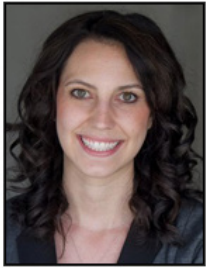


Perspectives on Child Welfare



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According to Morrison Institute's recent statewide poll, 75% of Arizonans think that child welfare (including abuse and neglect) is an important issue today. Rural (76%), urban (77%) and suburban (73%) Arizonans agree child welfare is important.

It is not surprising that the poll shows Arizonans who have children under the age of 18 (83%) and women (82%) feel more strongly that child welfare is an important issue in Arizona. The poll also showed Hispanic Arizonans (81%) are more likely to consider child welfare an important policy issue for Arizona.

It is not difficult to understand why Arizonans agree child welfare as an important policy issue. The alarming situation of thousands of uninvestigated abuse and neglect cases back in 2013 garnered the attention of Arizonans and the state saw seismic shifts in the way child safety was addressed in Arizona.

Since being recreated as a stand-alone agency, the Department of Child Safety has made significant progress on eliminating the backlog of uninvestigated cases and reducing the number of children in out-of-home care from the height of 19,000 children in care in 2016 to 13,400 children in out-of-home care at the end of October 2019. Alongside this very public transformation of the state's process for assessing family safety and intervening when necessary, other influential individuals and organizations started paying attention.

Policy makers, decision makers, service organizations and foundations in Arizona noticed that Arizona families were struggling. In 2016, the Arizona Community Foundation invested in Morrison Institute to facilitate research on the child welfare system to inform policy makers on best practices and services that are needed to help support families in different areas of the state. Read more about this research here: [Neglect of Neglect](#), [Preventing Families' 'Drift into Failure'](#), [Child Neglect in Arizona: Analysis](#), [Supervisory Neglect in](#)

[Arizona: Facts, Issues, Opportunities](#), [Child Neglect: Voices from Arizona Communities](#).

Morrison Institute for Public Policy's work reflects Arizonans' feelings about the importance of child welfare. At Morrison Institute, [we have built a mapping tool to showcase programs in Arizona that help to prevent child abuse and neglect and where these programs are located across the state](#). To help decision-makers understand the needs of communities, we have also developed an index that combines more than a dozen indicators related to the risk of child abuse and neglect. By comparing the risks in a community to the available supports, the tool highlights policy options for decision makers to consider if there is a desire to geographically target child abuse and neglect prevention activities and programs.

In 2016, a group called "Collective Impact for Child Safety and Well-Being" was formed with the intention of bringing cross-sector partners together to improve the lives of children and families in Arizona. At its core, the team aims to ensure all children and families throughout Arizona are safe, stable, and flourishing.

This collective impact group has included and benefited from the knowledge and expertise of four state entities (Department of Child Safety, Department of Health Services, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, and First Things First), the Governor's Office of Youth Faith & Families, and many important organizations in the child welfare and well-being space including Children's Action Alliance, Jewish Family and Children's Services, Pima County Superior Court, Prevent Child Abuse Arizona and Arizona State University.

Recently, the group selected two areas for action and improvement: home visitation and family navigation. In these two areas, teams comprising practitioners, institutions, community members, and academics collaborate to launch improvements to reduce child abuse and neglect. Some of the initial improvements the teams are discussing include the use of common screening tools, single-stop family resource centers, and offering more job skills training and employment opportunities for parents and caregivers.

The group has all of Arizona in its sights but will choose initial geographies to pilot improvements for rapid learning cycles.