

Child and Family Services

GLOSSARY

Case plan

A plan developed by a caseworker to devise and implement what is thought to be the most desirable outcome for the individual under the agency's care.

Friend of the Court

A division of circuit court that handles child custody, child support, and parenting time (visitation) matters.

Local multi-purpose collaborative body

State-mandated human-services bodies established in every county (or, in less populated areas, cluster of counties) to advise local government on ways to coordinate services to produce better outcomes for children and families; has both public- and private-sector members.

Managed-care child-welfare services

A program whereby providers are paid a capitated fee (a certain amount per child) for delivering child-welfare services, e.g., family preservation, family reunification, foster care, adoption.

Permanent placement

The setting in which a child who has been removed from his/her family ultimately will be placed; may be back with the family, with a relative, in permanent foster care, or in an adoptive home.

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)

A 1996 federal law that substantially changed the nation's welfare system; replaces Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Protective services

Programs to investigate alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect.

BACKGROUND

Child Welfare

Although there is little disagreement that a key state and federal government function is protecting children from abuse and neglect, the evolution of the public child-welfare system has been fraught with controversy about balancing parental, child, and state's rights.

For example, growing public recognition of the extent and seriousness of child abuse/neglect led many states, Michigan among them, to require certain professionals to report suspected maltreatment and also to improve their protective-services assessment and investigation processes. In many instances this resulted in children being removed from their home and placed in foster care or other out-of-home setting permanently or for an extended time. This phenomenon, termed "foster care drift," became a concern, and in 1980 federal legislation was passed requiring states to make "reasonable efforts" to preserve and reunify families.

Although "reasonable effort" was neither well defined nor fully implemented by the states, during the 1980s they rapidly expanded family preservation and reunification programs, placing more emphasis on keeping families together and recognizing the importance of the biological family. This trend was exemplified by federal legislation (1993) authorizing new spending for family preservation and family support services.

Despite these federal and state efforts to reform child-welfare systems, there is widespread concern that too many children are "falling through the cracks," facing repeated maltreatment, and languishing in foster care. The demand on state child-welfare systems may be exacerbated by demographic and economic trends: In Michigan alone, thousands of children are affected by increasing poverty, family dissolution, and substance abuse. While most low-income families do not maltreat their children, poverty increases stress and puts children at increased risk. In this context, the effect that national and state welfare reform is having on the child-welfare system—including lifetime limits on income assistance—requires careful monitoring.

Child-Welfare Funding and Administration

The charge given the child-welfare system is to protect children, and the primary responsibility for carrying it out rests with the states; in Michigan, the state Family Independence Agency (FIA) has administrative responsibility. The FIA's programs include services in the following areas:

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- Abuse/neglect prevention
- Protection (investigating reports of abuse/neglect)
- Foster care
- Adoption
- Juvenile justice

Michigan has a long history of delivering child-welfare services in partnership with private agencies. Private agencies provide supervision, treatment, and residential care to nearly 60 percent of the more than 10,000 abused/neglected youths in out-of-home care.

The federal government plays a significant role in financing child-welfare services. Among the more notable sources are Titles IV-A, IV-B, IV-E and XIX of the Social Security Act, and the Title XX Social Services Block Grant. These funds are but part of Michigan's complicated child-welfare funding system, which also includes state and local monies. Each funding source has its own eligibility and program requirements, and this complicates delivering services to children and families.

Although there now is federal funding for family preservation and family support (\$442 million in FY 1994–95, the latest year for which comparable data are available), most federal child-welfare monies are directed to maintaining children in out-of-home care—foster care maintenance payments and adoption assistance (nearly \$3.5 billion). A similar situation is found in Michigan: In FY 1994–95, \$41 million was appropriated for child abuse/neglect prevention services, including family preservation and support, but nine times that—\$369 million—was spent on out-of-home care and adoption subsidies and services.

Several states—including Michigan—are experimenting with new ways to deliver and fund child-welfare services. The initiatives reflect (1) concern about increasing foster care caseloads and costs and (2) recognition that the current child-welfare financing system inadvertently may give states an incentive to put children in out-of-home settings, which cost more than giving services to families to prevent the neces-

sity for such placement. Many states are seeking more flexibility in using child-welfare funding, the goal being to give communities more money with fewer strings attached, making it easier for them to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, to help maintain costs and increase flexibility, many states—including Michigan—are testing managed-care models for child-welfare services.

In December 1997 Michigan received a federal waiver (permission to operate a program in a way different from that required in federal law/regulation) to run a four-year child-welfare managed-care program in as many as six counties. Through this pilot program, the state will give child-welfare providers a capitated fee (a certain amount per child) and the providers will deliver a range of child-welfare services, including abuse/neglect prevention, family preservation, family reunification, foster care, and adoption assistance.

In July 1997 the Michigan Supreme Court issued an opinion that alters Michigan's system for funding child-welfare services. In *Oakland County v. State of Michigan*, the court ruled that the Michigan Legislature violated the so-called Headlee amendment by putting a cap (an upper limit for expenditures) on the Child Care Fund—the state fund used to reimburse counties for child-welfare expenditures. This ruling will more than double state reimbursement to counties.

Abuse/Neglect Investigation (Protective Services)

Nearly one in every 100 Michigan children is a confirmed abuse/neglect victim. Even more are the subject of a protective services investigation. In FY 1995–96, nearly 143,000 Michigan children lived in families investigated by the FIA for suspected child abuse/neglect. Some groups—e.g., low-income youth and teenage girls—suffer a higher rate of maltreatment than does the general population.

Although the FIA is receiving and investigating a growing number of reports of suspected child maltreatment, the number of confirmed abuse/neglect cases is falling: From FY 1987–88 to FY 1995–96, the number

dropped nearly 17 percent, from about 25,300 to 21,000. While this appears to be good news, child-welfare professionals point out that the decrease could be all or partly attributable to the fact that the increase in protective-services resources is not keeping pace with the number of investigations required: From 1982 to 1996, abuse/neglect investigations conducted by the state climbed almost 60 percent, but investigative staff grew less than 3 percent. It may be that investigators' caseloads are so heavy that they cannot investigate as fully as they should, with the result that fewer instances of abuse/neglect are *confirmed*.

The primary responsibility for responding to suspected child maltreatment rests with the state, and since 1989 certain human services professionals have been legally mandated to report suspected child abuse/neglect. In FY 1995–96, the FIA received approximately 124,000 complaints of suspected child maltreatment. More than half were dismissed without a full investigation for such reasons as the social worker's assessment that the case did not meet the legal definition of child abuse/neglect, there was not reasonable cause to suspect current maltreatment, or the person who reported the instance was not credible. The state must respond to complaints of suspected abuse/neglect within 24 hours (this requirement is met about 80 percent of the time) and complete an investigation within 21 days. When maltreatment has been substantiated, protective-services workers either may (1) remove children from their home and place them in foster care or (2) leave them in the home under FIA supervision.

Concern about the state's ability to effectively protect children has led in recent years to several efforts to examine the state child-welfare system.

- In 1992 Governor Engler appointed the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice to review Michigan's investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse (particularly child sexual abuse) and recommend changes.
- In 1993 the Michigan State Bar convened a Children's Task Force that undertook an intensive two-year study of the justice system and legal services to children.
- Public Act 204 of 1994 established the Children's Ombudsman office; among its purposes is to investigate how the state handles child-welfare cases and recommend policy or statutory changes.
- In 1995 Governor Engler established a Children's Commission chaired by Lt. Gov. Binsfeld and charged it with reviewing current child-welfare laws and their implementation (this body commonly is called the Binsfeld Commission).
- In 1997 the auditor general completed a performance audit of the children's protective services program.
- In 1997 the American Bar Association and the National Center for State Courts assessed the Michigan probate court's handling of child abuse/neglect cases.

The result is new legislation and policy changes. On December 29, 1997, Governor Engler signed a package of bills that is expected to streamline child-protective investigation and decision-making. The bills require counties to adopt a standard child abuse/neglect investigation-and-interview protocol that is based on a model recommended by the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice. The laws also prohibit investigators from interviewing children in the presence of the individual suspected of having perpetrated the abuse and require the FIA to file a petition with the court within 24 hours if it determines that a child was severely physically injured or sexually abused.

The auditor general and the children's ombudsman raised several troubling issues regarding children's protective services, some of which have not yet been addressed through legislative or policy change. The auditor general found three serious problems during the review period: (1) The FIA telephone-screening process left nearly one-quarter of the children they reviewed at risk because their case did not receive a full investigation; (2) the FIA did not commence and complete all investigations on a timely basis; and (3) among the county FIAs there is inconsistency in the standards used to determine whether a child has been abused/neglected.

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Because many child-welfare reforms are increasing protective-services workers' workload, the FIA has undertaken some initiatives to help workers, including standardized risk-assessment tools. Also, in 1997 the FIA launched its Child Welfare Training Institute. New workers, before assuming a caseload, now receive eight weeks' training: five in the classroom and three on the job (formerly, they were given four days' training). Enhanced training is being developed for workers already on the job.

Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention

Prevention is considered an important part of the continuum of services to children and families and can reduce the need for protective services and foster care placements, both of which are more expensive than prevention. Interest in prevention services has grown in the last several years as new brain research has confirmed that children's experiences early in life affect their long-term physical, emotional, and intellectual development.

Many successful child-abuse prevention programs involve home-based services that support and educate parents, and they often are provided by private, community-based organizations. Michigan is using local "collaborative" bodies (which include representatives of public and private agencies and others with an interest in child welfare) to determine the prevention services needed locally. Since 1993 such groups have played a part in allocating approximately \$35 million in federal family preservation and support funding.

In FY 1997–98 the Michigan Legislature appropriated \$9 million for abuse/neglect prevention, including its application in instances in which no abuse/neglect problem has been substantiated, but the parents are considered at risk of maltreating their children. In addition, Michigan funds prevention services through the Children's Trust Fund, an independent nonprofit agency funded primarily through a state income tax checkoff.

Foster Care

When children cannot be protected in their own homes, the court may place them in a foster home or

other residential setting. The foster care program is among the most visible and controversial components of the child-welfare system. Studies show that

- the number of children placed in foster care is growing,
- the average age of children entering out-of-home care is dropping,
- minority children are disproportionately represented in foster care and stay there longer, and
- a portion of the rise in out-of-home placements can be attributed to growing parental substance abuse.

In FY 1995–96 on any given day, an average of about 15,200 Michigan children were in out-of-home care. Although Michigan's rate has been below the national average, the state's out-of-home placement rate rose 7 percent from FY 1987–88 to FY 1995–96.

In 1997 several bills were enacted to improve the state's foster care system; they are based on the Binsfeld Commission's work. The new laws

- make provision for permanent foster care for children aged 14 and older for whom return to home or adoption is not recommended or expected;
- require the court, if there is concern that a child could be harmed, to order psychological evaluation or counseling to determine whether "parenting time" (visitation) by the alleged abuse perpetrator is appropriate; allows the court to suspend parenting time when a petition to terminate parental rights is filed;
- make available to foster parents copies of case plans, court orders, and medical and education reports concerning children in their care;
- establish procedures for foster parents to appeal a foster child's being removed from their home;
- require all counties to establish child fatality review teams by January 1, 1999;
- expand the number and role of county foster-care review boards (such boards consist of members of the general public);

- require each child in foster care to have a “medical passport,” to ensure that s/he receives necessary health care and that changes in placement do not disrupt it;
- require an attorney to be present at all hearings concerning a child; substitute counsel is not permitted without court approval;
- allow some variance to foster-home licensing requirements if placement in a particular home is in the child’s best interest, and his health and safety is not jeopardized; and
- encourage “kinship” care by requiring the state to explore placing a child with relatives within 30 days of removal from his/her home; require criminal-record checks and home studies of relatives.

Parental substance abuse plays a major role in family dissolution and strains the child-welfare system. Some children with substance-abusing parents enter the child-welfare system at birth (when evidence of prenatal exposure to alcohol/drugs is discovered), others later in life, when their parents’ substance abuse results in maltreatment. Substance abuse creates a conflict for the child-welfare system: One goal is family reunification; if this is not possible, another goal is to quickly move children into permanent out-of-home placement (usually in foster care or with relatives). Drug and alcohol addiction often require lengthy treatment and a long recovery period, and this conflicts with the goal of quick out-of-home permanent placement for children. As part of the Binsfeld legislation described immediately above, Michigan now gives the parent of a child who is in foster care (or at risk of being removed from the home) priority for substance abuse treatment.

Michigan, as have many states, has invested in programs designed to keep children out of foster care. The state’s Families First program, established in 1988, provides intensive, short-term assistance to families in which a child is at imminent risk of being removed from the home. While evaluation shows that family-preservation programs have some success, highly publicized cases where such intervention failed have eroded some support for this approach.

Adoption

Nationally, approximately two-thirds of children in foster care eventually return to their biological family. However, if efforts to reunite families fail, the goal is to find children permanent homes or arrange for adoption as soon as possible.

Many children do not quickly find adoptive homes. Although about 22,000 children were adopted in the United States in 1996, another 54,000—one in ten foster children—remained available. Michigan ranks 19th in the country in its adoption rate (FY 1995–96), with nearly 37 percent of available children finding adoptive homes. A record 2,378 children were adopted in Michigan in FY 1996–97, a 9 percent increase over the prior year. Eight of every ten were adopted by foster parents or relatives.

The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 provides some definition to the 1980 federal law that requires states to make “reasonable efforts” to preserve and reunify families. The act deems children’s safety to be of paramount concern and also

- expands the Family Preservation and Support Services Program, renamed the Safe and Stable Families Program, and permits states to use the funds for adoption promotion and support services;
- provides a financial reward to states that exceed a specified number of adoptions (\$4,000 for each foster child adopted and \$6,000 for special-needs children);
- encourages “concurrent planning,” whereby states simultaneously make reasonable efforts to reunify children with their family and plan for adoption or permanent placement;
- requires states to initiate action to terminate parental rights and proceed with adoptive placement when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the prior 22 months—unless (1) the child’s placement is with a relative, (2) such action is not in the child’s best interest, or (3) the state has failed to provide reunification services consistent with the child’s case plan;

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- requires a permanency planning hearing within 12 months of a child's entering care (currently 18 months), during which plans are reviewed for the child's eventual permanent placement; and
- allows states to forgo reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families in cases in which there is serious physical abuse, sexual abuse, or abandonment.

Many Michigan children are placed for adoption through a private agency. The FIA has established incentive payments for adoptive placements, paying private foster care and adoption agencies \$3,500–8,600 for placement within a specified time. Furthermore, the Binsfeld bills establish a permanent-placement goal of 12 months. The bills

- tighten the time frame for determining permanent placement for children,
- require that a petition to terminate parental rights be filed at the initial disposition hearing in cases involving certain serious physical and sexual abuse,
- direct the State Court Administrator's Office to publish annually an evaluation of the courts' ability to obtain permanency for children, and
- require the FIA to publish an annual "report card" on individual agencies' success in obtaining permanent placement for children.

Parental Responsibilities and Rights

More than one of every five Michigan children lives with just one parent, and significantly more children spend at least some time during their childhood in a single-parent arrangement. Approximately four of every ten children born to married parents experience separation or divorce of their parents.

Children born out of wedlock or whose parents divorce can face numerous economic and psychological hardships. For example, children who live only with their father are three times more likely to live in poverty than others; those living only with their mother are seven times more likely. Because chil-

dren living in a single-parent household are more likely to receive public assistance, considerable attention is being directed to the relationship between welfare reform and child-support enforcement. The former focuses largely on the parent's willingness/ability to work, the latter on the noncustodial parent's willingness/ability to fulfill his/her financial responsibility for their children.

Michigan, like other states, has two child-support enforcement systems—one private and one public. In the private system, custodial parents usually must hire an attorney, finance a search for the absent parent, and pay court and other fees. In the early 1970s, Congress recognized that this relatively costly private system was excluding many low-income parents from access to child support, and added Title IV-D to the Social Security Act. Title IV-D required every state to establish a child-support agency that provides services (1) free-of-charge to recipients of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Medicaid and (2) for a nominal fee to others. Michigan established the Office of Child Support (OCS) within the FIA. However, Michigan's system for enforcing child support and parental responsibility includes local government and the courts, and the OCS contracts with Michigan counties and the Friend of the Court (FOC) for child-support enforcement.

Friend of the Court

The Friend of the Court was created in Michigan in 1919 and has four major responsibilities:

- Investigate and make recommendations regarding child custody, child support, and parenting time (visitation)
- Provide mediation regarding custody and parenting time
- Collect and distribute court-ordered support payments within 14 days of receipt (and initiate enforcement proceedings after four weeks' arrearage)
- Enforce custody, parenting time, and support orders

In FY 1996–97 the FOC collected \$1.1 billion in child support, 9 percent more than in the prior year. Approximately 18 percent was for cases involving AFDC recipients, but recently—with the decline in the number of people on public assistance—this figure has begun dropping dramatically. The overall FOC caseload (child and spousal support) in calendar year 1996 was nearly 825,000, a slight increase from 1995. In 1996 there were 1,725 FOC staff, averaging almost 480 cases each.

Federal and State FOC Reforms

Over the last 25 years the federal government has increased its role in state child-support enforcement. In addition to creating Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, in 1984, 1988, 1993, and 1996 Congress revised laws affecting state child-support collection. Congress also passed legislation intended to increase establishment of paternity, speed up the process of securing child-support awards, enhance states' authority to enforce support awards, and help children to receive health insurance coverage through their noncustodial parent. Many of Michigan's recent reforms have been in response to the federal changes.

The federal Family Support Act of 1988 required states to establish statewide computer-information systems by 1995, later extended to 1997. Only 17 states met the deadline, and Michigan was not among them. The penalty for missing the deadline is losing all federal child-support and welfare funds, but negotiations are underway to extend the deadline. Michigan and other states in which child-support is administered at least partly through local government and the courts are having the most trouble implementing the statewide system.

In 1986, to increase uniformity and predictability of child-support awards statewide, Michigan adopted a child-support formula that identifies common factors to be considered in setting a child-support award. The formula is based on the child's needs and both parents' resources. Courts must follow the formula or state the reasons for failure to do so. Child-care and health-care costs are considered, and the formula allows the FOC to "impute" income. Imputation means that the court may find that a noncustodial parent has the ability to

earn a certain amount—even if s/he currently is not earning at that level.

Despite these state and federal changes, there remained considerable dissatisfaction with Michigan's FOC. Some parents complained that the FOC and the law displayed a gender bias. Noncustodial fathers believed that the FOC was interested only in securing child support but wouldn't intervene aggressively to ensure parenting time. Custodial mothers thought the FOC shouldn't pursue parenting time when it was ineffective in securing support. Both custodial and noncustodial parents complained that the FOC was inefficient and slow to respond: For example, in 1995 less than half (48 percent) of FOC child-support cases in Michigan had a support order in place, and only a third of those with orders received any support; overall, only 16 percent of the cases handled by the FOC that year received any child-support payment.

In 1996 new laws were enacted to

- increase the number of cases in which paternity is established;
- expand the number of cases in which child-support is awarded;
- expedite child-support enforcement by requiring the state to suspend the occupational or driver's license of parents not complying with child-support or parenting-time mandates;
- improve accountability by establishing FOC citizen-advisory committees in each county;
- require quicker response to grievances;
- make FOC services more accessible by requiring offices to be open to the public at least 20 hours each month during nontraditional office hours;
- assure that noncustodial parents have access to their children's medical, dental, school, and child-care records; and
- increase the legal penalty for falsely reporting child abuse/neglect in order to influence custody or parenting decisions.

Also in 1996, as part of an overhaul of the nation's welfare system, new federal child-support require-

ments were imposed on the states by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The new law requires welfare recipients to turn over their rights to child support to the state and also to cooperate with efforts to establish a child's paternity. Individuals who refuse to cooperate in establishing paternity will have their monthly cash assistance reduced by at least 25 percent. In addition, states no longer must give the first \$50 in child support collected each month to a custodial parent who is receiving assistance, although Michigan is one of 20 states retaining this policy. The PRWORA also mandates new enforcement techniques, streamlines the process for establishing paternity, and requires states to establish centralized, state-level collection and disbursement.

DISCUSSION

The federal Social Security Act (1935) firmly established government as a key player in providing social welfare for children and families. The evolution of children's services, however, has been characterized by changing views about the appropriate balance of child, parental, and public interests. Reform or expansion of children's services often has followed the swing of the public policy pendulum as it went from protecting children's rights to protecting parents' rights or from increased parental rights to increased state responsibility.

For example, concern about the states' ability to protect children from abuse/neglect led to initiatives to increase reporting of suspected maltreatment and improve state investigation—children's safety and rights were perceived as paramount. The subsequent increase in foster-care placement, along with research questioning the effect of out-of-home care on children, led to the pendulum's swinging to family preservation and support—culminating in federal requirements and funding for state efforts to preserve and reunify families.

During the 1990s, however, there has been a “backlash” in regard to family preservation and reunification programming: Critics complain that such pro-

grams elevate parents' rights over children's safety. They also fear that at-home child placement may inappropriately reflect the state's interest in reducing the high cost of out-of-home placement. Moreover, “child protection” and “family preservation” are viewed by some as incompatible, and a shift to a “child safety” perspective is seen in the recent reauthorization of the 1993 federal Family Preservation and Family Support Act (in 1997 it was renamed the Safe and Stable Families Program, and it imposes some limit on family preservation and reunification efforts).

Many child advocates believe that children and families need a continuum of services that includes prevention, family preservation and reunification, out-of-home care, and adoption and post-adoption services. The challenge is to determine which children and families will benefit from which services or intervention. A critical component is well-trained staff who can adequately assess the risk to a child and the likelihood of success in intervening with the family. In addition, not all family preservation and support programs are equal—they need to be evaluated to determine which are successful in strengthening families *and* protecting children.

The 1997 Michigan reforms resulting from the work of the Binsfeld Commission, Children's Ombudsman, and others received bipartisan support as well as approval by child advocates and child-welfare professionals. Additional legislation is expected in 1998, addressing

- confidentiality and release of records,
- guidelines for attorney representation in child-welfare cases (SBs 54–56),
- releasing information to adoptive parents, and
- management-information improvements that will permit better case tracking.

In addition, legislation may be proposed to address the three priority issues raised by the children's ombudsman in his most recent report: problems involving

- “live-in partners” who refuse to participate in counseling, substance-abuse treatment, and other such programs;
- parents who do not participate fully in court-ordered services; and
- difficulties protecting very young children from maltreatment.

Since 1983 the legislature has substantially changed laws controlling child-support collection and disbursement, establishment of paternity, and parenting time. Many of these reforms were required by changes in federal law. Contrary to the overall trend toward “devolution,” the federal government has been *increasing* state mandates in child-support enforcement. Many of Michigan’s child-support reforms, intended to improve FOC consistency and accountability and also to give the state more tools to crack down on “deadbeat dads,” have met with some success. For example, Michigan is one of only a few states that have met the federal goal of establishing paternity in more than 90 percent of out-of-wedlock births, and total child-support collections are increasing (but despite this, only 16 percent of the cases handled by the FOC in 1995 received any child-support payments).

The Engler administration and the courts have begun several child-support collection initiatives.

- A “most wanted” list is posted on the Internet, listing noncustodial parents who are not paying court-ordered child support.
- The governor and the chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court appointed a 10-member Child Support Coordinating Council to coordinate the reform efforts of the courts and the executive branch.
- The governor recently announced a plan to use half of new federal welfare-to-work funding (\$15 million) to allow judges in child-support collection cases to compel noncustodial parents to participate in Work First, the state’s welfare-to-work program.

Some experts believe that support-collection efforts will be successful only up to a point: Federal evaluators who examined an earlier federal effort concluded that the payoff from tighter enforcement may be constrained by the fact that some parents simply cannot pay what they owe.

In regard to other parental rights and responsibilities, in the last several years the Michigan Legislature has considered several measures, including one bill that would have restricted the custodial parents’ freedom to move and another that would have eliminated the state’s no-fault divorce law. The legislature also considered a Parental Rights and Responsibility Act that would have reinforced parents’ right to direct their children’s upbringing and education; supporters of this approach strongly support greater parental rights with less government interference.

Federal and state welfare reform may strain the state’s child-welfare and -support systems. Child advocates are concerned that holes in the income-support “safety net” could force more children into out-of-home care. At risk will be children whose parents have reached the time limit on their income assistance or have been penalized by having their benefits reduced or eliminated because they did not participate fully in employment and training. A 1997 study of case closures in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program reveals that sanctioned (penalized) families were 50 percent more likely to have subsequent contact with FIA protective services. In nearly one-quarter of families who lost their income assistance in April 1996, within six months there was a substantiated child abuse/neglect case; in contrast, this occurred in only 15 percent of similar families still receiving aid.

The new time limits and penalties may force states to look for more alternatives to welfare—for example, the FOC, churches, and philanthropic organizations. Some experts expect the FOC to experience a surge in demand for its services: A great many custodial parents and children may be forced off the welfare roll at the end of their time limit, increasing requests

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for child support as well as custody and visitation changes.

See also Child Care; Early Childhood Development; Divorce; Domestic Violence; Court Reorganization and Election of Judges; Health Care Access; Job Training; Substance Abuse; Welfare Reform.

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