

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/policy/policy-priorities/child-welfare/>

Campaign and Advocacy

A child is removed from their home and placed into foster care every two minutes. Neglect, often a proxy for the consequences of poverty, is the most common driver of child welfare involvement and, too often, families are broken apart for reasons that could have been prevented if they were supported to overcome poverty, mental illness, and substance use. Children of color, particularly Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children, are dramatically overrepresented in the child welfare system. Of every 1,000 white children in the United States, 5.2 are in foster care, compared with 9.9 of every 1,000 Black children and 16.9 of every 1,000 American Indian/Alaska Native children. Once in foster care, the system too often fails to provide children with stability, moving them between foster homes or placing them unnecessarily in institutional settings instead of with families, and while the majority of children leave foster care to a permanent family, too many age out of foster care without a permanent family. Children left with no permanent family or connection with caring adults have no one to turn to for social, emotional or financial support and face numerous barriers as they struggle to become self-sufficient adults.

All children in America should have a safe start in a permanent nurturing family and community with access to services that help strengthen families and avoid crises.

We work to expand programs that provide resources and services families need to remain strong and stable to help prevent crises that often lead to child maltreatment and involvement with the child welfare system; help ensure children in foster care receive quality care and are connected to caring permanent birth, kin, or adoptive families; promote racial justice within the child welfare system; develop a quality child welfare workforce; and increase accountability. To strengthen families and keep children safe, we must:

Continued reliance on institutional placements puts our nation's children—especially Black children—at risk of lasting harm to their health, development, and well-being. Congress must prioritize effective community-led, family-focused, youth-centered programs to ensure young people have the resources and supports they need to thrive within their families and communities.

Foster youth are on the cusp of a crisis in the middle of a pandemic. If our representatives in Washington D.C. don't act fast, thousands of foster youth will age out of foster care on October 1st, and many more will lose a lifeline to flexible cash assistance that young people like me fought for. We need Congress to pass legislation that extends the protections included in the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act immediately.

With growing research on the harms of institutional placements and continued calls to action from young people who experienced these placements, we must ensure young people impacted by the child welfare system have the resources they need to thrive with their relatives or in a family-like setting.

A gift today helps children get the help they need

The Children's Defense Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our Federal Tax ID number is 52-0895622.

Let us know how you're using this resource



Count me in!

Be a champion for every child. Sign up for updates about our work to fight for children and ways you can help.

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Fight for children, stay informed and know when to act.