



The Role of Economic and Concrete Supports in Child Maltreatment Prevention: Findings from a National Survey of Child Welfare Leaders

Chapin Hall: Leanne Heaton, Colin Cepuran,
Yasmin Grewal-Kök, Clare Anderson &
Jennifer Gaul-Stout

APHSA: Matt Lyons & Meg Dygert

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Study Overview



- ✓ Background & Partnership Information
- ✓ Policy Context – Why CES?
- ✓ Survey Overview
- ✓ Review of Key Findings
- ✓ Research Methods
- ✓ Questions and Open Discussion

Partnering for Impact

- ❖ In 2021, with generous support from the **Doris Duke Foundation** and **W.K Kellogg Foundation**, 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

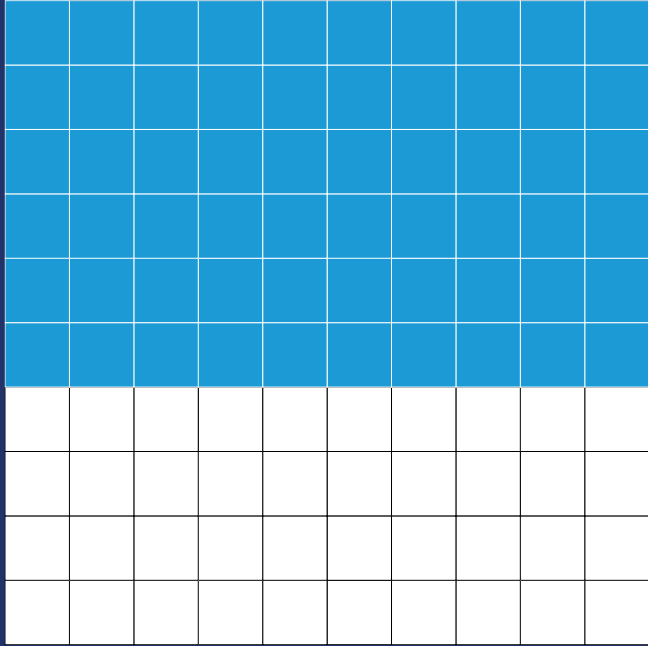
Economic & Concrete Supports as a Child Welfare Prevention Strategy

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Project expanded in 2022 to include a national study to fill knowledge gaps and gain a comprehensive overview of current policies, perspectives and practices related to the use of concrete supports of child welfare involved families





**Understanding The Why:
Economic & Concrete Supports as a
Child Welfare Prevention Strategy**



60%+

of substantiated CPS responses nationally involve **neglect only**

...and provision of economic & concrete supports is associated with decreased risk for ***both*** neglect and physical abuse

nearly **85%**

of families investigated by
child protective services
have incomes below 200%
of the federal poverty line

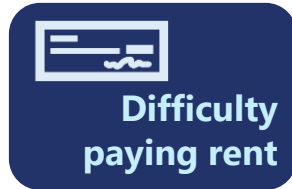
(\$49,720 for a family of 3 in 2023)

The Intersection of Family Economic Insecurity & Child Welfare Involvement

Most reliable **economic predictors** of child welfare involvement



Strongest predictors of investigated neglect reports



Overview of Economic & Concrete Supports

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



Survey Overview

Goals of this survey are to understand how **state child welfare agencies use economic & concrete supports** to address the economic and material needs of families:

- 1) when they are reported for **suspected maltreatment**, and
- 2) to **prevent child welfare involvement**.

Research Questions

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?

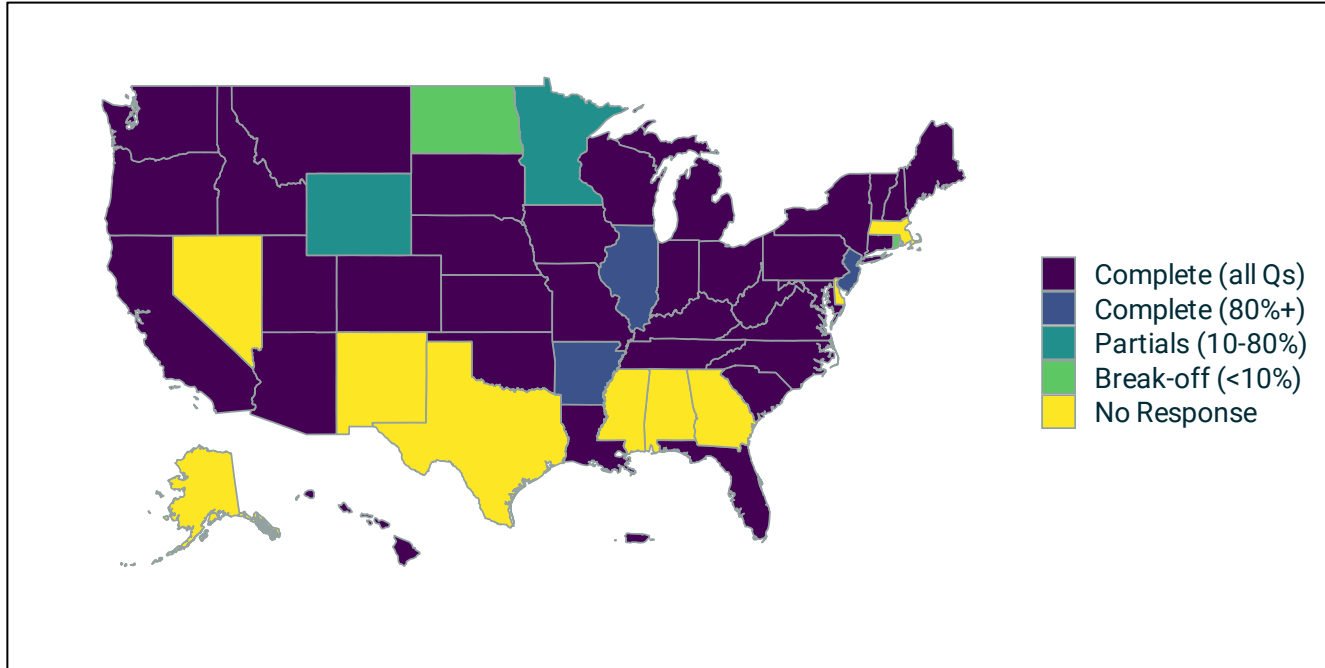
1. Survey development – about 8 months

1. Initial Items developed with human services policy subject matter experts (SMEs)
2. Cognitive testing with former child welfare leaders (state and county administered, full political spectrum) & SMEs
3. Pilot testing with same former child welfare leaders and broader number of SMEs

2. Survey disseminated with implementation plan to boost response rates

3. Survey fielded October 2022 to January 2023

Completion Status by State



Completion by state/district/territory.
Washington, DC completed the survey.



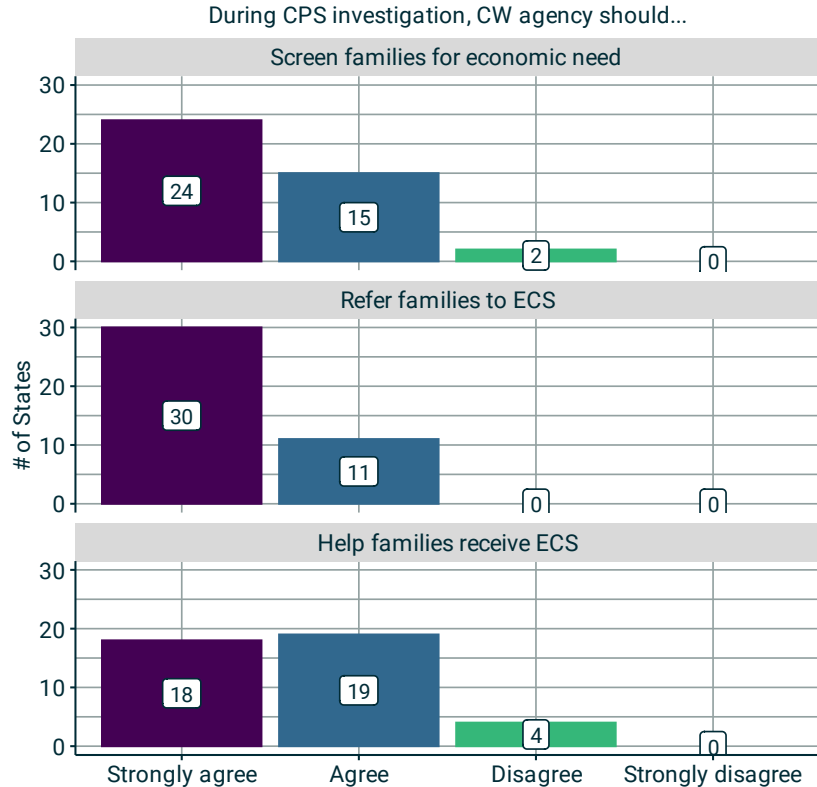
Survey Findings



What are CW administrators' beliefs about economic need and CW system involvement?

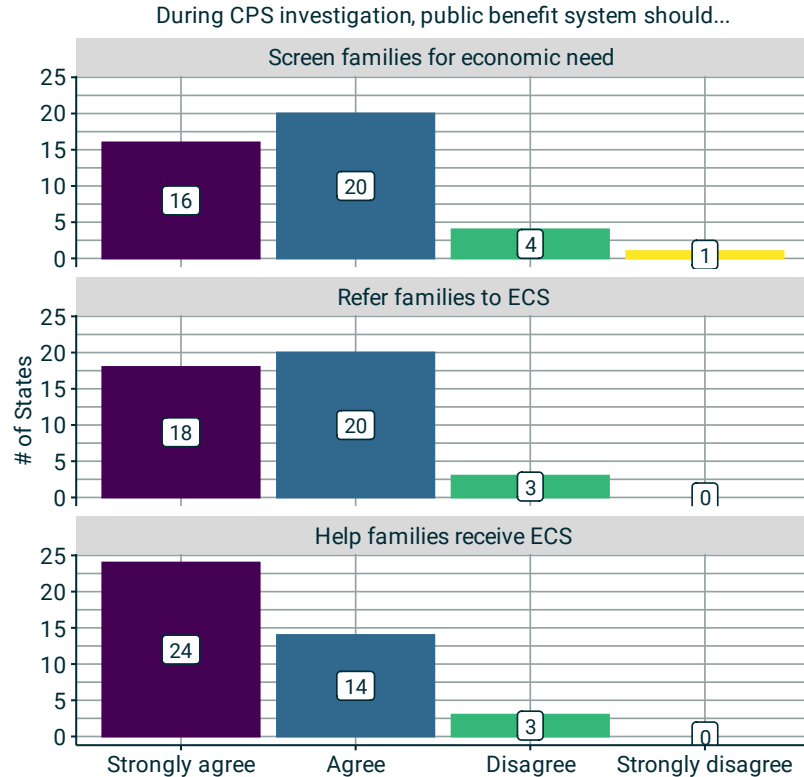
What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?

- Respondents were more likely to agree that the **CW agency should screen and refer families to ECS** during a CPS investigation.

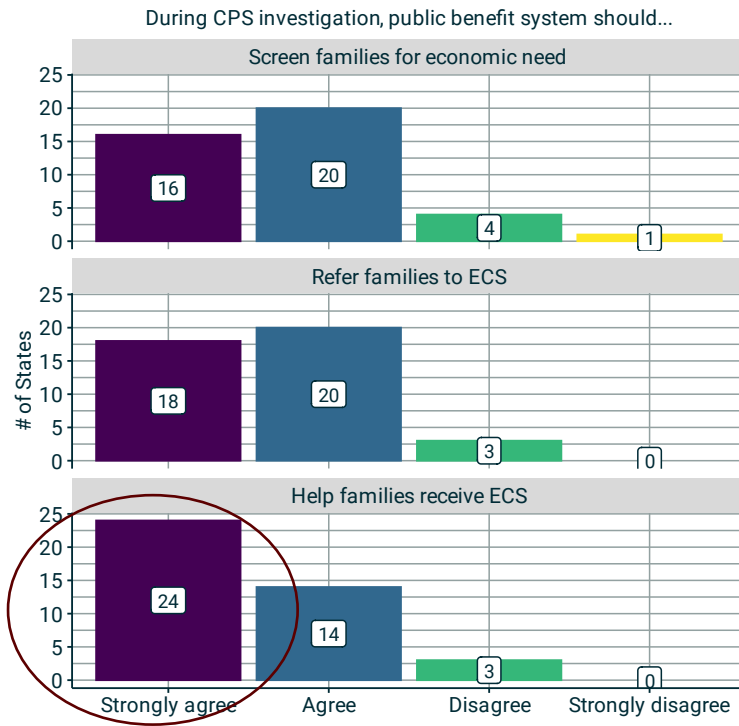
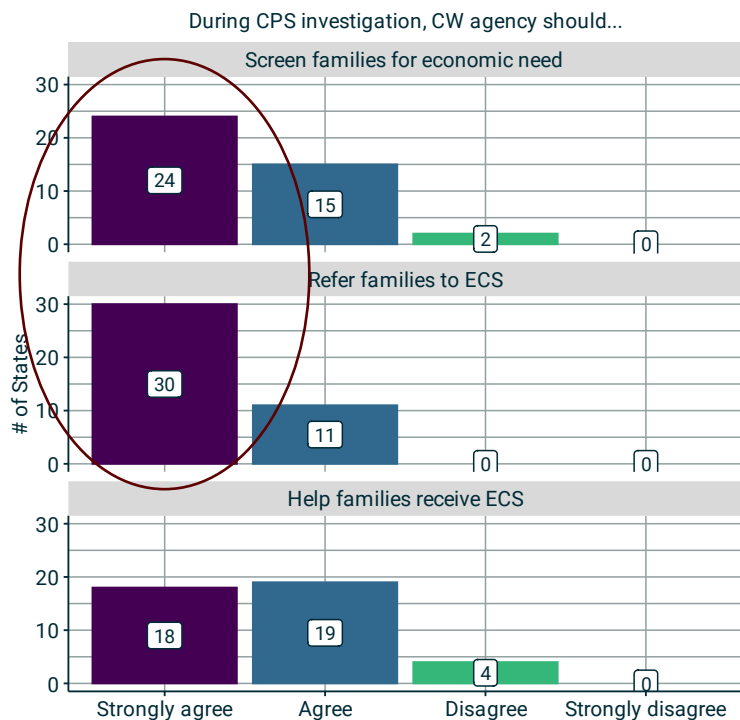


What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?

- Respondents were more likely to agree than the **public benefit system should help families receive ECS** during a CPS investigation.

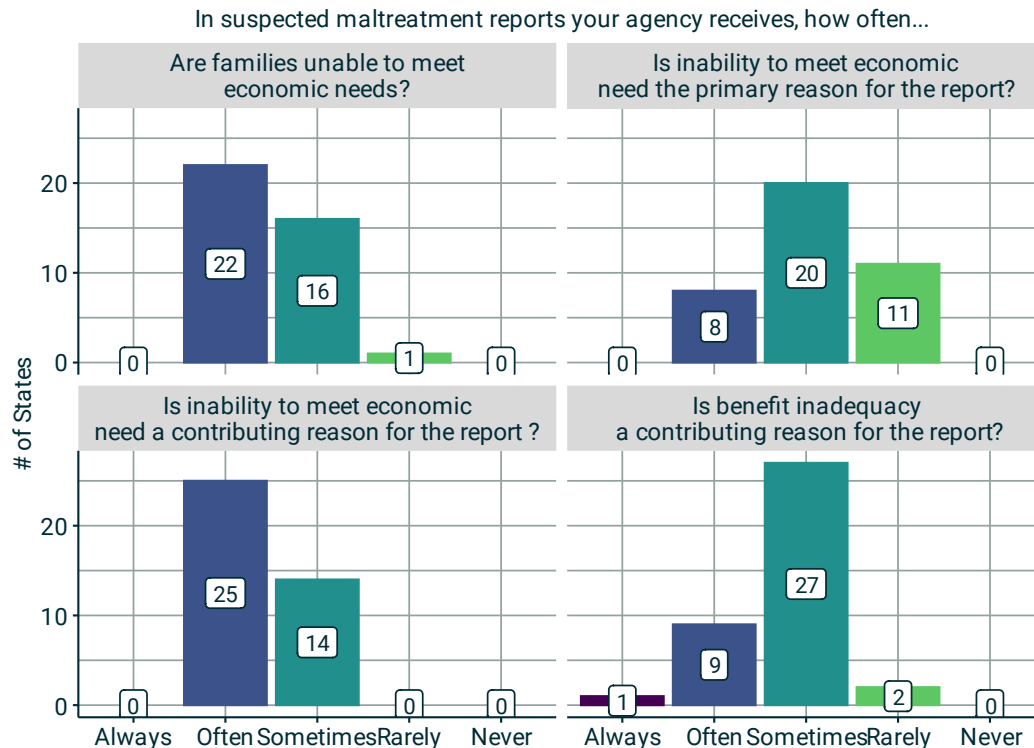


WHAT ARE CHILD WELFARE ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ECONOMIC NEED & CW SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT?



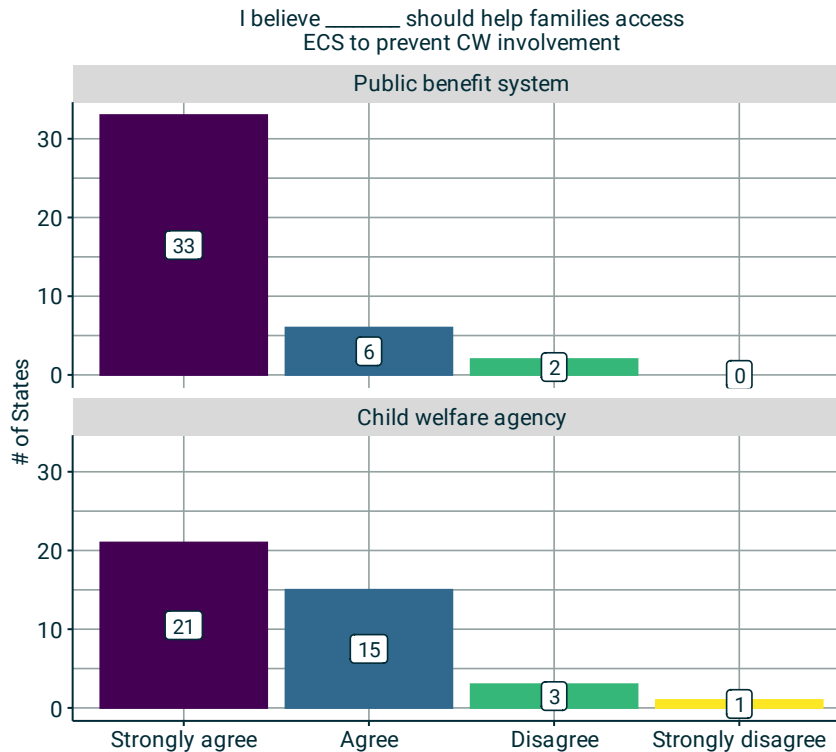
What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?

- Respondents agree that **economic need is frequently a contributing reason of suspected maltreatment.**



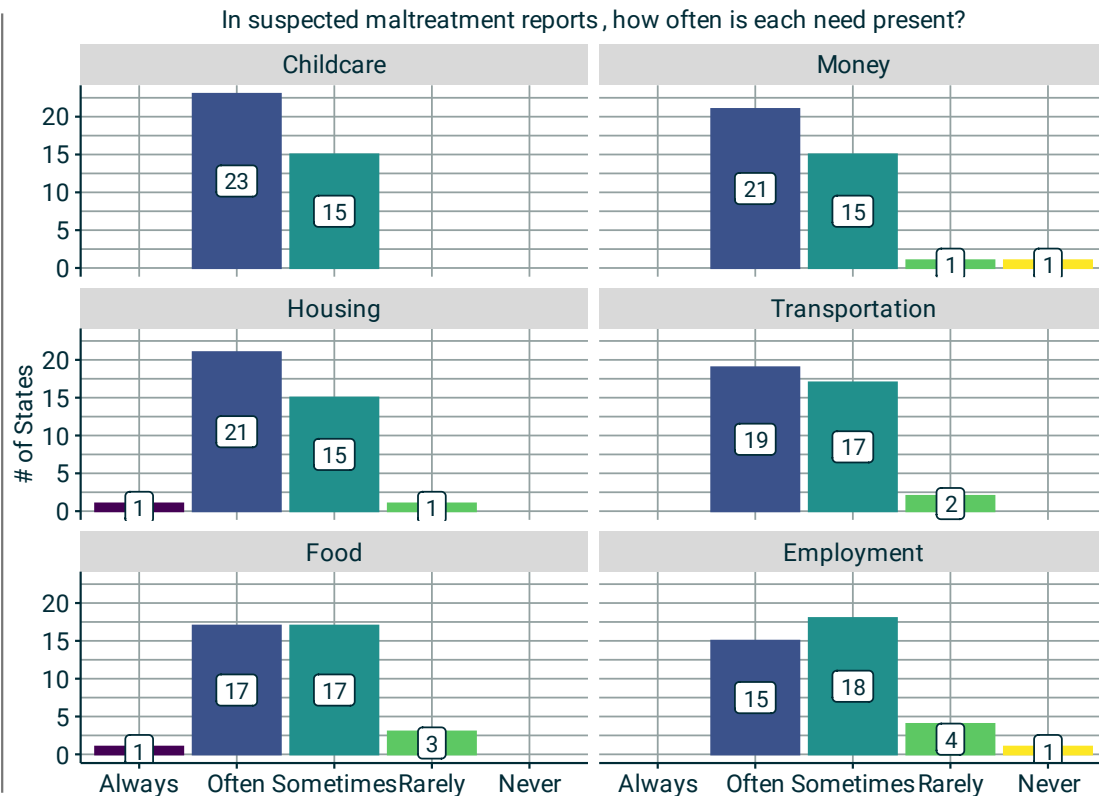
What are child welfare administrators' beliefs about economic need & CW system involvement?

- Nearly all respondents agree that the **public benefit system and CW agency** should help families access **ECS** to prevent child welfare involvement.
- Respondents are **more likely to prefer that the public benefit system help families access ECS** to prevent child welfare involvement.



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

- Respondents agree that **childcare, money, and housing needs are frequently present in suspected maltreatment reports**, followed by transportation, food, and employment.

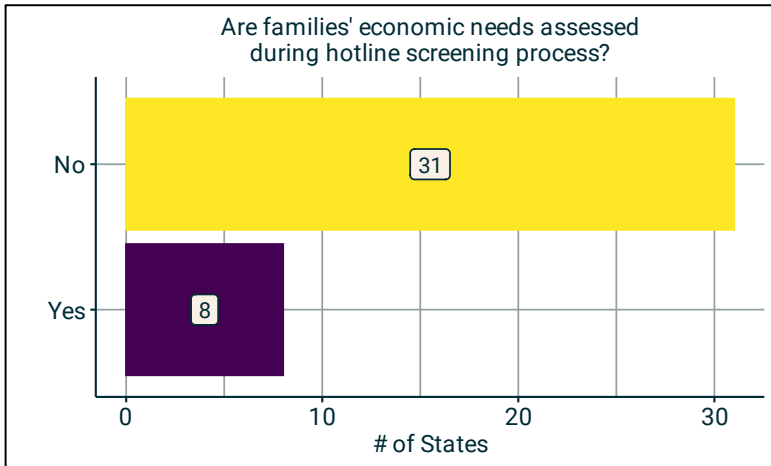




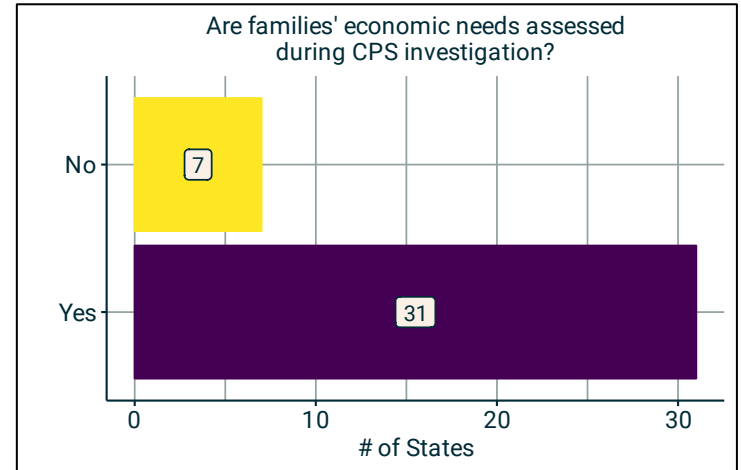
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

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*.

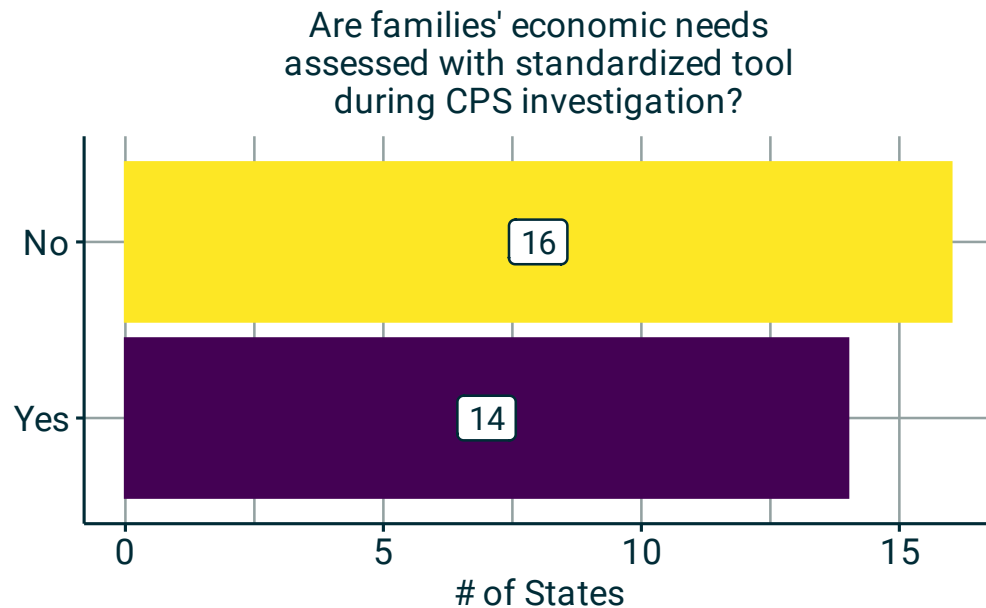


Most respondents report that families' economic needs are assessed during a *CPS investigation*



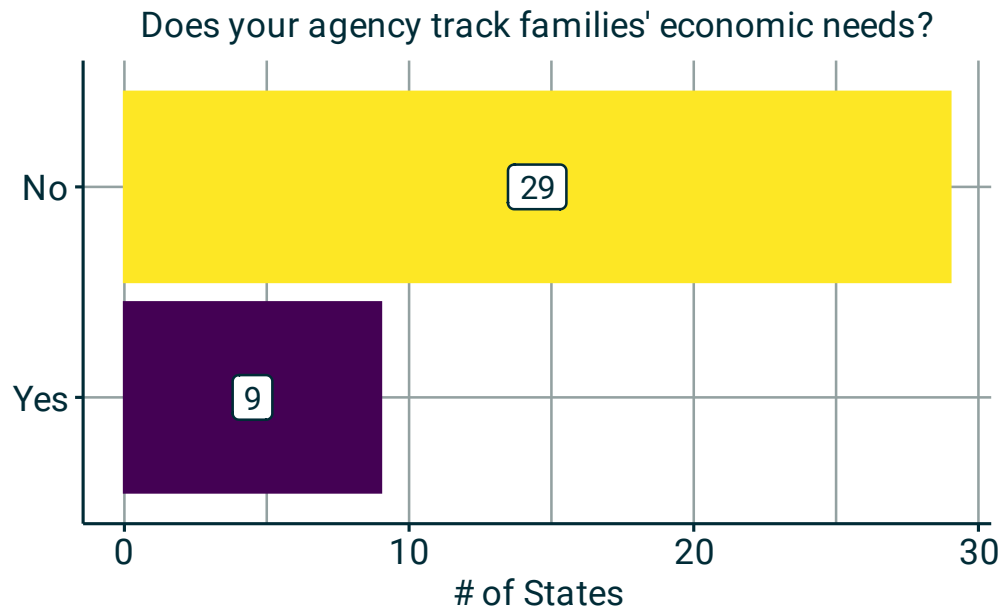
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

- Respondents were evenly split on their agency's use of a standardized tool to assess families' economic needs.



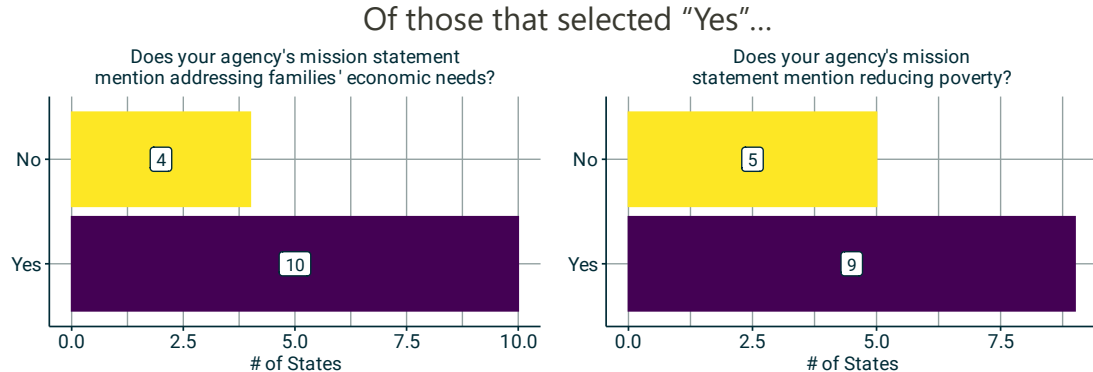
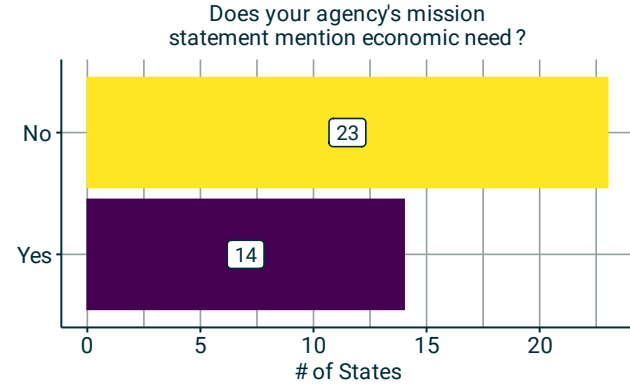
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

- Most agencies **do not track** families' **economic needs**.



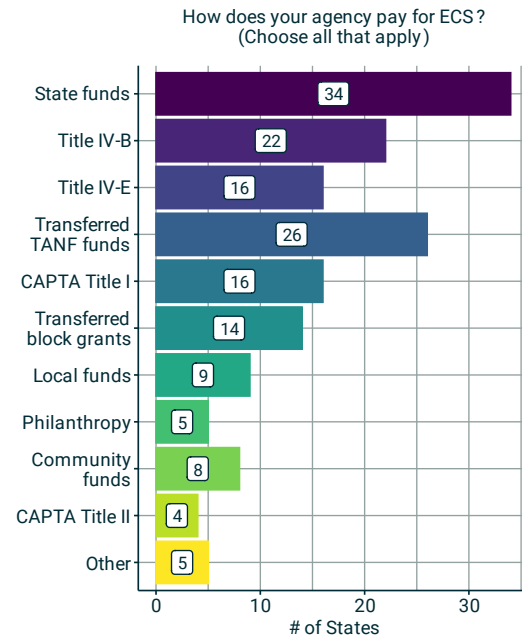
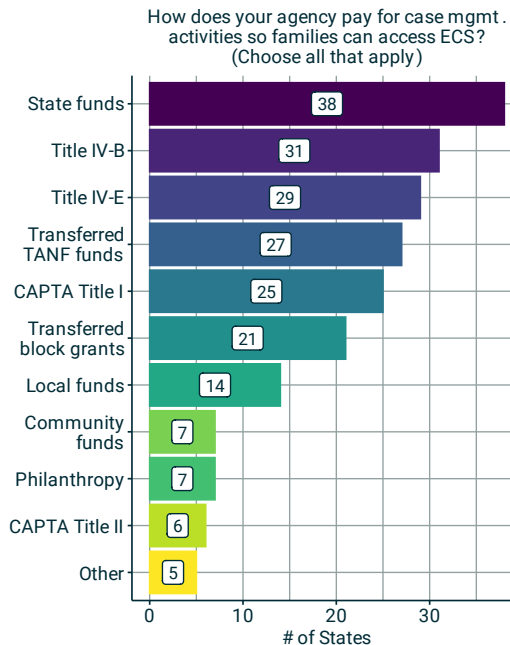
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

- A relatively small number of state child welfare agencies' mission statements mention economic need.
 - Of those that do, a clear majority
 - include language around addressing those needs.
 - include language around eliminating poverty.



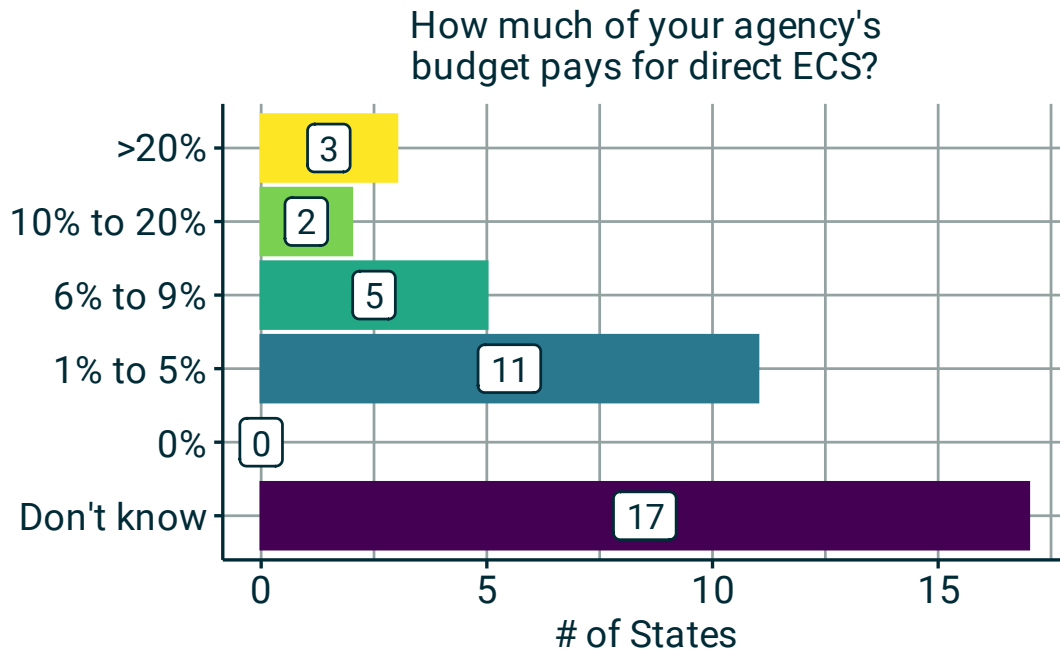
What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

- Agencies use a variety of funding streams to pay for case management activities and direct provision of ECS.
- **State funds are the most common** followed by **Title IV-B, Title IV-E, & transferred TANF funds.**



What approaches are state child welfare agencies using to offer ECS to families?

- Agencies vary in their funding of direct ECS.
- Most respondents were unsure of the budget amount used to pay for direct ECS.

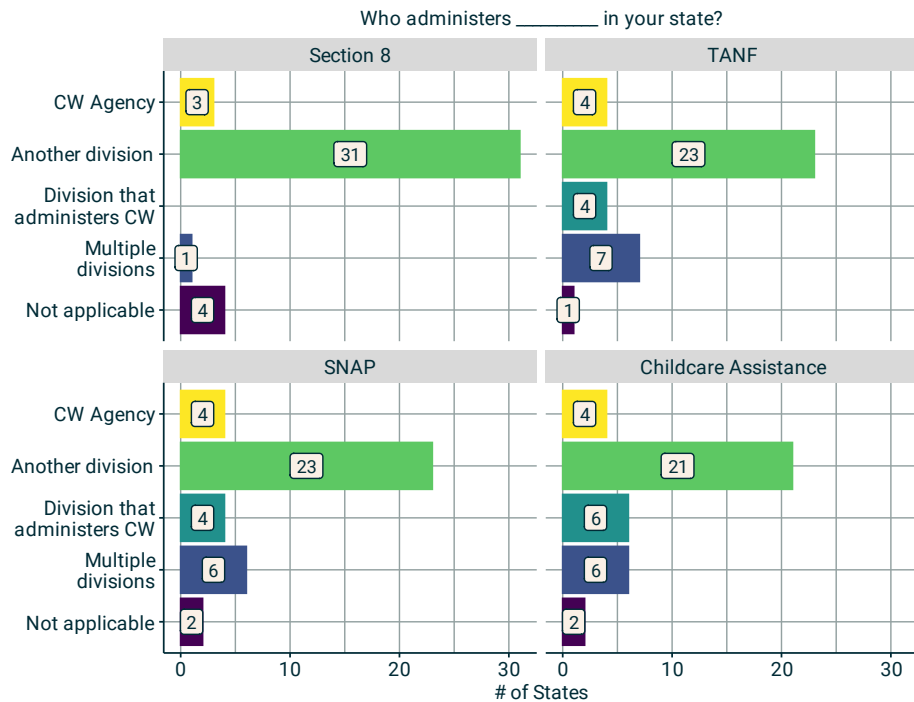




How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

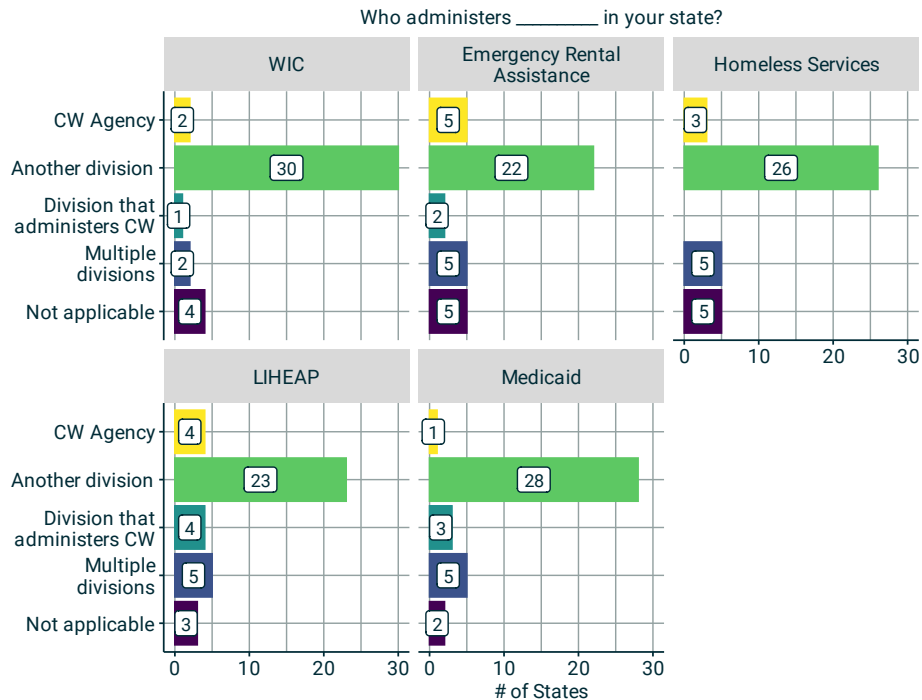
How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

- Coordination often occurs with other public departments or divisions external to child welfare.
- **Many programs are administered by a different division external to child welfare.**



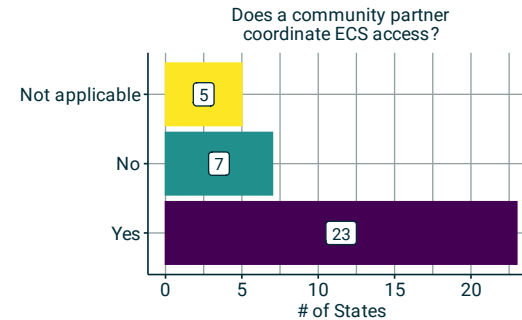
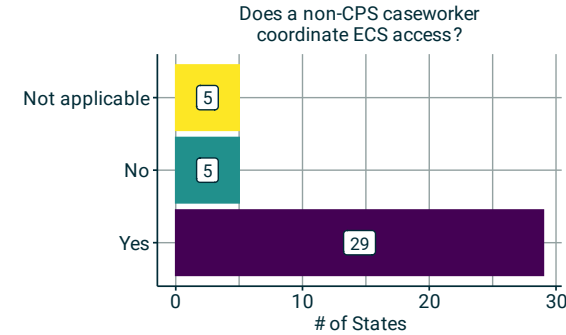
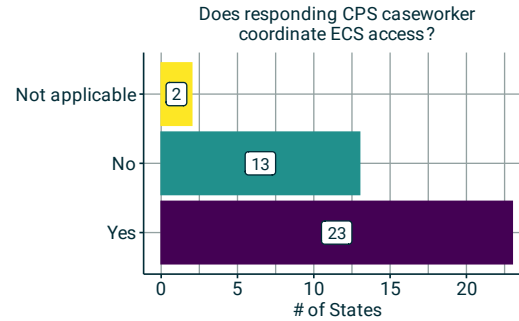
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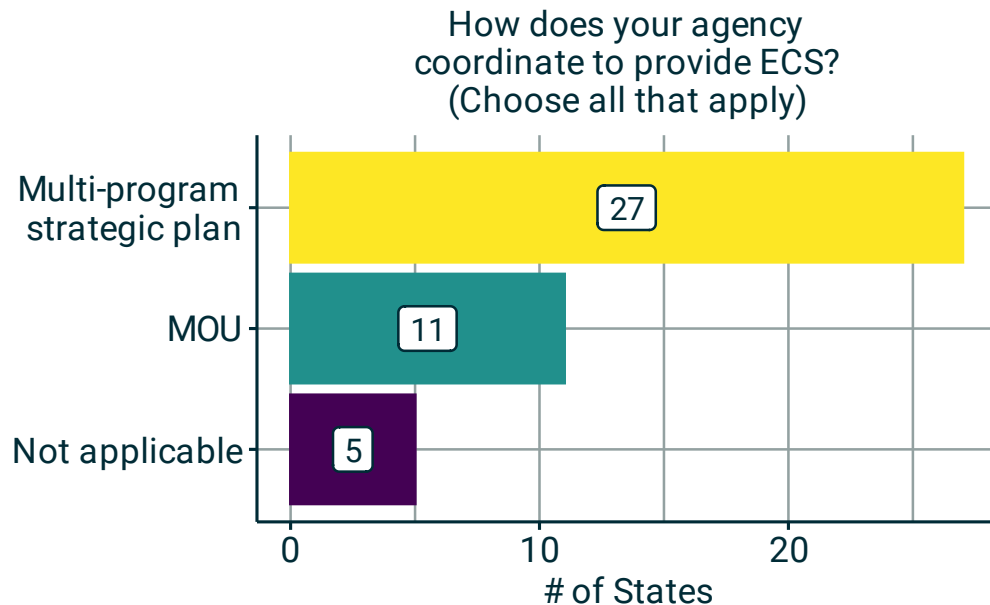
How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

- The majority of respondents report that responding CPS caseworkers, non-CPS caseworkers and community partners all coordinate ECS access for families.



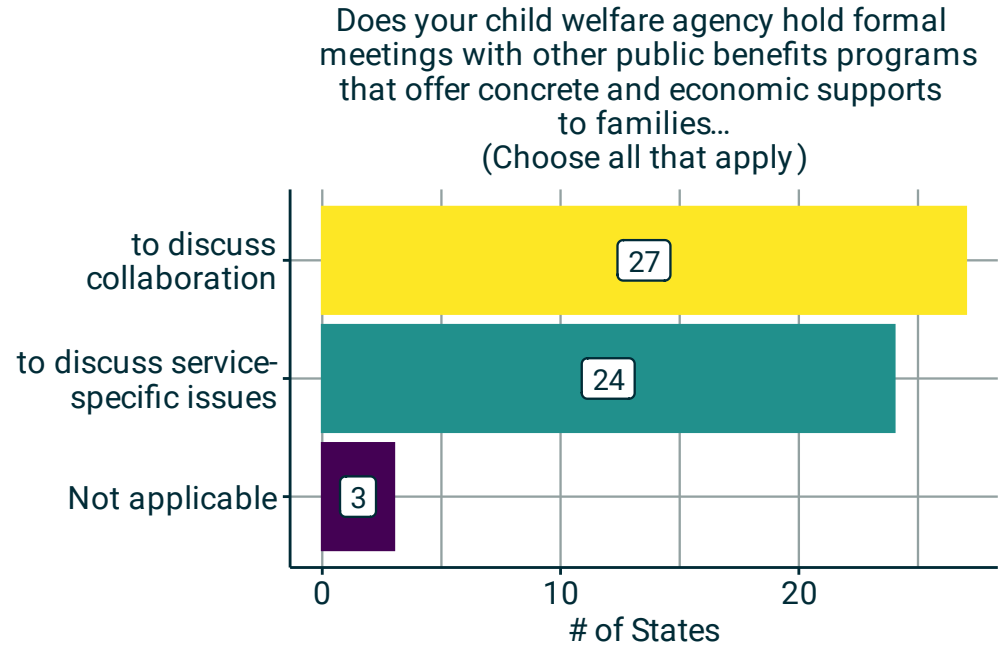
How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

- Agencies use a couple of strategies, most commonly a multi-program strategic plan to handle coordination for providing ECS.



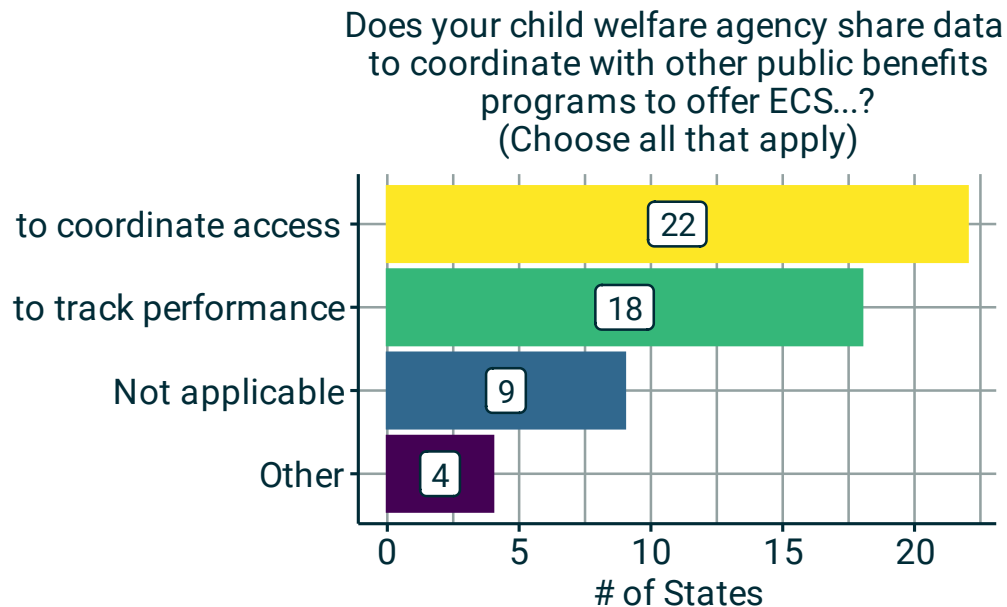
How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

- Agencies hold formal meetings with public benefit programs for collaboration and to address service-specific issues.



How do state child welfare agencies coordinate with other human service systems to offer ECS?

- More agencies share data with public benefit programs to coordinate access than to track performance.

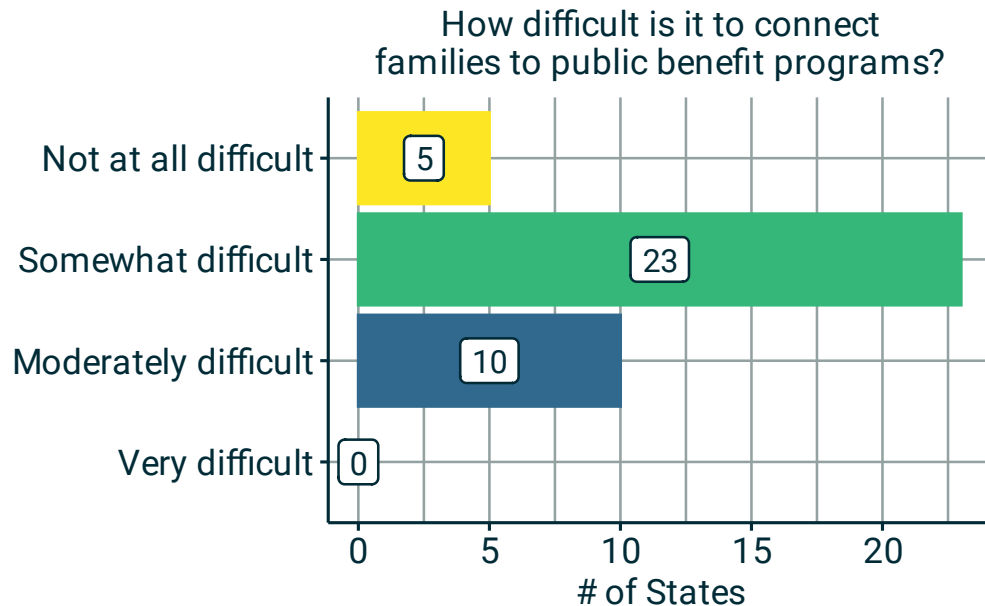




**What are the barriers to offering ECS?
What solutions do practitioners believe
might address barriers?**

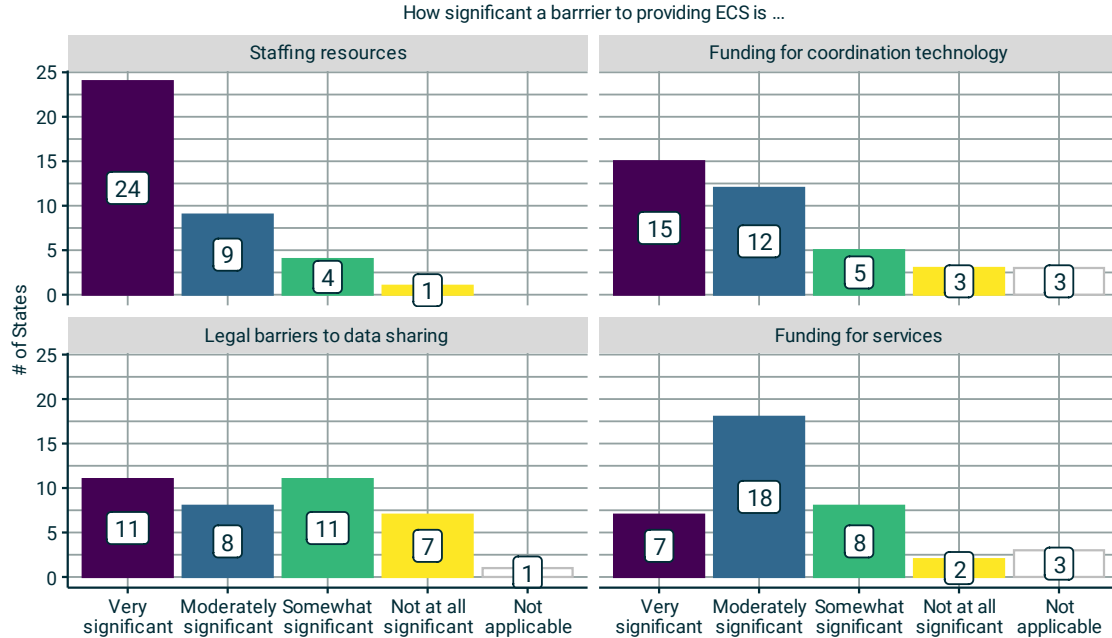
What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

- Respondents report their agencies have some difficulty connecting families to public benefit programs.



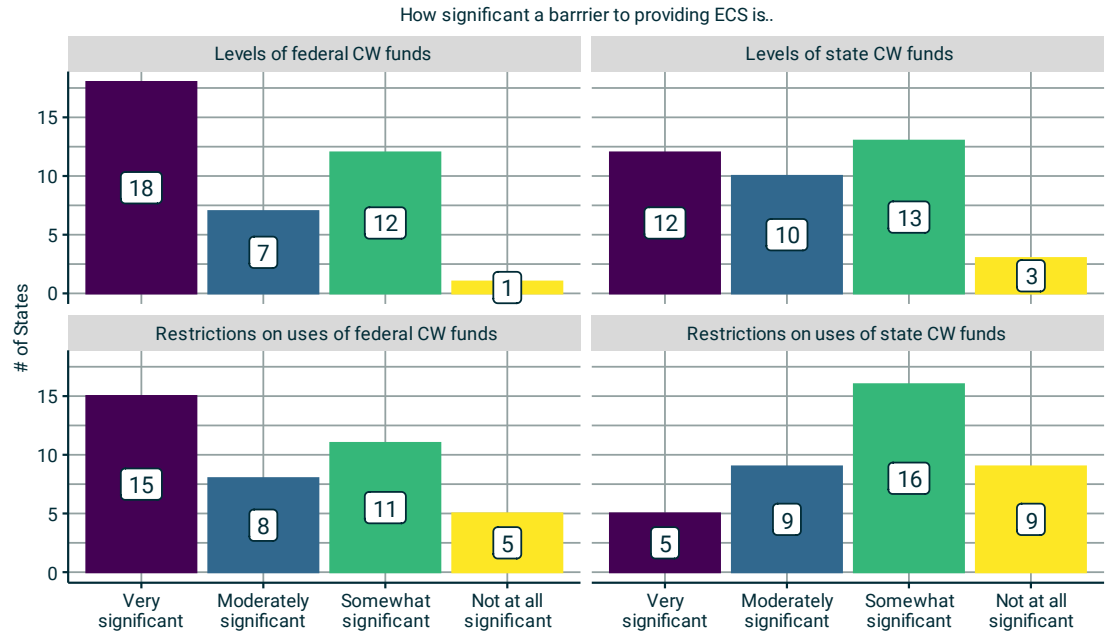
What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

- Respondents report varying **coordination barriers** to providing ECS.
- **Staffing resources** was the most problematic **coordination barrier**.



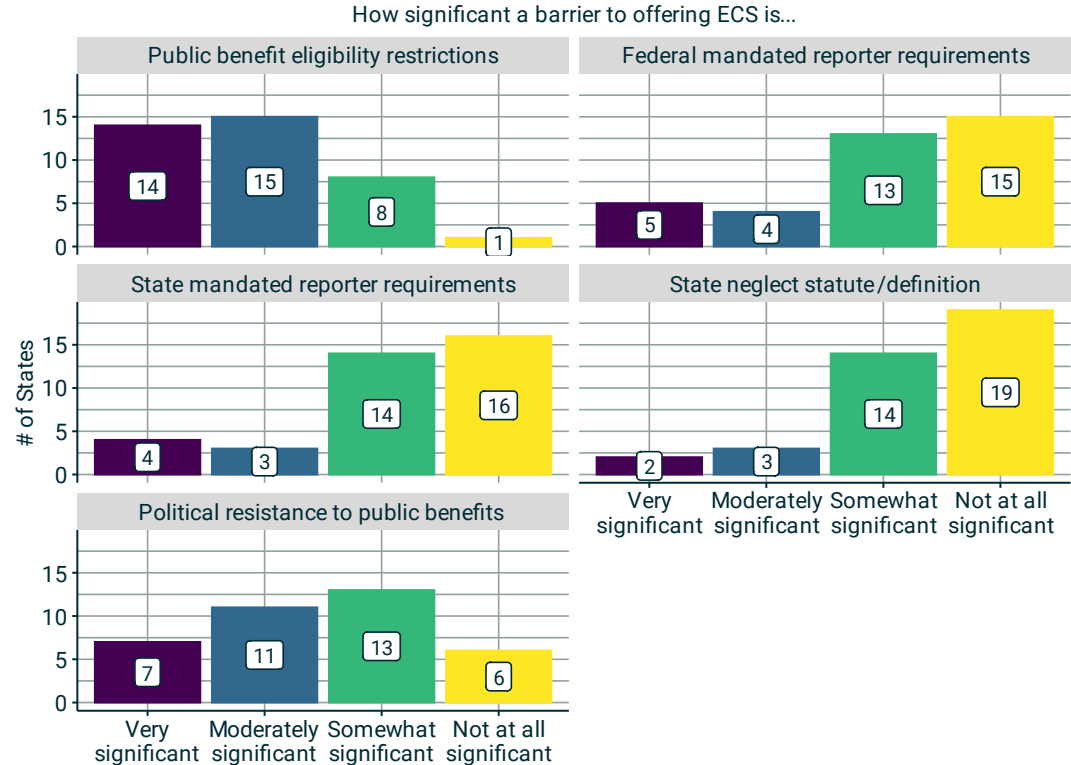
What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

- **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?

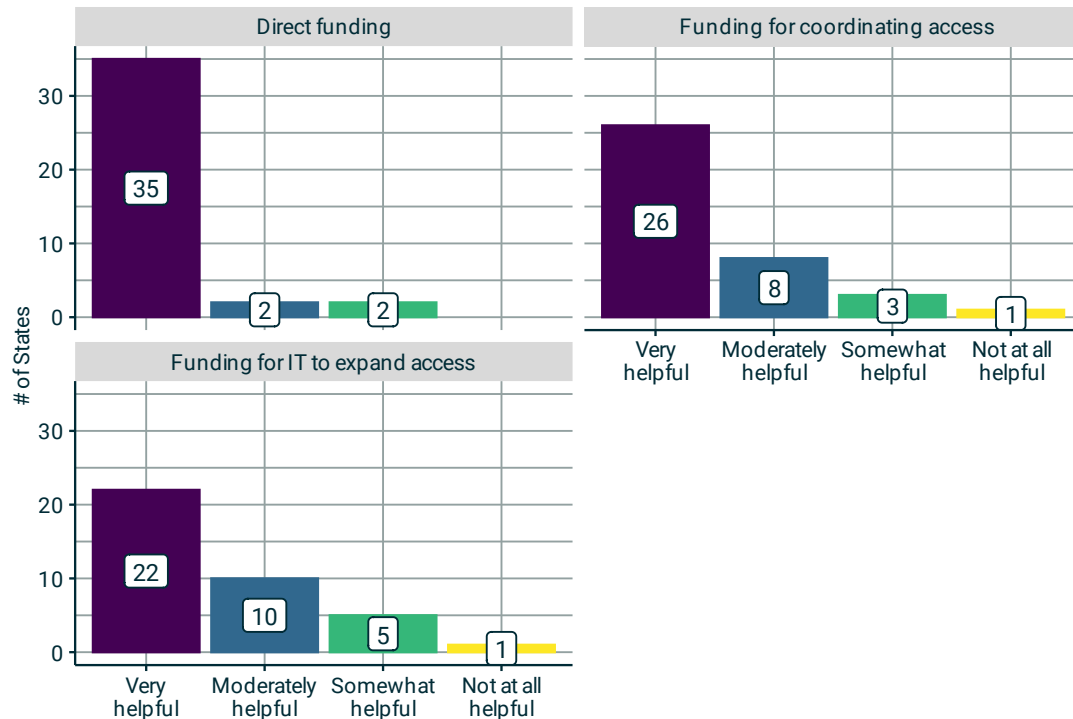
- Respondents identified **public benefit eligibility restrictions** as the most significant policy barrier.
- Other policy barriers were less significant.



What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

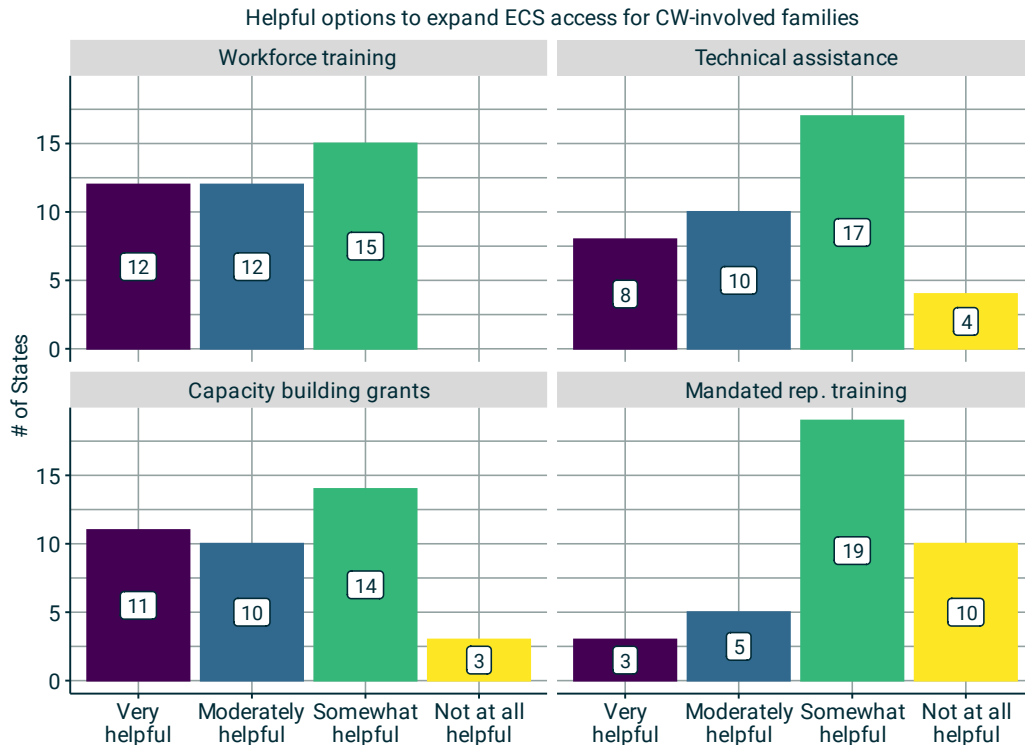
- Nearly all respondents report that **direct funding to expand access to ECS for child welfare involved families** would be very helpful.

The top three most helpful options to expand ECS access for CW-involved families



What are the barriers to offering ECS? What solutions do practitioners believe might address barriers?

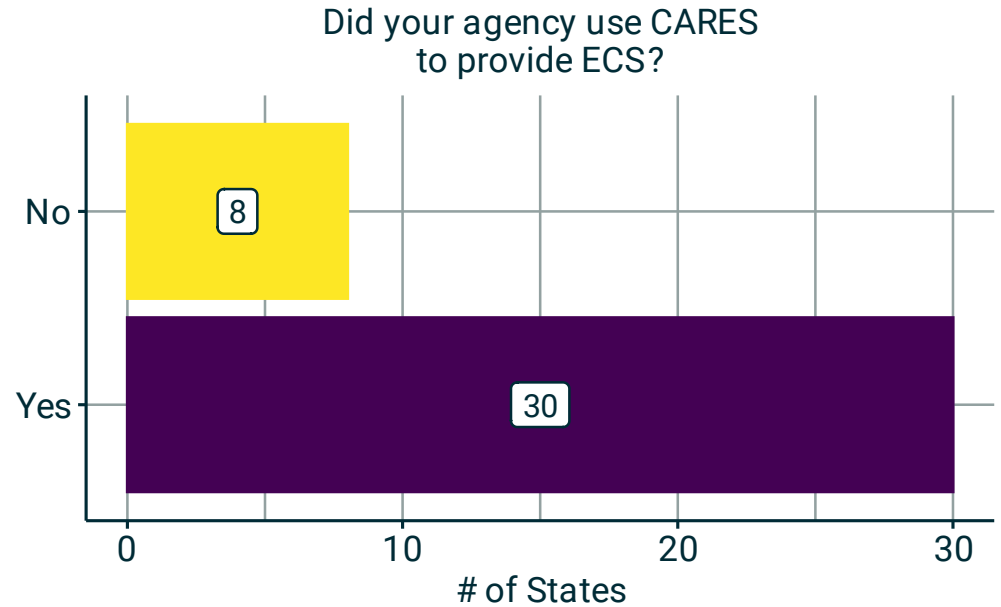
- Most respondents report that other resources would be "somewhat helpful" in expanding ECS access to child welfare-involved families.





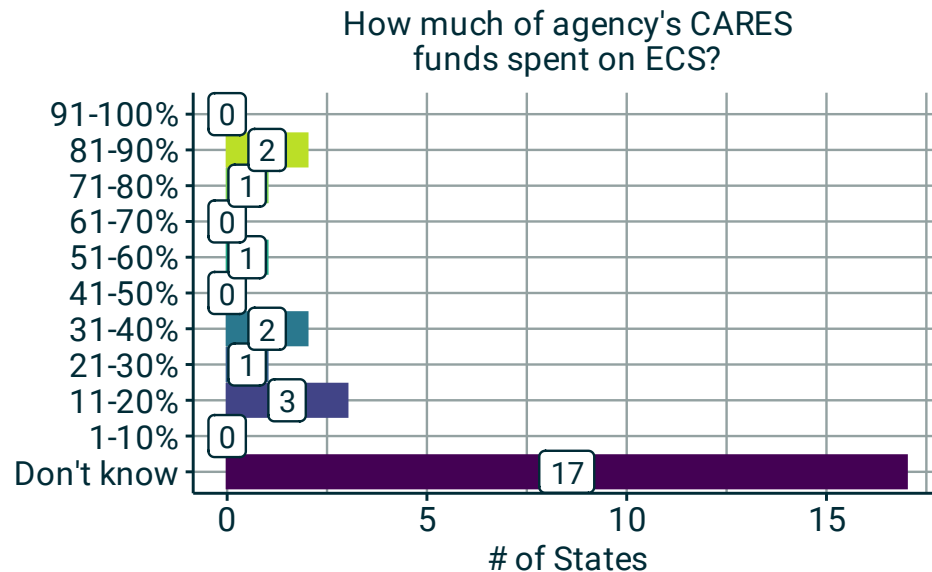
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- Most respondents reported their agency used CARES to provide ECS.



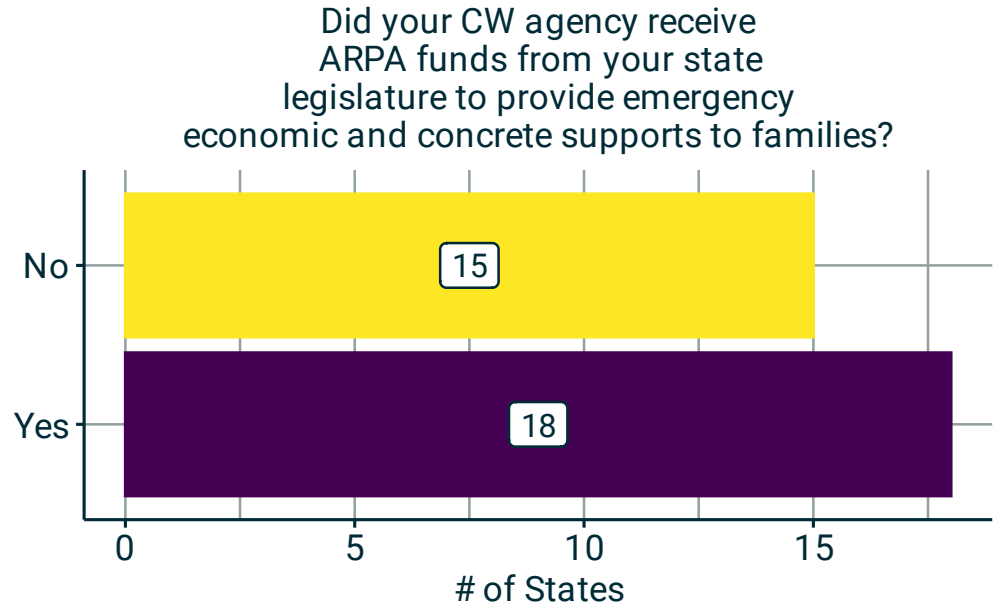
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- A large plurality of respondents reported uncertainty about how much of CARES was used to provide ECS.



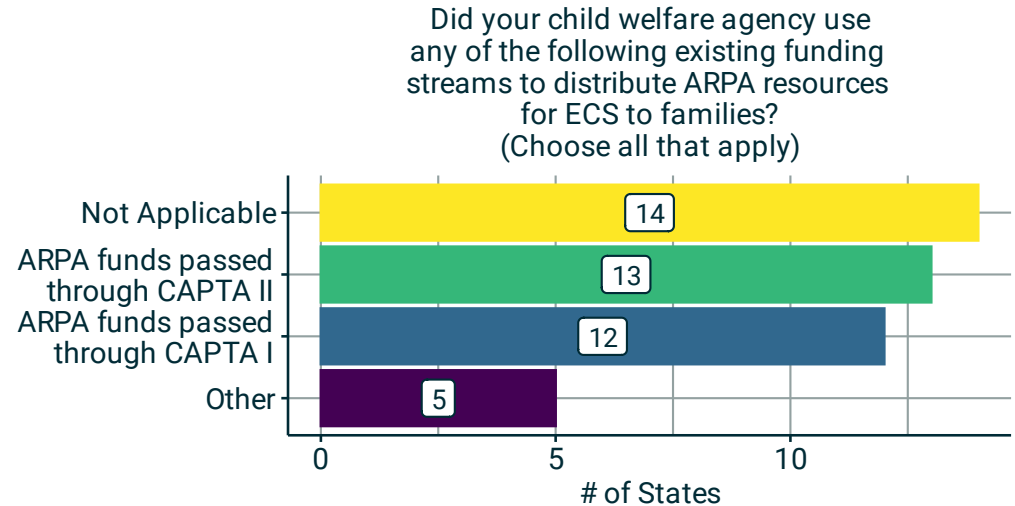
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- A little more than half of the respondents indicated their agency received ARPA funds from their state legislature to provide emergency ECS to families.



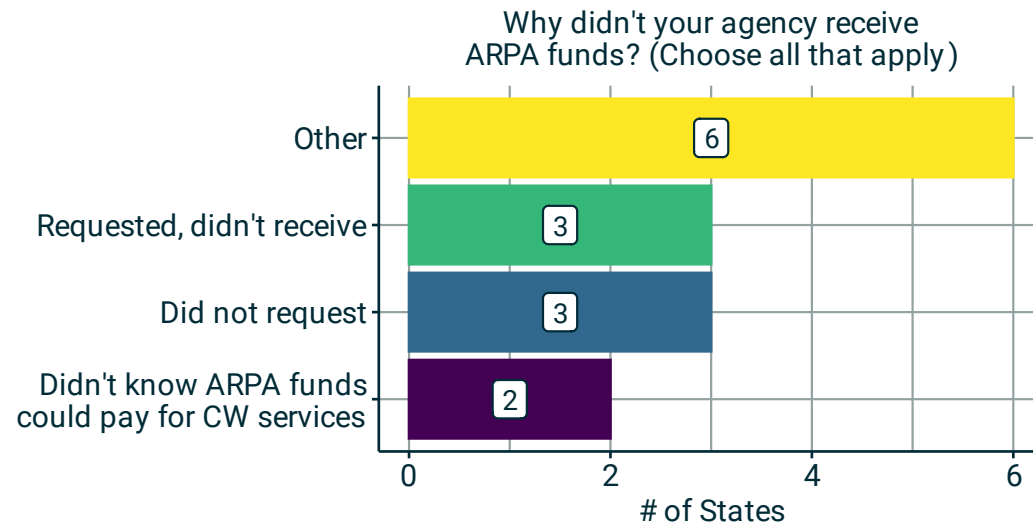
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- Respondent report their agencies distributed ARPA funds through CAPTA Title I and II for emergency ECS to families.



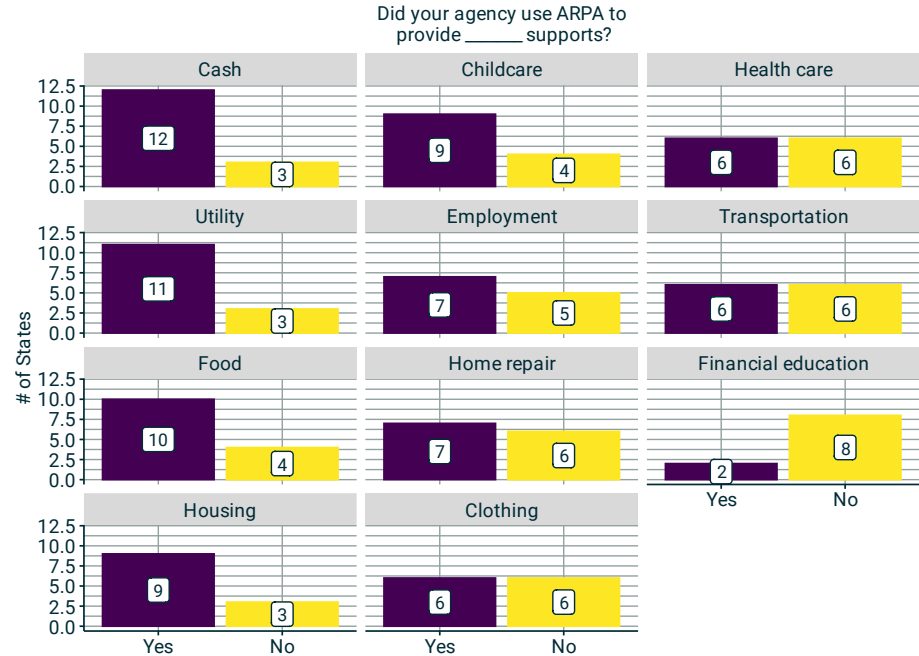
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- Of the respondents that report not receiving ARPA funds, "other" was selected as the most common reason for not receiving them.



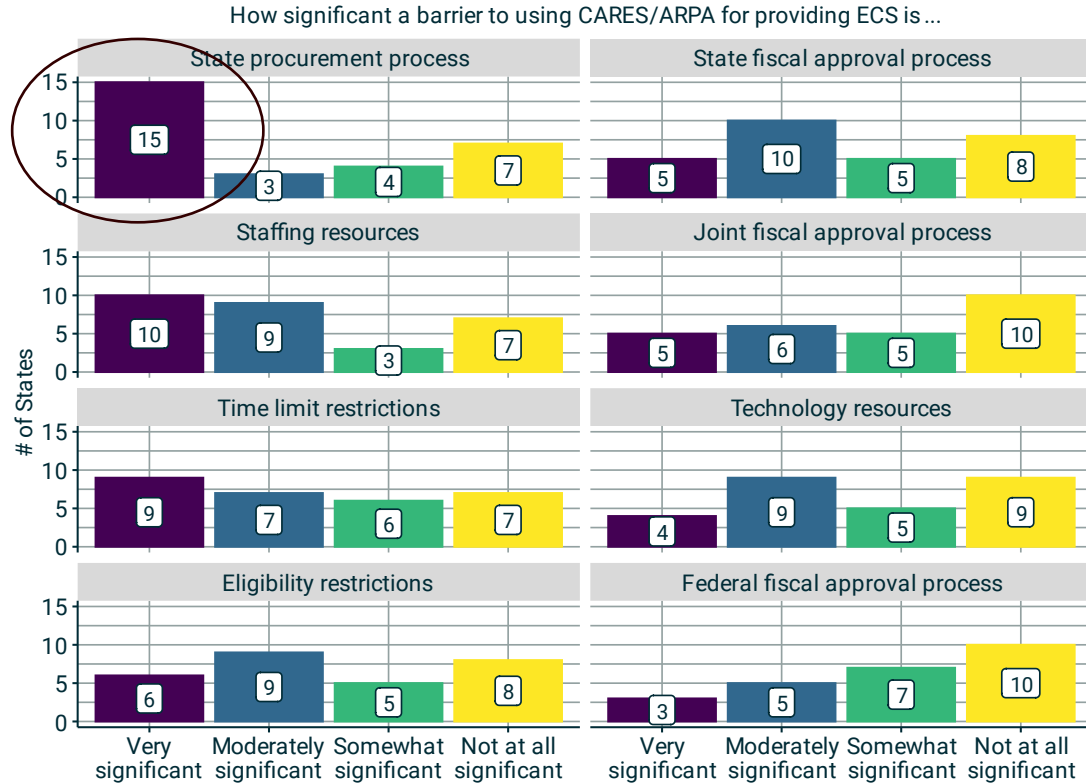
How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- ARPA funds were **most frequently** used to provide **cash, utilities, food, housing, childcare, and employment** supports.
- Other supports were provided less often.



How is COVID-19 emergency federal assistance being used to fund ECS?

- A plurality of respondents indicated that **state procurement processes** posed a very significant barrier to using CARES/ARPA for ECS.





Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

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?”

4 Themes



Upstream shared
responsibility



Direct and
flexible funding

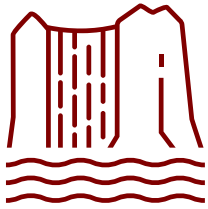


Policy changes



Awareness and
access

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

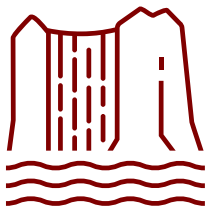


Upstream shared
responsibility

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 that child welfare agencies can exclusively focus on tertiary level interventions.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

Selected quotes...



Upstream shared
responsibility

- *"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."*

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations



Direct and
flexible funding

Child welfare leaders recommended **direct and flexible funding solutions** to make economic and concrete supports more accessible to families.

One specific area raised by several is the ability to use funds more flexibly without restrictions.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

Selected quote...



Direct and
flexible funding

"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".

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations



Policy changes

Child welfare leaders suggested **changes to child welfare policies** to reform mandatory reporting requirements, narrow definitions of child maltreatment, and update poverty definitions and income limits.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

Selected quotes...



Policy changes

“Change mandatory reporting to prevent unnecessary reports for neglect”.

“Research...specific info about child abuse definitions that remove poverty” would be helpful”.

“Updated definition (based on inflation and changes since 1990s) for determining poverty”.

“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”.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

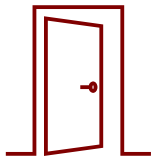


Awareness and
access

Child welfare leaders recommended promoting **awareness about the benefits of economic and concrete supports** in reducing child maltreatment and improving ways for families to access them.

Child Welfare Leaders' Direct Recommendations

Selected quotes...



Awareness and access

"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".

"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".

"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".

"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".



Synthesized Recommendations

Synthesized Recommendations

1. Establish joint human services leadership commitment to **shared responsibility for upstream prevention** of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement.
2. **Increase direct and flexible federal funding** to meet family economic and concrete support needs.
3. **Revise policies and practices** that contribute to unnecessary child welfare system involvement.
4. **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.
5. **Engage in national learning communities and innovative demonstration projects** focused on effective ways to redesign human service systems.

Additional Research Needed

1. **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;
2. Understanding the perceptions of public benefit agency leaders and their **awareness of the provision of economic and concrete supports and child maltreatment prevention**;
3. **Evaluating costs and benefits of more direct and flexible funding** for economic and concrete supports and the implications for foster care costs;
4. **Examining national trends in child maltreatment reporting** and child welfare system involvement before and after federal and state policy changes;
5. **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
6. **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.

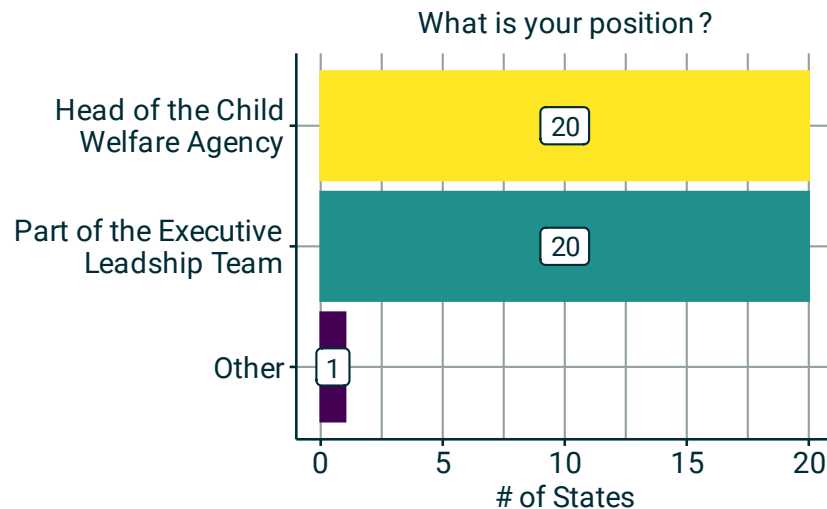


Methodology

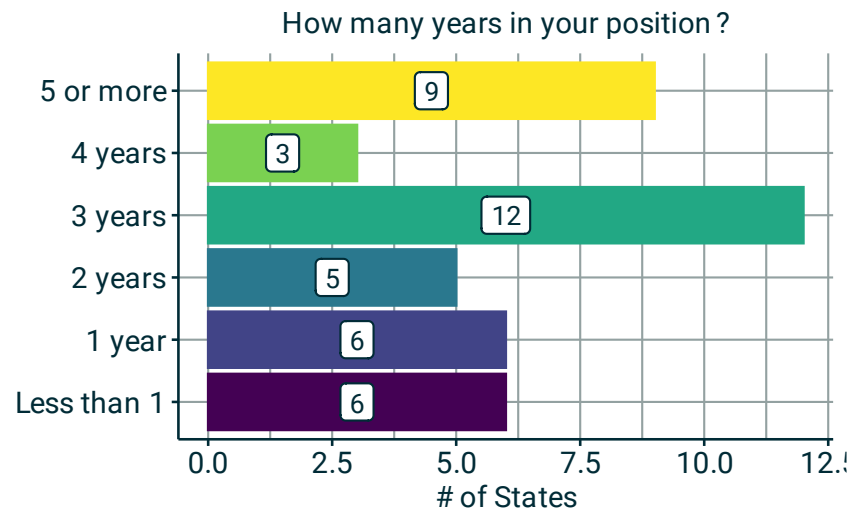


Sample characteristics

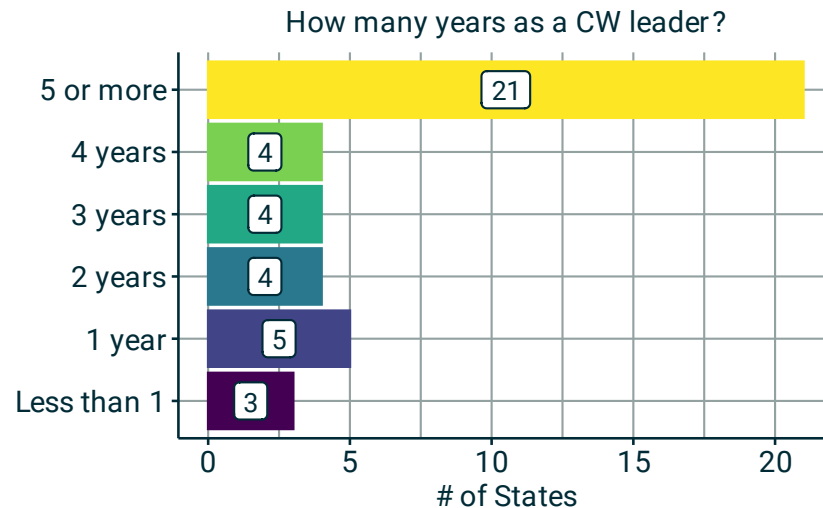
- Respondents are about evenly distributed between being agency leads and members of the executive leadership team.
- The other respondent was the leader of a local agency in a county-administered state.



- Respondents have spent a wide distribution of years in their current positions



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



- Median response time was 21.6 minutes.
- 25th to 75th percentile of response times was 14.9 minutes to 65.8 minutes.
- Two states completed the survey in longer than one day.

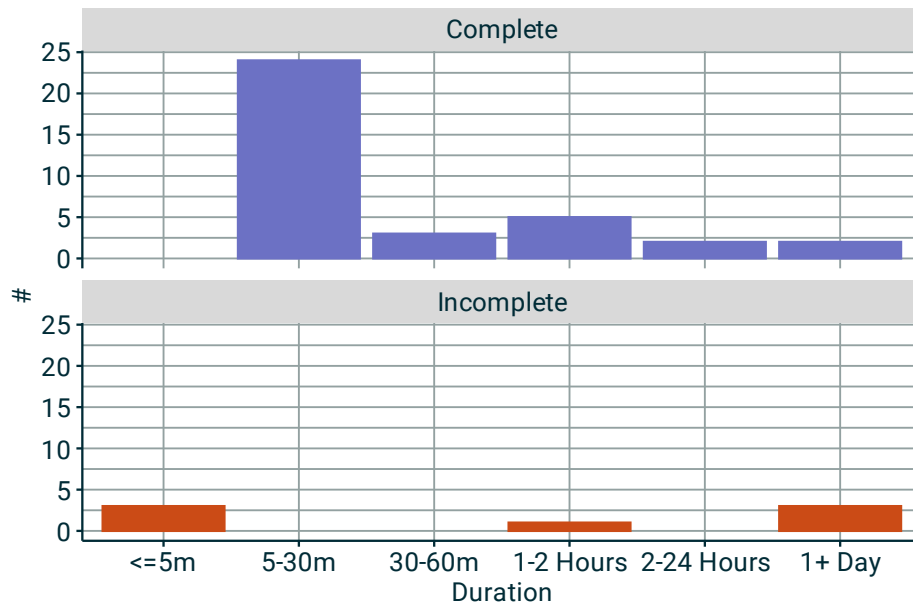
Status	n	Percent
Invited	9	17.3
Break-off (<10%)	2	3.8
Partials (10-80%)	2	3.8
Complete (80%+)	3	5.8
Complete (all Qs)	36	69.2
Total	52	100.0



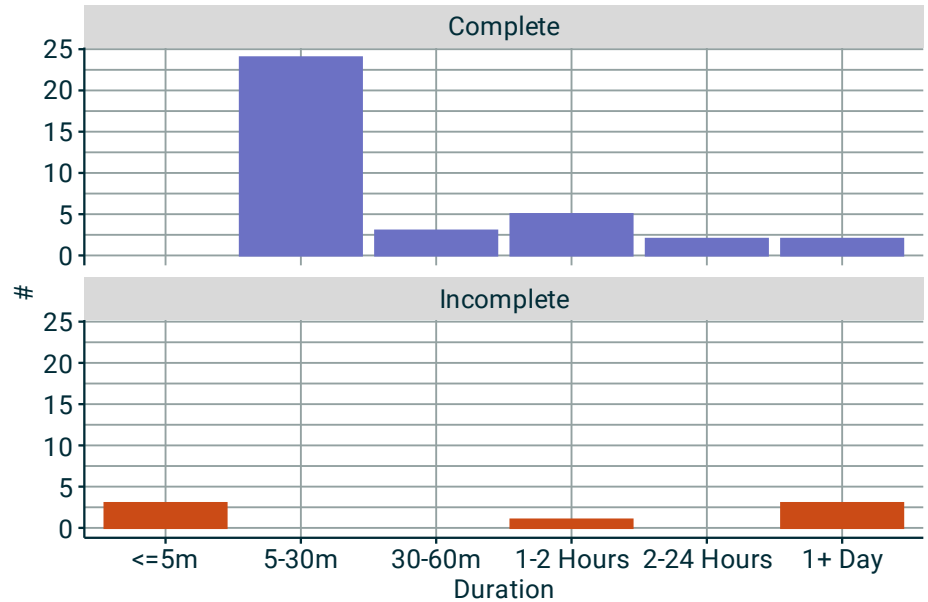
Reliability & Validity

Robust Checks

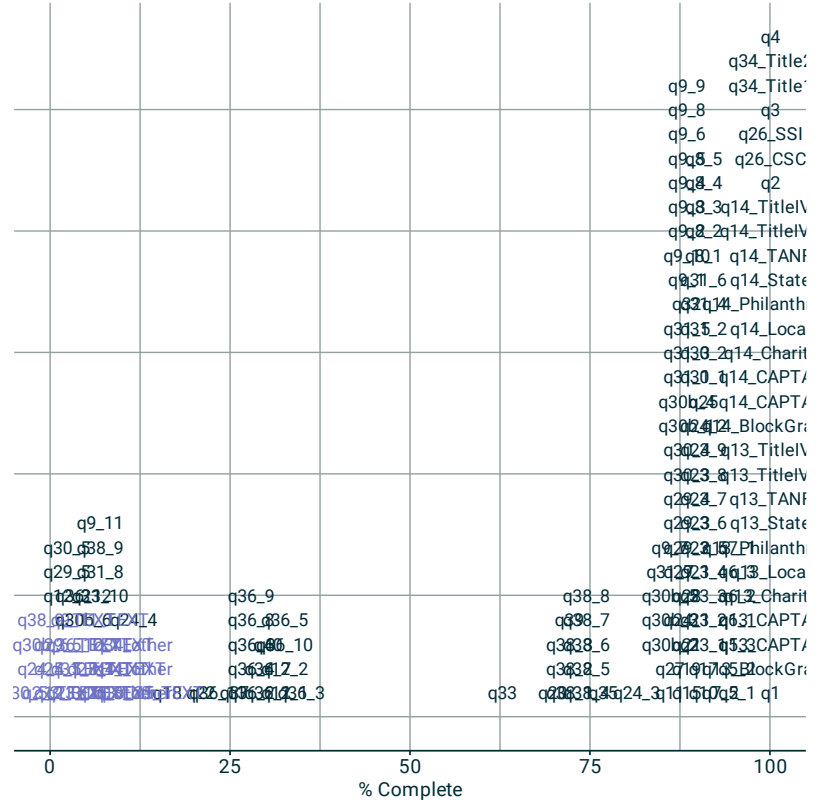
- Distributions of response times, by completion status.



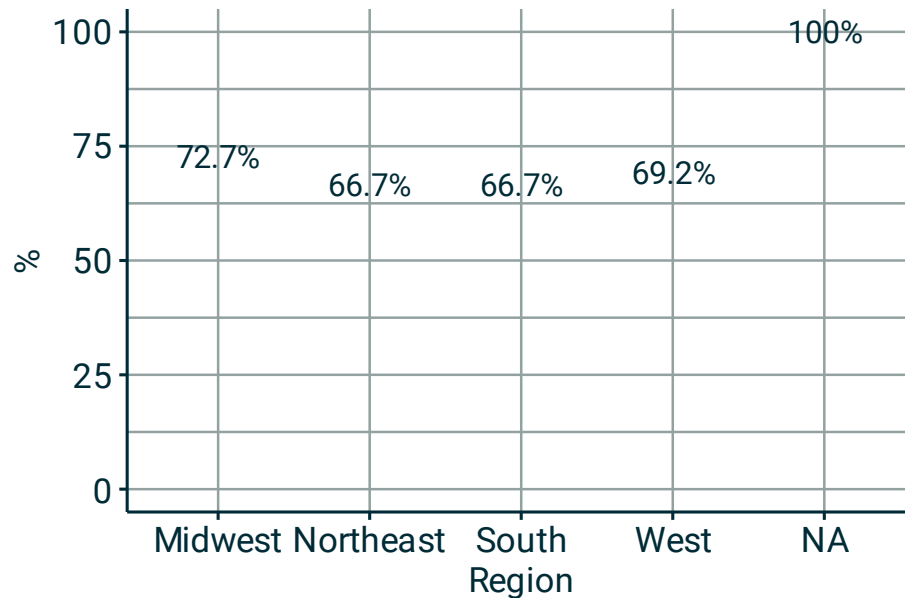
- Most respondents completed the survey in just under half an hour.
- Most respondents who did not complete the survey ceased responding in just a few minutes.



- This figure shows question-level completion rates. Purple questions are other/FITB questions.
- Most questions are completed at or above 75%.

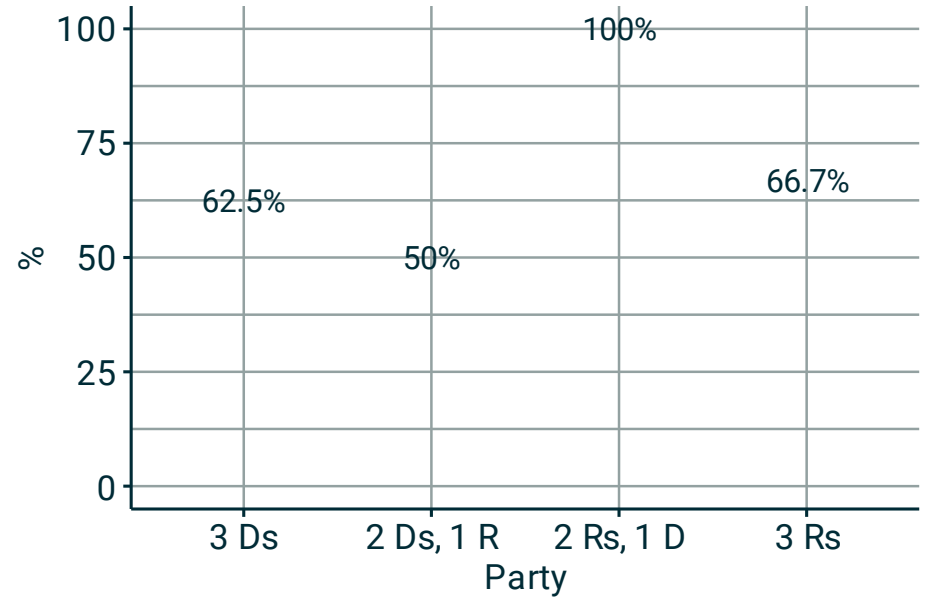


- There are no significant differences in response rates across different regions.

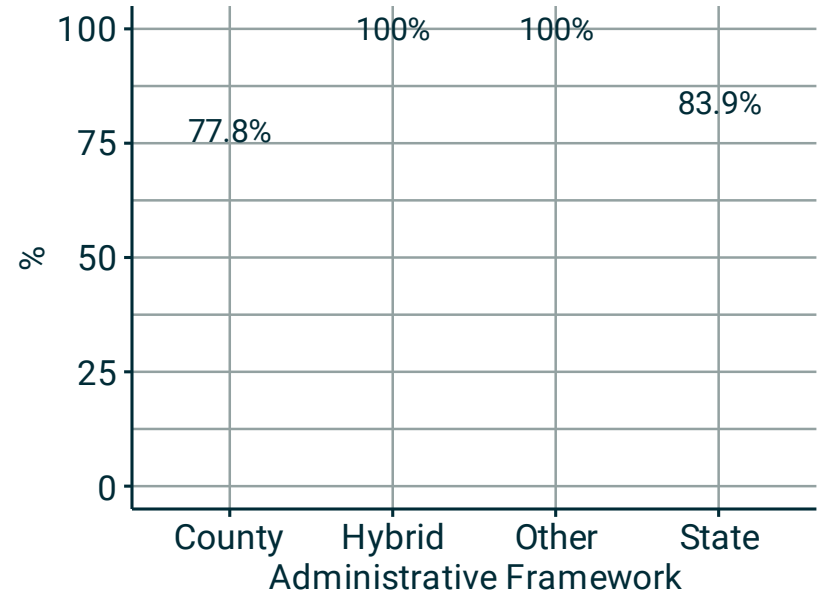


Note: Puerto Rico is not classified into the four regions

- Figure shows completion rates by partisan control of state lawmaking chambers.
- Coding is based on status *prior to* inauguration day 2023.
- There are no significant differences between completion statuses.



- Completion rates by state child welfare administrative framework.
- There are no significant differences between response rates by administrative framework.



Note: District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are included as "Other."