

Child Only: A Potential Linkages Population



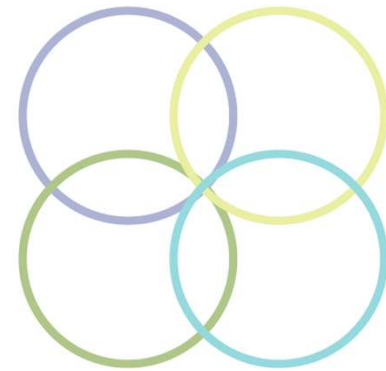


Welcome!

Presenters:

Stuart Oppenheim CFPIC Director Emeritus

Andrea Lewis, Linkages Senior Associate



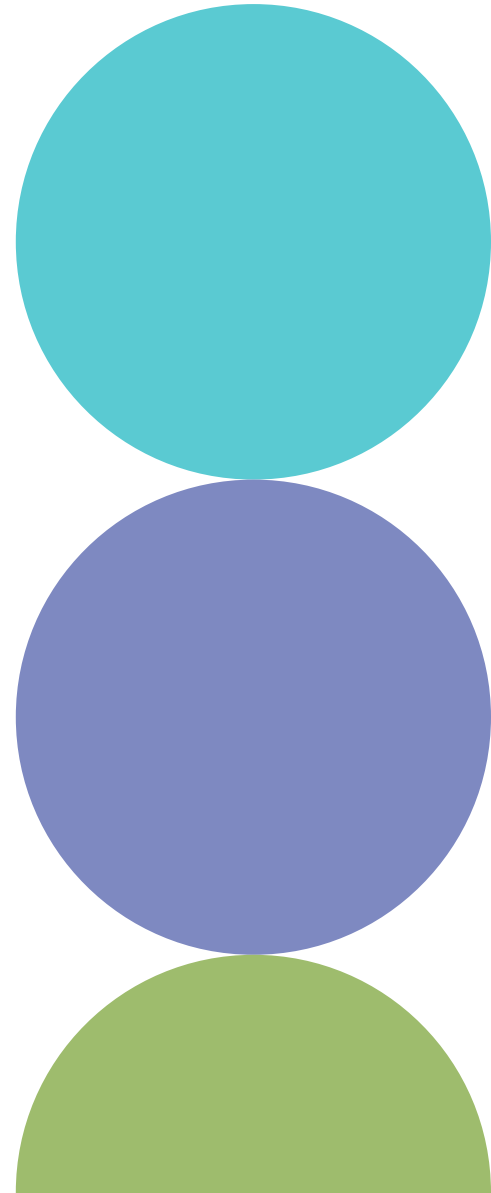
Icebreaker: One thing that comes to mind when you think about the Child-Only population

How many in the room are from the CalWORKs or
Welfare to Work Programs?

How many in the room are from Child Welfare Services?

Objectives

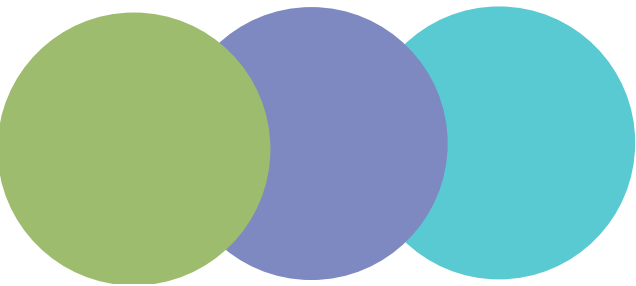
- Learn about Linkages Prevention and Early Intervention
- Understand the history of the Child-Only program and the current Child-Only population data
- Investigate the dynamics of Racial Disproportionality
- Explore how the Child-Only population can benefit from the Linkages Philosophy
- Share and discuss tools that can benefit the Child-Only population



Linkages 2.0 Approach

- Linkages 1.0 focused on high-end services for mutual families
 - Welfare to Work families (vs. all CalWORKs families)
 - Child Welfare cases (vs. referrals)
- Linkages 2.0 expanded the approach to include the full span of prevention
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Tertiary
- First Linkages Prevention and Early Intervention meeting 1/28/21
- Over past 5 years the committee identified strategies to address needs of new populations
 - Primary Prevention strategy: Protective Factors Brochure
 - Secondary Prevention strategy: Family Strengths Assessment Tool
- Committee continues to explore additional strategies

Additional Prevention and Early Intervention Considerations



- Tools to increase referrals from Child Welfare to Benefits programs
- Promoting the inclusion of CalWORKs staff on counties' Comprehensive Prevention Planning teams
- Identification of the most vulnerable populations
 - Committee reviewed research from 2007 on risk level in CalWORKs Child-Only cases
 - Presented the results of the studies at 2024 statewide Linkages Convening
 - Acknowledged need to update research on Child Only families to determine relevance
 - Andrea Lewis took up the challenge

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 excluded due to immigration status; child remains eligible.	Immigration-Related Exclusions	3R

Not to exclude

What are Child-Only cases?

Children receive aid but adults do not. Due to:

Description	Category	Aid Code
Parent is sanctioned (e.g., for non-compliance with Welfare-to-Work), child still receives aid.	Sanctioned Parents	3P
Adult has reached the 60-month federal time limit; only children continue to receive aid.	Safety Net (Timed Out)	K1

This group is not the focus of today's workshop, but there are ways to serve these populations and ensure they receive supports and possibly cure sanctions at a higher rate.

Activity

We see these groups as choosing this position, by not participating or by not participating in the way that would have allowed them to be successful by the time they timed out.

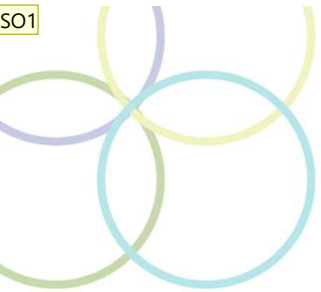
Why would these 2 groups be at risk? What could we do to prevent these population groups from having such high numbers?



How the 2 Systems Connect

- CalWORKs keeps families financially stable, decreasing the likelihood of child maltreatment among families experiencing child poverty.
- CalWORKs Child-Only grants keep children out of foster care by supporting relative caregivers and allowing parents to continue to receive
- food and medical assistance.
- Child Welfare Services can support families by referring them for CalWORKs assistance to ensure they receive the services and resources for which they are eligible.





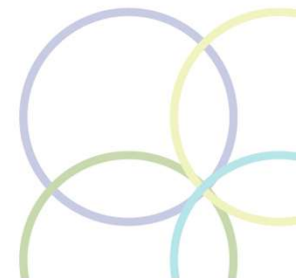
The systems loop

Economic
hardship

Child-Only
case

Family
instability

Child
Welfare
involvement

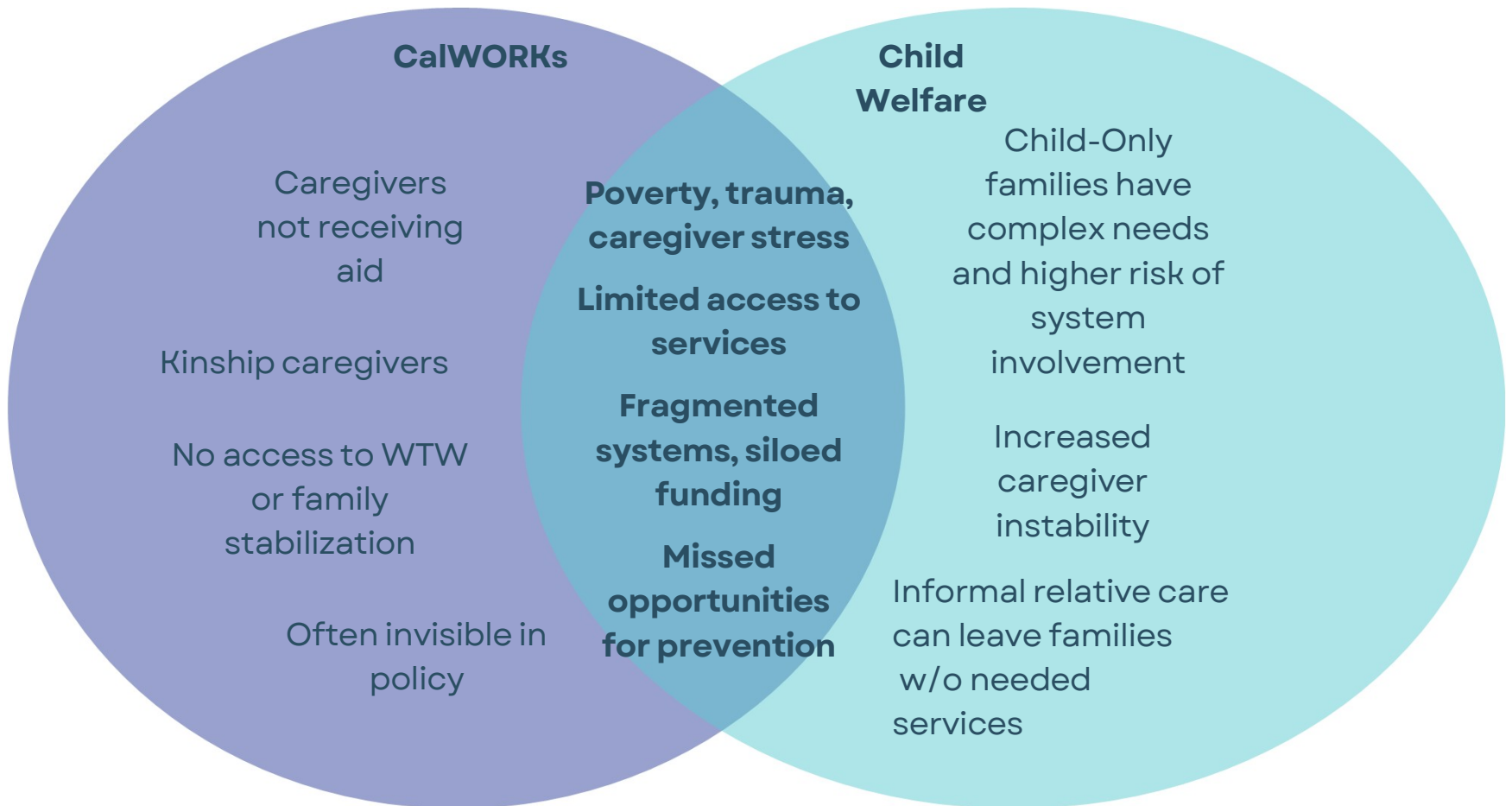


Slide 11

SO1 I took out references to disproportionality since it is explored later and may be distraction here. You can add it back if you want but I think it is not necessary here

Stuart Oppenheim, 2026-04-24T16:34:07.044

Child Only Families: Missed Opportunities



Activity

Understanding the benefits of each population/program:

How might you address these missed opportunities in your county?

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 Consistent

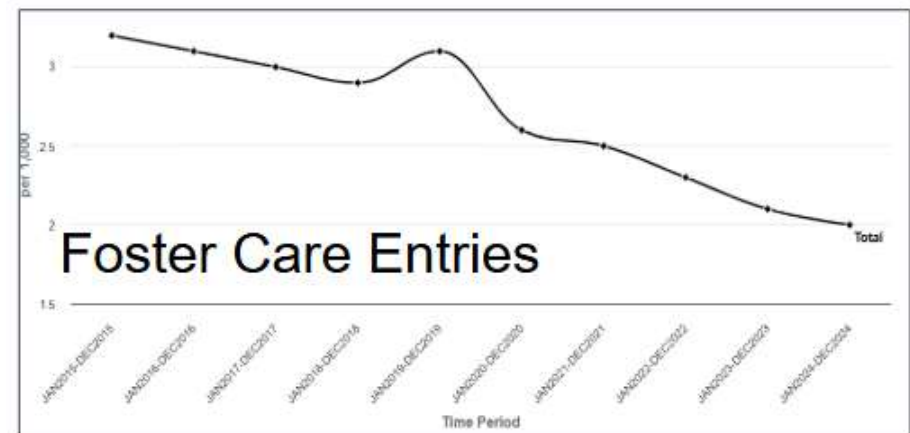
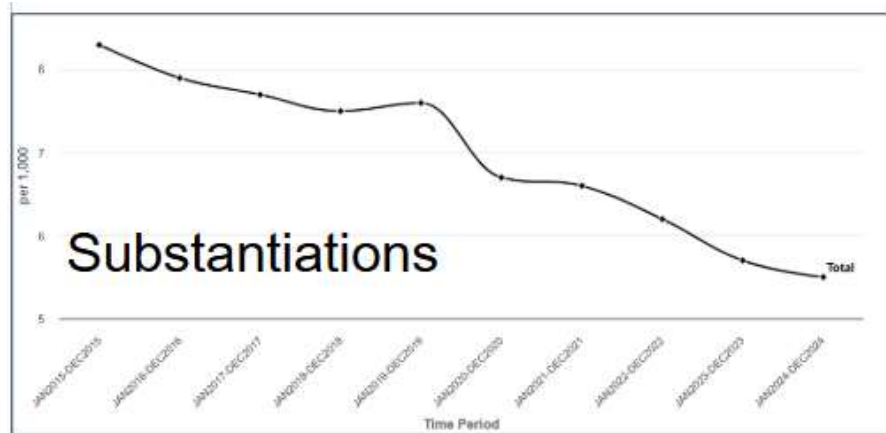
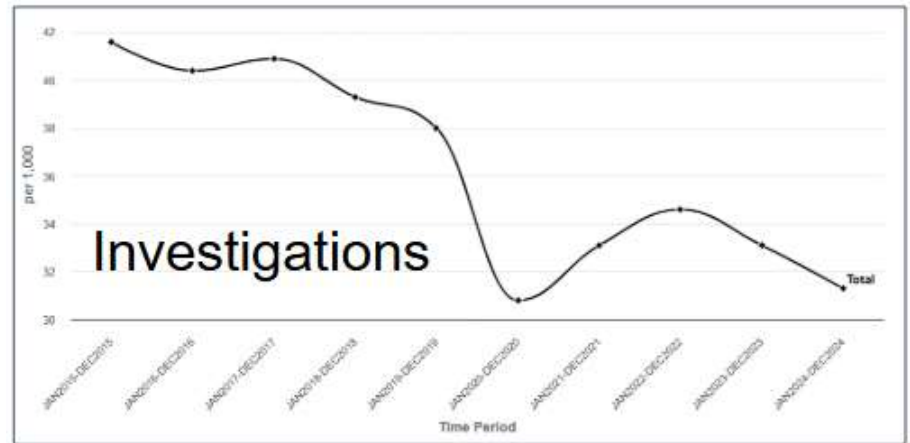
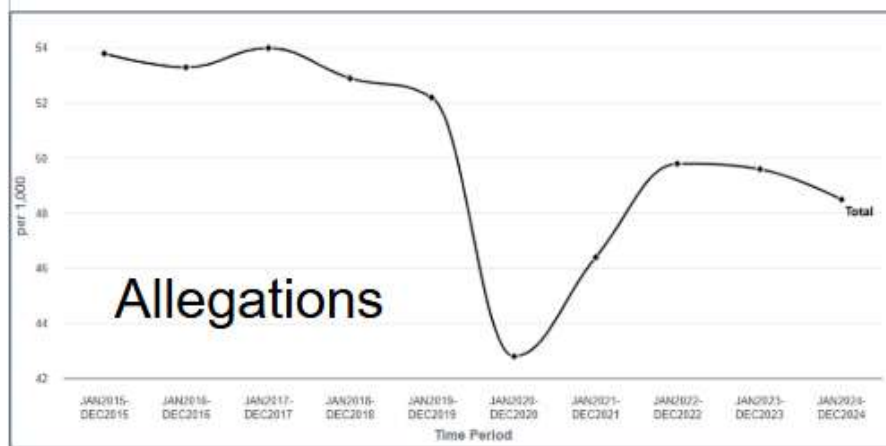
Group	2021 total	2024 total	Percent change 2021→2024
Child-Only	1,943,101	1,934,190	-0.50%
Approvals	3,665,905	4,337,901	18.30%
WTW enrolled	1,464,578	2,180,205	48.80%
WTW exempt	305,809	473,894	54.90%
Children Living in Poverty	1,363,000	1,208,000	-11.40%

Child-only Case #s Vary Across CA

Rank	County	%
1	Del Norte	44.9%
2	Imperial	41.3%
3	Lassen	41.1%
4	Fresno	39.4%
5	Sacramento	36.4%
6	Modoc	35.6%
7	Yuba	33.7%
8	Merced	33.3%
9	Siskiyou	32.5%
10	Tulare	31.5%

Rank	County	%
1	San Mateo	1.6%
2	Marin	3.2%
3	Sierra	3.9%
4	Mono	4.3%
5	Napa	4.5%
6	Sonoma	4.8%
7	Orange	5.3%
8	Santa Clara	5.4%
9	Santa Cruz	5.4%
10	San Luis Obispo	5.5%

CA's CWS Population is Decreasing



Child-Only cases have risks that reflect needs for services

- 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

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

Overrepresentation of Children of Color

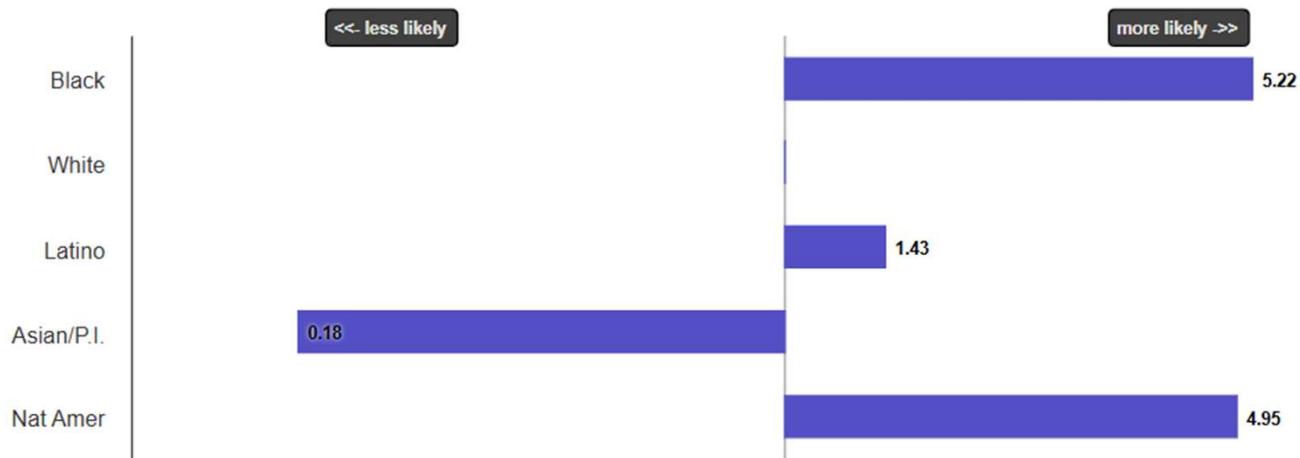


CalWORKs Disproportionality

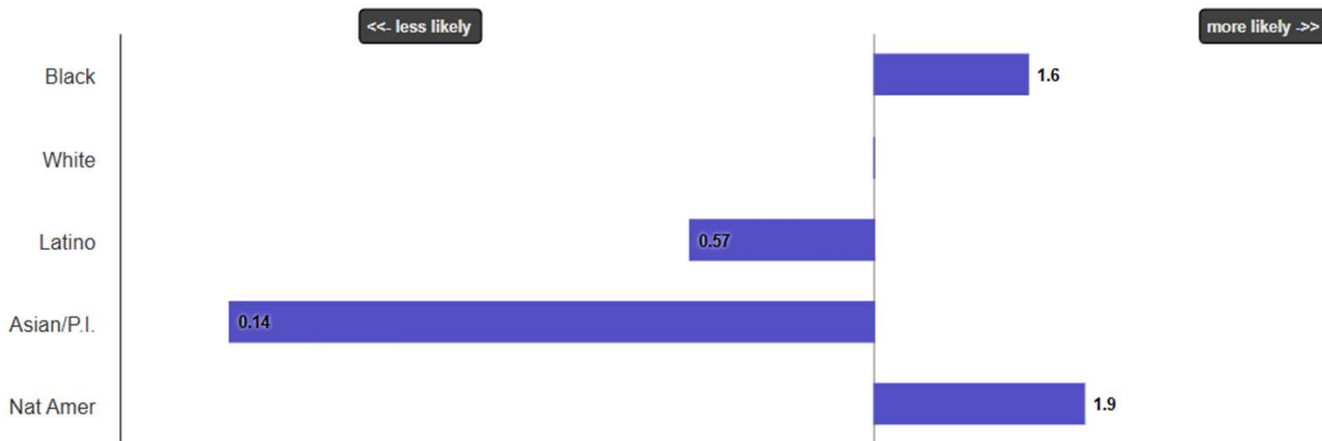
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Over or Under Representation</i>
Black	3.5x
Native American	1.8x
Latino	1.3x
White	0.7x
Asian	0.3x

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)

How Child-Only, Child Welfare & Disproportionality Intertwine

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



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

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**.

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



Slide 24

SO1 I could take these three next slides in addition to the ones you already assigned me

Stuart Oppenheim, 2026-04-24T16:46:31.002

al1 0 That would be great, lets discussing timing and slide assignments Monday.

andrea lewis, 2026-04-24T17:57:47.275

Population Needs

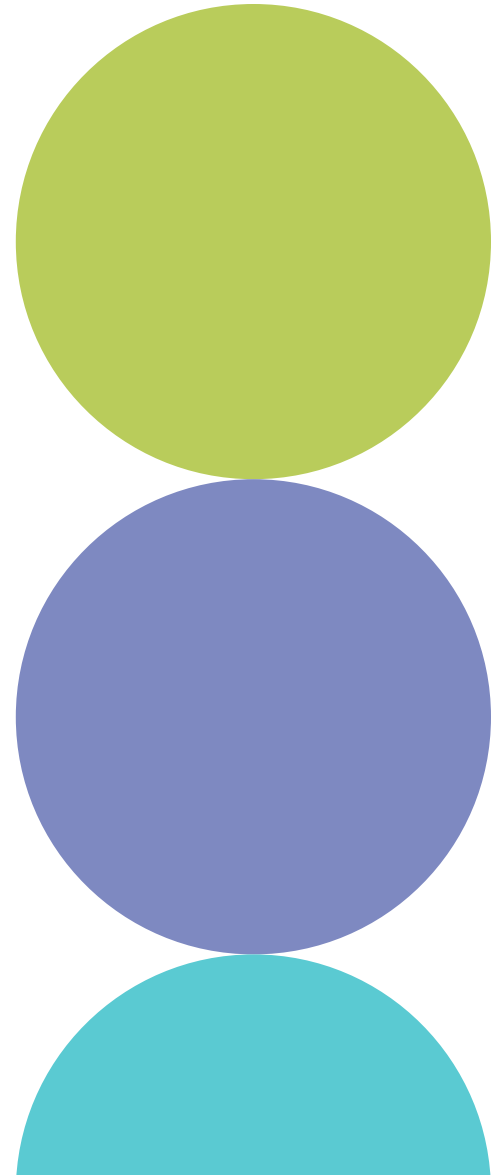
Population	Needs
SSI-Linked Cases (A/C 3F)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Disability Supports•Respite Care
Non-Needy Relative Caregivers (A/C 3M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Financial Support•Trauma-informed Services•Caregiver Training
Sanctioned Parents (A/C 3P)	<ul style="list-style-type: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

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

Child-Only Caseload Strategies

- Strengthen Caregiver Supports
- Reduce Sanction Driven Child Only Conversions
- Address Immigration Related Exclusions
- Enhance and expand Family Stabilization and Crisis Supports services
- Develop Specialized Child Only Case Management Models
- Use the Protective Factors Brochure
- Assess using the Linkages Screening Needs Tool



Primary Prevention: Linkages Protective Factor Brochure





What are the Protective Factors?



Parental Resilience

Resilience is managing stress and functioning well, even when things are difficult.



Social Connections

It's easier to handle parenting challenges when positive relationships with family, friends, and neighbors are consistent.



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

By learning what children need in order to thrive, you can provide them the best start in life.



Concrete Support in Times of Need

Knowing where to get help in times of need can make things a lot easier.



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Helping children develop social-emotional competence teaches them to manage emotions and build healthy relationships.

Five Protective Factors

Each of us is born into a unique set of circumstances that can impact the course of our lives. Identified as the social determinants of health, these circumstances can be either protective factors (things that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes) or risk factors (things that increase the likelihood of challenges). Research studying health outcomes identified five key protective factors linked with increased likelihood of positive outcomes.

These are the 5 Protective Factors:

1. Parental resiliency
2. Access to concrete supports in times of need
3. Knowledge of parenting and child development
4. Social connections
5. Child social and emotional competence

Building protective capacities within families to promote positive outcomes, strengthen communities, and improve child well-being is the job of all child and family serving organizations. This brochure was developed by the Statewide Linkages Project to help counties promote awareness of the protective factors and share information about state and local resources to assist families in building protective factors, increasing resiliency and reducing risk. Each section of the brochure looks at one of the protective factors and provides:

6. A definition of the protective factor
7. Family friendly suggestions for how to feel strong in that factor
8. Local connections the family can make if they want more support related to that factor

Check out the tips and resources listed below!

Instructions for Counties

Prior to printing, distributing and publishing this brochure online, please do the following:

1. Review each protective factor and make a list of relevant resources in your community associated with each factor.
2. If you are unable to identify local resources, consider including the CDSS parent resource website and helplines listed there: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ocap/parent-resources>
3. Reach out to each resource to make sure you have accurate contact information and to confirm cost or eligibility requirements.
4. Enter the available resource, contact information and eligibility requirements in the editable space for each factor. Some local resources may address multiple factors – be sure to include them in each area they address.
5. Make sure to use any county logos or other specific county information your agency has identified (this may include specific colors or fonts). If your agency does not have specific requirements for brochures, make sure to use a font that is easy to read and use colors that will work even if the brochure is printed in black and white.
6. Follow any county accessibility rules for online and printed materials.



Concrete Support in Times of Need

As a Parent, it is Important that You:

- Know what help is available (like where you can obtain food, housing, clothing, and help paying for utilities).
- Have access to the things you need to keep your family safe and healthy.
- Advocate for your family.

Concrete Support Tune-Ups:

- Learn more about what sources of support are available in your community. Check out bulletin boards at the library or visit your local family resource center.
- Help someone else get the help they need.



Why Protective Factors?

Protective factors help families succeed and thrive, even in the face of risks and challenges. There are many ways that you can build on your own family's strengths and offer support to other families when they need it.

These are the 5 Protective Factors:

- Parental resiliency
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Access to concrete supports in times of need
- Child social and emotional competence

Five Protective Factors Brochure F063-30-984 (05/24)

Parental Resilience

Being Resilient as a Parent Means:

- Taking care of yourself and asking for help when you need it.
- Planning for the future and what you will do in challenging situations.
- Taking time to enjoy your child and what you like about parenting.

Parental Resilience Tune-Up

Tips:

- What activities help you feel less stressed? Create a list of stress-buster activities to have on hand when times get tough.
- Write down all the things you love doing with your child and think of ways to build those activities into your day.

Social Connections

How to Build a Strong Social Support System:

- Join a local community group.

Social Connections Tune-Up Tips:

- There are also many virtual community groups on platforms such as Facebook.
- Reach out to and make plans with parents who have children the same age as yours.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Increasing Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Helps You:

- Know what to expect as your child grows and how you can best help them thrive.
- Respond in a positive way when your child misbehaves.
- Use new skills to help your child be happy and healthy.

Parenting and Child Development Tune-Ups:

- Make a list of your parenting strengths to remind yourself of what you do well.
- Write down at least one thing you want to learn about parenting and consider who might help you learn it.

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FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS RESOURCES AND TIPS

in Times of Need (cont'd)

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- Help someone else get the help they need.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

To Help your Child Develop these Skills:

- Respond to your child with warmth and consistency.
- Teach your child to use words to express how he or she feels.
- Allow your child to express his or her emotions safely.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children Tune-Ups:

- Look for opportunities to praise your child for making the right choices and for showing friendly behaviors, such as sharing a favorite toy.
- Create a regular family check-in routine to talk about the day

California Parent & Youth Helpline
<https://caparentyouthhelpline.org/>
(855) 427-2736

Text 4 baby
<https://www.text4baby.org/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>
(800) 394-3366

Help Me Grow OC
<https://www.helpmegrowoc.org/>
(866) 476-9025

Access California
<https://www.accesscal.org/>
(800) 287-1332
(714) 917-0440

Regional Center Of Orange County
<https://www.rcocdd.com/>
(714) 796-5100

Department of Social Services
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ocap/parent-resources>

Material adapted with permission from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, www.strengtheningfamilies.net

Five Protective Factors Brochure F063-30-984 (05/24)



Five Protective Factors

Building Strong Families

Each of us is born into a unique set of circumstances that can impact the course of our lives. Identified as the social determinants of health, these circumstances can be either protective factors (things that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes) or risk factors (things that increase the likelihood of challenges). Research studying health outcomes identified five key protective factors linked with an increased likelihood of positive outcomes.

OC Social Services Agency
FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS RESOURCES AND TIPS

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Protective Factors Building Strong Families:

Resources and Tips

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Access California

<https://www.accesscal.org/>
(800) 287-1332
(714) 917-0440

Regional Center Of Orange County

<https://www.roocdd.com/>
(714) 796-5100

Department of Social Services

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ocapi/parent-resources>

Why Protective Factors?

Protective factors help families succeed and thrive, even in the face of risks and challenges. There are many ways that you can build on your own family's strengths and offer support to other families when they need it.



Secondary Prevention: Linkages Family Needs Screening Tool



Screening Tool Background


- The Linkages Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee works to identify ways Linkages strategies can support upstream prevention work with families
- The Committee identified public benefits applicants as a population who might be supported by family strengthening services, but may be unsure of what resources exist
- The Committee focused on building access to community-based prevention services that can help families build resiliency

Why Screen?

*What's the
purpose?*

Many CalWORKs applicants are ineligible for Welfare-to-Work services, but they face challenges that put them at risk of child welfare involvement. Communities need streamlined ways to connect this underserved population with prevention services in community pathways.

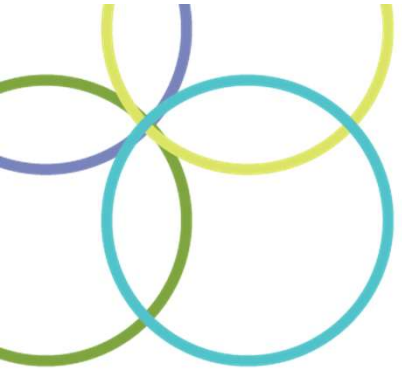
- Identify family strengths and needs early in the family's journey
- Provide appropriate referrals to community-based support services



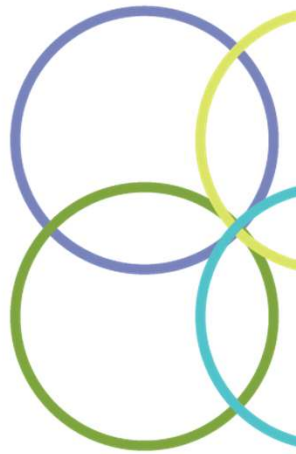
Discussion about the
Linkages Screening tool and
how to implement in your
county.

Table Talk Activity

How could a Linkages approach help make a difference for Child-Only families in your County?
What other approaches could work?



Q & A



Key Takeaways

- CalWORKs and Child Welfare are woven together in serving mutual families
- Disproportionality affects our Child Only population at a higher rate
- This population can benefit from the Linkages Philosophy
- Resources & tools that are being developed can benefit this population



Thank you for joining today!