

# Children Exiting Out-of-Home Care

## Definition

*Children exiting out-of-home care* is the number of children who exited foster care to any type of placement. *Percent reunified with family* is the percent of children exiting foster care who are legally returned to the custody of their parent or caregiver or are legally placed in the permanent custody of relatives. *Percent adopted* is the percent of children who exited the foster care system through adoption.

## Data in context

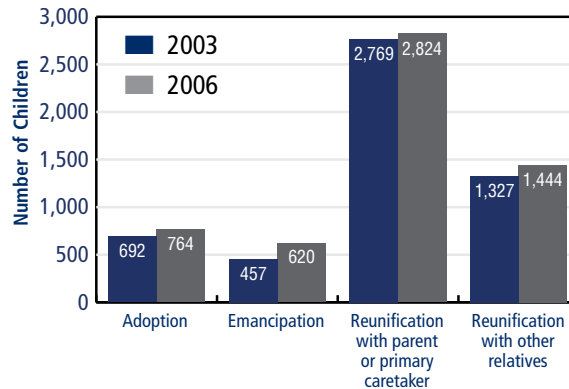
All children benefit from stable family connections. Although foster care offers children safety from harm, removal from one's home causes emotional trauma, and lingering in foster care can be detrimental to a child's emotional well-being. Health and mental health issues often appear in children who have been in foster care as a result of the trauma that originally led to their foster care placement and/or from the frequent changes in living arrangements too common in the foster care system.

During FFY 2005, approximately 311,000 children entered foster care and 287,000 exited foster care nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the children who exited foster care that year were reunified with family members (parents, caregivers, or other relatives) and 18 percent were adopted.<sup>2</sup>

The number of Kentucky children exiting out-of-home care from 2003 to 2006 increased, as did the total number of children in care. Warren County saw the largest increase in children exiting care (78 children), while Franklin County had the largest decrease in exits (53 children). Of all exits statewide, the portion of children exiting to placements with family decreased by 2 percentage points from 2003 to 2006, while the percent of children adopted increased by 1 percentage point. The portion of children reunified with family increased as a percent of all exits in 46 counties, but declined by more than 20 percentage points in 16 counties.

More than 600 Kentucky children who had previously been in out-of-home care re-entered foster

**Kentucky Children Exiting Out-of-Home Care by Exit Placement, 2003 and 2006**



**Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services.

care in 2006, a rate of 10.5 percent of all entries to foster care that year. Re-entry into foster care generally indicates additional trauma as children face removal and placement changes; however, approximately 40 older youth opted to re-enter foster care to access tuition assistance and other services.

Older youth often face a different experience in exiting foster care than younger children. Among Kentucky youth ages 12-18 exiting out-of-home care, about 73 percent exited to placements with parents, caregivers or relatives in both 2003 and 2006. This rate is slightly lower than the statewide rates for all children exiting foster care to placements with family of 78 and 76 percent, respectively, in 2003 and 2006. Within the category of reunifications with family, reunifications with parents and primary caregivers have increased as a portion of exits among older youth.

Most young adults at the age of 18 still rely on their families for financial and/or emotional support, yet youth leaving foster care often lack the support network or skills to help them succeed in adulthood. In addition to adjusting to the difficult change of being on one's own, youth aging out of foster care often have limited financial and educational resources. Federal funding

for youth in foster care ends on their 18th birthday, although some states are taking steps to support the transition of foster youth into adulthood.<sup>3</sup> In Kentucky, youth ages 18-21 may exit foster care or extend their commitment with the state agency to receive assistance with tuition and independent living to support a successful transition to adulthood.

Expanding in-home services prior to removal and strengthening family-community partnerships can ensure all children involved with the child welfare system have the opportunity for lasting family relationships and bright futures.<sup>4</sup> Communities must also focus greater attention on subpopulations that are likely to have longer stays in foster care, including older youth, who are less likely to be adopted; and African-American children, who are disproportionately placed in foster care rather than offered in-home services.<sup>5</sup>

**Data Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services.

**Data Note:** The number of children exiting foster care and placed in the custody of relatives is underestimated because some children are directly placed by the courts in the custody of relatives without entering the foster care system.

**Rate Calculation:**  $(\text{number of children who exited foster care through reunification with parent, caregiver, or relative in 2003} * 100) / (\text{number of children who exited foster care in 2003})$   
 $(\text{number of children who exited foster care through adoption in 2003} * 100) / (\text{number of children who exited foster care in 2003})$   
 $(\text{number of children who exited foster care through reunification with parent, caregiver, or relative in 2006} * 100) / (\text{number of children who exited foster care in 2006})$   
 $(\text{number of children who exited foster care through adoption in 2006} * 100) / (\text{number of children who exited foster care in 2006})$

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2006). *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2005 Estimates as of September 2006*. Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Vestal, C. (2007). *States Trying to Extend Foster-Care Benefits*. Available at <http://www.stateline.org>. Accessed August 2007.
- 4 Nelson, D. (2007). "Lifelong Family Connections: Supporting Permanence for Children in Foster Care." *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2007.
- 5 Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (2007). *Race, Community and Child Welfare*. Available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcb>. Accessed September 2007.

## Children exiting out-of-home care (number, percent reunified with family, & percent adopted)

	2003			2006		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Kentucky	5,245	78	13	5,652	76	14
Adair	19	95	0	10	70	0
Allen	8	75	0	37	86	8
Anderson	23	83	13	18	100	0
Ballard	4	25	75	4	50	50
Barren	50	94	2	58	83	10
Bath	11	64	0	23	100	0
Bell	36	89	8	30	80	0
Boone	28	79	7	47	83	0
Bourbon	20	80	10	35	94	3
Boyd	36	67	6	101	68	10
Boyle	56	88	0	76	71	22
Bracken	6	83	17	14	43	43
Breathitt	13	77	15	26	96	0
Breckinridge	19	84	11	25	84	0
Bullitt	60	87	2	18	56	0
Butler	18	94	0	33	85	6
Caldwell	16	94	0	4	75	0
Calloway	42	62	24	27	93	0
Campbell	97	27	64	154	31	56
Carlisle	3	100	0	2	100	0
Carroll	7	71	29	21	90	0
Carter	49	84	10	36	89	6
Casey	11	91	0	15	93	0
Christian	56	63	36	52	79	15
Clark	45	84	13	36	69	11
Clay	53	77	17	60	70	25
Clinton	28	54	43	12	58	42
Crittenden	9	89	0	10	80	0
Cumberland	2	100	0	2	100	0
Daviess	179	83	7	196	81	14
Edmonson	18	94	6	29	72	21
Elliott	14	86	0	11	82	0
Estill	51	78	16	18	72	28
Fayette	318	65	25	340	69	20
Fleming	19	84	16	16	75	13
Floyd	42	98	0	42	95	0
Franklin	107	93	1	54	78	11
Fulton	14	50	36	10	40	20
Gallatin	2	100	0	19	95	0
Garrard	14	71	21	12	67	0

	2003			2006		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Grant	34	88	6	26	85	0
Graves	36	75	17	56	71	14
Grayson	20	85	10	65	95	0
Green	18	94	0	12	92	0
Greenup	19	58	5	34	74	3
Hancock	8	88	0	4	50	0
Hardin	123	76	12	166	68	20
Harlan	35	71	6	61	89	0
Harrison	13	100	0	14	79	0
Hart	19	79	21	27	85	7
Henderson	64	80	17	46	76	7
Henry	1	0	0	27	85	0
Hickman	5	60	0	9	100	0
Hopkins	52	63	29	54	76	17
Jackson	25	96	0	43	72	26
Jefferson	776	70	19	752	64	21
Jessamine	62	84	8	41	63	22
Johnson	46	80	13	62	68	29
Kenton	218	79	5	222	83	0
Knott	16	94	0	18	94	0
Knox	59	81	15	52	98	2
Larue	8	63	38	21	95	0
Laurel	133	92	2	129	83	10
Lawrence	23	100	0	32	97	0
Lee	18	94	0	7	71	0
Leslie	34	100	0	42	95	0
Letcher	15	87	0	26	96	0
Lewis	9	100	0	3	100	0
Lincoln	55	87	2	45	84	0
Livingston	14	79	0	7	86	0
Logan	40	95	0	45	91	0
Lyon	9	78	0	4	75	0
McCracken	68	72	18	50	72	6
McCreary	85	93	0	97	98	0
McLean	16	81	0	16	88	0
Madison	57	74	14	70	59	20
Magoffin	15	87	0	27	59	33
Marion	22	82	14	33	55	45
Marshall	22	59	18	28	57	11
Martin	12	83	0	23	100	0
Mason	24	100	0	30	90	0

	2003			2006		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Meade	29	97	3	24	96	0
Menifee	11	73	27	10	30	60
Mercer	39	87	10	42	71	12
Metcalfe	13	100	0	12	100	0
Monroe	6	100	0	14	43	43
Montgomery	19	84	16	20	95	0
Morgan	12	75	17	19	53	47
Muhlenberg	47	98	0	38	95	0
Nelson	30	83	13	12	100	0
Nicholas	6	50	50	9	89	0
Ohio	64	69	25	55	84	9
Oldham	17	88	0	23	83	0
Owen	3	100	0	6	83	0
Owsley	3	100	0	10	100	0
Pendleton	33	94	3	23	96	0
Perry	65	91	2	63	84	0
Pike	33	76	0	75	95	0
Powell	21	95	0	9	56	0
Pulaski	180	83	9	139	83	10
Robertson	3	100	0	2	50	0
Rockcastle	52	94	0	38	92	0
Rowan	47	85	13	42	74	12
Russell	26	85	15	34	94	3
Scott	40	98	3	61	80	15
Shelby	57	42	49	50	60	24
Simpson	18	94	6	27	74	15
Spencer	5	80	0	15	87	0
Taylor	41	90	5	34	74	18
Todd	7	86	0	18	100	0
Trigg	9	89	0	9	89	0
Trimble	8	50	0	5	60	0
Union	9	100	0	17	82	0
Warren	151	63	24	229	69	16
Washington	17	100	0	17	94	0
Wayne	16	94	0	19	95	0
Webster	13	92	0	5	100	0
Whitley	124	88	8	93	85	6
Wolfe	29	38	59	49	18	82
Woodford	11	73	27	26	81	15