National Center for Enhanced Post-Adoption Support

Calculating Foster Care Re-Entries

Center Chat – October 16, 2024

Child Trends®

About you

Utility of assessing families' post-permanency stability

- Tracking post-permanency stability over time

- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

- Evaluation

- <u>Possible</u> future federal regulations
  - House Resolution 9076 to reauthorize and modify Part B of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (on tracking families post permanency)

Incidence of post-permanency instability: What we know from research

- Adoptions from foster care
  - 5-20% re-enter foster care
  - 1-10% dissolve
  - 10-25% disrupt
- Guardianship
  - 1-17% dissolve

Source: Children's Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS. (2021.) Discontinuity and Disruption in Adoptions and Guardianship. Numbers and Trends: August 2021. https://cwig-prod-prod-drupal-s3fs-us-east-1.s3.amazonaws.com/public/documents/s_discon.pdf

Discontinuity can be calculated for 3 groups of children

1. Children previously discharged to adoption or guardianship experiencing instability in FY of latest available data

2. Children discharged to adoption or guardianship in a specific prior time frame

3. Children currently under 18 ever adopted/in guardianship

Current caseload of children experiencing instability

Cohort of children joining post-permanency population

Overall post-permanency population during current year

1. Adoptive/guardianship children in care as of latest available data

- <u>Children in care at the end of the year</u>: Useful for understanding the number of children experiencing family instability at a given point in time.

- <u>Children in care at any time during the year</u>: Useful for estimating annual cost of foster care services. Most accurate if total number of days in care is known.

- <u>Children entering care during the year</u>: Useful for understanding stability experiences that recently began (i.e., during current policy and environmental context).

1. Adoptive/guardianship children in care as of latest available data

Does not require monitoring children for an extended time

- Post-adoption flag or indicator is needed
  - Data only needed for the latest year, indicator on whether child was previously adopted should be available
- Post-guardianship flag or indicator is needed
  - Beginning in FY 2023, data will include indicator for whether a child was previously in a guardianship family
  - Prior to FY 2023, data from prior years would be needed to look for any prior discharges to guardianship

For more information on updated federal requirements on post-permanency data collection as of 2023, see:
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/training-technical-assistance/overview-afcars-2020-final-rule

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2. Children discharged to adoption/guardianship during a specific time frame

- Use this group to track stability experiences over time, through the current year, with existing data.

- Stability of groups discharging in different years can be compared to look for evidence that policy or other changes affect stability.

3. Children currently under age 18 ever adopted/in guardianship

- Use to understand total number of children in the current post-permanency population.

- Use to understand stability history, other experiences, and characteristics of the post-permanency population.

- Some children in this group may experience instability in the future.

Data on foster care re-entries from AFCARS

Children in care as of latest available data	
% of all children who <u>entered care</u> in FY21 who had previously been adopted	2.18%
% of all children <u>in care at the end</u> of FY21 who had previously been adopted	2.47%
% of all children <u>in care at any point</u> in FY21 who had previously been adopted	2.93%
Children discharged to adoption/guardianship during a specific time frame	
Children who exited care to adoption in FY16 who returned to care in 5 years	3.26%
Children who exited care to adoption in FY03 who have ever re-entered care	6.00%

The Post-Adoption and Guardianship Instability (PAGI) Tracking Toolkit

Post-Adoption and Guardianship Instability (PAGI) tracking tool

- User Guide (.pdf and video) with instructions on how to track re-entries from **foster care and family instability**

- Sample letter to send to families with a brief survey to assess risk

- Excel worksheets to enter data and automatically calculate statistics
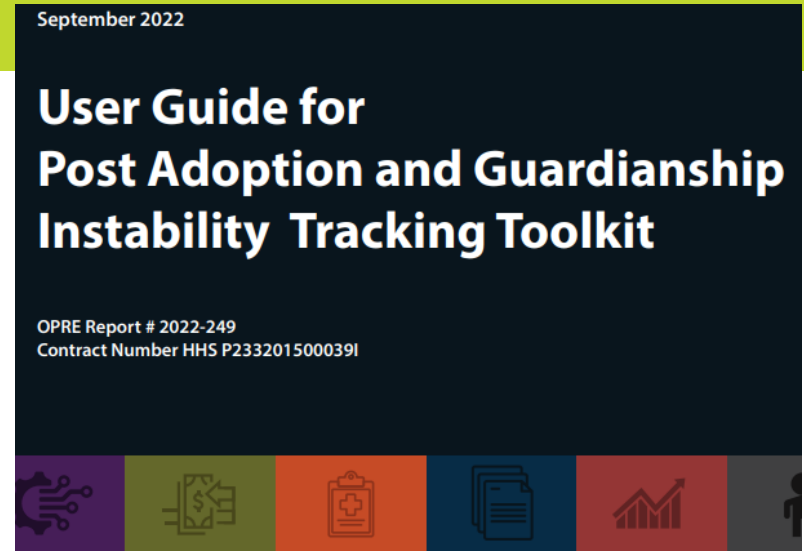
September 2022

User Guide for Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability Tracking Toolkit

OPRE Report # 2022-249
Contract Number HHS P233201500039I

Prepared for

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PAGI Excel worksheets

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/toolkit/post-adoption-guardianship-instability-tracking-toolkit
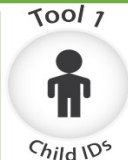
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	Worksheet tab
Tool 1 Child IDs	Child IDs
Tool 2 Data Flag	Data flag
Tool 3 Foster Care Reentry	Foster care re-entry
Tool 4 Subsidy Changes	Subsidy changes
Tool 5 Family Services	Family services
Tool 6 Well Being Letter	Well-being
Tool 7 Instability Summary	Instability summary

Strengths and weaknesses of using foster care re-entry data to assess family instability

General limitations of foster care re-entry as an indicator of family stability

Does not capture other forms of instability

- **Relational permanency**
- Legal permanency (dissolution)
- Placement instability not involving foster care, e.g.:
  - Youth kicked out by parents/caregivers or who run away
- Residential placements through other agencies, e.g.,:
  - Behavioral health services
  - Education
  - Juvenile justice
- Unregulated transfer of custody

General limitations of foster care re-entry as an indicator of family stability

- Might not be a negative indicator: Foster care can be used as pathway to needed residential services

- May not be permanent

- Harder to assess for some groups
  - Guardianship families
  - Families who achieved permanency in other jurisdictions
  - Families who adopted privately

Advantages of foster care re-entry as an indicator of family stability

- If a child re-enters foster care, they are experiencing placement instability, regardless of the reason
- All states, territories, and tribes (those receiving IV-E assistance) should have the data necessary to examine foster care re-entry
- Serves as a proxy for instability in general when other data are not available
- Can also examine whether children reunify

Improvements in data on instability

- Elements required for AFCARS as of FY 2023
  - Prior adoption
    - Prior adoption date
    - Whether the adoption was intercountry
  - Prior guardianship
    - Guardianship date

For more information, see: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/training-technical-assistance/overview-afcars-2020-final-rule

Examples of using foster care data to examine instability experiences of the post-permanency population

Virginia: Data collected on children with disturbed adoptions

Definition:

Child enters foster care either due to a report of maltreatment or at the request of the adoptive parent, but the adoption is still legally intact, as well as adoptions that have legally been reversed

- ✓ Disturbance type
- ✓ Adoption age (categories)
- ✓ Age at removal
- ✓ IV-E adoption assistance
- ✓ Type of prior adoption
- ✓ Entry reason
- ✓ Locality, county
- ✓ ID: Case, client
- ✓ Dates: Entry, custody, return, prior adoption finalization date

Reentry to Foster Care: A study using the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive

States in the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive

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Source: Wulczyn, Schmits, & Huhr, 2019. Center for State Child welfare Data. https://www.aecf.org/resources/reentry-to-foster-care

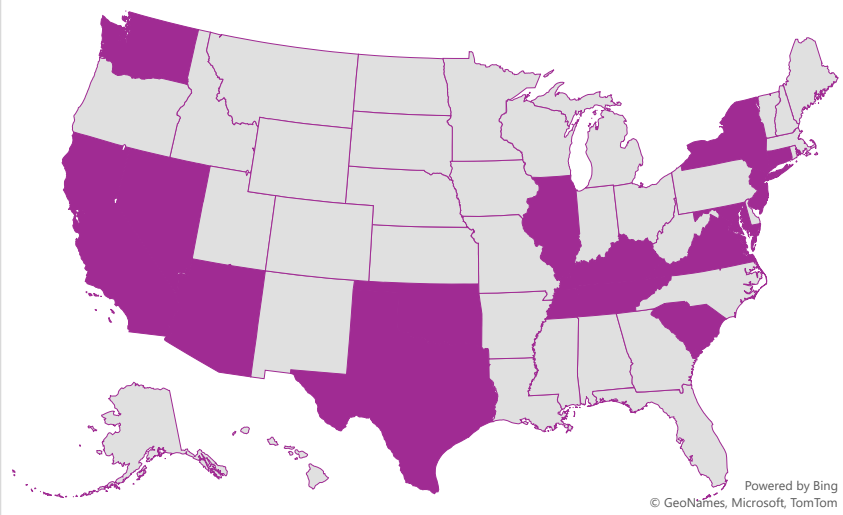Children who exited their first foster care stay to guardianship between 2003-2013, tracked through 2017

- 17% returned to foster care

Highest re-entry rates (holding other characteristics constant)

- Black children (compared with White children)

- Youth currently age 14-15

- Youth with foster care spells > 7 months

- Youth discharging from congregate care

- During first 6 months following discharge

SES is <u>not</u> a significant predictor of re-entry

Questions about a state, tribe, or territory's data for assessing stability

- Does the state have a unique ID to link foster care and adoption records pertaining to the same child?

- How are "previously adopted" children defined/identified?

Sates with IDs to link adoption and foster care records

Source: National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect

Powered by Bing
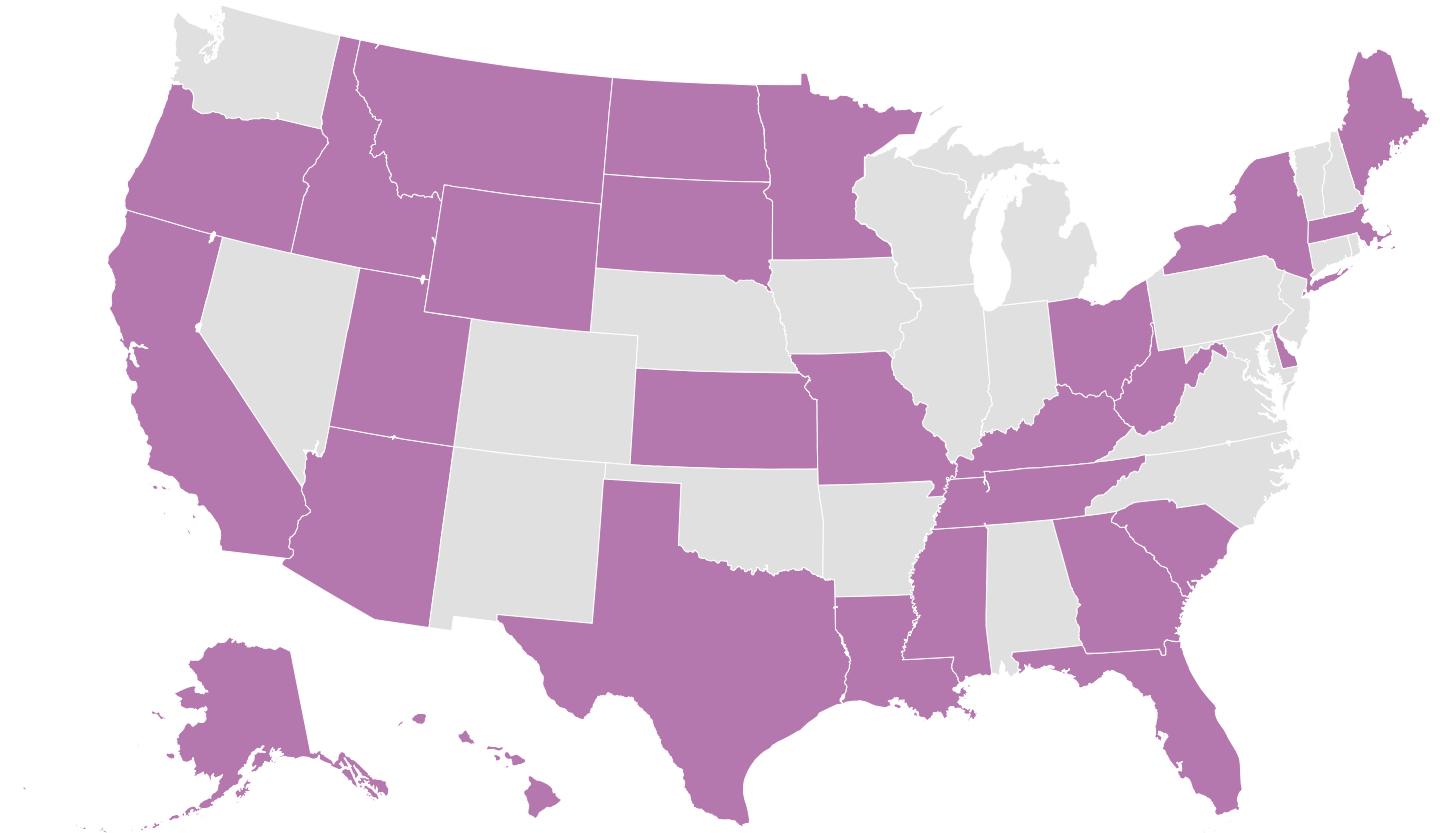
Questions about a state, tribe, or territory's data for assessing stability

- Do the data identify whether children entering foster care had previously been in a legal guardianship?

- Is dissolution captured?

- Are breaks in relational permanency captured?

- Are any post-permanency data tracked after youth are 18?

Questions and Comments

Thank you.

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