



FACT SHEET TWO: WITHOUT FAMILY PERMANENCE, YOUNG PEOPLE FACE DIFFICULT FUTURES

Every young person needs and deserves a safe, nurturing family. Yet for the 513,000 children in foster care, essential family connections are often lost or disrupted by the emotional and physical dislocations of foster care. Especially at risk for being cut off from family are African-American and other youth of color who are over-represented in foster care. This poses an urgent equity challenge for child welfare systems nationwide.

Without crucial family connections, young people suffer — not only in their teen years, but also as they face adulthood without the emotional and material safety net of a family.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OLDER YOUTH

How many older youth were in child protection systems in 2005 (the most recent available figures)?

- Of the 513,000 children in care, 237,665 (46 percent) were age 11-18.
- Of the 311,000 children who entered care, 119,311 were 11-18 (38 percent).

Are minorities disproportionately represented among the older youth population?

- The older youth population has an approximately similar racial and ethnic background to the younger foster care population and both reflect disproportionate representation of children of color.¹

What problems do foster youth ages 11-18 face?

Too many youth are disconnected from family environments and are not achieving permanence:

- Of those entering care for the first time (age 10+), 36 percent were placed in non-family settings.
- Of the 114,000 young people waiting to be adopted, 37 percent were age 11-17.²
- Many of the 28,800 young people who aged out of foster care, either through emancipation (24,407) or by running away (4,445), had no meaningful connection to family or a caring adult.

Outcomes for youth who age out continue to be unacceptable:

- In one study, 46 percent had not completed high school, 50 percent were unemployed, and 25 percent had experienced homelessness within four years of leaving care;³
- Eighty percent did not earn enough to be self supporting four years after leaving care;⁴ and
- More than 20 percent had been arrested since leaving care and 90 percent were earning less than \$10,000 a year.⁵

Data sources, unless otherwise noted:

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm

Penelope L. Maza, Recent trends in foster care in the United States, and Recent trends in adoption in the United States (presentations for the December 2007 CWLA Adoption and Foster Care Training Conference)

¹ In 2005, 56 percent of children in care were minorities: 32 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, 2 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1 percent Asian (AFCARS)

² As Maza notes, "By the time young people waiting for adoption are age 8 or 9, they are more likely to continue waiting than be adopted"

³ Cook, R. A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth, Phase 2 (Final Report) (Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc., 1991)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Courtney, et al, Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning: Outcomes at 19, Chapin Hall Center for Children, May 2005