
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES 2014-2015

INCLUDING THE YEARS 2005-2006 TO 2014-2015

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

September 28, 2015

The Honourable Glen Abernethy
Minister of Health and Social Services
Government of the Northwest Territories

Dear Mr. Minister,

It is my privilege to submit the 2014 – 2015 Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services, as required under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

The 2014 – 2015 fiscal year began with significant challenges for the Child and Family Services program, stemming largely from the highly critical report of the Auditor General of Canada. Under your direction and guidance the Department developed an action plan, *Building Stronger Families*, which laid out the initiatives required to address the deficiencies identified by the Auditor General, and which ultimately will transform the nature of child protection services in the Northwest Territories.

I am pleased to report that significant progress was achieved last year, and that progress is ongoing. This would not be possible were it not for the commitment and dedication of our regional Health and Social Services Authorities, beginning with their front line Child Protection Workers and supervisors, and continuing throughout their organizations from managers to directors and ultimately to the Chief Executive Officers, who are now appointed as Assistant Directors under the *Act*. The lion's share of the credit must go to them for what was accomplished in 2014 – 2015.

I must express my heartfelt gratitude both to you and your deputy minister, for your constant encouragement and unwavering support throughout an eventful year. It would be my pleasure to continue, through each of you, to serve the children, youth and families of the Northwest Territories.

Sincerely,



Andrew Langford
Director, Child and Family Services

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DATA SOURCES AND INTERPRETATION

The data presented in this report are extracted from the Department of Health and Social Services' Child and Family Information System. The Child and Family Information System is used daily in child protection practice, and continuous efforts to improve the completeness and accuracy of the data have led to the correction of previously existing errors, and the entry of missing data elements. As a result, the numbers presented in previous reports, particularly for the most recent years, may have changed slightly in this report.

In the 2014-2015 report, some changes have been made to the calculation of rates relative to previous years. Adjustments in methodology were made when it was identified that these changes would allow more accurate depiction of the state of child protection practice in the Northwest Territories. Explanatory text will identify these changes and explain the rationale behind the decision to change how the data are presented.

The presentation of data in the report is in the format of raw counts, rates by 1,000 child population, and rates by 1,000 child protection statuses. This is due to the fact that a child may hold more than one child protection status per year, complicating the analysis of service provision on the basis of population. The unit of analysis is identified in the vertical axis of each figure, so that the reader can identify whether the rate is presented based on the number of children served, or of child protection statuses held during the fiscal year.

Children and youth are eligible to receive services until the age of 19. Therefore, the data presented on rates of children with a child and family services status includes all children aged from 0 to 18 years. However, the *Child and Family Services Act* identifies that suspected maltreatment can only be reported and investigated on children and youth until they reach the age of 16. Consequently, rates of reports and investigations of maltreatment are presented as a rate per 1,000 children aged 0 to 15 years.

The statistical significance of change in rates over time was calculated using Poisson regression.¹ Trend lines are only shown on figures where a statistically significant time trend has been identified. Where there is no trend line, either there is no significant trend, or trend analysis is not appropriate for the data (e.g. raw counts).

¹ Poisson regression is a form of statistical analysis for examining the number of events and determining the likelihood that a change in the number of events over time is due to random variation. If it is extremely unlikely that the change observed could have occurred by chance, the conclusion is that this represents a true ("statistically significant") change over time.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2014-2015 annual report of the Director of Child and Family Services presents data on the delivery of services under the *Child and Family Services Act* during the ten-year period between April 1st, 2005 and March 31st, 2015. This report meets the requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act* to provide an annual report to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Table 1 highlights the major trends described in this ten-year retrospective report.

Table 1
Major Trends

Indicator	10-Year Trend (2005 – 2015)		
	Increasing	No Change	Decreasing
Number of Children Receiving Services		√	
Proportion of Children Receiving Services	√		
Proportion of Children Receiving Services at Home	√		
Proportion of Children Removed from Home and Community			√
Proportion of First Nations Children Receiving Services	√		
Rate of Reports of Suspected Maltreatment	√		
Rate of Investigations of Suspected Maltreatment	√		
Rate of Voluntary Support Agreements	√		
Rate of Support Service Agreements	√		
Rate of Apprehensions Less Than 72 Hours	√		
Rate of Apprehensions Greater Than 72 Hours		√	
Rate of Plan of Care Agreements	√		
Rate of Supervision Orders			√
Rate of Interim Custody Orders			√
Rate of Temporary Custody Orders			√
Rate of Permanent Custody Orders			√
Rate of Children in Southern Placements		√	

The report includes an overview of reports to child services and investigations into child maltreatment,² including an examination of the most common reasons that maltreatment is reported to the Department. The population-based rates of reports, including self-referrals for service, and of investigations, have increased over the past ten years.

Child and Family Services statuses are examined in the following section, including service statuses that are established *by agreement* with parents or youth (Voluntary Services Agreements, Support Service Agreements, and Plan of Care Agreements), and *court-ordered* service statuses (Supervision Orders, and Interim, Temporary and

² The predominant forms of child maltreatment include neglect, abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) and exposure to domestic violence.

Permanent Custody Orders). Over the past ten years, there has been an increasing trend in statuses by agreement, and a decreasing trend in court-ordered statuses; however, this trend has not been as strong this year as in years prior.

The placement of children while they are receiving services is discussed in this report. The percentage of children and families who receive services while in the family home has increased over the ten-year period, while the number of children who are removed from their home community has decreased.

The report presents a number of accomplishments achieved in Child and Family Services over the past fiscal year, and outlines next steps to continue to improve the services offered to families in the Northwest Territories.

2. INTRODUCTION

This annual report for 2014 – 2015 provides a synopsis of services delivered under the Northwest Territories *Child and Family Services Act* over the ten year period from April 2005 to March 2015.

The *Child and Family Services Act* is built on a number of founding principles including promoting and protecting the best interest and well-being of the child, and protecting children from harm and abuse. Where appropriate, children and parents participate in planning and decision making, and measures are taken to promote the integrity and continuity of the family. Differing cultural values and practices must be considered when determining the best interest of the child.

The Department, in collaboration with six Health and Social Services Authorities and the Tlicho Community Services Agency (the Authorities), administers Child and Family Services in the NWT. The Director of Child and Family Services is appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services and delegated the duties and powers under the *Child and Family Services Act*. The Director's duties are supported by the appointment of the Chief Executive Officers of the Authorities as Assistant Directors of Child and Family Services. Assistant Directors are able to act on behalf of the Director at the regional level, bringing decision making closer to the delivery of services. Social services staff receive specialized training to become appointed as Child Protection Workers. This appointment affords the staff the authority, in compliance with the *Child and Family Services Act*, to provide services to children and families when child protection concerns are identified.

As of March 31, 2015 there were 81 social workers appointed as Child Protection Workers.

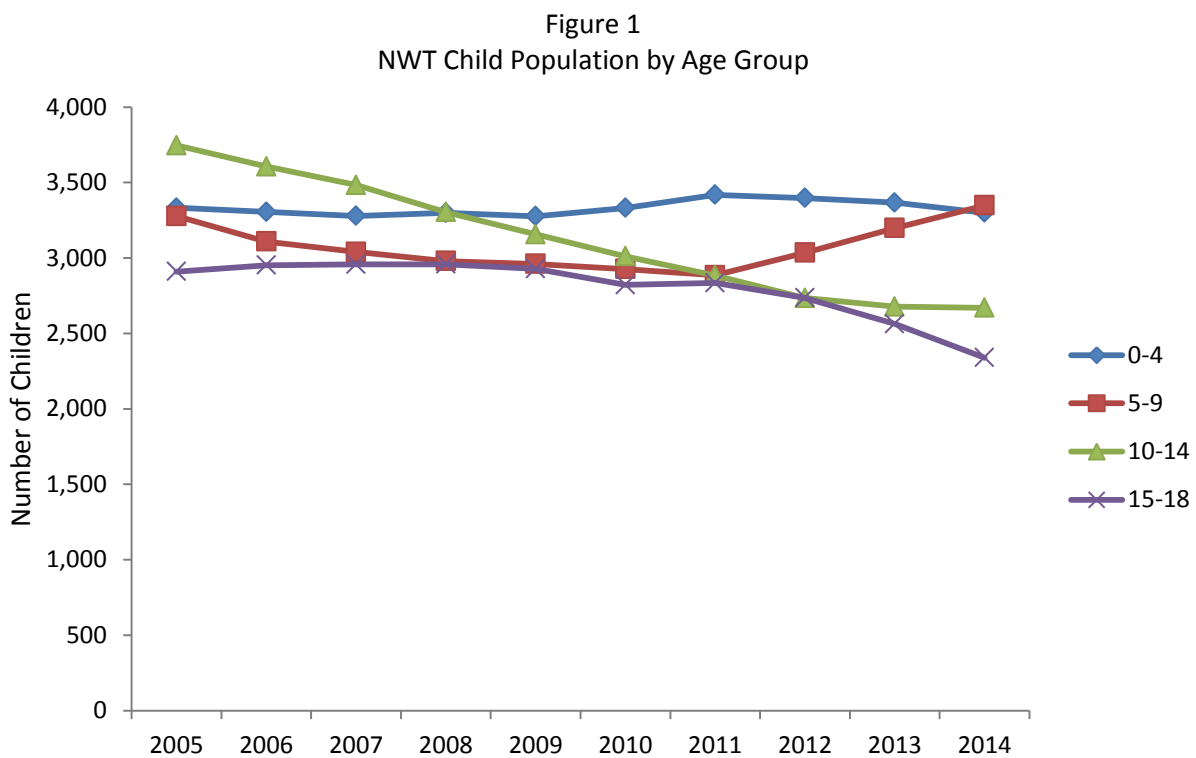
Child protection is a demanding field. Child Protection Workers must constantly assess and reassess the risk to children's safety and wellbeing. They make each decision based on a number of factors and a variety of information, all while keeping the best interest of the child first and foremost in their mind. The responsibilities and tasks of a Child Protection Worker require considerable skill including strong leadership and teamwork abilities. Child Protection Workers are required to work with the child, family, and community in preventing and mitigating child protection issues. Collaborative processes with

parents, family members and caregivers are key to address conflicts and seek the most appropriate solution while ensuring consideration is given to cultural and socio-economic influences.

Child and Family Services are provided and supported through multiple levels within the Department. The work is governed by the *Child and Family Services Act* and administered on the foundation that services and support are respectful of cultural factors and are provided in the best interest of the child.

CHILD POPULATION

The NWT Bureau of Statistics has identified a 12.1% decrease in the child population (0 - 18 years of age) from 13,266 in 2005-2006 to 11,657 in 2014-2015. The change in child population has not been consistent across all age groups; this can be observed in Figure 1.



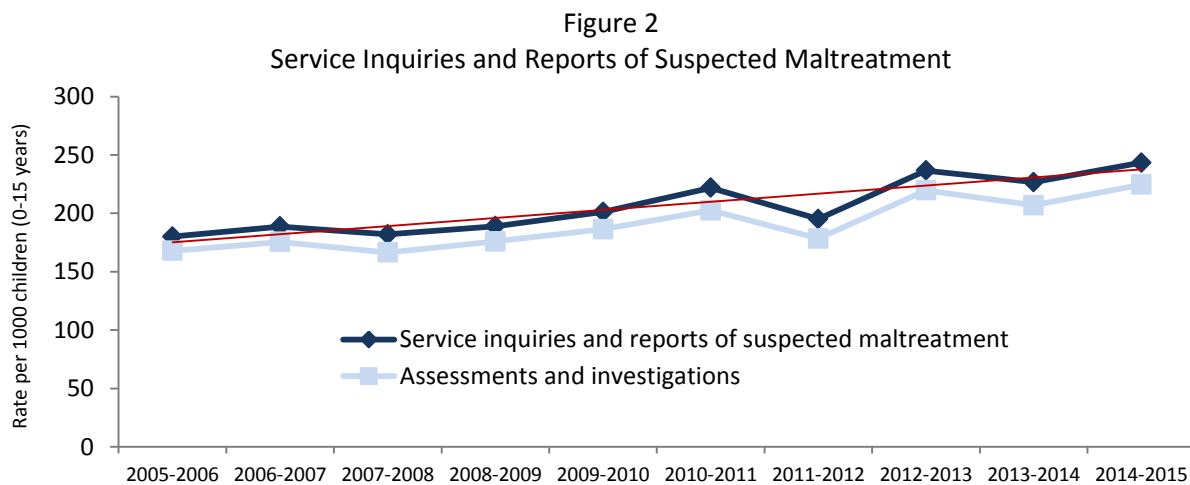
An overall decrease in the child population aged 10 to 18 has been observed between 2005-2006 and 2014-2015, with a decrease of 28.7% in children aged 10-14 and 19.6% in children aged 15-18.

3. REPORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Children and families come to the attention of Child and Family Services in one of two ways. Some parents may come directly to Child Protection Workers to inquire about assistance; this might include support to care for a child with special needs, financial assistance for food or diapers, or respite care while the parent seeks health, mental health or addictions treatment. When families seek assistance, an assessment is conducted, which may include meeting with the parents and/or child to assess what resources or referrals best meet the short and long-term needs of the family.

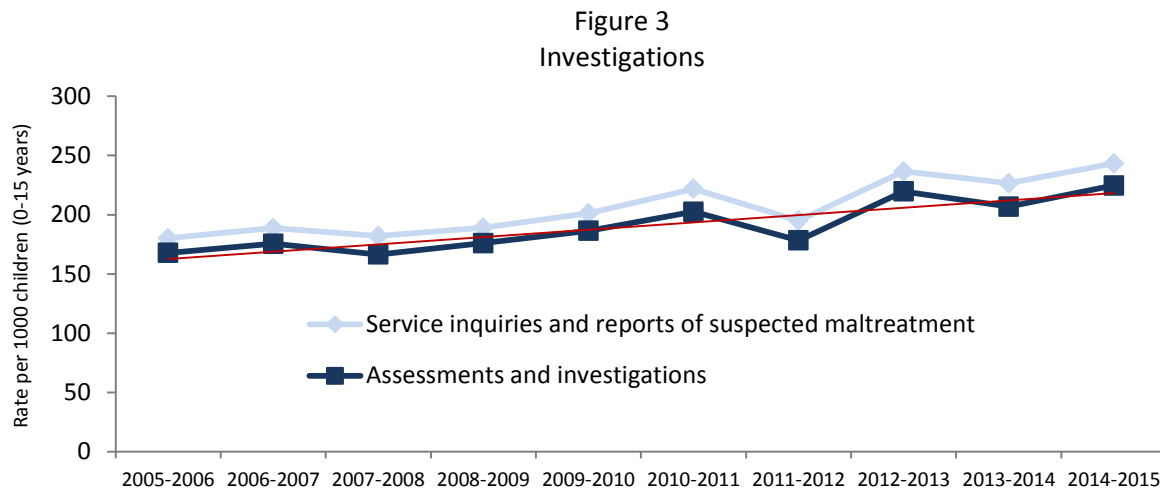
Children and Families may also be brought to the attention of Child Protection Workers by a third-party report of suspected child maltreatment. When suspected maltreatment is reported, the Child Protection Worker will investigate, often including a visit to the family and interviews with children, family members, and other community members (eg. teachers, nurses), and observation the child's living situation in order to determine whether the child is, or children are, in need of protection.

While the *Child and Family Services Act* states that all reports must be investigated, multiple reports may be received regarding one incident, or a report may not contain enough identifying information for an investigation to occur. As a result, the number of investigations is lower than the number of reports to Child Protection Workers each year. Between April 1st 2005 and March 31st 2015, there were an average of 2,098 reports of suspected maltreatment per fiscal year, and an average of 1,936 investigations per fiscal year. Figure 2 displays the reports and inquiries received per 1,000 children aged 0 to 15 years in the population during each fiscal year.



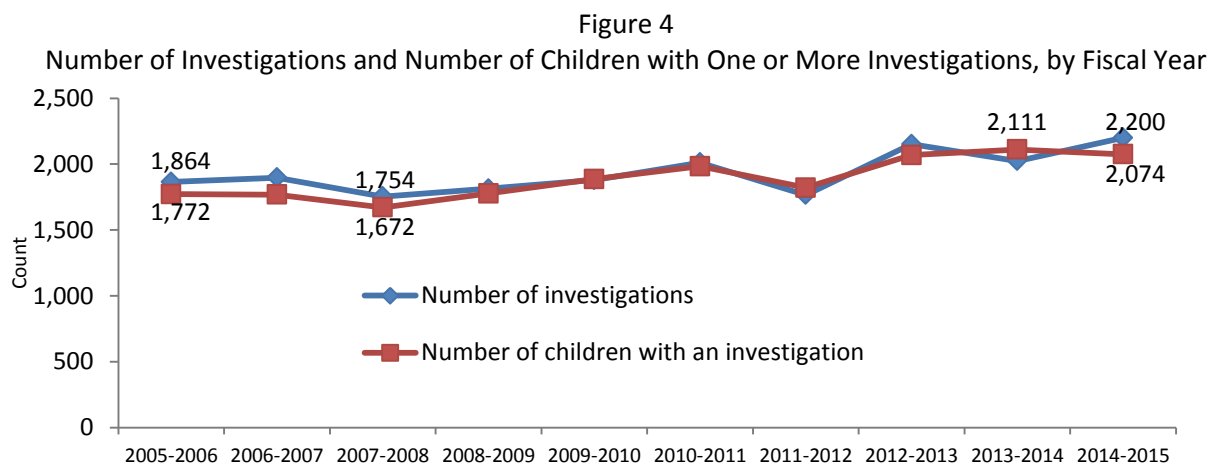
In the 2014-2015 fiscal year there were a total of 2,383 reports to Child and Family Services, at a rate of 243 reports per 1,000 children (aged 0 to 15 years) in the population.

Figure 3 shows the rate of investigations conducted per 1,000 children aged 0 to 15 years in the child population.



In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, there were a total of 2,200 investigations, at a rate of 224 investigations per 1,000 children. The population-based rates of reports and inquiries for assistance, and investigations, both presented a statistically significant increasing trend over the ten-year reporting period.

Each investigation can involve multiple children, and each child could potentially be involved in more than one investigation per year. The number of investigations is therefore not equal to the total number of children that have one or more investigations per year, as illustrated in Figure 4.



REASONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS

For every service inquiry or report of suspected maltreatment, a reason for that referral is recorded. These reasons for referral are currently recorded in the Child and Family Information System under the categories of “abuse”, “neglect”, “child’s behaviour” and “parent’s behaviour”. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and do not adequately describe all the reasons that families come into contact with Child and Family Services. For instance, requests for financial assistance fall under the category of neglect, as this is classified as a failure to provide the necessities of life; however, it is recognized that this is not necessarily a fair depiction of northern realities. Investigation outcome categories will therefore be assessed and adjusted with the future introduction of a new child and family services information system.

Table 2 shows the top reasons for referrals for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. Since there can be more than one reason for each referral, the total number of reasons for referral is higher than the number of service inquiries and reports of suspected maltreatment for the same time period. Nearly half of the referrals received were regarding a parent’s behaviour, with 30% of all referrals received being about a parent’s alcohol, drug or solvent use. Just over 20% of the referrals fell into the category of neglect, with half of those categorized as requests for financial assistance. Approximately 15% of referrals were for a child’s behaviour, such as for self-harm, or substance use issues. Finally, just over 7% of referrals were for allegations of abuse.

Table 2
Top Referral Reasons for 2014-2015 Fiscal Year

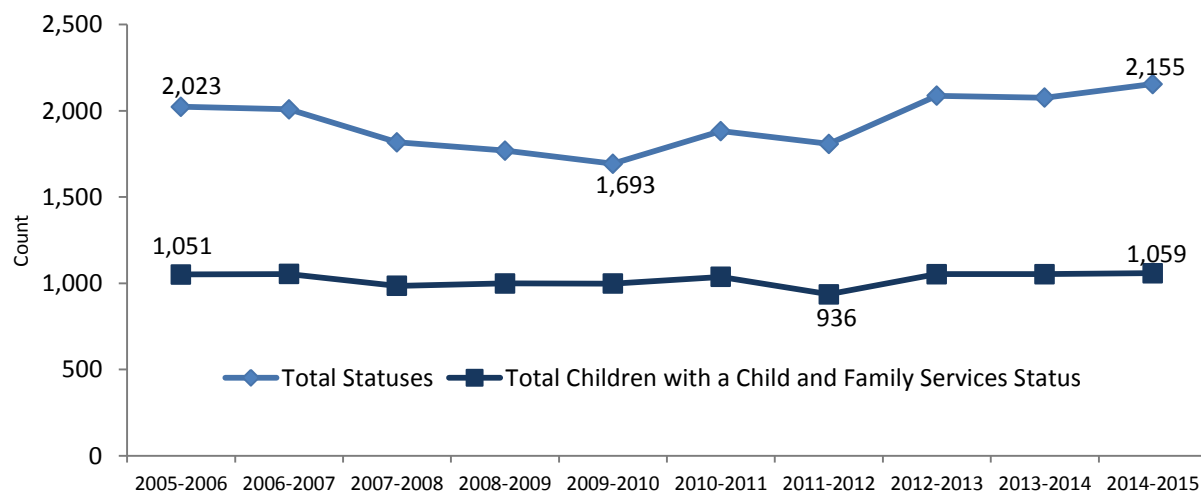
Referral Reason	Number of Referral Reasons	Percentage
Parent’s Behaviour	1,117	45.6%
<i>Parent’s Alcohol, Drug or Solvent Problem</i>	732	29.9%
<i>Adult/Family Violence</i>	129	5.3%
<i>Other Parental Behaviour(s)</i>	256	10.4%
Neglect	510	20.8%
<i>Financial Assistance</i>	260	10.6%
Child’s Behaviour	363	14.8%
Abuse	180	7.3%
<i>Alleged Physical Abuse</i>	106	4.3%
<i>Alleged Sexual Abuse</i>	64	2.6%
Other	282	11.5%
Total	2,452	100.0%

4. SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

NUMBER OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SERVICES

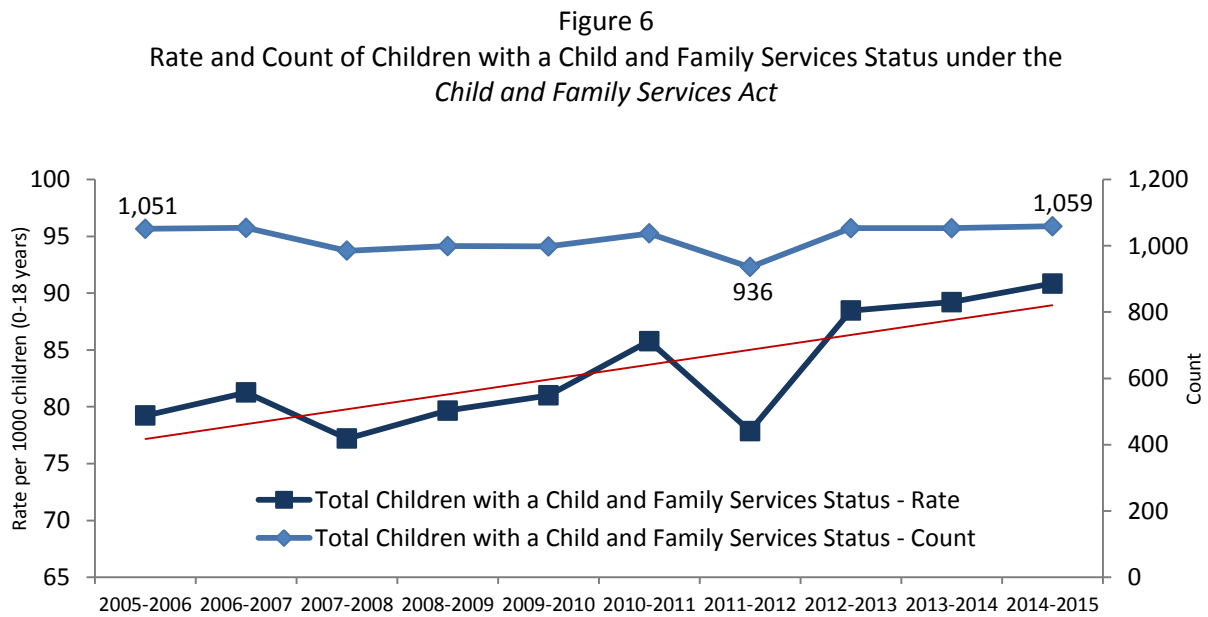
When a child is found to be in need of protection, or a family has requested support, the child is given a Child and Family Services status. This status reflects the section under the *Child and Family Services Act* that entitles the child and family to services, and outlines the legal structure under which these services will occur (i.e. whether the parents retain care and custody of the child, and the duration of the service status). The type of status is dependent on the age of the child, whether the child is determined to be in need of protection, and whether the parents are willing and able to work with the Child Protection Worker on a plan of action. (Status types will be described in more detail later in this section.) Figure 5 shows the number of Child and Family Services statuses each fiscal year, as well as the number of children who had a status during that year. As it is possible for each child to have more than one status within one fiscal year, the number of statuses is considerably higher than the number of children who had one or more statuses during the same fiscal year.

Figure 5
Total Number of Children with a Child and Family Services Status, and Total Number of Statuses



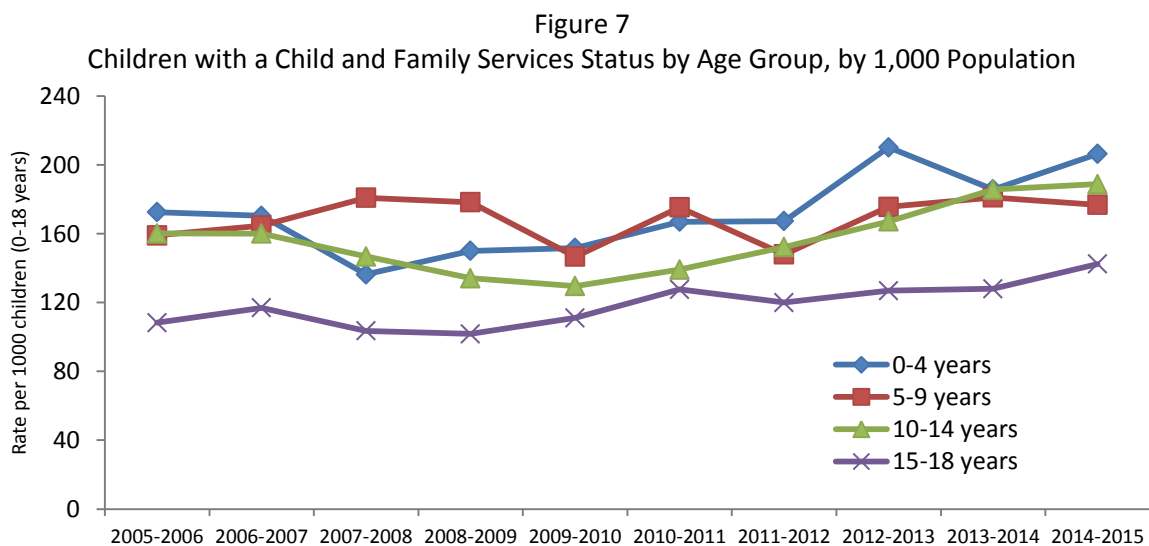
The number of children with a Child and Family Services status has remained stable over the past ten years, with an average of 1,022 children having a Child and Family Services status each year. The number of statuses has varied slightly but shows no significant trend, with between 1,693 and 2,155 statuses each year.

Figure 6 shows the total number of children with a Child and Family Services status during each fiscal year, along with the rate of children with a Child and Family Services status per 1,000 children.



This figure demonstrates that though the number of children with one or more status has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, there has been a statistically significant increase in the population-based rate of children with a Child and Family Services status as a result of the declining child population.

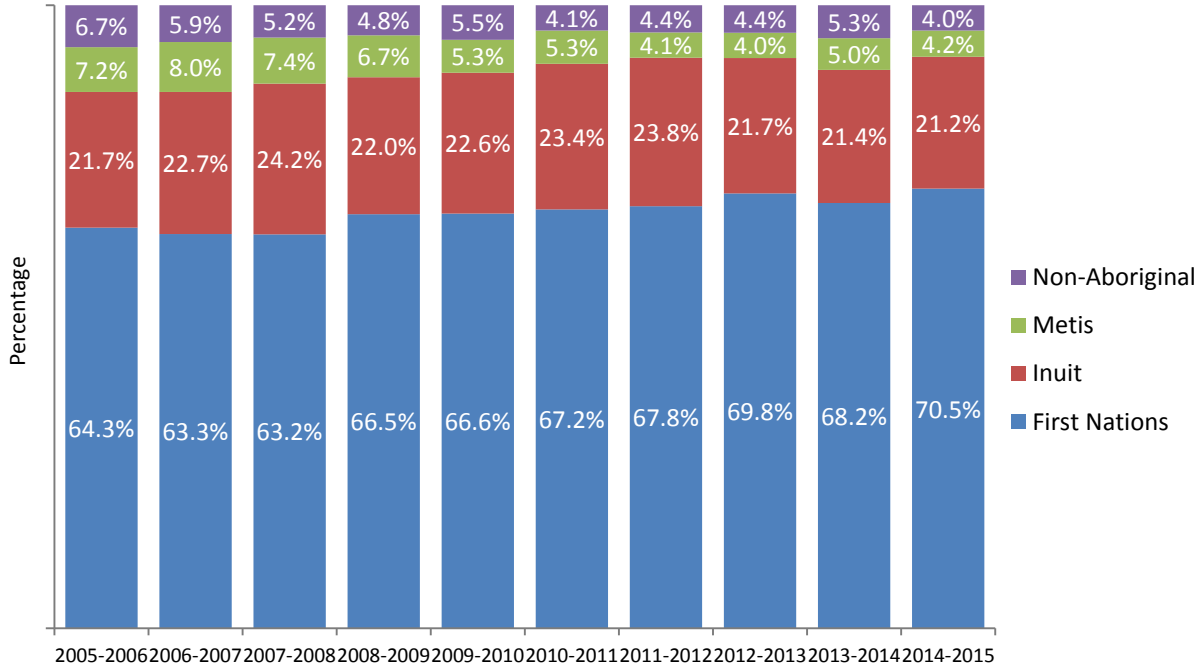
Figure 7 shows the rate of children with a Child and Family Services status, divided into four age groups.



There was a statistically significant increase in the rate of children with a status in the 10-14 and 15-18 year age groups (trend lines not shown), while the rate in both younger age groups showed no significant change over the ten-year period.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of children with a Child and Family Services status by ethnicity.

Figure 8
Proportion of Children with a Child and Family Services Status by Ethnicity



As shown in Figure 8, there has been an overall increase in the proportion of First Nations children among children with a Child and Family Services status, and a decrease in the proportion of Metis and Non-Aboriginal children in the same group. The proportion of Inuit children has remained relatively stable over the same time period.

TYPES OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUSES

Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, services can be offered to children and families either by agreement between the Child Protection Worker and the family, or via court order. Services by agreement allow families to access supports and services to strengthen families and address or prevent child protection concerns. When child protection concerns cannot be adequately addressed in this way, a child protection order may be sought from the court to ensure the safety of the child.

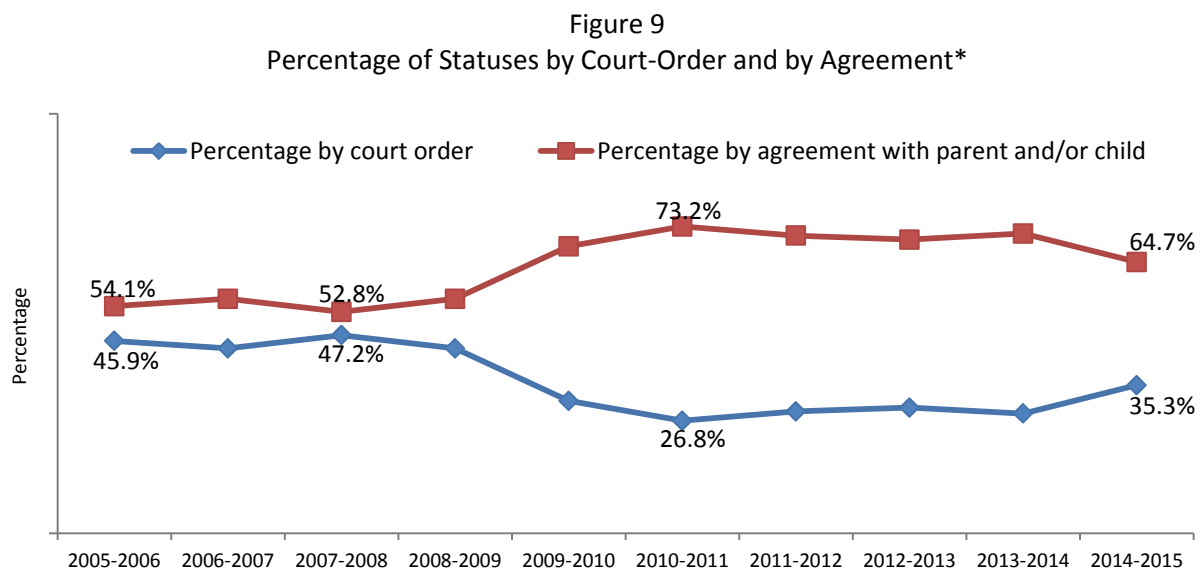
SERVICES BY AGREEMENT

The three types of services by agreement include Voluntary Services Agreements and Plan of Care Agreements for children aged 0 to 15, and Support Services Agreements for youth aged 16 to 18. Voluntary Service Agreements are used when no child protection concerns are found to exist, but the child and family have the potential to benefit from services that will reduce the risk of child protection concerns in the future. Plan of Care Agreements are used when child protection concerns are present, but the family and Child Protection Worker can develop and agree upon a collaborative plan to address these concerns. Examples of services provided under both Voluntary Services Agreements and Plan of Care Agreements include counselling, addictions treatment, temporary foster or respite care, and financial or material assistance such as food or diapers. Support Services Agreements address the needs of youth, who cannot be found in need of protection, but nevertheless require supportive services such as counselling, housing supports or addictions treatment.

COURT-ORDERED SERVICES

In circumstances where child protection concerns cannot be resolved to ensure the safety of the child, a court order may be sought. Court-ordered actions include Supervision Orders (under which the child remains in the home) and Interim, Temporary, and Permanent Custody Orders (under which the child is removed from the home).

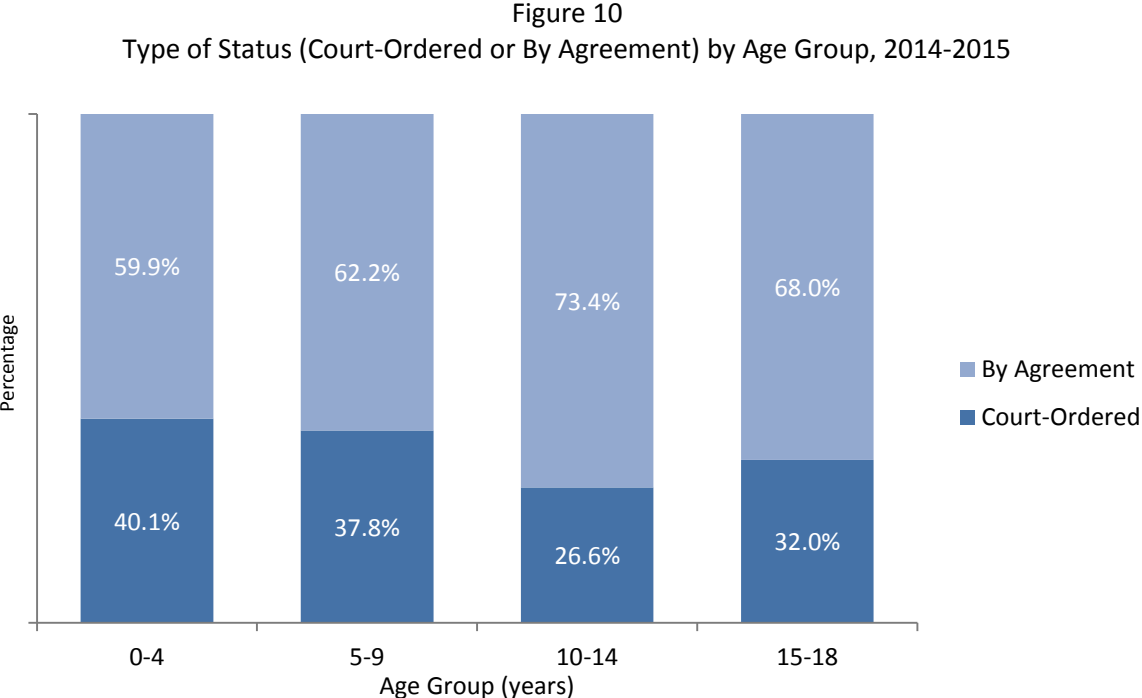
Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of children with a status by court order or by agreement.



*For the 2014-2015 analysis, apprehensions were removed from the statuses considered in this table. This is due to the fact that apprehensions can be a precursor to both statuses by court order and statuses by agreement, and therefore including them in the analysis as a “court ordered status” was inaccurate.

The majority of statuses are by agreement with the parent and/or child/youth. The percentage of statuses by agreement peaked at 73.2% in 2010-2011, and has fallen in the past few years to 64.7% of services provided under statuses by agreement with the parents and/or child, and 35.3% under statuses by court order.

Figure 10 shows the percentage of statuses that are by agreement or by court order, by age of the child.

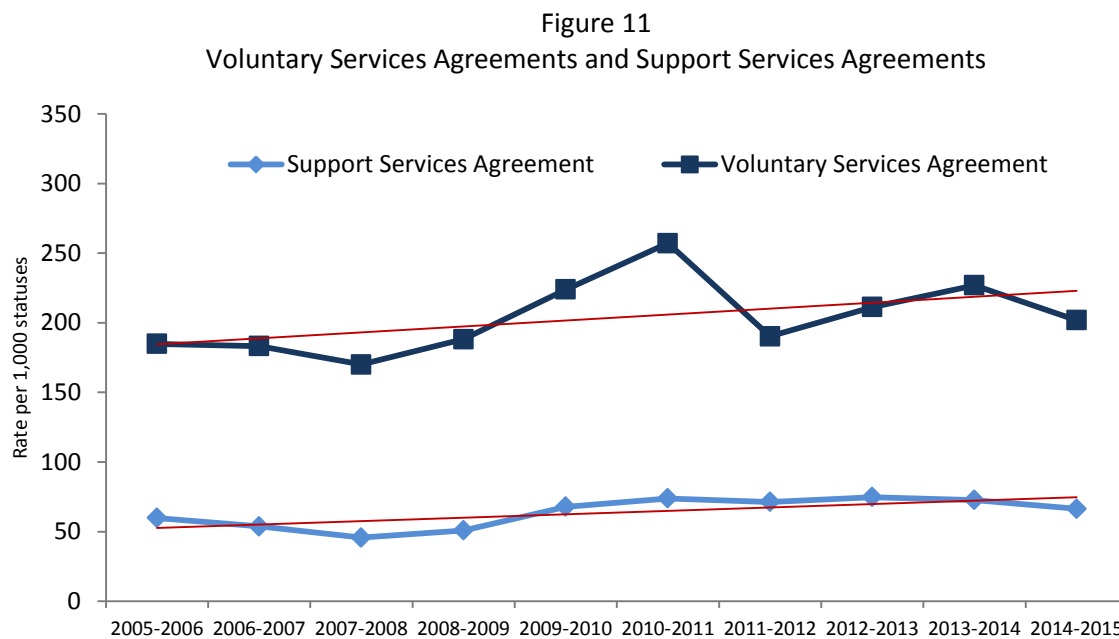


As can be seen in Figure 7, the proportion of statuses by agreement is higher in older age groups than in younger age groups, with just under 60% of statuses by agreement in the 0-4 age group, and approximately 73% of statuses by agreement in ages 10-14 and 68% of statuses by agreement in ages 15-18.

5. VOLUNTARY SERVICES AGREEMENTS AND SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENTS

Voluntary Services Agreements and Support Services Agreements are designed to strengthen families and prevent child protection concerns from developing. Under a Voluntary Services Agreement, the care and custody of the child remains with the parents and, as the service is voluntary, families may elect to end the Voluntary Services Agreement at any time. Youth aged 16-18 can similarly access assistance on a voluntary basis through a Support Services Agreement, under which the youth may be provided with supports such as housing, financial support and addictions treatment.

The rate of both Voluntary Services Agreements and Support Services Agreements per 1,000 statuses is displayed in Figure 11.

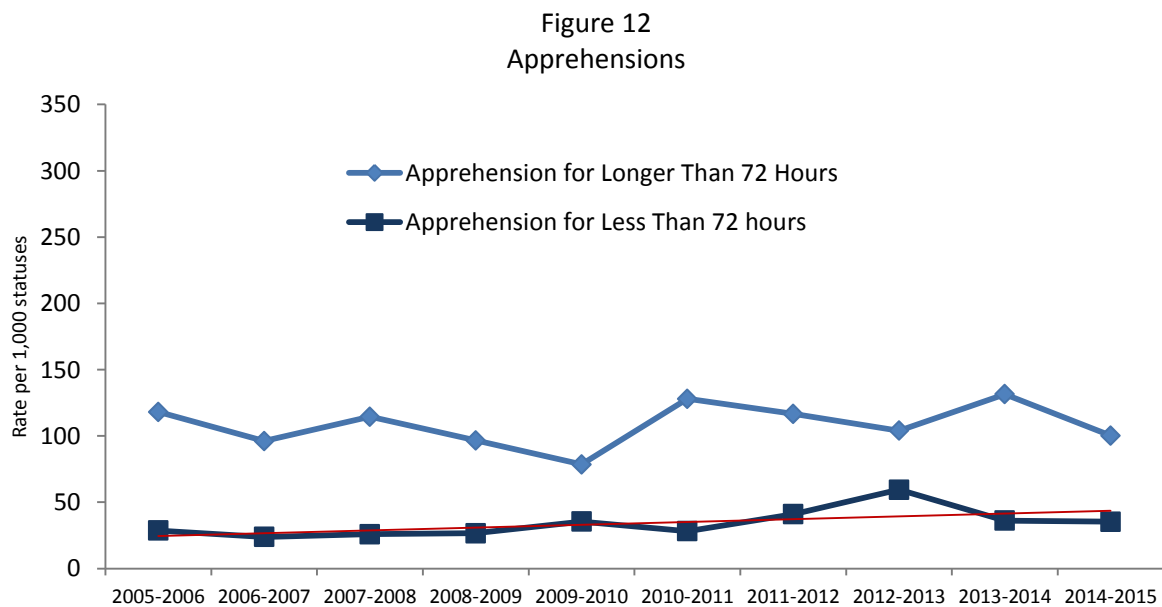


As can be seen in Figure 11, there has been a statistically significant increase in the proportion of both Voluntary Services Agreements and Support Services Agreements over the past ten years.

6. APPREHENSIONS

When a Child Protection Worker investigates and finds reasonable grounds to believe that the safety or wellbeing of a child is in danger, the Child Protection Worker may decide to apprehend the child, removing them from the care of their parents or caregivers and placing them in the care and custody of the Director of Child and Family Services. The child may be returned to the parents within 72 hours if the safety concerns have been resolved; otherwise, the Child Protection Worker must apply to the court for a confirmation order within 14 days of the apprehension. If the apprehension is not confirmed, the child must be returned to the custody of their parents. If the apprehension is confirmed, the child can remain in the care of the Director for up to 45 days. At any point following the apprehension, the Child Protection Worker may decide either to pursue a court order to obtain a custodial status, or to begin working with the family and return the child to the home under a Plan of Care Agreement.

The annual rates for apprehensions longer than 72 hours and less than 72 hours are presented below in Figure 12.

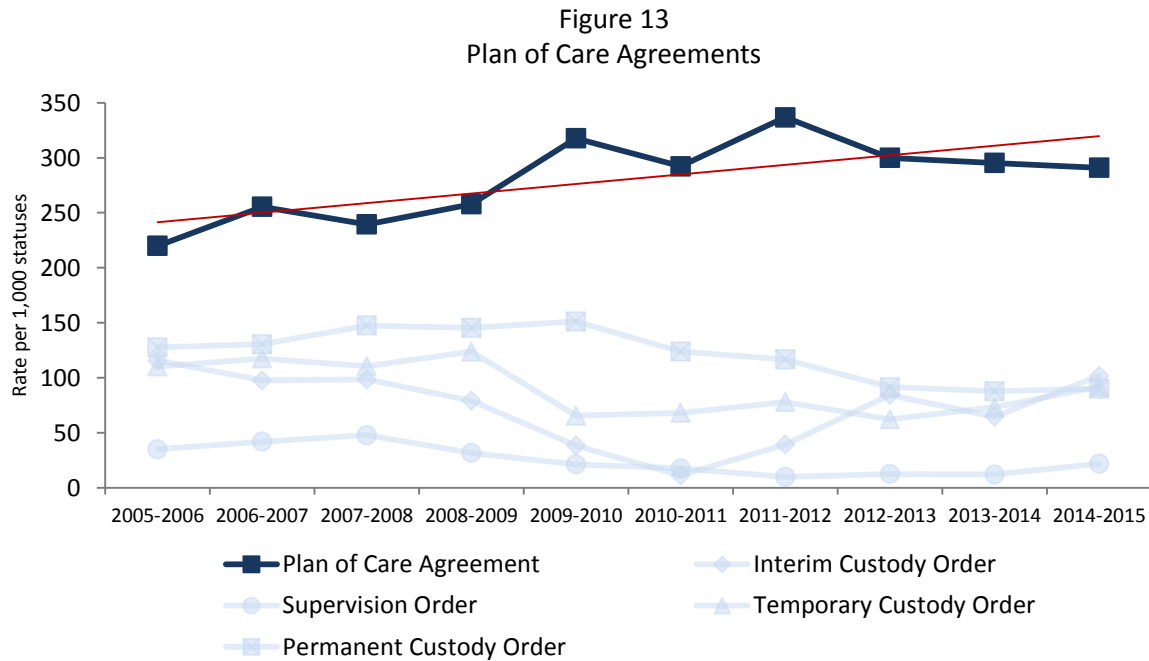


The proportion of apprehensions for longer than 72 hours does not show a significant change over the past ten years, while the proportion of apprehensions for less than 72 hours has increased slightly over this time.

7. PLAN OF CARE AGREEMENTS

Plan of Care Agreements enable parents to retain care and custody of their children while they work on the family issues that led to child protection concerns. Child Protection Workers work collaboratively with the family to identify the strengths and needs of the family and create a plan of action to address the child protection concerns in the home.

Figure 13 presents the rate of Plan of Care Agreements per 1,000 statuses.

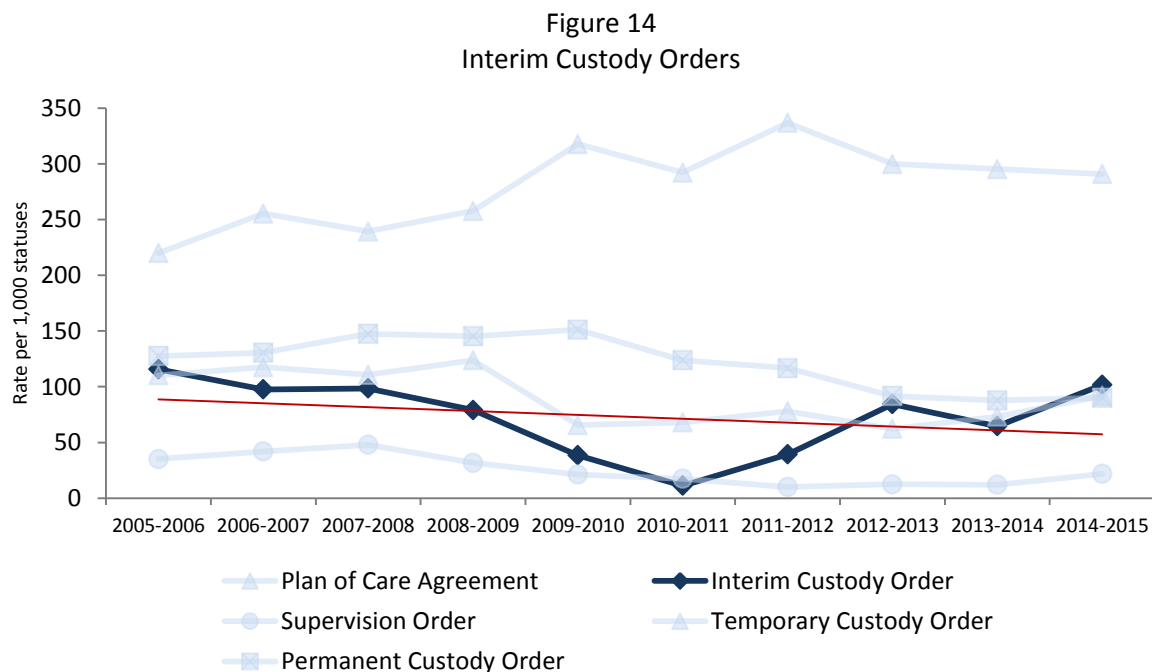


The increasing trend in the use of Plan of Care Agreements corresponds with a decreasing trend in court ordered statuses, as will be illustrated on the pages that follow.

8. COURT ORDERS

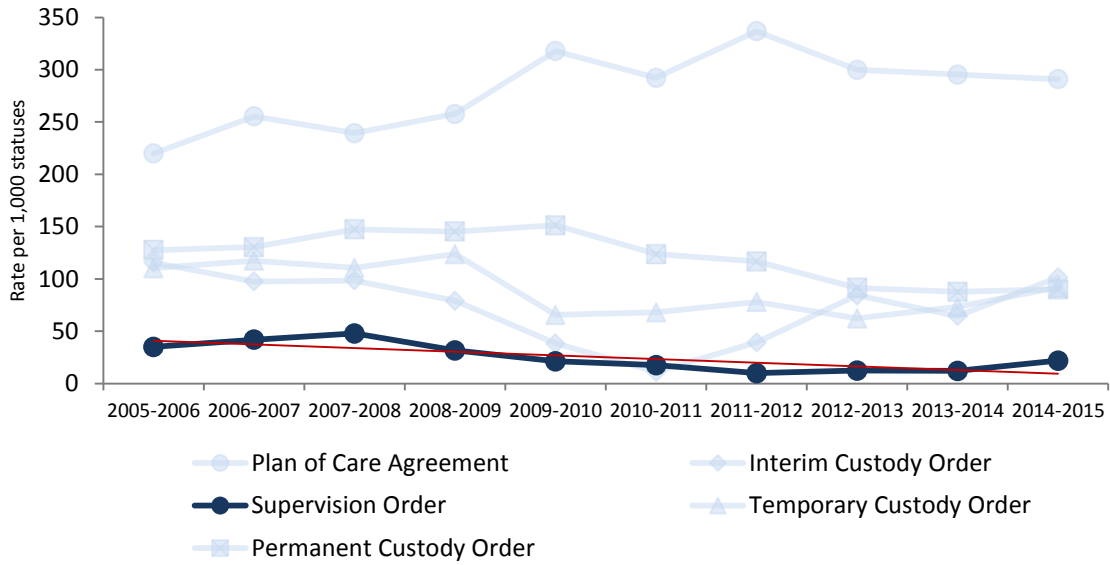
When child protection concerns cannot be successfully resolved using a Plan of Care Agreement, the matter may be referred to Territorial Court. Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, there are four different types of orders that may be sought. An *Interim Custody Order* is used to extend the allowable time period prior to a child protection hearing, for example to give the parents more time to consult with legal counsel. A *Supervision Order* allows the child to return home while remaining under the supervision of the Director of Child and Family Services, so that Child Protection Workers can continue to monitor child protection concerns in the home and act accordingly. A *Temporary Custody Order* allows for the Director to retain care and custody of the child for a period of up to two years, at which point the child may be returned to the custody of their parents, or the Director may seek permanent custody. A *Permanent Custody Order* places the child in the custody of the Director until they reach the age of 16, though this may be extended until the child's 19th birthday.

Figures 14 and 15 present the rates per 1,000 statuses for Interim Custody Orders and Supervision Orders.



While the most recent data may indicate that the use of Interim Custody Orders may have increased in the past three years, there has been an overall declining trend over the past ten years in the use of Interim Custody Orders. In the coming years, there may be a reversal of this trend if the use of Interim Custody Orders remains at a similar rate to that of the last three fiscal years.

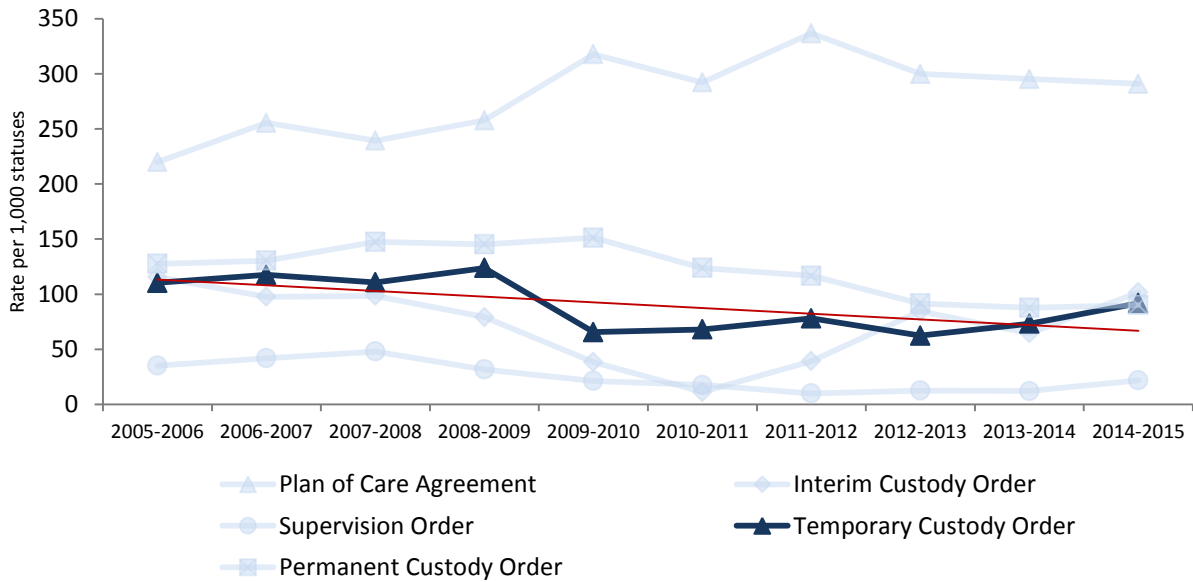
Figure 15
Supervision Orders



As can be seen in Figure 15, the rate of Supervision Orders has declined slightly over the past ten years. Supervision Orders are the least commonly sought court orders.

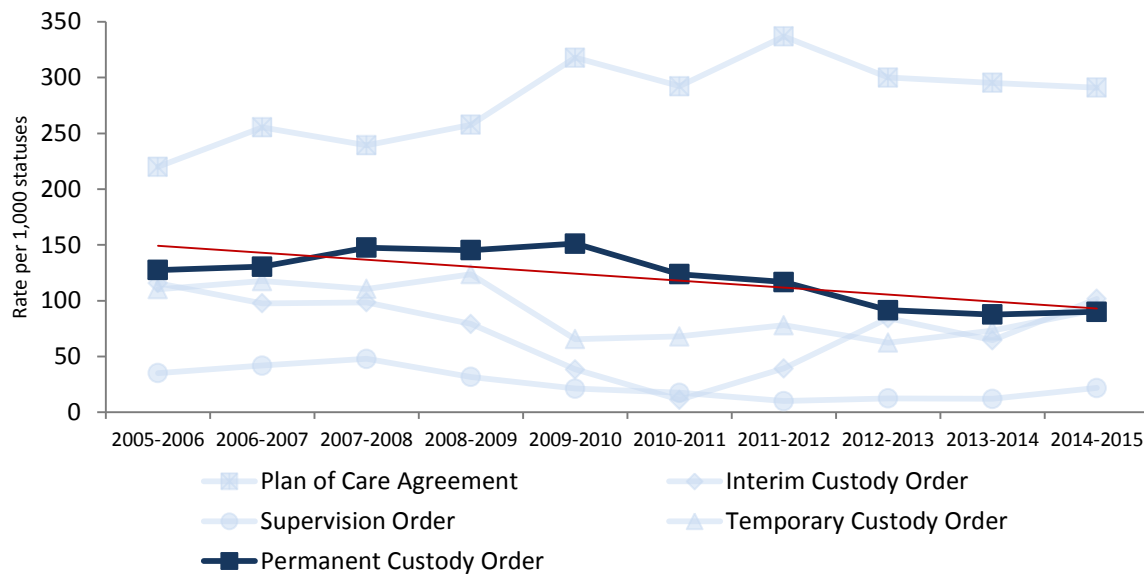
Figures 16 (below) and 17 (next page) present the rates for Temporary and Permanent Custody Orders.

Figure 16
Temporary Custody Orders



The rate of Temporary Custody Orders has declined over the past ten years; however, use of Temporary Custody Orders appears to have been higher in 2014-2015 than in the five previous years (not significant).

Figure 17
Permanent Custody Orders



As can be seen in Figure 17, there is a statistically significant decreasing trend in Permanent Custody Orders between 2005-2006 and 2014-2015.

Permanent Custody Orders may be rescinded by a court if the parent’s circumstances change significantly or of the youth makes application to the court with a viable plan in place for themselves. Information on the rates of children in care under a Permanent Custody Order will be presented in the next section.

9. CHILDREN IN PERMANENT CARE AND CUSTODY

Table 4 and Figure 18 show the age distribution of children with Permanent Custody Orders.

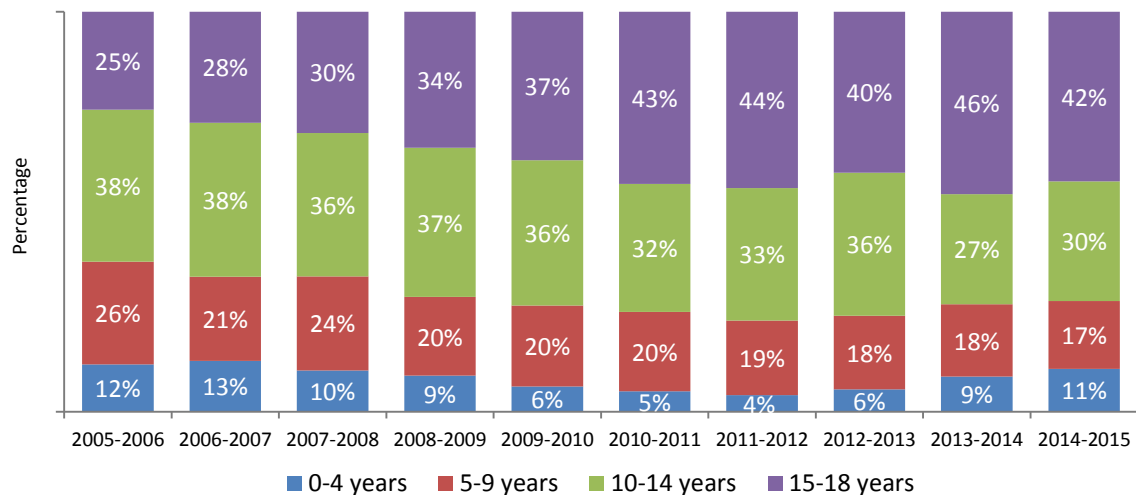
Table 4
Children in Permanent Care and Custody by Age Group*

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
0-4 years	30	32	26	22	15	11	8	10	15	19
5-9 years	65	53	59	48	48	43	36	33	31	30
10-14 years	96	97	90	91	86	69	64	64	47	53
15-18 years	62	70	76	83	88	93	85	72	78	75
Total	253	252	251	244	237	216	193	179	171	177

*Numbers presented in the previous report have been modified to include extensions of Permanent Custody Orders, which has increased the number and proportion of youth in permanent custody.

While the number of children in the 15-18 age group has increased slightly, the other three age groups have declined significantly over the same time period. Although the number of children vary by age group, the number of children in permanent care and custody has declined significantly over the past ten years.

Figure 18
Distribution of Children in Permanent Care and Custody by Age Group



The majority of children and youth in permanent care and custody are ten years or older, making up 72% of the children and youth in permanent custody in 2014-2015. Though there were 177 children receiving services under a Permanent Custody Order in 2014-2015, many of these children were placed in the permanent custody of the Director in previous fiscal years; 25 new Permanent Custody Orders were issued during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

10. LOCATION OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SERVICES

Whenever possible, services are provided to children and families while the children are still residing in the parental home. However, children may require services outside of their parental home for a variety of reasons, including voluntary placement in care due to a temporary emergency, or non-voluntary placement due to an apprehension. When a child receives services outside of the parental home, the first placement option is the extended family. Additionally, it is important for the child to reside within their home community, whenever possible. Children who remain in their local community have reduced disruption to their lives as their social activities, friends, extended family, and cultural activities and traditions are less likely to change. In addition to keeping their community supports, these children can be served by Child Protection Workers who are familiar with the community.

Figure 19 shows the distribution of children receiving services by location.

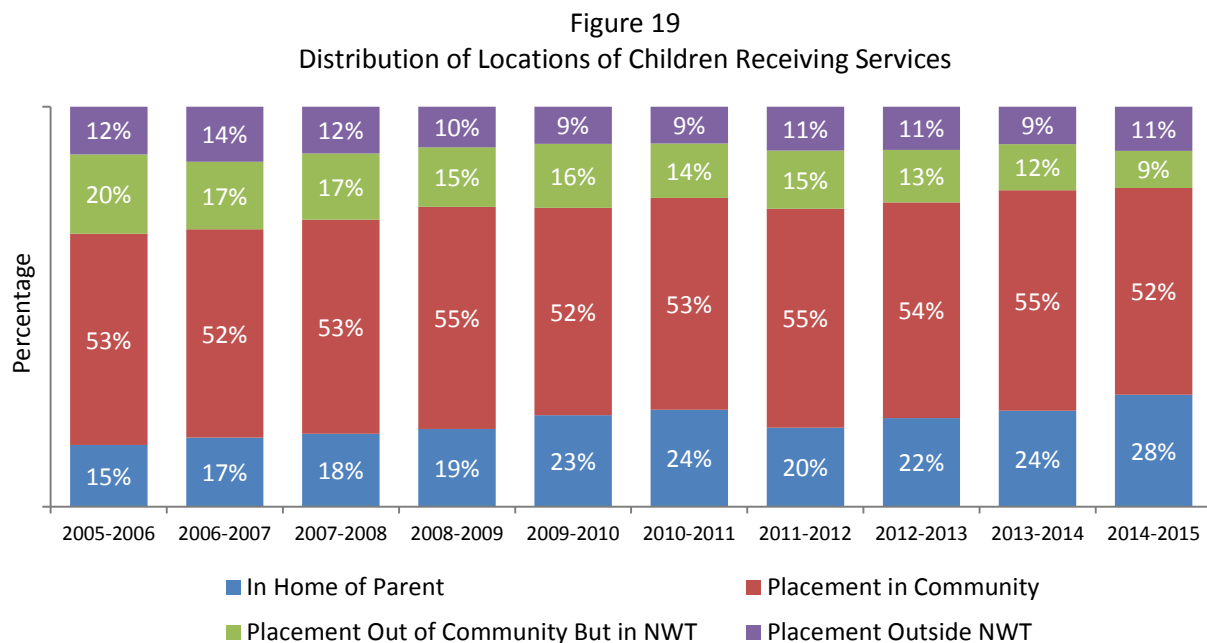


Figure 19 shows an increase in the percentage of service locations where services are provided in the home of the parent, from 15% in 2005-2006 to 28% in 2014-2015. Consistently, just over half of placements were outside the parent's home, but in the community (52%-55% across the ten year period). Combined, 80% of child placements were within the home community. Over the past ten years, there has been a decrease in the percentage of placement locations outside of the community but within the NWT, falling from 20% in 2005-2006 to 9% in 2014-2015. Placements outside the NWT also remained relatively stable, ranging from 9% to 14% over the past ten fiscal years.

PLACEMENT RESOURCES

FOSTER HOMES

Foster homes provide care for children who are unable to live in their family home. There are three types of foster homes in the NWT: regular, extended family, and provisional. Regular foster homes are open to provide care to any child or youth that is placed in foster care. Extended family and provisional foster homes, on the other hand, are extended family members or community members who are known to the child or youth, and are opened specifically to accommodate that child, and closed when that child no longer needs to be in foster care. The approval processes for all types of foster homes are described in detail in the *NWT Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual*.

GROUP HOMES

Group homes are placement settings where multiple children or youth live in a home-like setting, cared for by either house parents, or a staff of trained caregivers. There are three group homes that operate in the NWT: Polar Crescent Group Home, in Fort Smith; Inuvik Youth Group Home in Inuvik; and the Rycon Foster Family Shelter Home. Polar Crescent Group Home and the Rycon Foster Family Shelter Home provide family-modeled care to between six and eight children, while the Inuvik Youth Group Home is focused on life skill development for up to six youth as they prepare to transition out of care and into the community.

NORTHERN SPECIALIZED TREATMENT RESOURCES

There are two residential treatment resources in the Northwest Territories that provide services for children or youth with behavioural, emotional, psychological or psychiatric issues. The Territorial Treatment Centre in Yellowknife provides diagnostic services and treatment for up to eight children aged 8 to 12 years. Trailcross, in Fort Smith, provides services for up to nine youth aged 12 to 18.

SOUTHERN SPECIALIZED PLACEMENT RESOURCES

Southern placement resources are used to provide children and youth with specialized residential treatment services that are not available in the NWT. The length of time that children or youth are in southern placements depends on the individual needs of the child or youth, and whether the child's or youth's needs can be met within the home community after their stay in a southern placement.

Figure 20 illustrates the proportion of usage of the different placement resources in 2014-2015.

Figure 20
Placement Resource Use, 2014-2015

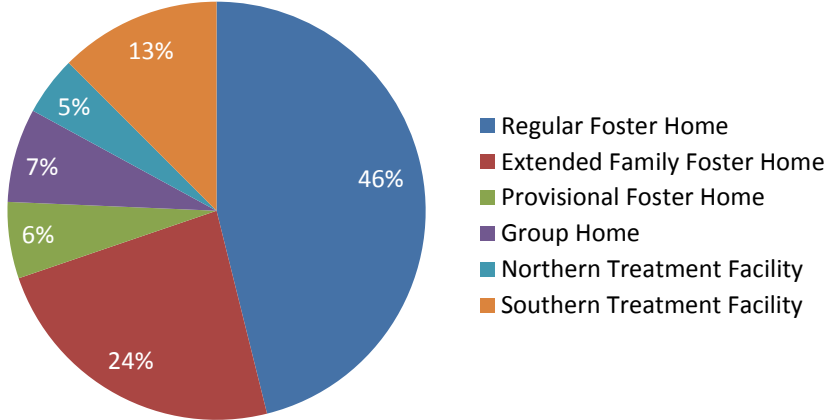
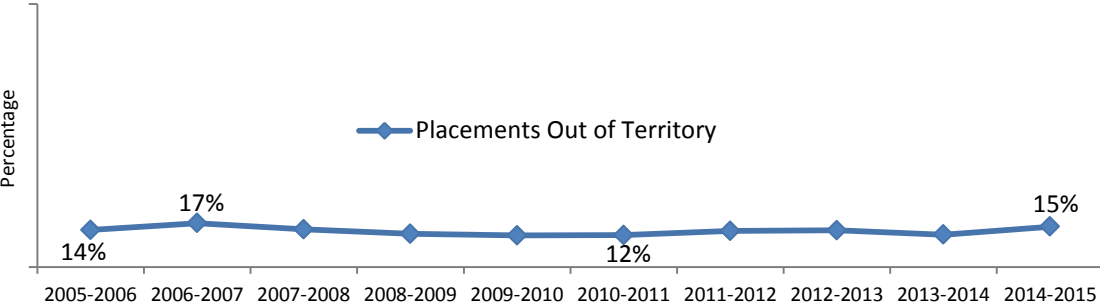


Figure 20 represents the percentage of individual children placed in each resource; children may be counted more than once if they are placed in different types of placement resources during the year. This figure does not account for children receiving services within the family home, which is the most common placement site. As shown, 46% of out of home placements were in regular foster homes, 24% were in extended family foster homes, and 6% were in provisional foster homes. Group home placements were 7% of all placements. Northern Treatment Facilities were used for 5% of placements, and 13% were in Southern Treatment Facilities.

Figure 21 shows the percentage of placements in which children were placed outside of the NWT. These include both Southern Treatment Facility placements, and foster home placements outside of the territory (usually with extended family).

Figure 21
Percentage of Out of Territory Placements



There has been no significant change in the number of children placed outside of the NWT in the past ten fiscal years.

11. ADOPTION

The Adoption program, part of the Child and Family Services program, coordinates and manages registries of children available for adoptions, approved adopted families, completed adoptions, and responds to information requests regarding adoptions records.

In the Northwest Territories, there are four different types of adoptions: departmental, private, step-parent, and Aboriginal custom adoption. The first three types of adoptions are governed by the *Adoption Act*, while the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act* provides for the recognition of traditional Aboriginal custom adoption. In all types of adoptions, children become legal, permanent members of the adoptive family.

Children may be surrendered by their parents for the purposes of adoption. From April 1st 2005 to March 31st 2015, eight children were surrendered for the purposes of adoption. All eight children have been adopted.

The annual distribution of adoptions is presented in Figure 22. Over the past ten years, the average number of adoptions per year was 59, with 53 adoptions taking place during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

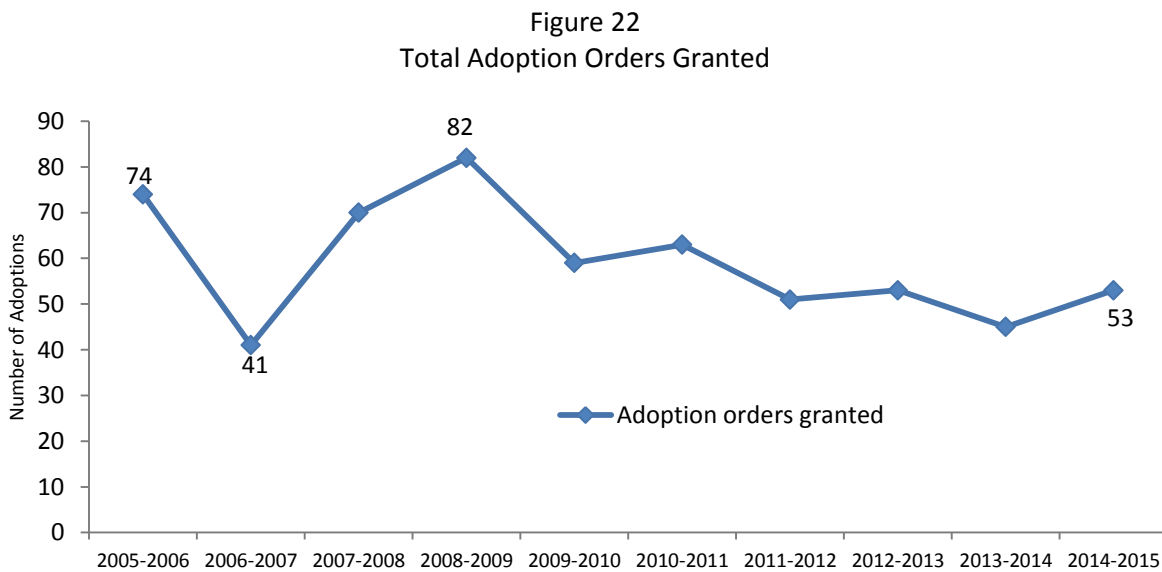
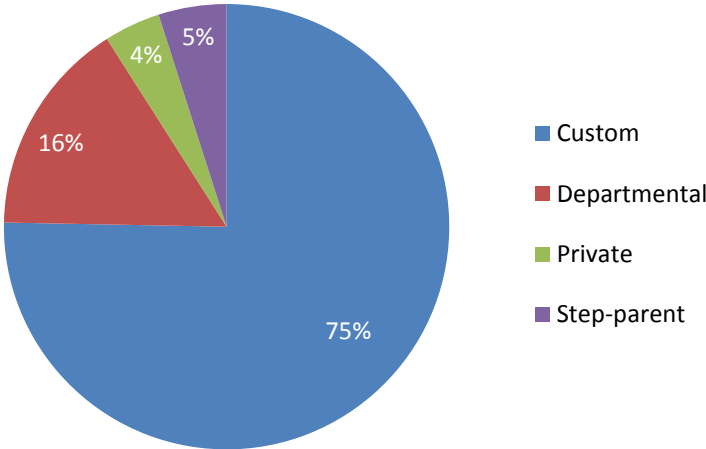


Figure 23 shows the percentage of adoptions between 2005-2006 and 2014-2015, by type of adoption.

Figure 23
Percentage of Adoptions by Adoption Type



Between April 1st 2005 and March 31st 2015, 591 children were adopted in the NWT. The majority of adoptions, 75%, (442) were custom adoptions, while 16% (92) were departmental adoptions, 5% (29) were step-parent adoptions, and 4% (24) were private adoptions.

12. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report presents a number of trends between 2005 – 2006 and 2014 – 2015. The population-based rates of service inquiries, reports of suspected maltreatment, and investigations have increased over the past ten years. The most common reason for reports of suspected maltreatment during 2014-2015 was parental alcohol, drug or solvent use, accounting for nearly 30% of all referrals, though service inquiries by parents requesting financial assistance made up over 10% of all referrals.

The number of children receiving services under the *Act* remained relatively stable; however, due to the decline in the child population in the NWT over the past several years, the population-based rate of children with a child and family services status has actually increased. This increase was statistically significant in both the 10-14 year and 15-18 year age groups. An increasing percentage of the children receiving services are First Nations children, with a decreasing percentage of Metis and Non-Aboriginal children.

From 2005-2006 to 2008-2009, only slightly more services were provided by agreement than by court order. Since 2009-2010, there have been considerably more child and family services statuses by agreement than by court order. In the past year, however, there was a decline in the percentage of statuses by agreement. This is not a statistically significant trend, but should be noted, as it may become a significant trend if the decline continues.

Over the past ten years, the use of Voluntary Services Agreements, Support Services Agreements, and Plan of Care Agreements have increased as a proportion of all statuses, while the use of all court-ordered statuses decreased as a proportion of all statuses.

The majority of children receive services in their home community, and an increasing percentage of children with a status receive services in the parent's home. A declining percentage of placements occur outside of the community (but in the NWT), while the number of placements outside of the NWT (often in specialized treatment centres) has remained stable.

13. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In 2014, the Department released, *Building Stronger Families: An Action Plan to Transform Child and Family Services* (Action Plan). The Action Plan was developed in response to over 100 recommendations made by Standing Committees of the Legislative Assembly and the Auditor General of Canada. The Action Plan outlined 12 initiatives to improve the delivery, supervision and administration of child and family services. The overall approach to the changes outlined is to transform from an adversarial system to one that is family-centered, and better managed.

The Action Plan sets out actions in three major program elements; *program administration and management; risk management and quality assurance; and service delivery and child protection practice* as the umbrella for change. Each of these is supported by a number of initiatives including items that the Department completed in 2014-2015.

By March 31, 2015 the following was accomplished:

Program Administration and Management

Child and Family Services undertook a number of activities to improve the administration and management of services both at the Authority level and the Department beginning with the appointment of Assistant Directors of Child and Family Services. Chief Executive Officers of six health and social service authorities and the Chief Executive Officer from the Tlicho Community Services Agency were appointed as Assistant Directors of Child and Family Services and delegated authority under the *Child and Family Services Act*. These appointments increase authority at the regional level supporting front line program delivery. The Assistant Directors, along with the Director of Child and Family Services form the steering committee to oversee *Building Stronger Families*.

The Directors of Social Programs Forum was revitalized and given the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. The Directors played a key leadership role in 2014 – 2015 enabling a number of changes to be initiated in collaboration with authority and department staff.

Bill 47, an Act to amend the *Child and Family Services Act*, was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Social Programs. The amendments are intended to address the gap in services for youth. Amendments include:

- Extending services and allowing for youth protection hearings;
- Creating flexible roles for Child and Family Services Committees;

- Notifying Aboriginal organizations of child and youth protection hearings;
- Providing for mediation and other alternative dispute mechanisms;
- Requiring Child Protection Workers to state the alternatives that had been considered prior to apprehension;
- Advising parents, children and youth of their right to legal counsel;
- Establishing time limits for temporary custody, depending on the child's age;
- Expanding criteria for when a child and youth needs protection to include prostitution; and
- Requiring a review of the *Child and Family Services Act* every five years.

There are a number of factors that impact program administration and management. Caseloads and workloads are often cited as major influences on staff's time to complete tasks required for quality case management. In order to assist the Department to understand the issues a workload management study was completed by the *Child Welfare League of Canada*. Following discussions and consultations with management and frontline staff across the Territories, the *Child Welfare League of Canada* identified six factors currently affecting the fair, equitable and adequate distribution of human resources. The factors are:

- Lack of agreement on the difference between a case, caseload and workload;
- Legal proceedings that require intensive training and supervision;
- High rate of staff overtime;
- Challenging on-call rotation schedule;
- Large amount of hours dedicated to travel; and
- Cumbersome information system.

Risk Management and Quality Assurance

Among the many recommendations, a number reference improving risk management and quality assurance in the provision of services. During 2014 – 2015, the Department revised the annual audit process in order to improve the monitoring and quality of practice. Audit teams were formed consisting of a staff member from the Department, one from the Authority undergoing the audit and one from a peer authority. An audit process was developed identifying the activities and timelines associated with completing the annual audit. This team methodology has led to a more collaborative approach to monitoring services and forged stronger linkages at the program level between authorities. The audit teams developed standardized audit tools providing a universal approach across the Territories. The audit tools reflect items identified in the Auditor General of Canada's report and examine compliance

with the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual. As a result of an audit, the Authority is provided a report identifying strengths and areas that require improvement. The Authority and the Department work together to develop an action plan to address concerns. Audit action plans not only provide guidance and direction to improve the current practice but are an informed resource for future planning within the Authority.

Quality assurance directly correlates to the development and implementation of standards that are founded in best practice knowledge, research and experience. The first five sections of the ten section Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual have been revised in light of up to date child protection research and are reflective of current practice in the NWT. Following training for all staff, the revised sections were implemented as of April 1, 2015. The Standards and Procedures Manual is a 'living document' and will continue to evolve as practice changes and improves.

Good supervision and strong supervisory skills are vital to the development of a solid staff team and ultimately to good case management. Historically, the Department has emphasized the Child Protection Worker Statutory Training however, as noted in the recommendations supervisory skills require focused attention. To that end, a working group was established with representation from the Authorities and Department to develop a supervisor training program. The group completed a jurisdictional review to assess existing supervisor training programs and made the recommendation that the Department should adapt Nunavut's Child Welfare Supervisors/Managers Training for delivery in the NWT.

The quality of data can restrict staff's ability to manage risk. The current data management system, the Child and Family Information System is out of date and because of that the information captured is limited. The Department has initiated the process to design, test and implement a data management information system to replace the current Child and Family Services Information System. A project manager has been selected and the Department has begun the process to document the business and technical requirements for the new system.

Service Delivery and Child Protection Practice

In order to ensure the most appropriate services are provided in the least intrusive manner in situations that may present child protection concerns, evidence is clear that there is a need for flexible response practices. *Building Stronger Families* identifies the need for changes in child protection practices from adversarial to a collaborative approach providing services to mitigate protection concerns. The Minister and the Department's Senior Executive mandated the Department and Authorities to move forward to adopt a flexible response approach to child abuse and neglect.

In order to transform practice in the NWT, the Department entered a contractual relationship with the Children's Research Centre to adapt Structured Decision Making®. Structured Decision Making is a suite of assessment tools to assist in the decision making in child protection concerns. The suite of Structured Decision Making tools considers the decision points within the life of a case beginning with a response assessment identifying the needs of the situation and leading to appropriate and timely provision of services. Three working groups with participants from both the Department and Authorities initiated the adaptation of the first three Structured Decision Making assessment tools - Screening and Response Priority, Safety, and Risk of Future Harm. Each working group was co-chaired by Directors of Social Programs.

Ensuring staff have resources to support their practice is a leadership responsibility. In 2014 – 2015, the Directors undertook the initial steps in creating an inventory of prevention programs providing information on programs and services in each community. The inventory will help staff refer children and families to programs and supports in their home community. Research indicates that services that are available closer to home often increase positive outcomes for children and families.

Moving Forward

Significant progress was made in 2014 - 2015 on activities outlined in *Building Stronger Families* that have become Child and Family Services core business. Transforming child and family services is a process that involves a number of initiatives and changes that will occur over a three to five year period. In the upcoming year, the Department will continue to strengthen core business while increasing activities that will modify child and family services. The transformation will involve continued collaboration between the Department and Authorities to ensure the changes made reflect best practice in child and family services.

Building on initiatives to date, 2015-2016 will see progress made in the following areas:

Program Administration and Management

Two significant events in 2015 – 2016 will impact the administration and management of Child and Family Services; the Department of Health and Social Services creating a single territorial health and social services operating authority, and the transition to the 18th Legislative Assembly.

A cumbersome administration system can hinder positive program outcomes. The Government of the NWT will move from eight individual operating Health and Social Services Authorities to a single

territorial health and social services operating authority with regional offices for local program delivery, and working in partnership with the Tlicho Community Services Agency.. Child and Family Services will make changes to accommodate the transition to a single operating authority.

The territorial election in November 2015 will lead to the establishment of the 18th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. The Department will ensure Child and Family Services is responsive to the priorities established by the new Legislative Assembly.

Child and Family Services will undertake two specific policy projects to support program delivery. First, following the approval of Bill 47, an Act to amend the *Child and Family Services Act*, the Department will develop regulations, policies and procedures to support the implementation of the amendments. The changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* are expected to come into force April 1, 2016. Second, the Department will work with the Foster Family Coalition to examine options to support foster families through the provision of insurance for legal expenses that may arise.

Building on the file review of children and youth in permanent custody of the Director completed in 2013, the Department will examine the larger picture of permanency planning. When a child or youth becomes involved in the child and family services system a 'road map' must be developed leading to a positive permanent situation. The Department will undertake the development of a permanency planning process to provide direction and guidance to staff. Such a process must identify the variety of programs, services and options for consideration when identifying a plan for a child or youth.

Risk Management and Quality Assurance

The annual Child and Family Services audits in all seven authorities will be completed and action plans to correct deficiencies will be developed. Action plans will be implemented by the Authorities and the impacts will be measured during the following year's audit cycle. The process to improve practice and compliance with standards will be ongoing, with continued collaboration between department and authority staff.

Following the first year of quarterly data collection of data on a quarterly basis from the Authorities, the Directors of Social Programs and the Director of Child and Family Services will analyze the information, identify trends and revise data collection as required, including the type of data being collected. The information collected will be used to inform planning and related processes, including the annual audits and the development of the new child and family services electronic information system.

The Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual is a policy and procedure resource to direct the practice of Child Protection Workers. The Manual is a living document that will continually undergo changes and improvements to reflect evolving child protection practices. The Department will work with the Authorities to make adjustments as additions and changes are required.

The adaptations to the Nunavut Child Welfare Supervisory/Manager Training will be completed in preparation of the delivery of the inaugural supervisory training. The adaptations will focus on ensuring the cultures of the NWT are reflected in the curriculum. The training will be delivered to all Child Protection Supervisors and Managers and is anticipated to result in a higher quality of supervisory skills providing increased support to child protection staff.

Service Delivery and Child Protection Practice

During the past year, the Department and Authorities began the adaption of the first three Structured Decision Making assessment tools: Screening and Response Priority, Safety, and Risk of Future Harm. In 2015 – 2016, the adaptations will be completed and the tools will undergo testing by child protection staff. Front line staff will be involved in the inter-rater reliability process and field testing. The inter-rater reliability process involves staff completing the assessment tools based on prescribed scenarios while field testing will see the use of the tools in daily practice by Child Protection Workers. Both processes will provide results on the understanding and use of the tools, following which final adaptations will be made prior to territorial training and implementation in 2016. Along with the testing and finalization of the first three assessment tools, a working group will work to adapt and test the fourth tool, the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, for implementation in 2017.

The Directors of Social Programs will complete and distribute the manual of prevention programs across the NWT. This resource will be used by child and family services staff as they collaborate with families to address child protection concerns and identify programs and supports available in the family's community.

In line with the need to provide support to supervisors through the offering of specific training, adjustments to the Child Protection Worker statutory training program will be made. Recognizing the changes to child protection practice being undertaken and the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, the current training program must be updated. A working group will consider revisions to the curriculum and delivery methods to support staff in ways that are meaningful and complement 'learning through practice'.

In 2014 – 2015, the Department contracted the services of a project manager to oversee the development and implementation of the new information management system. In the upcoming year, the Department will work with the project manager to identify elements for the new system to ensure it is responsive to child and family services processes. The Department will issue a request for proposals for a vendor to provide an off-the-shelf product that can be adapted to the needs of the NWT for implementation in 2016. The new system will reflect the workflow of child and family services responsibilities and support staff to efficiently execute their statutory duties while improving the safety and quality of services provided under the *Child and Family Services* and *Adoption Acts*.

APPENDIX 1

Conditions under which a child is considered to be in need of protection, as specified in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

7(3) A child needs protection where:

- (a) the child has suffered physical harm inflicted by the child's parent or caused by the parent's inability to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;
- (b) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted by the child's parent or caused by the parent's inability to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;
- (c) the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by the child's parent or by another person in circumstances where the child's parent knew or should have known of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and was unwilling or unable to protect the child;
- (d) there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually molested or sexually exploited by the child's parent or by another person in circumstances where the child's parent knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and is unwilling or unable to protect the child;
- (e) the child has demonstrated severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive behaviour, or aggressive behaviour towards others, or any other severe behaviour that is consistent with the child having suffered emotional harm and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;
- (f) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer emotional harm of the kind described in paragraph;(e) and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (g) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the condition;
- (h) the child has been subject to a pattern of neglect that has resulted in physical or emotional harm to the child;
- (i) the child has been subject to a pattern of neglect and there is a substantial risk the pattern of neglect will result in physical or emotional harm to the child;
- (j) the child has suffered physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to repeated domestic violence by or towards a parent of the child and the child's parent fails or refuses to obtain services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;

- (k) the child has been exposed to repeated domestic violence by or towards a parent of the child and there is a substantial risk that the exposure will result in physical or emotional harm to the child and the child's parent fails or refuses to obtain services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (l) the child's health or emotional or mental well-being has been harmed by the child's use of alcohol, drugs, solvents or similar substances, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;
- (m) there is a substantial risk that the child's health or emotional or mental well-being will be harmed by the child's use of alcohol, drugs, solvents or similar substances, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (n) the child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate serious physical harm or serious physical suffering, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of the treatment;
- (o) the child suffers from malnutrition of a degree that, if not immediately remedied, could seriously impair the child's growth or development or result in permanent injury or death;
- (p) the child has been abandoned by the child's parent without the child's parent having made adequate provision for the child's care or custody and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision for the child's care or custody;
- (q) the child's parents have died without making adequate provision for the child's care or custody and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision;
- (r) the child's parent is unavailable or unable or unwilling to properly care for the child and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision for the child's care or custody; or
- (s) the child is less than 12 years of age and has killed or seriously injured another person or has persisted in injuring others or causing damage to the property of others, and services, treatment or healing processes are necessary to prevent a recurrence, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, the services, treatment or healing processes.

GLOSSARY:

DEFINITIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUS TYPES:

1 VOLUNTARY AND SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENTS

Voluntary Services Agreement: under Section 5(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, "the Director may enter into a written agreement with a person who has lawful custody of a child to provide services or to assist others in providing services, or to assist that person's family in obtaining services, to support and assist that person's family to care for the child." The children may reside in their own home or elsewhere. The initial term of a Voluntary Services Agreement is for six months, with provision for additional six-month renewals until the child reaches the age of 16.

Support Services Agreement: under Section 6(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, "the Director may enter into a written agreement with a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has not attained the age of majority and cannot reside with his or her parents to provide services or to assist others in providing services, to support and assist that person to care for himself or herself." Support Services Agreements can be made for six months and can be renewed up until the age of majority.

2 PLAN OF CARE AGREEMENT

A Plan of Care Agreement is a written agreement made between the person(s) with lawful custody of the child and the Plan of Care Committee. The Agreement outlines a case plan for the child and family. The children may reside in their own home or elsewhere. The maximum term of a Plan of Care Agreement (including extensions) is two years. The Plan of Care Agreement is for children considered to be in need of protection as defined in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

3 APPREHENSION

Apprehension occurs when a child is removed from the care of the person with lawful custody or from the person having care of the child at the time of the apprehension. A community Child Protection Worker, a peace officer or a person authorized by the Director under Section 55(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act* can apprehend a child when he or she believes the child to be "in need of protection." Apprehended children are placed in the care and custody of the Director of Child and Family Services.

4 APPREHENSION LESS THAN 72 HOURS

After an apprehension, a child can be returned to parental care without the matter going to court when the protection issue is resolved in less than 72 hours.

5 INTERIM COURT ORDER

An Interim Court Order is issued by a judge when there is a delay in the court proceedings to another specified court date. This Order will state with whom the child will reside until the time of the next court date.

6 SUPERVISION ORDER

A Supervision Order is a court order under Section 28(1)(b)(ii) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, which directs a Child Protection Worker to supervise the home of a child according to the terms and conditions of the Order. The Order may be for a period of up to one year.

7 TEMPORARY CUSTODY ORDER

Custody of a child is temporarily transferred by court order under Section 28(1)(b)(ii) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, to the Director of Child and Family Services. The Temporary Custody Order may be extended to the age of 18; however, under Section 47(3) "the court may not make an order that would result in the child being in the temporary custody of the Director for a continuous period exceeding 24 months".

8 PERMANENT CUSTODY ORDER

A Permanent Custody Order under Section 28(1)(b)(ii) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, permanently transfers the custody of a child to the Director of Child and Family Services until the child attains the age of 16. The Director has all of the rights and responsibilities of a parent under Section 48 of the *Child and Family Services Act*. The Permanent Custody Order may be extended to the age of majority if the youth is in agreement.