

Safeguarding Our Children

Safety Reforms Update



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ACS

NYC Administration for
Children's Services

September 2007

Many Accomplishments, Many Challenges Ahead Safeguarding Our Children: Eighteen Months Out

In March 2006, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) released *Safeguarding Our Children*, a strategic plan focused on three major areas: strengthening the performance of direct and provider staff, sharpening investigatory skills and decision making, and strengthening the child safety focus throughout the agency. The plan included twenty-one initiatives; many were initiated prior to the plan's release. The plan's first update was released in November 2006, highlighting progress and implementation challenges. This second update marks eighteen months since the release of the safety plan. The focus on implementation has been unwavering, and the safety plan initiatives have been infused into the day-to-day work of the agency's divisions.

Some of the highlights include:

- ◆ Reviewing over 100 cases through the ChildStat process, an in-depth accountability and learning tool focused on child protective practices;
- ◆ Completing the planning and beginning implementation of *Improved Outcomes for Children* with five preventive agencies and nine foster care agencies;
- ◆ Commencing the first class of the Leadership Academy for Child Safety;
- ◆ Hiring close to 800 child protective staff in Fiscal Year 2007;
- ◆ Obtaining approval to hire 100 additional investigative consultants;
- ◆ Achieving a monthly average child protective caseload of under 10 in August 2007;
- ◆ Investigating more than 110,000 reports of abuse and neglect from January 2006 through August 2007;
- ◆ More than doubling the number of Court Ordered Supervision cases from 1,694 in January 2006 to 3,570 in June 2007;
- ◆ Opening up more than 17,000 preventive cases from January 2006 through June 2007;
- ◆ Maintaining over 13,000 active preventive cases from January 2006 through August 2007;
- ◆ Expanding preventive services capacity by 1,000 slots in this fiscal year; and,
- ◆ Beginning the *Community Partnership Initiative* in eleven targeted communities.

Children's Services has reached these milestones because of the leadership provided by the Mayor's Office and the support of other City agencies. Children's Services staff have put forth great efforts to ensure that the children and families of New York are protected and served to the best of our abilities. While we have much more work to do to become the model child welfare agency the City needs and expects, ACS is a different agency from the one operating just eighteen months ago.

Goal One: Keeping Children Safe by Measuring Results

The purpose of these initiatives is to identify practice trends in protective investigations and provider performance, to ensure that concerns are addressed, and to hold both Children's Services and provider staff accountable.

◆ **Institute ChildStat**

Initiated in July 2006, ChildStat has been one of the most effective staff accountability initiatives implemented from the action plan. As discussed in the first update, these three-hour, weekly accountability sessions are modeled after the New York Police Department's CompSTAT. Child protective leaders from each of the City's twenty geographic zones meet on a rotating basis with the Commissioner and other ACS leaders from every division of the agency. Wide-ranging zone performance data is analyzed, and an open child protective case is reviewed in-depth. The case reviews are framed by quality child protective investigatory practice – such as reviewing prior investigations, interviewing all household members and other relevant parties, and ensuring supervisory oversight. The discussion encompasses what did and did not happen, as well as what should happen.

One specific example of change resulting from ChildStat is increased access to preventive services from child protective referrals. The Division of Family Support Services worked with preventive providers to increase preventive service availability in targeted neighborhoods by closing out longstanding preventive cases which no longer needed services. In response to issues raised in ChildStat, ACS revises practice policies to guide investigative work and discusses issues in managerial/supervisory sessions within each borough. Children Services also releases Child Safety Alerts via email as a method of instant communication to both remind and update staff about specific practice issues. Twenty-one child safety alerts have been issued in the last twenty months.

◆ **Redesign Oversight of Contract Agencies**

Children's Services has made significant progress on this initiative, which is now called *Improved Outcomes for Children*. *Improved Outcomes* clarifies provider responsibilities for the families they are serving, as well as strengthens ACS' accountability role. The key components of *Improved Outcomes* include holding family team conferences at key points in a family's engagement with the child welfare system and ensuring that case management decisions are owned by the providers. Children's Services staff will be working closely with providers through teams of performance monitors to ensure that agencies are providing families with high quality services. ACS is also developing technical assistance teams to troubleshoot specific cases and provide training and consultation to providers.

ACS believes that *Improved Outcomes* will result in more children being successfully served in family foster home settings, children experiencing fewer moves while in care, and more children experiencing shorter lengths of stay. By June 2007, five Brooklyn preventive agencies and nine foster care agencies were selected to participate in Phase One. Full implementation with all preventive and foster care agencies is planned for 2008.

◆ **Reinvent Quality Improvement Program at the Frontline**

Senior management within the Division of Quality Assurance and the Division of Child Protection continue to meet monthly to review the results of ongoing case reviews. A web-based case review instrument is being modified in phases; the current focus is on strengthening the case review guidelines to better support practice improvements in ChildStat cases. The Divisions of Quality Assurance, Policy and Planning, and Child Protection also review specific practice issues, such as the appropriateness of case closures, arising from ChildStat and other case reviews.

Goal Two: Sharpening Investigatory Skills and Supporting Sound Decisions

These initiatives focus on staff development to hone investigatory skills and bolster sound decision-making.

- ◆ **Establish the New York City Leadership Academy for Child Safety**

As noted in the first update, Children's Services secured private and public funds to create the Leadership Academy to better support supervisory practice and leadership capacity. The Academy provides a continuum of trainings and activities for Child Protective Managers, led by experts in child protective case practice, management, policy, and leadership. The Academy also provides targeted assistance to individual managers to enhance their leadership capacity. In March 2007, thirty child protective managers entered the first class of the Academy. An evaluation of the Academy has been designed and will begin shortly.

- ◆ **Re-engineer Field Office Operations and Pursue Labor-Management Partnerships**

The Division of Child Protection has completed the hiring of Assistant Commissioners in each borough except Staten Island, as well as Deputy Directors who are responsible for the operations of each field office. Borough operations routinely hold meetings between labor and management to share information and resolve issues at the field offices. ACS undertook a technology pilot to deploy handheld devices into the field to better support investigators. Five different instruments were tested before the final selection of a laptop. Two hundred laptops have been purchased and are being piloted in the field. These portable computers access the same information technology available in the office, including CONNECTIONS, the child welfare case information system.

- ◆ **Leverage Law Enforcement Expertise and Strengthen Instant Response Team Protocol**

The Senior Advisor to the Commissioner for Investigations continues to foster the collaboration between ACS and the NYPD as part of the Deputy Mayor's Interagency Task Force. In February 2007, ACS and the NYPD began utilizing a real-time database that serves dual purposes – notification of an Instant Response Team case as well as tracking data related to the response. Children's Services has deployed 20 investigative consultants with extensive law enforcement experience into the field to work with child protective managers and investigators. These staff provide consultation and support to child protective workers to improve their investigative skills. ACS has begun the hiring process to bring on an additional 100 investigative consultants.

Goal Three: Focusing on Child Safety Throughout Children's Services

These initiatives reaffirm that children's safety is everyone's responsibility – whether working in Children's Services, a provider agency, or a community organization.

◆ Double the Number of Family Oversight Staff and Institute Ongoing Safety Assessments

ACS committed to hiring a cadre of child protective professionals to provide ongoing supervision of families who were investigated and whose children remained in their care. The Division of Child Protection began hiring the Family Services staff in June 2007. Children's Services anticipates hiring 250 staff by December 2007. The practice model for safety reassessments has been incorporated into the specialized training curriculum for Family Services staff. This curriculum was field tested beginning in July 2007 and will be fully implemented beginning in November.

◆ Implement Performance-Based Management for Preventive Services Contract

In July 2007, the Division of Quality Assurance and the Division of Policy and Planning began meeting with preventive providers to develop the first iteration of the Scorecard and evaluation tools which focus on safety and risk. The work is projected to be completed by December 2007, with scorecards being produced for preventive agencies beginning in March 2008. Children's Services is expanding preventive services capacity by 1,000 slots with completion targeted for April 2008. The expanded slots were allocated by community need and provider performance.

◆ Bolster Community Partnerships for Child Safety

Community organizations, leaders, and residents are critical in efforts to keep children safe. To strengthen linkages between Children's Services and communities, ACS created and funded demonstration grants to local coalitions of community organizations, foster care and preventive agencies, Head Start and child care agencies, City agencies, and community leaders. ACS is awarding *Community Partnership Initiative* (CPI) grants to eleven communities. In June 2007, Phase I communities – Highbridge, Jamaica, and Bedford-Stuyvesant – began implementation. Phase II communities – East New York, Staten Island, East Harlem, and the Lower East Side – began the strategic planning process in March 2007. In June 2007, Phase III communities – Bushwick, Soundview, Elmhurst, and Mott Haven – began strategic planning. To maximize the learning opportunities before full expansion of CPI to all communities, ACS is working with the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago to evaluate the initiative. The results are projected to be available in June 2008.

◆ Establish Neighborhood Child Safety Teams

Children's Services has reorganized child protective work in the two largest boroughs, Brooklyn and the Bronx. The boroughs have been reorganized into smaller geographic zones which combine several community districts. All the boroughs now have caseloads assigned by community districts and zones. This allows staff to develop knowledge about their neighborhoods, including needs and resources, and foster community relationships.

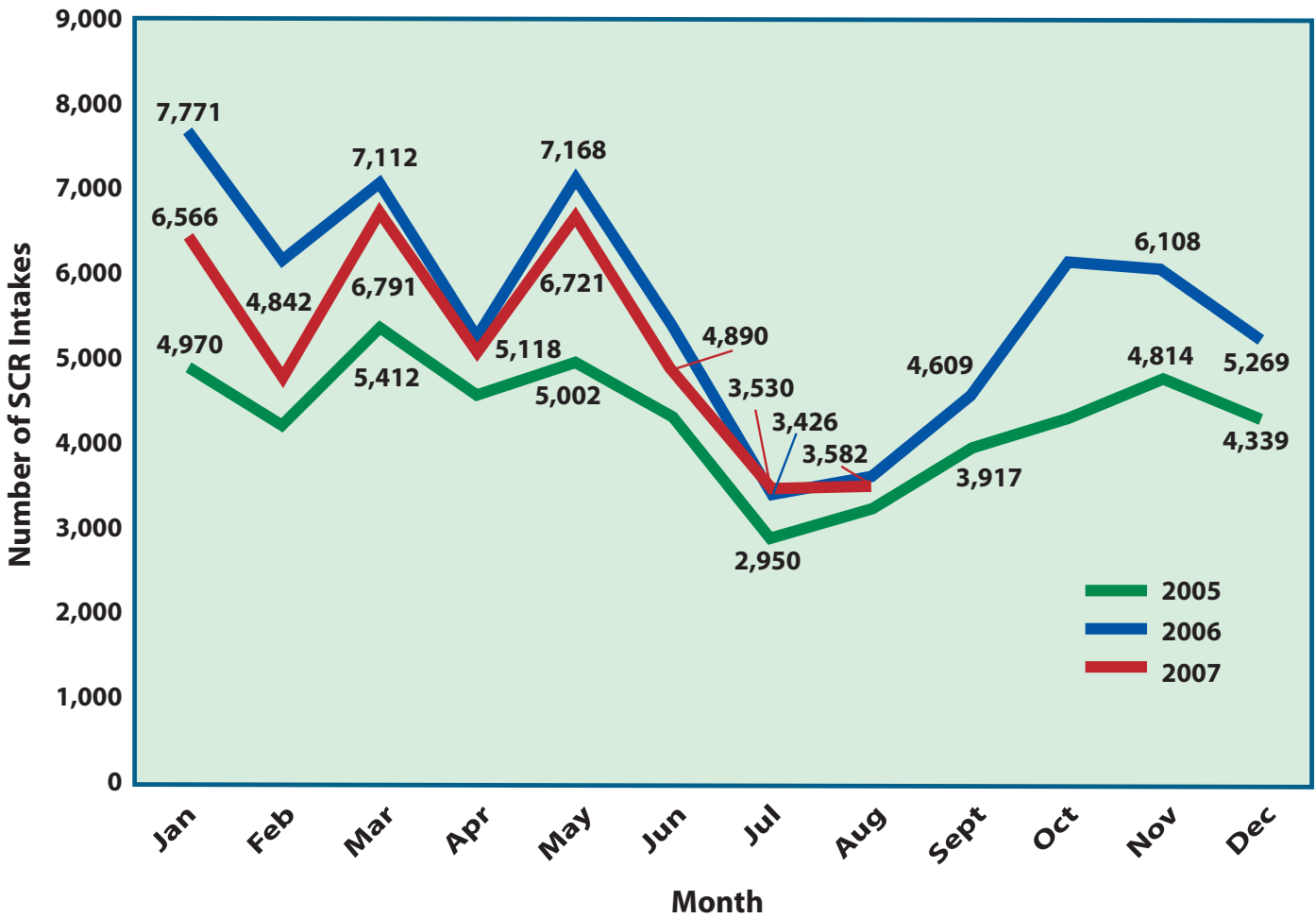
♦ **Deploy the Safety Solutions Teams**

The Safety Solutions Team is comprised of nine national child welfare experts. The team has worked with child protective staff in each borough. They worked intensively with mid-level managers and line supervisors to strengthen key practice issues as well as managerial and supervisory skills. ACS is currently using the same approach to focus on legal and child protection/investigation roles and functions, beginning in the Bronx. Another outcome from the Safety Solutions Team has been the implementation of Child Safety Conferences which occur prior to a decision being made about a child's removal from her home. These Conferences are nationally recognized best practice methods around child safety and placement decisions. The Conferences will be fully implemented in Manhattan by December 2007 with the other boroughs being completed by next year.

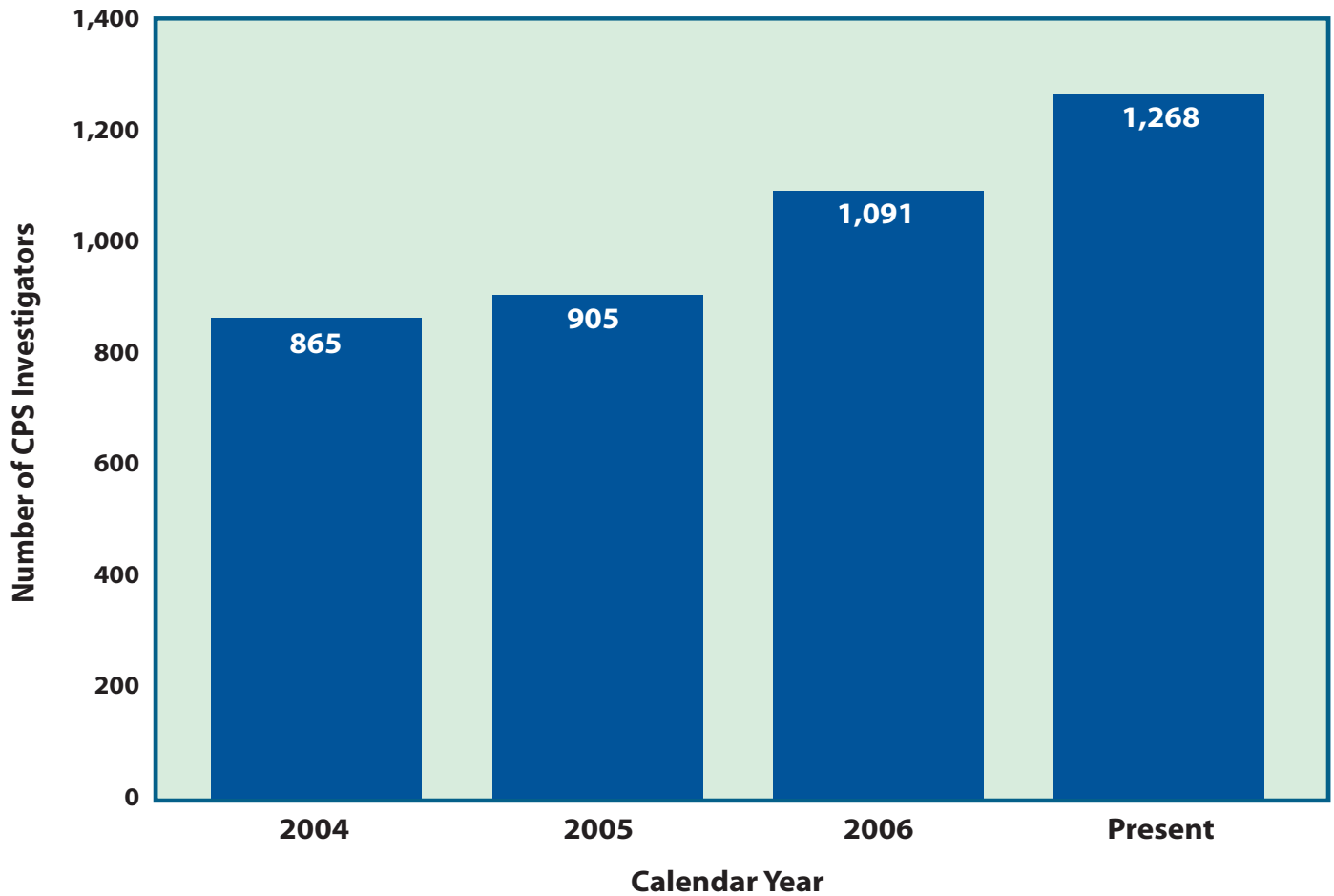
Conclusion

In order for New York City to have the child welfare system it deserves, much more work yet remains. However, ACS is proud of the results we have achieved to date, which are charted on the following pages.

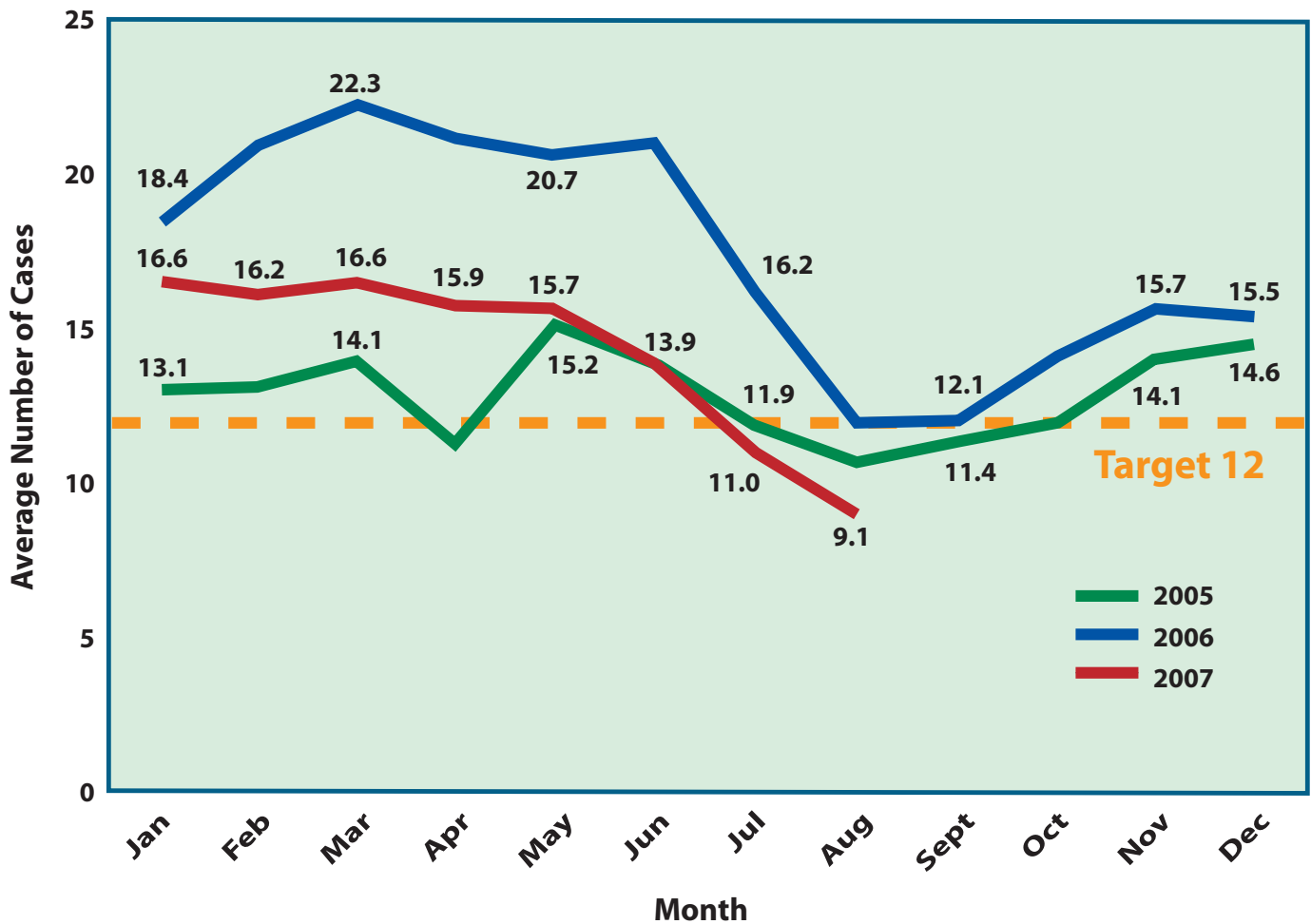
Child Abuse Reports Remain High Number of SCR Intakes by Month, 2005 – 2007



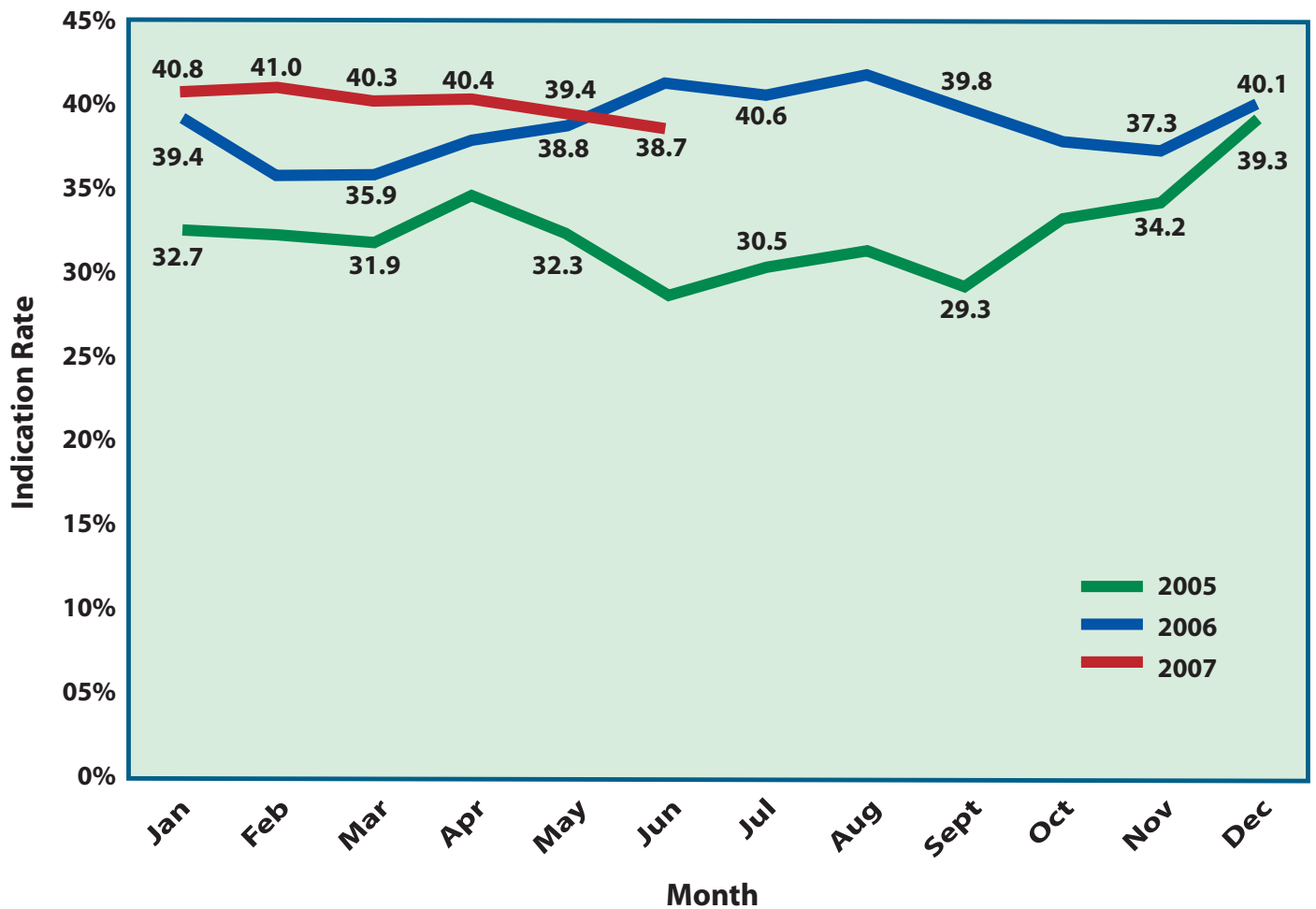
**More Trained Workers Are In The Field
Number of Child Protective Investigators, 2004 – Present**



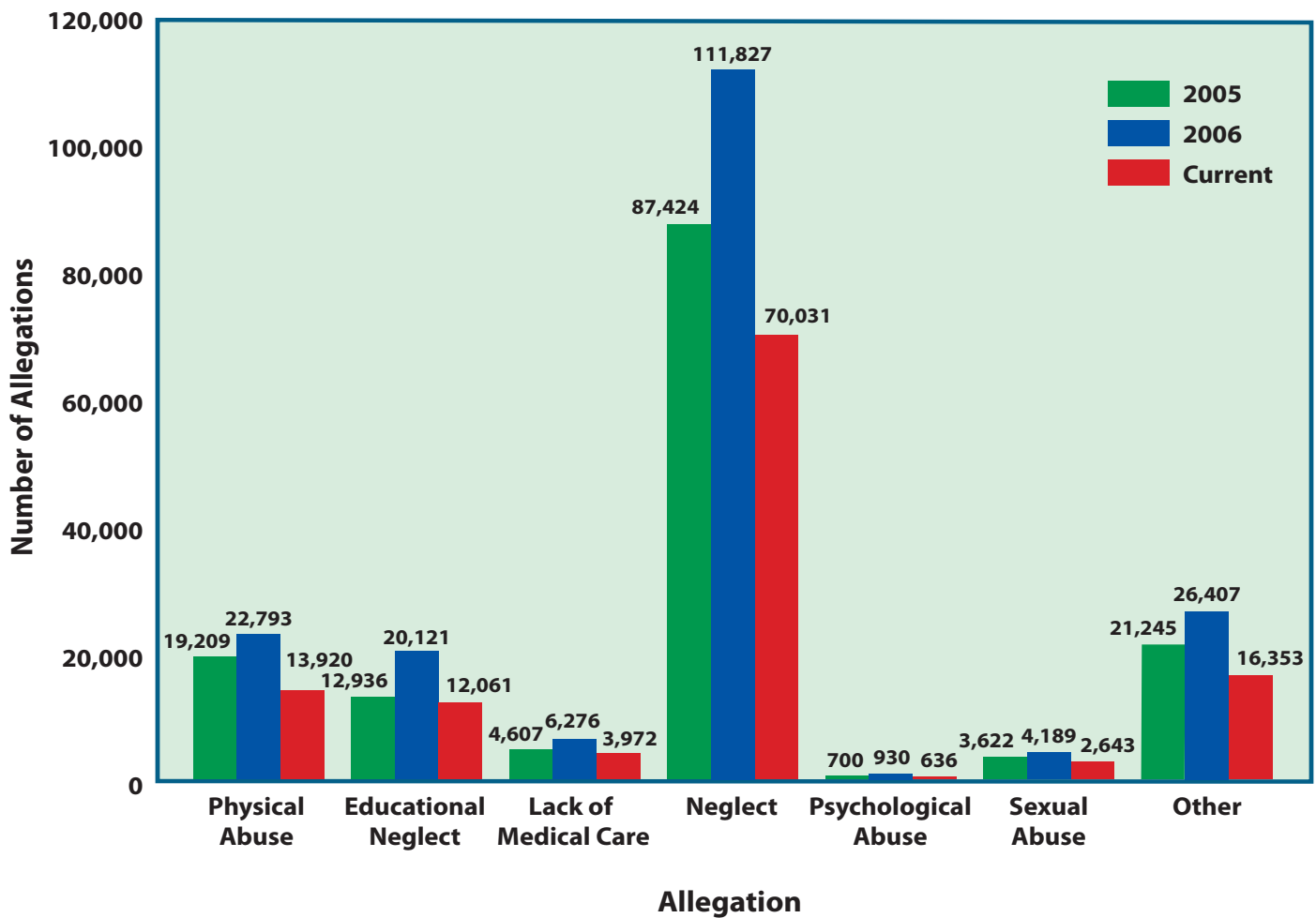
Caseloads Have Come Under Control Average Child Protective Caseload by Month, 2005 – 2007



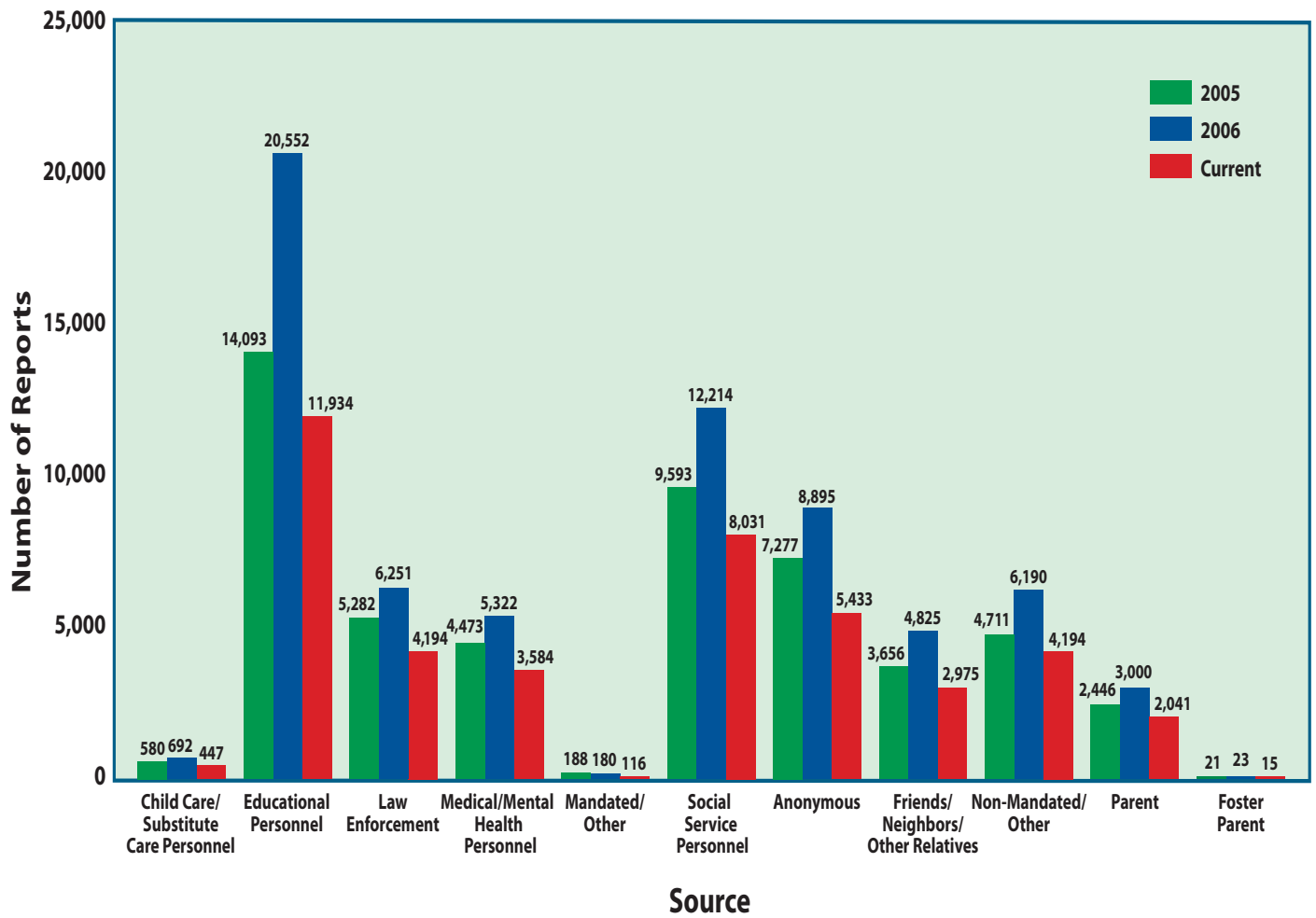
Indication Rates Remain High
Indication Rates, 2005 – 2007



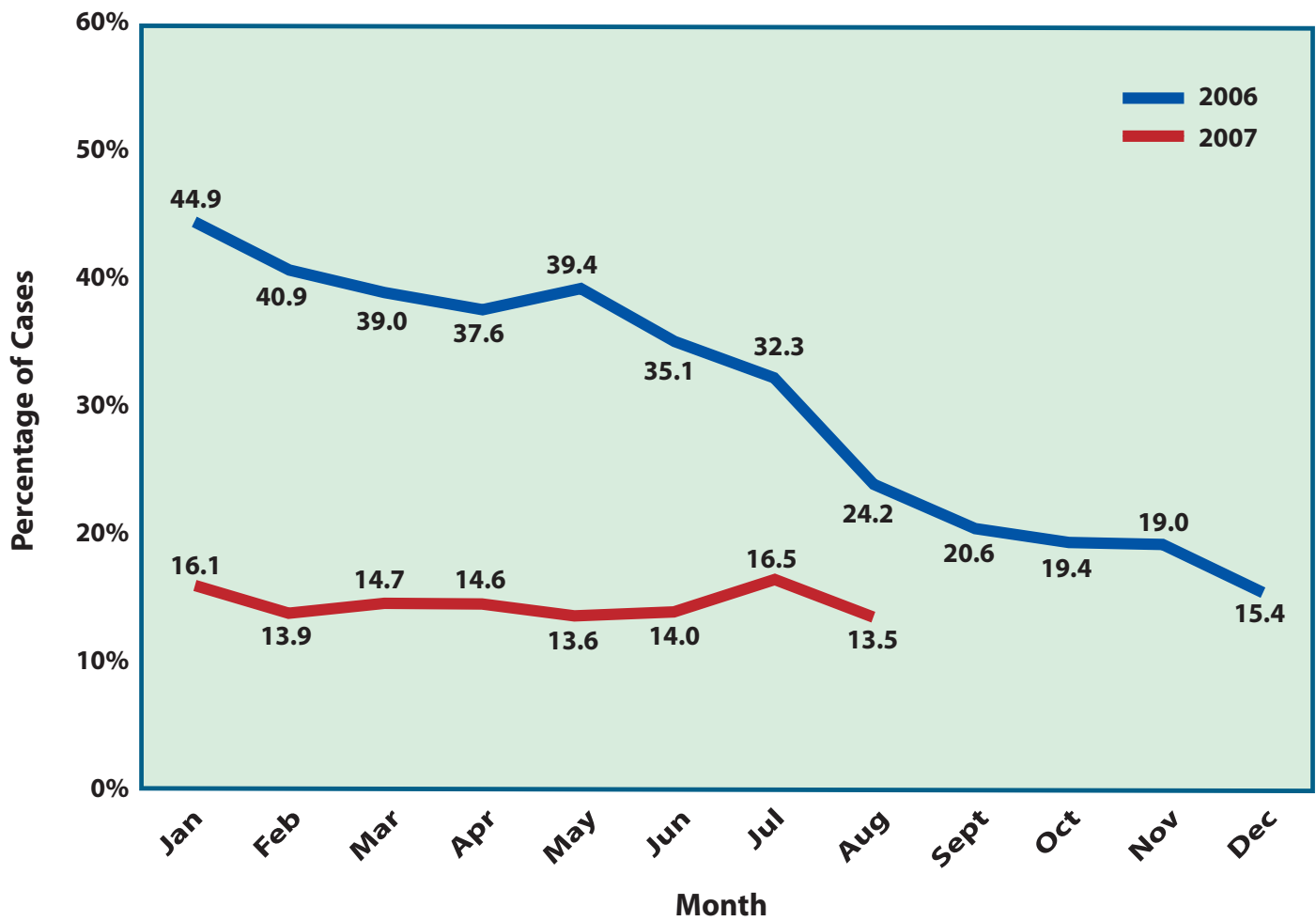
Neglect Allegations Continue To Be The Highest Number of Reports Types of Allegations, 2005 – 2007



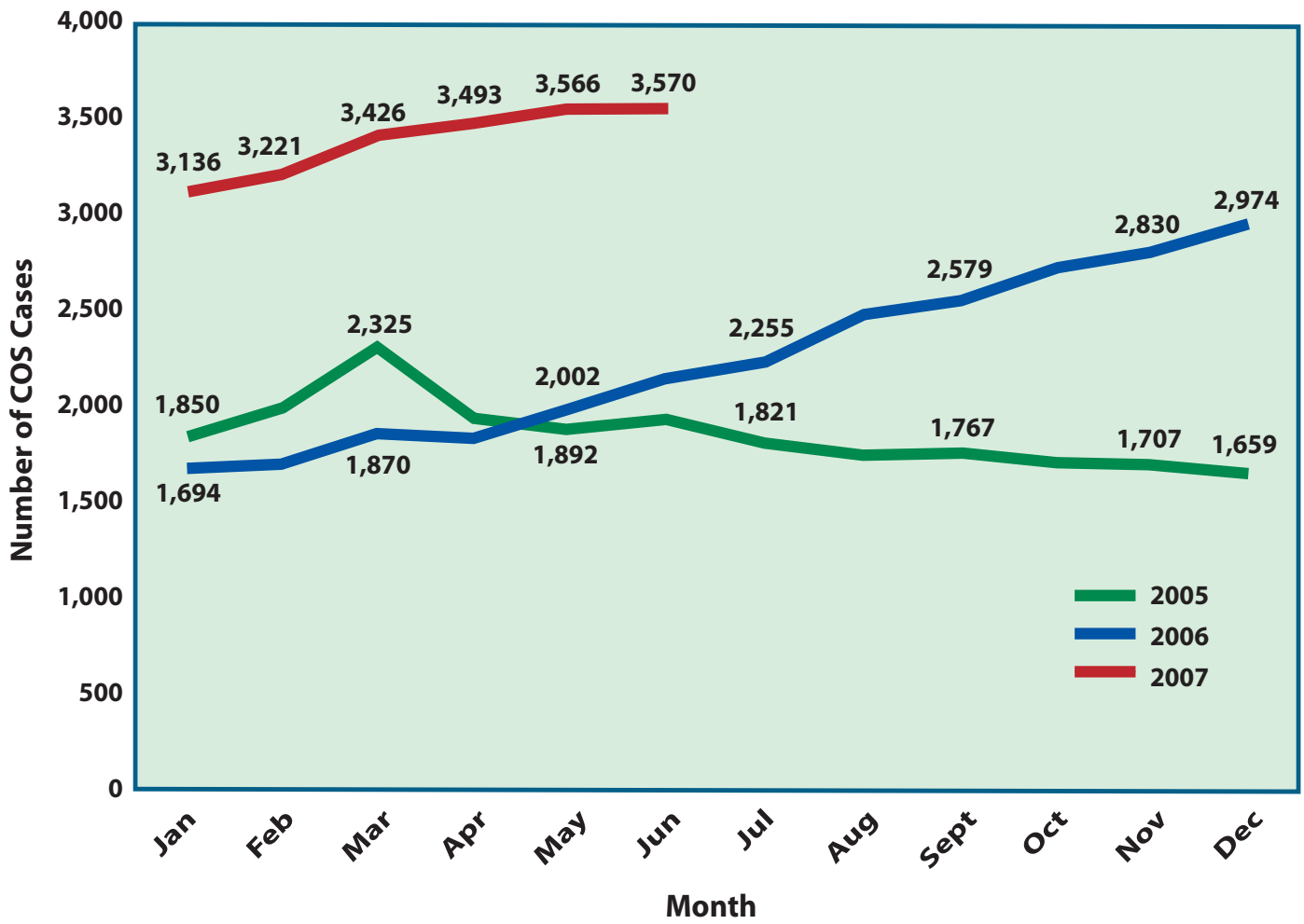
Educational Personnel Continue To Call In The Most Reports Source of Reports, 2005 – 2007



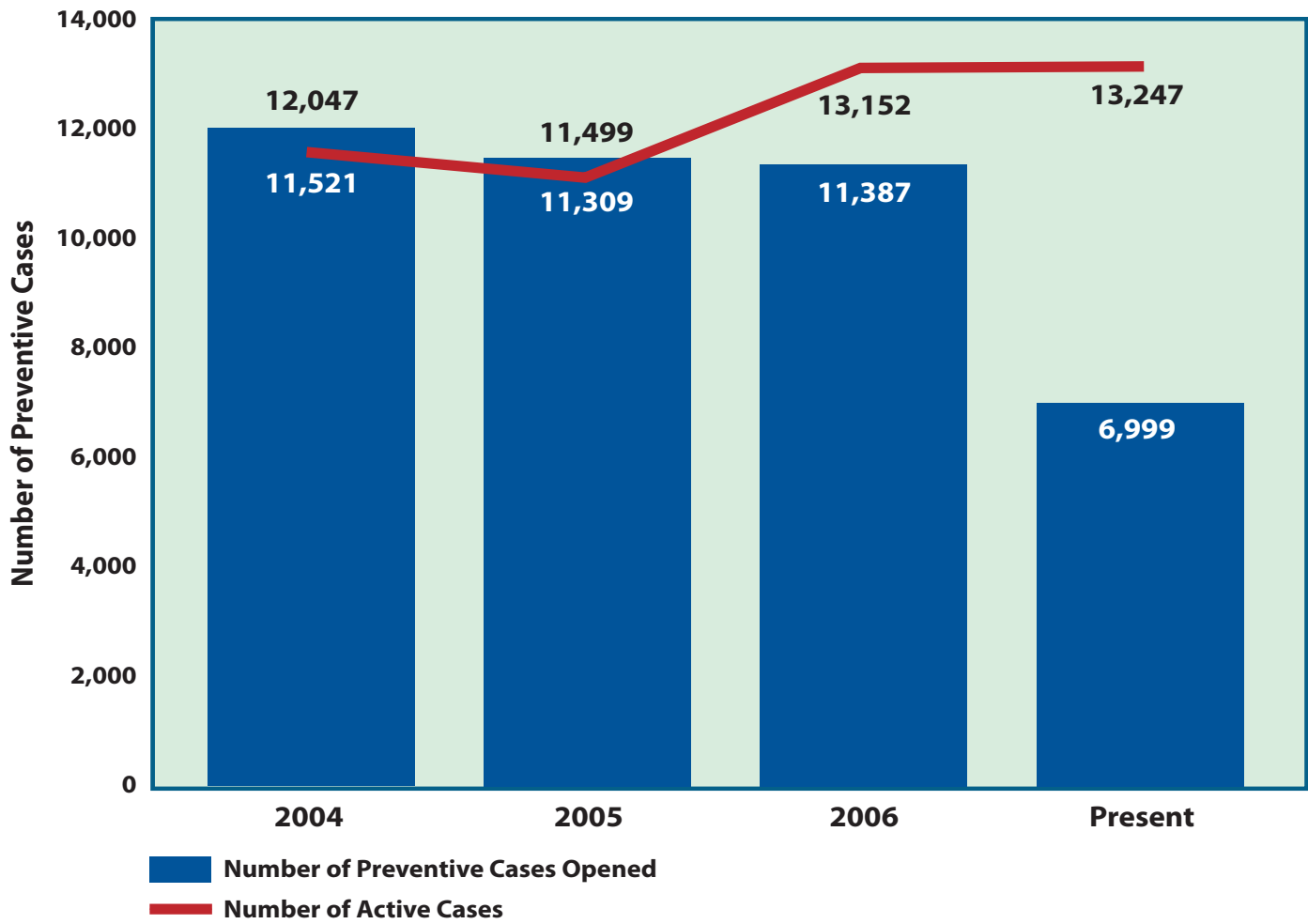
**More Families Are Receiving Services
Percentage of Indicated Investigations Closed Without Services,
2005 – 2007**



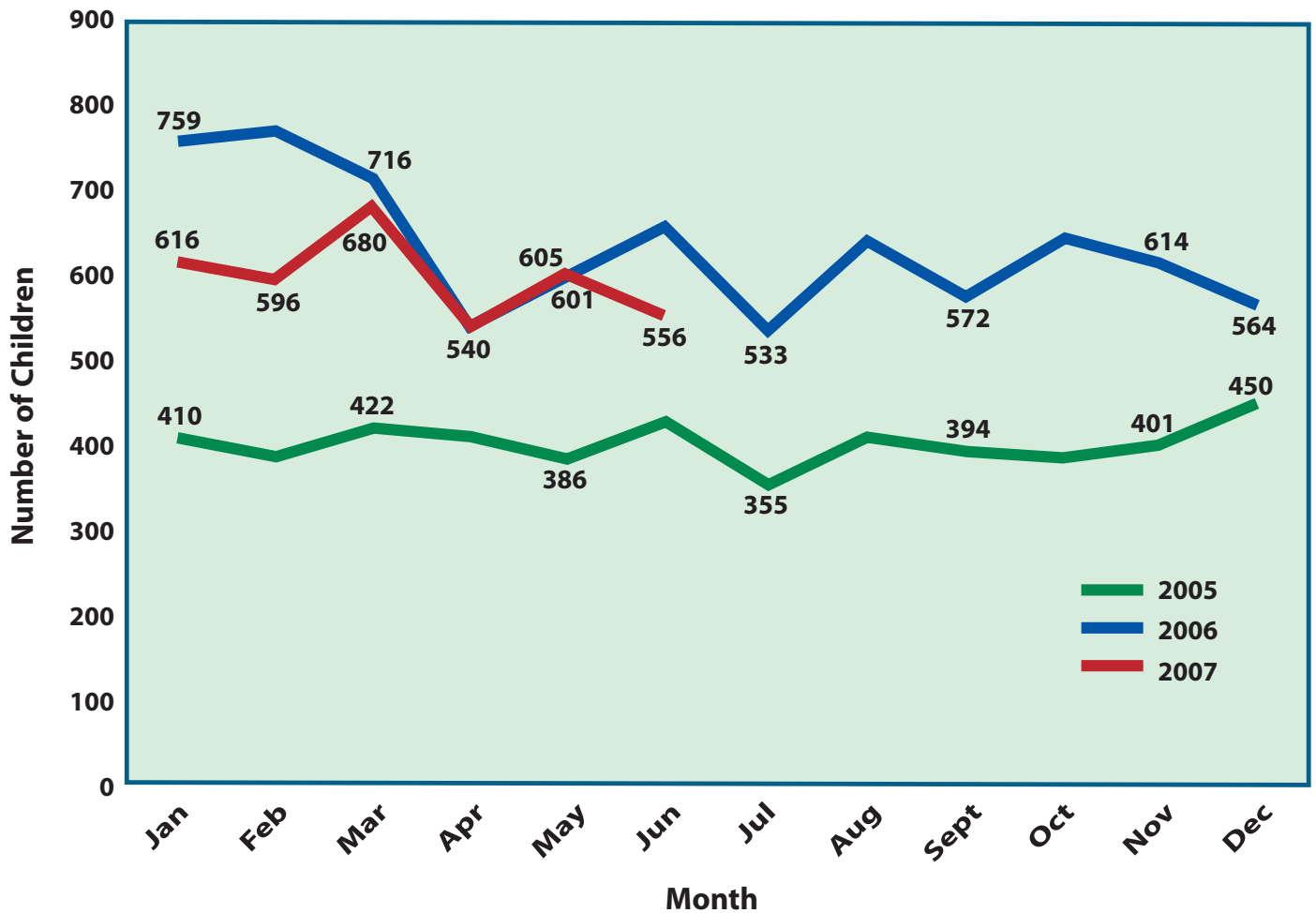
**More Families Are Being Supervised
Number of Court Ordered Supervision Cases by Month, 2005 – 2007**



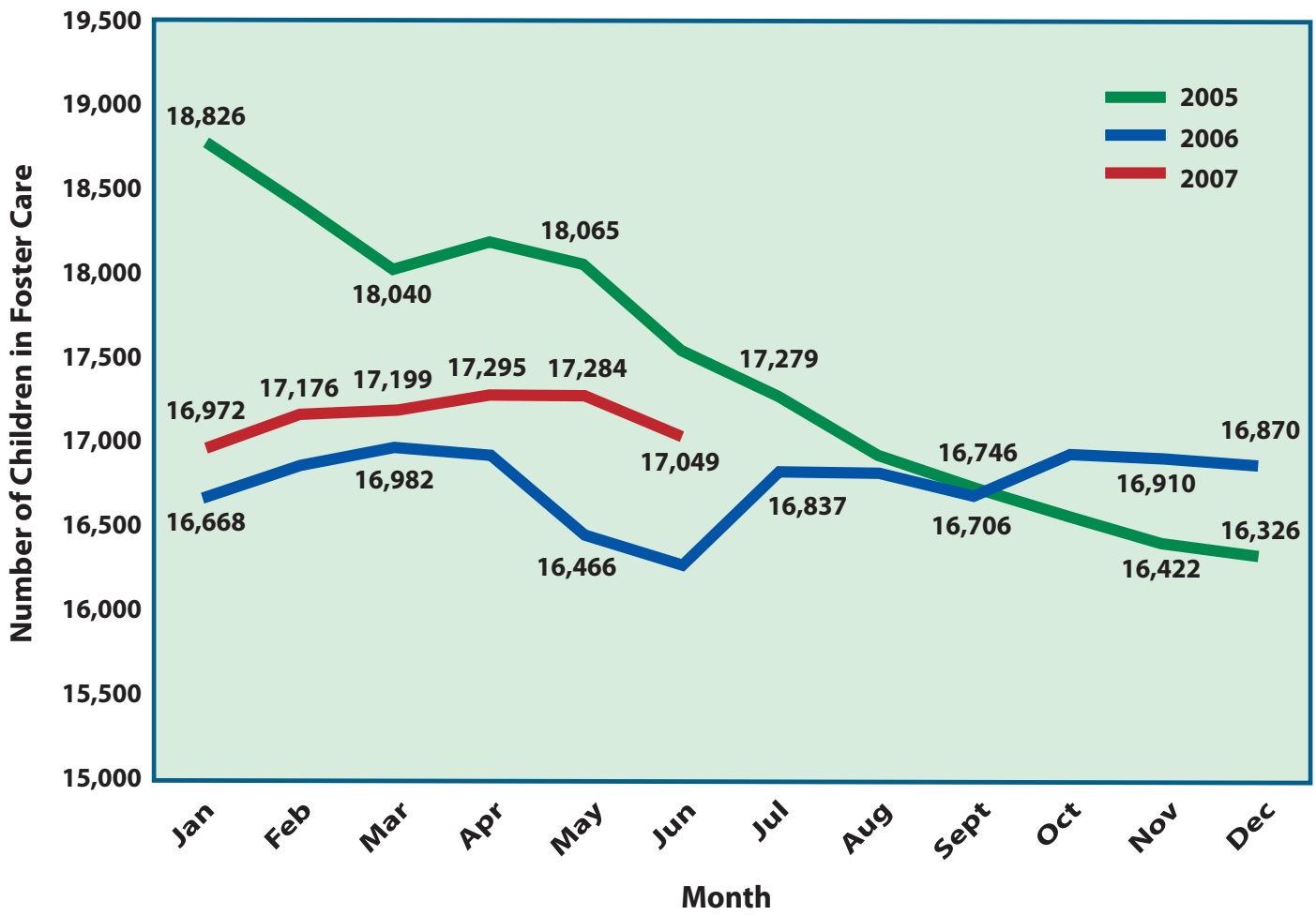
More Families Are Receiving Help Number of Preventive Cases Opened and Active, 2005 – Present



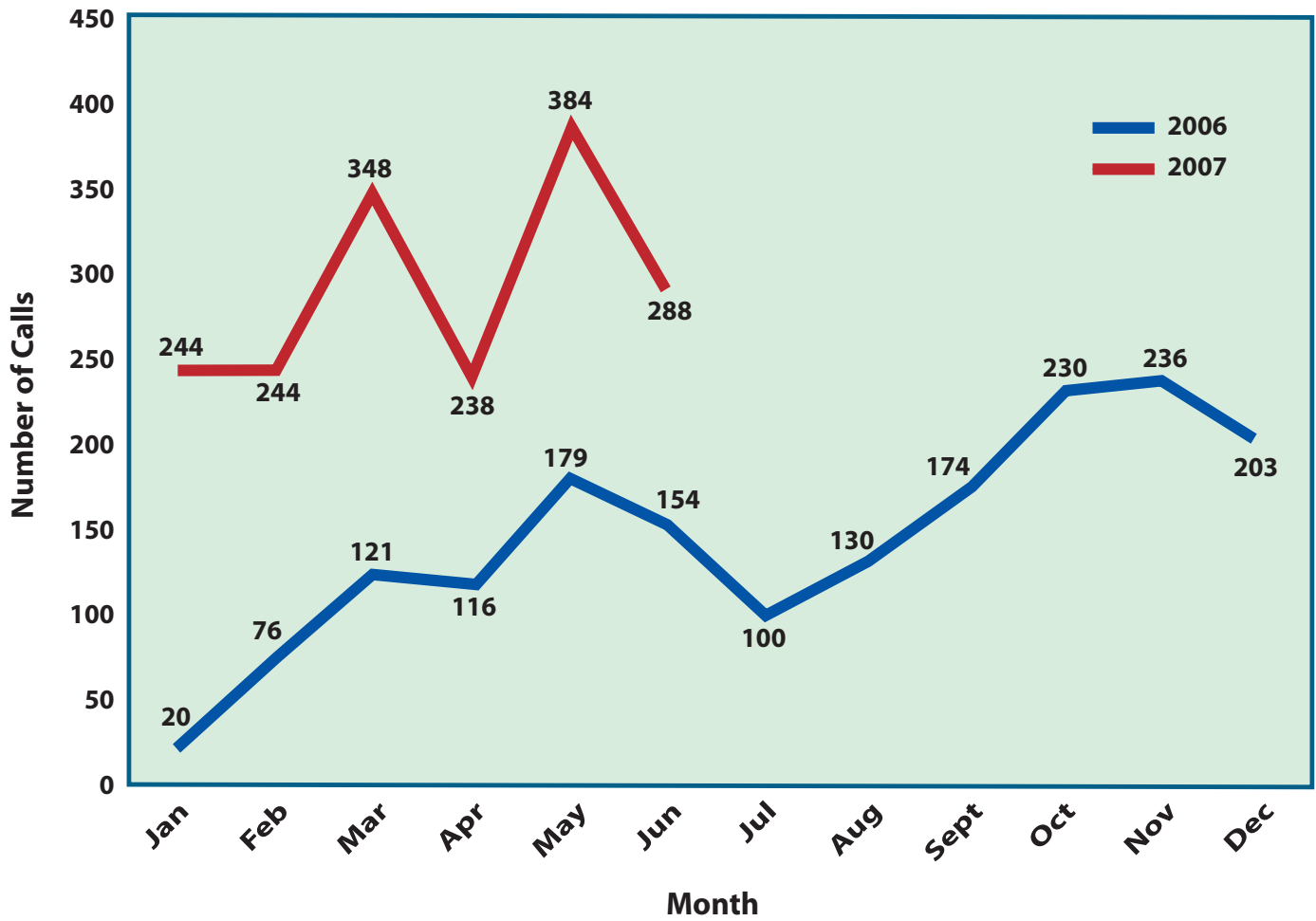
**Number of Children Coming Into Foster Care Has Increased
Number of Children Placed into Foster Care, 2005 – 2007**

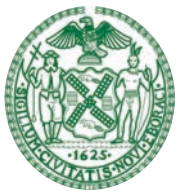


The Total Number of Children In Foster Care Remains Steady Foster Care Census, 2006 – 2007



**More Mandated Reporters Are Being Assisted By Safety First
Number of Calls Received in the Safety First Office, 2006 – 2007**





**NYC Administration
for Children's Services**

Michael R. Bloomberg, *Mayor*
John B. Mattingly, *Commissioner*