

# Child Welfare Administrators Track Session One



*The 2008 National Convening on Youth Permanence*  
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# Data trends & paths to greater youth permanence

## *Administrators Track: Session One*

*Ben Kerman, Ph.D.  
Director of Research  
Casey Family Services*

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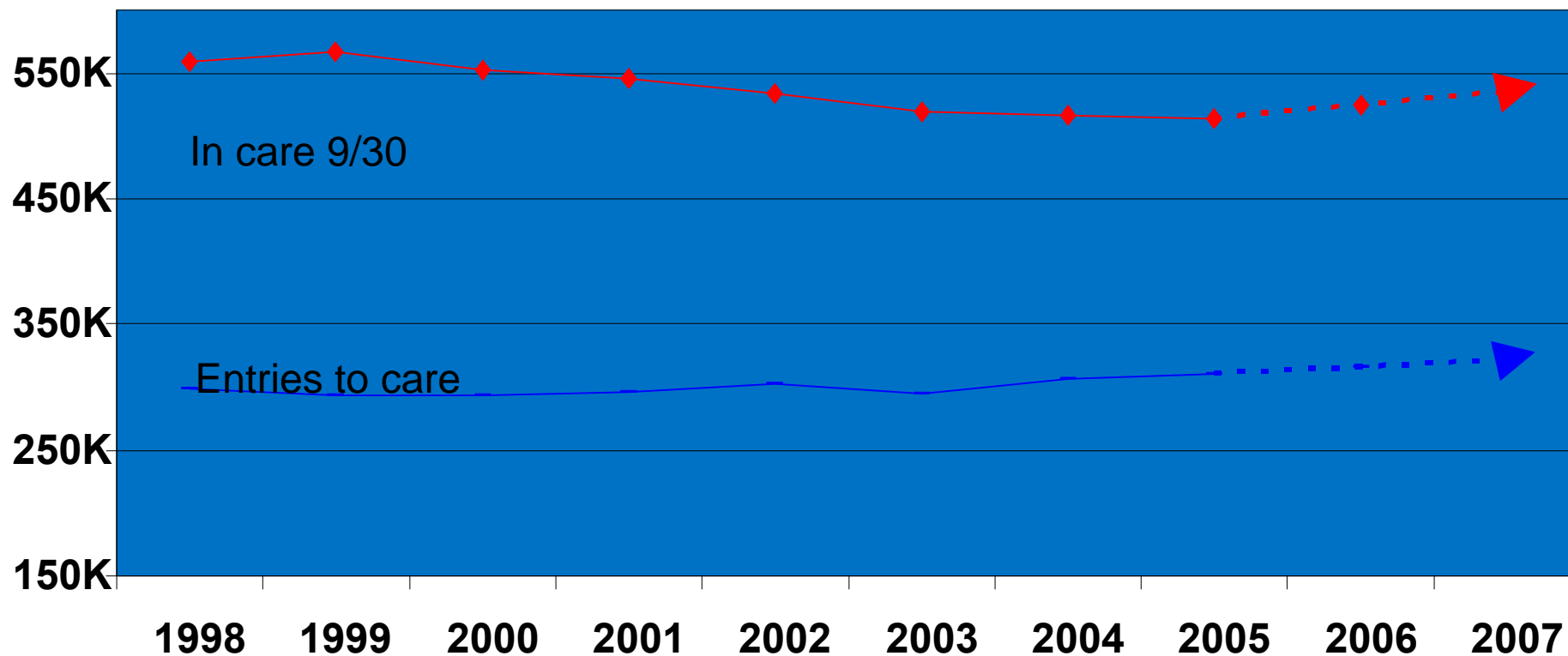
Families for Life

# Presentation Goals

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- Highlight a handful of points from national data
  - *Consider: What is known about your jurisdiction?*
- Deepen understanding of challenges facing foster youth age 11+
  - *Consider: If you are not satisfied, what are your priorities for change? What else do you want to know?*
- Suggest some evidence-informed responses to shape your program development
  - *Consider: Which strategies might work for you? How to implement them, and ensure effectiveness?*

# 1. Overall population dynamics: *CW population declined; Is it now reversing?*



Source: AFCARS

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Overall population dynamics within your jurisdiction  
***What is driving change? Is it increase or decrease in...***

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- ...maltreatment investigations?
  - e.g., decreased victimization & substantiation rates
- ...tendency to take children into care?
  - e.g., fewer substantiations lead to more placements
- ...poverty-related stressors?
  - e.g., increased number & % living in poverty
- ... other factors?

## 2. Growing proportion of services to infants and youth: ***Services must be developmentally appropriate***

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- Youngest children largest group of new placements, and will spend more time in care
  - In '06, infants nearly 16% of entries, up >3% since '98
  - Removals of children ages 1-5 is also rising slightly
- Youth 14-16 are the next largest entry groups after infants
  - In '06, 25% of newly removed were 14 or older
- **Youngest & oldest follow very different paths.**

## Risk of aging out increases with age at entry

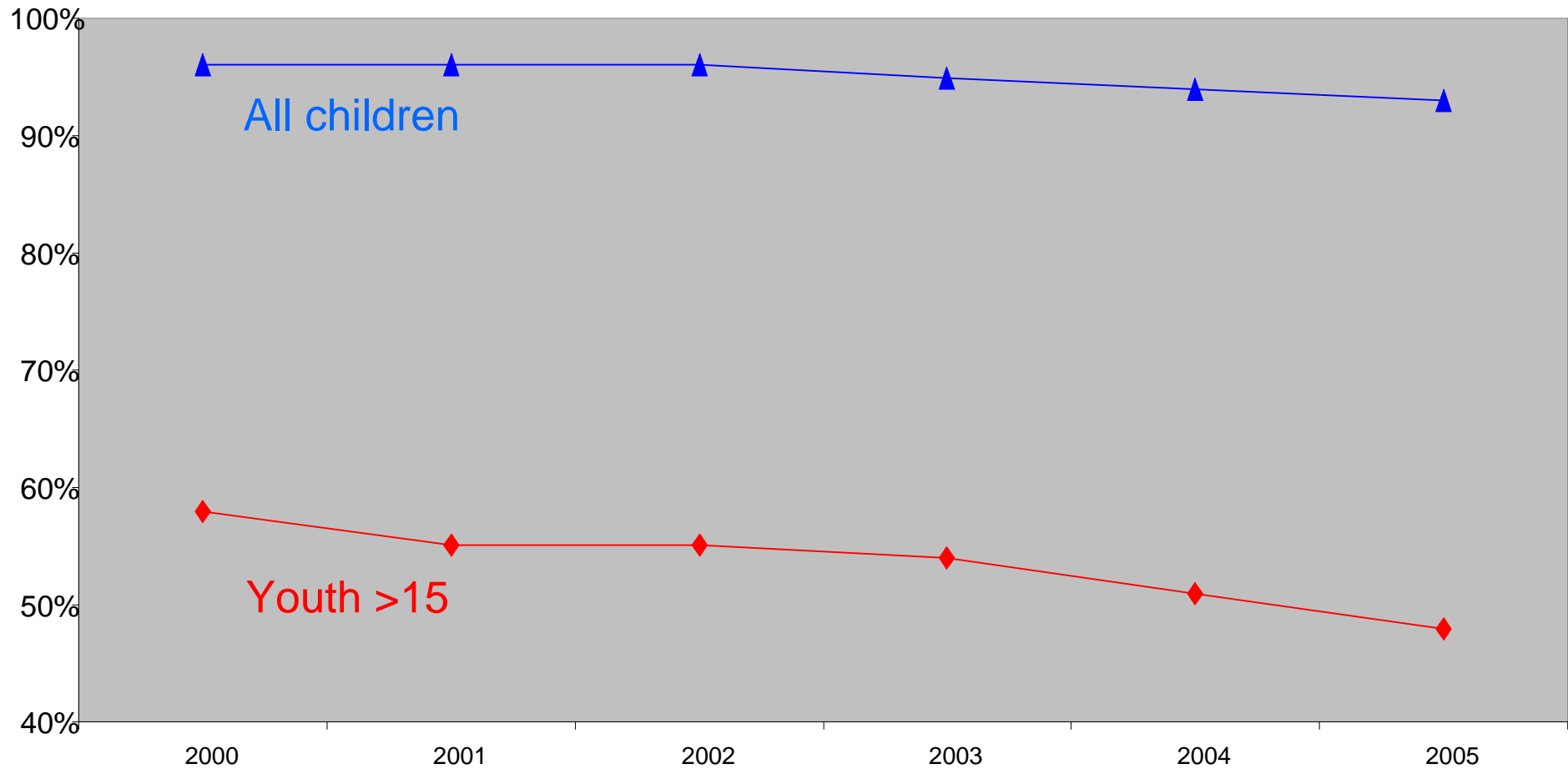
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- Aging out is not widespread destiny for young entries
  - <1% infants in care will age out
  - After age 9-10 >20% likelihood<sup>1</sup>
- Older entry age is more common among emancipators
  - 80% entered care at age 10 or older <sup>2</sup>
  - About half of those aging out were 15 or older at entry

<sup>1</sup> Wulczyn, in press

<sup>2</sup> Maza, 2007

### 3. Percentage of freed youth exiting with permanency is **trending DOWN**



Source: Pew, 2007

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Unique needs and role of CW for older youth:  
***Alarming outcomes for whom we re most responsible.***

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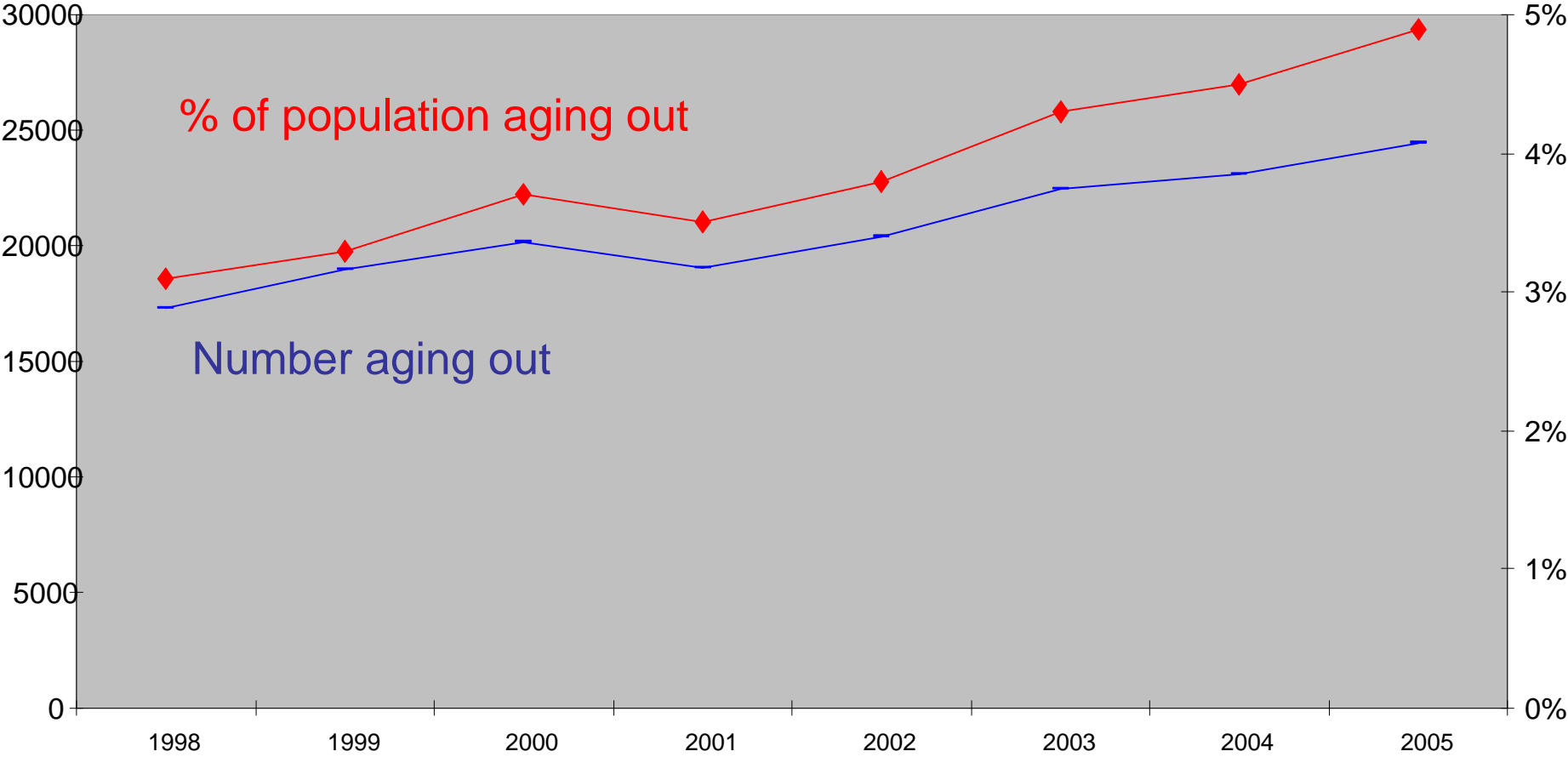
- Youths emancipating to adulthood present some of the greatest challenges:
  - Problems with economic self-sufficiency, well-being<sup>1 2 3</sup>
- Family connections play a mediating role
  - Adult connections are important to resilience
  - Permanency study results for foster youth are complex
    - Not just the existence of legal permanency, but the *quality of the connection* as well

<sup>1</sup> Courtney & Dworsky, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Pecora et al., 2005

<sup>3</sup> Kerman et al., 2002

# Aging Out: Number AND Proportion of Population *trending UP*



Source: Pew, 2007

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## Who is at greatest risk to age out?

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- Characteristics associated with aging out...
  - Older <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>
  - Less likely to have behavior cited as placement reason <sup>2</sup>
  - More likely to have entered care for neglect
  - More likely to have one or more moves in care
  - More likely to have entered foster care > one time
  - Older and African American/Black or Hispanic

<sup>1</sup> Wulczyn, in press

<sup>2</sup> Maza, in press

#### 4. Unique needs and role of CW for older youth: ***Most youth leave with a family connection***

##### ***Reunification is the most common path.***

- 49% of foster youth 15 and up are reunified<sup>1</sup>.
  - Another 6% exit to live with relatives
  - Another 3% establish a guardianship

##### ***Adoptions occur, but prospects fade with age.***

- 3% of foster youth 15 and up are adopted.
- Youth reports point to deep meaning of adoption.
- Risk factors (e.g., African American, male, spec. needs)

<sup>1</sup> Maza, in press

## Other trends to consider

### Plans that don't focus on families promote impermanence

- Rise in use of non-permanent plan goals
  - 1998-2005: LTFC 5% to 6%; emancipation 7% to 9%<sup>1</sup>
  - Peaks in 2002
    - *Look at patterns of use of APPLA among older youth*
- All APPLA plans need not come true<sup>2</sup>...
  - *As many as 25% or more LTFC plans ended in reunification or adoption.* <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> AFCARS

<sup>2</sup> Cushing et al, 2008

## Preventing some of the worst immediate outcomes: ***Other challenges for youth coming into care***

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- Youth are more likely to have behavior problems<sup>1</sup>
  - Opportunities for prevention, in-home treatment
- Use of congregate care may compromise relationships
  - Pilots underway looking at permanency planning
- 5% of the 15-20 year-olds “ran away” (24K ‘00-’05)<sup>2</sup>
  - Learn more about running away/*running to*

<sup>1</sup> Maza, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Maza, in press

## Examples: Data for shaping and monitoring plans.

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- Description of population coming into care
  - Example: *Age, race, and level of risk acuity*
- Description of population exiting care
  - Example: *% exits with permanency by race*
- Indicators of CW planning and service
  - Example: *% APPLA goals, use of congregate care, LOS*
- Indicators of system performance
  - Example: *timely progress to/from TPR; # licensed FFs*
- Indicators of program development implementation quality
  - Example: *% permanency teams with essential qualities*

## 5. Searching for strategies with a limited evidence base

### ***Composite picture points to***

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- Strategies for older youth that respect family ties, allow diverse definitions of 'permanence' AND emerging autonomy
- Increased focus on relationship repair and building
- Exploration of poverty and race as permanency barriers
- Focus on needs of minority youth
- Pressing need for family settings
- Strategies that work for youth w/ MH & behavioral needs
- Importance of preventive and after-care investments to support unsteady relationships and resource parents

## Four promising practice strategies that promote family connections and avert worst outcomes



- Involving young people in their own case planning and decision making
- Rethinking role of birth families
- Teaming to strengthen or build family relationships
- Strengthening the child welfare/court collaboration

## References cited

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