
LOS ANGELES COUNTY FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES: FAMILY PRESERVATION AND PREVENTION & AFTERCARE MINI-BRIEF

Children's Data Network

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ATTRIBUTION

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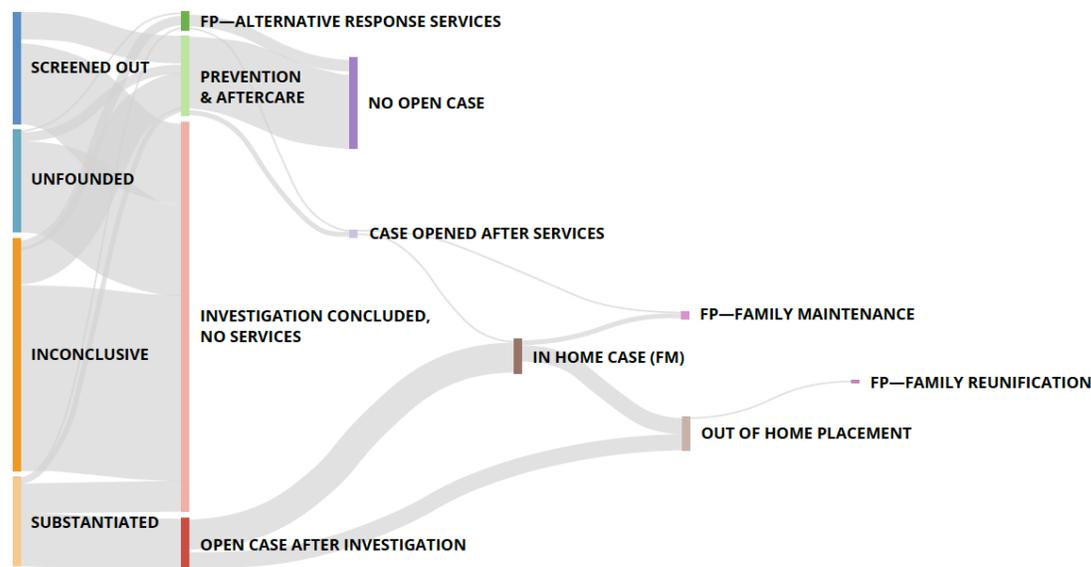
FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles County has long been an innovator in creating new approaches to community-based services for families and maintaining an array of supports and services. This research brief summarizes findings from an analysis of the impact of two core family-centered services (FCS) initiatives supported by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in partnership with the Department of Mental Health, Office of Child Protection, philanthropy, and community partners – **Family Preservation (FP) Services** and **Prevention and Aftercare (P&A) Networks**.

In October 2019, the Children’s Data Network, with support from First 5 LA, began working with DCFS to assess the landscape of FCS offered to families involved with LA County’s child welfare system. A focus on access and utilization of FCS was timely in light of current efforts to implement the Federal Families First Prevention Services Act and DCFS’s strategic plan, *Invest LA*. The CDN team worked with DCFS’s Business Information Systems Department to access data on families referred to these programs between 2016 and 2019 and with the Community Based Services Department to design the study, review historical documents and research reports, and gain input from community-based providers involved in these FCS initiatives.

The figure below illustrates how FP and P&A fit into the regular flow of child welfare services, and the following sections describe the findings of the CDN analysis, including the number of families and children served by these two initiatives between 2016 and 2019, referral patterns, and impact on subsequent child welfare system involvement.



Note. This figure illustrates movement from disposition of one focal referral through end of services for families referred to CWS in 2018 or 2019. FP-Family Maintenance represents families referred for community-based FP-FM services and FP-Family Reunification represents families referred for community-based FP-FR services.

FAMILY PRESERVATION

... IS ONE OF AN ARRAY OF COMMUNITY-BASED FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICE PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY DCFS TO PROTECT CHILDREN, SUPPORT FAMILIES AND IMPROVE CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

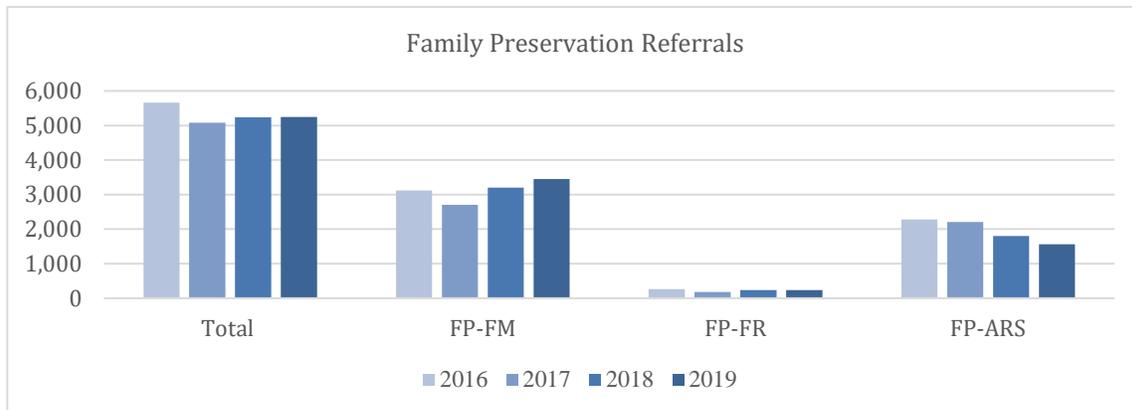
- **AIM:** Protect children while they remain in or safely transition back to their homes.
- **SERVICES:** Intensive services aimed at improving family functioning to ensure child safety and well-being (typically for six months with extensions based on family need).
- **POPULATION:** Serve families involved with DCFS and Juvenile Probation.

Community-based services that support families at different stages:

- **Alternative Response Services (FP-ARS or time limited FP services)** are designed to mitigate problems and prevent families reported to the Child Protection Hotline from entering the child protective services system.
- **Family Maintenance (FP-FM)** for families receiving DCFS Family Maintenance services while children remain at home.
- **Family Reunification (FP-FR)** for families receiving DCFS Family Reunification services when children return home after an out-of-home placement episode.

... SERVED MANY FAMILIES

Results show that 21,232 families (with approximately 43,000 children) were referred for community-based FP services between 2016 and 2019.^{1,2}



... BUT NOT ALL ELIGIBLE FAMILIES WERE REFERRED

Among all eligible families (families with an open in-home DCFS case), approximately one-third were referred for community-based FP-FM services. Families with children aged 0 to 5 years, Hispanic and

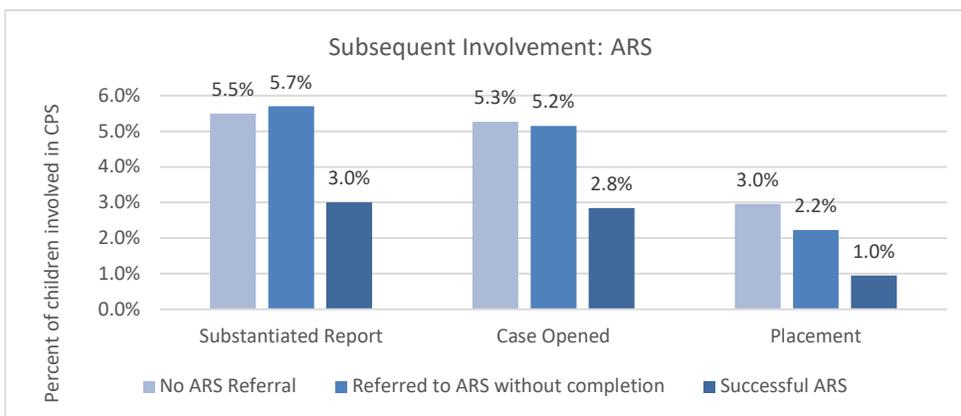
¹ Families are deduplicated within program but not across (i.e. a family referred to ARS in 2016 and to FP-FM in 2017 will be counted both in FP and ARS; a family referred to P&A in 2017 and 2018 is only counted once).

² Please note this is a count of families who were referred (*started* receiving services) in 2016 to 2019, it does not include continuing clients and therefore not a count of all families receiving services in a given year. For reference, in 2019, 5,245 families were referred to FP; in addition, the agencies were continuing services for 2,599 families referred prior to 2019.

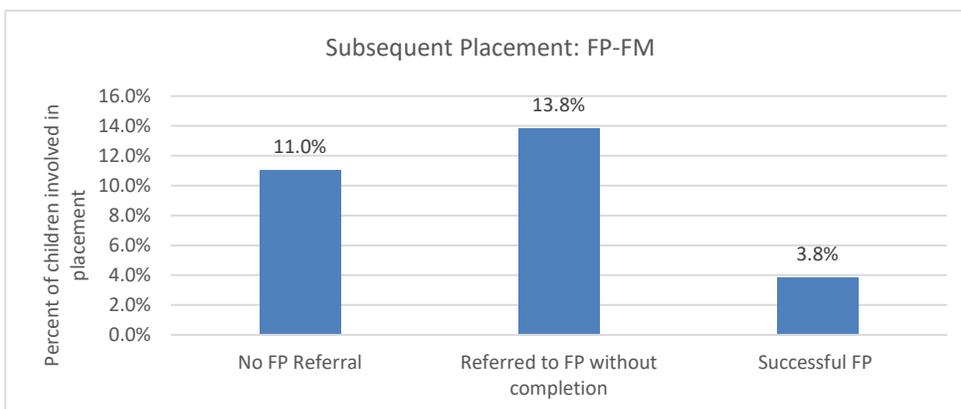
Asian families, families whose most serious allegation was emotional abuse, and families with no prior DCFS history were more likely to be referred to FP-FM than their counterparts. Approximately 4% of eligible families were referred for FP-ARS (i.e., they had experienced an investigated DCFS referral). Of those referred to FP-ARS, most were referred following an inconclusive disposition. Families with children ages 6 to 15 years, Hispanic and Asian families, families whose most serious allegations were emotional or physical abuse, and families with prior unsubstantiated reports were more likely to be referred to ARS.

... FAMILIES WHO COMPLETED FP HAD LOWER LEVELS OF CPS INVOLVEMENT

Families who successfully completed FP-ARS services were statistically significantly **less likely to have a subsequent substantiated referral, case opening, and out-of-home placement** compared with families who were not referred to FP-ARS.



Among families with an in-home case, **families who successfully completed³ FP-FM services were statistically significantly less likely to move to out of home placement** compared to families who were not referred. This highlights the importance of referring and engaging families in FP services to reduce the need for out-of-home care.



³ Successfully completed is defined as any family who had a termination code listed as *successfully completed Family Preservation services* or *Case plan goals met*.

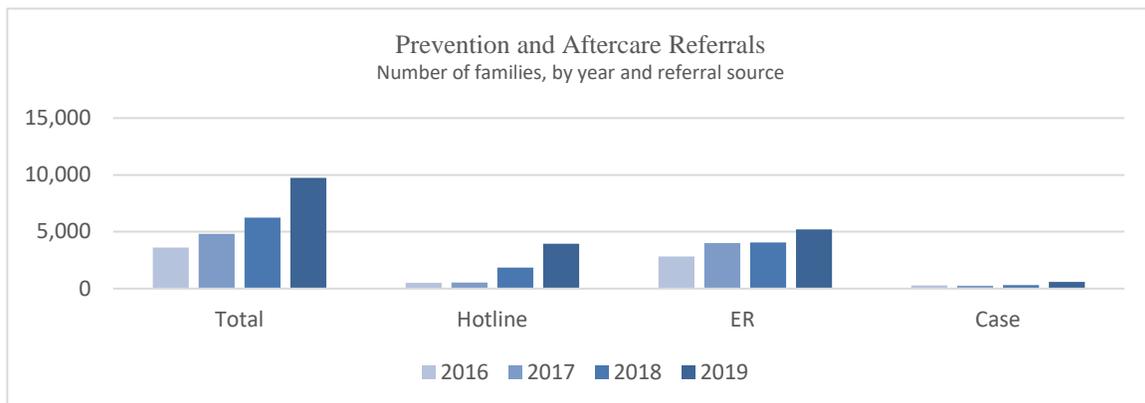
PREVENTION & AFTERCARE

... IS ONE OF AN ARRAY OF FAMILY CENTERED SERVICES PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY DCFS TO PROTECT CHILDREN, SUPPORT FAMILIES AND IMPROVE CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

- **AIM:** Strengthen families by decreasing social isolation, increasing economic opportunities, and improving access to resources, opportunities, and services through strengths-based, community-specific strategies.
- **SERVICES:** Primary prevention supports and services for families in the community, as well as secondary and tertiary prevention services for families anywhere on the continuum of Child Welfare Service (CWS) involvement (i.e., Hotline to case closure).
- **POPULATION:** Community networks offer neighborhood resources for all families, regardless of CWS status.

... SERVED MANY FAMILIES

A total of 24,400 DCFS families (representing 47,992 children) were referred by DCFS for P&A services in 2016 through 2019. A majority of P&A referrals were made during the investigative process, followed by the referrals made by the child protection hotline. Referrals to P&A increased 170% over the 4-year period, from 3,611 to 9,748. P&A referrals made through the child protection hotline showed the greatest growth,⁴ with a nearly 7-fold increase between 2016 and 2019.⁵



In addition to the families referred by DCFS, P&A networks also serve families within the greater Los Angeles County community who are not involved with the child welfare system, providing primary prevention resources and opportunities to engage families in supportive services and activities designed to prevent child maltreatment, keep children safe, and address family problems at an early stage before problems escalate. In 2019, one year alone, P&A welcomed 11,094 new families to community based primary prevention while continuing to serve an additional 41,693 families who

⁴ Between 2017- 2019, the DCFS Child Protection Hotline worked with partners to improve their Community Prevention Linkages Program; the “Moving Families from a Hotline to a Helpline” program began in June 2018.

⁵ Figure outlines the number of P&A referrals over a four-year period. Bars are clustered by referral source. For example, in 2016, 500 families were referred from the child protection hotline, 2,821 families were referred during an emergency response investigation, and 280 were referred during or after an open case. This is a deduplicated family count.

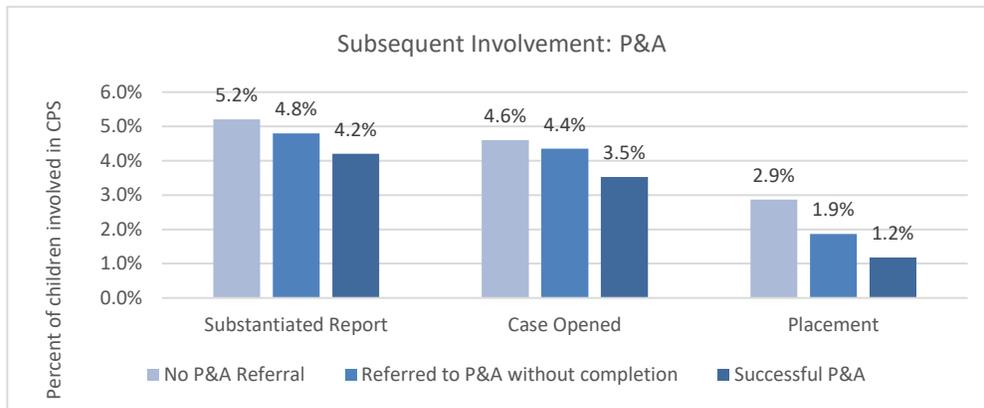
enrolled in previous years.

... BUT NOT ALL ELIGIBLE FAMILIES WERE REFERRED

In 2018 and 2019, 14% of all DCFS involved families (excluding those with out of home placement) were referred to P&A; 26% of families with a screened-out allegation were referred to P&A through the Child Protection Hotline. Families with children 6 and over, Hispanic families, families whose only allegation was neglect, and families with prior unsubstantiated referrals were more likely to be referred to P&A.

... FAMILIES WHO COMPLETED P&A HAD LOWER LEVELS OF CPS INVOLVEMENT

Families referred to P&A were statistically significantly **less likely to have a subsequent substantiated report, case opening, or out-of-home placement** following successful completion of services compared to families who were not referred or were referred but did not complete services.



An additional statistical analysis that matched families on age, race/ethnicity, and gender found that among families with a screened-out referral, those who were not referred to P&A had **2.5 times greater risk of a subsequent out-of-home placement** compared to families who completed P&A services. Families who were referred to P&A but did not accept services were almost **2 times as likely to experience a subsequent out-of-home placement** compared to families who completed P&A services. This highlights the importance of referring and engaging families in P&A services to reduce the need for out-of-home care.

A Note on Methodology

De-identified study data were derived from: (1) Child Welfare Services/Child Management System (CWS/CMS) records available through an active data sharing agreement with the California Department of Social Services; and (2) records from the FCS database maintained by DCFS and abstracted by BIS. Data were released for research purposes and all stages of analysis are governed by strict data security protocols. Data extracts included Family Preservation services, including Alternative Response Services (FP-ARS), Family Maintenance (FP-FM), and Family Reunification (FP-FR) between January 2016 and November 2019; Prevention and Aftercare services between January 2016 and December 2019; and, Partnerships for Families between January 2019 and November 2019. All FCS datasets include only those who started receiving services 2016 to 2019.

For More Information

The complete FCS report includes detail on program utilization, referral patterns across DCFS regional offices and Service Planning Areas, and analysis of subsequent CWS involvement following an FCS referral. Please see full report for a detailed analysis. For the full report please go to

<https://www.datanetwork.org/research/los-angeles-county-family-centered-services-using-administrative-data-to-understand-the-landscape-of-community-based-child-welfare-supports/>