

PRIORITY 2

SHAPE THE SYSTEM

DARE TO
HOPE



A child welfare system that powers dreams & empowers futures

We go beyond meeting immediate needs. We advance better practices, address inequities, and include the insights of those with lived experience. Our impact multiplies because we work to move the whole child welfare system forward.

GOAL: \$2.3 MILLION

How do we move the needle?

Children and teenagers experiencing foster care deserve our collective attention. With minimal coordinated advocacy, **their experiences go largely misunderstood, or worse, unknown.** Life outcomes for this population lag behind their peers in virtually every category, making them one of our country's most systemically-marginalized group of young people.

This is unacceptable in a system that is supposed to protect them and a country where every child is supposed to have **a fair shot** at success. We need to raise awareness about this stain on our nation's conscience, coordinate efforts to identify and replicate what works, and ultimately shift systems to be more accountable to an entire generation of youth and families.

Moving the needle is a process...



Donors make donations of all sizes to HopeWell.



As we meet the needs of kids and families each day, we develop new and better approaches to meeting the child welfare field's biggest challenges.



PROVIDE PROOF POINTS

We develop practical, real-life solutions and offer effective models for state and national investment.



GROW SOCIAL AWARENESS

We address common misconceptions, enhance public understanding, and help people get involved.



IMPROVE STATE POLICIES

We influence decision-makers by sharing data and insights, and we advocate for change.



LIGHT THE WAY FOR OTHERS

We share our learning with other organizations and communities across the state and nation.



The result is:

- ✓ Our impact is multiplied — the number of children and families we help grows exponentially.
- ✓ Instead of working to help some children and families involved in the foster care system *beat the odds*, we *change the odds* by changing the game.

That's why we're mobilizing around these goals together...

GOAL 2.1

Support state leaders to enact better child welfare policies.

GOAL 2.2

Team up with cross-sector leaders to solve problems.

What We'll Do

The supports we provide to policymakers and state officials drive change:



Sharing data and analysis promotes more informed and thoughtful decision-making.



Building relationships grows the pool of leaders who will champion policy solutions for improving the child welfare system.



Reviewing and analyzing policies provides state leaders with concrete guidance.



Providing learning opportunities educates decision-makers about the real-world challenges faced by those in the foster care system.

We build bridges across sectors.

Solving the complex challenges surrounding foster care will require many different forms of collaboration — and HopeWell will lead the way.

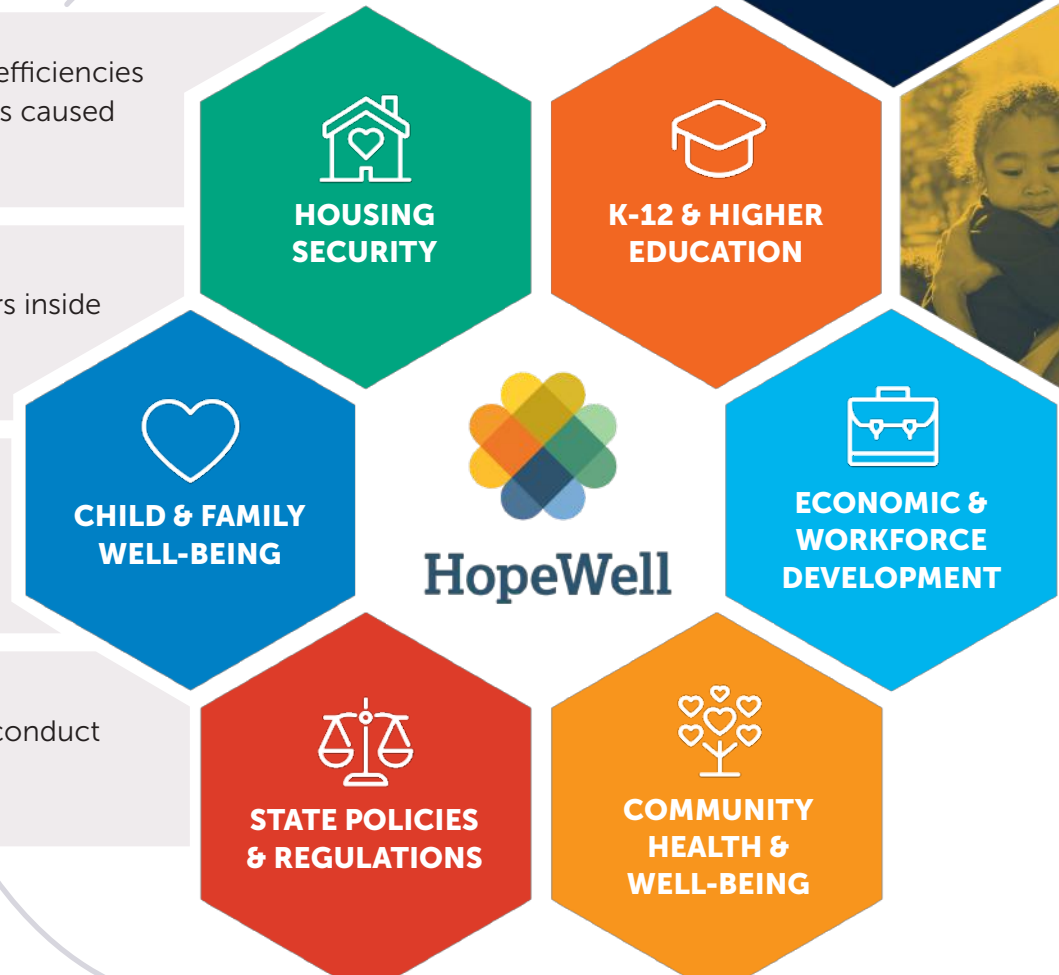
HOW WE'LL DO IT:

Reduce systemwide inefficiencies by addressing problems caused by siloed operations.

Build coalitions and mobilize leaders inside and outside of foster care.

Connect people to facilitate the exchange of ideas, learn from one another, and reach alignment across sectors.

Form research partnerships to conduct joint explorations and studies.



THE RESULT
Better policies & practices across the child welfare field



GOAL 2.3

Communicate so people know and care about foster care issues — and are inspired to become foster parents.

What We'll Do

Growing our communications efforts will allow us to strengthen and promote our essential services in new and better ways, garner public support for urgently-needed reforms across the state, and ensure every child has a safe, loving home.

BY THE NUMBERS

What do people in Massachusetts know and think about foster care?

Across our state and country, there is a widespread lack of familiarity with foster care, including what it is and how it works.⁷ This affects everything from growing the public momentum needed to improve policies, to tackling the urgent shortage of foster parents.

Most people aren't that familiar with the foster care system.

ONLY 14%

describe themselves as "very familiar" with the foster care system.

LESS THAN HALF

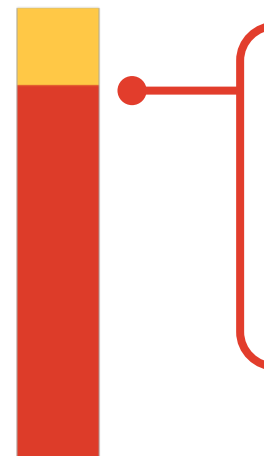
could identify the correct definition of foster care.



However, most people want to improve foster care.

83% say improving programs and systems for young people in foster care is an "extremely" or "very high priority"

This consensus holds true across political party, religion, education and income level, gender, age, and region of Massachusetts.



People acknowledge systemic challenges, including inequities and a lack of resources.



Too often, decisions on whether the child welfare system should intervene in families are influenced by **racial biases**.



Too often, decisions on whether the child welfare system should intervene in families are influenced by **poverty biases**.



The child welfare system only gets **attention** when something bad happens.

What do people see as obstacles the child welfare system faces?

Percent who said "a significant challenge" or "somewhat of a challenge" for the U.S. child welfare system:

- lack of services » **94%**
- too much red tape » **93%**
- limited funding » **92%**
- lack of resources & staffing » **92%**
- lack of community support » **88%**

Why does public outreach on this issue matter?

TOP 5 PLACES

people report learning what they know about the child welfare system:

1. News & media outlets
2. Friends & family
3. Doing online research
4. Personal experience
5. Social media

What people say contributes to them NOT FOSTERING:

41%

heard negative things about foster care from news, TV, or media.



41%

heard negative things from friends or family.



63%

don't know enough about how the system works.



A MORE THAN
60%

JUMP IN INTEREST

People's willingness to seriously consider fostering increased substantially once they were given more information.

During the survey, researchers provided some education about foster care and dispelled common misconceptions.

Many of the **barriers** people perceive toward their personal interest in becoming a foster parent are grounded in misconceptions or lack of information, such as thinking foster parents can't be LGBTQ+ (*they can!*) or thinking they need to be married or wealthy (*they don't*).

GOAL 2.4

Center the expertise of youth with lived experience in foster care in our change efforts.

What We'll Do

Our **Youth Partnership Committee (YPC)** will empower youth with direct experience in foster care to participate in decision-making as part of pathways to improving the system at large.

Youth will have opportunities to take part in initiatives of their choosing, where they'll contribute their ideas and insights. To lead this work ethically, we will provide youth with training and guidance to help them advocate in ways that are impactful for systemic change *and* supportive of their personal well-being.

Additionally, we will solicit insights from youth and families across the state — including foster parents — to identify systemwide gaps in services and support improvements.

Why?

Youth and families with lived experience in foster care have unique expertise, wisdom, and insights on the inner-workings of the system and how policies can impact real-life, day-to-day realities.

To improve outcomes, the system needs to meaningfully engage the people who know this context best — and we will lead by example.

This means doing more than just offering youth and families a seat at the table — it means ensuring their voices and expertise play a central role in the *decisions* being made at the table.

Shifting the balance of who is/isn't heard and who does/doesn't have power promotes greater understanding of the complex challenges at-hand and potential solutions to move the field forward.

How Philanthropy Helps

How will your donation have an immediate and direct impact?

Examples include:

- ✓ **Hosting or co-hosting educational events and forums** that boost learning and coordination among policymakers, child welfare advocates, and people with lived experience in foster care.
- ✓ **Consulting with external specialists** to expand upon the knowledge of our small, skilled team who care deeply about this work being done right.
- ✓ **Convening leaders and community members** — for example, a working group that meets regularly to tackle challenges at the intersection of foster care and education.
- ✓ **Solving the urgent widespread shortage of foster parents** by recruiting more loving foster homes across the state using a combination of 21st-century advertising strategies.
- ✓ **Compensating youth fairly** for their time and expertise as part of our Youth Partnership Committee.
- ✓ *...And much more!*

Budget Breakdown

Policy, Advocacy, & Communications Staff	\$1.05M
Foster Parent Recruitment & Awareness-Raising	\$900K
Educational & Advocacy Convenings	\$50K
Core Mission Support	\$300K
TOTAL	\$2.3M
PROJECTED STATE CONTRIBUTION	-\$0
OUR GOAL	\$2.3M





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