



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
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Rhode Island Making Strides in Keeping Children in Foster Care Connected to Families

RI has made progress in assuring more children are served in families instead of group care.

More work remains, particularly for ensuring children of color and children age 12 and older are placed with families.

New 10-year Data Snapshot with State-by-State Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Shows Progress as National Rates Improve

Providence, RI — Rhode Island increased the percentage of children in the care of DCYF placed with families from 60% in 2007 to 80% in 2017 according to the “Keeping Kids in Families: Trends in Placement of Young People in Foster Care in the United States,” a new data snapshot released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as part of its KIDS COUNT® project.

Using data from the child welfare system across all 50 states and the District of Columbia over a 10-year period to look at how placements for young people in foster care have changed, the report finds that nationwide care systems placed 86% of these children in families in 2017, compared with 81% in 2007. But despite this improvement, the data reveal the group placement rate for teens has remained stagnant, and there are persistent racial disparities for children of all ages in foster care.

Comparing percent of the overall number of children in out-of-home placement placed with foster/kinship families between 2007 and 2017, Rhode Island was the most improved state with a full 20% increase in family placements in the study time period. During this time period, RI moved from 12% of children under 12 in group placement to 3% in 2017. In 2017, RI placed 42% of children in out-of-home care in kinship placements which is a clear strength compared to the national percentage of 32% in the same time period.

Rhode Island continues to place children with families less often than the national norm. For teens in particular, 50% of youth 12 and older

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were placed in non-family placements in 2017. Gains in family-based care have not been experienced equitably across race/ethnic groups in this time period. Though more children are placed with relative and non-relative families, African American children are far less likely than White and Hispanic children to receive a family placement.

“We know that children do best in families, and that’s why it is encouraging to see the decrease in Rhode Island children and youth in group care settings and instead, living with foster families. Despite this important progress, there is more work to do in both the US and in Rhode Island to find foster families (including kinship families) for teens and youth of color”, said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. She continued, “Fortunately, the recently passed Family first Act (new federal law), will provide new policy support and federal resources to states that prioritize focusing on family placements”.

Being part of a family is a basic human need and essential to well-being, especially for children, teenagers, and young adults who are rapidly developing and transitioning to independence, as documented in the Casey Foundation’s 2015 report, [Every Kid Needs a Family](#). The new data suggest a growing consensus among practitioners and policymakers that young people in the child welfare system should live in families. Through the Family First Prevention Services Act, signed into law in 2018, states are empowered to prioritize family placement and high-quality, family-centered settings which produce the best outcomes for young people.

The “Keeping Children in Families” snapshot shows that while Rhode Island has made strides to ensure more children are placed in family settings, the state has more work to do to strengthen family placement options for children of color and children over age 12.

Across the child welfare system in Rhode Island, there is focused attention on improving policies and practice to lower disparities in the rates of family placements among children of color and children age 12 and older. Rhode Island has worked to increase overall foster family recruitment in recent years. It is a critical priority to continue intensive recruitment for families for children of color and older children to avoid placement in congregate care settings.

Key findings from “*Keeping Kids in Families*” include:

- In the US, for teenagers, progress in family placements has been elusive. Nationwide, more than a third of young people in child welfare systems who are 13 and older lived in group placements in 2017 – the same proportion as 10 years ago.
- In the US, a breakdown by race shows that progress is highly uneven. Systems increased the placement rate of white youth in family homes from 81 percent to 87 percent, but outcomes for Latino and African-American children improved by just 3 percent, and by just 1 percentage point for Asian-American children.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT joins the Annie E. Casey Foundation in calling on child welfare systems to use the opportunities afforded by Family First to increase available services to stabilize families. Similarly, states can:

- Prioritize recruitment of kin and foster families for older youth and youth of color in recruitment planning;
- Engage families in decision making, since kin and foster parents should be treated as important members of a child's team;
- Require director approval for non-kin placements.

“Child welfare systems are making progress in keeping children with families, which we know leads to better outcomes for young people,” said Lisa Hamilton, the Casey Foundation's President and CEO. “But systems must do more to find families for teenagers and youth of color. We see success in several states, and other jurisdictions could apply these lessons.”

About Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.