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

(Leeb et al., 2008)
Percent Change in Number of Children Investigated by State, 2007-2013

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
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

Changes in Policies

Economic Determinants

Family Processes

Change in Neglect Rates
Economic (TANF, EITC, sales taxes, minimum wage)
Food & nutrition (SNAP, WIC)
Health care (Medicaid, CHIP)
Child care, universal pre-K
Reproductive health care access
Mental health/substance abuse treatment access and spending

Child maltreatment definitions
Mandated reporting
Caseload size
State child welfare spending
Implementation of alternative response programs

State demographic characteristics
State poverty rates
Death rates due to substance use
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Severe Sanction: Lose Benefits</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Limit &lt; 60 Months</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work if Child &lt; 12 Months</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Requirement</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Attendance Bonus</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immunization Requirement</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Health Screening Requirement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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

US and Kansas Temporary Assistance to Needy Family Caseloads, 1994-2014

TANF Caseloads

US
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

Graph showing TANF Caseloads and Foster Care Placements in Kansas 2000-2015.
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
We infer that Kansas adopted a policy in 2011 that increased denials but Missouri did not.
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)
    ▪ 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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sanction</th>
<th>Total Reports</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lose All Benefits</td>
<td>0.048</td>
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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%
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<tr>
<td>Denials</td>
<td>0.186***</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>-0.252**</td>
<td>0.192***</td>
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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