



Child Welfare Report

MARYLAND, 2023



CHILD WELFARE REPORT: SNAPSHOT

The state of Maryland's child welfare system is at a critical juncture, facing significant challenges that demand immediate attention and action. The report delves into the heart of these issues, aiming to shed light on key deficiencies and their implications, as observed and experienced by The Hive. This comprehensive analysis presents a threefold focus:

- 1. Lack of Accountability and Data Transparency:** The report uncovers a stark absence of accountability in the system. Despite the implementation of preventative services following Child Protective Services (CPS) reports, a glaring lack of documented data poses serious concerns.
- 2. Crisis-Driven Funding Dissemination:** The report highlights the way funds are disseminated in a reactive, crisis-driven manner within Maryland's child welfare system.
- 3. Red Tape Impeding Community-Based Organizations:** The report makes references to the bureaucratic hurdles that obstruct community-based organizations from effectively stepping in to provide much needed aid.

Our proposed strategies aim to enhance accountability, reform funding dissemination for a proactive model, and remove barriers that stifle community-based organizations.

The subsequent sections of this report will detail these challenges, provide brief analysis, and offer innovative solutions to empower Maryland's child welfare system. **Together, let's embark on a human-centered, proactive, and community driven system that gives families a voice.**



OUR GOALS

RAISE AWARENESS

about the critical need for change.

OFFER SOLUTIONS

that are community-driven & prioritize family-services.

REDUCE BARRIERS

at the local level & open pathways that benefit families.

Our goal is to illuminate the systemic challenges within Maryland's child welfare system, fostering a comprehensive understanding while raising awareness about the critical need for change. We aim to pivot toward a community-driven solution that prioritizes a family-services centered design, emphasizing a more human-centric, proactive approach. By highlighting the limitations imposed by barriers at the local level, we endeavor to open pathways that benefit families and advocate for a restructuring of financial resources to better align with the needs of the community.

Our focus remains on creating a more responsive, supportive, and community-integrated system that places the well-being of families and children at its core. Ultimately, this report aims to not only pinpoint the existing issues but to present actionable solutions that foster a more effective, collaborative, and empowering environment for all involved stakeholders.

A CHILD RAISED IN THE SYSTEM

“Removing children from their families can be necessary, but stepping into a foster home doesn’t match the life we’re used to and I don’t think people quite understand what that’s like. I knew how to cope in a dysfunctional family, but ‘normal’ felt foreign, making it hard to adapt. I kept getting punished and moved from placement to placement for behaviors that I learned at home.”

“Why not focus on why these behaviors show up and help us, rather than just punishing us or forcing meds down our throat? No one should be forced through the experiences I’ve had while in foster care for the past 9 years.”

-19 year old



EXPERIENCE IN CARE

She entered foster care at the age of 10, her life already weighed down by the trauma of early sexual abuse. Her mother, a single parent struggling to navigate her daughter's behaviors from past traumatic experiences, bore the weight of her own history within foster care and the absence of her children's father, who had been incarcerated. Despite efforts in various therapeutic settings, from group homes to residential treatment centers, her path through the system remained tumultuous. Encounters with the Department of Juvenile Services, a brief recent incarceration, and subsequent probation has shaped her story.

Still in foster care at 19 years old today and currently residing in a transient arrangement, staying in a hotel with an uncertain support system, she grapples with a pregnancy intertwined with the child's father's incarceration, painting a picture of cyclical adversity.



OUTCOMES

This young girl has consistently sought a few fundamental elements—a connection with her family and siblings, a place to call home, and a life beyond the pages of a file stored on a shelf. Her heart's desire is to be authentically cared for, not merely as a case, but as a person with dreams and aspirations. She craves genuinely supportive individuals and seeks belonging with those who accept her for who she is, even if that path isn't always the best choice.

The essentials she requires are simple yet crucial—a stable home, regular access to food, and the foundational guidance of parenting skills and coaching. Equally vital is a community of peers where she can find genuine support and a sense of belonging. With her pregnancy there's an urgent need for maternal healthcare not only for her, but also to break the cycle for her unborn child. She recognizes the necessity for substance use treatment. She acknowledges the challenges she faces and demonstrates her resolve to overcome them. These are the practical necessities that underpin her quest for stability and a life defined by her identity and aspirations, not merely statistics or the confines of a system.



FAMILIES NEED EARLIER ACCESS TO RESOURCES

The current structure of our child welfare system relies on funding that primarily flows from the federal government once a child is removed from their family thereby creating a system that incentivizes interventions after crises occur rather than preventing them.

The current model, which only channels resources after family separation, inadvertently incentivizes the continuation of broken family structures rather than focusing on early prevention and support. There's a clear and urgent need to redirect our approach by allocating resources towards preventative measures—shifting the emphasis to invest in Evidence-Based Programs and initiatives that support families before they reach a crisis point.

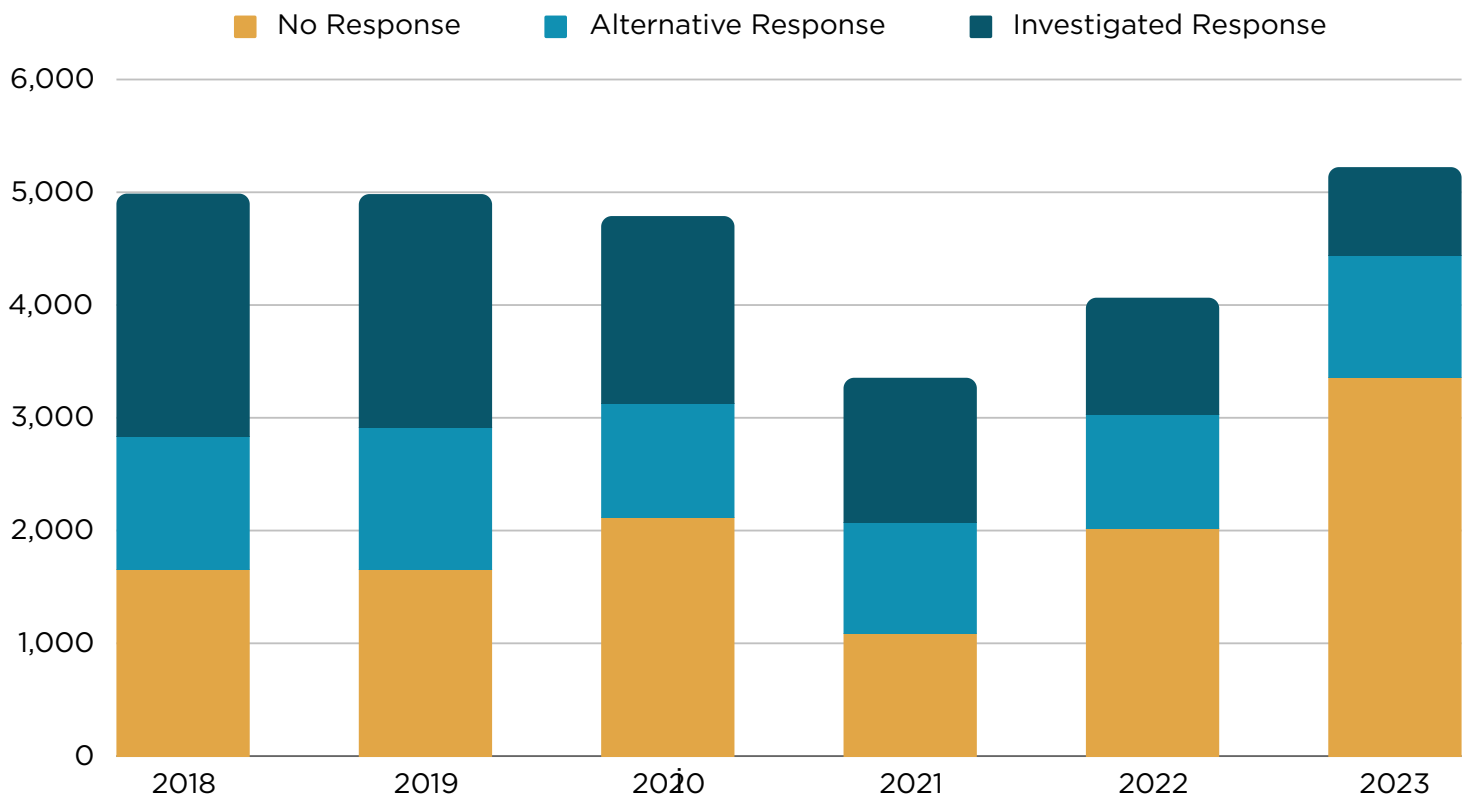


“OUR CURRENT SYSTEM IS CRISIS-DRIVEN & RISK-ORIENTED, NOT STRENGTHS - BASED & FAMILY SERVICES-DRIVEN.”



CPS RESPONSE

**“NO RESPONSE IS A
RESPONSE TO FAMILIES
WHO ARE STRUGGLING.”**



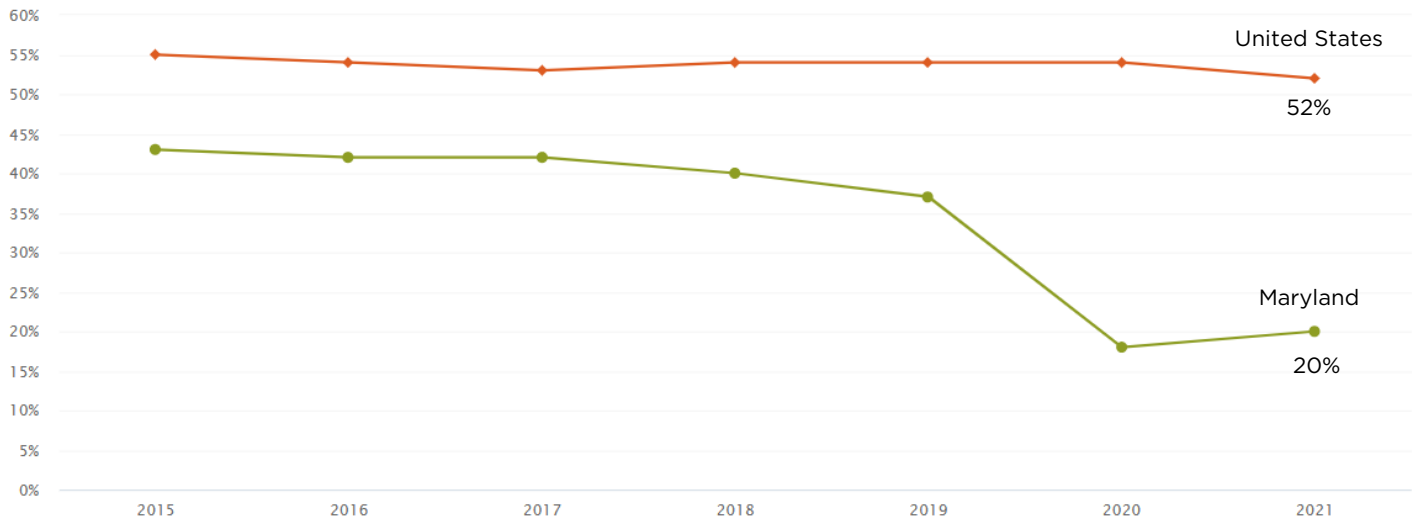
Maryland Department of Human Services (monthly median averages)

- CPS data in Maryland presents a narrative of consistency in the number of CPS reports while revealing a trend of diminishing state service responses over time.
- This decline in response rates suggests a growing gap between reported cases and the subsequent support provided by the state.
- It emphasizes the critical need for a closer examination of why there's a disconnect between reported incidents and the level of intervention offered.
- It supports the need to reduce red-tape that impedes community-based organizations from collaborating with the state agency in their local jurisdiction to provide resources & prevention.

POST RESPONSE SERVICES



CHILDREN WHO ARE CONFIRMED BY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AS VICTIMS OF MALTREATMENT WHO RECEIVE SERVICES IN MARYLAND



Annie E. Casey Foundation: Kids Count Data Center

	Maryland	United States
Number of victims who received postresponse services ⁹	1,255 (19%)	329,458 (58%)
Number of non-victims who received postresponse services	1,017 (6%)	716,560 (26%)

Child Trends

- Since 2015, the United States has maintained a relatively steady rate of 50-60% in delivering services to confirmed victims. Maryland, in contrast, has seen a drastic decline to a mere 20%.
- This highlights the urgency for Maryland's child welfare system to reevaluate and enhance its strategies to provide essential services and support to victims.

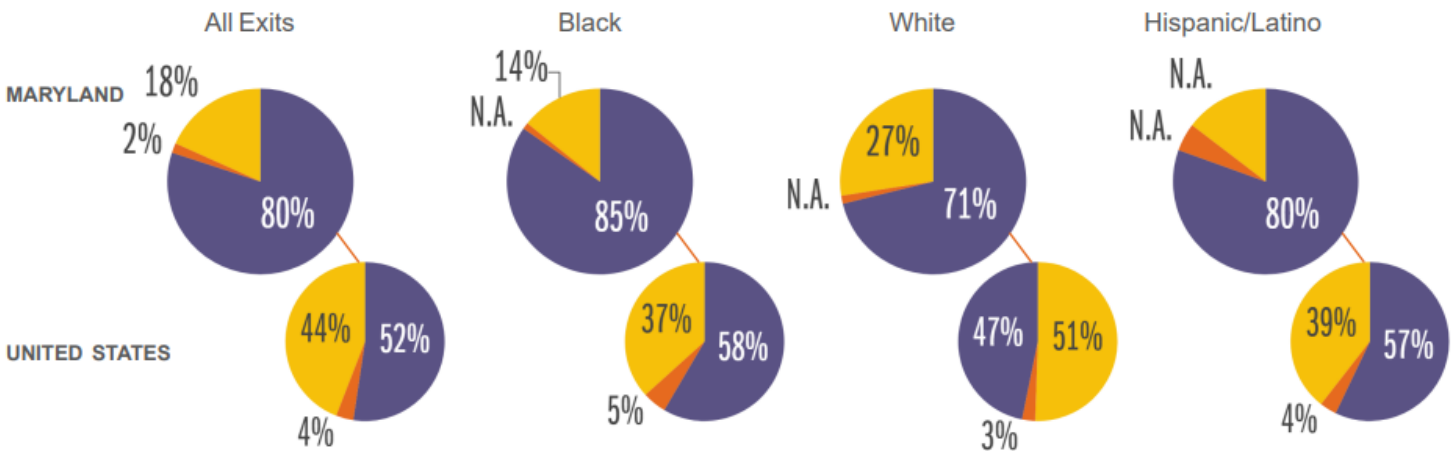
TRANSITION AGED YOUTH



EXIT REASONS

Many young people who leave foster care without permanent, legal connections to family or caregivers are exposed to risks including homelessness and economic instability.

■ PERMANENCE
 ■ EMANCIPATION/AGING OUT (NON-PERMANENCE)
 ■ OTHER



Annie E. Casey Foundation: Fostering Youth Transitions 2023

- The above charts represent young people ages 16+ who exited foster care in 2021.
- Permanence includes adoption, reunification with birth families, living with a relative and guardianship.
- When fewer than 10 young people are reported in data, this brief uses N.A.
- Older youth who age out of foster care are at increased risk for several adverse adult outcomes, including homelessness, high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, early or unintended pregnancies, and substance misuse.

SOLUTIONS: PREVENTION

- Universal Trauma Screening
 - Maternal Health
 - Pediatric Care
- Parenting Skill Development
- Streamlined Access to Services

**“IF WE CAN PREDICT IT,
WE CAN PREVENT IT”**

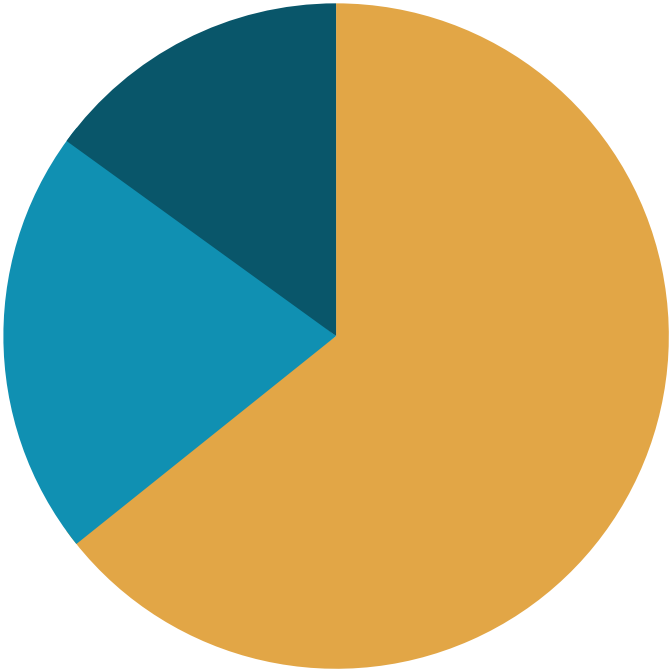
By emphasizing early intervention through predictive measures, we aim to build a robust preventive system. Strategies include prioritizing maternal health and pediatric care, employing universal screening to identify families who have increased exposure to adverse experiences, and providing comprehensive resources such as community support networks, parenting skill development programs, and streamlined access to crucial services.

This system places Evidenced-Based Practices in local jurisdictions where they become within reach of families when they need it; before a crisis or separation occurs.

SOLUTIONS: INTERVENTION

FAMILIES NEED TO BE SERVED WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY

- Right now we assume a woman struggling with drugs is a mother incapable of loving her child
- A human-centered design incentivizes support for families over support for removal



● Community Response ● Alternative Response ● Investigated Response

In cases where CPS calls are made, our intervention strategies aim to ensure a swift and effective response **every time**. We advocate for a fundamental shift in approach, from a risk-oriented model to a family-centered one. This approach replaces cases that currently receive ‘no response’ with ones who gain acknowledgement and support through a community response.

Removing the stigma and fear for parents is crucial to fostering an environment where families feel supported and empowered. Introducing the concept of a parent coach as part of the intervention process aims to provide guidance, support, and resources to families navigating challenging situations, thereby promoting a more nurturing and constructive environment for both parents and children.

ABOUT THE HIVE

In the absence of love and belonging, there is always suffering. At The Hive, we believe that everyone deserves a second chance and a sense of belonging.

Founded in 2015 and having served over 3,000 Maryland children and parents, we are dedicated to providing a supportive environment for individuals impacted by adverse experiences. Our team of professionals is committed to helping families stay intact by providing them with tools and connection. We strive to create communities where family interventions, like foster care and incarceration, are rare and brief and not the norm.



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**When we
connect,
*we thrive.***

