

Extending The Love of Our Father

“To me, they are all God’s children. They are children of God. I must protect them to the best of my ability.” —**Father Edward Joseph Flanagan, Founder, Boys Town**

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For some, the name Boys Town may invoke the 1938 movie starring Mickey Rooney and Spencer Tracy. The film was a biographical drama of Father Edward J. Flanagan, a priest of the Diocese of Omaha who dedicated his life to caring for disadvantaged and delinquent boys. Fr. Flanagan arrived in America from County Roscommon, Ireland and within a few years established a Home for Boys that welcomed without regard to race or religion. In time, the home became known as the Village of Boys Town and, by the mid-1930s, hundreds of otherwise vulnerable children and young adults were being cared for and educated in the village.

Following World War II, Fr. Flanagan was asked by President Truman to travel through Europe and Asia to participate in discussions related to children left homeless and orphaned during the war. He died while traveling through Germany in 1948. In February, 2012, the Archdiocese of Omaha announced it was to open a beatification process for Fr. Flanagan based on his life of heroic virtue.

Fr. Flanagan and his works of charity and love set a strong example for the thousands of foster care parents who likewise care for vulnerable children today. In Michigan, approximately 13,000 children are living in foster care at any given time. Similar to those who were cared for at Boys Town in decades

past, these children have been abused, neglected or abandoned through no fault of their own. They often have no family members to care for them and feel alone, not knowing what their future may hold. Several have never known what it was like to sleep in a bed, to have three meals a day, to have new clothes to wear, or even to know where they will be living the next day. These kids are in need of stability and loving care until they can either safely reunite with their families or establish other lifelong relationships with a nurturing adult.

Several Catholic charity agencies in Michigan help to facilitate temporary family homes for children in local communities who are victims of abuse

and or neglect. The Michigan Department of Human Services acts as the state agency responsible for facilitating foster care placements. Through the social service operations of the church and the civil government, adults who may consider providing shelter, love and compassion to vulnerable children have options to explore.

The purpose of this **focus** publication is to highlight foster care in Michigan and across the country, and to identify agencies in the state that can provide opportunities and answer questions for those with interest. Indeed, foster care parents are extending the love of our father in Heaven. As Fr. Flanagan stated “To me, they are all God’s children. They are children of God.” ■

STATE EFFORTS TO INCREASE NUMBER OF FOSTER PARENTS

In 2011 Michigan's Department of Human Services (DHS), under a recent lawsuit settlement agreement, was directed to increase the number of relative foster care providers that are licensed. DHS has committed to licensing 55 percent of new relative foster parents within 180 days of placement of a child in the relative's home by June 30, 2012; 65 percent by December 31, 2012; 75 percent by June 30, 2013 and 85 percent by December 31, 2013. In addition, DHS has committed to licensing 1,300 new, non-relative foster homes by June 30, 2012, and an additional 1,450 new non-relative foster homes by June 30, 2013. DHS has also committed to ensuring each county has a sufficient number and adequate array of foster homes capable of serving the needs of those children coming into care for whom foster home placement is appropriate. These commitments will require expediting what has been a much more time-consuming process. DHS has since made significant strides to improve the quality of service to children and families in the child welfare system by, in part:

- Increasing the number of caseworkers
- Decreasing the client caseload for each worker
- Moving more foster children to permanency
- Reducing the number of foster children in out-of-home care
- Extending the age of foster care eligibility with corresponding benefits to 21

Sources: Michigan Department of Human Services and Kids Count Data Book, 2011, page 24.

TESTIMONIALS FROM FOSTER PARENTS

"We can't imagine life without each other and we are always there for each other. Family doesn't have to be related, it's just a bond between hearts. There is always someone out there ready to love you. Have faith that God will make that connection." —**Tresa**

"Everyone thinks it's so hard to be a foster parent, but you just have to have a willing heart and God will give you the tools to do the rest." —**Carol**

"The professionalism, support, attentiveness from the [St. Vincent Catholic Charities] staff, ensuring to keep us informed made our experiences so much more meaningful. They made it personal and have a vision of care for the children, to reach out and push for goodness." —**Jim**

"The process has been a smooth one, and our worker from Catholic Social Services has been there with us every step of the way. We always felt like she was looking out for our best interests. This experience has been a wonderful blessing to our family, and we appreciate knowing that our worker will be there to help us with any bumps in the road." —**Raina J.**

"It has been wonderful being a foster parent, knowing that you are helping a child in need is priceless. Being a foster parent can be very challenging, it is full of ups and downs, but the reward of helping children overcomes that challenge. We are so grateful to the agency of helping us find our little boy. I hope others are as lucky as us to work with Catholic Social Services and make their dreams come true like ours." —**Jeff & Corrie M.**

"When people get to the end of their life they look back for a feeling of accomplishment. Monetary gain cannot fulfill you. I don't think anything in life can bring such satisfaction as the influence, impact and difference you can make in a child's life. Children, whether through birth, temporary care, or those you choose to make your own permanently through adoption, will complete you." —**Karen**



CHILDREN AGES 0–5 IN FOSTER CARE BY COUNTY, MICHIGAN, 2010

Alcona	0	Lake	12
Alger	3	Lapeer	16
Allegan	55	Leelanau	6
Alpena	19	Lenawee	40
Antrim	9	Livingston	31
Arenac	11	Luce	7
Baraga	12	Mackinac	8
Barry	16	Macomb	454
Bay	44	Manistee	12
Benzie	4	Marquette	30
Berrien	165	Mason	13
Branch	48	Mecosta	29
Calhoun	115	Menominee	8
Cass	42	Midland	31
Charlevoix	11	Missaukee	4
Cheboygan	29	Monroe	48
Chippewa	28	Montcalm	27
Clare	10	Montmorency	3
Clinton	47	Muskegon	189
Crawford	15	Newaygo	17
Delta	17	Oakland	286
Dickinson	30	Oceana	13
Eaton	89	Ogemaw	12
Emmet	18	Ontonagon	0
Genesee	461	Osceola	10
Gladwin	3	Oscoda	5
Gogebic	4	Otsego	33
Grand Traverse	39	Ottawa	57
Gratiot	21	Presque Isle	8
Hillsdale	32	Roscommon	23
Houghton	16	Saginaw	128
Huron	10	Saint Clair	156
Ingham	241	Saint Joseph	87
Ionia	46	Sanilac	9
Iosco	8	Schoolcraft	0
Iron	4	Shiawassee	54
Isabella	49	Tuscola	34
Jackson	74	Van Buren	59
Kalamazoo	240	Washtenaw	90
Kalkaska	12	Wayne	1,492
Kent	367	Wexford	22
Keweenaw	0		

Source: Data provided by Michigan League for Human Services; Accessed through Kids Count Data Center for Michigan, Annie E. Casey Foundation

FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT TYPES¹

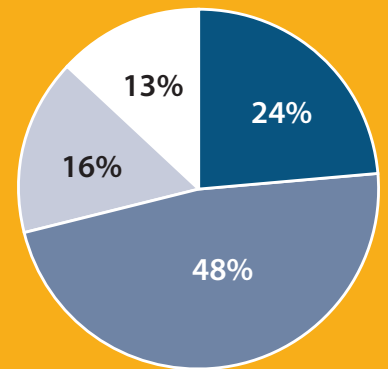
Foster family home, relative
A licensed or unlicensed home of the child's relatives regarded by the state as a foster care living arrangement for the child.

Foster family home, non-relative
A licensed foster family home regarded by the state as a foster care living arrangement.

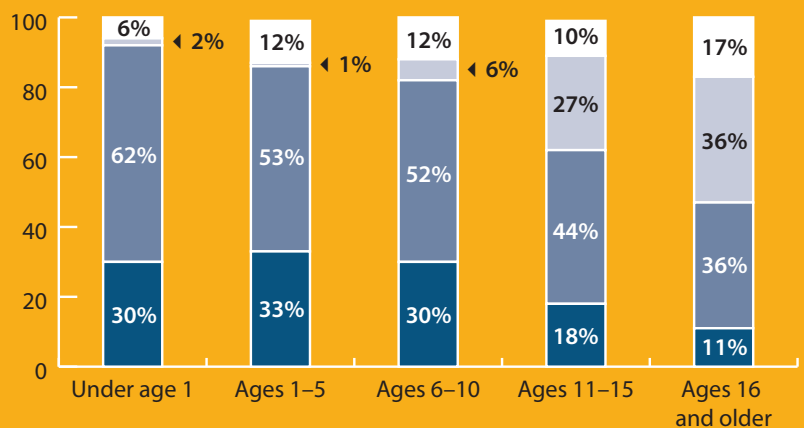
Group home or Institution
A group home is a licensed or approved home providing 24-hour care for children in a small group setting that generally has from 7 to twelve children. An Institution is a facility operated by a public or private agency and providing 24-hour care and/or treatment for children who require separation from their own homes and group living experience. These facilities may include child care institutions, residential treatment facilities, or maternity homes.

Other
Includes supervised independent living, runaways, pre-adoptive homes, and trial home visits.

PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY PLACEMENT TYPE, U.S., 2009²



PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY AGE, BY PLACEMENT TYPE, U.S., 2009³



- Source:** Definitions reported in the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS)
- Source:** Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), 2009. Figure does not total to 100 percent due to rounding.
- Source:** Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), 2009. Represents only those children in the foster care system on September 30, 2009 for whom data on type of placement and age was available.

DIOCESAN FOSTER CARE CONTACTS IN MICHIGAN

Archdiocese of Detroit

Catholic Social Services of Oakland County /
St. Francis Family Services
www.cssoc.org
(248) 552-0750

Diocese of Grand Rapids

Catholic Charities West Michigan
www.ccwestmi.org
(866) 857-1593

Diocese of Lansing

Department of Catholic Charities
www.dioceseoflansing.org/catholic_charities/
(517) 342-2465

Diocese of Marquette

Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula
www.cssup.org
(906) 786-7212 ext. 209

STATE GOVERNMENT & AFFILIATED CONTACTS

Michigan Department of Human Services

www.mi.gov/hopeforahome/
(888) 335-3882

Michigan Federation for Children and Families

www.michfed.org
(517) 485-8552

MEMORARE TO ST. JOSEPH, PATRON SAINT OF FOSTER PARENTS

Remember, O most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who implored your help and sought your intercession was left unassisted. Full of confidence in your power, I fly to you, and beg your protection. Despise not, O foster-father of the Redeemer, my humble supplication, but in your bounty, hear and answer me. Amen. ■



Father Edward Joseph Flanagan (left), during a visit to the White House, October 13, 1938

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