



## RESEARCH BRIEF

# NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

## A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF AN OVERLOOKED CHILD WELFARE POPULATION

### About this Study

To date, little to nothing is known about Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) children in foster care although they are overrepresented in some of the child welfare systems in the United States and experience challenges stemming from structural colonialism and displacement. To highlight this often-overlooked population in child welfare research, the current study applied an indigenous model to understand who the NHPI children are in foster care by descriptively examining their sociodemographic, family of origin, geographic characteristics, as well as their placement status with relatives or foster parents who identify as NHPI. Data came from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System with a focus on the 2018 entry cohort (N = 763). One-way analysis of variance and chi-square analysis were used. Results showed that NHPI children in foster care were school-aged, most commonly entered foster care due to neglect, and were most likely to be placed with relatives. Non-relative foster parents were more likely than relative foster parents to care for NHPI children with disabilities, sexual abuse histories, and parental incarceration. Within non-relative foster families, those where at least one foster parent identified as NHPI were more likely to care for NHPI children with behavior problems or parental illness, compared to non-relative foster families where no foster parent identified as NHPI. NHPI children in relative foster families experienced the least placement disruptions, but relative foster families tended to be more socioeconomically disadvantaged and a smaller proportion of them received monthly foster care payments than non-relative foster families. The results suggest that child welfare practitioners and policymakers should prioritize financially supporting relatives as part of ensuring NHPI children's wellbeing and preserving their connections to family and culture.

### Conclusion

There is a lack of research on NHPI children in foster care, and this descriptive study is a step towards recognizing the vulnerabilities of this population and understanding where NHPI children come from and where they are placed. Interweaving indigenous understandings of NHPI families is important and moves us towards the development of preventive programs and practices that are grounded in the culture and values of the community being served. Advocacy for policies that provide economic support for NHPI foster children and their caregivers, including relative foster parents, would be an important next step to rectifying the inequities of the current system.

### KEY FINDINGS

- *Little is known about Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) children in foster care although they are overrepresented in some U.S. child welfare systems.*
- *Using national data, the current study aimed to understand who the NHPI children are in foster care.*
- *NHPI children in foster care were school-aged, most commonly entered foster care due to neglect, and were most likely to be placed with relatives.*
- *However, relative foster families were more socioeconomically disadvantaged and a smaller proportion received foster care payments than non-relative families.*
- *Financially supporting relatives should be prioritized as part of ensuring NHPI children's wellbeing and preserving their connections to family and culture.*

### ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study is part of a larger research agenda focused on understanding and improving the health and wellbeing of children in foster care, employing racially and culturally responsive approaches to service.

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