

FOSTER

CURRICULUM AND TRAINING TOOLKIT

*“You can’t always write the beginning to your story, but you can definitely write the end.”
-Mary*

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INTRODUCTION

FOSTER was designed with the purpose of creating a positive impact for the foster care and child welfare communities, and to be used as a tool to educate, train, and advance their organization's mission and goals.

This toolkit is meant to serve as a guide to help you integrate the film into existing trainings or curriculum you may already have or to be inspired to create educational materials or trainings you didn't have before.

It's up to you to determine the focus and needs of your materials, based on your own priorities and objectives.

The foster care system is complex, with many organizations focused on different aspects of the system. The film does a tremendous job of covering a number of issues, challenges, and areas of focus, with the intention of being used in a multitude of ways to create impact.



GETTING STARTED

To create your curriculum or training, you will need to work with [ro*co films](#) to acquire your license. There are several options for licenses available:

Classroom Instruction Edition- If you will be showing the film in a classroom or for small training sessions of less than 20 people, you may purchase the Classroom Instruction Edition. You are then eligible to show the film an unlimited number of times in small training sessions at one location. The license comes with a DVD copy of the film that you may use in perpetuity.

1-Year/3-Year Streaming License via Film Platform- If you will be showing the film in a classroom or for small training sessions of less than 20 people and you prefer streaming access, you may purchase a 1-year or 3-year streaming subscription. Streaming access is hosted by our partners at Film Platform and can be embedded into learning management systems. You are then eligible to show the film an unlimited number of times for your small trainings at one location during the length of your subscription.



ABOUT CHILD WELFARE

Child welfare is one of our most pressing social justice issues and public health concerns. A recent national study revealed that 1 in 8 children suffer a confirmed case of neglect or abuse by the time they are 18 years old.¹ While most children remain in the care of their families, in many cases of abuse or neglect, the state intervenes by placing children in foster care. In 2017, over 400,000 children and youth were living in the foster care system, which includes family foster homes, group homes, and supervised independent living arrangements.² This number continues to rise. These cases have enormous costs and consequences, not only for the children and families involved but also for our society.

The foster care system was designed to provide temporary homes for children whose families are in crisis. Instead, for too many, it has become an unacceptable long-term arrangement. The sudden and traumatic separation of children from their families can create a generational cycle of poor educational, health, and well-being outcomes. The system is in desperate need of remodeling to safely meet the needs of the children and families it serves.

Keeping children safe in strong families and supportive communities, stabilizing a family in crisis, or, when necessary, placing a child in the best possible setting from the start, requires all of us -- the public, neighbors, businesses, nonprofits, philanthropists, community leaders, and more -- to work together to define needs and find solutions that secure a safe, nurturing, and permanent family for every young person, whether through reunification with their birth family, kinship care, or adoption.

How can we keep children safe from harm? What steps can we take to address the conditions that negatively affect children and families? How can we provide children and their families the opportunity to thrive?

There are no simple answers to these questions, but we do know that when we put the safety of children and the preservation of family first, positive outcomes for young people, families, community, and society are greatly enhanced, reducing the cycles of struggle and instead putting children on a path toward a successful and fulfilling adulthood.

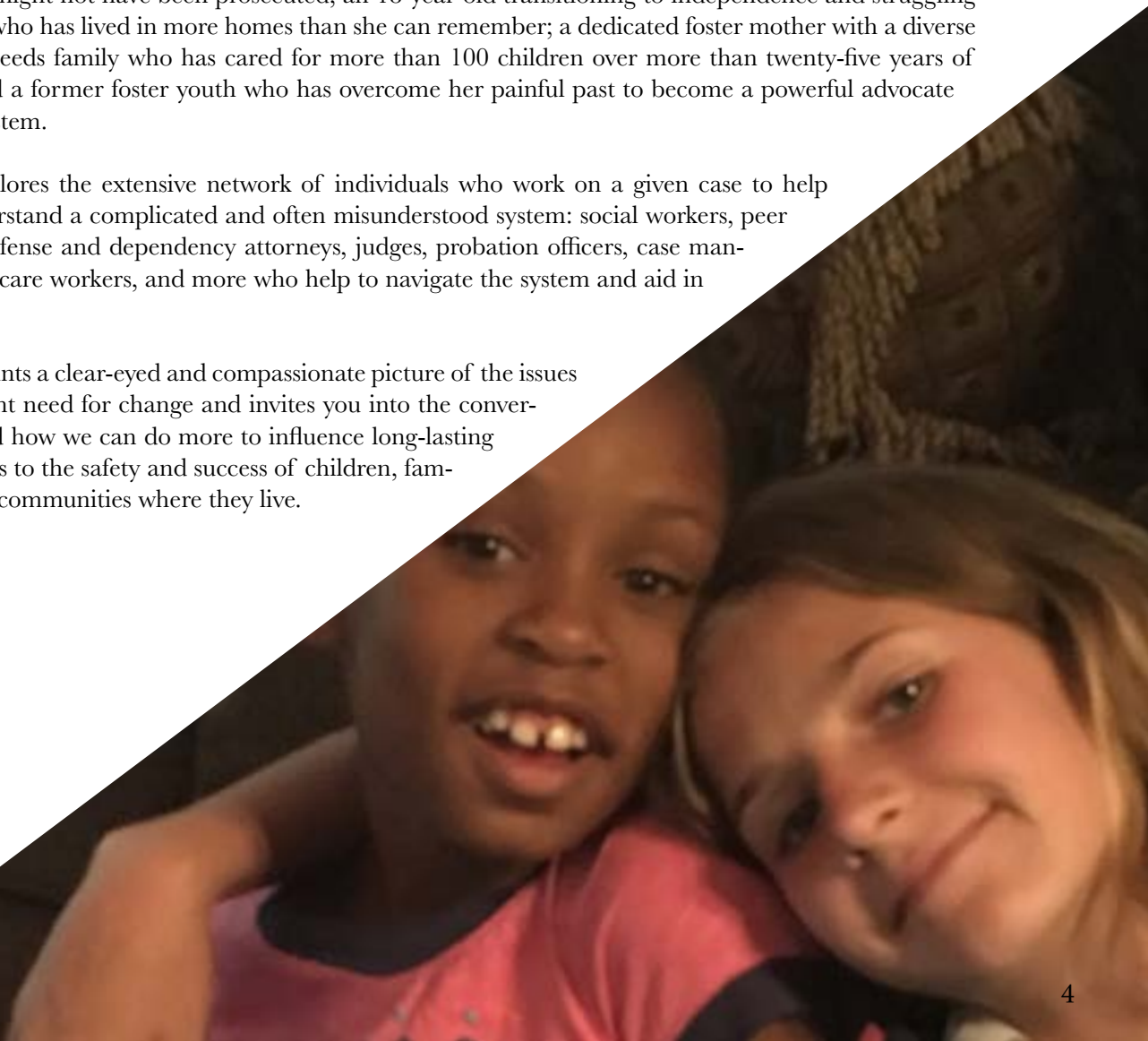
ABOUT THE FILM

Oscar®-winning filmmakers Deborah Oppenheimer and Mark Jonathan Harris (*Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*) spent more than four years documenting the complex child welfare system as seen through the eyes of those who know it best, with a focus on understanding the perspectives of children who have experienced foster care. With extraordinary access to the inner workings of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, the largest county child protection agency in the country, FOSTER examines the foster care system with a compassionate yet critical eye, interweaving gripping personal stories of children and youth, and parents and foster parents, with deep insights from social workers, advocates, attorneys, judges, and others who work tirelessly every day in the field.

FOSTER traces a complex path that starts in the cradle, following an infant born to a mother who tests positive for cocaine at the child's birth and her parents' efforts to recover and reunify; a teenager who entered the system through tragic circumstances and is on probation for a typical adolescent act that in an intact home might not have been prosecuted; an 18-year-old transitioning to independence and struggling with college who has lived in more homes than she can remember; a dedicated foster mother with a diverse and special needs family who has cared for more than 100 children over more than twenty-five years of fostering; and a former foster youth who has overcome her painful past to become a powerful advocate within the system.

The film explores the extensive network of individuals who work on a given case to help viewers understand a complicated and often misunderstood system: social workers, peer advocates, defense and dependency attorneys, judges, probation officers, case managers, health care workers, and more who help to navigate the system and aid in transitions.

FOSTER paints a clear-eyed and compassionate picture of the issues and the urgent need for change and invites you into the conversation around how we can do more to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families, and the communities where they live.



THEMES AND CENTRAL POINTS

FOSTER is intended to help viewers understand the realities and challenges within the current child welfare system and encourage conversation around solutions that might help to strengthen the health and safety of families.

To that end, a few especially relevant key themes in FOSTER are highlighted to inspire reflective discussions on the countless ways to support all children and families, focus on prevention, and promote child and family well-being:

- ◆ **Theme 1:**
Prevention of Neglect and Abuse as a Primary Strategy
- ◆ **Theme 2:**
Maintaining Family and Extended Family Connections
- ◆ **Theme 3:**
Birth Parents
- ◆ **Theme 4:**
Challenges of Long-Term Foster Care as a Replacement for a Permanent Family
- ◆ **Theme 5:**
Challenges Faced by the Current System
- ◆ **Theme 6:**
Building Broader Coalitions of Community Stakeholders to Take Responsibility for Child Well-Being Outcomes

FOSTER does not cover every aspect of the child welfare system and you may have questions that are not reflected in this guide. These themes are meant to begin a discussion, not end it. The more questions the better. To bring about effective reform of the child welfare system, we must work to build a more holistic understanding of each of the key perspectives reflected in the film, including understanding and supporting birth parents. Consider this guide an invitation to a conversation that we all need to have because together we can create better futures for children and families.

CHARACTERS AND STORYLINES

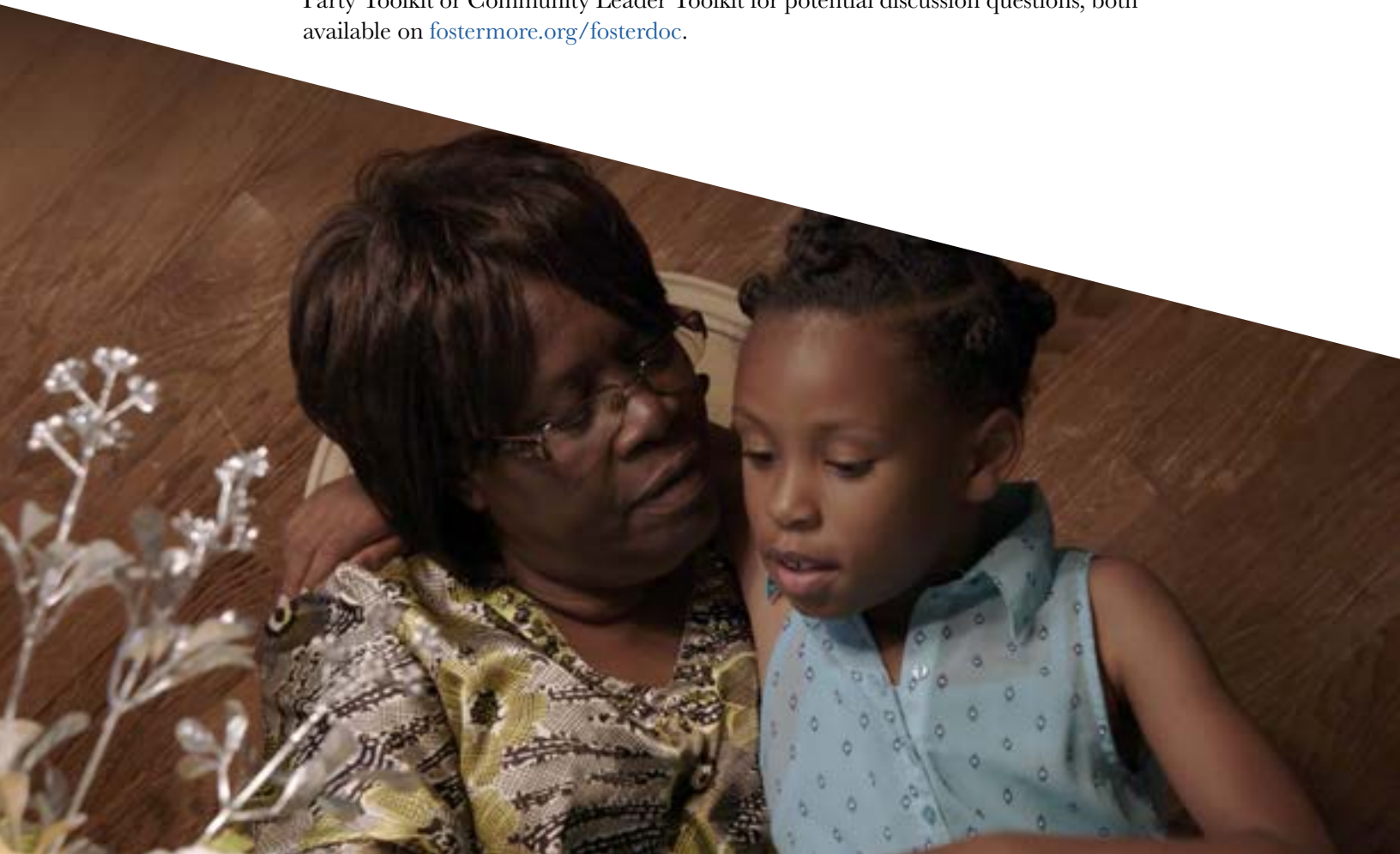
1. **Dasani:** A 16-year-old youth who has entered the foster care system through tragic circumstances and is supervised by both child welfare and the juvenile justice court, struggling to find stability.
2. **Mary:** An 18-year-old who has lived in more homes than she can remember. Now in college, she is transitioning to independence and grappling with her future.
3. **Chris, Raeanne, and Kris'lyn:** A family trying to remain together after their daughter, Kris'Lyn, is detained because she was born with drugs in her system. Chris is given sole custody of the baby while Raeanne goes through rehab and is allowed only supervised visits.
4. **Mrs. Beavers:** A foster mother who has taken in over 100 children. Her full house includes two teenaged girls, Sydney and Denyshia, who have become as close as sisters; Casi, an 8-year-old girl with autism; and Jake, her adopted son, who has cerebral palsy.
5. **Jessica:** A former foster child, probation youth and single mother of two who has become a social worker. She brings a unique perspective as both a client and an advocate in the system.



HOW TO DESIGN YOUR CURRICULUM OR TRAINING

Use the below tips and questions when creating your training or curriculum.

- After watching the film, what resonated most with you? What will resonate most, or be most applicable to your target audience?
- What is the goal or desired outcome for your training or curriculum? How long does your training last? Multiple days or just a few hours?
- You may want to show the whole film or select clips to play. If using clips, you'll want to identify the time codes while you watch so you can easily refer back to them.
- Create the structure of your training or curriculum around the goals for your event. What perspectives do you want to focus on?
- What are short term and long term action items you want your viewers to come away with?
- Consider partnering with a local organization or individuals to share different perspectives and approaches to the issues addressed in the film. Consider collaborating with foster parents, birth parents, healthcare providers, law enforcement, child welfare organizations, social workers, local government officials, etc.
- Represent different angles and viewpoints in your post-viewing discussions to diversify and enhance your post-screening discussions. Feel free to reference the Watch Party Toolkit or Community Leader Toolkit for potential discussion questions, both available on fostermore.org/fosterdoc.



ABOUT RO*CO FILMS

ro*co films is a leader in the documentary distribution world, with an educational division aimed at bringing these compelling real-life stories to schools, libraries, and other instructional environments across the country. In addition, ro*co broadens the impact and influence of our films by mobilizing communities to host, organize, and execute their own educational screening events.

For more information about licensing the film, please contact Allie Silvestri: allie@rocofilms.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ABA Center on Children and the Law

The Center promotes access to justice for children and families. They ensure those who work on children's law matters throughout the country have resources and support to do their jobs at the highest level. Click [here](#) to access the ABA Center on Children and Law's guide to legal representation in child welfare proceedings.

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/

Administration on Children, Youth and Families

As part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF),ACYF administers the major federal programs that support social services that promote the positive growth and development of children and youth and their families, protective services and shelter for children and youth in at-risk situations, and adoption for children with special needs.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/administration-on-children-youth-families/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics is a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children at risk of poor educational, economic, social, and health outcomes. Their work focuses on strengthening families, building stronger communities, and ensuring access to opportunity, because children need all three to succeed.

<https://www.aecf.org/>

Casey Family Programs

CFP is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America.

<https://www.casey.org/>

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

The mission of the Center on the Developing Child is to drive science-based innovation that achieves breakthrough outcomes for children facing adversity. The Center believes that advances in science provide a powerful source of new ideas focused on the early years of life. Founded in 2006, the Center catalyzes local, national, and international innovation in policy and practice focused on children and families. They design, test, and implement these ideas in collaboration with a broad network of research, practice, policy, community, and philanthropic leaders. Together, The Center seeks transformational impacts on lifelong learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

Children Awaiting Parents

Children Awaiting Parents, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to finding adoptive families for children in foster care who wait the longest. CAP works on behalf of children and sibling groups who wish to stay together and/or those with special needs.

<https://childrenawaitingparents.org/>

Children and Family Research Center

CFRC is an independent research organization that identifies research needs and supports research that is policy and practice relevant and encourages and facilitates public child welfare research activities through collaborative relationships.

<https://cfr.illinois.edu/>

Children's Defense Fund

CDF provides a strong, effective, and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments.

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/>

Child Welfare League of America

CWLA is a powerful coalition of hundreds of private and public agencies that has worked to serve children and families. Their expertise, leadership, and innovation on policies, programs, and practices help improve the lives of millions of children across the country.

<https://www.cwla.org/>

Circle of Parents

Circle of Parents provides a friendly, supportive environment led by parents and other caregivers. It's a place where anyone in a parenting role can openly discuss the successes and challenges of raising children. It's a place where they can find and share support.

<http://circleofparents.org/>

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation invests in 11 program areas, including providing access to safe water, supporting transition age foster youth, ending chronic homelessness, hospitality workforce development, disaster relief and recovery, helping young children affected by HIV and AIDS, and supporting the work of Catholic sisters. From its inception as a foundation created to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1.7 billion in grants, distributing \$112.5 million in the U.S. and around the world in 2018.

<https://www.hiltonfoundation.org/>

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national, nonprofit public charity dedicated exclusively to finding permanent homes and loving families for the children waiting in North America's foster care systems.

<https://www.davethomasfoundation.org/>

FosterClub

FosterClub is dedicated to providing a peer support network for children and youth in foster care.

<https://www.fosterclub.com/>

The Juvenile Law Center

Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity, and opportunity for youth in the child welfare and justice systems.

<https://jlc.org/>

The Future of Children

The Future of Children translates the best social science research about children and youth into information that is useful to policymakers, practitioners, grant-makers, advocates, the media, and students of public policy.

<https://futureofchildren.princeton.edu/>

National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (CASA)

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, together with its state and local member programs, supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every abused or neglected child in the United States can be safe, have a permanent home, and have the opportunity to thrive.

<https://www.casaforchildren.org/>

Nurse-Family Partnership

Nurse-Family Partnership is a national program that provides nurse home visits for first-time moms and their children in poverty.

<https://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/>

Youth Law Center

The Youth Law Center advocates to transform foster care and juvenile justice systems across the nation so every child and youth can thrive.

<https://ylc.org/>

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Children's Bureau Information Gateway

Many child welfare terms are subject to interpretation. The Glossary identifies commonly held definitions for terms that can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website or in products and materials developed by external entities (e.g., Federal or State Agencies or other reliable organizations). When noted, Information Gateway is cited as the source. The Glossary also provides common acronyms and includes links to information on major Federal legislation and related child welfare terms.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/glossary/glossary/>

Community Opportunity Map

This Community Opportunity Map is an interactive tool from Casey Family Programs that highlights the aspects of communities that are associated with safe children and strong families. This interactive, research-based framework is composed of select U.S. Census Bureau indicators and is available for any community in the nation to use. It was informed by significant evidence of the community factors correlated with child maltreatment and a healthy community framework developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

<https://www.casey.org/community-opportunity-map/>

Family First Prevention and Services Act

This website provides a summary and overview of the Family First Prevention Services Act which was signed into law as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act in 2018. This act reforms the federal child welfare financing streams, Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, to provide services to families who are at risk of entering the child welfare system.

<https://familyfirstact.org/>

Foster Care Overview

This handbook from the State of Wisconsin provides a broad overview of Foster Care.

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5000chapter1.pdf>

Preventive Services

This fact sheet from the NYC Administration for Children's Services provides an overview of the preventive services designed to help families keep their children safely at home.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/child-welfare/preventive-services.page>

How the Child Welfare System Works

This factsheet from the Child Welfare Information Gateway provides an overview of the Child Welfare System and the steps taken after a possible abuse or neglect is reported.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/cpswork.pdf>

Understanding Texas' Child Protection Services System

This report from TexProtects outlines how the child welfare system operates on a state level.

https://www.texprotects.org/media/uploads/texas_cps_system_%26_flowchart.pdf

END NOTES

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⁵ Placement stability strategies – Casey Family Programs. (2018, October 03). Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <https://www.casey.org/strategies-improve-placement-stability/>

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⁷ Picker, L. (n.d.). Does Child Abuse Cause Crime? Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/digest/jan07/w12171.html>

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