



Child Welfare Fact Sheet

Statistics illustrating major trends and issues in the child welfare system

Except as noted below, data are for the period ending **Sept. 30, 2003**, and are taken from: *Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Report: Preliminary FY 2004*. Retrieved May 5, 2006, from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm.

Children and youth at risk

- 872,000 children and youth were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect in the United States in 2004.¹

Children and youth in care

- 518,000 children and youth were in foster care on September 30, 2004 in the United States.²
- Half of all children in foster care are over the age of ten.

Length of stay in care for children and youth

- 39 percent (201,960) are placed in the child welfare system for less than one year.
- 28 percent (148,730 children) are in the system for three years or more.
- 48 percent (246,650 children) have reunification with their birth families as their case goal.

Caregivers

- 239,810 (46 percent) of the children in foster care live with licensed foster parents.
- 121,030 (23 percent) live with a relative.
- 97,070 (19 percent) are in a group home or institution.
- 24,650 (5 percent) are in pre-adoptive homes.
- 19,700 (4 percent) are in a trial home visit.
- 10,560 (2 percent) are runaways.
- 5,570 (1 percent) are in supervised independent living.
- There were 149,132 licensed (non-relative) family foster homes and 21,071 kinship homes licensed as foster homes in the United States in 2002.³

Kinship care (relatives or tribal members as caregivers)

- 121,030 (23 percent) of youth in foster care are placed with licensed foster parents who are also kin.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. (2006). *Child Maltreatment 2004*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Downloaded April 7, 2006 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/index.htm>

² As of September 15, 2005.

³ Child Welfare League of America National Data System: Out of Home Care Homes and Facilities, Number of Licensed, Approved and Certified Homes and Facilities, 2002. Retrieved May 20, 2005, from <http://ndas.cwla.org>.

- In 2000, more than 2.4 million grandparents were the primary adults responsible for their grandchildren.⁴

Siblings in care

Note: National statistics are not available, and state data are limited. Estimates are that over half of children in foster care have siblings who are also in care. For example:

- In October 2005, 68 percent of children in the California child welfare system had at least one sibling in out-of-home care.⁵
- In 1998 in the New York child welfare system, 64 percent of children had at least one sibling in out-of-home care.⁶

Racial/ethnic group representation

- Some research has shown no significant racial differences in the overall incidence of abuse and neglect of children and youth. When other predictors are taken into account, African American children suffering abuse are more likely to be investigated by Child Protective Services.⁷
- African-American children are over four times more likely than Caucasian children to be placed in out-of-home care.⁸
- Children of two or more races are twice as likely to be placed in out-of-home care.⁹
- American Indian and Alaska Native children are about three times more likely than Caucasian children to be placed in out-of-home care.¹⁰
- Children of color are less likely to be reunified with their birth families.¹¹

Emancipation (when a youth in foster care becomes a legal adult)

- Over 100,000 youth in foster care are 16 or older.¹²
- Over 20,000 youth aged 16 and older made the transition from foster care to legal emancipation in 2003.¹³

⁴ United States Census 2000 Summary File 1, Table DP-2, Profile of Selected Social Characteristics. Retrieved May 20, 2005, from <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>.

⁵ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Conley, A., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., & Kaczorowski, M.R., (2005). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved May 15, 2006, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>

⁶ *Progress on ACS Reform Initiatives: Status Report 3*. Chapter 5: Permanency. Retrieved May 16, 2006, from http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/acs/downloads/pdf/stats_status_report3.pdf.

⁷ Sedlak, A., & Schultz, D. (2001). Racial differences in child protective services investigation of abused and neglected children. In D. M. Derezotes, J. Poertner, & M. F. Testa, (Eds.). *Race Matters in Child Welfare: The Overrepresentation of African American Children in the System*. Washington, DC.: CWLA Press. Source data: National Incident Studies I-III (1980, 1986, 1993) available from National Data Archive of Child Abuse and Neglect at http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/NDACAN/Datasets_List.html.

⁸ These proportions were derived from dividing the number of children in each race/ethnicity group reported by AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Report: Preliminary FY 2004) by the population of the same race/ethnicity group aged 0-19 reported by the Census (U.S. Census Bureau (2005). Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2004-05. Washington, D.C. retrieved from http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-2001_2005.html.)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hill, R. (2001). *The role of race in parental reunification*. Paper presented at the Race Matters Forum meeting, Jan. 9-10, Chicago, IL. Available online on May 15, 2006, from Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Human and Health Services, as Chapter 6 in *Assessing the Context of Permanency and Reunification in the Foster Care System* at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/fostercare-reunif01/>.

¹² The actual number is 103,500.

¹³ The actual number is 21,720.