

CHAPTER 3

WHY CHILDREN ARE ABUSED

1. Lack of transparency/reporting/language
2. It's Not a Crime to Abuse Your Child
3. Cultural & Religion Keep Parental Rights over Children's Rights
4. *Children's Issues Have Become a Political Football
5. *Absence of child rights in America

OVERVIEW OF THIS CHAPTER;

LANGUAGE, TRANSPARENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY

Making the public, the Media, Administrators and Policy Makers Better Informed

Child abuse is an uncomfortable topic.

It's a subject we go to extremes to not talk about.

Besides, it's a "family matter".

Counties and Institutions hold information close.

This impacts what the media knows and what the public can know.

Even basic data or conditions about abused children in the system are not made public.

Much of what is reported, said and written about child abuse is understated, obfuscated, or euphemized.

Because of this, much of what we know is not so.

To make matters worse, stories and data about child abuse and trauma do not sell newspapers.

Even when information is available there is little incentive for paid media to give it coverage.

Advertisers don't like being identified with child abuse and readers don't ask for it.

At a time when print news is struggling to stay in business, child abuse gets few assigned reporters in the newsroom.

Investigative journalism is an unaffordable luxury reserved for stories that sell. To be fair, for profit media needs to tell stories that keep their audience and advertisers happy.

Fewer assigned reporters cover more COVID and on fire politics than stories about traumatized children and domestic violence.

Consolidation of media by giant national media are shaping how local news is covered. This does not bode well for the children and families suffering from the traumas of domestic violence and child abuse.

Things that don't get media, public or legislative atten-

tion go unnoticed.

Bad things that don't get noticed fester.

Things that can be seen can be seen can be measured.

Things that can be measured can be addressed.

Things addressed can be improved.

If the public is not aware of the data and conditions impacting at risk children, lawmakers won't be either.

This means that funds won't be appropriated and crisis nurseries, prenatal care and resources that make children safe and well will not be funded.

We the people don't see child abuse for what it is.

Tens of millions of traumatized children are growing up without being seen or heard.

At risk children have been easy to ignore and the depth and scope of generational child abuse in America has grown exponentially because of it.

What we do see are extreme death and horror stories.

When we do react, it's with outrage, blame and band aids that are quickly forgotten. that we don't understand it and we don't know what drives it or how to fix it.

CPS has recognized that circling the wagons and not providing information works better for them than mak-

ing information available. Making information available makes everybody look bad.

The HIPPA laws are often used as an excuse for explaining why we can't talk or write about this.

When Dee Wilson gave the results of the Casey Foundation report to the Hennepin County Commissioners in MN after the tragic death of four-year old Eric Dean, he stated quite clearly that the HIPPA laws were a "red herring" as an excuse to keep basic information secret.

There are serious consequences to institutions keeping information from the public.

Not knowing means bad people, bad programs and even counterproductive policies remain at the expense of those that work.

It means that programs and policies will be designed for the adults involved and not the children in need of the programs. Program policies like CPS not picking up children from toxic homes after 5pm or on weekends are anathema to a child being repeatedly raped or beaten.

It also means that programs that keep children safe and well often get less priority than the arts and dog parks.

Children are stuck in horrid homes.

Un-walked dogs can still have happy lives.

Almost all rural counties have underfunded child protection systems, poor health and mental health access and a serious lack of safety for their at-risk children and families.

KEEPING INFORMATION PRIVATE (a short story)

Minnesota's Investigative Journalist Brandon Stahl worked hard to discover meaningful information and follow the story of a rural MN child tragedy.

The Star Tribune gave him full support for investigating the suspicious death of a four-year old boy in rural Minnesota.

This kind of tragedy occurs regularly in the U.S.

In Starbuck MN, Four-year old Eric Dean died a slow painful death over two years at his mother's hands after 15 ignored reports of abuse by mandated reporters.

No one would have known anything about the life and death of Eric Dean had this curious reporter from the Minneapolis Star Tribune not made it a story.

Brandon found pushback at every level of government in his investigation. He filed a Freedom of Information Act and still found it hard to gain access to the information he needed to follow the story.

If Brandon had not been persistent;

We would not know that 4 MN counties screened out 90% of all child protection calls at the time of Eric's death.

We would not have known that social workers were forbidden to

review prior cases of child abuse within a family when reviewing a new charge of abuse in that family.

And of course, we would not know how the level of

dysfunction in Minnesota's Child Protection caused the death of Eric Dean.

When Governor Dayton read Brandon's reporting, he declared child protection in the case a colossal failure.

A Task force was formed resulting in public policy changes that improved child safety.

Brandon Stahl's investigative journalism changed child protection services in MN.

Two short (4 minute) descriptive video interviews with Brandon Stahl can be seen [here](#).

Brandon's kind of reporting is rare in child-death cases and almost never in other cases of child suicide, child self-harm or child abuse.

Keep in mind that Minnesota is a prosperous and progressive state and terrible things still happen to at risk children regularly.

In many states and especially poor rural counties, child safety regularly takes a back seat to the negative reality of overwhelmed child protective services, public concern and lack of public dollars.

Conditions are worse for children in states at the bottom rung of the economic ladder.

Tennessee, Puerto Rico, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, West Virginia, Alabama, Oklahoma, and South Carolina had the highest percentages of poverty in the nation (2019).

All across America, the COVID pandemic is making at

risk children and families more depressed, homeless, unhealthy, less educated and unsafe. Even more so in poor states.

Google searches rarely turn up any information concerning violence bad things happening to children in these states – and not because it isn't happening.

If America's institutions

(Child Protection/Law Enforcement/Child Protection/
Foster Care/Adoption/Healthcare/Education)

Operated like any other business,

There would be transparency and reporting of
important stories and program success and failure.

It would not be a rarity for a Brandon Stahl investigative report to give voice to the grim realities occurring in the lives (and deaths) of voiceless children.

Had the 15 reports of child abuse been more transparent for more people, Eric Dean would be alive today.

If Child Protection information were made available, it would be clear how many;

Reports of child abuse were made and how they were responded to,

How many foster children were succeeding or failing in school, living under bridges, sexually abused, involved in crime, juvenile justice and had health insurance.

We would know how many foster children were re-

quired to take psychotropic medications and the results.

Nationally, one third of State Ward children take these brain altering meds.

If you've read a psychological evaluation of a child on multiple meds you are familiar with obfuscating language and how questionable the practice can be.

Would making all psych evaluations publicly available (without names or any identifiable references) create an informed public? Certainly our current practice of near zero reporting isn't helpful for the children involved.

If more people understood what the warning on every package "can cause psychological ideation" language means, would more children get therapy instead of meds?

An informed public and legislature would have a better idea of the costs of failure and value of success.

If we knew these important things, we might be inclined to be kind to children that were born into tragic circumstances through no fault of their own.

If schools operated like businesses, more of us would know what "ready for learning "

means to a school and why America's high cost per child

delivers such poor results (CHAPTER_____).

Every year, millions of not ready for school children make education in America harder and less effective for children and every stakeholder (and much more costly).

If Law Enforcement tracked and made public the critical data of policing at risk children, we might understand the cost of “not throwing children into the river of juvenile justice” and other violence being done to them.

We would know how many local children and youth in our communities were involved in the juvenile justice system and how many of them being required to take psychotropic medications, placed in isolation, beaten up at sexually abused in jails and prisons (as children).

“90% of the youth in the juvenile justice system have passed through child protective services” are the words of Minnesota’s former Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz.

Few people know that the majority of youth in juvenile justice have diagnosable mental health issues and that more than half of them have multiple, severe and often dangerous conditions.

We would also know how many of them are involved in crime, failing in school and other important predictors of future success or failure.

We could calculate the value of success and failure and the impact on taxes and social costs.

Few people know that 25% of police shootings involve mental health issues.

Fewer still know the divorce rates, mental health problems, suicide rates and substance abuse rates of law enforcement officers.

We are becoming aware of how heavily Law Enforcement is tasked with being the primary childcare & mental health service provider in many communities.

Very few people have any awareness of how their local police department is trained.

There is a valid argument that community awareness of police recruiting and training would get more “protect and to serve” and less police violence.

In the police shooting of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights MN, it became public that officer Yanez was trained to empty his service revolver into the victim.

Philando was guilty of having a taillight out. He died a horrific and uncalled for death. His girlfriend and her three-year old daughter were in the back seat of the squad when it happened.

At the time this book is being written police training has been front page news in the death of George Floyd’s trial in MN. It is clear the nation needs more transparency and community involvement in law enforcement if peace and order are to be restored.

When we know the stories and data about abused children and youth at the hands of the police,

failing in school, not learning how to read, becoming teen and preteen mothers

going to jail and prison,

maybe our public policies

will become more rational and child friendly.

If we understood the financial and social costs of these failures, we could see the wisdom in investing our tax dollars in programs that work and ending those that don't.

Beat reporters writing about the stories of at risk youth, data, training and policies in a community would at least make their policy makers more aware of trends and festering emergencies.

This is a dream KARA wants more of us to share.

Law enforcement trained in de-escalation, including other service providers (mental health/social workers) on domestic abuse and mental health calls would reduce the number of terrible things police do to at risk children and youth (CHAPTER X)

If Child Protection reported the depth and scope of the problems facing children,

the need for services would become a public issue.

Funding for stadiums might at least compete with funding for crisis nurseries, quality daycare and mental health services for five-year old's.

Quality Foster Care and support for kinship care is lacking in most counties most of the time. Few communities are informed about how their State Ward children are doing in school, if they graduate or what becomes of them after aging out of the system. Na-

tionally, 80% of aged out youth go on to lead dysfunctional lives. If the data were more public, more communities would know more about how to improve the lives of disadvantaged children.

These institutional realities have high direct and indirect costs to the community that remain unknown.

Every County Auditor and local politician knows the growing costs of Social Services, Policing, Education and in urban centers, Healthcare and Mental Health Services.

Without more robust accountability and transparency within these institutions, there is little chance that better answers will be discovered or employed.

The cost to our communities in public health, education, public safety and child wellbeing is immense in both dollars and quality of life.

Transparency in Education

Mike Tikkanen submission;

When discussing the beating one of my 12 year-old child protection boys gave his 6th grade teacher, Mary, a child psychologist explained to me how standing between a traumatized child and the door in a classroom can be dangerous.

We were talking about why my State Ward child (Arne) had beaten his 6th grade teacher (Ann).

Ann was severely beaten, quit teaching and sued the State.

Mary described how the reptilian side of Arne's brain (Amygdala) reacted to perceived danger and why abused children seemed to explode for no observable reason.

Really terrible things repeatedly happened to him, and he could not escape. He had been tied to a bed, beaten, starved and sexually abused from four to seven years of age.

Now, very much like veterans hearing a noise that reminds them of the shell shock they received in battle.

Certain words trigger unpredictable violence. Calmly, Mary tells me that this is just the child's triggered escape reaction.

Don't stand between the child and the child's escape path.

In another incident I watched a teacher my size (135 pounds 5ft 9) smash a ten year old girls head into a desk in the principal's office when she wouldn't quit biting his face.

He was trying to restrain her from hurting others.

The ACEs healing model is gaining traction in many parts of America, but the centuries old punishment model is still the rule.

If schools reported classroom hours spent managing traumatized children and evaluating the effectiveness of the punishment model, a great awakening could occur. Few nonteachers know how common it is for teachers to spend more time managing out of control children than teaching. Few schools have in place adequate systems for dealing with the problem. This is

one reason we expel kids from daycare, grade school and high school.

Some statistics bear repeating;

High school dropouts are three and one-half times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested, and more than eight times as likely to be incarcerated. Across the country, 68 percent of state prison inmates have not received a high school diploma,

80% of youth aging out of foster care lead dysfunctional lives,

The average state cost for the secure confinement of a young person is now \$588 per day, or \$214,620 per year, a 44 percent increase from 2014. These cost figures over a six-year period represent the growing economic impact of incarcerating youth. Jul 30, 2020

America's nine-year prison recidivism rates are reaching 90%

When a community knows the value of keeping a child in school to graduation, it is easier to spend the tax dollars to heal a traumatized child and not expel him or her from grade school or high school.

It would be to everyone's advantage to closely track the trajectory of State Ward children and understand why the failure rates have been so terrible and the costs so high. It's not that we don't have programs that work – it is that we don't use them because we don't employ them.

We don't employ best practices because we don't have a grounded understanding of the cost benefit analysis (a function of reporting, accountability and

transparency).

School superintendents and principals could better address the impact traumatized children are having on the teachers and children in their classrooms.

If these things were better known, the issues and impact of child abuse might be better understood and addressed.

An informed and wiser community might support the initiatives that could save them future tax dollars and make their neighborhoods safer and happier places to live.

Until then, superintendents and principals will be underinformed and teachers remain front line workers managing the mental health and behavior problems at risk children bring into their classrooms.

Teaching is harder than ever and the politics of teaching to include guns, law enforcement and a conflict over the value of punishment and expulsion in our schools (CHAPTER_____).

It is likely that the community would react if it knew the fiscal breakdown of program success and failure in their schools.

TRANSPARENCY IN FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION/
GROUP HOMES/STATE CARE/KINSHIP (Chapter x)

This Frontline quality video (Foster Shock) depicts what became of State Ward girls when group

homes were privatized in Florida. <https://vimeo.com/139417634> . Rampant prostitution and drug abuse (legal and illegal).

Many states have similar problems, few states report on them.

In most states, group homes and detention centers are not closed when they fail to meet State standards.

Rikers Island is just one of many notoriously gruesome holding cells for youth on the way into the criminal justice system. A concept anathema in other Industrialized Nations but long accepted in America.

We blame the people working in the group homes and detention centers for the horrid stories that do make it into the media. A short-period of public outrage follows but there is no meaningful change before the next tragic story receives the same response.

Our punishment culture accepts terrible things happening to other people's children.

Without transparency there can be little understanding the underlying issues and small chance of significant meaningful change to fix things.

This article submitted by occasional KARA author Katrina Verdone, M.A.

Physician Scribe/Case Management

Southwood Psychiatric Hospital

Ethan was removed from his parents at a young age. I have only come to know him briefly through the course of my work with him at an inpatient facility. Like the others, Ethan has a story; one which I will never fully know or understand. A life outside of paper clothes, weighted furniture, and being watched round the clock. Luckily, this lifestyle is temporary. What I do know, is that Ethan's mother died of a drug overdose and that his father was incarcerated for a drug related charge.

This is how Ethan found himself being passed from placement to placement to placement.

There are approximately 443,000 children in foster care in the United States on average.

The average age that kids enter the system is 8 years old.

Of those children who enter the system at any given time, more than 17,000 age out without permanent families.

This is a sad set of statistics from 2017, but it lends to the idea that a child will likely spend time in multiple placements with numerous families over the years that they spend under state care and lead dysfunctional lives thereafter.

Ethan was 17 years old when I met him. Again, what I know of his story is limited, but the ugliest truths of

it seemed to jump off the page and into my brain as I read his file to prepare for our interview. At his first foster care placement, he was sexually and physically abused by his foster father who had an alcohol problem. His foster mother was aware of the abuse going on, but because she was a victim of the domestic violence herself, was unable to stand up for the children in her home. Whether Ethan was removed from this placement (I refuse to refer to it as a “home” given the state of things) before or after this information came to light, is unbeknownst to me.

Some time, a few mental health hospitalizations, and a couple more placements later, Ethan was taken into another foster home with a nurturing and caring family. There were other kids in the home for Ethan to socialize with, food regularly on the table, and the only substances in sight were foster mom’s multivitamin gummy she had every morning. This might have been a chance for a normal life, but Ethan’s time with this family was cut short when he sexually assaulted his younger foster brother. Ethan was 13 years old at the time.

He had since been to a residential facility which specialized in treatment of sexually maladaptive behaviors. He expressed a great deal of internalized guilt related to the situation, oftentimes hating himself for knowing what he had done to a child whom he considered a brother. At present day, he is hospitalized for making numerous threats and gestures to kill himself.

He is a pleasant kid when presenting for the interview; well groomed, with kind eyes.

Those kind eyes teared up when explaining why he gets depressed and suicidal, indicating the deeply internalized guilt that he was harboring.

I don't know if anyone ever tried to explain the effects that adverse childhood experiences can have, but I hope someone does.

Ethan hasn't discharged yet, but last I heard he is awaiting placement in another foster home or shelter. His last family didn't want to accept him back after he scared them with his suicide attempt.

At 17 years old however, he'll likely be difficult to place, and if he is placed, it will only be for a short time until he turns 18 and ages out of the system like those 17,000 others. Then what will he do?

The foster care system is an amazing idea, however clearly flawed in its current design.

Stories like Ethan's are all too common and all too often underreported. You might wonder how a violent, alcoholic, pedophile could even be approved as a foster parent.

These people and situations frequently fall between the cracks of what ends up reported and permitted when it comes to caring for our nation's children. A change needs to occur, because

Ethan may now spend a large portion of his life in and

out of hospitals and therapy, coping with the trauma that was given to him by adults and institutions that should have been protecting him.

In most communities it is the kind-hearted families that have been the most common and available placement for these children. Foster families may be the most underappreciated front line community child protection and mental health workers in our nation. They do this work with minimal training or understanding of the deep psychological impact

Pre COVID, almost all states were facing a shortage of safe homes for at risk children. (DATA) Post COVID, it is likely to be a much larger problem.

Few people know how many children are reported as traumatized/abused in their community.

Few people know how many of children are removed from their families or how many foster families are needed to take care of abused children.

Group homes and emergency shelters are the backup in communities with over-the top numbers of endangered and suffering children.

Truly desperate case children are forced to spend time in hospitals and social services buildings until space become available.

Think how awful this is for a frightened young child

taken from the only she has ever known by a police car to a place she has never been and people she does not know or if she will see her family again. All these things happen every day and they are all terrible experiences for the girls and boys that experience them.

Very few people know the existence of any of these sad and impactful things because there is little reporting and not much media coverage of the stories and data that do exist.

KARA believes that post COVID, the need for more and better-informed foster care will become a much bigger problem.

The conditions in many state group homes already overwhelm staff in many communities. Many homes are violent and poorly managed.

The level of trauma the children they oversee is often greater than the training of the staff involved.

Pre COVID, many have been forced to close - usually after years of not meeting state standards (standards like not having sex or beating the children they are charged with keeping safe).

None of this has worked well for our youngest citizens.

Post COVID numbers of damaged children are becoming a dangerous piece of this equation.

These stories and the lack of resources and oversight for emergency child placement and foster care are critical issues that need more reporting, awareness and attention in most of America today.

Trauma informed practices, kinship placement, training and resources are the hopeful piece of post the COVID ERA if transparency and reporting can be improved.

TRANSPARENCY IN HEALTHCARE/MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY CARE (chapter x)

SALLY'S STORY

(more common than you would hope)

This is a story about the most delightful, confused 8 year old girl I've ever met. For privacy purposes, I'll call her Sally. Sally has had numerous hospitalizations and an innumerable amount of sexual abuse referrals made on her behalf.

She has a history of sexual abuse by her biological father. When she first came to the children's psychiatric hospital, she immediately began to display sexually outrageous behavior such as touching her private area in front of peers, asking staff if they were her lovers, and disrobing. It was no surprise when her history came to light, or when she then began to make allegations of sexual abuse from her mother's current boyfriend. We'll call him Joe.

"Are you thinking of killing yourself or anyone else?" the doctor would ask.

"Yes. Joe freaks me out," she would say back.

"So you want to kill Joe?"

“Yeah, he freaks me out. Do you care about me?” She would change the subject almost as abruptly as it came up.

For a while all she said was that she hated Joe and that he “freaked [her] out”. The seeds of sexual abuse suspicion were planted.

Sally was diagnosed with several mental health diagnoses including depression, Autism, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

She said things that were entirely off the wall (such as referring to the lone male nurse as “Cookie” and asking to “kick your cat” or “lick your eyeball”) while maintaining a straight face and wholly flat affect. Her maladaptive behaviors rendered her quite the handful, but what a curious and interesting little handful she was.

Later, when Sally began to open up to the doctor and hospital staff, she made formal allegations of sexual abuse by Joe such that he would “put things in my vagina and bum, he freaks me out”.

In Pennsylvania, the abuse referral is called a “Child-line” and it is sent to the child’s county of residence and the appropriate authorities are alerted.

There are more examples of Sally’s sexually maladaptive and acting out behaviors, statements she made that no 8 year old child should ever say, and allegations of specific abusive acts cited to have occurred at the hands of both her biological father and mother’s boyfriend, Joe.

This had to have been one of the most detailed Child-line referrals the county had ever seen, not to mention

Sally had a wonderful, dedicated psychiatrist. As the time went by, the treatment team eagerly awaited the results of her abuse referral, as she had won over the hearts of all the hospital staff and we all wanted to see her safe and free from harm.

The referral came back as unfounded.

Due to her intellectual and neurodevelopmental disabilities, she was deemed in-credible. Her previous allegations and tendency to say outlandish things encouraged the agency to believe that she was too confused, too disoriented, and too unreliable to investigate the report further. There were rumors that her mother covered up for her boyfriend, and hid evidence from Children and Youth Services when they came knocking at her door.

Once Sally no longer met her insurance company's criteria for "in need of acute care", there was no choice but to discharge her back into the care of her mother with deep suspicion that she would be endangered again and continue to suffer at the hands of people who were supposed to love her more than anything in the world. She cried the day and night before she left, asking if she defecated in her pants, could she stay at the hospital?

It was with a heavy heart that staff had to explain to her that this wouldn't allow her to avoid going home.

"Joe freaks me out," she said as she gathered her belongings for discharge.

This story submitted by a Pennsylvania Psychiatric Hospital employee

Half of the 50 children in this CASA guardian ad Litem case load were sexually abused. Three were four years old or younger when the abuse began, several seven and younger and all but one was under ten when the abuse began. They bring their sexuality into the homes that foster and adopt them along with their uncontrollable rage, self-harm and other damaging behaviors that will be with some of them for life.

ANNA'S OBSERVATIONS (mental health insights)

The lack of reporting and transparency about the lack of support and services for badly damaged children is an awful reality affecting millions of children every day.

Almost none of this is known in the community or its law makers and others that could make a difference.

For decades now, the medical community has published ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) research.

The media is finally drawing attention to what is the most misunderstood and underreported sadness facing abused and neglected children.

Because the PTSD damage soldiers returning from war brought home with them the media told the public and the public told its legislators and policy began to change.

We are only now beginning to understand that the traumas suffered by veterans is the same kind of

trauma being experienced by children raised in toxic homes.

The media, legislators and courts are beginning to relax our centuries old harsh punishment model in favor of a kinder gentler healing approach to veterans behaving badly because of trauma related mental health and behavior problems.

Will the media, courts and legislators eventually get the information they need to make better decisions concerning the mental health and related behavior problems of children traumatized in their birth homes?

The lack of reporting, understanding and compassion being shown juveniles at this time has not been promising.

In the words of Minnesota's former Supreme Court Chief Justice a statistic that bears repeating;

"90% of the youth in the juvenile justice system have passed through child protective services".

Pre COVID, Prozac like drugs have long been the substitute for mental health healing therapies at the center of caring for traumatized children.

As a CASA guardian ad Litem, I once flew a suicidal case child to an emergency facility 200 miles away because no mental health beds were available in Minneapolis area.

A single hospital in our city sees (pre COVID) 1000 emergency psychiatric visits monthly.

The last decade has seen many rural hospitals and some urban hospitals end any mental health services. This area of concern is woefully underreported.

There is almost no information available about suicide attempts or self-harm by children.

About one out of 200 youth under 8 are successful in their suicide attempts

Post COVID, these realities could be much worse if not made more public and addressed robustly (read about them in chapter x).

1) TRANSPARENCY Federal Law, Religion & Parental Rights (chapter X)

It is likely that the most arcane facets of law and religion are the least known but a most important reason children are abused in America.

Few other Industrialized nations bring the baggage of 500 to 1000 years year old law and dogma to the raising of children.

Because almost no one knows that the United Nation's Rights of the Child Treaty of the 1980's was not ratified, children have no standing in courts. (the "Imminent Harm Doctrine" means different things to different people)

There is perhaps no greater example of the power "lack of transparency and reporting" has done to keep children from having the rights to safety and wellbeing than this federal reality.

Many American newborns remain untested and untreated for very treatable metabolic disorders, hearing and sight diseases & blood lead level s.

48 States allow religious exemptions from vaccination.

Some states allow religion to keep children from TB testing in school. 27 states give some kind of criminal or civil immunity to parents injuring their children by withholding medical care on religious grounds.

Six states let parents keep teachers from teaching their children about disease in school.

Over the years KARA has reported on children dying because their parents withheld medical treatment because the church told them to do so. Some parents have killed more than one child by withholding medical treatment.

Some religions allow child neglect and abuse & some states allow a religious defense against charges of murdering their child – and “some can’t be charged with murder at all” (Slate).

5 years ago, Kansas State Rep Gail Finney vowed to pass a bill that allowed caregivers to leave bruises and cause bleeding when disciplining a child (no age limit).

Arkansas State Rep Charles Fuqua promoted the death penalty for rebellious children (based on religious grounds).

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5 years ago, Kansas State Rep Gail Finney vowed to pass a bill that allowed caregivers to leave bruises and cause bleeding when disciplining a child (no age limit).

The U.S. is the only nation in the world to not ratify the United Nation's Rights of the Child Treaty of the 1980's.

UN Rights of the child treaty footnote

American children are chattel like women were prior to 1918 – property of their parents.

State and County law follow federal law.

All the legislators within America's 3006 counties govern the rights of the children within them. The myriad of people bringing their own personal politics and beliefs into the arena of parental rights and child safety is difficult to explain in one book. But it is a core problem and we will attempt to do so (chapters X &__).

The Supreme Court, Religion and Children.

Post COVID, religious organizations and arguments are winning 81% of oral arguments in front of the Roberts Supreme Court (to be published in the Supreme Court Review). This compares to 46% in 1969.

A similar shift in federal judiciary cases supporting constitutional protection of religion is happening at the same time.

Law, politics and religion have trended in favor of parental rights, punishment and discrimination against the poor and disenfranchised for several decades.

It is hard to ignore the continued national preference for parental rights superseding child rights and wellbeing at this time in our history.

Except in cases of “Imminent Harm” as defined by the judge, parental rights trump child rights and leave discipline and child well-being to the parent.

Not all courts view “Imminent Harm” in a way that favors the child. Rural communities less so.

These are not easy determinations and I do not envy judges required to take children from their mothers - under even the worst circumstances.

Ironically, violence against children has long been widely condemned and sentencing in child crimes is harsh unless you are the parent.

Sex with a child can bring a life sentence if you are not the primary caregiver.

Family child abusers are almost never charged in court with civil or criminal charges (acts that would put non-family members in prison if they had committed the same act against that child).

If your neighbor had beaten your four-year old son with a thick branch or leather belt, leaving the boy bleeding and bruised or had sex with your child daughter, that person would go to jail.

It's important to consider the violence and trauma being raped has on a child and that only a small number of in-home child sex crimes are ever known or report-

ed and fewer prosecuted.

In this CASA guardian ad-Litem's experience zero out of twenty five cases where child rape occurred were charged and that the perpetrating caregiver never became a party to the court proceedings. Most child abuse rape takes place over years and is extremely damaging to the child.

Children are deemed unreliable witnesses because they don't hold up well under cross examination in court.

This is a primary reason that perpetrators are rarely charged.

A serious unintended consequence is that perpetrators go on to molest many children in their lifetime without being recognized or punished.

None of this serves at risk children.

In practice, children raised in toxic homes with sex and drugs do not have the skills, understanding or training to live otherwise.

It is almost impossible to unteach sex and drugs to children that have lived with it for many years in their birth home. Foster families find this out when their biological children tell them.

In practice, young girls are prosecuted in prostitution cases in many states. In practice, juveniles as young as eleven and twelve are tried and sentenced as adults. Only recently did the Supreme Court end the execution of youth and those who committed violent acts while they were young. It appears that the Supreme Court may reverse that decision in this year's

(HELP) docket. (chapter x)

TRANSPARENCY IN *(chapter x) CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

For many reasons, some of them good, there may be no other American institution with such a low degree of transparency or accessibility as Child Protective Services.

This is not a reflection on the people working with at risk children. Social workers already have the burden of a disinterested public that blames them when a child dies or otherwise makes the paper with the next horrid story of a child abused.

By accident or design, the HIPPA laws have long been used to ensure people working with at risk children and their families are not to speak of their work or the conditions they see.

When Dee Wilson delivered the Casey Foundation report on Minnesota's Child Protection system, he spoke to the Hennepin County Commissioners about the HIPPA laws had become a "red herring" and were not meant to keep people from speaking about the conditions existing in abusive homes and savage things done to defenseless children.

Dee's report and the task force that was created after the death of four-year-old Eric Dean after many ignored reports of child abuse, did bring change to MN child protection – but it has never been enough. Now COVID is wreaking health on the underlying cause

of most of America's problems – deteriorating mental health and lack of services for troubled families and children.

Child protection workers are trained not to speak about even the generalities of conditions in the homes they visit and there is little access to meaningful information that might convince community members of the importance of prenatal care, foster homes and crisis nurseries.

EDUCATION (chapter x)

Preschool and grade school are the first and last hope for damaged children to lead healthy lives.

Growing up in a toxic home puts not ready for learning students with mental health and behavioral problems in classrooms. Because of HIPPA laws and punishment model administrative policies, the chances of educators having the awareness, tools or training to manage their classrooms.

Awareness of information from teachers and schools is sparse but increasingly negative about the impact the COVID pandemic is having on poor, homeless, rural, and other at risk children.

The lack of direct contact with at risk children during the lockdown has multiplied the effects of estrangement from a "normal" reality of a school classroom. This has also all but eliminated any chance of a teacher having truthful or meaningful conversations that any mandated reporter needs for understanding hard truths a child might be living with.

It's a terrific burden for teachers to have the awareness, empathy and skills to successfully shepherd a

deviant sometimes dangerous child through a school year of disruption and bad behavior.

If schools were to report the number of ACEs impacted children in their classrooms, the degree to which the need for services could be known and better addressed.

We have long had the Individualized Education Program (IEP) in theory, but the failure to deliver the services at an adequate level has rarely been achieved.

Pre-COVID, County social services, schools, courts and police departments have been hard pressed to manage the behavior problems and violence that evolves as a growing number of troubled children became troubled youth and adults.

Post COVID, the numbers of children and youth suffering from the traumas and mental health issues of the disease and lockdown in toxic homes are growing.

School districts, courts and social services will be hard pressed to find and fund programs that might provide homeless children, LGBTQ children, foster children and other long-suffering populations of at-risk children relief, safety and healing.

As this book is coming together, this administration is providing significant funding to make things better for at risk children and families and the institutions that serve them.

While that is good news, there is no promise that in this political environment that these programs or funding will continue in the next administration or that the healing model of treating at risk children and youth will replace the established punishment model of expul-

sion and imprisonment.

These two powerful forces at work in America today are diametrically opposed in their approach to managing troubled children.

It is clear to most of the contributors to this book helping families and find the to become contributing members of the community pays bigger dividends and is the right thing to do.

Teachers are repeatedly blamed for school failures especially at election time when politicians make political hay by making teachers responsible for what they (teachers) had no control over. The very things the politicians were in fact guilty of not providing

If a community is unaware of the number of children expelled from daycare and grade school

Without growing support from a better-informed public, the probability of maintaining adequate support for the people, programs and policies that improve the lives of at risk children and families is unlikely.

(MEDIA)

Because child abuse stories do not sell newspapers, investigative journalism and long form stories about abuse and child protection are rare. A few years ago, the San Jose Mercury News reporting on extreme medicating of foster children made front page news nationally.

) are the exception and extremely rare in print media. There are reasons for this including the falling revenues of print media eliminating investigative journalism and the consolidation of printed media during this time of extreme politics and COVID.

Advertisers don't want to be associated with the topic – it's a losing proposition for the paper and a financial disincentive for serious reporting on this topic.

KARA has for years sought to present data and stories on social media under categories like “child abuse”, “children's issues”, childhood trauma” and other nomenclature referring specifically to at risk children.

It is almost impossible to find these categories on media print or online.

It's hard to know if this is because the general public doesn't know or doesn't want to see it.

Stories and data we do see in mainstream media are almost always singular horrific cases that electrify people.

Information that might give people insight into how many foster children end up involved in crime or leading dysfunctional lives the cost communities, money, safety and Because the topic;

a) is not popular with the public,

b) the absence of institutional / governmental reporting or accessibility leaves the media without the information required to present a meaningful overview of how the schools/foster care/courts/social services/

policing institutions are working or not working and, c) the financial crunch media organizations have been living with means fewer beat reporters and it's hard for any news organization to provide meaningful coverage in an atmosphere of toxic politics and brutal realities of the COVID pandemic.

The media will remain much like the legislature – reacting to the events of the day that are demanding their attention; COVID, Politics, Crime, Sports and the glitz and glamor of movies and the people that make them. These things sell newspapers and the money and public support go to those programs and policies.

In KARA's home state of MN, a billion dollars made available to build a stadium, along with a billion dollars to fund transportation and the billion dollars showed to rebuild a bridge that fell in the river at a time five million dollars could not be found for children's mental health.

This is a common reality in most states as there are plenty of lobbyists and loud voices for sports, entertainment and transportation speaking with money and power overpowering the dire needs of voiceless children.

1) (CULTURAL & COMMUNITY) What happens in the family is family business.

The lack of information about the depth and scope of child abuse in the community combined with social norms, a discomfort to even talk about the painful topic of child sex abuse and childhood trauma leaves children vulnerable to more abuse and neglect.

Euphemism and understatement contribute to a lack of understanding of the topic and almost complete ignorance of its impact on children, taxes, schools, public health and public safety.

Child abuse continues behind closed doors and remains unknown and unaddressed until long after the damage is done.

There is little desire or incentive for neighbors or friends to ask someone about the bruises or behaviors their apparently damaged child is seen to have.

Parental rights are embedded in our culture along with a centuries old punishment model leaving only a small space for anyone but a mandated reporter to show interest in how a family raises their child.

About half the 50 children this CASA guardian ad Litem helped to remove from toxic homes were sexually abused. This is a topic of extreme discomfort and most often avoided by even mandated reporters.

This guardian ad Litem has had several mandated reporters openly state that they look the other way rather than get any of that on them. To be sure, once the allegations of abuse are made, there will be consequences for all involved. It takes strong people to do hard things.

It does not help that most people are not aware of the signs of abuse or domestic violence.

Without institutional transparency and hard-nosed media reporting the public will remain uninformed or misinformed and not support the people, programs and policies that would interrupt child abuse in their community....(DRAFT CHAPTER 3 NOT COMPLETE)

