

Leading Foster Care Expert Dr. John DeGarmo Addresses 10 Ways to Fix Foster Care for 2026

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, January 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While the Trump Administration has made positive strides with the Fostering the Future for American Children and Families Executive Order, the nation's foster care system continues to struggle on many levels. [Mental health](#) issues threaten today's children, agencies are understaffed, and more children are in crisis.

"I often tell legislators, there should be a sense of urgency, as these are children, not goods and services" says Foster care expert Dr. John DeGarmo, founder/director of [The Foster Care Institute](#), and a TEDx Talk presenter. "If we want to reform foster care, we must address the following issues." Dr. DeGarmo suggested the following:

1 Strengthen Families

States need to invest in prevention services that help keep families together, keeping children out of care, and focus on family reunification if possible. Before a child is placed into foster care, agencies and families should work together in an attempt at keeping the child within the family,

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Dr. John DeGarmo

if possible. More mental health, substance abuse treatment, support, and services are needed so birthparents can have access to treatment services they need.

2 Time Spent in Care.

The average amount of time a child spends in foster care is 20 months, though that number can be significantly lower or higher, depending upon the child's situation. The longer a child spends in care, the more [anxiety](#) the child may experience due to separation. Whether it is reunification,

adoption, or other options, agencies need to place more emphasis upon permanency of family for a child.



Dr. John DeGarmo Foster Care Expert

3 Better Placement Matching

Agencies need to take all necessary steps to better ensure that the child is placed in a home that provides the needed resources, support services, and care that a child needs, and that it is a good fit for both the child and the foster family.

4 Trauma Assessments

When a child is placed into a foster care home, foster families may not be completely aware of how trauma has affected the child. For foster families to be fully prepared and equipped to help the child, a trauma assessment needs to be made on each child placed within 10 days of being placed into foster care, and the information shared with the foster families.

5 Therapy

Mental health issues continue to increase for all children. For children in foster care, issues from anxiety can manifest themselves in several ways. Professional therapy and counseling on a continuing basis, both while in foster care, and afterwards is critical for the well-being of the child. In addition, foster parents should also have access to professional therapy and counseling services.

6 Sustained Funding

Child welfare agencies struggle to recruit and retain foster parents. More funding needs to be allocated, to better recruit new foster parents, provide much needed training and support services for foster parents, hire more case workers, aid youth aging out of care, support family preservation efforts, and better pay for case workers and child welfare workers.

7 Training and Support

States should better assess the needs of both the training and support services that foster parents are required to have and ensure that foster parents are equipped to help children who struggle with mental health issues on an ongoing basis.

8 Support Case Workers

Agencies must ensure that their caseworkers are safe and not at risk. In addition, caseworkers are overworked, overwhelmed, under resourced, under paid, and understaffed. Today's case workers need to be given more time, more funding, more resources, and more understanding from the public, from the courts, and from foster parents.

9 Invest in Lived Experience

Many youth who have aged out of care have vital insight and experience that can help shape reform. States should involve youth who have aged out foster care in policymaking as well as potential leadership roles.

10 Faith-based help

Faith-based organizations have an opportunity to truly impact the foster care system in a

positive way. Hosting a local foster parent association and support group is one such way a faith-based organization can serve foster parents. Another way is to serve as a location for family visitations. In addition, faith-based groups can host clothes closets for children and youth in care.

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