

Economic Resources and Social Safety Net Policies and Their Impact on Child and Family Well-being

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The Costs of Child Maltreatment are Significant and Ongoing



**4.4 million
referrals in
FFY 2019**



**Morbidity and
mortality in
childhood,
adolescence &
adulthood**



**Economic burden
of \$124 billion
each year (Fang
et al., 2012)**



The Majority of Reports Involve Child Neglect

Failure to meet basic physical, emotional, educational needs

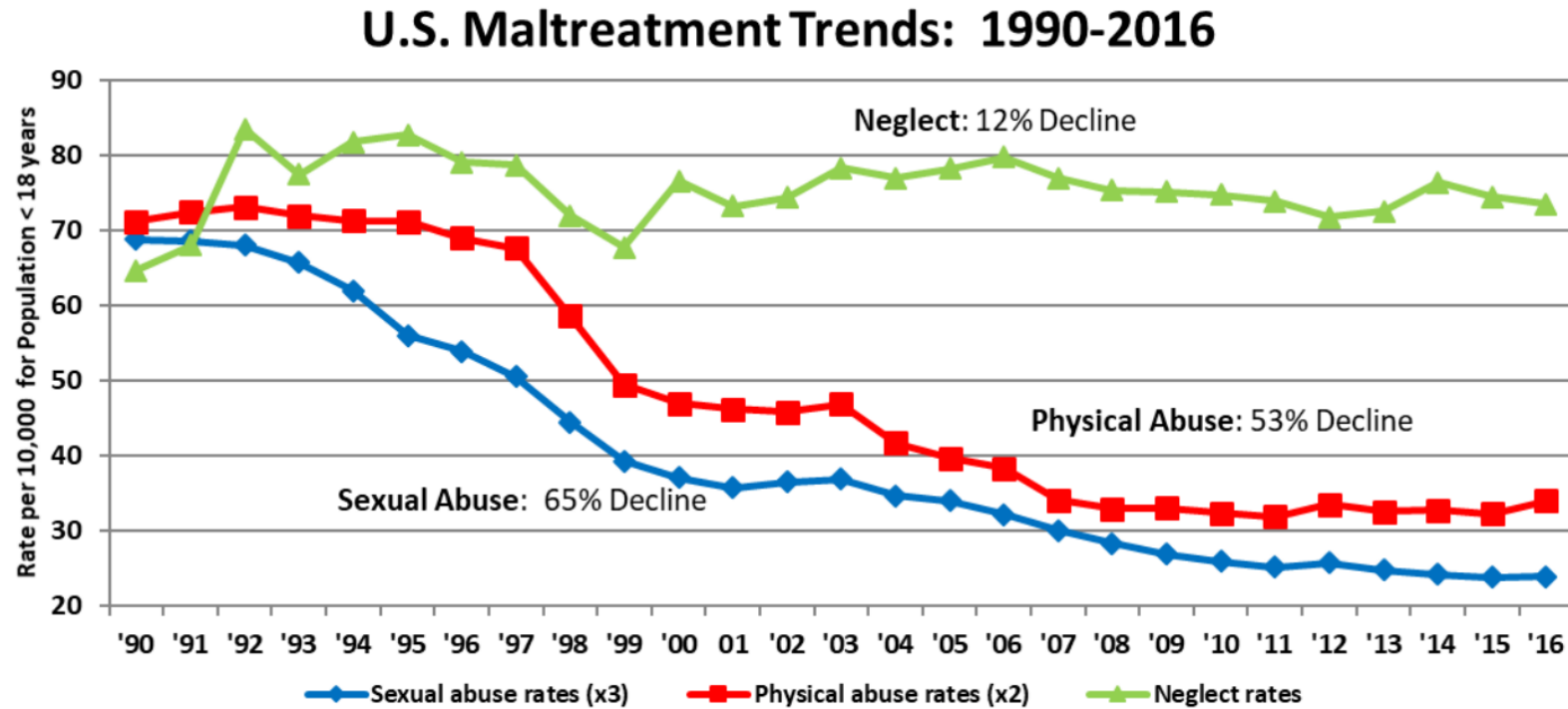
Failure to supervise or ensure safety given a child's emotional and developmental needs

Exposure to violent environments

(Leeb et al., 2008)



Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse Have Declined, Neglect Remains Stagnant



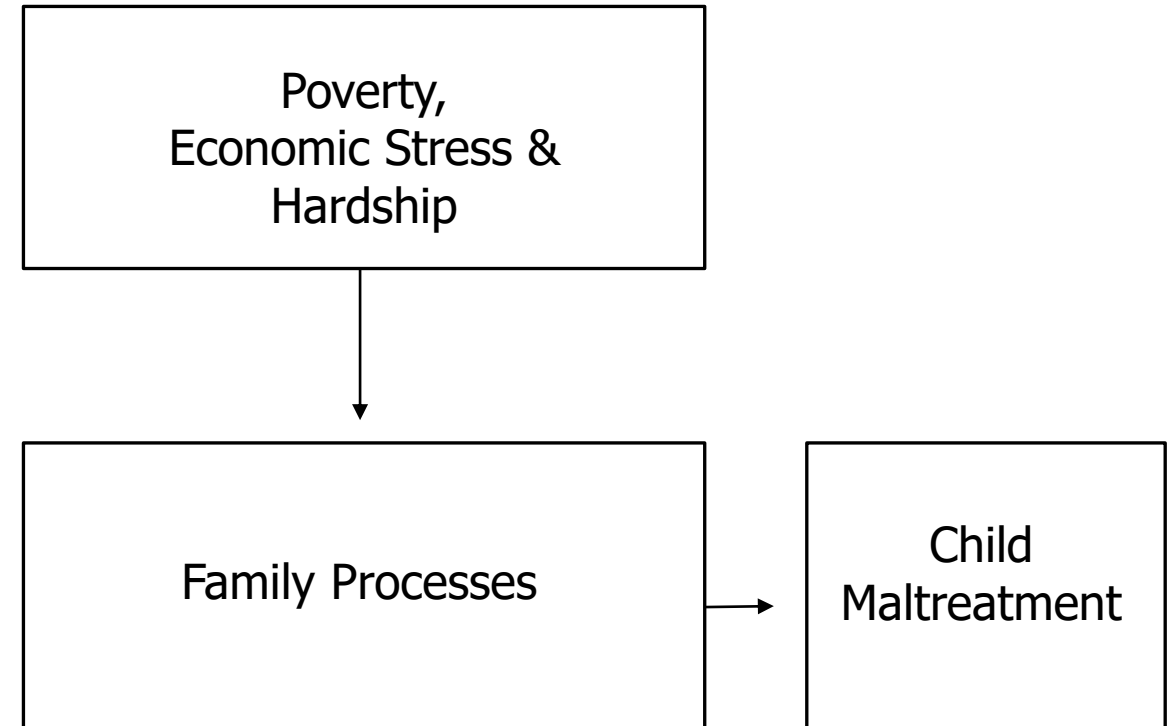
Note: Trend estimates represent total change from 1992 to 2016. Annual rates for physical abuse and sexual abuse have been multiplied by 2 and 3 respectively in Figure 1 so that trend comparisons can be highlighted.

¹The statistics in Table 1 and Figure 1 concern substantiated cases of sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect. A substantiated case means a case that has been reported to a child protection agency, investigated and deemed to have occurred according to a “preponderance of evidence.” The child maltreatment cases referred and investigated by state child protection agencies primarily involve abuse by caregivers. The cases do not include many involving stranger abusers, unless some element of caregiver neglect was involved.

How Does Economic Hardship Relate to Child Neglect?

Past research indicates that economic stress

- Impacts a family's ability to care for a child's basic needs for food, clothing, medical care
- Strains romantic relationships, contributes to divorce
- Contributes to caregiver depression, and problems in parenting and parent-child relationships
- Contributes to lack of adequate nutrition and proper care leading to child behavior problems, which places children at greater risk for maltreatment



(Adapted from Conger et al., 1992)

Social Safety Net
Policies are
Associated with
Child Maltreatment

- **Reductions in welfare generosity have been associated with increased rates of CPS reports** (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2002; Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003) and **out of home care** (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003; Wildeman & Fallesen, 2017)

Social Safety Net
Policies are
Associated with
Child Maltreatment

- **Conversely, increases and policies that maintain income and benefits have been associated with decreases in CPS involvement**
 - **EITC** (Berger et al., 2017), **child support** (Cancian et al., 2010), **continuity of eligibility for Medicaid/SCHIP** (Klevens et al., 2015) associated with decreases in CPS involvement
 - **Increases in the minimum wage** led to declines in child maltreatment reports, particularly neglect (Raissian & Bullinger; 2017)
 - States' **refundable EITC programs** (Klevens et al., 2017) and California's **Paid Family Leave policy** associated with decreases in AHT hospital admissions when compared to other states (Klevens et al., 2016)
 - **Increased spending on public benefit programs** reduced child maltreatment, foster care, and child fatalities (Puls et al., 2021)

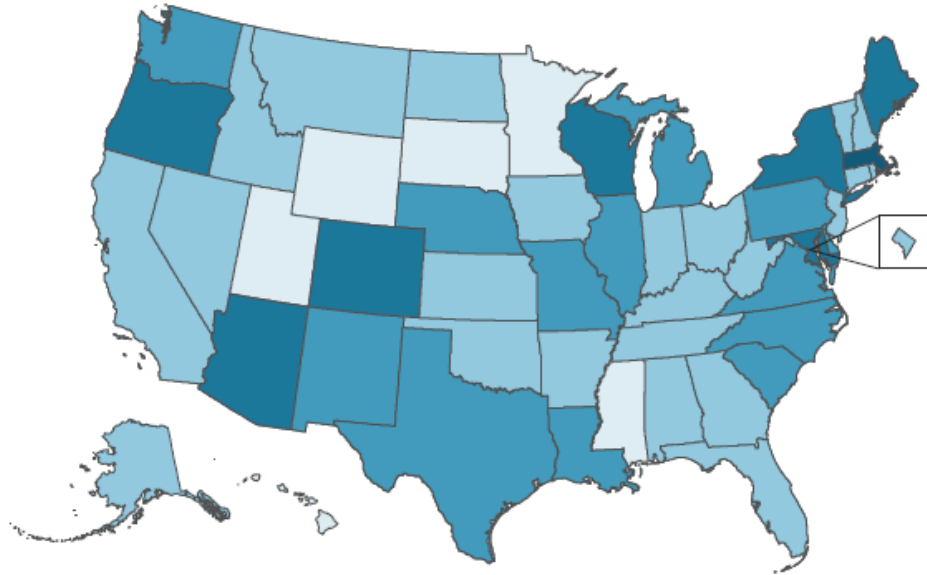
SNAP Policy Options & Child Maltreatment

A Table of Income Policy Data

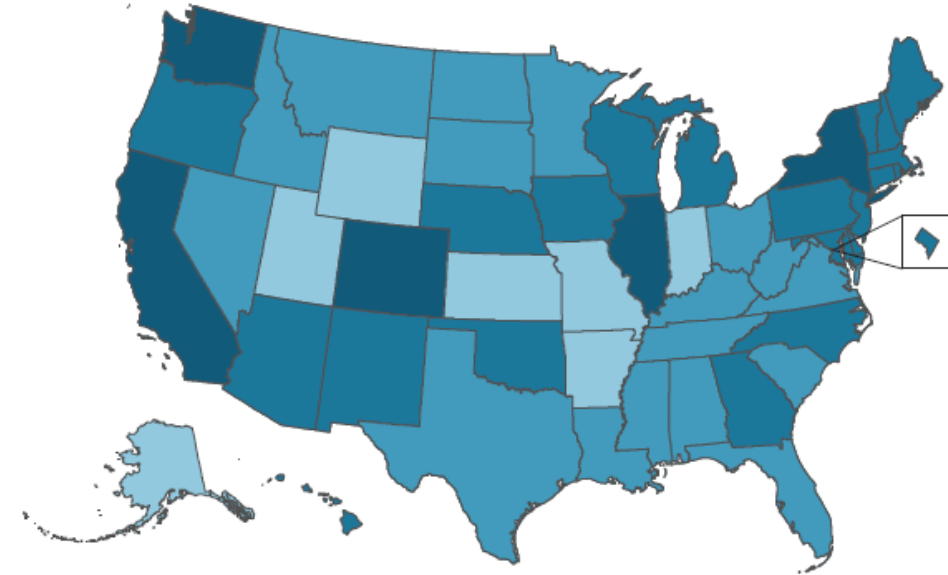
| | 2004 | 2008 | 2016 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>SNAP Income Generosity Policies (a)</u> | 1.47 | 2.37 | 2.49 |
| Median SNAP Income Generosity Policies | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| State uses the simplified reporting option that reduces requirements for changes in household circumstances | 43 | 49 | 50 |
| Income limit as a percentage of the Federal poverty line is higher under broad-based categorical eligibility | 11 | 38 | 40 |
| Transitional SNAP Benefits for TANF Leavers | 13 | 20 | 23 |
| Child Support Excluded from Income Calculations (b) | 8 | 14 | 14 |

C Maps of Income Policies in the U.S., 2004 and 2016

2004



2016



Notes for the table (B): Source: SNAP Policy Database Unless Otherwise noted. (a) Average of Counts of Policies. (b) Source State Option Reports
Notes for the maps (C): Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). SNAP Policy Database, SNAP Policy Data Sets. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/snap-policy-data-sets/>

Study Objective & Design

- **Objective:** To model the relationship of state SNAP policies to changes in CPS and foster care outcomes in the U.S. over time.
- **Study Design:** This ecologic study used panel data from NCANDS, AFCARS, U.S. Census, University of Kentucky Center on Poverty Research National Welfare Data to examine the association between SNAP policy options and study outcomes from 2004 to 2016 for 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.
- **Analysis:** We used two-way fixed-effects regression models and the count of SNAP policies as an instrument for SNAP caseloads in instrumental variables models.

Findings

- A state's count of SNAP income generosity policies was associated with large reductions in reports accepted for CPS investigation (-352.6 per 100,000 children; 95% CI, -557.1 to -148.2).
- Income generosity policy was also associated with -94.8 (95% CI, -155.6 to -34.0) fewer substantiated reports and -77.0 (95% CI, -125.4 to -28.6) fewer reports substantiated for neglect per 100,000.
- Each additional income generosity policy adopted by a state was associated with -45.1 (95% CI, -71.6 to -18.5) to -42.3 (95% CI, -64.8 to -19.8) fewer total foster care placements per 100,000 children.

Findings

- We found income generosity policies to operate through SNAP caseloads, which directly influence household resources, which provides compelling evidence that SNAP income generosity can influence CPS involvement in low-income households.
- *Increasing access to benefits may reduce CPS and foster care caseloads from 7.6% to 14.3% for every 5% increase in SNAP caseloads.*

TANF & Child Maltreatment

Table 2. State TANF Policies

| Policies | 2004 | 2010 | 2016 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Benefit Restrictions | | | |
| Most Severe Sanction Case Closed | 14 | 21 | 30 |
| Time Limit < 60 Months | 8 | 11 | 13 |
| Work if Child < 12 Months | 25 | 24 | 24 |
| Earnings Disregard Did Not Increase | 37 | 27 | 28 |
| Diversion Payments \geq 6 Months | 6 | 10 | 6 |
| Denial Policy Change | 0 | 9 | 12 |
| Drug Testing | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Average Number of Restrictions | 2.04 | 2.25 | 2.51 |

TANF & Child Maltreatment

- We find that state restrictions on access to TANF implemented by states from 2005-2016 saw
 - Increases in child maltreatment reports and total foster care placements ranging from 7 to 8%
 - Increases in foster care placements due specifically to neglect ranging from 11 to 18%
- Additional estimates indicate that policies easing restrictions on TANF reduced child maltreatment and foster care entries

Conclusions

- **Changes in state social safety net policies appear to have causal effects on child protective service caseload dynamics in rigorous designs**
- **Restrictions on access to household resources appear to have unintended and dire consequences**
- **Conversely, policies that increase the generosity and stability of household resources appear to yield valuable population health returns by preventing child maltreatment and the need for costly child welfare interventions.**



National Strategies Recognize the Need to Strengthen Family Economic Supports to Prevent Child Maltreatment

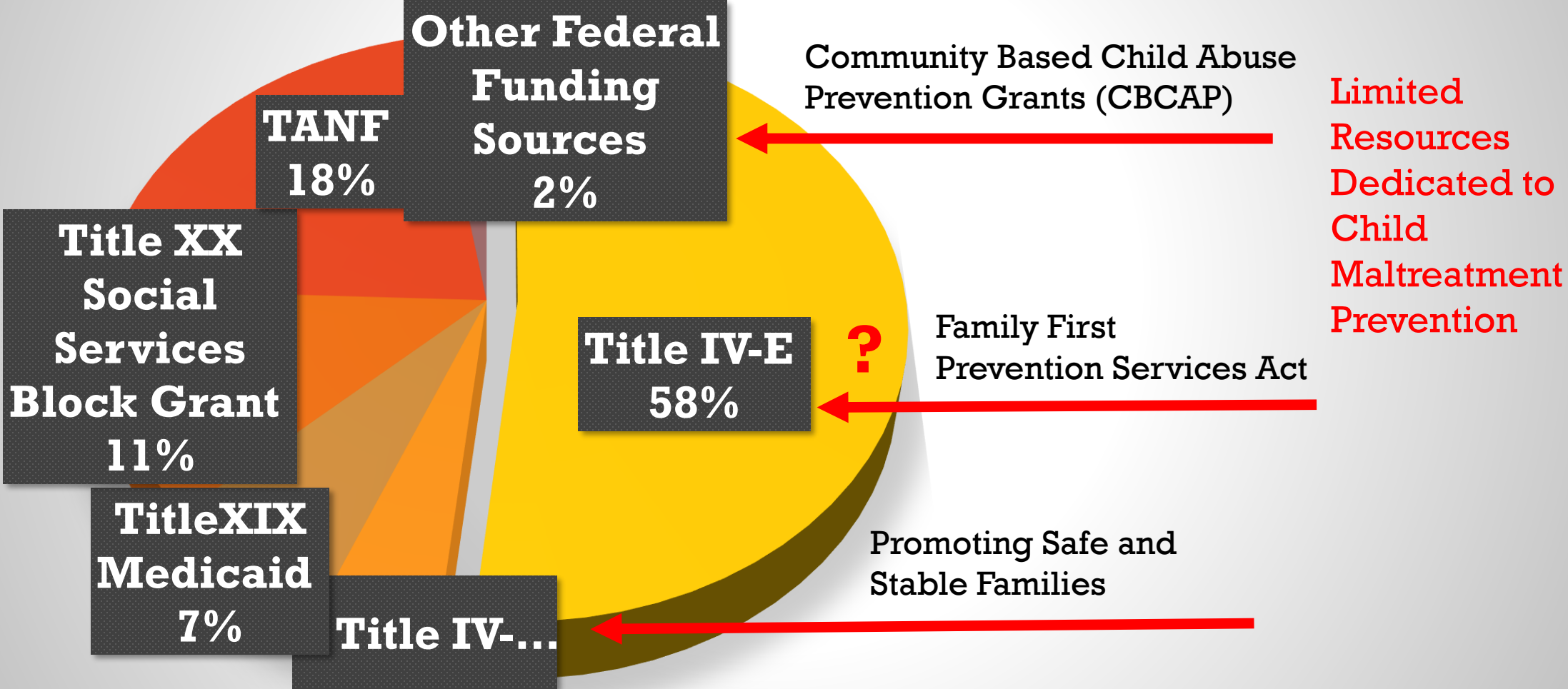
| Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect | Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework |
|---|---|
| Strengthen economic supports to families | Concrete supports in times of need |
| Change social norms to support parents and positive parenting | |
| Provide quality care and education early in life | |
| Enhance parenting skills to promote healthy child development | Knowledge of parenting and child development |
| Intervene to lessen harm and future risk | |
| | Parental resilience |
| | Social connections |
| | Social and emotional competence of children |

Fortson et al. (2016). *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities*. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: Washington DC.

Center for the Study of Social Policy (2015) *Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors*. Author: Washington, DC.

Sources of Federal Child Welfare Funding in 2018

\$14.5 Billion



Source: Child Trends, 2021

Social Policy is Child Maltreatment Prevention Policy

- Labor and employment policies: minimum wage,¹⁹ Paid Family Leave, unemployment insurance, workforce development programs
- Income support: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Child Tax Credit, Federal and state refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs
- Nutrition assistance (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Free and Reduced Lunch Programs)
- Housing policies and assistance
- Child care subsidies
- Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP)



Thank you!

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