

9-2014

## Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Joan M. Shaughnessy, *Introduction*, 21 Wash. & Lee J. Civ. Rts. & Soc. Just. 1 (2014).

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/crsj/vol21/iss1/4>

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## Introduction

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This issue of the Journal brings together papers prepared for a symposium organized by the Journal and by Washington & Lee's Frances Lewis Law Center and its Shepherd Program for the Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability. The symposium, presented in February of 2014, included presentations from practicing lawyers, government officials, and academics from a variety of disciplines. The symposium featured panels on The Boundaries of Abuse and Neglect, on The Child Welfare System's Response to LGBT Persons and on Children and Immigration: The Need for Reform. It also featured a conversation on Practice in the Field of Child Advocacy. The symposium can be viewed at [http://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/crsj\\_events/childwelfare/](http://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/crsj_events/childwelfare/).

The Journal decided to sponsor a symposium on Emerging Issues in Child Welfare because it recognized the seriousness of child maltreatment and the different ways it is experienced by different populations. There is no doubt that child maltreatment is a pervasive and costly social problem. One recent nationwide study found that nearly 3 million children (1 in 25) were maltreated during the study year.<sup>1</sup> Child maltreatment takes a tremendous toll. The same study found that 2,400 children died in the study year as a result of child maltreatment.<sup>2</sup> Those who survive face possible life-long health consequences. They are at increased risk for a range of problems, from heart and liver disease to substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>3</sup> One recent study estimated that the total, lifetime economic cost of the child maltreatment that occurred in the United States in one year was \$124 billion dollars, using a conservative measure of the

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1. A.J. SEDLAK, ET AL., *FOURTH NATIONAL INCIDENCE STUDY OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (NIS-4): REPORT TO CONGRESS, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVS., ADMIN. FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 6* (2010).

2. *Id.* at 3-11.

3. Vincent J. Felitti, et al., *Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study*, 14 AM. J. PREVENTIVE MED. 245, 245 (1998).

frequency of maltreatment.<sup>4</sup> Under a more expansive measure, the lifetime cost estimate rose to \$585 billion.<sup>5</sup> Given these studies, prevention is a moral and economic imperative.

Not all populations are impacted equally by child maltreatment. Some groups are particularly vulnerable. The papers included in the Journal address the experience of LGBT children,<sup>6</sup> of immigrant children,<sup>7</sup> of poor children<sup>8</sup> and of homeless children.<sup>9</sup> Together, they provide insights into hard lives of many children in America today, but they also offer suggestions and hope for change.

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4. Xianming Fang, et al., *The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention*, 36 CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT 156, 161 (2012) available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213411003140>.

5. *Id.*

6. See generally Megan Fulcher, *Gender and Sexual Orientation in the Family: Implications for the Child Welfare System*, 21 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 94 (2014) (discussing the emergence of different family models in the United States); and Kim Hai Pearson, *The Sacra of LGBT Childhood*, 21 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 54 (2014) (discussing the plight of LGBT children in the United States).

7. See generally Ashley Ham Pong, *Humanitarian Protections and the Need for Appointed Counsel for Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Facing Deportation*, 21 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 68 (2014) (discussing the United States' fragmented immigration system and why it is important to provide representation for unaccompanied minors facing deportation).

8. See generally Joan M. Shaughnessy, *An Essay on Poverty and Child Neglect: New Interventions*, 21 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 4 (2014) (highlighting the growing problem of child poverty in the United States).

9. See generally Jessica Dixon Weaver, *Beyond Child Welfare—Theories on Child Homelessness*, 21 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 16 (2014) (discussing the increasing epidemic of child homelessness, especially after the start of the recession that began in 2007).