



Child Care Reform in India: Emerging Trends and Strategic Approaches

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Abstract

Over the last few years, India has experienced a shift in the legislative and policy areas of child care and protection through the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022). The shift aims to ensure that every child grows up in a stable and safe family and that institutions should be seen as the last resort. The study explores the role of political will through the lens of laws, policies, institutions, and judicial support in promoting care reforms and overcoming systemic barriers. It looks at the unexplored challenges in implementing family-based care models, such as gaps in interdepartmental convergence, financial sustainability, and capacity building. The study examines the implementation of care reform in four states across India using qualitative research techniques (semi-structured interviews, case studies, and secondary data analysis) assessing how these state Governments have adapted national policies to innovative local situations to preserve family systems. The findings disclose that this sector requires more funding allocations to ensure that resources can be directed toward preventive and rehabilitative programs, strengthening family-based care models, and technology-based systems that can facilitate real-time data monitoring leading to informed decision-making. It also underlines the importance of the financial stability of families through expanded access to social protection schemes, livelihood opportunities, and building resilience. For qualitative assessments and effective intervention, a strong child protection workforce with enhanced inter-departmental collaboration is needed. Empowering families and communities will ensure every child's right to a supportive home that enables them to thrive.

Keywords: Child protection workforce, Family-Based Alternative Care, Political will, Prevention and Rehabilitation, Systemic change