

A necessary engagement

An international review of parent and family engagement in child protection



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Anglicare Tasmania

A necessary engagement: an international review of parent and family engagement in child protection

Mary Ivec

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AS A CHILD I was conscious of the disdain many people showed to my mother because of the way she treated my father ... and because she did not properly care for me ... Now as an adult, I read the same disdain for her in the many reviews of the film... This pains me deeply. Very often the hostility presents as a concern for her victims, me primarily. The concern is I think sincere, but it is pernicious because it suggests that my mother was such a bad mother and wife that she was not deserving of my father's love and kindness or even the love of her son. Such concern is no kindness to a child on behalf of whom it is expressed, because it can never be a kindness to a child to undermine its love for its parents by suggesting its parents are not deserving of its love. No one is undeserving of love, not because everyone really is deserving of it, but, because unlike admiration or esteem, love, deeper than both, has nothing to do with merit or desert.

Professor Raimond Gaita (2009), author of *Romulus My Father*, in *For Love of our Children and For Love of the World: Reflections on Rights, Needs and Hope*, Save the Children's 90th Anniversary: Inaugural Rights of the Child Lecture, 30 September 2009, Canberra.

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The posters of parent advocates from the Child Welfare Organising Project and Bridge Builders in The Bronx, the Seaman's Society for Children and Families in Staten Island, and Children's Village in Manhattan are reproduced with the permission of the Child Welfare Organising Project (New York).

The report's author, Mary Ivec, dedicated this report

*to Emma, and to all those
parents who struggled to be
heard.*

Acronyms

AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CRoC	Convention on the Rights of the Child, also referred to as 'the Convention'
CRP	Citizen Review Panel
FGC	Family Group Conferencing
FGDM	Family Group Decision Making
NGO	Non Government Organisation
SWR	Social Work Reclaimed

Glossary

The terms *child welfare services*, *child protective services* and *child protection services* are used interchangeably in this report. They are used to describe statutory interventions.

Multisystemic therapy is an intensive family- and community-based treatment program. It focusses on addressing all the environmental factors that affect young offenders, such as their homes and families, schools, neighbourhoods and peer groups.

The term *parent peer* is used in this report. In various contexts parent peers are also referred to as: consumers, advocates, parent partners, alumni, activists, mentors, coaches, buddies, leaders, veterans, peer advocates or advisors.

Wraparound services are holistic services developed by a team convened to address the needs of the child and family. The team consists of family members (including the child), community partners and professionals. Wraparound services have two goals: independence from formal professional supports and services, and to keep children out of institutional care and in care with families.



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Summary

This report provides a review of international and national models of engagement, support and advocacy for parents who have contact with child protection systems. How statutory child protection systems engage with parents ultimately affects the outcomes for children, including safety, permanency and wellbeing. While social work practices that emphasise people's self-determination and strengths are recognised as fundamental to eliciting change in parents when care standards have faltered, there is widespread acknowledgment of the struggle child protection authorities have to meaningfully engage parents and families.

The experiences of those who historically have been at the receiving end of child protection interventions and practices have gained public awareness through actions such as government apologies for past system failures and Senate Inquiries. Contemporary child protection systems continue to labour under regular public criticism. Research findings show that parents' experience of their engagement with child protection is often still disapproving, degrading and exclusionary.

Moving child protection practices away from stigmatisation and towards reintegration is shown to be possible and achievable through a number of models and practices which enable parents and families to take responsibility, heal through repairing relationships and build commitment to better futures for their children.

This review found that strategies for parent and family engagement were diverse and evident in prevention, early intervention and tertiary intervention initiatives. Proven or promising practices included home visiting programs; nurse-family partnerships; community-based models offering educative and supportive ways for diverting children and parents away from child protection systems; family group conferencing in various forms; birth parent-foster parent partnership programs which strengthened these alliances; visitation coaching for parents with children in care; and family reunification programs. These strategies covered all aspects of child protection intervention — from screening and assessment through case-planning and decision-making, to service delivery, case review and case closure.

Models of engagement were used at a community level as well as at a case management level. Consumer-led or peer initiatives included writing personal stories for a national newsletter and parent peers and mentors assisting other parents whose children

were at risk of removal or had been removed to state care. Parent forums provided input to policy development, service design and evaluation. In this, as in other contexts, the use of peers has been found to break down some of the stigma attached to seeking help from professionals.

Service initiatives targeted parents with special needs which had brought them to the attention of authorities, such as drug and alcohol misuse. Family drug treatment courts have been highly effective in engaging with parents with substance abuse issues. Both parents and service providers are kept accountable by an approach which offers high support and high control in order to achieve safety and permanence for children. Other services targeted fathers, young people leaving care and parents of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Cultural differences gave rise to special community-state partnerships such as those trialled with Indigenous communities (Hollow Water, Manitoba, Canada and the Family Responsibilities Commission in Queensland). These programs aim to bring the authority for decision-making back to the community while also having the backing of formal state legal and child protection systems.

Strategies and approaches which emphasised engagement with parents articulated a shared value base. They displayed a strong commitment to keeping families together and ensuring that children were safe at home with parents who knew how to best look after them.

The proposed classification for parental engagement in child protection is one that can bring together the social work (support) and child protection (control) systems. Support and control are the basic dimensions for a responsive regulatory and restorative justice approach. Such an approach promotes reintegration processes throughout the child protection continuum that can build on strengths, while being clear on expectations and sanctions if behaviour change is not forthcoming. The examples in this paper are compiled from national and international practice and literature and show a promising and hopeful restorative imagination and aspects of a responsive regulatory approach in some child protection jurisdictions.

Restorative practices embrace dialogue, active responsibility, healing, building relationships, building human capabilities and prevention of future injustice (Braithwaite, J 2011). In a child protection context, restorative approaches

acknowledge harm done, restore safety to the child, restore confidence to the parent, heal damaged relationships and offer hope for the future. John Braithwaite has outlined the principles which guide responsive regulation (2011). Reviewing these in light of what is seen in the literature generally in terms of restorative justice philosophy, the key principles which guide effective parent and family engagement can be defined as:

- think in context (be it the family, the community or the wider system) and do not impose a preconceived theory;
- listen actively by engaging all stakeholders; be clear on what is to be expected; be outcome focused and problem-solving; build commitment by having families find their own motivations to improve; communicate staying power and belief that change is possible;
- engage fairly and respectfully including with dissenting voices, whose experiences can often lead to improved ways of operating;
- embrace systemic approaches — multiple decision-makers and problem-solvers (networked governance) make better decisions than sole decision-makers removed from the front lines. Community collaborations with a coalition of key and diverse partners can assist at a family or a systems level;
- be collaborative in capacity building — shared responsibility requires shared decision-making. The key to the success of many of the models of engagement is to think through all major decisions and to bring the authority for decision-making as close to the family as possible; and
- learn, evaluate and share what is learnt.

The models and practices identified in this review cultivate restorative spaces in families, communities and systems, and enable restorative conversations that in turn help build engagement. Bad habits of past child protection practices can be unlearned. Risk-averse and highly bureaucratized child protection practices can be challenged. More natural forms of human engagement based on respect and trust can trump directives and threats, which have been unequivocally shown to be counterproductive to the long term interest of children and their families and communities.

2

Introduction

Most professionals involved with the child protection system understand the bond, sometimes good, sometimes bad, that children have with their families. Families cannot be written out of existence. But writing them into a child's history in a way that safeguards a child's safety in the eyes of the broader community is a more challenging task. This report provides a review of models of engagement, support and advocacy for parents who have contact with child protection systems. It brings together a national and international review of literature, organisations and individuals who are leading the way in parental and family engagement in child protection systems. The focus of the report is to identify actual practice models where good engagement takes place, is sustained and achieves positive outcomes for children and families. Actively seeking out and speaking with those who are solidly engaged with parents and families affected by statutory child protection authorities unearthed a wealth of information.

Internationally, child protection practice is being radically redesigned and transformed. Child protection systems in many countries are actively engaging with parents and families. Programs connect birth parents to foster parents. Birth parents who themselves have experienced child protection intervention work as peers, mentors and advocates alongside other parents in the child protection system. In this way, parents affected by state intervention are reclaiming their power as parents, as citizens and as active agents of change within child protection institutions. These changes are most notable in the United States of America, which leads the world in terms of researching and applying research to practice models of parental engagement in child welfare, but service models and interventions in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Europe are also providing evidence of inspiring leadership and activism in reducing the number of children entering care and improving rates of reunification. Embryonic attempts towards parental engagement are also being made in Australia and are identified in the report.

This report offers an initial scoping study, a necessary first step to identify practice models which are effectively engaging parents in child protection. In particular the report examines international and emerging national models and interventions that:

- support parents to address the underlying risk factors and meet the conditions imposed by child protection to promote reunification;
- facilitate a continuing positive relationship between parents and their children living in out-of-home care, whether or not they are eventually returned;
- address issues of parental grief and loss and the trauma of removal;

- support partnerships with parents and provide opportunities for them to participate in decision-making (for example through family group conferencing (FGC));
- provide advocacy and representation for parents, including consumer-led initiatives;
- promote collaborative working with adult-focused services (for example mental health and alcohol and other drug services) to address complex needs; and
- use consumer engagement initiatives.

While a strong commitment to parental engagement in child protection is evident in the practice examples provided, the reality is that most child protection systems across the western world do poorly in this regard. Public inquiries in Australia have identified that child protection processes leave parents feeling unsupported, marginalised and confused, with little knowledge of their rights or support to promote the chances of reunification. This report identifies initiatives that have gone against that trend and have successfully built parental and family engagement in the child protection field.

What emerges is an array of strategies that provide support for parents, opportunities for learning and skills development, advocacy and peer support based initiatives, from informal neighbourhood programs to more formally organised structures such as family drug treatment courts. Path-breaking models were identified where foster care agencies employed birth parents who had successfully navigated the system to work with foster parents and other birth families to facilitate positive connections, regardless of whether children stayed in foster care or were reunited with birth families. These recently developed models confidently strive for win-win solutions. Restoring safety to children, restoring parental morale and restoring authority and power to parents and families are not seen as incompatible goals. Indeed, the premise is that all parties need to be actively involved in decision-making processes for successful outcomes.

Many of the initiatives described in this report are, by virtue of their genuine engagement and shared decision-making with parents, promoted as empowerment models. But they are not empowerment at the expense of the child. The empowerment of parents advances the wellbeing of children. Consumer-led initiatives are an excellent example of empowerment models in child protection, where parents who have transformed their lives have become

parent advocates, mentors, peers and activists. In turn, these advocates and mentors become an established part of child protection and foster care systems and the way child protection business is done.

In Australia consumer-led initiatives are in their infancy in child protection, although this is not the case in the fields of mental health, disability or Indigenous services. Mental health services, like child protection services, are regulated by legislation and have involuntary components to their interventions, such as seclusion and restraint practices. Consumer input and consultation is now an accepted part of reviewing seclusion and restraint practices in the mental health field. The idea that statutory services need not consider client engagement is therefore challenged in public sector management and in the regulatory literature (Alford & O'Flynn 2012).

Drivers of change in the international arena have come from various quarters. Individual practitioners, small teams, child welfare departments partnering with university research centres and local service providers, schools of social work and law faculties all have played a part. So too has litigation or the threat of litigation been a catalyst for system reform. Litigation has been led by national child advocacy and civil liberties groups but also by individuals willing and able to challenge the decisions of statutory authorities. Various reviews into child protection practices also focused public attention on particular problems within the system — for example, the Race Equity Review in Michigan (Center for the Study of Social Policy 2009). Major reviews and evaluations in the USA identified themes which are common criticisms of child protection systems across the English speaking world: over-representation of minorities; a gap between service philosophy and practice; lack of accountability; and lack of belief that families could keep their children safe.

The programs and practice models that have been identified as part of this review would best be described as offering 'islands of civility' (Kaldor 2007) in the child protection world, which has been shown historically to have caused great damage to those it sought to protect. These promising practices and models have the potential to flourish into organised and embedded 'institutions of hope' (Braithwaite, V 2004) within child protection systems. There are certainly many lessons for Australia. Through the examples identified in this report, features can be drawn out to form a classification of effective approaches to better

engage parents involved in the child protection system.

The work undertaken to date by Anglicare Tasmania on consumer engagement in the delivery of alcohol and other drug services (Hinton 2010) and models for consumer participation and advocacy in mental health services (Hinton 2009) are valuable companions to this report when considering possibilities for improving parental engagement in child protection. The mental health consumer movement has succeeded in including consumer participation as a routine part of service delivery and evaluation, policy and planning. In Australia, child protection, like mental health, remains a state and territory responsibility. Yet both mental health and child protection now have national policy frameworks. A vision for transforming child protection systems can be informed by the work of the mental health consumer movement and the disability movement. In fact collaborations and coalitions between the sectors could open up new possibilities — such as parent peer workers in child protection. Just as mental health peer workers are helping in addressing workforce issues in that sector, so too the development of parent peers could stem the tide of departures in the child protection workforce.

The role of resistance in this work cannot go unnoticed. Identified in this report are examples of activities initiated by those who made a ‘decision to resist’ institutional practices which were experienced as oppressive, dehumanising, disempowering and humiliating (Falzon 2012) by typically poor and minority group families and their children, sometimes over generations. These acts of resistance taken by parents in solidarity with concerned professionals against child protection systems speak to the power of the State (Falzon 2012) across various parts of the globe. Parents and families are finding their voices (Tobis 2013), speaking their truth to power and claiming a space (Falzon 2012) where no space had existed for their stories. By speaking the truth to each other and to those privileged to stand in solidarity with them, examples of the real power for social change is coming from the people who achieve it on the ground.

2.1 Background and rationale for the research

Government inquiries into child protection in Australia have identified the need for child protection agencies to actively engage families and children in decision-making processes when child safety issues exist (Parliament of Tasmania 2011). The research literature stresses that meaningful family engagement is the foundation of good casework practice that promotes safety, permanency and wellbeing of children and families in child protection (Marcenko et al. 2010). While there is a substantial literature on the importance of engagement, pathways for engagement are less well established. Questions surround the practitioner skills necessary for engagement. Rituals and routines from the past often impede effective engagement with statutory clients. The focus of this report is to identify actual practice models where good engagement takes place, is sustained and achieves positive outcomes for children and families.

This review does not ignore the concerns of children, but it is focussed on parental engagement strategies. Each program has explicitly identified the goal of child safety. This review looked at efforts to change and engage with the adults and systems around the child in order to provide for children’s safety. It is noteworthy, however, that effective evidence-based interventions that do target children and young people in the child protection system stress the importance of including birth parents in the process through interventions such as ‘wraparound’ (See Glossary). (For an excellent resource on the topic of engaging young people in child protection, see Schmied & Tully 2009.)

The fact that practice often leads research (Braithwaite, J 2002) means that this environmental scan of what is happening in the practice world will yield information yet to be the subject of research attention. Where activities have had positive evaluations, these have been mentioned and links to relevant websites provided. While this research has drawn on interviews, scholarly literature, previous reports from existing work on parental engagement, internet databases and clearinghouses, the report cannot claim to be an exhaustive list of activities, programs or policies worldwide.

2.2 Methodology

The programs and initiatives cited in this report were identified through internet searches, direct contact with practitioners and literature reviews.

The project included identifying service models, interventions, strategic approaches and policy frameworks nationally and internationally. These were identified through internet searches of clearinghouses and databases, desktop research, literature reviews and direct contact with practitioners. While the compilation of programs is not exhaustive, the search to identify them has been extensive.

Email and phone contact with several key informants yielded very positive responses and an interest in maintaining contact into the future. It was noteworthy how important networks are for exchanging information and experiences in this newly emerging field of practice.

Over 100 programs, approaches and interventions were identified as examples of how to engage parents in the child protection process. These programs were classified according to who, or what, the interventions aimed to change. The programs were also classified to reflect the level of intrusiveness into family life the intervention represented. The least intrusive interventions included those generally provided while children were still at home. In contrast the highly intrusive levels of interventions reconfigured the way formal regulators operated once children were removed or were in the process of being removed.

2.3 Defining engagement and user participation

User involvement can encompass many activities from participation in decision making and representation in policy forums, through to consultation and information giving, paid employment and peer-led services, delivering education and training, self-help and mutual support groups and involvement in individual treatment decisions. It can be seen as a democratic right and an ethical requirement.
(Hinton 2010, p.13)

The engagement of parents in child protection can be thought of in many ways. Early intervention, prevention, intervention or multilevel approaches all aim to engage parents. Engagement will no doubt be easier if

a service or program is voluntarily sought out by parents. Once participation is involuntary, engagement becomes more elusive with drop-out rates especially high (Rooney 2009). Parenting classes, court mandated treatment and reunification services are just a few of the activities that can be involuntary, in which parents need to participate to show their ability to safely care for their children. Without this assessment compliance (Harris 2012) and successful completion of programs and treatment, reunification is threatened. Parents' willingness and ability to comply with authorities and their recommendations will depend on a range of factors, from caseworker relationships to practical considerations such as transport.

Strategies for improving birth parent engagement (e.g. early outreach and frequent contact), including reducing institutional mistrust through a supportive atmosphere where goals are clear and established and removing logistical barriers (e.g. transportation and child care), can be utilised to increase birth parent participation in the child welfare system.
(Corwin 2012, p.23)

The difficulties in engaging parents are further complicated when parents are fathers, come from a minority cultural background, have a mental illness, have a drug or alcohol problem, have a disability, are incarcerated, are young or may themselves have experienced growing up in care (Child and Family Social Work Journal 2012). Effective approaches to practice when working with parents where these characteristics and issues are present will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

A well known framework used to examine different levels of citizen participation is Arnstein's Ladder. This graphically portrays who has power and control in decision-making. Eight levels of participation are identified from 'non-participation' (manipulation and therapy) through 'tokenism' (informing, consultation and placation) to 'citizen power' (partnership, delegated power and citizen control) (Arnstein 1969). While a simplified classification, Arnstein's work is still considered to retain considerable contemporary relevance (Cornwall 2008). However, when contextualised, these levels of participation become more ambiguous (Cornwall 2008).

The reality for parents engaging with child protection services is that they generally experience 'bottom of the ladder' levels of participation. For example, it might be argued

that the special Indigenous Units in Australian child protection services have power to represent the interests of Indigenous children. In practice, Indigenous Units within child protection systems and grassroots Aboriginal-controlled childcare organisations have had little voice or influence in reducing the numbers of Indigenous children in out-of-home care (Ivec et al. 2012).

In the child protection context, working in partnership with parents and families may be the aspirational policy position, but when applied in Arnstein's model, partnership would require power to be redistributed through negotiation between parents and authorities, allowing for shared planning, decision-making responsibilities and going 'from involvement to influence' (Cornwall 2008).

Being involved in a process is not equivalent to having a voice. Voice needs to be nurtured. People need to feel able to express themselves without fear of reprisals or the expectation of not being listened to or taken seriously... Translating voices into influence requires more than simply effective ways of capturing what people want to say; it involves efforts 'from above' and 'from below' (Gaventa and Robinson 1998). From within the authorities, responsiveness is contingent on wider institutional changes and the political will to convert professed commitment to participation into tangible action. And 'from below', strategies are needed to build and support collectivities that can continue to exert pressure for change.
(Houtzager & Pattenden 1999, cited in Cornwall 2008, p.278)

What this report does show is that activities exist which are bottom up, top-down and 'side-out' (Braithwaite, J 2011). This report uses Arnstein's model as a tool for evaluating interventions. What is the aspiration? What happens in practice? The examples provided in this report may serve to cultivate possibilities yet untested in child protection and ways of ensuring that aspirations for empowerment are realised in practice.

2.4 Limitations of this report

Continuous government reviews, inquiries and reforms are the norm in child protection systems internationally. Pilot projects and new initiatives develop in response. These projects have varying lifespans, are often time limited and despite showing promising evaluations may not secure continued funding. Many have run on the sheer commitment of those who have been affected in some way by child protection intervention. Examples that have been sourced include promising interventions in hibernation awaiting funding opportunities, but considered to be positive developments in the field. The stop-start nature of these projects makes it difficult to comprehensively capture activities in the field and means that many small projects may never see formal evaluations surface in the public domain. For this reason, cost-benefit evaluations are rare. There is no definitive set of programs identified in this report as 'certain to work in a cost-effective manner'. In addition, it is worth noting that other experimental models and approaches could undoubtedly be found if time permitted. (For a review of the evidence of the cost-effectiveness of interventions in children's services see Stevens et al. 2010.)

Child protection policy frameworks: Australia and international

3

International treaties; national policies and frameworks; and state-based legislation, guidelines and standards all guide actions of governments, communities and families in the care of children. Obligations and commitments to children and families are upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children's basic human rights include their right to care and protection, to develop to their potential and to know and be cared for by their parents. Parents are recognised as having the most important role to play in meeting these obligations. When the family is seen as inadequate in fulfilling its responsibilities, the state intervenes through offers of support or more authoritative intervention (Gilbert et al. 2011). If separated from their parents, children have the right to maintain their relationship with their families through regular contact. This becomes problematic where safety issues for children remain. While policy preferences are for reunification, this is proving harder to achieve with the growing complexity of needs facing families (Salveron 2012).

Changing patterns of policy responses and emerging orientations in child protection systems in ten countries have been comprehensively analysed by Gilbert (1997) and Gilbert et al. (2011). Two broad policy approaches to abuse and neglect identified in Gilbert's earlier work described statutory responses as either child protection or family service oriented. His more recent analysis captures the emergence of a child-focused orientation. Instead of limiting its concern to harm and abuse, the state now assumes concern for the child's overall development and wellbeing.

While different countries were seen as leaning towards child protection or family service oriented child protection systems, a blending of orientations across countries is now more evident, according to Gilbert et al. (2011). Child protection policy and practice is aiming to maximise family support within child protection-focused systems and to make stronger efforts to address child safety concerns in family service-oriented systems (Gilbert et al. 2011).

While child protection systems across Australia fall under the jurisdiction of state governments, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 provides an overarching policy response promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and the reduction of child abuse and neglect nationally (Council of Australian Governments 2009). The framework, along with many state government reforms, focuses on early intervention and prevention approaches to enhance child and family wellbeing. A 'whole of community' approach that promotes child protection as 'everyone's responsibility' is advocated. In addition, 'child friendly', 'child safe' and 'child-focused' policies have become part of the wider social policy landscape. In Australia, this is

evidenced in initiatives relating to public health (DoHA 2012), childcare and education (DEEWR 2012), crime prevention and justice including family violence (FaHCSIA 2012b) and juvenile sex offenders, drug and alcohol and other adult-focused services (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy 2011), Indigenous health and social services (FaHCSIA 2012c; Australian Government 2013),¹ employment and income security (FaHCSIA 2012c) and family law and family relationships services (FaHCSIA 2013b).

Another important focus of child protection policy in Australia relates to Indigenous children. Just as racial and ethnic disproportionality continues to feature across child protection systems in Anglo-American, Nordic and European systems (Gilbert et al. 2011, p. 250), Indigenous children remain significantly overrepresented in Australian child protection systems (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2012). Historical removals of Indigenous populations also continue to impact on contemporary child protection systems (Ivec et al. 2012) with policy responses aimed at curbing racial over-representation still floundering (Gilbert et al. 2011).

As well as attempts to address the issue of over-representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system, the National Framework commits to trialling alternative child protection models for Indigenous communities. In order to do this, the Commonwealth has cut across normal state powers and legislated in some instances for particularly controversial child protection policies relating to Indigenous Australians living in rural-remote communities. These policies have included the Northern Territory Emergency Response (FaHCSIA 2012a), Stronger Futures (Australian Government 2013), the Family Responsibilities Commission and the Cape York Trials in Queensland (FaHCSIA 2012a), and actions taken in Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in South Australia (Macklin 2012) and in the Kimberley in Western Australia (Macklin 2011). Both opposition to and support for these models can be found in community and government circles. It is too early to report whether these initiatives will result in improved outcomes for children and families.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children aims for a more integrated response to the separate efforts of family support and child protection services, which are currently seen as failing many children and young people (Council of Australian Governments 2009). What may be helpful when considering a more unified approach is to consider how best to protect children while preserving and supporting families. This position is usually presented as a children's versus parents' rights issue, but according to a number of leading social work practitioners and researchers (Pennell et al. 2011) the two are not irreconcilable. Ethically, claim Pennell and her colleagues, 'family engagement is a way to uphold both child and family rights' (Pennell et al. 2011, p.9). Secondly, while policy intent on engagement with families is evident, a specific focus on how this engagement could be strengthened at an operational level is lacking. In Arnstein's terms, aspirations are higher up the ladder, practice is at the bottom.

Future efforts in national child protection policy development may well be guided by national mental health policy, where engagement with service users is more directly addressed. For example, the Fourth National Mental Health Plan outlines consumer experiences of engagement with mental health services (including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) as being improved through service development that supports advocacy and enables self-determination to the greatest extent possible (Australian Health Ministers 2008). While the child protection policy domain rightly positions a 'united approach' as being integral to children's safety, it is the legislative framework that binds authorities to work within a child protection and family support framework.

The next section will examine some of these legislative frameworks in Australia and internationally.

1 Policies linking child protection to income management of families on Centrelink remain highly controversial, reactive, and many argue they are discriminatory and reflect past colonising policies (see for example, Hunter et al. 2012).

Child protection legislative frameworks: Australia and overseas



4.1 Child protection legislation internationally

Legislation aims to protect children from abuse and sets out the legal foundations for and overarching goals of child protection systems. These legally defined activities guide child safety reporting requirements, the roles and responsibilities of child protection professionals, and their decision-making. Legislation defines the parameters for state intervention in the lives of families as well as setting out expectations of care by parents.

Legislation varies between countries and within countries. In Australia each state and territory has its own laws, similar to Canada with its provincial legislation. In the US national legal standards apply, but state and local variation in how these are applied is significant (Duerr Berrick 2011). County and municipal jurisdictions in England administer centrally determined laws. Denmark and Germany have integrated their child welfare legislation into broader social service laws while other Nordic countries have a specific Child Welfare Act that is administered across hundreds of municipalities by local authorities. Across the Western world, public and political pressures, usually media driven, have influenced child protection legislation (Gilbert et al. 2011). This in turn has given rise to expanding systems, which undertake an ever-increasing role in the social surveillance of families (Gilbert et al. 2011).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the international legal framework that outlines the obligations of governments to children and families. Most countries that are signatories aim to align their national legislation accordingly. The Convention's guiding principle of 'the best interests of the child' is now entrenched in child protection legislation in

Australia and internationally. The Convention also outlines the obligations of government to assist and protect the functioning of the family so that it can carry out its responsibilities. When family functioning is called into question, Article 9 allows for the separation of a child from its parents by competent authorities. Interested parties (which would include parents) are, however, 'to be given an opportunity to participate in these proceedings and make their views known'. The dual objectives of assisting the functioning of the family and protecting the child, as set out in the Convention is often described as a tension between two competing approaches — care and control — when set out in legislation (Parkinson 2003; Gilbert et al. 2011). How this 'elusive balance between care and control' is interpreted and prioritised at the coalface is very much dependent on the local authorities and child protection workers (Skivenes 2011).

The extent to which child protection laws give parents an opportunity for engagement, or marginalise them, varies.

Going further afield to countries outside Australia, contributors to Gilbert et al. (2011) describe in considerable detail the legislative reforms and analysis across Anglo-American, Nordic and Continental systems. Of the 10 countries examined, Denmark is the only country that does not have a specific Children's Act — instead a broad spectrum Consolidation Act on Social Services covers children and young people in need of support (Hestbaek 2011). Ironically, it is the USA, not a signatory to the UN Convention, which has legislated for some of the most innovative family engagement strategies, including peer mentoring. It has also provided demonstration grants for courts that show innovative practice to increase family engagement.

In 2001 Denmark included measures designed to increase the involvement of parents through the allocation of a 'support person' to help the parent cope with a child's placement (Hestbaek 2011). In 2006 Foster Care Reform followed, and promoted an increased involvement of and partnership with families and children, including a family's personal networks (network care) and kinship care.

However, in spite of these promising legislative initiatives, commentators express caution about the achievements. For example, the broader context of legislative reform in Denmark has seen considerable increase in the power of the state over parents with children in care. Hestbaek warns that the reform measures to increase parental involvement, depending on how local authorities interpret and implement amendments, might actually result in further exclusion of biological parents (2011, p.139). And although the USA has shown a decline in the number of children in out-of-home care, from 8 per 1000 children in 1997 to 6 per 1000 in 2007, this data should be used with caution according to Gilbert et al. (2011). Gilbert and his colleagues are pessimistic that 'none of the countries describe systems that overall are able to ensure the present or future well-being of children at risk' (Gilbert et al. 2011, p.251).

A final example, and one of a very different approach, is that of Belgium. Belgium has adopted a highly therapeutic approach to child protection that contrasts to traditional systems we know. The Belgium system is based on the idea that parents with problems or people who have abused or neglected their children should be able to voluntarily seek help. Pathways into child welfare services are mainly through the health system and a high number are self-referred. Multidisciplinary teams working through Confidential Centres for Child Abuse and Neglect (or Confidential Doctors Centres) receive reports that either come from other professionals or parents (self-reports). Expert professionals at the Centres provide a range of interventions including assessment, counselling, child and family therapy, and residential accommodation in hospital if necessary. While assessments take place, their goal is to gain insight into the best way to help the child and their family. Coercive interventions only occur if the family is deemed to have no capacity to care for their children. This model aims to have parents take responsibility for the problem — 'to name and face the problem' and for care to be provided in a re-integrative way (Clara et al. 1982). The Confidential Centre approach 'combines an interventionist with an empowering approach' (Desair & Adriaenssens

2011, p.214). Child safety is paramount, care is voluntary and provided in collaboration and dialogue with a wider care network. The care response is framed by restoring relationships between child and parent and by safe parenting (Desair & Adriaenssens 2011).

4.2 Child protection legislation in Australia

Appendix A sets out child protection legislation across the eight Australian jurisdictions and the corresponding intent and mechanisms for engagement of parents. All jurisdictions except South Australia and the Northern Territory have legislative requirements to provide information and explanation to parents. Queensland is the only state that has a legislative requirement that the preferred practice for child protection services is to have parents' agreement to intervention, and to work with the child and parents. Participation in decision-making by families and communities is promoted when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are the subjects of interventions in all jurisdictions. All Australian jurisdictions have explicit legislative provisions relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. (Similarly, legislation in New Zealand, Canada and the USA provides for engagement with Maori, First Nations and Native American populations.) Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia are the only states where decision-making principles specifically include a child's parents. The 'best interest' principle is universally applied, as is 'care and protection'. 'Prevention' as a legislative principle is only articulated in the Victorian *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

Various mechanisms for engagement are identified in the legislation. These include family group conferencing (FGC) in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory; family group meetings in Queensland and South Australia; alternative dispute resolution in New South Wales and Victoria; mediation in the Northern Territory; and in Western Australia, court ordered pre-hearing conferences. Some approaches are specifically for Aboriginal families, such as the vague 'open and flexible arrangements for consultation with a recognised Aboriginal organisation' in Tasmania and South Australia, and the requirement that the Western Australian statutory authority consult with Aboriginal agencies or 'an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait islander who... has relevant knowledge of the child, the child's family, or the child's community' (*Children and*

Community Services Act 2003). The inclusion of an Aboriginal Placement Principle, cultural connection planning, Aboriginal representation and consultations with Aboriginal organisations when placing children are just a few examples of the processes for engagement provided for under legislation.

Across the country, all child protection legislation recommends some level of engagement of parents when child protection concerns exist. As has been shown, legislative instruments across Australia do vary in their level of intent and mechanisms available when it comes to parental engagement. There are also examples of legislation which outline how authorities are required to interact with parents, and therefore strengthen parent engagement. Two examples of this are Queensland, which mandates that the powers under the Act

be exercised in a way that is 'open, fair and respectful of the rights of people affected by the exercise of the power' (*Child Protection Act 1999*; s.5D-(1) (a)), and Victoria, which mandates fair and transparent decision-making (*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*).

There are many examples of legislative intent for collaboration with families and joint decision-making with statutory authorities. However, the extent to which authorities collaborate and meaningfully engage with parents remains wanting. The sheer number of government-led inquiries into child protection is evidence that much could be improved.

For an overview of examples of international legislation with reference to intent for family engagement, mechanisms for engagement and use of collaborative processes, see Appendix B.



5

A framework for parental engagement in child protection

This section examines various approaches, program models and strategies that positively engage birth parents in the child protection system. The following section presents a framework for organising the range of programs and approaches to parental engagement in child protection and a description of the rich and varied approaches that are already underway nationally and in Australia.

Key organising themes for this work have been identified and are represented in the diagram below.

5.1 The pyramid of parent engagement programs

The diagram below enables us to see where targets of change lie and what interventions are used nationally and internationally. Using a pyramid to understand parental engagement reflects the opportunities for parent involvement at each level of the system. The model is based on the regulatory pyramid (Ayres & Braithwaite 1992) and responsive regulation theory.² The regulatory pyramid depicts six layers of activities. Escalation up the pyramid increases statutory and court involvement, cost and coercion. This is discussed in further detail below and in section 5.2.

The categories in the pyramid of parent engagement initiatives have been defined by the goals of the strategy, program, or legislation, that is, who, or what, is the target of change. The various layers are not exclusive; in practice, the borders are blurred and a mix of possibilities exists. The programs and approaches identified as part of this review are summarised and grouped according to these categories in Appendix C.

The pyramid pictures a classification of the various actors who have a responsibility for securing child safety and wellbeing. These layers make up the informal and formal care system around the child. Starting from the base of the pyramid we have:

- parents;
- family;

² See Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners (2009) for a detailed discussion on a responsive regulation approach to child protection.

- collective parent consumers/service users;
- birth parents and their children’s foster carers;
- statutory authorities; and
- the courts and legal system.

There are a myriad of interventions aimed at these actors. For example, a program may aim to develop the skills of a parent, or to change the way in which a family engages with a parent and child, or the way in which foster parents and birth parents interact, or the ways in which the courts make decisions to remove a child. Interventions at each of these levels seek to influence, strengthen the functioning of and build capacity in the various actors to better serve the interests of the child.

Programs or initiatives targeted at individual parents, broader family networks and even parents who are already dealing with child protection services (parent consumers) can operate independently of the formal care system. Professionals can address child safety concerns outside the statutory system across various sectors. Education, health, childcare or family support services, or even other statutory services such as the police, could be called upon to take action to

resolve issues of concern. Current practices of mechanically reporting any concerns to child protection services have over-burdened systems internationally, alienated a large section of human services professionals and shown little evidence of improving children’s safety (Ivec et al. 2011).

5.2 Program examples

Corresponding to the six layers of actors are various parent engagement programs and interventions described in the following sections of the report. These strategies and interventions vary greatly in how intrusive they are. Less intrusive interventions affect individuals; more intrusive interventions affect how authorities, including the courts, operate.

Less intrusive interventions are seen at the base of the pyramid. Here parents, families and groups of affected parents are able to access different forms of help such as home visiting, family group conferencing and peer support. These interventions are typically provided while the child is still at home (but could also be utilised once children have been removed to care). More intrusive interventions occur in the top three levels of the pyramid when children are removed from their parents through the legal system.

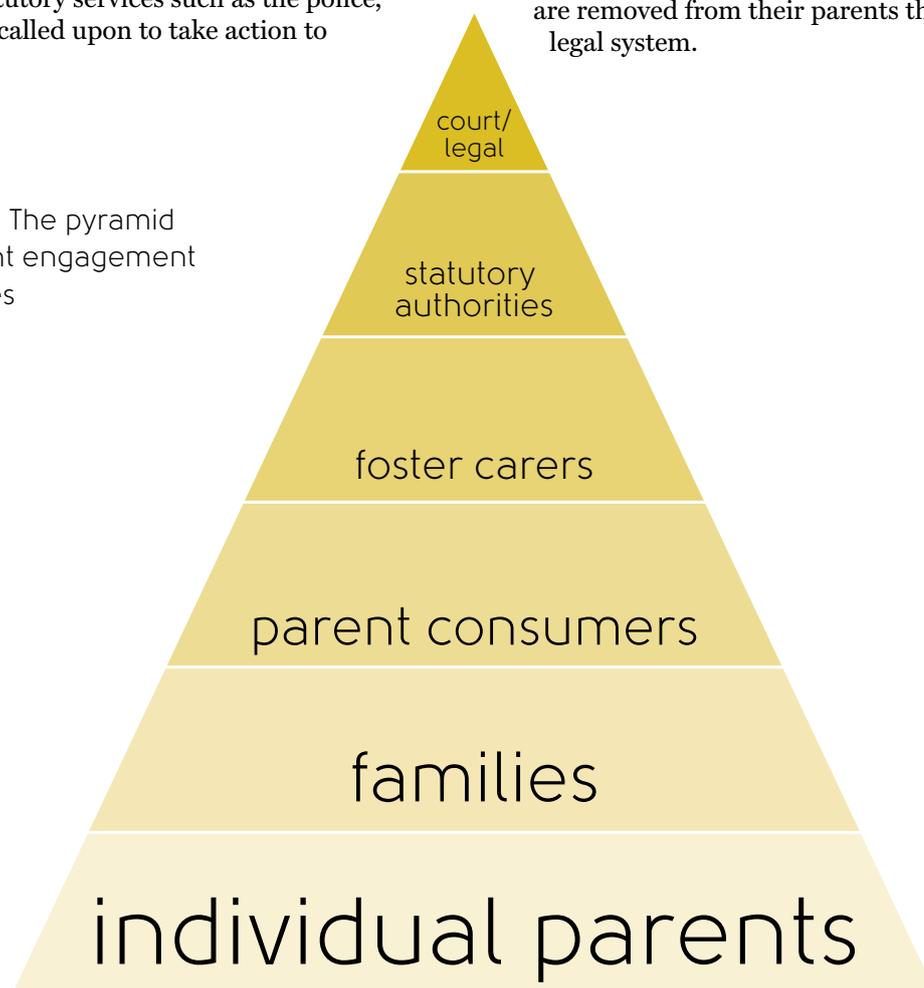


Figure 1. The pyramid of parent engagement initiatives

5.3 Drivers or 'who delivers' the programs

The drivers, or deliverers, of these interventions vary.

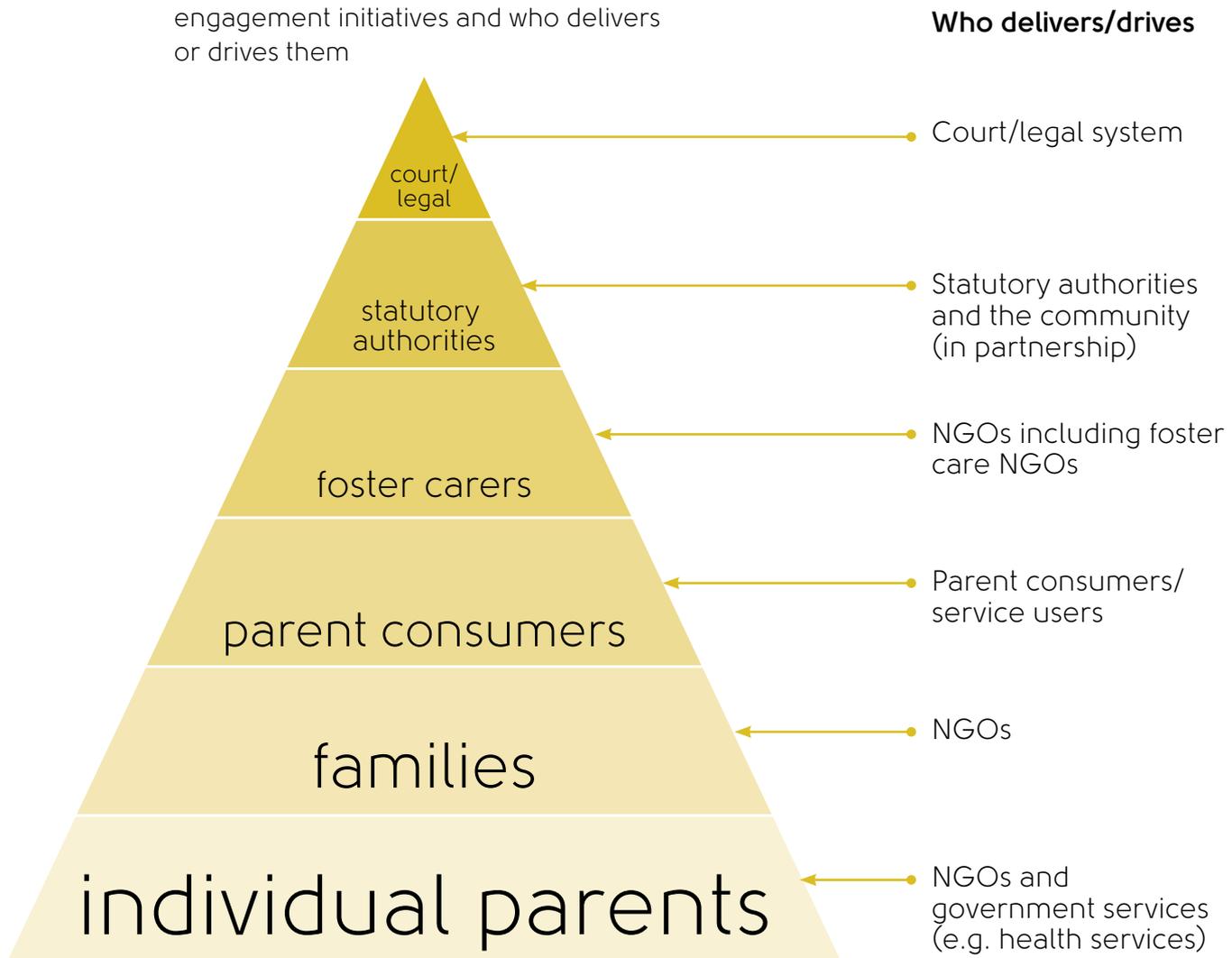
In Australia non-government organisations (NGOs) and other government services typically provide a range of mainstream family support interventions. This area has seen growth in NGO providers, funded both through government initiatives and their own resources. Parent consumer groups and parent-led initiatives have become particularly strong in the United States over the past twenty years (Tobis 2013). On a broader level, Indigenous communities are actively taking the lead on solution finding for issues of abuse in their communities. Statutory child protection systems, courts and legal systems have also been identified as actors in the pyramid who are driving their own reforms.

5.4 Key operating principles

Key operating principles repeatedly surface at each and every level of this work and are essential ingredients in the engagement of parents. These are:

- participation and inclusion in processes even if decisions are not in their favour;
- effective communication, listening;
- respecting rights (including cultural);
- shared decision-making for solutions; and
- sustained support and time to change.

Figure 2. The pyramid of parent engagement initiatives and who delivers or drives them



Overview of generic practices to increase parental engagement



Underlying the program examples and the work of those driving the change are a set of generic practices and frameworks known to be effective in increasing parental engagement in child protection across the levels of intervention. For example, they can be incorporated into programs to help parents care for their infants, or into programs to give parents better representation in the courtroom.

These approaches and frameworks comprise relationship-based, strengths-based and solution-focused practice and include case management, Signs of Safety framework, motivational interventions, family group conferencing and family decision-making, systems of care (including family group decision-making and child-family teams), differential response, concrete assistance, social learning models and respite.

Often promoted as service philosophies, strengths- and relationship-based practice is designed to better engage and empower parents. Social learning models are seen as highly effective and form the basis of many parenting interventions focused on improving parenting capacity and family functioning in order to ensure child safety and wellbeing (Schmied & Tully 2009). Other proven and evidence-supported approaches to parental engagement include motivational interventions, case management, shared decision-making approaches such as FGC and its variations, the signs of safety framework (discussed below) and practical assistance. Collaborative helping and solution-focused practice are also identified as strategies that reflect family engagement (Kemp et al. 2009; Madsen 2009). These approaches work together in a dynamic way. For example, FGC is just as relevant at reunification as it is when the decision to remove a child is being made.

Descriptions of ten approaches are outlined below.

6.1 Case management

Case management evolved in the United States in the 1970s as a response to the need for coordination across a range of health and welfare services for clients. There are a range of case management models, but they all 'share a common focus on making service delivery integrated, client-centred, coordinated, goal oriented, accountable, flexible, sequenced, cost-effective, sustained and comprehensive' (FFTA 2008, p. 163). Research has compared different types of case management and has generally shown that service access improves through case management. Intensive case management is seen as more effective than regular case management. Intensive case management is an example of a comprehensive intervention that targets multiple systems in a client's life (FFTA 2008).

6.2 Signs of Safety

The Signs of Safety framework is an approach to doing the core child protection work of assessing risk and planning for children's safety in a way that gathers both professional and family views about concerns, existing strengths and safety. It focuses on how workers can build partnerships with parents and children in situations of suspected or substantiated abuse (Edwards n.d.). The three core principles of the Signs of Safety Framework are: building constructive working relationships between professions and family members and between professionals; thinking critically and adopting a position of inquiry; and building frameworks based on the knowledge of frontline practitioners (Turnell 2010).

The Signs of Safety assessment and planning map has had some Australian and more overseas uptake, with at least 11 countries utilising the framework. A research meta-analysis of the Signs of Safety approach was undertaken which found that the approach appeared to offer workers a specific set of skills for engaging with clients, assisted with exploring problems and with solution building where safety concerns existed, and consistently enhanced worker capacity to involve clients in casework (Wheeler & Hogg 2011).

6.3 Collaborative helping

Collaborative helping (Madsen 2009) provides a framework for family-centred practice which combines a number of generic engagement building approaches, including signs of safety,

solution-focused therapy and motivational interviewing. The basis of this approach is the idea of the clinician and client working together in joint exploration to elicit client strengths and wisdom to build their preferred life, with the active support of their local communities to enact the desired change (Madsen 2009).

6.4 Motivational Interventions

Motivational interventions combine brief interventions (short sessions of feedback and information) with motivational interviewing (a directive, patient-centred counselling technique that builds motivation by helping patients clarify and resolve their ambivalence about behaviour change). Motivational interventions emphasise the creation of a constructive, empathetic relationship between worker and client by helping individuals to self-evaluate their behaviour (Forrester et al. 2008; Miller & Rollnick 2002). As a model for supporting behaviour change, motivational interviewing has shown positive results in working with parents with substance abuse issues who are in contact with child protection systems (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2010a).

6.5 Family group conferencing (FGC) (and family group decision making)

Conferencing and other group processes and practices are utilised throughout the world to engage and involve families in the child protection process. The umbrella term covers various models each with their distinct characteristics and variations. The goal is to maximise a family's involvement in the decisions that affect them by moving away from professionally driven decisions. The degree to which the family is empowered to solve its own problems is the distinguishing feature of this model (American Humane Association 2010). (A discussion of FGC can be found in section 8.1.)

6.6 Systems of care

Systems of care refer to frameworks for guiding processes and activities through collaborative efforts of multiple systems (both formal and informal) designed to meet the needs of children and families (Semanchin Jones &

LaLiberte 2010; Child Welfare Information Gateway 2008). The approach emphasises parents' role as partners and includes child-family teams and family group decision-making interventions. A comprehensive review of academic literature on systems of care was undertaken by the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. Evaluations of systems of care have indicated significant positive outcomes at the systems level in some areas, while developmental and child wellbeing outcomes are more recently beginning to show promise (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2008; Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte 2010).

6.7 Differential response

Differential response was developed as an alternative to traditional investigative responses by child protection authorities and in recognition that not every case referred to authorities need be perceived in the context of a potentially serious case of child abuse (Gilbert et al. 2011). The strategy aims for a non-adversarial approach to parents reported for child abuse and neglect, inviting families' voluntary cooperation with services without the heavy hand of the state (Kaplan & Merkel-Holguin 2008). Operating in the USA, Canada and Australia, the response allows for referrals to be made to outside support agencies by statutory child welfare services. This response is seen as a way of better engaging and supporting families while still allowing for the traditional response of investigation if deemed necessary (Dumbrill 2006). However, evaluation of differential response has found that success in engaging families cannot be solely attributed to this approach, and that the calibre of practice leader and practitioners also contributed to positive outcomes in study sites (Alexander 2010).

6.8 Concrete assistance

Families often view concrete services and practical assistance as helpful. Developing mutually agreed plans accompanied by the quick delivery of practical assistance is considered a key element of family engagement (National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connection 2009). The concrete help that is most predictive of reunification includes financial stability, childcare, housing assistance, and educational and vocational attainment (Berry et al. 2007).

6.9 Social learning models

Based on the work of Bandura and Herbert, social learning theory and behavioural-based interventions have been applied to family-based practice for almost half a century. Principles include observational modelling, rehearsal, self-management, and cognitive self-control. Social learning theory is one of the most influential of the theories that relate to the links between parent-child relationships and child outcomes (O'Connor & Scott 2007). Social learning models that guide work with families have been established as the most effective set of interventions with children, young people and their families where a number of life difficulties present themselves (McCafferty 2012). *Social Work Reclaimed* (see section 11.2) and *The Incredible Years* (see Appendix C) parenting programs are based on social learning principles.

6.10 Respite

Respite, while not a program, provides parents and anyone caring for a child the opportunity to take a break from parenting for a short time through the provision of an alternative caregiver. Respite has been shown to decrease stress and lead to fewer out-of-home placements; however there can be limited knowledge of what respite services are available (FFTA 2008).

7

Programs focussed on parents

This section examines programs that focus on individual parents. Parents are responsible for the system of care around the child. Programs that have been shown to assist parents include early intervention, prevention and education, early outreach and home visiting, nurse-family partnerships, intensive family support and multi-dimensional support. These programs target parents as the actor requiring change.

Programs were also identified for parents with certain characteristics and special needs: young parents, parents with disabilities, culturally diverse and Indigenous parents or where at-risk behaviours such as drug and alcohol use existed.

An overview of six programs for parents follows.

7.1 Programs

Prevention and education

The term ‘parenting programs’ is an umbrella term used to describe all forms of parenting interventions, including parent education, parent training and parenting support (Schmied & Tully 2009). These programs are usually focused, short term interventions aimed at helping parents improve their relationship with their child (for example, through *Parent-Child Interaction Interventions*) and preventing or treating a range of problems including emotional and behavioural problems (Barlow & Parsons 2003). Parenting programs are based on the premise that interventions promoting caring, consistent and positive parenting are central to creating safe and supportive environments for children (Sanders & Cann 2002). When parents lack necessary child-rearing skills, social supports and knowledge of child development, the risk of child maltreatment is heightened (Tomison 1998). Parenting programs serve an educative role that often focuses on child development, assist parents in developing parenting skills and normalise the challenges and difficulties inherent in parenting (Sanders et al. 2000). Parenting programs can be offered in various settings including clinics, community-based settings and in the home, on a one-on-one basis or in groups (Mildon & Polimeni 2012). A number of parenting programs have been positively evaluated including *The Incredible Years* and *Newpin*. The various parenting support programs are described more fully in Appendix C.

Early intervention programs

A number of programs exist worldwide with accompanying manuals that have been evaluated and are proving effective in engaging families where a risk of child abuse and neglect exists. Examples include *Newpin*, *Safecare* and the *Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP)*. Evaluations of such programs have found the family group conference/family welfare conference model most effective in early intervention but under-used in child protection and alternative care cases (Doolan 2006; Merkel-Holguin et al 2003).

Early, responsive and structured outreach is also vitally important in supporting the development of a working alliance and helping engage families in child protection systems (Kemp et al. 2009). Initial contacts that are active and persistent provide key opportunities for caseworkers to acknowledge, validate and respond to parents' complicated feelings as involuntary clients, to acknowledge and explore cultural differences, to identify needs that parents see as most pressing, and to work with expectable reactivity and resistance (Kemp et al. 2009).

Home visiting programs

Home visiting refers to the manner in which various services, programs, supports or interventions are delivered, the common feature being they are delivered by a person visiting the home (Mildon & Polimeni 2012). Great variation exists in content, processes used to deliver content and the length and intensity of service in home visiting programs (Mildon & Polimeni 2012). A meta-analysis conducted by Sweet and Appelbaum (2004) indicated that most programs are not rigorously evaluated. Those programs that have been evaluated indicate that parent education and child development are typically the primary goals of home visiting programs, and that the frequency of and potential for abuse was reduced in families who received home visiting (Mildon & Polimeni 2012).

Nurse-family partnerships

A specific type of home visiting program is the nurse-family partnership model, first developed in the United States by David Olds and colleagues. The nurse-family partnership model links low-income first-time mothers with registered nurses to ensure mothers receive professional and empowering support throughout their pregnancy and the first

two years of their baby's life (Nurse Family Partnership 2011).

Subsequent nurse home visiting programs have been adapted with features of the original program altered, resulting in mixed evaluations of programs in Australia and overseas. The original *Nurse-Family Partnership Program* has, however, had strong positive evaluations, including longitudinal favourable results which include the improvement of parental care of the child and the improvement of maternal life course (Olds 2006). The Olds *Nurse-Family Partnership Program* is grounded in theories of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner 1979), self-efficacy (Bandura 1977) and human attachment (Bowlby 1969). When combined, these theories emphasise the importance of families' social context and individuals' beliefs, motivations, emotions, and internal representations of their experience in explaining the development of behaviour (Olds 2006). The importance of maintaining the integrity of the program design has been shown as a critical factor in producing positive outcomes for children and mothers.

Intensive family support

In Australia, intensive family support services are defined as those services which aim to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers because of child protection concerns, and those services which aim to reunify families where separation has already occurred (AIHW 2013).

Features of intensive family support programs are increased access to therapists (up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week) and services, financial support and home-based, residential, community-based or outpatient treatment where mental health or drug and alcohol issues exist. Intensive family support treatments and services have been identified as part of comprehensive interventions and multisystemic therapy,³ resulting in positive outcomes for families including improved family functioning (FFTA 2008). *Shared Family Care, Option 2, Valuing Parents* and *Peer Mentor* programs described in Appendix C are a few examples of intensive family support programs.

3 Multisystemic therapy is an intensive family- and community-based therapy which focuses on addressing all the systems that impact on an individual (homes, families, communities, networks and services). MST combines cognitive behavioural therapy, behavior management, family therapy and community psychology.

Practical and multi-dimensional support

The complex and multidimensional nature of child abuse and neglect requires a multidimensional response in terms of supports and services (Tomison & Wise 1999). Providing concrete services that meet immediate needs for food, housing, childcare, transportation and other costs helps communicate to families a sincere desire to help and plays a critical role in engaging families (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2010b). If parents are preoccupied by immediate needs, they are likely to be less motivated to participate in treatment services. Conversely, early offers of relevant services have been shown to predict successful helping relationships which in turn support engagement and retention in other services (Kemp et al. 2009).

7.2 Specific groups

Parents with particular characteristics are often considered 'at-risk' groups when it comes to providing safety for their children. Young mothers, pregnant women with substance abuse histories, and parents with a disability are vulnerable to negative stereotypes and represent particular challenges for effective engagement (Robertson & Haight 2012; Tarleton & Porter 2012). Parents from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and fathers are also identified as groups with whom child protection authorities have traditionally not engaged well (Ivec et al. 2012; Maxwell et al. 2012; Scourfield 2006; Edwards 2009).

Fathers

Historically, child protection agencies have not been effective in involving fathers in the family work that is needed to achieve safety, permanency and wellbeing for children in care (Maxwell et al. 2012). Multilevel interventions which aim to better engage fathers in the child welfare system have been identified by Gordon et al. (2012).

In the US a five-year federally funded program, the *National Quality Improvement Centre on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System*, aimed to promote knowledge development on engaging non-resident fathers of children in the child protection system. The impact of such engagement on child safety and outcomes has been documented by the American Humane Association (2011)

in the publication *Bringing Back the Dads: Changing Practices in Child Welfare Systems* and resulted in the Indiana Department of Child Services introducing service standards for contracted organisations to actively engage with fathers (Indiana DCS 2012). Other examples of programs which are aimed at better engaging fathers include *Lifetime Dads*, *Fathers-In-Training (FIT)*, *Engaging Fathers Project* and *Divine Alternatives for Dads Services*. These are described in Appendix C.

Studies show that foster care time can be reduced when father engagement occurs (Coakley 2008) and child wellbeing, developmental and educational outcomes may improve (Malm et al. 2006). However, the studies also reveal that there are also barriers to engagement. Barriers include workers who lack training and skill to work with fathers (Huebner et al. 2008) and courts which can be tough on fathers (O'Donnell et al. 2005).

Parents or children with disabilities

Disability of a child or of a parent increases the chances of families coming into contact with the child protection system (Stalker & McArthur 2010; Tarleton 2008; Lamont & Bromfield 2009). In Australia, the work of Gwynyth Llewellyn has highlighted the needs of parents with a disability involved in the child protection system (Renwick 2012). The main issues identified relate to the increased involvement of parents with intellectual disability in care and protection proceedings, the prejudicial treatment of these parents by child protection agencies and the legal system, and the lack of specialist support and advocacy services.

The US National Council on Disability have been active lobbyists for the rights of parents with disabilities, particularly in relation to the activities of child protection systems. Their report to the President argues that there are unacceptably high levels of removal of children to state care as a result of diverse parental disabilities, including physical, development and intellectual disability. The NCDA argues that poverty, close scrutiny by service providers, biased assumptions by caseworkers, and the lack of appropriate family services all put these parents at relatively high risk of child welfare involvement (NCD 2012).

UK studies have documented the use of advocates for parents with disabilities involved in child protection. Advocates were found

to improve parents' experience with the child protection system; parents felt they were treated with more respect by statutory workers; they understood the process more, including the issues regarding their parenting; parents felt empowered, that their voices were heard; advocates could challenge professional practice, especially where poor practice existed; and parents felt emotionally supported (Tarleton 2008). Advocacy groups have called for standardised removal protocols to be introduced and for grief and trauma counselling for the relinquishing parents.

The National Council on Disability Report (2012, p. 271) identified a small number of programs delivering promising practices in supporting parents with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities to prevent the loss of their children into care. These were *Through the Looking Glass*, *Thresholds Mothers' Project*, *Invisible Children's Project*, *Family Initiatives at Employment Options*, *Positive Parenting Resource Centre* and *Ashbury House*. Some are small, stand-alone programs while others are part of larger disability organisations. Collectively, these programs are described as showing promise, long-term sustainable impact, and the potential for replication (NCD 2012).

In the UK, the *Valuing Parents Support Service* provides counselling and advocacy services to parents. In Australia, the initiative *Healthy Start: A national strategy for children of parents with learning difficulties*⁴ offers an on-line community of practice for practitioners, policy makers and parent peers for discussion and sharing expertise on how to best support parents with learning difficulties and their children, including in child protection (Parenting Research Centre & University of Sydney 2010). The on-line resource also includes key research articles on parental intellectual disability and child protection. The *Healthy Start* team also run face-to-face knowledge exchange forums and workshops, webinars, and consult on ways to embed best practice approaches for working with these families. *Healthy Start* was

positively evaluated in 2008 (McConnell et al.) In New South Wales, *CareWest* and *Northcott Intensive Family Support Service* and in Western Australia, *Wanslea Family Services* provide short-term intensive support services where children have a disability.

Culturally diverse groups and Indigenous populations

There is limited research regarding cultural issues within statutory child protection services in Australia (Kaur 2012) and around the world. Key messages which have emerged from the small number of studies identified by Kaur indicate the need for community education, in multiple languages, on the statutory role of child protection authorities in Australia; community awareness-raising programs relating to family violence, supervision and disciplining of children; cultural competency training for caseworkers; and further research to build understanding of the needs of children from refugee and culturally diverse backgrounds in out-of-home care (Kaur 2012).

A recent review of the effectiveness of parenting support for Indigenous families found that effective programs included:

- The use of cultural consultants in conjunction with professional staff;
- The necessity of long-term rather than short term programs;
- A focus on the needs of parents as well as children;
- A supportive strengths-based approach to families; and
- The use of structured early intervention programs while maintaining flexibility.

The review also found that adapting 'mainstream' programs (programs not specifically developed for Indigenous Australians) without community involvement or consultation did not work (Mildon & Polimeni 2012).

The historical experiences in Australia and overseas of Indigenous and First Nation peoples with state child welfare authorities remain a major stumbling block in contemporary engagement.

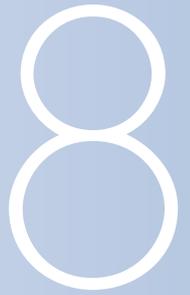
⁴ *Healthy Start* is an initiative of the Australian Supported Parenting Consortium, a collaboration between the Parenting Research Centre and the Australian Family and Disability Studies Research Collaboration. It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

7.3 Research on programs working with parents

The range of programs that work with parents is large, making the sharing of best practice knowledge challenging. A role has emerged for clearing houses which promote information sharing. Examples include the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC), which provides child welfare professionals with easy access to the research evidence for programs being used or marketed in California. In Europe, Eurochild publishes a 'compendium of inspiring practices' including those focused on early intervention and prevention in family support work (Eurochild 2012). Eurochild is a network of 116 member organisations across 35 European countries all of which aim to improve the quality of life of children and young people.



Programs focussed on the family



This section describes interventions targeted at the broader family.

Interventions targeted at extended families are believed to be critical in building resilience in children and young people and preventing abuse and neglect (DePanfilis 2006). The broadening of the support base to a wider network of care can help other possibilities emerge in terms of problem-solving and addressing child safety concerns.

Programs targeting individual parents and their extended families are generally delivered by NGOs or mainstream health organisations (as is the case with home nurse visiting).

Several approaches were supported in the literature that are directed at the family group and broader family and care network as targets of change. These were FGC, the Eigen Kracht Conference and kinship/network care interventions. These three approaches are described with a particular focus on the effectiveness of family group conferencing.

8.1 Family group conferencing (FGC)

The family group conference is a process in which parents, family members, community members and others work with the child welfare agency to create a plan for a vulnerable child or youth.⁵ In family group conferencing processes a trained, independent coordinator facilitates the conference. The processes 'position the family group to lead decision-making and the statutory authorities agree to support family group plans that adequately address agency concerns' (American Humane Association 2010, p.1)

Over 30 countries utilise some form of FGC (Doolan 2010). FGC started in New Zealand in 1989, where by law such conferences must be convened when a child is in need of care and protection. Interestingly, the primary driving force for legislative change was political rather than evidence-based, following an inquiry into the over-representation of Maori children in the welfare system and the failure of the statutory and legal systems to acknowledge kinship and community support networks around a child (Merkel-Holguin et al. 2003). Few countries have mandated FGC by law; rather it is a procedure which child protection systems can choose to adopt (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007).

A comprehensive analysis of Australia's use of FGC by Harris (2008) showed that 15 years after it was first trialled (1992) FGC was still not part of mainstream child protection practice, despite legislative provision in many states and territories and empirical support for efficacy of the approach. This is still true in 2013.

⁵ Also referred to as family group decision-making (FGDM).

While the practice is spreading internationally, it remains a marginalised practice unless mandated by law (Merkel-Holguin et al. 2003). In terms of family engagement models in child protection, FGC is the most researched, not surprising given the breadth of international take-up of the process.

Themes and key messages which emerge from studies into FGC (despite variations in policy and legal contexts and how FGC is applied) show that family groups want to be involved in finding solutions when child safety concerns exist. Birth families can take part safely, make plans and commit resources when children need help, and all cultures respond to and like the process (Doolan 2006). While multiple studies indicate increased safety for children and no compromise to safety, professionals often cite concerns about safety as reasons for why they are hesitant to embrace family-centred decision-making (Doolan 2006). This hesitation, argues Doolan, seems to be rooted in pervasive belief systems about the 'dysfunctionality' of families and blame for abuse being generalised across the whole family, without consideration being given to the significant harm that can arise through professional intervention (Doolan 2006).

Outcomes of FGC have been an increase in the engagement of fathers, in the past often rendered invisible and considered a liability and a threat in the child protection system (Schmid 2006). Studies have also shown an increased use of placements with a child's kin rather than with strangers, faster return to kin placements from stranger placements, and faster return to biological parents. Important patterns emerging are that agencies are building more trust in family and cultural networks in communities and that engaging family groups earlier in the process of investigating child abuse or neglect allegations has the effect of calming the legal process and enabling less formalised approaches to problem resolution (Burford et al. 2008 ongoing).

8.2 Eigen Kracht Conference (Netherlands)

In 2011 the Netherlands Parliament, with cross-party support, amended the Child Protection Act to grant parents or guardians of a child the right to make their own plan regarding how to care for a child of concern in collaboration with family and other involved friends. The right to construct a collaborative plan for a child therefore comes as a first recourse before the state and courts are permitted to intervene

(Wachtel 2011). Eigen Kracht Centrale, a non-profit organisation, introduced FGC in 2001 to the Netherlands. Eigen Kracht has led efforts on law reform and trained over 500 paid part-time coordinators who have facilitated over 4,000 conferences in the Netherlands. Eigen Kracht conference coordinators are not social work professionals, but people in the community who hold jobs in a range of sectors but have skills (following three days of training) and interest in conducting conferences. These coordinators are independent and impartial but care is taken to match the coordinator to the culture and language of the family concerned. A conference co-ordinator only undertakes one conference at a time because of the time taken to organise. The conference itself contains three parts. First, the child welfare professionals (including social workers and court officials) present an outline of the problem, legal constraints, availability of resources and any other relevant information that might be useful to the family. In the second part the professionals leave the room, and the families and supporters meet privately to make a plan. In the final phase, the professionals return and the family presents the plan. If the plan is safe for the child it will be accepted. FGC is seen as a mechanism to democratise help and welfare.

8.3 Kinship/network care

'Family engagement is the foundation from which change occurs'. These activities go beyond the immediate family to include in their focus the engagement extended family and the family's 'natural support systems' (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2010b, p.2). Research has found that broad-based involvement that incorporates informal networks and community representatives creates a web of support that promotes safety, increases options for families and provides links to needed and various services (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2010b). Innovative ways of finding and engaging extended family have emerged in some jurisdictions. Family search, also known as family finding or family locator services, are intensive search methods aimed to find family members and other adults who would like to step in and care for children and youth in foster care who lack permanency (Malm & Allen 2011; CDF 2011). Family finding is discussed in more detail in Section 10.

Programs focussed on collective 'parent consumers'



This section describes interventions aimed at collective 'parent consumers'. The engagement of people utilising services as peer workers, peer mentors or as leaders of initiatives is now standard practice in mental health, disability, Indigenous, drug and alcohol and family violence service domains. Peers are mobilised and reach out to help others in similar circumstances. Peer support is highly effective when trying to engage people who may resist or refuse the help of professionals. Less stigma, less distance socially and the absence of a power differential exist when someone has a shared human experience and story. Peers can be advocates for change as well as helpers. Parent advocates often engage in social action to voice their resistance to 'the system' and to push for change.

A number of different names are used to refer to parents who have themselves traversed the child welfare system and reunified with their child(ren) and are now working alongside other parents involved in the child welfare system. The parent 'consumer', 'advocate', 'partner', 'alumni', 'peer', 'activist', 'mentor', 'coach', 'buddy', 'leader', 'veteran', 'peer advocate' or 'advisor', can undertake multiple roles. This research refers to parents taking on these roles as 'parent peers'.

At a casework level, parent peers accompany parents to court hearings and agency meetings, help access services and encourage parents to advocate for themselves. At a systems level, birth parent advisory programs utilise birth parents as advisors to help inform and shape agency policy, develop programs and services for parents in the child welfare system and play a role in decision-making about program planning (Corwin 2012, p.20).

Having access to a parent partner provides a place where parents, even in the midst of turmoil, can connect with another parent... the moment a child is removed from the home, someone who is there right away (Boyd Rauber 2009, p.149).

The first-hand knowledge that parent peers bring to parents involved in child protection can assist with increasing parental engagement, decrease parental distrust in the system, alleviate stressors between parents and child welfare, and reduce staff burnout (Corwin 2012, p.17). Parent peers bring to birth parents a far more equal relationship than that experienced by birth parents dealing with professionals. They are 'experts by experience', and avoid the risk that professionals face of being seen as dominating and stigmatising (Braithwaite, J 2002). Corwin (2012) identifies the importance of agencies employing parent peers to carefully assess staff readiness to build positive partnerships with parents in an

accepting, inclusive, respectful and valuing way, particularly as negative views about parents by mental health professionals have been identified.

In the USA, federal attention to birth parent and family engagement is prioritised in child welfare legislation, requiring time-limited family reunification services to include peer mentoring and support groups for parents.

Following are four key approaches aimed at collective 'parent consumers'. These are Peer Support, Birth Parent Advisors, Parent/Consumer-led and targeted advocacy strategies, such as the development of a Parents' Bill of Rights.

9.1 Peer support programs

A number of peer partner programs were identified as part of this review and include the *Parent Partners Program*, the *Parent Advocacy Program*, *Powerful Families* and *Circle of Parents*. These and other peer programs including *Parents Anonymous* are described in Appendix C. Parent peers aim to promote the parents' perspective in child welfare systems, develop working relationships between social workers and parents, engage parents in services quickly, build knowledge and respect between parents and workers and allow parents to become informed consumers of child welfare services (Marcenko et al. 2010). Online engagement with other parent consumers through online cafes, forums and Facebook are already in existence and will no doubt continue to grow.

CASE STUDY: FAMILY BY FAMILY

...families are the enablers of change: they connect and build relationships with other families in a way that professionals can't.
(Community Matters 2012)

Family by Family is a South Australian initiative undertaken by the Australian Centre for Social Innovation and aims to respond to the numbers of families requiring crisis services, including child protection services (Community Matters 2012). It does so by linking 'sharing families' who have been through difficulties in the past with 'seeking families' who want something to be different in their lives. The sharing families are the key support offered to seeking families.

The families pair up and do activities together for up to 30 weeks. The activities include a two-day training camp designed to develop their skills in sharing strengths, ideas and resources with other families. Coaching is a main feature of the program — for groups, children and families — to support the work of the sharing family.

Each set of families has a coach who conducts three joint coaching sessions over the course of the link-up, to support the work of the sharing family. Family coaches are not employed on the basis of formal qualifications in human services but for their capacity to engage with and support families. Family coaches are involved with:

- recruitment of families;
- training and support of sharing families;
- supporting the establishment of link-ups;
- conducting joint coaching sessions;
- supporting the collection of information, including family profiles and evaluation questionnaires;
- organising events; and
- liaison with local services.

Kids' Coaches are also provided. Kids' Coaches are adults who work with children during events. The Kids' Coach role includes:

- development of processes and materials to support children's roles within *Family by Family*;
- support for families about how to support and engage children in *Family by Family*;
- some direct assistance to seeking families about issues they may face with their children; and
- direct engagement with children during training, coaching and events.

9.2 Birth parent advisors

The opinions, experiences and understanding provided by birth parent advisors can be invaluable with regard to informing how services are delivered, what methods and programs are most effective for working with other birth parents and how agencies and parents in child welfare interact with one another (Corwin 2012, p.20).

Birth parent advisors are people who have themselves traversed the child welfare system. Where birth parent partners provide guidance and support to other parents in the child welfare system, birth parent advisors work at a systems advocacy level. They can help organisations make decisions about program planning, policy, training and advocacy (Corwin 2012, p.5).

Several birth parent advisory programs have demonstrated their ability to shape child welfare agency policy and develop programs and services for parents in the child welfare system (Corwin 2012). These are detailed in Appendix C and include *Catalyst for Kids*, *Child Welfare Organizing Project* and the *Texas Parent Collaboration Group*. The history of birth parents organising themselves to transform New York City's child welfare system and end its over-reliance on foster care has also been documented (Tobis 2013).

9.3 Parent consumer-led initiatives

Parents and families can be part of the solution when it comes to child safety and prevention of abuse and neglect... By including parents and families in the child protection process, we believe we will see improved relationships between parents, extended family members, carers and child protection authorities. Most importantly, we expect to see improved outcomes for children in care or at risk of entering care.
(Emeritus Professor Rosamund Thorpe, quoted in FINA 2011)

Consumer-led initiatives in child protection in Australia are still in their infancy. The only group representing the voice of parents in the child protection system is the *Family Inclusion Network Australia* (FINA). FINA believes that 'parents and families have a central and essential role to play in the

child protection process when children are at risk of being removed or have been removed' (FINA 2011). FINA is the umbrella organisation and support network for individual Family Inclusion Networks in different jurisdictions in Australia.

The name *Family Inclusion Network* (FIN) was coined by Professor Rosamund Thorpe in Townsville, Queensland in 2006 (FIN 2013). Thorpe, a social work academic, leads a community development initiative which engages with parents and extended family members who have been affected by child protection intervention in their lives. Parents and extended family members work as equals with a small group of professionals. The FIN group in Townsville has regular morning teas for social support, fundraising activities, undertakes community action in the form of members making submissions to government inquiries, and offers assistance to people attending the Children's Court where care and protection matters are heard. Since 2004 other FINs have been established in Australia.

To date, FIN Western Australia is the only FIN with any government funding to provide support for parents. Other state and territory FINs operate according to their limited resources and capacity. Their services provide varying levels of voluntary assistance to limited numbers of parents and family members. FIN services include support groups, casework, advocacy, court support, education and awareness raising with a range of organisations and services (FIN 2011).

9.4 Bills of Rights and Service Charters

A Bill of Rights is a statement of the specific rights and freedoms of a group of people. As an advocacy tool it has particular potency due to historical and legal connotations.

The development of parental Bills of Rights and Service Charters for parents dealing with child protection systems have been led by those who themselves have been affected by statutory intervention. These charters are designed to affect multilevel change — for parents and families to become aware of their rights and responsibilities when they interact with child welfare authorities and as a yardstick by which the actions of authorities can be judged. Three US-based bills or charters are identified below. The development of an Australian charter by Hamilton (forthcoming) is also discussed in this section.

Most government departments or agencies have service charters, often formulated with all relevant stakeholders having input. They are a common way for agencies to inform the public how they can expect to be treated and are a form of outreach to the public, communicating commitment to meaningful engagement and more equal partnering between government and citizens. Service charters build a shared understanding of intent and hold organisations to account. While child protection authorities are developing service charters, these generally focus on the child and children in care. The absence of parents in these charters has led to consumers mobilising to develop their own charters and Bills of Rights.

The Parents' Bill of Rights

In 2009 the US based *National Coalition for Parent Advocacy in Child Protective Services* drafted the first known Parents' Bill of Rights. It describes the basic protection for all parents who become involved with the child welfare system (NCPACPS 2009).⁶ The National Coalition focuses on mobilising parents and advocacy organisations 'to create positive public policy and program changes that prevent removal of children from their families by child protective services, to strengthen and ensure the rights of families whose children have been removed, and return children to their families' (Rise 2010).

⁶ See Parents Anonymous and National Coalition in Appendix C for more detail.

PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

- 1 Every parent has the right to culturally and linguistically appropriate education, housing, health and mental health, food and nutrition, financial, and parenting support needed to raise their children.
- 2 Every parent has the right to get help when they ask for it, including immediate access to neighbourhood and community support such as child care, health and mental health care, access to substance abuse programs, in-home services, that help them prevent removal of their children from their home.
- 3 Every parent whose child is involved in the child welfare system has the right to receive support and help from a parent advocate (who has been involved in child protective services) to successfully navigate the system and advocate for their family.
- 4 Every parent has the right to know why they are being investigated by the child protection system and the outcome of any investigation; to be provided with a clear and immediate explanation of every step of the child protection process, and their rights from the very beginning (including their right not to let the caseworker in when they knock on the door if they do not have a warrant), and to receive information on available assistance and help parents advocate for themselves and their family.
- 5 Every parent has the right to an emergency hearing no later than 24 hours following their child's removal from their home.
- 6 Every parent has the right to fair treatment including due process protections (including the right to be present and bring witnesses to all proceedings, have an attorney, appeal agency decisions, and make complaints or raise concerns); equal treatment without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, religion, economic status, family composition, or sexual orientation; access to immediate, affordable, high quality, competent, knowledgeable, and assertive legal representation, from the report through the investigation, court and "reunification" stages.
- 7 Every parent who is being investigated by child protective services has the right to be considered "innocent until proven guilty," not to be judged guilty by association, and not to be considered neglectful or abusive solely because they or their child has a disability or mental health need.
- 8 Every parent has the right to speak for themselves and to be respectfully heard at every step of the child protective service processes.



9 Every parent has the right to have fair and reasonable expectations with regard to the child welfare system; to have these expectations developed with, shared in writing with, and clearly explained to the parents in a manner they can understand, and receive the support needed to meet those expectations.

10 Every parent whose child is involved in the child welfare system has the right to privacy (including keeping their records confidential unless they provide written parental consent), to access their own child and family records at any time at no cost, and to have their names expunged from any child protective services agency/central registry if there are no findings and/or after a reasonable amount of time after they have met all agency expectations.

11 Every parent whose child is involved in the child welfare system has the right to convene a meeting within a reasonable amount of time (no later than a week) with the agency and interested parties.

12 Every parent has the right to have their child/ren expeditiously placed with a family member or close family friend, identified in consultation with the parent, and have no “unreasonable” barriers placed in the way of having the child/ren placed with that family member or close family friend.

13 Every parent whose child is involved in the child welfare system has the right to make decisions about their child’s education, health, mental health, religious education; be informed about the progress their child is making with regard to education, health and development, and about the people and/or services involved with their child; and accompany their child to school and medical visits, even while their child is in care.

14 Every parent has the right to exercise their First Amendment rights, including the right to free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association, without being penalized by the child welfare system.

15 Every parent has the right to see and communicate with their child every day while their child is in care, at times and locations that are convenient to the parent and at no cost to the parent.

Source: National Coalition for Parent Advocacy in Child Protective Services 2009

The National Coalition's aim is to have the Bill of Rights incorporated into state and federal laws to improve the US child protection system. The Coalition reports that to date, some of these rights are enshrined in federal child welfare legislation and are therefore required in every state. In some states (but not all) other rights may be upheld as standard practice. However, the National Coalition promotes all of these rights are promoted in its pursuit of positive outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system (NCPACPS 2009). As this document is not yet a part of federal and state law, the Coalition describes it as a work in progress, with comments invited from parents, advocates and child welfare agencies.

The Parents' Charter of Rights

A Charter is a variation on a Bill of Rights. A Parents' Charter of Rights has been developed in the US by the organisation *Rise*. *Rise* trains parents to write about their experiences with the child protection system in order to support them and parent advocacy. The stories are used to guide child welfare workers and policy makers to become more responsive to families and communities (Rise 2011, p.3). *Rise* used the collection of parent stories to identify key concerns and develop a Charter of Rights. Having developed this Charter, *Rise* has gone on to develop a plan for parent advocacy and family-centred child welfare reform (Rise 2010).

CHARTER OF RIGHTS: FROM RIGHTS TO REALITY

As a parent investigated by the child welfare system:

- 1 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO not lose my child because I am poor.
- 2 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO services that will support me in raising my child at home.
- 3 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO speak for myself and be heard at every step of the child protective service process.
- 4 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO be informed of my rights.
- 5 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO a meaningful and fair hearing before my parental rights are limited in any way.
- 6 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO quality legal representation.
- 7 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO support from someone who has been in my shoes.
- 8 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO have my child quickly placed with someone I trust.
- 9 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO frequent meaningful contact with my child.
- 10 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO make decisions about my child's life in care.
- 11 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO privacy.
- 12 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO fair treatment regardless of my race, culture, gender or religion.
- 13 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO services that will support me in reunifying with my child.
- 14 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO offer my child a lifelong relationship.
- 15 I HAVE THE RIGHT TO meaningful participation in developing the child welfare policies that affect my family and community.

Source: Rise: From Rights to Reality 2010

Charter of rights for children of incarcerated parents

A Bill of Rights for children of incarcerated parents was developed in 2003 by *San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents* (SFCIPP), a coalition of social service providers, representatives of government bodies, advocates and others who work with or are concerned about children of incarcerated parents and their families (SFCIPP 2013). The aim of the group is to develop more responsive policies and practices when it comes to children with incarcerated parents.

While the Charter of Rights for children of incarcerated parents is child-focused, essential to it is the recognition of the vital role of parents in the lives of their children, in spite of their incarceration.

The Charter provides a useful overview of the rights of children and has been a useful tool for SFCIPP to highlight the absence of policies and services to support them.

CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS — A BILL OF RIGHTS

- 1** I have the right TO BE KEPT SAFE AND INFORMED AT THE TIME OF MY PARENT'S ARREST.
- 2** I have the right TO BE HEARD WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT ME.
- 3** I have the right TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT MY PARENT.
- 4** I have the right TO BE WELL CARED FOR IN MY PARENT'S ABSENCE.
- 5** I have the right TO SPEAK WITH, SEE AND TOUCH MY PARENT.
- 6** I have the right TO SUPPORT AS I FACE MY PARENT'S INCARCERATION.
- 7** I have the right NOT TO BE JUDGED, BLAMED OR LABELLED because my parent is incarcerated.
- 8** I have the right TO A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PARENT.

Source: San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents 2013

Service charter developments in Australia

While child protection authorities across Australia have developed Charters of Rights specifically for children and young people in out-of-home care these do not address the needs of parents or families (FACS 2012a; FACS 2012b). The *Community Capacity Building in Child Protection Research Program* at the Australian National University has recently developed a child protection service charter which addresses not only the rights of parents but also their responsibilities in their dealings with child protection authorities (Hamilton forthcoming). This charter has been developed in consultation with parents affected by child protection intervention and service providers who have clients with child protection issues, and has been informed by the research undertaken by the ANU team.

The usefulness of a Charter of Rights for Australian parents who are incarcerated is apparent. On any given day in Australia, approximately 38,000 children have a parent in prison (Quilty 2005; Flynn 2011). It is not known how many of these children are subject to child protection orders, but it is known that in Victoria, for example, there is 'no coordinated response by the child protection and justice systems to managing these children's situations' (Sheehan 2010; Flynn 2011). The problems experienced by these children are also well documented: isolation, behavioural difficulties at school, anxiety, insecurity, withdrawal, anger and mental health concerns (Flynn 2011). Despite these concerns and the growing nature of the problem, these children remain largely invisible, and do not feature as a priority for government policy and statutory welfare bodies (Flynn 2011).



Programs focussed on the foster carer/birth parent relationship



Formal systems of care kick in once children have been removed from their parents. There are a range of activities and initiatives to promote parent engagement which are targeted at foster carers and birth parents whose children have been removed. Building connections and relationships between birth parents and foster parents regardless of whether children are reunified or stay in care can increase family connectedness, reduce childhood trauma, expedite permanency and increase the likelihood of reunification (Corwin 2012).

This section describes five important types of programs that can positively influence the way birth parents and foster parents connect: relinquishing counselling, handling child removal, family finding, visitation counselling and family reunification. Many of these programs also use peer support, that is, other parents who have experience with child welfare authorities.

Practices included in the programs that engage and connect birth parents with foster parents include:

- *Ice-breaker meetings.* An ice-breaker meeting is 'a facilitated, child-focused meeting held shortly after a child is placed or replaced in out-of-home care to provide an opportunity for birth parents and foster parents (or other caregivers) to meet each other and to share information about the needs of the child' (NRCPPFC 2008). These are connections at the time of initial placement with foster carers to promote easier adjustments for children and help form relationships of mutual respect, tempering often painful experiences of out-of-home placement (NRCPPFC 2009).
- *Visit coaching.* (For a description of visit coaching, see 10.4 below.) Visit coaching is not the same as supervised visits. It uses a visit coach to actively support parents to meet their child's needs and capitalise on their family's strengths (Beyer 2008). Visit coaching improves quality of parent contact and visitation with children in out-of-home care. Empowerment, empathy, responsiveness and active parenting are the four visit coaching principles (NRCPPFC 2009).
- *Birth parent mentors and peers* employed by foster care agencies to help engage parents whose children are entering the foster care system (Marcenko et al. 2010).

Most of the interventions at this level were identified in the USA and are delivered by NGOs, where an active foster care NGO sector promotes engagement with birth parents as good practice.

Australian searches failed to identify any examples of programs that specifically addressed birth parent engagement with foster parents or visitation coaching when children were at risk of being removed or in care.

Family reunification initiatives have been included in this section. While reunification is generally seen to be a goal of child protection intervention, not all Departments in Australia appear to keep reunification data (Dalton 2013).

10.1 Relinquishing counselling

Relinquishing counselling is now recognised as an important part of the process of adoptions. Long term psychological consequences for birth parents can include unresolved grief, isolation, difficulty with future relationships, and trauma (Wiley 2005). Within the programs identified in this review, counselling to address issues of parental grief and loss and the trauma of removal featured as an important component of emotional support for parents who had lost their children into state welfare systems. Legislative changes in the USA have encouraged expedited permanency for children, meaning less time for parents to prove their ability to look after their children before losing their parental rights. It has been identified that in order to comply with this legislation without unnecessarily separating families, the child welfare system, along with communities and other public agencies, must offer parents the support and education they need to either become adequate parents or make the decision to relinquish their parental rights (Barth & Price 1999).

10.2 Handling child removals

...removing a child from parental care is a significant societal event, a crisis for the child and the family. The decision to remove and the details surrounding removal deserve a heightened level of societal oversight. Just because these situations are confidential and removed from public scrutiny does not make them less significant to the child, the family, and the community.
(Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007)

Whether children are removed from their families on a voluntary or involuntary basis, the moment is seared in everyone's memory. 'It is the worst thing that could happen to any parent' (G. Levine [former Senior Magistrate of the Victorian Children's Court] 2012, pers. comm. 23 November 2012). There is a paucity of research literature, policy or practice protocols on how the actual removal of children can best be handled. What has been identified comes from legal practice literature and joint response protocols (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007; Chill 2004; Pence & Wilson 1992) (see for example State Government of Victoria 2012). These protocols in turn produce the best results for children when multiple decision-makers and problem-solvers work together to meet the child's needs (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007, p.3). An examination of practice and legal issues in the emergency protection of children through removal found no practice guidance specific to the separation of a parent and child at birth (Freel 2010). While the topic of workers' occupational health and safety is examined in the literature and in public inquiries into child protection, the circumstances precipitating those reactions seem to be less subject to examination.

The Victorian Department of Human Services *Child Protection Practice Manual* outlines procedures for the first visit/interview with parents and child(ren) regarding allegations of harm or likely harm and for the possible removal of a child (DHS 2012). The importance of family engagement is stressed, as are considerations for good practice when undertaking a first visit. Inquiries about child removal practice protocols abroad confirmed no specific protocols as such, but the systemic approaches taken to intervention reinforced respectful practice which includes honesty, directness and empathy — all of which are needed when a child has to be separated from their family (Goodman, pers. comm. 25 November 2012). The Virginia Department of Social Services identifies emergency removal as a critical decision point for a family partnership meeting. This meeting must be convened before the court hearing in cases where removal has occurred (Virginia Department of Social Services 2010).

10.3 Family Finding

Family Finding or *Family Search and Engagement* is an intensive search method to find family members and other adults who would like to step in and care for children and youth in foster care who lack permanency (CDF 2010). A review of family finding programs reported that despite showing promising outcomes for young people and their families, some challenges in implementing family finding programs exist. These include:

- *Administrative and bureaucratic barriers:* policies focus on safety to the exclusion of permanency and stability goals. Agencies are prevented from moving forward with family finding because of concerns that safety will be jeopardised if children have contact with families of origin;
- *Resistance from staff:* case workers often view family finding as an additional burden alongside high caseloads and tight timeframes;
- *Lack of training, practice and expertise:* professionals working with family finding must be trained in more than just search techniques. Staff must have the ability to build strong relationships with the child, successfully engage the family and adults, and counsel the child in grief and loss in order to help them cope with their past experience and accept the reality that they deserve a permanent family;
- *Insufficient follow up:* once the families are engaged;
- *Lack of appropriate services:* many agencies are unable to provide the supportive wraparound services that are critical to appropriately supporting these children and families; and
- *Misconceptions:* at different levels of the child welfare system there are misconceptions that can impair the successful implementation of family findings. The review reported that judges and service staff often hold negative perceptions of parents which they extend to the rest of the child's family and believe that children would be better off in an unrelated adoptive family. Courts also may not perceive non-legal solutions, such as permanent life-long connections, as an appropriate solution. Some also believe that children must be stable in placement or treatment before considering family connections, as opposed

to seeing connections as an aid to stability. Lastly, and most unfortunately, some professionals view older youth in foster care as 'unadoptable' (CDF 2010).

10.4 Visitation coaching

Despite their importance, contact visits between parents and their children in out-of-home care have rarely been described as satisfactory. The psychological impact of these visits on parents has recently been examined by Salveron (2012), who highlights the:

importance of preparation, understanding, communication and helping parents to comprehend the importance of their role as parents and teaching them more positive and constructive ways of parenting and relating to their children. Furthermore, helping parents to understand the aims of contact, provision of constructive feedback, clear expectations of contact and access visits, activities that help build the parent, empower the parent, and educate the parent all contribute to assisting them understand the child protection system and process, engage with support services and make lifestyle changes for their children. (Salveron 2012, pp. 209-210)

Contact visits have been described as a service underutilised by child welfare agencies, one that could provide for safe reunification, or family participation in planning another permanent home (Beyer 2004). While research shows visitation as being a way to return home and shorten foster care placement, most visits are rarely more than an encounter in an office, and range in frequency.

Visit coaching encourages parents to prepare for children's feelings and behaviours in visits, to take charge of the visits and plan for them. The coach also assists parents to cope with their feelings and encourages communication to facilitate co-parenting between birth parent and foster parents (Beyer 2008; Williams & Beyer, 2009). The four principles of visit coaching established by Beyer are empowerment, empathy, responsiveness and active parenting. Visit coaching begins with reaching agreement with the family about the child's needs to be met in visits, connected to the risks that brought the child into care. A visit coaching manual has been developed by Beyer which describes how to help families take charge of visits, involve foster families and kin in visits, build attachment between infants and their families, involve teenagers

in visits, and improve visits as parents return from prison or treatment. The manual also includes a visit module for parenting classes (Beyer 2004).

US child welfare agencies have reported that coached visits are an exciting innovation and can be more effective than supervised visits (Beyer 2004). Visit coaching and support aims to directly address the issues that brought the child into care, build on family strengths and guide improved parenting. It is described as a practice that can help families to make significant changes within short time frames (Beyer 2004). Best practices around visitation while children are in foster care, including what factors support and challenge visitation, have been documented by Partners for our Children (2011).

10.5 Family reunification

A number of parent engagement programs identified family reunification as a goal. Some of these programs also supported families once reunification occurred through the involvement of parent peer workers, mentors and foster carers.

- *Bridging the Gap*: aims to build relationships and communication between birth and foster families. The goal of this work is to support family reunification or another permanency plan. The program includes the use of icebreaker meetings and visit coaching. Work can include other family members involved in the child's life, such as members of the extended family of origin, other relatives who are caregivers and adoptive parents.
- *Co-Parenting Program*: a 12-week shared parenting course for birth parents and foster parents. It aims to create collaborative partnerships to parent the children who are in care.
- *Parent Partner*: links parents who are currently in the child welfare system, and have had a child removed, with parent mentors who have had previous involvement with the child welfare system and have been reunified with their child for at least a year (CPPC 2013). An outcome study indicated that reunification may be more likely for children whose parents were supported by Parent Partners, with approximately 60% of children with a Parent Partner reunified with their parents within 12 months of removal, compared to 26% of children whose parents were not (Anthony et al. 2009).
- *Intensive Reunification Program*: an intensive program for parents whose primary case plan goal is reunification. The program incorporates a twice-weekly support group for birth parents and weekly visits between the child and birth parents at the parent's home. Foster parents are required to spend time with birth parents to model positive parenting behaviours, allow time for skill transfer, allow time for birth-parent self-evaluation, and impart community resource information. A tenet of the program is that experiential parent training increases child safety, and its central tenet is to provide multiple opportunities for parents and their children to spend time together (Berry et al. 2007). A comparative evaluation after one year found reunification rates double that of comparable cases receiving conventional reunification services (McCauley & Berry n.d.).

CASE STUDY: THE FOSTER FAMILY-BASED TREATMENT ASSOCIATION

This US body, in addition to working to provide appropriate support to families relinquishing children and supporting reunification, has also undertaken significant research on implementing evidence-based practice in *treatment foster care*. *Treatment foster care* provides children who would otherwise be placed in institutional settings with a combination of traditional foster care and residential treatment centers with active and structured, individualized and clinically effective intensive treatment (FFTA 2004).

The FFTA has identified parent engagement and support as critical for successful child outcomes (FFTA 2008; FFTA 2012). In order to support and engage birth parents with foster parents and to help birth parents deal effectively with the child welfare system, the FFTA has established the following seven programs. One is *respite* (discussed in section 6.10). The others are:

Co-parenting: a shared training program for birth and foster parent (see 10.5).

Parent engagement and self-advocacy: interventions which aim to teach birth parents, foster parents and child welfare workers how to work together to advocate for the health and wellbeing of children in care (FFTA 2008).

Parent mentoring program: a program (based on a manual) through which trained foster parents mentor birth parents on issues related to why their children came into care (FFTA 2008).

Shared family care: a parent and their children are placed in a community home with a trained host family who offer support and mentorship.

Building a bridge: a foster parent training program that recognises that positive connections between birth and foster parents are essential and can improve care for the child as parents exchange information (Corwin 2012).

Birth-family – foster-family connections project: a relational approach that aims to ‘create supportive connections among birth families, foster families, children and the child welfare system’ (Corwin 2012).

11 Programs focussed on the statutory authority

This section discusses programs that aim to make positive reforms of the structures and systems delivering statutory child protection services. It describes five cases where statutory agencies in Canada, UK, USA and Australia are initiating changes. How multiple agencies work together to respond to families through ‘joint responses’ is also addressed.

Child protection systems are often described, by government inquiries, NGOs and political parties, as being in crisis and failing (Parliament of South Australia 2009; Parliament of Tasmania 2011). This is reinforced by media headlines such as ‘*Aboriginal child protection system in crisis*’ (Jolley 2012), ‘*Child protection inquiry hears foster care system is in crisis as volunteers opt out*’ (Madigan 2012) and ‘*Parliamentary report finds SA child protection system in crisis*’ (Novak 2009). The number of children in care continues to grow, as does the demand for more resources, and poor outcomes for children who have been removed fuels anger and dissatisfaction with authorities, particularly by Indigenous communities.

Despite the national and international focus on the problems of child protection systems, with high profile examples of child deaths and the failings of professionals and systems, good news stories do exist. This section describes system-led and structural changes, seeing child protection working directly with parents in the best interests of the child. Here the system acknowledges it can do better and has seen itself as the target of change. System-wide changes such as the UK’s *Social Work Reclaimed* model (see section 11.2) are heralded as best practice in child protection (Munro 2011). Integrating child protection and family support is at the heart of this model with a strong focus on parental engagement. Another UK program, *Volunteers in Child Protection* (CSV 2013), won the National Charity Award in 2010 (Civil Society 2011).

A system-driven response comes from the organisation’s desire to build new relationships and to do things differently. Leadership is critical. Around the world, senior child protection workers, usually social workers, have led the change within the system with outside political support, leadership and commitment

to systems change (NSW, Nova Scotia and UK). Several examples were found where the child statutory authority itself acknowledged the need to improve its methods of protecting children and supporting healthy families. Numbers of children going into care are reducing significantly in the case of a pilot in New South Wales (see section 11.3); the UK's *Social Work Reclaimed* model reports a 40 per cent reduction in children going into care (see section 11.2).

The USA has seen legislative changes aimed at increasing parental engagement with child protection authorities. The *Child Welfare Practice Model* adopted by child protection services in Minnesota has produced consistently good outcomes, attributed also to a workforce with high quality practice skills. The outcomes from Olmstead and Carver counties in Minnesota are described as compelling: over a period of ten years, the services have made a demonstrable impact on keeping families together and increasing children's safety (Alexander 2010).

Also noteworthy in the USA is the inclusion of the birth parent perspective in the development of a national resource guide, *Strengthening Families and Communities*, which focuses on the promotion of protective factors. Used in over 30 states, the *Strengthening Families* framework is put into practice by leadership teams composed of parent partners and stakeholders across a range of sectors (Corwin 2012, p.21).

These initiatives have also shown that a child protection authority working directly with parents produces significant cost savings. Cost savings have been identified through the implementation of a number of approaches, including *Social Work Reclaimed* and *Volunteers in Child Protection* in the UK, and family drug treatment courts and nurse-home visiting in the USA (Munro 2011; Goodman & Trowler 2011; Levine 2012).

In regards to engaging Indigenous communities, models such as Hollow Water in Canada (Bushie 1999) and the Family Responsibilities Commission in Queensland (FaHCSIA 2013a) are two examples of how the authority of the community can join with the formal authority of the statutory and legal systems for shared decision-making that is solution focused.

11.1 Hollow Water Community Holistic Circle Healing (Manitoba, Canada)

The Hollow Water community is a well-known example of a community taking responsibility for family violence and widespread child sexual abuse by conducting community holistic circles of healing (CHCH), while also working with formal child protection and justice systems. These 'restorative justice rituals can be a lever for triggering prevention of the most systemic and difficult-to-solve crimes in contemporary societies' (Braithwaite, J 2002).

This example has been included in this section, which looks at programs aimed at statutory authorities, because it required a new negotiated relationship with all the agencies that had a stake in dealing with sexual abuse cases, including child protection workers, the police, the crown attorney and judges as well as community members and community agencies.

This model includes representatives of Child and Family Services and the police as well as representatives of the CHCH in investigating the crime. If it is determined that abuse has taken place the abuser is charged and given a choice of pleading guilty and participating in a healing process based on the cultural traditions of the Anishnaabe people, or going through the mainstream courts (Bushie 1999).

A cost benefit analysis undertaken in 2001 showed substantial cost savings and improved signs of health and wellness of children, more people completing their education, better parenting skills, the empowerment of community and individuals, broadening of community resources, an increase in community responsibility to issues, an increased sense of safety, a return to traditional ceremony and a decrease in overall violence (Native Counselling Services of Alberta 2001). Through prevention, community training and intervention, the healing circles program has caused a decrease in the amount and type of services the community has required from outside sources. In addition, there was every indication that these cost savings would increase exponentially into the future (Native Counselling Services of Alberta 2001).

11.2 Social Work Reclaimed (UK)

Social Work Reclaimed (SWR) is a well-known model developed in the UK which has gained an international reputation for child and family statutory social work. The starting point for SWR is that social work and child protection systems should be highly effective in keeping children safely with their families. SWR began in the borough of Hackney but has now been adopted by 16 other UK councils (Rix 2011).

SWR is a values-based practice model⁷ that restores a family focus within statutory social work. SWR is based on partnership with parents; risk being managed together proactively (based on the belief that you need to share the risks with others); the belief in families and that they want to do the best for their children; privileging direct work; and collaborative and respectful practice. Staff learn systemic approaches to child protection practice — that is, to look at all the key relationships in a child's life and how they can be improved to create the best outcome for the child. The SWR approach restores safety to children, relationships between children and parents and parenting morale, empowering and helping families to change. It also gives hope and energy for change to occur.

The first evaluation of SWR, conducted by the London School of Economics, described it as a best practice design (Munro 2011). Some of the key successes of SWR are:

- Reduction in numbers of children going into care by 40% in five years (numbers reduced within weeks of SWR being trialled);
- Reduction in time taken to conclude care proceedings by 30%;
- Reduction by 50% of staff sickness levels;
- Positive outcome measures for families;
- Openness and support for staff;
- Reduction in the bureaucratic burden of current practice;
- Better consistency and continuity of care;

⁷ Values-based practice is a 'framework which emphasises the centrality of values in decision-making; the diversity of values, which may remain unnoticed if they are presumed shared; and the importance of developing skills to identify and negotiate values' (Petrova et al. 2006)

- Better risk decision-making;
- Reflective practice encouraged and enabled; and
- A new skills mix bringing new perspectives into child protection practice (Goodman & Trowler 2012).

Key to the success of SWR is to think through all key decisions and to bring the authority for decision-making as close to the family as possible (Goodman & Trowler 2011). Substantial cost savings have also been identified as part of the review.

11.3 Practice First (New South Wales, Australia)

Based on the *Social Work Reclaimed* model, a pilot *Practice First NSW* is being undertaken in selected districts in NSW by child protection officers (based on the research of Alexander 2010). The aim of the pilot is to help workers value the relationship with birth parents and build better relationships with them. Initial results are proving promising with a significant reduction of children being removed to out-of-home care (McMaster 2012).

11.4 Family Responsibilities Commission (Queensland, Australia)

Historically child protection agencies have had uneasy relationships with Indigenous communities (Ivec et al. 2012). Past policies of forced removal of children from their parents and communities have left a legacy of trauma and distrust of the authorities. These past harms have been publicly acknowledged through national apologies and undertakings to forge a new kind of relationship. Examples of statutory child protection authorities partnering with communities can be seen in several Aboriginal and First Nations Communities. Facilitated through legislation (for example Queensland's *Family Responsibility Commission Act 2008*; Canada's *Child and Family Services Act 1998*), the fundamental premise is that communities have the ability to play a key role in keeping children safe and improving the child protection system.

By setting up these committees and commission arrangements, statutory authorities aim to rebuild relationships with communities, harness local knowledge, shift their focus to prevention

and early intervention with troubled families, involve extended families in solutions to family problems, and have communities work to restore the traditional role of elders (Standing Committee on Social Programs 2010). An evaluation of the implementation of the *Family Responsibilities Commission* has described the model as a responsive regulatory model (FaCHSIA 2010).

11.5 Citizen Review Panels (USA)

Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) for child protective services are groups of citizen-volunteers who evaluate and make recommendations to local and state child protection systems on how to strengthen their services (Jones & Royse 2008). The volunteer members are people who are broadly representative of the community and include individuals with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect (Jones 2011). The CRPs have a broad mandate including the review of practices, policies and procedures of child protection systems and engaging in public outreach. For example, in 2011 the Minnesota CRP identified the need to improve methods of involving non-custodial fathers in child protection cases. Panel recommendations must be responded to by state welfare agencies in writing within six months.

CRPs have been federally mandated since 1996. Citizen participation in child welfare is seen to be important as it promotes accountability and moves the community towards “community based” protection of children’ (Jones 2011). Where successful, CRPs have been given access to information, consulted early in the policy development process, given feedback about their recommendations, provided with staff and logistical support and made part of a thoughtful, strategic exercise (Jones 2011).

11.6 Joint response protocols

In emergency situations where children are identified to be at risk, one effective practice is to have a joint response (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007). A joint response refers to the practice where two or more agencies agree on a procedure whereby one agency notifies another whose assistance is necessary to resolve the problems detected by the first agency. In child protection cases, joint response refers to law

enforcement working with child protection to address the needs of the entire family.

In Santa Clara County California, joint response protocols are used regularly and have reduced the necessity of removing a child from the family by over 50 per cent (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007). These protocols include expanding the use of group decision-making models and including family members to make better decisions where child protection concerns exist.

A series of decision-making models as part of joint response initiatives have been described by Edwards and Sagatun-Edwards (2007). These include team decision-making, wraparound services, family group conferencing and court-based child protection mediation. Emancipation conferences⁸ and Family Finding practices (discussed in Section 10.3) are also part of these decision-making processes (Braithwaite, J 2004).

Several conclusions are reached by Edwards and Sagatun-Edwards in relation to group decision-making, including:

- group decisions in child protection cases produce better results than decisions made by one person;
- groups that include family members and community participants produce better decisions than those made exclusively by professionals;
- at different points of a child protection case, different decision-making models will better serve the needs of the children and family members; and
- child protection systems will produce the best results for children and families if they have a spectrum of decision-making models available to them.

The decision-making models identified by Edwards and Sagatun-Edwards are briefly described below:

⁸ Emancipation conferences are group conferences designed to support youth who are approaching independent living after having been in care. The conferences include personal goal-setting, group decision-making, strength building and group support for the ‘independent living plan’. (See Braithwaite, J 2004 for a description and example of an emancipation conference.)

Team decision-making

Team decision-making is a facilitated process which aims for consensus decision-making by child welfare workers, their supervisors, the child's parents, other family members, community members and service providers. It enables the assigned social workers to make informed decisions about the removal of children with the consensus of the other meeting participants. *Team decision-making* evaluation results have found most social workers find the process useful, although it can be time-consuming. Benefits include improving relationships with clients, higher quality decisions, better placements, and increased family participation and buy-in.

Child protection mediation

Mediation is an alternative to court processes. It is a way to resolve legal, social, and factual disputes. In child protection cases, it is 'a process in which specially trained neutral professionals facilitate the resolution of child abuse and neglect issues by bringing together, in a confidential setting, the family, social workers, attorneys, and others involved in a case' (Edwards 2004, p. 62). *Child protection mediation* first began in California in the 1980s, and has expanded greatly since. The California legislature recognised early that the traditional court process and the adversarial system is ill-suited for child protection cases (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007). The legislature felt that families are better served when they have a hand in resolving the dispute and establishing the service plan. Parents are more likely to follow these service plans and so resolutions reached in mediation last longer. 'Participants remark that the mediation process helps improve relationships between all parties,

and in particular between the parents and the social worker' (Edwards et al, cited in Edwards & Sagatun Edwards 2007, p. 7). (For an extensive review of mediation and conferencing in child protection disputes see Schepard (ed.) 2009.)

Wraparound services

Wraparound services are 'a unique approach to providing services to a child and family facing multiple adversities' (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007, p.7). They are developed by a team who are convened to address the needs of the child and family. The team consists of members of the family (including the child), community partners and professionals. Edwards & Sagatun Edwards (2007) describe *wraparound services* as having two goals and ten principles. The two goals are independence from formal professional supports and services, and keeping children out of institutional care and in care with families. The ten principles of the *wraparound* process are: eliciting and prioritising family and child perspectives and choice; working as a team; seeking out and encouraging natural supports; collaboration; service and support strategies are community-based; the wraparound process is culturally competent; strategies, supports and services are individualised; strengths-based; persistence; and outcome-based (Edwards & Sagatun Edwards 2007, pp 7-8). Youth and family-centred services are provided in their community and are focussed on the individual strengths and developmental needs of the young person and family. *Wraparound* has been evaluated nationally in the USA and with therapeutic foster care intervention has demonstrated effectiveness with foster children (Edwards & Sagatun-Edwards 2007).

Programs focussed on the court and legal system

12

This section describes initiatives designed to enhance legal processes for parents in child protection cases. These initiatives are developed by the legal system itself. They seek to reform how it does business with parents who have child protection issues. These initiatives include therapeutic, non-adversarial approaches such as family drug treatment courts and programs that include advocacy and enhanced legal representation for parents involved with child welfare authorities, including parent advocacy services. They also include legislative initiatives such as the prioritisation of birth parent and family engagement in US child welfare legislation. In the USA innovative court programs designed to engage more positively with parents are both encouraged through legislation and rewarded through demonstration grants.

12.1 Therapeutic jurisprudence

Therapeutic jurisprudence is the ‘study of the role of the law as a therapeutic agent’ (Wexler 1999). It focuses on the law’s impact on emotional life and on psychological wellbeing (Wexler 1999). Weinstein’s analysis of child custody disputes is an example of a legal procedure which bears resemblance to child welfare cases looked at through the lens of therapeutic jurisprudence. The adversarial process in a child custody context can be both traumatic for the child and damaging to the relationship of the parents who, despite their divorce, need to have some relationship in the future for the sake of the child. This analysis exposes how the adversarial process encourages inflicting of harm on the other party, presenting a case of a ‘bad parent’ — similar to proceedings in child protection proceedings. Therapeutic jurisprudence focuses on less damaging ways of resolving these issues (Weinstein 1997).

An example of a therapeutic jurisprudence approach to child welfare was Geraldton, WA’s *Family Care Program*, which used therapeutic court processes to promote family healing and wellbeing. Rather than an adversarial approach, a team worked collaboratively with families to promote the strength and skills of parents. Parents were involved in identifying problems and working out solutions. Judges and case officers used behavioural contracts, individually tailored rehabilitation programs and positive interactions to support family strengths (King & Tataschiere 2006). This program appears to have been discontinued.

12.2 Enhanced legal services for parents (USA)

Enhanced legal representation for parents who face court proceedings relating to child welfare concerns is critical to parental engagement in this stage of the process. Legal advocates reason as follows: ‘The defining characteristic of the child protection movement is its anti-parent stance. Parents have been cast as the enemy of children while the state becomes the child’s greatest saviour and protector’ (Guggenheim 2006). While a number of law schools have child advocacy clinical programs, a much smaller number devote their efforts to representing parents. The work of Vivek Sankaran, at the University of Michigan Law School, provides an overview of enhanced legal representation programs. Sankaran identifies promising practices in the *Parent Representation Programs* in Washington State Office of Public Defence, the *Center for Family Representation* and the *Detroit Center for Family Advocacy*. The *National Project to Improve Representation for Parents in the Child Welfare System* and *National Reunification Day* also contribute to enhancing the legal position of child welfare affected parents. More will be said about these initiatives in section 12.3 below.

Several programs were identified that might be described as providing legal advocacy services. These provide a team response to families: legal advocacy, social work services and parent peer support to low-income families to prevent the unnecessary placement and prolonged stay of children in foster care. These include the *Detroit Center for Family Advocacy*, the *Family Defence Center* in Chicago and the *Brooklyn Family Defence Project*. More detailed descriptions of these and other legal programs are found in Appendix C.

12.3 Court-based demonstration projects (USA)

The American Bar Association (ABA) takes leadership in helping court improvement projects through dissemination of professional resources to educate and assist lawyers representing parents against child welfare authorities (Redleaf et al. 2012). The ABA takes the view that:

Quality representation and due process for all parties in the child welfare system are essential but not always achieved. Poor parent representation exacts huge costs

for families and the state. Families can be unnecessarily separated for extended periods of time, if not permanently. The state has to provide foster care support payments, caseworker and court time, and resources to children and families, who may not have needed to be separated in the first place, or who could have been reunited sooner and more safely, had the parents had an effective voice in the process.

(ABA Center on Children and the Law 2009)

The ABA is also a lead partner in the *National Project to Improve Representation for Parents Involved in the Child Welfare System*. This project aims to meaningfully engage parents in their own child welfare cases. It does this by providing resources to improve parent representation and by supporting system-wide reforms to improve advocacy in the child welfare system by parents and their lawyers (ABA Center on Children and the Law 2010). A number of parent representation models exist across the country, several of which are in partnerships with law schools providing clinics to lawyers wanting to work in this field (ABA Center on Children and the Law 2009). The *Parents Representation Program* also engages in community education and awareness-raising through national days such as the *National Reunification Day*. This day celebrates families and communities coming together while raising awareness about the importance of family reunification to children in foster care.

12.4. Family Drug Treatment Courts

Family Drug Treatment Courts (FDTC) focus on directly engaging with parents and addressing shortfalls in the wider service system that impact on families involved with child protection.

Parental characteristics of children in out-of-home care in 2007 in Australia show parental substance abuse at 69.4 per cent (Scott 2012). This figure is consistent with UK and USA figures where between 60 and 80 per cent of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect cases involve substance abuse by the parent or guardian (Young et al. 2007).

Magistrate Greg Levine, former head of the Victorian Children’s Court, has provided a strong case for the development of Australia’s first *FDTC*, describing them as ‘non-adversarial, therapeutic processes for social justice outcomes’ in order to better serve the children of families struggling with substance abuse in Australia.

Family Drug Treatment Courts offer a proven structure and set of processes for interrupting the intergenerational harm caused by substance abuse and for giving parents the very best chance to rehabilitate and be reunited with their children.
(Levine 2012, p.5)

The *FDTC* was adapted from the Criminal Drug Court model and commenced in the USA in the early 1990s to respond to growing parental drug and alcohol abuse where child welfare was also a concern. Substance abuse often intersects with other problems such as family violence, inadequate housing, poverty and mental illness. Reunification rates are low for children removed from parents in these circumstances. These children stay longer in foster care, they often have unstable placements and the costs psychologically and financially over the long term for young people, their families and the wider community are high (Levine 2012). Orders made through the traditional courts have had little success in improving poor outcomes for children and parents as no adequate follow up processes exist (Levine 2013).

FDTCs address not only an individual's drug and alcohol issues but also the institutional and programmatic barriers and multiple systems factors that interfere with family reunification. These have been identified in child protection reviews and include: poor training and supervision; poor communication between different professionals; tensions created by difference in ideologies, practices and objectives; and fragmented services which also impact on parents' ability to navigate their way around the system (Levine 2012). The court is also able to hold service providers accountable should promised services not be delivered to *FDTC* parents (Levine 2012).

In this model, parents work intensively with the judicial officer and the *FDTC* team. Key features of *FDTCs* are a non-adversarial, specialist problem-solving approach where a judge or magistrate plays a central role in monitoring and motivating parents. This is achieved by building an ongoing and strong relationship with the family through weekly, bi-weekly or monthly contact. This frequency of contact fosters relationship building and connection along with compliance with orders. Other features include a court-based multidisciplinary team to manage rehabilitation and family reunification; a 12-month time-line for decision-making regarding family reunification or permanent placement outside the home and closely monitored rehabilitation that keeps

parents focused on recovery and improved parenting. A holistic approach to family needs is adopted by the multidisciplinary team.

Being treated with respect by the Judge and empowered to actively engage in their own recovery is cited by some parents as being critical to their success in the program.
(Marlowe & Carey 2012, p.13)

Marlowe and Carey (2012) provide a summary of methodologically acceptable evaluations of *family drug courts* (*FDCs*) in eight US states and London which included cost effectiveness analysis. They conclude that there is 'convincing evidence that *FDCs* produce clinically meaningful benefits and better outcomes than traditional family reunification services for substance-abusing parents' (p. 7). Compared to comparison groups, *FDC* participant treatment completion rates were 20 to 30 per cent higher, family reunification rates 20 to 40 per cent higher and children spent significantly less time in out-of-home care. In fact 'parents with extensive criminal histories, inadequate housing and a greater risk for family violence were more likely to complete *FDC* than those without these risk factors' (p. 6).

Average net cost savings from the *FDTCs* ranged from approximately \$5,000 to \$13,000 per family, and the total taxpayer cost savings increased approximately tenfold over five years. The largest cost savings were realised in child protection systems as a result of reduced use of foster care (Marlowe & Carey 2012).

12.5. Trauma-informed courts

Trauma-informed courts aim to recognise and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on the children and families who come before them. For example, a trauma-informed intervention recognises the high rates of exposure to trauma by alcohol and drug involved populations (Cohen & Hien 2006). A recent study by Powell examined outcomes of a trauma-informed family drug court where a trauma treatment component was included in an Arizona family drug court. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy based trauma interventions were used with results showing a higher rate of reunification with children. Although cautioning against a causal relationship, the research concluded that assessing for trauma and adding a trauma treatment component may improve participant outcomes (Powell et al. 2012).

13 Conclusion

There is a broad range of interventions in existence which engage parents and families in the child protection system nationally and internationally. This review identified over 100 programs, approaches and interventions which effectively engage parents in the child protection process, from initial contact with statutory authorities through to court proceedings.

These programs varied in terms of how intrusive the intervention was, from individuals on the verge of contact with the system to the heart of the system itself. The three least intrusive interventions included those that are generally provided while children are still living with their parents. Often these were delivered, or initiated by the more informal networks around a child, such as NGOs. In contrast the highly intrusive levels of interventions were based on more formal regulators and how the system exerted its influence and control once children are about to be or are removed.

The programs varied in terms of which particular actors or relationships were the target of change being sought by the interventions and programs. These ranged from individual parents, through families, collective parent consumers, the foster carer/birth parent

relationship, statutory authorities and ultimately, the court and legal system.

Each of these actors has a role to play when it comes to keeping children safe and government needs these numerous actors to each play their part in getting the job done. Given the multitude of stakeholders and extensive flows of information, no one actor possesses all the knowledge and influence necessary to implement change. When events are steered through a web of linked actors across many organisations, the term 'networked governance' becomes appropriate. This concept has been applied to the health sector (Healy 2011) and its applicability to child protection is just as relevant (Harris & Wood 2008).

The rationale behind this report was based on findings from government inquiries into child protection that active engagement of families in decision-making processes is needed. Currently in Australia the child protection field of activity and decision-making is dominated by government. While many programs are delivered through NGOs, government controls the purse strings. Professionals dominate the statutory child protection workforce and legal processes. For policy aspirations to become tangible,

that is, for child protection to be everyone's business, a shift is needed. To make operational much of the legislative intention of parental and community engagement, especially for Indigenous Australians, far greater engagement of families and communities is needed.

Through the activities and programs identified, a number of possibilities and regulatory strategies are shown to exist that enable the many actors to play a more equal part in child protection. Moving from our current model that is dominated by government and professionals to one where children, parents and other stakeholders are more engaged has been shown to be possible through the programs and activities identified as part of this review. It is through a process of principled engagement with parents, families and their children in the present day that we may avoid a future where these children and families are next in line to hear:

Sorry — that as children you were taken from your families... We look back with shame... For these failures to offer proper care to the powerless, the voiceless and the most vulnerable, we say sorry. We reflect too today on the families who were ripped apart simply because they had fallen on hard times. Hard times brought about by illness, by death and by poverty... Our purpose today ... is to begin to put right a very great wrong ... governments must continue to commit to the systematic auditing, inspection and quality assurance of the child protection services they administer today. Some 28,000–30,000 children are currently in the care of State and Territory Governments around Australia. Governments must put in place every protection possible to reduce the risk of mistreatment in the future ... to lift its game in doing whatever practicably can be done to provide for the proper protection of little ones, of children. Let us now go forward together ... as equal, as valued and as precious members of this one great family that we call Australia.

Kevin Rudd, *Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants* (Prime Minister of Australia 2009)

14

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Appendix A: Child protection legislation in Australia

Tasmania

Current legislation: *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* (Tas)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S9 Principles relating to dealing with Aboriginal children
- S51 Right of other interested persons to be heard
- S77D Notification to child and his or her parents
- S110A Department may provide support.

Mechanism for engagement:

- S9 Open and flexible arrangement for consultation with a recognised Aboriginal organisation
- S32 Family Group Conferencing.

Main principles:

- Best interests
- Protection focus
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Australian Capital Territory

Current legislation: *Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S22 Director-General's functions (1)(a) 'providing, or assisting in providing, services directed to strengthening and supporting families...'; & (c) 'providing, or assisting in providing, information to parents ... about the operation of this Act'
- S350 Care and Protection principles (1)(b) 'priority must be given to supporting the child's or young person's parents and other family members to provide for the wellbeing, care and protection of the child or young person'
- S351 Helping families understand care and protection procedures
- S457 Care plans—who must be consulted
- S482 Enduring parental responsibility provision.

Mechanism for engagement:

- Family Group Conferencing
- S482 Enduring parental responsibility provision (1)(g) 'the court has given any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or organisation that has provided ongoing support services to the child or young person and his or her family a reasonable opportunity to provide a written report about the making of the proposed provision.'

Main principles:

- Best interests
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Care and protection focus.

New South Wales

Current legislation: *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision making
- S21 Request for assistance by parent of child or young person or by funded non-government agency
- S51 Duty of Director-General to give information to certain persons
- S163 Parents' right to information concerning progress and development of their children.

Mechanism for engagement:

- S12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision making 'are to be given the opportunity, by means approved by the Minister, to participate in decisions'
- S37 Alternative dispute resolution
- S65 Dispute Resolution Conference
- S114 Alternative dispute resolution.

Main principles:

- Best interest
- Safety, welfare and wellbeing
- Care and protection focus
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Victoria

Current legislation: *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S11 Decision Making Principles
- S12 Additional decision-making principles (ATSI)
- S178 Responsibility of Secretary to provide information to parents.

Mechanism for engagement:

- S217 Referral of application to dispute resolution conference.

Main principles:

- Best interest of the child
- Prevention & protection focus
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Queensland

Current legislation: *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S5C Additional principles for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- S5D Principles about exercising powers and making decisions
- S15 Child's parents and long-term guardians to be told about allegation of harm and outcome of investigation
- S20 Officer's obligations on taking child into custody (2)(a) 'take reasonable steps to tell at least one parent'

- S32 Explanation of temporary assessment orders (1)(a) ‘give a copy of the order... to at least 1 of the child’s parents’
- Part 3B Division 2 Preference for intervention with parents’ agreement
- Part 3A Division 2 Family group meetings
- Part 3A Division 5 Periodically reviewing the case plan S51W Who may participate
- S106 Court to ensure parties understand proceeding.

Mechanism for engagement:

- Family group meetings.

Main principles:

- Safety, wellbeing and best interests
- Protection focus
- Supporting children’s family
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

South Australia

Current legislation: *Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA)*

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S3 Objects of Act (d) ‘...to accord a high priority to supporting and assisting the family to carry out its responsibilities to children’
- S5 Provisions relating to dealing with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

Mechanism for engagement:

- Consultation with Aboriginal recognised entity.

Main principles:

- Child’s wellbeing and best interests
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Western Australia

Current legislation: *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)*

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S9 Principles to be observed (j) ‘the principle that a child’s parents ... should be given an opportunity and assistance to participate in decision-making processes’
- S13 Principle of self-determination (ATSI)
- S14 Principle of community participation (ATSI)
- S81 Consultation before placement of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.

Mechanism for engagement:

- S136 Court may order pre-hearing conference.

Main principles:

- Best interest
- Protection focus
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Northern Territory

Current legislation: *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT)

Examples of intent of legislation for family engagement:

- S7 Responsibility of Territory Government ‘supporting families in fulfilling their role in relation to children’
- S12 Aboriginal children (2) ‘In particular, a kinship group, representative organisation or community of Aboriginal people nominated by an Aboriginal child’s family should be able to participate in the making of a decision involving the child.’

Mechanism for engagement:

- S49 Mediation Conference.

Main principles:

- Promote wellbeing of children
- Best interest
- Protection focus
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



Appendix B: International child welfare legislation

Examples of international legislation: showing legislative intent for family engagement, mechanisms for engagement and the use of collaborative processes in child protection interventions.

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Belgium	Child Protection Act 1965	Confidential Doctor Centres
	<p>Description</p> <p>Belgium is a country which has taken a therapeutic, rather than a legislative response to child welfare issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister of Justice has decreed that everyone has a moral rather than legal obligation to report cases of child abuse and neglect to the Confidential Doctors. • Juvenile Protection Agencies legislated to act if a child is maltreated, but only if all parties agree to the intervention. • Very limited use of FGC despite enthusiasm of welfare workers (Van der Auweraert 2011). • Voluntary measures: hearing with the family; informing; counselling; warning + compulsory measures: certain acts are subject to court permissions (e.g. travel permission); removing the child from the family; suspending parental authority (EIGE 1965). 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Canada	Each province and territory has its own child welfare legislation.	Local authorities and non-government organisations / mandated agencies
	<p>Description</p> <p>Legislation in each province and territory has common characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best interests of the child must be considered when a child is found to be in need of protection; • The parent's primary responsibility for child-rearing is respected; • It is acknowledged that continuity of care and stability are important for children; • The views of children are important in making decisions that affect their futures; • Cultural heritage should be respected, especially for Aboriginal children; and • It is the public's duty to report suspected harm, abuse and neglect of children (Standing Committee on Social Programs 2010). <p>Child and Family Services Act (Northwest Territories) seen as differing from other jurisdictions in that it encourages prevention and family support interventions.</p>	

Canada continued	<p>Examples of collaborative processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Group Conference (New Brunswick); • Mediation (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Nunavut & Northwest Territories); • Mediation for Plan of Care (Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan); and • Court adjournment & Aboriginal dispute resolution (Ontario).
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Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Denmark	No specific Children's Act but a broad Consolidation Act on Social Services. State legislation applies in 98 local municipalities.	Network care and kinship care to be used as a first option to out-of-home care. However, power to keep children in care against parents' will has been strengthened.
	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family engagement strategies such as Multi Systemic Therapy, Multidimensional Foster Care, Parent Management Training. • Evidence of FGC in use but not legislated. 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Finland	Child Welfare Act 2007	Services provided by local authorities or NGOs.
	<p>Description</p> <p>Evidence of FGC in use but not legislated.</p>	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Germany	Child Protection Act 2005	The Federal Republic of Germany has 16 Federal States. Child abuse and neglect covered directly or indirectly in the constitution, civil law, social law and criminal law.
	<p>Description</p> <p>Evidence of FGC in use but not legislated (Straub 2012).</p>	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Netherlands	Youth Care Act 2001 Child Protection Act 2011	Basic child welfare provisions at municipal level. Child protection concerns elevated to a provincial level to Youth Care Agency which in turn can escalate to the Child Protection Board, which operates at a national level.
	Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidential Doctors Agency (very similar to the Confidential Doctor Centres in Belgium). FGC legislated in 2011. 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Norway	Child Welfare Act 1992	Administered across 430 municipalities.
	Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of FGC in use but not legislated. Use of empowerment approaches such as family conferences, parent management training and multi-system therapy being promoted but implementation hard to gauge. In-home services must be tried or it must be proven that in-home services will not be useful. 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
Sweden	Social Service Act 1982 Children and Parental Code 1983	Local services authorities have legislated responsibility for child welfare.
	Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local service authorities required to work in partnership with families to support children's personal, psychosocial and social development (Cocozza & Hort 2011). Child protection deliberately integrated into a system of general municipal family welfare services (Cocozza & Hort 2011). Evidence of FGC in use but not legislated. 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
United Kingdom	Children Act 1989	Central legal framework. Child protection services provided by local authorities (Councils).
	Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Family Group Conference can be undertaken when significant harm or its likelihood is not suspected. • FGC found to be unevenly used (Parton & Berridge, cited in Gilbert et al. 2011, p.70). 	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
United States of America	Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008 Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act 2011	Within federal legislation and minimum standards, local variations exist across states, districts and territories. (Duer Berrick, cited in Gilbert et al. 2011, p.17)
	Description Some examples of an engagement and collaboration approach are: Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008 Legislative intent for family engagement: emphasises children's rights to stay connected to their families and relatives and to avoid or exit state care where possible, involving the extended family in decision making and as relative care givers (Pennell et al. 2011). Child and Family Services Improvement & Innovation Act 2011 Mechanism for engagement: Extension of Child and Family Services Programs (Sections 102, 104): Section 102: (1) peer-to-peer mentoring and support groups for parents and primary caregivers, and (2) services and activities designed to facilitate access to and visitation of children by parents and siblings. Section 104: court improvement program — grants to the highest state courts to serve the purpose of increasing and improving engagement of the entire family in court processes relating to child welfare, family preservation, family reunification, and adoption.	

Country	Legislation	Who provides/administers child protection services
United States of America continued	Child Welfare Demonstration Projects (Section 201) Section 201: Defines a long-term therapeutic family treatment centre as a state-licensed or state-certified program that: (1) enables parents and their children to live together in a safe environment for at least six months; and (2) provides substance abuse treatment services, children's early intervention services, family counselling, medical care, and related services. Treats as a state any Indian tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium operating a program under SSA title IV part E. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of collaborative processes demonstrated in Family Group Decision Making (modified from New Zealand). 	

Source: adapted from Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes (eds) 2011.

Appendix C: Programs reviewed for the research

The following program descriptions come from a range of sources. The descriptions draw heavily on the services' own websites.

The phrase 'promising practice' and 'emerging practice' is used to describe a number of programs. These descriptions have been given by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. With slight adjustment to incorporate child welfare language, the Clearinghouse has adopted the Institute of Medicine's definition for 'evidence-based practice' as a combination of the following three factors: 'best research evidence, best clinical experience, and consistent with family/client values' (Institute of Medicine 2001, cited in CEBC 2013). Where relevant the description has also adopted the conclusion of the Foster Family-based Treatment Association which describes emerging practices in its *Practice Wisdom Guide* (FFTA n.d.).

The programs in the appendix are categorised by who, or what, is the target of change for the initiative. They may, where relevant, be discussed under other categories in the report.

Programs focussed on individual parents

Australia

Country	Australia, Victoria
Name	Mirror Families
Description	A child centred intervention program. Its focus is creating and extending community connections for families where a parent has, or is recovering from, a substance abuse problem. Aims to support and maintain the development of 'extended families' for families where parents have substance problems. Community development approach; train the trainer.
Activities	Provides ongoing support, both formal and informal, for vulnerable families. This support is achieved through the promotion of kinship, social and community networks.
Information & contact details	Odyssey House, ph: (03) 9420 7680 www.odyssey.org.au

Country	Australia, Tasmania
Name	New Directions for Parents Program
Description	The program offers support to families who are in contact with Child Protection Services, or are considered 'at risk' of current notification. The program is a case management-based outreach program. Staff work with clients to identify issues, and assisting them to develop skills.
Activities	Families are offered intensive assistance with in-home support (including establishing routines), managing child behaviour problems, communication issues, liaison with schools and departments, dietary issues, parenting skills, advocacy, referral and support.

Information & contact details	Centacare Tasmania Family Services offers a range of programs to support families involved with child protection authorities. See 'Family Services' at http://centacaretas.org.au
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Country	Australia (NSW, Tasmania, ACT, Vic & WA)
Program Name	Newpin (New Parent and Infant Network)
Description	A preventative, therapeutic program that works intensively with families facing potential or actual child protection issues. Aims to enhance parent-child relationships. Created in response to the needs of new mothers experiencing issues such as isolation, mental illness, family violence, social disadvantage, low self-esteem and for those who were at risk of physically or emotionally harming their child or children. Former users of the program in Australia are also being employed by NEWPIN.
Activities	Work with both the parent and the child or children; Focus on emotional development and well-being as an essential foundation for learning and change; Address issues of child safety and well-being during the parent's learning, healing and personal development processes. Intensive early intervention and parent education program.
Evaluation	Newpin has been the subject of considerable formal scrutiny across the two decades of its operation, with three formal external evaluations having been conducted in the United Kingdom and two completed in Australia. Puckering, C 2008, 'Newpin: can it be as shiny as it sounds?', <i>Prevention Action</i> , < http://www.preventionaction.org/what-works/newpin-can-it-be-shiny-it-sounds > UnitingCare 2012, 'Newpin Inside Parents Tasmania Evaluation: Preliminary Findings', <i>Research Brief No. 3</i> , May 2012, < http://childrenyoungpeopleandfamilies.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/75071/Research_Brief_Newpin_Inside_Tasmania_Prelim.pdf >
Information	Newpin Australia http://www.newpin.org.au/

Country	Australia & USA
Name	Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
Description	Teaches positive parenting through child-directed and parent-directed interactions (Corwin 2012). In order to establish a nurturing and secure relationship with the child, these interventions engage parents with their child in a play situation with the goal of strengthening the parent-child relationship (University of Florida 2012). Parents are taught through description, modelling and role-playing, and are coached by therapists.
Activities	5-6 coached parent-child sessions delivered weekly. Based on developmental theory. Not time limited. Treatment is tailored to individuals based on observations of parent-child interactions. Parents are taught to increase praise and enthusiasm, avoid negative behaviours, ignore minor misbehaviours and reinforce discipline selectively and consistently (Corwin 2012).
Evaluation	Promising Practice. A randomised trial was conducted to test the efficacy and sufficiency of PCIT in preventing re-reports of physical abuse. At a two-year follow-up, 19% of parents assigned to PCIT had a re-report for physical abuse compared with 49% of parents assigned to the standard community group. Where PCIT was combined with motivational interviewing retention was significantly higher especially among low- to moderately-motivated parents.
Useful link	University of Florida, "What is PCIT?", <i>Parent-Child Interaction Therapy</i> , < http://pcit.php.ufl.edu/ >

United States

Country	USA
Name	SafeCare
Description	SafeCare is an evidence-based training program for parents with children aged 0–5 where the parents are at-risk of, or have been reported for, child maltreatment.
Activities	Parents receive weekly home visits. Staff support them to improve their skills in range of areas, including home safety, health care and parent-child interaction.
Evaluation	A 10-year large (n=2200) randomised comparative outcome trial of SafeCare in Oklahoma reported that SafeCare reduced child welfare reports for neglect and abuse by about 26% compared to the same in-home services without SafeCare (among the same target population). See http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/types/safe_care.cfm http://chhs.gsu.edu/safecare/Lutzker_and_Edwards_2008.pdf
Information & contact details	Georgia State University email: safecareinfo@gsu.edu Georgia State University 2013, <i>National SafeCare Training and Research Centre</i> http://publichealth.gsu.edu/968.html

Country	USA
Name	Cherish the Family (CTF)
Description	CTF targets families with young children (0-3) who have been affected by substance use or HIV/AIDS and are referred by child welfare services. Focuses on promoting family reunification and involves collaboration with multiple community-based providers. Links families to community supports, services, treatment, job training and support. The Circle of Parents program is utilised to help parents form social support networks. Groups are led by parents and other caregivers.
Activities	FCI provides a range of family support and educational services in collaboration local, state, and federal partners. Direct services offered include: Medicaid enrolment assistance, educational programs, help to access other service providers, including health care and child care.
Evaluation	The project is evaluated locally by the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine. The Florida Ounce of Prevention Fund is designing a data management system to collect and analyse the project's outcome data.
Useful link	Family Central Inc http://www.familycentral.org/

Country	USA
Name	Abandoned Infant Assistance – Family Outpatient Program
Description	Works with families with children residing in the home who have been prenatally exposed to substances or when voluntary or involuntary risk of abandonment exists due to the presence of drug use in the family. Program targets mothers and their children ages 0–5.

Activities	Works to strengthen parent-child attachment, focussing on bonding and attachment between mother and child. Parenting groups provide parents with opportunities to share experiences and learn about children's social-emotional development. Provides trauma-informed services for mothers and an on-site therapeutic centre for children offering educational, developmental and therapeutic services. Mothers participate in 4.5 hours of programming a week: two hours in a trauma-focused group, one hour of a parent/child interaction and a 1.5 hour group parenting class aimed at developing healthy parenting skills and provide information about childhood development.
Useful link	Abandoned Infants Assistance National Resource Centre 2012 <i>Change Agents – Family Outpatient Program</i> < http://aia.berkeley.edu/change-agents-family-outpatient-program/ >

Country	USA
Name	Parent Support Outreach program
Description	An early intervention family support program working with families with young children (under 10) who are at risk of child maltreatment. The program is voluntary.
Activities	Services have a significant focus on ensuring families' basic needs are met. Families are asked to participate in a strengths and needs assessment that is used to help the family and agency determine an appropriate service plan. (The service describes itself as largely consumer driven.)
Useful links	California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare 2011 <i>Parent Support Outreach Program</i> < http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/parent-support-outreach-program/ >

Country	USA
Name	The Incredible Years
Description	<i>The Incredible Years</i> is a series of programs focused on strengthening parent's skills (such as monitoring, positive discipline, confidence) and fostering parents' involvement in their children's school experiences. The goal of this is to promote children's academic, social and emotional competencies and reduce conduct problems.
Activities	<i>The Incredible Years</i> works with the parents of young children with behaviour problems. This parent training teaches key behavioural management techniques to parents using films of parent-child interactions. The program is delivered in a group format by a trained clinician over 12 two-hour sessions. If reunification is a goal, birth parents and case worker or birth parents and foster parents can attend an Incredible Years group together. Otherwise, work with the birth and foster parents can be done in parallel.
Evaluation	Extensive, considered best practice. Incredible Years has strong research evidence indicating that it leads to improvement in parenting skills.
Contact & more information	The Incredible Years Evaluation Studies, < http://www.incredibleyears.com/ResearchEval/studies.asp www.incredibleyears.com >

Country	USA, Louisiana
Name	Nurturing Parenting Program
Description	These are parenting education programs designed for families referred by Social Services/Mental Health because children are perceived to be at risk. The program addresses abusive and neglecting parent-child interactions. In learning re-parenting, parents increase their understanding of the abuse and neglect they experienced as children and how these parenting beliefs and patterns are affecting their relationships with their children.

Activities	A range of programs.
Useful links	http://nurturingparenting.com

United Kingdom

Country	United Kingdom, Wales
Name	Neath Port Talbot Family Action Support Team
Description	Aims to prevent family breakdown and promote the reunification of families. It does this by working with parents to support them to achieve acceptable standards of care for their children.
Activities	Approach is flexible to suit individual need, including: social network interventions and social learning theory; behaviour theories; solution- focused brief therapy.
Evaluation	Yes — see useful links
Useful links	Senior, A n.d., <i>Inspiring practice of family and parenting support</i> , viewed 26 July 2013, < http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/Events/2012/05_CiNI/UK_Wales_FAST_TEMPLATE_FINAL.pdf >

Country	UK
Name	Option 2
Description	Aims to reduce the number of ‘at-risk’ children in families where there are problems with substance use and to support families whose children have been taken into care to get them back. The project aims to safeguard children and improve family functioning.
Activities	Provides short-term, intensive, crisis support, including motivational interviewing, solution-focused brief therapy and practical interventions, to parents with drug/alcohol problems whose children are at risk of being taken into care. Also supports families working towards reunification.
Evaluation	Evaluation investigated the differences between children receiving the Option 2 service and a comparison group. Reported that the service did not reduce the proportion of children entering care but the time spent in care by those children was significantly reduced for varying reasons (for example, they tended to stay in care for a shorter time, they took longer to enter care and a higher proportion returned home after time in care). It also found that at the end of the study, one in three of children in the comparison group were in care and one in four of the Option 2 children were in care. It reported that the Option 2 project brought about significant financial savings in terms of reducing the need for local authority care and its associated costs (Forrester et al., 2008).

Country	UK, USA, Australia
Name	Family-Nurse partnerships
Description	A program for vulnerable, first time, young parents based on David Olds’ Nurse Family Partnership, developed and practiced in the United States.
Activities	FNP nurses visit parents at home and from early pregnancy until the child is two years old.
Evaluation	Extensive. Results include better antenatal health, better school readiness and better connection to social networks and employment.

Europe

Country	Netherlands, Belgium & parts of Germany
Name	The Confidential Doctor Service
Description	<p>These services provide ‘an alternative and therapeutic approach to dealing with child protection’. They are ‘based on the belief that parents with difficulties, or those who have abused or neglected their children, should be able to come of their own free will to an agency which they can be confident will give them help without the risk of being judged or prosecuted’. Their goal is to help parents acknowledge their behaviour and take responsibility for not harming their children in the future. They emphasise supporting the non-abusing parents’ capacity to protect the child. Families are followed up over a considerable period of time.</p> <p>In Belgium these centres are in hospital settings and are staffed by multi-disciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, nurses, speech therapists and health visitors, led by a consultant psychiatrist. The centres also provide support, counselling, training, information and research to child welfare professionals. There are a high number of self-referrals to the confidential doctor service (more than 30% of cases). Incidence of re-abuse has been found to be low.</p> <p>Adapted from <i>It’s everyone’s job to make sure “I’m alright” Literature Review</i>, Scottish Executive 2003, pp. 74-5</p>
Activities	Services offered at the centres include crisis intervention; counselling; child and family therapy; and residential accommodation in the hospital.

Programs for fathers

United States

Country	USA
Name	Engaging Fathers Project
Description	Fatherhood classes for non-resident fathers whose children have been removed from their homes. Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) locates and recruits non-resident fathers of children in the child welfare system to participate in fatherhood classes. The goal was to increase fathers’ involvement with their children and the child welfare system.
Activities	The fatherhood classes met for 20 weeks and used a curriculum to support fathers in engaging their children. The curriculum covers navigating the child welfare system, supporting children and workforce issues.
Useful links	<p>Indiana Department of Child Services Email: Melinda.Wright@dcs.IN.gov</p> <p>Child Welfare Information Gateway 2011, <i>Engaging Fathers Project</i> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/management/funding/funding_sources/sitevisits/indiana.cfm#page=summary></p>

Country	USA, Washington State
Name	Divine Alternatives for Dads (DADS)
Description	Assists fathers with the resources they need to engage with child welfare systems and be effective parents.
Activities	Provides assistance to fathers with visitation, reunification, parenting plans, child support, case management, parenting education and crisis intervention. Many fathers have been incarcerated or struggle with addiction and transitioning back into their communities and are helped with employment.

Information	http://www.aboutdads.org
Country	USA, Virginia
Name	Fathers-In-Training
Description	A strengths-based education and support program to support men to develop their skills in parenting and relationships.
Activities	Provides critical services in terms of engaging fathers with child welfare systems. 18 week education and support program. Individualised plans developed for each father, focusing on developing support systems, building communication skills, enhancing parenting skills, anger management and conflict resolution.
Information	http://www.fathers-in-training.com/F.I.T..html

Country	USA, Iowa
Name	Lifetime Dads
Description	Education and skills based program that provides support and health and safety information to fathers.
Activities	Led by fathers who have completed the program ('alumni'). A 15 week voluntary course that provides information and supports fathers to learn new skills. Focuses on five key topics: the importance of support systems, communication, parenting skills, anger management and conflict resolution.
Useful link	Fathers-in-Training n.d., <i>Fathers-in-Training (F.I.T.)</i> http://www.iowacommunityaction.com/programs_services/lifetime_dads_UDMO.cfm

Programs for parents dealing with disability

Australia

Country	Australia
Name	Healthy Start
Description	A national capacity building strategy which aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children whose parents have learning difficulties.
Activities	Works with practitioners, managers, researchers and policy makers to exchange information, resources and expertise about how best to support parents with learning difficulties and their children, including when child protection concerns exist. Individuals and organisations are provided with best-practice information, summaries of latest research and evidence-based programs; knowledge exchange with other professionals at events, workshops, or via an online Practice Network; other activities include face-to-face forums, discussions and leadership development opportunities.
Information & contact details	http://www.healthystart.net.au and http://www.parentingrc.org.au Olivia Clayton, Parenting Resource Centre Email: oclayton@parentingrc.org.au

Country	Australia, New South Wales
Name	Northcott Intensive Family Support Services (Nepean)
Description	Intensive, focussed, in-home support service to families with child or young person with a diagnosed disability. The service is for families where there is a risk of out-of-home placement or family breakdown.
Activities	Practical assistance, counselling, support to develop behavioural strategies, out of hours telephone support.

Information & contact details	Northcott Disability Services Ph: (02) 4720 4400 www.northcott.com.au
Country	Australia, Western Australia
Name	Wanslea Family Services
Description	Provide short-term intensive support services where children have a disability
Activities	Provide in home care where a parent or child has a disability; My Time program which offers weekly crèche so and parents and carers can meet and socialise for mutual support; parent coaching, training & education.
Information & contact details	Parenting Research Centre 2011, <i>'Ashley Odgers.avi'</i> , youtube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzDnO1ww0Tg Wanslea 2010, <i>My Time</i> , < http://www.wanslea.asn.au/component/content/article/38-family-services/127-my-time > Wanslea 2010, <i>Children's Services</i> , http://www.wanslea.asn.au/childrens-services/in-home-care

United States

Country	USA, California
Name	Through the Looking Glass
Description	A research and training centre which also provides services for families in which a child, parent, or grandparent has a disability.
Activities	Offers home-based infant mental health care, family support, case management, early intervention or developmental services, disability resources; legal expertise and developed parent-to-parent networks for parents with disabilities. Undertakes alternative assessments when parents with disabilities are involved with child protective services. In 2004, TLG established the Legal Program for Parents with Disabilities. TLG's services to parents with intellectual disabilities and their children have achieved a significantly lower rate of out-of-home placement of children of parents with intellectual disabilities since 1990 (2-7%), compared with the rate nationally 40-80%.
Useful links	National Council on Disability 2012, <i>Chapter 14: Promising practices to prevent unnecessary removal and loss of children</i> , < http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch14#end1181 > Through the Looking Glass 2013, <i>Chatterbox</i> , < http://www.lookingglass.org/home >

Country	USA, Chicago, Illinois
Name	Threshold Mothers
Description	A service for parents with psychiatric disabilities and their families where children are aged zero to five. Also offers a teen parenting program, a therapeutic nursery and a service for mothers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
Activities	The program teaches independent living and parenting skills. The project's overarching goal is 'maintaining the bond between child and parent, even if the parent does not have custody.' Children are very rarely removed from parents by child welfare while they are receiving supports from Thresholds services for parents (National Council on Disability 2012). Also provides a social support network for parents.

Evaluation	Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority 2006, <i>A guide to evidence-based mental health practices for children, adolescents and their families</i> < https://www.sccmha.org/quality/A%20Guide%20to%20Evidence-Based%20Mental%20Health%20Practices%20for%20Children%20Adolescents%20and%20their%20Families.pdf >
Useful links	National Council on Disability 2012, <i>Chapter 14: Promising practices to prevent unnecessary removal and loss of children</i> , < http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch14#end1181 > Thresholds http://www.thresholds.org

Country	USA, New York
Name	Invisible Children's Project
Description	Service for parents with psychiatric disabilities. The service works across agencies to integrate essential services for parents with a psychiatric disability, to increase their ability to parent and assist them in creating a safe and nurturing environment for their children.
Activities	Supports parents with psychiatric disabilities in their parenting efforts and to keep the family together. Critical program components include family case management with 24-hour emergency services; affordable housing and financial assistance; respite care for parents; planning for parental hospitalization so children are not placed in foster care; advocacy on behalf of the child with schools, social services, and the courts; parent skills training; support groups for parents; vocational training; and supported education services (e.g., classes and mentoring).
Evaluation	In an evaluation conducted by the New York Psychiatric Institute, more than 90 % of the families served by <i>ICP</i> rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent and would recommend it to a friend. The data demonstrated that the program is particularly effective in helping consumers obtain better housing and improve their parenting skills. Recent internal program evaluations reveal a notable decrease in parental hospitalization and an increase in the ability of participants to hold a job and get off public assistance. The evaluation also noted the decline in the number of children placed in foster care as a result of the project. <i>ICP</i> is a nationally recognized, award-winning program that the National Mental Health Association is helping to replicate nationwide.
Useful links	National Council on Disability 2012 <i>Chapter 14: Promising practices to prevent unnecessary removal and loss of children</i> , < http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch14#end1181 >

Country	USA, Marlborough, Massachusetts
Name	Family Options
Description	Initiatives run by Employment Options Inc. Offer support services to parents with a psychiatric disability where children may or may not be living with them. Referrals come from both the child- and adult-focused service sectors, with the majority from child welfare.

Activities	<p>Advocacy, legal advice and assistance, parenting recovery and skill building, rebuilding relationships with their children; visitation support for parents who do not have custody of their children to plan visits. Staff also provide supervised visitation and transportation to these visits; parent peer support group; staff facilitate contact and communication between parents and attorneys, in support of the parents' efforts to gain visitation and custodial care; liaison with community; staff and parents work together to facilitate a better understanding among the parent's community, including schools, housing, public safety, child welfare, and religious/community groups; family coaching, a wraparound team process, a 24-hour support line, a parent support group, and flexible funding to meet unique family and individual needs.</p> <p>Young Parents Support Services provides parent coaching and peer mentoring for young pregnant and parenting adults with psychiatric disabilities.</p> <p>The project teaches parents how to use their custodial rights and provides training for attorneys on the legal issues facing parents with psychiatric disabilities.</p>
Contact & useful links	<p>options@employmentoptions.org Family Options http://www.employmentoptions.org/family.htm</p>

Country	USA, Franklin and Hampshire Counties, Massachusetts
Name	Positive Parenting Resource Centre: United Arc
Description	Provides services and support families headed by parents with cognitive challenges, intellectual limitations or learning disabilities.
Activities	Individualized parent support, parent education and support groups, supervised visitation, intensive structured supported family living, consultation, mentoring support, grandparents support.
Useful links	The Arc 2011, <i>Family Support Services Positive Parenting Resource Centre</i> , < http://www.unitedarc.org/positiveparenting.html >

Country	USA, San Francisco, California
Name	Ashbury House
Description	Ashbury House is a service for homeless women who have lost custody or are at risk of losing custody of their children due to their mental disability, and need comprehensive mental health services and parenting education to maintain or regain custody. It provides a residential treatment program in a social rehabilitation model, serving mothers who present mental health treatment needs, frequently with co-occurring substance abuse treatment needs.
Activities	Services include on-site day treatment, including parenting education, individual and group counselling, crisis intervention, peer support, activities of daily living, medication support, ambulatory medical support by a nurse practitioner and referrals to social services, vocational rehabilitation, housing and community treatment. Eligibility includes pregnant women and women with up to two children are 12 and under.
Useful links	Network of Care 2009, Ashbury House < http://sanfrancisco.networkofcare.org/veterans/services/agency.aspx?pid=AshburyHouse_871_17_0 >

Country	UK
Name	Valuing Parents Support Services
Description	Specialist support service for parents with a disability. Provides intensive support and training to help parents care for their children appropriately and engage with children's services.

Activities	Practical support: shopping, household organisation, safety and cleanliness; specific teaching and role modelling of parenting skills; grief counselling where children had been removed; advocacy support to parents.
Evaluation	Yes. See useful links
Useful links	http://www.changepeople.co.uk 'Helping learning disabled parents keep their children', Community Care, 29 September 2011, viewed 26 July 2013 < http://www.communitycare.co.uk/articles/23/09/2011/117498/supporting-learning-disabled-parents-to-keep-their-children.htm >

Programs focussed on families

Australia

Country	Australia, New South Wales
Name	The Boomerangs Coolamon Parenting Program
Description	Based on an attachment framework using <i>Circle of Security</i> and <i>Marte Meo</i> programs. These aim to improve parents' caregiving behaviours and prevent child mental health problems. <i>Marte Meo</i> aims to help parents use ordinary interactions to support their child's development.
Activities	20 sessions (including 2 camps). The camps provide therapies, guidance on parent/child interactions, family games, 'fathering business' and 'mothering business', self-care, baby massage, 'books binding families', parent craft advice, children's games and playing as a family.
Evaluation	Case study evaluation. The <i>Boomerangs Parenting Program</i> won the Innovation in Aboriginal Health category of the 2009 NSW Health Awards.
Information & contact details	South West Sydney Local Health District, ph: 0407 277 904 Australian Resource Centre for Healthcare Innovations 2012 , <i>Boomerangs Coolamon Parenting Program</i> < http://www.archi.net.au/resources/delivery/maternity/boomerangs-parenting >

Country	Australia
Name	Kids in Focus
Description	A specialist child, parenting and family support service for vulnerable families where a parent has an alcohol or other drug problem. The model emphasises the safety and wellbeing of children as well as parenting and family support.
Activities	Kids in Focus provides a range of intensive interventions. The program aims to identify and address both the needs of the parents and their children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and support • Home based parenting education and support • Counselling and case management • Recreational and therapeutic groups for children and their families • Child and family activities to enhance social connections • Financial support for children's needs through a brokerage fund • Facilitated access to rehabilitation and supported accommodation • Facilitated access to targeted respite services • Post natal follow up and support.
Information & contact details	Odyssey House, Victoria (Australia wide), ph: (03) 9425 9537 Odyssey House 2013, <i>Kids in Focus</i> http://www.odyssey.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=140

Country	USA & Australia, Queensland
Name	Child Protection Family Intervention
Description	Home based intervention aimed at strengthening families' capacities to meet the needs of their children; to improve the safety and wellbeing of children; to assist families to access community resources; and to foster non-adversarial relationships between families, the statutory authority and the broader community critical to the appropriate care of the child including links to family, kin and culture.
Activities	Intensive support; family, child and individual counselling; help with managing children's behaviours; support to access community resources; after hours support.
Information & contact details	Uniting Care Children and Family Programs Ph: 1300 553 931 Uniting Care n.d., <i>Child Protection Family Intervention</i> , < http://www.uccommunity.org.au/child-protection-family-intervention >

Country	Australia, South Australia
Name	Parents Plus Playgroups
Description	Provides a supportive, structured and supervised environment that responds to parents needs and gives them the chance to learn and practise skills, helps promote quality contact between parents and their children in care.
Activities	Group-based approaches to working with biological parents whose pre-school-aged children have been placed in care.
Evaluation	Yes (n=27). Playgroups provided avenues for parents to build relationships with their children and other family members improve their parenting knowledge, skills and confidence and enhance their personal growth and wellbeing. See Salveron, M 2011, 'Evaluation of Parents Plus Playgroups', <i>Protecting Australia's Children: Research and Evaluation Register</i> , Australian Institute of Family Studies < https://apps.aifs.gov.au/cfcaregister/projects/1081 >
Information & contact details	Good Beginnings, (02) 9211 3775 http://www.goodbeginnings.org.au/

North America

Country	USA, Utah
Name	Families First
Description	Families First is an intensive home-based program which aims to empower parents and support parents' skill development.
Activities	The Families First professional spends 8–10 hours a week at the family home for six weeks. Parents are supported to develop positive ways of maintaining discipline and positive communications skills. This is done through positive reinforcement, modelling, role playing. Work targets the young person's specific risk factors. Also targeted are the risk factors which relate to the home environment (e.g. parental relationships, supervision, structure, discipline) and the social environment (e.g. peer associations, community involvement, relationships). After this intensive period the Family First worker is on-call 24 hours a day for 12 months. They conduct evaluations of the family's progress every three months.
Evaluation	Yes — promising practice. See http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/families-first/
Information & contact details	Utah Youth Village warner@youthvillage.org www.youthvillage.org

Country	USA
Name	Family Group Decision Making
Description	Family group decision promotes and supports family and community involvement and leadership in making decisions about children who need protection or care.
Activities	American Humane Association provides training and technical assistance, research and resources internationally to communities implementing FGDM as a way to transform systems.
Evaluation	Family group decision making has been extensively evaluated.
Contact & More Information	Email: info@americanhumane.org American Human Association http://www.americanhumane.org

Country	USA
Name	Homebuilders
Description	Aims to reunify foster children with their birth parents through brief but intensive family-centred support. The goals of Homebuilders are to reduce child abuse and neglect, family conflict, and child behaviour problems and to teach families the skills they need to prevent placement or successfully reunify with their children.
Activities	Focussed on building strong alliances with parents, strengthening communication, problem-solving and parenting skills, addressing concrete needs (eg, food, shelter, employment), and providing in-home support when the family is reunified (Semanchin Jones and LaLiberte 2010).
Evaluation	<p>Effective practice according to California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (2009). 'Several studies have shown the program to have a positive impact on reducing rates of re-entry to foster care. In one randomised, controlled study in Utah, significantly more children in the treatment group returned to their families within the 90-day treatment program than did control group children (96.5% versus 32.1%). At the end of the 15-month follow-up period of this same study, 70% of children who were in the program remained at home compared to 47% of children in the control group' (Fraser et al. 1996 cited in Semanchin Jones and LaLiberte 2010). In a six-year follow up to this study, it was found that a greater number of intervention families had discontinued services due to the family situation being stabilised.</p> <p>Another study in Northern California found that 74% of the children in the Homebuilders program remained at home compared to 45% of the comparison group at the 12-month follow-up (Wood et al. 1988 cited in Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte 2010).</p> <p>See: California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare 2013, 'Homebuilders', <http://www.cebc4cw.org/implementation/homebuilders/></p>
Useful link	Semanchin Jones, A & LaLiberte, T 2010, <i>Re-entry to Foster Care Report</i> , Centre for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota, < http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/Re-entry%20Report_Feb%202010_Final_rev.pdf >

Country	USA, California
Name	Youth Emancipation Conferences
Description	Emancipation conferences are group conferences designed to support young people moving from foster care to independent living.

Activities	The young person sets the agenda for the conference including goals and strengths. They also invite people to give support and help with their plans. The facilitator is trained to focus the conference on strength building rather than on problems and the discussion focuses on how the youth's strengths can be used to achieve goals. The youth writes an emancipation plan and the others help to develop it and to offer support. Timelines are agreed upon and a follow-up conference is scheduled. An important element of this is the independent living program which provides a wide range of skills training and includes a scholarship program.
Useful link	Southern Area Consortium of Human Services 2007, <i>Emancipating Foster Youth: Literature Review</i> , San Diego State University, San Diego. http://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/SACHS/literature/SACHS-Emancipating%20FY%20(8-07)-PDF.pdf

Country	USA
Name	Strengthening Families Program (SFP)
Description	Parenting and family strengthening program for high-risk and other families. Weekly groups aim to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. Focuses on building five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need and social and emotional competence of children.
Activities	14-session, science-based parenting skills, children's life skills, and family life skills training program specifically designed for high-risk families. Parents and children participate in SFP, both separately and together. Group Leader Manuals contain a complete lesson for every session. Parents' and children's Handbooks/Handouts provided for every session. SFP has produced a Resource Guide. On-line resources for parents to build leadership skills, learn about protective factors and develop skills to address parenting challenges. Provides on-line cafes where parents can engage in conversation with each other; quarterly parent leader gatherings and leadership and training opportunities.
Evaluation	Found to significantly reduce problem behaviours, delinquency, and alcohol and drug abuse in children and to improve social competencies and school performance. Child maltreatment also decreases as parents strengthen bonds with their children and learn more effective parenting skills. Evaluation currently underway to assess progress, best practice and challenges faced in implementing the approach into state systems. See http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/evaluation.html
Contact & useful links	Centre for the Study of Social Policy info@cssp.org Centre for the Study of Social Policy 2012, <i>Strengthening Families: a protective factors framework</i> , < http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families > Strengthening Families Program n.d., < http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org > Prevention Action 2012, 'Radically re-thinking the child welfare response to substance-abusing families', < http://www.preventionaction.org/research/radically-re-thinking-child-welfare-response-substance-abusing-families/5812 >

Country	USA
Name	Collaborative Helping
Description	An integrated practice framework that draws from cutting edge ideas and practices in family therapy, community/organisational development, and post-modern thinking while applying them in a concrete and accessible fashion. Collaborative Practice is designed to keep families out of the court system, and keep them in a supportive environment where the children are remembered and protected.
Activities	Helps families in a collaborative manner to resolve their disputes out of the court system.
Useful links	<p>Madsen, W 2009, 'Collaborative helping: a practice framework for family-Centered services', <i>Family Process</i>, Vol.48, No. 1, <http://www.taosinstitute.net/Websites/taos/images/ResourcesManuscripts/Madsen-Collaborative%20Helping-Family%20Process.pdf></p> <p>Madsen, W 2011, 'Collaborative helping maps: a tool to guide thinking and action in family-centered services', <i>Family Process</i>, Vol. 50, No. 4. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22145724></p> <p>Mediate.com 2012, <i>Collaborative Family Helping – Video</i> http://www.mediate.com/articles/CollaborativeFamilyHelping.cfm</p>

Country	Canada
Name	Family Group Conferencing Ontario Provincial Resource
Description	A professional resource for family group conferencing. A quality assurance body.
Activities	Maintains a roster of family group conferencing coordinators, trainers and mentors; maintains and updates the provincial FGC manual; provides training and consultation to service providers; acts as a locus of expertise and best practice in FGC.
Useful links	<p>The George Hull Centre for Children and Families n.d., Family Group Conferencing Ontario Provincial Resource, <http://www.georgehullcentre.on.ca/Family%20Group%20Conferencing%20%3Cbr%3E%20Ontario%20Provincial%20Resource></p> <p>The George Hull Centre for Children and Families n.d., Family Group Conferencing/Family Group Decision Making Manual for Ontario <http://www.georgehullcentre.on.ca/Coordinator_resources_regional_activities_projects></p>

Europe

Country	Netherlands
Name	Eigen Kracht (meaning 'our strength' or 'our power')
Description	<p>Under amendments to Child Protection Act in 2011 parents or caregivers have the right to meet with family and other involved friends or close family supporters to make their own plan regarding how to care for a child of concern. The right to meet and make a plan for a child comes as a first recourse before the state and courts are permitted to intervene.</p> <p>Eigen Kracht conference coordinators are people in the community (not social-work professionals) who are trained to conduct conferences.</p>
Activities	Family group conferencing.

Useful links	Wachtel, J 2011, <i>Netherlands child protection law grants families the right to make a plan</i> , Restorative Practices Eforum, International Institute for Restorative Practices, viewed 28 May 2013, < http://www.iirp.edu/iirpWebsites/web/uploads/article_pdfs/76278_NederlandChildProtec.pdf >.
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Country	Belgium, Brussels
Name	Tonuso (meaning 'resilience' in Esperanto)
Description	Tonuso is a government funded not-for-profit organisation. Works with marginalised children and youth who are subject to child protection orders, and their families. Aims to give flexible help to children and their families in all areas of the family/children's life.
Activities	To support social inclusion; to find a way to get a trusted relationship with counselling organisation; to find out how to increase the social networks for marginalised people.
Useful links	Incluso: Social Software for the Social Inclusion of Marginalised Youngsters n.d., 'About the pilot in Brussels, Belgium', < http://www.incluso.org/pilots/belgium >

Country	Romania
Name	Hope and Homes for Children
Description	Program aims to keep the most vulnerable children within their families to avoid institutionalisation and to increase family care.
Activities	The program offers structured, time-limited interventions to targeted families, delivered in partnership with local authorities to ensure sustainability. It is closely related to the Government's de-institutionalisation program and is meant to lay the proper foundation for it by preventing children from being admitted to institutions. The overarching aim is to develop a 'Public Policy for the Prevention of Child Separation from Families' that all state authorities dealing with childcare and social services would be required to observe.
Evaluation	Yes — see useful links
Contact & useful links	Stefan Darabus, HHC Romania — Email: stefan@hhc.ro Eurochild 2012, <i>Compendium of inspiring practices: Early intervention and prevention in family and parenting support</i> , < http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/ThematicPriorities/FPS/Eurochild/EurochildCompendiumFPS.pdf >

Programs focussed on 'parent peers'

Australia

Country	Australia (presence in each state & ACT. No service currently in Northern Territory)
Name	Family Inclusion Network Australia (National Body)
Description	Family Inclusion Network Australia (FINA Inc) advocates 'for the right of children to their families when in the child protection system'.
Activities	The FINs in different jurisdictions offer differing levels of voluntary assistance to parents. These include support groups, casework, advocacy, court support, education and awareness raising with a range of organisations and services.

Information & contact details	John Berger, Anglicare Western Australia Ph 0499-005-060 or email finaustralia@hotmail.com FIN WA: http://finwa.org.au ; FIN Qld: http://www.fin-qldtsv.org.au ; FIN ACT: http://www.finact.com.au ; FIN NSW: http://www.fin-nsw.org.au FIN Tas: https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/directories/listing?id=40729
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Country	Australia, South Australia
Name	Family by Family
Activities	A network of families helping families. It finds and trains families who have been through tough times, pairs them with families who want things to change, and coaches families to grow and change together.
Description	The model has been designed to help families thrive and not just survive. Distinctive features of the model include: the program is focussed on the family (not just parents or children), the program is delivered by families (not professionals) and families are supported by a professional coach in a behind the scenes role (rather than directly delivering the program).
Evaluation	Case study designed evaluation drawing on a realist and developmental evaluation approach. Based on 66 families, 26 sharing families and 40 seeking families (86 adults and 163 children). Results appear positive however conclusions must be regarded as tentative. Strongest impacts were on self-esteem, believing one's choices made a difference and having a positive orientation to the future. Linking to the community was not as strong as expected.
Contact & more information	The Australian Centre for Social Innovation Community Matters Pty Ltd 2012, <i>Family by Family Evaluation Report 2011-2012</i> , < http://www.tacsi.org.au/assets/Documents/Publications/Family-Project/TACSI-FbyF-Evaluation-Report-2012.pdf >

United States

Country	USA, New York
Name	Bridge Builders
Description	The primary goals of the project are to improve four key indicators: the number of children who enter foster care for the first time, the number of children who re-enter foster care, the length of time children remain in foster care, and the overall occurrence of abuse and neglect within the local community.
Activities	Community members working together in a collaborative way to reach out to and assist their neighbors; provision of targeted social services and legal representation; meaningful parent and youth involvement; collaboration by neighborhood-based service providers and strengthened relationships with the Administration for Children's Services.
More information	Bridge Builders n.d., < http://bridgebuilderscpi.org >

Country	USA, Seattle, Washington State
Name	Catalyst for Kids
Description	A coalition of child welfare professionals, consumers, advocates and decision-makers working together to bring about reform of the child welfare system through cross-system partnerships in which parents who have been reunified with their children and other consumers of the system are actively involved. Goals are: reduced entry into foster care; reduced length of stay in foster care; increased rates of reunification; reduced re-entry into foster care; outcome equity among all races and ethnicities.
Activities	Convenes child welfare consumers and stakeholders to promote cross-system reform. Ensures that the voices of birth parents and the community are heard in the development of policies and practices that affect them. Advocates for policy and practice that will improve outcomes for children and families.
Contact & Information	Email: nancyrb@chs-wa.org Children's Home Society of Washington, < http://catalystforkids.org >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP)
Description	CWOP is a partnership between parents and professionals which is dedicated to the reform of child welfare systems in New York City through more meaningful parent involvement in service and policy planning. CWOP is a self-help and advocacy organisation of parents who have been affected by the public child welfare system in New York City.
Activities	Parent self-help groups; parent leadership training; parent advocate network; parents' rights training; parent participation in professional training; parent involvement in advocacy; collaboration with researchers.
Information & contact details	Email: mikearsham@aol.com Child Welfare Organising Project, www.cwop.org .

Country	USA, New York, Staten Island
Name	Concerned Citizens for Family Preservation
Description	CCFP is a membership and preventive services organisation. The group was started to address the need in poorer communities for grassroots organisational support of women and families who have involuntarily entered the child welfare and family court systems. Its membership is professionals, activists, concerned citizens, and affected families working together for change in the child welfare system and in the communities where it has the greatest impact.
Activities	Community education and outreach; workshops and forums; parenting classes; individual and systemic advocacy; grassroots activism.
Information & contact details	Email: yemonja@ccfamilypreservation.org Concerned Citizens for Family Preservation, http://ccfamilypreservation.org

Country	USA, New York
Name	Voices of Women Organizing Project (VOW)
Description	VOW is an initiative of the Battered Women's Resource Center. The Center works to empower and supports survivors of family violence and to work to end violence, shape policies and improve services for victims of family violence.
Activities	In addition to its work on improving conditions for survivors of family violence VOW is working on campaigns to support children affected by family violence and 'to stop malicious child abuse and neglect reports by batterers.' See Battered Women's Resource Centre n.d., <i>Voices of Women Organising Project – VOW</i> http://www.vowbwrc.org/policies/13_who_VOW.pdf
Information	info@vowbwrc.org

Country	USA, Iowa
Name	Moms off Meth
Description	Provide support groups for women who have either lost their children or are in danger of losing them due to problems with drugs or alcohol.
Activities	Support group, referrals to other helping agencies.
Useful link	Murphy, J n.d., <i>Background information/Moms of Meth Group</i> < http://www.iowadec.net/uploads/Background%20info%20moms%20off%20meth.pdf >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Women in Prison Project
Description	WIPP is a project of the Correctional Association of New York. Its has an Incarcerated Mothers Committee which advocates for policies that protect parental rights and allow mothers in prison and their children to maintain their relationships while the mother is incarcerated.
Activities	Prison monitoring, research, leadership and advocacy training, public education.
Information	Correctional Association n.d., 'About the women in prison project', http://www.correctionalassociation.org/pp/about-women-in-prison-project

Country	USA, New York
Name	Parent Advisory Workgroup (PAWG)
Description	Run by the Office of Advocacy at New York City's child welfare agency, Children's Services. The Workgroup is a coalition of parent advocates (who have successfully reunified with their children) who advise Children's Services about parents' needs and perspectives.
Activities	Parent advocates meet regularly with Administration for Children's Services' Commissioner and senior child welfare staff. Their role is to bring attention to parents' perspectives and needs.
Information	Correctional Association of New York n.d., <i>Women in Prison Project</i> , < http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/events/pawg.shtml > Footman, P 2011, 'Parent's message for New York City's new child welfare commissioner', <i>Rise Magazine</i> , < http://www.risemagazine.org/featured_stories/On_the_agenda.html >

Country	USA, Pennsylvania
Name	Department of Human Services (DHS) — Give Us Back Our Children!
Description	A self-help support and action group of mothers, other family members. This grew out of a weekly picket started by one mother outside Philadelphia DHS.
Activities	The group advocates for individuals, builds public awareness, works with the media, works to change unjust policies and practices, and challenges sexism, racism and prejudices against mothers in the child welfare system.
Contact & Information	Email: philly@crossroadswomen.net Welfare Warriors 2008, 'DHS — give us back our children! Philly moms organise to stop CPS assaults on families', <i>Mother Warriors Voice</i> , < http://www.welfarewarriors.org/mwv_archive/s08/s08_dhs.htm > Retoor2 2011 'DHS us back our children' Youtube < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8ZGicFlc5g >

Country	USA, Austin
Name	Parent Guidance Center
Description	The Parent Guidance Center is a grassroots organisation that supports parents in contact with the Texas child welfare system. It provides help to at-risk families to prevent abuse and neglect, and mobilises parents to advocate for the reform the child welfare system.
Activities	Parent advocacy; policy analysis and system advocacy; provides training to lawyers.
Contact & Information	Email: info@parentguidancecenter.org www.parentguidancecenter.org

Country	USA
Name	Circle of Parents
Description	A national network of parent leaders who hold weekly meetings with the support of a trained facilitator in an effort to promote parent leadership at the individual, community and societal levels.
Activities	Free weekly meetings for parents to network with each other and build connections to community resources. Program works to build protective factors (eg building self-esteem, reinforcing positive parenting) and reducing risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect.
Evaluation	Improvements found in self-management skills, quality of parent-child relationships, parenting skills and support system use. <i>Corwin, T 2012, Strategies to increase birth parent engagement, partnership, and leadership in the child welfare system: a review, Casey Family Programs, Seattle, viewed 19 June 2013, <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/BirthParentEngagement.htm>.</i>
Contact & Information	Email: csavage@circleofparents.org http://www.circleofparents.org

Country	USA, Kentucky
Name	Parent Advocacy Program
Description	The goal of the parent advocacy is to identify and build on parent strengths that maintain and enhance parental functioning, parental care, and parental ties to their children involved with the child welfare system.
Activities	Parent advocacy trainings utilise a 15 hour curriculum conducted jointly with child welfare staff and prospective advocates. Most advocates serve as volunteers and draw stipends, intended to cover out-of-pocket expenses. Advocates are matched where possible with client families based on similarities in their child protection cases and on the proximity of their homes. The parent advocates, in partnership with the family worker, work intensively with parents to prevent removal of children from their homes, ensure timely reunification and the maintenance of connections between parents and children while in out-of-home care. They also provide training to workers and foster parents on the needs of birth parents and the benefits of working as a team.

Evaluation	<p>2007. Children involved with parent advocates had fewer moves within placement, spent less time in foster care and had higher rates of reunification. Further study is needed to provide evidence of effectiveness of parent advocates.</p> <p>Corwin, T 2012, <i>Strategies to increase birth parent engagement, partnership, and leadership in the child welfare system: a review</i>, Casey Family Programs, Seattle, viewed 19 June 2013, <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/BirthParentEngagement.htm>.</p> <p>The Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Community Based Services 2007, <i>Parent Advocacy Program Evaluation</i>, < http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F17AF937-836E-4514-AA47-59FE1B3ECB9B/0/ParentAdvocateProgramEvaluation_Retouch_July1107.pdf></p>
Useful links	Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs 2012, <i>Parent Advocacy</i> , < http://chfs.ky.gov/ccshcn/parents.htm >

Country	USA, Kansas
Name	Citizens for Change
Description	Works to reform the child welfare system. The goal is to educate, inform and empower families and speed up reunification.
Activities	Client advocacy and emotional support; connect families with services and legislators; support group meetings, public forums, newsletters.
Contact & Information	Email: cfc.kansas@gmail.com www.citizens-for-change.org

Country	USA Kansas
Name	Sunflower Community Action
Description	Grassroots organisation which works to reform child welfare system and empower families.
Activities	Engage families affected by the child welfare system in social action and advocacy.
Useful link	www.sunfloweract.org

Country	USA, Kentucky
Name	Women In Transition (WIT)
Description	A grassroots organisation run by low income people to address the issues of poverty which affect them.
Activities	Provides information to parents involved in child welfare; holds monthly meetings. <i>Claiming our Rights, Reclaiming our Children</i> project advocates for mothers affected by the child welfare system. It does this by providing parents with information and support, and by organising candlelight vigils to highlight injustices.
Useful links	http://www.witky.org

Country	USA, Massachusetts, Watertown
Name	Parents Helping Parents
Description	A non-profit organisation which operates on a self-help model. Focussed on preventing child abuse by offering free parenting help and support.
Activities	Provides parent support groups based on a mutual support model; parental stress telephone help line.

Useful links	Email: info@parentshelpingparents.org www.parentshelpingparents.org
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Country	USA, Omaha
Name	Family Advocacy Movement
Description	Parent initiated network and website for parents who have been in the justice and child welfare systems. Provides tools for parents and families to share their stories, find and offer support, identify systemic problems, and organise for change.
Activities	Web-based activism.
Useful links	Email: info@familyadvocacymovement.com http://familyadvocacymovement.com/

Country	USA, Newark, New Jersey
Name	Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)
Description	Web-based network for information about parenting issues. Aims to empower and support families and inform and involve professionals.
Activities	SPAN is working with Parents Anonymous to create a Family Council. This is a group of parents with experience with the child welfare system who will give feedback and recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families and other senior staff. 'Families' Counsel: New Jersey parents to advise the commish', <i>Rise Magazine</i> , < http://www.risemagazine.org/Parent%20advocacy%20stories/Families_counsel.html >
Useful links	www.spannj.org

Country	USA, New York
Name	Parent Advocates in the child welfare system
Description	An initiative of the Child Welfare Organising Project (CWOP). Parent advocates are parents who have had their children removed to foster care and have successfully reunified with them, and who subsequently choose to be trained to work within the child welfare system to support birth parents. Research suggests that parent advocates can help parents successfully move towards reunification.
Activities	A number of programs are run with various activities including Bridge Builders (South Bronx) which helps families stay together and Parent Advocate Initiative that promotes the hiring of parent advocates in foster care agencies.
Evaluation	Evaluation found that the study site where CWOP representatives operated had fewer removals and that parent organising promoted 'to ease pathways through the child welfare system for parents' (Lalayants 2012, p. 9). Parent Advocates enhanced and reinforced the work of the agencies employing them and integrated well into their agency environments while developing close working relationships with parents (Rosenblum 2010).
Useful links	National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2013, <i>Family Leadership and Perspectives</i> , < http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info_services/family-leadership-and-perspectives.html > National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2013, <i>Digital stories from the field: Bernadette Blount</i> , < http://www.nrcpfc.org/digital_stories/PP_Blount_B/index.htm >

Country	USA
Name	Rise Magazine: Stories by and for parents affected by the child welfare system
Description	Rise attempts to combat the negative stereotypes of families in the child welfare system. It publishes a magazine (print and online) for parents and child welfare practitioners; works with family support and child welfare agencies to use these stories in support groups, parent education classes and staff training; and partners with parent advocacy organisations to use parents' stories in child welfare reform.
Activities	Rise trains parents to write about their experiences with the child welfare system. This is done in order to support parents and parent advocacy with the goal of guiding child welfare practitioners and policymakers to become more responsive to the families and communities they serve.
Contact & more information	Nora McCarthy (Editor) nora@risemagazine.org http://www.risemagazine.org

Country	USA, Alaska
Name	Powerful Families
Description	Workshops for parents and caregivers that are co-facilitated by parents. The workshops focus on parent empowerment by improving family stability and reducing economic hardship. Creates a network of peer supports.
Activities	Nine week program (2 hours, once a week). Topics include financial literacy, parent advocacy and parent leadership. The program trains parents and caregivers to lead, manage money, and advocate for their families and each other. Parents as leaders focus on community organisation, legal rights, neighbourhood activism and community development. A meal is provided during all classes and child care is provided during evening classes.
Evaluation	Emerging practice. Positive outcomes. Increase financial literacy & money management, increased ability to self advocate, increase in leadership skills, a decrease in stress and increase in social support and increase confidence in parenting (Powerful Families Pilot Evaluation Final Report 2006)
Contact & Useful links	Catholic Service Community or Casey Family Programs Catholic Community Service 2013, <i>Powerful Families</i> , < http://www.ccsjuneau.org/5,powerfulfamilies >

Country	USA
Name	(PA)& National Coalition for Parent Advocacy in Child Protective Services
Description	PA is a parent-to-parent support group for parents involved in the child welfare system. A family-strengthening program of community-based weekly 1½-2 hour mutual support groups.

Activities	Program is based on national standards of practice and is free. Model is culturally responsive. Open to anyone seeking support and positive parenting strategies (that is, parent or caregiver in a parenting role). Groups are co-facilitated by a trained Group Facilitator and Parent Group Leader. Topics include issues identified by the participants and child development, communication skills, positive discipline, parental roles, age appropriate expectations, effective parenting strategies, anger management techniques and self-care. Children participate in complementary programs conducted by trained workers. Children's programs are designed to change behaviour, build self-esteem, teach management of emotions and strengthen family relationships. Parents/caregivers take leadership roles in planning, implementation and evaluation the PA Group and Children and Youth Program. PA Program is based on four principles: mutual support, parent leadership, shared leadership, and personal growth. The mission of the Children and Youth Program is to enhance the emotional growth and social development of children and youth of all ages.
Evaluation	National evaluation of PA assessed whether participation in PA is associated with changes in child maltreatment outcomes and in risk and protective factors (n=206). After attending PA mutual support group meetings, parents with a wide range of demographic and background characteristics and needs indicated statistically significant reductions in risk factors for child abuse and neglect. The study demonstrated that PA is a promising program for the reduction of child maltreatment. PA groups reduce child maltreatment (there is a reduction in parenting distress and rigidity, parental physical and psychological aggression). They also reduce risk factors (such parental stress, life stressors, family violence, and drug and alcohol use). PA also increases protective factors (quality of life, emotional support, feelings of competency as a parents, social support, discipline practices and family functioning) (Polinsky et al. 2011). Polinsky, M, Pion-Berlin, L, Long, T & Wolf, A 2011, 'Parents Anonymous outcome evaluation: promising findings for child maltreatment reduction', <i>Journal of Juvenile Justice</i> , vol. 1, no.1, viewed 21 June 2013 < http://www.journalofjuvjustice.org/JOJJ0101/article03.htm >.
Contact & more information	Email: info@parentadvocacy.org Thenewschoolnyc 2011, 'Parent advocates in the child welfare system — part 1' Youtube, < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_mdtGrpWxY > The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse 2013, <i>Parents Anonymous</i> , < http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/parents-anonymous/detailed >

Country	USA, Contra Costa County California & Washington State
Name	Parent Partners Program
Description	Employs parents who have experienced the child welfare system and have successfully reunified (veteran parents). These parents are given training and support to provide one-to-one direct services to birth parents who wish to be reunified with their children. The main goal of the program is to help parents understand their rights and to assist them to reunify with their children.
Activities	Parent Partners work as mentors, guides, and advocates for birth parents. They also provide connections to resources and services and support families through court proceedings. Run monthly classes. Course comprises six units and addresses information on time-lines; the role of social workers, attorneys and others; building effective relationships with foster parents and department staff; accessing services; and engaging in the recovery community.

Evaluation	Positive evaluation, with high degree of satisfaction among parents. Birth parents reported feeling ‘supported, empowered, and informed’ and parent partners indicated that they had learnt new skills and growing confidence. Studies have also found that reunification was more likely for children whose parents had access to Parent Partners (USDHHS 2010, cited in Corwin 2012, p 18)
Contact	Email: rosb300@dshs.wa.gov Casey Family Programs 2013, <i>Strategies and programs to improve birth parent engagement</i> , < http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/BirthParentEngagement.htm >

Country	USA, Washington
Name	Parent to Parent
Description	Program goal is to increase early engagement of birth parents newly entering the child welfare system through education and peer support coordinated by birth parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system (‘veteran parents’).
Activities	Veteran parents provide support at care hearings, facilitate classes on the child welfare system and support groups for birth parents. Support groups cover: a healthy support system, boundaries, community service involvement and healthy alternative activities. Also provide peer-to-peer mentoring.
Contact & more information	Email: Corrina Burris corrinab@chs-wa.org Partners for Our Children 2010, <i>Parent engagement/mentoring models in Washington State</i> , < http://pocweb.cac.washington.edu/sites/default/files/publications/2010._parent_engagement_mentoring_models_in_wa.pdf >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Parents As Partners
Description	Program within New York Child Welfare Agency’s Advocacy Office. Staff are parents with experience of the foster care system who have successfully achieved reunification. They provide concrete services to parents who are experiencing difficulty with their case and lack knowledge about child welfare issues.
Activities	Help parents navigate the system; provide support to parents planning for reunification; support parents in family group conferences; assist parents obtain public benefits or housing resources.
More information	See NYC Administration for Children’s Services, Office of Advocacy.

Country	USA
Name	Oklahoma Family Rights Coalition (OKFRC)
Description	A family advocacy and community assistance organisation. OKFRC is provides support to those involved with the Oklahoma child welfare system through the work of volunteers. ‘OKFRC is committed to bringing about reform of OKDHS through both the legislative process and our advocacy work directly with families and community members.’
Activities	Provides support to those involved in statutory child welfare services.
Information	Email: bbutchee@cox.net http://www.ofrc.org

United Kingdom

Country	England & Wales
Name	Family Rights Group
Description	Advice and advocacy services
Activities	Advises families involved with child welfare services. Promote policies and practices, including FGC and a support framework for children living with family and carers, so that children and their families have a greater say and influence over decisions-making and services they need or use and more children are raised safely and securely within their families.
Evaluation	Yes — see useful links
Useful links	<p>http://www.frg.org.uk</p> <p>Featherstone, B, O'Dell, L, Tarrant, A, Fraser, C & Pritchard D 2012, <i>Evaluation of Family Rights Group Advice and Advocacy Service</i>, The Open University, Consult Research and New Philanthropy Capital, <http://www.frg.org.uk/images/advicecampaign/Evaluation-of-Family-Rights-Group-Advice-and-Advocacy-Service.pdf></p>

Programs focussed on foster care

United States

Country	USA, New York
Name	Co-parenting
Description	A training program for birth and foster parents that focuses on creating a collaborative partnership to parent the children in care.
Activities	12-week parenting course (Incredible Years) and a co-parenting component (new developed).
Evaluation	Promising Practice. Evaluation found that involvement in the program increased co-parenting flexibility and problem solving at the end of the intervention but these gains were not maintained over time.
Information & contacts	<p>New York University Child Study Centre Email: oriana.linares@med.nyu.edu</p> <p>Foster family-based Treatment Association 2008, <i>Implementing evidence-based practice in treatment foster care: a resource guide</i>, Hackensack, NJ, viewed 29 May 2013, <http://www.ffa.org/publications/ebpguidefinalweb.pdf>.</p>

Country	USA
Name	Family Finding or Family Search and Engagement
Description	Family finding was inspired by the family-tracing techniques used by international aid agencies to reunite people separated by war and natural disaster. An intensive search method to find family members and other adults who would like to step in and care for children and youth in foster care who lack permanency. The goal is to locate long-term, caring, permanent connections for children, and to establish a long-term emotional support network with family and other adults who may not be able to take the child into their home but want to stay connected. Has resulted in permanent placements with relatives, but the more frequent outcome is the establishment of a lifelong connection with a group of relatives who provide the child with emotional and other support.

Activities	<p>Intensive search aims to identify at least 40 extended family members and important people in the child's life. Engagement is made through interviews, phone conversations and letters/emails. Through this a group of family members and supportive adults are identified who are willing to participate in a planning meeting on how to keep the child safely connected to family members.</p> <p>Family meetings of family members and others important to the child are then held to plan for the child's future and make decisions to support the child into the future.</p> <p>Family meetings also evaluate the permanency plans developed for the child. Providing follow-up supports to ensure that the child and family can access and receive informal and formal supports is essential to maintaining permanency for the child.</p>
Evaluation	<p>Yes. Between 2008–2010 the differences between two evaluation sites were examined, one implementing family finding with children 'new to out-of-home care' and one implementing family finding for children who have been 'lingering' in foster care. Although family finding was initially developed as a tool for helping children lingering in foster care reconnect with family members, it is fast becoming a tool that child welfare agencies want to utilise with all cases.</p> <p>See: http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/promising-approaches.pdf</p>
Contact & Information	<p>Email: info@familyfinding.org Family finding: http://www.familyfinding.org/</p> <p>EMQ Families First 2013, 'Family Finding' <http://www.emqff.org/services/family_finding.shtml></p>

Country	USA, Austin Texas
Name	Federal Parent Locator Service
Description	National database that is accessed by some state welfare used to notify the child's relatives that the child has been removed from the parents' home and ask if they are willing to be considered for placement of the child or if they would want to provide assistance or support for the child when they do not want to be considered for placement. The form identifies the possible resources available for the relative if the relative takes placement of the child and many of the requirements for the relative to become a licensed foster parent.
Activities	Locates fathers who have been identified where children are with child welfare agencies.
Useful links	<p>National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections n.d., <i>Fostering Connections</i>, <http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/kinship_guardianship.html#rsnprrre></p> <p>Office of Child Support Enforcement n.d., <i>Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS)</i>, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/fpls</p>

Country	USA, New York
Name	Parent Advocates: Foster care agencies
Description	Parent advocates (parents who have been in contact with the child welfare system) work in a number of private foster care agencies in New York City (NYC), as well as Children's Services, the NYC child welfare agency. Parent Advocates provide parents with information and support and help agency staff understand parents' perspectives.
Activities	Peer support, advocacy.

Information	<p>Miller, L 2011, 'Fighting for families: giving parents the information they need to succeed, <i>Rise Magazine</i>, <http://www.risemagazine.org/Parent%20advocacy%20stories/Fighting_for_families.html></p> <p>Pagan, R 2011, 'You're your voice': working from inside the system to support parents, <i>Rise Magazine</i>, http://www.risemagazine.org/Parent%20advocacy%20stories/I_am_your_voice.html</p>
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Country	USA, Texas
Name	Texas Parent Collaboration Group
Description	A partnership between the Texas child protection service and parents who have been clients of that service. Parents are involved in the design and implementation of programs in child welfare services.
Activities	The group acts as a consultative body liaising between parents and departmental staff to increase communication and improve services. The group provides information to staff about parents' experiences; suggestions for improvement; training opportunities for workers regarding the parent experience; and policy advice.

Country	USA, New Hampshire
Name	Adoptions Together, Parent Advocate Project
Description	Supports parents seeking reunification. It aims to provide the services needed for faster, safer, and lasting reunifications for the children entering foster care. Facilitates strong relationships between birth families, foster parents, and social worker soon after the child is placed in out-of-home care. Uses trained mentors who have (in the past) been monitored by or successfully navigated the child welfare system.
Activities	Parent mentors provide families with one to one support and guidance through the child welfare and family court systems; help parents obtain support services that will expedite reunification with their children.
Contact & Information	Email: kking@adoptionstogether.org Adoptions Together, www.adoptionstogether.org

Country	USA
Name	Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers (MTFC-P)
Description	Foster care treatment program tailored to 3–6 year olds. A team work intensively with the child, the foster care provider, and those who might provide permanent placements (birth parents, adoptive relatives or non-relatives).
Activities	Foster parents are given intensive training and support and access to around the clock on-call crisis intervention. The children also have weekly therapeutic playgroup sessions and attend receive services from a behavioural specialist. Birth parents (or other carers) receive family therapy.

Evaluation	<p>Effective practice according to California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (2009). At least two randomised clinical trials have been conducted to evaluate permanent placement outcomes. The earlier study found that the permanent placement success rate in the control group was 64% while the permanent placement success rate in the MTFC-P group was 90%. Results of this study also found that MTFC-P might mitigate against the risks of multiple placements (a known risk for permanent placement disruptions). Children with multiple placements in MTFC-P did not show increased re-entry to foster care (Fisher et al. 2005).</p> <p>A smaller study in 2009 (n=52) also found that children in the MTFC-P group had more than twice as many successful permanent placements (adoption or reunification with family) at the time of the 24 month follow up (Fisher et al 2009).</p> <p>See: Semanchin Jones, A & LaLiberte T 2010, <i>Re-entry to foster care report</i>, Centre for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/Re-entry%20Report_Feb%202010_Final_rev.pdf></p>
Useful link	<p>The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare 2011, <i>Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers</i>, <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/multidimensional-treatment-foster-care-for-preschoolers/detailed></p>

Country	USA, New York
Name	Building a Bridge (RISE program)
Description	Foster parent training program that aims to build and maintain positive connections between birth parents and foster parents to promote better outcomes for children.
Activities	The birth parent can feel support from the foster parent and become more comfortable with the boundaries and limitations of visits. Suggestions for building connections include: writing letters to the children (from the parent or foster parent), planning positive visits, invitations to birthday celebrations, or weekly phone calls (Rise, 2009).
Useful links	<p>Casey Family Programs 2013, <i>Strategies and programs to improve birth parent engagement</i>, <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/BirthParentEngagement.htm></p> <p>Rise Magazine 2009, <i>Building Relationships with Foster Parents</i>, <http://www.risemagazine.org/PDF/Rise_issue_13.pdf></p>

Country	USA, Washington State
Name	Birth Family-Foster Family Connections Project
Description	Designed to create supportive connections among birth families, foster families, children, and the child welfare system (Gerring, Kemp & Marcenko 2008, p. 5 cited in Corwin 2012, p. 16). The project also seeks to build connections to birth families and encourage participation in services and visitation.
Activities	Relationship-based practice includes early contact with birth parents, safer parenting, building relationships with birth parents, providing empathic support, alleviating the pain left by family separation, creating happy/fun visits, addressing developmental needs and providing feedback (Gerring 2008 cited in Corwin 2012 p. 16).

Evaluation	A three-year collaborative research demonstration project between a large private agency and the Washington State Department of Child and Family Services. Evaluation shows higher weekly visitation rates by birth parents and general satisfaction with the project services (Marcenko cited in Corwin 2012). The Connections Project resulted in strong parent-worker relationships, very high participation in weekly visitation by birth parents, and quite extensive contact between birth and foster families.
Useful links	Gerring, C, Kemp, S & Marcenko, M 'The Connections Project: A Relational Approach to Engaging Birth Parents in Visitation' Child Welfare Journal, Vol. 87, No. 6, < http://www.cwla.org/articles/cwjabstracts.htm#0806 > National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2012, <i>Family/child visiting</i> , < http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/family-child-visiting.html >

Country	USA, Northern Virginia
Name	Bridging the Gap
Description	Program which focuses on building and maintaining relationships and communication between the birth, foster and adoptive families involved in a child's life. The goal of this work is to support family reunification or another permanency plan. Implemented through a collaboration between private and public agencies.
Activities	Includes use of icebreaker meetings and visit coaching. Work can include other family members involved in the child's life, such as members of the extended family of origin, other relatives who are caregivers and adoptive parents.
Contact	Fairfax County Department of Family Services National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2012, <i>Birth and foster family partnerships</i> , < http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/fewpt/partnerships.htm >

Country	USA, Washington State
Name	Parent Mentoring Program
Description	Foster parents act as mentors to birth parents and work with them to develop and implement action plans for reunification. Voluntary program.
Activities	The program capitalises on the skills of foster parents who are knowledgeable about the child welfare system, the needs of children and families and the resources of the community. Mentor candidates complete a two-day training. Mentors are not a source of evidence for investigations. Parents must be reasonably cooperative with their service plan and not currently active in any addiction. Together, all parties identify barriers to reunification among participating families. Mentors and parents work together to address the issues. Families and mentors meet for 6-10 hours each week for up to 24 weeks. Mentors, birth parents and child welfare workers meet monthly. Mentors also help parents develop an appropriate, reliable, safe social support system. Mentors observe parents and children's interactions, encourage parents to use learned skills, and document these sessions, providing feedback to both the parent and assigned child welfare social worker. The mentor and social worker remain in frequent contact. Mentors also receive supervision and support through regular meetings with program staff and other mentors.
Evaluation	Parents in the program experienced more frequent reunifications and children of parents in the program experienced shorter durations in foster care (Marcenko & Grossman 2008 cited in Corwin 2012).

Contact & more information	Email: Ross Brown Rosb300@dshs.wa.gov Partners for Our Children 2010, <i>Parent engagement/mentoring models in Washington State</i> , < http://pocweb.cac.washington.edu/sites/default/files/publications/2010._parent_engagement_mentoring_models_in_wa.pdf >
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Country	USA
Name	Parent Engagement and Self-Advocacy (PESA)
Description	Program for birth parents, foster parents, and caseworkers of children (age 10–17) who are in foster care and candidates for reunification. All parties work together to address the mental health needs of the children.
Activities	Essential components: group facilitators and group must include birth parent advocates, foster parents and caseworker; a 3-day training for group facilitators followed by 12 consultation calls; groups: one 2–3 hour session per week, recommended duration: 5–6 weeks.
Contact	Lisa Hunter Romanelli, PhD; lisa@thereachinstitute.org Casey Family Programs 200113, <i>REACH Institute collaboration on mental health</i> , < www.casey.org/Resources/Initiatives/REACH >

Country	USA
Name	Shared Family Care
Description	Program provides short term placements for a parent and child with a family who provides mentorship, skills, and resources to meet goals. The goal of SFC is to achieve permanency for the child and to move the family toward self-sufficiency. The program works to establish a relationship between the foster and birth parents and develop the skills and supports of birth parents.
Activities	Provides parents with intensive 24-hour support from a trained mentoring family plus intensive services from a multi-disciplinary team (drug counsellor, case manager or housing specialist).
Evaluation	'In a quasi-experimental study (non-randomised, comparison group) in California, results showed that 8% of the children in families who completed the SFC program re-entered foster care within 12 months, compared to 17% in comparison group. Participants in the program also showed improved outcomes over the comparison group including: higher graduation rates, increased average income, and greater numbers of families living independently. More research is needed on this program, but results of this study indicate some promise in reducing re-entry to foster care using the SFC model.' (Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte 2010)
Useful links	Abandoned Infants Association n.d. , <i>Shared Family Care</i> , < http://aia.berkeley.edu/family-well-being/shared-family-care/ > Semanchin Jones, A & LaLiberte, T 2010, <i>Re-entry to Foster Care Report</i> , Centre for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota, < http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/Re-entry%20Report_Feb%202010_Final_rev.pdf >

Country	USA, Oregon
Name	Project Keep
Activities	Supports and trains foster and birth parents.
Description	<i>Project Keep</i> is a group program that provides foster and birth parents with coping tools and support for their work with children (ages 5-12) who exhibit behavioural and emotional problems. A comprehensive set of skills is covered including: effective limit setting, encouraging participation, strengthening interpersonal relationships and parental stress management. A 16 week program.

Evaluation	A controlled randomised study found parents who participated in <i>Project Keep</i> reported reduced rates of child problem behaviours, fewer placement disruptions and increased rates of family reunification and adoption.
Contact & more information	Oregon Social Learning Centre. Email: pattic@oslc.org www.oslc.org

Country	USA, Kansas
Name	Intensive Reunification Program
Description	Program provides multiple opportunities for parents and their children to spend time together. Places parents and children together to engage and interact. Clinicians, social workers, family support workers and volunteers partner with children and families, coaching and demonstrating appropriate responses.
Activities	The program requires extensive participation by family members. Biological parents and their children participate in activities for two hours, twice a week for 36 weeks. Based on a behavioural paradigm that requires intensive time and skills of foster care staff: modeling positive behaviors, providing opportunities to practise newly acquired skills, imparting community resource information, and providing frequent opportunities for participant self- evaluation.
Evaluation	A comparative evaluation of this model after one year found that its reunification rates are double that of comparable cases receiving the agency's conventional reunification services. Intensive Reunification Program of Kansas Children's Service League http://www.docstoc.com/docs/100303083/Intensive-Reunification-Program-of-Kansas-Childrens-Service-League

Country	USA, Oregon, North Carolina, Maryland, Oklahoma, California, Virginia and New Mexico
Name	Icebreaker meetings
Activities	Facilitated child-focused meeting to provide the opportunity for birth parents and foster parents (or other caregivers) to meet and share information about the needs of the child. Ideally held within two days of a child's out-of-home placement. The meeting is seen as the beginning of building relationships and communication between the child's parents and caregivers.
Description	The child welfare practice model includes the utilisation of icebreaker meetings between birth and foster parents to promote easier adjustments for children and parents involved in the child welfare system. Similar to Bridging the Gap program (see below).
Useful links	National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2009, <i>Birth and foster family partnerships</i> , < http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/fewpt/partnerships.htm >

Country	USA
Name	Visit Coaching
Description	Visit coaching supports families to make each access visit an opportunity to learn parenting skills as well as meet the needs of the children.
Activities	Visit coaching activities include: helping parents identify what their children need from access visits; preparing parents for their children's reactions; helping parents plan to give their children their full attention at each visit; appreciating the parent's strengths in caring for and meeting each child's needs; helping parents cope with their feelings so that they can visit consistently and keep their anger and sadness out of the visit. The goal of visit coaching is to address the issues that brought the child into care by building on family strengths and supporting improved parenting.

Useful links	http://www.martybeyer.com
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Europe

Country	Bulgaria
Name	For Our Children Foundation
Description	For Our Children Foundation is a successor to the British organisation for protecting children's rights 'EveryChild'. Areas of work include: prevention of child abandonment and placement in institutions; foster care; support for foster carers and adoptive parents; returning children from institutions back to their families or back to family type environments.
Activities	First Bulgarian non-government organisation that introduced foster care in 1997. Range of children and family services.
Evaluation	See useful links
Useful links	Child Abuse and Neglect in Eastern Europe 2008, <i>For Our Children Foundation</i> , < http://www.canee.net/bulgaria/other_organizations/for_our_children_foundation >

Programs focussed on statutory authorities

Australia

Country	Australia, Western Australia
Name	Signs of Safety
Description	<p>A risk assessment and case planning framework in situations of suspected or substantiated child abuse that integrates professional knowledge with local, family and cultural knowledge. The approach balances a rigorous exploration of risk to children alongside indicators of strengths and safety. The assessment is simple but rigorous and easily used to gather information about concerns or dangers, existing strengths and safety and envisioned safety.</p> <p>New Zealand and West Australia have expanded the assessment framework to cover planning for the future. In Minnesota implementing the framework has focused on using collaborative conferencing with all high risk cases. The Gateshead, England and Carver County, Minnesota implementations have refined ideas for using the Signs of Safety at the initial investigation.</p>
Activities	<p>Signs of Safety focuses on how the worker can build partnerships with parents and children and still deal rigorously with the maltreatment issues. This approach is grounded in working in partnership. It is strengths-based and safety-focussed. However, the investigation of risk is expanded to look at strengths, case planning and a future focus, which balances the usual problem focus of most risk assessment.</p> <p>The approach is designed to be used from notification through to case closure. It can be used by professionals at all stages of the child protection process, in statutory, hospital, residential or treatment settings.</p>
Information & contact details	Signs of Safety is owned by Resolutions Consultancy. info@signsofsafety.net Signs of Safety http://www.signsofsafety.net/

United States

Country	USA, Minnesota
Name	Child Welfare Practice Model
Description	<p>State mandated child welfare service, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and its county and tribal partners strive to support families and communities by engaging in essential partnerships needed to secure positive outcomes for children and youth served by the child welfare system.</p> <p>The practice model is defined by a clearly articulated value base, is principles-led, outcomes focussed and reliant on a highly skilled workforce.</p>
Activities	Statutory child protection activities. See useful links.
Useful links	<p>Minnesota Department of Human Services n.d., <i>Child Welfare Practice Model</i> <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/events/ImprovingSupervisionPacket/MNCWPracticeModel.pdf></p> <p>Office of the Legislative Auditor State of Minnesota 2012, <i>Child Protection Screening</i>, Evaluation Report Summary, <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/screensum.pdf></p>

Country	USA
Name	Citizen Review Panels (CRPs)
Description	Citizens Review Panels (CRP) are groups of citizen-volunteers who are federally mandated to conduct an evaluation of their state's child protective services agency.
Activities	Federal legislation details activities of CRPs; CRPs are co-ordinated by state child welfare agency; CRPs examine and report on various parts of the child protection agency.
Useful links	<p>University of Kentucky 2013, <i>National Citizens Review Panels</i>, <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/crp/></p> <p>Minnesota Department of Human Services 2013, <i>Minnesota Citizens Review Panels</i>, <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&dID=154568></p>

Country	USA
Name	Strengthening Families and Communities
Description	A resource guide
Activities	Developed with input from parents, the guide is used in nationally by services working with parents and carers in the area of child protection.
Useful links	Child Welfare Information Gateway 2011, <i>Strengthening Families and Communities 2011 Resource Guide</i> , < https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2011/guide.pdf >

Country	USA
Name	Systems of Care
Description of framework	This is a service delivery approach that builds partnerships to integrate processes for meeting families' needs. Family involvement is central to this work. The approach engages birth parents emphasising parents' role as partners in the case planning process acknowledging birth parents as experts in their personal needs and providing a meaningful role in decision making regarding their children.

Activities	<p>Case level — family-centred practices, e.g., family group conferencing; family group decision making, child-family teams.</p> <p>Peer-level — peer support/mentoring models to help families navigate the system.</p> <p>Systems level — families as advisors, collaborative members on decision-making bodies. Policies and procedures to support family-centred practice.</p>
Evaluation	<p>A 5 year cross site evaluation over 18 communities in Nov 2010 found that through this framework child welfare agencies discovered new ways of working with families and the community; that community collaborations created a space and place for family and community engagement; and that policies and procedures developed to support family-centred practice.</p> <p>See:</p> <p>Child Welfare Information Gateway n.d., <i>National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Centre for Systems of Care Resources</i>, <http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/ntaec.cfm></p> <p><i>Improving child welfare outcomes through Systems of Care: Overview of the National Cross-Site Evaluation</i>, US Department of Health and Human Services, http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/Cross-SiteEvaluationOverviewReport.pdf</p>
Useful links	<p>Semanchin Jones, A & LaLiberte, T 2010, <i>Systems of Care Report</i>, University of Minnesota, Minnesota. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/publications/SystemsOfCare.pdf></p> <p>Child Welfare Information Gateway n.d., <i>Systems of Care Resource Library</i>, http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/library.cfm</p> <p>National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Centre for Systems of Care 2010, <i>Partnerships with child welfare</i>, Powerpoint presentation, Special Forum July 14. <http://gucchdtcenter.georgetown.edu/resources/Training%20Institutes/Special%20Forums/SF6/Systems%20of%20Care%20Presentation_Training%20Institutes%202010.pdf></p>

Country	USA
Name	Organizational Self Study on Family Engagement
Description	This self study assessment tool can be used to review the core principles of family engagement practice. The tool is designed to review administrative policies and overall agency readiness, and to identify program strengths and challenges in engaging and working with families.
Activities	Web based toolkit.
More Information	National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections 2009, <i>Family engagement: a web-based practice toolkit</i> , < http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/fewpt/index.htm >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
Description	Provides strategic advocacy, education and the promotion of quality, culturally competent child welfare and juvenile justice services in the State of New York.
Activities	Provides a range of services to member organisations including representation, information, advocacy, training and forums.
Contact & more information	Email: dleske@cofcca.org Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies < www.cofcca.org >

Country	USA, Washington State
Name	Partners for Our Children
Description	A public/private partnership between Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, the University of Washington School of Social Work and private sector funding. The goal of the initiative is to inject new thinking resources and expertise into the state's child welfare system.
Activities	Conducts research, tests and implements innovative policies and practices, identifies children's and families' needs and tests training innovation. Attempts to offer a neutral space where people involved in the child welfare system can exchange ideas.
Contact	Email: info@partnersforourchildren.org Partners for our Children http://www.partnersforourchildren.org/ ;

Country	USA
Name	Advocating for Families
Description	Caseworkers advocate for individual families and support self-advocacy by families themselves. Caseworkers also work to empower and advocate for families to become interdependent members of the community. Focuses on the principles of family development, workers' own communication skills, and promoting the participation of community residents and families in the design of services.
Useful links	Child Welfare Information Gateway n.d., <i>Advocating for Families</i> , US Department of Health and Human Services, http://www.childwelfare.gov/famcentered/casework/advocacion.cfm . The Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Community Based Services 2007, <i>Parent Advocacy Program Evaluation</i> , < http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F17AF937-836E-4514-AA47-59FE1B3ECB9B/0/ParentAdvocateProgramEvaluation_Retouch_July1107.pdf >

Country	USA, Massachusetts
Name	Fatherhood Engagement Leadership teams
Description	Multi-disciplinary teams convened by child welfare services.
Activities	The teams identify gaps in practice, develop procedures for practice improvement, train workers in engaging fathers and collect data on father engagement in different phases of case practice. The team is composed of social workers, senior child welfare staff and representatives of community agencies that work with fathers.
Contact & useful links	Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Email: Fernando.mederos@state.ma.us National Resource Centre for Child Protective Services 2011, <i>Tips for workers working with dads: flexible approaches for men who have been violent with their partners</i> , < http://nrccps.org/wp-content/uploads/4-12-11-TIPS-FOR-WORKERS-FLEXIBLE-APPROACHES-WHEN-THERE-IS-DV-_2_.pdf > Mederos, F n.d., <i>Accountability and connection with abuse men: a new child protection response to increasing family safety</i> , Massachusetts Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Unit, < http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Accountability.pdf >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Office of Advocacy
Description	A staff of social workers and family specialists who respond to concerns of parents, youth, foster parents and the general public about child welfare cases. The Office comprises Parents' and Children's Rights Ombudsman; Parents As Partners & Independent Review.
Activities	To resolve conflicts between clients and voluntary agencies or statutory child welfare; provide information to the public about child welfare policies and procedures to ensure that parents, foster parents and youth are aware of their rights and responsibilities and obtain due process; share information gathered from interactions with clients to help statutory and partner agencies improve services for children and families.
Useful links	NYC Administration for Children's Services, <i>Office of Advocacy</i> , < http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/advocacy/office_advocacy.shtml#a3 >

United Kingdom

Country	UK
Name	Professional family advocacy
Activities	Advocates for families who find it difficult to engage with statutory services, including those who have previously had children removed from their care and are mistrustful of statutory intervention; asylum seeking families; and young care leavers. Supports families at different stages of their involvement with Children's Services including children in need; advocating for parents from when child protection enquiries were initiated until the first review conference; and within the complaints process.
Description	Independent professional advocacy service for families involved with child protection services nationally, including service provision at child protection conferences in four London Boroughs.
Useful links	Family Rights Group 2012, <i>Our advice service</i> , < http://www.frg.org.uk/need-help-or-advice/our-advice-service > Singlemum.com 2013, <i>Charles Pragnell, advocate for children and families</i> , < http://singlemum.com.au/expert-panel/biography-charles-pragnell.html >

Country	UK
Name	Volunteers in Child Protection
Description	Volunteer support for families involved in child welfare system.
Activities	Volunteers do home visiting, mentoring and befriending. They also keep in touch and continue to support families once Social Care teams have withdrawn, greatly reducing the chances of children going back on the register.
Evaluation	In 2011, Anglia Ruskin University found evidence of marked improvement in family functioning and a significant reduction in safeguarding concern following intervention from the project. The study concluded that the project represents good value for money and is seen as effective by service users, volunteers and stakeholders. Approximately one third of the children who were subject to a child protection plan when referred to the project were removed from the plan during the volunteer's involvement. CSV's Volunteers in Child Protection project has gained official recognition from The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) under the Safeguarding theme. CSV's Volunteers in Child Protection project won the Overall Award at the Charity Awards in 2010.

Useful links	CSV 2013, <i>Volunteers in Child Protection — mentoring and befriending</i> , < http://www.csv.org.uk/volunteering/mentoring-befriending/child-protection >
Country	UK
Name	St Helens Safeguarding Children Board, Supporters and Advocates
Description	Provides information to supporters and advocates.
Activities	Web based child protection procedures to find out what you need to do if you work with children, young people or families to keep children safe from harm or possible abuse.
Useful links	St Helens Safeguarding Children Board n.d., <i>Supporters and Advocates</i> , http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/sthelens/contents/child-in-need-policies-and-procedures/meetings-guidance/supporters-and-advocates/

Programs focussed on courts and legal systems

United States

Country	USA & UK
Name	Family Treatment Drug Courts
Description	Designed as a specialist problem-solving court with a multidisciplinary team of skilled professionals attached to the court.
Activities	Collaborative practice, engagement and retention. Child welfare services and treatment providers work together to identify, assess and provide immediate access to substance abuse treatment and other services. Service and treatment plans are developed to meet the needs of all family members. Plans are regularly reviewed and modified if necessary. Judicial oversight of children and families is increased with regular reviews. Parents are supported to be involved in decision making and their successes are acknowledged.
Evaluation	Bruns, E, Pullmann, M, Wiggins, E, Watterson, K 2011, <i>King County Family Treatment Court Outcome Evaluation Final Report</i> , Division of Public Behavioral Health and Justice Policy, University of Washington School of Medicine, < http://depts.washington.edu/pbhjp/downloads/projectsD/eval_king_countyD/Outcome_evaluation_final_report_2-22-2011.pdf >
Useful links	National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare n.d., <i>Family Treatment Drug Courts</i> , US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, < http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/resources/resources-drug-courts.aspx > Levine, G 2012, <i>A Study of family drug treatment courts in the United States and the United Kingdom: giving parents and children the best chance of reunification</i> , Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, viewed 3 July 2013, < http://churchilltrust.com.au/site_media/fellows/2011_Levine_Greg.pdf >.

Country	USA, New York City
Name	Parent Advocates: Legal Service Providers
Description	Parent advocates (parents who have been through the child welfare system and reunified with their children) are employed by organisations that provide legal representation to parents with child welfare cases. These parent advocates work in a team with social workers and lawyers. These Parent Advocates are found at the Center for Family Representation, Bronx Defenders and Brooklyn Family Defense Project.
Activities	Peer based support as part of legal team.
information	Carrion, L 2011, 'Lesson learned: the second time ACS came knocking, I found someone who stood up for me', <i>Rise Magazine</i> , < http://www.risemagazine.org/Parent%20advocacy%20stories/Lessons_learned.html >

Country	USA, New York
Name	Bronx Defenders
Description	Interdisciplinary teams of criminal, civil, and family defense lawyers, social workers, parent advocates, investigators, and community organisers work with clients and their families to identify and overcome the challenges they face.
Activities	Peer based support as part of legal team.
Information & contact details	Email: info@bronxdefenders.org Bronx Defenders http://www.bronxdefenders.org

Country	USA, New York
Name	Brooklyn Family Defense Project
Description	Protects the due process rights of low-income families and helps access the benefits and services families need to remain safe and stable. A diverse team of attorneys, social workers and parent advocates provides families with the tools to stay together and improve the quality of their children's lives.
Activities	Peer based support as part of legal team.
Information	Brooklyn Family Defense Project http://www.bfdp.org

Country	USA, Chicago
Name	Family Defense Center
Description	A public-interest legal advocacy centre that serves families involved in the child welfare system. The Center provides both high level systemic advocacy and grass-roots activities for families in the child protection system. Focuses primarily on wrongly accused family members who have come to the attention of child-welfare authorities due to a recent hotline report of abuse and neglect.
Activities	Provides direct legal services, policy advocacy, systemic/civil rights litigation, parent empowerment program, training and education and a newsletter. The Family Defense Center's observation that mothers are particularly at risk of losing custody and being labelled as child abusers or neglecters led to the development of the Mothers' Defense Education and Advocacy Project. See: Redleaf, D 2011, 'Protecting mothers against gender-plus bias: part 1' <i>American Bar Association News</i> , University of Maryland, < http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/childrights/content/articles/fall2011-protecting-mothers-gender-plus-bias.html >
Contact & more information	Email: fdc@familydefensecenter.net Family Defense Center www.familydefensecenter.net

Country	USA, Detroit
Name	Detroit Center for Family Advocacy (CFA)
Description	CFA provides legal advocacy and social work support to low income families in contact with the child welfare system. The goal is to prevent the unnecessary removal of children and unnecessarily long foster care placements. Once a case is accepted a CFA attorney, social worker and parent advocate will work closely with family members.
Activities	Teaching hospital model. The parent advocate provides support and advice. The social worker provides case management and supports access to services. The attorney provides legal advice and assistance, advocacy and follow-up support. The team use legal mechanisms to allow family members to support their children. Also assists other care-givers to gain custody of children (adoption or guardianship) to enable children to exit foster care. Law students also work with lawyers, social workers and parent advocates.

Evaluation	<p>Evaluation published February 2013 showed that children served by CFA sample families experienced fewer days in foster care than those compared with a matched control group of non-CFA families. A cost analysis demonstrated that the reduction in foster care days will save significant public dollars, dramatically offsetting the per-child cost of CFA.</p> <p>See: University of Michigan Law School 2013, <i>Detroit Center for Family Advocacy Pilot Evaluation Report 7/2009 – 6/2012</i>, <https://www.law.umich.edu/centersandprograms/pcl/cfa/Documents/evaluation.pdf></p>
Contact & more information	<p>Email: Professor Vivek Sankaran vss@umich.edu. University of Michigan 2013, <i>Detroit Center for Family Advocacy</i>, <https://www.law.umich.edu/centersandprograms/pcl/cfa/Pages/default.aspx></p>

Country	USA, New York
Name	Center for Family Representation (CFR)
Description	Provides families in crisis with free legal assistance and social work services to enable children to stay with their parents safely. CFR works to keep children out of foster care entirely or keep their time in care to a minimum.
Activities	Provides each family with a team of professionals to help it navigate its case, including an attorney, social worker, and parent advocate. CFR works directly with parents, provides training and technical assistance to professionals working directly with children, child welfare caseworkers and family court judges.
Useful links	Center for Family Representation 2012, <i>Every family matters</i> , http://www.cfrny.org/our-work/

Country	USA, Washington State
Name	Parents Representation Program, Office of Public Defense
Description	Program operates in 25 counties, provide state funded legal and social work assistance to families involved with child welfare agencies.
Activities	Aims to increase parental participation in services; ensure visitation; increases reunification and reduces re-entry into care; improves quality of legal proceedings including support to drug courts, promotes timely permanency.
Useful links	Washington State Office of Public Defense 2005, <i>Parents Representation Program</i> , < http://www.opd.wa.gov/PRP-home.htm >

Country	USA
Name	National Project to Improve Representation for Parents Involved in the Child Welfare System
Description	Aims to strengthen representation of parents in the child welfare system and to ensure child welfare activities and fair and just.
Activities	National Reunification month; provides training to parents' lawyers, courts and legislators; assessment of performance of parent legal representation; provides website resources on best practice and research material and information sheets
Useful links & contacts	<p>American Bar Association 2013, <i>About the project</i>, <http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/what_we_do/projects/parentrepresentation.html></p> <p>American Bar Association 2013, <i>National Reunification Month</i>, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/what_we_do/projects/nrd.html</p> <p>American Bar Association 2013, <i>Center on Children and the Law</i>, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law.html email: laverm@staff.abanet.org</p>

Appendix D: Evidence-based practice databases, clearinghouses and online resource centres

Australia

Database name	Web Address	Type of programs covered/Country
Australian Resource Centre for Healthcare Innovations	http://www.archi.net.au/resources/delivery/indigenous/indigenous-links	Australia
AIFS Indigenous families – Parenting	http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/bibliographies/indigenousfamiliesparenting.php	Australia
Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse	http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/goodpracticelinks.htm	Australia
Australian Indigenous HealthInfonet	http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/related-issues/family-violence	Australia Indigenous specific
Healthy Start	http://www.healthystart.net.au	Australia Intellectual Disability focus
Protecting Australia's Children: Research & Evaluation Register	https://apps.aifs.gov.au/cfcaregister/projects	Australia

North America

Database name	Web Address	Type of programs covered/Country
American Humane Association	http://www.americanhumane.org/children/	USA
California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare	http://www.cebc4cw.org	USA Information and resources for child welfare professionals
Canadian Welfare Research Portal	http://cwrp.ca	Canada Child welfare programs and policies, statistics, legislation, research and researchers
Child Trends	http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-Lifecourse_Interventions.pdf	USA Programs that work to improve children's development

Child Welfare Information Gateway	https://www.childwelfare.gov/	USA Connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive information and resources.
Coalition for Evidence Based Policy. Social Programs That Work	http://evidencebasedprograms.org/about/early-childhood	USA Broad range of programs from early childhood to employment & welfare
International Institute of Restorative Practices	http://www.iirp.edu/search-results.php?cx=002027130135840368450%3Apht00rhzw54&cof=FORID%3A11&q=family&sa=Search+»	USA Engaging and collaborating with families
National Resource Centre for Permanency and Family Connections	www.nrcpfc.org/fewpt	USA Hunter School of social work
Oregon Social Learning Centre	http://www.oslc.org	USA Research on the design and evaluation of interventions that strengthen children, adolescents, families, and communities.
PART (Practice and Research Together)	http://www.partontario.org	Canada Evidence based child welfare practice
Promising Practices Network	http://www.promisingpractices.net/programs.asp	USA Programs shown to have outcomes for children, including some family support and parent education programs
Strengthening America's Families	http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org/html/model_programs.html	USA Effective family programs for preventing juvenile delinquency
Washington State Child Well-Being Data Portal	http://www.partnersforourchildren.org/child-well-being	USA

United Kingdom and Europe

Database name	Web Address	Type of programs covered/Country
Campbell Collaboration	http://www.campbellcollaboration.org	Oslo based. Prepares, maintains and disseminates systematic reviews in education, crime and justice, and social welfare.
Department of Education, Find a Parenting Program	http://www.education.gov.uk/commissioning-toolkit/Program/CommissionersSearch	UK
Eurochild	http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/ThematicPriorities/FPS/Eurochild/EurochildCompendiumFPS.pdf	Europe
European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction	http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice	Europe
Free Social Care Research	http://www.reconstruct.co.uk/research.html	UK

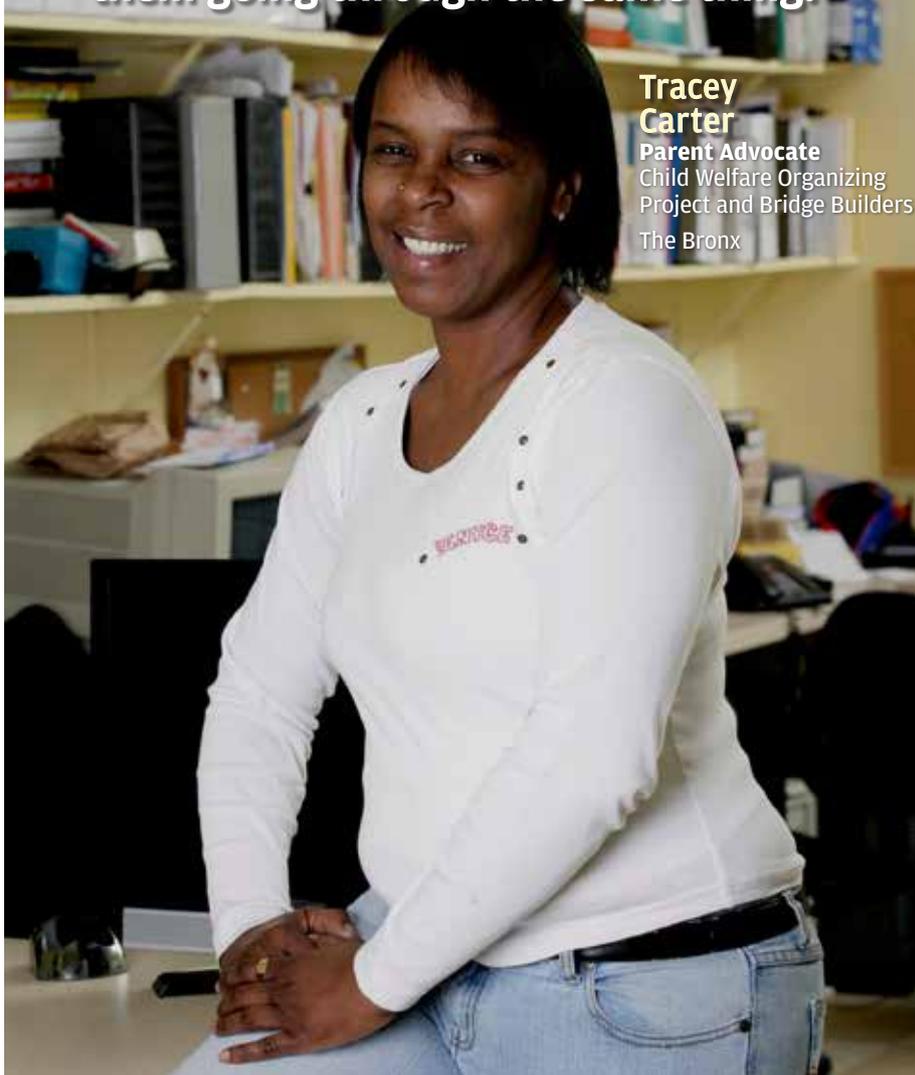


Appendix E:

Parent Advocates (USA)

“Sometimes I have to contain myself when parents talk about their lives. I want to cry remembering my life and hearing them going through the same thing.”

Tracey Carter
Parent Advocate
Child Welfare Organizing
Project and Bridge Builders
The Bronx



Then Tracey spent 13 years on the streets addicted to crack and lost custody of all 11 of her children.

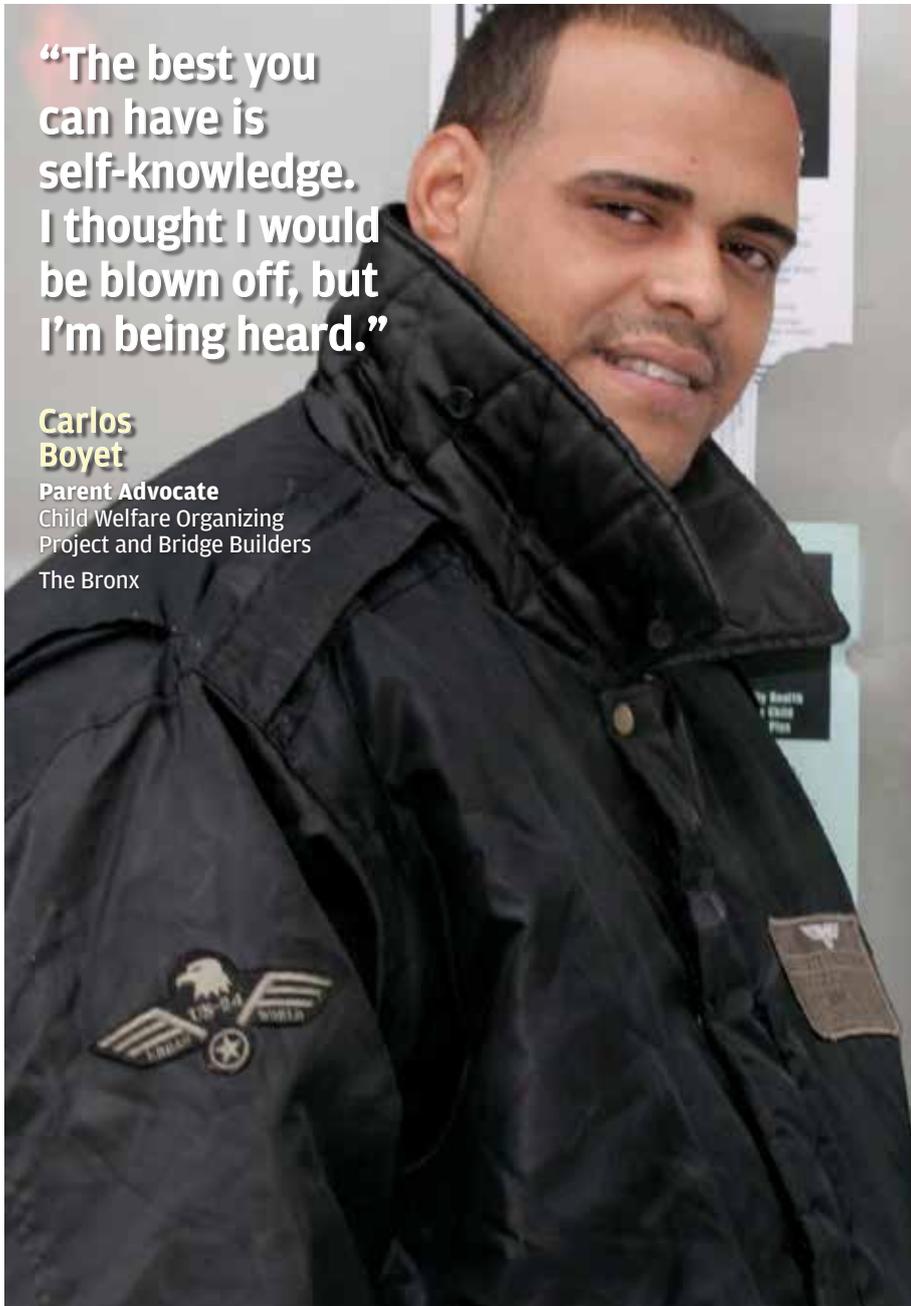
Now Tracey is married, has been clean since 2002 and has regained custody of three of her kids. As a parent advocate she handles a caseload of about 30 parents.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MANNY MILLAN

“The best you can have is self-knowledge. I thought I would be blown off, but I’m being heard.”

Carlos Boyet

Parent Advocate
Child Welfare Organizing
Project and Bridge Builders
The Bronx



Then Carlos denied that he was the father of his child and then refused to make support payments.

Now Carlos fought in court to gain custody of his severely disabled son and is now raising him. As a parent advocate, he focuses on ensuring that his clients know their rights.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MANNY MILLAN

**“Parent advocates offer hope to people
in a hopeless situation.”**

**Leeshorn
Franklin**

Parent Advocate
Seamen's Society for
Children and Families
Staten Island



Then Starting when she was 16, Leeshorn spent a decade on drugs and on the street. She lost custody of her three children.

Now Leeshorn has been clean for 16 years, has custody of two of her kids and has added a daughter to her family. As a parent advocate her aim is to get her clients to understand themselves.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MANNY MILLAN

“I am your parent advocate, and you could say I am your voice”

Rosita Pagan-Cruz

Parent Advocate
Children's Village
Manhattan



Then Amid the frustrations of raising a family, Rosita took to drinking and became an alcoholic. She lost custody of three of her children.

Now Rosita has been sober for almost a decade and regained custody of her kids. As a parent advocate, she gives others hope, comfort and reasonable answers to their questions.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MANNY MILLAN

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