Today's talker: Let's keep children in their family, if they can't be with their mothers

Keeping children out of foster care and within their families is a Trump administration objective we need to embrace.

President Trump signed into law the Family First Prevention Services Act, which prioritizes keeping families together and puts more funds toward at-home parenting classes, mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment — and puts limits on placing children in institutional settings such as group homes.

This Mother's Day, as we honor our moms and all of the mother figures in our lives, remember that not everyone is so fortunate. Not everyone has a mom whom they can call to share good news with. And not everyone has a mom whom they can lean on during tough times.
Imagine for a minute what it would be like to grow up without a mother. To not have someone who loves you, feeds and clothes you, hugs and kisses you. Imagine what your child would do without you. And now imagine what it would be like to have a mom but to not be able to live with her, simply due to poverty.

There are up to 8 million institutionalized children around the world — including more than 437,000 children in America’s foster care system — many of whom languish in orphanages without access to nutritious food, clean water, a quality education and medical care.

Children raised in institutions experience devastating consequences. When deprived of a family, kids are vulnerable to abuse, susceptible to attachment disorders and mental health problems, and lose an average of 10 IQ points. Orphanages are no place for children to grow up.

More: Maternal deaths are rising in America. Best Mother’s Day gift, reverse that trend.

While it’s true that some children living in orphanages have no mother or father, surprisingly, 80% of these kids actually have a living family member. The fact is, many children are in orphanages because their families are poor and can’t afford to feed or educate them. This is no reason to be institutionalized.

Most families wouldn’t leave their kids in institutions if they had the right support to care for them. That’s why we must all take a stand for orphaned and vulnerable children this Mother’s Day. Let’s make it our mission to support organizations and charities that bring life-changing care to these kids and reunite them with their mothers or families whenever possible. Our goal should be a loving family for every child.

We believe in a future where there’s no longer a need for orphanages. And we believe we can get every institutionalized child into a loving family in our lifetime.

Caroline Boudreaux is the founder of Miracle Foundation.

What are our readers saying?

USA TODAY’s article, "When Trump signed spending bill, he signed into law a huge overhaul of foster care," rightly described the way the new Family First Prevention Services Act invests in keeping children safely with family, when possible, and reducing overreliance on group care. But the article misrepresented the new law’s opportunities for serving relatives who step in to care for children. It wrongly states that kinship caregivers will not be eligible for foster payments under the new law and places a burden on them.

In fact, to the contrary, implemented as intended, the law offers more support to relatives. It provides the option for services to kinship families for up to 12 months without requiring the children to come into foster care, while retaining eligibility for foster care licensure for children in kinship care for whom the structure, monthly financial support and full range of services are needed. The law further requires states to examine their licensing standards against model standards to address barriers to licensing relatives as foster parents.
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