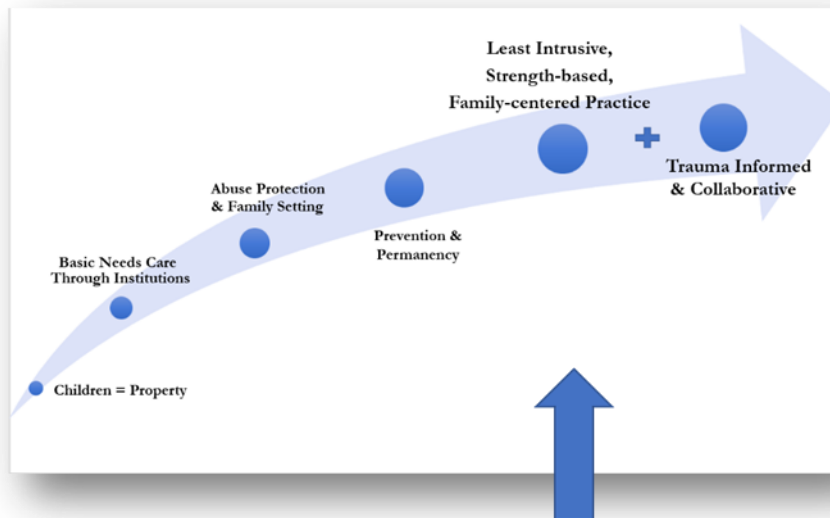


The Child Welfare Evolution



Least Intrusive, Strength-based, Family-centered Practice

(Remains a current practice priority)

- The 1980s saw family rights emerge as an important social issue.
 - Many demanded laws and programs that would both protect families from intrusive authority and support family life.
 - Others stressed the need to accept alternative family structures, such as single parent families, kinship care, gay or lesbian heads of households, and forms of communal living.
 - Of universal agreement was the importance of a supportive, nurturing, and protective family environment for healthy child development.
- It became clear that even with new social technologies, social services resources, and the best professional efforts, the needs of most children could only be met by strengthening their families.

- Many public programs and private charitable organizations attempted to strengthen and empower families through broad-based collaborative interventions for people who were poor and disadvantaged.
- These attempts at comprehensive, systemic family interventions highlighted the multiple and complex problems that many families faced.
- They also underscored the need for preventive services to address the earliest developmental family problems, and the need for increased opportunities for families to avoid or escape poverty, substance abuse, racism, and other destabilizing insults.
- The need for mechanisms to coordinate case planning and service delivery was identified.
- The growing concern for the rights of children and the rights of families had a powerful and productive synergistic effect:
 - In most cases, the interests of families and the interests of children are usually the same; efforts to enhance the rights of each resulted in gains for both.
 - Children and their families benefitted from efforts to:
 - Reduce infant mortality.
 - Support family planning.
 - Provide better child care to support employment.
- The move to strength-based family-centered practice promoted several developments:
 - A stronger emphasis on family preservation
 - The increased utilization of in-home services in an attempt to reduce out-of-home placement
 - The recognition of culturally-specific service resources and the need to support cultural integrity
 - The recognition of naturally-occurring services, like kinship care
 - The utilization of local community supports such as churches and charitable clubs
 - The professionalization of foster care.

- Despite the many positive effects of the family rights movement on child welfare practice, there evolved concern that family preservation de-emphasized the fundamental child welfare responsibility of child protection.
- Amid movements toward noncategorical services for families and children, and toward collaborative planning and service delivery, there has also been a movement to recover the unique responsibility of the child welfare field to, first and foremost, advocate for the protection of children.
- In 1997 the federal government enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), requiring timely permanency while ensuring child safety.
 - Mandated child safety focus throughout all case planning and review
 - Permitted concurrent planning, reunification and alternative permanency
 - Required filing to terminate parental rights (TPR) if children in substitute care for 15 out of the last 22 months. However, in Ohio this is 12 out of 22 months.
 - Prioritized relative placement over non-relative when it can be done safely.
 - Required documented efforts to find adoptive or other permanent settings (including kinship) for children.
 - <https://training.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/book/export/html/2977>
- Although reasonable efforts remained to prevent placement, exceptions were made in the following circumstances:
 - Murder, aggravated murder, or voluntary manslaughter of a sibling or another child who lived in the parent's household at the time of the offense
 - Felonious assault, aggravated assault, assault, endangering children, rape, sexual battery, corrupting a minor (sex-related offense), gross sexual imposition involving the child, a sibling of the child, or another child who lived in the parent's household at the time of the offense
 - Conspiracy or attempt to commit, or complicity to commit, an offense of murder or any sex-related offense, as described above
 - Repeatedly withholding medical treatment or food from the child when the parent has the means to provide the treatment or food (other than to treat the physical or mental illness or defect through spiritual means through prayer alone with the tenets of a recognized religious body)
 - The parent has placed the child at risk due to alcohol or drug abuse two or more times and has rejected treatment two or more times or refused to participate in further treatment two or more times, after a case plan requiring

- treatment of the parent was journalized or an order was issued by another court requiring treatment of the parent
- The child is presumed to be abandoned (i.e., the parents have failed to visit or maintain contact with the child for more than 90 days, regardless of whether the parent resumes contact with the child after 90 days)
 - Parental rights have been involuntarily terminated for a sibling of the child.
- Efforts are now made to integrate family preservation services as a very important method of child protection, rather than an alternative to it.
 - Many more families than previously believed can benefit from such services, and the aggressive provision of such services is in the best interests of most families and children.
 - However, for some families, the interests of parents and children diverge; some children cannot be protected unless placed out of their homes permanently.