



The Case for Support

Our children hold the future and give us hope, bringing joy to parents who want nothing more than a happy, healthy child who thrives and grows into a happy, healthy and independent human being. Each child, in his or her own way, elicits from us unconditional love.

And yet thousands of children in Chicago continue to suffer from the most extreme abuse and neglect, often experiencing the unimaginable and living in deplorable environments with little love, safety and stability.

All children deserve a safe home with a family that can provide abiding, loving care. They deserve a chance at life...a good life. And Chicago deserves the bright future our children can bestow upon it. For those of us with means, with an eye to the future, there is no excuse, no valid reason, not to help them.

What is Kaleidoscope?

Kaleidoscope, Inc. is a family foster care agency in Chicago providing children this chance for a good life. Its purpose is to unconditionally provide services and to organize and utilize available resources to meet the diverse needs of children of abuse and neglect who have special needs. Kaleidoscope connects these vulnerable children with what they need and deserve: compassion in a family who has the full support of a team of professionals in children's welfare.

Kaleidoscope exists to ensure that children and youth, ages zero to 21, are not denied the experience of a family and a community. We strive to make sure that each child's needs are met and his or her strengths are built upon. It is our belief that we must serve these children *unconditionally*, a vital care component which helps to break the cycle of repeated failures and rejections these children often experience within their own families or previous foster care placements.

A group of concerned and caring people founded Kaleidoscope in 1973 to serve hundreds of children who were previously sent to out of state for care. Through a state initiative, these children were returned to Illinois, and Kaleidoscope began accepting the children with complex emotional and physical problems resulting from their traumatic abuse and neglect.

Kaleidoscope has a history of pioneering care for children and families, gaining the organization national acclaim and creating models for other programs to follow.

Daunting numbers

Over 16,000 children in Illinois are in care outside of their home due to abuse and neglect, and of that number, over 4,000 are in the city of Chicago. Many suffer from severe emotional disabilities and medically complex conditions due to substance abuse, physical abuse and neglect. Even worse, because of the grave nature of their needs, they have been rejected from numerous placements, oftentimes bouncing from one foster home to the next until adulthood.



Kaleidoscope is proud to be a recipient of the Points of Light Foundation President's Award

Kaleidoscope's kids by gender, race & age

Gender	Female.....	56%
	Male.....	44%
Race	African Am.....	85%
	Latino/a.....	8%
	White.....	3%
	Other.....	3%
Age	0-5 yrs.....	14%
	6-12 yrs.....	28%
	13-17 yrs.....	25%
	18-21 yrs.....	33%

Kaleidoscope's kids

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the agency's single largest collaborator, refers many children to Kaleidoscope because they know we excel at handling tough cases: kids who have experienced numerous previous foster placements, have been institutionalized, have complex mental health needs or multiple disabilities, and who are sometimes aggressive towards their caregivers or peers.

Kaleidoscope has succeeded over the years in reducing the amount of foster home relocation a child experiences because tough cases are identified at the outset and referred directly to us. Known in the 1980s and 1990s as "an agency of last resort," Kaleidoscope is now the agency that is turned to first, preventing children from going through unnecessary trauma, instability and feelings of displacement.

Because Kaleidoscope's services focus on the community in which kids live, many relationships develop between the children, their caregivers and social workers, among others. That is to say, relationships develop naturally within a child's immediate environment depending on where a family is and what the child's strengths and needs are. If a child needs speech therapy, Kaleidoscope locates a speech therapist in the community. If the child wants to learn to swim, Kaleidoscope seeks a class in the child's community to realize the child's wish to swim.

Kiley came to Kaleidoscope after her mother abandoned her while she was a patient in a psychiatric hospital. Kiley was a teen mother with no family support. She suffered from severe depression, had few good parenting role models and had dropped out of school.



Kaleidoscope received the Annie E. Casey Foundation's National Honors Program Award, which cited Kaleidoscope for "...assembling comprehensive service packages designed to help families in even the most daunting circumstances. **Where others may retreat, Kaleidoscope persists in providing supports that knit families together.**"

Kaleidoscope helped Kiley find a positive support group, therapeutic counseling, childcare, books, transportation and tuition for school. Kiley graduated from college as a registered nurse! Most of the professionals who had worked with Kiley believed that she would never be able to parent her child or graduate even from high school—they believed she would spend her life in and out of psychiatric institutions. Kaleidoscope gave her hope for a bright future, and Kiley went after it.

While not all youth always experience the degree of success that Kiley has, the lesson is that all children need at minimum a chance for a good life.

Our mission

To serve abused and neglected children and their families—unconditionally—through individualized, family-centered, community-focused care.

Because of Kaleidoscope's philosophy of unconditional care, children find the compassion and abiding care necessary to become healthy, productive and independent members of society. We believe that the best way to serve children and young people is to support and recreate the family: its intimacy, love, caring and structure.

Our vision

For every child to have a chance to lead an independent, self-sufficient, productive and happy life.

We look to the future to ensure we provide the critical life skills and positive environments that will ultimately lessen the burden on society by creating and maintaining stable, healthy families.

Kaleidoscope serves hundreds of Chicago children each year and as many as 300 children at any given time. It is our hope that with your help – our friends and neighbors who care – we can build on Kaleidoscope’s legacy by continuing to provide unconditional care for children.



"Kaleidoscope plays a critical role in turning human tragedy into hope, opportunity, and prosperity. For some youth, Kaleidoscope is the best chance for a bright future."

~ Bryan Samuels
Director,

Illinois Department of
Children & Family Services
2003-2006

What's different about Kaleidoscope?

Stability

Too often, children can move from one foster care placement to another, even more than a dozen times. They are often moved because of their behavior, having learned to reject before being rejected, causing them to be deemed “the hardest to serve.”

Kaleidoscope recruits and rigorously trains professional foster parents to know what to expect and how to deal with challenging behaviors. These amazing, devoted people receive continuous support from a team of Kaleidoscope staffers, helping the child find stability through unconditional care from a family, not an institution.

Kaleidoscope believes that kids receive the best care by remaining in a single family environment until adoption, reunification or adulthood, whichever comes first. Unconditional care shows children compassion and gives them hope.

Kaleidoscope achieves a 92% stability rate, meaning that 92% of the children served by our agency remain with their foster family in a single, nurturing environment. Moreover, Kaleidoscope succeeds in attaining a 24% permanency rate, which means that a quarter of the children at Kaleidoscope are adopted or receive permanent guardianship.

Innovation

Serving kids requires creativity. Whether a child is emotionally disturbed, medically complex, a parenting adolescent or learning to live independently, Kaleidoscope has the reputation of successfully serving without rejecting a child due to these challenges.



The Chicago Community Trust
awarded Kaleidoscope with the
James Brown Award for
Outstanding Community Service.

FACT

Forty percent of youth in foster care are teens, many of whom are waiting for families.



The Chesapeake Institute of Washington, D.C. named Kaleidoscope as one of the top five child-serving agencies in the United States.

Programs

Kaleidoscope's programs are designed to create services that better match available resources with the needs of each child. Kaleidoscope teams are further tailored to provide individualized plans of care that are culturally sensitive and build on the child's strengths.

Kaleidoscope delivers services through three main program areas:

① Therapeutic Foster Family Care

Unconditional care in a family for foster kids with special needs

Located in Blue Island, Therapeutic Foster Family Care provides family living and specialized services to over 60 children and youth each year. Programs are specifically designed to serve children who require intensive services.

Many children in these programs have experienced numerous previous placements, have been institutionalized, have severe mental health needs or multiple disabilities and/or display extreme misbehaviors. These children are placed in foster homes where the parent is extensively trained on how to help this unique population.

Specialized teams include staff social workers, family workers and medical personnel who support the foster parents. These team members have training and experience with children who have medically complex needs, make frequent, regular visits to the homes and are available around the clock, seven days a week.

Our staff recruits and licenses foster parents to provide the specialized care – health and emotional – that the children require. Staff also provide ongoing training sessions and continuously work with the parents to monitor the child's progress and problems.

The programs assist children with complex medical conditions. Did you know that Kaleidoscope began one of the first pediatric AIDS programs in the country and the first of its kind in Illinois? While most children continue to be infants and toddlers, more are living into adolescence due to advances in drug treatment. At any one time, Kaleidoscope serves around 25 children with complex medical cases.

Kaleidoscope foster care programs also offer adolescent parents who are wards of the state the opportunity to learn effective parenting skills and accept responsibility for themselves and their children while in foster home. Foster parents are specifically trained to care for both the adolescent parent and her baby, serving as a role model for the teen so she can better parent her own child.

② Transitional Living Services

Independent living skills for youth 18-21 years old

Many youth have not had the opportunity to return to their families for a variety of reasons and are approaching adulthood. These youth typically lack family connections and have multiple issues creating immense challenges to attaining self-sufficiency.

Research shows that young adults who are able to remain within the foster care system beyond the age of 18 fare far better than those who leave it. Those who leave care are

FACT

Children participating in Kaleidoscope's programs adopt values and learn practical skills breaking cycles of abuse and neglect when they go on to serve as positive role models for



"I didn't know where my life was headed. My foster parents would accept me and not give up on me ...that's love."

~ a Kaleidoscope kid

50% more likely to be unemployed and out of school than those who stay in. About 14% of those who leave find themselves homeless.

Foster youth who are not properly prepared to live independently are at a greater risk of becoming homeless, addicted to substances and chronically unemployed. Fortunately for youth in Illinois, they may choose to remain in foster care until the age of 21 (this is not the case in Iowa, Wisconsin and most other states).

Kaleidoscope's **Youth Development Program (YDP)** teaches the independent living skills and affords the vocational and educational assistance needed to become self-sufficient. These youth live in their own apartments with regular visits from Kaleidoscope staff.

In line with Kaleidoscope's philosophy of unconditional care, YDP teams assist youth with areas needing improvement and build upon strengths. Teams initially concentrate on stabilizing behavior, later shifting to establishing educational and vocational goals and learning basic independent living skills, such as budgeting and maintaining their apartment.

Transition to Adult Services was created in consultation with the DCFS Office of Services to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities to ensure that youth aging out of the child welfare system are successfully transitioned into adult care *before* their DCFS cases are closed. Kaleidoscope provides the supportive services to practice the skills they need to make a smooth transition into an independent life.

Kaleidoscope's **Find Your Future** internship program selects and matches college students with Chicago-area and downstate employers for paid, full-time, 10-week internships lasting from early June through mid-August. The program, begun in 2005 as a joint venture between Kaleidoscope and DCFS, is now sponsored by Kaleidoscope and is made possible by gifts from foundations, individuals and participating employers.

To attain independence, youth require the advice and help they get from their support system, which typically includes family, community, friends, schools, and other civic or religious organizations. For teens lacking a support system, Kaleidoscope fills the gap through an array of services with a community focus.

3 Community Services

Services with a community focus for foster families facing difficult challenges

The **Systems of Care** program (SOC) is one of the oldest and largest in-home family-based programs. It has been nationally recognized as the model for working with families facing unique emotional and mental challenges.

Each year, state and other foster care agencies refer hundreds of children for services to Kaleidoscope for assessment and interventions intended to strengthen the foster family unit, reunite foster children with birth families or follow up past adoptions.

SOC remains flexible in order to build on the strengths of each child, family and community to develop an array of short-term, individualized services. Community resources are the first source of intervention accessed to address any behavioral, emotional and physical needs of the child. SOC teams include the family's primary caseworker and other individuals that have a significant role in the lives of the child and his or her family.

A WIFE INVESTMENT

Economists estimate that preventing ONE vulnerable child from becoming a high school dropout, career criminal or drug abuser saves \$1.7 to \$2.3 million in costs to society.

The Annual Fund

Supporting Kaleidoscope's Annual Fund means you will help our kids live richer lives through:

- Safe and stable environment
- Fewer hospitalizations
- Knowledge of community resources
- Knowledge of self-care
- Increased daily living skills
- Money management techniques
- Recreational and cultural activities and outings
- Increased self-esteem

Gifts to Kaleidoscope may be directed into any of the following funds:

The Foster Fund

Families who care for foster children receive payments from the state to cover ordinary expenses for the child, including food, clothing, shelter and daily supervision. These payments can – and often do – fall short of the actual cost of caring for the child. That's why a financial donation can be a big help. In fact, funds raised for these programs further enable us to:

- ✓ Recruit and train foster parents to care for abused and neglected children.
- ✓ Provide ongoing staff support to foster parents and their foster children.
- ✓ Help medically fragile children.
- ✓ Help pregnant and parenting teens and their children.

Community Services Fund

- ✓ Stabilize at-risk families and their children.
- ✓ Find children of abuse the help they need to begin the healing process.

Transitional Living Fund

- ✓ Provide supportive services while teaching young adults to live independently, find a vocation and become self-sufficient.
- ✓ Make ends meet by covering household goods, like personal hygiene items, cleaning supplies and groceries.
- ✓ Provide clothes for work and job interviewing.

ANNUAL FUND

- ✓ Gifts to the annual fund are directed to where they are most needed.



Internships for foster youth in college

In the career world, relationships are everything. Who you know can make a huge difference in whether or not you get to walk through some pretty formidable doors. Many newly-graduated young people can count on a solid network of parents, relatives and friends to help them make the vital connections that effectively catapult them into successful careers. For foster youth, however, this supportive network is not built in.

Kaleidoscope's **Find Your Future** internship program, in its fourth year, is now run and sponsored by Kaleidoscope, made possible by donations from foundations, individuals and participating employers. Donors and employers across the area are providing a critical rung in the stepladder for foster youth in college, launching them into successful careers while getting the help they need around the office.



Foster parents...the ultimate volunteer

The key to providing the highest quality of care to children is the recruitment, training and retention of foster parents. Without them, all of Kaleidoscope's efforts would be futile.

The recruitment of quality foster families willing to meet the medical and emotional demands our children present is paramount. This past year began a joint public-private public awareness campaign, which is the first of its kind providing a coordinated, united, and well-researched message to encourage people to become foster parents.

Kaleidoscope will continue working over the next year to raise awareness of the great need for unconditional services for children who have fallen victim to tragedy. Through education and awareness, we hope to increase the diverse pool of dedicated foster parents to provide the quality, family-centered community-focused care these children would otherwise not have.

As long as children continue to suffer from abuse, there is a need for us as a civilized society to take in the most vulnerable and—through knowledge, creativity, hard work and sufficient funding—provide them with the best care that can help them have a bright future. Kaleidoscope exists to fulfill this need.

Through your donation and/or involvement, you can give kids a chance to have a happy life – a good life. Share your compassion and consider joining Kaleidoscope and help a child trust and believe again.



www.kaleidoscope4kids.org