

# **Connecting the Dots: Using Linked Administrative Data to Improve Public Child Welfare Programs**

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**A Forum at the Center for Improving Research Evidence (CIRE)  
Washington, DC**

**November 5, 2015**

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Maria Cancian • Bryan Lindert • Jennifer Noyes  
Ann Person • Matthew Stagner

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# Welcome

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**Ann Person, CIRE director**

# About CIRE

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- More than 40 years of experience using **rigorous evaluation designs** to assess the impact of social policy and programs
- Uses **qualitative analysis** to build a better understanding of what programs work best, where, and for whom
- Works to bridge the gap between **research and practice**

# Today's Speakers

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**Matt Stagner,**  
**Mathematica**  
*Moderator*



**Jennifer Noyes,**  
**University of**  
**Wisconsin-**  
**Madison**



**Dr. Maria Cancian,**  
**U.S. Administration**  
**for Children and**  
**Families**



**Bryan Lindert,**  
**Eckerd**  
**Community**  
**Alternatives**

# Using Administrative Data to Improve Child Welfare Programs

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**Matt Stagner, Mathematica**

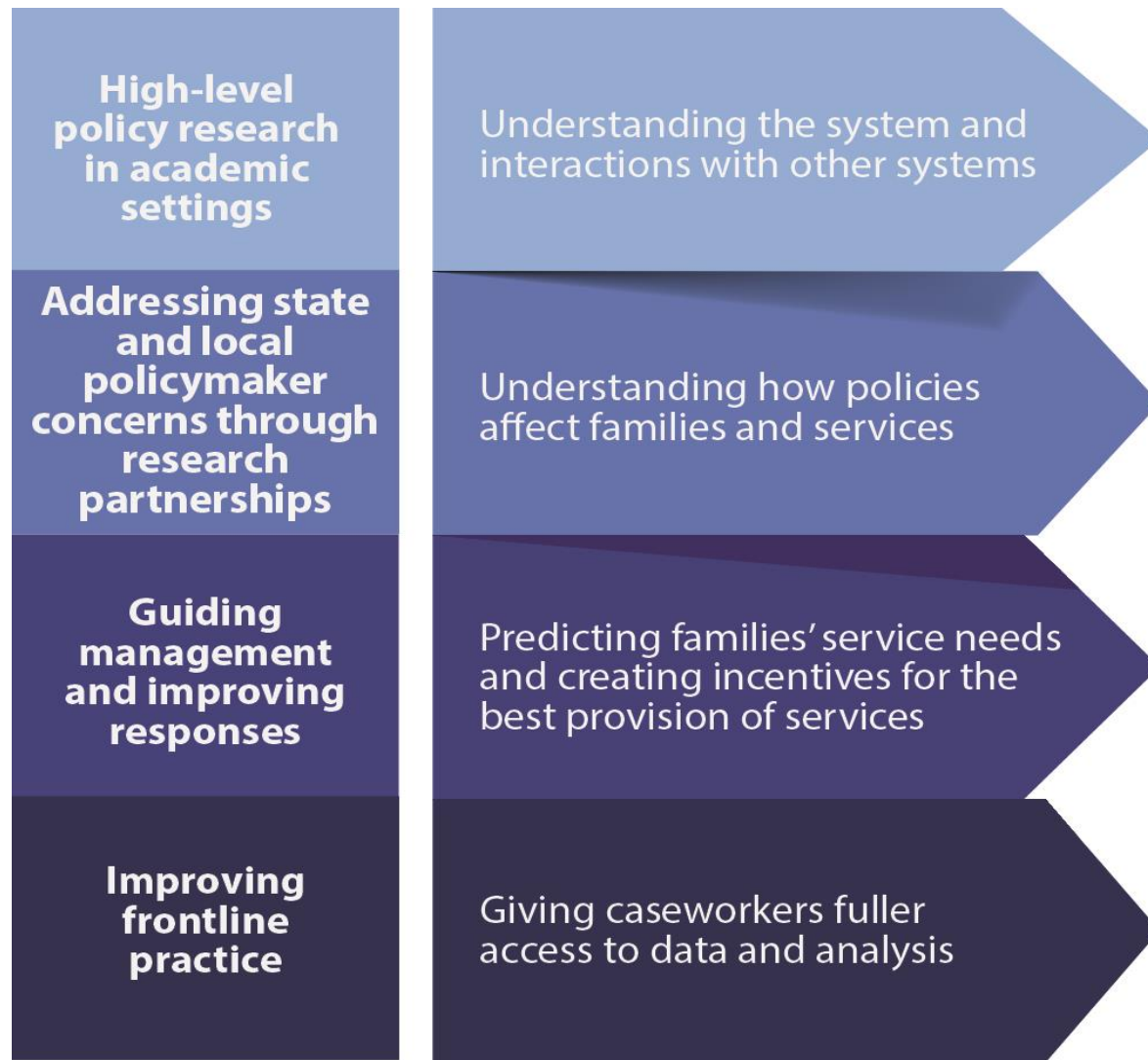
# Why Focus on Improving Use of Administrative Data in Child Welfare?

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- **Maturing of SACWIS systems**
- **Rising awareness that children and families need steady, coordinated support from many systems**
- **Focus on “inter-operability” of multiple systems**
- **Better methods for linking and analytics**
- **Refined thinking about the needs of many stakeholders**

# Many Stakeholders, A Continuum of Uses

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The first name in second chances.<sup>SM</sup>

**Eckerd**

**Rapid Safety Feedback<sup>SM</sup>**

A Business Intelligent Approach  
to Child Welfare Quality

Bryan Lindert, Senior Quality Director

Center for Improving Research Evidence Forum

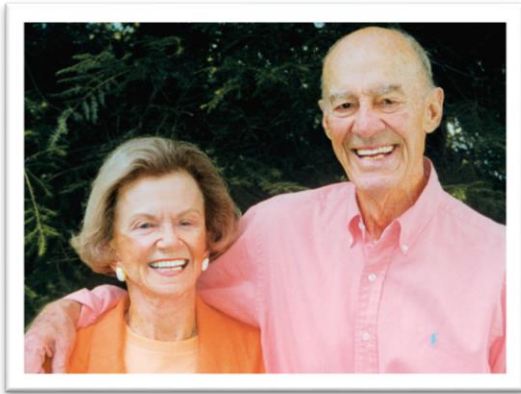
November 5, 2015



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# Our Organization



## “It’s the kids”

Jack and Ruth Eckerd  
Our Founders

## Mission

Provide and share solutions that promote the well-being of children and families in need of a second chance.



## Purpose:

- Improve Outcomes
- Change Practice
- Drive Service Innovation

Provide current and forward looking performance and production data.

Provide a deeper understanding of our clients and their probability of success.

# Eckerd Rapid Safety Feedback<sup>SM</sup> Solve the Problem

- Unprecedented history of child fatality in Hillsborough County.  
**Nine child homicides in 24 months.**
- Eckerd was awarded the contract July 2012 with directive to change the approach to quality in two ways:
  - **Identify cases** with highest probability of a poor outcome before they occur.
  - **Change the trajectory** of these cases through focused review.



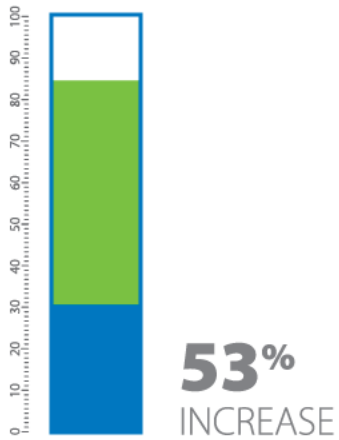
- **Determined best cases for review** through local death case review and consultation with State Death Review Team.
- **Quality and Service Improvement (QSI):** Reviewed >1500 cases for critical case practice indicators to ensure safety during transition.
- Narrowed identified QSI concerns into **critical themes.**

- **Best Sample: all children in-home under age 3.**
- **Safety Plans** were not tailored to individual cases and lacked family input.
- **Background Checks/Home Studies** were not updated to reflect changes in family circumstances.
- The core family issues bringing the child into dependency were not addressed **on home visits or in case documentation.**
- **Behavior change poorly monitored** with providers and other case participants.
- **Supervisory reviews** either failed to identify the issues or more likely repeated prior concerns without resolution.

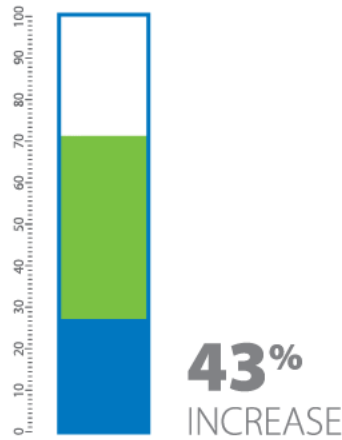
- 100% sample of cases reviewed with a child <3 and in-home owing to severity of local history.
- All cases with an identified **safety concern** are **staffed within 1 business day**.
- Staffings are focused on Supervision-**follow up tracked to completion**.
- Cases **reviewed every quarter** until closure or youngest child turns 3.



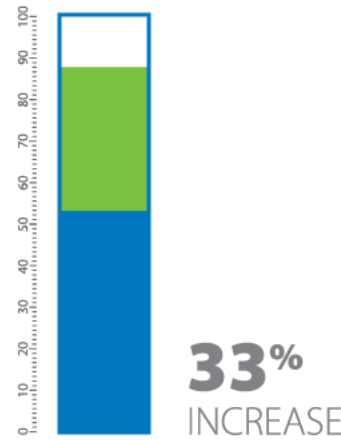
# Hillsborough Results



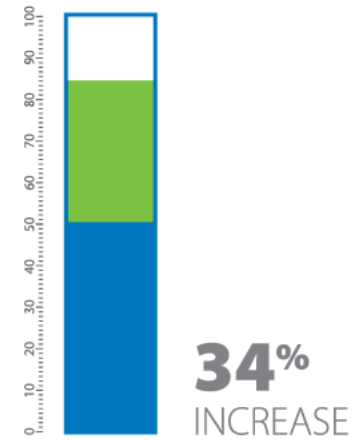
Improvement in sharing critical case information with all involved.



Improvement in Supervisor Case Reviews.



Improvement in safety planning with the family.

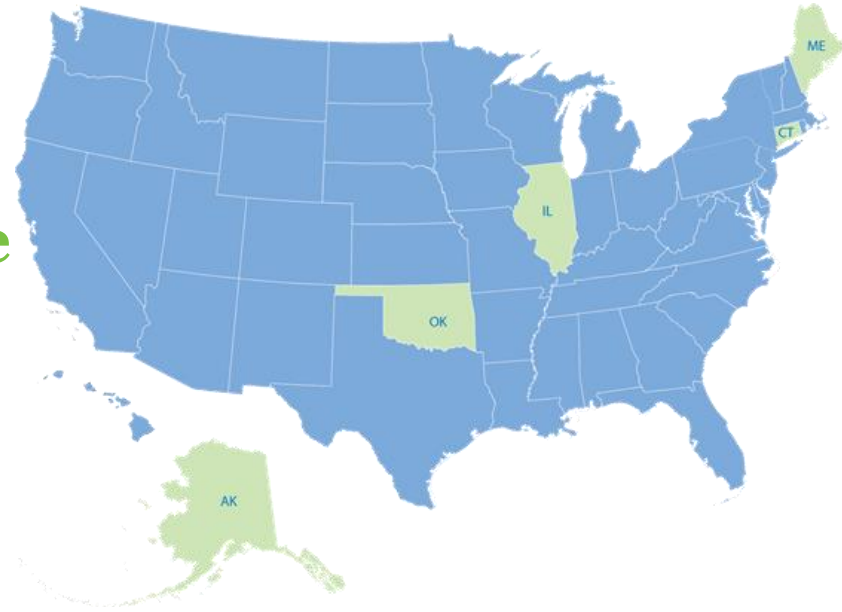


Improvement in frequency of visits with the child.

Most Importantly- *No Abuse Related Deaths*

- Baseline
- Eckerd Rapid Safety Feedback<sup>SM</sup>

- **National Foundation for Youth** – Share solution with 4 states at no cost.
- **Connecticut, Illinois, Maine and Oklahoma** – Preventing fatality/near fatality with prior involvement.
- **Alaska** – Preventing repeat maltreatment regardless of finding.
- Not just a list of cases. Coaching model is critical.





- Further evaluation needed. Working with all states and Casey Family Programs. **Planning for evaluation before work begins.**
- Presented to the NASW, CWLA, and the Federal Commission to Eliminate Abuse and Neglect Fatalities.
- Featured in Bloomberg News, The Wall Street Journal, The Chronicle of Social Change and on National Public Radio.

# Eckerd | Replication

- Models can be built for **investigations and/or ongoing case work.**
- **Access to the SACWIS/other child welfare data.**
- Access to local fatality cases and/or QA reviews of those cases.
- Eight weeks for research, initial set up and initial training.
- Can be applied to other child welfare problems (re-entry or delayed permanency.)



The first name in second chances.<sup>SM</sup>

# Eckerd

## Thank You!

[www.eckerd.org](http://www.eckerd.org)

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INSTITUTE *for*  
RESEARCH *on*  
POVERTY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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# Using Linked Administrative Data to Improve Child Welfare Programs: The Wisconsin Experience

Jennifer L. Noyes  
Mathematica CIRE Forum & Webinar  
November 5, 2015

# Outline

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- Integrating Data: What, Why and Why Not?
- The IRP Data Core: Overview of an Integrated System to Support Management, Evaluation and Research
- Using Linked Data to Improve Child Welfare Programs: Examples
- Key Lessons

# Integrating Data: What?

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- One definition:

“Data integration refers to the linking (i.e., matching) diverse, routinely maintained administrative data sets at the client level to obtain a rich picture of client encounters across state agencies.”

(Heil, Leeper, Nalty & Campbell, 2007)

# Integrating Data: Why?

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- Multiple program participation is common; integrated data provides history and context for program design and analysis
  - Integrated data allows a view “up stream” (e.g., welfare or child support history prior to child welfare involvement)
  - Integrated data supports evaluation of *variation* across individuals, groups, or jurisdictions (e.g., identifying agencies with best practices, or issues of disproportionality)
- Program interactions not well understood; breaking down data silos can facilitate collaboration across program silos
- Information available to one program/agency/data system may be critical for another (e.g., noncustodial parent contact information for child welfare cases)

# Integrating Data: Why Not?

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- Most administrative records not designed with a strict requirement to maintain a single record per individual
- No commonly agreed-upon set of high quality identifying variables
- Agencies with distinct missions face challenges in determining which data source takes precedence or how conflicts should be resolved
- Data sets change over time, and historical records of these changes need to be maintained



# Outline

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- Integrating Data: What, Why and Why Not?
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# IRP Data Core: What Is IRP?

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- **History:** Created in 1966 during the War on Poverty to support basic research, training and evaluation of anti-poverty policy
- **Funding:** IRP core infrastructure funded by U.S. DHHS and the UW-Madison; research projects funded by grants and contracts from foundations and state and federal agencies
- **Organization:**
  - Researchers:
    - IRP staff activities generally supported through specific project funding
    - IRP Faculty Affiliates supported through specific projects and as part of their faculty appointment
  - Research projects directed by project-specific Principal Investigators
  - Research support staff includes specialized programmers with expertise in Wisconsin administrative data

# IRP Data Core: Background

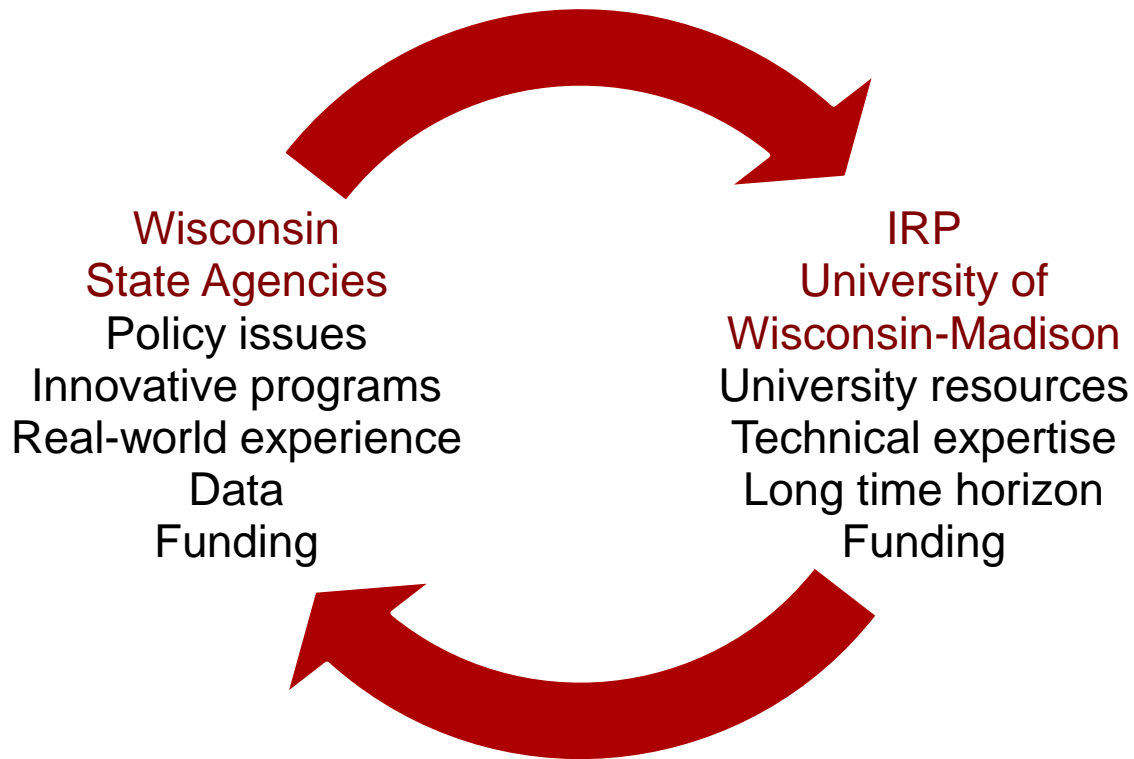
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- **History:** Evolved from a series of large-scale evaluation projects conducted by IRP for the state of Wisconsin, including the Child Support Demonstration Evaluation CSDE (1997-2006)
- **Funding:** Primarily through research projects funded by grants and contracts from state and federal agencies; administrative support from UW-Madison and the IRP Core grant (USDHHS/ASPE)
- **Purpose:** Designed for research
  - Not “legally” accurate
  - Not in “real time”
  - Complements agency approaches to day-to-day program management

# IRP Data Core: Logic of Collaboration

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Collaboration Supports Policy Development and Academic Research



# IRP Data Core: Current Wisconsin State Administrative Data Resources

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## CORE:

- AFDC/TANF (CRN, CARES)
- SNAP/Food Stamps (CRN, CARES)
- Medicaid/BadgerCare (CRN, CARES)
- Child Care Subsidy Program (CARES)
- Child Support (KIDS)
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UI)
- Child Protective Services (WiSACWIS)
- Incarceration (Dept. of Corrections)\*
- Milwaukee Jail

\*Through 2012

\*\* Not electronic

## REGULAR MATCH:

- Wage Records (UI)
- Foreclosures (CCAP)

## SPECIALIZED MATCH:

- Department of Revenue
- Department of Public Instruction
- Juvenile Circuit Court Records

## OTHER MATCHES:

- SSI records (CARES)
- Vital Records (births/paternity)
- Circuit Court Records
- Family Court Record\*\*
- TANF Applicants\*\*
- Parent Surveys

# IRP Data Core: Data Integration

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- Creation of a “Multi-Sample Person File” (MSPF)
- Structure: one record per individual, without distinction between adults and children, or between male and female
- Process: Match/merge all individuals from all primary data sources, using identifying variables with some combination of these traits:
  - a) commonly recorded (name, sex)
  - b) uniquely identifying (SSN, ITIN)
  - c) immutable (date of birth, place of birth)
- Complex and time-consuming to program (SAS)

*Reminder: MSPF designed for research only; not “legally” accurate, given use of fuzzy/probabilistic matching techniques.*

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# Linked Data Use: Examples

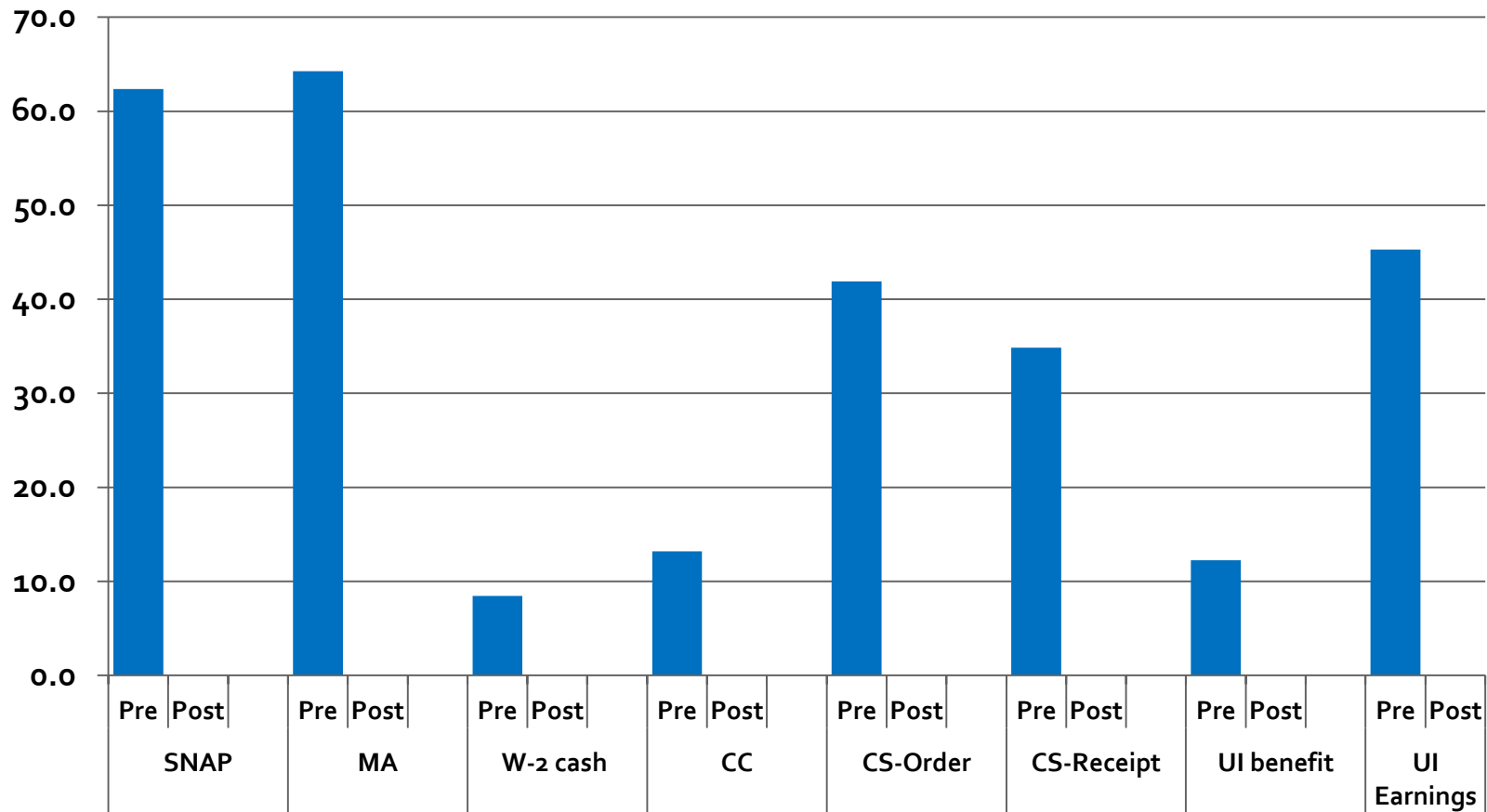
## Cross-Program Participation

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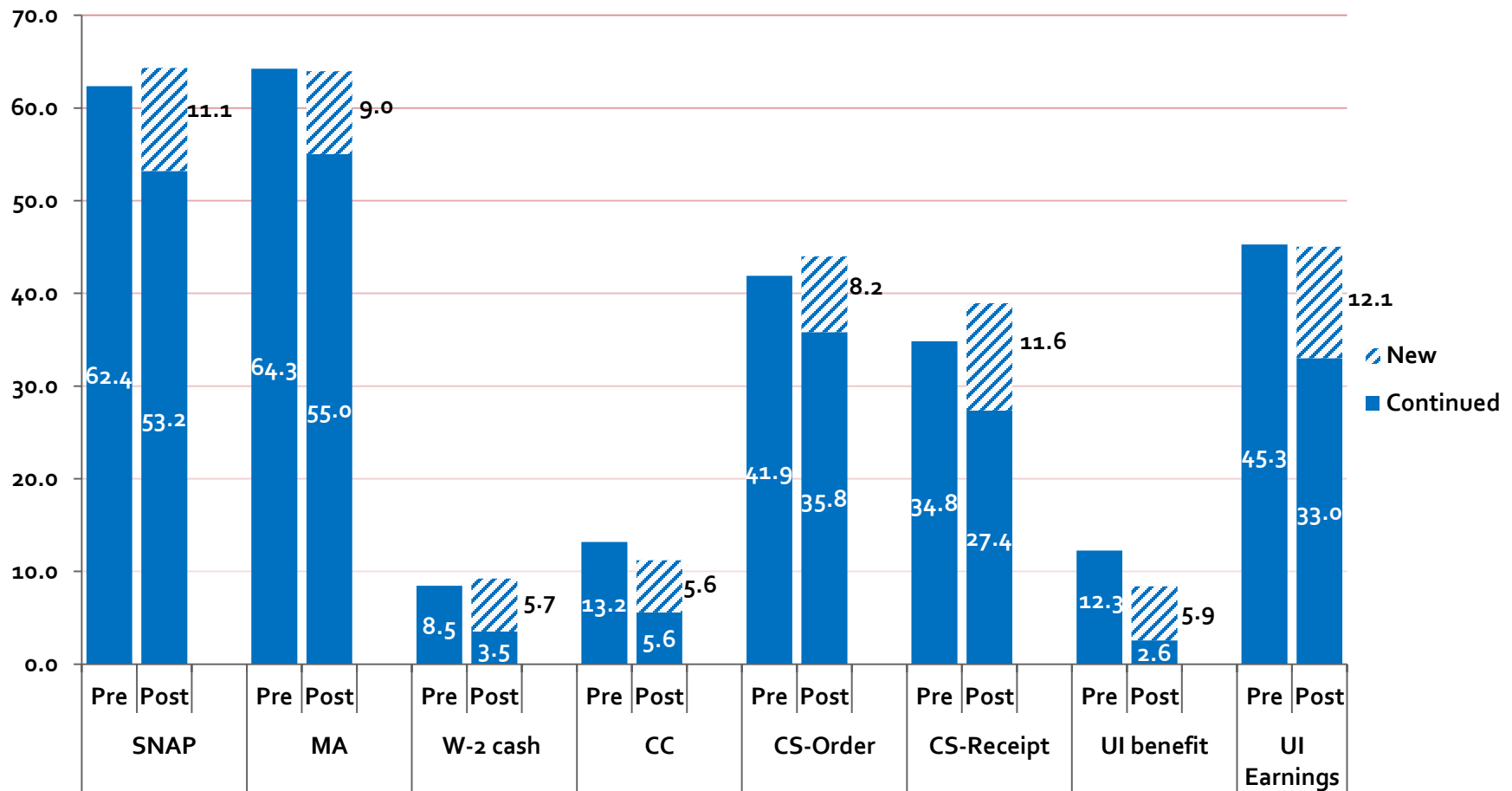
- What proportion of mothers with children reported to the child welfare system were participating in other programs:
  - in the year before a screened in call?
  - in the year after a screened in call?
- Sample includes mothers (18-64 years old) who had no children in OHP on January 1, 2011, and had at least 1 child who was subject of a screened-in call during 2011 (N= 18,106)



# Program Participation in the Year Before a Screened-In Call



# Program Participation in the Year Before and After a Screened-In Call



# Linked Data: Examples

## Child Welfare and Incarceration

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- What proportion of child welfare-involved children have an incarcerated parent?
- What proportion of children who were involved in the child welfare system subsequently become incarcerated?
- Of currently incarcerated adults, how many were child welfare-involved as children?

# Linked Data Use: Examples Child Welfare and Education

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- What is the relationship between out-of-home placement and academic achievement for children in grades 3 through 8?
- Does academic achievement vary by placement characteristics?
- What is the relative strength of the relationship between school quality versus stability and educational outcomes for children in an out-of-home placement?

# Linked Data Use: Examples

## Child Welfare and Child Support

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- What is the effect of child support income on the risk of maltreatment?
- How often are parents charged child support to offset costs? How often do they pay?
- Do child support orders to offset costs delay reunification? Or, do they motivate change by parents?

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# Three Key Lessons (Out of Many)

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- IRP-State Agency collaboration has been and will continue to be essential
  - Examples today crossed Departments of Children and Families, Corrections, Health Services, Public Instruction, Workforce Development
- Involvement by an entity that does not “own” any of the programs or the associated data can facilitate probabilistic matching
- Infrastructure requires sustained commitment by all parties and significant funding; big “fixed” costs are hard to fund and manage

# Contact Information

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Jennifer L. Noyes

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# Connecting the Dots: Using Linked Administrative Data to Improve Public Child Welfare Programs Webinar

Interoperability and Program Integration:  
Implications for Child Welfare

Maria Cancian

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy

November 4, 2015



# ACF Interoperability and Program Integration Efforts

- Why?: interoperable systems are a key building block for coordinated, family-centered services
- Why now?
  - Recognition of the social determinants of health
  - Tight budgets require careful tradeoffs to support the best use of limited resources
  - Demand for improved transparency and accountability
  - Support for evidence-based, good government



# ACF Interoperability and Program Integration Efforts

- What supports from ACF?:
  - Tri-agency resources (ACF-CMS-FNS) to help states make best use of the extension through 2018 of the of the OMB A-87 Cost Allocation Waiver
    - Collaborative TA resources
    - Collaborative site for program administrators
  - Renewed ACF Interoperability support– Senior Advisors for Data Sharing and Data Interoperability
  - Ongoing additional guidance on data sharing and system design, for individual programs across ACF and beyond



# Recent Children's Bureau Efforts

- The Children's Bureau expects to issue new regulations in 2016 for:
  - **Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (ACFARS)**
  - **Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).**
- Information Memos, technical assistance (including participation in Tri-Agency Collaborative site for program administrators), and other supports to states to help improve data systems, and data sharing.



# Why is linking and sharing data especially important for child welfare?

- Families served by child welfare have typically been touched by many systems over time; often require coordinated, family-centered services.
- Better outcomes can be achieved by serving families “upstream”, before they become involved in the child welfare system.
- To measure the costs/savings associated with alternative responses and prevention, we need to track outcomes for families over time across other systems.



# Questions?

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**Matt Stagner,**  
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*Moderator*



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# For More Information

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- **Mathematica's Center for Improving Research Evidence**  
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**Networking Reception Starts  
Now  
Mathematica Lobby, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4:30–5:30 p.m.**