

JOINT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

NC Department of Health and Human Services

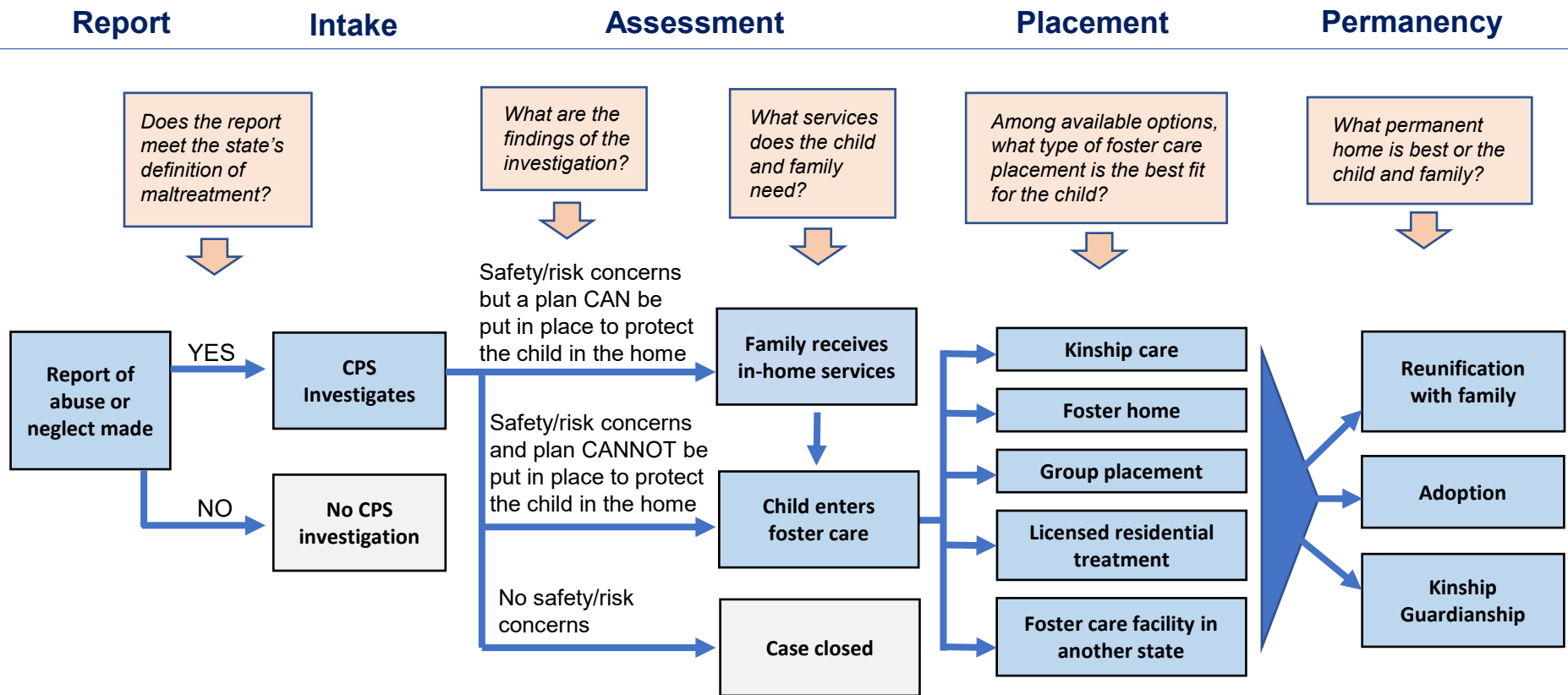
Foster Care and Adoption

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Child Welfare Overview



Snapshot of Children in Foster Care

- In SFY2020-21, 15,239 children spent at least one day in foster care in NC.
- Of the children who entered foster care, 83% were due to neglect. The 3 main causes were:
 - Parental Drug Use: 44%
 - Domestic Violence: 15%
 - Inadequate Housing: 14%
- The rate of entries was 3.7 per 1,000 children in rural counties and 1.6 per 1,000 children in urban counties.
- More than 40% of children in foster care are 5 years old or younger.

Snapshot of Children in Foster Care

- **Since the beginning of FY2021-22, 80.87% of children have experienced two or less placements while in foster care.**
- **The average length of stay for a child in foster care was 720 days.**
- **Family First Prevention Services Act: Since October 1, 2021, the number of children placed in a congregate care setting for more than 14 days has decreased by 5.4%.**

Key Decision Points in Foster Care

- **CPS Report** – Anyone can make a CPS report in NC. Reports that meet the definition for abuse, neglect, or dependency are investigated by local DSS.
- **Assessment** – During assessment, social workers investigate the level of safety and risk concerns for a child within their family and living situation.
- **Foster Care Placement** – The first choice is for a relative to provide foster care to keep children with their families. If kinship care isn't an option, children should be placed in the most family-like setting appropriate to their needs.
- **Permanency** – Placements that provide consistent, stable, nurturing living situations are critical to positive outcomes for children and families.
- **Exiting Foster Care** – Reunification with parents is the primary goal for children in foster care, but it's not always an option. Adoption is another path to lasting permanency.

Ingredients for Positive Outcomes in CPS

- **Statewide availability of wraparound services for kinship caregivers is critical to keeping children with their families.**
- **Statewide availability of quality behavioral health services is a key factor in determining outcomes for families and children in foster care.**
- **Statewide availability of services that treat the root cause of families' needs can help prevent children ever requiring CPS.**
- **NCDHHS' coordinated approach is an important first step in reaching across service areas to provide for children and families' overall well-being.**
- **Investing in a robust, resilient child welfare workforce can support better consistency in practice statewide and improve outcomes for children and families.**