Creating a Brighter Future for Children and Youth

One of our strategic areas of focus is creating more equitable outcomes for children and families in crisis so that children can grow up to be healthy, productive adults.

**Why is that important?** We know that children in foster care have poorer outcomes than their peers: only 58% of America’s youth in foster care graduate from high school and of the youth who age out of foster care, 20% are instantly homeless, only 3% graduate from college, and by age 26, half of them are arrested. And youth of color are disproportionately affected, for example, Black children are removed from their home more often, stay longer in foster care, and have poorer outcomes.

**What have we done?** Over the past five years, we have led multiple learning collaboratives among our children, youth and family members bringing in outside expertise, partners and resources from foundations to health insurers, industry leaders, and academia. Tangible results include: over 1,500 youth of color avoided re-arrest in South Dakota, over 100 children exited foster care to permanent families in Illinois, and over 350 youth of color exited homelessness to safe housing in Minnesota. Through work with 18 members in 17 states, we collectively improved the lives of over 7,000 children—which led us to create a bold goal to achieve equitable outcomes and improve the lives of 20,000 children by 2024.

**What are we doing now?** We recently launched two major initiatives: 1) the *Results Network* where we are working with 13 member organizations to address what it will take to stabilize families in their communities so that families remain intact and children do not have to be removed from their family; and 2) the *Congregate Care Initiative* to improve equitable outcomes and permanency for children in congregate care, develop more community-based resources for children, and reduce the number of children in congregate care. Harvard University’s Leadership for a Networked World will produce a white paper on policy and practice findings from the collaborative.

If you are interested in learning more or participating, please contact Alesia Frerichs at afrerichs@lutheranservices.org.

**Why us?** Lutheran social ministry organizations are known for quality, compassionate care and for enabling people from children to seniors, people with disabilities, the homeless, veterans and more to live a full life with dignity and respect. By coming together and bringing national partners and stakeholders to the table, we can gain new skills, new perspectives, and new ways of engaging community partners to create exponentially better outcomes for children.

And together we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children across the country—since on any given day, 100 Lutheran social ministry organizations work with over 40,000 families and 12,000 children in foster care.

The question is: if not us, then who?
In gratitude for all that you do,

Charlotte Haberaecker
President and CEO