

Children Who Have Experienced Trauma Need Support: Minnesota Should Invest in the Success of Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Families HF 1412 (Pierson)

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) is seeking a stable, designated funding stream for support services for adoptive, foster, and kinship families across Minnesota. Such services ensure that children and youth who have experienced loss, trauma, and disruption have the best possible opportunity to grow and thrive in a family. Support services such as the following help keep families together and enable children and youth who are or have been in foster care to heal:

- peer support
- mental health services
- training
- respite care
- educational and recreational activities for children and youth
- information and referral
- crisis response
- support with schools

In Minnesota, more than 6,000 children are in foster care, with the numbers increasing recently. Hundreds of children are adopted from foster care each year (642 in 2014) and there are thousands of adoptive families statewide. More than 1,000 children in Minnesota are waiting for a permanent, loving family.

These children and youth are much more likely than their peers to have serious physical, behavioral, and mental health needs. Children in care or adopted or placed with kin from care are at heightened risk of moderate to severe health problems, learning

and physical disabilities, developmental delays, and mental health challenges. The same challenges often face children adopted internationally, given the difficult circumstances of their early lives.

They deserve a strong, loving, supported family that has the capacity to help them grow and thrive.



"Although we have friends who try to be supportive, they ... don't understand the trials, difficulties, triumphs, and joys of adoption. They do not have advice to give in respect to our children's special needs and cannot recommend the resources necessary to provide our children with the best outcomes possible."

Supportive services for adoptive, foster, and kinship families can:

- help children heal from trauma
- teach families how to parent children who have experienced trauma
- keep families together
- encourage adoptions from foster care
- make it easier to recruit and retain foster parents
- reduce unnecessary moves for children in foster care
- save government funds by increasing permanency, reducing costly placement moves, and enabling children to remain in family care rather than group care

States such as Alabama, Illinois, Missouri, and Tennessee are offering robust programs providing effective support to adoptive or foster families. While Minnesota does provide some post-adoption support, it is limited and there is little for foster families or kin who took permanent custody. **Minnesota can and should be a leader in supporting our children who need us most.**



"Our normal life includes weekly doctor appointments, specialists, missed school, missed work, adaptive sports, special transportation needs, waivers, guardianship, social workers, police, special education, explosive behaviors, school suspension to name a few."

NACAC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the mission that every child deserves a permanent, loving family. By providing parent and youth leadership development, advocacy, education, and adoption support in the U.S. and Canada, NACAC promotes the adoption and other permanent placement of children in foster care. We work to ensure that families have the support they need to successfully raise children who have experienced trauma and who have other challenges. In Minnesota, NACAC operates the

Adoption Support Network, a peer support service for adoptive families. Learn more at www.nacac.org.