

For Your Information

June Monthly Feature:

What have we learned about reform in Child Welfare System

By Sierra M. Stephenson

The message is one of caution, but not despair. Efforts at reform must take into account the issues and limitations identified. They must also be based on a set of principles. True reform must seek a reasonable balance between safety of the child and maintenance of family ties recognizing that maintenance of those ties is usually in the best interest of the child if harm can be prevented. Reform must also recognize that there can be no quarantines total avoidance or maltreatment cannot be achieved and risks must be taken as part of any balance.

Responsibility of the State.

The most important requirement in reform is to be clear on the responsibilities of the government. We expect too little and too much of the state; too little because government could facilitate resolution of the social problems that contribute to child maltreatment and too much because the state cannot prevent or even respond to all harms to children.

Expectations of the state must reflect the limitations of technology and resources. The expansion of the preview of the child welfare system that has occurred in the last few decades should be stopped and reversed.

This will require that lines be carefully drawn between our aspirations and what can be reasonably expected. It may be

useful to distinguish between responsibility for outcomes and responsibility for opportunities. The state cannot accept responsibility for optimal development of all children, nor should it even endeavor to assure the “well-being” of all children.

The determination of the responsibilities of the state in dealing with abuse and neglect must begin with a specification of the harms to which it will respond. Emotional harm can of course have serious effects on the child, on his or her development, and the state should encourage the development of services to help parents better relate to their children. But these services should be voluntary outside the abuse and neglect response system.

The scope of state investigative and coercive action must be limited and it is quite difficult to provide a definition of emotional harm that is both unambiguous and not overly inclusive.

As indicated, I believe that a wide range of services options should be available for families and children. As programs are development it will be useful to the distinctions between in home and out of care, to make movement between them somewhat easier for some families and children for families placement should be viewed as a useful tool to facilitate reconciliation resolution of family problems that will help the families stay together.

News

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By: Michael Yoshida, WDAZ

"Native American Children's Safety Act" was introduced in Congress Thursday

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The safety procedures regarding foster children on Native American reservations may soon be getting major improvements. The "Native American Children's Safety Act" was introduced in Congress on Thursday. The foster care program on the Spirit Lake Nation has been under scrutiny for the last several years. This bill would

address concerns raised not only on Spirit Lake but reservations throughout the country. One major component of the legislation is a requirement for background checks on all the adults living in a potential foster home. Foster homes will also be subject to periodical checks for re-certification. Typically in North Dakota, foster care procedures outside the reservation require fingerprint and federal background checks. This is something that tribal chairman Russ McDonald has been hoping to bring to Spirit Lake. Next week, on behalf the Spirit Lake Reservation, Russ McDonald will be testifying before the Senate's Indian Affairs Committee in support of the bill. Senator Hoeven hopes to have the bill on the floor of the senate in the next few months. –

See more at:

<http://www.wdaz.com/event/article/id/23606/#sthash.L9DK7ZRe.dpuf>

And The Last Word Goes To?

Dreaming permits each and every one of us to be quietly and safely insane every night of our lives.

** William Charles Dement

God writes a lot of comedy... the trouble is, he's stuck with so many bad actors who don't know how to play funny.

** Garrison Keillor