



CENTER FOR THE RIGHTS
OF ABUSED CHILDREN

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New Report Declares Constitutional Crisis in Foster Care System, Demands Urgent Federal Reforms

Phoenix, AZ — In a searing new memo released today, [*Lives in the Balance: A Bold Plan to Fix America's Broken Child Protection System*](#), the Center for the Rights of Abused Children lays bare an unflinching truth: *“For more than 25 years, despite countless reforms, outcomes for America’s abused and abandoned children have not improved.”*

The report documents a national child protection system in deep crisis—where children are returned to known abusers, trafficked while missing from state care, and too often left to die at the hands of those charged with their care. With tens of billions in taxpayer dollars spent annually, the data reveal unconscionable failure:

- **Half of children removed for sexual abuse are returned to their abuser.**
- **70% of trafficked children were first exploited while missing from foster care.**
- **Up to 80% of children killed by a parent were previously known to child protection agencies.**

“This is not just a policy failure—it is a constitutional crisis,” said Darcy Olsen, founder & CEO of the Center, who also fostered ten children. “Children are being treated as second-class citizens—without attorneys, without enforceable rights, and without transparency in courtrooms where their futures hang in the balance.”

The memo outlines a common-sense agenda centered on three core principles: justice, safety, and accountability. The Center is calling on Congress to enact immediate federal reforms to:

- **Guarantee every child in foster care an attorney, just as criminal defendants are entitled to.**
- **Mandate that states comply with federal law in cases of aggravated abuse.**
- **Tie federal funding to child safety outcomes.**

“We give public defenders to criminals who prey on children,” said Bradley Galbraith, Director of Policy and author of the report. “How can we deny that same protection to the innocent child standing alone in a courtroom?”

The report also details widespread noncompliance with federal mandates—not one state follows the law requiring action after a child has spent 15 of the last 22 months in care. Meanwhile, 20,000 children disappear from the system each year, often without any meaningful search efforts.

Lives in the Balance urges Congress to take up the mantle of reform immediately. “The solutions are clear, and the time is now,” said Olsen. “Children are dying while Congress delays. There are no do-overs. No second childhood. If we don't act, we lose them.”

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About the Center for the Rights of Abused Children: The Center for the Rights of Abused Children believes every child deserves a safe and loving home. Join our mission today, thecenterforchildren.org.

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