Children Australia

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Letter to the Editor

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Letter to the Editor

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Dear Editor,

In 2013, Pat Hansen and I published an article in *Children Australia* that drew attention to the fact that the NSW Department of Family and Community Services could not provide information about the number of young women in the care of the Minster who were pregnant and gave birth to a child while in care, or shortly after they left care (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2013). There was also a lack of information about young men in foster care who became a parent while in care, or shortly after they left care.

The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to proposed developments in the USA that addresses this issue. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have recently published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM, 2019) that outlines changes to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), dated June 20, 2019. A blog from *Child Trends*, make the following note about this proposition:

> ... agencies do not consistently track whether youth in foster care are pregnant or parenting. While some child welfare agencies already track this information, agencies will now be required to track it; importantly, agencies will also be required to track if whether youth are placed with their children. These new data will enable states to plan for and provide adequate reproductive health and parenting services, and to train and recruit for families to care for foster youth with their children. Finally, the data will allow researchers to track national initiatives and identify whether state initiatives are improving youth outcomes.
>
> (Williams & Sepulveda, 2019, para.3)

This is a very progressive development as it will help to limit the number of young women who are in care, or who have recently left care, lose the custody of their child when their child is born.

Australian state and territory child protection authorities need to take note of the AFCAR changes and urgently consider similar initiatives.

Yours sincerely,

References

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