



HITTING THE M.A.R.C.

ESTABLISHING FOSTER CARE MINIMUM ADEQUATE RATES FOR CHILDREN

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

More than 2,500 of the District of Columbia's children are in foster care. Abused and neglected children have the right to receive appropriate care while in government custody.

State and local child welfare systems are obligated by federal law to provide payments to foster parents to cover the basic needs of children in foster care, including food, shelter, clothing and school supplies. Inadequate payment rates can mean that children in foster care do not receive necessary care. Low rates can negatively affect foster parent recruitment and retention, which can set off a chain reaction of long-term life consequences for children. When a child welfare system cannot maintain an adequate pool of foster homes, children may be more likely to be placed in institutional facilities, which are costly, or shuttled from placement to placement, an unstable situation which harms children and can decrease their chances of growing up in a permanent family.

A national research study has established **Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children (the "Foster Care MARC")** for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the first-ever calculation of the real expenses of caring for children in foster care in the United States.

The District of Columbia is only one of two jurisdictions where current foster care rates exceed the Foster Care MARC. DC is to be commended.

DC's Current Monthly Foster Care Rate ¹	Foster Care MARC ² for DC	To hit the Foster Care MARC, DC's current rate must be increased by: ³
Age 2: \$869	\$629 + travel and childcare expenses	***
Age 9: \$869	\$721 + travel and childcare expenses	***
Age 16: \$940	\$790 + travel and childcare expenses	***

District of Columbia Stats ⁴	
Number of children in foster care:	2,505
Number of licensed family foster homes:	200
Average number of different foster care placements children experience:	3.0
Percent of children placed in facilities (rather than family foster homes):	10%
Average length of time spent in foster care:	45.7 months (3.8 years)

For more information about the Foster Care MARC, please visit these websites:



¹ Current as of 05/07, Source: National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, Foster care maintenance payments, www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/foster-care.html (2007), supplemented with additional research by Children's Rights.

² The Foster Care MARC includes travel expenses associated with the daily provision of basic care to children. However, due to the variability in expenses, the Foster Care MARC does not include the cost of travel for visitation with the child's biological family, travel to administrative and judicial reviews or the cost of full-time child care for working foster parents. Foster parents should be reimbursed for their actual expenses for these purposes, in addition to the Foster Care MARC.

³ *** indicates that the state's current foster care rate is higher than the Foster Care MARC.

⁴ All data from CWLA, NDAS, <http://ndas.cwla.org> (2004), except number of children in foster care which is from AFCARS (2005).