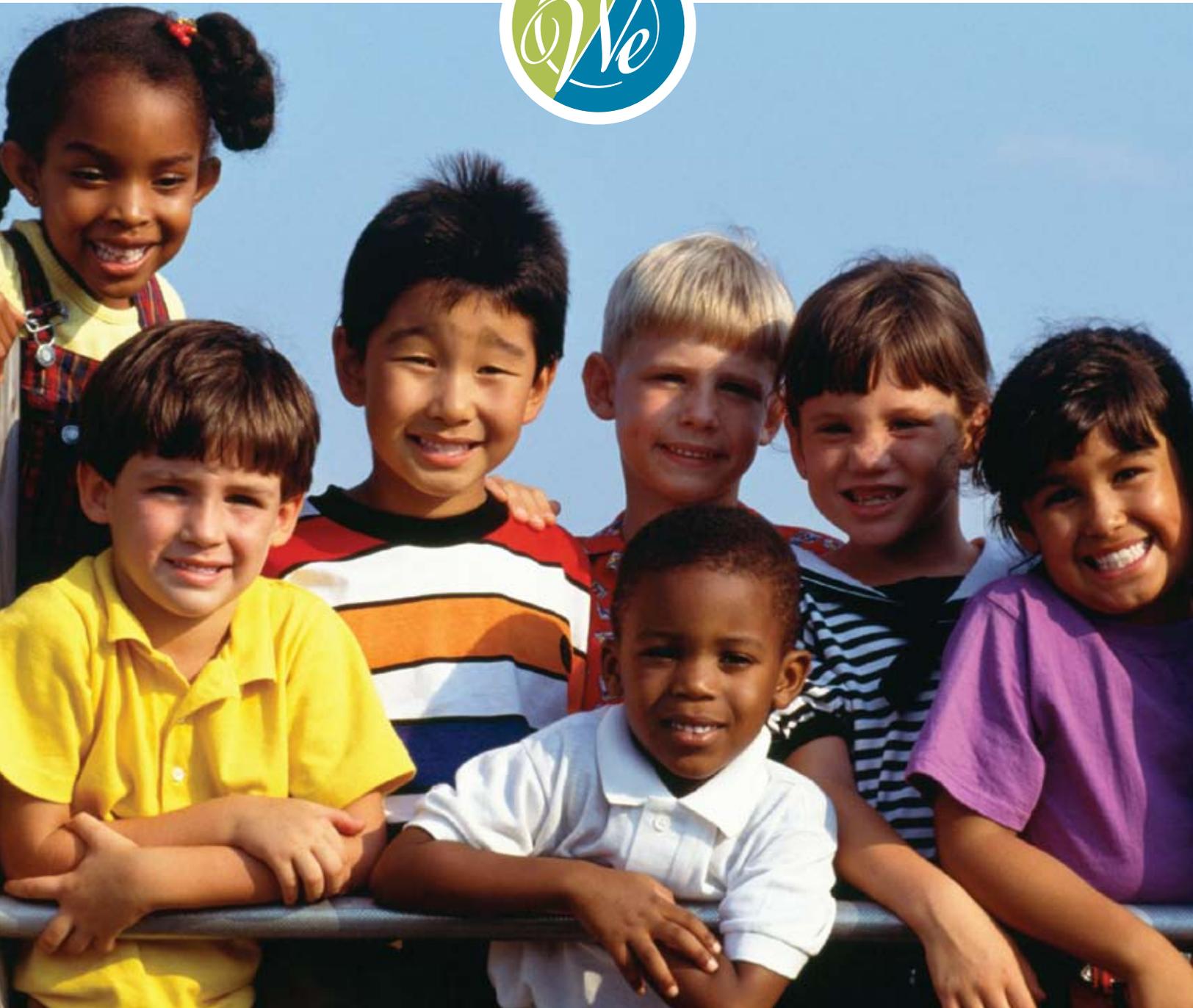


Mobilizing People, Resources *and* Reason to Ensure  
All of Southern Nevada's Children *are* Safe and Well

*the* COMMUNITY *We* WILL  
The Campaign for What's Possible for  
Children, Families and Southern Nevada





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## Our Mission **our goal**

To mobilize people, resources and reason to create a strong, community-held child welfare system that strengthens Southern Nevada's families and protects our children.

## Our Vision **what we believe is possible**

All of Southern Nevada's children and families are safe and well.

*The Community We Will* is supported by Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest foundation working to improve, and ultimately end the need for foster care.

# Introduction

## *The Community We Will* Business Case and Community Action Plan – ensuring Southern Nevada’s children and families are safe and well

### Our goal

Our goal is simple. We want to ensure all of Southern Nevada’s children and families are safe and well. By focusing on families at risk for abuse and neglect, and on children who are in foster care, we are putting our attention on the most vulnerable among us. Many children can safely remain with their families when those families receive appropriate supports and interventions. **We will know we have been successful when we have been able to safely reduce the number of children in foster care by 50% by 2020, aligned with Casey Family Programs’ 2020 strategy.**

The basic assumption of a community held child and family wellbeing system is that by providing the right services at the right time, vulnerable families can be supported, child abuse and neglect can be prevented, and the effects of trauma and harm can be reduced. This strategy will also ultimately reduce demand on the county child protection system, allowing the child welfare agency to improve capacity and better support those children for whom out-of-home care is the only option.

Only by identifying what families need, and why we are not meeting those needs as a community - recognizing that the cost of getting it wrong is a shared one, and not one that only belongs to that single family or single child, will we finally get it right.

### Who we are

*The Community We Will* is a community held initiative working to ensure that all of Southern Nevada’s children and families are safe and well. We are made up of advocates, stakeholders, organizations, businesses and elected officials working to make our region a better place to live and raise a family. *The Community We Will* leave behind is literally in our hands. We are making the business case that investment today leads to phenomenal returns in the future, and that we already have the people, resources and reason to make change - we just need to mobilize them toward a shared vision, and we will be on our way.

*The Community We Will* is working to highlight and illuminate the assets we already have in our community, and lay out a plan to build a strong, community held system of child welfare that focuses on strengthening families as well as the wellbeing of children.





Led by local advocates and community leaders, we are building partnerships with local youth, parents, families, faith-based groups, service providers, businesses, philanthropic groups, schools, policy makers, legislators, local government, media, advocates and concerned citizens in every step of the design, launch and implementation of this campaign.

### In order to be successful, and ensure long term sustainability, we will:

- 1) Engage a broad, diverse and deep coalition of community members in identifying and developing a shared vision for child and family wellbeing in our community
- 2) Develop the business case and detailed plan anchored in national best practices to achieve that vision
- 3) Rally and mobilize the resources needed to sustain the work

“Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we’ve put it in an impossible situation.”

– Margaret Mead, Author and Anthropologist



# Strategic Drivers of Progress & Change

We have chosen to take a systems approach to child welfare, recognizing that while direct services meet the immediate needs of children and families, a comprehensive systems approach solves expansive and chronic problems.

## Child Welfare Systems Approach



Our focus is to prevent entry into the child welfare system, ensure high quality care and outcomes for children and youth currently in the system, and expedite those who are in foster care to a safe, permanent home or independence.

A systems approach compels us to examine the continuum of child welfare services to determine where gaps exist, and where investment and action are required. By focusing on prevention and early intervention efforts at the front end of the child welfare system, we will ultimately reduce the need for any type of costly child welfare response at all.

We will safely reduce the number of children and youth in foster care, and improve outcomes for those who are already in care by mobilizing people, resources and reason around three strategic drivers of change:

### 1) Preventing abuse and neglect and entry into foster care

- Providing early and regular child and families screening and treatment of health and mental health issues
- Intervening early and comprehensively when families are at risk
- Wrapping at risk families with community services and supports, such as housing, work force training and education programs
- Providing education and support to parents and families
- Delivering high quality programs such as nurse family partnerships to work with new parents
- Increasing public awareness of abuse and neglect and how to prevent it
- Fully funding best practice early childhood education and intervention programs
- Ensuring access to high quality affordable day care
- Ensuring access to mental health and substance abuse programs
- Preventing teen pregnancy and providing supports for teens already pregnant or parenting



## 2) Improving outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system

- Providing high quality therapeutic care to abused and neglected children and their families to break the cycle of abuse
- Decreasing the time to permanency (which means a safe, long term home) for a child who enters foster care
- Providing support to foster parents and relative placements so that children heal and stabilize while in foster or relative care
- Increasing the continuum of services to effectively address the complex needs of children and families already involved in the foster care system
- Providing life skills training for children and adults in the child welfare system

## 3) Promoting safe exits and ensuring successful transitions for youth and families leaving the child welfare system

- Improve transitions back home by encouraging foster care providers to work with the families of the children in care (when safe and appropriate) to maintain relationships
- Connecting youth serving programs to holistically address the multiple needs of youth transitioning to adult independence
- Providing targeted wraparound services to help youth successfully transition to life on their own
- Wrap families who are parenting their children after being in foster care with services that will strengthen the family and keep children safe at home

Successful investment in these three key areas will safely reduce the number of children in foster care in Southern Nevada by 50% in 2020.



# Implementing the Plan

## *The Community We Will* Leave for Our Children

### Phase 1: Assessment and Planning

*The Community We Will* is a community-held initiative that will mobilize the people, resources and reason we need to make sure every child has a chance to grow into all he or she is destined to be. We are making the case to the community that investing in children and families provide an incredible return on investment, and that the cost of not doing so is far too high.

Over the last two years community groups have been meeting to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the community in terms of meeting the needs of children and families. We have assessed a wide variety of variables through a range of means, including conducting a service array gaps analysis, child welfare agency case reviews, focus groups, stakeholder interviews and input sessions, and primary and secondary research.

From our research we now have a better idea of what services and supports will be needed to end our overreliance on foster care, and to improve the outcomes of children by investing in families. The data we collected on the community and the foster care continuum of care in Southern Nevada will allow us to benchmark our progress toward our goals. We will be able to look at indicators such as entry into foster care, and length of time in foster care to show us how successful we are in strengthening families and moving children who are in the foster care system to permanence as quickly as possible.

## *The Community We Will* Find Solutions In

### Phase 2: Community Engagement

The second phase of our initiative is anchored on the belief that the solutions to social issues lie in the community itself - that we collectively are the seat of innovation and change. We have met with over 200 community members, leaders, stakeholders, providers and clients to arrive at a shared vision for the child welfare system that supports Southern Nevada's children and families.

We have developed our business case around the principle drivers of change, and will use this case to rally the people, resources and reason we need to make that vision a reality. We have also mapped out federal, state and local funding sources, as well as the community providers serving clients in our community and will begin working to compete for more state and federal dollars to support our collective work.



## *The Community We Will* Build Together

### Phase 3: Implementation

The third phase is the full implementation of *The Community We Will* Community Action Plan. The Community Action Plan will detail funding streams coming into Southern Nevada, and will lay out plans to build collaborative partnerships and alliances that will make us competitive for investments of federal, state and local dollars. We will also work to build incentives for innovation and collaboration, and focus on using existing resources more effectively, with a focus on prevention.

As the plan is implemented, we expect to safely reduce the number of children in foster care in Southern Nevada, and to improve short and long-term outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system. We will expect to see decreases in expenditures on foster care, and increases in reinvestments in family services and community infrastructure.

## *The Community We Will* Be Accountable To

### Phase 4: Evaluation

Evaluation of *The Community We Will* initiative will be ongoing and include process and outcome evaluations. We will look at changes in the data around the three key drivers of change we have identified, and report our progress to our elected officials, our donors, the community and local government.

With our shared efforts and aligned focus, we will be able to safely reduce the number of children and youth in foster care by 50% by 2020. We will see more families who are able to stay together and be successful, more children who are healthy and well, and significant public resources saved.





# Child Welfare System



## Southern Nevada's Child Welfare System

Southern Nevada's child welfare system, like countless others across the country, is designed to protect the children of our community, ensuring they have a chance to thrive as healthy, hopeful children and grow into productive adults.

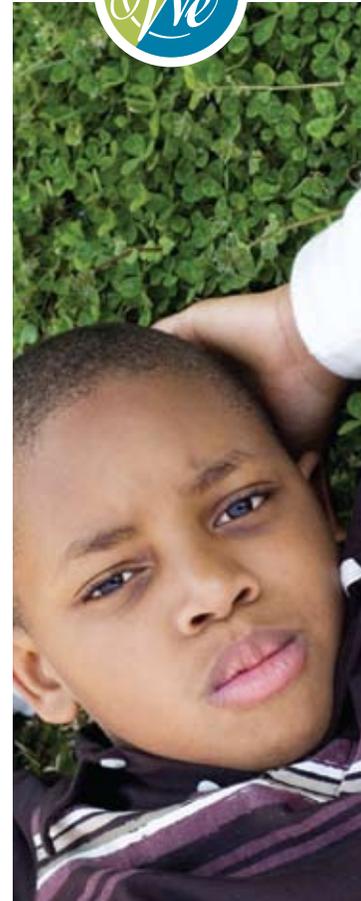
The child welfare system in Southern Nevada is comprised of a wide variety of state, county and community services intended to promote the safety and well-being of children by working to strengthen families at risk for abuse and neglect, ensuring the safety of children by placing them in foster care when they cannot remain safely at home, and finding them permanent families as quickly as possible when they cannot safely return to their own families<sup>i</sup>. Southern Nevada's system, like many others across the country is not adequately organized or resourced to strengthen families and prioritize prevention, while minimizing further trauma to children.

The child welfare system is not a single organization, or government department, such as the Clark County Department of Family Services or State Division of Child and Family Services. Instead, the system is made up of many different organizations and departments in the community working together to keep children safe: such as the courts, law enforcement, Office of the District Attorney, non-profit organizations, shelters, clinics, parenting support centers, and a wide array of other service providers.

Child welfare systems, like the many reasons for child maltreatment, are complex, and vary widely by state, but share some core functions, including<sup>ii</sup> :

- Receiving and investigating reports of possible child abuse and neglect
- Providing services to families who need assistance in the protection and care of their children
- Arranging for children to live with foster families when they are not safe at home
- Arranging for adoption or other permanent family connections for children leaving foster care
- Supporting the transition of older youth from foster care to independence

Public agencies contract and collaborate with community-based service providers, civic organizations and philanthropists to provide the wide range of services families in trouble need to stabilize and care for their children. The system, by definition, must be connected and supported in order to be effective for children and families. It must also be aligned with a clear vision for success that is shared at the state and local levels.



# Designed to Strengthen Families

## A System Designed to Strengthen Families is Possible

“Our ultimate goal should be to prevent the need for foster care by providing families with opportunities to earn an adequate income, receive health care, affordable housing, parenting skills, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment to prevent child maltreatment that stem from those needs.”

Southern Nevada’s social service system must provide a wide range of services and supports so that families in crisis can be stabilized to prevent abuse and neglect. The system must also be designed to provide the highest quality of care for those children who do experience foster care, and prepare those who are aging out of foster care for life on their own.

This community service array is critical to the overall health of families, as it provides for services to help parents safely raise their children, foster care, residential treatment, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, parenting skills classes, wrap-around services that are designed to address a child or family’s needs in a comprehensive way, employment assistance, and financial or housing assistance. It is the community held system of child welfare that will ultimately determine the strength of our efforts - it is the community that holds the future of our children.



– Tom Morton, Director,  
Clark County Department  
of Family Services



# A Call to Action

## Building A Continuum of Services to Protect Children and Strengthen Families

Driven by Families and Youth – Community Based – Culturally Competent

When Families Need Support	When Families are in Crisis	When Children Cannot Safely Remain With their Families & are placed in Foster Care	When Children Leave Foster Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parenting Education</li> <li>Housing Support</li> <li>Employment Support</li> <li>Health Care</li> <li>Life Skills Training</li> <li>Homemaker Aid</li> <li>Child Care/ Respite Care</li> <li>Information &amp; Referral to Available Services</li> <li>Support Groups</li> <li>Family Counseling</li> <li>Mental Health Treatment</li> <li>Alcohol / Drug Treatment</li> <li>Parent / Child Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Programs</li> <li>Special Education for Children</li> <li>Behavioral Services for Children</li> <li>Adolescent-Parent Conflict Mediation</li> <li>Adolescent Pregnancy/ Parenting Services</li> <li>Youth Development Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic Violence Services / Shelter</li> <li>Emergency Housing</li> <li>Emergency Health Care</li> <li>Emergency Funds</li> <li>Emergency Mental Health Services for Children and Parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Upon Removal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Foster Care</li> <li>Relative Caregiver Recruitment/Support</li> <li>Residential Treatment Centers</li> </ul> <p><b>To Help Children Return Home Safely</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent-Child Visitation</li> <li>Parent Education</li> <li>Anger Management</li> <li>Family Communication Building</li> <li>Teaching Behavior Management</li> <li>Couples Counseling</li> <li>Safety Planning</li> </ul> <p><b>For Children Who Cannot Return Home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoptive Parent Recruitment</li> <li>Kinship Care Services / Support</li> </ul>	<p><b>To Return Home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Communication Building</li> <li>Behavior Management Tools</li> <li>Safety Planning</li> </ul> <p><b>For Adoption or Guardianship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption/Guardianship Subsidies</li> <li>Behavior Management Tools</li> <li>Safety Planning</li> </ul> <p><b>To Live on Their Own</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connections to Caring Adults</li> <li>Access to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Care</li> <li>Educational &amp; Vocational Supports (Tuition, Vouchers, Stipends, etc)</li> <li>Transitional Services &amp; Supports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

“Our nation’s overreliance on foster care fails to address the conditions that lead to child removal, devastate families, strain state and local budgets, and contribute to long-term outcomes for children, families and communities.”

– Casey Family Programs

Source: Pew Charitable Trust, *Time for Reform: Investing in Prevention: Keeping Children Safe at Home, 2007iii*

# When Families are in Trouble

As we work to develop this systems reform plan, we are moving away from defining the child welfare system narrowly, as one interested only in protecting a child from harm, toward a child and family wellbeing system - one whose North Star is the strong, healthy family that is able to keep their children safe and well.

When families are in trouble, and have come to the attention of the child welfare system for one risk factor or another, we have two options as a community - continue to overly rely on foster care as the response without considering the long term implications for the family or child, or invest in the family and the child by giving them the support they need to raise their own children safely. A large percentage of families are struggling to provide for their children with limited resources and social supports. In fact, a large majority of children who come into the child welfare system are there for neglect, as opposed to physical or sexual abuse.

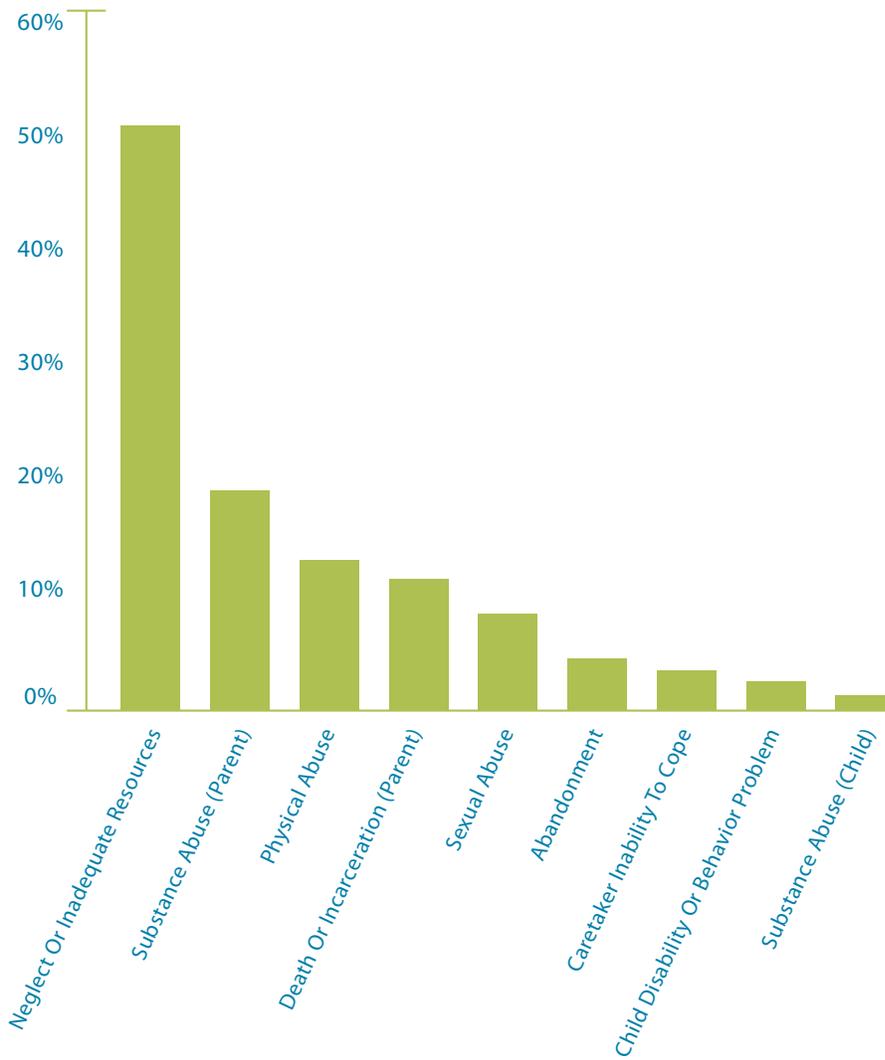
Although removal of children into foster care may seem like a logical first choice when a parent is not taking adequate care of the child, it is not always the best long term solution. Considering the fact that in Nevada more than 68% of the children who come into foster care are returned to their birth family within one year<sup>v</sup>, and 13% of those who enter the child protective system return home in 7 days or less<sup>vi</sup>, we are faced with the reality that unless we strengthen the family, and address the root causes for the abuse or neglect in the home, we have not really changed anything in the long run for the child who returns home, or for his or her siblings.

It is a natural human instinct, when seeing a child close to something dangerous, to pull the child away from the danger, such as a fire or a busy street. Hence, it seems to make sense that the best way to protect children from abuse and neglect is to take them from the family wherein the danger exists. But the long term effects on the child ask us to question that impulse. As well motivated as we might be to protect a child from the danger we see, we cannot see the impact of the removal trauma on the child at the time we take the action on their developing brain, emotional health and overall functioning in the community.





## Clark County Maltreatment Types



Note: Totals may exceed 100 percent due to multiple types of maltreatment per case.  
Source: Clark County Department of Family Service, 2009<sup>iv</sup>

# Risks and Impact

## What are the factors that put a family at risk for child maltreatment?

### Risk factors include:

- Low self-esteem and/or signs of depression, anxiety or antisocial behaviors. Often includes substance abuse, family history of abuse, and lack of knowledge of normal child development.<sup>vii</sup>
- Parental substance abuse is reported to be a contributing factor for between one- and two-thirds of maltreated children in the child welfare system.<sup>viii</sup>
- Age of the parent and/or caregiver may contribute to maltreatment. Some studies have suggested that younger mothers exhibit higher rates of child abuse than older mothers.<sup>ix</sup>
- Infants and younger children are more likely to be physically abused compared to teenagers, who are more likely to be sexually abused.<sup>x</sup>
- Children with disabilities (learning, chronic illness, etc.) may be at a greater risk for maltreatment because the demand to care for these children often increases the family stress, resulting in less attention or attachment with the child.<sup>xi</sup>
- In 1999, 85 percent of states identified poverty and substance abuse as the top two problems challenging families reported to child protective service (CPS) agencies.<sup>xii</sup> While poverty does not cause parents to neglect their children, the stressors associated with poverty increase the risk of neglect. Poverty impacts parents' ability to provide basic resources such as food, clothing and shelter; adequate child care, supervision and medical care; and safe schools and neighborhoods.

It is important to understand that most poor people do not abuse and/or neglect their children; however, the risk for maltreatment does increase with families living below the poverty level particularly when factors such as depression or substance abuse co-exist.



## What do we know about abuse and neglect as a social problem, as a public health problem, as an economic problem

The short term and long term costs of abuse and neglect are extremely high. We know, from considerable research across the country and the world, that early exposure to violence, including abuse and neglect, impacts the young child in permanent and damaging ways.

Children who are maltreated often experience disrupted physical, emotional, and social growth and development. Some die from the abuse. For those who survive the trauma, psychological problems persist through childhood and adulthood. Children who are physically abused tend to be aggressive and less empathetic towards others, and are subsequently at risk for negative short and long term outcomes. <sup>xiii</sup>

Young children who are abused struggle to form healthy relationships, and as they get older are more likely to perform poorly in school and to commit crimes. Children who are abused and neglected experience more emotional problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual problems, and alcohol/drug abuse than their peers. <sup>xiv</sup>

Child abuse and neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences, such as parental mental health problems, domestic violence in the home, or substance abuse in the home, raises the child's likelihood of: <sup>xv</sup>

- Abusing their own children
- Abusing illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Attempting or committing suicide
- Becoming homeless
- Being abused by an intimate partner
- Having multiple sexual partners and being infected with sexually transmitted diseases
- Getting pregnant before age 19 and having unintended pregnancies
- Suffering from chronic health problems, such as depression, ischemic heart disease, liver disease, and obstructive pulmonary disease

Not only are the emotional and health costs to the individual who has been abused tremendously high, but so is the economic impact of child maltreatment on our community and our country. The costs incurred when the child or young adult comes in contact with each system; homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, and criminal justice, when added together, are staggering.



“Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime.”

– Father Herbert Ward, Director, St. Jude's Ranch (1970-2000)

# Costs of Abuse & Neglect

These serious societal problems and the costs associated with them justify a strategic, collaborative approach to strengthening families and preventing abuse. The terrible pain and trauma it causes to the child only makes the need to plan, implement and sustain reform efforts more urgent.

As illustrated in the following table, the vast majority of the annual costs associated with child abuse and neglect are attributable to poor life outcomes. It is important to note that 32% of the costs associated with child abuse and neglect are lost productivity costs, impacting business, the economy and the community we live in on a large scale. <sup>xvii</sup>

## 2007 Annual Estimated Costs of U.S. Child Abuse & Neglect

Direct Costs	Estimated Annual Cost	Percentage	Daily Cost
Hospitalization	\$ 6,625,959,263	6.4%	\$ 18,153,313
Mental Health Care	\$ 1,080,706,049	1.0%	\$ 2,960,838
Child Welfare Services	\$ 25,361,329,051	24.4%	\$ 69,483,093
Law Enforcement	\$ 33,307,770	0.0%	\$ 91,254
<b>Total Direct</b>	<b>\$ 33,101,302,133</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>\$90,688,499</b>
Indirect Costs	Estimated Annual Cost	Percentage	Daily Cost
Special Education	\$ 2,410,306,242	2.3%	\$ 6,603,579
Juvenile Delinquency	\$ 7,174,814,134	6.9%	\$ 19,657,025
Mental Health Care	\$ 67,863,457	0.1%	\$ 185,927
Adult Criminal Justice System	\$ 27,979,811,982	27.0%	\$ 76,657,019
Lost Productivity to Society	\$ 33,019,919,544	31.8%	\$ 90,465,533
<b>Total Indirect</b>	<b>\$ 70,652,715,359</b>	<b>68.1%</b>	<b>\$193,569,083</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$103,754,017,492</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$284,257,582</b>

Source: Prevent Child Abuse America <sup>xviii</sup>



Child abuse and neglect costs United States taxpayers approximately \$103.8 billion each year, with a mere 25 percent of these costs attributable to child welfare services themselves.<sup>xi</sup> The remaining 75 percent of costs (\$70.7 billion) consist of indirect costs to society and involvement with other social service systems, such as the health care and criminal justice systems. <sup>x</sup> Child abuse and neglect costs each Nevada household roughly \$95, for a statewide total of 79 million every year.<sup>xi</sup>

Across the country we pay for abuse and neglect in terms of increased ER costs, increased high school dropouts, decreased income, increased crime and delinquency, juvenile and adult corrections, lost productivity, and future cycles of abused and neglected children. Foster care is a particularly expensive response, costing approximately \$25 billion per year in combined federal, state and local dollars.<sup>xii</sup>

**“We are willing to spend the least amount of money to keep a kid at home, more to put him in foster care, and the most to institutionalize him.”**

– Marian Wright Edelman,  
Founder, Children’s Defense Fund



# Strengthening Families Benefits Us All



Failing to invest in prevention results in significant costs to society

## Substance Abuse

Alcohol abuse = **\$185 billion** per year in the U.S.  
 Drug abuse = **\$181 billion** per year in the U.S.  
 (66% of people in drug treatment programs report being abused or neglected as children.)

## Homelessness

Homelessness = **\$40,000** per year for just one individual  
 (48% of southern Nevada homeless youth have been in foster care.)

## Mental Health

Direct cost = **\$55 billion** per year in the U.S.  
 (80% of foster youth have at least one psychiatric disorder by age 21.)

## Teenage Pregnancy

In Nevada = **\$67 million** per year  
 (Foster youth are twice as likely to become pregnant as a teenager.)

## Criminal Justice

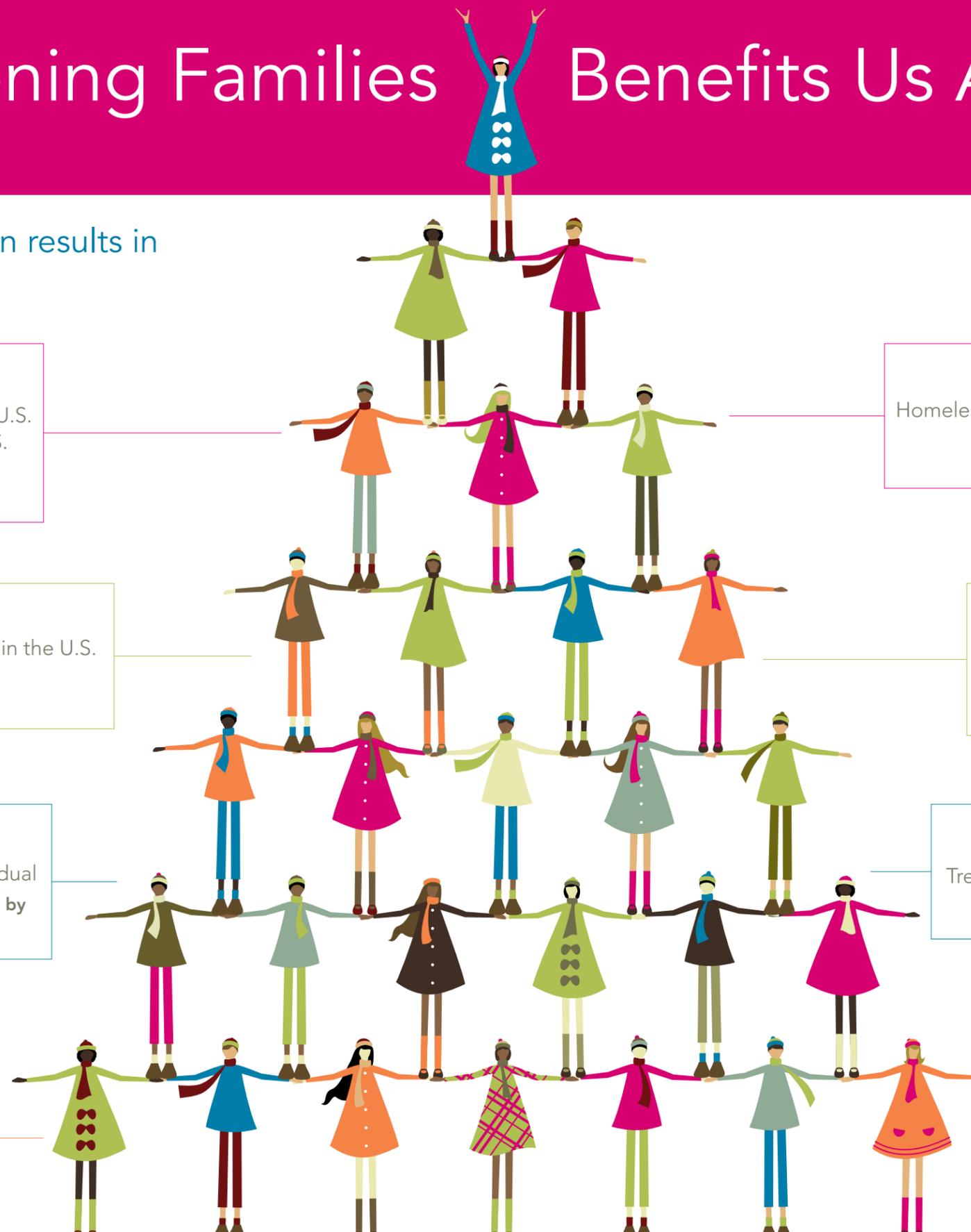
Incarceration = **\$35,000** per year for just one individual  
 (Child abuse increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 53%, as an adult by 28%, and for a violent crime by 30%.)

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Treatment = **\$8 billion** per year in the U.S. not including HIV  
 (Foster youth are 4 times more likely to contract an STD.)

## Education

High School dropout lifetime lost production = **\$243K**  
 (46% of children in foster care do not finish high school.)



33% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, perpetuating a cycle of costly societal problems over generations. These statistics are things we CAN change.

# Return on Investment

## A Focus on Prevention - What We Can Accomplish

Early prevention efforts are not novel and have proven to be a cost-effective strategy for many states and across a broad spectrum of health and human service sectors. Several studies have shown that high-quality prevention programs that provide services to at-risk parents in areas like substance abuse and mental health treatment, parenting education and training, family finances and housing assistance can produce several dollars worth of benefit for every dollar spent.

Type of Care	Annual Cost per Child
Family Preservation (In-Home Prevention Services)	\$ 3,100 - \$ 10,000
Foster Care	\$ 10,000 – \$ 52,000
Residential Care	\$ 60,000 - \$120,000

*Note: Annual costs were collected from a variety of national research reports. Estimates vary widely depending on location and the level of services required.<sup>xxiii</sup>*

Investing in prevention translates to fewer dollars spent on foster care, welfare, juvenile justice and a host of other programs further down the road. By investing additional dollars on the front end of the continuum of care, we could eventually save billions of dollars on foster care all the while supporting families, strengthening the community at large, and avoiding further childhood trauma.

A recent report estimates the lifetime monetary value of saving a single high-risk youth to be anywhere from \$2.6 million to \$5.3 million per youth.<sup>xxiv</sup> The average total cost of providing intensive family preservation services ranges from \$3,100 to \$10,000 per year.<sup>xxv</sup> Compared to the lifetime cost to society for a high risk youth, this equates to a 255 to 532 times return on investment (ROI).





## Summary of the Monetary Value of Saving a High Risk Youth (Present Value 2007 Dollars)

	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Career Criminal	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 4,300,000
Heavy drug user	\$ 840,000	\$ 1,100,000
High school dropout	\$ 420,000	\$ 630,000
Less duplication	\$ (700,000)	\$ (700,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,560,000</b>	<b>\$ 5,330,000</b>
Family preservation services	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
<b>Lifetime Benefits per Dollar of Investment</b>	<b>\$ 255</b>	<b>\$ 532</b>

Note: Please refer to page 34 for citations.<sup>xxvi</sup>

It is important to note that not all programs produce the same results; therefore, it is imperative to carefully study evidence-based programs when designing policies to improve outcomes. The majority of recent research studies report that prevention and early intervention programs provide a healthy return per dollar of investment. A cost-benefit analysis for some of the most effective family preservation and intervention programs demonstrating a positive ROI are shown below.

## Prevention and Intervention Programs

Program	Location	Total Benefits	Program Costs	Return on Investment
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy	Oklahoma	\$ 5,968	\$ 1,006	\$ 4.93
Chicago Child Parent Centers	Chicago	\$ 39,160	\$ 8,124	\$ 3.82
Nurse Family Partnership	Several	\$ 26,986	\$ 8,931	\$ 2.02
Homebuilders	Washington	\$ 7,875	\$ 3,099	\$ 1.54
<b>Average</b>		<b>\$19,997</b>	<b>\$5,290</b>	<b>\$2.78</b>

Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Children from Entering and Remaining in the Child Welfare System: Benefits and Costs for Washington, 2009



# Southern Nevada Specific

## Who experiences the child welfare system in Southern Nevada Specifically?

Approximately 2,600 children entered Southern Nevada's child welfare system during 2009. Of these children, more than half are males under the age of eight. The average Clark County child experiences 2.4 placements during a year, and remains in care for an average of 45 days. It is important to note that while the average stay may be only 45 days, 45 percent of children exiting care during fiscal year 2009 were in care for a year or longer. <sup>xxvii</sup>

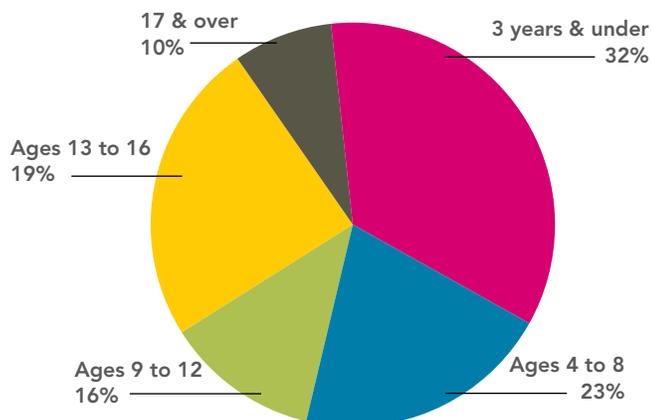
"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow,' his name is today."

– Gabriela Mistral, Chilean Poet





## Southern Nevada Children in Placement Age Range



## Southern Nevada Children in Placement Gender



Source: Clark County Department of Family Services, 2009

Preventing child abuse and neglect and improving responses to those children who have experienced maltreatment are priorities for all Southern Nevada children. However, those who are particularly disadvantaged require additional responses. African American and Hispanic populations are disproportionately represented in the local child welfare system compared to the respective makeup of the overall population.

## Nevada Race and Ethnicity Comparisons, 2007

	Child Victims	Proportion of Child Victims	General Population	Proportion of Total Population
African American	1,020	18.8%	188,565	6.9%
American Indian	51	0.9%	35,850	1.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	94	1.7%	181,039	6.6%
Hispanic	1,433	26.5%	670,228	24.6%
Multiple Race	355	6.6%	—	0.0%
Caucasian	2,464	45.5%	1,653,866	60.6%
<b>Total Victims</b>	<b>5,417</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,729,548</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Child Maltreatment Report, 2007 and The Nevada State Demographer's Office.<sup>xxviii</sup>

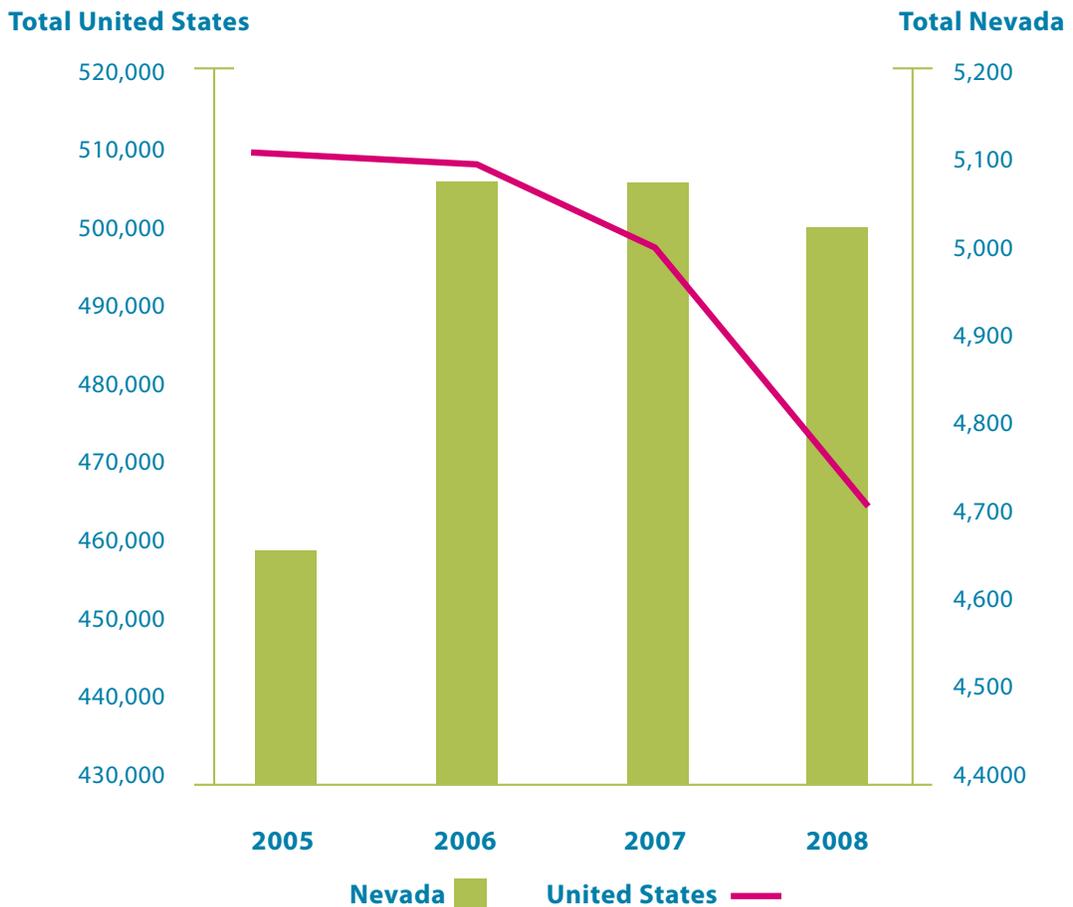
# Children in Care

While the rest of the country has experienced a steady decrease in the number of children requiring out of home care during the last four years (7.8 percent decline), Nevada has witnessed a marked 9.3 percent increase in the number of children placed in foster care during the same time period.<sup>xxix</sup>

“I prayed every night to see my mom again, to live with her once more. They told me I could live with her when she had accomplished what they wanted, when she was ready. But she could never get ahead...”

– Sharde, 22, 12 years in foster care in Indiana. Pew Charitable Trust, Time for Reform: Investing in Prevention: Keeping Children Safe at Home, 2007

## Total Children in Out-of-Home Care



Source: AFCARS, Maltreatment data from NCANDS<sup>xxx</sup>

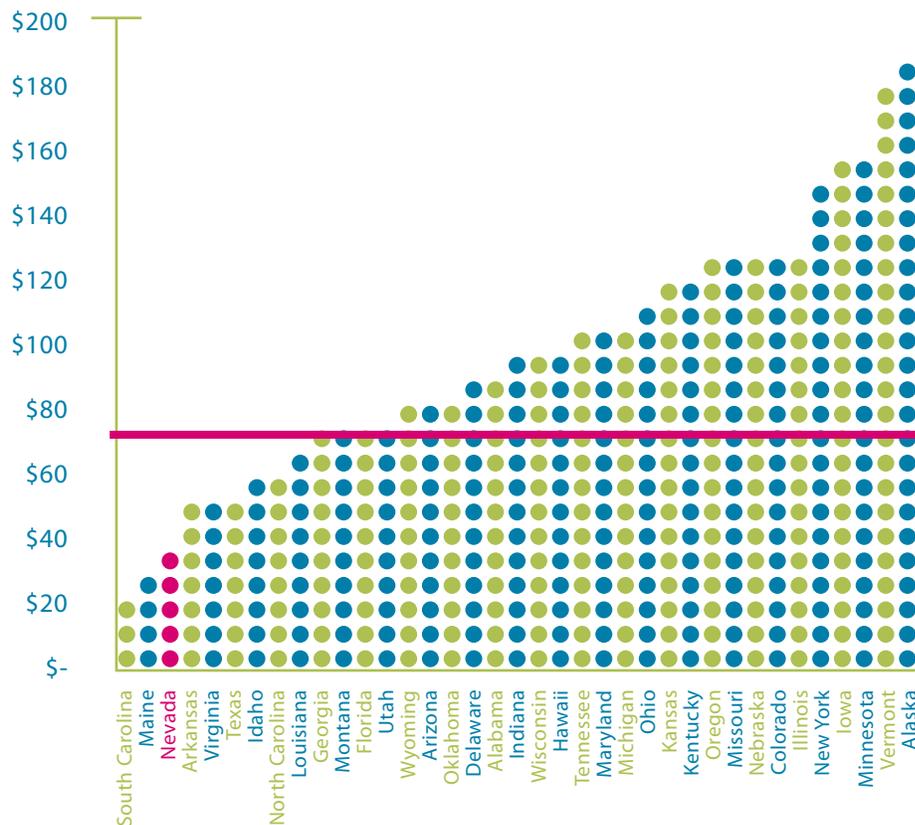


While Nevada continues to experience an increase in the number of children and families requiring child welfare services, we allocate fewer resources to serving these families than the rest of the nation. Staff shortages, high caseloads, high social worker turnover, and low salaries impede the state’s ability to deliver services to children and families currently in the system.<sup>xxxii</sup> As a result, children and families suffer, and the taxpayer ultimately pays the bill.

## Child Welfare Spending Per Capita

States vary in regards to the amount of child welfare dollars per person, however, the national average is 118 percent greater than the amount spent in Nevada.

A weakening economy, higher costs of energy and housing, increasing worker layoffs, and higher crime rates all suggest the potential for a higher marginal propensity to demand child welfare services and foster care in the near future.<sup>xxxiii</sup>



**National Average \$74.06** — **Nevada Average \$34.02** ●●●●●

Source: Every Child Matters Education Fund, 2007<sup>xxxii</sup>

# Foster Care in the U.S.

## Definition of Foster Care

The legal definition of foster care is a system enabling a child without parental support and protection to be placed with a person or family to be cared for, usually by local welfare services or by court order. The foster parents do not have custody, nor is there an adoption, but they are expected to treat the foster child as they would their own in regard to food, housing, clothing and education. Most foster parents are paid by the local government or state agency.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The child's parents may retain their parental rights, and the child may ultimately return home. Under permanent foster care the agency has guardianship; the child may then be available for adoption by the foster parents or others.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Foster care is the last resort for communities to provide protection and care for children who are unable to safely remain at home with the families. Even though this is a much needed resource for some children, it is imperative that we recognize this option of last resort for what it is....proof that help came too late.

## History of Foster Care in the U.S.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Foster care as we know it today grew out of ancient traditions of extended family taking in orphaned children. Over the years, what was meant to be a charitable act or simply a familial responsibility has taken different forms and sometimes in history has allowed for children to be exploited – as indentured servants, for example.

In the early years of the U.S., foster care was rooted in the English tradition of indenturing children who had no roots, generally poor children, so that they could ostensibly learn a trade. Families continued to care for their orphaned children when they had the resources to do so.

In 1853, Charles Loring Brace, a child advocate, advanced the notion that children would fare better in the farming communities of the South and West than the streets and orphanages of New York. Thus began the Orphan Train movement in which children were “placed out” to families and “earned their keep” by working on the farms.

By the early 20th century, foster care had other champions, led by Henry Dwight Chapin who campaigned for children to be raised in families rather than the large orphanages and institutions of the day. In these early decades of the 20th century, foster care meant many things – even legally adopted children were called “foster children” – and the



quality of care and life for these children varied enormously even though the term “foster care” did not.

The contemporary foster care system emerged out of reforms that began following World War II as Americans began to recognize child abuse, resulting in the enactment of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1972. The foster care population exploded and with the increase also grew “foster care drift” as children experienced multiple placements.

Thus was passed the Child Welfare Act of 1980 which attempted to reduce the foster care population by mandating “reasonable efforts” before a child was removed from their home and formalizing “kinship care” in which relatives served as foster parents. Despite these attempts, foster care experienced rampant growth culminating in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. The goal of ASFA was to reduce foster care and promote permanency for children by stressing adoption.

Today, foster care continues to be a necessary approach to child welfare for some children and families. Foster care is often underfunded and systems overloaded; caseloads are too high, children continue to experience multiple placements, and even the most well-meaning foster parents often times cannot handle the needs of children who present significant problems resulting from parental abuse and neglect, substance abuse, or the attachment problems created by the system itself when children are moved and separated from foster family after foster family.

“From the first day that the child welfare system came into my life, I felt confused, afraid to ask for help and alone, with no one to guide or support me.”

– Parent, Anonymous



# Regional Challenges that Exist

Nevada's unemployment rate, while experiencing modest decreases during the final quarter of 2009, is still at a historical statewide high of 13.0 percent (as of December 2009).<sup>xxxvii</sup> This marks a 4.6 percent year-over-year increase and has allowed the state to lay claim to the 2nd highest unemployment rate in the nation.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Job losses coupled with nation-leading declines in home prices and nation-leading levels of residential home foreclosure have pushed otherwise stable families into situations of crisis. Declining home values and decreased consumer spending have depleted state and local government revenues, leading to service funding shortfalls just when families need help the most.

Now, arguably more than ever, our community needs to pull together to find solutions to problems that have only been exacerbated by recent economic events.

## Gaps Analysis - Southern Nevada's Service Array Needs Assessment

Southern Nevada's challenges did not begin with the "Great Recession".

Southern Nevada's challenges did not begin with the "Great Recession". For years, our community has struggled to keep up with unprecedented growth. For the better part of the last 20 years, Nevada was ranked as the fastest growing state in the nation, experiencing average annual population growth rates between four and seven percent.<sup>xxxix</sup>

This persistent challenge to keep up with increased demand led Clark County's Department of Family Services to initiate a 2008 Service Array Needs Assessment report aimed at surveying service providers, community stakeholders, child welfare staff, funding providers, and families in order to assess availability, accessibility, and quality of services throughout Clark County's child welfare system.<sup>xl</sup>

Conclusive findings of the report showed that regardless of the service area or the specific service in question, the majority of survey respondents indicated that the biggest factor impacting the ability to access services in Southern Nevada is the lack of availability relative to demand.

The second largest factor impacting the ability to access services was a lack of information about service availability, suggesting the need for a central repository where those who need services can be matched with service providers. Ideally, when this basic structure has been implemented we can work with service providers to measure the volume of services we are currently unable to provide.



Other issues and concerns repeated throughout the survey included the following:

- Inadequate supply relative to demand
- Long waiting lists
- Lack of knowledge regarding the existence of some services
- Agency lists are often outdated
- Restrictions often preclude eligibility
- Limited program funding
- Not enough coordination and collaboration between agencies
- Preventative services do not exist
- Facilities and training are inadequate
- Programs lack structure and consistency
- Families often have issues with transportation

It is difficult, if not impossible, to aid families in crisis so that they may safely care for their children when we as a community are simply unable to provide the resources they so desperately need. This is what we must do together.





# Conclusion



## Everyone Has a Role to Play

In order to safely reduce the number of children in foster care we must strengthen families, and focus on prevention. The return on investment is high, but it will take all of us working together to make the change we are seeking real.

Children, youth and young adults participate in decisions affecting them. As a community, we must provide our children with the tools and the supports to encourage them to do so.

Parents and families care for and protect their children and engage in decision making about their family's futures.

Communities support and protect all their members, particularly those most vulnerable. Any family can experience crisis; indeed, some families will collapse under pressure.

Non-government organizations deliver services and contribute to the development of policy, programs, and initiatives that actively promote child safety, protection, rights and wellbeing.

Local governments deliver a range of services to vulnerable families and play a pivotal role in engaging vulnerable children and their families in those services.

Nevada's state government delivers a range of services and early intervention initiatives to prevent child abuse and neglect, and also funds many of the services provided by the non-profit sector. The State of Nevada is responsible for the statutory child protection systems, including the support provided to children and young people in out-of-home care.

The business and corporate sector supports parents raising healthy, hopeful children through family-friendly policies, and corporate social responsibility investments in the communities they serve. They may also support programs and initiatives to directly assist children and families, including direct financial assistance, pro bono or volunteer activities of their staff to community organizations.<sup>xii</sup>

All of these organizations and systems have a role to play in ensuring all of Nevada's children and families are safe and well. It is possible, but it will take all of us.

To join us in this work please visit us at [www.thecommunitywewill.org](http://www.thecommunitywewill.org)

*"The destiny of all of us is, to a large extent, in the keeping of each of us."*

– Jim Casey

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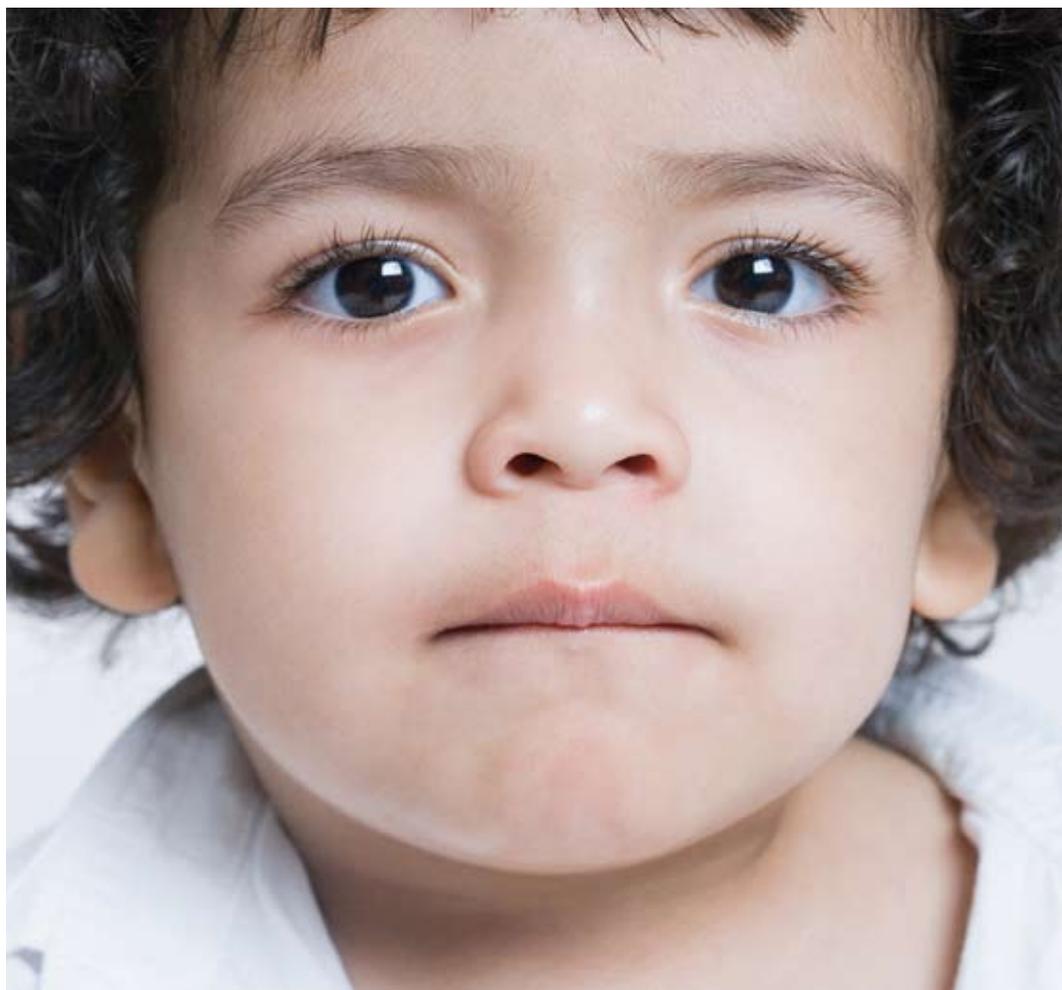
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# The Community We Will - Partners



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