

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 were legally returned to the custody of their parent or caregiver or were legally placed in the permanent custody of relatives. *Percent adopted* is the percent of children who exited the foster care system through adoption.

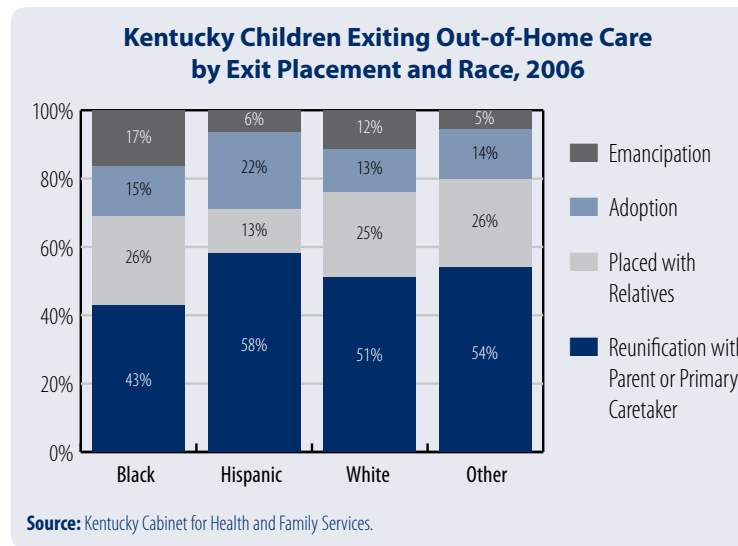
Data in context

All children need safe, permanent homes to develop lifelong connections to families. Some children exit out-of-home care to rejoin parents who have demonstrated increased capacity to provide care; other children exit to become part of a new permanent family through adoption. Youth ages 18 to 21 can exit foster care through emancipation, or “aging out,” and choosing not to receive services and oversight any more.

During FFY 2006, approximately 303,000 children entered foster care and 289,000 exited foster care nationwide.¹ More than half of the children who exited foster care that year were reunified with parents or primary caretakers (53 percent), 11 percent were living with relatives, and 17 percent were adopted.² On September 30, 2006, approximately 129,000 children were waiting to be adopted.³

In 2007, nearly 5,400 Kentucky children entered the foster care system. While the number of Kentucky children in foster care increased greatly from 2003 to 2007, the number of children exiting increased by only 0.2 percent. The average length of stay in out-of-home care improved slightly in Kentucky in recent years, decreasing from 26.1 months for children in foster care on December 31, 2003, to 24.9 months for children as of December 31, 2007.⁴

While out-of-home placements offer children much-needed safety and care, it is important for all children to move toward permanent outcomes with loving families. Yet national data indicate that despite similar rates of abuse across races, children of color remain in out-of-home care



for longer periods and are reunified with family less often than White children.⁵ The percentage of Kentucky children exiting care who were Black or African-American increased by 1.5 percentage points from 2003 to 2007, indicating progress on reducing overrepresentation of children of color in foster care.⁶ However, the percentage of White youth exiting care decreased by 2.4 percentage points.⁷

Of children who entered Kentucky’s foster care system in 2007, some 583 had a previous experience in out-of-home care in the past 12 months (10.8 percent).⁸ This figure includes a number of youth ages 18-21 who chose to re-enter, a positive move given the tuition assistance benefits and independent living support older youth in care receive.⁹

Youth aging out of the foster care system face unique challenges, including disruptions in placements, which affect continuity in schooling and health care. Nationally, older youth in foster care are more likely to live in group settings that are not homes, compared with younger children in foster care.¹⁰ This means they may lack social connections and a supportive network for life after foster care. In 2007, 645 youth were emancipated because of their age, representing 12 percent of exits from foster care that year

and a 43 percent increase in the number of emancipated youth from 2003.¹¹ Promising strategies include training in independent living skills for youth aging out to learn topics such as money management and how to gain employment, which leads to health insurance and building social support networks.¹²

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: (number of children who exited foster care through reunification with parent, caregiver, or relative in 2003 * 100) / (number of children who exited foster care in 2003)
 (number of children who exited foster care through adoption in 2003 * 100) / (number of children who exited foster care in 2003)
 (number of children who exited foster care through reunification with parent, caregiver, or relative in 2007 * 100) / (number of children who exited foster care in 2007)
 (number of children who exited foster care through adoption in 2007 * 100) / (number of children who exited foster care in 2007)

- 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 2006 Estimates as of January 2008* (14). Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Data obtained from Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, July 2008.
- 5 Annie. E. Casey Foundation (2006). “Unequal Opportunity within the Child Welfare System.” *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 6 Data obtained from Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, July 2008.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Wertheimer, R. (2002). “Youth who ‘Age Out’ of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects.” *Child Trends Research Brief*. Publication #2002-59. Available at <http://www.childtrends.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 11 Data obtained from Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, July 2008.
- 12 Wertheimer, R. (2002). “Youth who ‘Age Out’ of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects.” *Child Trends Research Brief*. Publication #2002-59. Available at <http://www.childtrends.org>. Accessed August 2008.

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

	2003			2007		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Kentucky	5,284	78	13	5,294	75	13
Adair	20	95	0	13	100	0
Allen	7	86	0	19	79	11
Anderson	24	83	13	29	86	0
Ballard	4	25	75	6	83	0
Barren	90	90	6	62	81	6
Bath	10	70	0	14	86	0
Bell	36	89	8	35	100	0
Boone	29	83	7	39	87	0
Bourbon	16	75	13	30	80	0
Boyd	45	73	4	87	74	16
Boyle	58	88	0	36	81	0
Bracken	6	83	17	8	63	38
Breathitt	14	79	14	9	78	0
Breckinridge	18	89	6	42	90	2
Bullitt	65	85	3	36	78	0
Butler	20	95	0	17	71	24
Caldwell	15	93	0	2	0	0
Calloway	41	59	27	48	73	4
Campbell	89	22	69	147	23	56
Carlisle	4	100	0	5	100	0
Carroll	2	0	100	7	57	0
Carter	44	82	11	38	76	16
Casey	12	92	0	3	100	0
Christian	54	63	35	44	80	7
Clark	43	84	12	39	72	18
Clay	84	83	11	117	87	9
Clinton	25	48	48	24	50	50
Crittenden	9	89	0	11	100	0
Cumberland	0	*	*	0	*	*
Daviess	177	83	7	145	77	13
Edmonson	18	94	6	41	93	0
Elliott	15	87	0	11	91	0
Estill	50	78	16	27	74	22
Fayette	322	66	25	332	72	18
Fleming	22	68	32	27	67	30
Floyd	34	97	0	51	100	0
Franklin	100	91	2	53	87	11
Fulton	16	56	31	13	92	8
Gallatin	3	100	0	5	80	0
Garrard	15	67	27	23	96	0

	2003			2007		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Grant	29	93	0	26	92	0
Graves	35	77	14	47	53	43
Grayson	19	95	0	40	95	0
Green	16	100	0	3	67	33
Greenup	18	56	6	42	81	0
Hancock	5	80	0	3	67	0
Hardin	99	78	9	124	68	19
Harlan	32	72	6	59	85	5
Harrison	12	100	0	5	100	0
Hart	16	75	25	15	40	47
Henderson	56	77	20	37	59	35
Henry	1	0	0	3	100	0
Hickman	5	60	0	3	67	33
Hopkins	53	64	30	65	69	25
Jackson	27	96	0	22	59	32
Jefferson	764	70	19	654	66	19
Jessamine	64	84	8	30	80	10
Johnson	107	81	6	293	60	6
Kenton	232	80	6	193	82	0
Knott	18	94	0	8	75	0
Knox	56	80	16	31	87	3
LaRue	9	67	33	27	89	0
Laurel	132	92	1	89	70	12
Lawrence	23	100	0	13	92	0
Lee	12	100	0	36	100	0
Leslie	27	100	0	33	97	0
Letcher	31	45	48	28	50	50
Lewis	9	100	0	5	100	0
Lincoln	57	88	0	26	73	12
Livingston	14	79	0	9	89	0
Logan	39	97	0	31	84	6
Lyon	9	78	0	6	83	0
McCracken	68	72	18	71	75	8
McCreary	83	94	0	84	90	4
McLean	17	76	6	2	100	0
Madison	58	74	14	60	57	22
Magoffin	19	89	0	36	89	0
Marion	20	80	15	31	97	0
Marshall	21	57	19	25	40	24
Martin	11	82	0	15	93	0
Mason	23	100	0	23	91	0

	2003			2007		
	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted	Number	Percent reunified with family	Percent adopted
Meade	34	97	3	33	94	0
Menifee	11	73	27	8	63	25
Mercer	37	84	14	35	77	17
Metcalfe	14	100	0	21	81	14
Monroe	6	100	0	9	78	11
Montgomery	19	79	16	12	42	25
Morgan	12	75	17	15	60	33
Muhlenberg	52	98	0	24	96	0
Nelson	24	96	0	10	100	0
Nicholas	8	63	38	8	100	0
Ohio	54	65	30	46	76	15
Oldham	17	88	0	16	88	0
Owen	5	100	0	4	100	0
Owsley	3	100	0	15	93	0
Pendleton	32	94	3	21	90	0
Perry	61	90	2	71	87	0
Pike	37	76	0	52	94	0
Powell	25	96	0	14	100	0
Pulaski	170	84	9	124	89	6
Robertson	1	100	0	1	100	0
Rockcastle	50	94	0	37	86	0
Rowan	42	93	5	41	85	5
Russell	25	84	16	29	83	17
Scott	36	97	3	42	86	2
Shelby	87	57	37	65	31	57
Simpson	14	93	7	16	75	19
Spencer	8	88	0	15	80	20
Taylor	38	89	5	44	75	23
Todd	4	75	0	18	100	0
Trigg	9	89	0	10	90	0
Trimble	8	50	0	16	88	0
Union	8	100	0	9	89	0
Warren	148	65	23	209	65	26
Washington	15	73	27	8	88	0
Wayne	12	92	0	22	95	0
Webster	11	91	0	7	71	0
Whitley	124	86	10	85	82	9
Wolfe	11	82	18	15	100	0
Woodford	10	80	20	19	79	16

* County had no children exiting out-of-home care.