

WHY THIS MATTERS

Perspectives from Lived Experience





North Star: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive

We Believe That ...

All children deserve the right to grow up free from harm in their own family and thriving in their own strong communities that are well resourced.

Parents want to do what is best for their children and sometimes need help because they may lack the networks, supports, and services needed to bring about what they want for their children and their families.

Moving from mandated reporting to community supporting will greatly help California children grow up healthy, happy, and free from harm.

The child welfare system must be free from racial and cultural bias. The structure of the current system results in a disproportionately negative impact on African American, Native American/Indigenous People, and Latino families. This must be fixed by better understanding how mandated reporting contributes to racism, and by recommending actions for change..

Communities must be well-resourced to be able to provide quality services to help families stay together and keep children well and safe

The current child welfare mandated reporting system steals hope and personal power from families, minimizing their natural ability and strength to keep their children well and safe. This is especially true for African American, Native American/Indigenous People, and Latino families who disproportionately experience the trauma of intrusive investigations and sometimes harmful separation.

Families and communities are the best agents of their own change and must be respected and trusted

“My daughter was born medically fragile. I had no support from my family, and I didn’t know where to go for help or even what to ask for. The domestic violence in our home got worse because of the stress of being parents of a child with significant needs. When the police called CPS, I had no idea that my child could be removed because I was a victim of domestic violence. How could they take her away? I believe my experience—and my daughter’s life—would have been different if we had support and had known about the “failure to protect” laws. Even though my daughter was in foster care for less than a year, she continues to suffer from the experience.”

— Shelley Lopez, MRCS Task Force and Lived Experience Group member, parent, and advocate

When reports are made to child protective services, we are subjecting families to experience the worst and sometimes most traumatic events of their lives. If services for parents are more easily accessible without court and child protective services (CPS) intervention, then parents can access the resources they need to make informed and healthy decisions about the direction of their families and their growth.

Breanna Campos, parent, Washington State

Children’s Trust Fund Alliance. (2024). What Parents Say About... Supporting Families Rather Than Reporting Them: Changing Mandated Reporting Policies and Practices. <https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bpnn/>

“My commitment to this work began with the promise I made to my son. When he was six years old he told me, if daddy ever takes me again from you, fight like a wild animal. He is 12 now, and I continue to fight. Not only for him, but for all children, including those of my ancestors and those children yet born.”

— Tina Rios, Reimagine Child Safety Coalition, Indigenous mother with lived experience, member of the MRCS Task Force



Additional Harms of Mandated Reporting

- **Fear of Asking for Support:** Families share that they often do not ask for help due to fear of how their situation will be perceived, and that they could lose their child.
- **Trauma and Stigma:** Families talk about being traumatized by child welfare investigations and stigmatized by allegations that follow them, even if the outcome of the investigation did not result in formal system involvement
- **CWS System Overburdened:** Majority of reports to the child welfare hotline do not need formal system involvement; as a result, the child welfare workforce is overburdened and unable to focus on referrals that do require formal attention