

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.goerie.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back to the article](#)

Article published Sep 15, 2008

Percentage of black children in foster care alarming

By [Ed Palattella](#)

ed.palattella@timesnews.com

The figure for black foster children is glaring, for both the nonprofit Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children and the Erie County Office of Children and Youth.

"Erie County places a disproportionate number of African-American children into foster care," the Pennsylvania Partnerships said in releasing its new statewide report on foster care. "While African-American children comprise only 9 percent of the county's child population, 41 percent of the children in foster care are African-American."

Statewide, according to the study, black children make up 15.8 percent of the population, and 47.2 percent of the children in foster care are African-American.

The Pennsylvania Partnerships did not offer reasons for the high rate in Erie County. The group's president and chief executive, Joan Benso. She said Erie County would be in a better position to examine detailed data to "double-check to make sure there isn't anything inadvertently driving a higher level of placement" for black children.

The head of OCY said she is already planning to undertake such an examination. Mary Ann Daniels said the figures in the Pennsylvania Partnerships report surprised her, and she said such factors as child poverty and demographics could influence the relatively high placement rate for black children. "That is absolutely something we are going to look at it," Daniels said.

Daniels, who took over at OCY at the start of the year, said she has not seen a bias at OCY regarding placing black children in foster care. But she said a thorough review of cases and data should yield explanations for the findings of the Pennsylvania Partnerships report.

"It bears a lot more study," Daniels said.

ED PALATTELLA can be reached at 870-1813 or by e-mail.

A glance at foster care in Pennsylvania

*Number of children in foster care:

Statewide -- 19,956

Erie County -- 652

Crawford County -- 181

Allegheny County -- 2,389

Philadelphia County -- 6,570

* Percentage of foster children placed with relatives:

Statewide -- 21.7 percent

Erie County -- 37 percent

Crawford County -- 17.7 percent

Allegheny County -- 39.1 percent

Philadelphia County -- 25.1 percent

*Percentage of children in foster care who are black children:

Statewide -- 47.2 percent; overall percentage of black children to all children statewide: 15.8

Erie County -- 41 percent; percentage of black children to all children in county: 8.9

Crawford County -- 9.9 percent; 1.5 percent

Allegheny County -- 68.1 percent; 17.4 percent

Philadelphia County -- 73.8 percent; 50.2 percent

**Median length of stay for children in foster care:

Statewide -- 16 months

Erie County -- 15 months

Crawford County -- 16 months

Allegheny County -- 20 months

Philadelphia County -- 15 months

***Percentage of foster children reunited with their families but returned to foster care within a year:

Statewide -- 28.6 percent

Erie County -- 20.6 percent

Crawford County -- 32.4 percent

Allegheny County -- 27.2 percent

Philadelphia County -- 43.1 percent

*March 2008

**Oct. 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008

***April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008

Source: Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

For more information on the Pennsylvania Partnerships study on foster care, go to papartnerships.org/porchlight.
