

CT CASA Recommended Reading

Continuing Education Resource

In addition to attending classes and online training, advocates are also able to read books related to the work we do to receive continuing education credit hours. Each 50 pages equals 1 CE hour. You may complete a maximum of four hours of your continuing education training each year through reading.

How to use this list. Titles are organized by topic so advocates can choose reading that matches current case needs. Books marked NEW are proposed additions and should receive CT CASA's normal staff approval before being offered for CE credit.

Recommended Additions at a Glance

- **I Speak for This Child: True Stories of a Child Advocate** — Gay Courter. First-person accounts from a Guardian ad Litem/child advocate. Useful for connecting CASA training concepts to interviewing, observation, court advocacy, boundaries, and best-interest decision-making.
- **Somebody Else's Children: The Courts, the Kids, and the Struggle to Save America's Troubled Families** — John Hubner and Jill Wolfson. A close look at children, families, courts, and professionals navigating the child-welfare system, with strong relevance to the systems CASA advocates encounter.
- **We Were Once a Family: A Story of Love, Death, and Child Removal in America** — Roxanna Asgarian. Investigative reporting centered on a family involved with the child-welfare system. Encourages advocates to examine family separation, kin, decision-making, and the consequences of system choices.
- **Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare** — Dorothy Roberts. Examines race, family regulation, and child-welfare intervention. A useful complement to the list's broader books on racial inequity because it focuses directly on child welfare.
- **Abusive Policies: How the American Child Welfare System Lost Its Way** — Mical Raz. A history of U.S. child-abuse policy and child removal that can help advocates understand how current practices developed and why policy context matters.
- **Building the Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children** — Daniel A. Hughes. A practice-oriented exploration of attachment difficulties following early trauma, neglect, and disrupted caregiving.
- **No Such Thing as a Bad Kid: Understanding and Responding to the Challenging Behavior of Troubled Children and Youth** — Charles D. Appelstein. Reframes difficult behavior through strengths, relationships, and trauma-responsive approaches, making it especially useful for advocates observing children across placements and settings.
- **The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for Your Special Ed Child** — Lawrence M. Siegel. A practical introduction to special-education advocacy, evaluations, IEPs, services, meetings, and procedural protections. Edition should be reviewed periodically for legal currency.
- **More Alike Than Different: My Life with Down Syndrome** — David Egan. A first-person disability perspective that can broaden advocates' understanding of self-determination, expectations, inclusion, and adulthood.
- **The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics** — Lundy Bancroft, Jay G. Silverman, and Daniel Ritchie. Focuses specifically on the intersection of

coercive control, parenting, children, custody, and family systems. Particularly relevant when domestic violence is part of a CASA case.

- **No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us** — Rachel Louise Snyder. Journalistic examination of domestic violence from survivor, offender, law-enforcement, and systems perspectives. Helps illuminate coercive control and risk beyond visible injury.
- **Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale** — Rachel Lloyd. Explores commercial sexual exploitation of girls and the vulnerabilities that can precede exploitation, including abuse, instability, and system involvement.
- **On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System** — Martha Shirk and Gary Stangler. Examines housing, education, employment, relationships, and other challenges facing young people leaving foster care without permanent family supports.
- **Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion** — Gregory Boyle. Stories from work with gang-involved young people that invite reflection on dignity, belonging, relationships, stigma, and the strengths of young people often defined by their behavior.
- **What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma** — Stephanie Foo. A lived-experience account of complex trauma and recovery that can deepen understanding of long-term trauma while also prompting reflection about how helpers understand healing.
- **The Shadow in Our Lives: One Family's Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse** — Tracey Wilson Heisler. A CASA-network author's memoir about disclosure, family response, recovery, and lessons learned after child sexual abuse; National CASA/GAL featured it in its network author book series in 2025.

Reading List by Topic

CASA & Advocacy Skills

A Question of Balance: Decision Making for CASAs by Janet Ward

Easy to read narrative and sample interview questions that pull together the “how” and “why” of the 30+ hour National CASA/GAL pre-service training for volunteers.

NEW • I Speak for This Child: True Stories of a Child Advocate by Gay Courter

First-person accounts from a Guardian ad Litem/child advocate. Useful for connecting CASA training concepts to interviewing, observation, court advocacy, boundaries, and best-interest decision-making.

NEW • Somebody Else’s Children: The Courts, the Kids, and the Struggle to Save America’s Troubled Families by John Hubner and Jill Wolfson

A close look at children, families, courts, and professionals navigating the child-welfare system, with strong relevance to the systems CASA advocates encounter.

Foster Care, Child Welfare & Lived Experience

The Butterfly Garden by Chip St. Clair

Fear rocked Chip St. Clair’s world. As a boy, he never knew what would set his father off—maybe the ice cubes had melted in his glass of Tab, maybe dinner was overcooked or undercooked or the gravy was too runny. Regardless, the beatings always came. But one fateful night when the police answered the call, the truth came to light from the shadows, sparking national headlines: Chip St. Clair’s entire life—his name, even his date of birth—had been a lie, and the man he called ‘Dad’ was an impostor, an escaped child killer who had been on the run for over two decades. The stunning revelation would send one of America’s Most Wanted to justice and another on a quest for his true identity.

A Colony in a Nation by Chris Hayes

A Colony in a Nation examines the surge in crime that began in the 1960s and peaked in the 1990s, and the unprecedented decline that followed. Drawing on close-hand reporting at flashpoints of racial conflict, as well as deeply personal experiences with policing, Hayes explores cultural touchstones, from the influential “broken windows” theory to the “squeegee men” of late -1980s Manhattan, to show how fear causes us to make dangerous and unfortunate choices, both in our society and at the personal level.

From Foster Care to the White House by Terrence K Williams

Released in October 2020, Mr. Williams tells his story of being born into nothing, neglected, starved, abused, and beaten. He let his deprived upbringing shape him, not destroy him. Surrounded by a victim hood mentality, he pushed himself to reject the acceptance that his life would never be better. Today he’s a popular voice for common-sense and a defender of freedom.

Growing Up in the Care of Strangers by Waln Brown and John Seita

Products of foster care themselves, 11 college-educated adults share their insights about their experiences and provide recommendations for professionals about what would improve foster care.

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer

this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world. “The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.”

A Private Family Matter by Victor Rivas Rivers

In *A Private Family Matter*, Victor recalls his days as an angry youth living under the rule and wrath of his father. A Cuban immigrant, Victor’s dad was nicknamed *El Ciclón* for his tempestuous temperament, which led him not only to beat his wife but to abuse, and eventually kidnap, his own children. How Victor managed to seek help for his family and criminal punishment for his father, overcome his demons and learn to love himself, and share his experience with other victims and survivors of domestic abuse is at the heart of this profound and affecting memoir.

To The End of June: The Intimate Life of American Foster Care by Cris Beam

Who are the children of foster care? What, as a country, do we owe them? Cris Beam, a foster mother herself, spent five years immersed in the world of foster care looking into these questions and tracing firsthand stories. The result is *To the End of June*, an unforgettable portrait that takes us deep inside the lives of foster children in their search for a stable, loving family.

We Are Called to Rise by Laura McBride

This is a story about families, the ones we have and the ones we make. It’s a story about America today, where so many cultures and points of view collide and coexist. *We Are Called to Rise* challenges us to think about our responsibilities to each other and reminds us that no matter how cruel life can be in a given moment, it is ultimately beautiful to live, and live fully.

NEW • We Were Once a Family: A Story of Love, Death, and Child Removal in America by Roxanna Asgarian

Investigative reporting centered on a family involved with the child-welfare system. Encourages advocates to examine family separation, kin, decision-making, and the consequences of system choices.

NEW • Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare by Dorothy Roberts

Examines race, family regulation, and child-welfare intervention. A useful complement to the list’s broader books on racial inequity because it focuses directly on child welfare.

NEW • Abusive Policies: How the American Child Welfare System Lost Its Way by Mical Raz

A history of U.S. child-abuse policy and child removal that can help advocates understand how current practices developed and why policy context matters.

Trauma, Attachment & Child Development

Brave: A Personal Story of Healing Childhood Trauma by Jayne McConnaughey

A personal memoir describing a woman’s journey through psychotherapy which pays tribute to how a therapist and client worked together to heal attachment wounds.

The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by Nadine Burke Harris

Provides insight and research into the prevalence of childhood trauma and the impact of Adverse Childhood Experienced Study (ACES)

The Grown-Up’s Guide to Teenage Humans: How to Decode Their Behavior, Develop Unshakable Trust, and Raise a Respectable Adult by Josh Shipp

Written by a former foster youth, Shipp shows us how to be a caring adult in a teenager's life to help them face adversity and develop resilience.

Reshuffled: Stories of Hope and Resilience from Foster Care by Tracy Gharbo and Linda Palmer

Reshuffled tells the life stories of former foster children who despite all odds, craft productive lives.

Youth share their trials and strategies to gain footing in their unpredictable lives with the hopes that their stories can model, inspire, and encourage youth facing similar situations today.

What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing by Bruce D. Perry and Oprah Winfrey

Through deeply personal conversations, Oprah Winfrey and renowned brain and trauma expert Dr. Bruce Perry offer a groundbreaking and profound shift from asking "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" In conversation throughout the book, Winfrey and Dr. Perry focus on understanding people, behavior, and ourselves. It's a subtle but profound shift in our approach to trauma, and it's one that allows us to understand our pasts in order to clear a path to our future—opening the door to resilience and healing in a proven, powerful way.

NEW • Building the Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children by Daniel A. Hughes

A practice-oriented exploration of attachment difficulties following early trauma, neglect, and disrupted caregiving.

NEW • No Such Thing as a Bad Kid: Understanding and Responding to the Challenging Behavior of Troubled Children and Youth by Charles D. Appelstein

Reframes difficult behavior through strengths, relationships, and trauma-responsive approaches, making it especially useful for advocates observing children across placements and settings.

Education & Special Education

A Chance in the World by Steve Pemberton

From the day he is five-years-old and dropped off at his foster home of the next eleven years, Stephen is mentally and physically tortured. No one in the system can help him. No one can tell him if he has a family. Along the way, a single faint light comes only from a neighbor's small acts of kindness and caring, and a box of books. From one of those books he learns that he has to fight in any way he can, for victory is in the battle. His victory is to excel in school. Against all odds, the author succeeded.

Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools and Beyond by Glenn E. Singleton

Allows you to deepen your personal understanding of race and its impact on all students. You will discover how to apply the strategy and protocol to: Embrace the four agreements—stay engaged, speak your truth, experience discomfort and accept non-closure—to deepen interracial dialogue, Build a foundation for advancing equity using the Six Conditions of Courageous Conversation, Examine the role of race in your life using the Courageous Conversation Compass to understand and guide your actions and Expand your capacity to lead others on the journey in addressing institutional racism disparities

Demon Copperhead - Barbara Kingsolver PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

Set in the mountains of southern Appalachia, this is the story of a boy born to a teenaged single mother in a single-wide trailer, with no assets beyond his dead father's good looks and copper-colored hair, a caustic wit, and a fierce talent for survival. In a plot that never pauses for breath, relayed in his own unsparing voice, he braves the modern perils of foster care, child labor, derelict schools, athletic success, addiction, disastrous loves, and crushing losses. Through all of it, he reckons with his own

invisibility in a popular culture where even the superheroes have abandoned rural people in favor of cities.

Educated by Tara Westover

Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home.

Foster Placements: Why They Succeed and Why They Fail by Ian Sinclair

Based on exhaustive research, the author discusses the primary concerns in foster placement planning, considering the high frequency of placement breakdowns, their impact on the child's behavior and school performance and the challenges this places on foster families.

Ghosts from the Nursery by Robin Karr-Morse

This book incorporates significant advances in neurobiological research over the past decade. The author's groundbreaking conclusions became even more relevant following the wave of school shootings across the nation. Following each media coverage and public debate turned yet again to the usual suspects concerning the causes of violence: widespread availability of guns and lack of mental health services for late-stage treatment. Discussion of the impact of trauma on human life, especially early in life during chemical and structural formation of the brain, is missing from the equation.

Helping Foster Children In School: A Guide for Foster Parents, Social Workers and Teachers by: John DeGarmo

This book explores the challenges that foster children face in schools and offers positive and practical guidance tailored to help the parents, teachers and social workers supporting them.

How Children Succeed by Paul Tough

Why do some children succeed while others fail? The story we usually tell about childhood and success is the one about intelligence: success comes to those who score highest on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs. But in *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter more have to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, optimism, and self-control.

Not By My Wings Alone: A Memoir – From Harlem to Howard University, A Journey of Courage, Resilience, and Hope by Carolyn Henry

During her childhood, Carolyn had been exposed to a dead man lying in the street, stumbled over her mother's body passed out from drinking, was shipped off to several foster homes, and survived molestation. When she was moved to her third foster home, an eighth-grade teacher challenged her to strive to make the honor roll. She was inspired and determined not to let him—or herself—down. By the end of that year, for the first time, Carolyn passed every class. With hard work, determination, and key people coming into her life at pivotal moments, it was the start of a new beginning. A new life.

NEW • The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for Your Special Ed Child by Lawrence M. Siegel

A practical introduction to special-education advocacy, evaluations, IEPs, services, meetings, and procedural protections. Edition should be reviewed periodically for legal currency.

Mental Health, Disability & Neurodiversity

Alphabet Kids by Robbie Woliver

A guide for people working with children who exhibit symptoms of a possible disorder that may impede their physical, psychological, intellectual, or emotional development.

The Body Keeps the Score by Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk

This book uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity.

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog by Bruce D. Perry

Traumatized children can teach us about loss, love and healing. A psychiatrist carefully examines and explains attachment disorders including RAD (reactive attachment disorder).

A Child's Journey Through Placement by Vera Fahlberg

Fahlberg has provided the comprehensive guide for all who care about advocating children with all kinds of behavior and disorder issues.

The Out of Sync Child by Carol Kranowitz

The Out-of-Sync Child broke new ground by identifying Sensory Processing Disorder, a common but frequently misdiagnosed problem in which the central nervous system misinterprets messages from the senses. This newly revised edition features additional information from recent research on vision and hearing deficits, motor skill problems, nutrition and picky eaters, ADHA, autism, and other related disorders.

The Reason I Jump by Naoki Higashida

A smart, self-aware, charming 13-year old with autism tells his story of how his mind thinks, feels, and perceives and responds to things due to his diagnosis of Autism. Parents and family members who never thought they could get inside the head of their autistic loved one at last have a way to break through to the curious, subtle, and complex life within. (Book, 4 hours)

Trauma Stewardship by Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky

A longtime trauma worker, Laura van Dernoot Lipsky offers a deep and empathetic survey of the often unrecognized toll taken on those working to make the world a better place. We may feel tired, cynical, or numb or like we can never do enough. These and other symptoms affect us individually and collectively, sapping the energy and effectiveness we so desperately need if we are to benefit humankind, other living things and the planet itself. In Trauma Stewardship, we are called to meet these challenges in an intentional way, to keep from becoming overwhelmed by developing a quality of mindful presence. Joining the wisdom of ancient cultural traditions with modern psychological research, Lipsky offers a variety of simple and profound practices that will allow us to remake ourselves—and ultimately the world.

NEW • More Alike Than Different: My Life with Down Syndrome by David Egan

A first-person disability perspective that can broaden advocates' understanding of self-determination, expectations, inclusion, and adulthood.

Domestic Violence, Abuse & Family Safety

Child Abuse. What You Need to Know by Evin Daly

A definitive guide to understanding every facet of child abuse—physical, emotional and sexual; and neglect. Providing an in depth look at each, including the connection between child abuse and domestic violence.

Damaged by Cathy Glass

A true story of an abused child written by Cathy Glass. Cathy was Jodie's foster parent and writes about the time she spent with her child. Jodie is removed from her home when she is eight years old because of suspected child abuse by her parents. After being in five foster homes within four months, social services contacted Cathy to see if she would take Jodie and care for her. Cathy has been a foster parent for twenty years and has had success with all the children for whom she has cared.

I Never Told Anyone by Ellen Bass

Deeply moving testimonies by women survivors of child sexual abuse.

Lizzy Lives in An Angry House by: Karen Addison

This practical resource will help countless children, families and trusted adults make sense of an angry parent, show how to love them and still be able to stand up and speak up, and teach ways to keep themselves safe.

Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence by Judith L. Herman

When Trauma and Recovery was first published in 1992, it was hailed as a groundbreaking work. In the intervening years, it has become the basic text for understanding trauma survivors. Drawing on her own research on incest, as well as on a vast literature on combat veterans and victims of political terror, she shows surprising parallels between private horrors like child abuse and public horrors like war. Trauma and Recovery is essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand how we heal and are healed.

Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men by Lundy Bancroft

"He doesn't mean to hurt me-he just loses control." "He can be sweet and gentle." "He's scared me a few times, but he never hurts the children – he's a great father." "He's had a really hard life..." Women in abusive relationships tell themselves these things every day. Now they can see inside the minds of angry and controlling men-and change their own lives. In this groundbreaking book, a counselor shows how to improve, survive, or leave an abusive relationship, with: The early warning signs, nine abusive personality types, how to tell if an abuser can change, is changing, or ever will, the role of drugs and alcohol, what can be fixed, and what can't, how to leave a relationship safely.

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Substance Use & Recovery

The American Epidemic: Solutions for Over-Medicating Our Youth by Dr. Frank J. Granett Dr. Granett

This book provides new knowledge for parents, educators, all healthcare professionals, and public health policymakers to determine the cause of behavioral symptoms prior to psychoactive drug therapy in children.

Beautiful Boy by David Sheff

A teenager's addiction from the parent's point of view - a real-time chronicle of the shocking descent into substance abuse and the gradual emergence into hope.

Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal by Donna Jackson Nakazawa

Your biography becomes your biology. The emotional trauma we suffer as children not only shapes our emotional lives as adults, but it also affects our physical health, longevity, and overall well being. Scientists now know on a bio-chemical level exactly how parents' chronic fights, divorce, death in the family, being bullied or hazed, and growing up with a hypercritical, alcoholic, or mentally ill parent can leave permanent, physical fingerprints on our brains. When children encounter sudden or chronic adversity, stress hormones cause powerful changes in the body, altering the body's chemistry. The developing immune system and brain react to this chemical barrage by permanently resetting children's stress response to high, which in turn can have a devastating impact on their mental and physical health as they grow up. Donna Jackson Nakazawa shares stories from people who have recognized and overcome their adverse experiences, shows why some children are more immune to stress than others, and explains why women are at particular risk.

The Color of Water by James McBride

Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self-realization and professional success.

Dope Sick by Beth Macy

Chronicles America's more than twenty-year struggle with opioid addiction, from the introduction of OxyContin in 1996, through the spread of addiction in distressed communities in Central Appalachia, to the current national crisis.

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond

In this brilliant, heartbreaking book, Matthew Desmond takes us into the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee to tell the story of eight families on the edge. Arleen is a single mother trying to raise her two sons on the \$20 a month she has left after paying for their rundown apartment. Scott is a gentle nurse consumed by a heroin addiction. Lamar, a man with no legs and a neighborhood full of boys to look after, tries to work his way out of debt. Vanetta participates in a botched stickup after her hours are cut. All are spending almost everything they have on rent, and all have fallen behind.

The Invisible Child by Andrea Elliott

This is an astonishing story about the power of resilience, the importance of family and the cost of inequality-told through the crucible of one remarkable girl. This book takes on poverty, homelessness, racism, addiction, hunger and more as they shape the lives of one girl and her family.

Labelled: Ward of The State by Denisha Anthony and Monique Mensah

An abandoned child of drug-addicted parents and Florida's broken child-welfare system, Kenisha E. Anthony was left to wonder if anyone would ever want her. As a young girl, desperate for love and belonging, she bounced from one unstable home to the next, packing only resentment, abandonment, and heartbreak to take with her. Still, Kenisha found her way, ultimately breaking barriers and shattering statistics. This is a story of triumph, redemption, and the will to become more than just a Ward of the State.

Why Don't They Just Quit? by Joe Herzanek

Watching a loved one immersed in an intense battle with alcohol or drug abuse may be the most difficult, complex, and harrowing experience one can have. This book offers a message of hope to families and friends, giving practical solutions to help someone struggling with addiction begin the road to recovery. The book discusses dealing with relapse, the differences between quitting and recovering, and why addiction so often interferes with parenting.

Poverty, Housing & Homelessness

Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope, by Tina Kelley

This book tells the stories of six remarkable young people from across the United States and Canada as they confront life alone on the streets. Each eventually finds his or her way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America.

American Daughter: A Memoir by Stephanie Thorton Plymale

For 50 years, Stephanie Plymale kept her past a fiercely guarded secret. No one outside her immediate family would have guessed that her childhood was fraught with every imaginable hardship: a mentally ill mother who was in and out of jails and psych wards throughout Stephanie's formative years, neglect, hunger, poverty, homelessness, truancy, foster homes, a harrowing lack of medical care, and worse. American Daughter is at once the deeply moving account of a troubled mother-daughter relationship and a meditation on resilience, transcendence, and redemption.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son.

Bridges Out of Poverty by Ruby Payne

Bridges Out of Poverty takes the concepts of hidden rules of economic class and uses them to educate social workers, employers and community organizations about the unique and sometimes hidden obstacles that individuals from poverty face. Strategies help improve services for clients, raise retention rates for new hires from poverty, and increase understanding of the differences in economic cultures and how those differences affect opportunities for success.

Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City by Kathryn Edin

Across the political spectrum, unwed fatherhood is denounced as one of the leading social problems of today. Doing the Best I Can is a strikingly rich, paradigm-shifting look at fatherhood among inner-city men often dismissed as "deadbeat dads." Kathryn Edin and Timothy J. Nelson examine how couples in challenging straits come together and get pregnant so quickly—without planning. The authors chronicle the high hopes for forging lasting family bonds that pregnancy inspires, and pinpoint the fatal flaws that often lead to the relationship's demise. They offer keen insight into a radical redefinition of family life where the father-child bond is central and parental ties are peripheral.

The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls

In her childhood memoir, The Glass Castle, Jeannette Walls offers a blow-by-blow description of growing up with parents whose capacity for loving their children is greater than their ability to care for them.

Hope's Boy by Andrew Bridge

Bridge's memoir of surviving his childhood in a broken child-care system where the state acts as parents for the young certainly illustrates the complexity of such government institutions. After being

removed from his mother by the state, Bridge spent a brief stint in a residential program before being put into foster care. His decade-long stay with an emotionally abusive and unsupportive family left its share of marks.

Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive by Stephanie Land

Memoir about a mother's struggle to provide for her family as a member of the working poor.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America by Barbara Ehrenreich

Author and social critic goes undercover as an unskilled worker to reveal the challenges of poverty in America.

A Place Called Home by David Ambroz

A Galvanizing, stirring memoir about growing up homeless and in foster care to become a leading advocate for child welfare.

Poorly Understood: What America Gets Wrong About Poverty by: Mark Robert Rank, Lawrence Eppard, Heather Bullock

Poorly Understood systematically addresses and confronts many of the most widespread myths pertaining to poverty. The authors powerfully demonstrate that the realities of poverty are much different than them myths; indeed in many ways they are more disturbing.

Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the U.S. by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's acclaimed Racism without Racists documents how, beneath our contemporary conversation about race, there lies a full-blown arsenal of arguments, phrases, and stories that whites use to account for--and ultimately justify--racial inequalities. The fifth edition of this provocative book makes clear that color blind racism is as insidious now as ever. It features new material on our current racial climate, including the Black Lives Matter movement; a significantly revised chapter that examines the Obama presidency, the 2016 election, and Trump's presidency; and a new chapter addressing what readers can do to confront racism--both personally and on a larger structural level.

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down by Anne Fadiman

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down explores the clash between a small county hospital in California and a refugee family from Laos over the care of Lia Lee, a Hmong child diagnosed with severe epilepsy. Lia's parents and her doctors both wanted what was best for Lia, but the lack of understanding between them led to tragedy.

Those Who Wander: America's Lost Street Kids by Vivian Ho

Explores the challenging pasts of young people who commit a senseless murder, addressing the homelessness and runaway crisis of abused and neglected youth.

Three Little Words by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

The author's ability to form intelligent, open-minded conclusions about her traumatic childhood demonstrates her remarkable control and insight. Although there are plenty of wrenching moments, she succeeds not in attracting pity but in her stated intention, of drawing attention to the children who currently share the plight that she herself overcame.

The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind by Daniel Siegel and Tina Bryson

Provides insight into how a child's brain develops and functions and how adults can help children handle and respond to different experiences and challenges.

Race, Culture & Equity

Caste by Isabel Wilkerson

The book describes racism in the United States as an aspect of a caste system – a society-wide system of social stratification characterized by notions such as hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and purity. Wilkerson does so by comparing aspects of the experience of American people of color to the caste systems of India and Nazi Germany, and she explores the impact of caste on societies shaped by them, and their people.

Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine

This book recounts mounting racial aggressions in ongoing encounters in 21st century daily life and in the media. The accumulative stresses come to bear on a person's ability to speak, perform and stay alive. Citizen is a powerful testament to the individual and collective effects of racism in our contemporary, often named "post-race" society.

The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein

The book documents the history of state sponsored segregation stretching back to the late 1800s and exposes racially discriminatory policies put forward by most presidential administrations in that time, including liberal presidents like Franklin Roosevelt. The author argues that intractable segregation in America is the byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, and federal levels, also known as de jure segregation — and not happenstance, or de facto segregation. Among other discussions, the book provides a history of subsidized housing and discusses the phenomenons of white flight, blockbusting, and racial covenants, and their role in housing segregation. Rothstein wrote the book while serving as a research associate for the Economic Policy Institute, where he is now a Distinguished Fellow.

Me and White Supremacy by Lyla Saad

Structured as a 28-day guide targeted at white readers, the book aims to aid readers in identifying the impact of white privilege and white supremacy over their lives. It contains quotations, terminology definitions and question prompts. It received positive critical reception, entering many bestseller lists in June 2020 after a surge in popularity in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests.

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Honest conversations about race and racism and their impact on American life

White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to talk about Racism by Robin DiAngelo

Anti-racist educator illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and discusses what we can do to engage more constructively.

NEW • Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion by Gregory Boyle

Stories from work with gang-involved young people that invite reflection on dignity, belonging, relationships, stigma, and the strengths of young people often defined by their behavior.

LGBTQ+ Youth & Identity

Coming Out to the Streets: LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Brandon Andrew Robinson

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth are disproportionately represented in the U.S. youth homelessness population. In Coming Out to the Streets, Brandon Andrew Robinson examines their lives. Based on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in central Texas, Coming Out to the Streets looks into the LGBTQ youth's lives before they experience homelessness—within their

families, schools, and other institutions—and later when they navigate the streets, deal with police, and access shelters and other services.

Mama's Boy: Preacher's Son by: Kevin Jennings

Growing up poor in the South, Kevin Jennings learned a lot of things, especially about how to be a real man. When his father, a fundamentalist preacher, dropped dead at his son's eighth birthday party, Kevin already knew he wasn't supposed to cry. He also knew there was no salvation for homosexuals, who weren't "real men"—Or Christians, for that matter. But Jennings found his salvation in school, inspired by his mother. Self-taught, from Appalachia, her formal education had ended in sixth grade, but she was determined that her son would be the first member of their extended family to go to college, even if it meant going North. Kevin, propelled by her dream, found a world beyond poverty. He earned a scholarship to Harvard and there learned not only about history and literature, but also that it was possible to live openly as a gay man. But when Jennings discovered his vocation as a teacher and returned to high school to teach, he was forced back into the closet. He saw countless teachers and students struggling with their sexual orientation and desperately trying to hide their identity. For Jennings, coming out the second time was more complicated and much more important than the first—because this time he was leading a movement for justice.

The Son with Two Moms (book, 5 training hours)

In the early 1990's, author Tony Hynes was taken in at age three by two mothers after separation from his biological mother who suffered from schizophrenia.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents (15-page fact sheet, 1 training hour)

The Children's Bureau created a short factsheet with basic information about working with LGBTQ+ youth including terms and misconceptions, information about LGBTQ+ youth in child welfare, and tips for placements to create an affirming home environment.

Human Trafficking & Sexual Exploitation

The Berlin Turnpike: A True Story of Human Trafficking in America by Raymond Bechard

This is a true story of human trafficking in America as told through the testimony of a landmark federal trial which took place at the heart of one of the country's wealthiest states, Connecticut, over the course of eight days in 2007. The trial of United States vs. Dennis Paris provides a rare and detailed account of how a specific type of trafficking — commercial sexual exploitation — is thriving because it has left the street corners and entered our homes. This one case contains every element of a crime so reliant on secrecy; shrouded behind a scintillating veil of growing legitimacy. Yet it is buried just below the surface of our culture's mainstream perception.

A Piece Of Cake: A Memoir

Cupcake Brown (that's her real name) was 11 in 1976 when her mother died. Custody of Brown and her brother was given to a stranger—their birth father—who only wanted their social security checks. He then left them with an abusive foster mother who encouraged her nephew to rape Brown repeatedly. Brown got better and better at running away. A prostitute taught her to drink, smoke marijuana and charge for sex. Her next foster father traded her LSD and cocaine for oral sex. Eventually she went to live with a great-aunt in South Central L.A., where she joined a gang. Almost 16, having barely survived a shooting, she decided to quit gangbanging. Drugs were her new best friends. A boyfriend taught her to freebase, but then there was crack, which was easier. Before long she was a "trash-can junkie," taking anything and everything. It wasn't until she woke up behind a Dumpster one morning, half-dressed and more than half-dead, that she admitted she needed help. Brown conveys this all in gritty detail, and her

struggle to come clean and develop her potential-she's now an attorney with a leading California firm and a motivational speaker-ends her story on a high note.

Renting Lacy: A Story of America's Prostituted Children by: Linda Smith

To millions of Americans, the trafficking of children for commercial sexual purposes only happens somewhere else - in Southeast Asia or Central America - not on Main Street USA. Yet, it is abundantly clear that today at least 100,000 children are being used as commodities for sale or trade in cities across the nation. These kids are 21st Century slaves. They cannot walk away.

Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Prevention, Advocacy, and Trauma Informed Practice by: Lara B. Gerassi and Andrea J. Nichols

Analyses the current research and best practices for working with children, adolescents, and adults involved in sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). With a unique, research-based focus on practice, the book synthesizes the key areas related to working with victims of sex trafficking / CSE, including prevention, identification, practice techniques, and program design.

NEW • Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale by Rachel Lloyd

Explores commercial sexual exploitation of girls and the vulnerabilities that can precede exploitation, including abuse, instability, and system involvement.

Juvenile Justice & Incarceration

Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison by Nell Bernstein

One in three American children will be arrested by the time they are twenty-three, and many will spend time locked inside horrific detention centers that defy everything we know about how to rehabilitate young offenders. In a clear-eyed indictment of the juvenile justice system run amok, award-winning journalist Nell Bernstein shows that there is no right way to lock up a child. The very act of isolation denies delinquent children the thing that is most essential to their growth and rehabilitation: positive relationships with caring adults.

The Car Thief by Vicki Reed

Twelve-year-old Kelly Morgan wants only to return home to the wilds of Wyoming. All that's standing in his way are two thousand miles and the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This suspenseful tale of loss and redemption reveals serious flaws in the criminal justice system and the power of kindness, friendship, and love in healing life's deepest wounds.

Finding Fish by Antwone Fisher

Baby Boy Fisher was raised in institutions from the moment of his birth in prison to a single mother. He ultimately came to live with a foster family, where he endured near-constant verbal and physical abuse. In his mid-teens he escaped and enlisted in the navy, where he became a man of the world, raised by the family he created for himself.

Juvenile Delinquency in a Diverse Society by Kristin A. Bates and Richelle S. Swan

This engaging, student-friendly text takes a critical look at juvenile delinquency today. Authors Kristin Bates and Richelle Swan examine the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency in the context of real communities and social policies, integrating into the text the many social factors that shape juvenile delinquency and its control (including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality). Offering a thorough mix of traditional and cutting-edge theories, research, and practices, this text helps students develop critical thinking skills and answer many of the difficult questions on juvenile delinquency that they will face in their careers and lives.

Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth by John Hubner

A powerful, bracing and deeply spiritual look at intensely, troubled youth, Last Chance in Texas gives a stirring account of the way one remarkable prison rehabilitates its inmates. While reporting on the juvenile court system, journalist John Hubner kept hearing about a facility in Texas that ran the most aggressive, and one of the most successful, treatment programs for violent young offenders in America.

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

The book discusses race-related issues specific to African-American males and mass incarceration in the United States, but Alexander noted that the discrimination faced by African-American males is prevalent among other minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged populations. Alexander's central premise, from which the book derives its title, is that "mass incarceration is, metaphorically, the New Jim Crow

No Matter How Loud I Shout by Edward Humes

In an age when violence and crime by young people is again on the rise, No Matter How Loud I Shout offers a rare look inside the juvenile court system that deals with these children and the impact decisions made in the courts had on the rest of their lives. Granted unprecedented access to the Los Angeles Juvenile Court, including the judges, the probation officers and the children themselves, Edward Humes creates an unforgettable portrait of a chaotic system that is neither saving our children in danger nor protecting us from adolescent violence. Yet he shows us there is also hope in the handful of courageous individuals working tirelessly to triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds.

The Shadow System: Mass Incarceration and the American Family by Sylvia A. Harvey

A searing expose of the effects of the mass incarceration crisis on families-including 2.7 million American children who have a parent locked up. The author follows the fears, challenges, and small victories of three families struggling to live within the confines of a brutal system.

Weeping in the Playtime of Others: America's Incarcerated Children by Kenneth Wooden

From the summer of 1972 through 1975, Kenneth Wooden visited correctional facilities in thirty states where juveniles between the ages of five and sixteen were being held. During his research he uncovered an astoundingly high incidence of emotional and physical abuse, torture, and commercial exploitation of the children by their keepers, individuals who received public funds to care for them. After observing the brutal treatment of these youths, a significant number of whom were not criminals but runaways or mentally disabled, Wooden described the conditions in which these children lived in Weeping in the Playtime of Others.

Kinship Care, Adoption & Permanency

Before and After: Incredible Real Life Stories of Orphans Who Survived the Tennessee Children's Home Society by Judy Christie and Lisa Wingate

True stories of an adoption scandal from 1920 to 1950 in Georgia and the victims' journeys to reconnect with biological family.

The Connected Child by Karyn Purvis

The adoption of a child is always a joyous moment in the life of a family. Some adoptions, though, present unique challenges. Welcoming these children into your family—and addressing their special needs requires care, consideration, and compassion. Written by two research psychologists specializing in adoption and attachment, The Connected Child will help you: build bonds of affection and trust with your adopted child, effectively deal with any learning or behavioral disorders, discipline your child with love without making him or her feel threatened. "A must-read not only for adoptive parents, but for all families striving to correct and connect with their children."

Far From the Tree by Robin Benway

Robin Benway beautifully interweaves the story of three very different teenagers connected by blood as she explores the meaning of family in all its forms. This young adult novel addresses topics such as adoption, teen pregnancy, and foster care.

Instant Mom by Nia Vardalos

Nia Vardalos, writer and star of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, tells her hilarious and poignant road-to-parenting story that eventually leads to her daughter and prompts her to become a major advocate for adoption. Vardalos chronicles her attempts to have a baby, and how she tries everything—from drinking jugs of green mud tea, to acupuncture, to working with two surrogates. Finally, she and her husband, actor Ian Gomez, decide to try adoption and discover a free service: Foster Family Agencies. Then one day, the social workers “match” her with an almost- three-year-old girl, who she knows, instantly, is her daughter. With her signature wit and candor, Nia Vardalos reveals what really came next – the truth of how she and her husband transitioned a preschooler into their home. Vardalos opens up about the bawling-tears and belly-laughter that all make up what it means to be...a parent.

Keep the Doors Open: Lessons Learned from a Year of Foster Parenting by Kristin Berry

As a teenager, Kristin Berry had heard all the horror stories surrounding foster care and adoption—abuse, neglect, rejection, anger, and misunderstandings. This is Kristin's honest, unvarnished story of some of her experiences as a foster parent of twenty-three children over the course of nine years.

Like Family: Growing Up in Other People's Houses by Paula McLain

Paula McLain has written a powerful and haunting memoir about the years she and her two sisters spent as foster children. In the early 70s, after being abandoned by both parents, the girls were made wards of the Fresno County, California court and spent the next 14 years in a series of adoptive homes. The dislocations, confusions and odd pleasures of an unrooted life form the basis of a captivating memoir. McLain's beautiful writing and limber voice capture the intense loneliness, sadness, and determination of a young girl both on her own and responsible, with her siblings, for staying together as a family.

The Limits of Hope: An Adoptive Mother's Story by Ann Kimble Loux

Loux tells the story of her family's decision to adopt two sisters removed from their alcoholic biological mother. This personal account tells of Loux's attempt to raise these girls along with her three biological children. In the conclusion, Loux suggests alternatives to traditional adoption for the care of troubled older children

Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care by Joseph Crumbley

The rapid growth of kinship care has caught many child welfare agencies off guard. *Relatives Raising Children* gives professionals, agencies, institutions, communities and organizations the information they need to develop and provide service to kinship caregivers, kinship families, children and parents.

Three More Words by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent a harrowing nine years of her life in fourteen different foster homes. Her memoir, *Three Little Words*, captivated audiences everywhere and went on to become a New York Times bestseller. Now Ashley reveals the nuances of life after foster care: College and its assorted hijinks, including meeting “the one.” Marriage, which began with a beautiful wedding on a boat that was almost hijacked (literally) by some biological family members. Having kids, from fostering children and

the heartbreak of watching them return to destructive environments, to the miraculous joy of blending biological and adopted offspring.

Older Youth & Transition to Adulthood

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline

Penobscot Indian Molly Ayer is close to “aging out” out of the foster care system. A community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping Molly out of juvie and worse. As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren’t as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance. Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life—answers that will ultimately free them both.

What I Carry by Jennifer Longo

This young adult novel takes a powerful look at a teen girl about to age out of the foster care system. Growing up in foster care, Muir has lived in many houses. And if it’s learned one thing, it is to pack light. Carry only what fits in a suitcase. Muir has just one year before she ages out of the foster care system. When she meets Francine, Kira and Sean, everything changes.

NEW • On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System by Martha Shirk and Gary Stangler

Examines housing, education, employment, relationships, and other challenges facing young people leaving foster care without permanent family supports.

Advocate Wellness & Secondary Trauma

NEW • What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma by Stephanie Foo

A lived-experience account of complex trauma and recovery that can deepen understanding of long-term trauma while also prompting reflection about how helpers understand healing.