

Kids Forward: Wisconsin is keeping more children in foster care connected to families

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A new 10-year Data Snapshot from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Shows Progress in Wisconsin as National Rates also Improve

Madison, WI —Wisconsin performed better than the national average and has seen a five point increase in the percentage of foster children placed with families according to a new data snapshot released today. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, as part of its KIDS COUNT® project, used data from the child welfare systems across all 50 states over a 10-year period to look at how foster care placements have changed. The report, Keeping Kids in Families, finds that nationwide 86 percent of these children were placed in families in 2017, compared with 81 percent in 2007.

Wisconsin performed better than the national average, with 89 percent of children placed in families in 2017, compared to 84 percent in 2007. Other good news in Wisconsin is that there has been an increase in the percent of family placement across all races and ethnicities.

“Being part of a family is a basic human need and essential to well-being, especially for children, teenagers and young adults who are rapidly developing and transitioning to independence, “ said Ken Taylor, Executive Director of Kids Forward, Wisconsin’s KIDS COUNT partner. Taylor goes on to say “The new data reflects a growing consensus among practitioners and policymakers that young people in the child welfare system should live in families.”

At the federal level, the 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act, prioritizes family placement and high-quality, family-centered settings, which research shows produce the best outcomes for young people. It offers an opportunity for state leaders to reimagine their systems in ways that focus on families and benefit young people, and shifts funds away from group placements and requires states to find families more quickly.

Kids Forward joins the Casey Foundation in calling on child welfare systems to use the opportunities afforded by the Family First law to increase available services to stabilize families. States can:

- Prioritize recruitment of kin and foster families for older youth and youth of color in recruitment planning;
- Engage families in decision making, since kin and foster parents should be treated as important members of a child's team; and
- Require director approval for non-kin placements.

"When children are placed with relatives, the data show that they are more likely to finish school and find employment, and are less likely to become early parents. We should support relatives like we support all foster parents, and they should be treated as important members of the child's team," says Taylor.

About Kids Forward

Kids Forward aspires to make Wisconsin a place where every child thrives by advocating for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every child, every family and every community thrive. For more information visit www.kidsforward.net

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT ® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.