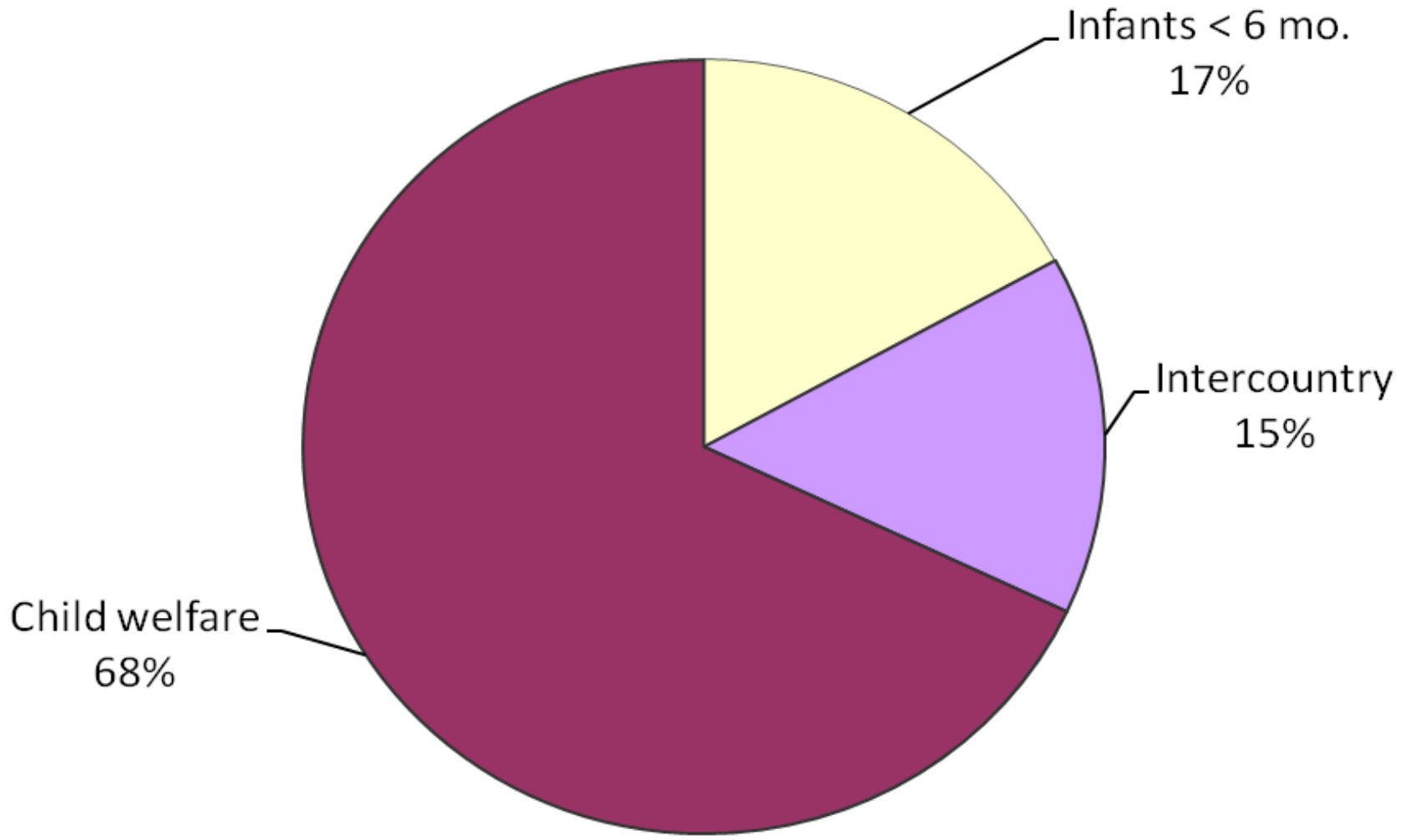


From Understanding to Intervention

Susan Livingston Smith

**Evan B. Donaldson Adoption
Institute**

Current Non-stepparent U.S. Adoptions



Percentage of Children (6-17) Receiving Mental Health Care (Nat'l. Survey of Adoptive Parents)

46% Foster care adoptions (57% over 12)

33% Private domestic adoptions

35% International adoptions

10% General population
(National Survey of Children's Health)

Consider Intersecting Physiological & Socioemotional Tasks of Adolescence

- Maladaptive physiology from deprivation/trauma
- Puberty; hormonal shifts
- Trauma resolution: search for meaning
- Cognitive advances: formal operations
- Complex identity challenges/adoption & racial ID
- Heightened need for peer approval > stress/
anxiety
- Individuation from family

Trauma Resolution:

Integration of Experiences & Search for Meaning

- ❖ Physiological & psychological adaptations to trauma
- ❖ Puberty > resurfacing of trauma

Study of children treated in IL Adoption Preservation Program

PTSD Symptoms: most common at age 12 (59%); reported for 35% of all other children

Most common for SA children, followed by PA children

Also for some adopted at older ages from institutions

(Smith, Howard, & Monroe, 2000)

Adoptive parents need special knowledge, skills, & support to address challenges: Pre & Post-Adoption Services

- **Understand child in light of history**
- **Realistic expectations**
- **Prepared to expect challenges & to know where & when to seek help**
- **Ability to empathize with child/see strengths**
- **Parent self-care & management of own reactions in interactions with child**
- **Therapeutic parenting skills**
- **Reframe help-seeking as a strength**

New Resources for Treatment

Supporting “felt safety”, self-regulation & mastery

- **ARC: Attachment, Self-Regulation & Competency**

Blaustein & Kinniburgh. (2010). *Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents*.

- Karyn Purvis & David Cross, *The Connected Child*

Trust-Based Relational Intervention

Article: Purvis, Cross, Pennings (2009). *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*, 48 (1), 3-22.

<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/new-dvd-trust-based-parenting/>

Empowered to Connect website: <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/guide>