



Economic and Concrete Support as an Evidence-Based Service

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Summary of Chapin Hall's Submission to the
Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse

CHAPIN HALL POLICY BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

In late 2023, the [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) invited submissions for programs or services to be considered for inclusion on the Clearinghouse and eligible for federal funding through the Family First Prevention Services Act. This brief outlines Chapin Hall's submission of **Economic and Concrete Support as an evidence-based service**, providing background, rationale, and supporting evidence.

The Family First *Prevention* Services Act (Family First) is an important policy designed to resource programs or services that prevent child abuse and neglect and reduce the use of child welfare interventions that increase the likelihood of foster care. Family First is generating prevention momentum and innovation across the country. Child welfare leaders are joining with cross-sector partners to establish shared responsibility and accountability for preventing the involvement of child protective services (CPS) and use of foster care, and to strengthen community pathways for the delivery of Family First evidence-based programs or services to meet the needs of families. Emerging from these efforts—and from scientific evidence showing that meeting the basic needs of families with economic and concrete supports reduces risk for maltreatment and the use of CPS and foster care—is clarity that **macro-economic policies (e.g., child tax credit, universal child care) and a public cross-sector shared responsibility and accountability policy framework, alongside Family First programs or services, are needed to guide collective resourcing of and service provision with families.**

Economic and concrete support is an evidence-based service that reduces child maltreatment and child welfare involvement including entry into foster care and evaluation findings are aligned with Family First's priority areas of mental health prevention and treatment, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and in-home parent skill-based programs and services. **Chapin Hall's submission recommended the Clearinghouse review economic and concrete support as an evidence-based, independently implementable, and portable service for prevention.**

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORT

Economic and concrete support reduces risk for CPS reports and investigations, both abuse and neglect, and foster care entry, and improves child and adult well-being (Grewal-Kök et al., 2023). The Overall Weight of Evidence described in the Chapin Hall submission suggests that economic and concrete support, regardless of delivery mechanism, is a service that exerts a preventive effect consistent with the intent of Family First. It is also consistent with the requirements of the Clearinghouse, which is directed by the Family First legislation to "evaluate research and include information on the specific outcomes associated with each practice, including whether the practice has been **shown to prevent child abuse and neglect and reduce the likelihood of foster care placement by supporting birth families and kinship families**" and to rate as "promising" any program or service with at least one study that shows it is "superior to an appropriate comparison practice" (PUBL123.PS).

Based in part on this body of evidence, child welfare leaders across the country indicate that economic and concrete support is important in a comprehensive prevention strategy as described in a recent Chapin Hall national landscape survey ([Heaton et al., 2023](#)).

Additionally, multiple jurisdictions have identified resourcing families through economic and concrete support as a strategy for preventing child abuse and neglect and reducing the likelihood of foster care entry, and have specifically emphasized the need for such support as an evidence-based service in their approved Family First Prevention Plans or in their use of flexible funds (e.g., [Indiana's Family First Prevention Plan](#); [Wisconsin's Family First Prevention Plan](#); [New York's Family First Prevention Plan](#); [Kentucky's Family First Prevention Plan](#)).

Families also are calling for the provision of economic and concrete support to redress the effects of poverty, reduce risk for involvement in child welfare, and respond to service needs. The recent Children's Trust Fund Alliance Birth Parent Network and Casey Family Programs Parent Advisory Committee together created a framework for *Building a 21st Century Community-based Approach to Strengthening Families* that clarifies, *from the perspective of parents with lived expertise*, the need at both the macro-policy and family service levels for economic and concrete support ([Birth Parent National Network](#), 2020).

THE OVERALL WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE ON ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORT

The Family First legislation instructs the Clearinghouse to consider “**the overall weight of the evidence**” when reviewing practices that have multiple outcome studies (PUBL123.PS). The evidence is clear – *reduced access* to economic and concrete support is associated with *increased risk* of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement, while *increased access* to economic and concrete support is associated with *decreased risk* of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement ([Anderson et al., 2023](#); Grewal-Kök et al., 2023).

The evidence is **consistent across time**, from Pelton's 1978 article that presented clear and strong evidence of the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect, to a recently published study by Pac et al. (2023) showing how proposed anti-poverty programs could significantly reduce maltreatment investigations, and a new study by Kim and Drake (2023) which found the county-level relationship between child poverty rates and child maltreatment reporting rates had intensified almost linearly from 2009 to 2018.

The evidence is **consistent across types of studies**, from natural experiments to quasi-experiments and randomized controlled trials (RCTs). The evidence is also **consistent across a variety of delivery mechanisms**, be it through cash, housing, child care, healthcare, food assistance, or other sources, economic and concrete support is critical in strengthening and stabilizing families, preventing child welfare involvement, and reducing the likelihood of foster care entry.

ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORT AS AN INDEPENDENT AND PORTABLE EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICE

Economic and concrete support is an independent evidence-based service that can be delivered directly to families through a variety of means. This includes:

- Economic support in the form of cash transfers, income support, vouchers or gift cards, all centered on the provision of unconditional cash or cash equivalent as the evidence-based service.
- Concrete support in the form of goods, services, or flexible funds to meet a specific need.
- Referrals or navigation to another organization or service that is able to meet the family's economic and concrete needs.

The economic and concrete support service can be implemented by a community-based organization or a state or local public agency and/or agency partners, with intentional flexibility in how organizations determine the transfer type, amount, frequency, and disbursement mechanism and in how families use the funded service ([Public Consulting Group's Economic & Concrete Supports Service Manual](#), 2023).

As an evidence-based service, economic and concrete support is clearly defined and replicable, and is administered via publicly available standard operating procedures for service delivery, monitoring for fidelity, and continuous quality improvement using a strengths-based approach to help stabilize and strengthen families ([Public Consulting Group's Economic & Concrete Supports Service Manual](#), 2023).

As an independent evidence-based service, economic and concrete support is also **portable**. A **systematic review conducted by Chapin Hall** illustrates the portability of economic and concrete support as an evidence-based prevention service (see Appendix). The systematic review aimed to compile and synthesize the evidence of the impact of economic and concrete support on child maltreatment, child welfare involvement, and child and parent well-being, regardless of program in which the economic and concrete support might be embedded or disbursed.

Given the flexibility and portability in delivery mechanism, economic and concrete support can be delivered independently or inserted into an existing program or practice without requiring additional evaluation and review by the Clearinghouse, similar to Motivational Interviewing.

Economic and concrete support services are also included within multiple Clearinghouse approved programs:

Program	Rating on Clearinghouse	Service Type per Clearinghouse	Economic & Concrete Support Service
<i>Child First</i>	Supported	In-home parenting & mental health	SNAP, WIC and housing, etc. accessed through referral and care coordination
<i>Community Reinforcement Approach + Vouchers</i>	Promising	Substance use	Voucher with economic value as incentives to remain in treatment and abstinent
<i>Healthy Families America</i>	Well-supported	In-home parenting	Food, housing assistance and child care accessed through referral and service coordination
<i>Homebuilders</i>	Well-supported	In-home parenting	Flexible funds for concrete supports
<i>Intercept</i>	Well-supported	In-home parenting	Flexible funds for concrete supports
<i>Multisystemic Therapy</i>	Well-supported	Mental health & substance use	Flexible funds for concrete supports

STUDIES FOR REVIEW

In addition to considering the overall weight of the research evidence on economic and concrete support, Chapin Hall's submission recommended the Clearinghouse review the studies in the table below with experimental or quasi-experimental research design:

Economic and Concrete Support Service		Relevant Evaluation(s) & Notable Findings				Target Outcome	Program or Service Area
		Citation	Study Design	Finding(s) Consistent with Clearinghouse Defined Outcomes	Sustained Effect		
1.	Child Support Income: Mothers received full child support income paid on behalf of children passed-through & disregarded in calculating welfare benefits.	Cancian, M., Yang, M. Y., & Slack, K. S. (2013). The effect of additional child support income on the risk of child maltreatment. <i>Social Science Review</i> , 87(3):417-438	RCT	Lower odds of having a screened-in report for child maltreatment	24 months	Child Safety	In-home parenting
2.	Cash Assistance and Income: Mothers continued to receive cash assistance after placement post-welfare reform.	Wells, K., & Guo, S. (2006). Welfare reform and child welfare outcomes: A multiple-cohort study. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 28(8), 941-960.	QED	Faster reunification for children whose mothers did not lose cash assistance and whose mothers had higher total income after placement.	12 months	Child Permanency	In-home parenting
3.	Baby's First Years: \$333 each month (\$4,000/year) for the first 52 months of child's life to low-income mothers w/ newborns	Troller-Renfree, S.V. et al. (2022). The impact of a poverty reduction intervention on infant brain activity. <i>Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences</i> , 119(5), e2115649119.	RCT	Greater brain activity indicative of higher child cognitive functioning	12 months	Child Well-being	In-home parenting
4.		Magnuson et al. (2022). Can a poverty reduction intervention reduce family stress among families with infants? An Experimental Analysis. <i>Social Science Research Network</i> .	RCT	Increase in household income and reduced poverty; more frequent engagement in enriching child activities	12 months	Child Well-being; Adult Well-Being	In-home parenting
5.		Sperber et al. (2023). Unconditional cash transfers and maternal assessments of children's health, nutrition, and sleep: A randomized clinical trial. <i>JAMA Network Open</i> , 6(9), e2335237-e2335237.	RCT	Increased child consumption of fresh produce	24 months	Child Well-being	In-home parenting

Economic and Concrete Support Service		Relevant Evaluation(s) & Notable Findings				Target Outcome	Program or Service Area
		Citation	Study Design	Finding(s) Consistent with Clearinghouse Defined Outcomes	Sustained Effect		
6.	Stockton Guaranteed Income Program: \$500 monthly income supplements to randomly selected residents	West, S., Castro Baker, A., Samra, S., & Coltrera, E. (2021). <i>Preliminary analysis: SEED's first year</i> . Stockton Economic Empowerment Dem.	RCT	Improved economic stability, employment and mental health	12 months	Adult Well-being	In-home parenting, Mental health
7.	Casino Dividend Program: Annual income supplement (averaging \$4,000 - \$6,000) from casino profits to every adult member of the Tribe since 1996	Copeland, W. E., Tong, G., Gaydos, L., Hill, S. N., Godwin, J., Shanahan, L., & Costello, E. J. (2022). Long-term outcomes of childhood family income supplements on adult functioning. <i>JAMA Pediatrics</i> , 176(10), 1020-1026.	QED	Fewer anxiety symptoms & depressive symptoms; improved physical health; improved financial functioning; fewer risky or illegal behaviors	Multiple years	Child Well-being; Adult Well-being	In-home parenting, Mental health, Substance use prevention
8.		Akee, R.K., Copeland, W.E., Keeler, G., Angold, A., & Costello, E.J. (2010). Parents' incomes and children's outcomes: A quasi-experiment. <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i> , 2(1), 86-115.	QED	Improved child well-being and mental health; increased education attainment	Multiple years	Child Well-being	In-home parenting, Mental health, Substance use prevention
9.		Costello, E.J., Erkanli, A., Copeland, W., & Angold, A. (2010). Association of family income supplements in adolescence with development of psychiatric and substance use disorders in adulthood among an American Indian population. <i>JAMA</i> , 303(19), 1954-1960.	QED	Lower psychiatric disorders and substance use and/or dependence in adulthood for individuals whose families received supplement in adolescence	Multiple years	Adult Well-being	In-home parenting, Substance use prevention, Mental health
10.		Costello, E.J., Compton, S.N., Keeler, G., & Angold, A. (2003). Relationships between poverty and psychopathology: A natural experiment. <i>JAMA</i> , 290(15), 2023-2029.	QED	Reduced family poverty; lower behavioral symptoms	Multiple years	Child Well-being; Adult Well-being	In-home parenting, Mental health, Substance use prevention
11.	The Family Options Study: Referral to permanent housing subsidies	Gubits, D. et al. (2015). Family options study: Short-term impacts of housing and services interventions for homeless families. Prepared for HUD.	RCT	Reduction in foster care placements	20 months	Child Safety	In-home parenting

Economic and Concrete Support Service		Relevant Evaluation(s) & Notable Findings				Target Outcome	Program or Service Area
		Citation	Study Design	Finding(s) Consistent with Clearinghouse Defined Outcomes	Sustained Effect		
12.	Flexible funds up to \$600 for concrete needs	Rostad, W. L., Rogers, T. M., & Chaffin, M. J. (2017). The influence of concrete support on child welfare program engagement, progress, and recurrence. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 72, 26–33.	QED	Lower odds of re-report to child welfare; better client satisfaction with services; higher attainment of goals	12 months	Child Safety; Adult Well-Being	In-home parenting

PRIORITY RELEVANT TO ADVANCING EQUITY AND SUPPORTING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Evidence-based economic and concrete support is **consistent with the goals and intended purpose of President Biden’s Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities** (January 20, 2021).

Because Black, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native families are disproportionately more likely to face economic and material hardship due to longstanding systemic inequities and structural racism, addressing families’ economic and material needs through economic and concrete support services may be a powerful approach to reduce child welfare involvement for families of color and address persistent racial and ethnic disparities in the child welfare system.

An analysis by Pac et al. (2023) simulating the effects of increased income under anti-poverty packages (inclusive of income support programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit) proposed by the National Academy of Sciences consensus report, *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty* (2019), found the potential for an 11 to 20% annual reduction in CPS investigations (386,000 to 669,000 children). Implementation of the anti-poverty packages would substantially reduce racial disproportionality in CPS involvement, with an estimated 19 to 29% annual reduction in CPS investigations for Black children compared to a 7 to 13% reduction for white children.

APPENDIX

Economic & Concrete Support across Mechanisms: Evidence from a Systematic Review by Chapin Hall

ECS Delivery Mechanism	Study Citation	Study Design	Clearinghouse Target Outcomes with Favorable, Significant Findings		
			Child Safety	Child Well-Being	Parent Well-Being
Food Assistance	Chaparro, M. P., Anderson, C. E., Crespi, C. M., Wang, M. C., & Whaley, S. E. (2020). <i>The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity</i> , 17(1), 18. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-020-0921-3	Quasi - Experimental		+	
	Collins, A. M., Klerman, J. A., Briefel, R., Rowe, G., Gordon, A. R., Logan, C. W., Wolf, A., & Bell, S. H. (2018). A summer nutrition benefit pilot program and low-income children's food security. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 141(4), e20171657.	RCT		+	
	Moore, G. F., Murphy, S., Chaplin, K., Lyons, R. A., Atkinson, M., & Moore, L. (2014). Impacts of the Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative on socio-economic inequalities in breakfast consumption among 9-11-year-old schoolchildren in Wales. <i>Public Health Nutrition</i> , 17(6), 1280–1289.	RCT		+	
	Wang, J., Zhao, X. & Nam, J. (2021). The effects of welfare participation on parenting stress and parental engagement using an instrumental variables approach: Evidence from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 121(C).	RCT			+
Child Support	Cancian, M., Yang, M. Y., & Slack, K. S. (2013). The effect of additional child support income on the risk of child maltreatment. <i>Social Science Review</i> . 87(3):417-438	RCT	+		
Medicaid	Boudreaux, Michel & Golberstein, Ezra & McAlpine, Donna. (2015). The long-term impacts of Medicaid exposure in early childhood: Evidence from the program's origin. <i>Journal of Health Economics</i> , 45.	Quasi - Experimental			+
Income Supports or other Financial Support	Noble, K. G., Magnuson, K., Gennetian, L. A., Duncan, G. J., Yoshikawa, H., Fox, N. A., & Halpern-Meekin, S. (2021). Baby's First Years: Design of a randomized controlled trial of poverty reduction in the United States. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 148(4).	RCT		+	
	West, S., Baker, A. C., Samra, S., & Coltrera, E. (2021). <i>Preliminary analysis: SEED's first year</i> . Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration.	RCT			+
	Huang, J., Kim, Y., Sherraden, M., & Clancy, M. M. (2017). Unmarried mothers and children's social-emotional development: The role of Child Development Accounts. <i>Journal of Child & Family Studies</i> , 26(1), 234–247.	RCT		+	
	Huang, J., Kim, Y., & Sherraden, M. (2017). Material hardship and children's social-emotional development: Testing mitigating effects of Child Development Accounts in a randomized experiment. <i>Child Care, Health & Development</i> , 43(1), 89–96.				
Cash Transfers	Courtin, E., Muennig, P., Verma, N., Riccio, J. A., Lagarde, M., Vineis, P., Kawachi, I., & Avendano, M. (2018). Conditional cash transfers and health of low-income families in the US: Evaluating The Family Rewards Experiment. <i>Health Affairs</i> , 37(3), 438–446.	RCT			+
	Lopez-Arana, S., Avendano, M., Van Lenthe, F., & Burdorf, A. (2016). The impact of a conditional cash transfer programme on determinants of child health: Evidence from Colombia. <i>Public Health Nutrition</i> , 19(14), 2629-2642.	Quasi - Experimental		+	

ECS Delivery Mechanism	Study Citation	Study Design	Clearinghouse Target Outcomes with Favorable, Significant Findings		
			Child Safety	Child Well-Being	Parent Well-Being
	Morris, P. A., Aber, J. L., Wolf, S., & Berg, J. (2017). Impacts of family rewards on adolescents' mental health and problem behavior: Understanding the full range of effects of a conditional cash transfer program. <i>Prevention Science: The Official Journal of the Society for Prevention Research</i> , 18(3), 326–336.	RCT		+	
	Martins, Ana Paula & Monteiro, Carlos. (2016). Impact of the Bolsa Família program on food availability of low-income Brazilian families: A quasi-experimental study. <i>BMC Public Health</i> , 16.	Quasi - Experimental		+	
	Ozer, Emily & Fernald, Lia & Manley, James & Gertler, Paul. (2009). Effects of a conditional cash transfer program on children's behavior problems. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 123.	Quasi - Experimental		+	
	Paes-Sousa, R., Santos, L. M., & Miazaki, É. S. (2011). Effects of a conditional cash transfer programme on child nutrition in Brazil. <i>Bulletin of the World Health Organization</i> , 89(7), 496–503.	Quasi - Experimental		+	
	Ramos, D., da Silva, N. B., Ichihara, M. Y., Fiaccone, R. L., Almeida, D., Sena, S., Rebouças, P., Júnior, E. P. P., Paixão, E. S., Ali, S., Rodrigues, L. C., & Barreto, M. L. (2021). Conditional cash transfer program and child mortality: A cross-sectional analysis nested within the 100 Million Brazilian Cohort. <i>PLoS Medicine</i> , 18(9), e1003509.	Quasi - Experimental	+		
	Rasella, D., Aquino, R., Santos, C. A., Paes-Sousa, R., & Barreto, M. L. (2013). Effect of a conditional cash transfer programme on childhood mortality: a nationwide analysis of Brazilian municipalities. <i>Lancet</i> , 382(9886), 57–64.	Quasi - Experimental	+		
	Shei A. (2013). Brazil's conditional cash transfer program associated with declines in infant mortality rates. <i>Health Affairs</i> , 32(7), 1274–1281.	Quasi - Experimental	+		
Other Concrete Support	Loman, L.A., & Siegel, G.L. (2012). Effects of anti-poverty services under the differential response approach to child welfare. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 34(9), 1659-1666.	RCT	+		
	Rostad, W. L., Rogers, T. M., & Chaffin, M. J. (2017). The influence of concrete support on child welfare program engagement, progress, and recurrence. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 72, 26–33.	Quasi - Experimental	+		
	Wimer, C., Marti, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Waldfogel, J. (2021). Early impacts of Room to Grow: A multifaceted intervention supporting parents and children age zero to three. <i>Children & Youth Services Review</i> , 126, 106041.	RCT			+
Housing Assistance	Farrell, A.F., Britner, P.A., Kull, M.A., Struzinski, D.L., Somaroo-Rodriguez, S.K., Parr, K., Westberg, L., Cronin, B., & Humphrey, C. (2018). Final report: Connecticut's Intensive Supportive Housing for Families program. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.	RCT	+	+	+
	Fowler, Brown, Schoeny, & Chung. (2018). Homelessness in the child welfare system: A randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of housing subsidies on foster care placements and costs. <i>Child Abuse & Neglect</i> , 83, 52-61.	RCT	+		

ECS Delivery Mechanism	Study Citation	Study Design	Clearinghouse Target Outcomes with Favorable, Significant Findings		
			Child Safety	Child Well-Being	Parent Well-Being
	Gubits, D. et al. (2015). Family Options Study: Short-Term Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families. Prepared for Department of Housing and Urban Development.	RCT	+	+	+
	Osypuk, T. L., Joshi, S., Schmidt, N. M., Glymour, M. M., & Nelson, T. F. (2019). Effects of a federal housing voucher experiment on adolescent binge drinking: a secondary analysis of a randomized controlled trial. <i>Addiction</i> , 114(1), 48–58.	RCT		+	
	Pergamit, M., Cunningham, M., & Devlin, H. (2019). Does supportive housing keeping families together? Supportive housing for child welfare families. Urban Institute Research Report. <i>(updated findings at 54 months show similar impacts on child welfare outcomes)</i> .	RCT	+		
	Pollack, C.E., Blackford, A.L., Du, S., DeLuca, S., Thornton, R.L., & Herring, B. (2019). Association of receipt of a housing voucher with subsequent hospital utilization and spending. <i>JAMA</i> , 322(21), 2115-2124.	RCT		+	

References available here: https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Chapin-Hall_ECS-Reference-List_November-2023.pdf