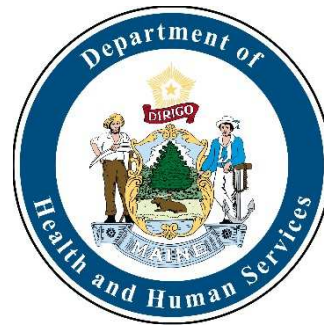


# Office of Child and Family Services 2021 Update

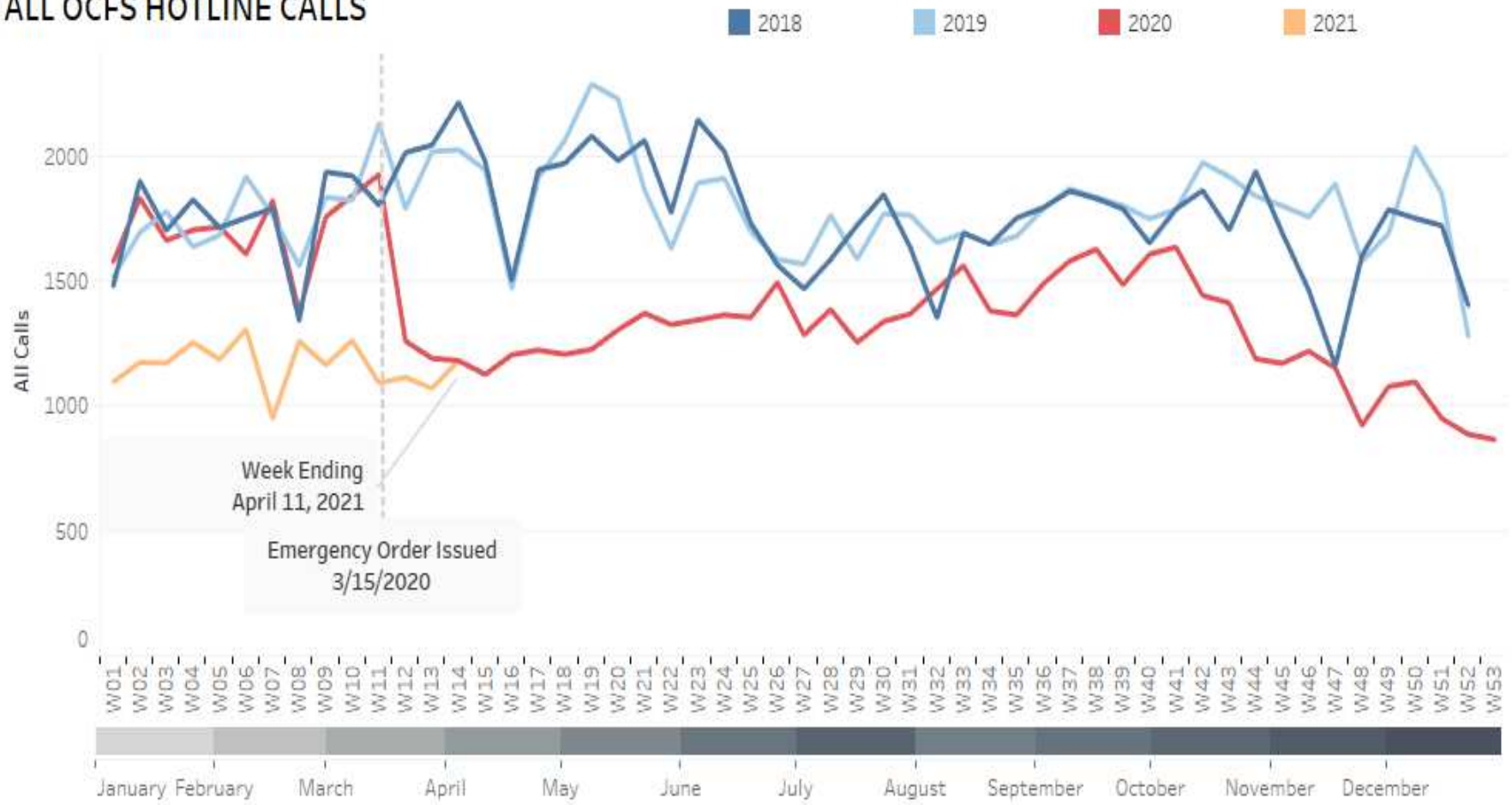
Dr. Todd A. Landry

April 2021



# Impact of COVID-19 on Child Welfare

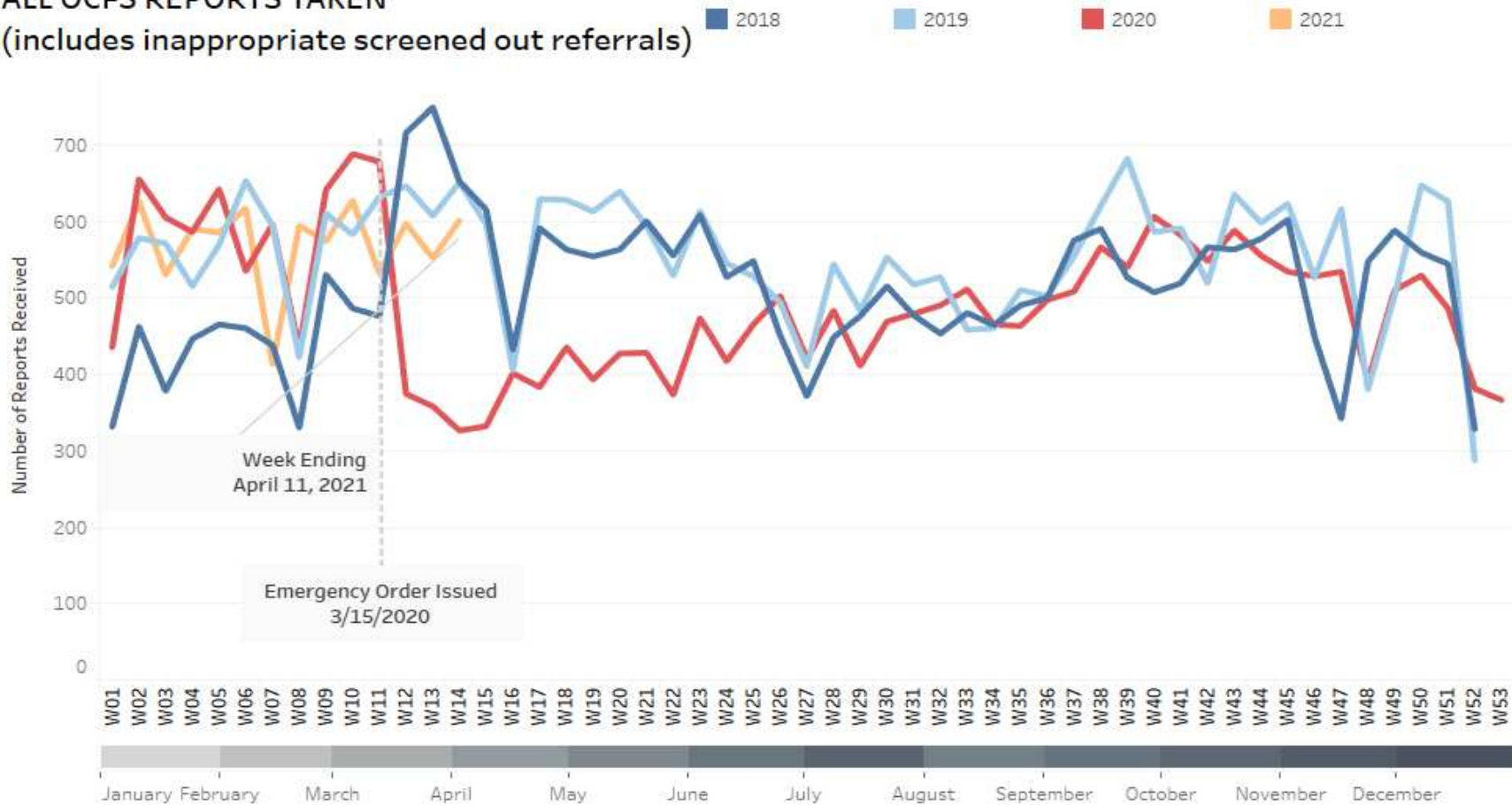
## ALL OCFS HOTLINE CALLS



# Impact of COVID-19 on Child Welfare

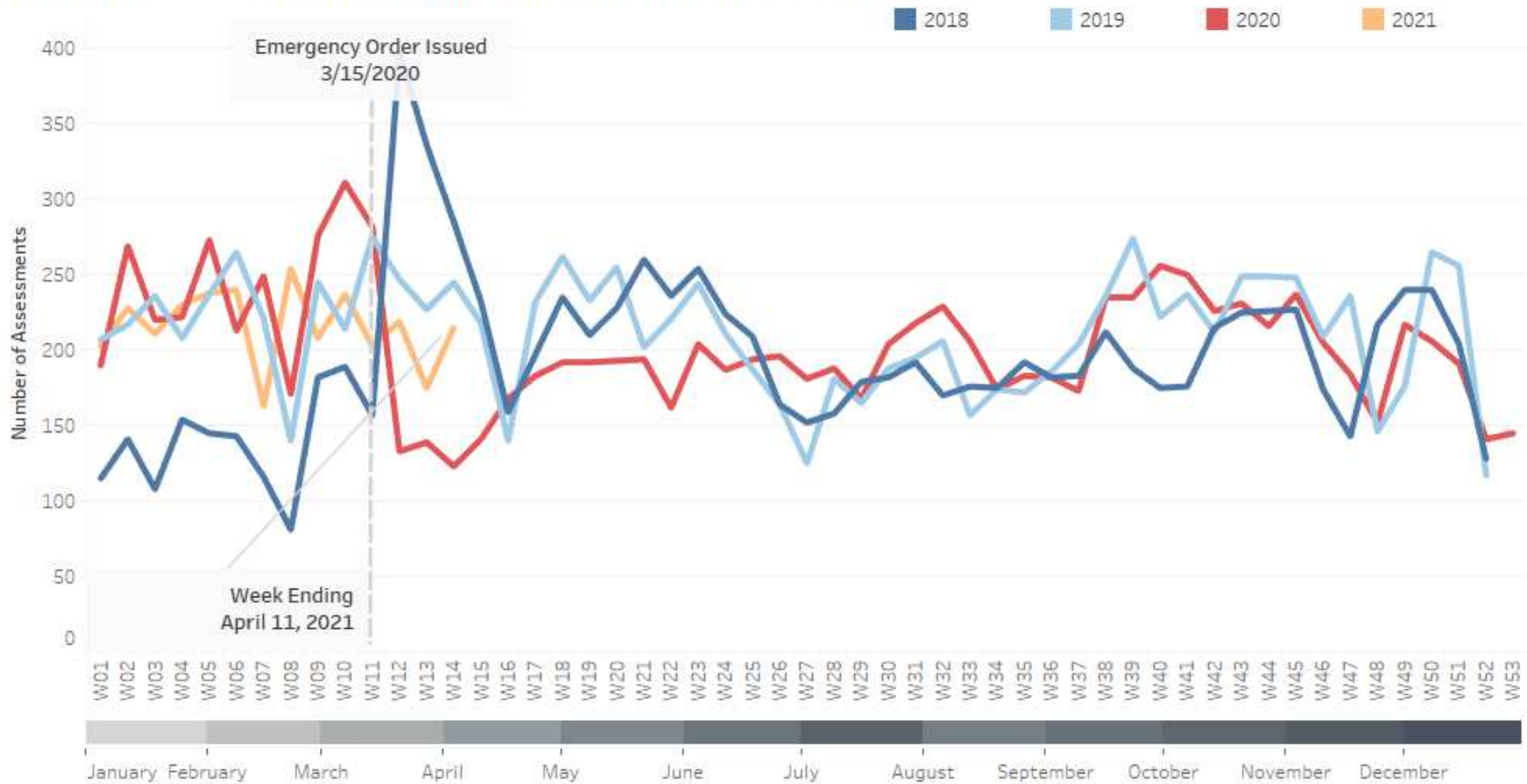
## ALL OCFS REPORTS TAKEN

(includes inappropriate screened out referrals)



# Impact of COVID-19 on Child Welfare

NUMBER OF REPORTS ASSIGNED FOR INVESTIGATION BY OCFS



# Response to COVID-19 in Child Welfare

## Beginning

- Briefly replaced in-person parent/child visits with virtual visits
- Set guidelines to ensure health and safety when in-person visitation resumed in June 2020
- Limited staff's in-person field contact in counties deemed to have "community transmission"

## Ongoing

- Focus on permanency for children and working through pandemic-related delays in Court proceedings
- Ensuring children in custody receive well child checkups and regular childhood vaccinations during the pandemic
- Transitioning training for staff and resource parents to a virtual format
- Weekly COVID trend reporting
- 85% of staff dispatching from home
- Obtaining and distributing PPE for children in care, parents, and resource parents
- Finding opportunities to learn and improve practice

## Recent

- Provided guidance on vaccinations for children in care

# COVID-19 Within the Child Welfare System



Less than 3% of youth in care have tested positive for COVID-19



Very few resource parents have reported testing positive for COVID-19



Small number of staff who have tested positive, none connected to exposure while at work

# Child Welfare Initiatives

**Timely Permanency**

**Recruitment and Retention of Resource Parents**

**Policy and Training Improvements**

**Onboarding, Training, and Retaining Staff**

**Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation**

**Alternative Response Program (ARP)**

**CCWIS Development and Deployment**





## Maine Office of Child and Family Services

### Focus on Outcomes

In July 2019, Maine's Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) partnered with Casey Family Programs to map the major initiatives and strategies currently underway in Maine. This mapping was designed to help executive leadership and regional staff evaluate which strategies were working to produce outcomes and areas where duplication of effort or inefficiencies might exist. As a result of this work, OCFS streamlined their approach and prioritized strategies as shown below in the strategic framework.

#### Mission

Child and Family Services joins with families and the community to promote long-term safety, well-being and permanent families for children.

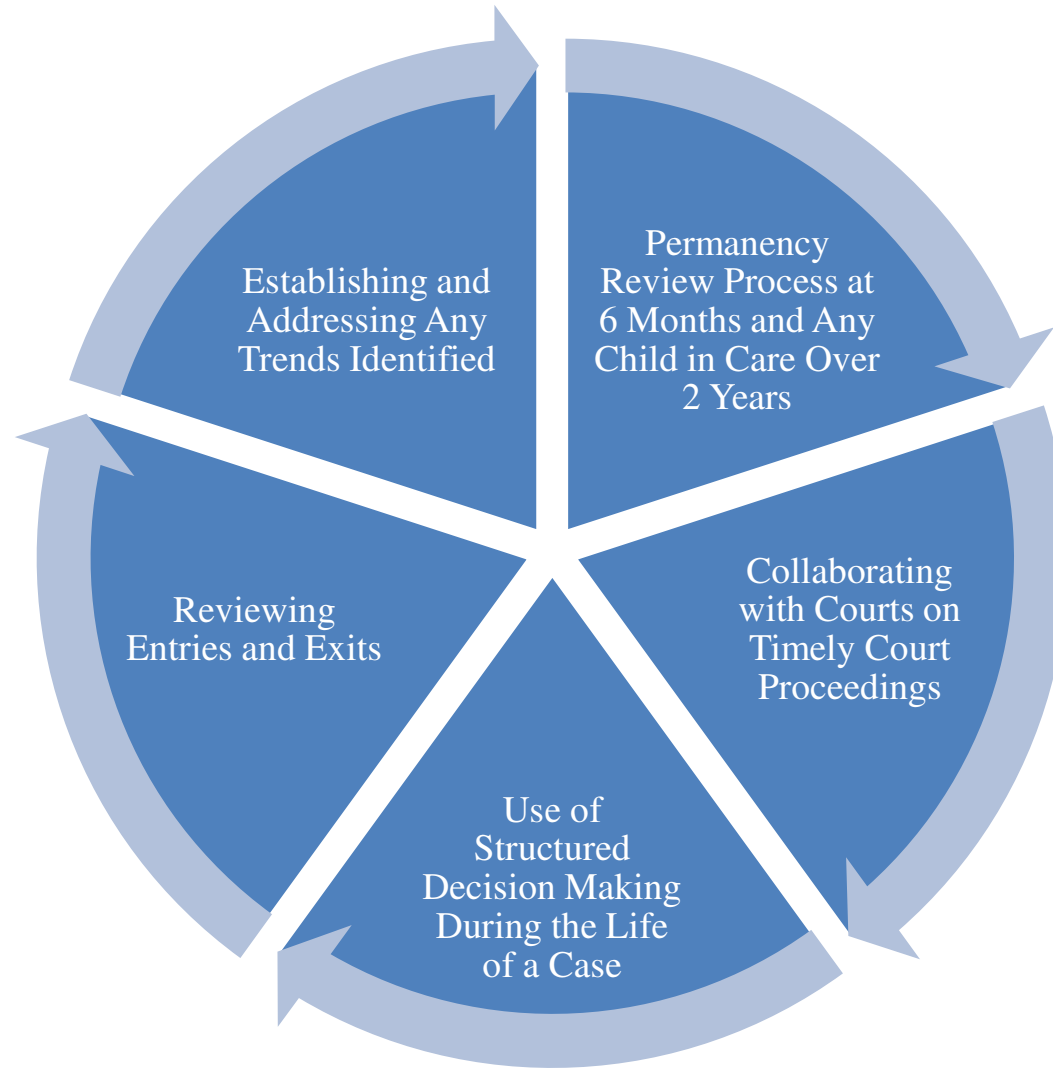
#### Strategic Framework

In order to achieve their mission, Child and Family Services uses guiding principles as a foundation to employ strategies that lead to improved outcomes for children and families. The strategies listed below were prioritized by executive leadership and regional staff.

 <b>Guiding Principles</b>	 <b>Strategies</b>	 <b>Outcomes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Child Safety, First and Foremost</li> <li>2 Parents have the Right and Responsibility to Raise their Own Children</li> <li>3 Children are Entitled to Live in a Safe and Nurturing Family</li> <li>4 All Children Deserve a Permanent Family</li> <li>5 How We Do Our Work is as Important as the Work We Do</li> </ol>	<p><b>Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;Address Intake processes and improve staffing</li> <li>&gt;Re-assess the Alternative Response Program</li> <li>&gt;Enhance Assessment Processes</li> </ul> <p><b>Permanency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;Develop a Permanency Review Process</li> <li>&gt;Monitor the Family Visit Coaching pilot to develop best practices</li> <li>&gt;Improve SDM tool consistency</li> </ul> <p><b>Well-Being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;Develop family engagement tools and training</li> <li>&gt;Improve resource parent outreach and support</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff Training and Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;Develop policy and training plan for new processes and tools</li> <li>&gt;Establish workforce wellness teams and education</li> <li>&gt;Update caseload size, standards, and ratios</li> <li>&gt;Procure MACWIS replacement</li> </ul>	<p>Safety for children through timely response and thoroughly assessing and addressing safety and risk issues</p> <p>Improved timeliness to permanency</p> <p>Enhanced well-being of children through identification of individual needs and engagement with formal and informal supports.</p> <p>Strengthened child welfare practice through improved engagement with families and children.</p>

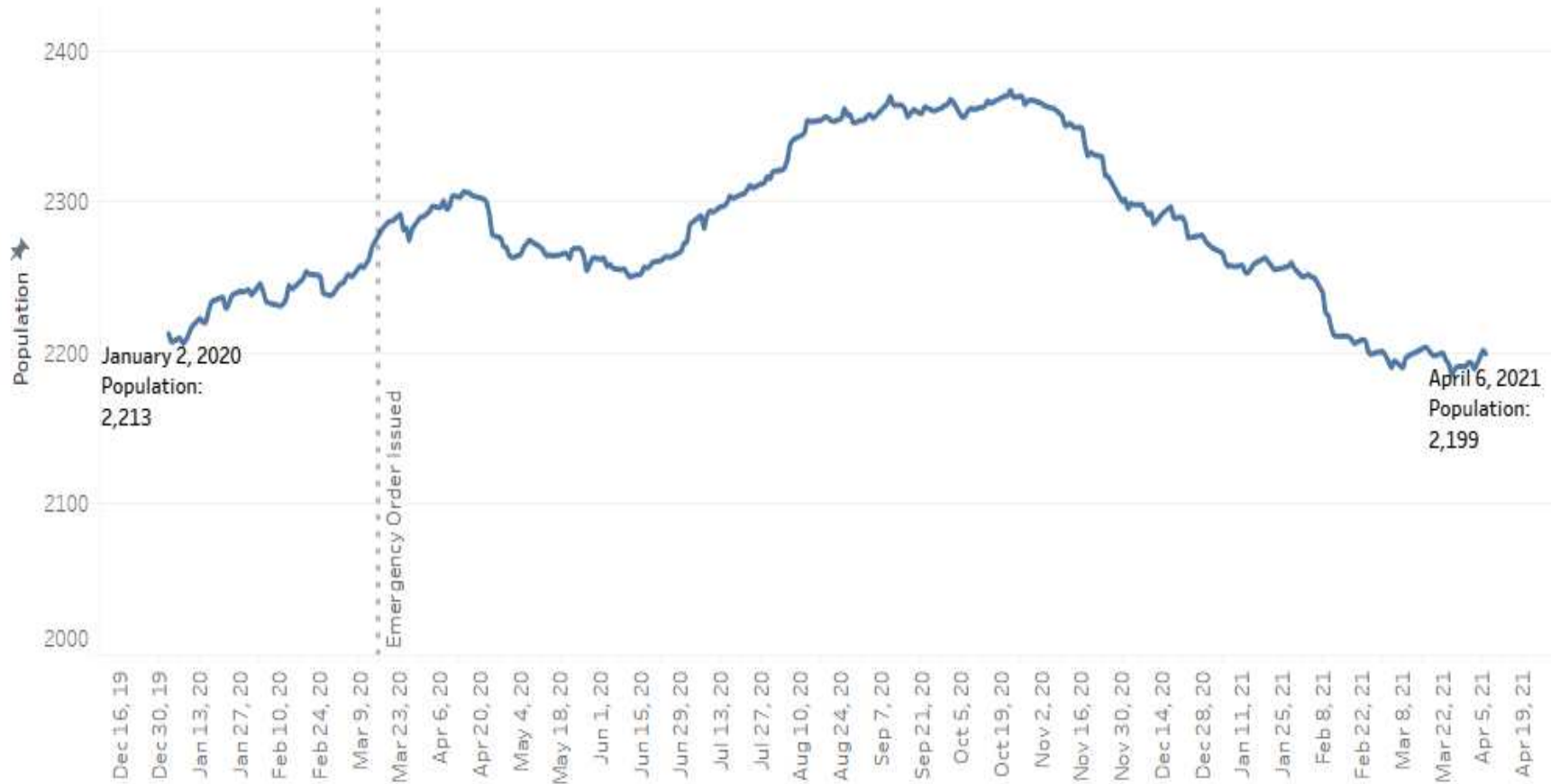


# Focus on Permanency

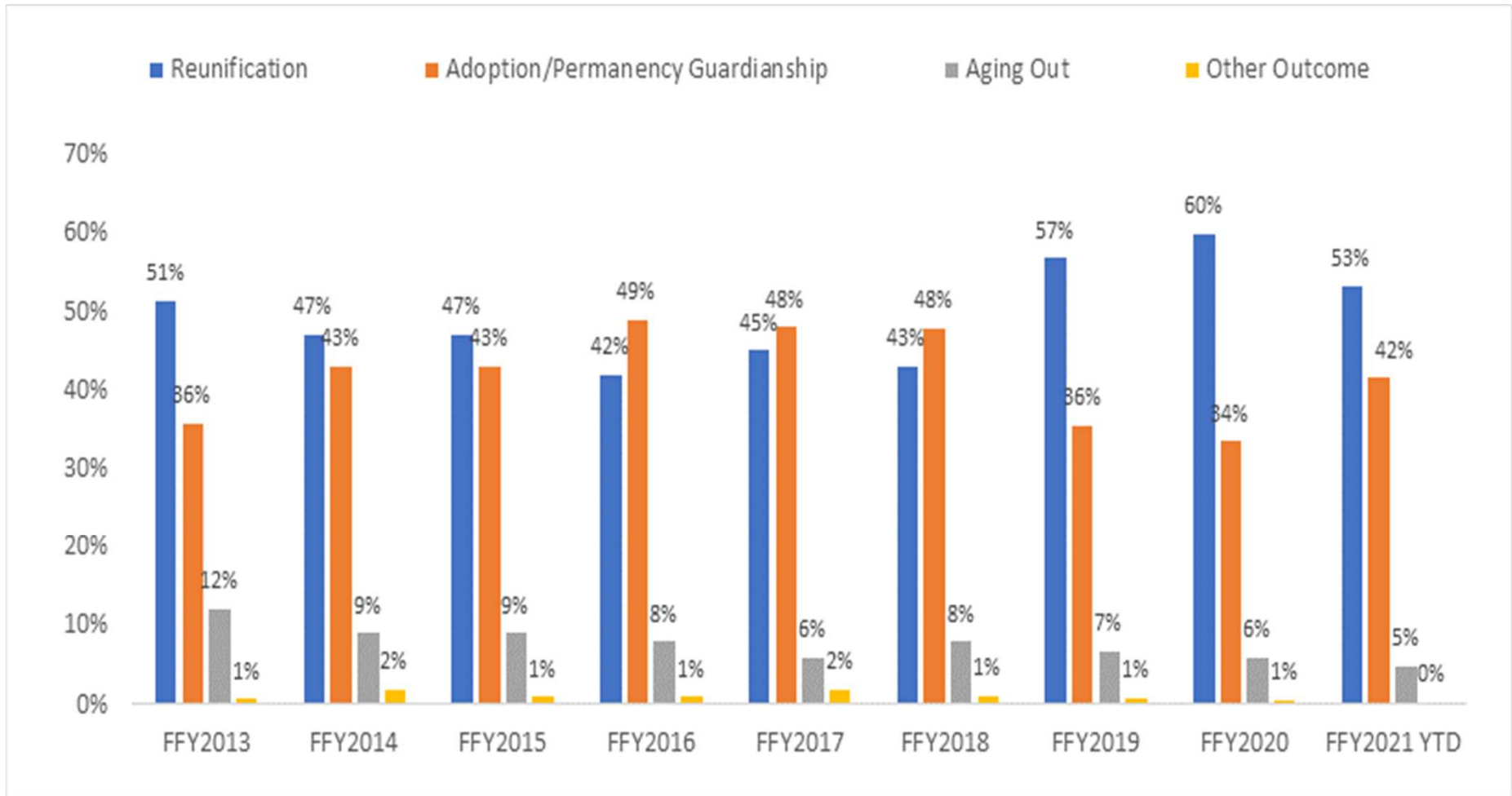


# Focus on Permanency

CHILDREN IN DHHS CUSTODY (POINT IN TIME) TREND 2020-21



# Permanency Outcomes



# Safety While in State Custody

## Safety While in State Custody

The goal for children while in State custody is to remain safe while in custody. This report shows the rate of abuse of children while they are in State custody. The number is calculated by dividing the number of instances of abuse/neglect by the total number of days that all children spent in State custody. The ratio of this report is per 100,000 days spent in State custody.

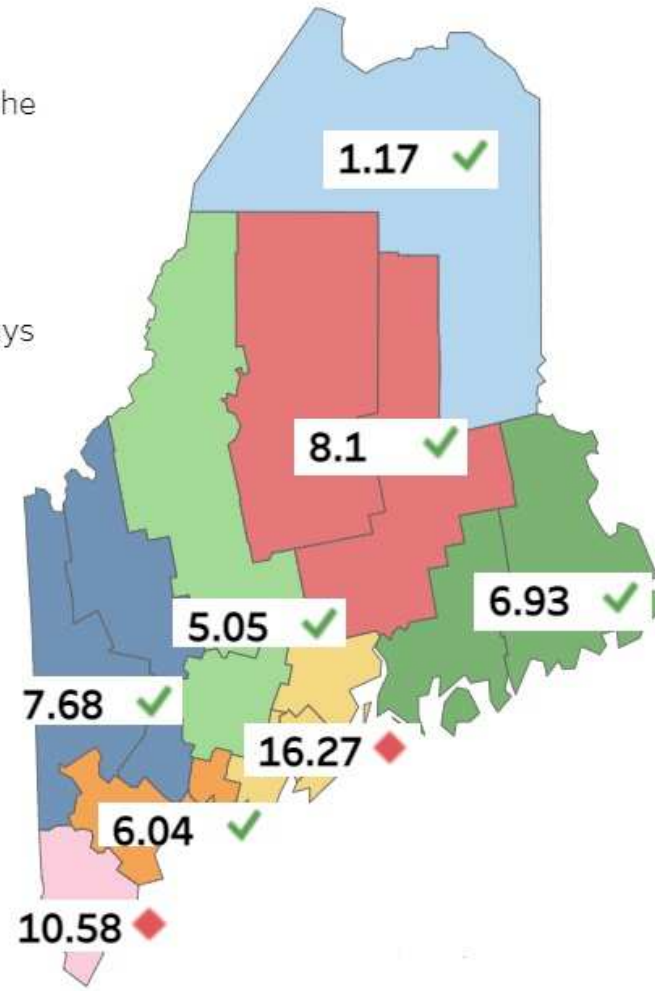
### STATE AVERAGE

6.97 ✓

### National Standard:

8.5 or less (a lower rate is better)

*The National Standard is an average set by the Federal government to monitor each State's performance on key child welfare outcomes.*



# Resource Parent Support



## Resource Parent Advisory Team

- Partnering with AFFM to co-lead
- Diverse group of experienced resource parents
- Providing insight on training and policy

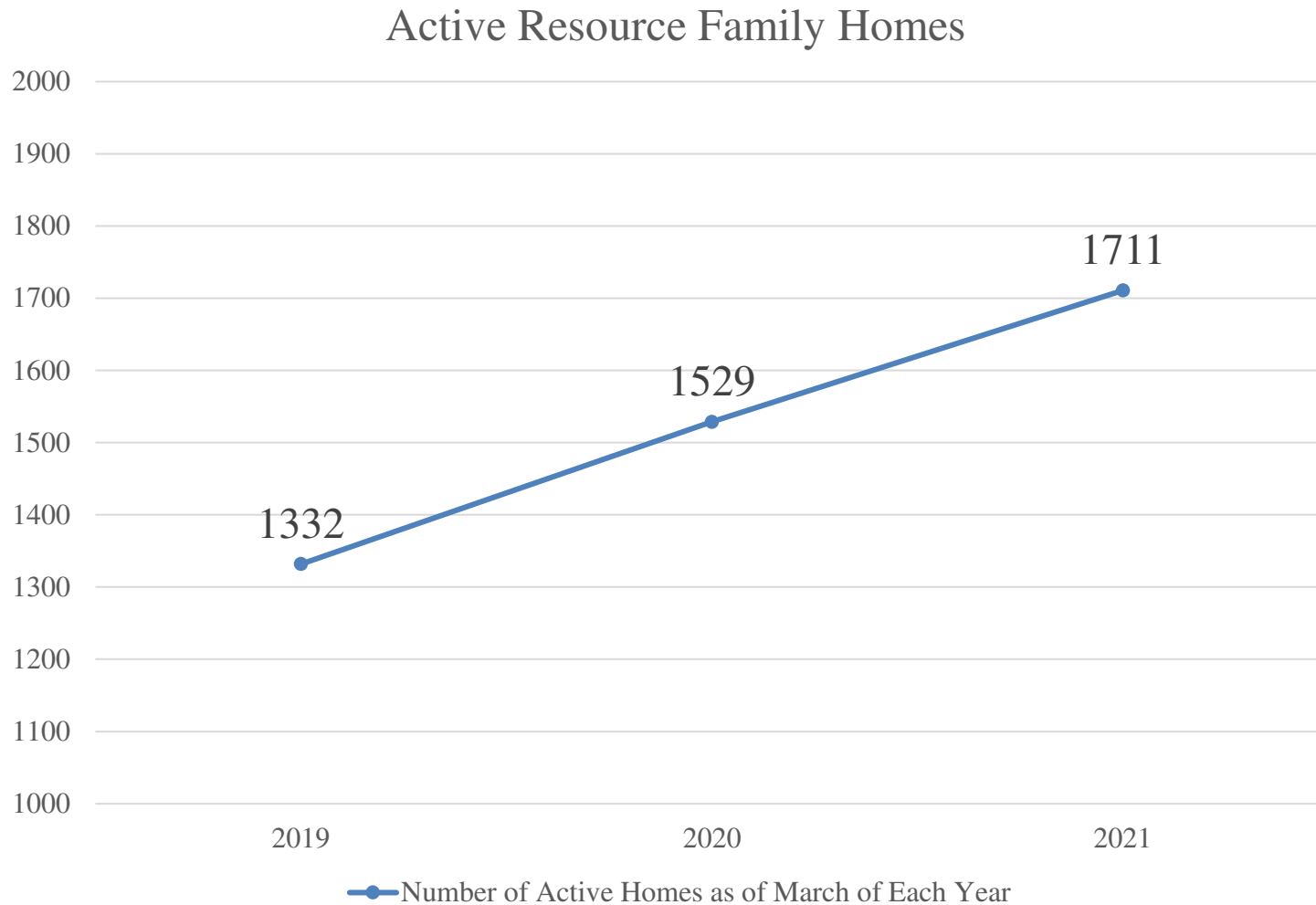
## New Resource Parent Training

- Partnered with Muskie to identify a new training model for resource parents, NTDC
- Produced by national experts
- Prepares resource parents to effectively care for children exposed to trauma

## Support for Resource Families

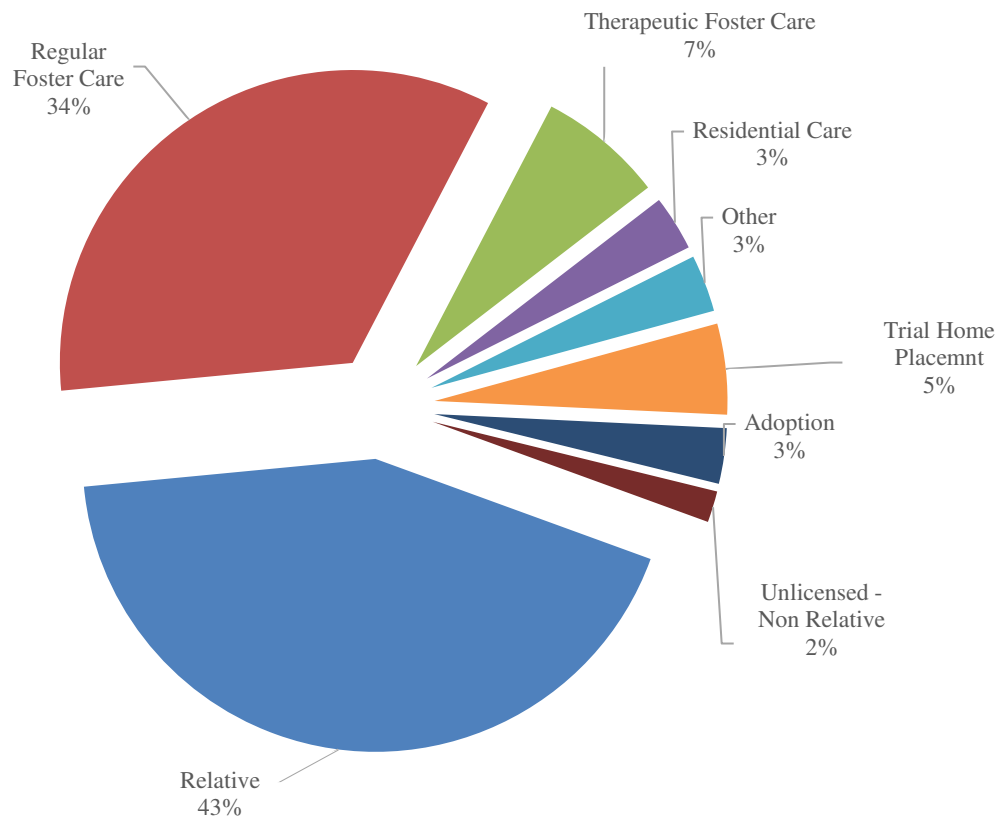
- AFFM
- Resource Parent Care Team
- Kinship Support

# Recruitment and Retention of Resource Parents



# Kinship Placement in Child Welfare

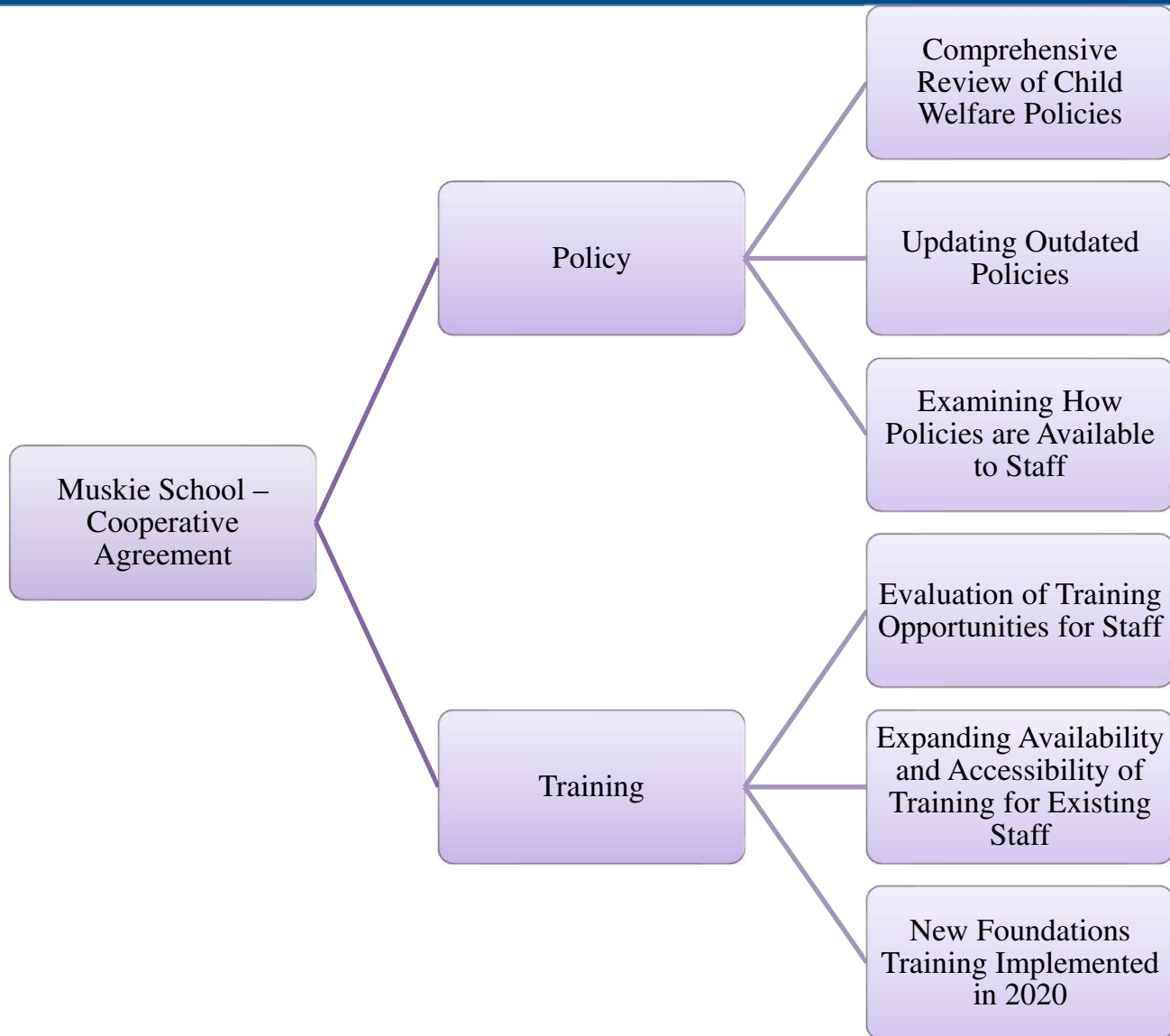
## Placements for Federal Fiscal Year 2020



**As of September 30, 2019, national data indicated only 32% of children in custody nationwide were placed with a relative caregiver.**

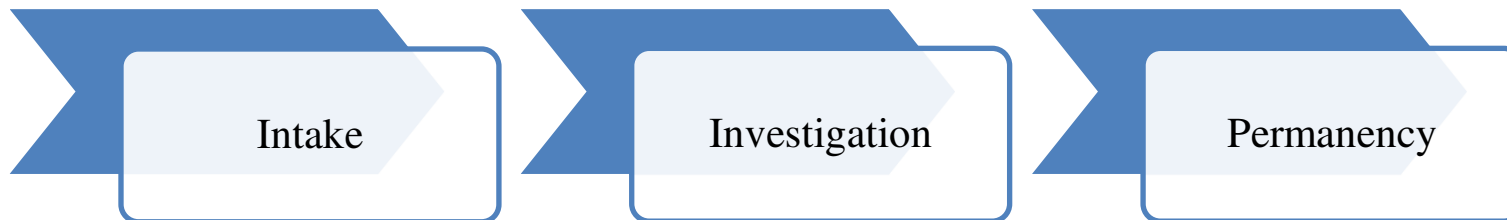


# Policy and Training Improvements



# Structured Decision Making

Evidence-based tool used within Child Welfare Services to create **high-quality, consistent** statewide practice when determining **safety decisions** about child abuse and neglect and the assignment of appropriate services and supports.



# Structured Decision Making

Should this referral be investigated?



**Intake  
Assessment**

Can the child remain safely in the home?



**Safety  
Assessment**

Should a case continue with ongoing services?



**Risk  
Assessment**

What interventions could address child and family needs?



**Case Planning  
Tool**

Can the child return home?



**Reunification  
Assessment**

Should this case be closed?



**Risk  
Reassessment**

# Retaining Staff

## New Staff

- In late 2019 OCFS added 33 additional caseworkers
- New supervisor positions to provide adequate supervisor oversight

## Training

- Updated training for new workers
- Improvements in training for existing staff (including supervisors)

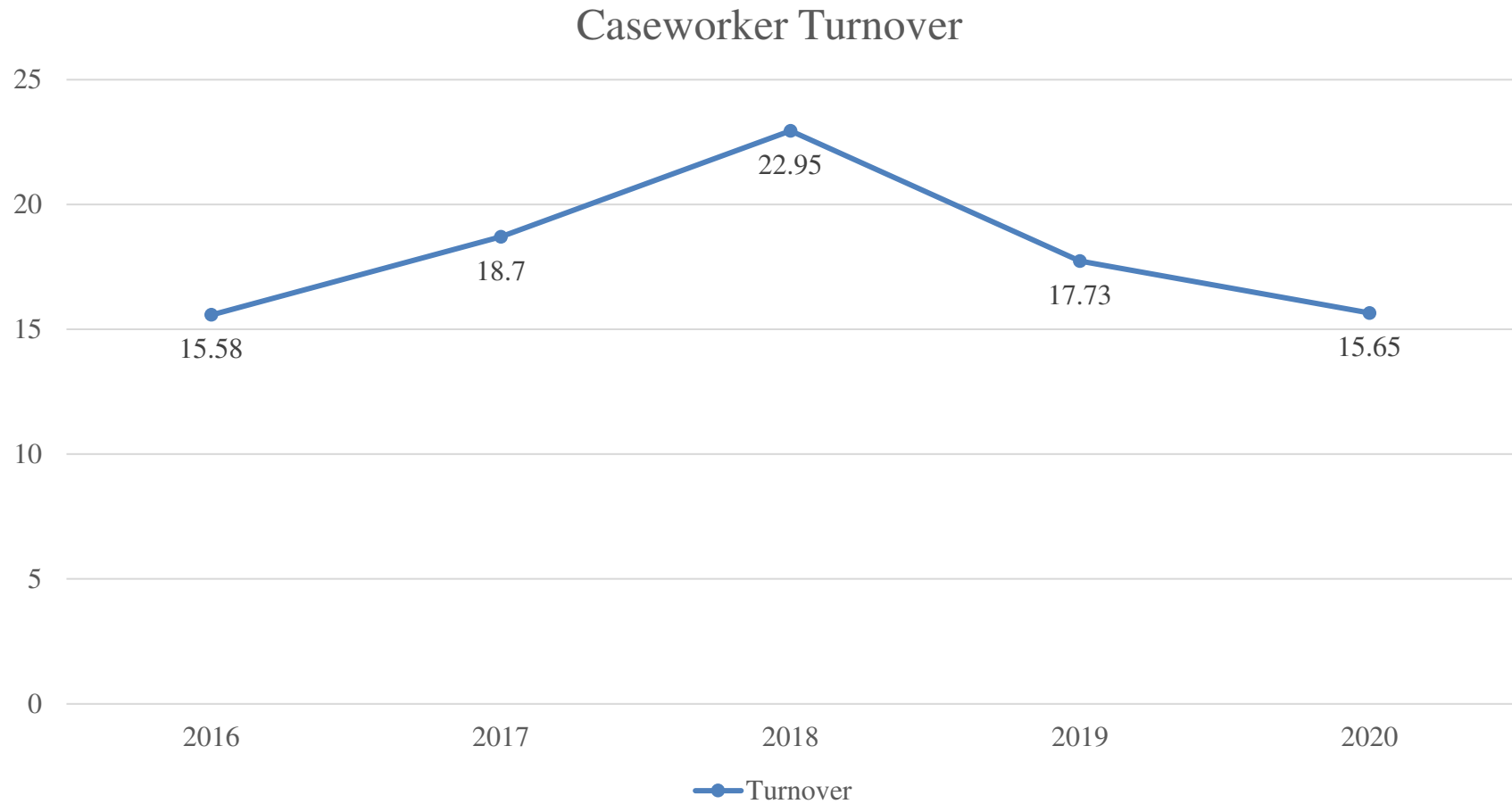
## Time

- Time and experience needed to build the casework skills of new staff
- Large portion of OCFS supervisory workload are new and while experienced in casework need time to build their supervisor skill set

## Support

- Use of Quality Assurance to evaluate casework practice and identify areas in need of improvement
- Ongoing support and training to address these areas, as well as new tools and policies implemented

# Child Welfare Turnover



# COVID-19 Operational Challenges

- Maintaining staff safety while at work
- Adjusting to a new work environment/setup, adapting to new challenges
- Personal challenges related to child care, working from home, etc.
- Number of investigations has remained high (in line with 2018 and 2019)

# Response to Concerns

- Provided PPE for staff
- Adapted practices to ensure safety, including remote visits with case participants (early pandemic, community transmission counties)
- Continually updated guidance to staff, providers, and families based on public health guidance
- Temporary pause on in-person visitation
- Educated staff on vaccination priority decision impact
- Support and flexibility for staff dealing with personal challenges or illness
- Open communication around expectations, as well as any cases of COVID-19 among staff



# Family First Prevention Services Act

- Implementation work is underway
- Strong focus on stakeholder engagement and support for staff as they implement
- Fully implemented by October 2021
- Awaiting Federal approval of Maine's State Plan
- Use of prevention funding is very targeted and intended to keep children safely out of state custody through the use of evidence-based services

## Family First Prevention Services Act Focus Areas

Prevention Services  
for Children and  
Families

IV-E

Increased Quality &  
Appropriateness of  
Residential Care

Prevention of foster care placements  
through:

- Trauma informed and evidenced based services including: mental health & substance abuse prevention and treatment services, in-home parent skill-based programs, and kinship navigator services

Improving the well-being of children already in foster care by reducing placement of children in group care settings and enhancing quality of care for residential treatment programs. Establishment of Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP)

# Prevention Services

## Who

### Eligibility:

- A child who is a victim of maltreatment in which safety and risk factors can be mitigated by the provision of in-home services and is able to safely remain at home with a child-specific Prevention Plan.
- Pregnant and Parenting Foster Youth
- Children who have exited foster care through reunification, guardianship, or adoptions and may be at risk of re-entry.

## What

### Services:

- Mental Health
- Substance Use Prevention and Treatment
- In Home Skill Based Parenting Support

That are....

- Evidenced Based
- Time Limited
- Trauma Informed
- Not already covered by MaineCare

## How

### Prevention Planning:

- Structured Decision making helps OCFS to identify candidates.
- A Prevention Services Family Plan will be completed with the family through the Family Team Meeting process. The plan will outline what services will be provided to the family to keep the child/ren safe in the home.
- The plan is reviewed every 90 days

# Federally-Approved Evidence-Based Services Under Family First

**Methadone Maintenance Therapy** – MaineCare funds service.

Substance Use Disorder

Kinship Navigator

Mental Health Services

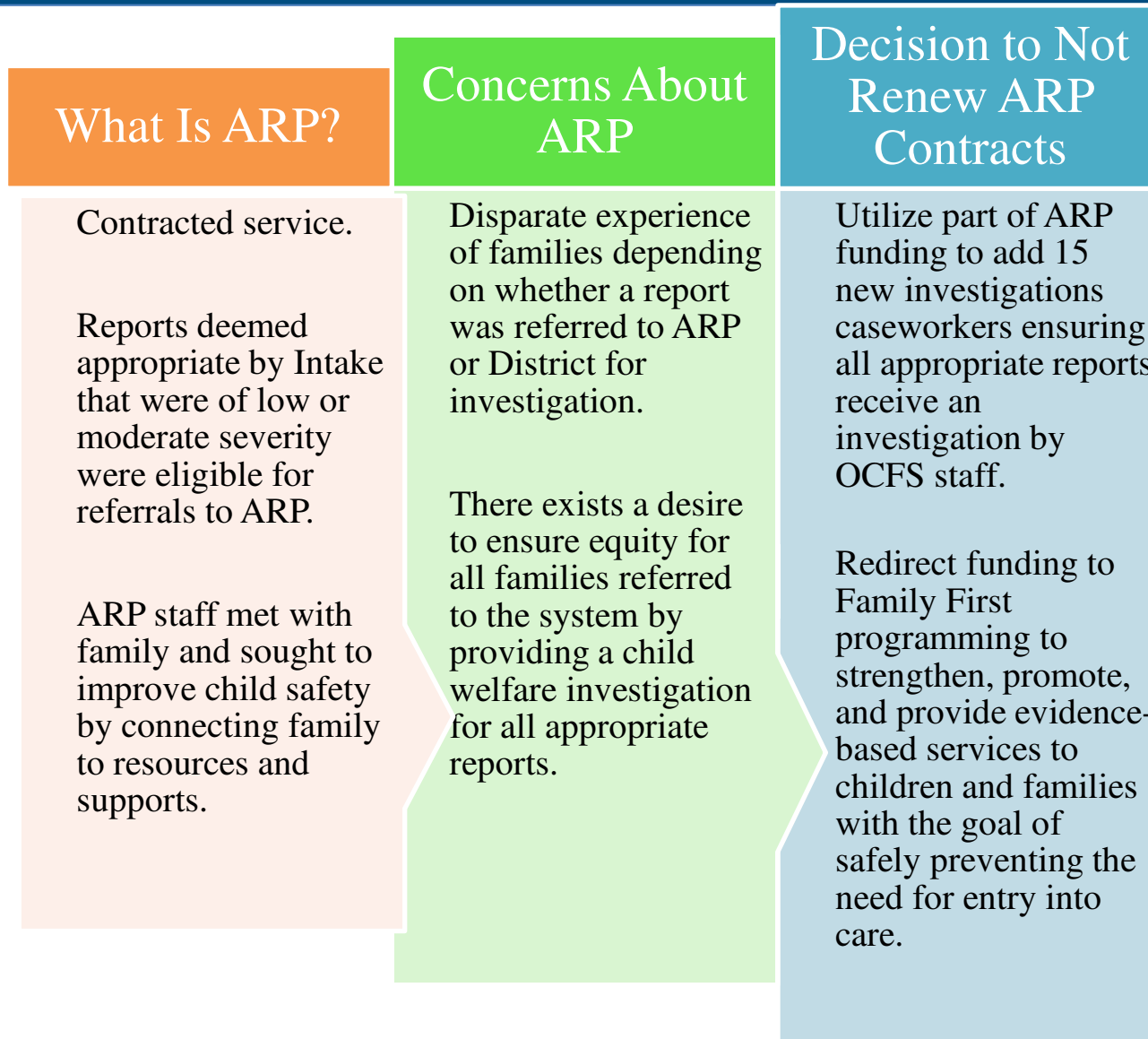
- **Functional Family Therapy (FFT)** – MaineCare funds service
- **Multisystemic Therapy (FFT)** – MaineCare funds service
- **Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)** – MaineCare funds service
- **The Incredible Years** – MaineCare funds service
- **Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)** – MaineCare funds service
- **Triple P – Positive Parenting Program** - MaineCare funds service

No kinship navigator programs have been federally approved at this time. Once evidence-based kinship navigator programs are identified, Maine will explore implementation through IV-E

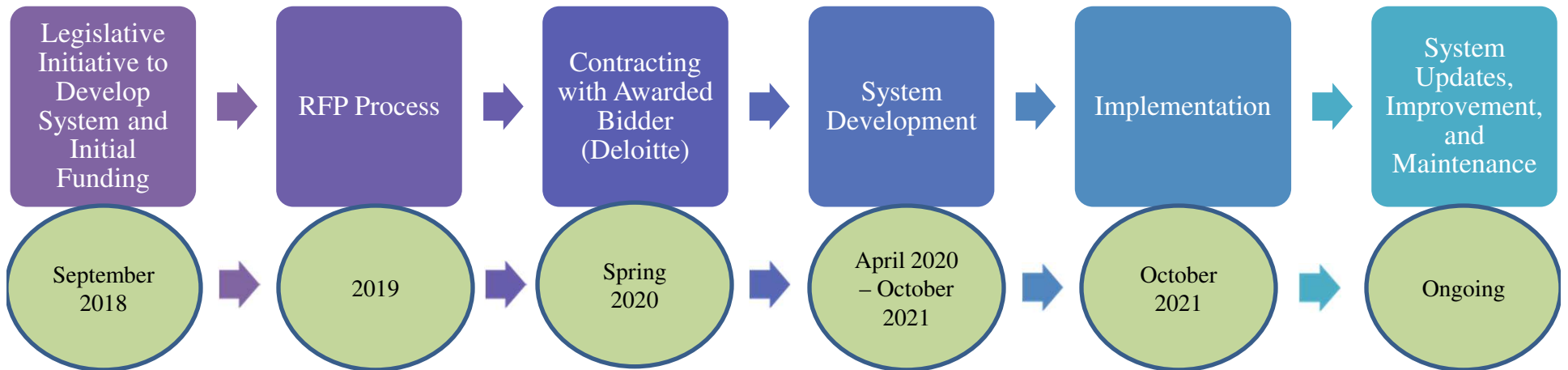
In-Home Parent Skill Building Services

- **Parents as Teachers (PAT)** – IV-E and State General Fund dollars fund the service which is currently provided as part of Maine's Home visiting Program
- **Homebuilders** – IV-E and State General Fund dollars will provide will provide for development and implementation statewide.

# Alternative Response Program (ARP)



# Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS)



# Completing the System

In 2018, the Legislature provided funding for initial phases of development

Current budget initiatives provide funding for the remainder of the project

Child welfare staff have spent a significant amount of time contributing to the project to ensure the system meets operational needs

OCFS is preparing to train staff on the system in anticipation of implementation later this year

**Project is  
on budget  
and on  
schedule**



# CCWIS



## Goals:

- Modernizing
- Eliminating inefficiencies
- Allowing for remote access
- Improve the experience of those who interact with child welfare system
- Ensuring system meets all current needs of child welfare
- Creating a system that can be easily updated as policies/procedures/processes change
- Implementing federal requirement of a comprehensive system

# Thank You!

**Todd A. Landry, Ed.D.**  
**Director**  
**Office of Child and Family Services**

