



Vision and Principles for Finance Reform in Child Welfare

Vision

CWLA envisions a future that allows families, communities, organizations, and governments the ability to ensure that all children and youth benefit from the resources needed to grow into healthy, contributing members of society. Child welfare services must be available to families whenever concerns arise about the safety, nurturance, and well-being of children. A network of community-based, family-centered organizations, whose mission is to support and stabilize children, youth, and families with appropriate sensitivity to family culture, will be able to provide these services.

CWLA's ultimate goal is to achieve better outcomes for the children and families who encounter the child welfare system by

- preventing abuse and neglect,
- preventing unnecessary separation of children from their homes,
- ensuring systems are in place to support and stabilize children, youth and families in those instances when placement is necessary,
- ensuring placements are the most appropriate and least restrictive, provided at the right level and for the minimum amount of time necessary to achieve desired outcomes,
- ensuring appropriate transition services for youth who age out of foster care,
- ensuring that all children and youth have permanent families through reunification, adoption or kinship care, and sustaining permanent placements that are made,
- partnering with client families involved in the child welfare system in such a manner to allow the family and child, as appropriate, to be actively engaged in their service planning, and
- ensuring no disproportionate effect on children or families of any culture including tribal communities.

Principles

CWLA embraces the principle that families must be at the center of services that prevent and remedy situations leading to child abuse and neglect. The full spectrum of services for children and families must be available, from early intervention programs when it is first determined that a family is at risk, to foster care and other treatment alternatives for those children whose safety and well-being is more significantly threatened. Ensuring high-quality casework practice in each instance,

according to national child welfare standards, requires a professional workforce. Recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining qualified, culturally diverse, culturally competent, effective, and dedicated professionals is essential to this effort.

- All children and youth who are substantiated as abused or neglected, determined to be dependent, or in need of protective services should be eligible for federal, state, and locally funded support services.
- Federal funding should remain tied to children and youth in need and not be capped as in a block grant or limited in some other similar arbitrary way.
- Maintain the partnership on child welfare between federal, tribal, state and local governments. Support and enhance partnerships with tribal governments and private providers.
- Build on progress with Tribes and tribal organizations in regards to child welfare. In particular the provisions affecting tribes from the Fostering Connections to Success Act must be fully and successfully implemented and any new reforms must assure access for tribal communities.
- Increase support for best practice interventions and new initiatives such as kinship care. Support evidence based and promising practices, including those that are culturally based.
- Increase support for public and private child welfare agency's systemic and integrated approaches to monitoring quality, improving practice, and achieving outcomes, including the Continuous Quality Improvement structure.
- Enact the next phase in child welfare reforms by making changes to the federal child welfare system that will provide greater support to states, require more accountability and address the need for prevention and post-permanency services:
 - Maintain the Title IV-E entitlement for foster care, adoption assistance and kinship care.
 - De-link Title IV-E foster care and kinship care from the AFDC eligibility requirements, if not immediately then over time similar to the provision in the Fostering Connections Act for adoption assistance.
 - Require increased level of maintenance of effort on states as they receive more federal funds due to the delink.
 - Require states to reinvest savings into prevention services, specialized treatment and post-permanency services.

- Strengthen prevention funding by reforming and expanding Title IV-B Child Welfare Services and allowing the use of Title IV-E funds to address prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- Require greater accountability through reporting and investment into successful and promising prevention strategies.
- Target resources to support and improve post-permanency services so that children reunified with their families, children that reach permanency through adoption and children that are placed in kinship guardianship families receive the family supports that will assure these families continue to be permanent. Target resources to support and improve transition and independence for youth who age out of foster care.
- Invest in the child welfare workforce, including the private provider and tribal workforce, through a national strategy that will encourage work in this field through partnerships with higher education, funding of loan forgiveness, and state-based strategies.