



Between People and Places: Reducing Upheaval for Children Moving Around in Connecticut Foster Care

Stephanie Luczak
Nicole Updegrave
Lauren Ruth, Ph.D.
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Placement: Any foster home (including relatives), group home, or residential treatment center in which a child resides while in DCF care.

Placement change: A move from one placement to another for any reason.

Permanency: A stable, safe, and enduring home into which the youth exits foster care that provides lifelong family.

For any child, moving to a new place can evoke uncertainty and anxiety. A move may present new opportunities such as new teachers, new friends, new neighborhoods, and a new space to call home. With these new and exciting opportunities, however, may also come devastating loss: leaving school connections, saying goodbye to familiar everyday faces, changing routines, and the loss of possessions in the shuffle.

Moving from place to place is often a regular experience for some children in foster care, as the search for a perfect home for a child may take a few tries. When children and youth in foster care are moved to a new placement, the transition can cause significant upheaval by introducing a new set of adult caregivers with different routines, personalities, and expectations. Although in the short-

term, most individual placement changes occur to advance the child's best interest, placement changes can add to the trauma and upheaval experienced in foster care.

Research tells us:

- Older youth and children who have been in foster care longer tend to experience more placement changes.
- A vicious cycle: youth who have experienced repeated placement changes often show maladaptive behavior, which may contribute to more instability in future placements.
- With one fewer placement change per year, youth are 1.8 times more likely to graduate high school.
- Experiencing multiple placements in childhood is associated with lower life satisfaction, low self-efficacy, and more criminal convictions in adulthood.

In Connecticut, youth experience an average of

2.92

moves per 1,000 days in foster care

National standard: 4.12

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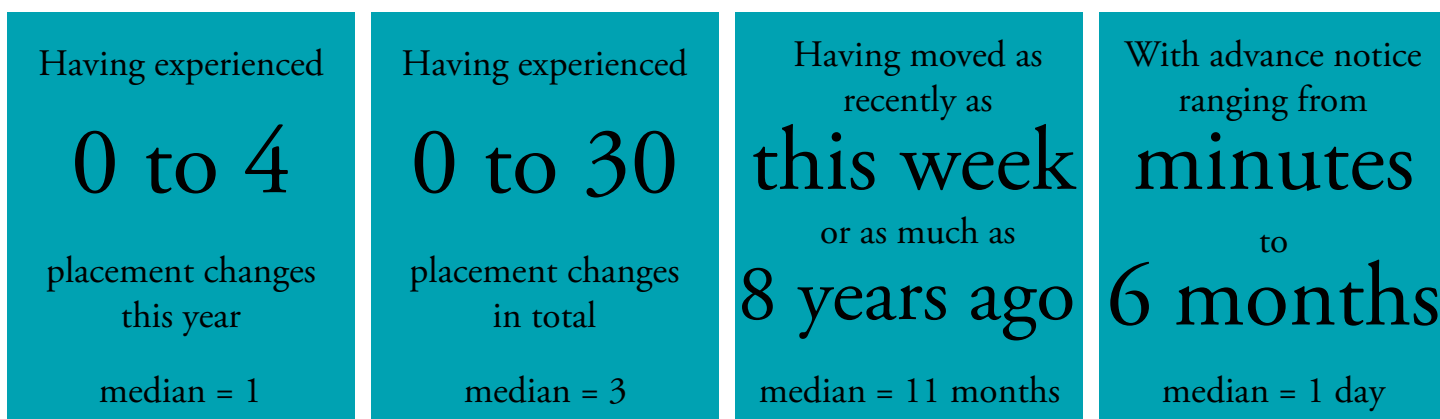
Data

Connecticut youth in care experience an average of 2.92 moves per 1,000 days in foster care. While much lower than the national average, that's a little more than one move every year. For youth who remain in care for many years, those moves add up.

In Connecticut:

- Youth aged 12+ move more often than younger children.
- Latino and Black children move more often than white children and children of other races.

In the fall of 2017, Connecticut Voices for Children conducted an informal, voluntary survey with 46 youth from Department of Children and Families (DCF) Youth Advisory Boards. Although this was not a random sample and should not be considered representative of the general population of youth in care, it does show some of the range of foster youths' experiences. Youth reported:



Policy

Recommendations:



1. Ensure that youth receive at least ten days notice before moving whenever possible, and help them prepare to change placements.
2. Convene the team (including youth) to plan, process, and regroup whenever placement removals occur.
3. Develop an individualized list of each child's possessions that must follow the child between placements.
4. Improve data collection and reporting regarding who experiences placement changes, why, and what the process looks like.
5. Convene youth to provide input into policy and practice around placement changes.

Read the
report:

www.ctvoices.org/youthonthemove