

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

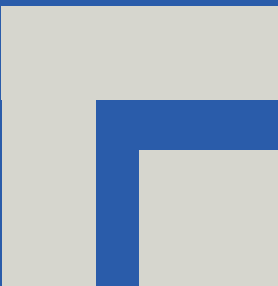
Yasmin Grewal-Kök

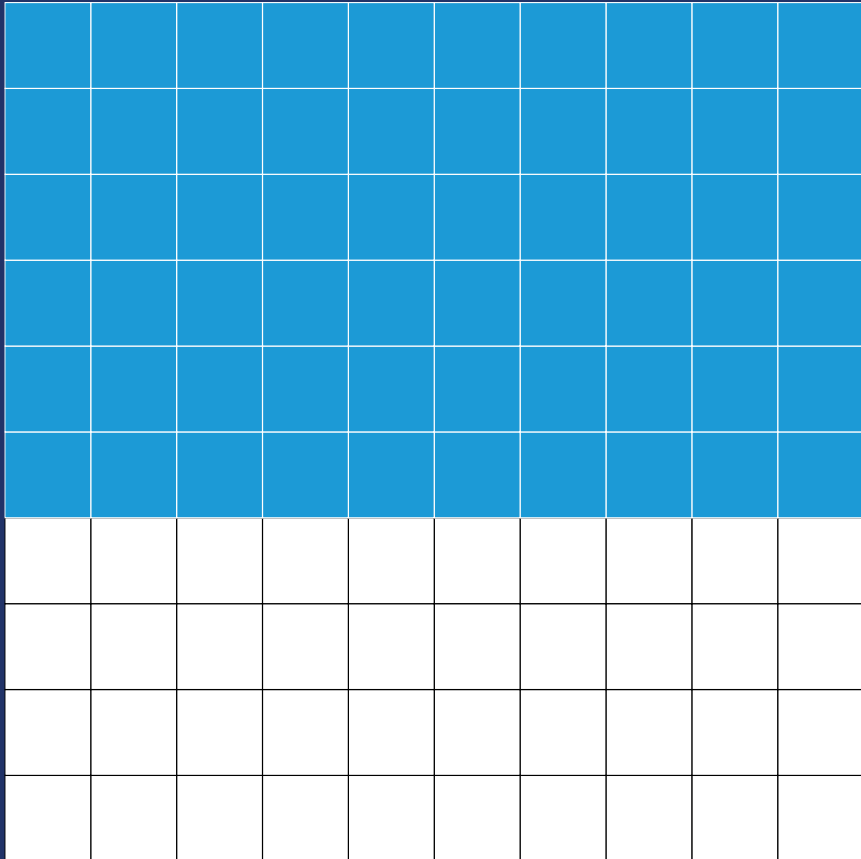
Child Welfare's Historic Structure

- 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**



Intersection of Family
Economic Insecurity, Income &
Child Welfare Involvement





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
earn below 200% of the
federal poverty line

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

Material Hardship Increases Risk for Child Welfare Involvement: **Both Neglect & Abuse**

If low-income families experience at least one material hardship

- ~3x higher likelihood of neglect investigation
- ~4x higher likelihood physical abuse investigation

If low-income families experience multiple types of material hardship
(after experiencing no hardships)

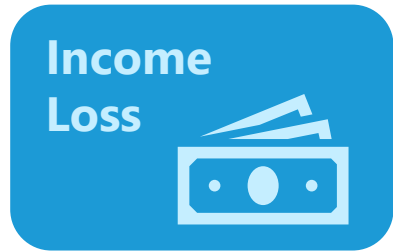
- ~4x higher likelihood of CPS investigation
- ~7x higher likelihood physical abuse investigation

(Yang, 2015)

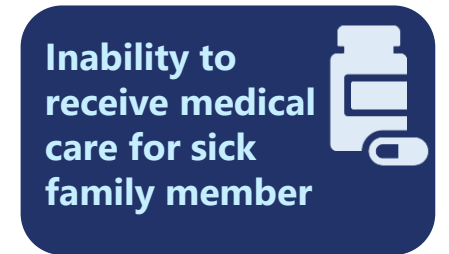
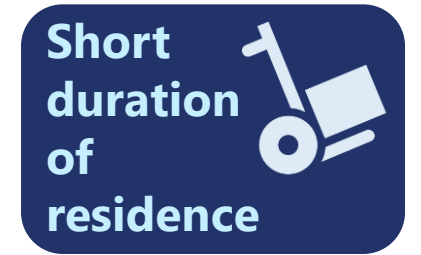
**Dimensions of material hardship in this study included: food, housing, utilities & medical hardship*

The Intersection of Family Economic Insecurity & Child Welfare Involvement

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



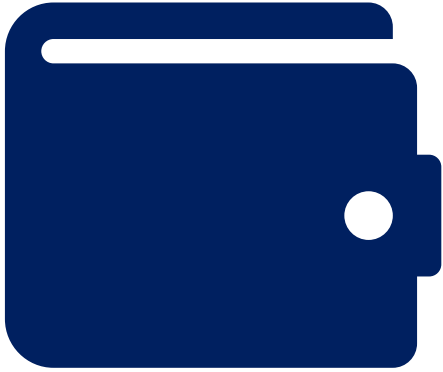
Strongest predictors of investigated neglect reports



Negative Earnings Shocks Are Associated with Increased Risk for Subsequent Child Welfare Involvement

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For low-income families with recently closed CPS investigations:



About 10% of low-income adults with children have experienced an economic shock resulting in a **50% income drop** over one year

- Experiencing a **negative earnings shock** (*quarterly reduction in earnings of 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

But the Association Diminishes When Negative Earnings Shocks Are Offset by Public Benefits

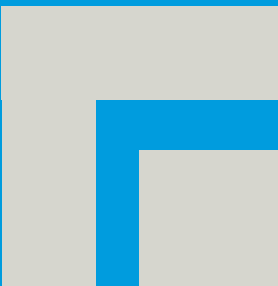
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For low-income families with recently closed CPS investigations:



- **Accessing sufficient public benefits** when negative earnings shocks occur effectively buffers against the risk of **child welfare involvement**
 - 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

Exploring the Context of Family Economic Insecurity, Income, & Child Welfare Involvement



Economic Insecurity Is Widespread, But Families Move In and Out of Poverty

(Drake, 2014)
(Cellini, 2008)
(Mistry, 2002)
(Han, 2021)

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



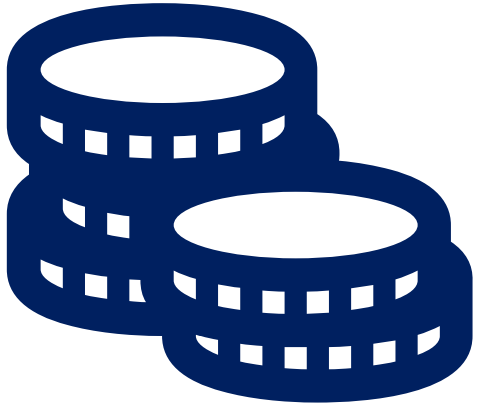
Almost 50% of those who become poor are out of poverty a year later



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**

Family Income Instability Increases Risk for Child Welfare Involvement



Low-income families at risk for child welfare involvement who have experienced **income instability** in the past year (*including changes in both earnings and public benefits*) are at **increased risk for CPS investigations**, even after controlling for household income level

- These findings suggest a **unique relationship** between **income instability & child welfare involvement**

Multiple Material & Economic Hardships Overload Families and Increase Risk for Child Welfare Involvement



Economic & Concrete Support Packages (NAS) to Improve Context and Prevent Child Welfare Involvement

Analysis simulating the effects of increased household income under 3 anti-poverty policy packages found implementation could **reduce CPS investigations by 11 to 20%** (*386,000 to 669,000 fewer children investigated per year*)

- Reductions were **particularly large** for Black and Latinx children & those living with single parents
- Analysis suggests implementation would **substantially reduce racial disproportionality** in CPS involvement:
 - 19 to 29% reduction in investigations for Black children
 - 13 to 24% reduction in investigations for Latinx children
 - 7 to 13% reduction in investigations for white children

National Academy of Sciences Consensus Report (2019)

A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty

- **Anti-poverty package 2:** expansion of EITC & Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) + universal monthly child allowance
- **Anti-poverty package 3:** expansion of EITC, CDCTC, Housing Choice Voucher Program & SNAP
- **Anti-poverty package 4:** expansion of EITC & CDCTC, increase in federal minimum wage (to \$10.25/hr) + monthly child allowance

(Pac, forthcoming)

([*A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*](#), 2019)

Evidence Regarding How People Spend Unconditional Cash Payments



Meeting Basic Needs

- Food
- Rent
- Utilities
- Auto care/transportation



Education

- School supplies
- Tuition
- Child care



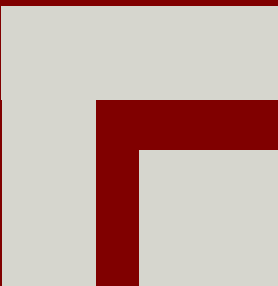
Paying Down Debt



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 & Baby's First Years** unconditional cash transfer recipients spent less than 1% of their payments on tobacco & alcohol

Economic & Concrete Supports:
A Race Equity Strategy to
Address Disparity & Disproportionality
in Child Welfare



Economic & Concrete Supports:

A Race Equity Strategy to Address Disparity & Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Poverty & economic hardship puts families at **increased risk of child welfare involvement**

Economic & concrete supports to stabilize families and prevent child welfare involvement may be a mechanism to **reduce racial disparities**



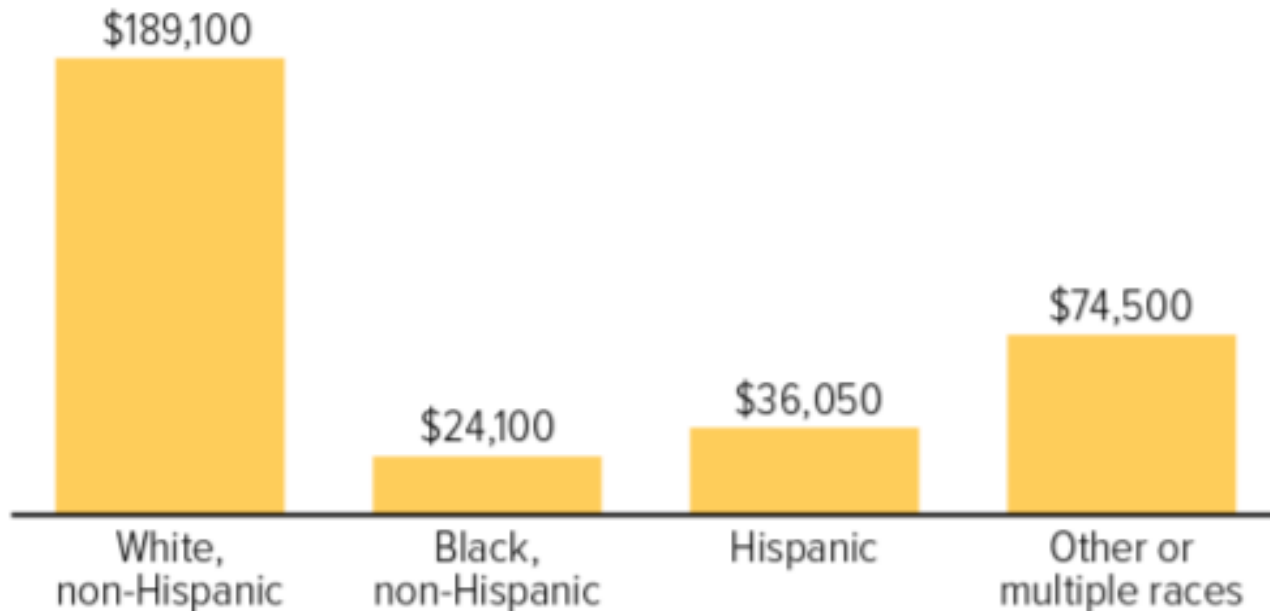
Due to systemic inequities, families of color are **more likely to experience economic hardship** & this may contribute to their disproportionate child welfare involvement

Disproportionality and disparities are due to racism both internal and external to the child welfare system (Dettlaff, 2020)

Macroeconomic Policy Context: Racial Wealth Gap Exacerbates Economic Insecurity for Families of Color

White Families Hold 8 Times More Wealth Than Black Families, 5 Times More Than Hispanic Families

Median net worth, in 2019 U.S. dollars



Note: "Other or multiple races" includes all respondents who identified as Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacifica Islander, other race, and those who reported more than one racial identification. Roughly 69 percent and 23 percent of respondents in this grouping reported more than one racial identification or identified as Asian, respectively.

- 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*)

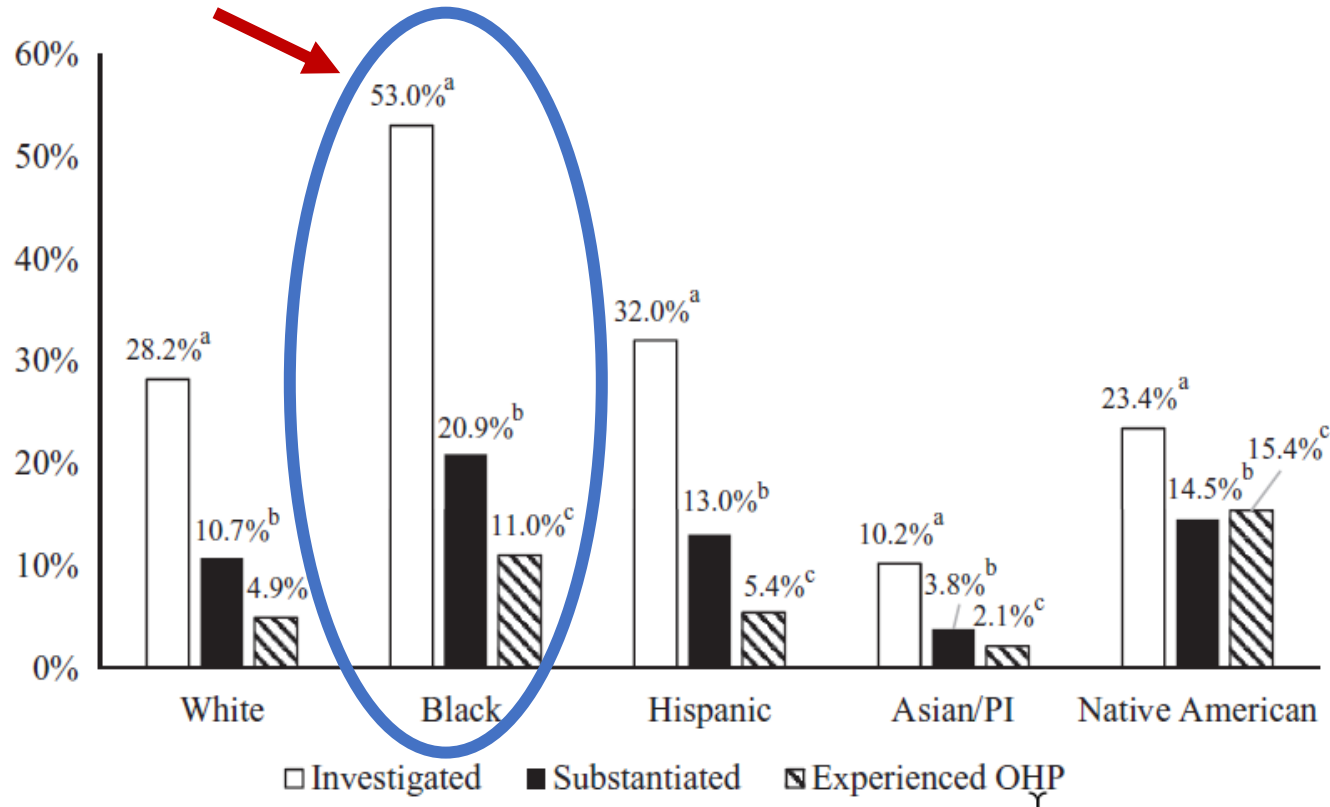
([CBPP](#), 2021 – graphic)

(Federal Reserve, 2020) (Moss, 2020)

(Prosperity Now, 2020) (Chang, 2010)

CPS Interventions Are Pervasive: Over Half of All Black Children Experience an Investigation

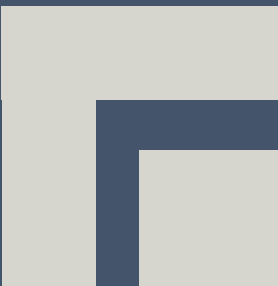
Lifetime (Birth–18) Incidence of CPS Involvement in the United States by Race/Ethnicity



- **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** experience a CPS investigation each year (FFY 2019)
- An estimated **1 in every 100** children experience a termination of parental rights

(Berger, 2020 - graphic) (Kim, 2017) (Edwards, 2021)
(Child Maltreatment 2019) (Wildeman, 2020)

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
 - ❖ Furniture & equipment
 - ❖ Transportation
 - ❖ Food
 - ❖ Clothing
- 

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



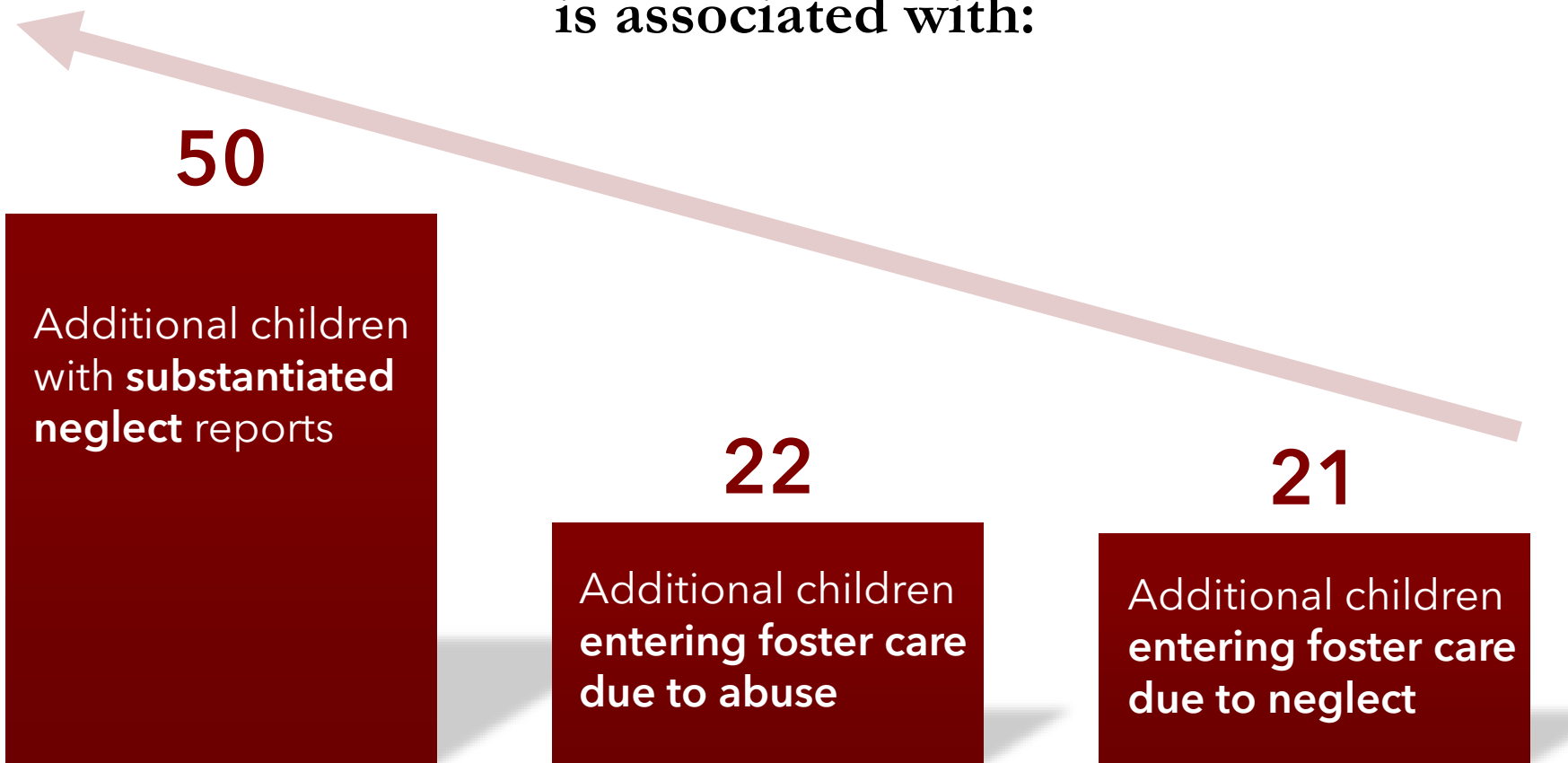
Reduced income & negative earnings shocks

= ↑ **Increased risk for child welfare involvement**

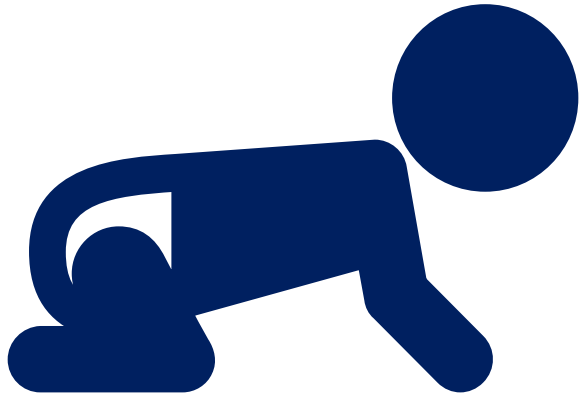
(Ginther, 2017) (Paxson, 2003) (Yang, 2016) (Cash, 2003)
(Klevens, 2015) (Weiner, 2020) (McLaughlin, 2017) (Bullinger, 2021)
(Berger, 2015) (Frioux, 2014) (Wood, 2012) (Cai, 2021)

Lack of Access to TANF

Each additional state policy that restricts access to TANF is associated with:

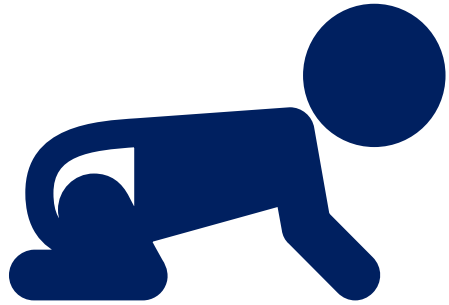


Lack of Access to Child Care



- For every additional child care concern reported by families receiving TANF, the **risk of supervisory child neglect increases by 20%**
- Mothers entering substance use treatment who have difficulty securing child care are **82% more likely to self-report child neglect** (*compared to mothers entering treatment who don't have difficulty securing child care*)
 - 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

Lack of Access to Child Care Subsidies



Waitlists to access subsidized child care are associated with an **increase in child maltreatment 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**

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 associated with **increased risk for neglect** (*above and beyond poverty*)

(Fowler, 2013)

(Warren, 2015)

(ACF Dear Colleague Letter, 2021) (NCTSN, 2005)

“

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

”

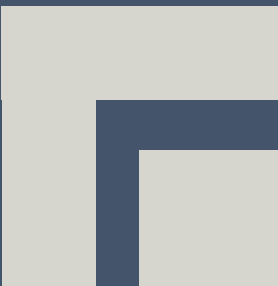
Housing Insecurity: Mortgage Delinquency & Foreclosures



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)

What does the evidence suggest happens when economic & concrete supports are increased?



Increased Access to These Economic & Concrete Supports (ECS) Is Associated with Decreased Child Welfare Involvement



Macroeconomic Supports

- Tax credits (EITC & CTC)
- Employment
 - Minimum wage
 - Paid family leave
 - Unemployment benefits



Concrete Supports

- Healthcare (Medicaid)
- Child care
- Housing



Child Welfare Interventions with ECS

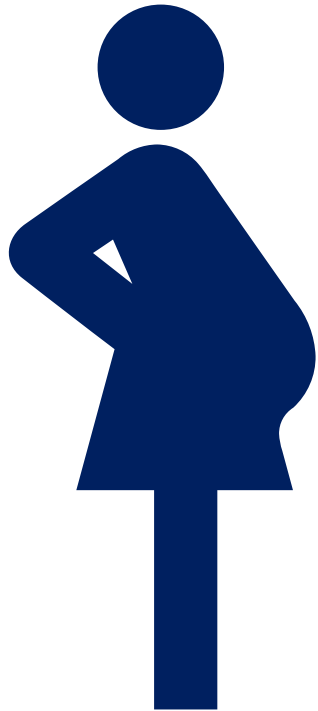
- Differential response
- Family preservation



Public Benefits

- Overall state spending on benefits
- TANF
- SNAP & WIC

Paid Family Leave (PFL)



Compared to states with no PFL policy, the implementation of California's 2004 PFL policy (*up to 12 weeks of partially paid leave*) was associated with a **decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma:**

- among children <1 year old and
- among children < 2 years old

State Policy Option: Establishing Paid Family Leave Policies

7 states have adopted and fully implemented a paid family leave program of a minimum of 6 weeks following the birth, adoption, or the placement of a child into foster care.



■ State has newly adopted and implemented the policy since October 1, 2021

2021: 6 states

- **Less than 1 in 4** workers have access to paid family leave
- 11 states + D.C. have adopted a statewide paid family leave program (but not all are fully implemented)
(as of 2022)

([Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center \(PN3\)](#), 2022 - graphic) ([KFF](#), 2021)

Medicaid Expansion



The rate of **screened-in neglect reports for children < age 6 decreased** in states that expanded Medicaid, but increased in states that did not expand Medicaid (*from 2013 to 2016*)

➤ If non-expansion states had expanded Medicaid, there would have been almost **125,000 fewer screened-in neglect referrals for children < age 6** in the U.S. (*from 2014 through 2016*)

Medicaid expansion is associated **with improved economic stability & mental health** for parents who are low-income

Medicaid Expansion

States that newly **expanded Medicaid** in 2014 were associated with **reductions in the average rate of child neglect reports** per state-year:

- 13% reduction for children ages 0-5
- 15% reduction for children ages 6-12
- 16% reduction for children ages 13–17 years

(compared to states that did not expand Medicaid from 2008 to 2018)

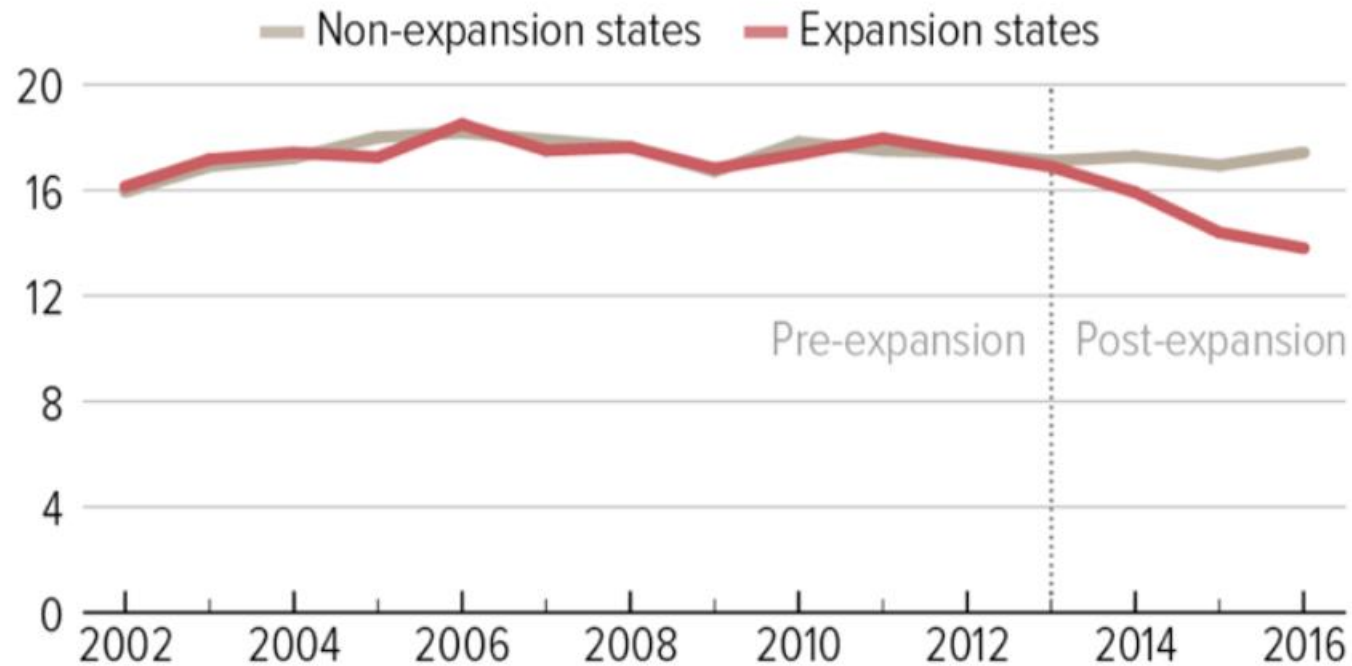
- Almost **60%** of uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- **7.6%** of children in non-expansion states, compared to 3.8% of children in expansion states, are uninsured *(as of 2019)*



Medicaid Expansion & Housing Stability

Evictions Fell Sharply in Medicaid Expansion States

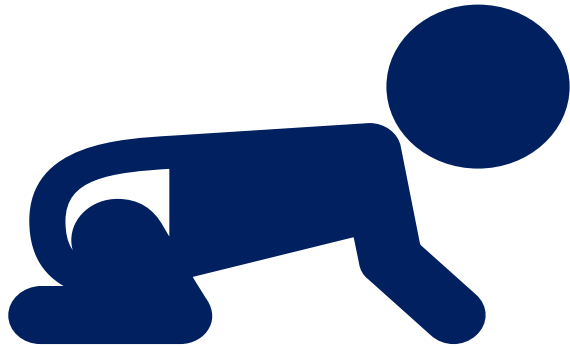
Evictions per 1,000 renter-occupied households



Source: Zewde et al, "The Effect of the ACA Medicaid Expansion on Nationwide Home Evictions and Eviction-Court Initiations," 2019

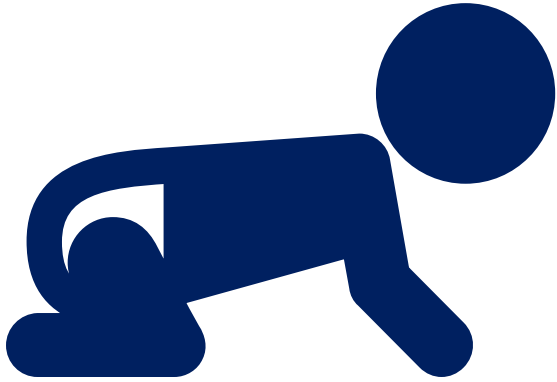
- Medicaid expansion is a **key strategy for addressing housing instability** for people with low incomes
- **Evictions fell by 20%** in Medicaid expansion states compared to non-expansion states
- By providing enrollees with **financial protection from high medical bills**, Medicaid can free up income to pay rent or to avoid eviction

Child Care Subsidies



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

Child Care Subsidies



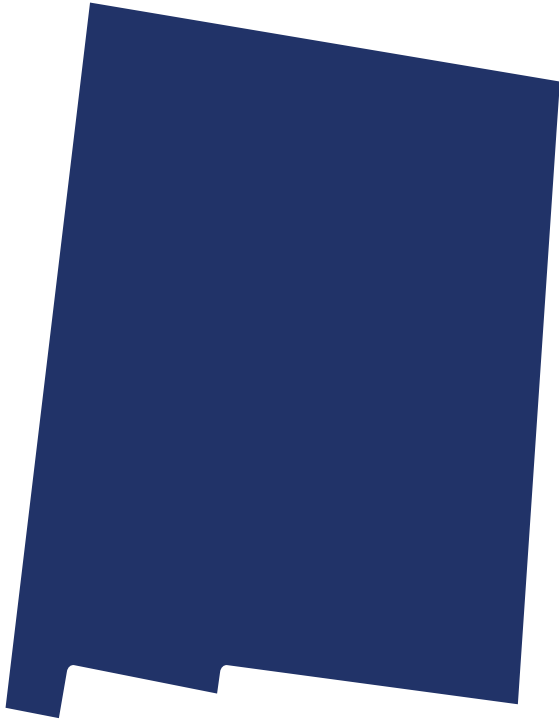
Each additional month that mothers who are low-income receive a child care subsidy is associated with a **16% decrease in the odds of a neglect report**

(in the following 12 months)

State Policy Option: Increasing Access to Child Care for Families

New Mexico

- From 2022 to 2023, **child care will be free for most families** (*family of four earning up to about \$111,000*)
- Goal is to develop a **free, universal child care system**
 - In November 2022, New Mexico will vote on a measure that would guarantee a **constitutional right to early childhood education**
 - If approved, it would create a **dedicated funding stream** (*from the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund*) for universal preschool & child care and bolster home-visiting programs for new parents



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% vs. 26% in control group after 18 months*)
- **Increased reunification** (*30% vs. 9% in control group after 2 years*)

Permanent Housing Subsidies



HUD's **Family Options Study** found that homeless families referred for permanent housing subsidies self-reported at the 20-month follow-up:

- **50% fewer foster care placements**
(1.9% vs. 5% in the control group experienced at least 1 placement in the last 6 months)
- Lower rates of psychological distress
- Less intimate partner violence
- Fewer child behavior problems
- Greater housing stability & food security

(Gubits, 2015) (RCT)

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

State Policy Option: Providing Short-Term Housing Support to Families Involved with Child Welfare



Wisconsin – [Family Keys Pilot Program](#) (2022)

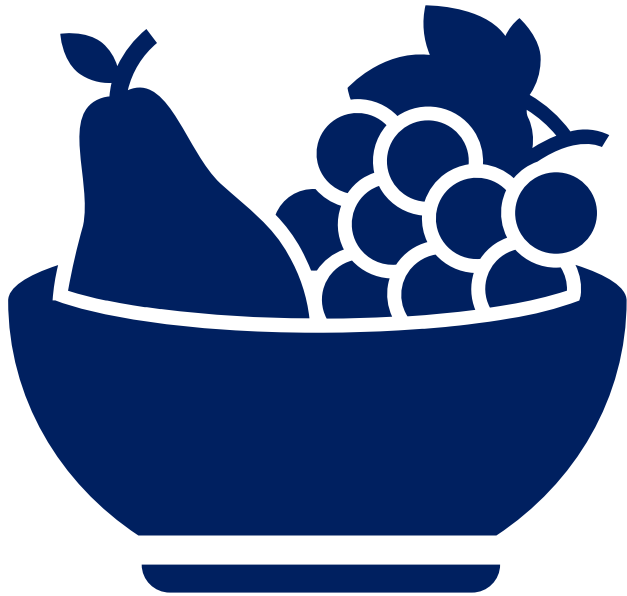
- Will provide **short-term housing funds** to families with children at risk of removal due to housing insecurity & to families unable to reunify due to inadequate housing
- Short-term housing funds will be used for **hotel costs, short-term rentals & expenses related to finding and maintaining housing** (*security deposits, housing application fees, utility costs*)

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (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%**

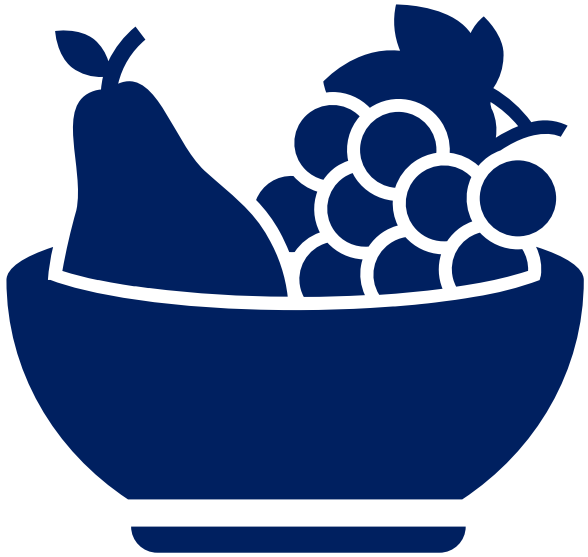
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) & Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)



Children from low-income families who participate in SNAP or WIC (jointly or alone) have a **lower risk of substantiated abuse and neglect reports**

(compared to children from low-income families who don't participate in either program)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



From 2004 to 2016, states with **more generous SNAP policies** experienced:

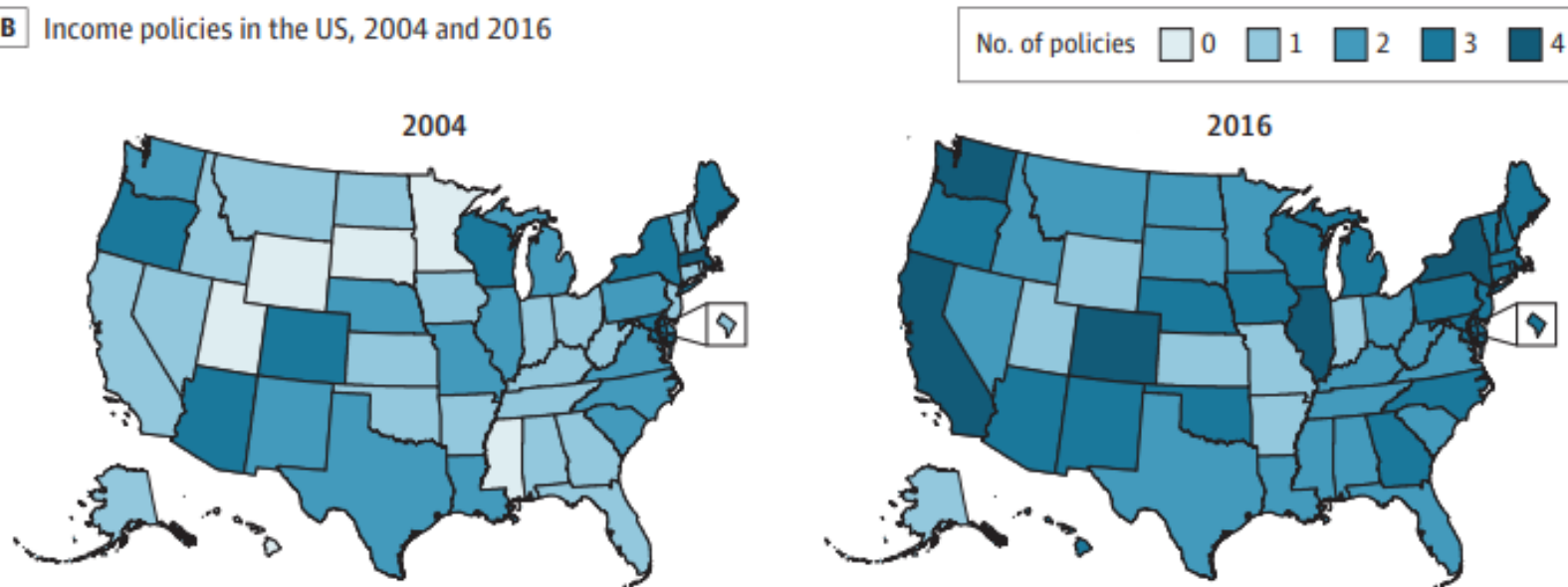
- Large reductions in CPS reports
- Fewer substantiated reports, particularly for neglect
- Fewer foster care placements

(compared to states with less generous SNAP policies)

State Policy Option: Implementing More Generous SNAP Policies

States With More Generous SNAP Policies Over Time

B Income policies in the US, 2004 and 2016



SNAP income generosity policies reviewed in the study:

- Increasing income limits under broad-based categorical eligibility
- Excluding legally obligated child support payments from total income
- Providing transitional SNAP benefits to families leaving TANF
- Using simplified reporting option for changes in household circumstances

Family Preservation with Concrete Supports



Families with open child welfare cases (mostly neglect) who receive a home-based services program with concrete supports are **17% less likely to experience a subsequent child maltreatment report** (during the first year)

(compared to families who receive the program without any concrete supports)

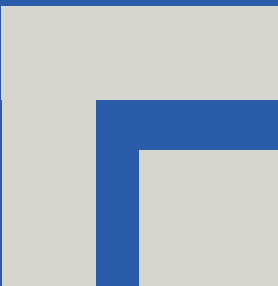
State Policy Option: Providing Concrete Supports through Family Preservation Program



Kentucky – SFY 2022 budget

State budget included **\$1,000 in flexible funds** for families participating in Kentucky’s family preservation program to meet concrete needs & prevent removal

Relationship Between
Macroeconomic Factors & Child Welfare
Involvement Suggests the Need for a
Population-Level Public Health Approach to
Prevention



Connecting Families to Resources via Universal Home Visiting to Reduce Child Maltreatment at Population Level



Family Connects (FC) is a short-term, community-wide nurse home visiting program for families with newborns

- **Focuses on addressing material needs:** 1–3 home visits to assess family needs, connect families to community resources, and provide education & intervention as needed
- **Randomized clinical trials** of all families with births in selected hospitals in Durham, NC over a 6-month period found that families randomly assigned to FC experienced:
 - **More positive maternal mental health** (at age 6 months)*
 - **44% lower rate of CPS investigations** (through age 2)
 - **39% fewer CPS investigations** (through age 5)

"The findings... suggest that, when implemented with high quality & broad reach, a brief postpartum nurse home visiting program can reduce population rates of child maltreatment."

(Goodman, 2021)(RCT) (Dodge, 2019)(RCT) *(compared to families who didn't receive FC)*

** Approaches statistical significance*

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

(independent of federal spending)

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)

Economic & Concrete Supports As a Population-Level Strategy for Prevention of Child Maltreatment

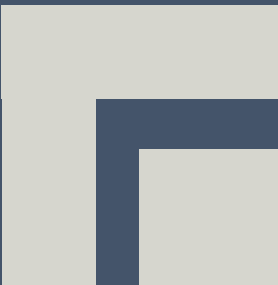
In 2017, if all states had increased their investment in public benefit programs by 13.3%, there would have been an estimated:

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

- 12 states had not expanded Medicaid
 - Only 23 states had a refundable EITC
 - Only 11 states had a refundable Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit
 - Only 2 states had a refundable CTC
- (as of FFY 2017)*

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

Resource Considerations for 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)

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)

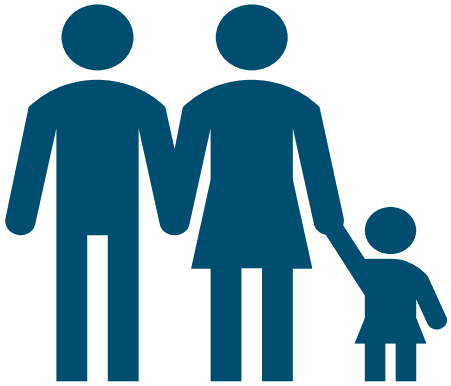
Proportion of federal and state/local expenditures on categories of services



- *Find your state's prevention percentage in the Child Trends Financing Study*
- *What would it take to flip this percentage?*

The Negative Social Return of Foster Care

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



- An estimated **6% of all children, 15% of Native American children and 11% of Black children** spend some time in foster care by age 18
- While foster care remains a necessity for some children, there is no consistent evidence that as an intervention it is beneficial broadly to children & there is substantial evidence that it is associated with **poor outcomes**

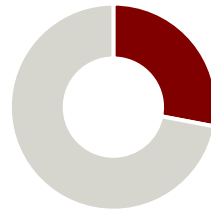
(Nielsen, 2019) (Wildeman, 2014)
(Doyle, 2007) (Sariaslan, 2022)
(Hobbs, 2021)

Human Longevity Costs of Poverty & Family Instability

Compared to children who do not experience early life adversity:

Children who experience **family instability**

(changes in parents' marital status; parental divorce/separation, frequent changes in residence; parent or sibling death; **foster care**)



Are associated with a **28% higher risk for premature death**

Children who experience **poverty + crowded housing**



Are associated with a **41% higher risk for premature death**

“

Once adversities occur, findings such as ours highlight the importance of **integrating anti-poverty programs with family-based interventions** in mitigating the long-term consequences of early adversity.

”

(Yu, 2022 - five-decade birth cohort longitudinal study)

Child and Family Well-being System: Continuum of Economic & Concrete Supports Alongside Broad Array of Supports

Continuum of supports for families **upstream of system involvement**

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

Broad array of supports includes economic & concrete supports and evidence-based practices as needed

Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness & impact of interventions and fine-tune approach

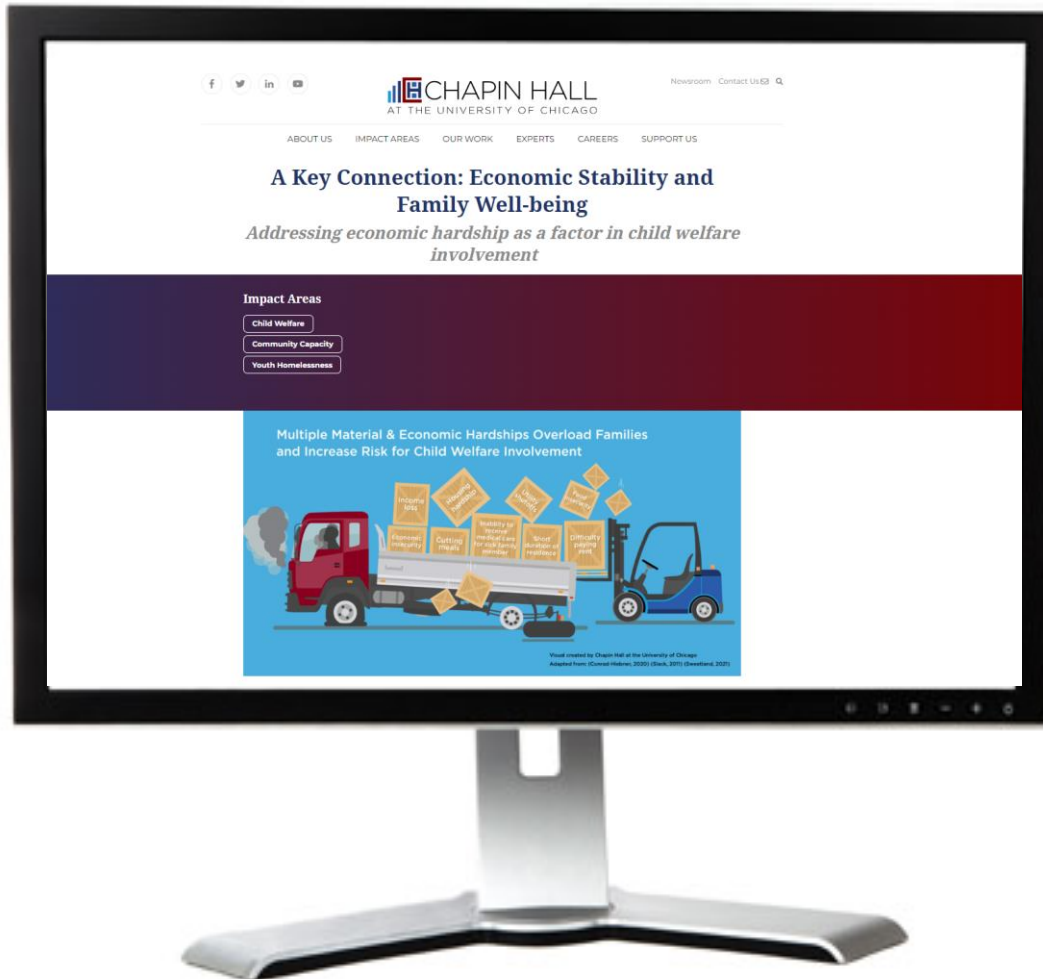
Assessment of economic instability at key touchpoints across human service agencies

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

Partnership with families and communities to co-design responsive & accessible supports and services



Chapin Hall Resources



[Chapinhall.org/ecsproject](https://chapinhall.org/ecsproject)

(Weiner, Anderson & Thomas, 2021)

(Anderson, Grewal-Kök, Cusick, Weiner & Thomas, 2021)

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Main slide deck with references available at:

[Chapinhall.org/ecsproject](https://chapinhall.org/ecsproject)