

THE OBSERVER



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Reporting Accurate and Objective Information Based on Facts, not Agenda-Setting Theories

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America's Children

Foster Care Revealed

Series - Part 1 of 5

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

[Nelson Mandela](#)

[Foster Care](#) is defined as "24 hour substitute care for children outside their own homes," and considered one of the most significant programs to help protect and stabilize our children however, multi-agencies and numerous departments lacking coherent uniformity and cohesiveness, coupled with the overwhelming bureaucracy has created massive confusion. Various interpretations of procedures and statutes, personnel inconsistencies in education, experience, unmeasurable compassion, out-of-date and conflicting statistics also add to the chaos of the system. Stir in the lack of funding and the overall result is: The [Foster Care Program](#) "Fails to Meet the Needs of the Child Welfare Field".

Simplification and unification would not only control waste and manage costs, but would support the case workers, management and foster families who are key to helping children with an uncertain legacy.

The 404 page FY [2011 President's Budget](#) requests a \$58.8 billion (a \$7.5 billion increase above the FY 2010 enacted level) for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) located within the (HHS) including both mandatory (pre-appropriated and entitlement) and discretionary programs, [Department of Health and Human Services](#) is confusing.

In 1790 three significant events occurred. The [first United States Census](#) revealed 3,929,326 people which included 697,681 slaves residing within the USA while the French Revolution in Europe (1789-1795) was well into the first year of social and political turmoil. Meanwhile, philanthropist John Robertson and the City Council of Charleston, South Carolina decided to open the first US orphanage. [The Charleston Orphan House](#) in Charleston, South Carolina was necessary . . . "for the purpose of supporting and educating poor orphan children, and those of poor, distressed and disabled parents who are unable to support and maintain them."

A child could be admitted to the Orphan House by a parent, guardian, church or a city warden. The Orphan House would then assume complete control until a boy was 21 years old and a girl was 18 years old. They were referred to as "[inmates](#)" and often wore identifiable clothing made by the girls who were

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apprenticed on domestic chores beginning at the age of 13 years. Boys assumed apprenticeship at the age of 14 years often learning construction. The orphanage "*operated as a self-sufficient isolated entity*". The children had an apprentice education, "*a sum of money, suit of clothes and a set of tools*" and many tales of mistreatment. **Source Document:** [History and Records of the Charleston Orphan House](#) by Susan L. King

Presently, the orphanages have been replaced with various type facilities such as: short- term crisis care residential facilities, commonly referred to as Shelters and Foster Homes with a relative which are termed Kinship Care.

Other such facilities include: The [Family Foster Home](#) is a private home setting often limited to six children including the foster caretaker's biological children under the age of 18 years. The [Therapeutic Foster Home](#) is operated by a foster family who has received special needs training and support for children with behavior or emotional problems. [Residential Facilities and Group Homes](#) are licensed and have a 24 hour staff to provide care and individualized treatments/group therapy sessions that could include psychiatric consultations. Short-term placement centers that provide medical, psychiatric, therapy, drugs/alcohol abuse evaluations and family assessments are diagnostic facilities. [Transitional Housing Programs](#) are for students who are considered homeless.

Suggested Additional Reading:

[Foster Parent Handbook](#)

[Foster Care Statistics 2010](#)

[Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)

[Foster Care Inquiries by State Chart](#)

[National Coalition for Child Protection Reform](#)