



CONNECTIONS

March 2021

A F S

*Providing foster care, adoption
and mental health services for
Northern California foster youth
and families*

**The mission of Alternative Family Services
is to support vulnerable children and
families in need of stability, safety and
wellbeing in their communities.**

(800)300-1022 www.afs4kids.org

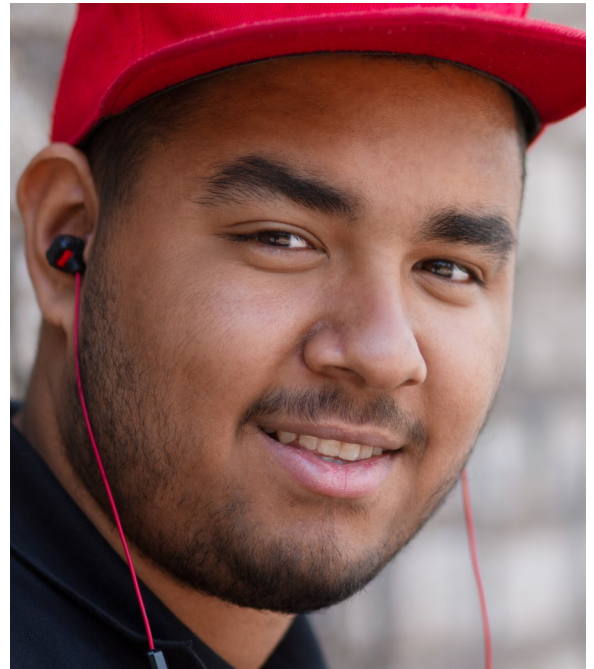


Marcus's Journey

Marcus* was placed with an AFS foster family eleven years ago when he was just 7 years old. Marcus, his 10-year-old sister, Nikki* and 12-year-old brother, Miles*, had all endured severe abuse and neglect. All three siblings were placed in Ms. Burn's* home. Upon assessment, it was determined Marcus had some developmental delays with his speech and behavior. Nikki had been caring for Marcus and protecting him more like a son than a brother. Nikki and Jake would speak for Marcus and make decisions for him.

From day one, Ms. Burn's let all the kids know that Marcus would be speaking and making decisions for himself.

[Read Marcus's Full Story Here](#)



RESOURCE PARENTING

- Learn about becoming an AFS resource parent [here](#)
- Consider fostering siblings, [watch now](#)
- Help teens in foster care, [watch now](#)
- Watch the [KTVU story on the foster parent shortage in San Francisco](#)

Meet the Sobalvarros

Here at AFS, we are lucky to work with some amazing [resource parents](#) including Jessica and Silvio Sobalvarro. The Sobalvarros started their fostering journey three years ago. Silvio's best friend had been in foster care and was ultimately adopted. That positive experience is what influenced Jessica's and Silvio's motivation to [foster-to-adopt](#) (fast-adopt). However, the process of fostering children has changed their outlook.

[Read the Sobalvarro's full story and watch their personal videos here.](#)



RESOURCE PARENT SHORTAGE

Job loss, homelessness, extreme stress, generational abuse and addiction are some reasons a family may spiral into crisis that leads a child or teen to be placed into foster care. COVID-19 has exacerbated the shortage of safe, stable and loving homes for foster youth.

If you have room in your heart and your home and have considered fostering a child or teen, you can start by reading, [What is a Resource Parent](#), filling out an [inquiry form](#) or reaching out to an AFS recruiter at

(800)300-1022 or
rfarecruitment@afs4kids.org



SAVE THE

D A T E

AFS Virtual Masquerade Gala

MAY 22, 2021

6:00pm (PDT)

Join us for this year's MASQUERADE live event where we celebrate AFS community achievements and tremendous influence on the lives of hundreds of local foster youth. Our annual gala, has been known as the "Party of the Year." This year to protect the health and safety of our staff, speakers and guests, we are pivoting to a virtual event celebrating the resilience of the organization and our loyal supporters.

All donors to the Masquerade Gala will receive an exclusive invitation to our culminating digital event with a LIVE AUCTION on Saturday, May 22 at 6pm PDT.

Our virtual event on May 22 will feature special tributes to our first responder staff, conversations with foster youth and CEO Jay Berlin about the struggles of the current climate and ability to bring communities together for the road ahead.

[BUY TICKETS](#)

CONTACT: Simone West, Director of Development, swest@afs4kids.org, (510)338-7769



Corporate Partnerships

Now more than ever, companies are seeking to get involved with organizations whose mission is to support underserved populations. AFS is looking to partner with organizations who are seeking to improve the lives of the most vulnerable youth and families.

[Learn about Corporate Partnerships here.](#)

Thank you to our current sponsors!



SYNOPSYS®





AFS Rising Star

— JOIN THE TEAM —
We're hiring!

Tonia Elliott

Tonia Elliott is one of the amazing staff members here at AFS. Tonia, a Caseworker out of the Vallejo office, was inspired to work with children and families and has been working at AFS for 10 years. Tonia started out as a Case Aide before transitioning to a Mental Health Rehab Specialist in the **Intensive Services Foster Care** program. Tonia went on to obtain her MS degree in Mental Health Counseling which led her to her current role as a Caseworker.

What are your main responsibilities at AFS?

I support vulnerable children and families, through advocacy, team meetings, and home visits.

What led you to work in this field?

I wanted to help children in need of support and advocacy.

Why did you choose to work at AFS?

I initially was laid off from a job and wanted to do a job working with children that was part-time. I loved working for AFS and eventually was offered a support role in the ISFC Program.

What are three best things about your job?

- Working with children.
- The relationships with my colleagues.
- The flexibility of the job. COVID-SIP I had to stay home and distance learn with my youngest child and AFS made that a reality for me.

What are some difficulties of your job?

- The difficult part of my job is hands down when I lose a child off my caseload and when colleagues I work with move on from AFS.

What are some misconceptions about foster care you would like to address?

- Foster care is actually a useful system to help children and their families get back on track with their lives.
- Foster parents and their experience offer safe places for youth to regain something that was lost within their family experiences.

Tell us about one impactful moment you've had since working at AFS.

The first time one of my young clients made me aware that he was aware of his Father's passing at 4 years old. I was saddened to hear this but, in the moment, I truly saw what resilience looked like.

Please tell us about a particularly memorable AFS success story!

I have many success stories in my 10 years with AFS. Success for me is an adoption or a reunification that results in continued permanency.

What is an interesting fact about you that others wouldn't expect?

I have three children in different stages of life. A year ago, I was blessed to have a new status as a grandmother to my grandson who is a year old this month.

What's one piece of advice you would provide to someone just starting out in a similar role?

Self-care leads to longevity and helps to promote resilience and wellness.

Interview by, Matt Kaplan, AFS Content Manager



Bukola Mabadeje

has been working with children in different capacities for as long as she can remember – from taking care of her young cousins as a pre-teenager to setting up a makeshift school for under-schooled kids in her native

Nigeria just fresh out of college, to volunteering with Junior Achievement and teaching fifth-graders in Illinois about money as a working adult.

These days, as a mother of 3, Bukola is ever so thankful for the stability and security she and her husband have been able to provide their children with, which is why she is invested in the mission of AFS. She joined the Board of AFS to support in any way possible an organization that understands that we can't be cavalier about the vulnerable children in our midst.

Bukola Mabadeje is an attorney specializing in commercial finance, community development finance and real estate finance and works in San Francisco, California. You can find Bukola not taking advantage of the beautiful hiking trails abundant in the Bay Area, instead, reading a book whenever taking care of the aforementioned three children permits.

New Board Members



Inverleith Fruci

is the daughter of immigrants from South China who was also raised by my paternal grandmother while both parents worked to provide for my brother

and me a better life in Oakland. Included in our household was my two cousins who lived with us while their parents lived in another town running a restaurant.

My grandmother shared her bed with my brother and older cousin. I shared my twin bed with my younger cousin. I had the head of the bed and his head was at the foot. We were cozy. Reflecting back, I can see now how my parents instilled upon me the value of hard work and the importance of family caring for each other no matter what.

Click [here](#) to read all the AFS Board Member's quotes about why they're on the board.



AFS Corporate Partnerships

Adam Reiner, Board Chair
Resource Development Committee

Adam currently serves as President and CEO of Sakura of America, an arts, crafts and writing instrument manufacturer, headquartered in Hayward, CA. Prior to Sakura, Adam

spent twenty years at the Clorox Company in various leadership roles. Adam joined the AFS Board in 2019.

"I'm excited and energized to serve as the AFS Resource Development Chair. We know that foster youth face enormous challenges in the best of times and resource development plays a crucial role in supporting them. As we look forward, our priorities will focus on creatively engaging and building awareness with community partners and donors in our mission and work.

Additionally, we have a goal of embedding and nurturing a Culture of Philanthropy throughout AFS, which starts by cultivating the understanding around how fundraising and community engagement is core to our success in fulfilling the AFS mission."

"I believe deeply that knowing you can change the trajectory of a child's life is critical to making a real difference in the world. I believe that early impacts can have significant and lasting change.

I'm an immigrant from Syria who was raised by a single mom who was an emergency room nurse in Oakland for more than thirty years. I'm the benefactor of people in my life, especially in my youth, that took particular interest in me that helped create a point of inflection and influence that changed the trajectory of my life. This support changed my life's outlook and very much contributed to the person I am today.

I believe in paying it forward with wealth and/or wisdom and the AFS Family shares these common views about being able to make a meaningful difference in a child or teenager's life."

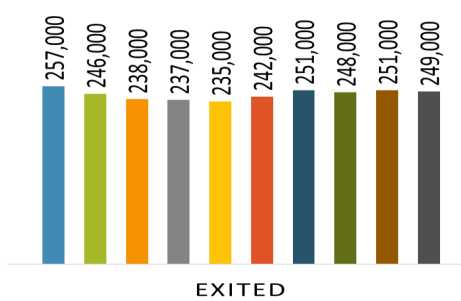
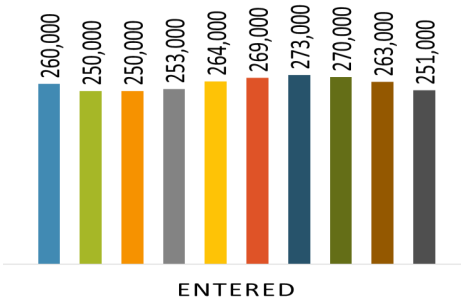
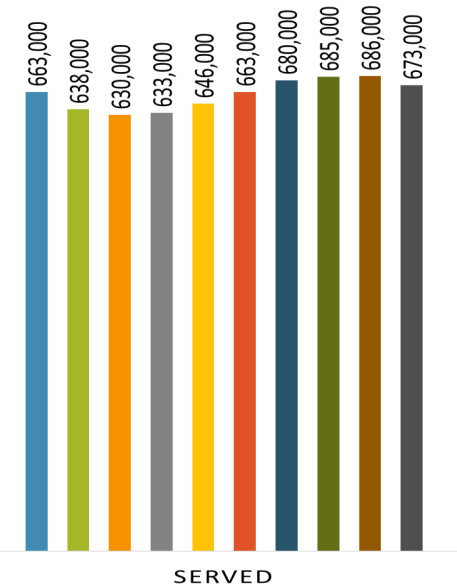
~ Karim Toubba



Foster Care Trends

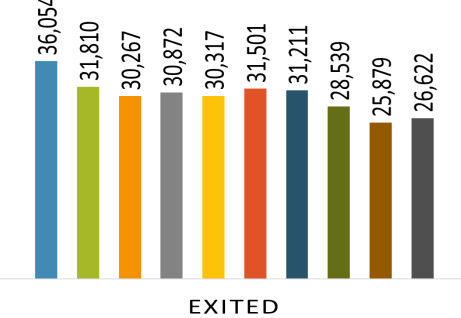
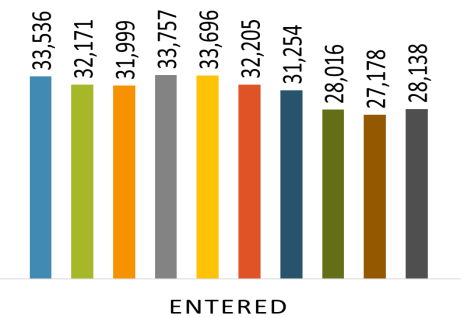
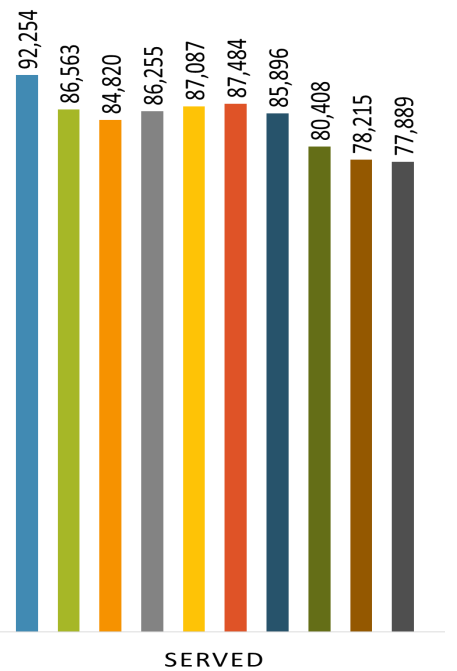
National & California 2010-2019
Data from AFCARS

UNITED STATES



2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

CALIFORNIA



In 1999, CA had 109,276 youth in foster care compared to 51,219 in 2019

While the number of youth entering care has not changed dramatically, the length of stay in care has decreased significantly due to the California's focus of family preservation and reunification.

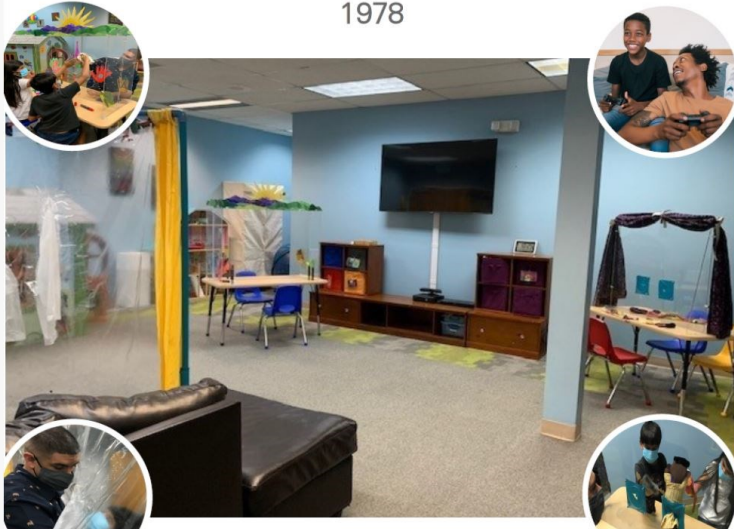
AFS Wins National 2020 Innovative Practices Award for its Enhanced Visitation Model

Enhanced Visitation Model: Foster Care

A safe, compassionate and engaging visitation model during COVID-19

AFS has been creating safe and permanent connections
for foster youth and families since

1978



AFS was recently named the winner of the 2020 Innovative Practices Award by The Council on Accreditation (COA). The award highlights the work that AFS is doing to provide therapeutic visitation support and services to foster youth and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AFS's Enhanced Visitation Model, funded with the assistance of the **Walter S. Johnson Foundation**, incorporates risk assessment and visit planning tools to assist staff in developing transparent and equitable visitation plans for all families. They have coupled this with replicable visitation activities or venues that can safely provide a continuum of healthy visit experiences regardless of risk level. To learn more about the award-winning visitation model, [please check out this video](#) or [click here](#).

According to COA, the **Innovative Practices Award** identifies, documents, and celebrates examples of successful approaches to management and service delivery practices adopted by our accredited organizations. The purpose of the Innovative Practices Award is to amplify the effect of one great idea by elevating it to the national stage and offering it as a resource for direct service providers, leadership, researchers, and advocates across the full spectrum of human services.

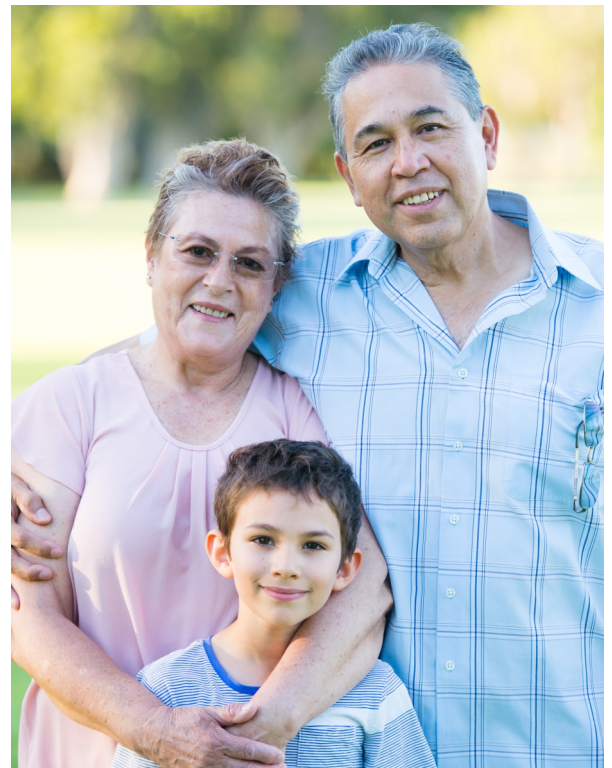
KINSHIP CARE

For every one child formally placed in foster care (either with a relative or otherwise), there are 19 others who go to live with a family member, usually a grandparent, outside the foster care system, according to **Generations United**, an advocacy organization for kinship parents.

At AFS, our foster care program will train relatives to become approved resource parents so they may have access to the same resources available to traditional resource parents.

To learn more, fill out this [inquiry form](#) or reach out to an AFS recruiter at

(800)300-1022 or
rfarecruitment@afs4kids.org





FACTSHEETS FOR FAMILIES | SEPTEMBER 2020

Parenting in Racially and Culturally Diverse Adoptive Families

This factsheet created by the **Child Welfare Information Gateway** provides information to help families support their child in developing a healthy racial and cultural identity and live a vibrant multicultural life. It discusses the importance of examining thoughts and biases and preparing a child to live in a society where race has a major impact on individual lives. This factsheet can be used as a resource for information on some of the potential rewards and challenges that come with choosing to live a multicultural and multiracial family life.

[Click here
for fact sheet](#)

AFS Office Locations

Alternative Family Services - Oakland Facility #015201154

401 Roland Way #150, Oakland, CA 94621

Homes for youth in the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa

Programs: Foster Care, Adoption, Mental Health, Training for Alameda & Contra Costa Counties

Alternative Family Services - San Francisco Facility #385201811

250 Executive Park Blvd. #4900, San Francisco, CA 94134

Homes for youth in the following counties: San Francisco, Santa Clara

Programs: Foster Care, Adoption, Mental Health, Emergency Placement, Parenting for Permanency College (training for SF County resource parents)

Alternative Family Services - Santa Rosa Facility #496803276

1421 Guerneville Road #218, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Homes for youth in the following Counties: Marin, Napa, Sonoma

Programs: Foster Care, Adoption, Mental Health

Alternative Family Services - Sacramento Facility #347005069

8795 Folsom Blvd #101, Sacramento, CA 95826

Homes for youth in: Sacramento, San Joaquin

Programs: Foster Care, Adoption

Alternative Family Services - San Rafael Facility #216803574

361 3rd Street Suite G, San Rafael, CA 94901

Caring for youth from: Marin County

Programs: Transition Aged Youth, Transitional Housing Program

Alternative Family Services - Vallejo Facility #487005364

160 Glen Cove Marina Road #102, Vallejo, CA 94591

Homes for youth in the following counties: Solano

Programs: Foster Care, Adoption, Trainings for Solano County

The Gathering Place: Alameda County Visitation Center - Oakland

401 Roland Way #100, Oakland, CA 94621

Caring for families from: Alameda County

Programs: Therapeutic Visitation

The Gathering Place: Alameda County Visitation Center - Pleasanton

5167 Johnson Drive, Pleasanton, CA 94588

Caring for families from: Alameda County

Programs: Therapeutic Visitation

Stockton Office Space

2529 W March Lane 95207

Used as needed for trainings and visitations for San Joaquin County families. Not staffed, does not receive mail.