

Out-of-Home Care by State and Place: Higher Placement Rates for Children in Some Remote Rural Places

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The lives of children placed in out-of-home care as a result of abuse or neglect are severely disrupted. Children are generally removed from their homes only as a last resort when their or others' safety and well-being are at risk. These placements aim to alleviate distress and improve child well-being. However, it is often difficult for policy makers to fully understand variations in placement rates by location within their states. In this fact sheet, we show breakdowns by metropolitan status for the nation, regions, and states in hopes that the information will be useful as changes to and funding for the child welfare system are considered.

Counties are classified according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural-urban continuum codes. This approach contrasts placement rates in metropolitan areas, termed "metropolitan/urban," with nonmetro counties adjacent to metropolitan areas, termed "adjacent nonmetro," and those not adjacent to metropolitan areas, termed "remote rural."¹

Table 1 shows rates (per 1,000) of children and youth in out-of-home care at any time in 2007 by place, state, and region. Nationally and within each region, remote rural areas have higher rates of out-of-home placement. Additionally, nearly half of the states have the highest placement rates in remote rural areas.

There are several potential reasons for observed differences. Larger populations of African American or Latino children who tend to have higher placement rates may increase the overall risk of placement in the area, particularly in urban areas.² Higher poverty rates in some states or regions may increase the need for child welfare resources, including out-of-home placement. A scarcity of supportive services in rural areas or gaps in mental health services to address issues contributing to out-of-home placements may lead to higher placement rates in resource-poor areas.³ Finally, differences in child welfare agencies' policies and procedures might result in differing placement rates across states and types of communities.

Data

We used Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) data.⁴ AFCARS data are collected at regular intervals in every state and reflect all placements, providing "24-hour substitute care for children outside their own

homes."⁵ State-level differences may contribute to variations in types of placements included in AFCARS.

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ENDNOTES

1. See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Rurality/RuralUrbCon/>.
2. Fred Wulczyn and Kristin Brunner Hislop, "Topic #1: Foster Care Dynamics in Urban and Non-Urban Counties" (Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2003).
3. Kathleen Belanger and Warren Stone, "The Social Service Divide: Service Availability in Rural Versus Urban Counties and Impact on Child Welfare Outcomes," *Child Welfare* 87 (2008): 101–124; Richard P. Barth, Judy Wildfire, and Rebecca L. Green, "Placement into Foster Care and the Interplay of Urbanicity, Child Behavior Problems, and Poverty," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 76 (2006): 358–366.
4. The data used in this publication were made available by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and have been used with permission. Data from the AFCARS were originally collected by the Children's Bureau.
5. Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Foster Care Statistics: Numbers and Trends."

TABLE 1. OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT DURING 2007 BY STATE AND PLACE

	METROPOLITAN		NONMETRO ADJACENT		REMOTE RURAL		TOTAL	
	Rate (per 1,000)	Population Served	Rate (per 1,000)	Population Served	Rate (per 1,000)	Population Served	Rate (per 1,000)	Population Served
United States	10.3	641,359	10.8	82,766	13.7	53,273	10.5	777,398
Northeast	10.4	118,153	10.0	9,151	11.9	2,461	10.4	129,765
Midwest	10.8	136,799	10.3	21,812	14.8	21,150	11.1	179,761
South	8.9	196,612	10.7	39,917	12.2	18,115	9.3	254,644
West	11.7	189,795	13.1	11,886	14.8	11,547	12.0	213,228
Alabama	10.2	8,192	9.1	2,515	5.1	197	9.7	10,904
Alaska	14.3	1,750	7.6	30	21.0	1,167	16.2	2,947
Arizona	10.3	15,514	8.6	1,439	NA	-	10.1	16,953
Arkansas	9.9	4,262	11.4	1,544	12.1	1,598	10.6	7,404
California	12.3	113,321	18.7	2,231	18.8	966	12.4	116,518
Colorado	11.9	12,355	18.7	932	11.0	1,075	12.1	14,362
Connecticut	10.8	8,121	12.1	813	NA	-	10.9	8,934
Delaware	10.6	1,748	8.7	347	NA	-	10.2	2,095
District of Columbia	26.0	2,943	NA	-	NA	-	26.0	2,943
Florida	11.4	43,288	17.2	4,041	NA	-	11.8	47,329
Georgia	7.9	16,377	12.0	4,285	13.2	1,180	8.7	21,842
Hawaii	12.5	2,511	NA	-	14.1	1,214	13.0	3,725
Idaho	8.4	2,277	6.6	513	9.8	564	8.2	3,354
Illinois	7.4	20,802	5.6	1,211	12.1	1,772	7.5	23,785
Indiana	12.1	15,002	11.0	3,164	12.0	633	11.9	18,799
Iowa	19.9	8,137	14.3	2,306	22.6	3,176	19.1	13,619
Kansas	13.6	6,196	19.6	1,429	15.3	2,589	14.6	10,214
Kentucky	12.1	7,169	11.6	2,067	16.0	3,732	12.9	12,968
Louisiana	7.6	6,124	8.7	2,332	7.3	185	7.8	8,641
Maine	10.7	1,792	7.4	615	16.9	492	10.4	2,899
Maryland	9.6	12,316	6.3	426	NA	-	9.4	12,742
Massachusetts	11.7	16,699	NA	-	NA	-	11.6	16,699
Michigan	12.3	24,923	10.5	2,126	11.3	2,325	12.0	29,374
Minnesota	10.4	9,784	13.8	2,287	14.3	2,165	11.3	14,236
Mississippi	7.2	2,470	6.3	932	7.2	1,969	7.0	5,371
Missouri	9.7	10,270	12.5	2,212	13.5	2,532	10.5	15,014
Montana	13.6	1,064	14.7	440	13.0	1,456	13.5	2,960
Nebraska	21.7	5,806	29.1	872	19.7	2,901	21.5	9,579
Nevada	13.7	8,164	8.3	331	9.2	211	13.2	8,706
New Hampshire	4.9	959	6.0	422	9.2	294	5.6	1,675
New Jersey	7.8	16,075	NA	-	NA	-	7.8	16,075
New Mexico	7.4	2,429	10.0	817	14.6	1,330	9.1	4,576
New York	9.7	39,873	9.1	2,483	11.8	680	9.7	43,036
North Carolina	7.2	11,365	8.0	4,356	9.4	891	7.5	16,612
North Dakota	16.2	1,112	10.9	201	15.0	840	15.0	2,153
Ohio	10.8	24,024	7.7	3,652	6.2	351	10.2	28,027
Oklahoma	20.7	12,142	18.4	3,182	22.1	3,076	20.5	18,400
Oregon	16.5	11,205	19.7	2,363	21.7	1,421	17.4	14,989
Pennsylvania	12.4	29,441	11.2	4,220	9.2	367	12.2	34,028
Rhode Island	19.2	4,452	NA	-	NA	-	19.2	4,452
South Carolina	8.7	7,015	6.4	1,344	4.9	190	8.1	8,549
South Dakota	14.8	1,376	4.5	87	17.7	1,510	15.1	2,973
Tennessee	9.2	10,102	12.9	3,958	10.2	660	10.0	14,720
Texas	6.6	38,839	10.1	5,200	9.0	1,945	7.0	45,984
Utah	5.0	3,739	5.9	288	12.7	480	5.4	4,507
Vermont	16.0	741	14.4	598	14.4	628	15.0	1,967
Virginia	5.5	8,757	9.0	1,512	15.3	912	6.1	11,181
Washington	10.8	14,619	15.1	2,364	17.3	374	11.3	17,357
West Virginia	16.1	3,503	19.5	1,876	21.7	1,580	18.0	6,959
Wisconsin	9.5	9,367	7.5	2,265	10.2	356	9.1	11,988
Wyoming	21.3	847	15.3	138	16.7	1,289	18.0	2,274

Shading: States with nonmetro adjacent or remote rural counties with higher rates than metro counties