

Goal: Decrease Length of Stay

Data source (unless otherwise noted): AFCARS; may include some youth from juvenile justice cases.

As is true in any analysis, it is important to consider differences in statute, policy and practice when comparing jurisdictions.

Length of Stay - Children Exiting Care

This measures the length of stay in care for all the children and youth who *exit* care during the year. It can be broken out by exit reason (reunification, adoption, guardianship, emancipation), age, and race.

Concerns: This includes a mix of children who entered care years ago, as well as those who entered recently. The measure does not include children who remain in care. Trends can be negatively affected by achieving permanency for youth who have already been in care for a while. This is not an accurate measure of agency performance over time.

Length of stay: children exiting care during FY08			
State	Mean (avg) LOS in months	# of children exiting	Median LOS in months
Connecticut	27.0	2,949	19.2
Maine	33.4	979	21.7
Massachusetts	20.2	6,475	11.8
New Hampshire	27.6	553	16.5
Rhode Island	20.9	1,655	12.7
Vermont	22.1	712	18.2
New England	23.2	13,323	14.7

Length of Stay - Children Currently In Care

This measures the length of stay in care for all the children *in care* at a particular point in time. It can be broken out by age and race, or by current permanent goal. This is appropriate for targeting services to particular groups of children and youth in the system now.

Concerns: This includes a mix of children who entered care years ago, as well as those who entered recently. This measure is not as likely to count children who enter and exit quickly, and cannot predict how long children will remain in care. It is not an accurate measure of agency performance over time.

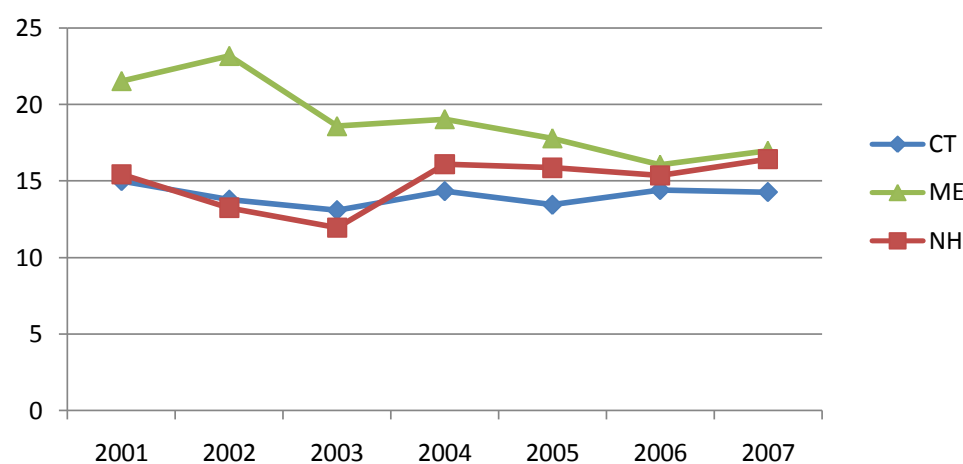
Length of stay for children in care on 9/30/08			
State	Mean (avg) LOS in months	# of children in care	Median LOS in months
Connecticut	30.4	5,373	17.5
Maine	28.6	1,864	15.6
Massachusetts	24.1	10,427	14.1
New Hampshire	30.9	1,029	16.2
Rhode Island	24.6	2,407	15.3
Vermont	24.4	1,200	17.0
All New England	26.4	22,300	15.3

Length of Stay - First Time Entry Cohorts

Source: Chapin Hall Foster Care Profiles

Also see "increased exits to permanency" for entry cohort data

Median Length of Stay (Months) for First Entries



This analysis uses first time entry cohorts - or groups of children who entered care for the first time (not re-entries) during each calendar year. These children are followed over time to see if the system is performing differently for children who enter care in more recent years.

Median length of stay for an entry cohort is simply how long it takes for half of the children to exit care.

In Maine, children entering care in more recent years have a shorter median length of stay than those who entered in 2001 or 2002.

In all three states, it took just about 15 months for half of the 2006 and 2007 entry cohorts to exit care.

This particular analysis does not distinguish between permanent and non-permanent exits, but a more detailed analysis is possible for states that have the capacity for longitudinal analysis.

Longitudinal analysis of entry cohorts is the most appropriate measure of system performance related to issues of length of stay and likelihood of achieving permanence.