



THE DIRECT SERVICE AGENCY OF  
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

# Voice

*Winter 2008 Volume Nine Issue One*

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## *From the Executive Director's Desk*

*As the nation copes with a worsening economy, families from coast to coast struggle to make ends meet and provide stability for their children. National attention has focused on the potential benefit of a one-time, across-the-board tax rebate to citizens, yet the singular effectiveness of a simple program that boosts the economic viability of some of our poorest families has gone all but unnoticed.*

*The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) routinely delivers a significant benefit to hard working families, with refunds of up to \$4,800 per family. EITC is a refundable federal tax credit that also is now provided by 21 states, as well as the District of Columbia, New York City, and Montgomery County, Maryland. When volunteer tax preparation initiatives – especially the national VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) campaign – are coupled with access to Individual Development Accounts and interest-bearing savings and checking accounts, the impact of EITC is compounded.*

*I am pleased that the entire Annie E. Casey Foundation, including Casey Family Services, continues to play a role in supporting this effort to offer free tax preparation to low- and moderate-income people through community partners, direct funding, and the participation of staff and families. For the often fragile families with whom we work, this program has opened the door to sustainable home ownership, education, productivity, and hope for the future. Most important, family economic success can translate into safe, stable childhoods for kids who might otherwise find themselves caught in the child welfare system.*

*Professionals in child welfare and policymakers alike have begun to address the link between poverty and child neglect. As we point out in this issue, far more children enter foster care because of neglect – most often due to families' lack of resources – than for reasons associated with abuse. If we are to achieve the goal of permanence – stable, lifelong families for every child in care – we must heed the lessons of EITC and other innovative approaches that make our economy work for all.*

Raymond L. Torres  
Vice President, The Annie E. Casey Foundation &  
Executive Director, Casey Family Services

Raymond L. Torres (izq.) con jóvenes durante un evento con legisladores en el Capitolio del Estado de Connecticut, Diciembre 2007.



## *Del Escritorio del Director Ejecutivo*

Mientras el país hace frente a una economía en estado de desplomo, muchas familias luchan para que rindan los pocos recursos y para que puedan dar estabilidad a sus hijos. La atención nacional se ha enfocado en los beneficios potenciales de un reembolso financiero único y universal, pero la efectividad de este programa que pueda afectar la vida económica de familias de escasos recursos por poco ha pasado por desapercibido.

El Crédito por el Ingreso de Trabajo (The Earned Income Tax Credit – EITC por sus siglas en inglés) proporciona un beneficio importante a las familias trabajadoras, con reembolsos que llegan hasta \$4,800 por familia. EITC es un crédito federal de reembolso vigente en 21 estados y también en el Distrito de Columbia, la ciudad de Nueva York y el condado de Montgomery, Maryland. Cuando se combinan las iniciativas de preparación voluntaria de contribuciones, especialmente la campana nacional Ayuda Voluntaria con el Impuesto sobre el Ingreso (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – VITA por sus siglas en inglés) con el acceso a cuentas individuales de desarrollo y cuentas bancarias de ahorros y cheques, se multiplican los efectos del EITC.

Me alegro que la Fundación Annie E. Casey Foundation, incluyendo Casey Family Services, siga en un papel clave apoyando a esta iniciativa que ofrece la preparación gratis de los formularios de impuestos sobre el ingreso a personas con pocos o modestos recursos, por medio de socios comunitarios, financiamiento directo y participación del personal y familias. Para las familias a veces quebradizas con quienes trabajamos, este programa ha servido para abrir la puerta a la posibilidad de llegar a ser dueños de su hogar en forma sostenible, a la educación, la productividad y esperanza para el futuro. Y aun más importante, este éxito económico hace posible una vida estable y segura para niños y jóvenes quienes de otra manera se encontrarían atrapados en el sistema de Bienestar de Niños.

Tanto los profesionista como las autoridades responsables de elaborar políticas relevantes han empezado a poner atención a los nexos entre la pobreza y el descuido de niños. Como subrayamos en este número, más jóvenes llegan al cuidado de crianza por el descuido – muchas veces debido a la falta de recursos adecuados – que por motivos relacionados con el abuso. Si quisiéramos lograr la meta de la permanencia – o sea, lazos familiares estables y perdurables para cada niño y niña en cuidado de crianza – tendremos que tomar muy en serio los elementos del EITC y otras iniciativas que hacen que nuestro sistema económico funciona para el bien de toda la gente de nuestro país.

Raymond L. Torres

Vice Presidente, La Fundacion Annie E. Casey &

Director Ejecutivo, Casey Family Services



“WHILE FIRST JOBS’ TRUE VALUE IS THE WAY IT SUPPORTS AND EMPOWERS YOUTH, IT ALSO MEETS A NEED FOR ITS BUSINESS PARTNERS.”

## FIRST JOBS: YOUTH WITH CHALLENGES BUILDING A WORKFORCE



*Jon and Kat from Westbrook, Maine, bound into a conference room at Hannaford Bros. Forest Avenue store – one of the largest in Maine – where they held their first summer jobs last year through a staffing program called First Jobs. Arriving with their foster mom, Iris, they’re here to recap their experiences with First Jobs founder Rob Franciose and Store Manager Dale Kinney, whom they greet with easy familiarity.*

**A summer job is often a rite of passage for youth looking to earn extra money and gain valuable experience. Yet, this traditional introduction to the workforce can be disappointing and even damaging for those youngsters unprepared for the structure, responsibility, and relationships a job requires.**

Foster youth in particular struggle in vocational settings where developmental and behavioral issues may be exacerbated or not tolerated.

“Working at Hannaford was the first job I ever had,” states 15-year-old Jon. “I loved this job, seriously, I loved it!” he says. A self-confessed shopper, the satisfaction that came from earning his own money lifted his self-esteem. “I liked having money,” he beams.

Kat, age 17, is more reflective: “There are a lot of nice people here. I felt safe.” Feeling safe and secure is critically important to kids such as Jon and Kat, both of whom have learning disabilities and emotional issues resulting from 12 foster home placements before coming to their permanent home with Iris.

The siblings’ foster mother sees the benefit of the First Jobs experience. “Last summer, they both learned how to get along with people,” Iris says. “Jon, for example, has more respect for others. Kat shows more confidence.”

Jon plans to work again next summer at Hannaford. Kat wants to work at an animal shelter. At the heart of their positive experiences was a network of supportive

*Jon, a First Jobs participant, working in the produce section of Hannaford’s flagship store in Portland, Maine.*

people that exemplifies the First Jobs model, including First Jobs training staff, Hannaford management, social workers, and their foster mother. All were aware of the teens’ needs and the strategies that made these youths truly employable.

### *Strong Beginnings*

With funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2004 and technical assistance from Casey Family Services and the University of Southern Maine, First Jobs Maine began as a staffing initiative that provided first-time and transitional employment opportunities for youth in foster care.

Part of Casey’s national strategy to improve the economic self-sufficiency of youth in the foster care system, First Jobs was perceived as a natural extension of the Foundation’s School to Career initiative,

a program that connects youth to quality, supportive employment.

With ongoing funding from the Casey Foundation and an additional grant from the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, First Jobs today also serves youth with disabilities who are referred through the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. As a result, the program has expanded its job placement partners to include the Home Depot, Paradigm Windows, T.D. Banknorth, and UnumProvident, along with smaller companies in the Portland, Maine, area.

Hannaford, with its numerous entry-level positions and constant staffing needs, remains the major employer of First Jobs youth and a committed champion of the program.

"While First Jobs' true value is the way it supports and empowers youth, it also meets a need for its business partners," explains Dale Kinney, manager of Hannaford's Portland store. "I employ 300 people in this building, and it's not easy to find them. We can't rely solely on the traditional methods of hiring. We need to tap into innovative hiring practices. Working with First Jobs youth is good for us, those we hire, and the community as a whole."

Tapping into the First Jobs staffing approach has paid off for Hannaford. The grocery retailer has employed 150 young people in 21 stores, with an 82 percent retention rate, since partnering with First Jobs three and a half years ago. In total, First Jobs has connected 180 young people with jobs at 10 different Maine businesses.

Today, First Jobs is poised to launch a pilot through VIP Community Services and Managed Work Services in New York City with Whole Foods, another large prominent retailer.

### *Elements of Longevity*

Everything about First Jobs is designed for youth to have a successful work experience. A key element is the involvement of every stakeholder from the beginning.

Once a social worker referred Jon and Kat to the program, for example, staff from First

**STARTING WITH 25 YOUTHS IN THREE LOCATIONS DURING THE PROGRAM'S FIRST YEAR, [HANNAFORD] HAS EMPLOYED 150 YOUNG PEOPLE IN 21 STORE LOCATIONS, WITH AN 82 PERCENT RETENTION RATE OVER THE LAST THREE AND A HALF YEARS.**



*From left: Rob Franciose, First Job executive director; Jon, Dale Kinney, Hannaford store manager; Kat; and Iris, the teens' foster mother.*

Jobs met with Iris and the siblings to discuss the program in depth, assess any particular needs, and determine what types of support would be needed on the job. Job coaches, who are trained in the tasks that the youth must perform during their employment, are on the job site every day to guide and support youth. In Jon and Kat's case, the job coach was a young woman adopted from foster care, whose family was receiving post-adoption services from Casey Family Services' Maine Division.

In addition to on-site coaching, First Jobs provides its young associates with individual and classroom training. Representatives from the business community and the field of workforce development serve as teachers. Youth learn financial management, workplace etiquette, proper attire, application and interview processes, and other skills

they will need for future employment and career development.

Most important, service providers such as Casey Family Services and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) host training sessions to educate business partners about the emotional and behavioral issues common to kids from care and those with disabilities.

This knowledge enables greater flexibility on the job and a culture that recognizes options rather than failures. R.B.'s story is a case in point. Because of his disability, R.B. was unable to perform most jobs, but expressed an eagerness to work. So, First Jobs worked with a small grocery retailer in Maine to design a new position of bulk packager tailored for R.B. He performed his job so well that when the business was purchased a year later, R.B. followed the rest of the team to the new owner.

"Everyone – youth, parents, employers, and social service providers – knows what is expected of them, what their roles are,"





*Jon and Kat hanging out with their former First Jobs job coach, Kaila Kelly, after working a shift.*

states First Jobs founder Rob Franciose. "When a young person's life issues get in the way in the workplace, there's a whole support network that can step in and find a way to mitigate those circumstances."

It doesn't always work perfectly. Youth employed at Paradigm Windows didn't fare as well. Of 12 initial First Jobs hires, only one remains. Human Resources Manager Jennifer Frank explains that the four 10-hour work days proved too demanding.

One by one, the young associates, some of whom were teen parents juggling work and child-care responsibilities, were unable to adhere to the rigorous production schedule. But Frank and trainer Lark Pitts expressed an unequivocal approval of the youths' performance while on the job. "We never had

one problem. Once trained, they were as good as or better than many other employees," Pitts says. Likewise, both managers had very positive relationships with the young employees and are determined to keep Paradigm connected with First Jobs.

#### *Building on Strengths*

As First Jobs enters 2008, the team is not complacent. It is building on the considerable strengths of the program and examining opportunities to develop a wider array of employers, more in-depth youth needs assessments, and better evaluation of what makes a good business partner for the placement of a youth.

Most significant, according to Franciose, First Jobs made two important observations about its work. First, youth who had the most success in sustaining employment were those who had a basic understanding of life skills and a solid support system in place to continue to develop those skills while applying them to their work and personal goals. Second, the employers who saw the greatest success were those who took an active role in vocational support.

Building on this information and the long-time relationship with Hannaford, First Jobs, in partnership with Casey Family Services, plans to combine the vocational education of the youth with enhanced leadership training at a First Jobs Academy, housed initially in five Hannaford locations in Southern Maine.

The academy will offer a curriculum to youth who are identified as needing more intensive life-skills training. At the same time, it will provide training in youth vocational support to Hannaford associates who are on a customer service management career path.

Rob Menezes, associate relationship manager for Hannaford, explains: "The job position of 'mentor-leader' created for the academy will have its own application and interview process. First Jobs associates will attend the workforce and life-skills training components of the academy alongside the mentor-leader candidates, so by the time they begin their employment, they will already have built a relationship with their mentors," he says.

Franciose sums it up: "We are creating a whole set of fully trained, management-level employees, and developing a system within the company designed to facilitate successful early employment experiences for kids in foster care."

Working closely with Casey Family Services, First Jobs and Hannaford envision the potential for replicating the academy in Hannaford stores throughout New England and targeting jobs for 500 youths in three years.

That's an impressive goal, but watching Franciose and First Jobs partners in action, one can sense a kind of collective passion for making it all work.

It's that passionate belief in what youth with challenges can bring to the workforce that continues to fuel the engine of First Jobs.

# ANSWERING FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:

## THE CONNECTIONS AND MYTHS OF POVERTY AND CHILD NEGLECT

IF KIDS COME INTO FOSTER CARE BECAUSE OF POVERTY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS THE PROBLEM AT HAND SO WE CAN DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO KEEP THEM AT HOME.



**Does family poverty lead to child neglect? Does this neglect require the intervention of child welfare services and the removal of children? Or, do families struggling with poverty simply need a helping hand?**

In other words, are children from poor families who are involved with protective services primarily the victims of poverty?

The answers to these key questions have a profound bearing on how the child welfare system responds to child neglect and tailors its services. For the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services, these questions also have a fundamental impact on their work, particularly in achieving family permanence for children who may be entering the system and for those already in foster care.

To help find answers and solutions, the Foundation, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Social Policy, hosted a Poverty and Neglect Consultative Session last November, bringing together academ-

ics, families, social policy and legal experts, and youth from around the country. The session targeted three key questions to focus the discussion and produce recommendations and guidance: What do we know from experience? What do we know from research? and What do we know about solutions?

“By exploring our understanding of what actually happens when the forces of poverty become intertwined with the child welfare system, we can bring to our practices a more humane and effective approach to solving these pressing problems,” says Joy Duva, deputy executive director of planning and policy at Casey Family Services. “This connection between poverty and what is labeled as child neglect has not gotten enough attention.”

The Foundation has focused considerable resources on addressing poverty and neglect in child welfare. This work includes broad income security and asset-building policy initiatives (see “Close-up” on pages 8 and 9), systems reforms, and efforts to improve decision making in child welfare cases.


Casey has taken on this issue because, as Foundation President Douglas W. Nelson has said, “Children cannot prosper unless their parents do.”

### *What Do We Know from Experience?*

There was a consensus at the consultative session that when neglect is a result of the family’s lack of resources – food, clothing, child care, and housing – removal of a child for these reasons alone is not a solution that benefits the child or helps the family. What’s more, poverty not only precipitates placement, but it impedes reunification. Child welfare administrators estimate that a large number of children in state custody could return to their families if adequate housing were available.

And all too often, the current system offers support to families only after the fact. “You give us all the help we need at the end of the day, but in the morning, we are all alone,” said Robert Clayton, a parent on the panel.





“WE NEED MUCH MORE TRAINING AT ALL LEVELS FOR CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES, ACCOMPANIED BY LEADERSHIP, TO MAKE SURE ALL FAMILIES ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT.”

Early support to keep children in their own homes may include in-home and child care services to families, the accessibility of services in the community, and strong public-private partnerships that provide basic economic support, as well as preventive resources.

The lack of respect for parents was cited as another significant barrier to keeping families intact. “Parents are considered insignificant, from entry into the child welfare system throughout the court process,” notes Sania Metzger, Esq., Casey’s director of policy. “Their failures are highlighted, and their strengths are ignored. We need much more training at all levels for child welfare agencies, accompanied by leadership, to make sure all families are treated with respect.”

#### *What Do We Know from Research?*

While various forms of neglect are the predominant reasons for opening formal protective service cases and for removing children, the correlation between poverty and a formal finding of neglect varies, depending on race, the age of the child, and geography.

“The need to disentangle poverty from neglect requires further research into the nature of poverty,” says Metzger. “Poverty itself is not enough of a reason to remove a child from the family. Poverty is not what families choose, so we must understand if there’s real maltreatment or just poverty-related problems. It’s an important distinction.” Other related questions: How is persistent poverty different from intermittent poverty, and what’s the impact of community poverty on individual poverty?

“In addition, disproportionate numbers of certain children of color are being removed

from their homes, despite no differences in rates of abuse or neglect,” Metzger says. “We need to focus more explicitly on the racial disproportionality and inequities that exist in practice, policy, and accountability.”

A recent study of a differential response system showed that a combination of concrete services (basic, finance-related services) and formal casework services has reduced the number of cases of abuse or neglect and future placement. “Our understanding of best practices is still evolving,” adds Duva. “More research is needed to shed light on what is working and what is not.”

#### *What Do We Know About Solutions?*

Potential solutions to the poverty-neglect nexus are far-ranging. Those discussed at the session include: enacting legislative poverty exemptions, increasing prevention services, developing differential response systems, changing the definition of neglect in the context of poverty, providing adequate legal representation for families, and incorporating parent advocacy and support.

“Perhaps most important, we need to reframe ‘child welfare’ to ‘child well-being,’ and create, with communities, a better system to achieve it,” says Raymond L. Torres, vice president of the Casey Foundation and executive director of Casey Family Services.

During the consultative session, participants identified necessary elements of effective child welfare policy and practices to address issues of poverty:

- A multi-pronged, comprehensive system

based on family teaming and solution-focused services, and accountability.

- Closer relationships with community resources, including community service providers and institutions.
- Improved decision making based on a fundamental shift in the relationship between case workers and families.
- The importance of legal representation.
- An explicit focus on racial disproportionality.
- A change in the culture based on respect and inclusion.

#### *Early Support Is Critical*

The importance of providing support to families before they are in crisis cannot be overstated, according to Metzger.

Early support can include employment, transportation, and child care; flexible funds (not necessarily new funding) so case-workers have the tools they need to address concrete needs quickly; and community-based partnerships between public and private agencies that offer one-stop shopping for a wide variety of services and supports.

“The issue of poverty is at the core of every one of the Foundation’s goals and objectives,” Torres notes. “A big part of our message is to eliminate the ‘we and they’ view of children and families involved in the child welfare system and to convey the human face of poverty and its lifelong impact on children who get stuck in the system solely because they come from poor families.”





## New Study Points to Value of Extended Connections for Foster Youth

**Just a few more years of state support in early adulthood can have a major impact on the success of young people aging out of foster care, a new study shows.**

In all but a few jurisdictions, states relinquish their parental responsibilities for young people who have not been reunited with family or found permanent families when they reach age 18. In recent years, however, there has been increased attention to the poor outcomes of foster children cut off from the system at age 18, and pressure to bolster federal and state laws and funding to ease the transition to independent living.

Prior studies have highlighted stark differences in life outcomes between foster youth who age out of the system at age 18 and young people who are raised by their parents. But now, new data from the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago offer specific evidence that receiving support through age 21, as opposed to age 18, can make a compelling difference.

Chapin Hall's "Midwest Study" has been following a set of foster youth from Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin since 2002. The latest data, released at a Capitol Hill briefing in December 2007, show that study participants in Illinois are doing significantly better than those in the other two states. The key distinction is that Illinois supports young

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people in foster care through age 21, while the other two states end support at age 18.

The Illinois youth were faring much better at age 21 in terms of education, employment, earnings, avoidance of early pregnancy, and other challenges associated with aging out. The briefing was hosted by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, which offers support in a number of areas to help young people transition out of foster care.

The newest data reflect interviews when most of the young people were age 21. Similar to prior studies, as a whole these former youth in care are faring worse than young people in the general population at age 21; far fewer have a high school diploma,

attend college, or are working, and rates of criminal justice involvement and early pregnancy are significantly higher.

The outcomes of young people from Illinois bolster the case for advocates seeking to amend Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide federal reimbursement to states for the care and supervision of foster youth until age 21.

"The effect of these policies is not trivial," said Mark E. Courtney, lead author of the Midwest Study report and executive director of Partners for Our Children at the University of Washington School of Social Work.

"Young people at 18 are not ready to live on their own. They need our assistance in having a longer time to establish permanent connections to people that care about them," said Robin Nixon, executive director of the National Foster Care Coalition. "Unless we are able to provide that support, society will pay in lots of unfortunate ways."

Nixon and other panelists, including U.S. Representative Danny Davis of Illinois (D-Illinois); Carla Owens, director of communications and public affairs for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; and Erwin McEwen, Illinois director of Children and Family Services, echoed the call for improved policies to help young people transition out of foster care and for systemic reforms that help young people form permanent connections to families that can provide lifelong support.

Priscilla Davis and J.J. Hitch, former foster youths who have both benefited from services provided by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, offered compelling testimony about their personal journey. Davis described her struggles to complete her education and pay the bills while serving as primary caregiver for her younger sister. Hitch noted, "When you don't have parents who hug you and say they love you and don't provide for you like they should, it's hard to carry on a normal life."

*The "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21" can be downloaded at [www.chapinhall.org](http://www.chapinhall.org).*



## BOB GILOTH, DIRECTOR, FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS, THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

*Robert P. "Bob" Giloth is known for his experience and passion for improving economic opportunities for workers and families living on the margins in this country. Under his leadership, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed a comprehensive "family economic success" agenda that has yielded groundbreaking strategies and results while leveraging hundreds of thousands of public and private dollars for bettering economic outcomes for vulnerable families and communities. Giloth is the author of a new book, *Nonprofit Leadership: Life Lessons from an Enterprising Practitioner*, published by iUniverse, Inc.*

**VOICE:** *What is the Casey Foundation's commitment to helping families lift themselves out of poverty? How does this relate to other areas of focus, including direct services?*

**GILOTH:** When I came to the Foundation in 1993 to design the eight-year, six-city JOBS initiative, the focus was on direct services and system reform. We had launched the Rebuilding Communities Initiative and were just beginning to invest in income security policy and youth employment. We also began building out our economic opportunity work to look at strategies such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).

As our work in strengthening families in some of the nation's toughest neighborhoods deepened, we reorganized the work under the heading of Family Economic Success and began focusing on consumer financial services, predatory lending, and the lack of access to bank accounts in poor communities. Out of that came some of the first Casey investments in Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaigns on the ground.

In 2003, as part of our annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, we released an essay on the "High Cost of Being Poor." This

created a framework and body of work around the lack of affordable goods and services in low-income communities. We worked on all those strands individually, but we also spent a lot of time figuring out how they were connected from the point of view of families.

The result was our pilot Centers for Working Families – community-based networks that help connect families to many different services to bolster family economic success. Casey Family Services, the Foundation's direct service agency, hosts Centers for Working Families in its Massachusetts and Rhode Island divisions.

**VOICE:** *How have these efforts affected the field at large?*

**GILOTH:** We've helped to build a common sense of understanding of what it takes for a family to do well economically. We're considering multiple aspects of economic opportunity and figuring out how to bundle, blend, or sequence them in ways that work best for families and children. We've built partnerships with prominent national organizations and civic groups that are using key elements of this approach. For example, the United Way of America last spring launched its Financial Stability Partnership, a national initiative aimed at helping low- to moderate-income families build assets and achieve economic independence.

**VOICE:** *Family Economic Success is a part of Casey Family Services' direct work with vulnerable families throughout New England and in Baltimore. How has that dimension of the approach helped to inform the Foundation's national work?*

**GILOTH:** Casey Family Services has some terrific tax credit campaigns in Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island, in both rural and urban sites. The insights the agency has gained are extremely important, and this is helping the Foundation learn how these family economic success tools can be most helpful.

**VOICE:** *With tax season in gear, is there anything new about the 2008 EITC work?*

**GILOTH:** The campaign continues to yield impressive results. In 2007, with a total of 44 local campaigns, volunteers prepared 193,000 federal income tax returns. Participants claimed close to \$276 million in federal and state tax refunds, \$109 million in EITC returns, and approximately \$44 million in child tax credits.

Besides long-time partners like the United Way, a growing number of national and local foundations have come on board to support tax credit campaigns, including the Abell Foundation in Baltimore, the Charles



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Stewart Mott Foundation, Chase, Citibank, Fannie Mae Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Piton Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation in New York City. We’re also working closely with the National Tax Coalition of the Center for Economic Progress in Chicago.

At the behest of local EITC campaigns, we’re helping to monitor quality by providing a “check in” to see how well they’re doing filling out returns, how accurate they are, and how they can do a better job. We’ve also been having a lot of success in advocating for split refunds, giving people the opportunity to direct their refunds to checking as well as savings accounts. The IRS now allows this as well. We also have expanded a new pilot project where people can use split refunds to purchase savings bonds. We had six pilots in 2007, and we’ll be supporting 25 or more this year.

**VOICE:** *Congress just funded \$8 million for VITA sites over the next two years. What impact will these funds have?*

**GILOTH:** Funding had been cut for these, and VITA sites need resources to be sustainable. So this new investment is a very good sign. It recognizes that these campaigns have a big payoff.

**VOICE:** *Where do you see Family Economic Success work going in the future?*

**GILOTH:** In the workforce arena, we are paying a lot more attention to the challenge of adult education – there is just a huge

literacy challenge in the United States, while a large segment of jobs are requiring more and different skills. On the asset-building side, we’ve realized that an IDA is too big a jump for a lot of folks who are in debt, barely making it, and don’t have bank accounts. There needs to be a whole continuum of new products and wider access to mainstream, lower-cost financial services.

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We also need to pay more attention to the issue of credit scores and understand how they affect vulnerable populations like immigrants and refugees, for example.

And we have started to focus on what families will be facing in 2025 and what trends we’ll need to anticipate. We’re joining with some of the others in the Foundation who have worked on issues related to vulnerable families – immigrant and refugee populations, people who have been incarcerated and are reentering society, single parents, and young mothers – to figure out how family economic success relates to them.

**VOICE:** *What kind of federal policy agenda is the Foundation pursuing to advance family economic success?*

**GILOTH:** In the short term, we’re asking, “Does the federal economic stimulus package have provisions that help low-income families put money in their pockets and address some of the uncertainties facing them in the current economy?” In terms of the foreclosure crisis, “How can we help families who were misled and put some constraints around the way financial institutions make loans?”

In the longer term, we’ve been having a lot of discussion around deepening the impact of our EITC campaigns; providing mechanisms to guarantee access to college; improving resources for adult education; and making all of these kinds of things much more available to low-income working families.

Through the Foundation’s ongoing income security work, we’re also looking at how best to identify the key elements and channel the attention being given in this presidential campaign to an explicit poverty alleviation agenda.

# MARYLAND TURNS TO CASEY TO USHER IN REFORMS



**Maryland has a chance to turn its struggling child welfare system around and place more children on a path toward permanent family connections, thanks to the leadership of a former Casey Fellow and growing partnerships with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services.**

While recent news reports have drawn attention to the crucial need to improve the safety and health services of children in Maryland foster care—particularly in Baltimore—the appointment of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald in January of 2007 set the stage for much broader reforms to support lifelong families for the state's children.

## *Alarming Numbers*

A shortage of foster homes, a lack of services to help support children placed in these homes, and inadequate recruitment and retention efforts have contributed to an over-reliance on high-end therapeutic and group care in Maryland. About 22 percent of children involved with the child welfare system in the state are placed in congregant care—well above the national average of 15 percent.

Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Prince George's County together represent 40 percent of the state's population, but account for 72 percent of its child welfare population. Baltimore City itself accounts for 61 percent of all children in the child welfare system in Maryland.

The Baltimore Division of Casey Family Services is finalizing a contract with the state Department of Human Resources to help teenage foster parents remain in the same foster homes as their infants and is helping them to get services and support through the Family Resource Center that Casey Family Services operates in East Baltimore.

Ed Rennells, interim director of the Baltimore Division, noted that a state regulation requiring foster homes to have two extra bedrooms to house a teenage parent and child makes it particularly hard to find foster homes for teenage foster parents and their babies. As a result, many get placed in group homes or separate foster homes. Rennells said the Division will be intensifying its efforts to reunite these teen parents with their children and to ensure that the teenage parents have a permanent family in their lives.

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**“WE WILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM  
SUCCESS ONLY WHEN WE  
MEET EVERY CHILD’S NEED  
FOR A STRONG, SAFE, AND  
LASTING FAMILY.”**

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## *Place Matters*

Donald, a 1995 Annie E. Casey Foundation Fellow from the Children and Family Fellowship program, also has moved to develop a collaborative plan to meet the needs of Maryland's foster children by forging a partnership with the Foundation's Casey Strategic Consulting Group.

Announced last August, the Maryland initiative—known as “Place Matters”—focuses on four key goals:

- Making better decisions about whether children can be kept safely at home;
- Providing community-based services to families;
- Building stronger local supports so that if children have to be removed from their

homes, they can remain in their own communities;

- Ensuring that every child removed from home finds a permanent lifelong family.

“We need to think about permanence for children from the start,” Donald said in announcing the partnership with Casey Strategic Consulting Group. “We are building a greater reliance on foster parents to ensure that they provide temporary, loving homes to our children, with the goal every day either to reunify children with their families or match them with caring, committed adoptive parents.”

Donald announced the partnership last summer on the heels of the release of the Casey Foundation's 2007 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which, in fact, focused on the importance of securing lifelong family connections for children and youth in foster care. The report, which offers state-by-state ratings on several measures of child well-being, ranked Maryland—one of the highest per capita income states in the country—only 24th in the nation in overall child well-being.

Kathleen Feely, vice president for innovations and strategic consulting at the Casey Foundation, said the consulting team in Maryland is helping the Department of Human Resources formulate a plan to reduce reliance on group and residential care.

“Difficult as it has been for Maryland to attend to the immediate health and safety needs of foster children,” noted Casey Foundation President Douglas W. Nelson in a recent Op-Ed in the *Baltimore Sun*. “We will be able to claim success only when we meet every child's need for a strong, safe, and lasting family.”





## JULIE SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF CHILD WELFARE COMMISSIONERS AND DIRECTORS

*Julie Sweeney-Springwater is executive director of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors and a member of the faculty for Boston University's Graduate School of Social Work where she teaches management classes. In 2008 she joined the Board of Advisors for Casey Family Services, the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In that capacity, she is helping to guide the policy and vision for Casey's expanding work related to permanency practice and policy. Sweeney-Springwater also serves on the Board of the Child Welfare League of America.*

**VOICE:** *Over the past few years and especially since the 2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence, have you observed change in the commitment of state child welfare systems in New England to achieving permanence for all kids in care?*

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** In general, the various convenings that have taken place nationally and regionally have served to put greater focus on the practices, philosophy, and policies that need to be in place. In New England, Vermont and Rhode Island have held convenings on permanence, and in February, the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice and the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors supported Maine in its first permanency summit. What's unique is that this gathering will be made up of an equal number of youth and adult participants, and that it was in response to a youth summit held earlier in the state.

This is a good example of one of the more important changes that I've seen overall: The role young people play in creating change is much stronger. Young people also have achieved much more involvement in policy setting and practice improvement. Among several factors contributing to this and other changes taking place is the federal Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs), which now engage youth directly. The CFSRs assess state systems on their ability to achieve child safety, permanence, and well-being. Because the states are guided by the program improvement plans completed following the CFSRs, the review process has had a tremendous impact on the work. The continuing challenge is to figure out how to work much more effectively across systems.

### "THE MODEL OF FOSTER CARE IS CHANGING WITH MORE FOCUS ON PERMANENCE, AND AS THE MODEL CHANGES WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND IT."

**VOICE:** *Have you seen any improvement in the effort to break down systems silos?*

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** There were many more silos 10 to 15 years ago than there are today. Maine, for example, has created one system that comprises many of the human services that impact the lives of children and families: early childhood development, child care, child protective services, mental health, and more. Vermont is implementing

such a model. Connecticut has had a kind of umbrella agency in place for 20 years. Rhode Island is the same. As people have recognized the need to work across systems to address complex, interrelated issues, there's been a movement to restructure agencies somewhat differently.

**VOICE:** *What are your hopes and expectations for the 2008 National Convening?*

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** I talked about that with the commissioners recently. We plan to be a co-sponsoring organization again this year. What I saw come out of the 2006 National Convening was a focus on permanence with an eye to what participants could learn from the experience of others. This time, perhaps we can broaden the initiatives that are the direct result of the first National Convening. For example, we're currently working with a planning grant from the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice on a New England-wide youth coalition that could enhance leadership development and help create changes in public policy. We're in the planning phase now.

**VOICE:** *Many agencies and institutions, including Casey, are actively building a new approach to recruiting foster families willing and able to work within a permanency framework. What lessons are there to learn from our state systems?*

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** We have talked about the challenges of recruiting foster parents at association meetings several times; it's an issue that cuts across state lines, and

**“ONE OF THE UNIQUE STRENGTHS OF THIS ASSOCIATION IS OUR ABILITY TO BRING TOGETHER PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT FUNCTIONAL MANDATES ACROSS STATE LINES TO SHARE INFORMATION, TECHNOLOGY DIALOGUE, AND STRATEGIES.”**

all states are struggling with it. The model of foster care is changing with more focus on permanence and family engagement, and as the model changes we need to think about the philosophy behind it. We also need to think about how we bring in foster families and others who can embrace that philosophy. In the Midwest, there has been some success in programs in which families parent other families to facilitate the reunification process, so it's not just a child to come into care. We must think about emerging approaches.

**VOICE: What do you see as the future of foster care in the United States?**

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** It depends on whether or not states move toward more differential response – an approach to ensuring child safety by expanding the ability of child welfare agencies to use a broader set of responses to reports of child abuse and neglect at the first signs of trouble. With differential response, social workers work with families to engage them in solutions and to provide focused services so that there is the best possible opportunity to make needed improvements. If more states put that approach in place, and it works, then it is likely that we will have fewer children in foster care. California, a bellweather state, has implemented it. Vermont is talking about it, and Massachusetts is

considering a different model of family engagement that could include elements of differential response. There may be enough states talking about it to reach a tipping point; the question is when.

**VOICE: Have you seen any increase in media coverage of child welfare issues and in the public's willingness to support improvements?**

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** I certainly think there's always room for improvement. Over the past several years, the media has given a lot of attention to the needs of youth aging out of care, and that has led to greater recognition of the need for services and for youth participation in decision making. You need to continue to build public will if you're going to be able to address poverty as one of the factors leading to children entering the child welfare system.

**VOICE: During the past few years, the economy has taken a heavy toll on the stability of families, and at the same time, state budgets have constricted. How has the economy affected the New England systems?**

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** I recently heard a news report saying that 25 governors nationwide are talking about the possibility that they will face deficits in the next year to two. Currently, I know that Maine is struggling with budget issues; Massachusetts is talking about the possibility; and Rhode Island clearly has a serious budget situation. That's three of the six New England states, and it is a cause for concern because deficits always stress services.

**VOICE: Is your association a model for collaboration?**

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** One of the unique strengths of this association is our ability to bring together people with similar functional mandates across state lines to share information, technology, dialogue, and strategies. As a result we've been connected with institutions of higher learning, resource centers, and foundations like Casey. I don't know of any other regional child welfare organization that works as we do. There have been times when we've been asked to think about expanding to include other states. But we haven't had the capacity to do that. So, we're still a model for anyone out there.

**VOICE: You graciously agreed to serve on Casey's Board of Advisors. What do you hope to accomplish through your membership?**

**SWEENEY-SPRINGWATER:** The commissioners and directors feel that the mission of Casey is important and complementary to the missions of their own organizations. The way that Casey works to achieve its mission through advancement of sound public policy is another close fit with the association and its members. We also believe we are well matched in terms of our commitment to understanding what contributes to best practice, to creating a practice model, and to knowing what best practices should be used in evidence-based treatment.

It's an honor to sit and share my thoughts about ways to help your mission come to life.



## ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

# IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER CARE ALUMNI



by Nathan Monell,  
Executive Director, Foster  
Care Alumni of America

*"To name a few of the careers  
I have aspired towards, I  
dreamed of becoming a*

*writer, a policeman, and a CIA operative.  
For each I need a degree from a college, and  
at age 24, I have not achieved that. It is not  
for lack of trying, talent, or resolve. The heart  
of why I have failed in attaining needed  
education? I have had an absolute absence of  
support and resources. What is next for me?"*  
— Aaron Weaver, former foster youth, Lincoln,  
Nebraska

Undoubtedly, Aaron's determination  
will ultimately lead to success. But the  
"Northwest Alumni Study" found that,

encouragement from invested parents and  
adults, a lack of successful workplace role  
models, unfamiliarity with the culture of  
work, and the absence of social and profes-  
sional networks that lead to summer jobs,  
internships, and promising first jobs.

"Growing up in care, you learn so much  
about what failure looks like," writes for-  
mer foster youth Angie Cross. "It is not on  
alumni's radar to do success planning or  
learn how to expect and plan for success.  
For the average alumnus and alumna, it's a  
self-worth issue."

There are the exceptions — those super-  
achieving alumni who stun us all with  
their tenacity in the pursuit of their goals,  
turning their life adversity into a challenge  
they are determined to meet. On the other

deal with all of the paperwork I needed to  
complete," Florida's Melanie Oyler writes.  
"I had a mountain of debt. In addition to  
attending school, I needed a job with medi-  
cal insurance and a decent enough wage  
to pay down my debts. The books alone  
were so expensive! The only way to make  
it through was to incur more debt to cover  
my tuition and expenses."

What are the solutions? They are not to be  
found simply in better pep talks encourag-  
ing foster youth to make more of them-  
selves. These well-intentioned speeches  
ignore the current reality for many foster  
youth that they are lucky just to be standing  
after all they have been through. Youth who  
recently have transitioned out of care with-  
out the safety net of a family are struggling  
to maintain very basic needs: food, clothing,  
housing, and some semblance of belonging  
and dependable support.

One solution could be a new national  
strategy for educational training and  
employment for foster care alumni. Many,  
perhaps most, of our foster youth are not  
ready to deal with the concrete issues of  
job-readiness and full employment until  
they are adults in their 20s or 30s. The  
U.S. Department of Labor should identify  
alumni as a vulnerable employment subset  
in the same way it has identified displaced  
homemakers, senior workers, and workers  
subject to plant closings.

It is time for the federal government to  
address and remedy the unacceptable  
employment outcomes that adults from fos-  
ter care experience.

*To learn more about Foster Care Alumni of  
America, visit [www.fostercarealumni.org](http://www.fostercarealumni.org) or  
join the organization's Facebook group online.*

WITH 12 MILLION ADULTS HAVING EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARE,  
THE LOSS OF PRODUCTIVE AND FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR THIS  
SEGMENT OF THE WORKFORCE HAS REPERCUSSIONS NOT ONLY  
FOR THE INDIVIDUALS DEEPLY AFFECTED, BUT FOR THE ECON-  
OMY AS WELL.

although 80 percent of former foster youth  
are working full- or part-time, one-third  
of alumni from the system have household  
incomes at or below the poverty level —  
three times the national average for their  
peer group. In addition, only three percent  
of foster youth complete college.

Underemployment and unemployment  
among former foster youth result from  
transportation challenges, life transitions  
that prevent stability, a lack of personalized

end of the continuum are foster youth who  
carry the additional limitations of mental or  
physical disabilities, or who have had brush-  
es with the criminal justice system. For  
these vulnerable individuals, the employ-  
ment barriers are profound.

College and family support are the tickets  
for better employment outcomes. And, yet,  
both come hard.

"When I was starting college in 1995, I had  
no support systems to help ready myself to

## *Economic Reality and Doing the Right Thing: When Should the State Cease Parenting?*

# View from Washington



*by Robin Nixon, Executive  
Director, National Foster  
Care Coalition*

I have a 20-year-old child in college, and an 18-year-old about to graduate from high school. Somehow, despite 20 years of working with adolescents and developing programs and services to prepare them for adulthood, I have missed the boat with my own kids!

While they are intelligent, socially capable, and good at academic pursuits, they are terrible with money, expect mom and dad to bail them out of every financial crisis, and resist gainful employment as if it were a prison sentence. There are times when I literally want to bang my head against a wall, and feel as if I actually know nothing about helping young people become self-sufficient citizens.

In these moments of frustration, I take some time to think about it, stop beating myself up, and try to reframe my internal dialogue.

My childhood was not one of privilege; I was intimately familiar with doing without, making do, and getting by on what I had. As any loving parent, I wanted better for my kids. I wanted them never to worry about having school supplies, nice clothes, or participating in sports or other special activities. And compared to many of their peers, my kids are relatively unspoiled.

The expectations for the Millennial Generation in terms of self-sufficiency are

just very different; there is an understanding that parents will retain financial responsibility for their children until they have finished college and are launched in a career. Most parents provide support even beyond college. Recent surveys suggest that parents provide economic support at an average level of \$38,000 between the ages of 18 and 34. Perhaps most important, the door to home is never closed. If our children need a place to stay after college, between jobs, or when they break up with a significant other, they can always come home.

In the worlds of public policy and child and youth advocacy, there is a significant level of discussion and debate regarding this very phenomenon in relation to young people in foster care. When should the state cease parenting?

Mark Courtney and his colleagues at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago recently published findings from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth which demonstrate exactly what common sense might indicate: Young people who continue to receive the support of the system beyond age 18 do better.

The most dramatic difference is in education. Youth who remain in care past age 18 are more than three times more likely to go to college than their peers who leave foster care at the age of majority. The research also indicates positive impacts on earnings and on the delay of pregnancy.

In the Chapin Hall issue brief, "When Should the State Cease Parenting: Evidence from the Midwest Study," Courtney and his team present a compelling argument for states to continue supporting

young people beyond age 18. There also are a number of legislative proposals on the table in Washington to extend federal reimbursement to states through the Title IV-E program to age 21, to extend Medicaid to young adults up to ages 21 or 24, and to expand the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

This in no way diminishes the state's responsibility to facilitate permanence for older youth in foster care and beyond their 18th birthday. Advocates across the nation fully acknowledge and promote the belief that a lifetime family is the best place from which to launch a young person into adulthood.

Although child welfare systems around the nation are making strides in connecting youth to permanent families, there are still, each year, up to 25,000 young adults who leave foster care without a legal connection to a caring adult. Until such time as we are able to ensure that each youth achieves permanence while he or she is in care and exits with a family to count on for a lifetime, policymakers have an obligation to provide economic, emotional, and social support to every young adult who is emancipating on his or her own.

We would do no less for our own children while continuing to help build lifelong family relationships.

*To learn more about the National Foster Care Coalition, view a complete archive of Nixon's articles for Voice, and learn about the activities of its members, visit [www.nationalfostercare.org](http://www.nationalfostercare.org).*

# Resource Corner

## *Foundations Ask Presidential Candidates What They'll Do for America*

Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity is an initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services and other major national foundations to move the issues of poverty and opportunity in America to center stage during the 2008 presidential campaign and beyond. Discover the presidential candidates' views on poverty and find daily updates, opinions, research and data, and links to blogs on poverty, hunger, and presidential politics.

Learn more at [www.spotlightonpoverty.com](http://www.spotlightonpoverty.com).

## *The Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program*

Through the federally funded Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program (Chafee ETV Program), states are working to improve the outcomes experienced by this vulnerable population of young people in foster care and engage them more fully in decision making related to their transition to adult life, economic self-sufficiency, and achievement of educational and career goals. A new publication from the National Foster Care Coalition and Casey Family Programs examines how the Chafee ETV Program and other state-based supports for higher education have been working for these young adults in six states.

To view this report, visit [www.nationalfostercare.org](http://www.nationalfostercare.org).

## *The Mistress's Daughter*

*The Mistress's Daughter* tells the story of A.M. Homes, who, before she was born, was placed for adoption. Her birth mother



was a 22-year-old single woman who had a relationship with a much older married man with children. *The Mistress's Daughter* is the story of what happened when, 30 years later, Homes's birth parents came looking for her. This brave, daring, and humorous book is a story about what it means to be adopted, and, more important, identity and how all of us define our sense of self and family.

To purchase this book, visit Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Penguin USA online.

## *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, through Harris Interactive, commissioned the "National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey," a study to understand Americans' attitudes about foster care adoption, their beliefs about the children waiting to be adopted, and their perceptions of the system, as well as their attitudes about what constitutes a healthy environment for a child. With an intensified lens on foster care adoption and the use of state-of-the-art online surveys to capture more detailed information, the findings from the 2007 survey provide information on what Americans think and believe.

To view this report, visit [www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org](http://www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org).

## *KIDS COUNT Data Center*

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT online database has a whole new look and feel. Now featuring child well-being measures for the 50 largest U.S. cities, this tool also contains more than 100 well-being indicators, including the most recent data available on education, employment and income, poverty, health, and youth risk factors for the United States as a whole – all 50 states – the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Visit [www.kidscount.org/datacenter](http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter) to create your maps, charts, and graphs by topic or geographic area.

## *Nonprofit Leadership: Life Lessons from an Enterprising Practitioner*

This new book – authored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Bob Giloth – explores what it means to be a civic leader in the nonprofit sector, building on the author's 30 years of experience as a leader, investor, and researcher. The book combines leadership insights with personal reflections and provides new perspectives on social innovation and problem solving in community economic development. *Nonprofit Leadership* challenges readers to consider questions about their careers, rethink or expand their points of view, and absorb lessons from the field. At the heart of the book is the recognition that good leadership and management cannot be reduced to a handful of principles or lessons, but flows from ongoing reflection and action.

This book is available at [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com) and at major online retailers.



## What the Media Say

### **Connecticut Legislators Learn Value of Family**

At the December 2007 foster care forum at the State Capital, Connecticut child advocates, service providers, and others recognized the urgent need to help children and to reduce the overall number of children taken away from their families because of allegations of abuse or neglect.

"Permanency is about restoring each child to their family," said Lauren Frey, project director of permanency services for the nonprofit Casey Family Services, part of a national child welfare organization with offices in Connecticut. "We need to get them home, get them home safe, and get them home quickly."

*The Hartford Courant*  
December 6, 2007

### **Casey Foundation Shines Spotlight on Virginia**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's report [KIDS COUNT] is the first to provide a comprehensive analysis of how many foster children live in Virginia and where they are placed.

The study found that only 43 percent of Virginia's roughly 900 foster children age 12 and over find a permanent home, well below the national average of 72 percent. In addition, 23 percent of Virginia's 8,100 total foster children are discharged without any significant connections to family or friends that could ease their transition, the highest rate in the country. Experts say those numbers indicate a deficiency in getting children adopted or placed with a stable, permanent family.

*The Washington Post*  
December 11, 2007



*Marc Cherna, child welfare director in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, addressing Connecticut legislators and policymakers on improving the outcomes of vulnerable families at a December 2007 forum in Hartford.*

### **Rowell Earns Praise as Author and Advocate**

Victoria Rowell's life had very inauspicious beginnings. She grew up in the foster care system, only meeting her biological mother sporadically and never knowing her father. But from this turmoil comes ultimate triumph. She is an outspoken activist for foster and adopted children and the founder of a nonprofit that provides scholarships in the arts and education for foster youth. She is the national spokeswoman for the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services and has won no fewer than 11 NAACP Image awards.

A humble, well-spoken woman, she has penned a meticulously remembered, bestselling memoir, *The Women Who Raised Me*, which serves as homage to all the grandmothers, sisters, aunts, fosterers, mothers, and mentors who have helped along the way.

*San Antonio Express News*  
December 6, 2007

### **Foster Care Ranks Dropping**

The number of children in foster care is down and the number of adoptions is up. "In Baltimore City we're seeing a decline in the number of kids in foster care," said Elyn Jones, spokeswoman for Maryland Department of Human Services.

National trends mirror this positive outlook, said Casey Family Services' Sarah Greenblatt, director of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practices. "While we still have too many kids in care, and they move much too often and stay too long, we have seen significant innovations to develop plans that ensure the well-being, safety, and permanence of these children," she said.

*Baltimore Afro American*  
November 24, 2007

### **Opinion: Alternatives to Payday Loans Exist**

As tax return filing season gets underway, there is a timely, nonpartisan answer to the question [of how families can access funds for short-term needs] that includes the private sector, nonprofits, government supports and, yes, individual responsibility. Free income-tax preparation sites throughout New Hampshire are a start. Working families can go to free sites and save as much as \$200, compared to going to a commercial preparer. That cost may include "refund anticipation loans," another predatory lending practice with interest rates in the several-hundred percent range.

Cary Gladstone  
Casey Family Services  
*The Concord Monitor*  
February 1, 2008

For additional important dates, visit [www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org).

# 2008: Important Dates

**Voice** is published quarterly by Casey Family Services, the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for child welfare professionals, advocates, and the children and families they serve. The opinions expressed within this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, including Casey Family Services.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization established in 1948 by UPS founder Jim Casey and his siblings in honor of their mother. The Foundation is dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States.

Started in 1976, Casey Family Services offers permanence-focused foster care, post-adoption services, family reunification, family preservation, family advocacy and support, family resource centers, assistance to young families, and nationwide technical assistance through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.

The mission of Casey Family Services is to improve the lives of at-risk children and strengthen families and communities by providing high-quality, cost-effective services that advance both positive practice and sound public policy.

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Extending the Conversation

With a vision of sharing ideas and insights, the Voice editorial staff welcomes feedback from its readers. Please feel free to contact us with your story ideas, requests for additional information on topics covered, and updated subscription information. The editor can be reached by sending an email to [voice@caseyfamilyservices.org](mailto:voice@caseyfamilyservices.org) or calling 203.401.6940.

## March

National Professional Social Work Month

### March 13-16

2008 Spring Conference  
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators  
Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.napcwa.org](http://www.napcwa.org)

### March 26-29

29th Annual American Adoption Congress Conference  
“Adoption in the Global Community: Redefining Kinship in the 21st Century”  
American Adoption Congress  
Portland Downtown Waterfront Marriot  
Portland, Oregon  
[www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)

## April

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

### April 1-3

The 2008 Migration and Child Welfare National Network Conference  
American Humane Association  
Club Quarters Central Loop  
Chicago, Illinois  
[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

### April 20-23

26th Annual National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect  
“Protecting Our Children”  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
Sheraton Bloomington Hotel  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
[www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org)

## May

National Foster Care Month

### May 1-2

2008 National Convening on Youth Permanence (invitation only)  
“Families for Life”  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services and Casey Family Programs  
Renaissance Washington D.C. Hotel  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.youthpermanence.org](http://www.youthpermanence.org)

### May 12-16

38th Annual Education Conference  
National Foster Parent Conference  
Sheraton Atlanta Hotel  
Atlanta, Georgia  
[www.nfpainc.org](http://www.nfpainc.org)

### May 19-22

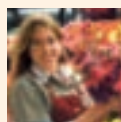
Prevent Child Abuse America  
2008 National Conference  
Midwest Airlines Center  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
[www.preventchildabuse.org/events/index.shtml](http://www.preventchildabuse.org/events/index.shtml)



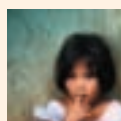
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

# Voice

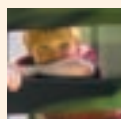
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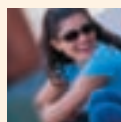
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**8** Close-up: Bob Giloth, Director, Family Economic Success, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

**10** News & Highlights:  
Maryland Turns to Casey To Usher in Reforms

**11** Close-up: Julie Sweeney-Springwater, Executive Director of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors



**13** Perspectives:  
Alumni Perspective: Improving Employment Outcomes for Foster Care Alumni  
View from Washington



**23** Resource Corner, What the Media Say, and Important Dates

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