

Children's Administration Caseload Forecasts Year in Review

FISCAL YEAR 2008: JULY 2007 THROUGH JUNE 2008



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CA FORECAST MODEL

SCOPE

The Children's Administration caseload forecast includes the "Total Unduplicated Foster Care" (TUFC)¹ caseload and the "Adoption Support Maintenance Payment" (ASMP) caseload. The TUFC caseload includes all foster care placements in state licensed family foster homes, receiving homes and group care. The TUFC caseload consists of children who have been removed from the home due to allegations of abuse or neglect pending resolution of complaint or a permanent out-of-home placement. The monthly ASMP caseload includes all adopted children for whom the state has paid an adoption support maintenance payment. The ASMP caseload includes difficult to place special needs children.

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION CASELOAD COMPONENTS

The Caseload Forecast Council develops two official caseload forecasts: Total Unduplicated Foster Care (TUFC) and Adoption Support Maintenance Payments (ASMP).

TOTAL UNDUPLICATED FOSTER CARE (TUFC)

The **Total Unduplicated Foster Care** caseload is the unduplicated count of children in licensed foster care. It does not include children placed with relatives in unlicensed foster care.

The licensed **Foster Care** program provides services to children who need temporary out-of-home placement due to child abuse, neglect or family conflict. Licensed foster care caregivers receive reimbursement under any of three budget categories: family foster homes, receiving homes, or behavioral rehabilitative services.

Historically, these budget categories corresponded to three types of placement: family foster homes, receiving homes, and group homes. Receiving homes provided short term emergency placements, typically followed, if necessary, by longer term placement in foster homes. Children with special medical needs or who required more structure were placed in group homes. Over time, these distinctions have blurred with a decline in specialized receiving homes, foster family homes providing emergency short term placements, and children in family foster homes requiring additional services receiving those services paid for from the BRS/GC budget.

In November 2005, recognizing that children may sometimes receive services under more than one (or all) of these categories in a single month, the Caseload Forecast Council moved to combine the three separate forecasts into a single unduplicated "foster care" forecast. The council staff continues to develop unofficial projections of the individual components in addition to the TUFC forecast.

¹ The "foster care" caseload excludes youths who have been placed in unlicensed foster home placements. These placements with extended family members are termed "kinship care" or "relative" placements. Children in unlicensed placements are still eligible for state financial assistance for clothing, counseling, care-giver respite care, and medical assistance. Foster parents in unlicensed homes do not receive a monthly state maintenance payment. Children in unlicensed placements are eligible for state Temporary Assistance to Families in Need (TANF) "Child Only" monthly financial grants, although these are typically about 75 percent of the maintenance payment for licensed foster care. Children in unlicensed placements continue to be supervised by state caseworkers and are subject to a required home visit every 30 days.

ADOPTION SUPPORT MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS (ASMP)

The **Adoption Support Maintenance Payment** caseload is a count of all children whose foster parents are currently receiving Adoption Support program payments. The **Adoption Support Maintenance Payment** program encourages adoption of children from DSHS foster care who, because of age, race, physical condition or emotional health, would not otherwise be placed for adoption. To be eligible for the program, the child must be under 18 years of age, in foster or group care placement, and considered hard to place. Payments include a monthly stipend and may include additional support for child care, respite, counseling, and incidentals.

FORECAST MODEL

The TUFC and ASMP caseloads are both forecast using exponential smoothing time series forecast models. The generic forecast model is presented below. The TUFC/ASMP caseload data is available by month of payment and is generated from state payment data. These data are updated monthly with previously reported counts. The “lag” in foster care payments is relatively short with almost all payments submitted and paid within 3 months of service. The "raw" monthly counts are "lag adjusted" based on the historical pattern of lags in submission of payment invoices.

The TUFC/ASMP forecast is a three step process involving the lag adjustment of reported caseload data and the development of a time series forecast of future caseload (Figure 1). The first step is to adjust the reported caseload data for the lag in reporting of payments. This step uses historical data to estimate the average lag in reporting payments and adjusts the most recent monthly data for an expected under counting of (eventual) payments. The second step involves the development of an initial "primary trend" time series forecast model. As part of this step, any policy related (estimated) impacts are extracted from the data series so that the initial time series forecast represents a forecast of the “primary trend” in the data, absent the historical impact of any recent policy changes. Finally, in third step of the process, the estimated impact of policy changes are added back into the forecast so that the final caseload forecast represents an updated primary trend forecast incorporating anticipated future impacts of recent policy changes.

Foster Care / Adoption Support Forecast Process

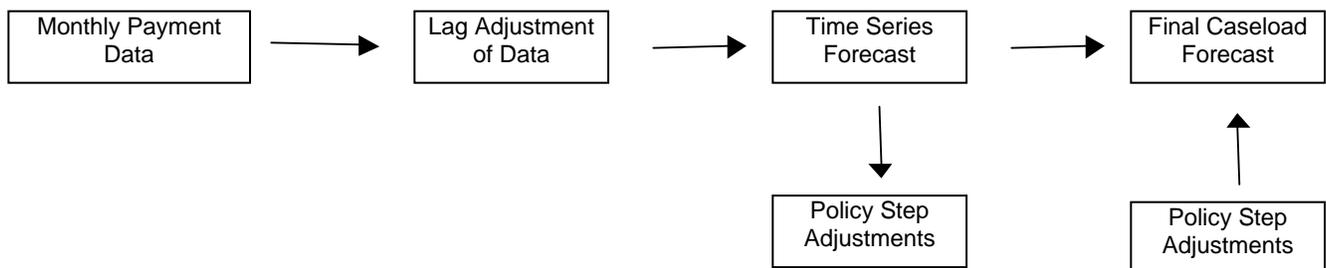


Figure 1. CA Forecast Model

NOVEMBER 2008 CASELOAD FORECAST

Both the TUFC and ASMP forecasts were revised in the November 2008 forecast cycle. Table 1 presents the actual and forecasted caseloads.

Table 1 Children's Administration Caseload Forecast Tracking: Nov 2008 CFC Forecast Tracking

Month/Year	Actual (Lagged)	Nov 08 w/Steps w/Adoption			Month/Year	Actual (Lagged)	Nov 2008 FC w/Adoption				
		Backlog	Step	FC			Backlog	Step	FC	Var	%Var
Jul-07	7,852				Jul-07	10,947					
Aug-07	7,913				Aug-07	10,887					
Sep-07	7,919				Sep-07	10,949					
Oct-07	7,942				Oct-07	11,050					
Nov-07	7,936				Nov-07	11,083					
Dec-07	7,831				Dec-07	11,238					
Jan-08	7,693				Jan-08	11,352					
Feb-08	7,766				Feb-08	11,392					
Mar-08	7,762				Mar-08	11,423					
Apr-08	7,722				Apr-08	11,522					
May-08	7,854				May-08	11,575					
Jun-08	7,767				Jun-08	11,624					
Jul-08	7,595	7,654	-59	-0.8%	Jul-08	11,558	11,561	-2	0.0%		
Aug-08	7,548	7,713	-165	-2.2%	Aug-08	11,588	11,591	-3	0.0%		
Sep-08	7,542	7,665	-123	-1.6%	Sep-08	11,651	11,632	19	0.2%		
Oct-08	7,554	7,705	-151	-2.0%	Oct-08	11,739	11,687	53	0.4%		
Nov-08		7,670			Nov-08	11,761	11,755	6	0.0%		
Dec-08		7,652			Dec-08		11,839				
Jan-09		7,612			Jan-09		11,937				
Feb-09		7,619			Feb-09		12,051				
Mar-09		7,669			Mar-09		12,165				
Apr-09		7,612			Apr-09		12,279				
May-09		7,625			May-09		12,392				
Jun-09		7,574			Jun-09		12,506				

The current forecast continues the longer term trends in the two caseloads. The TUFC has been relatively stable for a number of years. The ASMP caseload, in contrast, has been growing over the past seven years.

The charts also show the first four months of tracking for the two forecasts. Actual TUFC caseloads (dashed line) have been under the forecast, while actual ASMP caseloads have been very close to the forecasted level.

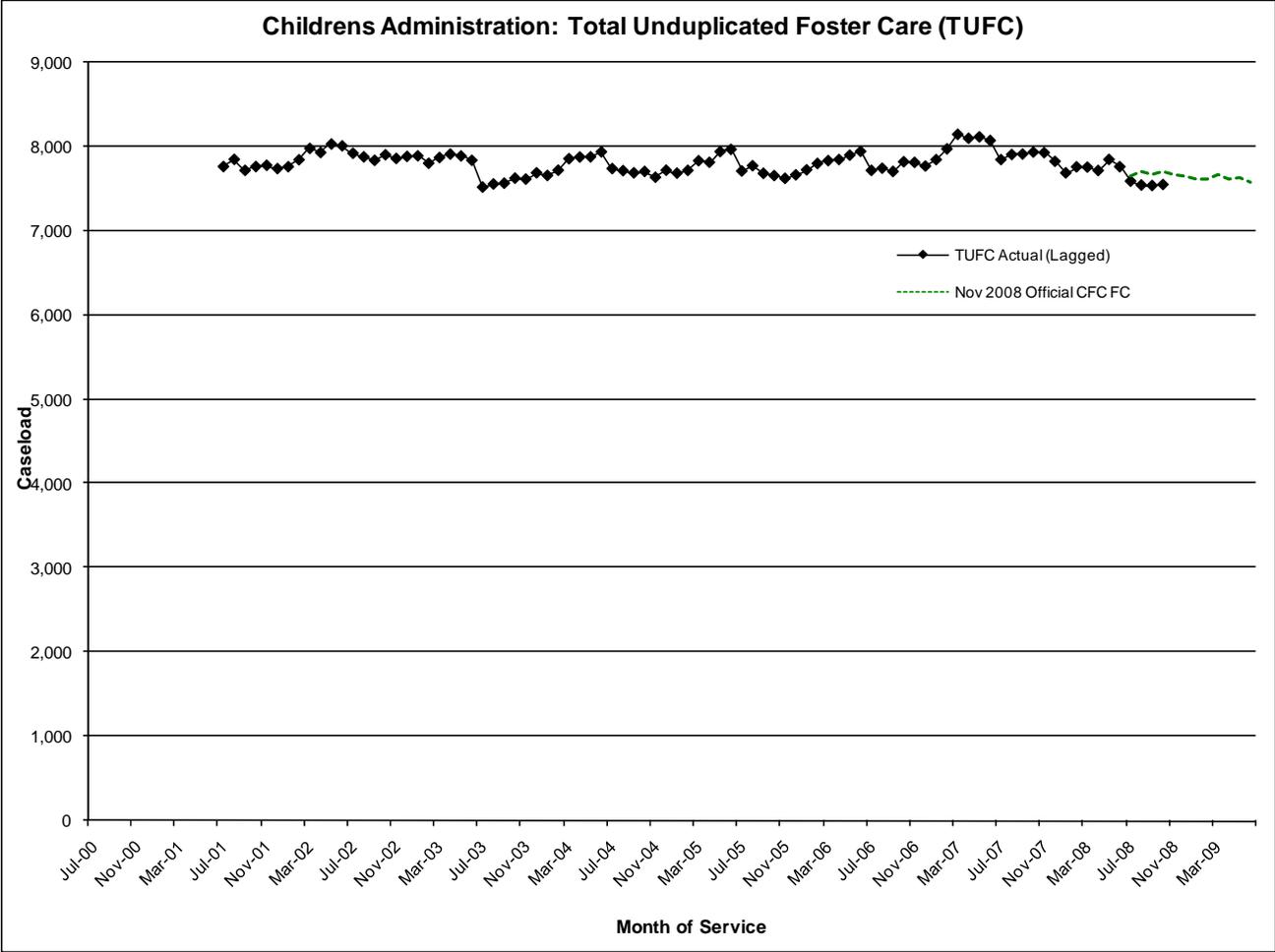


Figure 2. November 2008 TUFC Forecast

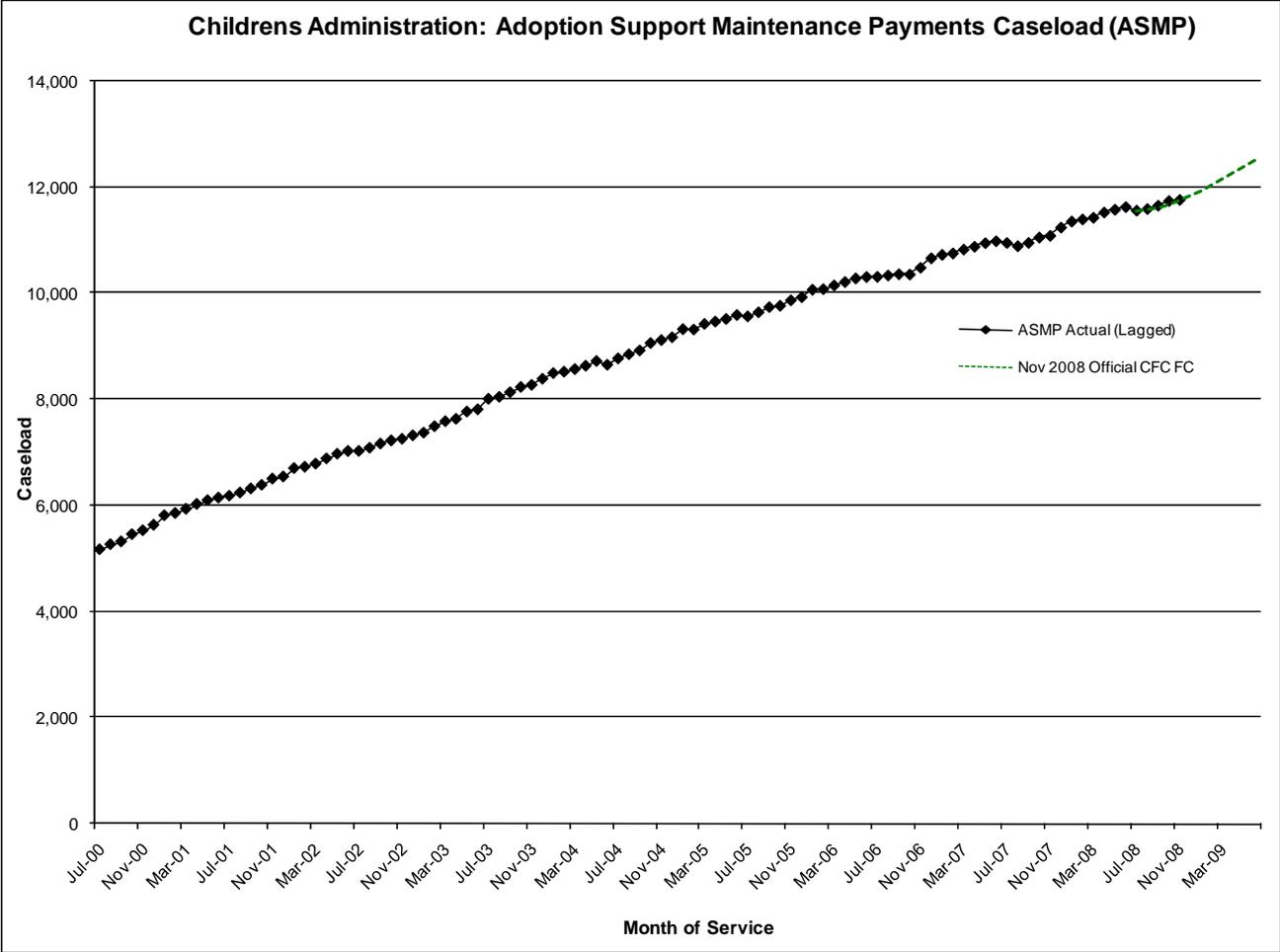


Figure 3. November 2008 ASMP Forecast