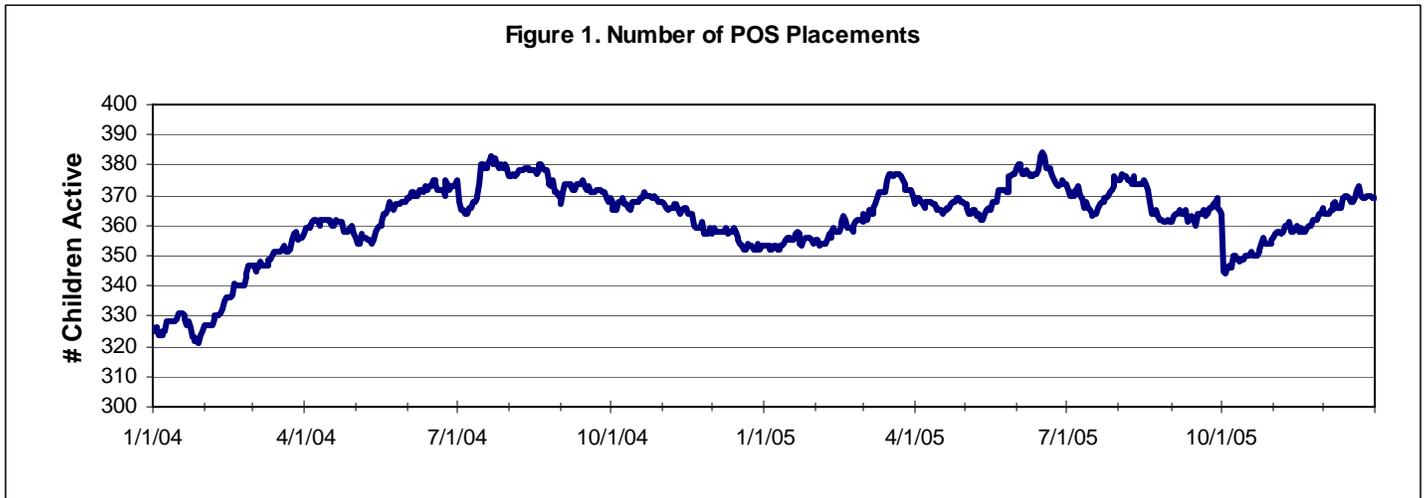


Trends and Characteristics of Purchase of Service (POS) Placements for Children in Foster Care: January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2005

This report summarizes placement trends and characteristics of foster care children in Purchase of Service (POS) placements funded by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Placements are examined for the 2-year period from January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2005. According to data obtained from the Rhode Island Children’s Information System (RICHIST), there were a total of 876 POS episodes in foster care, and 5,028 episodes in contracted programs (non-POS) during this 2-year period under review. Figures 1 and 2 depict the trend in POS and



contracted placements, respectively, from January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2005. As can be seen in Figure 1, POS placements ranged from a low of 320 per day in February 2004 to a high of 385 per day in July 2005. This represents a shift of 20% over the course of two years. Such a shift in placements was apparent during 2004 (with a range in placements of 320 to 383 per day), but not in 2005 (with a range in placements of 345 to 385 per day, a shift of 11.6%).

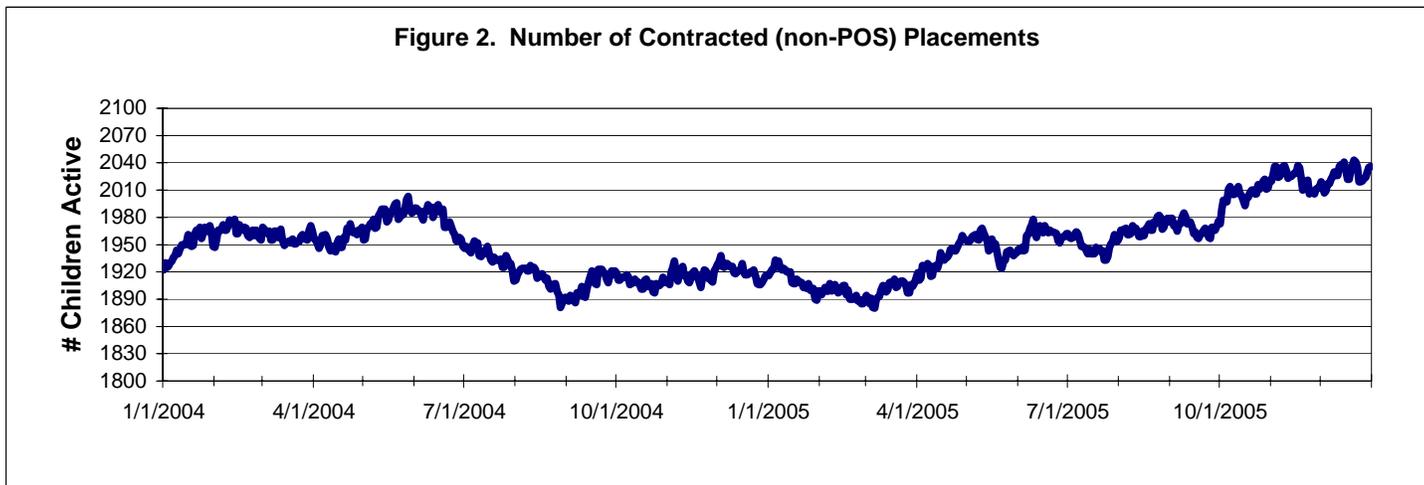


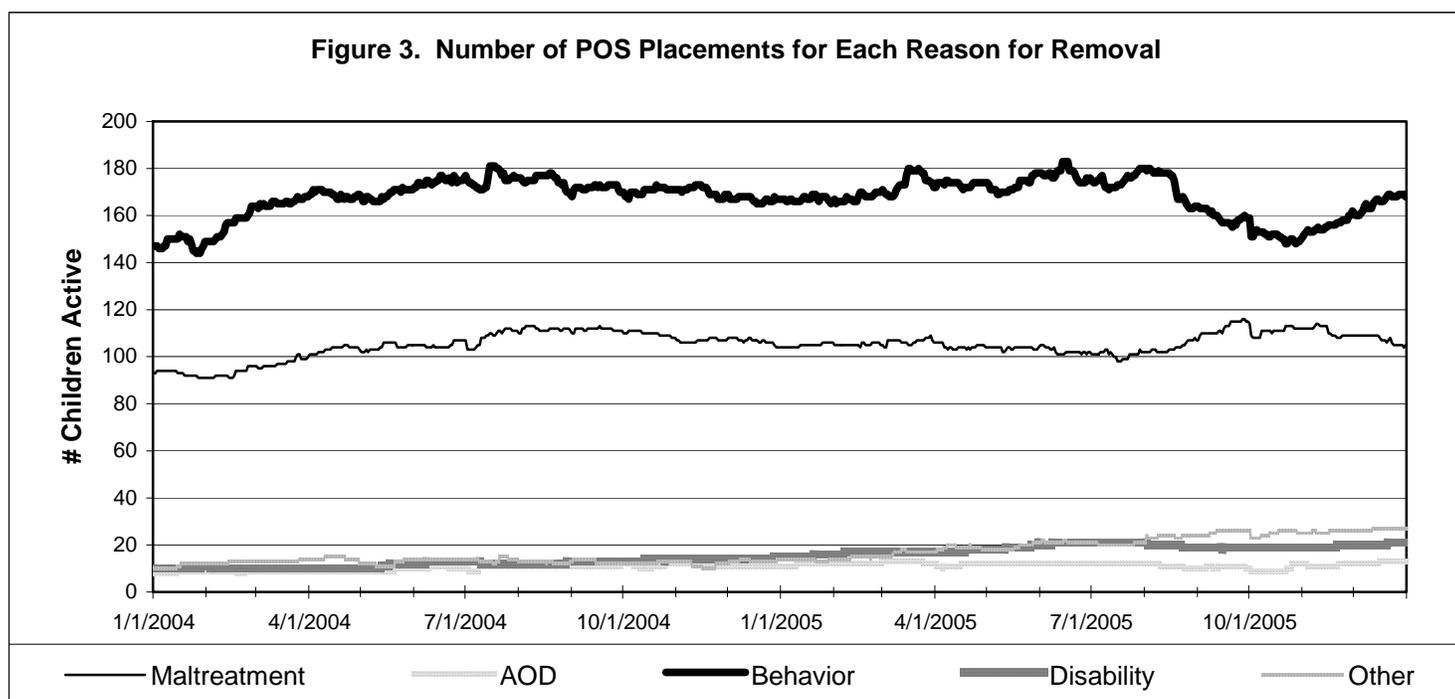
Figure 2 shows the trend of contracted (non-POS) placements for children in foster care. As is shown, during the 2-year period under review, contracted placements ranged from a low of 1,880 per day (in September 2004 and March 2005) to a high of 2,040 per day in December 2005; a shift of almost 9%. In 2004, contracted placements ranged from 1,880

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to 2003 per day (6.5%), and in 2005 they ranged from 1880 to 2044 per day (8.7%). Comparisons by month across the two figures reveal several patterns. First, contracted placements were much more stable across the two years than POS placements. Thus, within a given year, contracted placements fluctuated proportionately less (6.5% to 8.7%) than POS placements (20.3% to 11.6%). Second, for both POS and contracted placements, the placement census in July always exceeded that found for January in any given year. And third, several periods showed a steadily increasing pattern of placements in both POS and contracted programs: May – July 2004, March – May 2005, and October – December 2005. Placement availability may have been more limited during these periods because of the increased demand for placement in both POS and contracted services. Examination of system level factors that may influence placement availability during these periods could help identify potential solutions to POS and contracted placement needs.

How is the reason a child is removed from parental custody related to the pattern of POS placements?

Figure 3 below depicts placement trends per day from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2005 for each of the reasons given for a child's removal. Five broad categories of removal were identified: maltreatment, parental drug abuse, child behavior problem/drug abuse, child disability, and "other." (Not shown are cases for which data on this question was missing; in general, data was missing for about 44 placements per day. When more than one reason was given for removal, cases were assigned only one reason in the order noted above.) As shown in the figure, removals due to child behavior problems accounted for approximately 169 placements per day (or about 45% of all POS placements per day). Second, removals due to child maltreatment numbered about 105 placements per day (or about 25-30% of the total per day). Children placed in POS for "other" reasons, a disability, or parental alcohol or drug abuse all ranged in number from about 8 to 27 placements per day. Figure 3 below shows that the percent variation in placements across the two years was substantial for the various reasons for removal given. For removals due to child behavior problems, placements



ranged from a low of 144 per day in February 2004 to a high of 183 per day in June 2005, an increase of 27.1%. In addition, for child maltreatment, placements ranged from a low of 91 per day in February 2004 to a high of 116 per day in October 2005, an increase of 27.5%. Removals due to a child's disability, parental alcohol or drug abuse, or "other" reasons varied more than 50% across the 2-year period, although these changes likely had only minimal impact on system demand because they were a small percentage of overall placements (about 3-7% each). The demand for placements for both POS and contracted services appears to have converged during one particular period: October –

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December 2005. When this period is compared to any other 3-month period over the previous two years, it is unique because of several converging trends: 1) POS placements for children with behavioral problems or for children with “other” reasons for removal were higher than usual during this period; 2) POS placements for maltreated children or for children with a disability were also consistently high during this period; and, 3) contracted placements were generally higher than usual during this period and had been increasing for several months (especially for removals due to child behavior problems or child maltreatment [data not shown]). These factors combined to exert a marked increase in the demand for placements during October – December 2005 and into January 2006.

Do foster care children in POS placements differ from those in contracted placements?

Children who had a POS placement during an episode of care were compared to those who had a contracted placement on several key demographic characteristics and their reason for removal from parental custody. Chi-square tests and t-tests were used to make statistical comparisons between groups. Table 1 shows the mean age, and percents for gender, race/ethnicity, and reason for removal for children with POS and contracted placements. As the table shows, children in POS placements were older, and were more likely to be male and Caucasian. They were also more likely to have been removed due to: sexual abuse, child behavior problems, child disability, and the parent’s/caretaker’s ability to cope. In addition, children in contracted placements were more likely to: be victims of neglect, abandonment, or parental alcohol or drug abuse; have a parent who had been incarcerated, or removed due to inadequate housing. No differences were found for removal due to physical abuse, children’s alcohol or drug abuse, and parental death or relinquishment.

Table 1. Comparisons of children in POS placements and contracted placements			
Characteristic	POS Placement	Contracted Placement	Significant Difference?
Mean Age	12.3 yrs	10.0 yrs	Yes
Gender (%)			
Male	63.4	52.8	Yes
Female	36.6	47.2	
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
Caucasian	62.3	53.6	Yes
Minority Status	37.7	46.4	
Reason for Removal (% Yes) ^a			
Sexual Abuse	5.5	3.4	Yes
Physical Abuse	7.0	8.0	No
Neglect	19.8	34.4	Yes
Parent Drug Abuse	6.4	20.8	Yes
Parent Alcohol Abuse	3.2	7.6	Yes
Child Behavior	57.5	35.0	Yes
Child Disability	16.4	2.8	Yes
Child Drug Abuse	6.5	5.5	No
Child Alcohol Abuse	2.7	2.4	No
Caretaker Inability to Cope	33.1	23.9	Yes
Abandonment	2.6	4.7	Yes
Relinquishment	1.4	1.8	No
Inadequate Housing	4.7	10.4	Yes
Parent Death	0.7	0.8	No
Parent Incarceration	1.3	4.5	Yes

Summary of Major Findings

- **From January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2005 the number of POS placements ranged from 320 – 385 per day, a difference of about 20% across the two years. During this same period, the number of contracted (non-POS) placements ranged from 1,880 - 2,044 per day, a difference of about 9% across the two years.**
- **The number of contracted placements was much more stable across the two years than POS placements. For POS, the percent variation in placements within each year ranged from 20.3% in 2004 to 11.6% in 2005. For contracted placements, there was little variation across the two years; ranging from 6.5% in 2004 to 8.7% in 2005.**
- **For both POS and contracted placements, the placement census in July always exceeded that observed for January in any given year.**
- **Several periods had a steadily increasing number of placements in both POS and contracted programs: May – July 2004, March – May 2005, and October – December 2005. Placement availability may have been more likely during these periods because of the increased demand for placement in both POS and contracted services.**
- **About 169 (or about 45%) of all POS placements annually were for children removed due to behavioral or drug abuse problems, and about 105 (or about 25-30% of all POS placements) were for children who had been victims of maltreatment. About 8-27 POS placements each (or about 3-7% each of total POS placements) occurred daily for children removed due to a disability, parental alcohol/drug abuse, or for “other” reasons.**
- **The demand for placements converged during one particular period: October – December 2005. If contracted placements are also considered in the context of specific reasons for removal for POS programs and for placements in contracted programs, several converging trends are revealed: 1) POS placements for children with behavioral problems or for children removed due to “other” reasons were higher than usual during this period; 2) POS placements for maltreated children or for children with a disability were also consistently high during this period; and, 3) contracted placements were generally higher than usual during this period and had been steadily increasing for several months, particularly for removals due to behavioral problems or child maltreatment. These factors combined to exert a marked increase in the demand for placements during October – December 2005 and into January 2006.**
- **Children who had a POS placement differed from those who had a contracted placement in several ways: they were usually older, and were more likely to be male and Caucasian. They were also more likely to have been removed due to: sexual abuse, child behavior problems, child disability, and the parent’s/caretaker’s ability to cope. In addition, children in contracted placements were more likely to: be victims of neglect, abandonment, or parental alcohol or drug abuse; have a parent who had been incarcerated; or were removed due to inadequate housing.**
- **Examination of system level factors that may have influenced both POS and contracted placement availability during periods of increasing placement demand could help identify potential solutions to POS and contracted placement needs.**