



Over 110 Amazing Foster Families Recognized During National Foster Care Month, Policy Progress Being Made *13 States Advance Better Foster Parenting Policies*

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WASHINGTON, May 29, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- During National Foster Care Month, this May, the CHAMPS campaign [recognized](#) over 110 outstanding foster families nationwide who help children in foster care. Furthermore, a [state policy analysis](#) conducted by CHAMPS staff found that 13 states advanced 20 new laws or governor actions to improve foster parenting policies for the future, and another 17 bills are under consideration.

May is National Foster Care Month, designated by Congress as a time to recognize the many people who support the well-being of children in foster care. This week, under the leadership of Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and 23 bipartisan colleagues, the Senate passed a resolution to recognize May as National Foster Care Month and May 31 as National Foster Parent Appreciation Day.

The bipartisan [resolution](#) describes the multiple challenges facing the approximately 425,000 children in the foster care system, and recognizes the efforts of all those who work to improve the system. It resolves that the Senate should enact policies to improve the lives of these children. Policy goals include the achievement of permanent homes and the successful transition of youths who are aging out of the system into adulthood.

The resolution also marks May 31 as National Foster Parent Appreciation Day, describing it “as an opportunity to recognize the efforts of foster parents to provide safe and loving care for children in need and raise awareness about the increasing need for foster parents to serve in their communities.

“Foster parents are truly the unsung heroes who are holding up the US child welfare safety net,” said CHAMPS Campaign Director Hope Cooper. “Foster parents step forward to help when children and families are in crisis, and do everything from providing food and shelter to mentoring families so children can return home safely. When that’s not possible, many foster families adopt children from foster care. Where would our children in foster care be without the love, guidance and perseverance of America’s foster parents?”

For the past month, the CHAMPS campaign and its partners have led a national effort to honor more than 110 specific foster families for their service to children and families. In addition to caring for children, these parents play important roles as coaches and mentors to birth families. They also support the child's transition to a permanent family, which may be through reunification, adoption or guardianship. These stories and photos, submitted by foster families, social workers, former foster youth and others, are shareable through social media and highlight and thank the many families who step up for children.

CHAMPS, which stands for Children Need Amazing Parents, is a national campaign to support and strengthen quality foster parenting through policy change at the national, state and local levels. CHAMPS provides research-based information and tools to encourage and assist decision makers in strengthening foster parenting in their communities. CHAMPS identifies six policy priorities. Key resources from CHAMPS include a policy playbook, a Guide on Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention, and the Foster Family Story Project.

The CHAMPS team recently reviewed efforts to improve foster parenting policies across the US. The state policy update highlights legislative activity as well as executive and administrative actions related to recognizing and

supporting current foster parents as well as recruiting and training new foster families. Thirteen states advanced 20 laws or Governor actions to improve foster parenting policies: Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Virginia, and West Virginia. Twelve states still have pending bills: California, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. CHAMPS applauds the many policymakers who are committed to supporting foster families and helping to ensure that children in foster care receive the highest quality parenting and experience the best possible outcomes.

CHAMPS Policy Priorities

1. Support Relationships between Birth and Foster 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
5. Prioritize Placements with Family Members and Other Family Connections
6. Ensure Timely Access to Physical and Mental Health Services

Follow along with CHAMPS with the hashtag, #ThanksFosterFamilies, and learn more about the amazing families who step forward when children are in crisis, and the policies that could help bring about better outcomes.

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