

# Invisible No More

Elevating California's Child-Only  
CalWORKs Families



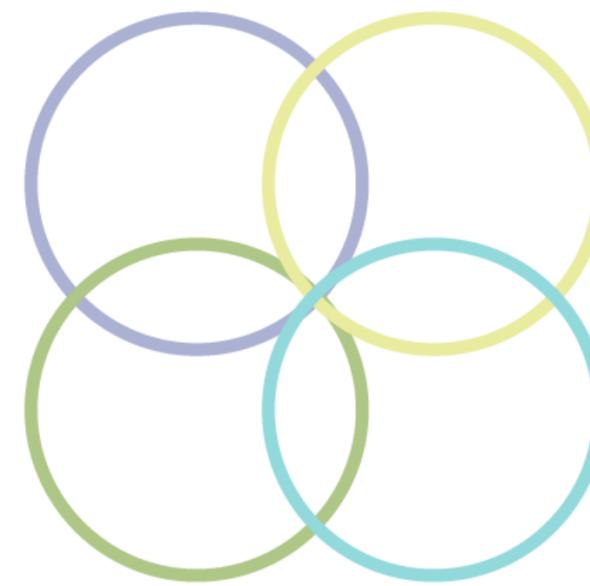


# Welcome!

Presenters:

Jennifer Marcelli, Linkages Director

Andrea Lewis, Linkages Senior Associate

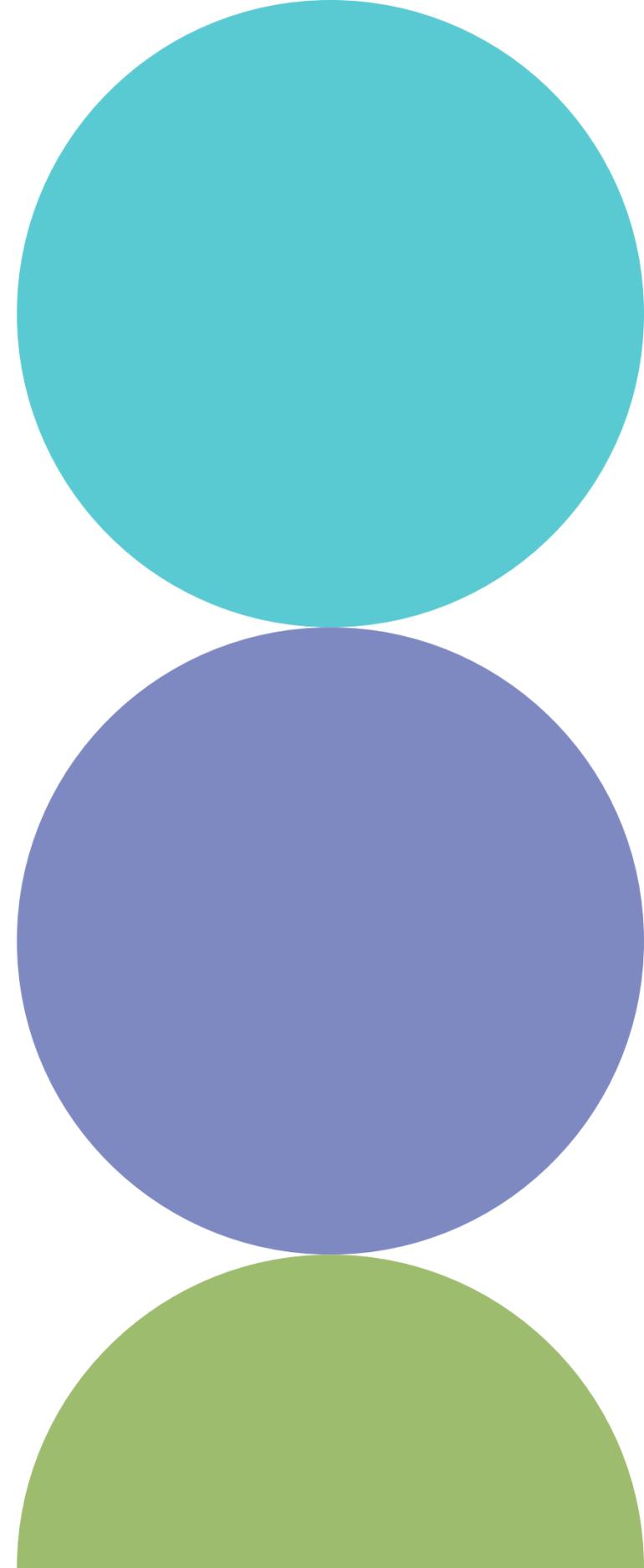


Share your name, county and your role within your Linkages County Team

Icebreaker: One thing that comes to mind when you think about the child-only population

# Objectives

- Understand Child-Only caseloads
- Compare with Child Welfare Data
- See how the systems intertwine
- Consider the benefits of serving Child-Only families differently
- Identify best practices



# What are Child-Only cases?

Children receive aid but adults do not. Due to:

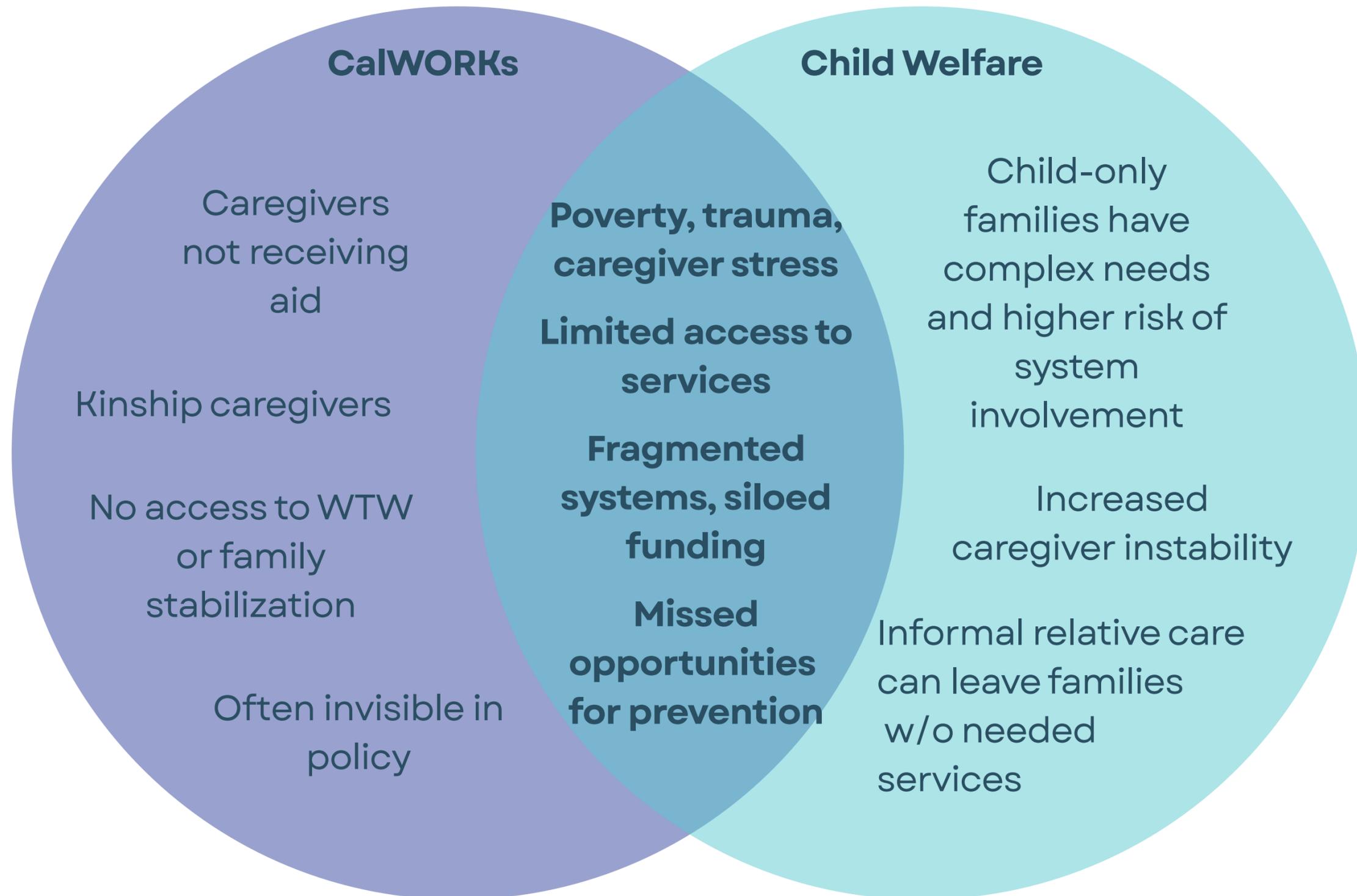
Description	Category	Aid Code
Used when the caretaker is excluded due to receiving SSI. Only children are aided.	SSI-Linked Cases	3F
Caregiver is not financially eligible but provides care for an eligible child.	Non-Needy Relative Caregivers	3M
Parent is sanctioned (e.g., for non-compliance with Welfare-to-Work), child still receives aid.	Sanctioned Parents	3P
Parent is excluded due to immigration status; child remains eligible.	Immigration-Related Exclusions	3R
Adult has reached the 60-month federal time limit; only children continue to receive aid.	Safety Net (Timed Out)	K1

# How the 2 Systems Connect

CalWORKs keeps families financially stable, reducing their risk of child welfare system involvement. CalWORKs child-only grants keep children out of foster care by supporting relative caregivers.



# Both Systems Miss Opportunities



Let's Explore Data  
and Trends in the  
Child-Only and Child  
Welfare Populations in  
California



# Despite Changes in CalWORKs Involvement over Time and Decreases in Child Poverty, Child-Only Cases Remain Stable

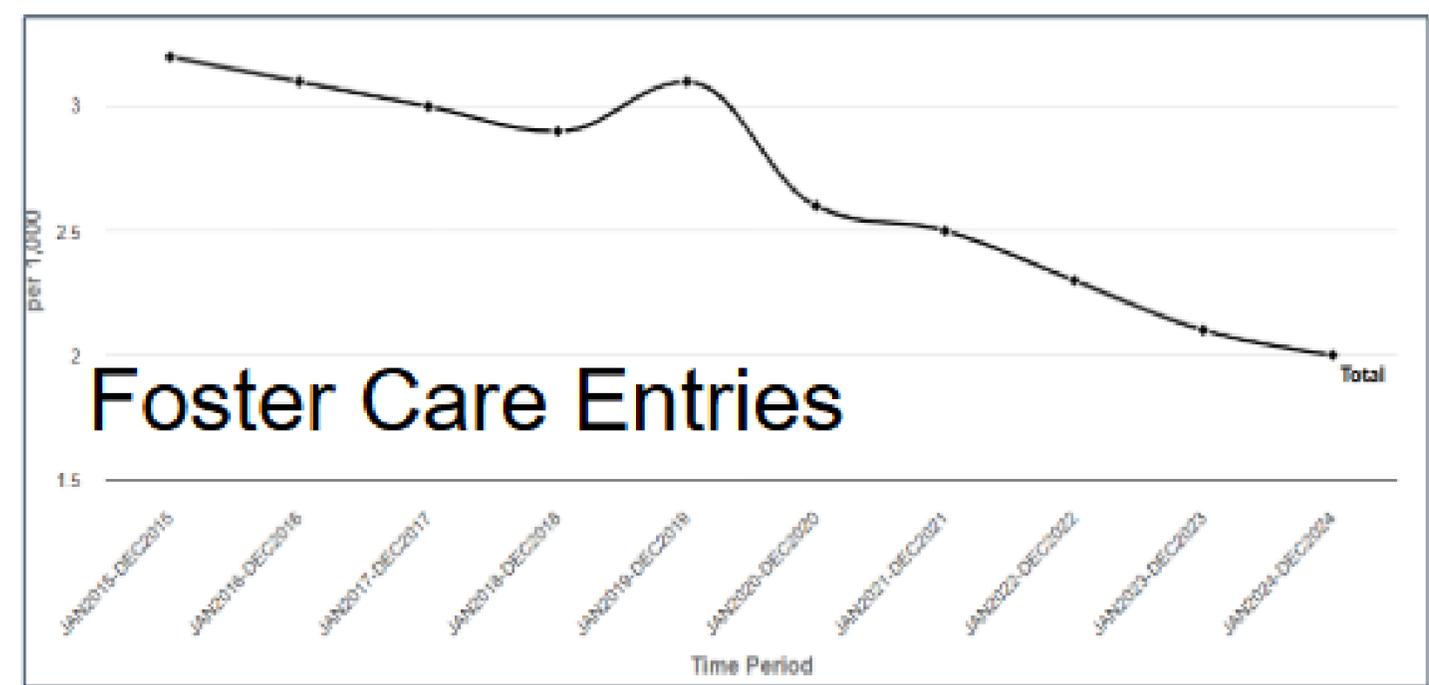
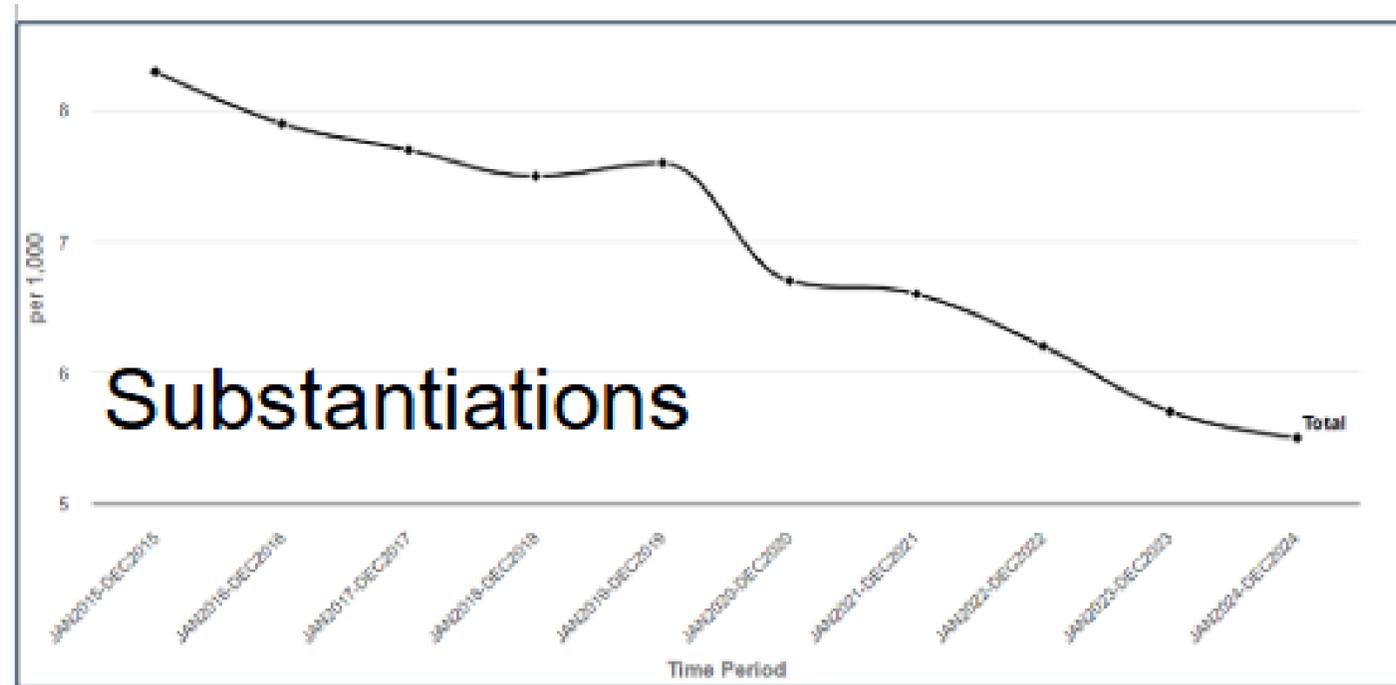
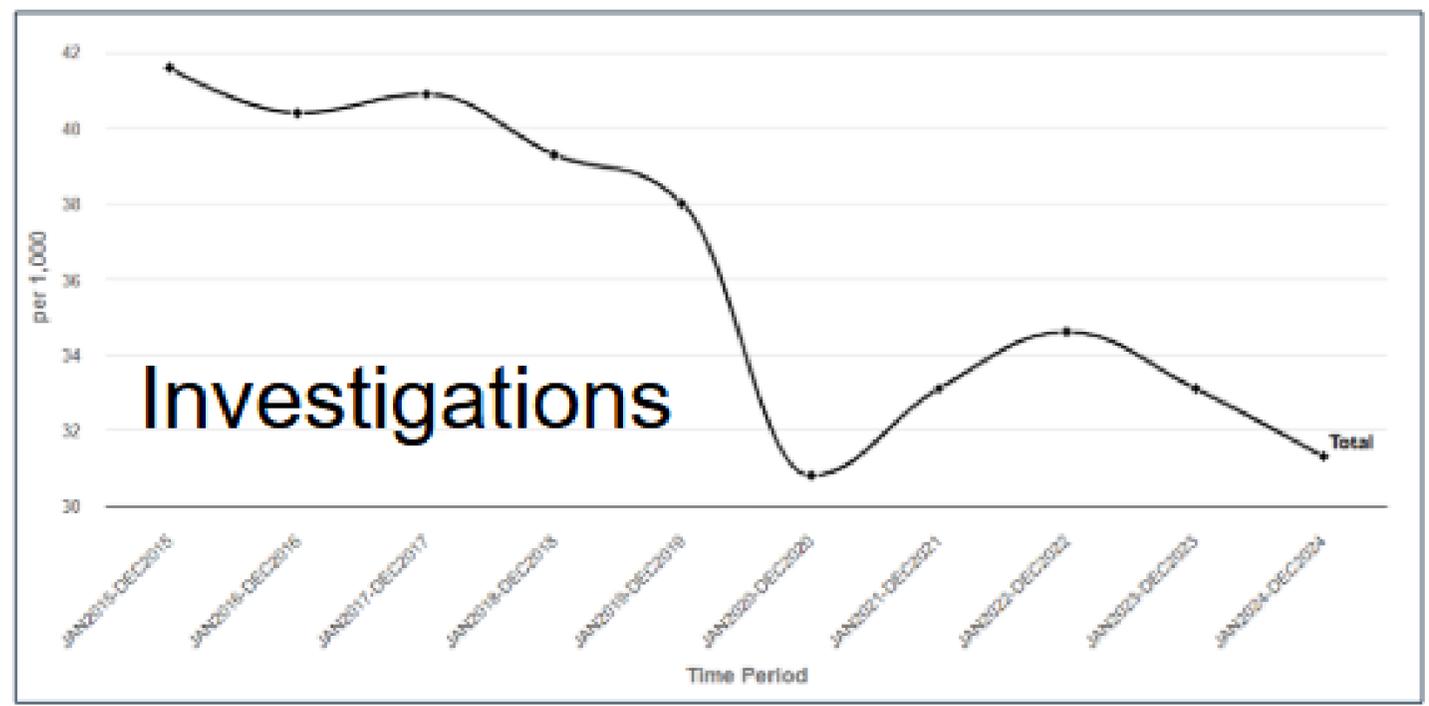
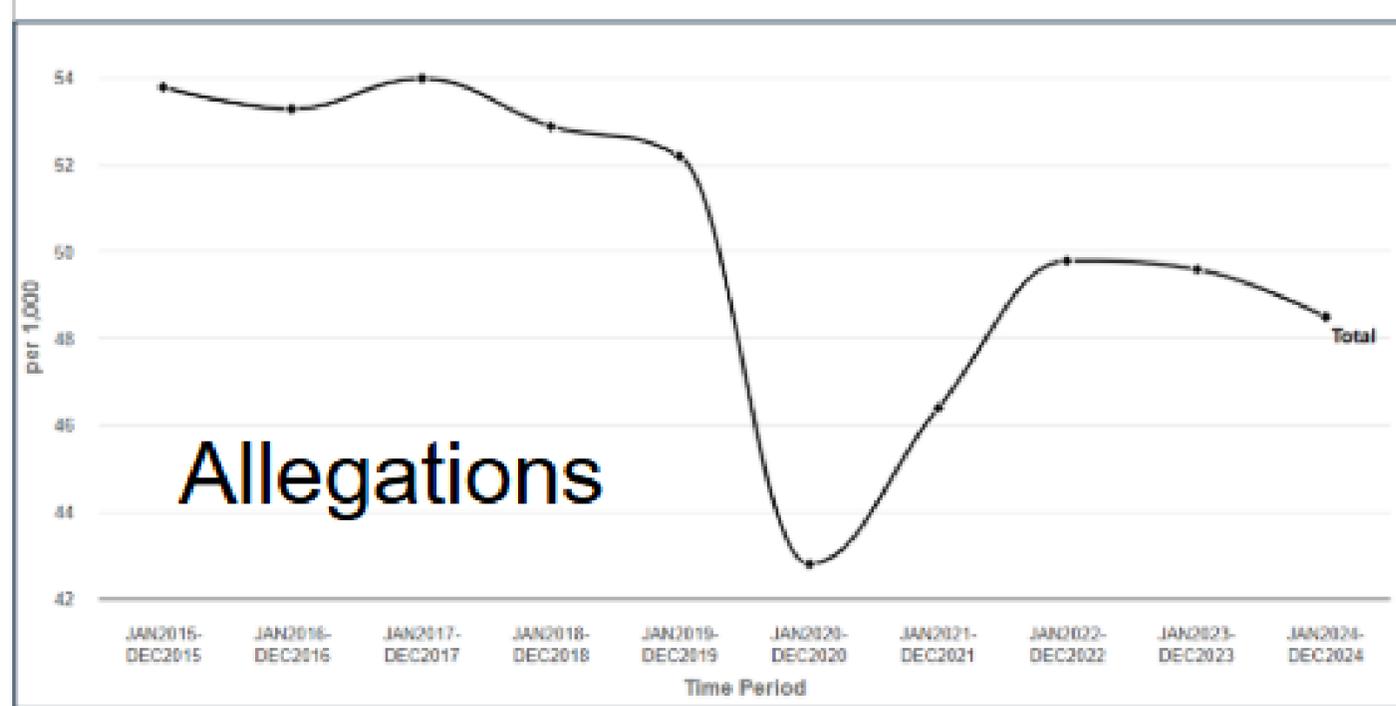
Group	2021 total	2024 total	Percent change 2021→2024
Child-Only	1,943,101	1,934,190	-0.50%
Approvals	3,665,905	4,337,901	18.30%
WTW enrolled	1,464,578	2,180,205	48.80%
WTW exempt	305,809	473,894	54.90%
Children Living in Poverty	1,363,000	1,208,000	-11.40%

Child-  
only Cases  
#s Vary  
Across CA

County	Child Only Cases as Percent of County Population
Fresno	13.59%
Imperial	13.40%
Tulare	10.74%
Kern	10.21%
San Bernardino	7.94%
Siskiyou	7.59%
San Joaquin	7.53%
Lake	6.53%
Stanislaus	6.14%

County	Child Only Cases as Percent of County Population
Los Angeles	6.04%
Mariposa	5.94%
Glenn	4.55%
Riverside	3.76%
Trinity	3.25%
Alameda	3.20%
Calaveras	3.14%
Amador	3.06%
Tuolumne	2.91%
Nevada	2.16%

# CA's CW Population is Decreasing



Digging a little deeper, we see another trend across CalWORKs, CalWORKs Child-Only Families, and Child Welfare:

Overrepresentation of Children of Color

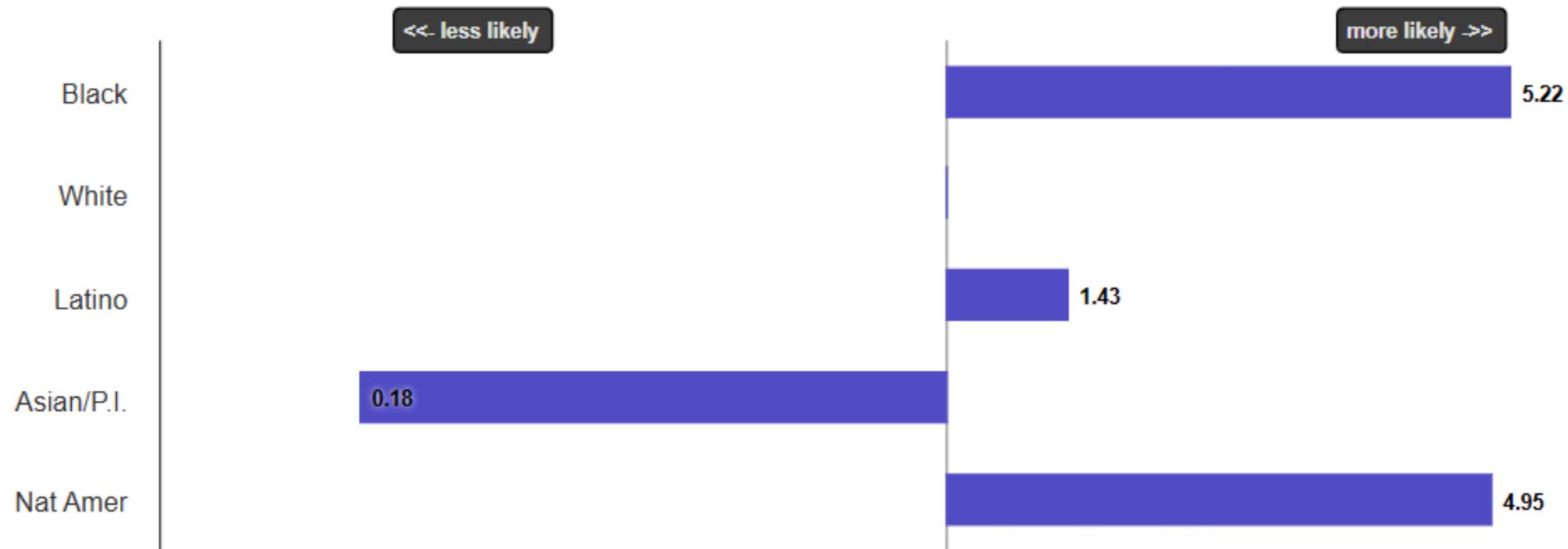


## CalWORKs Disproportionality

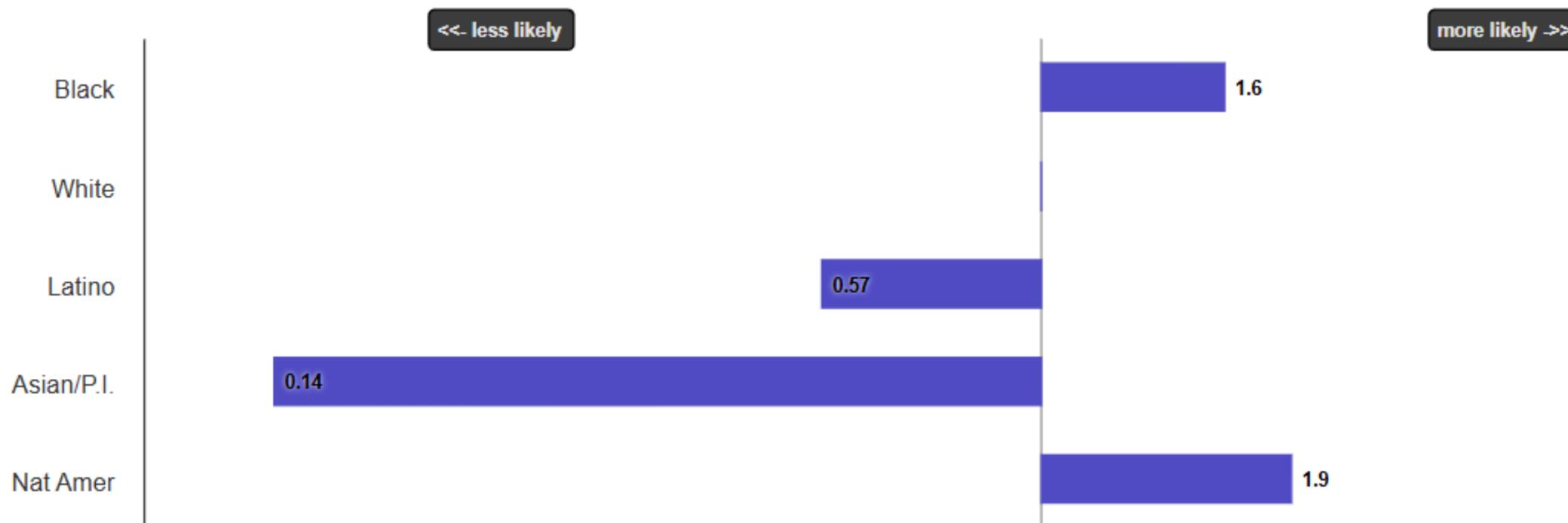
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Over or Under Representation</i>
Black	3.5x
Native American	1.8x
Latino	1.3x
White	0.7x
Asian	0.3x

## Child Only Disproportionality

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Over or Under Representation</i>
Black	4.2x
Native American	2.1x
Latino	1.4x
White	0.6x
Asian/P.I.	0.2x



Child Welfare  
Disproportionality:  
Children in Foster Care  
(2024)



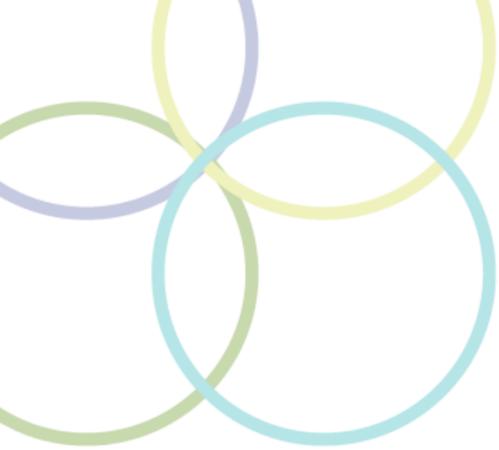
Child Welfare  
Disproportionality:  
Children in Foster Care  
**Controlling for Poverty**  
(2024)

# Why Disproportionality Matters in CalWORKs & Child Welfare



- Structural inequities
- Historical Context
- Policy impacts that fall unevenly across groups
- Systemic Barriers to access
- Patterns of surveillance and reporting
- Where prevention and support efforts should be prioritized

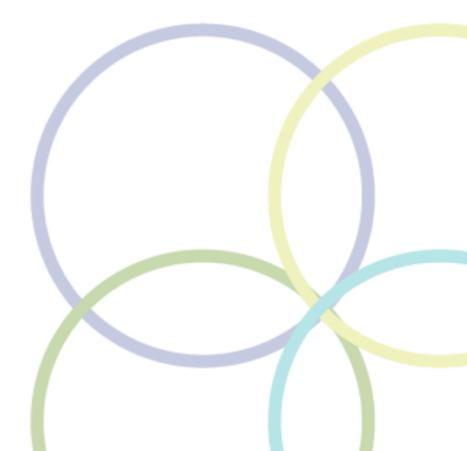
It is not about individual behavior – it is about **systemic patterns**.



# The systems loop



*reinforces disproportionality*



# How Child-Only, Child Welfare & Disproportionality Intertwine

- Indicator of family instability
- Strong predictor of CWS involvement
  - Shared drivers
  - Shared populations
  - Shared inequities



We're spending more to do less. **Let's flip the script.**

Let's take a look at the needs of Child-Only families and how to bridge some of the gaps they experience.



# Child-Only cases reflect deeper family instability

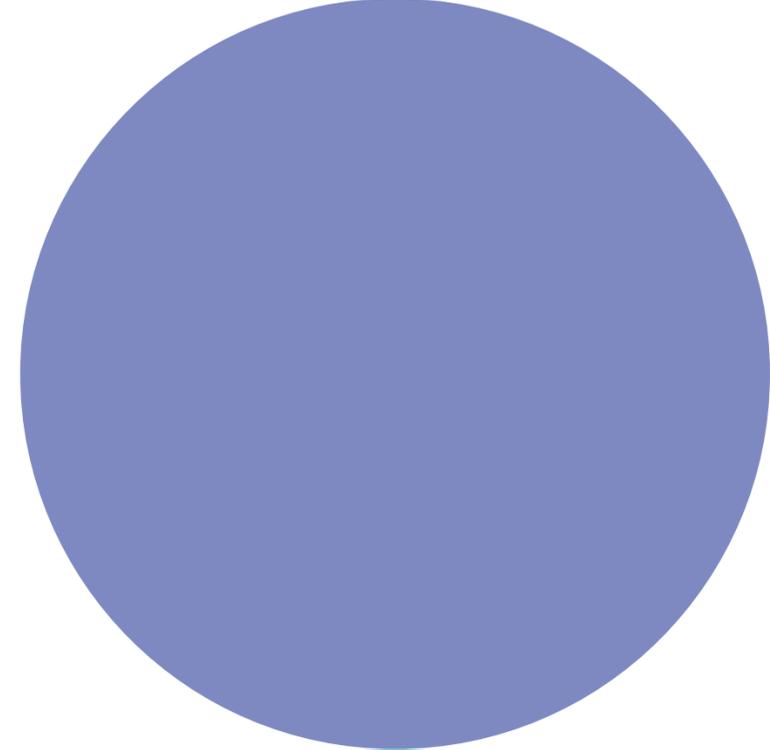
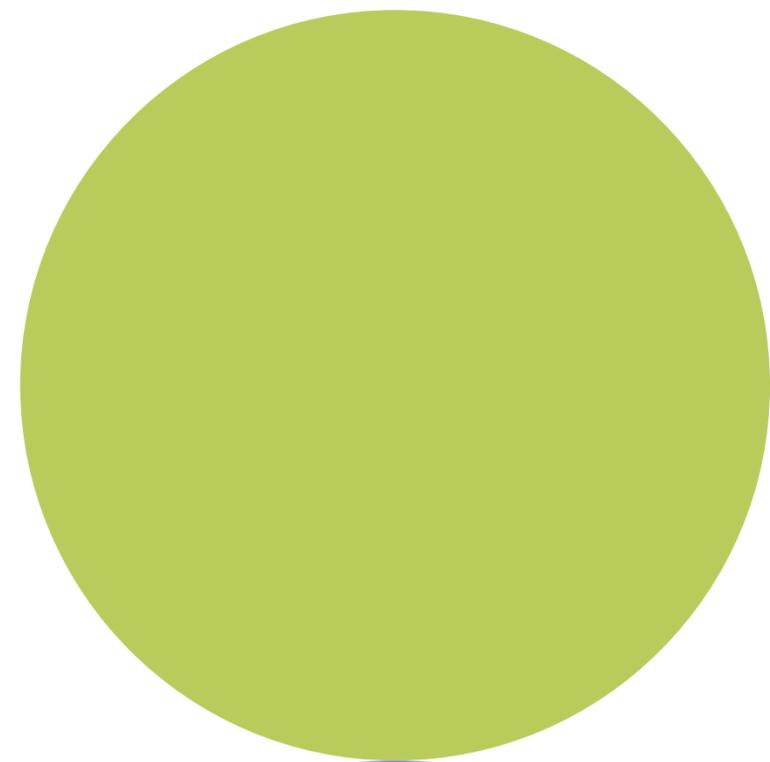
- Child-Only status limits caregiver access to Welfare-to-Work and stabilization services
- Reduced caregiver supports increase economic and household instability
- Limited trauma-informed services leave caregiver and child needs unaddressed
- Lack of developmental screening delays early identification of child needs
- Unmet needs increase risk of CPS involvement and placement disruption
- Kinship caregivers often step in without training, financial parity, or system navigation support
- Reactive child welfare responses cost more than coordinated prevention supports

# Population Needs

Population	Needs
SSI-Linked Cases (A/C 3F)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disability Supports</li><li>• Respite Care</li></ul>
Non-Needy Relative Caregivers (A/C 3M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial Support</li><li>• Trauma-informed Services</li><li>• Caregiver Training</li></ul>
Sanctioned Parents (A/C 3P)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial Support</li><li>• Case Management and Barrier Removal Services</li><li>• Communication About Sanction Status</li><li>• Childcare</li></ul>
Immigration-Related Exclusions (A/C 3R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial Support</li><li>• Immigration Services</li><li>• Trauma-Informed Services</li><li>• Childcare</li></ul>
Timed Out/Safety Net Cases (A/C K1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial Support</li><li>• Case Management and Barrier Removal Services</li><li>• Childcare</li></ul>

# Child-Only Caseload Strategies

- Strengthen Caregiver Supports
- Reduce Sanction Driven Child Only Conversions
- Address Immigration Related Exclusions
- Enhance Family Stabilization and Crisis Supports services
- Develop Specialized Child Only Case Management Models



# What could help?

Strengthen WTW Engagement	Engagement and Supportive Case Management
Cross System Collaboration	Identify families and support connection to services
Linkages	Help families navigate across systems
First 5 Commissions	Parent coaching, developmental screenings, and concrete supports
FFPS (Family First Prevention Services)	Evidence-based parenting, mental health, and substance-use supports
CBCAP Grants	Parenting programs, home visiting, and family-strengthening services
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Culturally responsive supports, navigation, and concrete resources
Policy Changes	Reducing Sanctions
Data-Informed Decision-Making	Track Child-Only Caseloads and work to reduce them

Where do you see this in your county? How could a Linkages approach help make a difference for Child-Only families in your County? What other approaches could work?

# Key Takeaways

- Child-Only is a structural indicator
- Disproportionality is systemic
- The systems are intertwined
- Solutions require cross-system alignment



*Thank you for  
joining today!*

