



Because we're stronger together

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Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Every Kid Needs a Family* KIDS COUNT Policy Report
GENERATIONS UNITED'S STATEMENT

The new KIDS COUNT policy report, *Every Kid Needs a Family: Giving Children in the Child Welfare System the Best Chance for Success*, released today, makes the case for family over group or congregate care. The report found that 90 percent of children in family foster care "like who they are living with" and "feel part of the family." Additionally, "rates of positive experiences are highest for children who live with kin."

Every child needs a family, and kin are a key resource that should be considered first. Children raised in kinship care, or what are commonly referred to as grandfamilies, fare better than those placed in the care of non-relatives. They are more likely to report feeling loved, achieve stability, stay connected to their brothers and sisters and understand their roots and culture. They are also more likely to have a couch to crash on when they're too old to be in the foster care system.

The report found that too many children in the child welfare system are living in group placements at seven to 10 times the cost of placing a child with a family. Those dollars could be invested in relative caregivers to nurture and care for children in families at a lower cost.

Today, about 400,000 children are in foster care. Twenty-seven percent of them, according to the *State of Grandfamilies in America: 2014*, are among the 2.5 million raised in grandfamilies or kinship care. For every child being raised by a relative in the foster care system, about 23 children are being raised by relatives outside of the system with no parent present in the home.

These caregivers keep families together and save taxpayers \$4 billion a year.

Through our National Center on Grandfamilies, we work to enact policies and promote programs, like kinship navigators and respite care, that help grandfamilies address challenges. Research shows that programs like these can reduce costs and increase permanency, while resulting in fewer days in child welfare custody and lower rates of foster care reentry.

The KIDSCOUNT policy report found that one in seven kids under the care of the child welfare system are in a group setting. Group placements "remove children from the familiar routines of school, neighborhood and activities, and siblings are likely to be separated, especially if they are of different genders. "

The report, instead, recommends that "child welfare agencies should exhaust all means to find available kin and provide support that allows relatives to properly care for children, removing any barriers that would keep kin from being licensed and financially supported as foster parents," and we agree.

After all, young people may age out of a system, but they never age out of a family.

Donna Butts
Executive Director
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