



Prevention Mindset Institute: *Embracing Prevention Across Systems*

The 3-2-1 newsletter shares three ideas, two quotes, and one question to ponder. In this edition, we focus on what a reimagined prevention services system will require and on families as important leaders of this new vision and transformation. A special thank you to Teresa Rafael, Executive Director of the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, for developing this edition of the newsletter.

Future issues are planned for May and July, 2021.

The format, 3-2-1, is based on James Clear's newsletter that shares ideas related to developing effective habits, drawing from his book, [Atomic Habits](#).



Three Ideas:

Idea #1:

Creating a reimagined Prevention Services System in the United States will require a whole new approach not only to the services we deliver, but also the ways in which we deliver them...

A robust, comprehensive prevention system would not just prevent tragedies before they occur, but it would also offer upfront, cost-effective strategies that could strengthen all families and reduce the need to remove children from their families in the first place. ...

We envision this new system being led by a dedicated agency or department that is adequately funded to ensure the coordination of prevention resources so that all families, regardless of where they reside, can access services to keep their children safe, healthy and well. This prevention system would provide equal attention to the prevention of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the promotion of positive childhood experiences.

This focus on prevention will need to be supported with a robust policy agenda, including policies that address the economic strain that affects all too many families... This prevention system must be constructed with the recognition that there are systemic injustices in our society that limit opportunity and access for some children and families.

Many families do not trust the systems that have been put in place to "help," because they often experience discrimination when they attempt to access those services. A new, comprehensive prevention system would fundamentally work to alter the conditions and contexts in which children and families live in order to produce equitable outcomes for all.

The Chronicle of Social Change, *It's Time for State Prevention Services Systems*, July 21, 2020
Jennifer Jones and Bart Klika (Prevent Child Abuse America)

Idea #2:

We hope that in the future, it will be common practice for leaders, service providers, child welfare workers and other stakeholders to respond to families' requests and needs in a way that builds trust and strengthens the capacity of parents. As parents, we want to feel comfortable calling a service provider and being able to ask questions when needed. For example, one of us might have a question relating to our child's limited use of words and wonder whether this is typical of the child's developmental stage or something we should worry about? We are asking for help in fulfilling our role as providers and caretakers for our children. We are not asking for you to fix our problems but to help us identify what is best for our family. We want YOU to help US help our children in the best way possible....

Our hope is that families are, ultimately, connected to appropriate resources through the prevention system and that we are able to prevent families from becoming involved with the child welfare system. Please be the person who gives us real hope, not because you have all the answers but because you help us believe in ourselves. We challenge you to join with those who already focus their work on building relationships with families, being dependable and identifying strengths. As a service provider, always ask yourself, how have I worked in partnership with this family and supported them to reach their full potential? As a leader, ask yourself how have I partnered with family members to be sure our policies and practices reflect what will be most successful in my community or state. We, as parents need to be supported and guided in our journeys to address challenges that led us to reach out for support. Later, we want opportunities to use our life experiences to give back to the communities and agencies that helped us grow and change.

We are working to expand the recognition that supportive communities can help build strong families willing and able to ask for help. We must join together to change public perceptions regarding families. We are recommending that systems create opportunities for parents to work in partnership with community service providers, systems leaders (including child welfare leaders) and other key stakeholders to promote a culture shift where asking for help is normalized and seen as a strength. We have seen how powerful it is when parents and service providers work with community, state and national leaders to build a public perspective that values families and the importance of supporting their growth, including extended family, friends and other supportive individuals. When we all work together, we can change public attitudes and build support for this approach.

Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Birth Parent National Network, 2020,
*What Parents Say About... Building a 21st Century
Community-Based Approach to Strengthening Families*
<https://ctfalliance.sharefile.com/share/view/s8d47a5c1da04de68>

Idea #3:

The key to moving forward in transforming the current child welfare system into a new way of work that keeps children safely with their families is requiring systems to work together and in partnership with families and communities. Transformation is a goal too massive for any one person, organization, or system to do alone. True change will come when we work together to create the community conditions where all people, especially children and their families, can thrive. We don't need to know exactly what to do to begin, and it's not up to professionals or systems to figure this out by ourselves. We just need to take the lead from families—who know better than anyone else what their needs are—and start "doing." Helping families to safely raise their own children is the key. Hero-based rescuing and removing and out-of-family placement must end. We simply know better; now let's do better.

Building a New Way, Together, Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer, Chief Executive Officer, Alia,
CBX, August/September 2020, Vol. 21, No. 6 |



Two Quotes:

"When parents seek resources, let us remove punitive system barriers and change the way we see and talk about helping families and ensure that our efforts build hope. If a child asked for support, we would comply without any hesitation. Let us be as motivated to support parents as we are children and acknowledge the importance of keeping families together."

-Shrounda Selivanoff, birth parent (Washington)

"As parents the hardest thing in the world to face is not being able to meet the needs of our children and having to ask for help. We go back and forth in our thinking – should I pick up the phone and ask for help? Will you judge me for asking? Are you going to call child protective services? All we want to do is provide for our children."

-Kimberly Mays, Parent and Social Services Worker, Washington State Office of Public Defense
Children's Trust Fund Alliance, 2020, *What Parents Say About... Building a 21st Century Community-
Based Approach to Strengthening Families*

<https://ctfalliance.sharefile.com/share/view/s8d47a5c1da04de68>

(Kimberly Mays, Parent who lost custody of nine of her ten children and they have now all reunited with her as adults. Kimberly now has an MSW and was instrumental in starting the first Parent for Parent Program in WA State. She is a social services worker with the Washington State Office of Public Defense and a caregiver for relative and non-relative foster youth.)



One Question:

What would it look like if parents in communities across the country could seek and find help without fear of shame, blame or loss of their children?