



Foster care: Temporary out-of-home care for children

Children who cannot safely remain in their familial home may be placed in family foster care or a group residential facility. In Minnesota, about 15,300 children and young adults experienced foster care in 2019. On an average day, there were approximately 9,300 children and young adults in care, based on preliminary 2019 data.

Children enter foster care for a variety of reasons

During 2019, about 6,100 children and young adults entered out-of-home placement. The most common primary reasons for removal from the home are:

- Parental drug abuse (31% of cases)
- Allegations of neglect (22% of cases)
- Allegations of physical abuse (10% of cases).

Due to the recent rise in opioid and methamphetamine addiction, removing children from the home for parental drug abuse has increased from 17% of all new placements in 2013 to 31% of all new placements in 2019, with a high of 32% in 2018. As of 2016, parental drug abuse has become the most frequently identified primary reason for children to be placed in foster care.

Family foster homes are urgently needed

Some children and youth are in group residential settings, but about 82% are in family foster care. Because of this need, many county and tribal agencies have a shortage of family foster homes and are urgently seeking additional families to be licensed to care for Minnesota's children. There is a particular need for homes willing to care for teenagers, who make up more than one-quarter of the youth in foster care; this includes the need for homes for parenting teens to remain with their children in a safe and supportive environment.

Foster families provide critical temporary care and nurturing to children in crisis. They come from all walks of life and may be single, married, partnered, with or without children, renters or homeowners. Foster parents play a role in recognizing the trauma children may have experienced and help give them the structure, nurturing and stability they need every day.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services website provides [steps to becoming a foster parent](#). Those interested can contact their county or tribal social service agency or licensed child placement agency for more information about the need for homes.

Placement options available for children

Children thrive in stable, nurturing, permanent homes. As part of an effort to preserve family connections while children were in foster care, 49% of those in foster care spent time with relative caretakers. Removing children from the people they love and the environments that are familiar to them can be an emotionally traumatizing experience. When children must leave their homes, placement in foster care with relatives is considered first. Children may be placed in:

- Emergency foster care when removed from their homes by law enforcement. This immediate care may be provided in a shelter facility or in a nonrelative foster home.
- Family foster homes, which offer a temporary substitute until children can be safely reunified with their families, placed permanently with relatives or adopted. Foster homes are licensed by county, tribal or private agencies.
- Group residential settings, which provide structured, temporary care. Many group settings offer intensive treatment for children with serious emotional disturbances or chemical dependency.

Whenever possible, children are placed in their own community and continue to attend their home school.

Supports available to meet children's needs

Foster parents receive initial training prior to placement, and ongoing training while licensed, to help prepare them to meet the needs of children.

All foster parents receive the same supports, including foster care payments and other services, to help keep children in their care. Agencies arrange for Medical Assistance or other medical insurance to cover a foster child's medical, dental, vision care and mental health services. If a foster child needs additional services, agencies will assist to determine appropriate services and eligibility for those services. Services may include child protection, Medical Assistance, independent living and transition, mental health, disability, chemical dependency, home- and community-based services, Intensive Treatment in Foster Care, vulnerable adult services, or other services offered by a county or tribal agency.

The department also has grant funding for support services statewide. For more information, refer to [Permanency support services for adoptive, foster and kinship families DHS-4925 \(PDF\)](#).

Most children reunite with families, some are adopted, some age out

For children who left out-of-home placement in 2019:

- 56% were reunited with their birth parents or legal guardians; placements for children under the age of 1 ended with reunification nearly 80% of the time
- 18% were adopted
- 11% achieved permanency with a relative or other caregiver
- Others left foster care without the benefits of a permanent family.

Collaboration speeds permanency outcomes for many

Concurrent Permanency Planning is a process for children in foster care, where caseworkers pursue family reunification at the same time as they develop alternative permanency plans. By moving concurrently, rather than sequentially, temporary foster care placements can be shortened, and children and youth can thrive in safe, stable, permanent families. Concurrent Permanency Planning goals are best achieved when child welfare agencies, community partners and the court system work together with children's birth parents, extended families and foster parents.

Disproportionality in Minnesota's foster care system

Younger children, children from rural counties and children of color and American Indian descent are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. Of children in foster care in 2019:

- About 30% were 3 years old or younger, while this age group represents 22% of the child population in Minnesota.
- About 61% were children living in Greater Minnesota (outside the seven-county metropolitan area), while children in this region represent 44% of the child population in Minnesota.
- Children of color were overrepresented compared to the number in the general population; American Indian children were around 18 times more likely than their white counterparts to experience out-of-home care; those of two or more races were six times more likely; and African-American or black children three times more likely.
- Asian and Pacific Islander children were less likely to experience out-of-home care compared to their white counterparts.

Resources

- [MNAdopt – Fostering Network webpage](#)
- [Minnesota's Out-of-home Care and Permanency Report, 2018 DHS-5408Ka \(PDF\)](#)
- The department's [foster care webpage](#)
- The department's [child welfare data dashboard webpage](#)