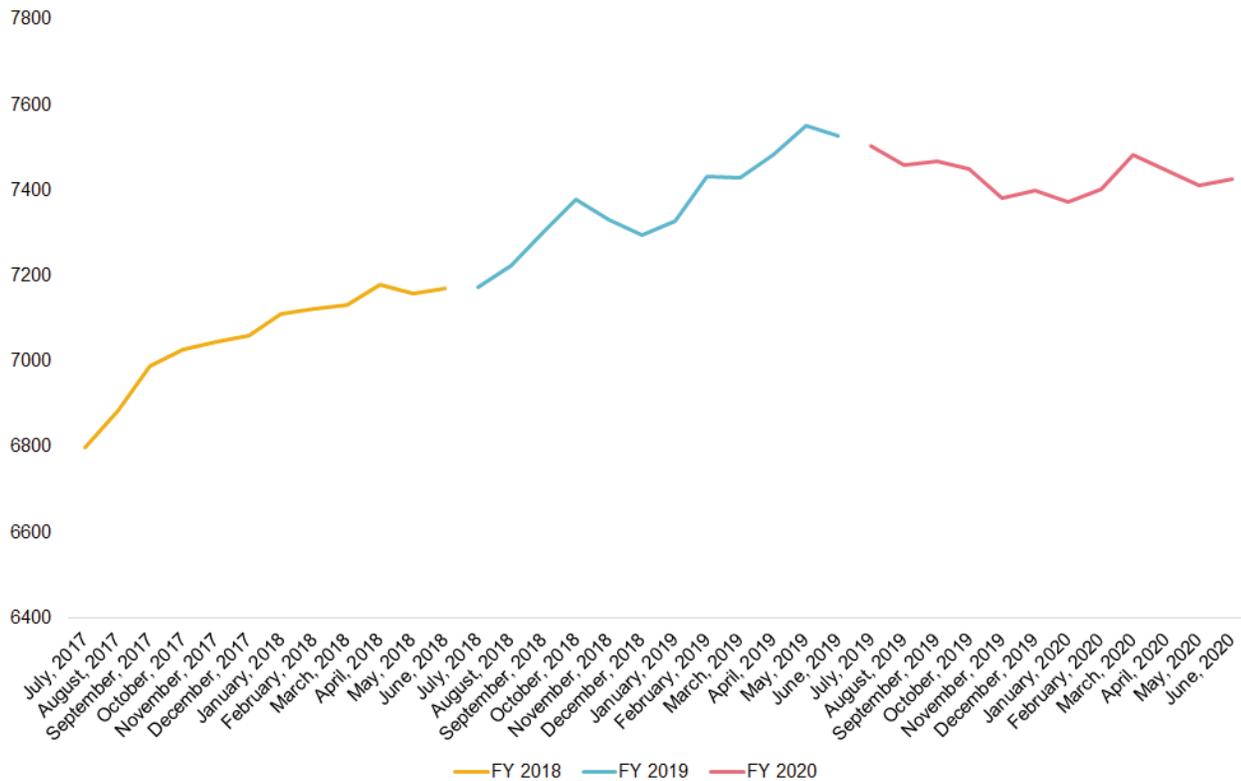


The number of children in protective arrangements in Montana increased over FY 2018 and FY 2019 but has leveled off in FY 2020.



This graph shows the caseload (a sum of children in foster care, guardianship, and adoption arrangements) for the Child & Family Services Division (CFSD) for the last three fiscal years.

Increased rates of child abuse and/or neglect impact CFSD in several ways. Higher prevalence rates require higher levels of spending on CFSD administration: more caseworker-hours (and sometimes overtime hours) are needed to investigate and track potential cases of abuse or neglect. Higher rates of abuse and neglect have tended to lead to more children in foster care in Montana. There is some evidence that foster care use is becoming more limited and guardianship arrangements are more prevalent over the last fiscal year.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) reported to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee they have witnessed a sharp drop in child protective services maltreatment referrals in the early stages of the COVID-19 public health emergency. DPHHS stated this decrease was likely due, in part, to the closure of K-12 schools as K-12 educators and staff are a significant source of these referrals.