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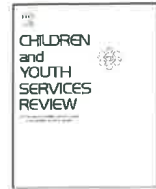
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Estimating minimum adequate foster care costs for children in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Although foster care homes play a crucial role in providing stable placements to children who enter the child welfare system due to maltreatment, there is currently no federal minimum rate nor standard methodology to establish adequate rates to support foster parents to meet these children's needs. Therefore, it is important to establish a model to estimate the real costs associated with caring for children to serve as a foundation for states to set adequate reimbursement rates. The objectives of this study are to: use the methodology of a 2007 study to establish foster care minimum adequate rates for children (MARC) based on the child's age and geographical location in every state; update the MARC with cost of living adjustments to 2016; examine changes in gaps between the MARC and the current foster care rates; and identify states that have made increases to their reimbursement rates, relative to the MARC over time. Results found that all but four states provide lower foster care reimbursement rates than the adequate costs in 2016. This study recommends that, at the federal level, enhanced precision in operational definitions of care categories could increase consistency in the way that states reimburse foster families. Additionally, findings provide policy suggestions to establish a national methodology standard and increase foster care rates to the level that will meet children's needs. This study will enhance the scant body of literature found on establishing an economic model to estimate foster care costs.

1. Introduction

As of September 30, 2015, there were 427,910 children in foster care in the United States, with 45% of these children living in non-relative foster family homes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [U.S. DHHS], 2016a). Foster care plays a vital role in the child welfare system by providing a resource to support a child's safety, well-being, and permanency (Geiger, Hayes, & Lietz, 2013; Pecora, Barth, Maluccio, Whittaker, & DePanfilis, 2009). Under the Social Security Act (section 475), "foster care maintenance payments" are defined as "payments to cover the cost of providing food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, a child's personal incidentals, liability insurance with respect to a child, and reasonable travel to the child's home for visitation and reasonable travel for the child to remain in the school" for children in foster care placements (U.S. Social Security Administration, 2016). Under this guideline, states set their basic rates for families providing care for a child, and the federal government and states share the cost of paying those rates; however, there is significant variability in rates among states (Committee on Ways and Means, 2016; DeVooght et al., 2013; Rosinsky & Connelly, 2016).

Foster care payments are likely to influence the quality of foster care. Studies showed that although foster care payments do not motivate foster parents to begin fostering children, adequate payments play an important role in foster care parents' satisfaction, and inadequate reimbursements and the concerns of financial burdens impact foster parents' decisions to discontinue fostering (Colton, Roberts, & Williams, 2008; Geiger et al., 2013; Kirton, Beecham, & Ogilvie, 2007; Macgregor, Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). These factors can affect children's well-being by causing unstable placements and increased foster placement changes.

A decade ago, DePanfilis, Daining, Frick, Farber, and Levinthal (2007) conducted a study to estimate the costs associated with providing basic care to a child in foster care in the United States, and established foster care *minimum adequate rates for children* (MARC). This study implemented through a collaboration between Children's Rights, Inc., the National Foster Parent Association, the American Public Human Services Association, and the University of Maryland, was the first attempt to differentiate the costs of caring for children in foster care based on age and geography in each of the fifty states. The study also calculated the discrepancy between what states paid and the foster care MARC.

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The purposes of the current study are to use the methodology of the 2007 foster care MARC study as a foundation, update the costs adjusting for inflation rates through 2016, and compare changes in gaps between states' foster care payments and the foster care MARC over time. This study also identifies states that have made increases in the adequacy of payments from 2007 to 2016. Finally, we will discuss policy implications for developing guidelines to establish adequate rates across the nation to improve retention and recruitment of foster parents and provide stable placements for children who come into foster care.

2. Background

Foster care services, including the payments to foster parents caring for children are funded by a combination of federal, state, and local funding (Committee on Ways and Means, 2016; U.S. DHHS, 2016b). Title IV-E federal foster care program pays a portion of the states' costs to provide care for maltreated children removed from homes. However, there is no federally required minimum rate, and different federal funding claiming practices by the states result in wide variations in funding among the states (Committee on Ways and Means, 2016; Rosinsky & Connelly, 2016). In addition, geographical differences in the cost of living, and the methods, if any, that states use to determine the amount of foster care payments have significant variability among foster care rates (DePanfilis et al., 2007). The current monthly foster care payments range from $232 in Wisconsin to $1003 in the District of Columbia, and the range is too wide to completely explain these factors. Thus, it is important to establish a standardized economic model to estimate adequate costs associated with caring for a child in foster care to serve as a foundation for states to support foster parents to meet children's needs.

Current foster care payments are provided to cover the expenses of caring for children, such as food, clothing, and allowances. Studies have found that many foster parents were either not aware of, or did not consider, payments when deciding to become a foster parent, and most parents begin fostering due to altruistic motivations (Colton et al., 2008; Kirton et al., 2007). However, studies also showed that financial consideration is associated with foster parents' satisfaction (Daniel, 2011; Geiger et al., 2013; Marcenko, Brennan, & Lyons, 2009), and the greatest predictor of intent to continue fostering is foster parent satisfaction (Cooley, Farineau, & Mullis, 2015; Geiger et al., 2013; Mihalo, Strickler, Triplett, & Trunzo, 2016). Further, research indicates that keeping foster parents satisfied requires not only increased payments but also adequate support and training systems (Cooley et al., 2015; Goodman & Steinfeld, 2012; Rome, Blome, & Raskin, 2011). Combining these efforts for support, training, and financial stability through increased payments are vital to the child welfare system and can produce positive outcomes for both foster children and foster parents (Daniel, 2011; Geiger, Piel, & Julien-Chinn, 2017; Marcenko et al., 2009).

Additionally, due to the reimbursement rates providing insufficient coverage of the basic needs for raising a child, children in foster care might not always receive the care they need and may deter community members from becoming or remaining foster parents. Many foster families have low to moderate incomes and can experience substantial financial stress when foster care reimbursement payments cover substantially less than the actual cost of care (Freundlich, 2014). Studies found that inadequate reimbursements and additional financial strain placed upon foster parents causes them to consider no longer fostering (Geiger et al., 2013), and sufficient financial support is critical in recruiting foster parents and maintaining foster children in their home (Daniel, 2011). Foster parents report that fostering incurs expenses that exceed foster care payments and often pay out of their own pockets to meet the needs of foster children in their care (DeVooght et al., 2013), and there is a need for more reimbursement for daily living expenses for their foster children and the specific needs related to their physical,

emotional, and behavioral health (Marcenko et al., 2009). Taken together, previous research highlights the importance of adequate foster care payments for the retention of services and to adequately attend to children's needs.

The objectives of this study are the following: (1) use the methodology of the 2007 foster care MARC study (DePanfilis et al., 2007) to update the costs adjusting for inflation rates through 2016 and collect data on states' updated foster care payments in 2016; (2) examine changes in gaps over time between the foster care MARC and the current rates that states reimburse foster families for children in their care; (3) identify states that made increases in the adequacy of payments based on the MARC from 2007 to 2016; and (4) discuss policy implications for retention and recruitment of foster parents and providing stable placements for children.

3. Method

3.1. Use of the original 2007 foster care MARC study

3.1.1. Cost estimates
The first phase of this study involved using the cost estimates established in 2007 (DePanfilis et al., 2007) as a foundation for the current study. The original study, briefly summarized here, was the first attempt to differentiate the costs of caring for children in foster care based on age and geography in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia. In 2007, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) surveyed child welfare agencies in 50 states and several counties, to collect information on their foster care rate-setting methodologies. Federal policy, the expert opinions of the project partners, and a national advisory group used existing data on the costs of caring for children. Estimates of the additional costs of caring specifically for children in foster care, and geographic costs of living variations were used to calculate the foster care MARC. National advisory group members included current and former foster parents, public child welfare agency administrators and staff, policy analysts and researchers, economists, advocates, and a pediatrician (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

The general expenditure categories and the specific cost of items included within those categories in the original foster care MARC were defined based on federal law, regulations, and policy guidance. The eight categories of allowable expenditures, as established in the Title IV-E Maintenance Payment Program of the Social Security Act are food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal incidentals, liability insurance, and transportation associated with visits with the child's biological family and school (U.S. Social Security Administration, 2006). These categories provided the basic framework for the calculation of minimum adequate rates for children[1] (DePanfilis et al., 2007). Table 1 presents specific definitions of eight cost categories and a summary of the estimates for each of the categories of the 2007 MARC study.

3.1.2. Data and sample
In 2007, once these cost categories were clearly defined, a secondary data analysis was conducted using the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) data. The CES is a national study of household spending habits, family earnings, and household characteristics conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). The CES collects data from family members using both a quarterly interview survey and a one-week diary survey focusing on consumer units (generally a family dwelling within a household; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). The CES is the same data

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[1] It should be noted that this project developed an estimate of the basic costs associated with caring for a child in foster care. This economic model did not include expenses for special needs such as the needs of a child with a physical disability or medical condition. (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

Table 1

Cost categories definitions and estimates of the 2007 foster care MARC study.

Categories	Definitions and estimates of the 2007 MARC
Food	The food calculation in the foster care MARC utilized the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) estimate for food costs for children within different age groups and increased that estimate by 10%, following the multiplier used by McHugh (2002), to adjust for added costs associated with behavioral issues of foster children related to, for example, hoarding food or additional nutritional needs.
Clothing	The clothing category reflected expenditures on clothing items, coin operated laundry and dry cleaning. The CES estimate for costs of clothing items for children within different age groups were doubled to account for wear and tear and replacement of lost items. Following McHugh (2002), costs of coin-operated laundry were increased by 50% to adjust for added cleaning costs, consistent with the adjustment to utility costs. No adjustment was made to the cost of dry cleaning as it was not expected that the clothes of children in foster care were frequently dry cleaned. The foster care MARC was intended to cover regular ongoing expenses related to clothing and did not include funds to purchase an entire basic wardrobe, which some children needed when they entered care.
Shelter	Cost estimates for the shelter category reflected utilities, furniture and appliances and household linens. Following a study of the cost of caring for children in foster care by McHugh (2002), the CES estimate of the costs of utilities was increased by 50% to adjust for added costs associated with increased uses of water and electricity. The foster care MARC did not include costs related to mortgage or rent, as foster parents were typically expected to maintain their homes independent of the foster care payment. In addition, the foster care MARC did not include the costs of preparing a home to meet the needs of the child such as initial furnishings or safety features (e.g., window guards). These items must be installed before the child is placed in the home and they would not be included in a monthly foster care rate tied to a child.
Daily supervision	The daily supervision category in the foster care MARC reflected costs for occasional baby sitting or other child care in the home or in the home of someone else and one week of residential summer camp for ages 5–18. Estimates of the cost of occasional babysitting for children aged 0–4 were based on the CES data of expenditures of babysitting in the home or the home of someone else. Given that children in foster care often have behavioral issues, older children in foster care, even teenagers, typically require supervision. Thus, the daily supervision portion of the foster care MARC included babysitting costs for children of all ages. The babysitting expenses in the CES for children ages 0–4 were used as a base and adjusted to estimate the costs of occasional babysitting for older children. Cost estimates for occasional babysitting for children ages 5–13 years old and 14–18 years old were derived by calculating 40% of the expenses of the 0–4 age group for 9 months of the year to account for the need for supervision after school or on weekends during the school year and 100% for 3 months when children are on summer vacation. Additional costs associated with one week of residential camp were added to the daily supervision costs for ages 5–18. (A. McMunn, personal communication, April 23, 2007). The foster care MARC did not include the cost of full-time child care that would be paid by the working foster parents.
School supplies	The foster care MARC included the costs of books, recreational lessons and other school supplies. Recreational lessons reflected the expense of providing children in foster care with "normalizing" childhood experiences such as after-school sports or creative arts activities. Following McHugh (2002), the CES estimate for costs of books and other school supplies was doubled to adjust for wear and tear.
Personal incidentals	The personal incidentals category in the foster care MARC reflected costs associated with reading materials, videos, toys and hobbies, gas and motor oil, fees and admissions, and an additional 15% of other costs to reflect the cost of personal hygiene items, cosmetics, and over the counter medications. Following McHugh (2002), the CES estimates for costs of reading materials video games, toys, and hobbies were doubled to adjust for wear and tear.
Liability and property damage insurance	The estimates provided by Foster Parent Professionals, Inc. (B. Eshbaugh, personal communication, August 17, 2006) were incorporated into the foster care MARC and adjusted for costs of living. The estimates provided were based on policies sold to child welfare agencies, not to individual foster parents and thus the project partners believed the estimates reflected a more conservative calculation of actual costs than if an individual foster parent were to purchase such insurance.
Reasonable travel to the child's home for visitation and school	The costs of transporting a child in foster care to visit with his/her family can vary significantly. In some cases, a foster parent may walk across the street to take a child to visit with his/her parents. In other cases, transportation might take the form of a subway or bus ride. In yet other circumstances, a foster parent may have to drive a child 90 miles away for a visit. And finally, in some jurisdictions, caseworkers or case aides–not foster parents—provide this transportation for children in foster care. Due to this significant variability, the foster care MARC did not include an average expense for travel for a child's visitation with his/her biological family. An average amount would underpay some foster parents and overpay others. The foster Care MARC also excluded the costs of travel to administrative case/judicial reviews or to medical visits (beyond routine medical visits). These expenses were also variable and in addition, were not reimbursable under the Title IV-E Maintenance program, which provided the framework for the calculation of the foster care MARC. However, these costs were reimbursable under other federal funding mechanisms, including the Title IV-E Administration Program and the Title XIX Medicaid Program. The general travel costs were associated with daily provision of basic care to a child and were included in the foster care MARC under the personal incidentals expense category.

Source: DePanfilis, Daining, Frick, Farber, & Levinthal. (2007). Hitting the M.A.R.C.: establishing foster care minimum adequate rates for children brief report. Children's Rights Inc. http://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/bitstream/10713/487/1/Hitting%20the%20MARC.pdf

source used by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to produce its annual report on the costs of raising a child (Lino, 2006). However, in 2006 the figures released each year by the USDA were based on earlier calculations using 1990–92 CES data, adjusted for inflation (Lino, 2006). For the 2007 foster care MARC study, the CES data from 2002 to 2004 were used, as the data reflected more current spending patterns, and the data were inflation-adjusted using the general consumer price index to the price level of the second half of 2006 (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

The sample of the 2007 MARC study included 1213 families from the CES data. These families had at least one child at any time in the year and no more than two children during the year were included in the analysis of all categories except those for which expenditures were

summarized by the BLS (DePanfilis et al., 2007). The families included in the analysis had incomes ranging from $40,000 to $100,000 to represent at least 200% and more than 500% of the federal poverty level for a family of four. The sample's median income was $62,761. In 2005, the median income in the U.S. for a family of four was $67,019, suggesting that the data used in the analyses were largely representative of similarly sized middle-class families (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

Instead of calculating simple averages across children of all ages, averages for specific ages of children were constructed. Children were divided into the following age categories: 0–4 years old, 5–13 years old, and 14–18 years old. States typically report foster care rates for children age 2, 9 and 16, which are the mid-points of the age categories utilized for this project. The estimates were then adjusted to reflect the

cost-of living variation in the 48 contiguous United States based on the state cost of living indices for 2003 developed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (Berry, Fording, & Hanson, 2004). Adjustments for Hawaii, Alaska, and the District of Columbia were not available and therefore the U.S. average was used for these three jurisdictions. These relative costs of living were applied to the inflation adjusted amounts that were used in the analyses and then were adjusted with weights provided by the U.S. BLS so that the results would be nationally representative (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

3.2. Updating the MARC to 2016 and collecting information of 2016 foster care payments from states

To estimate the foster care MARC for 2016, the 2007 foster care MARC dollar values and inflation rates were adjusted to 2016-dollar values using the Consumer Price Index Research Series Using Current Methods (CPI-U-RS) inflation adjustment rates as reported by the U.S. BLS (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). The 2016 CPI-U-RS inflation adjustment rate is the latest year reported by the U.S. BLS.

Then, all states' 2016 foster care payments data were collected from state websites or by phone calls with state foster care administrators. The collected information showed that all state foster care rates are based on one or more of the following factors: age, placement in the community, or child's level of need, and setting the foster care payment rate varies in methodology from state to state. Thirty-five states use both the age of the child and their level of care to determine the standard foster care rate. Seven states including California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming only used age categories to determine the foster care rate for children in care. For these states, rates were highest among infants (0–12 months) as well as teenagers (13–18 years old). Only examining a child's level of need such as basic needs or special treatment needs was used to set the rate in five states (i.e., Kansas, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and West Virginia). Standard foster care rates in Alaska and North Carolina were determined using both the child's age and placement in the community. Pennsylvania was the only state to only use the child's placement in the community to determine rate standards while New York used all three factors to set their rates accordingly.

In addition to foster care rates, some states also provide additional financial assistance to families through reimbursements for the child's expenses not included in their rate calculations. Reimbursement payments include but are not limited to the following expenses: Clothing, damaged property, childcare, transportation, education and graduation, passport, celebration and holidays, baby supplies, recreational activities, sibling visits, kinship provider supports and training, vacation, equipment, emergency medical services, and a one-time expense. States often have limits on the number and amount of reimbursements a child can receive. Clothing was the most common reimbursement that 37 states provided to foster homes (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, District of Columbia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). Twelve states including California, Connecticut, Florida, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming did not provide information on any additional reimbursements that they provide to their resource families.

A previous study also showed that some states (i.e., Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) use the USDA rates as guidelines for increasing the foster care rate (DeVooght et al., 2013). In addition to USDA recommendations, states like Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina often require budgetary and legislative approval before

passing an increase in the foster care rates (DeVooght et al., 2013). Timeframe for foster care rate reviews range from annually (e.g., Indiana) to no set timeframe (e.g., Kentucky) (DeVooght et al., 2013).

Although states set their foster care rates based on multiple factors and provide specialized financial assistances in addition to their basic rates, this study did not review these additional specialized rates due to limited information access, and considered basic foster care rates to compare with the MARC, which is the minimum adequate rates associated to care for a child. Comparison between each state's current foster care rates and the MARC showed the gaps between payments made to foster parents and the adequate costs of providing care.

Examination of changes in the gaps between 2007 and 2016 was also conducted to identify which states made increases in foster care rates over time and reduced the gaps. This analysis provides evaluation of each state's foster care rate and implications to establish a standard methodology to ensure adequate foster care rates meeting children's and foster parents' needs.

4. Results

4.1. 2016 foster care MARC by cost categories

The eight cost categories for the foster care MARC include food, shelter, school supplies, daily supervision, clothing, child's personal incidentals, liability insurance, and reasonable travel to child's homes. Each category describes the cost when adjusting for cost of living differences between states. The 2007 monthly average costs for each category and updated 2016 costs are presented in Table 2. The national average of the 2016 monthly foster care MARC is $749 per month for children ages 0–4 years old, $859 per month for children 5–13 years old, and $941 per month for children 14–18 years old.

Table 3 provides additional details about each of the cost categories within the foster care MARC and the costs of living adjustments that were made to develop rates for the 50 states and the District of Columbia in 2007 and 2016. When adjusting for cost of living differences, annual food expenditures per child for the three designated age groups at the state level in 2016 range from $2253 to $3108 for the 0–4 age group, $2495 to $3443 for the 5–13 age group, and $2802 to $3867 for the 14–18 age group. The national averages for the entire shelter category in 2016 are $2622 for children 0–4 years old, $2732 for children 5–13 years old, and $2953 for children 14–18 years old. The school supplies category in the 2016 foster care MARC includes costs for books, recreational lessons, and other school supplies. As expected

Table 2
Monthly estimates by cost categories.

Cost categories	Year	US national average: monthly foster care MARC		
		Ages 0–4	Ages 5–13	Ages 14–18
Food	2007	$179	$198	$222
	2016	$213	$236	$264
Shelter	2007	$184	$191	$207
	2016	$219	$227	$247
School supplies	2007	$3	$9	$11
	2016	$4	$11	$13
Daily supervision	2007	$18	$59	$59
	2016	$21	$70	$70
Clothing	2007	$77	$78	$93
	2016	$92	$93	$111
Personal incidentals	2007	$161	$178	$190
	2016	$192	$212	$226
Liability insurance	2007	$8	$8	$8
	2016	$10	$10	$10
Total monthly costs[a]	2007	$629	$721	$790
	2016	$749	$859	$941

[a] Note: due to the rounding of the categories, the total monthly costs do not always match with the sum of the categories.

Table 3
Foster care minimum adequate rate for children (foster care MARC): annual expenditures by cost subcategories in 2007 and 2016 (unit: $).

Child's age		Food			Shelter			School supplies			Daily supervision [1]			Clothing			Personal incidentals			Liability and property damage insurance		
		0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18
US	2007	2143	2373	2666	2202	2294	2480	34	108	135	217	709	709	923	931	1114	1928	2134	2278	99	99	99
	2016	2552	2826	3175	2622	2732	2953	40	129	161	258	844	844	1099	1109	1327	2296	2541	2713	118	118	118
AL	2007	1933	2140	2404	1986	2068	2236	31	97	122	195	640	640	833	839	1005	1739	1925	2054	89	89	89
	2016	2302	2548	2863	2365	2463	2663	37	116	145	232	762	762	992	999	1197	2071	2292	2446	106	106	106
AK[a]	2007	2143	2373	2666	2202	2294	2480	34	108	135	217	709	709	923	931	1114	1928	2134	2278	99	99	99
	2016	2552	2826	3175	2622	2732	2953	40	129	161	258	844	844	1099	1109	1327	2296	2541	2713	118	118	118
AZ	2007	2067	2289	2571	2124	2212	2392	33	104	130	209	684	684	890	898	1075	1859	2058	2197	96	96	96
	2016	2461	2726	3062	2529	2634	2848	39	124	155	249	815	815	1060	1069	1280	2214	2451	2616	114	114	114
AR	2007	1901	2105	2365	1954	2035	2200	30	96	120	192	629	629	819	825	988	1710	1893	2020	88	88	88
	2016	2264	2507	2816	2327	2423	2620	36	114	143	229	749	749	975	982	1177	2036	2254	2405	105	105	105
CA	2007	2335	2586	2905	2400	2500	2702	37	118	147	236	773	773	1006	1014	1214	2101	2326	2482	108	108	108
	2016	2781	3079	3459	2858	2977	3218	44	141	175	281	920	920	1198	1207	1446	2502	2770	2956	129	129	129
CO	2007	2245	2486	2793	2307	2403	2598	36	113	141	227	743	743	967	975	1167	2020	2236	2386	104	104	104
	2016	2673	2960	3326	2747	2862	3094	43	135	168	270	885	885	1152	1161	1390	2405	2663	2841	124	124	124
CT	2007	2576	2852	3204	2647	2757	2980	41	130	162	260	852	852	1110	1118	1339	2317	2565	2737	119	119	119
	2016	3068	3396	3815	3152	3283	3549	49	155	193	310	1015	1015	1322	1331	1594	2759	3054	3259	142	142	142
DE	2007	2128	2357	2648	2187	2278	2463	34	107	134	215	704	704	917	924	1106	1915	2120	2262	98	98	98
	2016	2534	2807	3153	2604	2713	2933	40	127	160	256	838	838	1092	1100	1317	2280	2525	2694	117	117	117
DC[a]	2007	2143	2373	2666	2202	2294	2480	34	108	135	217	709	709	923	931	1114	1928	2134	2278	99	99	99
	2016	2552	2826	3175	2622	2732	2953	40	129	161	258	844	844	1099	1109	1327	2296	2541	2713	118	118	118
FL	2007	1974	2186	2456	2029	2113	2284	31	99	124	200	653	653	850	857	1026	1776	1966	2098	91	91	91
	2016	2351	2603	2925	2416	2516	2720	37	118	148	238	778	778	1012	1021	1222	2115	2341	2498	108	108	108
GA	2007	2003	2218	2492	2058	2144	2318	32	101	126	203	663	663	863	870	1041	1802	1995	2129	93	93	93
	2016	2385	2641	2968	2451	2553	2760	38	120	150	242	790	790	1028	1036	1240	2146	2376	2535	111	111	111
HI[a]	2007	2143	2373	2666	2202	2294	2480	34	108	135	217	709	709	923	931	1114	1928	2134	2278	99	99	99
	2016	2552	2826	3175	2622	2732	2953	40	129	161	258	844	844	1099	1109	1327	2296	2541	2713	118	118	118
ID	2007	2050	2270	2550	2107	2194	2372	32	103	129	207	678	678	883	890	1066	1844	2042	2179	95	95	95
	2016	2441	2703	3037	2509	2613	2825	38	123	154	246	807	807	1051	1060	1269	2196	2432	2595	113	113	113
IL	2007	2251	2493	2801	2314	2410	2605	36	113	142	228	745	745	970	978	1170	2025	2242	2393	104	104	104
	2016	2681	2969	3335	2756	2870	3102	43	135	169	272	887	887	1155	1165	1393	2411	2670	2850	124	124	124
IN	2007	2146	2377	2670	2205	2297	2483	34	108	135	217	710	710	924	932	1116	1931	2137	2281	99	99	99
	2016	2555	2831	3179	2626	2735	2957	40	129	161	258	845	845	1100	1110	1329	2299	2545	2716	118	118	118
IA	2007	2132	2361	2652	2191	2281	2467	34	107	134	216	705	705	918	926	1108	1918	2123	2265	99	99	99
	2016	2539	2812	3158	2609	2716	2938	40	127	160	257	840	840	1093	1103	1319	2284	2528	2697	118	118	118
KS	2007	2140	2370	2662	2199	2290	2476	34	108	135	216	708	708	922	929	1113	1925	2131	2274	99	99	99
	2016	2548	2822	3170	2619	2727	2948	40	129	161	257	843	843	1098	1106	1325	2292	2538	2708	118	118	118
KY	2007	1939	2147	2412	1993	2075	2244	31	98	122	196	642	642	835	842	1008	1744	1931	2061	90	90	90
	2016	2309	2557	2872	2373	2471	2672	37	117	145	233	765	765	994	1003	1200	2077	2299	2454	107	107	107
LA	2007	1931	2139	2403	1985	2067	2235	31	97	121	195	639	639	832	839	1004	1737	1923	2053	89	89	89
	2016	2299	2547	2862	2364	2461	2661	37	116	144	233	761	761	991	999	1196	2068	2290	2445	106	106	106
ME	2007	2337	2588	2908	2402	2502	2705	37	118	147	236	774	774	1007	1015	1215	2103	2328	2484	108	108	108
	2016	2783	3082	3463	2860	2979	3221	44	141	175	281	922	922	1199	1209	1447	2504	2772	2958	129	129	129
MD	2007	2140	2370	2662	2199	2290	2476	34	108	135	216	708	708	922	929	1113	1925	2131	2274	99	99	99
	2016	2548	2822	3170	2619	2727	2948	40	129	161	257	843	843	1098	1106	1325	2292	2538	2708	118	118	118
MA	2007	2610	2891	3247	2682	2794	3020	41	132	164	264	864	864	1125	1133	1357	2348	2600	2774	121	121	121
	2016	3108	3443	3867	3194	3327	3596	49	157	195	314	1029	1029	1340	1349	1616	2796	3096	3303	144	144	144
MI	2007	2202	2438	2739	2263	2356	2548	35	111	138	223	729	729	948	956	1145	1981	2193	2340	102	102	102
	2016	2522	2903	3262	2695	2806	3034	42	132	164	266	868	868	1129	1138	1363	2359	2611	2787	121	121	121
MN	2007	2253	2495	2802	2315	2411	2607	36	114	142	228	745	745	970	978	1171	2026	2244	2394	104	104	104
	2016	2683	2971	3337	2757	2871	3104	43	136	169	272	887	887	1155	1165	1394	2413	2672	2851	124	124	124

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Table 3 (continued)

Child's age		Food			Shelter			School supplies			Daily supervision [1]			Clothing			Personal incidentals			Liability and property damage insurance		
		0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18
MS	2007	1892	2095	2353	1944	2024	2189	30	95	119	191	626	626	815	821	983	1702	1884	2010	87	87	87
	2016	2253	2495	2802	2315	2410	2607	36	113	142	227	745	745	971	978	1171	2027	2243	2394	104	104	104
MO	2007	2137	2367	2659	2196	2288	2473	34	108	134	216	707	707	921	928	1111	1923	2129	2272	99	99	99
	2016	2545	2819	3166	2615	2725	2945	40	129	160	257	842	842	1097	1105	1323	2290	2535	2706	118	118	118
MT	2007	2038	2257	2536	2094	2181	2358	32	103	128	206	674	674	878	885	1060	1833	2030	2166	94	94	94
	2016	2427	2688	3020	2494	2597	2808	38	123	152	245	803	803	1046	1054	1262	2183	2417	2579	112	112	112
NE	2007	2167	2400	2696	2227	2320	2508	34	109	136	219	717	717	934	941	1127	1950	2158	2303	100	100	100
	2016	2580	2858	3210	2652	2763	2987	40	130	162	261	854	854	1112	1121	1342	2322	2570	2742	119	119	119
NV	2007	2173	2407	2704	2234	2326	2515	34	110	137	220	719	719	936	944	1130	1955	2165	2310	100	100	100
	2016	2588	2866	3220	2660	2770	2995	40	131	163	262	856	856	1115	1124	1346	2328	2578	2751	119	119	119
NH	2007	2469	2734	3071	2537	2642	2857	39	124	155	250	817	817	1063	1072	1283	2221	2459	2624	114	114	114
	2016	2940	3256	3657	3021	3146	3402	46	148	185	298	973	973	1266	1277	1528	2645	2928	3125	136	136	136
NJ	2007	2558	2832	3182	2628	2737	2960	40	129	161	259	846	846	1102	1111	1330	2301	2547	2718	118	118	118
	2016	3046	3372	3789	3129	3259	3525	48	154	192	308	1007	1007	1312	1323	1584	2740	3033	3237	141	141	141
NM	2007	2046	2266	2545	2103	2190	2368	32	103	129	207	677	677	881	888	1064	1841	2038	2175	95	95	95
	2016	2436	2698	3031	2504	2608	2820	38	123	154	246	806	806	1049	1057	1267	2192	2427	2590	113	113	113
NY	2007	2456	2720	3056	2524	2629	2842	39	124	154	248	813	813	1058	1067	1277	2210	2446	2611	114	114	114
	2016	2925	3239	3639	3006	3131	3384	46	148	183	295	968	968	1260	1271	1521	2632	2913	3109	136	136	136
NC	2007	2147	2378	2671	2207	2298	2485	34	108	135	217	711	711	925	932	1116	1932	2138	2282	99	99	99
	2016	2557	2832	3181	2628	2736	2959	40	129	161	258	847	847	1102	1110	1329	2301	2546	2717	118	118	118
ND	2007	1991	2204	2476	2046	2131	2303	32	100	125	201	659	659	858	864	1035	1791	1983	2116	92	92	92
	2016	2371	2625	2948	2436	2538	2742	38	119	149	239	785	785	1022	1029	1232	2133	2361	2520	110	110	110
OH	2007	2162	2395	2690	2222	2314	2502	34	109	136	219	716	716	932	939	1124	1945	2154	2298	100	100	100
	2016	2575	2852	3203	2646	2756	2979	40	130	162	261	853	853	1110	1118	1338	2316	2565	2736	119	119	119
OK	2007	1900	2104	2363	1952	2033	2198	30	96	119	192	629	629	818	825	988	1709	1892	2019	88	88	88
	2016	2263	2505	2814	2324	2421	2617	36	114	142	229	749	749	974	982	1177	2035	2253	2404	105	105	105
OR	2007	2187	2422	2720	2247	2340	2530	35	110	138	221	724	724	942	950	1137	1967	2178	2324	101	101	101
	2016	2604	2884	3239	2676	2787	3013	42	131	164	263	862	862	1122	1131	1354	2342	2594	2767	120	120	120
PA	2007	2288	2534	2847	2352	2449	2648	36	115	144	231	757	757	986	994	1190	2058	2279	2432	106	106	106
	2016	2725	3018	3390	2801	2916	3153	43	137	171	275	901	901	1174	1184	1417	2451	2714	2896	126	126	126
RI	2007	2452	2727	3063	2530	2635	2849	39	124	155	249	815	815	1061	1069	1280	2215	2452	2617	114	114	114
	2016	2932	3247	3647	3013	3138	3393	46	148	185	297	971	971	1263	1273	1524	2638	2920	3116	136	136	136
SC	2007	1961	2172	2440	2016	2099	2270	31	99	123	198	649	649	845	852	1020	1764	1953	2085	91	91	91
	2016	2335	2586	2906	2401	2500	2703	37	118	146	236	773	773	1006	1015	1215	2101	2326	2483	108	108	108
SD	2007	2158	2389	2684	2217	2309	2497	34	109	136	218	714	714	929	937	1122	1941	2149	2293	100	100	100
	2016	2570	2845	3196	2640	2750	2973	40	130	162	260	850	850	1106	1116	1336	2311	2559	2731	119	119	119
TN	2007	1957	2168	2435	2012	2095	2265	31	99	123	198	648	648	843	850	1018	1761	1949	2080	90	90	90
	2016	2330	2582	2900	2396	2495	2697	37	118	146	236	772	772	1004	1012	1212	2097	2321	2477	107	107	107
TX	2007	1898	2102	2362	1951	2032	2197	30	96	119	192	628	628	818	824	987	1708	1891	2018	88	88	88
	2016	2250	2503	2813	2323	2420	2616	36	114	142	229	748	748	974	981	1175	2034	2252	2403	105	105	105
UT	2007	2159	2391	2686	2219	2311	2498	34	109	136	218	715	715	930	938	1122	1942	2150	2295	100	100	100
	2016	2571	2847	3199	2642	2752	2975	40	130	162	260	851	851	1107	1117	1336	2313	2560	2733	119	119	119
VT	2007	2404	2662	2990	2470	2573	2782	38	121	151	243	796	796	1036	1044	1250	2162	2394	2555	111	111	111
	2016	2853	3170	3561	2941	3064	3313	45	144	180	289	948	948	1234	1243	1489	2575	2851	3043	132	132	132
VA	2007	2053	2284	2566	2120	2208	2387	33	104	130	209	683	683	889	896	1072	1855	2054	2192	95	95	95
	2016	2457	2720	3056	2525	2629	2842	39	124	155	249	813	813	1059	1067	1277	2209	2446	2610	113	113	113
WA	2007	2240	2480	2786	2302	2397	2592	35	113	141	227	741	741	965	973	1164	2015	2231	2380	104	104	104
	2016	2557	2953	3318	2741	2854	3087	42	135	168	270	882	882	1149	1159	1386	2399	2657	2834	124	124	124
WV	2007	1912	2117	2378	1964	2046	2212	30	96	120	193	633	633	824	830	994	1720	1904	2032	88	88	88
	2016	2277	2521	2832	2339	2436	2634	36	114	143	230	754	754	981	988	1184	2048	2267	2420	105	105	105

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Table 3 (continued)

Child's age		Food			Shelter			School supplies			Daily supervision [1]			Clothing			Personal incidentals			Liability and property damage insurance		
		0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18	0–4	5–13	14–18
WI	2007	2209	2446	2748	2270	2364	2556	35	111	139	223	731	731	952	959	1148	1987	2200	2347	102	102	102
	2016	2631	2913	3272	2703	2815	3044	42	132	166	266	870	870	1134	1142	1367	2366	2620	2795	121	121	121
WY	2007	2071	2293	2576	2128	2217	2396	33	104	130	209	685	685	892	899	1077	1863	2063	2201	96	96	96
	2016	2466	2731	3068	2534	2640	2853	39	124	155	249	816	816	1062	1071	1283	2218	2457	2621	114	114	114

Note: [1] daily supervision in these rates does not include regular day care for the working foster parent. Foster parents should be reimbursed for their actual costs for this expense, in addition to the foster care MARC.

a Since there was no cost-of-living adjustment available for Alaska, the District of Columbia and Hawaii, the foster care MARC reported here for these jurisdictions is the national average foster care MARC.

school supplies expenditures for children ages 14–18 are highest ($161 annually). Cost estimates for the daily supervision category in the 2016 foster care MARC reflect costs for babysitting or other child care in the home or outside of the home and one week of residential summer camp for children 5–18 years old. When adjusting for cost of living differences between states, the annual costs for daily supervision range from $227 to $314 for the 0–4 age group and from $745 to $1029 for both the 5–13 and the 14–18 age groups. Annual clothing expenditures in 2016 include $1099 for children 0–4 years old, $1109 for children 5–13 years old, and $1327 for youth aged 14–18 years old. Child's personal incidentals range from $2027 to $2796 for the 0–4 age group, $2243 to $3096 for the 5–13 age group, and $2394 to $3303 for the 14–18 age group. The liability insurance rate for all ages is $118 annually or approximately $10 per month in 2016.

4.2. Comparison of state rates in relation to the MARC

4.2.1. Discrepancy between states current foster care rates and MARC

Each state's current foster care payments and foster care minimum adequate rates that should be provided to meet children's needs are presented in Table 4. The foster care MARC rates are monthly estimated expenditures per child inflation-adjusted for 2007 and 2016 for the age groups specified as a national average and for specific states. These rates represent the foster care MARC that states can adopt to better cover the costs paid by foster parents. The 2016 foster care MARC rates are $749 for the 0–4 age group, $859 for the 5–13 age group, and $941 for the 14–18 age group, which are significantly higher than current national average rates of $555, $593, and $655 per month, respectively, for the three age groups. This finding shows that to meet the 2016 foster care MARC rates, average foster care rates require an increase of 35% for the 0–4 age group, 45% for the 5–13 age group, and 44% for the 14–18 age group. These gaps between the foster care MARC and current rates are larger than 2007. The gaps in 2007 were 29% for the 0–4 age group, 41% for the 5–13 age group, and 39% for the 14–18 age group. Between 2007 and 2016 the gap in funding needed to meet the MARC increased by 6% for children 0–4 years old, 4% for children 5–13 years old, and 5% for children aged 14–18 years old. When adjusting for cost of living differences among states, the foster care MARC in 2016 ranges from $661 to $912 for the 0–4 age group, $757 to $1046 for the 5–13 age group, and $830 to $1146 for the 14–18 age group. Massachusetts has the highest foster care MARC and Mississippi has the lowest, because of their respective state cost-of-living adjustments.

4.2.2. Gaps and changes over time in foster care MARC

Table 5 presents states listed in order of the states that meet the foster care MARC to the states that have larger gaps between current 2016 foster care rates and MARC. All but four states provide lower foster care rates than the MARC, minimum adequate rates. The District of Columbia, Mississippi, Montana, and North Dakota have foster care rates for children of all ages that meet or exceed the foster care MARC. However, nine states currently have foster care rates that would need to increase by up to 25% for at least one age group of children in order to hit the MARC. Twelve states currently have rates that should increase by 26% to 50% for at least one age group of children in order to hit the MARC. Thirteen states currently have foster care rates that should increase by 51% to 75% for at least one age group of children in order to hit the MARC. Three states currently have foster care rates that should increase by 76% to 100% for at least one age group of children in order to hit the MARC. Lastly, ten states currently have rates that should more than double for at least one age group of children in order to hit the MARC.

Table 6 presents changes in states' foster care rates over time. The gap between current foster care rates and foster care MARC changed over time for all states. Fifteen states made progress in regard to their current foster care rates and reduced their gaps between current foster care rates and foster care MARC in 2016 compared to 2007. The

Table 4
Foster care MARC compared to current foster care rates in 2007 and 2016 (alphabetical by state[1]).

Child's age		Current foster care rates ($)[a]			Foster care MARC ($)[b,c]			To hit the foster care MARC, current rates should increase by:		
		2	9	16	2	9	16	2	9	16
US average	2007	488	509	568	629	721	790	29%	41%	39%
	2016	555	593	655	749	859	941	35%	45%	44%
Alabama	2007	410	434	446	567	650	712	38%	50%	60%
	2016	463	488	501	675	774	848	46%	59%	69%
Alaska[d]	2007	652	580	688	629	721	790	***	24%	15%
	2016	749	850	920	749	859	941	***	0%	1%
Arizona	2007	793	782	879	606	695	762	***	***	***
	2016	644	633	714	722	828	907	12%	31%	27%
Arkansas	2007	400	425	475	558	639	701	39%	50%	48%
	2016	410	440	500	664	761	835	62%	73%	67%
California	2007	425	494	597	685	785	861	61%	59%	44%
	2016	688	783	859	816	935	1025	19%	19%	19%
Colorado	2007	348	392	423	659	755	828	89%	93%	96%
	2016	354	354	429	785	899	986	122%	154%	130%
Connecticut	2007	756	767	834	756	866	950	0%	13%	14%
	2016	791	800	867	900	1031	1131	14%	29%	30%
Delaware	2007	517	517	517	625	716	785	21%	38%	52%
	2016	397	397	511	744	853	935	87%	115%	83%
District of Columbia	2007	869	869	940	629	721	790	***	***	***
	2016	933	933	1003	749	859	941	***	***	***
Florida	2007	429	440	515	579	664	728	35%	51%	41%
	2016	439	451	527	689	791	867	57%	75%	64%
Georgia	2007	416	471	540	588	674	738	41%	43%	37%
	2016	457	517	589	700	803	879	53%	55%	49%
Hawaii	2007	529	529	529	629	721	790	19%	36%	49%
	2016	575	650	676	749	859	941	30%	32%	39%
Idaho	2007	274	300	431	602	689	756	120%	130%	75%
	2016	301	339	453	717	820	900	138%	142%	99%
Illinois	2007	380	422	458	661	757	830	74%	79%	81%
	2016	409	453	491	787	901	988	92%	99%	101%
Indiana	2007	760	760	760	630	722	791	***	***	4%
	2016	623	676	780	750	860	942	20%	27%	21%
Iowa	2007	454	474	525	626	717	786	38%	51%	50%
	2016	510	531	589	745	854	936	46%	61%	59%
Kansas	2007	603	603	603	628	720	789	4%	19%	31%
	2016	674	674	674	748	857	940	11%	27%	39%
Kentucky	2007	599	599	660	569	652	715	***	9%	8%
	2016	690	690	751	678	776	851	***	13%	13%
Louisiana	2007	380	365	399	567	649	712	49%	78%	78%
	2016	407	449	501	675	773	848	66%	72%	69%
Maine	2007	548	577	614	686	786	862	25%	36%	40%
	2016	502	502	502	817	936	1026	63%	86%	104%
Maryland	2007	735	735	750	628	720	789	***	***	5%
	2016	835	835	850	748	857	940	***	3%	11%
Massachusetts	2007	490	531	616	766	878	962	56%	65%	56%
	2016	632	712	754	912	1046	1146	44%	47%	52%
Michigan	2007	433	433	535	646	740	812	49%	71%	52%
	2016	524	524	626	769	881	967	47%	68%	54%
Minnesota	2007	585	585	699	661	758	830	13%	29%	19%
	2016	565	670	790	787	903	988	39%	35%	25%
Mississippi	2007	325	355	400	555	636	697	71%	79%	74%
	2016	685	788	862	661	757	830	***	***	***
Missouri	2007	271	322	358	627	719	788	131%	123%	120%
	2016	300	356	396	747	856	938	149%	141%	137%
Montana	2007	515	475	572	598	685	751	16%	44%	31%
	2016	878	831	916	712	816	894	***	***	***
Nebraska	2007	226	359	359	636	729	799	181%	103%	123%
	2016	608	700	760	757	868	951	25%	24%	25%
Nevada	2007	683	683	773	638	731	801	***	7%	4%
	2016	683	683	773	760	870	954	11%	27%	23%
New Hampshire	2007	403	439	518	724	830	910	80%	89%	76%
	2016	481	521	620	862	988	1084	79%	90%	75%
New Jersey	2007	553	595	667	751	860	943	36%	45%	41%
	2016	763	845	907	894	1024	1123	17%	21%	24%
New Mexico	2007	483	516	542	600	688	754	24%	33%	39%
	2016	490	523	549	714	819	898	46%	57%	64%
New York[e]	2007	504	594	687	721	826	906	43%	39%	32%
	2016	558	663	769	859	984	1079	54%	48%	40%
North Carolina	2007	390	440	490	630	722	792	62%	64%	62%
	2016	475	581	634	750	860	943	58%	48%	49%

Table 4 (continued)

Child's age		Current foster care rates ($)[a]			Foster care MARC ($)[b,c]			To hit the foster care MARC, current rates should increase by:		
		2	9	16	2	9	16	2	9	16
North Dakota	2007	370	418	545	584	669	734	58%	60%	35%
	2016	696	798	875	695	797	874	0%	0%	0%
Ohio[f]	2007	275	275	275	635	727	797	131%	164%	190%
	2016	304	304	304	756	866	949	149%	185%	212%
Oklahoma	2007	365	430	498	557	639	700	53%	49%	41%
	2016	461	535	601	663	761	834	44%	42%	39%
Oregon	2007	387	402	497	642	735	806	66%	83%	62%
	2016	575	655	741	765	875	960	33%	34%	30%
Pennsylvania[g]	2007	640	640	640	671	770	844	5%	20%	32%
	2016	647	647	950	799	917	1005	23%	42%	6%
Rhode Island	2007	438	416	480	723	828	908	65%	99%	89%
	2016	438	415	480	861	986	1081	97%	138%	125%
South Carolina	2007	332	359	425	576	660	723	73%	84%	70%
	2016	337	364	431	686	786	861	104%	116%	100%
South Dakota	2007	451	451	542	633	726	795	40%	61%	47%
	2016	478	478	574	754	865	947	58%	81%	65%
Tennessee	2007	627	627	737	574	658	722	***	5%	***
	2016	768	768	881	684	784	860	***	2%	***
Texas	2007	652	652	652	557	638	700	***	***	7%
	2016	703	703	703	663	760	834	***	8%	19%
Utah	2007	426	426	487	634	726	796	49%	70%	63%
	2016	475	505	535	755	865	948	59%	71%	77%
Vermont	2007	475	528	584	705	808	886	48%	53%	52%
	2016	517	571	630	840	962	1055	62%	69%	67%
Virginia	2007	368	431	546	605	694	760	64%	61%	39%
	2016	462	541	686	720	826	905	56%	53%	32%
Washington	2007	374	451	525	657	753	826	76%	67%	57%
	2016	562	683	703	782	897	984	39%	31%	40%
West Virginia	2007	600	600	600	561	643	705	***	7%	17%
	2016	600	600	600	668	766	840	11%	28%	40%
Wisconsin[h]	2007	317	346	411	648	743	814	104%	115%	98%
	2016	232	232	232	772	885	969	233%	281%	318%
Wyoming	2007	645	664	732	608	696	763	***	5%	4%
	2016	645	664	732	724	829	909	12%	23%	23%

[1] *** indicates that states' current foster care rate is higher than the foster care MARC.

[a] The source for states' 2007 rates was The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/foster-care-maintenance-payments.pdf, supplemented by Children's Rights research. 2016 rates were collected from each state website or by phone calls with state foster care administrators. For all but three states, the current foster care rate reflected in this table is the state-established minimum rate. Alaska, New York and Pennsylvania do not have a statewide minimum. For these states, the table includes the rate for the most populous region (Anchorage, New York Metro Area and Philadelphia).

[b] The foster care MARC does not include the cost of transporting a child to visit with his/her biological family or the cost of full-time child care for working foster parents. Given the variability in these expenditures from case to case, states/localities should reimburse foster parents based on their actual expenditures, in addition to the foster care MARC. The foster care MARC also excludes the cost of travel to administrative and judicial reviews and health care appointments. These expenses are also variable and are not reimbursable to states under the federal Title IV-E maintenance program, which provided the framework for the calculation of the foster care MARC. However, these costs are reimbursable under other federal funding mechanisms, such as Title IV-E Administration and Title XIX Medicaid. States should reimburse foster parents for their actual travel expenses for these purposes (DePanfilis et al., 2007).

[c] Since there was no cost-of-living adjustment available for Alaska, the District of Columbia and Hawaii, the foster care MARC reported for these states and DC is the national average foster care MARC.

[d] For Alaska, the table includes the rates for Anchorage, the most populous region.

[e] New York State does not set min/max rate for parents to receive but does have a maximum they will pay to counties. The table includes the rate for New York Metro Area, the most populous region.

[f] Ohio's rates are set by the counties. Overall, they have a state range for the min/max. The rate varies based on the child's age, needs, and number of children in the foster home. The basic rate was used in calculating the monthly average of the foster care rate for Ohio.

[g] For Pennsylvania, counties set rates. State does not set min/max rate for parents to receive but does have a maximum they will pay to counties. For Pennsylvania, the table includes the rate for Philadelphia, the most populous region.

[h] Wisconsin has the per diem for $232/month across all ages for Level I care. If there is a higher level of care than the rates increase to the following: 0–4: $384; 5–11: $420; 12–14: $478; and 15 +: $499 (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2016).

remaining 36 states have increased the gaps between current foster care rates and foster care MARC since 2007. Most notably, Wisconsin's gap in 2007 was 104% for a child age 2; 115% for a child age 9; and 98% for a child age 16 and over, and is now at 233%, 281%, and 318% respectively for each age group in 2016 (Table 4).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to establish foster care minimum adequate rates for children (MARC); identifying costs categories for children in foster care; applying a geographic cost of living adjustment to develop specific rates for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia; providing updates of 2016 foster care MARC; and examining changes over time.

The shortage of qualified foster homes in the U.S. has reached a crisis (Freundlich, 2014), and several states have experienced a wide fluctuation in the number of foster homes, often having high attrition rates (Louisiana Legislative Auditor, 2017; Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, 2017; Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2016). The Oregon Department of Human Services (2017) reported that it has seen a 16.9% decrease in foster homes from 2010 to 2016, with neighboring Washington showing similar declines (16.4% from 2005 to 2015) (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2016). Michigan reported

Table 5
Hitting the foster care MARC best to worst for 2016 (alphabetical within categories).

Child's age	2016 current foster care rates ($)			2016 foster care MARC ($)			To hit the foster care MARC, current rates should increase by:		
	2	9	16	2	9	16	2	9	16
US average	555	593	655	749	859	941	35%	45%	44%
Hitting the MARC									
District of Columbia	933	933	1003	749	859	941	− 20%	− 8%	− 6%
Mississippi	685	788	862	661	757	830	− 4%	− 4%	− 4%
Montana	878	831	916	712	816	894	− 19%	− 2%	− 2%
North Dakota	696	798	875	695	797	874	0%	0%	0%
Missing the MARC: must raise rates by up to 25% in at least one age category									
Alaska	749	850	920	749	859	941	0%	0%	1%
California	688	783	859	816	935	1025	19%	19%	19%
Kentucky	690	690	751	678	776	851	− 2%	13%	13%
Maryland	835	835	850	748	857	940	− 10%	3%	11%
Nebraska	608	700	760	757	868	951	25%	24%	25%
New Jersey	763	845	907	894	1024	1123	17%	21%	24%
Texas	703	703	703	663	760	834	− 6%	8%	19%
Tennessee	768	768	881	684	784	860	− 11%	2%	− 2%
Wyoming	645	664	732	724	829	909	12%	23%	23%
Missing the MARC: must raise rates by 26% to 50% in at least one age category									
Arizona	644	633	714	722	828	907	12%	31%	27%
Connecticut	791	800	867	900	1031	1131	14%	29%	30%
Hawaii	575	650	676	749	859	941	30%	32%	39%
Indiana	623	676	780	750	860	942	20%	27%	21%
Kansas	674	674	674	748	857	940	11%	27%	39%
Minnesota	565	670	790	787	903	988	39%	35%	25%
Nevada	683	683	773	760	870	954	11%	27%	23%
Oklahoma	461	535	601	663	761	834	44%	42%	39%
Oregon	575	655	741	765	875	960	33%	34%	30%
Pennsylvania	647	647	950	799	917	1005	23%	42%	6%
Washington	562	683	703	782	897	984	39%	31%	40%
West Virginia	600	600	600	668	766	840	11%	28%	40%
Missing the MARC: must raise rates by 51% to 75% in at least one age category									
Alabama	463	488	501	675	774	848	46%	59%	69%
Arkansas	410	440	500	664	761	835	62%	73%	67%
Florida	439	451	527	689	791	867	57%	75%	64%
Georgia	457	517	589	700	803	879	53%	55%	49%
Iowa	510	531	589	745	854	936	46%	61%	59%
Louisiana	407	449	501	675	773	848	66%	72%	69%
Massachusetts	632	712	754	912	1046	1146	44%	47%	52%
Michigan	524	524	626	769	881	967	47%	68%	54%
New Mexico	490	523	549	714	819	898	46%	57%	64%
New York	558	663	769	859	984	1079	54%	48%	40%
North Carolina	475	581	634	750	860	943	58%	48%	49%
Vermont	517	571	630	840	962	1055	62%	69%	67%
Virginia	462	541	686	720	826	905	56%	53%	32%
Missing the MARC: must raise rates by 76% to 100% in at least one age category									
New Hampshire	481	521	620	862	988	1084	79%	90%	75%
South Dakota	478	478	574	754	865	947	58%	81%	65%
Utah	475	505	535	755	865	948	59%	71%	77%
Missing the MARC: must raise rates by more than 100% in at least one age category									
Colorado	354	354	429	785	899	986	122%	154%	130%
Delaware	397	397	511	744	853	935	87%	115%	83%
Idaho	301	339	453	717	820	900	138%	142%	99%
Illinois	409	453	491	787	901	988	92%	99%	101%
Maine	502	502	502	817	936	1026	63%	86%	104%
Missouri	300	356	396	747	856	938	149%	141%	137%
Ohio	304	304	304	756	866	949	149%	185%	212%
Rhode Island	438	415	480	861	986	1081	97%	138%	125%
South Carolina	337	364	431	686	786	861	104%	116%	100%
Wisconsin	232	232	232	772	885	969	233%	281%	318%

32% of its foster homes closed during the 2016 fiscal year (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). It is difficult to explain that the decline in the number of foster homes is attributed to low foster care rates because there are other factors that contribute to the shortage of foster homes. However, a decrease in foster homes can result in multiple placements, use of residential care and untimely permanency. Reports from across the country document that children's residing in group care or residential care are often a result of foster home shortages, especially in rural areas (Haack, 2017; Hart, 2017; Meyers, 2017; Reinhart, 2012; Slattery, 2017; The Enterprise, 2017). It is also often reported that a number of abused and neglected children stayed in hotels or offices because foster care homes are not available and they await permanent foster care placements for a long period of time (Garrett, 2017; Maxine, 2017). Given that experienced foster

Table 6
Changes in gap between current foster care rates and foster care MARC from 2007 to 2016 (alphabetical within categories).

Child's age	Current foster care rates difference between 2007 and 2016 ($)			Foster care MARC difference between 2007 and 2016 ($)			Changes in gap between current rates and MARC over time. It was decreased or increased by (%)		
	2	9	16	2	9	16	2	9	16
US average	67	84	87	120	138	151	6%	4%	5%
Gap decreased over time									
Alaska	97	270	232	120	138	151	0%	− 24%	− 14%
California	263	289	262	131	150	164	− 42%	− 40%	− 25%
District of Columbia	64	64	63	120	138	151	− 20%	− 8%	− 6%
Massachusetts	142	181	138	146	168	184	− 12%	− 18%	− 4%
Mississippi	360	433	462	106	121	133	− 75%	− 83%	− 78%
Montana	363	356	344	114	131	143	− 35%	− 46%	− 33%
Nebraska	382	341	401	121	139	152	− 156%	− 79%	− 98%
New Jersey	210	250	240	143	164	180	− 19%	− 24%	− 17%
North Carolina	85	141	144	120	138	151	− 4%	− 16%	− 13%
North Dakota	326	380	330	111	128	140	− 58%	− 60%	− 35%
Oklahoma	96	105	103	106	122	134	− 9%	− 7%	− 2%
Oregon	188	253	244	123	140	154	− 33%	− 49%	− 32%
Tennessee	141	141	144	110	126	138	− 11%	− 3%	− 2%
Virginia	94	110	140	115	132	145	− 8%	− 8%	− 7%
Washington	188	232	178	125	144	158	− 37%	− 36%	− 17%
Missing the MARC: gap increased by up to 10% in at least one age category									
Alabama	53	54	55	108	124	136	8%	9%	9%
Iowa	56	57	64	119	137	150	8%	10%	9%
Kansas	71	71	71	120	137	151	7%	8%	8%
Kentucky	91	91	91	109	124	136	− 2%	4%	5%
Maryland	100	100	100	120	137	151	− 10%	3%	6%
Michigan	91	91	91	123	141	155	− 2%	− 3%	2%
New Hampshire	78	82	102	138	158	174	− 1%	1%	− 1%
Missing the MARC: gap increased by 11% to 25% in at least one age category									
Arkansas	10	15	25	106	122	134	23%	23%	19%
Connecticut	35	33	33	144	165	181	14%	16%	16%
Florida	10	11	12	110	127	139	22%	24%	23%
Georgia	41	46	49	112	129	141	12%	12%	12%
Hawaii	46	121	147	120	138	151	11%	− 4%	− 10%
Idaho	27	39	22	115	131	144	18%	12%	24%
Illinois	29	31	33	126	144	158	18%	20%	20%
Louisiana	27	84	102	108	124	136	17%	− 6%	− 9%
Missouri	29	34	38	120	137	150	18%	18%	17%
Nevada	0	0	0	122	139	153	11%	20%	19%
New Mexico	7	7	7	114	131	144	22%	24%	25%
New York	54	69	82	138	158	173	11%	9%	8%
Ohio	29	29	29	121	139	152	18%	21%	22%
Pennsylvania	7	7	310	128	147	161	18%	22%	− 26%
South Dakota	27	27	32	121	139	152	18%	20%	18%
Texas	51	51	51	106	122	134	− 6%	8%	12%
Utah	49	79	48	121	139	152	10%	1%	14%
Vermont	42	43	46	135	154	169	14%	16%	15%
West Virginia	0	0	0	107	123	135	11%	21%	23%
Wyoming	0	0	0	116	133	146	12%	18%	19%
Missing the MARC: gap increased by 26% to 50% in at least one age category									
Arizona	− 149	− 149	− 165	116	133	145	12%	31%	27%
Indiana	− 137	− 84	20	120	138	151	19%	26%	17%
Minnesota	− 20	85	91	126	145	158	26%	6%	6%
Rhode Island	0	− 1	0	138	158	173	32%	39%	36%
South Carolina	5	5	6	110	126	138	31%	32%	30%
Missing the MARC: gap increased by 51% to 100% in at least one age category									
Colorado	6	− 38	6	126	144	158	33%	61%	34%
Delaware	− 120	− 120	− 6	119	137	150	66%	77%	31%
Maine	− 46	− 75	− 112	131	150	164	38%	50%	64%
Missing the MARC: gap increased by more than 100%									
Wisconsin	− 85	− 114	− 179	124	142	155	129%	166%	220%

parents often provide quality care to children with significant needs, their greater presence in the foster care pool could also reduce the use of far more expensive therapeutic foster care or residential care.

Multiple placements can have a negative impact on children's well-being (Rubin et al., 2008). Children who experienced unstable out-of-home placements are more likely to show poorer long-term physical and behavioral well-being, which is likely tied to ongoing and unstable and negative placement experiences (Villodas, Litrownik, Newton, & Davis, 2016). Even in more stable adoptive placements, children who were in unstable placements in foster care were more likely to demonstrate poorer inhibition controls and more oppositional behavior than adopted children with stable foster care experiences (Lewis,

Dozier, Ackerman, & Sepulveda-Kozakowski, 2007).

In addition, inadequate foster care reimbursement can impact the quality of foster parents' care. The limitation of payments often impacts the amount of time a foster parent is able to spend with children in the home as there is an increased need for employment to provide for the family. In cases where the foster parent is a single earner, this can directly impact the amount of time spent between a foster parent and child (Colton et al., 2008). If foster parents are not provided sufficient support to care for the children and they have to pay out-of-pocket for expenses that could ordinarily be judged to be basic to a child's development and part of the parental role, they may be unable to adequately provide for the children in their care and opt to discontinue their role as foster parents (DeVooght et al., 2013; Geiger et al., 2013).

The results of this study indicate that, on a national average, foster care reimbursement rates are far lower than would be expected to meet children's basic needs based on the MARC. Current reimbursement for the care of children 2 years old was $555 a month, children 9 years old $593, and children 16 years old $655. States, on average, would need to increase their rates by 35%, 45%, and 44% respectively for these age groups to reach the 2016 foster care MARC. After adding geographical adjustments, the 2016 estimated costs of foster care were determined to be higher than current foster care reimbursement rates in all but four states. The estimated cost of caring for children based on this analysis was as much as 100% higher than the amount provided as reimbursement to foster families in the ten lowest paying states. States have complete discretion in setting their foster care rates. In fact, 2016 foster care monthly rates range from $232 a month in Wisconsin to $1003 a month in the District of Columbia.

This study's findings suggest the need for increases in foster care reimbursement rates in many states to facilitate the well-being for over 400,000 children in the foster care system. To establish the adequate rates, the federal government needs to establish guidelines to set the minimum foster care rates and strengthen foster care funding. States also need to set the state level policies to adopt the foster care MARC to cover actual costs of caring for children.

Adequate foster care reimbursement rates can lower financial burdens on foster parents. Without financial stress, foster parents are more likely to continue caring for children, and foster care systems would be better able to maintain a stable pool of foster parents (Doyle, 2005; Doyle & Peters, 2003; Geiger et al., 2013). Adequate foster care rates can be more cost effective because they can help maintain or increase the foster care supply and reduce the use of such strategies as holding children in hotels or more expensive residential care. A study showed that higher monthly subsidies paid to foster families had a positive impact on foster home supply, indicating states with high subsidy rates had an excess supply of foster homes (Doyle & Peters, 2007). When combined with training and increased services, foster parent retention rates dramatically increase with additional foster care stipends, and a decrease in reimbursement rates is associated with a decrease in foster parent retention, their satisfaction, and meeting children's needs (Rindfleisch, Bean, & Dendy, 1998; Colton et al., 2008; Daniel, 2011).

In addition, adequate foster care rates contribute to children's stability of placements and permanency. Pac (2017) showed that for foster children, stability of placement was linked to whether the caregiver perceived that the stipend was "adequate" for the needs of the child. When foster parents described their stipend as adequate, there was a 45% decrease in disruption risk, and among kinship homes, with a 1% increased stipend resulting in a 53% decrease risk of disruption (Pac, 2017). When children receive stable and necessary care through adequate foster care rates, they have a better chance of achieving permanency outcomes in stable homes (DeVooght et al., 2013).

As in all research studies, there are some limitations. First, the foster care MARC does not include the cost of transporting a child to visit with his/her biological family and school or the cost of full-time child care for working foster parents. Given the variability in these expenditures from case to case, states/localities can reimburse foster parents based

on their actual expenditures, in addition to the foster care MARC (DePanfilis et al., 2007). Additionally, the foster care MARC excludes expenses related to the cost of travel to administrative and judicial reviews and health care appointments. These expenses also change in amount and frequency and, in addition, are not reimbursable to states under the federal Title IV-E Maintenance program, which provided the framework for the estimation of the foster care MARC. However, these costs are reimbursable under other federal funding mechanisms, including the Title IV-E Administration Program and the Title XIX Medicaid Program. Here again, states can reimburse foster parents for their actual travel expenses for these purposes, in addition to the foster care MARC (DePanfilis et al., 2007). Second, some states' foster care rates are based on multiple factors (e.g., age, placements in the community, or child's level of needs) and have varying rates in each state. However, this study's methodology considers only basic rates and compares those with the MARC. Lastly, to update the foster care MARC for 2016, this study simply utilized inflation adjustment rates using CPI-U-RS provided by U.S. BLS, and assumes similar spending patterns over time. Although this study provides insightful information and adds to the literature on foster parent reimbursement rates, future research should examine whether the spending patterns changed in fundamental ways to focus on items that are or are not included in the foster care reimbursement calculations and how those patterns change over time.

Future research should also focus on collecting primary data from foster families directly about the expenditures of caring for children, instead of using secondary data sources. However, since available resources influence actual expenditures, it is likely that a quantitative study alone could not factor how some needs may go unmet (e.g., clothing to participate in sports or other school activities). A mixed – method study would ideally be implemented to consider how resource shortages compared to sufficient resources affects how the basic needs of foster children are met. In addition, future studies should examine longitudinal effects of increased foster care reimbursement rates in any states on foster parents' retention, as well as children's permanency and well-being outcomes.

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