



## Effectively Integrating Data, Policy, and Practice

**New England Permanency Convening**  
November 30 – December 1, 2010

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Certain concepts used with permission from the presentation "Generating Commitment to Act - Data as Change Agent"(2007) authored by Marie Jameson

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### What gets in the way

(Or why people hate data)

- Data overload – let's measure everything!
- Technical language / boring presentations
- Inaccuracies (disregard the findings)
- "Data people" who don't understand practice
- "Practice people" who don't understand data

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**Myth:** Data = Good Decision

**Reality:** The Right Data + The Right People = Good Decision

Who are the right people?

- Birth parents
- Youth in care
- Foster Adoptive/Parents
- Front line workers and supervisors
- Policy makers (not in "silos")
- The Data Broker

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### Strategies for effectively integrating data, policy, and practice:

- Provide **localized, meaningful data** that establishes context and describes trends
- Identify where improvement is needed and **create urgency for action**
- Keeps **commitment for change**: focus on priority areas (what is measured improves)
- **Provides feedback**, celebrates success and identifies areas for further work

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### Establishing Context: National Child Welfare Trends Through FY 2009

- No substantial change in the percentage of calls that are screened in
- Decline in substantiations / children with founded allegations
- Increased use of 'Alternative/Differential Response'

#### Among children with founded allegations of maltreatment:

- Decline in the number entering care across all ages
- Decline in the number in-care at a point in time

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### Open Discussion

Are we seeing these trends in New England?

How are economic conditions affecting child welfare agencies?

- Increased calls to intake/hotlines ?
- More 'basic needs' assessments?
- Are communities able to meet these needs?

Any changes in case mix?

- Do cases seem "more complex"
- Increase in substance abuse or Domestic Violence?
- Changing demographics (More infants? More older youth? Different populations?)

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### Important notes about the data source

- The following presentation relies on AFCARS data
- Available and accessible
  - Standardized (as much as possible)
  - Used in federal reporting (public)
  - In many states, includes some level of Juvenile Justice cases.

Differences in statute and policy should be considered when comparing jurisdictions.

Our working assumption is that your own data are better and more fine-tuned to your practice. However, the general trends should be similar, and the data here are useful for generating thoughtful discussion.

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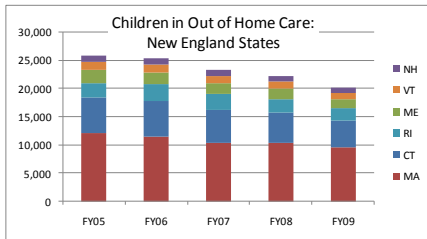
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### Localized, Meaningful Data: Out of Home Care in New England



Between FY05 and FY09, the number of children and youth in care in New England decreased by 22%

Source: AFCARS

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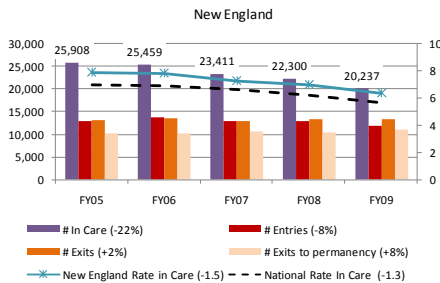
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### Localized, Meaningful Data: Out of Home Care in New England



Source: AFCARS

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**Opportunity for discussion:**

What factors are influencing entries into care across age groups?

What approaches have been successful in reducing entries among older youth?

What opportunities exist for collaboration with other youth programs to maintain school age youth safely in their homes?

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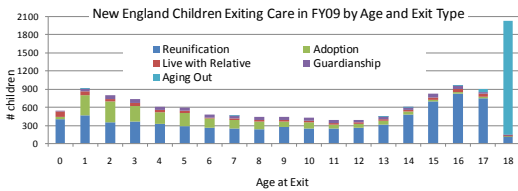
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**Localized, Meaningful Data:**  
Exits from Care



Exits from care and the impact of length of stay

Source: AFCARS

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**Opportunity for discussion:**

What factors are influencing EXITS from care across age groups?

Questions to ask of the data:

- How many youth have a discharge reason that differs from their permanent goal?
- Are more children exiting to permanency?
- How has length of stay changed? (And can your system follow an entry cohort?)
- Variation across offices/regions?

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**Creating Urgency for Action:**

- Almost one quarter (23%) of children entering care in FY09 in New England have been removed from their homes at least one other time. (no change since FY05)
- 38% of older youth in care (13-21yrs) are residing in group homes or institutions. (no change since FY05)
- During FY2009, over 2,000 New England youth aged out of care without achieving permanency (slight decrease since FY07)
- Only about 40% of the children who enter care will return to their own homes\*

\*based on first time entry cohorts for three states, NH, ME, and CT followed for three years. Reunifications after 3 years are minimal. Entry cohort data were not available for MA, RI, or VT.

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**Creating Urgency for Action:**

**What would your slide look like?**




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**Commitment for Change:** Data within a Framework of Solutions and Strategies

**Strategies for:**

- Engaging families
- Collaboration with stakeholders
- Reducing entries (including re-entries) by maintaining children safely in their own homes
- Supporting older youth in family settings
- Increasing reunifications
- Finding permanent families for children who cannot safely reunify
- Maintaining and fostering connections
- Addressing the immediate needs of older youth approaching adulthood




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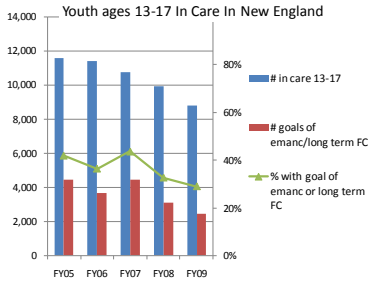
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### Providing Feedback: Celebrating Success and engaging for continued improvements



Source: AFCARS

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### Summary and Q&A

After reviewing the data from your state in your packets.

- What jumps out at you?
- What strategies are in place, or could be put in place to address this issue?
- Is there commitment to change at all levels?
- What are the next steps?

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