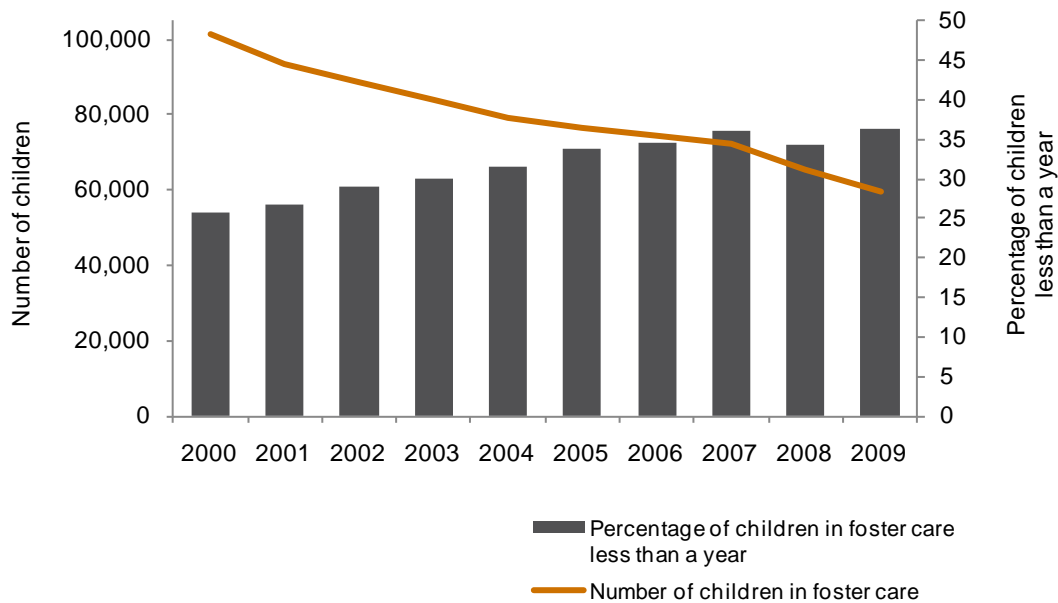


MARCH 2010

- **FOSTER CARE IS ONE APPROACH IN A BROADER EFFORT TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN'S WELFARE.**  
About 60,000 children under age 18 in California are in foster care. They were removed from their parents because county child welfare departments, in conjunction with juvenile dependency courts, determined that these children could not live safely with their birth parents. However, most children for whom reports of maltreatment are received do not enter foster care. In fiscal year 2008–09, just under 1% of children in California had a report of abuse or neglect sufficient to meet the legal definition of maltreatment—and only about a third of these children entered foster care.
- **FOSTER CARE EXPENDITURES INCLUDE BOTH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS AND SERVICES.**  
In 2008–09, California's child welfare services budget—including federal, state, and county funding—was \$5.4 billion. About a quarter was spent on assistance payments to out-of-home care providers. Roughly an additional fifth went to assistance payments to families who adopted or became the legal guardians of foster children. And about half was spent on services to address child abuse and neglect for children in and out of foster care.
- **MANY FEWER CHILDREN ARE IN FOSTER CARE NOW THAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DECADE.**  
The percentage of children under age 18 in foster care has dropped by 45% since the year 2000. The primary reason for the declining caseload is that children are spending less time in foster care. In 2009, 36% of the children in foster care had been in foster care for less than a year; in 2000, only 26% of the children had been in foster care for less than a year. The number of children entering foster care each year has also recently begun to decline from a decade high of about 38,000 children in 2006–07 to about 32,000 children in 2008–09.
- **BUT BLACK CHILDREN ARE STILL OVERREPRESENTED IN FOSTER CARE.**  
Over the past 10 years, the largest percentage decline in foster care has occurred among black children. Nevertheless, in 2009 a larger percentage of black children (2.7%) than Hispanic children (0.6%), white children (0.5%), or Asian/Pacific Islander children (0.2%) were in foster care. Compared with other children, a higher fraction of black children enter foster care as a result of substantiated maltreatment reports, and black children remain in foster care for longer periods of time than other children.
- **FOSTER CARE IS TEMPORARY FOR MOST CHILDREN.**  
Over half (54%) of the children first removed from their parents leave foster care within a year, and 31% leave within three months. However, one in five children entering foster care has previously been in foster care. When children under age 18 leave foster care, most (65%) return to their parents; in 2008–09, 22% were adopted and 9% left to live permanently with a legal guardian.
- **BUT SOME CHILDREN DO NOT LEAVE FOSTER CARE BEFORE THEY BECOME ADULTS.**  
In 2008–09, about 4,500 foster youth age 18 and older “aged out” of eligibility for foster care, representing 12% of all children and youth who left foster care. Their numbers have grown somewhat since 2000.



## Foster Care Caseload



## Children in Foster Care by Race/Ethnicity, 2009

	Percentage of California children in foster care	Percentage of children with a substantiated maltreatment report who enter foster care	Among children in foster care, percentage with stays of less than one year
ALL CHILDREN	0.6	34	36
Black	2.7	47	29
Hispanic	0.6	33	39
White	0.5	33	38
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.2	29	42

**Sources:** California Welfare Performance Indicators Project ([cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)). Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System ([ndacan.cornell.edu](http://ndacan.cornell.edu)).

**Note:** Estimates for Native American children are uncertain.

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