

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. My name is Calvin McKenzie, and I am a GAL volunteer here in Mecklenburg County. This is the third time I have presented this matter to the Board, and today, as before, I am sharing my personal observations. I am not speaking on behalf of the Guardian ad Litem organization or any other organization.

Before discussing this topic again, I wanted to express my appreciation and admiration for the wonderful YFS workers, foster parent agencies, attorneys, and others who show tremendous dedication to children in the foster care system. All these people do amazing work to help children who, due to no fault of their own, are in the Foster Care system.

At the previous meetings, I shared my concern with you that, based on the data provided in the Permanency Performance Report created by NC state DHHS, Meck County YFS was not consistently following the 1997 federal Adoption and Safe Families Act. Since then, I am very happy to report that Meck County YFS has significantly reduced the time to file the TPR petition from 23.5 months in May last year to 16.3 months as of May this year. This change has made Meck County YFS more aligned with Wake County YFS. Along with this, Meck County YFS has also shown improvement in finding permanent placement for children who have been in foster care for more than 12 months. They have improved this percentage from 31% in May last year to 40% in May this year.

I wanted to thank the Meck County YFS organization for these improvements. I have provided copies of these findings to the clerk for your review. Thank you!

Reference links and document samples:

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997
 - Text -> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/105th-congress/house-bill/867/text>
 - Summary provided by Adoption.com -> <https://adoption.com/summary-adoption-and-safe-families-act-of-1997>

***Establishes New TimeLine and Conditions for Filing Termination of Parental**

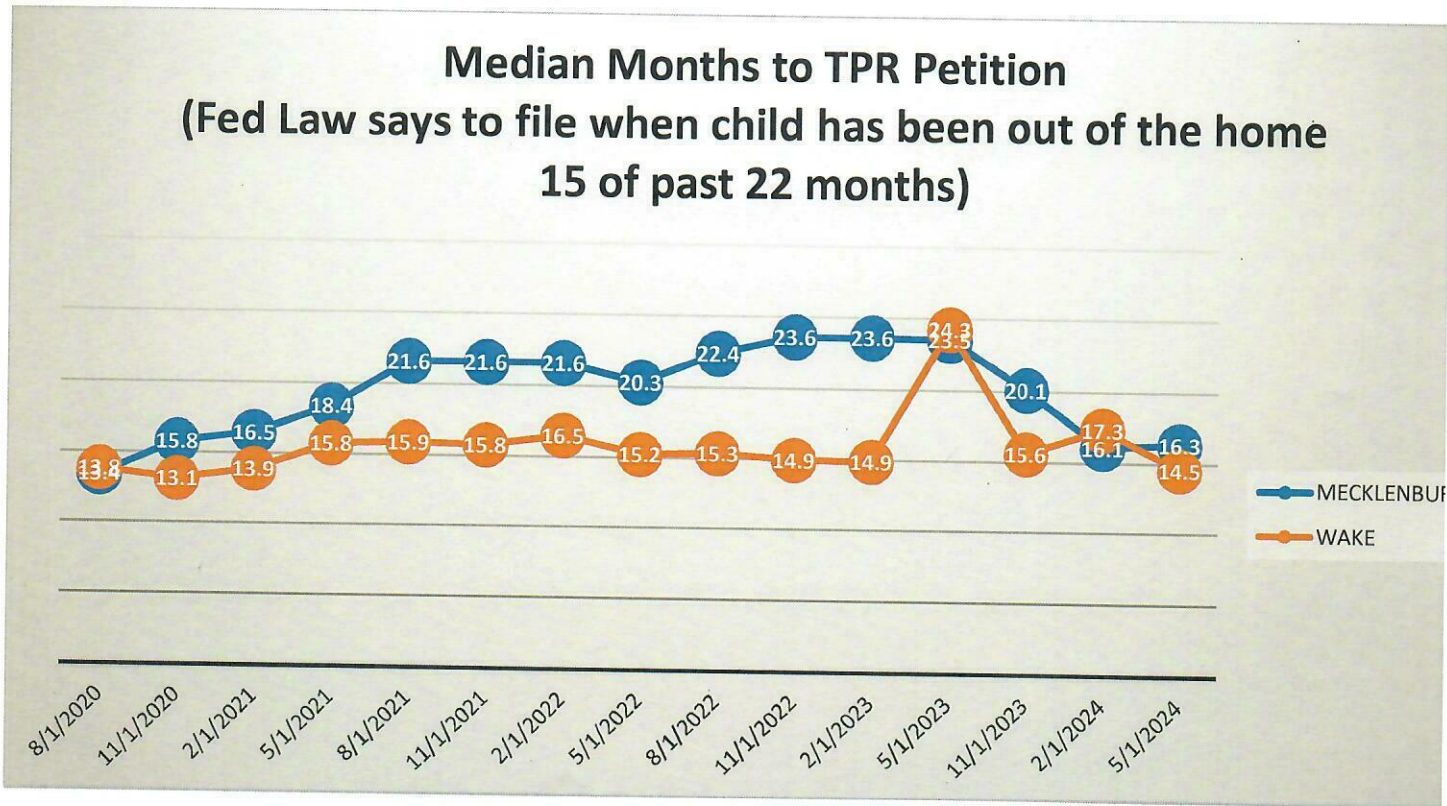
Rights. Federal law did not require states to initiate termination of parental rights proceedings based on a child's length of stay in foster care. Under the new law, states must file a petition to terminate parental rights and concurrently, identify, recruit, process and approve a qualified adoptive family on behalf of any child, regardless of age, that has been in foster care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months. A child would be considered as having entered foster care on the earlier of either the date of the first judicial finding of abuse or neglect or 60 days after the child is removed from the home.

- North Carolina Statute 7B-1111
 - https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_7B/GS_7B-1111.html

§ 7B-1111. Grounds for terminating parental rights.

- (a) The court may terminate the parental rights upon a finding of one or more of the following:
 - (1) The parent has abused or neglected the juvenile. The juvenile shall be deemed to be abused or neglected if the court finds the juvenile to be an abused juvenile within the meaning of G.S. 7B-101 or a neglected juvenile within the meaning of G.S. 7B-101.
 - (2) The parent has willfully left the juvenile in foster care or placement outside the home for more than 12 months without showing to the satisfaction of the court that reasonable progress under the circumstances has been made in correcting those conditions which led to the removal of the juvenile. No parental rights, however, shall be terminated for the sole reason that the parents are unable to care for the juvenile on account of their poverty.
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- NC DHHS Permanency Performance Profile data – I have not found where the data has been posted on the DHHS site, but I did receive a copy directly from NC DHHS for 5/1/24. Please let me know, and I will email a copy to you.
- Median months to file a TPR petition



- Percentage of children who have permanency after 12 to 24 months in Foster Care

