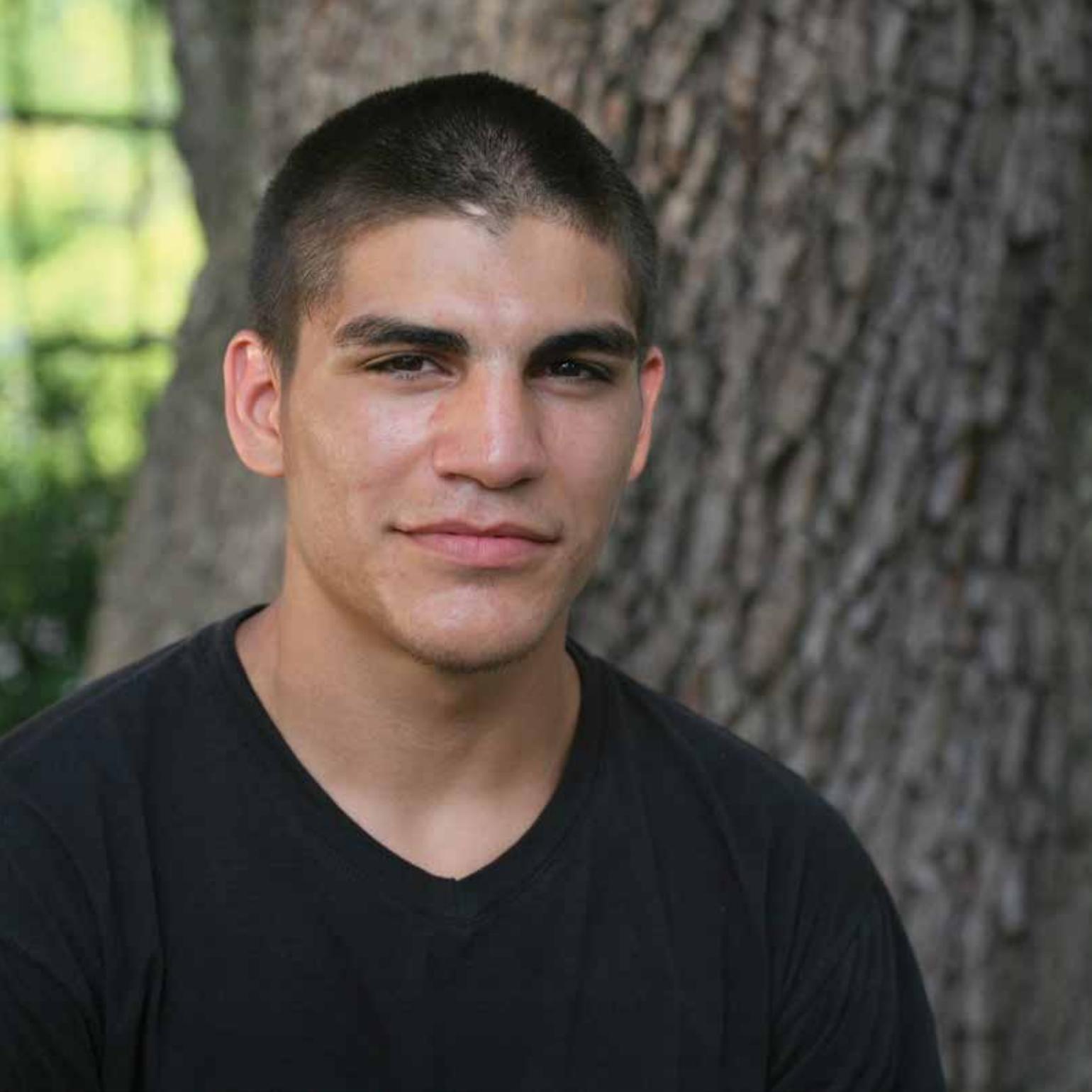




Children's Rights *Works*



Defending America's
Abused and Neglected Kids



Too often children in foster care feel invisible, like their personal lives and heartbreak go unseen.

Many of the roughly 650,000 young people who spend time in care every year live in unstable, even dangerous conditions.

While some suffer abuse or neglect in care, others are pushed through a labyrinth of foster homes, shelters, group homes and residential centers. At any given time about 23,000 live in group homes and more than 32,000 live in institutions.

Thousands languish in care for years, hoping to join permanent families. Tragically, about 22,000 age out each year without being adopted or safely reunified with relatives. Lacking support or life skills, at least 31 percent end up homeless or couch surfing, while as many as 64 percent of males and 32 percent of females spend time in jail.

America's foster children deserve more. That is why Children's Rights shines a spotlight on child welfare systems. We highlight the realities of kids' lives and compel states to do better by them.

Children's Rights Works for America's abused and neglected kids.

Fighting to transform our failing child welfare systems is one of the most important social justice movements of our time.

We fight to protect and defend the rights of children such as:

The 18-year-old girl who has been split from her four sisters, shuffled through more than 25 placements and spent years in group homes and institutions.

The 5-year-old girl placed in a high-security institution — designed for children with severe mental health needs — who threatened to commit suicide while at the facility, and described her some six months there as the “worst time in [her] life.”

The 7-year-old boy who has been moved through eight schools and 11 placements in less than two years, including two stays in shelters and a foster home where he was physically abused.

What these children have endured is a mere sampling of the travesties kids experience in foster care.



Governments should intervene with families only when truly necessary. And when children are removed from abusive and neglectful homes, they are supposed to be kept from further harm. But while foster care can be a safe haven for some, it can be heartbreaking for others.

Too many kids are left to live in dangerous situations or languish in institutions, are shuffled between multiple homes or torn from siblings.

That's why Children's Rights is so critical.

For more than 20 years, Children's Rights has used the law to hold governments accountable and defend thousands of kids when foster care systems fail. As a result, kids are safer. They get the education and health care they need. They have better foster homes. Best of all, children safely reunite with their families or join loving adoptive homes more quickly, ensuring they have the best possible futures.

Here's how we do it:

We team up with local child advocates to thoroughly investigate state, local and regional foster care systems that are causing physical and psychological harm to the children they are mandated to protect.

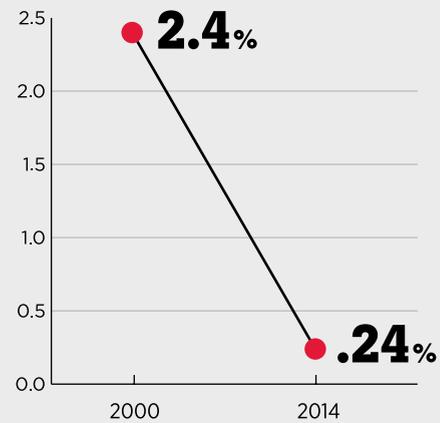
We build cases that expose pervasive failures, help develop solutions, then negotiate court-enforceable plans that ultimately improve the way child welfare agencies treat kids.

Once reform strategies are in place, **we monitor states' progress** until children in their care are safe and supported.

Children's Rights has produced real, visible improvements to benefit tens of thousands of children in more than 15 states. The life-changing results of some of our most recent campaigns demonstrate that Children's Rights *Works*.

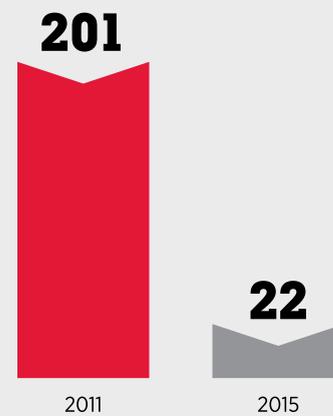
The difference Children's Rights makes is measurable and meaningful. Because of our advocacy:

Fewer children are abused or neglected in Milwaukee foster care



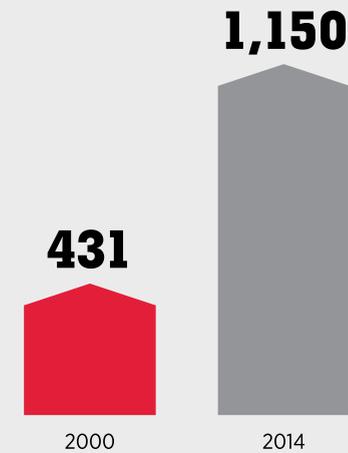
Rate at which children were maltreated in foster care

In Connecticut, fewer young children live in institutions



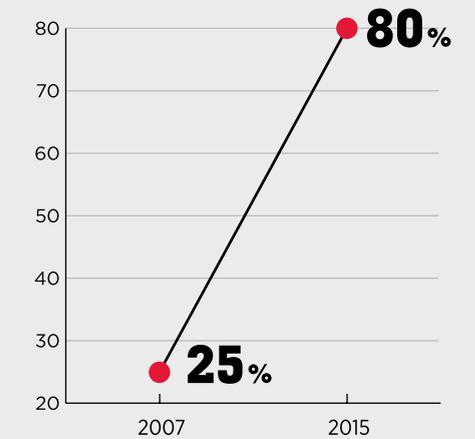
Number of children, 12 and younger, institutionalized in foster care

More young people in Tennessee are being adopted



Number of children adopted from foster care

Kids in Atlanta foster care visit with their parents more frequently



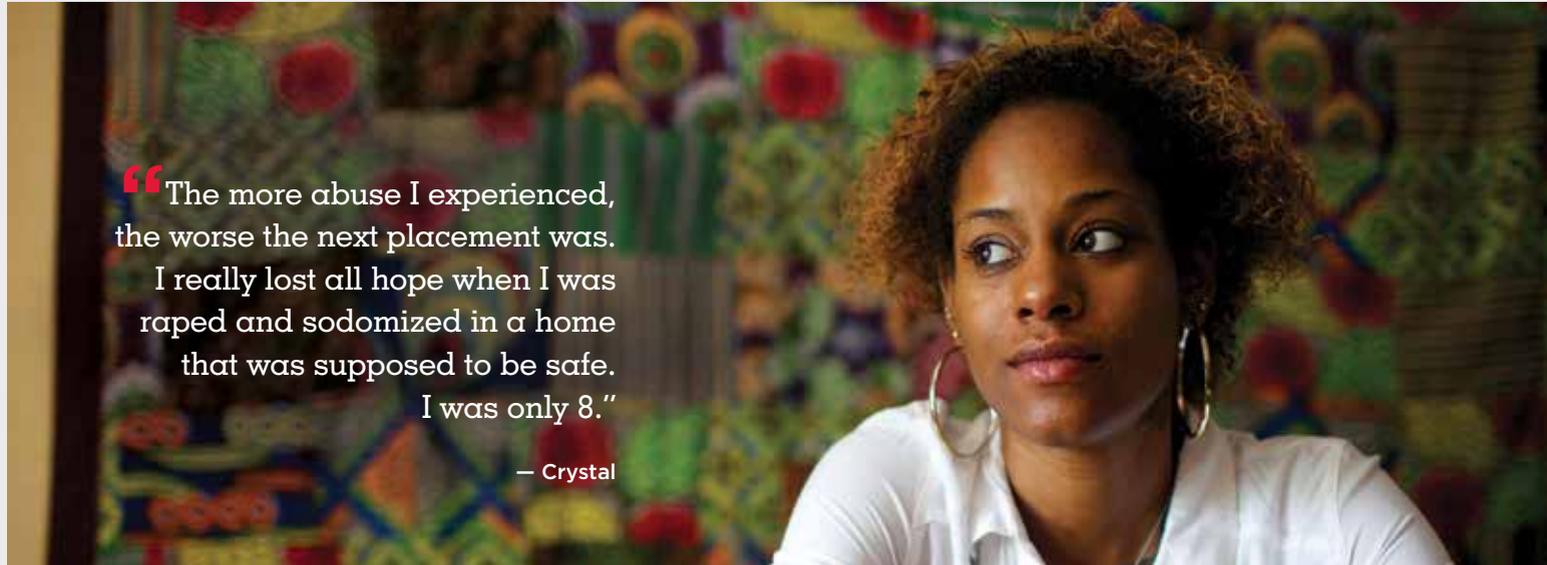
Approximate percent of children in foster care, with goals to rejoin their families, who visited regularly with their parents

We Keep Kids Safe

Sadly, too many children suffer abuse and neglect at the hands of their own parents. We expect our child welfare systems to intervene and ensure these kids grow up in loving, stable homes. While some children live with excellent foster parents, others find themselves in even more danger. Children's Rights' reforms strengthen the child welfare safety net, lead to dramatic drops in abuse of kids in foster care, and improve investigations when abuse is alleged.

- In **Milwaukee**, the rate at which children were abused and neglected in foster care was reduced tenfold between 2000 and 2014. Allegations of maltreatment, which used to sit for months, are now referred and investigated within days.
- In 2013, Children's Rights secured a settlement for an 11-year-old **South Carolina** boy who was sexually assaulted by another boy in a dangerous group home, then denied mental health services. After CR's lawsuit, the home closed, ending its long history of lax supervision and child-on-child violence.

- In 2003, children in metropolitan **Atlanta** foster care would often go six or more months without a visit from a caseworker. But by 2015, workers provided 96 percent of required twice-monthly visits to children.
- **Michigan** once had 83 county-based abuse hotlines, making it difficult to protect children consistently across the state. But in 2012, the state implemented a single centralized hotline to receive reports of child abuse and neglect.



“The more abuse I experienced, the worse the next placement was. I really lost all hope when I was raped and sodomized in a home that was supposed to be safe. I was only 8.”

— Crystal

Photo Credit: Patrick Michels/Texas Observer

We Improve Life in Foster Care

Being in foster care can be traumatic, especially when kids are moved between a string of shelters, institutions and unfamiliar homes, are split from their brothers and sisters and lose ties to their community. But because of us, youth move less often. They go from institutions that can't meet their needs to homes that can. And we make their lives better in other ways — like ensuring they stay connected to siblings and live with relatives when possible.



“The eldest of us three [siblings] was dropped off at a foster home that only had space for one ... We struggled to reunite for years after that.”

— Joseph

- More siblings are being placed together in **Tennessee** foster homes. In 2002, less than 35 percent of sibling groups were living together while in state custody, compared to 75 percent in 2015.
- **Connecticut** decreased the number of institutionalized children aged 12 and younger by nearly 90 percent, from 201 kids in 2011 to 22 in 2015.
- Placement stability for children in **Tennessee** foster care has vastly improved since 1998, when nearly a quarter of children went through 10 or more placements. During 2014, 92 percent of children in care had two or fewer placements within the previous 12 months.
- In 2005, metropolitan **Atlanta** failed to seek relatives to care for foster children in nearly 40 percent of cases. By 2014, workers diligently searched for relatives for 97 percent of children.

We Make Sure Children Have Permanent, Loving Homes

Kids need loving families — and Children's Rights makes sure more children have them. We encourage agencies to place children with family members whenever appropriate, safely bring kids and parents back together, or pursue adoption when it's in the best interest of young people. Because of our reform campaigns, more kids join permanent homes at a quicker rate.

- Children in **Connecticut** are being adopted at a faster rate. The state tripled the percentage of kids who had their adoptions finalized within two years, from only 11 percent in 1999 to nearly 33 percent in 2015.
- Metropolitan **Atlanta** frequently failed to arrange visits between foster children and their parents, making it difficult for them to safely reunite. In 2007, only about 25 percent of kids with goals of moving back with their families visited regularly with their parents, but by 2015 this measure was at approximately 80 percent.

- More children are being adopted in **Tennessee**. In 2000, only 431 children were adopted, compared to 1,150 in 2014.
- In 2006, approximately 6,300 **Michigan** children were legally free for adoption, but instead were growing up as permanent wards of the state. By 2014, the number dropped to under 2,700.



“My foster family took care of me like I was their own, and it became clear that I was theirs forever.”

— Diane

We Support Child Welfare Workers

People who work in the child welfare field have a passion for helping kids, but are often overwhelmed by unmanageable caseloads, antiquated tracking systems and poor training. They need the tools and support to make decisions that carry serious consequences for young people. By bringing improvements like robust training programs, lower caseloads and better computer systems, Children's Rights' reform campaigns give workers the support they need to keep kids safe.

- Caseloads in **Tennessee** have dropped dramatically, giving workers more time to devote to the safety and well-being of each child. In 1999, some workers were responsible for 50 or more children, but by 2015, at least 98 percent had caseloads of 20 or fewer kids.
- Caseloads in **Milwaukee** sometimes exceeded 100 children per caseworker in 1993. In 2014, the average caseload was 15.5 children.

- For years **Michigan** struggled to deliver consistent training to workers. But by 2015, thousands of workers had benefited from a child welfare training program created in partnership with the state's schools of social work.
- Without a quality statewide data management system, **Tennessee** often lost track of where children were housed in state care. But by 2015, workers had an effective computer program — known as the Tennessee Family and Child Tracking System — to manage cases and records.



“I think everyone goes into it caring, but for a lot of people, workloads are overwhelming ... Caseworkers are not really provided enough support and resources to be able to help out as much as they want to.”

— Edgar

Photo Credit: Laurence Borten

Children's Rights has proven that failing child welfare systems can be reformed.

And so can the lives of the kids in their care.

Over the past 20 years, we have made tremendous headway and impacted the lives of tens of thousands of children across the country.

But so many more abused and neglected kids need our help. So Children's Rights is not giving up. We're exploring fresh approaches to leverage our experience on their behalf.

We're determined to combat the over-prescription of psychotropic medications to kids in foster care, ensure lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth are not discriminated against in state care and improve conditions for kids involved in juvenile justice systems. We will stay strong in our resolve to reform child welfare.

We have a lot on the horizon. By joining together we can reach the children who need us most.

With your support, Children's Rights will continue to work for America's abused and neglected kids.



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