

Better Futures

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casa de los niños



Foster Care at a Glance

As of July, 2019 there were 14,271 youth under the care of the Department of Child Safety, including more than 850 young adults (18–21 years) in extended foster care. Nearly 11,000 children throughout Arizona are placed in a family setting, either with kinship caregivers (5,371) or a licensed foster family (5,628). Pima County alone had more than 2,337 children in out-of-home care that were either placed with a family in a home or, for teens and young adults, accommodated through a group home. Though these numbers may be alarming, they reflect outcomes of the strides

in Arizona's child welfare system to integrate preventative and intervention services that support whole families.

We have much work to do, but we are moving in the right direction.

Arizona reached its highest number of children in out-of-home care in 2016, with more than 18,287 children placed in shelters, group homes or with foster or kinship families. The number of children entering Arizona's foster care system grew ninety-two percent from 2005 to 2015, *(take a moment to let that sink in!)* prompting the state to restructure its Department of Child Safety and implement new measures that promote family preservation, reunification and—when circumstances cannot allow the child to stay with their biological family—finding an appropriate placement in a family setting that every child deserves.

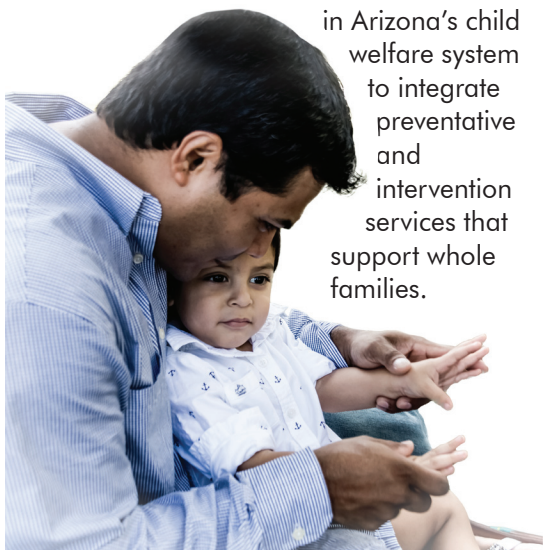
Older youth who are adopted from foster care are more likely to finish high school, go to college, and be more emotionally secure than their peers who remain in, or age out of, foster care without a permanent family.

Today, the state has just under 9,000 licensed foster care placements for children, many of which cannot accommodate for siblings, children with special needs, and older kids.

The greatest challenge for foster care in Arizona is sustaining a network of available foster families locally. While the Department of Child Safety and its partnering foster care licensing organizations—including Casa de los Niños—continuously work to recruit, train and certify new foster placements, we still lose foster homes. The challenge is real, but the good news is that most families close their license after adopting their foster children.

“The greatest challenge is sustaining available foster families.”

Now more than ever, the state needs foster families to help support a generation of children in need of the safety, love and normalcy found only with a family. For more information on becoming a foster parent with Casa de los Niños, visit casadelosninos.org/foster-care.



Our Newest Program at Casa de los Niños: Well-Child and Family Care

The Well-Child and Family Care program is the latest addition to the Casa de los Niños Family Support and Education team of services. Funded by First Things First, the Well-Child and Family Care team will be embedded at El Rio's El Pueblo Clinic, working with the pediatricians and their staff serving over 950 children aged birth to five. Helping to bridge the gap between medical and community services, the Well-Child and Family Care team will join the doctors and their patients during and after well-child visits to help provide the developmental and sensory screenings that only 22% of Arizona's young children receive when they visit their doctors. The team will also assist families in arranging follow-up appointments and referrals, as well as connecting them with other community services they may need. In short, the Well-Child and Family Care program is performing the screenings and follow-ups that so many pediatricians wish they had the time to do for children and families!



John Elliott, Program Supervisor
and the Well-Child Team



Healing Garden Dedication Ceremony

In May, we gathered together with friends and family of Carol Fletcher to honor her memory and dedicate the healing garden at Casa de los Niños in her honor. It was a simple and beautiful ceremony that truly captured the essence of Carol's love for kids, family and the natural beauty of Tucson. We know Carol is with us in spirit because the garden has thrived—no matter the heat....it is beautiful!

Thank you to Gary Fletcher and Lyn Fletcher for making this thoughtful gift in memory of Carol.

Focus on Families: A Community Conversation

Casa de los Niños is pleased to present

DR. HAROLD KOPLEWICZ OF THE CHILD MIND INSTITUTE

Free of charge

Thursday, October 24 | 5:30-7:00pm

RSVP to amendoza@casadelosninos.org | 520-624-5600

TRAUMA, STRESS, AND ATTACHMENT DISORDERS: RE-WRITING THE STORY

Dr. Koplewicz is one of the nation's leading child and adolescent psychiatrists and founding president of the Child Mind Institute. He established the NYU Child Study Center in 1997 and was the director until 2009. Dr. Koplewicz was director of the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research from 2006–2011. An award-winning master clinician and advocate for children and teens with psychiatric disorders, Dr. Koplewicz was named one of WebMD's 2014 Health Heroes.

He has been interviewed on *TODAY*, *Good Morning America*, NPR and in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and his writing has appeared in *The Hill*, *Time* and *USA Today*.

He is the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology* and author of several books including the textbook *Depression in Children and Adolescents*; *It's Nobody's Fault: New Hope and Help for Difficult Children and their Parents*, which received the Parent's Choice Award and was a finalist for the Books for a Better Life Award; *Childhood Revealed: Art Expressing Pain, Discovery & Hope*; and his most recent work on adolescent depression, *More Than Moody: Recognizing and Treating Adolescent Depression*.



"Having a speaker like Dr. Harold Koplewicz come to Casa de los Niños to speak in our Community Conversations lecture series is such a win for kids and families in Tucson. The "new frontier" for childhood mental health is brain-based science and what it can help us to understand about attachments and those critical first five years of life.

Our team of therapists work closely with kids and their caregivers to repair some of the deficits in attachment caused by early neglect. What we do know is that it is never too late to rebuild healthy attachments with a safe, emotionally available caregiver. We know one of the best tools we have to help kids who have experienced neglect is the relationship with a primary caregiver. We are always learning and looking for new intervention tools and techniques to use in therapy sessions. This is a great opportunity for the Casa de los Niños team as well as our community-based partners. I hope to see you there!"

Cathleen Phelan, LCSW, IMH-E
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICAL SUPERVISOR

Kelly Early Education Center is Open

The Kelly Early Education Center at Casa de los Niños opened its doors in May 2019 and has already begun enrolling students ages 6 weeks to 5 years old! The Center has the capacity to serve 100 infants and children to get them off to a strong start for kindergarten. Each classroom has been specially designed to suit the cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of every age group. The teachers at the Center have extensive experience teaching children and are committed to working with all children regardless of their situation or challenges. The Center provides a warm, nurturing environment that incorporates academic and social skills learning within play-based activities to make sure that the kids are learning and having fun at the same time. Every part of the Center was designed to encourage kids to explore, play, socialize, and develop skills that will provide the foundation for lifelong learning and academic success throughout their school years.

Every child deserves access to affordable, high-quality care and early education, and all parents need to feel that their children are well-cared for and supported in every way. Casa de los Niños is proud to be able to provide this service to the community. This kind of support can dramatically change lives for the better and help many families to break the cycle of poverty.



Kids enjoying books given by United Way in conjunction with First Books

THE KELLY EARLY EDUCATION CENTER IS STILL ENROLLING NEW STUDENTS!

The center accepts DES subsidies and works with families to ensure that their child is getting the best care available. Interested parents and caregivers are encouraged to schedule a tour of the center, or please feel free to call 520-344-6678 with any questions regarding the center.

Mica LaBellarte,
Kelly Center Director

Tye Johnson,
Kelly Center Assistant Director



Transporting Kids Safely and with Care

Last year, over 3,500 kids and young adults received therapeutic services with the Casa de los Niños Behavioral Health Services Program. Many of these children would not be able to benefit from this critical mental health service if it were not for Casa de los Niños Transportation Services.

The Transportation Department is responsible for the safe and timely transport of clients to their appointments. It was created with three things in mind; timeliness of service, the amount of time kids and young adults spend traveling in the vehicle, and the interactions between our clients and the people transporting them. The Transportation Department averages 1,800 trips (and 13,000 miles) monthly. This is all accomplished through the efforts of 12 transporters, two dispatchers, and a transportation manager.

So many of the families we serve are experiencing hardships and financial strain. The transportation services of Casa de los Niños removes that barrier to services and ensure our clients receive the help they need.

Our transporters go above and beyond to make sure the children we serve do not spend more time than necessary traveling to and from their appointments and that they arrive on time. After a long day at school, and the challenging work of therapy, the young clients are hungry, tired and ready to get home. We minimize their travel time, and treat each child with the same respect and kindness that we would have for our own children. The stability of the relationships built between our clients and transporters eases the anxiety that some children experience.



Carlos Cervantes,
Transportation
Services Manager

Carlos Cervantes, Transportation Manager



Our transporters are tremendously proud of what they do and are extremely dedicated to the mission of Casa de los Niños.

Some of our great transporters pictured to the left: Miranda Martinez, Ronald Villarreal, Bianca Rodriguez, Robert Manuel, Pia Van der Schoor

RIGHT: Our great transportation dispatch team—Kimberly Helms and Braden Preece—are dedicated, responsive, and caring. They step up to challenges every day to ensure no child is left waiting for a ride or late for their appointments.

With thanks to the
ARMSTRONG MCDONALD FOUNDATION
for their generous gift in 2017 to purchase the first van
to kick off this important service!



Thank You to these Amazing People!



Sam Levitz/Ashley HomeStore Hope to Dream Campaign—With the help of the employees at Sam Levitz, they donated a total of 74 beds to children and families in need, including a bunk bed for twins and a queen-size mattress for an expecting mother who had been sleeping on her bedroom floor. We truly appreciate this ongoing partnership! They respond quickly and have beds delivered within a week of the requests!



Packaging Distributors of America The Packaging Distributors of America hosted their 13th annual meeting at the Ritz Carlton Dove Mountain. Over 40 of their members and suppliers participated in their annual charity golf tournament where they raised \$12,000 to support Casa de los Niños!



St. Alban's Episcopal Church The wonderful community of St. Alban's Church came through this summer with a large number of backpacks to help kids start the new school year feeling prepared and confident! We deeply appreciate their wonderful commitment to our community!



Sims Recycling Solution The employees of Sims Recycling Solutions did an amazing fundraiser by selling healthy smoothies and pizza to their staff at lunch time! They raised \$800 total and purchased hygiene, toys, and baby items for families in need! What a fun way to bring your employees together while giving back to the community!



Southwest Gas FUEL for LIFE playground at the Kelly Early Education Center



Staff Spotlight

Irma Marquez PROGRAM SUPERVISOR, PARENTS AS TEACHERS

I've been working with Casa de los Niños since April 2008, and working with our population touches my heart. I strive to encourage families to enjoy every opportunity with their children by increasing their interactions and making them into fun, playful learning experiences. I see myself in the children we serve and would like every parent to take a moment to read, sing, talk, play, guide, and just be there for them. I would also like for parents to motivate their children to reach their full potential as mine did for me.



Irma and her family:
Husband Mario Marquez, and
sons Angel Marquez and Mario Marquez

I was raised by immigrant parents who had 6 children: 3 boys and 3 girls. I am the second oldest and the oldest daughter. My parents did everything they could so we wouldn't realize we lived in poverty. As for food, we never went without. Our childhood was great and our mother encouraged us to play outside. We played games like baseball, tag, hide and seek, and even with a string and a button. Believe it or not, playing with a string a button was very relaxing.

We would go to work with our dad irrigating different crop fields. We played in the ditches and followed him around as he worked. With our mother we all had chores to do such as cleaning the house, yard work and taking care of each other. My older brother is only 18 months older than me, but he would comb my and my sister's hair before we went to school. We would have the most interesting ponytails, but at least our hair was out of our face, and we were ready to learn!

Our parents instilled the importance of literacy in different ways. I remember sitting around the table listening to the adventures of Kaliman on the radio. Our parents took us to a bookstore in Mexico every week for my dad to buy his novels and, between the

6 of us, we would agree on one comic book to share. My dad always read his novels to us in a loud voice. To this day, he continues to read his novels out loud even if he is the only one in the house.

My mother completed up to 6th grade, and my father completed up to 2nd grade to work with his father, and they value education so much. My mother has always attended English classes. My parents told us to aim high and attend the University of Arizona, and to wait to get married until we earned our degrees. And we did that—we all obtained a degree before marriage. To understand why this is so important, you need to understand in our small town most girls ended up pregnant, marrying young or dropping out of school while boys ended up working in the fields or fast food restaurants. To drive home the importance of education to us, my parents decided to take us to work in the fields for three summers cleaning cotton. It was hard work in HOT weather. Working in the fields was not something we saw each other doing for the rest of our lives. We earned our college degrees!

My husband and I raised our children to value education and hard work. My oldest graduated from the University of Arizona and works at the University as a Materials Handler. My youngest will be graduating in December and is a student worker at the University working for the College of Agriculture. I am very proud of who they have become.

Casa de los Niños is an amazing place to work—it is my second home! I am proud to be the program supervisor for Parents as Teachers and am grateful for the opportunity to grow professionally and personally.



Irma's parents:
Cirilo & Amalia Morales

THE MISSION of Casa de los Niños
is to promote
CHILD WELL-BEING and
FAMILY STABILITY in our community.

the
voice
for change
advocacy
children



casa de los niños

CHANGING LIVES FOR GENERATIONS

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It's Hot but the Holidays are Around the Corner!

Will you help make the holidays a little brighter for the children and families we serve by holding a *Hope for the Holiday Toy or Clothing Drive*? You can coordinate a donation drive with your family, friends, at work, or you can donate individual NEW toys and clothing on your own! For more information on holiday donations, please contact Mikaela Ross at mross@casadelosninos.org.

These are just a few of the fine people who made a lot of kids very happy with their donation drives last season!



Madison McCoy, a student from the University of Arizona, College of Education gathered new toys and board games with her Student Council Board to help support families during the holidays.



Starrview at Starr Pass Apartments
The staff and their neighborhood community donated toys for children and families in need!



Classic Chevy Club of Tucson
brought smiles to many young faces with their Annual Holiday Toy Donation Drive.