

# FAMILY FIRST

## ••••• REDUCING THE USE OF CONGREGATE CARE •••••

Children and youth do better emotionally, physically, and educationally when placed in home based family settings. When compared to children living in congregate care settings, children in family foster care have fewer placements, are less likely to be re-abused, more likely to be placed with siblings and more likely to achieve permanency in a forever home.

### THE CONGREGATE CARE ISSUE

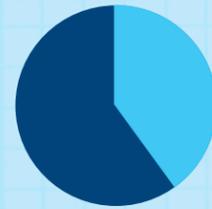
1 in 7 children in the child welfare system are currently in congregate care



THAT'S NEARLY

**57,000**

CHILDREN & YOUTH



40% of these children have no medical diagnosis or behavioral problem that would warrant such a group placement

Children in these placements are more likely to test lower in basic English and math, more likely to drop out and less likely to graduate high school

### THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

When possible, and with the right support and services, children should remain with their birth parents

When relatives are not available, children should be placed with foster care families



Those who cannot return to their birth parents should live with relatives or kin if possible

Residential treatment is a necessary option for a small number of children (with the goal of returning them to a family setting as quickly as possible)

### ROLE OF A CASA OR GAL VOLUNTEER

#### PRE-PLACEMENT

#### POST-PLACEMENT



#### 1 ADVOCATE FOR MORE SERVICES

Expand the scope of services utilized to avoid removal and to support a safe return home



#### 2 TAILOR MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

Use early trauma screenings and assessments to avoid placement in more restrictive settings



#### 3 REVIEW PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Encourage a multidisciplinary committee review process for any situation where congregate care is being recommended



#### 4 SUPPORT MORE PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Call for increased availability of family-based placement options in your community



#### 1 ASK TOUGH QUESTIONS

Insist on evidence that supports the more restrictive placement and push back when needed



#### 2 RAISE CONCERNS

If you don't believe this is the best placement option, raise your concerns with those involved in the case



#### 3 REQUEST REGULAR EVALUATIONS

Ask that a qualified mental or behavioral specialist regularly evaluates the child



#### 4 ADVOCATE CONTINUALLY

Visit the placement and talk with the child and staff to better understand if it's an appropriate setting for the child

“Too many children in the child welfare system are living in group placements, at great cost to taxpayers. While residential treatment is a beneficial, short-term option for a small percentage of young people, we know kids do best in families.”  
—THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION, KIDS COUNT POLICY REPORT

NATIONAL CASA ASSOCIATION  
800.628.3233 | CASA FOR CHILDREN.ORG



SOURCES:  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *KIDS COUNT Policy Report*  
The National CASA Association, *Advocacy in Action: Resources to Improve Safety, Permanency and Well-Being*

NATIONAL CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION