



Arkansas House Newsletter

July 12, 2019

Improvements to Foster Care in Arkansas



The number of Arkansas children in foster care has fallen by more than 700 since reaching an all-time high in 2016. That information was part of an annual report presented a legislative committee this week.

On Tuesday, the Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) presented its annual Family Preservation Report to the Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs Committee.

The report outlines progress made and areas for improvement when it comes to the most vulnerable children in our state.

We learned from the report that the number of children in foster care declined by more than 10% during 2018. That is a decrease of 507 children.

Additional funding for DHS approved by the legislature in recent years has helped to increase the number of caseworkers and decrease the average worker caseload. As a result, we are seeing children placed in

permanent homes sooner and fewer children re-entering the foster care system.

Adoptions were finalized for 969 children in 2018, similar to the previous year and a 16% increase since 2016.

When it comes to areas for improvement, the report notes that the agency struggled to place children close to the homes from which they were removed. A total of 69% resided in either their home county or a neighboring county at the end of 2018, similar to previous years.

Children who are removed from their parents or guardian do better when placed with family members or people they know. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles are often willing to help and make the child feel safe and loved. The percentage of children in care residing with relatives was 27–29% over the past three years. While this is well above the relative placement rate from years ago it is still below the aspiring goal of 33%.

The report breaks down all of the information by every county in the state. We will use this information to continue our efforts in creating policies to keep children in a safe and loving environment. We have posted this report on our website www.arkansashouse.org.