



Together We Stand is a summation of the camaraderie and support provided through membership in the Coalition of Residential Excellence. It was the man of wisdom who said: “Two are better than one; they have a good return for their labor.” When it comes to advocating for legislation, the words of Solomon ring true.

I am pleased to report that at least a dozen residential child care providers plan to attend the Legislative Fly-In scheduled on Capitol Hill for March 17, 2026. The date

to RSVP to join in that process has passed, but I wanted you to know that CORE will be well represented on that day.

Our goal is to promote passage of H.R. 4972 – Create Accountable Respectful Environments (CARE) for Children Act. Currently the legislation has 21 cosponsors in addition to Rep. Stuebe who filed the legislation. The breakdown by states looks like this: Representatives from Florida - 18, Mississippi - 3, North Carolina - 1, Tennessee - 1, Texas - 1, Virginia - 1

Of those cosponsors, 4 are Democratic and 18 are Republican.

H.R. 4972 is intended to address or assist in resolving the shortage of appropriate foster homes for children. It provides a system of checks and balances to ensure a child’s on-going safety and wellbeing in a cottage family home and makes such a child’s placement eligible for foster care maintenance payments.

A companion bill to H.R. 4972 has not yet been filed in the Senate. We have Republican leadership in the Senate willing to file the legislation but will do so only if we can locate a Democrat to sign-on to make the legislation bipartisan.

Update on Implementation of Stop Institutional Child Abuse Legislation

William Shakespeare is credited with the phrase, “Oh! What a tangled web we weave”. This week, I attempted to research progress being made in response to passage of SICCA [Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act] that became law on December 23, 2004.

HHS Research Contract: HHS is tasked with contracting with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study the “troubled teen



industry". Key areas of study include:

- **Restrictive Interventions:** Evaluate the use of restraints, seclusion, and other restrictive practices in youth residential programs.
- **Safety and Abuse:** Identify the nature, prevalence, and severity of child abuse, neglect, and deaths within these facilities.
- **Industry Mapping:** Produce a detailed map of the complex network of youth residential programs across the United States.
- **Demographics and Funding:** Determine how many youth are held in these settings, why they are there (e.g., behavior problems), and the sources and amounts of federal funding supporting them.
- **Oversight Evaluation:** Access both federal and state oversight mechanisms to identify gaps in accountability and regulation.
- **Baseline Reporting (Due 2027):** The National Academies must deliver a report by December 2027 documenting the prevalence of abuse and fatalities in residential programs.

In attempting to discover the federal agencies participating in this study, the Federal Work Group reportedly includes the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Indian Health Services (IHS), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Other agencies and entities involved in the study and consultation process include:

- Administration for Community Living : Part of the Federal Work Group
- National Council on Disability: Consulted regarding rights and protections

The Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP) is also reportedly involved. That group reportedly includes senior officials from 18 federal departments and agencies, chaired by the Department of Health and Human Services with the Department of Justice as Vice-Chair.

Participating Agencies: Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, State, Interior and Transportation.

Other Members: Environmental Protection Agency, Social Security Administration, Corporation for National and Community Service, National Science Foundation, and Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Of course, all of that may perfectly fall into place. Otherwise, it will be a tangled web we weave.

Executive Order: Fostering The future of American Children and Families

I also attempted to discovery progress being made in fulfilling President Trump's Executive Order entitled: "Fostering the Future for American Children and Families." The order was signed on November 13, 2025, with the expectation that needed changes to the system would fall in place within 180 days (roughly May 2026).



The Executive Order directs federal agencies to modernize the child welfare system and support youth transitioning to adulthood. As a first order of business, I researched what is being done legislatively or what was already legislatively in place to promote the intended outcomes.

Following legislation reportedly has relationship to the Executive Order signed in November:

- **H.R. 6221 - Fostering the Future for American Children and Families Act.**

The legislation was introduced by Rep. Zach Nunn (IA-3) with three initial co-sponsors: Rep. Greg Landsman [D-OH-1], Rep. Vince Fong [R-CA-20], and Rep. Don Bacon [R-NE-2]. Rep. Eugene Simon Vindman [D-VA-7] signed on 12/17/26 followed by Rep. Glenn Grothman [R-WI-6] on 02/03/26.

Key aspects of the legislation include:

- **Study on Workforce Programs** – Directs HHS and the Department of Labor to evaluate and improve apprenticeship/workforce programs for foster youth.
- **Fostering the Future Pipeline Program** – Establishes a \$50 million competitive grant initiative to support technical training in high-demand fields [IT, healthcare, trades.
- **Education and Training Vouchers [ETV]:** Expands the Chafee program to allow ETV funds to be used for short-term, career-focused credential programs

- **H.R. 7259 - Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act**

The legislation was introduced by Rep. Danny Davis [D-IL-7] on 02/12/2026. This legislation focuses on legal support by requiring states to consider legal issues

(housing, education, employment) in case planning an allows use of Chafee Foster Care Program funds for legal services and counseling.

- **H.R. 7419 - Foster Care Stabilization Act of 2026**

The bill was filed by Rep Don Bacon [R-NE-2] with Rep. Gwen Moore [D-Wi-4], Rep. Zachary Nunn [R-IA-3], and Rep. Mary Scanion [D-PA-5] on . The legislation has been signed on by Rep. Jason Smith [R-MO-8], Chair of the Ways and Means Committee and by Rep. Richard Neal [D-MA-1] Ranking Member of the Ways and Means Committee. In addition, 43 other members of the Ways and Means Committee have signed on in support of the legislation. In addition, 8 other Representatives have signed on in support.

This bill aims to amend Title IV of the Social Security Act to establish a demonstration grant program for emergency relief to improve pre-placement services.

- **S. Res. 516** (Introduced Nov 2025/Feb 2026): A Senate resolution focusing on ensuring a child-centered, compassionate system that provide adequate support for youth aging out of foster care.

2026 CORE Membership Dues are Needed

It is easy to lose track of time and fail to remember that you haven't yet paid your membership dues for this calendar year.

Core Committees

Interest in CORE membership committees continues to draw interest. Six additional committee members signed up in February. I will update committee membership lists for your review as I report on each committee.

CORE Legislative Committee

The legislative committee hosted a couple of “*what you need to know*” informational training sessions via Zoom on February 18, 2026, for those planning to participate in the Fly-In Legislative Summit scheduled for March 17th.

CORE Legislative Committee

Gregg Harper	CORE Lobbyist
Maria Knapp	Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches
Sean Milner	Baptist Children's Village & Family Services
Robyn Knecht	St. Joseph's Indian School
Traci Wagner	Methodist Children's Children Home
Christopher Allabaugh	Masonic Home of Oxford
Dr. Chad Parker	Tupelo Children's Mansion
Paul Schandavel	Children's Home, Inc.
Deborah Tannenbaum	Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches
Chad Puckett	Show Me Christian Youth Home
Carrie Browning	French Camp Academy
James Turner (if available)	Milton Hershey School
Don Forrester	Coalition of Residential Excellence

CORE Communication Committee

The first meeting of the CORE Communication Committee took place via Zoom on February 14, 2026. The communication committee will assist in promoting the work we are doing. Hopefully that exposure will help increase our membership and also highlight the exceptional work being done by member agencies of our organization. The group discussed current communication efforts within their agencies including social media presence, newsletters, and donor outreach. They explored ways to improve branding for both individual agencies and CORE as an organization.

The committee also agreed to focus on developing a unified message to counter negative perceptions of the kinds of services provided by members and to highlight the benefits of CORE membership.

Daryl Thuringer [St. Joseph's Indian School] was appointed the committee chair, with support from other members to help facilitate needed outcomes. Daryl suggested that a first step is to audit CORE's communication efforts. Others suggested that a SWOT analysis might be beneficial.

The group decided to meet again in early April to further discuss strategic planning and communication goals. In the interim, Don is sending a copy of the CORE Strategic Plan to committee members.

The next meeting is set for April 8, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. CST/2:00 p.m. EDT. An invitation for a Zoom call has been sent out for that meeting. All committee members need to review the strategic plan prior to the next meeting.

Daryl and Don will meet to discuss and refine agenda topics before the next committee meeting.

CORE COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

Daryl Thuringer - Chair	St. Joseph’s Indian School
Kelly Lawson	Methodist Children’s Home
Madyson (Mady) Wilhelm	Tupelo Children’s Mansion
Monica Flickinger	Milton Hershey School
Deborah Tannenbaum	Florida Sheriff’s Youth Ranches
Renee Wright	Georgia Baptist Children’s Home and Family Ministries
Tyler Pau	Kamehameha Schools & CORE webmaster
Dr. Juston Gates	Missouri Baptist Children’s Home
Chrystelle Thames	Baptist Children’s Village & Family Ministries
Paul Schandavel	Children’s Home, Inc.
Jessica McManus-Sazue	St. Joseph’s Indian School
Amanda Ryan	Blaze School
Don Forrester	Coalition of Residential Excellence

CORE Conference / Education Committee

The Conference/Education committee met on March 3, 2026. Discussion centered around location, agenda and other plans for the conference. The date of the conference is November 3-5, 2026. The conference site is Lake City, FL. Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches is the conference host.

The conference will take place at The Blanche Lake City, a small hotel and event center. After check-in on the first day, the group will be transported to the Ranch for the opening of the conference and dinner on Tuesday evening.

We reviewed feedback received by Methodist Children’s Home from evaluations gathered at the 2025 CORE National Conference.

There was discussion related to the theme for the 2026 National CORE Conference and timelines necessary related to RFPs and Nominations for the annual Catherine Hershey Awards. It is anticipated that our membership will received that information by the end of March 2026.

CORE Conference/Education Committee

Elisha Hoggard, Chair	Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches
Traci Wagner	Methodist Children’s Home
Dr. Juston Gates	Missouri Baptist Children’s Home
Kevin Hewitt	Christian Children’s Home of Ohio
Kryston Butts	Masonic Home at Oxford
Carrie Browning	French Camp Academy
Renee Wright	Georgia Baptist Children’s Home
Amanda Ryan	Blaze School
Don Forrester	Coalition for Residential Excellence

CORE Finance Committee

The CORE Finance Committee met on March 3, 2026. Obviously, scheduling conflicts were abundant. Jennifer Renner-Meyer, CORE Board Treasurer, Stephen Ullrich, and I were the only participants. We will schedule again for late April.

CORE Finance Committee

Jennifer Renner-Meyer	St. Joseph’s Indian Schoo
Deborah Tannenbaum	Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches
Kevin Hewitt	Christian Children’s Home of Ohio
Stephen Ulerich	French Camp Academy
Jimmy Harmon	Black Mountain Home for Childre
Sean Milner	Baptist Children’s Village and Family Ministries
James Turner	Milton Hershey School
Don Forrester	Coalition of Residential Excellence

Ad Hoc Committee for Faith Based Initiative8

The faith based Ad Hoc Committee met via Zoom on February 12, 2025. Due to calendar conflicts and cancellations, Shawn Yambor - Christian Children's Home of Ohio and I were the only ones In attendance. We made good use of the time and discussed possibilities related to this committee. The next meeting is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. EDT. Shawn agree to serve as the committee chair.

Joe Tyrell	St. Joseph's Indian School
Serenity Richard	New Mexico Baptist Children's Home
Mike Wilhelm	Cal Farley's Boys Ranch
Mike Thompson	French Camp Academy
Elodie Covert	Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth & Families
Sean Milner	Baptist Children's Village and Family Ministries
James Turner	Milton Hershey School
Don Forrester	Coalition of Residential Excellence

