

First Edition of

Leadership Dialogues

Empower. Strengthen. Innovate.

Towards a Safer Future for Our Children

**Frequently Asked and Most
Important Questions**

Please share more about foster care in India.

Children in need of care and protection may be placed in family foster care, including group foster care for their care and protection through orders of the Committee in a family which does not include the child's biological or adoptive parents for a short or extended period of time;

- First preference shall be given to the extended family of the child, which does not include child's biological or adoptive parents; PROVIDED that any of the immediate or extended family members are not the alleged accused/perpetrators of abuse on the child. (Model Guidelines for Foster Care 2024)

Laws and Policies relating to Foster care in India:

- Central level guidelines introduced to streamline the process related to Foster care (Model Guidelines for Foster Care 2024)
- Group Foster Care facility introduced (JJ Act 2015; Model Guidelines for Foster Care 2016; Mission Vatsalya 2022, (Model Guidelines for Foster Care 2024)

Promising Practices in Foster Care system- CSOs

- Foster parents mapping, preparation of an enabling environment through Bal Sangopan Yojana (Family Service Centre)
- Counselling on positive parenting & personality building activities for children (Children Emergency Relief International)
- Foster family support through home screening, foster parent training and monitoring (YCDA)
- Foster Care Society (Rajasthan)

State Government Schemes to Support Foster Care System:

- Kinship Foster Care (DWCD, Kerala) • Maharashtra

I would like to understand the practices and outcomes of strengthening gatekeeping at the CWC level.

Strengthening gatekeeping at the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) level involves improving the assessment, decision-making, and oversight processes to ensure the well-being and appropriate care of children in need of protection. The CWC serves as a crucial gatekeeper in determining the best interest of the child and whether they require alternative care such as kinship, foster care, adoption, or institutional care. A proper assessment of the family at CWC level enables decisions of placement of children either into alternative care or back to the family. Efforts are made to strengthen the family by keeping the child in the family without any separation.

Promising Practices in gatekeeping at CWC level : Prerana Mumbai <https://www.preranaantitrafficking.org/>,
[Miracle Foundation India](https://www.miraclefoundationindia.org/)

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Children's Adoption Procedure Formerly Hon. It used to be done by the order of the district court, but now it is done by the order of the collector, since it is not sure that the decision was in the interest of the rest, can that process be done again?

The final authority of passing the adoption order is with District Magistrate, as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021. However all the other preparation such registration to CARA, preparation of PAPs, preparation of children, pre adoption counseling, follow up are to be done as before.

For what reason, do children enter into the Juvenile Justice System?

There are multiple reasons why children enter Child Care Institutions (CCIs), including abuse and neglect, poverty, family conflicts, parental death or abandonment, incarceration of parents, parental mental illness, disability, and concerns for a child's well-being or safety. However, it is important to recognize that not all children presented to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) are necessarily in need of care and protection. Many are placed in CCIs primarily due to poverty-driven circumstances, as families seek better education and basic facilities for their children. This highlights the critical need for family strengthening interventions to ensure that poverty alone does not become a reason for family separation. Strengthening families through economic support, access to services, and community-based care can prevent unnecessary institutionalization and uphold a child's right to grow up in a family environment.

I would like to have an understanding of work being done across India on system strengthening for child protection.

Promising practices in family and system strengthening:

- Tools to map and assess needs of vulnerable children and families - Thrive Scale (Miracle Foundation India), Vulnerability Assessment Tool- VAT (Child in Need Institute- CINI; Family Service Centre), Virtual Companion Tool Kit (Leher)
- Case Management mechanism (Miracle Foundation India; CINI)
- Safe spaces for children (CINI), Livelihood promotion (Youth Council for Development Alternatives CDA)
- Capacity building of stakeholders (Leher; Prerana; Aide Et Action; Miracle Foundation India)
- Positive parental engagement - Better parenting toolkit (CINI)
- CCIs transforming into family-based care resource centre (Cornerstone, Tamil Nadu and Aarambh, Madhya Pradesh in collaboration Miracle Foundation India)
- Families First- reducing length of stay in CCIs, quality ICP and SIR, expediting integration and follow up (CINI)
- Fit Families Programme- Counselling, educational sponsorship, restoration and post-exit follow-up (Udayan Care)
- Capacity Building of CCI staff through immersive Learning Circles Programme (Prerana)

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What is the strategy for System Strengthening for Alternative Care?

There are 4 major elements to be in place for system strengthening in family-based alternative care. It is political will, knowhow, capacity building and funding (reference : Hope and Homes for Children) . Capacity building of social workforce, building awareness and capacities of Community Based Child Protection Committees, strengthening the community leaders and engaging with stakeholders, quality assessment of children & families, resource mapping and follow up are some strategy for alternative care. Creating convergence platform at district and state levels to facilitate dialogues and linkages related to child protection issues is precious

Importance of gatekeeping at different levels? Role of CWC and its interconnectedness within a specific geographic region to stop cross-district flow of children into Child Homes? How is CWC a system-strengthening agency in addressing the needs of vulnerable children?

Gatekeeping at different level will prevent separation of children from their family and children landing into system. At community level (VCPC members, parents, volunteers, teachers and children) are encouraged and empowered through capacity building to identify issues of child protection and vulnerabilities in the community and strengthen families to prevent any kind of separation.

At the level of system, CWC members are encouraged to thoroughly investigate the reasons for the child's separation and give priority to reintegrating the child into their family. They can further ensure that proper SIR (Social Investigation Report – Form 22, JJA) is done, and the ICP of the child are adequately prepared and are regularly updated by the case workers.

What are the key capacity-building needs for the social workforce in relation to care reform?

The broad areas can be Introducing the importance of family care, strategy and planning for the transition, qualitative Assessments of children and families, case management, gatekeeping, after care, family strengthening, kinship care, foster care, Psycho Social Support. Focus and mindset shift is needed towards community and not restricted only to the children in the CCIs. Children in kinship care/sponsorship/independent living need equal amount of monitoring and follow up.

Children are being impacted negatively through social media. How can we stop that?

For children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet and social media. That's an essential part of everyone lives. However at the same time, it is also important to use the endless supply of information on the internet and these social media platforms in a healthy way. Hence, it is important to aware children about the same. Children should be well informed and prepared through digital safety, cyber bullying periodically. Regular communication with children, non judgmental and empathetic conversations between children and parents/caregivers should take place.

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Need a module or guidance for monitoring the children residing with their parents' or guardian.

At Miracle Foundation India, we utilize our Thrive Scale™ methodology, a revolutionary application that allows us to measure progress and assess risk at every stage of our work. The Thrive Scale™ focuses on five well being domains: Physical & Mental Health, Education, Family & Social Relationships, Home Finances and Living Conditions.

To access Case management tool kit, please visit:

<https://miraclefoundationindia.in/case-management-tool-kit/>

You will get modules and tools which will help you to monitor better.

You may also like to refer our Case management videos at Miracle Foundation youtube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdlwb1OrfEoTUjJ5JKLMx-DDNU9GRfqY1>

What is the role of youth and care leavers?

Youth and care leavers plays a very important role. They can be brand ambassador and can be empowered to work towards issues related to children's rights -- especially the right to a family -- at the individual child level as well as within the surrounding community. Youth and young care leavers can be actively engage in the improvement of the child care and protection system at all levels, with a focus on family-based care (FBC) and alternative care.

To know about Miracle's Youth ambassador program please visit: <https://miraclefoundationindia.in/youth-ambassadors-leading-the-way/>

Promising practices : Udayan Care, Catalyst for Social Action, Aide et Action, YuWaah, National Care Leavers Network

Reunification is possible only if both the child and the family are willing. However, in cases where neither the child nor the parents are open to reintegration, what steps can be taken to address such situations?

In such cases we try to understand what the reservations are from both the parent's and child's end. It is therefore important to identify the root cause for separation. The long period of institutionalization might have such impact where children and parents need to be prepared for the transition. Child's meaningful participation in the care reform process is crucial. However child's safety and well being has utmost importance in care reform. If these reservations are due to some safety concerns, child should not be sent back to family. The priority is always that child should be back to own biological families but if that's not possible, we look for family-based alternative care options.

What is the adoption process?

For Adoption guidelines and process, please visit: <https://cara.wcd.gov.in/>

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How to create coordination between the departments to improve and implement Family Strengthening and Family-Based Alternative Care process?

It is important to create convergence and linkages between different departments in order to strengthen families and FBC approach.

Guidelines by Ministry of Women & Child Department (MWCD), Govt of India: Mission Vatsalya https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/GUIDELINES%20OF%20MISSION%20VATSALYA%20DATED%2005%20JULY%202022_1.pdf

Promising practices by CSO: Please refer to the [India Alternative Care Network resource page](#).

How to ensure proper follow-up of the child in CCI setup as well as home setup after reunification?

An effective case management system is required to ensure that the child remains with family and there's no chance of re-separation. You can refer to Miracle Foundation India's Case management toolkit to understand more on this and we hope this will help you. <https://miraclefoundationindia.in/case-management-tool-kit/>

What is the role of an NGO in Gatekeeping?

NGOs can lead the community and its leaders towards family-based care and prevent the separation of children from their families. NGOs can play an important role of facilitator while working with community leaders, youth, children, parents, Anganwadi, teachers, etc.

Promising practices: Deepak Foundation, Miracle Foundation India, Catholic Relief Services, Udayan Care.

With the role of CHILDLINE 1098 being discontinued under Mission Vatsalya, what does the future hold for children in need of care and protection? How can children seek assistance from the police and District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), especially considering that CHILDLINE operated 24x7, while DCPU does not function round-the-clock?

It is incorrect to say that the CHILDLINE has vanished. CHILDLINE has now integrated with the government system which is an ultimate example of system change. Yes, the transition of CHILDLINE from CSOs to government could have been given more time. However, we have seen that the states have absorbed the old CHILDLINE team with their DCPU structure to avoid reinventing the wheel. Promising practices: Tamil Nadu.

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What are the family strengthening/ supporting systems/ structures available from the government & private sector? What are sustainable alternative care systems available & useful?

There are 5 well being domains : family & social relationship, Education, Health & mental health, Household Economy and Living conditions to be supported well under family strengthening work. The support system is family as agency is the most important structure which need to be supported in a sustainable model by the community structure, linkages with social protection schemes, local governance etc. One has to be mindful to believe in strength based approach not the limitations and weakness in the family. It is development and right based work not service provision.

Can you please share some more on the CWC engagement with VCPCs? Is this on a case-to-case basis or are there any periodic engagements planned on specific issues?

As per the JJ Act, the role of CWC is not only restricted within the CCIs or need based case discussion but guide the CPCs and local governance in working with the children and families at risk of separation. For that, their periodic engagement with the CPCs is needed to understand the context of the community. The CWCs can support and guide the system for building and activating the convergence platform at district/block/village level. This can be done through DCPU, community based volunteer groups, SHGs.

Could you please share a list of benefits that children experience through Family-Based Alternative Care (FBAC)? This will help in effectively convincing stakeholders. What are your thoughts on this?

Please refer to the MWCD website, HAQDARSHAK <https://haqdarshak.com/>

How to improve the relationship between children and parents?

Improving the relationship between children and parents involves various approaches aimed at fostering trust, communication, understanding, and a supportive environment. Both children and parents should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. Both parents and children should actively listen to each other without interruption. Encourage respect for each other's viewpoints and practice empathy to understand each other's feelings

Skill building: Parenting skills, Life Skills Education.

Please share more about Miracle Foundation India work.

Please visit: <https://miraclefoundationindia.in/our-work/>

Please share the process to develop acceptance from systems for family care is best for the child.

Developing system-wide acceptance that family care is the best option for a child requires a sustained, multi-stakeholder approach. It is essential to create awareness about the importance of family-based care and provide structured support to the system in transitioning away from institutionalization. This requires a series of strategic engagements, including leadership dialogues with government bodies, child protection functionaries, families, children, donors, and civil society organizations. Continuous advocacy, capacity-building initiatives, and policy discussions play a crucial role in shifting mindsets and fostering systemic change. Additionally, showcasing best practices and evidence-based models from successful family strengthening and alternative care programs helps reinforce the feasibility and effectiveness of family-based care. Collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and stakeholder alignment are key to reducing reliance on institutions and ensuring that every child grows up in a safe and nurturing family environment.

