

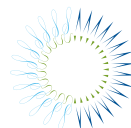


# Time for Reform:

PREVENTING YOUTH FROM AGING OUT  
ON THEIR OWN



**KIDS ARE WAITING**  
Fix Foster Care Now



THE  
**PEW**  
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

# Time for Reform:

## PREVENTING YOUTH FROM AGING OUT ON THEIR OWN

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Pew Charitable Trusts thanks the following individuals and organizations for their assistance in the development of this report:

Celeste Bodner, Nicole Dobbins, FosterClub and the foster care alumni affiliated with FosterClub who shared their stories; MaryLee Allen, Children's Defense Fund; Kathi Crowe, National Foster Care Coalition; Crystal Ward Allen, Public Children Services Association of Ohio; F. Scott McCown and Jane Burstain, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jaia Peterson-Lent, Generations United; Joe Kroll and Mary Boo, North American Council on Adoptable Children; David Simmons, National Indian Child Welfare Association; and Dr. Mark Testa, Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

In addition, Pew would like to thank Dr. Elliott Smith and Michael Dineen, from the National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) at Cornell University for completing and verifying the data from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) included in this report.

Marci McCoy-Roth, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Madelyn Freundlich, consultant to the Kids Are Waiting campaign and Trinity Thorpe-Lubnueksi, Kids Are Waiting, were responsible for

researching and writing this brief. The following Pew staff provided invaluable assistance in preparing this report: Shelley Hearne, Lori Grange, David Gilliland, Hope Cooper, Kip Patrick, Emily Cheramie Walz, Betsy Sharkoski, and Christine McCormick. The Kids Are Waiting campaign's communication consultants, Sharon Appel and Gina Russo, also assisted in reviewing and editing this document.

The views expressed here represent those of The Pew Charitable Trusts and not necessarily of the individuals acknowledged above.

Photo by Nate Johnson, copyright © 2008 FosterClub. Front cover / pictured:

**Tyler Bacon**, Florida, spent 5 years in foster care

**Lupe Tovar**, Arizona, spent 18 years in foster care

**Nicole Dobbins**, Oregon, spent 6 years in foster care

**Anthony Reeves**, Georgia, spent 11.5 years in foster care

**Mercedes Wooten**, Indiana, spent 5 years in foster care

The report was designed by Freedom by Design, Inc.

Released September 2008 in Washington, D.C.

Foster care is a critical safety net for many neglected and abused children. Federal law directs case workers to ensure that children in foster care are returned home safely or, when that is not possible, provide safe, permanent families through adoption or guardianship. But the number of youth “aging out” or emancipating from foster care without a family continues to rise at a record pace. According to the latest available figures, more than 26,000 foster youth left the system on their own in 2006—up 119 percent since the federal government began collecting data in 1998.<sup>i</sup> About 9 percent of all children leaving foster care nationally aged out; however, in some states, the percentage is significantly higher, including Virginia (32 percent), Maine (22 percent) and Massachusetts (19 percent).<sup>ii</sup> Overall, nearly 200,000 youth have aged out of the foster care system without families they could rely on.<sup>iii</sup> Appendices A and B summarize these findings. The consequences are stark:

- In one study, 25 percent of the foster care alumni who had aged out did not have a high school diploma or GED.<sup>iv</sup> Less than 2 percent had completed a college education, compared with 23 percent in the general population, another study found.<sup>v</sup>
- Over half of foster care alumni who had aged out had experienced homelessness or unstable housing and nearly 30 percent had been incarcerated.<sup>vi</sup>

- Foster care alumni who had aged out experienced disproportionate rates of unemployment or underemployment and were more likely than the general population to lack health insurance.<sup>vii</sup>

The federal government must act to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in foster care and **prevent their aging out with no family of their own.** Specifically:

1. The Adoption Incentive Program should be reauthorized and updated so that states receive the full amount authorized—\$43 million<sup>viii</sup>—to improve necessary child welfare services.
2. All children, regardless of their birth parents’ income, should be eligible for federal adoption support when they leave foster care to join adoptive families.
3. Federal support should be available for relative caregivers who become legal guardians of children in foster care.
4. Congress should provide tribes direct access to federal Title IV-E foster care funding so they can provide critical services to American Indian children within their communities.

With these changes, the foster care system will be better equipped to place every child with a safe, permanent family and prevent youth from aging out of foster care on their own.

On average, youth who aged out of foster care in 2006 spent five years in the system, compared with less than two years for children who left through reunification, adoption, guardianship or other means.

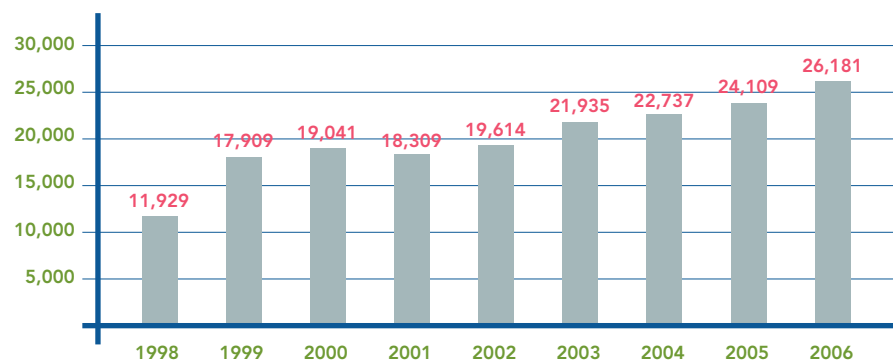
# Time for Reform:

## PREVENTING YOUTH FROM AGING OUT ON THEIR OWN

### AGING OUT **AND ON THEIR OWN**

Many significant improvements have been made to the foster care system over the years, and across the country, case workers and court officials have worked to facilitate better outcomes for children in the government's care. Yet the number of foster youth aging out of care keeps rising. In 2006, the latest year for which data are available, 26,181 youth aged out of care,<sup>ix</sup> a 119 percent increase since 1998. See Figure 1. On average, youth who aged out of foster care in 2006 spent five years in the system, compared with less than two years for children who left through reunification, adoption, guardianship or other means. See Appendix C.

**FIGURE 1**—Number of Youth "Aging Out" of Foster Care without Safe, Permanent Families (1998-2006)



Source: Analysis by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), FY 2006 Data.

### AGING OUT **IN THE STATES**

States continue to work to improve outcomes for older youth in foster care—but in a number of states, an alarming percentage of children leaving foster care in 2006 were youth who aged out without families. Virginia topped the list at 32 percent, followed by Maine at 22 percent and Massachusetts at 19 percent. (See Table 1.) States with the lowest percentages were Connecticut at 1 percent, Mississippi at 3 percent and Wyoming at 4 percent. (See Table 2.) The national average was 9 percent.

**TABLE 1**—15 states with highest percentage of youth aging out without families in 2006

STATE RANK	STATE	AGED OUT IN 2006	% AGED OUT OF TOTAL EXITS IN 2006
1	Virginia	979	32.1
2	Maine	216	22.3
3	Massachusetts	1,283	19.0
4	District of Columbia	166	17.6
5	Kansas	421	15.9
6	Vermont	104	14.3
7	Illinois	783	14.2
8	New York	1,551	11.7
9	New Hampshire	63	11.3
10	Ohio	1,255	11.1
11	Nebraska	405	11.1
12	Utah	209	10.7
13	South Carolina	347	10.7
14	Tennessee	718	10.5
15	Kentucky	591	10.4

**TABLE 2**—15 states with lowest percentage of youth aging out without families in 2006

STATE RANK	STATE	AGED OUT IN 2006	% AGED OUT OF TOTAL EXITS IN 2006
36	Florida	1,488	7.0
37	North Dakota	61	6.9
38	Idaho	98	6.7
39	Washington	382	6.2
40	Colorado	427	6.2
41	Missouri	379	5.9
42	Nevada	204	5.9
43	New Mexico	121	5.9
44	South Dakota	74	5.4
45	Oregon	295	5.4
46	Alabama	174	5.0
47	Indiana	328	4.9
48	Wyoming	44	4.2
49	Mississippi	75	3.9
50	Connecticut	25	1.3
<b>National</b>		<b>26,154</b>	<b>9%</b>

Source: Analysis by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), FY 2006 Data.

Note: Puerto Rico is not included in this total.

## FACING LIFE ON MY OWN

LUPE TOVAR, Tucson, Arizona



LUPE TOVAR, Arizona

Along with four of her six brothers and sisters, Lupe entered Arizona's foster care system as a young child. "I spent virtually my entire life—20 years—in foster care," she recalls. "In those 20 years, I was moved more than 11 times, enrolled in 11 different schools, and lived with more than 35 foster brothers and sisters."

Because of these constant moves, Lupe lost contact with her birth family and, eventually, with her siblings. "In high school, I loved being involved in school activities like theater, church groups, sports, and diversity clubs," she says. "These gave me a glimpses of a life lived by my classmates and their families—a normal family life—that I only dreamed of."

Throughout all of her many placements—with foster families, in group homes and shelters - she never found a family to call her own. She aged out of foster care, with no one to rely on, no home to return to.

"I still long for a family. Growing up, it was really hard knowing that there was no one to turn to if I had problems, needed advice, or even wanted to just sit and talk with someone," Lupe says. "My successes have always seemed bittersweet, because few people understand how hard I have had to work to accomplish the goals I set for myself. They don't know how frustrating it was to move every year, how challenging it was to change schools constantly and to adjust to different houses, different rules, different foster parents, brothers and sisters."

Now 26, Lupe is a powerful advocate for foster care reform. A graduate of Arizona State University, she has testified before Congress, spoken about her experiences in foster care at countless conferences across the nation, and has been honored with a national leadership award. She works as a program coordinator for In My Shoes, helping to match foster teens with community mentors.

"I have accomplished a lot, but it is in spite of all of the uncertainty I experienced in foster care—not because of it. I want something better for youth currently in foster care. I want them to have families to love and protect them, and homes they know they can always return to. With the right policy changes, what happened to me—aging out without a family—can be prevented for many youth still in the system."

## IMPROVING OUTCOMES: BEFORE AND AFTER YOUTH AGE OUT

After spending the majority of their entire childhoods in foster care, many youth become adults whose lives are fraught with challenges. Recent studies examined the experiences of young people who age out of foster care, and found that many were ill-prepared for adulthood—they struggle with housing, food, and education, and do not have a safety net to fall back on in times of need. Twenty-five percent of the young adults studied did not have a high school diploma or GED.<sup>x</sup> Less than 2 percent completed a college education, compared to 23 percent in the general population.<sup>xi</sup> In addition, over half of these youth experienced homelessness or unstable housing and almost 30 percent became incarcerated.<sup>xii</sup> Young adults who age out experience disproportionate rates of unemployment or underemployment and are more likely than the general population to lack health insurance.<sup>[iv]</sup> Further, a third are plagued by mental health problems or developmental disabilities and other special needs that may interfere with their ability to live an independent and self-sufficient life.<sup>xiii</sup>

Many have argued that eliminating benefits to youth when they turn 18 exacerbates the challenges they face. Some have recommended that states should have the option of increasing the age of eligibility for federal foster care resources to 21. Allowing children to remain in care longer improves their outcomes and is worth exploring—but it does not connect them with a family who will be there for them forever. Some states, including Illinois and Maine, have state-based programs that extend foster care benefits to youth to age 19, 20, 21 or 22. Extended care should benefit youth by both preparing them for adulthood *and* helping them find a family. Working to ensure that each young person has a permanent home should not stop while he or she remains in care.

## PREVENT AGING OUT BY SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL ADOPTIONS

Increasing adoptions from foster care is a critically important strategy for preventing youth from aging out without a family.<sup>i</sup> Nearly 127,000 foster children who cannot be returned to their parents are waiting for adoptive families today,<sup>ii</sup> and a significant number will eventually age out without the lifelong support that a family can provide.

Federal law recognizes that children do best when they live with safe, permanent families and directs state agencies to secure adoptive families for children who cannot safely reunify with their parents.<sup>iii</sup> Eleven years ago, Congress passed the bipartisan, Adoption and Safe Families Act, which significantly reformed the foster care system and created the Adoption Incentive Program to reward states that increase adoptions from foster care.<sup>[i]</sup> The Adoption

*In 2006, foster children who are adopted waited for an average of 3.5 years (42 months).*

Incentive Program has been crucial in helping move children out of foster care—yet this successful program will expire September 30, 2008 unless Congress acts now.

Since inception of the Adoption Incentive Program in 1998, more than 440,000 adoptions have been completed from foster care throughout the country.<sup>[ii]</sup> The program provides states financial bonuses for increasing the number of adoptions over a baseline year. States have received more than \$211 million in adoption incentive funds that they have been able to reinvest and help even more foster children secure homes.

Another important resource that encourages adoptions from foster care is federal adoption assistance, which is provided to some children who leave foster care to adoptive families. This monthly support to adoptive families has helped boost adoption rates from foster care and decrease the length of time children spend in care. Studies have found that the availability of adoption subsidies is the most important determinant of adoptions of children in foster care.<sup>[v]</sup> In a recent survey of adoptive and prospective adoptive parents, 81 percent reported that the availability of subsidy was important to their decision to adopt, and 58 percent said they could not adopt without a subsidy.<sup>[vi]</sup>

Adoption subsidies play an important role in encouraging adoptions of older youth—particularly those in danger of aging out—however, federal subsidies are not provided for every child. Unfortunately, only children whose birth parents' income meets the eligibility requirements of a now defunct welfare program or who qualify for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program are eligible for federal adoption assistance. Reauthorizing the Adoption Incentive Program and expanding eligibility for federal adoption assistance will help ensure that more of these children find the families they need before they age out.

## **PREVENT AGING OUT BY PROVIDING FEDERAL RELATIVE GUARDIANSHIP SUPPORT**

For many children in foster care, a supported legal guardianship with a relative or another caring adult can provide a way out of the system to a safe, permanent family. When it is necessary to remove children from their parents because of abuse or neglect, research shows foster placements with relatives are good for children—they are less likely to change schools and more likely to be placed with their brothers and sisters.<sup>xiv</sup> For many children in the care of relatives, adoption is not the right option when they cannot return to their birth parents. Guardianship gives legal rights to a child's caregiver so that he or she can permanently care for the child and make decisions about education and health needs. Without guardianship, some children will likely languish in care until they age out. While in care, their lives can be difficult; without case worker approval, they cannot go to doctors, on field trips, or even to sleepovers with friends.



## NEVER TOO OLD FOR A FAMILY

ANDREW CRANDALL, *Connecticut*



ANDREW CRANDALL,  
*Connecticut*

*Andrew first entered foster care at age 11 and remained in care for eight years. He was moved to four different placements—first a shelter, then a foster home with a family he did not know, and then a kinship placement with his aunt and uncle. At 13, Andrew moved in with his current foster family, where he has lived for the past six years.*

*Andrew and his foster family know that they are there for one another, forever, and decided 4 months ago to begin the adoption process, to make this permanent commitment a legal one as well.*

*“My foster parents have been there for me every step of the way, and have played an active role in my life, my schooling and in any activities I have been interested in,” he says.*

*“I became interested in the Scouts, and, with my dad’s help, I became an Eagle Scout. I would not have been able to do this without my father.” Andrew credits his successes, including graduating from high school, entering college and obtaining a driver’s license to the support of his foster parents.*

*Andrew speaks powerfully both about the meaning of family, and the impact of not having supportive adults in one’s life. His older brother left foster care at 18, and, in the five years since, he has experienced difficulty securing a job and permanent housing. He was homeless for a short period.*

*“Even though he is older, he doesn’t have the same life skills that I have, and I got these from my family.”*

*Being part of a family means “you have support and help in everything that you do. Having a family means that someone is there to care about you no matter what happens, and that is truly one of the best things.” Andrew’s family has embraced his brother and sister as well. “My brother lived with us when he needed a place to stay, and when my sister got married, she asked my foster father to walk her down the aisle, and he did.”*

*Nineteen-year-old Andrew Crandall is a student at Manchester Community College. A criminal justice major, he would like to one day become a police officer.*

## PREVENT AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN FROM AGING OUT

According to a recent report, American Indian and Alaskan Native children are overrepresented in the nation's foster care system at more than 2.25 times the expected level.<sup>xvii</sup> They are 3.3 times more likely to be in foster care than White children.<sup>xviii</sup> Yet tribal governments are excluded from some of the largest sources of federal child welfare funding. Currently, more than 10,000 American Indian and Alaskan Native children are in state foster care in the U.S. and about another 5,000 children are in tribal foster care.<sup>xix</sup> In 2006, more than 6,000 children of American Indian/Alaska Native descent aged out of care without a family, making up 7 percent of all youth who aged out.<sup>xx</sup>

Because tribes do not have access to Title IV-E, the main source of federal foster care dollars, except by special arrangements that can be difficult to obtain, they receive a patchwork of federal funding dollars, most of which are discretionary and provide extremely low levels of support. As a result, tribal governments, which have the legal authority to care for their children, have limited ability to provide services. They find themselves managing crises rather than responding to the core issues that put children at risk. With direct access to Title IV-E, tribes would have the resources to work more intensively with foster children and their families to achieve permanency and keep youth from aging out of care.

Results from federal demonstration waivers and state-funded subsidized guardianship programs show that providing relatives with financial support and services makes it possible for more children to leave foster care to the permanent care of family.<sup>xxi</sup>

Approximately 124,000 children lived with relatives in foster care in 2006.<sup>xxii</sup> There has been an increase in the number of children leaving foster care to guardianship with relatives as a result of federal subsidized guardianship waivers in some states and state-funded guardianship programs in other states.<sup>xxiii</sup> Nonetheless, nearly 15,000 of these children are in the long-term care of relatives and will not return home.<sup>xxiv</sup> These children could leave the system for good if federal guardianship support existed. Federally supported guardianship would provide relatives—who tend to be older and of modest means—with resources to meet their children's physical, mental health, and developmental needs. Forty states have implemented state-supported guardianship programs, but because of limited state fiscal capacity, these programs often offer lower subsidies than the federal foster care maintenance rates and, like all programs for children, are particularly vulnerable during state budgetary crises. Federal support could eliminate the inequities between foster care payments and the support available for relatives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT YOUTH FROM AGING OUT

It has been 11 years since the last significant reform of the federal foster care system. Foster care reforms currently under consideration in Congress could prevent youth from aging out with no one to rely on, and help place tens of thousands of children in foster care who cannot be safely reunified with their parents with safe, permanent families through adoption or supported guardianship with relatives.

The federal government must enact reforms to give case workers and judges more options in helping children and youth have safe, permanent families through adoption and guardianship when reunification is not possible. Specifically:

1. The Adoption Incentive Program should be reauthorized and enhanced so that states continue to receive support for increasing adoptions from care and can receive the full amount authorized (\$43 million) to invest in further foster care improvements;
2. All children, regardless of their birth parents' income, should be eligible for federal adoption support when they are adopted from foster care;
3. Federal support should be available for relative caregivers who become legal guardians of children in foster care; and
4. Congress should correct the current funding inequity by providing tribes direct access to federal Title IV-E foster care funding.

## LEGISLATIVE POSSIBILITIES IN THE 110th CONGRESS

Several bipartisan bills have been introduced in the 110th Congress that would implement these cost-effective reforms.

- The Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardian Support Act (S. 3038) introduced by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) reauthorizes and improves the adoption incentive program, extends federal post-adoption support for children with special needs by de-linking eligibility for adoption assistance from birth parents' income, and provides federal relative guardianship support.
- The bipartisan Kinship Caregiver Support Act (H.R. 2188/S. 661) helps up to 15,000 children living with relatives leave foster care by allowing use of federal IV-E funds for subsidized guardianships and offers additional resources for relative caregivers. Introduced by Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and Tim Johnson (R-IL).
- The bipartisan Tribal Foster Care and Adoption Access Act of 2007 (S. 1956/ H.R. 4688) provides tribes direct access to federal foster care and adoption funds and creates accountability measures to ensure that tribes meet the needs of the children in their care. Introduced by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) and Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND).
- The bipartisan Adoption Equality Act of 2007 (S. 1462/H.R. 4091) extends federal post-adoption support for children with special needs by de-linking eligibility for adoption assistance from birth parents' income. Introduced by Senator Jay Rockefeller, IV (D-WV) and Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN).
- The bipartisan Foster Care Continuing Opportunities Act (S. 1512) provides federal foster care support to youth beyond age 18 and up to age 21 at state option. Introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA).

In late June, the House acted unanimously to reauthorize the Adoption Incentive Program by passing the bipartisan **Fostering Connections to Success Act** (H.R. 6307) introduced by Representative James McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-CA).<sup>xxviii</sup> The bill helps more children leave foster care for the safe, permanent families they need and deserve and will improve their long-term health and education outcomes. It contains reauthorization of the Adoption Incentive Program, provides states with federal support for relative guardianships, extends foster care to age 21 as a state option, and provides tribes with direct access to Title IV-E funds.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over the foster care system, recently postponed its scheduled mark-up of reform legislation. The mark-up is now set for September 10, 2008. If the Senate fails to act this time, many important, cost-effective, bipartisan and broadly supported foster care reforms will fail to materialize. The legislative window for 2008 and the 110th Congress is rapidly closing. The Senate must act swiftly for the 500,000 children who are still waiting for improvements to the foster care system—improvements that are within reach and are necessary to find families for vulnerable children and youth.

## APPENDIX A

### NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE 1998-2006: WHERE DO THEY GO?

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	1998-2006 TOTAL	% CHANGE 1998- 2006
Reunification	107,001	136,758	147,302	148,715	152,800	152,052	145,516	150,447	152,152	1,292,743	42%
Living with other relatives	16,673	22,616	24,444	25,699	27,832	30,872	31,390	30,913	30,362	240,801	82%
Adoption	26,340	39,173	44,403	44,984	49,255	49,239	50,279	50,721	49,741	404,135	89%
Emancipation or "Aging Out"	<b>11,929</b>	<b>17,909</b>	<b>19,041</b>	<b>18,309</b>	<b>19,614</b>	<b>21,935</b>	<b>22,737</b>	<b>24,109</b>	<b>26,181</b>	<b>181,764</b>	<b>119%</b>
Guardianship	4,077	7,461	8,536	8,006	10,150	10,716	13,764	13,789	14,820	91,319	264%
Transfer to another agency <sup>xxi</sup>	5,720	7,438	7,043	7,467	6,794	6,296	6,261	6,639	6,598	60,256	15%
Runaway	4,964	5,112	5,430	4,981	4,714	4,066	4,672	5,093	4,985	44,017	0.4%
Death of child	406	522	553	524	533	573	480	499	503	4,593	24%
<b>Total exits from fostercare</b>	<b>223,033</b>	<b>249,398</b>	<b>267,483</b>	<b>269,176</b>	<b>281,412</b>	<b>281,651</b>	<b>279,739</b>	<b>285,932</b>	<b>287,691</b>	<b>2,425,515</b>	<b>29%</b>

*Source:* Analysis by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), FY 1998-2006 data.<sup>xxiii</sup>

## APPENDIX B

### STATE DATA ON THE PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH AGING OUT

(OF ALL EXITS IN 2006)

RANKED BY PERCENTAGE WHO AGED OUT

RANK	STATE	TOTAL # OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN 2006	# OF YOUTH WHO AGED OUT	TOTAL # OF EXITS FROM FOSTER CARE IN 2006	PERCENT OF YOUTH WHO AGED OUT OF TOTAL EXITS
1	Virginia	7,843	979	3,044	32.2%
2	Maine	2,076	216	967	22.3%
3	Massachusetts	11,499	1,283	6,747	19.0%
4	DC	1,074	166	941	17.6%
5	Kansas	6,393	421	2,652	15.9%
6	Vermont	1,379	104	729	14.3%
7	Illinois	18,371	783	5,533	14.2%
8	New York	29,973	1,551	13,289	11.7%
9	New Hampshire	1,146	63	557	11.3%
10	Ohio	16,631	1,255	11,285	11.1%
11	Nebraska	6,187	405	3,658	11.1%
12	Utah	2,427	209	1,956	10.7%
13	South Carolina	4,920	347	3,259	10.6%
14	Tennessee	8,618	718	6,841	10.5%
15	Kentucky	7,606	591	5,690	10.4%
16	California	78,373	3,889	40,144	9.7%
17	Wisconsin	7,641	513	5,276	9.7%
18	Minnesota	7,156	698	7,248	9.6%
19	Texas	30,848	1,399	14,695	9.5%
20	Delaware	2,368	72	791	9.1%
21	Louisiana	5,213	293	3,386	8.7%
22	North Carolina	11,115	469	5,577	8.4%
23	Michigan	20,142	718	8,695	8.3%
24	Iowa	9,040	433	5,279	8.2%
25	West Virginia	4,226	208	2,581	8.1%
26	New Jersey	10,594	552	6,993	7.9%
27	Pennsylvania	21,135	1,051	13,307	7.9%
28	Arkansas	3,434	278	3,621	7.7%
29	Hawaii	2,355	152	2,008	7.6%
30	Oklahoma	11,816	477	6,313	7.6%
31	Rhode Island	2,842	119	1,582	7.5%
32	Alaska	2,017	52	689	7.5%
33	Georgia	13,175	790	10,513	7.5%
34	Maryland	11,505	116	1,329	7.3%
35	Arizona	9,731	518	7,171	7.2%
36	Montana	1,962	91	1,288	7.1%
37	Florida	29,229	1,488	21,238	7.0%
38	North Dakota	1,331	61	881	6.9%
39	Idaho	1,850	98	1,471	6.7%
40	Colorado	8,139	427	6,896	6.2%
41	Washington	10,457	382	6,163	6.2%
42	Missouri	10,181	379	6,376	5.9%
43	New Mexico	2,357	121	2,061	5.9%
44	Nevada	5,047	204	3,468	5.8%
45	South Dakota	1,648	74	1,359	5.4%
46	Oregon	10,661	295	5,475	5.4%
47	Alabama	7,157	174	3,474	5.0%
48	Indiana	11,384	328	6,716	4.9%
49	Wyoming	1,301	44	1,045	4.2%
50	Mississippi	3,203	75	1,943	3.9%
51	Connecticut	7,448	25	1,970	1.3%
	National	504,224	26,154	286,170	9.1%

*Source:* Analysis by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2006 Data.

## APPENDIX C

### STATE DATA ON THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN FOSTER CARE FOR YOUTH AGING OUT

RANK	STATE	TIME IN CARE BEFORE AGING OUT (MONTHS)	TIME IN CARE BEFORE AGING OUT (YEARS)	TIME IN CARE FOR ALL WHO EXITED (MONTHS)	TIME IN CARE FOR ALL WHO EXITED (YEARS)
1	Illinois	119.9	10	46.3	4
2	DC	93.0	8	42.8	4
3	New York	92.2	8	37.9	3
4	Alabama	82.5	7	21.1	2
5	New Hampshire	81.9	7	30.2	3
6	California	81.3	7	26.8	2
7	Missouri	79.8	7	24.0	2
8	Oregon	78.4	7	23.6	2
9	Maryland	77.3	6	32.0	3
10	Mississippi	75.4	6	19.9	2
11	Nevada	74.4	6	17.7	1
12	Montana	73.1	6	21.6	2
13	Louisiana	71.4	6	19.3	2
14	Connecticut	71.2	6	25.2	2
15	Rhode Island	68.1	6	19.7	2
16	Maine	68.0	6	39.5	3
17	South Dakota	67.6	6	14.2	1
18	South Carolina	66.8	6	19.1	2
19	Wisconsin	63.1	5	22.5	2
20	Michigan	62.5	5	27.3	2
21	West Virginia	61.9	5	23.3	2
22	Pennsylvania	60.7	5	22.2	2
23	Washington	60.2	5	18.3	2
24	Texas	59.9	5	21.6	2
25	Massachusetts	58.8	5	28.4	2
26	Georgia	58.4	5	18.1	2
27	New Jersey	57.7	9	25.8	2
28	Minnesota	55.5	5	12.6	1
29	Indiana	55.4	5	18.2	2
30	Ohio	54.8	5	19.0	2
31	Colorado	54.8	5	14.5	1
32	Oklahoma	54.2	5	20.1	2
33	New Mexico	53.7	4	13.7	1
34	Arizona	52.5	4	15.8	1
35	Florida	51.2	4	19.3	2
36	North Carolina	50.2	4	21.7	2
37	Arkansas	47.7	4	11.6	1
38	Vermont	47.5	4	24.0	2
39	Virginia	47.4	4	28.2	2
40	Iowa	46.4	4	19.4	2
41	Kansas	45.4	4	24.5	2
42	North Dakota	44.7	4	16.7	1
43	Delaware	44.5	4	12.8	1
44	Utah	43.8	4	14.6	1
45	Idaho	41.8	3	13.2	1
46	Kentucky	41.4	3	15.3	1
47	Hawaii	40.8	3	18.0	2
48	Alaska	39.8	3	20.4	2
49	Nebraska	39.3	3	22.0	2
50	Tennessee	35.8	3	18.7	2
51	Wyoming	28.3	2	12.9	1
	<b>National</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>

Time in care before aging out was calculated by using the total lifetime length of stay in care for youth aging out who had either one or two foster care entries (a group representing 90% of youth aging out).

Time in care for all who exited was calculated by using the total lifetime length of stay in care for all exits for children with either one or two foster care entries (a group representing 95% of the exits from foster care).

**Source:** Analysis by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2006 data.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A 2007 Kids Are Waiting Report titled "Aging Out and on Their Own" showed a 41% increase in the number of youth emancipating or "aging out" from foster care from 1998-2005. Revised data now available from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems (NCANDS), a federal data warehouse, shows the 1998 to 2005 increase was 102%. For the period between 1998 and 2006, there is a 119% increase in the number of youth aging out of foster care.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Courtney, Amy Dworsky, Gretchen Cusick, Judy Havlicek, Alfred Perez, Tom Keller, "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21." Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, (December 2007): 68-70.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Pecora, Ronald Kessler, Jason Williams, Kirk O'Brien, Chris Downs, Diana English, James White, Eva Hiripi, Catherine White, Tamera Wiggins, & Kate Holmes, "Improving Foster Family Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study." Casey Family Programs, (2005). <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NorthwestAlumniStudy.htm> (accessed August 15, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> M.B. Kushel, I. H. Yen, L. Gee, & M.E. Courtney, "Homelessness and Health Care Access After Emancipation: Results From the Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth." *Archives of Pediatric Medicine* 161 no. 10 (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Pecora et al. "Improving Foster Family Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study."

<sup>6</sup> National Conference on State Legislatures, "Reauthorization of the Adoption Incentive Payments Program." (December 2003). <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/adoptact.htm> (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. The AFCARS Report: Preliminary Estimates for FY 2006 as of January 2008. [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm) (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Mark Courtney et al. "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21."

<sup>9</sup> Peter Pecora et al. "Improving Foster Family Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study."

<sup>10</sup> M.B. Kushel et al. "Homelessness and Health Care Access After Emancipation: Results From the Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth."

<sup>11</sup> Peter Pecora et al. "Improving Foster Family Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study."

<sup>12</sup> Sonya Leathers & Mark Testa, "Foster Youth Emancipating from Care: Caseworkers' Reports on Needs and Services." *Child Welfare*, 85 no. 3 (2006): 463-498.

<sup>13</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, "Federal Leadership in Promoting Adoption and Other Permanency Outcomes." Report to Congress on Adoption and Other Permanency Outcomes for Children in Foster Care: Focus on Older Children (2005). [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/congress\\_adopt/leadership.htm#asfa](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/congress_adopt/leadership.htm#asfa) (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Pew's Kids Are Waiting Campaign, "Total Finalized Adoptions and Number of Children Waiting to be Adopted by State (FY1998- FY2006)." <http://www.kidsarewaiting.org/assets/docs/State%20by%20state%20adoptions> (accessed on August 20, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Bradley Hansen & Mary Hansen, An Economic Analysis of the Adoption of Children from Foster Care. *Child Welfare*, 85 no.3 (2006): 559-583.

<sup>17</sup> Children's Rights, National Foster Parent Association & North American Council on Adoptable Children, "Ending the foster care life sentence: The critical need for adoption subsidies." New York, NY: Children's Rights (2006). <http://www.childrensrights.org/pdfs/FINAL%20ADOPTION%20SUBSIDY%20DATA%20REPORT.doc.pdf> (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Dalberth, Deborah Gibbs & Nancy Berkman, "Understanding adoption subsidies: An analysis of AFCARS data." Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (January 2005). <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/05/adoption-subsidies/report.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Children's Rights, National Foster Parent Association & North American Council on Adoptable Children, "Ending the foster care life sentence: The critical need for adoption subsidies."

<sup>20</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, "Children in Public Foster Care Waiting to be Adopted: FY 1999-2006." (2008) [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/waiting2006.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/waiting2006.htm) (accessed August 12, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Pew's Kids Are Waiting Campaign, "State by State Facts." <http://www.kidsarewaiting.org/publications/statefacts> (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Fred Wolczyn & Emily Zimmerman, "Sibling placements in longitudinal perspective." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27 (2005): 741-763.

<sup>23</sup> Pew's Kids Are Waiting Campaign. "Time for Reform: Support Relatives in Providing Foster Care and Permanent Families for Children." (2007). <http://www.kidsarewaiting.org/tools/reports/files/0004.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary Estimates for FY 2006 as of January 2008.

<sup>25</sup> There was a 264% increase between 1998 and 2006 in the percentage of children exiting foster care to guardianship. See Appendix A.

<sup>26</sup> Pew's Kids are Waiting Campaign, "Strengthening Families Through Guardianship: Issue Brief." (2008). <http://www.kidsarewaiting.org/tools/reports/files/0017.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2008). The estimate for the number of children living with relatives in foster care who could leave foster care today (nearly 15,000) was calculated

by examining the number of children living with relatives in foster care for more than 12 months without a case goal of reunification or adoption. If we were to apply an additional criterion that the children had been in foster care 17 of the last 22 months, the estimate drops to 13,500.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. "African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care." (2007). <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf> (August 26, 2008).

<sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxi</sup> National Conference on State Legislatures, "Reauthorization of the Adoption Incentive Payments Program." (December 2003).  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/adoptact.htm> (accessed August 20, 2008).

<sup>xxii</sup> Rep. Jim McDermott (WA-D), "House Passes McDermott-Weller Foster Care Legislation: Most Significant Reform in Over a Decade." (June 24, 2008).  
<http://www.house.gov/mcdermott/pr080624b.shtm> (accessed August 12, 2008).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Transfer to another agency refers to the transfer of children and youth primarily to mental health agencies or juvenile justice agencies.

<sup>xxiv</sup> AFCARS reports can be found at: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/index.htm#afcars](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm#afcars)

For more information, visit:

KIDS ARE WAITING: FIX FOSTER CARE NOW  
[www.kidsarewaiting.org](http://www.kidsarewaiting.org)

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. We partner with a diverse range of donors, public and private organizations and concerned citizens who share our commitment to fact-based solutions and goal-driven investments to improve society.

An independent nonprofit, the Trusts is the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew.

© 2008 The Pew Charitable Trusts. All rights reserved.

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS  
2005 Market Street, Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077  
215.575.9050

1025 F Street NW, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20004-1409  
202.552.2000

[www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org)





**KIDS ARE WAITING**  
Fix Foster Care Now

[www.kidsarewaiting.org](http://www.kidsarewaiting.org)  
[info@kidsarewaiting.org](mailto:info@kidsarewaiting.org)