

Strengthening Illinois through Child and Family Well-being Action Planning Fact Sheet

Quick Facts - In Illinois:

- 20,659 children are in care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) (as of 07/31/2022). Among all children and youth in care, 42% are young children aged 0-5. The science of child development demonstrates how trauma and neglect adversely affect healthy child development and other positive outcomes; and the importance of early intervention.¹
- **Economics:** In 2020, 14% (377,680) of children were part of families whose income was below the U.S. poverty threshold in 2020.² Approximately 34% of families receiving in-home child welfare services experience severe environmental or financial needs.
- 7% (188,000) of children under 18 lived in high-poverty areas (% of children under age 18 who live in census tracts where the poverty rates of the total population are 30% or more) (5-year estimate, 2016-2020).³
- **Education:** 11% (301,000) of children under 18 were in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma or equivalent (5-year estimate, 2016-2020).⁴
- **Employment:** 26% (731,000) of children under 18 had parents who lacked secure employment (i.e., for two-parent households, neither parent had full-time, year-round employment; for single-parent households, the parent did not work at least 35 hrs. per week for at least 50 weeks in the previous 12 months; children not living with any parent are also counted in this group.) (5-year estimate, 2016-2020).⁵
- **Housing:** 28% (813,000) of children under 18 lived in households with a high housing cost burden, i.e., more than 30% of monthly household pretax income is spent on housing-related expenses (5-year estimate, 2016-2020).⁶

Definition of Neglect

Most investigations nationally (76%) of child maltreatment are due to neglect alone or neglect in combination with other maltreatment types (In Illinois, this proportion is 68%).⁷ Neglect only allegations are the most common among investigations by DCFS and comprise slightly over half of all investigations. Neglect allegations include: substantial risk of physical injury and environment injurious to health and welfare; inadequate supervision; environmental neglect; medical neglect; inadequate food, shelter or clothing; and failure to thrive or malnutrition (non-organic, without a specific underlying disease or medical condition to account for growth failure).⁸ In Illinois, minimum parenting standards are that the parent or other responsible person for the child's welfare "is able and willing to ensure that a child is healthy and safe, which includes ensuring that the child is adequately fed, clothed appropriately for the weather conditions, provided with adequate shelter, protected from physical, mental and emotional harm and provided with necessary medical care and education required by law."⁹

Needs and Characteristics of Families and Children involved with DCFS Intact Family Services

How many children and families participate in Illinois' Intact Family Services program? What do we know about the needs of families involved in Intact Family Services?

In FY 2022, DCFS had 12,986 children in 5,440 families participating in Intact Family Services. From a DCFS analysis of FY2018 data, among cases referred to Intact Family Services:

- 75% had an allegation of neglect.
- 42% had an abuse allegation.
- 18% had an initial Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP) report of Unsafe.
- 9% had allegations of serious harm.

A study in 2020 by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that, while each case has unique circumstances, there are six different key groupings of children impacted by Intact Family Services:

1. Infants with many indicated reports of abuse/neglect (39.6%).
2. School-age children with many indicated reports of abuse/neglect (23%).
3. Teens with many indicated reports of abuse/neglect (21.6%).

4. Infants impacted by at least one parent experiencing substance misuse (7.6%).
5. Teens with no indicated reports of abuse/neglect (4.3%).
6. Infants with no indicated reports of abuse/neglect (4%).

Based upon FY2018 data from the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol, among children referred to Intact Family Services:¹⁰

- 53% experience domestic violence.
- 52% have parents with substance misuse.
- 51% have a high prior report level history with DCFS.
- 50% have parents with deficiencies in parenting skills.
- 48% have caregivers with mental health service needs.
- 34% have unsafe safety assessments at any time during a case.
- 34% need supports for functioning in current living situation, e.g., developmental, intellectual, physical needs or intervention for substance misuse or delinquency.
- 30% need financial or environmental support.
- 26% need social support.

Also from FY18 CERAP data, children brought into foster care from Intact Family Services had higher rates of these challenges listed above.

Race Disparities in the Child Welfare System and the Disproportionate Impact of Poverty for Black Families

How does the proportion of children in Illinois' foster system vary by race? Are children of different racial groups in foster care in Illinois represented proportionately to their racial group in the broader state population?

Compared to White and Latinx children, Black children are disproportionately more likely to enter foster care in Illinois, in relation to their representation in the overall child population in the state. From the Children and Family Research Center,¹¹ we know that over the seven years from 2014 to 2020, Black children were placed into substitute care at 2.5 times the rate of their representation in the Illinois child population. White children are proportionately represented, and Hispanic children are under-represented in the foster care system compared to their percentage in the Illinois child population. Internal DCFS data analyses reveals that the widest disparities by race occurs in calls to the DCFS hotline, which highlights the need for broad, community-based child maltreatment prevention.

How does the disproportionate impact of poverty for Black families impact the foster care system and racial disparities in child welfare involvement?

In a 2022 study by WalletHub, Illinois ranked lowest (50th) for disproportionate rates of unemployment, income, poverty, homelessness and representation in business leadership between Black and White residents.¹² Even though Black Illinoisans make up 14% of the state's population, the poverty rate is 30% and homelessness rate is 59% among Black Illinoisans.¹³ Based on an analysis by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007):¹⁴

"A higher rate of poverty is among several factors contributing to the higher proportion of African American children entering and remaining in foster care. Families living in poverty have greater difficulty accessing housing, mental health, and other services needed to keep families stable and children safely at home. Bias or cultural misunderstandings and distrust between child welfare decision makers and the families they serve are also viewed as contributing to children's removal from their homes into foster care."

Community Conditions Related to Substitute Care Entry and Child Maltreatment

How is overall community poverty related to substitute care entry rates?

In a recent analysis of neighborhood characteristics within Illinois census tracts and child welfare entry rates (LaSota & Lotspeich-Yadao, 2021), increased rates of unemployment and poverty were both statistically significant predictors of increased substitute care entry at census tract level (2016-2020).¹⁵ Several peer-reviewed studies¹⁶ have also documented the relationship between higher community-based poverty rates and increased child maltreatment.

How is overall community-based education attainment associated with foster care entry rates?

Accounting for a wide range of community characteristics with Illinois data by census tract from 2016-2020, an increased proportion of the adult population **without a high school diploma or equivalent** was associated with higher substitute care entry rates in all Illinois geographic areas, especially in non-Cook metropolitan areas and rural areas.¹⁷ About one-fourth of child

welfare involved parents do not have a high school diploma or equivalent (based on data of parents of children in the 2010 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being).¹⁸

How does inadequate housing among families and neighborhood-based housing conditions (crowded housing, vacant housing) relate to child maltreatment and foster care entry rates?

Families with housing insecurity have higher rates of child welfare involvement than low-income families with housing; and unstable or inadequate housing can delay reunification.¹⁹ Additionally, several peer-reviewed studies²⁰ have documented the relationship between higher community-based indicators of housing stress (e.g., proportion of vacant homes, degree of housing crowding) and increased child maltreatment. Accounting for a wide range of community characteristics with Illinois data by census tract from 2016-2020, a higher concentration of vacant households was associated with higher child welfare entry rates in all three geographic types (Cook County, non-Cook metro, and non-metro areas).²¹

What other community-level factors contribute to substitute care entry rates?

Accounting for a wide range of community characteristics with Illinois data by census tract from 2016-2020, top factors associated with substitute care entry rates are generally poverty-related: higher percentage of the population without a high school education, crime index, higher proportion of vacant housing, increased unemployment rates, higher proportion of children living below federal poverty level and higher number of households without a vehicle. Additionally, household characteristics also matter for our understanding of increased substitute care entry – higher child-to-adult ratios and higher proportion of single-parent households.²² Several peer-reviewed studies²³ have also reported the relationship between [crime, domestic violence, racial/ethnic diversity of neighborhoods, lack of vehicle access, etc.] and increased child maltreatment.

¹ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child (2017). Applying the science of child development in child welfare systems. Cambridge, MA: Author. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/child-welfare-systems/>

² Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). Illinois Kids Count Data Center. Child Poverty Rates by County in Illinois. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8752-child-poverty-rates-by-county?loc=15&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/21990,17567>

³ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). Illinois Kids Count Data Profile. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). Illinois Kids Count Data Profile. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

⁵ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). Illinois Kids Count Data Profile. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

⁶ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). Illinois Kids Count Data Profile. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

⁷ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2022). *Child Maltreatment 2020*. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>

⁸ Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2022). *Procedures 300- Appendix B*. https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/notices/Documents/Procedures_300_Appendix_B.pdf

⁹ Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2018). *Permanency Planning Rules – Part 315*. https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/notices/Documents/rules_315.pdf

¹⁰ Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2021). Family First Prevention Services Act Title IV-E Prevention Plan. https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/Documents/Illinois_DCFS_Title_IV-E_Family_First_Prevention_Plan_102621.pdf

¹¹ Children and Family Research Center (2021). *Racial Disproportionality in the Illinois Child Welfare System. FY2021 Report*. https://cfrc.illinois.edu/pubs/rp_20211021_FY2021DisproportionalityReport.pdf

¹² WalletHub (2022, June 14). *State economies with the most racial inequality*. https://wallethub.com/edu/state-economies-with-most-racial-equality/75810#expert=Kent_Jones

¹³ Housing Action Illinois (2019, September). *Black and White Disparities in Homelessness*. https://housingactionil.org/downloads/Policy/RacialDisparitiesinHomelessnessIL_September2019.pdf

¹⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007). *Black children in foster care: Additional HHS assistance needed to help states reduce the proportion in care*. Washington, DC: Author. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-07-816.pdf>

¹⁵ LaSota, R. & Lotspeich-Yadao, M. (2021). *Community factors associated with average child welfare entry rates in Illinois*. [Unpublished Report]. Urbana, IL: Office of Research and Child Well-being, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign School of Social Work.

¹⁶ Coulton, C. J., Richter, F. G. C., Korbin, J., Crampton, D., & Spilsbury, J. C. (2018). Understanding trends in neighborhood child maltreatment rates: A three-wave panel study 1990–2010. *Child abuse & neglect*, 84, 170-181.

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