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Subject: Child welfare changes since 2000
Date: March 25, 2022 at 2:07 PM
To: ryan@wacasa.org

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Since I sent out the email below in 2020, the number of children in foster care nationally has declined to about 406,000; there was a large reduction in reported CPS cases and in substantiated child victims and child maltreatment fatalities reported in NCANDS during the pandemic year, 2020, and the country's foster care crisis has become worse, a lot worse. In addition, state child welfare systems are having great difficulty in filling vacant caseworker positions leading to a workforce crisis in many states. Family First implementation has begun which is likely to make this crisis worse as residential care facilities close their doors.

On Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 11:05 AM Dee Wilson <deewilson13@aol.com> wrote:

This is a list of changes in child welfare during the past two decades. Despite the understandable frustration of advocates with child welfare reform initiatives that have accomplished little or nothing, there have nevertheless been several major developments and some big changes in child welfare systems since 2000.

Major trends in child welfare from 2000-2020:

- The number of children in foster care peaked in 1999-2000 at 568,000. Twelve straight years of declines in foster care followed, with the nation's FC population falling below 400,000 in 2011-12. The foster population increased about 12% from 2012-2018 to about 440,000, and is currently at about 423,000 (under 420,000 in the Imprint report that was just released), a very large difference from 2000.
- The number of children in kinship care increased 36% from 2010 to 2018, according to the recent Imprint report on foster care trends.
- In 2010, the percentage of foster children and youth in group homes was greater than 20% in 12 states; in 2019, only two states had group care rates greater than 20%.
- The number of adoptions increased from about 36,000 in 1997 when ASFA became law to more than 60,000 in 2019.
- The country's reunification rate has fallen below 50% during the past few years; the reunification rate was close to 66% a couple of decades ago. The reduction in reunification reflects (in part) a reduction in brief placements in many states.
- In 2000, 48% of children in foster care were African American; currently, 23% of children in foster care are African American. There has been a "whitening" of foster care during the past several years (until 2020) according to the Imprint report.
- There has been a large increase in Mixed Race children in foster care.
- There was a 15 year 60% plus decline in physical abuse and sexual abuse as reflected in NCANDS from 1995-2012 (see studies by Finkelhor and his colleagues). There has been a small increase in physical abuse and sexual abuse during the opioid epidemic. There were small declines in neglect (less than 10%) during the same time frame.
- In 2000, only a few states were implementing differential response (DR) systems; currently more than half of states have DR systems despite a fierce scholarly controversy over DR.
- In 2000, very few, if any, states extended foster care eligibility past age 18. Today, many states have extended FC eligibility to age 21, and some states are considering extending eligibility to age 23.
- In 2000, there were very few evidence based parenting programs; currently there are a large

- In 2000, there were very few evidence based parenting programs, currently there are a large number of evidence based parenting programs, e.g., PCIT for physical abuse, Triple P.
- In 2000, there was little understanding of the effects of trauma on children and no trauma informed care in child welfare; today, there is a large knowledge base regarding trauma with great resources available for both training programs and practice models. This is the single most important child welfare improvement during the past 20 years, in my view. There is a tremendous potential for improving foster care systems by applying trauma informed care principles and knowledge.
- Family First has changed allowable expenditures under IV-E rules to allow funding of prevention/ early intervention programs and to support reunification. It will take a decade or more to fairly assess the outcomes of cw finance reform embodied in Family First legislation.

What has not changed or become worse since 2000:

- Child maltreatment deaths have increased during the past decade despite many thousands of child death reviews, reform initiatives, changes in leadership, training programs etc. Child welfare systems continue to respond to child maltreatment deaths with the same failed strategies, despite a 2016 Blue Ribbon Commission study and report.
- Foster care systems are in a serious crisis that has become worse in recent years with the 12% increase in foster care from 2012-18. Most state systems function with acute and chronic shortages of foster homes. State child welfare systems are stubbornly sticking with a volunteer business model that is a proven failure for behaviorally troubled children and youth. As a result, foster care is not (in the aggregate) a therapeutic intervention for behaviorally troubled youth. I have become increasingly concerned with child safety issues for foster youth in recent years. Children around the country are being placed in hotels, or sleeping in cw offices, or moved from home to home on a 24 hour basis. There has been a muted public outcry to these outrages in care of behaviorally troubled youth, a main reason these system abuses have continued, in my view.
- Child safety measures have not improved, with the result that it's impossible to know whether child protection systems are performing about the same, better or worse in protecting children from child maltreatment. There is no excuse for this deliberate lack of transparency regarding the effectiveness of CPS programs and practices.
- Data informed practice has deteriorated into "gaming" performance indicators in many states, including Oregon and Washington.
- There is no more commitment among policymakers to workload controls in cw agencies than there was 20 years ago. Child welfare systems cannot markedly improve until there is a firm commitment to keeping workload demands within reasonable limits.
- Child welfare systems continue to be managed in the same dysfunctional ways as in past decades, i.e., top-down, ever increasing policy and procedural frameworks, suppression of initiative at the unit and office level.
- Many promising programs have been lost or have not been brought to scale. There was a time when child welfare offices in Washington State had CD liaisons, but no longer. Offices used to employ home support specialists. There has not been a large state investment in Family Treatment Drug Courts or Safe Baby courts in most states. Hopefully, this will change with Family First.
- In Washington State, the cw system is less collaborative than it was 20 years ago. There has been a 'circle the wagons' and turn inward direction in many cw systems
- Reports of bullying in cw management have increased, especially in Oregon, to a lesser extent in Washington and in other states around the country. Many child welfare leaders and managers seem unable to reflect on their self defeating managerial practices.
- CW systems around the country are not making the kind of investment in workforce development that is essential for any cw reform agenda to be effectively implemented. CW staff continue to be paid paraprofessional salaries in many states and inadequate top-out salaries in Oregon and Washington.
- Many cw leadership teams are ambivalent regarding a commitment to professional development among cw staff. Policy frameworks have been dumbed down to lists of

development among CW staff. Policy frameworks have been dumbed down to lists of procedures and use of assessment tools without much knowledge or critical thinking expected of casework staff. Child protection practice cannot be improved with this approach.

- In-home safety planning remains the weakest part of CPS practice, with little investment in practice-based research regarding this important part of child protection.