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51 Useful Aging Out of Foster Care Statistics | Social Race Media

Some children don’t have loving homes that they can call their own. For whatever reason, the parents of these children are not able to provide for them and neither is their extended family. When this occurs, the child will be placed into the foster care system.

**More than 250,000 children are placed into the foster care system in the United States every year.**

**Aging Out of Foster Care**

We are making some promises to these children when we place them into foster care. We are telling them that they are getting the chance to create a better life for themselves. They are promised a safe home where they can have a family that can be called their own. For many children, these promise are just empty words that have no meaning. As the statistics show, many foster kids are aging out of the system and have nowhere to turn.

* More than 23,000 children will age out of the US foster care system every year.
* After reaching the age of 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless.
* Only 1 out of every 2 foster kids who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24.
* There is less than a 3% chance for children who have aged out of foster care to earn a college degree at any point in their life.
* 7 out of 10 girls who age out of the foster care system will become pregnant before the age of 21.
* The percentage of children who age out of the foster care system and still suffer from the direct effects of PTSD: 25%.
* Tens of thousands of children in the foster care system were taken away from their parents after extreme abuse.
* 8% of the total child population of the United States is represented by reports of abuse that are given to authorities in the United States annually.
* In 2015, more than 20,000 young people — whom states failed to reunite with their families or place in permanent homes.

One of the biggest problems that social workers face today is a stigma that people have regarding what they do. Many people see child protection workers as vengeful, hateful people who just want to take kids away from their parents and families. The sad truth is that over 6 million children are at a high risk of being abused by their families annually and this is represented by the over 3 million reports of possible abuse that are filed every year. We know that children thrive in families and that is why we want kids to be placed into foster care instead of an institution. The problem is that the temporary solution of foster care has become a permanent solution and 10% of the kids that are placed into the system age out of it without every really getting the chance to heal.

**Is Violence Against Children A Hidden American Epidemic?**

* In the U.S. 397,122 children are living without permanent families in the foster care system.
* The number of these foster kids who are eligible for adoption, on average, every year: 101,666.
* 32% of the children who are eligible for adoption from foster care must wait at least 3 years before they will be adopted.
* There are 17,900,000 orphans who have lost both parents and are living in orphanages or on the streets around the world today.
* U.S. families adopted more than 7,000 children in 2012, yet over 100k children await adoption from the American foster care system every year.
* Nearly 60% of young men who age out of the foster care system and are legally emancipated have been convicted of a crime.
* About 1 in 4 kids who age out of the system will not graduate from high school or be able to pass their GED.
* Despite all of the challenges, 70% of foster kids regularly say that they would like to attend college one day.
* 5.1% of children who have been the victim of substantiated child abuse will become the victim of abuse again within 6 months.

If 7 out of 10 foster kids say that they want to pursue college, then why are we finding ways to limit them? A college education allows for a number of advantages that can help these kids find happiness, even though their childhood may not have been as fun as some of their peers. These kids want to change their lives, yet a vast majority of them will never even get to see college. Only 6% of kids who age out of the system will attend an institution of higher learning and only 50% of them will be able to graduate with a degree. What is the end result? These kids give up hope, stop caring, and are at a higher risk of repeating the cycle of violence with their own children one day that led to their placement in foster care in the first place.

**Foster Kids Aren’t Always Placed Into Foster Homes**

* Despite the promises of the foster care system, as of 2012, more than 58,000 children in the U.S. foster care system were placed in institutions or group homes.
* 75% of women and 33% of men receive government benefits to meet basic needs after they age out of the system.
* 1 out of every 2 kids who age out of the system will develop a substance dependence.
* States spent a mere 1.2-1.3% of available federal funds on parent recruitment and training services even though 22% of children in foster care had adoption as their goal.
* Adopted children make-up roughly 2% of the total child population under the age of 18.
* Children who are adopted make up over 10% of the total referrals for child therapy.
* 55% of these children who wind up being legally emancipated by the foster care system have had 3 or more placements over their childhood.
* 33% of children had changed elementary schools 5 or more times, causing them to fall behind academically and lose friends that they had made in the process.
* There is a direct correlation to the age of a child who enters foster care and their likelihood of being successfully discharged to a permanent home instead of being legally emancipated.

There is more than just the problem of worthless parents when it comes to the modern foster care system – parents who abuse their children are worthless. There is also the problem of foster families not being able to access the resources that kids need because of a lack of funding… or a lack of desire to do so. Kids who are taken out of violent homes not only face the struggle of missing their parents and living in a strange environment, but there may be PTSD and other mental health issues present as well. Foster kids will blow out of homes because the tools aren’t in place to help them cope and there isn’t enough patience within the foster family to allow for the natural grieving process to take place. When parents, foster families, and the system at large fail these kids and they age out of the system, is it any wonder why so many struggle to make their way in the world?

**Are Things Getting Worse Instead of Better?**

* In 2012, there were approximately 679,000 instances of confirmed child maltreatment from the over 3 million reports generated.
* The overall national child victim rate was 9.2 child victims per 1,000 children in the US population.
* State child victim rates vary dramatically in the United States, ranging from 1.2 child victims per 1,000 children to 19.6 child victims per 1,000 children.
* African-American children had the highest rates of victimization at 14.2 victims per 1,000 children in that racial group’s overall child population.
* Asian children had the lowest rates, with 1.7 victims per 1,000.
* Between 2002 and 2012, the number of children in care on the last day of the fiscal year decreased by 24.2%, or by over 130,000 children.
* The annual rate of children who are discharged out of the foster system without a successful placement: 13%.
* Children with a diagnosed disability of any kind, including a learning disability, are twice as likely to age out of the foster care system.
* Kids who enter the foster care system after the age of 12 have a 2 in 5 chance of being legally emancipated at the age of 18 from the system.
* More than 20% of the children who are currently in foster care are aged 3 or younger.
* African-American children make up 20% of the foster care population, which is about double the amount of maltreatment reports that are generated for their racial demographic annually.
* More than 40% of the children who reach the age of 18 while in foster care were in the system for more than 3 years.

Even when foster care isn’t the best solution, it is often still better than the maltreatment that was being experienced at home. In the United States, the median measurements of child maltreatment are over 5% annually. In foster car, the median measurement for maltreatment is just 0.32%. In practical terms, this means that a child in the US is about 15x more likely to be abused in their home then in a foster home. From this standpoint, we can honestly say that we are providing a safer environment for children, but we need to do more than just provide safety. We need to be able to provide areas of growth so that these kids can have the tools they need in order to find success in the pursuit of their own dreams.

**What Can We Do To Help Facilitate Change?**

* In 2012, only 4.5% of children who were adopted out of foster care were placed in the system for fewer than 12 months.
* The percentage of children adopted in less than 12 months out of foster care in 2009: 3.6%.
* More than 85% of children in foster care have had a minimum of two different placement settings within the first 12 months of being placed in the system.
* 11% of children who are placed into a permanent setting outside of foster care will re-enter the system within 12 months.
* Only 32.6% of adoptions from foster care occur within the first 2 years of a child being placed into the system.
* Less than 70% of the cases of founded child maltreatment had a response time that was less than 48 hours for an intervention.
* 30.4% of incidents were responded to by caseworkers in 24 hours or less.
* 73% of the cases of child maltreatment are due to neglect.
* Kids between the ages of 0-7 make up more than half of all child maltreatment reports that are generated in the United States every year.
* 48.9% of the reports are generated from families that are Caucasian.
* More than 6% of children who are placed into foster care have been sexually abused by a parent or family member.

If the goal of providing children with a new home is to be able to give them a new start, then we are failing many of these kids. We can’t just take kids out of a home, place them in a new home, and then expect them to thrive. This is where the social worker comes in as they can provide supports and services, but a social worker can only access existing resources in a community. If no resources exist, there is nothing that a social worker can really do except provide a continuing, stable presence in the child’s life. This is where we need to do better as a community to help foster kids. We need to give them access to resources so that if an adoption isn’t available, they will still have tools, a supportive environment, and people who care about their dreams.

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