



# FACT SHEET

## History and Purpose

Kaleidoscope exists to provide services and coordinate available resources to meet the diverse needs of children who have suffered severe violence and neglect and have special needs, often as a direct result of their abuse. The people who volunteer for, work for and donate to Kaleidoscope connect vulnerable children with what they need and deserve: loving families caring unconditionally so all kids have a chance to lead healthy, productive, independent and happy lives.

A group of concerned and caring professionals founded Kaleidoscope in 1973 to serve the hundreds of children who had been sent out of Illinois for care. Through a state initiative, these children were returned to Illinois and Kaleidoscope began accepting the children with complex emotional and physical problems that resulted from their traumatic abuse and neglect. Kaleidoscope has a history of pioneering care for children and families that has gained national acclaim and created models for other programs to follow.

## Kaleidoscope's kids

Over 4,000 kids in Chicago are in substitute care due to abuse and neglect, and many of those kids suffer severe emotional distress, physical disabilities or medical conditions - often resulting directly from their abuse. They get moved from one placement to the next, learning to reject before getting rejected.

State and other foster agencies refer 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.

The agency 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 Kaleidoscope. Known in the 1980s and 1990s as an agency of last resort, we are turned to first, preventing children from going through unnecessary trauma, instability and feelings of displacement and rejection.

## An innovative response

Kaleidoscope recruits and rigorously trains foster parents to handle challenging behaviors. These amazing, devoted foster parents receive continuous support from a *team* of Kaleidoscope staffers, helping the child find stability through unconditional care from a family, not an institution.

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, we succeed in attaining a 24% permanency rate, which means that a quarter of the children at Kaleidoscope are adopted or receive permanent guardianship.

## Mission

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

## Vision

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

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Kaleidoscope's three program areas 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.

## 1. Therapeutic Foster Family Care

*Unconditional care in a family environment for foster kids with special needs*

Located in Blue Island, Therapeutic Foster Family Care programs provide family living and specialized services to over 60 children and youth each year. Many of these youth have experienced numerous previous placements, have been institutionalized, have severe mental health needs or multiple disabilities, are young parents 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. Therapeutic Foster Family Care ensures that children and youth will not be denied the experience of family and community life.

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

Kaleidoscope offers adolescent parents who are wards of the state the opportunity to learn effective parenting skills and accept responsibility for themselves and their children while they are in foster care. Foster parents are specially trained to care for both the adolescent parent and baby, and to serve as a role model for the teenager so she can better parent her own child.

## 2. Transitional Living Services

*Independent living skills for youth 18-21 years old*

Kaleidoscope's **Youth Development Program (YDP)** teaches the independent living skills and affords the vocational and educational assistance needed to succeed at becoming self-sufficient young adults. Because of Kaleidoscope's philosophy of unconditional care, youth are not removed from the program for punitive reasons.

YDP teams assist youth, ages 18-21, with areas needing improvement and build upon strengths. Teams initially concentrate on stabilizing behavior, later shifting to establishing educational or vocational goals and learning basic independent living skills, such as budgeting and maintaining the apartment in which they live.

**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 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 run and sponsored by Kaleidoscope and is made possible by donations 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*

**Systems of Care**, or 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 with a community focus. Each year, state and other foster care agencies refer hundreds of children to Kaleidoscope for assessment and interventions intended to strengthen the foster family unit or reunite foster children with their birth families.

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.

Kaleidoscope's kids by gender, race, age		
n = 162		Fall 2009
Gender	Female	56%
	Male	44%
Race	African-American	85%
	Latino/a	8%
	White	3%
	Other	3%
Age	0-5	14%
	6-12	28%
	13-17	25%
	18+	33%

## Finance and Governance

Kaleidoscope's fiscal year 2010 budget is \$8.2 million, of which 85% goes directly to programs. Major sources of funding include government contracts, foundation, corporate and individual donations and special events. Kaleidoscope, Inc. is governed by a volunteer board of directors with Bill Binder serving as chair. Kaleidoscope is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable child welfare organization.