

# Help Place Foster Children with Their Relatives

**Research clearly shows that children experience better outcomes when placed in relative foster care as opposed to being placed in non-relative foster care.**

Evaluation of Minnesota's foster care policy reveals that our punitive standards are having unintended consequences on relatives' ability to obtain licenses. To avoid further traumatizing children in the very system that strives to protect them, a clearer path to out of home placement with relatives is considered a priority.

## **Why should Minnesotans care?**

Under Minnesota's current requirements, there are over one hundred crimes, many unrelated to child safety, that temporarily or *permanently* disqualify potential foster care parents from receiving licenses. While other states have modified their standards to align with those set forth by the feds, Minnesota has yet to do so. Minnesota's foster care licensing standards are also inconsistent with its adoption standards. Not only is this an alarming inconsistency, but it continues to harm children and communities by unnecessarily delaying a child from being placed in their permanent adoptive home.

## **What does this mean for Minnesota's most vulnerable children and families?**

Research shows that a child is more likely to thrive when placed with a relative with whom they have an emotionally and culturally significant relationship. Relative foster care also results in more stable placements, decreased

likelihood of being separated from siblings, and increased maintenance of community connections.

Compared to their white counterparts, Native American children are 17x more likely to experience out of home placement, those of two or more races are 5x more likely, and African American children are 3x more likely. The punitive nature of Minnesota's licensing standards further disproportionately impacts Native Americans, African Americans, and other individuals of color who are arrested, tried, convicted, and incarcerated at much higher rates.

## **What does this mean for Minnesota?**

Current law allows relatives who have been convicted of a crime unrelated to child safety to seek variance.

We know that relatives with low level crimes are still being licensed as foster care providers — unfortunately, it's taking much longer and requiring significantly more effort. Data from the Minnesota Department of Human Services makes this clear. In cases where a misdemeanor was used as a disqualifier, 95% of appeals were granted. Obtaining a license is an urgent need for relatives and the children in need of their care. Thus, the process should be clear, streamlined, and easy to navigate.

**Smarter Systems.  
Stronger Families.**

