

Senate Bill 279 Report

July 1, 2022

Child Welfare Division
Oregon Department of Human Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Bill 279, passed during the Oregon Legislature's 2021 regular session, directed Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) to collect data and submit reports to the Legislative Assembly regarding the number of children in foster care who are missing school to attend visitations scheduled by the department.

Section 2 of the bill requires the following data to be collected at the conclusion of each semester during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years:

- a) *The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least five but not more than six school days due to visitations scheduled by the department;*
- b) *The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least seven but not more than eight school days due to visitations scheduled by the department;*
- c) *The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least nine but not more than 10 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department;*
- d) *The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least 11 but not more than 15 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department;*
- e) *The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of more than 15 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department; and*
- f) *The most common reasons given for why it was not practicable to schedule the visitations outside of school hours.*

Please note that the initial report of fall 2021 absence data was not submitted as ODHS needed time to develop and implement a tracking mechanism for the requested data. The following data reflect the fall 2021 absence data as a result of missing school to attend visitations scheduled by the department.

The report due September 1 will have more thorough analysis and will include initiatives, policy recommendations and data from the full 2021-22 school year.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill 279, passed during the Oregon Legislature's 2021 regular session, directed Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) to collect data and submit reports to the Legislative Assembly regarding the number of children in foster care who are missing school to attend visitations scheduled by the department.

REQUIREMENTS OF SENATE BILL 279

Section 2 of the bill states:

(2) The Department of Human Services shall collect data regarding school days missed by children in foster care due to visitations scheduled by the department and report that data to the appropriate committees or interim committees of the Legislative Assembly at the conclusion of each semester during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years.

The reports must describe:

- g) The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least five but not more than six school days due to visitations scheduled by the department.*
- h) The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least seven but not more than eight school days due to visitations scheduled by the department.*
- i) The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least nine but not more than 10 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department.*
- j) The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of at least 11 but not more than 15 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department.*
- k) The number, age and grade of children in foster care who missed part or all of more than 15 school days due to visitations scheduled by the department.*
- l) The most common reasons given for why it was not practicable to schedule the visitations outside of school hours.*

(3) Not later than September 1, 2022, the Department of Human Services shall provide a report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly regarding human services with information regarding the school days missed by children in foster care during the 2021-2022 school year due to visitations scheduled by the department.

The report must include information about any initiatives the department plans to implement to address school absences during the 2022-2023 school year. The report may also include recommendations regarding policy initiatives to support the department's efforts to improve school attendance and the educational success of children in foster care and, if applicable, budgetary resources necessary to implement the recommendations.

DATA

This first report will focus only on the data, as requested in the bill. A more thorough analysis will be completed in the September 1 report. The statute requires the department to collect data by semester for this report. It is important to note that not all school districts operate on a semester system; some operate on a trimester system, and moreover there is variation among the 197 school districts regarding the start and stop dates of their semesters or trimesters. The department decided to set dates to function as approximate semesters for the purposes of compiling and analyzing statewide data. For the fall data collection, the selected dates are August 1, 2021¹ through January 31, 2022.

Currently, our OR-Kids information system does not have the capacity to track these metrics in the child's person management or electronic casefile system. Until a permanent tracking system can be built, the department is using SharePoint to track children missing school for visitations. Managers who supervise Social Service Assistants (the staff facilitating visitations/family time) tracked and submitted data to the SharePoint tracker. Reminder emails were sent to ensure all data were being captured, including information from districts where young adults in foster care did not miss any school for visitation. Due to the time involved in setting up a new tracking system and working with staff to ensure consistent data entry, this first report took longer to produce than will subsequent reports.

In the Fall 2021-2022 semester, 107 children missed all or part of at least one day of school for visitations scheduled by the department. Only 40 children missed all or part of five or more days of school for visitations. On January 1, 2022 (the last month of the first semester), there were a total of 5339 children in foster care. This translates to just **0.75 percent of children in foster care having 5 or more visits that resulted in time missed from school**. The median amount of school time missed was 0.75 of an hour, or 45 minutes.

Fall 2021 Total Distinct Children*

107

*Reports total number of distinct children in ODHS custody who have missed school time because of a visit

Fall 2021 Children w/ 5+ Visits

40

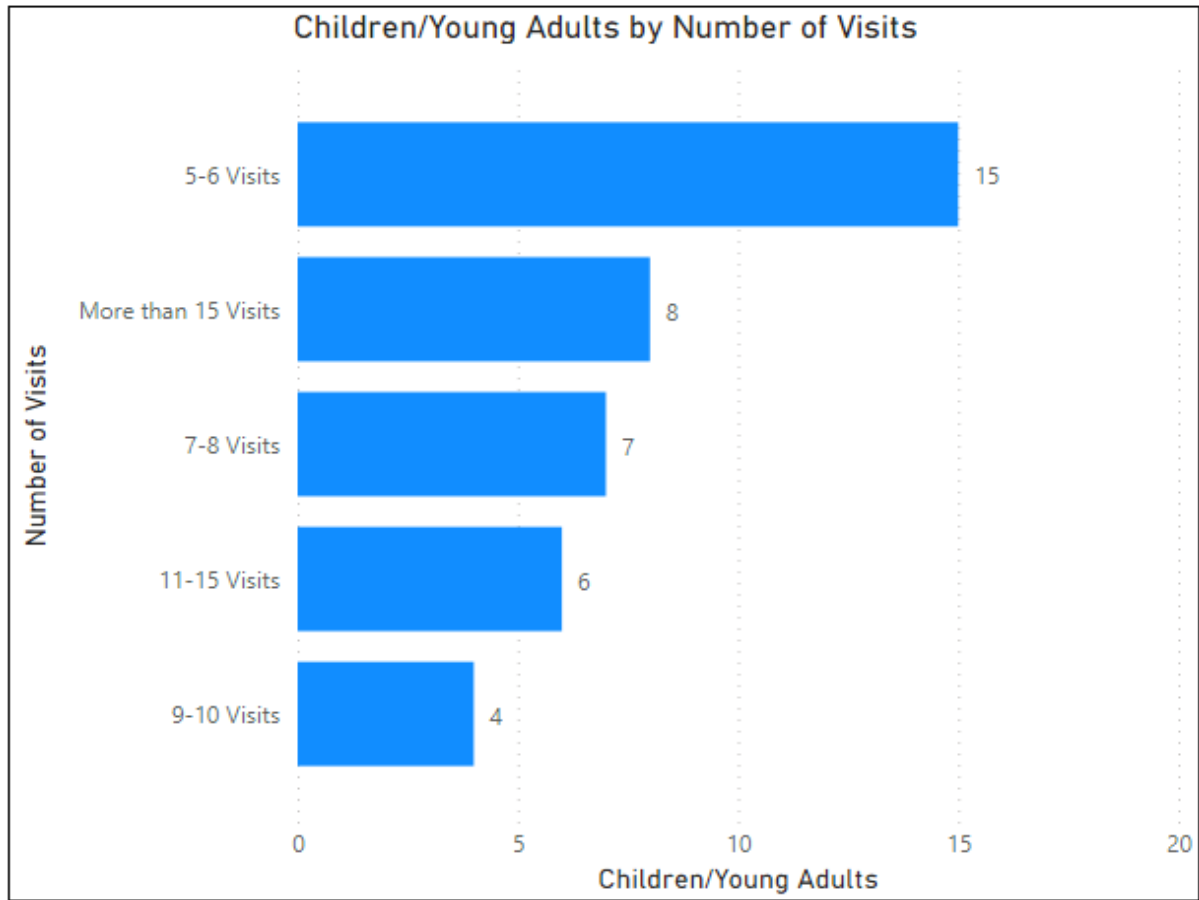
**Reports total number of distinct children in ODHS custody who have had 5 or more visits resulting in lost school time

¹ While no Oregon schools begin fall term as early as August 1, some start in mid-August.

Median School Hours Missed Per Visit

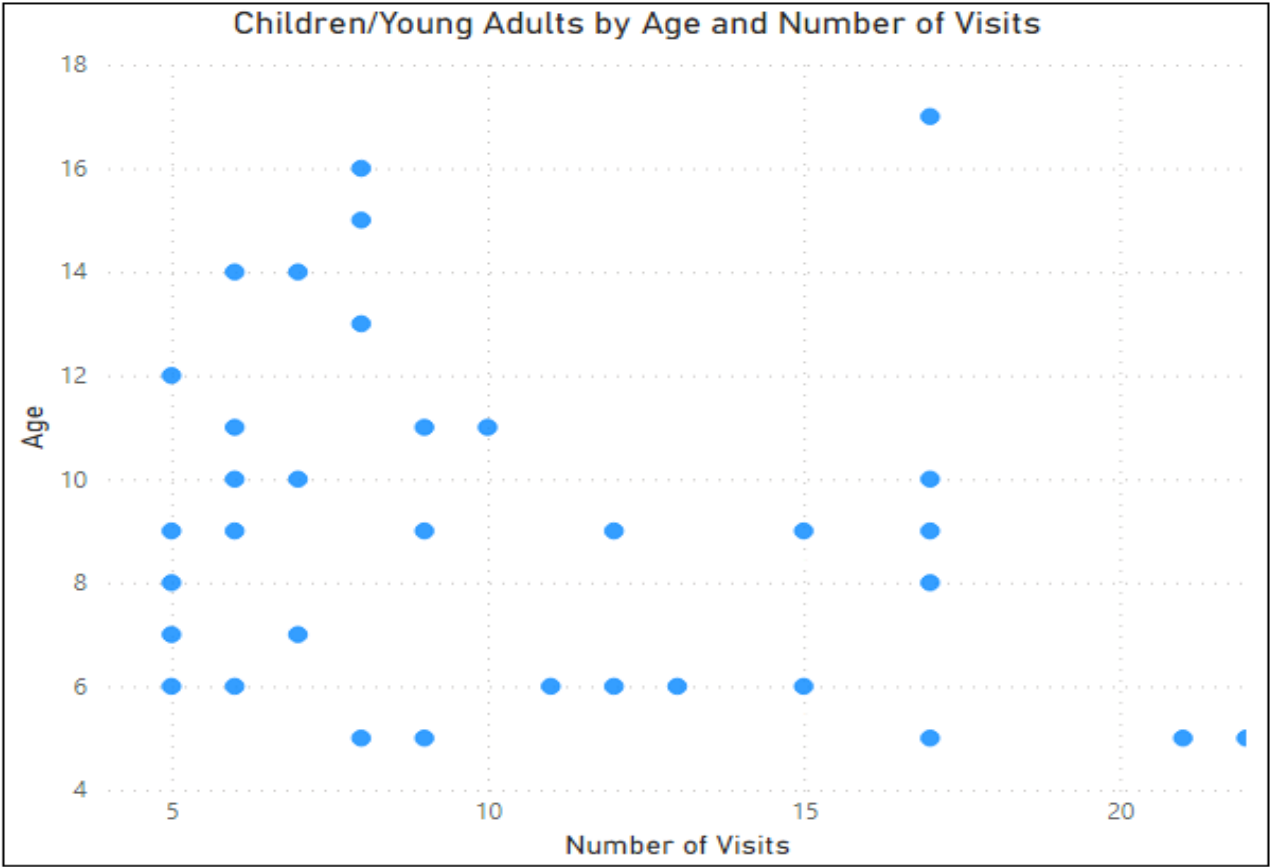
0.75

Children/Young Adults by Number of Visits



This chart displays the number of students in foster care who missed more than five days of school (all or part of the day) and the number of visitations scheduled by the department for the semester. The largest plurality of students (15) had five to six visitations that required them to miss some school. The remaining 25 students are listed in descending order of the number of visitations scheduled by the department that resulted in missing school.

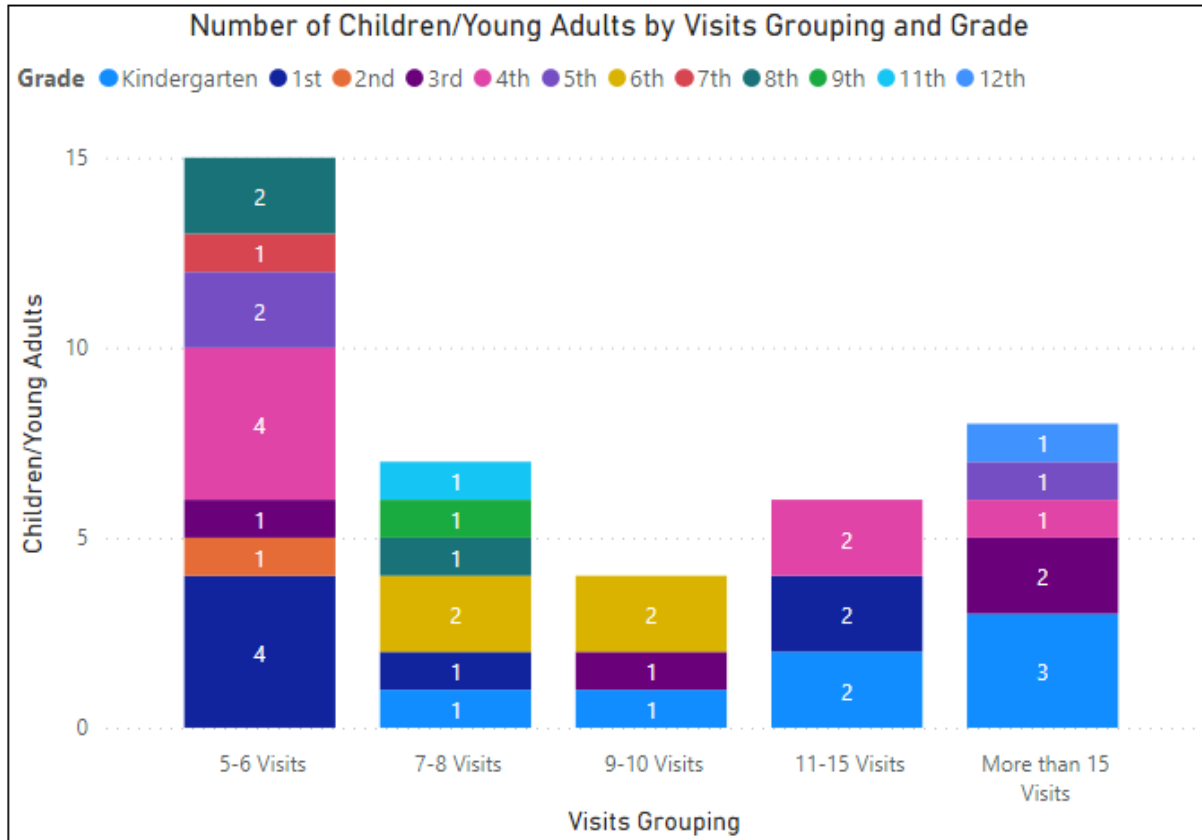
Children by Age and Number of Visits



This scatter-plot chart shows the age of the students and the number of visitations scheduled by the department that resulted in missing school (all or part of a day). Only 34 data points are visible for 40 students, as some had the same age and number of visitations. The duplication breakdown is as follows:

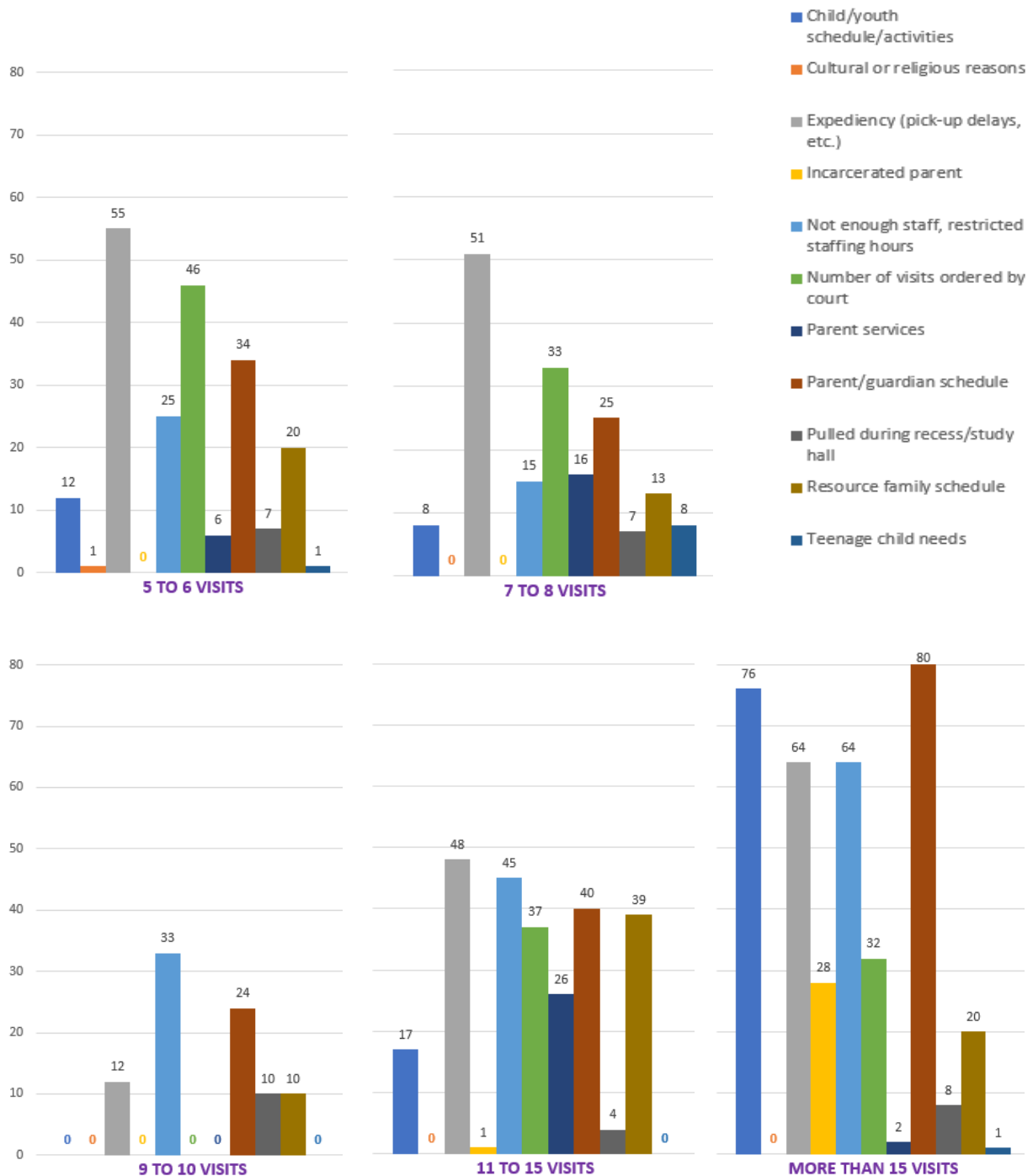
- Three 6 -year-olds each with 5 visits
- Two 8-year-olds each with 17 visits
- Two 9-year-olds each with 5 visits
- Two 11-year-olds each with 6 visits
- Two 14-year-olds each with 6 visits

Number of Children / Young Adults by Visit Grouping and Grade Level



This chart shows the number of children (40 total) by grade level and the number of visitations scheduled by the department that resulted in missing school (all or part of a day).

Visit Reasons by Number of Visits (Grouped)



Multiple reasons could be selected for each time a child missed school. Most often, multiple reasons were selected, which creates numbers greater than the actual number of visitations scheduled by ODHS. For example, a child may miss some school for

expediency of pick-up, to have the court-ordered amount of visitation time, and due to a need to navigate the parent and child's schedule.

The Expediency category (gray line) generally refers to the practice of picking up a child 15-30 minutes early, near the end of the school day. Most of the time, picking up a child early does not entail missing academic classes, as the end of the school day is often used as transition time, study hall, etc. Early pick-ups are a common strategy that guardians use to miss long pick-up lines and allow more time for the actual visitation. The pandemic has significantly increased the length of pick-up lines, due to a lack of school bus drivers and more families transporting their children by car as a means of reducing COVID-19 transmission risk. Staff reported some pick-up lines being an hour long or more this year. We expect early pick-ups to decrease as pandemic-related issues are resolved.

Among children who missed more than 15 days of school (all or part of a day), the most frequently reported reasons were Parent/guardian schedule (brown line) and Teenage child needs (blue line). Staff reported that parents' work, treatment, and service engagement schedules frequently posed challenges when scheduling visitations. The category of "Teenage child needs" most often relates to after school activities and sports schedules.

NEXT STEPS

The report due on September 1, 2022, will have more thorough analysis and will include initiatives, policy recommendations and data from the full 2021-22 school year. The report will also describe the policy option package, submitted by ODHS to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care, within the institutional structure.

SUMMARY

Staff reported placing a high value on children not missing school for visitations scheduled by the department, whenever possible. The department also places a high value on ensuring children can spend quality time with their families. The complexity of parent and child schedules sometimes necessitates missing school to ensure that visitation occurs and complies with juvenile court orders.



For additional information:

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