



Child Welfare Reading List

This resource list aims to provide materials related to what is traditionally referred to as the child welfare system—its history, its current practices, its impacts, and its intersections with other systems. Also included are materials exploring approaches and movements for advocacy related to this system. Because this list is a resource for learning and continuing dialogue, links will be updated periodically to reflect and elevate narratives and research as they become available.

The Shriver Center is continually working to expand accessibility and inclusivity— particularly for communities and identities historically marginalized by power structures and systems—of the available resources in terms of language, voices of impacted communities, and the myriad ways folks engage with and understand the world around them. If you have resources to recommend, please contact Molly Dull at mollydull@povertylaw.org.

How It Works

There are 7 categories of topics to explore, which are listed in the far left column. Within each topic, you will see 3 sections:

- Quick overview (media or reads that should take less than about 15 minutes to explore)
- Learn more (media or reads that should take between 15-30 minutes to explore)
- Deep dive (media or reads that will take longer than 30 minutes to explore)

The 3 sections include a few items for you to click on. Each work included in this reading guide is hyperlinked to the source where you can find it.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">A History of the System</h2>	<p>How did the U.S. foster system become what it is today, and in what ways are the system's harmful roots still present today?</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch (from 17:50-28:33): #stopstealingourbabies Virtual Town Hall • Read or listen: Foster care in the United States began with Orphan Train • Read: How Foster Care Has Stripped Native American Children of Their Own Cultures • Read: How racism has shaped welfare policy in America since 1935 <p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Best Interests: How Child Welfare Serves as a Tool of White Supremacy • Read: ASFA: An Assault on Family Preservation <p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read (all but conclusion): A Short History of Child Protection in America • Read: Federally Mandated Destruction of the Black Family: The Adoption and Safe Families
<h2 style="text-align: center;">What is Mandated Reporting and Why Was It Created?</h2>	<p>Mandated reporting laws were created in the 1960s as a backlash against supportive social welfare policies for poor families. Who are mandated reporters, what causes reports to be made, and what comes of reports they make?</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch (from 19:38-28:30): "Abolishing Policing, Not Just Police" (includes CC and transcript) • Read (p. 542-549): "Doing something" about child abuse: the need to narrow the grounds for state intervention • Read: How the Foster Care System Punishes the Poor • Read: Foster Care as Punishment: The New Reality of 'Jane Crow' • Leer // Read: Barreras culturales, obstáculo para el bienestar infantil entre inmigrantes // For migrants, cultural barriers, life's shocks complicate welfare cases <p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Refusing to be Complicit in our Prison Nation: Teachers Rethinking Mandated Reporting • Read // Listen: Incentives And Cultural Bias Fuel Foster System // Extended audio version • Read: Stop and Frisk for Caregivers: How

		<p>Expanded Mandated Reporting Laws Hurt Families</p> <p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen: Decolonize Social Work: The Tyranny of the Child Welfare System, Part 1 & Part 2 (transcript available below play option) • Read: When the Misdiagnosis Is Child Abuse
<p>Historical and Modern Parallels & Intersections with Other Systems</p>	<p>The foster system operates in ways that mirror other systems in our society that surveil, discriminate, and punish individuals and communities. What do the comparisons and parallels across these carceral systems look like?</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comic: Against 'Soft' Policing • Read: For Women of Color, the Child-Welfare System Functions Like the Criminal-Justice System • Watch: Ground Zero: The Foster System and the U.S. Drug War (includes CC) • Read: What is the Foster Care-to-Prison Pipeline? • Read: Yes, Gov. Pritzker, close juvenile detention centers -- and then reimagine foster care <p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch (from 3:35-21:45 & 32:35-40:10): Invisible No More: Policing Motherhood (includes CC; see edited transcript of second recommended segment) <p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: What Can the Child Welfare System Learn in the Wake of the Floyd Decision?: A Comparison of Stop-And-Frisk Policing and Child Welfare Investigations • Read: Entangled Roots: The Role of Race in Policies that Separate Families • Read: Prison, Foster Care, and the Systemic Punishment of Black Mothers
<p>Disproportionate Impact & Harms</p>	<p>While Black children make up 12% of the U.S. population, they comprise more than 20% of the foster system. In places like</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: The Sad Omission of Child Welfare from Mainstream Discussion on Race • Read: Black Families Matter: How the Child Welfare System Punishes Poor Families of Color

	<p>Cook County, IL, disproportionality is even higher: Black youth are 24% of the population yet 70% of the system. Indigenous children are also overrepresented, as are those with poor families or disabilities. Why do we need to be talking about these disparities?</p>	<p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Parenting in Families of Low Socioeconomic Status: A Review with Implications for Child Welfare Practice • Watch (from 9:28-36:39): Elie Hirschfeld Symposium on Child Welfare (includes CC)
		<p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Racial Bias in American Foster Care: The National Debate • Read: White Privilege in Child Welfare: What Racism Looks Like • Read: Processes of Racialization in New York City's Child Welfare System • Book: Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare

<p>Outcomes for Current & Former Foster Youth</p>	<p>Child & Family Services often claim that they exist to serve the best interests of children. What do the data show us about whether and how the best interests of children are being served?</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch (from 0:00-3:09): How the Foster Care System Fails So Many Kids—And How We Can Do Better (includes CC) • Read: Foster youth face 'grim outcomes' • Read: Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study • Read or listen: Aging out: Thousands of foster youth graduate to the streets every year
		<p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Dubious arrests, damaged lives: How shelters criminalize hundreds of children • Read: The Cycle of Child Protection Services Involvement: A Cohort Study of Adolescent Mothers • Explore: Fostering Youth Transitions: Using Data to Drive Policy and Practice Decisions
		<p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: The Harm of Child Removal • Explore: Research Collection: Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth

<h2>A Parent-Centered Approach</h2>	<p>Children do not exist in a vacuum; they have parents and families, and separation from those families creates trauma for all involved. What would it look like for the system to define a child's best interest as and prioritize the outcome of families together and supported in thriving communities?</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: ‘Family Regulation,’ Not ‘Child Welfare’: Abolition Starts with Changing our Language • Read: What is Family Centered Practice? • Read: To ‘Protect’ My Kids, the State Made Me Homeless • Read: Rise Recommendations to Address Schools’ Over-Reporting to Child Protective Services
		<p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read or Listen: As U.S. spends billions on foster care, families are pulled apart and forgotten • Watch (from 1:22:15-1:42:20): Child Welfare Braintrust of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
		<p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Family Defense in the Age of Black Lives Matter • Listen: The Power of the Parents’ Voice (transcript available) • Read: African American perspectives on racial disparities in child removals
<h2>A Movement for Abolition</h2>	<p>A movement is growing that asks critical questions like, “What would it look like for families and communities to have the equitable systemic investment and support they need to thrive?” & “How can harm and accountability be addressed in ways that do not cause more harm?” & “How can systems account for the harm already done to families and communities and stop the cycle of causing that harm?”</p>	<p>Quick Overview (< 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Abolishing Policing Also Means Abolishing Family Regulation • Watch: FUAN’s Iowa Family Stabilization & Preservation Act (includes CC) • Read: What Does it Mean to Abolish the Child Welfare System as We Know It? • Leer // Read: Metas compartidas y colaboración son claves para que las familias tengan éxito // Shared goals, collaboration are keys to family success
		<p>Learn More (15-30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Toward the Abolition of the Foster System • Read: What Will It Take for The Child Welfare System to Become Anti-Racist?
		<p>Deep Dive (30+ min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen: Mother’s Day In The Trenches: Abolishing the Child Welfare System