Child and Family Well-being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component
Chapin Hall Resources

www.chapinhall.org/economicsupports

(Weiner, Anderson & Thomas, 2021)
(Anderson, Grewal-Kök, Cusick, Weiner & Thomas, 2021)
New Briefs in 2022
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Historical Context
Child Welfare’s Historic Structure

- Historically, child welfare has been **reactive**—responding to allegations of maltreatment with investigations & foster care
- From the onset of child and family services, **policymakers repeatedly separated programs designed to address poverty from programs designed to protect children**
- **Prevention** services receive less consistent funding
- **Root causes** of maltreatment have not been consistently addressed, perpetuating family separation & recapitulating structural racism and intergenerational trauma
- Economic & concrete support policies and programs are administered as if **unrelated to child welfare**
Mother’s Pensions
for poor single mothers recognized the importance of financial supports to address economic hardship & promote family stability. However, these supports were largely limited to white, widowed mothers.

Flemming Rule (FR)
implemented in response to states denying ADC benefits to families, mostly Black, because their homes were deemed "unsuitable." It required states to either 1) provide supports to these families OR 2) remove the children and place them in foster care.

CAPTA
requires state mandated reporting laws but does not include standard guidelines, training, or opportunities for reporters to explore alternative family support options. This has resulted in high reporting rates by teachers, the majority of which are unsubstantiated.

Social Security Act
bifurcates supports to families by nesting Aid to Dependent Children (ADC, later AFDC) under the Social Security Administration but social services under the Children’s Bureau.

Social Security Act Amendments
establish AFDC-FC (later title IV-E) as an open-ended entitlement for foster care services (part 2 of FR) without analogous funding for family support services (part 1 of FR)

Family First Prevention Services Act
does not explicitly include economic & concrete supports and focuses on treating the parent or child rather than the context.

Impact of Historical Policy Choices

- Economic Hardship
- Fragmented Human Service System
- Mandated Reporting Laws
- Deficit-Based, Rigid & Piecemeal Policies

Lack of Sufficient Economic & Concrete Supports

- Overloaded & Destabilized Families
- Unmet Service & Support Needs
- High Rates of Reported Neglect
- Child Welfare Involvement
Intersection of Family Economic Insecurity, Income, & Child Welfare Involvement
# ACYF Well-Being Framework

**April 2012 (ACYF-CB-IM-12-04)**

## Appendix 1: ACYF Well-Being Framework

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<td><strong>Early Childhood</strong> (0-5)</td>
<td>Family income, family social capital, community factors (e.g., institutional resources, collective socialization, community organization, neighborhood SES)</td>
<td>Temperament, cognitive ability</td>
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<td>Normative standards for growth and development, gross motor and fine motor skills, overall health, BMI</td>
<td>Self-control, emotional management and expression, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, trauma symptoms</td>
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<td>Family income, family social capital, family social, social support, community factors (e.g., institutional resources, collective socialization, community organization, neighborhood SES)</td>
<td>Identity development, self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, cognitive ability</td>
<td>Academic achievement, school engagement, school attachment, problem-solving skills, decision-making</td>
<td>Normative standards for growth and development, overall health, BMI, risk-avoidance behavior related to health</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, motivation, self-control, prosocial behavior, positive outlook, coping, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, trauma symptoms</td>
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<td><strong>Adolescence (13-18)</strong></td>
<td>Family income, family social capital, family social, social support, community factors (e.g., institutional resources, collective socialization, community organization, neighborhood SES)</td>
<td>Identity development, self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, cognitive ability</td>
<td>Academic achievement, school engagement, school attachment, problem solving skills, decision-making</td>
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### Social and Emotional Well-Being Domains
Family Protective Factors

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children
60%+ of substantiated CPS responses nationally involve **neglect only**

...and provision of economic & concrete supports is associated with decreases in *both* neglect and physical abuse

(Child Maltreatment 2019)
Nearly Half of All States Do Not Exempt Families’ Financial Inability to Provide From Their Definition of Neglect

- Inclusion of income-related factors in definitions of neglect without any exemptions may be funneling families into the child welfare system.
- However, poverty exemptions in neglect statutes do not guarantee sharp reductions in neglect cases without strategic practices & assessing neglect through a harm specification lens.

(Child Trends, 2022)
(DeGuerre, 2021)
Rates of Neglect Remain Unchanged (as of 2019)

Note: Physical & sexual abuse are and continue to be a small percentage of child maltreatment relative to neglect. Trend lines in this table have been multiplied to emphasize reductions over time.

(Finkelhor, 2021)
(Bullinger, 2019)
Family Economic Insecurity is Associated with Child Welfare Involvement

- Children in economically insecure households are:
  - 5x more likely to experience maltreatment
  - 7x more likely to experience neglect
  
  (compared to other children)

- Nearly 85% of families investigated by CPS earn below 200% of the federal poverty line ($43,920 for a family of 3 in 2021)

- Families living below the poverty line are 3x more likely to be substantiated for child maltreatment

Experiencing Material Hardship is Associated with Increased Risk for Child Welfare Involvement - Both Neglect & Abuse

If families experience at least one material hardship

- Likelihood of being investigated for neglect increases nearly 3x
- Likelihood of being investigated for physical abuse increases nearly 4x

If families experience multiple types of hardship (after experiencing no hardships)

- Likelihood of being involved in a CPS investigation increases 4x
- Likelihood of being investigated for physical abuse increases 7x

(Yang, 2015) (Shook, 1999)
The Intersection of Family Economic Insecurity & Child Welfare Involvement

Most reliable economic predictors of child welfare involvement:
- Income Loss
- Cumulative Material Hardship
- Housing Hardship

Strongest predictors of investigated neglect reports:
- Food pantry use
- Cutting meals
- Difficulty paying rent
- Utility shutoffs
- Short duration of residence
- Inability to receive medical care for sick family member
- Public benefit receipt

(Conrad-Hiebner, 2020) (Slack, 2011)
Negative Earnings Shocks Are Associated with Increased Risk for Subsequent Child Welfare Involvement

For low-income families with recently closed CPS investigations:

• Experiencing a **negative earnings shock** (reduction quarterly by 30% or more):
  ▪ Increases risk of subsequent CPS investigation by 18%
  ▪ Increases risk of physical abuse investigation by 26%

• Each additional negative earnings shock is associated with a **15% greater likelihood** of CPS involvement

• But each consecutive quarter with stable income is associated with a **5% lower risk** of CPS investigation

(Cai, 2021)
But the Association Diminishes When Negative Earnings Shocks Are Offset by Public Benefits

For low-income families with recently closed CPS investigations:

- Research suggests that accessing sufficient public benefits when negative earnings shocks occur serves to effectively buffer against the risk of child maltreatment.
  - Buffer is particularly strong for families with young children (ages 0–4) who are associated with a:
    - 12% decrease in risk for CPS involvement
    - 50% decrease in risk for physical abuse investigation

(Cai, 2021)
Increased Unemployment Rates Are Associated with Increased Child Maltreatment Reports

- 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)
- A 1% increase in the county unemployment rate is associated with a 20% increase in substantiated neglect reports

(Weiner, 2020)
(Brown, 2020, national data set 2004–2012)
Increased Unemployment Rates Are Associated with Increased Child Abuse

During the Great Recession (2007–2009):

The rate of abusive head trauma (AHT) for children < 5 years old was significantly higher than during the period immediately before:

- AHT rate increased from 8.9 in 100,000 children before the recession to 14.7 in 100,000 children during the recession

(Berger, 2011)
Increased Male Unemployment Rates Are Associated with Increased Child Maltreatment Rates

Decreases in male employment are significantly associated with increased child maltreatment

➢ For every 10% decrease in the male employment rate (among 20- to 34-year-olds), the child maltreatment rate rises by 9.62%
➢ A 1% increase in the male mass layoff rate increases the child maltreatment rate between 4.7 and 13%

Once poverty, male employment, & single-parent households are accounted for, race does not play a role in maltreatment rates

(Cherry, 2016, state-level employment data 2000–2012)
(Lindo, 2018, California county-level data 1998–2012)
Children in foster care take longer to reunify with their families when:

- Their reason for placement is neglect (compared to physical abuse)

- Their mothers have lower average monthly incomes post placement
  - Every $100 increase in a mother’s post-placement income increases her child’s speed of reunification by 6%.

- Their mothers lose a significant amount of cash assistance post placement
  - Percentage of children remaining in foster care after a year whose mothers lost a significant amount of income from cash assistance post placement is more than double that of children whose mothers did not lose income from cash assistance post placement (87% vs. 41%).

- Their mothers must pay the state for the costs of foster care
  - $100 increase in the monthly child support order amount is predicted to increase the time to reunification by 6.6 months.

(Wells, 2006) (Cancian, 2017)
Exploring the Context of Family Economic Insecurity, Income, & Child Welfare Involvement
Economic Insecurity Is Widespread, but Families Move In and Out of Poverty

Economic insecurity is widespread

- Almost 50% of American families with young children are at risk of poverty before their child enters kindergarten
- More than 50% of all Americans will spend a year in poverty (by age 65)
- 84% of all Black Americans will spend a year in poverty (by age 65)

Families move in and out of poverty over time

- Almost 50% of those who become poor are out of poverty a year later
- But more than 50% of those who previously left poverty will return to poverty within 5 years

The volatility and turbulence created by entering & leaving poverty may create serious stress for parents and impact parenting

(Drake, 2014)
(Cellini, 2008)
(Mistry, 2002)
(Han, 2021)
(Irving, 2015)
The Buffer is Thin

37%

of U.S. adults don’t have $400 in the bank to cover an unexpected expense

(Federal Reserve, 2020)
How Does Economic & Material Hardship Impact Parenting and Child Well-Being?

Family Stress Model

Economic & material hardship → Psychological distress → High cognitive loads → Drained mental resources → Increased conflict & hostility → Less nurturing, responsive, & supportive parenting → Higher risk for child abuse & neglect

But Families Must be Considered within the Context of Their Communities, Cultures, Policies, & Systems

“The single most significant lesson of [this] conceptual framework is that interventions & policies to reduce health inequities must not limit themselves to intermediary determinants, but must include policies specifically crafted to tackle underlying structural determinants.”

(WHO, 2010)
Multiple Material & Economic Hardships Overload Families and Increase Risk for Child Welfare Involvement

Adapted from: (Conrad-Hiebner, 2020) (Slack, 2011) (Sweetland, 2021)

Visual created by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Racial Economic Disparities May Contribute to Disproportionate Child Welfare System Involvement
Economic & Concrete Supports:
A Race Equity Strategy to Address Disparity & Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Due to systemic inequities, families of color are more likely to experience economic hardship & this may contribute to their disproportionate child welfare involvement.

Disproportionality and disparities are due to racism both internal and external to the child welfare system (Dettlaff, 2020).
Children in Families of Color Are More Likely to Experience Poverty

While 14% of U.S. children are Black, they make up 27% of children living below the poverty line.
Children in Black and Latinx Households Are More Likely to Experience Net Worth Poverty

In 2019, 57% of Black and 50% of Latinx households with children were net worth poor.

In any given year, 54% to 67% of Black and Latinx households with children experience income poverty or net worth poverty (or both).

TRENDS IN INCOME AND NET WORTH POVERTY
BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 1989 TO 2019

Net worth poverty = wealth (total assets minus total debts) < ¼ of the federal poverty line (i.e., wealth < $6,500 for a family of four in 2019)

(Gibson-Davis, 2021)
The Racial Wealth Gap Further Exacerbates the Consequences of Economic Insecurity for Families of Color

- Black Americans represent 13% of the U.S. population, but possess only 4% of the nation’s household wealth.
- The median wealth of young Black families is $600.
- Nearly 1 in 5 Black households has zero or negative net worth.
- Native American households own $0.09 for every dollar of wealth held by white households (as of 2000).

Racial Disparities at Decision Points Across Child Welfare Continuum

Children in maltreatment investigations
• 28% of all white children by age 18
• 53% of all Black children by age 18

Children determined to be “victims” of maltreatment
• American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) and Black children are determined to be “victims” of maltreatment at almost twice the rate of white children

(Kim, 2017) (Child Maltreatment 2019)
Racial Disparities at Decision Points across Child Welfare Continuum

Children placed in foster care
- Black children: 14% of general child population but 23% of children in foster care
- AIAN children: 1% of general child population but 2% of children in foster care

Children who experience termination of parental rights
- Compared to white children, AIAN children are 2.7 times more likely and Black children are 2.4 times more likely to experience termination of both parents’ rights

(Child Maltreatment 2019) (Wildeman, 2020)
CPS Interventions Are Pervasive: Over Half of All Black Children Experience an Investigation

- 37% of all children and 41% of children in the 20 most populous U.S. counties experience at least one CPS investigation by age 18
- Almost 3.5 million children subject to a CPS investigation each year (FFY 2019)
- 1 in every 100 children are estimated to experience a termination of parental rights

Economic & Concrete Supports as a Race Equity Strategy

To reduce persistent racial health disparities at a population level, there must be:

• An intentional, upstream focus on a broad range of socioeconomic conditions
  ➢ These include more equitable access to assets and opportunities in education, employment, housing, health-promoting environments & wealth creation

• Strengthened policies that provide economic support to families

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2021): Moving Upstream: Confronting Racism to Open Up Children’s Potential

"The scientific evidence is clear and growing. Structural, cultural, and interpersonal racism impose unique and substantial stressors on the daily lives of families raising young children of color."
Evidence: The Relationship between Economic & Concrete Supports and Maltreatment and Child Welfare Involvement
Sources of Evidence

How do the following studies show the impact of programs, policies, and strategies for reducing child welfare system involvement through economic & concrete supports?

- **Research designed to detect the impact of a specific strategy through randomized controlled trials (RCT)**
- **Analysis of decades of administrative data aligned with policy or other shifts**
- **Natural experiments to assess public benefit programs**
- **Theoretical models and studies that illustrate the processes by which material hardship leads to child maltreatment**

Taken together, this vast body of science and growing preponderance of evidence informs our understanding of what has been effective and why and our hypotheses about the potential of policy shifts and new pathways.
What does the evidence suggest happens when economic & concrete supports are reduced?
What Are Economic & Concrete Supports?

This is not an exhaustive list, but examples include:

- Cash assistance
- Emergency funds
- Direct cash transfers
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- TANF benefits
- Employment
- Income
- Flexible funds
- In-kind benefits
- Child care
- Housing supports
- SNAP
- WIC
- Medicaid
- Unemployment benefits
- Legal support
- Rental assistance
- Utility assistance
- Transportation
- Food
- Clothing
- Furniture & equipment
Decreased Access to Economic & Concrete Supports Is Associated with Increased Child Welfare Involvement

- Reduced TANF benefits
- Reduced employment
- Lack of child care
- Increased gas prices
- Lack of stable housing
- Reduced income & negative earnings shocks

Increased risk for child welfare involvement

States that implemented TANF sanctions of loss of all benefits for not working:

- 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

(Increases observed from 2004 to 2015)

Reminder: First statutory goal of TANF is to support needy families so that children can remain safely at home or with relatives.

(Ginther, 2017)
Lack of Access to TANF

States that implemented TANF time limits of less than 5 years:

- Increase in substantiated maltreatment reports: 34.4%
- Increase in substantiated child neglect reports: 37.3%

(Increases observed from 2004 to 2015)
Reduced State Public Benefits

- Reductions in state public benefit levels (*AFDC/TANF plus the value of food stamps*) are associated with higher numbers of children in foster care

- Lifetime limits on receipt of TANF benefits & sanctions for noncompliance are associated with higher levels of substantiated maltreatment

(Paxson, 2002)  
(Paxson, 2003)
Lack of Access to Child Care

- For every additional child care concern reported by families receiving TANF, the risk of supervisory child neglect increases by 20%.

- Mothers entering substance abuse 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).

  ➢ Difficulty finding child care was a stronger predictor of maternal neglect than almost any other factor measured in this study, including mental health, severity of drug use, history of abuse as a child & use of public assistance.

(Yang, 2016) (Cash, 2003)
Lack of Access to Child Care Subsidies

Waitlists to access subsidized child care are significantly associated with an increase in child abuse & neglect investigations

- Only 1 in 6 children eligible for childcare assistance receives it
- Low-income families who pay for child care spend an average of 30% of their household income on child care

(Klevens, 2015) (Rice, 2019)
Reduced Disposable Income Due to Increased Gas Prices

A $1.00 increase in the price of gas for a state with 100,000 children would be associated with an additional 642 child maltreatment referrals (controlling for demographic and other economic variables)

(McLaughlin, 2017)
Housing Insecurity

• Inadequate housing contributes to the risk of entering foster care for 1 out of every 6 children involved in CPS investigations.

• Self-reported housing instability in urban areas is significantly associated with increased risk for neglect (above and beyond poverty).

“The Children’s Bureau affirms that working with families and young adults to secure housing and prevent eviction and homelessness is paramount to prevention.”

1 in 3 children who are homeless have experienced a major mental disorder by age 8.

(Fowler, 2013) (Warren, 2015)
(ACF Dear Colleague Letter, 2021)
(NCTSN, 2005)
Housing Insecurity - Evictions

Each additional eviction filing (per 100 occupied units in a block group) is associated with a 2% increase in child maltreatment reports (primarily neglect)

(Bullinger, 2021) (Lundberg, 2019)

1 in 4 children born in large U.S. cities who are living in deep poverty will experience at least one eviction for nonpayment of rent by age 16
Housing Insecurity - Foreclosures

- Households experiencing a foreclosure filing in next 6–12 months are at 70% greater risk of a CPS investigation than households that will not

- Increases in current and prior-year mortgage foreclosure rates are associated with increases in investigated & substantiated child maltreatment
  - 1% increase in the prior-year foreclosure rate is associated with a 7.3% increase in substantiations

- Increases in mortgage delinquency & foreclosure rates are associated with increases in hospital admissions for:
  - Physical abuse of children < 6 years old
  - Traumatic brain injury for infants <1 year old (non-birth & non-motor vehicle crash related)

(Berger, 2015, Wisconsin data 2008–2011)
What does the evidence suggest happens when economic & concrete supports are increased?
How Might Economic & Concrete Supports Positively Impact Child and Family Well-being?

Family Investment Model

- Families receive sufficient economic & concrete supports
- Families have resources to meet their basic needs
- Families can invest in services & opportunities for their children
- Families have access to housing, child care, & educational opportunities
- Families can provide increased nurturing, responsive & supportive parenting
- Families experience improved child and family well-being
- Families have lower risk for child welfare involvement

(Conrad, 2020) (Maguire-Jack, 2021)
Increased Access to Economic & Concrete Supports Is Associated with Decreased Child Welfare Involvement

Child Welfare Interventions Augmented with Economic & Concrete Supports
- Differential response
- Family preservation

Concrete Supports
- Medicaid
- Supportive housing
- Paid family leave
- Child care
- SNAP & WIC

Economic Supports
- Minimum wage increase
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Public benefits (TANF)
- Child support payments
- Unemployment benefits
Low-income families who receive Differential Response (DR) with concrete supports, as compared to low-income families who receive DR with no concrete supports, are less likely to experience a subsequent maltreatment report (43.2% v. 52.7%).

Concrete supports may include housing, rent, utilities, food or clothing, appliances, furniture or home repair, and other financial help.

(Loman, 2012)
Families with screened-in reports who are assigned to a Differential Response (DR) track and tend to receive more concrete supports, as compared to families assigned to the traditional track who receive fewer concrete supports, experience a lower risk of:

- Subsequent accepted maltreatment reports
- Subsequent child removals & placements

(Loman, 2012) (RCT)
Families with open child welfare cases (mostly neglect) who receive a home-based services program with concrete supports (averaging $314 per family) are less likely to experience a child maltreatment report (compared to families who receive the program without any concrete supports)

(Rostad, 2017)
Study estimated that, on average, in the first year a family with an open child welfare case receives a home-based services program:

- Providing concrete supports costing $3,361 would **avert one maltreatment report**
- Providing any concrete support (vs. no support) **reduces the risk of a subsequent maltreatment report by almost 17%**

(Rostad, 2017)
Medicaid Expansion

- Medicaid expansion is associated with improved economic stability & mental health for low-income parents.
- Between 2013 and 2016, the rate of screened-in neglect referrals decreased in states that expanded Medicaid, but increased in states that did not expand Medicaid.
  - Medicaid expansion was associated with 422 fewer cases per 100,000 children < age 6 for each study year (2013 baseline rate of 3,944 cases per 100,000 children < age 6).
  - If non-expansion states had expanded Medicaid, there would have been an estimated 124,981 fewer screened-in neglect referrals in the U.S. from 2014 through 2016.

(Brown, 2019)
Continuity of eligibility for Medicaid/child health insurance (SCHIP) is significantly associated with a decrease in child abuse & neglect investigations.

(Klevens, 2015)
Supportive Housing

Children of child welfare-involved families who face housing instability and receive a supportive housing program (housing voucher + case management) experience:

- **Fewer removals** (9% vs. 40% in business-as-usual control group after 2 years)
- **Lower prevalence of substantiated maltreatment** (8% v. 26% in control group after 18 months)
- **Increased reunification** (30% vs. 9% in control group after 2 years)

(Farrell, 2018) (RCT)
Permanent Housing Subsidies

HUD’s Family Options Study found that homeless families referred for permanent housing subsidies self-reported:

- **50% reduction in foster care placements** (after 20 months)
- Lower rates of psychological distress
- Less intimate partner violence
- Fewer child behavior problems
- Greater housing stability & food security

*(compared to a business-as-usual control group of homeless families)*

(Gubits, 2015) (RCT)
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 significant decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma among children <1 year old and among children < 2 years old

(Klevens, 2016)
Child Care Subsidies have a Protective Effect

- States with more flexible Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program polices regarding subsidies for child welfare-supervised children have, on average, **significantly fewer child removals** than other states.

- Each additional month that low-income mothers receive a child care subsidy is associated with a **16% decrease in the odds of a neglect report** (in the following 12 months).

(Meloy, 2015) (Yang, 2019)
Child Care Subsidies

An additional $1,000 spent by states on child care assistance per person living in poverty is associated with a:

➢ 40% reduction in child maltreatment reports
➢ 35% reduction in substantiated child maltreatment
➢ 63% reduction in foster care placements
➢ 50% reduction in child fatalities due to maltreatment

(independent of federal spending)
(data are best understood qualitatively)

(Puls, 2021)
High-Quality Child Care

• Reduces likelihood of child welfare involvement
  ✓ Children who attended Early Head Start had **significantly fewer child welfare encounters** between ages 5 and 9 than those who didn’t attend

• Reduces likelihood of foster care entry
  ✓ 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** than children who did not receive any ECE

• Helps prevent child maltreatment
  ✓ Children who participated in Chicago Child-Parent Center preschool were **52% less likely to be victims of confirmed maltreatment** by age 17 & experienced **significantly lower rates of reported neglect** than nonparticipating peers

Less than 1/3 of young children under child welfare supervision who live at home receive ECE services

(Reynolds, 2003) (Green, 2014) (Klein, 2017)
Children who participate in SNAP or WIC (jointly or alone) have a lower risk of substantiated abuse and neglect reports than children who don’t participate in either program.

(Lee, 2007)
Presence of each additional store accepting SNAP benefits in the least densely populated areas of a northeastern state is associated with:

- **11.3% decrease** in substantiated child maltreatment cases
- **4.4% reduction** in child maltreatment reports
- **6% reduction** in neglect reports

(Bullinger, 2021)
Minimum Wage

• States that increased the minimum wage beyond $7.25 per hour experienced a reduction in child maltreatment reports

• For every $1 increase in the minimum wage, there was a 9.6% reduction in neglect reports (primarily for children < 12 years)

(Raissian, 2017)
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- EITC is associated with significant reductions in self-reported CPS involvement, particularly for single-parent households & larger families.
- A $1,000 increase in income via EITC is associated with 8–10% reduction in self-reported CPS involvement for low-income single-mother households.

(Berger, 2017)
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

• 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)

• States with state-level refundable EITC, compared to those without, had 11% fewer entries into foster care (even after controlling for poverty, race, education, and unemployment)

• If states without any EITC implemented a refundable EITC, an average of 668 fewer children would enter foster care annually in each state

(Biehl, 2018) (Rostad, 2020)
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- 10% increase in refundable state EITC benefits is associated with a:
  - 5% decline in rates of reported maltreatment
  - 9% decline in rates of reported neglect

- Refundable EITC (averaging $400 per year) is associated with a decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma for children < 2 years (decrease of 3.1 per 100,000), even after controlling for child poverty

(Kovski, 2021) (Klevens, 2017)
Public Benefits (TANF)

A 10% increase in state public benefit levels (AFDC/TANF + the value of food stamps) for a family of four is predicted to reduce foster care placements by 8% (Paxson, 2003)
Mothers who participate 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).

➢ Even a modest increase in child support payments—averaging $100 per year—results in a decrease in screened-in maltreatment reports

(Cancian, 2013) (RCT)
Unemployment Benefits

States that extended the duration of unemployment benefits at the onset of the Great Recession saw significantly smaller increases in substantiated reports of child neglect (as compared to states that didn’t extend unemployment benefits)

(Brown, 2020)
Economic Supports Provide Stability and Are Associated with Improved Mental Health and Well-Being
125 low-income residents of Stockton, CA were randomly selected to receive $500 per month for 24 months.

After 1 year, compared to the control group that didn’t receive the payment, recipients experienced:

- Improved financial stability
- Improved adult mental health

Recipients also experienced:

- Improved employment
  - 28% of recipients had full-time jobs at start of program → one year later, 40% had full-time jobs

With their monthly cash payment, recipients spent on average:

- 37% on food
- <1% on tobacco & alcohol

(West, 2021) (RCT)
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Casino Dividend (1997 – present)

Every adult tribal member receives a yearly income supplement from casino profits (averaging $4,000–$6,000).

Longitudinal studies show children of recipients have experienced:

✓ **Improved child well-being & mental health**
  - Tribal children whose families’ income rose above the poverty rate showed a 40% decrease in behavioral problems.
  - Before the program, poor tribal children scored twice as high as other tribal children for symptoms of psychiatric disorders. After 4 years of the program, poor tribal children were behaviorally no different than tribal children who had never been poor at all.
  - By age 21, tribal members were less likely to have substance abuse issues & psychiatric disorders than nontribal adults in the same community.

✓ **Improved educational attainment**
  - For poor tribal children, an extra $4,000 in annual household income increased educational attainment by 1 year.

(Akee, 2010)
(Costello, 2003)
(Costello, 2010)
First large-scale U.S. randomized controlled trial (RCT) designed to identify causal impact of poverty reduction on children’s early development

- 1,000 low-income mothers of newborns (in NYC, New Orleans, Twin Cities, & Omaha) were randomly assigned to receive either a $333 monthly unconditional cash payment or a nominal monthly payment (control group) for the first 4+ years of their child’s life

**Initial Findings:** 1-year-olds whose mothers received $333 monthly cash payment **had brain activity associated with higher cognitive functioning** compared to infants in the control group

➢ Monthly unconditional cash payments given to families experiencing poverty may have a causal impact on early childhood brain activity

(Troller-Renfree, 2022) (Noble, 2021) (RCT)
The Magnolia Mother’s Trust (2018 – present)

- Very low-income Black mothers in Jackson, MS received a $1,000 unconditional monthly cash payment for 12 months
- **Key Findings**
  - Participating mothers who had **enough money for food**: 64% → 81%
  - Participating mothers who were able to **pay all bills on time** without support: 27% → 83%
  - Participating mothers who **always had gas in their car** when they needed it: 55% → 82%
  - Participating mothers who were able to **save money for emergencies**: 40% → 88%

(Magnolia Mother’s Trust Evaluation Report, 2020)
Economic Supports are Associated with Improved Mental Health

Impact of federal government cash-based supports during the pandemic

Figure 9: Several or more days feeling down, depressed, or hopeless (depression) in last seven days

Large decrease in share of adults who reported adverse mental health symptoms following passage of the Dec. 2020 COVID relief bill & American Rescue Plan Act

From Dec. 2020–May 2021 respondents who reported frequent symptoms of depression or anxiety fell by over 20%

Note: Authors' analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse data

(Cooney, 2021)
Economic Supports Are Associated With Improved Maternal Mental Health

- After the 1993 EITC expansion substantially increased the benefit level for families with 2 or more children:
  - Mothers (with a high school degree or lower) who were eligible for the EITC and had 2 or more children reported **larger improvements in mental health and reductions in stress-related biomarkers** (compared to similar mothers with only 1 child)

- Expansion of the Canadian child tax benefit was associated with **significantly reduced depression** for low-income mothers

(Evans, 2014) (Milligan, 2011)
How Do People Spend Unconditional Cash Payments?

Meeting Basic Needs
- Food
- Rent
- Utilities
- Auto care/transportation

Education
- School supplies
- Tuition
- Child care

Paying Down Debt

Alcohol & Tobacco
- Families who received monthly Canadian child benefit payments significantly decreased their alcohol & tobacco spending
  - Supports theory that substance use is sometimes a response to financial stress
  - Consider economic & concrete supports as a substance abuse prevention intervention
- Stockton cash transfer recipients spent less than 1% of their payments on tobacco & alcohol

Is Attending to Economic & Concrete Supports in Evidence-Based Programs More of an Active Ingredient Than Currently Understood?
Services on Prevention Clearinghouse that Include Augmentation of Economic & Concrete Supports or Care Coordination

✓ **Homebuilders** (well-supported): Parenting intervention augmented with $200 in flex funds per family

✓ **Multisystemic Therapy** (well-supported): Mental health & substance use intervention augmented with $100 in flex funds per family

✓ **Intercept** (well-supported): Parenting intervention augmented with $200 in flex funds per family

✓ **Healthy Families America** (well-supported): Parenting intervention that provides referral and coordination of services for families, including financial, food, housing assistance and child care

✓ **Child First** (supported): Parenting & mental health intervention with teaming structure that requires a care coordinator to assist families in accessing services such as SNAP, WIC, housing, etc.

✓ **Incredible Years** (promising): Mental health intervention that recommends a line item for child care so families can engage in services
Relationship Between Macroeconomic Factors & Child Welfare Involvement Suggests the Need for a Population-Level Public Health Approach to Prevention
Family Context & Economic Factors Matter

- Material hardship is associated with CPS involvement beyond caregiver psychological distress & parenting factors

- The association of individual factors, such as caregiver substance abuse or mental health, with child maltreatment is reduced after accounting for poverty experienced by families

  ➢ “Contextual factors like poverty are essential to understanding a family’s needs when addressing child maltreatment.”

- Economic factors are associated with neglect outcomes above individual-level parenting behaviors & capacities

(Yang, 2015) (Escaravage, 2014) (Slack, 2011)
Higher Income Inequality Is Associated with Higher Child Maltreatment Rates

At the county level, higher income inequality—*independent of child poverty rates*—is significantly associated with higher rates of substantiated child maltreatment.

- The impact of income inequality on child maltreatment rates is greatest in counties with the highest levels of child poverty.

**Who lives in high poverty neighborhoods?**

- 44% of poor Black children
- 33% of poor Latinx children
- 15% of poor white children
- 24% of *all* Native American children

Higher Intergenerational Income Mobility Is Associated with Lower Child Maltreatment Reports

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 and poverty rates)

- 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** (Bullinger, 2021) (Chetty, 2019)

Blacks & Native Americans have **substantially lower rates of upward mobility** than whites, leading to persistent disparities across generations.
The Family Connects (FC) is a community-wide nurse home visiting program for families with newborns.

**Short-term:** 1–3 home visits to assess family needs (with a focus on material needs), address family needs with collaborative connections to community resources, and provide education & intervention as needed.

**Randomized clinical trial** of all families with births in two county hospitals in Durham, NC between 2009 and 2010.

- Compared to those who didn’t receive FC, families assigned to FC experienced:
  - 39% fewer CPS investigations (through age 5)

- Findings suggest that, when implemented with high quality and broad reach, a brief postpartum nurse home visiting program can reduce population rates of child maltreatment.

(Goodman, 2021) (RCT)
Economic & Concrete Supports As a Population-Level Strategy for Prevention of Child Maltreatment

Each additional $1,000 that states spend annually on public benefit programs per person living in poverty is associated with:

- 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

Public benefit programs included in this analysis:
- Cash, housing, & in-kind assistance
- Low-income housing infrastructure development
- Child care assistance
- Refundable EITC
- Medical assistance programs (including Medicaid + CHIP)

In 2017, if all states had increased their investment in public benefit programs by 13.3%, there would have been an estimated:

- 181,850 fewer child maltreatment reports
- 28,575 fewer substantiations
- 4,168 fewer foster care placements
- 130 fewer child fatalities due to maltreatment

Each additional 13.3% that states invest annually in public benefit programs (which would total $46.5 billion nationally) would save up to $153 billion in the long term (due to reduced maltreatment-related costs)

(Puls, 2021, state-level data FFY 2010-2017)
Cross-Systems Recommendations to Strengthen Economic & Concrete Supports to Families

American Academy of Pediatrics
Reimagining Child Welfare: Recommendations for Public Policy Change (2021)

Build upon the goals of Family First by expanding the scope of services eligible for federal reimbursement to include:

- **Time-limited cash assistance** to help low-income families meet concrete needs and minimize poverty-related neglect cases
- Services that address behavioral health, housing instability, and domestic violence

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities (2016)

- Evidence-based strategies to help prevent child abuse and neglect must include **strengthening economic supports to families**
- Policies that improve the socioeconomic conditions of families have the largest impacts on health
Cross-Systems Recommendations to Strengthen Economic & Concrete Supports to Families

U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory - Protecting Youth Mental Health (2021)

• Address economic & social barriers that contribute to poor mental health for young people, families and caregivers. Priorities should include:
  - Reducing child poverty
  - Ensuring access to quality child care, early childhood services & education
  - Healthy food
  - Affordable health care
  - Stable housing
  - Safe neighborhoods

• Additional investments & improved coordination are needed across all levels of government to address youth mental health needs & ensure households eligible for social services and supports are receiving them
Elevating Federal Policies that Promote a Child & Family Well-being System
Addressing Poverty-Related Neglect at the Federal Level

Allowed topics for HHS research & technical assistance to include:

• Evidence-based approaches to support child & family well-being and ways to identify, relieve, and mitigate stressors affecting families
• Methods to promote racial equity in the child welfare system, including a focus on how neglect is defined

Purposes of grants to include:

• Expanding primary prevention services
• Strategies that reduce findings of child neglect due to family economic insecurity
• Programs that help families build protective factors linked to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, such as time-limited, need-based concrete support

Stronger CAPTA – HR 485 passed in House 2021
Addressing Poverty-Related Neglect at the Federal Level

Family Poverty is Not Child Neglect – HR 573 introduced 2021

Amends CAPTA to ensure that states receiving grants for CPS:
• Address reports concerning a child’s living arrangements or subsistence needs through services & benefits
• Do not permit the separation of children from parents on the basis of poverty

Alternative Pathways to Child Abuse Prevention Act – S 1741 introduced 2021

• Amends CAPTA to provide for alternative pathways that connect families experiencing difficulty meeting basic needs or other risk factors—such as parental stress, family violence, and isolation—to voluntary community-based prevention services in order to safely reduce the number of families unnecessarily referred to CPS
Impact of 2021 Federal Stimulus Checks

Material hardship **fell sharply** following federal stimulus cash payments, which most Americans received in January & April 2021 (*totaling up to $2,000 per person)*

From December 2020 to April 2021, Americans reported:

- **Adverse mental health symptoms fell by 20%** (*among all households*)
- **Food insufficiency fell by 41%** (*among households with children*)

While the economic recovery, tax credits, & other forms of aid may have also contributed to these improvements, **largest declines in measures of hardship coincided with arrival of stimulus checks.**

➢ “We believe the success of the federal government’s relief measures may be due to the speed, breadth, & flexibility of its broad-based approach, *primarily relying on cash transfers.*”

Who experienced the greatest declines in material hardship?

✓ Poorest households
✓ Families with children

(Cooney, 2021)
Impact of Enhanced Unemployment Benefits During the COVID Pandemic

Applicants who received enhanced unemployment benefits from August to December 2020 reported fewer adverse mental health symptoms than those who applied for, but did not receive, these benefits.
Impact of Enhanced Government Assistance During the COVID Pandemic

Child maltreatment declined during the pandemic

- **Emergency room visits** for suspected child maltreatment substantially declined
- **Hospitalizations** for abusive head trauma (AHT) decreased
- Child **fatalities** due to maltreatment decreased 4.4% (FY19 to FY20) *(though Black child fatalities increased 17%)*

**Government assistance to families in financial distress may be protective**

➢ Although surveys show that household finances worsened for 40% of American families during the pandemic, increased government assistance **buffered financial distress**

(Sege, 2021) (Child Maltreatment 2020) (Maassel, 2021 - graphic) (CDC, 2020)
Impact of Monthly Child Tax Credit (CTC) Payments

Monthly CTC payments:
- **Reduced monthly child poverty by almost 30%**
- Reduced month-to-month volatility in poverty
- Increased families’ abilities to meet their **basic needs**
- Strongly **reduced food insufficiency**
- Had **no** discernable negative effects on parental employment

$1,000 increase in the average CTC benefit (as of 2013) is associated with a 1.1% increase in single mother labor force participation

(Parolin, 2022) (Shafer, 2022) (Zheng, 2020)
How Did Families Spend Their Expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC) Monthly Cash Payments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Below $25,000</th>
<th>$25,000 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (incl. phone &amp; internet)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent or mortgage</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education expenses*</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying down debt</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle payments</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings or investments</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational goods</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving to charity/family</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families with incomes below $25,000 were more likely than other families to spend the CTC on **basic needs: food, utilities, clothing, & housing**

Data collected from July 21 – August 2, 2021

(CBPP, 2021 - analysis of U.S. Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey data)
CTC: Potential for Significant Long-Term Cost Savings & Benefits to Society

Social benefits of a more generous and widespread CTC* are estimated to be worth nearly nine times the annual program costs due to:

✓ Increased children’s future earnings in adulthood
✓ Increased parent and child health & longevity
✓ Decreased infant mortality
✓ Reduced health care costs
✓ Reduced expenditures on child protection ➢ $4 billion in avoided CPS expenditures
✓ Reduced criminal justice costs

“The biggest single benefit to children and society as a whole comes from the substantial increases in children’s health and longevity.”

*Making it fully refundable, distributing it monthly, and increasing its annual value to $3,600 per child aged 0–5 and $3,000 per child aged 6–17

(Garfinkel, 2022)
High-Quality Child Care: Long-Term Return on Investment

Every $1 invested in high-quality child care = $9 in benefits to society due to:

- Reduced participation in special education
- Reduced K-12 grade retention
- Increased high school graduation rates
- Increased labor income
- Reduced crime & criminal justice costs
- Improved health & healthy behaviors

Direct investments in health & education of low-income children yield the highest returns

• U.S. annual public spending on child care per child (age 2 and under) = $500
• O.E.C.D. average = $14,436 (2019 data)

(García, 2021) (Hendren, 2020) (Davis, 2021)
Emergency Funding for MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF)

**Amount:** $72,450,000 to states/territories for FY 2021 (project period thru 9/30/22)

- **Eligible grantees:** All states, territories, and tribes approved to receive FY 2021 PSSF funding are eligible to receive supplemental PSSF grants

- **Approved Activities (No State Match Required):** Supplemental PSSF funds may be used to provide community-based family support, family preservation, family reunification, adoption promotion and support services

- There are no other specific programmatic requirements or limitations on use of supplemental funding

- The Children’s Bureau encourages child welfare agencies to reach out to families and community-based agencies to identify the unmet needs for services or supports

ACYF-CB-PI-21-04 (March 9, 2021) - Guidance and instruction related to Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021
Economic & Concrete Support Funding Opportunities Available NOW!

Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) in American Rescue Plan

**Amount:** $250 million supplement to states/territories available through 9/30/25 which augments CBCAP funding increases over the last several years

- **Approved Activities:** CBCAP is flexible and example activities include assistance to families, comprehensive support for parents, increasing family stability, improving access to formal and informal resources

- Program Instruction elevates the need to attend to the “Intersection of Poverty and Child Welfare” and to “Advance[e] Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities in Prevention and Child Welfare Prevention”

- Children’s Bureau strongly encourages lead agencies to reach out to families and community-based agencies to plan for the use of funds to increase supports, especially for black, brown, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ children and families as well as communities that have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty.

ACYF-CB-PI-21-07 (May 5, 2021) - Guidance and instruction related to American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
Pandemic Fiscal Recovery Funds Final Rule: Creates Opportunities to Strengthen Economic & Concrete Supports and Address Racial Inequities

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), part of the American Rescue Plan, provide $350 billion to address the impacts of the pandemic & support equitable recovery

- Funds can be used for a **wide range of investments** focused on helping low-income households & communities *(presumed to be impacted by the pandemic)*
- State, local, and Tribal governments have flexibility to use the funds to address long-standing **racial & economic inequities**

- Services for child welfare-involved families & foster youth
- Cash assistance
- Assistance in accessing public benefits
- Affordable & permanent supportive housing
- Rental, mortgage & utility assistance
- Childcare, early learning, & home visiting services
- Family leave programs
- Health services
- Food aid

(US. Dept. of Treasury, 2022)
Elevating State Policies & Other Organizations’ Efforts that Promote a Child & Family Well-being System
Tightening Legal Standards for Removal at State Level May Address Poverty-Related Neglect

Washington State

*Keeping Families Together* (effective 2021)

- Tightens standards for removal by requiring child protective services to show a child faces “imminent physical harm” from abuse or neglect rather than “serious threat of substantial harm”

- Prevents the state from removing children solely because of certain conditions in the home, including community or family poverty, inadequate housing, mental illness or substance use
Tightening Legal Standards for Removal at State Level May Address Poverty-Related Neglect

New York
State Central Registry reform (2020)
• Raises the standard of evidence needed for child protective services to indicate a report of child abuse or neglect from “some credible evidence” to a “fair preponderance of the evidence”
Tightening Legal Standards for Removal at State Level May Address Poverty-Related Neglect

Texas – House Bill 567 (effective 2021)

Before a child can be removed for neglect:

• Parent’s actions (or lack thereof) must create an “immediate danger” of harm—rather than a “substantial risk” to the child’s safety

• Parent must show “blatant disregard for the consequences” on the child of their action or inaction
Tightening Legal Standards for Removal at State Level May Address Poverty-Related Neglect

Kentucky – Senate Bill 8 (passed 2022)

- Defines a neglected child as one whose health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm when parent/guardian does not provide adequate care, supervision, food, clothing, shelter, and education or medical care necessary for the child’s well-being when financially able to do so or offered financial or other means to do so

- Expands access to family preservation services to families with children at moderate risk of out-of-home placement
New Mexico – House Bill 46 (effective 2022)

• Leverages title IV-E federal funding to establish an Office of Family Representation & Advocacy that will provide high-quality legal representation to parents, custodians, or guardians whose children are at risk of being placed into, or are in, foster care

• American Bar Association (ABA) 2019 resolution
  ▪ Recognizes children and parents have legal rights to family integrity and family unity
  ▪ Supports use of prevention services, including legal services, to ensure children’s safety without the need for removal from a parent or caregiver
Right to Counsel for Child Welfare-Involved Parents May Address Racial Disparities

**Minnesota – HF 312**(effective 2022)

All parents and guardians in child welfare cases shall have the right to court-appointed counsel beginning “prior to the first hearing on the petition and at all stages of the proceedings”

- New law **goes beyond many other state right to counsel laws** because courts may appoint counsel when a family is being investigated by CPS
- Right to counsel laws have the potential to reduce family separation, address racial inequities in the child welfare system, & reduce the foster care population
Economic & Concrete Assistance to Address Poverty-Related Neglect

Illinois – Norman Services for Family Preservation

For families whose children are at risk of entering foster care due to lack of food, clothing, housing or other basic human needs, this program provides:

➢ Emergency cash assistance
   Security deposit and/or first month’s rent • Housing repairs • Utilities • Food • Clothing • Furniture and/or equipment • Transportation

➢ Assistance finding housing

➢ A waiver to allow families to apply for TANF so that children in DCFS custody can be returned home within 90 days
Family Preservation Program Augmented with Flexible Funds

**Kentucky** – Family Preservation Program (FPP)

- FPP provides families who have children at risk of removal with short-term interventions, support services, and **flexible funds**
  - Evaluation found FPP services are successful in reducing entry into foster care & promoting family well-being
    - Families who received FPP services were **less likely to have their children enter foster care** than comparison group of families who did not receive FPP services, although FPP group had higher risk factors overall
    - **87%** of children whose families received FPP services remained in their home **1 year after services ended**
    - Every $1 spent on FPP services saved $2.85 in out-of-home care costs
    - Recommended **expansion** of FPP services & flexible funding to meet family needs

(Huebner, 2008)
Flexible Funds to Meet Economic & Concrete Needs of Families with Children at Risk of Removal

Kentucky – SFY 2022 budget
State budget included $1,000 in flexible funds for families with children at risk for removal to meet economic and concrete needs & support prevention.

From SFY 2019 to SFY 2021
- Prevention expenditures increased by $9.6 million
- Out-of-home care expenditures decreased by $58.1 million

(decline in out-of-home expenditures includes decrease in number of children in foster care [900+ less] & reductions in congregate care placements)

(Kentucky Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare & Family Services, July 21, 2021)
Family First Prevention Plan Centered on Concrete Supports

**Indiana** – **IV-E Prevention Plan** (submitted 2021)

Prevention Plan proposes:

- **Indiana Family Preservation Services** as a parenting program (*evaluation pending*) – includes concrete supports for families to prevent removal due to unmet basic needs
  - ✓ Provides direct payments for rent, utilities, food, clothing, and transportation assistance
  - ✓ Connects families to community supports
  - ✓ Assists families with applications for federal assistance

- **All children & families who receive Healthy Families America** as prevention candidates (*through child welfare or community providers*)
Economic Diversion System to Address Poverty-Related Neglect

**Vermont** — “Economic Firewall” for poverty-related cases

- Vermont has the highest rate of child maltreatment referrals in the nation, but lowest reported screened-in neglect rate
  - Only 1.5% of all child maltreatment victims are substantiated for “neglect only” (compared to 92% in Montana)
  - Specificity of harm is required to substantiate neglect, rather than omissions
- Strong interagency collaboration—child welfare division is co-located with economic services division & child development division
- CPS district directors have direct access to family preservation flexible funds for families without open cases to prevent removal
- Multidimensional diversion system where families are referred to:
  - Economic support services (TANF)
  - Family resource centers
  - Differential response systems

(DeGuerre, 2021)  
(Child Maltreatment 2019)
Continuation of Cash Assistance for Families Working to Reunify

**California** — [AB 135](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavFullText.xhtml?billId=2020-21%200135%20AB&view=arrow) (effective 2021)

Requires that parents who are receiving CalWORKs/TANF benefits, and who are actively working to reunify when their children are placed into foster care, will **continue to be eligible to receive monthly cash assistance** for up to 6 months.
Limits to Billing Parents for the Cost of Foster Care If They Are Working To Reunify

California – AB 1686 (introduced 2022)

Limits the practice of billing parents for the cost of their child’s foster care placement if they are working to reunify

- Under California law, child welfare agencies must determine whether it is in the child’s best interests to pursue collection
- AB 1686 would require child welfare agencies to presume that collection is likely to pose a barrier to family reunification
- Introduced in response to a 2021 NPR investigation which found:
  - 57% of parents billed for foster care in California are people of color & the extra debt often follows families for years
  - When parents get billed, their children are likely to spend additional time in foster care
  - The government raises little money, or even loses money, when it tries to collect

(Cancian, 2017)
(see also time to reunification slide)
Connecting Child Welfare-Involved Families with Community Partners to Provide Concrete Supports

Oklahoma - CarePortal

- Collaboration with Oklahoma DHS that connects child welfare-involved youth & families to community churches to provide needed resources and concrete supports

- Impact of CarePortal (SFY 2020)
  - Children served: 2,733
  - Estimated value of resources provided: $276,328
  - Estimated economic impact of resources provided: $1,062,755

- Total estimated economic impact of CarePortal since it began in 2015 = $3,539,037

CarePortal available across the US [CarePortal map]
Connecting Child Welfare-Involved Families with Community Partners to Provide Economic & Concrete Supports

Georgia – Together for Families Program

• Provides emergency financial assistance & concrete supports to families struggling with poverty who are referred by child welfare

• Collaborates with community partners to meet a family’s immediate basic needs, such as adequate housing, food, & health care

• Once a family’s immediate needs are met, families may connect with a Family Navigator who will meet with them, understand their needs, & help them navigate government systems
Family Resource Centers to Provide Economic & Concrete Supports to Child Welfare-Involved Families

**Colorado – Family Resource Centers** (FRCs)

FRC in Teller County, CO connects families who have been screened out of child welfare to community resources & family support services and provides *one-time financial assistance*

- After a formal partnership between child welfare & FRC was established, Teller County saw a 63% reduction in its child maltreatment rate and saved an estimated $2.5 million

For each $1 invested,

the savings to child welfare in terms of fewer cases of maltreatment was $2.92 in Teller County, CO
Providing Housing Supports to Families Receiving Healthy Families America (HFA)

Maryland

• Housing instability was identified as a consistent barrier for families seeking to engage in HFA

• In 2021, began pairing housing supports with HFA to **address the housing needs** of participating families
  ➢ HFA home visitors assess for housing-related needs & provide housing support resources to **all** participating families
Building a Child & Family Well-being System
Annual Costs of Child Maltreatment in the U.S.

- $80 billion = direct & indirect costs of child maltreatment (2012)
- $428 billion = economic burden due to substantiated child maltreatment (lifetime costs incurred annually) (2015)
- $2 trillion = economic burden due to investigated child maltreatment (lifetime costs incurred annually) (2015)

(Gelles, 2012) (Peterson, 2018)
Total Annual Public Expenditures on Child Welfare Systems in the U.S.

• **$33 billion** = total direct public expenditures by state & local child welfare agencies (SFY 2018)

(Child Trends, 2021)
Financial supports = funds for transportation; utility or rent payments; purchase of needed furniture & appliances; child care; food & cash for incidentals

(Notes: Federal analysis includes data from 31 states; state/local analysis includes data from 33 states; analysis does not yet include title IV-E prevention expenditures authorized by the Family First Prevention Services Act; substance abuse and mental health spending excludes costs associated with health care coverage)

(Child Trends, 2021)
County Spending on Prevention Services is Associated with Individual Maltreatment Investigations

• Mothers receiving WIC benefits who live in counties with **greater amounts of per child spending on prevention services** have **lower odds of individual child maltreatment investigations**, compared to those who live in counties that spend less (controlling for individual and county-level risks for maltreatment)

• The effect of county spending on individual maltreatment investigations is **irrespective of actual receipt** of prevention services

(Maguire-Jack, 2014)

**Prevention services included:**
- Domestic violence, parenting, substance abuse & mental health services
- Home visiting programs
- In-home counseling programs
- Flexible funding
- Resource & referral to community resources
- Family team meetings, wraparound programs & coordinated service teams
- Support groups
- Respite care
- Youth services
The Negative Social Return of Foster Care

Every $1 spent on foster care for a child = \textit{Negative social return} of -$3.64 to -$9.55

- Investment in foster care \textit{multiplies future long-term negative outcomes} far beyond those occurring in the general population.
- While foster care remains a necessity for some children, there is no consistent evidence that as an intervention it is beneficial broadly to children, and there is substantial evidence that it is associated with \textit{poor outcomes}.

Child and Family Well-being System: Use of Economic & Concrete Supports as a Prevention and Intervention Strategy

Supports for families upstream of system involvement

Assessment of economic instability at all touchpoints

Reorientation of public benefits administered explicitly to reduce government interventions that interrupt familial bonds

Interagency collaboration & integration to leverage supports beyond what child welfare systems can provide

Broad array of supports that extend beyond “treatment” for parents

Partnership with families and communities to develop responsive & accessible supports and services

Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness & impact of interventions and fine-tune approach
THEORY OF CHANGE:
ECONOMIC & CONCRETE SUPPORTS

INPUTS
Policies: Systemic approach to supporting families, promoting well-being, & preventing maltreatment
Data: Analytic framework & information to understand and address economic risk
People: Engagement with communities, providers, & individuals with lived experience
Programs: Services, supports, & collaboration among human service agencies

INTERVENTIONS
• Community pathways to support families without CPS hotline
• Data-driven strategies to identify economic risk & measure impact
• Improved availability & accessibility of economic supports
• Raise awareness among families of available economic supports

OUTPUTS
Responsive delivery of economic & concrete supports to families in need

OUTCOMES
Proximal:
▶ Improve protective capacity of parents
▶ Reduce familial stress

Distal:
▼ Reduce unnecessary hotline calls
▼ Reduce child maltreatment
▲ Enhance child & family well-being
New communications toolkit reframing childhood adversity as a public issue and emphasizing:

- Collective responsibility for child and family well-being
- Social conditions that contribute to child abuse & neglect

[https://buildingbetterchildhoods.org/](https://buildingbetterchildhoods.org/)

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Clare Anderson, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Universal Childcare as a Policy to Prevent Child Maltreatment (forthcoming in Pediatrics)

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Suggested citation:

Main slide deck available at:
Chapinhall.org/economicsupports
References & Related Citations


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