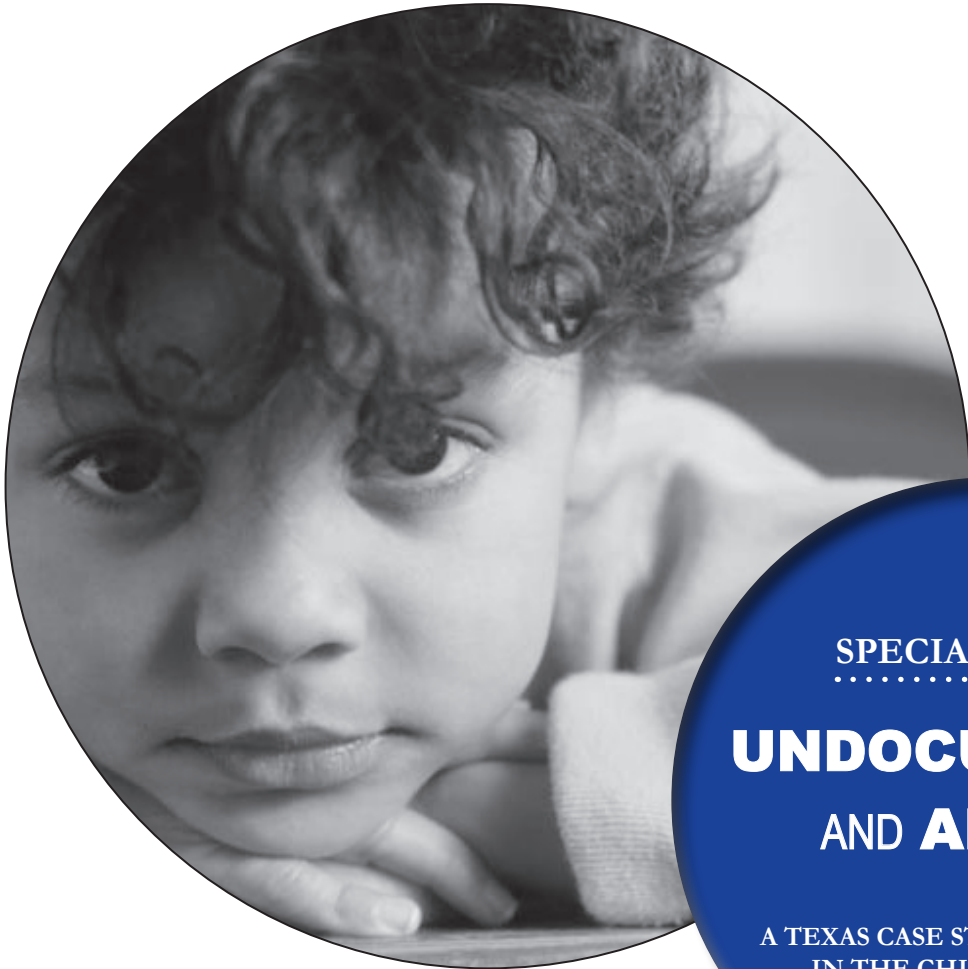




CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



SPECIAL REPORT
.....
**UNDOCUMENTED
AND ABUSED**

A TEXAS CASE STUDY OF CHILDREN
IN THE CHILD PROTECTIVE
SERVICES SYSTEM

.....
SEPTEMBER 2010

.....
PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

CPPP

For 25 years, the center has been a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.

The center pursues this mission through independent research, policy analysis and development, public education, advocacy, coalition-building, and technical assistance.

Principal Researcher

Jane Burstain, Ph.D, Senior Policy Analyst
burstain@cppp.org

Jane Burstain joined the center in 2008. She is responsible for child welfare policy and budget issues. Before joining the center, she served as an Adjunct Professor at Pepperdine University, where she taught a family policy class in the Masters of Public Policy Program. Before that she worked as an attorney representing children in the Los Angeles child welfare system with the Children's Law Center. She earned a Ph.D. in Policy Analysis from the Pardee RAND Graduate School in 2008 with her dissertation addressing how to improve outcomes for adolescent mothers in the child welfare system. Jane also earned a Juris Doctor, *Magna Cum Laude*, Order of the Coif, in 1995 from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, and a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Virginia in 1989.

Acknowledgement

We thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for funding *Undocumented and Abused: A Texas Case Study of Children in the Child Protective Services System*. The findings and conclusions presented in this study, however, are solely those of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, as are any errors or omissions.

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CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

900 LYDIA STREET
AUSTIN, TX 78702
TEL 512.320.0222
FAX 512.320.0227
www.cppp.org



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PART 1—Overview

How to best regulate immigration and treat immigrants—both those lawfully and unlawfully here—are hotly debated questions. To promote responsible action, the center recently proposed a common-sense set of principles to secure our borders and reform our immigration system.¹ Now we turn our attention to a much smaller issue, perhaps one on which consensus may be more readily reached: How should the United States deal with undocumented children who are here through no fault of their own and have suffered abuse or neglect? Using Texas as a case study, this paper looks at who these children are and discusses why a blanket policy to send them home will not work. It also discusses how to improve the process through which these children can obtain legal residency. Finally, this paper explains how federal immigration and child welfare law should be aligned to ensure our country acts responsibly and that the federal government provides the necessary financial support to the states to care for this vulnerable population.

Only a Small Number of Children in State Care Are Undocumented

Less than one percent of those in state care in Texas during 2009, or about 400 children, were undocumented at some point during that year. For federal funding reasons, Texas and other states do ascertain the immigration status of the children brought into care, making this number reasonably reliable.

Texas is a large border state and so is likely to have a higher undocumented population as compared to most other states. As a result, with such a small number of undocumented children in care in Texas, nationally, the number must also be small. Given this small population, responding responsibly should be easy. But, as discussed in Part 4, the complexity of federal immigration law and its misalignment with federal and state child welfare law currently makes responding responsibly difficult.

Why Can't Undocumented Children Just Be Sent Home?

A state must protect all children from abuse or neglect regardless of whether they are in the country lawfully. Texas child protection laws make no distinction between lawfully present and unlawfully present children² and, in fact, doing so would likely violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.³

Of course, once a state intervenes to stop ongoing abuse and neglect by removing children from the custody of the perpetrator, the state can then repatriate, or return, the children to their country of origin. States do send children back to their country of origin. For example, in Texas, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) has a process in place to evaluate repatriation for undocumented children and has signed a memorandum of understanding with social service representatives for the four Mexican states that border Texas.⁴ Certainly there will be times when it is in the best interest of a child to be reunited with family in their country of origin.

Realistically, however, repatriating children is never simple and often is not viable. Many of the countries to which the children would be returned have inadequate

A Child Alone Without Papers

In our 2008 report, *Child Alone and Without Papers*, CPPP investigated what happens to more than 43,000 undocumented, unaccompanied children removed annually from the United States and repatriated to their home countries. Through a careful study of repatriation in Mexico and Honduras, including interviews with adults and children in the system, we found the following:

- Repatriation in Mexico and Honduras is marked by the absence of explicit and consistent policy and procedure within each country’s child welfare agencies.
- In both Honduras and Mexico, local and regional variations in the collection and sharing of data on the repatriated child (e.g., whether a child has been previously/repeatedly returned and from where), variation in the practices surrounding the release of the child, and even variations in the parties involved in the process, confound standardization of the repatriation process and, in turn, jeopardize the safety of the child.
- Repatriation services that help the child reintegrate exist in Mexico, but the range of services available to children varies substantially by region. In Honduras, no services exist to facilitate the positive reintegration of Honduran children.
- In Mexico, agencies prioritize family reunification, even when the safety of the child may be in question. In Honduras, we found evidence of discrimination against disabled children and cruel and degrading detention conditions.

child welfare systems that are unable to locate relatives, conduct home studies, or even ensure basic safety. Local laws or practice may simply return children to perpetrators or allow their extended family to return them.

Other countries are also often not able to provide treatment for physical or psychological injuries from abuse or neglect. Indeed, many of the children have lived their entire lives in the United States with no connection to their country of origin, perhaps not even speaking its language, leaving them isolated and making treatment even more difficult.

Additionally, most undocumented children live in families with “mixed” immigration status so some of the child’s siblings and possibly one or more of the parents is here legally and not subject to repatriation. By some estimates, three of every four families with an undocumented member also have a family member that is a U.S. citizen.⁵ Generally, children are best off if the state can keep their families together.

A policy of uniformly sending children back to their country of origin would be as irresponsible as leaving them in their abusive home here in the United States. Instead, state child welfare officials must make individual determinations about what is in the best interest of a child, which means that some children will end up living in state care in the United States.



PART 2—Undocumented Children in State Care

DFPS provided us de-identified data on undocumented children in state care in 2005 through 2009⁶ and on all children in state care in 2009. Appendix A contains a detailed description of the data.

In this analysis, we only discuss the undocumented population in care and how they differ from other children in care for 2009. We only reference other years when

there are statistically significant changes to characteristics and outcomes.⁷ But in Appendix B, we have included a table which lists the characteristics and outcomes for undocumented children in care for all of the years.

The Characteristics of Undocumented Children in State Care Vary from Other Children in State Care

Looking at undocumented children versus all other children in care during 2009, there are several significant differences⁸ that should inform policy and practice.

Undocumented children are more likely to be Hispanic, (though the percentage of undocumented African American children has been growing), older (though, on average, still preadolescent), and female. Undocumented children are less likely to have a sibling in care, though almost two-thirds still do.⁹ More than 40 percent of undocumented children are from a “mixed” immigration status family in that they have at least one sibling in care that was a citizen or otherwise documented.

Characteristics of Victim Children

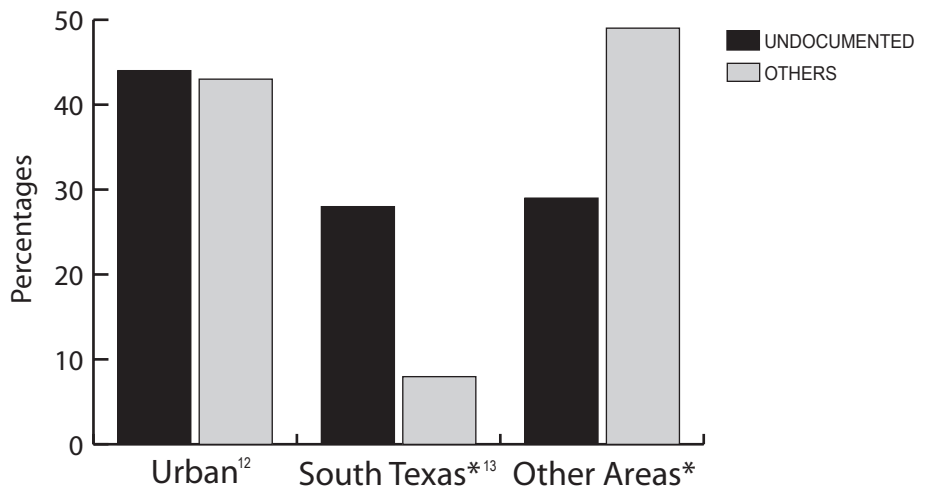
	Undocumented	Others
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic* ¹⁰	85%	38%
African American* ¹¹	8%	30%
White (Non-Hispanic)*	6%	30%
Other	2%	3%
Average age at removal (years)*	10.4	5.9
Female*	56%	48%
At least 1 sibling in care*	63%	71%

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT
DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED
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Undocumented children are equally likely as other children to live in urban areas at the time they are removed into state care. But undocumented children are over three times more likely to live in South Texas as compared to other areas of the state. And over time, undocumented children in care have been shifting away from the urban areas to South Texas.

Where They Come From



STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT
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Not only are undocumented children different, so are their parents. Perpetrator mothers are more likely to be married and both parents are, on average, older.

Characteristics of Perpetrator Parents

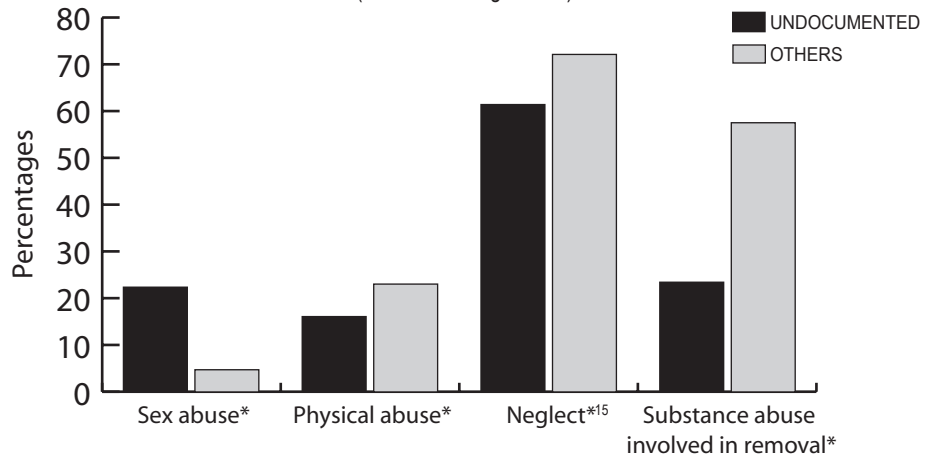
	Undocumented	Others
Married perpetrator mothers*	48%	32%
Average age of perpetrator mothers (years)*	31.4	28.8
Average age of perpetrator fathers (years)*	37.3	33.5

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



Undocumented children also come into care for different types of maltreatment. Undocumented children are more than five times as likely to come into care for sexual abuse and are less likely to come into care for physical abuse or neglect. Substance abuse among families with undocumented children is substantiated at a far lower rate. Undocumented children are half as likely to have substance abuse identified as being involved in their removal.

Type of Maltreatment (Confirmed Allegations¹⁴)



STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



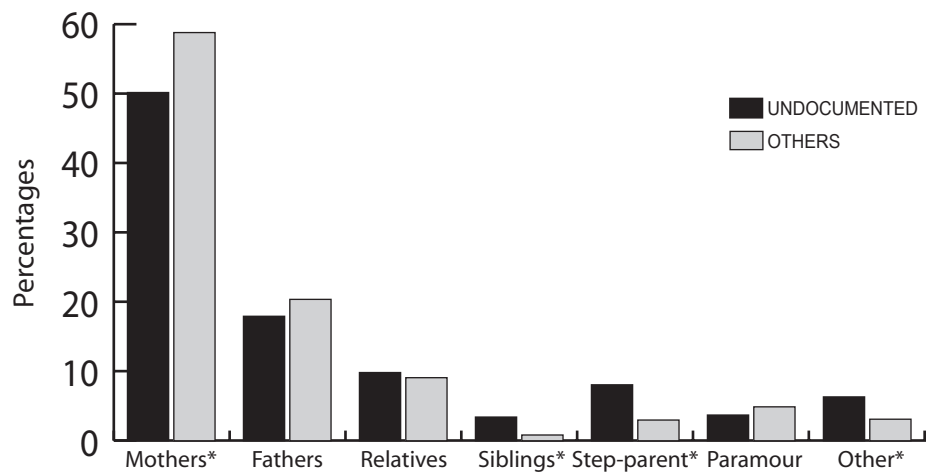
The higher rate of coming into care for sexual abuse may explain, in part, why undocumented children tend to be older and female, as those are the usual victims. But this does not necessarily mean that the undocumented child population overall is sexually abused at a higher rate. It may be a result of differences in what type of abuse is reported. Undocumented individuals may be reluctant to report abuse for fear of becoming entangled with authorities and subsequently deported. As a result, they may only report abuse if it is very serious, such as sexual abuse, and fail to report less serious physical abuse or child neglect.

Or it may be that the dynamics in families with undocumented children provide more opportunity for sexual abuse. If the higher marriage rate among mothers of undocumented children is because they are marrying men who are not the child's biological father, undocumented girls will be more likely to have a step-parent in the home. If this is happening, there may be more opportunity for sexual abuse to occur. Studies have shown that girls with a step-father in the home are more likely to be subjected to sexual abuse.¹⁶

Differences in family dynamics for undocumented children may also account for the lower reported incidence of substance abuse. The parents of undocumented children are older and, in general, older adults are less likely to have used an illicit drug in the past year.¹⁷ It may also be due to the higher rate of marriage among perpetrator mothers of undocumented children as married individuals have fewer substance abuse problems.¹⁸ Or the difference may be that families with undocumented children want to avoid entanglement with authorities and so avoid using illicit drugs.

Parents are the dominant perpetrator in both populations. But for undocumented children, mothers are less likely to be a perpetrator while siblings, step-parents and others are more likely to be a perpetrator.

Types of Perpetrators



STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK

It is likely that the variation in perpetrators is related to the differences in type of maltreatment. Mothers who are perpetrators are more likely to commit physical abuse or neglect as opposed to sexual abuse. Since undocumented children are less likely to come into care for physical abuse or neglect, they are less likely to have a mother designated as a perpetrator. Similarly, the higher rate of siblings, step-parents and others as perpetrators is likely related to the higher incidence of sexual abuse among undocumented children coming into care. In looking at the type of abuse perpetrators commit, sexual abuse is more likely to be committed by siblings, step-parents and others as compared to parents and relatives.

But exactly why these differences exist is unclear. Perhaps mothers of undocumented children are simply less likely to physically abuse or neglect their children and their siblings, step-parents and others are more likely to commit sexual abuse. Alternatively, it may be an issue of opportunity rather than behavior. Undocumented children may be in the company of adults other than their mother more often. So their mothers may have less opportunity to abuse and neglect while siblings, step-parents and others may have more.

Undocumented Children in State Care Have Vastly Different Experiences From Other Children

WHERE THEY LIVE

Undocumented children in care are more likely to live in a foster home and are less likely to live with relatives. The most plausible explanation may be the simplest: undocumented children are less likely to have relatives in the United States.

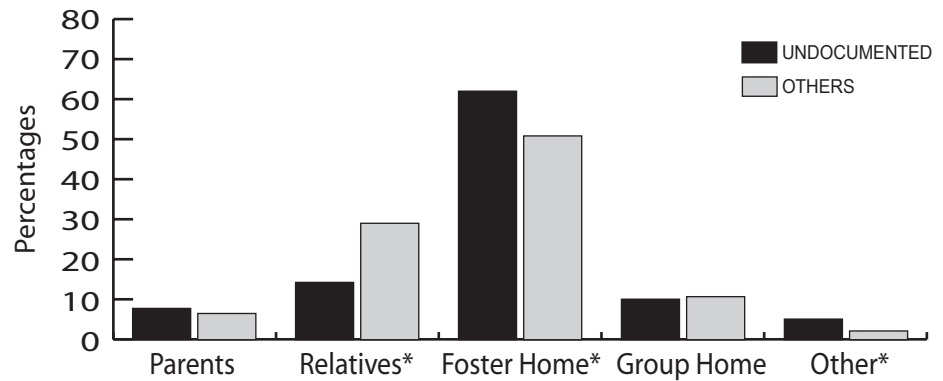
Or it may be because the relatives that do live in the United States are undocumented themselves. As a result of their status, they may be less likely to come forward as a placement resource for fear of deportation¹⁹ or, in practice, caseworkers may be reluctant to place children there.²⁰

Alternatively, the higher rate of sexual abuse allegations may make using relative care less likely. In cases of sexual abuse, relatives may be more disbelieving or judged unable or unwilling to provide a safe and supportive environment.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



Where They Live While in Care



OUTCOMES

Undocumented children in care are likely to have one or both parents who are undocumented as well. As a result, the parents may have less access to the services necessary to resolve their underlying problem. This is further exacerbated by the large concentration of undocumented children in care who are from South Texas. That area in particular has a dearth of available services and undocumented parents are essentially trapped as they cannot pass through the internal border check points. As a result, one would expect that undocumented children would have a lower rate of reunification. But, in fact, undocumented children are almost twice as likely to reunify.

There are many possible explanations. Because undocumented children are older at the time they come into care, it may be that returning them home is less of a risk.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



Reunification

	Undocumented	Others
Reunification*	52%	30%

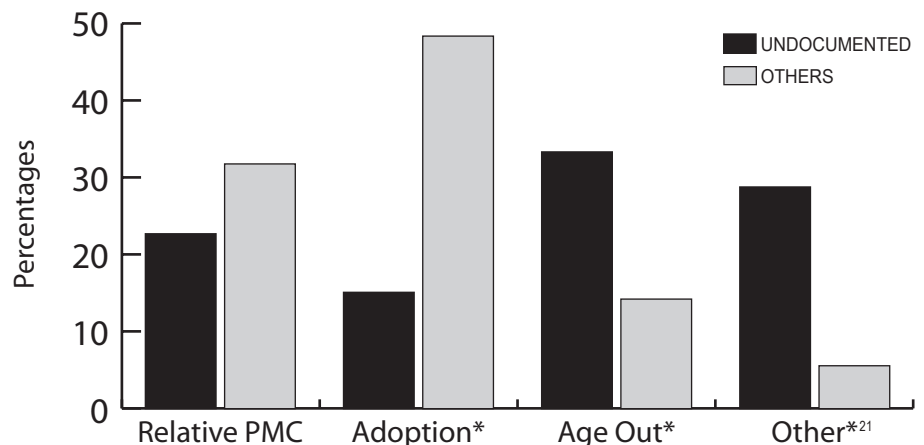
Or, perhaps a lower incidence of substance abuse makes reunification easier. Or, it could be that cases of sexual abuse are more easily resolved than cases of neglect. In sexual abuse cases, the mother is rarely the perpetrator. So once the perpetrator is removed and DFPS is assured the mother can protect the child from future abuse, the child can be returned. In contrast, neglect cases often involve chronic problems such as poverty or mental illness which are not easily remedied. Alternatively, there may be geographic differences in how the CPS system operates. For example, undocumented children are concentrated in South Texas and all children in that area are more likely to reunify as compared to other areas of the state.

Or, and this is a worrisome hypothesis, it may be that the system returns undocumented children home at a greater rate simply because it has no other alternatives. Undocumented children are less likely to be adopted and more likely to age out or have some other type of non-permanent exit such as running away. For children who do not return home, those who are undocumented are three times less likely to be adopted, two times more likely to age out, and are five times more likely to have an “other,” non-permanent exit. Part of the reason for the lower adoption rate may be because undocumented children have fewer relatives available as relatives account for a large percentage of all adoptions. Part of the difference may also be due to age. Undocumented children are older and older children are less likely to be adopted.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



Exits Other Than Reunification



Of the children who age out, undocumented children are in care for a much shorter period of time, most likely because they are older when they enter care. But despite spending a shorter time in care before aging out, both documented and undocumented children who age out after a year in care experience the same level of placement instability, moving almost twice a year.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ARE NOTED WITH AN ASTERISK



Age Out Exits

	Undocumented	Others
Average time in care (years)*	3.05	5.3
In care 3+ years*	45%	68%
Average moves per year	1.86	1.81

Research on Immigrant Children in the Child Welfare System

The Annie E. Casey Foundation highlighted the lack of reliable data and research about immigrant children in the child welfare system in 2006 in its paper *Undercounted. Underserved. Immigrant and Refugee Families in the Child Welfare System*. Since that report, a limited and very small body of research has emerged.

Although there has been no research focused specifically on the characteristics and outcomes of undocumented children in state care, there have been a couple of recent studies looking at immigrant children in general. In 2007, the Urban Institute published a three-part study looking at a sample of children in state care in Texas in 2006 and compared various Hispanic immigrant and citizen populations.²² And a 2009 study looked at a national sample of children with immigrant parents who were involved in child protective services, focusing on identifying characteristics and risk factors associated with abuse or neglect.²³

It is unclear why undocumented children have such a high rate of “other” exits. But it may be due, in part, to being older when they enter care. Being older, they may be more likely to run away and have their case closed before they turn 18, which results in an “other” exit designation.

Summary

In Texas, undocumented children in state care are a relatively small population of about 400, representing less than one percent of all children in state care. They are predominantly Hispanic and the vast majority live in one of the five large urban areas (Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin or Ft. Worth) or in South Texas. Over 40 percent of undocumented children are from a mixed immigration status family in that they have at least one documented or U.S. citizen sibling in care. They differ from other children in state care in virtually every aspect. Most notably, they are five times more likely to come into care for sexual abuse, are less likely to live with relatives, are more likely to be reunified and, for those who are not reunified, they are less likely to be adopted.

Although our analysis adds an important dimension to the emerging body of literature on immigrant children in care, it is only a beginning. Much more research is needed, especially in exploring the reasons for the noted differences as it is unclear whether it is the child’s undocumented status or some other characteristic that is driving the results.



Part 3—Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

Overview

Because the federal government recognized that undocumented children who are abused and neglected required special protection, it created the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) in 1990 to allow them to obtain legal residency. The law has since been amended, most recently in 2008 through the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA).

SIJS Eligibility

To be eligible for SIJS, an undocumented child must meet the following criteria:²⁴

1. The child is unmarried and under the age of 21;²⁵
2. A juvenile court²⁶ (a) has placed the child in the legal custody of an agency of the state or with an individual or entity located in the United States; and (b) has found that reunification with one or both parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect, abandonment or similar basis found under state law. For children in federal custody, the Secretary of Health and Human Services has to consent to the state court exercising jurisdiction over the child before it can make the necessary findings.
3. Judicial proceedings, or administrative proceedings authorized or recognized by the juvenile court, in which it is determined that return to the child's country of origin would not be in the child's best interest; and
4. A juvenile court is still supervising the child when the petition is granted.

At least one change under the TVPRA may have important implications for undocumented children in state custody due to abuse or neglect in Texas. Under the old eligibility criteria, a child was not able to apply for SIJS until after a final order was issued placing the child in the long-term care of the state. This meant that the child may not have even been eligible to initiate the process until they had been in care for up to 18 months.²⁷ Under the new provision, however, reunification only has to be ruled out for one parent so a child may be eligible to apply much sooner. In many cases, at least one parent is absent from the child's life. If that parent is properly served and does not appear, the court can take a default and make a finding of abuse, neglect or abandonment (depending on what DFPS has pled) and that reunification with that parent is not viable. Once that order is made, the child may then be eligible to apply for SIJS even if they are still pursuing reunification with the other parent.²⁸

A recent change in Texas law has important implications for SIJS eligibility as well. Before this past legislative session, a court's jurisdiction over a youth in state care terminated upon the youth's 18th birthday, even if the youth remained in foster care. As a result, a youth whose SIJS petition had not yet been filed or had been filed but not yet granted lost SIJS eligibility. The 2009 Legislature, however, amended the Texas Family Code so that now, a youth who is 18 can request that the court continue jurisdiction until they turn 21 or they withdraw their consent for continuing jurisdiction.²⁹

A recent change in Texas Family law allowing a court to continue jurisdiction over a child even after they turn 18 should make it easier for more children in state care to get SIJS.

How the SIJS Process Works³⁰

The SIJS process essentially requires the child to file a petition for a special immigrant status along with an application for a green card at the federal district office that has jurisdiction over the child. Anyone acting on the child's behalf may file the necessary paperwork. There is no filing fee for the petition, but the application for the green card has a filing fee of about \$1,000, although the fee can be waived.

The petition and application must include, among other things, the court orders establishing a child's eligibility, and supporting documentation establishing the child's age and fingerprints. The process generally requires an interview with the local U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) office, although this requirement can be waived if the child is less than 14 years of age or when the interview is deemed unnecessary.³¹ Under TVPRA, the SIJS petition must now be adjudicated within 180 days.³²

The Secretary of Homeland Security must consent to the SIJS.³³ The purpose of obtaining this consent is to ensure that the juvenile court findings supporting the petition were sought primarily for relief from abuse, neglect, or abandonment rather than to obtain a legal immigration status.³⁴ But that does not mean that the child can be extensively questioned about the abuse, neglect, or abandonment. In fact, a recent CIS field guidance memorandum specifically stated that the CIS officer should avoid questioning the child about the details of the abuse, neglect, or abandonment during the required interview.³⁵ Approval of the SIJS petition constitutes sufficient evidence of the Secretary's consent.³⁶

Even if the child meets the SIJS eligibility criteria, the child may still be barred from obtaining legal status based on one of the enumerated grounds of inadmissibility.³⁷

Texas' Process to Pursue SIJS on Behalf of Undocumented Children in Care³⁸

Texas' policy is to pursue SIJS in every case where it is appropriate. Each of the 11 regions in Texas has one DFPS attorney assigned to address immigration issues, although that attorney may also have other duties. There is also an attorney in the state office that is assigned to help the regional attorneys on immigration issues, when necessary. Caseworkers refer children with an undetermined immigration status to the regional attorney who evaluates whether the child is eligible for SIJS or other forms of immigration relief. If the child is eligible, the caseworker obtains the necessary state court order, prepares the necessary SIJS paperwork and documentation, and gives it to the regional attorney. The applications are generally submitted by mail to the regional office in Chicago, Illinois, although SIJS petitions in Houston are filed with the local CIS office if a child is already involved in federal removal proceedings.

The regional attorney attends the interview with the child. If the SIJS petition is denied, the regional attorney considers and pursues an appeal as appropriate. If a case is particularly complex, the DFPS attorneys consult with local immigration attorneys or, occasionally, refer a case to a private immigration lawyer. Region 10 (El Paso) consistently appoints undocumented children a pro bono attorney to help with immigration issues and pro bono attorneys are also sometimes provided in Region 7 (Travis).

• In 2009, the Texas Legislative Budget Board (LBB) reviewed DFPS' process for
• handling SIJS cases and identified several challenges. The process relied heavily on
• caseworkers to identify a child's eligibility and to do all the work in completing the
• paperwork and obtaining all the necessary documentation. But most caseworkers
• are already overworked and have little experience with SIJS beyond what they learn
• during their basic training. As a result, there was significant variation in the time it
• took to get the necessary paperwork completed. An LBB survey found it could take
• anywhere from three to 18 months to prepare the necessary paperwork.

• Another barrier identified was that it was difficult to obtain funds to pay for the
• filing fees and the fee waiver process was time consuming. It was also difficult to
• obtain funds to pay for the required medical exam, which can only be conducted by
• a CIS-approved physician, and fingerprinting.

• As a result, children were slipping through the cracks. Although DFPS has been
• doing a better job of getting legal residency for undocumented children in care, in
• 2009, only 15 percent of all children who had an undocumented status at some
• point during the year changed to a documented status by the time they exited care
• or by the end of the year.³⁹ Moreover, four of every five undocumented children
• who emancipated were still undocumented at the time they left care.⁴⁰ In 2009, this
• represents 18 youth who spent an average of three years in state care only to exit with
• no permanent home or connection, no way to support themselves through legal
• employment and no means to access social services.

• To help remedy this problem, in 2009, the legislature authorized DFPS to hire three
• full time employees to focus on supporting caseworkers and regional attorneys with
• the SIJS process. As of March 2010, DFPS had filled all three positions. Although
• they provide support to caseworkers all over the state, they are based in Region 3
• (Dallas/Ft. Worth), Region 6 (Houston) and Region 11 (South Texas) as over 80
• percent of the undocumented children in care are from these areas. DFPS will create
• a bimonthly report that identifies children with an undetermined status and the new
• SIJS staff will follow up with legal staff and caseworkers, starting with the oldest
• children, to ensure immigration options are pursued. The SIJS staff also will help
• educate caseworkers on assessing immigration options for undocumented children,
• coordinate with regional attorneys to help complete the necessary paperwork, and
• track the progress of children in the SIJS process. DFPS is also reviewing current
• policy relating to undocumented children and expects to have revisions by November
• 2010.

*As of March 2010, DFPS has hired three
full-time specialists dedicated solely to improving
the SIJS process for children in care.*
.....

Recommendations to Improve the SIJS Process in Texas

For a detailed list of best SIJS practices from other states, see Appendix C. Looking at these practices, there are several changes DFPS can make to improve how the process works in Texas.

- **In addition to internal changes, DFPS should work with local CIS offices to more efficiently and expeditiously process SIJS applications including:**
 - o File the petitions at the local office instead of by mail to Chicago.
 - o Ask CIS to designate a specific day for CPS interviews so transportation can be coordinated.
 - o Routinely ask for the interview to be waived, especially as recent federal guidance suggests waiving interviews as a means of ensuring that petitions are adjudicated within the required 180 days.⁴¹
 - o Request a blanket fee waiver for any child in state care.
- **DFPS and the courts should collaborate with law schools and other immigration organizations to create written resources regarding how to navigate the SIJS process in Texas.** Right now, the only available written resource for Texas caseworkers is the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for Children in the Dependency System, a publication prepared by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center.⁴² But the publication is not up-to-date regarding recent changes to the SIJS process; it is not easily accessible as caseworkers must request a hard copy from the state legal office; and it is not specific to Texas.⁴³ There is currently no written SIJS resource for CPS judges and attorneys. A list of SIJS resources that can be adapted for use in Texas is in Appendix D.
- **Court jurisdiction should not be terminated over a child who has an SIJS petition pending.** One requirement for SIJS under federal regulations is that the child is under court jurisdiction at the time the petition is granted. Caseworkers, attorney ad litem, and the court should advise all youth who turn 18 and have an SIJS application pending to extend court jurisdiction under the new Family Code provision to ensure they do not lose eligibility. To the extent a child has an SIJS petition pending, the court should not finalize an adoption or transfer legal custody to a relative until the petition is resolved.
- **DFPS should file the SIJS paperwork as soon as possible.** The sooner the process is started, the sooner the child can get their immigration status adjusted, eliminating the fear and complication of deportation proceedings. With the change under the TVPRA, if the court makes a finding that reunification with one parent is not viable, it may be possible for a child to file an SIJS petition even while the state only has temporary custody and the child pursues reunification with the other parent. DFPS needs to explore whether this avenue is available and, if so, pursue a finding of abuse, neglect or abandonment against parents who are not interested in or who cannot participate in reunification services as soon as possible.



Part 4—Aligning Federal Immigration and Child Welfare Law

Immigration Authorities Should Not Interfere with Undocumented Children in State Custody

Once a child files the SIJS paperwork, the child is protected from deportation until the immigration case is decided. But a child cannot file the required paperwork until a state court finds that return to or reunification with at least one parent is not appropriate. Under federal law, however, a state court cannot always immediately make that finding. Absent serious (e.g., murder) or repeated (e.g., parental rights on a sibling have been terminated) abuse, states are required to give a parent who appears a chance to reunify with the child,⁴⁴ which can take up to 18 months.⁴⁵

So if reunification cannot be ruled out with at least one parent, during the reunification period the child is subject to deportation. But if a child is deported during the reunification period, they have no opportunity to actually reunify with the parent and they have no opportunity to pursue an SIJS to the extent reunification is unsuccessful.

And, at any time before obtaining legal residency, a child in state care for abuse, neglect, or abandonment is now subject to removal into federal custody. Under TVPRA, although the state has legal custody of the child, it is no longer considered the child's legal guardian and so the child is considered an unaccompanied minor.⁴⁶ As a result, the child may be removed from state custody and detained in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility for up to 72 hours before being transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement.⁴⁷ If this happens, reunification and the SIJS process will be disrupted and may be stymied altogether.

To give a child a meaningful chance at reunification and to establish eligibility for SIJS, the federal government should not pursue deportation, removal, or other immigration proceedings against a child while the state has legal custody. If the child is subsequently reunified with a parent and state custody is terminated, the federal government can pursue any immigration remedies at that point. If reunification is ruled out, the child should be given an opportunity to pursue an SIJS or other immigration options. If the SIJS or other immigration applications are denied, the federal government can then pursue deportation or removal into federal custody.

The Department of Homeland Security should also clarify that the Border Patrol should not interfere with caseworkers transporting undocumented children through internal border checkpoints. Although there is no data available on this particular issue, anecdotal evidence suggests that the Border Patrol prevents caseworkers from transporting undocumented children in state custody to other parts of the state. This is especially concerning in Texas given the large and growing concentration of undocumented children in state care in South Texas. South Texas has a dearth of services and resources for children in care, even those who are U.S. citizens. For example, although eight percent of all children in state custody are from South Texas, only four percent of the foster homes in the state are located there.⁴⁸ And there is not a single residential treatment center in the area that takes foster children. U.S. citizens or those with legal documentation, however, can go to other parts of the state for services. In contrast, undocumented children are often trapped due to problems at the internal border checkpoints.

Other Resources on the Intersection of Child Welfare and Immigration Law

First Focus, a national bipartisan advocacy organization working to make children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, and the Migration and Child Welfare National Network, a coalition of state and national organizations working to improve how state and federal systems respond to issues of migration, have recently published a series of policy pages on the intersection of immigration and child welfare.⁴⁹ These papers address how immigration enforcement affects undocumented parents who are trying to reunify with their children, what state child welfare agencies can do to address the needs of immigrants, and issues regarding immigrants accessing federal funded public benefits.

Gaps in Federal Funding of Foster Care and Medicaid

A child is eligible for federally subsidized foster care if the child's parent would have been eligible to obtain benefits for the child under the old welfare program Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC).⁵⁰ And if a child is eligible for the federal foster care subsidy, they are also eligible for federally subsidized Medicaid.⁵¹ But undocumented children were not eligible for benefits under AFDC (and are not eligible under the current program of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). As a result, the state bears the full foster care and Medicaid costs as long as the children remain undocumented.

Once they obtain legal residency through SIJS or another immigration option, however, their eligibility for federal subsidies is less clear. On the one hand, the law states that a child's eligibility is determined at the time of removal.⁵² The Administration of Children and Families (ACF) has interpreted this provision to mean that a child who was undocumented at the time of removal can never become eligible for federal subsidies, even if they subsequently become a legal permanent resident (LPR). On the other hand, changes under the TVPRA now allow a state to retroactively claim reimbursement for foster care costs for children who become legal residents through SIJS,⁵³ suggesting that Congress also intended to allow a state to claim reimbursement going forward. To date, however, ACF has not made any changes to its eligibility rules for federal foster care subsidies as a result of TVPRA. As a result, there currently appears to be a conflict between the TVPRA provisions and intent and ACF's rules and practice.

Even if the foster care reimbursement issue is sorted out, there is still the issue regarding the child's Medicaid coverage. As discussed above, if a child is eligible for federal foster care subsidies, they are also eligible for federal Medicaid while in care. But what happens after they leave care? In many states, including Texas, Medicaid coverage continues uninterrupted after a child leaves care until they turn 21. And under the recent federal health care reform, starting in 2014 all states must provide coverage for children who emancipate from the system through age 26. But how will this work in connection with the five-year ban on public benefits for LPRs?⁵⁴ For example, a child becomes an LPR through the SIJS process at age 17. They emancipate and leave foster care at age 18. Are they eligible for federally subsidized Medicaid at that point or are they subject to the five-year ban?

The current financing structure is anachronistic, confusing, and unfair. The federal government controls immigration policy and enforcement. As a result, it should subsidize the foster care and Medicaid costs of any undocumented child who ends up in state custody because of abuse or neglect. At a minimum, ACF should change its policy to conform to the TVPRA changes so that once a child's SIJS petition is granted, the child becomes eligible for federal foster care and Medicaid subsidies both retroactively and going forward.

Federal law should also be changed so that a child who becomes an LPR through the SIJS process is exempt from the five year bar on obtaining federally subsidized benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. Exceptions to the bar already exist for certain vulnerable populations such as refugees or those seeking asylum.⁵⁵ Children in state care because of abuse or neglect are also a vulnerable population who came to this country and into state care through no fault of their own. They should be exempt as well, especially as they are only a very small population.

Summary

If a child is undocumented, he falls within the purview of the federal immigration system. If a child is abused or neglected, he falls within the purview of the state child welfare system. When a child is both undocumented and abused and falls within the purview of both, one system needs to take the lead. Since state child welfare agencies are far better situated to address the more pressing problem of maltreatment and ensure appropriate care, they should take the lead. After an abused or neglected child enters state care, all federal immigration proceedings regarding the child should be suspended to give the state time to safely and appropriately repatriate the child or to seek SIJS. It makes no sense for the federal government to recognize the need for SIJS but design a system that is essentially a race between state child welfare officials and immigration officials to see who can move the fastest.

The question should not be whether state child welfare officials can secure SIJS before federal immigration officials can deport. Instead, the state child welfare system should be given the time to repatriate or secure SIJS. And while the child is in state care, state child welfare caseworkers should be able to freely transport the child to needed services and care. In those cases where the state child welfare system determines that a return to parents in the United States is appropriate, then federal immigration officials can act pursuant to their own policies.

But aligning state child welfare and federal immigration policy, however, is not enough. Because the federal government is responsible for immigration, the federal government should pay its share of the cost of foster care and Medicaid for undocumented children. At a minimum, when an undocumented child secures SIJS, the state should be able to retroactively claim reimbursement for foster care and Medicaid as set forth in TVPRA, in addition to securing federal financial participation going forward. Finally, children who have SIJS should also be exempt from the five-year ban on eligibility for federally subsidized social programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, so that when they leave state care, they can still access the services they need. •



Endnotes

- 1 *Common-sense Principles for Immigration Reform*. Center for Public Policy Priorities, April 2010.
- 2 Texas Human Resources Code §40.002.
- 3 *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982).
- 4 Child Protective Services (CPS) Handbook §§6581-83.
- 5 Passel J. *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S. Estimates Based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey*. Pew Hispanic Center. March 7, 2005.
- 6 Unless otherwise noted, all references to a year refer to the Texas state fiscal year which runs from September 1 to August 31.
- 7 Unless otherwise noted, we used a single variable ordinary least squares or logistic regression comparing 2005 to 2009, using a p-value of 0.05 to test for significance.
- 8 Significant differences were determined using a one variable ordinary least squares regression (if the dependent variable was continuous) or a one variable logistic regression (if the dependent variable was an indicator). The dependent variable was the characteristic (e.g., age at removal) and the independent variable was an indicator with 1 meaning the child was undocumented at some point during the year. A p-value of 0.05 was used to determine significance.
- 9 Because this analysis is conducted at the child level, it likely overstates the proportion of families with more than one child in care. Families with more than one child in care will be identified multiple times. For example, a family with two children in care shows up as having a sibling in care twice—once for each child.
- 10 We used the DFPS definition for Hispanic, which includes any of the following races that are also identified as Hispanic: White, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Multiple, and Unknown.
- 11 Includes those who are also identified as Hispanic.
- 12 Bexar County, Dallas County, Harris County, Tarrant County, and Travis County.
- 13 Defined as DFPS Region 11, which includes the following counties: Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kennedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Willacy, Zapata.
- 14 The abuse categories are mutually exclusive. If a case had multiple confirmed allegations, it was given the designation of the most serious abuse (sex abuse, physical abuse, and, finally, neglect).
- 15 Neglect is defined as any confirmed allegation other than sex abuse and physical abuse, and so includes: abandonment, medical neglect, physical neglect, neglectful supervision, and refusal to accept parental responsibility. Since very few cases had a primary allegation of emotional abuse, these cases were included in the neglect category as well.
- 16 Putnam FW. *Ten year research update review: Child sexual abuse*. J. AM. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry 42(3):269-278. (2003).
- 17 Based on data on illicit drug use from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2008 National Survey on Drug Abuse and Health and population data from the Census Bureau comparing adults age 18 to 25 to adults age 26 and older.

- 18 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Marital Status and Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions: 2005*. The DASIS report. October 2007.
- 19 Undocumented individuals are generally reluctant to apply for social services for fear of deportation. Holcomb PA, Tumlim KC, Koralke R, Capps R, Zuberi A. *The Application Process for TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid and SCHIP: Issues for Agencies and Applicants, Including Immigrants and Limited English Speakers*. The Urban Institute. 2003.
- 20 But there is no DFPS policy against placing with an undocumented relative.
- 21 Other exits are a default provision when a child has exited state custody and does not fit into one of the other categories (e.g., runaways, abductions, transfers, adult guardianships, unknown exits).
- 22 Keuhn D, Vericker T, Capps R. *Child Sexual Abuse: Removals by Child Generation and Ethnicity. Findings from Texas*. The Urban Institute. May 2007; Vericker T, Kuehn D, Capps R. *Foster Care Placement Settings and Permanency Planning. Patterns by Child Generation and Ethnicity. Findings from Texas*. The Urban Institute. May 2007; Vericker T, Kuehn D, Capps R. *Title IV-E Funding. Funded Foster Care Placement by Child Generation and Ethnicity. Findings from Texas*. The Urban Institute. May 2007.
- 23 Dettlaff AJ, Earner I, Phillips SD. *Latino children of immigrants in the child welfare system: Prevalence, characteristic, and risk*. *Children and Youth Services Review* 31:775-83. 2009.
- 24 8 U.S.C. §1101(a)(27)(J) and 8 CFR §204.11.
- 25 TVPRA clarified that this age restriction only applies at the time the application is submitted. TVPRA §235(d)(3).
- 26 A juvenile court is defined as a court located in the U.S. having jurisdiction under state law to make determination about the custody and care of juveniles (8 CFS §204.11(a)), which in Texas includes a juvenile court, a family law court, a probate court, and a court of general jurisdiction.
- 27 Texas Family Code §§263.401-03.
- 28 Pursuing such an option, however, may require clarification from the federal government that a child in the temporary managing conservatorship of the state still qualifies as being “placed” with the state. As of yet, there have been no revisions to the regulations governing the SIJS process and the guidance issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in March 2009 did not address this issue.
- 29 Texas Family Code §263.002.
- 30 Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is based 8 CFR §204.11.
- 31 8 CFR §245.6.
- 32 TVPRA §235(d)(2).
- 33 8 U.S.C. §1101(a)(27)(J)(iii).
- 34 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Interoffice Memorandum, Field Guidance on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Petitions dated May 27, 2004.
- 35 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Interoffice Memorandum, Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008: on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Provisions dated March 14, 2009.
- 36 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Interoffice Memorandum, Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008: On Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Provisions dated March 14, 2009.
- 37 8 U.S.C. §1255.

- 38 Unless otherwise noted, information in this section comes from the January 2009 special report from the Texas Legislative Budget Board and information provided by DFPS.
- 39 Changes occurring within six months of entering care probably do not reflect an actual change in immigration status. Rather, they likely represent children who are documented but who could not immediately verify their legal status. But this number is relatively small, suggesting that for the vast majority of undocumented children who have a change in status, the change reflects an actual adjustment to their immigration status.
- 40 This is likely an overestimation of the percentage of children who enter care undocumented and emancipate without a change in their immigration status. If a child enters care as undocumented in 2005, obtains a documented status in 2007, and then exits to emancipation in 2008, they would not have been counted as exiting with a changed status. With a change in immigration status in 2007, they would no longer be undocumented and so they would not be included in the 2008 undocumented population and their exit in 2008 would not be counted.
- 41 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Memorandum, March 24, 2009.
- 42 CPS Handbook §6585.
- 43 There is a short Q&A available online in Spanish and English but it is generic and answers only the most basic questions.
- 44 42 U.S.C. §671(a)(15).
- 45 Texas Family Code §263.401-02.
- 46 TVPRA §235(d)(5).
- 47 Rome SH. *Untangling the Web: Immigration Law and Child Welfare Practice*. The Michigan Child Welfare Law Journal, 12(1):14-22. Fall 2008.
- 48 CPPP analysis of DFPS 2009 databook. This includes both foster homes and foster/adoptive homes.
- 49 Cervantes W., Lincroft Y. *The Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Child Welfare*. March 2010; Lincroft Y., Cervantes W. *Language, Culture and Immigration Relief Options*. April 2010. Lincroft Y., Borelli K. *Public Benefits & Child Welfare Financing*. May 2010. Available at: <http://www.firstfocus.net/library/reports/caught-between-systems-the-intersection-of-immigration-and-child-welfare-policies> (Accessed on June 21, 2010).
- 50 42 U.S.C. § 672 (a)(1).
- 51 ACYF-CB-PIQ-82-16 (6/21/82).
- 52 42 U.S.C. § 672 (a)(3).
- 53 TVPRA §235(d)(4).
- 54 8 U.S.C. §1613.
- 55 8 U.S.C. §1613(b).



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APPENDIX A

Data Description

The federal government will only reimburse a state for foster care expenses related to documented children (8 U.S.C. §1613; 62 F.R. 61433). As a result, for the children in state care, DFPS documents their immigration status in its statewide data system, called IMPACT (CPS Handbook §6584.1). Those for whom further verification is needed or who lack any documentation are identified with an “undetermined” immigration status (CPS Handbook §6584.1). Given the state’s financial incentive to document a child’s legal immigration status, it is likely that the vast majority of children with an undetermined status are undocumented. As a result, unless otherwise noted, we use the terms undetermined and undocumented interchangeably.

Using the IMPACT system, for each year from 2005 to 2009, DFPS provided de-identified information on children who had an undetermined immigration status during the year including child characteristics, confirmed allegations, living arrangements, birth date, dates of entry and exit, how a child exited state care, the child’s immigration status at the end of the year or the time of exit and perpetrator information. Children who were in care for more than one year are identified in each year for which they were in care and had an undetermined status.

To provide context and comparison, in a separate data run, DFPS also provided the same information for all children who were in care in 2009, both documented and undocumented. The data on undocumented children from the first data run and the second data run seem to be identical except on one child. In that case, in the initial data run, the child was identified with an “other” exit in 2009 and in the second data run, that child was identified with an exit to “reunification” in 2009. All other information regarding the child was identical in both data runs. As the child was living with their parents at the time of exit, we treated the exit as a reunification.

In looking at why a child comes into care, it is important to understand how allegations are handled. Children often have multiple confirmed allegations. Thirty-six percent of undocumented children with a confirmed allegation had more than one type of abuse or neglect confirmed. But this does not necessarily mean that each child was subjected to multiple, different incidents. For example, one incident of sexual abuse may result in a confirmed allegation for the child of sexual abuse (against the abuser) and negligent supervision (against the parent who failed to protect the child from sexual abuse). The same is true for physical abuse.

As a result, any analysis that uses the entire universe of confirmed allegations may not get a true picture of the prevalence of different types of abuse. If serious forms of abuse are more likely to have a concomitant negligent supervision finding for the same incident, it will distort the results. For example, a removal for sexual abuse may technically involve both abuse and neglect, but the major problem the family needs to address is the sexual abuse. By counting the incident as both sexual abuse and neglect, however, it arguably under counts the prevalence of sexual abuse and over counts the incidence of neglect. Doubling counting the incident also confounds findings related to neglect. A child with a confirmed allegation of neglect related to sexual abuse is in a very different position from a child with only a confirmed allegation of neglect.

More than 50 percent of the undocumented children in state care with a confirmed allegation of sexual or physical abuse also have a confirmed allegation for neglectful supervision. To avoid the problems discussed above, in our analysis we created abuse categories that are mutually exclusive so that each child is counted only once. If a case had multiple confirmed allegations, it was given the designation of the most serious abuse in the following order: sex abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and, then, emotional abuse. The category of neglect includes: abandonment, medical neglect, physical neglect, neglectful supervision, and refusal to accept parental responsibility. As less than one percent of the confirmed allegations involved only emotional abuse, we included it in the neglect category as well.

A single perpetrator can have confirmed allegations against multiple children from a single incident (e.g., sexual abuse to one child which places the other children at risk of sexual abuse). But counting a single perpetrator multiple times can distort the analysis regarding perpetrator characteristics. To avoid this, unless otherwise noted, we have counted each perpetrator only once even if they were involved in multiple incidents or with multiple children.

With the data on perpetrators for all children in care, we could not identify which perpetrators related to undocumented children and which related to documented. The same perpetrator may have committed abuse or neglect against multiple children, some of whom may be documented and some of whom may not. As a result, we used the entire universe of perpetrators as a comparison population to perpetrators of undocumented children. Although the perpetrators of undocumented children are also included in the comparison group, they comprise less than two percent of all perpetrators and so their inclusion is not likely to skew the results.

There was very little missing data. For undocumented children, there were five or fewer children in each year missing a county of removal, a last living arrangement, or an indicator about substance abuse. In 2006, one child had a birth date that was after the time the child entered state custody. As a result, we treated their age at time of removal as missing.

For the documented children in care in 2009, less than one percent was missing the county of removal, a last living arrangement or an indicator about substance abuse.

For perpetrators, less than one percent was missing their gender or a marital status.

To the extent a child or perpetrator was missing data on a particular data element, they were excluded from the analysis of that data element.

Our analysis of how children exited was based on exit, rather than entry, cohorts. This analysis is limited in that children may have been in care for different lengths of time and so may not be comparable as a group (Wulczyn & Delts 2001).

To the extent we did not find a statistically significant difference over the years for the undocumented population or between undocumented and documented children, it may be due to the relatively small size of the undocumented population rather than a lack of a relationship.

APPENDIX B

Data on Undocumented Children in State Care 2005-2009

Undocumented Children in Care

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number	497	556	500	447	400
Percentage of Total Pop	1.20%	1.20%	1.06%	0.99%	0.96%

Undocumented Child Characteristics

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Others 2009
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic ¹	89.13%	88.67%	88.80%	86.80%	85.25%	37.84%
African American ^{2*}	3.82%	5.58%	5.60%	7.38%	7.50%	29.59%
White (Non-Hispanic)	5.03%	3.60%	3.00%	4.03%	5.75%	30.07%
Other	2.01%	2.16%	2.60%	1.79%	1.50%	2.50%
Average age at removal (years)	10.1	10.1	10.3	10.2	10.4	5.9
Female	58.15%	57.73%	55.20%	55.03%	56.00%	48.46%
Where They Live						
Urban*	50.61%	48.01%	46.79%	45.41%	43.75%	43.12%
South Texas*	21.95%	28.80%	29.32%	26.85%	27.75%	8.08%
Other areas	27.44%	23.19%	23.89%	27.74%	28.50%	48.80%

Family Dynamics

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Others 2009
Confirmed allegations³						
Sex abuse	26.22%	22.70%	22.34%	20.82%	22.44%	4.83%
Physical abuse	19.60%	21.75%	21.53%	18.77%	16.17%	23.10%
Neglect ^{4*}	54.17%	55.56%	56.13%	60.41%	61.39%	72.08%
No allegation*	30.18%	23.92%	26.60%	23.71%	24.25%	22.00%
Substance abuse involved in removal	19.92%	22.46%	19.28%	22.15%	23.50%	57.51%
Perpetrators						
Mothers	49.01%	51.01%	49.77%	50.77%	50.14%	58.76%
Fathers	22.03%	23.18%	21.03%	18.56%	17.97%	20.40%
Relatives	8.17%	7.90%	10.05%	9.22%	9.88%	9.14%
Siblings	2.72%	1.01%	0.93%	2.58%	3.48%	0.90%
Step-parent	6.93%	7.09%	7.01%	8.51%	8.12%	3.05%
Paramour	5.59%	4.66%	5.84%	4.12%	3.77%	4.95%
Other	5.45%	4.86%	5.37%	6.19%	6.38%	3.17%
Average age of mothers (years)	31.6	31.3	31.9	31.5	31.4	28.8%
Average age of fathers (years)	36.7	35.9	37.0	37.0	37.3	33.5%
Married mothers	51.72%	55.87%	51.03%	52.31%	47.90%	31.56%
Siblings⁵						
At least 1 sibling in care					62.50%	70.72%
Documented sibling in care					43.25%	

Where They Live While in Care

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Others 2009
Parents	9.01%	8.19%	8.22%	5.60%	7.98%	6.72%
Relatives*	9.30%	11.30%	8.22%	13.38%	14.45%	29.14%
Foster Home	65.92%	67.80%	69.18%	66.22%	61.98%	50.86%
Group Home	13.24%	10.45%	8.56%	10.03%	10.27%	10.90%
Other*	2.54%	2.26%	5.48%	4.35%	5.32%	2.37%

Change in Immigration Status

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number with change in status	43	32	31	39	61
Percent with a change in status*	8.65%	5.76%	6.20%	8.72%	15.25%
Years in care before change*	1.65	1.77	2.27	3.3	2.85
Change within 6 months	27.91%	40.63%	19.35%	5.13%	11.48%

What Happens to Undocumented Children

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Others 2009
Number Who Exit From Care	142	202	208	148	137	
Reunification	60.56%	56.44%	55.77%	48.65%	51.82%	30.17%
Exits other than reunification						
Relative PMC	28.57%	20.45%	33.70%	19.74%	22.39%	31.77%
Adoption	7.14%	11.36%	15.22%	17.11%	14.93%	48.32%
Age Out	42.86%	37.50%	28.26%	47.37%	32.84%	14.27%
Other	21.43%	30.68%	22.83%	15.79%	28.79%	5.64%
Adoption						
Number of adoptions	4	10	14	13	10	
Average time to completion (years)	3.8	2.6	3.5	3.1	3.0	2.5
Age Out Exits						
Number of exits	24	33	26	36	22	
Average time in care (years)	2.93	3.12	3.40	3.09	3.05	5.3
In care 3+ years	45.83%	36.36%	46.15%	41.67%	45.45%	67.90%
Average moves/year	1.14	1.26	1.26	1.59	1.86	1.81
Undocumented when exit	87.5%	100%	84.62%	94.44%	81.82%	
Other Exits						
Number of exits	12	27	21	12	20	
Average time in care (months)*	10.9	6.4	8.5	3.0	6	13.2
Average number of placements	2.5	2.3	2.4	1.6	1.6	3.2
Average age (years)*	14.09	12.19	13.32	10.30	8.98	10.19
Undocumented when exit	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

*Denotes that the difference between 2005 and 2009 is statistically significant using an ordinary least squares or logistic regression and a p-value of 0.05.

- 1 We used the DFPS definition which includes any of the following races that are also identified as Hispanic: White, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Multiple and Unknown.
- 2 Includes those who are also identified as Hispanic.
- 3 The abuse categories are mutually exclusive. If a case had multiple confirmed allegations, it was given the designation of the most serious abuse (sex abuse, physical abuse, neglect and, finally, emotional abuse).
- 4 Neglect is defined as any confirmed allegation other than sex abuse and physical abuse and so includes: abandonment, medical neglect, physical neglect, neglectful supervision and refusal to accept parental responsibility and emotional abuse.
- 5 Data on both undocumented and documented siblings in care is only available for 2009.

APPENDIX C

SIJS Best Practices

Best practices for state systems to obtain SIJS include:

- Having individuals within or working with the child welfare agency to help caseworkers with the process.
 - Illinois and Los Angeles County have special, designated immigration units within the child welfare agency. In Los Angeles, all the members of the unit are certified interpreters.
 - New York City has a special Immigrant Issues Subcommittee Advisory Board and with a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation created a Special Director of Immigrant Services to oversee policy and practice issues regarding families. It also gives pro bono representation to undocumented children in foster care.
- Creating a written SIJS manual with state specific instructions, guidelines, and resources on how to handle the process.
 - Illinois has a manual developed by the National Immigrant Justice Center.
 - Florida has a manual developed with advocates, private law firms, and law school faculty. It also has statutory guidelines regarding the necessary findings and when the process should be initiated.
 - New York City has an immigration handbook developed especially for caseworkers and an interactive Web site regarding the SIJS process developed and maintained by Columbia Law School.
 - New Jersey has a special immigrant juvenile status training and information packet prepared by the American Friends Service Committee.
- Ensuring that costs associated with the process are covered.
 - The special immigration unit in the Los Angeles County child welfare agency has its own budget approved by the county which includes funding to pay for fees and expenses and funding for transportation for children to attend interviews.
 - New York City reimburses child placing agencies who work with undocumented youth for the SIJS filing costs.
 - Los Angeles County funds bone scan tests for children who have no other way to establish their age.
- Ensuring that children have transportation to the interviews
 - The specialized immigration unit in Los Angeles County transports children for their interviews.
- Providing specialized training for caseworkers
 - Both Los Angeles County and New York City have such training. In Los Angeles County, caseworkers are required to teach undocumented children how to acquire and complete the SIJS application as part of the child's independent living plan.
- Working with local offices of the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS)
 - The child welfare immigration unit in Los Angeles County holds quarterly meetings with local CIS staff. It has arranged to file SIJS applications in person at the local office rather than mailing them to the district office. It also has a designated day for interviews.
- Providing for court supervision beyond the age of 18 to ensure that the child is still eligible when the application is granted.
 - Florida, California, and, now, Texas have statutory authority for the court to retain jurisdiction beyond age 18.

APPENDIX D

Resources Regarding the SIJS Process

- Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Remedies for Immigrant Children and Youth Web page:
https://www.ilrc.org/immigration_law/remedies_for_immigrant_children_and_youth.php
Contains downloadable resources on immigration issues including guides for immigrant youth in English, Spanish and Korean and an immigration benchbook for Juvenile and Family Court judges.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, SIJS Caseworker's Toolkit for Children in Federal Custody:
<http://www.brycs.org/sijs/default.htm>
Contains downloadable resources regarding the SIJS process for children in federal custody.
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Web page:
<http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1559&subm=75&area=Participate&ssm=118>.
Contains downloadable general resources on SIJS as well as links to state specific resources.
- American Immigration Lawyers Association, Special Immigrant Juveniles Web page:
<http://www.aila.org/Issues/Issue.aspx?docid=23300>
Contains downloadable legal resources regarding immigration issues.
- National Immigrant Justice Center, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in Illinois, A Guide for Pro Bono Attorneys:
<http://www.njcpac.org/admin.asp?uri=2181&action=15&di=370&ext=pdf&view=yes>
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in Florida: A Guide for Judges, Lawyers and Child Advocates:
http://www.law.miami.edu/pdf/SIJ_Manual.pdf
- New York City's Administration for Children's Services, Immigration and Language Guidelines for Child Welfare Staff: http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/downloads/pdf/immigration_language_guide.pdf
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Training and Information Packet for New Jersey. September 2009:
<http://www.njcpac.org/admin.asp?uri=2181&action=15&di=370&ext=pdf&view=yes>
- New York online guide to SIJS: https://quickplace.law.columbia.edu/QuickPlace/childimmigrant/Main.nsf/h_Toc/C7676E2EC40EE46D85257123007C4802/?OpenDocument
- A Social Worker's Tool Kit for Working with Immigrant Families: Immigration Status and Relief Options. June 2009:
<http://www.americanhumane.org/assets/docs/protecting-children/PC-migration-sw-toolkit-status-relief.pdf>



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