

National Foster Care Data

U.S. child population served in foster care during any one year	1% ¹
Children served in foster care during 2005	Over 799,000 ²
Children in foster care on September 30, 2005	513,000 ³
Children in foster care who are children of color	59% ³
Children in foster care who are male	52% ³
Children exiting foster care who have been in care for one year or more	50% ³
Children exiting foster care who have been in care for three years or more	17% ³
Number of placement changes per year	1-2 ⁴
Youth who aged out of foster care in 2005	24,407 ³

Foster Care Study Results

Children in foster care who have chronic medical problems	50% ⁵
Alumni (adults formerly in foster care) who experienced seven or more school changes, Kindergarten through Grade 12	65% ⁶
Alumni who completed high school (compared to the general population of 86% ⁷)	74% ⁸
Youth emancipating from foster care who plan to attend college	70% ⁹
Alumni who attended college (compared to the general population of 51% ¹⁰)	37% ⁸
Alumni who completed a bachelor's degree (versus 28% for 25- to 34-year-olds in the general population ¹⁰)	3% ¹¹
Alumni who were employed 12 to 18 months after aging out of care	52% ⁸
Alumni who became homeless for one day or more after aging out of care	25% ⁸
Alumni who volunteered in the community in the past year	42% ¹²
Alumni who reported positive involvement with their neighbors	80% ¹³

Foster Care in the Year 2020 (if nothing changes in child welfare trends)

Children who will experience the foster care system	Over 10,500,000 ¹⁴
Children who will age out of the foster care system	300,000 ¹⁵
Former foster youth aging out of the system that will experience homelessness	75,000 ¹⁶
Former foster youth aging out of the system that graduate from college	9,000 ¹⁷
Number of children killed by abuse or neglect	22,500 ¹⁸

Endnotes

- 1 This figure is derived using the following statistics: 513,000 children in foster care divided by the total number of children under age 18 in the United States on July 1, 2005 (513,000/73,469,984 = 0.7%). For national foster care data, go to <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/> and click on "Adoption and Foster Care Statistics." See the "Trends in Foster Care and Adoption" table. The total number of children under age 18 was downloaded November 30, 2006 from <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/national/asrh/NC-EST2005-sa.xls> (Table 2: Annual Estimates of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005).
- 2 Go to <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/> and click on "Adoption and Foster Care Statistics." See the "Trends in Foster Care and Adoption" table.
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. (2006). The AFCARS report: Preliminary FY 2005 estimates as of September 2006. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Downloaded November 30, 2006 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm#afcars. (Go to <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/> and click on "Adoption and Foster Care Statistics.")
- 4 National 2002 AFCARS case level data available from the Child Welfare League of America's National Data Analysis System (NDAS) indicate a mean of 2.5 placements with an average stay of 22 months in care (or a median of 2 placements for a median length of stay of 12 months. (Personal Communication, Carrie Friedman, March 23, 2005). Note that the placement change rate is inflated by the large percentage of children who have a short-term shelter care placement before being placed in a regular foster home.
- 5 See Rubin, D., Halfon, N., Raghavan, R. & Rosenbaum, S. (2005). Protecting children in foster care: *Why proposed Medicaid cuts harm our nation's most vulnerable children*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Also see:
 - Halfon N., Mendonca, A., & Berkowitz, G. (1995). Health status of children in foster care. The experience of the Center for the Vulnerable Child. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 149(4), 386-392.
 - Simms, M. D. (1989). The foster care clinic: A community program to identify treatment needs of children in foster care. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 10(3), 121-128.
 - Takayama, J. I., Wolfe, E., & Coulter, K. P. (1998). Relationship between reason for placement and medical findings among children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 101(2), 201-207.
 - U.S. General Accounting Office. (1995). *Foster care: Health needs of many young children are unknown and unmet* (GAO/HEHS-95-114). Washington, DC: Author.
- 6 Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., Hiripi, E., White, C. R., & Wiggins, T. (2005). *The legacy of family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. In terms of school changes, one-third of the alumni in another recent study had attended more than five elementary schools, averaging a change in schools nearly every year. See Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs, p. 28. Both studies can be downloaded from www.casey.org.
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Percent of high school and college graduates of the population 15 years and older by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin: March 2000. (March 2001 Current Population Survey: Table 1a.) Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/p20-536/tab01a.pdf>. Note that a more conservative estimate of national high school completion rate of 70% was recently published by Greene & Forster (2003). They believe that completion statistics are sometimes overstated because they underestimate dropouts, and because they exclude military personnel, prisoners and institutionalized populations. See Greene, J. P. & Forster, G. (2003). *Public high school graduation and college readiness rates in the United States*. New York: Center for Civic Innovation, The Manhattan Institute.
- 8 This statistic was derived by averaging the results of a representative set of foster care alumni studies that interviewed older alumni, who had more time to complete high school via a diploma or a GED, attend a post-secondary educational program, and/or complete a bachelor's degree than younger alumni. The studies were then weighted by study sample size so the larger studies carried more weight in the average. For more information contact Peter J. Pecora at ppecora@casey.org. Examples of studies included in the analysis for the high school completion rate include:
 - Blome, W. W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 14(1), p. 41-53.
 - Buehler, C., Orme, J. G., Post, J., & Patterson, D. A. (2000). The long-term correlates of family foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 22(8), 595-625.
 - Casey Family Services. (1999). *The road to independence: Transitioning youth in foster care to independence*. Shelton, CT: Author. (www.caseyfamilyservices.org)
 - Cook, R.; Fleishman, E., & Grimes, V. (1989). *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth* (Phase 2 Final Report, Volume Rockville Westat, Inc.
 - Courtney, M., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Nesmith, A. (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care, *Child Welfare*, 80, 685-717.
 - Festinger, T. (1983). *No one ever asked us... A postscript to foster care*. New York: Columbia University.
 - Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., White, C.R., Hiripi, E., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Website: www.casey.org.
 - Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Website: www.casey.org.
 - Reilly, T. (2003). Transition from care: Status and outcomes of youth who age out of foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(6), 727-746.
- 9 Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Ruth, G., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., & Bost, N. (2005). *Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.
 - McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(4), 475-495.
- 10 U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Educational Attainment by Sex: 2000. (Table QT-P20). http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPeople?_submenuid=people_5&_sse=on. Click on the "Educational Attainment" table.
- 11 According to a weighted average of foster care alumni studies (see reference note 8), the college completion rate was 3%. College completion rates, however, are higher when follow-up studies include older adults. For example, the college completion rate was three times greater (at 10.8%) in a recent study of foster care alumni who were served by a voluntary child welfare agency (and who were ages 25 and older). See Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs, p. 28.
- 12 White, C. R., Havalchak, A., O'Brien, K., & Pecora, P. J. (2006). Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey, 2005. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.
- 13 Casey Family Services. (1999). The road to independence: Transitioning youth in foster care to independence. Shelton, CT: Author. (www.caseyfamilyservices.org)
- 14 Calculated by multiplying the number of children served in foster care in 2005 by 15, the number of years until 2020. This figure was derived by subtracting the number of children who re-entered care (about 100,000) from the number of children served by the foster care system in 2005 (about 800,000). See Child Welfare Outcomes 2003: Annual Report. Downloaded on January 3, 2007 from www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb. And The AFCARS report: Interim FY 2003 Estimates as of June 2006 (10). Downloaded on January 3, 2007 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm.
- 15 About 20,000 children ages 16 and older leave foster care through emancipation each year (see AFCARS reference).
- 16 About 25% of youth who were placed in foster care experience one of more days of homelessness after leaving care. This statistic was derived by averaging the results of a representative set of foster care alumni studies that interviewed older alumni. The studies were then weighted by study sample size so the larger studies carried more weight in the average (Casey Research Services).
- 17 According to a weighted average of foster care alumni studies referenced above, the college completion rate was 3%. College completion rates, however, are higher when follow-up studies include older adults. For example, the college completion rate was three times greater (at 10.8%) in a recent study of foster care alumni who were served by a voluntary child welfare agency (and who were ages 25 and older). See Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs, p. 28.
- 18 In 2004, there were about 1,500 confirmed victims from abuse or neglect. See 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.

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