

Background of Child Welfare Services



Child Welfare: *A Congressional Overview*

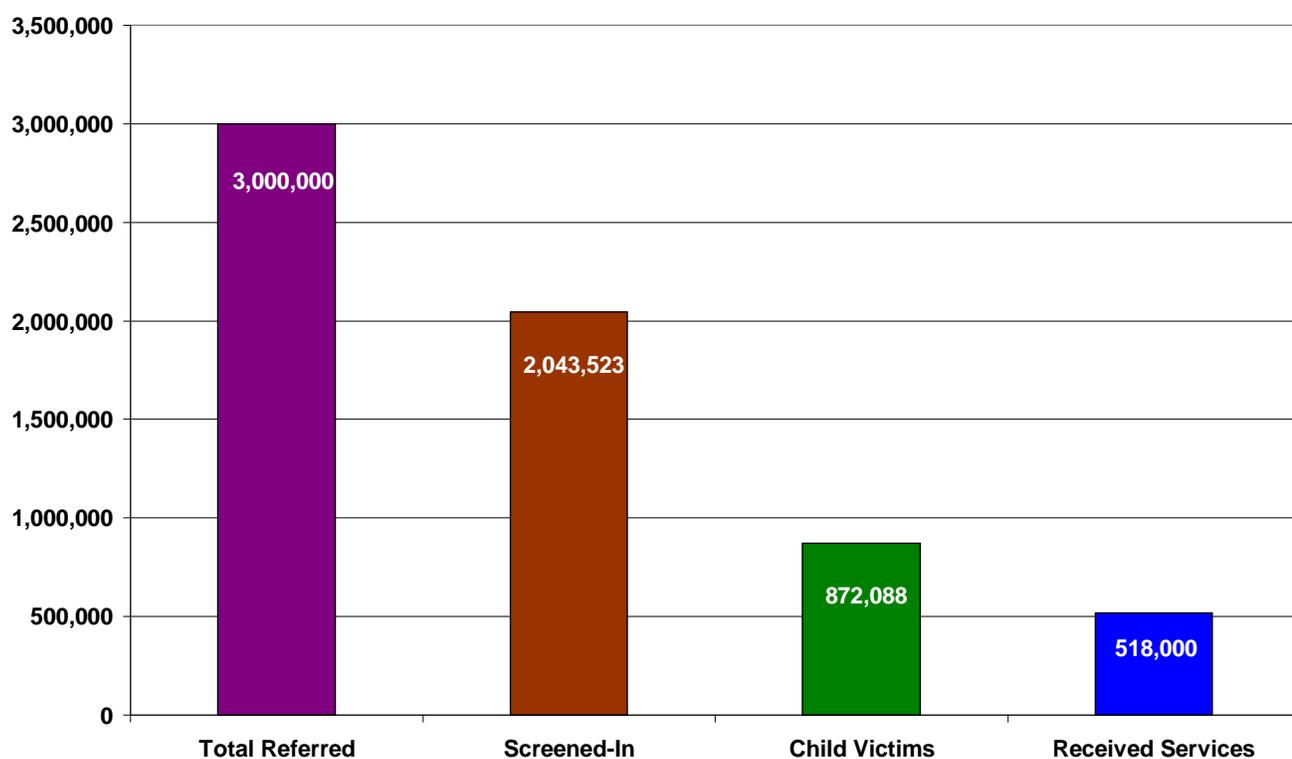
February 12, 2007

Children in Child Welfare

What children do public child welfare agencies serve?

Most children served in the child welfare system are alleged victims or actual victims of child maltreatment. Over half of the state child welfare agencies also serve youth in the juvenile justice system and mental health system. In this context, “served” means an intervention by the child welfare agency on behalf of or with the child. The scope of the intervention may include the following: actions to prevent maltreatment; investigations of reported maltreatment; ongoing services and work with families where maltreatment occurred; work with children in placement; reunification of children with families; and/or programs to facilitate the adoption of children.

Children Referred to Child Welfare Agencies, 2004



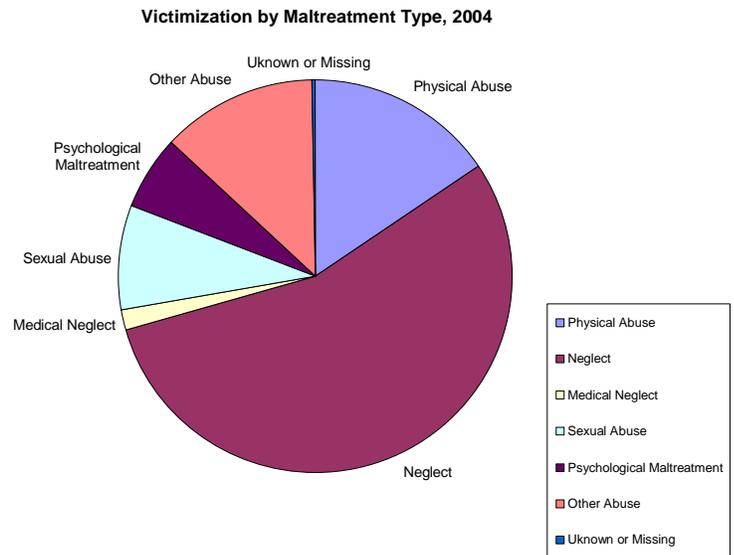
How many children were alleged victims or victims of child maltreatment?

In 2004, child welfare agencies accepted an estimated three million referrals alleging child maltreatment, representing approximately 3.4 million children (a referral can include more than one child).¹

Of these referrals about 956,477 referrals were “screened out,” with many being referred to other service systems. There were 2,043,523 referrals were “screened in,” meaning that they were assigned to child protective services workers for investigation or assessment. The referrals are an aggregate number derived from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). They represent the “front door” for most of the children served by child welfare agencies.

Of the 2 million referrals, approximately 872,088 children were substantiated as victims of abuse and neglect:²

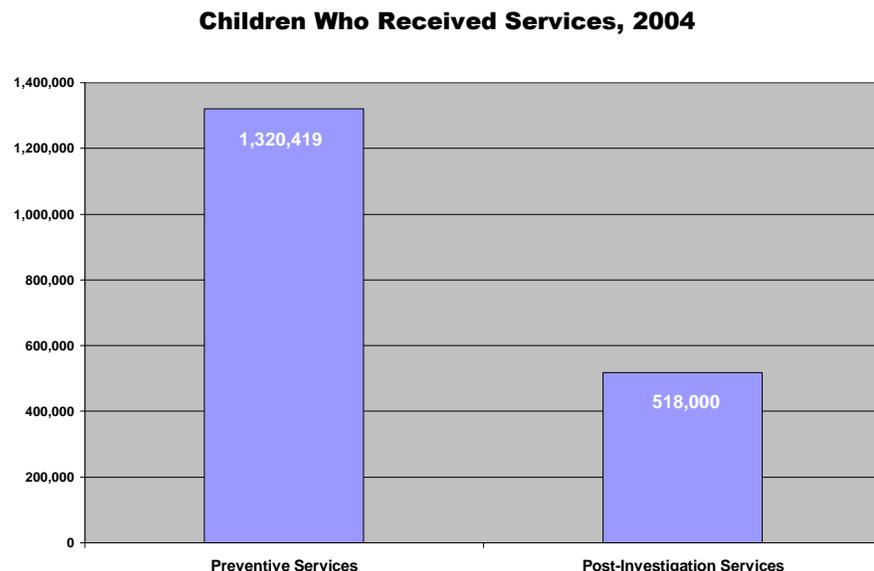
- 62.4% suffered neglect
- 17.5% were physically abused
- 9.7% were sexually abused
- 7.0% were psychologically maltreated
- 2.1% suffered medical neglect
- 14.5% experienced other forms of maltreatment that did not precisely fit the foregoing terms



How many children actually received services?

The estimates represented in the graph represent those children that were reported to National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and are not a full description of all children who received services. Some of these children are also reflected in the foster care numbers reported to Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS).

- Approximately 1.3 million children received preventive services in 2004. NCANDS reports that preventive services are provided to parents whose children are at risk of abuse or neglect. Examples of these services include respite care, day care, counseling and other services that help parents in rearing their children.



- In 2004, 1,055,459 children received post-investigation services. Of those, 518,000 were victims of maltreatment.³ NCANDS reports that post-investigation services are provided to children and families to ensure the safety of children. These may include counseling, in-home services, and court services.

- Not all victims and non-victims received services. The estimated 518,000 victims who received services means that 59% of victims received services and the rest did not. The reason for not receiving service is not clear. Children and families may not have received services for a variety of reasons including service unavailability, no need for service, and refusal to accept services.

Children in Foster Care

What is foster care?

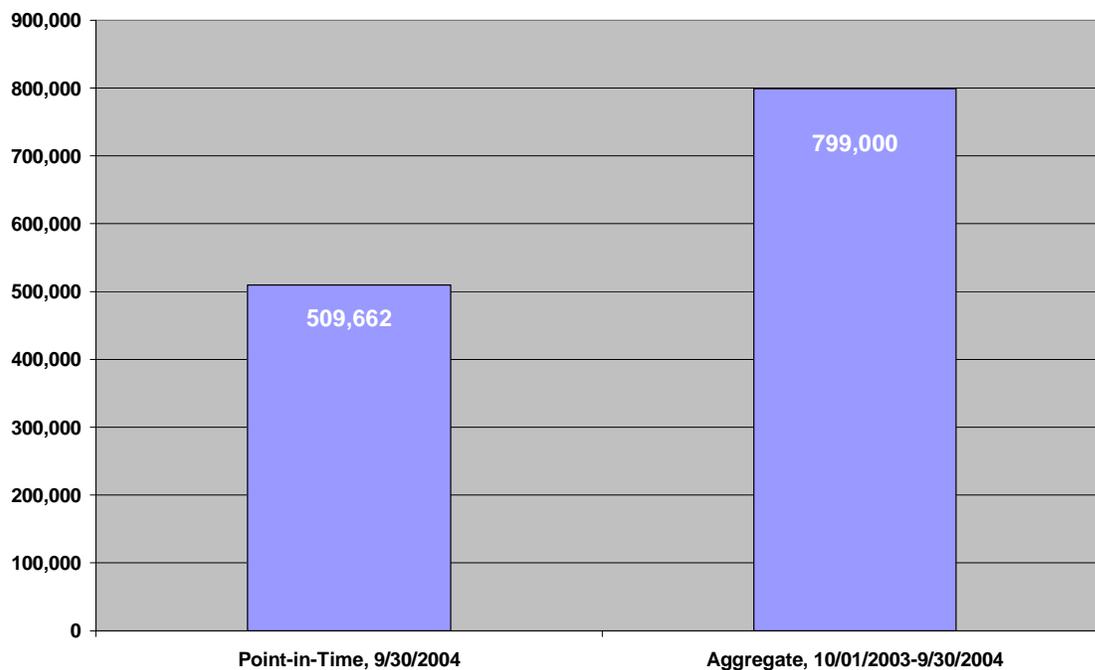
Foster care includes all out-of-home settings for children who cannot live at home for safety or other reasons. These settings include pre-adoptive homes, foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, institutions (e.g., hospitals), and supervised independent living arrangements. The number also includes children who are home on trial home visits and children considered to be “runaway”.

How many children are in foster care?

There are at least two answers to this question that the graph below shows:

- 509,662 children were in foster care on September 30, 2004. This is called “point-in-time” data, and is often cited to describe the child welfare population on a given day in state child welfare agencies. The data is usually based on information at the end of the federal fiscal year.
- 799,000 children were in foster care [out-of-home-care] during 2004, meaning that between October 1, 2003 and September 30, 2004, almost four-fifths of a million children were in an out-of-home care setting at some time during the year. This “aggregate” number is also derived from AFCARS, but is less often cited when explaining the number of children that state child welfare agencies serve.

Children in Foster Care, 2004

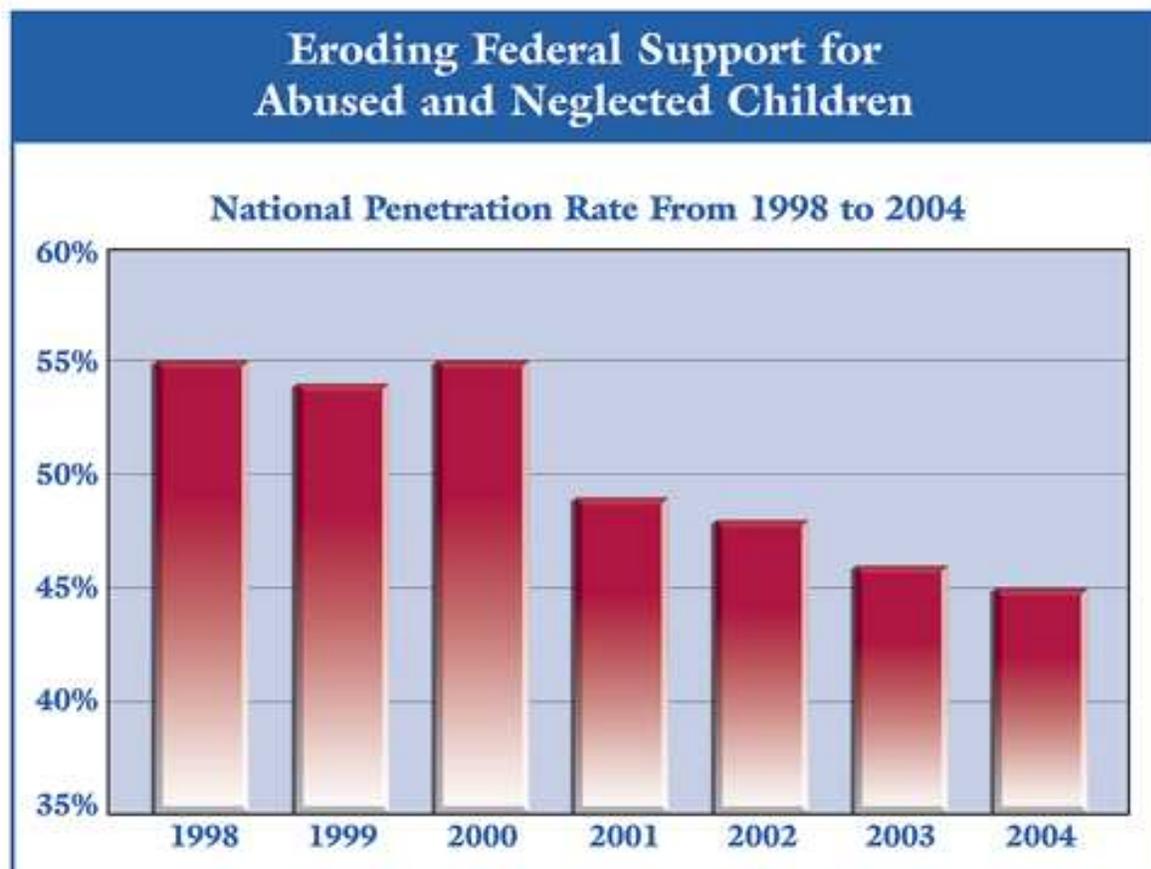


Are all children in foster care covered by IV-E foster care?

No. Only children who meet the eligibility requirements under Title IV-E are covered by federal IV-E funding. Under Title IV-E, the federal government will help share the cost of services such as food, shelter, clothing and other basic needs of a child placed with a foster family or in a group home or residential facility. States receive a match based on the Federal Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) rate. In addition the federal government shares fifty percent of the administrative costs. This includes important services such as case workers' time spent in court, connecting the child with needed services, placing the child in a safe and nurturing environment, recruiting new foster parents, and licensing and training of the families.

The federal government provides these shared costs only if that child was removed from a family that *would have been eligible* for the cash assistance program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as it existed on July 16, 1996. This link to the now non-existent AFDC program is sometimes referred to as the "look-back" provision. A Congressional Research Service Report indicated, "in 1996...the median state need standard under AFDC (for a family of three) equaled 60% of the federal poverty level; by 2005 that median was 48%. This means that eligibility for the Title IV-E foster care program may only be established for children removed from families with incomes less than half the federal poverty level (roughly \$8,000/year for a family of three)."

A study by CWLA based on the number of children in care at the end of the fiscal year compared to a state's average monthly claims indicated that the percentage of children covered by Title IV-E is decreasing and was only 45 percent in 2004.⁴



What happens to children who leave foster care?⁵

- Approximately 305,000 entered foster care and 283,000 children exited foster care in 2004⁶. The results suggest that most of the children who left foster care in 2004 went home to family-like settings.⁷
- Fifty-four percent (54%) went home to parents, or primary caretakers;
- Eighteen percent (18%) went home to adoptive parents;
- Twelve percent (12%) went home to other relatives;
- Eight percent (8%) were emancipated and went to live independently;
- Four percent (4%) went to guardianship placements; and
- Four percent (4%) experienced other outcomes, such as being transferred to another agency, identified as being on runaway status, and in some cases identified as being deceased.

How many children in foster care are available for adoption?⁸

For a number of children in foster care, adoption is the permanency plan because they have no homes they can return to safely. When children cannot be safely cared for at home or the home of a relative, they should have the best opportunity possible to be adopted into loving, permanent families. These children in need of adoption—infants and older children may have a range of challenging needs. Many of these children come from families that abuse drugs and alcohol; many have suffered serious physical and sexual abuse; many are older children and adolescents; and many are brothers and sisters who ideally should be adopted into one family. Of the 509,662 children in foster care on September 30, 2004, approximately 118,000 were waiting to be adopted.

How many children are adopted from the child welfare system each year?⁹

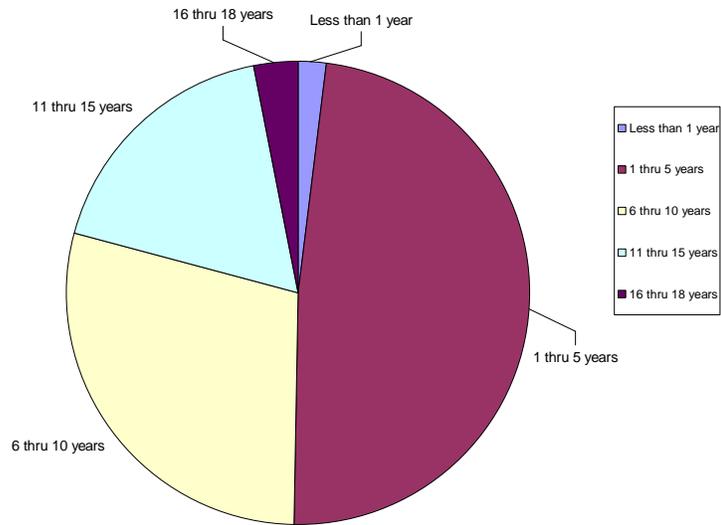
The number of children adopted from foster care has increased in recent years. The table to the right shows this trend. In 1997 Congress enacted the Adoption Incentive Program as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act to promote permanence for children. The program was extended in 2003. The Adoption Incentive Program is designed to encourage states to finalize adoptions of children from foster care, with additional incentives for the adoption of foster children with special needs. States receive incentive payments for adoptions that exceed an established baseline.

Year	Adoptions from Foster Care
1996	28,000
1997	31,000
1998	37,000
1999	47,000
2000	51,000
2001	50,000
2002	53,000
2003	50,362
2004	52,000

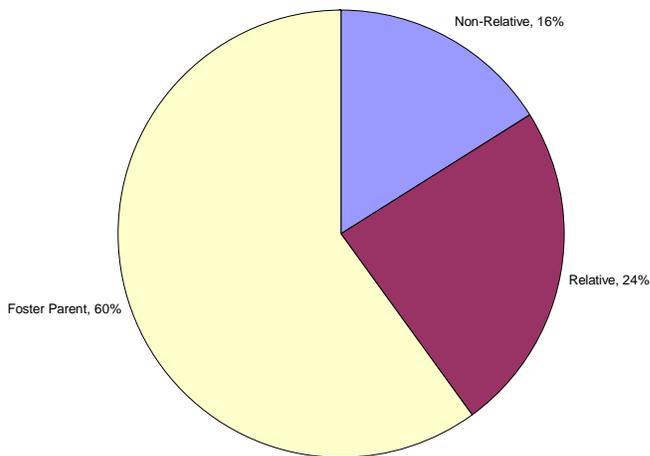
What are the ages of children adopted from foster care?

Of the children adopted from foster care in 2004:

- 2% were less 1 year
- 48% were ages 1 – 5
- 29% were 6 – 10
- 18% were 11 – 15
- 3% were 16 - 18



Who is adopting children from foster care?

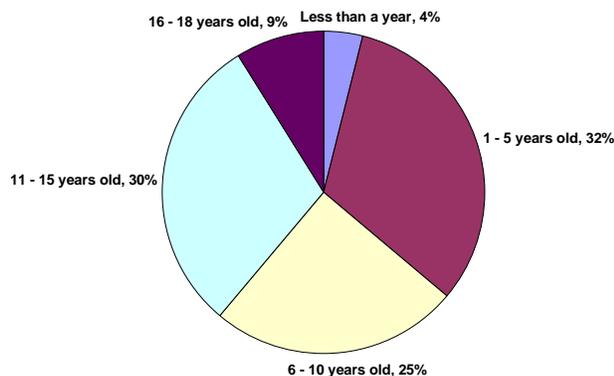


Of the children adopted from foster care in 2004, 60% were adopted by their foster parents, 16% were adopted by a non-relative, and 24% were adopted by a relative. Of the children adopted from foster care in 2004, 48% waited more than one year from the time parental rights were terminated until they were adopted.

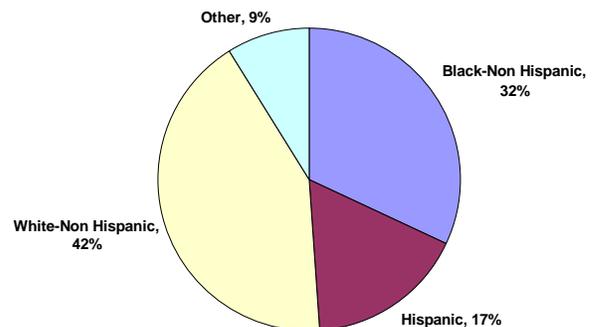
What do we know about the children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted?

Of the 509,662 children in foster care on September 30, 2004, approximately 118,000 were free for adoption. In 2004, the median age of children waiting to be adopted was 8.7 years. Four percent of the children waiting to be adopted were younger than 1 year, 32% were between the ages of one and five, 25% were between 6 and 10, 30% between 11 - 15, and 9% were from ages 16 - 18. Of the children waiting to be adopted from foster care as of September 2004, 32% were black non-Hispanic, 42% were white non-Hispanic, and 17% were Hispanic.

Age of Children Waiting to be Adopted, 2004



Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Children Waiting to be Adopted, 2004



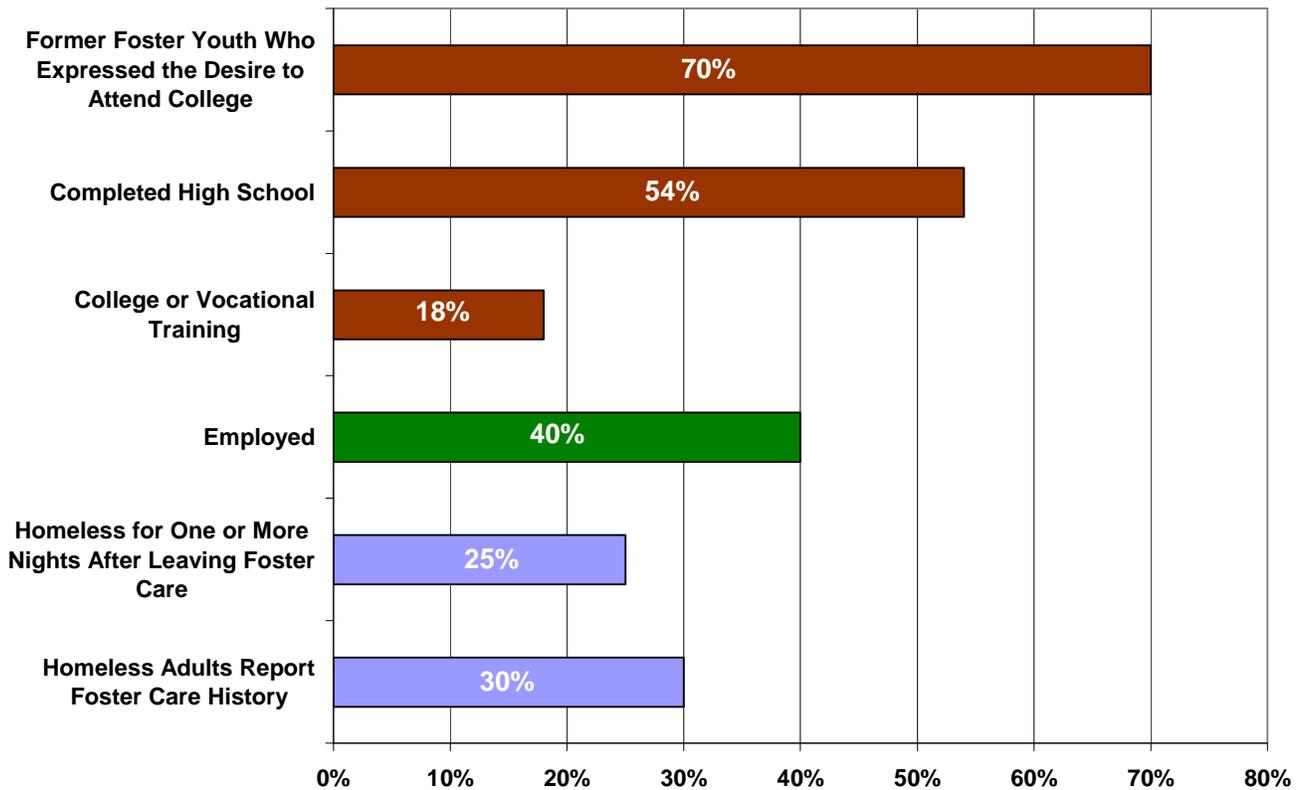
What do we know about the young people in foster care who are not adopted?

In 2004, there were 23,121 children who aged-out of the foster care system. Many of these youth lose the supports offered by the foster care system and are left on their own to obtain further education and employment preparation, as well as health and mental health care and housing.

Studies show these young people face serious challenges as they transition to adulthood:

- Only 18% will go on to college or vocational training¹⁰
- 60% will be unemployed
- Slightly over 50 % will have completed high school¹¹
- 22% will be homeless for one or more nights.

Youth After Foster Care



Federal support is provided for Independent Living programs and Education and Training Vouchers to assist these young people. Each state designates an independent living coordinator to work with young people and local programs. Positive recognition and support from the community are key in helping these youth make a successful transition.

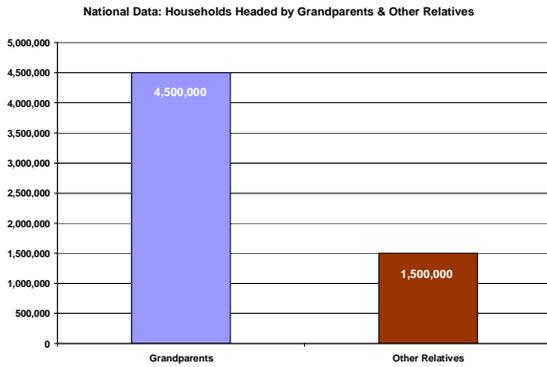
Kinship Care

What is kinship care and what role does it play in child welfare?

Kinship care is a situation in which an adult family member, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other relative, provides a home for a child who cannot live with his or her parents. In 1997 Congress enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) which recognized a child's placement with a relative or a legal guardian as one permanency option along with reunification and adoption for children in foster care. However, the federal government currently does not make any designated funds available on a continuing basis to support those placements.

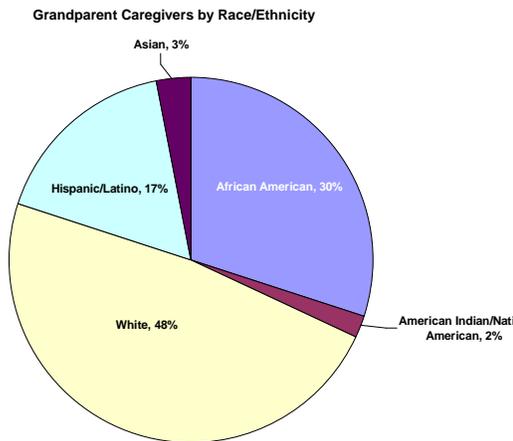
Kinship placements for children in child welfare provide an opportunity to keep families united through a time of crisis. These placements also offer an emotional and cultural benefit to children who cannot return safely to their parents and for whom adoption is not an appropriate option.

How many children are being raised by relatives?¹²



This figure represents the national number of children being raised by relative care givers. In 2000, there were a total of 6 million children being raised by grandparents and other relatives (4.5 million living with grandparents and 1.5 million living with other relatives. 405,000 of these children are in kinship foster care placements).

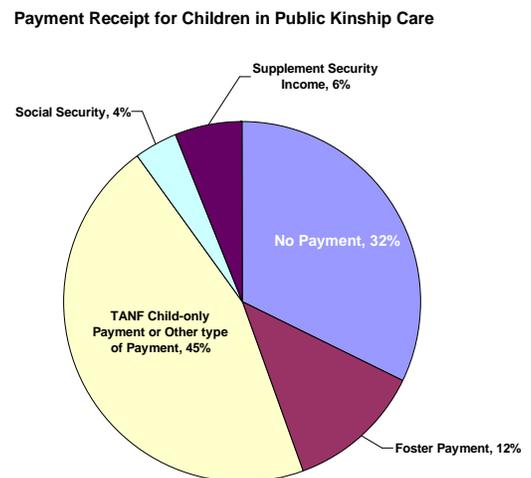
What is the ethnic/racial makeup of grandparent caregivers?¹³



The figure shown to the left depicts the national break out of grandparent caregivers by race and ethnicity according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

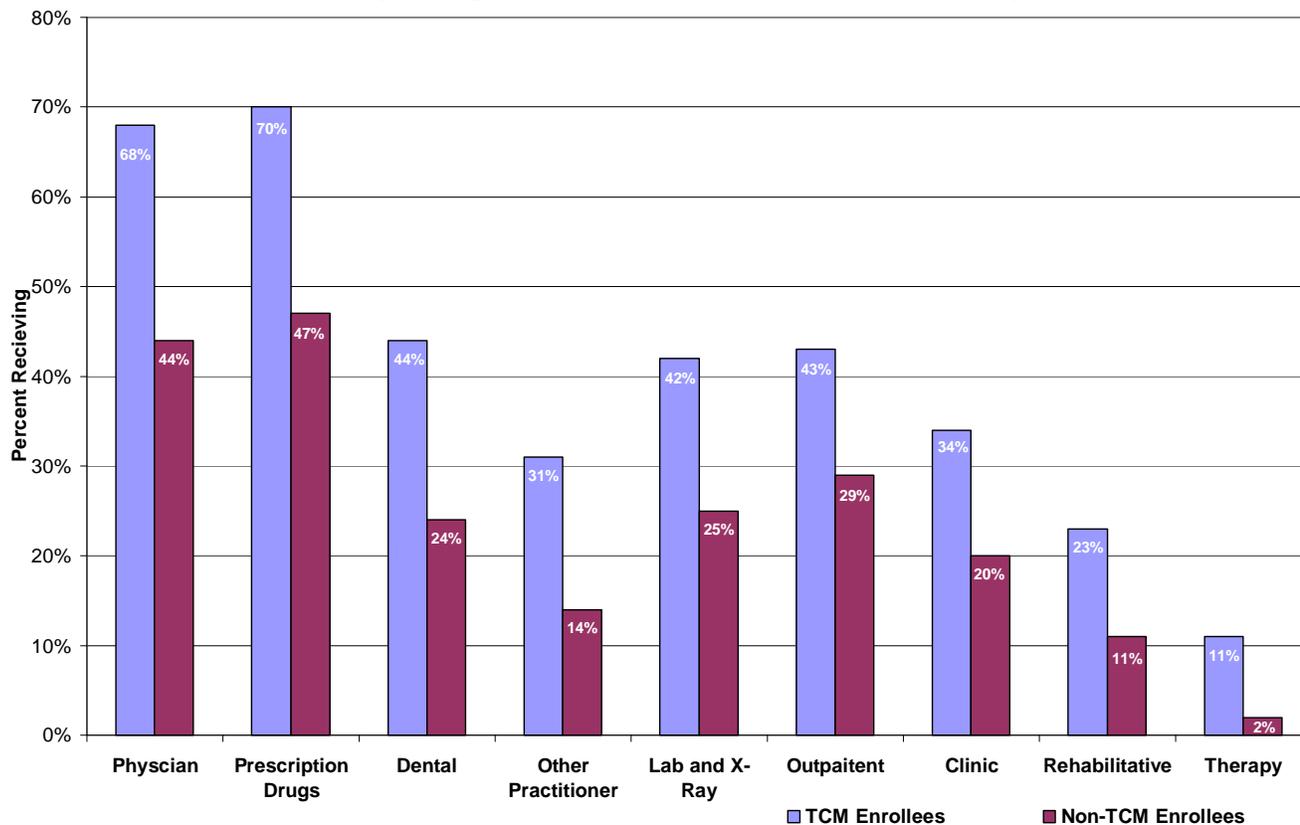
How many children in public kinship receive foster care payments?¹⁴

According to the Urban Institute, in the National Survey of America's Families there were 540,000 children in public kinship care. Public kinship care occurs when a social services or foster care agency assist in placing children with their kin. A placement without court involvement is known as voluntary kinship care. This made up approximately 100,000 in 2002. Although public kinship care families are involved with social service agency, low occurrence of custody and rigorous licensure requirements limit how many children receive foster care payment. About one-third of children in state custody who were placed by a court with kin receive foster care payment.



HEALTH CARE

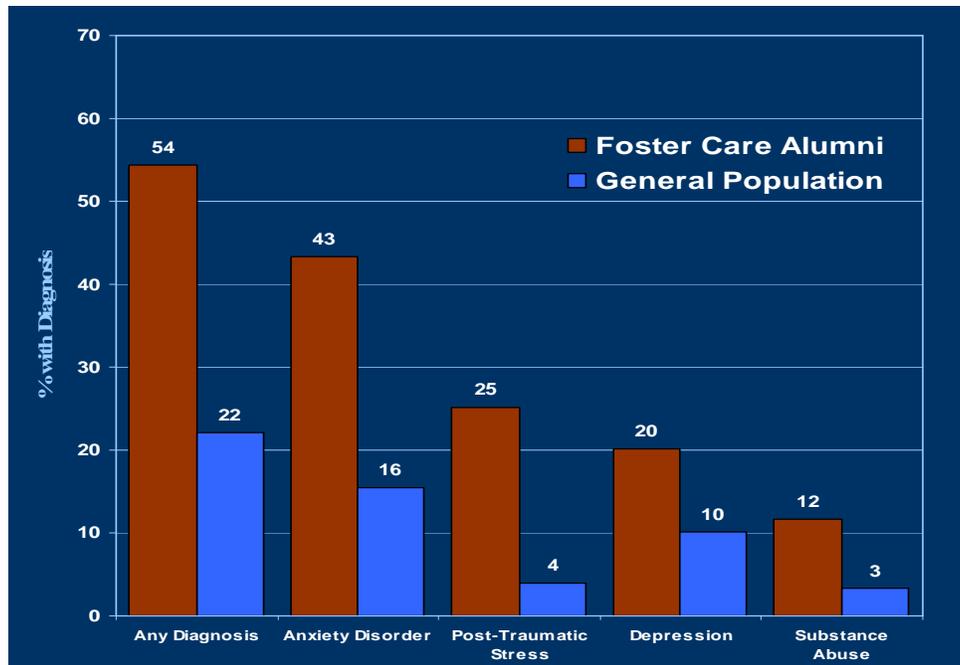
Medicaid Spending for TCM and Non-TCM Foster Care Recipients



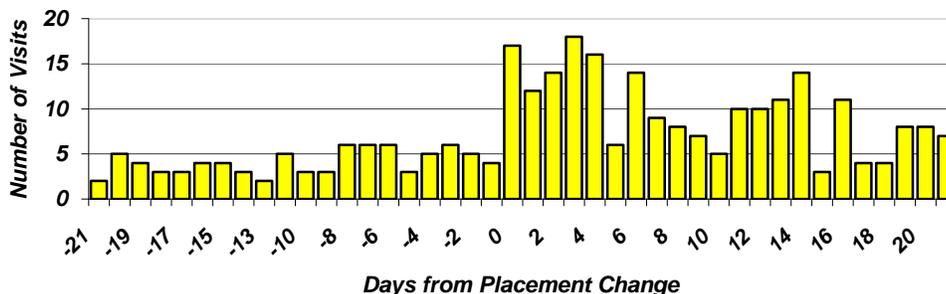
Case management services under the Medicaid program can be targeted to special populations when a state uses targeted case management, or TCM. In such situations a state will target a certain population such as children in foster care. TCM may include assessment of service needs, development of a specific service, plan, referral and related activities to help the individual obtain needed services, and monitoring and follow-up.

The Urban Institute conducted a study of children enrolled in TCM and children who did not receive this support. Consistently foster children enrolled in TCM had greater access to a range of health services.¹⁵

The Northwest Alumni Study (2005) compares the mental health diagnosis of foster care alumni to the general population. They found that foster care alumni were significantly more likely to experience mental illness than the general population. Foster care alumni were six times more likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, four times more likely to turn to substance abuse, twice as likely to experience depression, and more than two and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder than the general population.¹⁶



Emergency Department Visits Before and After Changes



Research has found that foster children receive fewer outpatient services than do other Medicaid-eligible children and also receive a greater proportion of their outpatient care in hospital emergency departments. One recent study found a dramatic increase in emergency department visits right after placement changes. This demonstrates the need for better health care access and management for foster children, especially in the period directly following new placements.¹⁷

Additional Resources

Annie E. Casey Foundation

www.aecf.org

Since 1948, the Annie E. Foundation (AECF) has worked to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human services reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families

KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. by providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of the child's well-being. KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. Website: www.aecf.org/kidscount

Casey Family Programs

www.casey.org

Casey Family Programs collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in their direct care. Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, they develop tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

Chapin Hall

www.chapinhall.org

Chapin Hall is a research and development center that brings the highest standards of scholarship and the intellectual resources of one of the world's great research universities to the real challenges of policymakers and service providers struggling to ensure that children grow, thrive, and take their place in a formidable world. Working behind the scenes with lawmakers and government administrators, as well as on the front line with program providers, Chapin Hall puts rigorous, non-partisan research in the hands of those who shape the programs and policies that affect the daily lives of all children.

Child Trends

www.childtrends.org

Child Trends is a non-profit research center who provides reports of evidence-based practices in a variety of areas related to child development and well being, abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption.

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

www.cwla.org

The CWLA website offers links to practice information about child protection, foster care, adoption, juvenile justice, youth development, and more. Also check out CWLA's Research to Practice (R2P) site at www.cwla.org/programs/r2p to find annotated bibliographies and research briefs on a variety of practice-related topics and reprints of Children's Voice magazine features about innovative programs.

Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (CFRC)
<http://Cfrcwww.social.uiuc.edu>

The CFRC offers reports and annotated bibliographies on topics directly related to child welfare services. The **Best Practice** section provides information specifically targeted to child welfare practitioners including bibliographies on topics related to child safety, stability, permanence and more. The **Research to Practice** link allows you to access an easy-to-use case decision making tool kit.

Children's Bureau Express
<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>

Children's Bureau Express is an electronic newsletter designed to provide child welfare professionals with brief, concise information on current issues, research, and promising practices.

Child's Bureau National Resource Center (NRC)
<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/reslist/cbttan/index.cfm>

The NRC provides information and technical assistance to state child welfare systems on a variety of topics. This address links to a listing of the NRCs with contact information and a brief description of the services that each provides.

Practice Notes
<http://Sswnt7.sowo.unc.edu/fcrp/Cspn/cspn.htm>

Published by the North Carolina Department of Social Services and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Practice Notes is a newsletter designed specifically to provide child welfare practitioners with the latest information about key practice topics in a brief, concise format. Both current and back issues may be downloaded from the web site.

National Data Analysis System (NDAS)
<http://Ndas.cwla.org>

The National Data Analysis System (NDAS) is a part of CWLA's National Center for Research, Data, and Technology. The NDAS puts child welfare data and statistics at the fingertips of internet users. NDAS also promotes discussion around state and federal data issues in an effort to promote effective integration of research, policy, and practice

Search Institute
<http://www.search-institute.org>

The Search Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of healthy children, youth, and communities. It is best known for its *40 Developmental Assets*, an evidenced-based set of 20 external and 20 internal factors associated with positive youth development, and provides materials and resources to engage youth and those who care for and work with them in using the *Assets* framework.

Urban Institute

<http://www.urban.org>

A non-partisan organization, the Urban Institute analyzes policies, evaluates programs, and informs community development to improve social, civic, and economic well being. Research findings are shared with policymakers, program administrators, business, academics, and the public online through reports and scholarly books

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² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sciamanna, J., et. al. (2006, July) *Ten Years of Leaving Foster Children Behind: The Long Decline in Federal Support for Abused and Neglected Children*. Washington, DC: The Child Welfare League of America.

⁵ Administration on Children, Youth, & Families. (2006). *Child Maltreatment 2004: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available online at: www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/index.htm

⁶ Administration on Children, Youth, & Families. (2006). *Trends in Foster Care and Adoptions FY 2000 - FY2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available online at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends.htm

⁷ Logic would say that if more children enter the foster care system than exit within the year, the number of children in foster care should increase for that year. That is not always the case. Some of the difference can be attributed to estimation procedures and rounding. The remainder is generally the result of the under-reporting of foster care exits by some states. In addition, a child may enter the foster care system, exit it, and re-enter the foster care system again in the same year. That child would count as two entries and only one exit.

⁸ Administration on Children, Youth, & Families. (2006). *Child Maltreatment 2004: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available online at: www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/index.htm

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Courtney, M. E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2005). *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Conditions of Youth Preparing to Leave State Care*. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Available online at: http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355

¹¹ 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.

Available online at: <http://www.casey.org/resources/publications/nationalalumnistudy.htm>

¹² Source: (1) U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics: 2000. (2) *Snap Shots 3 of America's Families. Kinship Foster Care: Custody, Hardships, and Services. 2004. No 14*. Assessing the New Federalism: An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Policies

¹³ Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics: 2000.

¹⁴ Murray, J., Macomber, J. E., Geen, R. *Estimating Financial Support for Kinship Caregivers*. Series B, No. B-63, December 2004. Assessing the New Federalism: An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Policies

¹⁵ Geen, R., Sommers, A., Cohen, M. (2005, August). *Medicaid Spending on Foster Children*. Washington DC: The Urban Institute. Available online at: <http://www.urban.org/publications/311221.html>

¹⁶ Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K. Downs, A. C., English, D., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. E. (2005). *Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Available at: <http://www.casey.org>

¹⁷ Source: Rubin, et al. "Placement Changes and Emergency Department Visits in the First Year of Foster Care." *Pediatrics*. Vol. 114, No.3. September 2004. Available at <http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/114/3/e354>