



Foster Care in Washington

- In Fiscal Year 2006, the administration provided services to almost 19,100 children who were in out-of-home care for at least one day during the year. At any given time during Fiscal Year 2006, about 9,600 children were living in an out-of-home placement. Over 3,600 of those children were cared for by relatives, while 6,000 were placed with unrelated caregivers. An additional 2,900 children were cared for in guardianships supervised by the administration, and over 1,400 of those children were in a guardianship with their relatives.
- Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2006
- Washington State's foster care system is currently subject to improvements mandated by the settlement of a class-action lawsuit filed in 1998. Under the direction of an outside panel (the Braam Oversight Panel) created in 2004, the state must meet agreed-upon benchmarks for improving placement stability, mental health services, foster parent training and information, safety and appropriateness of foster care placements, sibling separation and services to adolescents.
- www.braampanel.org
- African American children make up 4.2 percent of the general population in Washington State but 10.5 percent of children in foster care.
- Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2006
- In Washington, Native American children make up 2 percent of the child population and 8.4 percent of children in foster care.
- National Indian Child Welfare Association and Kids Are Waiting, 2007
- In King County, African American and Native American children are over-represented at nearly every decision point in the child welfare system. Although these two groups of children represent only 8% of the child population in King County, they account for one-third of all children removed from their homes and one-half of children in foster care for more than four years.
- King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality, 2005
- In 2005, more than one-third of children in foster care had been there for longer than two years. This represents a decrease from 1997, when 44% of foster children had been in care more than two years. One in six children in foster care was moved to three or more homes within the first year. Nearly 37% of children in foster care in Washington State were living with relatives.
- Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2005
- In Washington State about 400 children a year "age out" of foster care, meaning they turn 18 years old without having been adopted or reunited with their birth families.
- Washington Education Foundation, 2006
- A study of foster care alumni from the Northwest found that the majority faced significant challenges in the areas of mental health, education, employment and finances. More than half of the 659 alumni studied had clinical levels of at least one mental health problem, one in four experienced Post-traumatic stress disorder in the prior year, only 16% completed a vocational degree, more than one in five experienced homelessness after leaving foster care, and one-third had no health insurance.
- "The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study," Casey Family Programs, 2005

- An estimated 50-75% of school-aged children who enter foster care must leave their school districts because foster homes are not available near their current homes. Academic experts estimate that children lose up to 4-6 months of progress every time their education is interrupted by a change of schools.
- Washington Education Foundation, 2006
- 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 30-80% of foster children have chronic medical conditions, with an estimated 25% of foster children having 3 or more chronic conditions.
- "Comprehensive Assessments for Children Entering Foster Care: A National Perspective", Pediatrics, July, 2003
- The most recent data from the Braam oversight panel indicates that the department has made improvements in reducing the number of placements experienced by children in care and improving retention of foster parents, although an increase in the number of children coming into the foster care system has offset the increase in foster homes. In 2007, 26.5% of foster children moved more than two times between foster homes, Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) screens were completed within 30 days for fewer than half of foster children, and 58% of children in foster care were kept in the same home with all of their siblings.
- Braam Performance Report, FY05-FY07, www.braampanel.org