



The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2017 Estimates as of August 10, 2018 - No. 25

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2017 data²

Numbers at a Glance					
Fiscal Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	400,394	414,129	427,328	436,551	442,995
Number entered foster care during the FY	254,622	264,357	268,808	272,952	269,690
Number exited foster care during the FY	237,721	235,768	242,011	248,856	247,631
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	638,041	649,802	669,202	685,165	690,548
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	102,808	106,610	109,881	116,608	123,437
Number waiting to be adopted as of the end of the FY for whom parental rights (for all living parents) had been terminated	58,936	61,178	62,280	65,534	69,525
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	50,835	50,668	53,555	57,209	59,430

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2017 N = 442,995					
Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number	
Mean	8.4	Male	52%	228,707	
Median	7.7	Female	48%	214,236	
Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	32,247	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	17,449
1 Year	9%	37,749	Foster Family Home (Relative)	32%	140,675
2 Years	8%	33,838	Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	45%	195,360
3 Years	7%	29,730	Group Home	6%	24,472
4 Years	6%	26,649	Institution	7%	29,438
5 Years	5%	23,806	Supervised Independent Living	1%	4,944
6 Years	5%	22,262	Runaway	1%	4,734
7 Years	5%	21,144	Trial Home Visit	5%	21,813
8 Years	5%	20,650	Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
9 Years	5%	20,208	Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	56%	242,800
10 Years	4%	18,823	Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,141
11 Years	4%	17,856	Adoption	27%	114,406
12 Years	4%	17,154	Long Term Foster Care	2%	9,012
13 Years	4%	17,295	Emancipation	4%	17,147
14 Years	4%	18,859	Guardianship	4%	15,265
15 Years	5%	21,387	Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	5%	19,481
16 Years	5%	23,958			
17 Years	6%	24,688			
18 Years	2%	7,882			
19 Years	1%	2,979			
20 Years	1%	2,230			

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

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by August 10, 2018 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	Time in Care	Months
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	10,529	Mean	20.1
Asian	0%	2,175	Median	12.9
Black or African American	23%	100,607		
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	945		
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	93,507		
White	44%	193,828		
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	6,673		
Two or More Races	7%	32,126		

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	22,632
1 - 5 Months	22%	96,006
6 - 11 Months	21%	91,065
12 - 17 Months	15%	68,107
18 - 23 Months	10%	45,546
24 - 29 Months	8%	33,576
30 - 35 Months	5%	21,155
3 - 4 Years	9%	39,973
5 Years or More	6%	24,838

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

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2017 N = 269,690

Age at Entry	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Mean	7.1	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	6,153
Median	6.1	Asian	1%	1,423
		Black or African American	21%	56,614
		Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	697
		Hispanic (of any race)	20%	54,411
		White	47%	124,937
		Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	5,038
		Two or More Races	7%	18,756

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	19%	50,076
1 Year	7%	20,117
2 Years	7%	18,210
3 Years	6%	16,323
4 Years	5%	14,654
5 Years	5%	13,349
6 Years	5%	12,818
7 Years	5%	12,263
8 Years	4%	11,648
9 Years	4%	11,062
10 Years	4%	10,393
11 Years	4%	9,542
12 Years	4%	9,705
13 Years	4%	10,368
14 Years	4%	11,900
15 Years	5%	13,104
16 Years	5%	13,271
17 Years	3%	9,409
18 Years	0%	1,161
19 Years	0%	203
20 Years	0%	87

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	62%	166,991
Drug Abuse (Parent)	36%	96,720
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	37,057
Physical Abuse	12%	33,530
Housing	10%	27,929
Child Behavior Problem	9%	24,756
Parent Incarceration	7%	20,131
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	5%	14,684
Abandonment	5%	12,484
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,806
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	6,286
Child Disability	2%	4,334
Relinquishment	1%	2,601
Parent Death	1%	2,096
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	1,246

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

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 2017 N = 247,631

Age at Exit		Years	Race/Ethnicity		Percent	Number	
Mean		8.7	American Indian/Alaska Native		2%	5,655	
Median		7.8	Asian		1%	1,421	
Age at Exit		Percent	Number	Black or African American		21%	52,430
Less than 1 Year		5%	11,115	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		0%	628
1 Year		8%	20,621	Hispanic (of any race)		21%	52,627
2 Years		9%	21,065	White		46%	112,881
3 Years		7%	17,992	Unknown/Unable to Determine		1%	3,558
4 Years		6%	15,836	Two or More Races		7%	17,803
5 Years		6%	14,029	NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.			
6 Years		5%	12,931				
7 Years		5%	12,560	Reason for Discharge		Percent	Number
8 Years		5%	11,895	Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)		49%	121,203
9 Years		5%	11,312	Living with Other Relative(s)		7%	16,272
10 Years		4%	10,285	Adoption		24%	58,104
11 Years		4%	9,216	Emancipation		8%	19,945
12 Years		3%	8,348	Guardianship		10%	25,229
13 Years		3%	8,163	Transfer to Another Agency		1%	3,283
14 Years		4%	8,751	Runaway		0%	766
15 Years		4%	9,498	Death of Child		0%	386
16 Years		4%	10,746				
17 Years		4%	10,759				
18 Years		7%	17,134				
19 Years		2%	3,732				
20 Years		0%	728				
Time in Care		Months					
Mean		19.2					
Median		14.3					
Time in Care		Percent	Number				
Less than 1 Month		9%	22,408				
1 - 5 Months		15%	37,213				
6 - 11 Months		19%	47,615				
12 - 17 Months		17%	40,844				
18 - 23 Months		13%	31,040				
24 - 29 Months		9%	21,614				
30 - 35 Months		6%	14,443				
3 - 4 Years		9%	23,007				
5 Years or More		4%	9,216				

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2017 N = 123,437

Age as of September 30th			Age at Entry into Foster Care		
Years			Years		
Mean			Mean		
7.6			5.1		
Median			Median		
6.8			4.2		

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,639	Less than 1 Year	26%	31,626
1 Year	10%	11,978	1 Year	9%	10,615
2 Years	9%	11,715	2 Years	8%	9,402
3 Years	8%	9,981	3 Years	7%	8,559
4 Years	7%	8,864	4 Years	6%	7,874
5 Years	6%	7,929	5 Years	6%	7,508
6 Years	6%	7,212	6 Years	6%	7,388
7 Years	5%	6,777	7 Years	6%	6,947
8 Years	5%	6,702	8 Years	5%	6,386
9 Years	5%	6,555	9 Years	5%	5,733
10 Years	5%	6,167	10 Years	4%	5,057
11 Years	5%	5,780	11 Years	4%	4,427
12 Years	4%	5,403	12 Years	3%	3,963
13 Years	4%	5,145	13 Years	3%	3,336
14 Years	4%	5,139	14 Years	2%	2,477
15 Years	4%	5,235	15 Years	1%	1,461
16 Years	4%	4,770	16 Years	0%	562
17 Years	3%	3,446	17 Years	0%	97

Placement Type	Percent	Number	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	13%	15,410	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,442
Foster Family Home (Relative)	27%	32,764	Asian	0%	491
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	51%	61,997	Black or African American	22%	27,388
Group Home	4%	4,620	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	175
Institution	5%	6,229	Hispanic (of any race)	22%	27,416
Supervised Independent Living	0%	96	White	44%	53,440
Runaway	0%	543	Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,560
Trial Home Visit	1%	624	Two or More Races	8%	9,896

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	64,390
Female	48%	59,039

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

³ 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	Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=69,525), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2017
Mean		30.9	
Median		25.1	

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	444
1 - 5 Months	4%	4,370
6 - 11 Months	10%	12,012
12 - 17 Months	17%	20,371
18 - 23 Months	17%	20,667
24 - 29 Months	15%	18,356
30 - 35 Months	10%	12,403
3 - 4 Years	19%	23,482
5 Years or More	9%	11,332

Time Since TPR		Months
Mean		17.5
Median		8.0

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2017⁴ N = 59,430

Age at Adoption		Years	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption		Months
Mean		6.3	Mean		11.6
Median		5.2	Median		8.6

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,252
1 Year	12%	7,276
2 Years	14%	8,450
3 Years	11%	6,622
4 Years	9%	5,295
5 Years	7%	4,435
6 Years	7%	3,903
7 Years	6%	3,573
8 Years	6%	3,277
9 Years	5%	3,012
10 Years	4%	2,633
11 Years	4%	2,201
12 Years	3%	1,833
13 Years	3%	1,516
14 Years	2%	1,278
15 Years	2%	1,013
16 Years	2%	953
17 Years	1%	781
18 Years	0%	101
19 Years	0%	11
20 Years	0%	6

Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption		Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month		2%	1,445
1 - 5 Months		30%	17,474
6 - 11 Months		35%	20,163
12 - 17 Months		17%	9,949
18 - 23 Months		7%	4,173
24 - 29 Months		4%	2,114
30 - 35 Months		2%	1,066
3 - 4 Years		3%	1,490
5 Years or More		1%	505

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,114
Asian	0%	207
Black or African American	17%	10,332
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	89
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	12,621
White	49%	28,868
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	816
Two or More Races	9%	5,351

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

⁴ 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	Sex	Percent	Number
Married Couple	68%	40,136	Male	51%	30,482
Unmarried Couple	3%	1,865	Female	49%	28,940
Single Female	25%	14,811			
Single Male	3%	1,983			
Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number	Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	14%	8,209	Yes	93%	55,002
Foster Parent	51%	29,445	No	7%	4,372
Stepparent	0%	77			
Other Relative	35%	20,274			

FY 2017 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

With the prior year's release of the AFCARS Report (FY 2016), the Children's Bureau brought to the attention of the reader our continuing efforts to address AFCARS data quality and highlighted the issue of "dropped cases" (i.e., cases that 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 include 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, we have begun 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 years' data. Thus, there may be some differences between historical numbers presented in this report compared to previous reports.