

**What Parents Say About....
Supporting Families Rather than Reporting Them
Changing Mandated Reporting Policies and Practices**

December 4, 2024



WELCOME

Please share your name, state,
and role in the chat box



The BPNN 2024 Team



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Agenda

- Welcome and Policy Update
- Introduce the new *What Parents Say About...* Issue Brief
- Presenters share their why
- Discuss the challenges of mandated reporting
- Emerging Solutions
- Call to Action: It starts with Pilina
- Questions and Wrap Up



Public Policy Update



Vanessa Spagnoli
Public Policy Director



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safe children | strong families | supportive communities

Federal Update 2024 Election Results

- In 2025, the Executive Branch, House of Representatives and the Senate will all be controlled by the Republican Party.
- New Congress will be sworn in on January 3rd becoming the 119th
- Committee Leadership will largely remain the same in the House of Representatives but will shift in the Senate given the new majority, a 53/47 split.

The Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act (Title IV-B)

- Would reauthorize and place key investments in child welfare programs. The bipartisan legislation incorporates policies from 16 Member bills and was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on September 18, 2024. The Senate introduced its version on November 18, 2024.
- Among other things, the Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act would extend the authorization of discretionary funding for CWS, support the modernization of Title IV-B programs in alignment of FFSPA, expand funding for Indian Tribes and Family Resource Centers.

CA Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force



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

- 1 Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous people, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.
- 2 Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California's mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families' needs appropriately.
- 3 Ensure that Mandated Reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.
- 4 Ensure that Mandated Reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.
- 5 Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in Mandated Reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.



Presenters



Roger De Leon, Birth father representative on the California Child Welfare Council, Co-Chair of Task Force for Mandated Supporting, Member of the Alliance's Birth Parent National Network (California)



Christina Romero, Executive Director, Parent Advocates for Transformation and Healing (Path), Member of Alliance's Birth Parent National Network (Florida)



Kimberly Nabarro, EPIC Ohana Makua Ally, Parent Partner, Member of the Alliance's Birth Parent National Network (Hawaii)



Jim McKay, National Director of Public Policy Children's Trust Fund Alliance



What Parents Say About...
Supporting Families Rather Than Reporting Them
 Changing Mandated Reporting Policies and Practices

INTRODUCTION
 Parents all across the country are speaking out about how mandated reporting can cause trauma to children and families. Fear of mandated reporting is a barrier for many families to seek help. Inconsistency in reporting laws from state to state means that families may be treated differently based on where they live.

The Children's Trust Fund Alliance, in partnership with the Birth Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) and Casey Family Program, spearheaded the development of this issue brief focused on a new approach to supporting families whenever possible rather than reporting them. We also gathered more information from parents in the Alliance's Birth Parent National Network (BPNN) to help inform the call to action and recommendations in this issue brief. For more information about these two important parent groups, please see the last page of this document.

Our goal was to include the perspectives of parents with life experiences involving the child welfare system and the mandated reporting system. Through surveys and facilitated conversations, we gathered parent feedback on how to reduce the numbers of families reported to child protective services for neglect or abuse allegations.

We developed this issue brief to elevate the voices of parents on this important and timely topic to better inform policymakers, child welfare leaders and other stakeholders about: child welfare's harm families experience from an unnecessary child protective service report.

- Recognizing the harm families experience from an unnecessary child protective service report.
- Improving mandated reporting and child welfare team policies and practices so that fewer families are subjected to unwarranted investigations and so that fewer families become involved with the child welfare system.
- Shifting the focus of our child welfare systems from surveillance of families towards support of families.
- Changing the mandated reporting system to support parents and caregivers in accessing community resources and keeping children safely at home with their families whenever possible.

What's Inside

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- The Challenges of Mandated Reporting 2
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When reports are made to child protective services, we are subjecting families to experience the worst and sometimes most traumatic events of their lives. If services for parents are more easily accessible without court and child protective services (CPS) involvement, their parents can access the resources they need to make informed and healthy decisions about the direction of their families and their growth.
Breanna Campion, parent, Washington State

CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND Alliance

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What is Mandated Reporting?

"When I had my first and only experience of the reporting of my child, I was really reporting fear of the unknown and being by child abuse. I would have been more likely to file a complaint had there been a community center and given me access of encouragement instead of being contacted 'reporting to me or your power and control'."
Kennedy M. Powell

Mandated reporting is the legal requirement that professionals notify appropriate authorities about situations when children and certain other groups of vulnerable individuals are suspected of being abused or neglected. State laws addressing the abuse and neglect of children were passed in all 50 states following the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act that required all states to include child protection in their child welfare systems.

Eighteen states require all people to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Other states identify specific professionals as mandated reporters. Specific child protective services (CPS) individuals designated as mandated reporters typically have frequent contact with children.

The Challenges of Mandated Reporting

Why an Over Reliance on Reporting is Problematic

- Families who need support often get investigated – not supported.
- Families are reluctant to seek services for fear of being reported.
- The CPS system is overwhelmed due to unwarranted reports relating to poverty.

From the perspective of a parent, the large number of mandated reports leads to the inability of professionals to effectively respond to other parent needs. The system is over-reliant on reporting and not on providing support to other parent needs. This leads to a cycle of reporting and not on providing support to other parent needs.

Breanna Campion, parent, Washington State

Across the country, mandated reporting laws are in place for professionals and community members who work with children and families, such as teachers, social workers, doctors, police officers and other child serving individuals, to make reports of suspected child abuse or neglect to appropriate government authorities. Mandated reporter requirements have expanded greatly during the past 40 years leading to significant increases in the numbers of reports made, as well as decreasing accuracy of the reports.

The sheer number of families who are reported to child welfare agencies nationally is staggering. In 2021, child abuse hotlines received approximately 3,000,000 referrals of alleged maltreatment. 2,245,000 of those referrals became an investigated report, and only 600,000 (26.4%) of those reports were confirmed by child protective services as cases of maltreatment.

Nationally, more than one in three (33%) of all children will be subject to a report prior to their 18th birthday according to the latest estimates by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The numbers are even higher for Black children's 18th birthday. The vast majority of those reports will not be substantiated. These unsubstantiated reports make it more difficult to identify children in need of protection.

Stephan Spitzer, New York

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What Parents Say About... Supporting Families Rather Than Reporting Them

<https://ctfalliance.sharefile.com/share/view/sce1f49825e4444a8cdf85fe089af009>



Other Issue Briefs in the What Parents Say About ... Series

What Parents Say About...Equity and Support for Underserved Communities

What Parents Say About...Supporting Families to Provide a Strong Start for Their Young Children

What Parents Say About...Building a 21st Century Community-Based Approach to Strengthening Families

What Parents Say About...Keeping Families Together and Strong Through Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies

What Parents Say About...Prevention Strategies that Work to Keep Families Together, Resilient and Strong

What Parents Say About...Using the Protective Factors to Understand Substance Abuse and Recovery

What Parents Say About...What Works in Substance Abuse Recovery to Strengthen Protective Factors in Families and Ensure Children's Safety and Well-Being

<https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bpnn/>



Why this Publication is Important

To elevate the voices of parents on this important topic to better inform policymakers, community and child welfare leaders and other key stakeholders about:

- Recognizing the harm families experience from an unnecessary child protective service report
- Improving mandated reporting and child welfare laws, policies and practices
- Shifting the focus of our systems from surveillance towards support of families
- Changing the mandated reporting system to support parents and caregivers in accessing community resources.



What's your why...

Why is it important to you that people **support** families rather than make an **unwarranted report** about them?



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

Breanna Campos, parent, Washington State



<https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bpnn/>





“We need to provide more training to mandated reporters and community partners. The training needs to cover topics specifically related to certain demographics and populations to better understand the impact of racial and ethnic bias. We need to provide cultural competency training to better understand the traditions and practices of the community serviced so that children are not removed based on poverty or cultural norms that might not be recognized by others.”

—Advocate

Mandated Reporting

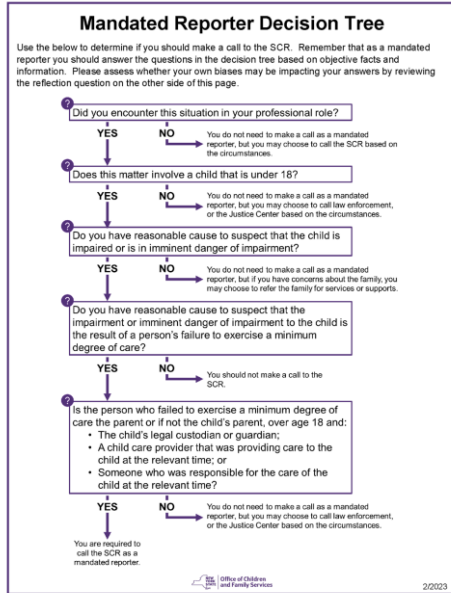
- Mandated reporting laws are in place for professionals and community members who work with children and families to make reports of suspected child abuse or neglect to appropriate government authorities.
- In 2021 child abuse hotlines received approximately 3,900,000 referrals of alleged maltreatment,
- About 1 in 7 (15.4%) of those reports were confirmed by child protective services as cases of maltreatment. (Children's Bureau (2023)
- Nationally, more than one in three (37.4%) of all children will be subject to a report prior to their 18th birthday (NCANDS).
- The numbers are even higher for Black families with 53% of Black families being subject to a CPS investigation prior to their child's 18th birthday.

Challenges with Mandated Reporting

- Families who need support often get investigated - not supported
- Families are reluctant to seek services for fear of being reported
- The child protective services system is overwhelmed due to unwarranted reports related to poverty

Emerging Solutions

*What if, instead of watching for families to fall,
we built systems that ensured they could
stand?*



Assessing for Bias in Decision-Making

Each assessment made by a mandated reporter regarding whether to call the SCR can change the course of the life of a child and the members of a family. It is important to be aware of the propensity for implicit or explicit bias and to be intentional about making decisions based on the objective facts of a situation.

One proven strategy to mitigate bias is to examine whether the facts of the situation would lead you to the same decision to call the SCR if the demographic information for the child or family were different.

For example, would you make the same decision to call if any of the following were different? The child or family's:

- Race?
- Ethnicity?
- Gender?
- Gender identity?
- Sexual orientation or expression?
- Religion?
- Immigration status?
- Primary spoken language?
- Culture?
- Age?
- Neighborhood where they reside?
- Presence of a disability?
- Occupation?
- Socio-economic status?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, bias may be impacting your decision to make the call.

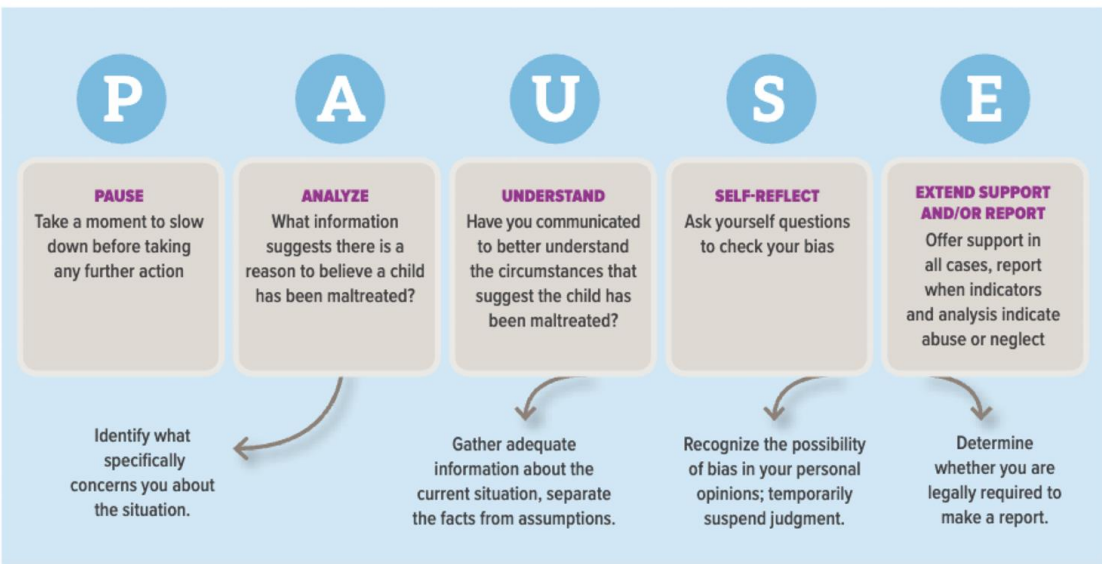
If you are interested in learning more about what feeds into implicit bias, Harvard University has developed the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You can access a variety of IAT tests here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

City of Chicago, Office of Children and Family Services | 2/2023

Reforms to Mandated Reporting Practices



Thinking Critically with the P.A.U.S.E. Framework



Reforms in State Laws, Policies and Practices

California passed a law in 2022 that prohibits reports to CPS for only poverty-related reasons

Los Angeles County Coalition, including parents, caregivers, researchers, and stakeholders, developed a plan that includes:

- Monitoring data trends for hotline calls
- Revising the training curriculum for mandated reporters
- Creating a new tool to help mandated reporters make more accurate, consistent, and equitable reporting decisions
- Creating a new culture of mandated supporting to link families to community-based prevention services

Texas passed legislation in 2023 that eliminates anonymous reports of suspected child maltreatment. In 2021, Texas passed legislation that bars the child welfare agency from removing children in non-emergencies and also established a new definition of child neglect.

Hennepin County, Minnesota, is providing technical assistance to local organizations to help reduce disparities and avoid unnecessary mandated reports.

Washington State Passed the Keeping Families Together Act in 2023, aimed at reducing foster care placements and supporting families with preventive services. Requires courts to weigh the harm of removing children and consider services to prevent removal.



California Child Welfare Council (CWC) Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force Recommendations

- March 2023 - CWC unanimously approved a set of Community Pathway recommendations with the goals to:
 - (1) Reform the state's mandated reporting system and
 - (2) Build strong and connected community supports
- The combination of these aspirational goals will help to ensure families and children are strong and supported in their communities.
- Led to the formation of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force (MCRS)
- 32 MCRS Task Force members worked in collaboration with 78 subcommittee members including individuals with lived experience to develop priorities and recommendations
- Produced Report: *Shifting from Reporting Families to Supporting Families* (Released 9/24)

MCRS Task Force Co-Chairs:

- ★ Dana Blackwell, Senior Director, Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
- ★ Roger De Leon, Jr., Birth Parent, Parent Partner and Father Advocate



Community-Based Approaches

Prevent Child Abuse America Chapters in Arizona, Kentucky, New Jersey, and West Virginia are implementing "LEAN on Me" initiatives. LEAN on Me helps community members learn how they can support families through:

Listening

- Families know their own needs best.

Empathy

- We all need help sometimes.

Affirmation

- What is strong – not what is wrong.

Non-judgment

- Families deserve dignity and respect, no matter what.

Community workshop participants learn how to engage families who need support, find resources for families, and gain tools to understand better the differences between poverty and neglect to help reduce unwarranted reports to CPS.



Call to Action: It starts with Pilina

Shift the Message: Support families rather than make an unwarranted report about them



Call to Action: It starts with Pilina

Shift the Message: Support Families Rather Than Report Them

Review your state's mandated reporting laws and consider taking action to make changes

Encourage your state to narrow the front door of child protection service agencies by revising laws and regulations

Expand availability of community supports for families

Create a community advisory group that includes parents other stakeholders to inform policymakers and community leaders about needed improvements in mandated reporting policies

Encourage state and counties to update their mandatory reporting training curricula

Develop and promote new messages that help professionals reduce reports to CPS

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Community Center



“My concern with mandatory reporting is that it largely absolves the community of any sense of duty to help. We teach and ingrain this need to report but not support. Right now we have an opportunity to strengthen supports developed and delivered by communities themselves.”

Timothy Phipps, parent, Oregon

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Resources

Children's Trust Fund Alliance - <https://ctfalliance.org/>
Alliance's training of trainers: *Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work* <https://ctfalliance.org/protective-factors/#TrainingofTrainers>

Casey Family Programs - <https://www.casey.org/>
What Parents Say About... Supporting Families Rather Than Reporting Them
<https://ctfalliance.sharefile.com/share/view/sce1f49825e44444a8cdf85fe089af009>

Alliance's Birth Parent National Network - <https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bpnn/>

Community Cafes training provided by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance - <https://ctfalliance.org/building-healthy-communities/#CommunityCafes>

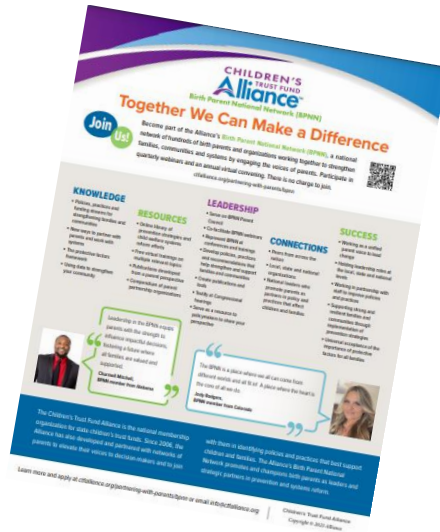
SHIFTING FROM REPORTING FAMILIES TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES California's Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and Recommendations, September 2024

<https://www.caltrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/MRCS-Task-Force-Report-for-09-04-24.pdf>

Na Kama a Haloa is a community-based network - <https://www.epicohana.org/nakama>



Join the BPNN!



Save the Date

Next Caring Conversation Monday, December 16th

1pm ET • 12pm CT • 11am MT • 10am PT

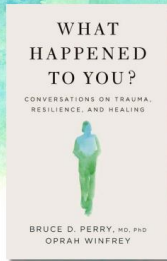


2024 Book Club Check Ins

Join us for our book club check-ins in 2024!

Journey to Resilience: From Trauma to Healing

March 5th 2:00 pm–3:00 Eastern
May 21st 2:00 pm–3:00 Eastern
August 13th 2:00 pm–3:00 Eastern
December 3 2:00 pm–3:00 Eastern



Learn more: <https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/book-club/>



Tuesday, December 10th

2pm ET/1pm CT/12pm MT/11am PT



Next BFPP Monthly Meeting



Tuesday December 17th

12:30pmET/11:30am CT/10:30am MT/ 9:30am PT



Family First Prevention Services Act



FAMILY VOICES UNITED

familyvoicesunited.org



Evaluation

<https://forms.gle/aQzPZjojLMQht2eT6>



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