

## A

abandoned infant	A newborn child who is not medically cleared for hospital discharge and who is unlikely to leave the hospital in the custody of his or her biological parent(s). Abandoned infants can also refer to babies whose parents are unknown and who are abandoned in unsafe places, sometimes with fatal outcomes. Laws to avert these unsafe abandonments are almost exclusively State laws.
abandonment	A situation in which the child has been left by the parent(s), the parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown, the child suffers serious harm, as a result of his/her desertion, or the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or to provide reasonable support for a specified period of time.
accreditation	The acknowledgment and verification that an organization fulfills explicit, specified standards. For example, public and private child and family service agencies may apply for accreditation with several accrediting bodies—including the Council on Accreditation—conduct self-assessments, and undergo periodic accreditation reviews to ensure that they meet quality standards.
accredited agency (in intercountry adoption)	An adoption service provider who has been accredited by either the Council on Accreditation (COA) or the Colorado Department of Human Services (CO) to provide adoption services in the United States for cases subject to the regulations set forth by the Hague Adoption Convention. An accredited agency does not include a temporarily accredited agency. There are more than 200 accredited adoption service providers in the United States.
accredited body (in intercountry adoption)	An adoption agency which has been through a process of accreditation including meeting criteria for accreditation imposed by the accrediting country, and can perform certain functions of the Convention in the place of, or in conjunction with, the U.S. Central Authority.
accrediting entity (in intercountry adoption)	The Council on Accreditation (COA) and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CO) are the two organizations that have been designated by the U.S. Secretary of State to accredit adoption service providers in the United States for cases subject to the Hague Adoption Convention.



adjudicatory hearing	Held by the juvenile and family court to determine if there is enough evidence to prove that a child was actually abused, neglected, or abandoned, or whether another legal basis exists for the State to intervene to protect the child. Also referred to as a fact-finding hearing
adoption	The social, emotional, and legal process through which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.
adoption agency	A legally regulated entity that provides one or more of the following: assessment of prospective adoptive parents, counseling services to birth parents, preparation and placement of children with adoptive families, and postadoption services. Agencies may be public or private, secular or religious, for profit or nonprofit.
Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)	A national data collection and analysis system that collects case level information on all children in foster care for whom State child welfare agencies have responsibility for placement, care or supervision, and on children who are adopted under the auspices of the State's public child welfare agency.
adoption assistance	Federal (title IV-E of the Social Security Act) or State benefits granted to adoptive families to offset the short- and long-term costs of adopting eligible children who have special needs (defined differently in each State). Benefits vary by State but commonly include monthly cash payments, medical assistance, social services, and nonrecurring adoption expenses.
adoption dissolution	Describes an adoption in which the legal relationship between the adoptive parents and adoptive child is severed, either voluntarily or involuntarily, after the adoption is legally finalized. This results in the child's return to (or entry into) foster care or placement with new adoptive parents.
adoption revocation	Legal withdrawal of an agreement to adoption by the birth parents. Circumstances and time limits for revocation are established by States.



adoption triad	The three types of individuals involved in any adoption: the birth parent(s), the adoptive parent(s), and the adopted child or adult. The adoption triad may also be referred to as the "adoption triangle," the "adoption circle," or the "adoption constellation."
AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)	The most severe phase of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection occurring when an immune system is badly damaged and becomes vulnerable to opportunistic infections.
alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD)	A term coined by the Institute of Medicine in 1996 that is used to describe a type of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) affecting individuals with confirmed maternal alcohol use and one or more congenital defects, including heart, bone, kidney, vision, or hearing abnormalities.
apostille (in intercountry adoption)	A simplified form that contains standardized numbered fields of common, yet essential information, which allows the data to be understood by all adoption officials regardless of the language spoken in intercountry adoption cases. A completed Apostille must be attached to the documents needed for Hague cases; it provides a certification of certain public and notarized documents.
authentication	The process of certifying documents for use by foreign governments (e.g., home studies for intercountry adoptions).

## B

### background check

An investigation of prospective kinship caregivers foster and adoptive parents, and all adults residing in prospective foster and adoptive households. In most states, the background investigation includes a fingerprint check of federal and state criminal records and child abuse and neglect registries. These records checks are also part of the home study process used to assess the suitability of these homes for placement of foster or adoptive children.

behavioral health	A state of mental/emotional being and/or choices and actions that affect wellness. Substance abuse and misuse, as well as serious psychological distress, suicide, and mental illness, are examples of some behavioral health problems that can be far-reaching and exact an enormous toll on individuals, their families and communities, and the broader society
best interests of the child	The deliberation that courts undertake when deciding what type of services, actions, and orders will best serve a child as well as who is best suited to take care of a child. "Best interests" determinations are generally made by considering a number of factors related to the circumstances of the child and the circumstances and capacity of the child's potential caregiver(s), with the child's ultimate safety and well-being as the paramount concern.
boarder baby	An infant under the age of 12 months who is left at the hospital past the date of medical discharge. Boarder babies may eventually be claimed by their parents and/or be placed in alternative care.
bonding	The process of forming an emotional attachment. It involves a set of behaviors that will help lead to a close personal bond between the parent/caregiver and their child. It is seen as the first and primary developmental achievement of a human being and central to a person's ability to relate to others throughout life.
bullying	Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

## C

caregiver	One who provides for the physical, emotional, and social needs of a dependent person. The term most often applies to parents or parent surrogates, child care and nursery workers, health-care specialists, and relatives caring for children, elderly, or ill family members.
case closure	The process of ending the relationship between the caseworker and the family. This often involves a mutual assessment of progress and includes a review of the beginning, middle, and end of the helping relationship. Optimally, cases are closed when families have achieved their goals and the risk of maltreatment has been reduced or eliminated or the child has achieved his/her permanency goal.
case management	A process that includes the coordination, provision, and monitoring of services tailored to best address clients' strengths and needs. Ongoing case management requires frequent, planned contact with the family to assess progress toward goals.
child abuse and neglect	Defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) as, at a minimum, any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or trafficking, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm. While CAPTA sets federal minimum standards for states that accept CAPTA funding, each state provides its own definitions of maltreatment within civil and criminal statutes.
child advocacy center (CAC)	Community-based, child-friendly, multidisciplinary service center for children and families affected by sexual abuse or severe physical abuse. These centers bring together, often in one location, child protective services investigators, law enforcement, prosecutors, and medical and mental health professionals to provide a coordinated, comprehensive response to victims and their caregivers.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)	Periodic reviews of state child welfare systems conducted by the Children's Bureau. The purpose of the reviews is to achieve three goals: ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and to assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.
child fatality review	A review of child abuse and neglect fatalities and suspicious child deaths conducted by child death review teams (also known as child fatality review teams), which exist in most States. Results of these reviews may be used to improve services, advocate for change, and conduct public awareness activities, ultimately for the purpose of preventing future child maltreatment deaths.
child sex trafficking	The act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, patronizing, soliciting, or maintaining a child (under 18 years of age) for commercial sex, including prostitution and the production of child pornography.
continuum (in child welfare)	An uninterrupted sequence of services and supports provided to the child or youth and his/her family across the child welfare spectrum from child abuse prevention to permanency.
convention country (in intercountry adoption)	One of the 81 nations that has ratified, entered into force, and are party to (members of) the Hague Adoption Convention along with the United States.
cultural competence	The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence is a vehicle used to broaden our knowledge and understanding of individuals and communities through a continuous process of learning about the cultural strengths of others and integrating their unique abilities and perspectives into our lives.

## D

decree of adoption	The document signed by a judge to finalize an adoption. It formally creates the parent-child relationship between the adoptive parents and the adopted child, as though the child were born as the biological child of its new parents. It places full responsibility for the child on the new parents.
developmental disability	A diverse group of severe chronic conditions caused by mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental disabilities may have problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during development up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.
disaster preparedness	The process of developing and implementing emergency responses in the event of a natural or human-made disaster.
dispositional hearing	Hearings held by the juvenile and family court to determine the legal resolution of cases after adjudication. Dispositional hearings may determine where the children will live for the time being, who will have legal custody of them, and what services the children and family will need to reduce the risk and to address the effects of maltreatment.
dossier (in intercountry adoption)	A collection of required documents sent to a foreign country in order to process the adoption of a child in that country's legal system. Adoptive families will have documents translated for those involved in the process of adoption in the child's country of origin. Required information varies by country but generally includes records to prove a family's identity, finances, health, and character.
dual-system served/crossover youth	Youth who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, sometimes also known as cross-over, joint cases, dual-system served, or multisystem involved youth.
due process	The principle that every person has the protection of a day in court, representation by an attorney, and the benefit of procedures that are speedy, fair, and impartial.

## E

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT)	The child health component of Medicaid. It is required in every State and is designed to improve the health of low-income children, by financing appropriate and necessary pediatric services.
early childhood intervention	A support system or collection of services for infants and children with developmental disabilities or delays and their families under the IDEA Part C program. The term is also used to describe services and supports that promote healthy development and a readiness to learn in children up to age 5 and that create safe, stable, and nurturing families and communities.
employer-provided adoption benefits	Benefits paid by employers to families who adopt, which usually mirror those available to new biological parents. Benefits may include paid or unpaid leave when a child arrives in the home, reimbursement of some portion of adoption expenses, or assistance with adoption services.
equitable adoption	The legal process used in some States to establish inheritance rights of a child when the prospective adoptive parent had entered into an oral contract to adopt the child and the child was placed with the parent, but the adoption was not finalized before the prospective adoptive parent died. If the parent has died without a will, the child may present a claim to all or part of the estate based on the doctrine. If the parent died with a will and the child was not mentioned in the will, the child may still present a claim for a portion of the parent's estate on the basis of being an omitted or pretermitted child. The child also may be eligible for some government benefits based on the doctrine. Not all States recognize an equitable adoption.
evidence-based practice	Involves approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are valid as well.
exempted provider (in intercountry adoption)	A social work professional or organization that operates under the convention system in the United States and provides adoption services in concert with primary providers. The fact that such a provider is not "accredited" or "approved" does not reflect negatively on the provider's ability to provide a particular adoption service. It simply





reflects the fact that such a provider is not in a position to act as a primary provider.

## F

faith-based organization (FBO)	A faith-based organization is one that holds religious or worship services, or is affiliated with a religious denomination or house of worship that generally maintains a faith-based mission, but the services they deliver may or may not have content that is faith-based. FBOs do not necessarily restrict participants to those who adhere to that faith.
family-centered casework practice	Encompasses the range of activities designed to help families with children strengthen family functioning and address challenges that may threaten family stability. These activities include family-centered assessment and case planning; case management; specific interventions with families including counseling, education, and skill building; advocating for families; and connecting families with the supportive services and resources they need to improve their parenting abilities and achieve a nurturing and stable family environment.
family-centered practice	A way of working with families, both formally and informally, across service systems to enhance their capacity to care for and protect their children. It focuses on the needs and welfare of children within the context of their families and communities. Family-centered practice recognizes the strengths of family relationships and builds on these strengths to achieve optimal outcomes. Family is defined broadly to include birth, blended, kinship, and foster and adoptive families.
family engagement	A family-centered and strengths-based approach to partnering with families in making decisions, setting goals, and achieving desired outcomes. Beyond specific cases, engaging families as key stakeholders must extend to policy development, service design, and evaluation.
family group decision-making	A generic term that includes a number of approaches in which family members are brought together to make decisions about how to care for their children and develop a plan for services. Families are engaged and empowered by child welfare agencies to make decisions and develop plans that protect their children from experiencing further abuse and neglect. Different terms used for this type of intervention include "family group conferencing," "family team conferencing," "family team decision-making," "family team meetings," "family unity meetings," and "team decision-making." Approaches differ in various aspects, but most



	consist of several phases and employ a trained facilitator or coordinator.
family reunification	Refers to the process of returning children in temporary out-of-home care to their families of origin. Reunification is both the primary goal for children in out-of-home care as well as the most common outcome.
fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)	A group of conditions that can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects can include physical problems and problems with behavior and learning. Often, a person with FASDs has a mix of these problems.
fictive kin	People not related by birth or marriage who have an emotionally significant relationship with an individual.
finalization	The legal act that establishes a family connection between the adopting person and the adopted person. Usually done in a courtroom setting, this act grants rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parent and child equal to those rights and responsibilities granted to families created by birth.
foster care	A 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians, and for whom the State agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and preadoptive homes.
foster care review board	State boards made up of volunteer citizens who review foster care cases to help ensure safe and timely permanency for children and that quality services are provided to families involved in the State foster care system. Foster care review boards often inform State policy and are typically established through State legislation.
foster child	A child who has been placed in the State or county's legal custody because the child's custodial parents/guardians are unable to provide a safe family home due to abuse, neglect, or an inability to care for the child.

## G

grief	A continuing process of mourning through which one learns to live with loss.
group home	A residence intended to serve as an alternative to a family foster home. Homes normally house 4 to 12 children in a setting that offers the potential for the full use of community resources, including employment, health care, education, and recreational opportunities. Desired outcomes of group home programs include full incorporation of the child into the community, return of the child to his or her family or other permanent family, and/or acquisition by the child of the skills necessary for independent living.
guardian ad litem (GAL)	A lawyer or layperson who represents a child in juvenile or family court. Usually this person considers the best interests of the child and may perform a variety of roles, including those of independent investigator, advocate, advisor, and guardian for the child. A layperson who serves in this role is sometimes known as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA).
guardianship	A judicially created relationship between a child and caretaker that is intended to be permanent and self-sustaining as evidenced by the transfer to the caretaker of the following parental rights with respect to the child: protection, education, care and control of the person, custody of the person, and decision-making.

## H

Hague Adoption Certificate	Issued by the U.S Department of State, it attests that the child's adoption has been completed in the United States in accordance with the Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA).
Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption	Is an international agreement to establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child.

Hague Custody Declaration	Issued by the U.S. Department of State when a child emigrates from the United States (outgoing adoption case) to another Convention country and certifies that custody of a child for purposes of adoption has been granted in the United States in accordance with the Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000.
home-based services	Services provided primarily to families in their homes. In child welfare, this may include home visiting, parent aides, respite care, and homemaker services.
home study	The process of gathering information, preparing, and evaluating the fitness of prospective foster, kinship, and adoptive parents. The primary purpose of a home study is to ensure that each child is placed with a family that can best meet his/her needs. Home study requirements vary greatly from agency to agency, State to State, and (in the case of intercountry adoption) by the child's country of origin.
home visiting	Method of delivering preventive and family support services directly to the family in the home. Home visiting programs support positive parent-child relationships, promote optimal child health, development, and academic success, enhance parental self-sufficiency and parenting skills, connect the family with community resources, and prevent child abuse and neglect. They focus on the importance of children's early years and on the role parents play in child development.
human trafficking	A crime involving the exploitation of someone for the purposes of compelled labor or a commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

## I

illegal adoption	An adoption resulting from abuses such as: abduction, the sale of, trafficking in, and other illegal or illicit activities against children.
immigrant	An individual admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident. Permanent residents are also commonly referred to as immigrants; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a) (15)).



implementation science	The study of methods to promote the integration of research findings and evidence into child welfare policy and practice.
incest	Sexual contact between closely related persons. Laws vary across States regarding what constitutes crimes of incest.
independent living program	A program that assists youth who are transitioning from an out-of-home care placement in receiving services necessary to become independent. Programs provide youth with services such as stable, safe living accommodations, basic life-skill and interpersonal skill-building techniques, educational opportunities, assistance in job preparation and attainment, trauma-informed mental health care, and physical health care.
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	A federally mandated statement of goals written for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and implemented in a school-based setting. The IEP may be revised in a meeting in accordance with outlined regulations and may address the needs of youth with emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, or other health impairments.
Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	A law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.
institutionalization	The practice or concept of placing a child or youth in a congregate care setting for an extended period. Being institutionalized can impact an individual's future adjustment outside of a structured environment.
intellectual disability	A disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18.
intercountry adoption	The adoption of children who are citizens of one country by parents who are citizens of a different country.
Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)	An agreement between member States that governs the interstate delivery of and payment for medical services and adoption assistance payments/subsidies for adopted children with special needs. The agreements are established by the laws of the States that are parties to the Compact. Nearly all 50 States and the District of Columbia are parties to the ICAMA.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)	An agreement regulating the placement of children across State lines. All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the ICPC as statutory law in their respective jurisdictions.
IR-3 Visa (for intercountry adoption)	An immigrant visa issued to children adopted from non-Hague Convention countries. IR-3 visas are issued after a full and final adoption is completed abroad by both adopting parents, both parents physically see the child prior to or during local adoption proceedings, and the country in which the child resides does not require readoption in the United States. Children who are under 18 automatically acquire U.S. citizenship upon entry to the United States on IR-3 visas. In such cases, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services automatically sends Certificates of Citizenship without requiring additional forms or fees.
IR-4 Visa (for Intercountry Adoption)	A type of immigrant visa issued to children adopted from non-Hague Convention countries. IR-4 visas are issued to children for whom a full and final adoption will be completed in the United States. This classification is used when a foreign country only permits prospective adoptive parents to obtain guardianship of a child, rather than allowing a full and final adoption and/or the prospective adoptive parent(s) have not seen and observed the child prior to the adoption process. Orphans admitted to the United States on IR-4 visas become lawful permanent residents and are automatically processed to receive an Alien Registration Card ("green card").

## J

jurisdiction [of a court]	The legal authority of a court to hear and decide a certain type of case. It is also used as a synonym for venue, meaning the geographic area over which the court has territorial jurisdiction to decide cases
juvenile court	A court of law that has jurisdiction over cases involving children under a specific age, usually 18. Juvenile courts (sometimes referred to as family courts) generally preside over both delinquency and dependency proceedings.
juvenile delinquency	A federal criminal violation committed prior to one's eighteenth birthday.

## K

kinship adoption	Adoption of a child by someone related by family ties or a prior relationship.
kinship foster care	An arrangement that can occur when a public child welfare agency has legal custody and places a child with relatives or kin in a foster care arrangement. This type of arrangement is often referred to as either “formal” or “public” kinship care. Kinship foster homes may be either licensed or unlicensed, depending on State licensing requirements and family preferences.
kinship navigator program	A federally funded program that connects children involved with child welfare to grandparents or relative caregivers and helps those caregivers identify and access needed services. Kinship navigator programs are funded through grants established by the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.
knowledge management	A collection of systematic approaches to help information and knowledge flow to and between the right people at the right time (in the right format at the right cost) so they are able to act more efficiently and effectively to create value for the organization.

## L

labor trafficking	The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.
leadership	The ability to set a direction and influence others to follow. Increasingly, child welfare researchers and reformers have focused on the importance of leadership in building and maintaining an effective workforce. Agency administrators and judicial officers can set the tone for the organization and affirm the importance of its workforce through large and small decisions as well as day-to-day interactions with staff.
learning disability (LD)	A neurological condition that interferes with an individual's ability to store, process, or produce information. Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math, and reason, and can affect an individual's attention, memory, coordination, social skills, and emotional maturity.



legal risk placement	A placement made prior to the relinquishment or termination of parental rights where the prospective adoptive parents acknowledge, in writing, that a child may return to the care of his/her parent. A final decree of adoption shall not be entered in any jurisdiction until all required consents or a termination of parental rights are obtained or dispensed with in accordance with applicable law.
legally free (in adoption)	A child is legally free for adoption when the parental rights of that child's birth parents have been terminated in a court of law.
logic model	Map or a simple illustration of what an individual does, why he/she does it, what he/she hopes to achieve, and how he/she will measure achievement. It includes the anticipated outcomes of services, indicators of those outcomes, and measurement tools to evaluate the outcomes.
long-term foster care	The placement of a child in foster care for an extended period of time. The Adoption and Safe Families Act does not recognize long-term foster care as a permanency option and, increasingly, State child welfare systems no longer view long-term foster care as a placement alternative.
loss	The harm or distress resulting from losing. Children and families involved in child welfare typically have suffered many losses that may be attributed to abuse and neglect, removal from the home (loss of family and friends), and/or the transitions or disruptions they may experience throughout the process.

## M

mandated reporter	Groups of professionals who are required by State statutes to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the proper authorities (usually Child Protective Services or law enforcement agencies). Mandated reporters typically include educators and other school personnel, health care and mental health professionals, social workers, child care providers, and law enforcement.
maternity home	A residence for pregnant woman (adults or adolescents) who are in the process of making an adoption plan for their unborn child. Pregnant young woman in foster care can be placed in a maternity home setting if the home is licensed to provide group home care.



medical neglect	Failure to provide or to allow needed care as recommended by a competent health care professional for a physical injury, illness, medical condition, or impairment, and/or the failure to seek timely and appropriate medical care for a serious health problem that any reasonable person would have recognized as needing professional medical attention.
mentoring	In child welfare, enhancing organizational culture and workforce retention through peer support. In many jurisdictions, new child welfare staff are now assigned mentors during their designated training period. Mentors are typically seasoned colleagues who can assist new caseworkers with specific knowledge development about their job, organization, and/or the community.
meta-analysis	A quantitative, formal, epidemiological study design used to assess previous research studies systematically to derive conclusions about that body of research.
model court	In general, a court that seeks to improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system by adhering to the practices and procedures described in Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges—NCJFCJ). More specifically, it refers to one of the Model Court sites supported by NCJFCJ's Child Victim's Act Model Courts Project.
multicultural, multiculturalism	The coexistence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles.
multidisciplinary team	A team established between agencies and professionals within the child protection system to discuss cases of child abuse and neglect and to aid in decisions at various stages of the child protective services' case process. These terms may also be designated by different names, including child protection teams, interdisciplinary teams, or case consultation teams.



## N

National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)	A voluntary national data collection and analysis system created in response to the requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (P.L. 93-247) as amended.
neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)	A group of problems that occur in a newborn who was exposed to addictive opiate drugs while in the mother's womb.
nonrecurring adoption expenses	The reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney's fees, and other expenses that are directly related to the legal adoption of a child with special needs, which are not incurred in violation of State or Federal law, and which have not been reimbursed from other sources or funds.
nonresident father	A father who does not live in the same household as his child. A nonresident father may be divorced, separated, or never married to the child's mother.
nurturance	Behaviors and activities that further the growth and development of another person, family, group, or community.

## O

ombudsperson	An advocate or spokesperson for a group who are served by an organization to ensure that the organization's obligations, ethical duties, and rules are being followed; investigates possible illegal, unethical activities or harmful, unforeseen consequences of that organization's actions; and facilitates negotiations or actions for satisfactory solutions.
orphan	A child is considered an orphan for any of several reasons: the death or disappearance of, abandonment or desertion by, separation from, or loss of both parents; or if a surviving parent or unwed mother is unable to care for the child properly, as specified by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for intercountry adoption.
other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA/APPLA)	Also known as another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA), a term created by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 to replace the term "long-term foster care." With OPPLA, the child welfare agency maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. OPPLA or APPLA is a permanency option only when other options, such as



	reunification, relative placement, adoption, or legal guardianship, have been ruled out.
out-of-home care	Also called foster care, including family foster care, kinship care, treatment foster care, and residential and group care. Out-of-home care encompasses the placements and services provided to children and families when children must be removed from their homes because of child safety concerns, as a result of serious parent-child conflict, or to treat serious physical or behavioral health conditions that cannot be addressed within the family.
outreach	Activities to bring services, resources, or information to people in their homes or usual environments.
overrepresentation	Used interchangeably with the term "disproportionality" to refer to the proportion of ethnic or racial groups of children in child welfare compared to those groups in the general population.

## P

parens patriae	A legal term referring to the State's power to act for or on behalf of children who cannot act on their own behalf, in their best interest.
parent café	A tool used to engage parents directly in building protective factors for themselves and their families. It facilitates structured, small-group conversations that bring parents together to discuss issues that are important to them.
parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT)	A family-centered treatment approach proven effective for abused and at-risk children ages 2 to 12 and their biological or foster caregivers. A key activity is the therapist's role in coaching the parent to interact more positively with the child.
performance measure	A measure of how well services are delivered by an agency or program. Performance measures address issues such as the degree to which services are timely, cost-effective, or in compliance with standards. Unlike an indicator, which measures progress toward a broad outcome, a performance measure gauges how well a program is run. Examples include percentage of child abuse investigations completed within 24 hours of a report or the amount of child support collected for each dollar spent on child support enforcement.



permanency	A legally permanent, nurturing family for every child and youth. As defined in the Child and Family Services Reviews, a child in foster care is determined to have achieved permanency when any of the following occurs: (1) The child is discharged from foster care to reunification with his or her family, either a parent or other relative; (2) the child is discharged from foster care to a legally finalized adoption; or (3) the child is discharged from foster care to the care of a legal guardian.
permanency pact	A tool used to create a formalized, facilitated process to connect youth in foster care with a supportive adult. A permanency pact or pledge provides structure and a safety net for youth. It involves a defined and verbalized commitment by both parties to a long-term supportive relationship and provides clarity regarding expectations of the relationship. A permanency pact can be helpful particularly for youth who are preparing to transition out of foster care to live on their own.
permanency planning	In child welfare work, permanency planning is a systematic effort to provide long-term continuity in a dependent child's care, as an alternative to temporary foster placements. This might be done by facilitating adoption, by establishing clear guidelines for remaining in foster care or by helping the child's family become capable of meeting the child's needs.
physical abuse	Generally defined as "any nonaccidental physical injury to the child" and can include striking, kicking, burning, or biting the child, or any action that results in a physical impairment of the child. In approximately 38 States and certain territories, the definition of abuse also includes acts or circumstances that threaten the child with harm or create a substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare.
placement stability	Ensuring that children remain in stable out-of-home care, avoiding disruption, removal, and repeated placements that have harmful effects on child development and well-being. In the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, placement stability is one of the four composites used as the basis for national standards for Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
postadoption reporting (in intercountry adoption)	A requirement to submit information about a child's welfare after adoption. After a child has been adopted, some countries of origin have postadoption reporting requirements. Additionally, adoption service providers must comply with the State laws of the jurisdiction where the adoptive parent lives regarding the number of postadoption home visits that are



	required. The adoption service provider includes a requirement for such reports in the adoption services contract.
postplacement	The period of time before an adoption is finalized but after a grant of legal custody or guardianship of the child to the prospective adoptive parents or to a custodian for the purpose of adoption.
posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	A mental health disorder that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening or other traumatic event. PTSD is characterized by pervasive feelings of distress after the event. PTSD is diagnosed if the duration of symptoms is longer than a few months or if symptoms are significantly disrupting daily life.
prenatal substance exposure	Fetal exposure to maternal drug and alcohol use that can significantly increase the risk for developmental and neurological disabilities in the child. The effects can cause severe neurological damage and growth retardation in the substance-exposed newborn.
Program Improvement Plan (PIP)	The plan that States are required to submit to the Federal Government if found out of conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors subject to review in the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews.
putative father	Legal term for a man who is not married to the child's mother and who is alleged or claims to be the biological father of a child.
putative father registry	Registry system that serves to ensure that birth fathers' rights are protected. Some States require that birth fathers register, while other States presume that the father does not wish to pursue paternity rights if he does not initiate any legal action.

## Q

quality  
assurance/quality  
improvement

The processes and measures an organization uses to determine that its products or services measure up to the standards established for them. In child welfare agencies, quality assurance programs may contain one or more of the following components: a client information/data system, a peer review system, or a case record review system. All State child welfare agencies are required to develop and implement standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. They are also required to operate an identifiable quality assurance system



that evaluates the quality of services, identifies the strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures.

qualitative service review	An instrument that generally assesses child and family status issues and system performance in child and family status and system performance.
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## R

racial disproportionality	The difference between the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the country and the percentage of children of the same group in the child welfare system.
reasonable efforts	Efforts made by State social services agencies to provide the assistance and services needed to preserve and reunify families.
recurrence of child abuse and neglect	A substantiated report of child abuse or neglect following a prior substantiation that involved the same child victim or family.
residential services	Services designed for children who need a more structured environment than generally offered in the child's home or in family foster care. They are delivered in a diverse array of settings, with the purpose of providing physical safety and security; maximizing children's growth, development, and potential; supporting and promoting permanency and families' involvement in meeting children's individual needs; and helping children move toward leading productive, satisfying, and independent lives.
resource family	Includes foster/adoptive parents, foster parents, and relative or kinship caregivers.
respite care services	Short-term child care services intended for parents and other caregivers that offer temporary relief, improve family stability, and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect. Respite can be planned or offered during emergencies or times of crisis.
reunion (in adoption)	The ultimate goal of many adoption searches, culminating in contact between a birth parent/relative and an adopted person. Reunion can be emotional for both birth parent and adopted adult and preparation is essential to think through expectations and potential outcomes specific to each situation. Although not all searches will result in a reunion, many adopted people and



	birth parents have been able to build meaningful relationships with their newfound relatives.
reunion registry	A tool that allows adopted persons and birth parents who do not know each other's identity to register the fact that they are searching for each other. If both parties' names are on the same registry, a "match" is made, and the organization can inform the parties, including helping to arrange a meeting. Most registries are passive, which means both parties must have independently registered in order for a match to be made. The organization will not search for the missing party. By contrast, an active registry will actively search for birth relatives and usually involves a fee. Both types of registries are operated by private and State organizations. An "access veto" may be filed by one party to the adoption to veto contact and/or the release of identifying information to those searching.
review hearing	An opportunity to evaluate the progress that has been made toward completing the case plan and any court orders and to revise the plan as needed.
Risk	In child welfare, the likelihood that a child will be maltreated in the future.
risk assessment	The collection and analysis of information to determine the degree to which key factors are present in a family situation that increase the likelihood of future maltreatment to a child or adolescent.
risk factors	Characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.

## S

safe haven	Refers to the legislative policy in which a parent can relinquish a child, usually a newborn, to lawfully designated places such as a hospital. When a child is surrendered in this way, the parent is protected from criminal prosecution. The legislation is not without controversy, and the scope and specifications of the statutes vary widely across the States. Safe haven laws are in effect in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
safety	The absence of an imminent or immediate threat of moderate-to-serious harm to a child
safety plan	A casework document developed when it is determined that a child is in imminent or potential risk of serious harm. It targets



	the factors that are causing or contributing to the risk of imminent serious harm to the child and identifies, along with the family, the interventions that will control the safety factors and assure the child's protection.
secondary traumatic stress	The emotional duress that results when a professional working with children and families hears about their firsthand trauma experiences. Its symptoms mimic those of posttraumatic stress disorder.
serious emotional disturbance	A term used to identify children and youth who persistently exhibit behaviors that indicate severe emotional and/or behavioral disorders. One who is classified as having a serious emotional disturbance is eligible for special health and special education services under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.
sex trafficking	The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of commercial sex. While adults must be compelled to perform commercial sex by force, fraud, or coercion in order for it to be considered a severe form of trafficking in persons, this is not the case for children. By law, children under the age of 18 who are induced to engage in a commercial sex act are considered victims of sex trafficking.
sexual abuse	Inappropriate adolescent or adult sexual behavior with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, sexual exploitation, or exposure to pornography. To be considered child abuse, these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child (for example, a babysitter, parent, or daycare provider) or related to the child. If a stranger commits these acts, it would be considered sexual assault and handled solely by the police and criminal courts.
shaken baby syndrome	The constellation of signs and symptoms resulting from violent shaking or shaking and impacting of the head of an infant or small child. The American Academy of Pediatrics describes shaken baby syndrome as a subset of abusive head trauma with injuries having the potential to result in death or permanent neurologic disability.
short term guardianship	A type of guardianship granted to an individual who accepts care and custody of a minor for a defined amount of time, usually for one year or less, which authorizes him/her to exercise the full decision-making rights of a guardian. These rights include enrolling the child in school, allowing for





	participation in school and community activities, and consenting to the provision of medical care and treatment.
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	Title XXI of the Social Security Act, jointly financed by the Federal and State governments and administered by the States. This national program is designed for families who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid, yet cannot afford to buy private health insurance. Within broad Federal guidelines, each State determines the design of its program, eligibility groups, benefit packages, payment levels for coverage, and administrative and operating procedures. The Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148) expanded eligibility for many low-income families.
Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)	A comprehensive automated case management and data collection tool supporting child welfare case management practice and meeting the requirements of 45 CFR 1355.50–57, including data reporting to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, and the National Youth in Transition Database.
subsidized guardianship	Program that provides financial assistance for caregivers who take legal guardianship of children who can no longer live with their parents.
sudden infant death syndrome	A term describing the sudden and unexpected death of a baby less than 1 year old in which the cause was not obvious before investigation. These deaths often happen during sleep or in the baby's sleep area
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	A federally funded, needs-based disability program for adults and children that provides monthly cash benefits and, in most States, automatic Medicaid eligibility.
systemic factors	The seven State and local child welfare agency systemic factors included in the Federal Child and Family Services Review that affect the achievement of positive outcomes by the children and families that agencies serve. These include (1) Statewide Information System, (2) Case Review System, (3) Quality Assurance System, (4) Staff and Provider Training, (5) Service Array and Resource Development, (6) Agency Responsiveness to the Community, and (7) Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing, Approval, and Recruitment.

# T

temporarily accredited agency (in intercountry adoption)	An agency that has been accredited on a temporary basis by an accrediting entity to provide adoption services in the United States in cases subject to the Convention.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	A program that provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting States the Federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. The focus of the program is to help move recipients into work and to turn welfare into a program of temporary assistance.
termination of parental rights (TPR)	Voluntary or involuntary legal severance of the rights of a parent to the care, custody, and control of a child and to any benefits that, by law, would flow to the parent from the child, such as inheritance.
therapeutic foster care	Intensive care provided by foster parents who have received special training to care for a wide variety of children and adolescents, usually those with significant emotional, behavioral, or social problems or medical needs. Therapeutic foster parents typically receive additional supports and services.
transition, independent living, and self-sufficiency services	Those programs, services, and opportunities intended to support young people in out-of-home care to develop to their full potential; contribute to their schools, programs, and the community; and succeed in work, family, and community life as adults. Also see independent living program.
trauma	A single, isolated, definable traumatic event that can lead to a wide range of potentially negative short-term psychological and behavioral responses from the child that include fear, dissociation, inability to regulate emotions, loss of trust, attachment disorders, and many other issues.
trauma-informed practice	A practice in which all parties involved recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the system, including children, caregivers, and service providers. Programs and agencies within such a system infuse and sustain trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills into their organizational cultures, practices, and policies to maximize physical and psychological safety, facilitate the recovery of the child and family, and support their ability to thrive.
Tribe, Tribal	An American Indian or Alaska Native Tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and is



eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. (U.S. Department of Interior Indian Affairs) A list of the federally recognized Tribes may be found in the U.S. Department of Interior website.

## U

unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs)	Children who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In resettlement terms, URM's are children under age 18 who are resettled alone in the United States without a parent or relative able to care for them.
unsubstantiated (not substantiated)	An investigation disposition that determines that there is not sufficient or credible evidence under State law or policy to conclude that the child has been maltreated or is at serious risk of maltreatment.
U.S. authorized entity (in intercountry adoption)	An agency or person that is accredited or temporarily accredited or approved by an accrediting entity, or a supervised provider acting under the supervision and responsibility of an accredited agency or temporarily accredited agency or approved person.
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	Federal agency within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that must approve all intercountry adoptions. USCIS determines whether a particular child meets the definition of a Hague Convention-adopted person, conducts background and criminal checks on all household members, (including fingerprint checks of all household members aged 18 and older), approves the adoption home study, and issues a Certificate of Citizenship.

## V

vicarious trauma	Occurs when a professional experiences stress or symptoms of trauma when working with children and families who are experiencing abuse, neglect, or family violence.
visa	An official authorization permitting entry into and travel within a particular country or region. When an orphan enters the United States with an immigrant visa, he/she is usually considered to be a lawful permanent resident of the United States, not a U.S. citizen, depending on the type of visa. Also see IR-3 Visa and IR-4 Visa.



visitation	Scheduled contact among a child in out-of-home care and his or her family members. The purpose of visitation is to maintain family attachments, reduce the sense of abandonment that children may experience during placement, and prepare for permanency.
vital record	Vital records most commonly refer to records such as birth and death certificates, marriage licenses and divorce decrees, wills, and the like. These records are created by local authorities, with possible exceptions for events overseas, in the military, or in the District of Columbia.

## W

waiting children	Children in the public child welfare system who cannot return to their birth homes and need permanent, loving families to help them grow up safely and securely. Preferred term is "child who waits for a family."
welfare reform	Various efforts to change the way social welfare programs are administered, funded, and used. A significant reform effort, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L.104-193), replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF).
wellness	An active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, improving their emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual factors and well-being.
wraparound services	An arrangement of individualized, coordinated, family-driven care to meet complex needs of children and families who are involved with several child- and family-serving systems (such as mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and special education). Wraparound services aim to emphasize the strengths of the child and family and to deliver coordinated, unconditional services to achieve positive outcomes.
wrongful adoption	Lawsuits brought against agencies for intentionally misrepresenting, deliberately concealing, or negligently disclosing a child's background information to adoptive parents.

## X

## Y

youth development	A strengths-based approach to working with youth that focuses on preparing them to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent.
youth involvement/'engagement	A component of family-centered practice that centers on recognizing youth as experts in determining what is best for themselves and engaging youth in the development of policy, program, and service design and in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.
youth leadership	The ability of youth to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinion and behavior of others, and show the way by going in advance. It also includes the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals and have the self-esteem to carry them out, and establish support networks to participate in community life and effect positive social change.
youth permanency	The opportunity for a continuous, lifetime relationship with a nurturing parent, caregiver, or other adult. Includes unconditional commitment by a caring adult, lifelong support, involvement of the youth as a participant, a legal arrangement, where possible, and the opportunity to maintain contacts with important people, including birth family members and siblings.

## Z