

AT A GLANCE: Child Welfare in Oklahoma

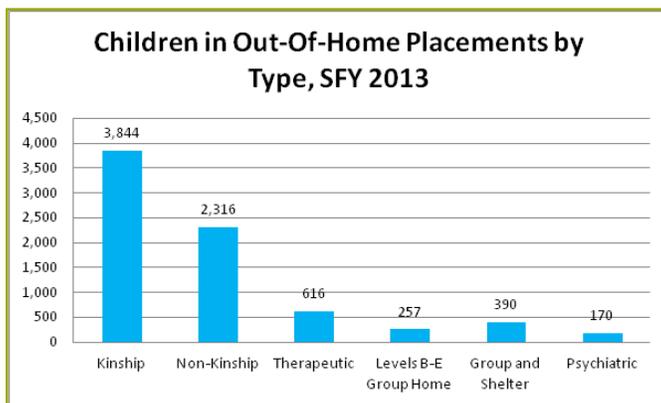


The number of children coming into contact with the child welfare system has been increasing in recent years. More children are being removed from their homes and are staying in custody rather than quickly being reunited with their birth parents. Oklahoma continues to struggle to address the many issues children encounter far too often in our state. Oklahoma is among the worst in the nation for household and family dysfunction. The state currently ranks: #2 for highest divorce rates, #4 for overall imprisonment, #1 for incarceration of women, #2 for the number of adults struggling with mental illness, and #3 for the number of women killed by men. The connection between such childhood stress and trauma and the quality of life in adulthood shows a bleak outlook for Oklahoma's future growth and stability.

National Perspective

- National trends indicate a steady decline in child maltreatment rates, dropping from 10.3/1,000 in 2008 to 9.9/1,000 in 2011. The majority of decline has been seen in the physical and sexual abuse categories.¹
- Minority children are frequently over-represented in the child welfare system.¹
- One-third of all maltreatment reports are for children under 3 years, and nearly 60% of maltreatment reports are for children under 7 years. The overwhelming majority (70%) of reports are made for neglect.¹ Such treatment of young children has lasting impacts on early childhood brain development due to toxic stress.
- Nationally, children who died as a result of maltreatment, had parents with risk factors for certain behaviors including alcohol/drug abuse (23.6%) and domestic violence (20.1%).²
- Studies have shown anywhere between 26% and 85% of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have past child welfare involvement. These children often have higher recidivism rates than juveniles with no past child welfare history.³
- Foster care children have more serious and complex physical health, mental health and developmental problems than children who are not in foster care. An estimated 30% to 80% of foster children have chronic medical conditions, with an estimated 1 in 4 foster children having three or more chronic conditions.⁴

- Nearly 1 in 3 children (30%) in an out-of-home placement was moved three or more times within the first year during FFY 2012.⁵
- The use of shelters for placing children removed from homes increased 11.0% for 6-12 year olds and 19.0% for children 13 years and older since 2012-2013.⁵
- One in five children who were victims of child abuse and neglect in Oklahoma in 2012 had a reported disability, including: behavioral problems (1.3%); emotional disturbances (5.6%); learning disabilities (5.0%); intellectual and physical disabilities (1.1%); or other medical conditions (7.1%).²
- A little more than 1,300 children were adopted out of foster care during SFY 2013. Nearly 3 out of 4 children (72.3%) waiting to be adopted have been in care more than 2 years.¹

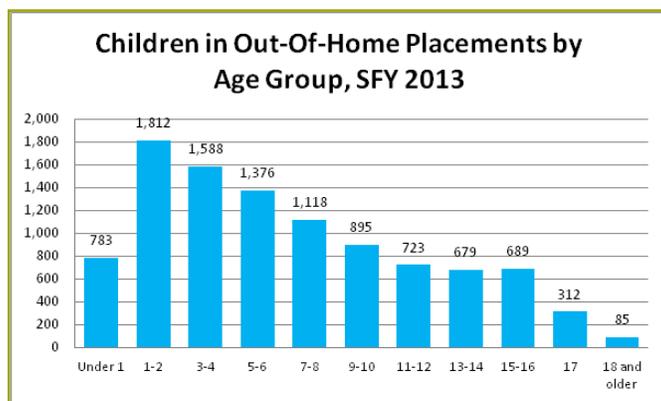


Source: Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services

Oklahoma Perspective

More than 128,000 Oklahoma children were alleged victims of abuse and neglect during SFY 2013. Just over 11,000 of these reports were substantiated. On average, more than 10,000 Oklahoma children were in an out-of-home placement during any given month of SFY 2013, with 10,233 children in custody on June 30, 2013. Of these children:

- Approximately 1 in 3 were being cared for by relatives (38%), 1 in 4 were with unrelated caregivers (23%), and 6% were in a therapeutic foster home.
- The majority of children in out-of-home placements are under the age of 7 years (55%).



Source: Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

To improve the long-term outlook for Oklahoma's most vulnerable children, we must:

- Improve communication and data sharing between state agencies, child-serving organizations and tribal child welfare services;
- Increase family supports available to those families struggling, such as home visitation programs, parenting classes and mental health treatment; and
- Increase and improve the number and types of placement options for children in custody, including therapeutic foster homes which are essential to helping children traumatized by abuse and neglect heal.



	White	Black	American Indian	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Percent of population <18yrs (2011)	55.5%	8.3%	10.5%	14.7%	1.7%	9.1%
Children confirmed as victims of maltreatment (2011)	44.1%	9.7%	7.4%	15.1%	0.2%	23.5%
Children waiting for adoption (2011)	36.4%	17.3%	7.7%	15.0%	0.1%	23.4%
Children Adopted (2011)	36.4%	13.8%	9.1%	20.5%	<0.1%	20.0%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services; Child Welfare Outcomes Report to Congress, 2008-2011

A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report found that between 2008 and 2011:

- Children of two or more races were over-represented in the child welfare and foster care systems. These children make up 9.1% of Oklahoma's child population, but represent 23.5% of all confirmed victims of child maltreatment.¹
- About 300 Oklahoma children a year "age out" of foster care, meaning they turn 18 years old without having been adopted or reunited with their birth families. Nearly 2 out of 3 of these children (61.4%) entered foster care after the age of 12.¹

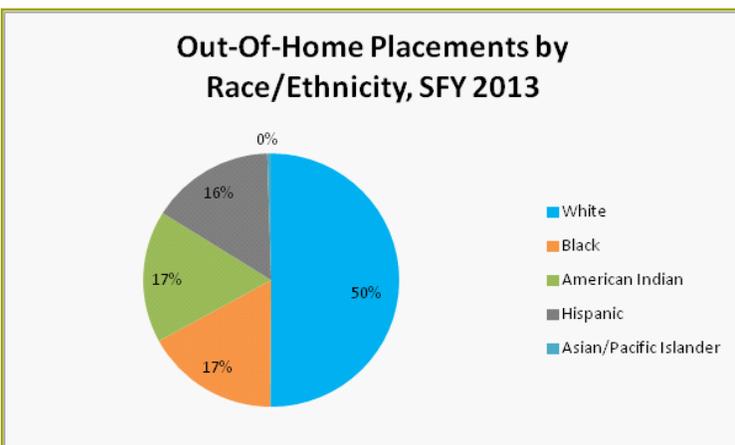
Lasting Consequences

Abuse and neglect occurring during infancy and early childhood actually change the way a child's brain develops. Studies have shown that chronic toxic stress:

- May alter the brain's chemicals creating imbalances in things like serotonin production throughout a child's lifetime;
- Result in underdeveloped regions of the brain used for complex thought and abstract cognition; and
- Stunt development by depriving children of the necessary brain stimulation for strong neuronal pathways.

Such conditions result in children not achieving normal developmental milestones and may lead to long-term health and social consequences.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study, shows a relationship exists between negative childhood experiences, including instances of maltreatment, and the origins of risk behaviors that evolve into the leading causes of disease and disability in adulthood, including: alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, heart disease and other common chronic illness. Prevention, intervention and treatment are vital to mitigating these effects as children grow into adults.



Source: Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services

Data Sources:

- 1 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Child Welfare Outcomes 2008-2011; Report to Congress.
- 2 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Child Maltreatment 2012.
- 3 Models for Change, Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration.
- 4 "Comprehensive Assessments for Children Entering Foster Care: A National Perspective," Pediatrics, July 2003.
- 5 Co-Neutral Commentary Two Report, Issued April 2014.
- 6 OKDHS Annual Report, SFY 2013.
- 7 U.S. Department of Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development, 2009.

