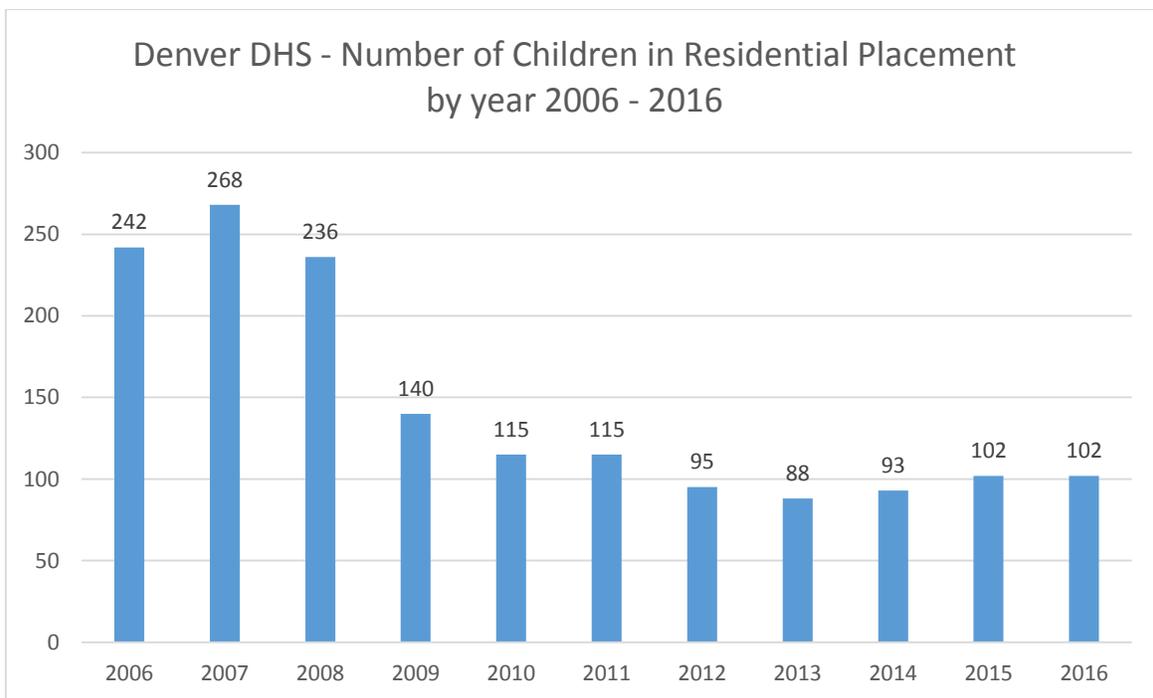


In Denver County, since 2008, DHS has seen an overall reduction in the number of children placed in out of home care while spending per child in evidence-based preventative and mental health interventions has increased. In Colorado, the Children's Code, Volume VII and best practice mandates placement of children in the least restrictive, safe and most appropriate setting available, while avoiding unnecessary placement. The Colorado Department of Human Services has identified a reduction in the use of institutional care (congregate care) as a priority.

Although there is an appropriate role for congregate care placements in the continuum of care for children, there is consensus across multiple stakeholders that reliance on placement in congregate care has resulted in poorer long-term outcomes for children. Specifically, research shows children in congregate care settings are at a greater risk of developing physical, emotional and behavioral problems when compared to other populations in settings like family foster care. Meantime, the reduction in the use of congregate care settings has resulted in "marked improvements for children" (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009).

Nationally, the placement of children in congregate care has reduced by 24 percent since 2008. Denver County has prioritized the reduction of children in residential level congregate care settings and has reduced the placement of children in residential level congregate care by 62% since 2007.



The use of residential level care in Denver County is now limited primarily to youth with juvenile delinquency involvement or children and youth with significant mental health problems. Youth with juvenile delinquency cases comprise 67% of the current population of youth placed in residential level care. Youth in this population require treatment programming specific to their needs, which are quite different from the treatment needs of children with mental illness.

Denver County DHS began utilizing Rite of Passage (ROP) Ridge View Youth Services Center as a residential level placement option for youth with juvenile delinquency cases and delinquency behavior issues in 2014. 83% of the current population of Denver County youth placed at Rite of Passage has a juvenile delinquency case and has been court ordered into residential level placement. The average length of stay for a youth placed at Rite of Passage is 138 days, comparable or lower than other similar residential level treatment placements in the Denver metro area.

Rite of Passage is the primary treatment provider in the Denver metro area that specializes in residential level treatment of youth with delinquency behaviors through the use of evidence-based and research based interventions. Denver County DHS has prioritized with Rite of Passage the need for community based services that provide expedited opportunities for youth to transition out of a residential level placement setting into a community or family placement setting. Located 23 miles southeast of Denver, Ridge View Academy is an on-site charter high school operating under Denver Public Schools, providing year-round school which allows students to earn high school credits, pass the GED exam, or earn a high school diploma. In addition to the treatment interventions offered and charter school opportunity, Ridge View Academy offers career technical education, extensive vocational programming, athletic and recreational programming and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC).