



What is CHAMPS?

CHAMPS – which stands for Children Need Amazing Parents – is a national policy campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality foster parenting.

The primary goal of CHAMPS is to drive improvements to foster parenting policies throughout the United States. To achieve this, we offer a research-based policy playbook and related tools that encourage and assist policymakers in championing reforms to strengthen foster parenting in their state.

We do our work through partnerships with a wide range of partner organizations, including advocates, foster parents, health professionals, faith-based and community groups, philanthropy and others. With our partners, we employ three key strategies:

1. statewide policy advocacy campaigns,
2. direct technical assistance to decision makers, and
3. targeted advocacy support

All aspects of CHAMPS build on research that shows that loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children. By better supporting foster parents through improved resources and policies, we can ensure children receive that loving, supportive care the need to grow and flourish, while they are in foster care.



CHAMPS Policy Goals

The centerpiece of CHAMPS is its policy playbook, which is grounded in research and builds on best practices such as those generated by system reform efforts such as the Quality Parenting Initiative. The policy playbook is organized around six reform goals. For each goal, the playbook summarizes supporting research and offers strategies and policy examples that align with each of the following goals:

1. strengthen relationships between foster and birth families,
2. implement data-driven recruitment and retention practices,
3. engage foster parents in decision making,
4. provide timely access to trusted dedicated staff and peer support for foster parents,
5. prioritize placements with relatives, and
6. ensure timely access to physical and mental health services.

Why Focus Policy Efforts on Foster Parenting?

Recent events and trends are converging to create an urgency for foster parenting solutions:

- **Increasing caseloads.** News reports are filled with stories about the increase in the number of children entering foster care, driven primarily by the opioid epidemic. After years of decline, the number of children in out-of-home care has increased for four consecutive years.
- **Foster parent shortages.** Many jurisdictions are experiencing a severe shortage of foster homes, resulting in children sleeping in hotel rooms and child welfare offices. Contributing

to this shortage is the high turnover rate among foster parents, estimated to be between 30 and 50 percent nationwide. Foster parents often cite inadequate support and preparation as primary reasons for quitting.

- **New expectations.** The recently enacted Family First Prevention Services Act emphasizes the importance of stable, supportive family-based care, including with birth and adoptive parents, kinship caregivers and foster parents. In particular, the Act seeks to curtail the use

of congregate care for children, placing new emphasis on the importance of family foster care for children and youth and seeking to remove barriers to the licensure of kin.

- **Growing evidence of what works.** Promising policy and best practice examples offer evidence of what works to make a difference. We know more now than ever before about the importance of stable, quality caregiving to the health, safety and well-being of children.

Campaign Leadership and Partners

Launched in June 2017, CHAMPS brings together research, policy expertise and influential stakeholders that collectively encourage and support policy change efforts. Key components of the campaign include:

- **A national steering committee** that serves as the leadership hub of the campaign. It is comprised of eight organizations representing key stakeholder groups such as youth, parents, service providers, advocates, and faith-based and community partners.
- **A national research partner**, the Brookings Institution, contributes its research expertise so that national and state campaign partners can utilize evidence-based information to advocate for quality foster parenting. The Brookings Institution also serves as the campaign's primary convener, hosting round tables and other events to engage influential leaders in the campaign's activities.
- **A child welfare leaders' advisory board** comprised of child welfare directors and other national experts who advise CHAMPS on policy and serve as spokespersons for the campaign about the importance of quality foster parenting.
- **A state legislative leaders' advisory group** that brings together state legislators with a keen interest in supporting foster parents, including legislators who have personal experience as foster parents. They advise the campaign and utilize CHAMPS technical resources to advance policy efforts in their states.
- **A network of state-based organizations** that mobilize and direct state campaign activities, including public awareness and policy advocacy to advance one or more policy reforms.
- **A network of philanthropy partners** that support the state and national campaign components, serve as key advisors on the campaign's strategy, and engage in campaign activities.
- **Staff and consultants**, including technical experts who support the steering committee and other campaign partners and coordinate all aspects of the campaign's policy and communications activities.



How CHAMPS Can Help in Your State

The campaign offers a wide range of opportunities for how to leverage CHAMPS to improve foster parenting policies in your state. Activities that CHAMPS can help lead or support include:

- Public events that can include national experts to raise awareness and build public interest
- Strategic communications through media about the vital importance of quality caregiving to children's health, development, education and permanency
- Briefings or technical assistance engagements to share research and analysis about what works to strengthen foster parenting
- Assistance with policy development and advocacy strategies to promote data-driven, innovate policy approaches
- Direct technical assistance to agencies and legislators seeking solutions to recruiting and retaining quality foster parents
- Stakeholder outreach and coalition building to help raise awareness and understanding of the importance of quality foster parenting in your states.



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WITH QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:
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Getting Started: Key Resources and Contact Information

Looking to spark improvements to foster parenting in your state? Let CHAMPS help. Learn more about our campaign and how to get involved on our website and/or contact us to discuss. CHAMPS offers a range of resource to help identify and implement policy solutions, including:

- CHAMPS **Playbook**
- CHAMPS Policy Solutions **Brief** and **Infographic**
- CHAMPS Animated video (**English version**) (**Spanish version**)
- CHAMPS-Family First Act **issue brief**
- CHAMPS **Technical Assistance** overview
- CHAMPS Research Reviews (**bibliography** and **highlights**)
- CHAMPS: How to **Get Involved**
- Foster Parent Appreciation **Toolkit**
- CHAMPS Campaign **Partners**
- See here for our most **frequently requested resources** including:
Connect to CHAMPS on Facebook: www.facebook.com/fosteringCHAMPS
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With questions, please contact: info@fosteringCHAMPS.org