

BACKGROUND

When a child is not able to remain living with his or her birth parents, adoption becomes an alternative way for that child to have a permanent family. The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) is required to provide adoption services for a child in its custody or under its supervision who is in temporary, substitute care and who cannot be returned to his or her own home. A Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) must come before every adoption.

This data brief includes information on involuntary termination of parental rights cases and adoptions handled through CYF. TPR petitions and completed adoption data from January 2014 through December 2017 were examined.

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

A TPR decision is made by a judge after evidence is reviewed and it is determined that attempts to reunify a child with his or her birth parent(s) were unsuccessful and reunification is no longer in the best interest of the child. When the permanency goal for a child under the care of CYF is changed from reunification to adoption, CYF staff gathers evidence and documentation to facilitate the filing of a termination petition. If any parent's whereabouts are unknown, CYF will conduct a diligent search to locate the parent.

A judge hears testimony and evidence gathered by CYF and its legal representatives and service providers; as well as testimony from the parents, the child and other witnesses. If the judge determines that the evidence is sufficient to prove the grounds alleged by CYF, the judge will grant a TPR order, and the child is free to be adopted. By this stage, the child is generally living with a family willing to adopt. An adoption hearing is scheduled approximately 30 days after the TPR hearing to allow birth parents a period during which they may appeal the judge's decision.

TPR petition filings from May 2013 through December 2017 were available from the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. For the purposes of this brief, data on petitions from January 2014 through December 2017 were examined by the age of the child at the petition filing date and the order granted date.

Findings

- 61 percent of youth on TPR petition filings were under the age of 5.
- 41 percent of TPR petition filings were for white children, 40 percent were for black children, and 19 percent were for children of another single race or more than one identified race.

TABLE 1: TPR Petitions Filed, 2014–2017

AGE OF CHILD AT TPR PETITION FILING	COUNT OF CHILDREN	% OF TOTAL
under 1	52	6%
1	193	24%
2	102	12%
3	81	10%
4	72	9%
5	53	6%
6	52	6%
7	45	5%
8	32	4%
9	31	4%
10	24	3%
11	20	2%
12	17	2%
13	12	1%
14	16	2%
15	7	1%
16	5	1%
17	6	1%
Total	820	100%

TABLE 2: TPR Petitions Filed by Age & Race, 2014-2017

AGE	RACE			TOTAL
	BLACK	WHITE	OTHER SINGLE-RACE/ MULTI-RACE	
under 1	17	18	17	52
1	81	82	30	193
2	38	45	21	104
3	37	27	17	81
4	28	25	19	72
5	19	27	8	54
6	21	19	12	52
7	15	19	11	45
8	17	10	6	33
9	12	16	3	31
10	9	12	3	24
11	9	10	1	20
12	6	9	2	17
13	5	7	0	12
14	6	8	2	16
15	3	3	1	7
16	3	1	1	5
17	3	3	0	6
Total	327	338	154	820

COMPLETED ADOPTIONS

After a TPR order is granted, the adoption process can begin. In most instances, the child already knows the adoptive family either because they are relatives or close family friends (kin) or because they provided foster care to the child. Children may also be matched with a supportive adoptive family using family finding or state and local databases of approved adoptive homes.

Findings

- Children under the age of 5 made up 54 percent of all completed adoptions.
- 47 percent of all adoptions were to kin.
- 46 percent of black children, 48 percent of white children, and 47 percent of other single-race or multi-race children were adopted by kin.

TABLE 3: Completed Adoptions, 2014–2017

AGE OF CHILD AT ADOPTION EXIT	2014		2015		2016		2017		TOTAL BY AGE	
	KINSHIP ADOPTION	FOSTER ADOPTION	KINSHIP ADOPTION	FOSTER ADOPTION	KINSHIP ADOPTION	FOSTER ADOPTION	KINSHIP ADOPTION	FOSTER ADOPTION	KINSHIP ADOPTION	FOSTER ADOPTION
under 1	0	5	0	1	0	4	0	3	0	13
1	6	13	8	10	10	15	10	19	34	57
2	13	22	21	21	15	10	12	23	61	76
3	7	14	9	14	6	17	14	13	36	58
4	7	8	9	17	10	7	11	9	37	41
5	11	3	7	7	7	7	6	13	31	30
6	2	1	8	6	8	5	9	10	27	22
7	6	4	8	8	6	5	6	4	26	21
8	6	4	4	4	5	8	6	4	21	20
9	2	4	5	4	3	4	7	3	17	15
10	5	2	5	3	7	5	3	2	20	12
11	5	5	2	3	2	2	3	2	12	12
12	3	4	3	3	2	1	1	1	9	9
13	1	4	1	2	3	1	0	1	5	8
14	3	3	4	0	4	1	0	0	11	4
15	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	6	4
16	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	3	3
17	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	2	4	5
18	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Total by Caregiver	83	97	95	108	89	94	95	111	361	410
Total by Year	180		203		183		206		771	
Percent by Caregiver	46%	54%	47%	53%	49%	51%	46%	54%	47%	53%

TABLE 4: Completed Adoptions by Race, 2014–2017

ALL ADOPTIONS BY RACE			
AGE	BLACK	WHITE	OTHER SINGLE-RACE/ MULTI-RACE
under 1	6	1	6
1	33	44	14
2	58	54	25
3	24	39	31
4	33	31	14
5	30	19	12
6	16	22	11
7	20	18	9
8	10	13	18
9	10	15	7
10	13	12	7
11	9	12	3
12	6	8	4
13	5	6	2
14	8	6	1
15	1	7	2
16	4	0	2
17	5	2	2
18	1	1	0
Total	292	310	170

TABLE 5: Percent of Kinship Adoptions by Race

% KINSHIP ADOPTION BY RACE			
AGE	BLACK	WHITE	OTHER SINGLE-RACE/ MULTI-RACE
under 1	0%	0%	0%
1	39%	39%	29%
2	50%	44%	32%
3	33%	41%	39%
4	42%	42%	71%
5	50%	47%	58%
6	44%	59%	60%
7	45%	61%	67%
8	70%	46%	44%
9	60%	53%	43%
10	54%	67%	71%
11	33%	58%	67%
12	33%	50%	75%
13	40%	33%	50%
14	63%	83%	100%
15	100%	43%	100%
16	50%	0%	50%
17	40%	100%	0%
18	100%	100%	0%
Total	46%	48%	47%