From Intervention to Prevention: A National Survey of Child Welfare Leaders on Economic and Concrete Supports

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Today’s Panelists

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ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORTS

National Reports
Perspectives on the use of economic and concrete supports (ECS) to prevent child welfare involvement.

National Peer Learning
Community of state and local practitioners exploring strategies to align upstream approaches to address poverty for families at risk of child welfare involvement.

National Policy Influence
Breaking the link: disrupting the connection between poverty and child welfare
The Role of Economic and Concrete Supports in Child Maltreatment Prevention: A National Survey of Child Welfare Leaders
November 2023
Survey Overview
Some examples include:

- Cash assistance
- Emergency funds
- Direct cash transfers
- Earned Income Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- TANF benefits
- Employment
- Income

- Flexible funds
- In-kind benefits
- Child care
- Housing supports
- SNAP
- WIC
- Medicaid
- Unemployment benefits

- Legal support
- Rental assistance
- Utility assistance
- Furniture & equipment
- Transportation
- Food
- Clothing
What are child welfare administrators’ beliefs about economic need and child welfare system involvement?
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer economic and concrete supports to families?
How do state child welfare agencies *coordinate* with other human service systems to offer economic and concrete supports to families?
Research Question 4

What are the barriers to offering economic and concrete supports to families? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund economic and concrete supports?
Completion Status by State

Survey fielded October 2022 to January 2023

Completion by state/district/territory. Washington, DC completed the survey.
Key Survey Findings
Respondents were more likely to agree that the **CW agency should screen and refer families to ECS** during a CPS investigation.

**What are child welfare administrators’ beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?**

- **Screen families for economic need**
  - Strongly agree: 24
  - Agree: 15
  - Disagree: 0
  - Strongly disagree: 2

- **Refer families to ECS**
  - Strongly agree: 30
  - Agree: 11
  - Disagree: 0
  - Strongly disagree: 0

- **Help families receive ECS**
  - Strongly agree: 18
  - Agree: 19
  - Disagree: 4
  - Strongly disagree: 0
• Respondents were more likely to agree than the **public benefit system should help families receive ECS** during a CPS investigation.

What are child welfare administrators’ beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?
Respondents agree that economic need is frequently a contributing reason of suspected maltreatment.

What are child welfare administrators’ beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?
What are child welfare administrators’ beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?

- Public benefit system and CW agency should help families access ECS.
- Prefer public benefit system help families access ECS.
Childcare, money, and housing needs are frequently present in suspected maltreatment reports.
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

Most respondents report that families’ economic needs are not assessed during the *hotline screening process*.

Most respondents report that families' economic needs are assessed during a *CPS investigation*.
State funds are the most common followed by Title IV-B, Title IV-E & transferred TANF funds.
Many programs are administered by a different division external to child welfare.
Respondents report varying coordination barriers to providing ECS.

Staffing resources was the most problematic coordination barrier.
Levels and restrictions of federal child welfare funds were identified as more significant barriers than state funds.

What are the barriers to offering ECS?
What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?
Respondents identified **public benefit eligibility restrictions** as the most significant policy barrier.

- Other policy barriers were less significant.

What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?
Nearly all respondents report that **direct funding to expand access to ECS for child welfare involved families** would be very helpful.
31 Child Welfare Leaders Responded

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

Final optional open-ended survey question
Child Welfare Leaders’ Direct Recommendations

4 Themes

- Upstream shared responsibility
- Direct and flexible funding
- Policy changes
- Awareness and access
Final Recommendations Based on Survey Findings

Establish joint human services leadership commitment to shared responsibility for upstream prevention of child maltreatment & child welfare involvement.
Final Recommendations Based on Survey Findings

Increase direct & flexible federal funding to meet family economic and concrete support needs.
Revise policies & practices that contribute to unnecessary child welfare system involvement.
Final Recommendations
Based on Survey Findings

Promote increased understanding of the relationship between access to economic and concrete supports & reduced child welfare involvement and enhanced family stability and well-being.
Engage in national learning communities & innovative demonstration projects focused on effective ways to redesign human service systems.
Using Economic and Concrete Supports to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement Policy Brief Series

Part 1: Child Welfare Leaders’ Perspectives on Cross System Prevention

Economic and concrete supports are critical to ensuring the well-being and stability of families. These supports include a range of financial and tangible resources that reduce economic hardship and increase opportunity for economic mobility for families in need. Examples include food, clothing, housing, medical services, transportation, child care, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), and cash assistance. Research demonstrates that increasing access to these supports is associated with reduced risk for child maltreatment and child welfare involvement (Anderson et al., 2023: ECS Policy Tool).
Thank You!