Event Summary

CHAPIN HALL
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ASPE
U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services

Expert Roundtable: Toward an Analytic Framework to Address Economic-Related Risk Factors in Child Welfare

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HIGHLIGHTS

Child welfare policymakers and stakeholders recognize the role that poverty and related circumstances play in increasing children's maltreatment risk and increasing the likelihood that children will come to the attention of child protective services. Some child welfare systems have begun to provide prevention services to mitigate economic risk factors. Transforming child welfare systems to prevent maltreatment and system involvement requires adequate information and analytic strategies. To that end, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and Casey Family Programs partnered to host an expert roundtable with two objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1
Create an analytic framework and identify tools to help jurisdictions deploy resources to address economic risk factors for child maltreatment.

OBJECTIVE 2
Identify steps to develop the data capacity and infrastructure needed to implement the analytic framework.

Roundtable attendees all participated in four sessions, each focused on an aspect essential to the successful creation of an analytic framework to address economic risk factors in child welfare. The first session focused on developing a vision for how real-time analysis can support different child welfare stakeholders in addressing economic risk factors. In this session, participants considered **what information an economic risk framework should provide**, including how to disentangle direct risk factors from those that do not cause maltreatment, among other areas of inquiry. The session also noted **important metrics for understanding and** childhood experiences scores and family functioning. Participants discussed **how to measure and monitor effectiveness of economic interventions**, focusing on well-being and different measurement needs of different communities. The session also addressed **what an analytic framework should accomplish and for whom**, **key stakeholders who should inform the vision**, and additional considerations in developing and implementing an analytic framework.

The second session centered on key elements for an analytic framework. This included **identifying key policy and research questions**, how to **define and operationalize economic risk**, the specific **data needs** in order to implement analytics, and the **analytic methodologies and tools** agencies need to implement a framework on economic risk.

The third session addressed the gap between the vision for an analytic framework, and the existing capabilities of child welfare and related systems. The final session prioritized action steps by different stakeholders. In these two sessions, participants focused on data capacity, analytic capacity, and stakeholder engagement. For **data capacity**, participants emphasized improved data collection to give a holistic view of family needs and strengths, data linking to other valuable datasets, and data access and availability to different stakeholders.

Analytic capacity discussions focused on systematically using innovative methodological and analytic tools, building capacity of the child welfare workforce to use and interpret data and analysis, and enhancing technological infrastructure. Finally, **stakeholder engagement** focused on encouraging collaboration among agencies and service providers, inviting stakeholders to inform data and analytic work, and sharing results with stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION AND ROUNDTABLE OBJECTIVES

On June 23 and 24, 2021, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and Casey Family Programs, partnered to host an expert roundtable, "Toward an Analytic Framework to Address Economic-Related Risk Factors in Child Welfare." The roundtable—held virtually—brought together experts with two objectives:

1. Create an analytic framework and identify tools to help jurisdictions deploy resources to address economic risk factors for child maltreatment.

2. Identify steps to develop the data capacity and infrastructure needed to implement the analytic framework.

The roundtable included 45 experts selected to provide a range of perspectives on the meeting objectives. The experts were diverse in their institutions (federal agencies, state and local agencies, academia, foundations, private sector), areas of expertise (child welfare, data and analytics, economic supports), career trajectories (mid-career, senior), gender, race, and ethnicity. The participant list can be found in Appendix A.
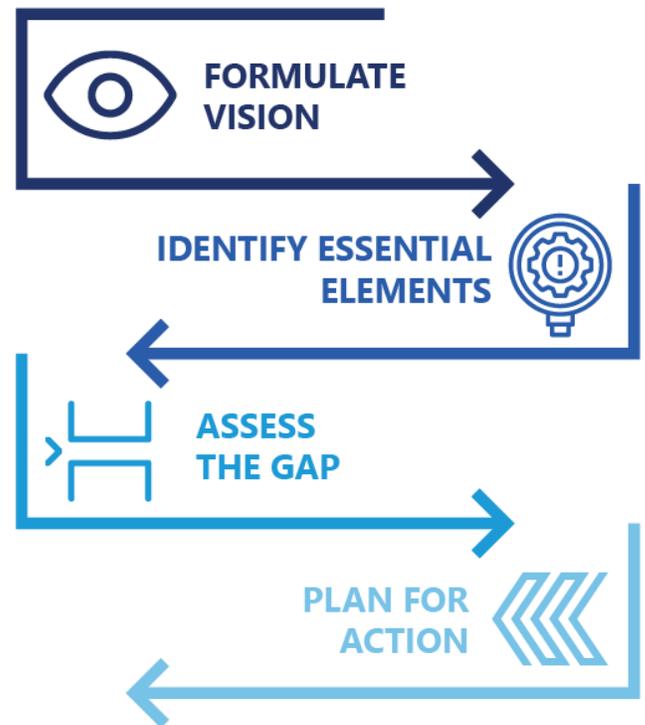
The roundtable consisted of four facilitated breakout sessions, remarks from leadership in ASPE and Chapin Hall, and two background presentations: "Why we need a parallel vision for data and analytics to support the prevention vision" and "Current state of Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems (CCWIS) and other data integration efforts." The breakout sessions followed a systematic approach to develop the analytic framework, illustrated by Figure 1. The first session focused on formulating a vision for the framework. The second focused on identifying specific elements of the framework. The third assessed the gaps between the current state of data and analytics in child welfare, and the vision for the framework. The final session prioritized action steps for implementing the framework. The roundtable agenda can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 1. Flow of the Roundtable Sessions

BACKGROUND

National, state, and local child welfare policymakers and stakeholders have taken a number of important steps to incorporate a prevention perspective in child welfare practice. The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (FFPSA) allows states to leverage federal Title IV-E funds for approved evidence-based prevention services related to parenting skills, substance use disorder, and mental health treatment. Public child welfare agencies and foundations have made investments to redesign child protection systems to support child and family well-being, prevent maltreatment. and avoid unnecessary family separations.

At the same time, stakeholders recognize the role that poverty and its related circumstances play in increasing both maltreatment risk and the likelihood that children will come to the attention of child protective services. Economic factors also contribute to historical disproportionate involvement in the child welfare system among different racial and ethnic groups, as well as

inequities in child welfare outcomes. Prevention services could focus on mitigating these economic-related factors that drive and sustain disparities. However, system transformation requires adequate information and analytic approaches to:

- define economic risk of child maltreatment or child welfare involvement and identify children and families experiencing this form of economic risk;

- collaborate effectively with a range of stakeholders to prevent maltreatment due to economic risk factors; and

- assess the effectiveness of prevention practices that mitigate the impact of economic risk factors.

Improved data and analytics includes timely, integrated data systems across programmatic areas and sectors, analytic approaches that incorporate local context and illuminate disparities, and output that is responsive to the needs of policymakers, practitioners, and families across programmatic areas and sectors.

SESSION SUMMARY

Session 1: Develop a vision for how real-time analysis can support different child welfare stakeholders in addressing economic risk factors

This session promoted discussion surrounding economic risk factors: how to understand and measure economic risk, how to monitor the effectiveness of related interventions, and how to thoughtfully design an analytic framework to address economic risk.

Participants first considered what information an economic risk framework should provide. Participants discussed the shortcomings of common child welfare outcomes in capturing risk. They suggested practitioners take time to operationalize outcomes of interest (for example, maltreatment, neglect, etc.) with specific and thoughtful language to more accurately identify appropriate measures. Participants discussed several areas the framework could illuminate:

- Disentangle direct risk factors from those that do not cause maltreatment. The framework should help practitioners distinguish reports of maltreatment from actual maltreatment.

- Efficiently allocate budgetary and other resources related to economic supports.

- Identify inequities in participation, service delivery, and outcomes that may be caused or exacerbated by economic risk. Pinpoint specific parts of the child welfare and related systems that introduce or exacerbate inequities.

- Prevent increases in surveillance of families, particularly as more services may be provided upstream to prevent maltreatment and system involvement.

- Align economic support programs to child welfare

metrics (both existing and new).

Next, participants noted important metrics for understanding and measuring economic risk, including: Adverse Childhood Experiences Scores (ACES), social determinants of health, health insurance status and its implications for access to services, family functioning assessment tools, and tax and wage records to understand income. Participants brought up the need for a cohesive definition of material hardship using administrative data. Discussion also covered the importance of stratifying metrics by race and ethnicity. Participants considered what information the framework needs to provide beyond awareness of racial equity and disparities, and how the framework could address equity issues in terms of the economic experiences of communities of color. Finally, participants debated the importance of capturing communities with the appropriate unit of analysis (such as census tract, block, county), and using predictive analytics to estimate family needs based on location and other factors.

Once metrics were identified, participants suggested mapping metrics on to economic supports that are available to families to identify gaps in the landscape of support. Participants then discussed how to measure and monitor effectiveness of economic interventions and relevant outcomes. Discussion centered on well-being, what outcomes constitute well-being, and how it may be defined differently for different communities. Further, participants noted the importance of capturing not just the number and quality of the services that are families are referred to, but also whether referred families actually connect with services for which they are eligible .

Next, participants discussed what an analytic framework should accomplish and for whom. They agreed a framework should be designed with researchers, families, practitioners, community

members, and policymakers in mind as potential users. Some of the goals discussed include:

- Help practitioners articulate and assess family needs.

- Bridge the gap between research and fieldwork.

- Provide real-time data analytics for service providers.

- Support family service and child removal decisions.

- Help families understand their involvement and resources in child welfare and other systems.

- Allow data sharing among data systems across public agencies, and subsequent collaboration across those agencies fueled by data.

- Support caseworkers in initiating linkages to other services in child welfare and other systems.

- Highlight community-level or geographical factors of child maltreatment risk (such as racial heterogeneity/homogeneity, school funding, property tax structure) and how such factors may contribute to both poverty and inequities in child maltreatment, child welfare system involvement, and subsequent outcomes.

- Conduct gap analysis to understand indicators of economic need relative to available family supports and services.

Participants identified key stakeholders who should inform the vision for an economic risk framework and ideas for securing their involvement. Key stakeholders included people with lived experience, education and judicial system actors, housing and employment services providers, economic development programs, and community organizations.

Finally, roundtable participants described important considerations in developing and implementing an analytic framework. These include limitations of

workforce capacity: the framework will rely on increased data literacy among workers, which may require increased training in many agencies. Participants also noted concerns about increased data collection leading to increased surveillance of families by their communities. Participants agreed that while risk identification and prevention are the chief goals of this project, avoiding unnecessary intrusion into the lives of families is a priority as well as explaining to families why data are being collected. It will also be critical to first identify existing data from other systems that should be integrated into child welfare data systems. Participants also shared that it can be difficult to capture timely administrative data. Finally, because identifying risk entails capturing more upstream data points, some participants shared concerns that the role of child welfare may inadvertently be expanded beyond its current capacity.

Session 2: Key elements for an analytic framework

This session focused on identifying key elements of an analytic framework to address economic risk and grouped those elements into three categories: (1) defining and operationalizing economic risk; (2) data needed to measure and analyze risk and its effects; and (3) available analytic methodologies and tools.

Identifying key policy and research questions was viewed as an important first step in determining what data and analytic approaches are needed for the framework. Within the broad objective to reduce economic risk, specific questions or issues related to policy development, program design and implementation, and service delivery should guide how the framework is executed.

BOX 1. FACTORS RELATED TO ECONOMIC RISK

Individual Level

- Household and family income—including all earnings, benefits, and child support payments—as measured in different ways, including the official poverty measure, the supplemental poverty measure, or other income-needs ratios

- Employment status, stability, and work schedules

- Living conditions: housing adequacy, housing stability, running water, electricity, utilities, etc.

- Household composition—including number of members, marital and caregiver status, age, gender, and generational status—with focus on single-parent families and intergenerational households, and the involvement of fathers and their extended family in child rearing

- Household spending and cost burdens, particularly with regards to housing cost burden and housing vouchers, and child support payments

- Residential mobility

- Disability status, caregiving needs and arrangements, and chronic health issues

- Mental health functioning

- Eligibility and receipt of different income support programs (such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Supplemental Security Income [SSI])

- Education level of adults in the household

- Social determinants of health: access to healthcare, education, high-paying jobs

- Access to family-friendly policies (paid family leave, child care subsidies, flexible scheduling)

- Homeownership

- Child and family demographics, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity

- Financial literacy and access, including to bank accounts, savings, and credit

- Social capital and support networks

Community Level

- Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation

- Areas with concentrated and persistent poverty

- Urbanicity/rurality, including tribal lands

- Community assets, such as availability of social services, health care (including behavioral health), transportation networks, access to healthy food markets and pharmacies

- Social cohesion, social isolation, social supports

Define and operationalize economic risk

Participants offered many factors that contribute to economic risk that should be considered in an analytic framework. These include factors at the individual family level, and others at the community level. **Box 1** highlights examples participants described.

Discussions highlighted important considerations regarding economic risk. One key consideration is that economic risk may need to be operationalized differently at different units of analysis, such as the family versus the neighborhood. Participants also discussed that economic risk is not static but can change over time. As a result, operationalizing risk for analytic purposes should consider both point-in-time needs, as well as patterns over time (for both the individual family as well as the community).

Participants discussed the need to measure the multiple facets of economic risk. Are we measuring the most important aspects of these concepts? For example, when looking at SNAP participation, would measures such as "How many months of SNAP?" or "Intermittent or long-lasting SNAP usage?" be more useful for understanding how SNAP relates to economic risk and how to best support families? Aside from studying program beneficiaries, researchers may learn from analyzing who has been rejected from economic support programs, who is not able to apply, and who is eligible but not receiving services. This would provide insight into the source of barriers and resistance to economic assistance.

Data Needs

In general, participants thought measurement of economic risk is limited by existing data, particularly administrative data accessible to child welfare agencies and researchers. Participants discussed data sources and variables that should be included

in the framework. Some examples include information on the child's entire caregiver network, experiences, and quality of life of youth in foster care; tax records; receipt of TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, and unemployment insurance; and other direct data collection from families (rather than through the conduit of a caseworker). Participants also suggested that child and family assessments provide rich information and should be standardized throughout the country for ease of data sharing/linking.

Participants described the value of child support data in child welfare analysis. Many families involved in child welfare systems are also involved in child support enforcement systems, and many participants viewed child support as important to understanding economic support and risk. Child support data are typically unavailable to child welfare agencies and researchers, even though decisions made by child support enforcement agencies and courts can affect child welfare outcomes. Participants emphasized that we need to think about data, and data availability, at different levels of the social ecology: individual/family, community, systems, state, and federal policies and programs. At the individual level, participants generally agreed that data on families should be disaggregated to the extent possible by race, ethnicity, and gender. Geographic variables are important to understanding the location of economic needs and services, and subsequently target resources. Participants also described the importance of measuring protective factors along with risk factors.

Aside from specific data sources and variables, participants described the importance of the quality, value, and usability of data. High-quality data are necessary to produce results that decisionmakers can rely on. Relatedly, data quality issues in current data collection efforts was the most commonly discussed data issue among participants

(discussed further in Sessions 3 and 4). In many instances it may be more prudent to improve the quality of existing data collections before collecting new data. The lack of standardization across states also needs to be closely examined and accounted for. More standardization would permit more rigorous analysis across jurisdictions. Participants generally talked about the need to identify approaches to incentivize improvements in data collection.

Additionally, to help differentiate economic hardship, participants suggested collecting data that can help distinguish between families facing economic hardship with no other risk of maltreatment, relative to those facing safety-related risk of maltreatment. Research in this area would also benefit from encouraging states to use better screening tools. We need to ensure that we are using scientifically valid assessments and may need to find ways to provide best-practices guidance to states on how to best collect information of interest. Participants also discussed more specific needs, including access to data about participation in economic support programs (for example, administrative data collected by benefit programs such as Supplemental Security Income, or income data collected by the Internal Revenue Service), educating legal staff to minimize access to data being blocked, studies of income loss, and best practices to address security, privacy, and other legal issues.

Another consideration when operationalizing economic risk is the role of qualitative data in assessing risk at different levels. Information gained from qualitative efforts can give us insight into what children and families need and the challenges they face. Some participants felt that the framework should consider how to leverage qualitative data, which could include text mining of caseworker notes to understand information not easily captured in standardized data fields. Another idea was to get

data on calls to support services hotlines (such as 2-1-1, as established by some jurisdictions) and the services that are requested.

Finally, some participants acknowledged that the data needed to support the objectives of the analytic framework may rely on sources with less quality or reliability than data currently collected, even though existing data are insufficient.

Analytic methodologies and tools

Many different methodologies and analytic capabilities can be included in this framework. Participants highlighted a number of approaches, both well-established ones and ones needing more development. Examples include:

- Predictive risk modeling using economic risk factors to predict who might need and be eligible for economic supports

- Place-based risk modeling to target resources, supports, and services

- Other forms of geospatial analysis, including leveraging geographic information system (GIS) tools to map resources and risk

- Simulation modeling, to project how potential policies and programs, such as specific economic supports, could impact economic risk, subsequent maltreatment, and system involvement

- Methods to harmonize and link data across systems

- High-quality screening tools and scientifically valid assessments, including promising practices for jurisdictions in how to use them.

Some participants recognized the need for methods to systematically assess eligibility for and receipt of different benefits and services, as well as evaluating how economic support policies work together and contribute to eligibility for other supports (which may result in "benefits cliffs" or high effective

marginal tax rates). Participants discussed the value of participatory action qualitative methods. These methods are different than traditional research methods. A participant described using quantitative data to identify geographic areas of poverty, and then collecting qualitative data through interaction with community members to generate a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the community and services they need.

Aside from analytic methodologies, participants described the importance of the capacity of child welfare stakeholders to use and interpret data and analysis. Agency decisionmakers could benefit from training in the value of data and analysis, and how to interpret results, in order to design better policies and programs. Social workers could be trained in analytic approaches to better design packages of supports that maximize benefits and minimize risk for families

Participants mentioned the need to ensure child welfare outcomes are included in experimental and nonexperimental studies of income supports (such as universal basic income). Studies of income loss, such as early expiration of enhanced unemployment benefits, would also enhance the framework.

Finally, participants laid out key questions that jurisdictions implementing an analytic framework will need to address (see **Box 2**). The answers to these questions may differ by locality.

BOX 2. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING AN ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

- How can the framework support states in planning and implementing prevention plans as part of FFPSA?

- How can the framework integrate processes, data collection, and analysis with other ongoing reporting requirements, such as Child & Family Services Reviews?

- Which stakeholders should have access to which data?

- How can we incentivize better data collection, including both new data and data of better quality?

- How can our data and analytic approaches better incorporate the perspectives of families involved in, or at risk of being involved in, child welfare systems?

Sessions 3 and 4: How far are we from the vision? What needs to change? What action steps should we prioritize?

Session 3 covered how far child welfare systems are from being able to implement the group's collective vision of an analytic framework to address economic risk. Session 4 focused on how to prioritize actions and opportunities identified in previous sessions, including what factors should be considered in that prioritization. In both sessions, participants covered similar broad areas for child welfare and related fields to focus on. These areas include data capacity, analytic capacity, and stakeholder engagement.

Data Capacity

Participants identified a number of gaps in the data capacity of child welfare agencies and researchers. They made clear recommendations for action to address those gaps, focused on data collection, sharing and linking, and accessibility.

Regarding **data collection**, participants felt that child welfare agencies do not collect adequate data to have a holistic view of family needs and strengths. Participants generally agreed that National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)[1] have several issues that need to be addressed related to the data currently being collected. Participants also felt some data are not being collected but should be. It is challenging for child welfare agencies to collect data from some populations and services—particularly data regarding children who are with kin or other temporary caregivers and are not in formal foster care. Agencies do not always collect detailed,

reliable data on services provided. Those that do may not always store the data in usable formats. For example, the increased funding of agencies' prevention services through FFPSA and other efforts provides a valuable opportunity to collect more data on services and outcomes. However, federal guidance does not currently call for collecting detailed service and outcome data for prevention services funded through FFPSA. No federal database currently exists to standardize required service data or provide opportunity for analysis. This crucial information needs to be incorporated into data systems to enhance the analysis. Participants expressed concern about the quality of much of the data currently collected by agencies. They emphasized the need to invest in improving data quality. Participants pointed out that some jurisdictions may duplicate data collection, with multiple systems collecting the same information from the same families. This may re-traumatize families. It can also be a potential barrier to service uptake, since similar questions may be asked in a variety of ways or information may be collected in different formats.

Participants felt that agencies and researchers should prioritize collecting regular, repeatable measures, and avoid collecting data at a single point in time to answer specific questions. Participants recognized that policy and programmatic questions and family circumstances change over time, and that investments should prioritize sustained data collection that can develop lasting capacity.

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[1] NCANDS and AFCARS are the primary federal data administrative systems collecting data on child welfare cases reported by states. NCANDS contains information on children with screened-in allegations of child maltreatment and AFCARS contains information on foster care and adoption cases.

Data linking was one of the most widely discussed opportunities for increasing available data. Much of the information analysts and researchers need to support efforts to reduce economic risk is available in administrative data systems outside the child welfare system. However, participants noted that data sources they identified as important for the framework are generally not linked with child welfare data (or with each other). If the data are linked, they are not accessible for research purposes. Child welfare data are not generally linked with other existing administrative data sources, such as SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid. Examples of actions (for federal and other stakeholders) discussed by participants are outlined in **Box 3**.

Privacy concerns regarding federal and state policies as well as perceptions of those policies—present a major barrier to better data collection and linkages. Participants discussed the high level of data security needed to link multiple, large sets of human subjects data. In addition, research facility partners need to protect data in an integrated system. Agencies and research facilities need the capacity to ensure an adequate level of security to protect data from disclosure. Many participants felt that agencies did not have such capacity. This is particularly important when linking data, as more information on individuals can increase the risk of data sources being identified.

BOX 3. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE DATA SHARING AND LINKING TO SUPPORT AN ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

- Use a single universal identifier for individuals, allowing programs to conduct better analysis and also connect individuals with eligible supports. In particular, participants saw having a single identifier across Medicaid, SNAP, and child welfare systems as beneficial.

- Issue federal guidance making unambiguous the ability to share child welfare data with other program areas (and vice versa) for programmatic and research purposes. This could include an explicit program linking child welfare data to other federal and state data.

- Develop a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction guide on data sharing rules, and a "myth-busting" document to clarify data sharing rules.

- Provide technical assistance to jurisdictions to improve how agencies link data, and how to use linked data to enhance decision making.

- Support jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction peer learning, as some states and localities may have made progress addressing barriers to data sharing that could be useful for others.

Participants felt that the federal government could facilitate the linking of data between child welfare and other data sources. The federal government could also improve access to such linked data. Participants ideated around how avenues for accessing data remotely could be developed to support workers. They agreed that federal and state agencies need to remove barriers to data sharing. These barriers currently exist between states as well as between program offices within states, and sometimes even within one department or agency. Efforts in this area should clarify rules and processes, develop new policies, or change existing policies to facilitate sharing. Several participants felt that federal law did not limit data sharing, but rather state and local interpretation of federal laws tends to be more restrictive regarding what is permissible. Many participants strongly felt that state and local agencies need assurance that the federal government will not prosecute agencies for sharing data. Participants also discussed the role of CCWIS in linking data. In particular, they asked for clarification on the minimum data sharing that needs to take place for CCWIS systems to be compliant with regulations.

With regard to **data accessibility**, participants discussed the need for an improved, shared, cross-system understanding of child welfare concepts and definitions. In service of this, they suggested a shared investment in educating partners and the community on what child welfare data "do and don't say." Moreover, participants believed systems would be more effective if they were designed to respond to community needs first rather than to comply with federal oversight structures. To increase usage, participants recommended data systems prioritize user-friendly interfaces, develop data use trainings, and seek buy-in from leadership of agencies around the country. To improve reporting, participants suggested the system emphasize rewarding programs that achieve positive outcomes rather than penalizing programs with undesirable outcomes.

Analytic Capacity

Participants outlined the need to improve the analytic capacity of the child welfare field and related fields in order to implement an analytic framework. Analytic capacity entails several domains. First, participants recognized the research field has developed a range of **innovative methodological and analytic tools** that child welfare systems were not regularly or systematically using. Many of these tools were outlined in Session 2; they include predictive modeling, geospatial analysis, and text mining of caseworker notes. Many of these methods are not perfect and have limitations. As a result, they must be implemented appropriately with adequate contextual information. For example, predictive modeling has the potential to both reduce and exacerbate inequities across different subpopulations, based on the biases that may be present in the data the models rely upon or the specific modeling technique.

Another area for capacity building is human capital. Participants discussed the **need to build the capacity of the workforce to use and interpret data and analysis**. This includes investing in data analytics as a profession within child welfare. It also includes offering foundational training of caseworkers on how to use and interpret data and quantitative analysis. This can be done through training and coaching, translating data and analysis results in a way that caseworkers can understand how to use them, and recruiting staff with data science and social work experience. Some participants suggested holding a series of trainings on how to analyze data wisely. In addition, emphasizing analytic skills sets among social work students could, over time, address this issue. Where this internal agency capacity is being developed (or

perhaps in place of that internal capacity), participants stated that agencies could seek out university partners to support analytic capacity.

Participants also discussed **technological infrastructure** as a major gap and an opportunity for action. Participants said many agencies rely on antiquated information technology systems that are not nimble enough to incorporate new data collection or improved data quality. Participants said another barrier is a lack of transparency and access in systems designed and managed by private sector contractors. Some participants lamented that CCWIS was not being adopted by all states; some states had abandoned their CCWIS development, and little is known about the extent to which jurisdictions use CCWIS for analytics. Participants suggested that as federal agencies consider investing in the adoption of new technology (such as CCWIS), they consider how best to equitably support states. For example, a grant-based system may present an equity issue, as some states are further along in data capacity than others. Those that are less sophisticated have greater need but may not be well-positioned to win a grant competition.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement on data and analytics was universally seen as a gap in current practice, and a key area in which to prioritize action. Participants discussed two areas for engagement. First, **encouraging collaboration from agencies and service providers** that interact with child welfare agencies and families involved in child welfare systems. In many jurisdictions, participants felt that these stakeholders do not actively support data and analytic efforts to reduce economic risk. Participants discussed opportunities for engaging these stakeholders through caucuses or other structured engagement. They felt that developing a clear theory of change can help non-child welfare

stakeholders recognize their role, agree on common goals, and participate in activities related to measurement, data collection, and analysis, as well as service provision.

A second role for stakeholder engagement is to **inform data and analytic work and share results**. Participants felt that stakeholders need to drive how data are used, including defining problems that better data can help address and identifying and prioritizing opportunities for improving data and analytic infrastructure. Agencies, researchers, and advocates from child welfare need to reach out to stakeholders and listen to what they need. A list of stakeholders to engage in this area included caseworkers; children, youth, and families currently or formerly involved in the system; community groups and organizations; and funders. The families involved should have diverse backgrounds and experiences—for example, be of different race and ethnic groups, have different risk factors (such as housing insecurity and substance misuse), or have children with different needs (such as complex medical conditions). Engaging families is important to understand their needs and perspectives and to inform how data and analytics can support efforts to meet those needs. It is critical to engage child welfare caseworkers—including asking them what information they need to do their jobs—in order to collect relevant data and conduct analysis that will be meaningful and actionable. Similarly, agencies and researchers should engage families to learn what information they would find useful.

Some participants felt that stakeholders should be more engaged with child welfare agencies and researchers to develop shared accountability and support for data sharing. It is important for agencies and researchers to recognize the complex perspectives on child welfare data. Participants recognized families involved in child welfare systems have a certain degree of mistrust, as do other stakeholders who may have seen child welfare

agencies use data in ways that are not productive for family stability. There may be mistrust among caseworkers as well; they are asked to record a lot of data but may not see any of the benefits of such data. In addition, stakeholders should be paid to acknowledge their involvement and time. Moreover, transparency should be emphasized to all involved in design and use of the system and leadership should consider engaging ethics and privacy experts in the design process.

Participants recommended improving how technical information is communicated to stakeholders that may need information produced by analysis, but need it communicated in a more plain-language manner. Participants recognized the need to be innovative and creative around sharing findings and research in a digestible, interactive way.

Finally, participants agreed that American Indian tribes must be meaningfully included in the development of new data systems. Without their inclusion, inequities among tribal families will persist.

CONCLUSION

Roundtable participants agreed that an analytic framework to address economic risk in child welfare was important for improving child and family outcomes *and* that there is much work to do to realize this vision. Stakeholders at all levels of government and across different sectors must identify opportunities to work together to address the many gaps that roundtable participants identified. This roundtable identified clear action steps for federal, state, tribal and local agencies to take to make progress in critical areas related to data capacity, analytics, and stakeholder engagement.

We have a long path ahead of us. But we find reason for optimism in the commitment shared by the federal government, many state and local agencies, and the research and philanthropic communities. Child welfare agencies, programs serving families at risk of child welfare involvement, and analysts have more tools at their fingertips than ever before. In recent years, innovations in infrastructure, analytics, research, and program design have improved efficiency and rigor. All agencies, regardless of their current data and analytic capacity, can and should take steps to enhance that capacity and integrate policy decisions and program activities to better serve families facing economic risk. We look forward to developing an analytic framework that can help all agencies in child welfare and related program areas prevent child abuse and neglect, and child welfare system involvement.

APPENDIX A

Participant List

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APPENDIX B

Agenda

(note all times EST)

Day 1: Outline a Framework

1:00-1:15 pm   Welcome, Introductions, and Objectives

- Introduction from Robin Ghertner (ASPE) and Dana Weiner (Chapin Hall)

- Remarks from Associate Commissioner Aysha Schomburg (Children's Bureau)

- Remarks from Bryan Samuels (Chapin Hall)

1:15-2:00 pm   Orientation

- "Vision for prevention services." Speakers: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy Miranda Lynch-Smith (HHS-ASPE)

- "Why we need a parallel vision for data and analytics to support the prevention vision." Speaker: Dana Weiner (Chapin Hall)

2:00-3:30 pm   Session 1: Develop a vision for how real-time analysis can support different child welfare stakeholders in addressing economic risk factors.

2:00-2:45 pm   Breakout groups

    a. What information should the framework provide?

    b. What should the framework accomplish and for whom?

    c. Who are the key stakeholders (within and outside of child welfare services, including those with lived experience) who should inform the vision?

2:45-3:00 pm   Break

3-3:30 pm   Reconvene

3:30-5:00   Session 2: Key elements for an analytic framework.

3:30-4:15   Breakout groups

    a. Operationalize economic-related factors.

    b. Data needs – What data are needed to input into the tools/methodologies of the framework? What are potential sources of these data? Do the data currently exist, or does some need to be produced?

    c. Analytic methodologies and tools – What methodologies and tools should be included in the framework? How do they inform the issues and stakeholders laid out in Session 1? What is the feasibility of implementing them? How do they interact?

4:15-4:30   Break

4:30-5:00   Wrap-up discussion

Day 2: Identify Steps to Develop the Capacity and Infrastructure to Implement the Framework

1:00-1:30 pm   Welcome to Day 2

- o   Welcome from Robin Ghertner (ASPE) and Dana Weiner (Chapin Hall)
- o   Remarks from David Sanders, Casey Family Programs
- o   "Current state of CCWIS and other data integration efforts." Speaker: Emily Madden (ASPE)

1:30-3:00 pm   Session 1: How far are we from the vision? What needs to change?

Breakout group discussion

a.   Data issues: collection, integration, accessibility, privacy

b.   Analytic infrastructure: human capital (agency staffing, research partnerships), IT systems, diffusion of technology

c.   Stakeholder involvement: which stakeholders are and need to be involved, partnerships across service areas/silos

d.   Methodological approaches: innovative strategies to measure, analyze and evaluate

3:00-3:15 pm   Break

3:15-4:30   Session 2: Prioritizing Applications

Which of the opportunities should be prioritized? How do we prioritize them? How will this be different across states.

3:15-3:45 pm – Breakout group discussions

3:45-4:15 pm – Sharing priorities as a group

4:15-4:30 pm   Closing remarks

Acknowledgements: