



Building a 21st Century Research Agenda to Increase the Use of Research in Child Welfare Decision-Making

Background

The purpose of building a 21st Century Research Agenda (to support child and family well-being) is to (1) form a broad-based coalition of research partners, including those with lived experience (constituent consultants), to identify research gaps to support child welfare, (2) articulate clear research questions that need to be addressed that are relevant for jurisdiction leaders and policy-makers; (3) identify and implement strategies to conduct research that will close the gaps and answer those key questions; and (4) help agencies use findings to improve policy, program and practice strategies.

Partners to Support this Effort

While previous efforts have been made to convene researchers, there have been no recent comprehensive efforts to create a research agenda that addresses major knowledge gaps across the full continuum of child welfare services. Casey Family Programs (CFP), the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) and the William T. Grant Foundation have partnered with other philanthropic organizations as well as top researchers, policy analysts, agency leaders, and people with lived experience in the child welfare system to form an Expert Workgroup to identify and fill research gaps and to support the use of findings in decision-making to improve practice and policy. Organizations included in this effort include Black Administrators in Child Welfare, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, Child Trends Hispanic Institute, the American Public Human Services Association, the Child Welfare League of America, and the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

Progress so Far

The work that has been completed so far is depicted below:



Remaining Steps

The next steps to build a research agenda are depicted below:



Build Consensus across Child Welfare and Related Fields

Consensus Convenings will be held in October of 2021. Drawing together constituent consultants, agency leaders, foundations and other nonprofits, academic researchers, and others from the fields of Child Welfare, Justice, Education, Labor, and others at this intersection, this will serve as the final vetting of the research gaps identified before the partner organizations finalize the Agenda.

Conduct Research to Address Gaps

We are identifying what Foundations and the Federal Government are doing regarding current and planned studies in child welfare. We will align this research with the prioritized list created above. For those gaps that are not being addressed, we will reach out to potential funders to address the research gaps.

Increase Use of Research in Decision-Making

A critical aspect of this work concerns what to do once we have research that addresses these gaps. Specifically, how can we support communities, jurisdiction leaders and policy-makers (including legislators) to use research in shaping policy, program design and practice? This work will occur concurrently with other steps described above so that we can support decision-makers as key gaps in the research base are filled. We will rely heavily on existing work by and a current partnership with WT Grant.

Contact Information

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