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DIRECT SERVICES



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safe children | strong families | supportive communities

Every child can have a safe and permanent family

On any given day in America, more than 400,000 children are living in foster care. More than 20,000 youth “age out” of the foster care system annually, leaving the system without a permanent family connection. But this doesn’t have to be the case.

Casey Family Programs believes that every child can have a safe, supportive and permanent family, and that no youth should exit foster care without the benefits of their support.

We work directly with children and families to help turn this belief into reality. We develop and demonstrate effective, practical solutions to safely reduce the need for foster care, improve well-being, and secure safe and lifelong families for every child in our care. We continually learn from others and share what we have learned with partners to help build supportive communities.

Together with colleagues across our organization, we work to fulfill Casey Family Programs’ mission: To provide and improve — and ultimately prevent the need for — foster care.

Our Child and Family Services team

Casey Family Programs’ Child and Family Services team provides services — including prevention, foster care, family reunification, young adult transition, kinship and permanency work — to 1,100 children and families each year. We operate community-based field offices in five states — Arizona, California, Idaho, Texas and Washington — and work in a mix of urban, suburban and rural communities.

We draw on evidence gained from research-informed and promising practices, as well as our five decades of front-line child welfare experience, to provide a range of multidisciplinary services to children, youth, young adults and families. We work with youth in foster care to find permanent homes and improve their well-being; families with children at risk of entering, or re-entering, the child welfare system; and young adults who transitioned from foster care.

We have particular experience in working with older youth, who tend to experience more barriers to permanency and are at risk of aging out of the foster care system. We help create opportunities for them to reach their full potential with forever families, while also focusing on advancing their educational, employment and emotional well-being.

Our team provides social work and family engagement, family development and education liaison services. All nine of our community-based offices provide clinical case management services. Six offices are also licensed as child-placing agencies, where they provide placement supervision for youth in foster care, including the recruitment, training and supervision of resource families. All of our direct service staff have graduate-level education and child welfare experience. Professional case aides work alongside administrative support staff and field office leadership. The team also includes our Indian Child Welfare and headquarters staff, who work collectively with the front line.

Across these efforts, we develop, evaluate and refine effective, data-driven child welfare practices and policies — and demonstrate what works.

Safe children

To be well, youth must not only be safe, but they must feel safe. We understand the impact of abuse and neglect on youth and families. We apply a trauma-informed approach, including the use of a specialized assessment, the Neuro-Sequential Model of Therapeutics, to inform our work with youth and families.

A primary focus of our work is strengthening physical and psychological safety for children and youth in their own homes. Among the youth we work with, 99 percent do not have an occurrence of maltreatment within six months. From 2013 to 2015, we saw a 32 percent increase in the number of permanencies achieved.

Trauma-informed practice

Trauma is often inherent in the circumstances that involve youth and families in the child welfare system.

In some instances, trauma related to abuse, neglect or loss is severe and has gone unaddressed for significant periods of time. Participation in the system itself can create additional trauma.

We therefore seek to understand and help heal the effects of trauma, engaging caregivers, partners and communities in creating trauma-informed services and supports. We use specialized assessments and individualized services planning. We also support staff in understanding and addressing the impact of secondary trauma.

STORY OF HOPE

Safely reunifying families

When the Roberts* family was referred to Casey Family Programs in 2015, all four children — ages 5, 8, 11 and 13 — were living in foster care with a relative. The oldest girl had run away multiple times and experienced sexual abuse by relatives.

Safety concerns about the father's anger issues, the mother's medical condition and an unsafe adult allowed around the children kept them from being returned to their parents. Casey staff worked with the parents to ensure they had appropriate services and resources to overcome these concerns. Staff supported the parents in better understanding how their behavior affected the children, and they began to make concrete changes. And most importantly, staff pulled together a team of child-serving partners, private providers, Court Appointed Special Advocates and state social work staff, who also worked with the parents and worried about the children returning to them, to identify and address the safety issues.

In just six months, these children were living safely with their parents. The family continues to receive in-home services, and the court has dismissed the case.

**All family names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

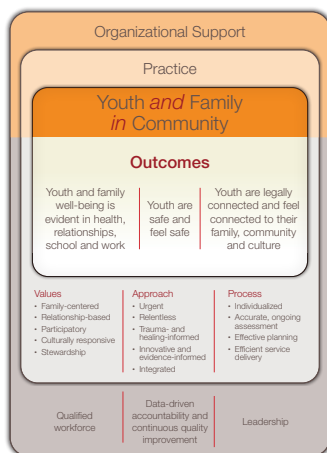


Strong families

Permanency without safety is not acceptable. But safety at the expense of well-being or permanency also is not acceptable. We have set a bold goal for our direct services work: To secure a safe, nurturing and permanent family for every young person in our care, whether through reunification with their birth family, adoption or guardianship.

Through in-home family services, we concentrate supports on preventing children and youth from entering the child welfare system. For children already in foster care, we work urgently and relentlessly to achieve legal and relational permanency. This is accomplished by partnering with families to make their homes safe so youth can be reunited with their parents. If that isn't possible, we work to find them other safe, loving and permanent families through guardianship or adoption. Making a connection or placement with relatives is a priority. We also work with young adults who are transitioning from foster care.

To support these efforts, we use family engagement strategies such as family finding, family group conferencing and other multidisciplinary teaming models with youth, families and jurisdictions. We work alongside public child welfare systems and the courts to accelerate these efforts. Our community-based offices also work with tribal child welfare systems to build their capacity to ensure the well-being of Native American children.



Our practice model, *A Safe and Permanent Family for Every Youth*, is available for download from casey.org.

Our practice model is strongly family-centered. It is also culturally responsive. We recognize that families know their own challenges and needs and know best how to address them. Our values-based approach supports, guides and facilitates the process of change for youth and family. We meet families where they are, and we help them develop their strengths and discover their own solutions.

We use engagement and information-gathering tools to inform a functional assessment, the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). This strategy informs our individualized approach to practice and allows us to design tailored action plans for each child and family we serve. We recognize the role and importance of effective clinical supervision in child welfare, and our field office leaders use a variety of staff support and coaching strategies.

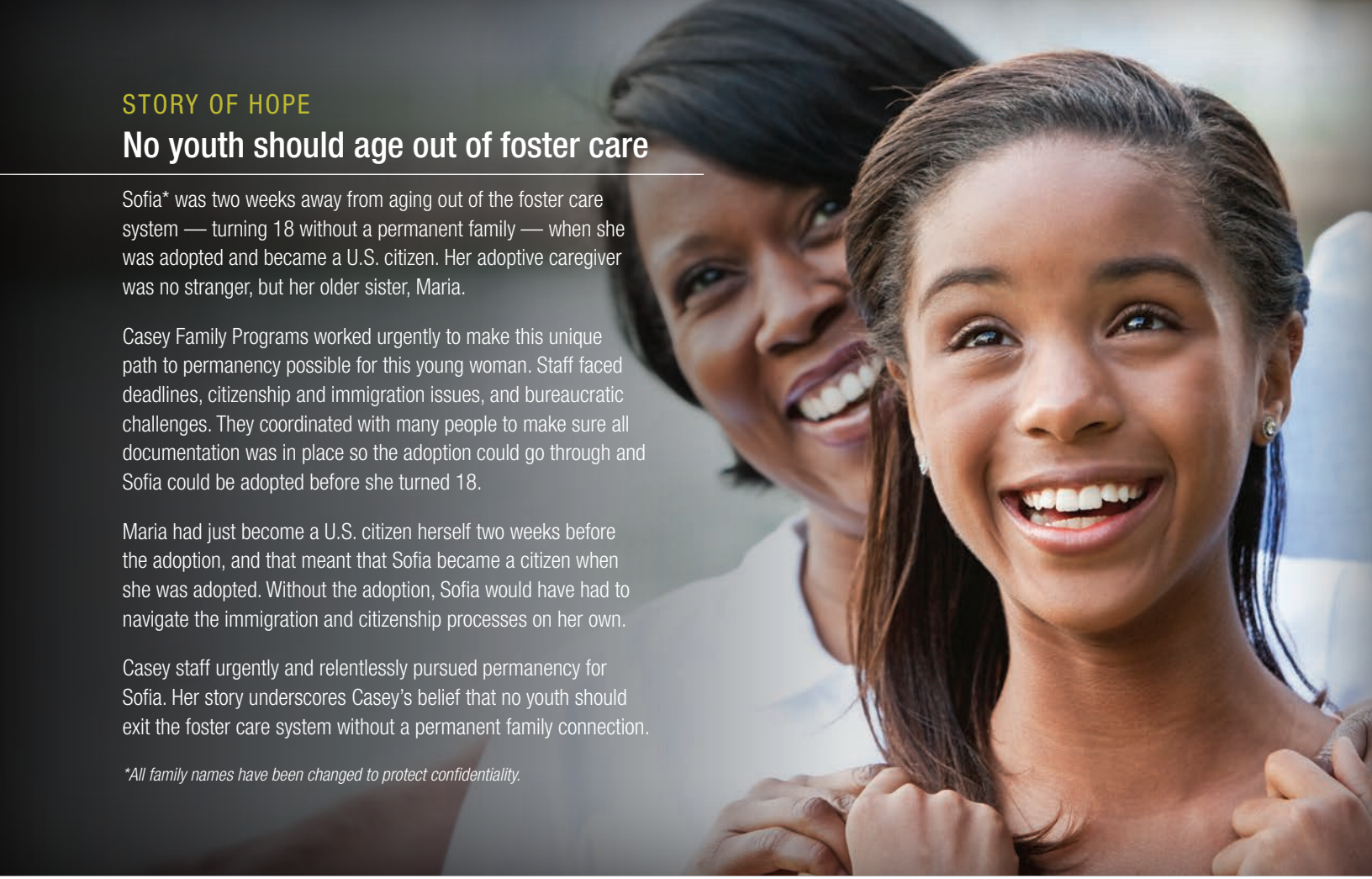
We work to effectively support family well-being by developing protective capacities, nurturing supportive networks and addressing parental challenges related to economic self-sufficiency and overall emotional well-being.

Functional assessments

After extensive review of several functional assessments, our Child and Family Services team developed and implemented Casey Family Programs' version of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool for youth in out-of-home care. We chose the CANS assessment to complement practices already in place while also enhancing the scope of our work with youth and families to include a more intentional focus on trauma and well-being.

CANS is designed as a practice framework for communicating about a shared vision and using information as an integrated story to inform planning, support decisions and monitor outcomes. It provides a common language for multidisciplinary settings for consensus building, and it is action-oriented and focused on both the planning process and outcomes.

We also developed and implemented a version of the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) for in-home youth to support prevention of entry into the foster care system or facilitate reunification.



STORY OF HOPE

No youth should age out of foster care


Sofia* was two weeks away from aging out of the foster care system — turning 18 without a permanent family — when she was adopted and became a U.S. citizen. Her adoptive caregiver was no stranger, but her older sister, Maria.

Casey Family Programs worked urgently to make this unique path to permanency possible for this young woman. Staff faced deadlines, citizenship and immigration issues, and bureaucratic challenges. They coordinated with many people to make sure all documentation was in place so the adoption could go through and Sofia could be adopted before she turned 18.

Maria had just become a U.S. citizen herself two weeks before the adoption, and that meant that Sofia became a citizen when she was adopted. Without the adoption, Sofia would have had to navigate the immigration and citizenship processes on her own.

Casey staff urgently and relentlessly pursued permanency for Sofia. Her story underscores Casey's belief that no youth should exit the foster care system without a permanent family connection.

**All family names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



STORY OF HOPE

Reconnecting families

Michael, Mecayla and Melissa,* ages 11 to 13, were referred to Casey Family Programs in 2015. They had been placed together in foster homes, experienced an unsuccessful adoption and were facing being separated to different foster homes when they re-entered the child welfare system.

Casey staff worked diligently to find extended family for the children. Melissa eventually confided that she was in touch with her mother — whose parental rights had been terminated — through social media, and staff worked to find her. At first, the children's mother was reluctant to partner with Casey. But family members and others met for a family group conference to figure out how to support the mother so she could be reunified with her children. The meeting was a success and, within six months from the referral, the children were successfully reunified with their mother and her family.

Not only was the family reconnected, but members of the children's legal team shifted their perspectives and are now more open to reconsidering such birth family connections in other cases.

**All family names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Supportive communities

Jim Casey recognized the importance of maintaining consistent ties to relatives and communities to support children's healthy development and identity formation. His values continue to drive our work today, as we believe that children are best served in the context of families, and that families are best served in the context of the communities in which they live.

Casey Family Programs is committed to sharing our knowledge and experience while learning from state, tribal and county child welfare systems; private providers; and community partners. Our field offices are part of the fabric of their communities, directly supporting children and families and working in close partnership with local agencies.

Across the country, we collaborate with government, business, nonprofit and faith-based, philanthropic and community partners, helping to create Communities of Hope that improve the long-term safety and success of children and their families. We offer ongoing strategic consultation at no cost to child welfare systems and tribes in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and with tribal nations across North America to influence long-lasting improvements to the well-being of children, families and the communities where they live.

Our hope is that the insight we share and the work we demonstrate will allow more families to remain intact or to safely and quickly reunify.

For more information

If you would like to learn more about our approach, please contact dspread@casey.org.

“Inspiration is more than ambition, enthusiasm or optimism. It is vision and intuition put to practical use in creative thinking.

—JIM CASEY

