

Children's Services Act



Office of
Children's Services
Empowering communities to serve youth

Performance Measures / Outcome Indicators Report FY2021

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Introduction

Virginia Code, §2.2-2648.D.17. requires that the State Executive Council for Children's Services shall:

Oversee the development and implementation of a uniform set of performance measures for evaluating the Children's Services Act program, including, but not limited to, the number of youths served in their homes, schools and communities. Performance measures shall be based on information: (i) collected in the client-specific database referenced in subdivision 16, (ii) from the mandatory uniform assessment instrument referenced in subdivision 11, and (iii) from available and appropriate client outcome data that is not prohibited from being shared under federal law and is routinely collected by the state child-serving agencies that serve on the Council. If provided client-specific information, state child-serving agencies shall report available and appropriate outcome data in clause (iii) to the Office of Children's Services. Outcome data submitted to the Office of Children's Services shall be used solely for the administration of the Children's Services Act program. Applicable client outcome data shall include, but not be limited to: (a) permanency outcomes by the Virginia Department of Social Services, (b) recidivism outcomes by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, and (c) educational outcomes by the Virginia Department of Education. All client-specific information shall remain confidential and only non-identifying aggregate outcome information shall be made available to the public.

Under the direction of the State Executive Council for Children's Services (SEC), the Office of Children's Services (OCS) has developed a set of performance/outcome measures to be used to evaluate the Children's Services Act (CSA) program. The seven indicators are:

- 1) The percent of youth who had a decrease in their score on the School Domain of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), the mandatory CSA assessment instrument, from a baseline assessment to the most recent reassessment;
- 2) The percent of youth who had a decrease in their score on the Child Behavioral and Emotional Needs Domain of the CANS instrument from a baseline assessment to the most recent reassessment;
- 3) The percent of youth who had a decrease in their score (indicating increased strengths) on the Child Strengths Domain of the CANS instrument from a baseline assessment to the most recent reassessment;

- 4) The percent of youth receiving Intensive Care Coordination (ICC) services compared to all youth placed in residential settings;
- 5) The percent of youth receiving only Community-based Services (CBS) of all youth receiving CSA funded services;
- 6) The percent of children in foster care who are in family-based placements; and
- 7) The percent of children who exit from foster care to a permanent living arrangement.

In addition to individually reporting on the performance on each measure, a locality-based comparison score is generated. Each locality is scored on a scale of 1 through 4 based on the degree of variation from the state average on each of the first five measures. Localities more than one standard deviation above the state average receive a score of 4, those between the state average and one standard deviation above that average receive a score of 3, those between the state average and one standard deviation below that average receive a score of 2, and localities scoring greater than one standard deviation below the state average receive a score of 1 on that measure. For the last two measures, each locality is scored on a scale of 2 through 4 based on their proximity to targets established by the Virginia Department of Social Services. Localities are scored a 4 when the target was met or exceeded on these two indicators. A score of 3 is assigned if the locality was below but within five percent of the target, and a score of 2 is assigned if the performance was more than five percent below the target. For all seven measures, 4 is the highest score. An overall composite measure of all seven performance indicators has been constructed. The composite measure represents the average of all the comparison scores for which a valid result could be determined.

CANS Outcomes

The CANS is the mandatory uniform assessment instrument for all children receiving CSA-funded services. It is administered at the time of service initiation and at periodic intervals throughout the duration of services. The reassessment interval varies depending on the service provided and local practice. Typically, children receiving more intensive services are reassessed more frequently.

- The CANS School Domain score is the average score of the three items that constitute the domain¹.
- The CANS Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs Domain score is the average score of the ten items that constitute the domain.²
- The CANS Child Strengths Domain score is the average score of the 11 items that constitute the domain.³

Each item in a Domain is ranked 0, 1, 2, or 3, with a lower score indicating the youth has less significant needs (or is better functioning) in those areas. Domain scores would be expected to decrease (as needs decrease) if interventions have the desired impact. Children are assigned to the cohort where their baseline (initial) assessment occurs. Only youth with at least one reassessment within six months of the end of the FY (i.e., for FY 2021, as of December 31, 2021) are included in this report (as time elapses and additional youth in the FY 2021 cohort receive reassessments, the number in the cohort will grow and the outcomes recalculated)⁴. The baseline assessment score is compared to the most recent assessment for children in each cohort. The percentage of youth with a decreased average score on these items is calculated for each locality. The average time between assessments was 183 days for the FY 2021 cohort.

¹ The items are: School Behavior, School Achievement and School Attendance.

² The items are: Psychosis, Impulsivity/Hyperactivity, Depression, Anxiety, Oppositional, Conduct, Adjustment to Trauma, Anger Control, Substance Use and Eating Disturbance.

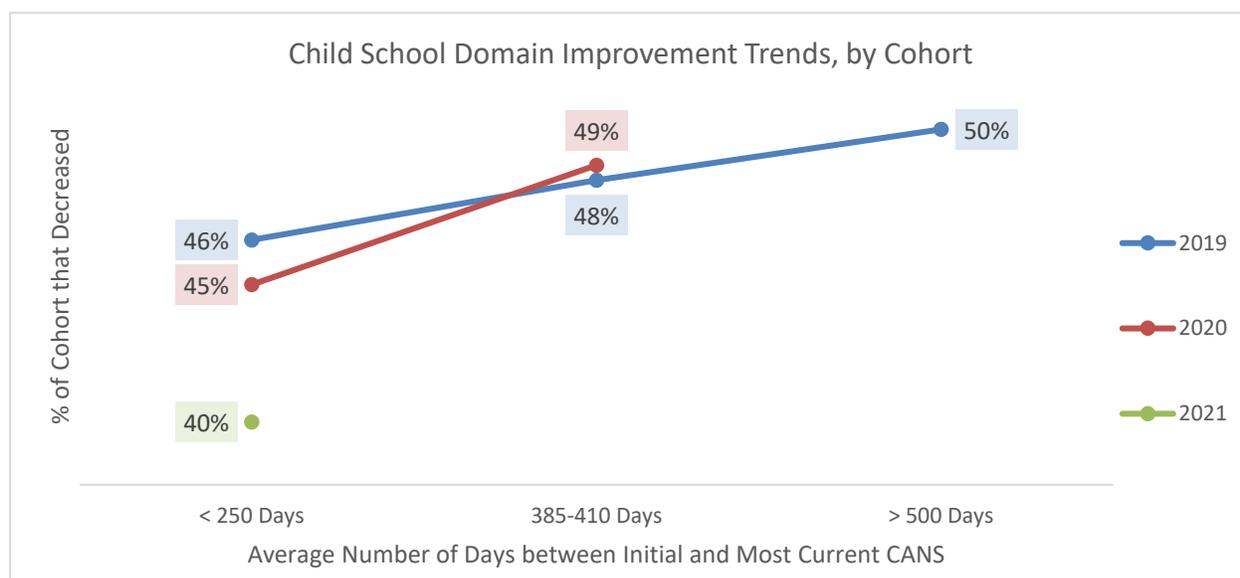
³ The items are: Family, Interpersonal, Optimism, Educational, Vocational, Talents/Interests, Spiritual/Religious, Community Life, Relationship Permanence, Child Involvement with Care, and Natural Supports.

⁴ FY 2021 and updated data from prior year's cohorts at the local level is reported in the "State and Local CSA Performance Measures" application found on the CSA website.

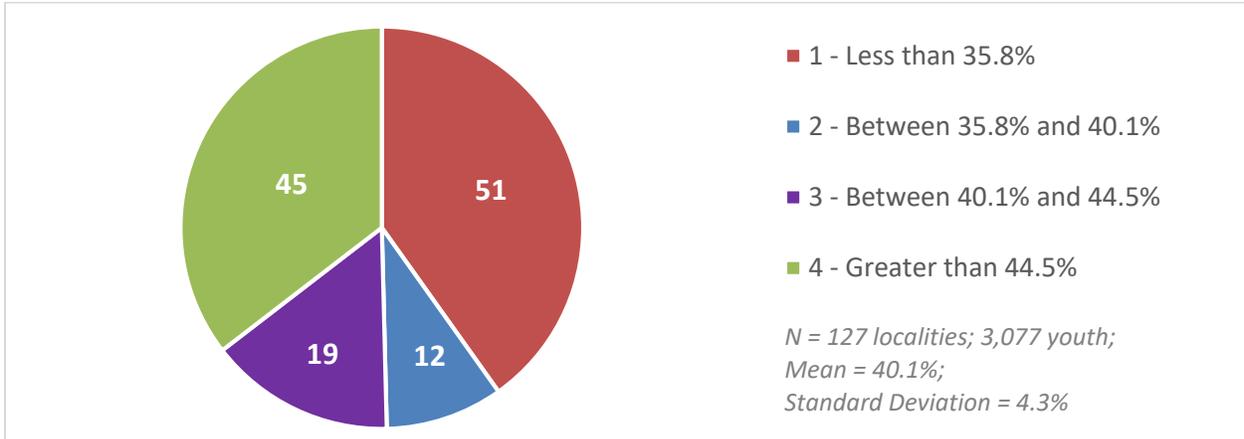
Percent of Youth with a Decrease in the School Domain of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Score

In the first year of reporting children in the FY 2021 cohort, 40 percent showed improvement (decrease) between the initial and most current assessments. In comparison, about 45 percent of the FY 2020 cohort and 46 percent of the FY 2019 cohort decreased their CANS School Domain score during their first year of reporting.

Outcomes tend to improve as the time between the initial and most current assessment increases, and this pattern is seen with the increasing percentage of a cohort that improves over time. For example, the FY 2019 cohort increased its performance by around two percent per year (46 to 48 to 50 percent between FY 2019 and FY 2021). This consideration should be taken into account when comparing differences between the current and prior years' cohorts.



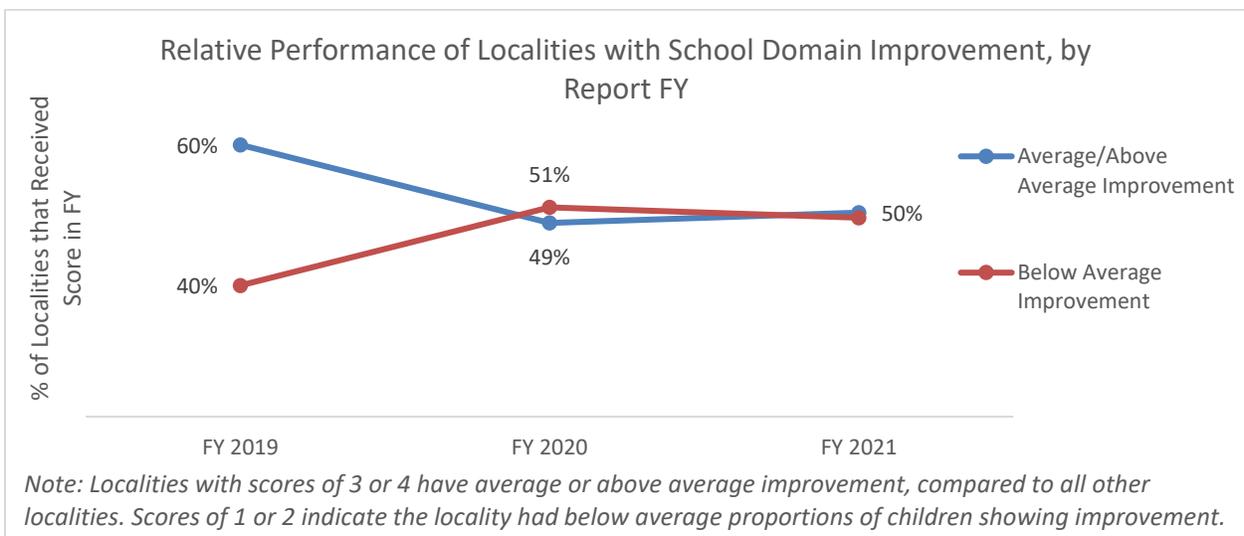
FY 2021 Cohort Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Percentage Decrease in School Domain



Note: 3 of the 130 localities were not rated due to not having any youth meet the inclusion criteria in the FY 2021 entrance cohort.

For the FY 2021 cohort, localities were split equally above and below the mean of 40.1 percent of children improving between their initial and most recent assessments. However, more localities (51) were notably lower than the average (less than 35.8 percent) than localities that were notably higher (45 localities showing improvements of more than 44.5 percent among their cohort).

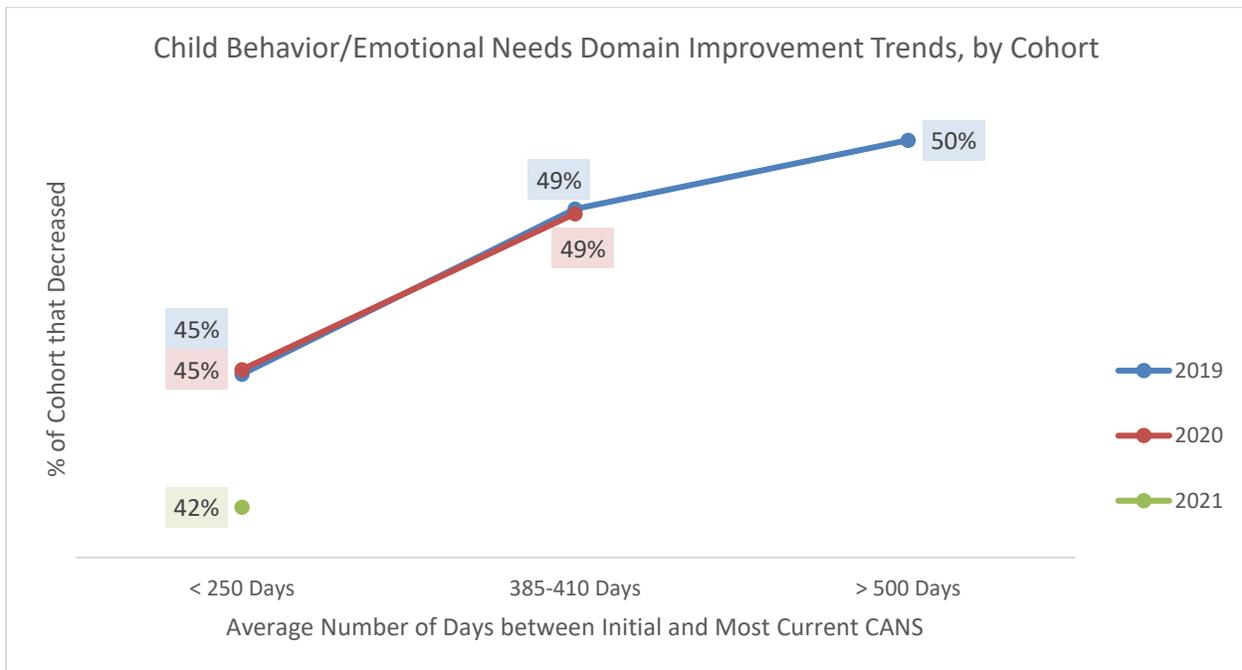
Over the last three fiscal years, in each cohort's first year of measurement, the proportion of localities with below-average performance in School Domain improvement has grown (40 percent of localities for the FY 2019 cohort's first year). During the same period, the proportion of localities with above-average performance in School Domain improvement has declined (60 percent of localities for the FY 2019 cohort's first year). The last quarter of FY 2020 was the beginning of the COVID pandemic; FY 2021 is the first cohort whose entire measurement period occurred during the pandemic. The impact of this on School Domain performance is unknown but worth noting.



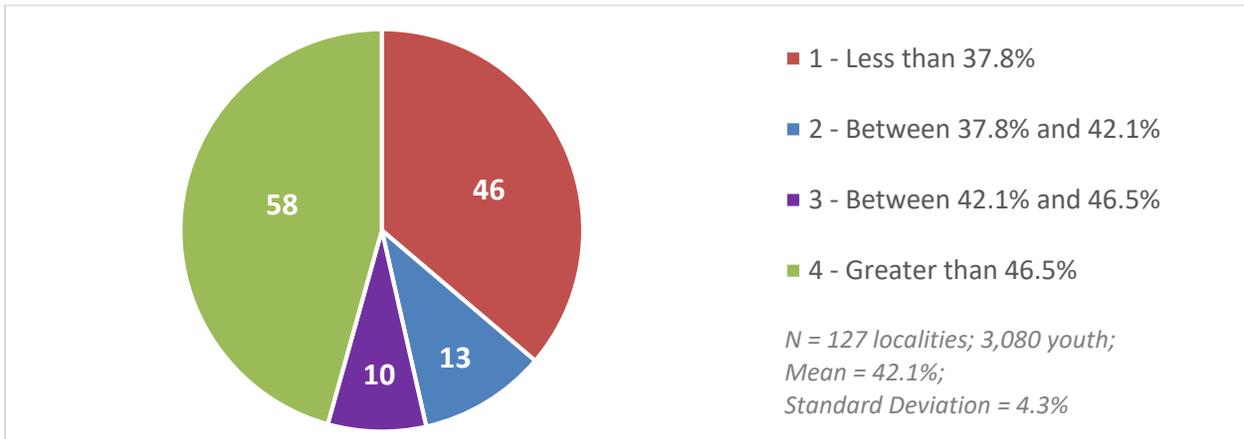
Percent of Youth with a Decrease in Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs Domain of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Score

In the first year of reporting children in the FY 2021 cohort, 42 percent showed improvement (decrease) between the initial and most current assessments. About 45 percent of the FY 2020 and FY 2019 cohorts decreased their CANS Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs Domain score during their first reporting year.

Outcomes tend to improve as the time between the initial and most current assessment increases, and this pattern is seen with the increasing percentage of a cohort that improves over time. This consideration should be taken into account when comparing differences between the current and prior years' cohorts. For example, the FY 2019 and FY 2020 cohorts increased their performance by around four percent between the first and second FYs of reporting. However, the FY 2019 rate of improvement slowed between the second and third year of reporting and increased from 49 percent to 50 percent of the cohort showing improvement.



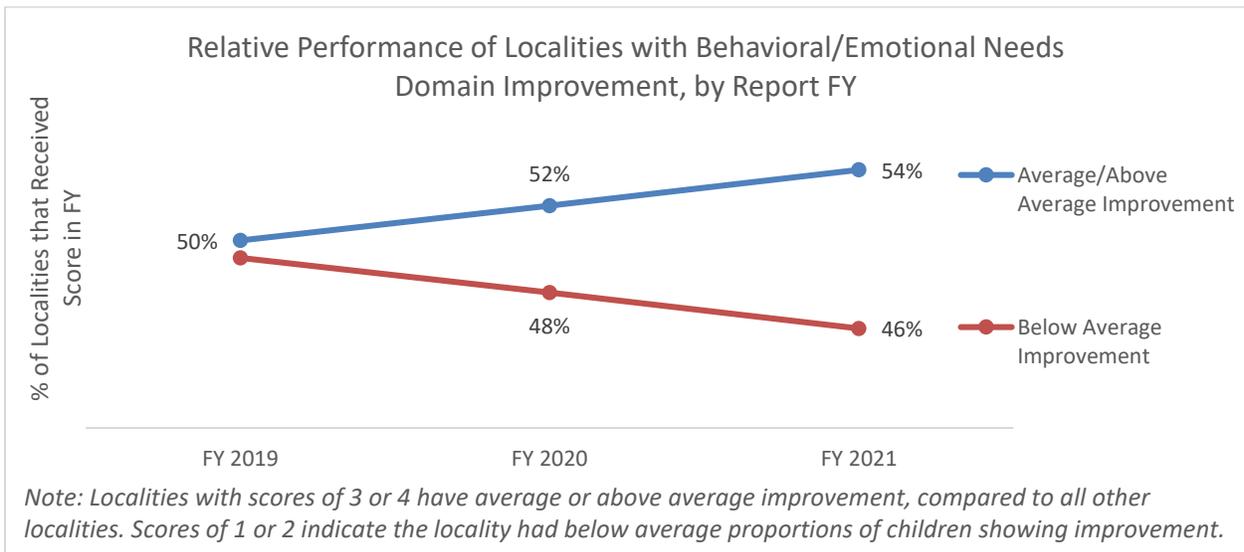
FY 2021 Cohort Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Percentage Decrease in Behavioral/Emotional Needs Domain



Note: 3 of the 130 localities were not rated due to not having any youth meet the inclusion criteria in the FY 2021 entrance cohort.

The performance ranking for a majority (104, or 82 percent) of localities fell into two categories. Compared to statewide improvement, locality performance was either very high (greater than 46.5 percent) or very low (less than 37.8 percent).

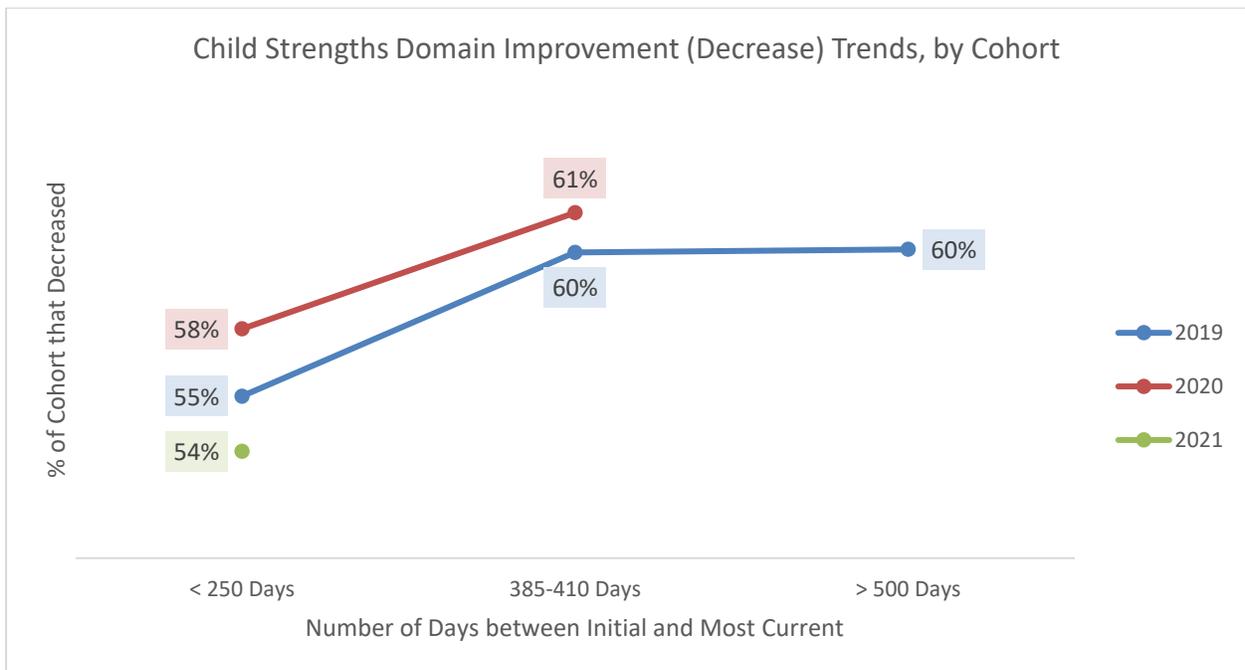
Improvement for each cohort in its initial year has increased for this indicator in the last few years. The proportion of localities with average or above-average gain on the Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs Domain was 50 percent for FY 2019 and 54 percent in FY 2021.



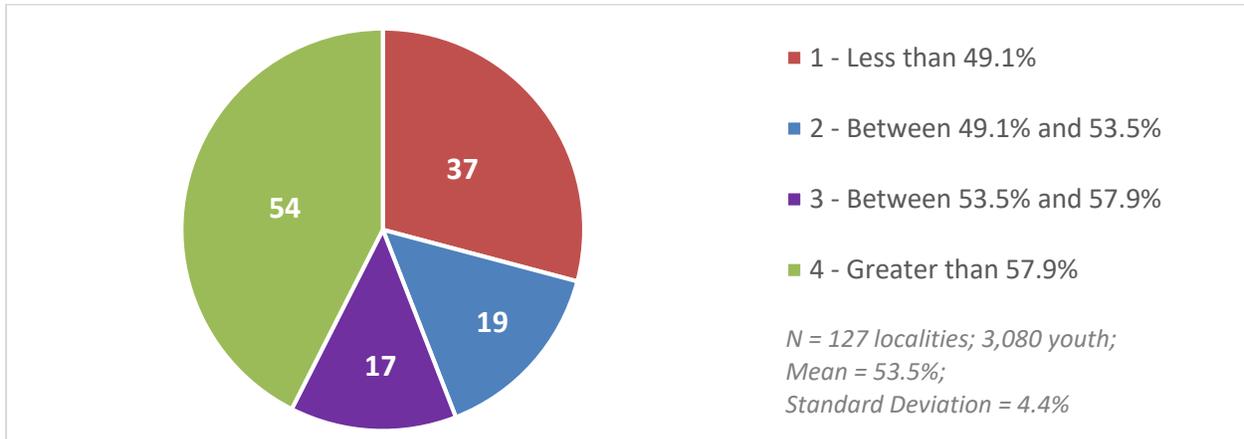
Percent of Youth with a Decrease in Child Strengths Domain of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Score

In the first year of reporting for the FY 2021 cohort, 54 percent of youth showed improvement (decreased scores) between the initial and most current assessments. This improvement is lower than the proportion that improved for the FY 2020 (58 percent) and FY 2019 cohort (55 percent) in their first reporting year. However, among the three CANS Domains measured, improvement in the Child Strengths Domain has been more prevalent among these cohorts compared to the other two Domains.

Outcomes tend to improve as the time between initial and most current assessment increases. This can be seen with the increasing percentage of a cohort that improves over time. This consideration should be taken into account when comparing differences between the current and prior years' cohorts. For example, the proportion of children in the FY 2019 and FY 2020 cohorts that improved between the first and second FYs of reporting increased by three percent and five percent, respectively. The FY 2019 cohort's rate of improvement slowed between the second and third years of reporting, stabilizing at 60 percent.



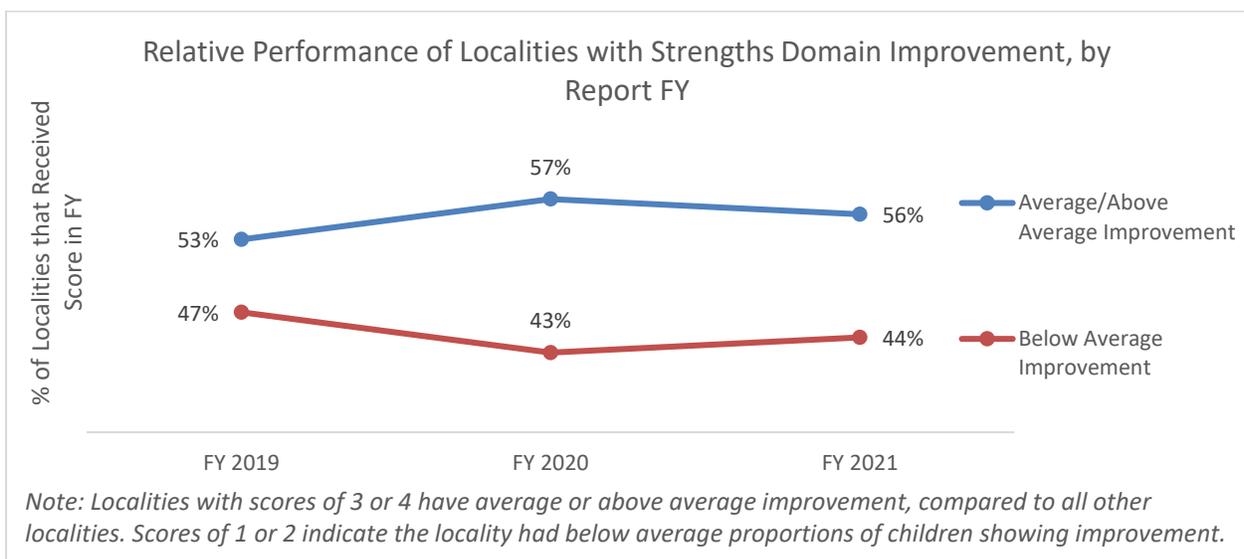
FY 2021 Cohort Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Percentage Decrease in Strengths Domain



Note: 3 of the 130 localities were not rated due to not having any youth meet the inclusion criteria in the FY 2021 entrance cohort.

For the FY 2021 cohort's first year of reporting, slightly more than half (56 percent) of localities had achieved or exceeded the 54 percent average, and 56 localities (44 percent) scored below the mean on this measure.

The degree of improvement for each cohort in its initial year has been more stable than the other two CANS indicators (between 53 and 57 percent of localities had average or above-average improvement, while between 43 and 47 percent of localities had below-average gain).



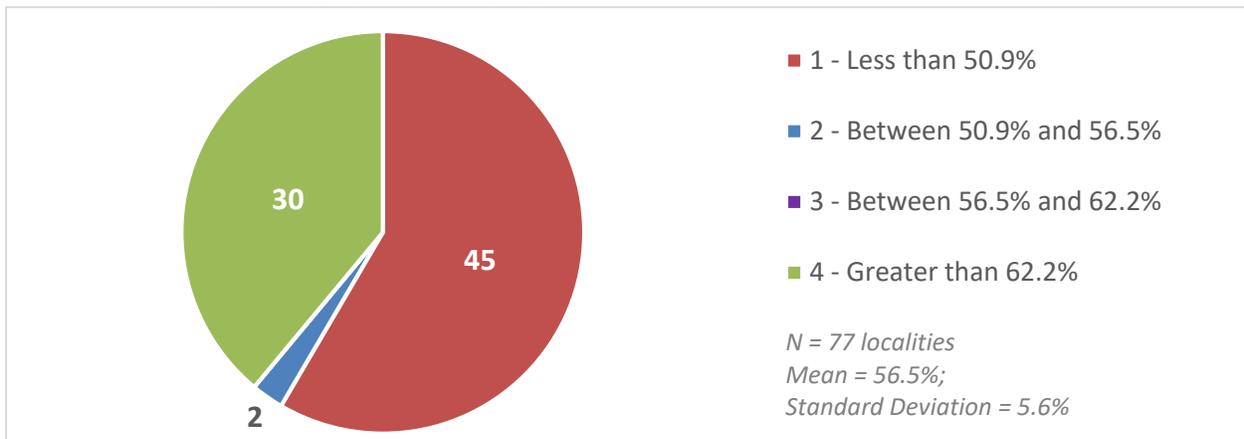
CSA Performance Indicators

Percent of Youth Receiving Intensive Care Coordination Services Against All Youth Placed in Residential Settings

Intensive Care Coordination (ICC) is an evidence-informed service (also known as High Fidelity Wraparound) defined by the State Executive Council as appropriate for children at risk of entering or placed in residential care. The intent of ICC is to prevent the need for residential placement, shorten the length of residential placements, strengthen discharge planning and community reintegration, and improve results for children at high risk for adverse outcomes. In 2014, the SEC identified a target for this indicator at 75 percent. This performance measure weighs a locality's utilization of ICC services relative to the number of youth placed in a residential care setting during the year.

For FY 2021, the average was 56.5 percent, up from 48.6 percent in FY 2020 and 45.5 percent in FY 2019. Thirty localities met or exceeded the state average, while 47 localities were below the state average.⁵ A majority of localities (45, or 58 percent) received a quartile score of one on this measure, indicating performance of more than one standard deviation below the state average. Twenty-nine of the 77 localities (38 percent) met or exceeded the 75 percent target. This percentage is about nine percent more than FY 2020 (29 percent) when 24 of 82 localities met or exceeded the target.

FY 2021 Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Intensive Care Coordination Utilization



Note: 53 of the 130 localities were not rated due to low sample size. See footnote 5 below.

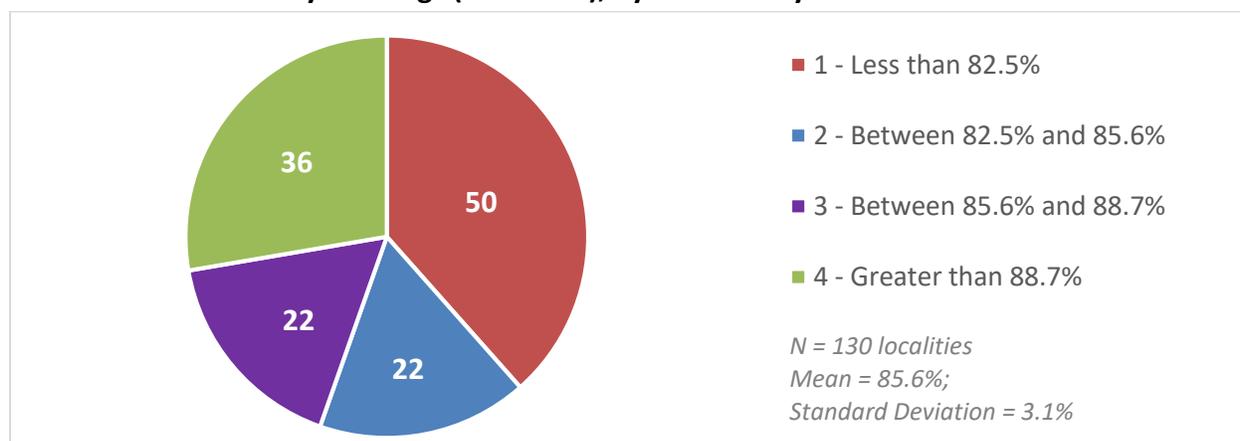
⁵ Localities with no youth receiving ICC and six or fewer youth placed in residential care were excluded from the calculations and not ranked to avoid misrepresentation due to low sample size.

**Percent of Youth Receiving Only Community Based Services of
All Youth Receiving CSA Funded Services**

The CSA has long supported the principle of serving youth in their homes and home communities as a centerpiece of the system of care approach. This measure is one indicator of how this goal is realized. Youth who, in FY 2021, received only community-based services through CSA (no residential or congregate care) are counted from the entire population served. In FY 2021, 85.6 percent of all CSA youth received only community-based services, up slightly from 84.8 percent in FY 2020. This is the sixth straight year this indicator has increased.

This performance measure considers the proportion of those receiving only community-based services to all youth served through the CSA. Fifty-eight localities (45 percent) scored above the state average, and 72 localities (55 percent) scored lower than the average. In all 130 localities, at least half of the CSA youth received only community-based services.

FY 2021 Cohort Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Community Based Services Utilization



Outcomes Related to Foster Care⁶

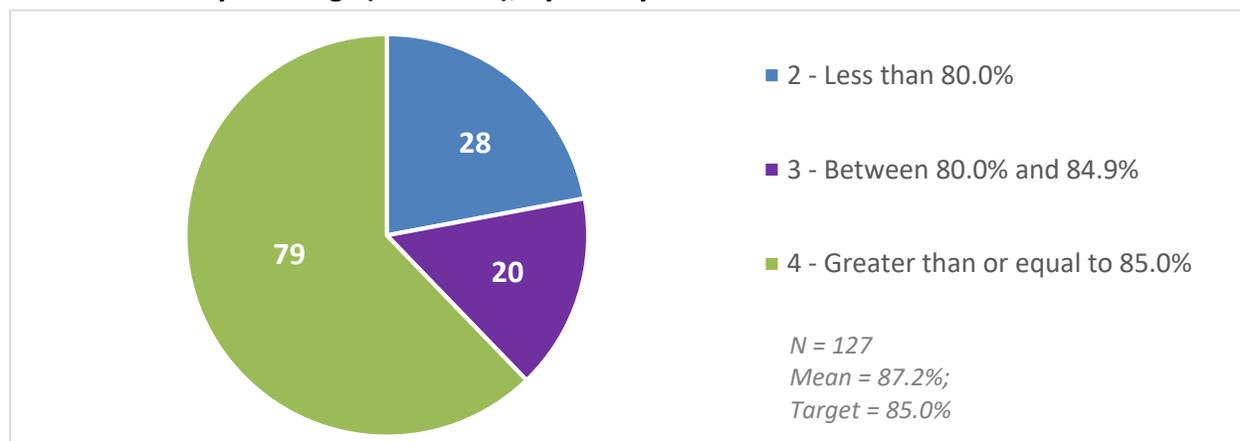
A majority (53 percent) of children served through the CSA in FY 2021 were referred due to involvement in Virginia's child welfare system through local departments of social services. The state Department of Social Services (VDSS) has established multiple indicators for children in the foster care system. The CSA has adopted two of these indicators in its performance measurement model.

Percent of Children in Foster Care in Family-Based Placements

Best practices in child welfare suggest that children removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or other reasons do best in family-based foster care settings. These are family and family-like settings with a limited number of children instead of group homes or other larger congregate care settings. The VDSS has established a target that 85 percent of the children in foster care are placed in a family-based placement.

Statewide performance on this indicator was about 87 percent, or two percent above the VDSS established target, at the end of FY 2021. Performance was also about 87 percent in FY 2020 and 85 percent in FY 2019. Localities received a score of 4 when the target was met or exceeded, a score of 3 if performance was below but within five percent of the target, and a score of 2 if performance was more than five percent below the target. Nearly two-thirds of reporting localities (79) met or exceeded this target for FY 2021. This is four localities more than in FY 2020, but more localities were not ranked in FY 2020 due to no children in family-based or congregate care at the time of the report.

FY 2021 Locality Rankings (2=Lowest), by Family-Based Placements of Children in Foster Care



⁶ The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is comprised of 120 local agencies, with some covering multiple jurisdictions. The VDSS reports foster care outcomes at the agency level. In this report, each locality within a multiple jurisdiction agency was assigned the overall DSS jurisdictions' percentage.

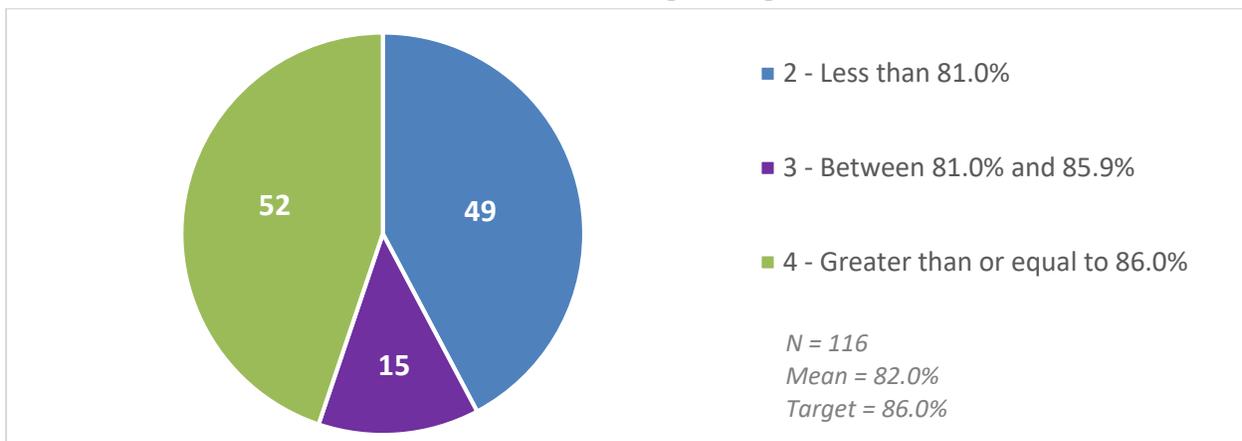
Note: 3 of the 130 localities were not rated due to not having any youth meet the inclusion criteria. The percentage of children in family-based placements was calculated using the total number of children identified in either current family-based placements or current congregate care placements as the denominator. Reported children in foster care without a defined placement type were excluded from the calculation. This is a new method for calculating this measure and resulted in a higher percentage than is reported by VDSS. For local DSS agencies that contain multiple FIPS, the calculated value was applied to all individual FIPS within the jurisdiction.

Percent of Children Who Exit from Foster Care to a Permanent Living Arrangement

Children who "exit" or "age out" of the foster care system without establishing a permanent family connection (typically through adoption, reunification with their biological family, or placement with a relative) are known to have considerably poorer life outcomes. Achieving permanency is a critical indicator of performance for the child welfare system. The VDSS has established a target that 86 percent of the children in foster care "exit" to a permanent living arrangement before "aging out."

For FY 2021, the percent who exited to permanency statewide was 82 percent, or four percent below the target. This is higher than the 76 percent of children that exited to a permanent living situation in FY 2020. The largest group of jurisdictions (52, or 45 percent) were at or above the target, and this was an increase of 23 localities meeting or exceeding the target compared to FY 2020 (29 out of 118, or 25 percent)⁷.

FY 2021 Locality Rankings (2=Lowest), by Children Who Exit from Foster Care to a Permanent Living Arrangement



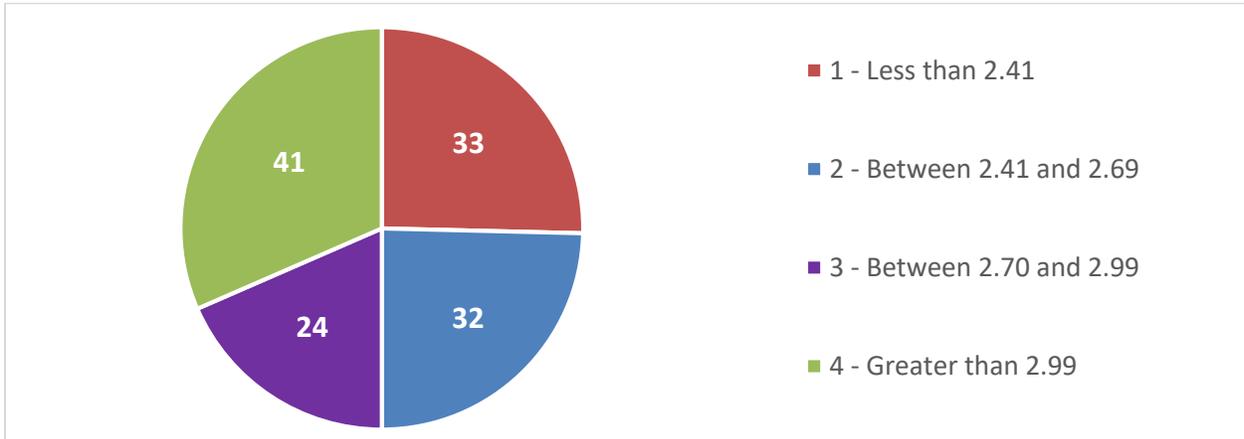
Note: 14 of the 130 localities were not rated due to not having any youth meet the inclusion criteria.

⁷ Localities with no youth exiting foster care to a permanent living arrangement and having six or fewer total youth exiting from foster care were excluded from the calculations and not ranked to avoid misrepresentation due to low sample size.

Composite Performance Measure

A composite measure for each locality was derived, summarizing a locality's scores on as many of the seven performance indicators as possible. The composite performance measure score is calculated using the average of the seven⁸ individual outcome indicators: 1 is the lowest 25 percent of scores; 2 is the between 25 percent and the midpoint (50 percent), 3 is between the midpoint and 75 percent, and 4 is the highest group between 75 and 100 percent.

FY 2021 Composite Locality Rankings (1=Lowest), by Average Scores across All Indicators



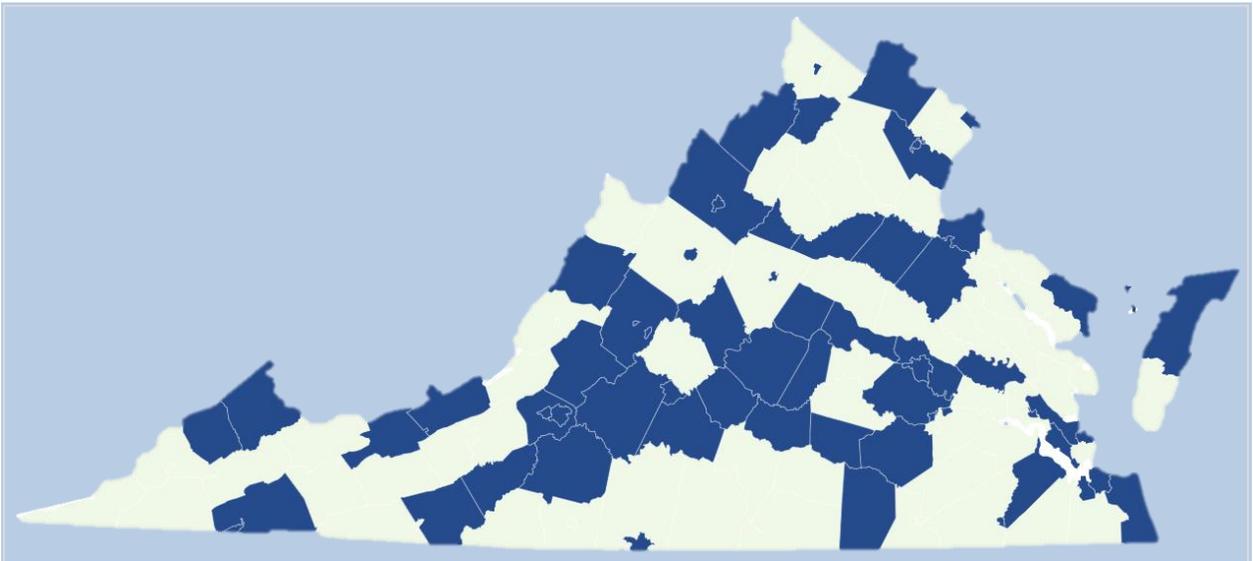
⁸ In cases where a locality did not receive a score for all outcome measures, the average was taken of only those outcome measures for which they do have scores.

Geographic Differences in Performance Measures⁹

Geographic differences between the seven performance measures and the composite score are shown in the map below.

The localities displayed in dark blue are those with scores of 1 or 2 (falling below the mean) for their total composite score, the average score across all seven indicators. The localities in lighter areas of the state scored a 3 or 4 (above the mean) on their Composite Performance Measure.

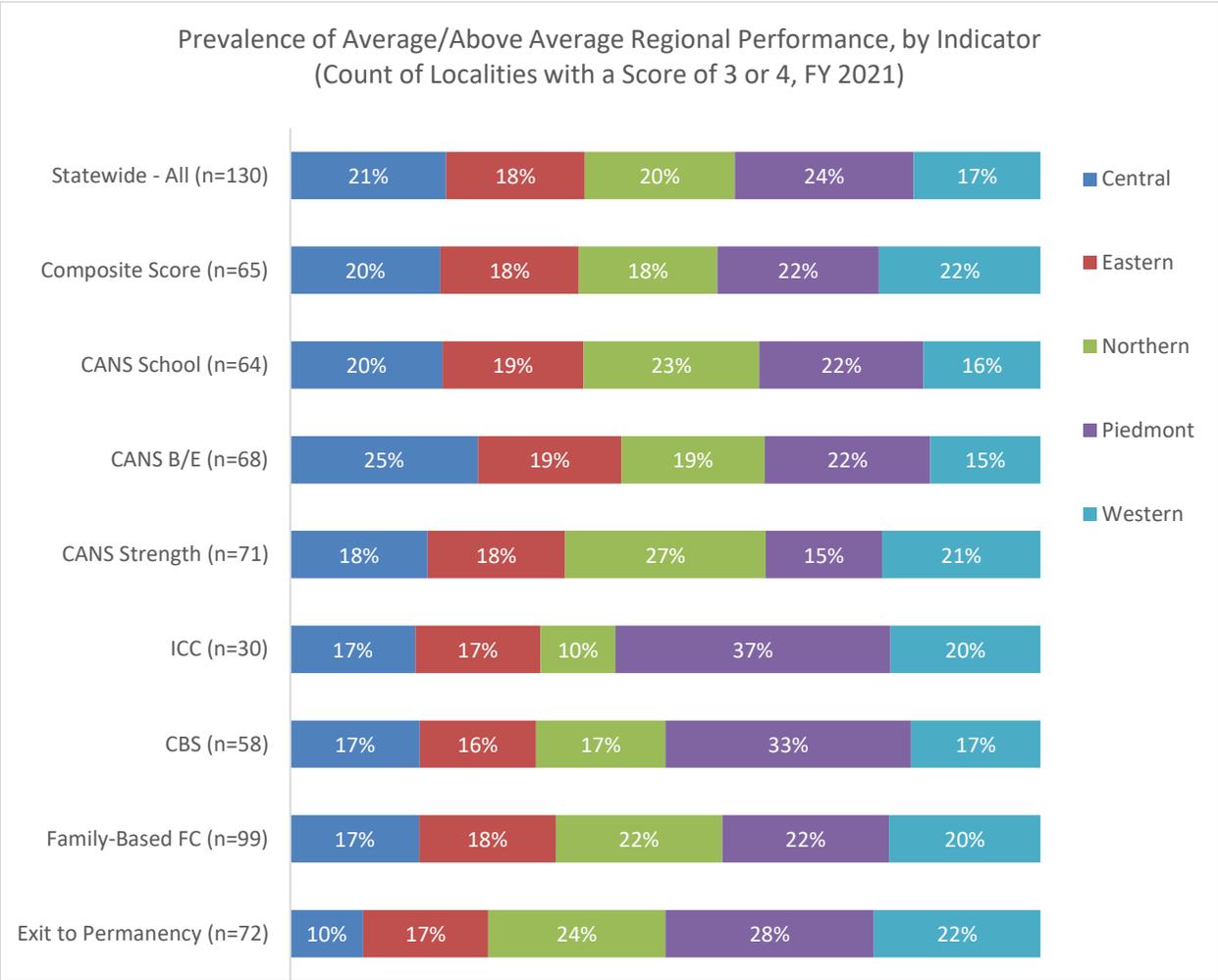
Map of Virginia Localities, Total Composite Score for FY 2021



Map created using Datawrapper

The following chart shows the representation of higher-performing localities, for each indicator, across the five geographic regions.

⁹ Geographic regions were aligned with the five VDSS defined regions.



Conclusion

Measuring the Children's Services Act's performance is critical in determining if CSA achieves its stated goals and objectives. This report provides updates and additions to reporting completed in FY 2015-2020. These performance benchmarks are treated with statistical analysis to provide information to CSA stakeholders and the State Executive Council about localities with a high level of performance and areas where possible improvements can be identified.

In addition to the state-level data summarized in this report, the Office of Children's Services has developed a web-based application allowing individual localities to view their performance on the seven measures and compare their outcomes to the state average and other localities.¹⁰ That application is available on the CSA website at www.csa.virginia.gov (see the Statistics and Publication > Reports and Publications menu). It is hoped that local CSA programs utilize this application to identify and build upon areas of strength and develop strategies to improve performance where appropriate.

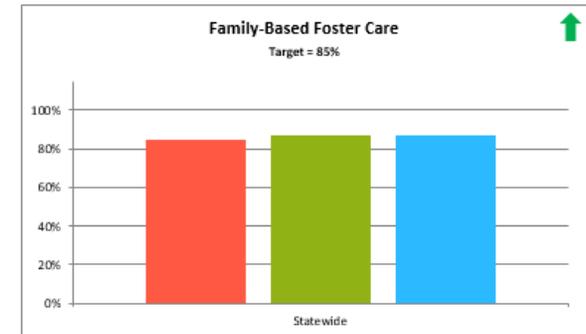
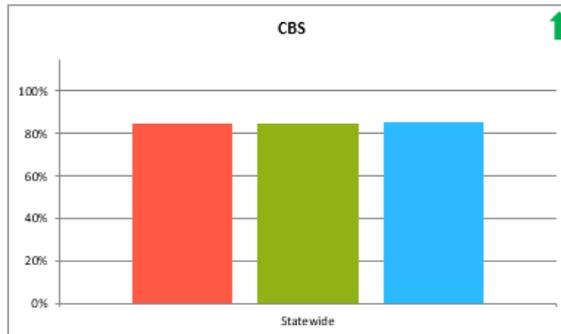
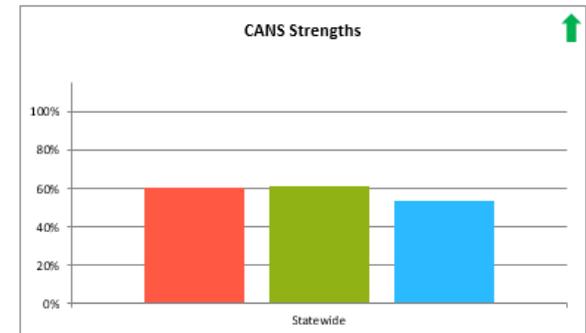
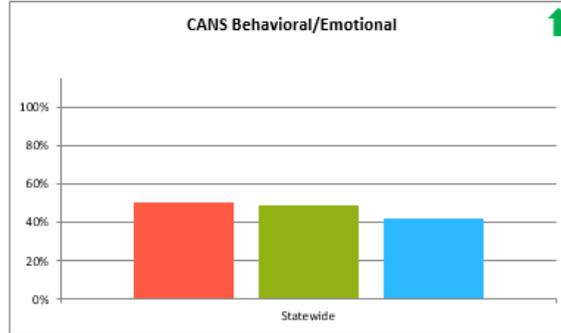
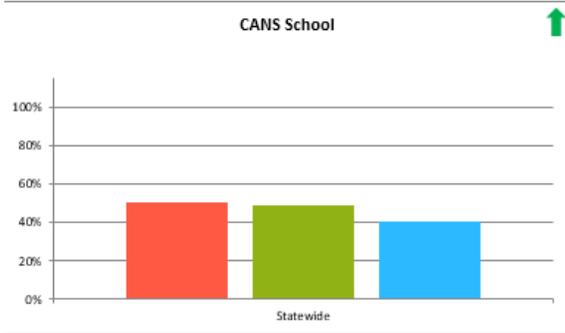
¹⁰ See Appendix 1 of this report for the FY 2019 – FY 2021 statewide results displayed through the web-based application.

Appendix 1

CSA Performance Measures - FY2019-2021

Locality	Percent of Youth with a Decrease in CANS Child School Domain ¹			Percent of Youth with a Decrease in CANS Child Behavior/Emotional Needs Domain ¹			Percent of Youth with a Decrease in CANS Child Strengths Domain ¹			Percent of Youth Receiving ICC Against Those in Residential ² (Target=75%)			Percent of Youth Receiving CBS Out of All CSA Youth			Percent of Foster Care Children in Family-based Placements (Target=85%)			Percent of Children Who Exit from Foster Care to a Permanent Living Arrangement (Target = 86%)			Composite Performance Measure ³		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
Statewide	49.9%	48.7%	40.1%	50.1%	48.5%	42.1%	60.1%	61.3%	53.5%	45.5%	48.6%	56.5%	84.5%	84.8%	85.6%	85.1%	86.8%	87.2%	76.3%	75.6%	82.0%	2.70	2.59	2.59

Locality Performance Measures with Rankings



¹Decreases in CANS scores are generally indicative of improved functioning. CANS performance measures are updated periodically with the youth's latest scores. Scores are expected to decrease as time passes and more services are provided. The average number of days between the youth's initial and latest scores is 520 days for FY 2019, 385 days for FY 2020 and 183 days for FY 2021. As such, CANS scores are not directly comparable across fiscal years.

²For the percent of youth receiving ICC, the average is taken for non-zero values only.

³For each of the seven outcome measures, localities are assigned a score relative to their proximity to either the statewide average or targets set by the Commonwealth. The composite outcome measure score is calculated using the average of the seven outcome measure scores, with 4 being the highest possible score.

