

# Do changes to the social safety net affect child maltreatment? A preliminary study of TANF

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# Consequences and Costs of Child Maltreatment are Significant and Ongoing

- 3.4 million reports investigated nationally, 683,000 victims in 2015 (USDHHS, 2017)
- SFY 2017: 67,372 reports in Kansas; 56% assigned for investigation; 2,091 affirmed, 2,236 substantiated
- Contributes to morbidity and mortality in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood
- Generates economic burden of \$124 billion to society each year

# Child Neglect in the U.S.

- 75% of reports involve neglect
  - 63.4% involve solely neglect (USDHHS, 2017)
- Child neglect is highly correlated with poverty, economic conditions, economic shocks

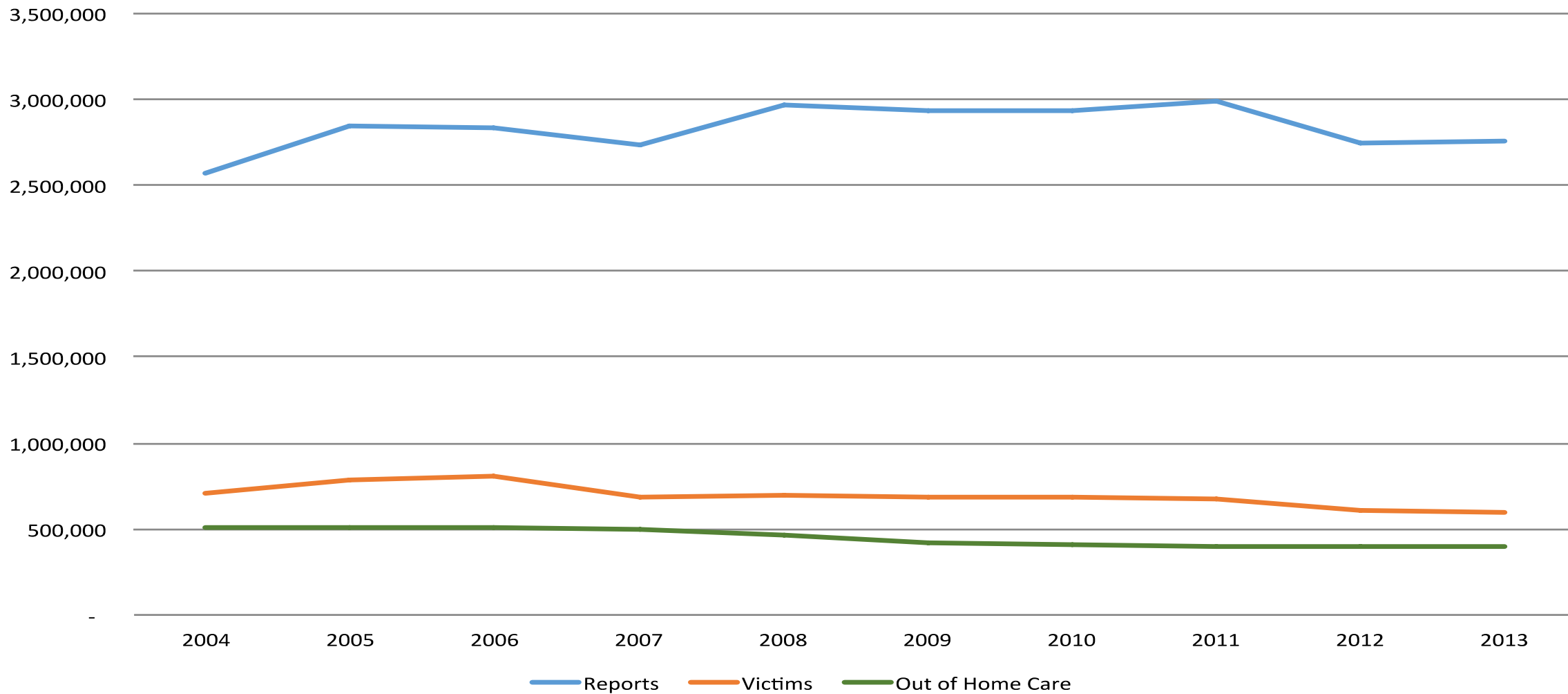


Failure to meet basic physical, emotional, educational needs

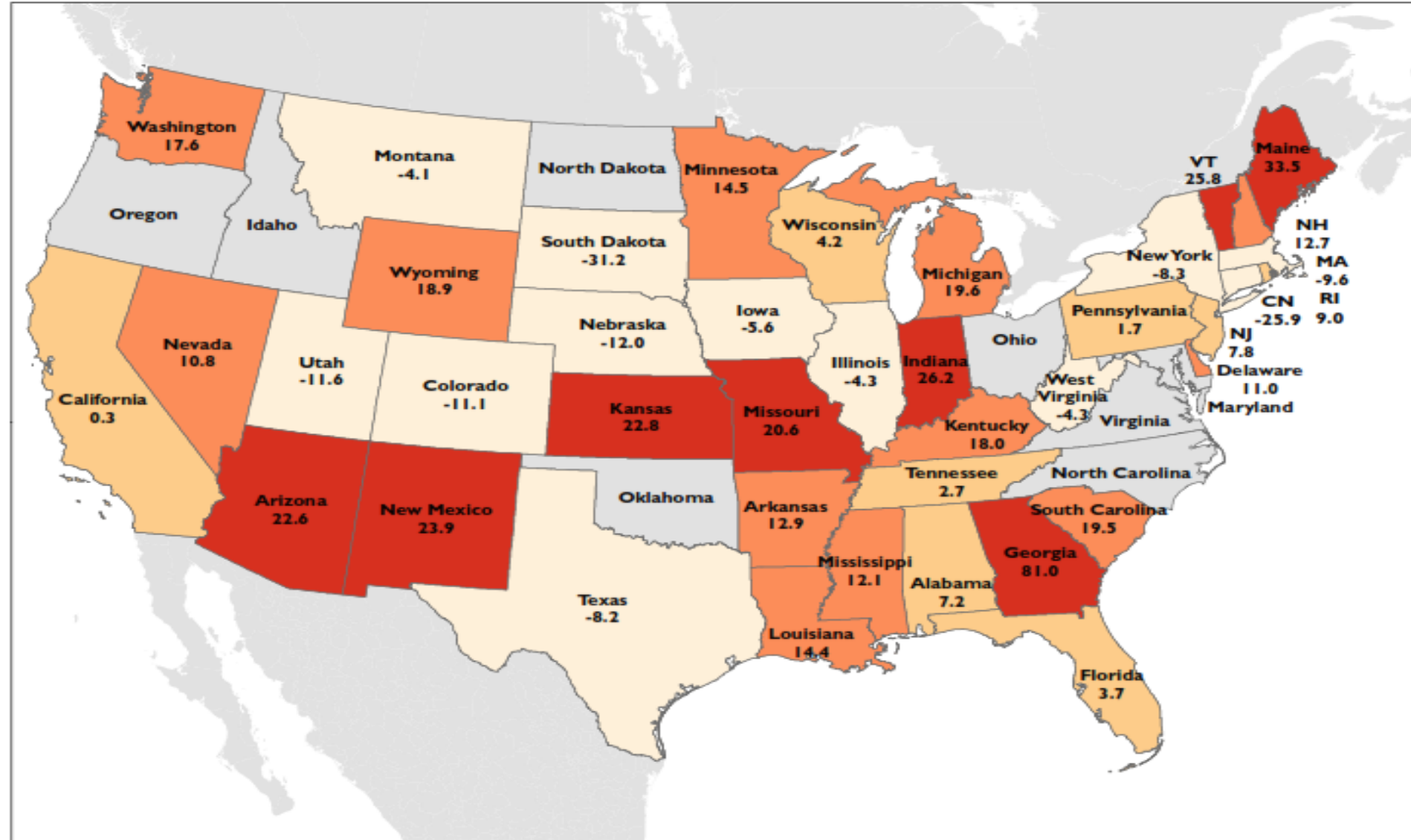
Failure to supervise or ensure safety given a child's emotional and developmental needs

Exposure to violent environments

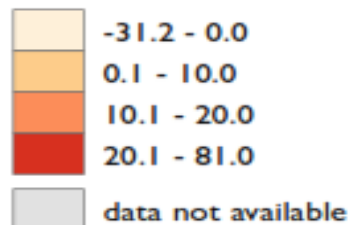
## Number of Children Reported and Substantiated for Abuse & Neglect and Out-of-Home Care, 2004-2013



# Percent Change in Number of Children Investigated by State, 2007-2013



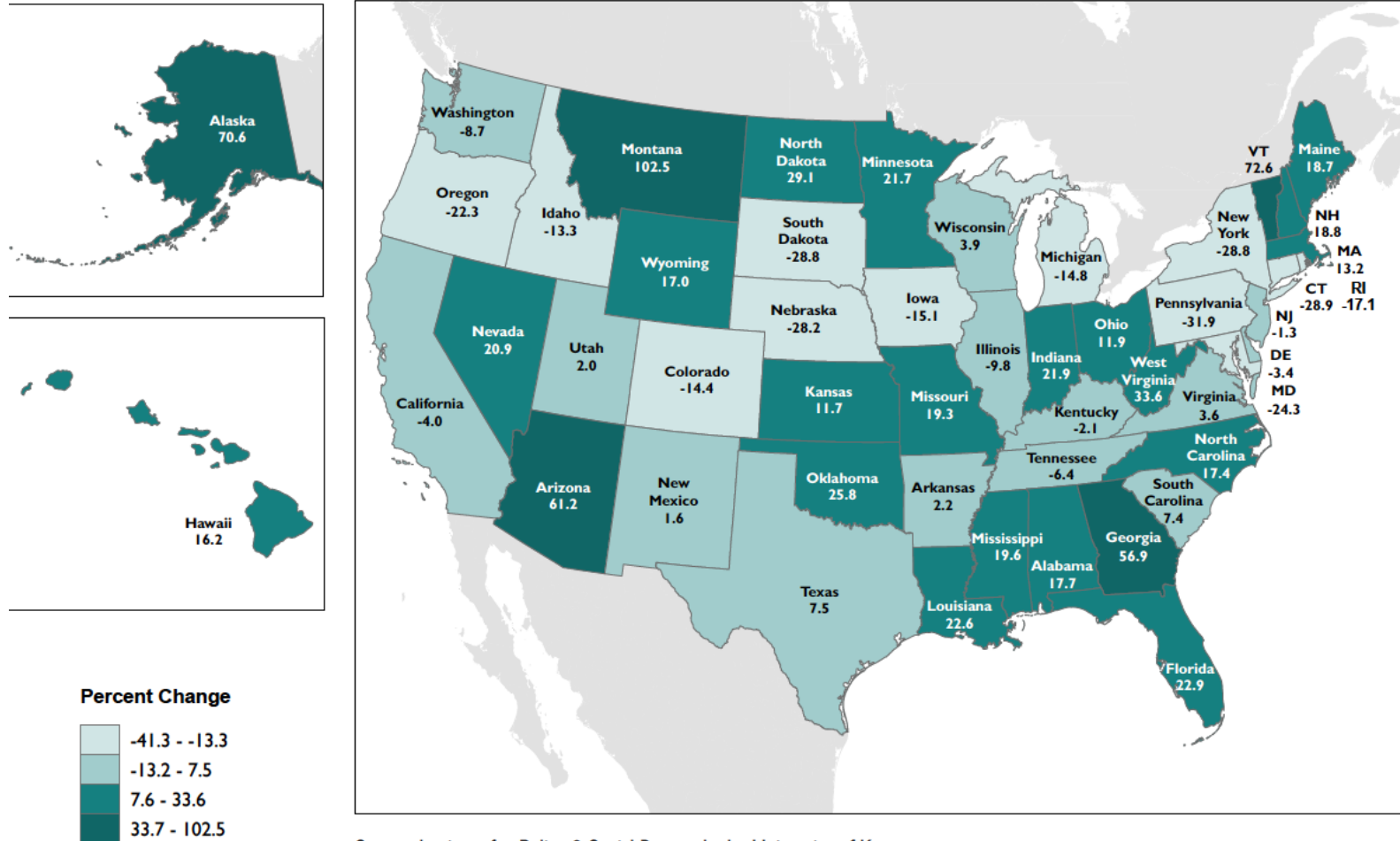
## Percent Change



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, the University of Kansas;  
 data from National Data Archive on Child Abuse & Neglect, NCANDS Child File.

# Percent Change in the Number of Children Placed in Foster Care, 2010-2015

Percent Change in the Number of Children who Entered Foster Care, by State, 2010-2015



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, the University of Kansas; data from National Data Archive on Child Abuse & Neglect, AFCARS Foster Care File.

# Past Research: Correlational Studies

## **Policies Can Contribute to Child Maltreatment**

- Decreases in state welfare benefit levels associated with increased rates of child maltreatment (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2002)
- Reductions in welfare benefits associated with increases in out-of-home care (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003)
- Lifetime welfare limits and sanctions associated with increases in substantiated child abuse and neglect (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003)
- Wait lists for child care increased child maltreatment investigation rates (Klevens et al., 2015)

## **Policies Can Prevent Child Maltreatment**

- Continuity of eligibility for Medicaid/SCHIP decreases investigation rates (Klevens et al., 2015)
- Increases in the minimum wage led to decline in overall child maltreatment reports, particularly neglect reports (2004-2013) (Raissian & Bullinger; 2017)



# Past Research: Quasi-Experiments & Experiments

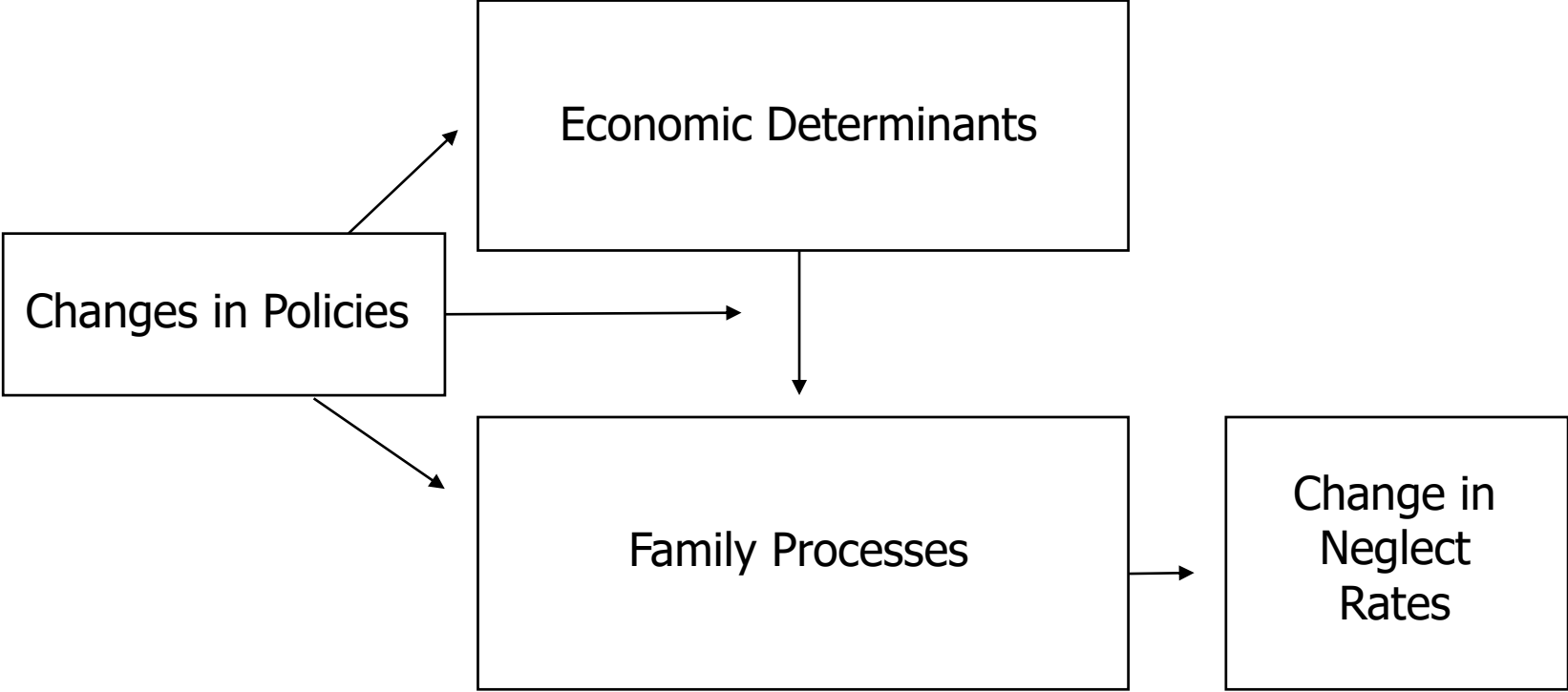
## **Policies Can Contribute to Child Maltreatment**

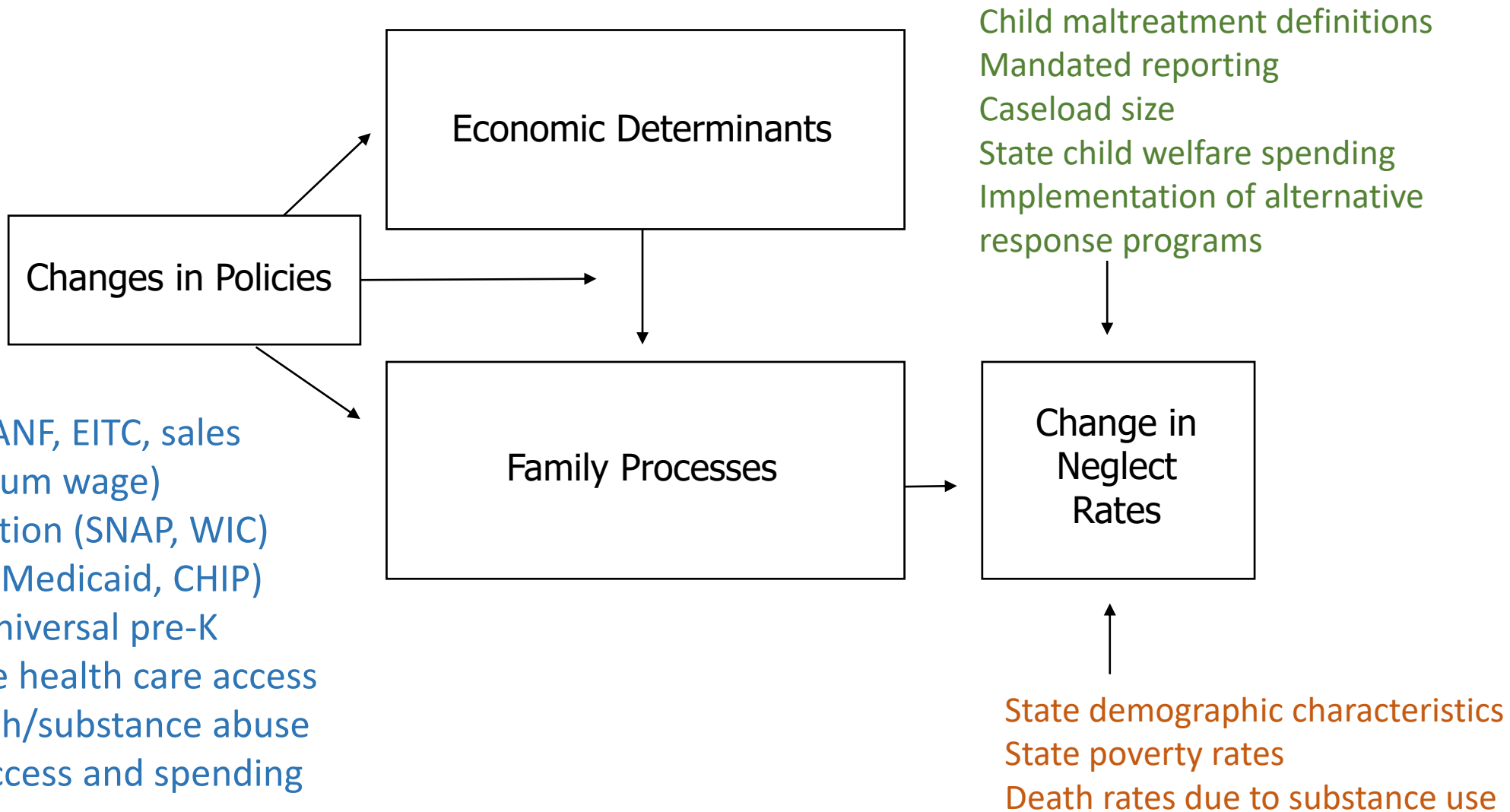
- Decreases in welfare generosity increased children's risk of out-of-home placement by about 1.5 percentage points in any given year (Wildeman & Fallesen, 2017)

## **Policies Can Prevent Child Maltreatment**

- Natural experiment in child support demonstrated protective effect of additional income on screened in child maltreatment reports (Cancian et al., 2010)
- Increase in income via the EITC is associated with reductions in involvement with CPS (Berger, Font, Slack & Waldfogel, 2016)

# Conceptual Framework: Family Stress Theory





# Study Goal

To examine whether changes in state TANF policies were associated with changes in child neglect during the Great Recession

# TANF Program

- Replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1996
- Placed 60 month time limit on benefits
- Introduced sanctions for not working or looking for work including removing entire family from benefits
- Block grants to states resulted in significant policy variation

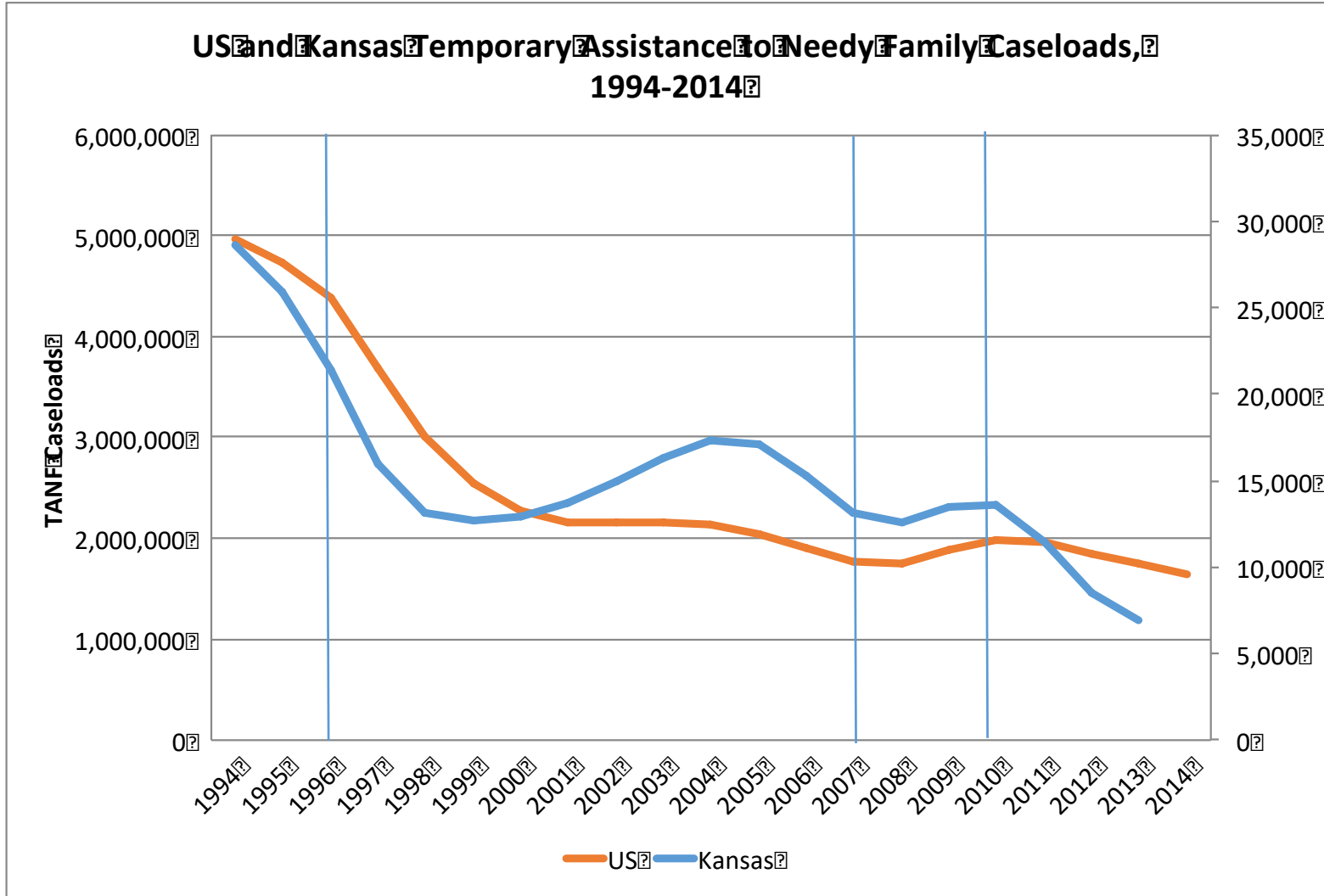
# TANF Policy Changes

Policies	2005	2010	2015
Most Severe Sanction: Lose Benefits	43	45	46
Time Limit < 60 Months	8	11	12
Work if Child < 12 Months	22	25	25
School Requirement	33	33	37
School Attendance Bonus	8	9	8
Immunization Requirement	27	26	25
Health Screening Requirement	8	6	5

# Were changes in state TANF policies associated with changes in child maltreatment?

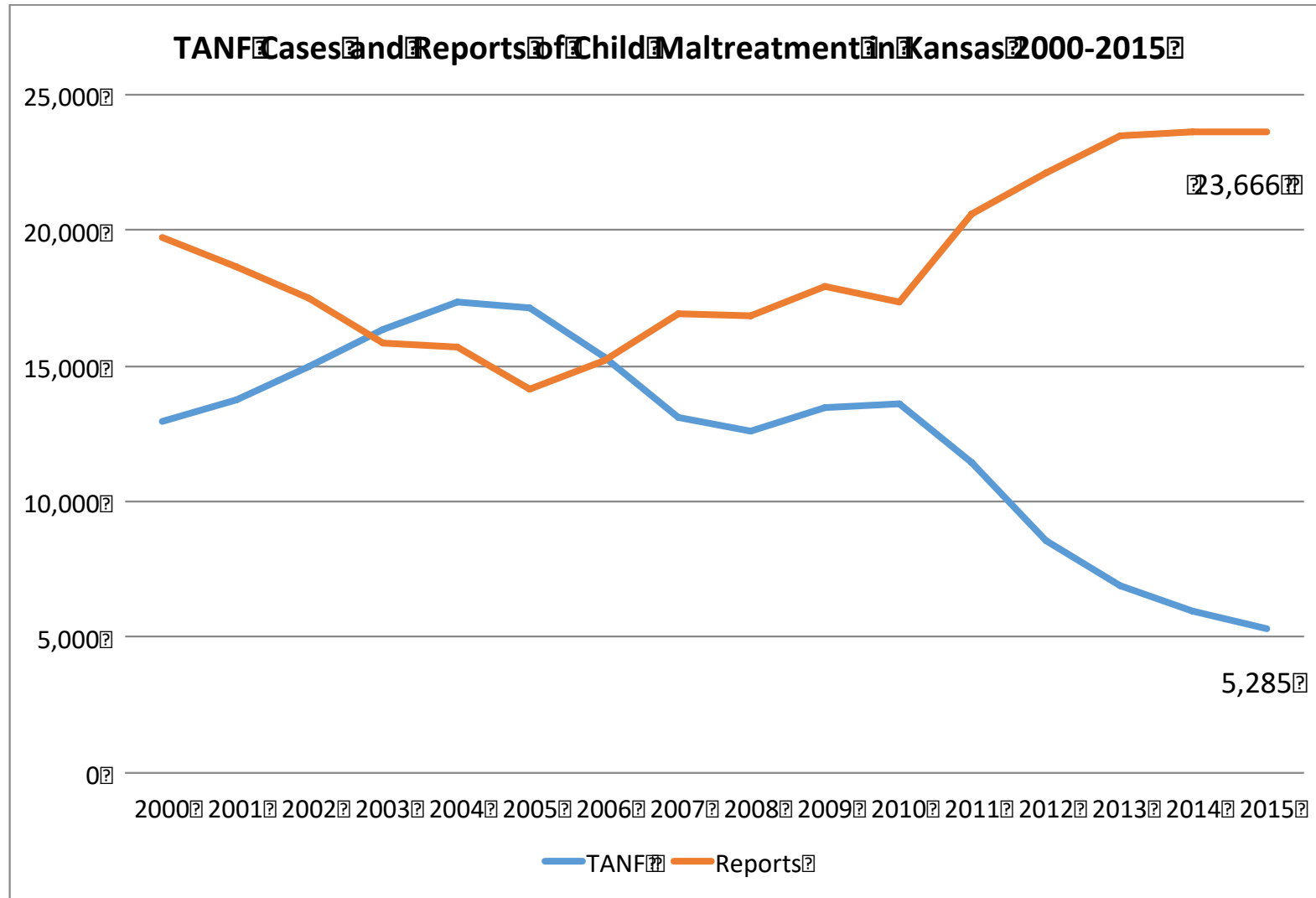
- Since Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (implemented in 2007) states have been under increased pressure to move TANF recipients into work
- At the same time, the Great Recession of 2007-2009 resulted in a peak 10% unemployment rate that stayed high through 2013
- Despite very high unemployment rates, TANF caseloads did not increase during the Great Recession
- In addition to sanctions and time limits that push people off of TANF, states may have policies that limit the take up of benefits

# TANF Caseloads 1994-2014



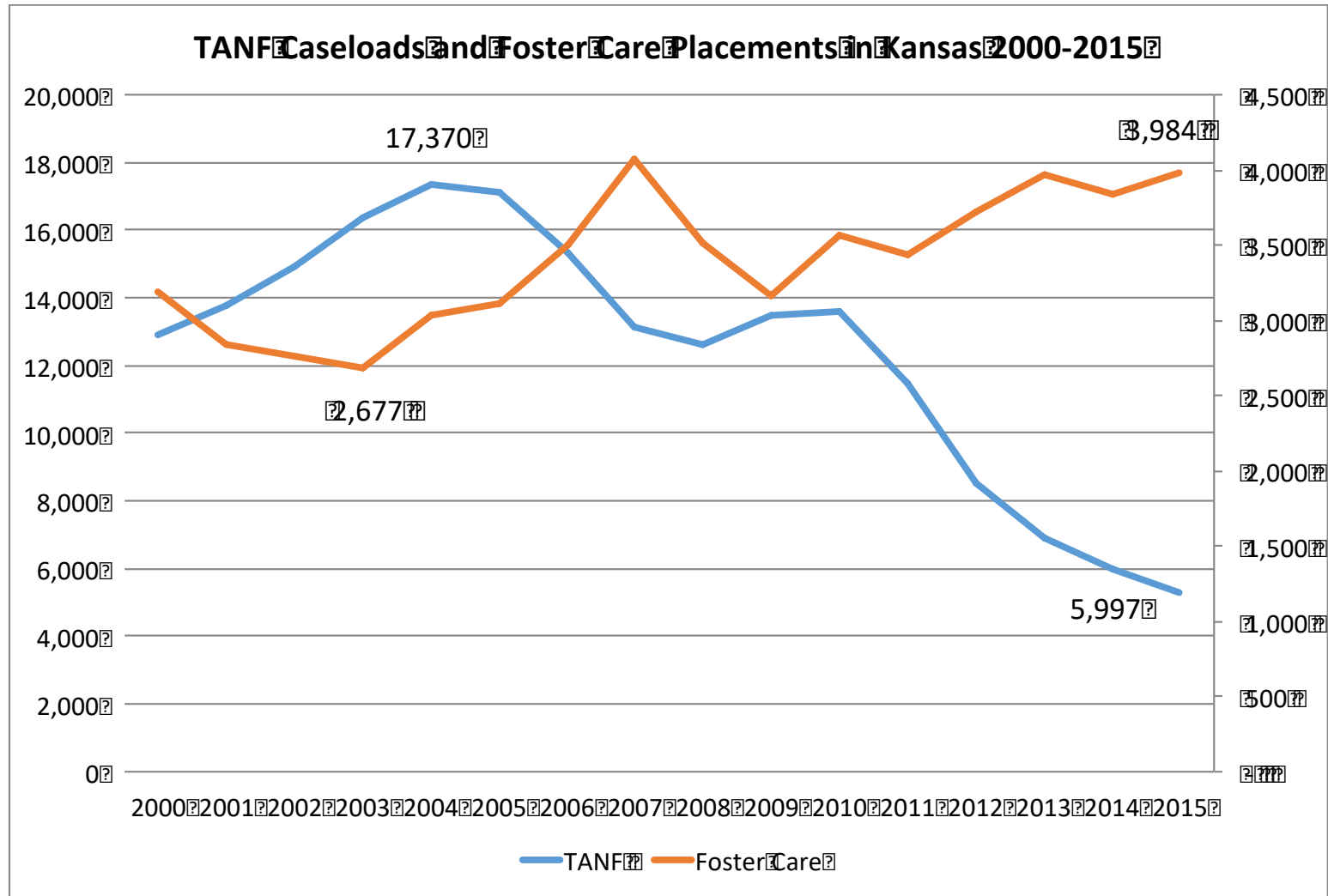


# TANF Caseloads & Child Maltreatment in Kansas



Reports of abuse and neglect are the mirror image of TANF caseloads

# TANF Caseloads & Foster Care Placements in Kansas



Foster care placements are the mirror image of TANF caseloads

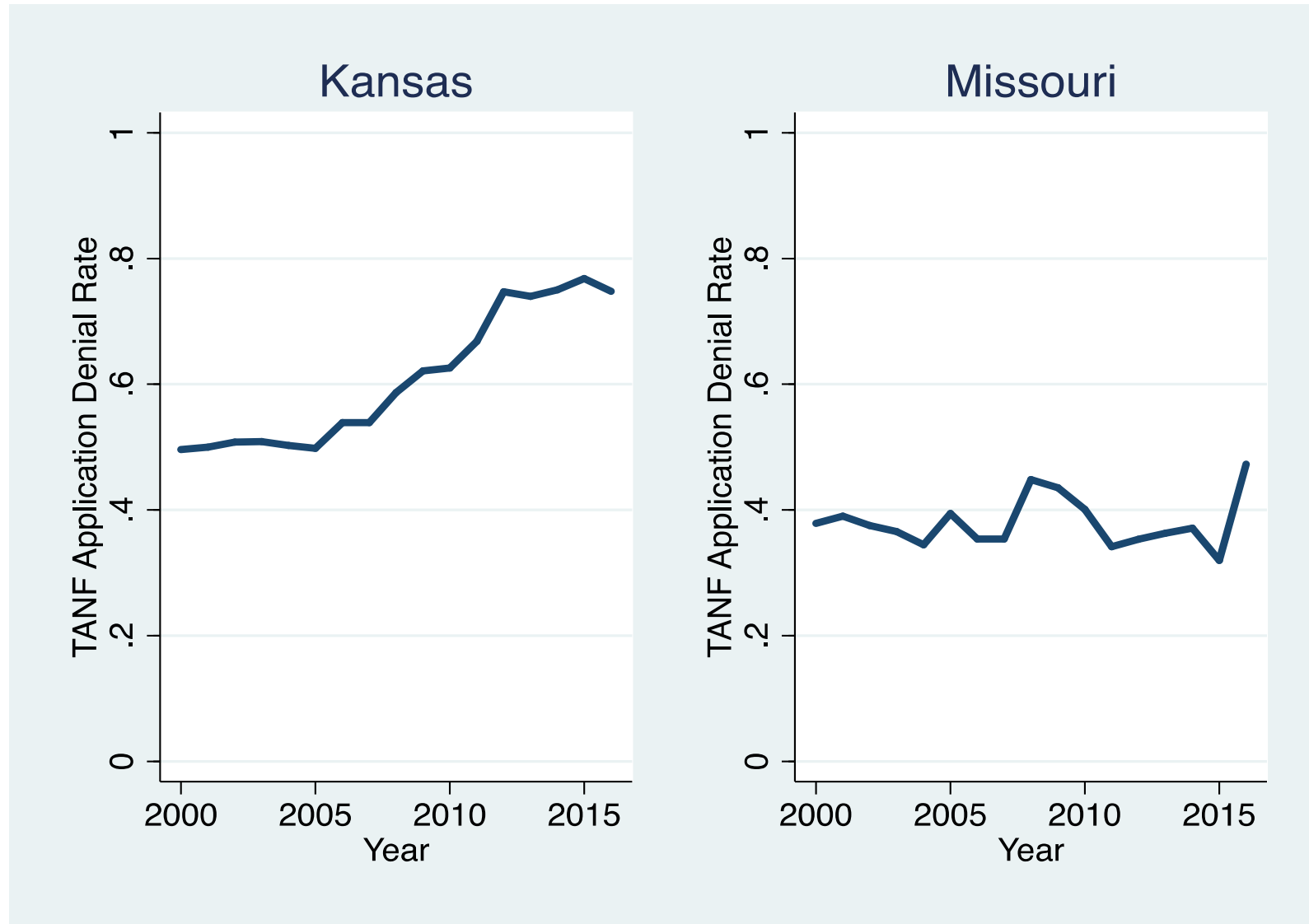
# Methods

- Study Design
  - State/year panel data using policy variables and official child protective services (CPS) and foster care records
- Outcomes: general maltreatment and neglect variables from National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), 2004-2014
  - Reports
  - Victims
  - Foster care entries

# Methods

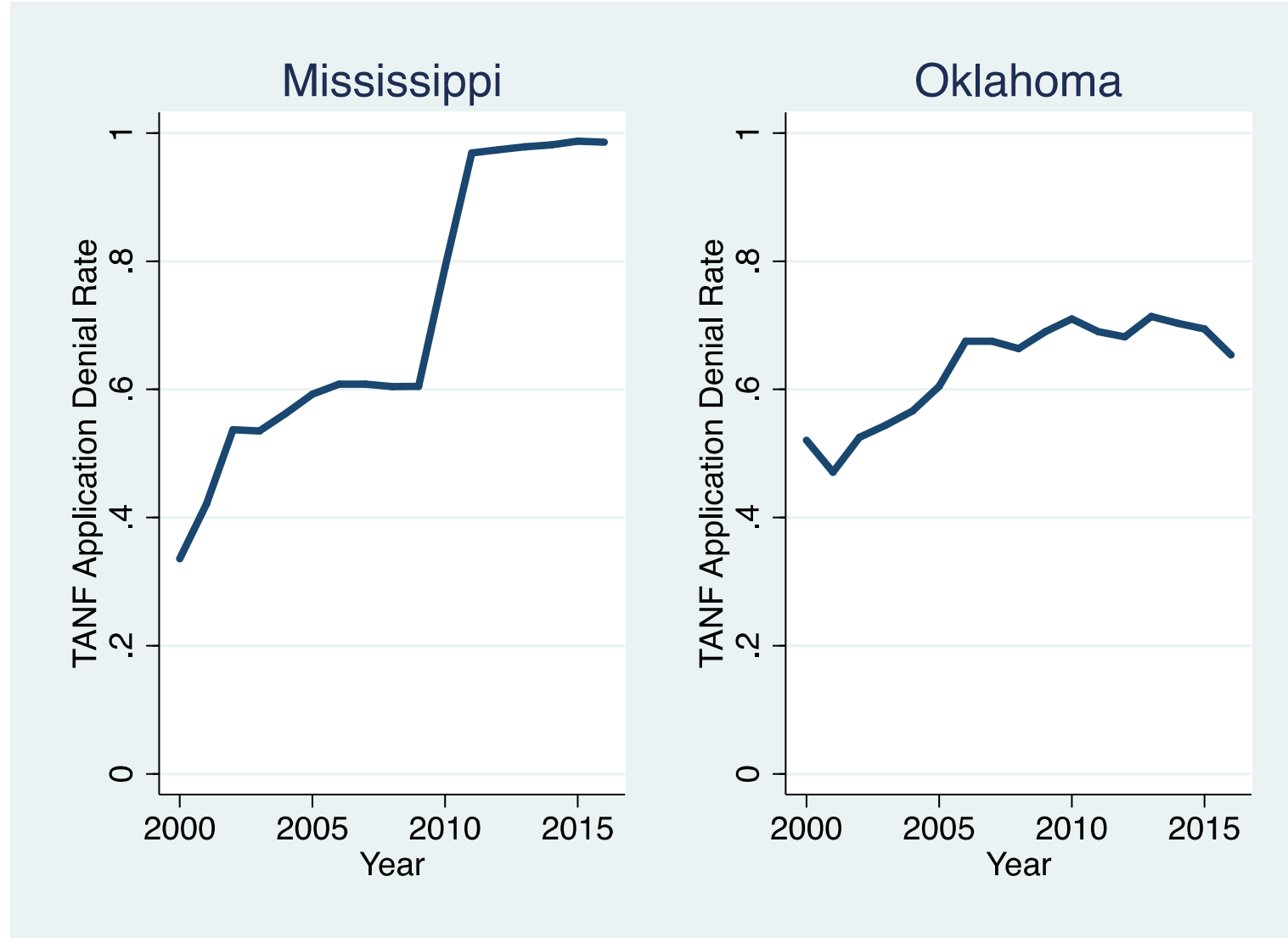
- Policy Variables
  - Sanctions: For each state and year (Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database)
  - Work sanction equals one if the most severe sanction for not working is that households lose their entire benefit or have their case closed
  - Time limit variable equals one if the state adopts a time limit on welfare benefits less than the median of 60 months
- Denial rates
  - Drawn from DHHS' Office of Family Assistance
  - We inferred a policy change when denial rates are above average and jump ~ 20 percentage points within two years

# TANF Denial Rates



We infer that Kansas adopted a policy in 2011 that increased denials but Missouri did not.

# TANF Denial Rates



We infer that Mississippi adopted a policy in 2011 that increased denials

# Methods

- Control Variables
  - State population, unemployment rate, gross state product, percentage of children in poverty, state minimum wage (University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research and Current Population Survey)
  - Covariates from March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC)
    - share of children by age categories, share of population that are immigrants, non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic Asian, non-Hispanic other race, Hispanic any race, children living below 75% of poverty line, share of mothers without a high school degree, share of single mothers, share of working mothers/no father, share with father not working, share of working mother/non-working father, share of working mother/working father
- CDC Crude Death Rates from Substance Use

# Methods

- Analytic Approach
  - Difference in difference estimates
  - Policy changes as quasi-experiments embedded in a regression model
  - These models will generate estimates of the causal effect of policy changes on child abuse and neglect and placement into foster care.
  - Drop states that changed policies except for Kansas, to see the effect of Kansas policies relative to states that didn't restrict access.



# Effect of TANF Sanctions on Abuse & Neglect

Full Sample  ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~ p<.10	Total Reports	Neglect Reports	Total Victims	Neglect Victims	Total Foster Care	Neglect Foster Care
Sanction: Lose All Benefits	0.048	0.030	0.125*	0.217~	0.126*	0.118~
Time limit < 60 months	0.011	0.262	0.296*	0.335*	0.049	0.195~
Denials	0.073	0.150	0.190*	0.161	0.160**	0.153

Coefficients are interpreted as percent change. Denials have a larger effect on foster care placements in Kansas.

# Full Sample: Effects of TANF Sanctions on Abuse & Neglect

- When sanctions are switched to losing all benefits:
  - Total maltreatment victims increase 13%
  - Total children in foster care increases 13%
- Reductions in time limits increase victims 29.6% and neglect victims 33.5%
- Denials increase victims by 19% and children in foster care placements by 16%

# Effect of TANF Sanctions on Abuse & Neglect

Full Sample ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~ p<.10	Total Reports	Neglect Reports	Total Victims	Neglect Victims	Total Foster Care	Neglect Foster Care
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Denials	0.073	0.150	0.190*	0.161	0.160**	0.153
<b>Kansas</b>						
Sanction: Lose All Benefits	0.075	0.144	0.153*	0.262~	0.158**	0.108
Time limit < 60 months	0.099	0.053	0.092*	0.040	0.129**	0.189*
Denials	0.186***	0.054	0.014	-0.252**	0.192***	0.224***

Coefficients are interpreted as percent change. Denials have a larger effect on foster care placements in Kansas.

# Kansas: Effects of TANF Sanctions on Abuse & Neglect

- Sanctions losing all benefits:
  - Total abuse & neglect victims increase 15.3%
  - Children in foster care placements increase 15.8%
- Reductions in time limits increase
  - Total victims by 9.2%
  - Total foster care placements by 12.9%
- Denials increase:
  - Total reports by 18.6%
  - Total foster care by 19.2%; foster care for reasons of neglect by 22.4%

# More Work to Do

- Include additional safety net programs (e.g. SNAP, EITC, Medicaid, etc.) and child welfare policy variables
- Calculate the costs and benefits of policies
  - For example, foster care in Kansas costs a minimum of \$3060 per month for two children (at a rate of \$55.71 per day). This is more than 8 times the amount of a monthly TANF payment (\$375) for a three person family
- Estimate counterfactual outcomes and other robustness checks to support causal argument

# Conclusions

- Our preliminary results indicate that restrictions on TANF have a causal effect on the change in abuse victims and foster care placements.
  - In Kansas sanctions that remove families from TANF as well as barriers to obtaining TANF appear to increase abuse & foster care placements.
- Restrictions on access to the safety net appear to have unintended and consequences with regard to human costs and costs to Kansas taxpayers