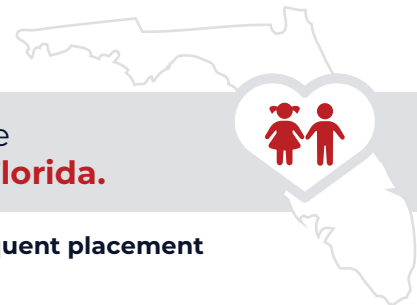




IMPROVING FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION SYSTEMS IN FLORIDA

Laurie Todd-Smith, Ph.D. | June 10, 2024

There are nearly 400,000 children in foster care in the United States, including around **35,000 children in Florida.**



Unfortunately, children in Florida's foster care system experience frequent placement changes, which increases the risk of mental health issues.

ACCORDING TO A 2021 REPORT FROM THE

[Annie E. Casey Foundation](#),

of children who are placed in out-of-home care through the welfare system,

33% have been in more than two placements.



However, adoption and kinship placements can help mitigate this problem. **Unfortunately, not enough children are placed with kin in Florida.**



IN 2021:
9,813 OR 42%
 of foster children were placed with relatives but
10,339 OR 44%
 were placed in non-relative homes.



On average, **1,000** Florida youths age out of foster care each year when they turn 18 and exit the system with little support. Those who age out are more likely to experience homelessness and mental health challenges than children who haven't spent time in foster care. To reduce the number of youths who age out of foster care without finding a forever home, Florida must take action to increase adoptions and reunification.

TO IMPROVE FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION SYSTEMS, PENNSYLVANIA SHOULD:

- ★ Protect the religious liberty of faith-based foster care and adoption providers, such as [Embrace Florida Kids](#) and [Genesis Hopeful Haven](#). Neglecting to protect religious liberty means fewer adoption providers and more children stuck in the system.
- ★ Implement expanded and simplified adoption tax credits for foster families. **Currently, the Florida adoption tax credit is not refundable—taxpayers can only get the refund if they have federal income tax liability.**
- ★ Support and utilize programs that aim to decrease the number of children entering foster care by connecting families in need with churches and communities, such as [CarePortal](#).
- ★ Better support foster parents by establishing comprehensive support programs that include pre-placement training to equip foster parents with the necessary skills to care for children with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- ★ Improve mental and behavioral healthcare for foster children by conducting periodic screenings, providing timely treatment, and passing trauma-informed care legislation like Illinois's [Public Act 099-0927](#).
- ★ Review and eliminate burdensome regulations.
- ★ Improve communication between agencies and foster parents to ensure effective recruitment and matching processes for children and adoptive parents.
- ★ Maximize the functionality and public awareness of data systems like the [Florida Adoption Exchange](#), an online database that allows prospective adoptive parents to create profiles and search for children available for adoption.

For more information, obtain the full report [here](#).