

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Outcomes Management Report

2009



Ryan Good,
LCSW, LISW

Executive Director's Report

I am pleased to represent Benchmark Family Services as we enter the next decade. Benchmark sees this decade as a period of ripening the quality that has become the hallmark of each of our 19 Benchmark offices. Our expansion has been in response to the demand and needs of the youth in the areas we serve, and has been carefully developed within the overarching principles of our core values. As Executive Director, I pledge continued concerted attention to quality and controlled growth to best serve youth in out-of-home care.

This attention to quality comes through a number of regulating processes, among them CARF oversight, our Board of Directors review process and our internal systems of checks and balances extending from case management to fiscal operations. The harmony inherent in common purpose allows close attention to Benchmark and industry standards and holds tolerance to our core values. Benchmark Family Services has defined a nucleus of strengths that have emerged from this regulatory method:

Benchmark Program Strengths:

1. *Flexibility—allows BFS to pursue opportunities and program potential as they arise.*
2. *BFS Open-door/No-secrets Policy—encourages staff trust*
3. *Solid long-term relationships with service vendors promote continuity, efficiency, and satisfactions (Duvall and Associates, Alt Architecture, etc.)*
4. *Regional Office Development Plan—reduces dependence on any one placement entity.*

5. *Stable benefit package—encourage staff retention and satisfaction.*
6. *Staff varied education and employment experience—produce deep knowledge base agency wide, and offer potential for staff transfer and promotion.*
7. *Investment in real property—promotes financial depth and security, and anticipates a rent-free/mortgage-free operation within the next 10 years.*
8. *Large work force*
9. *Involved Board of Directors*
10. *Growth of newly developed regional offices.*
11. *Diversified program development in multiple states*
12. *Specialization in therapeutic foster care only (offer no other services).*

Of course, any honest scrutiny of program quality also reveals areas to which improvement can be made. Our quality indicators point to areas of need within our program, all of which are being addressed through our internal administrative processes. Benchmark considers these to be areas of opportunity for continued excellence:

Areas for Improvement:

1. *Some Benchmark facilities need to be expanded or moved to provide needed space.*
2. *Some Benchmark offices need to be made handicapped accessible or relocated to facilities which are ADA compliant, while continued accommodations must be made for those who need such physical supports.*
3. *Benchmark must continue to hire or retain bi-lingual staff who represent the cultural composition of the area*
4. *Benchmark must continue to consolidate paperwork volume by utilizing the MIS ChildTrax system to avoid replication of data entry and paperwork.*
5. *Benchmark must continue to strive for increased and improved communication between regional offices by continued usage of the Inter-Office Communication System and weekly Virtual Meetings.*

While these areas are clearly defined by agency surveys and internal review, they do not represent the total of our efforts; BFS is committed to the constant sweep of attention that is required to explore and analyze the depth and breadth of program quality. In the following pages you will see a clear portrait of the soundness of BFS program elements and measures and other pertinent information.

If you would like a hard copy of our agency report, or desire other information, contact the Benchmark National Office at (937) 845-1080, or email the links in this website.

Sincerely,
Ryan Good LCSW, LISW
Executive Director

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.
Agency Overview



Mission Statement

The purpose of Benchmark Family Services is to provide stable and caring placements for youth in need of out-of-home care. Our mission is to advocate for children by insuring reasonable opportunities for healthy physical, psychological and emotional growth and development in the most normal and least restrictive setting possible. To this end, Benchmark Family Services provides and coordinates programs and services in cooperation with referring child welfare agencies. Benchmark Family Services is committed to the highest standards of childcare and professionalism.

Benchmark Family Services Value Statement

At the core of Benchmark Family Services are several key values that drive our operations and our responses:

- **Benchmark Family Services is child-centered. We evaluate all activities and actions in light of the BEST INTERESTS of each individual child. Our continuing growth and quality is a direct result of our attention to each placement.**
- **Foster children should be placed in the best possible, least restrictive setting.**
- **Benchmark Family Services places children with families. Families are not institutions. Each family must meet certain standards in their home and in their response to children.**
- **Benchmark Family Services welcomes and recognizes the diversity of culture, background, experience, and heritage that our families contribute to our agency.**
- **Foster children should be part of the foster family. They should be integrated into the fabric of the family's daily lives and should look no different than the other children of that home.**
- **Foster parents are professionals. Benchmark Family Services recognizes that foster parents have more yearly retraining requirements than the medical, social work, and mental health professionals who work with the same children.**
- **Benchmark Family Services believes foster parents should be valued as an equally important part of the child's treatment team, and afforded the respect due any professional by every member of Benchmark's staff.**

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Agency Overview

Service Areas

BENCHMARK FAMILY SERVICES OFFICE LOCATIONS

National Corporate Office

- New Carlisle, Ohio

Kentucky Offices:

- Berea, Kentucky
- Corbin, Kentucky
- Elizabethtown, Kentucky
- Florence, Kentucky
- Lexington, Kentucky
- Louisville, Kentucky
- Prestonsburg, Kentucky
- Somerset, Kentucky

Virginia Offices:

- Richmond, Virginia
- Roanoke, Virginia

Indiana Offices:

- Gary, Indiana
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Muncie, Indiana
- South Bend, Indiana

Georgia Office:

- Atlanta, Georgia

Texas Offices:

- Edinburg, Texas
- Houston, TX
- San Antonio, Texas

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Outcomes Management Report Categories

Benchmark Family Services Performance Measurement is presented in the following categories:

- **Agency Demographics**
- **Level of Care Comparison**
- **Planned and Unplanned Discharge Review**
- **Stakeholder Satisfaction**
- **Critical Incident Assessment**
- **Accessibility Appraisal**
- **Service to Diverse Populations Report**
- **Financial Integrity**



Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category:

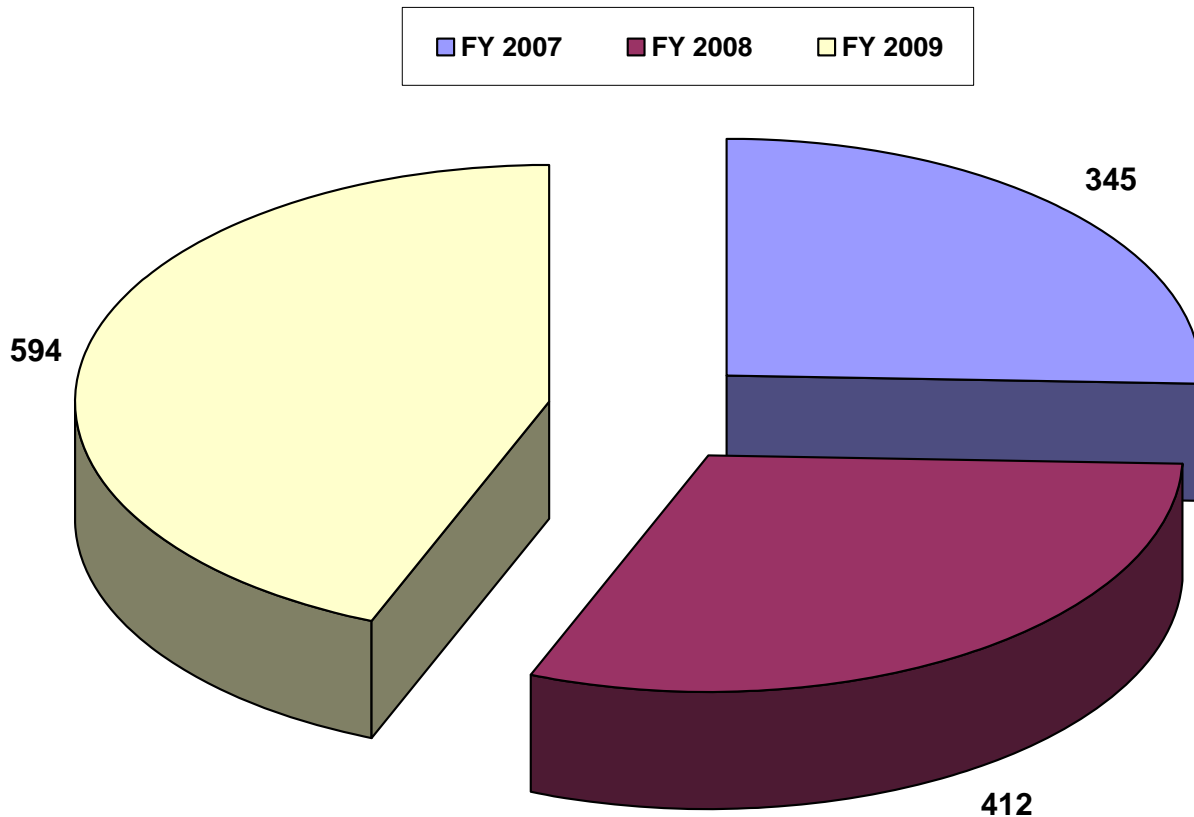
Agency Demographics



Benchmark Family Services maintains status records of all youth in placement through its contract Management Information System, *ChildTrax*. The following charts illustrate the characteristics of youth served by all of Benchmark's offices. Additional charts represent a comparison of 2008 and 2009 populations served. Critical information is discussed following each section.

Number of Youth Placed

FY2007-FY2009 Average Number of Children Served Daily



In FY 2009, BFS averaged 594 youth per day in placement, compared to 412 in FY2008 and 345 in FY2007. This steady increase in numbers can be attributed to agency growth and expansion and includes the addition of the Indiana program on March 19, 2009. For further reference, in 2005, BFS had an average of 139 youth in placement.

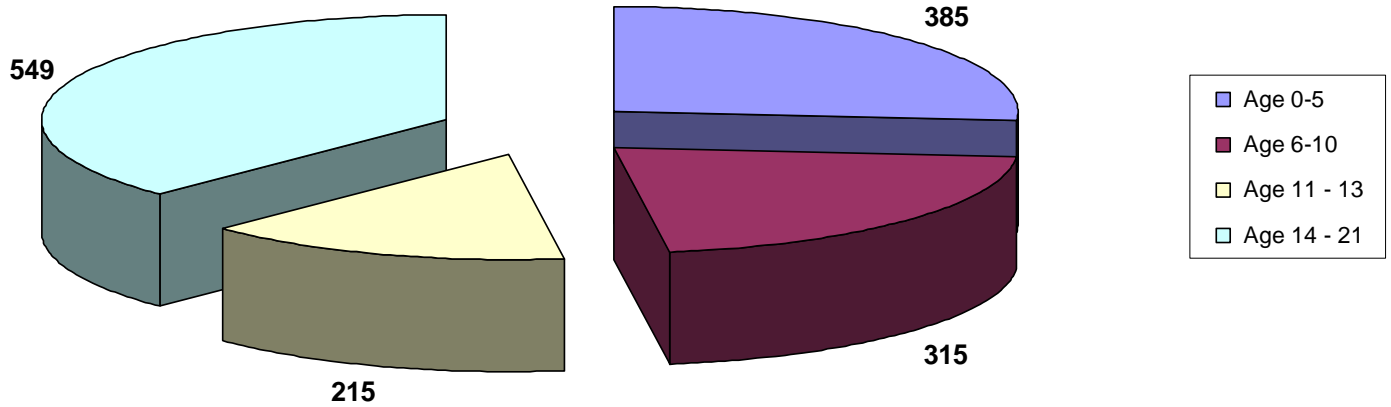
Total Number of Youth Placed

FY 2009		FY 2008		FY 2007	
Youth Placed		Youth Placed		Youth Placed	
Total	1197	Total	871	Total	698

In FY 2009, BFS placed a total of 1197 youth, compared to 871 placed in FY2008 and 698 in FY2007. Again, this steady increase in numbers can be attributed to agency growth and expansion and includes the addition of the placements in Indiana from March 19, 2009 to the end of the 09FY. For further reference, in 2005, BFS placed a total of 334 youth.

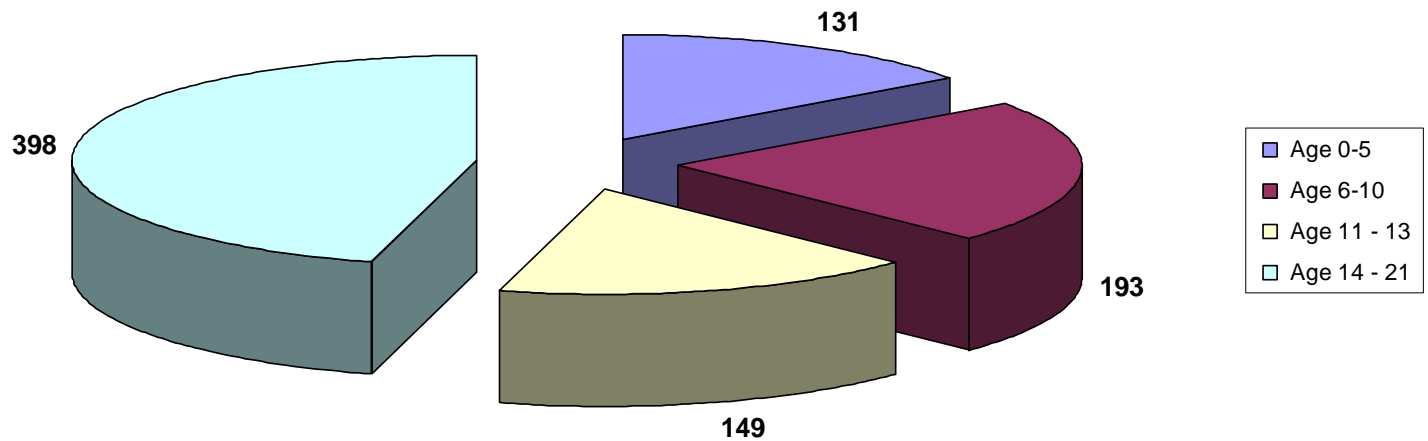
Age

FY 2009 Youth by Age



Of the total number of youth placed in FY 2009, the majority of youth (37%) were from the 14-21 age group. The 0-5 age group made up 26% of the total of youth in placement, the 6-10 age group was 26% of the total and the 11-13 group was 15%.

FY 2008 Youth by Age



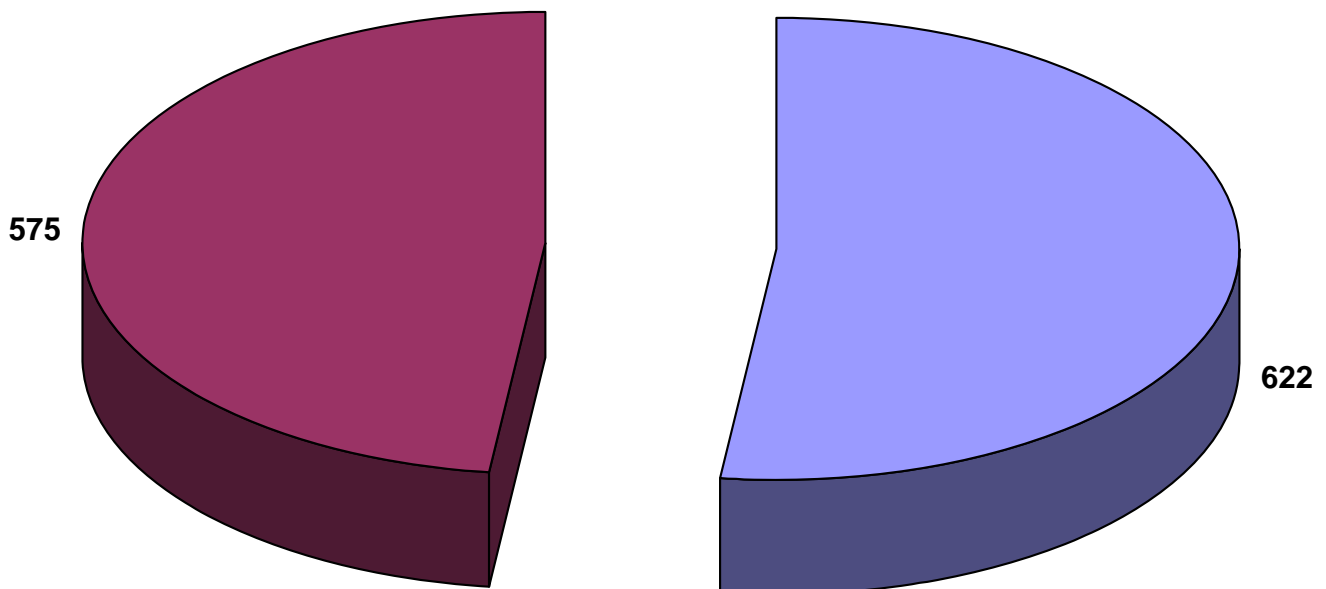
Of the total number of youth placed in FY 2008, the majority of youth were again from the 14-21 age group at 45% of the total population in placement. The age group 6-10 represented 22% of the total population, the 11-13 age group was 17% and the 0-5 age group was 15% of the total population.

Knowing the typically referred age groups in each service area allows BFS foster parent recruitment staff to concentrate efforts primarily on those families who are able and comfortable with the populations most frequently placed in that office area; BFS foster parent trainings also reflect the needs of the age ranges served in a region.

Gender

FY 2009

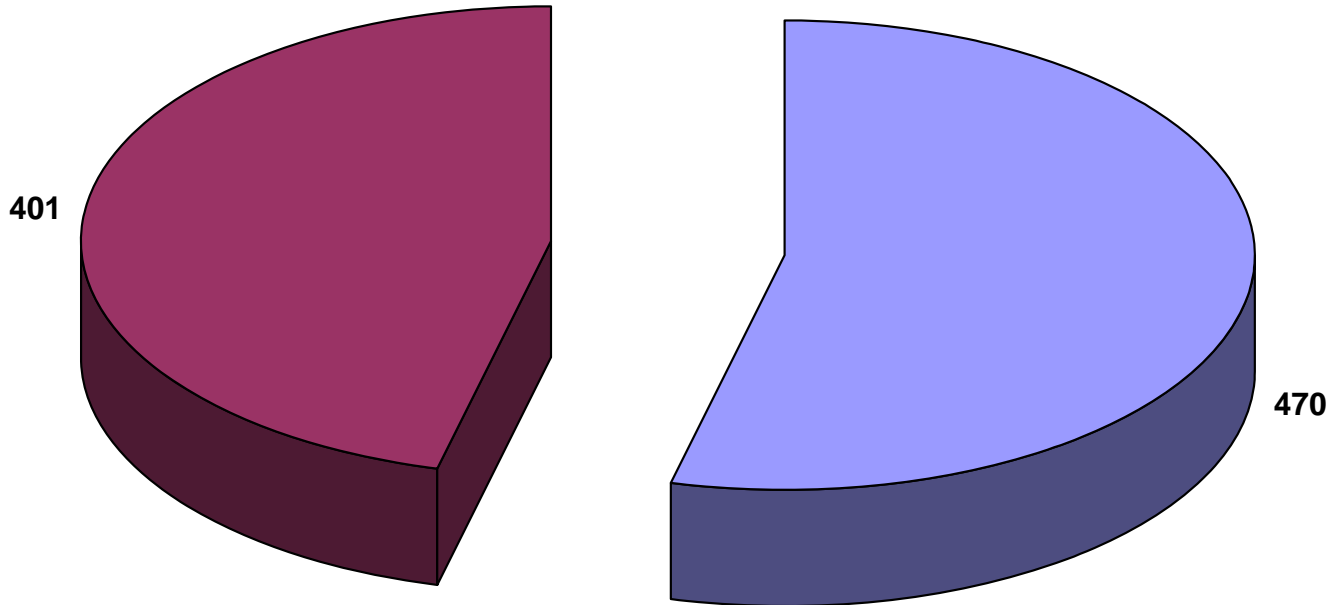
Male Female



Of the total youth placed in FY 2009, 52% were male and 48% were female.

FY 2008

■ Male ■ Female



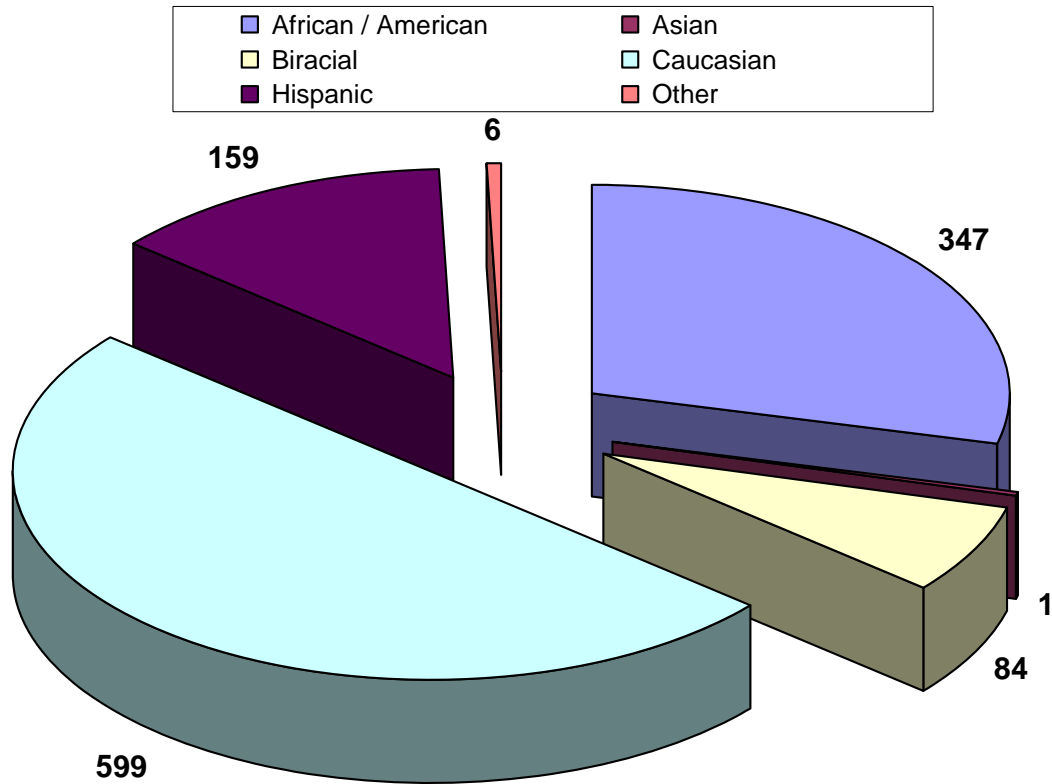
Of the total number of youth placed in FY 2008, 54% were male and 46% were female.

With a distribution of almost evenly divided male and female placements over the last two years, BFS prepares foster homes to receive both genders in equal numbers. Of course, each family states its ability and desire for the types and genders of youth it accepts.

It is noteworthy that over the past five years, this male/female distribution percentage has not varied significantly.

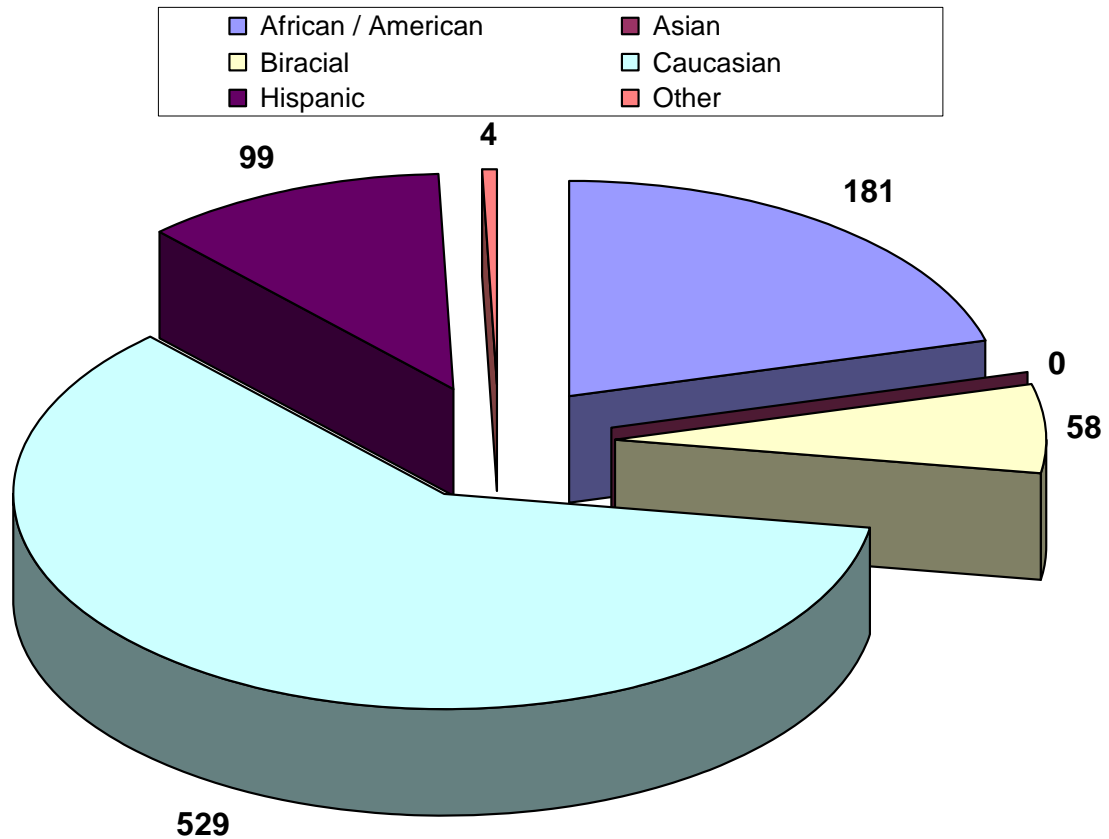
Race

FY 2009



Of the total number of youth placed in FY 2009, 29% were African/American; -1% were Asian; 7% were Biracial; 50% were Caucasian; 13% were Hispanic and -1% were "other".

FY 2008



Of the total number of 871 youth placed in FY 2008, 21% were African/American; 0% were Asian; 6% were Biracial; 61% were Caucasian; 11% were Hispanic and -1% were “other”.

In reviewing the Race Demographics, the most significant change in numbers of placed youth occur in the Hispanic population.

The implications to the recruitment and administration divisions of BFS are that the increase in placements from the Hispanic populations requires a more concerted effort for recruitment of foster parents, and diversity in staff selection as well. Efforts remain necessary in considering bi-lingual capacity of staff and translations of BFS written material.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category:

Level of Care Comparison

Different states have different determinations as to the manner of assigning “levels of care” in their areas. Each determination carries a different set of criteria for the placement and movement of a child between levels. Benchmark Family Services cooperates fully with placing agencies that include foster agencies in the “leveling” of youth in placement and are mindful that the primary objective is to reduce the level of care of each youth to the least restrictive classification. Obviously, higher levels of care require more intensive levels of foster parent supervision, services by inner-agency and community professionals, and a more involved individual plan.

The following chart is a total of the number of days youth are placed in BFS, and indicates the needs of these youth according to each state’s system. Each state’s classification system is different, but basically involves more intense needs with higher levels of care. The numbers represent actual days of care provided in each state’s BFS foster homes.

Benchmark administration notes trends in levels of placement in each area to enable recruitment of foster parents and staff who have expertise in specific types of care. An example is the medically fragile category; in areas with large numbers of placements of medically fragile youth, recruitment efforts would target current and retired nurses, parents of medically fragile children, medically trained technicians, etc.



**Level of Care
Placements by Days Served**

FY 2008	Days Per Level of Care		FY 2009	Days Per Level of Care	% of Increase/Decrease
Indiana	8123 days Level 0		Indiana	6928 days Level 0	15% decrease
	2921 days TFC-1			10411 days TFC-1	72% increase
	7660 days TFC-2			13778 days TFC-2	44% increase
	6739 days TFC-3			11029 days TFC-3	39% increase
	97 days TFC-4			195 days TFC-4	50% increase
	3103 days Medically Fragile 1			3494 days Medically Fragile 1	11% increase
	1226 days Medically Fragile 2			2279 days Medically Fragile 2	46% increase
	2613 days Medically Fragile 3			1737 days Medically Fragile 3	34% decrease
	269 days Medically Fragile 4			419 days Medically Fragile 4	36% increase
Indiana Total Days in Placement	37,751 days at all levels of placement		Indiana Total Days in Placement	50,270 days at all levels of placement	25% increase
Georgia	3197 days Traditional		Georgia	2752 days Traditional	14% decrease
	1651 days Basic Watchful Oversight			2240 days Basic Watchful Oversight	25% increase
	643 days Maximum Watchful Oversight			629 days Maximum Watchful Oversight	2% decrease
	52 days Specialty BWO			0 days Specialty BWO	100% decrease

	456 days Specialty MWO			480 days Specialty MWO	5% increase
	228 days Specialty MWO- MF			351 days Specialty MWO- MF	35% increase
Georgia Total Days in Placement	6,227 days at all levels of placement		Georgia Total Days in Placement	6,452 days at all levels of placement	4% increase
Kentucky	9136 days Level 0/Basic Needs		Kentucky	10606 days Level 0/Basic Needs	14% increase
	10472 days Level 1			8474 days Level 1	19% decrease
	7780 days Level 2			7734 days Level 2	1% decrease
	28857 days Level 3			27886 days Level 3	3% decrease
	30910 days Level 4			29618 days Level 4	4% decrease
	28333 days Level 5			29249 days Level 5	3% increase
	64 days DJJ			203 days DJJ	69% increase
	3608 days Medically Fragile 5			2992 days Medically Fragile 5	17% decrease
Kentucky Total Days in Placement	119,160 days at all levels of placement		Kentucky Total Days in Placement	116,762 days at all levels of placement	2% decrease
Texas	0 days Level 0		Texas	3410 days Level 0	100% increase
	7585 days Basic			13796 days Basic	45% increase
	9471 days Moderate			10661 days Moderate	11% increase
	5684 days Specialized			5548 days Specialized	2% decrease
Texas Total Days in Placement	22,740 days at all levels of placement		Texas Total Days in Placement	33,415 days at all levels of placement	32% increase

Virginia	1136 days Level 1		Virginia	212 days Level 1	81% decrease
	414 days Level 2			1420 days Level 2	71% increase
	1384 days Level 3			3078 days Level 3	55% increase
	844 days Level 4			1296 days Level 4	35% increase
	1428 days Level 5			1876 days Level 5	24% increase
Virginia Total Days in Placement	5,206 days at all levels of placement		Virginia Total Days in Placement	7,882 days at all levels of placement	34% increase
Overall Days in Placement Totals	191,084 days at all levels of placement		Overall Days in Placement Totals	214,781 days at all levels of placement	11% increase agency-wide

Benchmark Family Services measures each child’s placement by number of days in each level. Each of the numbers in the chart above is an unduplicated number of days of service offered to all youth in placement with BFS.

The chart is divided by state served by BFS, and includes the numbers of days of placement for each “level of placement” designated by that state. The state segments note the FY08 and FY09 totals, and the last column shows the percentage of increase or decrease at that level. The total of placed days per fiscal year is the last row in each segment and shows the overall increase or decrease per state.

Many factors influence the increase or decrease of numbers of days of placement; children may be moved to lower levels of care, which is the least restrictive setting and the desired outcome; newly recruited foster parents may not be able to accept foster youth at higher levels; newly opened offices may also not be able to accept the more severe placements.

Most notable is the fact that larger numbers of youth were served at higher levels of placement. This reflects a dynamic need for increased service levels from both foster parents and staff.

The last row in the chart shows the total days of placement for the agency in FY08 and FY09, and shows the percentage of increase as 11% overall.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category:

Planned and Unplanned Discharge Review

Overview

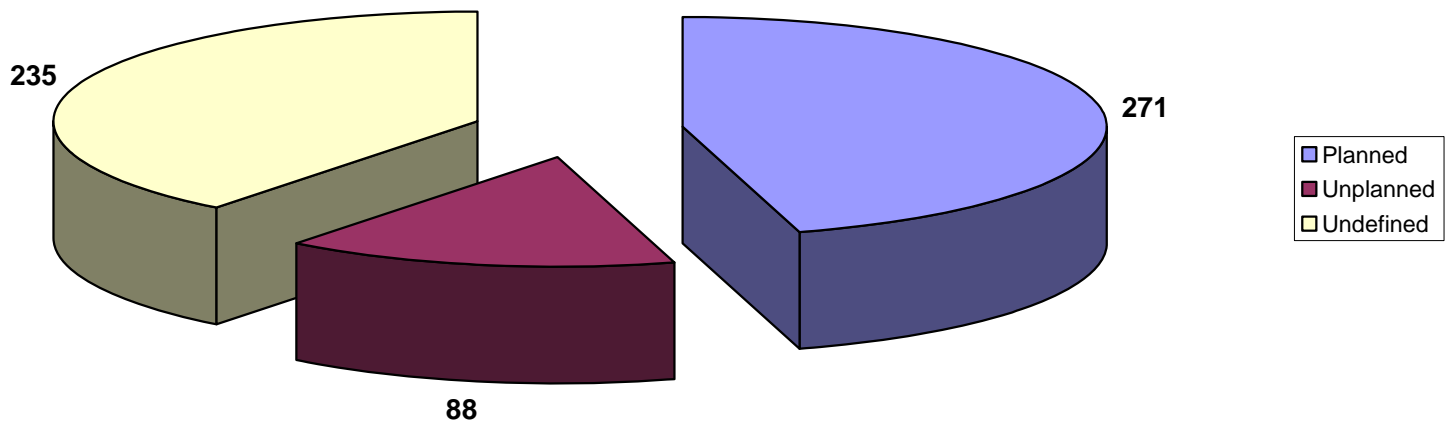
Discharge is one way a Child Placing Agency can monitor the success of each placement that is made. Planned discharges occur because goals were accomplished for the placement, while unplanned discharges occur due to disruptions in placement.



At the placement of each child with Benchmark Family Services, the plan for discharge is determined. The termination of each placement will vary with the individual plan of each youth and his specific circumstance, but each will have a plan for ending his stay in foster care. Each youth's plan for discharge will be aimed to create a favorable future for the youth.

Benchmark seeks from the onset to make wise placements with the most appropriate family for each child, including preplacement visits wherever possible, and then follows with careful attention to the needs of each child and his foster home. Outside supports may be utilized in the form of mental health professionals, additional BFS supports or frequency of services, and disruption meetings to try to manage the needs of each situation. BFS analyzes the care provision and discharge of each youth to ensure that the agency is responding appropriately.

Planned vs. Unplanned Discharges FY08

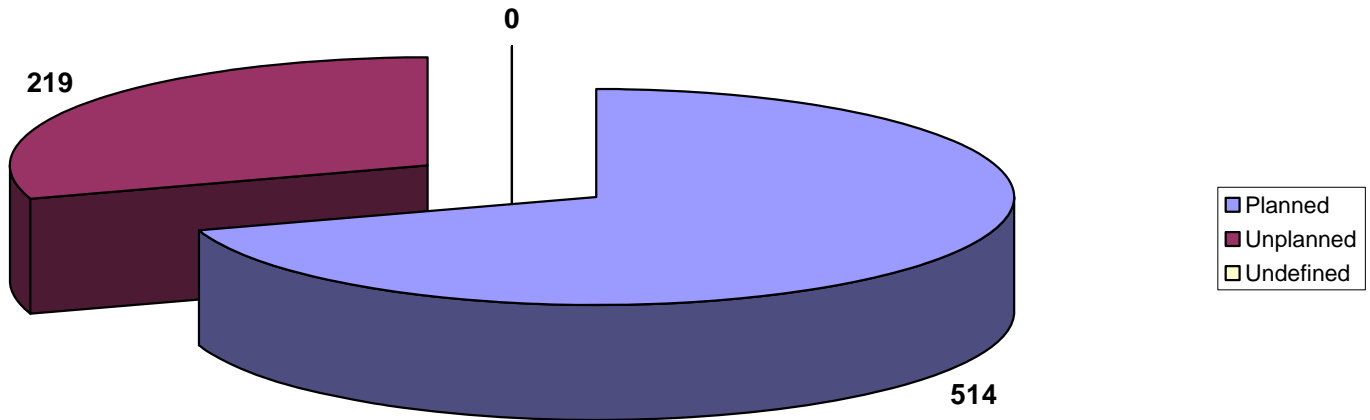


Benchmark Family Services formerly tracked discharges in categories of “Favorable” vs. “Unfavorable”, but changed midway through FY08 to tracking in categories of “Planned” vs. “Unplanned” to more carefully reflect the service patterns and outcomes designed in case planning and management. The “Undefined” category reflected in the FY08 chart represents numbers of discharges under the former system.

In FY08, there were 235 discharges under the former measurement system, 271 Planned and 88 Unplanned discharges. Of the 359 discharges falling under the new measurement system, 75% were planned and 25% were unplanned.

BFS responded to this information by further strengthening the placement process and the case management review of each placement to mitigate unplanned placements wherever possible.

Planned vs. Unplanned Discharges FY09



In FY09, Benchmark's tracking reflected an entire year categorizing all discharges into "Planned" and "Unplanned", thereby eliminating the "Undefined" category shown on the FY08 chart.

In FY09, there were 514 Planned and 219 unplanned discharges. Of the total 733 youth discharged from Benchmark care in FY09, 70% were planned and 30% were unplanned.

FY08 and FY09 shows a 5% increase in unplanned discharges; this increase may be a result of a corresponding increase in days of placements at higher levels of care from FY08 to FY09. Increased levels of care indicate an increased volatility in youth and may usher with it an increase in unplanned discharges such as AWOL, move to mental health facilities or hospitals, etc.

Additional Assessment of Performance

Recommendations

After an intensive analysis of 2008 and 2007 discharges, Benchmark Family Services had implemented a number of systems to decrease unfavorable discharges; these internal processes continue to be utilized. Among the processes instituted was a planned discussion of disruptions at weekly staff meetings and bi-monthly administrative meetings. At the weekly staff meetings supervisors are able to provide oversight and input into all pending disruptions and discharges. As a means of prevention, the case managers are asked to share details with the group about particular situations. Supervisors then take this information from their local offices to the bi-monthly administrative meetings. This also serves as a tool for supervisors to discuss and develop agency-wide preventative measure for preventing future disruptions/discharges and ensures that supervisors maintain involvement in discharges within their local office.

BFS also restructured the process of Disruption Meetings. These meetings are implemented if an impending disruption/discharge is foreseen by the case manager/ treatment team or if a foster family submits a notice for termination of placement. The disruption meetings provide intense case analysis and triage to ameliorate current issues and enact immediate supports to allow the child to remain in this placement. These meetings involve the BFS case manager, foster family, treatment director, state worker and therapist.

Additionally, BFS has researched and engaged trainers for educating staff and foster parents in child diagnosis and behaviors typical for youth in placement. When a placement is made for a child with a particular diagnosis or history, specific information concerning that issue is offered to the family. De-escalation and intervention strategies are also stressed at foster parent training and in case manager visits to the homes.

It has become part of the Policy and Procedure Manual for agency management that direct attention is focused on successfully placing children in the most appropriate homes and managing their placements with all due diligence and administrative oversight, and includes preplacement visits wherever possible.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category:

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Overview

Benchmark Family Services, Inc. regularly conducts a semi-annual satisfaction survey of Board Members, Collateral Service Providers, Foster Children, Foster Parents, and Staff. The June 2009 survey includes results from the Benchmark Family Services, Inc. offices located in Kentucky, Georgia, Texas, Virginia, Indiana and Ohio. The June 2009 survey followed the December 2008 definition of collateral service providers as custodial workers only.

The scores and individual comments are organized by survey question and survey type and will be charted later in this section.

Response Rate

The data received from the surveys is reliable. The June 2009 Surveys were sent to 100% of licensed foster parents, 100% of foster children currently in care (aged 10 or above), 100% of board members, 100% of state workers with a current placement at Benchmark, and 100% of staff. Because the surveys were sent to 100% of persons served, staff, community members, and other stakeholders, the information gathered is representative of the total group served by Benchmark Family Services. No groups were omitted; foster parents and foster children were cross checked with the agency's database system at the time surveys were disseminated, therefore the data is complete.

Surveys were sent to individuals beginning May 15, 2009. Surveys were completed beginning May 15, 2009 through June 30, 2009. All surveys returned to the Corporate Office prior to July 31, 2009 were considered as valid entries for this survey period. There were sixteen surveys received after the deadline of July 31, 2009. The ranking information and comments of these sixteen surveys were, therefore, not included in the results of this report. The breakdown of surveys not included in the results of this report is as follows: Collateral—3, Foster Child—4, Foster Parent—8, Staff—1. There were no other late surveys or surveys that were not included in this report for any reason.

The number of completed surveys returned to Benchmark Family Services, Inc. is sufficient to warrant this survey period as valid. Though some response rates are lower than desired, the data is still valid and the responses can be useful to the improvement of the agency. Responses relate to the overall satisfaction with services provided and the data collected measures what was intended.

In June 2009, Benchmark Family Services, Inc. had seven (7) members on the Board of Directors. Three (3) board members returned surveys. This is a 43% response.

In June 2009, Benchmark Family Services, Inc. sent approximately four hundred fifteen (415) surveys to collateral service providers. Seventy-six (76) collateral service providers returned surveys. This is an 18% response rate.

In June 2009, Benchmark Family Services, Inc. sent approximately three hundred sixty-nine (369) surveys to foster children. One hundred sixty-three (163) returned surveys. This is a 44% response rate.

In June 2009, Benchmark Family Services, Inc. sent approximately four hundred fifty-six (456) surveys to licensed foster parents. One hundred sixty-two (162) foster parents returned surveys. This is a 36% response rate.

In June 2009, Benchmark Family Services, Inc. sent approximately one hundred forty-one (141) surveys to staff members. One hundred one (101) staff members returned surveys. This is a 72% response rate.

Response Rate Goals

The response rate of the satisfaction survey is key to the integrity of data collected and the ability of the agency to utilize the information gathered constructively. The response rate of every survey type increased in the June 2009 survey as compared with the December 2008 survey, except for Foster Parent. See the comparison below:

<u>Survey Type</u>	<u>Response Rate December 2008</u>	<u>Response Rate June 2009</u>
Board Member	29%	43%
Foster Child	20%	44%
Foster Parent	43%	36%
Collateral Service Providers	13%	18%
Staff	64%	72%

Survey Evaluations

Foster Child Surveys

Strengths

The most notable strength, for the third survey in a row, from the foster children surveys, is regarding the foster children's perception of their foster homes. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of responding foster children reported they feel safe in their foster homes. Foster children commented, "I know no one will hurt me." "I feel real safe." "I always feel secure." "My parents are always helpful and treat me well." "I love my foster mom." Ninety-five percent (95%) reported they are treated with respect by Benchmark staff and ninety four percent (94%) reported their case manager and foster parents worked well together to meet their needs. Foster children commented a great deal about the staff and foster parents, stating workers and foster parents are always attentive, helpful, good listeners, always there for me, friendly, care about my needs, treated fairly, good home, reliable, strong support, nice and caring, organized, trustworthy, respectful, protective, and help me to learn right from wrong. Foster children reported "staff and parents helped them reach their goals and would do anything they needed them to do".

Two percent (2%) down from nine percent (9%) of responding foster children reported that the staff at Benchmark Family Services did not share information with them about services or people in the community that could help them. Three percent (3%) down from six percent (6%) stated they did not believe they participated in treatment planning or that their opinion was valued. Both of these percentages have decreased since the survey in December 2008 which is a positive improvement.

Areas for Improvement

As seen and reported in the previous surveys, several children commented they felt as though they had limited freedom and should have the ability to make more of their own choices. Children report not liking limitations placed upon them by supervision plans and background checks that need to be completed on others in order for the child to have approved contact outside the home. Another minor area of concern listed was the turnover of case workers.

Recommendations

Many of the areas for improvement mentioned by the children in placement are items that Benchmark Family Services cannot control. Children do not like supervision plans or limitations on their freedom, but most of this is dictated by the regulations of the state. These rules and regulations were created to allow children in foster care the freedom of feeling safe, however, it can seem a bit restrictive to children, especially as they grow closer to 18 years of age. Benchmark could improve in the area of communication with children in care to help them understand the supervision requirements and why they must be enforced. Although turnover rate of social workers is typically a negative aspect of the field in general, it still should be addressed in the best way possible, by a timely transfer of the case, allowing some closure between the child and their worker.

Foster Parent Surveys

Strengths

Ninety-five percent (95%) of responding foster parents reported that they are treated with respect by their Benchmark Family Services staff members. This is an ongoing trend, as the last two survey periods, responding foster parents reported at a rate of ninety three percent (93%) and ninety-seven percent (97%). Ninety-three percent (93%) reported their case manager is prompt when attending scheduled meetings. Ninety-four percent (94%) of foster parents reported that their case manager was available when needed. Ninety-one percent (91%) of foster parents reported that Benchmark Family Services staff listens to what they have to say both in satisfaction and concerns. Ninety percent (90%) of foster parents reported that they feel supported by the Benchmark Family Services staff. This has consistently increased over the last three survey periods.

Responding foster parents went on to comment that staff is friendly, helpful, pleasant, caring, supportive, prompt, knowledgeable, personable, good communicators, good character, reliable, professional, good values and commitment to the parents and children, and like family.

Areas for Improvement

In the previous December 2008 survey, ninety-four percent (94%) reported information regarding them and their foster children is kept private whereas there was a decrease to eighty-seven percent (87%) this survey period.

Thirteen percent (13%) of responding foster parents either disagreed, strongly disagreed or stated they had no opinion with regard to having knowledge of the Benchmark grievance policy. Sixteen percent (16%) reported having difficulty receiving the services they thought their foster children needed. This is an increase from the December 2008 survey.

Responding foster parents also reported they sometimes feel as though paperwork is unnecessary or repetitive, don't like the turnover of case workers and would like more referrals. Foster parents also requested additional training hours on different days and childcare for them during trainings or maybe staff could supervise the children during these trainings.

Recommendations

Some foster parents are reporting a struggle to obtain the services they believe the children in their care need. Foster parents should not be gaining services for children on their own. Case managers need to assist in scheduling and arranging for children to receive the services needed and obtain custodial agency approval. This matter can be addressed in more detail during case manager training. It is also sometimes difficult to identify and locate the services needed in specific smaller communities who don't have as many resources as larger communities do, however, the case manager should exhaust all resources in the surrounding areas as well. All foster parents are notified annually of the grievance policy via the Foster Parent Handbook.

Collateral Service Provider Surveys

Strengths

Overall, the responding collateral service providers were positive about Benchmark Family Services, Inc. and the services the agency provides. Collateral service providers commented they liked that case managers communicated effectively with them, were informative, and consistent. Collateral service providers also remarked that staff were friendly, competent, professional, and dependable, easy to work with, quick response to placements with quality homes, and illustrates concerns about the children's safety. Service providers also stated they liked the incident reports and that the case managers provide a lot of support to the foster parents, which is unique and essential.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of responding collateral service providers agreed the amount of work they are asked to complete for Benchmark is reasonable. Seventy-one percent (71%) stated they agree their relationship with Benchmark is well maintained and seventy percent (70%) stated that teamwork is an important part of the work the agency does. Seventy-three percent (73%) stated that they agree Benchmark Family Services' staff is available when needed.

Areas for Improvement

Forty-two percent (42%) of Collateral Service Providers were unaware of the Benchmark Family Services grievance policy. Twenty-six percent of the providers also marked this question as no opinion, which may indicate the provider was either unaware or had no need to use the policy at this time. This is the third survey where agree and strongly agree percentages fall under forty percent (40%).

Recommendations

This is the third survey period in which most responding Collateral Service Providers reported being unaware of the agency grievance policy. It is recommended that the grievance policy be provided to all Collateral Service Providers at the time a child is placed with Benchmark Family Services.

Staff Surveys

Strengths

Eighty-five percent (85%) of responding staff members reported enjoying their work environment and eighty-eight percent (88%) reported they believe teamwork is important to their coworkers. The majority of staff reported being aware of their job description, job duties, and believe the amount of support they are receiving from supervisors is adequate. Seventy-four percent (74%) of staff reported that Benchmark certifies quality foster families, with twenty percent (20%) having no opinion.

Responding staff members had many positive comments to make with regard to their employment with Benchmark Family Services, Inc. Staff members reported especially liking the flexible work schedule, PTO benefits, coworkers, the relaxed environment and atmosphere, the team spirit of the office, the lack of micro management, support of supervisors and that it is family oriented.

Areas for Improvement

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of responding staff members reported they feel the amount of work they are required to complete is manageable in a forty hour work week. This is an increase from the last two reporting periods, however still needs improvement. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of staff members reported that there should be additional training concerning their job position. This percentage has increased in the last two surveys. The additional requirements of the use of technology for case managers and supervisors may be contributing to this increased number; however, Benchmark has highly skilled IT staff available for additional training and help when needed.

For the second survey in a row, several employees mention the pay either being too low or that raises are not offered frequently enough. Previously, the benefits offered would help to balance out the lower paying salary however; employees are now stating that as the cost of benefits increase, this is no longer a factor for them. It should be noted that Benchmark currently pays 90% of health insurance premiums for staff and family.

Staff reported concerns about the lack of timely notifications of frequent paperwork and form changes, and distribution of these forms to the correct staff member.

Staff members also requested more pertinent, job specific, and useful professional development training. They also requested more training initially prior to taking on a full case load. Some of the areas staff members are requesting additional training are:

- CARF and how it applies to them
- Policies and Procedures
- ChildTrax training
- Therapeutic issues for children in care
- Case management documentation

Some staff members commented that they did not like training via the webcam.

Recommendations

Supervisors should openly discuss these matters with their staff and work with them to make the work load as manageable as possible. While requirements for paperwork, documentation, etc. cannot necessarily be changed, employees should feel empowered to speak with supervisors when feeling overwhelmed. Benchmark supervisors and directors could also spend time with staff covering time management techniques in order to help ease the stress of the workload and time sensitive deadlines. Also, incorporating additional training and job shadowing at an employee's hire will assist them in learning their job duties more thoroughly prior to taking on a full case load. Supervisors should do all they can to encourage and allow employees to utilize flex time and PTO.

Staff members made some excellent suggestions for professional development training they would like to have offered to them. It is recommended that these suggestions be taken into consideration when in-service training classes are scheduled and organized. Overall, staff members are indicating a desire to attend professional development training in order to become more effective for the agency in the field.

Board Surveys

One hundred percent (100%) of the board members responding to the survey strongly agreed that Benchmark Family Services makes itself accessible to the widest range of clients possible. Additionally, responding board members agree they are kept up to date regarding pertinent information, have an open relationship with administration, are aware of the Benchmark offices and the staff currently in those offices and that the agency is both an efficient and effective organization in leadership and services provided. Responding board members commented that Benchmark provides outstanding services to foster families and children. Additionally, responding that perhaps a bit more board input into strategic planning for the agency is needed.

Previously, responding board members reported Benchmark Family Services could be more effective in showing the organization's strengths and weaknesses and that strategic planning does not appear to be a priority or that every member plays a role in this process. This survey period, one hundred percent (100%) responded that the agency is effective in showing the organization's strength and weaknesses. This is an improvement and as recommended in the previous survey, has been addressed in ongoing board meetings. However, only sixty-seven (67%) strongly agreed that strategic planning is a priority and that every member plays a role in this process, and thirty-three (33%) had no opinion. Although this response is not one hundred percent (100%) strongly agree, it is not perceived as a negative score. The strategic plan was reviewed in a board meeting, and will continually be monitored.

Areas for Improvement

Responding board members reported that thirty-three percent (33%) agree and sixty-seven percent (67%) strongly agree that, Benchmark Family Services is effective in identifying conflicts of interest in a timely manner and handled in an appropriate way following an already identified and in place procedure.

Recommendations

This is the second survey period that Board members did not report one hundred percent (100%) strongly agree that the agency is effective in identifying conflicts of interest. It was reported thirty-three percent (33%) agree and sixty-seven percent (67%) strongly agree.

It is recommended that conflicts of interest continue to be discussed in board meetings to ensure that they are being identified and handled in a timely manner following already established procedures.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category:

Critical Incident Assessment



Benchmark Family Services monitors critical incidents very closely, observing for trends, issues and conditions that indicate a need for agency action. Patterns may indicate an issue with a particular foster family or staff person, or may suggest a need for training for a particular topic.

As BFS has grown, we have seen a yearly decrease in the numbers of critical incidents per population. This has been a result of carefully screening foster parents to ensure that they are able to deal with potentially volatile placements, exceptionally careful matching of youth and their needs with foster parents and their capabilities and experience, and close case management of all placements to offer services and supports to reduce issues before they become critical.

Careful analysis of critical incident types has also allowed administrative staff to determine what types of training in each area are needed for foster parents and staff to best support their youth in placement.

Following are charts measuring numbers of critical incidents by type for each of the years 2007, 2008 and January to September 2009. Each year is also charted by the percentage of population in placement. A comparison chart is included which shows the percentage of incidents per population for 2007, 2008 and the first three quarters of 2009.

An explanation of the categories of critical incidents is included which explains the guidelines for determining if an incident is considered critical, and under what heading it should be placed.

Definitions of Critical Incidents

Below are examples of critical incidents. These categories are not limited to the stated behaviors, but serve as a tool to define the section.

Physical Aggression: This includes hitting, kicking, biting, attacking others, destroying items, etc.

Abuse/Neglect: Anything that would require a call to state agency to make an abuse referral. This includes abuse reports against the foster parent, biological parent, child, teachers, or anyone else involved with the child. Abuse includes but is not limited to corporal punishment, excessive use of punishment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, failure to meet the child's nutritional, medical, needs, etc.

Restraint of a Resident: If the foster parent "holds" or "hugs" the foster child with the intent of keeping them from acting out or harming self or others.

Suicide Attempt: This is if the child commits an act with the intent of harming self (cutting wrists, overdose, starvation, using poison, etc).

Death of a Resident: Any event leading to the death of a child in our care.

Possession of Deadly Weapon: This includes any time a child has possession of a deadly weapon, such as a knife, gun, brass knuckles, etc.

Unusual Family Issue: This would include unusual circumstances with the child's biological family such as the parent stalking the foster family, calling incessantly, following the child to school, showing up to see the child at school, etc. These are things that have not been planned or scheduled by the state social worker.

Victim of Delinquent/Criminal Activity: If the child is a victim of any crime such as stabbing, rape, assault, theft, etc.

AWOL: This is any time a child's whereabouts are unknown resulting in notification of law enforcement.

Medical: This is anything that requires professional medical attention for the child. This could include injuries, psychiatric hospitalization, medical hospitalization, emergency treatment, etc.

Injury to Resident: This is anytime a child is injured in our care. This would include incidents that do and do not require medical attention. For example, if the child gets hit by a sibling and develops a bruise, we would document that incident this way.

Suicide Threat: Any time the child threatens to harm self or talks about having a desire to die.

Minor Self Harm: This is anything the child does with the intent of harming self such as banging head, picking skin, rubbing skin raw, inflicting pain, etc.

Bizarre Behaviors: This might include smearing feces, defecating or urinating on self, talking to self or referring to things that are not there, reporting hearing voices, reporting seeing things that are not there etc.

Major Self Harm: This would include cutting or any suicide attempts.

Sexualized Behaviors: This includes any form of sexual acting behaviors such as masturbation, attempting to see others naked, showing self naked to others, inappropriate touching, cuddling or sexual intercourse, inappropriate sexual comments or remarks, etc.

Verbally Aggressive: This includes any time the child may try to verbally intimidate others, cussing, making threats, etc.

Suspension from School: Any time the child is suspended from school.

Medication: This is any time there is a problem related to the child's medication: a missed dose, an overdose, and incorrect dose, refusal to take medication, etc.

Destruction of Property: Any time the child destroys property: this includes property belonging to the child, parent, or someone outside the home.

Involvement with Law Enforcement: This would be any time the child is involved with the police or the police are called in regard to the child. Charges do not need to be pressed against the child for this to be marked.

Delinquency/Unruly/Criminal Act: This would include any time the child is involved with the police. In most cases specific charges are pressed, but it is not a requirement to mark this category. Generally speaking, the child has broken a law.

Injury to Another: This would include any time a foster child causes injury to another that requires professional medical treatment ("Another" includes staff, foster parents, foster children, household members, etc.)

Visitation Problem: This would include any incident where there is a problem involving the child and visitation with biological family. This would include skipped visitations, missed visitations, or biological parents keeping the child late, etc.

Detention: This would include any time a child is sent to juvenile detention. It would also include if a child receives in school detention, however at the discretion of the office supervisor.

Suspicion of Drug Use / Tested Positive: This would include any time a child is suspected to have used drugs or alcohol or has test positive for using.

Termination from Employment: This is any time a child is terminated from their place of employment for poor behavior that would warrant an incident report. This again would be documented at the discretion of the office supervisor.

Other: If items do not fit into the above categories, other would be used. Be sure to specify what “other” means on the critical incident form.

School Changes: This is any time a child moves to a different educational setting, excluding moves to a less restrictive setting and/or transitions necessitated by typical educational progression, during the reporting period. This includes moves to alternative school, moves resulting from the change of residence, transfers from community school to campus school. This does not include promotions and moves that mainstream a child with special education needs.

Possession of a Deadly Weapon: This is an incident where a child has possession of a deadly weapon.

Supervision Violation: This would include any incident in which the child violates the supervision plan / guidelines established by the treatment team.

Foster Parent Grievances: This is any time the foster parent files a formal grievance with Benchmark Family Services.

Foster Child Grievances: This is any time the foster child files a formal grievance with Benchmark Family Services.

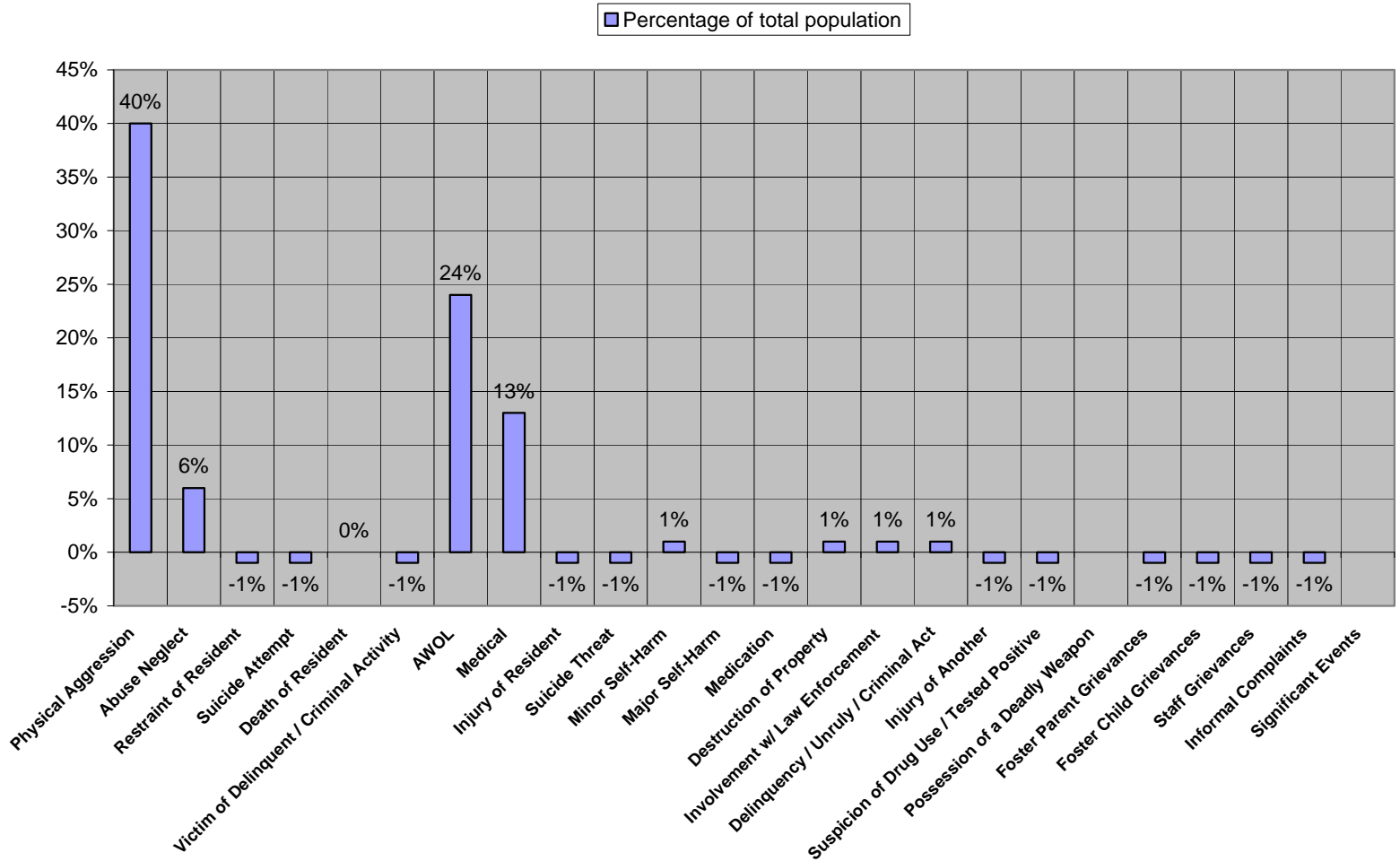
Staff Grievances: This is any time a staff member files a formal grievance with Benchmark Family Services.

Informal Complaints: This is any time a foster parent or other service provider has a complaint that requires the involvement of an administrative personnel and they decline to file a formal grievance.

Significant Events: This includes any significant event happening in the office such as change in leadership, change in ownership, relocation, change in mailing address, reorganization, expansion or elimination of an accredited program, financial distress, acquisition, consolidation, joint venture, or merger, investigation, material litigation, catastrophe, sentinel event, and CMS Survey Deficiency.

Incidents per Percentage of Population FY2008

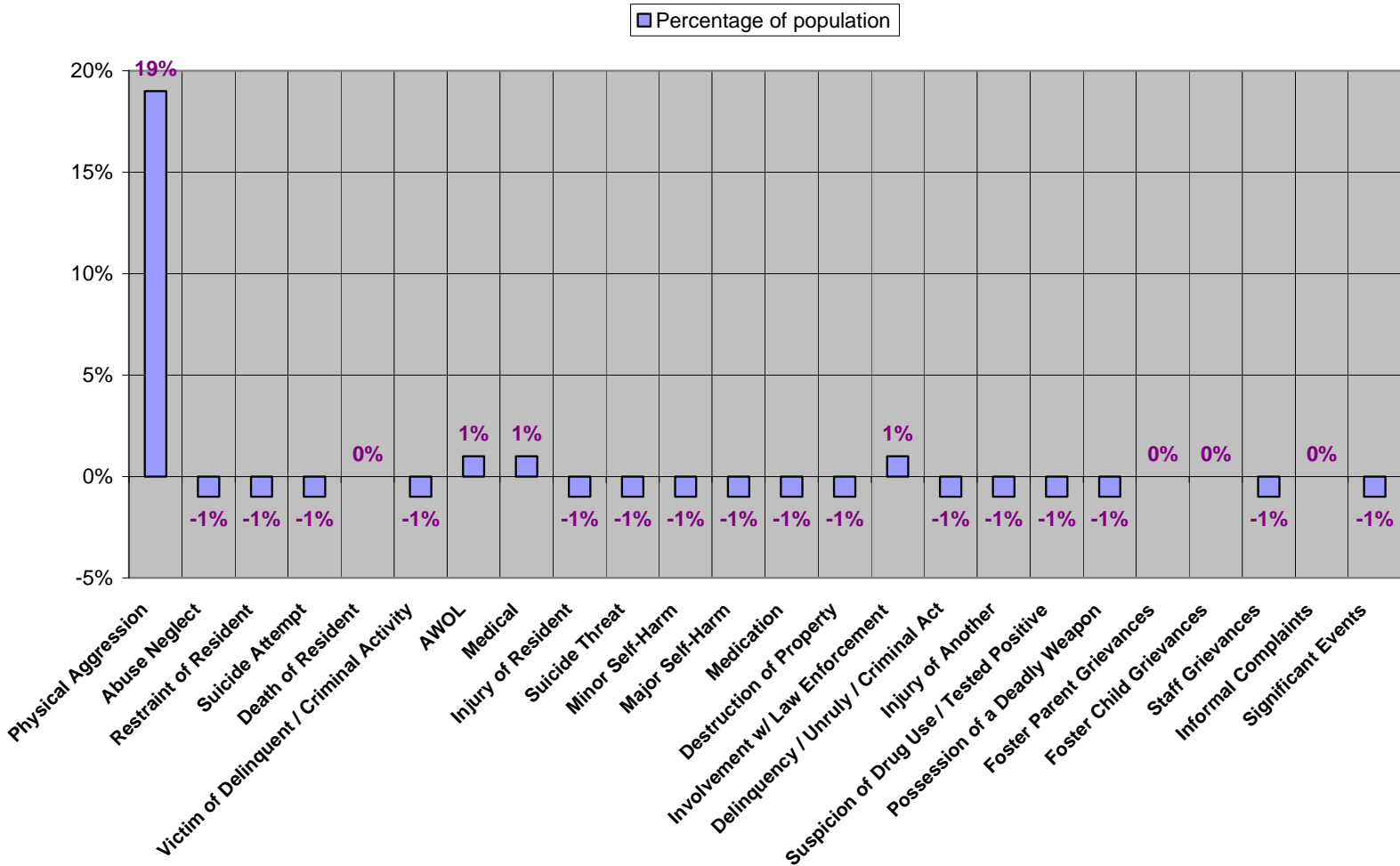
Percentage of Critical Incidents per Total Population FY2008



In FY2008, BFS had a population of 871 youth in placement. The major issues in foster families were Physical Aggression, AWOL and Medical. It is remarkable that the majority of critical incidents are 1% and -1% of the total population over all Benchmark offices.

Incidents per Percentage of Population FY2009

Percentage of Critical Incidents per Total Population FY2009

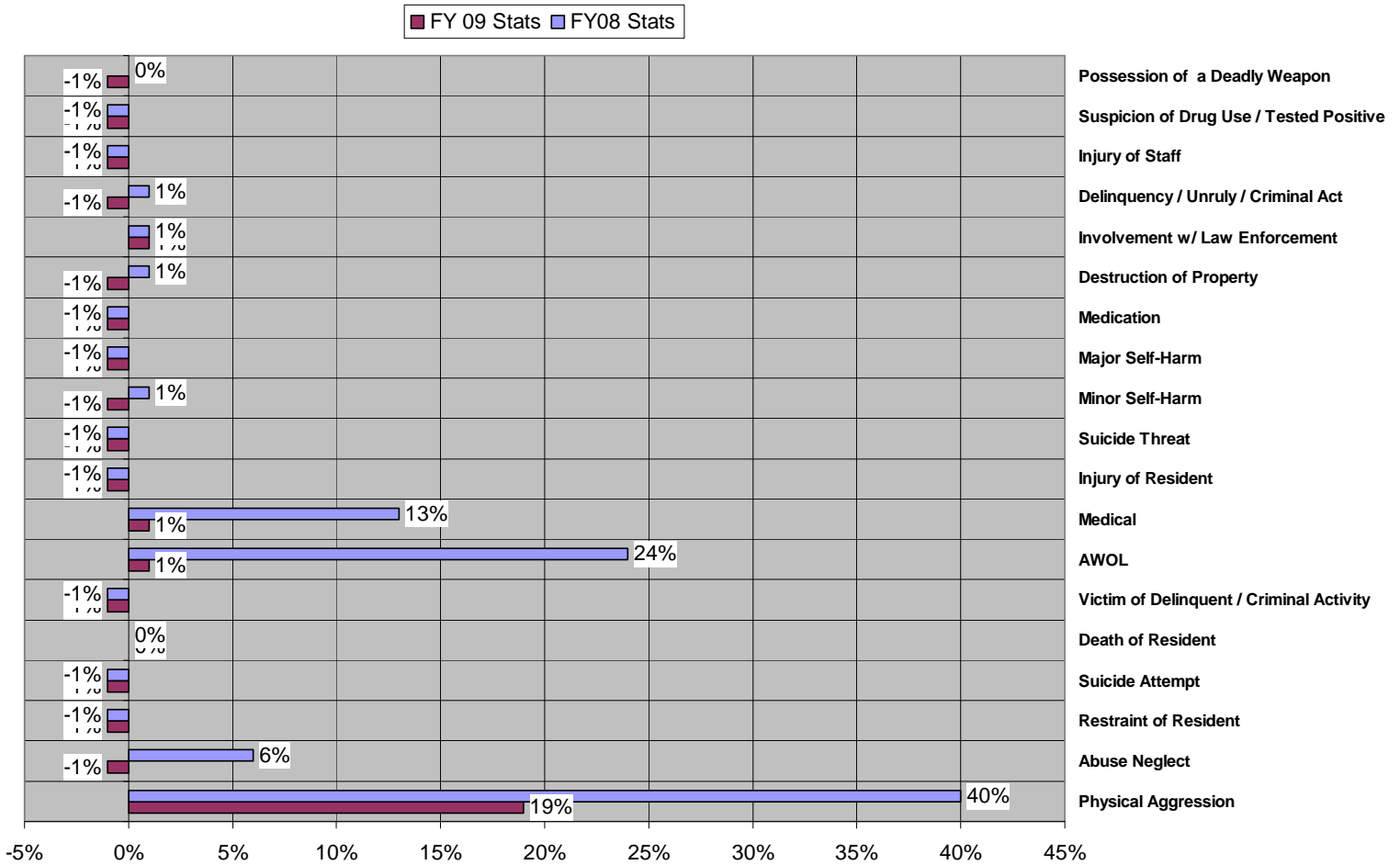


In FY 2009, BFS had a population of 1464 youth in placement. The major issue in foster families was Physical Aggression, although Physical Aggression fell from 40% of the population in FY08 to only 19% of the population in FY09.

Attention was given to training foster parents and staff in how to work with youth without provoking direct confrontation, and specific efforts were made to support youth in remaining in their placements in the form of professional mental health services and supportive case management.

Comparison of Incidents per Percentage of Population FY08 – FY09

Comparison of % Critical Incidents per population FY 08 - FY09



This chart compares the critical incidents per population for FY2008 and FY2009. This illustrates the dramatic drop in critical incidents even while Benchmark continued to grow (a 59% increase in total population), indicating that the efforts of BFS were successful in mitigating issues with youth in placement.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category: **Accessibility Appraisal**



Benchmark Family Services recognizes the diverse needs of the population we serve and ensures that any needed accommodations will be made in each of our offices.

BFS further recognizes that barriers to service extend beyond physical accommodations, and seeks to meet needs as they are presented, including language barriers.

Annually, BFS evaluates each office for areas of need with regard to accessibility, and notes who will be responsible for addressing those needs. Architectural barriers in rented offices are presented to the landlords for specific attention, and issues in BFS-owned buildings are swiftly addressed. For those issues where resolution must be delayed, specific accommodations are enacted. Dates for resolution of each presented issue are included in each office's report.

These reports are presented annually to the BFS Board and a review is presented of remaining issues and their resolution.

To further ensure that accommodations are made as needed on an individual basis, each office submits an annual report of their specific requests for accommodations.

Following is the Quarterly Accessibility Update from June 2009.

Quarterly Accessibility Update

Accessibility Update

June 2009

The following locations have been added to the current Benchmark Family Services, Inc. Accessibility Plan:

- Gary, IN
- Houston, TX
- Indianapolis, IN
- Muncie, IN
- Roanoke, VA
- South Bend, IN

The following location's Annual Reviews of Accessibility Plans have been completed:

- Berea, KY
- Corbin, KY
- Elizabethtown, KY
- Florence, KY
- Lexington, KY
- Louisville, KY
- Prestonsburg, KY
- Somerset, KY

Accessibility planning is part of the ongoing CARF compliance for Benchmark Family Services and is required to be completed initially and annually thereafter. We are currently seeking board approval for the above listed locations and should be reflected in the minutes.

All of the barriers in our various offices have been identified and a plan has been created to address those specific barriers. Because the majority of our offices are leased, with the exception of Lexington, Florence and South Bend, all landlords were contacted via mail about the correction of identified barriers in their buildings. Only one landlord has responded with a phone call inquiring about the survey. Most of the offices are not completely handicap accessible. Until the time that the landlord can assist in making the building more accessible, Benchmark Family Services will make arrangements to meet with individuals in their home or another place in the community that is fully accessible. There have been no reported employee requested accommodations to the Human Resources Specialist to date.

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Report Category: **Financial Integrity**

Benchmark Family Services ensures the highest level of fiscal accountability and stability. The fiscal department, administration executives and Board of Directors overview all budgets and financial statements, while the independent auditing firm of Duvall and Associates, Inc. provides intense scrutiny and advice for risk management and legal issues.

In compliance with our requirement to participate in an annual financial audit by an independent accounting firm, BFS has received the following statement from Duvall and Associates, Certified Public Accountants, www.duvallcpa.com, (rewritten with permission):

Duvall and Associates
301 West First St., Suite 200, Dayton, Ohio 45402

Independent Auditor's Report

***To the Board of Trustees of
Benchmark Family Services, Inc.***

We have audited the accompanying statement of financial position of Benchmark Family Services, Inc. (a non-profit corporation) as of June 30, 2009, and the related statements of activities and cash flows and schedules of foster care program expenditures and general and administrative expenditures for the year then ended. These financial statements and schedules are the responsibility of the Organization's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements and schedules based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether

the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements and schedules referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Benchmark Family Services, Inc., as of June 30, 2009, and the changes with its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

***(signed)
Duvall and Associates, Inc.
September 11, 2009***

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Outcome Performance Report Availability

Benchmark Family Services will complete an annual analysis of its agency performance and compile this information into the **BFS Annual Outcome Performance Report**.



- This Report will be available at the agency website at www.benchmarkfamilyservices.org. The website will be updated with each subsequent annual Report completion.
- Each BFS Annual Outcome Performance Report will be made available in hard copy at BFS offices upon request.
- If there are questions concerning the Outcome Report or its accessibility, please contact the office nearest you and a BFS representative will address your questions.