A Campaign to Ensure Bright Futures for Kids in Foster Care

www.fosteringchamps.org
CHAMPS is a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting.

CHAMPS builds on research that shows that loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children.

By improving supports to families and respecting parenting as the primary intervention for children in foster care, children can achieve better outcomes in health, development, education and permanency.
**Campaign Goals**

- **Build a network** of national, state and local partners to lead advocacy efforts for quality foster parenting.

- **Advance state policies** in 20 to 25 states over five years that result in (1) quality caregiving, (2) parents as partners in decision-making, and (3) quality assurance to ensure foster parenting is a priority.

- **Encourage federal policies** to emphasize that children do best in families, such as through fiscal incentives or greater accountability.

- **Strengthen public will** by changing the narrative about foster parents – communicate the vital role that foster parents play in a child’s life.
The Time is Right for a National Campaign

- Adolescent development science shows evidence of importance of family, especially in healing from trauma.
- In hyper-partisan world, growing consensus on need to better support foster parents.
- Growing interest in reducing non-therapeutic group care, need viable alternatives.
- Federal laws require states to support effective foster parenting, but lack accountability mechanisms.
- Increasing examples of best practice can inform design of policy solutions.
- New technologies promote innovation.
Opioid crisis driving up numbers of children entering foster care

Ongoing implementation of policy requiring states to provide youth with more "normal" growing-up experiences while in foster care

Juvenile justice agencies also relying on foster families

Influx of unaccompanied minors

Litigation that requires states to improve foster parent capacity

The Time is Right
Challenges

Too many good foster families leave discouraged. More than half quite within 12 months.

Negative perception of foster parents by the general public and by public agency staff; common concerns that foster parents are “in it for the money.”

Major information gaps exist; no readily available data on how many foster parents are licensed, trained or available.

Few tools to help make good matches of children and caregivers.
Opportunity: Evidence Demonstrates Success is Possible

- Evidence that there are enough, good families to care for children in foster care
- Evidence that systems can implement reforms that will bring in needed families
- Evidence-based models for enhancing skills of caregivers
- Evidence that making the shift is not only affordable, it’s cost-effective
What Success Looks Like

CHAMPS
children need amazing parents

Percent of Children in Foster Care


Kin | Non-Kin Family | Group

3% - 5%

33% - 35%

52% - 54%
National Campaign Partners

Lead Coalition Partners
Co-Chairs: Jeremy Kohomban and Jennifer Rodriguez

Research Partner
The Brookings Institution, Center on Children and Families

Funding Partners
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, The Duke Endowment, Georgia Department of Human Services, Lumos, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Redlich Horwitz Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

State Lead Partners – In development
Parents as partners in decision maker
- Foster parent advisory boards
- Foster parent participation in court proceedings
- Improved access to information, such as education and health

Quality caregiving
- Kinship care: expedited / provisional licensing,
- Peer support
- Effective Training
- Dedicated support workers for foster parents

Quality Assurance
- Census of foster parent capacity of active, diverse, licensed, trained families
- Specialized plans to recruit, train and support foster parents caring for special needs populations
- Modernize foster parent licensing
- Foster parent feedback

Quality foster parenting = Improved outcomes for children and families
Practice Improvements

• Foster Home Calculator determines foster parent needs based on geography, age, gender, race of youth entering care
• Coaching and technical assistance on contract monitoring or provider
• Streamlined the approval process for prospective foster parents
• More than 25 training staff sessions
• Coordinated outreach to improve agency relationships with Native Americans, African American and Latino communities
• Redesigned agency structure and personnel allocation to meet recruitment needs
• Provided leadership development to change culture of agency towards foster parents

Policy Reform

• Legislation introduced to:
  • Enhance foster parents rights to attend family team meetings and court hearings
  • Limit liability of foster parents
  • Require agency to maintain census of foster parents, develop targeted recruitment plans, and report new data

2,000 new foster parents over two years
Activities of the CHAMPS CAMPAIGN

1. Define the problem
2. Create effective messages and recruit influential messengers
3. Develop policy approaches based on research
4. Showcase what works
5. Mobilize communities and life up youth and parent voices
6. Cultivate champions among policymakers
7. Host national and state-based events
8. Achieve policy wins
The CHAMPS Pledge

Foster parents are game-changers for children

Loving, supportive families – birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children.

Children do best in families, and quality foster parenting is key to helping children heal, grow and flourish

Quality foster parenting helps children thrive and succeed in school, relationships and in life.