

# Adoptions 2004



- ▶ **DHS child welfare finalized 943 adoptions in FFY 2004, an increase of 10.4 percent from FFY 2003.**
- ▶ **Adoptions for children 9 and older totaled 220, or over 23.3 percent of all adoptions.**
- ▶ **Most children (almost 64.0 percent) were adopted by relatives or foster parents.**
- ▶ **The median time to adoption reached an historic annual low in FFY 2004, at 34.6 months from the date of the child's last removal from home to finalized adoption.**

**DHS FINALIZED  
943 ADOPTIONS IN  
FFY 2004.**



In 1998, the federal government began requiring states to use a single system to report where children go when they leave foster care. This report on adoption trends is the data Oregon reported to the federal government for the federal fiscal year from 10/01/03 through 9/30/04.

# Adoptions

**T**he Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) passed by Congress in 1997 and Oregon's SB408 (passed in 1999 to conform to ASFA) share the goal of moving children more quickly from temporary foster care to permanency.

When adoption is the goal, a family is recruited that best matches the child's needs. Many factors are considered, including keeping siblings together if it is in the best interests of the children.

**DHS PLACES A HIGH VALUE ON PRESERVING AND PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SIBLINGS, PLACING THEM TOGETHER IN THE SAME ADOPTIVE FAMILY WHENEVER IT IS SAFE AND POSSIBLE TO DO SO.**

## Special needs

Most of the children placed for adoption by DHS child welfare have "special needs." Children with special needs:

- ▶ Are 6 years of age or older.
- ▶ Are part of a sibling group.
- ▶ Have a physical, emotional or mental disability.
- ▶ Are part of an ethnic/racial/cultural minority.

**IN FFY 2004, 534 CHILDREN WHO WERE ADOPTED HAD SIBLINGS ALSO ADOPTED DURING THE YEAR. OF THESE CHILDREN, 509 (95.3 PERCENT) WERE ADOPTED BY THE SAME FAMILY AS ONE OR MORE OF THEIR SIBLINGS.**

# The children who were adopted

Of the 943 children adopted in the federal fiscal year which ended September 30, 2004, 183 were under the age of 3 at the time of finalization. As children get older, the chances for an adoptive placement decrease dramatically, creating a critical need for adoptive homes for children over age 7.

## AGE of ADOPTED CHILDREN

Age	# of children	Percent of children
less than 3	183	19.4%
3-4 years	228	24.2%
5-8 years	312	33.1%
9-10 years	92	9.8%
11-13 years	92	9.8%
14 and older	36	3.8%

## GENDER

Finalized adoptions in FFY 2004 were about evenly split between boys and girls.

466 (49.4%)	Males
477 (50.6%)	Females

## CHILD'S RACE

Race	# of children	Percent of children
White	683	72.4%
African American	63	6.7%
Hispanic	125	13.3%
Native American	3	0.3%
Asian	0	0.0%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Unknown ethnic	1	0.1%
Multiracial	68	7.2%

*27.5 percent of children adopted in the federal fiscal year, which ended September 30, 2004, belonged to ethnic minorities.*



**AS CHILDREN GET OLDER, EFFORTS TO RECRUIT POTENTIAL ADOPTIVE FAMILIES FOR THEM BECOME MORE CHALLENGING.**

# The children who were adopted (cont.)

**A**doptive families are caring people who are ready to make a commitment to a child. No two families look alike. They are as varied as the children needing homes. Families of every background are needed to provide children with a stable, caring and nurturing environment.



## RECRUITING HOMES

- ▶ Oregon families recruited by DHS child welfare adopted 686 children (72.7 percent).
- ▶ Families recruited by Oregon private adoption agencies adopted 50 children (5.3 percent).
- ▶ Families recruited by out-of-state, private agencies adopted 113 children (12.0 percent).
- ▶ Families recruited by out-of-state, public agencies adopted 94 children (10.0 percent).

## CHILDREN ADOPTED IN FFY 2004

AREA OF STATE	CHILDREN	
	CAME FROM	WENT TO
SDA 1 Clatsop/Columbia/Tillamook	36	28
SDA 2 Multnomah	242	135
SDA 3 Marion/Polk/Yamhill	152	108
SDA 4 Benton/Lincoln/Linn	51	51
SDA 5 Lane	118	85
SDA 6 Douglas	33	20
SDA 7 Coos/Curry	37	26
SDA 8 Jackson/Josephine	62	43
SDA 9 Gilliam/Wheeler/Hood River/ Wasco/Sherman	*1-5	6
SDA 10 Crook/Deschutes/Jefferson	26	22
SDA 11 Klamath/Lake	37	23
SDA 12 Morrow/Umatilla	18	20
SDA 13 Baker/Union/Wallowa	**6-15	10
SDA 14 Grant/Harney/Malheur	**6-15	10
SDA 15 Clackamas	63	72
SDA 16 Washington	44	27
Oregon private licensed adoption agencies or out of state		257

\*Between 1 and 5 children. \*\*Between 6 and 15 children.

Data ranges given to assure confidentiality.

A total of 24 children were from SDAs 9, 13 and 14.

# Adoptive families

**F**ederal and Oregon statutes both require that consideration must be given to relatives as the placement of choice for children unable to live safely with their parent(s). Relative caregivers, including those who foster and those who adopt, must meet the same criteria for safety that nonrelated caregivers must meet.

The length of time to achieve adoption depends on the complexity and severity of a child's needs and the availability of appropriate caregivers already known to the child.

**63.9 PERCENT OF THE CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM DHS ARE ADOPTED BY RELATIVES OR NONRELATED FOSTER PARENTS.**

- ▶ Nonrelative foster parents became adoptive parents for 290 (30.8 percent) of the finalized adoptions.
- ▶ 282 finalized adoptions (29.9 percent) were with relatives providing foster care.
- ▶ An additional 31 finalized adoptions (3.3 percent) were with relatives who were not providing foster care.



**ADOPTIVE HOMES FOR OLDER CHILDREN, CHILDREN OF COLOR, AND SIBLING GROUPS CONTINUE TO BE IN HIGH DEMAND.**

# Cooperative adoption planning for children



In FFY 2004, 269 families who adopted children from DHS participated in mediation with one or more of their adopted children's birth parents. Through mediation, many of these families were able to reach an agreement regarding communication after finalization of the adoption.

Since 1997, the number of children in state custody freed for adoption has increased from fewer than 500 per year to an average of more than 900 per year. In FFY 2004, 887 children were legally freed for adoption. Of these children, 23.0 percent were voluntarily released by their parents; 43.0 percent were freed through a court process called termination of parental rights. The remaining children were freed through a combination of voluntary release by one or more parents and termination of the parental rights of one or more parents.

Oregon was the first state in the nation to use mediation in parental rights termination cases. This process avoids the costly and stressful process of a court trial and lays the groundwork for the birth parents to be involved in planning for their child's future. In this process, the birth parents voluntarily relinquish their parental rights, but play a role in planning for their child and, in some cases, have ongoing communication with the child after the adoption is finalized.

An open adoption can work in the best interest of the child. Open adoption is defined as one in which there is some communication or contact between the birth parent and the child and adoptive parent after finalization. Typically, the scope of this communication ranges from an annual exchange of letters and/or pictures through confidential intermediary means to periodic telephone and/or face-to-face contact which includes the child, his or her adoptive family, and the child's family of origin. When incorporated into the child's adoption decree, such an agreement for post-adoption communication is legally binding.

# Establishing adoptive placements

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**D**HHS child welfare works diligently to recruit families who match the needs of the child. This careful adoption process helps assure the adoption will be successful. Statistics show 93.1 percent of Oregon adoptive placements continued without disruption in FFY 2004.

The success of the DHS Adoptions Program in achieving timely adoptions for children relies on strong partnerships with a wide variety of private sector agencies and individuals. These partnerships include:

- ▶ Special Needs Adoption Coalition, a group of 12 licensed Oregon private adoption agencies that recruit, train and link adoptive families with children.
- ▶ Boys and Girls Aid Society, which coordinates recruitment, training, screening families and contracts to operate the foster/adopt family inquiry telephone line.
- ▶ Northwest Adoption Exchange for nationwide recruitment of qualified adoptive families.
- ▶ More than four dozen out-of-state private adoption agencies that bring forward prospective adoptive families.



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# After the adoption



## MANY ADOPTED CHILDREN HAVE LIFE-LONG SPECIAL NEEDS.

FOR MANY ADOPTED CHILDREN,  
THEIR EARLY HISTORIES OF  
ABUSE AND NEGLECT HAVE  
RESULTED IN CONDITIONS  
OR BEHAVIORS THAT WILL  
REQUIRE SPECIALIZED SERVICES  
THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES.

**D**HS provides services to preserve adoptive families. As of December 2004, 8,473 adopted Oregon children with identified special needs were receiving one or more adoption support services. In addition to the diagnosed special needs listed in the table below, children who are members of sibling groups, ethnic minority groups, or age 6 or older are also recognized as having special needs surrounding their placement and adoption. Of the 943 children adopted in FFY 2004, 866 (91.8 percent) had one or more special needs, and 856 of those special needs children received adoption support services, primarily in the form of Adoption Assistance.

The Adoption Assistance program provides benefits such as medical coverage, monthly payments or one-time payments for unexpected needs until a special needs adopted child reaches the age of 18. The number of children receiving Adoption Assistance has increased 174.0 percent from 1995 to 2004.

CHILDREN WITH ADOPTIONS FINALIZED IN FFY 2004	
IDENTIFIED SPECIAL NEED	% OF CHILDREN
Emotional disability	36.2%
Mental disability	16.6%
Visual or hearing impairment	1.3%
Physical disability	1.1%
Other medically diagnosed condition	26.5%

*Most adopted children have multiple special needs.*

Since 1999, the Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC) has provided regional training, a lending library and resource center, a Web site and assistance to start local adoption support groups for families adopting children from DHS foster care.