

CHILD ABUSE STATISTICS – FOR RFK INC.

- I. **Going into Foster Care:** According to the most recent federal data, there are more than 442,995 children in the foster care system in the United States in 2017 (www.acf.hhs.gov/cb). This represents an increase from the 2015 statistics. They range in age from infants to 21 years old (in some states). Of these children more than a quarter (32%) were in a relative's home, while nearly half (45%) were in nonrelative foster homes. Further breakdown of placements:
- i. 7% were in institutions
 - ii. 5% were in group homes
 - iii. 5% were on trial home placement under state supervision
 - iv. 4% in pre-adoptive homes
 - v. 1% had runaway
 - vi. 1% in supervised independent living

Current trends indicate a change from 2006 to 2016 with a notable increase in the use of placements with relatives and a decrease in placements in group homes (www.childwelfare.gov).

The average age of a child in foster care is more than 8 years old, there are slightly more boys (52%) than girls (48%) (www.childwelfare.gov). Unfortunately, the United States has one of the worst records among industrialized nations – losing on average between 4 and 7 children every day to child abuse and neglect!

Of the children in foster care: 44% were white, 23% were African-American, 21% were Hispanic, 10% were other races or multicultural and 2% were unknown or unable to be determined (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, AFCARS 2017).

- II. **Reasons for going into Foster Care:** In a recent report by David Carry in his November 30, 2017 article; “More Kids in Foster Care; Parental Drug Abuse a Factor”, the number of children in the U.S. foster care system has increased for the fourth year in a row, with substance abuse by parents a major factor! According to Carry the number of children placed in foster care dropped steadily from 2002 to 2012 before rising again as the opioid epidemic and other drug abuse began to worsen (apnews.com/bb4b6a7c468046019394b4ae6ee28a31). The U.S. Department of Health and Human services said that drug abuse was a factor in 34% of the cases in which a child was removed from the home! While child neglect was the primary reason for foster placement, physical and sexual abuse were the other primary causative factors leading to placement). However, numerous other reasons exist.
- i. Caretaker inability to cope - 14%
 - ii. Parental incarceration - 8%
 - iii. Housing - 10%
 - iv. Child behavior problem - 9%
 - v. Alcohol abuse - 5%
 - vi. Abandonment - 5%
 - vii. Relinquishment - 1%

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viii. Parent death – 1%

(Note: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that these categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100%)

The number of kids whose parental rights have been terminated and are currently waiting for adoption remains roughly at about 123,437 (AFCARS, 2017). 44%=White, 22% = Black, 22% = Hispanic, 2% American Indian/Alaska native, 2 or more races 8%, Unknown= 1%, Asian= less than 1%.

30% to 80% of children come into foster care with at least 1 physical health problem. Fully one-third have a chronic health condition. 46% to 60% of children younger than 6 years have a developmental disability. Up to 80% of these children in foster care enter with a significant mental health issue. Children in foster care are also prescribed psychotropic medications at a rate 3 times that of other Medicaid enrolled children and remain on them for longer periods (Pediatrics, Vol 136, issue 4 “Health Care Issues for Children and Adolescents in Foster Care”, Oct. 2015, American Academy of Pediatrics).

****Child abuse also comes with a cost to society. The estimated minimum annual cost of child abuse to US communities equals \$124 billion (Fang, X, et al) The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention.**

- III. What happens to them once they are in foster care?** On average, children remain in state care for nearly 2 years, while 6% of children languish there for 5 or more years (afamilyforeverychild.org). A third of foster children have been removed from their home and placed in foster care multiple times! Additionally, half of these children have experienced 3 or more foster care placements (www.childrensrights.org/newsroom/fact-sheets/foster-care/). Additionally, 33% of these children will change schools 5 or more times, causing them to fall behind and lose friends that they have made (**Casey Foundation Dec. 29, 2017, “What Every Student Succeeds Act and how does school stability affect children in foster care).**

IV. Leaving foster Care:

Each year, approximately 20,000 youth will age out of the foster care system . Depending on the state, young adults in foster care “age out” of the system at either 18 or 21. Aging out occurs because the child was never adopted or must leave the foster care system.

According to the AFCRS report in 2017 roughly 49% of children who left foster care were discharged to be reunited with their parents or primary caretakers – 7% in relative foster family homes - 24%

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adoption - 5% in group homes - 8% emancipated - 10% guardianship - 1% runaway - 1% transfer to another agency (www.acf.hhs.gov/cb).

In her report “Aging Out of Foster Care; 18 and On Your Own” (sharedjustice.org 3/30/2017), Christina Squiers presents some devastating statistics. “By age 26, only 3 to 4 percent of youth you aged out of foster earn a college degree. One in five of these youth will become homeless after turning 18. Only half will obtain employment by 21. Over 70 percent of female foster youth will become pregnant by 21, and one if four former foster youth will experience PTSD!” 25% will not graduate high school or be able to pass their GED. 60% of young men who age out are convicted of a crime. 75% of women and 33% men will receive government benefits to meet basic needs after they age out (www.NFYI.org/51-useful-aging-out-of-foster-care-statistics-social-race-media May 2017)

Additionally a study done by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative **May, 2013**) showed that on average, for every your person who ages out of foster care, tax payers and communities pay \$300,000 in social costs like public assistance, incarceration, and lost wages to a community over that person’s lifetime. **This will result in an annual cost of roughly \$8 billion** (www.huffingtonost.com/gary-stangler/aging-out-of-foster-care- b 3658694.html)

NEW INFO:

“Consider the year 2020. If nothing changes in the U.S. child welfare system, nearly 14 million confirmed cases of abuse and neglect will be reported; more than 22,500 children will die of abuse and neglect; nine million children will be placed in foster care; and more than 300,000 children will age out of foster care without adequate supports to successfully transition to adulthood. Of those 300,000 transitioning youth, 75,000 will experience homelessness and 54,000 will become involved in the criminal justice system (www.casey.org/preparing-youth-adulthood/)

Here’s what they found:

A study of foster children in Oregon and Washington state found that nearly one third reported being abused by a foster parent or another adult in a foster home. That study didn’t even include cases of foster children abusing each other.

In a study of investigations of alleged abuse in New Jersey foster homes, the researchers found a lack of “anything approaching reasonable professional judgment” and concluded that “no assurances can be given” that any New Jersey foster child is safe.

A study of cases in metropolitan Atlanta found that among children whose case goal was adoption, 34 percent had experienced abuse, neglect or other harmful conditions. For those children who had recently entered the system, 15 percent had experienced abuse, neglect or other harmful conditions in just one year. (Abuse in Foster Care: Research vs. the Child Welfare System’s Alternative Facts, by Richard Wexler, Sept. 20, 2017 youthtoday.org/2017/09/abuse-in-foster-care-research-vs-the-child-welfare-systems-alternative-facts/)

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A study by John Hopkins University found that children who are in foster care are four times more likely to be sexually abused than other children not in this setting. Additionally, children who are in group homes are 28 times more likely to be abused than children not living in these homes (www.hg.org/legal-articles/sexual-abuse-an-epidemic-in-foster-care-settings-6703)

"It's easier to build strong children than it is to repair broken men!"

Frederick Douglass