

Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Parent Advocacy Program in Jefferson County

Parent Advocacy Program

The Parent Advocacy Program was developed to improve outcomes for families in crisis

A *parent advocate* is someone who has had previous involvement with the child welfare system and now helps mentor other families through the system

Parent Advocates:

- Work mainly on a volunteer basis
- Work collaboratively with social workers
- Train with Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Building a Better Future" curriculum

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Key Components and Activities

Component/Activity	Comments
Home Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interaction with parent(s) •Minimum number of home visits •Opportunity for coaching/ mentoring •At least one visit at case initiation and one at case closure •No unannounced/surprise visits
Face-to-face contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •minimum of weekly contact initially •every other week for stabilized families •monthly for end-of-case
Contact with Child Welfare caseworker/ case manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build partnership/ relationship with worker •Varies depending on whether case is managed by CWS agency or private agency •Allows worker to prioritize what needs to be done first •Provides information exchange between worker and parent partner •Need to also work with foster care specialist
Contact with all involved parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Collaborative partners •Service providers •Contact with foster care specialist •Encourage contact/relationship with foster parent (ice breakers)

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Key Components and Activities

Component/Activity	Comments
Participation in TDM, FTM, or other decision-making meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support for parents •Critical that parent advocate/partner purpose and process of meeting •Prepare parents for meeting •Build report with social worker •Serve as an interpreter of what's being said
Support during court process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Help ensure parent(s) are prepared for court and understand court process •May require meeting with the court before implementing program •Support parent during "waiting" time •Parent advocate/partner need training and understanding of court process •Re-educate court after program is implemented •Pre-meeting with parents
Formal referral and tracking process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Child welfare agency maintained system
Dedicated to advocacy (time)	
On-going supervision	

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Key Components and Activities

Component/Activity	Comments
Length of PP/PA involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Custody cases – 6-12 mos.• Non-custody cases – 90-120 days where there had been a TDM or FTM• Based on needs of the family• Need to prioritize cases (time may need to be swamped)
Caseload size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-time – 12-15 cases• ½ time – 6-10 cases• part-time – 3-5 cases (minimum of 10 hours per week• includes paperwork and collateral contact time

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Additional Training for Parent Advocates

Suggested Training	Comments
Building A Better Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Engagement 101 <i>mandated</i>
Basic social work training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal • Language • Child abuse and neglect • Safety and permanency • Sexual abuse • Child welfare history
Parent education	
Anger management/domestic violence	
Substance abuse	
Mental health	
Early child development	
Critical conversations	
Boundaries	
Working with fathers	

Parent Advocate Role

- Provide support to birth families to prevent removals, disruptions, and/or assist with reunification action plans
- Bridge gap between the agency staff, birth parents, and foster families to achieve case closure in less time
- Provide other extended support and resources to birth parents
- Participate in Team Decision Making process, assist with the development of the family action plan and encourage parent participation

Participant Eligibility

Criteria for families chosen for services:

- Have children under 5 years of age;
- Are involved with CPS for the first time; or
- Reside in areas where there are high removal rates

Jefferson County Parent Advocacy Site

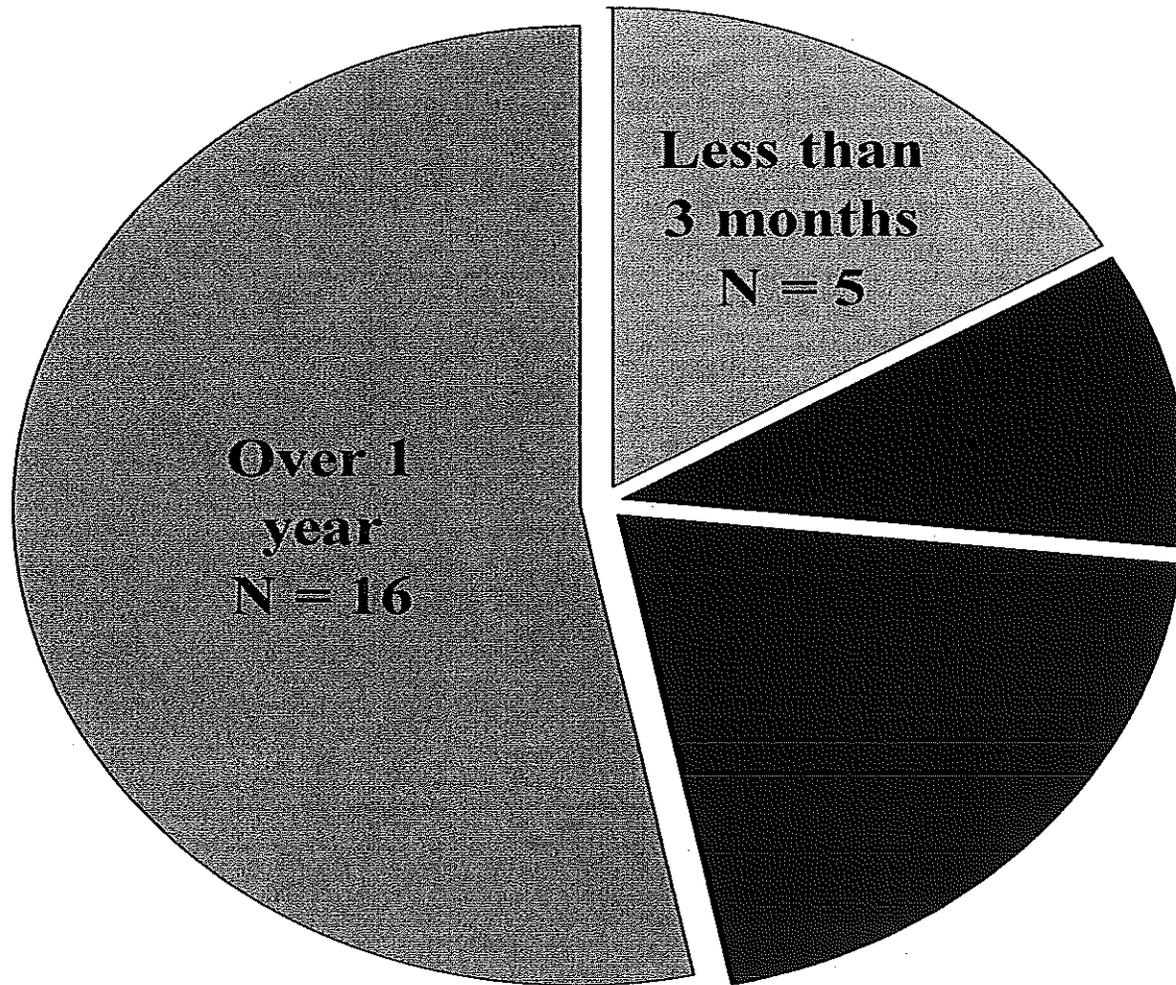
- Jefferson County Parent Advocacy Program started in September 2004 - *1/2005 Roll out*
- Current funding provided by Kentucky's Department of Community Based Services *\$50,000*
- By March 2007, social workers had recommended about 130 families for assignment of Parent Advocates

Jefferson County Parent Advocates

- 35 potential Advocates completed Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Building a Better Future" training during program's first two-plus years
- About 20 active advocates in the program
- Advocates must meet expectations outlined by reading and signing a "Parent Advocate Pledge"
- Age range of Advocates: 30-56 years (Mean = 40.3)
- Parent Advocates are of both Anglo (N = 6) and African American (N = 23) racial backgrounds

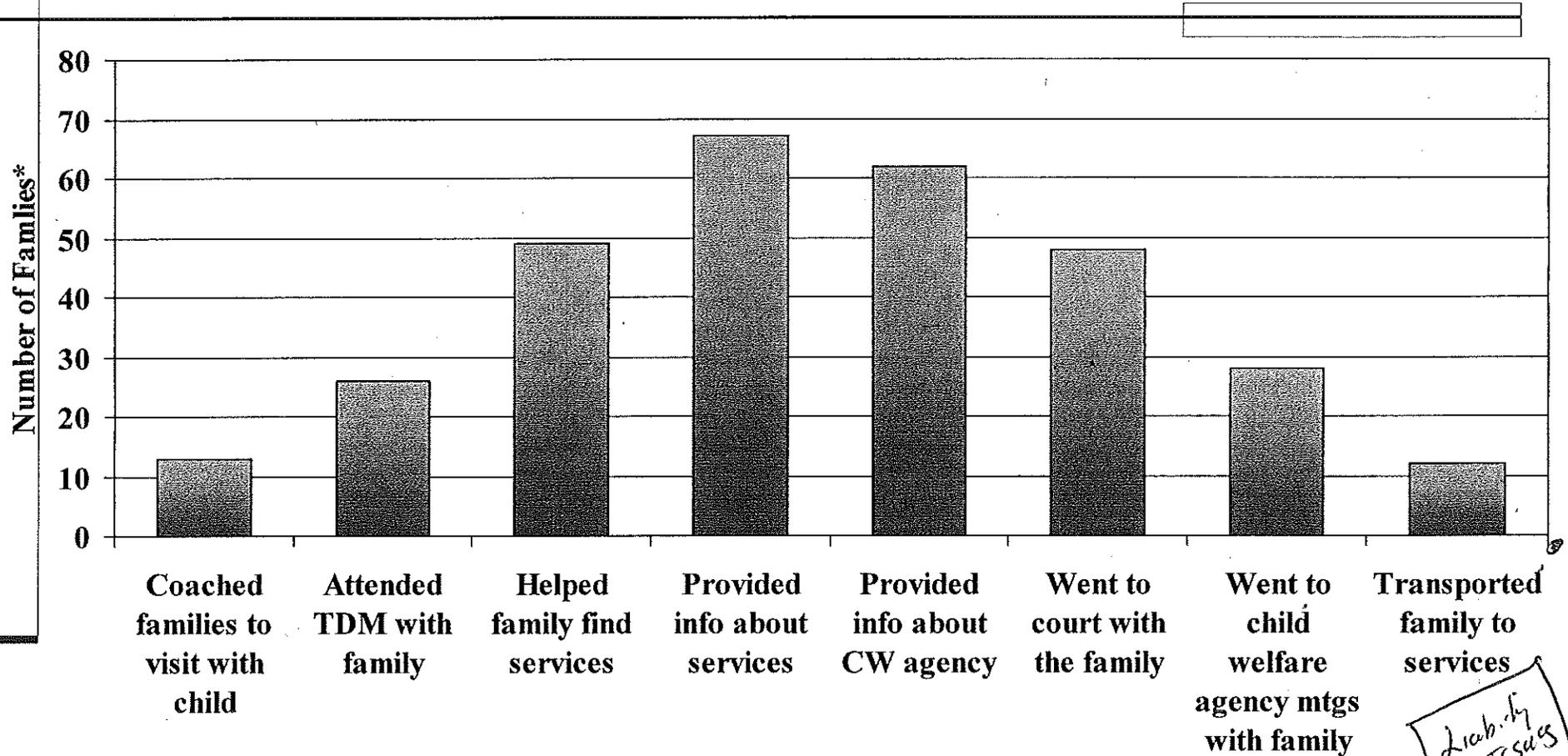
5 Feathers

Jefferson County Parent Advocates: Length of Time Spent as an Advocate



Parent Advocate Services Provided to Families

September '05 through January '07

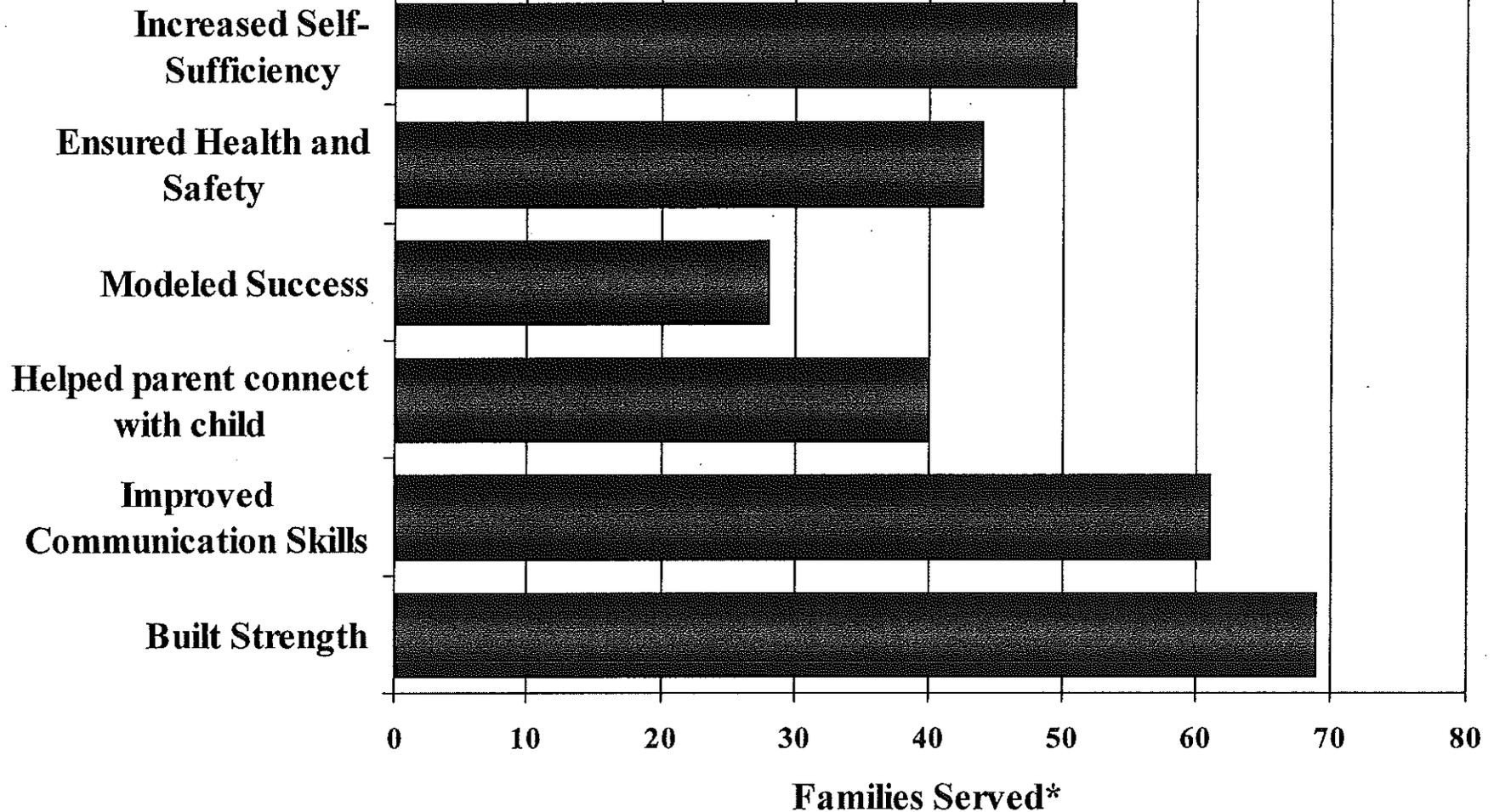


Liability Issues

*Total number of families served = 136

Parent Advocates Working to Strengthen Positive Family Outcomes

September '05 through January '07



*Total number of families served = 136

Program Evaluation for Parent Advocate

IQI Unit

Methodology

*Infant
Quality
Program
Unit*

- Interviews conducted with Key Stakeholders
- Parent Advocate data collected on:
 - Number and types of services provided to family
 - Family progress towards goals
 - Family outcomes
 - Parent Advocate information
 - Monthly count of Parent Advocate activities
- Families with PA services in comparison to families without PA services

Program Evaluation Methodology (cont.)

- The Worker Information SyTem (TWIST)
 - Referral data
 - Out-of-Home Care data
- Parent Advocate data merged with information from Jefferson County families
 - Referral Data
 - Jefferson County, N = 3034 children ??
 - Parent Advocate Programs, N = 63 children
 - Out-of-Home Care Data
 - Jefferson County, N = 7635 children
 - Parent Advocate Program, N = 51 children

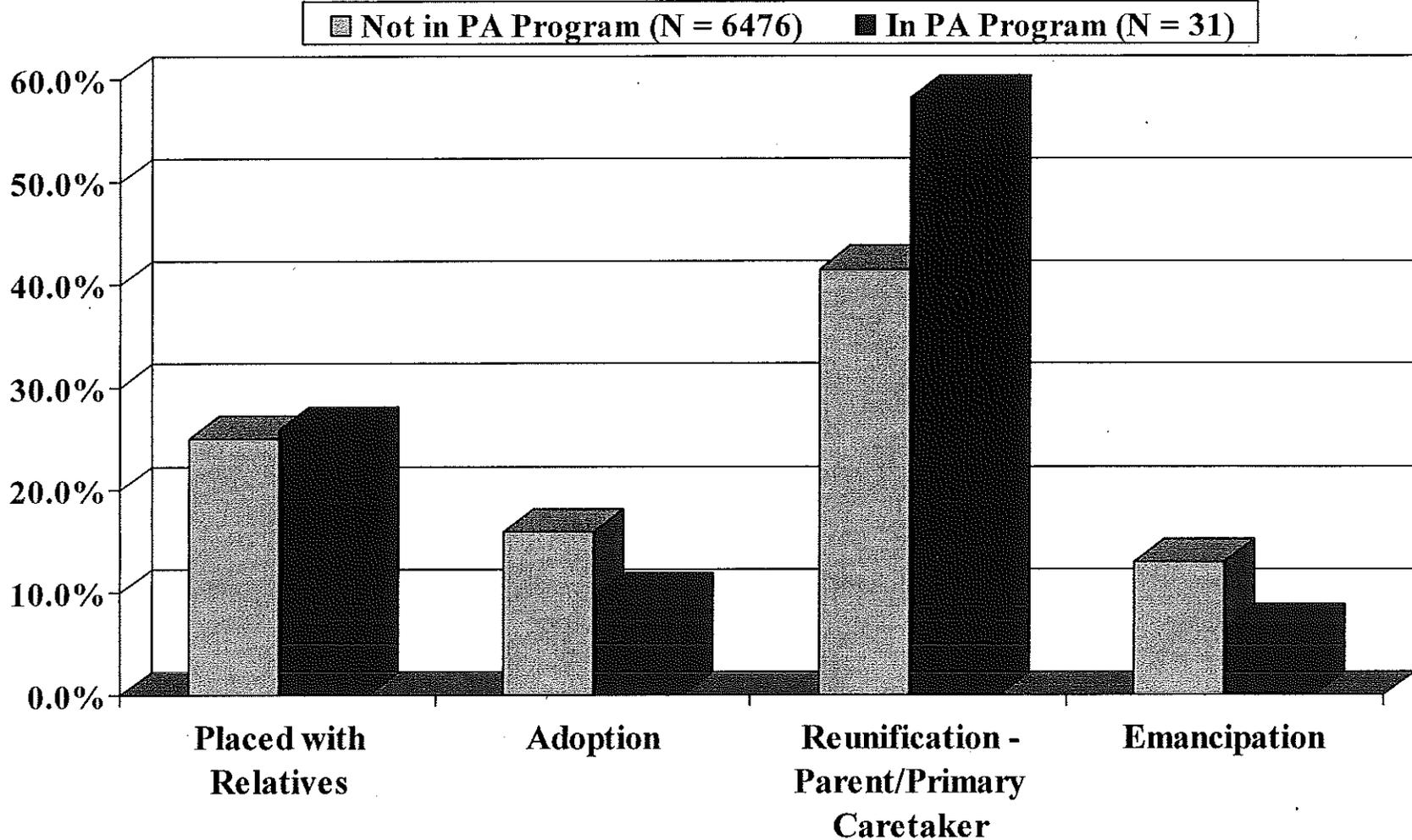
Profile of Children with Families in the Parent Advocacy Program

- Based on Jefferson County's referral data
- Children of families with PA services in comparison to those without PA services:
 - Tend to be younger in age
 - With PA services = 6.0 years old
 - Without PA services = 7.3 years old
 - Have the same average number of referrals (4.5)
 - Have higher cumulative risk ratings (19.1 vs. 16.7)
 - Are more likely to experience an episode of Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) (55.6% vs. 27.9%)

Outcomes of Children with Families in the Parent Advocacy Program

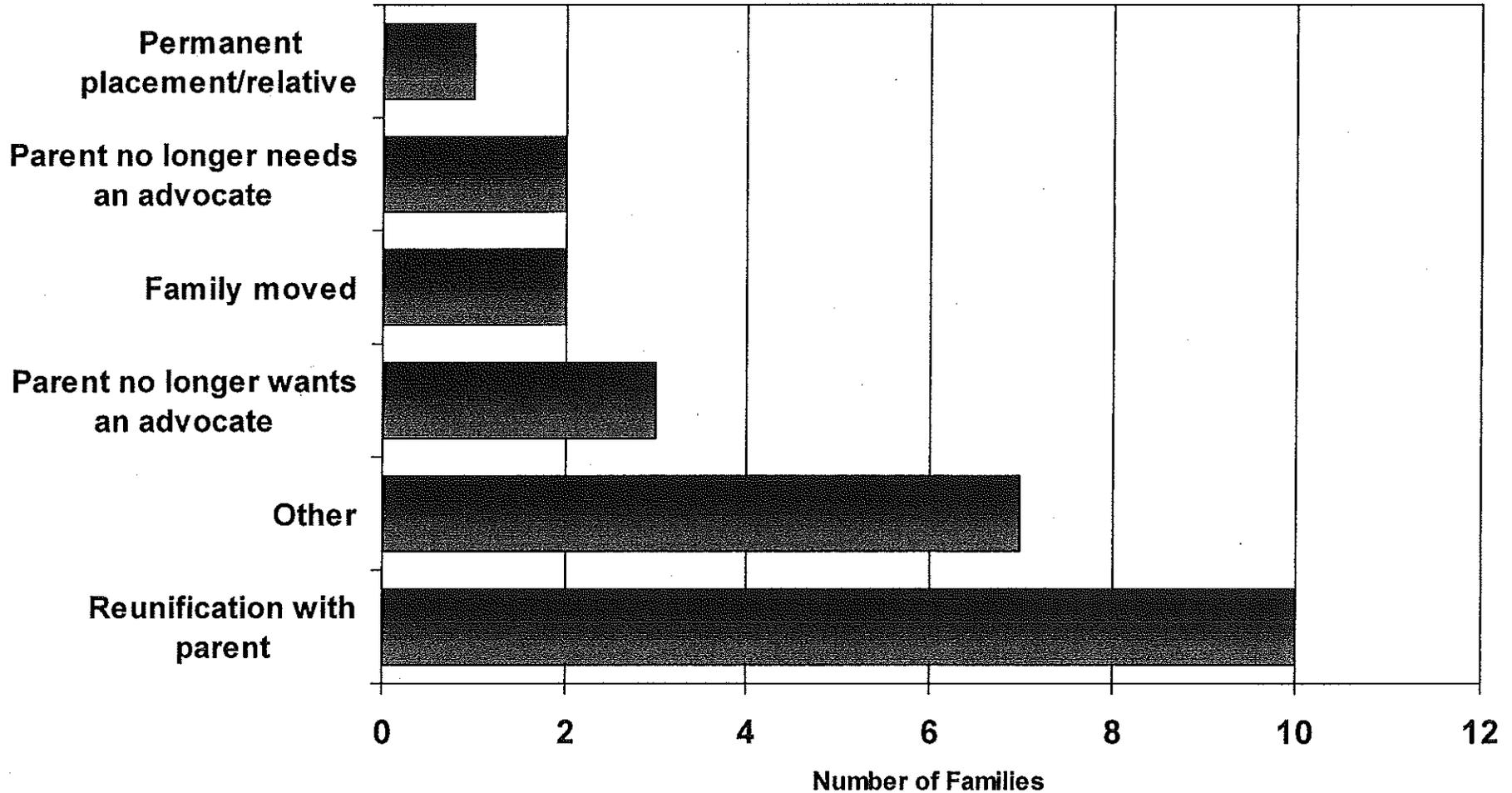
- Based on Jefferson County's OOHC data
- Children of families with PA services in comparison to those without PA services:
 - Experience 1 less move in their current episode
 - Have the same number of total episodes in OOHC (1.2)
 - Spend less time in OOHC (10.8 months vs. 18.2 months)

Top 5 Reasons for Most Recent Out-of-Home Care Exit*



*Data from PA data merged with Jefferson County OOHC data

Reason for Parent Advocate Services Ending



*Please note that 11 out of the 36 families whose Parent Advocate services ended was because they could not be reached

From Parent Advocates' Perspective

“I love being a parent advocate. ... I get to help someone who was in the same position I was.”

“I’m there to at least give you a kick-start. If you stall, I’m there to help you.”

“I’m able to relive that pain (of separation) with them. And that’s a pain that I don’t want to bring back to my own heart. So in the process of helping somebody else, it helps me ... to continue to do the right things that I need to do to make sure that my family stays together.”

From Parent Advocates' Perspective (cont.)

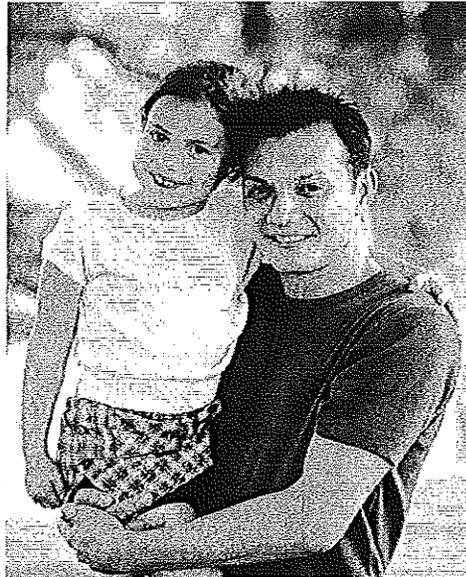
“What makes me want to be involved is that I think that the fathers don't really have a voice in the system. ... So, you know, men who've been through the system really need to be here to help the guys ...”

“There's a lot people who do not know nothing about the system. ... So to have a support system there is like, 'I've been through it; if you listen to me, I can help you. But you got to listen. The first thing you've got to realize is, do you want your kids back? If you don't want your kids back, walk away. But if you do, take my hand, I'm going to help you.’”

Closing Remarks

Parent Advocates:

- Are an integral part of child protective services
- Provide unique perspectives and support to families in need because of their experiences
- Improve family outcomes



Parent Advocacy Program

“Help is on the Way”