

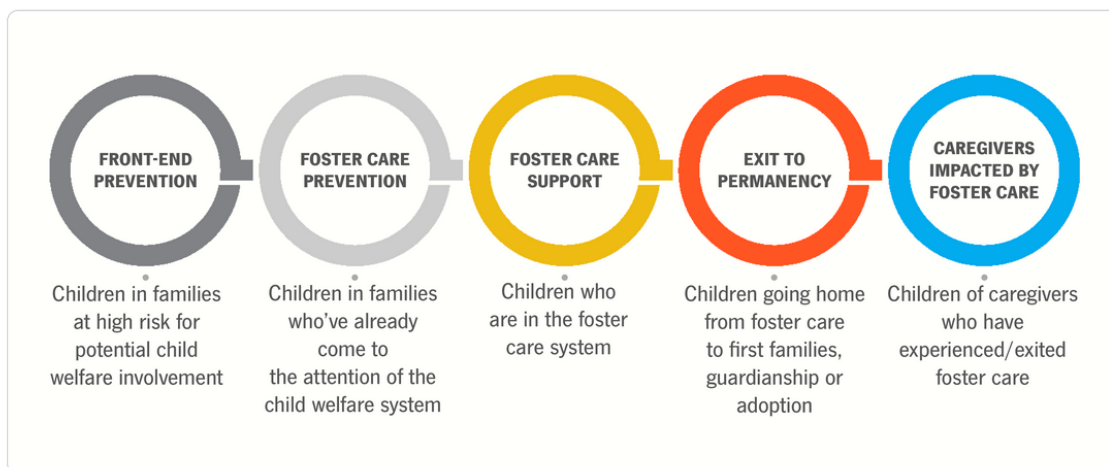
For nearly thirty years, Friends of the Children has been empowering youth and families who have been impacted by the foster care system. Our enrollment process focuses on youth who are highest risk of entering, or who are already involved in the foster care system. More than 40% of youth in our program have experienced out-of-home placement and approximately 30% of caregivers have experienced foster care themselves. Our youth and family-led, trauma informed approach supports the health and well-being of children and families together with these goals in mind:

- Promoting safe and well-supported children in families
- Providing hope-inspiring services that mitigate trauma and promote well-being
- Preventing further involvement with the child welfare system

### OUR MODEL

In partnership with child welfare systems, schools and community-based organizations, Friends of the Children invites children ages 4-6 and pairs them with a salaried, professional mentor (a Friend) who stays with them from kindergarten through graduation – 12+ years, no matter what.

We work with partners to identify families along the child and family well-being continuum to ensure that our model is serving the children and families who need us most:



Ultimately we want all parents to have the supports they need to be the parents they want to be, and for all kids to get to be kids – living safely at home with their families.

Mark\* age 6, and his family have been in Friends of the Children for 2 years. Mark's Dad is the primary caregiver to Mark and his brother. After a fire in their apartment building, they lost their possessions. Soon after, their car was totaled in an accident. Dad has struggled with his mental health over the years, but the compounding events made things feel especially hard. Ultimately, the school filed a report with Child Protective Services (CPS).

Because of the close relationship between Friends of the Children and the child welfare system, the CPS caseworker contacted Mark's Friend to discuss what supports Friends of the Children could provide to the family. The Friends of the Children team connected Dad to robust mental wellness services and Mark's Friend stepped in to be even more actively involved in Mark and his sibling's academics. As a result of this trust and partnership, the children were able to remain with Dad safely at home and not be placed into the foster care system.

## ADVANCING FOSTER CARE OUTCOMES

In a recent exploratory outcome study, children invited into Friends from foster care experienced lengths of stay 6 months shorter than a like comparison group.

Additional early data (based on the Tampa Bay cohort as compared to like- youth in care without a Friend) shows:

- Children who join our program while in care face more obstacles than other children, even compared to other children in foster care.
- Children who are in care and have a Friend achieve in school at higher rates than youth in care without a Friend.
- Children in our program re-enter foster care less often than the general foster care population.

## YOUTH OUTCOMES

Friends of the Children has developed a strong reputation based on the achievement of proven, measurable outcomes for youth facing the greatest challenges. Young adults who experience involvement with the foster care system and who graduate from the program achieve our three long-term programmatic outcomes at the same rate as all our program participants – remarkable results considering the national statistics for youth transitioning out of foster care:

- 83% of youth with Friends graduate high school, while 55% without a Friend graduate high school;
- 93% of youth with Friends avoid the juvenile justice system, compared to 74% without Friends avoid the juvenile justice system;
- 98% of youth with Friends avoid early parenting, while only 74% without a Friend wait to parent until after their teen years; and
- In addition, while young adults who've experienced foster care are just as likely as their peers to have college aspirations, only 32 to 45 percent pursue higher education after high school. At Friends of the Children, we celebrate the fact that 92% of our program graduates go on to enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country, or become employed in a living wage job.

## CAREGIVER IMPACT: BUILDING PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

The work Friends do with youth and caregivers is highly individualized and intentional. 30% of our caregivers were in foster care as a child and 60% of those who had been in care, aged out of care as adults. Our two-generation approach works with caregivers to build parenting skills, empower systems navigation and self-advocacy, and meet concrete needs.

86%

said Friends supported them to **BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR CHILD'S NEEDS/STRENGTHS**  
And 88% said their child's behavior had improved, making their home a more positive place.

84%

said Friends helped **STRENGTHEN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**  
And 84% said Friends supported them to spend more time with other children.

91%

said Friends helped them **SUPPORT** their child's **SCHOOL SUCCESS**  
And 84% said Friends helped make their relationships with school personnel stronger.

92%

said Friends connected them to **CONCRETE SUPPORTS** that enrich and stabilize their family  
And 77% said Friends promoted their ability to navigate systems and build community connections.