

# 2020: A Vision for America's Children



**Our country is one of the wealthiest in the world, but our children lag behind in basic security and well-being. The most vulnerable are those at risk of being placed in foster care.**

## **If Nothing Changes in the United States Between 2005 and 2020:**

- » 22,500 children will die from child abuse and neglect.
- » Nearly 14 million children will be confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect.
- » 9 million more children will experience foster care.
- » 300,000 youth will age out of foster care, most with inadequate support to build successful adult lives.

# Casey's 2020 Vision

Casey Family Programs has over 40 years of experience working with children and families. Our 2020 Vision calls for comprehensive change in the child welfare system. The primary goal is to ensure that every child in America has a safe, permanent family. By the year 2020, we will work to reduce the number of children in foster care by 50 percent and improve self-sufficiency for those who remain in the system. To reach these goals, our nation needs to change current financing policies to improve the child welfare system and reinvest overall savings to maintain ongoing positive results for children and families.

We believe we can achieve our 2020 Vision by investing in three primary strategies:

- » **Direct practice**—Based on more than 40 years working in the foster care system, we strive to provide families and children with the highest quality services.
- » **Strategic consulting**—Free of charge, we provide child welfare systems with the knowledge and expertise of our highly qualified, experienced staff.
- » **Public policy**—We work to provide policy leaders with nonpartisan research and data to inform cost-effective policy solutions.

And, for those youth who must remain in foster care, we are committed to improving their self-sufficiency by focusing on three critical areas — education, employment and mental health.

## Education

Over 70 percent of foster youth say they want to attend college. Three percent graduate. We are committed to helping youth in foster care complete their education. As a country, we need to improve success in early childhood education for children in foster care and increase the high school graduation rates and the number of youth who earn two- and four-year vocational or college degrees.

## Employment

Youth who age out of foster care at age 18 often face unemployment or end up in low-wage, unsteady jobs. More than one in five experience homelessness after leaving foster care. Our strategies combine traditional employment and training programs with support such as counseling, mentoring and peer support, childcare, and transportation assistance.

## Mental Health

Abuse or neglect—the principal reasons children enter care—can have a serious effect on mental health later in life. One study shows that youth in foster care have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at twice the rate of U.S. Gulf War veterans. Casey is now working to increase access to mental health services for youth while they are in foster care and extend the age range of eligibility for health insurance coverage beyond foster care to age 25 (or, at a minimum, to age 21).

## How You Can Help

There are many ways to help. Public involvement is critical. Working in partnership with child welfare professionals, judges and courts, and policymakers, every community can take action to improve outcomes for their children and families—one child, one family, and one community at a time. At the national level, corporations, the philanthropic community, service organizations, and government agencies all have a role in ensuring that every child in the United States has a safe, healthy family.

No organization can achieve this vision alone. Working together, we can make the success of America's children our number one priority. For more information, please visit our Web site:

[www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org).