






# Sub-strategies 2a & 2b: Caregiver recruitment, retention, training, and support

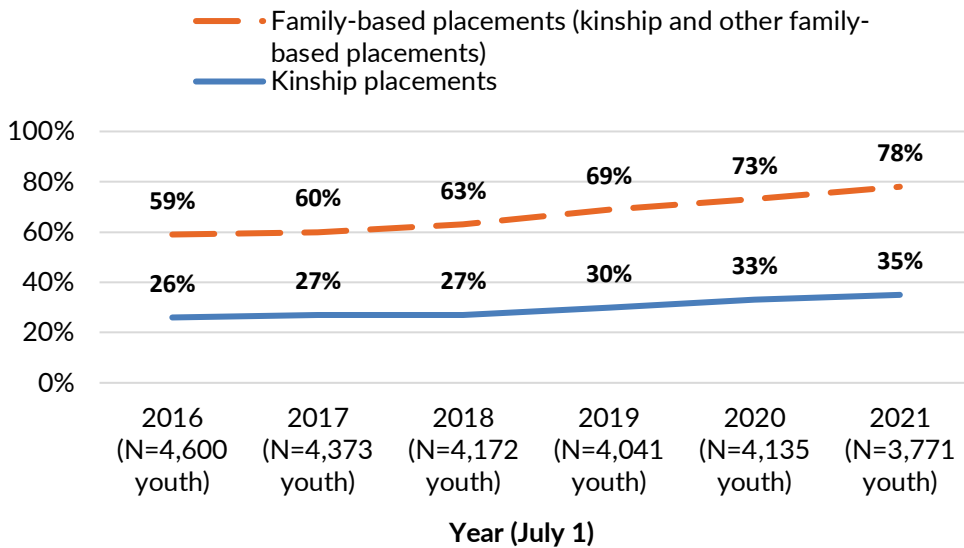
This snapshot accompanies Child Trends' [2022 Evaluation Report](#) for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's [Foster Youth Initiative](#). It highlights a sample of the Foundation's grantees' efforts, key data points, and ongoing barriers to recruiting, retaining, training, and supporting caregivers for foster youth in Los Angeles (LA) and New York City (NYC). Snapshots are available for each of the Initiative's sub-strategies focused on foster youth and caregivers.

## Los Angeles

### Highlights

	<p>The number of youth in congregate placements in LA has continued to decline since the implementation of Continuum of Care Reform<sup>i</sup> in 2016. Furthermore, the percentage of youth placed with kin continues to increase with the support of policy advancements (e.g., SB 354,<sup>ii</sup> sponsored by the <a href="#">Alliance for Children's Rights</a> and <a href="#">Children's Law Center of California</a>) and funding allocated to identify and support relatives (e.g., \$150 million allocated in the 2022-2023 California state budget to support counties' family finding and engagement efforts and \$50 million to promote the facilitation and stability of home-based placements, including with relatives).<sup>iii</sup></p>
	<p>Grantees continue to implement programming to promote the retention of caregivers for older youth and stability of placements. To prepare caregivers prior to placement, <a href="#">Extraordinary Families'</a> will provide trainings on the needs of this age group and support groups for potential caregivers. Additionally, <a href="#">Peace4Kids</a> and <a href="#">Fostering UNITY</a> offer peer mentorship for caregivers.</p>
	<p>Members of the <a href="#">Alliance for Children's Rights' Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC)</a> Young Leaders Program participated in and/or facilitated numerous conversations including a convening informing stakeholders (i.e., LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), LA County Department of Mental Health (DMH), and Short-Term Residential Treatment Provider (STRTP) staff) about the experiences and needs of youth in STRTPs, resulting in DCFS and DMH's development of a STRTP taskforce.</p>
	<p>Recognizing the importance of achieving stability through targeted caregiver recruitment, <a href="#">Saving Innocence</a> became LA's only licensed Resource Family Agency focused on recruiting and training families specifically for youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, <a href="#">Friends of the Children LA's</a> Fostering Resiliency Project, which provides mentorship to Black boys ages 12-18 in care, will hire a Caregiver Engagement Specialist to provide resource referrals, crisis intervention, and parent skill-building supports.</p>
	<p>To identify improvements needed in outreach efforts and implementation of the Family Urgent Response System, <a href="#">Children Now</a> developed and administered a survey to caregivers.</p>

**Figure 1.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in family-based placements, Los Angeles, 2016-2021



LA continues to place more youth in family-based placements (inclusive of kin) and with relatives specifically. From 2020 to 2021, the following changes were seen in family-based placement rates for youth when disaggregated by race and ethnicity:

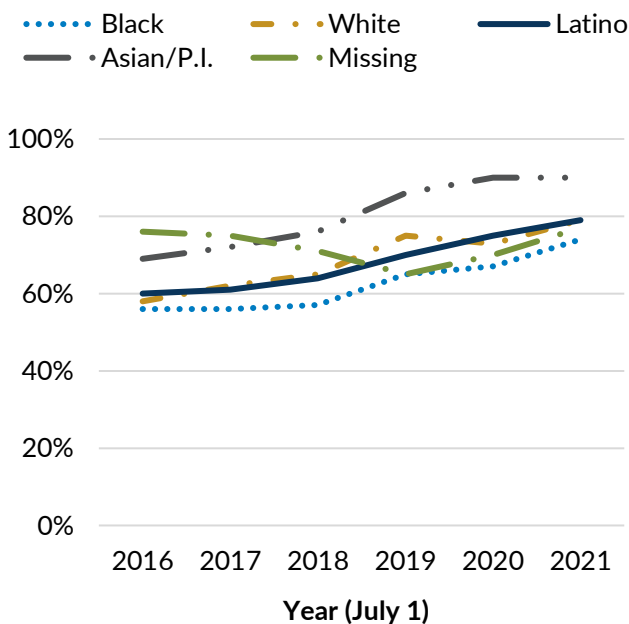
- Black: 67% to 74%
- Asian/P.I.: 90% to 90%
- Latino: 75% to 79%
- White: 73% to 79%

Additionally, from 2020 to 2021, the proportion of youth in kinship placements in LA increased for:

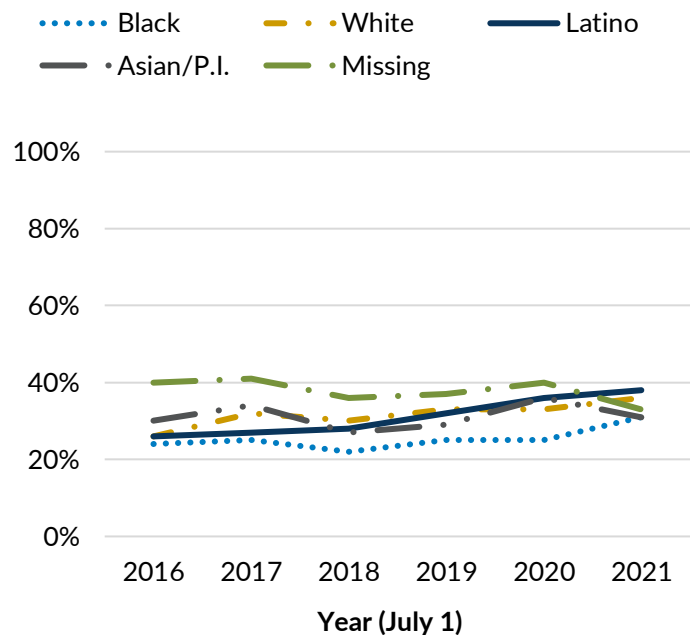
- Black: 25% to 31%
- White: 33% to 36%
- Latino: 36% to 38%

However, kinship placements decreased for Asian/P.I. youth from 36% to 31%.

**Figure 2.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in family-based placements (kinship and other family-based placements) disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Los Angeles, 2016-2021



**Figure 3.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in kinship placements disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Los Angeles, 2016-2021








**Source:** California Child Welfare Indicators Project Reports, provided by the LA County Department of Children and Family Services<sup>iv, v,vi</sup>

## Barriers

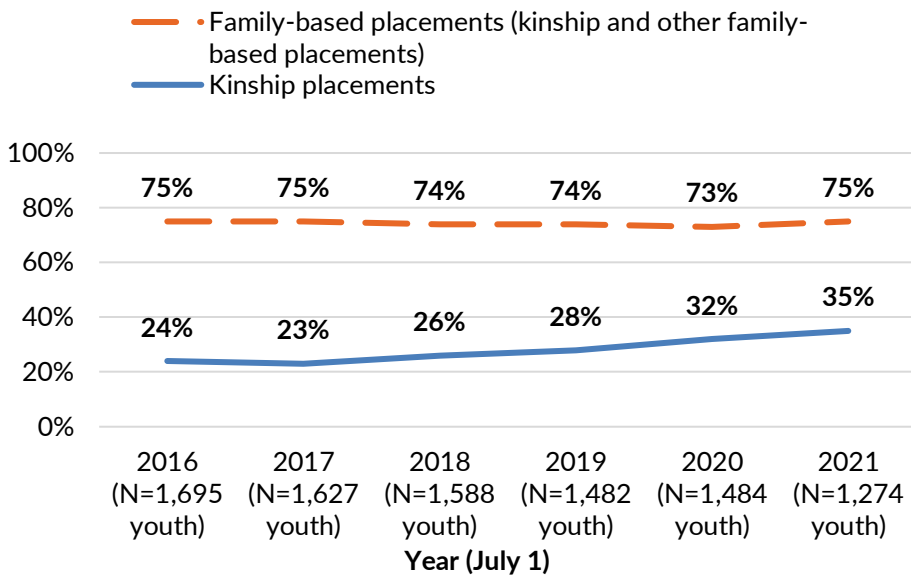
While more youth are being placed with kin in LA, relatives continue to experience barriers to accessing the supports they need including the limited availability of resources. Both relative and non-relative caregivers continue to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and seek training and support to assist them in meeting the needs of youth in their care. Relatedly, they express frustrations in trying to navigate siloed systems to obtain support. Additionally, obstacles still persist in identifying appropriate placements and improving the placement experiences for older youth in care. In discussions focused on the Foundation’s focal populations,<sup>vii</sup> grantees and stakeholders expressed actively working to develop targeted interventions to address these obstacles. For example, [Saving Innocence](#) provides recruitment, training, and empowerment efforts for prospective and existing caregivers for youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation, and [Friends of the Children LA’s](#) has expanded stability supports (e.g., crisis intervention, resource referrals) for caregivers of youth in their Fostering Resiliency Project, which provides mentorship to Black boys, new funding available to support family-based placements equipped for the placement of both expectant/parenting youth and their children, and the identification of affirming caregivers to support LGBTQ+ youth in care.

## New York City

### Highlights

	<p>Implementation of the city’s new performance-based foster care contracts<sup>viii</sup> presents opportunities to recruit and support caregivers. Notably, all caregivers will be trained as Enhanced Family Foster Care caregivers, payment rates have increased, and provider agencies now have more flexibility in how NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) funding may be used based on need, as all services are to be billed at the same rate.</p>
	<p>With funding made available through Home Away from Home, which the Initiative previously supported, <a href="#">HeartShare St. Vincent</a> hired three new recruiters, one of whom is focused exclusively on identifying, licensing, and training kinship caregivers within 90 days of a child being placed in the home.</p>
	<p><a href="#">Children’s Village</a> works to provide support and transparency from the beginning of their work with each caregiver by including the voices of older youth and their caregivers in recruitment orientations, among other strategies. Additionally, the LGBTQAI+<sup>ix</sup> youth subcommittee of ACS’ Youth Leadership Council meets monthly; reviews documents including policies and research surveys; and is co-designing a targeted recruitment strategy for LGBTQAI+ caregivers alongside ACS’ Department of Equity Strategies’ LGBTQ Unit staff.</p>
	<p><a href="#">SCO Family of Services</a> promotes long-term, meaningful connections for youth ages 18-26 who have signed out of care and are participating in their Passages to Adulthood program, which largely engages Black and Latino youth. Efforts include providing training and annual stipends to peer mentors (i.e., young adults with foster care experience) for participating in activities to identify kin, inclusive of fictive kin, who may serve as placement resources and/or supportive adults for youth and establishing supportive community networks.</p>
	<p>Through <a href="#">New Yorkers for Children</a>, Action Research will provide ACS with technical assistance, using data to monitor and incentivize progress and the refinement of strategies for integrating the performance of provider agencies into placement determination processes. Action Research plans to identify metrics to measure the impact of the new system on provider agency performance and youth placement outcomes with input from caregivers, youth, and provider agencies.</p>

**Figure 4.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in family-based and kinship placements, New York City, 2016-2021



The percentage of NYC youth in family-based placements (inclusive of kin) remains high, including continued increases of the percentage of youth placed with kin specifically. From 2020 to 2021, the following changes were seen in family-based placement rates for youth when disaggregated by race and ethnicity:

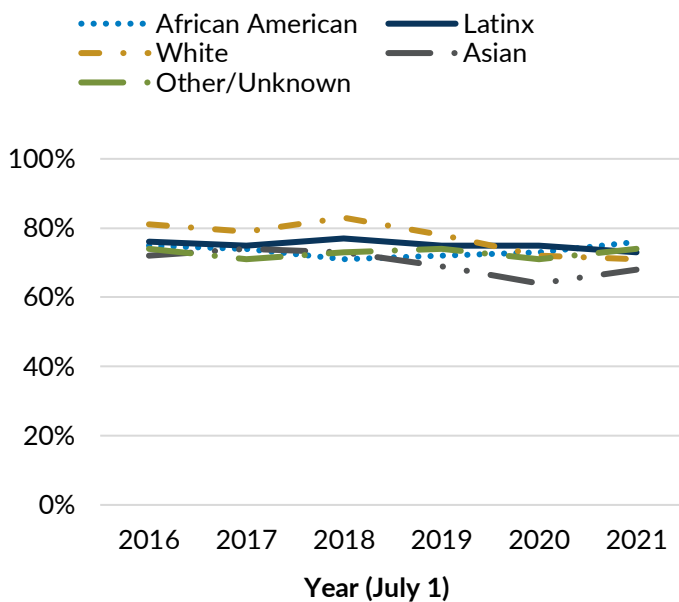
- African American: 73% to 76%
- Asian: 64% to 68%
- Latinx: 75% to 73%
- White: 72% to 71%
- Other/Unknown: 71% to 74%

Additionally, from 2020 to 2021, the proportion of youth in kinship placements in NYC increased for:

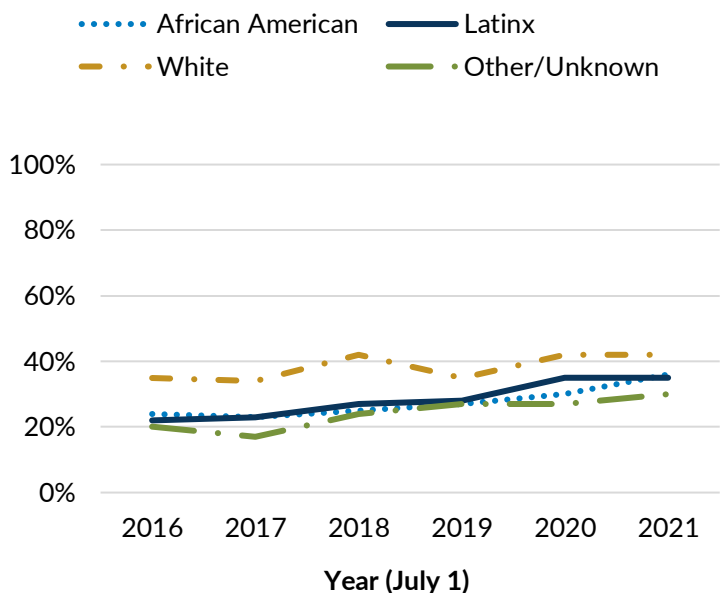
- African American: 30% to 36%
- Other/Unknown: 27% to 30%

However, kinship placement rates remained stable for Latinx youth (35%) and White youth (42%).

**Figure 5.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in family-based placements (kinship and other family-based placements) disaggregated by race/ethnicity, New York City, 2016-2021



**Figure 6.** Percent of youth ages 14-17 in kinship placements disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Los Angeles, 2016-2021



Source: New York State's CCRS and CNNX databases, provided by the NYC Administration for Children's Services<sup>x, xi, xii</sup>

## Barriers

The number of older youth in foster care in NYC has continued to decline over recent years. However, according to grantees, the needs of those who do enter care are higher, and grantees report that some caregivers have experienced burnout due to inadequate training and support. Despite great progress in reducing the use of congregate placements, challenges persist including limited resources available to residential programs for identifying kin and difficulty staffing programs appropriately. Additionally, grantees note that youth are also challenged with navigating stigma (e.g., stigma associated with commercial sexual exploitation due to the field and community's limited education about their experiences) that may impact placement with families, limited platforms and environments to comfortably voice their placement desires, and mistrust in systems when they do not feel valued or heard.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> See <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/continuum-of-care-reform> for more information.

<sup>ii</sup> Effective January 1, 2022, SB 354 removes some barriers to placing youth in care with kin including the allowance of some previously deemed “non-exemptible” convictions to be waived for relatives pursuing licensure under certain conditions. See <https://www.calsaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ACL-22-33.pdf> for additional information.

<sup>iii</sup> See <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4640/4> for more information.

<sup>iv</sup> Indicator data presented for LA and NYC are not directly comparable, as each jurisdiction has different measurement approaches and policy contexts.

<sup>v</sup> CCWIP Reports. CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract; 2020 Quarter 2 Extract; and 2021 Quarter 3 Extract. Data obtained from the University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project and provided to Child Trends by LA County Department of Children and Family Services on 02/03/21 and 04/11/22.

<sup>vi</sup> Among foster youth ages 14-17 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 youth in SILPs are also living in family settings. Kinship placements include relative and non-relative extended family members (NREFM) placements. Data for Native American youth are not shown as this subgroup included fewer than 30 foster youth.

<sup>vii</sup> The Hilton Foundation has identified four focal populations —youth of color, expectant and parenting youth, youth who have experience commercial sexual exploitation, and LGBTQ+ youth.

<sup>viii</sup> See <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/PressReleases/2021/RedesignedFCC.pdf> for more information.

<sup>ix</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, agender or asexual, and intersex.

<sup>x</sup> Indicator data presented for LA and NYC are not directly comparable, as each jurisdiction has different measurement approaches and policy contexts.

<sup>xi</sup> New York State's CCRS database as of October 30, 2019; January 4, 2021; and March 2, 2022. New York State's CNNX database as of October 30, 2019; January 7, 2021; January 8, 2021; March 25, 2022; and March 28, 2022. Provided by New York City Administration for Children's Services.

<sup>xii</sup> Among foster youth ages 14-17 in care on July 1 of each year. Family-based placements include youth in foster homes or kinship placements. Kinship placements include youth in kinship placements only. Excludes youth whose entry reason is juvenile delinquency, youth in care for fewer than 8 days, and youth in specialized placements. Data for Asian youth in kinship placements are not shown as this subgroup included fewer than 30 foster youth and/or fewer than 10 foster youth living with kin.