

Estimation Methods to Calculate ORR Discharges and Discharge Rates

Jonathan Beier, Ruben Ortiz, and Kofi Forkuo-Sekyere

Acacia Center for Justice

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Summary

This document describes methods developed by Acacia to generate estimates related to monthly discharges of unaccompanied children from the custody of the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The formulas below can be used to estimate total monthly discharges, monthly discharges that were not unifications with an individual sponsor, and a disaggregation of ORR's published discharge rate that breaks out discharges to individual sponsors and discharges for other reasons.

All calculations described here can be conducted using ORR's public data available at its unaccompanied children data page: <https://acf.gov/orr/about/ucs/facts-and-data>.

Estimation Methods

Total Monthly Discharges

Total monthly discharges are estimated by applying ORR's monthly average discharge rate to the derived number of bed days that month.

Bed days are the total number of days in ORR custody experienced by individual children. For instance, if one child spent two days in custody and another child spent three days in custody, they collectively experienced five bed days. Bed days are derived from the average number of children in care for a given month — published monthly by ORR — and the number of days in that month.

The average discharge rate is published monthly by ORR. The average monthly discharge rate is a percentage reflecting the total number of children discharged for any reason on a given day, divided by the number of children in ORR custody on that day, averaged over the prior 30 days.

The estimation method for total monthly discharges is approximate because ORR's reported discharge rates are provided to one decimal place and calculated over a fixed period of 30 days.

total bed days = avg children in care for a given month × days in that month

$$\text{total monthly discharges} = \left(\frac{\text{avg discharge rate}}{100} \right) \times \text{total bed days}$$

Discharges for Reasons Other Than to Individual Sponsors

When unaccompanied children are discharged from ORR custody but not unified with an individual sponsor, they may be discharged via one of several pathways. These pathways include but are not limited to age-outs from ORR custody; deportations; voluntary departures; immigration relief; run-aways; and discharges to Unaccompanied Refugee Minor programs, law enforcement, or ICE.

In the formula below, counts of discharges to individual sponsors use official ORR data, taken from monthly counts of releases to individual sponsors published online. Counts of discharges for other reasons are calculated as the difference between total estimated discharges and discharges to sponsors.

$$\text{discharges for other reasons} = \text{total monthly discharges} - \text{discharges to sponsors}$$

Monthly Average Discharge Rates

Monthly average discharge rates are calculated by dividing the number of monthly discharges for each group by the total number of bed days experienced by children in ORR custody that month. This can be done separately for discharges to sponsors and discharges for other reasons; in each version, the value for the total bed days that month is the same.

$$\text{discharge rate} = \left(\frac{\text{total monthly discharges}}{\text{total bed days}} \right) \times 100$$

Example Calculation

The following example illustrates the estimation methods outlined above, using publicly available data for August 2025, drawn from ORR's unaccompanied children data page. The only sourced data point not taken from ORR's monthly public data is the total days in the month of August, which can be easily referenced from a calendar.

The data needed to use the estimations methods, with values indicated for August 2025, are as follows:

- From ORR's "Average Monthly Data" table
 - Average Number of Children in Care: 2,011
 - 30-Day Average UAC Discharge Rate: 0.7
- From ORR's "Released to Sponsors" table
 - Total Monthly Discharges to Individual Sponsors: 165
- Days in Month (August): 31

Step 1: Estimate Total Monthly Discharges¹

$$\text{total bed days} = 2,011 \times 31$$

$$\text{total bed days} = 62,341$$

$$\text{total monthly discharges} = \left(\frac{0.7}{100} \right) \times 62,341$$

$$\text{total monthly discharges} = 436$$

Step 2: Estimate Discharges for Other Reasons

$$\text{discharges for other reasons} = 436 - 165$$

$$\text{discharges for other reasons} = 271$$

Step 3: Calculate Monthly Discharge Rates

$$\text{discharge rate (individual sponsors)} = \left(\frac{165}{62,341} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{discharge rate (individual sponsors)} = 0.3$$

$$\text{discharge rate (other reasons)} = \left(\frac{271}{62,341} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{discharge rate (other reasons)} = 0.4$$

¹ For this example, individual children counts are rounded to the nearest whole number and percentages/rates are rounded to one decimal place. When using these formulas, the fractional part of an estimated number should be carried forward in calculations.