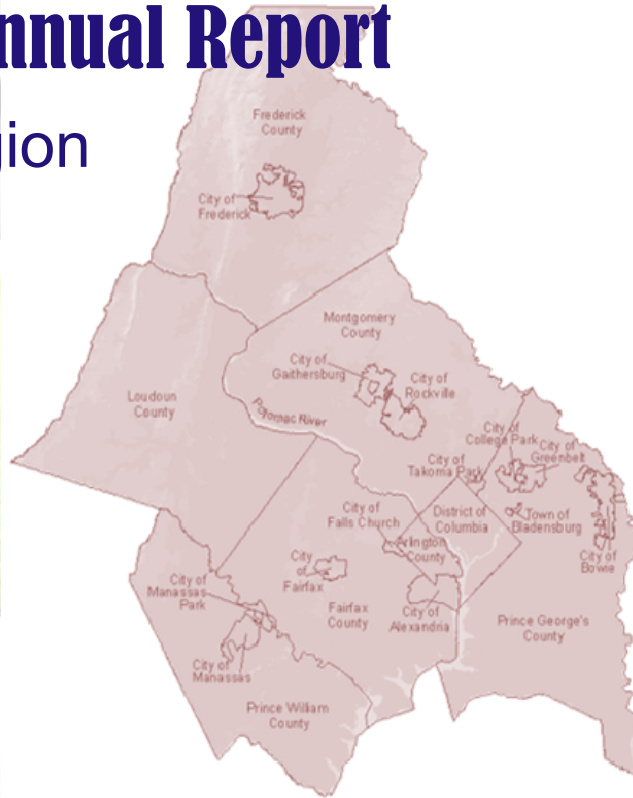


2009 Foster Care Annual Report

National Capital Region



Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Child Welfare Program

Annual Report Summary

Each year the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) queries the national capital region's child welfare systems to collect data, analyze findings and discover trends occurring in the region's foster care systems. Within this 2009 report you will find data, analysis and notes of trends in the following areas: children in foster care, placements, foster care providers, children waiting to be adopted, children who were adopted and their characteristics. Below are the highlights of 2009.



For additional information, contact the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), 202-962-3200, or COG's child welfare program directly, 202-962-3264 or kbunn@mwkog.org

Children in Foster Care

Children enter the foster care system for two reasons: abuse or neglect. When their safety is threatened, and abuse or neglect allegations are substantiated, children are removed from their birth homes and placed in foster care. Several factors are often cited as contributing to a caretaker's abuse or neglect of the child: drug abuse, incarceration, lack of appropriate child care and inadequate housing. These factors alone do not result in a child's removal, but rather may have led to the family's dysfunction.

| Children who entered foster care (January 1—December 31) | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| District of Columbia | 516 | 687 | -24.9% |
| Frederick County | 84 | 68 | 23.5% |
| Montgomery County | 173 | 241 | -28.2% |
| Prince George's County | 158 | 166 | -4.8% |
| City of Alexandria | 25 | 56 | -55.4% |
| Arlington County | 26 | 52 | -50.0% |
| Fairfax County | 135 | 117 | 15.4% |
| Loudoun County | 49 | 38 | 29.0% |
| Prince William County | 58 | 43 | 35.0% |
| Total | 1,224 | 1,468 | -16.6% |

During 2009, the region removed fewer children from their birth homes than in 2008. Also, fewer children remained in foster care last year. In fact, by the end of 2009, collectively, the national capital region's child welfare systems were serving 214 fewer children in foster care than at this same time in 2008 (see bottom chart.) The trend of fewer children in need of foster care is not only occurring in our region, but is also occurring nationally.

According to the most recent report by the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), for the last 10 years (1999—2008), over half of states and the District of Columbia were serving fewer children in foster care on the last day of 2008 than 1999.

| Children in foster care (As of December 31) | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| District of Columbia | 2103 | 2264 | -7.1% |
| Frederick County | 175 | 140 | 25.0% |
| Montgomery County | 546 | 575 | -5.0% |
| Prince George's County | 599 | 608 | -1.5% |
| City of Alexandria | 167 | 181 | -7.7% |
| Arlington County | 133 | 147 | -9.5% |
| Fairfax County | 370 | 394 | -6.1% |
| Loudoun County | 97 | 87 | 11.5% |
| Prince William County | 91 | 99 | -8.1% |
| Total | 4,281 | 4,495 | -4.8% |

Note: All counts above include children in homes that were purchased from the private sector.



Placement Settings

Children who enter foster care are either placed in a family foster home or in congregate care. Congregate care placements include: group homes, residential or independent living care. With few exceptions, the region placed fewer children in congregate care settings this year than last.

| Placement Setting | Family Foster Homes | | | Congregate Care | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | 2009 | 2008 | Change | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
| District of Columbia | 1,507 | 1,586 | -5.0% | 409 | 448 | -8.7% |
| Frederick County | 84 | 82 | 2.4% | 50 | 46 | 8.7% |
| Montgomery County | 347 | 363 | -4.4% | 145 | 145 | 0.0% |
| Prince George's County | 353 | 352 | 0.3% | 169 | 181 | -6.6% |
| City of Alexandria | 117 | 134 | -12.7% | 32 | 38 | -15.8% |
| Arlington County | 93 | 96 | -3.1% | 26 | 47 | -44.7% |
| Fairfax County | 225 | 244 | -7.8% | 98 | 105 | -6.7% |
| Loudoun County | 65 | 60 | 8.3% | 19 | 14 | 35.7% |
| Prince William County | 58 | 70 | -17.1% | 22 | 26 | -15.4% |
| Total | 2,849 | 2,987 | -4.6% | 970 | 1,050 | -7.6% |

Note: Numbers are as of December 31st each year.



Foster Home Providers

On December 31, 2008, the national capital region had 4,495 children in care and only 2,193 foster homes providers. On December 31, 2009, with 214 fewer children in foster care, roughly twice as many children were in foster care than foster home providers.

The disparity between the number of foster homes available and the number of foster children in care presents a special challenge for local jurisdictions. With so few homes available, agencies have difficulty placing children who are perceived as “harder to place” with a willing foster parent. “Harder to place” children are: teens, children with special medical needs and large sibling groups.

COG and the Freddie Mac Foundation recently launched a region-wide foster parent recruitment campaign, *Kids Need Families Like Yours*, to recruit more foster families especially those who are willing to parent “harder to place” children.

Outcomes are still pending from the *Kids Need Families Like Yours* campaign as it launched May 2010. Undoubtedly, with more initiatives like this campaign and other recruitment and retention activities, the national capital region’s child welfare systems will continue to work toward attracting and retaining a surplus of quality foster homes for children in care, especially teens, children with special medical needs and large sibling groups.



| Agency Foster Homes | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| District of Columbia | 1,181 | 1,197 | -1.3% |
| Frederick County | 95 | 86 | 10.5% |
| Montgomery County | 302 | 291 | 3.8% |
| Prince George's County | 171 | 166 | 3.0% |
| City of Alexandria | 72 | 84 | -14.3% |
| Arlington County | 52 | 56 | -7.1% |
| Fairfax County | 157 | 167 | -6.0% |
| Loudoun County | 60 | 48 | 25.0% |
| Prince William County | 98 | 98 | 0.0% |
| Total | 2,188 | 2,193 | -0.2% |

Note: Numbers are as of December 31st each year. This count excludes specialized care homes purchased from the private sector, but includes relative placements.

Permanency Outcomes

Foster care was never intended to be a child's permanent placement. Rather, a foster home is a temporary safe haven for children who have been abused and neglected. Ideally, services are put in place so children can be safely reunified with their birth families, or permanently placed with a relative through legal guardianship.

For the last several years, the national capital region's child welfare systems have continued to work toward safely reunifying more children with their birth families and/or finding relative caretakers to parent them permanently. In late 2008, the Fostering Connections bill was signed into law giving states more flexibility to financially support and strengthen kinship care and legal guardianship arrangements for foster children. Through federal assistance such as Fostering Connections, and by employing other cutting-edge search strategies to locate and place more children with relatives, child welfare systems in the national capital region continue to ensure that foster care is, indeed, a temporary placement for all children in our region.

When relative placements and birth parent reunifications fail, agencies work to find other permanency options for the foster children. Programs like Wednesday's Child have a long and distinguished history of supporting the region's child-specific adoption recruitment by encouraging the public to consider adopting a teen or sibling group who is waiting to be adopted in foster care. The child's individual story is told in a compelling yet sensitive way by NBC 4 news anchor, Barbara Harrison. Locally, hundreds of children have been helped by the Wednesday's Child program, Heart Galleries, youth mentor programs and others. These private programs bolster the child welfare agencies' own child-specific recruitment programs to improve permanency outcomes for youth in care.

In essence, during 2009 the region increased adoptions by 4.6%, decreased reunification by 15% and 12 more children were emancipated from foster care as compared to last year. On the next several pages, these 2009 permanency outcomes are extrapolated and expressed in multiple ways.



Permanency Vs. Emancipation

| | Permanency (2009) | | | Emancipation (2009) | | | Permanency (2008) | | | Emancipation (2008) | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|---------------------|----------|------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------|----------|------------|
| | Reunification | Adoption | Total | Reunification | Adoption | Total | Reunification | Adoption | Total | Reunification | Adoption | Total |
| District of Columbia | 346 | 115 | 461 | 177 | | 177 | 374 | 81 | 455 | | | 173 |
| Frederick County | 32 | 5 | 37 | 8 | | 8 | 50 | 12 | 62 | | | 17 |
| Montgomery County | 79 | 51 | 130 | 32 | | 32 | 81 | 46 | 127 | | | 42 |
| Prince George's County | 71 | 26 | 97 | 67 | | 67 | 83 | 22 | 105 | | | 43 |
| City of Alexandria | 17 | 8 | 25 | 11 | | 11 | 25 | 29 | 54 | | | 11 |
| Arlington County * | 15 | 9 | 24 | 15 | | 15 | 21 | 12 | 33 | | | 14 |
| Fairfax County | 79 | 40 | 119 | 27 | | 27 | 113 | 48 | 161 | | | 24 |
| Loudoun County | 23 | 10 | 33 | 5 | | 5 | 23 | 9 | 32 | | | 6 |
| Prince William County | 32 | 11 | 43 | 8 | | 8 | 41 | 4 | 45 | | | 8 |
| Total | 693 | 275 | 968 | 350 | | 350 | 811 | 263 | 1,074 | | | 338 |

Numbers are as of December 31 each year. *Note: The only exception is Arlington County's 2009 reunification and emancipation numbers. These numbers are actually fiscal year, October 2008—September 2009.

Waiting Children

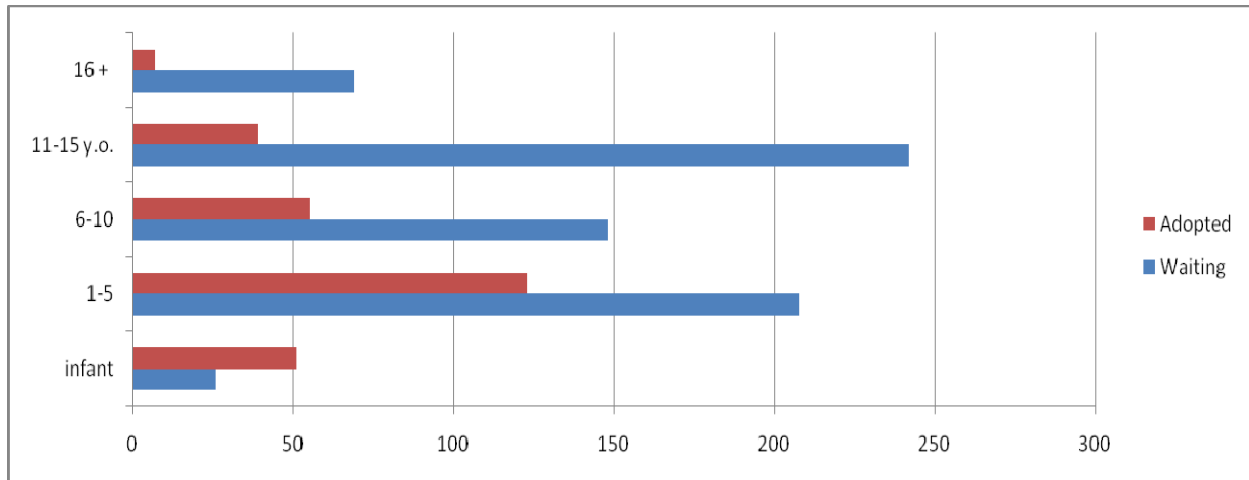
| | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| District of Columbia | 458 | 487 | -6.0% |
| Frederick County | 11 | 21 | -47.6% |
| Montgomery County | 62 | 58 | 6.9% |
| Prince George's County | 65 | 67 | -3.0% |
| City of Alexandria | 36 | 27 | 33.3% |
| Arlington County | 31 | 22 | 41.0% |
| Fairfax County | 13 | 13 | 0.0% |
| Loudoun County | 14 | 0 | 140.0% |
| Prince William County | 3 | 18 | -83.3% |
| Total | 693 | 667 | 3.8% |
| Note: Numbers are as of December 31st each year. Count includes children in pre-adopt placements that have not finalized, as well as children who are not matched with an adoptive parent. | | | |

Adopted Children

| | 2009 | 2008 | Change |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| District of Columbia | 115 | 81 | 42.0% |
| Frederick County | 5 | 12 | -58.3% |
| Montgomery County | 51 | 46 | 10.9% |
| Prince George's County | 26 | 22 | 18.2% |
| City of Alexandria | 8 | 29 | -72.4% |
| Arlington County | 9 | 12 | -25.0% |
| Fairfax County | 40 | 48 | -16.7% |
| Loudoun County | 10 | 9 | 11.0% |
| Prince William County | 11 | 4 | 175.0% |
| Total | 275 | 263 | 4.6% |
| Note: Numbers are as of December 31st each year. | | | |



Waiting & Adopted Children, By Age



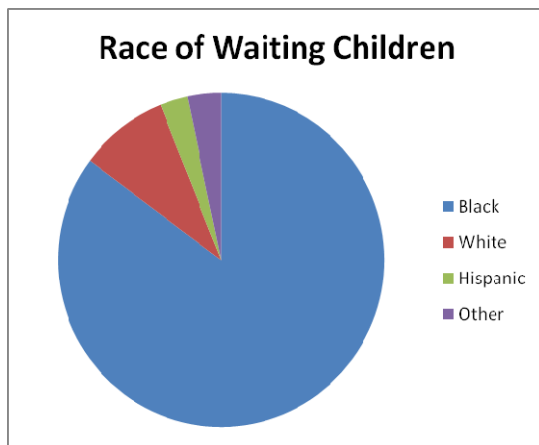
Waiting Children 2009, By Age
(As of December 31st)

| Infant | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16 + | Regional Totals |
|--------|-----|------|-------|------|-----------------|
| 26 | 208 | 148 | 242 | 69 | |

Adopted Children 2009, By Age
(As of December 31st)

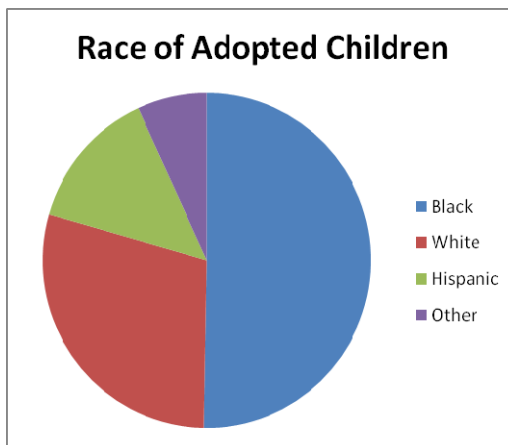
| infant | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16 + | Regional Totals |
|--------|-----|------|-------|------|-----------------|
| 51 | 123 | 55 | 39 | 7 | |

Waiting & Adopted Children, By Race



Waiting Children 2009, By Race
(As of December 31st)

| Black | White | Hispanic | Other | Regional Totals |
|-------|-------|----------|-------|-----------------|
| 590 | 61 | 19 | 23 | |



Adopted Children 2009, By Race
(As of December 31st)

| Black | White | Hispanic | Other | Regional Totals |
|-------|-------|----------|-------|-----------------|
| 188 | 51 | 24 | 12 | |



**Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments**