

Foster Care in the U.S.

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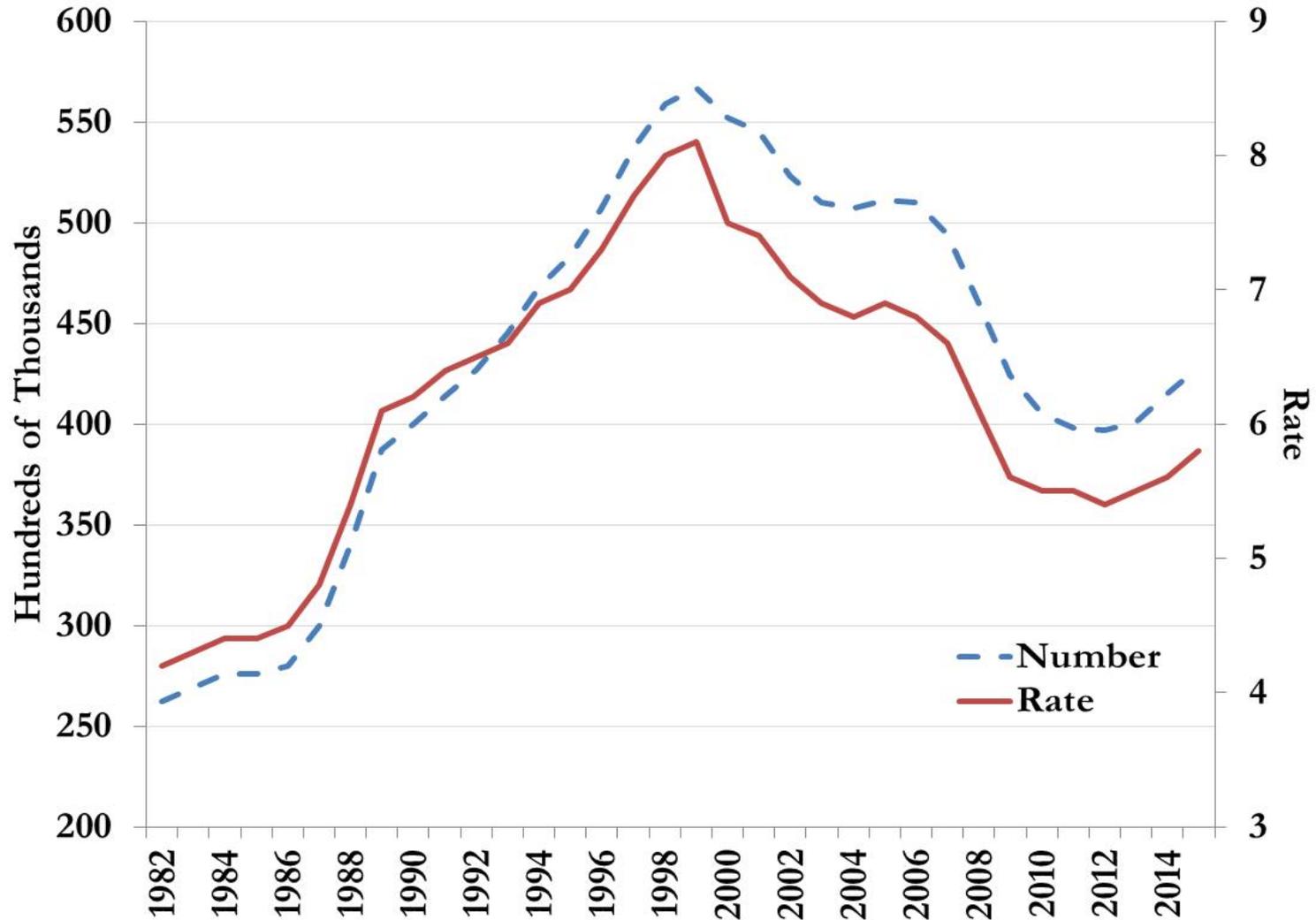
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The US Foster Care System: A Snapshot

- **A state-supported system of providing care for children who cannot be in their own family homes.**
- **Family foster homes, treatment foster homes, and kinship or relative's homes; may also include group or residential care.**
- **Children in foster care are in the legal custody of the state. Foster families receive financial and services support from the state.**
- **For most children, goal is permanency—return to home or permanent placement with another family via adoption.**

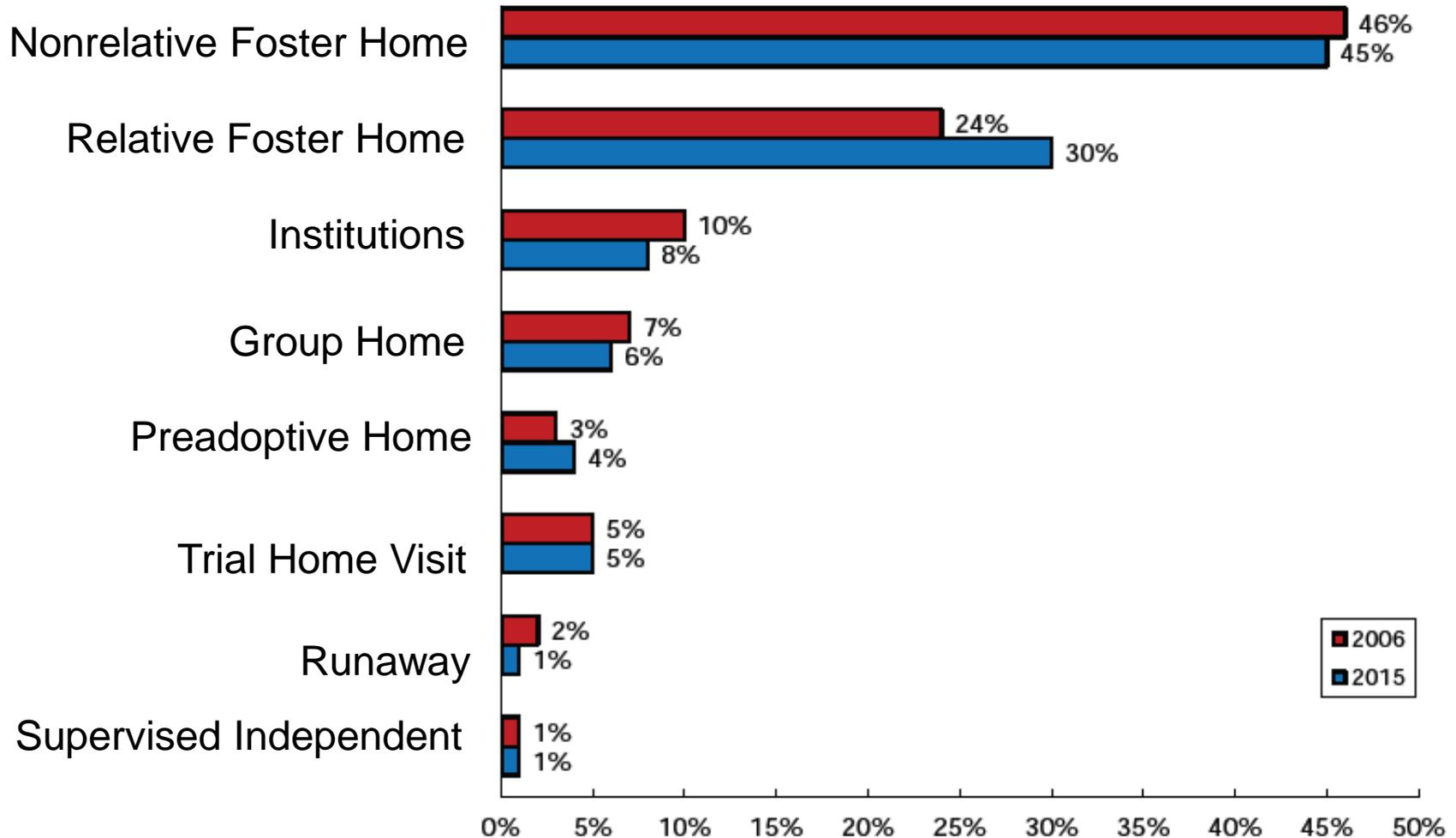
Foster Care Caseloads, 1982-2015

Rate is per 1,000 children under 18



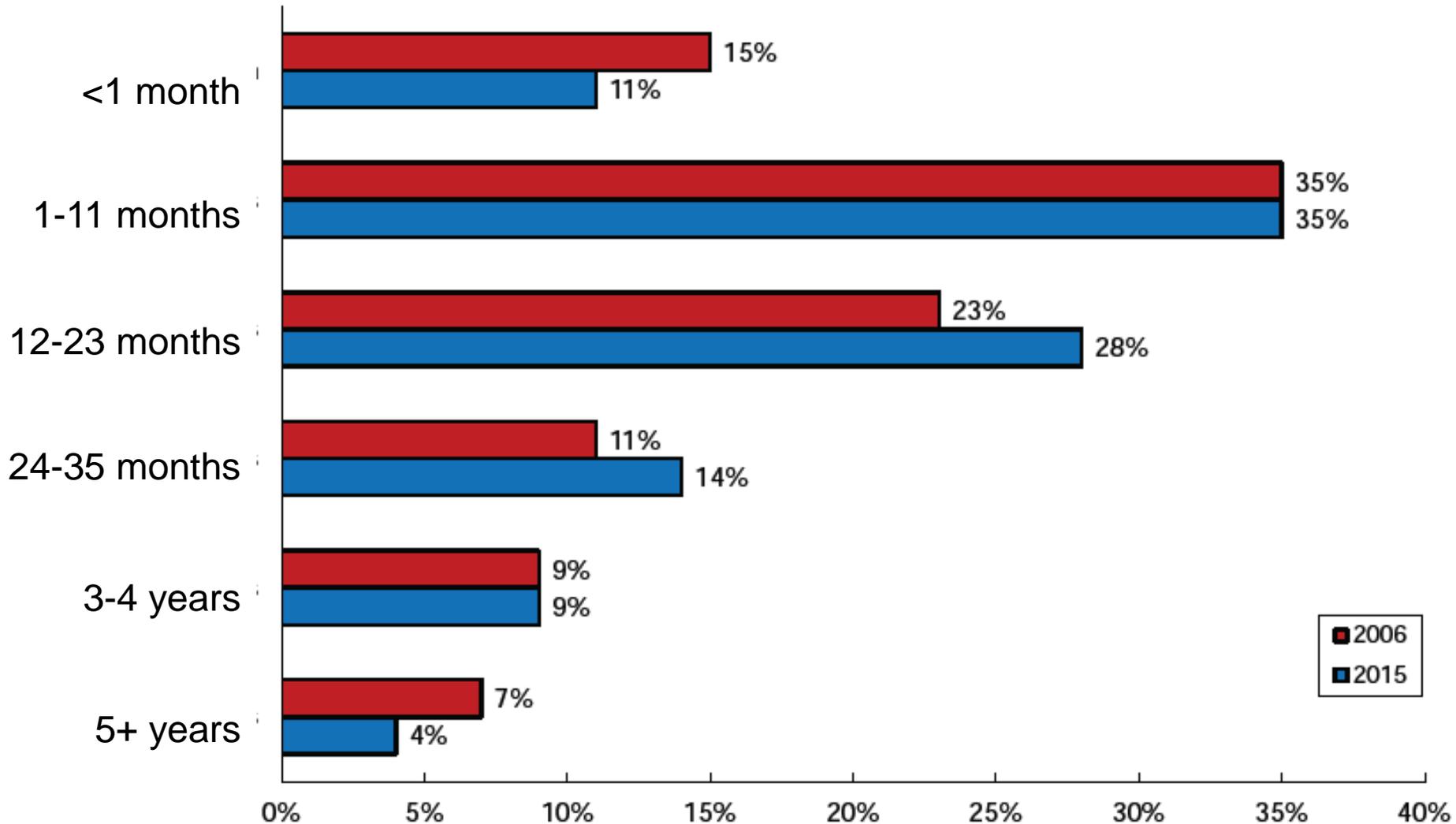
Source: AFCARS data

Placement Settings for Children in Foster Care 2006 and 2015



Source: Foster Care Statistics 2015, Child Welfare Information Gateway

Length of Stay in Foster Care, 2006 and 2015



Source: Foster Care Statistics 2015, Child Welfare Information Gateway

Characteristics of kids in care

- **Median age: 7.8**
- **43% White, 24% Black, 21% Hispanic (any race)**
- **52% male**
- **About two thirds abused or neglected, one third experienced substance abuse in the home, about half eligible for Medicaid**
- **Low family income is single best predictor of entering foster care (Lindsey 1991).**
- **Foster children have higher rates of behavioral and health problems, lower educational attainment . . .**

What do we know about the effects of stays in foster care?

Research challenges

- Selection into foster care, or into different treatments
- Unclear counterfactuals
- Data limitations—difficult to follow foster care children after they leave care

What do we know about the effects of stays in foster care?

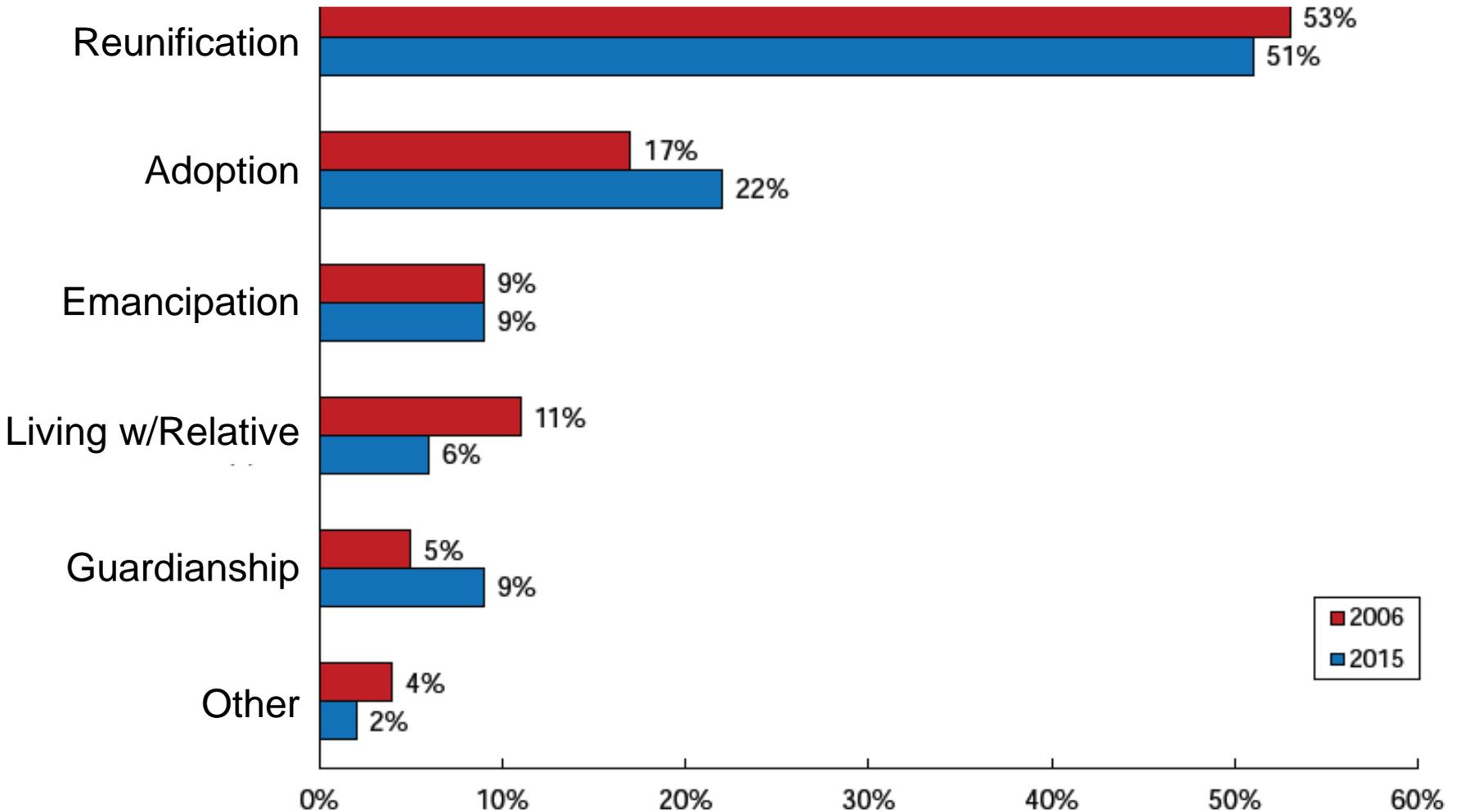
Doyle (2007, 2008)

- Compares remaining at home to foster care placement
- Uses variation in investigators' placement frequency to mimic random assignment
- Links child services records to juvenile justice records, Medicaid data, earnings data in Illinois
- Finds that the marginal child has higher delinquency and teen pregnancy rates, lower earnings when placed in foster care.

Unanswered questions (a partial list)

- Effect of length of stay
- Effect of different placement types
 - Kinship care, group settings
- What features of foster care programs produce better outcomes?
- What characteristics of foster children/families are most predictive of success?

Outcomes for Children in Foster Care 2006 and 2015



Source: Foster Care Statistics 2015, Child Welfare Information Gateway

Aging Out of Foster Care

- Over 25,000 young people leave foster care via emancipation each year.
- 55% of these have had 3 or more placements over their childhood.

Aging Out of Foster Care

- After reaching the age of 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless.
- Only half will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24.
- One in four will not graduate from high school or be able to pass their GED.
- Fewer than 4% will earn a college degree at any point in their life.
- 7 out of 10 girls will become pregnant before the age of 21.
- Nearly 60% of young men will be convicted of a crime.
- 1 out of every 2 will develop a substance dependence.

Aging Out of Foster Care

- “On average, for every young person who ages out of foster care, taxpayers and communities pay \$300,000 in social costs like public assistance, incarceration, and lost wages to a community over that person’s lifetime”

“Aging Out” of Foster Care

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
 - Created an option to extend eligibility for title IV-E foster care, adoption assistance and kinship guardianship payments to age 21
 - Twenty-five states currently do this