

AFCARS Adoption Data Research Brief Number 4

SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

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The purpose of the AFCARS Adoption Data Research Briefs is to make national and state level AFCARS data available to citizens and researchers interested in adoption, especially adoption of children with special needs.

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Background

For most of the past 200 years, many children who needed adoptive families could not be placed with one because they were considered unadoptable. The first modern general adoption legislation was passed in 1851. That Massachusetts statute required that an adopted child be treated as though he had been born to his adoptive parents. Prospective adoptive parents were to petition for adoption from the local probate judge, and the judge was to determine if the prospective parents were of "sufficient ability to bring up the child, and furnish suitable nurture and education, having reference to the degree and condition of its parents and that it is fit and proper that such adoption should take place." The Massachusetts statute, and the statutes subsequently passed by most states, thus required that the prospective adoptive family and the child be matched in socio-economic terms.

In general, then, social workers desired to place children where they would blend in. Children and families were therefore matched on physical characteristics, as well as on expected intellectual, social, and religious characteristics. For example, a study by the U.S. Children's Bureau conducted in 1922-1933 found that all the agencies matched children based upon the religious affiliation of birth mother and adoptive parents. The Child Welfare League of America's influential *Standards for Organizations Providing Foster Family Care* (1933) also recommended adoptive matching by intelligence.

The belief in matching in foster and adoptive placement was driven by a belief that nature limited the influence of nurture. Because child welfare agencies were strongly influenced by

theories of inherited intelligence and theories that predicted that the negative effects of poor early child rearing were not reversible, most agencies limited their adoption practice to healthy infants of known background. That is, before an infant was placed, the agency determined that the child was, in fact, *adoptable*.

Adoptability meant without defect or disability. A defective or disabled child could not be matched with a normal family, that is, a family that could survive the process of pre-adoptive screening. The practice of labeling some children as *unadoptable* was reinforced because agencies often promised to provide prospective adoptive parents, many of whom struggled with infertility, with the perfect child. A disabled child was not a perfect child.

The welfare of the child may have first been cited in a Pennsylvania statute in 1855, but the best interest of all children who needed adoptive parents did not edge its way into adoption practice until the 1950s and 1960s.

The pace of change in adoption practice picked up dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s as adoption and child welfare practice moved, as did society, in a direction of acceptance and inclusiveness. Advocates of special needs adoption confronted traditional social work standards by insisting that families could choose inclusion and difference. Families who chose children with special needs took very personally the spirit of multiculturalism and multiracialism that bloomed during the period.

Adoption advocates began to promote the idea that *all* children are adoptable. They believed that many children in foster care who could not be returned home could be adopted even though they possessed characteristics which in the past had made them hard to place. Adoption advocates challenged agencies to achieve adoptive placement for these children.

Adoption advocates aggressively sought changes in adoption practice at the ground level. They formed statewide adoption resource exchanges to help with placements. The Indian Adoption Project was a national program that sought placements for Native American children and from which the Adoption Resource Exchange of North America was founded in 1968. Adoptive parents took an active role in adoption advocacy, forming The Open Door Society of North America, The Council on Adoptable Children, and local groups such as Transracial Adoptive Parents in Illinois and Families for Inter-Racial Adoption in Boston. By the end of the 1960s, there were almost 50 groups advocate for placement of all children (The Adoption History Project 2005)

Adoption advocacy groups came to resemble the consumer advocacy groups and civil rights groups formed in the 1950s-1970s, when they became aggressive in the pursuit of law to promote the adoption of

About AFCARS Data

A federal rule issued in December 1993 requires states to submit data on adoptions with state agency involvement (445CFR1355.40). Federal funding under the Social Security Act Title IV-E is contingent upon state's collection and submission of uniformly defined data. Beginning in 1998, states could be fiscally disciplined for lack of compliance. The data collection system is known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, or AFCARS. AFCARS reporting rules require states to submit to the Children's Bureau case-level information on all children covered by the Title IV-B/E of the Social Security Act; that is, states are required to submit semi-annually information about children in foster care and information about children whose adoptions were finalized after any state agency involvement. The foster care and adoption data are tabulated annually by the Children's Bureau. The Children's Bureau publishes tabulations on its website and in an annual Child Welfare's Outcomes Report.

The data used to produce the outcomes report form the basis for the public use version of the data used here, although the public use data may also include updates made by the states.

The AFCARS public use data files contain answers to 37 queries regarding each adoption finalized during the fiscal year.

The public use AFCARS data used here begin with fiscal year 1996, but many records for 1996 and 1997 contain missing data. The completeness of the data improves after 1997. The Children's Bureau puts little faith in the AFCARS data for years before 1998. However, AFCARS represents the only source of case-level data on adoptions with state agency involvement that is reasonably consistent in format across states and over time.

Although states are only required to submit data for adoptions that involve a state agency, the 1996 and 1997 AFCARS files include some observations of adoptions that were made without state involvement and were submitted voluntarily. The statistics presented here include only adoptions with state agency involvement.

children with for whom it is difficult to find an adoptive placement. The first federal adoption law promoting the adoption of these children was the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978 Title II-Adoption Opportunities (P.L. 95-266 Section 203). This legislation clearly defined a role for the federal government in the adoption of children in the foster care system by creating a discretionary grants program to fund state promotion of the adoption of children with so-called *special needs*. It said: "It is, therefore, the purpose of this Title to facilitate the elimination of barriers to adoption and to provide permanent and loving home environments for children who would benefit by adoption, particularly children with special needs."

Though the Adoption Opportunities grants program was small relative to later programs promoting adoption, the introduction of the term *special needs* has had a long-lasting effect. By federal definition, *special needs* are characteristics of a child that can make adoption more difficult. The term special needs now generally replaces the more cumbersome, but still legally accurate, description of children for whom agencies must work especially diligently to place. Special needs can include older age; physical, mental, learning, and emotional disabilities (or risk of these conditions); minority group membership; or membership in a sibling group that needs to be placed together. States designate the conditions that constitute special needs in that state. The definition of special needs is dynamic; states may change their definitions as circumstances change. The North American Council on Adoptable Children keeps an updated database on state definitions of special needs.

As agencies refocused adoption service as a service provided for children in need of families rather than a service provided for prospective adoptive parents, they refocused adoptive matching criteria. Most physical, religious, intelligence, and other matching criteria (except matching on race) were abandoned in favor of matching criteria that emphasized the ability of specific families to parent children with specific needs. The 1988 Standards for Adoption Service of the Child Welfare League of American recommended that prospective adoptive parents be evaluated "on the basis of their capacity to understand and meet the needs of a particular available child at the point of the adoption and beyond into the future...The ability to protect, nurture, and care for a child makes up the primary qualifications [of adoptive parents]." The standards recommend that agencies set aside consideration of marital status, sexual preference, age, and socio-economic status in favor of consideration of willingness to accept and to parent a specific child who needs an adoptive family. Research has suggested that the attributes associated with successful adoption of special needs children are realistic expectations, flexibility, patience, and good social support (Rosenthal & Groze 1992). Rita Laws and Timothy O'Hanlon (1999, p. 4) put it this way: "Successful special needs adoptions are the result of hard work on the part of the parents and their support network, and most of that work can be summed up in one word: advocacy...A parent-advocate is firm and calm, knowledgeable, a good listener, and somewhat stubborn" in her negotiations with child welfare administrators and others.

Several aspects of federal and state adoption law are important to families who adopt children with special needs. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272), also known as Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, created a joint federal-state program to provide federal funds to pay for the support of children in foster and adoptive families. The Act established the federal adoption assistance program which provides federal matching funds on an entitlement basis to pay a monthly adoption subsidy on behalf children who would have been eligible for AFDC at the time of removal from their homes or who were SSI-eligible at the time of removal and who have a special need. If a child qualifies for subsidy, the adoptive family can opt to receive monthly payments on behalf of the child until the child is 18 years of age (21 in some states), or until the child is financially independent or leaves the adoptive home.

Congress stated that its purpose in enacting the federal law was to enable each state "to provide ... adoption assistance for children with special needs."¹ Further, the provision of the federal law dealing specifically with the adoption assistance program states: "Each State having a plan approved under this part shall enter into adoption assistance agreements ... with the adoptive parents of children with special needs."² Adoption assistance programs are not limited to children with special needs who are in the legal custody of a county agency or other state-approved agency.

The 1980 Act also made children with special needs eligible for Medicaid. In 1986, Congress allowed Medicaid-only adoption assistance grants. The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act expanded Medicaid health coverage for adopted children with special needs.³

Federal laws supporting persons with disabilities are also important to families who adopt children with special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (P.L. 105-17) has proved especially important as it requires public schools to provide individualized education plans for children who struggle in the standard learning environment. A study of children waiting for adoptive placement in Nebraska in 1988 indicated that 36 percent of the waiting children received special education services (Coyne & Russell 1990).

A survey of families who adopted children from foster care between 1983 and 1987 found that 84 percent had a state-defined special need, 26 percent had a disabling or handicapping condition, and about half had been adopted together with siblings (65 percent had siblings and 74 percent of sibling groups were adopted together). At the time of the survey, that is several years after the adoptions had been finalized, 58 percent of the children needed special health care, 68 percent had an educational delay, 69 percent exhibited misconduct, and 83 percent exhibited some other kind of serious behavioral problem (Sedlack and Broadhurst 1993).

Little is known about the special needs and disabilities of adopted children in general. The federal Census of 2000 was the first census to collect data on *adopted son/daughter* separate from *natural born son/daughter* and *stepson/stepdaughter* (Kreider 2003). The "adopted" category includes all kinds of adoption, including: adoption of kin, stepchildren, adoption through private and public agencies, domestic and international adoptions, and independent and informal adoptions. The census enumerated 2.1 million adopted children, who represented about 8 percent of all sons and daughters of householders in 2000. About 1.8 percent of all households (817 thousand households) contained only adopted children. Another 1.8 percent contained both adopted children and birth children.

The disability status of children under five was not collected by the census. For children aged five to 17, householders were twice as likely to report at least one disability among their adopted children as compared to their other children. About 5.2 percent of birth children were reported to have a disability, while 11.8 percent of adopted children were reported to have a disability. The census did not collect especially detailed information about the type of disabilities; categories were limited to sensory, physical, mental, and self-care disabilities. Householders reported that just under one percent of birth children had a sensory, a physical, or self-care disability, while they reported about 1.5 percent of adopted children had disabilities that fell into one of those categories. Mental disabilities included learning disabilities and difficulties concentrating. About 4 percent of birth children and 10.4 percent of adopted children were reported to have a mental disability. Adopted children were more than twice as likely to have multiple disabilities.

Given the problems experienced by adopted special needs children, it is perhaps not surprising that the shift towards the adoption of special needs children has not been

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 670

² 42 U.S.C. § 673(a)(1)(A)

³ 42 USC section 671(a)(21)

problem-free. As special needs adoptions increased in the 1970s, the percentage of adoptions that disrupted or dissolved increased. Estimates of disruption and dissolution range from 5 to 15 percent (Berry 1997). Researchers have documented some cases of significant inappropriate behaviors among children with special needs, and parents have reported that agencies have collected inadequate information on children, or have misrepresented the needs of children. Despite these difficulties, most parents who adopt children with special needs report that their adoptive families function well and that they are, overall, satisfied with their experiences of adoption (Rosenthal & Groze 1992).

The Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption and Family Services Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-543) established funds for post-adoption services such as respite care and parent support groups. In some jurisdictions post-adoption services are also called adoptive family preservation services to emphasize their goal - preventing dissolution and disruption. Families of adopted children may utilize these post adoption supports in addition to any adoption assistance payments received. Post-adoption services may be provided by social workers at a public agency or by private providers under direct contract with the state program. Services are wide-ranging, addressing issues directly related to the adoption as well as issues raised by the special needs of the child, including educational, vocational, recreational, health, and mental health services.

National Trends in Special Needs and Disabilities

The categories of special needs basis that are defined in the AFCARS data set include being of minority race, being of an older age, belonging to a sibling group, having a diagnosed medical condition, and having another (unspecified) special need. AFCARS allows only one special needs basis to be assigned to an individual child for reporting purposes, even though children may, in fact, have several special needs. Each state has the latitude to set its own criteria for classifying children as special needs children and to specify a priority for classifying children if they meet multiple criteria. Some caseworkers may report the one special needs criteria that is the easiest to document. Additionally, some states or individual social workers may specify may use the “other” category differently. For these reasons, the data regarding special needs are not entirely comparable across states. If the adopted child does not meet the special needs criteria of the state, then special needs are marked as “*not applicable*.”

AFCARS includes additional details on diagnosed conditions that include separate categories for mental retardation, visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, and other (unspecified) diagnosis. These categories are termed *disabilities* to distinguish them from state-defined *special needs*. Disabilities are not mutually exclusive categories; AFCARS records may indicate that a child has multiple disabilities.

Table 1 and figure 1 show the distribution of special needs basis for all reported adoptions in all states for all years 1996-2003. Note that about 46,000 adoptions with state agency involvement (14.6 percent of valid observations) were finalized for children who did not have a state-designated special need. About 33,500 adopted children (10.6 percent of valid observations) had the special need basis of belonging to minority race. Older age was the special need of almost 75,300 adopted children (almost 24 percent of valid observations). Needing to be placed with one or more siblings was the special need of about 53,700 adopted children (17 percent of valid cases). Over 64,000 adopted children had a medical condition

Table 1. Special Needs Bases of Children Adopted with State Agency Involvement

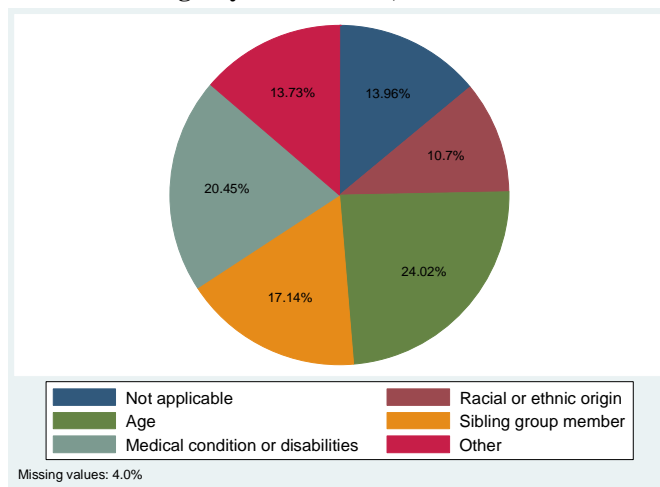
	Total Cases	Percent Missing Observations	Percent of Valid Observations					
			Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition or disabilities	Other
			1996	12,483	16.7%	33.4%	21.6%	11.3%
1997	20,757	9.0	30.8	17.3	10.2	14.0	14.6	13.1
1998	36,650	3.1	12.9	10.2	26.7	17.8	18.4	13.9
1999	46,586	1.6	12.8	9.6	28.8	16.6	19.2	13.0
2000	50,600	0.9	11.7	9.2	26.9	16.8	19.8	15.7
2001	50,940	1.3	10.7	9.5	25.1	17.8	21.3	15.5
2002	52,546	2.1	11.3	10.5	22.5	18.9	23.0	13.8
2003	50,362	2.1	12.2	9.4	24.3	18.2	24.3	11.5
Average	40,102	4.0%	14.0%	10.7%	24.0%	17.1%	20.5%	13.7%

or physical disability (about 20 percent of valid observations). About 10,600 children (13.6 percent) had a special need that fell outside of these categories.⁴

About 4 percent of adoption records contain incomplete data on special needs. For fiscal year 1996, over 16 percent of adoption records were missing any information on special needs basis. For fiscal year 1997, about 9 percent of records were missing special needs data. As with other AFCARS data, completeness improves beginning in fiscal year 1998. In 1998, invalid observations fell to about three percent of adoption records and declined to about two percent in 2002 and 2003.

Some changes in the distributions of special needs designation between 1997 and 1998 are notable, and easy to see in figure 2. First, the fraction of adopted children to whom the state-designated special needs categories did not apply dropped by more than 50 percent, from about 33 percent in 1996 to 3 percent in 1998 and 1999.

Figure 1. Special Needs Basis, All Adoptions with State Agency Involvement, 1996-2003



The fraction of adopted children for whom age constituted the main special need more than doubled, from ten percent in 1997 to almost 27 percent in 1999.⁵ The fraction of children whose status as sibling and who had a medical condition increased, but not as dramatically.⁶ The fraction of children for whom race was a special need declined from about 17 percent in 1997 to 10 percent in 1998.⁷ Further investigation of changes in state-specific special needs definitions is warranted.

⁴ For each disability, the difference between highest and lowest proportion is statistically significant (p -values<.05 in all cases).

⁵ Difference is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

⁶ The small difference, however is still statistically significant (p -value<.01).

⁷ Decline is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

Figure 2. Trends in Special Needs

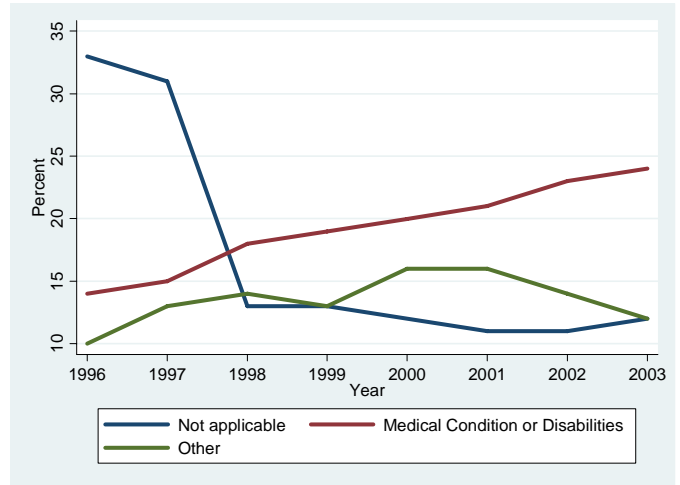
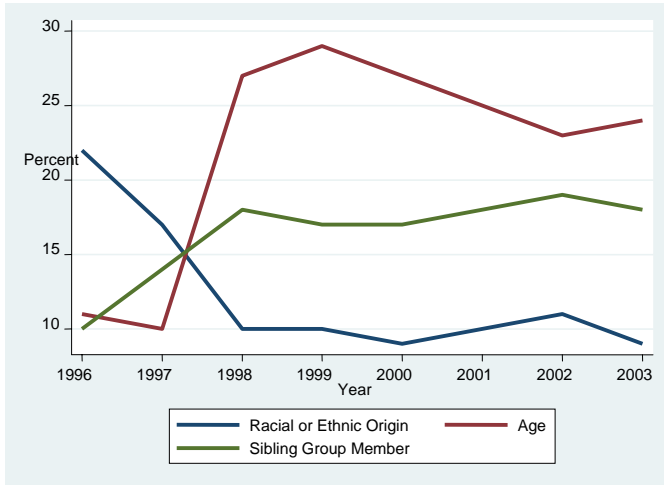


Table 2. Percent of AFCARS Records with Missing Disability Data

	Physically Disabled	Visually or Hearing Impaired	Mental Retardation	Emotionally Disturbed	Other Condition
1996	15.8%	24.4%	16.0%	15.8%	15.5%
1997	8.0	14.0	8.1	8.0	8.0
1998	0.4	4.6	0.4	0.4	0.4
1999	3.5	6.4	3.5	3.5	3.5
2000	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.3	3.3
2001	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3
2002	4.9	5.1	5.0	4.3	5.1
2003	5.7	5.9	5.9	5.1	5.9
Average	4.6%	6.4%	4.6%	4.4%	4.6%

Table 3. Cross-Tabulation of Disabilities, All Adoptions 1996-2003

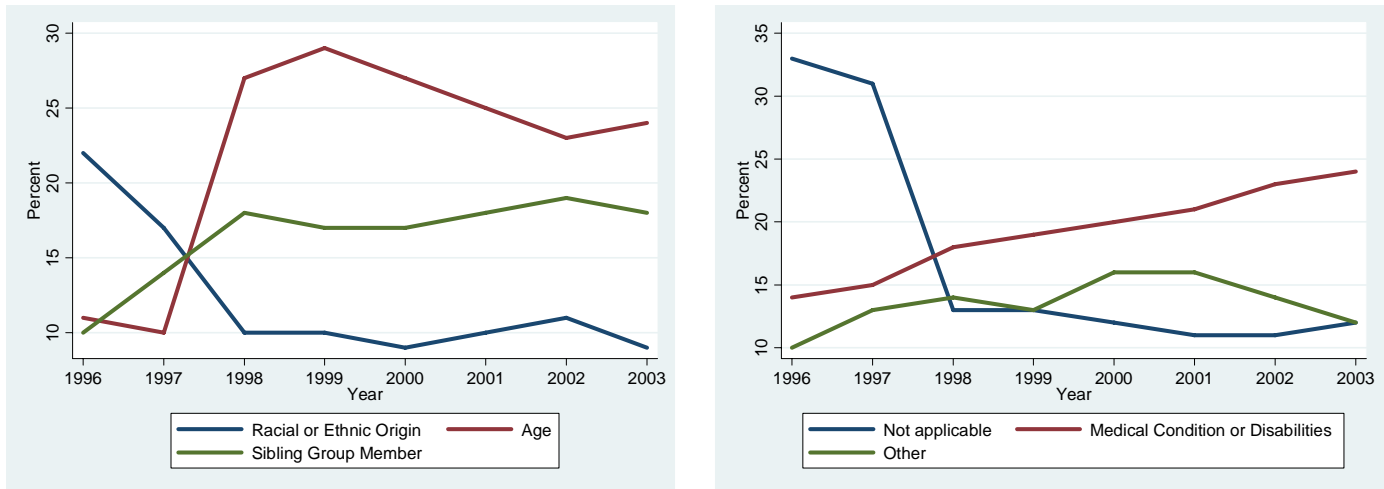
	Emotionally Disturbed	Mental Retardation	Other Conditions	Physically Disabled
Mental Retardation	1.1%	2.6%		
Other Conditions	3.4	1.4	15.5%	
Physically Disabled	0.8	0.6	1.3	2.7%
Visually or Hearing Impaired	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.4%

Table 3 shows that fewer than four percent of the 326,000 adoptions with state agency involvement were placements of children with physical disabilities, visual impairment or hearing impairment. The percentages of adopted children with a physical or sensory disability has climbed, however, from 3.3 percent (just over 400 children) in 1996 to almost 5.3 percent (1,600 children) in 2003, as shown in figure 3.⁸ Note that children with a physical or sensory disability account for only about 20 percent of children whose primary special needs basis is a medical condition or disability. The percentage of adopted children who are mentally retarded has remained steady at between two and three percent. The percentage of adopted children with an emotional disturbance has increased from about 5.5 percent in fiscal years 1996 and 1997 to 8.3 percent in 1998 and 12.7 percent in 2003.⁹ The percentage of children with some other disabling condition, which could include learning disability or psychiatric diagnosis such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or post-

⁸ Increase is statistically significant (p -value<.01)

⁹ Increase is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

Figure 3. Trends in Recorded Disabilities of Adopted Children



traumatic stress disorder has increased from an average of nine percent for 1996-1997 to 13.7 percent in 1998 and 18.2 percent in 2003.¹⁰

It is not clear what changes in policy or practice produced the changes in the recorded special needs and disabilities of adopted children. One possibility is simply that record-keeping has improved in reporting or in case management. Another possibility is that specific diagnoses have risen in the population of waiting children because general awareness of these conditions has increased. A third reason may be that after 1998 states began to use special needs designation strategically to increase the financial incentives for families to adopt. Note that these reasons are not mutually exclusive; all three may co-exist.

Although most adopted children with a disability have only one reported disability, the disability categories are not mutually exclusive. Cross tabulations of the reported disabilities are shown in table 3. There are 12,939 cases in which two disabilities are reported, 3,969 cases in which three disabilities are reported. There are a few hundred cases in which four or five disabilities are reported. The most common combination is of emotional disturbance with another disability.

Table 4 cross checks the recorded information on special needs basis and disabilities of children. Almost all disabled children have *medical condition or disability* as their primary special needs basis. Children who are emotionally disturbed or who have an unspecified diagnosis are more likely to have race, age, or sibling group membership as their primary special need.

Table 5 summarizes the likelihood that Title IV-E reimbursement was claimed on behalf of the child, given the reported special needs basis of the child. The recording of a special needs basis is correlated with request for Title IV-E funds, but not perfectly correlated. For fiscal years 1998-2003, IV-E funds were claimed in an average of about 70 percent of cases in which a special need basis is indicated. Requests for Title IV-E funds were less often made in fiscal years 1996 and 1997; for some categories of special needs (medical condition and other) the rate of IV-E assistance is as low as 44 percent.¹¹

When special needs are recorded as *not applicable*, Title IV-E assistance is still claimed in about 40 percent of cases, up from about 20 percent in 1996 and 1997. It is not clear how to interpret these data, except to allow that there are weaknesses in how the states gather and report this information.

¹⁰ Increase is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

¹¹ The increases in the proportions of IV-E claims for each special needs basis except minority race between 1997 and 1998 is statistically significant (p -value<.02 in all cases).

Table 4. Special Needs Basis of Disabled Children

	Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition or disabilities	Other	Average
Percent of Children with Mental Retardation							
1996	0.07%	0.47%	0.42%	0.40%	22.61%	0.23%	3.34%
1997	0.10	0.12	0.69	0.25	9.48	0.19	1.57
1998	0.20	0.17	0.26	0.42	10.71	0.18	2.19
1999	0.21	0.19	0.09	0.37	11.40	0.14	2.40
2000	0.27	0.32	0.34	0.74	11.31	0.70	2.68
2001	0.23	0.30	0.47	0.82	12.04	0.82	3.09
2002	0.26	0.23	0.40	0.55	11.29	0.55	2.93
2003	0.16	0.38	0.36	0.65	10.26	0.47	2.82
Average	0.19%	0.27%	0.33%	0.58%	11.42%	0.48%	2.67%
Percent of Children Physically Disabled							
1996	0.02%	0.36%	0.28%	0.24%	14.60%	0.23%	2.17%
1997	0.08	0.46	0.30	0.36	10.89	0.31	1.82
1998	0.22	1.24	0.22	0.45	12.87	0.33	2.72
1999	0.11	0.31	0.07	0.18	13.09	0.16	2.70
2000	0.23	0.45	0.13	0.44	12.05	0.57	2.71
2001	0.27	0.39	0.24	0.65	11.27	0.60	2.81
2002	0.24	0.50	0.41	0.58	11.84	0.56	3.10
2003	0.31	0.88	0.33	0.75	11.87	0.42	3.30
Average	0.19%	0.57%	0.23%	0.51%	12.09%	0.44%	2.80%
Percent of Children Visually or Hearing Impaired							
1996	0.02%	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	4.12%	0.00%	0.62%
1997	0.00	0.10	0.28	0.18	2.72	0.13	0.49
1998	0.13	0.21	0.20	0.34	4.15	0.16	0.98
1999	0.09	0.19	0.09	0.25	4.74	0.15	1.08
2000	0.17	0.19	0.11	0.28	3.98	0.36	0.98
2001	0.23	0.24	0.14	0.20	5.16	0.31	1.30
2002	0.15	0.23	0.16	0.32	5.89	0.35	1.55
2003	0.16	0.32	0.25	0.25	7.27	0.42	1.98
Average	0.12%	0.20%	0.16%	0.26%	5.19%	0.29%	1.25%
Percent of Children Emotionally Disturbed							
1996	0.23%	1.30%	2.02%	3.01%	34.94%	0.46%	5.73%
1997	0.44	1.36	2.97	3.66	29.99	0.88	5.70
1998	0.67	2.13	1.67	3.50	38.21	1.37	8.63
1999	0.52	3.01	0.86	2.38	40.78	0.95	9.16
2000	0.74	2.27	1.15	1.91	43.26	1.84	9.99
2001	0.95	2.83	1.48	2.71	43.34	1.45	10.97
2002	0.60	3.10	2.03	3.37	42.82	2.57	11.96
2003	0.86	3.88	2.25	3.99	43.27	2.19	12.83
Average	0.63%	2.60%	1.59%	3.02%	41.51%	1.66%	10.17%
Percent of Children with Other Diagnosed Condition							
1996	1.00%	6.39%	1.81%	6.58%	58.01%	10.06%	11.55%
1997	1.13	4.98	3.46	3.33	37.86	5.20	8.27
1998	2.12	6.74	1.15	3.49	63.23	4.57	14.21
1999	2.34	6.99	0.70	3.49	62.00	4.83	14.59
2000	3.37	5.73	0.80	2.54	63.78	6.76	15.54
2001	3.49	4.76	1.36	2.74	64.14	7.32	16.87
2002	3.12	6.87	2.03	4.56	65.63	10.12	18.95
2003	2.39	6.46	2.16	4.91	61.59	9.18	18.42
Average	2.37%	6.12%	1.41%	3.71%	62.12%	7.22%	15.81%

Table 5. Title IV-E Reimbursement Claims by Special Need of Child

	Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition or disabilities	Other	Average
1996	20.6%	54.6%	59.6%	64.7%	65.0%	45.1%	51.6%
1997	22.0	62.8	62.1	49.3	44.2	39.5	46.7
1998	44.9	69.4	83.4	79.4	78.2	61.1	69.4
1999	48.9	75.6	85.4	80.7	80.4	65.7	72.8
2000	47.4	80.4	85.1	82.0	78.8	67.4	73.5
2001	41.1	85.0	82.0	78.9	78.9	70.9	72.8
2002	40.1	77.3	84.4	77.1	77.6	69.5	71.0
2003	36.5	75.5	78.0	69.6	73.4	67.0	66.7
Average	37.9%	74.2%	82.1%	76.0%	75.8%	65.0%	69.0%

Table 6 summarizes the value of the adoption assistance subsidy in cost-of-living adjusted, constant 2000 dollars by category of special needs basis and by recorded disability. The averages in table 6 exclude cases in which the subsidy is recorded as zero. The subsidy at the time of finalization is highest in support of adoptions in which the special needs basis is age of the child. This is because subsidy schedules in the states are tiered by age category: older children require more resources to support; therefore, the subsidy is higher. Somewhat anomalously, though, is the high value of subsidies for which the special needs basis is recorded as *not applicable*.¹² As noted above that there are apparently some errors in the recording of special needs basis, as indicated by the cross-tabulation of basis with claims for Title IV-E reimbursement (see table 5). However, at least some of the subsidies recorded when special needs are *not applicable* are likely being funded entirely by the states and local jurisdictions (see *BriefNo. 5*).

Adoption assistance payments in support of children with disabilities *are not* among the highest on average, but the standard deviation of the subsidies is quite large. The large standard deviation may reflect attempts to align the amount of the subsidy to fit the special circumstances of the child with disabilities. A comparison of the size of adoption assistance subsidies paid in support of children with reported disabilities bears this out: Children with specific disabilities receive subsidies significantly greater than children with *other diagnosed conditions*.¹³

Table 7 shows the percent of adoptions for which a monthly adoption assistance payment of \$0 was recorded in AFCARS. A payment of \$0 was recorded in about 40 percent of all adoptions for which the special needs basis was recorded as *not applicable*. There was a sharp decline in non-payment of adoption assistance when special needs are *not applicable* early in the period studied—from 65 percent in 1996 to 46 percent in 1997 to 35 percent in 1998.¹⁴ This change should be interpreted with care, however, because it coincides with an increase in the number of states that submitted data and in the completeness of the data. Information about each state's submission of special needs data appears in the next section. For other special needs, rates of non-payment rose early in the period. After 1998, there is no

¹² The average adoption assistance subsidy for each special needs basis category is statistically significantly greater than the average for the *other* special needs basis category (p -value<.01). Increases between 1996 and 2003 are also statistically significant (p -value<.05) for each special need and disability.

¹³ Statistically significantly greater (p -value<.01).

¹⁴ Decline in each year is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

**Table 6. Adoption Assistance Payments by Special Needs Basis and Disability
(Standard deviations in parentheses.)**

	Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition	Other	Average
1996	\$367 (264)	\$372 (175)	\$385 (220)	\$355 (189)	\$351 (298)	\$312 (145)	\$360 (223)
1997	354 (301)	384 (180)	383 (181)	391 (182)	380 (252)	306 (173)	370 (219)
1998	474 (316)	370 (200)	437 (261)	305 (237)	386 (376)	271 (195)	377 (284)
1999	485 (306)	387 (211)	438 (267)	345 (225)	414 (348)	300 (200)	400 (277)
2000	479 (307)	410 (200)	447 (269)	373 (204)	438 (335)	319 (198)	413 (268)
2001	487 (301)	410 (204)	479 (285)	385 (223)	445 (307)	355 (198)	429 (266)
2002	425 (251)	431 (191)	477 (272)	397 (213)	456 (310)	364 (211)	432 (258)
2003	407 (246)	463 (224)	517 (306)	402 (240)	443 (317)	434 (304)	452 (289)
Average	\$447 (292)	\$408 (203)	\$463 (277)	\$372 (223)	\$431 (326)	\$341 (221)	\$416 (271)

	Mental Retardation	Visually or Hearing Impaired	Physically Disabled	Emotionally Disturbed	Other Diagnosed Condition
1996	\$339 (318)	\$499 (371)	\$364 (323)	\$357 (291)	\$361 (260)
1997	365 (285)	454 (318)	397 (285)	396 (240)	379 (216)
1998	498 (345)	\$490 (349)	498 (347)	538 (388)	300 (295)
1999	491 (329)	517 (306)	527 (320)	520 (359)	342 (292)
2000	492 (300)	550 (337)	524 (320)	537 (335)	380 (284)
2001	519 (302)	548 (346)	536 (330)	525 (286)	394 (279)
2002	555 (322)	541 (345)	533 (341)	530 (268)	405 (291)
2003	535 (320)	495 (322)	509 (315)	538 (283)	381 (299)
Average	\$504 (320)	\$522 (335)	\$513 (329)	\$523 (313)	\$374 (290)

clear trend in the rate of non-payment. Non-payment declined from 1998 to 2002 for the special needs basis *age* and from 2000 to 2003 for children with *other* special needs.¹⁵

When state-defined special needs are recorded, non-payment of adoption assistance is most likely when the special needs fall into the *other* category; 18 percent of children with

¹⁵ The increase in rates of non-payment in 1998 as compared to 2003 is statistically significant (p -value<.02); the decline from the highest rate of non-payment to the lowest for the 1998-2003 period is statistically significant (p -value<.05) for *age* and *other* special needs.

Table 7. Percent and Number of Records with Adoption Assistance Payments

	Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition or disabilities	Other	Average (Total)
1996	65.4% (3,032)	7.8% (359)	5.1% (236)	4.6% (213)	5.9% (272)	11.3% (523)	16.7% (4,635)
1997	45.8 (1,797)	15.5 (609)	9.0 (353)	7.0 (275)	7.9 (311)	14.7 (577)	16.7 (3,922)
1998	34.7 (1,581)	11.1 (508)	13.4 (613)	8.4 (383)	11.3 (515)	21.1 (963)	16.7 (4,563)
1999	36.6 (1,953)	11.1 (590)	12.7 (679)	7.8 (413)	10.5 (560)	21.3 (1,137)	16.7 (5,332)
2000	32.5 (1,815)	8.5 (473)	12.5 (696)	7.2 (401)	14.4 (803)	25.1 (1,403)	16.7 (5,591)
2001	36.7 (2,059)	6.6 (369)	11.1 (625)	12.6 (704)	12.9 (722)	20.2 (1,132)	16.7 (5,611)
2002	38.6 (2,192)	13.7 (781)	9.4 (535)	10.5 (595)	12.3 (701)	15.5 (880)	16.7 (5,684)
2003	34.0 (2,100)	10.6 (653)	13.4 (829)	13.6 (840)	14.6 (900)	13.8 (852)	16.7 (6,174)
Average (Total)	39.8% (16,529)	10.5% (4,342)	11.0% (4,566)	9.2% (3,824)	11.5% (4,784)	18.0% (7,467)	16.7% (41,512)

other special needs were not supported with adoption assistance payments at the time of finalization. When being part of a sibling group constitutes the primary special need, non-payment of adoption assistance is least unlikely. Only 10 percent of children adopted with siblings are not supported with the subsidy. There is not much variation in the average age at adoption between special needs categories. The one exception is if the special need is being of minority race. The average age of adopted children from whom race was a special need fell from just over seven years in 1996 to just over five years in 1998 and thereafter.

Table 8 shows the average time between termination of parental rights and finalization of adoption for children with valid observations of special needs basis. For these children, average time from termination to finalization fell from 19.3 months in fiscal year 1996 to under 16 months in fiscal years 1999 through 2003.¹⁶ The decline was not evenly distributed across recorded special needs bases. The largest decline in time between termination and finalization, from 26.7 months to 14.8 months was for the children with no state-defined special need.¹⁷ The uncertainty about states' reporting practices does not allow a clear interpretation of this trend, although it may be that some of these children benefited from the so-called *fast track* termination procedures allowed under the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

Time from termination to finalization increased for all other special needs groups between 1996 and 1998, after which time from termination to finalization generally fell.¹⁸ This pattern is consistent with the claim that between 1997 and 1999 states more actively pursued adoptive placements for children who had been legal orphans for a longer-than-average time.

¹⁶ Decline is statistically significant (p -value<.02).

¹⁷ Differences are statistically significant (p -value<.02) for all pair-wise comparisons.

¹⁸ Difference between maximum and minimum for each special needs basis is statistically significant (p -value<.01).

Table 8. Time from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption (in months) by Special Needs Basis

	Not applicable	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group member	Medical condition or disabilities	Other	Total
1996	26.7	15.2	19.7	17	15	12.8	19.3
1997	18.9	15	21	19.8	19.7	18.9	18.8
1998	13.8	17.3	18.2	17.5	19	15.9	17.2
1999	13.6	16	15.9	15.8	17.3	14.2	15.6
2000	14.3	16.1	16.1	14.6	16.5	14.1	15.4
2001	13.7	15.9	18	14.6	16.8	13.9	15.8
2002	11.8	15.9	18.8	15.1	16.9	13.5	15.8
2003	12.2	16.8	18.8	14.7	16.9	13.1	15.9
Average (Total)	14.8	16.1	17.7	15.5	17.1	14.2	16.1

Special Needs and Disabilities State-by-State

States that are missing substantial amounts of information on special needs basis—particularly for 1996 and 1997—include Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Mexico and Wisconsin; see table 9. These states are missing special needs information for more than 20 percent of children adopted during 1996-2003. States missing special needs information in 10 to 20 percent of all cases are Idaho, Indiana, Maine, North Carolina, and Washington. Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico reported 90 to 100 percent of cases in 1996 as *not applicable*, as did Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, and Nevada in 1997, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, and New Mexico in 1998, and Connecticut and New Mexico in 1999. Connecticut did not report meaningful special needs data until fiscal year 2002. States not appearing in table 9 submitted complete special needs and disabilities data.

States missing more than 20 percent of information on physical disabilities are Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Washington, and Wisconsin. Most states have 90 percent or more valid observations of disabilities.

Table 11 shows, by state, the drop in the number of adopted children who did not have a state-defined special need. Several states show dramatic drops in the percentage of children adopted who did not have a special need. Declines of 50 percentage points or more are evident in Kentucky, Delaware, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Vermont. Thirteen additional states had declines of 10 percentage points or more. Only six states had increases in the percentage of adoptions of children with no special need; Utah and Georgia had increases of more than 10 percent.

Figure 4 shows the time trend by state in the percent of adoptions for which *minority race* was a special need and for which special needs basis was recorded as *not applicable*. As was evident in the national figures discussed above, several states had a discrete decline in the proportion of adoptions involving a child without state-defined special needs. These states include Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New York, and Texas. More continuous declines are evident in Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, North Dakota, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Three states (Florida, Georgia, and Utah) had increases in the proportion of adoptions of children without special needs.

The proportion of adopted children for whom minority race was a special need remained fairly constant in most states. However, notable declines in race as a special need were recorded in Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and West Virginia. Race as a special need increased in Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

Figure 5 graphs trends by state in the proportion of adopted children for whom *age* or *sibling group membership* was a special need. It also shows trends in *other* (unspecified) special needs. Colorado posted increases in all three special needs categories, while Montana posted decreases. The largest changes were in the percent of adopted children for whom older age was the primary special needs basis. Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Ohio, Vermont, and Washington posted notable increases, while Texas posted a decrease. The percent of adopted children for whom sibling group membership was the primary special need increased notably in Texas and South Dakota, but declined in Arizona. Other special needs increased notably in Alaska, Indiana, South Dakota, and Massachusetts, while they decreased in District of Columbia, Florida, and Nebraska.

The proportion of adopted children who have a disability has been fairly consistent at the national level, but the national statistics obscure considerable variation between the states. New York, Rhode Island, and Washington report no adopted children with mental retardation; Georgia, Wyoming, Alaska, South Carolina, and Arizona report that more than five percent of adopted children have mental retardation. New York reports no adopted children with vision or hearing disabilities, while Wisconsin, Kansas, and Georgia report that more than one in 10 children adopted with state agency involvement have a sensory disability. Similarly, New York reports no physical disabilities in its adopted children, while Georgia, Nebraska, South Carolina, Utah, and Oregon reported that more than 10 percent of adopted children have a physical disability.

Dispersion in reporting disability rates is especially large for *emotional disturbance* and *other conditions*, as shown in Figure 6. In a few states, such as Alabama, California, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island disability rates are uniformly low. In other states, children with disabilities constitute a significant group. In fact, the majority of children adopted in Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin are recorded as having some disability. Moreover, the reporting of multiple disabilities is inconsistent. For example, more than twenty percent of children adopted in Alaska, Georgia, Oregon, and Wisconsin are recorded as having an emotional disturbance *and* at least one other disability.

Finally, as was the case with the reporting of special needs basis, the reporting of disabilities in some states has discrete jumps. The abrupt changes in reporting evidenced in Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Georgia, Minnesota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wisconsin may indicate changes in policy rather than changes in the characteristics of adopted children.

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Table 9. Distribution of Missing Values of Special Needs Basis and Disability, All Adoptions with State Agency Involvement, 1996-2003

	Special Needs Basis	Physically Disabled	Visually or Hearing Impaired	Emotionally Disturbed	Mental Retardation	Other Condition
Alaska	0.4%	21.0%	21.1%	20.9%	21.1%	20.9%
Arkansas	5.2	60.0	60.0	60.0	60.0	60.0
Colorado	27.8	0.0	10.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Connecticut	63.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Delaware	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DC	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Florida	1.7	0.4	39.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Georgia	0.3	52.1	52.1	52.1	52.1	52.1
Hawaii	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Idaho	16.2	0.0	8.8	0.0	8.8	0.0
Indiana	19.4	4.0	3.2	4.1	3.9	3.3
Kansas	0.0	51.5	51.5	51.5	51.5	51.5
Kentucky	1.7	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Maine	17.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Massachusetts	29.0	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5
Minnesota	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mississippi	2.6	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Missouri	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Montana	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nebraska	0.0	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4
Nevada	8.1	0.0	8.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
New Mexico	34.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
North Carolina	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ohio	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Puerto Rico	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rhode Island	0.0	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6
South Carolina	3.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
South Dakota	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8
Utah	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Vermont	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Washington	10.0	29.7	31.7	21.0	31.3	31.7
Wisconsin	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6
All States	4.0%	4.6%	6.4%	4.4%	4.6%	4.6%

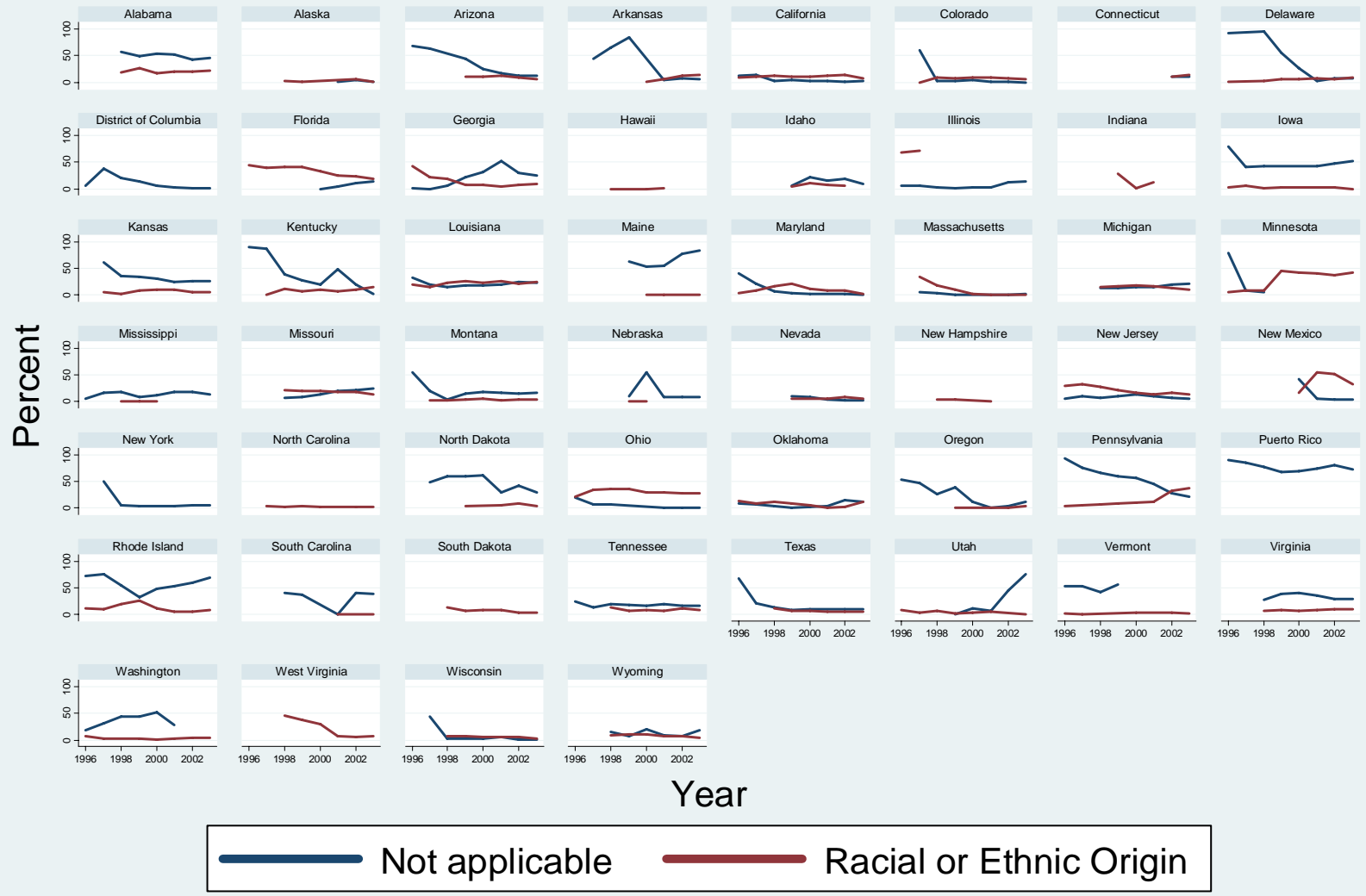
Table 10. Percent of Adoptions with Special Needs Basis, All Adoptions with State Agency Involvement, 1996-2003 (Number of cases in parentheses.)

	Not applica-ble	Racial or ethnic origin	Age	Sibling group mem-ber	Medical condition or disabilities	Other	Missing values	Total
Alabama	49.5%	21.1%	19.9%	0.5%	6.6%	2.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Alaska	1.2	1.8	2.9	5.2	45.8	42.7	0.4	100.0
Arizona	27.6	8.2	7.8	32.1	24.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
Arkansas	25.1	5.6	24.4	13.7	8.7	17.4	5.2	100.0
California	3.2	11.0	23.5	20.7	9.7	32.0	0.0	100.0
Colorado	4.5	4.8	12.4	23.2	25.2	2.1	27.8	100.0
Connecticut	3.7	4.2	1.8	8.9	14.3	3.2	63.9	100.0
Delaware	29.7	5.1	7.0	13.7	38.6	1.7	4.2	100.0
DC	7.8	0.1	45.2	25.4	10.7	9.2	1.6	100.0
Florida	4.8	30.2	14.7	16.3	9.4	22.9	1.7	100.0
Georgia	26.6	9.7	3.4	22.5	33.0	4.6	0.3	100.0
Hawaii	0.0	0.3	11.2	51.7	19.6	9.1	8.1	100.0
Idaho	11.7	4.9	39.8	4.7	21.3	1.4	16.2	100.0
Illinois	4.6	10.3	77.3	6.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
Indiana	2.7	5.8	11.5	8.7	4.4	47.4	19.4	100.0
Iowa	49.4	1.8	1.2	1.0	46.6	0.0	0.0	100.0
Kansas	30.5	6.8	6.3	18.9	37.5	0.0	0.0	100.0
Kentucky	43.4	7.1	4.4	10.7	28.3	4.5	1.7	100.0
Louisiana	21.0	24.3	6.2	5.1	43.4	0.0	0.0	100.0
Maine	55.0	0.3	7.2	8.8	2.4	8.5	17.7	100.0
Maryland	5.7	10.1	10.3	37.7	25.1	11.2	0.0	100.0
Massachusetts	1.3	4.9	0.6	14.8	5.4	44.0	29.0	100.0
Michigan	17.0	15.3	61.1	3.8	2.6	0.2	0.0	100.0
Minnesota	25.7	25.3	4.7	4.6	33.5	3.8	2.6	100.0
Mississippi	14.0	0.5	24.5	30.2	27.5	0.8	2.6	100.0
Missouri	16.7	17.9	10.2	31.5	14.8	5.5	3.5	100.0
Montana	16.2	3.1	58.8	9.9	11.0	0.0	1.0	100.0
Nebraska	16.8	0.1	13.9	6.7	18.6	43.8	0.0	100.0
Nevada	4.3	5.4	8.3	20.8	49.0	4.2	8.1	100.0
New Hampshire	0.0	0.9	22.0	15.1	28.4	33.5	0.0	100.0
New Jersey	8.4	20.6	2.1	12.0	32.0	25.0	0.0	100.0
New Mexico	9.8	26.0	13.9	6.3	9.1	0.9	34.2	100.0
New York	12.2	0.0	17.2	22.6	30.0	17.9	0.0	100.0
North Carolina	0.0	1.7	2.4	28.1	34.5	21.6	11.7	100.0
North Dakota	46.5	3.4	21.3	7.9	20.9	0.0	0.0	100.0
Ohio	2.6	28.3	34.0	10.2	18.8	1.2	4.7	100.0
Oklahoma	7.1	6.6	13.4	21.3	5.1	46.5	0.0	100.0
Oregon	18.9	0.7	3.7	9.0	67.7	0.2	0.0	100.0
Pennsylvania	47.3	18.3	7.7	12.0	12.8	1.9	0.0	100.0
Puerto Rico	75.6	0.0	2.5	11.0	9.2	1.6	0.1	100.0
Rhode Island	57.9	12.1	3.5	6.8	4.9	14.8	0.0	100.0
South Carolina	26.2	0.3	19.5	11.2	38.0	1.6	3.4	100.0
South Dakota	0.0	5.8	3.9	13.6	24.9	44.1	7.8	100.0
Tennessee	17.7	8.0	19.6	15.5	35.2	4.0	0.0	100.0
Texas	10.0	6.4	6.9	45.3	31.5	0.0	0.0	100.0
Utah	19.3	2.9	12.3	34.0	14.6	9.4	7.6	100.0
Vermont	31.0	2.0	35.1	7.9	18.0	5.5	0.4	100.0
Virginia	33.7	8.3	18.1	19.5	13.6	6.8	0.0	100.0
Washington	27.1	2.4	22.5	1.1	36.9	0.0	10.0	100.0
West Virginia	0.0	20.3	30.6	20.7	15.5	13.0	0.0	100.0
Wisconsin	2.2	4.1	1.0	2.2	63.0	3.0	24.6	100.0
Wyoming	13.4	8.2	22.6	31.5	14.7	9.6	0.0	100.0
Average	13.4%	10.3%	23.1%	16.5%	19.6%	13.2%	4.0%	100.0%

Table 11. Percent of Adopted Children with No Reported Special Need

	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996
Alabama	45.9%	42.97%	53.36%	53.96%	49.02%	58.26%	63.03%	67.93%
Alaska	1.44	4.02	0.72	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Arizona	13.47	12.11	16.84	24.74	43.89	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	5.45	7.07	3.87	0	84.28	64.73	45.31	0
California	1.59	0.7	2.37	2.42	3.55	2.29	14.43	12.72
Colorado	0.29	0.44	1.15	3.33	2.66	2.09	27.57	0
Connecticut	10.23	10.05	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Delaware	7.92	8.27	2.56	26.21	54.55	93.55	0	91.67
DC	0.83	0.79	2.17	5.33	14.46	20.14	36.84	5.88
Florida	12.56	9.54	3.92	0.06	0	0	0	0
Georgia	24.84	30.26	51.95	31.03	21.35	6.25	0.41	0.86
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	8.7	17.8	14.39	20.71	5.61	0	0	0
Illinois	13.96	12.44	1.97	1.96	1.42	1.93	5.86	6.48
Indiana	0	0	0	0	19.76	0	0	0
Iowa	51.77	47.28	43.12	43.13	41.62	41.52	41.04	78.87
Kansas	26.56	25.69	25.47	30.92	34.45	35.8	61.9	N/A
Kentucky	2.45	19.5	48.52	19.75	27.78	33.65	87.84	89.81
Louisiana	23.94	25.05	20	19.12	17.98	16.03	20.34	33.33
Maine	83.66	75.88	56.32	53.28	62.87	0	0	0
Maryland	1.09	1.92	1.96	2.42	3.55	6.71	20.91	40.72
Massachusetts	1.77	1.24	1.29	1.16	0.98	3.64	0.69	0
Michigan	21.74	19.53	16.35	15.95	14.19	13.82	N/A	N/A
Minnesota	0	0	0	0	0	6.06	8.97	80.44
Mississippi	13.19	18.06	17.67	11.81	8.02	17.06	16.35	5.56
Missouri	22.88	21.6	19.24	12.25	8.36	6.41	N/A	N/A
Montana	17.41	14.57	16	18.64	14.97	3.36	19.59	54.55
Nebraska	7.66	8.44	7.53	56	10.04	N/A	0	0
Nevada	2.36	2.37	2.88	9.09	10.57	N/A	0	N/A
New Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	4.92	6.97	10.21	13.74	10.25	6.51	10.15	5.62
New Mexico	2.73	2.55	4.61	42.94	0	0	0	0
New York	4.89	5.22	4.22	4.39	4.44	5.35	50.34	N/A
North Carolina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Dakota	30	41.61	30.34	60.95	59.71	60.36	48.39	N/A
Ohio	0.29	0.29	0.13	0	0	6.7	7.05	18.93
Oklahoma	12.24	15.43	4.5	1.51	1.21	4.16	7.31	9.39
Oregon	11.43	3.77	1.12	11.43	38.56	26.32	47.17	52.56
Pennsylvania	22.46	27.52	44.88	57.07	59.7	66.75	76.45	93.2
Puerto Rico	72.01	79.9	73.54	70.13	68.4	77.22	85.58	90.91
Rhode Island	69.7	58.98	53.93	48.46	31.51	54.5	74.88	72.43
South Carolina	36.79	39.83	0.52	0	38.38	40.22	N/A	N/A
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	16.67	15.51	18.89	16.94	18.32	19.29	12.69	25.07
Texas	9.58	9.71	9.71	9.56	9.1	12.8	22.22	66.67
Utah	75.24	44.51	5.73	12.21	0.81	0	0	0
Vermont	0	0	0	0	56.83	41.53	53.06	52.38
Virginia	29.77	29.95	34.55	39.73	39.26	27.23	N/A	N/A
Washington	0	0	29.24	51.71	44.99	44.19	30.66	18.78
West Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	0.67	1.17	5.17	2.31	3.12	2.8	4.75	0
Wyoming	17.86	7.69	8.7	21.31	6.67	15.63	N/A	N/A
All States	11.97%	11.09%	10.53%	11.46%	12.45%	12.28%	27.09%	26.78%

Figure 4. Trends in *Minority Race as Special Need Basis and No Special Need* in the States



Graphs by State

Figure 5. Trends in Special Needs: Age, Sibling Group, Other

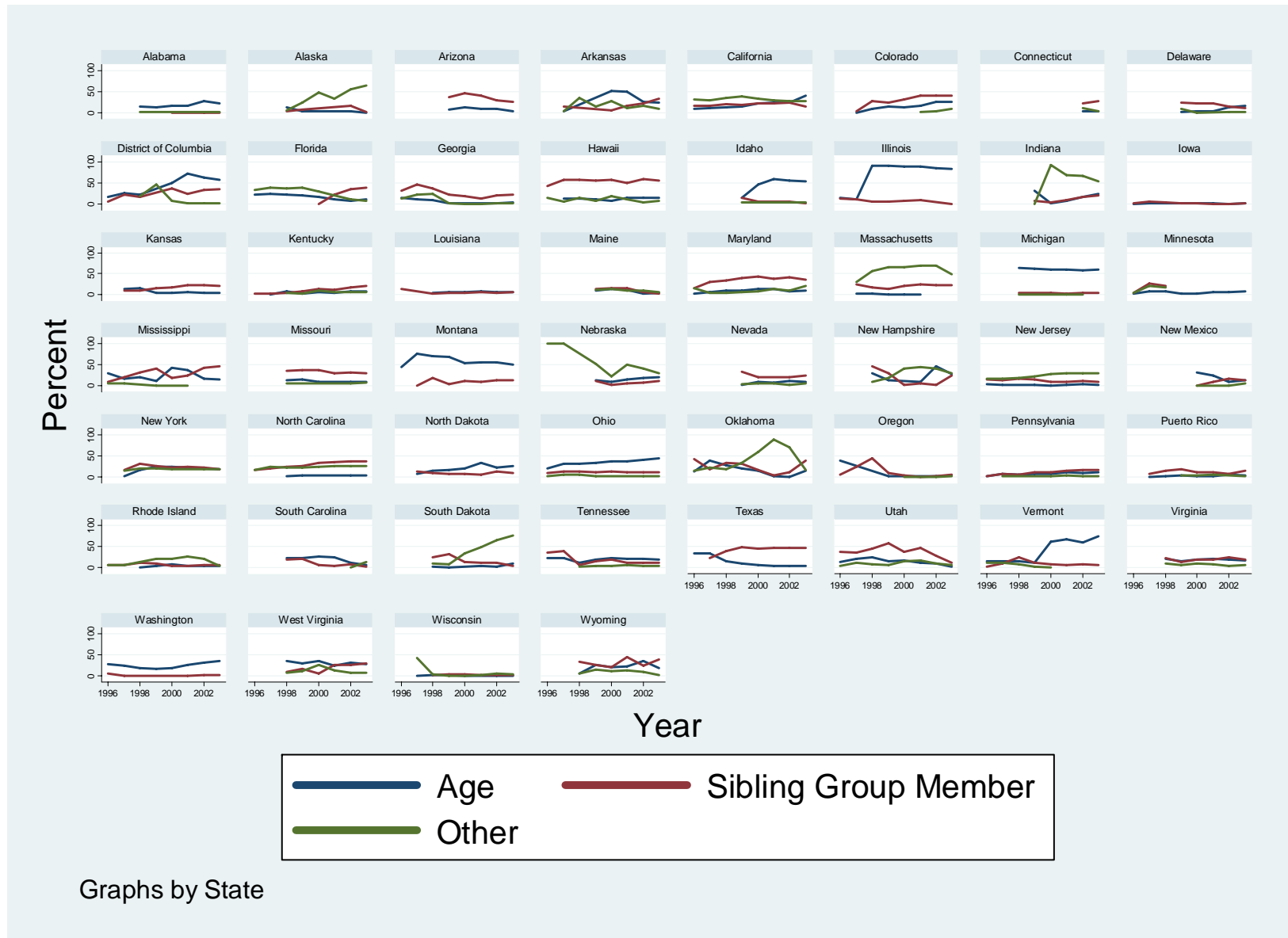


Table 12. Adopted Children with Mental Retardation, Sensory or Physical Disability by State, All Adoptions with State Agency Involvement, 1996-2003

	Mental Retardation	Sensory Disability	Physical Disability		Mental Retardation	Sensory Disability	Physical Disability
Alabama	0.9%	4.2	2.1	Montana	2.3	0.7	0.1
Alaska	5.9	9.0	6.2	Nebraska	0.9	0.5	10.4
Arizona	8.4	0.5	3.9	Nevada	1.0	3.8	3.0
Arkansas	1.8	2.8	5.4	New Hampshire	1.1	2.4	1.5
California	0.8	1.2	1.1	New Jersey	0.2	2.3	0.2
Colorado	1.1	6.3	3.3	New Mexico	0.7	2.2	7.5
Connecticut	1.2	0.6	0.8	New York	0.0	0.0	0.0
Delaware	0.3	0.2	0.8	North Carolina	1.7	2.6	3.1
DC	0.5	5.2	6.1	North Dakota	2.3	3.7	4.4
Florida	2.1	2.7	1.6	Ohio	0.2	2.6	3.8
Georgia	5.2	26.5	10.1	Oklahoma	2.2	2.1	2.3
Hawaii	1.4	6.7	1.3	Oregon	3.3	2.4	29.5
Idaho	1.6	0.5	1.3	Pennsylvania	1.2	1.6	3.4
Illinois	0.1	0.1	0.4	Puerto Rico	1.0	2.8	2.1
Indiana	2.2	1.9	2.1	Rhode Island	0.0	0.5	0.3
Iowa	0.9	1.6	2.5	South Carolina	6.3	8.0	11.0
Kansas	1.7	25.0	6.3	South Dakota	4.7	4.4	2.3
Kentucky	1.1	6.0	3.7	Tennessee	3.0	3.7	4.9
Louisiana	4.8	9.2	5.7	Texas	1.4	1.5	1.6
Maine	0.1	0.7	1.7	Utah	2.1	5.2	13.8
Maryland	1.7	6.6	2.4	Vermont	0.9	2.1	1.4
Massachusetts	0.9	0.4	0.2	Virginia	2.7	2.2	2.9
Michigan	0.1	0.6	0.1	Washington	0.0	9.5	3.7
Minnesota	3.2	5.3	5.9	West Virginia	0.8	8.2	1.6
Mississippi	1.0	7.2	2.5	Wisconsin	4.9	18.8	5.1
Missouri	1.8	5.6	2.7	Wyoming	5.8	2.7	5.8
All States	2.6	1.3	2.7				

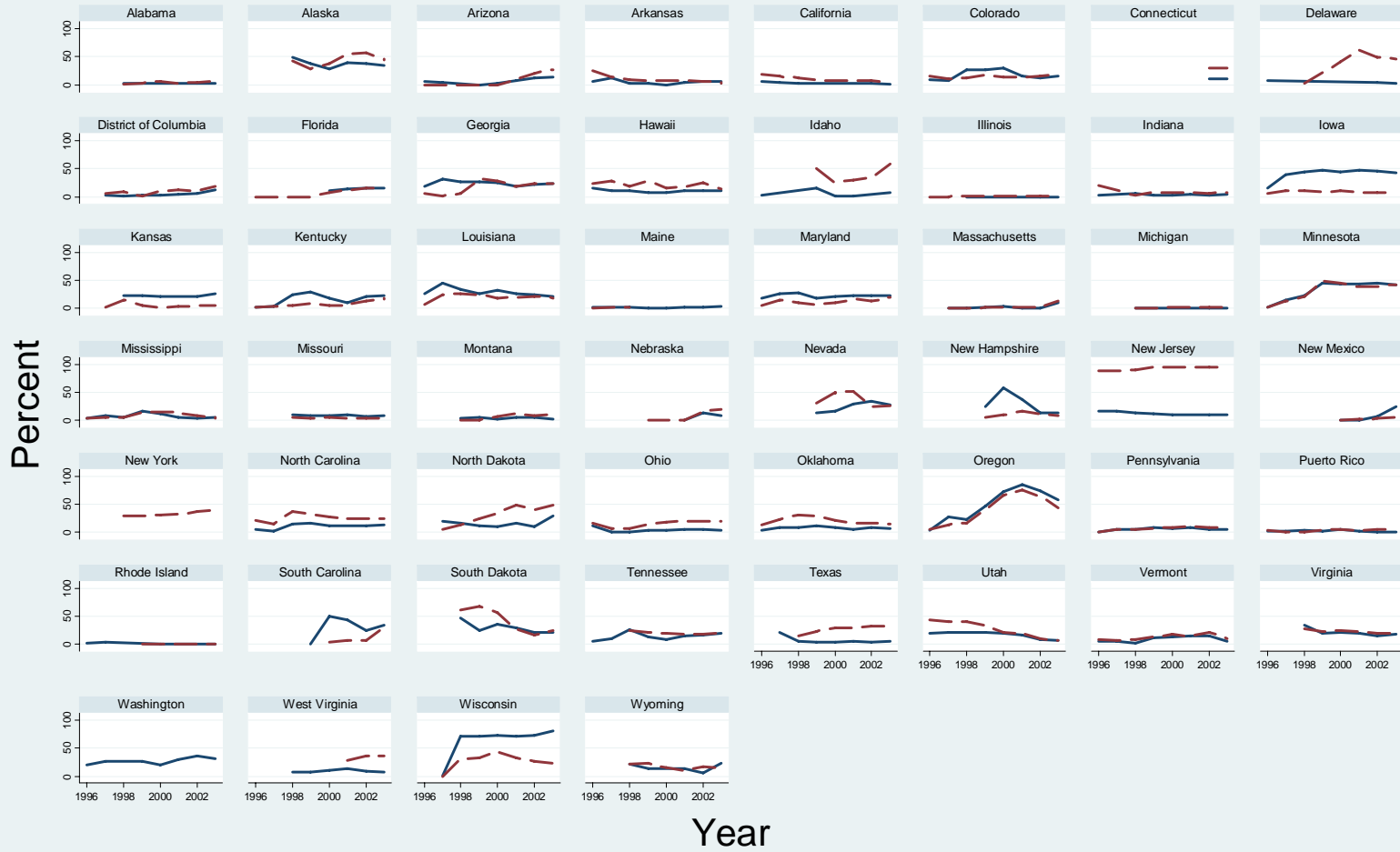
Table 13. Adopted Children with *Emotional Disturbance* by State

	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	Average
Alabama	2.1%	1.6%	2.9%	2.0%	2.6%	1.7%	N/A	N/A	2.2%
Alaska	33.7	38.4	57.1	55.2	63.4	49.5	N/A	N/A	46.6
Arizona	14.3	12.7	7.4	2.2	0.1	N/A	4.2	5.1	7.1
Arkansas	58.1	46.2	38.1	100.0	1.9	1.9	12.5	6.3	10.0
California	0.7	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.4	3.4	4.2	4.7	2.3
Colorado	14.8	12.5	16.4	30.0	26.4	27.0	8.4	9.1	18.2
Connecticut	9.9	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	3.5
Delaware	3.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	2.0
DC	11.7	6.3	3.9	2.5	2.4	0.7	2.1	0.0	4.6
Florida	15.8	15.1	12.7	10.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.8
Georgia	60.1	59.2	61.9	59.7	57.1	28.4	30.6	20.6	49.1
Hawaii	10.1	11.2	9.6	6.8	7.1	10.3	10.2	15.4	9.4
Idaho	6.5	0.0	0.8	0.7	15.9	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.9
Illinois	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2
Indiana	4.2	3.4	4.4	3.0	2.2	5.4	0.0	26.7	3.8
Iowa	41.9	46.5	48.0	44.8	46.6	44.6	40.5	16.1	41.6
Kansas	61.6	52.6	61.5	62.1	62.0	22.9	0.0	N/A	46.5
Kentucky	23.5	20.9	11.2	30.1	29.2	33.1	3.9	3.2	16.3
Louisiana	21.3	25.5	25.7	33.0	27.0	35.0	45.8	26.7	27.6
Maine	4.0	2.3	1.9	1.5	0.5	1.6	0.0	1.5	2.0
Maryland	24.4	23.7	23.1	21.2	18.4	27.7	26.1	17.5	23.1
Massachusetts	10.4	1.5	0.6	3.7	3.5	0.5	0.8	N/A	3.1
Michigan	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	N/A	N/A	0.2
Minnesota	42.2	44.9	43.7	43.8	44.9	23.1	15.0	1.8	27.8
Mississippi	5.5	4.4	5.3	12.2	18.9	6.7	13.4	8.7	9.2
Missouri	9.3	7.1	10.3	8.1	9.0	9.7	N/A	N/A	8.7
Montana	2.2	4.9	4.7	1.7	4.8	3.4	0.0	0.0	3.2
Nebraska	24.7	49.4	1.5	0.0	0.0	N/A	0.0	0.0	10.6
Nevada	28.4	34.8	29.2	16.0	13.0	N/A	0.0	N/A	23.7
New Hampshire	13.7	14.0	36.8	58.3	24.2	0.0	N/A	N/A	25.5
New Jersey	9.7	9.6	11.4	10.8	12.3	14.4	16.0	16.3	12.0
New Mexico	24.5	7.3	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	4.7
New York	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	0.0
North Carolina	14.3	12.2	12.3	11.1	16.5	14.6	1.8	6.2	12.7
North Dakota	29.2	10.2	15.9	9.5	11.5	16.2	19.4	N/A	15.5
Ohio	3.8	5.3	4.7	4.2	4.4	1.0	1.0	11.0	4.5
Oklahoma	7.3	7.8	5.8	9.0	11.8	8.9	9.1	3.3	8.2
Oregon	58.1	74.9	86.4	71.6	46.9	22.9	26.8	3.4	56.3
Pennsylvania	5.3	5.4	7.9	7.1	8.4	5.3	5.1	0.7	6.3
Puerto Rico	1.4	0.5	2.3	6.5	1.8	3.9	2.4	2.0	2.4
Rhode Island	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	3.9	1.8	0.8
South Carolina	33.7	25.1	48.9	52.8	0.4	0.0	N/A	N/A	24.1
South Dakota	22.2	22.1	28.9	35.1	23.8	47.3	N/A	N/A	27.6
Tennessee	19.5	15.6	13.6	8.6	13.1	25.8	9.6	4.9	14.9
Texas	4.8	3.9	4.8	4.2	4.1	4.6	22.2	0.0	4.4
Utah	5.8	8.1	16.6	20.1	22.2	22.5	21.4	19.0	16.6
Vermont	4.8	14.4	13.8	13.1	10.8	1.7	4.6	5.3	7.8
Virginia	17.9	14.6	19.8	21.0	19.3	34.0	N/A	N/A	20.0
Washington	100.0	100.0	29.7	20.6	27.1	26.0	27.0	20.2	35.9
West Virginia	8.1	8.6	13.0	10.5	7.4	7.1	N/A	N/A	9.3
Wisconsin	81.8	73.8	72.4	73.0	71.5	71.0	6.8	N/A	73.7
Wyoming	23.2	5.8	13.0	13.1	13.3	21.9	N/A	N/A	14.7
All States	12.7%	11.8%	10.8%	9.8%	8.9%	8%	5.4%	5.6%	9.9%

Table 14. Adopted Children with *Other Diagnosed Conditions* by State

	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	State Average
Alabama	7.3%	4.0%	2.5%	6.4%	2.6%	0.9%	N/A	N/A	4.5%
Alaska	45.7	57.6	80.6	72.6	49.4	42.1	N/A	N/A	59.1
Arizona	26.9	20.8	8.60	0.5	0.0	N/A	0.4	0.3	9.90
Arkansas	34.9	43.6	64.3	0.0	6.9	8.5	14.1	25.4	15.5
California	2.3	7.9	6.7	7.3	7.9	13.1	15.3	19.1	8.0
Colorado	18.0	14.9	13.8	14.3	17.3	12.5	9.6	14.8	14.7
Connecticut	30.4	30.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	10.9
Delaware	45.5	48.9	62.4	40.8	0.0	3.2	0.0	0.0	35.5
DC	17.9	10.3	12.2	10.3	1.2	8.6	5.3	0.0	10.1
Florida	15.4	14.9	11.1	8.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	8.2
Georgia	62.4	63.9	60.8	65.8	70.2	5.9	1.2	6.5	45.4
Hawaii	13.5	25.1	18.5	16.1	27.8	18.6	27.8	23.1	20.8
Idaho	59.4	34.7	29.5	26.4	49.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.0
Illinois	0.0	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.6
Indiana	7.9	6.3	6.7	6.7	8.0	2.1	0.0	70.3	7.2
Iowa	7.9	6.8	7.6	10.1	8.0	10.1	9.8	4.9	7.9
Kansas	10.8	11.5	12.8	6.5	13.6	16.5	3.2	N/A	12.3
Kentucky	18.3	13.8	5.8	9.2	8.9	6.3	3.5	1.9	8.8
Louisiana	18.5	21.6	20.2	19.3	24.7	26.2	25.4	6.7	21.2
Maine	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.8	0.1
Maryland	19.6	13.4	16.8	10.2	7.5	10.1	15.8	6.2	13.4
Massachusetts	13.9	3.5	1.80	2.9	2.0	0.5	0.8	N/A	3.6
Michigan	1.7	1.5	2.20	1.7	1.5	1.5	N/A	N/A	1.7
Minnesota	43.0	40.3	38.8	45.1	49.6	22.1	12.6	2.2	27.4
Mississippi	6.0	8.4	13.5	15.3	15.2	4.9	7.5	8.7	11.0
Missouri	3.3	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.0	4.5	N/A	N/A	4.0
Montana	12.1	7.7	12.4	7.2	1.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	6.7
Nebraska	65.9	62.0	6.1	1.6	2.7	N/A	0.0	0.0	19.6
Nevada	26.7	24.9	52.3	50.2	30.9	N/A	0.0	N/A	33.9
New Hampshire	8.4	12.3	15.8	10.4	4.8	0.0	N/A	N/A	9.7
New Jersey	96.1	95.6	95.7	96.4	94.7	90.0	88.6	88.6	93.8
New Mexico	4.5	3.3	1.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	1.6
New York	40.7	36.6	31.9	30.8	28.5	29.0	0.0	N/A	27.2
North Carolina	25.3	23.9	24.2	27.9	32.9	38.1	15.4	21.2	27.3
North Dakota	48.3	40.9	49.0	35.2	24.5	14.4	6.5	N/A	34.8
Ohio	19.5	20.4	21.0	18.9	17.7	7.1	7.3	17.0	17.5
Oklahoma	15.1	16.5	15.9	20.5	28.7	30.9	22.7	13.8	20.0
Oregon	44.1	65.1	76.5	66.8	39.7	17.3	13.6	4.7	47.9
Pennsylvania	8.9	8.1	9.70	8.60	7.4	6.5	5.2	0.7	8.0
Puerto Rico	2.7	5.6	2.70	6.50	4.0	1.1	1.0	4.0	3.5
Rhode Island	1.2	0.0	0.00	0.80	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
South Carolina	31.5	5.6	7.50	3.10	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	6.4
South Dakota	25.0	17.2	25.8	57.4	66.7	61.8	N/A	N/A	37.2
Tennessee	20.9	18.0	17.6	19.0	20.9	24.0	0.0	0.0	17.1
Texas	31.6	31.9	30.3	29.2	23.1	15.4	0.0	0.0	27.6
Utah	5.8	10.4	18.6	22.1	32.8	40.4	39.6	44.2	24.6
Vermont	10.2	21.6	13.8	18.0	12.9	7.6	6.6	8.70	11.6
Virginia	18.9	20.0	22.6	23.7	23.0	27.	N/A	N/A	22.1
Washington	N/A	N/A	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
West Virginia	36.6	37.1	29.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	18.6
Wisconsin	24.1	27.3	33.3	44.4	32.6	31.0	2.7	N/A	30.7
Wyoming	14.3	17.3	10.9	14.8	24.4	21.9	N/A	N/A	16.8
Average	18.2%	18.7%	16.6%	15.3%	14.3%	13.7%	7.9%	11.5%	15.5%

Figure 6. Trends in Reported Disabilities



Graphs by State

Modifications to the Public Use AFCARS Adoption Data

The following corrections were made:

Monthly Amount of Adoption Assistance Subsidy

New York's subsidy data included only observations of "0" or "1"; we treated these as missing. South Dakota and New Mexico (802 records) were inconsistent with other years' data and treated as missing. Values for Nevada (1040 records) and Mississippi (958 records) were divided by 100. For Rhode Island, 1998 and 1999 values were multiplied by 10. For Alaska and Georgia values were divided by 10 if greater than \$2,000. All subsidy values greater than \$10,000 were divided by 100 (331 records). Subsidy amounts for California (706 records), Illinois (239 records), Ohio (1,995 records), and other states (2,031 records) were divided by 12 if the recorded amount was greater than \$2,000 and evenly divisible by 12.

Race

Due to the differences in race coding in 1995-1999 and 2000-present data we recoded to create a uniform child and adoptive parent race variable. The variable "of color" equals 1 for non-white and Hispanic children and 0 otherwise. Arizona reversed coding for White, non-Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islander in 1999-2000. In 1999 Indiana reversed coding for Hispanic and non-Hispanic.

Special Needs Basis

Arkansas (63 records), Connecticut (1700 records), Delaware (22 records), Idaho (32 records), Maine (44 records), Nevada (101 records), and New Mexico (455 records) reported only one value for special needs basis in some years; we considered these as missing.