Foster Care Statistics

This factsheet provides the most recent national statistical estimates for children and youth in foster care from fiscal year (FY) 2008 and also provides earlier data from FY 2000 to allow for some estimate of trends over time. Data were obtained from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). AFCARS collects information on all children in foster care for whom state child welfare agencies have responsibility for placement, care, or supervision and on children who are adopted with public child welfare agency involvement.

Key Findings

- On September 30, 2008, there were an estimated 463,000 children in foster care.
- Almost a quarter (24 percent) were in relative homes, and nearly half (47 percent) were in nonrelative foster family homes.
- Almost half (49 percent) had a case goal of reunification with their families.
- The majority of children left the system to be reunited with their families (52 percent).
- Close to half of the children (46 percent) who left foster care in FY 2008 were in care for less than 1 year.

Children In, Entering, and Exiting Care

These numbers give a broad picture of the number of children in the foster care system during a specific fiscal year.

- **Point in Time.** On September 30, 2008, there were an estimated 463,000 children in foster care.
- **Entries.** During FY 2008, 273,000 children entered foster care.
- **Exits.** During FY 2008, 285,000 children exited foster care.
- **Trends.** Between FY 2000 and FY 2008, the number of children in care on September 30 dropped. Entries into foster care decreased during those years, while exits from foster care during those years increased.

Placement Settings

Children in foster care live in a variety of placement settings and may move among or between settings while in care. For example, a child may move from a group home to a relative foster home.

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From the State Office

By Dean Storn, Foster Care Administrator

The 62nd North Dakota Legislative Assembly was convened in Bismarck at the beginning of January. This assembly consists of 94 representatives in the House of Representatives and 47 senators comprising the Senate. As expected, the session began with great anticipation and excitement toward seeing North Dakota continue to show positive growth in many key areas.

Specifically, I wanted to point out legislation that has been introduced that has direct bearing on the foster care system.

- HB 1095 Relates to the approval process of group foster care facilities.
- HB 1115 Relates to the confidentiality of foster care records.
- SB 2029 Relates to short term shelter and assessment programs for at-risk youth.
- SB 2129 Relates to continued foster care services for youth between the ages of 18 and 21.

Further information about these bills and other human service related legislation can be found at the official North Dakota State Government web page at www.nd.gov.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and respect to everyone who take the time and effort to work with foster youth and their families in North Dakota. Without the dedicated and passionate efforts from child and family team members from across the state, North Dakota would not be one of the top foster care and child welfare systems in the nation. I truly believe that the team members within our child welfare system live and breathe one of my favorite quotes from Dr. James Dobson: “Children just don’t fit into a ‘to do’ list very well....It takes time to introduce them to good books - it takes time to fly kites and play ball and put together jigsaw puzzles. It takes time to listen.”

Please keep taking the time to listen and to make sure that children and families are nurtured and safe. I wish you all health and happiness.

President’s Corner

By Jon Mielke, President

Acting on Governor Hoeven’s executive budget recommendation, North Dakota’s 2009 Legislature took a bold step and approved foster care reimbursement rates recommended by the national MARC report. Governor Dalrymple’s executive budget recommendation to the 2011 Legislature calls for an additional 3% increase in each year of the 2011-13 biennium. These increases would keep foster parent compensation rates current and are worthy of your support. I encourage you to contact your legislators and to urge them to support this provision in the Department of Human Services’ budget (Senate Bill No. 2012). You can contact your legislators by calling 1-888-635-3447 or via e-mail through http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/62-2011/sessionlinks.html.

Planning is already underway for next fall’s annual conference in Minot (Sept. 23-24). The Association is working closely with PATH, UND’s Children & Family Services Training Center, and local social services personnel to put together what is already looking like a very informative and enjoyable conference. Please mark your calendar and make plans to attend. Attending foster parents will receive reimbursement for mileage, hotels, and conference registration fees. Attendees can also earn up to 12 hours of continuing education credits.

Anyone who attends the Association’s annual conference is a member of the Association. If you did not attend last fall’s conference but would like to become a member, please send the $10 annual membership fee to Jim Hooge, the Association’s treasurer. Jim’s mailing address is 8928 88th St. NE, Munich, ND 58352.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite Association members to become involved with work of the Association. Here is a list of the Association’s standing committees:

- Scholarships & Awards
- Financial Review
- Website
- Education/Convention Planning
- Legislation

If you would like to be a member of one of these committees, please contact me and I will put you in touch with the appropriate committee chair.

It is also not too early to start thinking about nominations for foster child college scholarships and awards for foster parents of the year, social worker of the year, and social service agency of the year. For more information,

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- **Point in Time.** The estimated 463,000 children in foster care on September 30, 2008, were in the following types of placements:
  - 47 percent in nonrelative foster family homes
  - 24 percent in relative foster homes
  - 10 percent in institutions
  - 6 percent in group homes
  - 4 percent in preadoptive homes
  - 5 percent on trial home visits (Situations in which the state retains supervision of a child and the child returns home on a trial basis, for an unspecified period of time, are considered a discharge from foster care after 6 months.)
  - 2 percent had run away
  - 1 percent in supervised independent living
  - **Trends.** Placement type on September 30 remained relatively unchanged between FY 2000 and FY 2008.

**Permanency Goals**

The preferred goal for children in care is permanency with caring parents. Permanency goals refer to the goals for permanent placement that are reported to AFCARS.

- **Point in Time.** Of the estimated 463,000 children in foster care on September 30, 2008:
  - 49 percent had a goal of reunification with parent(s) or primary caregiver(s)
  - 24 percent had a goal of adoption
  - 8 percent had a goal of living with a relative or guardian
  - 8 percent had a goal of long-term foster care
  - 6 percent had a goal of emancipation
  - 5 percent had not yet had a permanency goal established

- **Trends.** Due to a significant improvement in the quality of data on permanency goals since 2000, a comparison between the 2 years is not provided.

**Outcomes**

The outcome statistics for children leaving foster care are somewhat reflective of the percentages for the permanency goals (see above), especially for reunification and adoption.

- **Exits.** Of the estimated 285,000 children who exited foster care during FY 2008:
  - 52 percent were reunited with parent(s) or primary caregiver(s)
  - 19 percent were adopted
  - 15 percent went to live with a relative or guardian
  - 10 percent were emancipated
  - 3 percent had other outcomes

- **Trends.** The percentage of children who left the system for adoption increased from FY 2000 to FY 2008 (from 17 percent to 19 percent). The percentage of children who left the system to be reunited with their families or placed with relatives or guardians decreased from FY 2000 to FY 2008 (from 70 percent to 67 percent).

**Length of Stay**

Length of stay in foster care refers to the amount of time between entering and exiting foster care.

- **Exits.** Of the estimated 285,000 children who exited foster care during FY 2008:
  - 13 percent had been in care less than 1 month
  - 33 percent had been in care for 1 to 11 months
  - 24 percent had been in care for 12 to 23 months
  - 12 percent had been in care for 24 to 35 months
  - 10 percent had been in care for 36 to 59 months
  - 7 percent had been in care for 5 or more years

- **Trends.** The median amount of time children spent in foster care increased between FY 2000 (12.0 months) and FY 2008 (13.3 months). When the time periods are broken down, it becomes apparent that fewer children were in foster care less than 1 month or longer than 3 years and more children were in foster care from 1 month to 35 months in FY 2008, compared to FY 2000.

**Age**

Children can enter foster care at any age, from infancy up to age 18 years, and most exit by the time they are 18 years old.

- **Point in Time.** The median age of the children in foster care on September 30, 2008, was 9.8 years.

- **Entries.** The median age of children entering foster care during FY 2008 was 7.3 years.

- **Exits.** The median age of children exiting foster care during FY 2008 was 9.0 years.

- **Trends.** The median age at entry and exit decreased between FY 2000 and FY 2008. The largest decrease was among the entries (from 8.8 to 7.3 years of age). There was also a decrease among the exits (from 10.2 to 9.0 years of age).

**Race and Ethnicity**

AFCARS tracks children's race or ethnicity. Using U.S. Bureau of Census standards, children of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Beginning in FY 2000, children could be identified with more than one race designation.

- **Point in Time.** Of the estimated 463,000 children in foster care on September 30, 2008:
  - 40 percent were White/Non-Hispanic
  - 31 percent were Black/Non-Hispanic
  - 20 percent were Hispanic
  - 10 percent were other races or multiracial

- **Trends.** The percentage of Black/Non-Hispanic children in care on September 30 dropped 8 percentage points (from 39 to 31 percent) between FY 2000 and FY 2008,
In Memory of Shirley Hoffarth

On Wednesday, November 24th, we lost a great social worker, co-worker, mentor and friend. Many who read this have their own personal memories of Shirley as an adoption worker, foster care licensing worker and PRIDE Trainer. Some of you have had the pleasure of working with Shirley in all of these areas. She presented the session, “Panel of Former Foster Youth” at the recent state Family Foster Care Conference.

Shirley had a caring spirit that will go unmatched. She did not rest until the job was done and most importantly until unmet needs were met. There is a special place in heaven for Shirley. I’m sure she is organizing something wonderful as we speak!!

Shirley started her social work career at Grand Forks County Social Services prior to her 30+ years with the AASK Program. She returned to GFCSSC in July 2005, until the time of her death. She literally worked with hundreds of families during the course of her career and was well-known all around the state.

In Memory of Bruce Bueling

It is with deep sadness that we remember Bruce Bueling, our friend and co-worker, who passed away unexpectedly November 30, 2010. Bruce spent his career in social work dedicated to improving the lives of children and families, and finding ways to be a voice for those who could not speak for themselves. His persistence, sense of humor and passion for advocating for children were his trademarks.

Bruce was hired July 1, 1994, by Richland County Social Services to serve as the Family Focused social worker for Ransom and Sargent Counties. He moved to child protection work in Richland County on September 1st of 1998 and was employed in that capacity until his death. As a PATH foster parent for more than nine years, Bruce loved children and often worked with teen boys and taught them independent living skills. His absence will be felt deeply by his colleagues and coworkers, as well as families he worked with over the years.
please contact Colette Sorensen at davecolette@yahoo.com. Related awards will be presented at the Association’s annual conference in Minot next September.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, the Association’s bylaws were amended at last fall’s annual conference. Our bylaws now provide for staggered elections so not all the officers will leave office at one time. Here is a list of current officers, when their term in office expires, and related contact information:

President
Jon Mielke (Risonok - 2012)
jcmielke3@bis.midco.net

Vice President
Keatha McLeod (Horace - 2012)
cloudynd@Q.com

Secretary
Theresa Osteroos (Burlington - 2011)
t.osteroos@sendit.nodak.edu

Treasurer
Jim Hooge (Munich -2011)
jim43hooge@gmail.com

Past President
Jim Schnabel (Venturia)
jnpfarm@dtel.net

Please feel free to contact any of these officers if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Tara Muhlhauser of the North Dakota Department of Human Services is also a member of the association’s board of directors. We appreciate her dedication and her willingness to serve in this capacity.

Thanks for all that you do for the foster kids that come into your homes and into your hearts. Until next time – keep warm!

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Awards

Each year, the North Dakota Foster and Adopt Parents Association takes great pleasure in presenting the “Foster Parent of the Year,” Social Worker of the Year” and “Agency of the Year” awards. You are a special group of people who come together to protect the best interests of children and families. We would like to take this time to thank you for the work you do to serve the children of North Dakota. This is a difficult job, and yet, each and every one of you has made this commitment to work as a team to make our state a better place for the youth in care. You are all to be commended! Please take the time to nominate someone who consistently goes “above and beyond” the realm of their duties. Please use the format in this newsletter. The deadline for nominations will be September 1, 2011. Nominations should be sent to: Awards Committee, Colette Sorensen, 1535 46th St. W, Williston, ND, 58801. ph 701-572-5320 or email to davecolette@yahoo.com.

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**North Dakota Foster and Adopt Parent Association Awards Nomination Form**

Category of nomination (Circle one): Foster Parent, Social Worker, Agency, Other

**PERSON SUBMITTING NOMINATION**
(Must be an Association member)
Nominations must be received by September 1, 2011

Name ________________________
Telephone ___________________
Address _____________________
Street City ___________________
State Zip ____________________

**PERSON OR AGENCY BEING NOMINATED**

Name ________________________
Telephone ___________________
Address _____________________
Street City ___________________
State Zip ____________________

Provide the following information (typed or neatly written):

A. Service to Children, the Foster Care Program, and to the Foster Parent Association.

B. Narrative and other special information that qualifies the nominee for an award.

Send to:
Colette Sorensen
1535 46th St. W, Williston, ND, 58801. ph 701-572-5320
davecolette@yahoo.com
Scholarship

The North Dakota Foster and Adopt and Parent Association has the opportunity to annually award scholarship money to youth in foster care who have a desire to further their education beyond high school. In 1984, the NDFAPA announced the formation of a scholarship committee that led to the development of a scholarship trust fund the following year. In 1988, the Ruth Meier's Children's Memorial Scholarship was established to honor the former State Representative and first woman Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota. The Ruth Meier's Scholarship is $500 and the NDFAPA Scholarship is $600.

Applications should be requested from: Colette Sorenson, 1535 46th St. W, Williston, ND, 58801. ph 701-572-5320, email to davecolette@yahoo.com. She will help you with any questions or problems you might have in completing the application form. All types of educational opportunities beyond high school will be considered.

In 1656, less than thirty years after the founding of the Jamestown Colony, at the age of seven, Benjamin Eaton became this nation’s first foster child. The National Foster Parent Association offers scholarships for foster youth who wish to further their education beyond high school, including college or university studies, vocational and job training, and correspondence courses, including the GED. The NFPA has criteria similar to the North Dakota scholarships and requires the application be submitted by March 31st. They require two references and an essay on "Why I want to further my education and why I should be considered for a National Foster Parent Association Scholarship."

Applications should be submitted by around the first of July for NDFPA scholarships because the decisions on the award winners must be completed before the annual conference in September. Membership dues, memorials, contributions and donations from individuals and businesses help to fund the scholarships.

Scholarships often go unclaimed. Foster parents and social workers should make every effort to seek out these options for the children in their homes and in their care.

NDFAPA Executive Board
Jon Mielke, President, Bismarck
Jim Schnabel, Past President, Ventura
Keatha McLeod, Vice President, Horace
Jim Hooge, Treasurer, Munich
Theresa Osteroos, Secretary, Burlington
Tara Muhlhauser, Department of Human Services