



## New Study Confirms Foster Care System Harms Children

By Brian Shilhavy, Editor, Health Impact News | July 31, 2019



The American Academy of Pediatrics recently published [a study](#) comparing “mental and physical health outcomes of children placed in foster care to outcomes of children not placed in foster care.”

[The study](#) claims to be the first of its kind looking specifically at these health outcomes.

Similar to [other past studies](#) looking at outcomes comparing foster children to those not placed in foster care, the results of this [new study](#) were predictable:

*We find that children in foster care are in poor mental and physical health relative to children in the general population, children across specific family types, and children in economically disadvantaged families... Children in foster care are a vulnerable population in poor health, partially as a result of their early life circumstances.*

The study reached three key conclusions:

*First, children placed in foster care had more mental and physical health conditions than children not placed in foster care. For instance, these children were about twice as likely to have a learning disability and 3 times as likely to have ADD or ADHD. They were also roughly twice as likely to have asthma and speech problems and 3 times as likely to have hearing problems and vision problems. Differences were even more substantial for other mental health conditions; they were 5 times as likely to have anxiety, 6 times as likely to have behavioral problems, and 7 times as likely to have depression.*

*Second, although some of the mental and physical health differences of children in foster care compared with other children were explained by characteristics of these children and*

*their households, many of the differences in mental health persisted after adjusting for these child and household characteristics, suggesting possible effects of foster care placement on mental health. However, unlike much other research in this area, our primary goal was not to ascertain whether foster care placement has an effect on children. Rather, our goal was to use these large and representative cross-sectional data to provide a descriptive portrait of the health of children in foster care relative to other children.*

*Third, children placed in foster care were in poor mental and physical health relative to children in virtually every other type of family situation and in children in economically disadvantaged families. The differences in mental health outcomes (ADD/ADHD, depression, anxiety, behavioral or conduct problems) were statistically significant. The differences in physical health outcomes, although sometimes substantial, were not statistically significant. Additionally, the results show that children adopted from foster care had worse health than their counterparts placed in foster care. These differences could be driven partially by the fact that children in foster care only become available for adoption after parental rights have been terminated (and therefore these children have likely experienced more maltreatment than children who remain in the system) or because adoption subsidies offered in some states encourage adoption of children with health conditions.*

Read the [full study here](#).

## **Good Foster Parents Handicapped in a Corrupt System**

Ryan White from the *Center for Health Journalism* at USC Annenberg [wrote a piece on this study](#). Some of the comments published at the end of the article point out the frustrations of those foster parents who often agree that children are better off with their biological parents rather than put into the foster care system.

A comment from “Shelly”:

*Thank you for this. As the foster/adoptive parent of three, I love my children tremendously, but if I had a choice I'd rather that their biological families had the supports and opportunities to be healthy parents. Foster care is always a tragic choice.*

A comment from “Carmen”:

*I just read the article written by Ryan White and I agree with his observations and as a foster and now adoptive parent I went through these same stages. I learned that foster/adoption mental health services are not really equipped to help the amount of loss these children endure with the biggest loss of being removed from their families. I found that the kids develop coping skills to live within their families situations and in foster care/adoption spend years trying to overcome the effects of being removed from their families this has had on their lives.*

*So now I say if you can't really help them then put impact services in the areas/schools where this is more prevalent so these kids can gravitate towards opportunities and healthy*

*relationships vs removing them from their families and they can influence (empowerment) changes in their homes/communities.*

*One of the biggest factors is that most of my adoptive kids bio parents are developmentally delayed and so are the kids. So without opportunities for people in our society I have noticed that they all have turned to “survival” living.*

And then, from the prospective from one who grew up in the foster care system, a comment from “Jeff”:

*Let me start by saying that I am a former foster child. I grew up in 40-50 different placements ranging from mental hospitals, lockdowns, group homes, foster homes, etc al. Every type of abuse you can put an adjective in front of I personally endured. When I aged out I had less than 1 year of High school. On my own I got a GED, and a BSW in Social Work.*

*I initially wanted to be a social worker so that I could utilize my unique background to help other kids who are in a similar predicament that I was in. One of the first things that I learned in University was that most of my classmates were totally indoctrinated in the progressive view point of glorifying the victim. The professors were completely out of touch with reality.*

*There were three people who turned my life around. Two of them were foster parents and the third was a social worker without “proper” training that you described. There are several tangibles that an advanced degree is unable to teach chiefly empathy and love. I went to my first foster mother when I was 9 years old having come from a group home where I was repeatedly raped by older residents. Not only that but the so call experts (the ones that you want to turn to) were forcing me to take medication that no 9 year old should take in huge dosages.*

*My foster mother only had a high school education. She had no special degree or no special training (this was back in 1988). When I arrived in her care I could not even read and could only sign my first two initials ‘JL.’ The public schools did not want to work with me and the social workers constantly fought with my foster mother trying to take me away. She was able to keep me for nearly 3 years often fighting the system tooth and nail for my sake.*

*The social worker that I mentioned did not have a degree in social work when she became my worker. If I recall correctly she only had an education degree though later she was mandated to get a masters. What made her stand out though among the dozen[s] of other social workers I had? She had a caring heart who could not stand injustice. She treated me as though I was one of her own children.*

*There are going to be bad social workers, supervisors, and even directors. Having a[n] advanced degree as you advocated will not change that. I would even argue that having an advanced degree is oftentimes a detriment in this field. What needs to be done? Do*

*away with children courts altogether (it's unconstitutional) and forcing the state to make their allegations against the parent in a regular court of law. All parents have a right to be judged by their peers and not some judge! Also, stop incentivizing the state government through adoption grants. This amounts to modern day slavery when the federal government gets 80,000 dollar per year per child in the system and even more when they get adopted.*

Read the [full article and all of the comments here](#).

## **Not the First Study to Show the Failures of Foster Care**

There have been numerous reports published over the past several years that clearly show the current foster care system is an abysmal failure. Children who stay with parents who are accused (but not arrested or convicted) of “abuse” or “neglect” clearly do better than most of the children being put into foster care.

In 2007 Joseph Doyle, an economics professor at MIT’s Sloan School of Management, published a study which tracked at least 15,000 kids from 1990 to 2002. It was the largest study of its kind at that time.

USA Today ran a story on the report – [Study: Troubled homes better than foster care](#). Here are some excerpts:

*Children whose families are investigated for abuse or neglect are likely to do better in life if they stay with their families than if they go into foster care, according to a pioneering study. Kids who stayed with their families were less likely to become juvenile delinquents or teen mothers and more likely to hold jobs as young adults.*

*Doyle’s study.... provides “the first viable, empirical evidence” of the benefits of keeping kids with their families, says Gary Stangler, executive director of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a foundation for foster teens. Stangler says it looked at kids over a longer period of time than had other studies. “It confirms what experience and observation tell[s] us: Kids who can remain in their homes do better than in foster care,” says Stangler.*

Read the [full study here](#).

Joseph Doyle did another study, one year later in 2008, comparing children left in troubled homes with foster care children to see which group was more likely to be arrested as adults. The study looked at 23,000 children, and it found that “children placed in foster care have arrest, conviction, and imprisonment rates as adults that are three times higher than those of children who remained at home.” Read the [full study here](#).

In January of 2015, U.S. District Judge Janis Graham Jack [ruled against the State of Texas](#) stating that their foster care system was unconstitutional. In her 255 page ruling, Judge Jack stated:

*Texas's PMC (Permanent Managing Conservatorship) children have been shuttled throughout a system where rape, abuse, psychotropic medication, and instability are the norm.*

She ordered the State of Texas had to replace their foster care system with one that was Constitutional. ([Full Story.](#))

Molly McGrath Tierney, the former Director of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, gave one of the most [insightful TEDx talks](#) about the problems with the “Foster Care Industry” – an industry where children become a commodity that profits doctors, lawyers, judges, social workers, advocates, and other organizations, an industry that can only exist by taking other people’s children, an industry that damages the very children it purports to be helping. She goes on to explain the trauma inflicted on children by the foster care industry, saying:

*... we're digging a wound so deep, I don't believe we have a way of measuring it. This dismantling of families – it has enormous consequences. Kids that grow up outside of families – they don't master the things that can only be learned in that context, like who to trust, how to love, and how to take care of yourself, and that frankly does more damage than the abuse and neglect that brought the kid to my attention in the first place.*



## Foster Care System Beyond Reform

The late Georgia Senator [Nancy Schaefer](#) wrote:

*I have witnessed such injustice and harm brought to these families that I am not sure if I even believe reform of the system is possible! The system cannot be trusted. It does not serve the people. It obliterates families and children simply because it has the power to do so. Children deserve better. Families deserve better. It's time to pull back the curtain and set our children and families free. ([Full story.](#))*

With billions of dollars employing hundreds of thousands of people in the corrupt foster care system, it is unrealistic to think it could ever be reformed. The only solution is to remove all

funding and abolish it. Local communities, as they once did, would then be responsible for dealing with the problems of troubled families, instead of State Government bureaucracies motivated with federal funds to put more children into the foster care system.

For a greater treatment of this subject, please see:

[The U.S. Foster Care System: Modern Day Slavery and Child Trafficking](#)

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