

# Issues with child protective services



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Introduction: A recent report done by 'The Cato Unbound Journal of Debate' finds that "CPS caseworkers continuously separate children from their parents at a monthly rate 300 times greater than the number of the separations at the Mexican border that took place in May 2018." However with growing concerns of the definition of best interest, racial discrimination, and overworked agents, it calls for a deeper comprehension of child protective services as a primary contributor to the extent that foster care is today. Doug Besharov, the director of the U. S. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect and also the author of 17 books on child maltreatment defines child protective services as "the primary recipients of reports of intrafamilial child abuse and neglect... [and they] operate in the social work tradition of helping people with their problems through a variety of mental health and supportive services." ( 219 ) Overall the common goal of child protective services, was to provide a safer option for the children and family at risk. Unfortunately, this has resulted in an increasing number of children in the foster care system. Over-Stressed: Andrea Ball and Eric Dexheimer two researchers from the 'Austin American Statesman' recently finds that "Each month, Child Protective Services hires 200 new caseworkers. Within six months, 33 of them will quit." And unfortunately, low salaries and oppressive workloads bear much of the blame. But this affects more than just the number of child protective agents that we poses, it hampers the nature of work done in existing conditions. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) and its companion survey, Caring for Children in Child Welfare (CCCW) laments that "One possible explanation [for open cases], is that many families receive few services beyond periodic visits by usually over-burdened caseworkers" (199) When Child Protective

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services are over-worked, over stressed, or even over burdened it can be easy to ignore those suffering in front of them but most importantly it can lead to caseworkers just unsubstantiating the case and not going further into depth or proceeding with an investigation. This is problematic as reports of child abuse and neglect have increased during the past several years there has been an equally dramatic decline in the number of substantiated child abuse and neglect reports. ( Cameron 327 ) and just over a third of children from those cases were placed into foster care or a group home. (Waldfoegel 197) The poor quality in services because of overburden cases workers leads to the retaliation of taking the easier route, sustaining the case, and furthering the amount of children within the foster care system. The Safety Plan: It's time to re-consider the policies and context of separation done by CPS. When Child Protective agents take children into their custody, they need to get approved to have the kids' expulsion from their homes and to exchange lawful care to CPS. Then the child is placed into substitute care, and is mandated a court order to find the best possible solution. Yet Diane Redleaf author of ' They Took the Kids Last Night' and a family defense attorney analyzes some key issues with the process, defining child protective services safety plans as a process " that require parents to give their children over to relatives under threat of forced removal and placement with strangers" and though " these separations are labelled as " voluntary" ... parents are led to believe that entrusting their children to a relative is the only way they can see their kids at all." The problem with this is the ' foreshadowing of foster care.' because more often than not this " safety plan" that is supposed to be temporary, turns into a " treatment plan" and is long term. The policies and implementations of the CPS system is

what primarily leads to a further downfall to the child's future. Howard Davidson, the Director of Children's Law highlights that the system knows they don't have the correct roadmap in place so “ to address the too-common experience of " foster care limbo" and governmental neglect of children in foster placement, in 1980 Congress enacted the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA). The AACWA tied considerable federal financial support for state costs of foster care to a set of procedural reforms taken by child welfare agencies and the courts.” It ultimately failed, due to the rigorous restrictions it placed on homes of foster children. When researching, this was the last full attempt I found to help the system and their roadmap, but until further implementations, we can visibly see that the roadmap for children within the system, isn't looking to bright. Racial Discrimination: African Americans are disproportionately represented within the foster care system than that of any other race. In Samuel Myers’ book titled ‘ Analysis of Race as Policy Analysis’, he emphasis the bias of those of color in child protective services stages with connection to the leading amount of African Americans within foster care through two important citations as follows. One of the underlying issues highlighted by the head of Child Welfare League, Thomas Morton, was that “ the overrepresentation of African American children [within the foster care system] is due principally to reporting bias and other forms of racial bias within the child protective services” (176). In hopes to further understand the depth of that representation, we must examine the disparities between the reports. On the off chance that families of color are at higher danger of abuse or take part in abuse at more elevated amounts, we would anticipate that the statistics show the disparities. However, Myers continued with evidence from the

National Incidence Studies, contending that “surprisingly, blacks are not more likely to be reported than are whites, even when one accounts for differences in characteristics of reporters, type of maltreatment and characteristics of the child and family” (Ards, Chung, and Myers 177). In translation, this means the root of child maltreatment may be equal between those of color and those not of color, but the outcome for the amount in foster care is disproportionate and disturbing. “On average, black children account for more than 40 percent of the foster care population... and they are subject to longer stays in foster care, on average, than that of white children” (Berger, Font, & Slack). This points the blame to the child protective services agents and their reporting bias. Conclusion: Despite the positive intentions of child protective services, it leads to an unintentional amount of children within the foster care as a permanent placement rather than a temporary solution. To prevent the overstress or underpay of CPS agents, we could do things such as raise property tax or raise wages but this solution doesn't prevent further disruption of the foster care system and only addresses the system and not the families at risk. So instead, Madelyn Freundlich from The National Conference of State Legislatures sets us a clear solution which is “Family support services [that are relatively] designed to strengthen families who have not yet experienced a crisis or become involved with the child welfare system or even family preservation services [that are] designed to strengthen families who are in crisis and at risk of having their children enter foster care.” With these in place, the burden would be lifted off of CPS' shoulders and the perpetuation of children within the foster care system due to the system will further be diminished. Works Cited:

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