AN INQUIRY INTO THE RISK FACTORS AFFECTING FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

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PRESENTATION AGENDA

1. Introduction
   o About Me
   o Why I chose this format for my Senior Honor's Project
2. Brief History of the Child Welfare System
   o Mission of the System
   o Current Legislation
3. Overview of the NASW Code of Ethics.
4. Possible flaws within the Child Welfare System
5. Existing Resources
6. My suggestions for change
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Why I selected Social Work
- I originally entered UNCG as a Sociology Major, but soon realized I wanted to do something a little more specialized
- Social Work would allow me to continue studying social systems/inequalities, while also giving me the opportunity to make a true difference in the world around me.

Social Work Interests
- Child Welfare
- Individuals with Disabilities
During the process of deciding what my Senior Honor's Project would be, I wanted to do something more involved for my selected topic.

Papers are great....for some things.
- Allow for a deeper discussion of a topic.
- One-sided in terms of interpretation.

A Social Worker's influence comes from a combination of their writing, and their voice.

Completing a presentation and a literature review would allow this information to reach a variety of audiences, and possibly make a larger difference.
Brief History of the Child Welfare System
CREATION OF CHILD WELFARE

- **1854: The Orphan Train Movement**
  - Created by Charles Loring Brace
  - Homeless children across the United States utilized railroad systems to be placed into non-relative households.
  - The placement of these children was unregulated, leading to many being placed in abusive/harmful households.

- **1864: The Case of Mary Ellen Wilson**
  - Became an orphan after her father passed away during the American Civil War, and her mother becoming unable to provide care.
  - Placed in the care of an abusive Foster Parent by her mother, before being placed in a different household by Henry Bergh.
  - Inspiration for the creation of the 1874 New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SYSTEM

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services states that "we believe all foster children deserve safe, permanent, nurturing homes within one year of initial placement." (NCDHHS, n.d.).
LEGISLATION/NASW CODE OF ETHICS

- Current Legislation:
  - Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994:
    - Prevents racial discrimination when determining which homes to place foster children.
  - Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997:
    - Promoted the quick placement of children into foster homes and required background checks be completed on family members prior to placement.
  - Family First Prevention Services Act:
    - Allowed for the use of state funding to provide resources to counseling services and courses for foster parents to learn how to raise the new additions to their household.

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence
Flaws within the System: During Placement
Requirements for Foster Parents

- Due to the policies the Foster Care System uses when placing children into a new home placement, the process to become a Foster Parent is incredibly selective.
  - Orientation/Trainings provided by the system.
  - Evaluation of one's living arrangement.
  - Licensure Application

- The biggest factor in becoming a Foster Parent is the completion of a Criminal Background Check.
  - Only screens for information related to criminal convictions from sex-offender databases and drug testing.
  - Suspicious behavior could easily go unnoticed.
Prejudices and preconceived notions about minority and ethnic groups may prevent these children from being placed in safe and nurturing homes.

2017 Study in *Child Abuse and Neglect: The Intellectual Journal*
- Focused on studying the reports of maltreatment between Indigenous and White foster children.
- 63% of Indigenous foster youth experienced physical abuse compared to 38% of White foster youth.

Study in *Children and Youth Services Review*
- Compared the rates of foster care placement and maltreatment between Black foster youth and White Foster youth.
- It is 2.5 times higher for Black foster youth to be placed within the system and experience a higher level of abuse.
REFUSAL TO ACT ON ALLEGATIONS

- Despite being mandated by law to report any cases of suspected abuse or maltreatment, some Foster Care agencies refuse to take immediate action.

- The case of the Turpin Family, CNN:
  - Removed from their abusive biological family by ChildNet Youth and Family Services in Riverside County, California.
  - Placed within yet another abusive household, experiencing various forms of physical and emotional abuse.
  - When they attempted to bring these allegations to the attention of ChildNet supervisors, they were repeatedly silenced.
  - The foster family was eventually arrested in 2021 after the youth decided to take legal action against them, and ChildNet as a whole.
Flaws within the System: After Placement
LACK OF COMMUNITY REPORTING

- North Carolina's Mandatory Reporting law states that "any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent....or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found." (Craven County North Carolina, n.d.).

- Not extended to all members of the community, which may lead to unreported cases.

- The CDC claims that 1 in 7 children experiences some kind of neglect during their lifetimes, but the number may be much larger than what we can see.
Some cases of maltreatment may not be a result of abusive tendencies within the system itself, or the families the children are placed in.

Some families may have a lack of resources that prevent them from properly taking care of a new life entering their home.
- Financial Insecurities
- Lack of healthy food options
- Lack of training on how to smoothly transition into new responsibilities.

Families may also experience life crises that take away these abilities.
- Foster families are provided a monthly check to assist in covering the costs of a new Foster Child.
Current Resources for Foster Families
NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

• Social Workers can refer the families they are assigned to to various Nonprofit Organizations that provide them with the resources they need to keep up with their new household.

• The Family Room Triad
  - Located in Greensboro, North Carolina
  - Aims to help reduce the amount of out-of-pocket costs for Foster Families by providing them with a variety of resources, completely free of charge.
    - Child Furniture
    - Clothing
    - Toys
    - Diapers
    - Formula.
  - Families only need to show proof of their Foster Parent licensure to have access to these resources.
PARENTING COURSES

• While some families may be eager to adopt a child, they may realize upon placement that their expectations and reality do not match.

• To ease any discomfort associated with this phenomenon, the Foster Care System and other organizations provide parenting courses as a way for families to adjust.

• Fostering NC: An Online Learning Resource
  o Managing Biases
  o Permanency Planning
  o Providing support to other Foster Families
  o Free of charge!
My Recommendations for Reform
AREAS I WISH TO ADDRESS

- Stricter Background Check Requirements
  - Social Workers should be required to hold interviews with members of the community who have gotten into contact with the potential foster parents.
  - Any suspicious behaviors should be deeply investigated to verify the validity of the claims.

- Universal Mandatory Reporting
  - Online courses for mandatory reporting liscensure should be made available to all U.S. citizens once they become adults.

- Tracking System of Monthly Checks
  - Ensures that families aren't using the money they are provided to take care of foster children to address their own crises, or for personal gain.

- Continued Supervision of Social Workers
Thank you for listening!
WORKS CITED


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