Putting Economic and Concrete Supports At the Center of a Family Well Being System
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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

ECONOMIC & CONCRETE SUPPORTS, NOV. 16, 2021
Historical Policies & Choices: Repetition of Bifurcation

• Early child welfare system leaders recognized the importance of financial supports to address economic hardship and promote family stability and integrity (e.g., Mother’s Pensions)

• The Social Security Act of 1935 bifurcated supports by nesting Aid to Dependent Children (later AFDC) in the Social Security Administration whereas social services were administered by the Children’s Bureau

• Flemming Rule/Social Security Act Amendments in 1961 established title IV-E as an open-ended entitlement for foster care services without analogous funding for family support services

• Mandated reporting laws (CAPTA, 1974) do not include standard guidelines, training requirements, nor opportunities or expectations for reporters to explore alternative family support options; implementation results in high reporting rates by teachers

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

Policies & Administration Are Contemporary Choices

• Policy makers repeatedly separate programs designed to address poverty from programs designed to protect children as if unrelated

• Economic & concrete support policies and programs are administered as if unrelated to child welfare

• Flexibilities do or could exist in how these programs are administered and are our choice points

Family Economic Insecurity & Child Welfare Involvement

Most reliable economic predictors of child welfare involvement

- Income Loss
- Cumulative material hardship
- Housing Hardship

(Conrad-Hiebner, 2020)

Strongest predictors of investigated neglect reports

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

(Slack, 2011)
Multiple Material & Economic Hardships Can Overload Families and Increase their Risk for Child Welfare Involvement

Experiencing any type of material hardship (food, housing, utilities or medical) is strongly associated with an elevated risk for CPS involvement.

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 material hardship:
- Greater likelihood of being involved in a CPS investigation than families who experience a single type of material hardship

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)
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

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

- 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)
Relationship Between Family Income & Time to Reunification

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* (cash assistance + earnings) 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 child support to the state* to offset the costs of foster care
  - A $100 increase in the monthly child support order amount is predicted to increase the months to reunification by 6.6 months
- Their mothers had *lower earnings* prior to placement
  - Children whose mothers earned up to $3,000 in the year prior to placement are associated with an estimated 1.4 month decrease in months to reunification

(Wells, 2006) (Cancian, 2017)
Lifetime Incidence of CPS Involvement by Race/Ethnicity: Over Half of all Black Children Experience Investigation

**Lifetime Incidence of Investigation**
- **37.4%** of all children experience at least one CPS investigation by age 18

**Annual Investigations**
- **3.66 million children** received an investigation disposition in 2019

(Berger, 2020)
(Kim, 2017)
(Child Maltreatment, 2019)
Evidence:
Economic & Concrete Supports, Child Maltreatment, CPS Involvement, and Child and Family Well-being
Sources of Evidence

How do we know what we know about 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
- Observations using decades of administrative data aligned with policy shifts
- Natural experiments to assess public benefit programs
- Theoretical models and studies that illustrate the processes by which material hardship leads to 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.
Increased Economic Hardship Associated with Child Welfare Involvement

- Reduced TANF benefits
- Reduced employment
- Lack of child care
- Increased gas prices
- Housing instability

Child Welfare Interventions Augmented with Concrete Supports

- Differential Response
- Family Preservation

Concrete Supports

- Medicaid
- Supportive Housing
- Paid Family Leave
- Child Care
- SNAP & WIC
- Legal Support

Economic Supports

- Minimum Wage Increase
- Employment
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Public Benefits (TANF)
- Child Support
- Sustained Income Support
Family Preservation with Concrete Supports

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)
States with expanded Medicaid, compared to those without, experienced a decrease in reported neglect:
- 422 fewer cases per 100,000 children < age 6 for each study year
  (baseline rate in 2013 of 3,944 cases per 100,000 children < age 6)

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

(Brown, 2019) (Klevens, 2015)
Permanent Housing Subsidies

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

- 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 **decrease in hospital admissions for abusive head trauma** among children < 2 years old.

(Klevens, 2016)
Child Care Subsidies

- States with more flexible Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program policies 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

(after controlling for federal spending)

(Puls, 2021)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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 CPS involvement, particularly for single-parent households & larger families.

- A $1000 increase in income via EITC is associated with 8-10% reduction in CPS involvement for low-income single-mother households.

(Berger, 2017)
Mother 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)
Family and Child 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
- Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness & impact of interventions and finetune approach
- Partnership with families and communities to develop responsive & accessible supports and services
Discussion

Please type your questions into the chat box.
Resources

- **Chapin Hall Report**
  - [https://www.chapinhall.org/research/economic-supports-child-welfare/](https://www.chapinhall.org/research/economic-supports-child-welfare/)

- **Economic Supports Can Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina.**
  - [https://www.preventchildabusenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Economic-Supports-Final.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3v6pfq_qs55-LtL3yo7N2ko3XEyz-14MKgCGQQG__UkJwCjsNICKP8Sk](https://www.preventchildabusenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Economic-Supports-Final.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3v6pfq_qs55-LtL3yo7N2ko3XEyz-14MKgCGQQG__UkJwCjsNICKP8Sk)

- **Stabilizing Families Through TANF (podcast):**
  - [https://www.childwelfare.gov/more-tools-resources/podcast/episode-26/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/more-tools-resources/podcast/episode-26/)

- **Self Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse:**
  - [https://selfsufficiencyresearch.org/](https://selfsufficiencyresearch.org/)
Thank You!

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