

# Are you getting this?

*International Fathers Rights Foundation (785)230-5620*

## Preventive Policies in Child Welfare

The outlined social problems affecting children and the deficiencies in the programs and the policies designed to address these inadequacies. The state of children in the 1900's was in great need, not to mention the system now is in great need of a concerted social response. Professionals and child welfare advocates know many programs and approaches that work. The early 1900's represents the decade when child welfare must become a national priority if we are to turn back the numerous negative trends facing today's children. The need for a preventive policy and approach to serving the social needs of children as well as provide outlines and agenda for action to follow through with their needs.

Although we are a country of great wealth and freedoms, millions of children are closed out of opportunities for healthy growth and development. Due to race, status, geographic location, physical ability, or other notable differences, millions of children are outside the mainstream of society. The levels of inadequate care and

neglect of children are severe nationwide. Millions of children live in poverty, hundreds of thousands are in foster care and other forms of temporary care, millions have no healthcare insurance and do not receive basic medical care and/or for many children runaway shelters and streets are all they know as home.

The result of this national neglect of children is delayed development and a permanent loss of contributions from to many of our nation's future adults. The consequences and costs of national neglect what social service workers can and should do and concludes with policy agenda to change the current status of our nation's children.

Although it is impossible to prevent all social and human mishaps much more can be done to protect people from social breakdown. The concept of prevention is rarely found in social welfare policy planning. We as a country have been reluctant to embrace a preventive strategy in meeting the needs of children and families.

Although we know the

value of early intervention efforts that the majority of social welfare services are residual developed and implemented after a problem is identified. The reasons for this approach are varied and lie in our social values and economic system.

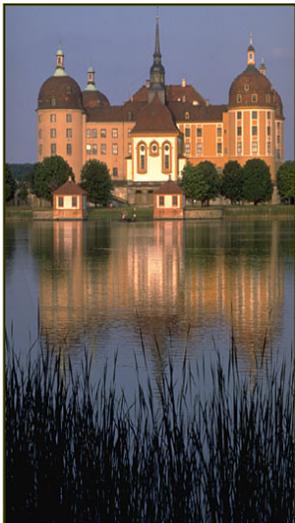
This nation was founded on principles of self-help and ability. When there is a breakdown the family is the first line of support. Now only when efforts fail are we willing to turn to state intervention for support. While this philosophy is not inherently flawed, the reality of our social structure makes it a problematic approach, if we respond to social need only when there is an identified problem, there is never any attention given to the underlying cause.

For example, we know the poor education and poverty are linked. Education can lead to better employment and a good job can provide adequate income for a family. Yet we continue to give grudging public assistance without seriously considering how to educate people nationally, regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, their gender, or family background.

## Consequences of Current Policies



*“Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark in the hopeless swamps of the not-quite, the not-yet, and the not-at-all. Do not let the hero in your soul perish in lonely frustration for the life you deserved and have never been able to reach. The world you desire can be won. It exists.. it is real.. it is possible.. it's yours.”*



For self-reliance and family support to work effectively, people must start with open access to ample opportunities and resources. It is impossible for an impoverished family to give children the same chances as a family of economic means.

Barriers to opportunities such as racism, sexism and limited knowledge of availability inhibit access to opportunity. Social Welfare Policy needs to focus on opening opportunities for healthy development, safe environments, education, employment and growth rather than only directing resources to the breakdowns in society.

Preventive social policy calls for services designed to serve all regardless of whether there is and identified need. Thus there will be times when a person who does not need the services will receive them anyway.

Although over the short term residual policies may seem effective preventive resources are needed to stem the continued growth of social problems. Policy makers focused on benefit levels and eligibility for existing cash assistance programs rather than on ways to lift people

permanently out of poverty. Little attention was given to funding ways to prevent people from falling into Poverty. Most social concerns gain public attention only after they become a problem. As homelessness was recognized as a social problem, initial public response centered on funding emergency shelters and food, but only after the problem was recognized to be more complex and more beds in shelters did not decrease the number of homeless persons.

It was not and still is not a national social goal, although as a nation we should be concerned with every citizen having a safe and affordable place to live. Although we know the value of early health care for women, yet it is not a national priority.

The passage of major child welfare legislation in 1980 was a response to the realization that thousands of children were languishing in foster care without the prospect of ever having a permanent home. Little attention however was given to the need for support services to families before there is a disruption and state

intervention.

Such policy changes although significant efforts attempt to “fix” the symptom rather than change the root cause of the problem. Now the end result is that we are caught in a perpetual cycle of responding to social breakdowns rather than creating supportive services that prevent breakdowns from occurring in the first place.

Students from poor families are more likely to drop out of school. Our nation loses \$240 billion in unearned wages and unpaid taxes over their lifetimes. This does not include the public expense for remedial education, welfare, health, and social services. The average cost to hold a young person at a juvenile detention center is \$ 43,000 year. For the same amount of money, preventive services could be provided to a child for his or her entire childhood.

## The Cost of Neglect

Social problems that are prevented from occurring save significant costs over time and the overall benefit to society of caring for our children today as well as provide a healthy and productive workforce for tomorrow.

The development of human resources is vital for our national wellbeing. The United States is developing a "Human resource Deficit." The difference in the jobs to be filled and the abilities of those available to fill them is growing.

While caring for disadvantaged and neglected children are a worthy cause in itself.

National survival will depend on it. A complete social services system must provide for those social services needs and mishaps that cannot be prevented, while simultaneously working to prevent social concerns from becoming problematic and dysfunctional.

Social institutions such as schools, community, agencies, religious organizations, as well as the government can provide much needed support to families.

Such a system must stress the cost effectiveness of preventive approach as well as the social

responsibility of giving all children chances to succeed.



You cannot find peace by avoiding life.

## State of Current Services for Children and Families

The number of programs that exist to serve children and families in need appears comprehensive. There are medical care programs, school intervention services, nutrition and food programs, employment training and housing assistance.

In spite of the array of existing programs children are poorly served. Children's services although covering an array of needs, have never been a national budget priority. Where a nation chooses to spend its money is important. It is shortsighted not to view spending on children as an investment in the future. The citizens of the

United States have accepted the need to develop military strength and capabilities for the future as demonstrated by programs such as "star wars." Care for the elderly has improved over the years and accounts for 30% of the national budget.

Unfortunately we are negligent in preparing for the future through investment in children. This approach cannot continue. Our economic situation is worsening. The recession of the early 1990's, 2008 is not loosening its grip. Social services programs cut back during the previous decade do not have excess dollars to return.

The problems and needs of children are worsening and require more national attention. The social policy agenda must change and the care of children must become a national priority.

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*"These woods are lovely, dark  
and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep."*

## Early Intervention

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*“To catch the reader’s attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

The majority of public programs for children are residual in nature, but there is a growing awareness of the value of providing services early in a child’s life. Existing early intervention programs help young children develop educationally and socially. They provide learning experiences that help prepare children for school and develop better social skills, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although children and their families benefit, early intervention efforts offer a cost-effective social policy approach. Positive outcomes beneficial to society include decreasing the future need for remedial education, juvenile delinquency services and welfare costs.

The issue is not a lack of knowledge but of will. Research outlines programs with proven results and the

“evidence” that crucial outcomes among high-risk children can be changed by systematic intervention early in the life cycle.

Other services that employ an early intervention approach include home visiting and respite care. Home visiting programs are designed to provide services such as health care or social support to families within their homes.

Evaluations of home visiting programs with an emphasis on early intervention demonstrate improvement in the health and well-being of participant families. Program have proven to be cost effective by providing services early, thereby decreasing the need for more costly services later.

Respite care provides child care on a temporary basis for families. Services are targeted for families with children who may be at risk of abuse and neglect due to

stress. These children include those who live with disabilities, mental illness, chronic illness, or terminal illness.

Respite care provides a break for parents with special needs children and as such services the entire family and acts as a social support. Although little research is available those involved in the provision and use of respite care cite as very successful.

The knowledge and skill for developing early intervention efforts exist. The long and short-term benefits are clear and will documented. The task at hand is to develop broader support for early intervention efforts and promote a preventive social policy agenda for children. The needs of at-risk children and have the expertise to develop implement and evaluate successful preventive programs

## Policies Sensitive to Children and Family’s needs

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*“Although most current services are residual there are ways to incorporate a more preventive philosophy into the existing structures.”*

The quality of life and well being of millions of children are far below what a wealthy nation such as ours can provide. At every age, among all races and income groups and in communities nationwide, many children are in jeopardy. They grow up in families whose lives are in turmoil. The harshness of these children’s lives and their tenuous hold on tomorrow cannot be countenanced by wealthy nations, a caring people, or a prudent society.

America’s future depends on these children too. If we measure success not just by how well most children do, but by how poorly some fare, America falls far short. There is no shortage of information in the shortcomings and inadequacies of child welfare services in this country. In addition there is tremendous collective knowledge on what works and what benefits children in need. The challenge now is to develop

the collective will to make changes and institute policies that are proactive and benefit children. With the knowledge of what works and doesn’t along with insight into the state of children in society today, an agenda for action can be developed.

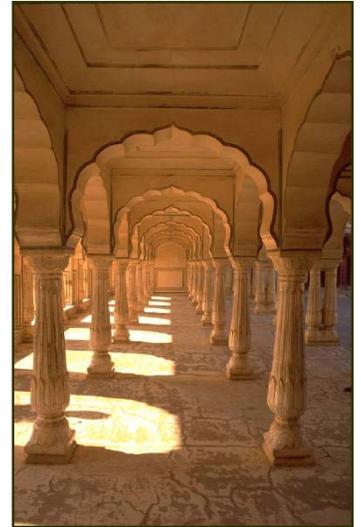
Such an agenda must provide for the immediate needs of millions of children as well as work to prevent the continued decline in the well-being of America’s children.

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## Policies Sensitive to Children (continued.....)

With the knowledge of what works and along with insight into the state of children in society today, an agenda for action can be developed. Such an agenda must provide for the immediate needs of millions of children as well as work to prevent the continued decline in the well-being of America's children.

Although most current services are residual there are ways to incorporate a more preventive philosophy into the existing structure. While services must respond to immediate need and provide emergency care, progress can be made in countering the cause of the problem and workers toward prevention of continued need. This approach involves response to the emergency, stabilization of the child and family, and focus of child welfare practices' progresses from response to emergency situations to aid families to become self-supporting.



Everything you imaging is real.

## An Action Agenda

What follows is a set of recommendations to improve the lives of children, help become self-supporting, and in the process improve the prospects for a positive national future.

1. Support and expand existing work programs.
2. Focus on Preventive services designed for long-term improvements.
3. Develop and enhance services that support parents in caring for their own children.
4. Develop services that support all families.
5. Emphasize comprehensive service delivery
6. Empower families.
7. Advocate for children and families.

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*"I'm selfish, impatient and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control and at times hard to handle. But if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best."*

## International Fathers Rights Foundation

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We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.internationalfathersrights.com](http://www.internationalfathersrights.com)

## Summary

Children do not vote, do not contribute to election campaigns, and do not make policy decisions. The development and implementation of social policy for children resides with adults.

Professionals who provide services for children must take an active role in influencing the state of programs and policies in the country. For too long, children's services have been fragmented and respond only one there is an identified problem.

For the United States to be in a position to grow and prosper in the coming decades, its children must be healthy, educated and

socially developed.

Prevention of social problems through early intervention is key to improving the overall well-being of children. Preventive services have proven to be cost effective.

Advocates for children must draw public attention to the importance of alleviating poverty: providing health care for all children, creating educational opportunities and training for meaningful employment and protecting children from abuse, neglect and violence.

Child welfare practitioners

must know their craft well to be effective service providers, thus demand more excellence of practitioners.

For children to served, child welfare professionals must become proactive and be advocates for policies and programs sensitive to the needs of children and families.

### *About Our Organization...*

Mr. Stephenson, as a single father and parent, has experienced the social services and foster care services first hand through trying to obtain services for his son and

encountered the negative results of bias and lack of programs developed for all families. Mr. Stephenson experiences the lack of communication, programs,

or even support systems designed for families headed by single fathers, led to the development of International Fathers Rights Foundation (IFRF).

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