Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Foster care: Temporary out-of-home care for children

Children in Minnesota who cannot remain with their birth parents may be placed in family foster homes or group residential facilities. Of approximately 11,400 children in out-of-home placements in 2013, foster families provided care to 8,000 of them.

Children need foster care for a variety of reasons

During 2013, 66 percent of the children in out-of-home placement entered care due to abuse or neglect, inadequate housing, termination of parents' rights, or parental death, illness, disability, abandonment, incarceration, substance abuse, temporary absence or inability to cope; 21 percent due to their own behavior; 10 percent due to multiple reasons; 2 percent due to disabilities; and 1 percent not reported.

Placement options available for children

Children thrive in stable, nurturing, permanent homes. When children must leave their homes, placement in foster care with relatives is considered first. If that is not an option, then children may be placed in:

- Emergency foster care when removed from their homes by law enforcement. This immediate care may be provided in a shelter facility, or in a relative or nonrelative foster home.
- Family foster homes, which offer a temporary substitute until children can be safely reunified with their families, placed permanently with relatives or adopted. Foster homes are licensed by counties, tribal, or private agencies and include both relative and nonrelative care.
- Group residential settings, which provide structured, temporary care. Many group settings offer intensive treatment for children with serious emotional disturbances or chemical dependency.

Most children in out-of-home care are reunited with families

For 2013, 80 percent of children who left out-of-home care were reunited with their birth parents, primary caregivers or other relatives, or moved to a permanent home with a relative through a transfer of permanent physical and legal custody. Other children were adopted or left foster care without the benefits of a permanent family. Some children may have entered and exited from out-of-home care more than once. As part of an effort to preserve family connections while children were in foster care, 39 percent of foster families were relatives of the children they cared for.

Collaboration speeds permanency outcomes for many

Concurrent Permanency Planning is a process for children in foster care, where caseworkers pursue family reunification at the same time as they develop alternative permanency plans. By moving concurrently, rather than sequentially, temporary foster care placements can be shortened, and children and youth can thrive in safe, stable, permanent, families. Concurrent Permanency Planning goals are best achieved when child welfare agencies, community partners and the court system work together with children's birth parents, extended families and foster parents.

Northstar Care for children available in 2015

Beginning January 2015, adoptive and foster families, and relative custodians will care for children under a single set of financial benefits and a streamlined process. The changes are part of Northstar Care for Children, a program for children who are removed from their homes for their protection or disability, which follows them to an adoption or transfer of custody to a relative if they cannot be safely reunited with their birth parents. Northstar Care combines three programs — family foster care, adoption assistance and custody assistance – to create a simpler and more uniform benefit program for children 6 and older; benefits are coordinated, though not uniform, for children 5 and younger. No children in placement prior to implementation of the new law will experience any changes in benefits or processes as long as children remain with the same caregiver and do not change legal status. A fact sheet, Northstar Care for Children (PDF), provides an overview of the program. More comprehensive information about the program, including administrative details, is on the department's CountyLink website.

Children in out-of-home care not representative of peers

For 2013:

- Youth aged 12 and older represented approximately half of the total number of children in foster care.
- Forty-four percent of the children in foster care were living in the Twin Cities' seven-county area.
- Children of color were overrepresented in the out-of-home placement system compared to the number in the general population. Approximately 47 percent of children in out-of-home care were white; 20 percent were black or African American; 17 percent were American Indian and Alaskan native; and 2 percent were Asian, native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Approximately 13 percent were of two or more races; and 1 percent had heritage unknown or not reported. Nine percent indicated Hispanic ethnicity.

Foster parents provide critical care and nurturing

Foster parents come from all walks of life. They may be single or married, with or without children, renters or homeowners. What they share is a concern for children and a commitment to help them through tough times. They provide critical temporary care and nurturing to children in crisis.

Forgotten Children's Fund helps with one-time expenses

The Forgotten Children's Fund, established more than 70 years ago by the American Legion Auxiliary and now administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, provides up to $300 per child, one time, so foster families can purchase special items and services for children. Call 651-431-4690 for information.

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling 651-431-4671 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.