

Large drop in NYC foster child placement

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NEW YORK, Oct. 23 (UPI) -- The number of New York City children in foster care has dropped to about 18,000, a number not seen since the 1980s.

The drop in foster care placement -- half of what it was six years ago and down from a record high 49,100 in 1991 -- is due to a more healthy economy and a shift in child welfare policy, city officials say.

After a 6-year-old was beaten to death by her mother in 1995, then-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani appointed former prosecutor Nicholas Scoppetta to fix the system. From 1996 to 1998, nearly 35,000 children were removed from their homes, but Scoppetta slowly recognized that child safety could be better served by preventing child abuse and keeping the family intact, the New York Times reported Sunday.

Since then, the city made strides in preserving families by offering parents services to prevent abuse, such as counseling, housing aid, food stamps and drug treatment.

Scoppetta was appointed Fire Commissioner by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in December 2001.