

# FOSTER AMERICA



2021 Annual Report

# Our Mission

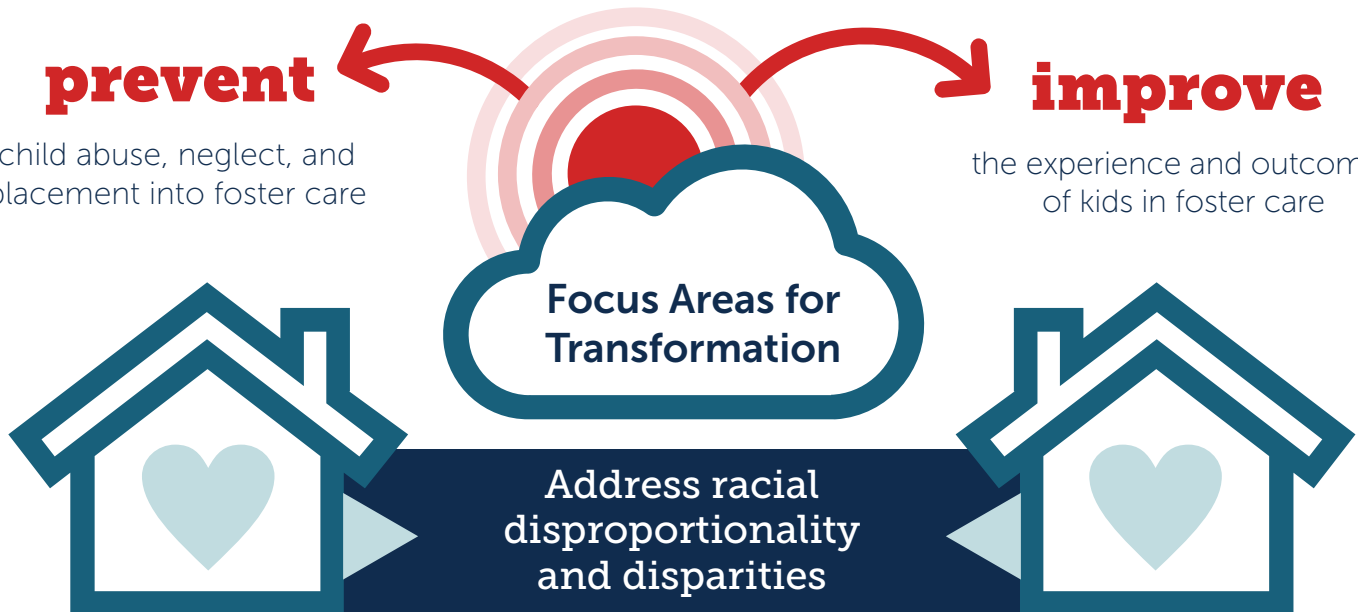
Foster America is a non-profit organization that aims to improve the lives of America's most vulnerable children: those in foster care or at risk of entering the system. We are developing a pipeline of leaders and innovators and building a movement to transform the child welfare system.

**prevent**

child abuse, neglect, and placement into foster care

**improve**

the experience and outcomes of kids in foster care



Foster America aims to transform child welfare by **preventing** family separation and **improving** foster care.

**5**

years

**17**

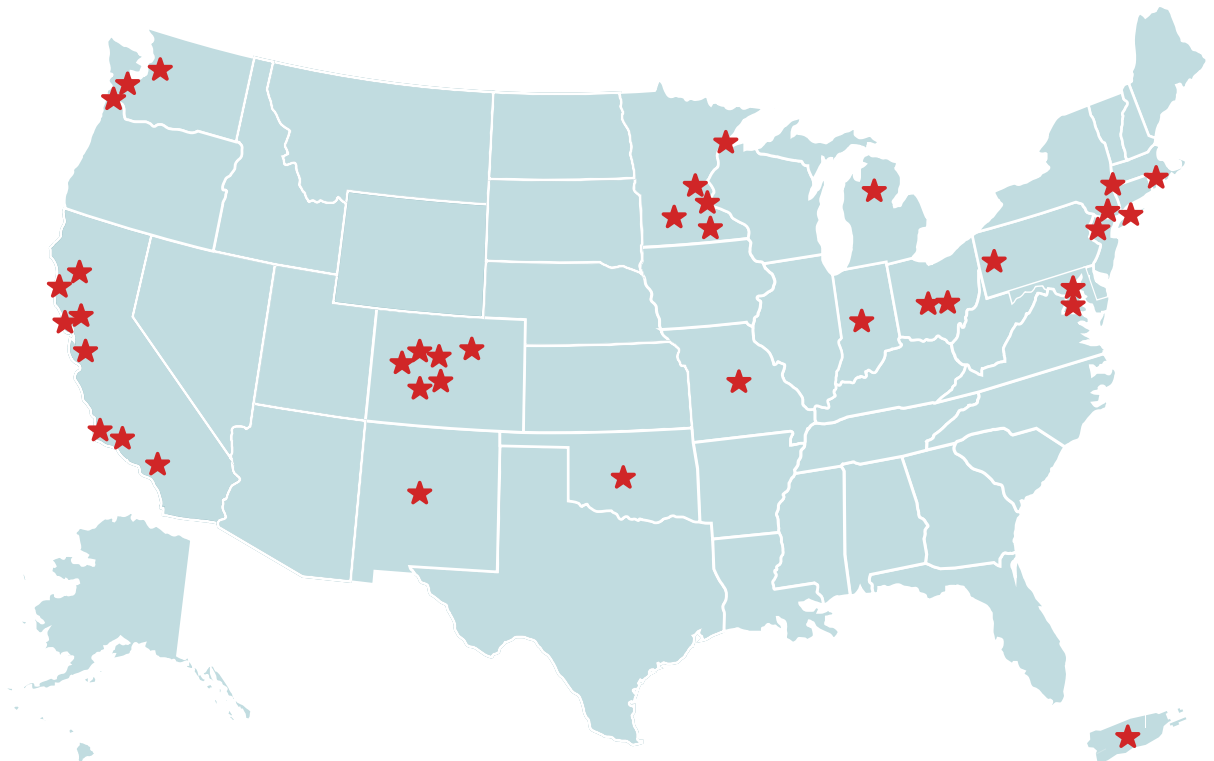
states/territories

**38**

agencies

**63**

fellows



As fellows make an impact, more agencies have joined us and our movement has grown. Foster America operates as a learning organization and innovation hub – testing, innovating and demonstrating the possibility of child and family well-being systems.

# Letters from Leadership



Dear Friends,

On behalf of our board of directors, I am pleased to share this annual report, featuring inspiring snapshots of Foster America's work. As we celebrated our fifth year in operation, we are proud of all that our network has accomplished, and the strength of the organization we've built.

2021 included many highlights. We began the year by appointing our co-founder Marie Zemler Wu as Foster America's new executive director. Throughout the year, Marie has challenged our thinking and the way we work so that Foster America can be ever-more effective in transforming the child welfare system. We were excited to launch two new teams of fellows: one is focused on designing equity-centered supports for relative caregivers, the other impacting educational and economic outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood. Entrepreneurship was a unifying theme among our 2021 fellowship graduates, and in response, we built our first-ever incubator program to support alumni's entrepreneurial social ventures. Additionally, we extended the placement of several senior fellows, who centered community-driven solutions to redesign child welfare.

We invite you to read more about our work and the continued professional successes of our alumni network in the pages that follow. I preface these stories with my sincere gratitude to the Foster America team - both fellows and staff - for the determination they bring to reimagining a more humane system of supports for families in our country. I also want to thank you, our circle of friends and supporters, for your ongoing commitment to Foster America and the transformation we seek.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Notkin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Susan Notkin**  
Board Chair



Dear Friends,

In writing this letter after my first year as Foster America's Executive Director, I echo the gratitude expressed by Susan and our board. It is among my greatest honors and privileges of my life to continue to have a front row seat to all that our staff team and fellows accomplished in 2021.

As children and families weathered another year of pandemic challenges, as lived experts shared the gap between their visions for well-being and the realities of child welfare practice, and as our alumni described the persistent challenges of systemic change, we were also called to spend 2021 in reflection. Our team, fellows, and alumni have joined with lived experts and partners in the field to together refine our strategic approach to advancing systems transformation and opening pathways to child and family well-being.

As we head into 2022, we look forward to sharing what we're learning and how we continue to evolve. The fellows featured in these pages represent a path for the future. They are building meaningful bridges from our current child welfare system to more equitable child and family well-being approaches—approaches that are racially just, community-driven, and center the self-determination of all children and families.

In a sector where innovation is sorely needed yet too rarely nurtured, I hope you are as inspired as I am by the changemakers we support and their dedication to transforming the child welfare system. Thank you for all that you have done to make our work possible.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Zemler Wu". The signature is cursive and elegant.

**Marie Zemler Wu**  
Executive Director and Co-Founder

# Our Fellows' Impact in Action



## Spotlight on Cohort 4

Foster America's 4th cohort graduated in April 2021. Their tenure included the onset of the pandemic and the pivot to virtual collaboration. Despite these challenging circumstances, the cohort was undeterred. For the first time, placements included jurisdictions in Indiana, New Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Baltimore, as well as the deepening of an existing partnership across multiple levels of government in Minnesota.

Guided by a community-centric approach, fellows built prevention-based projects from the ground up and worked to reimagine the child welfare system to better serve children and families. An end of fellowship survey of Cohort 4 fellows and site partners showed that their work made a meaningful impact on their jurisdictions and the families they serve, with 80% of fellows remaining in the child welfare space 8 months following graduation.

**Asad Bandeali, St. Louis County Dept. of Public Health & Human Services**

Facilitated community decision making in how the county would disburse \$500,000 in prevention funds, ultimately funding 9 programs

**Takkeem Morgan, Indiana Dept. of Children's Services**

Built a coalition of public and private sector organizations to redesign foster parent recruitment in Indiana

**Mathangi Swaminathan, Olmsted County Health, Housing & Human Services**

Evaluated a community program that reduces "educational neglect" by offering families support and diverting children from the child welfare system

## Incubator

Cohort 4 alumni remain committed to advancing child and family well-being, with some fellows electing to stay on with their agencies to implement the programs they worked on and several other fellows choosing to participate in our first incubator program.

In total, four alumni chose to participate in our incubator. Specifically designed to support child welfare-related ventures at varying stages of their start-up journeys, the program connected these entrepreneurial alumni to strategy, storytelling, branding, legal, and financial support and resources.

Each of the participants made significant strides in their ventures during the three-month incubator period, with several landing significant client contracts. Foster America continues to build upon the learnings of this pilot incubator session and drive further innovation in this space.

# Fellows in the Field

Our Cohort 5 fellows completed their 18-month placements in April 2022. These fellows helped to drive impact and advance organizational goals in partnership with host agencies in Washington, California, Oklahoma, and Ohio. Their work included special focus on financial management, systems-level reform, human-centered data analysis, and design thinking and strategy. We are grateful to be able to include these talented changemakers in the ranks of our Foster America alumni.



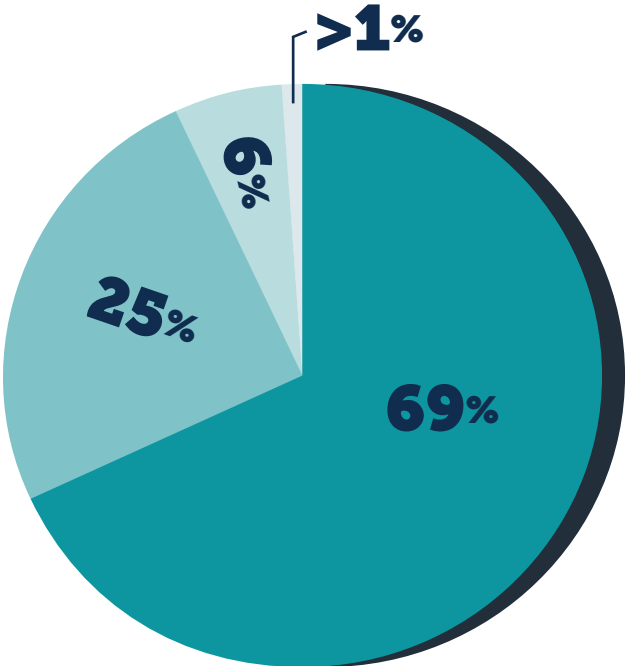
Cohort 6 will graduate in October 2022. Iterating on past success, Cohort 6 marks Foster America's first group to be officially structured as part of our new teams model. In this approach, multiple fellows are placed together across partner agencies with shared focus areas for improvement. Together, they are communicating real-time learnings to scale and replicate positive impact, promote equitable outcomes for young people who are or have been in foster care, and develop infrastructure to improve public-sector collaboration.

The Kinship Care Team is working across Oklahoma, Washington state, and San Diego County to improve the recruitment, licensing, and support of kinship caregivers.

Our Better Futures Initiative Team is working in partnership with Tipping Point, a Bay-area nonprofit support organization focused on improving education and employment outcomes for youth in care. Our fellow in Colorado is working to implement the national Thriving Families, Safer Children initiative, which is an effort to fundamentally rethink child welfare by focusing on prevention and creating the conditions for strong, supported families.

We look forward to continuing to support these changemakers as we work together to imagine better outcomes for individuals and families touched by our nation's foster care system.

# Financials



## Total Revenue\*

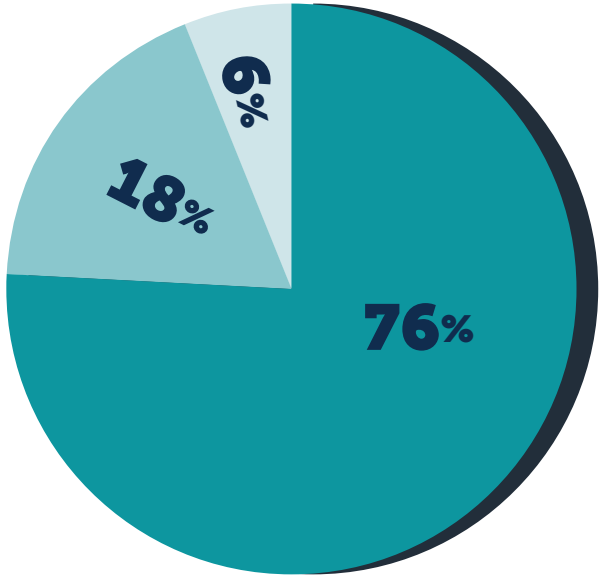
\$4,168,014

Foundations	\$ 2,860,088
Government Contracts	\$ 1,059,685
Individuals	\$ 247,190
Interest income	\$1,051

## Total Expenditures\*\*

\$4,221,066

Program	\$ 3,225,927
General & Administrative	\$ 756,747
Fundraising	\$ 238,392



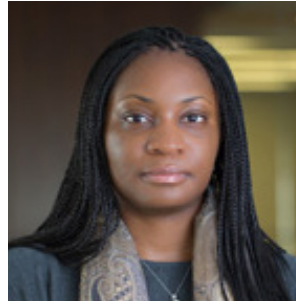
# Board of Directors

We are grateful for our board members' time and commitment to Foster America's mission.



**Susan Notkin**  
*Board Chair*

*Senior Vice President  
Center for the Study of  
Social Policy*



**Lola  
Adedokun**

*Executive Director  
Aspen Global  
Innovators Group*



**Jolie  
Bales**

*Vice President  
TechSoup*



**Sandra  
Gasca-Gonzalez**

*Vice President  
Annie E. Casey  
Foundation*



**Allegra  
Lawrence-Hardy**

*Partner  
Lawrence & Bundy LLC*



**David  
Sanders**

*Executive Vice President  
Casey Family Programs*



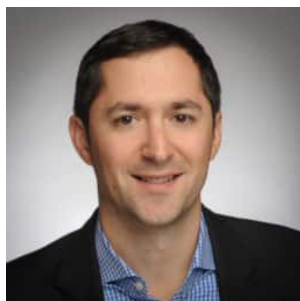
**Jermeen  
Sherman**

*Founder  
Community Up*



**Daniel  
Stephens**

*Partner  
McKinsey & Co.*



**Pete  
Treadway**

*Founder and CIO  
Metavasi*

# Thank You!

This work would not be possible without you—our incredible network of partners, friends, supporters, colleagues and advocates. We are deeply grateful for all of the ways that you guide and support us.

## Jurisdictional Partners

From 2016 to 2022, Foster America placed fellows in agencies in 17 states and territories. These agencies at the state and county level are invaluable partners to our work.

### California

Alameda County Social Services Agency  
Contra Costa County Office of Education  
Freedom Forward  
Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services  
Los Angeles Department of Mental Health  
Santa Clara County Office of Education  
Santa Clara County Social Services Agency  
San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency  
San Mateo County Human Services Agency

### Colorado

Colorado Human Services Directors Association  
Department of Human Services  
Denver County Department of Human Services  
Douglas County Department of Human Services  
Illuminate Colorado  
Larimer County Department of Human Services

### Connecticut

Office of Early Childhood

### Indiana

Department of Child Services

### Maryland

Baltimore City Department of Social Services

### Michigan

Department of Health and Human Services

### Minnesota

Olmstead County Health, Housing, and Human Services  
Department of Human Services  
Scott County, MN Department of Health and Human Services  
St. Louis County Health and Human Services  
Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators

### Missouri

Children's Division

### New Mexico

Santa Fe Children, Youth, and Families Department

### New York

Administration for Children's Services  
The Door, New York City

### Ohio

Department of Job and Family Services  
Hamilton County Job and Family Services

### Oklahoma

Department of Human Services

### Pennsylvania

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

### Puerto Rico

Departamento de la Familia

### Rhode Island

Department of Children Youth and Families

### Washington

Department of Children, Youth and Families  
Office of Homeless Youth  
Washington Association of Children and Families

### Washington DC

Child and Family Services Agency

### Washington

Department of Children, Youth and Families  
Office of Homeless Youth  
Washington Association of Children and Families

### Washington DC

Child and Family Services Agency  
Youth Villages