

"Foster care and adoption are in a state of crisis," said Brian Maness, President and CEO of Children's Home Society of North Carolina, the state's largest private provider of foster care and adoption services. "Foster care has been growing at an alarming rate with a shortage of permanent, safe, and loving homes for adoptable children."

In North Carolina, the number of children in foster care increased every month in 2016 compared to the corresponding month in 2015, with over 2,400 children eligible for adoption.

"About five years ago, we had just over 8,000 children in foster care in our state," said Maness. "Today, there are about 10,500 children in foster care, an increase of more than 25% in the last five years. That is a trend we would very much like to reverse. For a child in foster care, it's a state of limbo, where they don't know what their future holds. They don't know whether they're going to remain with that foster family, move to another foster home, return to their biological family or whatever situation they came from, or whether they are going to find an adoptive family. The biggest challenges we have with adoption are public awareness and increased resources to find the right family for the child. Every child that we place for adoption has a set of unique needs."

Living in foster care for more than ten years, 16-year-old Mae and her 17-year-old sister Ann are examples of some of the obstacles facing adoptive children. Many are 6 to 18 years of age with siblings who frequently want and need to be together in a single adoptive home.

"If you ever decide to adopt me ... my sister is really important to me," said Mae, in a video for prospective adoptive parents. "When things get tough for you, you've got to be strong and hold on tight to your dreams and never let go."

"I'd also like for my sister to be with me," said Ann. "My favorite song is Climb, by Miley Cyrus. It tells you to keep on going, to keep on climbing, to keep faith in yourself, to keep your spirit, and don't ever give up."

"Time is an eternity to a child. We don't want any child to spend one day longer than they absolutely need to in foster care," said Maness. "Our goal is to help each child achieve permanency with a safe and loving family that will be theirs forever. We want to shorten that period of time as much as possible. It's important to prioritize the long-term implications of a child not knowing who their family is going to be. It impacts how they see the world and how they see themselves. It impacts their sense of identity and belonging in ways that have profound implications long-term for them."

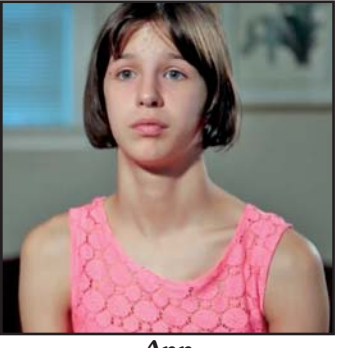
In October of 2014, Children's Home Society of North Carolina adopted the Promise of Family campaign to help address growing foster care and adoption needs in the state. In May of 2016, with added research and continuation of adverse trends, CHSNC's board of directors approved a five-year strategic plan and campaign to boost the number of completed adoptions and increase the size of its enhanced foster care to permanency program.

According to Maness, the CHSNC board will meet and review the plan and funding in late-January.

Founded in 1902, Children's Home Society serves over 20,000 children and families in all 100 counties in North Carolina with adoption, foster care, family preservation, and teen pregnancy prevention services. More than 15,000 children have been adopted through Children's Home Society North Carolina.



Mae



Ann

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