



# Senate Committee on Health and Human Services: Disrupted Foster Care Adoptions

Judge John Specia, DFPS Commissioner  
*April 20, 2016*

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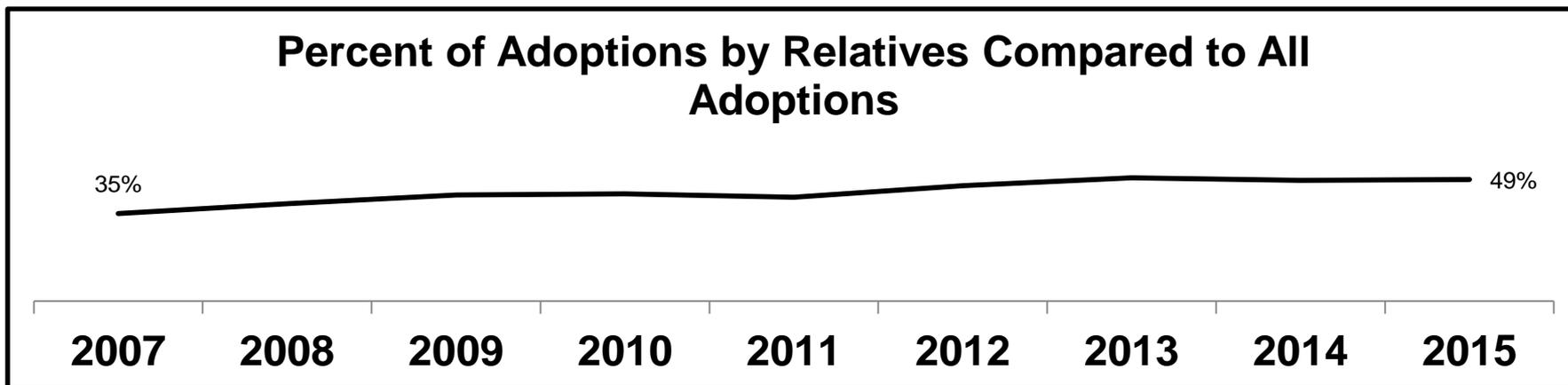
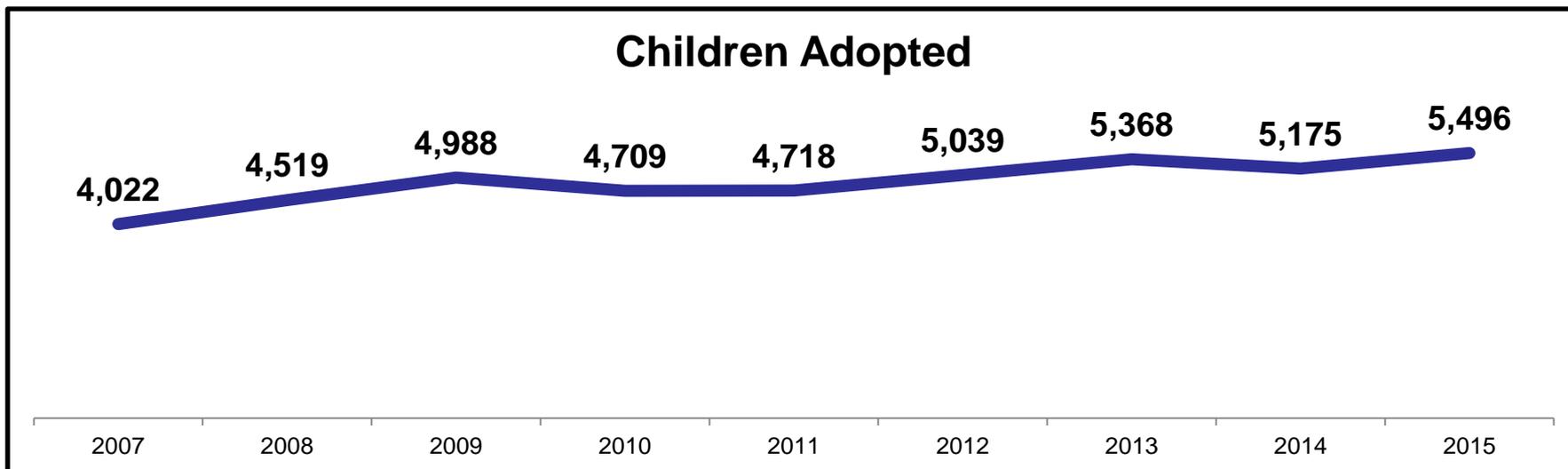
*The mission of the Department of Family and Protective Services is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by involving clients, families, and communities.*

Examine the frequency, causes, and effects of disrupted foster care adoptions and make recommendations to improve the long-term success of adoptive placements. Study and make recommendations on ways to ensure a smooth transition for foster care children who are exiting the system.

**When the abuse and neglect suffered by a child or youth is so severe that parental rights are terminated, DFPS first pursues adoption, as it provides the most legal protections.**

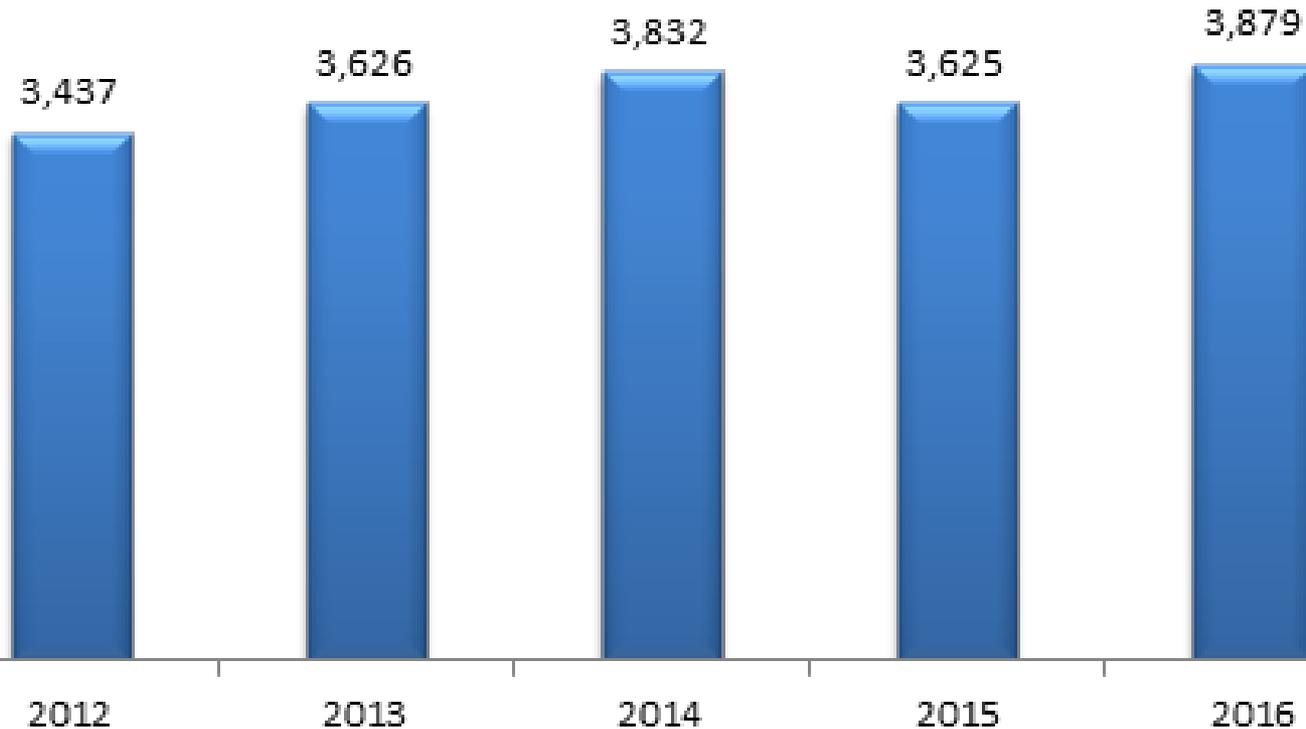
- Child Protective Services works with children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect and who are in Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS.
- DFPS and Child Placing Agencies work together to identify, recruit, and train adoptive families
  - DFPS homes
    - FY 15 – 2,138 children or 39% of all adoptions
  - Child Placing Agency home
    - FY 15 – 3,357 children or 61% of all adoptions

# Number of DFPS Adoptions



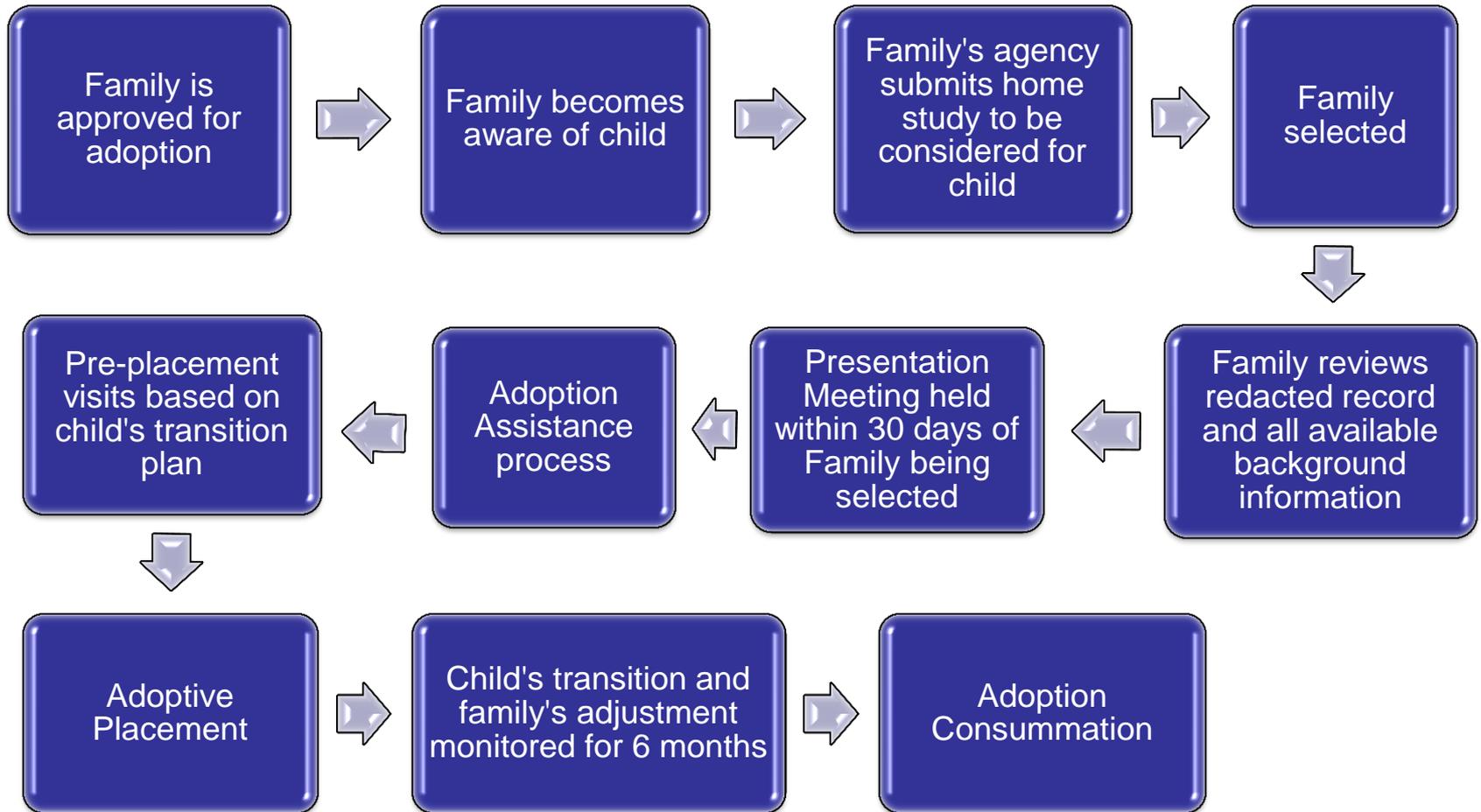
# Number of Children Waiting for Adoption by Fiscal Year

## Children Legally Free for Adoption and Not in Their Intended to be Permanent Home *as of end of February of each Fiscal Year*



- Beginning in 1998, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began rewarding states for increasing foster care adoption as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.
  - Texas has received a total of \$73 million.
  - That total is \$46.4 million more in Adoption Incentive Awards than any other state since 1998.
  - Texas is also the only state to have received this award every year since 1998.

# Adoption Process



# Disruptions and Dissolutions

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- **Adoption Disruption** - Occurs when a child is placed in an adoptive home, but the placement **disrupts before the adoption is legally finalized** and the child is still under DFPS conservatorship.
  - **Adoption Dissolution** - Occurs when the adoption fails **after the adoption is legally consummated** and the child is no longer under DFPS conservatorship. When adoption dissolutions occur, DFPS must take custody of the child and the child returns to DFPS substitute care.
  - US Health and Human Services does not collect data on adoption dissolutions.
    - Independent studies report disruption rates that range from 10 to 25 percent nationwide.
    - Texas Average Disruption Rate (2 to 3.5%)
    - Independent studies report dissolution rates range from 1 to 5 percent nationwide.
    - Texas Average Dissolution Rate (2 to 3%)
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# Supporting Adoptive Families

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- **Adoption Assistance** – A program designed to help families pursue adoption. In order to qualify for adoption assistance, a child must meet the criteria of special needs.
- **Non-Recurring Adoption Expenses** - Non-recurring payments not to exceed \$1,200 are provided after consummation of the adoption to reimburse families for certain adoption-related expenses.
- **Tuition and Fee Waiver** - The Texas state tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions at state supported institutions of higher education to youth who were adopted through DFPS.
- **Post-Adoption Services** - After consummation, services are provided through contracts to help the child and family adjust to the adoption, cope with any history of abuse of the child and avoid permanent or long-term removal of children from the adoptive family setting.

- **Permanency Care Assistance** – This is a subsidized kinship guardianship assistance program eligible for children for whom family reunification and adoption have been ruled out.
    - First implemented in September 2009
  - As of March 2016, 2877 children have exited DFPS custody with Permanent Managing Conservatorship with PCA to a relative caregiver
  - Total assistance provided for FY 15 was \$10.5 million
  - PCA is scheduled to be reviewed by sunset in 2017
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## Efforts to Strengthen Adoptions

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- **Training for Adoptive Parents and Adoption Workers** - As part of CPS Transformation, an Individualized Training Plan was created for caseworkers. The current pre-service training for parents is in review to ensure the most updated, evidenced-based training is used.
  - We also developed a **Best Practice Guide** to help caseworkers achieve positive, timely permanency for children.
- **Pre- Adoption Services** – This includes in-home screenings, pre-placement visits, training for adoptive families, preparation of the child, and supervision.
- **Revision to Adoptive Placement Agreement** - A consent statement was added to the Adoptive Placement Agreement to share families' information to post-adoption contractors to better support permanency.

## Efforts to Strengthen Adoptions cont.

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- **Participation in the National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption / Guardianship Support and Preservation Project** – This is a five-year research project that aims to promote permanency.
- **Texas Faith Based Model** – This is a DFPS collaboration with congregations and communities to provide services ranging from prevention to permanency.
- **Extended Adoption Assistance** - The Texas Legislature voted to extend adoption assistance for older youth that allowed adoption assistance payments and Medicaid benefits to extend until the adopted child turns 21.

- Objective 1: Determine how DFPS ensures targeted and child-specific adoption recruitment efforts are utilized for children in care.
  - Objective 2: Determine how DFPS ensures the selected adoptive family meets the needs of the child(ren).
  - Objective 3: Identify barriers to adoption processes that impact the timely consummation of adoptions and efficiencies to improve the processes.
  - Planned completion: June 2016
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