Frequently Asked Questions Related to Adoption
Data Sources and Metrics

The department has several data sources and metrics related to adoption. Each serves a unique purpose. Some of the differences between these metrics, though important, can be somewhat nuanced. To avoid miscommunication or inadvertent misinterpretation, it is critical to use “the right tool for the right job”. To that end, the available adoption metrics, their sources, their appropriate uses, and relevant caveats are explained below.

How many children does Florida have available for adoption?

The answer to this question depends entirely on the meaning of the term "available for adoption." Different interpretations of this term refer to different populations, or population subsets. These generally include:

- Children with a goal of adoption, who have not been TPR’d;
- Children who have been TPR’d, making them legally available for adoption, regardless of whether adoption is among their current goals;
- Children who have been both TPR’ed and have a goal of adoption;
- Children who have been TPR’d, have a goal of adoption, and an adoptive family has been identified, but the adoption has not been finalized; and
- Children who are TPR’d, have the goal of adoption, but no family has been identified and recruitment for a family is still ongoing—these are the children on the web site

These populations overlap or are nested within each other, and each yields a different number:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children TPR'ed or who have a goal of adoption</td>
<td>7,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with a goal of adoption regardless of TPR status</td>
<td>7,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children TPR'ed, regardless of goal</td>
<td>3,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have been TPR'ed and have a goal of adoption</td>
<td>2,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have been TPR'ed, have a goal of adoption, and are on the website</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which adoption number is the “right” number to use?

As described above, there really is no “right” number, when talking about adoptions. Each of them is “right” in a different context. However, there are a number of official adoption numbers and data sources. Many of these are described in detail in Appendix A.

The official source used to populate a number of department adoption reports as well as the Performance Dashboard is an FSFN report called “Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY”. The report is run every Saturday by CBC, District and County, so it is crucial that the correct version be used whenever comparing adoption numbers across any of the sources that use this report, to avoid misunderstanding. According to established convention, fiscal year adoptions numbers are “set” using the version of this report run on the last Saturday in July following the end of the fiscal year. This time lag is necessary to allow CBCs enough time to enter finalized adoption data into FSFN.
**Why do spinner, Dashboard, FSFN reports and ad hoc reports produced by the data reporting unit contain different numbers for the same reporting period?**

There are two primary reasons why this happens. The first, different operational definitions, is discussed in some detail above. The second is different report run dates. Because FSFN is primarily a case management system, information is constantly being entered and updated as casework is completed or circumstances change in a child’s life. Because the system is not static, reports run even hours apart may produce different results, even when using the same timeframe parameters. For example, every time the Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY report is run, all totals for all prior months are updated. As a result, even historical information can differ significantly depending on which date’s report you select. Finalized adoptions for August taken from a report that was run in August may differ significantly from finalized adoptions in August taken from a report run later in the same fiscal year.

As seen in the chart provided, which tracks the time it took to enter adoptions finalized during the month of August 2009 into FSFN, many CBCs took much longer than the allowed 60 days before an even remotely reasonable estimate of the actual number of adoptions that occurred during the month could be produced.

As a result of these lags, which are often seasonal in nature, year-to-date comparisons with the same time period in a prior fiscal year, such as the first quarter, can produce very different conclusions depending on whether the prior fiscal year numbers are taken from the report run during the time period in question, which provides information only on data entered up through that point in the year, or the official report run on the last Saturday in July following the end of the fiscal year, which provides information on the number of adoptions that actually occurred during the specified time period.
Appendix A

Question - What data sources are available for adoption information?

Below is a list of reports produced by or known to the data reporting unit. Because so much information is available to the general public via the Performance Dashboard, and to other department users via FSFN, adoption reports can literally be created by almost anyone at almost any time.

A. FSFN reports

1. Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY

This report contains a count of all adoptions finalized as of the date it is run. It includes totals for each month, as well as fiscal-year-to-date. It runs automatically every week on Saturday and is available in FSFN. There are versions available at the District, CBC and County level. The report that is run on the 2nd Saturday of each month is used to load the Performance Dashboard. Every time this report is run, all totals for all prior months are updated. This report provides information used for the following:

Performance Dashboard Element FS215

Measure FS215 on the department’s Performance Dashboard provides fiscal-year-to-date count of adoptions finalized. It is loaded using the aforementioned FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY that is run on the 2nd Saturday of each month, except for the final report for the fiscal year, which is run on the last Saturday in July following the end of the fiscal year. Measure FS215 is a cumulative year-to-date total and does not update previous year-to-date data points when new data are loaded throughout the year. The prior month year-to-date totals on the Dashboard will not match the new month totals in the FSFN report because the Dashboard is year to date as of the date the report was run, and the FSFN report is monthly. On the Dashboard any prior month additions are captured in the new cumulative total.

Operations Agency Tables - Adoption Target Tracking Tab

This report is manually produced by Hans Soder every month. It contains finalized adoptions data extracted from Performance Dashboard element FS215 (where the original source is again the FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY) for the last 3 fiscal years, as well as the cumulative fiscal-year-to-date total. It also contains adoption targets established by the Family Safety Program Office and compares these pro rata to finalized adoptions to determine relative performance over the course of the year. The CBC-level data displayed on the Performance Dashboard is converted to Circuit and Region level manually for this report.

1 If you need to roll Performance Dashboard data up to Circuit level, it must be pulled directly from the FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY. Circuit breakdowns cannot be calculated using the Performance Dashboard because the Dashboard reports data by District, and Districts and Circuits do not align completely.
Weekly Out of Home Care e-mail to Leadership

The data reporting unit tracks adoptions for agency leadership on a weekly basis and sends out an e-mail every Monday morning containing three pieces of adoption information:

- Most current fiscal-year-to-date statewide total of finalized adoptions from the FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY run the prior Saturday.
- Fiscal-year-to-date finalized adoptions minus 2 months from the current month (i.e. In October the e-mail contains August’s fiscal-year-to-date total) from the FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY run the prior Saturday.
- Fiscal-year-to-date finalized adoptions minus 2 months for the prior fiscal year (i.e. In October the e-mail contains August’s fiscal-year-to-date total) from the FSFN report Adoptions Finalized by Month and Cumulative for SFY run on the last Saturday in July following the end of the fiscal year.

The lag is incorporated because the Family Safety Program Office has established by policy that workers have 60 days to enter finalized adoption information.

2. Children Available TPR’d with Goal of Adoption

This FSFN report is produced weekly on Sunday and is available as a summary count at the District, CBC, County, and Unit level. The CBC and District reports are also available as a list report. This report reflects the children whose parents have been TPR’ed and who have a primary goal of adoption. Within the report, the available children are grouped by age: 0-12 months, 1-4 years, 5-8 years, 9-12 years, 13-15 years, and 16-17 years.

3. Children available and web status

This is an on-demand FSFN report that is intended to provide a real-time list of children who are available for adoption and are on the adoption web site. The user enters the agency or district for whom they want the report (it is not available statewide), the web status they are looking for, and the begin and end dates of the timeframe in which they are interested. Unfortunately this report has not yet proven to be a useful tool as there appear to be problems in the programming. As it currently operates, it varies between including children who are in closed and finalized adoptions and not including children who are currently available on the web. Until these problems are resolved, this report is not a viable source of information. We are working with Northwood to diagnose and correct the problems. In the meantime, the data reporting unit produces the Monthly Adoption ad hoc report to capture this information.

B. Spinner Reports

Child Welfare Services Spinner Report – Adoptions Finalized

This report is an excel workbook that allows users to view tables and charts showing a rolling 24 month trend at a number of different levels, including county, circuit, CBC and
region. It is run on the 10th of each month for the month prior to allow for a short data entry lag. New data is appended each month and the report does not update previous months when new data is appended throughout the year. As a result, adoptions finalized within a given month that are not entered until after the 10th day of the following month are never loaded into the spinner report. Therefore spinner data should not be added up across a 12 month period to get an annual total because it significantly undercounts finalized adoptions if data are not entered before the 10th day of the month following the adoption.

C. AFCARS submission

The AFCARS submission file is generated semi-annually and reflects all children with a discharge of adoption that was entered during the reporting period (April to September and October to March). It pulls the list based on the date the adoption was entered into FSFN, the transaction date. So if an adoption took place in February, but was not entered into FSFN until April it would be captured in the April to September report, not the October to March report. This means it can also report adoptions that took place and were previously reported due to a caseworker reopening the case, making a modification, and then closing the case again. In some cases that will cause a new transaction date that will include the adoption in the extract. For this reason, if using this report to consider adoption numbers, it is important to look at the actual date of the adoption finalization to avoid counting old adoptions.

D. Federal Performance Measures System

The Federal Performance Measures System is an in-house program run in the data reporting unit on a quarterly basis for the previous quarter and fiscal-year-to-date. It provides data that populates three primary sources: feeds several measures on the Dashboard as well as the Don Winstead Report summary chart. It provides data that populates three major locations:

Performance Dashboard

The Performance Dashboard measures related to adoption are:

- C2.1 Percent adoptions finalized within 24 months of the latest removal. (FS303 on the Dashboard);
- C2.2 is the median length of stay (in months) for children adopted; it looks at time passage and is not used as a count of adoptions;
- C2.3 Percent of children in out-of-home care 17 months or longer on July 1 whose adoptions were finalized by June 30. (FS668 on the Dashboard);
- C2.4 Percent of children in out-of-home care 17 months or longer on July 1 (or January 1) who became legally free for adoption by December 31 (or June 30). (FS669 on the Dashboard); and
- C2.5 Percent of children who were legally free for adoption on July 1 whose adoptions were finalized by June 30. (FS760 on the Dashboard).

In each case, the measure will look at the adoptions within the specified time frame and take into consideration the various parameters specified in the measure. These may all produce slightly different numbers than some other reports due to variances in the parameters, for example, C2.5 defines “legally free for adoption” as having both parents TPR’d with no consideration of the goal. The FSFN report Children Available TPR’d with Goal of Adoption will not necessarily have the same numbers because it takes the goal of adoption into consideration.

Federal Performance Measures Spinner Report
Includes the measures listed above, and allows for trend analysis by displaying multiple quarters.

**Don Winstead Report**

This summary chart report is contains a number of adoptions-related measures also located on the Performance Dashboard but summarized at a different level.

**E. Ad hoc FSFN adoption reports**

The data reporting unit is often asked to run special up-to-the-minute, real time reports that query the live FSFN system. These include information that was in the system as of the date the report was run, which is generally provided via a footnote with the excel file or e-mail response to the requester. Because these reports query the live system, they are generally not replicable if re-run at a later time.

**Monthly Adoption Ad Hoc Report**

This report is run by the Data Reporting Unit at the beginning of each month as a point-in-time snapshot for the end of the prior month. It gives a count of all children who are listed in the Adoption Web Registry as being available for adoption. It looks ONLY at children who are marked as “available” and “web authorized”, so there will be fewer children on this report than would be found on the FSFN report Children Available TPR;d with Goal of Adoption. This report shows the breakdown of available children by gender, age, race, and length of time since TPR, broken out by Circuit and Region.