

Poverty is Not Neglect Tool Kit

ICOY Policy Team – January 2023

Poverty is Not Neglect is an initiative championed by Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY) with support and input from a coalition of bi-partisan house members and child welfare experts. Please see below for the bill number for the 103rd Illinois General Assembly, talking points and extra resources.

Bill Numbers:

- [HB 3799](#) (Rep. Carol Ammons)

Talking points:

- Poverty is a risk factor for neglect: in 2021, 64% of allegations in Illinois were due to neglect, unrelated to abuse. Neglect allegations consist of inadequate food, shelter, and clothing, which are directly linked to lack of resources, not always intentional harm.
- Inclusion of poverty-related factors in definitions of neglect without any exemptions may be funneling families into the child welfare system unnecessarily.
- Provision of economic and concrete supports is associated with decreases in neglect toward children.
- Helping families meet the needs of their children through financial supports decreases the number of abuse and neglect allegations made on them. By amending the definition of neglect, we open a pathway to support families, not penalize them.
- Poverty is an added challenge for parents/guardians to meet the needs of their children; our system should help families address the challenge and prevent involvement in the child protection system.
- The presence of poverty alone does not mean a child is neglected, unsafe, and unloved, or that a parent lacks the capacity to care for his or her child.
- Children must not be removed from the home solely on their parent or guardian financial inability to provide, instead they should be referred to services in their community that will help them better meet their needs.
- A paradigm shift must occur in Illinois; we should move to be mandated supporters as opposed to mandated reporters when it comes to issues that can be addressed without formal child protection involvement.
- 90% of calls to the hotline made by teachers for abuse and neglect are unfounded, which means that there should be an alternative warm line that mandated reporters can call to better support families as opposed to surveil them.
- 53% of all black children will be subjected to a child protection services investigation by the age of 18.
- According to University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, if low-income families experience at least one material hardship, the likelihood of being investigated for neglect increases nearly 3 times.

- According to University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall, If low-income families experience multiple types of hardship, the likelihood of being involved in a child protection services investigation increases 4 times.
- Parents and caregivers fair better with natural, community, and formal supports which boost their own protective factors. In most cases, it is better for families to be served in and by the community rather than having a child removed from their home and placed into foster care.

Research and Data:

- [Child and Family Well-Being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component](#)
- [The AFCARS Report](#)
- [Racial Disproportionality in the Illinois Child Welfare System: FY2022 Report](#)

Resources:

- Fact sheet: (hyperlink)
- [ICOY’s Legislative & Advocacy Agenda](#)
- **What We Lose When We Conflate Child “Abuse” and “Neglect”**
Growing up in Southern Illinois, I knew many children whose basic needs went unmet. Reporting here decades later, I began to wonder why the system wasn’t doing more to help their families (ProPublica, April 2022).
- **The State Took His Kids Three Times. And Three Times It Gave Them Back.**
In Southern Illinois, many families suspected of neglect cycle through the child welfare system. Too often they don’t get the help they need (ProPublica, April 2022).
- **In Child Welfare, If the Solution is Money, the Problem is Poverty**
In the beginning, the builders of what would become a system of massive intrusion into families, and, ultimately, the separation of millions of children from their parents, all in the name of “child welfare,” insisted that poverty had nothing at all to do with what they labeled “child abuse” and “child neglect.”(Youth Today, March 2022).

Take Action!

Has ICOY asked you to slip in support of HB3799? If so, and you are new to filing a witness slip, check out a tutorial [here!](#)