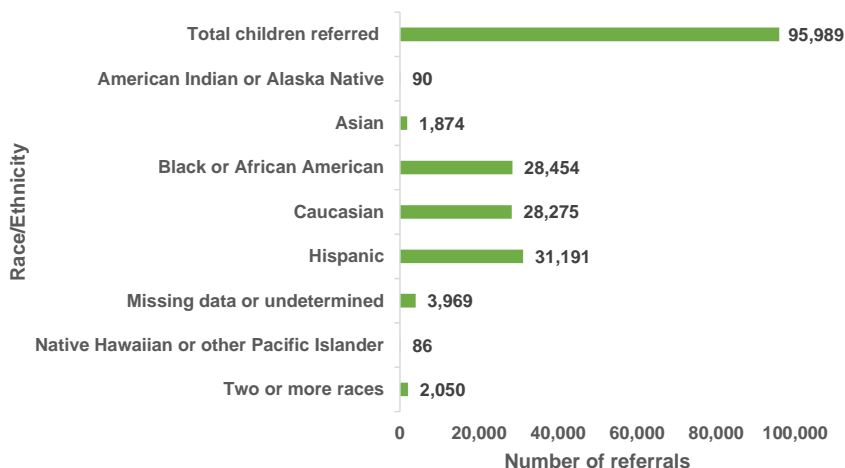
Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Child Abuse Neglect Report.
Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.



Most abuse/neglect referrals involved Hispanic children

Chart 3 breaks down by race and ethnicity the total number of children and youth referred to the CP&P for alleged abuse and neglect in calendar year 2019. It reinforces that families and children of color continue to face daunting systemic issues contributing to unequal representation in New Jersey's foster care system. NJ CPAC is working with the Judiciary, the DCF and others in identifying, reviewing and revising policies that perpetuate racial and ethnic disparities in our systems. NJ CPAC training workshops, available to the entire community without cost, help to raise awareness about this important issue and the need to recognize the existence and consequences of implicit bias.

***Chart 3:
Race/ethnicity of children and youth referred to
the CP&P in 2019***



Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Child Abuse Neglect Report.

Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.



Most reports of abuse and neglect came from law enforcement

New Jersey residents are legally required to report suspected incidences of child abuse and/or neglect. Table 1 shows that prior to the 2020 pandemic, professionals working in the fields of law enforcement, education and healthcare reported the most incidences of suspected child abuse to the hotline. Victims of abuse/neglect (“self” category) initiated the least contact. This finding is noteworthy in the context of March and April 2020 executive orders that closed schools, directed all residents to stay at home to protect their health and the capacity of New Jersey’s healthcare system, and closing of childcare centers for all but the children of essential workers.

***Table 1:
Sources of child abuse/neglect calls to the State
Central Registry (Child Abuse Hotline) in 2019***

Reporter	Total Reported Incidences
Agency	4,339
Anonymous	10,988
Facility	964
Friend/Neighbor/Community	7,275
Health	13,401
Legal and Court	2,443
Parent	6,798
Police	20,553
Relative	3,548
School	20,076
Self	331
Other	5,273

Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Total Hotline Referrals Report.

Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.

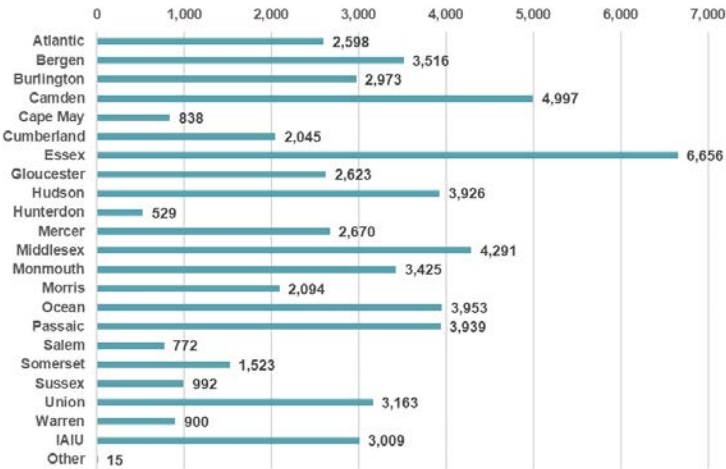


Essex and Camden counties received the most reports requiring further investigation

All 21 New Jersey counties have at least one local CP&P office responsible for investigating if a child or youth has been harmed or at risk of harm, and/or if a family needs services. The following chart captures the total number of child abuse and neglect reports and child welfare referrals assigned to each county in calendar year 2019. The “other” category includes data where a county assignment could not be determined at the time data was pulled.

Allegations involving out-of-home settings are assigned to one of four regional DCF Institutional Abuse Investigation Units (IAIU). These referrals are included in Chart 4. Examples of out-of-home settings include resource (foster) homes, schools and residential centers.

***Chart 4:
Number of referrals received by CP&P local offices
by county in 2019***



Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Total Hotline Referrals Report.
Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.



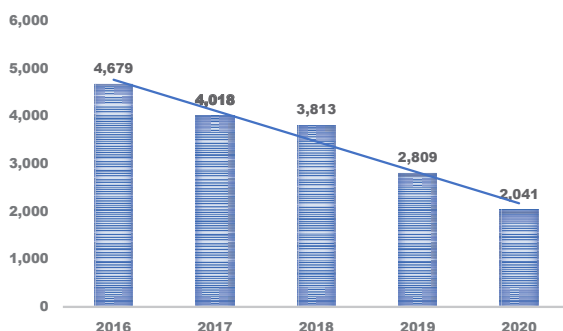
Beginning with the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of referrals dropped

In April 2020, DCF Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer announced at a Gov. Philip Murphy daily coronavirus press briefing that child abuse reports fell in March and April 2020 by 32 percent, from 7,501 to 5,117, compared to the same months in 2019. During the same period, domestic violence reports, also referred to as “intimate partner violence,” dropped 38 percent, from 7,357 to 4,498, compared to March and April 2019. Arrests for domestic violence dropped by 21 percent.

Fewer children entered foster care in 2020

Chart 5 summarizes the total number of children and youth removed from their homes and placed into New Jersey’s child welfare and protection system. This type of placement is referred to as an “out-of-home placement” and is commonly known as foster care. The trendline indicates that the early months of the pandemic, mid-March through June 30, 2020, had little or no impact on CP&P’s ongoing strategy of reducing out-of-home placements for in-home services.

***Chart 5:
Number of new
out-of-home
placement case
2016-2020
court year***



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. New Filings Dashboard. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

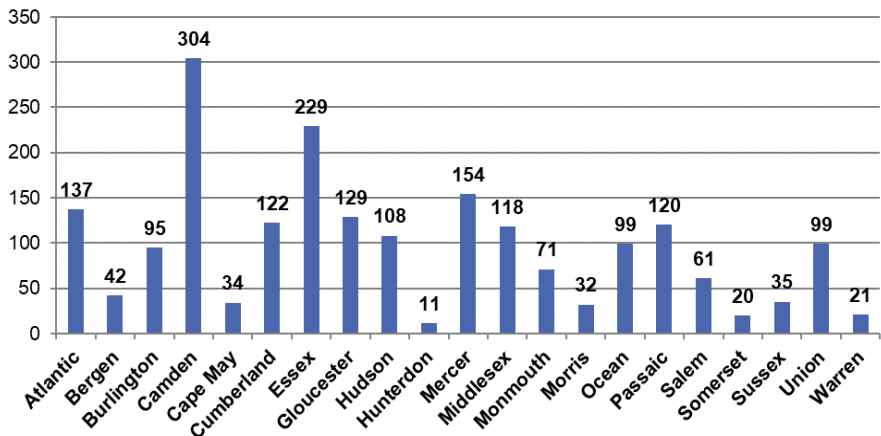
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Camden County led in new out-of-home placement cases in 2020

The following chart provides a county view of the number of children and youth entering foster care for the first time.

***Chart 6:
Number of new out-of-home placement cases (FC docket) by
county in 2020 (court year)***



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. New Filings Dashboard. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.

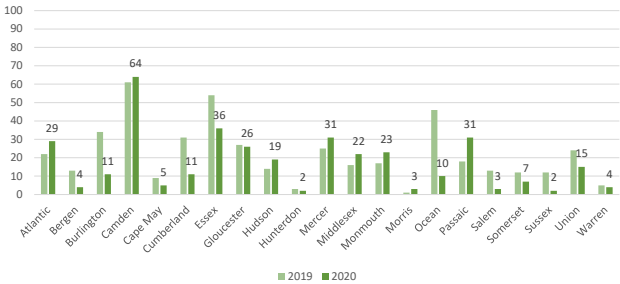


Ocean County experienced largest drop in out-of-home placement cases during initial months of COVID-19 outbreak

For some time, the DCF has adhered to a prevention approach focused on supporting families by building protective factors and keeping children with families in their homes as members receive services. The health crisis led to a rapid and radical paradigm shift in business practices affecting nearly all aspects of the child welfare system, as operations switched in mid-March 2020 from working in, or out of, offices to working in the home. NJ CPAC commends the Judiciary and the DCF for how quickly and efficiently they responded to the crisis and communicated changes in affected practices and policies.

Chart 7 and Table 2 show how the unprecedented upheaval affected the amount of new out-of-home placement cases entering the courts. Chart 7 contrasts the weeks and months following the move to remote operations, mid-March through June 30, with the same period in CY 2019, when the Judiciary operated normally. It is followed by Table 2, which shows county fluctuations following the pandemic’s onset. Ocean County experienced the largest dip in the number of new cases and Passaic County the greatest growth. Statewide, the total number of new case filings declined.

***Chart 7:
Number of new out-of-home placement cases (FC docket) by county vs. 2019 (mid-March through June 30)***



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. New Filings Dashboard. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Table 2:
Total new case filings (FC) by county following state shutdown vs. same period 2019 (court year)

County	2019	2020	+/-
Atlantic	22	29	+7
Bergen	13	4	-9
Burlington	34	11	-23
Camden	61	64	+3
Cape May	9	5	-4
Cumberland	31	11	-20
Essex	54	36	-18
Gloucester	27	26	-1
Hudson	14	19	+5
Hunterdon	3	2	-1
Mercer	25	31	+6
Middlesex	16	22	+6
Monmouth	17	23	+6
Morris	1	3	+2
Ocean	46	10	-36
Passaic	18	31	+13
Salem	13	3	-10
Somerset	12	7	-5
Sussex	12	2	-10
Union	24	15	-9
Warren	5	4	-1
Total	457	358	-99

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts, New Filings Dashboard, webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



A parent's substance use was the primary reason for children entering placement in 2020

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.

According to information documented on the Notice of Placement (NOP), the form used by the CP&P to notify the courts that a child has been placed out of their home, 38 percent of the children entering placement in CY 2020 did so because of a parent's drug use and four percent was for alcohol use. In the preceding court year (CY 2019), six percent entered because of a parent's substance use. This rise over a one-year period can be attributed to several factors. The American Medical Association (AMA) reported in October 2020 that the pandemic led to a rise in opioid and other drug-related mortalities as well as suicides.

More White individuals received alcohol/drug treatment than any other race or ethnicity

Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.

The New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System (NJ-SAMS) receives data collected by the New Jersey Department of Health's Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) from licensed treatment providers. Alcohol and drug treatments were for all types of treatment settings, with most individuals, 67 percent, receiving outpatient services.

Of the 98,659 individuals admitted by licensed treatment providers for alcohol/drug treatment during the reporting period January to December 2019, 66,823 were White adult men. White adult women accounted for 64 percent of the women admitted. A 2018 report summary released by NJ-SAMS disclosed that one percent of women were pregnant at the time of admittance.

*Administrative offices of
NJ CPAC are located at the
Richard J. Hughes Justice
Complex in Trenton.*



More than 6,000 adults involved with the CP&P/Family Court received substance use treatment

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requires that children achieve permanency within 15 months of their 22 months in out-of-home placement. According to Casey Family Programs, reunification for families affected by alcohol and drug addictions can be achieved within these federal timelines if proper interventions and system supports are in place (Healthy Families, 2017). New Jersey offers various programs to fill this need. For example, DMHAS offers specialized treatment services and therapeutic interventions for pregnant women and mothers of dependent children with mental illness, substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders, including mothers of children with active court cases (<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/home/index.html>).

NJ CPAC has previously written about expanding access to treatment programs throughout New Jersey, as well as providing more residential treatment facilities for parents who would benefit from longer, in-treatment recovery programs. As part of their annual trainings, caseworkers and judges should be kept apprised of advances in individualized mental health and addiction treatment options, including medications that could help reduce cravings and the use of emergent technologies as telehealth services, biofeedback and virtual reality.

There are multiple studies that support the idea that diversionary initiatives such as drug court can improve the likelihood of family reunification and result in shorter out-of-home placements for children (Bruns, Pullmann, Weathers, Wirschem, and Murphy, 2012). The Judiciary offers a statewide drug court program as an alternative to incarceration (www.njcourts.gov/courts/criminal/drug.html) for qualifying nonviolent offenders. The mission of drug court is to help defendants overcome drug and/or alcohol dependences while they resolve related criminal charges. It is a rigorous, highly structured program that requires intensive drug and alcohol treatment, supervision, frequent drug testing and court appearances.

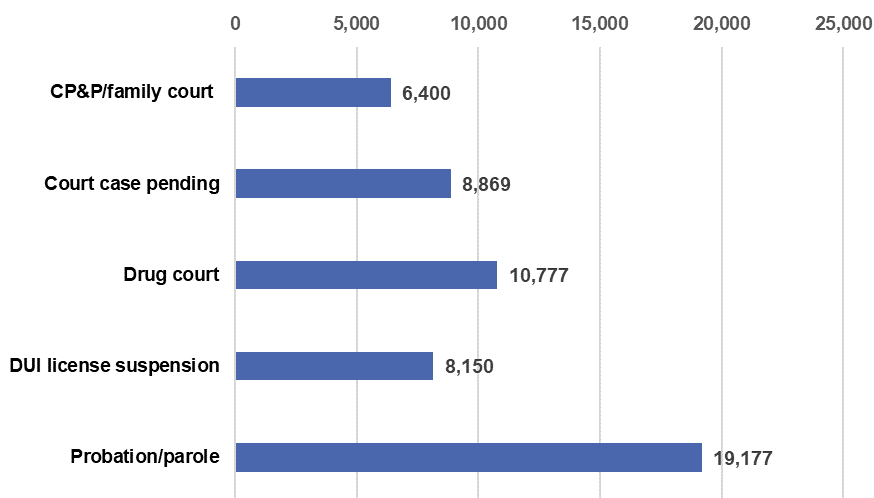
Charts 8 and 9 rely on data from the *Substance Abuse Overview 2018*, the statewide summary report published in September 2019. The report's findings are based on data collected from January to December 2018. This data is included here as the statistics illustrate the detrimental impact of substance use and incarceration on breaking up families. Chart 8 shows that 57 percent, 55,363, of the individuals admitted for treatment in 2018 had some involvement with the New Jersey legal system. Of these, seven percent, or 6,400, were involved with the CP&P and/or family court, and 12 percent, or 10,777, with drug court.

“We are rightly focused on a pandemic that has changed our lives, but it is important to remember at the same time that the opioid crisis continues. Individuals who deal with addiction issues are particularly vulnerable to relapsing in stressful times like these, when routines have been disrupted and many find themselves out of work. Virtual drug court provides continued structure and accountability at a time when it is needed most.”

-Chief Justice Stuart Rabner



Chart 8:
Categories of individuals with CP&P and/or court involvement receiving drug/alcohol treatment

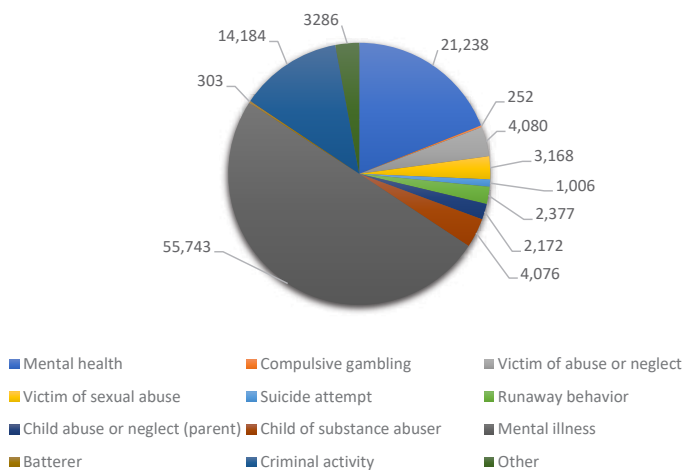


<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/publications/statistical/Substance%20Abuse%20Overview/2018/statewide.pdf>

Individuals enter treatment for a variety of reasons and with a variety of risk factors. Chart 9 reveals that most individuals entering treatment in New Jersey in 2018 had an underlying diagnosed mental illness or mental health issue. In prior reports, NJ CPAC has expressed concern that parents with untreated mental illness are becoming needlessly involved in the criminal justice system, leading to prolonged family separations and out-of-home placements. NJ CPAC is a strong proponent of affordable community mental health services. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs and diversion programs such as drug court help keep parents out of prison and in treatment.



Chart 9:
*Underlying disorders, conditions and/or situations of
 individuals receiving drug/alcohol treatment*



<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/publications/statistical/Substance%20Abuse%20Overview/2018/statewide.pdf>



Of children who entered foster care for the first time, most were one to five years old

For data collection purposes, the Judiciary uses four racial categories (White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander), and an ethnic category to indicate Hispanic origin, or not of Hispanic origin. Based on the race/ethnicity of children with active and pending FC cases during court year 2020, most New Jersey children were documented as Black, with the second largest group classified as White. Children of Hispanic origin came in a distant third. This finding is noteworthy within the context of Table 3, which shows that most children referred to the CP&P in 2019 for abuse/neglect allegations were documented as Hispanic, not as Black or White.

CPR boards rarely encounter American Indian children because of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which established standards for their placement and required that indigenous tribes be involved in child welfare cases. CPR boards are trained in ICWA and, if reviewing a case in which a child might be of native American heritage or have native American family members, to note this in their recommendations to judges.

Few Asian children enter placement. According to a 2019 report by Jersey Promise, an Asian American advocacy group, individuals of Asian heritage make up the fastest growing and “least understood” population in New Jersey, and that two-thirds of this population are immigrants.

Table 3:
Active and pending FC cases by race/ethnicity

County	Black	White	Hispanic	Alaskan Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Not stated	Other
Atlantic	210	209	3	0	6	0	6	1
Bergen	76	136	38	0	6	1	5	0
Burlington	138	204	0	0	3	0	3	0
Camden	502	451	15	0	13	0	13	3
Cape May	48	138	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumberland	127	230	40	0	0	0	0	3
Essex	960	192	32	2	3	0	3	16
Gloucester	148	273	5	0	2	0	2	8
Hudson	214	121	85	1	6	0	6	1
Hunterdon	7	20	3	0	1	0	1	0
Mercer	343	129	20	0	0	0	0	3
Middlesex	101	195	24	0	11	0	11	10
Monmouth	121	192	1	0	2	0	2	0
Morris	20	95	7	0	3	0	3	0
Ocean	88	342	9	0	3	0	3	15
Passaic	155	188	28	0	1	0	1	1
Salem	70	100	1	0	1	0	1	0
Somerset	35	48	3	0	1	0	1	5
Sussex	5	77	5	0	1	0	1	0
Union	209	128	35	0	0	0	0	5
Warren	22	84	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3,599	3,552	354	3	62	1	63	71

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Reports by Race. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.

Older youth continue to exit the system unemployed and without documented housing plans

Table 4 on the next page breaks down the number of days children and youth that had been in out-of-home placement on June 30, 2020, the last day of the court year. On that date, of the 4,618 in out-of-home placement, 1,504 had been in foster care from zero through 360 days (up to one year) and 1,241 from 361 days through 720 days (1 to 2 years).

***Table 4:
Length of time spent in placement as of June 30, 2020***

County	0-180 Days	181-360 Days	361-720 Days	721-1,080 Days	1,081-1,440 Days	1,441-1,800 Days	1,801 Days - Over 5 Years
Atlantic	51	53	51	36	28	9	29
Bergen	9	29	47	13	17	19	17
Burlington	24	40	59	27	11	8	16
Camden	109	99	189	83	28	9	41
Cape May	19	8	24	17	11	7	6
Cumberland	18	58	62	47	24	10	15
Essex	79	118	190	169	67	41	97
Gloucester	46	42	77	44	31	17	19
Hudson	43	49	64	52	21	14	35
Hunterdon	3	5	4	2	0	0	1
Mercer	50	54	70	54	28	33	38
Middlesex	46	48	61	38	10	11	22
Monmouth	34	14	45	29	13	20	18
Morris	12	14	13	24	3	3	13
Ocean	25	44	100	46	15	13	19
Passaic	47	47	47	31	18	8	28
Salem	9	10	30	14	5	1	5
Somerset	12	5	16	2	4	1	7
Sussex	12	16	12	3	3	2	3
Union	38	47	64	58	19	14	42
Warren	6	12	16	8	6	0	3
Total	692	812	1,241	797	362	240	474

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. Length of Time Placement Report.
webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Most children entering foster care in 2018 for the first-time experienced two or less placements in the first year

Placement stability is the goal for children and youth in out-of-home placement until timely permanency, preferably reunification, can be achieved.

When the Federal Monitor issued its most recent progress report (Jan. 23, 2020), data related to placement stability for the 2018 calendar year was unavailable. Using 2017 data, the Federal Monitor concluded that 85 percent of children who entered out-of-home placement for the first time in 2017 experienced either no more placements during the 12 months following their date of entry, or one additional placement change.

Since the January progress report, the DCF and Rutgers University joint data hub has updated data to include calendar year 2018. Table 5 shows most children across all age groups experienced two or less placements during their first year in 2018. NJ CPAC commends the CP&P for assuring minimal movement while children are in out-of-home placement.

***Table 5:
Percentage of placement changes experienced since initial removal from the home by age group as of 2018***

Age of Child	Number of Placements	Percentage of Children
0-11 Months	2 or Fewer Placements	92%
	3 to 4 Placements	8%
	5 or More Placement	1%
1-5 Years	2 or Fewer Placements	84%
	3 to 4 Placements	13%
	5 or More Placements	2%
6-12 Years	2 or Fewer Placements	82%
	3 to 4 Placements	15%
	5 or More Placements	2%
13-17 Years	2 or Fewer Placements	78%
	3 to 4 Placements	16%
	5 or More Placements	6%

Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Placement Rates Report.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Two years after family reunification, 21 percent of children and youth returned to foster care

Some children who return home experience a subsequent re-entry into foster care. The first placement with a resource parent or family member is considered the initial placement. According to state law*, a “repeated” placement occurs when a child placed by the CP&P with a resource parent/family is returned to the biological parent, or reunified, and then is again removed from the home into placement. Each time a child is returned into resource family care, the CP&P must count the placement as a new placement.

The first repeated placement means that the first attempt at family reunification was unsuccessful and provided the CP&P with information as to whether the family requires additional services, needs more time to make the home safe for the child’s return, or if reunification should remain as the case goal.

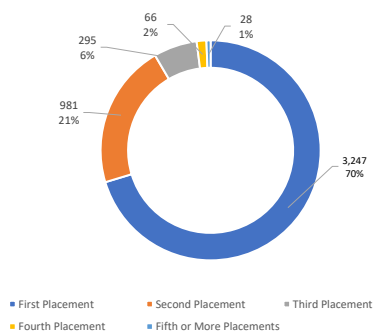
*N.J.S.A.30:4C-53.2 - Definition of “repeated placement in resource family care”, “placed again into resource family care.” For purposes of P.L. 1991, c. 448 (C. 30:4C-53.1 et seq.), the terms “repeated placement into resource family care” and “placed again into resource family care” shall apply to a child who has been placed in the custody of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency for placement in resource family care by the Family Part of the Chancery Division of the Superior Court or as a result of a voluntary placement agreement pursuant to P.L.1974, c.119 (C.9:6-8.21 et seq.), released into the custody of the child’s parents or legally responsible guardian at the conclusion of the placement and is once again temporarily removed from the child’s place of residence and placed under the division’s care and supervision.



Concurrent planning is required for all children in CP&P’s custody if reunification cannot be accomplished within required ASFA timeframes. It is important to know that when monitoring ASFA requirements (for termination of parental rights, for instance), the date of the first out-of-home placement is the starting point for counting the length of time of a child’s placement, even if a repeated out-of-home placement is made.

Based on statewide totals, Chart 13 captures the percentage of children and youth with court cases experiencing a repeated placement on June 30, 2020.

Chart 13:
Percentage experiencing a repeated placement
June 30, 2020 (point in time)



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Report - Children experiencing a repeated on June 30, 2020. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Table 6 provides a statewide historical view of placement stability. One year after returning home from placement, first-time reunification continues to be the permanent result for most families.

There has been no noticeable improvement in reducing the number of children with repeated placements over a five-year period. On June 30, 2016, the last day of court year 2016, nearly seven percent of children were experiencing their third placement. Five years later, at the end of CY 2020, the percentage was close to nine percent.

Table 6:
***Total number of placements June 30, 2020 (point in time)
vs. 2016 through 2019***

COURT YEAR	In 1 st Placement	In 2 nd Placement	In 3 rd Placement	In 4 th Placement	In 5 th Placement	In 6 th Placement	In 7 th Placement
2016	5,839	1,491	385	80	28	3	2
2017	5,160	1,429	382	89	25	0	4
2018	4,745	1,330	373	89	28	3	6
2019	3,950	1,132	331	89	26	1	5
2020	3,247	981	295	66	23	2	3

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Report - Minors Repeating in CPR and Number of Times Minors Were Placed. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Table 7:
Number of placements June 30, 2020
(point in time) by county

County	In 1 st Placement	In 2 nd Placement	In 3 rd Placement	In 4 th Placement	In 5 th Placement	In 6 th Placement	In 7 th Placement	Total
Atlantic	172	68	11	2	3	0	0	256
Bergen	103	36	9	2	1	0	0	151
Burlington	131	35	15	4	0	0	0	185
Camden	366	127	43	15	6	1	0	558
Cape May	63	22	5	0	2	0	0	92
Cumberland	159	49	17	7	2	0	0	234
Essex	573	150	35	3	0	0	0	761
Gloucester	182	69	14	7	4	0	0	276
Hudson	191	64	19	3	0	0	1	278
Hunterdon	12	1	2	0	0	0	0	15
Mercer	249	49	28	1	0	0	0	327
Middlesex	174	43	17	2	0	0	0	236
Monmouth	117	34	16	5	1	0	0	173
Morris	68	13	1	0	0	0	0	82
Ocean	180	58	21	2	1	0	0	262
Passaic	144	53	16	10	3	0	0	226
Salem	47	18	6	1	0	0	2	74
Somerset	36	8	3	0	0	0	0	47
Sussex	30	16	5	0	0	0	0	51
Union	218	52	11	0	0	1	0	282
Warren	32	16	1	2	0	0	0	51
Total	3,247	981	295	66	23	2	3	4,617

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Report - Minors Repeating in CPR and
Number of Times Minors Were Placed. webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.

Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



Of children in placement for more than three years, most were living in a family setting, but not with relatives

When placing a child or youth out-of-the home, the CP&P will first look for relatives and family friends with whom the child is familiar to provide a safe and nurturing environment that will help to ease the trauma of separation from the birth parent. When kinship care is unavailable or inappropriate, CP&P will aim to place the child with a non-kinship family so that the child can benefit from a family, rather than an institutional setting.

There were 839 children and youth in placement for three or more years at the close of calendar year 2019, according to the DCF. Of these, the greatest percentage lived with a resource family (non-kin). Adoption was the primary goal (61.7 percent), followed by independent living (9.8 percent) and individual stabilization (9.7 percent).

The DCF is reviewing and adjusting relevant policies to remove barriers that could prevent some children and youth from living with family or with known family friends rather than with unfamiliar persons.

***Table 8:
Three and more years in placement
by placement type 2019***

Placement Type	Percentage
Resource family - kinship	20.2%
Resource family – non-kinship	41.9%
Treatment home	15.9%
Group home	5%
Residential home	11.5%
Independent living	4.3%

Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Children in placement age 36 months Report. **Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.**

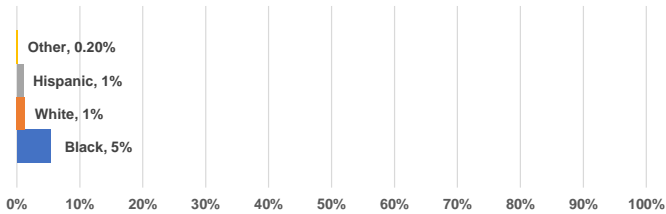


More Black children with the goal of family reunification waited longer than three years in placement

According to data maintained by the DCF, 68 children waited three or more years for reunification to occur in Dec. 2019. This figure represents less than 10 percent of all children and youth in placement. In some of these instances, reunification could be delayed due to valid circumstances, such as when a child needs specialized treatments.

The Judiciary and child welfare stakeholders are studying the reasons for delays and if additional court interventions are necessary to speed up kinship legal guardianships and other permanency solutions.

***Chart 14:
Percentage (rounded down) in placement for 36 months or longer with the case goal of reunification***



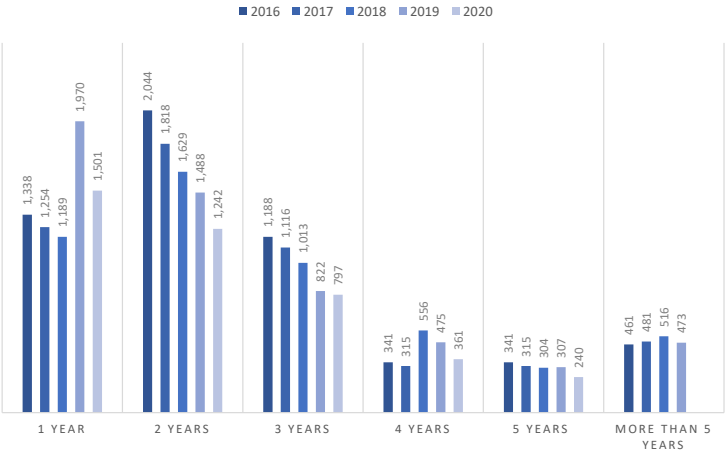
Source: NJ Department of Children and Families Data Hub. Children in placement age 36 months Report. **Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.**



The number of children in placement for longer than five years remained relatively unchanged

Using Judiciary data, Chart 15 shows that the number of children spending more than five years in placement has remained fairly steady over a five-year period, despite less children entering out-of-home placement each year.

Chart 15:
Years spent in placement 2016 through 2020



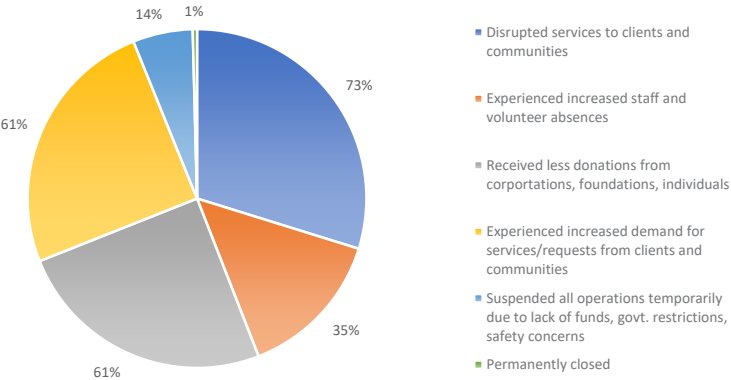
Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Report - Length of Time in Placement.
webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.



More than 60 percent of non-profits reported increased demands for services in July 2020

Some non-profit organizations providing services for children in placement are members of the New Jersey Center for Non-Profits. Examples include Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for the Children of Mercer and Burlington counties, embrella (formerly Foster and Adoptive Family Services) and Catholic Charities, the Diocese of Trenton. In July 2019, the Center for Non-Profits, with the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers, conducted a rapid response survey to assess the effects of the pandemic on charitable non-profits and the vital programs and services they provide. More than 280 organizations responded, with most respondents classified as providing primarily human services (36 percent), health services (15 percent) or education (14 percent). Nearly half, or 46 percent, provided programs or services deemed essential. These include mental health and crisis interventions, emergency childcare and food banks and food pantries.

Chart 16:
COVID-19 Impact on New Jersey Non-Profits and Services



Source: Third Coronavirus Rapid Response Survey, July 9-15, 2020.
Note: Includes COVID-19 data.

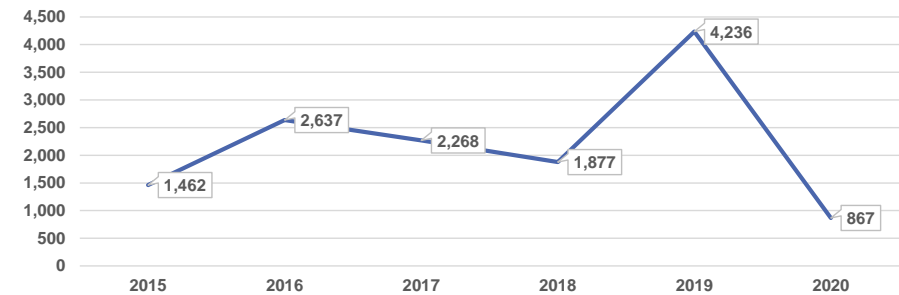


More unaccompanied immigrant children were released to New Jersey sponsors than ever before in 2019

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, when a child who is not accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian is apprehended by immigration authorities, the child is transferred to the care and custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The Refugee Act of 1980 requires that the ORR feed, shelter, and provide medical care for the child until the child can be released safely with a sponsor (usually a family member), while the child awaits immigration proceedings. The data in the table below shows the total number of unaccompanied children released to New Jersey sponsors beginning in 2015.

New Jersey judges were provided with information on unaccompanied minors concerning special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS) proceedings. The DCF has policies and procedures in place related to their best interests and well-being, and Legal Services of New Jersey is available to provide low-income immigrant families with legal assistance. The DCF also approves undocumented immigrants, usually kin, to serve as resource homes for immigrant children. As child advocates, NJ CPAC adds its voice to the national chorus of citizens, government officials and others concerned that families arriving at the southern border are being separated and children housed under unacceptable conditions as their fates are decided.

Chart 17:
Number of unaccompanied immigrant children released to approved New Jersey sponsors



Source: US Administration of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement.
Note: Does not include COVID-19 data.



CPR Board Activities for Court Year 2020

Facts and Figures

CPR is a statewide program. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, CPR board volunteers met at local courthouses at least once a month to review cases and prepare recommendations for family court judges. The onset of the pandemic in March 2020 resulted in immediate and significant consequences to all court volunteer programs, including CPR. This section of the annual report uses data collected from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

During NJ CPAC's June 18, 2020 webinar, Wilkerson read the following note from the AOC to CPR board volunteers:

The Judiciary has taken numerous measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the continuing safety of children in out-of-home placements. This also requires us to ensure the safety and health of the public and court staff. As a result, almost all court proceedings are currently being handled remotely by telephone or video.

Of course, these measures affect Child Placement Review boards, which operate on behalf of the courts. While some volunteers and vicinages have the technology to handle the CPR reviews remotely, others do not. For those vicinages unable to do remote CPR reviews, judges are reviewing these cases. Judicial oversight will ensure that children and their families continue to receive critical services and avoid delays to permanency.

The Supreme Court has announced a plan for transitioning from remote court operations to a gradual return to courthouses and court facilities. This gradual resumption of certain in-person court events will begin on Monday, June 22, 2020, with most events continuing to be handled remotely at this time. For in-person events, precautions will include requirements for the public and Judiciary employees to wear masks in non-private areas and to maintain social distancing. Additional information on subsequent transitions will be issued as soon as available on the Judiciary's website, www.njcourts.gov.

The Judiciary appreciates your efforts and concern for New Jersey's children and families during this public health crisis. We look forward to the time we can return to normal operations.



CPR board initial reviews

When a court finds that a child should be placed outside the home, a child’s case is subject to a review by the CPR board 60 days after the child is placed. Reviews of CIC cases are referred to as CPR initial reviews. CPR boards can conduct additional reviews for children who have been voluntarily placed, but data related to such reviews are not included in this report due to their rarity.

Prior to a scheduled initial review, the CP&P determines if the child’s family home is safe and whether in-home services are appropriate. As more children receive in-home services to avoid the psychological and emotional consequences and possible developmental delays associated with the trauma of family separation, the number of children entering out-of-home placement has steadily decreased. The number of 60-day initial reviews conducted by CPR boards statewide also mirrors that steady decline. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated that decline. (See Chart 5: The number of children with new out-of-home placement cases.)

The total number of initial CPR board reviews held in CY 2020 declined by 1,155, while the total number of meetings declined by two. This finding infers that most counties had fewer cases to review per meeting in CY 2020 than in previous years.

Table 9:
Summary of CPR board activities 2016 through 2020

Court Year	CPR Board Meetings	Initial CPR Board Reviews
2016	411	3,445
2017	342	2,831
2018	368	3,159
2019	353	2,327
2020	351	1,172

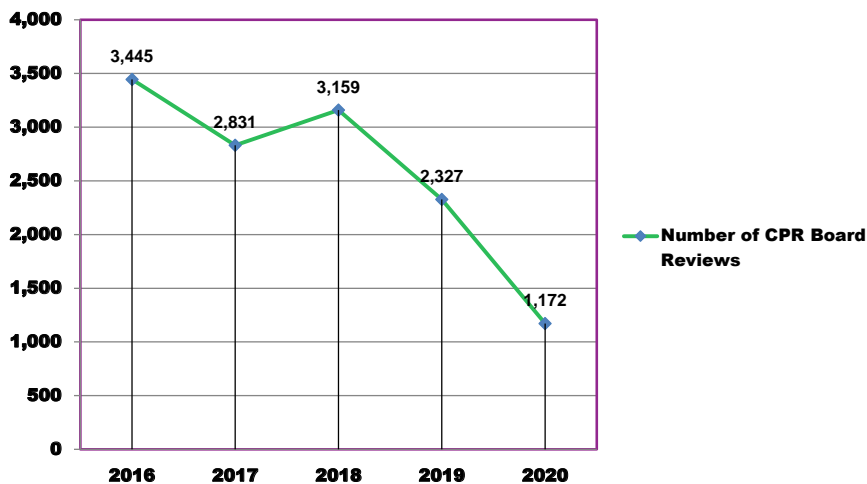
Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Reports.
webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.



Total number of initial reviews

The following chart captures the decrease in the number of cases reviewed statewide by CPR boards.

Chart 18:
Number of CPR board reviews 2016 through 2020



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Reports.
webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.



In 2020, the total number of cases reviewed by CPR boards decreased for most of the state's 21 counties, with the exceptions of Monmouth, Morris and Sussex. Nearly half of the counties (10) met more frequently throughout the court year to conduct reviews than in the prior year.

Table 10:
Number of CPR board meetings and cases reviewed by county in 2020 vs. 2019

County	2019 CPR Board Meetings	2020 CPR Board Meetings	+/-	2019 CPR Board Reviews	2020 CPR Board Reviews	+/-
Atlantic	15	22	+7	110	108	-2
Bergen	17	18	-1	92	51	-41
Burlington	12	27	+14	132	83	-49
Camden	63	45	-18	383	269	-114
Cape May	14	13	-1	71	34	-37
Cumberland	10	17	+7	122	114	-8
Essex	23	25	+2	327	181	-146
Gloucester	20	30	+10	142	117	-25
Hudson	13	21	+8	122	95	-27
Hunterdon	5	4	-1	11	7	-4
Mercer	11	10	-1	108	101	-7
Middlesex	13	9	-4	105	68	-173
Monmouth	27	8	-19	81	94	+13
Morris	8	12	+4	19	27	+8
Ocean	22	15	-7	154	116	-38
Passaic	22	25	+3	89	81	-8
Salem	11	9	-2	79	38	-41
Somerset	5	4	-1	14	6	-8
Sussex	9	12	+3	15	36	+21
Union	17	19	+2	98	70	-28
Warren	16	6	-10	53	16	-37
Total	353	351	-2	2,566	1,712	-854

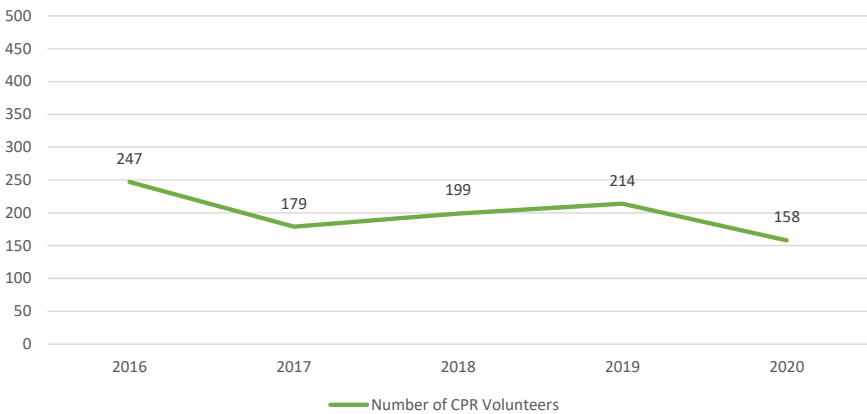
Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts, CPR Reports.
webfocusprod.courts.judiciary.state.nj.us.



Total number of CPR board volunteers

The total number of CPR board volunteers dropped to an all-time low in 2020.

***Chart 19:
Number of CPR board volunteers 2015 through 2020***



Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. Volunteer Information Processing System (VIPS) Reports 2020 and VIPS 2020.

Mandated Requirements for CPR Boards

The CPR Act mandates that each county have at least one CPR board for every 200 reviews conducted the previous year. Each board must have at least five court-appointed volunteers. All 21 counties met their minimum requirements for court year 2021 (includes partial COVID-19 data), with the exception of Camden County. Camden County is actively seeking additional volunteers. NJ CPAC recognizes that counties could find recruiting and retaining volunteers challenging until the courts resume normal operations.

***Table 11:
Statute Requirements v. 2020 performance***

County	Reviews by CPR Board 2019	Minimum CPR Boards Required 2020	Actual CPR Boards 2020	Met Mandated Minimum Number of CPR Boards 2020	Minimum CPR Volunteers Required 2020	Actual CPR Volunteers 2020	Met Mandated Minimum Number of CPR Volunteers 2020
Atlantic	109	1	1	✓	5	6	✓
Bergen	51	1	2	✓	10	13	✓
Burlington	83	1	1	✓	5	9	✓
Camden	269	2	2	✓	10	5	
Cape May	35	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Cumberland	114	1	2	✓	10	11	✓
Essex	181	1	2	✓	10	10	✓
Gloucester	117	1	1	✓	5	8	✓
Hudson	95	1	1	✓	5	6	✓
Hunterdon	7	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Mercer	101	1	1	✓	5	10	✓
Middlesex	68	1	2	✓	10	15	✓
Monmouth	94	1	2	✓	10	10	✓
Morris	27	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Ocean	116	1	1	✓	5	6	✓
Passaic	81	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Salem	38	1	1	✓	5	7	✓
Somerset	6	1	1	✓	5	6	✓
Sussex	36	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Union	70	1	1	✓	5	6	✓
Warren	16	1	1	✓	5	5	✓
Total	1,712	22	27		135	158	

Source: NJ Administrative Office of Courts. CPR Activity and Volunteer Information Processing System (VIPS) Reports Run 8.14.20 and information provided by the counties.



STUART RABNER

CHIEF JUSTICE

GLENN A. GRANT, J.A.D.

ACTING ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COURTS

JENNIFER M. PEREZ

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JUNE 2021