

# How Are the Children?

**Inspiring Hope.**

**Renewing Vision.**

**Influencing Action.**

A Casey Family Programs Report





Dear Friends,

What are the elements that all children need in their lives to help them thrive? The love of a parent or caregiver. The support and encouragement of someone they trust and admire. The knowledge that no matter how tough it gets, there is always a welcoming and safe place to call home.

These should be every child's birthright. But we know far too many children in our country face the challenges of growing up without the stability of a loving and permanent family.

That is beginning to change.

Across our country, there is a growing movement by child welfare agencies to improve how they serve the approximately 463,000 children in foster care and the many more who are at risk of entering the system. Agencies are:

- Building hope by surrounding struggling families with community support to help prevent abuse and neglect at the first warning signs so more children can remain safely at home.
- Pursuing a vision to reduce the amount of time children spend in the foster care system and improve the services they receive.
- Taking action to find safe, stable and permanent families for more children, whether through reunifications when appropriate, placement with relatives, adoption or long-term guardianship.

At Casey Family Programs, we are working with child welfare systems in nearly every state to keep children safe, strengthen families and improve the lives of children in foster care.

I'm confident Jim Casey would approve. The founder of Casey Family Programs, Jim gave us the inspiration and means to pursue a mission to provide and improve—and ultimately prevent the need for—foster care. We fulfill that mission today through our 2020 Strategy for America's Children.

The goal of our 2020 Strategy is to safely reduce the need for foster care in our communities by working to provide safe, permanent families for more children. By 2020, we believe this effort will safely reduce the number of children who experience foster care by 50 percent and improve the education, employment and mental health support for those who remain.

Today, there are 9.3 percent fewer children in foster care compared to 2005, a promising start. This report highlights the approaches that already are making a difference—and what's at stake for vulnerable children and families if we lose sight of the opportunities before us.

The progress during the past few years is encouraging, but also fragile. In today's economic climate, there is tremendous pressure on federal, state and local policymakers to cut support for the very programs making a difference, when what is most needed is the ability for child welfare systems to invest in what works.

I hope you will join with Casey Family Programs in pursuing the vision of a country in which all children have the love, support and family they need to reach their potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Severson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gary R. Severson  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*



Dear Friends,

Five years ago, Casey Family Programs set an ambitious goal for the future, one to better the lives of the more than 500,000 children who were in the nation's foster care system at that time.

We called it our 2020 Strategy for America's Children. At its heart is a fundamental question: What can all of us do to ensure that every child is raised in a safe, loving and permanent family?

Across the country, child welfare systems are providing answers that address their own distinct needs and circumstances. What has emerged is not a single solution, but approaches that center around two principal beliefs:

- We can keep more children safe from abuse and neglect by strengthening families and addressing the root causes of maltreatment.
- We can provide children already in foster care the safe, permanent families they need through an intentional relentless focus on achieving safe and timely family reunification, discharge to relatives, adoption, or legal guardianship (including subsidized guardianship).

For some children, foster care is a necessary and appropriate safe haven. But foster care should be considered a temporary intervention used to protect a child from imminent harm.

While foster care may help save the life of a child, it never should be a way of life for a child.

We know that children who grow up in foster care and then age out of the system are much more likely to face daunting challenges as adults. They are more likely to experience homelessness and incarceration. They are also more likely to be undereducated, unemployed and to struggle with untreated mental illness.

We also know that the stability that results from living in a safe, caring and permanent family contributes greatly to a child's well-being and is a predictor for that child's success into adulthood. It is our belief that every child in America should experience this healing power of a safe, stable and permanent family.

This is why Casey Family Programs' 2020 Strategy is based on working in partnership with child welfare jurisdictions to prevent abuse and neglect and provide safe, permanent families for all children. We believe this work will help safely reduce our nation's foster care population by 50 percent by 2020. We already have seen that number reduced from more than 500,000 to approximately 460,000. But make no mistake —our 2020 Strategy is not simply about a numerical target. Our work is about helping create a supportive environment in communities that helps families keep their children safe and increases their chances for successful outcomes in education, employment and mental health.

It is so heartening to see that as the number of America's children in foster care has declined by more than 9 percent since 2005, so has the rate at which children re-enter the child welfare system because of a recurrence of abuse or neglect.

This tells us that we can find safe, permanent homes for vulnerable children and that we can keep America's promise of opportunity and hope for all of our children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William C. Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William C. Bell  
*President and CEO*

## Inspiring Hope. Renewing Vision. Influencing Action.

“How Are the Children?” introduces you to real families, dedicated individuals and forward-thinking organizations that deserve much of the credit for the improvements being made in child welfare. Their commitment, leadership and collaboration will make it possible to realize a vision of every child being raised in a safe, strong and permanent family.

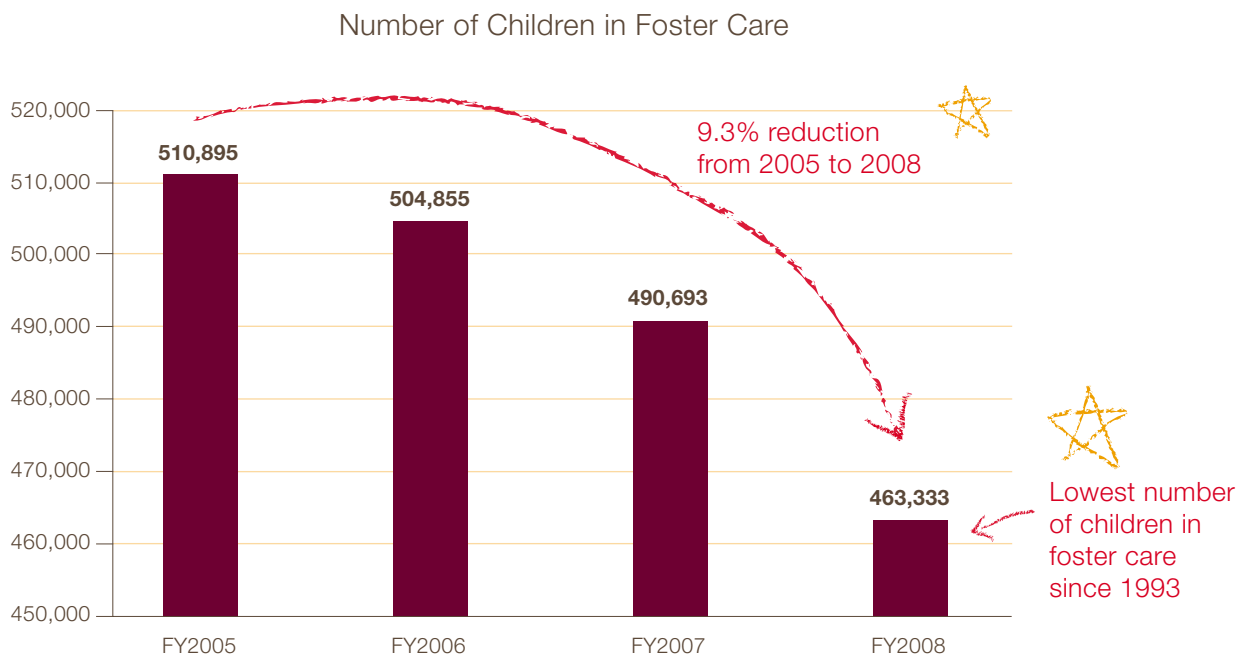
Children who grow up in stable homes have a much better chance to grow into happy, confident and successful adults. We can make that happen by ensuring that no child enters foster care unnecessarily or stays in foster care longer than necessary.

Since 2005, the number of children in foster care has been safely reduced by more than 9 percent. The reduction from 2007 to 2008 alone was 5.6 percent. The number of children in foster care in 2008 was the lowest it has been in 15 years, and 2008 also marks the first time in 26 years that the number of children leaving foster care was greater than the number entering it.

The stories in this report illustrate the progress reflected in those numbers.

The first story originates out of Casey Family Programs’ Seattle field office. Our foundation cut its teeth on providing high-quality foster care services and has a core of dedicated social workers who now specialize in finding safe and permanent homes for the teenagers in foster care they are so honored to serve.

When we assist public child welfare systems in their efforts to ensure permanent homes for children, we don’t just talk about how to get that work done. We demonstrate it by doing the work ourselves with our own caseload.



Source: Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fiscal years, ending Sept. 30.

The second story, which features three families from Hawaii, is an example of improvements occurring in a child welfare system as a result of strong leadership and the public’s insistence for change. Hawaii now focuses strongly on strategies that keep children safe at home with their parents. This story illustrates how Casey Family Programs assists public child welfare agencies to find solutions that work best for them.

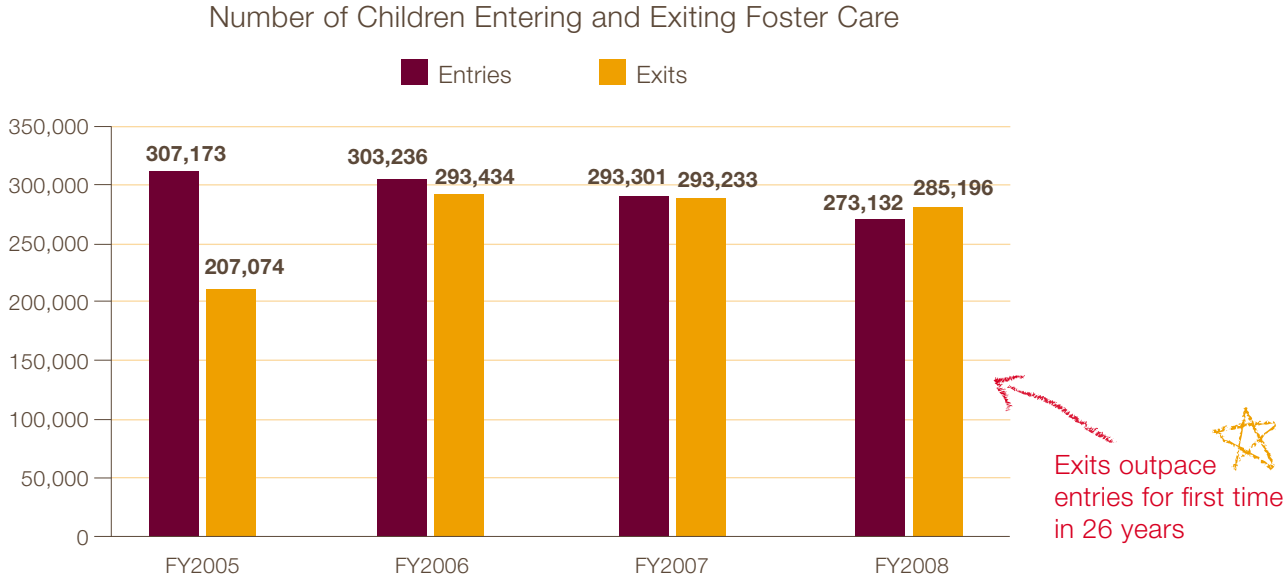
The third story, out of Franklin County, Ohio, features a family being kept safely together with the help of community services. These services are possible because Ohio is one of five states able to spend federal child welfare dollars in ways that communities deem most effective.

In economic times like these, it is more crucial than ever for the federal government to give child welfare systems the ability to invest in prevention and early intervention strategies that are effective at keeping children safe at home and out of foster care.

The report also features a story about the efforts of Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer to build a strong partnership between the judicial and child welfare systems in that state. Justice Baer and other leaders recognize the important role played by the courts in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the child welfare system.

Casey Family Programs is building critical partnerships of our own because we realize that it takes involvement by many to get this work done. We are proud to feature profiles of a few of our dedicated partners in this report.

“How Are the Children?” is intended to inspire hope, renew vision and influence action in improving the safety and well-being of America’s children. We must inspire hope so people believe that success is possible. We must renew vision so that America can be a better place for vulnerable children and families. And we must influence action so that the tremendous progress we are seeing can continue—and all children will have a safe, caring and permanent family to call their own.



Source: Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fiscal years, ending Sept. 30.



# Safe and Permanent Families

## Casey Family Programs Emphasizes Lifelong Families to Improve the Lives of Children in Foster Care

Vonnie Richardson was determined not to give up—not on herself, and not on her two sons.

Finally, she was free—free from the crack cocaine addiction that had purloined 20 years of her life, and free from the jail cell where she had spent the previous year.

While her boys, 15-year-old Junior and 13-year-old Isaiah, lived with a relative and later with a foster family, Richardson was doing whatever was asked of her to get them back.

“I wasn’t raised by my own mother,” she explains. “Instead, I was raised by family members. I was in foster care. I made a vow to myself that I never would give up on my own kids the way I felt my mom gave up on me, no matter the trials and tribulations.”

True to her vow, Richardson underwent regular drug and alcohol evaluations, submitted to random urinalysis testing three times a week, and took classes that helped her become a more successful parent. She was diligent about being on time for every appointment, especially

the four-hour supervised visits she had with her sons twice a week.

She kept meticulous notes documenting every call and each meeting she had with a representative from the child welfare system. Yet there were many times she would walk away from those contacts less hopeful than before that she ever would be able to reunite her family.

After the state of Washington referred Richardson’s case to Casey Family Programs’ Seattle field office, she heard a message of hope from social worker James Williams. He told Richardson that he wasn’t trying to keep her kids from her.

“At first, I didn’t trust him,” Richardson recalls.

But she could, and eventually she did.

Casey Family Programs, which had built a legacy on providing high quality long-term foster care for children and youth, has shifted its emphasis in recent years toward finding a permanent family for the youth it serves.

Vonnie Richardson and her sons, Isaiah (left) and Junior, are back on a stable path as a reunited family.

Research shows—and experience in the field demonstrates—that children raised in a permanent home fare better than those who do not have that kind of stability in their lives.

Children living in foster care are at higher risk than other children for poverty, poor educational outcomes and a range of physical and mental health disorders that can last long after their stays in foster care. For example, young adults who experienced foster care as children are just as likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as U.S. war veterans of Vietnam and Iraq.

These problems are partially due to adversities children experience before entering foster care—but not entirely. Some children in foster care report that they struggle with feelings of inadequacy and disrupted relationships, which researchers believe are compounded by multiple foster care placements, frequent school changes, separation from siblings, and infrequent visitation with parents and relatives.

It is no wonder that the shift away from long-term foster care and toward permanency is spreading across the country. Public child welfare agencies are more determined than ever to give all children the benefit of the stability that comes with being part of a family they forever can call their own. More agencies are implementing innovative practices that make finding permanent homes for children in foster care an urgent priority. In addition, many dependency courts have adopted bold policies that are speeding up the finding of permanent homes for children, with an emphasis on reunification of families.

The results are encouraging. The average length of time that children are spending in foster care is decreasing, and for the first time in 26 years, the number of children exiting foster care is higher than the number of those entering.

Casey Family Programs has worked hard to help its own staff make the same kind of cultural shifts and practice changes that it is assisting public child welfare agencies make all across America. By undergoing specialized trainings, piloting innovative permanency practices, working more closely with birth families and soliciting more input from foster youth, Casey Family Programs staff has risen to the same challenges that the foundation has asked public child welfare agencies to take on.

Even in cases where reuniting youth with birth parents is not possible, Casey Family Programs is working with relatives to maintain positive and productive family ties that will benefit youth later in life and help them appreciate who they are.

Casey Family Programs has set a goal for 2010 of achieving permanency for 30 percent of the children it serves. The Seattle field office is setting the standard within the foundation for meeting those targets, having achieved permanency for more than one-third of the youth in its total caseload last year. Foundation-wide, the number of permanencies has more than doubled from 2006 to 2009.

But Casey Family Programs' work isn't about numbers. It's about doing what is best for the youth it serves and improving their chances



to achieve success. It's about strengthening families and, when safe and appropriate to do so, reuniting those that have been separated.

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Casey Family Programs, which had built its legacy on providing high quality long-term foster care, has evolved its work to where the top priority now is finding a safe, strong and permanent family for every youth it serves.

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Reunited with her two sons in 2009, Richardson finally is able to reflect calmly on the past and look optimistically to the future. She sits on a sofa inside the family's Seattle home, which has a gallery of photos of her children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews taped to the wall above the fireplace. Her two boys, both on the shy side, are doing their homework at the dining room table, a timer ticking off the 30 minutes that their mother prescribed as the minimum time they needed to study.

There were times Richardson had to wonder whether she ever would get to this point. She recalls special weekends when her boys would get to leave their foster home to spend time with her, unsupervised, in a motel south of Seattle. They shared a lot of laughs, but also tears.

She would try to reassure them: "Mama is really trying. Stick with me." And the boys would say, "Hurry up. How much longer is it going to take and stuff?"

"It hurt," Richardson says. "It hurt a lot."

Richardson found advocates in James Williams, state social workers and the Casey Family Programs foster home where the boys had been placed. The foster mother helped Richardson keep tabs on the growth of Junior and Isaiah, and she supported the plan to reunite the family.

Casey Family Programs assisted Richardson in overcoming a final barrier to reuniting her family—helping her secure the Section 8 home where the family now lives together. Although the family is reunited officially, the Seattle field office continues to provide services, including food vouchers, a peer group for the boys, and help in obtaining beds so Junior and Isaiah no longer have to sleep on mattresses on the bedroom floor.

In the Richardson dining room, the 30-minute homework timer goes off and Junior heads to the kitchen to make himself a sandwich. Isaiah heads to the sofa and nuzzles his mother.

"I try to be the best mom I can be," Richardson says. "Nobody's perfect, and I certainly am not. But to be a single mom, and to be someone who has recovered from a crack addiction, I give myself the utmost respect. No mother loves her kids any more than I love these two."



# Keeping Families Together

## Hawaii Improves Its Child Welfare System by Respecting the Bonds of *Ohana*

In a place called Paradise, a rambunctious 3-year-old boy is captivated by a banyan tree shading a spot along the shore.

He tries to smoosh himself within the valleys of the tree's snaking trunks. When he realizes he can't fit, he paws at the crevices with a stick he found on the ground.

It's nearing sunset but Alaka'i Loando isn't ready to call it a day. He's visiting Ala Moana Beach Park on Oahu with his baby brother, big sister and mother. The family often spends time here together, making the short trek from their two-bedroom apartment in Honolulu.

"I feel like the richest person in the world," says Cathy Siu, mother of the three. "As long as I have my kids—as long as we are all together—I feel like there is nothing more that I need."

Hawaii has not always been paradise for Siu and her family. On the day Alaka'i was born, child protective services arrived at the hospital, removed him from his mother and placed him in emergency foster care. Siu had tested

positive for methamphetamine. The teen sister, Kaila, was placed with her grandmother.

"Having my baby taken away from me at the hospital, that was just the most horrible feeling, one I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy," Siu says. "I definitely don't want something like that to ever happen again."

Hawaiian culture puts *ohana* (family) above all else. Yet Hawaii's child welfare system once was removing children at four times the national average. Removals occurred not only when there was substantiated evidence of child abuse or neglect, but also when a determination was made that a high or even moderate threat of maltreatment existed. Children were being removed because Hawaii could not offer alternatives to keep children safe at home—alternatives that respect *ohana*.

But a new sun has risen in Hawaii. The state's child welfare system is proving that progress is possible when agency leadership commits to safely reducing the number of children in foster care and when community *kahunas* support the reforms.

Cathy Siu (second from right) and her children (from left) Kaila Siu, 16, Alaka'i Loando, 3, and Keahi Siu, 1, enjoy family outings at the beach.

The child welfare system in Hawaii now is helping families solve their own problems, which means parents like Siu are given a chance to demonstrate that they can keep their children safe while raising them at home, thus giving children the best chance to thrive. Siu has taken on the challenge, graduating from a 10-month substance abuse treatment program to studying toward an associate's degree in culinary arts.

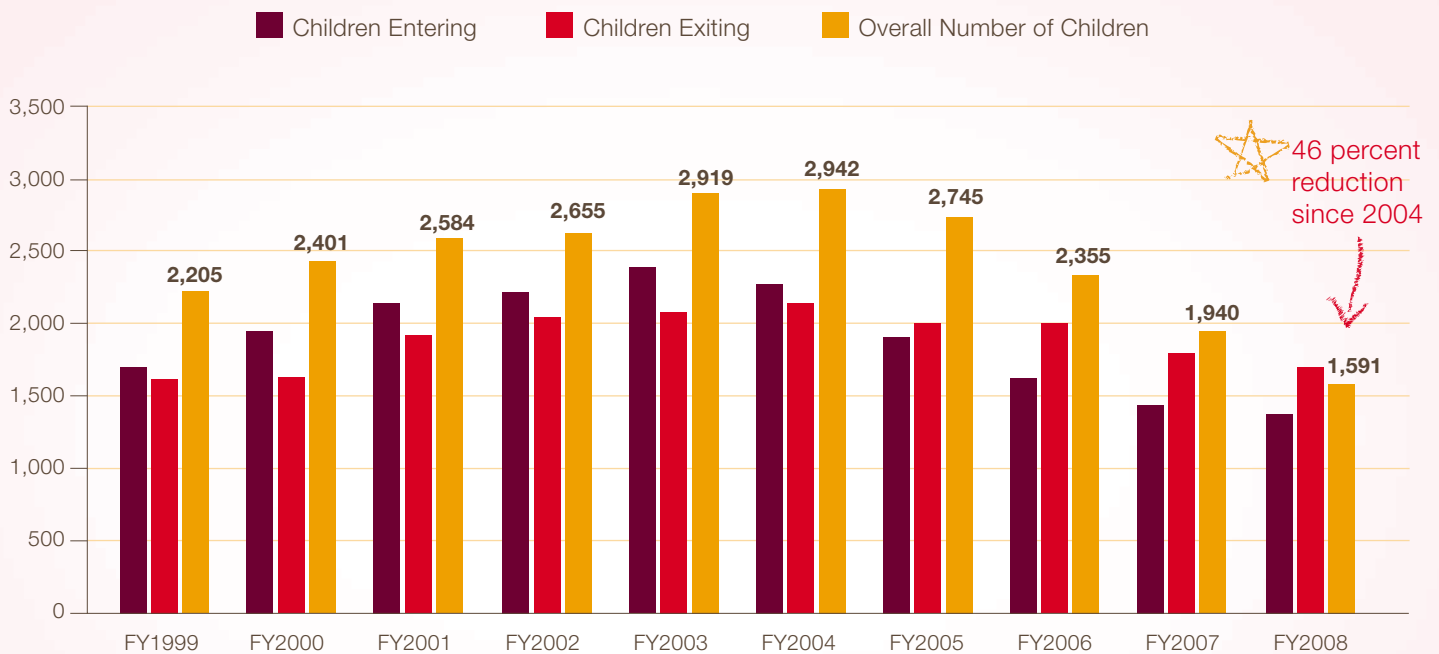
Hawaii has put a priority on prevention and early intervention practices that reduce the need for foster care, partnering with community agencies that provide voluntary services to strengthen vulnerable families. The state also is employing aggressive strategies to find a safe and permanent home for children already in foster care—ideally by reunifying the family.

“Children are hard-wired, as we all are, to be attached to our families,” says Lillian Koller, who has overseen the reforms since becoming director of Hawaii’s Department of Human Services in 2003.

Progress in child welfare happens when leaders get behind a deliberate plan and the public demands that community services are plentiful enough to support it.

Since then, the state has instituted the well-tested practice of differential response, which

Foster Care Caseload Trends: Hawaii



Source: Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fiscal years, ending Sept. 30. Overall number of children is measured on Sept. 30 of each year.

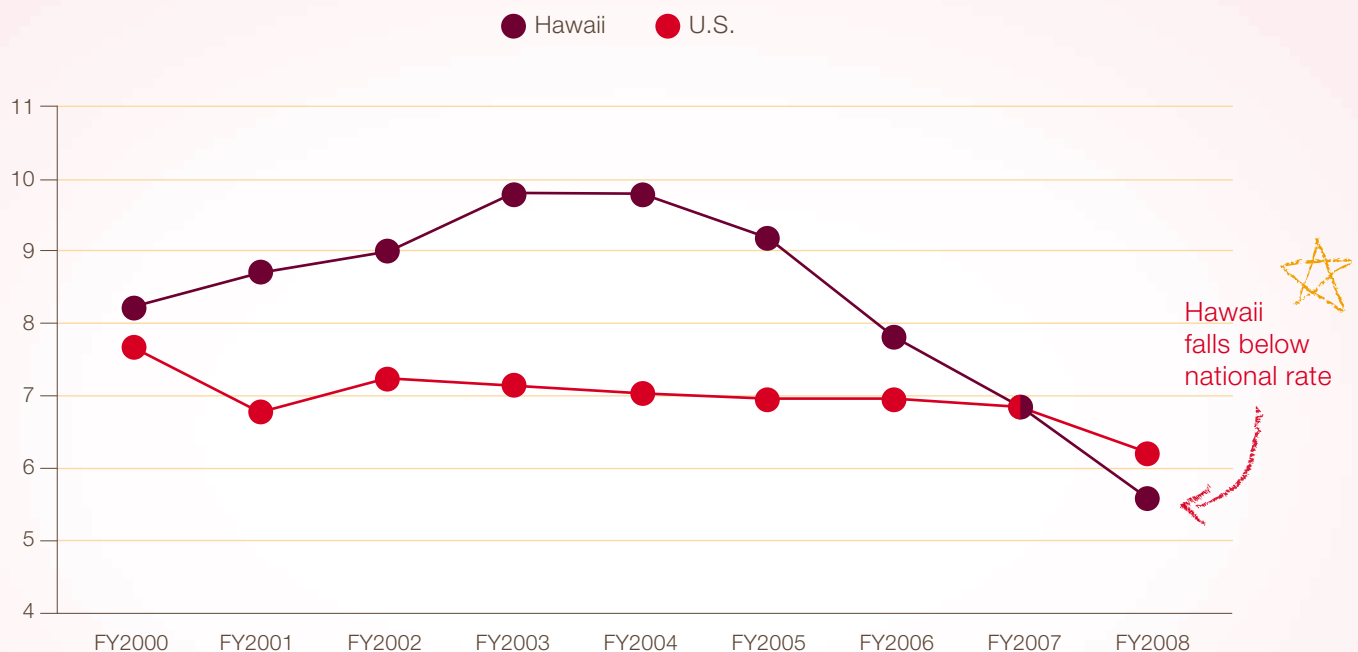
diverts child protection cases into voluntary services for families. Community providers are offering “*ohana* conferences,” meetings where family members and service providers sit and discuss how best to keep a child safe in ways the family can support. Backed by a new state law, the child welfare system also is focusing on finding relatives to care for any children who cannot be reunified with their parents, as opposed to placing them with people they don’t know inside a foster home.

The result of Hawaii’s reforms is that since 2004, the number of children in foster care has been safely reduced by almost half. Hawaii has one of the lowest rates in the country for child maltreatment recurrence—the rate at which children who have been victims of abuse

or neglect experience another incident within six months. Another result of the reforms is that the system has become more equitable for Native Hawaiian children. Several years ago, they were twice as likely to be in foster care as children of other backgrounds, while today the rates are about the same.

Casey Family Programs supports and assists Hawaii’s pursuit of change, just as it does in nearly every state in the country. Last year, Casey Family Programs helped Hawaii start “permanency roundtables,” which are aimed at moving children considered stuck in long-term foster care into a permanent home. In 2008, Casey Family Programs sponsored a statewide summit that brought together Hawaiian elders with service providers, educators, civic clubs

Rate of Children in Foster Care: Hawaii vs. U.S.



Rate based on number per 1,000 children in population.

Source: Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fiscal years, ending Sept. 30.

and other stakeholders around the needs of children and families. And Casey Family Programs helped the state obtain a federal grant to expand *ohana* conferencing.

The progress in Hawaii illustrates the change that can happen in child welfare when strong leaders back a deliberate plan, and when the public demands that community services are plentiful enough to support that plan.

Koller is confident Hawaii can maintain its momentum. “This will go on because no one will let the system go back to what it was. It’s the people’s system now, not ours.”

The people’s system has reunited Jeremy Kamalani with his mother, who was with him to witness his first steps at 10 months. Jady

Kamalani-Quitog, 18, and her mother, Jadeen Kamalani, have accepted the offer of voluntary services to ensure Jeremy’s safety.

The family meets twice a month with Karen Chan, a case manager with Catholic Charities Hawaii. “She doesn’t judge us,” Jadeen Kamalani says. “She might go with us to the park and actually play with Jeremy.”

Sometimes a family just needs advocates. Letitia Lavoie has several, including EPIC Ohana, another community agency offering voluntary services to families involved in the system. Lavoie is making up for lost time, having spoiled her opportunity to play dotting mother on her oldest son, Roland, now 20.



Jady Kamalani-Quitog (left) is raising her son, Jeremy, with the help of her mother, Jadeen Kamalani.



She became addicted to methamphetamine, losing her home and her sons. Her younger sons, Philip and Eric, bounced around for five years, living with relatives before being placed in foster care. After her father tracked her down living on a beach, Lavoie appeared before a dependency court judge and committed to getting her life together—and her boys back.

“I needed help and help was right in front of me,” she says. “With the right support, I knew I could do what was needed to be reunited with my kids.”

Her turnaround included undergoing treatment for her addiction, taking classes on parenting and participating in *ohana* conferences.

Now reunited with Philip and Eric, she takes interest, pride and pleasure in tracking their activities in and out of school. Philip is active with the Waianae High School’s prestigious Junior ROTC program, while Eric is a middle school honor student who plays point guard on his basketball team. Lavoie is in school, too, taking liberal arts classes at the local community college.

“It’s great to be with my family again,” Philip says. “It’s a bunch better than being in a foster home. My mother understands what it means to me to be in ROTC and what it means to be in high school in general. She’s supportive but also gives me my space. Everything right now is perfect.”



Letitia Lavoie (right) touches base with her son, Eric, before he heads to basketball practice.



Lavoie (left) chats with her son, Philip, on the campus of his high school where he is active in Junior ROTC.







# Investing in What Works

## Ohio Families Grow Stronger as Federal Dollars Are Spent on Prevention

Jim and Tina Love and their teenage sons, Sheridan and Mark, have a host of angels looking out for them.

First, there's a large collection of angel figurines displayed on shelves in the living room of the family's Columbus, Ohio, home. Then there's the social services network in Franklin County, Ohio, that has helped turn an explosive home situation into one that suits the family surname.

"Sometimes it seems like everyone in the state of Ohio is working with us," says Jim Love, who keeps close a stack of business cards from community providers. "They've gotten us the programs we needed."

After being alerted to aggression in the home between Jim and Sheridan, Franklin County was able to defuse the situation without ever having to place Sheridan in foster care. The county benefits from having the ability to invest federal child welfare dollars in community services that strengthen families while keeping children safe at home.

Most federal child welfare dollars (Title IV-E) are restricted to being spent on foster care services. But Franklin is one of 18 counties in Ohio—and Ohio is one of five states along with California, Florida, Indiana and Oregon—with a waiver that lifts the funding restrictions.

Casey Family Programs believes that children and families are better served when child welfare systems are given the ability to spend Title IV-E dollars on services that prevent the need for foster care and improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The progress made in the handful of communities granted Title IV-E waivers provides a glimpse into what is possible when existing resources are committed to ensuring that children have a safe, strong and permanent family.

In this era of scarce public dollars, child welfare systems should be given the ability to direct their resources toward prevention and early intervention services that address the root causes of child abuse and neglect. These types of services already exist in the

Columbus teenager Sheridan Love (on bicycle) has the support of his family behind him—mother Tina (left), brother Mark and father Jim—as well as the backing of Franklin County, Ohio.

community—substance abuse or mental health treatment for the parent or child, adequate housing, affordable child care, in-home parent coaching—and are proven effective at strengthening families.

In Franklin County, the average number of children per year placed outside the home has been reduced by 29 percent from 2006 to 2009. Last year's number of 1,815 represented the fewest children in county custody in two decades. The county experienced this progress even as the number of referrals and investigations increased 12 percent in 2009.

“We have the ability to deploy our financial resources and wrap our services around principles that we believe in—separate of any outside mandates,” says Eric Fenner, executive director of Franklin County Children Services. “In Franklin County, that means we have a public child welfare agency that is properly aligned with what our community values, and that’s keeping families together.”

To keep his family together, Jim Love needed to respond more appropriately to his oldest son’s outbursts.

“Sheridan would refuse to go to school and he wouldn’t mind me,” Jim said. “He would tell me to go to hell or throw things at me. He would punch holes in the wall. I’d just snap and start punching. By the time my mind caught up with my body and told me to stop, it was too late.”

Jim’s rage subsided after he and Tina learned that Sheridan’s behaviors were influenced by previously undiagnosed developmental delays. Jim and Tina took classes to learn how to control their anger and how to more successfully parent their strong-willed and strong-bodied teenager.

Sheridan, now 17, began regular counseling that Jim says has done wonders in teaching his son self-control.

“When Sheridan gets bad, now he just goes to his bedroom and shuts the door,” Jim said. “When I get mad, I have learned either to take off in my truck or take a walk—maybe go to a friend’s house and talk with them for a while. When I come home, Sheridan and I apologize to one another and everything is wonderful again.”

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**Children benefit when child welfare systems have the ability to invest federal dollars in prevention strategies that strengthen their families while remaining safe at home.**

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Under the Title IV-E waiver, Franklin County has contracted with two community agencies to manage a share of its cases. The Love family’s case was referred to National Youth Advocate Program (NYAP).

Soon after getting the case, NYAP paid to have Jim and Mark live in a motel while Tina and Sheridan remained home. During those two weeks of separation, NYAP set up the necessary services for the family.

“We all needed that time to calm down,” Jim says. “When I was away, I missed my wife and I missed Sheridan. Mark and I talked a lot, and we felt the same way about what we wanted for our family. It seemed like the family got closer when we got back together.”

Shawn Holt, Ohio state director for NYAP, describes another case in which 14 children were being raised in a home in deplorable condition. The health department was set to condemn the house, leaving the family homeless. Using Title IV-E dollars, NYAP paid for the family to live in a rental property and refurbish the family house into a safe and livable condition.

Had Franklin County lacked the flexibility to spend federal dollars to keep the family together, Holt says it is “likely those 14 kids would have been placed outside the family, and it’s highly unlikely that all 14 would have remained together.”

In the Love home, on the shelves displaying the angel figurines is an urn with grandma’s ashes and a mug with a photo of Sheridan and Mark at a young age. Mark, now 14, explains that this mug must never be broken.

“There’s humongous progress going on here in this house,” Jim Love says. “Three years ago, before I realized Sheridan had a serious problem, I wanted to beat him. Now, we’re like buddies.”

No matter the challenges Sheridan may face as an adult, Jim is convinced his son will be able to look back and be proud of what he and his dad overcame. Instead of saying, “I can’t do this,” Sheridan can say confidently in the future, “Yes, I can.”





# Working Together

## Judges and Child Welfare Leaders in Pennsylvania Treat Each Other as Partners

A court order is necessary in almost all cases before a child can enter or leave foster care. Yet too often, the relationship between the judicial and the child welfare systems is distant. And that distance can get in the way of their shared goal of doing what's best for vulnerable children and their families.

In Pennsylvania, however, state Supreme Court Justice Max Baer has laid down a different law. He is insistent that court and child welfare systems work together as partners to improve the lives of children in foster care.

Across the country, children are benefiting from better cooperation between the judiciary and child welfare leadership. The partnerships have inspired progress in other states such as California and Texas, and are producing more knowledge and improved decision-making about vulnerable children and families.

Baer is a living symbol of this growing collaboration. With a decade of experience behind him as an administrative judge in the family division of the Allegheny County Court in Pittsburgh, Baer ran for Pennsylvania's highest court in 2003 in order to raise the profile of dependency courts throughout the state and improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Since being elected, he has inspired major court reforms in Pennsylvania, just as he had in Allegheny County. The result of the reforms is a child welfare system that is more responsive to finding permanent families for children in foster care.

Anyone doubting Baer's resolve need only consider who was sitting alongside him at a recent roundtable gathering that brought together family court judges and child welfare administrators from across Pennsylvania for the first time ever.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer's concern for children extends to his tradition of giving a stuffed toy to any child who visits his office.

Baer presided over the roundtable with Richard Gold, deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth and Families. And joining the both of them was Sandra Moore, administrator of the Office of Children and Families in the Courts, which the state Supreme Court created in 2007 to oversee family court reforms and to support partnerships between the judiciary and the child welfare system.

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## Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer insists that court and child welfare systems work together as partners to improve the lives of children in foster care.

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As a triumvirate, Baer, Gold and Moore have made it an urgent priority in Pennsylvania to shorten the length of time that children remain in foster care. Dependency court judges and child welfare administrators from all over Pennsylvania are responding, pledging their commitment to safely reunite families, accelerate the adoption process and create lasting adult connections for children who must remain in foster care.

"We—and by we, I mean more than 130 proactive child welfare administrators and judges—have created a climate in Pennsylvania of ongoing enthusiasm and excitement that we are making a difference for children and families," Baer says.

The judiciary and child welfare system haven't always been partners in Pennsylvania. In Allegheny County, Baer warmed relations between the two systems by working closely with Marc Cherna, director of the county's Department of Human Services.

Baer recalls contacting Cherna the first time in 1996. "I didn't know any better, so I called Marc before his first day on the job and said, 'You come see me because together we can fix things here. We set up weekly lunches and struck a deal to never take anything personally that was said or done in the courtroom. Basically, we walled off the adjudicatory functions and worked cooperatively on the procedural functions.'"

Cherna says progress happens when people sit down and talk. "Relationships are everything in this business. One of the biggest problems is that people get very protective of their turf, which is a detriment to serving children and families."

In Pennsylvania, Baer, Gold and Moore have created a structure for judges and child welfare administrators across the state to communicate and cooperate at regularly scheduled roundtable meetings, where they can share ideas and compare notes.

"Sometimes I hear my colleagues in child welfare say, 'Courts aren't my partners because no partner can hold me in contempt,'" Gold says. "Well, I disagree. We're partners when dealing with policies and procedures and how we intervene and interface with families."

Using his influence as a Supreme Court justice, Baer also is elevating the value of dependency court work among judges, changing their perspective that dependency court is an entry-level, temporary, pay-your-dues assignment. That has resulted in more judges committing to stay in family court.

As judges become more experienced and knowledgeable in the complexities of the child welfare system, they become more effective in moving children more quickly into permanency.

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Dependency court judges and child welfare administrators from all over Pennsylvania have pledged to safely reunite families, accelerate the adoption process and create lasting adult connections for those children who must remain in foster care.

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Case in point is Judge Kelley Streib. She says that during her career as a lawyer, she worked one divorce and one dependency case “and after each one, I said, ‘Never again.’ I didn’t think that was my forté.”

But when she ascended to the Butler County Court of Common Pleas bench in 2008, she assumed responsibility over all family court cases. To shorten her learning curve, Streib attended training conferences and took part

in a roundtable with dependency court judges and child welfare administrators from like-size counties. She now has a standing lunch meeting every week with the county’s child welfare director.

As soon as Streib clears the remaining criminal cases from her docket, she will be doing family court cases exclusively, appreciating the importance of the work. “I never would have guessed in a million years that not only is this what I would be doing, but this is what I would want to do,” she says.

Casey Family Programs supports bringing the judicial and child welfare systems together and has taken the baton from the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care to assume a catalyst role in building those kinds of partnerships across the country.

Courts carry a heavy responsibility to keep children safe and to ensure that no child enters foster care unnecessarily or stays in foster care longer than necessary.

# Inspiring **Hope**, Renewing **Vision** and Influencing **Action** through the Power of Partnerships

Casey Family Programs is committed to deepening the public's understanding of foster care and inspiring people across the country to take action to improve how we serve our most vulnerable children and families.

Through our 2020 Strategy, we work with public child welfare systems in nearly every state so that more children can have a safe, strong and permanent family, thereby safely reducing the foster care population.

Casey Family Programs believes that to improve our nation's child welfare systems, we must build effective partnerships with a broad range of organizations. To that end, we work in concert with national nonprofits, public policy associations, child welfare organizations and research institutions to

make a meaningful difference in the lives of children. These partnerships range from a focus on improving state and federal child welfare policy to supporting cutting-edge research on child development.

We work with agencies committed to effective child welfare practices. And we help community-based organizations understand how to better serve vulnerable children and families.

With our partners, we are changing this nation so all children can grow up in a safe, loving and permanent family. We are proud to profile in this report a few of our valued partners and the inspiring results of our work together.





## National Governors Association National Conference of State Legislatures

Casey Family Programs believes strongly that in order to achieve lasting improvements in the foster care system, all three branches of government—executive, legislative and judicial—must be engaged and work together. That philosophy came to life last fall with the first-ever Safe Reduction Institute, where more than 120 leaders from 18 states gathered to discuss the common goal of ensuring that all children have a safe, loving and permanent family. The institute was sponsored by Casey Family Programs and two of our partners, the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). The institute built on the success of the two-year NGA Policy Academy aimed at safely reducing the number of children in foster care. Each state delegation was comprised of members of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, including the child welfare director, state Senate and House leaders on child welfare, a dependency court judge, and the governor's policy advisor. The participants shared experiences and strategies, heard from national experts, and set safe reduction goals. The involvement of NGA and NCSL in the institute continues their long-standing commitment to educating their constituents about innovations in child welfare and facilitating learning across states. The NGA Center, with Casey Family Programs support, has published an instructive policy brief, "Nine Things Governors Can Do to Build a Strong Child Welfare System." Last fall, NCSL formed a national network of state legislators involved or interested in child welfare, supporting the efforts of those lawmakers through an online monthly newsletter with the latest information related to child welfare policy. NCSL also published in its State Legislatures magazine an article about the need for all children to have a safe, strong and permanent family.



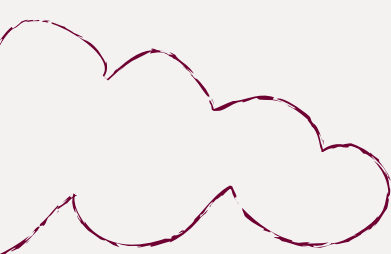
## National Center for State Courts National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

More than 330 chief justices, judges, court administrators, legislators, child welfare administrators and state education leaders—representing 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico—attended a summit last year to help improve timely permanency for children in foster care and strengthen collaboration among the judicial, child welfare and education systems. Casey Family Programs provided funding and planning support for the Third National Judicial Leadership Summit for the Protection of Children, hosted by the National Center for State Courts. Summit sessions included: finding permanent families for older youth in foster care; quality legal representation for parents; youth empowerment in and out of court; the needs of older youth in foster care who also are part of the juvenile justice system; the placement of children with relatives; and reducing racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. Casey Family Programs also partners with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to increase timely permanency for children in foster care and reduce disparities in child welfare. The work includes a major initiative, Courts Catalyzing Change. The partnership also has published guides for dependency court judges that outline questions they should ask of various parties who appear before them, including youth.




Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS),  
University of Washington

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University




Science has shown that persistent fear and chronic anxiety at an early age affects the brain of a developing child and has lifelong impacts on the ability to learn, solve problems and relate to others. Science also has shown, however, that the young brain is resilient in recovering if that child is provided a safe, loving and nurturing environment as soon as possible. As one-third of the children who come into foster care each year are five years old or younger, Casey Family Programs has partnered with two university-based research institutes focused on child development to support our efforts to ensure that all children have a safe, strong and permanent family and, in doing so, improve their opportunities at success. Our partnership with I-LABS is helping lay the groundwork for what promises to be a groundbreaking study of brain and behavioral development in young children and infants who have experienced foster care. Using brain imaging technology, scientists will investigate effects on the developing brain of children who are victims of neglect or abuse and placed in foster care. One purpose of this research is to help states make a more compelling case for having the ability to invest federal child welfare dollars in services that help prevent child neglect and abuse, and ensure that all children have a safe, strong and permanent family. Our partnership with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University is bringing together scientists, child welfare system leaders and early learning experts. This sharing of knowledge will help frame the dialogue around child development to influence practice and policy change in child welfare.





## National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators

Founded in 1983, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) is an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association. NAPCWA provides input on child welfare policy and oversees several committees, workgroups and grant projects. Casey Family Programs partnered with NAPCWA in 2007 to develop a Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance (PPCWG), which was completed last year. More than 300 child welfare leaders, administrators and researchers met regularly to write the PPCWG, which effectively promotes promising and innovative practice in child welfare, such as those aimed at raising children in safe, strong and permanent families. The PPCWG lays out clear standards and criteria, which help increase the accountability of public child welfare systems by providing a benchmark against which to measure themselves. The PPCWG also positions the field of child welfare to speak with one voice about its purpose and roles in improving the lives of vulnerable children and families. The PPCWG provides insight into 14 areas of child welfare administration: strategy, practice model, leadership, disparity and disproportionality, workforce, communications, change management, administrative practices, strategic partnerships, information management, public policy, budget and finance, research, and technology.



### First Focus

First Focus, the public policy arm of America's Promise Alliance, is a bipartisan advocacy organization that inspires leaders to influence state and federal policies that will improve the lives of America's children. First Focus brings together child advocacy leaders with groups not traditionally engaged in policy efforts related to children and families—such as prominent private sector partners of America's Promise. Last year, Casey Family Programs expanded our partnership with First Focus to boost our efforts at the state level to ensure that all children have a safe, strong and permanent family. With our support, First Focus has enlisted partners in Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Ohio and New York to carry out various advocacy projects in those states. The projects include: promoting state implementation of the national Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008; monitoring and tracking state child welfare policy issues; recommending specific improvements to state child welfare agencies; bringing together various stakeholder groups to discuss state child welfare reforms; nurturing relationships with state elected officials and child welfare leaders; and participating in state workgroups and forums to increase the public understanding of foster care issues. In 2010, this partnership initiative with First Focus will expand to at least 20 more states.



# Casey Family Programs at a Glance

**Inspiring Hope. Renewing Vision. Influencing Action.**

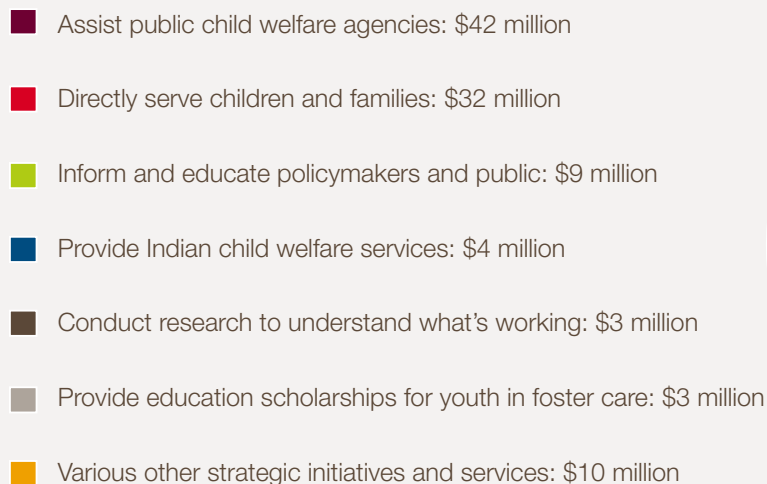
Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused entirely on foster care and improving the child welfare system.

In 2009, Casey Family Programs spent \$126 million in pursuit of our mission to provide and improve—and ultimately prevent the need for—foster care.

Out of each dollar spent in 2009, about 82 cents paid for strategic initiatives, services and research to help ensure that all children can have a safe, strong and permanent family.

At the end of 2009, Casey Family Programs' assets totaled \$1.94 billion.

## Spending on Strategic Initiatives, Services and Research



# Leadership and Offices

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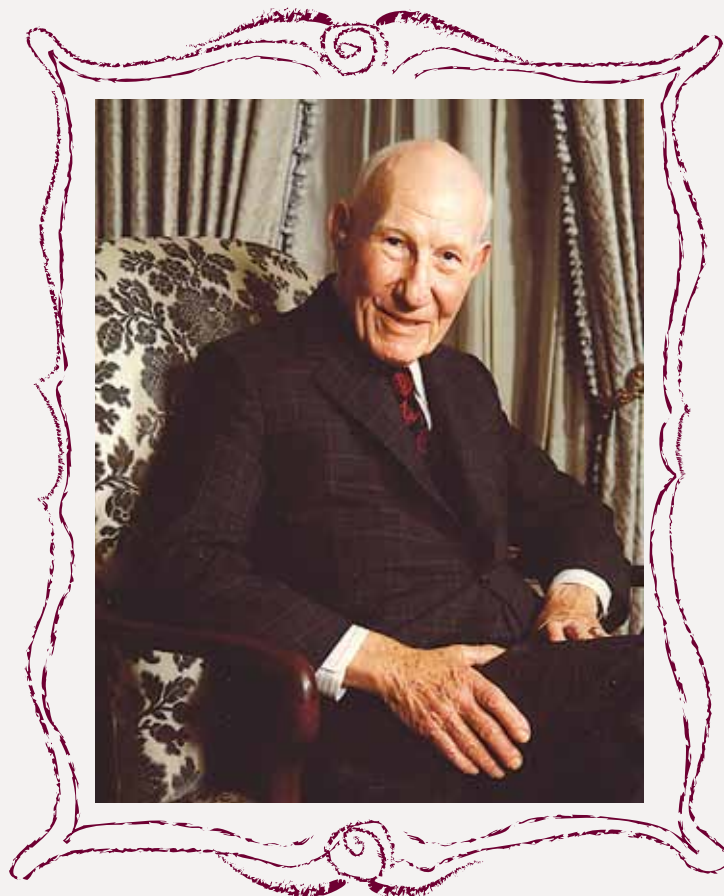
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Casey Family Programs draws inspiration from our founder, **Jim Casey**, a visionary and an entrepreneur who recognized that a nation's most valuable resource is its children. The founder of United Parcel Service, Jim Casey understood that children need the love and support of a stable family in order to thrive. To that end, he established Casey Family Programs in 1966 as a national operating foundation, based in Seattle. Casey Family Programs works each day in Jim Casey's spirit of compassion and concern, singularly focused on better serving America's children. Jim Casey and his family left a lasting legacy to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families.



In addition to Casey Family Programs, other organizations that bear the family name include:

- **Annie E. Casey Foundation** (Baltimore), and its direct services agency, **Casey Family Services** (New Haven, Conn.)
- **Marguerite Casey Foundation** (Seattle)
- **Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative** (St. Louis)

320.2-3010-10



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