



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Children and Youth Missing from
DFPS Conservatorship
&
Human Trafficking Initiatives
Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report

May 2021

Background

Pursuant to Texas Family Code § 264.017(b)(12) and (13) and Texas Family Code § 264.123, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is required to report annually:

- The number of children who are missing¹ from the children's substitute care provider while in the managing conservatorship of the department;
- The number of children who were victims of trafficking² under Chapter 20A, Penal Code, while in the managing conservatorship of the department;
- Whether a child who went missing was a victim of the offense of Trafficking in Persons;
- Whether the managing conservatorship of the department is temporary or permanent;
- The type of substitute care in which the child is placed; and
- The child's county of residence, sex, age, race, and ethnicity.

In Fiscal Year 2016, DFPS began investigating allegations of sex and labor trafficking committed by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare. Prior to Fiscal Year 2016, these allegations were investigated as sexual abuse or neglectful supervision.

Children and Youth Missing while in DFPS Conservatorship

In Fiscal Year 2020, 47,913 children and youth were in DFPS conservatorship. Of these, 2,094 children and youth were reported missing during Fiscal Year 2020. In addition, 201 children and youth were already missing on the first day of the fiscal year.³ A total of 2,229 unique children and youth were missing at some point during Fiscal Year 2020.⁴

Of the 2,229 children and youth who were missing at some point during Fiscal Year 2020:

- 1,881 (84%) had been located as of August 31, 2020.
- 255 (11%) were still missing on August 31, 2020. Of these, 62 (24%) had gone missing during August 2020.
- 93 (4%) children and youth exited conservatorship while missing.⁵ Of these:
 - 63 youth turned 18 while on missing status.
 - 30 had legal responsibility terminated by the court of jurisdiction while on missing status before they turned 18.

Over the last three fiscal years, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of children and youth who have at least one or more missing event during the fiscal year,

out of the population of children and youth in DFPS conservatorship at some point during the year (see **Table 1**). However, some of this increase is due to continued improvements to our internal tracking processes of missing children.

Table 1
Total Number of Children and Youth in DFPS Conservatorship who were Missing

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of children and youth in conservatorship at some point during fiscal year.	52,397	51,417	47,913
Number of children and youth in conservatorship who were reported missing during Fiscal Year 2020.	1,843	1,973	2,094
Percent of children and youth in conservatorship who were reported missing during Fiscal Year 2020.	3.5%	3.8%	4.4%

Demographics of Children and Youth Missing from DFPS Conservatorship

Of the children and youth who were newly reported as missing in Fiscal Year 2020, 68% were age 15-17 at the time of their first missing event in the fiscal year (see **Table 2**).

Table 2
Ages of Children and Youth at the Time of the First FY 2020 Missing Event

Age	FY 2018 Number of Children	%	FY 2019 Number of Children	%	FY 2020 Number of Children	%
17	481	26%	473	24%	507	24%
16	433	23%	470	24%	494	23%
15	354	19%	363	18%	419	20%
14	244	13%	249	13%	236	11%
13	145	8%	151	8%	168	8%
12	54	3%	67	3%	58	3%
Less than 12 ⁶	132	7%	200	10%	215	10%
Total	1,843	100%	1,973	100%	2,094	100%

The gender breakdown of those missing from care has remained relatively consistent (see **Table 3**).

Table 3
Gender of Missing Children and Youth

Gender	FY 2018 Number of Children	%	FY 2019 Number of Children	%	FY 2020 Number of Children	%
Female	1015	55%	1053	53%	1122	54%
Male	827	45%	919	47%	972	46%
Unknown	1	< 1%	1	< 1%	0	0%
Total	1,843	100%	1,973	100%	2,094	100%

Race/Ethnicity for children and youth missing have remained consistent across fiscal years (see last column of **Table 4**)

Table 4
Race/Ethnicity Children and Youth Missing

Race/ Ethnicity	FY 2018 Number of Children	%	FY 2019 Number of Children	%	FY 2020 Number of Children	%	FY 2020 % of All Children and Youth in Care
African American	465	25%	476	24%	558	27%	22%
Anglo	524	28%	557	28%	547	26%	30%
Hispanic	767	42%	829	42%	912	44%	42%
Native American	1	< 1%	2	< 1%	3	< 1%	< 1%
Asian	1	< 1%	3	< 1%	3	< 1%	< 1%
Other ⁷	63	3%	78	4%	41	2%	6%
Unknown	22	1%	28	1%	30	1%	< 1%
Total	1,843	100%	1,973	100%	2,094	100%	100%

As in prior fiscal years, the living arrangements from which children and youth are missing from DFPS conservatorship most frequently in Fiscal Year 2020 are Residential Treatment Centers and Emergency Shelters (see **Table 5**).

Table 5
Living Arrangements for Children and Youth at the Time of the Missing Event

Substitute Care Type	FY 2018 Number of Children	%	FY 2019 Number of Children	%	FY 2020 Number of Children	%
Residential Treatment	433	23%	466	24%	547	26%
Emergency Shelter	342	19%	377	19%	315	15%
Therapeutic Foster Care	285	15%	283	14%	272	13%
Kinship Home	211	11%	223	11%	238	11%
Missing at Time of Removal*	-	-	191	10%	154	7%
GRO	145	8%	129	7%	147	7%
Other Foster Care	60	3%	48	2%	100	5%
Foster Care: Child Care Services	61	3%	67	3%	98	5%
Unauthorized Placement	90	5%	50	3%	79	4%
Own Home	78	4%	82	4%	64	3%
Other	11	1%	14	1%	54	3%
DFPS Supervision	21	1%	19	1%	21	1%
Unknown	106	6%	24	1%	5	< 1%
Total	1,843	100%	1,973	100%	2,094	100%

*This category was added in Fiscal Year 2019 and does not have data for previous year.

Most children and youth who were missing continue to be under Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC), followed by Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) with termination of parental rights, then PMC without termination of parental rights (see **Table 6**). Most children and youth in DFPS conservatorship are under TMC.

Table 6
Legal Status of Missing Children and Youth

Legal Status	FY 2018		FY 2019		FY 2020	
	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%
Temporary Managing Conservatorship	903	49%	936	47%	1002	48%
Permanent Managing Conservatorship with Termination	561	30%	603	31%	661	32%
Permanent Managing Conservatorship Without Termination	352	19%	377	19%	403	19%
Other Legal Basis	6	< 1%	2	< 1%	4	< 1%
Care, Custody, and Control	5	< 1%	9	< 1%	6	< 1%
Not Recorded	16	1%	46	2%	18	1%
Total	1,843	100%	1,973	100%	2,094	100%

Reasons Given for Missing Event

When children and youth are recovered, they are given an opportunity to share the reason for the missing event. A total of 3,076 recoveries were documented and for 1,894 of these recoveries, the children and youth reported why they were missing from care in Fiscal Year 2020.⁸ The top seven reasons children and youth gave are listed below, and are similar to those given in previous years:

- Dislike of rules of placement (19%)
- Desire to be on one's own (15%)
- Anger at CPS or the system (14%)
- Frustration / anger with caregivers (11%)
- Desire new placement (10%)
- Desire to see family/relatives (10%)
- Desire to be with boyfriend or girlfriend (8%)

Children and Youth Trafficked while in Conservatorship

There were 1,972 unique children recovered from missing status in Fiscal Year 2020. Of the 1,972 children and youth who were recovered in Fiscal Year 2020, 136 (7%) reported being victimized while missing, 68 (3.4%) of whom reported being a victim of sex trafficking (see **Table 7**).

Table 7
Overview of Texas Children and Youth in DFPS Conservatorship

FY 2020	
Total number in DPFS Conservatorship at some point in FY 2020	47,913
Total number of unique children and youth missing from DPFS Conservatorship	2,229
Total number of unique children recovered during FY 2020	1,972
Number of unique children who reported being victimized during missing episode	136
Number of unique victims of sex trafficking during missing episode	68
Number of unique victims of labor trafficking during missing episode	0

One hundred and thirty-six children and youth were victimized while they were on missing status in Fiscal Year 2020, with some experiencing multiple types of victimization (see **Table 8**).

Table 8
Children and Youth Victimized During Missing Event

	FY 2018 Number of Children	FY 2019 Number of Children	FY 2020 Number of Children
Reported Sex Trafficked	52	46	68
Reported Labor Trafficked	2	0	0
Reported Being Sexually Abused	68	72	64
Reported Being Physically Abused	23	19	23
Total who Reported being Victimized*	105	109	136

*Numbers do not sum to total as youth may have experienced multiple types of victimization

Tables 9, 10 and 11 provide the age, gender, and race/ethnicity of the 68 children and youth who reported being sex trafficked during a missing event in Fiscal Year 2020.

Demographics of Children and Youth Sex Trafficked During a Missing Event in FY 2020

**Table 9
Age**

Age	Number of Children	%
17	19	28%
16	24	35%
15	19	28%
14	3	4%
13	1	1%
12	1	1%
11	1	1%
Total	68	100%

**Table 10
Gender**

Gender	Number of Children	%
Female	67	99%
Male	1	1%
Total	68	100%

**Table 11
Race/Ethnicity**

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Children	%
African American	32	47%
Anglo	13	19%
Hispanic	16	24%
Asian	1	1%
Native American	0	0%
Other ⁵	4	6%
Unknown	2	3%
Total	68	100%

Reports and Investigations of Sex and Labor Trafficking

Child Protective Investigations (CPI) investigates allegations of sex trafficking and labor trafficking when the alleged perpetrator is traditionally responsible for a child or youth’s care, custody, or welfare such as a family member, or an adult living in the home of an alleged minor victim. Reports of child trafficking not under DFPS investigative jurisdiction are sent to local law enforcement, and the Texas Department of Public Safety. **Tables 12 and 13** provide data on reports of sex or labor trafficking received in Fiscal Year 2020.⁹

Table 12
Sex Trafficking Reports

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Reports Received with Sex Trafficking as an Allegation	731	732	800
Alleged Victims of Sex Trafficking*	803	859	876
Reports with a Sex Trafficking Allegation Investigated by CPI	462	549	543
Reports with a Sex Trafficking Allegation sent to CPI Alternative Response	0	2	3

*Multiple victims may be identified in a single report, resulting in a higher victim count than reports received.”

Table 13
Labor Trafficking Reports

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Reports Received with Labor Trafficking as an Allegation	79	102	103
Alleged Victims of Labor Trafficking*	101	125	135
Reports with a Labor Trafficking Allegation Investigated by CPI	31	64	76
Reports with a Labor Trafficking Allegation sent to CPI Alternative Response	7	3	6

*Multiple victims may be identified in a single report, resulting in a higher victim count than reports received.”

Tables 14 and 18 provide the outcomes of allegations of sex and labor trafficking for investigations that closed during Fiscal Year 2020. These allegations could be the result of a report or could have been added during an investigation of other abuse/neglect allegations.¹⁰ Tables 15-17 and 19-21 provide the demographics for confirmed victims of sex and labor trafficking.

Table 14
CPI Sex Trafficking Investigations

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Investigations with one or more Allegation of Sex Trafficking	515	544	547
Investigations with a Disposition of “Reason to Believe” for one or more Sex Trafficking Allegations	31	29	35
Unique Victims of Sex Trafficking Allegations with a “Reason to Believe” Disposition*	33	29	39

*Multiple victims may be identified in a single investigation, resulting in a higher victim count than investigations.”

Demographics of Confirmed Victims of Sex Trafficking in FY 2020

Table 15
Age

Age	Number of Children	%
17	3	8%
16	15	38%
15	4	10%
14	2	5%
13	5	13%
12	1	3%
Under 12	9	23%
Total	39	100%

Table 16
Gender

Gender	Number of Children	%
Female	34	87%
Male	5	13%
Total	39	100%

Table 17
Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Children	%
African American	8	21%
Anglo	14	36%
Hispanic	12	31%
Native American	0	0%
Asian	0	0%
Other ⁵	5	13%
Unknown	0	0%
Total	39	100%

**Table 18
Labor Trafficking Investigations**

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Investigations with one or more Allegation of Labor Trafficking	44	63	75
Investigations with a Disposition of "Reason to Believe" for one or more Labor Trafficking Allegations	2	4	4
Unique Victims of Labor Trafficking Allegations with a "Reason to Believe" Disposition*	2	11*	4

*Of the 11 confirmed victims of labor trafficking in Fiscal Year 2019, 9 were from the same investigation.

Demographics of Confirmed Victims of Labor Trafficking in FY 2020

**Table 19
Age**

Age	Number of Children	%
17	0	0%
16	0	0%
15	2	50%
14	0	0%
13	2	50%
12	0	0%
Under 12	0	0%
Total	4	100%

**Table 20
Gender**

Gender	Number of Children	%
Female	3	75%
Male	1	25%
Total	4	100%

**Table 21
Race/Ethnicity**

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Children	%
African American	0	0%
Anglo	0	0%
Hispanic	4	100%
Native American	0	0%
Asian	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Unknown	0	0%
Total	4	100%

Table 22: Placement Counties of Children and Youth at the First FY 2020 Missing Event¹¹
(Highest to Lowest)

County	Number of Children Missing	County	Number of Children Missing	County	Number of Children Missing
Harris	385	Coryell	8	Hood	<5
Bexar	267	Mills	8	Howard	<5
Dallas	154	Cass	7	Jackson	<5
Fort Bend	111	Ector	7	Jasper	<5
Tarrant	89	Grayson	7	Jim Wells	<5
Travis	75	Jeff Davis	7	Kaufman	<5
Lubbock	60	Bastrop	6	Kleberg	<5
Comal	54	Hockley	6	Lamar	<5
Montgomery	54	Matagorda	6	Lamb	<5
Cameron	43	Upshur	6	Liberty	<5
Smith	37	Walker	6	Live Oak	<5
Nueces	32	Zavala	6	Mason	<5
Denton	31	Hill	5	Maverick	<5
Galveston	29	Wharton	5	McCulloch	<5
McLennan	29	Wichita	5	Medina	<5
El Paso	26	Terry	5	Midland	<5
Hidalgo	26	Anderson	<5	Milam	<5
Williamson	20	Angelina	<5	Moore	<5
Bell	19	Atascosa	<5	Morris	<5
Kerr	19	Bailey	<5	Nacogdoches	<5
Lampasas	18	Bowie	<5	Navarro	<5
Potter	18	Burleson	<5	Nolan	<5
Harrison	17	Burnet	<5	Oldham	<5
Jefferson	17	Camp	<5	Orange	<5
Taylor	16	Chambers	<5	Palo Pinto	<5
Austin	15	Cherokee	<5	Red River	<5
Brazoria	15	Childress	<5	Reeves	<5
Hays	14	Coleman	<5	Rockwall	<5
Randall	14	Concho	<5	Sutton	<5
Brazos	13	Cooke	<5	Throckmorton	<5
Tom Green	13	Crosby	<5	Tyler	<5
Webb	13	Eastland	<5	Van Zandt	<5
Brown	12	Erath	<5	Victoria	<5
Collin	12	Fayette	<5	Waller	<5
San Patricio	12	Freestone	<5	Ward	<5
Ellis	11	Frio	<5	Wilson	<5
Hunt	11	Gaines	<5	Wise	<5
Johnson	11	Goliad	<5	Wood	<5
Kendall	10	Gray	<5	Young	<5
Washington	10	Gregg	<5		
Caldwell	9	Hale	<5	Out of State	30
Guadalupe	9	Henderson	<5	Total	2,094

¹ Current policies for children missing from substitute care can be found at:
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6400.asp#CPS_6460

² Current policies for child trafficking (sex and/or labor) can be found at:
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_2200.asp#CPS_2380
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6400.asp#CPS_6460
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10150
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10200.asp#CPS_10224_1
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10400.asp#CPS_10441
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x12000.asp#CPS_12911

³ The demographic data on these youth were included in the data on first missing events in the previous year's report, so they will not be included in the demographics of first missing events in this report unless the youth had a new missing event within the fiscal year to avoid double counting them.

⁴ 2,094 children and youth had a new missing event in Fiscal Year 2020. This includes 66 of the 201 youth who were still missing at the end of the previous fiscal year—who were recovered and had a new missing event that started in Fiscal Year 2020. However, the remaining 135 of the 201 youth who were still missing at the end of the previous fiscal year are not captured in the new missing event population as they did not have a subsequent missing event in Fiscal Year 2020. Therefore, the total number of unique children and youth missing during Fiscal Year 2020 is calculated as 2,094 youth with new events + 135 youth missing at the start of the year who did not also have a new missing event = 2,229.

⁵ DFPS continues to search for any youth missing from conservatorship until the department no longer has legal authority.

⁶ The majority of these children were missing because parent(s) absconded with the children before the department could take possession or abducted after the department took possession.

⁷ In the DFPS data system, this racial category is "Multiple (Non-Hispanic)"

⁸ The number of recoveries is greater than the number of unique youth who were missing, as well as the number of unique youth who were recovered, because youth may have multiple missing events and recovery events within the fiscal year.

⁹ Trafficking reports are presented in a different way than in prior reports. Previously, we included reports where sex or labor trafficking was the primary allegation. Primary allegation is the highest priority allegation in a report and is assigned by the intake worker. In the Fiscal Year 2019 report, we expanded our definition to include reports where sex or labor trafficking is an allegation, primary or not.

¹⁰ The numbers of reports investigated in tables 9 and 10 do not match the numbers of investigations in tables 11 and 12 because the reports were received within Fiscal Year 2020 and the resulting investigation may not have been completed and closed before the end of the fiscal year, while the investigations closed during Fiscal Year 2020 could have been the result of a report received in the prior fiscal year.

¹¹ For children and youth who were missing at the time of removal, or whose first FY 2020 missing event was preceded by a different missing event, the county of legal jurisdiction was used as the placement county from which the child/youth was missing.