



PROJECT JIGSAW

A child should never be without a permanent, loving home. Unfortunately, this is the reality for the nearly 18,000 children and youth in Arizona's state care. This is why Equality Arizona and Arizona Children's Association have launched a new collaborative community effort called Project Jigsaw: Connecting Every Child to a Loving Family.

What is Project Jigsaw?

A campaign focused on building a diverse coalition of Arizonans working together to create an environment where all couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, are provided the opportunity to build a loving family for amazing children. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring all prospective parents have equal opportunity to foster and adopt.
- Offering parents, providers, and stakeholders the resources they need to navigate the foster care and adoption process so the child can succeed. This includes identifying agencies, lawyers and counseling services well versed in the specific needs of LGBT families considering fostering or adoption.
- Telling the story of Arizona families created by adoption and fostering, moving past the outdated and damaging stigma and stereotypes that too often prevail.
- Advocate for the necessary policy and procedural changes in Arizona, from improved training and processes to legislative and technical policy changes.

Why do we need Project Jigsaw?

Be it for political or policy based reasons, no child should be denied a permanent, loving home. Yet, despite some of the recent gains in equality across the nation, there are still many obstacles to connecting children with loving families here in Arizona, including:

- State agencies refusing to represent same-sex adoptive couples, or being ill-prepared to do so.
- Same-sex couples being placed at the bottom of the list of homes for potential child placement.
- Barriers to a smooth placement process that includes outdated or discriminatory practices, out of date paperwork and systems, and ill-prepared staff.
- State agencies standing by policies as written that the state should not allow married same-sex couple to jointly adopt or become foster parents in Arizona.

Become Involved

To learn more about the Project Jigsaw campaign or how you can get involved in the effort to break down obstacles to connecting Arizona's children with loving families, please email projectjigsaw@equalityarizona.com or visit our website at www.equalityarizona.org/project-jigsaw.

The Need for Connecting AZ Families

Over the last 5 years, Arizona's foster care system has experienced:

56%

increase in number of children

9%

increase in the number of foster families

73%

increase in children living in congregate care

3X

the cost to tax payers for children to stay in congregate care compared to family settings¹

¹Arizona Department of Child Safety, "New Foster Care Advisory Commission Mandate to do More than Make Recommendations," May 27, 2015.