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The Cost of Being Poor: Entering Foster Care and Losing Hope

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### Top Reasons for Child Entry into Foster Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>= 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Incarceration</td>
<td>= 18%</td>
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<td>Neglect</td>
<td>= 45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>= 58%</td>
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These same reasons are common factors of poverty. Thus, there is a connection.

### Poverty Statistics

- 47% of families who have their children placed in foster care live below the federal poverty guidelines.
- 60% of children in foster care have a chronic medical condition.
- 40% of foster youth nationwide have some sort of special education need(s).
- 65% of foster youth have an annual income below the poverty line at age 23.
- Less than 3% of those leaving foster care earn a college degree.
- 75% of former foster kids are or were in a U.S. prison at some point in their lives.

Many foster children are trapped in a vicious poverty cycle with little to no financial resources throughout their stay in foster care and after they leave. How can we prevent this?

### The Foster Care Housing Crisis

As the number of foster youth continues to rise in America, many state child welfare systems struggle to recruit and keep enough foster homes.

In the first-ever report of its kind, The Chronicle of Social Change projects a continued increase in the number of children in foster care, as well as a concurrent shortfall in the number of foster homes to accommodate them.

While the federal government tracks the overall number of youth in foster care, the latest count of 427,910 was for federal fiscal year 2015. The next count of children in foster care will be released later this year and will encompass fiscal year 2016.

Based on 2017 figures provided to The Chronicle by state agencies,

### Key Findings

1. At least half of the states in the U.S. have seen their foster care capacity decrease between 2012 and 2017. Either these states have fewer beds and more foster youth, or any increase in beds has been dwarfed by an even greater increase in foster children and youth.

### Challenges of Foster Care

- Not enough focus on family unification
- Those who are Hispanic and/or African American are extremely overrepresented and with numerous referrals for foster care from high poverty areas; indicators of bias, cultural incompetency, and poor retention of Child Protection Services (CPS) workers.
- The most funding in the child welfare system is allotted towards foster care, but not always given directly to the foster child or Family Preservation Services (FPS)
- Lifelong adverse conditions and experiences (i.e. bullying, mental health conditions) follow the child from foster care into unstable adulthood.

“Poverty is not neglect. Just because you’re born into poverty doesn’t mean you have to be taken in by the system and chewed back out into poverty as an adult.” – Former foster child

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<td>Priority goals for impoverished families at risk: family engagement, case planning, service coordination, poverty prevention, and intervention delivery</td>
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