Getting to Good Policy Decisions

How Can Policy and Practice Best Support the Most Vulnerable Children, Youth and Families

IPPSR Public Policy Forum

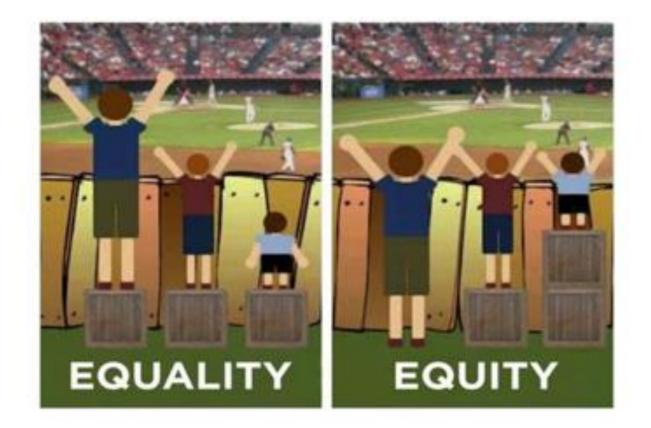
May 2, 2018



Who We Are

- A statewide, independent policy voice for children, youth and their families.
- We want Michigan's public policy and programs to help children, youth and families access the opportunities they need to succeed.
- To make that happen, we work to ensure that policymakers prioritize the needs of children, youth and families facing the most challenges.
- We believe that better public policy is built when those directly impacted by it are engaged with decision makers.







Public policy in the best interest of children.

www.michiganschildren.org

Why Do We Need to Improve Policy In This Area?

- Predictably Poor Outcomes for Kids, Youth and Families Involved in the System
- Over-Representation of Children of Color in the System
- Unique Public Responsibility for Children and Youth in the System



Under-Resourced System

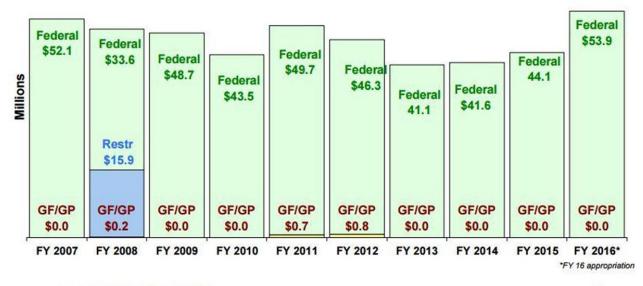
- Three of Every Four Dollars in MDHHS Federal
- Virtually All Child Welfare and Foster Care Driven Federally, Only Required State Investment
- Positive Practices Remain "Pilots" or Not Available Statewide
- Privatization Contributes to Inequities in Services
- Support Services Required Also Under-Resourced



Funding Choices

Family Preservation/Prevention Services Expenditures

By FY 2000-01 budget, most GF/GP was removed from program. Merit Award Trust Funds were appropriated in FY 2007-08 to better position the state to draw down additional TANF contingency funds. Most federal funding in this area is TANF block grant.



House Fiscal Agency: December 2015

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Policy Made In Points of Crisis

- Publicized Tragedies
 - Creates Worst-Case Scenario Narrative
- Court Involvement
 - Michigan's Foster Care System Sued in 2006
 - Required Spending in Certain Areas
 - Latest Agreement 2/16 Considered an "Exit Plan"
 - Created Some Transparency/Available Information
 - Contributed to Winners and Losers
- Current Sexual Abuse Situation
 - Reactive Policy



Information + Research/Evidence + Lived Experience

= Good Public Policy Investment and Strategy



What Information We Need?

- LOTS of Information Available
- Lots of Great Research and Evidence
- Real Question: Do Policymaker Have Access to The Right Information to Help Them Make The Best Decisions?
 - Who Comes Into the System? Why?
 - How Are They Doing Under Our Care?
 - Are They Better Prepared When They Leave?



Keeping Families Out of the System: Stability

- We Know A Lot About What Stabilizes Families
- And What Destabilizes Them
 - Domestic Violence
 - Substance Use/Misuse
 - Mental Health Challenges
 - Lack of Parenting Knowledge and Skill
 - Lack of Connection to Supports
- Not Having Enough Resources for Basic Needs or the Skills to Get Them
 - Unstable Housing
 - Limited Education and Workforce Success



ACEs and Child Welfare

- Abuse and Neglect ARE ACEs and Trauma
- Most other measured ACEs are contributors to families entering into the system.
- Growing recognition that trauma and stress change our biology – change our brain function
 - Adversity can cause traumatic stress
 - Stress changes the brain, making it difficult for kids to pay attention and engage
 - Often results in fight, flight or freeze responses
 - Over time leads to problems in school and health problems



Assessing and Serving Families: Protecting Children in Michigan

- A Complaint is Made
 - Mandated Reporters and Others
 - Centralized Intake System
- For Some Families, There is An Investigation
 - Almost 250,000 Children in These Families
 - This is Growing
- Investigations Have Five Possible Outcomes
 - Assess Risk and Prescribe Services
 - Nearly 40,000 Confirmed Victims Annually
 - Vast Majority Confirmed for Neglect



Removing Children From Home

- Result of a Substantiated Investigation AND
- A Court Order
- Determination of Imminent Risk of Harm
- DHHS Becomes the Responsible Caretaker
- We Remove About 7,000 Kids a Year
- Foster Care Considered a Short-Term Solution Leading to Permanent Placements
 - Back Home (Reunification)
 - Relatives (Kinship Care)
 - Adoption



What Do Kids in Care Need?

- Supportive Caregivers
 - Connections To Birth Families
 - Preference of Family Placements
 - Trained in Trauma; Supported
- Consistent Placements
- Normal Environments
- Timely Services
 - More Complex Needs
 - Often Dependent On Other Under-Resourced Systems
 - Early On
 - Child Care
 - Mental Health Services
 - Dependent on Many Systems Working Well Together
 - Health, Education, Workforce



What Do Kids Need To Succeed Into Adulthood: Transition

- Kids Leave Foster Care For Three Reasons
 - Reunification
 - Adoption
 - Aging Out of Care
- As They Leave, What Do They Need?
 - Connections and Skills
 - Time To Build Those Things
- Option to Extend Foster Care Benefits to Age 23; Educational and Medical Services to Age 26
- Expanded Services as Opt-In
 - Young People Leave Traditional Foster Care at 18
 - RE-Apply for Youth Voluntary Foster Care (YVFC)



Where Does This Lead Us For Policy Recommendations?

- To Keep Families Out of the System
- To Better Serve Children, Youth and Their Caregivers In Foster Care
- To Better Prepare Young People For Life Success
- Need for State Investments Current Budget Decisions
- Need for Policy Change



Prevention Policy Needed

- Invest in Practices That Address What Destabilizes Families
 - Researched Strategies for Family Support
 - Based In Community Priorities and Needs
- Improve Access To Supports that Stabilize Work and School
 - Child Care
 - Transportation
- Improve Access to Services That Keep Young People Moving On Positive Paths Before They Become Parents
 - Mental Health, Substance Use, Targeted Educational Support



Foster Care Policy Implications

- Training and Support for Caregivers Including Formal and Informal Kin
- Use of Child Care Subsidy to Better Serve Families in Care
- Expand Early On for Consistent Access Statewide
- Timely, Appropriate Access to Behavioral Health Services
- Improving Trauma Informed Practice in All Systems
- Targeted Education System Resources
 - For Identification, Assessment and Services
 - Help to Catch Up and Inspire Success



Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Act, House Bills 5121-5123

- Puts Into State Law Current Federal Requirements and DHHS Policy
 - Service Access
 - Timeliness of Service
 - System of Complaints
- Recommended Expansions
 - Better Definitions of Timeliness
 - Onus of Responsibility for Complaints
 - Placement of Monitoring
- Supported By Youth in Care and Caregivers
- Must Pass the Senate in 2018



Transition Policy Implications

- Continue Foster Care Services As Opt Out vs. Opt In
 - Maintain Physical and Mental Health Coverage
 - Maintain Basic Needs Supports
- Build Universal High School Diploma Success
 - Regardless of Time
 - Supporting Alternative and Adult Education
- Build Supports and Skills Through MYOI
- Increase Investments in Post-Secondary and Workforce Options
 - Don't Base Service Availability on Time or Age
 - Base On Skill Building and Successful Outcomes
- Improve the Tax System to Support
 - Lower the Age of the EITC
 - Incentivize Employers Through Tax Breaks



We Can Do Better

We Must Do Better



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