

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



July 2026 | A-07-24-06114

National Overview of State-Level Challenges and Efforts To Minimize or Eliminate Temporary Emergency Placements in Foster Care

Why OIG Did This Audit

- The Federal Foster Care Program helps States provide safe and stable out-of-home care for children who meet certain eligibility requirements until they are safely returned home, placed permanently with adoptive families, or transitioned to other planned, permanent living arrangements.
- Concerns regarding States' reliance on unlicensed temporary emergency placements—such as hotels and State and county offices—that are not designed to care for children in foster care have garnered national attention.
- This report provides Federal, State, and local decision makers with summarized data, drawn from a questionnaire and followup questions, regarding States' efforts to minimize or eliminate the use of temporary emergency placements that might not be safe or best meet the children's needs.

What OIG Found

States' responses to our questionnaire described a wide range of strategies to minimize or eliminate the use of temporary emergency placements that might not be safe or might not best meet the children's needs. The 34 State agencies that tracked their use of temporary emergency placements to house children in foster care reported a total of 15,705 stays in these placements during the period January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. (Some children were housed in multiple temporary emergency placements.) In addition:

- Despite ongoing efforts to reduce the use of temporary emergency placements, States frequently reported persistent challenges in securing appropriate foster care placements, particularly for children with complex or special needs.
- Other factors that increased States' reliance on temporary emergency placements included difficulties in placing older children, challenges stemming from the COVID-19 public health emergency, and the impact of illicit drug use.
- States also described strategies to minimize or eliminate the use of temporary emergency placements.
- Consistent and accurate data reporting on temporary emergency placements can reveal systemic challenges, such as a shortage of foster homes or difficulties in recruiting and retaining foster parents.

What OIG Recommends

We recommend that the Administration for Children and Families ([ACF](#)) consider the information in this report and work with States to improve data collection and reporting on the use of temporary emergency placements for children in the Federal Foster Care Program, which, in turn, can be used to promote the health and safety of children who are in these placements.

ACF concurred with our recommendation.