



# Supporting Unaccompanied Children in the U.S. Communities Where They Live

July 21, 2021





# Today's Event

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# Today's Event

- Related Report:  
*Strengthening Services for Unaccompanied Children in U.S. Communities*  
(<https://bit.ly/servicesUSuc>)
- Related Commentaries:  
*Hampered by the Pandemic: Unaccompanied Child Arrivals Increase as Earlier Preparedness Shortfalls Limit the Response* (<https://bit.ly/hampered21>)

*U.S. Government Makes Significant Strides in Receiving Unaccompanied Children but Major Challenges Remain* (<https://bit.ly/receivinguc21>)



## Strengthening Services for Unaccompanied Children in U.S. Communities

Mark Greenberg  
Kylie Grow  
Stephanie Heredia  
Kira Monin  
Essey Workie

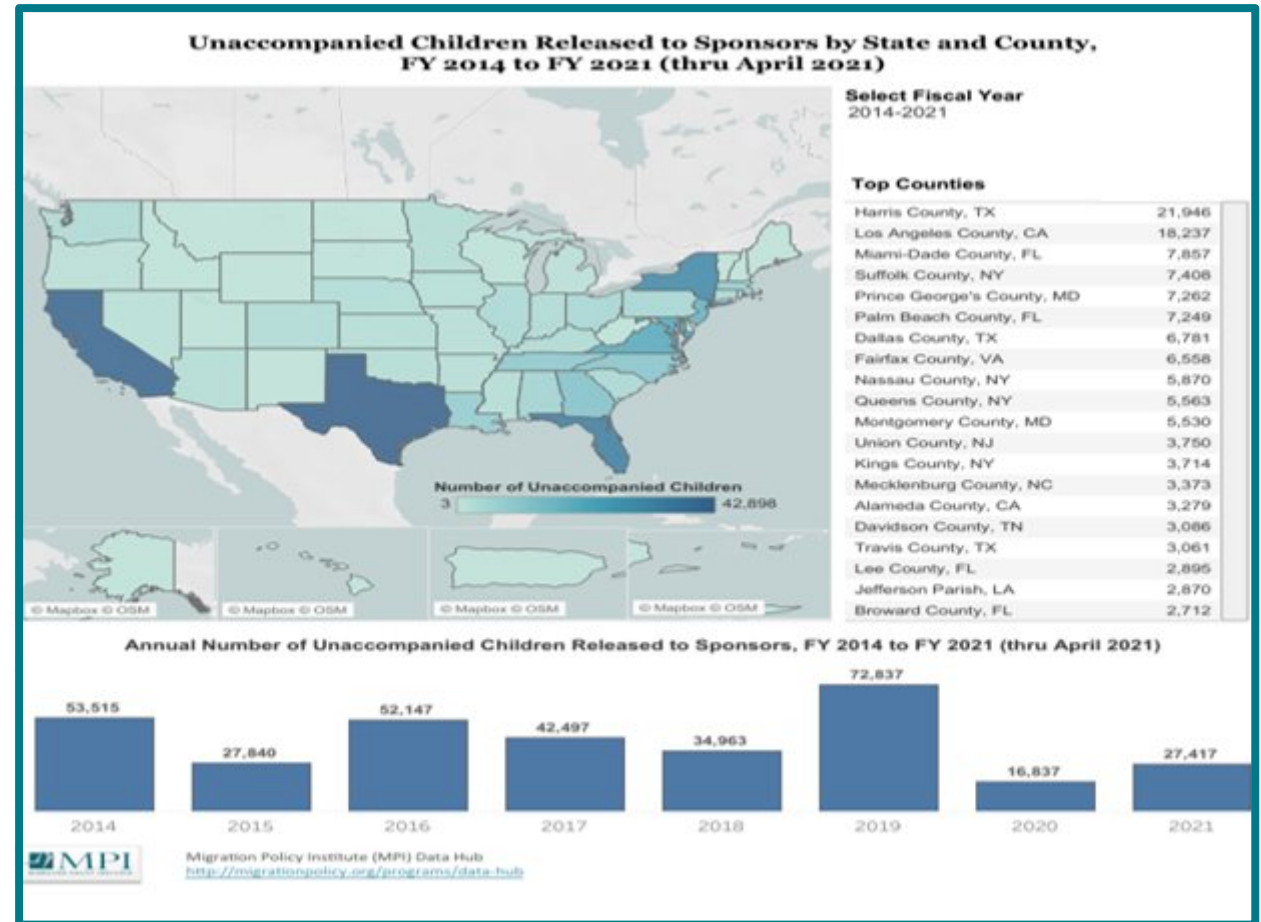


# Today's Event

- Related Data:

*Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State and County, FY 2014-Present*

(<https://bit.ly/ucdata1421>)



# Speakers



**Essey Workie**, Senior Policy Analyst, Migration Policy Institute (MPI)



**Mark Greenberg**, Senior Fellow and Director of Human Services Initiative, MPI



**Stephanie Heredia**, Research Assistant, MPI



**Matt Haygood**, Director of Children's Services, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants



**Marcela M. Ruiz**, Director of the Office of Equity, California Department of Social Services



**Kate Reen**, Director of Youth Initiatives, Northern Virginia Family Service

# Opening Speakers



**Essey Workie**  
Senior Policy Analyst,  
MPI

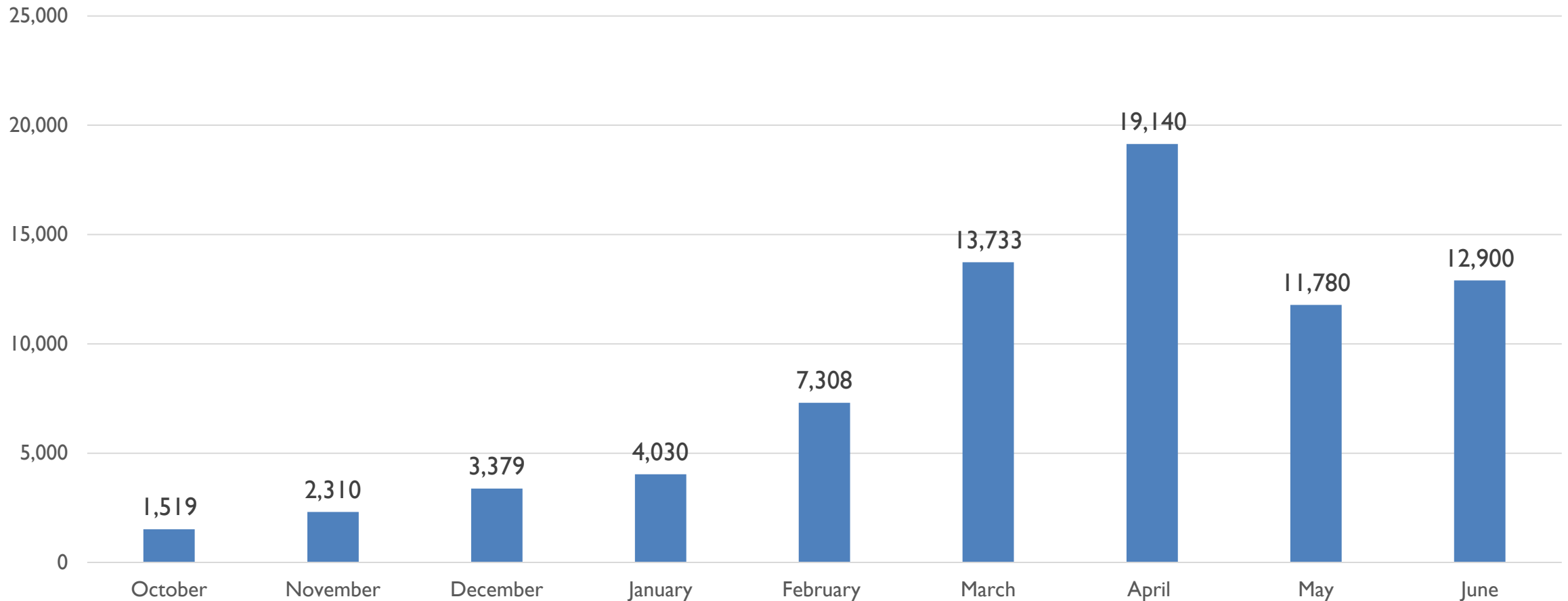


**Mark Greenberg**  
Senior Fellow and Director of Human  
Services Initiative, MPI



**Stephanie Heredia**  
Research Assistant,  
MPI

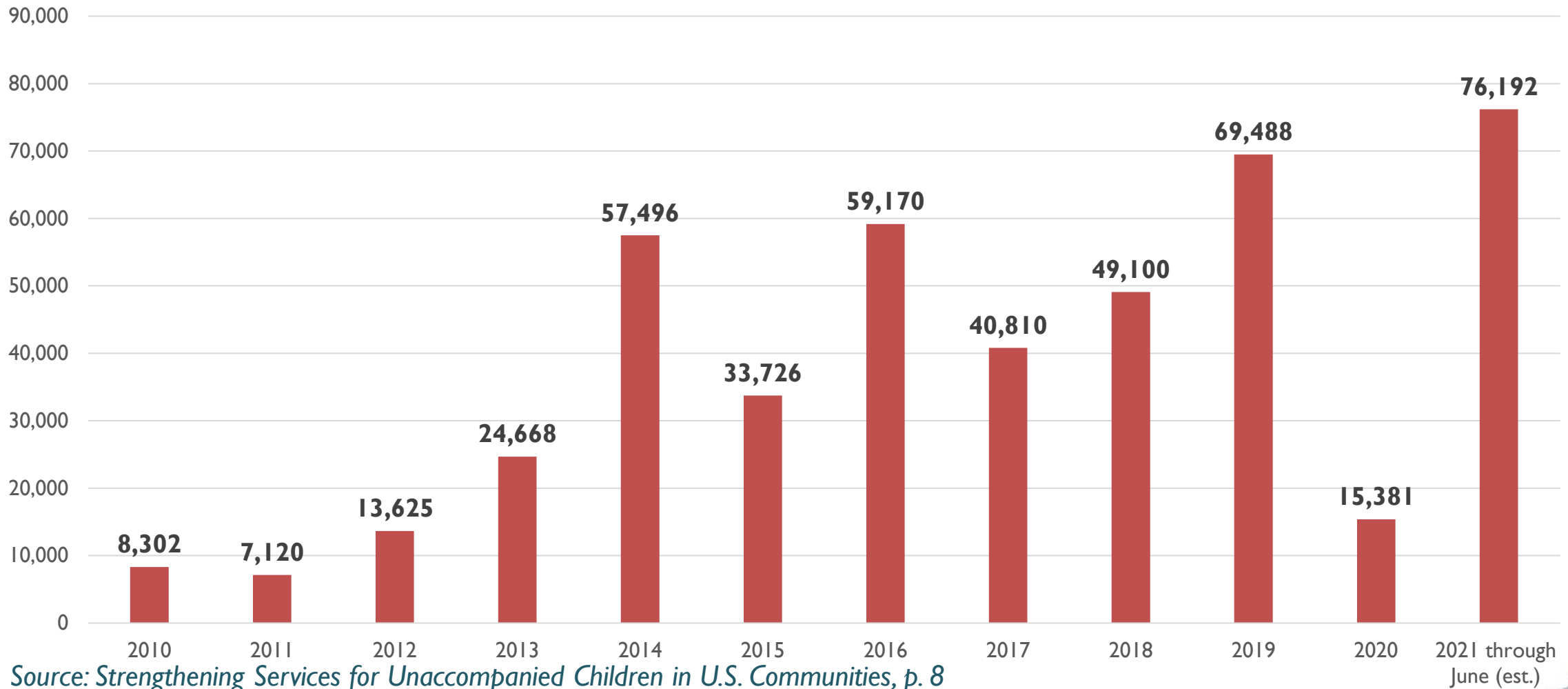
# Unaccompanied Children Referrals to ORR, 2021



Source: MPI calculations from average daily referrals available from HHS, Latest UC Data – FY 21 and HHS/DHS Unaccompanied Children Daily Report, July 1, 2021.



# Unaccompanied Children Referred to Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) since 2010



Source: *Strengthening Services for Unaccompanied Children in U.S. Communities*, p. 8





# Challenges Going Forward

- Improving Conditions in Emergency Intake Sites.
- Getting optimal balance in expediting releases to speed process while minimizing risks to children.
- Building licensed capacity to minimize future reliance on emergency facilities.
- Strengthening services to children and sponsors after release.



# ORR-Funded Services After Release

## For **All** Unaccompanied Children

- 30-day Safety and Well-Being Follow-up/Check-in Call
- Access to a hotline for service referrals

## For a **Minority** and **Certain Qualifying** Unaccompanied Children

- Legal Services
- Post-Release Services, typically for 90 days



# Selected Findings from the Report

1. Legal services are crucial for a child's case and for links to other services, but federally funded legal services are limited.
2. Schools play an important role as service hubs to link children to community resources.
3. There is a need for improved coordination between shelters, ORR-funded post-release service providers, and other community providers.



# Selected Recommendations

1. HHS should ensure the availability of **legal representation for all children** released from federal custody to parents and other sponsors through a combination of support for pro bono assistance and directly funded services.
2. ORR should extend **case management to all children** for the first 90 days after they are released from federal custody and identify circumstances in which it should be provided beyond that period.



# Selected Recommendations

3. ORR should **strengthen coordination** between 30-day follow-up calls and post-release case management and **ensure additional follow-up** when children cannot be reached in 30-day calls.
4. ORR should require **case consultations** between shelter staff and post-release service providers to strengthen continuity of care.
5. States, localities, and philanthropic organizations should **identify service gaps and seek to provide funding** to fill those gaps.

# Speaker



**Matt Haygood**  
Director of Children Services,  
U.S. Committee for Refugees  
and Immigrants  
(USCRI)



# USCRI'S HOME STUDY AND POST RELEASE SERVICES

**MATT HAYGOOD, LICSW**

Director of Children's Services

571-390-6600

[mhaygood@uscridc.org](mailto:mhaygood@uscridc.org)

[www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)



# HOME STUDY AND POST RELEASE SERVICES

- USCRI is one of eight grantees under the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) who provide these services nationally

## Home Studies

A home study is an in-depth investigation of a potential sponsor's ability to ensure a child's safety and well-being. The process includes background checks of the sponsor and adult household members, a home visit(s), a face-to-face sponsor interview, interviews with other household members, and an interview with the child.

## Post Release Services

ORR provides post-release services for children who would benefit from ongoing assistance by a social service agency. These services include assistance in connecting children and their sponsors to community-based resources and monitoring the safety and stability of the placement.

# USCRI'S POST RELEASE SERVICES (PRS)

The goal is that children are safe, their developmental needs are met, and they have the resources to thrive in their new community.

Home visitation model

Support the child and family during the transition, monitor the placement

Connect the family to affordable and culturally-appropriate mental health, medical, legal and other services

Assist with school enrollment

Advocate for the child and caregiver and address barriers to services

Educate the child and sponsor and build upon their strengths

# KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Arrival (Honeymoon phase) > Long-term Needs
- Resources are non-existent or not accessible in many places
- We are not adequately addressing mental health and legal needs
- Need for increased research to develop evidence-based practices
- Outcomes are worse when PRS is not provided immediately upon release
- Sponsors overwhelmingly want and appreciate the services

# SURGE OF 2021

- Not enough service providers to meet the need
  - COVID complications
- Timeliness is prioritized over safety
- Needs are not identified or addressed while in care
- Trauma experienced in Emergency Intake Sites

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All children should receive PRS
2. Federal government needs to fund more direct services post release (mental health, legal, medical, etc.)
3. Build capacity of local governments to meet the needs of unaccompanied children (school systems, child welfare)

# Speaker



**Marcela M. Ruiz**  
Director of the Office of  
Equity, California Department  
of Social Services

# California's Unaccompanied Children Programs

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**Marcela Ruiz**

Office of Equity

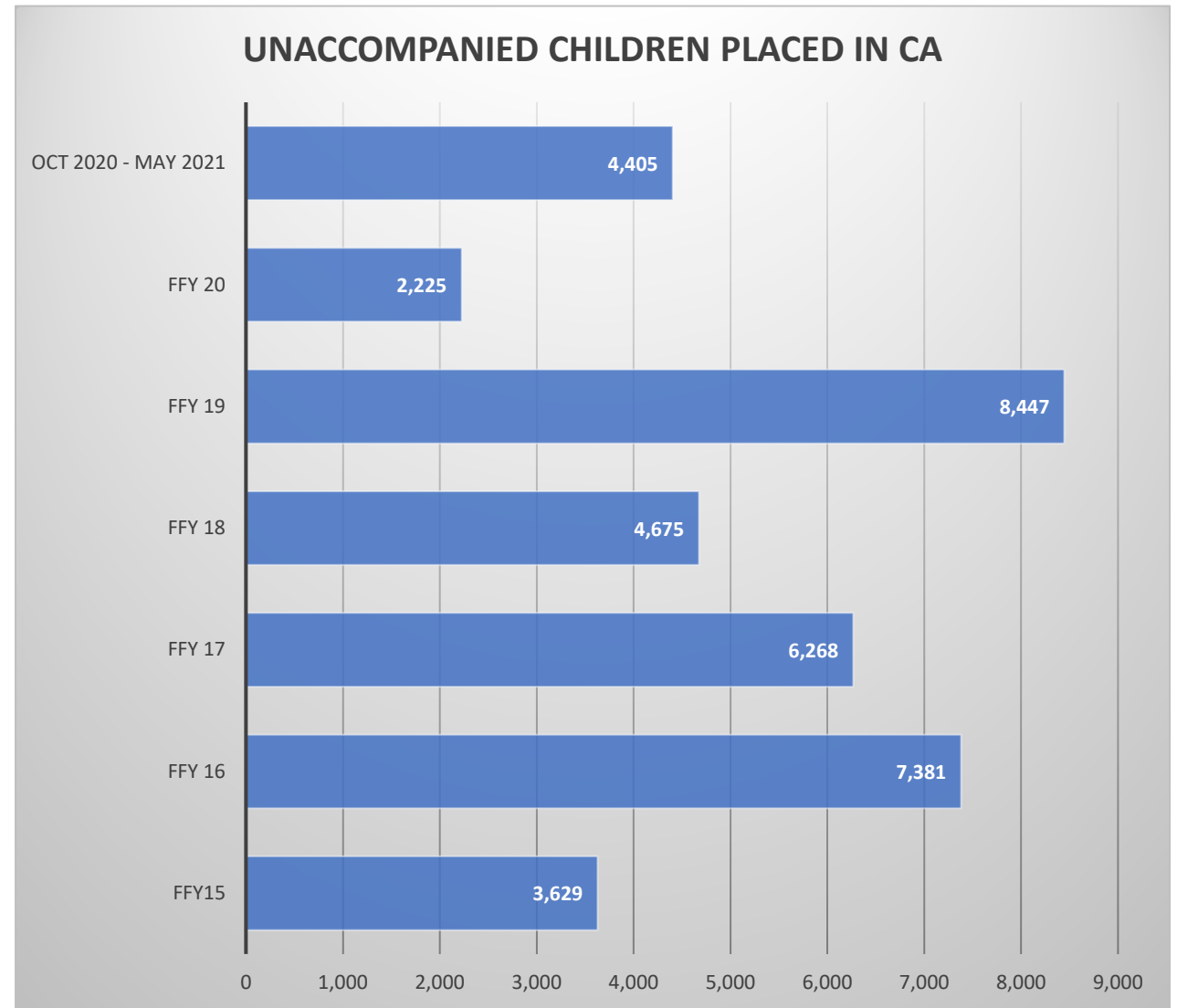
California Department of Social Services



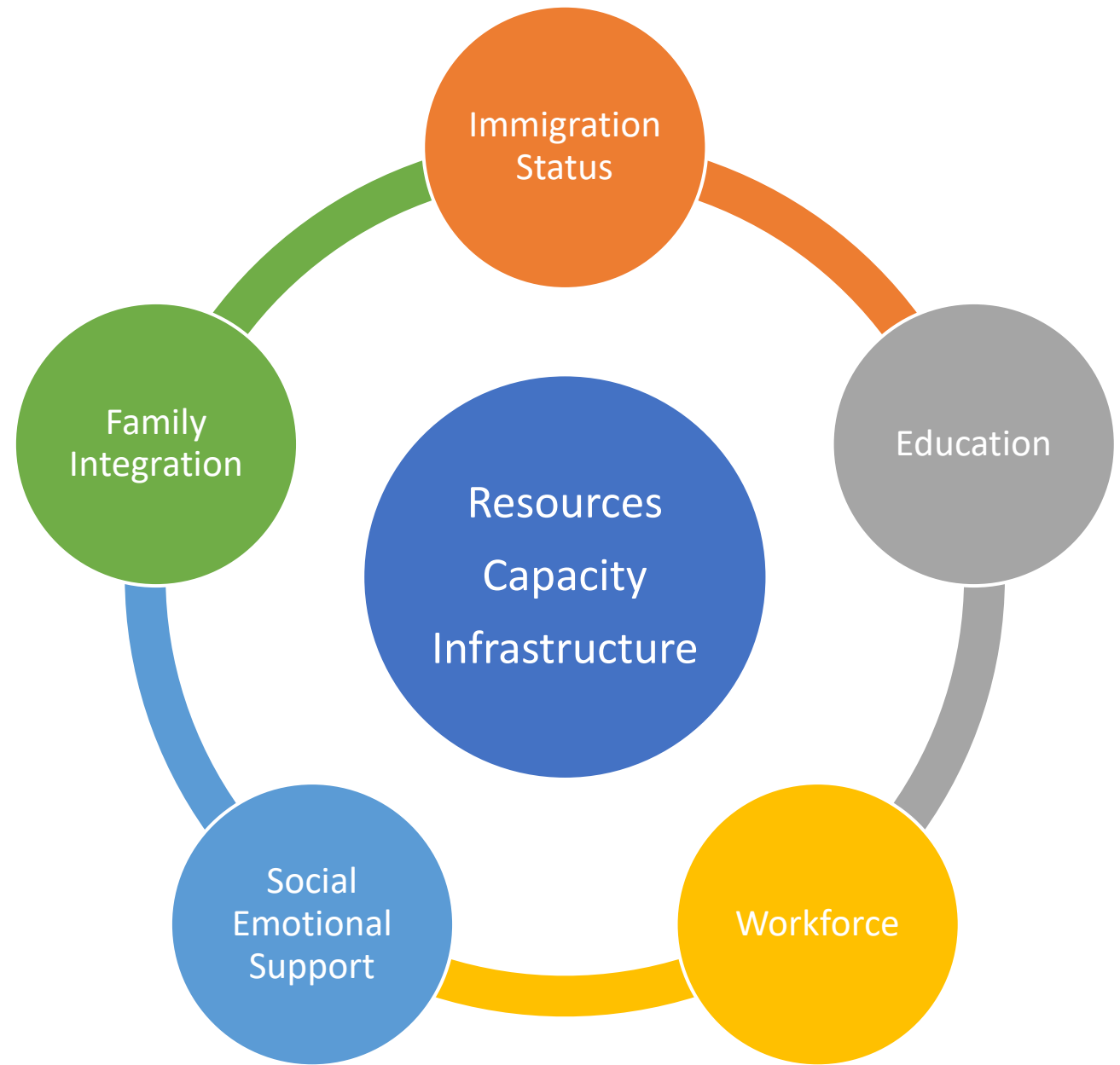


# UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA

- 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> greatest number of placements
- Across 17 counties
  - Los Angeles (1,731)
  - Alameda (301)
  - Fresno (162)
- Urban and rural
- Northern Triangle



# Unaccompanied Children Integration



# CALIFORNIA PROGRAMS

- Legal Services
- California Newcomer Education and Well-Being (CaNEW)
- Opportunities for Youth (OFY)



Marvin Cornejo came from El Salvador to the United States when he was 16 years old and Mendota alone and not speaking English. Now he is attending Fresno State and working to degree, pre-med. He is among many unaccompanied minors looking for a better life in the  
*KOHLRUSS CKOHLRUSS@FRESNOBEE.COM*



# RESOURCES FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

## Legal Services (2014-15)

- \$3 million
- 20 providers
- Full scope legal representation and technical assistance (Vera Institute)

## California Newcomer Education and Well-Being (CalNEW)

- \$10 million (expanded to \$15 million)
- 12 school districts
- Services: academic enrichment; civic engagement; community partnerships; consumer education; employment pathways; youth and family engagement.
- Evaluation and technical assistance (forthcoming)

## Opportunities for Youth (OFY)

- \$5 million
- 8 non-profit providers
- Services: case management, service navigation, mentorship, and family support workshops
- Evaluation and technical assistance

## State Unaccompanied Minor Coordinator



Elk Grove Unified School District  
Family Engagement Night



Hayward Unified School District  
Mechanics Club and Family Workshops



San Juan Unified School District  
Leadership Council



San Diego Unified School District  
Leadership Council



# Speaker



**Kate Reen**  
Director of Youth Initiatives,  
Northern Virginia Family  
Service (NVFS)

# NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

## Youth Initiatives Programs:

- The Family Reunification Program
- VPIP – Violence Prevention and Intervention Program
- The IPE Gang Prevention Program
- TVAP Provider



# NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

## Other NVFS Programs serving Unaccompanied Minors:

- Healthy Families
- Multicultural information, referral, and case management
- Immigration Legal Services
- Health Access
- Hunger Resource Center
- COVID-19 Crisis Case Management

# NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

## Individual and Family Services

- Therapeutic case management
- Trauma informed home visiting mental health services

## Group Based Services

- Psychoeducational groups and workshops for youth
- Workshops for Parents

## Community Outreach and Education Services

- Educational presentations to service providers, school staff, parent groups and other community members on effective strategies and enhancing community response to youth exposed to violence and experiencing reunification.

# NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

- **Population Specific Program Design**
  - Cultural Navigation
  - Tangible & Intangible Accessibility
  - Trauma Informed
- **Continuum of Services**
- **Timing & Intensity of Services**
- **Collaboration**



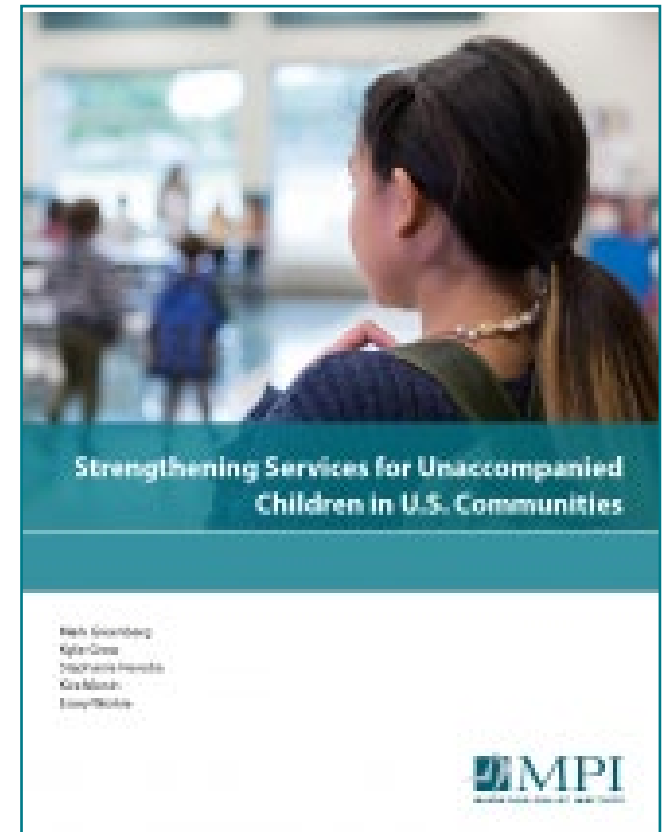
# Q&A

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# For More Information

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