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NASW Statement On Foster Care and Adoptions

Social workers advocate for creating homes for all children in foster care

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) supports a child welfare policy designed to provide the best care for all children in need of foster care and adoption services. Presently, there are more than 500,000 children in foster care and a disproportionate number of these children are African-American. Every child has the right to a permanent, continuous, and nurturing relationship with adults who convey to the child an enduring sense of love and care. Children should be able to perceive themselves as valued family members. The paramount concern of social workers is the health and safety of the child and determining the child's best interest. NASW supports laws and policies that facilitate the fostering and adoption of children through kinship care when feasible, with adequate financial support so that children may remain within their family of origin.

When the extended family is unable to care for a child, social workers take a proactive role in providing appropriate and adequate information regarding available resources, rights and responsibilities to all parties involved in foster care and adoption proceedings. Active and continuous recruitment of adoptive parents from diverse racial and ethnic groups should be aggressively pursued. Placement decisions should reflect a child's need for continuity, safeguarding the child's right to consistent care and to service arrangements. NASW recognizes the need for respect of the integrity of each child's ethnicity and cultural heritage. NASW recommends the provision of training for foster and adoptive families in the area of cultural sensitivity, heritage and identity to provide support for issues involving cultural competency and understanding the dynamics of race and ethnicity in a child's life. NASW seeks to promote cultural and linguistic competence so that there may be effective cross-cultural communication. Racial and ethnic identities should be valued and respected; they should never be a barrier in adoption. Receiving training related to transracial adoption is important assistance to prospective parents.

Special attention should be given to children with special needs, including children of racial and ethnic groups, children who are older, children with disabilities, children who have been subjected to sexual abuse and other trauma, children who are HIV positive or medically fragile, and members of sibling groups, to ensure protection of their right to a caring environment. This care extends to the recruitment of appropriate families and provision of professional services throughout the adoption process and beyond legalization. Barriers that prevent children from being placed in permanent homes must be removed and legislation must address adequate financial support for adoptive and fostering families.

Social workers have the unique training and education to guide children and families through the challenges that foster care and adoption present and to work with families to provide a caring, nurturing environment where a child can thrive.

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