

Washington State Foster Care: The Children

On any given day in 2008, there were about 10,000 children in foster care or other out-of-home care.¹ Here are some highlights about these children.

Ages

Of the children in care at a point in time, 38% are under five years old and only 7% are infants.

However, the children who enter care for the first time are younger. Almost half of these children are less than five years old, and about one fifth are infants. This isn't surprising, because very young children and infants are especially vulnerable.

AGE	FIRST TIME ENTRY INTO CARE ²	CHILDREN IN CARE AT A POINT IN TIME ³
Infants	22%	7%
1-4years	23%	31%
5-8 years	16%	20%
9-12 years	14%	16%
13-15 years	17%	13%
16 and older	8%	13%

Where children in out-of-home care live⁴

Children in care can live in a variety of situations including:

- Foster home with unrelated adults: 49.7%
- Foster home with relatives: 38.3%
- Group home: 4.2%

Race and ethnicity

At any point in time, there are higher percentages of African American and Native American children in

our child welfare system than in the general population. This disparity tends to occur at the front end of the system (when children enter care). Although race and ethnicity does affect the length of time children are out of home, other factors — such as age, reason and type of placement — play important roles too. More information about racial disproportionality in Washington State can be found at www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/about/disproportion.asp.

Why children are removed from home⁵

Sometimes it's a combination of factors that lead to removal of a child from home. The top reasons reported by social workers are:

- Neglect: 57.0%
- Parental substance abuse: 25.7%
- Physical abuse: 16.9%
- Child behavior: 16.9%
- Parent in jail: 6.4%
- Sexual abuse: 4.3%

What happens to these children

Within two years, 68% return home and 37% go home within one month.⁶

Adolescents go home the fastest, while infants reunify at less than half the rate of teens.

1 Children's Administration Performance Report 2008 | 2 CAMIS FY 2008: First entries into care | 3 CAMIS CY 2008: Point in time – January 1, 2 009 | 4 CAMIS FY 2008: Point in time – July 1, 2008 | 5 CAMIS FY 2008: All entries | 6 CAMIS 1998-2008: First entries into care

Partners for Our Children is committed to improving the lives of Washington state foster children through rigorous research, analysis and evidence-based innovation. The organization, founded in 2007, is a collaborative effort of the University of Washington School of Social Work, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and private funders.

For more information, email info@partnersforourchildren.org or call 206.221.3100.