

Sending an SOS: Advocating for Change



**MARY BISSELL, JD
PARTNER, CHILD FOCUS**

**MELISSA TANGUAY LANEY, JD
SOLICITOR, ADAMS COUNTY CHILDREN & YOUTH
SERVICES**

**KIRSTEN JOHNSON, MSW, LSW
CLINICIAN, HEMPFIELD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

foster parenting

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FosterSTRONG: A Campaign to Transform Foster Parenting

EVERY KID NEEDS A FAMILY

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



Every Kid Needs a Family



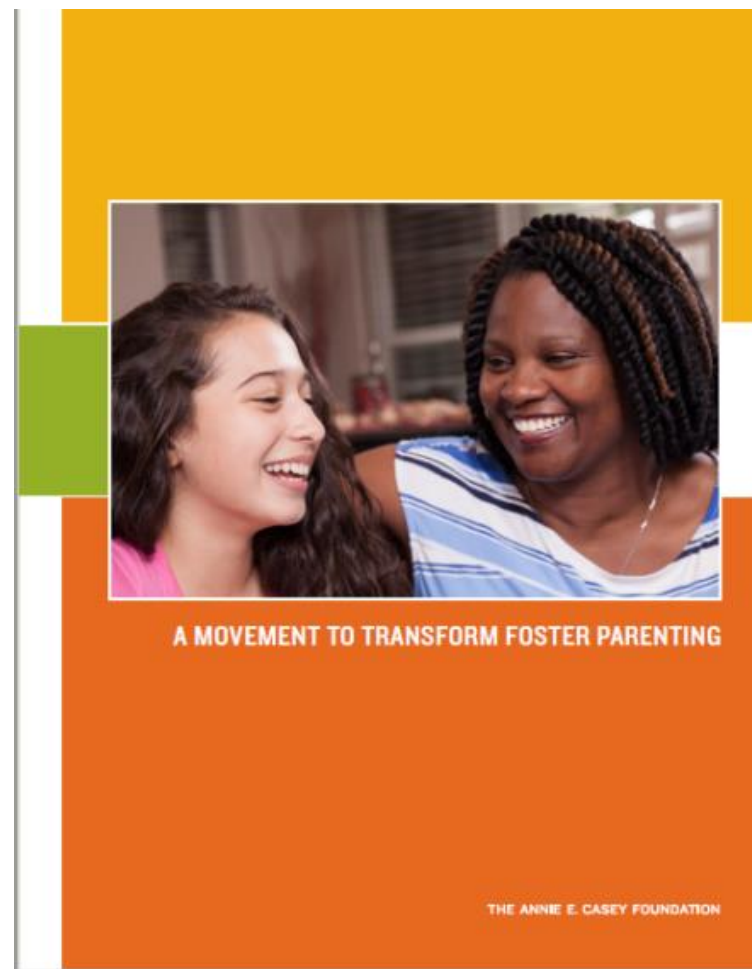
- Keep children in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate
- If children must be placed outside their own home, find and support kin to care for them
- When kin are not an option, engage and support non-kin foster parents as caregivers
- Thoroughly review recommendations to place children in non-family settings
- When children must be placed in non-family settings, ensure high-quality residential treatment that adequately meets their needs

A Campaign to Improve Supports, Change Attitudes

*Foster parents
are the child welfare system's
primary intervention
for children removed from home*

A Movement to Transform Foster Parenting:

- Ensure quality caregiving for children
- Forge strong relationships
- Find, retain more amazing caregivers



Reinventing the Child Welfare Agency's Relationship with Foster Parents

- Foster parents are **ordinary people who do extraordinary things for children and families in crisis.**
- With a deep capacity to care and the commitment to stick with the child in difficult circumstances, these **caregivers provide havens for children to begin healing from trauma with the goal of eventually returning home to their families.**
- When appropriately trained and properly supported, **foster parents-both kin and non-relative caregivers are critical partners in a child-centered foster care system.**

Three Strategies to Engage and Empower Foster Parents for Better Child Outcomes

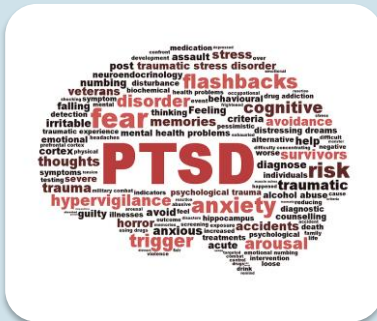


1. Ensure Quality Caregiving for Children

- Deliver a robust training and education program
- Develop a strong network of support for foster parents
- Ensure adequate financial and other resources



Promising Approaches



Trauma-informed Parenting



The Quality Parenting Initiative



Mockingbird Family Model



A Second Chance Skill-Building Curricula

2. Force Strong Relationships with Foster Families



- Engage foster parents as full and respected partners in child-centered decision making
- Expand the foster parent voice and improve agency policies and practices
- Promote the agency-foster parent partnership with internal and external partners

3. Find and Keep More Amazing Foster Parents

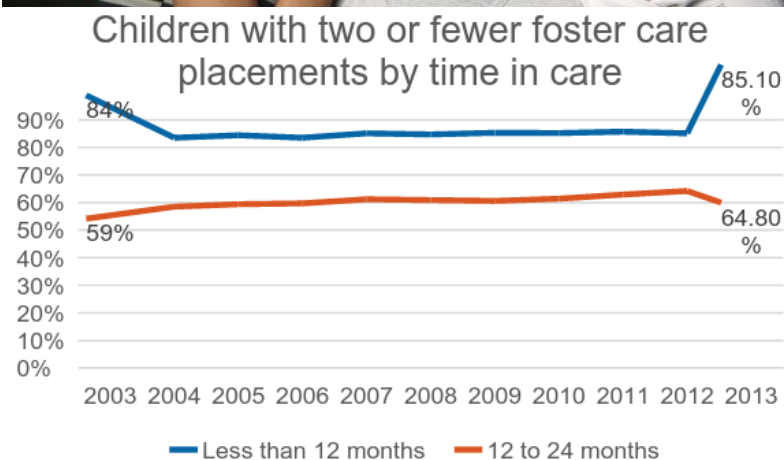
- Have a better understanding of the need of children in foster care
- Create more accurate foster parent inventories
- Use child-specific recruitment efforts
- Conduct targeted recruitment for foster parents to work with specialized populations
- Partner with faith-communities
- Invest in technological solutions for recruitment and marketing

Foster parents can be absolute game-changers in children's lives. Amazing foster parents are out there, and if we can help share their challenges and triumphs, we can really do something special here.

Jeremy Kohomban
President and CEO
The Children's

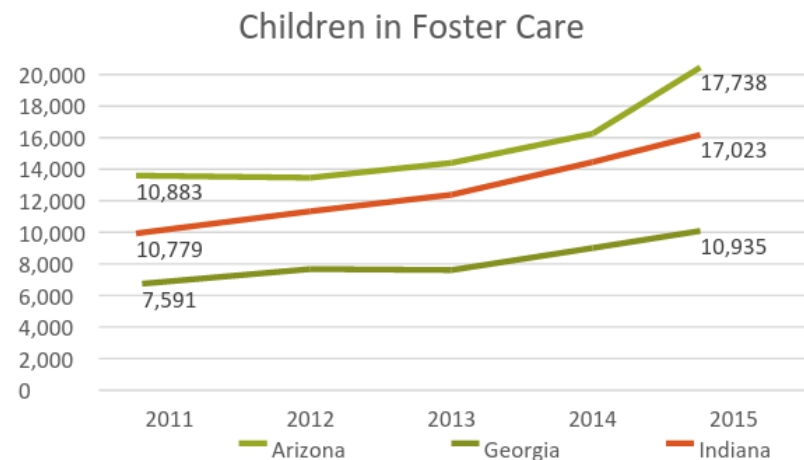
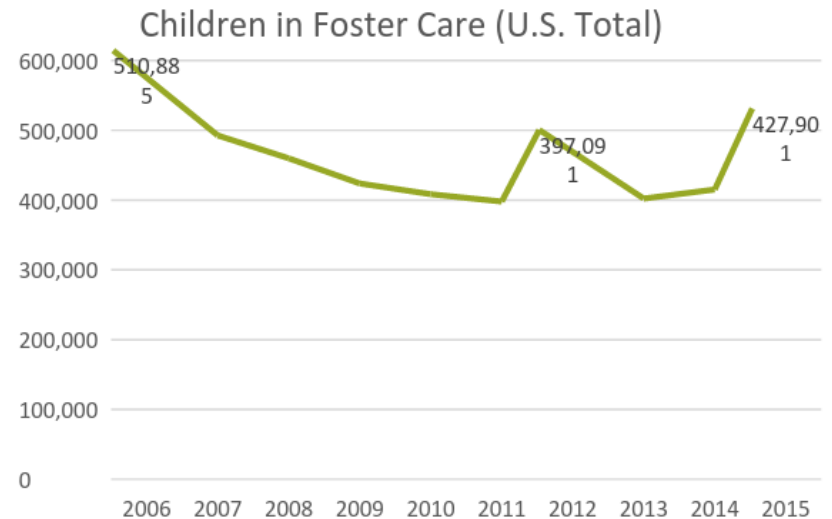
Stability, Support and Supply of Foster Parents

- Limited progress in improving stability – children need not just families, but stable homes with well-supported foster parents
- Limited information on the quality of foster parents
 - Youth in care report positive relationships with foster parents
 - Agencies are not even using many of the foster parents they license: 20% of foster parents care for 60% to 80% of children



Challenge: Increased Demand for Foster Parents

- Opioid Crisis
- Youth diverted from juvenile justice
- Shifts away from the use of group placements
- Litigation that requires states to improve foster parents capacity



Challenge: Shortage of Foster Parents

- Agencies are having a more difficult time recruiting foster parents
- Complexity, intrusiveness and lack of consumer focus in licensing process leading to prospective parents dropping out



FOSTERING HOPE: THE ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE CRISIS IN NORTH CAROLINA



Governor Susana Martinez: Foster Care System Needs More Native American Foster Families

The Anniston Star

TOP STORY

'A critical need'

With fewer local foster parents, Calhoun County DHR sending children out of county

By Zach Tyler, Star Staff Writer, zt Tyler@annistonstar.com Feb 11, 2017 • (6)

Idaho Statesman

Report: Idaho's foster care parents are in short supply, caseloads high

Challenge: Many Foster Families Leave Discouraged

- Half to two-thirds quit caregiving within 12 months of receiving first child
- Foster parents are often willing but feel ill-equipped to deal with a child's behavior or needs
- Impact of disruptions, is often devastating:
 - Negatively affects children's well-being
 - Increases the likelihood that they will be placed in group settings
 - Increases the length of time children spend in foster care
 - Decreases the likelihood of permanency



Challenge: Negative public (and agency) perceptions

- Poll: “Why do you think people become foster parents?”
 - 42% out of concern for children
 - 29% for financial payments
 - 24% both equally
- Data did not vary based on level of familiarity with the child welfare system
- Those reporting negative impressions of the child welfare system most frequently cited “some parents are in it for the money/don’t care for kids” and that systems “should screen foster parents better”



Former foster parents arrested, accused of abusing children



Foster parents facing child abuse charges



Foster parents accused of sexually abusing children had previous neglect reports

Lawsuit Claims "Kids for Cash" Foster Care Abuse



Challenge: Information Gaps

- No readily accessible data on how many foster parents are licensed, trained and available
- Little data to inform decision makers on **how many foster parents are needed, where, for which children** at a given time
- Limited information to inform quality fit between kids and



Meeting the Challenges: Evidence Demonstrates that Success is Possible

- Evidence that there are enough families willing to care for children in foster care if adequately supported
- Evidence that systems can implement reforms that will bring in needed families
- Evidence-based models for enhancing skills of caregivers
- Evidence that making the shift is not only affordable, it's cost-effective



Achieving Transformational Change



- Practice tools
- Evidence-based training models
- System infrastructure
- Leadership development to support culture change (QPI)

- Resources and support
- Agency infrastructure and accountability
- Foster parent rights

Quality caregiving for children
Enhance foster parents' skills and provide needed supports

Stronger agency relationships with foster parents
Treat foster parents as partners

Sufficient numbers of amazing caregivers
Invest in effective recruitment and retention approaches

Success Story: Oklahoma

Practice Improvements

- Used Foster Home Calculator to determine foster parent needs based on geography, age, gender, race of youth entering care
- Conducted more than 25 staff training sessions
- Coordinated outreach to improve agency relationships with Native American, African American and Latino communities
- Streamlined the approval process for prospective foster parents
- Redesigned agency structure and personnel allocation to meet recruitment needs
- Provided leadership development to change culture of agency towards foster parents
- Provided coaching and technical assistance on contract monitoring of providers

Policy Reform

Legislation introduced to:

- Enhance foster parents rights to attend family team meetings and court hearings
- Limit liability of foster parents
- Require agency to maintain census of foster parents, develop targeted recruitment plans, and report new data

2,000
new foster parents
over two years

Campaign Goals and Performance Measures

Build constituency network and advocacy capacity

A broad-based coalition is formed to support quality foster parenting with the skills and knowledge to effectively advocate for change

Reform State policies

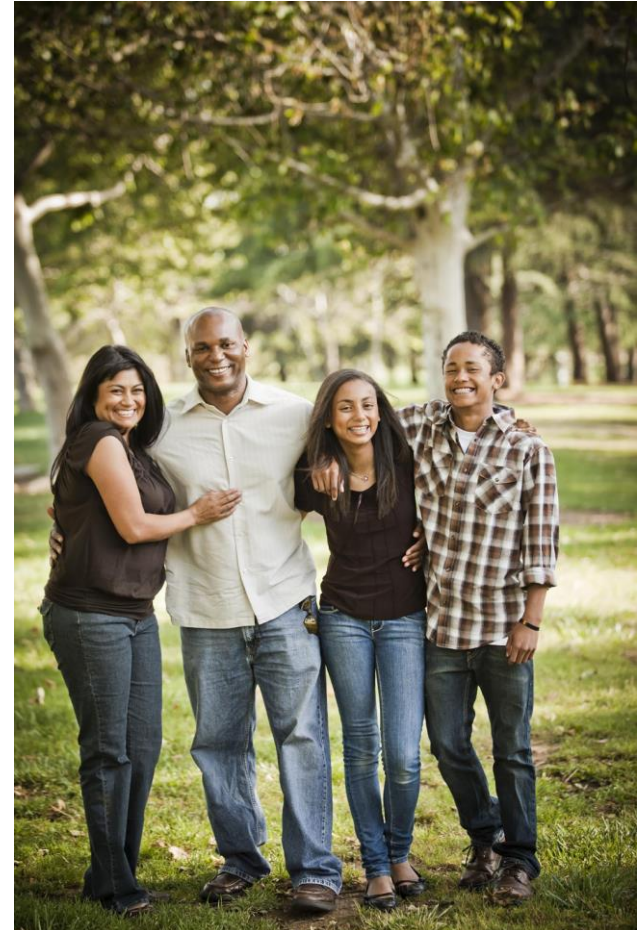
20-25 states reform statutes, administrative codes and regulations to better support, engage, recruit and retain foster parents

Reform Federal policies

Congress provides new fiscal incentives and creates state accountability measures to ensure sufficient numbers of quality foster parents

Alter foster parent “narrative”

Polling and agency survey data show more positive attitudes towards foster parents



Practice Changes in Action

*Foster parents
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primary intervention
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SOS Project

(Securing our Stability)

Adams County PA



Let's Get Perspective...



<https://vimeo.com/100518405>

SOS Project

- Program Vision
 - Improve the quality of resource family care
 - Stabilize foster placements & adoptions by building adult capacity, thus improving child well-being
- Population Served
 - All foster families caring for a child in the care & custody of Adams County CYS
 - Post permanency families at risk for adoption disruptions in Adams County
- Method
 - Clinical coaching – in home and community



SOS Project

- Assumptions

- Children grow in the context of relationships & families
 - Resiliency research, ACES, Family Finding, Fostering Connections
- Children in foster placements have increased probabilities of demonstrating traumatic stress responses, emotional dysregulation, & externalizing/internalizing behavior problems
- Children's treatment needs are largely relational, not individual
- Foster parenting is inherently stressful and challenging - to acknowledge this does not reflect on the quality of the foster parent
- Training alone does not sufficiently prepare caregivers

SOS Project

- Enhance protective factors
 - Positive family relationships
 - Supportive family environment
 - Marital harmony
 - Natural support network
 - Commitment to permanency
 - Problem solving skills



SOS Project

- Decrease risk factors
 - Child characteristics
 - Poor parent child interactions
 - Family discord
 - Unrealistic expectations
 - System stressors



QUALITATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Parental Resilience

- “Preserving permanence”
- “Without the service wouldn’t still be working towards permanency”
- “Help with our concerns, provide honest feedback, learning to accept that current functioning may be the best it will ever be”
- “Helped me work through confidence issues”
- “Feeling understood”
- “Not feeling so stressed out” “more relaxed and more grounded”

Parenting Knowledge

- “Provide skills and advocacy to navigate the system”
- “Assisting in setting rules and boundaries with all children in the home”
- “Understanding behaviors and how to manage”
- “Learn parenting skills”



QUALITATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Social Support

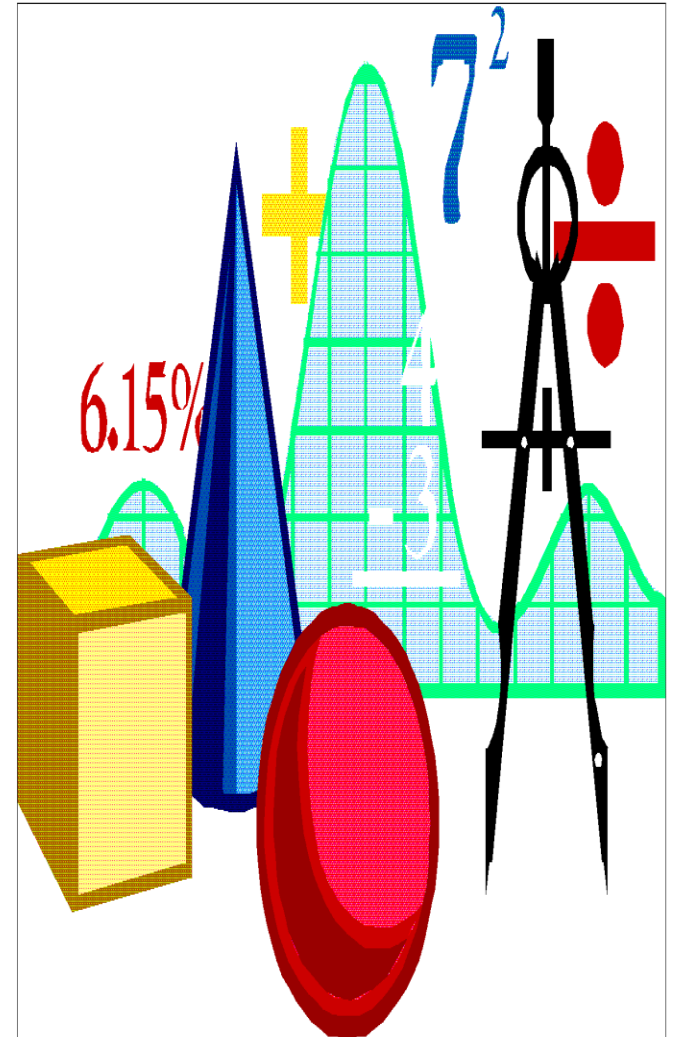
- “Strengthen the family”
- “Maintain relationships [with people the child is no longer living with]”

Social/Emotional Competence of Children

- “Helping children to process grief, loss and feelings”
- “Helped child find their voice”
- “Helped child develop coping skills”
- “Develop strategies to reduce child stress”

QUANTITATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Assessment measures
 - Parenting Stress Index
 - Family Advocacy & Support Tool (FAST)
 - Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths
- Of families participating in the project, 8% have experienced a disruption
 - Others have achieved reunification, adoption, or are committed to fostering until TPR occurs



QUANTITATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Parental knowledge & competence scores improve over time
- Parental emotional response & social support scores deteriorate over time
- Children show improvement in moodiness, impulsivity, opposition, and anger

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

- 2012 – New Agency Administrator
 - Emphasis on best practice
 - Collaboration, communication, and transparency as Agency values
- 2014 – New Agency Solicitor – In-house
 - Legal consultation around daily practice – not only court preparation
 - Focus on compliance with current laws and regulations
- 2014 – Team Case Conferencing at the Agency
 - Multidisciplinary approach
 - Monthly review – accountability
- 2015 – S.O.S. Program
 - Emphasis on connections and relationships
 - Clinical voice to the table regarding child well-being

DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS



CONTACT US

- Kirsten Johnson, MSW, LSW
 - kjohnsonhbh@gmail.com
 - 717-476-7550
- Melissa Tanguay Laney, JD
 - mtanguay@adamscounty.us
 - 717-337-5802
- Mary Bissell, JD
 - 240-461-5990
 - mary@childfocuspartners.com