

WHERE YOUR FAMILY'S FATE IS DECIDED

Family Court Is a **Factory**

Hearings last **minutes, not hours** — and judges routinely rubber-stamp whatever the agency asks.

15–30

minutes — a routine hearing where a judge decides your child's future

20+

families stacked into a single morning docket in some courts

8%

of hearings where judges discussed reunification — it hit **88%** after judicial training, then the system let it **collapse**

OVERWORKED, OUTGUNNED COUNSEL

Recommended max caseload **77**

Actual clients per CA dependency attorney **273**

That's **3x over the limit**. Parents have **no constitutional right to effective counsel** (Lassiter v. DSS, 1981) — losing your children is "the civil-law equivalent of the death penalty," yet a thief gets more protection than a parent.

EXAMPLE · MEDICAL KIDNAPPING — JUSTINA PELLETIER

14-year-old Justina was taken from her parents after **Boston Children's Hospital** disputed her diagnosis and alleged "medical child abuse." She spent **16 months** in state custody — much of it on a locked psychiatric ward. She entered in a wheelchair and left in worse condition.

"It's an assembly line of injustice... everyone pretends to be holding hearings, but they're just going through the motions before rubber-stamping whatever the agency wants."

— **RICHARD WEXLER, NAT'L COALITION FOR CHILD PROTECTION REFORM**

No jury. No open courtroom. Most of the **3.8M** family cases a year are decided behind closed doors — where CPS/DFCS is the accuser, controls the evidence, AND testifies, then its own recommendation is rubber-stamped. That power goes almost entirely **unchecked**. Families deserve open hearings and a jury of their peers.

Minutes to decide a childhood. That's not justice — it's an assembly line.

Sources: Lassiter v. DSS (1981); RAND/ABA workload study (2023); R. Wexler, NCCPR; Hawaii reunification-hearing study; Boston Globe (Pelletier, 2013–14).

WHAT THE SYSTEM PRODUCES

Aging Out: A **Life Sentence**

Each year roughly **20,000 youth "age out"** of foster care with no family to catch them. The system's report card on its own children is devastating.

1 IN 2 END UP HOMELESS



50% become homeless within **18 months** of aging out of the system.

1 IN 4 LAND BEHIND BARS



25% incarcerated within 2 years of aging out

50% only half of former foster youth are **employed** by age 24

35% of foster youth use illegal drugs; they're also **2x as likely** to drop out of school

75% of siblings in foster care are split into **separate homes**

\$300K+ lifetime social cost taxpayers pay for **each** foster youth — much of it from these outcomes

2x more likely to suffer **PTSD than U.S. combat veterans**. And **80%** of foster youth carry significant mental-health issues.

Cut loose at 18: support ends overnight. These young people enter adulthood with no family, no savings, and the trauma the system added — then society blames them for the fall.

This is what "protection" produced. Worth it?

Sources: The Independent; Community Care; The Annie E. Casey Foundation; Justia Lawyer Directory; Return My Child.



WHAT THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE

They Call It "Protection." The Truth Is Horrifying.

Foster care, CPS & family court — the numbers no one wants you to read. **Open it.**

LET THE SILENCED SPEAK

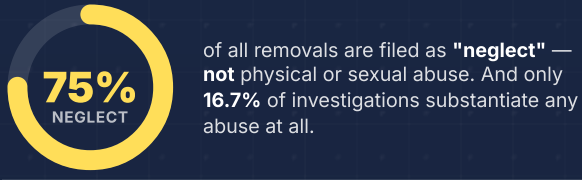
Father's Advocacy Network

fathersadvocacynetwork.org

THE REAL REASON FAMILIES ARE TORN APART

Punished for Being Different

The system calls it "neglect." But there's **no agreed definition** of the word — and that is the whole problem.



650K+ children labeled abused or neglected each year — the vast majority for vague "neglect"

22x more likely to be flagged if a family earns under **\$15,000/year** — being poor gets read as neglect

"NEGLECT" IS AN OPINION — NOT A STANDARD
There is **no objective definition** of neglect — it swings wildly from one caseworker to the next. A different culture or faith, a co-sleeping baby, a messy house, an unconventional home, simply being **poor**, even **calm, proper discipline** — almost any **difference** can be written up as "neglect."

WHO GETS TO JUDGE YOUR FAMILY?

That life-altering call often rests with a **single, minimally trained** caseworker — sometimes only **weeks** of training, buried under **30+** cases — judging your home against their **own idea of "normal."** And though the law requires "**reasonable efforts**" to keep a family together **first**, removal often happens **immediately — with none made**, no warrant, before any judge looks.

Apply that "standard" to the entire continent of **Africa** — where children walk to school alone, share beds, and are raised by the whole village — and **nearly every child would be removed from their home.**

"I could predict how a case would turn out based on which supervisor was working that day. It's supposed to be uniform. It's not."
— **"LISA," FORMER CPS INVESTIGATOR & FOSTER PARENT**

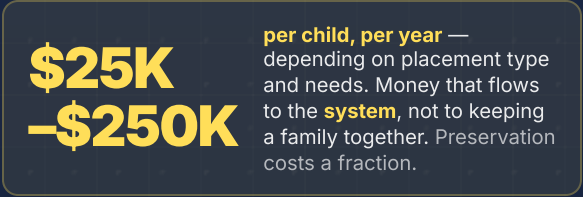
A family that looks **different** isn't a family in danger.

Sources: NCANDS / AFCARS, U.S. Children's Bureau; Chapin Hall, Univ. of Chicago; Casey Family Programs (workforce & training); NCWWI; "reasonable efforts" — Title IV-E, 42 U.S.C. §671(a)(15).

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES KEEP KIDS IN CARE

Not For Sale

Every child in the system is a **revenue stream**. The money flows to keeping kids in care — not to bringing them home.



Keep a family together (preservation)	\$3K-\$10K
Traditional foster care, per child	\$25K-\$50K
Group / residential care, per child	\$100K-\$250K+

Why spend up to 10x MORE to tear a family apart than to keep it together? Staying with family means **less trauma and better outcomes** (see inside) — it just doesn't pay. **\$30B+** flows in yearly; under Title IV-E agencies earn more the **longer** a child stays, plus **adoption bonuses** for never reunifying.

A BILLABLE-SERVICES MACHINE

Federal **Title IV-E** reimburses states for each child in care — and providers bill for every service on top. Each evaluation, drug test, parenting class, supervised visit, and counseling session is **revenue** for public agencies, private contractors, and the nonprofit providers families are referred to. The more services ordered, the more everyone bills — so **goalposts move** and the **longer a child stays, the more the whole system earns.**

MANUFACTURED REASONS · GHOST VISITS — MOFFAT COUNTY, CO
One caseworker fabricated details in **50+ cases** — inventing bedrooms, diagnoses, even **babies that didn't exist** — for visits she **never made**. More "findings" mean more billable services.

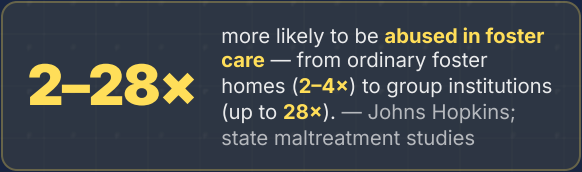
Junk drug tests pad the bill, too: most screens **can't tell prescription medicine from illicit drugs**, hair tests false-positive by **hair color**, and kids are taken **without confirmatory testing.**

Children are **not for sale.**

Sources: Title IV-E (42 U.S.C. §675); Casey Family Programs; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; The Colorado Sun (Moffat County, 2022); U.S. DOJ (Averhealth, 2024); SAMHSA.

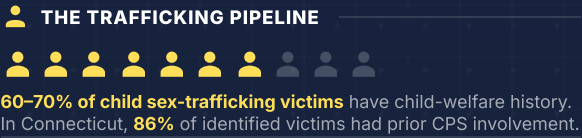
REMOVED "FOR THEIR SAFETY"?

More Dangerous, Not Safer



THE RESEARCH · MIT / JOSEPH DOYLE
Removal is its own trauma. Studying borderline cases, MIT economist Joseph Doyle found children **on the margin of removal** have **better long-term outcomes** — more employment, less crime, fewer teen pregnancies — when they **stay with family** than when placed in foster care. For most kids, a less-than-ideal home beats the system.

Kinship ignored: federal law says place a child with **relatives first**. Only about **1 in 3** are — and kin are routinely denied the funding and licensing that paid strangers receive.



25-50 deaths per 100k in foster care vs **~27** per 100k for all children — **not** safer, and at the high end nearly double

500+ welfare-known children died in **Florida** over 3 yrs; **hundreds** died in **Texas** DFPS care over 5 yrs

EXAMPLE · VANISHED UNDER WATCH — MISSOURI
978 children went missing from Missouri foster care in a single year — and at least one was **trafficked across four states** while missing. A federal watchdog found roughly **half** were never reported to police or NCMEC.

"In foster care you have a way higher chance of being raped, molested, abused and killed than in a home where you're already being abused."
— **CARLOS MORALES, FORMER CPS INVESTIGATOR**

Removed "for safety" must mean **safer**. The evidence says the opposite.

Sources: Johns Hopkins & state maltreatment studies; J. Doyle, MIT — American Economic Review (2007-08); HHS/ACF Kinship data (FY2024); HHS OIG (2021); NCMEC; CDC.