



foster
advocates

Our Mission

Foster Advocates is not just our name

It's what we do. We foster advocacy, policy change, and organizing by partnering with fosters and impacted communities.

Why Foster Care?



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Our Foster Community

Foster Advocates recognizes the experience of being in foster care creates a significant cultural identity. We have found **Foster** encompasses this unique identity, akin to other immutable characteristics, and helps recognize the impact of the foster care system never ends, even if individuals are adopted or age out. We use this term to name and claim this critical identity.

State of Foster Care in MN

A Swing of the Pendulum



Eric Dean: The boy they couldn't save

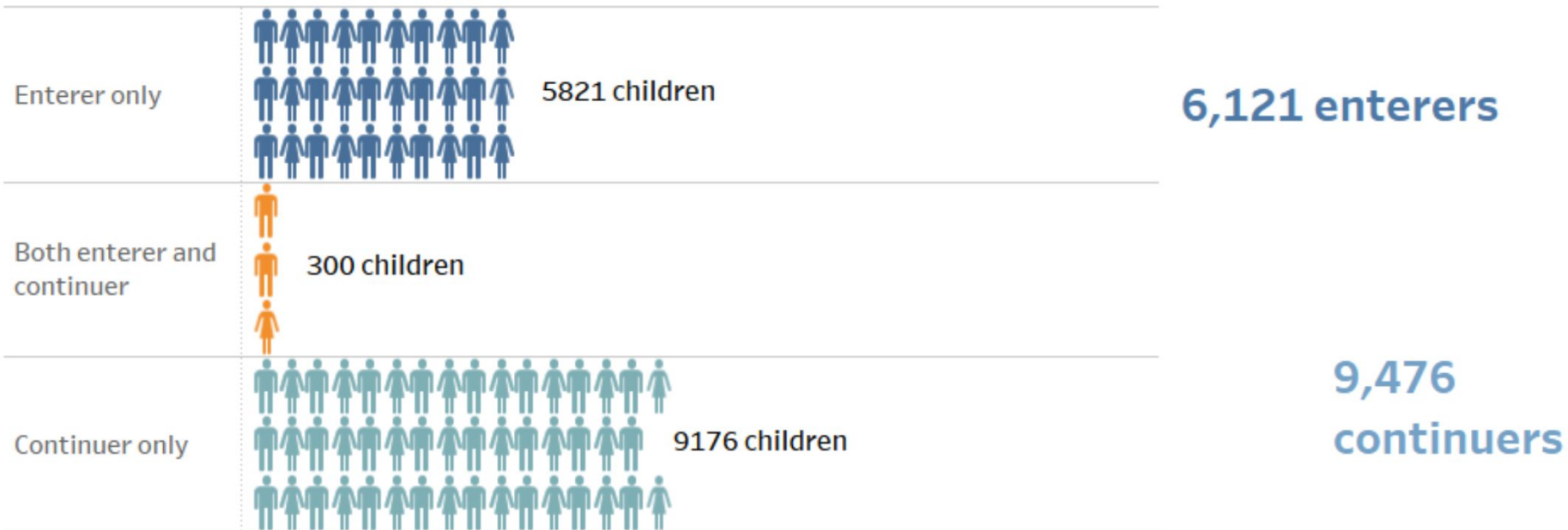
Special report: On 15 occasions, day-care workers and others told Pope County authorities that they suspected Eric Dean was being hurt. But it was not enough. His death exposes the failure of a system charged with protecting the youngest Minnesotans.

By **Brandon Stahl** Star Tribune | SEPTEMBER 1, 2014 — 2:38PM

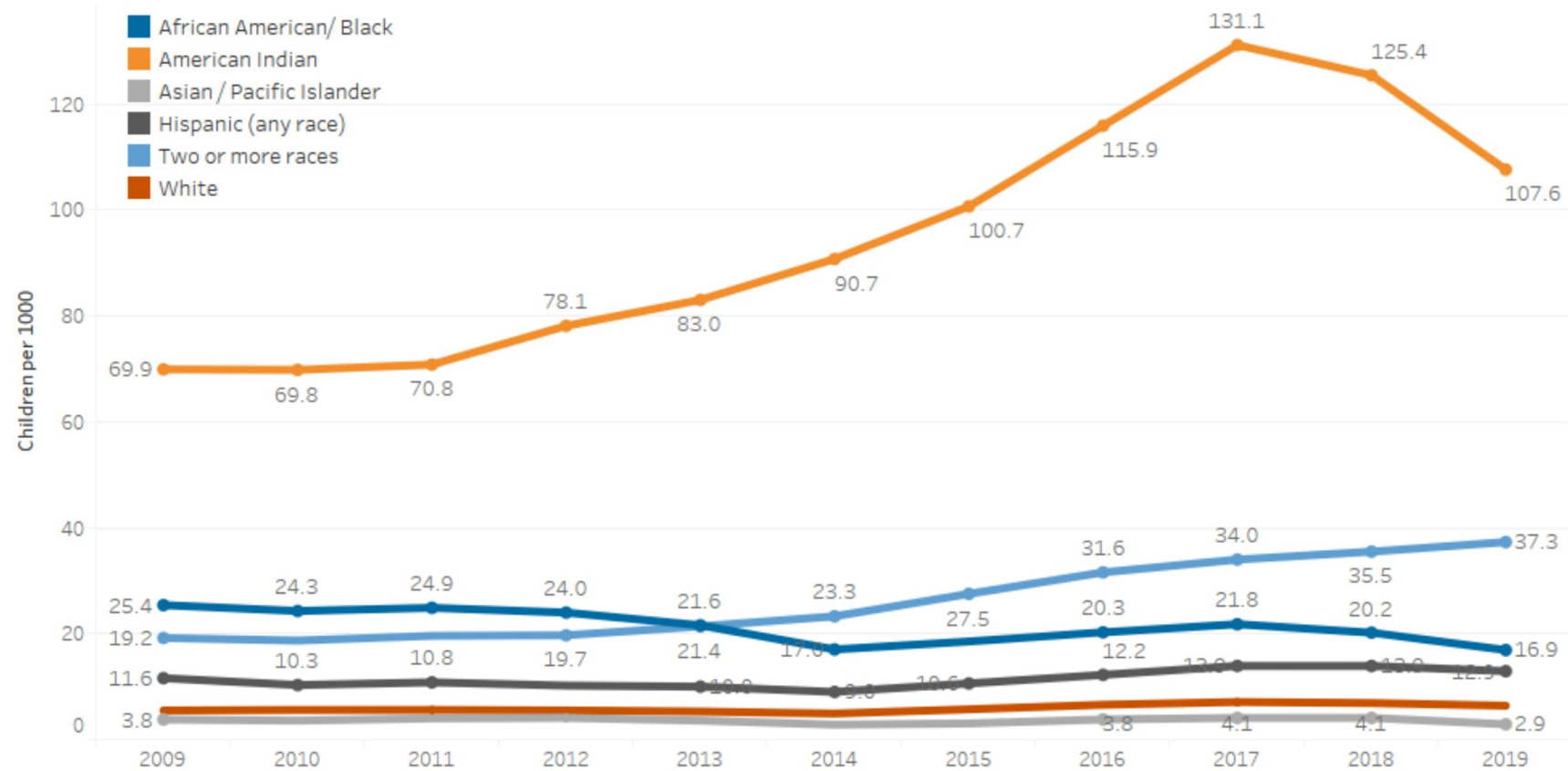
Foster Care Population

Total number who experienced care in 2019:

15,297 children



Race and Rate (per 1,000)



"I felt like I was thrown out into the wild,"

"It seemed like there was no path forward."



The COVID Landscape

- Unemployment
 - 2 x higher rate than general population of US,
 - 4x higher rate than MN
- 21% had living situation impacted by pandemic
 - Number jumps to 38% for those over 21
 - 18-20 most concerned about future safety

Our June Survey

- **Unemployment**
 - 2 x higher rate than general population of US,
 - 4x higher rate than MN
- **21% had living situation impacted by pandemic**
 - Number jumps to 38% for those over 21
 - 18-20 most concerned about future safety

Changes in Child Welfare Data

- Broadly, was a 22% drop in maltreatment reports and a 27% drop in investigations
- Drops in:
 - number of youth experiencing care
 - number of continuers
 - slight decrease in disparity rates
- Debate on whether this is evidence of hidden abuse or evidence of over investigation

Nothing to Celebrate

- Still at almost double the federal reentry into foster care standard
- Minnesota is below the federal standard requirement for monthly caseworker visits for enterers and continuers (before COVID challenges)



Emergency Support for Aging Out Fosters

2021 Appropriations Act

- Allows states to provide foster youth—who would otherwise age out during the pandemic—with the option to stay in care
- Allows youth who have aged out since January 27th, 2020 to voluntarily reenter care through the end of the public health emergency
- Removes the 30% cap in using Chafee funds for housing assistance
- Expands options for public housing authorities to allow using family unification program (FUP) vouchers for an additional 24 months for foster youth

Connection to Homelessness

The Venn Diagram

- Within 18 months of emancipation 40-50% of foster youth become homeless
- A history of foster care correlates with becoming homeless at an earlier age and remaining homeless for a longer period of time
- 65% of youth leaving foster care need immediate housing upon discharge

Minnesota Impact

- More locally, the youth homeless survey conducted in Hennepin County showed that 38% of our homeless-youth have had experiences with foster care
- Our Hennepin Foster Survey:
 - 79% had ever experienced homelessness;
 - 14% actively homeless;
 - 35% had been homeless for a year or more
- 25% experienced homelessness in 2020 and 20% were currently couch surfing, sleeping in a car, or on the street at the time of the survey in December.



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