

ECONOMIC & CONCRETE SUPPORTS

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE SURVEY

Research Report

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www.familyeconomicmobility.com

We also want to thank all of the Child Welfare Leaders who donated their time to complete this survey, as well as former Leaders who helped us to develop and test the content. This project would not have been possible without all of you.

Disclaimer

The points of view, analyses, interpretations, and opinions expressed here are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Kellogg Foundation and/or the Doris Duke Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the effects of a broad array of economic and concrete supports (ECS) to reduce risk for child maltreatment and child welfare involvement (Grewal-Kök et al., 2023; Anderson et al., 2023). This evidence spans macroeconomic supports (tax credits, minimum wage, paid family leave, unemployment benefits), concrete supports (child care, housing, health care, flexible funds, direct cash transfers), and public assistance programs (TANF, SNAP, WIC). Because families of color experience deep inequities in income, wealth and resource access (Federal Reserve, 2020) and are disproportionately more likely to face material hardship and economic insecurity due to longstanding systemic conditions and structural racism (Dettlaff et al., 2021; Shrider et al., 2021), directly addressing families' economic and material needs not only addresses child maltreatment risk factors but may also serve as an important race equity strategy.

In 2021, with generous support from the Doris Duke Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) launched the Advancing Family Economic Mobility Initiative. In 2022, through a collaboration between Chapin Hall and APSHA, the project expanded to develop and launch a national landscape survey to better understand state child welfare leaders' perceptions and practices regarding the use of ECS in preventing system involvement. This report presents these survey findings and offers several key recommendations for human service leaders and policymakers to consider.

Survey Background & Objectives

The survey had five main objectives:

1. to explore child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need and child welfare involvement;
2. to examine state child welfare agencies' approaches to identifying and meeting families' economic needs;
3. to assess how state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS;
4. to identify barriers and solutions to offering ECS, and;
5. to understand how COVID-19 emergency federal assistance was used to fund ECS.

The survey had high response (83%) and completion (75%) rates from child welfare executive leaders in 52 states, districts, and territories. The survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis.

Research Questions & Findings

The findings are presented to answer five research questions:

Research Question 1: What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need and child welfare system involvement?

Respondents believe that it is the responsibility of both the child welfare agency and public benefit system to screen, refer, and help families receive ECS during a CPS investigation and to prevent system involvement. However, they also expressed a clear preference for the public benefit system to lead the work of helping families access ECS. Respondents noted that economic need is frequently a contributing factor in suspected maltreatment reports and that child care, money, and housing are frequently present in suspected maltreatment reports.

Research Question 2: What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer economic and concrete supports to families?

Most respondents reported that ECS needs are not assessed during the hotline screening process; these needs are assessed during a CPS investigation. However, respondents said their agencies do not track families' economic needs. Additionally, only a relatively small number of respondents indicated that their agency's mission statement included mention of economic need and, of those, most include language about eliminating poverty and addressing economic needs. Finally, respondents indicated that a variety of funding streams are utilized to pay for case management and direct provision of ECS. State funds were the most common funding source. A clear majority of respondents were unsure of the percentage of their agency budget used to pay for direct provision of ECS.

Research Question 3: How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer economic and concrete supports to families?

A clear majority of respondents noted that public benefit programs are administered by another division, separate from child welfare. Child welfare agencies used similar case management approaches to help families access economic and concrete supports. Many used a multiprogram strategic plan to coordinate with public benefits programs. Data are more commonly shared with public benefits programs to coordinate access to economic and concrete supports than to track performance.

Research Question 4: What are the barriers to offering economic and concrete supports to families? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

Respondents reported that their agencies have some difficulty connecting families to public benefit programs. Agencies encounter a wide variety of barriers in offering economic and concrete supports to families. Staffing resources were identified as the most significant coordination barrier. Agency staff selected levels of and restrictions on federal child welfare funds as the most significant funding barrier. They noted that public benefit eligibility restrictions were the most significant policy barrier. Nearly all respondents reported that direct funding to expand access to economic and concrete supports would be very helpful.

Research Question 5: How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund economic and concrete supports?

Most respondents indicated that their agency used CARES to provide economic and concrete supports, but many were uncertain about the amount used. Slightly more than half of the respondents reported receiving ARPA funds from their state legislature to provide economic and concrete supports. They also reported that their agencies distributed ARPA funds through CAPTA Titles I and II during the pandemic. ARPA funds were used most often to provide cash, utilities, food, housing, child care, employment, and home repairs. A plurality of respondents identified the state procurement processes as the most significant barrier in the ability to use CARES and/or ARPA funds to provide economic and concrete supports.

The final optional open-ended question in the survey provided an opportunity for child welfare leaders to offer direct recommendations. They were asked the following question: *"Based on your experience as a child welfare leader, what needs to be done to expand access to concrete and economic supports to prevent child welfare involvement?"* Common themes from the written replies provided by thirty-one leaders included:

- (1) upstream shared responsibility - Child welfare leaders indicated that the best way to expand access to economic and concrete supports and prevent child welfare involvement is to create a robust primary and secondary prevention system so child welfare agencies can focus on tertiary level interventions.
- (2) funding and resources - Several child welfare leaders suggested the need to be able use funds more flexibly and without restrictions. Others highlighted changes to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and more direct funding to expand access to economic and concrete supports.
- (3) policy changes - They had several responses that included revisions to mandatory reporting requirements, narrowing definitions of child maltreatment, and update poverty definitions and income limits.
- (4) awareness and access - They offered insights into specific ways to promote awareness about the benefits of economic and concrete supports in reducing child maltreatment. And, they suggested ways to promote better access to economic and concrete supports by co-locating programs and streamlining the application process.

Recommendations

In conclusion, economic and concrete supports are essential for preventing child maltreatment and child welfare involvement, and promoting family stability and well-being. Child welfare agencies face many challenges and barriers in providing access to these supports, and prefer to shift the primary role to other human service systems and community-based providers. To do so, policy and fiscal reforms are needed to increase direct and flexible funding, and changes to **policies and practices** that contribute to unnecessary child welfare system involvement are necessary.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Project

In 2021, with generous support from the Doris Duke Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) launched the Advancing Family Economic Mobility Initiative (AFEM). AFEM brought together HHS leaders in regional and national learning communities to share strategies and innovations that remove systemic barriers to sustainable family economic mobility and well-being. A key strategy of this effort included using economic and concrete supports as a child welfare prevention strategy. Economic and concrete supports (ECS) include direct cash assistance, child care, housing supports, rental assistance, utility assistance, transportation, food, clothing, and similar forms of assistance. APHSA partnered with Chapin Hall, who provided technical assistance, guidance on strategic planning and subject matter expertise to four states: Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Oregon. In 2022, the project expanded to develop and launch a national landscape survey to better understand state child welfare leaders' perceptions and practices regarding the use of ECS in preventing system involvement. This report presents these survey findings and offers several key recommendations for human service leaders and policymakers to consider.

Background and Context

Each year millions of referrals of suspected maltreatment are made to child welfare agencies across the country. Allegations of neglect make up most of these with 60% of substantiated cases consisting of neglect only (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Many neglect concerns are directly related to economic insecurity; cumulative material hardship and are disproportionately common among low-income families (Conrad-Hiebner & Byram, 2020; Pac et al., 2023, Yang, 2015). An estimated 85% of families investigated by child welfare agencies earn below 200% of the federal poverty line, equaling roughly \$49,720 for a family of three in 2023 (Dolan et al., 2011; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Many more unsubstantiated reports are made to child welfare hotlines for issues that are secondary to financial need, with economic factors and resource constraints leading directly to increased risk of reported maltreatment (Pac et al., 2023; Slack et al., 2011). This disproportionately affects families and communities of color due to historic and systematic inequities that restrict and limit upward economic mobility. As a result, communities of color are more likely to experience poverty and the unnecessary use of the child welfare system to address financial and material hardships.

Cumulative evidence shows that the most reliable economic predictors of child welfare involvement are income loss, cumulative material hardship, and housing hardship (Conrad-Hiebner & Byram, 2020). Additionally, the strongest predictors of investigated neglect reports are associated with food pantry use, cutting meals, difficulty paying rent, utility shutoffs, short duration of residence, inability to receive medical care for a sick family member, and receipt of public benefits (Slack et al., 2011).

The fact that economic hardship drives child welfare system involvement underscores the importance of addressing families' concrete needs (Dolan et al., 2011; Conrad-Hiebner & Byram, 2020; Cai, 2022). A growing body of research demonstrates the positive effects of a broad array of economic and concrete supports to reduce risk for child abuse and neglect and child welfare involvement. These supports include:

- macroeconomic supports (Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, minimum wage, paid family leave, employment and job creation),
- concrete supports (child care, housing, health care, flexible funds to meet concrete needs, direct cash transfers), and
- public assistance programs (Temporary Assistance to Needed Families [TANF], Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children [WIC]; Grewal-Kök et al., 2023).¹

Families with low incomes who receive differential response² with concrete supports are less likely to experience a subsequent maltreatment report (compared to low-income families who receive differential response without any concrete supports; Loman, 2012). For families who report difficulty paying bills, providing clothing/furniture/supplies or housing assistance was associated with a reduced likelihood of subsequent substantiated maltreatment. Providing cash assistance or clothing, furniture, and supplies was associated with a reduced likelihood of subsequent foster care placement *prior* to the provision of intensive home-based services (Ryan & Schuerman, 2004). For additional evidence on the relationship between economic and concrete supports and child welfare involvement, see Appendix A. While research clearly demonstrates that the provision of ECS is key to the prevention of maltreatment and unnecessary child welfare system involvement, little research exists on the perspective of leaders and practices of the public agencies that administer child welfare services.

Survey Background

To understand state child welfare leaders' perceptions of and practices related to the role of ECS in preventing system involvement, Chapin Hall and APhSA partnered to develop and launch a national landscape survey. The goals of the survey were to understand how state child welfare agencies use economic and concrete supports to address the economic and material needs of families 1) when they are reported for suspected abuse and neglect and 2) to prevent child welfare involvement. Key objectives were:

1. To understand child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need and child welfare system involvement.
2. To understand state child welfare agencies' approaches to identifying economic need.
3. To understand how state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer economic and concrete supports to families.
4. To identify barriers and solutions to offering economic and concrete supports that could inform federal and state policy recommendations.
5. To understand how COVID-19 emergency federal assistance is being used to fund economic and concrete supports.

¹ See <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/a-key-connection-economic-stability-and-family-well-being/>

² For more information about differential response see <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/alternative/>

Survey Content

APHSA and Chapin Hall collaborated to develop survey content. Content was developed using a series of substantive question blocks designed to answer five research questions and organized to answer each research question in the following manner:

- Section 1: Information about respondents and their role in their state's child welfare system
- Section 2: Respondents' beliefs about the relationship between economic need, the child welfare system, and the broader public benefit system
- Section 3: Child welfare agency approaches to meeting families' economic needs
- Section 4: How child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to meet families' economic needs
- Section 5: Barriers and solutions to offering ECS
- Section 6: States' use of federal emergency financial assistance stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic to provide families with ECS
- One final optional, open-ended question to gather direct recommendations from child welfare administrators on what needs to be done to expand access to economic and concrete supports to prevent child welfare involvement

Throughout the survey, key and contested terms were defined with anchors on their first mention. APHSA and Chapin Hall developed those anchoring definitions and subject-matter experts were involved in crafting definitions. For example, after the survey's first mention of "economic and concrete supports," the survey reads: "By economic and concrete supports, we mean direct cash assistance, child care, housing supports, rental assistance, utility assistance, transportation, food, and clothing, and similar forms of assistance" (see Appendix B for full survey).

METHOD

Survey Methodology

Survey development included a three-phased approach. Phase one consisted of establishing a series of working meetings between subject matter experts in human services and child welfare policy to develop the initial survey questions. Once the questions were developed, the initial survey underwent cognitive testing with three former child welfare directors (representing county-administered systems, a large urban human services system, and states controlled by Republican and Democratic governments) and two subject matter policy experts. Several key revisions were made to the survey based on results of cognitive testing. These updates consisted of adjusting framing for each of the questionnaire batteries to reduce cognitive burden for county-administered child welfare systems and clarifying several policy terms throughout the survey. After applying these revisions, phase two consisted of piloting the survey with the same group of cognitive testers and four additional human services and child welfare policy experts. The purpose of pilot testing was to understand if the survey functioned as intended and to assess the length of the survey. In phase three, APHSA and Chapin Hall administered the survey.

Prior to administering the survey, staff at APHSA emailed premessaging to all child welfare leaders letting them know about the survey. The research team at Chapin Hall and APHSA also developed a nonresponse plan to boost response rates. The plan included direct correspondence via email to state leaders, prompting them to complete the survey. The survey was disseminated to the entire population of state child welfare leaders throughout the United States through the APHSA email listserv via the web-based Qualtrics platform. The administration period lasted for 4 months from October 25, 2022 to February 1, 2023. It was initially planned to be administered for a shorter period; however, given the timing of the survey over the holiday season, more time was needed to boost overall response rates.

The survey received an overall response rate of 82.7% and an overall completion rate of 75%. The completion rate consists of 69.2% of respondents who answered all substantive questions³ and 5.8% of respondents who answered all questions except for a block of questions on COVID-19 related emergency financial assistance (80% of the way through the survey). The research team made the decision to include the 5.8% in the overall completion rate based on the overall length of the survey and the fact that the COVID-19 item block assessed an unprecedented event rather than standard business practices. Two states (3.8%) broke off before completing basic identifying questions; two other states (3.8%) broke off during the main body of substantive survey questions. These rates are shown in Table 1 mapped in Figure 1. Median survey completion time was 21.6 minutes. The 25th to 75th percentile of response time ranged from 14.9 minutes to 65.8 minutes; and most respondents completed it in one sitting. Two states completed the survey in more than 1 day. Other sample characteristics can be found in Appendix B.

In this survey, the unit of analysis is the state/district/territory child welfare agency. All questions referred to the policy and practice of the state child welfare agency. In seven instances, we received multiple responses from the same state agency. We discuss our protocol for recoding multiple responses in Appendix C and establishing reliability and validity in Appendix D.

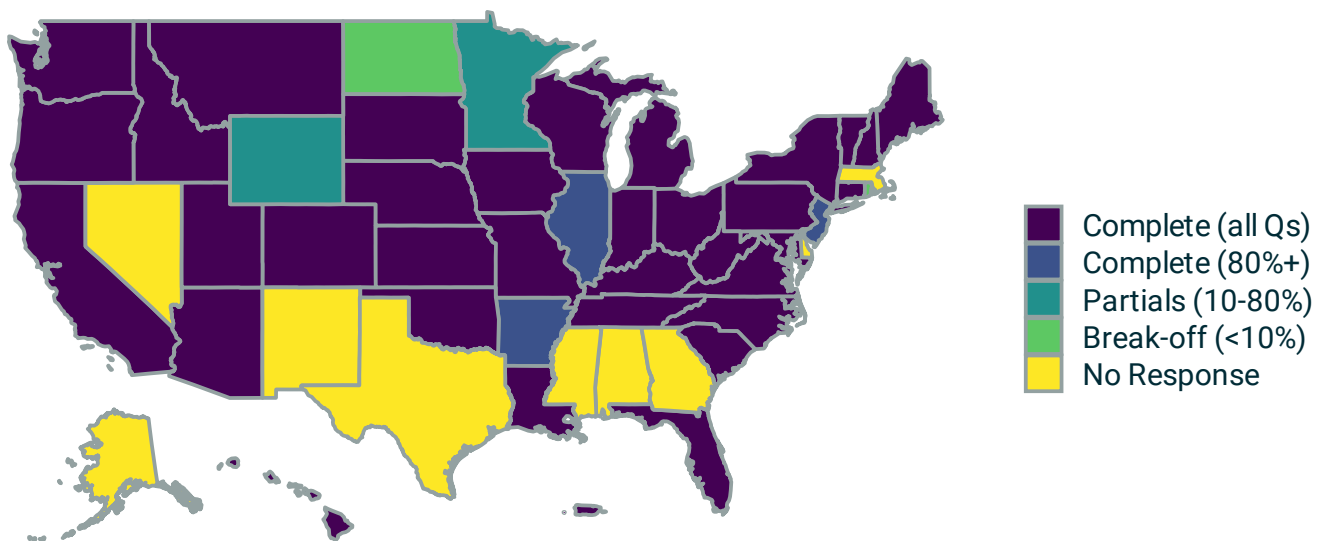
³ We defined a completed survey as answering all closed-ended questions in each block. The final, optional open-ended question at the end of the survey was not counted towards the overall completion rate.

Table 1. Response, Break-off, Partial Completion, and Completion Rates, by State.

Status	n	Percentage*
Invited	9	17.3
Break-off (<10%)	2	3.8
Partials (10-80%)	2	3.8
Complete (80%+)	3	5.8
Complete (all Qs)	36	69.2
Total	52	100.0

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Figure 1. Survey Completion by State/District/Territory. (Washington, DC completed the survey [viewing and having the opportunity to respond to all substantive questions.]).



RESULTS

Survey Results

In this section we present the survey's key findings, organized around the five research questions this survey set forth to answer:

1. What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need and child welfare system involvement?
2. What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer economic and concrete supports to families?
3. How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer economic and concrete supports to families?
4. What are the barriers to offering economic and concrete supports to families? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?
5. How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund economic and concrete supports?

1. What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need and child welfare system involvement?

To answer the first research question, we asked respondents a series of questions about their beliefs about how the child welfare agency and the public benefit system screened, referred, and helped families receive ECS during a child protective services (CPS) investigation. Respondents described their role in helping families access ECS to prevent child welfare involvement. They were also asked a series of questions about the frequency of unmet ECS needs and suspected abuse and neglect reports. Respondents expressed broad consensus with most "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that both the child welfare agency and public benefit system should screen, refer, and help families receive ECS during a CPS investigation (see Figure 2 and 3). There was also consensus that both entities should help families access ECS supports as a prevention strategy (see Figure 4). That said, respondents were more likely to agree that the *CW agency* should *screen and refer* families to ECS and that the *public benefit system* should *help families receive* ECS during a CPS investigation. Nearly all respondents agree that the *public benefit system and CW agency* should both help families access ECS but were *more likely to prefer that the public benefit system* help families access ECS to prevent child welfare involvement.

Figure 2. Respondents' Views of the Child Welfare Agency's Role in a CPS Investigation

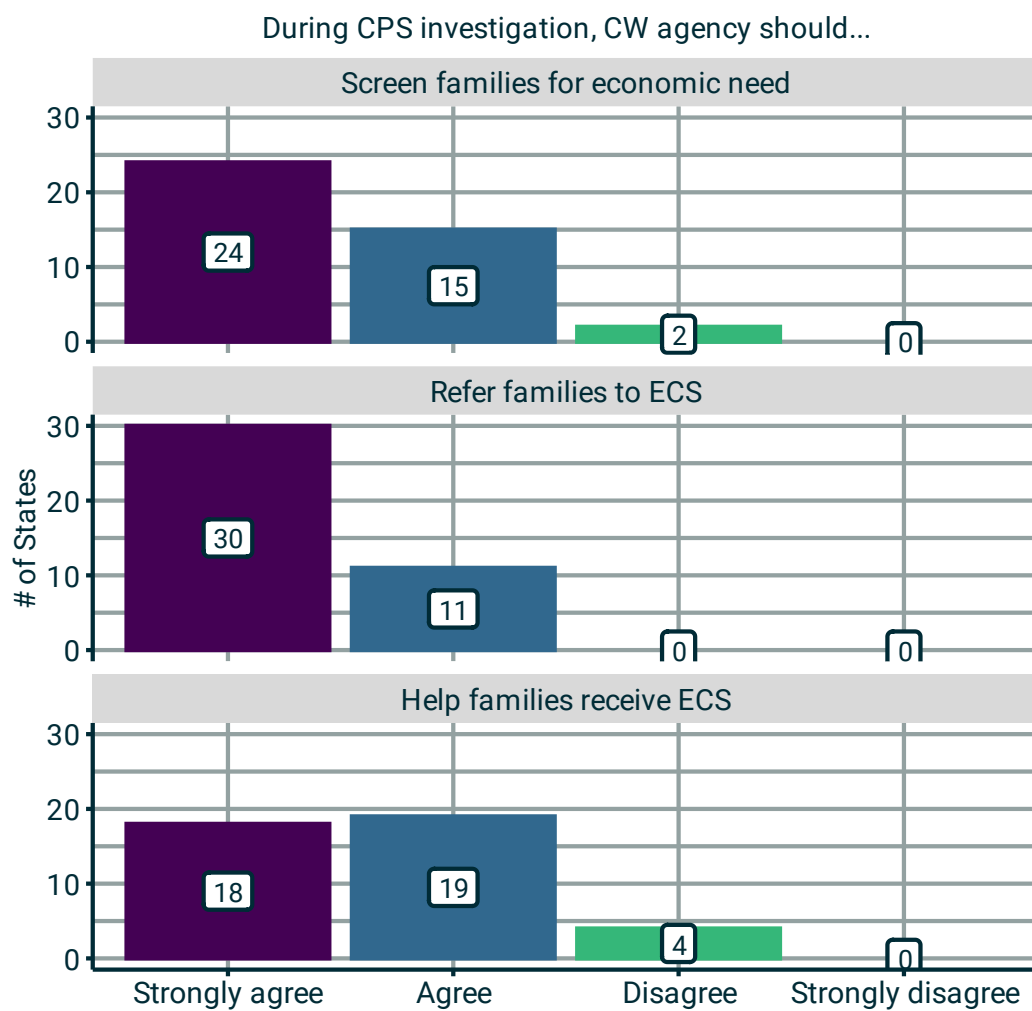


Figure 3. Respondents' Views of the Role of the Public Benefit System during a CPS Investigation.

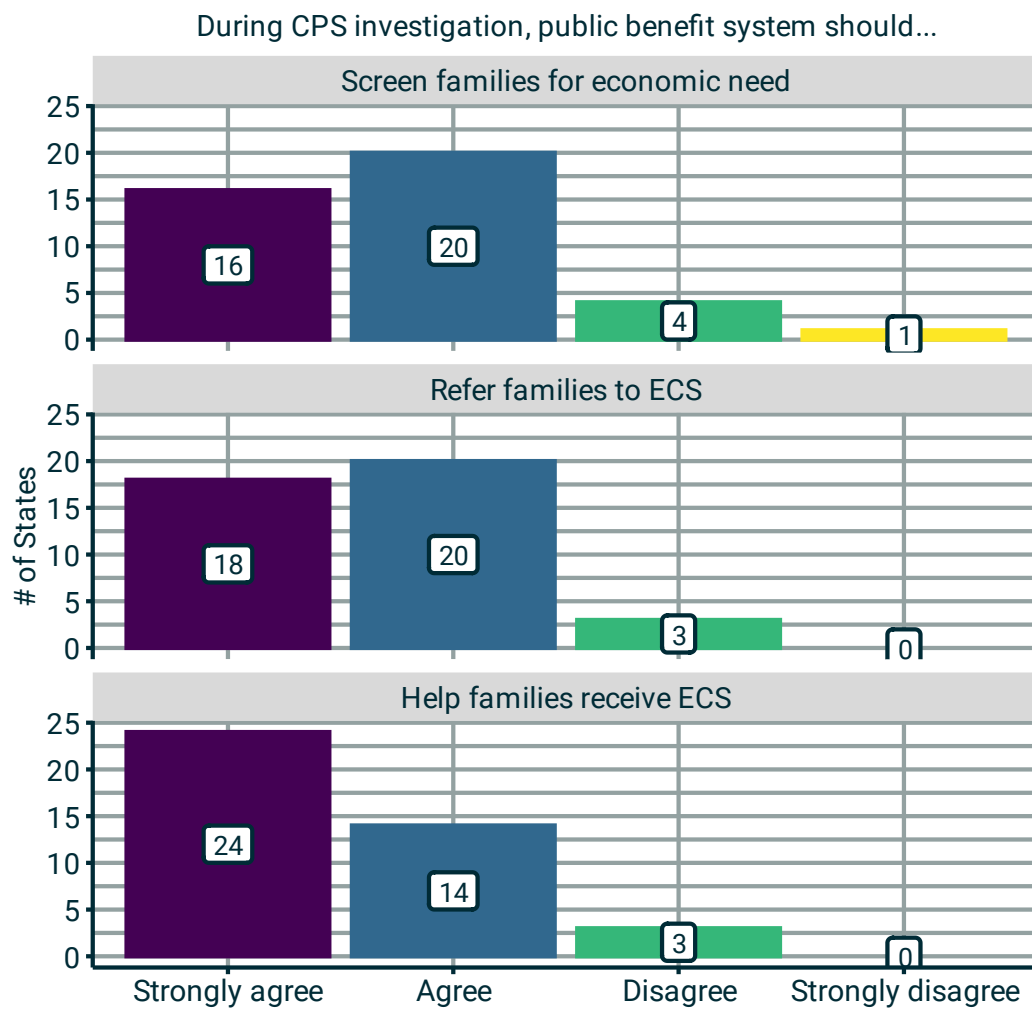
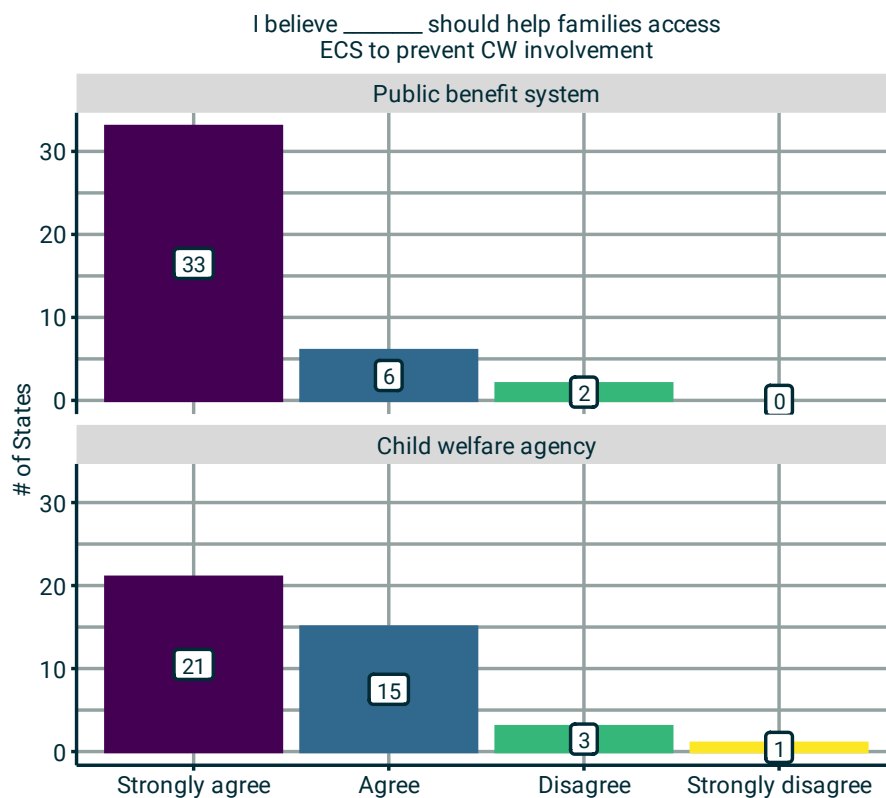


Figure 4. Respondents' Views of Who Should Help Families Access ECS to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement.



While respondents agreed on the role of agencies in responding to economic need, they gave varied responses about the role of economic need in suspected abuse and neglect reports. The majority of respondents indicated that families are unable to meet economic needs "often" or "sometimes" and that inability to meet economic need was a contributing reason for the report. Results varied widely on whether economic need was the primary reason; at least a quarter noted that it was rarely the primary reason. A majority noted lack of access to programs or inadequacies of the programs as "sometimes" or "often" being contributing factors to the reports and a majority noted "sometimes" benefit inadequacy contributed to the report (see: Figure 5).

Figure 5. Economic Need is Frequently a Contributing Factor in Suspected Maltreatment Reports

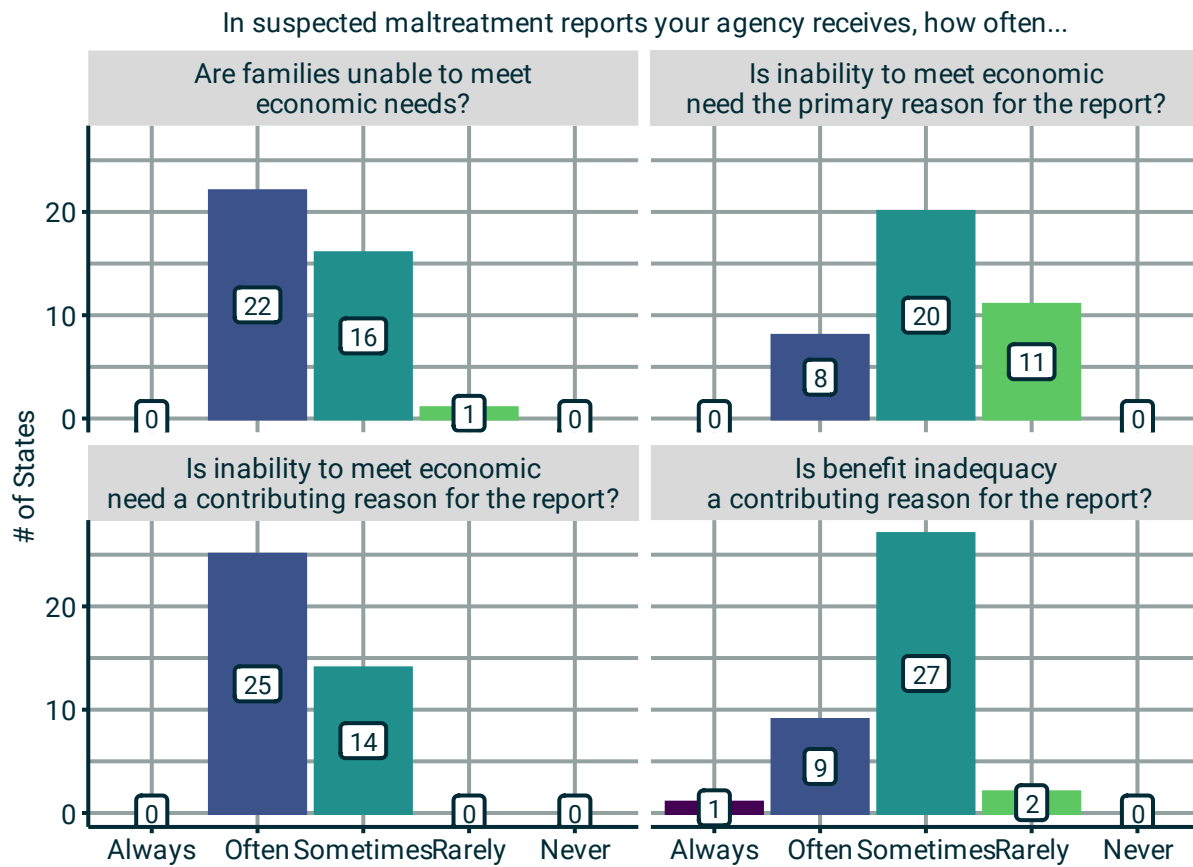
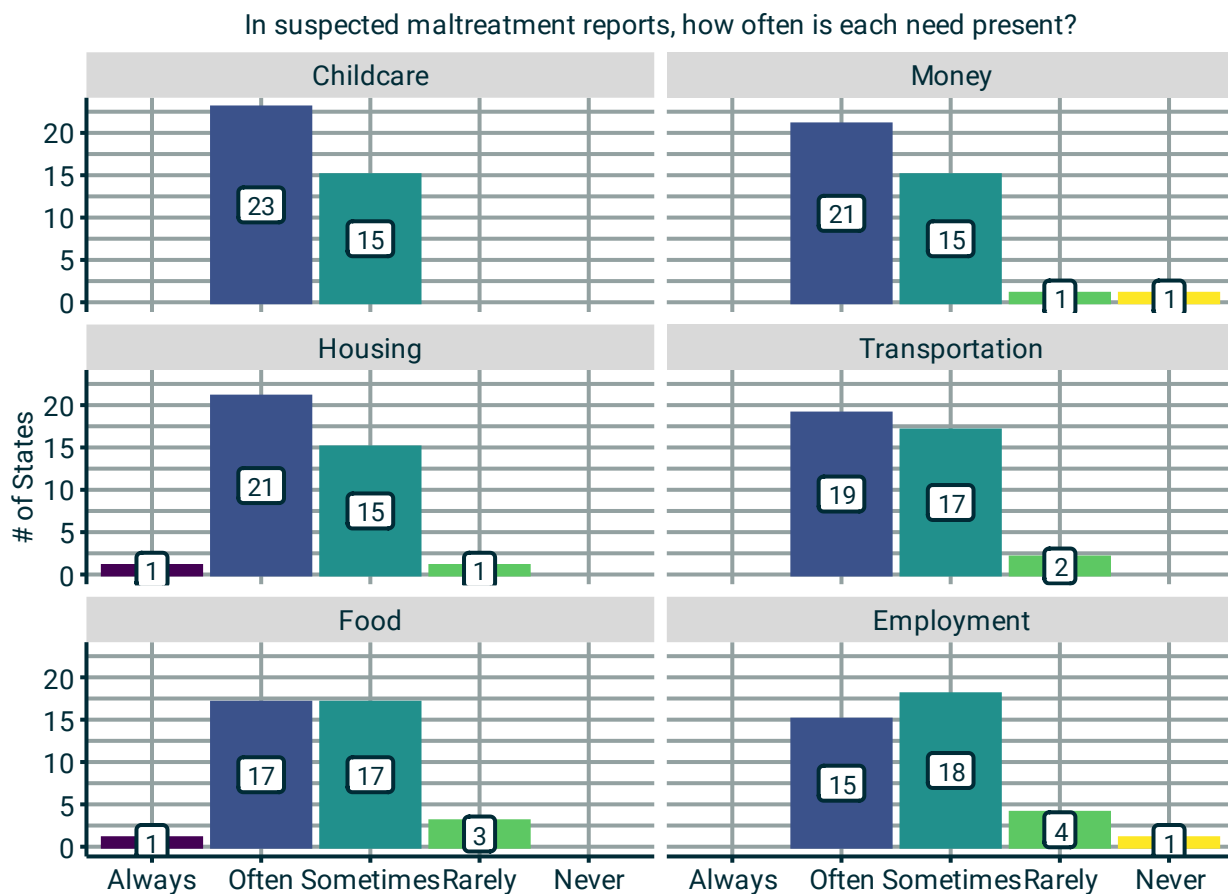


Figure 6: Respondents' Views on the Presence of Needs in Suspected Maltreatment Reports



Respondents reported similar perceptions about the frequency of the presence of different economic needs in suspected maltreatment reports. Respondents agreed that child care, money, and housing needs are most frequently present, followed by transportation, food, and finally employment needs (see Figure 6). Notably, *all respondents* agreed that *child care needs* are "often" or "sometimes" present.

Research Question #1—Summary of Findings

Respondents believe that it is the responsibility of both the child welfare agency and public benefit system to screen, refer, and help families receive ECS during a CPS investigation and to prevent system involvement. However, they also expressed a clear preference for the public benefit system to lead the work of helping families access ECS. Respondents noted that economic need is frequently a contributing factor in suspected maltreatment reports and that child care, money, and housing are frequently present in suspected maltreatment reports.

2. What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer economic and concrete supports to families?

To answer the second research question, we asked respondents a series of questions to assess agency screening and tracking practices, mission statements, and how they pay for case management activities and the provision of economic and concrete supports.

Based on responses, we can say that agencies take similar approaches to identify families' economic needs. Majorities noted that their agency *does not assess* families' economic and concrete needs during the hotline screening process (see Figure 7). However, a similarly large majority reported that families' economic needs *are assessed during a CPS investigation* (see Figure 8). Respondents were evenly split on their agencies' use of a standardized tool to assess families' economic needs (see Figure 9) Most respondents indicated that their agency *does not track* families' economic and concrete needs (see Figure 10).

Figure 7. Do Agencies Assess Families' Economic and Concrete Needs during Hotline Screening?

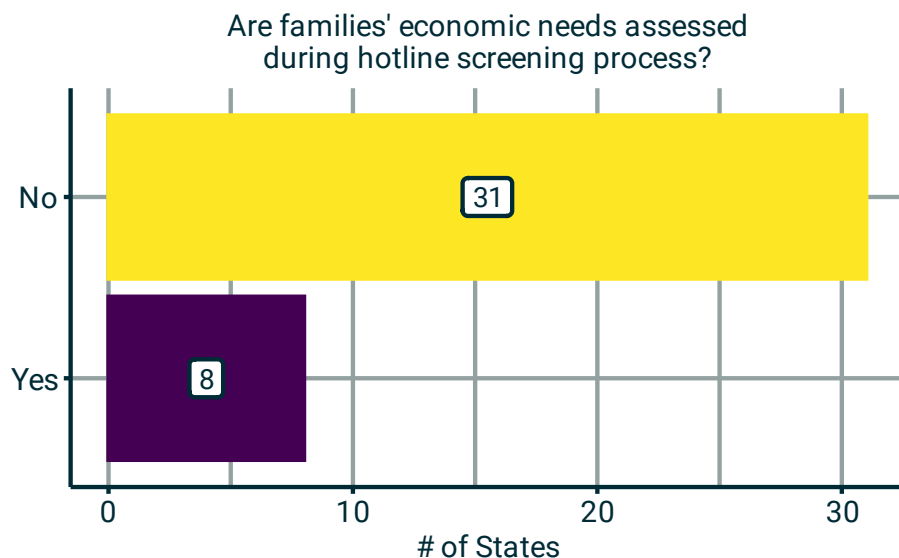


Figure 8. CPS Assesses Families' Economic Needs during an Investigation

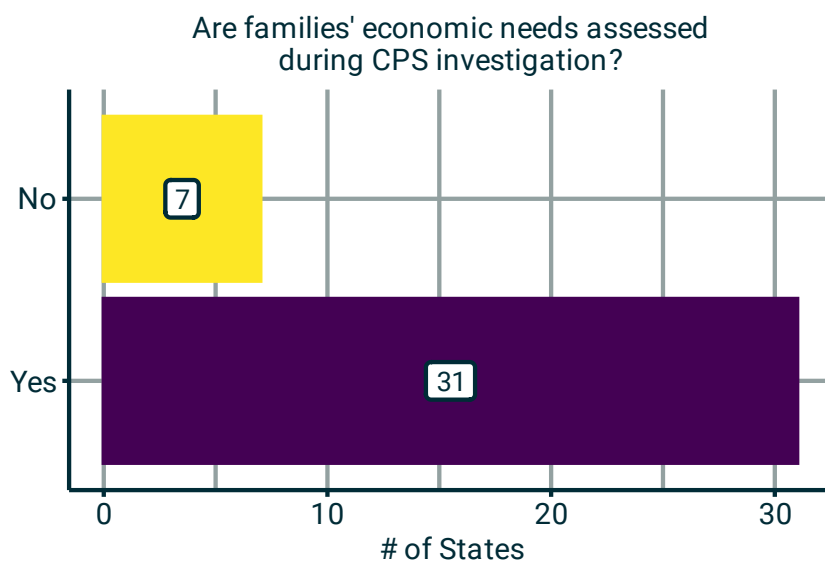


Figure 9. Half of Agencies Do Not Use Standardized Tool to Assess Families' Economic Needs.

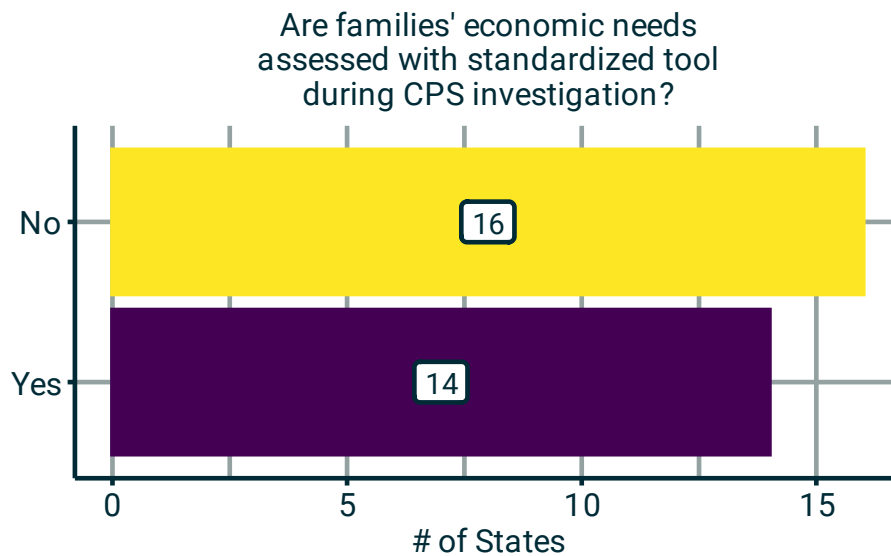
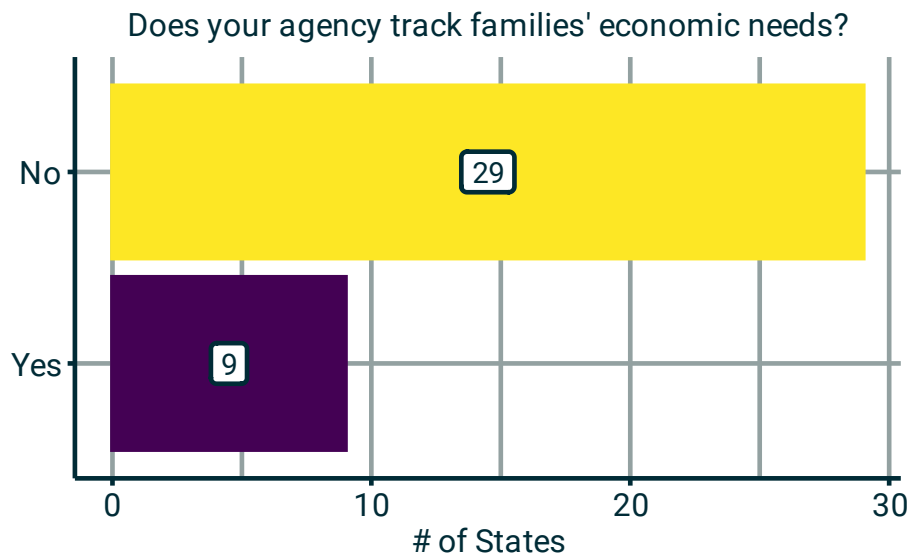


Figure 10. Most Respondents Reported Their Agencies Do Not Track Families' Economic Needs.



While agency leaders expressed broad consensus on screening for economic need during a CPS investigation, a relatively small number of agencies' mission statements explicitly mention it (see Figure 11). However, of those states that *do* include such language, that language very often includes provisions for addressing families' economic needs (see Figure 12) or reducing/eliminating poverty (see

Figure 13).

Figure 11. Few States' Child Welfare Agency's Mission Statement Mentions Economic Need.

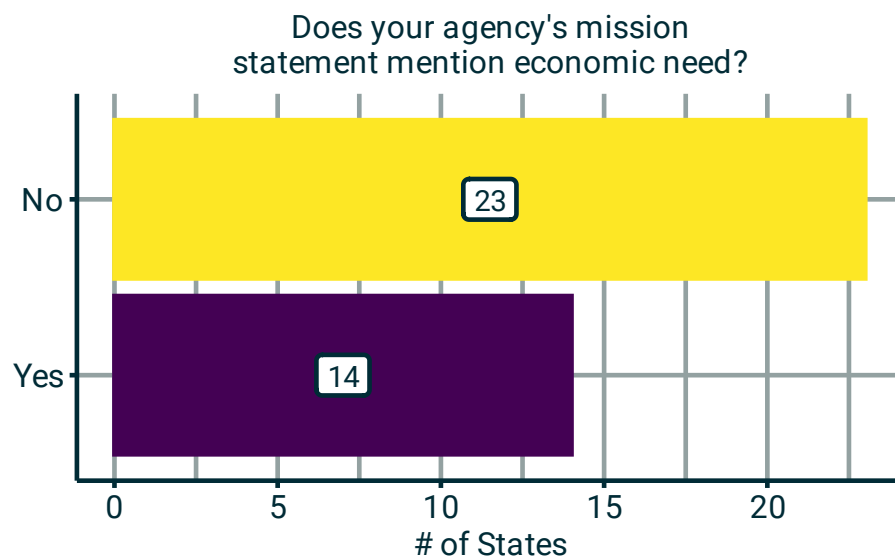


Figure 12. Most States Mentioning ECS in Their Mission Statement also Include Language about Addressing Economic Needs

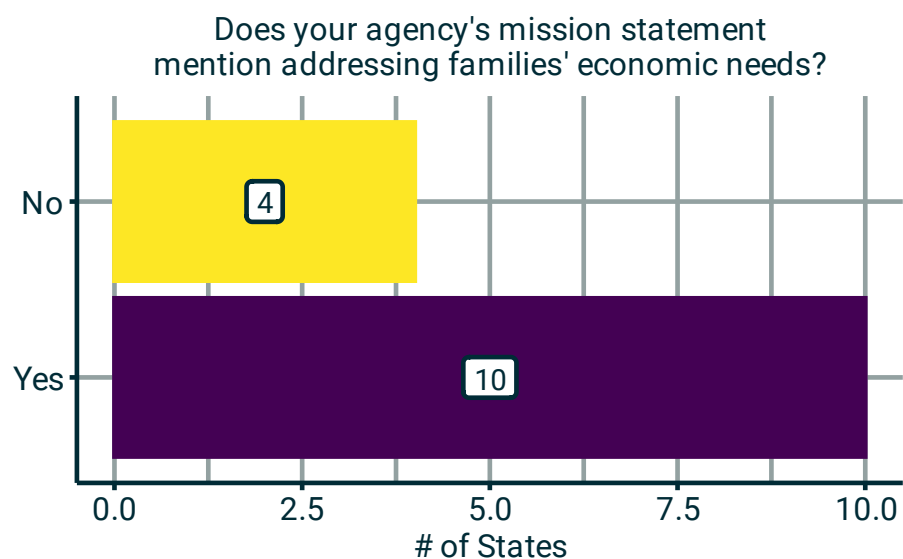
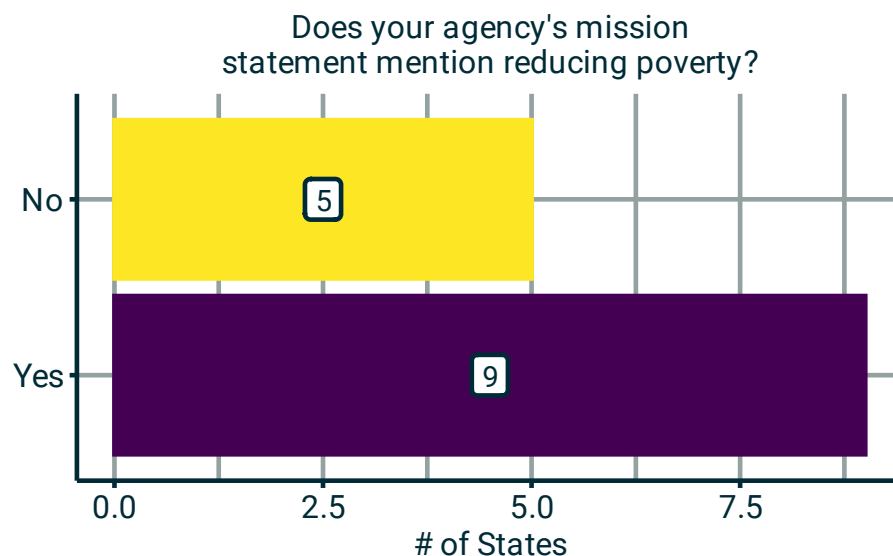


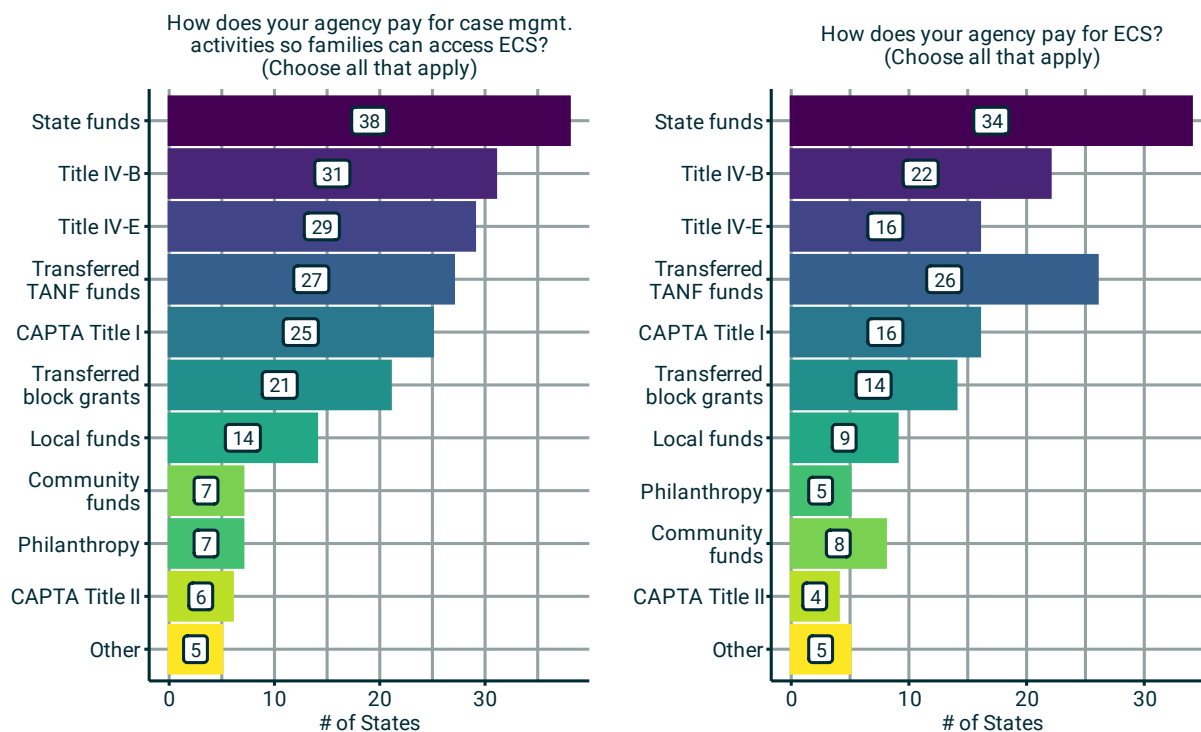
Figure 13. Most Agencies' Mission Statements Include a Goal of Reducing Poverty.



Respondents indicated that states draw on a range of funding streams to pay for case management activities to facilitate access to and to pay directly for economic and concrete supports. State funds are the most common way to pay for both case management and direct provision of economic and concrete supports. Other common funding streams used to pay for both are Title IV-B, Title IV-E, and transferred TANF funds. Title IV-B and Title IV-E are more commonly used to pay for case management services while transferred TANF funds and Title IV-B are more commonly used to pay for direct provision of economic and concrete supports. Far fewer rely on other types of funding streams to pay for both (see

Figure 14).

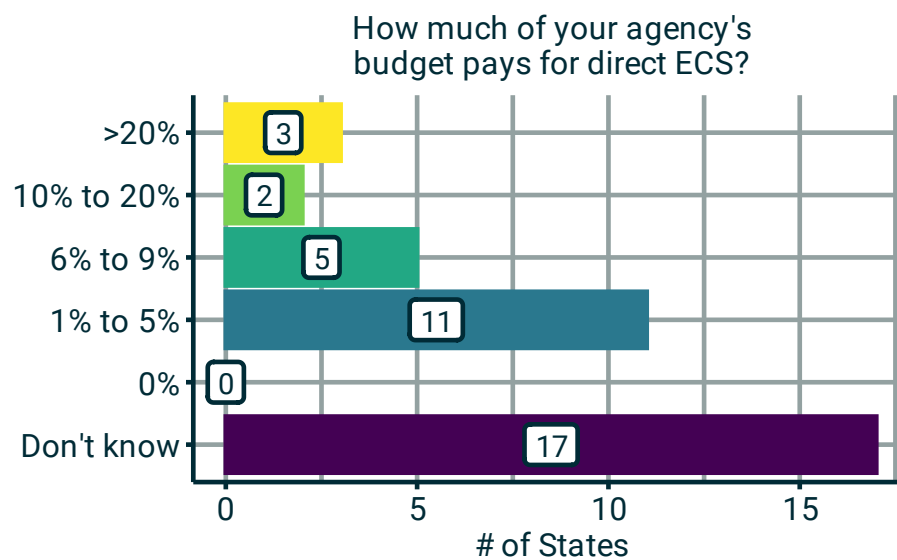
Figure 14. Agencies Use a Variety of Funding Streams for Economic and Concrete Supports.



While respondents indicated they use a variety of funding streams to pay for economic and concrete supports, they expressed less certainty about the precise distribution of these funds. A little under a third indicated that 1% to 5% of the budget is used to pay directly for economic and concrete supports. Roughly a quarter noted that 6% or more of their budget is used to pay directly for economic and concrete supports, and a clear majority indicated that they did not know (see

Figure 15).

Figure 15. Respondents' Knowledge of Whether Their Agency's Budget Pays for ECS



Research Question #2—Summary of Findings

Most respondents reported that ECS needs are not assessed during the hotline screening process; these needs are assessed during a CPS investigation. Respondents also said their agencies do not track families' economic needs. Additionally, only a relatively small number of respondents indicated that their agency's mission statement included mention of economic need, and of those, most include language about eliminating poverty and addressing economic needs. Finally, respondents indicated that a variety of funding streams are utilized to pay for case management and direct provision of ECS. State funds were the most common funding source. A clear majority were unsure of the percentage of their agency budget used to pay for direct provision of ECS.

3. How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer economic and concrete supports to families?

To gather this information, respondents were asked a series of questions about who administers public benefits programs, responsibilities for coordinating access to ECS, and coordination methods with public benefits programs.

A clear majority of respondents noted that public benefit programs are administered by another division, separate from child welfare. An overwhelming majority reported that Section 8, TANF, SNAP and child care assistance are all administered by a different division in their state (see Figure 16). The same was true of other programs such as WIC, emergency rental assistance, homeless services, the low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP), and Medicaid (see Figure 17). Of all programs, TANF was the one identified as more commonly administered by multiple divisions (in 7 states; see Figure 16). Emergency rental assistance was the most common to be administered directly by the child welfare agency but in only 5 states (see Figure 17).

Figure 16. Child Welfare Agencies Do Not Administer Section 8, TANF, SNAP, and child care assistance in Most States

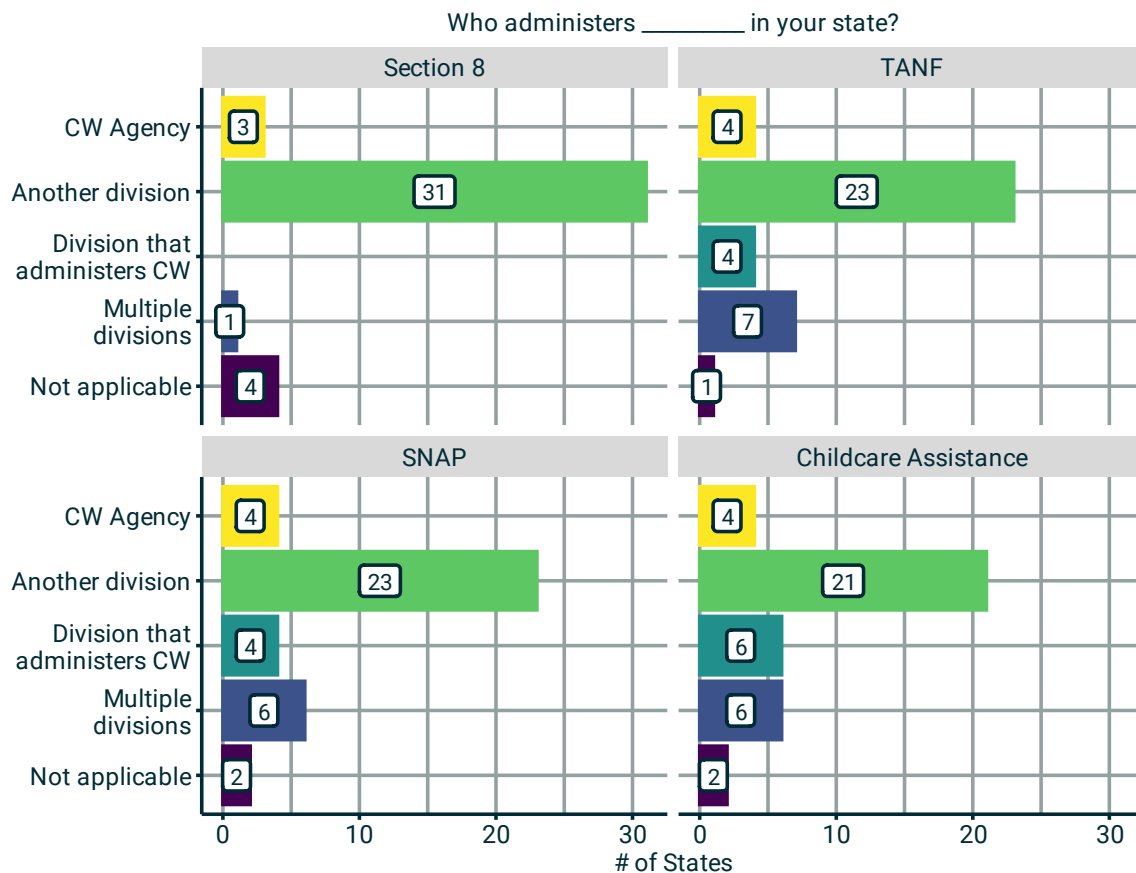
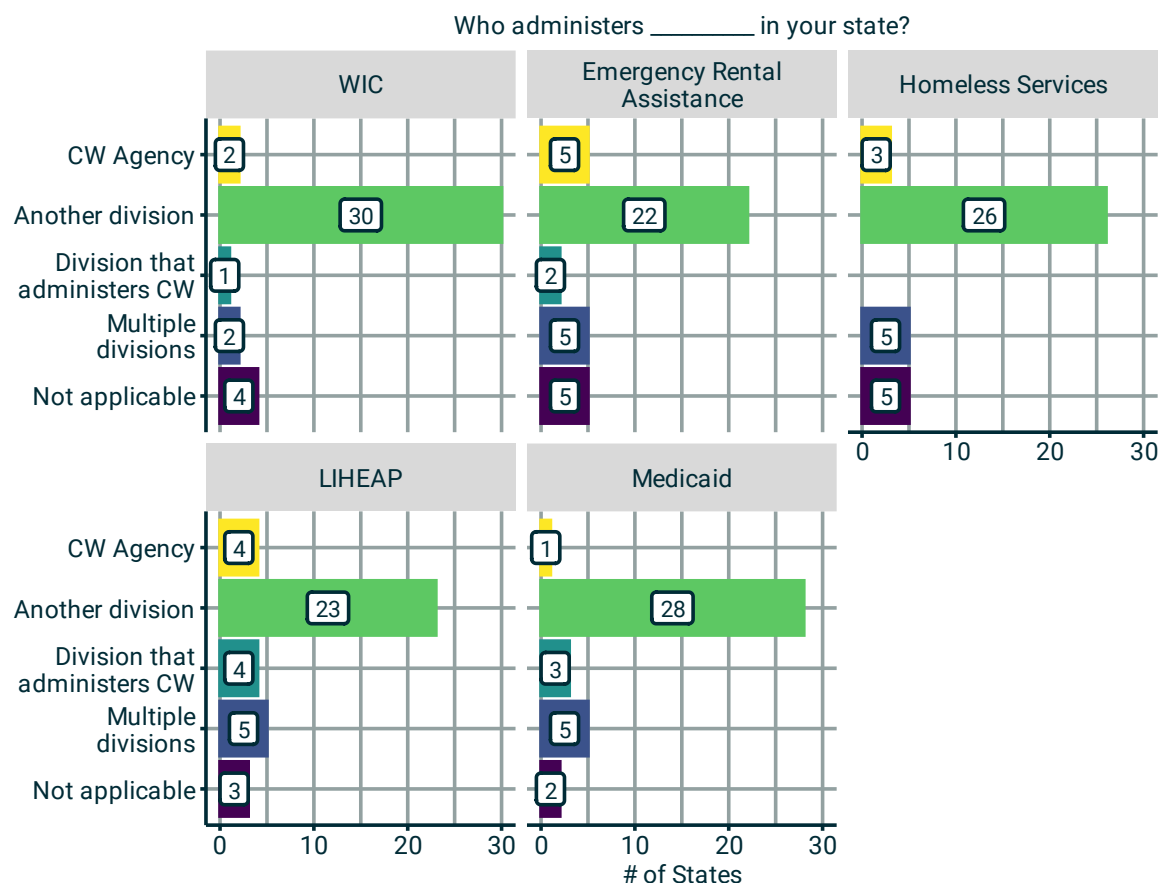


Figure 17. In Most States, Child Welfare Agencies do not Administer WIC, Emergency Rental Assistance, Homeless Services, LIHEAP, and Medicaid



Respondents expressed similarities in how their agency coordinates economic and concrete supports access. Most reported that the responding CPS caseworker (see Figure 18), a case worker not responsible for the CPS investigation (a non-CPS caseworker; see Figure 19), and a community partner all help to coordinate economic and concrete supports access (see Figure 20)⁴.

⁴ Results in Figures 18–20 are based on questions marked “check all that apply” and answers are not mutually exclusive.

Figure 18. Most Responding CPS Caseworkers Coordinate ECS Access

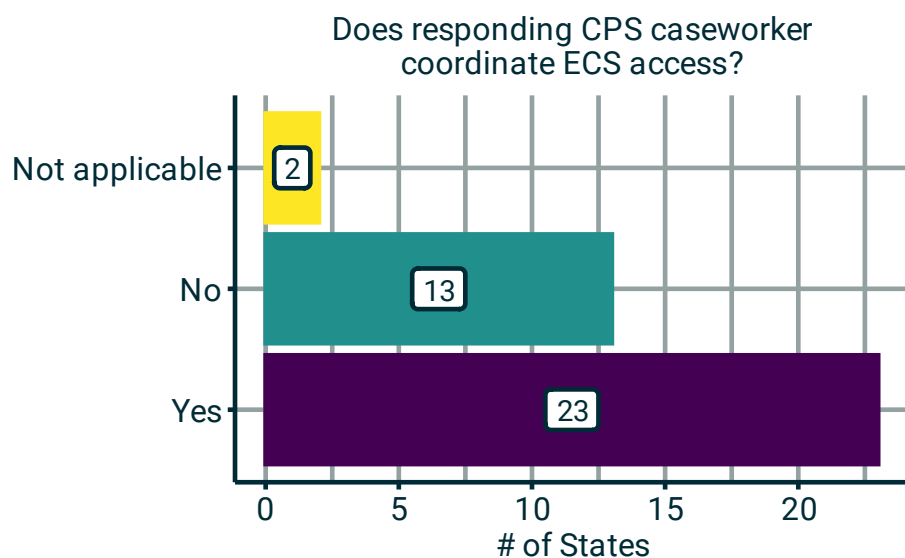


Figure 19. Most Caseworkers Coordinating ECS Access are Not Responsible for the CPS Investigation

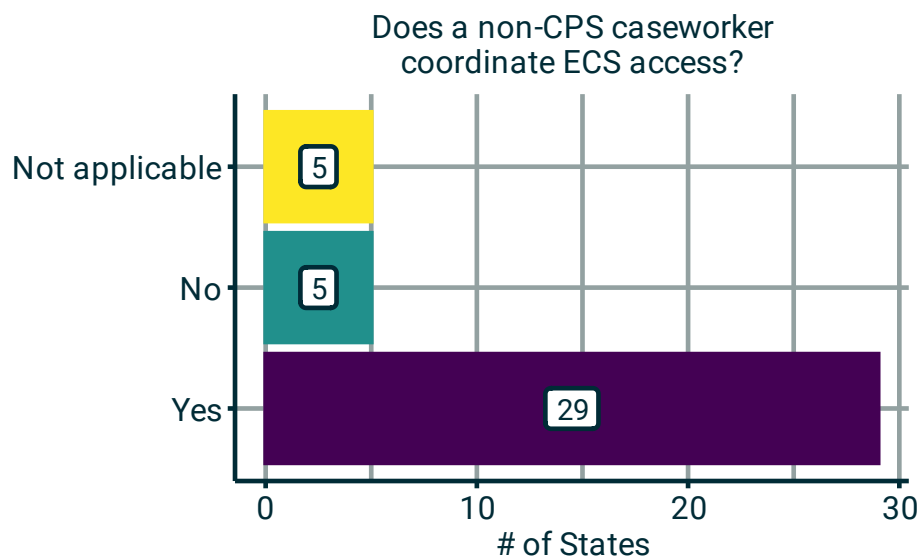
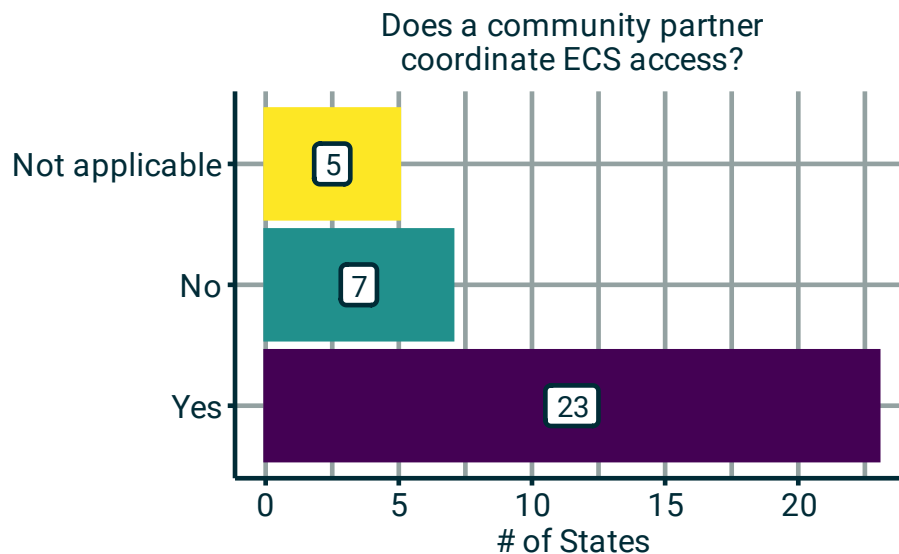
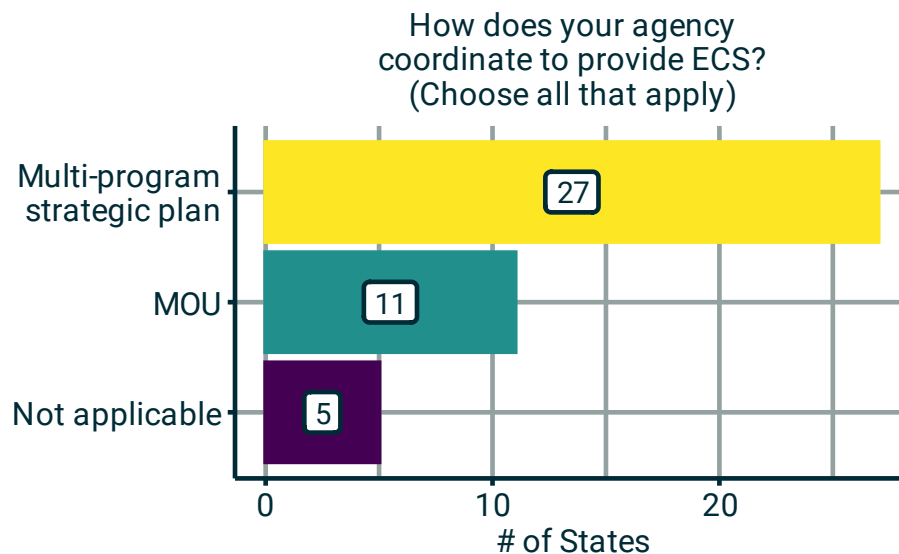


Figure 20. In Most States, a Community Partner Coordinates ECS Access



A majority of respondents noted that their agency uses a couple of approaches to coordinate with public benefits programs to provide economic and concrete supports. The most common is a multiprogram strategic plan, followed by a memorandum of understanding (MOU; see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Most Agencies Use a Multiprogram Strategic Plan to Coordinate Provision of ECS.



Respondents were evenly split on their use of formal meetings with public benefit programs to offer economic and concrete supports; a little more than half used them for collaboration and a little under half used them to address service-specific issues (see Figure 22). About half reported that their agency shares data with public benefit programs to coordinate access and a little over a third share data to track performance (see Figure 23).

Figure 22. Agencies' Use of Formal Meetings with Other Public Benefits Programs

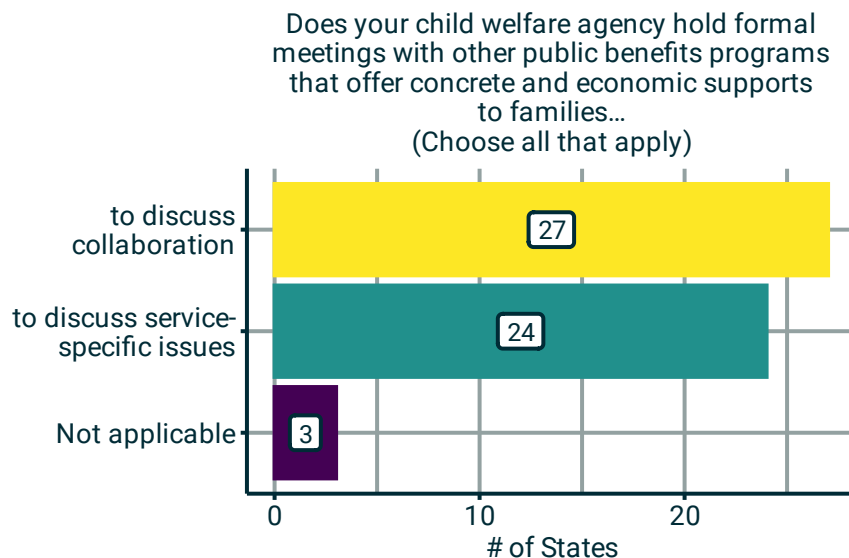
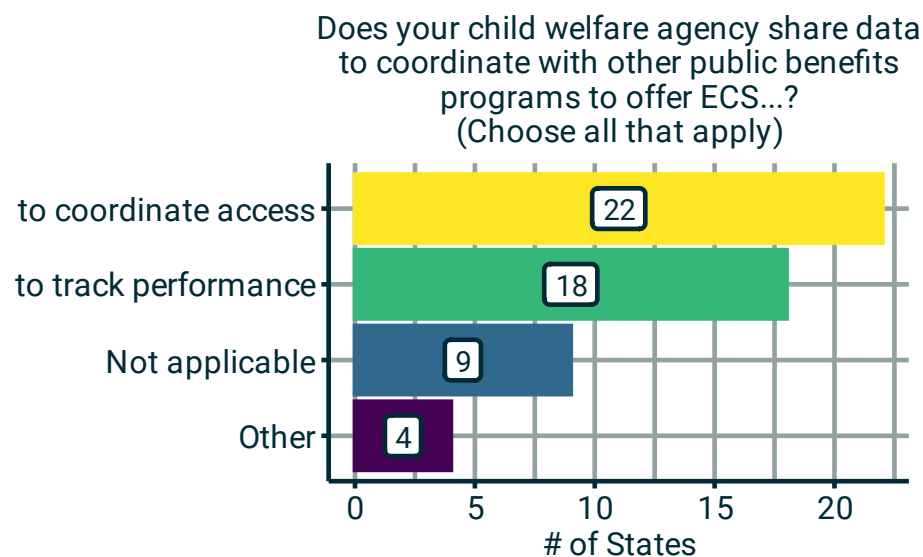


Figure 23. How Agencies Share Data with Other Public Benefit Programs



Research Question #3—Summary of Findings

A clear majority of respondents noted that public benefit programs are administered by another division, separate from child welfare. Respondents used similar case management approaches to help families access economic and concrete supports. Many used a multiprogram strategic plan to coordinate with public benefits programs; data are more commonly shared to coordinate access to economic and concrete supports than to track performance.

4. What are the barriers to offering economic and concrete supports to families? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

To learn more about barriers, we asked respondents a series of questions about difficulties connecting families to programs, coordination barriers, federal and state funding barriers, and policy barriers. We also asked about potential solutions.

Respondents reported their agency had somewhat-to-moderate difficulty connecting families to public benefit programs (see Figure 24) and they encountered a wide variety of coordination barriers ranging in severity. Staffing resources, funding for coordination technology, legal barriers to data sharing, and funding for services were all identified as posing very significant-to-moderately significant barriers to providing economic and concrete supports (see Figure 25). The most problematic barrier to coordination was staffing resources; over two-thirds of respondents identified it as a very difficult barrier.

Figure 24. Level of Difficulty Connecting Families to Public Benefit Programs.

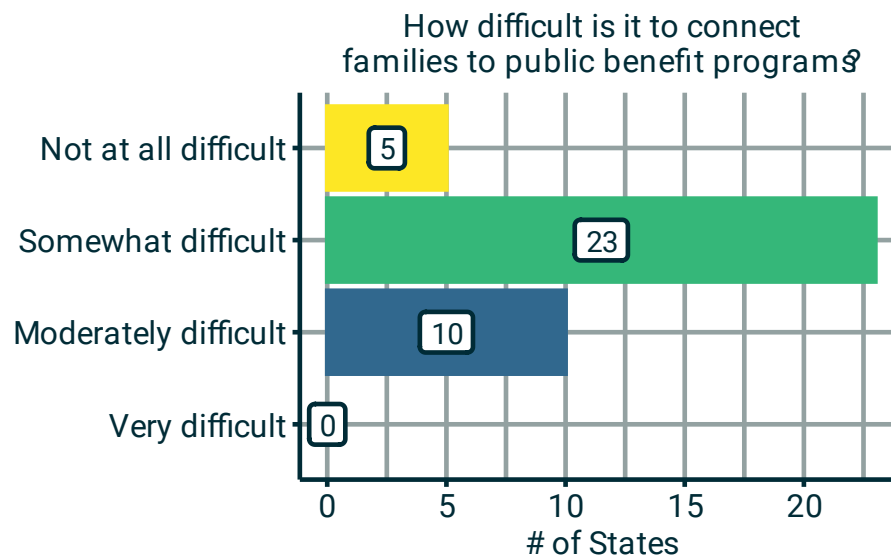
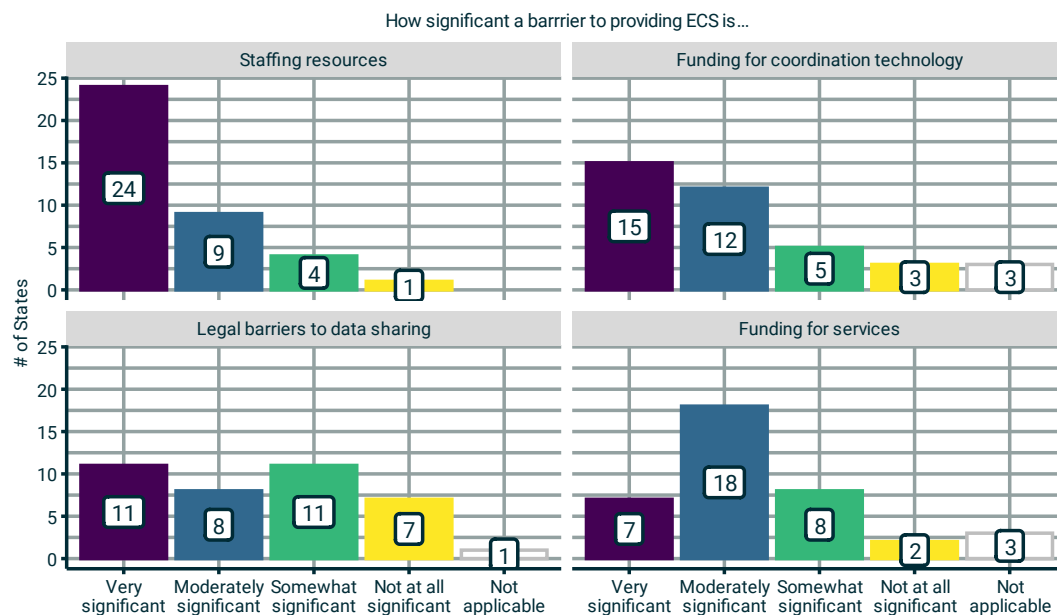
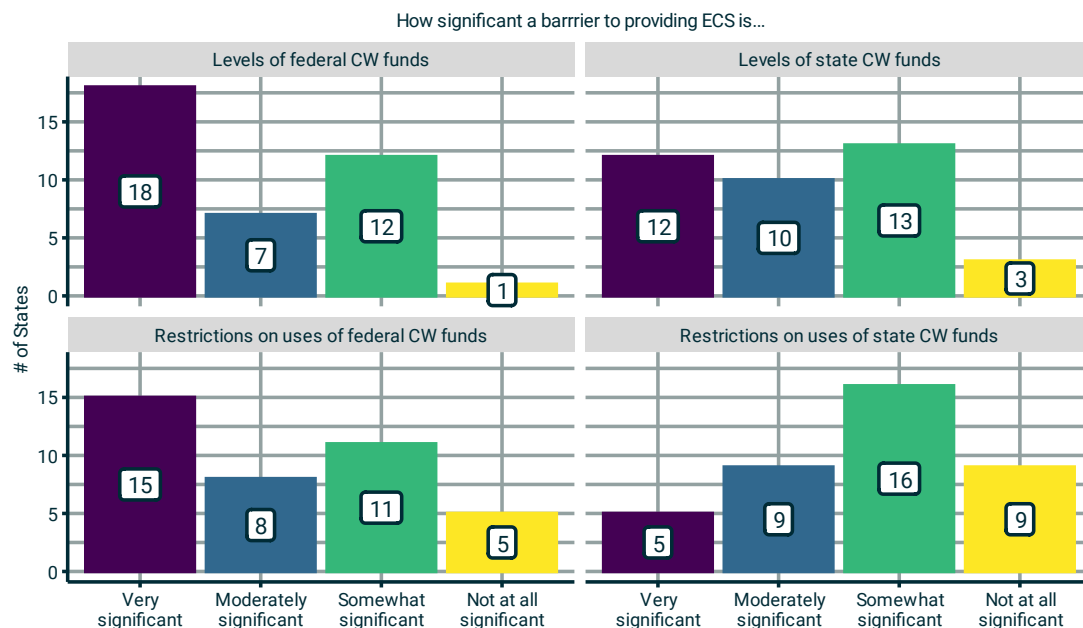


Figure 25. Coordination Barriers to Providing ECS (Staffing was Most Problematic)



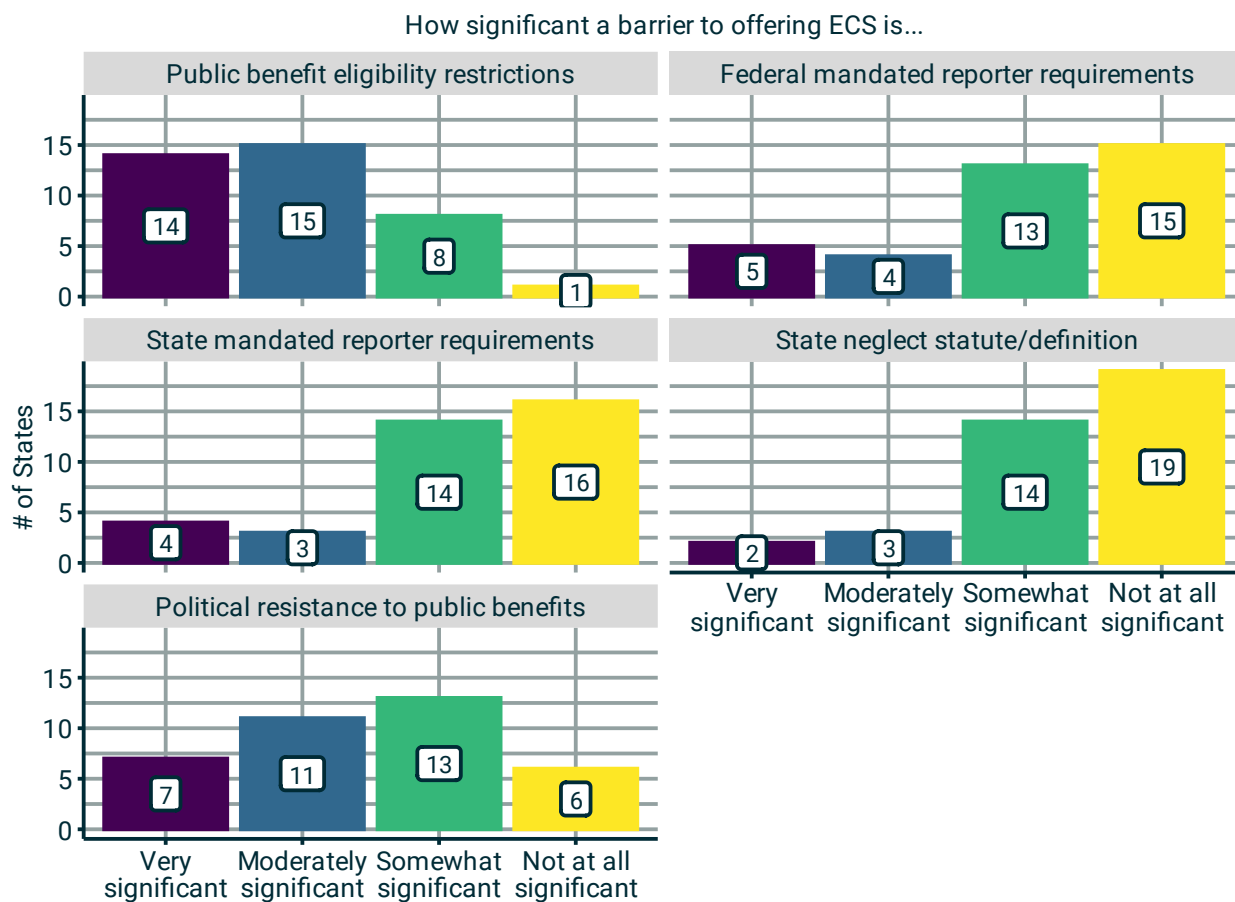
More respondents encountered very significant funding barriers. These barriers included the levels of federal child welfare funds and the restrictions on federal child welfare funds for providing economic and concrete supports as compared to state funds (see Figure 26).

Figure 26. Agencies Using Federal Funds to Provide ECS Report More Funding Barriers.



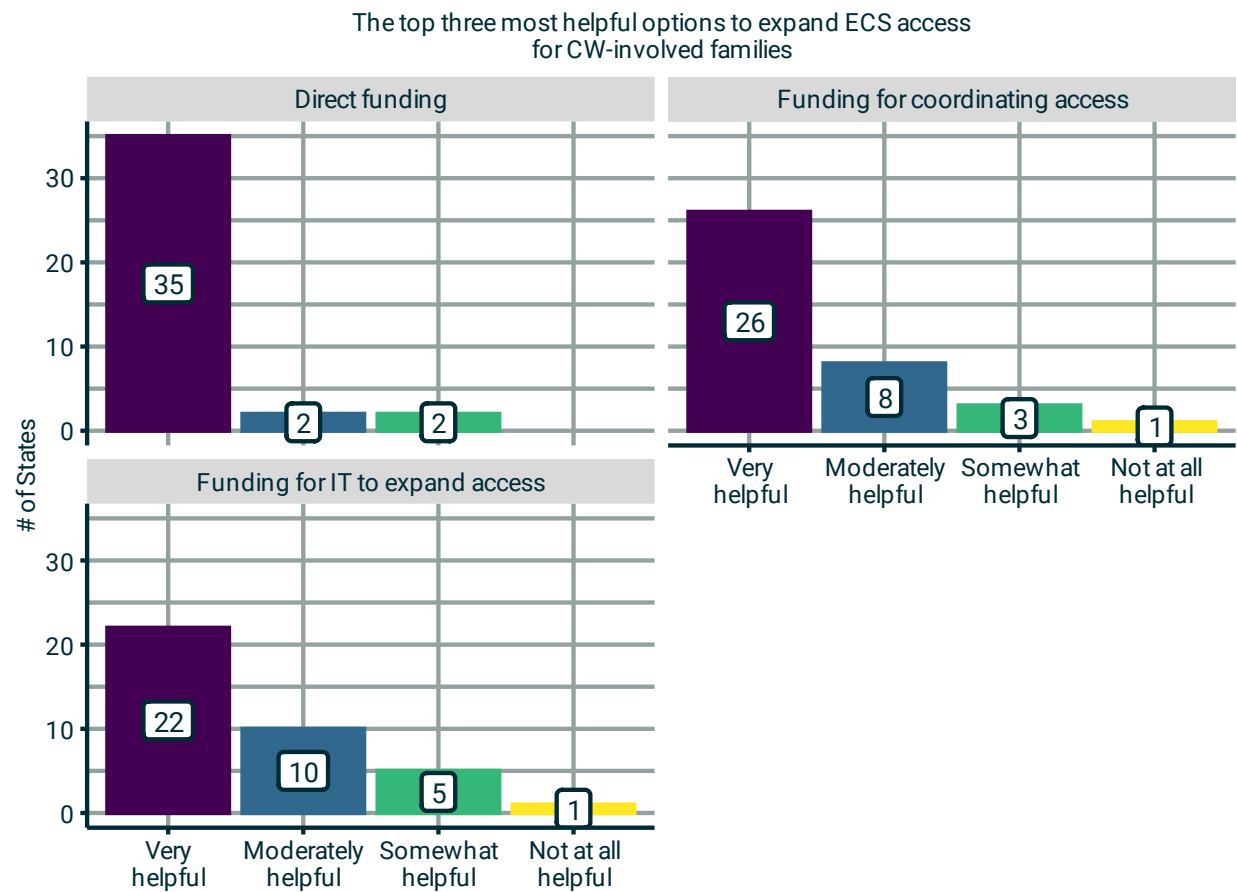
Respondents reported public benefit eligibility restrictions as the most significant policy barrier to offering economic and concrete supports, followed by political resistance to public benefits. Other policy barriers were reported as being less significant (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Public Benefit Eligibility Restrictions are Most Significant Policy Barrier to Offering ECS.



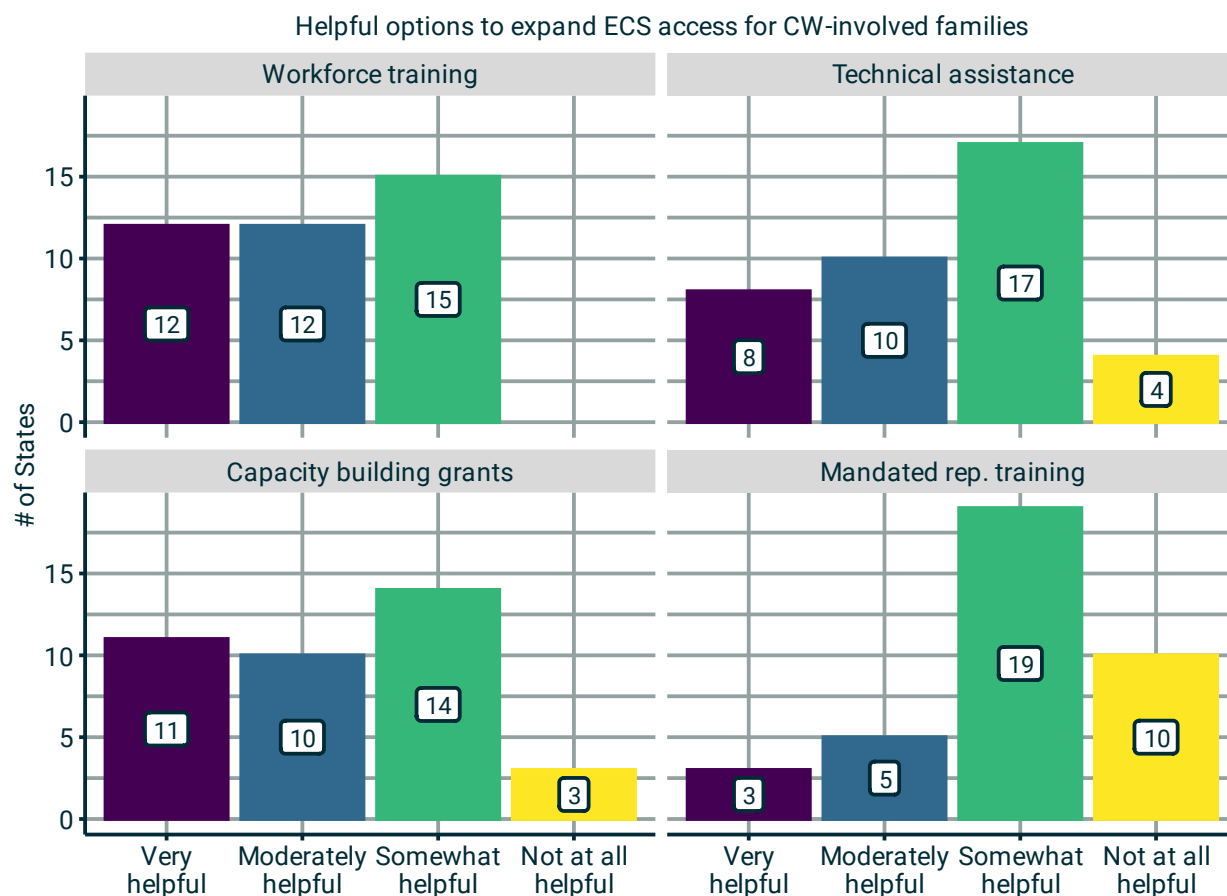
Respondents expressed noticeably more agreement on options to expand access to economic and concrete supports for child-welfare-involved families. Nearly all respondents reported that direct funding to expand access would be very helpful. Many also noted that funding for coordinating access and funding for Information Technology (IT) to expand access would also be very helpful (see Figure 28).

Figure 28. The Most Helpful Ways to Expand Access to ECS for Child-Welfare-Involved Families.



Respondents varied more widely in their selection of other helpful resources to expand access to economic and concrete supports for child-welfare-involved families. They noted that workforce training would be collectively more helpful than capacity building grants followed by technical assistance and mandated reporter training (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: Responses about Helpful Resources for Expanding ECS Access for Child-Welfare-Involved Families.



Research Question #4—Summary of Findings

Respondents reported that their agencies have some difficulty connecting families to public benefit programs. Agencies encounter a wide variety of barriers in offering economic and concrete supports to families. Staffing resources were identified as the most significant coordination barrier. Agency staff selected levels of and restrictions on federal child welfare funds as the most significant funding barrier. They noted that public benefit eligibility restrictions were the most significant policy barrier. Nearly all respondents reported that direct funding to expand access to economic and concrete supports would be very helpful.

5. How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund economic and concrete supports?

For the research question about COVID-19 emergency federal assistance, respondents shared how they used federal financial assistance to provide economic and concrete supports to families during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also shared the barriers they faced in trying to administer funds.

An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that their agency used the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide emergency economic and concrete support to families (see Figure 30). It was more difficult for them to determine what portion of emergency funds was used to pay for economic and concrete supports; many respondents did not know the amount used. Of those that did identify a percentage, there was wide variety in responses (see

Figure 31).

Figure 30. Most Respondents Said Their Agency Used CARES to Provide ECS.

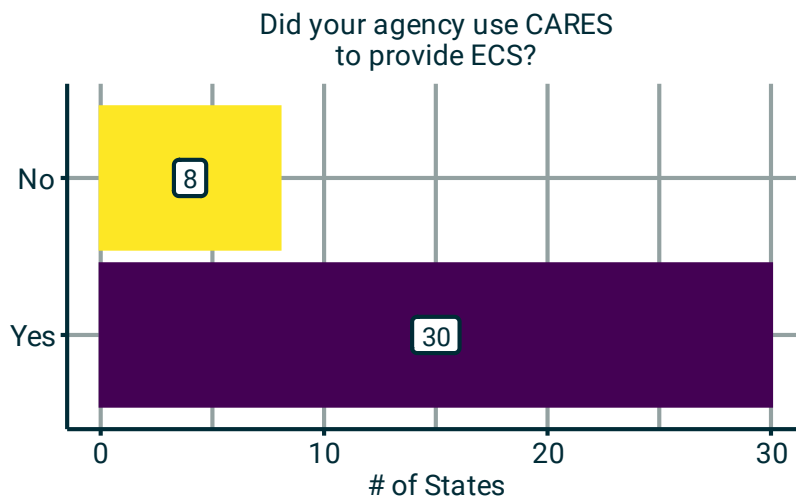
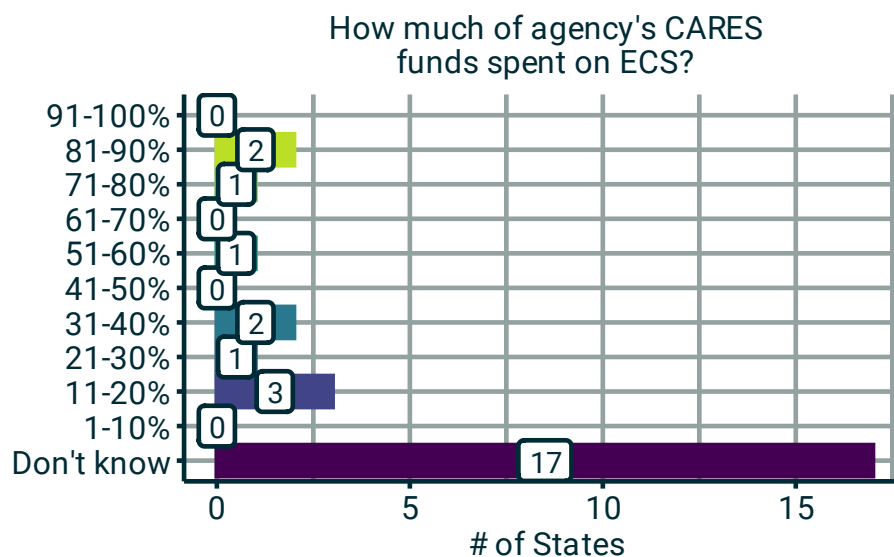


Figure 31. Large Pluralities of Respondents Were Uncertain How Much of CARES Was Used to Provide ECS.



Slightly more than half of the respondents indicated their agency received American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from their state legislature to provide emergency economic and concrete supports to families (see Figure 32). Among those states that distributed ARPA resources for economic and concrete supports to families, a similar number of respondents reported using dollars passed through CAPTA Title I (General Program) and CAPTA Title II (Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention [CBCAP]; see Figure 33).

Figure 32. Use of ARPA Funds to Provide Emergency ECS to Families.

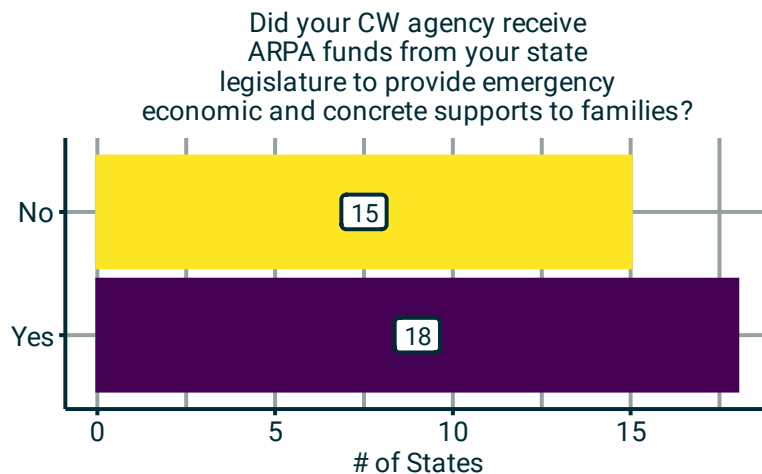
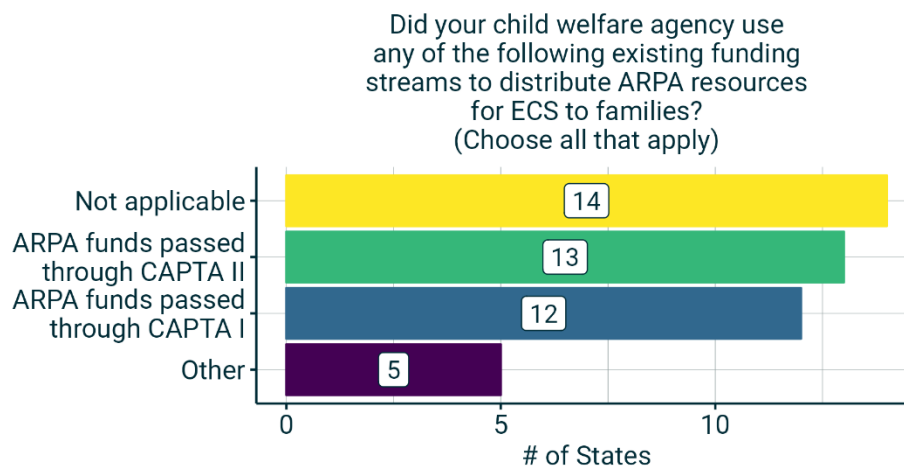


Figure 33. Agencies Equally Distributed ARPA Resources for ECS to Families through CAPTA Title I and II Funding Streams.



Those who received ARPA funds reported that the monies were used to provide cash, utilities, food, housing, child care, employment, and home repair. The monies provided other supports, but with less frequency (see Figure 34). For those respondents who reported that their agency did not receive ARPA funds from their state legislature, there was no prevailing explanation for why they did not receive the funds. Many respondents selected “other” and supplied their own explanation (see Figure 35). Finally, a plurality of respondents indicated that state procurement processes posed a very significant barrier to using CARES or ARPA to provide economic and concrete supports (see Figure 36).

Figure 34. Agencies Provided a Variety of Supports Using ARPA Funds.



Figure 35. Why Agencies Did Not Receive ARPA Funds.

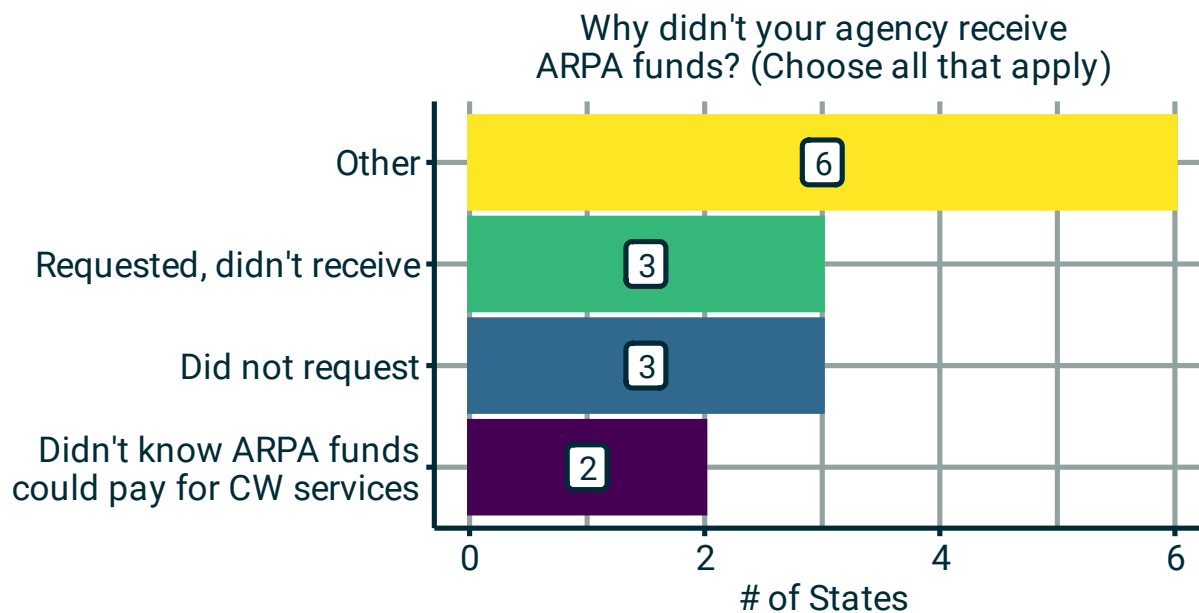
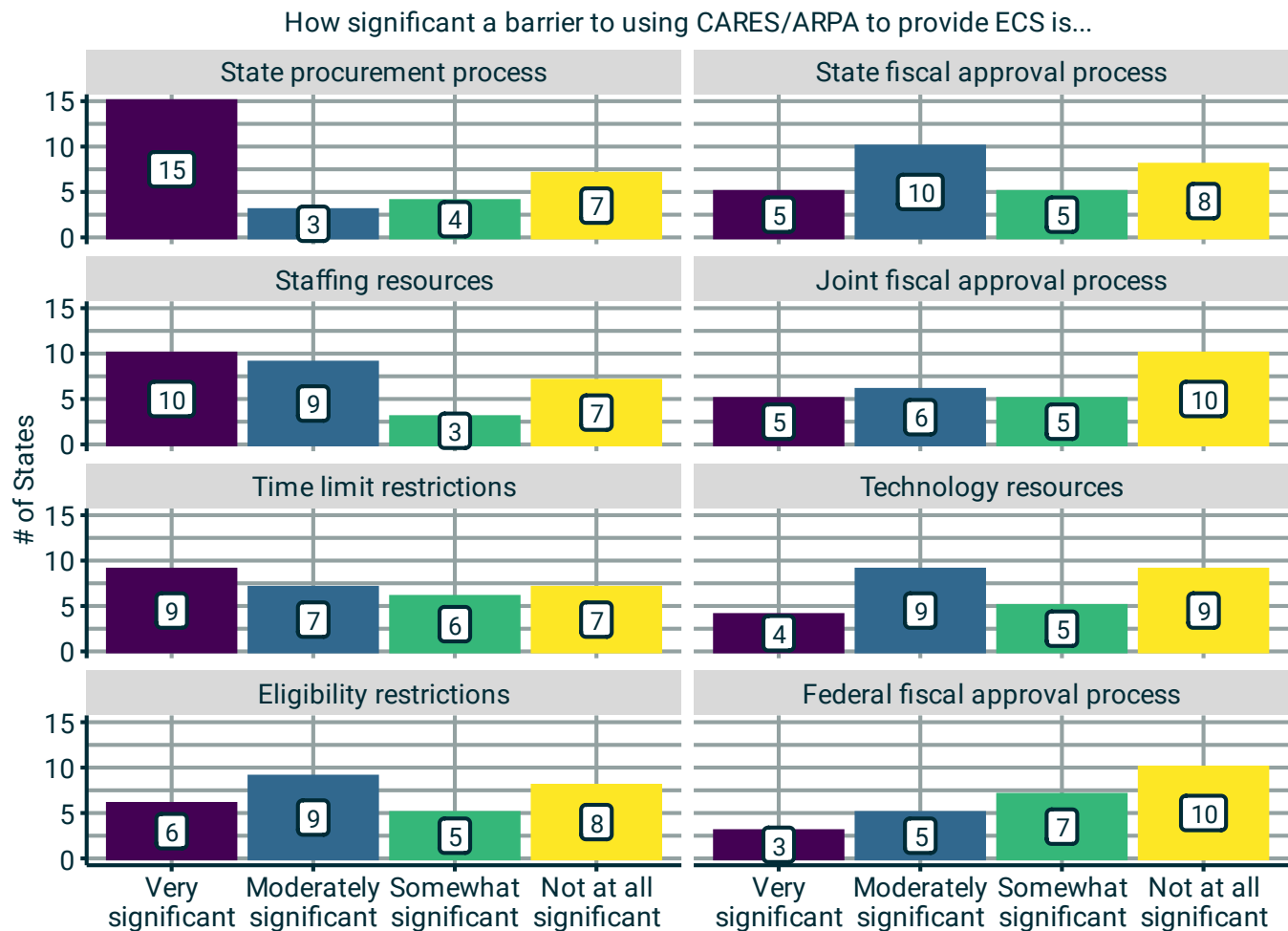


Figure 36. Barriers to Using CARES/ARPA to Provide ECS.



Research Question #5—Summary of Findings

Most respondents indicated that their agency used CARES to provide economic and concrete supports, but many were uncertain about the amount used. Slightly more than half of the respondents reported receiving ARPA funds from their state legislature to provide economic and concrete supports. They also reported that their agencies distributed ARPA funds through CAPTA Titles I and II during the pandemic. ARPA funds were used most often to provide cash, utilities, food, housing, child care, employment, and home repairs. A plurality of respondents identified the state procurement processes as the most significant barrier in the ability to use CARES and/or ARPA funds to provide economic and concrete supports.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

The final optional open-ended question in the survey provided an opportunity for child welfare leaders to offer direct recommendations. They were asked the following question: "Based on your experience as a child welfare leader, what needs to be done to expand access to concrete and economic supports to prevent child welfare involvement?" Thirty-one leaders provided specific written replies.⁵ Results consist of four themes centered on (1) upstream shared responsibility, (2) funding and resources, (3) policy changes, and (4) awareness and access. Below we discuss and provide supporting evidence for each theme.

Upstream Shared Responsibility

The first theme highlights the need for upstream shared responsibility through a broader and more comprehensive prevention system. Child welfare leaders indicated that the best way to expand access to economic and concrete supports and prevent child welfare involvement is to create a robust primary and secondary prevention system so that child welfare agencies are exclusively focused on tertiary level interventions. Three separate leaders summarized it this way:

A completely new system focused on primary and secondary prevention needs to be created. A system that wraps around families early to prevent them from coming to the door of child welfare. Shift funding and resources that are typically dedicated to the tertiary side to the primary and secondary prevention system.

The local community has to own primary prevention. This is not a state issue, many children who enter the child welfare system could have been diverted with local resources and coordinated care within a local community.

Having a system in place with knowledgeable staff that are able to help assess the needs of children and families long before the threat of entering the child welfare system. This system would need to be rigorous in identifying such families long before the dire need for child welfare intervention.

Several leaders shared concerns around the distinct role of the child welfare agency in expanding access to economic and concrete supports and expressed strong preferences for shifting the primary role to entities that provide broader prevention services. They suggested that amplifying child welfare's responsibility may be counterproductive, inadvertently reinforce inequities, and perpetuate surveillance rather than service provision. One leader expressed these concerns:

⁵ The research team loaded the open-ended responses into Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software, and analyzed them using an iterative coding process to identify overarching themes. During the coding process, the data were organized and reviewed multiple times via a data analysis spiral process by two independent team members (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Once initial themes emerged, the team engaged in an interrater consensus activity to refine and finalize thematic categories.

I don't think the statutory child protection agency should be the conduit for concrete supports, as that seems to inadvertently reinforce reporting that can exacerbate certain biases/racial inequities in society. Rather, I think ensuring universal knowledge and support of families in need through social hubs such as schools, child care settings and healthcare settings have the opportunity to reduce stigma and ensure more equitable access.

Another leader echoed those sentiments by urging policy makers not to “confuse the child protection agency with the child protection system, [as] the agency has a distinct role in securing child safety.” A third emphasized that “I feel like our field is in a bind right now because we do have the opportunity to offer resources that reduce poverty for children and families. However, I am uncertain that a child welfare agency that potentially has the power to terminate parental rights is the appropriate source for those benefits.”

A fourth leader summed it up this way: “I don't think that this should be handled through the child welfare agency because I don't believe that providing economic and concrete supports should be the child welfare agency's responsibility: we don't want to widen the net”.

Even after expressing these sentiments, all four of these leaders confirmed the essential necessity of providing economic and concrete supports in assisting families and preventing child welfare involvement.

Direct and Flexible Funding

The next theme focused on direct and flexible funding solutions to make economic and concrete supports more accessible to families. Several child welfare leaders separately raised the ability to use funds more flexibly without restrictions. One leader summarized it this way:

Federal funding needs to be made available to allow states to create programs solely dedicated to concrete and economic supports on the child welfare side. This would be a program that would complement what our TANF programs are already doing around utilities but we would support families with other resources such as deposits for housing, car repairs, etc., that may be help to reduce burdens for their families. Currently in [our state] these flexible funds are tied to services. A family may not always need a service. They may just need this economic or concrete support and then be able to go on their way. We want to be able to support families in that way if we can.”

Two others identified “flexible funding streams and eligibility criteria that allow for needs to be met in the community” and “flexible spending for services that address acute and special needs youth” as key levers to expanding access to economic and create supports. Several different leaders highlighted needed changes to Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to expand access. One leader stated:

FFPSA did not focus on programs that provide increased income to families. Programs that allow people to increase their income [to] have access to affordable housing are critical to preventing children from experiencing abuse and neglect. FFPSA needs to allow IV-E spending for these programs.

Another suggested the following FFPSA solution:

Allowing federal kinship navigator funds to be used to help pay for concrete supports for kin caregivers/families [and] rate the provision of concrete supports on the Title IV-E Clearinghouse and allow states/DC to draw down Title IV-E for concrete supports to candidate populations to prevent children from entering foster care.

Finally, there were roughly half a dozen leaders that suggested more direct funding as the most helpful way to expand access to a variety of economic and concrete supports. Comments expanding on this idea include:

Additional resources for housing and child care for families. More flexible funding opportunities available in local communities.

More dollars for family resource centers.

More funding for child care organizations to improve facilities and more funding for parents to pay for child care. Continued earned income credit.

Increased funding and increased flexibility with the funding.

TA [technical assistance] regarding use of blended/braided funding streams; framework for federal funds/programs and intersections of funding/policy to be used as examples of how to get community connected to resources so they don't call [the] hotline.

Broader funding for public transportation and infrastructure projects in rural states to improve accessibility to concrete services and supports.

An increase in the amount of "in-kind" benefits received by families. Resources allotted to education systems for distribution to families and children.

Collectively, these examples illustrate the importance of front-end financial investments to effectively support primary and secondary prevention resources.

Policy Changes

The third theme focused on child welfare policies. Leaders recommended several changes that specifically restrict mandatory reporting requirements, narrow definitions of child maltreatment, and update poverty definitions and income limits.

Several leaders suggested restricting mandatory reporting by limiting definitions of abuse and neglect. One leader wrote, "Change mandatory reporting to prevent unnecessary reports for neglect". Another mentioned, "Change the federal definition of who is eligible to receive child welfare services" while a third recommended that more "research and specific info about child abuse definitions that remove poverty" would be helpful.

Leaders outlined two options for updating poverty definitions and income limits. One leader suggested creating an "updated definition (based on inflation and changes since 1990s) for determining poverty." Another leader wrote that there needs to be "changes in income limits and earnings to program eligibility. People need assistance before they fall to over 100% of the federal poverty line. Families also need to remain eligible to receive benefits as they earn to acquire stability before being cut from benefits programs." A third echoed these sentiments by stating:

[I] fully support efforts to increase concrete supports to families. It is critical that as concrete supports to families increase, simultaneous policy action is taken to mitigate the "cliff effects" caused by increasing income for low-income families. The increase in income substantially affects families' ability to maintain the public benefits that allow them to stabilize—and thus create a net-negative impact. This must be addressed so we can support families to increase earnings without the barriers they currently face as they navigate losing child care subsidy, housing subsidy, food stamps, TANF, etc.

Awareness and Access

Finally, leaders offered recommendations for promoting awareness about the benefits of economic and concrete supports in reducing child maltreatment. They also recommended finding ways to promote better access to economic and concrete supports. Several leaders offered quotes on the need for education to prompt awareness and to reduce stigma.

When onboarding new child welfare staff and new public assistance staff (SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, LIHEAP), talk about reviewing the needs of the whole family, at the beginning. Talk about it at each opportunity with new staff.

Increase awareness and availability of concrete supports.

[Offer a] vision for bringing partners with lived experience to make decisions and direct programming. Education to remove stigma of needing supports.

The data is there that demonstrates that economic factors often contribute to abuse and neglect. This factor is often overlooked by caseworkers and not addressed by service providers. More education and support is needed on this topic to develop an understanding and reduce stigma of providing these services.

Better education regarding available resources. Destigmatize asking for help/assistance. Improved technology for service referral and access.

Increase kinship supports, widespread communication about available supports.

An equal number of different leaders commented on how to promote better access through streamlined and easier community-based processes, illustrated by the following quotes:

Co-locate distribution where eligible people would receive the supports without additional application processes. Not punish the family receiving the supports by making them ineligible for services they are currently receiving.

Make resources readily available and with easier access. Interoperability between agencies would also be ideal upstream intervention by TANF agencies.

Model the behavior from the state leadership to the local staff. Dismantle silos within the programs themselves.

Support community-based services for people, including, but not limited to, faith-based, charitable, and community organizations. Allowing the above to access funding streams that we may house for these services which would be considered prevention."

In conclusion, the written responses provided by 31 child welfare leaders suggest several actionable recommendations for federal and state policymakers to consider to expand access to concrete and economic supports to prevent child welfare involvement. Collectively, they clearly illustrate that child welfare must have support from other systems, community partners, and policymakers to effectively redesign a human-serving system and make it one that provides resources to families to buffer against stress in times of financial need and material hardship.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Key Survey Findings

The survey findings have important implications for the collective responsibility of all human service systems in preventing child maltreatment and child welfare involvement. To achieve this goal, policymakers at all levels can consider the following discussion points.

Role of the child welfare agency and economic and concrete supports service delivery. Most child welfare leaders believe that economic need frequently contributes to suspected maltreatment reports and that child care, money, and housing difficulties are frequently present in suspected maltreatment reports. Yet, they also report that economic and material needs are not assessed during the hotline screening process. Although child protective services workers assess these needs during investigations, they not tracked within their agencies. These business practices are likely driven by the mandate of child welfare agencies, which is to ensure child safety. Many families, however, are coming to the attention of child welfare for issues secondary to economic and material hardship—issues related to well-being rather than safety.

Child welfare leaders believe well-being concerns can be better addressed by other human service systems and community-based providers. Leaders agreed that both the child welfare agency and the public benefits system need to screen for economic and material needs and refer families to supports. However, they clearly preferred for the public benefit system to help families receive economic and concrete supports. Several leaders provided direct recommendations to limit the child welfare agency's role in expanding access to economic and concrete supports, noting child welfare limited mandate of child protection. Instead, they expressed strong preference for shifting the primary role to human service entities that provide broader prevention services. Several leaders suggested the way to achieve this is through a well-funded and comprehensive upstream prevention system. In such a system, human services staff are trained to assess for economic and concrete supports needs and then help families access needed supports directly or through community-based agencies.

Administrative challenges in providing access to economic and concrete supports. Almost all child welfare leaders noted that the public benefit programs designed to provide access to economic and concrete supports are administered by another division, separate from child welfare. Concretely, this means different leaders with different programmatic requirements and strategic priorities are operating independently of each other with limited focus on their direct role in child maltreatment prevention. Many respondents report using a multiprogram strategic plan to coordinate child welfare with public benefits programs. However, unless a state's executive leadership develops a clearly articulated mission statement and prioritizes providing economic and concrete supports, these siloes will continue to exist. State child welfare leaders highlighted three significant administrative barriers to providing access to economic and concrete supports: staffing resources, levels of and restrictions on use of federal child welfare funds, and public benefit eligibility restrictions. They also had two clear recommendations for solutions: more direct funding and greater flexibility in the use of federal funds. This would enable child welfare agencies to pass funds more easily to community providers as well as directly to families, with fewer bureaucratic hurdles. Child welfare leaders noted significant challenges with the state procurement processes in their ability to use CARES and ARPA funds to provide economic and concrete

supports during the COVID pandemic. Therefore, policy changes at all levels of government that facilitate flexible options to transfer economic and concrete resources directly to families have the potential to improve access and reduce administrative burdens.

Collective responsibility for family stability and well-being. These survey findings are consistent with research showing the role of economic and concrete supports and child welfare system involvement (Grewal-Kök et al., 2023). Yet, our current human service system is designed to deploy the child welfare agency, an entity with the primary mandate of ensuring child safety, to address unmet well-being needs. Child welfare agency leaders expressed a clear desire to shift these practices. It is important that child welfare agencies screen and help families access economic and concrete supports once they become system involved. However, the agency with a mandate for child safety is not well positioned to be the first stop for these services. High turnover and chronic workforce shortages in child welfare clearly demonstrate that these agencies are not best equipped to help the volume of families referred for concerns secondary to poverty or material needs. Significant policy and fiscal reforms to strengthen publicly funded social programs—those designed to address the very stressors that elevate the risk of child maltreatment—can help stabilize families and promote well-being. If more families are served by other systems and through communities, it will reduce the demand on the child welfare system and address workforce shortages. Moreover, revisions to policies and practices that promote joint human services responsibility for child maltreatment prevention will also allow child welfare agencies to provide better services and supports to children and their families to mitigate safety concerns.

Recommendations

Based on the collective survey findings and direct responses from child welfare leaders, there are several direct, actionable recommendations at both the federal and state levels:

- **Establish joint human services leadership committed to shared responsibility for upstream prevention of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement.** Survey findings show that most public benefit programs are administered in a division separate from the child welfare agency. This means that establishing a comprehensive upstream prevention system requires top-level executive and programmatic human services leaders at all levels of government to explicitly make child maltreatment prevention a strategic priority. Prioritization and communication are necessary to successfully advocate for the policy, fiscal, data, and staffing infrastructure needed to implement a holistic system of joint responsibility. Federal, state, and local leaders should begin by collectively communicating a vision with shared joint responsibility for stabilizing families and promoting well-being through the provision of economic and concrete supports. Additional action steps can include:
 - aligning policy across programs to increase access and reduce administrative barriers;
 - establishing universal screening to assess family economic and concrete needs including economic shocks (for example, recent loss of employment or income) and cumulative material hardship (for example, inability to pay for rent, utilities, medical needs, or food);
 - integrating fiscal funding streams across programs to maximize economic and concrete support resources (for example, braided funding between state funds, Medicaid, Title IV-B, Title IV-E, TANF, etc.);

- developing one-stop case management navigation with knowledgeable cross-sector staff to connect families to local community resources and support holistic family well-being;
 - colocating cross-sector public human service workers with community providers to streamline eligibility and service delivery in one central location; and
 - establishing uniform performance metrics with streamlined data sharing and integrated information technology support to systematically track assessment of family economic needs, human service delivery patterns, and trends in child maltreatment reporting.
- **Increase direct and flexible federal funding to meet family economic and concrete support needs.** The overwhelming majority of child welfare leaders responded that both the levels of and restrictions on federal child welfare funds were the most significant funding barriers to providing economic and concrete supports. They also suggested the need for more flexible funding to offer economic and concrete supports to families without having it tied directly to a service. This is a particularly important strategy to address historic racial inequities in access to jobs, housing, child care, health care, income supports and other resources that likely contribute to persistent disparities in child welfare involvement among communities of color (Pac et al., 2023).

One actionable strategy at the federal level to promote family stability and well-being is updating the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) legislation or the next significant child welfare policy package (or both) to explicitly include economic and concrete supports as Title IV-E evidence-based services eligible for prevention funding. Child welfare agencies can consider agreements with partner agencies to provide economic and concrete supports. Another is for the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse to review economic and concrete supports as an independent and portable service or in combination with another evidence-based program (Monahan et al., 2023). This would create broader fiscal opportunities for child welfare agencies to support families in need of economic and concrete supports exclusively or in combination with effective clinical and therapeutic interventions.

A third strategy, directly recommended by child welfare leaders, is to ease restrictions on and increase the amount of direct funding available for kinship foster care homes. Placing children with relatives or close family friends instead of nonrelative foster parents is widely recognized as a best practice to help children stay connected to their siblings, communities, and cultural identities (Armendariz, 2023). Expanded funding for kinship homes would enable more children in need of temporary or permanent placement alternatives to live with people they know. It would also increase fiscal supports to help kinship caregivers meet their additional financial responsibilities. These changes to federal funding, in combination with investments through state, local and philanthropic support, can create expanded and innovative opportunities to resource upstream prevention and reduce systemic inequities.

Revise policies and practices that contribute to unnecessary child welfare system involvement. Survey findings show that public benefit eligibility restrictions are the most significant policy barrier in providing access to economic and concrete supports. This likely

contributes to unnecessary child welfare involvement. Leaders suggested policy changes, such as easing federal restrictions on income and asset limits and updating federal poverty definitions to enable families to continue receiving the public benefits they need (for example, child care, housing, food subsidies, health insurance, and other benefits) as they increase income until they are financially stable. Since child welfare leaders expressed a clear preference for the public benefit system to lead the work of helping families access economic and concrete supports, to prevent system involvement, strengthening alignment and coordination between child welfare, partner human service agencies, and community-based organizations will be critical to this effort. In addition, universal standardized screening practices should be established across human service agencies and when families first come to the attention of child welfare. Survey findings show that most child welfare agencies do not assess concrete and economic needs at the hotline screening phase. Doing so would provide opportunities to divert concerns related to child and family well-being to other human service agencies and community resources that are better equipped to support these needs.

Child welfare leaders also suggested reforming mandated reporting laws and narrowing the definitions of child maltreatment to prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement. These actions are important to address the pervasive role of child welfare in the lives of child and families in the United States. Child welfare agencies receive and respond to maltreatment reports involving almost 3.5 million children each year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021), particularly for families of color. An estimated 53% of Black children experience at least one child protective services investigation by age 18 (Kim et al., 2017). Many of these families come to the attention of child welfare because of issues that are secondary to economic or material hardship (Yang, 2015), and the survey findings show that economic need is frequently a contributing factor in suspected maltreatment reports, particularly neglect. Recent analysis led by Casey Family Programs (2023), found that most state neglect statutes remain “vague and open to interpretation based on one’s professional training, personal experiences, and preferences or biases” (p. 4). Rather than continuing to deploy the agency tasked with child protection to address issues of child well-being, policymakers and human services staff at all levels of government should consider revising current policies and practices to enable child welfare to focus its resources on instances where children’s safety is in danger and intervention is needed.

- **Promote increased understanding of the relationship between access to economic and concrete supports and reduced child welfare involvement and enhanced family stability and well-being.** Child welfare leaders noted that raising awareness of both human services staff and the general public will be critical to overcoming political resistance and stigma associated with expanding access to economic and concrete supports. One coordinated strategic suggestion is for human service leaders at all levels to create family stability campaigns illustrating the direct association between economic and concrete supports, enhanced family stability, and child maltreatment prevention (Anderson et al., 2023; Grewal-Kok, et al., 2023). Pairing these campaigns with evidence of the negative outcomes associated with long-term

foster care stays (Doyle, 2007; Hobbs et al., 2021; Sariaslan et al., 2022) and the cost benefit savings of resourcing prevention and child and family well-being (Nielsen & Roman, 2019; Puls et al., 2021, Garfinkel et al., 2022) is another action step. Finally, family stability campaigns provide the opportunity to promote broader education of historic structural racism in our policies and practices that have led to inequities and persistent overrepresentation of families of color in our child welfare system.

- **Engage in national learning communities and innovative demonstration projects focused on effective ways to redesign human service systems.** Increasing calls to strengthen alignment between child welfare and human service partner agencies have led to several national opportunities. APHSA, in partnership with Chapin Hall, is convening state and local practitioners from child welfare and public benefits agencies in a [national peer community](#) to share promising practices and generate solutions for providing economic and concrete supports to prevent child welfare involvement and promote well-being. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA), in partnership with the Children's Bureau, recently launched [Families Are Stronger Together: TANF & Child Welfare Partnering for Prevention Learning Community \(FAST-LC\)](#), a learning community focused on TANF and child welfare collaboration. Additionally, [the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023](#) provides authority in TANF for new pilot projects in 5 states that will promote accountability through the negotiation of performance benchmarks for work and family outcomes, including indicators of family stability and well-being. These pilots provide an opportunity to test how decision making in TANF is or could be brought more into alignment with first statutory goal of TANF: to provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives. All of these efforts include an emphasis on engaging community partnerships, those with lived experience, and partnerships across human service systems. All of these efforts include an emphasis on engaging community partnerships, those with lived experience, and partnerships across human service systems.

CONCLUSION

The survey data and direct responses from child welfare leaders demonstrate a clear awareness and interest in addressing the significant impact economic insecurity has on families and the child welfare system. It also affirms significant work is needed to reengineer the way public systems are structured to break the link between poverty and child welfare involvement. There is a wealth of opportunity to grow federal, state, and local economic and concrete services. However, there are also many policy and practice solutions human service leaders at all levels of government can use to prevent child maltreatment and child welfare involvement through economic and concrete supports. APHSA and Chapin Hall collaborated to release [*Evidence to Impact: State Policy Options to Increase Access to Economic and Concrete Supports as a Child Welfare Prevention Strategy*](#), a policy tool that provides examples of state policy options aligned with peer-reviewed research. It is organized by the policy levers at agencies' disposal, including macroeconomic supports (Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, minimum wage, paid family leave, employment and job creation), concrete supports (child care, housing, health care, flexible funds, direct cash transfers), and public assistance programs (TANF, SNAP, WIC). The tool provides options and opportunities for child welfare agencies to partner with other human services agencies to advocate for policy reforms.

This national survey also highlights the need for additional research around economic and concrete supports and service delivery that should include:

- engaging people with lived experience to understand their perspectives on the relationship between economic and concrete need and child welfare involvement and strategies to break the link;
- understanding the perceptions of public benefit agency leaders and their awareness of the provision of economic and concrete supports and child maltreatment prevention;
- evaluating costs and benefits of more direct and flexible funding for economic and concrete supports and the implications for foster care costs;
- examining national trends in child maltreatment reporting and child welfare system involvement before and after federal and state policy changes;
- greater emphasis on evaluating successes and barriers to accessing economic and concrete supports and other services, rather than continuing to build evidence towards deficit-based individual risk profiles; and
- evaluating the impact of changes in advancing equity across all of these strategies and in all innovative research and evaluation to reduce child welfare system involvement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Economic and Concrete Supports Evidence Table

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	<p>EITC payments are associated with immediate reductions in state-level maltreatment reports (<i>Kovski, 2022</i>)</p> <p>Each additional \$1000 in per-child EITC and Child Tax Credit refunds is associated with a decline in state-level maltreatment reports of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.3% in the week of payment • 7.7% in the 4 weeks after payment <p>(<i>Kovski, 2022</i>)</p> <p>A \$1000 increase in income via EITC is associated with an 8-10% reduction in self-reported CPS involvement for single-parent households that are low income (<i>Berger, 2017</i>)</p> <p>States with refundable state-level EITC, compared to those without, have 11% fewer entries into foster care (<i>Rostad, 2020</i>)</p> <p>A 10% increase in the amount of refundable state-level EITC benefits is associated with a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% decline in rates of reported maltreatment • 9% decline in rates of reported neglect <p>(<i>Kovski, 2021</i>)</p> <p>Refundable state-level EITC is associated with a decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma for child <2 years (<i>Klevens, 2017</i>)</p> <p>Expansion of EITC is associated with a 7.4% decrease in foster care entry rates per year in states with a state-level EITC (relative to those without) (<i>Biehl, 2018</i>)</p>
Child Tax Credit (CTC)	<p>CTC payments are associated with immediate reductions in state-level maltreatment reports (<i>Kovski, 2022</i>)</p> <p>Each additional \$1000 in per-child EITC and CTC refunds is associated with a decline in state-level maltreatment reports of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.3% in the week of payment • 7.7% in the 4 weeks after payment <p>(<i>Kovski, 2022</i>)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Expanded monthly CTC payments in 2021 improved risk factors for child welfare involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced child poverty by almost 30% • Reduced month-to-month volatility in poverty • Increased families' abilities to meet their basic needs • Strongly reduced food insecurity <p>(<i>Shafer, 2022</i>) (<i>Parolin, 2022</i>)</p>
Minimum Wage	<p>States that increased the minimum wage beyond \$7.25 per hour experienced a decline in maltreatment reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For every \$1 increase in the minimum wage, there was a 9.6% decline in neglect reports <p>(<i>Raissian, 2017</i>)</p> <p>Increasing a city's minimum wage is associated with reductions in self-reported physical & psychological aggression by parents towards their children (compared to cities that do not change minimum wage) (<i>Schneider, 2021</i>)</p>
Paid Family Leave (PFL)	<p>Compared to states with no PFL policy, the implementation of California's 2004 PFL policy (up to 12 weeks of partially paid leave) was associated with a decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma among children <1 year old and < 2 years old (<i>Klevens, 2016</i>)</p>
Employment & Job Creation	<p>States that extended the duration of unemployment benefits at the onset of the recession (2007-2009) saw smaller increases in substantiated neglect reports (compared to states that didn't extend unemployment benefits) (<i>Brown, 2020</i>)</p> <p>A 1% increase in the county unemployment rate is associated with a 20% increase in substantiated neglect reports (<i>Brown, 2020</i>)</p> <p>A 1% increase in the monthly unemployment rate (in an urban midwestern county) is associated with an increase of 61 screened-in child maltreatment reports (excluding "neglect only" reports) (<i>Weiner, 2020</i>)</p> <p>During the recession of 2007–2009, the rate of abusive head trauma for children < 5 years old was considerably higher than during the period immediately before (<i>Berger, 2011</i>)</p> <p>At the county level, higher income inequality—independent of child poverty rates—is associated with higher rates of substantiated child maltreatment (<i>Eckenrode, 2014</i>) (<i>Zhang, 2021</i>)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Counties where children have a greater chance of moving up the income ladder have lower child maltreatment report rates (even after accounting for income inequality & poverty rates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1% increase in the likelihood of moving from the bottom of the income ladder in childhood to the top in adulthood is associated with 2.3% fewer maltreatment reports <p>(<i>Bullinger, 2022</i>)</p>
Universal Home Visiting with ECS	<p>Randomized clinical trials of all families with births in select hospitals in Durham NC over a 6-month period found that families randomly assigned to Family Connects (FC)— a short-term, community-wide nurse home visiting program for families with newborns that focuses on addressing families’ material needs—experienced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More positive maternal health (at age 6 months) • 44% lower rate of CPS investigations (through age 2) • 39% fewer CPS investigations (through age 5) <p>(compared to families who didn’t receive FC) (<i>Goodman, 2021</i>) (<i>Dodge, 2019</i>)</p>
Child Care	<p>Child care investments included in Build Back Better (proposed 2020-2021) would be associated with a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.4% reduction in CPS investigations • 6% reduction in substantiated child maltreatment • 3.1% reduction in foster care placements • 11.6% reduction in child fatalities due to maltreatment <p>(<i>Puls, 2022</i>)</p> <p>Waitlists to access subsidized child care are associated with an increase in maltreatment investigations (<i>Klevens, 2015</i>)</p> <p>States with Child Care & Development Fund program policies that make child care subsidies more accessible to child welfare-supervised children (in terms of eligibility, priority lists, copays & activity requirements) are associated with lower child removal rates (compared to other states) (<i>Meloy, 2015</i>)</p> <p>For every additional child care concern reported by families receiving TANF, the risk of supervisory neglect increases by 20% (<i>Yang, 2016</i>)</p> <p>Each additional month that mothers who are low-income receive a child care subsidy is associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16% decrease in the odds of a neglect report • 14% decrease in the odds of a physical abuse report <p>(in the following 12 months) (<i>Yang, 2019</i>)</p>

POLICY	<u>Evidence Related to</u> <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare</u> <u>Involvement</u>
	<p>Mothers entering substance use treatment who have difficulty securing child care are 82% more likely to self-report child neglect (compared to mothers entering treatment who don't have difficulty securing child care)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty finding child care was a stronger predictor of neglect than almost any other factor measured in this study, including mental health & severity of drug use (Cash, 2003) <p>For working mothers who are low income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instability in child care arrangements is associated with increased risk for self-reported physical & psychological aggression toward their children • Not having access to emergency child care is associated with increased risk for self-reported neglectful behavior (especially for single mothers) (Ha, 2019) <p>More restrictive child care subsidy enrollment policies are associated with higher rates of substantiated maltreatment reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying asset tests to determine eligibility (associated with substantiated abuse reports) • Counting more public benefits as income in determining eligibility (associated with substantiated maltreatment reports & abuse reports) <p>Less restrictive child care subsidy policies—copayment exemptions for families living in poverty—are associated with lower rates of substantiated maltreatment reports (Rochford, 2022)</p> <p>States with more generous income eligibility policies for child care subsidies have lower physical abuse & neglect investigation rates among children <5 (compared to states with less generous income eligibility policies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Michigan increased its maximum monthly enrollment income by \$700 (for a family of 3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1,220 fewer children < age 5 would be investigated for neglect ○ 528 fewer children < age 5 would be investigated for physical abuse (over a one-year period) (Klika, 2023) <p>Neighborhoods with a higher percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds attending preschool (both locally and in surrounding neighborhoods) are associated with lower rates of child maltreatment investigations & substantiations (Klein, 2011)</p> <p>Children who attended Early Head Start had fewer child welfare encounters between ages 5 and 9 (compared to those who didn't attend) (Green, 2014)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Children (ages 0-5) who participated in Head Start and were referred to child welfare for suspected maltreatment were 93% less likely to enter foster care (compared to children who did not receive any early childhood education service) <i>(Klein, 2017)</i></p>
Housing	<p>Randomized controlled trial of children of child welfare-involved families who face housing instability & receive a supportive housing program experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer removals (9% vs. 40% in business-as-usual control group after 2 years) • Lower prevalence of substantiated maltreatment (8% vs. 26% in control group after 18 months) • Increased reunification (30% vs. 9% in control group after 2 years) <p><i>(Farrell, 2018)</i></p> <p>Multi-site randomized controlled trial (HUD’s Family Options Study) of homeless families referred for permanent housing subsidies found that they self-reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% fewer foster care placements (1.9% v. 5% in the control group experienced at least 1 placement in the last 6 months) • Less intimate partner violence • Lower rates of psychological distress • Greater housing stability & food security <p>(compared to the business-as-usual control group of homeless families at the 20-month follow-up) <i>(Gubits, 2015)</i></p> <p>Housing stress is associated with increased likelihood of child welfare involvement <i>(Chandler, 2022)</i></p> <p>Self-reported housing instability in urban areas is associated with increased risk for neglect (above and beyond poverty) <i>(Warren, 2015)</i></p> <p>Each additional eviction filing (per 100 occupied units in a block group) is associated with a 2% increase in child maltreatment reports, primarily neglect <i>(Bullinger, 2021)</i></p> <p>Households that will experience a foreclosure filing in the next 6-12 months are at 70% greater risk of CPS investigation (compared to households that will not) <i>(Berger, 2015)</i></p> <p>Increases in current & prior-year mortgage foreclosure rates are associated with increases in investigated & substantiated child maltreatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1% increase in the prior-year foreclosure rates is associated with a 7.3% increase in substantiations <p><i>(Frioux, 2014)</i></p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Increases in mortgage delinquency & foreclosure rates are associated with increases in hospital admissions for physical abuse of children < 6 years old & for traumatic brain injury for infants < 1 year old (Wood, 2012)</p> <p>Expansion of Medicaid coverage is associated with reduced risk of home eviction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evictions fell by 20% in states that expanded Medicaid compared to non-expansion states <p>(Zewde, 2019)</p>
Health Care Medicaid Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	<p>Rate of screened-in neglect reports for children < age 6 decreased in states that expanded Medicaid, but increased in states that did not (from 2013 to 2016)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If non-expansion states had expanded Medicaid, there would have been almost 125,000 fewer screened in neglect referrals for children < age 6 in the U.S. (from 2014 through 2016) <p>(Brown, 2019)</p> <p>States that newly expanded Medicaid in 2014 were associated with the following reductions in the average rate of neglect reports per state-year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% reduction ages 0-5 • 15% reduction ages 6-12 • 16% reduction ages 13-17 <p>(compared to states that did not expand Medicaid from 2008 to 2018) (McGinty, 2022)</p> <p>States with policies that facilitate continuity of eligibility for Medicaid/CHIP are associated with lower maltreatment investigation rates (compared to states without continuous eligibility) (Klevens, 2015)</p>
Flexible Funds for Concrete Supports	<p>Families with open child welfare cases (mostly neglect) who receive a home-based services program with concrete supports are 17% less likely to experience a subsequent child maltreatment report (during the first year, compared to families who receive the program without any concrete supports) (Rostad, 2017)</p> <p>Low-income families who receive Differential Response (DR) with concrete supports are less likely to experience a subsequent maltreatment report (compared to low-income families who receive DR without any concrete supports)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a significant interaction between income & material services receipt—receiving concrete supports is associated with lower likelihood of experiencing a subsequent maltreatment report among low-income families who received DR <p>(Loman, 2012)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>For families who report difficulty paying bills prior to receiving a home-based family preservation program with concrete supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of clothing/furniture/supplies or housing assistance is associated with reduced likelihood of subsequent substantiated maltreatment • Provision of cash assistance or clothing/furniture/supplies is associated with reduced likelihood of subsequent foster care placement (Ryan, 2004) <p>Families who received Kentucky's family preservation program (FPP), which includes short-term interventions and flexible funds to meet concrete needs, were less likely to experience a subsequent substantiated maltreatment referral within 6 months of ending services, and less likely to have their children enter foster care after services ended, compared to similar families who did not receive FPP, even though the families who received FPP had higher cumulative risk factors (Huebner, 2008)</p>
Direct Cash Transfers (DCT)	<p>An additional \$1,000 unconditional cash payment to families in the early months of a child's life is estimated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce likelihood of a CPS referral for neglect by 10% (by age 3) • Reduce likelihood of a CPS referral for physical abuse by 30% (by age 3) • Reduce likelihood of a substantiated CPS referral by 15% (by age 3) • Reduce likelihood of child mortality by 30% (3 fewer child deaths) (by age 5) <i>Bullinger, 2023 – working paper analysis based on Alaska Permanent Fund)</i> <p>Evaluations of <i>unconditional</i> DCTs (meaning there are no work requirements or restrictions on how recipients can use the funds) demonstrate recipients experience improvements in risk factors for child welfare involvement:</p> <p>Randomized controlled trial of the Stockton, CA Guaranteed Income Program, which provided \$500 monthly income supplements for 24 months to 125 low-income residents, found that, after 1 year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipients experienced improved financial stability & mental health (compared to the control group) • Recipients also experienced improved employment: while 28% of recipients had full-time jobs at the start of the program; one year later, 40% had full-time jobs (West, 2021) <p>Randomized controlled trial of the Baby's First Years program, which provides \$333 monthly income supplements to 1,000 low-income mothers with newborns, found that 1-year-olds whose mothers received the monthly income supplements had brain activity associated with higher cognitive functioning (compared to infants in the control group) (Troller-Renfree, 2022)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Tribal children whose families received an annual income supplement of ~\$5,000 from casino profits have improved mental health, physical health & financial well-being as adults and improved educational attainment (compared to nontribal adults in the same community)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual income supplement has a <i>cumulative effect</i>—at age 30, children whose families had received the supplement for the longest duration & for the largest amounts reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lowest levels of psychiatric symptoms ○ Highest levels of physical health & financial well-being <p>(Copeland, 2022) (Akee, 2010)</p>
Public assistance program	<p>Each additional \$1,000 that states spend annually on public benefit programs* per person living in poverty is associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.3% reduction in child maltreatment reports • 4% reduction in substantiated child maltreatment • 2.1% reduction in foster care placements • 7.7% reduction in child fatalities due to maltreatment <p><i>*Public benefit programs included in analysis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash, housing & in-kind assistance • Child care assistance • Refundable EITC • Medical assistance programs (including Medicaid + CHIP) • Low-income housing infrastructure development <p>(Puls, 2021)</p> <p>Analysis simulating the effects of increased household income under 3 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) anti-poverty policy packages found these could reduce CPS investigations by 11 to 20% annually (386,000 to 669,000 fewer children investigated per year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis suggests implementation would substantially reduce racial disproportionality in CPS involvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 19 to 29% reduction in investigations for Black children ○ 13 to 24% reduction in investigations for Latinx children ○ 7 to 13% reduction in investigations for white children <p>(Pac, 2023) (NAS, 2019)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	<p>A 10% increase in state public benefit levels (ACDF/TANF + the value of food stamps) for a family of 4 is predicted to reduce foster care placements by 8% (from 1990 – 1998) (<i>Paxson, 2003</i>)</p> <p>Lifetime limits on receipt of TANF benefits & sanctions for noncompliance are associated with higher levels of substantiated maltreatment (from 1990 – 1998) (<i>Paxson, 2003</i>)</p> <p>A 10% reduction in the average monthly AFDC/TANF cash benefit amount for a family of 3 is associated with a 2.3% increase in the foster care caseload rate (from 1985 – 2000) (<i>Swann, 2006</i>)</p> <p>Each additional state policy that restricts access to TANF* is associated with an additional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 children with substantiated neglect reports • 22 children entering foster care due to abuse • 21 children entering foster care due to neglect (per 100,000 children) <p><i>*State policies reviewed included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time limits on TANF benefits of less than sixty months • Severe sanctions for failure to meet work requirements • Work requirements for mothers of children younger than 1 year old • Suspicion-based drug testing of applicants <p>(<i>Ginther, 2022</i>)</p> <p>States that implemented TANF time limits of less than 60 months experienced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34.4% increase in substantiated maltreatment reports • 37.3% increase in substantiated neglect reports <p>(increases observed from 2004 to 2015) (<i>Ginther, 2017</i>)</p> <p>States that imposed total benefit loss as the most severe sanction for not meeting TANF work requirements experienced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23.3% increase in substantiated neglect reports • 13.4% increase in foster care entries due to neglect • 12.7% increase in total foster care entries <p>(increases observed from 2004 to 2015) (<i>Ginther, 2017</i>)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>Randomized controlled trial found mothers who participant in TANF and are eligible to receive full child support for their children (and child support is disregarded in determining welfare benefits) are 10% less likely to have a child subject to a screened-in maltreatment report (compared to mothers who are eligible to receive only partial child support payments) (Cancian, 2013)</p> <p>State policies that limit access to TANF benefits*are associated with increases in mothers' self-reports of physical child maltreatment</p> <p><i>*State policies reviewed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreasing the maximum allowable cash benefit amount • Implementing stricter time limits on receipt of benefit • Lower TANF-to-poverty ratios (number of families with children receiving TANF for every 100 families with children in poverty) <p>(Spencer, 2021)</p>
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	<p>States that adopted both of these policies to expand SNAP eligibility under broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the income limit for eligibility • Eliminating the asset test <p>were associated with decreases in the number of CPS-investigated reports (from 2006 – 2019) (Austin, 2023)</p> <p>Every 5% increase in the number of families receiving SNAP benefits is associated with a 7.6% to 14.3% reduction in CPS & foster care caseloads (Johnson-Motoyama, 2022)</p> <p>States with more generous SNAP policies* experienced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large reductions in CPS reports • Fewer substantiated reports, particularly for neglect • Fewer foster care placements <p>(from 2004 – 2016, compared to states with less generous SNAP policies)</p> <p><i>*State policies reviewed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing income limits under BBCE • Excluding legally obligated child support payments from total income • Providing transitional SNAP benefits to families leaving TANF • Using simplified reporting option for changes in household circumstances <p>(Johnson-Motoyama, 2022)</p>

POLICY	Evidence Related to <u>Reducing Risk for Child Abuse & Neglect or Child Welfare Involvement</u>
	<p>The implementation of <i>multiple</i> more generous SNAP policies is associated with larger reductions in child welfare involvement (<i>Johnson-Motoyama, 2022</i>)</p> <p>There are particularly large estimated reductions in CPS reports & substantiations among states offering transitional SNAP benefits to families leaving TANF (<i>Johnson-Motoyama, 2022</i>)</p> <p>Children from low-income families who participate in SNAP have a lower risk of substantiated maltreatment reports (compared to children from low-income families who don't participate) (<i>Lee, 2007</i>)</p> <p>The presence of each additional store accepting SNAP benefits (in the least densely populated areas of a northeastern state) is associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11.3% decrease in substantiated maltreatment cases • 4.4% reduction in maltreatment reports • 6% reduction in neglect reports <p>(<i>Bullinger, 2021</i>)</p>
Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)	<p>Children from low-income families who participate in WIC have a lower risk of substantiated maltreatment reports (compared to children from low-income families who don't participate) (<i>Lee, 2007</i>)</p>

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

APHSA Concrete and Economic Supports

Start of Block: Introduction and Consent

Introduction

APHSA is partnering together with Chapin Hall to **understand more about child welfare administrators' perceptions of concrete and economic supports**. Specifically we are interested in understanding the economic and concrete needs of the families your child welfare agency serves, how those needs are being met, and the barriers that exist to expanding the provision of economic and concrete supports.

The survey will take about 20 to 25 minutes to complete. You do not have to do any additional research or data gathering to participate in the survey. You may choose to skip any question you do not want to answer. All your responses will be kept confidential so that no state-specific or individual identifiable information will be shared outside of the research team. All survey findings will be published in an aggregate format. The results will be used to inform potential changes to federal policy. By proceeding with the survey, you are consenting to participate.

q1 Please select your state.

▼ Alabama (1) ... Wyoming (52)

q2 What is your position?

- ☐ I am the head of the Child Welfare agency (i.e., Director, Commissioner, Administrator) for my state (1)
- ☐ I am part of a Child Welfare Executive Leadership team for my state (2)
- ☐ Other (fill in the blank) (3) _____

q3

How long have you been in your current position?

- ☐ Less than 1 year (1)
- ☐ 1 year (2)
- ☐ 2 years (3)
- ☐ 3 years (4)
- ☐ 4 years (5)
- ☐ 5 or more years (6)

q4 How long have you been in a Child Welfare Executive leadership position **at the state level?**

- ☐ Less than 1 year (1)
- ☐ 1 year (2)
- ☐ 2 years (3)
- ☐ 3 years (4)
- ☐ 4 years (5)
- ☐ 5 or more years (6)

B1 Intro

We are interested in your beliefs about offering economic and concrete supports to meet the needs of the families you serve.

By economic and concrete supports, we mean direct cash assistance, child care, housing supports, rental assistance, utility assistance, transportation, food, and clothing, and similar forms of assistance.

q5
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following.

During a child protective services (CPS) investigation, I believe the **child welfare agency** should...

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
... <u>screen families</u> <u>for</u> economic and concrete needs (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... <u>refer families</u> <u>to</u> economic and concrete supports (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... <u>help families</u> <u>receive</u> economic and concrete supports (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q6
During a child protective services (CPS) investigation, I believe the **public benefit system** should...

Note: By public benefit system, we mean the system of all non-child welfare government programs that provide either cash assistance or in-kind benefits to individuals and/or families.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
... screen families for economic and concrete needs (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... refer families to economic and concrete supports (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... help families receive economic and concrete supports (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q7 Intro

The next few questions are about your beliefs about offering economic and concrete supports **to prevent child welfare involvement.**

When we say “preventing child welfare involvement” we mean preventing suspected abuse and/or neglect reports.

q7

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following.

I believe _____ should help families access concrete and economic supports to prevent child welfare involvement.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
The Public Benefit System (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Child Welfare Agency (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q8 Intro

The next few questions are about your perspectives on the reasons children and families are reported to child protective services (CPS) in your state.

Specifically, we are interested in understanding more about the role of economic and concrete needs and suspected abuse and/or neglect reports. Please think of the definitions of child abuse and neglect in your state as you answer these questions. Your responses should reflect your best estimate based on your professional experience. You do not need data to guide your response.

q8 Of the suspected abuse and/or neglect reports your child welfare agency receives how often...

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
...are families unable to meet their economic and concrete needs? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... is the inability to meet their economic and concrete needs the primary reason for the report? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...is the inability to meet their economic and concrete needs a contributing reason for the report? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...is the lack of access to programs that provide economic and concrete supports a contributing reason for the report? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...are the economic and concrete supports provided by programs inadequate to meet needs and a contributing reason for the report? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q9 How common is it for the following economic and concrete needs **to be present** during suspected abuse and/or neglect reports...

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Child care (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clothing (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health Care (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home repair/modification (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilities (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Perspectives on the role of Economic Need

Start of Block: Approaches to meeting needs

q10 Intro

The next few questions are about your child welfare agency's approach to offering economic and concrete supports.

Note: when we say "your child welfare agency," we mean "the state and/or local child welfare agency."

q10 Does your child welfare agency have a clearly articulated mission statement and/or strategic priorities?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: q13 If Does your child welfare agency have a clearly articulated mission statement and/or strategic prio... = No

q11 Does your child welfare agency's mission statement and/or strategic priorities include language about meeting economic and concrete needs?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: q13 If Does your child welfare agency's mission statement and/or strategic priorities include language a... = No

q12 Does your child welfare agency mission statement and/or strategic priorities include language...

	Yes (1)	No (2)
...addressing economic and concrete needs of families (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... on reducing and/or eliminating poverty (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q13

What funding does your child welfare agency **use to pay for case management activities** (e.g. making referrals or arranging transportation, etc.) so that families can access economic and concrete supports?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Title IV-B (1)
- ☐ Title IV-E (2)
- ☐ State funds (3)
- ☐ Local funds (4)
- ☐ CAPTA (Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention) Title I (General Program) (5)
- ☐ CAPTA Title II (6)
- ☐ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds transferred to your child welfare agency (7)
- ☐ Social Services Block Grant funds transferred to your child welfare agency (8)
- ☐ Philanthropic funds (9)
- ☐ Community/charity funds (10)
- ☒ Not applicable (12)
- ☐ Other (fill in the blank) (11) _____

q14

What kinds of funding does your child welfare agency **use to pay for** economic and concrete supports? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Title IV-B (1)
- ☐ Title IV-E (2)
- ☐ State funds (3)
- ☐ Local funds (4)
- ☐ CAPTA (Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention) Title I (General Program) (5)
- ☐ CAPTA Title II (6)
- ☐ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds transferred to your child welfare agency (7)
- ☐ Social Services Block Grant funds transferred to your child welfare agency (8)
- ☐ Philanthropic funds (9)
- ☐ Community/charity funds (10)
- ☒ Not applicable (12)
- ☐ Other (fill in the blank) (11) _____

q15 Please estimate **the percentage of your child welfare agency's child welfare budget** that is used to pay for direct concrete and economic supports.

- ☐ 0% (1)
- ☐ 1% to 5% (3)
- ☐ 6% to 9% (4)
- ☐ 10% to 20% (5)
- ☐ More than 20% (6)
- ☐ Don't know/Not sure (7)

q17 description

In your state, an allegation of child maltreatment is screened by a hotline. Then, some of those allegations get investigated by CPS.

q17

Right now, we're asking about the hotline screening process.

During your state's hotline screening process, are families' economic and concrete needs assessed?

- ☐ Yes (4)
- ☐ No (5)

Skip To: q19 If Right now, we're asking about the hotline screening process. During your state's hotline screenin... = No

q18

Right now, we're asking about the hotline screening process.

During your state's hotline screening process, are families' economic and concrete needs assessed **with a standardized tool?**

☐ Yes (4)

☐ No (5)

q19

Right now, we're asking about the CPS investigation process.

During your state's CPS investigation process, are families' economic and concrete needs assessed?

☐ Yes (4)

☐ No (5)

Skip To: q21 If Right now, we're asking about the CPS investigation process. During your state's CPS investigatio... = No

q20

Right now, we're asking about the CPS investigation process.

During your state's CPS investigation process, are families' economic and concrete needs assessed **with a standardized tool?**

☐ Yes (4)

☐ No (5)

q21 Does the child welfare agency in your state **track** families' economic and concrete needs?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Does the child welfare agency in your state track families' economic and concrete needs? = No

q22

How does the child welfare agency in your state track economic and concrete need data?

Choose all that apply.

☐

We **track referrals** made to public benefits programs (1)

☐

We track **outcomes of referrals** made to public benefits programs (2)

☐

We **create reports** that track economic and concrete need trends (4)

End of Block: Approaches to meeting needs

Start of Block: Coordination and Partnership efforts

q23 Intro

The next few questions are about how your child welfare agency coordinates with other public benefits programs to provide economic and concrete supports to families.

When we use the term “public benefits programs” we are referring to other state or local departments and/or agencies that administer programs providing economic and concrete supports (like TANF, SNAP, Child care, Housing, etc.).

q23 Please indicate which of the following public benefits programs are administered: directly by the child welfare agency in your state, directly by another division in your state, directly by the same division that administers child welfare, jointly, by the division that administers child welfare and another division, or not applicable in your state

	Administered directly by child welfare agency (1)	Administered directly by another division (2)	Administered directly by same division that administers child welfare (4)	Administered jointly by division that administers child welfare and another division (6)	Not applicable (5)
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child care assistance (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing subsidies (Section 8) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency rental assistance (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homeless services (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Low income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP) (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicaid (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q24 Who is responsible **for coordinating access for families** to economic and concrete supports?

	This person is responsible (1)	This person is not responsible (4)	Not applicable (5)
The responding child protective services (CPS) caseworker (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A caseworker not responsible for the child protective services investigation (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A community partner (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q25 Intro The next few questions are about how your child welfare agency coordinates with other public benefits programs.

q25
How does your child welfare agency **coordinate with other public benefits programs** to offer concrete and economic supports to families?

Note: By economic and concrete supports, we mean direct cash assistance, child care, housing supports, rental assistance, utility assistance, transportation, food, and clothing, and similar forms of assistance.

Choose all that apply.

- ☐ Our child welfare agency has a Memorandum of Understanding (or similar governing agreement) with other public benefits agencies or programs (1)
- ☐ Our child welfare agency is included in a broader multi-program strategic plan that includes cross-system coordination (2)
- ☐ ☒ Not applicable (4)
- ☐ Other (Fill in the blank) (5) _____

q26 Does your child welfare agency **hold formal meetings** with other public benefits programs that offer concrete and economic supports to families...

- ☐ ...to discuss cross-system collaboration? (1)
- ☐ ...to discuss service-specific issues? (2)
- ☐ ☒ Not applicable (5)
- ☐ Other (fill in the blank) (4) _____

q27 Does your child welfare agency **share data** to coordinate with other public benefits programs that offer concrete and economic supports to families...

- ☐ ...to coordinate access (1)
- ☐ ...to track performance measures (2)
- ☒ Not applicable (5)
- ☐ Other (fill in the blank) (4) _____

End of Block: Coordination and Partnership efforts

Start of Block: Difficulties

q28 Intro The next few questions are about kinds of difficulties your child welfare agency faces when connecting families to programs that offer concrete and economic supports.

q28 How difficult is it to **connect families served by your child welfare agency to public benefits programs** that offer concrete and economic supports?

- ☐ Not at all difficult (1)
- ☐ Somewhat difficult (2)
- ☐ Moderately difficult (3)
- ☐ Very difficult (4)

q29 When **coordinating with other public benefits programs** to offer concrete and economic supports to families, how significant are the following barriers to offering concrete and economic

supports?

	Not a significant barrier at all (1)	Somewhat significant barrier (2)	Moderately significant barrier (3)	Very significant barrier (4)	Not applicable (5)
Funding for technology to improve coordination (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding to pay for service coordination activities (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal barriers to data sharing (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staffing resources (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q30 How significant are the **following federal and state funding limitations** in offering concrete and economic supports to families?

	Not a significant barrier at all (1)	Somewhat significant barrier (2)	Moderately significant barrier (3)	Very significant barrier (4)
Eligible uses of federal child welfare funding streams (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eligible uses of state child welfare funding streams (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding levels of federal child welfare funding streams (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding levels of state child welfare funding streams (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

q30b How significant are the **following federal and state policy limitations** in offering concrete and economic supports to families?

	Not a significant barrier at all (1)	Somewhat significant barrier (2)	Moderately significant barrier (3)	Very significant barrier (4)
Restrictions on eligibility for public benefits programs (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal mandated reporting requirements (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State mandated reporting requirements (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State neglect statute/definition (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political resistance to public benefits (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Difficulties

Start of Block: Resources and solutions

q31 intro The next question are about possible options to expand access to economic and concrete supports to families.

q31 How helpful would the following options be in expanding access to economic and concrete supports for child welfare involved families...

	Not helpful at all (1)	Somewhat helpful (2)	Moderately helpful (3)	Very helpful (4)
Capacity building grants (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding for direct economic and concrete supports (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding for coordinating access to economic and concrete supports (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical assistance (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding for information technology (23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce training and coaching (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mandatory reporter training (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Resources and solutions

Start of Block: Emergency Federal Assistance

q32 Intro The next few questions about how your child welfare agency is using emergency federal financial assistance provide economic and concrete supports to families.

q32 Did your child welfare agency **use the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act** to provide emergency economic and concrete supports to families?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: q34 If Did your child welfare agency use the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act... = No

q33

Of the CARES Act funds your child welfare agency received, please estimate what percent was spent on providing emergency economic and concrete supports to families.

If you don't know an exact number, a quick estimate is fine.

- ☐ 0% (15)
- ☐ 1-10% (1)
- ☐ 11-20% (4)
- ☐ 21-30% (5)
- ☐ 31-40% (6)
- ☐ 41-50% (7)
- ☐ 51-60% (8)
- ☐ 61-70% (9)
- ☐ 71-80% (10)
- ☐ 81-90% (11)
- ☐ 91-100% (12)
- ☐ Don't know/Not sure (13)

q34 Did your child welfare agency use any of the following existing funding streams to distribute American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) resources for emergency economic and concrete supports to families...

☐

ARPA funds passed directly through the CAPTA Title I (General Program) (1)

☐

ARPA funds passed directly through CAPTA Title II (Community Based Child Abuse Prevention: CBCAP) (2)

☐

Other (Fill in the blank) (4) _____

☐

☒ Not Applicable (5)

q35 Did your child welfare agency receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds **from your state legislature** to provide emergency economic and concrete supports to families?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: q37 If Did your child welfare agency receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from your state legis... = No

q36 Did you use the ARPA funds from your state legislature to pay for the following emergency economic and concrete supports...

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Child care (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clothing (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stipends/direct money (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health care (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home repair/modification (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilities (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial literacy curriculum development and training (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If Did your child welfare agency receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from your state legis... = No

q37 Please indicate **why your child welfare agency did not receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds** from your state legislature.

☐

My child welfare agency did not request ARPA funds (22)

☐

My child welfare agency requested ARPA funds for did not receive them (23)

☐

My child welfare agency was not aware ARPA funds could be used for child welfare services (24)

☐

Other (fill in the blank) (25) _____

q38 How significant were the following barriers in the ability to use CARES and/or ARPA funds to provide economic and concrete supports...

	Not a significant barrier at all (1)	Somewhat significant barrier (2)	Moderately significant barrier (3)	Very significant barrier (4)	Not Applicable (5)
Federal fiscal approval processes (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State fiscal approval processes (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal and state joint approval processes (29)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eligibility restrictions (30)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time limit restrictions (31)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State procurement processes (32)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff resources (33)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology (34)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (fill in the blank) (35)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Emergency Federal Assistance

Start of Block: Perceptions of moving upstream

q39 Intro We're almost done! We just have a few more questions about your perceptions about preventing suspected abuse and/or neglect reports.

q39
Based on your experience as a child welfare leader, what needs to be done to expand access to **concrete and economic supports to prevent child welfare involvement?**

When we say "prevent child welfare involvement" we mean preventing alleged reports and/or investigations of abuse and neglect and/or placements of children and youth in foster care.

Please share one or two specific ideas.

q40 Do you have anything else you would like to tell us?

q41

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report produced from this survey, please provide your name and email address.

☐ Name (4) _____

☐ E-mail Address (5) _____

End of Block: Perceptions of moving upstream

Appendix C: Sample Characteristics: Our efforts to survey state-level child welfare leadership were clearly successful—our respondents’ roles were evenly split between agency head and executive leadership team member. The respondent who selected “Other” is a county-level agency director in a county-administered state (see: Figure C1). Our respondents are similarly evenly distributed in the number of years they have spent in their current position: the modal respondent has spent three years in their current position (see: Figure C2). Our respondents are overwhelmingly highly experienced child welfare leaders at the state level (see: Figure C3).

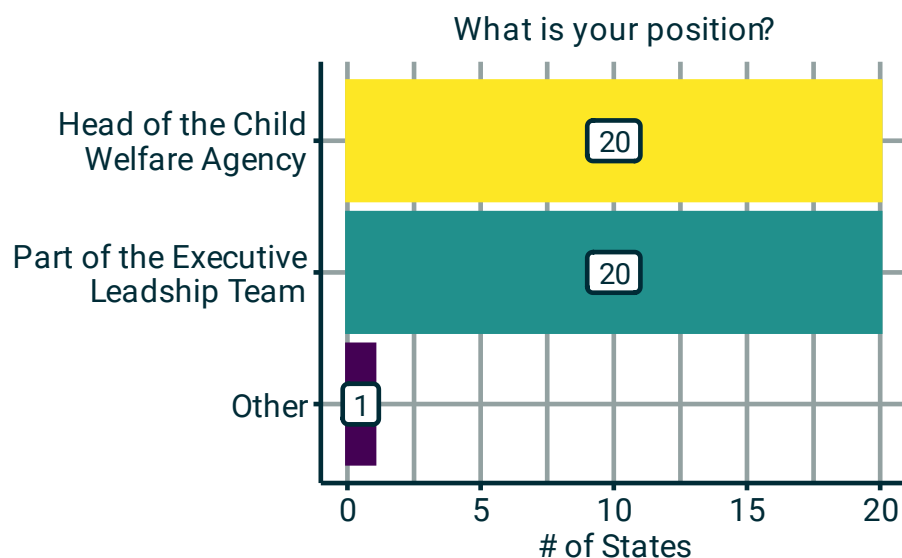


Figure C1: Distribution of respondents' positions within child welfare agencies.

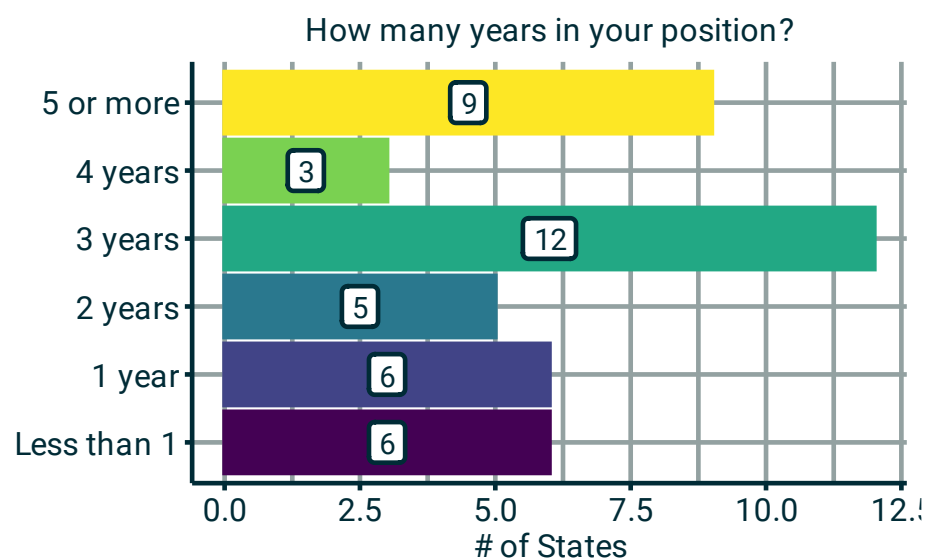


Figure C2: Respondents have spent a wide distribution of years in their current positions.

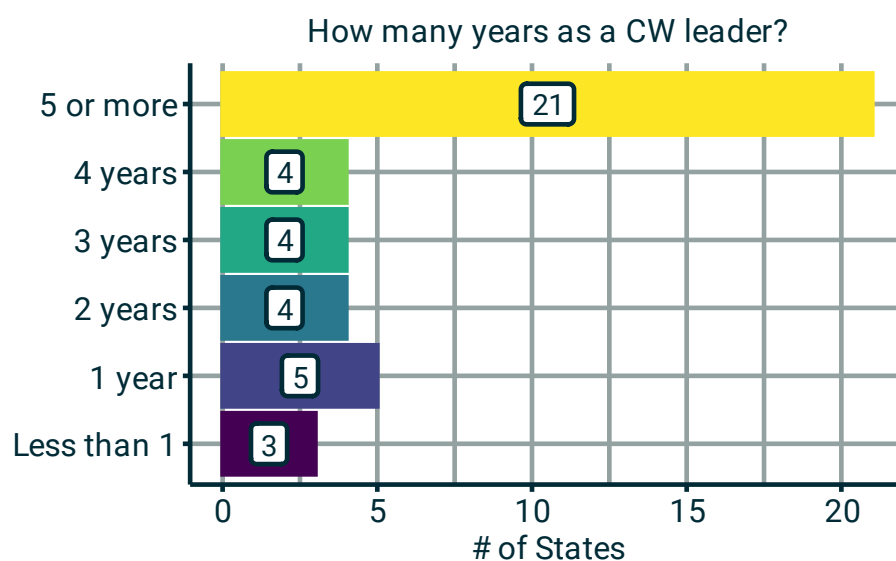


Figure C3: A plurality of respondents have spent five or more years as a child welfare leader on the state level.

Appendix D: Unit of Analysis

In several cases (22) multiple respondents from a state opened the survey and gave consent, at which point we recorded a response. When the respondent abandoned the survey after a handful of questions ($n = 4$), we exclude their response. In most other circumstances ($n = 13$), one respondent completed the survey and the rest of respondents failed to remotely approach completion. In these circumstances, we exclude the incomplete responses. In Arizona, two agency staff completed the survey. We retained the response from the Child Welfare Agency Head, reasoning that we should prioritize responses from the most senior staffer responding. In Oregon, a member of the Executive Leadership team reached the last question of the survey and the Agency Head completed. We retained the agency leader's response in this circumstance. In two circumstances, respondents completed much of the survey but not 80%. In these instances, a member of the survey team followed up with the original respondent and enumerated the unanswered questions over email. While existing research presents evidence of important mode effects (e.g. Groves, et al. 2009, ch. 5) in surveys, we deemed potential bias due to mode effects the preferable alternative to non-response from these states.

Appendix D: Reliability and validity. Researchers at Chapin Hall conducted several tests of reliability and validity to confirm that the survey measured what was intended. We conducted holistic tests for inattention, speeding, and item non-response. We also conducted difference-in-proportion tests to identify the presence of any statistically significant variation in completion rates by region, partisan control of state governments, or child welfare administrative framework. Each test along with supporting research is outlined below.

- *Response times*: A respondent's level of attention shapes both the quality of their answers and what those answers actually are (Zaller & Feldman, 1992). Response time is a simple way to measure respondents' levels of attention and thought (Petersen *et al.*, 2013).
 - No respondents appeared to speed through the survey (Figure D1). When a respondent spent an extremely short period of time active in a survey (less than five minutes), it was because they answered few questions.
- When respondents complete a survey, but do not answer individual questions, estimates of population values (i.e., the real-world construct the survey should extrapolate to) can be skewed (Groves *et al.*, 2009, ch.4). Thus, we calculate item-level response rates to identify areas of systematic nonresponse.
 - Item-level nonresponse increases throughout the survey. Questions that were asked of all respondents but commonly skipped were answered about 70% of the time. Questions that were very commonly skipped were either embedded in display logics or other/fill-in-the-blank questions (i.e., did not apply to the respondent). See: Figure D2.
- A final source of potential bias is response rates being conditioned by a factor that could be related to an individual's attitudes toward economic and concrete supports. One item of particular concern to the research team is partisanship (or partisan control of a respondent's state government). In recent years, Democrats have become modestly more likely to respond to surveys than Republicans (Clinton *et al.*, 2022). It seems plausible that this pattern could apply to leaders of agencies accountable to partisan governments. If this pattern held in our survey, it could systematically bias our findings. A standard method for identifying potential bias of that sort is to examine response rates across partisanship (Keeter *et al.*, 2017). We also examine response rates across regions as regions vary in their allocations of economic and concrete supports (Puls *et al.*, 2021).

Examination of completion by state/district/territory presents some evidence of bias (see: Figure 7Figure 7). That bias is not strongly correlated with region (see: Figure D3). No region's response rate is significantly (i.e., $p < .05$) different from any of the others. There is some evidence of partisan bias in response rates: while the research team expressed collective concern about higher response rates in Democratic-controlled states than Republican states, Republican-controlled states were actually more likely to respond to the survey than Democratic-controlled states (see: Figure D4).⁶ However, no given level of party control had a significantly ($p < .05$) different response rate from any other level of party control. For example, while 100% of states where two chambers were controlled by Republicans and one was controlled by Democrats completed the survey, there are only 8 states fitting this description. Finally, numerous questions on the survey made reference to state-level child welfare policy. Such questions might not be relevant to county administered or hybrid child welfare systems. As such, we examine completion status across state child welfare administrative framework. The results are

⁶ Because our survey was administered largely before the inauguration of state elected officials elected in 2022, we base these analyses on state partisan control as it stood prior to the 2022 elections.

presented in Figure D5. While very slight differences exist, none of them approach statistical significance. Taken together, these tests present evidence of reliability and validity.

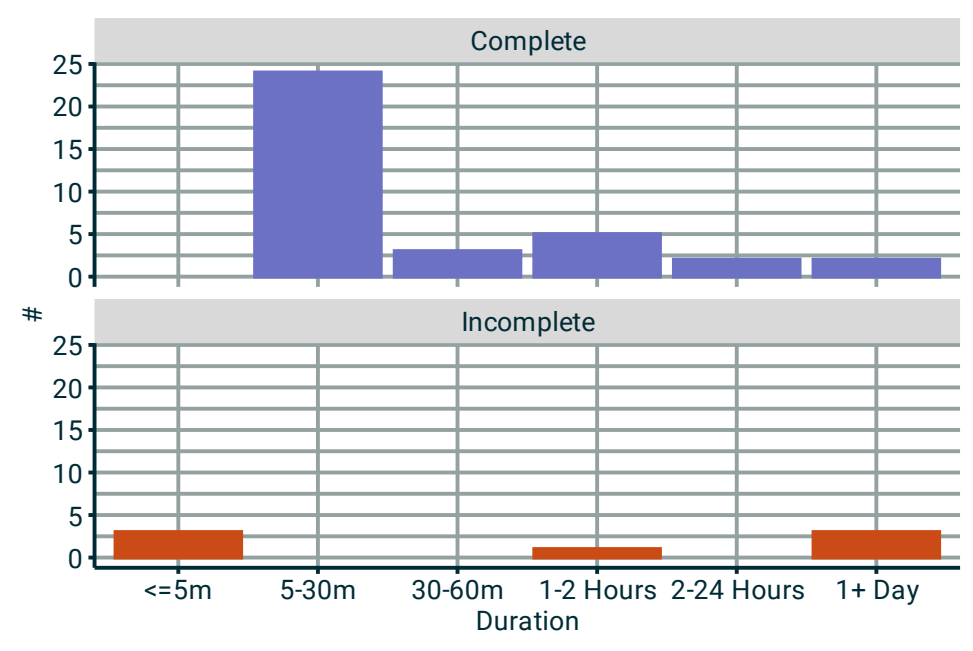
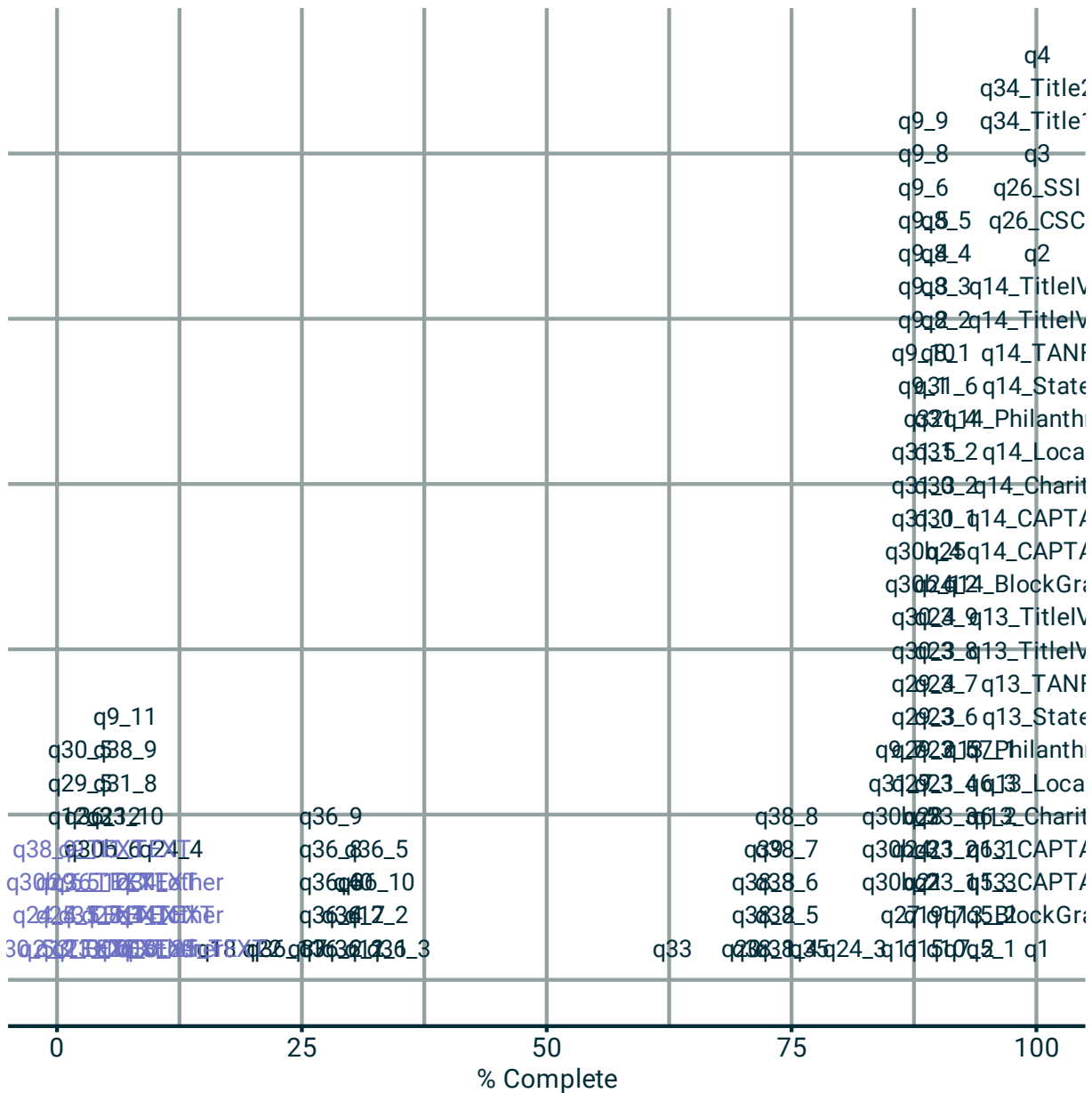


Figure D1: Distributions of response times, by completion status.



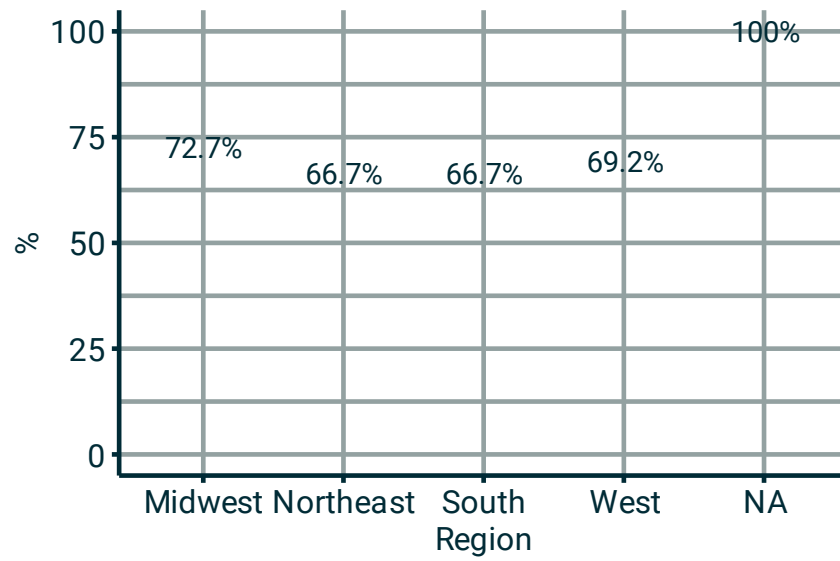


Figure D3: Completion rates by region. Puerto Rico is not classified into the four regions.

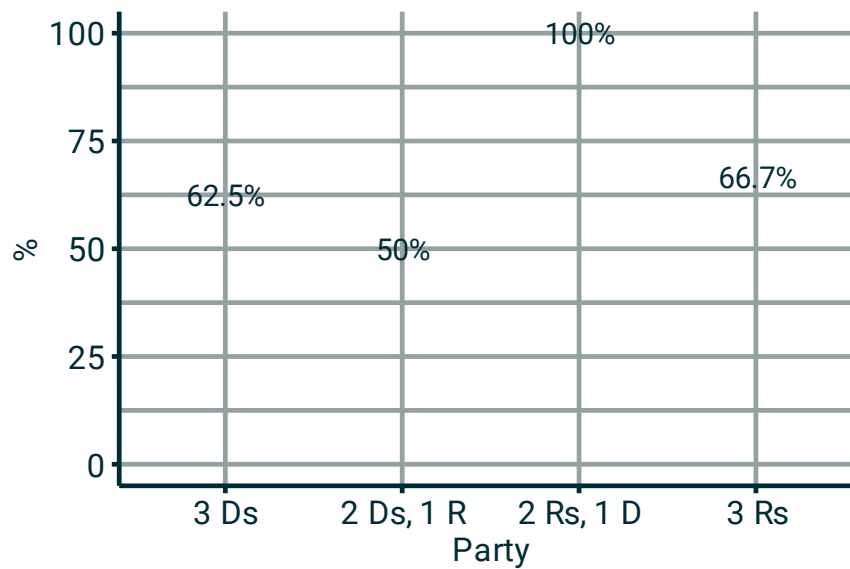


Figure D4: Completion rates by partisan control of state lawmaking chambers. Nebraska and Alaska coded as Republican trifectas. Coding is based on status prior to Inauguration Day 2023.

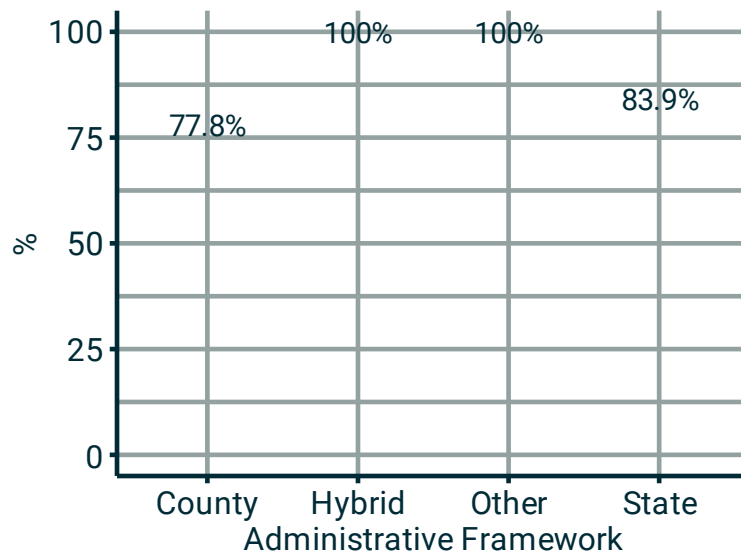


Figure D5: Completion rates by state child welfare administrative framework. District of Columbia and Puerto Rico do not fit well into trifurcation and are included as "Other."