upEND

How We endUP
A Future Without Family Policing

June 18, 2021

Reviewers

About This Document

How We endUP offers ideas about how we can, in community, move toward abolition of family policing. The intended audience are those committed to improving the safety and well-being of children, youth, and families in their communities and those who recognize the urgency of ending the harms done to Black, Native, and Latinx families by the family policing system. This document is not a prescription with detailed policy and practice recommendations—we believe that work must be done within communities. Our intention is to contribute to work already occurring and provoke new actions and innovations from others. We invite you to build on these ideas, share with us the actions you are undertaking, and let us know ideas we missed. We want to continue to find ways to support your work and the exchange of information. Over the next year, we hope to explore our collective ideas and efforts in more depth together. This is a living document and was last updated on June 18, 2021.

Introduction

The child welfare system is predicated on the subjugation, surveillance, control, and punishment of mostly Black and Native communities experiencing significant poverty. We more accurately refer to this as the family policing system.[i] The system and its supporters portray family policing as a legitimate, supportive helping system—one that protects the safety and well-being of children through necessary state-sanctioned interventions. But the history and reality of the system's impact on the lives of children, families, and communities underscores the ways in which the system functions to maintain anti-Blackness, White supremacy, racial capitalism, and colonialism. We can collectively do better. *How We endUP* puts forth ideas about how we can, in community, improve support and care for children, youth, and families as we move toward abolition of family policing. These ideas are intertwined and address what must be dismantled as well as what must be created and supported.

The destruction of Black and Native families and communities in the United States began with American chattel slavery and the disposition of Native people from land through settler colonialism. For over 400 years, Black children have been torn from their families for the exploitation of Black labor necessary for capitalist accumulation.[1] As Professor Dorothy Roberts argues, the destruction of Black families through slavery laid the foundation for the devaluation of Black families through the surveillance and policing of today's family policing system.[2] The making of what we now know as the United States further required the attempted genocide and disposition of Native communities to allow settlers to profit from stolen land.[3] This legacy of exploitation, violence, and control continues through the modern family policing system.

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[i] We use the term family policing system to refer to what has more commonly been known as the child welfare system. We believe this term more accurately captures the roles this system plays in the lives of families, which include surveillance, regulation, and punishment, all roles associated with policing rather than children's welfare. These roles are used to maintain the control and oppression of Black, Native, and Latinx families, which is also consistent with the practice of policing.

The family policing system's intent to surveil, control, and separate poor families and their children emanates from its inception. The architect of the modern family policing system, Charles Loring Brace, envisioned a system that would "save" poor children by removing them from their communities and families to instill in them the value of hard work.[4] Through the Orphan Train Movement, the precursor to the modern family policing system, Brace and the Children's Aid Society orchestrated a movement that took poor children, who were mostly immigrants, from their communities, often without consent, and lent them to various families where they labored on their farms.

In the words of Brace, the system intended to discipline "these dangerous classes" of children into workers to prevent a revolt against capital.[5] That is, Brace built a system intended to discipline working class people to accept personal responsibility as the solution to poverty to convince society that poor parents were neglectful and unfit. The system was thus deemed necessary to intervene on behalf of poor children, "saving" them from their families and communities. At its very inception, the system's primary intervention became family separation, blaming parents for their poverty to obscure the need to dismantle the social structures responsible for poverty.

The family policing system initially targeted poor White immigrant children and families because Black and Native children and families were not fully incorporated into government systems of support. Yet, as government institutions began to integrate, and child welfare policy became more formalized, the family policing system disproportionately separated Black children from their families based on Eurocentric and White supremacist ideas of parenting and family structure.[6] Today, more than half of all Black children in the United States are investigated by child welfare authorities,[7] and Black and Native children are forcibly separated from their parents and placed in foster care at rates significantly higher than those of White children.[8] Stratified across race, class, gender, disability, and citizenship, the family policing system systematically targets communities for surveillance and punishment in the name of saving and protecting children.

We point to the ways in which this history of anti-Blackness, White supremacy, colonialism, and racial capitalism shape the modern family policing system because reforms intended to strengthen the system are often proposed as the solution to what the field has long called racial disproportionality and disparities.[9] Indeed, data show that Black, Native, and, in many jurisdictions, Latinx children enter foster care at rates significantly higher than their proportion of the general population and experience racial disparities at multiple decision points within the system.[10] But reforms that focus solely on racial disproportionality and disparities obscure how the system functions as intended and absolves us from the larger societal changes required. The family policing system was built to separate children from their families, and as such, reforms cannot fix a system that is functioning as intended.

Thus, the vision for the future of the family policing system must be a vision of abolition. The racist origins of family separation and the racist intent upon which the family policing system is built are so deeply rooted in its policies and structures, they cannot simply be revised or modified. Critics of abolition often argue that abolitionists ignore the safety and well-being of children. Conversely, upEND and the larger movements we are joining focus on the elements of care and child, family, and community well-being that the family policing system neglects. We focus on transforming material conditions and disrupting the social order that causes families to experience harm and hardship. When abuse and harm do occur, we strive to build and support solutions that are non-carceral and center accountability, safety, and healing.

We strive for abolition because we understand that the biggest threats to child safety and well-being are anti-Blackness, economic exploitation produced by racial capitalism,[11] the continuing cultural genocide produced by colonialism, gender oppression sustained through patriarchy, the ableism entrenched by the current system, and White supremacist norms of good parenting, family, and safety—norms that maintain power in the hands of oppressive systems. Abolition seeks solutions for issues for which the state has no solutions, because the current system maintains and upholds ideologies and constructs that ensure harm will continue. We seek to build a society where children, families, and communities self-determine what well-being and safety mean for them and are supported with the resources to do so because they are no longer oppressed by a system that destroys their ties to families and communities.

How We endUP puts forth ideas about the abolition of family policing. Some of the ideas focus on reducing harm to parents, children, and families who are currently in the system, while others work to envision a world without family policing and its tools of surveillance, control, and separation. Importantly, while this document focuses specifically on the family policing system, we understand that the family policing system is just one part of the carceral web. From incarceration, to borders, to family policing, we oppose the surveillance and state-sanctioned separation of children from their families in all forms. We build on the work of reproductive justice, which centers bodily autonomy and asserts that parents should live in a society where they have power to make decisions about how and when they will parent and the ability to raise their families in conditions that are free of oppression.[12] We also recognize that reparations are key to abolition; beyond necessary monetary payment, we believe that true reparations require the dismantling of the structures that produce harm—racial capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, White supremacy, patriarchy, ageism, adultism, abelism, and anti-Blackness. In other words, we seek to build a world where the care, support, and well-being of children, families, and communities is fully realized.

To be clear, abolition requires the complete elimination of the existing family policing system and a fundamental transformation of the ways in which society supports children, families, and communities. Doing so is a process that involves many people and an array of efforts and organizing. Abolition involves simultaneously dismantling the racist policies and structures that produce harm and replacing them with resources and supports designed by families and communities that promote the safety and well-being of children in their homes. In this way, abolition is not about simply ending the family policing system, nor is it about ignoring child safety; it is about creating the conditions in society where the need for family policing is obsolete. Here are some ideas to help us get there. Please share yours too.

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End the Involuntary Separation of Children from Parents

It is well-documented that the separation of children from their parents results in significant and lifelong trauma, as well as increased risk of harmful outcomes including mental health disorders, substance use disorders, unemployment, and homelessness.[13] The risk of experiencing these outcomes is increased for Black, Native, and, in many instances, Latinx youth who are disproportionately separated from their parents and placed in foster care by the family policing system.[14] For families and communities, surveillance and disproportionate separation leads to intergenerational trauma and harm that perpetuate the oppressive conditions that maintain injustices among Black, Native, and Latinx families and communities. Nationally, more than 60% of state-sanctioned family separations are due to neglect,[15] which is largely associated with the conditions of living in poverty.[16] Beyond this, children are often separated from their parents due to reasons unrelated to serious harm. Racist practices and beliefs, which include judgments against a White normative parenting standard; vague definitions of maltreatment; inconsistent and subjective decision-making; and fear of liability are all factors that contribute to the inappropriate use of family separation. The harms that result from state-sanctioned separation and placement in foster care will only end when this practice is discontinued, and children are supported within their families and communities.

- **Immediately end removals due to poverty and poverty-related concerns.** While definitions of neglect vary by state, most states define neglect as a failure to provide for basic needs including food, nutrition, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care.[17] The inability to meet these needs is largely due to poverty and related concerns of homelessness and joblessness. The prevalence of poverty is a result of racial capitalism and centuries of racism in public policies that disproportionately impact Black, Native, and Latinx families.[18] Yet when parents experience poverty and are unable to meet their children's basic needs, they are held responsible for neglect and their children are at risk

of being removed by the family policing system. The determination of neglect and the act of family separation are largely influenced by narratives of poverty based on racial stereotypes and deep-seated biases that result in the disproportionate removal of Black and Native children from their parents.[19] The family policing system does not provide services to remedy poverty, and as such, state-sanctioned separation of children from their parents should not be a response to families living in poverty. Rather, parents should have access to the resources they need to ensure healthy development for themselves and for their children, including food, housing, and other direct material support.

- **Urge state legislators and courts to oppose and limit the state-sanctioned separation of children from their parents.** All removals conducted by the family policing system must be approved by a juvenile or family court judge, who has the authority to temporarily—and potentially permanently—remove custody of a child from a parent and transfer custody to the state. Yet at the point of involuntary removal, judges do not consistently and rigorously question the decisions made by family policing agents and fail to consider the harm that will occur because of removal.[20] The use of state-sanctioned family separation can be significantly limited through judicial intervention.[21] Further, while judges can have an immediate impact on individual cases, state legislators can have a larger impact by enacting legislation that significantly limits the coercive power of the state to separate children from their parents. Ultimately, legislative solutions are necessary to end state-sanctioned family separations and prioritize the well-being of children in their homes and communities. Legislative solutions include significant investments in community-based resources AND fundamental needs, including child allowances and a universal basic income.

- **Dismantle the myth of voluntary services and discontinue practices that punish parents for "non-compliance."** Some families brought to the attention of family policing systems do not meet the state's criteria for removal, but the state still has concerns about the issues that brought the family to the attention of the system. These families are offered services that are classified as "voluntary" and are often referred to as "family preservation services" or "alternative responses."[22] Voluntary services cannot be provided by a system with the coercive power to separate children from their parents. Many of these services lack relevance to families' actual needs and are provided to families within a system of surveillance and punishment that penalizes parents for any form of "non-compliance."[23] In this regard, "compliance" and "non-compliance" are judgments passed on families that are solely related to participation in services, not on whether services are effective in meeting families' needs. Compliance is often impossible as families are asked to participate in services with no consideration to issues of accessibility, transportation, childcare, or job responsibilities.[24] These barriers are structural and are exacerbated for families living in poverty, who are disproportionately Black, Native, and Latinx. Further, families describe service requirements and the expectations of what they must do as unclear and continually shifting.[25] Yet, a parent's lack of compliance is characterized as lack of cooperation,

justifying family separation as a means of enforcing compliance. The separation of children from their parents should not be a punishment for families who are unable to meet the demands of a coercive state system. Rather, families should have access to and choice in appropriate resources, without coercion, to ensure both parents' and children's well-being.

- **Oppose expansions to foster care funding and begin a process of divesting funding from foster care and increasing investments in families and communities.** Nearly $8 billion is spent annually to maintain the current system of foster care.[26] Yet in response to the multiple layers of harm that result from foster care intervention, as well as the adverse outcomes experienced by youth aging out of foster care, family policing systems often advocate for increased funding for foster care services, including specialized placement options for youth with mental health and behavioral health challenges. Increased funding is also requested to provide services for older youth who have never been reunified with their parents, including independent living programs. The need for these services exists because the family policing system has failed children and youth, compounding the harm of multiple placements, lack of effective treatment and supports, and lack of connection to family. Family separation and placement in foster care should not be the gateway by which youth are eligible to receive services that nominally promote healthy development, as these services come at the expense of children losing their identities, families, and communities. Rather, funding should be divested from foster care and heavily invested in services that support the healthy development of children and families within their own communities. The field already recognizes the harms of incentivizing financing in deep end, congregate care placements and has worked to shift funding to increased prevention services.[27] We are calling for bigger funding shifts—shifts that support families directly and enable communities to care for families currently impacted by family policing. These shifts must dismantle old funding structures and build new ones to support families and communities through non-coercive means.

- **Repeal the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and end the involuntary Termination of Parental Rights.** When children are involuntarily separated from their parents, the family policing system often moves quickly toward termination of parental rights as a means of establishing "permanency" for youth through adoption or other means. This is often due to parents' inability to meet the demands of family policing systems within the timelines set forth in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). ASFA requires that states move to terminate parental rights if a child has been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months. In addition, financial incentives are built into ASFA that encourage states to increase adoptions.[28] Rather than working to achieve family healing and reunification, these incentives encourage states to move expeditiously toward adoption or other permanency options. This disproportionately harms Black and Native children, who are not only more likely to be placed in foster care than White children, but also spend longer periods of time in foster care than White children,[29] and thus are more vulnerable to termination of parental rights. All policies that support the involuntary Termination of Parental Rights, including ASFA, should be repealed. Family preservation should be prioritized in all cases and the practice of involuntarily terminating parental rights should be ended.

Reunite Children Currently in Care with Their Families and Communities

Over 420,000 children are currently in foster care.[30] The majority of these children entered foster care due to allegations of neglect,[31] which is largely associated with poverty. Many others entered foster care due to racist policies and decision-making, vague and subjective standards of child maltreatment, and other inconsistent decision-making practices.[32] These children are disproportionately Black, Native, and in many states, Latinx.[33] The disproportionate involvement of these children results in disproportionate harm due to the adverse outcomes associated with foster care. The harm that results from family separation and placement in foster care is immediate and accumulates daily. To prevent further harm, children should be reunited with their families and communities and reparations should be provided for the harm that was caused.

- **Require immediate efforts to achieve reunification.** Due to the harm that results from family separation and placement in foster care, immediate efforts should be made to safely reunify all children with their families. Cases progressing toward reunification should be expedited and cases not progressing toward reunification should be reassessed. In the absence of immediate and severe safety concerns, these efforts should be mandated by the courts responsible for overseeing these cases. When reunification with family is not possible, family-driven and community-based solutions should be sought that allow children to live safely in their communities with extended family or kin. These decisions should be made by families and communities.

- **Eliminate barriers that prevent or delay reunification.** Once children enter foster care, they are often prevented from reunifying with their families due to factors unrelated to immediate and severe risk of harm. These include income, employment, stable housing,

criminal histories, immigration status, and others.[34] Often the standard for reunification is much higher than the standard for removal, and parents are punished for any form of "non-compliance" without regard to the relevance or accessibility of services.[35] Judges and courts should ensure that artificial barriers to reunification are eliminated to expedite the reunification of children with their families and communities.

- **Ensure all families have free, quality legal representation.** Quality legal representation should be provided in a timely way and from the initial point of contact with the family policing system to facilitate reunification. Research shows that parents who have legal representation have higher rates of reunification,[36] and that interdisciplinary legal services—teams of lawyers, social workers, and parent advocates working in non-profit organizations—are effective in expediting permanency for children without impacting child maltreatment rates.[37] Further, robust legal aid can help families in accessing benefits, fighting eviction or utility issues, addressing immigration concerns, and other legal issues—all of which are necessary for families to be well and prevent involvement with the family policing system.

- **Redirect funds used to support children in foster care to families upon reunification.** Families living in poverty are significantly more likely to become involved with the family policing system than families who are not living in poverty.[38] Rather than providing families with material supports that can address the concerns that result from poverty, children are separated and placed in foster homes as a means of providing for their needs. The family policing system then provides unrelated foster parents with direct cash payments to meet children's needs, rather than providing that assistance directly to the parents who need it. Further, when children are placed in foster care, parents often incur additional costs and may experience a loss of wages or reduced employment while struggling to meet the demands placed on them by the state.[39] Until large-scale financial supports such as a child allowance and a universal basic income exist, families should be provided with the funds used to support children in foster care, including payments for specialized care, immediately upon reunification as a means of ensuring they have the resources necessary to meet their children's needs. Additionally, families must be financially compensated for income and/or housing lost while children were in foster care or when meeting service plan demands.

- **End the criminalization of foster youth behaviors and release youth in foster care from carceral systems.** Due to the trauma and harm that result from family separation and placement in foster care, including experiencing multiple placement changes, children in foster care may engage in behaviors that reflect the trauma and harm they have experienced. These may include running away, absences from school, behavior deemed as aggressive or non-compliant, substance use, and others. These behaviors are often criminalized, and youth are arrested and detained by carceral systems.[40] When this occurs, the adultification of Black youth contributes to inequities in decision-making and disparities in punishment.[41] Youth in foster care should not be detained in carceral systems. Rather, they should be immediately released, and families of origin

should be assessed for immediate reunification along with appropriate non-coercive, community-based resources and supports. When this is not possible, family-driven and community-based solutions should be sought that allow children to live safely in their communities with extended family or kin. These decisions should be made by families and communities.

- **End the use of congregate care placements.** While congregate care is supposed to be used only for children in need of short-term intensive services, in practice it is used as the default when systems fail to create sufficient placement resources. The use of these institutionalized settings such as group homes, detention centers, and residential treatment centers deprives children of essential connections to family and community, and subjects them to lasting and irreparable harm. These placements are often miles away from children's families and communities, and children placed in congregate care are often subjected to further abuse.[42] Institutionalized congregate care should be discontinued. As reunification is actively pursued, alternate solutions and community supports should be identified that allow children to live in non-coercive settings with family and community.

- **Provide reparations for children and families harmed by the family policing system.** The state-sanctioned separation of children from their families results in significant and lifelong trauma, as well as increased risk of mental health disorders, substance use disorders, unemployment, homelessness, and other forms of economic hardship.[43] These harms are exacerbated for Black, Native, and Latinx children who are already at risk of adverse outcomes due to societal racism and inequities. For example, Black youth[44] and youth who are LGBTQ+[45] are disproportionately placed in congregate care settings, which correlates with disproportionate "crossover" from the family policing system to the juvenile punishment system—an even more restrictive system. For families and communities who are disproportionately torn apart by these systems, the resulting harm, extended time apart, and disintegration weakens their collective ability to overcome the structural disadvantages they already face.[46] Family policing systems are responsible for this harm and must also be responsible for remedying its long-lasting effects. While reunification is an essential first step, family policing systems owe children and families reparations in the form of direct financial assistance to address the costs associated with the physical, social, and economic consequences resulting from family policing intervention.

End Surveillance of Families

Mandatory reporting laws result in the surveillance of Black, Native, and Latinx families, turning communities into environments where family policing intervention can happen at any place and time. This surveillance is indicative of the system's antagonistic relationship with communities and is informed by a long history of criminalizing certain communities, especially Black and Native communities experiencing significant poverty. State and federal mandatory reporting laws must be repealed to end the surveillance of families.

- **Repeal mandatory reporting laws.** Mandatory reporting laws require that educators, doctors, nurses, therapists, child care providers, intimate partner violence support workers, and others report families to child abuse and neglect hotlines with any suspicion of concerns.[47] Reporting families to family policing systems opens the door for increased policing and surveillance, and ultimately begins the process through which families experience harm, trauma, and punishment.[48] It is well documented that racism, classism, and other structural factors influence reporting to hotlines.[49] Mandatory reporting also creates distrust between families and people who should be offering support (e.g., teachers, therapists, health care providers, and intimate partner violence support workers), turning what should be helping and supportive relationships into ones of policing and surveillance.[50] This dynamic prevents families from seeking and receiving real support—support that is non-coercive, decreases harm, and addresses their needs.

- **End permanent punishment caused by the use of registries.** When the family policing system substantiates parents for abuse or neglect, their names are placed on an abuse and neglect registry. Many agencies require a low burden of proof to place parents on these registries, but it is exceedingly difficult for parents to get their names removed.[51] Placement on a registry carries severe economic impacts, including being barred from working in certain sectors. In many instances being placed on registries only serves to perpetuate harm, not prevent it. Other registries, such as sex offender registries, severely impact individuals' ability to find employment and housing.[52] Registries center punishment, increase harm to families and communities through further marginalization, and because of racism and homophobia,

often disproportionately punish Black and queer people. Registries do not increase community safety, but rather invite further harm upon community members.

- **End drug testing of expectant and new parents and their newborns.** Testing parents and their newborns for drugs is linked to a long, racist history of devaluing Black motherhood and differential treatment toward Black mothers who use substances.[53] Black women are disproportionately targeted for this testing, even when there is no evidence that substance use has impacted their child's health or their ability to care for their child.[54] Drug testing hinders parents' comfort with being honest with their doctors—which is critical to receiving good medical support—due to the fear that doing so will lead to policing and surveillance.[55] Infants are often separated from their parents at the hospital, which is detrimental to the bond with their parents and healthy development. This racist practice does not keep children safe and transforms the doctor-patient relationship into one of surveillance instead of care.

- **End surveillance by educators and other educator personnel.** Teachers and other educators are trusted adults who should nurture children and work with families to support children's healthy development. Too often, however, mandatory reporting requires that teachers disrupt their relationships with children and parents through laws that require them to report parents whose children are frequently absent from school or for what many jurisdictions categorize as "educational neglect."[56] There are many factors that cause children to miss school such as lack of transportation, conflicts with parents' work schedules, and parents who are experiencing mental health challenges. Parents should receive support from schools and teachers to ensure the well-being of children, not surveillance and the threat of family policing intervention through mandatory reporting.

- **End collaboration between the police and family policing systems.** Police do not keep children and families safe. Whether creating reports against parents, participating in involuntary removals, or completing "wellness checks," police do not keep children or families safe, but rather create more harm, trauma, and violence. Police have no place in responding to families' needs, whether a mental health crisis or intimate partner violence. Police have repeatedly shown that their presence creates more harm, and sometimes life-ending violence, especially in interactions with Black communities. When police arrest parents, they often call child abuse hotlines to place children into foster care, and in some states, have the power to automatically place children into custody.[57] This often occurs without any attempt to identify other appropriate adults to care for children, resulting in unnecessary harm and trauma to both children and parents.

- **End the use of risk assessment tools and other racist algorithms, including predictive analytics.** These tools use technology and data to categorize families into arbitrary categories that impact children's and families' lives. These tools are often presented as solutions to racism and bias, with the underlying assumption that computer-generated assessment tools can protect against them. However, in the family policing system, these tools are usually developed based on the population already involved with the system, thus building on the racist inequities already present.[58] Further, these tools are not consistently implemented and used, recalibrated, or even designed and evaluated with the involvement of impacted communities. The use of these tools disproportionately harms Black, Native, and Latinx families and exacerbates existing structural racism.

Prioritize Care Over Punishment

The family policing system criminalizes and punishes certain behaviors and identities, deeming certain parents as "good" and others as "bad," which contributes to the separation of families. What is viewed as "good" and "bad" is almost always racialized, classist, queerphobic, and rooted in White supremacist beliefs and definitions of parenting and caregiving. We support ending the criminalization and punishment of stigmatized behavior or ways of being, as this punishment further marginalizes families and contributes to the separation of children from their families and communities.

- **Decriminalize drug use and end the punishment of parents for substance use.** Criminalizing drugs and the United States' "war on drugs" has not curbed drug use.[59] However, criminalization disproportionately impacts Black communities—and Native and Latinx communities to varying degrees—who are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement for buying, using, and selling drugs.[60] We support the decriminalization of all drug use. In addition, we recognize that not all drug use is chaotic; drug use does not necessarily impair parents' and caregivers' abilities to care for their children.[61] When families do need support with substance use, they should have access to treatment that is supportive, non-coercive, and focuses on harm reduction. Drug use should not be used as a reason to separate and harm families.

- **Decriminalize sex work.** Many sex workers are parents who engage in sex work to support their families. When sex work is criminalized, parents are punished for engaging in it through both the criminal punishment system and the family policing system. The stigma that comes with the criminalization of sex work stops families from seeking supportive services they may need.[62] In addition, there is mounting evidence that decriminalizing sex work aids in efforts to decrease human trafficking and violence against sex workers by reducing marginalization and vulnerability.[63] Decriminalizing sex work helps keep families and children safe and together.

- **End the punishment of survivors of intimate partner violence.** Too often family policing agencies punish parents who are survivors of intimate partner violence by holding them responsible for neglect or failure to prevent their children from being exposed to violence.[64] When survivors reach out to intimate partner violence support workers, because of mandatory reporting requirements, workers report the information survivors share with them to the family policing system and that information is used as evidence against them and as a basis for removal of their children.[65] These approaches are inherently rooted in stigma and punishment and do not center the needs of survivors or their children. Intimate partner violence is complex, and many survivors might still wish for their children to have relationships with parents who have engaged in acts of violence. Families should have access to resources and care that assist them in holding those who have engaged in violence accountable while also centering care, safety, and healing without the threat of being separated from their children.
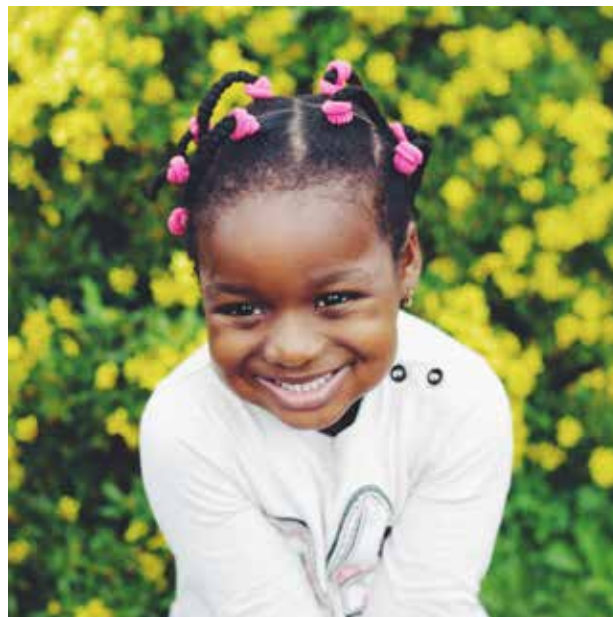
- **End the use of ableism to remove children from their parents.** Parents and caregivers with physical and cognitive disabilities, especially parents who are Black and living in poverty, are often seen as incapable of caring for their children. Parents with disabilities face some of the highest removal rates by family policing agencies.[66] Moreover, families experiencing poverty often lack the support and resources to care for children with disabilities. Families should have access to resources that are supportive and do not further stigmatize and punish disabilities.

Transform Societal Conditions So Families and Communities Can Thrive

The upEND Movement seeks to end state-sanctioned separation of children from their families and reimagine care so that all families are supported and can thrive. To do so, we must collectively address the societal failures and disinvestment in Black, Native, and Latinx communities which have resulted in food insecurity, poverty, lack of affordable and safe housing, and lack of meaningful prevention services, including effective and readily available substance use and mental health assistance. Children and families should be supported through responses that promote healing and well-being, rather than surveillance and punishment. This involves creating societal conditions where children, youth, and families can live safely, have enough to eat, have adequate financial and social supports, and have equitable opportunities to thrive in strong and healthy communities. We support increased investments in families and communities that acknowledge and make amends for past harms and injustices; actively expand financial support to families, specifically ensuring that the needs of Black and Native families are met; and support families, as defined by families, in ways that promote healing and instill hope so children and youth can thrive.

- **Implement a reparations framework.** A reparations framework "outlines five elements—repair, restoration, acknowledgment, cessation, and nonrepetition."[67] A reparations framework acknowledges and repairs the past harms and injustices Black people have experienced in this country because of slavery, continued racial oppression, and intentional, state-sanctioned family separation.[68] Reparations also requires acknowledging and repairing the harm of genocide, colonization, and repeated violations of treaties and trusts done to Native communities.[69] Some professional associations have acknowledged and apologized for their role in harming Black and Native communities.[70] The family policing system, and all systems and professions associated with state-sanctioned separation of children from their families, must do the same by describing, acknowledging, and apologizing for their role in perpetuating systemic and entrenched harms to

Black and Native families. Reparations requires working with organizers and community leaders to detail what repair and restoration looks like. Repair and restoration should at a minimum include monetary compensation to Black people who have actively been deprived of amassing wealth and property over centuries.[71] Reparations includes honoring and supporting tribal sovereignty and requires financial investments in housing, health, and education services as promised in past trusts and treaties.[72] To cease state-sanctioned family separation and not repeat or recreate oppressive forms of "help," reparations require a sustainable mechanism to identify and stop harms done to individuals and communities financially, environmentally, and socially. Ultimately, this work requires dismantling oppressive systems—White supremacy, racism, homophobia, transphobia, patriarchy, xenophobia, and racial capitalism—to create a society where harms are not repeated.

- **Eliminate poverty**. Our current economic system has increasingly concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. This economic inequality is profoundly intertwined with racism, specifically anti-Blackness, and embedded within our laws and policies. Consequently, overwhelming numbers of families—specifically Black, Native, and Latinx families—are trapped in poverty, earning low wages, with limited financial support for affordable housing, food, child care, and health and mental health care. How society supports families has deep and racist roots in determinations of who is deemed worthy of support and the requirements that must be demonstrated to access financial resources.[73] Current programs for financial support are fragmentary and can prove overwhelmingly burdensome to access.[74] Research has documented the stress of poverty on families and on parenting.[75] This stress is within our collective power to end by ensuring a universal basic income for all adults, a child allowance for each child, paid parental leave for families welcoming new children, paid sick leave, and a job guarantee with a living wage. Immigration status should not determine access to these or other financial supports.

- **Guarantee housing as a human right.** No child or family should ever be without safe and healthy housing. A housing guarantee ensures that all children can grow up in healthy housing with their families. Healthy housing means eliminating environmental toxins caused by environmental racism.[76] Families must have housing that is free of pollutants including lead paint, unhealthy water, and poor air quality. Practices such as eviction and foreclosure that create homelessness must be discontinued.

- **Expand support for other basic needs.** There are many critical supports that families need, which require significant policy and practice changes, including access to quality food, transportation, child care, and health and mental health care. Child care must be safe and support the developmental needs of children, and be readily available during the hours needed by working parents.[77] Asset tests and means tests for disability support must end as they often relegate people receiving disability support to poverty.[78] Public transportation that is environmentally friendly should be expanded, accessible, and free for all families. These supports should be ongoing and permanent.

- **Invest in non-coercive supports that help families without surveillance and punishment.** Many communities have a history of providing one another with mutual aid, and such efforts have received renewed attention during the COVID-19 pandemic.[79] Communities also spend money supporting families with both concrete needs, such as housing, food, and utilities, as well as other supports such as parenting groups, breastfeeding support groups, non-coercive home visiting programs, and multi-age community support centers. Investments should be made to ensure community support systems are able to provide resources to meet families' needs, while programs that do not support families and instead rely on policing and surveillance through mandated services (e.g., involuntary drug treatment programs and mental health facilities) should be ended. Ultimately, families should feel able to seek and receive help when needed and not experience judgment, oversight, or removal of their children.

Reimagine Care for Children, Youth, and Families

Child and family well-being can no longer be defined by systems grounded in anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, and White supremacy. Well-being must be defined by families and communities from their own perspectives of being loved, valued, and safe. Carceral systems, including the family policing system, fail to recognize humanity and instead treat people as disposable. This dehumanizing frame drives interventions that destroy family connections and mandate services and treatment that do not remedy the larger oppression families face. Family policing systems rely on many different contracted services and programs, and while some families are connected to services, these services are not consistently accessible, appropriate, effective, and affordable. Ultimately, the family policing system is not held accountable for the services they provide. Instead, any failures to produce changes deemed necessary by the system are blamed on individuals and families, rather than on the quality or availability of the services themselves. Reimagining care moves away from mandatory treatment and ends the surveillance, monitoring, and compliance that exist in carceral systems.

- **Invest in community-led efforts to redefine care and well-being.** Concepts of care and well-being should be defined and supported by families and communities. Investment in communities is needed to support the process of redefining care and well-being as many communities have been depleted of funding and infrastructure through historical divestment. There are many examples from the federal and state levels of efforts to support community planning and assistance that are designed and led by community members.[80] Similar large-scale investments in communities to pay for community members' time and expertise should be made. Once defined, those who work with families and communities—including school personnel, health care providers, child care workers, and others—should be guided by and held accountable to these definitions, their accompanying principles, and their outcomes.

- **Organize services and other forms of intervention around families' unique needs.** Communities should have the responsibility for working with families to identify the services that will best meet families' needs and for holding providers accountable for the quality and effectiveness of their services. Interventions such as healing circles, mutual aid, church counseling, and peer support networks, which may not meet Eurocentric evidence-based standards, may be the most effective interventions in meeting families' needs. Families and communities should be a critical part of defining "evidence" and how it is measured.[81] Ultimately, what families need to thrive should be the standard used to determine the appropriateness of services. This may be different for each family.

- **Use a holistic view of the individual and family.** Evidence-based interventions, as currently defined and implemented, often provide targeted support to a parent or a child and focus on a specific aspect of support such as parenting, substance use, or mental health. Families impacted by the family policing system repeatedly describe case plans for a predetermined set of services that do not match their unique needs.[82] Further, supports offered do not work together to ensure basic financial stability—support that includes housing, food security, affordable health and mental health care, quality and flexible child care, and a livable wage. This type of care neglects the larger context in which families operate. Services should be available to families outside of carceral systems in ways that meet their holistic needs and account for the larger systemic issues, including societal racism and oppression, that serve as barriers to achieving their desired goals. Prevention and intervention funding should be directed to programs that are trusted within communities and in communities that have been most impacted by historical divestment. Design and evaluation of programs should be led by families and communities.

Shift Power and Support Families and Communities as First Responders

White supremacy culture largely focuses on the individual rather than the communal.[83] All families need support at some time, whether it is help working through conflict, fiscal emergencies, death of a loved one, or harm that has occurred among family members. Currently, our society intervenes in ways that are consistently unhelpful and punitive, especially to Black, Native, and Latinx families, and families living in poverty. Intervention happens at an individual parent or child level and ignores broader societal responsibilities that require attention. Rather than providing families with what they need, these interventions often require individuals to comply with what is being offered or is contingent on eligibility categories linked to federal or state funding requirements.[84] Parents, youth, and extended family are deterred or fearful of seeking help from government systems because they don't believe they will get the help they need. We support shifting power away from state-sponsored interventions that are coercive and harmful. We support restructuring how help is provided by shifting power to families and communities and ensuring they have the resources necessary to promote healing, address harm, and be responsible to each other.

- **Restructure financing to prioritize care and support for all families.** Current funding mechanisms are insufficient to support families and prevent child maltreatment. To receive support, families often must meet specific eligibility criteria. For example, the Family First Prevention Services Act requires an assessment of "candidacy" and a determination of "imminent risk" of entering foster care to qualify for support.[85] True prevention services should meet a variety of needs of parents, youth, and families without eligibility restrictions. Funding should be increased to communities and

grassroots agencies that provide services and supports to families in holistic ways and offer concrete financial help when needed. Families should have the autonomy to identify and receive the support they need and not feel pressured or mandated to participate in interventions that are not helpful or undermine their autonomy. The concept of family should not be prescribed to mother, father, child, or other members of the same household. Services should be engaging, flexible, and adaptable to support families' unique needs, and designed by and for the people they are intended to serve. Services should not interfere with but rather support and maintain families' cultural practices and connections. More funding should be allocated to universal supports such as public education, as well as targeted supports such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid.

- **Invest in families and communities to provide care when conflict or harm occurs.** Families should be able to rely on their communities for help, receive help without punishment, and benefit from help received. Communities also must work to be inclusive and to prevent feelings of disconnection, whether among LGBTQ+ youth, immigrants, parents and youth with disabilities, and others. All need to have a sense of belonging.

Help provided should result in deepened connections between families and communities, rather than feeling shunned or demeaned. Help provided by communities should support families in understanding and navigating stressors of child and adolescent development; identity development, including formation of gender identity and sexual orientation; cultural parenting practices and conflicts related to immigration; generational divisions; and other areas that may lead to parent/child conflict. In the rare instances of extreme maltreatment, family and community members should be supported and equipped with the resources and skills to intervene and prevent future harm.

- **Promote community accountability.** Communities should hold responsibility for rendering healing and accountability when harm has occurred while strengthening relationships with each other. As a result of the legacy of organizing society around punishment and incarceration, relationships have evolved to policing rather than helping and healing. Support should be provided for families and communities to reckon with histories of harm, to address current harm, and to heal from the trauma inflicted by the family policing and other carceral systems. Support should include reimagining and/or remembering supportive and healing ways of being together in community.

Please provide your thoughts on these ideas and share what you are working on. We look forward to exchanging ideas, learning from you and others in this movement toward abolition, and ultimately, creating new ways of caring for one another.

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