EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Los Angeles, specifically in Skid Row, the child welfare system has used surveillance and policing tactics to separate and monitor generations of families. Throughout the years the system has made Skid Row families more vulnerable to having their housing, employment, and children taken away. Similar to the criminal legal system, the child welfare or **family policing system** continues to justify their policing and surveillance practices through the criminalization and categorization of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities, constantly defining who they believe should be considered a "safety" threat or "high risk" parent.

Both the criminal legal and family policing system rely on carceral tactics and ideologies however unlike the criminal legal system the family policing system has evaded criticism to the same degree as the police due to its reliance on social workers and caseworkers rather than police officers.

Broken Windows policing helps exemplify how the family policing system parallels the criminal legal system. Whereas the criminal legal system has used **Broken Windows policing** to justify violent policing tactics, child welfare researchers and practitioners have used Broken Windows to justify and advocate for child maltreatment intervention through the child welfare system. Through Broken Windows policing variables of "social and physical disorder" such as the presence of litter are used to enforce zero-tolerance policies in communities. In Skid Row this form of Broken Windows Policing, in addition to other carceral logics, led to the creation of the **Skid Row Outreach Team** (SROT) in 2005 which enforced zero-tolerance policies in the community. The SROT roved the streets of Skid Row day and night, hoping to "help" move Skid Row residents out of their community, yet for years this has been overlooked because the surveillance was carried out by social workers, social service staff, and healthcare providers rather than the police.

The family policing system continues to punish mothers for problems that are often outside of their control, problems largely caused by *organized abandonment*. Mothers shared stories of being separated from their children due to lack of section 8 housing, for having a "dirty" home, and for being disabled. The current system largely offers no way to remedy these issues as they were not caused by the families themselves. Therefore Skid Row families have found themselves being separated permanently with their children being placed in abusive facilities like MacLaren Hall or the Children's Welcome center, foster homes far from their communities, or placed in unknown locations. The separation of families has led to mothers feeling psychologically and physically impacted for years, having to deal with repeated and long-lasting trauma caused by the system. Moreover the child welfare systems use of surveillance and separation tactics has decreased the ability for family members to creatively address harm without carceral entities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Decision-making processes used by social workers are based on subjective and discretionary definitions of "harm", "threat", and "risk". Social workers' assessment of harm (such as child neglect) revolves around assumptions of normativity, and often criminalizes those who are disabled, Black, transgender, and/or homeless. This subjectivity in determining who and what is harmful serves as the **basis** for decision-making, including algorithmic decision-making. These subjective assessments are encoded into data collection processes that are used to compile information for child welfare system databases. Algorithms use variables from these databases to generate risk scores that social workers use to make critical decisions, thus leading to the removal of children or added surveillance. If a child is removed from the home, this subsequently adds to the families risk score and therefore the cycle continues.

One of Los Angeles County's newest algorithmic decision-making tools called the **Risk Stratification Model** is used to predict risk of future involvement within the system. The tool is used in conjunction with other automated tools on the child welfare hotline and the SDM (Structured Decision Making Tool) which has been used to help caseworkers discern immediate safety risks. Skid Row parents are largely unaware of what tools are being used, how they're being used, where the data comes from, and how it impacts their lives. Further, many caseworkers we spoke to are also unaware of its implications. Through this, families remain unaware of their rights and often consent to data sharing and collection under the threat of family separation.

We believe that surveillance and policing has caused irreparable harm to communities, especially in Skid Row. These carceral tactics are not necessary for ensuring the well-being of children, their kin, or their communities. We believe that prevention efforts must include defunding the police, reparations, land back, bolstering of community created services, healing spaces, and community accountability processes. Additionally, we believe the system should be abolished to ensure that generational harm does not continue to occur.