



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

## Infants and Toddlers in the Child Welfare System A Quick Overview

- Children under age 4 are the largest cohort of children entering foster care: Infants alone represent 16% of the children entering foster care. Children from birth through age 3 account for 34% of those children entering care<sup>1</sup> even though they only account for 22% of the child population<sup>2</sup>.
- They are more likely to be abused and neglected than older children. Maltreatment is highest during the first week of life. Among those infants experiencing non-fatal maltreatment in 2006, 33% were less than eight days old.<sup>3</sup>
- Children under four account for 77% of child fatalities from abuse and neglect.<sup>4</sup>
- Children younger than 4 are 32% more likely to be placed in foster care than children ages 4 to 11.<sup>5</sup>
- Among infants leaving foster care to return to the care of their parents, 33% return to placement.<sup>6</sup>
- Once they have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care, infants stay in foster care longer than older children.<sup>7</sup>
- Children awaiting adoption are spending more than three years in foster care on average.<sup>8</sup> For infants, this represents their entire early childhood.
- All young children involved in a child maltreatment investigation (whether OR NOT the allegations are substantiated) are far 4 to 5 times more likely than the general population to experience multiple developmental delays that make them eligible for publicly funded early intervention services.<sup>9, 10</sup>
- More than 400,000 children under the age of five have a parent in jail.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 6,600 babies are born to mothers who were imprisoned during their pregnancies.<sup>12</sup>
- Substance abuse is a factor in as many as 67% of child maltreatment cases.<sup>13</sup>
- Every year, more than 2.6 million babies are born to mothers who drank alcohol during pregnancy<sup>14</sup> and 40,000 of those babies are born with birth defects.<sup>15</sup>
- More than 2 million children under six live with one or more alcoholic parents.<sup>16</sup>
- Some 460,000 babies are exposed to illegal drugs in utero each year.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Children's Bureau (January 2008). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2006 Estimates as of January 2008 (14). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,

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Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved on May 1, 2008 from [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)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2008). *Table 3-9 Age Group of Victims, 2006. Child Maltreatment 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved on September 9, 2008 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/table3\\_9.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/table3_9.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Brodowski, M.L., Nolan, C.M., Gaudiosi, J.A., Yuan, Y.Y., Zikratova, L., Oritz, M.J., Aveni, M.M., Leeb, R.T., Simon, T.R., Hammond, W.R. (April 4, 2008). *Nonfatal Maltreatment of Infants --- United States, October 2005--September 2006*. *MMWR Weekly*, Vol 57, No. 13, pages 336-339.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2008). *Figure 4-1 Age of Child Fatalities, 2006. Child Maltreatment 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved on September 9, 2008 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/figure4\\_1.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/figure4_1.htm).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2006). *Table 6-8 Factors Related to Victims Receiving Postinvestigation Services and Foster Care, 2004. Child Maltreatment 2004*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved on September 9, 2008 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/table6\\_8.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/table6_8.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Austin, M.J., Anthony, E.K., Kimberlin, S. (2008). *Foster Care Re-Entry: Evidence and Implications. Evidence for Practice*, No. 11. Berkeley, CA: University of California at Berkeley, School of Social Welfare. Page 7.

<sup>7</sup> Wulczyn, F. & Hislop, K. (2002). Babies in foster care: *The numbers call for attention. ZERO TO THREE Journal*, Vol.22, No. 4, pages 14-15. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

<sup>8</sup> Children's Bureau (January 2008). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2006 Estimates as of January 2008 (14). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved on May 1, 2008 from [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)

<sup>9</sup> Stahmer, A.C., Leslie, L.K., Hurlburt, M., Barth, R.P., Webb, M.B., Landsverk, J., and Zhang, J. (2005) *Developmental and Behavioral Needs and Service Use for Young Children in Child Welfare. Pediatrics*, vol. 116, no. 4. Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics. Pages 891-900.

<sup>10</sup> Stahmer et al. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> LaVigne, N.G., Davies, E., Brazzell, D. (2008). Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Joint Policy Center. Retrieved on October 16, 2008 from <http://www.aaccf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={4BD33365-508B-407C-BE2D-50CC41154726}>

<sup>12</sup> Parke, R., Clarke-Stewart, K.A. (2002). *Effects of Parental Incarceration on Young Children* [Papers prepared for the "From Prison to Home Conference (January 30-31, 2002). Riverside, California: University of California. Retrieved on October 16, 2008 from [http://www.fcnetwork.org/reading/parke\\_ParentalIncarceration.pdf](http://www.fcnetwork.org/reading/parke_ParentalIncarceration.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway (December 2003). *Substance Abuse and Child Maltreatment*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau/ACYF. Retrieved May 22, 2007 from [www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/subabuse\\_childmal.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/subabuse_childmal.cfm).

<sup>14</sup> Brady, J.P., Posner, M., Lang, C., Rosati, M.J. (1994). *Risk and Reality: The Implications of Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol and Other Drugs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/cyp/drugkids.htm> on June 29, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (July 20-21, 2005). *Hope for Women in Recovery: Understanding and Addressing the Impact of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure* (Summit Proceedings: Raleigh, NC). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/ US HHS. Retrieved from [http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov/documents/WiR\\_Proceedings\\_Raleigh\\_V2.pdf](http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov/documents/WiR_Proceedings_Raleigh_V2.pdf) on June 29, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Grant, B.F. (2000). *Estimates of U.S. children exposed to alcohol abuse and dependence in the family. American Journal of Public Health*, 90, 112-115.

<sup>17</sup> Brady, J.P. et al (1994). Op cit.