



NEWS RELEASE

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Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care Releases Recommendations to Reform Connecticut's, Nation's Foster Care System

Panel's Effort Moves Child Welfare Issues, Urgent Need for Reform into National Spotlight

New Haven, CT: Calling a report released today by the Pew Commission on Foster Care an essential “first step towards reform” and “an opportunity for change,” state child welfare experts and advocates today acknowledged the role that the information in the report can play in addressing child welfare issues at the federal level and in Connecticut. The Pew Commission recommendations focus on financing and court improvement—issues hampering troubled foster care systems nationwide.

“Each day, Connecticut is the ‘parent’ to thousands of children in its foster care system. The needs of the children who come into state care are daunting, and the needs of their families equally challenging,” said Shelley Geballe, Co-President of Connecticut Voices for Children. “Today, the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care took an important first step towards making Connecticut – and all other states – competent ‘parents’ to the children in state care. Its creative proposals for reform of our nation and our state’s troubled foster care system tackle the critical and central issues of federal child welfare financing and improving state judicial oversight of child welfare cases.”

Among the financing recommendations that would likely benefit Connecticut are:

- Expanding the entitlement to federal financial reimbursement for foster care maintenance and adoption assistance to all children in care, regardless of family income, **especially if Connecticut is able to keep any increase in funding** (as outlined in the first alternative in the appendix of the Pew Commission recommendations). Currently, only about 4 in

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10 of the children in Connecticut foster care have family income so low that the state can claim 50% federal reimbursement for their care. For the others, the federal government is not a financial partner in meeting the children's needs.

- Extending federal financial reimbursement to children who leave foster care to live with a permanent legal guardian when a court has determined that neither reunification nor adoption are feasible permanence options. This recommendation would provide additional federal funds for support of many of Connecticut's relative caregivers, including grandparents caring for grandchildren in foster care.
- Allowing states to "reinvest" federal and state foster care funds into other child welfare services if the services safely reduce the use of foster care. Currently, if a child leaves foster care, federal matching funds do not follow the child to help assure adequate services in the home and community. The funding flexibility recommended by the Pew Commission would help Connecticut build the "front end" services necessary to reducing reliance on institutional and out-of-home care. It would also help the Department of Children and Families achieve key federal court-ordered goals for improvement, including reducing the proportion of children in residential care and expediting children's return home when reunification with parents is appropriate.

CT Voices is now analyzing the potential impact of the Pew Commission's recommendation to create a flexible, indexed Safe Children, Strong Families grant from funding currently included in Title IV-B and the administration and training components of Title IV-E, as well as other aspects of the Pew Commission recommendations. Later this month, Voices will release a report on Connecticut's funding of child welfare services that assesses trends in state and federal funding, as well as the impact of the current federal funding constraints that the Pew Commission has sought to address.

"The Pew Commission has moved key issues faced by half a million abused and neglected children into the national spotlight where they belong," noted Janice Gruendel, Co-President of CT Voices for Children. "Its recommendations will give us the opportunity for further discussion about how Connecticut, with the federal government as a partner, can best meet the needs of the thousands of children in its care."

ABOUT CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN. Connecticut Voices for Children is a statewide, research-based policy and advocacy organization committed to promoting leadership, policy change, and investment on behalf of all of Connecticut's children and youth. Connecticut Voices is a state partner of *Fostering Results*, a national, nonpartisan project to raise awareness of issues facing children in foster care. CT Voices has worked for years on ways to improve child welfare services. For more information on CT Voices, visit www.ctkidslink.org.

ABOUT THE PEW COMMISSION: The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care is a national, nonpartisan panel composed of leading experts in child welfare and supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute. After more than a year of intensive analysis and conversations with professionals, parents and children, the Commission today released far-reaching recommendations to reform the nation's foster care system. For more information and to see the recommendations, visit www.pewfostercare.org.

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