

# Critical Incidents Briefing

Natalie Green, Assistant Secretary of Child Welfare  
Dr. Vickie Ybarra, Assistant Secretary of Partnership, Prevention, and Services

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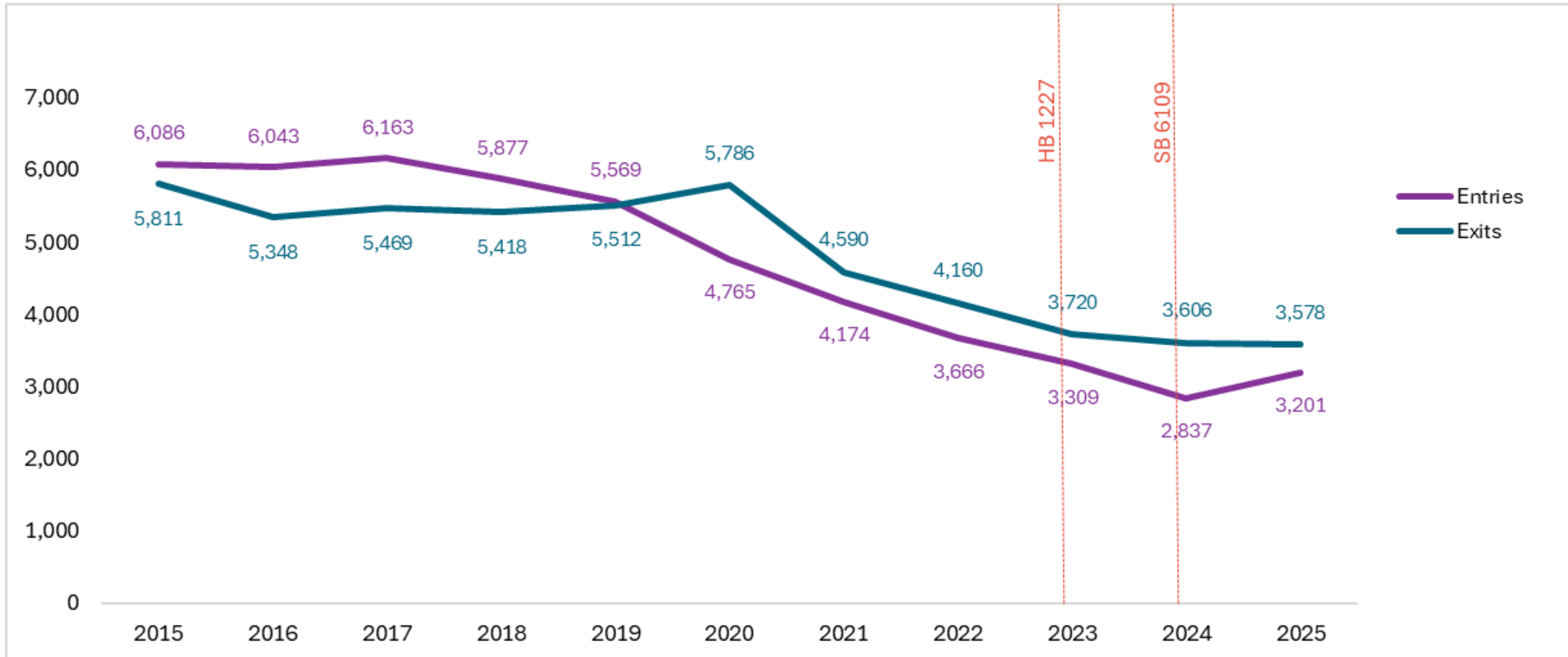
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Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

# CHILDREN ENTERING AND EXITING OUT OF HOME PLACEMENT

STATE FISCAL YEARS 2015-2025



# Difference between OFCO and DCYF Reports

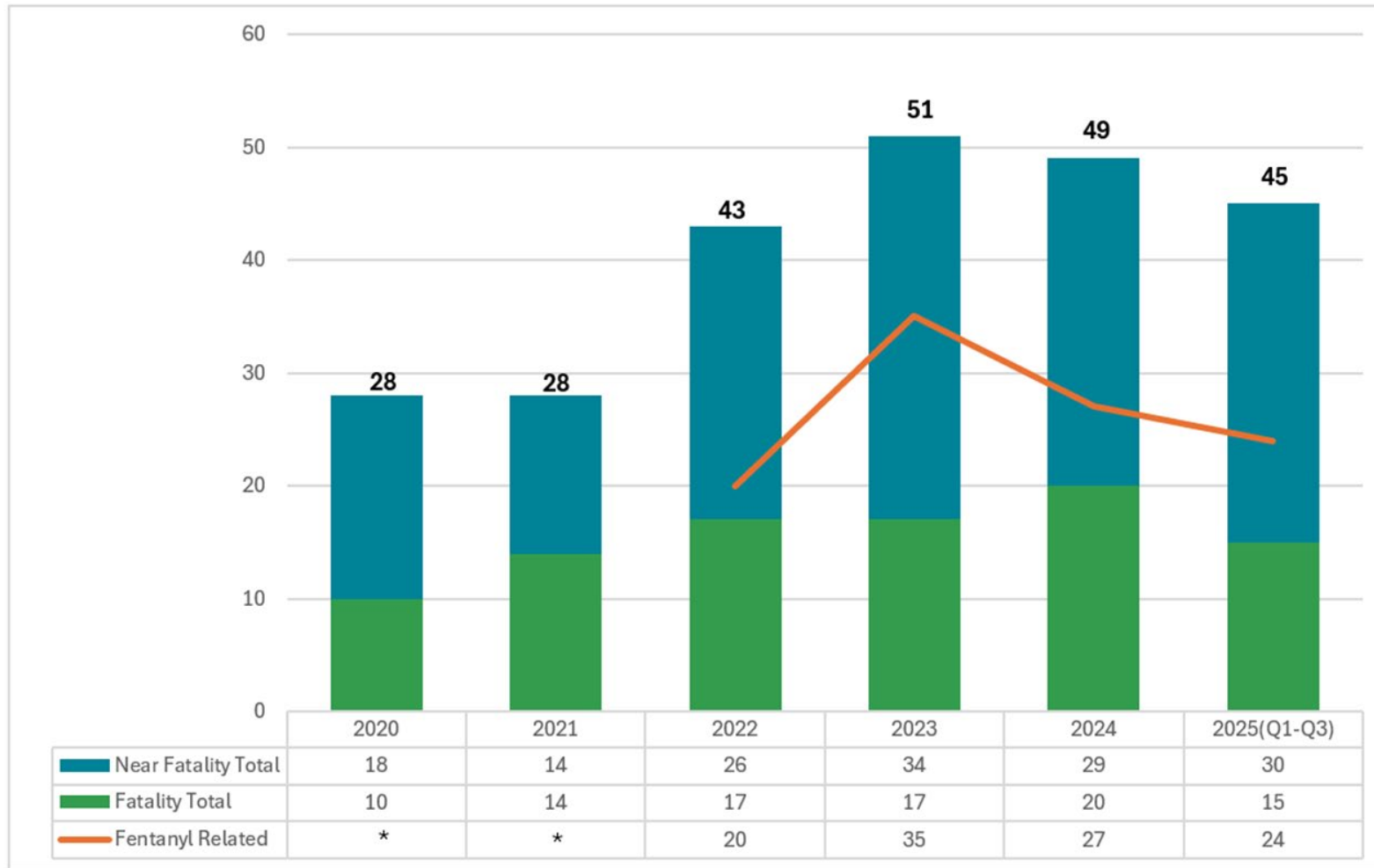
- The Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO) and DCYF conduct reviews of child fatalities using different criteria.
- OFCO examines child fatality reported to the office, including those not directly caused by maltreatment, as long as there are concerns about child welfare or systemic issues.
- DCYF is limited by statute (RCW 74.13.640) to reviewing only those child fatalities and near fatalities that are maltreatment-related *and* where there was prior DCYF involvement within the 12 months preceding the incident.
- For example, DCYF would not review a case if the family had no child welfare history in the past year, even if a critical incident occurred.

# Number of Critical Incidents for Q1-Q3 2025

- **Total number of 2025 DCYF-reviewable critical incidents**
  - Q1 2025: 22 critical incidents
  - Q2 2025: 14 critical incidents
  - Q3 2025: 9 critical incidents\*
  
- **So far in 2025, 24 opioid related critical incidents**
  - 3 fatalities
  - 21 near fatalities
  - 20 age 3 or younger

# NUMBER OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

2025 IS ON PACE TO SURPASS 2024 LEVELS BEFORE END OF YEAR



Year	Fatality Count	Near Fatality Count
2020	10	18
2021	14	14
2022	17	26
2023	17	34
2024	20	29
2025 (Q1-Q3)	15	30



# Observations and Takeaways

- This will still be a record year and very concerning, but numbers are not double or triple previous years.
- Possible reasons for moderation since Q1: Seeing the full effects of SB 6109, some changes in practice since Q1, and opioid overdoses trend down during the summer.
- About 53% of critical incidents in 2025 have been opioid related.
- Children ages 0-3 are most likely age group to experience a critical incident.
- The number of families with chronic CPS involvement (high-need families) has steadily increased since 2018. When CPS chronicity is not effectively interrupted, it may result in more complex family situations, child removals, and critical incidents.

# DCYF Asks: Legislative Investment

- Families need support in their communities to mitigate risk factors.
- **Proposing a set of investments that will help prevent critical incidents while supporting families who are struggling.**
- Investing in increased community-based supports will:
  - Better engage parents in substance use disorder treatment
  - Create safe home environments for young children
  - Connect families to services after a case closed

# Investment Components

- Decision packages have been submitted to legislation
  - Critical Incidents Response: [DP-PL-P3-CriticalIncidentsResponse.pdf](#)

## Statewide systemic work:

- Certified Peer SUD specialists
- SUD training for service providers, including CIHS
- Modernize Child Welfare Safety Framework

## Prevention services in five high needs communities:

- Public Health Nurses
- Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) – 32 additional slots
- Community pathways referrals prior to closing a CPS, CPS-FAR or FVS case:
  - Families with children 0-3 years, Help Me Grow
  - Families with children 3+ years, Family Resource Centers



# Next Steps

- Decision packages have been submitted to legislation
- Briefings will not continue at this cadence, but data can be found quarterly at our Child Fatality Report webpage: <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/child-fatality/child-welfare>
- Child Welfare leadership concluded internal HPSO listening sessions and forums, leadership will gather insight and report out

# Questions?



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