

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 is an updated version of the 2018 Data Brief: Adoptions and Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights Cases, Jan. 2014 – Dec. 2017. It includes information on involuntary termination of parental rights cases and adoptions handled through CYF. TPR petitions and completed adoption data from January 2018 through December 2021 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. 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 and other witnesses. If the judge determines that the evidence is sufficient to prove the grounds alleged by CYF and that termination serves the child's needs and welfare, 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. Birth parents have a 30-day period during which they may appeal the judge's decision. If they do not appeal, CYF then schedules an adoption hearing. If they do appeal, CYF will wait for the result of that appeal before scheduling an adoption hearing.

For the purposes of this brief, data on petitions from January 2018 through December 2021 were examined by the age of the child at the petition filing date and the order granted date.

Findings

Table 1 lists the number of children with TPR petitions filed by year and the child’s age at the time of the filing. Also provided is the percentage of all petitions that were filed per the child’s age and the cumulative total.

Of the children with TPR petitions filed between 2018 and 2021, 63 percent were under the age of six at the time of the filing. This compares to 67 percent of children that were under the age of six between 2014 and 2017.

TABLE 1: Count of children with TPR Petitions filed by Age & Year, 2018 – 2021

AGE OF CHILD AT PETITION FILING	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL		
					# Total	% Total	Cumulative
Under 1	15	6	6	9	36	4%	4%
1	55	55	68	62	240	26%	30%
2	27	23	18	36	104	11%	41%
3	26	16	13	24	79	8%	49%
4	25	17	10	17	69	7%	57%
5	15	13	12	21	61	7%	63%
6	17	12	13	18	60	6%	69%
7	13	11	8	13	45	5%	74%
8	13	7	10	17	47	5%	79%
9	12	8	7	6	33	4%	83%
10	5	6	10	14	35	4%	87%
11	11	6	7	7	31	3%	90%
12	5	4	5	6	20	2%	92%
13	4	7	6	6	23	2%	95%
14	2	7	4	2	15	2%	96%
15	1	4	3	5	13	1%	98%
16	2	5	3	3	13	1%	99%
17	1	2	3	0	6	1%	100%
Age Unknown	3	1	0	0	4	0%	100%
Total	252	210	206	266	934	100%	100%

Table 2 shows the number of children with filings from 2018 through 2021 by the age and race of the child at the time of the filing.

43 percent of TPR petition filings were for white children, 50 percent were for black children, and seven percent were for children of another race or of unknown race. Between 2014 and 2017, 41 percent of filings were for white children, 40 percent were for black children, and 19 percent were for children of another race.

TABLE 2: Count of children with TPR Petitions filed by Age & Race, 2018-2021

AGE OF CHILD AT PETITION FILING	BLACK	WHITE	OTHER*	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
Under 1	18	15	0	3	36
1	127	99	4	10	240
2	52	50	0	2	104
3	40	35	0	4	79
4	43	24	1	1	69
5	29	30	1	1	61
6	26	30	2	2	60
7	22	21	1	1	45
8	19	24	1	3	47
9	18	13	1	1	33
10	20	12	1	2	35
11	14	14	1	2	31
12	8	10	0	2	20
13	12	10	0	1	23
14	6	5	1	3	15
15	7	2	1	3	13
16	8	4	0	1	13
17	2	3	0	1	6
Age Unknown	0	1	0	3	4
Total	471	402	15	46	934

*"Other" race includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and "Other Single Race"

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 (kinship) or because they provided foster care to the child (non-kinship).

Findings

Table 3 shows the number of completed adoptions each year by the age of the child at the date the adoption was finalized. Within each year, the number of kinship adoptions—where a child is adopted by a relative or close family friend—is provided alongside the number of non-kinship adoptions.

Adoptions to kin accounted for 52 percent of all 2018 through 2021 adoptions. In the prior report, this figure was 47 percent.

TABLE 3: Completed adoptions by Year, Adoption Type, and Age, 2018 – 2021

AGE OF CHILD AT ADOPTION	2018		2019		2020		2021		TOTAL BY AGE		CUMULATIVE %	
	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP	KINSHIP	NON-KINSHIP
Under 1	1	4	1	2	0	1	0	3	2	10	0%	1%
1	9	15	11	12	4	14	7	11	31	52	4%	7%
2	14	20	20	16	11	17	24	30	69	83	12%	17%
3	11	11	15	8	11	9	15	13	52	41	18%	22%
4	15	12	11	7	5	8	6	5	37	32	23%	26%
5	11	8	7	10	9	4	7	5	34	27	27%	29%
6	11	11	10	5	3	6	10	4	34	26	31%	32%
7	5	3	10	3	3	12	7	2	25	20	34%	35%
8	8	4	9	2	5	4	4	7	26	17	37%	37%
9	6	2	4	5	5	2	5	4	20	13	40%	38%
10	0	5	7	5	5	2	3	3	15	15	41%	40%
11	5	2	4	6	4	0	6	6	19	14	44%	42%
12	2	3	4	1	4	4	5	1	15	9	45%	43%
13	3	2	2	2	3	0	0	3	8	7	46%	44%
14	4	0	5	3	5	2	2	5	16	10	48%	45%
15	0	4	3	1	3	5	2	1	8	11	49%	46%
16	3	3	0	1	3	3	1	0	7	7	50%	47%
17	0	4	1	2	5	2	2	0	8	8	51%	48%
18+	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	4	2	52%	48%
Total by Type	108	113	125	91	89	96	108	104	430	404		
Total by Year	221		216		185		212		834			
Percent by Type	49%	51%	58%	42%	48%	52%	51%	49%	52%	48%		

*"Other" adoption type includes adoption by non-kinship foster parents and by adoptive parents that have not previously fostered the child

Table 4 provides the number and percentage of all adoptions by the child’s race and age at the time of adoption.

Children under the age of six made up 56 percent of all completed adoptions from 2018 through 2021. Between 2014 and 2017, children under six accounted for 61 percent of all adoptions.

TABLE 4: Completed Adoptions by Race, 2018 – 2021

AGE OF CHILD AT ADOPTION	BLACK		WHITE		OTHER		UNKNOWN		TOTAL		CUMULATIVE TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 1	3	1%	7	2%	0	0%	2	9%	12	1%	12	1%
1	39	9%	40	10%	1	11%	3	13%	83	10%	95	11%
2	81	20%	67	17%	1	11%	3	13%	152	18%	247	30%
3	48	12%	43	11%	0	0%	2	9%	93	11%	340	41%
4	36	9%	31	8%	0	0%	2	9%	69	8%	409	49%
5	32	8%	28	7%	0	0%	1	4%	61	7%	470	56%
6	34	8%	24	6%	0	0%	2	9%	60	7%	530	64%
7	21	5%	23	6%	1	11%	0	0%	45	5%	575	69%
8	23	6%	19	5%	1	11%	0	0%	43	5%	618	74%
9	10	2%	20	5%	2	22%	1	4%	33	4%	651	78%
10	13	3%	15	4%	0	0%	2	9%	30	4%	681	82%
11	17	4%	15	4%	0	0%	1	4%	33	4%	714	86%
12	11	3%	11	3%	0	0%	2	9%	24	3%	738	88%
13	6	1%	8	2%	1	11%	0	0%	15	2%	753	90%
14	11	3%	14	4%	0	0%	1	4%	26	3%	779	93%
15	12	3%	7	2%	0	0%	0	0%	19	2%	798	96%
16	4	1%	8	2%	1	11%	1	4%	14	2%	812	97%
17	12	3%	4	1%	0	0%	0	0%	16	2%	828	99%
18+	2	0%	3	1%	1	11%	0	0%	6	1%	834	100%
Total	415	100%	387	100%	9	100%	23	100%	834	100%		

Other race includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and *Other Single Race*

Table 5 shows the number of all completed adoptions alongside the number of all kinship adoptions by the child’s race and age at the time of the adoption. It also includes the percentage of kinship adoptions out of all adoptions for each age and race pairing.

Of all completed adoptions between 2018 and 2021, 51 percent of black children, 52 percent of white children, and 89 percent of children of another race were adopted by kin. From 2014 through 2017, 46 percent of black children, 48 percent of white children, and 47 percent of children of another race were adopted by kin.

TABLE 5: Percent of kinship adoptions by Race

AGE OF CHILD AT ADOPTION	BLACK			WHITE			OTHER			UNKNOWN			TOTAL		
	# Total	# Kinship	% Kinship	# Total	# Kinship	% Kinship	# Total	# Kinship	% Kinship	# Total	# Kinship	% Kinship	# Total	# Kinship	% Kinship
Under 1	3	1	33%	7	1	14%	0	0	0%	2	0	0%	12	2	17%
1	39	12	31%	40	16	40%	1	1	100%	3	2	67%	83	31	37%
2	81	34	42%	67	33	49%	1	1	100%	3	1	33%	152	69	45%
3	48	26	54%	43	25	58%	0	0	0%	2	1	50%	93	52	56%
4	36	21	58%	31	16	52%	0	0	0%	2	0	0%	69	37	54%
5	32	20	63%	28	14	50%	0	0	0%	1	0	0%	61	34	56%
6	34	20	59%	24	13	54%	0	0	0%	2	1	50%	60	34	57%
7	21	12	57%	23	12	52%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	45	25	56%
8	23	13	57%	19	12	63%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	43	26	60%
9	10	5	50%	20	12	60%	2	2	100%	1	1	100%	33	20	61%
10	13	5	38%	15	10	67%	0	0	0%	2	0	0%	30	15	50%
11	17	9	53%	15	9	60%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%	33	19	58%
12	11	7	64%	11	7	64%	0	0	0%	2	1	50%	24	15	63%
13	6	2	33%	8	6	75%	1	0	0%	0	0	0%	15	8	53%
14	11	7	64%	14	8	57%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%	26	16	62%
15	12	6	50%	7	2	29%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	19	8	42%
16	4	3	75%	8	3	38%	1	1	100%	1	0	0%	14	7	50%
17	12	6	50%	4	2	50%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	16	8	50%
18+	2	2	100%	3	1	33%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	6	4	67%
Total	415	211	51%	387	202	52%	9	8	89%	23	9	39%	834	430	52%

*"Other" race includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and "Other Single Race"