

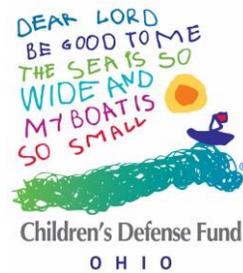
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Too Many Children Without Families**

*Providing services to families in crisis and finding and supporting kin can reduce costly group placements and promote child well-being*

COLUMBUS – On any given night, about 57,000 children nationwide--1,700 in Ohio-- who are under the care of our nation's child welfare systems go to bed without the care and comfort of a family. In its latest KIDS COUNT® policy report, *Every Kid Needs a Family: Giving Children in the Child Welfare System the Best Chance for Success*, the Annie E. Casey Foundation highlights sobering statistics that point to the urgent need to ensure, through sound policies and proven practices, that everything possible is being done to find loving, nurturing and supported families to help raise more of these children.

"Children fare best in a family," said Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director at the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "Let's follow what the research shows. A child who lives in a family has the best chance at life success and one day, he or she will be a better father or mother."

Specifically, *Every Kid Needs a Family* emphasizes making and keeping a lifelong connection to a family. The report also highlights the promising ways that state and local government leaders as well as policymakers, judges and private providers can work together as they strive to help these 57,000 children who are living in group placements – and overall, the more than 400,000 children in the care of child welfare systems.

The imperative is clear: One in 7 children under the care of child welfare systems live in group placements, even though federal law requires that they live in families whenever possible. While research shows children who need residential treatment likely need to stay no longer than three to six months, young people are staying in group placements an average of eight months. Group placements can also cost seven to 10 times the amount it takes to place a child with a relative or foster family.

In Ohio, 14% of the 12,340 children in foster care live in non-family placements. This follows national trends, with 14% of children placed in non-family settings in the U.S.

Research shows the secure attachments provided by nurturing caregivers are vital to a child's healthy physical, social, emotional and psychological development throughout his life. The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio's 2015 Beat the Odds® story of [Alberto Jones](#) shows how being adopted into a

stable family can change the course of a child's life. Born into a broken home, Alberto suffered abuse and was in and out of the child welfare system from the time he was a toddler. When Alberto was eight, he and his brothers were adopted. He describes how being adopted into a family gave him the stability, love and nurturing he had always longed to have. He went on to achieve in school and in his community. Alberto plans to attend college this fall to become a journalist and motivational speaker. He tells how he beat the odds in [this video](#).

The report recommends four ways to improve policy and practice:

- **Increase service options.** Communities that provide a wide range of services have more options that enable children to remain safely in families.
- **Strengthen pool of families.** Public and private agencies should do more to find families for children and to make sure those families have the support they need to help children thrive.
- **Keep residential treatment short, with family in focus.** Residential treatment should be strengthened to meet children's acute needs in a customized, short-term way that equips young people to live in a family and to maintain family connections throughout treatment.
- **Require justification for restrictive placements.** Substantial justification should be required by child welfare systems and by the courts before young people are sent to group placements.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is one program that is making a difference for children for adoption in Ohio and nationally. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption awards grants to public and private adoption agencies to hire adoption professionals who implement proactive, child-focused recruitment programs targeted exclusively on moving America's longest-waiting children from foster care into adoptive families. In Ohio, 1,440 children have been served through the program sites since inception with more than 740 children matched with families and 77 children in pre-adoptive placements. Nearly 400 children have been adopted in Ohio.

*Every Kid Needs a Family* will be available May 19 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available in the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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