

*A Case Study of Harvest of Hope:*

# A FAITH-BASED CHILD WELFARE INTERMEDIARY



**BY BYRON R. JOHNSON AND WILLIAM WUBBENHORST**



# Purpose

ISR exists to initiate, support, and conduct research on religion, involving scholars and projects spanning the intellectual spectrum: history, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, epidemiology, theology, and religious studies. Our mandate extends to all religions, everywhere, and throughout history. It also embraces the study of religious effects on such things as prosocial behavior, family life, population health, economic development, and social conflict. While always striving for appropriate scientific objectivity, our scholars treat religion with the respect that sacred matters require and deserve.



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Launched in August 2004, The Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) exists to initiate, support, and conduct research on religion, involving scholars and projects spanning the intellectual spectrum: history, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, philosophy, epidemiology, theology, and religious studies. Our mandate extends to all religions, everywhere, and throughout history. It also embraces the study of religious effects on such things as prosocial behavior, family life, population health, economic development, and social conflict. While always striving for appropriate scientific objectivity, our scholars treat religion with the respect that sacred matters require and deserve.





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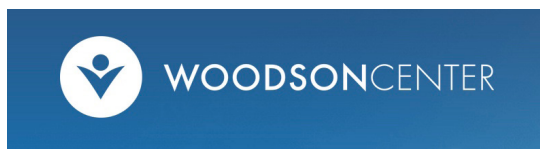




# A CASE STUDY OF HARVEST OF HOPE: A FAITH-BASED CHLD WELFARE INTERMEDIARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . . .	5
BACKGROUND - A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHILD WELFARE IN THE UNITED STATES .	9
THE CHILD WELFARE CRISIS IN NEW JERSEY . . . . .	11
INTRO OF HARVEST OF HOPE: AN INTERMEDIARY MODEL . . . . .	11
HARVEST OF HOPE PROGRAMS GROW . . . . .	12
BRIDGING RACIAL BARRIERS . . . . .	13
ADVOCATING FOR FOSTER FAMILIES . . . . .	15
HOH SERVICES: A TYPICAL WEEK . . . . .	15
THE HARVEST OF HOPE: DCF PARTNERSHIP ENDS . . . . .	17
RESOURCE WORKER CONTACT . . . . .	18
HOME VISITS . . . . .	18
AN ROI ANALYSIS OF HARVEST OF HOPE . . . . .	19
ESTIMATING THE ROI FOR HARVEST OF HOPE . . . . .	19
CONCLUSION . . . . .	22
EXHIBIT 1: SUMMARY OF ROI CALCULATIONS . . . . .	24

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larger research report on innovative models in foster care.***









## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The spike in opioid addictions over the past five years have contributed to a steady rise in the number of children in foster care in the U.S., with more than half of all the states experiencing a decrease in the number of available foster homes. In addition, new legislation enacted by Congress last year, known as 'Family First',<sup>1</sup> exerts pressure on states to reduce the use of group homes,<sup>2</sup> which only serves to further increase the need for foster homes across the country. Another factor that influences foster care capacity concerns the retention rate of foster families, estimated to be as low as 50%-70% annually. One estimate on the cost to recruit, train and license foster families is around \$25,000 per family, which does not include the foster care payments they would receive if the children were placed.<sup>3</sup>

The other major factor related to the performance of foster care services is the quality of care received by youth in the custody of the state as it concerns the long-term outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. For example, longitudinal research conducted on youth aging out of foster care by show that:

- 33% of females aging out of foster care, compared to only 14% of the general population, become pregnant by age 18;
- 50% of males aging out of foster care, compared to only 19% of the general population, reported that they had gotten a female pregnant by the age of 21;
- 58% of youth aging out of foster care graduated high school; and
- 20% of males aging out of foster care reported having been arrested by age 21 (i.e., making them four times more likely to be arrested than the general population at that age).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, children of color are overrepresented in the foster care system. For example, statistics on African American children in foster care reflect this effect:

- African American children, representing only 14% of the national population, represent 23% of children in foster care awaiting adoption, and 24% of children with 2 or more placements<sup>5</sup>;
  - Of the 149,459 children and youth who experienced multiple placements in 2015, 40% were black<sup>6</sup>;
- and

1 The Family First Prevention Services Act was signed into law on February 9, 2018 as part of Division E in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (H.R. 1892). The Family First Act is a landmark bill that focuses on the importance of children growing up in families. The legislation introduces historic reforms to help keep children safely with their families and avoid the traumatic experience of entering foster care. It also includes provisions to help ensure children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate to their special needs when foster care is needed.

2 A group home is a private residence model of medical care for those with complex health needs. Traditionally, the model has been used for children or young people who cannot live with their families, people with chronic disabilities who may be adults or seniors, or people with dementia and related aged illnesses. Typically, there are no more than six residents, and there is at least one trained caregiver there 24 hours a day. Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders. "Group homes". Retrieved 4 May 2012.

3 <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/child-welfare-2/why-keeping-foster-parents-is-just-as-important-as-recruiting-new-ones/32849>

4 Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

5 AFCARS, 2017

6 AFCARS, 2017



- In Washington DC, while 57% of all children are African American, they represent 90% of all children in Washington DC's child welfare system.

The Harvest of Hope Family Services Network (HoH), a faith-based non-profit, served as a contractor with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families between 1999 and 2015. The primary measure of activity that the state required in its contract with Harvest of Hope was to recruit foster families. However, HoH also provided extensive support services for the families it helped to get licensed as foster home, along with supporting foster to adoption among its families.

The impetus for the formation of HoH dates back to 1996, when former New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman sought help from Reverend Dr. DeForest Soaries, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (FBC), to address the ravages of the crack epidemic on families, and particularly on African American families. One of the immediate challenges Pastor Soaries and FBC addressed was to take in, initially through foster care and ultimately through adoption, fifty-eight (58) so-called 'boarder' babies, infants left by their parents in the hospital due to crack cocaine addiction. As Bob Woodson of the Woodson Center remarked:

*For a single congregation to come forward and to bring these 58 babies into their community and to raise them up, that is an unprecedented achievement and testimony to the First Baptist Church and its commitment to meeting the needs of its community. I have never seen anything like it in all my years and travels.*

Between 1996 and 2015, when the state ended its contract, HoH had accomplished the following:

- Recruited, trained and licensed 450 foster care families, the majority of whom were African American;<sup>7</sup>
- Placed over 1,440 children in these homes;
- Found permanent adoptive homes for 284 of these children; and
- Retained 85% of its foster families annually.

HoH achieved these results through an innovative, relationship-focused program that included:

- Birthday parties and holiday celebrations: At least once a month, HoH foster families would come together with the children placed in their care, building community and also providing a built-in monitoring system where every child is "seen", thus assuring proper care and preventing abuse; and

<sup>7</sup> Technically, HoH did not license foster families but helped them through the licensing process

- Respite Care within the same community: HoH also had trained foster families that specialized in providing respite care, providing an additional level of stability by keeping the children in their care within the same community.<sup>8</sup>

In financial terms, these outcomes generated an estimated \$40.6 million in taxpayer savings between 1996 and 2015 which, compared to the roughly \$20 million they received during that time from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, produced and estimated 2 to 1 savings in tax-payer dollars. The long-term benefits (i.e., beyond age 18) are also significant, based on the decreased likelihood of: dropping out of high school, getting pregnant, and/or getting arrested for the 284 adopted youth, in comparison to youth aging out of foster care. All totaled, this project saved the state an additional estimated \$28.4 million, bringing the overall estimated tax-payer return-on-investment (ROI) for Harvest of Hope to \$3.45 for every \$1.00 invested by the state.

This case study provides a description on how this unique partnership started, the key strategies employed by Harvest of Hope in its intermediary role to achieve the aforementioned outcomes, as well as a comparative analysis of foster family experiences since the termination of the HoH contract. Finally, a detailed methodology is provided, with citations, on how the ROI values are generated, as well as the steps taken, to evaluate the economic impact of Harvest of Hope's work.

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<sup>8</sup> Typically, children in foster families requiring respite care would be placed back into the child welfare system and assigned to another family, often resulting in disruption of care to another available foster family, often in another community or city.







## BACKGROUND

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHILD WELFARE IN THE UNITED STATES

Foster Care in the U.S. has changed considerably over the past 160+ years. Back in 1853, Charles Loring, minister and founder of the Children's Aid Society in New York, saw large numbers of homeless immigrant children. He began advertising across the country for families willing to take these children in, from which the term "orphan trains" was coined. Families responded to Loring's call, sometimes out of good intentions and sometimes simply for the additional labor. Over time, state governments and agencies became involved in these placements, as did the practice of paying board payments to foster families and adding a licensure requirement.

The first federal agency dedicated to issues of child welfare, the U.S. Children's Bureau, was established in 1912, and in 1935 the Social Security Act included the provision of federal funds for child protective services. The establishment and ongoing development of the child welfare system has protected thousands of children for well over 100 years. The standard functions and activities of the child welfare system include, but are not limited to:

- Investigation of abuse and neglect allegations
- Removal of children from a home where abuse or neglect allegations are substantiated
- Provision of temporary care (foster care) for children who have been removed
- Recruitment, training, licensure and oversight of foster families
- Oversight and implementation of case plans with the primary objective of reunifying children with their caregivers whenever possible
- Making recommendations to the court regarding next actions
- Recruitment of adoptive families for children whose parental rights have been terminated by the courts
- Managing the distribution of resources to caregivers within the system

The faith community has always been an active participant in matters related to child welfare. As Jason Weber, National Director for Foster Care Initiatives for the Christian Alliance for Orphans, explains:

*While the faith community has a long history of involvement in issues of child welfare, some new things have emerged from communities of faith around the country over the last two decades in particular. They are grass roots, collaborative efforts that start outside of the system in the context of local churches but could not achieve the effectiveness they do without partnership with the child welfare system.*







*They are intensely local and comparatively inexpensive. Most importantly they are getting incredible results. These local faith-based foster care movements are seeing the recruitment, training and support of thousands of foster and adoptive families. They are providing training and support for biological families trying to stay together and reunify and they are mobilizing hundreds of volunteers to support foster care who never knew before that they had a vital role to play.<sup>9</sup>*

## THE CHILD WELFARE CRISIS IN NEW JERSEY

In 1996, then governor of New Jersey Christine Todd Whitman approached Reverend Dr. DeForest Soaries Jr., Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (FBC) about the foster care epidemic affecting the state and the nation. This epidemic was driven, in large part, by the scourge of crack cocaine, especially in urban communities and particularly in African American families. The state needed additional homes for children in foster care, including for so-called “boarder” babies, infants who were abandoned by their parents and left in hospitals, even though they had been medically-cleared for discharge. There were more than sixty (60) such “boarder” babies in 1996. Within a year, Pastor Soaries and the FBC congregation had adopted fifty-eight (58) of them.

Before Harvest of Hope was officially established, Pastor Soaries and the FBC congregation accepted the governor’s invitation to collaborate through the First Baptist Community Development Corporation, a non-profit formed by the church, whose mission was to “rebuild communities, one family at a time” by improving the social, educational and economic conditions in targeted areas in Central Jersey.<sup>10</sup> While Pastor Soaries and FBC were glad to respond to the state’s request for help, it soon became clear to the FBCDC board members that the work associated with this partnership was ostensibly outside of the mission for the CDC, and that there was a need to establish a separate non-profit for the specific purposes of assisting the state on child welfare matters.

In 1999, the Harvest of Hope Family Services Network was officially established as a separate non-profit. Its mission was: “To organize, mobilize, and utilize resources, and to advocate for policies that address immediate and long-term needs of children in foster care”.

## INTRO OF HARVEST OF HOPE: AN INTERMEDIARY MODEL

The concept of intermediary organizations in the human services field refers to organizations that generally serve as a “go-between” for government agencies and front-line, community-based organizations. The general idea behind intermediaries is that they are organizations that interface between government and faith-based and com-

<sup>9</sup> From an article entitled Foster Care Activity VS Foster Care Movement, posted on CAFO.org on 10/4/2019.

<sup>10</sup> The CDC was subsequently renamed the Central Jersey Community Development Corporation.



munity organizations, helping to bridge the language and culture gaps that often hinder effective collaboration. In essence, intermediary organizations better understand the administrative requirements associated with government contracting, while also “speaking the language” of front-line, mission-focused non-profits, including faith-based organizations, that often lack the skills and capacity to work directly with public agencies. Intermediaries also often provide capacity in terms of collecting data, both to comply with public agency reporting requirements and to facilitate program evaluations to validate success.

Effective intermediary organizations are generally well-versed in the crucial role of relationship-building, both as part of the service delivery process as well as how organizations treat individuals and organizations with whom they are in partnership. As Brandon Logan, Executive Director of an intermediary organization addressing child welfare in Texas, explained:

*The materials, language and terminology used by many child welfare agencies in reference to foster families tend to simply view them as paid providers, which, although true in a technical sense, loses sight of the inter-personal dynamics associated with bringing a child into a household. As a result, foster families express frustration in interactions with child welfare staff at the state and county level and frequently cite this disconnect as a significant factor in leaving the system.*

Harvest of Hope, along with other intermediaries providing services related to the child welfare system, are unique in the sense that many are dealing directly with foster families. Instead of working with other community organizations, as is typical with most intermediaries, Harvest of Hope interacted directly with foster families in its role with the state. This intermediary role places an even higher premium on relationship skills and trust-building, as Harvest of Hope helps foster families with various needs, which includes addressing personal dynamics associated with taking in a child placement through foster care.

## HARVEST OF HOPE PROGRAMS GROW

Initially, Harvest of Hope recruited primarily from amongst its First Baptist congregants.<sup>11</sup> Pastor Soaries played a central role in encouraging parishioners to “step up”, with sermons focused on the connection between their faith journey and Biblical references. Over time, however, Harvest of Hope’s recruitment efforts would extend beyond the walls of the church. HoH was asked by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) to assist with recruiting families in Essex County (FBC was located in Somerset County).

<sup>11</sup> The First Baptist Church has a membership of about 1,700 people.

As Katherine Taylor, originally hired as a family recruiter in 1999 and eventually assuming the role of Training and Processing Supervisor for foster/adoptive parents at Harvest of Hope, explained:

*We were always about going above and beyond the specific service requirements of our contract with DCF, because this work was also our calling. We put a lot of energy towards developing communities of support among our foster parents by holding baby showers, partnerships with companies like Johnson & Johnson, where we would also distribute clothing, diapers, and other items our foster families needed. For us, it was all about providing care for those who were caring for these children.*

By 2005, Harvest of Hope realized annual foster family retention rates as high as 96%. Based on Harvest of Hope's success at recruiting and supporting foster families, DCF asked them to expand their efforts statewide. In response, Harvest of Hope agreed to open two (2) additional offices to support this expanded mandate in Millville and Newark.

## BRIDGING RACIAL BARRIERS

Although most of the foster families served by HoH were black, another part of their efforts was to build bridges for white foster families caring for black children. This was achieved both at an individual and organizational level, as Harvest of Hope also supported the development of foster care ministries at other churches, such as the Calvary Chapel of Old Bridge (Calvary Chapel), a predominately white church located in nearby New Brunswick, New Jersey. Lisa Rubino-Doyle was first a HoH foster parent who was inspired by their model to begin a fostering/adoption ministry called Caring for His Children, at Calvary Chapel. Rubino-Doyle described the importance of Harvest of Hope in supporting the development of this ministry, and also how Harvest of Hope assisted white families in applying to be foster parents and then in the care and raising of black children:

*I think there was a natural affinity and shared purpose from our common faith and calling. When we were working with [HoH] staff, it was okay to say 'we need to pray' on certain decisions related to our role as foster or adoptive parents. The events Harvest of Hope hosted were particularly important for people like myself, a white foster parent with black children in my care, because it gave those kids an opportunity to be around other black children, and to develop their own support system with their own shared experience as children in foster care.*







For white foster parents, sometimes it was something as simple as understanding how to care for skin and hair for the black children placed in their care. HoH support events and celebrations were not just for the children, but also provided an affirming environment for parents like Lisa Rubino-Doyle to gain more skills or cultural competency to better serve the children under her care.

## ADVOCATING FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

Another significant intermediary role that Harvest of Hope played was in representing the foster families in their dealings with DCF. Foster families were not always aware of the various resources and supports they could access from the state, and HoH helped them obtain what they needed. HoH also often intervened on issues related to anything from home studies to payment, serving as an advocate for foster families. This advocacy role is especially important, because new research shows that foster families cease to participate more so because of their frustrations in dealing with state and county child welfare agencies than from difficulties associated with a child placement. As Taylor explained:

*I think overall that DCF caseworkers appreciated the support we provided, in terms of support and retention of foster families. We had kind of a brand name, and you would sometimes hear caseworkers remark 'That's a Harvest of Hope family', which generally meant that was a strong, well-supported foster family, something important to know especially when placing children that have additional challenges or have had multiple placements. However, among some of the caseworkers there may have been some resentment due to the fact that we, in some ways, were holding them accountable to provide the information and resources that foster families were entitled to.*

## HOH SERVICES - A TYPICAL WEEK

During a typical week at Harvest of Hope, the offices would field phone calls from DCPD Resource Units throughout the state who were working to identify placements for children and sibling groups. The HoH facilitator would receive the phone requests, record the information pertaining to the child(ren) in need of placement, and begin to identify a placement from within the HoH resource family network. The facilitator would review case files, discuss prospective placements with HoH retention specialists, contact resource families to discuss placement needs, and report back to DCPD Resource Units. At the end of the day, the HoH facilitator would compile a report of the placement requests received, and the number of children that were successfully placed.







HoH retention specialists spent their days conducting home visits with resource families, transporting children to and from visitation with biological family members, supervising visitation, and accompanying families to court hearings. Retention specialists visited families with newly placed children on a biweekly basis for the first 3 months of the placement, and on a monthly basis thereafter. Resource families who did not have a child in placement were visited on a quarterly basis. When Retention Specialists were not in the field on a home visit, reunification visit, or attending an annual home inspection or family team meeting, they were in the office drafting and filing case notes, and advocating on behalf of their families by contacting state workers that were assigned to the families they serve.

HoH also conducted pre-service training for prospective resource families throughout the week. Parent Resource Information and Development Education (PRIDE) is a 27-hour training curriculum that is mandatory for families pursuing a resource parent license in New Jersey. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings, HoH hosted 3-hour training sessions for families where meals would be provided. Trainings were also hosted on Saturdays in an alternative location from 9am to 3pm, and lunch was provided.

## THE HARVEST OF HOPE - DCF PARTNERSHIP ENDS

In 2015, HoH was informed that their contract would not be renewed, along with nine other private non-profit agencies contracted by the state to provide similar services. At that time, Harvest of Hope transferred 122 active and licensed resource homes (i.e., foster families) to various local offices of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) within DCF.

As Pastor Soaries explained:

*With respect to recruiting and retaining foster families, in some respects we worked ourselves out of a job. The state was also undergoing a budget crisis in 2015, which was also a factor in our contract termination. There was also a big movement away from foster families in favor of kinship care, in which the state actively seeks out family members to care for children in state custody. Nonetheless, we had demonstrated value to the state through our foster family retention rate, which was significantly higher than the state average, savings the state in family recruitment and training costs. As part of the effort to show our value, we conducted a survey of the foster families we supported.*

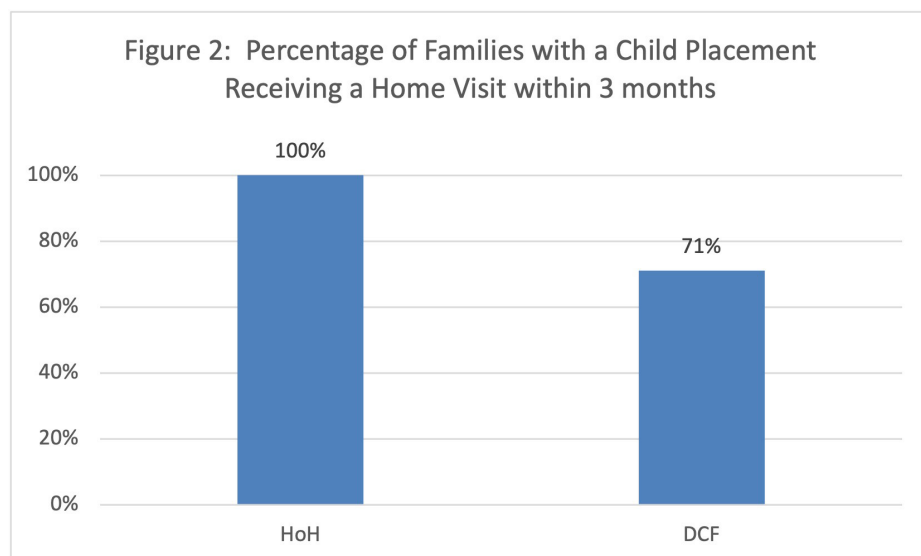
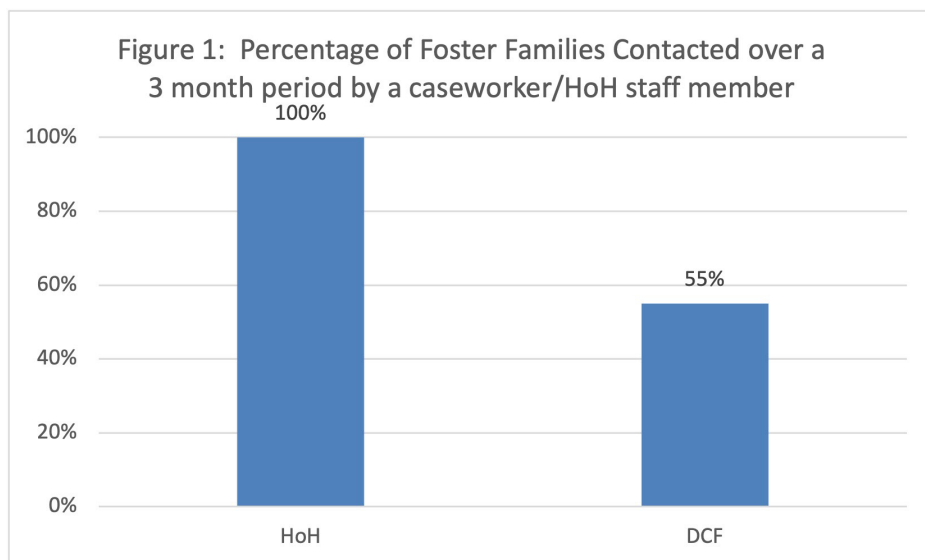
Beginning in March of 2016, the Central Jersey CDC (formerly named the First Baptist CDC) conducted a telephone survey with former Harvest of Hope families to gain an understanding of what their experiences were like in

working directly with the state (i.e., without the benefit of Harvest of Hope's intermediary role). Harvest of Hope collected responses from 99 of those 122 foster families (81% response rate) between March and May of 2016. Below is a sampling of those survey results.

## RESOURCE WORKER CONTACT

As can be seen in Figure 1, from the 63 surveyed families that had a child in placement on any given day since Harvest of Hope's contract was terminated (12/31/15), only 34 (55%) had been contacted by their DCPD resource worker.<sup>12</sup> This is in sharp contrast

to the time period when Harvest of Hope managed these families, in which 100% had been contacted. Harvest of Hope understood how vital caseworker contact was to establish and maintain relationship with the families they served. In fact, most families were contacted twice a month, per Harvest of Hope directives.



## HOME VISITS

Figure 2 shows that only 45 of the 63 families (71%) with at least one child placement since 12/31/15 indicated they had received a home visit in the past 3 months. Home visits are a great opportunity to discuss and address various issues related to one or more child placements in

<sup>12</sup> In New Jersey, resource workers are Resource Unit employees of DCPD that are assigned to each individual resource family (foster family). Each child is assigned a separate caseworker from either the Permanency or Adoption Units.



the familiar setting of the foster family's home. Under Harvest of Hope, families with child placements had home visits conducted monthly, with quarterly visits for families without a child in placement. In fact, Harvest of Hope conducted home visits twice a month for the first 3 months of a new placement.

Other findings from the survey were:

- 47 out of 63 Resource Families (75%) reported that children in placement were not receiving DCPD services;
- 13 out of 44 Resource Families (30%) reported issues about children reunification visits.

These clearly point to the value-added intermediary role that Harvest of Hope played in support of foster care and adoptive placements.

## AN ROI ANALYSIS OF HARVEST HOPE

The ROI analysis described below examines three components of estimated taxpayer savings (and increases in projected future income taxes) associated with the work provided by Harvest of Hope to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families between 1996 and 2015:

1. Savings in DCF family recruitment, training and licensing costs due to Harvest of Hope's higher foster family retention rate (as compared with the estimated statewide rate);
2. Savings from reduced DCF child welfare caseworker costs and lower payment supports from 284 adopted children that would otherwise continue to be under foster care; and
3. Projected lifetime savings (and increased tax revenues) associated with improved outcomes for the 284 adopted children, as compared with anticipated outcomes associated with children aging out of foster care.

## ESTIMATING THE ROI FOR HARVEST OF HOPE

### Savings From Improved Retention of Foster Families

One of the areas of taxpayer savings attributable to the Harvest of Hope program is linked to its high rate of foster family retention. Harvest of Hope retained 85% of the foster families it served, as compared to the estimated annual statewide rate of 60%. Given Harvest of Hope's average annual caseload of about 150 foster families, this

results in an estimated 38 additional foster families retained. At an average estimated cost of \$25,000 to recruit, train and license a foster family, this alone results in an estimated annual savings of \$937,500. In other words, Harvest of Hope's higher retention rates resulted in a level of savings almost equal to the average annual amount contract with the state of about \$1 million. Over the course of the 20 years of service to the state, the total estimated savings from HoH's improved retention of foster families is approximately \$18.75 million.

#### Adoption of Children from Foster Car - Savings Up to Age 18

The most significant savings associated with children served through Harvest of Hope results from the savings as compared to what it otherwise costs the New Jersey DCF to support a child in the foster care system. Based on previous studies comparing the costs of foster care versus adoption<sup>13</sup> and the average age of adoption of five years for children placed with Harvest of Hope families, we estimated the per-child savings, in 2019 dollars, to be \$77,167, or about \$5,935 per year per child for an average of 13 years. Multiplying by the total number of adoptions facilitated by Harvest of Hope of 284 children yields a total savings of \$21.9 million over 20 years.

As a result of higher foster family retention and the placement of children into adopted families, the total estimated savings associated with Harvest of Hope services is \$40.6 million. This breaks down to \$2.00 saved for every \$1.00 paid to Harvest of Hope by the state of New Jersey. These projected savings occurred during and up to the child reaching the age of 18. It is important to note that the estimated savings of \$40.6 million is, in fact, a conservative estimate.

This current calculation does not take into consideration the savings associated with the children placed in foster care with Harvest of Hope families (which also benefit from higher retention rates as well as the unique support systems they provide).

#### Long-Term Outcomes for Adopted Children Versus Children Aging Out of Foster Care

There are also projected future savings (i.e., associated with the youth beyond the age of 18). These projections utilize longitudinal data associated with youth aging out of foster care with respect to:

- Education/Employment achievements;
- Likelihood and costs of pregnancy and associated public assistance costs; and
- Likelihood and costs of criminal activity

<sup>13</sup> A Comparison of the Governmental Costs of Long-Term Foster Care and Adoption; Barth, Ricard P. et al; Social Service Review; March 2006.



We examined these main areas for estimating lifetime ROI values for youth that lived in adoptive families in comparison to those aging out of the foster care system.

#### Education/Employment Outcomes:

We estimated a conservative high school graduation rate of 70% for adopted children<sup>14</sup>, as compared to 58% for children aging out of foster care.<sup>15</sup> The 70% rate is actually based on high school graduation rates for children from single-parent families, given the lack of longitudinal data on educational outcomes for adopted children. This 12% differential in high school graduation rates results in 34 of the 284 adopted children graduating high school than we would otherwise have predicted. A study conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that each high school graduate produces about \$77,341 (in 2019 dollars) additional federal and income tax revenues over their lifetime than a high school drop-out.<sup>16</sup> The total projected savings due to improved educational and career outcomes for the 34 additional children graduating high school is \$2.635 million (\$77,341 times 34).

#### Likelihood of Teen Pregnancy:

Based on longitudinal outcome studies of youth aging out of foster care, we estimate that 41.5% of youth aging out of foster care either become pregnant or get another female pregnant.<sup>17</sup> We used the average of the 33% of females pregnant and the 50% of men up to age 21 and aging out of foster care getting someone pregnant for a 41.5% pregnancy rate among youth aging out of foster care. We used a conservative estimate of 20% of adopted children getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant (as compared to 14% of females in the general population getting pregnant and 19% of males in the general population getting someone pregnant). This differential of 21.5% (41.5% less the estimated 20% for adopted children) results in an estimated 61 pregnancies prevented among the 284 adopted children placed with Harvest of Hope families.

Given that approximately 51% of pregnancies result in births<sup>18</sup> (at an average medical cost of \$7,202 per pregnancy)<sup>19</sup>, and that approximately 71% of teen mothers end up receiving public assistance, we further estimate that the 61 fewer pregnancies results in 22 fewer single-parent families on public assistance. The estimated lifetime public assistance costs per single-parent family are estimated at \$236,414 per family.<sup>20</sup> The total sav-

14 In the absence of information on high school graduation rates for adopted children, we are using findings associated with the high school graduation rate of 70% for children from single-parent families. Sigle-Rushton, W and McLanahan, S. Father absence and child well-being: A critical review; in *The future of the family*; Russell Sage Foundation (2004).

15 Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago, IL: ChapinHall Center for Children.

16 Alliance for Excellent Education, (2006, March 1). High School dropouts cost the U.S. billions in lost wages and taxes, according to Alliance for Excellent Education [Press release]. Washington

17 Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago, IL: ChapinHall Center for Children.

18 U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends by Race and Ethnicity. Alan Guttmacher Institute (based on 2006 data).

19 The cost of unintended pregnancy in the United States, Trussell, J (2007) *Contraception*, Volume 75: pp. 168-170.

20 The primary study is *The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First-Ever Estimates for the Nation and All Fifty States*; Benjamin Scafidi, Georgia College & State University. Certain cost categories reference *The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man -- The Annual Costs of Father Absence*; Steve L. Nock, University of Virginia, Christopher Einolf, DePaul University School of Public Service.

ings associated with reduced likelihood of teenage pregnancy is \$439,754 in reduced medical costs from fewer teen pregnancies, plus \$5.23 million in avoided public assistance costs (61 fewer single-parent households times \$236,414), totaling \$5.67 million.

#### Likelihood of Prolonged Criminal Involvement:

“Career” criminals cost taxpayer’s a significant amount, including everything from the costs of incarceration, the costs of prosecuting those criminals, and the costs of crime to victims. We estimate that 20% of male youth aging out of foster care are projected to have prolonged criminal involvement during their lifetime. This is based on a study indicating that 5% of the population represented 51% of police contacts – these are the career criminals who generate the greatest costs. Since 5% of the total population is the norm and 4 times as many youth in the foster group reported having been arrested by age 21, we estimate that 20% of the foster group males will have serious and prolonged involvement in the criminal justice system.<sup>21</sup>

We estimated that 12.5% of adopted children will become career criminals, which is the mid-point between the general population (5%) and youth aging out of foster care (20%). Again, this estimation is required due to the absence of longitudinal data on outcomes for children adopted out of foster care. This produces a differential of 7.5%, resulting in 10.7 fewer children projected to be career criminals. The estimated lifetime cost per career criminal, in 2019 dollars, is about \$2.1 million, resulting in a total projected lifetime savings of \$20.1 million.<sup>22</sup>

In total, the projected taxpayer savings attributed to lower foster family attrition and to the adoption of 284 children is estimated at \$40.7 million. The estimated long-term savings and benefits from improved education/employment outcomes, fewer single parent households from pregnancy, and reduced likelihood of prolonged criminal involvement, total another \$28.4 million in taxpayer savings and increased income tax revenues.

## CONCLUSION

In total, Harvest of Hope produced an estimated benefit of over \$69 million which, compared to the \$20 million received for services from the state, resulting in a ROI of \$3.45 for every \$1.00 invested in Harvest of Hope. But the critical question in need of an answer is this – Is the remarkable work of Harvest of Hope an outlier? Or is it the norm for many faith-based organizations across the country in foster care? This question requires an empirical answer for which we do not yet have systematic data to assess. If the impact of Harvest of Hope is remotely representative of other faith-based organizations across the country, then the impact of faith-based organizations

21 Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19. Chicago, IL: ChapinHall Center for Children.

22 The Monetary Value of Saving a High-Risk Youth; Cohen, Mark A.; Journal of Quantitative Criminology; 1998.



is no doubt far greater than most have assumed. Of course, we need systematic research and quantify the value of faith-based organizations.

See Exhibit 1 for a Summary of the ROI calculations.

## EXHIBIT 1:

### SUMMARY OF THE ROI CALCULATIONS

#### WORKSHEET FOR ROI MEASURES: Adoption/Foster Care Services Harvest of Hope

##### Reference Assumptions About Program Effectiveness

I	Number of children placed into adoption by HoH	284
I	Average Length of Stay for Children in Foster Care (months)	22.7
I	Total Cost to operate HoH	\$20,000,000
I	Percentage of adoptive families specifically because of HoH	100%
I	Average number of children placed into adoptive families per year	284.0

##### Cost-Benefits Of Foster Family Retention and Adoption up to Age 18

##### Projected Savings

II	Total savings in foster family <u>recruitment</u> and training costs due to higher retention of foster families	\$18,750,000
V	Savings from reduced child welfare and foster care costs from adoptions through HoH versus ongoing foster care.	\$21,915,428
	HoH savings to the Child Welfare System for adopted children up to Age 18	\$40,665,428

##### Lifetime Cost-Benefits of additional Adoptions through HoH beyond Age 18

VI - VIII	Tax Revenue Gains from Adopted Teens Graduating high school at a higher rate than children aging out of foster care	\$2,635,781
IX - XII	Public Assistance Costs Saved from Reduced Incidence of Pregnancy for adopted youth versus youth aging out of foster care	\$5,666,827
XIII - XIV	Savings in the Reduction in the Projected number of male youths becoming criminal careers as a result of adoption versus aging out of the foster care system.	\$20,096,550
TOTAL SAVINGS FROM ALL ABOVE EFFECTS		\$69,064,586







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