



# The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY<sup>1</sup> 2016 Estimates as of Oct 20, 2017 • No. 24

**SOURCE:** Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2016 data<sup>2</sup>

## Numbers At A Glance

| Fiscal Year  | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number <b>in foster care</b> on September 30 of the FY   | 396,966 | 400,911 | 414,435 | 427,444 | 437,465 |
| Number <b>entered</b> foster care during FY  | 251,352 | 254,719 | 264,364 | 268,720 | 273,539 |
| Number <b>exited</b> foster care during FY   | 239,496 | 238,892 | 236,906 | 243,043 | 250,248 |
| Number <b>waiting to be adopted</b> on September 30 of the FY  | 101,945 | 104,395 | 108,068 | 111,358 | 117,794 |
| Number waiting to be adopted whose <b>parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated</b> during FY | 58,240  | 58,681  | 61,012  | 62,093  | 65,274  |
| Number <b>adopted</b> with public child welfare agency involvement during FY                                 | 52,025  | 50,820  | 50,671  | 53,556  | 57,208  |

## Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2016 • N=437,465

| Age as of September 30th | Years |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Mean                     | 8.5   |
| Median                   | 7.8   |

| Age as of September 30th | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year         | 7%      | 31,295 |
| 1 Year                   | 8%      | 36,942 |
| 2 Years                  | 8%      | 33,034 |
| 3 Years                  | 7%      | 28,754 |
| 4 Years                  | 6%      | 25,607 |
| 5 Years                  | 5%      | 23,190 |
| 6 Years                  | 5%      | 21,999 |
| 7 Years                  | 5%      | 21,580 |
| 8 Years                  | 5%      | 20,957 |
| 9 Years                  | 4%      | 19,546 |
| 10 Years                 | 4%      | 18,006 |
| 11 Years                 | 4%      | 16,858 |
| 12 Years                 | 4%      | 15,984 |
| 13 Years                 | 4%      | 17,077 |
| 14 Years                 | 4%      | 18,831 |
| 15 Years                 | 5%      | 22,034 |
| 16 Years                 | 6%      | 24,835 |
| 17 Years                 | 6%      | 26,166 |
| 18 Years                 | 2%      | 8,353  |
| 19 Years                 | 1%      | 2,834  |
| 20 Years                 | 0%      | 2,129  |

| Sex    | Percent | Number  |
|--------|---------|---------|
| Male   | 52%     | 227,248 |
| Female | 48%     | 210,166 |

| Most Recent Placement Setting     | Percent | Number  |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Pre-Adoptive Home                 | 4%      | 16,572  |
| Foster Family Home (Relative)     | 32%     | 139,017 |
| Foster Family Home (Non-Relative) | 45%     | 196,446 |
| Group Home                        | 5%      | 21,649  |
| Institution                       | 7%      | 31,679  |
| Supervised Independent Living     | 1%      | 4,599   |
| Runaway                           | 1%      | 4,660   |
| Trial Home Visit                  | 5%      | 21,566  |

| Case Plan Goal                                   | Percent | Number  |
|--|---------|---------|
| Reunify with Parent(s) or Principal Caretaker(s) | 55%     | 233,108 |
| Live with Other Relative(s)                      | 3%      | 12,993  |
| Adoption   | 26%     | 109,482 |
| Long Term Foster Care                            | 3%      | 10,549  |
| Emancipation                                     | 4%      | 17,394  |
| Guardianship                                     | 3%      | 14,491  |
| Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established               | 5%      | 22,485  |

<sup>1</sup> 'FY' refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by Oct 20, 2017 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g. number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group)

| Race/Ethnicity                         | Percent | Number  |
|--|---------|---------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%      | 10,366  |
| Asian                                  | 1%      | 2,290   |
| Black or African American              | 23%     | 101,825 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0%      | 936     |
| Hispanic (of any race)                 | 21%     | 91,352  |
| White                                  | 44%     | 191,433 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine            | 2%      | 8,418   |
| Two or more Races                      | 7%      | 30,224  |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

| Time in Care | Months |
|--------------|--------|
| Mean         | 20.1   |
| Median       | 12.7   |

  

| Time in Care (Months) | Percent | Number |
|-----------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month     | 6%      | 24,071 |
| 1 - 5 Months          | 22%     | 95,884 |
| 6 - 11 Months         | 20%     | 89,315 |
| 12 - 17 Months        | 15%     | 67,509 |
| 18 - 23 Months        | 10%     | 43,507 |
| 24 - 29 Months        | 8%      | 32,830 |
| 30 - 35 Months        | 5%      | 20,662 |
| 3 - 4 Years           | 9%      | 37,998 |
| 5 Years or More       | 6%      | 25,620 |

## Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2016 • N=273,539

| Age at Entry | Years |
|--------------|-------|
| Mean         | 7.2   |
| Median       | 6.3   |

| Age at Entry     | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 18%     | 49,234 |
| 1 Year           | 8%      | 20,709 |
| 2 Years          | 7%      | 18,282 |
| 3 Years          | 6%      | 16,236 |
| 4 Years          | 5%      | 14,610 |
| 5 Years          | 5%      | 13,724 |
| 6 Years          | 5%      | 13,260 |
| 7 Years          | 5%      | 12,897 |
| 8 Years          | 4%      | 11,923 |
| 9 Years          | 4%      | 11,051 |
| 10 Years         | 4%      | 9,935  |
| 11 Years         | 3%      | 9,270  |
| 12 Years         | 3%      | 9,491  |
| 13 Years         | 4%      | 10,532 |
| 14 Years         | 4%      | 12,172 |
| 15 Years         | 5%      | 13,976 |
| 16 Years         | 5%      | 14,338 |
| 17 Years         | 4%      | 10,439 |
| 18 Years         | 0%      | 1,098  |
| 19 Years         | 0%      | 224    |
| 20 Years         | 0%      | 96     |

| Race/ethnicity                         | Percent | Number  |
|--|---------|---------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%      | 6,033   |
| Asian                                  | 1%      | 1,696   |
| Black or African American              | 21%     | 58,211  |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0%      | 702     |
| Hispanic (of any race)                 | 20%     | 54,722  |
| White                                  | 47%     | 127,152 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine            | 2%      | 6,090   |
| Two or more Races                      | 7%      | 18,195  |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

| Circumstances Associated With Child's Removal | Percent | Number  |
|---|---------|---------|
| Neglect                                       | 61%     | 166,679 |
| Drug Abuse (Parent)                           | 34%     | 92,107  |
| Caretaker Inability To Cope                   | 14%     | 37,857  |
| Physical Abuse                                | 12%     | 33,671  |
| Child Behavior Problem                        | 11%     | 28,829  |
| Housing                                       | 10%     | 27,871  |
| Parent Incarceration                          | 8%      | 20,939  |
| Alcohol Abuse (Parent)                        | 6%      | 15,143  |
| Abandonment                                   | 5%      | 12,889  |
| Sexual Abuse                                  | 4%      | 9,904   |
| Drug Abuse (Child)                            | 2%      | 6,273   |
| Child Disability                              | 2%      | 4,554   |
| Relinquishment                                | 1%      | 2,694   |
| Parent Death                                  | 1%      | 2,212   |
| Alcohol Abuse (Child)                         | 0%      | 1,242   |

**NOTE:** These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries.

## Children Exiting Foster Care during FY 2016 • N=250,248

| Age at Exit | Years |
|-------------|-------|
| Mean        | 8.8   |
| Median      | 7.8   |

| Age at Exit      | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 4%      | 11,153 |
| 1 Year           | 8%      | 20,382 |
| 2 Years          | 8%      | 20,610 |
| 3 Years          | 7%      | 17,845 |
| 4 Years          | 6%      | 15,517 |
| 5 Years          | 6%      | 14,348 |
| 6 Years          | 5%      | 13,451 |
| 7 Years          | 5%      | 12,953 |
| 8 Years          | 5%      | 12,063 |
| 9 Years          | 5%      | 11,283 |
| 10 Years         | 4%      | 9,721  |
| 11 Years         | 4%      | 8,934  |
| 12 Years         | 3%      | 8,172  |
| 13 Years         | 3%      | 8,166  |
| 14 Years         | 4%      | 9,006  |
| 15 Years         | 4%      | 10,066 |
| 16 Years         | 5%      | 11,742 |
| 17 Years         | 5%      | 11,618 |
| 18 Years         | 7%      | 18,017 |
| 19 Years         | 2%      | 3,901  |
| 20 Years         | 0%      | 666    |

| Time in Care | Months |
|--------------|--------|
| Mean         | 19.0   |
| Median       | 13.9   |

| Time in care      | Percent | Number |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month | 10%     | 24,602 |
| 1 - 5 Months      | 15%     | 37,771 |
| 6 - 11 Months     | 20%     | 49,113 |
| 12 - 17 Months    | 16%     | 40,796 |
| 18 - 23 Months    | 12%     | 30,494 |
| 24 - 29 Months    | 9%      | 21,272 |
| 30 - 35 Months    | 6%      | 14,259 |
| 3 - 4 Years       | 9%      | 22,070 |
| 5 Years or More   | 4%      | 9,388  |

| Race/ethnicity                         | Percent | Number  |
|--|---------|---------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%      | 5,125   |
| Asian                                  | 1%      | 1,605   |
| Black or African American              | 22%     | 55,391  |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0%      | 570     |
| Hispanic (of any race)                 | 21%     | 53,004  |
| White                                  | 45%     | 112,779 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine            | 2%      | 4,258   |
| Two or more Races                      | 7%      | 17,225  |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

| Reasons for Discharge                                | Percent | Number  |
|--|---------|---------|
| Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s) | 51%     | 125,975 |
| Living with Other Relative(s)                        | 7%      | 16,306  |
| Adoption   | 23%     | 56,507  |
| Emancipation   | 8%      | 20,532  |
| Guardianship   | 10%     | 23,659  |
| Transfer to Another Agency                           | 2%      | 4,336   |
| Runaway  | 0%      | 881     |
| Death of Child                                       | 0%      | 320     |

## Children Waiting to be Adopted<sup>3</sup> on September 30, 2016 • N=117,794

| Age as of September 30th | Years |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Mean                     | 7.7   |
| Median                   | 6.9   |

| Age as of September 30th | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year         | 4%      | 4,326  |
| 1 Year                   | 10%     | 11,226 |
| 2 Years                  | 9%      | 11,190 |
| 3 Years                  | 8%      | 9,577  |
| 4 Years                  | 7%      | 8,315  |
| 5 Years                  | 6%      | 7,514  |
| 6 Years                  | 6%      | 6,885  |
| 7 Years                  | 6%      | 6,820  |
| 8 Years                  | 6%      | 6,670  |
| 9 Years                  | 5%      | 6,244  |
| 10 Years                 | 5%      | 5,834  |
| 11 Years                 | 5%      | 5,405  |
| 12 Years                 | 4%      | 4,929  |
| 13 Years                 | 4%      | 4,960  |
| 14 Years                 | 4%      | 4,862  |
| 15 Years                 | 4%      | 5,166  |
| 16 Years                 | 4%      | 4,493  |
| 17 Years                 | 3%      | 3,378  |

| Age at Entry into Foster Care | Years |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Mean                          | 5.1   |
| Median                        | 4.2   |

| Age at Entry into Foster Care | Percent | Number |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year              | 25%     | 29,811 |
| 1 Year                        | 9%      | 10,154 |
| 2 Years                       | 8%      | 8,934  |
| 3 Years                       | 7%      | 8,177  |
| 4 Years                       | 7%      | 7,660  |
| 5 Years                       | 6%      | 7,558  |
| 6 Years                       | 6%      | 7,312  |
| 7 Years                       | 6%      | 6,661  |
| 8 Years                       | 5%      | 5,988  |
| 9 Years                       | 5%      | 5,361  |
| 10 Years                      | 4%      | 4,754  |
| 11 Years                      | 4%      | 4,143  |
| 12 Years                      | 3%      | 3,724  |
| 13 Years                      | 3%      | 3,152  |
| 14 Years                      | 2%      | 2,269  |
| 15 Years                      | 1%      | 1,415  |
| 16 Years                      | 1%      | 600    |
| 17 Years                      | 0%      | 94     |

| Placement type                    | Percent | Number |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Pre-Adoptive Home                 | 13%     | 14,765 |
| Foster Family Home (Relative)     | 26%     | 30,954 |
| Foster Family Home (Non-Relative) | 52%     | 60,595 |
| Group Home                        | 3%      | 3,751  |
| Institution                       | 5%      | 6,195  |
| Supervised Independent Living     | 0%      | 106    |
| Runaway                           | 0%      | 454    |
| Trial Home Visit                  | 1%      | 720    |

| Sex    | Percent | Number |
|--------|---------|--------|
| Male   | 52%     | 61,730 |
| Female | 48%     | 56,058 |

| Race/ethnicity                         | Percent | Number |
|--|---------|--------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%      | 2,302  |
| Asian                                  | 0%      | 455    |
| Black or African American              | 23%     | 26,709 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0%      | 152    |
| Hispanic (of any race)                 | 22%     | 25,822 |
| White                                  | 44%     | 51,279 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine            | 2%      | 1,799  |
| Two or more Races                      | 8%      | 9,245  |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

<sup>3</sup> Waiting children are identified as children who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. Children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation have been excluded from the estimate.

| Time in Care | Months |
|--------------|--------|
| Mean         | 31.2   |
| Median       | 25.0   |

  

| Time in Care      | Percent | Number |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month | 0%      | 463    |
| 1 - 5 Months      | 4%      | 4,190  |
| 6 - 11 Months     | 10%     | 11,442 |
| 12 - 17 Months    | 17%     | 19,957 |
| 18 - 23 Months    | 17%     | 19,463 |
| 24 - 29 Months    | 15%     | 17,631 |
| 30 - 35 Months    | 10%     | 11,807 |
| 3 - 4 Years       | 18%     | 21,495 |
| 5 Years or More   | 10%     | 11,346 |

**Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=65,274), Time elapsed since termination of parental rights as of September 30, 2016**

| Time since TPR | Months |
|----------------|--------|
| Mean           | 18.2   |
| Median         | 9.0    |

### Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2016<sup>4</sup> • N=57,208

| Age at Adoption | Years |
|-----------------|-------|
| Mean            | 6.2   |
| Median          | 5.2   |

| Age at Adoption  | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 2%      | 1,276  |
| 1 Year           | 12%     | 7,055  |
| 2 Years          | 14%     | 8,085  |
| 3 Years          | 11%     | 6,301  |
| 4 Years          | 9%      | 5,103  |
| 5 Years          | 8%      | 4,446  |
| 6 Years          | 7%      | 3,891  |
| 7 Years          | 6%      | 3,629  |
| 8 Years          | 6%      | 3,162  |
| 9 Years          | 5%      | 2,859  |
| 10 Years         | 4%      | 2,329  |
| 11 Years         | 4%      | 2,040  |
| 12 Years         | 3%      | 1,608  |
| 13 Years         | 2%      | 1,407  |
| 14 Years         | 2%      | 1,175  |
| 15 Years         | 2%      | 1,014  |
| 16 Years         | 2%      | 920    |
| 17 Years         | 1%      | 758    |
| 18 Years         | 0%      | 98     |
| 19 Years         | 0%      | 25     |
| 20 Years         | 0%      | 18     |

| Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption | Months |
|--|--------|
| Mean   | 11.8   |
| Median   | 8.7    |

| Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption | Percent | Number |
|--|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month  | 2%      | 1,222  |
| 1-5 Months   | 29%     | 16,435 |
| 6-11 Months  | 35%     | 19,848 |
| 12-17 Months   | 17%     | 9,437  |
| 18-23 Months   | 7%      | 4,088  |
| 24-29 Months   | 4%      | 2,167  |
| 30-35 Months   | 2%      | 1,037  |
| 3-4 Years  | 3%      | 1,501  |
| 5 Years or more  | 1%      | 541    |

| Race/ethnicity                         | Percent | Number |
|--|---------|--------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%      | 970    |
| Asian                                  | 0%      | 235    |
| Black or African American              | 17%     | 9,988  |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0%      | 80     |
| Hispanic (of any race)                 | 22%     | 12,371 |
| White                                  | 49%     | 27,776 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine            | 1%      | 772    |
| Two or more Races                      | 9%      | 4,991  |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

<sup>4</sup> Note that the adoption data reported in this section are from the AFCARS Adoption file. Therefore, the number of adoptions reported here may not equal the number reported as discharges to adoption from foster care.

| Adoptive Family Structure | Percent | Number |
|---------------------------|---------|--------|
| Married Couple            | 69%     | 38,840 |
| Unmarried Couple          | 3%      | 1,786  |
| Single Female             | 25%     | 14,049 |
| Single Male               | 3%      | 1,967  |

| Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption | Percent | Number |
|---|---------|--------|
| Non-Relative  | 14%     | 7,725  |
| Foster Parent   | 52%     | 29,044 |
| Stepparent  | 0%      | 51     |
| Other Relative  | 34%     | 18,854 |

| Sex    | Percent | Number |
|--------|---------|--------|
| Male   | 51%     | 29,281 |
| Female | 49%     | 27,923 |

| Receive Adoption Subsidy | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Yes                      | 92%     | 52,795 |
| No                       | 8%      | 4,371  |

### FY 2016 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

With this release of the AFCARS FY 2016 foster care data the Children's Bureau would like to bring to the attention of the readers/users of the AFCARS data our continuing efforts in addressing data quality issues associated with the AFCARS data. The Children's Bureau is currently focusing on the issue of dropped cases which is described below.

Historically the Children's Bureau has been aware of the data quality issue involving "Dropped Cases", i.e., cases which appear in one six-month AFCARS submission without a date of discharge and do not appear in the subsequent six-month submission. The following link's "Technical Discussion" tab provides a more detailed description of the "Dropped Cases" issue.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>

Early in our efforts to understand the dropped cases issue it was understood that the majority fell into a category of those exiting care, however more recent analyses includes a category of instances in which record numbers change, i.e., child records undergo a merge process, hence the child's record is in the subsequent submission but with a different record number. The records merge process typically happens when a child's information exists in the State's information system but the child is inadvertently assigned a new record number, sometimes due to a re-entry into care. We do not believe the two aforementioned categories account for all dropped cases.

We have historically addressed the dropped cases by excluding these records from our AFCARS estimates, and we believe this has ameliorated most negative effects on the annual estimates. Although there has been some decrease in the numbers of "Dropped Cases," given that the problem still exists, we are now formally addressing the issue with each applicable State beginning with the 2017 AFCARS data. To the extent practicable and reasonable we will attempt to address prior year's data.