

# Placement Patterns for Adolescents in Foster Care:

A Longitudinal Analysis of NH AFCARS Data

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PRELIMINARY ANALYSES-PLEASE DO NOT CITE WITHOUT  
PERMISSION

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# Presentation Overview

- Development of practice-based research questions
- Longitudinal analysis of 2001-2003 NH AFCARS foster care data
- Discussion, implications and directions for future research

# Practice-based Questions about Family/Environment

- What parental characteristics contribute to reunification?
- Is it the case that children whose parents struggle with drug and alcohol issues are in care longer?
- What happens to siblings? Are they generally placed together or adopted together?
- Do youth who have an outcome of APPLA stay connected with their biological parents?

# Practice-based Questions about Foster Families

- Are there regional differences in foster parents within NH?
- What are the characteristics of the foster care population served in NH?
- What are the characteristics of foster parents who foster adolescents?
- Is it possible to better match children with “ideal” foster parents?

# Practice-based Questions about Adolescents in Care

- Are children in care longer less likely to reunify?
- What child characteristics are associated with longer stays in foster care?
- What happens when youth age out?
- What are the conditions of youth in foster care?

# Length of Stay in Foster Care

- Practice focus on permanency planning (AFSA)
- Research emphasis on length of stay (Benedict & White, 1991; Courtney, 1994; Connell, Katz, Saunders & Tebes, 2006)
- Do placement trajectories vary across developmental stages? (Finkelhor, Cross, & Cantor, 2005; Finkelhor & Hashima, 2001; Wulczyn, Barth, Yuan, Harden, & Landsverk, 2005)
- Do other child factors and case characteristics impact length of stay in foster care?

# Foster Care Exits

- Foster care exit possibilities captured in AFCARS
  - Reunification
  - Relative/guardian
  - Adoption
  - Aged out at 18 (or 21 if requested)
  - Transfer, runaway, death
  - Still in care (censored here)
- Length of stay in foster care (LOS)

# Use of AFCARS Data

- Foster Care File and Adoption Files
- Advantages
  - Able to merge multiple years of case-level data
  - Nationally available data with consistent fields
- Limitations
  - General administrative data limitations
  - Missing outcomes and data recoding

# Longitudinal Analysis of NH AFCARS Data

## Methods

# NH AFCARS

## Longitudinal File Creation

- 12 month AFCARS submissions from 2001-2003
- Fred Sebesta syntax  
(Hornby Zeller Associates)
  - Data cleaning routines
  - Record imputation routines
- Discrepancy between AFCARS and NH SACWIS

# NH AFCARS Cases 2001-2003

## Longitudinal File

- File Includes:
  - All youth who entered care between 10/1/00 and 3/15/04 (AFCARS window)
  - Primary first case within this window
- 5 cases deleted (adults and no entry to care in study window)

# Developmental Age

- Infancy (birth to 2.99)
- Early childhood (3 to 5.99)
- Middle childhood (6 to 13.99)
- Adolescence (14 and older)

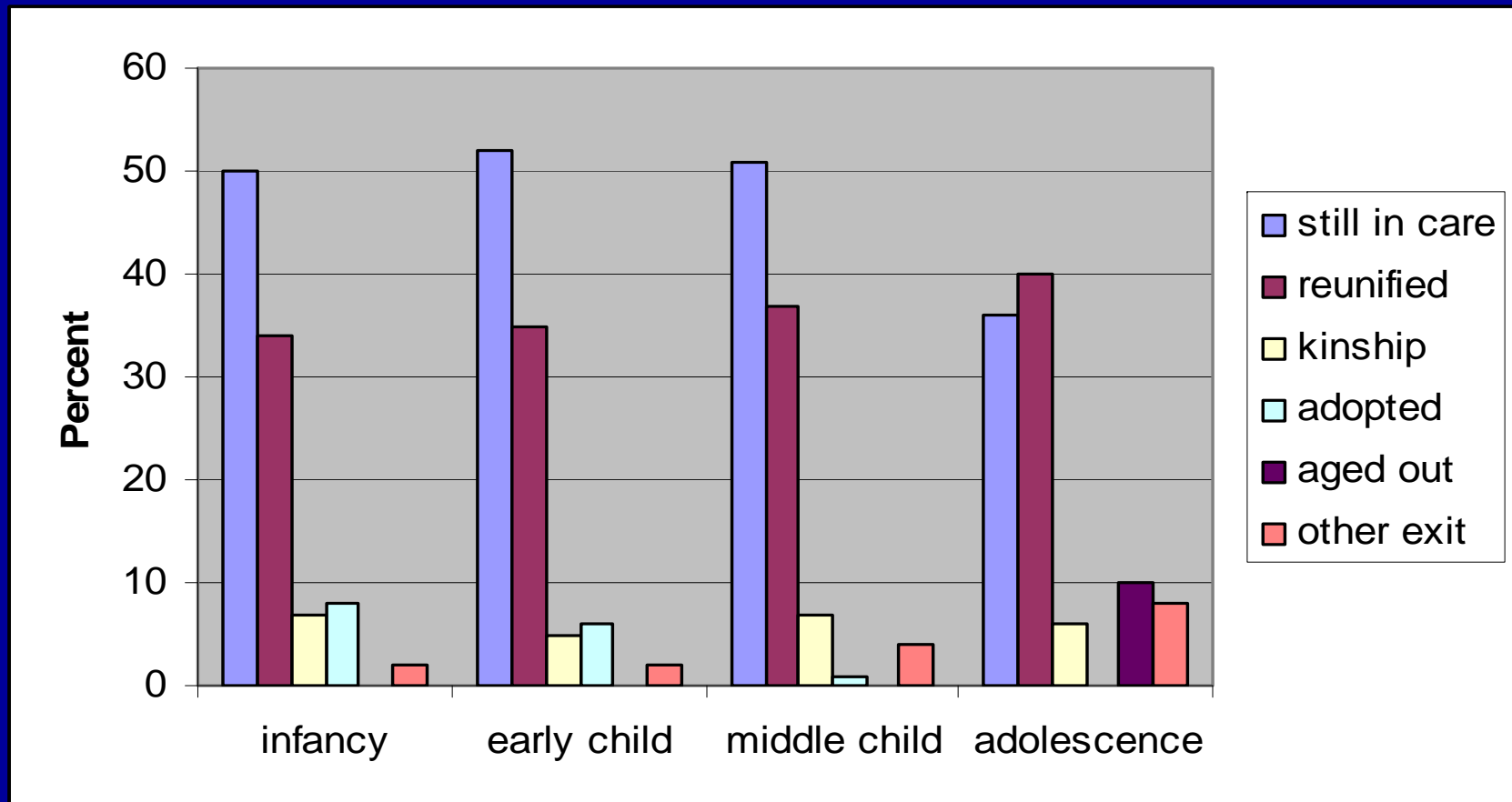
# Other Covariates

- Child characteristics
  - Gender
  - Race/Ethnicity
- Case characteristics
  - Prior removals
  - Removal reason
  - Initial placement setting

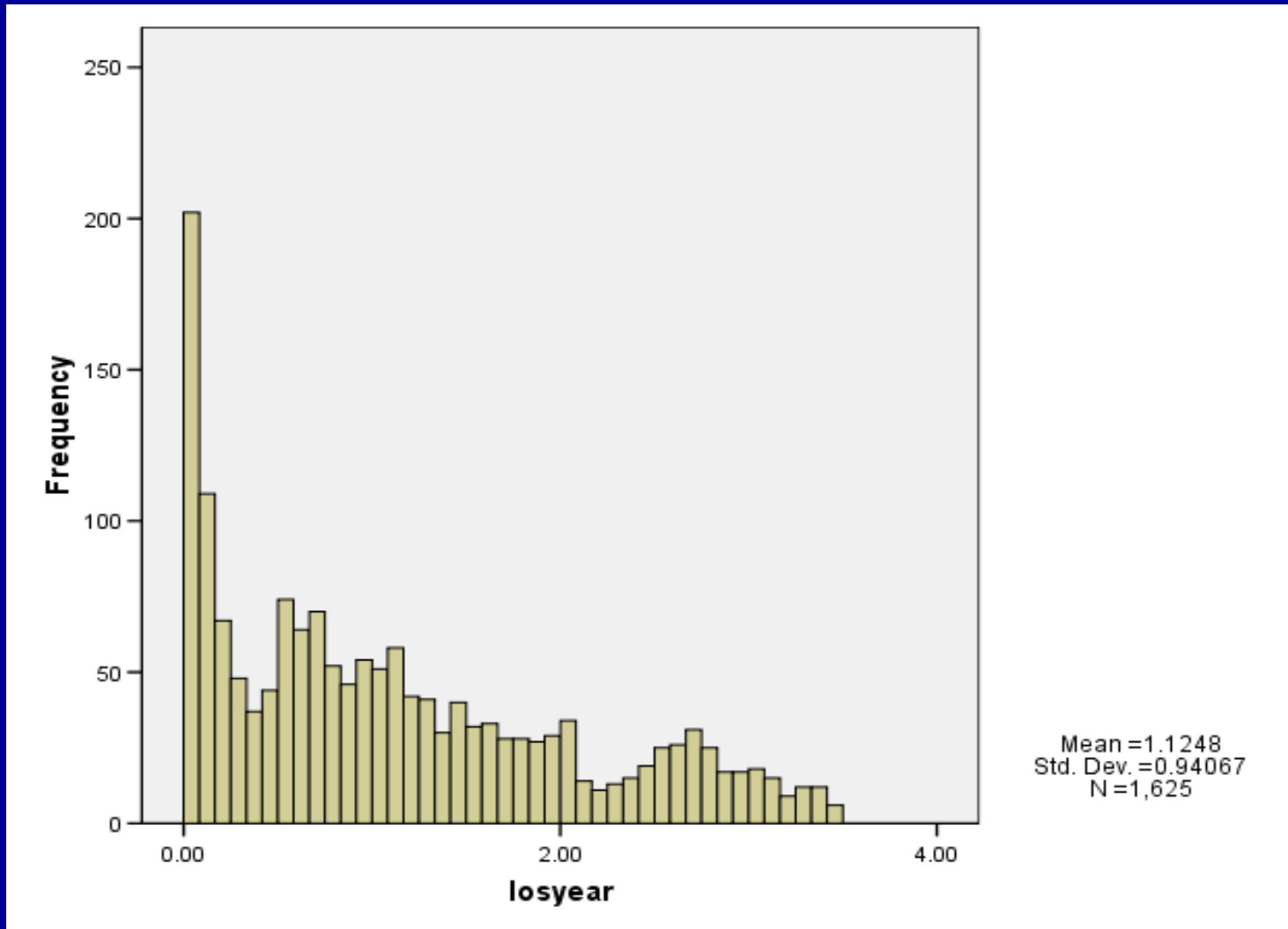
# Sample Characteristics

- Child Characteristic
- Gender
  - Male 52 % (849)
  - Female 48% (774)
- Age
  - Infant 21% (341)
  - Early child 14% (226)
  - Mid child 37% (593)
  - Adolescent 28% (462)
- Race/Ethnicity
  - White/Non-His 82% (1,328)
- Case Characteristics
- Prior removals
  - No prior removals 84% (1,357)
- Placement setting
  - Relative FF 14% (236)
  - Nonrelative FF 58% (939)
  - Other 28% (450)
- Removal reason
  - Neglect 58% (948)
  - Sexual abuse 3% (49)
  - Physical abuse 10% (160)
  - Parent Sub abuse 3% (43)
  - Child behavior problem 21% (334)
  - Other 5% (81)

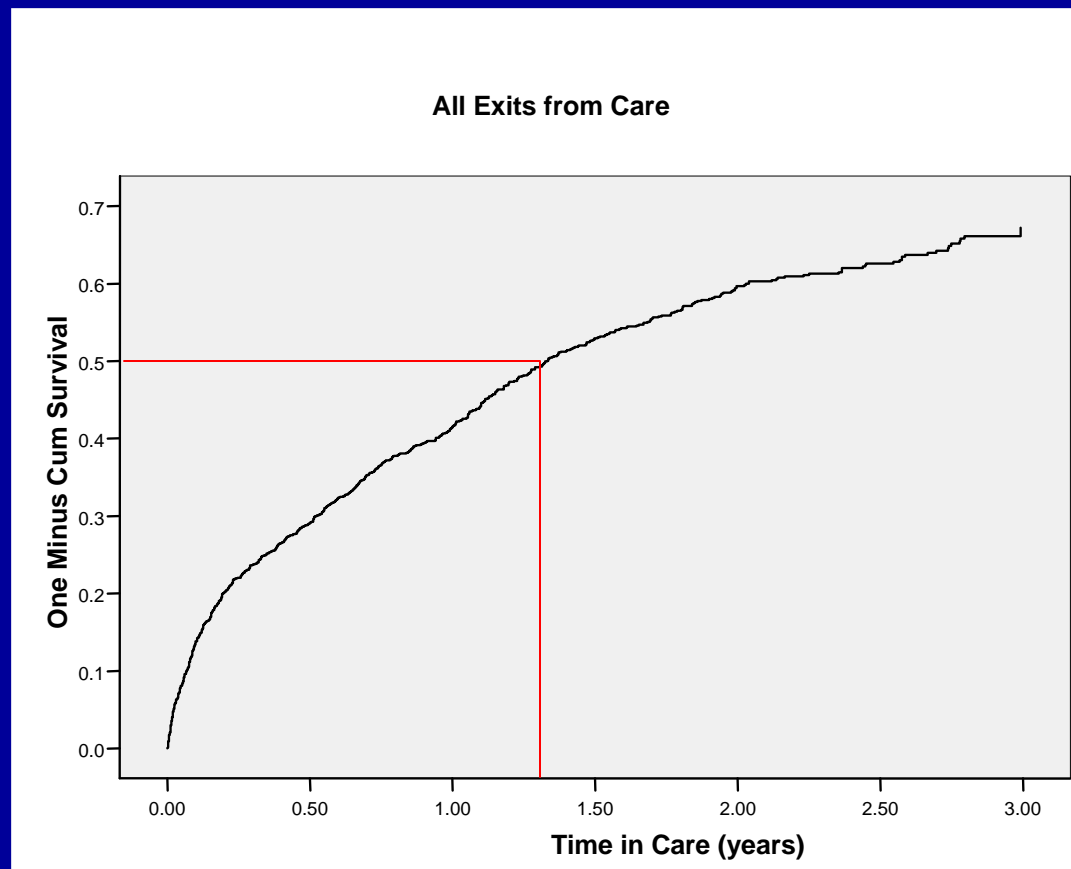
# Foster Care Outcomes by Developmental Age



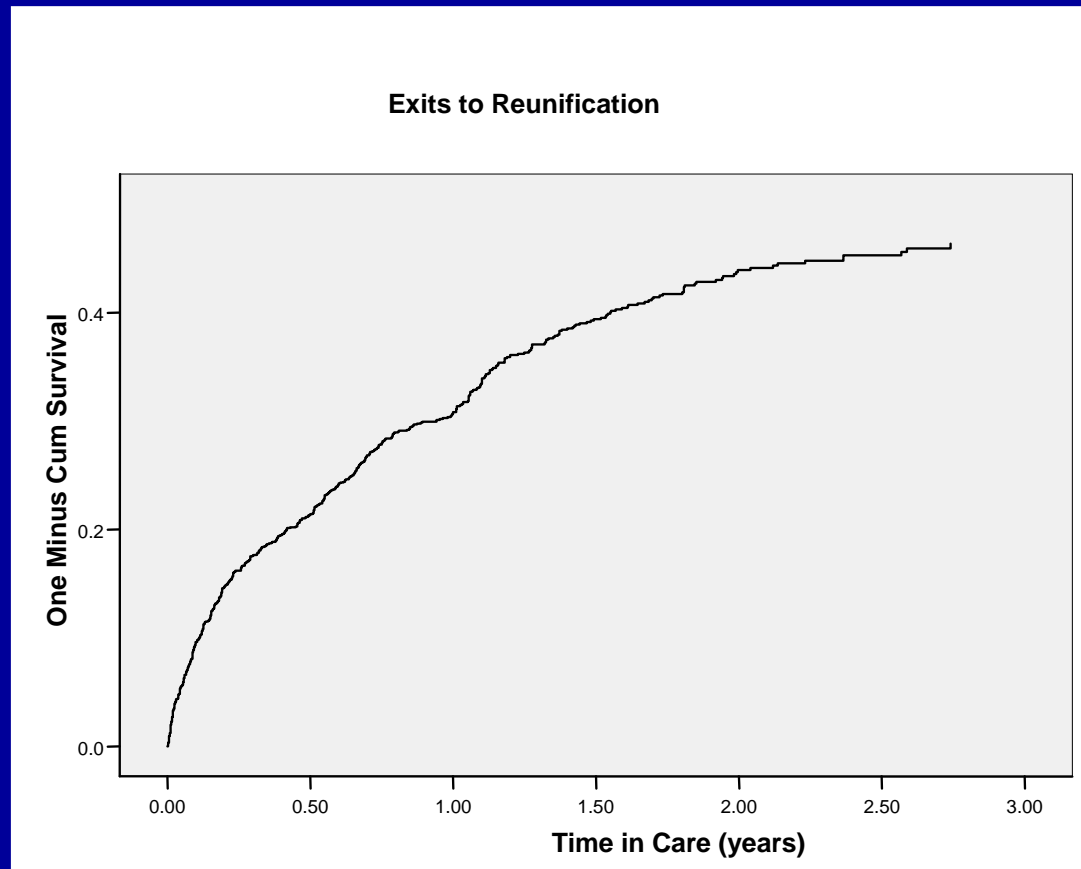
# Length of Stay in Foster Care



# Survival Curve: All Exits from Care



# Survival Curve: Reunification Exits

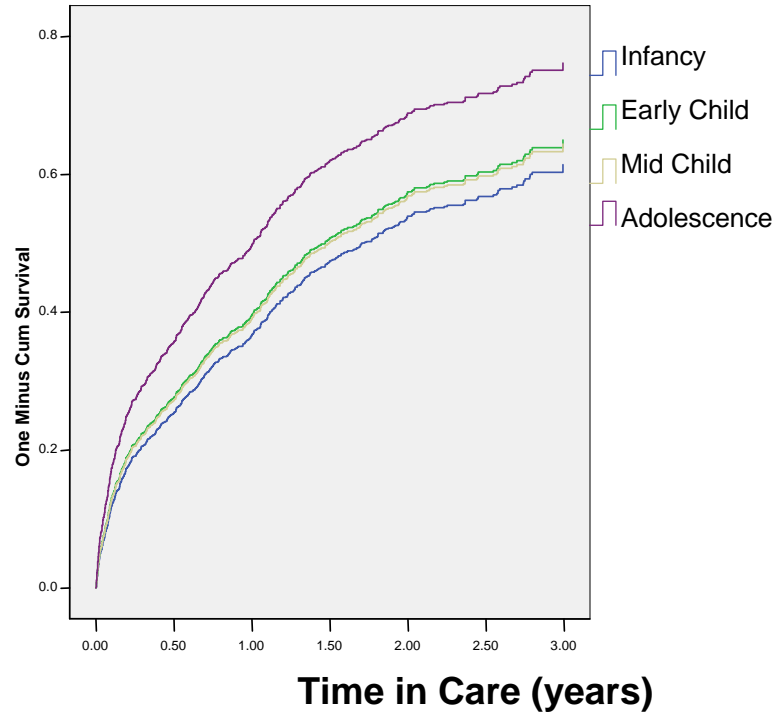


## Developmental Differences in Median Length of Stay

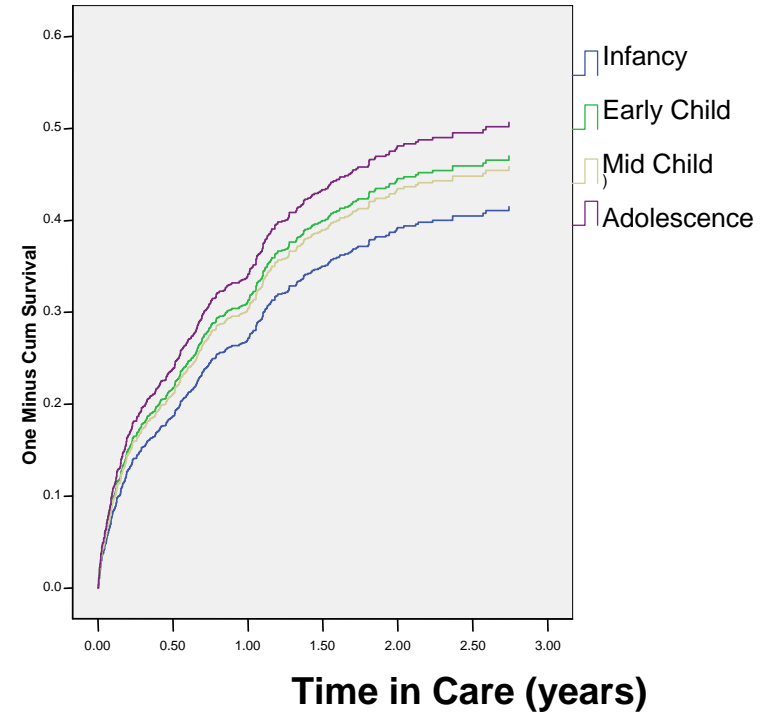
- Infancy 1.91 years
- Early Childhood 1.50 years
- Middle Childhood 1.60 years
- Adolescence .86 years
  
- Total sample 1.37 years

# Developmental Differences in Exit

## All Exits from Care



## Exits to Reunification



# Predictors of Exit from Foster Care

Child Characteristic	All children in care	Risk Ratios	Adolescents
<b>Gender</b>			
Female <sup>a</sup>			
Male	1.017		.987
<b>Age</b>			
Infancy (Birth to 2.99) <sup>a</sup>			-
Early childhood (3-5.99)	1.096		-
Middle childhood( 6 -13.99)	1.064		-
Adolescence (14+)	1.526***		-
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White/Non-Hispanic <sup>a</sup>			
Non-White/Hispanic	.998		.891

# Predictors of Exit from Foster Care

Case Characteristic	All children in care	Risk Ratios	Adolescents
Prior Removal	.735***		.834
Initial Placement			
Relative Foster Home <sup>a</sup>			
Nonrelative Foster Home	1.294*		1.018
Other setting (GH, I, IL, AWOL)	.966		1.131
Removal Reason			
Neglect <sup>a</sup>			
Sexual abuse	1.00		.879
Physical abuse	1.190		.922
Parent Sub Abuse	.871		1.489
Child Behavior	1.602***		1.359*
Other reason	1.197		.869

# Predictors of Exit to Reunification

Child Characteristic	All children in care	Risk Ratios	Adolescents
<b>Gender</b>			
Female <sup>a</sup>			
Male	1.039		1.053
<b>Age</b>			
Infancy (Birth to 2.99) <sup>a</sup>			-
Early childhood (3-5.99)	1.181		-
Middle childhood( 6 -13.99)	1.137		-
Adolescence (14+)	1.299		-
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White/Non-Hispanic <sup>a</sup>			
Non-White/Hispanic	.998		.885

# Predictors of Exit to Reunification

Case Characteristic	All children in care	Risk Ratios	Adolescents
Prior Removal	.654***		.692
Initial Placement			
Relative Foster Home <sup>a</sup>			
Nonrelative Foster Home	1.284		.663
Other setting (GH, I, IL, AWOL)	1.088		.937
Removal Reason			
Neglect <sup>a</sup>			
Sexual abuse	1.111		1.074
Physical abuse	1.340*		1.106
Parent Sub Abuse	.726		.573
Child Behavior	1.608***		1.556*
Other reason	.997		.825

# Length of Stay Analysis Summary

- Children likely to exit all types of foster care are:
  - Adolescents
  - Experiencing their first removal
  - In nonrelative care
  - Removed for child behavior problems
- Children likely to be reunified with families are:
  - Experiencing their first removal
  - Removed for physical abuse or child behavior problems

# Practice and Policy Considerations

- Impact of Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) process.
- DCYF data improvements and increased data usage.
- Staffing changes:
  - Adoption
  - Adolescents
- Permanency Plus! Pilot project (intensive reunification and foster families willing to be permanent caregivers) in some offices during this study window.

# Implications

- Length of Stay as measure of child well-being
- Developmental differences
  - In removal trajectory
  - In removal reason
  - In exits from care
- Practice implications for working with adolescents in the foster care system

# Limitations

- Data file creation issues
- Utility of AFCARS data for longitudinal analyses
- Ability of AFCARS data to answer practice-oriented questions

# Practice-Based Issues We Can Examine with AFCARS

- Parental characteristics associated with reunification
- Duration of care for children removed due to parental drug and alcohol issues
- Characteristics of the foster care population served in NH
- Characteristics of foster parents who foster adolescents
- Length of stay for children who are reunified with parents
- Child characteristics associated with longer foster care stays

# Practice-Based Issues We Cannot Examine with AFCARS

- Sibling placement and outcomes
- Youth with APPLA outcomes or their connection with biological parents
- Regional differences in foster parents within NH
- Methods for better matching children with “ideal” foster parents
- Aging out issues
- Conditions of youth in foster care

# Future Analyses

- Assessing the unique characteristics for adolescents in foster care
- Supplementing AFCARS data with NCANDS or SACWIS fields
- Examining practice-based questions raised here

Comments, Suggestions, or  
Innovations in other States?