

— TOP TAKEAWAYS —

Fixing Our Child Welfare System to Help America's Most Vulnerable Kids

MISPLACED EFFORTS TO REDUCE FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS HURT CHILDREN

- States are desperately trying to reduce the number of children in foster care. While this seems like a good goal, simply looking at foster care placement is an insufficient measure of children's safety.
- The numbers on child maltreatment and child fatalities should worry us: in Maine, the number of children experiencing maltreatment jumped **30%** from 2015-2019, while the number of children in foster care only grew by **12%**.
- We would all like to see fewer children in foster care, but only if those children are safe in their own homes. We shouldn't seek to reduce the number of children in foster care by keeping more children in unsafe home situations.

MANY CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES FAIL TO APPRECIATE THE ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

- In many child welfare agencies, workers presume that kids who are removed from their families weren't really in danger and that most of the families involved with child welfare simply can't afford to properly care for their children.
- Yet the statistics belie these assumptions. **At least 40%** of kids in foster care are removed from their homes because of parental substance abuse, but most experts say the number is closer to 80%.
- Drug use, alcohol use, and co-occurring mental illnesses prevent many parents from properly caring for young children, no matter how robust the safety-net supports available to them are.

WE NEED REFORMS TO IMPROVE THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

- When parents clearly cannot rehabilitate, officials need not drag matters out for children.
- We don't have enough homes for children who need foster care, so we need to protect faith-based foster agencies, who do most of the work in this space, from activists trying to shut them down.
- We must realize that even if policies mitigated the shortage of foster families, some vulnerable children would still have behavioral and mental health problems that need residential care.

Click [HERE](#) to read the policy focus and learn more about America's foster care system.