Fewer Kids in Out-of-Home Care

WHAT’S BEHIND THE NUMBERS?

Out-of-home care is the term used to describe the living situations for children who have been removed from their homes and families, and are now in foster care, group homes or shelters, treatment facilities, or independent living situations.

Since 2005, the number of children being removed from their homes has declined in most states, while in Arizona the numbers climbed, peaking at a staggering 19,000 in February 2016. But, the numbers have started to decline…down to about 17,000 in December 2016. It’s hard to get excited about that high number, yet, it is a positive trend that should not be ignored. So, what has changed? Has the number of children being removed from parental custody actually gone down? No, in reality that number has remained quite steady, but the number of children either returned home or placed in permanent situations has trended upward each month. In February 2015, approximately 795 children exited the “system” while in November 2016 that number had climbed to approximately 1,387 children being returned home or placed in permanent care, as reported by the Department of Child Safety.

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A Message From Our CEO

Dear Friends,

Government and policy is on everyone’s minds these days. And while the vote to “appeal and replace” did not happen, we still have a lot of questions and concerns. There will be a next iteration of this bill, and it is likely to be even more restrictive. There is no question — the current Affordable Care Act has problems like skyrocketing premiums. But the fact remains, that millions of people cannot afford to purchase insurance from private insurers. And Medicaid matters!

Medicaid is the single largest health insurer for children. It is also the primary source of health care for low-income parents. Did you know that Medicaid covers health insurance for 636,000 low-income children in Arizona? And children make up 51.5% or Arizona’s Medicaid population. Did you know that 64.5% of children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) live in a family with at least one full-time worker? Medicaid is a lifeline for working families in this country! I know the families we work with and our employees, no matter if they are Republican or Democrat, first want to know, what does this mean for me, for my family, and for my future access to affordable health care? We all need to be able to compromise but I stand firm that we must protect these assurances of health care for children and families.

It’s a complicated issue that elicits high emotions for people. We want to have an open dialogue with you, the people who choose to support the work of Casa de los Niños. My door is always open to you.

Sincerely,

Susie Huhn, MA
Chief Executive Officer
Casa de los Niños, along with the Department of Child Safety, has been working on many different fronts to reduce that 19,000 number. More prevention programs are in place to help keep families together when a crisis hits. Casa de los Niños has robust In-Home Programs – you can read more about one of them to the right.

The state has also made a concerted effort, if a child is removed, to find “kinship family placements” first to minimize the trauma to the child from the removal and to encourage a speedy whole family resolution to the case (see article on page 4). With the number of kinship placements on the rise and more family reunifications, we are now seeing fewer kids enter our Crisis Shelter, and when they do, they are not staying as long.

Casa de los Niños has many programs available to families entering the child-welfare system. If a kinship placement is not available or appropriate and a licensed foster home cannot be found, children may then be served by our Crisis Shelter and may also receive mental health supports from our Behavioral Health Services program. Parents can learn parenting skills and receive supervised visitation to help with family reunification from our Parent Aide program. They also have the opportunity to learn with other parents and caregivers through the Community Education and Outreach program which offers an enormous spectrum of family enrichment topics at no cost.

With your support, we continue to build on this continuum of services which support and help families work toward reunification.

In-Home Services Keeping Families Together

Theresa Lindberg, In-Home Services Program Supervisor

In-Home Services have been a part of the Casa de los Niños array of services since the summer of 2012. Since that time, the team has had the opportunity to work with over 1,000 families to help them improve their overall safety, well-being and stability by focusing on increasing at least one of the 5 Protective Factors (Parent Resilience, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Social and Emotional Competence of Children, Social Connections, and Concrete Supports in Times of Need) within their family. Because In-Home Services has the opportunity to get involved when risks or potential risks of abuse and neglect are initially identified, the intervention can be focused on working with the entire family without the need to remove the children from the home. Additionally, the services are tailored to each family’s specific needs and seem to have a significant impact on a family’s willingness and ability to make positive changes.

One of the positive trends that we see with In-Home Services is the number of families being referred for these voluntary resources has increased each year. While that may not initially sound like a positive trend, what it means is that the children in these families are not being removed from their parents and/or caregivers and being placed into the foster care system. Instead, these families are gaining the benefits from working with a support team consisting of a Therapist and a Family Support Specialist who go into the home and work with the entire family on a multitude of topics and issues. Being able to work with the families in their “natural” environment allows the team to engage and interact with families at a level that helps them feel less pressured, which leads to higher levels of engagement, participation and successful completion of goals.

The most consistent messages that the In-Home teams get from families who participate and complete the services is that they didn’t feel judged, they liked the flexibility of services and sessions, and they felt “heard” by their support team.

The 5 Protective Factors

The 5 Protective Factors (see definition above) are characteristics that have been shown to build strong families, making positive outcomes more likely for young children and their families, and to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Strong families respect each other, celebrate each other, value and support each other, spend time together, communicate and make healthy choices, laugh and ask for help when they need it. Learn more about the research-based Protective Factors at casadelosninos.org/programs-resources/resources-for-parents/5-protective-factors/.
A Little Intervention Goes a Long Way

Ana Santos-Diaz is a Parent Educator with the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Parent Educators provide parents with knowledge of child development stages, parenting support, early detection of developmental delays and health issues for at least two years, or until the child enters kindergarten.

Ana has been working with a mom who has 3 children; a 2 year old who is part of the PAT program, and also an 8 and 10 year old. At one of the home visit sessions, the mom was talking about her frustrations with the older children who were constantly fighting over everything, from crayons to the TV. At a recent training, Ana had learned about a simple conflict resolution method that works with children. She talked with the mom and explained the 6 rules involved, which include: agreeing to resolve the conflict, take turns talking and do not interrupt, no name calling, be truthful about what is bothering you, listen to the other person, and be willing to compromise.

A couple of weeks later at the next home visit, the mom had some good news! She told Ana that she sat down with the older kids, and using some of the communication skills she had learned in other sessions with her younger child, she talked with them about resolving their conflicts on their own before they turned into the fights that had been happening. She explained the 6 rules and even wrote them down and put them on the refrigerator for all to see. Mom was happy to report that the older children were actually starting to talk more and fight less, lowering the stress level in the home for everyone.

Kinship Foster Families Need Support

Many grandparents, aunts, uncles and other family members are stepping up and taking children into their homes when they have been removed from other family members. When this happens, our Foster Care Services program is there for these outstanding families...people who truly devote themselves to the children who arrive in their homes.

It is good to see an increase in “kinship families” as placements for kids. But, we need to ensure that the state recognizes the supports needed by these families too. Did you know that while a non-relative, licensed foster family is eligible for about $20 a day to care for the child, a kinship family placement entitles them to only about $2.60 a day? You can't care for a child properly with $2 a day...and even $20 a day is a challenge!

Kinship foster families are encouraged to go through the steps to become licensed so they are eligible for the increased support. But going through the licensing process involves many steps and can cost a significant amount of money, especially to a grandparent living on social security. For example, being licensed involves having smoke detectors, travel and time for training, fire extinguishers and other costly items. As a result, many of these kinship foster families simply decide to not move ahead in the licensing process, forgoing the extra support.

The increase in placements in “kinship homes” is positive—but, there needs to be proper consideration of the magnitude of costs these families are required to manage. It’s an enormous burden and they deserve support.

Donations to Help Foster Families Meet Requirements

Recently the students at Basis Tucson North School organized a collection of items to help support foster families. Their donation included needed items such as first-aid kits, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
New Director of Human Resources

Pam Genske has joined Casa de los Niños as our new Director of Human Resources. Pam is a Virginia Beach, VA native who has lived in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and now Arizona for the past 4 years with her husband, Dave and 8 year old daughter, Reagan. Pam also has three four-legged friends at her home – one dog who is owned by two cats. Pam picked up a love for running since arriving in Arizona so be on the lookout for her at the next local race!

Pam's background is diverse in different areas of Human Resources to include, Pension and Retirement plans administration, Training and Development, Recruiting, HR Information Systems, and Employee Relations. She's had the opportunity to work at organizations like Prudential Financial, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, and most recently Sunquest Information Systems right here in Tucson. Pam has a Bachelor's degree in Management from Virginia Wesleyan College, a Master's degree in Human Resources Management from Troy University, and has her Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and SHRM-Senior certified professional designation (SHRM-SCP).

Pam has very personal reasons for joining CDLN. She knows directly about our impact to the Tucson area through two family members who are CDLN alums and sing our organization's praises. More importantly, Pam wanted to have a larger impact on helping CDLN have the right people strategy in place to help at risk children and families. Pam knows first-hand how poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, and mental illness can impact a family through her own experiences growing up or through extended family. Pam states that “I really wanted to assist an organization from a people perspective. I'd love to impact a community and enable children and families to get a hand up and have the tools they need to succeed and maybe even break the cycle of abuse, neglect, and so forth. I've really enjoyed getting to know our dedicated staff and their passion for helping families in crisis, children who need patience and caring, and all of the many things they do every day. This organization has to be the most rewarding opportunity in my career thus far, and I look forward to continuing to find ways to secure and retain the best talent for our organization moving forward.”

Your Tax Credit Gift is Working!

The impact of your tax credit gift cannot be overstated!

Your tax credit gift has already made an impact as we continue to face challenges with shifts in funding and cuts to critical programs. We are all watching to see what the impact and cuts will be to programs that help vulnerable people in Arizona. But you have ensured that resources remain available to the people who need it the most! These tax credit gifts go directly to help kids and families right when they need the help.

We appreciate everyone who selected Casa de los Niños as a recipient of their Foster Care Organization tax credit gift this year.

As a Qualifying Foster Care Organization, gifts to Casa de los Niños qualify for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit up to $500 for single tax filers and up to $1,000 for couples.
Thank You to Our Partners...

Successful partnerships are essential to supporting the vulnerable children and families served by Casa de los Niños. These caring groups have partnered with us to provide the critical services that help our clients. Thank you for your support!

**Foundations Making a Difference**

We are fortunate and grateful for the unwavering support from the foundations to the left, whose recent grants to support our Crisis Shelter will help provide such things as medical supplies, healthy meals and snacks and respite care for families. Many of these foundations have supported Casa de los Niños for several years.

Thank you to *Wheels for Kids* for making sure we always have bikes for the kids to ride!

Thank you to both the *Highland Lady Niners’ at Dove Mountain*, and the *Gallery Women’s Golf Association*! Both of these groups made Casa de los Niños the recipient of the proceeds from their recent golf tournaments. Thank you ladies!

Thank you to *ALL the Girl Scout troops* that donated Girl Scout cookies through your Cookies for the Community program.

We appreciate all the members of *The Newcomers Club of Tucson*! This group “adopted” Casa de los Niños for the past year and have donated items for the Crisis Shelter, books for the kids, items for the Thrift Store and they made us the beneficiary of their recent auction. Thanks for all your help!

Casa de los Niños is honored to have *Cenpatico Integrated Care*’s support and partnership in 2017. Cenpatico IC sponsored two key community events this year—Focus on Families: A Community Conversation that featured Piper Kerman, and our annual Family Fiesta.

Cenpatico Integrated Care (Cenpatico IC) serves as the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) for eight Southern Arizona Counties, supporting an extensive network of both behavioral and physical health providers. Offering an innovative approach to whole person health care, Cenpatico IC works with Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System to ensure services are available for more than 400,000 eligible members throughout their service area, including Casa de los Niños Behavioral Health Services.

In addition to funding behavioral health activities Cenpatico IC believes in supporting community focused programs and initiatives to help improve the lives of Arizonans. Cenpatico Integrated Care believes in aligning their community giving with their mission of transforming the health of communities, one person at a time. **Thank you, Cenpatico IC, for your partnership!**
Dear Casa de los Niños,

Thank you for bringing Piper Kerman to Tucson and highlighting the impact of incarceration on women and children. Women comprise the fastest growing population within the punishment system, yet their particular needs are rarely addressed.

A key difference between men and women who go through the system is that 66% of women who are incarcerated are mothers (and sole caretakers) of children under the age of eighteen. Approximately 1.3 million children have a mother who is under correctional supervision.

She offered a critical analysis of the unique challenges that women and mothers who come in conflict with the law face - barriers which severely impact their ability to parent. Data shows that family reunification reduces recidivism, which means there are personal and public benefits to supporting children and families impacted by mass incarceration.

Again, thank you for creating space to learn, and for all of the critical work you do in Tucson to support children and families in crisis.

Many of the children served by our programs such as Behavioral Health Services, and even Nurse-Family Partnership (teen moms) are older children and young adults between the ages of 12 and 22, and many are in foster care.

Our current Wish List focuses on collecting new items for these clients: ordinary items that we would like to be able to provide these kids and young adults as needed, in hopes of helping to raise their self-esteem.

Please consider organizing a collection of these items at your church, club, business, etc. For more information please contact Dan Gregory at dang@casadelosninos.org, or 520.624.5600 x10500.

- Ear buds / headphones
- Gift cards: Target, Walmart, Old Navy, movies, etc.
- Socks: women’s and men's sizes
- Underwear: women's and men’s small to XL
- Hygiene products: teens’ body spray, lotion, deodorant, hair ties, shampoo, etc.
- Clothing: older kids, age 12 and up;
  - women's and men's small to XL
- Pajamas: women’s and men’s small to XL
- Writing journals
- Adult coloring books and colored pencils
- Shoes: women’s 6 to 8, men's 8 to 12
- Sports equipment
- Jackets: light/medium; adult’s small to XL
- School supplies: teens, organizers, pencils, back packs, etc.
- Make-up for teen girls
- Arts and crafts supplies

Thank you to all of our community partners for providing information for families and activities for kids, and to the wonderful stage entertainers for the great singing and dancing!

Thank you to Our Event Partners...

...Cenpatico Integrated Care and Fuel for Life Employee Giving Program at Southwest Gas for helping us present Focus on Families: A Community Conversation with Piper Kerman in February and our Family Fiesta in April.

Our February lecture featuring Piper Kerman, author of Orange is the New Black, was enjoyed by a large crowd at the Fox Theatre and focused on the incarceration of women and the impact on their families. Here is one of the thank you letters we received:

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Warmly,

Garrison Grammer, Ph.D.
Program Coordinator Reintegrating Justice Project
The mission of Casa de los Niños is to promote child well-being and family stability in our community.

ACCREDITED BY:

The Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services

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