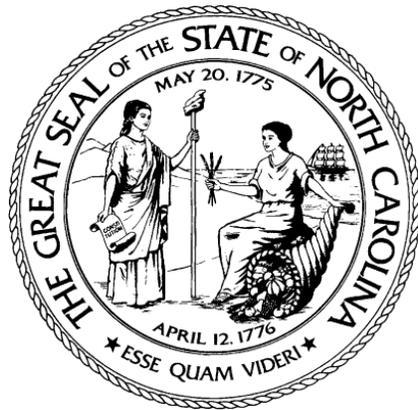


**Annual Report on NC Intensive Family Preservation Services  
July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024**

**Session Law 2023-134, Section 9J.2.(d)**



**Report to**

**The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
Health and Human Services**

**and**

**The Fiscal Research Division**

**by**

**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

**February 25, 2026**

## **Background and Introduction**

Pursuant to Session Law 2023-134, Section 9J.2, the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) shall submit an annual report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Fiscal Research Division by December 1 of each year that provides the information and data about Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS) collected as required in subsection (b) of this legislation. NCDHHS, through the Division of Social Services (DSS), provides the staff and support services for implementing IFPS Services in accordance with SL 2023-134, Section 9J.2 and offers this report on the IFPS for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024.

During SFY 2024, which covers July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, DSS transitioned from contracting with community-based agencies that implemented IFPS to contracting with agencies to implement the evidenced-based HOMEBUILDERS® model. The transition included releasing a Request for Applications to select agencies that would provide HOMEBUILDERS® as part of NC's Family First Prevention Plan. In order to maintain service continuity, DSS continued IFPS services while beginning HOMEBUILDERS® implementation during this fiscal year. This report includes both services provided in SFY 2024.

**The Intensive Family Preservation Services** Program provides intensive services to children and families in cases of abuse, neglect, and dependency where a child may be at imminent risk of removal from the home. DSS implements the IFPS program statewide on a regional basis. The IFPS applies standardized assessment criteria to determine imminent risk of children involved in child protective services, receiving behavioral health services, or involved with the juvenile justice system, being placed in foster care, group homes, or other types of out-of-home placement. Its core components were based on the HOMEBUILDERS® model. In SFY 2024, DSS contracted with Children's Home Society and Coastal Horizons Center agencies (referred to as IFPS Grantees throughout this report) to serve all 100 counties in NC.

**North Carolina's HOMEBUILDERS®** program is an evidence-based program developed by the Institute of Family Development (IFD) designed to strengthen families, keep children safe, and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placement. The HOMEBUILDERS® model provides intensive crisis intervention, counseling, and life-skills education for families who have children at imminent risk of out-of-home placement. HOMEBUILDERS® is similar to IFPS but includes additional training, implementation support, and model fidelity monitoring from the model purveyor. It will eventually replace the DSS IFPS program.

In January 2024, DSS contracted with the following three agencies to implement HOMEBUILDERS® in all 100 counties within seven Social Services Regions: Children's Home Society in Regions 1, 2 and 4, Coastal Horizons Center in Regions 5, 6 and 7, and Crossnore Communities for Children in Region 3. During SFY 2024, IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® programs provided services to a total of 1,616 children in 656 families.

Pursuant to Section 9J.3.(b), The Department of Health and Human Services shall require that any program or entity that receives State, federal, or other funding for the purpose of IFPS shall provide information and data that allows for the following:

- (1) An established follow-up system with a minimum of six months of follow-up services.

DSS has established a two-part follow-up system to track short and long-term outcomes of families who completed IFPS services. First, DSS requires IFPS Grantees to contact the most involved parent in each family served with IFPS to administer a follow-up evaluation at six and twelve months after services concluded. If a home visit is not possible, phone contact is attempted and documented at least five times. In addition to checking on the family's well-being, this assessment determines whether repeat child maltreatment and/or out-of-home placement of a child occurred during these time frames. This requirement is listed in IFPS contracts, policy manual and training.

Secondly, DSS requires Grantees to submit an addendum with their monthly invoice. This addendum includes each child's name, service identifying system number, and the dates services started and ended. The NC DHHS's Performance Management Team compares the compiled client data with case information entered by the county child welfare agencies in the state-wide DSS database system (Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry and NCFAS Child Welfare databases) to determine if the child remains in the home at IFPS case closure, 6 months after closure, and 12 months after closure. This data report is completed annually.

- (2) Detailed information on the specific interventions applied, including utilization indicators and performance measures.

#### Details of Interventions Applied:

The goals of IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® are to stabilize the crisis which placed the family at imminent risk, maintain children safely in their homes, prevent future incidence of child maltreatment, and improve family functioning. IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® Grantees provide in-home case management services and intervention strategies to participating families. Depending on the additional needs and goals of the families, Grantees may provide or refer families to additional evidence-based programming.

#### In-Home Case Management

Both IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® Grantees employ Specialists who use Motivational Interviewing and Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) during the provision of in-home case management. The Specialists have small caseloads, serving two families at a time for four to six weeks in the family home. Specialists are available to the family 24 hours a day, seven days a week for a minimum of 40 hours during the delivery of the service. Program strategies offered through in-home case management include:

- Assessing risk & developing a safety plan,
- Teaching parenting skills,
- Family/individual/marital counseling,
- Teaching budgeting skills,
- Aiding the family in meeting medical needs,
- Linking the family with concrete services & follow-up services, and/or
- Assisting the family with transportation.

During home visits, IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® Programs use a range of interventions to support families, including motivational interviewing techniques, Your Deal Cards, and cognitive behavioral skills (CBT toolbox for children and adolescents). From intake through the duration of the case, staff conduct comprehensive assessments to develop personalized goals and interventions, ensuring a family-centered approach. The interventions employed by the programs include, but are not limited to:

- **Motivational Interviewing:** Enhances engagement and encourages positive behavioral changes.
- **Triple P (Positive Parenting Program):** Prevents and treats behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents while helping parents build strong, healthy relationships to manage their children’s behavior.
- **Active Listening:** Builds trust and understanding between staff and families.
- **Fighting Fair:** Teaches conflict resolution skills.
- **1-2-3 Magic:** Provides effective parenting strategies.
- **Common Sense Parenting:** Offers practical parenting techniques.
- **Household Chore and Behavior Charts:** Promotes organization and positive behavior in the home.
- **Life Skills:** Equips families with essential skills for daily living.
- **Impact of Substance Abuse:** Educates on the effects of substance abuse and strategies for prevention.
- **Therapy Aid:** Supports mental health and emotional well-being.

#### Evidence-Based Programs (EBP)

Grantees provide or refer families to a wide range of evidence-based programs (EBPs) based on the specific family’s needs. Some examples of services that IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® Grantees have offered families in their agencies or communities the following interventions or services: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Parent Child Interaction Therapy, Child First, Seven Challenges, Nurturing Parenting Program, Solution Focused Brief Therapy, Love and Logic, Incredible Years Program, Strengthening Families Program, and Multisystemic Therapy.

In addition to formal EBPs, IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® grantees provide services that are family-centered, strength-based, and trauma-informed. Based on the family’s needs, they make referrals to inpatient and outpatient therapy, day treatment, and substance abuse outpatient treatment. In addition, grantees help families meet their financial goals and concrete needs through Financial Skill Building skills, General Educational Development (GED) services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) services, Work First services, and local housing and emergency housing agencies.

#### Utilization Indicators:

In SFY 2024, the NC IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® program served 1,616 children in 656 families. These families qualified for services by having at least one child, age birth through 17 years old who was at imminent risk of placement in out-of-home care as defined by a substantiation of abuse, neglect or dependency and a rating of “high” on the Family Risk Assessment or Family Risk Reassessment.

Performance Measures:

Immediate parental performance is measured through pre- and post-service assessment tools. Grantees administer the following assessment tools at the beginning and end of service delivery to measure changes in the family’s functioning and protective factors:

North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NC-FAS)

NC-FAS is intended for use with high-risk families with at least one child who is at risk of removal due to child abuse or neglect. The purpose of utilizing NC-FAS for IFPS participants is to measure family functioning.

Protective Factor Survey (PFS)

The Protective Factors Survey (PFS) is a 20-item measure designed for use with caregivers receiving child maltreatment prevention services. It is a pre-post survey completed by the program participants that measures change in behaviors. All IFPS adult participants complete the PFS at enrollment and again at closure to determine changes in parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children.

The table below describes the IFPS SFY 2024 outcomes for improved family functioning and increased protective factors.

SFY 2024 Outcomes for Families that Completed the Program	Measurement Tools
97% of families had improved functioning at case closure 100% of families increase their protective factors at closure	NC Family Assessment Scale Protective Factors Survey

(Source: 2024 Performance Status Monitoring Reports and 2024 Protective Factors Survey Reports)

(3) Cost-benefit data

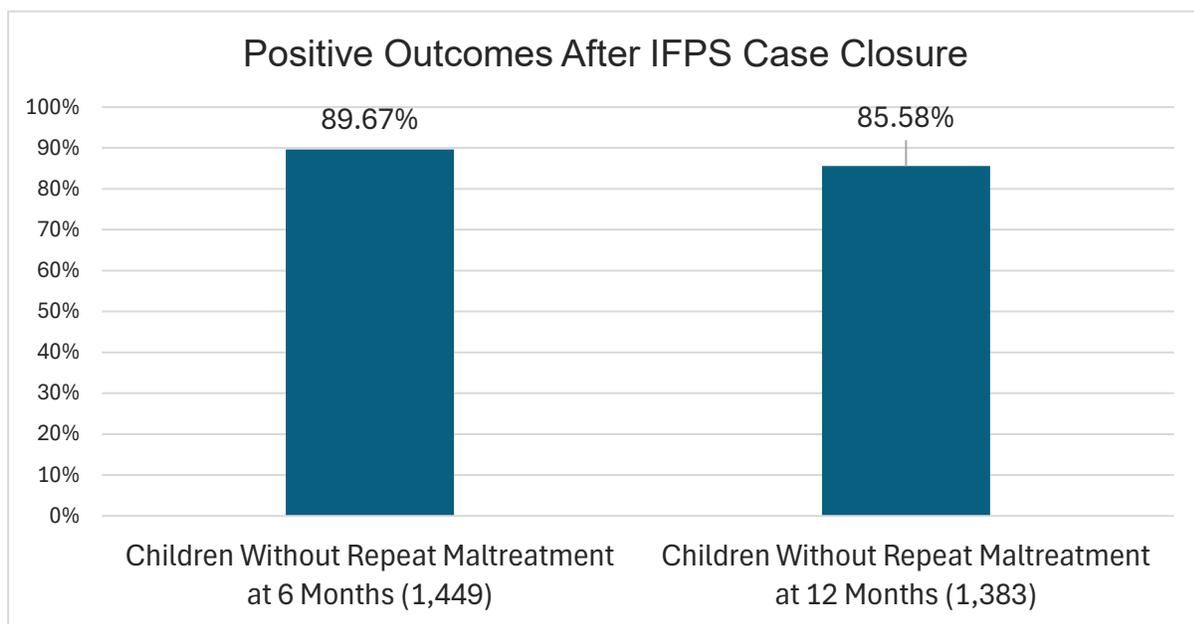
- DSS served 656 families with IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® in SFY 2024 with 576 of those families remaining intact after 12 months.
- IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® services cost an average of \$7,200 per family. The total cost of IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® for SFY 2024 equals \$3,929,600. For SFY 2024, the average board payment for each child for 12 months of foster care was \$1,296 per month per child x 12 months = \$15,552 x 21,616 children = \$25,132,032. This resulted in savings of \$21,202,432. The benefit-cost ratio of IFPS in SFY 2024 was 4.27:1. In other words, IFPS achieved \$4.27 of savings in out-of-home placement costs for every \$1 spent on IFPS in SFY 2024.

(4) Data on long-term benefits associated with IFPS. This data shall be obtained by tracking families through the intervention process.

In addition to a child remaining in their parents’ home, the long-term outcomes for IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® include decreased incidence of repeat maltreatment, improved family functioning, and increased protective factors. Repeat maltreatment is defined as children with a child maltreatment assessment or investigation finding of:

- Abuse Substantiated
- Neglect Substantiated
- Abuse and Neglect Substantiated
- Dependency Substantiated
- Services Needed
- Services Provided

DSS assessed the incidence of repeat maltreatment by searching Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry and NCFAST Child Welfare databases by the ID number of each child who received IFPS to determine if they experienced additional Child Welfare involvement within 6 months after closure and 12 months after closure. The graph below indicates that children receiving IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® services have low rates of repeat maltreatment within a year after services concluded.



(Sources: Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry Universe and NCFAST Child Welfare Universe)

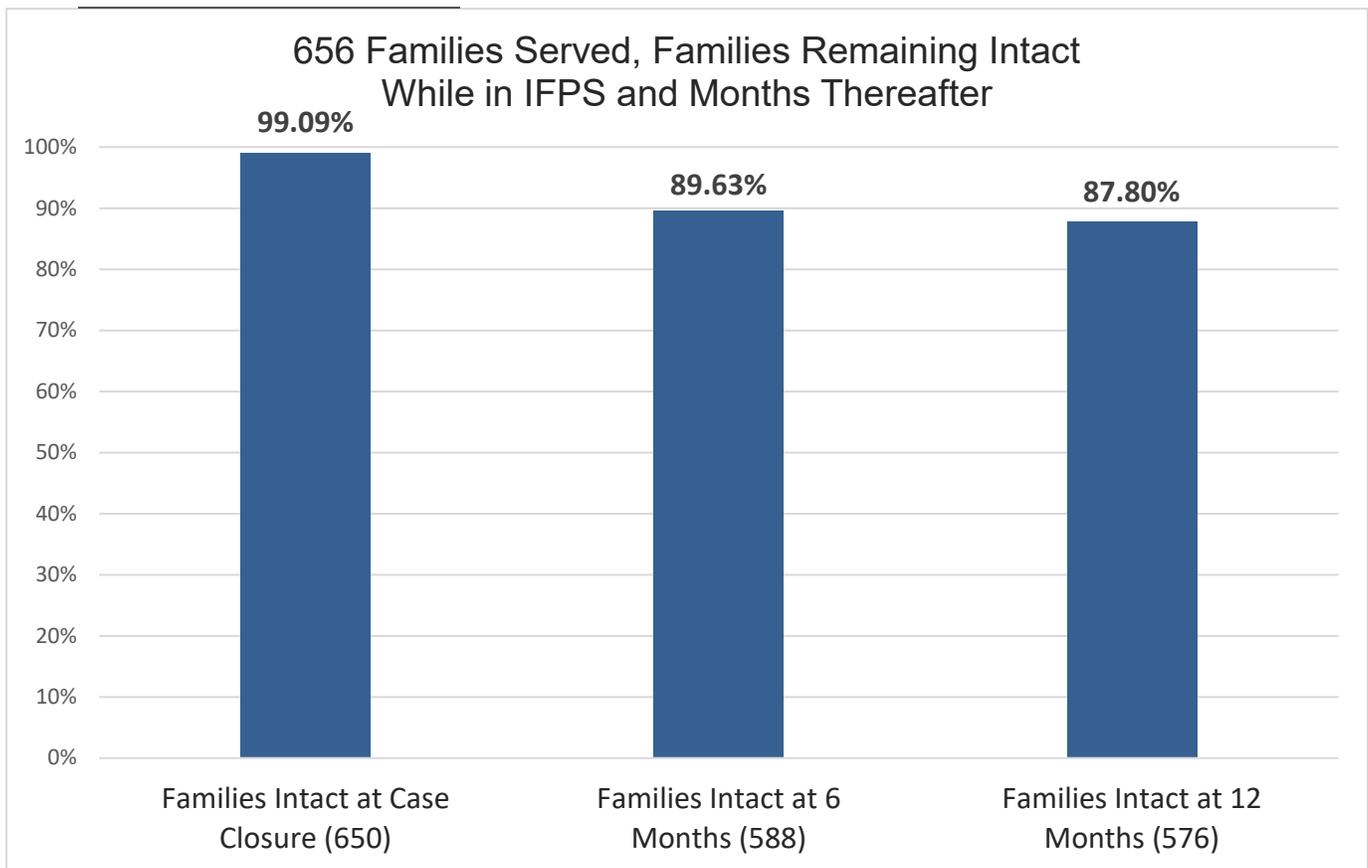
Additionally, research indicates that family preservation services that help children remain with their families have better educational, health, and employment outcomes. For instance, longer-term outcomes for children who remain or reunified with their families include decreased rates of substance abuse, criminal conviction, homelessness, and underemployment as adults<sup>1</sup>. DSS is not able to track these long-term outcomes for our families.

- (5) The number of families remaining intact and the associated interventions while in these programs and months thereafter.

<sup>1</sup>Ringel, Jeanne S., Dana Schultz, Joshua Mendelsohn, Stephanie Brooks Holliday, Katharine Sieck, Ifeanyi Edochie, and Lauren Davis, *Improving Children's Lives: Balancing Investments in Prevention and Treatment in the Child Welfare System*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB9949-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9949-1.html)

The number of families remaining intact at case closure, at 6 months after closure and at 12 months after closure is determined by DSS by searching the state-wide Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry and NCFAST Child Welfare databases by the ID number of each child who received services to determine if they had been removed from their home and placed in out-of-home or foster care.

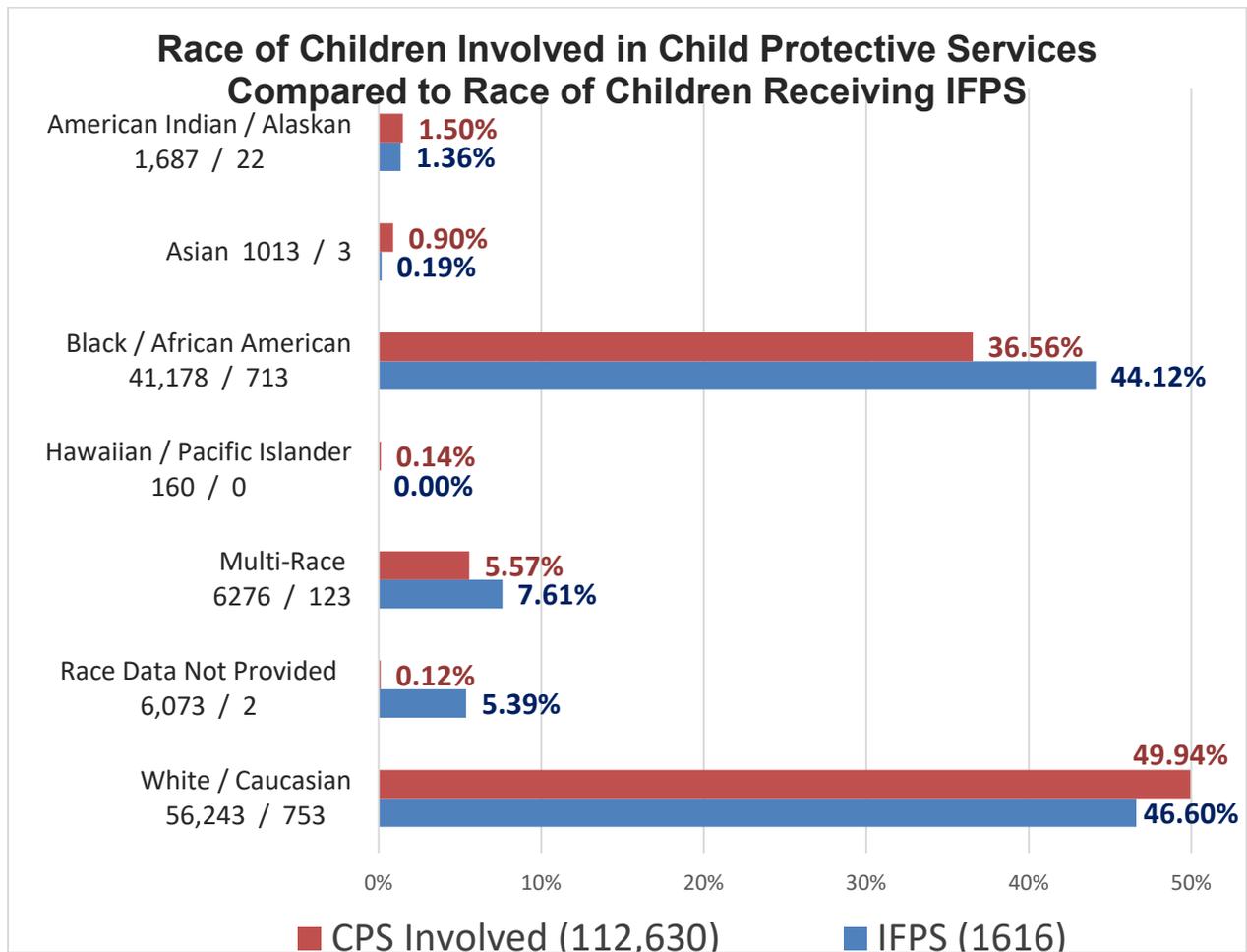
The chart below shows positive outcomes for IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® maintaining intact families within a year after services concluded. Additionally, during this period, the majority of these children did not receive additional child welfare services, so there are no known associated interventions that families received post services.



(Sources: Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry Universe and NCFAST Child Welfare Universe)

- (6) The number and percentage, by race, of children who received IFPS or HOMEBUILDERS® compared to the ratio of their distribution in the general-out-of-home, foster care population involved with Child Protective Services.

The bar graph below compares the number of children, by race and ethnicity, who received services to the out-of-home placement population of children involved in child protective services. The percentage compares the different race and ethnicity of children to the total number of children (blue); and it compares the race and ethnicity of children in out-of-home placement to the total number of children in out-of-home placement (red).



(Sources: Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry Universe and NCFASST Child Welfare Universe)

Ethnicity	Program Participants	CPS General Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,499	104,052
Hispanic or Latino	117	7,518
Unable to Determine	N/A	1,060
	<b>1,616</b>	<b>112,630</b>

(Sources: Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry Universe and NCFASST Child Welfare Universe)

In SFY 2024, the total number of children involved in Child Protective Services with completed assessments was 112,630, the number of children who received IFPS was 1,616.

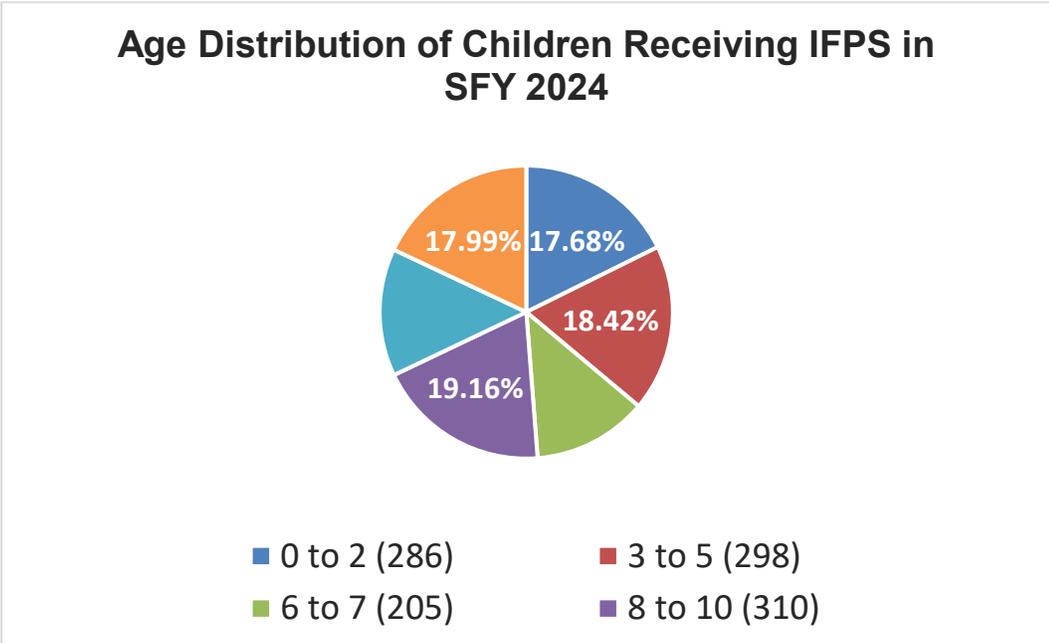
### Conclusion

In SFY 2024, the NC IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® programs served 1,616 children in 656 families. These families qualified for services by having at least one child, age birth through 17 years old who was at imminent risk of placement in out-of-home care as defined by a substantiation of abuse, neglect or dependency and a rating of “high” on the Family Risk Assessment or Family Risk Reassessment. This intensive service is typically the last intervention offered before a child is

removed from their home. IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® are short-term, intense crisis management programs that offer case management, evidence-based programming, and concrete supports to stabilize families and prevent future crises.

NC DHHS implements intensive family preservation programs to improve the short term and long-term outcomes of children and their families, including increased safety, family functioning, protective factors, as well as decreased repeat maltreatment and out-of-home care placement. DSS collects and reviews data from contracted IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® providers each quarter. On an annual basis, DSS compares IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® Grantees’ self-report data with data drawn from the Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry and NCFAST Child Welfare databases to assess individual grantee performance and determine continued funding. As stipulated in Section 9J.2, DSS employs this performance-based funding methodology to “only provide funding to those programs and entities providing the required information specified in subsection (b) of this section.” Grantees must also demonstrate positive outcomes for children and families.

Analysis of SFY 2024 data indicates that individual IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® providers as well as the collective NC intensive family preservation program had a beneficial impact on participating families’ ability to protect and nurture their children with 87.80% of children remaining with their family for 12 months after the program concluded. In addition, cost-benefit data indicates that the program achieved \$4.27 of savings in out-of-home placement costs for every \$1 spent on IFPS and HOMEBUILDERS® in SFY 2024.



(Sources: Client Services Data Warehouse Central Registry Universe and NCFAST Child Welfare Universe)

The chart below provides the gender of children receiving IFPS in SFY 2024.

841	Female
774	Male
1	Gender not provided