

# Placement

To promote nurturing and stable relationships between foster youth and their caregivers, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation funds efforts to strengthen supports for caregivers and prioritize family-based placement.

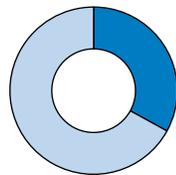
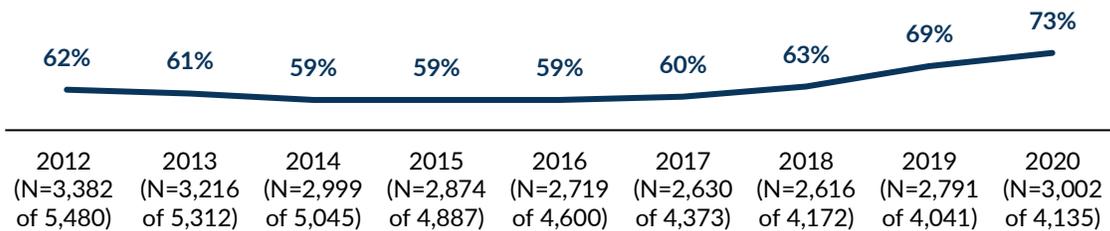
## Impact of COVID-19

Many families, including foster and kinship careivers, have faced increased responsibilities and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., related to school closures and youths' education). While recruitment efforts were maintained through virtual formats, barriers emerged in the certification process as caregivers experienced delays in obtaining necessary clearances. With courts in LA and NYC suspending all but emergency and essential hearings, a backlog of youth awaiting permanency through adoption, guardianship, or reunification emerged.

**The proportion of foster youth in LA living in family-based placements, and with kin specifically, continues to increase, as the overall number of youth in care has decreased.**

### Percentage of Youth ages 14-17 in Family-Based Placements<sup>i</sup>

Los Angeles, 2012-2020



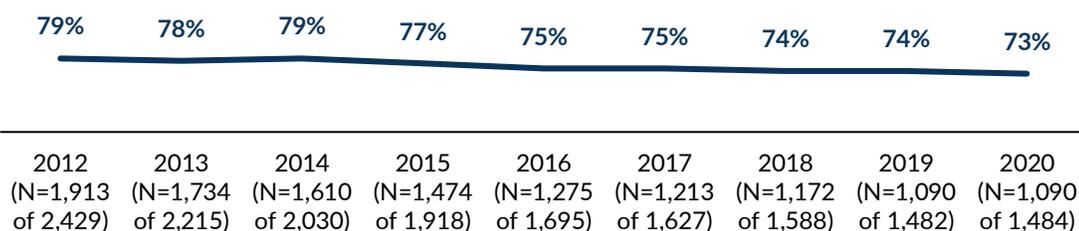
**33%**

of youth ages 14-17 in LA lived with kin in 2020, an increase from 30% in 2019.<sup>ii</sup>

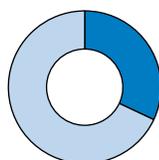
**Kin placements continue to increase. While the proportion of foster youth in NYC living in family-based placements decreased, the overall number of youth in care has also decreased.**

**Percentage of Youth ages 14-17 in Family-Based Placements<sup>iii</sup>**

New York City, 2012-2020



| Year | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| N    | 1,913 | 1,734 | 1,610 | 1,474 | 1,275 | 1,213 | 1,172 | 1,090 | 1,090 |
| of   | 2,429 | 2,215 | 2,030 | 1,918 | 1,695 | 1,627 | 1,588 | 1,482 | 1,484 |



**32%**

of youth ages 14-17 in NYC lived with kin in 2020, an increase from 28% in 2019.<sup>iv</sup>

## Caregiver support

*Grantees and stakeholders in LA and NYC responded to many needs of caregivers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.* The [Alliance for Children’s Rights](#) in LA and NYC’s child welfare agency administered surveys to caregivers. Responses highlighted the common challenge of inadequate access to technology for youth education and identified caregivers’ ongoing financial hardships. Grantees sought to address these challenges through supporting technology distribution efforts and advocating for financial assistance for caregivers. Following successful advocacy from grantees including [John Burton Advocates for Youth \(JBAY\)](#), [Children’s Law Center of California](#), [National Center for Youth Law](#), [Alliance for Children’s Rights](#), and [Children Now](#), California leaders issued an Executive Order<sup>v</sup> and an All County Letter<sup>vi</sup> from the state child welfare agency maintaining emergency funding for caregivers during delays in the approval process caused by the pandemic. While short-term financial supports have been provided by grantees and the child welfare agency in NYC, [Children’s Village](#) continues to advocate for sustained financial assistance beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and a long-term policy solution that adequately addresses caregivers’ cost of living.

*Caregiver recruitment remained a priority in both jurisdictions.* Before the pandemic, **Home Away from Home** coaching staff began working with youth served by **Children's Aid** in **NYC** to integrate youth voice into their recruitment events and training. To continue recruitment efforts throughout the pandemic, grantees and stakeholders creatively adopted virtual approaches. In **LA**, **Raise a Child** holds monthly virtual recruitment events for approved resource families to learn about specific youth from their caseworkers and other supportive adults in their networks, while **NYC's** child welfare agency supported provider agencies to maximize their use of foster parents to recruit foster parents through social media and other virtual platforms. Before the pandemic, many of these providers were on target to meet their goals for the percentage of newly certified homes to have a youth placed within 90 days; however, certifications decreased substantially after the onset of the pandemic, and only two providers accomplished this goal, including grantee **HeartShare St. Vincent**.

## Emphasis on families and family-based placements

*Prospective caregivers experienced barriers in the certification and permanency finalization processes, which were exacerbated due to the pandemic.* Families in **LA** and **NYC** experienced delays in obtaining required medical and background screenings resulting in an initial backlog of families awaiting background checks in **LA**.<sup>vii</sup> Similarly, courts in both jurisdictions experienced a backlog of youth awaiting finalizations, as adoption, KinGAP, and guardianship hearings in **LA** and KinGAP, reunification, and adoption hearings in **NYC** were sharply reduced in response to the pandemic. As a result, **LA** saw a drastic increase in the number of youth supervised by the child welfare agency during 2020.<sup>viii</sup> In **NYC**, data show a substantial decrease in the number of youth discharged to permanency (reunification, adoption, guardianship) between January and September 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.<sup>ix</sup> In response to the limited Family Court operations, **NYC** implemented a proactive case review process to determine if cases could progress to permanency via court order. While **California** enacted short-term solutions to ease capacity and bedroom sharing restrictions in 2020, related long-term policy efforts, including a bill supported by **Children's Law Center**, were stalled as the legislature prioritized pandemic responses.

### Spotlight: NYC grantees support kinship placements

Following successful advocacy efforts by grantees including **Children's Aid**, **Children's Village**, **Graham Windham**, and the **New York Foundling**, New York State implemented a Kin-First Firewall in October 2020. This policy requires the exhaustion of all efforts to place youth with kin before placement with non-kin. The Families First Demonstration team, staffed by three grantees, also demonstrated success with its pilot program that led to an increase in kin placements for youth with lengthy stays at the Children's Center pre-placement facility.

*Grantees identified strategies to prepare older youth in care for family-based placements.* In **NYC**, **HeartShare St. Vincent** redefined its group home program to emphasize the transitional nature of the program, and **Children's Village** supported youth through targeted conversations about what to expect while living with a family, including the potential of conflict but coinciding unconditional support. **Raise a Child** found that video biographies, created by families in **LA**, can help older youth better envision themselves living with a family. Despite a reduction in the number of youth placed in congregate care in **California**, grantees report a continued need for

family placements for expectant and parenting youth, crossover youth, and youth with mental health needs because they are more likely to remain in congregate care due to the lack of availability of family placements.

## Looking ahead

After **Children Now**'s successful advocacy to sustain \$30 million in state funding in 2020 for the Family Urgent Response System (FURS)—a 24/7 hotline and mobile response unit in **California** to support youth and caregivers in times of crisis and at risk of placement disruption—the focus has now shifted to planning and implementation. Delayed by the pandemic, **NYC**'s child welfare agency's Foster Care Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in summer 2021, providing an opportunity to further embed **Home Away from Home** recruitment and retention strategies and supports. Both jurisdictions seek to advance racial equity, with advocates in LA seeking to address racial bias from the criminal justice system during the resource family approval process, and NYC's child welfare agency working with provider agencies to promote more equitable practices after reviewing data that show disparate use of kin placements for Black youth compared to youth of other races.

For more information on progress made toward accomplishing all the Initiative's objectives in 2020, see the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative 2020 Evaluation [Report](#).

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<sup>i</sup> Among foster youth in care on July 1 of each year. Family-based placements include pre-adoptive, relative/non-relative extended family members (NREFM), foster, foster family agencies, guardian-dependent, and guardian-independent, and trial home visit. Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs) are not counted here, although some foster TAY in SILPs are also living in family settings. Analyses includes all agency types. Source: Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., ..., Morris, N. (2019). CCWIP reports. [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare). & Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Chambers, J., Hammond, I., Williams, C., Miramontes, A., Ayat, N., Sandoval, A., Benton, C., Hoerl, C., McMillen, B., Wade, B., Yee, H., Flamson, T., Hunt, J., Carpenter, W., Casillas, E., & Gonzalez, A. (2020). CCWIP Reports. Data provided to Child Trends by DCFS on 02/03/21 and obtained from the University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project. CWS/CMS 2020 Quarter 2 Extract.

<sup>ii</sup> Kinship placements include relative and non-relative extended family members (NREFM) placements. Source: Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Chambers, J., Hammond, I., Sandoval, A., Benton, C., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Flamson, T., Hunt, J., Carpenter, W., Casillas, E., & Gonzalez, A. (2019). CCWIP reports. [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare). & Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Chambers, J., Hammond, I., Williams, C., Miramontes, A., Ayat, N., Sandoval, A., Benton, C., Hoerl, C., McMillen, B., Wade, B., Yee, H., Flamson, T., Hunt, J., Carpenter, W., Casillas, E., & Gonzalez, A. (2020). CCWIP Reports. Data provided to Child Trends by DCFS on 02/03/21 and obtained from the University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project. CWS/CMS 2020 Quarter 2 Extract.

<sup>iii</sup> This calculation includes youth in foster homes or kinship care on July 1 of the given year. Excludes youth whose entry reason is juvenile delinquency and youth in care for less than eight days. Sources: New York State's CCRS database as of January 4, 2021 and CNNX database as of January 7, 2021 provided by New York City Administration for Children's Services and New York State's CCRS and CNNX databases as of October 30, 2019 provided by New York City Administration for Children's Services.

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<sup>iv</sup> This calculation includes youth ages 14-17 in kinship placements on July 1, 2020 and July 1, 2019. Excludes youth whose entry reason is juvenile delinquency and youth in care for less than eight days. Sources: New York State's CCRS database as of January 4, 2021 and CNNX database as of January 7, 2021 provided by New York City Administration for Children's Services and New York State's CCRS and CNNX databases as of October 30, 2019 provided by New York City Administration for Children's Services.

<sup>v</sup> Executive Department State of California Exec. Order N-53-20, (2020). <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/4.17.20-EO-N-53-20.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> CDSS ACL 20-44 California Department of Social Services (2020). ACL 20-44.

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2020/20-44.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> LA DCFS Resource Family Home Live Scan Completion Status-10/07/2020 Update

<sup>viii</sup> DCFS (2021). *Monthly Fact Sheets*. <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/resources/data-and-monthly-fact-sheets>; Loudenback, J. (2020, December). Dependency Court Backlog Finds Many Los Angeles Children Still in Limbo. *The Imprint*. <https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/coronavirus-persistent-dependency-court-backlog-finds-many-los-angeles-children-still-in-limbo/50359>

<sup>ix</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services (2020). Monthly Indicator Flash Report: December 2020. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2020/12.pdf>