

States Again Place More Children in Adoptive Homes

During the past two years, states have increased the number of finalized adoptions from foster care at an impressive rate—up 7,587 children in federal fiscal year (FY) 1998, and 9,388 children in FY 1999. While preliminary numbers for FY 2000 indicate that quite a few states may have placed fewer children than in previous years, at least 28 states have placed more children in adoptive homes than during their baseline year.¹ States' diligent family recruiting efforts are clearly paying off for children.

Many states, including Delaware, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas finalized significantly more adoptions in FY 2000 than in FY 1999. Of the states with the most children in care, results vary. California, which in FY 1999 finalized adoptions for nearly 2,300 more children than previously, has increased again. Illinois' FY 2000 adoptions (which topped out at more than 7,000 children in FY 1999—up more than 4,800 from two years earlier) have understandably levelled off.

Regrettably, New York reported its second decline in as many years.

Child advocates who watch adoption numbers are also tracking incentive payments that states earn for increased adoptions.² FY 1999 increases warranted a total of \$51.5 million in bonuses. The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 42 states received only \$19.3 million in 2000 payments, however, because Congress did not appropriate funding to cover the dramatic increase. Thanks to an extra appropriation in the 2001 budget bill, the Administration for Children and Families issued the remaining \$32.2 million to states on January 29, 2001.

As shown below, the two biggest beneficiaries were Illinois and California. Both received multi-million dollar payments.

Preliminary FY 2000 Adoption Increases by State

	Baseline Numbers*			Estimated 2000 Adoptions†			Total Increase
	IV-E	Non-IV-E	Total	IV-E	Non-IV-E	Total	
Alaska	120	17	137	170	20	190	53
Arkansas	237	41	278	251	64	315	37
California	4,287	1,967	6,254	5,415	955	6,370	116**
Delaware	27	9	36	76	27	103	67
D.C.	96	70	166	21	259	280	114
Louisiana	244	108	352	‡	‡	476	124
Maine	183	20	203	321	37	358	155
Michigan	2,108	338	2,446	2,341	434	2,775	329
Minnesota	452	87	539	‡	‡	617	78
Mississippi	197	41	238	270	108	378	140
Missouri	581	236	817	894	328	1,222	405
Montana	64	112	176	158	66	224	48
Nevada	148	63	211	‡	‡	223	12
New Hampshire	51	12	63	‡	‡	95	32
New Jersey	533	222	755	650	166	816	61**
New Mexico	212	46	258	285	95	380	122
North Carolina	673	234	907	1,031	299	1,330	423
Ohio	1,383	222	1,605	1,566	199	1,765	160
Oklahoma	625	229	854	629	453	1,082	228
Oregon	544	211	755	690	141	831	76
Pennsylvania	1,332	194	1,526	‡	‡	1,712	186
South Dakota	49	33	82	66	30	96	14
Tennessee	260	110	370	302	129	431	61
Texas	1,397	505	1,902	1,278	771	2,049	147
Washington	653	268	921	714	394	1,108	187
West Virginia	135	173	308	175	176	351	43
Wisconsin	540	82	622	640	79	719	97
Wyoming	25	19	44	21	27	48	4

TOTAL PRELIMINARY INCREASES Title IV-E: 3,233 Overall: 3,519

* Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as reported to NACAC in February 2001. The baseline figures reflects each state's number of adoptions in 1997, 1998, or 1999, whichever is highest. Incentive payments for the adoption of IV-E-eligible children is based on a comparison of the IV-E baseline against the official AFCARS IV-E adoption numbers.

† Data reported in this chart consists of preliminary federal fiscal year 2000 adoption estimates NACAC received from the 28 states listed above. States not listed either experienced a decrease in adoptions (n=17) or did not provide information (n=7). Final AFCARS numbers may differ from these numbers.

‡ IV-E and non IV-E numbers are not available for these states.

** State's figures are based on incomplete reporting. Final numbers are expected to be higher.

Top Incentives for FY 1999 Adoptions (2001 Payment)

Illinois	\$8,924,735
California	\$7,320,260
Texas	\$1,871,053
Oklahoma	\$1,397,971
Georgia	\$1,123,883
Arizona	\$829,771
North Carolina	\$802,237
Ohio	\$710,875

Now, with only \$10.8 million left in this year's adoption incentive budget (\$43 million appropriated, less \$32.2 million paid out for FY 1999 adoptions), Congress must again take action to find additional bonus funds. States that work hard to find more permanent homes for children need resources to keep adoptive families strong.

As child welfare professionals know, the adoption process does not end at finalization. Families who adopt children from foster care need ongoing support to successfully handle challenges that go along with special needs adoption. With bonuses received this January (that states have until September 30, 2002 to spend) and bonuses yet to come, states should invest heavily in post-adoption services. In this way, states can help to ensure that children who find adoptive families can stay a part of them forever. ☺

¹ The Department of Health and Human Services sets baselines against which to measure adoption increases by assessing the past few years of states' adoption finalization numbers.

² Under the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, incentive-eligible states that increase adoptions of children from foster care during federal fiscal years 1998 through 2002 will receive incentive payments.