



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### A Review of FY 2018's Foster Care and Adoption Statistics

October 25, 2019 – Alexandria, VA – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released their Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data for FY 2018, capturing data from October 1, 2017, to September 30, 2018.<sup>1</sup> The report has collected statistics about children in foster care annually since FY 1998.

National Council For Adoption (NCFA) is encouraged to see that **the number of children in foster care has declined** for the first time since FY 2012. After rising 11% over the course of five consecutive years, the number of children in foster care fell to 437,283—a slight (-0.9%) decrease from FY 2017. For reference, the highest number of children in care in the 21-year history of the report was 567,000 children in FY 1999.

For the majority of the children in care, the goal is to reunite them with biological parents, family members, or guardians. While NCFA's mission focuses on adoption, we certainly recognize the efforts of over 100,000 families and the social services professionals who supported them toward successful reunification this year. When safe and stable reunification is *not* possible, adoption can provide a child with a loving, permanent home. Unfortunately, **the number of children waiting to be adopted has risen** for the past six consecutive years and is now at a 10-year high, with more than 125,000 waiting children. For every child who was adopted in FY 2018, two children were left waiting.

The AFCARS report shows that more American families are responding to the call to adopt, as **63,123 children were adopted from foster care** in FY 2018—a 6% increase in the past year and the highest number of adoptions in the history of the report.

"We are grateful to see that the number of children entering care has declined. We hope this trend will continue and that fewer children will experience the shattering effects of trauma and neglect," says NCFA president and CEO Chuck Johnson. "The number of adoptions from foster care has grown over the past four years, to the highest level we've ever seen in our country. If your family welcomed a child into your home this year, *thank you*. These children—who have faced unfathomable challenges in their young lives—now have a chance to blossom with your loving support. And if you've considered adopting through foster care, take the first step today and contact a public agency in your state. A child might be waiting for *you*."

### Aging Out

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<sup>1</sup> "New data show 1<sup>st</sup> foster care decrease since 2011, record number of adoptions." Administration for Children and Families/HHS. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/media/press/2019/new-data-show-1st-foster-care-decrease-since-2011-record-number-of-adoptions>

**The number of youth who aged out of care fell** a significant 11% in just the past year. At 17,844, the number of emancipated youth is now the lowest since FY 1998, which was the first year that data was collected by the AFCARS report.<sup>2</sup> This significant 20-year low is in part due to increased efforts to find adoptive families for older youth as well as efforts by states to expand foster care services to the age of 21. According to the Children’s Bureau, most of the youth reported as “emancipated” in the AFCARS dataset are those who age out at 18 or younger. Due to the report’s methodology, most youth who age out of care *beyond* the age of 18 are not included in the AFCARS report. NCFCA advocates for all states to extend services beyond the age of 18 in order to better support these young people as they transition into adulthood. Without the support of a family, these services are vital.<sup>3</sup>

## **Foster Care and Substance Abuse**

AFCARS has included the circumstances associated with a child’s removal from his or her home since FY 2015.<sup>4</sup> In four years, parental drug abuse grew 10% from 86,000 in FY 2015 to just over 94,000 in FY 2018. **The number of parental drug abuse cases fell slightly** in the past year, and it is NCFCA’s hope that, as the opioid epidemic continues, more families battling substance abuse will seek and have access to the support they need to move beyond addiction.

## **State Statistics**

The AFCARS report also includes a national dataset with state-by-state data.<sup>5</sup> This year, NCFCA would like to recognize **New Hampshire** for nearly doubling their adoptions in the past year. **Alabama, Kansas, Minnesota, and Montana** also made significant strides in increasing adoptions in FY 2018.

NCFCA is conducting a longitudinal foster care study in several states with a goal to improve the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents. It is our goal that this study will provide states with actionable best practices to better serve children and families.

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## **ABOUT NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION**

*Founded in 1980, National Council For Adoption (NCFCA) is a global adoption advocacy nonprofit that promotes a culture of adoption through education, research, legislative action, and collaboration. As the authoritative voice for adoption, NCFCA’s areas of focus include domestic infant adoption, adoption and permanency outcomes for youth in foster care, and intercountry adoption. Passionately committed to the belief that every child deserves to thrive in a nurturing, permanent family, NCFCA serves children, birth parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and adoption professionals. In addition, we work tirelessly to educate U.S. and foreign government officials and policymakers, members of the media, and all those in the general public with an interest in adoption.*

For more information, visit [www.AdoptionCouncil.org](http://www.AdoptionCouncil.org).

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<sup>2</sup> The AFCARS Report: Final Estimates for FY 1998 through FY 2002. October 2006.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport12.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Extension of Foster Care Beyond Age 18.” Child Welfare Information Gateway. Children’s Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS. February 2017. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/extensionfc.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The AFCARS Report. June 2016. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcars\\_state\\_data\\_tables\\_09thru18.xlsx](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcars_state_data_tables_09thru18.xlsx)