

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ADMINISTERING THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES ACT



THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE SERVICES UNDER THE CSA

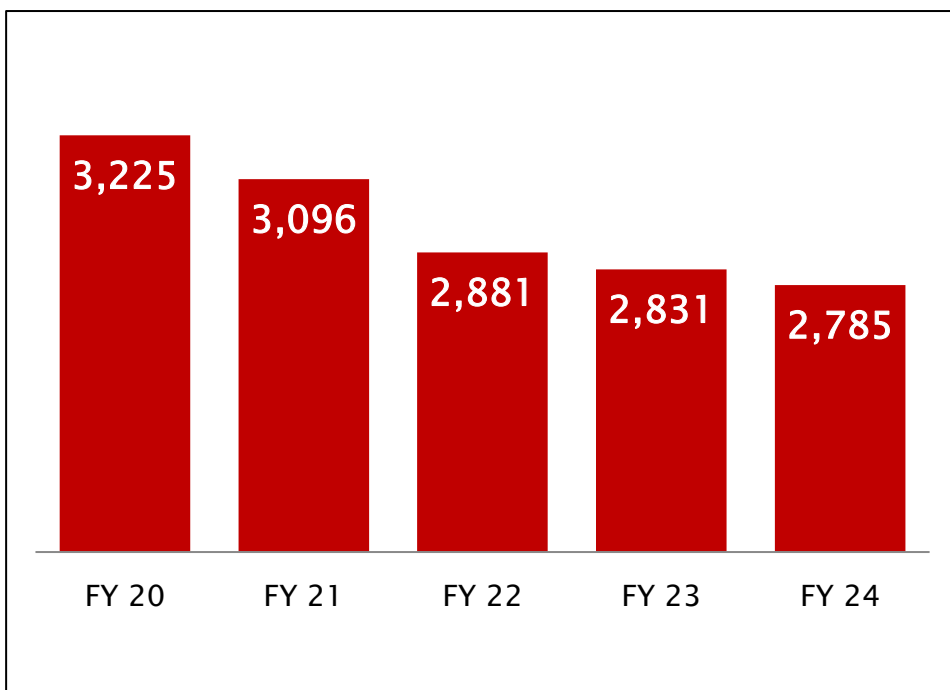
Annual Report to the General Assembly, December 1, 2024

In accordance with the Appropriation Act, Chapter 2, Item 268 (K)(1)

Item 268. K.1. The Office of Children's Services (OCS) shall report on funding for therapeutic foster care services including but not limited to the number of children served annually, average cost of care, type of service provided, length of stay, referral source, and ultimate disposition.

Therapeutic foster care (TFC)¹ is a community-based program that addresses placement and service needs of children in the custody of a local department of social services (LDSS). Foster parents trained, supervised, and supported by a private agency (licensed child-placing agency, or LCPA) provide TFC. TFC is family-based, goal-directed, and results-oriented, emphasizing permanency planning for children in care. An LDSS makes all referrals for TFC. Total TFC costs may be offset partially by federal/state Title IV-E revenues to cover maintenance costs (room and board) for eligible children. Title IV-E revenues and payments are handled through the LDSS and the state Department of Social Services.

Therapeutic Foster Care Number of Youth Served (FY2020 - FY2024)



The Children's Services Act (CSA, §2.2-2648 et seq.) was enacted in 1993 to create a collaborative system of services and funding for at-risk youth and families.

The CSA establishes local multidisciplinary teams responsible to work with families to plan services according to each child's unique strengths and needs and to administer the community's CSA activities.

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) is the administrative entity responsible for ensuring effective and efficient implementation of the CSA across the Commonwealth.

Guiding principles for OCS include:

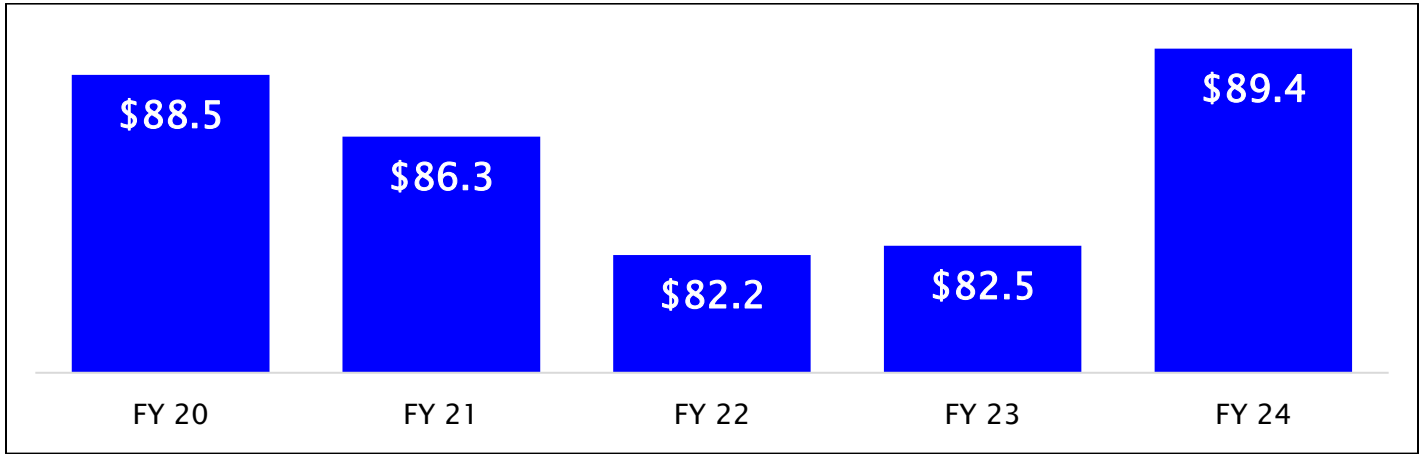
- Child and family directed care,
- Equitable access to quality services,
- Responsible and effective use of public funds,
- Support for effective, evidence-based practices, and
- Collaborative partnerships across state, local, public, and private stakeholders.



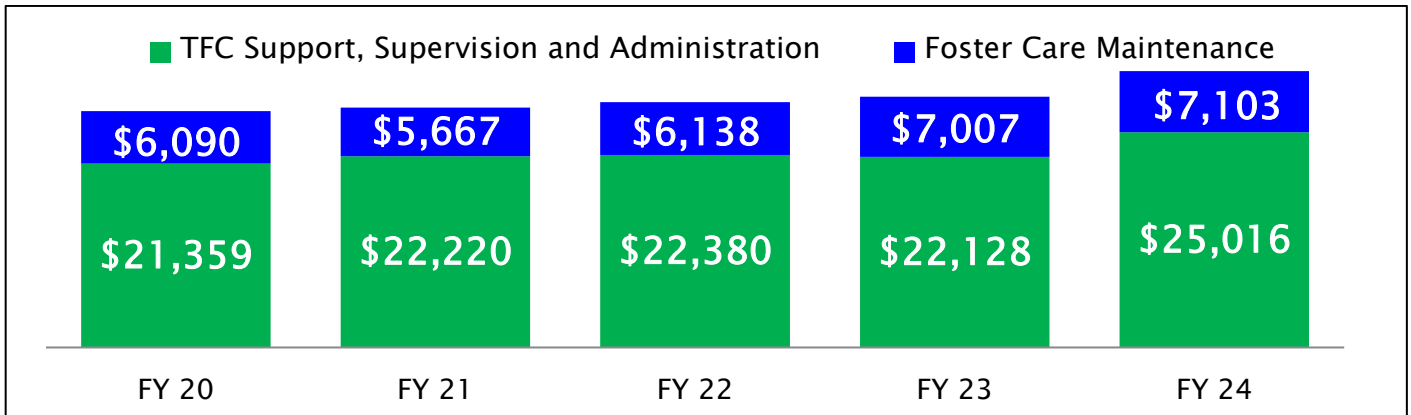
Office of Children's Services
Empowering communities to serve youth

¹ The term "therapeutic" foster care is often used interchangeably with "treatment" foster care.

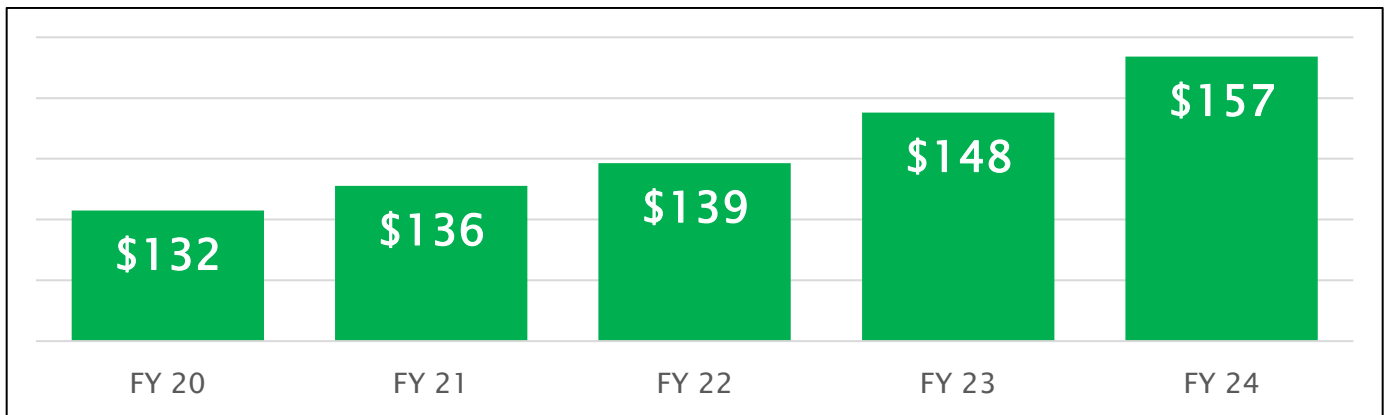
**Therapeutic Foster Care
Total CSA Expenditures (Millions)
(FY2020 - FY2023)**



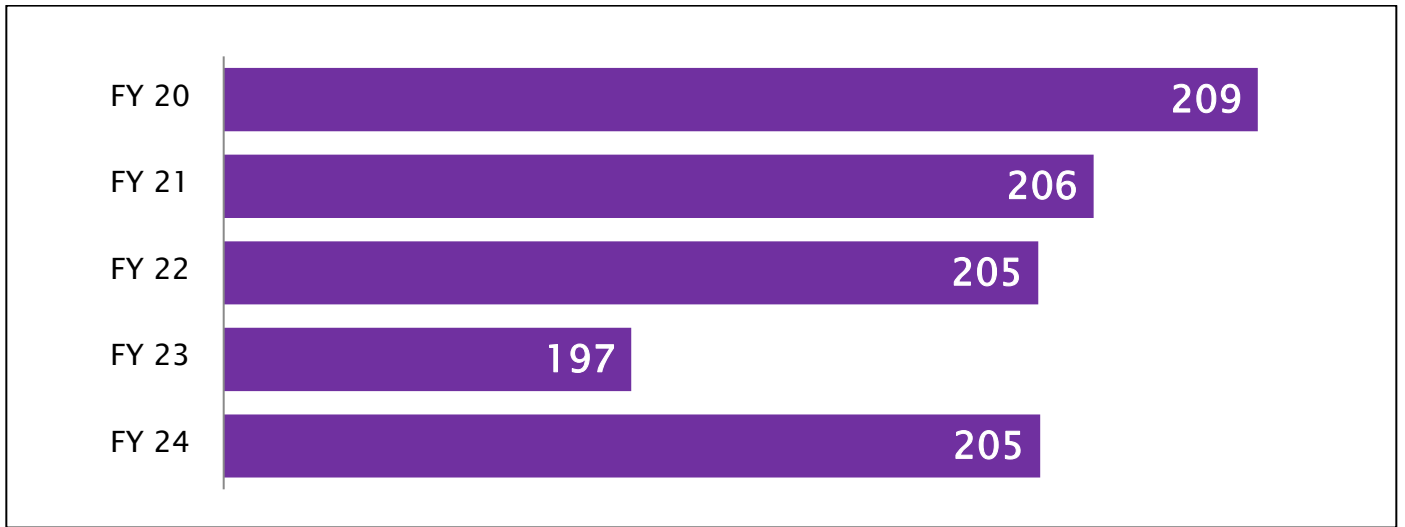
**Therapeutic Foster Care
Average Annual CSA Expenditure per Child
(FY2020 - FY2024)**



**Therapeutic Foster Care
Average Per Diem Expenditure per Child
(FY2020 - FY2024)**



Therapeutic Foster Care
Average Length of Stay (Number of Days/Year)
(FY2020 – FY2024)



Discussion

TFC remains a primary resource to local departments of social services (LDSS) for foster care placements in Virginia. Licensed Child Placing Agencies (LCPAs) are private agencies that, among other services, provide foster home placements. In FY2024, approximately 41% of children in foster care were served through an LCPA TFC program and TFC utilization mainly remained stable (-1.6%). The number of youth served has decreased over the past five years (-14% since 2020). This utilization level reflects ongoing challenges in LDSS's ability to establish "agency foster homes" (foster families recruited and supported by the local department) and the needs of children in foster care and their foster families for higher support than typically provided in agency foster homes. The new Parental Child Safety Placement Program (effective July 1, 2024) is anticipated to reduce the number of children entering local department of social services custody by providing an emphasis and support to relatives who may be willing to take short-term custody of children with their entering the formal foster care system.

While the foster care maintenance costs (e.g., room and board and daily supervision) are supported by CSA pool funds or the federal Title IV-E program, TFC-specific costs (CSA Service Name = "Private Foster Care, Support, Supervision, and Administration") are paid exclusively from the CSA state pool and local matching funds.

In FY2024, a TFC placement (excluding monthly maintenance and enhanced maintenance payments) averaged \$123 daily. As children remained in a TFC setting for an average of 205 days during FY2024, the cost during the year was approximately \$25,000 (\$123/day for 205 days). With an overall length of stay crossing multiple fiscal years (from entry to discharge) of 484 days, this results in a total average cost of \$59,532. The increasing overall cost for TFC placements is due to increased maintenance costs (tied to statutorily required rated increases), length of stay, and per diem provider costs.