Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Financial Support Policies as a Mechanism to Reduce Child Welfare Involvement

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Nearly four million referrals are made to the U.S. child welfare system each year. In the U.S., children in lower-income families are significantly more likely to come into contact with the child welfare system than their higher-income counterparts. Poverty mediates involvement with the child welfare system primarily through a two-fold mechanism. First, poverty is associated with an increased risk of a child experiencing abuse. Second, poverty leads to social needs that are often characterized as neglect.

While the mission of the child welfare system is to ensure the safety and permanency of children and families, the system was not designed to ameliorate acute and chronic economic stresses. As a result, families referred to the child welfare system for poverty-related concerns are left with the stigma of child welfare referral without the resolution of a core driver of referral, thereby leaving potential for ongoing system exposure.

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