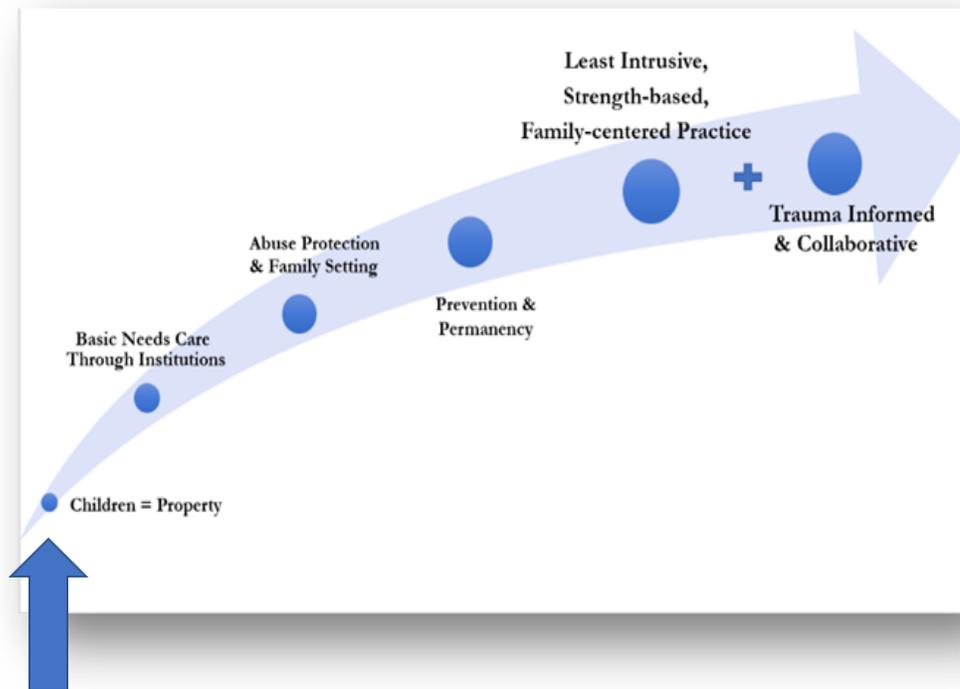


The Child Welfare Evolution



Children = Property

- Early American law described children as an extension of family with few separate rights, with little protection from cruel treatment or economic deprivations.
- The federal and state governments' dispositions with respect to children in the first half of the nineteenth century ranged from general indifference to horror.
 - Parents, families, communities, and circumstance decided children's fate, with little interference by institutions of government.
 - Native American families were regularly displaced, disrupted, and destroyed.
 - Until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, a whole race of children was not just treated as property, they were property: bought and sold by slave owners, subject to physical and psychological deprivation, and routinely, and often permanently, separated from their families.

Basic Needs Care Through Institutions

- During the middle and late nineteenth century dependency asylums were formed specifically as institutions for the placement of abandoned, orphaned, abused, or otherwise dependent children.
- Some children were placed into these dependency asylums, and then indentured into local families.
- Other children were indentured directly by local community governments immediately into "adopting" families.
- Indentured meant occupational training and basic needs care in exchange for labor. The success or failure of this approach depended entirely upon the luck of the draw.
 - If the child was placed within an empathetic, caring, and fair household, indenture could greatly benefit children. They became part of a family and learned a trade.
 - However, the indenture system was also a convenient mechanism for exploitation. Children could become little more than slave labor, learning little and suffering much.
- During the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century there was a growing recognition within the states and provinces that dependent and orphaned children were a significant social problem.
 - There was a growing belief that society had a responsibility to "save" neglected, abused, dependent, and exploited children.
 - It became more and more accepted that public monies could be used to support voluntary agencies.
 - This was a time in which large groups of children became orphaned or dependent.
 - Lynchings, family displacements, and disruptions that followed emancipation, the Jim Crow legislation in the south, and the mass exodus north by former slaves resulted in many orphaned and dependent children.
 - Native American families were uprooted and moved to impoverished reservations, and whole tribes were destroyed during the Indian Wars. Native American children were orphaned and

dependent or systematically removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools to deconstruct entire cultures.

- The accepted method of protecting children became institutionalization. The accepted method for the developmental preparation of children for eventual emancipation became indentured labor.
 - Although these institutions could not provide the intimacy and care of families, they did provide discipline, occupational training, and social structure and expectations.
 - The success of dependency institutions in meeting the needs of children was contingent upon a child's age, developmental needs, and psychological disposition.
 - The institutions met basic developmental needs for many children and provided the foundation for successful and productive adult lives. For other children, the institutions could neither meet their developmental needs nor prevent physical, emotional, or psychological harm.
 - It was common practice for children to be required to work long hours to build character.
 - The fate of very young children was often worse than that of older children, who could work. Of the infants placed only a small minority survived the first few weeks.