



SUPPORTING LIFELONG FAMILIES

Steps child welfare agencies can take to prevent children from re-entering foster care

Nearly one in five children in foster care has been in care before. Each time a child comes in or out of care, families are fractured and re-fractured. Stable, nurturing families can bolster their resilience and lessen negative long-term effects — but these protective factors can't be nurtured if children keep re-entering care.

While the number of children in foster care has decreased by nearly 25 percent since 2002, the percentage of children who have re-entered care has remained stable. Nearly 20 percent of children in out-of-home care — that's nearly 80,000 children — have been in care before.

These re-entry numbers show that community conditions and service delivery systems aren't providing the support all children and families need to remain together safely. Services and programs that better support families as they transition out of care could help.

We know that most children in foster care have physical, emotional, or behavioral challenges that can create significant ongoing concerns. These challenges often result from the parent's or child's unmet needs, and they require services and supports while the child is in care and after he or she leaves the system.



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INCREASE THE FOCUS ON POST-PERMANENCY

- Use an inclusive approach with all stakeholders to get a full range of views on how to design and deliver post-permanency services.
- Discuss staff expectations about families' needs and responses to services.
- Use language that shifts the focus from preventing re-entry to supporting post-permanency.



MAKE THE MOST OF AVAILABLE DATA

- Examine jurisdictional data to better understand who is re-entering care. Look at trends by age, ethnicity, and other variables.
- Take a closer look at the types of assessments and service planning packages that have been used to prepare families for post-permanency. Identify what has been effective in the past, as well as areas that can be strengthened to help inform future cases.
- Identify and emphasize variables that relate both to positive post-permanency (a family variable) and re-entry (a system variable). Post-permanency variables, for example, may include assessing a family's link to community resources and supports and their accessibility to services.

Learn more

To learn more about what is known and what you can do to strengthen post-permanency services, download a copy of our full report, *Supporting Lifelong Families: Ensuring Long-Lasting Permanency and Well-Being*, from [casey.org](https://www.casey.org).

Looking for inspiration?

Programs across the U.S. are providing a range of post-permanency services, including those that focus on basic family resources, safety-focused practices, clinical child supports, caregiver supports and services, support networks, and navigation services. Explore the links below to learn about some of these programs.

- Kinship Navigator Program: dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare
- Homebuilders: institutefamily.org/programs_IFPS.asp
- The Incredible Years: incredibleyears.com
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon (formerly Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers): tfcoregon.com
- Nurturing Parenting Program: nurturingparenting.com
- On the Way Home: cehs.unl.edu/ccfw/way-home/
- Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center: orparc.org
- Shared Family Care: http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/san_francisco_cft_shared_family_care_planning_and_shared_coaching_manual_final_7-7-15.pdf

While it's unlikely that any one program can address all necessary services, they can strive to provide services that meet each child's and family's unique circumstances.

Casey Family Programs

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America. Founded in 1966, we work in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and two territories and with more than a dozen tribal nations to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families and the communities where they live.

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