

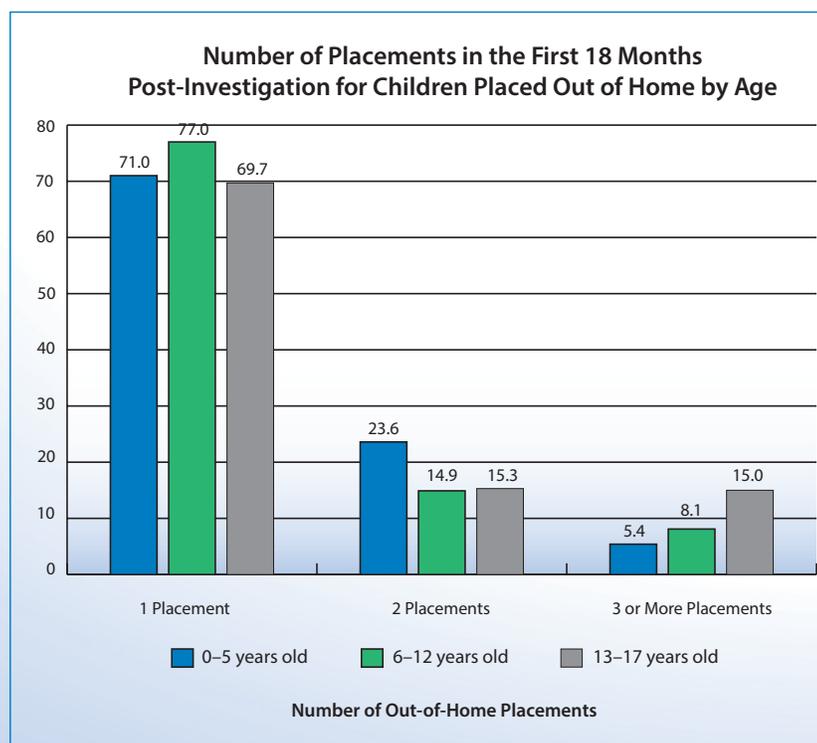
NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

February 11, 2013

Child Well-Being Spotlight

More than One Quarter of Children Placed Out of Home Experience Placement Disruption in the First 18 Months After a Maltreatment Investigation

During a child maltreatment investigation child protective services caseworkers must make a very important decision: whether to remove a child from the home and place the child in out-of-home care. The stability of the resulting placement is vital to child well-being. Placement instability, characterized by multiple moves and disruption, is associated with



increased health and mental health needs^{1,2} and impaired social-emotional development.^{3,4} According to data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW), 22.3% of children in families investigated for maltreatment were placed out of home at least once in the 18 months following the close of investigation.⁵ Among those placed out of home, 72.6% had one placement, 18.9% had two placements, and 8.5% had three or more placements. The oldest children in the study (13 to 17 years old) had a higher number of mean placements than younger children. Children 13 to 17 years old were more likely to have experienced three or more placements in 18 months, and had a higher average number of days out of home, than any other age group. These data highlight the need for continued emphasis on placement stability in child welfare, including ongoing support for foster and kin caregivers, as well as assessment and service provision to youth.

For more information on the well-being of children and their caregivers in the child welfare system, visit: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse_neglect/nscaw/.

¹ James, S., Landsverk, J., Slymen, D. J., & Leslie, L. K. (2004). Predictors of outpatient mental health service use: The role of foster care placement change. *Mental Health Services Research, 6*(3), 127-141.

² Rubin, D. M., Alessandrini, E. A., Feudtner, C., Mandell, D. S., Localio, R., & Hadley, T. (2004). Placement stability and mental health costs for children in foster care. *Pediatrics, 113*(5), 1336-1341.

³ Lewis, E. E., Dozier, M., Ackerman, J., & Sepulveda-Kozakowski, S. (2007). The effect of placement instability on adopted children's inhibitory control abilities and oppositional behavior. *Developmental Psychology, 43*(6), 1415-1427.

⁴ Howard, K., Martin, A., Berlin, L. J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2011). Early mother-child separation, parenting, and child well-being in Early Head Start families. *Attachment & Human Development, 13*(1), 5-26.

⁵ Percentages are from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II (NSCAW II). Baseline data collection began in 2008-2009. The study includes 5,873 children ranging from birth to 17.5 years old at the time of sampling

Source: The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II (NSCAW II) is the second nationally representative sample of children reported to child protective services sponsored by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews with caseworkers, children, caregivers, and teachers.

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