

Are you getting this.....?

MARCH

2014



State of child welfare (cont.)

If they are not successful in keeping congress from looking into the system, they will try to prevent any major reforms from being implemented. In particular, they will advocate for keeping the federal child welfare program as an uncapped entitlement and fro the federal government to continue to play a strong policy directive role with the states

Not all of those who will try to keep congress from looking into the child welfare system are simply interested in maintaining the status quo. There are some serious issues at stake. To begin with the federal government got into the child welfare business because many states refuse or were unwilling to live up to their responsibilities for protecting and caring for abused and neglected children.

There are serious questions as to whether the states will or are capable of doing anything to correct the growing trend of current child welfare system across this country. Congress and the administration should focus on long term solutions and new strategies.

The other issues such as the mission of the child welfare system, how child welfare services can be improved, what the major program priorities should be, the role of the federal government and how the system should be financed should be addressed. However as important as these are, they should not consume all of our attention and be an excuse to put aside the more fundamental issues that appear to be fueling the child welfare system.

The State of Child Welfare

Preface:

The child welfare system is broken and worse of all no one has a clue on what or how to fix it. The goals of family unifications and permanency planning remain paramount. But drastic increases in the number of troubled families and misplaced financial incentives to the states make these goals nearly impossible to achieve. Now please understand the no marginal changes will turn this system around. What is needed will be comprehensive reform based on fundamental restructuring of our efforts to help troubled children and protect vulnerable children.

It comes to mind the public knows little about child welfare system (CWS) with the expectation of the increasing number of scandal in the media and newspapers. This system is shrouded in secrecy allegedly to protect children the fact that so little is known about the system is a tribute to the child system, i.e. administrators, social workers, juvenile and family court judges and many child advocates. These people have done a truly remarkably and efferent job of keeping the system hidden from public scrutiny.

Since the public has been kept in the dark, there have been some very severe developments. Also more than twenty five state child welfare systems are either being sued or are under federal court order, because of abusive and unconstitutional practices. Being mindful of this, there are dozens of similar law suits have been filed against local public child welfare agencies. Now class action lawsuits are not the only problems confronting the system. The number of children being propelled into public child welfare systems is growing at an alarming rate. Estimates that as many as 500,000 will be in foster care by the end of the decade, almost twice the number in such care ten years ago. Child advocates claim that child welfare services are underfunded there is extreme waste in these systems. Almost daily there are shocking media reports of abused and neglected children known to child welfare authorities who are allowed to stay with or be returned to their parents or guardians only to be mistreated again or worse sometimes killed. There is indication that state and federal policymakers are becoming more sensitive to the dangers children might face as a result of these policies. An objective and comprehensive examination into the child welfare system by Congress will be met with mix reactions, some will welcome such inquire and feeling it is long overdue. Now others will try to prevent it from ever happening in the first place. .

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Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

>>>>Mark Twain

I love those who can smile in trouble, who can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but they whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves their conduct, will pursue their principles unto death.

>>>>Leonardo da Vinci

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or exercise their revolutionary right to overthrow it.

>>>>Abraham Lincoln



There are serious questions.....

If congress and the administration give states block grants along with the flexibility to determine how they will spend their federal child welfare dollars. More specifically they don't trust that state and local elected public officials and child welfare administrators (who are political appointees in most jurisdictions) will spend their federal child welfare resources wisely.

Now this probably not and unwarranted assumption, given what has occurred in the past and the current state of events. There are concerns about weather states will increase their child welfare expenditures if federal funds are capped and the child welfare population continues to grow.

Don't get me wrong, this is a legitimate criticism and cause for concern. But as I stated earlier, there is waste and inefficiency in the child welfare system and little doubt that existing resources can be used more effectively. It will be interesting to see if the political will mobilize at the state and local levels to tackle some of the scared cash "cows" (the residential care industry) in the child welfare that could result in significant long-term cost savings. Focusing on poverty is important part of this equation affecting the welfare system, but the problem is more complicated.

The issue of income inequality and the economic disparities that stems from particularly as it affects the most impoverished portion of our population seems to be an important factor. The wage distribution has become considerably more unequal with more highly skilled, trained and educated workers at the top experiencing real wage growth and those at the bottom real wage losses.

The types of jobs that are being created by the economic expansion currently taking place require skilled and better educated workers. Moreover, the unskilled also have to contend with other factors such as immigration, declining rates of unorganized and the growing use of temporary workers, all of which decrease their chances of becoming gainfully employment. This is what I believe are the more fundamental issues.

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F.Y.I

Problems are not new but needed honesty and openness about C.W.S.

It has been a fact that social workers directly involved with troubled families were under great stress. They have impossible large caseloads and even more excessive and meaningless paperwork. No time to get to know children for whom they make decisions for whom they make decision for, no time to visit families and no time or training to deal with complex family problems. The sad fact is that for many children out of their homes there is no end, they simply grow up in foster care never certain of their status.

Even more alarming the “States” are often neglectful parents even abusive to meet their ongoing obligations to children at risk or in “placement.” Not to mention evidenc³ of serious and continuing abuses to children by the providers of services. Now with the knowledge it would stand to reason that the “reasonable efforts” policy would apply to the state as it does the parents. Federal law was meant to reduce the need for foster care by helping troubled families stay together, but foster care has grown into a multibillion dollar system of confusion and misdirection and overwhelmed by the profusion of sick, battered and emotionally scarred children who are becoming the responsibility of the public.

This system promised to clean up the foster care system, save money, and help children and families through enactment of specific regulations and requirements. Children with severely complex problems have scarred their young lives to remain a challenge to our society for the remainder of their lives. Of something isn't done to overcome our indifference and response to the needs of our families, the children and those who will follow them into the foster care nightmare it will remain a crushing and costly burden to the United States through the next century.

What a travesty that will be.....

**“HOLDING ON TO ANGER IS
LIKE GRASPING A HOT COAL
WITH THE INTENT OF
THROWING IT AT SOMEONE
ELSE; YOU ARE THE ONE WHO
GETS BURNED.”**

BUDDHA

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All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible.

>>>>T.E. Lawrence



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