The Chronicle of Social Change is a nonprofit, independent news site covering child welfare, juvenile justice and other critical systems serving vulnerable children and families.

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Today’s Discussion

Who Cares Background & Methodology

Site Tour

Key Findings

Questions

Moderated by
John Kelly, Editor-in-Chief, The Chronicle of Social Change

Daniel Heimpel, Publisher, The Chronicle of Social Change
A QUICK OVERVIEW:

Who Cares? An Annual Data Collection Project

Background & Our Methodology

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, *The Chronicle of Social Change* has been working to build the nation's first public resource on foster care capacity. We collect data directly from each state, and combine that with specially obtained federal reports to shed light on two critical questions.

DRIVING QUESTIONS

- How many children and youth are in foster care today?
- And where and with whom are they living?
Over the years, our scope has widened in the hopes of gaining a long-term picture of total state capacity when it comes to foster care. We ask that states provide responses to the questions below for March 31, or the closest possible point in time.

**SCOPE**

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**DATA POINTS**

1. Total licensed homes
2. Non-relative foster homes
3. Relatives with an active, ongoing placement of youth in their homes
4. The number of congregate care providers that take placements of foster youth, and the number of total beds available in them
5. The number of children in foster care placements of any kind
We work with professional researchers to acquire and aggregate data collected through the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

While this data does lag behind present day by more than a year, it allows us to provide numbers on the demographics of both foster parents and foster youth, and trends in the number of youth living in each type of foster care setting.

Last year, our projection of the number of children in foster care was within 5 of the AFCARS number.
Who Cares is the nation’s first public resource on foster care capacity. The Chronicle of Social Change collects data directly from each state, and combines that with specially obtained federal reports to shed light on two critical questions:

How many kids are in foster care today? And where are they living?

This year the data suggests that nationwide, the number of youth in care is going down, and the number of foster homes is going up. But there are plenty of states still struggling with capacity, support of relatives, and racial disparity.
WHO CARES:
A National Count of Foster Homes and Families

Explore more data

Total licensed foster homes
2018-2019

Non-relative homes
2012-2019
Changes in the number non-relative foster homes from 2012 to 2019

Youth in care
2008-2019

Foster youth living in congregate care
2011-2017
Foster youth who are living in group homes, institutions, and other residential care settings

Foster youth living with relatives
2011-2017
Youth placed with family members or "fictive kin" during a removal to foster care

Youth living in unpaid placement
2011-2017

FOSTERCARECAPACITY.ORG
## Louisiana

### Foster care capacity*

Collected by the Chronicle of Social Change

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Youth in care</th>
<th>Total licensed foster homes</th>
<th>Non-relative homes</th>
<th>Relatives with active placements</th>
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Foster care capacity*

Collected by the Chronicle of Social Change

Youth in care
Data collected directly from states shows that the national total is declining, even as some states continue to grapple with surging numbers of youth.

Our 2019 count has the total number of youth in care just below 430,000, about a 3 percent decline since 2017.
Based on state data, the number of licensed homes was 210,000 to 215,000 in 2018. In 2019, the range is up to between 220,000 and 225,000.

We were able to make a comparison of licensed homes in 45 states, and 20 of them saw at least some decline in quantity. Of those, 11 states saw a decline of more than 10 percent.
Nationwide, AFCARS shows the number of youth in group homes and institutions declined by about 12 percent between 2011 and 2017.

But 20 states have seen the number of youth in congregate care rise during that same period.

10 of those have seen an increase of 20 percent or more.

Family First Prevention Services Act, taking effect this month, will complicate how states pay for institutional care.
YOUTH LIVING IN CONGREGATE CARE

- **Indiana**
  - 2011: 1,104
  - 2017: 1,326
  - Increase: +148%

- **Tennessee**
  - 2011: 1,345
  - 2017: 1,622
  - Increase: +21%

- **Georgia**
  - 2011: 1,295
  - 2017: 1,601
  - Increase: +24%

- **North Carolina**
  - 2011: 985
  - 2017: 1,262
  - Increase: +28%

- **Ohio**
  - 2011: 1,583
  - 2017: 2,031
  - Increase: +28%

- **Arkansas**
  - 2011: 642
  - 2017: 835
  - Increase: +30%

- **Kansas**
  - 2011: 333
  - 2017: 545
  - Increase: +21%

- **Arizona**
  - 2011: 1,343
  - 2017: 2,219
  - Increase: +65%

- **New Mexico**
  - 2011: 89
  - 2017: 171
  - Increase: +92%

- **New Hampshire**
  - 2011: 118
  - 2017: 311
  - Increase: +164%
Forty states saw increases in the number of youths living with relatives between 2011 and 2017; 30 of those states saw an uptick of 40 percent or more.

Role of relative caregivers will only increase with the onset of the Family First Prevention Services Act (enables states to spend more federal dollars to avoid the use of foster care in some cases)

The number of youth living in a home without payment attached went up 32 percent between 2011 and 2017, from 81,838 to 108,426.
UNPAID PLACEMENTS

2011: 81,838
2017: 108,426

+32%
In 2011, 39 percent of youth were 13 or older – that was down to 31 percent in 2017. Thirty-two states saw the number of teens in care decline.

In the same time frame, the percentage of foster youth identified as white went up 21 percent. White youth made up 67 percent of foster youth as of 2017, up from 60 percent in 2011.
Many of the states with large Native American populations saw a dramatic uptick in the number of Native youth in care as well.

Despite the decline in the proportion of black youth in foster care nationally, a number of states saw big spikes in this population.
Reading Room: Chronicle

Who Cares 2019: Executive Summary
A Complete Guide to the Family First Prevention Services Act
New Bill Offers Sweetener to Waiver States on Family First Act
Kin Prop up Illinois' Foster Care System, With Limited Support
With Foster Care Numbers At A 15-Year High, Georgia Looks to Relatives
We Want Kids to Grow Up in Safe Families. So Let’s Measure That.
Chat Room Questions (answered in recording)

From Matt Anderson to All panelists: (10:18 AM) As these placements increase and with a move to licensing and paying relatives, what will the fiscal implications be for states?

From Daniel Heimpel to All panelists and attendees: (10:23 AM): Here is that paper: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3437849 — HIDDEN FOSTER CARE

From Matt Anderson to All panelists: (10:27 AM): I think I missed the date range for the 2019 data. what is that range and are they projections at this point?

From Mary JO Pitzl to All panelists: (10:28 AM): Is there data on where kids go when they leave the foster system — either by aging out, by dropping out, getting adopted, reunified?

From Shaquita Ogletree to All panelists: (10:30 AM): Are you looking at the different types of congregate care placement for youth (specifically treatment care/PRTF)?

From Sara Wilson to All panelists and attendees: (10:31 AM): Nationally, the number of licensed homes has increased, but in some states (including Washington D.C. where I cover) have seen a sharp decline in licensed homes. Is there any research or ideas about the cause for this decrease? What are the implications for youth in care?

We Want to Hear From You!

What are your questions about foster care capacity?

What is being discussed in your state or county?

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