



# The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY<sup>1</sup> 2017 Estimates as of August 10, 2018 - No. 25

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2017 data<sup>2</sup>

## Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number <b>in foster care</b> on September 30 of the FY	400,394	414,129	427,328	436,551	442,995
Number <b>entered</b> foster care during the FY	254,622	264,357	268,808	272,952	269,690
Number <b>exited</b> foster care during the FY	237,721	235,768	242,011	248,856	247,631
Number <b>served</b> by the foster care system during the FY	638,041	649,802	669,202	685,165	690,548
Number <b>waiting to be adopted</b> 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 <b>parental rights (for all living parents) had been terminated</b>	58,936	61,178	62,280	65,534	69,525
Number <b>adopted</b> 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	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Case Plan Goal</th> <th>Percent</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)</td> <td>56%</td> <td>242,800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Live with Other Relative(s)</td> <td>3%</td> <td>12,141</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adoption</td> <td>27%</td> <td>114,406</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Long Term Foster Care</td> <td>2%</td> <td>9,012</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emancipation</td> <td>4%</td> <td>17,147</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Guardianship</td> <td>4%</td> <td>15,265</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established</td> <td>5%</td> <td>19,481</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number	Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	56%	242,800	Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,141	Adoption	27%	114,406	Long Term Foster Care	2%	9,012	Emancipation	4%	17,147	Guardianship	4%	15,265	Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	5%	19,481
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10 Years	4%	18,823																									
11 Years	4%	17,856																									
12 Years	4%	17,154																									
13 Years	4%	17,295																									
14 Years	4%	18,859																									
15 Years	5%	21,387																									
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																									

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

<sup>2</sup> 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		

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

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

**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

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

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

**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	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:** 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	
		Black or African American	21%	52,430	
		Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	628	
		Hispanic (of any race)	21%	52,627	
		White	46%	112,881	
		Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,558	
		Two or More Races	7%	17,803	
<b>NOTE:</b> All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.					
Age at Exit	Percent	Number	Reason for Discharge	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	5%	11,115	Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	49%	121,203
1 Year	8%	20,621	Living with Other Relative(s)	7%	16,272
2 Years	9%	21,065	Adoption	24%	58,104
3 Years	7%	17,992	Emancipation	8%	19,945
4 Years	6%	15,836	Guardianship	10%	25,229
5 Years	6%	14,029	Transfer to Another Agency	1%	3,283
6 Years	5%	12,931	Runaway	0%	766
7 Years	5%	12,560	Death of Child	0%	386
8 Years	5%	11,895			
9 Years	5%	11,312			
10 Years	4%	10,285			
11 Years	4%	9,216			
12 Years	3%	8,348			
13 Years	3%	8,163			
14 Years	4%	8,751			
15 Years	4%	9,498			
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 Adopted<sup>3</sup> on September 30, 2017 N = 123,437

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

<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	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 2017<sup>4</sup> 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	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,252	Less than 1 Month	2%	1,445
1 Year	12%	7,276	1 - 5 Months	30%	17,474
2 Years	14%	8,450	6 - 11 Months	35%	20,163
3 Years	11%	6,622	12 - 17 Months	17%	9,949
4 Years	9%	5,295	18 - 23 Months	7%	4,173
5 Years	7%	4,435	24 - 29 Months	4%	2,114
6 Years	7%	3,903	30 - 35 Months	2%	1,066
7 Years	6%	3,573	3 - 4 Years	3%	1,490
8 Years	6%	3,277	5 Years or More	1%	505
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			

  

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.

<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	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.