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About US

Child Welfare

Understanding the risk factors children in the child welfare system face helps strengthen the work of child welfare agencies and programs. Mathematica contributes to these efforts by advancing research on child welfare programs. We work across a range of issues to provide expertise on the design of child abuse and neglect studies, evaluation technical assistance for homelessness prevention efforts, and data-driven evaluations of home visiting and other programs.

REDUCING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) estimates that over six million children were involved in maltreatment reports in 2013. Administrative data are critical to reducing the prevalence of child maltreatment and related risk factors. Reporting systems vary at the local, state, and federal levels, making measurement difficult and inaccurate, and reported incidents are likely the tip of the iceberg, with many more children experiencing or at risk of maltreatment. To improve ongoing monitoring and assessment, we are developing design options for future studies for ACF. We are also working with the Children's Bureau to identify strategies for adopting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based home visiting programs to prevent child maltreatment.

SERVING FOSTER-CARE YOUTH AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Youth who experience foster care can face significant challenges in the transition to adulthood, including risk of homelessness and unstable housing. Mathematica leads an evaluation technical assistance project sponsored by ACF to help improve this group's well-being and help them transition to adult life. We work with grantees to conduct evaluability assessments as they enact initial implementation pilots and prepare for summative evaluations. We also conducted a multiyear study of housing opportunities available to these youth, including Family Unification Program models, for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, finding that the models have promise for supporting youth but are not widely used.

IMPROVING PARENTING AND FAMILY STABILITY

Adverse birth outcomes are more common in the U.S. than in other developed countries and result in emotional and economic costs for families and communities. Mathematica is evaluating the effectiveness of national maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting programs, which aim to achieve better outcomes for mothers, fathers, and their babies. Our studies are providing information about programs with evidence of effectiveness in improving child health and development and other factors. We are also studying programs to increase the well-being and safety of children who are in, or at risk of, out-of-home placement because of a parent or caretaker's substance abuse.

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