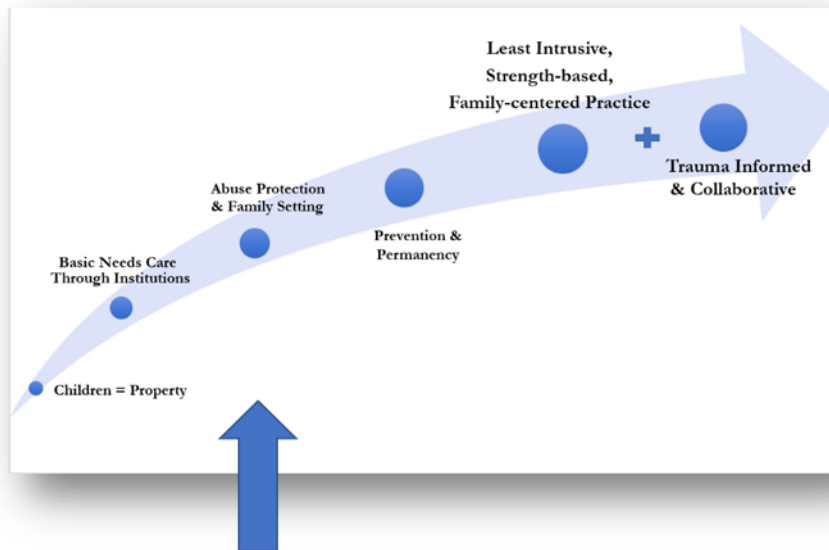


## The Child Welfare Evolution



### Abuse Protection and Family Settings

(Children have human rights, too.)

- The inability of dependency institutions to meet the developmental needs of most children resulted in a growing belief that dependent children without homes would be best served by placement in a substitute or foster home.
  - The Children's Aid Society of New York was the first large-scale use of foster care placement for dependent children.
  - Between 1850 and 1930, over 30,000 children from New York were placed with families.
- By 1850, the courts had begun to set precedents establishing children's rights and making parental rights contingent on their providing proper care for their children.
  - The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC) was the first child protection agency formed.
  - By 1900, more than 250 societies for the protection of children had been formed.

- Social work emerged as a profession in the mid-1800s, as more humanistic and rational explanations were sought for both human behavior and social dynamics. Social workers embraced a duty to help others.
- While early child protection advocates were acutely aware of the harmful effects of parental abuse and neglect, they were less aware of the potential harm to children from separating them from their families. Their primary objectives, which were fundamental in the evolution of children's rights, were:
  - Establish the rights of children.
  - Advocate for those rights.
  - Identify instances of abuse and neglect.
  - Threaten, coerce, and police parents into conforming to acceptable behavior.
  - Remove children from their families for permanent out-of-home placement when necessary.
- Caregivers who could have benefitted from remedial help were often punished and imprisoned.
- Families that could have been saved and strengthened were often disrupted or destroyed.
- Immigrant families were often discounted and misunderstood.
- In the early 1900s, foster care placement was becoming a widespread and well recognized child welfare intervention.
  - Important programming and service delivery issues were being identified.
  - Practice issues related to foster home selection, the placement process, and regulation of interstate placements were being scrutinized and improved.
- The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a continuous debate about the relative merits of institutionalization versus foster care. The dependency institutions began to evolve into clustered family settings with increasingly family-like environments.