



Changes and Trends in the Child Welfare Caseload in North Carolina

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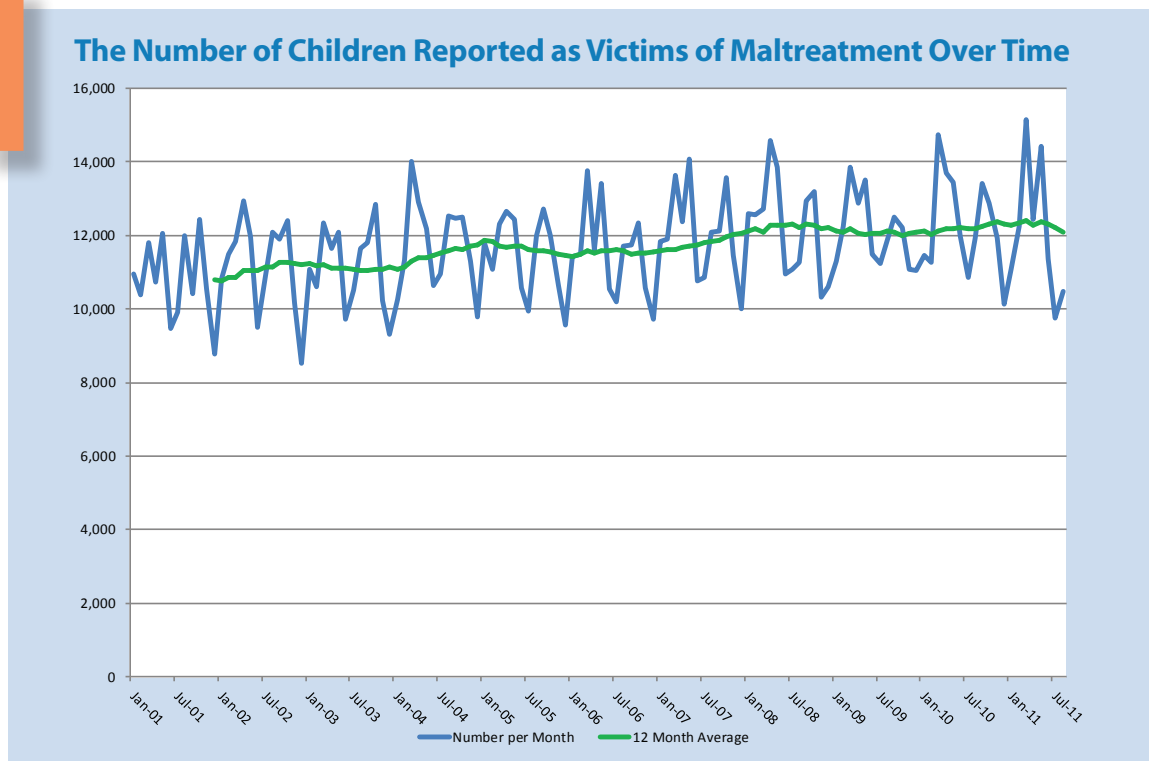
Changes and Trends in the Child Welfare Caseload in North Carolina: December 2011



This report explores changes and trends in the child welfare caseload in North Carolina. This analysis is based on data extracted from the Services Information System (SIS) in early December 2011. These extracts are used to construct and maintain a longitudinal file that tracks the experiences of children and youth who have been involved with the child welfare system in North Carolina. The analysis explores changes in the number of children reported as victims of maltreatment, the number of those reports which are substantiated, and the number of children entering foster care. Long-term trends are also discussed.

Figure One illustrates the changes in the number of reports of maltreatment¹ over time (specific monthly numbers can be found in Appendix A, Table One). As the figure indicates, the number of reports of maltreatment received monthly has increased slightly over time and is illustrated by

Figure 1



¹ The reports of maltreatment tracked in Figures One through Five of this report do not provide a unique count of children per year. There are a number of instances in which a child may be counted more than once in the analyses for this report. For example, a child may have more than one report investigated within a calendar year. Also, there are some instances where two separate investigations—as indicated by date of case decision on the DSS-5104 form—about an individual child are concluded within the same calendar month. However, instances where there are separate allegations of maltreatment for an individual child—as indicated by the form identification number—with the same case decision date are collapsed into a single report. Also, state policies require that when a report of maltreatment is received, all children living in the home must be assessed as a possible victim of maltreatment. As a result, the number of children reported as victims of maltreatment could fluctuate based upon the sizes of families involved, even as the number of reports remains steady.

the twelve month average trend line. In 2002, the number of children reported rose above 11,000 to about 11,800 at the end of 2004. The number of reports settled around 11,500 in 2005 and 2006 before rising above 12,000 beginning in 2007 to 2009. The monthly number of reports remained slightly above 12,000 throughout 2010 and has risen to about 12,300 in 2011. In March 2011, the monthly number of reports reached its highest point in the past ten years at about 15,150 children. The monthly numbers of reports for July and August 2011 will likely increase as data are updated over time.

Figure One also indicates that there is variation from month to month in the number of children reported. That variation is further illustrated in **Figure Two** which shows the pattern of the number of reports received each month by year from January 2007 through August 2011. As the figure indicates, the number of reports received generally peaks around May, then falls in June and July before beginning a slight rise through October. The number of reports then declines through December. The patterns for 2010 and 2011 appear to follow those of prior years.

Figure 2

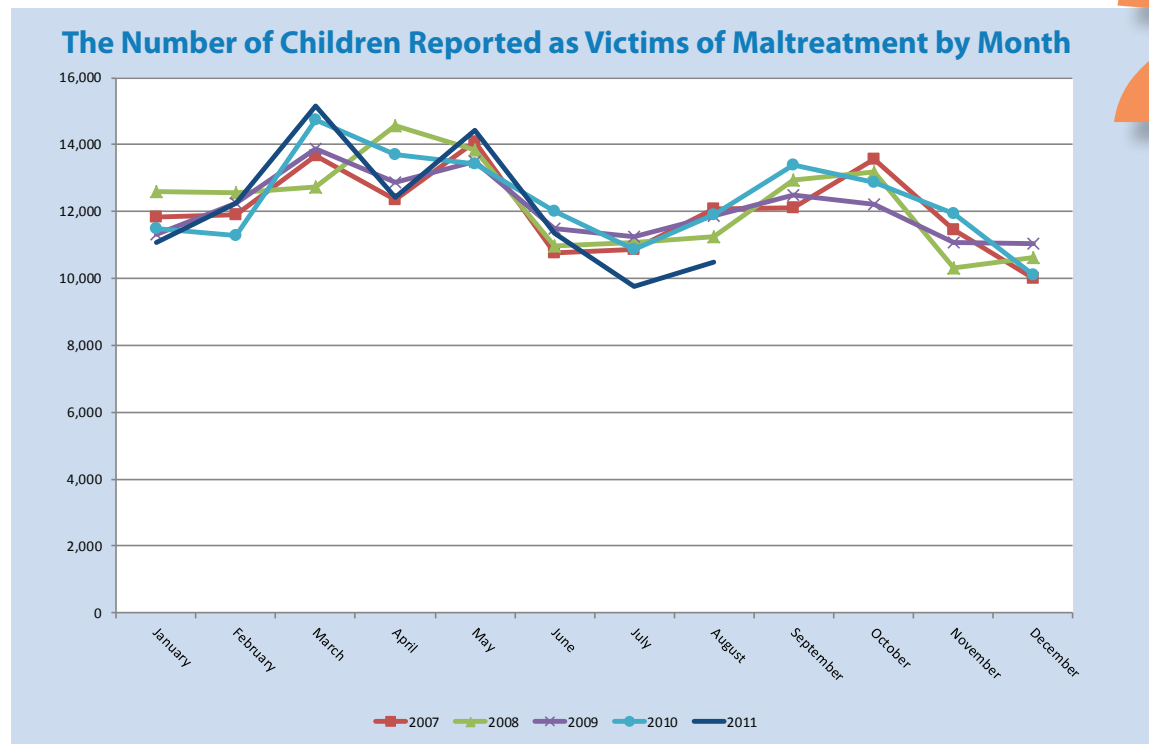
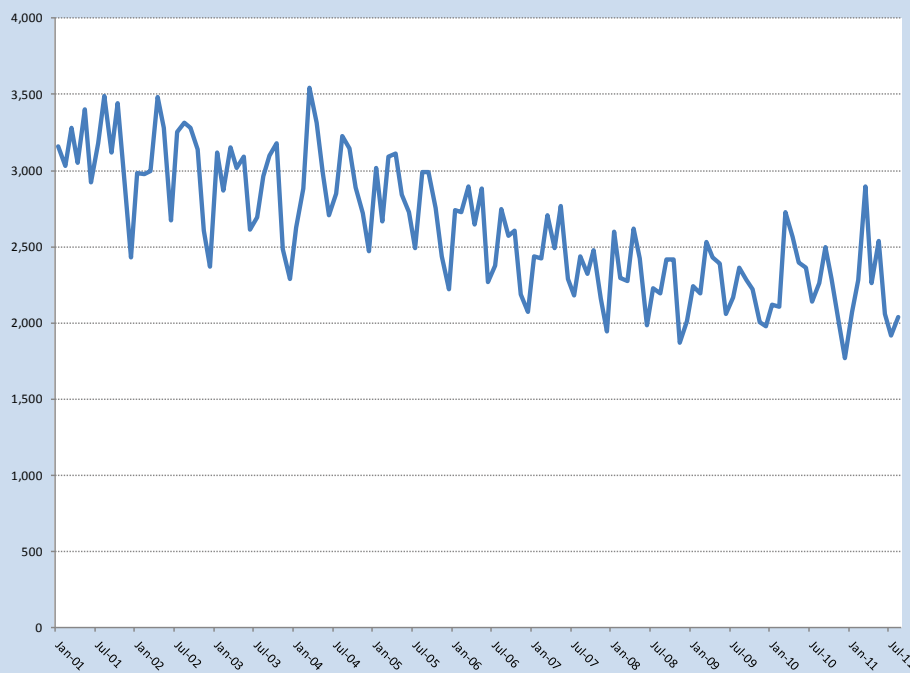


Figure Three illustrates the number of children whose reports of maltreatment were substantiated. Specific monthly numbers can be found in Appendix A, Table Two. A report is considered substantiated if it has a finding of abuse, neglect, abuse and neglect, dependency, or services needed. It does not include instances where the finding was services provided, child protective services no longer needed. Again, these reports are not based on a unique count of children per year. As the figure indicates, the number of children whose report is substantiated has declined over time, from around 3,100 per month in 2001 to around 2,300 per month in 2009-2011. The decline generally corresponds to the implementation of the Multiple Response System (MRS) between 2001 and 2006 (see Appendix B for a longer description of MRS).

Figure 3

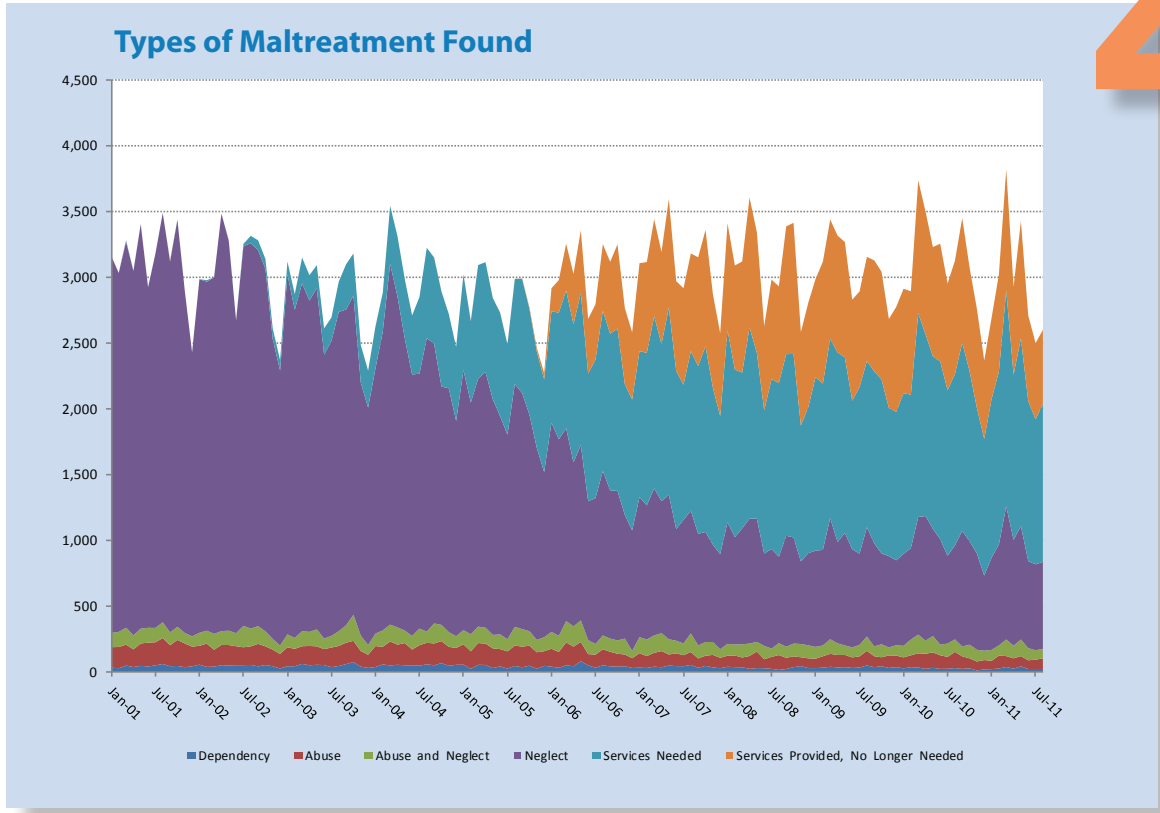
The Number of Children with Substantiated Reports of Maltreatment Over Time



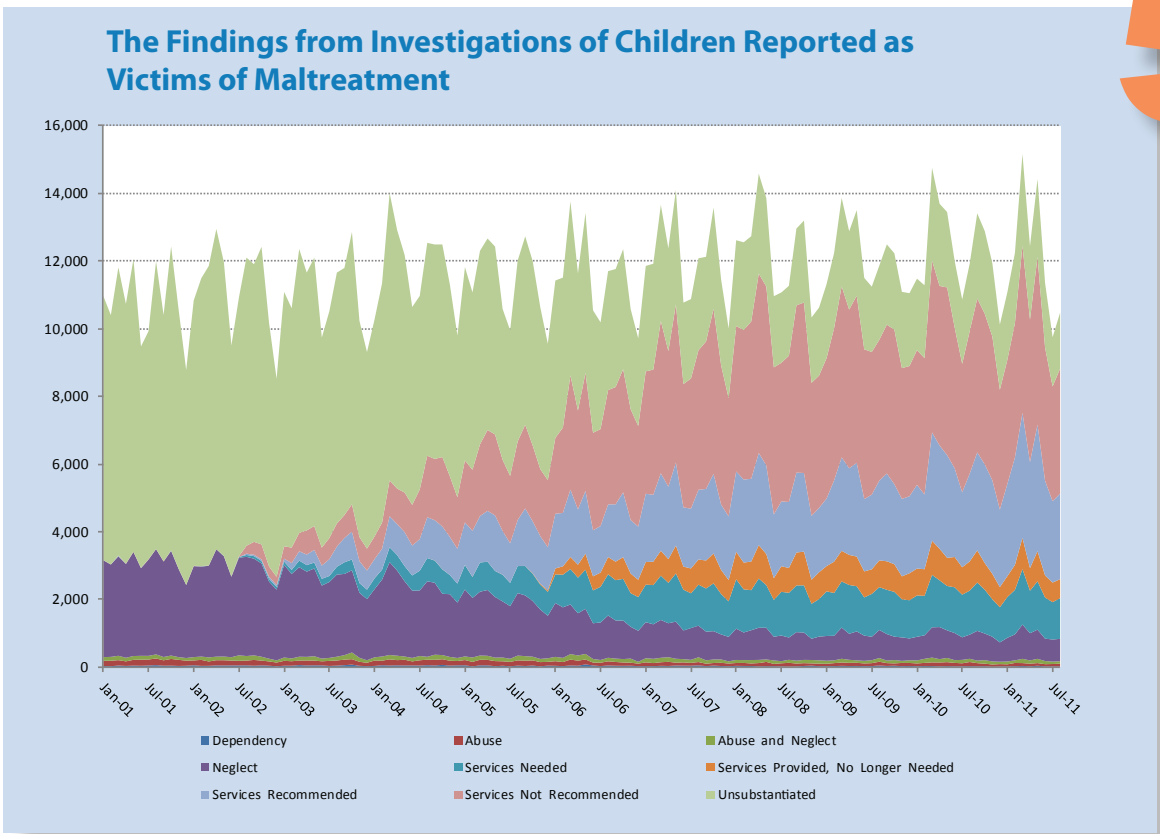
The changes in the type of maltreatment found over time are shown in **Figure Four**. In addition to the types presented in Figure Three (i.e., abuse, neglect, abuse and neglect, dependency, and services needed), this figure contains the count of children whose maltreatment investigation found that services were provided to the child or family during the protective services investigation but that child protective services were no longer needed. These reports do not provide a unique count of children per year. Specific monthly numbers can be found in Appendix A, Table Three. As the figure indicates, there has been a decline in the number of children found to be victims of neglect. This decline corresponds with an increase in the number of children where the investigation into the maltreatment concluded that services were needed. In mid-2006, there also was an increase in the number of maltreatment investigations which concluded that as the result of the services provided during the protective services investigation, no additional services were needed. In addition to the decrease in the number of instances where children and youth were found to be victims of neglect, there is a slight decrease over time in the number of children who were found to be victims of abuse.

Figure Five illustrates how findings from the investigation of maltreatment reports have changed over time. As the figure indicates, while there has been a decrease in the findings of abuse, neglect, abuse and neglect, and dependency, there has also been a decrease in the number of unsubstantiations. This decline in unsubstantiations is likely due to a decrease in the number of investigations routed through the investigative track. That notion is further supported by the increase in the number of findings of services not recommended, an outcome of the family assessment track. Figure Five also shows an increasing number of findings of services recommended. The increase reflects the growth of MRS. Even after the expansion of

4 Figure

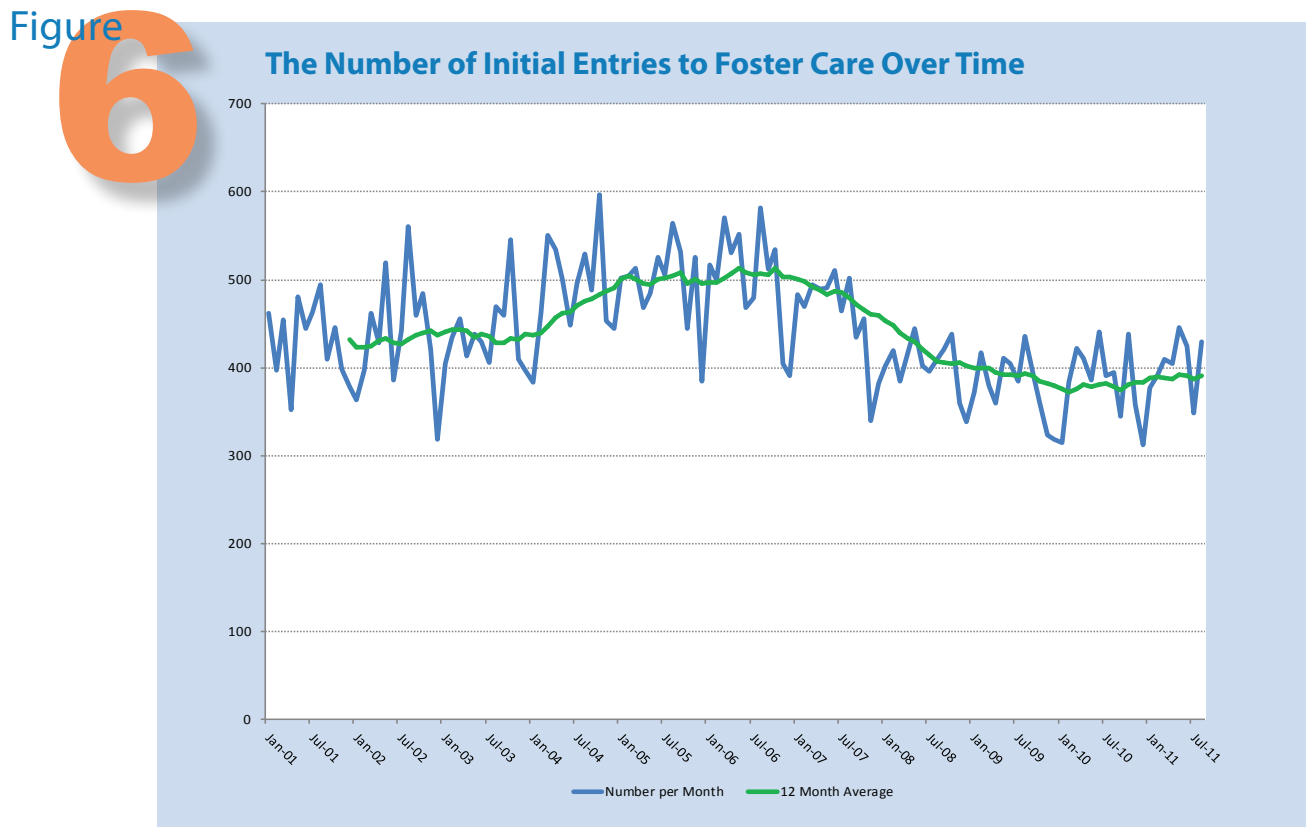


5 Figure



MRS statewide in 2006, the number of findings of services recommended has continued to grow. As Figure Four suggested earlier, the monthly sum of findings of abuse; neglect; abuse and neglect; dependency; services needed; and services provided, protective services no longer needed, has remained fairly steady over time. With the expansion of MRS, there appears to have been an increase in the number of families and children recommended for services above the number of children determined to be victims of maltreatment.

Figure Six reports the number of children entering foster care for the first time. Specific monthly numbers can be found in Appendix A, Table Four. According to the figure, the number of children entering foster care generally ranged between 400 and 500 per month between 2001 and 2004. There appears to have been an increase between 2005 and 2007, when the number of children entering care centered around 500 per month. In mid-2007, the number entering each month began to fall and has ranged between a high of 511 children in June 2007 to a low of 312 in December 2010. For 2011, the number of children entering per month has ranged between 446 in May and 349 in July. The twelve month average trend line suggests that the number of children entering per month stabilized to just below 400 for 2010 and 2011.





Summary

Since 2000, there has been a gradual increase in the monthly number of children with reports of maltreatment. There has been a gradual decrease in the number of reports that are classified as substantiations. That decrease is not as apparent when MRS assessments with a finding of services provided, services no longer needed are included. Also, following the implementation of MRS, there has been a gradual decrease in the combined number of assessments with a finding of unsubstantiated or services not recommended. There has been an increase in the number of cases with an MRS finding of services recommended. Initial entries into foster care increased until 2006-2007 and then declined before leveling off in 2010-2011 to just below 400 children per month.

This research is funded through a contract with the North Carolina Division of Social Services. The views expressed are those of the authors. Any errors due to the interpretation of the analysis of the data are the authors' alone.

Additional information on the child welfare program at the state or county level is available through the Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food and Nutrition Services web site, <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>.

A PDF version of this report can be found at http://sasweb.unc.edu/cgi-bin/broker?_service=default&_program=wrkfirst.highlight.sas

This report was designed by Rea Gibson of the UNC-CH School of Social Work.

Management Assistance Web Site Update

The latest version of the Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food and Nutrition Services web site at <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/> will be released in January 2012. The new release includes the following updates and changes:

Overall

- ▶ The site has been divided into Historical Data and Current Data for Work First and Food & Nutrition Services. Current Data is the default selection. To retrieve Historical Data, click on the Go to Historical Data pick box under Work First or Food & Nutrition Services on the left of the screen.
- ▶ The demographics section has been updated and expanded. Detailed population data are available for each county and judicial district, and can be broken down by age group and race/ethnicity.

Child Welfare

- ▶ Experiences Report:
 - Reorganized to show one measure per page.
 - Provided summary data for cohort data for ease of use.
- ▶ Abuse & Neglect:
 - Added the unique count of type found by most severe type.
 - Added information about most severe type found for different characteristics.
 - Updated the report rate per 1000 children.
- ▶ All measures can be viewed on two printable pages with comparisons to NC, counties of similar size, and judicial district through a pdf file.

Work First (WF)

- ▶ The site has been reorganized into Child Only, WF Benefits, Diversion, and Other type. Data begin with the WF Benefits start date of October 2009. Older data can be found on the Historical Data site.
- ▶ Application Data:
 - Added section with information about approvals, denials, and withdrawals.

Food and Nutrition Services

- ▶ Household Dynamics is now called Longitudinal Data, as it contains information about the same individuals and groups over time
- ▶ Household Characteristics is now called Point in Time Data, as it contains information gleaned from a “snapshot” taken at a particular point in time.

Appendix A

Table 1

The Number of Children Reported As Maltreated

Month	Number of Children Reported
Jan-01	10,961
Feb-01	10,397
Mar-01	11,808
Apr-01	10,728
May-01	12,051
Jun-01	9,473
Jul-01	9,922
Aug-01	11,988
Sep-01	10,402
Oct-01	12,425
Nov-01	10,552
Dec-01	8,775
Jan-02	10,830
Feb-02	11,483
Mar-02	11,850
Apr-02	12,941
May-02	11,964
Jun-02	9,500
Jul-02	10,918
Aug-02	12,094
Sep-02	11,900
Oct-02	12,414
Nov-02	10,164
Dec-02	8,517
Jan-03	11,080
Feb-03	10,602
Mar-03	12,350
Apr-03	11,653
May-03	12,093

Jun-03	9,733
Jul-03	10,509
Aug-03	11,653
Sep-03	11,790
Oct-03	12,853
Nov-03	10,224
Dec-03	9,306
Jan-04	10,269
Feb-04	11,335
Mar-04	14,005
Apr-04	12,907
May-04	12,170
Jun-04	10,637
Jul-04	10,963
Aug-04	12,531
Sep-04	12,483
Oct-04	12,485
Nov-04	11,297
Dec-04	9,795
Jan-05	11,814
Feb-05	11,067
Mar-05	12,297
Apr-05	12,660
May-05	12,421
Jun-05	10,579
Jul-05	9,949
Aug-05	12,008
Sep-05	12,722
Oct-05	11,986
Nov-05	10,630
Dec-05	9,551
Jan-06	11,419
Feb-06	11,505
Mar-06	13,757

Month	Number of Children Reported
Apr-06	11,626
May-06	13,415
Jun-06	10,539
Jul-06	10,184
Aug-06	11,696
Sep-06	11,758
Oct-06	12,346
Nov-06	10,569
Dec-06	9,713
Jan-07	11,850
Feb-07	11,915
Mar-07	13,650
Apr-07	12,369
May-07	14,091
Jun-07	10,766
Jul-07	10,870
Aug-07	12,076
Sep-07	12,119
Oct-07	13,572
Nov-07	11,452
Dec-07	10,001
Jan-08	12,609
Feb-08	12,548
Mar-08	12,728
Apr-08	14,573
May-08	13,854
Jun-08	10,957
Jul-08	11,067
Aug-08	11,263
Sep-08	12,955
Oct-08	13,188
Nov-08	10,327
Dec-08	10,619
Jan-09	11,313
Feb-09	12,233
Mar-09	13,862

Apr-09	12,872
May-09	13,497
Jun-09	11,496
Jul-09	11,239
Aug-09	11,859
Sep-09	12,486
Oct-09	12,222
Nov-09	11,084
Dec-09	11,045
Jan-10	11,473
Feb-10	11,279
Mar-10	14,748
Apr-10	13,685
May-10	13,441
Jun-10	11,998
Jul-10	10,858
Aug-10	11,921
Sep-10	13,403
Oct-10	12,876
Nov-10	11,932
Dec-10	10,119
Jan-11	11,074
Feb-11	12,233
Mar-11	15,157
Apr-11	12,432
May-11	14,412
Jun-11	11,349
Jul-11	9,744
Aug-11	10,471

Table 2

The Number of Children Substantiated (including Services Needed)

Month	Number of Children with a Substantiated Report
Jan-01	3,158
Feb-01	3,032
Mar-01	3,280
Apr-01	3,049
May-01	3,403
Jun-01	2,924
Jul-01	3,178
Aug-01	3,488
Sep-01	3,121
Oct-01	3,439
Nov-01	2,900
Dec-01	2,428
Jan-02	2,985
Feb-02	2,977
Mar-02	2,999
Apr-02	3,483
May-02	3,281
Jun-02	2,671
Jul-02	3,253
Aug-02	3,314
Sep-02	3,280
Oct-02	3,138
Nov-02	2,609
Dec-02	2,370
Jan-03	3,119
Feb-03	2,871
Mar-03	3,149
Apr-03	3,015
May-03	3,091
Jun-03	2,611
Jul-03	2,694
Aug-03	2,966

Sep-03	3,098
Oct-03	3,180
Nov-03	2,484
Dec-03	2,289
Jan-04	2,624
Feb-04	2,882
Mar-04	3,542
Apr-04	3,312
May-04	2,985
Jun-04	2,709
Jul-04	2,849
Aug-04	3,223
Sep-04	3,148
Oct-04	2,890
Nov-04	2,720
Dec-04	2,469
Jan-05	3,019
Feb-05	2,665
Mar-05	3,092
Apr-05	3,114
May-05	2,841
Jun-05	2,730
Jul-05	2,489
Aug-05	2,987
Sep-05	2,988
Oct-05	2,757
Nov-05	2,435
Dec-05	2,224
Jan-06	2,741
Feb-06	2,730
Mar-06	2,899
Apr-06	2,643
May-06	2,880
Jun-06	2,268
Jul-06	2,374
Aug-06	2,745
Sep-06	2,570
Oct-06	2,609
Nov-06	2,187

Month	Number of Children with a Substantiated Report
Dec-06	2,071
Jan-07	2,438
Feb-07	2,425
Mar-07	2,704
Apr-07	2,492
May-07	2,769
Jun-07	2,289
Jul-07	2,183
Aug-07	2,438
Sep-07	2,325
Oct-07	2,476
Nov-07	2,162
Dec-07	1,945
Jan-08	2,597
Feb-08	2,298
Mar-08	2,275
Apr-08	2,619
May-08	2,425
Jun-08	1,987
Jul-08	2,226
Aug-08	2,196
Sep-08	2,415
Oct-08	2,417
Nov-08	1,872
Dec-08	2,011
Jan-09	2,240
Feb-09	2,191
Mar-09	2,533
Apr-09	2,428
May-09	2,391
Jun-09	2,061
Jul-09	2,165
Aug-09	2,363
Sep-09	2,285
Oct-09	2,224
Nov-09	2,006

Dec-09	1,977
Jan-10	2,119
Feb-10	2,107
Mar-10	2,726
Apr-10	2,566
May-10	2,399
Jun-10	2,360
Jul-10	2,142
Aug-10	2,262
Sep-10	2,501
Oct-10	2,287
Nov-10	2,006
Dec-10	1,771
Jan-11	2,074
Feb-11	2,283
Mar-11	2,899
Apr-11	2,259
May-11	2,536
Jun-11	2,058
Jul-11	1,920
Aug-11	2,038

Table 3

The Number of Children by Type of Finding (Not Based on a Unique Count of Children; Some Children May Have Multiple Reports Investigated at the Same Time)

Month	Dependency	Abuse	Abuse and Neglect	Neglect	Services Needed	Services Provided, No Longer Needed	Services Recommended	Services Not Recommended	Unsubstantiated
Jan-01	33	156	108	2,861	0	2	1	0	7,800
Feb-01	29	161	115	2,727	0	1	3	0	7,361
Mar-01	49	159	129	2,934	9	0	9	8	8,511
Apr-01	38	134	107	2,768	2	0	2	10	7,667
May-01	47	170	113	3,073	0	2	1	4	8,641
Jun-01	42	181	113	2,587	1	0	4	6	6,539
Jul-01	51	175	109	2,843	0	0	0	10	6,734
Aug-01	61	197	120	3,110	0	0	3	1	8,496
Sep-01	44	159	98	2,818	2	7	0	3	7,271
Oct-01	46	198	100	3,091	4	0	6	3	8,977
Nov-01	37	180	80	2,602	1	0	2	5	7,645
Dec-01	43	150	78	2,157	0	0	0	2	6,345
Jan-02	56	143	99	2,687	0	0	0	9	7,836
Feb-02	39	177	98	2,651	12	0	0	10	8,496
Mar-02	41	128	121	2,709	0	0	0	3	8,848
Apr-02	52	154	105	3,172	0	0	0	0	9,458
May-02	50	155	109	2,963	4	0	4	2	8,677
Jun-02	52	144	99	2,376	0	0	4	4	6,821
Jul-02	52	136	163	2,883	19	0	0	25	7,640
Aug-02	54	141	135	2,929	55	0	38	234	8,508
Sep-02	43	171	135	2,856	75	0	42	380	8,198
Oct-02	53	142	114	2,755	74	0	44	445	8,787
Nov-02	44	126	81	2,276	82	0	62	302	7,191
Dec-02	27	110	64	2,090	79	0	53	249	5,845
Jan-03	44	144	98	2,735	98	0	84	366	7,511
Feb-03	44	132	83	2,494	118	0	204	457	7,070
Mar-03	62	134	114	2,643	196	0	274	543	8,384
Apr-03	51	147	107	2,517	193	0	311	714	7,613
May-03	55	140	129	2,592	175	0	374	704	7,924
Jun-03	53	121	80	2,157	200	0	389	531	6,202
Jul-03	37	149	89	2,241	178	0	495	624	6,696
Aug-03	46	152	112	2,426	230	0	596	682	7,409

Month	Dependency	Abuse	Abuse and Neglect	Neglect	Services Needed	Services Provided, No Longer Needed	Services Recommended	Services Not Recommended	Unsubstantiated
Sep-03	60	163	132	2,399	344	0	719	674	7,299
Oct-03	76	161	198	2,426	319	0	822	810	8,041
Nov-03	41	118	118	1,921	286	0	648	709	6,383
Dec-03	31	100	74	1,804	280	2	563	646	5,806
Jan-04	38	159	95	2,014	318	2	565	669	6,409
Feb-04	58	134	124	2,271	295	0	618	769	7,066
Mar-04	50	182	128	2,742	440	0	915	1,060	8,488
Apr-04	55	153	131	2,515	458	0	915	1,047	7,633
May-04	51	169	95	2,220	450	0	1,001	1,172	7,012
Jun-04	51	120	103	1,986	449	0	884	1,200	5,844
Jul-04	48	156	126	1,937	582	0	933	1,466	5,715
Aug-04	59	163	85	2,230	686	0	1,206	1,816	6,286
Sep-04	51	166	152	2,124	655	3	1,188	1,811	6,333
Oct-04	68	167	123	1,811	721	3	1,263	2,050	6,279
Nov-04	47	144	112	1,852	565	0	1,127	1,790	5,660
Dec-04	55	128	89	1,636	561	0	1,027	1,522	4,777
Jan-05	56	155	107	1,976	725	3	1,253	1,829	5,710
Feb-05	24	133	130	1,760	618	4	1,358	1,803	5,237
Mar-05	55	165	125	1,884	863	0	1,373	2,118	5,714
Apr-05	54	162	121	1,943	834	0	1,503	2,386	5,657
May-05	30	150	102	1,790	769	2	1,638	2,392	5,548
Jun-05	43	131	112	1,657	787	2	1,292	2,100	4,455
Jul-05	26	131	92	1,554	686	1	1,169	1,989	4,301
Aug-05	46	155	142	1,845	799	1	1,358	2,320	5,342
Sep-05	36	157	133	1,794	868	2	1,699	2,473	5,560
Oct-05	48	152	110	1,644	803	13	1,535	2,237	5,444
Nov-05	25	125	94	1,459	732	28	1,409	1,978	4,780
Dec-05	47	111	106	1,255	705	47	1,271	1,982	4,027
Jan-06	41	136	128	1,590	846	175	1,615	2,241	4,647
Feb-06	32	120	123	1,493	962	248	1,578	2,520	4,429
Mar-06	51	174	162	1,465	1,047	355	1,991	3,372	5,140
Apr-06	44	149	154	1,246	1,050	382	1,633	2,923	4,045
May-06	82	146	164	1,333	1,155	475	1,852	3,485	4,723
Jun-06	51	85	106	1,055	971	415	1,360	2,881	3,615

Month	Dependency	Abuse	Abuse and Neglect	Neglect	Services Needed	Services Provided, No Longer Needed	Services Recommended	Services Not Recommended	Unsubstantiated
Jul-06	33	99	81	1,108	1,053	420	1,375	2,863	3,152
Aug-06	51	122	105	1,249	1,218	506	1,556	3,375	3,514
Sep-06	43	111	100	1,126	1,190	547	1,693	3,464	3,484
Oct-06	41	98	101	1,136	1,233	640	1,915	3,637	3,545
Nov-06	44	89	121	940	993	578	1,581	3,268	2,955
Dec-06	31	74	55	916	995	510	1,571	2,973	2,588
Jan-07	33	110	122	1,064	1,109	668	2,016	3,615	3,113
Feb-07	31	90	126	1,019	1,159	690	1,976	3,697	3,127
Mar-07	41	105	132	1,118	1,308	736	2,287	4,499	3,424
Apr-07	36	123	136	1,003	1,194	699	2,139	4,003	3,036
May-07	49	84	116	1,097	1,423	824	2,451	4,672	3,375
Jun-07	45	97	96	848	1,203	681	1,750	3,642	2,404
Jul-07	44	84	89	939	1,027	733	1,767	3,843	2,344
Aug-07	54	98	141	933	1,212	742	2,060	4,120	2,716
Sep-07	32	71	99	848	1,275	826	2,113	4,354	2,501
Oct-07	47	77	104	836	1,412	883	2,351	4,876	2,986
Nov-07	35	95	98	740	1,194	711	1,930	4,114	2,535
Dec-07	29	79	65	723	1,049	629	1,877	3,492	2,058
Jan-08	40	84	90	924	1,459	812	2,371	4,293	2,536
Feb-08	37	89	83	816	1,273	791	2,453	4,417	2,589
Mar-08	36	74	101	881	1,183	844	2,444	4,646	2,519
Apr-08	24	98	94	949	1,454	986	2,721	5,297	2,950
May-08	30	126	73	936	1,260	916	2,619	5,281	2,613
Jun-08	29	68	102	701	1,087	641	1,883	4,343	2,103
Jul-08	24	91	63	757	1,291	756	1,914	4,094	2,077
Aug-08	16	113	90	657	1,320	734	1,949	4,319	2,065
Sep-08	23	85	84	843	1,380	971	2,360	4,940	2,269
Oct-08	37	82	97	807	1,394	996	2,322	5,034	2,419
Nov-08	45	67	101	628	1,031	710	1,888	3,927	1,930
Dec-08	30	74	99	700	1,108	792	1,900	3,908	2,008
Jan-09	30	71	90	731	1,318	746	1,994	4,147	2,186
Feb-09	33	87	82	726	1,263	926	2,400	4,498	2,218
Mar-09	40	98	111	921	1,363	905	2,759	5,052	2,613
Apr-09	35	94	89	769	1,441	888	2,558	4,686	2,312

Month	Dependency	Abuse	Abuse and Neglect	Neglect	Services Needed	Services Provided, No Longer Needed	Services Recommended	Services Not Recommended	Unsubstantiated
May-09	37	93	72	854	1,335	876	2,769	4,936	2,525
Jun-09	31	80	76	746	1,128	768	2,136	4,422	2,109
Jul-09	34	85	88	692	1,266	726	2,204	4,215	1,929
Aug-09	50	111	109	830	1,263	791	2,357	4,157	2,191
Sep-09	37	83	75	783	1,307	843	2,591	4,398	2,369
Oct-09	44	68	99	690	1,323	817	2,362	4,563	2,256
Nov-09	31	95	61	693	1,126	676	2,288	3,862	2,252
Dec-09	37	88	79	645	1,128	797	2,273	3,848	2,150
Jan-10	28	83	88	699	1,221	793	2,472	3,980	2,109
Feb-10	37	90	120	694	1,166	786	2,208	4,026	2,152
Mar-10	34	108	142	894	1,548	1,010	3,197	5,078	2,737
Apr-10	24	115	99	947	1,381	932	3,049	4,711	2,427
May-10	32	117	125	814	1,311	830	3,034	4,952	2,226
Jun-10	24	103	81	801	1,351	894	2,623	4,155	1,966
Jul-10	25	90	101	667	1,259	809	2,213	3,794	1,900
Aug-10	30	123	95	713	1,301	862	2,593	4,213	1,991
Sep-10	24	95	75	879	1,428	948	2,895	4,544	2,515
Oct-10	28	76	104	786	1,293	786	2,915	4,449	2,439
Nov-10	12	68	89	731	1,106	753	2,764	4,244	2,165
Dec-10	20	71	71	571	1,038	595	2,289	3,538	1,926
Jan-11	22	63	83	701	1,205	616	2,727	3,665	1,992
Feb-11	27	98	77	767	1,314	739	3,171	3,967	2,073
Mar-11	38	83	126	1,013	1,639	920	3,694	4,941	2,703
Apr-11	26	78	96	804	1,255	667	3,131	4,206	2,169
May-11	43	78	126	862	1,427	890	3,739	4,956	2,291
Jun-11	23	66	93	661	1,215	651	2,799	3,931	1,910
Jul-11	23	71	71	653	1,102	579	2,403	3,388	1,454
Aug-11	23	80	73	661	1,201	562	2,527	3,694	1,650

Table 4

The Number of Children Initially Entering Foster Care

Month	Number of Children Initially Entering Care
Jan-01	462
Feb-01	397
Mar-01	455
Apr-01	352
May-01	481
Jun-01	445
Jul-01	463
Aug-01	495
Sep-01	410
Oct-01	446
Nov-01	398
Dec-01	378
Jan-02	363
Feb-02	397
Mar-02	462
Apr-02	428
May-02	520
Jun-02	386
Jul-02	442
Aug-02	561
Sep-02	459
Oct-02	484
Nov-02	421
Dec-02	318
Jan-03	405
Feb-03	435
Mar-03	456
Apr-03	413
May-03	438
Jun-03	430
Jul-03	406
Aug-03	469

Sep-03	459
Oct-03	545
Nov-03	410
Dec-03	397
Jan-04	383
Feb-04	462
Mar-04	550
Apr-04	534
May-04	501
Jun-04	448
Jul-04	496
Aug-04	529
Sep-04	488
Oct-04	597
Nov-04	453
Dec-04	444
Jan-05	502
Feb-05	505
Mar-05	513
Apr-05	468
May-05	485
Jun-05	526
Jul-05	506
Aug-05	564
Sep-05	532
Oct-05	444
Nov-05	526
Dec-05	384
Jan-06	517
Feb-06	499
Mar-06	570
Apr-06	531
May-06	552
Jun-06	468
Jul-06	479
Aug-06	582
Sep-06	512
Oct-06	535

Month	Number of Children Initially Entering Care
Nov-06	404
Dec-06	391
Jan-07	483
Feb-07	470
Mar-07	494
Apr-07	489
May-07	491
Jun-07	511
Jul-07	465
Aug-07	502
Sep-07	435
Oct-07	456
Nov-07	340
Dec-07	382
Jan-08	402
Feb-08	419
Mar-08	384
Apr-08	417
May-08	445
Jun-08	402
Jul-08	396
Aug-08	410
Sep-08	421
Oct-08	438
Nov-08	360
Dec-08	338
Jan-09	372
Feb-09	417
Mar-09	379
Apr-09	360
May-09	411
Jun-09	405
Jul-09	384
Aug-09	436

Sep-09	394
Oct-09	361
Nov-09	323
Dec-09	318
Jan-10	315
Feb-10	383
Mar-10	422
Apr-10	411
May-10	386
Jun-10	441
Jul-10	391
Aug-10	395
Sep-10	345
Oct-10	438
Nov-10	358
Dec-10	312
Jan-11	377
Feb-11	392
Mar-11	409
Apr-11	404
May-11	446
Jun-11	424
Jul-11	349
Aug-11	430

Appendix B

Multiple Response System (MRS) Description

MRS was implemented as a pilot program in ten counties in 2001. In 2003, 42 additional counties began applying MRS policies. MRS was expanded statewide in January 2006. Under MRS, investigations of reports of maltreatment can follow one of two tracks: investigative or family assessment. The investigative track is similar in most respects to the way maltreatment reports were handled prior to the implementation of MRS. The family assessment track, on the other hand, allows and encourages the provision of services to families that would build on their strengths and eliminate the risk of harm to their children.

Counties have some flexibility in whether to use the investigative or the family assessment track. According to policy², the choice of response should be based on the approach that best provides for the child's safety, permanence, and wellbeing. State policies require that all reports of abuse follow the investigative track. In addition, the policies require that certain reports of neglect—such as those involving a child fatality or where there is medical neglect of a disabled infant—follow the investigative track as well. For other neglect or dependency reports, county departments of social services may use the family assessment response. The family assessments incorporate System of Care (SOC) principles such as involving the family in decisions, developing an individualized plan which builds on the family's strengths, fostering interagency collaboration to address the family's needs, and developing culturally appropriate responses.

Just as the tracks differ in their approach, the findings differ as well. Under the investigative track, findings for abuse, neglect, or dependency are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated. For reports handled through the family assessment track, the findings can be services needed; services recommended; services provided, protective services no longer needed; and services not recommended. The finding of services needed is made when there are questions about the frequency and severity of maltreatment, current safety issues, if there is a risk of harm in the future, or if the child is in need of protective services. The finding of services provided, protective services no longer needed is used if, during the assessment, a determination was made that the threat to the child's safety or the risk of future harm were great enough to require the provision of involuntary services, but the problems were addressed and services were no longer required at the end of the assessment period.

² The policies for investigations are found in Volume 1: Children's Services, Chapter VIII: Child Protective Services, of the NC-DSS Family Services Manual available at <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-60/man/>.