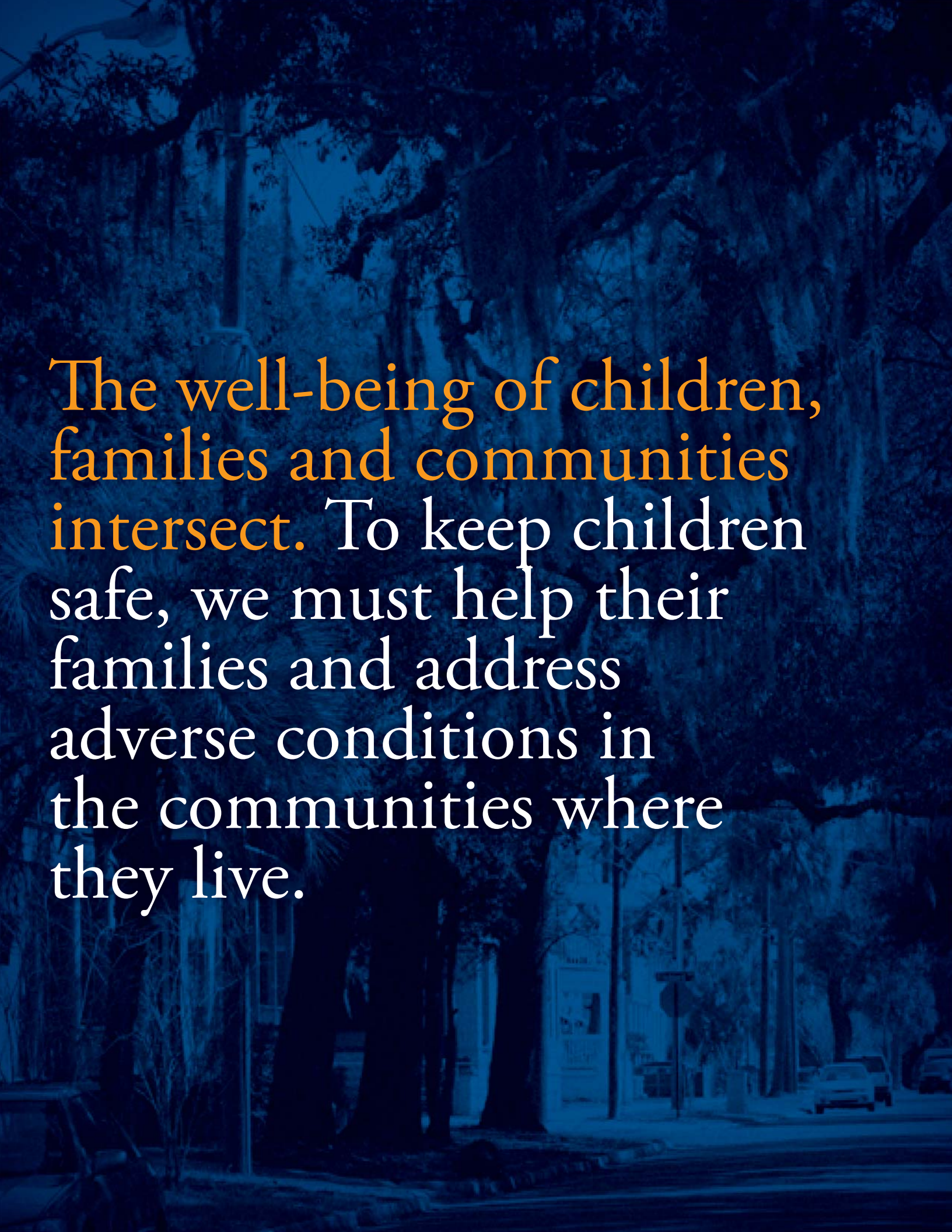




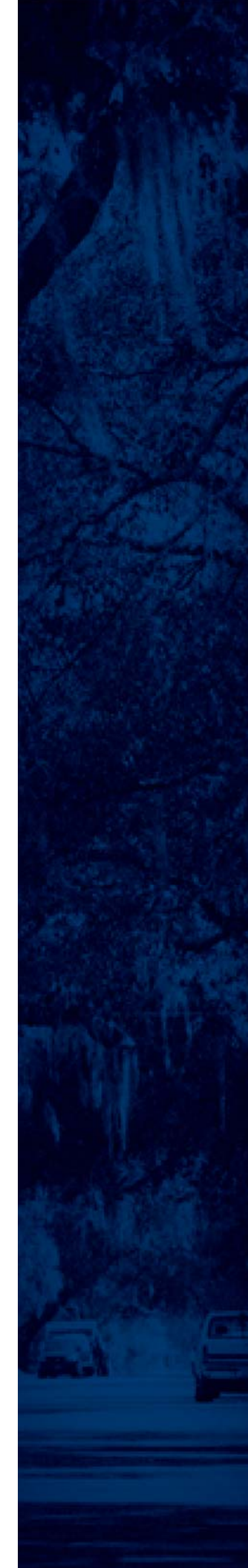
Safe children
Stable families
Supportive
communities


GOING BEYOND THE VISION

A report on **child welfare in America**



The well-being of children, families and communities intersect. To keep children safe, we must help their families and address adverse conditions in the communities where they live.



An aerial, sepia-toned photograph of a city street scene. The central focus is a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent sign on its side that reads "FLORIDA THEATRE" in bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. The building is situated on a corner. To the left, there are several smaller, multi-story buildings with classical architectural features. In the background, a tall, modern skyscraper rises above the rest of the city. A church with a tall, pointed steeple is visible to the right of the theatre building. The streets are lined with trees and parked cars, and the overall atmosphere is that of a historic urban center.

The obligation to protect children extends beyond responding to child abuse or neglect that already has occurred. It also involves supporting innovative programs that help prevent maltreatment from occurring in the first place.



Gary R. Severson
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

All across America, vulnerable families are being helped. Fewer children are suffering from child abuse or neglect, and more are now members of safe, loving and permanent families.

While remaining focused on its obligation to protect children, the child welfare system is giving more attention to creating stable families and supportive communities as a means toward achieving long-term safety for children.

That shift in focus is what “Going Beyond the Vision” is all about. In this report, we examine the progress we have made, address existing challenges and contemplate the future of child welfare.

Casey Family Programs spent much of the past year exploring how child safety has been impacted as the number of children in foster care has declined. After careful review of available evidence, we have concluded that children who come to the attention of the child welfare system today are as safe, or safer, during this period of foster care reduction as when foster care was at its peak. This report’s story out of Carver County, Minn., describes how a full-on effort to ensure safety in one home has kept a baby together with his parents.

For all the progress we have seen in child welfare, we remain troubled at the increasing number of older youth in foster care who age out of the system without a permanent family. Our story out of North Florida dives into these murky waters, and we emerge squarely on the side of what is right for our next generation of adults.

Child welfare has the potential to expand its reach to serve those who are at risk of entering the system but have not yet crossed that threshold. Our story out of South Los Angeles shows one way to stretch those arms and embrace a new paradigm in child welfare.

Let there be no doubt: Child protection still comes first. But the job of protecting children extends beyond responding to cases of child abuse or neglect that already have taken place. It also involves the development and implementation

of practices that prevent maltreatment before it occurs.

About 90,000 children from birth through age 3 enter foster care each year. Over the past two years, Casey Family Programs has partnered with the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS) at the University of Washington and the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University to research the brain science of young children who are removed from home and put into foster care, compared to children who are raised safely at home.

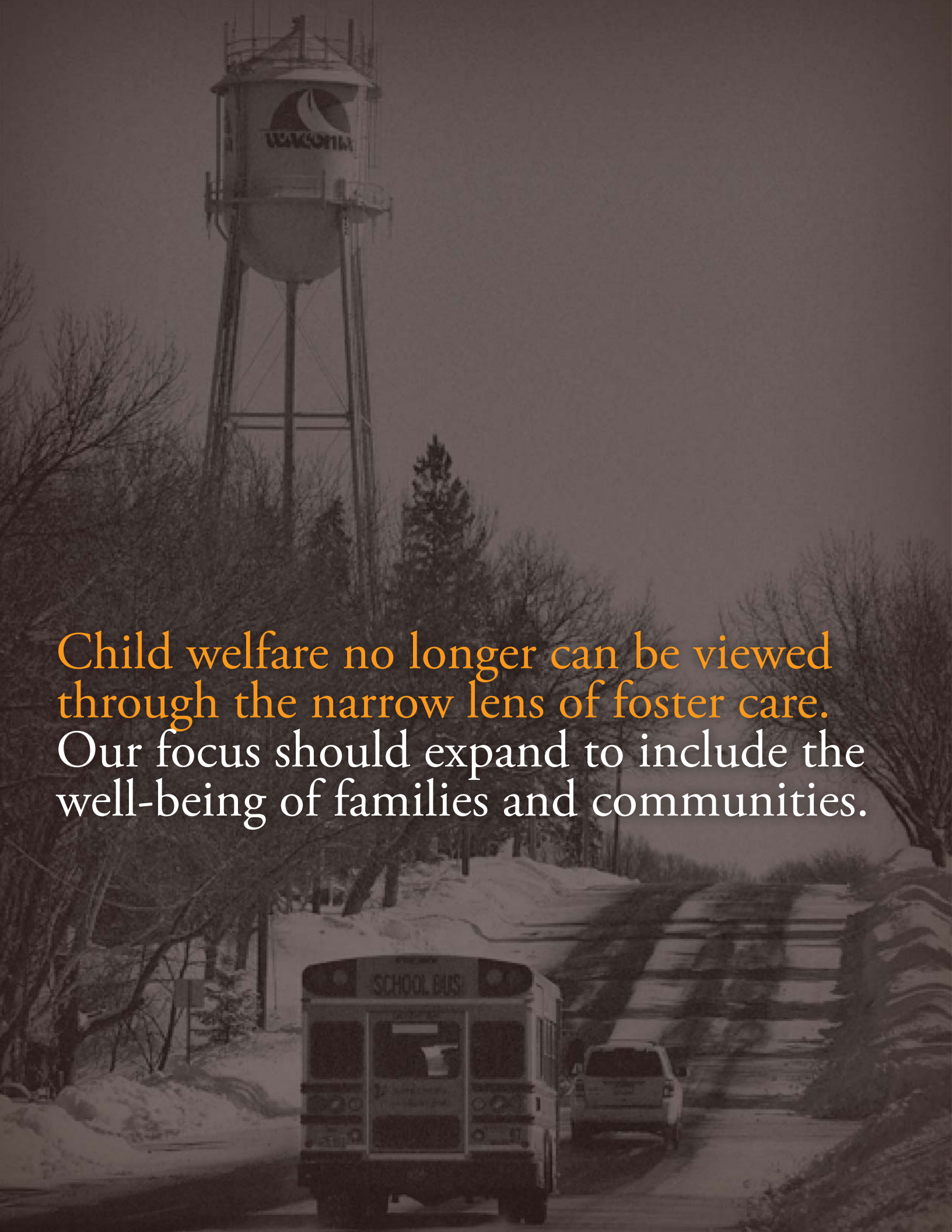
This research will shine more light on what we already know – that the development of children at an early age is key to their future ability to succeed.

Clearly, we cannot settle for a child welfare system that simply responds after a child already has suffered the trauma of abuse or neglect, compounded by the separation from family. Instead, we must support a system that helps families and communities so that children have the stable relationships, supportive environments and loving people they need during early stages of development.

As Casey Family Programs enters our 45th year of service, we are tailoring our work to meet the changing needs of children, families and communities.

We continue to provide direct services to children and families through our field offices, gaining knowledge through on-the-ground experience and demonstrating innovative practices we can share with child welfare systems across the country. We also offer strategic consulting and technical assistance to child welfare systems so they can more successfully serve children, families and communities. Understanding that no organization can create systemic change alone, we engage community partners to advocate effectively on behalf of children and families.

You have our commitment that Casey Family Programs will be at the forefront in making sure that federal, state and local public policies address the future needs of this newly evolving child welfare system.



Child welfare no longer can be viewed through the narrow lens of foster care. Our focus should expand to include the well-being of families and communities.



William C. Bell, Ph.D.

PRESIDENT AND CEO

The time has come to fundamentally transform how we approach the issues of child abuse and neglect in this country.

Fortunately, the basis for that transformation already has taken place. Child welfare no longer is viewed through the narrow lens of foster care. We all have come to understand that every child in America – no matter the background or age – deserves a safe, loving and permanent family.

An ever-growing number of state and county agencies are emphasizing prevention as an integral part of their work. A result of these efforts is that 87,000 fewer children today are living in foster care compared to five years ago.

America's foster care system indeed is smaller, but that does not mean fewer children and families are in need of support.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, approximately 262,000 children were placed in foster care in 2009. That same year more than 900,000 were identified as being at risk and requiring in-home support services.

Our challenge is: How can we reshape child welfare to respond more effectively to all of these children and families that need our help?

Casey Family Programs believes that the focus needs to be on the communities where these families live.

Going beyond the vision means that we must focus our energy and resources on improving the conditions of vulnerable families and vulnerable communities.

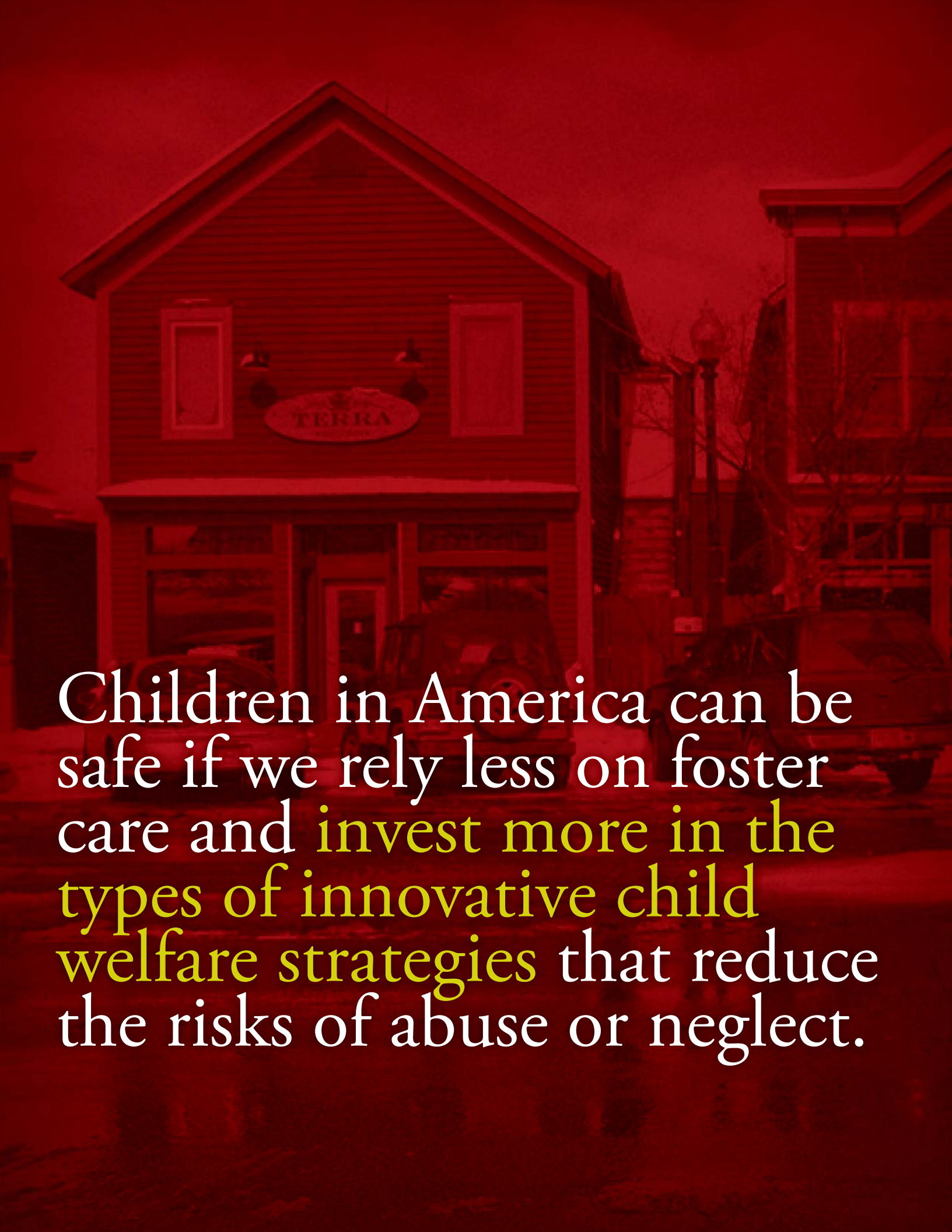
If communities are isolated and under-resourced, the families living in those communities most likely are not doing well, or only marginally so, and the children in those families suffer the consequences. If this nation's vulnerable children and families are to succeed and thrive, we must more consistently view children in the context of their families, view families in the context of the communities in which they live, and view any intervention in the context of a family and community support network.

It's imperative that we design strategies of intervention that take into account the interconnectedness of children, families and their communities, addressing the needs of all three.

To do that, we need to change the way the federal government funds child welfare. We must consider changing our policies around child welfare financing so that our precious child welfare dollars are supporting the kinds of innovative practices that produce the most positive results for children, families and communities – giving each a fair chance at success.

Getting to that place won't be easy, but neither was getting to where we rely less on foster care to raise our children. And yet we have arrived, together, through the hard work and commitment of child welfare systems, the courts, community partners, families and other stakeholders across America.

For that, all of us at Casey Family Programs are grateful. But our work is not done until all children are safe, all families are stable and all communities are supportive.



Children in America can be safe if we rely less on foster care and **invest more in the types of innovative child welfare strategies** that reduce the risks of abuse or neglect.



All for Brennan: A community of caring people bands together with a family to put a baby's safety first

A knock at the apartment door disturbed an otherwise peaceful day. Expecting no visitors, Sarah Baillif opened the door anyway. The woman on the other side identified herself as a social worker from the Carver County, Minn., child welfare system. She said she was there to help.

On impulse, Baillif placed her hand gently on her swollen tummy. She was seven months pregnant.

Five years earlier, a different Minnesota county had removed her and her husband's first child from their care after discovering that the little boy had serious bodily injuries consistent with physical abuse. To resolve the case, the Baillifs agreed to surrender parental rights to their son permanently.

"No, we are not going to go through this again," Baillif told the worker before slamming the door in her face. The worker slipped her business card under the door, hoping the couple would see fit to call her. After a moment to catch her breath, Baillif grabbed the phone to call her husband, Brian, at work.

The young couple had believed they were permitted legally to raise another child someday without

interference. But they were mistaken. Now in a panic, they figured they had two options. They could pack up their things and go on the run in a desperate attempt to keep their baby. Or they could call the social worker, Sarah Manthei, and find out if she meant what she said. If they ran, they'd be in a constant state of wandering and wondering.

"There was no avoiding it," Sarah Baillif said. "Not calling only would have made matters worse."

Manthei meant what she said. Her goal was not to remove the baby from his parents, but rather to keep the family together – as long as the Baillifs could demonstrate that they would be able to keep their child safe.

In the past, the Baillifs never would have been given a chance to keep their second child because of what happened to their first. Child protective services would have taken baby Brennan from the Baillifs at the hospital and placed him immediately into foster care.

In this case, though, Brennan never entered foster care. He didn't need to.



Since the day Brennan was born, Sarah and Brian Baillif have been raising their son in the bucolic town of Waconia, 35 miles southwest of Minneapolis, in the same apartment where Manthei showed up that day.

The Baillifs are together as a strong family that celebrated Brennan's first birthday last December. Through the efforts of the child welfare system and the court system working in tandem with the family, Brennan has a solid network of people surrounding him to advocate on his behalf.

Brennan is supported. Brennan is loved.

And Brennan is safe.

. . .

Keeping children safe from child abuse and neglect remains the primary mandate and principal concern of child welfare systems across the United States. As systems place fewer children into foster care and – as an alternative – provide more in-home services to at-risk families, questions have been raised as to whether children are as safe today as they were when foster care caseloads were at their peak.

A new Casey Family Programs white paper on child safety examines evidence and concludes that the number of children in foster care can be reduced without affecting the overall safety of children. In fact, there is reason to believe that by reinvesting the money saved from

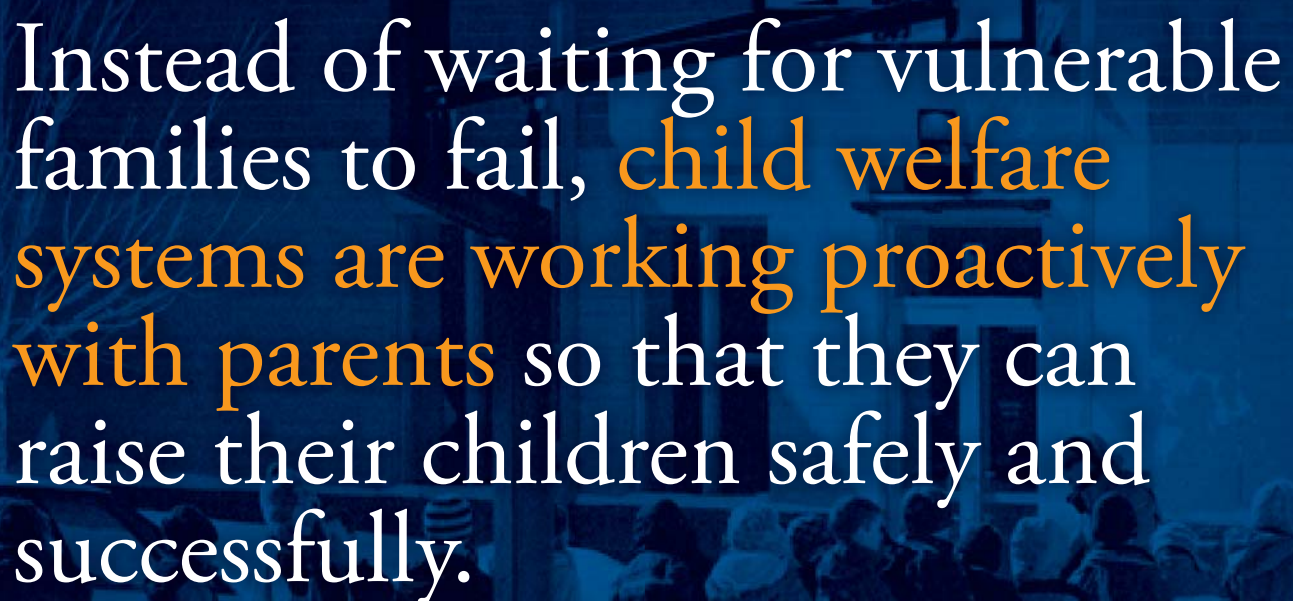
lower foster care caseloads into innovative child welfare practices and community services, the potential exists for children in America to be safer – and families more stable – than ever before.

In Carver County and other communities across America, child welfare systems no longer pigeonhole parents who are vulnerable or have pasts that denote risk. Instead of expecting those families to fail, systems are working with them to improve their chances for success.

When risks of abuse or neglect exist in a home but no imminent danger is present, child welfare systems are joining forces with communities to help vulnerable families so that the children can remain safe at home. This is the best way to serve children and their families, and the communities where they live. Research shows that children who have been removed from their families and placed into foster care fare much worse than their peers – both as children and as adults – in the areas of education, employment and mental health.

Understanding what is best for the children, families and community it serves, the child welfare system in Carver County has implemented a highly structured practice that gives parents an opportunity to demonstrate they can keep their children safe, thus making child removal the last resort.

“What would the Baillifs have done if we automatically terminated parental rights and put Brennan into foster



Instead of waiting for vulnerable families to fail, **child welfare systems are working proactively with parents** so that they can raise their children safely and successfully.

Caseworkers are making more informed assessments on whether a child can remain safe at home. This has reduced unnecessary child removals.

care?” asked Dan Koziolk, child and family manager of Carver County Community Social Services. “Would they subsequently have moved to another state where they wouldn’t have been detected and had another baby?”

“Sure, we could have patted ourselves on the back for removing Brennan, but these parents are young enough – and have enough of a desire to raise a family – that they conceivably could have a dozen more kids. We would have isolated this family and the parents would have lost their support network that ultimately is going to help them keep their children safe.”

• • •

For the Baillifs to keep Brennan legally, the Carver County child welfare system had to file a court petition stating a compelling reason for not terminating their parental rights. In order for the system to have faith in the Baillifs, the couple needed to demonstrate to Carver County that their baby could remain safe in their care.

There were reasons to think the Baillifs, still in their 20s, could keep their baby safe this time around. Married for seven years, they were more mature than they were five years ago as individuals and as a couple. Both now have stable jobs – Sarah as a manager at a sandwich shop and Brian as an assistant manager at a gas station. And this pregnancy was planned, where the previous one was not.

To evaluate the Baillifs’ ability to protect Brennan, Carver County used Signs of Safety, an assessment tool developed in Australia and one of several effective

practices used across the United States that help caseworkers determine whether child removal is necessary.

Since implementing Signs of Safety, the number of children in foster care in Carver County has dropped to a level comparable to 1993 – a time when the county’s child population was half of what it is today. At the same time foster care placements have gone down, fewer repeat cases are coming back into the system – an indication that the children remaining at home are staying safe.

Under the requirements of Signs of Safety, the Baillifs assembled a “safety network” – a group of friends, family, neighbors and co-workers committed to the safety of their baby. Two weeks after Manthei first sat down with the Baillifs, she showed up at their apartment to meet the couple’s safety network. Eleven people were sitting in the Baillifs’ living room when Manthei arrived with pizza and sodas. She was impressed.

After Brennan was born, the safety network expanded to include someone from his day-care center who is mandated by law to report any evidence of child maltreatment. Like other members of the safety network, her focus was Brennan’s safety, not Sarah and Brian’s desire to raise him.

“One of the many benefits of establishing a safety network is that those people are going to be around for that child long after we have closed our case,” Koziolk said.

As part of Signs of Safety, the Baillifs and the safety network crafted a blunt statement expressing the specific safety concerns for Brennan. As part of that process,



the Baillifs had to divulge their past to members of the safety network, not all of whom knew the details of what happened to their first child. The Baillifs learned who their true friends are, and they made new close friends as a result.

“No one wants to hear that about your life,” Sarah Baillif said. “But it helped remind us what the focus was.”

Carver County also set strict guidelines that the couple was required to follow after Brennan was born. One slip, and the county would not hesitate in removing Brennan from the home.

“There was a tremendous amount of hands-on supervision of the parents to make sure the child was safe,” said Carver County District Court Judge Kevin Eide, who presided over the case. “The Baillifs were very cooperative with Carver County. More than once, they expressed the knowledge that in some other places – and perhaps even five years earlier in Carver County – they would have lost this child, too. They were grateful to be given this chance.”

For the first week after Brennan was born, a member of the safety network stayed in the home around the clock. For the next couple of months, safety network members had to check up on the family in person at least two or three times a day. During that time, it was common for a safety network member to be in the home six hours a day. A public health nurse also regularly visited the family.

For months after Brennan was born, Brian was not allowed to be alone with his son – even when Sarah was showering or walking the dog.

“It was like I was a single mother, living with my husband,” Sarah Baillif recalled.

Also as part of Signs of Safety, the couple took part in a structured role play in which a parent hurt a child. Sarah and Brian were forced to view the situation through the eyes of the opposite spouse and of the young sibling.

“It was like a Lifetime movie,” Brian Baillif said. He played the role of the father comforting the brother, who was hiding under a bed. Manthei and others observed the role play to see if Brian would display empathy for the scared child. He did.

• • •

The Baillif case is now closed – although Brennan’s safety network is still in place, strong as ever.

“It’s nice that we haven’t had to do all of this on our own,” Sarah Baillif said.

The Baillifs said being able to raise Brennan at home while the county assessed their ability to keep him safe has made a huge difference in Brennan’s life.

If he had been in foster care during that time, “there would not have been the bonding that we have now,” Brian Baillif said.

“Having Brennan stay with us helped remind us of our goals,” Sarah Baillif added. “We did this for one purpose. We did this all for Brennan.”

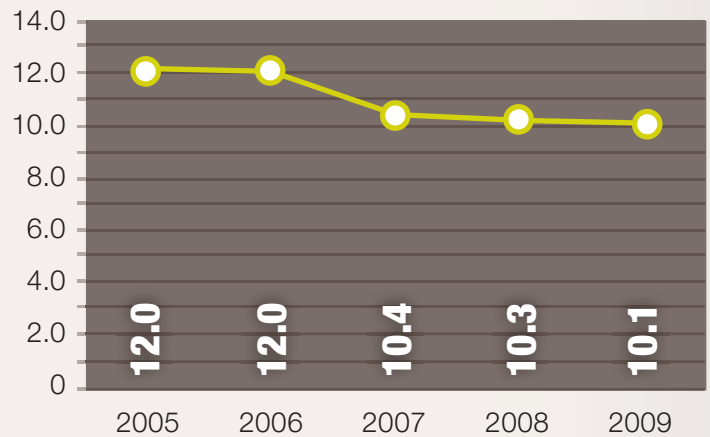


Safety first

Child abuse and neglect

The rate of confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect continues to decrease in the United States. The rate peaked in 1993 at 15.3 per thousand children. The number of child abuse and neglect incidences decreased from 900,642 in 2005 to 762,940 in 2009, a reduction of 15.3 percent.

Child abuse and neglect rate
per thousand children

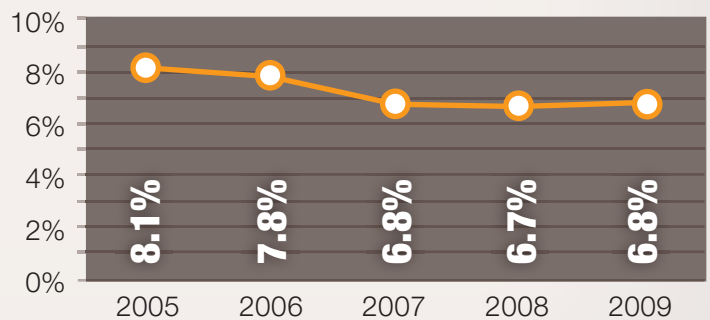


Repeat maltreatment

One way to measure child safety is to track repeat maltreatment, which the federal government defines as a confirmed report of child maltreatment that occurs within six months of a previous confirmed report for the same child. *Nationally, the repeat maltreatment rate has declined since 2005.*

Repeat maltreatment

% of children who experience subsequent maltreatment within six months



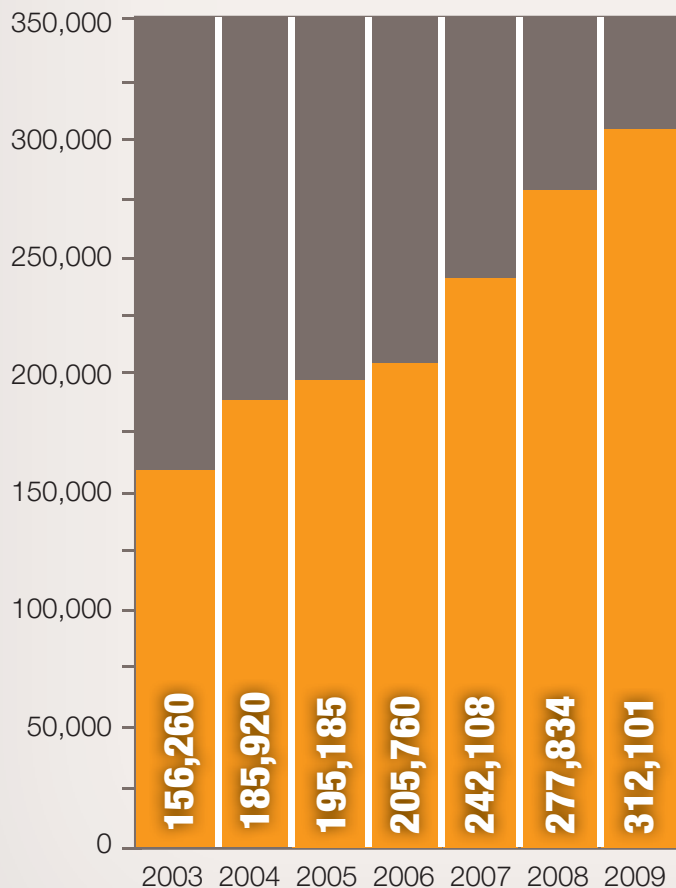
Improving safety by *helping families*

Rather than removing children from their families at the first sign of trouble, child welfare systems are focusing on keeping children safe at home and keeping families together.

For example, an increasing number of systems are using the practice of alternative response to help low-risk and moderate-risk families in which children face no immediate safety risks. In the past, these families often would have been investigated but then had their cases closed without being offered services.

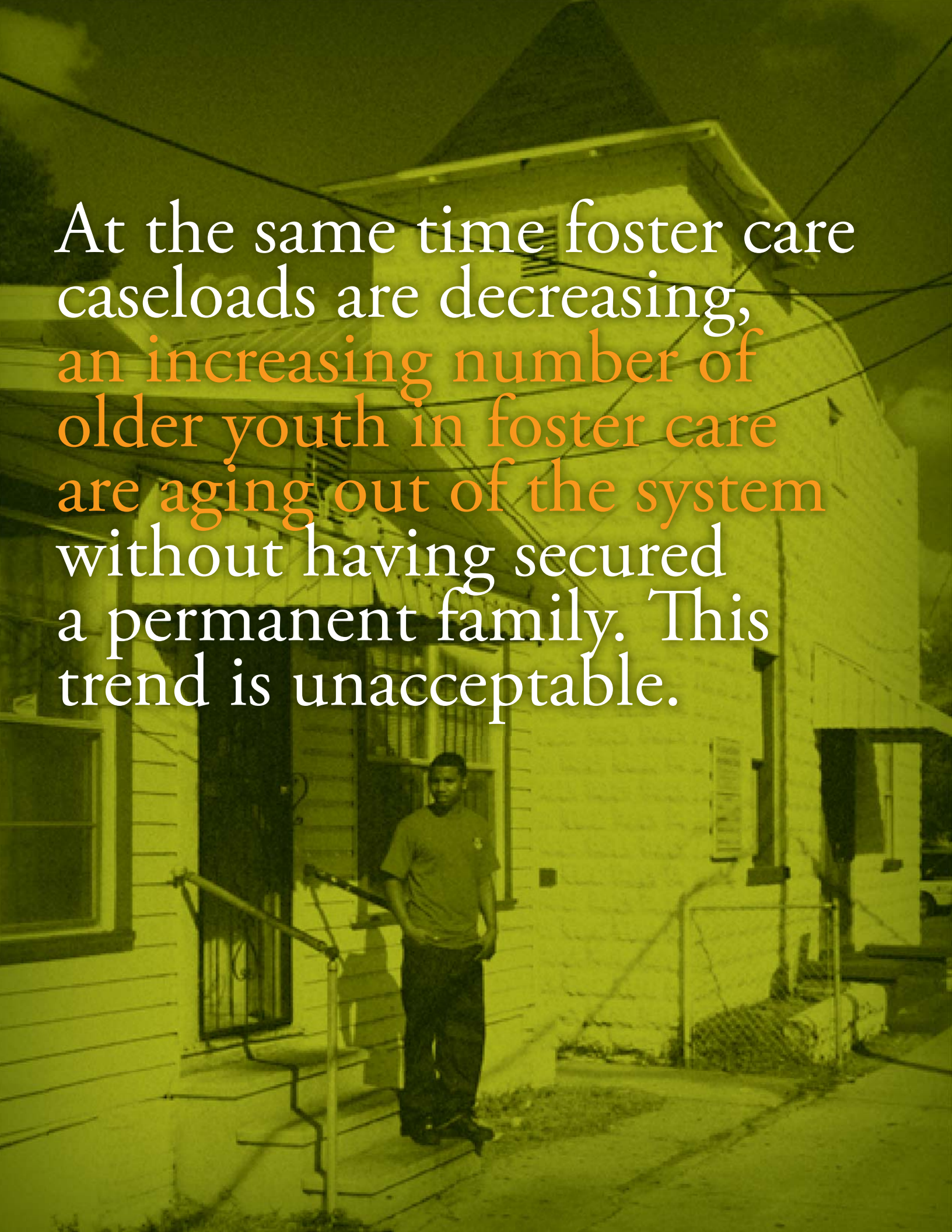
With alternative response, however, these families may volunteer to receive community services to address any chronic or escalating stresses in the home, giving parents access to the tools they need to raise their children safely and successfully.

Number of children nationally whose families have received *alternative response*



Source: Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as reported at the 2010 National Child Welfare Data and Technology Conference.



A young man in a dark t-shirt and pants stands on the steps of a house at night. The house has a porch with a railing and a window to the left. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source from the right creating a bright glow on the man and the porch. The background shows the dark silhouette of the house and the night sky.

At the same time foster care caseloads are decreasing, an increasing number of older youth in foster care are aging out of the system without having secured a permanent family. This trend is unacceptable.





Desiree's Desire: A teenager's deep-down yearning for a permanent family rises to the surface

With enough scuba gear attached to her back to nearly outweigh her slender frame, 17-year-old Desiree Lewis explored the natural wonders of the underwater theater off Key Largo, Fla., mindful of the number one rule of diving.

Never venture out alone.

"Trust your buddy and your equipment," said Desiree, recalling the lessons she learned. "If you are in the dark under water, you don't want your buddy to leave you. If you get tangled up or something, you're going to need your buddy to help you out because if you try to untangle yourself, you get all messed up."

Desiree's dive was the culmination of a scuba certification program designed to help older youth in foster care develop the self-confidence they need – and often lack. It teaches them not only about life below water, but also above it. When dropped into choppy seas, support from others is necessary to stay safe and be successful.

Six older youth in foster care completed the program last year through Family Support Services of North Florida, a nonprofit agency that provides child welfare services in

the Jacksonville area through a contract with the state of Florida. The program is made possible through a Title IV-E waiver, which has given Florida more flexibility to spend federal child welfare dollars on services other than foster care – such as those aimed at preventing child maltreatment and moving older youth in foster care into permanent homes.

Older youth in foster care need the same things as infants, toddlers and adolescents in the system – safe and loving families that will support them now and into adulthood. They need the stability and security of a permanent family. But they also need programs and approaches recognizing that older youth in foster care face different challenges.

Despite an increase in the number of adoptions over the past decade, youth between the ages of 11 and 17 account for only 17 percent of all adoptions while comprising more than 35 percent of those waiting to be adopted, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Even as progress has been made to reduce the overall number of children in foster care, the number of youth aging out of the system without having secured a



The age-old need to feel safe, stable and loved inspires efforts to find permanent families for older youth in foster care.

permanent family has increased from 17,000 in 1998 to close to 30,000 in 2010. If that trend holds, more than 400,000 young people could age out of foster care over the next 10 years.

Casey Family Programs joins child welfare professionals, leaders, judges, lawyers and advocates across the country in declaring this trend unacceptable. Youth never should be allowed to age out of foster care without a sincere effort having been made to secure them a permanent family.

Child welfare systems can follow the lead of North Florida by adopting innovative practices and policies that encourage family reunifications, adoptions and legal guardianships so that older youth in foster care can have the permanent families they need to become successful adults.

Another innovation helping older youth secure permanent families is a process called permanency roundtables. During permanency roundtables, caseworkers, outside experts, youth and their families come together to scour case records and brainstorm ideas for achieving permanency for children who have spent years in foster care. Casey Family Programs is playing a leadership role in spreading this effective practice to public and tribal child welfare agencies across the country.

One reason that permanency roundtables work so well is that youth have a say in their own futures. Older youth typically resist the idea of permanency, at least at first.

One way to overcome that obstacle is to let youth realize for themselves the benefits of having a family that they can trust and rely upon for all time.

“I try to challenge the youth to investigate the issues and discover the answers for themselves,” said Judge David Gooding, who heads the Duval County Dependency Model Court in Jacksonville. “I’m definitely not going to harangue young people into accepting permanency, but I want to make sure they consider all the evidence and figure out what is best for them.”

Even when older youth have all the facts, their tough exteriors can be difficult to crack. Their expressions of “I don’t need anybody but myself” often are rooted in the fear of rejection. The idea of trusting another is difficult when trust has been betrayed previously in their lives.

“If you can’t trust your own birth mom, it kind of leaves you wondering who else you can trust,” said Desiree, who first entered foster care four days shy of her 12th birthday.

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Staring down her 18th birthday, Desiree was living with her younger brother Tracy in a loving foster home in Jacksonville, resigned to becoming one among the statistics of older youth to age out of foster care. But the child welfare system in North Florida had another idea – one that would allow her and Tracy to remain with the foster mother they had grown to call “Grandma,” and become part of her permanent family.

Calling to the table those who were interested in the welfare of Desiree and Tracy, the system took another hard look at their cases and pursued the option of adoption by their foster mother. At first, foster mother Margaret Russ was reluctant. She had adopted a child in her care once before, but it ended badly. She had needed the system's support to make the adoption a success, yet felt abandoned by it. She did not want such a heart-wrenching experience repeated.

Having learned from its mistakes, the system assured Russ that this time around it would help provide the emotional, financial and logistical support she needed to continue to raise Desiree and Tracy successfully. But Desiree was cool to the idea of her own adoption, and became convinced only after realizing that it would be best for Tracy, who was 13 at the time.

"Even before we adopted them, we had a tendency to consider ourselves a family," said Russ, who has 18 grandchildren. "I never have liked using the term foster home. These are my kids."

Russ adopted the siblings two months before Desiree turned 18. The formalization of the relationship is not lost on Desiree.

"When you are in a real family, instead of being a foster child, it's a big difference," said Desiree, who recalled instances when her caseworker would show up at her school and her classmates would ask who she was. "I'd try to throw them off. I don't have to do that anymore. I don't have a label on me – we don't have a label on us – anymore."

Desiree and Tracy do, however, have a new legal last name: Russ.

• • •

Desiree, who is very shy, is gaining more poise through the nurturing advice of her adoptive mother.

"I will see her at times kind of let people walk all over her," Russ said. "I try to tell her it's all right to be nice and it's all right to be sweet, but by the same token you've got to be kind of strong because people will take your kindness for weakness."

The scuba certification program also did wonders at giving Desiree a newfound confidence in herself and trust in others. Keeping her buddy close, Desiree felt relaxed on her inaugural scuba dive off Key Largo, even as she experienced great depths. The feelings surprised her. After all, this was a young woman who screamed whenever her foster family went fishing and their catch

wriggled on the hook. Now she was swimming among fish as big as her head.

Without the funding flexibility provided through the Title IV-E waiver, the scuba training program – and several other innovative child welfare services in North Florida – might never have happened. Florida is one of five states with a waiver.

"Agencies should have discretion on how to spend their funds to improve the well-being of the child," said Nancy Dreicer, northeast regional director for the Florida Department of Children and Families. "With the waiver, we have been able to use our resources in the right places and in the right way."

Through a major redesign of its child welfare system – led by Dreicer and carried out by Jim Adams, chief executive officer of Family Support Services of North Florida –



the number of children in foster care in Jacksonville's home county of Duval has gone from nearly 1,800 in 2005 to 825 in 2009 – a 54 percent reduction. As a result, the amount of money Family Support Services of North Florida spends per day on foster care beds has decreased from about \$23,000 in January 2008 to about \$13,000 in January 2011.

Adams said his agency has been able to reinvest some of the money saved into services that help secure permanency for older youth, such as the scuba training program.

"I consider self-esteem building and giving youth a sense of normalcy as necessary services," he said.

Through the support of Casey Family Programs, the practice of permanency roundtables has spread to North Florida. By the end of 2011, public or tribal child welfare systems in 34 states are expected to hold roundtables, which can be tailored to meet the unique characteristics of a jurisdiction.

For American Indian tribes, for example, the focus is on family reunifications and guardianships as opposed to adoptions because tribal courts are reluctant to terminate parental rights.

“We never want to take away the opportunity of families to be able to change their lives and get back on the right road again,” said James Trosper, director of the Northern Arapaho Department of Family Services in Wyoming.

Casey Family Programs recently evaluated a permanency roundtables project in Georgia that began in 2009 to help

The state of Idaho, for example, has not provided financial assistance to relatives who serve as foster parents and step up to become legal guardians. The state, however, does provide room and board reimbursement if they remain licensed foster parents, thereby creating a disincentive to become legal guardians.

Through its Idaho Field Office, Casey Family Programs is demonstrating the value and cost-effectiveness of having licensed relative foster parents become legal guardians. Under a guardianship assistance project developed by the field office, licensed relative foster parents who become legal guardians may receive financial assistance for up to two years in the same amount they were receiving as licensed foster parents, thereby eliminating the financial disincentive to become the youth’s legal guardian. They also continue to receive case management services for up to two years, or until the child turns 18.

The program is for youth ages 11 to 18, whose cases are managed by the Idaho Field Office. As a result of the program, several youth have achieved legal permanency with relatives.

“Foster families often articulate that they believe in the values of permanency but do not want to go at it alone,” said Jane Morse, supervisor of child welfare services for the Idaho Field Office.

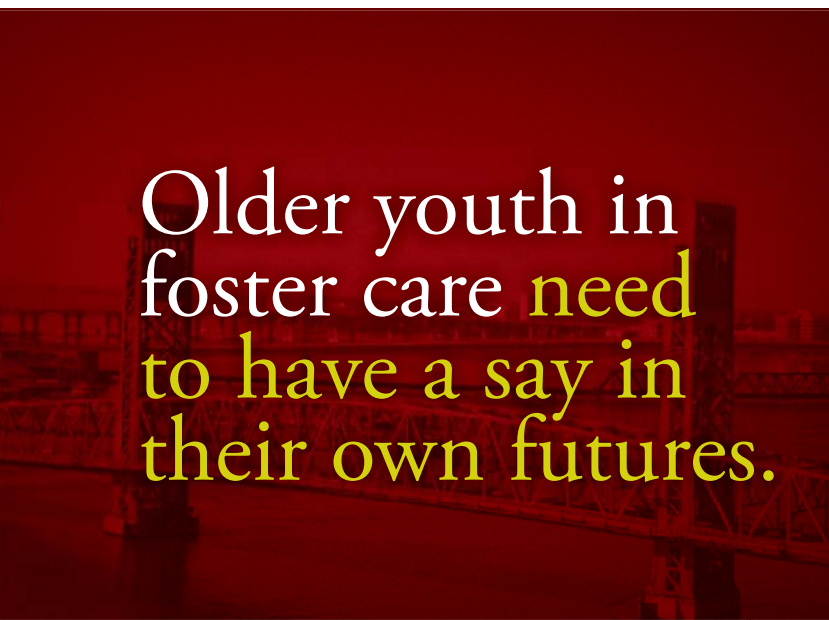
A thorough evaluation of the program is under way, but the belief is that the state of Idaho can save money by providing financial assistance to licensed relative foster parents who become legal guardians compared to what it spends to maintain those youth in foster care.

This year, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is planning to implement its own version of a guardianship assistance program for licensed relative foster parents, aimed at youth in foster care who are age 14 and older.

Achieving permanency for older youth can be challenging – but it is possible.

Before ultimately embracing the idea of being adopted, 18-year-old Aiden Eska’takii said he worried about becoming a financial burden to his loving foster parents who were stepping up to adopt him. But Aiden, whose case was managed through the Idaho Field Office, also came to understand the many benefits of having a permanent family. His adoption was finalized last September.

“It’s just nice to know someone will always be there for you, even when you are fine and you don’t need them,” Aiden said. “It’s even better to know that someone is there to catch you in case you fall.”



find permanent homes for nearly 500 children who were in foster care for extended periods of time.

After one year, nearly one in three of the 500 children whose cases went through the roundtable process achieved legal permanency, either through reunifying with family, adoption or guardianship. Although 57 percent of children remained in foster care a year after their cases went through roundtables, many have made strides toward achieving permanency because of the ideas that percolated out of the process.

Working in partnership with child welfare systems, youth and families, Casey Family Programs also is working to remove barriers that historically have prevented many older youth from achieving permanency.

A low-angle, sepia-toned photograph of a church steeple and a sign that reads "SUNDAY 1030". The steeple is tall and ornate, with a cross on top. The sign is mounted on a building facade with horizontal lines. The text is overlaid on the image in a yellow-green color.

Children must be served
in the context of families.
And families must be
served in the context of
communities.

SUNDAY

1030





Community Medicine: A child welfare system extends its reach to all South Los Angeles families in need

Across the street from a city park and kitty-corner to a community center, a rooster crows long after dawn already has broken, its racket beating against an apartment window protected by burglary bars and draped with a Mexican flag.

Near the intersection of two wide boulevards clogged with traffic, the old Academy Theater is easy to spot because of its slim cylindrical tower. A church moved into the one-time movie house years ago, offering healing, deliverance and miracle services.

Where once stood burned-out hulls of buildings destroyed during the 1992 riots, signs of rebirth are evident. But harsh realities impede community progress.

The community of South Los Angeles sprawls across several neighborhoods and a handful of cities, the most recognizable of which are Watts and Compton. Three in every 10 households in South Los Angeles live in poverty. Three in every 10 adults over age 25 have less than a ninth-grade education. The high school graduation rate is 35 percent. More than 300,000 crimes are committed in a year.

The South Los Angeles community also has a high number of child welfare cases. In 2009, nearly 25,000 children in the community were the subject of a child welfare referral, according to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. Those referrals led to 2,220 children being removed from their homes. At any one time, about 3,600 children in South Los Angeles are in foster care.

The ultimate obligation of child welfare systems is to protect children from danger. But that is not accomplished solely by reacting to child maltreatment that already has occurred. To ensure the safety of America's children and build stable families, the condition of the communities in which they live must be addressed.

An innovative program is under way in South Los Angeles that may signal the future of child welfare in the United States.

It's a future where children are kept safe because their families have received the help they need before any abuse or neglect takes place. It's a future where families receive the support and learn the skills they need so that children can be raised safely and successfully at home – and within the communities they call home.

And it's a future where communities can thrive by drawing strength from the children and families they serve.

. . .

This new approach in child welfare is benefiting the entire South Los Angeles community by aiming to stop child neglect and abuse in their tracks. The project is made possible in part because Los Angeles County has a Title IV-E waiver, which gives child welfare systems more flexibility to spend federal child welfare dollars on services other than foster care – such as those aimed at

preventing child maltreatment and moving children in foster care into permanent homes.

The Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) serves not only families with open child welfare cases but also those in the community who never have come into contact with the system. Those latter families, however, are at a high risk to enter the system unless they receive help raising their children.

“This kind of a program diverts children from foster care while strengthening the communities we serve,” said Blanca Vega, assistant regional administrator for the Department of Children and Family Services office in Compton.

PIDP is a countywide project funded through an investment of \$10 million. Casey Family Programs has supported the project through consultation, research and technical assistance.

The project takes on different forms within the various parts of Los Angeles County, based on individual community needs. In South Los Angeles, it is managed by SHIELDS for Families, a nonprofit with deep community ties, which it has used to build a broad network of PIDP resources.

“Instead of having systems that are set up to keep families apart, we should be investing in services that are helping keep families together,” said Kathryn Icenhower, SHIELDS executive director.

SHIELDS opened four ASK (Ask, Seek, Knock) Family Resource Centers throughout South Los Angeles as places for families to receive the services they need to raise their children safely and successfully. Each family resource center has a staff person, or “resource navigator,” who guides families through the social services maze to make sure they get the support they need.

The family resource centers are well embedded within South Los Angeles. One is inside the Avalon-Carver Community Center, which has been a part of the community since 1940. Another is run through West Angeles Church of God in Christ, which has more than 22,000 congregants.

Families are more likely to walk into a church or community center to ask for services than they would be if the centers were billed as part of the child welfare system, said Ron Taylor, resource navigator at the West Angeles Church family resource center.

“Most people aren’t going to ask the Department of Children and Family Services for whatever help they need

Supportive communities help create stable families.



Geron Flynn (standing), vocational coordinator for SHIELDS for Families, teaches a high school equivalency course at the ASK Family Resource Center in Lynwood, Calif.

to raise their children,” he said. “This way, families can be comfortable that their coming in won’t result in a child welfare case being opened on them. Some don’t even realize that the center is connected to the system. They just know they went somewhere and got the help they needed.”

Needs have varied among the 8,400 South Los Angeles families that have sought services through the family resource centers as of March 2011. The majority of families come in asking for food or clothing for their children, including baby formula and diapers. Some seek safe housing or assistance with paying rent. Others need beds so their children don’t have to sleep on the floor.

About 75 percent of those served by family resource centers have been parents with no active child welfare case but who need help raising their children safely and successfully.

Rita Espino falls within that 75 percent. She walked into a family resource center needing food and a stove so she could prepare proper meals for her four children, who range in age from 4 to 14. During her first meeting with the PIDP navigator, she was so worried for her children that she broke down in tears. With enough food and a new stove, the children now eat well – and they eat together, each night, as a family.

“Once I am finished cooking, everyone sits at the kitchen table, we say a prayer to thank God and then we eat,” Espino said.

. . .

Some services are provided directly at the family resource centers, including parenting classes, computer proficiency training, high school equivalency courses and tutoring for children. PIDP also helps parents who are seeking vocational training so they can earn steady work and therefore raise their children safely and successfully.

Leslie Hemsley, who is raising 4-year-old Leslie Jr. by himself, has begun taking a fiber optics cable technician certification course offered free of charge.

“Becoming a father made me a man,” said Hemsley, 26. “My son is my heart, my pride, my joy. He is everything to me. I’m trying to move up in life so I can take better care of him. Without him, I don’t know what I’d do. Every night, I think about it. I think about losing him. That’s why I am really trying to learn a trade. It’s for him.”

Hemsley, an immigrant from Belize, also is receiving legal aid through PIDP to help obtain a work permit. SHIELDS for Families estimates that more than 1,000 residents so far have received some sort of pro bono legal services through PIDP.

Hemsley said his PIDP navigator, Sharron Eason, has been a blessing for him and his son.

“When I met Sharron, I felt like a weight was lifted off me,” he said. “If I have any questions, I just call her and she guides me to what I need.”

The fiber optics certification program has trained hundreds of single fathers just like Hemsley. Most have no active child welfare case but suffer from economic and other stresses that put the family at risk of entering the system. A group of former students even formed a support group for single dads.

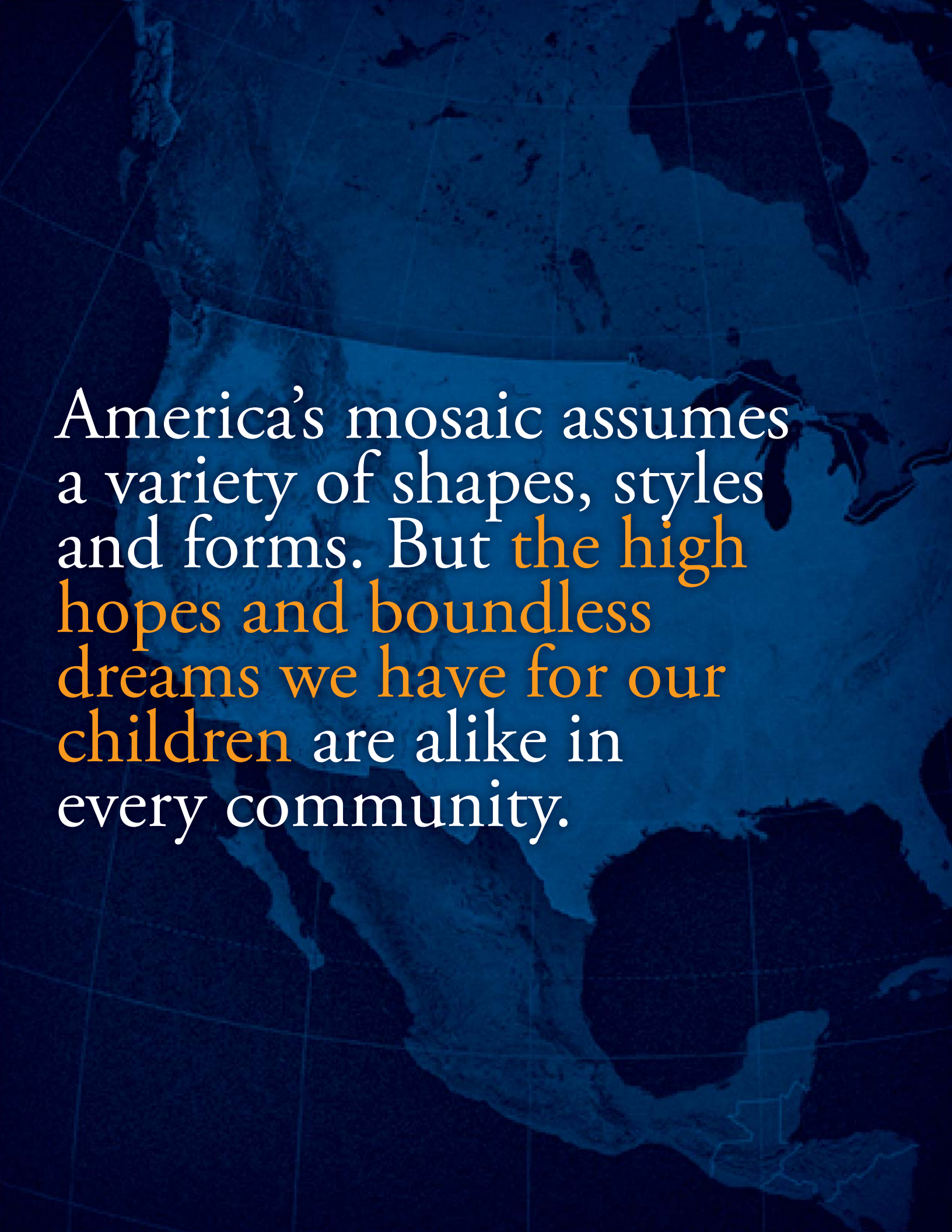
“This is what we mean when we talk about building community,” said Audrey Tousant, PIDP program manager for SHIELDS. “They are making their own social networks outside of – but as a result of – the services we are providing.”

According to SHIELDS, many graduates of the fiber optics program have found jobs in the field and been promoted to supervisor level, earning salaries of \$60,000 to \$75,000 a year, plus benefits. A few have started their own companies in cable and computer repair.

About one-third of last January’s graduating class of 27 students had jobs lined up even before they received their certificates. A formal graduation ceremony took place at one of the family resource centers, attended by spouses, parents and children of the students. A few graduates carried their babies in their arms as they accepted their certificates.

“You cannot put a price on that kind of pride, that kind of excitement,” said Vega, the assistant regional administrator for the county child welfare department. “To see their families there with them, also beaming with pride – I couldn’t help but think that with that kind of support, we’ll never see these families enter our system. Ever.”





America's mosaic assumes a variety of shapes, styles and forms. But **the high hopes and boundless dreams we have for our children** are alike in every community.



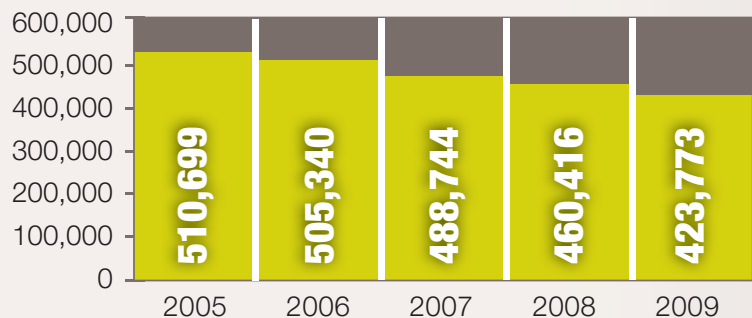
The primary goal is to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. By ensuring that all children have a safe and permanent family, we can reduce the number of children in foster care.

Number of children in *foster care*

The United States had **423,773** children in foster care on Sept. 30, 2009.

- This number represents a **17% decrease** since the 2005 federal fiscal year, and an **8% decrease** since FY2008.

Overall number of children in *foster care*

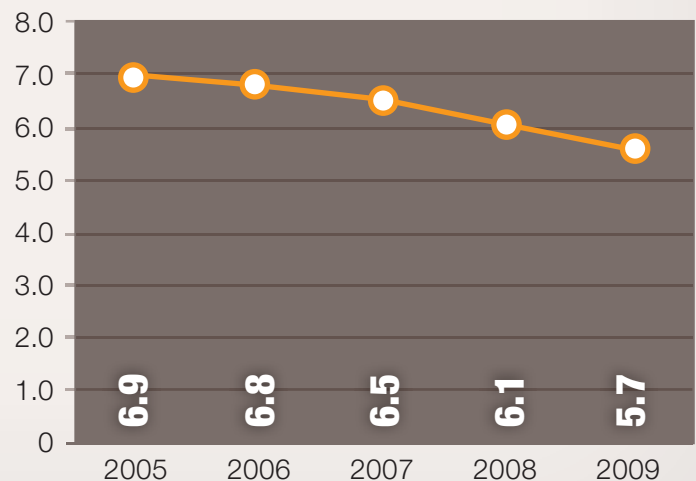


Rate of children in *foster care*

The rate of children in foster care (per thousand children under age 18) is an important measure because it takes into account changes in population.

- The national rate **decreased** each year between FY2005 and FY2009.

Rate of children *in foster care*
per thousand children



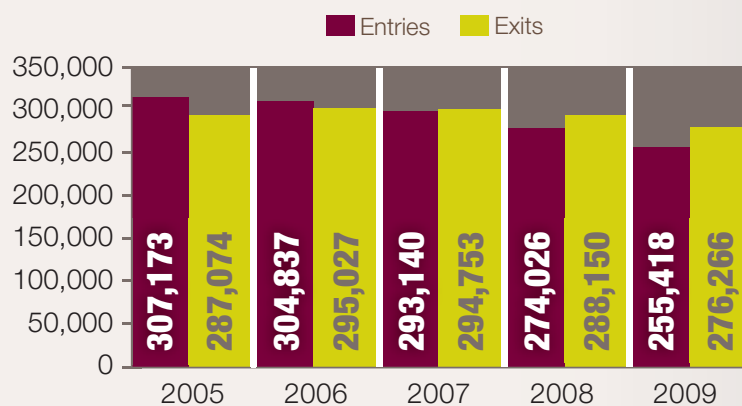


Relationship between *entries and exits*

An indicator of safe reduction is whether the number of children exiting foster care is exceeding the number entering.

- Exits began **exceeding** entries in FY2007 and continued in FY2008 and FY2009.
- The number of children entering foster care **decreased 16.8%** from FY2005 to FY2009.
- The number of children exiting foster care **decreased 3.8%** from FY2005 to FY2009.

Relationship between *entries and exits*

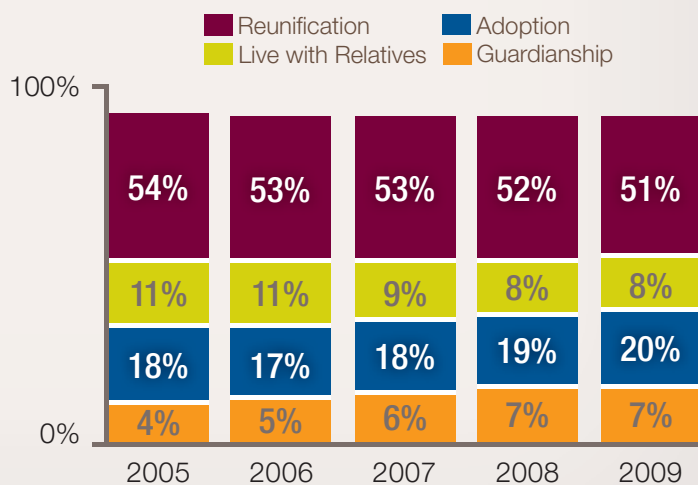


Exits to *permanency*

The goal is for every child in foster care to exit into a safe and permanent family.

- The percentage of children exiting to permanency **remained stable** from FY2005 to FY2009.
- **More than half** of all exits to permanency are the result of family reunification.

Exits to *permanency*



Source: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System.



Casey Family Programs *at a glance*

In 2010, Casey Family Programs spent \$116 million in pursuit of our mission to provide and improve – and ultimately prevent the need for – foster care.

Out of each dollar spent in 2010, about 80 cents paid for strategic initiatives, services and research to help ensure that all children can have a safe, loving and permanent family.

At the end of 2010,
Casey Family Programs
assets totaled \$2.1 billion.

Spending on Strategic Initiatives, Services and Research





Leadership, offices *and national partners*

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National Partners

As part of our mission to improve the child welfare system, Casey Family Programs has built effective partnerships with a broad range of national organizations, including nonprofits, public policy associations, child welfare groups and research institutions:

American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law

American Humane Association

American Public Human Services Association

America's Promise Alliance

Association of Black Foundation Executives

Black Administrators in Child Welfare

Center for Social Services Research, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Child Trends

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Children's Defense Fund

Foster Care Alumni of America

FosterClub

Generations United

Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Systems Integration

Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families

Harvard Medical School

Harvard University Center on the Developing Child

National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators

National Center for State Courts

National Civilian Community Corps

National Conference of State Legislatures

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association

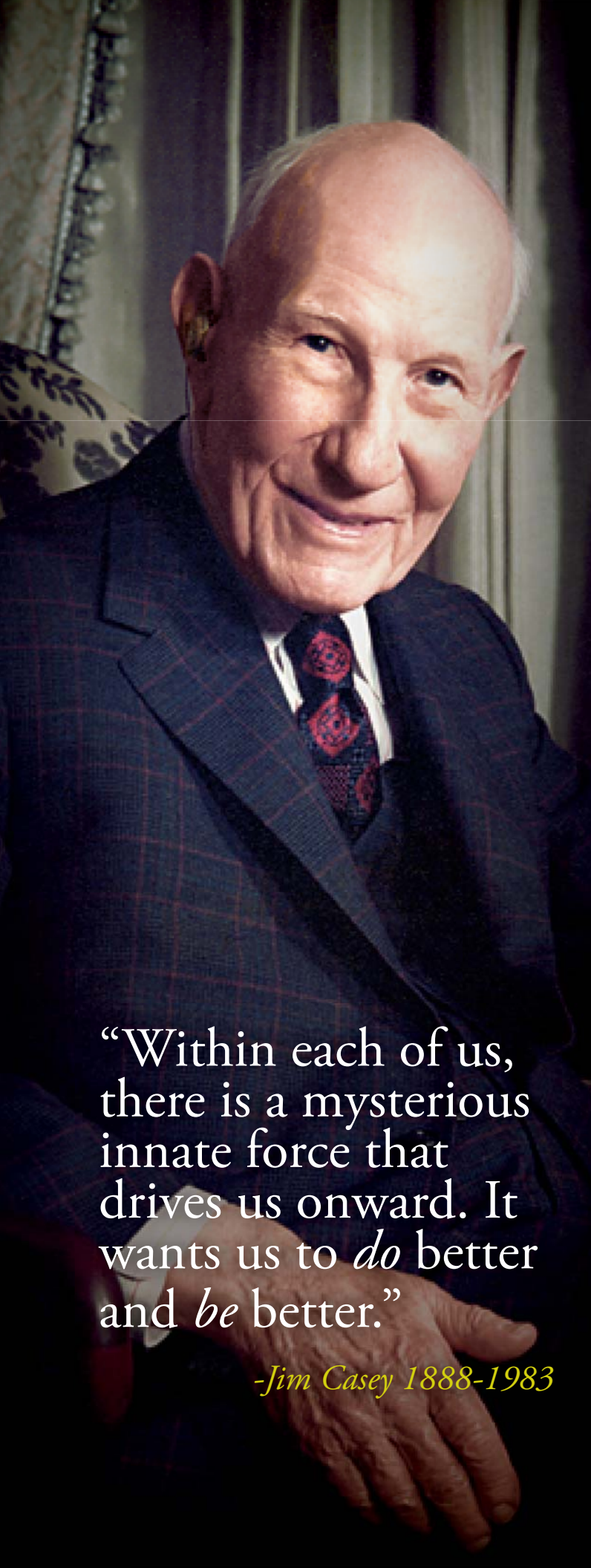
National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

National Urban League

University of Texas at Austin

University of Washington Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences

Walter R. McDonald and Associates



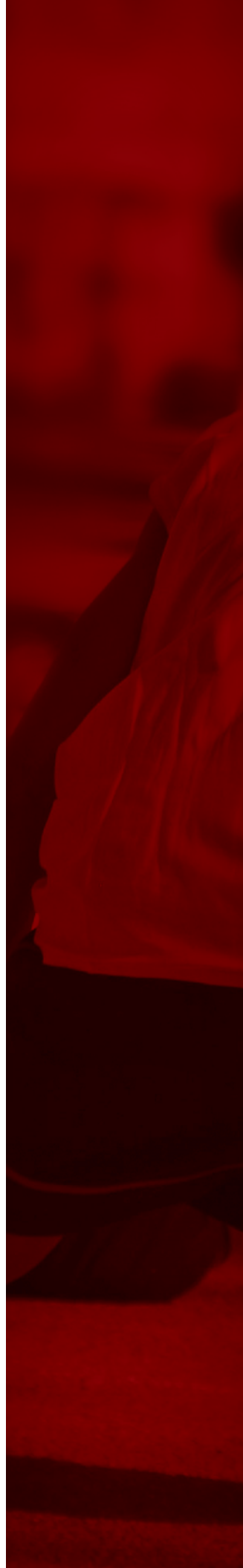
“Within each of us,
there is a mysterious
innate force that
drives us onward. It
wants us to *do* better
and *be* better.”


-Jim Casey 1888-1983

The founder of United Parcel Service, *Jim Casey* understood that children need the love and support of a safe and stable family in order to thrive, and he carefully considered ways to provide that chance. To that end, he established Casey Family Programs in 1966. The foundation continues to work each day in Jim Casey’s spirit of compassion and concern, singularly focused on improving the lives of America’s children.

Jim Casey and his family left a lasting legacy to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families. In addition to Casey Family Programs, other organizations that bear the family name include:

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore
www.aecf.org
and its direct services agency
Casey Family Services
New Haven, Conn.
www.caseyfamilyservices.org
- Marguerite Casey Foundation
Seattle
www.caseygrants.org
- Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
St. Louis
www.jimcaseyyouth.org





“Going Beyond the Vision”
means embracing a future
where all children are
safe, all families are stable
and all communities are
supportive.



GOING BEYOND THE VISION

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GOING BEYOND THE VISION
May 2011

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