

MONTANA ADOPTION FACTS

In 2011, 241 children were adopted from foster care in Montana.
Another 452 children in Montana foster care were waiting to be adopted.

Adoption provides children with a lifetime of emotional and legal connections to a family. Recent years have brought new attention to children's need for adoptive families, and the risks facing foster children who age out of care without a family. Despite this progress, more than 100,000 children across the country—especially older children and children of color—still wait for families. And many families who have adopted lack critical post-adoption support essential to their children's stability and well-being.

Foster care was intended to be temporary, but many Montana children remain in care for years.

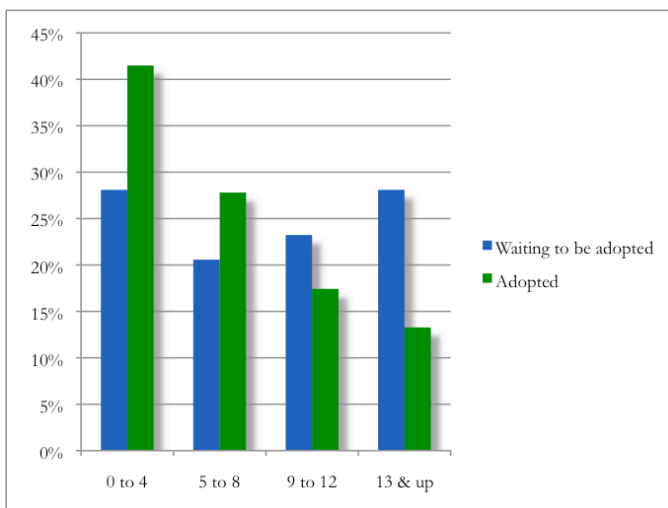
For children still waiting to be adopted in Montana in 2011, the average stay in care was 3.7 years (44.3 months). On average, children who were adopted in 2011 spent 3.4 years (41.0 months) in care before the adoption was finalized.

To shorten the time children spend in care, child welfare agencies must first work to ensure that any children who can return safely home, do so. For those children who cannot, agencies must employ the best recruitment tools available to find a permanent family as quickly as possible.

Older children in Montana are not as likely to be adopted as younger children.

The average age of Montana's adopted children was about 6.9 years in 2011, while waiting children were, on average, roughly 9. For youth age 9 and older, the likelihood of being adopted drops significantly.

Age of Montana Children Waiting to Be Adopted and Adopted, 2011



States must employ special strategies to ensure that older children are adopted, and that their newly formed families have support to meet the children's needs.

A higher proportion of American Indian children are waiting to be adopted than are adopted in Montana.

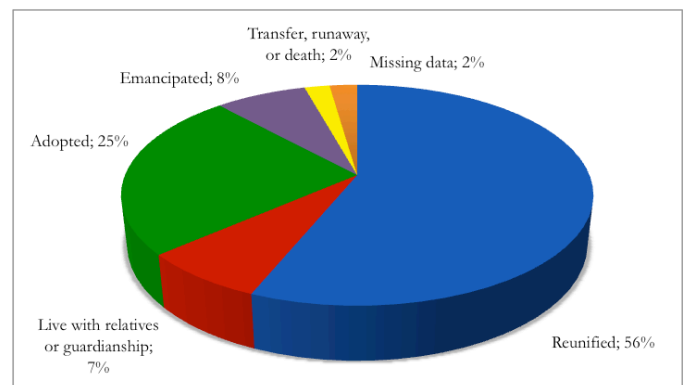
	Children Waiting	Children Adopted
Caucasian	54.4%	57.7%
African American	2.0%	1.7%
Multiple Races	9.1%	11.6%
Hispanic	7.5%	9.1%
American Indian	27.0%	19.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%

Agencies must address the unique racial and cultural needs of children of color in care, including seeking families who reflect the children's race and ethnicity, as required by law.

In 2011, most Montana children left foster care to return home (56.2%) or live with relatives or in guardianship (7.4%). 241 children (24.7% of all exits) were adopted.

Children who leave care for permanent families need support to help them address the trauma of abuse and neglect and the experience of being in care.

Exit Types for Montana Foster Children, 2011



Post-permanency services should be available to families who adopt, accept guardianship, or reunify with their children. These services help children heal and make families as strong as possible.

In 2011, 73 youth in Montana aged out of foster care without a permanent, legal family.

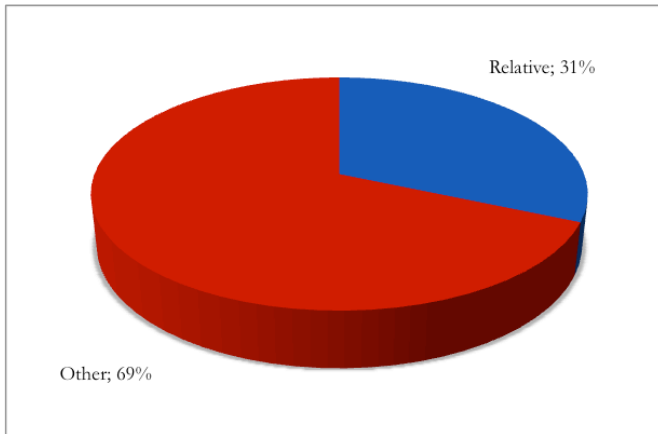
Research shows many of these youth will face obstacles such as homelessness, unemployment, early parenting, and substance abuse. In 2011, 78 (12.1%) Montana children in care age 9 and older had case goals of long-term foster care or emancipation. Since they have no permanency plan, these youth are at very high risk of aging out of care without a family.

The best way to support youth is to ensure they do not age out of care without a family. For those youth who do not find a family, however, states and counties must provide services that ensure a successful transition to independent living with the help and support of caring adults.

Many children adopted from foster care in Montana are adopted by relatives.

In Montana, about 31.5% of children adopted from care in 2011 were adopted by their relatives.

Montana Adopting Parents' Relationship to Child Prior to Adoption, 2011



Placing children with relatives keeps them connected to their family of origin and their heritage. Relative caregivers need support to help their children heal, just as other adoptive parents do. They may also need special support to address the complications of changing family relationships.

Many children in Montana foster care are adopted transracially.

In 2011, 20.2% of the children adopted in Montana were children of color adopted by white parents. About 0.4% of adoptions were white children adopted by parents of color, and 6.7% were children of color adopted by parents of color who were a different race than the child.

Families who adopt transracially may need extra support and training to help them meet their children's cultural needs.

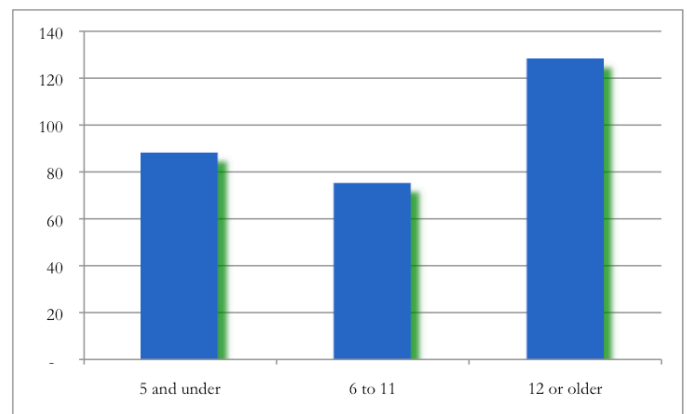
As a result of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, many more children will be eligible for federal adoption assistance.

About 54.6% of Montana children adopted from foster care in 2011 were receiving Title IV-E federal adoption assistance. Many children who are not IV-E eligible did not qualify due to their birth parents' income.

As a result of Fostering Connections, many more children will receive federal assistance. When additional children are IV-E eligible, the state receives more federal funds to help children and families. As of October 1, 2013, children 8 and older and children who have been in care for five years or longer—and their siblings—will no longer be denied federal adoption assistance based on their birth parents' income. Each year, younger adopted children will be phased in (6 and older in federal fiscal year 2015, 4 and older in 2016, and so on) until 2018 when federal support will be given to all adopted children who meet other eligibility criteria.

In 2011, 89 (19.7%) of Montana's waiting children had been in care five years or more. Of those, 17 were not receiving IV-E payments. Also in 2011, about 181 waiting children who were not receiving IV-E payments (40.0%) were 8 or older. If adopted, these children will likely receive federal adoption assistance due to Fostering Connections.

Montana Waiting Children Who Are Not Receiving Federal Support—by Age, 2011



We encourage Montana to invest funds saved as a result of this provision of the Fostering Connections Act into post-adoption and other post-permanency support services.