

12-2022

Important Activities for Infants and Toddlers / To Support a Foster Child

Vanessa Salas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

To Support a Foster Child

Vanessa Salas

CASA of Santa Cruz County, Ana Guzman

Collaborative Health and Human Services

Department of Health and Human Services and Public Policy

California State University Monterey Bay

November 18,2022

Agency and Communities Served

Court Appointed Specialist Advocate of Santa Cruz county (CASA) is an agency that screens, trains and supervises adult volunteers who serve as mentors and advocates for children in the foster care system. Once a CASA is appointed a child they act on behalf of the child in the juvenile justice system. The population that is served is children who are in the foster care system. CASA's develop relationships with the child but as well as the guardians and anyone else involved in the child's case including social workers, therapists and teachers. CASA's mission is to provide court appointed volunteers for children in the dependency court system who are cared for and connected with the people, family and resources they need to heal and flourish into adulthood.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Biological parents unable to care for their children.	Children in the Foster care system that do not have enough support or resources to sustain a healthy life.	Lack of stability leads to mental health issues.
Substance abuse problems		Lost in the system/homelessness into adulthood
Poverty/lack of education		

Identify a Social Problem

In 2019 there were over 672,000 children that were in the foster care system (Foster Care 2022). While children are in the foster care system they feel alone with no one to turn to. One of the biggest problems is not having enough resources throughout the whole process that will enable them to sustain a healthy life into adulthood. Foster children go through multiple traumas in their

lives that are impeccable to have those resources available to them. Some of those issues they have to deal with are lack of education, neglect, abuse and behavioral issues to name a few (Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care: Challenges and Solutions | Youth.gov, n.d.). Having a mentor while going through this process can have a positive impact on a child's life. According to youth.gov, there are more than 8.5 million youth that lack healthy relationships with adults who care about them ((Mentoring | Youth.gov, n.d.). There is a great need for those supporting services.

Identify Contributing Factors

There are several different reasons why children are taken away from their parents and placed in foster care. One reason why children are put in this situation is because their parents have substance abuse problems. According to Child Trends, the rate of children being taken away from their parents rose up for the sixth consecutive year to 131 per 100,000 children nationwide, which was a 5% increase from the previous year (Russ, 2020). When parents are addicted to drugs this causes them to be negligent to their children and eventually this will have them removed from their custody. Addiction causes anyone to be negligent in their own lives but when caring for a child it is very dangerous.

Abuse and neglect is another reason why children are placed in foster care. According to datacenter, eight in every thousand children were victims of maltreatment in 2020 and of those three in four experienced neglect which is the most common. Also nearly one in five of them were physically abused, 9% were sexually abused, 6% were emotionally abused and 2% were medically abused (Children Who Are Confirmed by Child Protective Services as Victims of Maltreatment | KIDS COUNT Data Center, n.d.). Although one would think that poverty causes

children to be placed in foster care and this may be true, it is actually unknown mainly because once a child is placed in foster care they are not counted for when it comes to the official statistics. However, it is known that children in the welfare system are disproportionately from families that live in poverty (Poverty among Foster Children; Estimates Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure, NIH. June, 2017). When people live in poverty there is going to be more crime, violence and drug abuse, it is bound to happen that children are taken away from their parents.

Identifying Consequences

Children who grow up in the foster care system deal with a lot of pain and trauma throughout their life even leading into adulthood. Mental health plays a big role for the children and young adults that grew up in the foster care system. It is believed that 80 percent of foster children have some type of mental health issues, compared to those that are not in the foster care system where it is about 18-22 percent (Mental Health and Foster Care, n.d.). Children in the foster care system get pulled away from their families due to abuse, neglect and maltreatment as if that is not traumatic enough they get placed in homes that they might not even know the family and in some cases end up getting abused again. Oftentimes children who are placed in the foster care system are at higher risk for mental and physical health conditions such as learning disabilities, developmental delays, depression and behavioral health issues (Children's Law Center of California, 2021). Having to endure this kind of trauma is hard on an adult, one can only imagine how hard it is for children. At such a young age children and even teenagers do not know how to deal with this type of hurt and unfortunately do not get the help they need to cope, eventually this leads to other self harm or even substance abuse.

There is a huge issue of the lack of stability a child has while in the foster care system. It is believed that of children who are in foster care for two or more years, 44 percent experience more than three home placements and 15 percent experience more than five placements (For Children in the Foster Care System, Stability Can Be Hard to Come By, 2020). There is a lot that can contribute to this injustice for these children. There are barriers that prevent access to important community based, trauma based support systems during these times of instability and in turn it derails a foster parent and child to build a relationship. As well as minor miscommunications and frustrations among both foster child and foster parents that makes the situation and problems worse and can have detrimental outcomes that leaves the child even more traumatized. Children are sponges when it comes to everything going on in their lives and the traumas they go through are embedded in their head for life, not having anything stable and secure can affect them later in life. Children who get moved a lot of times throughout their childhood do not worry about learning math or english they worry if they are going to get moved to another home or have another hot meal. The instability they face is damaging to their mental health and if they do not get the proper help they need their mental health will take an incredible toll even leading up to adulthood.

Life after living in foster care throughout childhood can have serious consequences that affect young adults after aging out. According to youth.gov, youth that transition into adulthood after being in the foster care system are less likely to pay for housing compared to those who have not grown up in the foster care system. Studies have proven that there is a correlation between children who grew up in the foster care system and homelessness in adulthood (Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care: Challenges and Solutions | Youth.gov, n.d.) There is also the issue of runaways and of course homelessness among foster youth and although it is hard to

pinpoint the exact amount of youth that have experienced homelessness because there are various factors that play such as age and timeframes but it is believed that between 500,000 to 2.8 million are faced with homelessness in the United States each year (Homelessness and Runaway | Youth.gov, n.d.). The lack of support these children have is unreal and again affects them in the most horrible ways.

Project Description and Justification

Infant to Toddler Activities

For my capstone project I came up with the idea to make a resource book for future CASA's that work with infants. Visiting with CASA infants that are under one can be difficult sometimes. So I decided to develop a book that would give future CASA's ideas on activities to do while visiting with their babies. In this book I will go over sensory games, activities for indoors and outdoors for infants to toddler aged children.

The primary goal for this project is to help future CASA's and the guardians for the infants and toddlers that are in their care to help with activities to do during their visits. The agency wants to have this as a resource tool for future CASA's. It is hard to come up with activities for children that age because they are not allowed to leave the guardian's care as opposed to children 3 and older.

This tool will be a resource to ensure that the infant's needs are being met and that they are meeting those milestones as they grow. This will also be a tool for guardians that do not have those resources and do not know about those milestones. One contributing factor that will be

addressed is the lack of education there is for some parents and guardians when it comes to the importance of playing with infant's, making sure their milestones are being met or close to being met.

I feel like this proposed project meets the best practice standards because more infants are being placed in the foster care system and future CASA's might not know how to go about interacting with an infant or how to even interact with the caregiver. In those situations it can become difficult to maneuver the task of a CASA. Coming into my internship I was lost as to what to do with the baby I was advocating for and we can easily google information but having the information at your hand at any given time without having to do the research would help the process go a lot more smoothly.

Benefits

The benefits my project will have is being able to have the resources at hand without having to do the research yourself. It will be helpful for future CASA's and the staff at CASA for future training. This project will also have a positive impact on the infants life because it is important to understand their needs and milestones that they may or may not be reaching. I will also help the caregivers that take care of the infants who may not have children themselves or their children are grown.

References

Homelessness and Runaway / Youth.gov. (n.d.) <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/homelessness-and-runaway>

For Children in the Foster Care System, Stability Can Be Hard to Come By. (2020, September 4). Children Now. <https://www.childrennow.org/blog/covid-19-foster-care-stability/>

Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care: Challenges and Solutions / Youth.gov. (n.d.). <https://youth.gov/youth-briefs/foster-care-youth-brief/challenges>

Mental Health and Foster Care. (n.d.). <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/mental-health-and-foster-care.aspx>

Children's Law Center of California. (2021, July 19). *Foster Care Facts - Children's Law Center of California.* <https://www.clccal.org/resources/foster-care-facts/>

Pac J, Waldfogel J, Wilmer C. *Poverty among Foster Children: Estimates Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure.* Soc Serv Rev. 2017 Mar;91, retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5484162/>

Children who are confirmed by child protective services as victims of maltreatment / KIDS

COUNT Data Center. (n.d.). <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6221-children-who-are-confirmed-by-child-protective-services-as-victims-of-maltreatment>