



FOSTER CARE FACTS

On any given day, half a million abused and neglected children and youth are in foster care in our nation.¹

- ? Almost half of foster children spend at least two years in the foster care system, and nearly 20 percent wait five or more years for a safe, permanent family.²
- ? Approximately 39,000 infants are placed in foster care, where they too often lack the stability that promotes attachment and early brain development.³
- ? The *annual* turnover rate in the child welfare workforce is estimated to be between 30 and 40 percent.⁴
- ? Nearly one fourth of youth in foster care are placed with relatives.⁵
- ? On average, children in foster care move through three different foster care placements,⁶ frequently with little or no warning.
- ? 118,000 of the children currently in foster care are waiting to be adopted.⁷
- ? About 19,000 older youth “age out” of foster care each year without a permanent family to support them.⁸

As a result, the future – for many of these youth – is anything but bright. According to research studies:

- ? Over a third of foster youth earn neither a high school diploma nor a GED.⁹
- ? Fewer than half of young adults were employed 12 to 18 months after aging out of the foster care system.¹⁰
- ? One third of youth who age out of the foster care system evidence mental health problems, the most prevalent diagnoses being Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol or substance abuse, and major depression.¹¹
- ? Approximately one third of foster children will receive some form of public assistance shortly after aging out of the system.¹²
- ? About one fourth of foster youth will be incarcerated within the first two years after they leave the system.¹³
- ? Over one fifth of foster children will become homeless at some time after age 18.¹⁴

¹ US Dept. of Health and Human Services AFCARS report, 2003.

² Ibid.

³ US Dept. of Health and Human Services, AFCARS report, 2001.

⁴ US General Accounting Office, (GAO-03-357), 2003.

⁵ US Dept. of Health and Human Services AFCARS report, 2001.

⁶ US Dept. of Health and Human Services AFCARS report, 2003.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Courtney et al., “Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19,” Chapin Hall, 2005.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, Casey Family Programs, 1998.

