



OUTCOMES
FOR IDAHO
FOSTER YOUTH:
**ENGAGEMENT WITH
IDAHO DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS**
2019



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If parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children (under the age of 18) the children often are taken into the custody of a public child welfare agency and are subsequently placed into foster care. While the child welfare agency remains responsible for any legal decisions for a child, foster families are responsible for the child's day to day care and wellbeing. A number of children in the United States face this reality. In fiscal year 2017, there were almost 443,000 children in foster care in the United States (5.8 per 1,000); 1,592 of them in Idaho (3.6 per 1,000).¹

This study is the initial step in examining the long-term impacts of foster care in Idaho. The report is the first in a series that seeks to answer the question, "How does the experience associated with being removed from one's family and placed in foster care in Idaho impact a person's long-term outcomes?"

This first report specifically examines former foster youths' rate of interaction with Idaho Department of Corrections (IDOC).

There are three main findings:

- Former foster children and youth in the study are 2.2 times more likely to have interacted with IDOC than the general population.
- The ratio for males is 2.2 times that of the general population and for females it is 2.6 times.
- As former foster youth age, incidence increases.



INTRODUCTION

A need exists to understand the long-term outcomes of living through the foster care system in Idaho. Nationally, foster care has been associated with poor outcomes in terms of delinquency, educational attainment and other measurable factors as compared to the general population. A study performed with data from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, the largest longitudinal study of youth aging out of foster care, found that 70% of former foster youth have been arrested and 63% convicted of a crime.² One report using data from the state of Illinois concluded that vulnerable children placed into foster care are two to three times more likely to engage with the criminal justice system than their peers who remained with their families.³

A careful review of the literature shows that there is no study looking at the long-term effects of foster care in Idaho.

THE SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This report uses data from Family Advocates (FA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency, and the Idaho Department of Corrections (IDOC) as a first step towards a comprehensive analysis of outcomes of foster care in Idaho.⁴ The report utilizes two main datasets for the analysis. The first is a dataset from FA which includes all the children served between 2012 and 2018 that are now 18 and older. The second is a publicly available dataset from IDOC which includes all Idahoans who were, as of March 15th, 2019, actively involved with IDOC. The report specifically examines the incidence rate between former foster care children and youth from the FA database and the IDOC database of active felony cases and then compares that rate with the general population of Idaho.⁵

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

A central difficulty in conducting accurate, long-term analysis of outcomes is the challenge of accessing and aggregating datasets from multiple state agencies. Many states, including Idaho, do not have data systems or agreements in place that allow state agencies to share records and information across systems. This makes cross-referencing records difficult for aggregate analysis and has limited the scope of this initial research.

This study specifically examines the propensity of involvement with IDOC for both former foster youth in FA's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) database and the general population. The study does not cover all children who have been removed from their families and are now 18 or older, since not all children are assigned to the FA CASA program. Therefore the outcomes for children who were not served by the FA CASA program are unknown. Access to the dataset of all children removed from their families and placed into foster care would afford a more comprehensive analysis. Accessing this data would also allow for a comparison of the two groups of former foster youth and could provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CASA program.

At this early level of analysis this study does not address, nor does it imply, any causal relationships. As the authors are granted access to more datasets, the scope of implications will expand.

The study uses the IDOC database, which includes only active felony charges and does not include records for individuals who have completed their sentence or that have passed away. In addition, all misdemeanor charges in Idaho are handled at the county level and are not part of the study.⁶ One last limitation is the lack of ability to track the migration in and out of Idaho of former foster care youth.

BACKGROUND ON FAMILY ADVOCATES AND CASA

The CASA program is a national program created in 1977 in King County, Washington, to serve children entering into Child Protective Services. Each state designs the program to meet the specific needs of their state. Some programs are part of a government entity while others are independent non-profits. A majority programs, however, follow national CASA standards.

FA of Boise was founded in 1978 and serves Southwest Idaho. The founders were two foster families that sought to end child abuse in Idaho. Two years later, the FA CASA Program began when the Junior League, the Boise Bar Association and FA received permission from the Honorable Richard Grant, Juvenile Magistrate, to initiate a pilot Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program in Ada County. In 1982, the CASA program officially accepted its first child protection referral and, in 1986, FA took an active role in working with legislators to revise the Child Protection Act in Idaho to clearly define the role of a GAL. The CASA Program at FA serves children in Idaho state’s Fourth Judicial District (Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties).⁷

Not all children in foster care in the district are assigned to the FA CASA program. Each year, depending on FA’s capacity, a percentage (between 30% and 71%) of children who are removed from their families are assigned to the FA CASA program. In 2018, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare reported that 809 children and youth were removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. However, due to a lack of resources at FA (e.g., volunteers and funding), only 409 children under 12 years of age were appointed to FA’s CASA program.

SUMMARY OF CHILDREN SERVED BY FAMILY ADVOCATES

Table 1 provides information on the children assigned to FA from the Fourth Judicial District between 2012 and 2018.

TABLE 1: NEW CHILDREN ASSIGNED TO FAMILY ADVOCATES

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total New Children	104	145	203	190	136	124	164
Female	52	72	96	102	66	66	76
Male	52	73	107	88	70	58	88
0 to 11 (Children)	91	134	165	158	125	113	149
12 and over (Youth)	13	11	38	32	11	11	15
% Children	87.5%	92.4%	81.3%	83.2%	91.9%	91.1%	90.9%

Table 2 shows the number of cases filed to the Idaho Supreme Court (IDSC) and the percentage assigned to FA in those same years.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CASES

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
IDSC Cases Filed	153	193	172	204	199	232	218
IDSC Children On Petition	236	346	286	329	317	413	364
Average Age	6	6	7	7	6	8	7
Ratio Child/Cases	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.7
% Assigned to FA	44%	42%	71%	58%	43%	30%	45%

When siblings groups are removed, a single case is filed. The number of single cases is reflected in the “IDSC Cases Filed” row. “Children on Petition” is the total number of children in Child Protective Services (CPS). The ratio is the average number of children per filed case.

Figure 1 demonstrates the trends in IDSC cases as well as the percentage of cases assigned to FA.

FIGURE 1: TRENDS IN NEED AND SERVICES

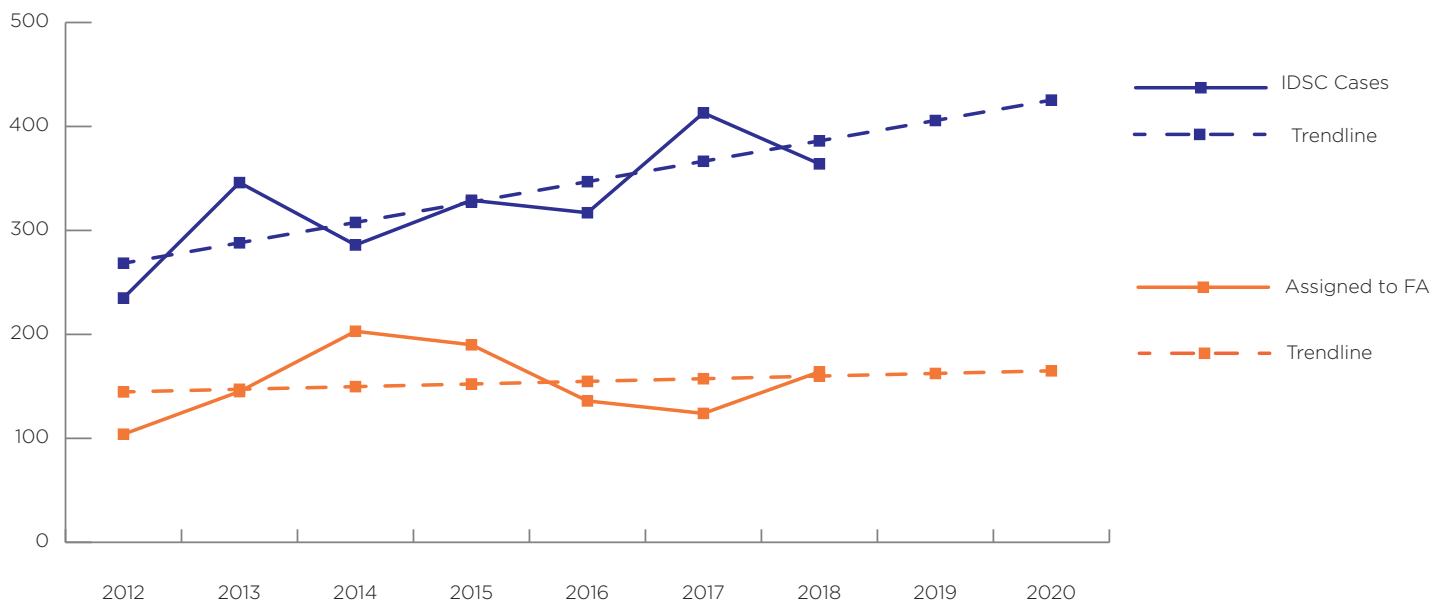
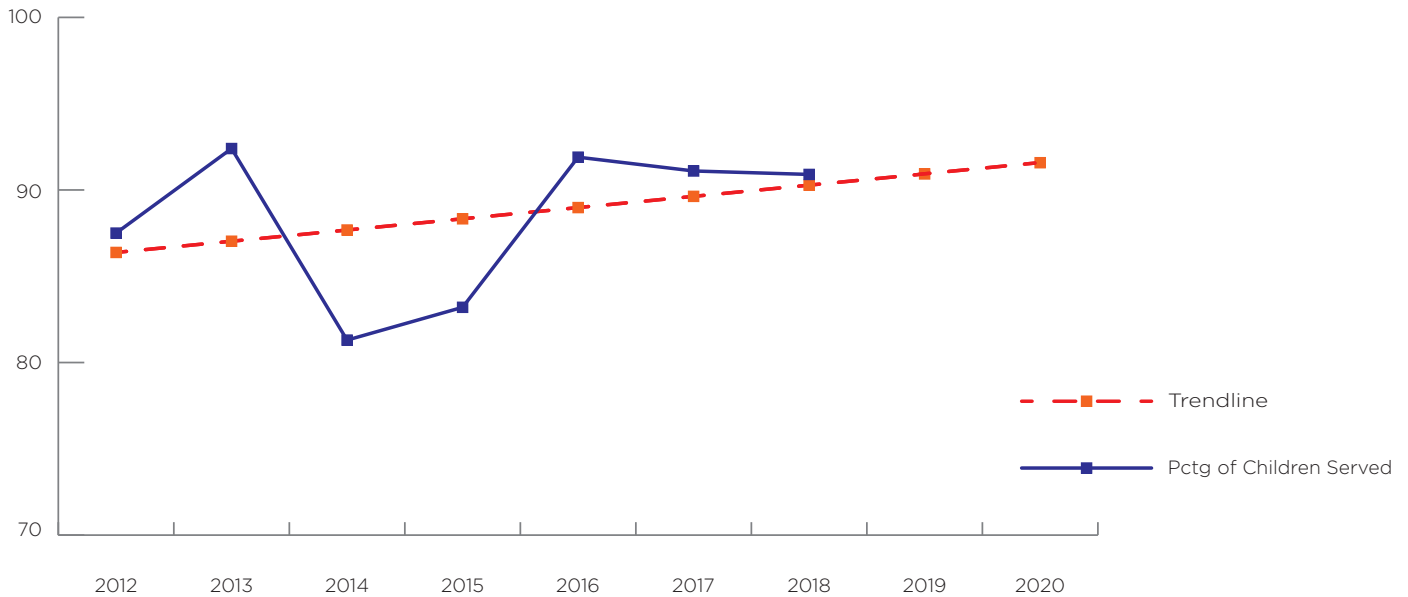


Figure 2 demonstrates the percentages of children in CSP in the Fourth Judicial District served by FA CASA has trended to increase over time. However, the past three years show a decrease in the percentage of children and youth being assigned to FA’s CASA program.

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE CHILDREN SERVED BY FA



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS DATABASE

The dataset utilized in this analysis is publicly available through IDOC. It contains the names of all current cases of individuals under felony supervision by the Idaho Department of Corrections. Removed from the dataset are names of those who have completed their sentences or have passed away.

The IDOC database includes over 33,000 individuals who are either under felony supervision by IDOC, living in other states under interstate compacts, fugitives, or are in federal prison. Of these 33,000, about 17,000 are currently on probation or parole and nearly 9,000 are still in prison facilities.

Table 3 shows the percentage of Idaho population age 18 - 34 (using a 2017 American Community Survey estimate) who are in the current IDOC database.

TABLE 3: RATES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

	Total	Male	Female
IDOC Database Age 18 - 34	15,062	11,479	3,583
Idaho Population Age 18 - 34	373,553	191,382	182,171
Percentage of Idaho Population	4.0%	6.0%	2.0%

ANALYSYS OF THE IDOC DATABASE BY AGE

Figure 3 and Table 4 show a breakdown by age groups and gender of the IDOC database. This study focuses on ages 18 to 34, which represents the current ages of foster youth in the FA database who are now adults. For both males and females, the highest incidence rate in the IDOC database is for age 30 to 34.

FIGURE 3: IDOC DATABASE DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER

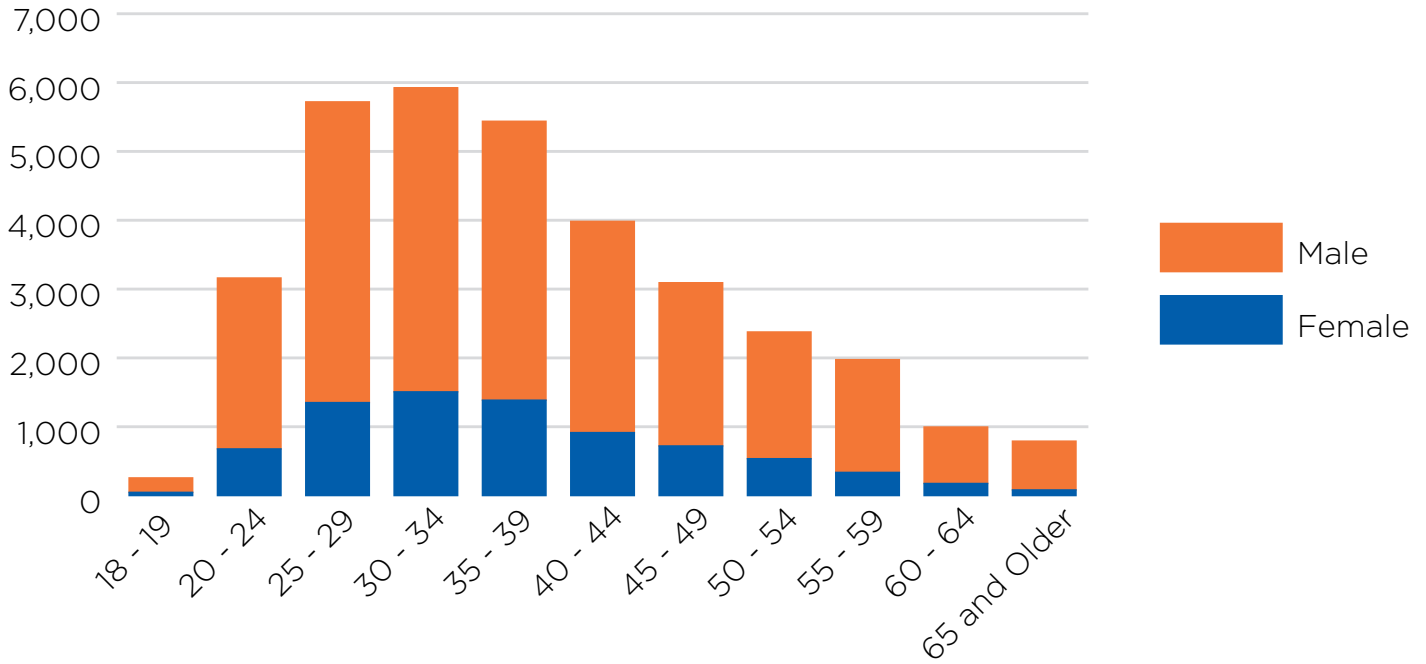
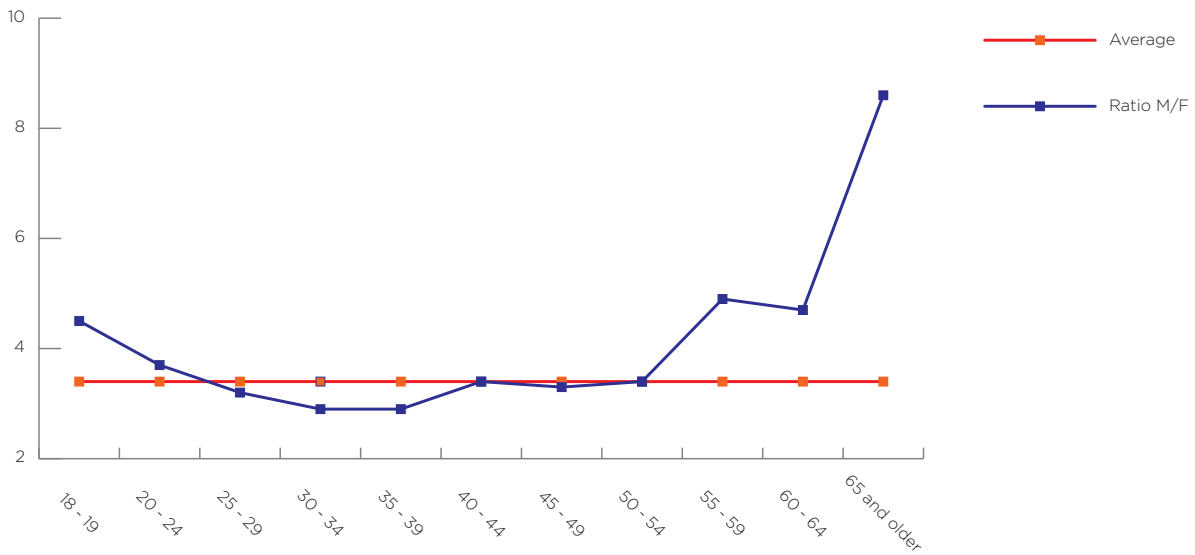


TABLE 4: IDOC DATABASE DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER

Age	Female	Male	Total	Ratio M/F
18 - 19	47	210	257	4.5
20 - 24	678	2,483	3,161	3.7
25 - 29	1,351	4,369	5,720	3.2
30 - 34	1,507	4,417	5,924	2.9
35 - 39	1,386	4,052	5,438	2.9
40 - 44	915	3,069	3,984	3.4
45 - 49	721	2,371	3,092	3.3
50 - 54	536	1,841	2,377	3.4
55 - 59	337	1,638	1,975	4.9
60 - 64	176	820	996	4.7
65 and Older	82	709	791	8.6
Total	7,736	25,979	33,715	3.4

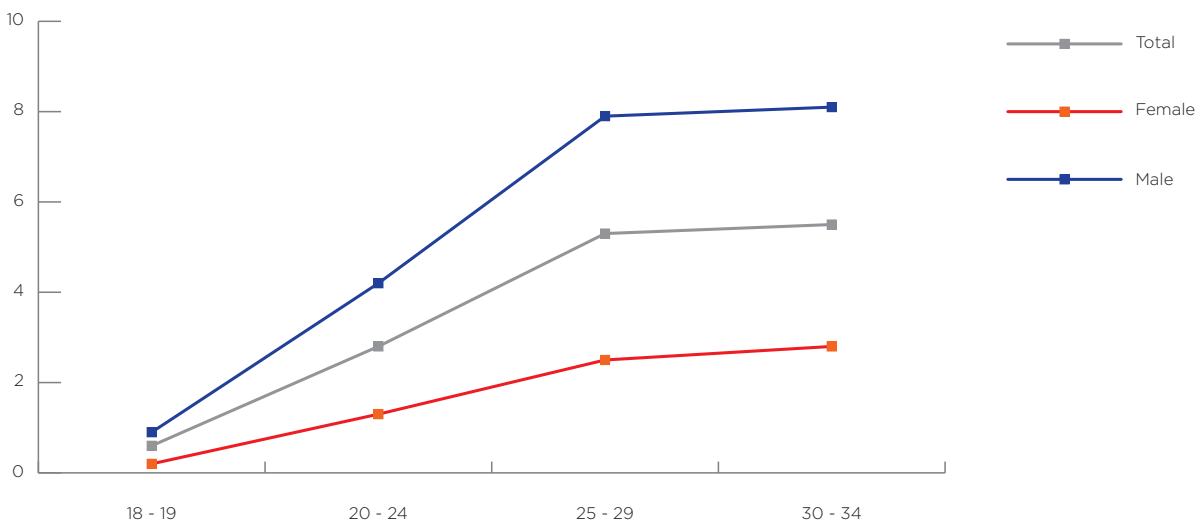
Men offend at a higher rate than women, as demonstrated in Figure 4. Over time, the ratio of males to females in the IDOC database has an average of 3.4 males for each female.

FIGURE 4: IDOC MALE TO FEMALE INMATE RATIO



The percentage of the general population in Idaho with active felony cases is shown in Figure 5

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF IDAHO POPULATION IN IDOC DATABASE



OUTCOMES

OCCURANCE RATE OF INVOLVEMENT WITH IDOC

Table 5 shows the occurrence rate of former foster youth from FA in the IDOC database.

TABLE 5: IDOC AND FA DATABASES

	Total	Male	Female
FA Database	2,337	1,133	1,204
IDOC Database	209	148	61
Percentage	8.9%	13.1%	5.1%

Table 6 provides comparison to the general population and demonstrates that the incidence rate for former FA youth is more than double that of the general population. Females have a higher incidence rate than males. At this stage of the research it is too early to make a clear hypothesis regarding the reasons for this gender difference but the data is statistically significant.⁸

TABLE 6: OUTCOMES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION AND FA DATABASE

	Total	Male	Female
FA Database	8.9%	13.1%	5.1%
General Population	4.0%	6.0%	2.0%
Ratio	2.2	2.2	2.6

OCCURANCE RATE BY AGE AND GENDER

The highest incidence of former foster youth in the FA dataset to be present in the IDOC database is between the ages of 30 and 34, as demonstrated in Table 7. Table 8 shows the rates for males 30 to 34 years of age is close to 25% while the highest rates for women is 8% as shown in Table 9.

TABLE 7: BREAKDOWN BY AGE, TOTAL

Age	Total	FA in IDOC	Percentage
18 - 19	351	3	0.9%
20 - 24	829	62	7.5%
25 - 29	738	96	13.0%
30 - 34	276	41	14.9%
Other	143	7	4.9%
Total	2,337	209	8.9%

TABLE 8: BREAKDOWN BY AGE, MALES

Age	Total	FA in IDOC	Percentage
18 - 19	174	174	1.7%
20 - 24	429	429	11.0%
25 - 29	357	357	18.5%
30 - 34	114	114	24.6%
Other	59	4	6.8%
Total	1,133	148	13.1%

TABLE 9: BREAKDOWN BY AGE, FEMALES

Age	Total	FA in IDOC	Percentage
18 - 19	177	0	0.0%
20 - 24	400	15	3.8%
25 - 29	381	30	7.9%
30 - 34	162	13	8.0%
Other	84	3	3.6%
Total	1,204	61	5.1%

Figure 6 visualizes the data from Tables 7, 8, and 9 and provides trends by age group while Table 10 provides the ratio of males to females within the FA database.

FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE FA DATABASE IN IDOC DATABASE BY AGE GROUP

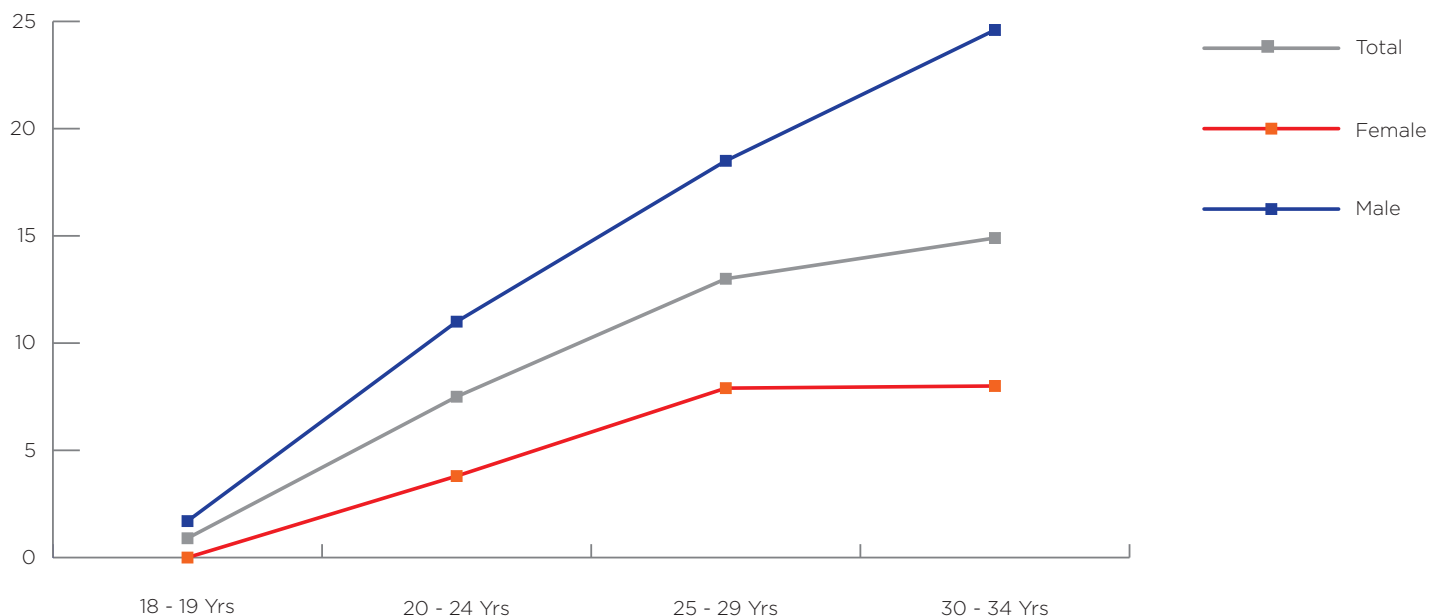


TABLE 10: RATIO MALE/FEMALE FOR THE FAMILY ADVOCATE DATABASE

Age	Percentage Male	Percentage Female	Ratio M/F
18 - 19	1.7	0.0	N/A
20 - 24	11.0	3.8	2.9
25 - 29	18.5	7.9	2.3
30 - 34	24.6	8.0	3.1
Other	6.8	3.6	1.9

COMPARING THE GENERAL POPULATION TO THE FA DATABASE BY AGE

Table 11 and Figure 7 show how the individuals in the FA database compare with the general population by age group.

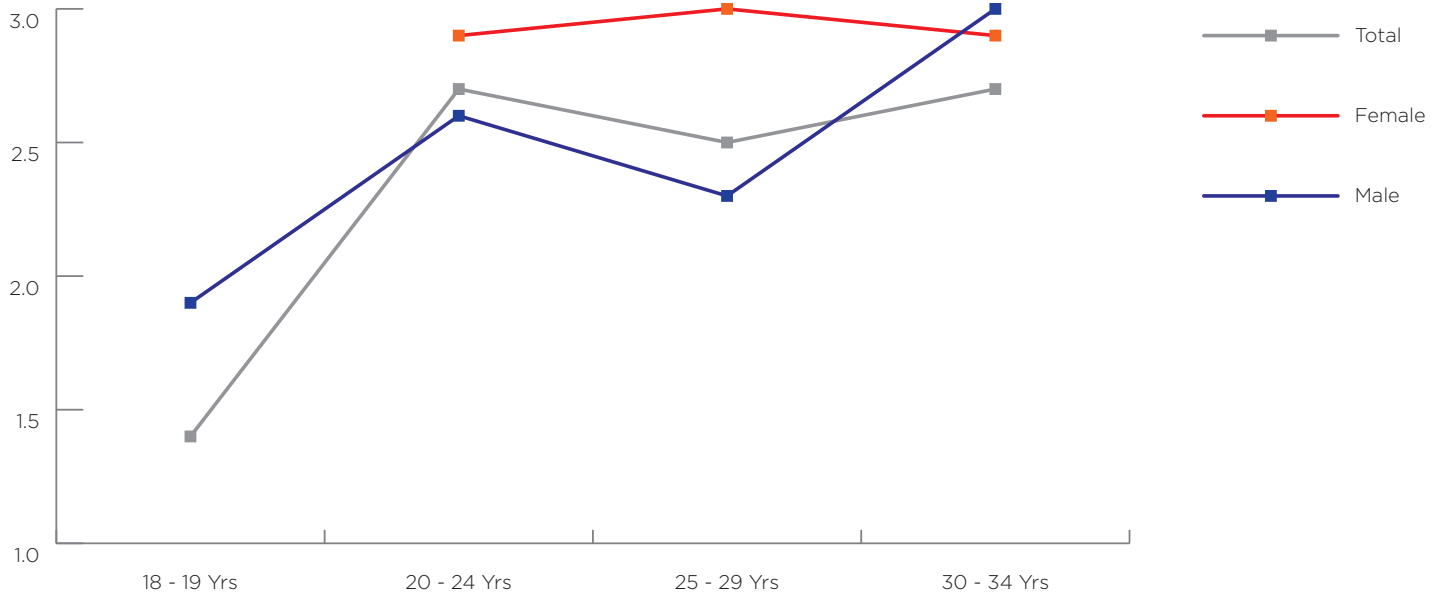
TABLE 11: OUTCOMES BY AGE GROUP, FA DATABASE AND GENERAL POPULATION

Age	General Population			FA Dataset			Ratio FA/General Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
18 - 19	0.9	0.2	0.6	1.7	0.0	0.9	1.9	N/A	1.4
20 - 24	4.2	1.3	2.8	11.0	3.8	7.5	2.6	2.9	2.7
25 - 29	7.9	2.5	5.3	18.5	7.9	13.0	2.3	3.0	2.5
30 - 34	8.1	2.8	5.5	24.6	8.0	14.9	3.0	2.9	2.7

As age increases there is an increasing incidence with the IDOC dataset for both the FA dataset and the general population. For males, the ratio is highest in the age 30 to 34 group and is nearly three times the rate of the general population. The incidence of FA,

however, is higher than the general population across all age groups and gender. For females, after reaching a peak of three times greater in the 25 to 29 age group, the ratio slightly diminishes to 2.6 in the 30 to 34 age group.

FIGURE 7: IDOC MATCH RATIO OF FA TO THE GENERAL POPULATION OF IDAHO



At this stage of the analysis, we have not attempted to hypothesize any causal relationships. More data is needed to expand the analysis beyond this preliminary stage to enable researchers to hypothesize why former foster youth offend at a higher level than the general population. As previously stated, this could be achieved by having access to other datasets.

FAMILY ADVOCATES NEW DATABASE: DIFFERENCE IN OUTCOMES WITH THE COMPLETE DATABASE

FA and the CASA program went through several iterations of an electronic database. The newest one was implemented in 2013. Given its recent implementation, the number of children in the new database who are now 18 and older is low. For the purpose of the study, the new and previous databases were combined to create the comprehensive dataset utilized for the analysis.

An analysis of the subset of children in the new database is provided. The new database has a total of 227 individuals who are currently over the age of 18; 96 males and 131 females. The results are shown in Table 12

TABLE 12: FA NEW DATABASE INCIDENCE VERSUS GENERAL POPULATION INCIDENCE

	Total	Male	Female
IDOC Database	33	27	6
FA New Database	227	96	131
Percentage	14.5%	28.1%	4.6%
Percentage General Population	4.0%	6.0%	2.0%
Ratio	3.6	4.7	2.3

The results indicate that males in this cohort have much higher incidence of occurrence with the IDOC database as compared with the entire FA dataset. The rate is slightly lower for females. Although the smaller population size has an effect on the results, the results are statistically significant and their general trends confirm the main findings of this study: former foster youth have a higher incidence rate with the Idaho criminal corrections system than the general population.

CONCLUSION

This study took the first initial step in examining the long-term outcomes of foster care in Idaho. The report specifically examined the question, “Do former foster youth served by Family Advocates have a higher propensity to interact with Idaho Department of Corrections than the general population?”

Three main findings were presented:

1. Former foster children and youth in the study are 2.2 times more likely to have interacted with IDOC than the general population.
2. The ratio for males is 2.2 times that of the general population and for females it is 2.6 times.
3. As former foster youth age, incidence increases.

Outcomes for children who were not served by the FA CASA program are unknown. However, future access to the dataset of all children removed from their families and placed into foster care would allow for a more comprehensive analysis. Ideally an analysis would examine all judicial districts and all CASA programs in Idaho. Accessing this data would also allow for a comparison of the two groups of former foster youth and could provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CASA program. In addition, accessing data on vital statistics, education, homelessness and misdemeanors would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of foster youth in the state.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Williams, C., & Sepulveda, K. (2018). In 2017, the rate of children in foster care rose in 39 states. *Child Trends*. <https://www.childtrends.org/2017-the-number-of-children-in-foster-care-rose-in-39-states>
- 2 Rebbe, R., Nurius, P. S., Ahrens, K. R., & Courtney, M. E. (2017). Adverse childhood experiences among youth aging out of foster care: A latent class analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 74, 108-116.
- 3 Doyle, J. (2008). Child Protection and Adult Crime: Using Investigator Assignment to Estimate Causal Effects of Foster Care. *Journal of Political Economy*, 116(4), 646-770.
- 4 Family Advocates. (2019). Court Appointed Special Advocates assigned youth 2002-2019 [Data file]. Available from Family Advocates: <https://www.familyadvocates.org/>
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- 5 Family Advocates. (2019). Court Appointed Special Advocates assigned youth 2002-2019 [Data file]. Available from Family Advocates: <https://www.familyadvocates.org/>
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- 6 Williams, C. & Sepulveda, K. (2018). In 2017, the rate of children in foster care rose in 39 states. *Child Trends*. <https://www.childtrends.org/2017-the-number-of-children-in-foster-care-rose-in-39-states>
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- 7 The History of CASA/GAL System. <https://casaforchildren.org/about-us/history/>
- 8 All values that are presented as statistically significant are so at the 0.01% level, implying that the results are strong and likely not due to chance.

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