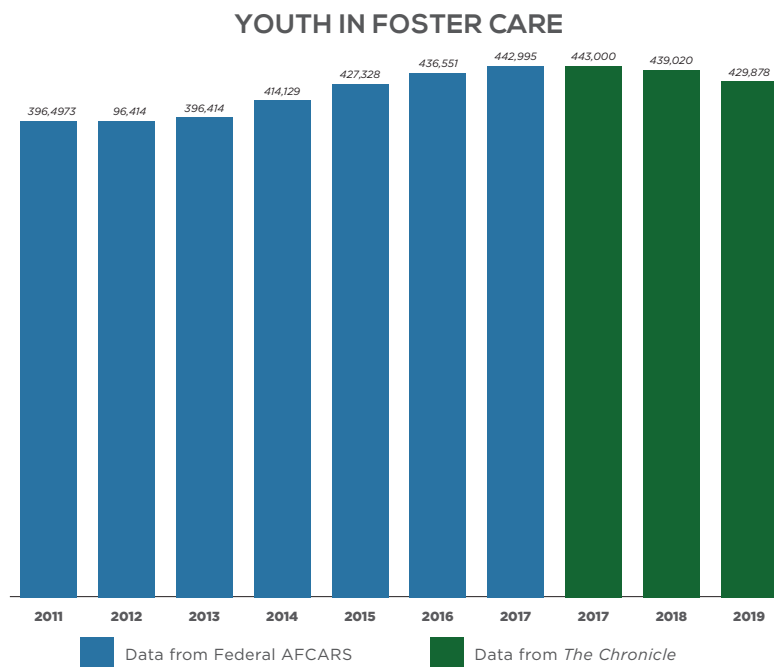


# AS FOSTER CARE POPULATION SURGE ABATES, STATES INCREASE FOSTER HOME CAPACITY.

Newly released data compiled and analyzed by *The Chronicle of Social Change*, the nation's leading news outlet covering child welfare and juvenile justice, suggest that the United States is on the downside of its most recent foster care surge.

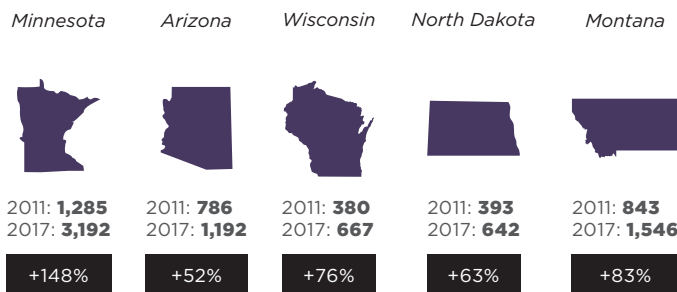
For most of the 2010s, federal data showed the number of children in foster care steadily increasing after a previous decade of decline. This spike, fueled in part by the opioid crisis, came as many states struggled to recruit and retain enough foster homes.

The tide may be turning on this front as well, according to *The Chronicle's* third annual *Who Cares* reporting project, which tracks the foster care population and housing capacity nationwide. The number of children in foster care is declining, while homes available to foster youth are on the rise.

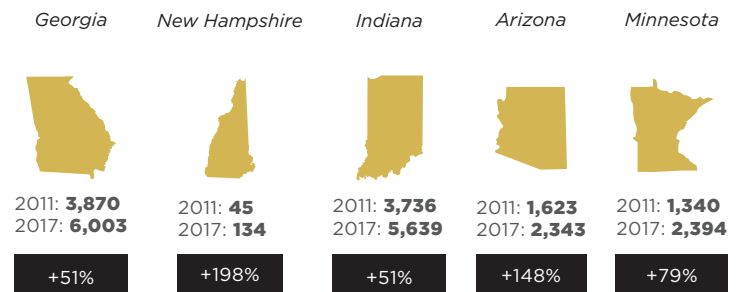


But the data highlights some clear challenges around the country. For example, many states are still struggling with foster care capacity – at least 20 states saw the number of licensed homes decline between 2018 and 2019. And there are disturbing trends in foster care rates among black and Native American children in several states.

## NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



## BLACK YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



## KEY FINDINGS FROM WHO CARES

**Unpaid Placements:** The majority of states have come to rely more heavily on relatives and unrelated kin. But a growing number of these families are being asked to carry out this important role without any financial support from child welfare agencies. The number of youth living in the homes of relatives and family friends, without a single dollar from the child welfare agency went up 32 percent between 2011 and 2017, from 81,838 to 108,426.

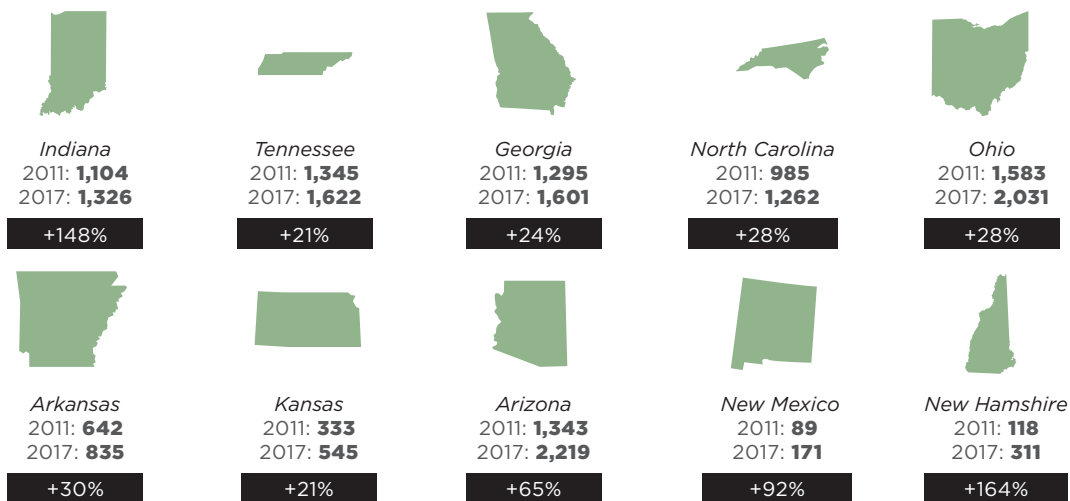


### UNPAID PLACEMENTS

2011: **81,838**  
2017: **108,426** **+32%**

**Congregate Care Cliff:** The Family First Prevention Services Act limits federal funds for group homes and other institutional settings for foster youth. Despite this looming change, many states have increased their reliance on these placements in recent years. Twenty states have seen the number of youth in congregate care rise between 2011 and 2017, and 10 of those have seen an increase of 20 percent or more.

### YOUTH LIVING IN CONGREGATE CARE



**Fewer Kids in Foster Care:** Based on numbers collected from state agencies, we estimate the number of youth in foster care this year to be just below 430,000, about a 3 percent decline from last year. The most recent federal report, covering fiscal 2017, has the total at 442,995 – just five fewer kids than our estimate of 443,000 for that year.

**More Homes:** Based on data collected from almost every single state, the number of licensed homes was between 210,000 and 215,000 in 2018. In 2019, the range is up to between 220,000 and 225,000.

## ABOUT WHO CARES

*The Chronicle of Social Change* is a nonprofit, independent news site covering child welfare and juvenile justice. Since 2017, *The Chronicle* has built the nation's first public resource on foster care capacity. We collect data directly from each state, and combine that with specially obtained federal reports to shed light on two critical questions:

How many children and youth are in foster care today? And where and with whom are they living?

To do this, we collect information directly from state child welfare agencies, and work with researchers to compile federal data through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

The site includes:

1. National overviews on key indicators
2. Robust individual profiles for each state
3. Featured reporting, and op-eds from prominent state and national stakeholders in child welfare

Access the *Who Cares* project by visiting: [www.FosterCareCapacity.org](http://www.FosterCareCapacity.org).

