

Transforming Child Support into a Family-Building System

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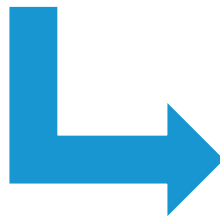
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- All participants are muted
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#MobilityFromPoverty



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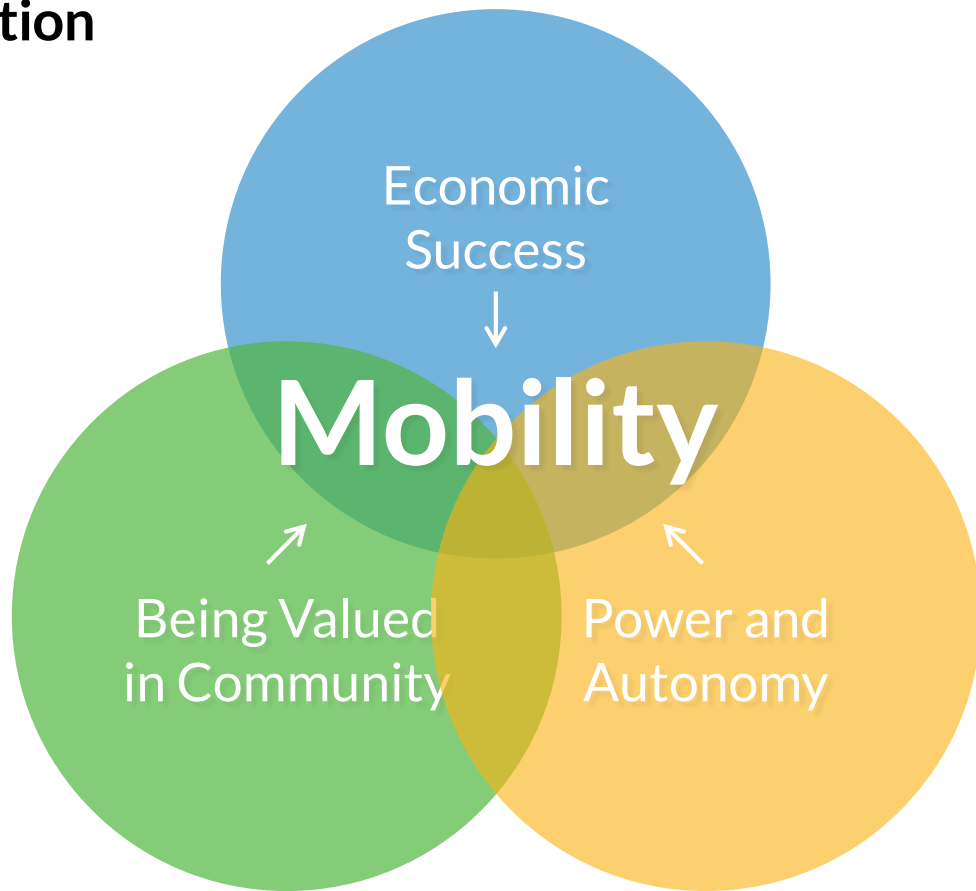
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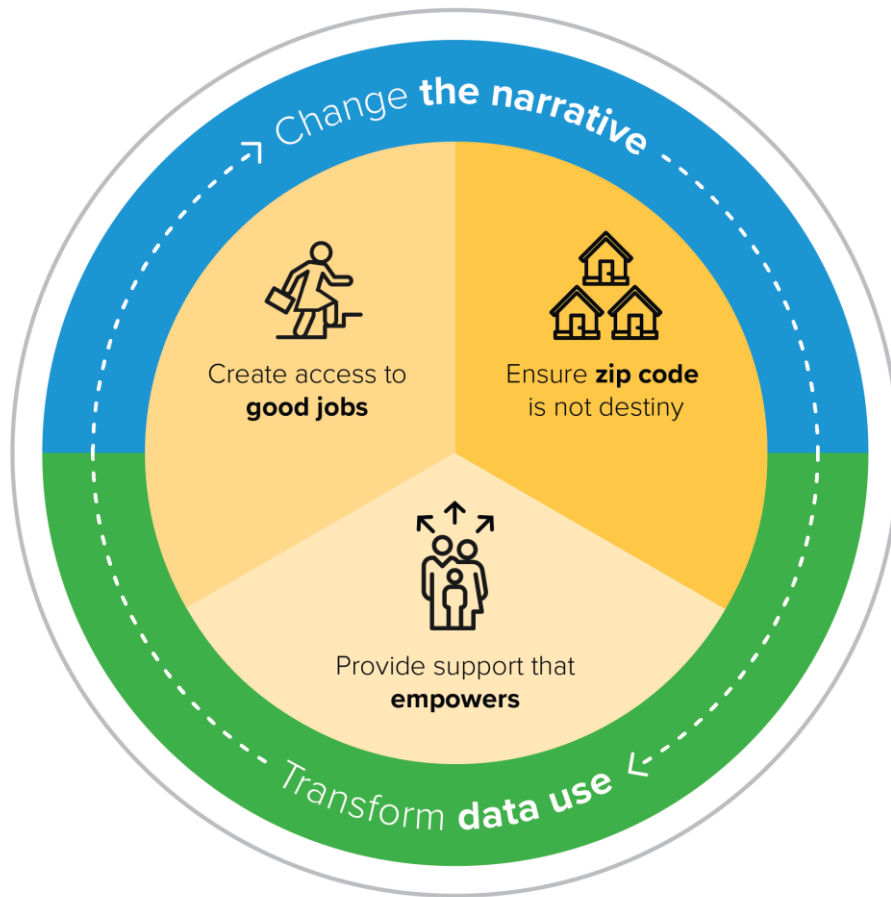
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Mobility Definition



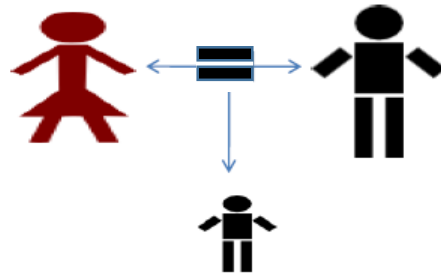
Strategies



Child Support

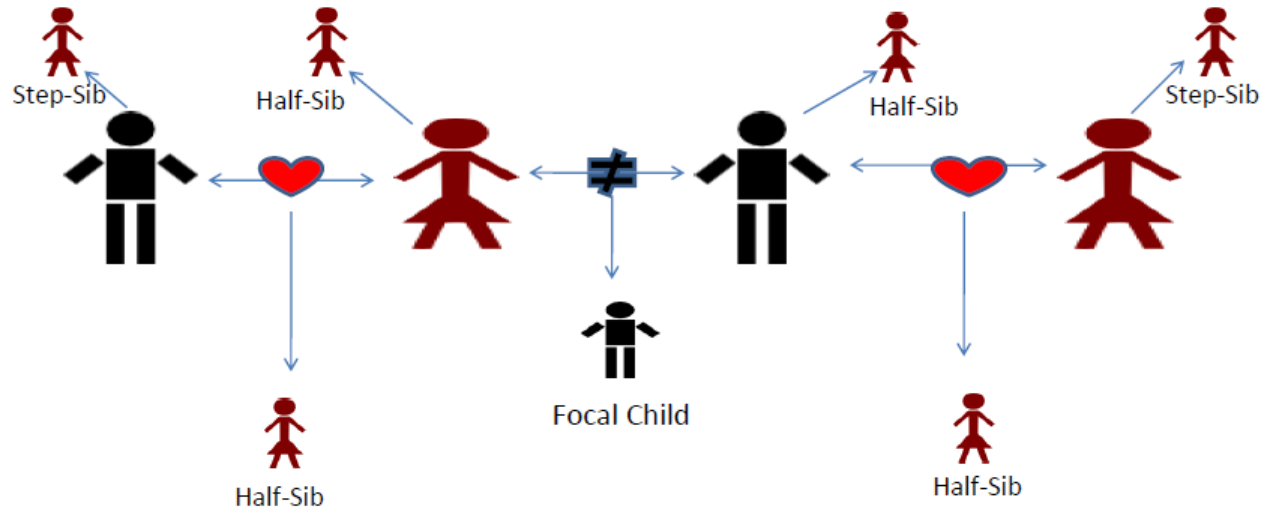
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Many poor kids' families
don't look like this



Focal Child

but like this



Lonnie Berger, *Pathways, Bold Visions*, Spring 2017

“Here is a crucial fact: Most U.S. children will not spend their full childhood living with both of their biological parents.... If we continue to pretend that we’re in the 1950s and that family arrangements remain relatively simple and stable, our policies will remain ill-equipped to handle the reality of how children are now being raised.... The upshot: *Child support is simply critical in a complex-family society (pp. 22-23).*”

Is Rebranding and Recasting the Mission of Child Support a “Bold Vision” that can Spur Mobility from Poverty?

1. A **key institution** in low-income families’ lives
2. It can capitalize on low-income fathers’ **strong desires to be involved in their children’s lives**
3. **Increases financial resources** to kids and enhances child wellbeing
4. For those without stable jobs and sufficient earnings, **the system is broken.**

1. A key institution

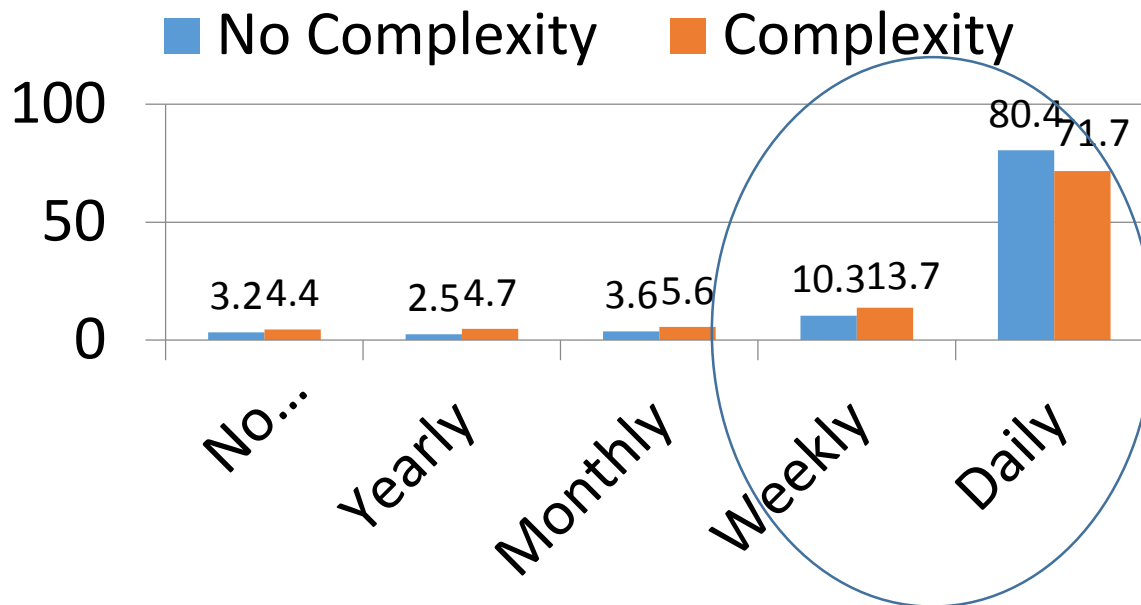
The child support system has huge reach, and huge potential benefit

- Serves 1 in 5 American children
- Serves a third of all poor children.
- 41% of income for poor CPs receiving it, 65% if they receive the full amount.
- Gets more cash to poor kids than any other program except refundable tax credits.
- Paying and caring go together. Involved fathers have lower testosterone. Thus, CS could promote prosocial behavior among men (Gettler & Kazawa 2011)

2. CS can capitalize on low-income fathers' **strong desires** to be involved in their children's lives.

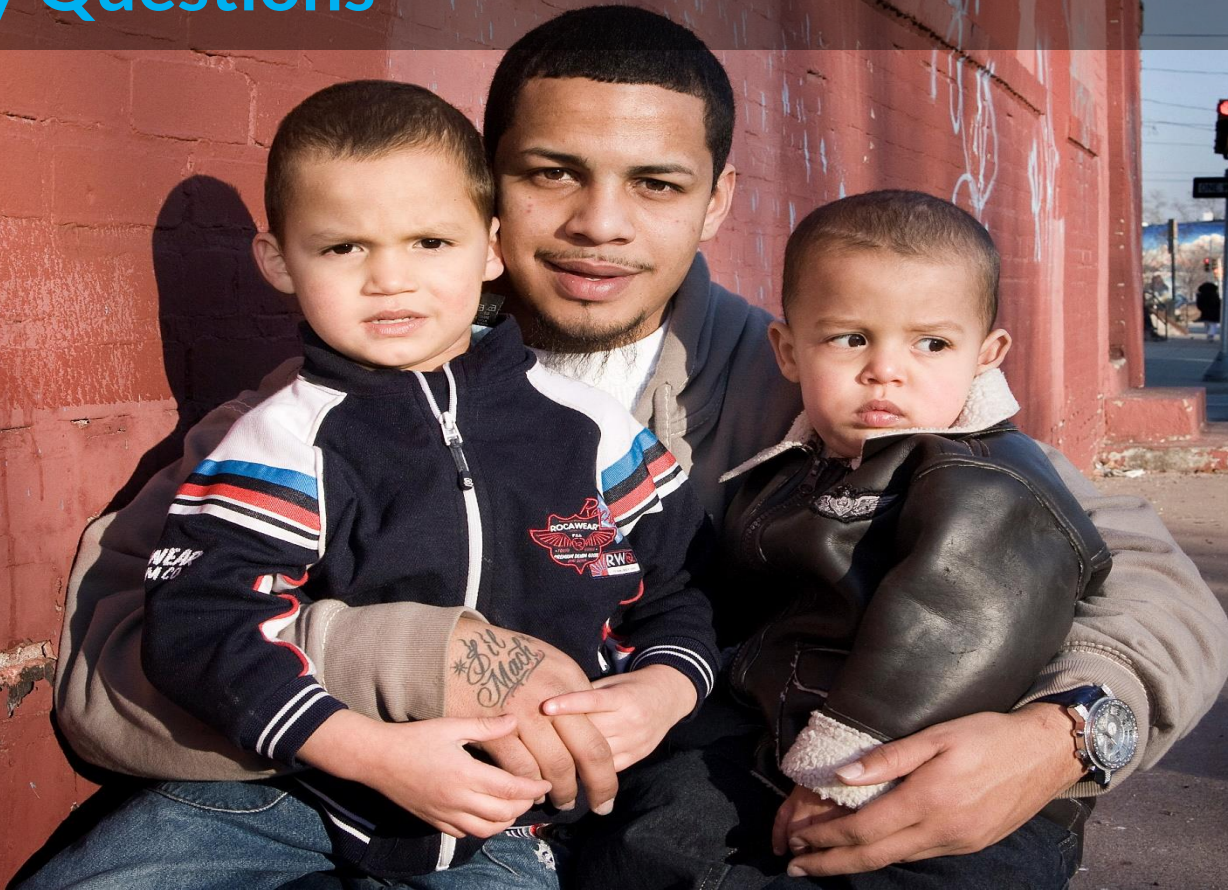
- Shortly after birth, **98%** of unmarried (disadvantaged) fathers say they want to be involved in their child's life. Father-child contact is initially very high. Mothers say,
 - 4 out of 5 fathers contributed financially during pregnancy
 - 3/4 visited the mom in the hospital (by the time she was interviewed)
 - 8 in 10 planned to contribute financially
 - 91 percent planned to put the father's name on the birth certificate
 - 94 percent want the fathers to be involved
- For a focal child, involvement falls off over time, but, *changing the unit of analysis to the father, rather than the child, reveals...*
- ...at any given time, more than **85%** of men in prime family-building years who ever had a nonmarital child are **actively involved in fathering at least one nonmarital child.**

Child Involvement from a Father's Perspective: Maximum Child Involvement (among Men with Nonmarital Births), NLSY97 (Tach and Edin, 2012)



20 Years Talking to NCPs about Child Support

Two Key Questions



“Think back to when you first learned she was pregnant. What was your first reaction to the news?”



What fathers say

“Deep inside, I wanted to have a child.”

“I was going to have a baby! I was happy!”

“I thought, ‘Aw, sweetie, I'm going to be a daddy.’ That was my feeling.... if I could [have] bottled it and keep it, I would have.”

**“What would
your life be
like without
your child?”**



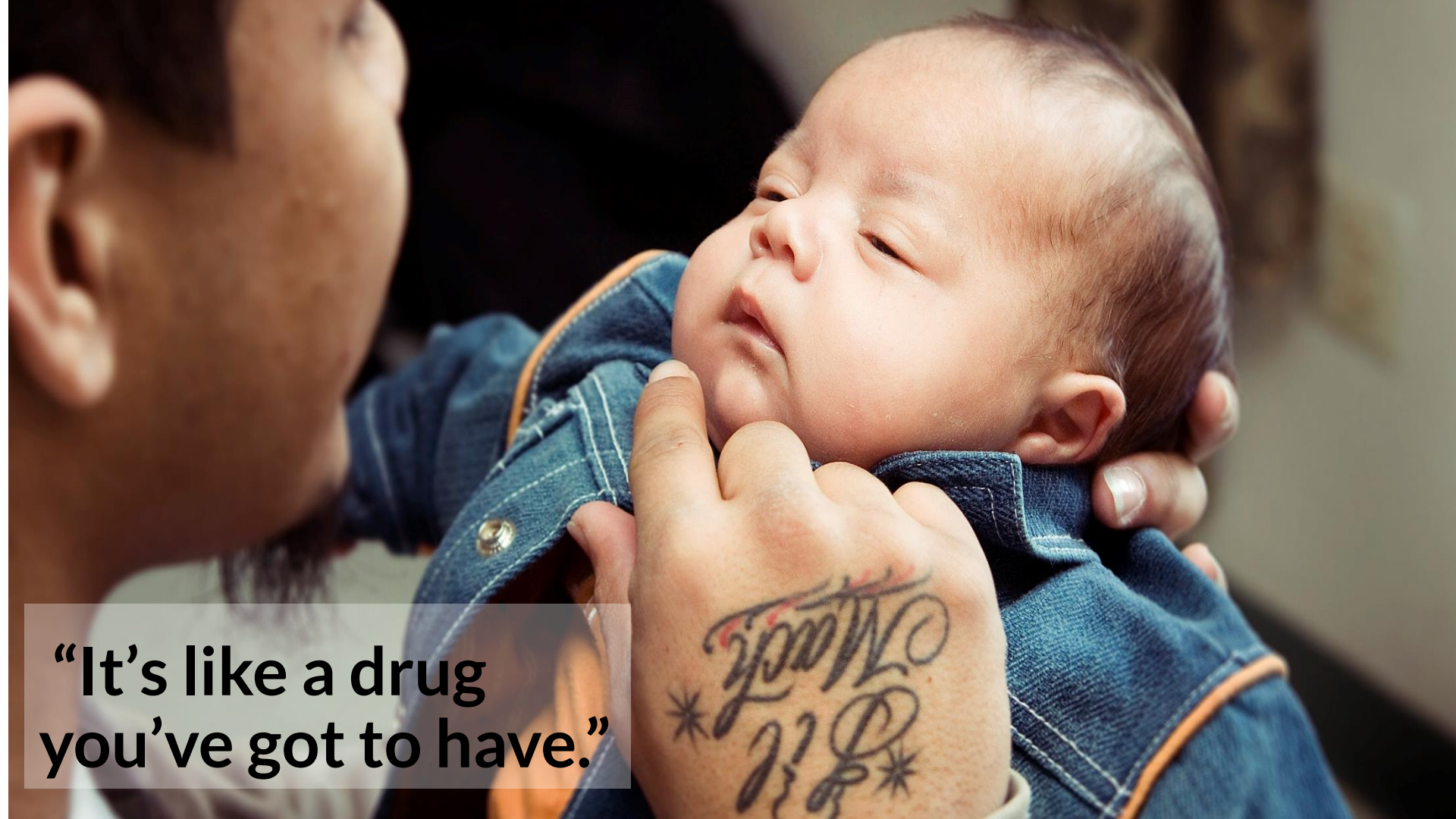
What fathers say

“I would be out getting high because I would not have [anything]. *I would have my girlfriend, but my...baby is the most important thing in my life right now.*”

“I’d still be out there.... I’d still be f’ing off, drugs and all. [But now] I think about my kids and there’s just this HOPE of getting a good relationship with them.”

“I’d probably be dead somewhere, or back in jail, in and out of rehabs. It’s given me something to fight for, something like a destination. I got to BE somewhere.”

“I couldn’t imagine being without them because when I am spending time with my kids it is like, now that is love. That is unconditional love.... It is like a drug that you got to have.”



**“It’s like a drug
you’ve got to have.”**

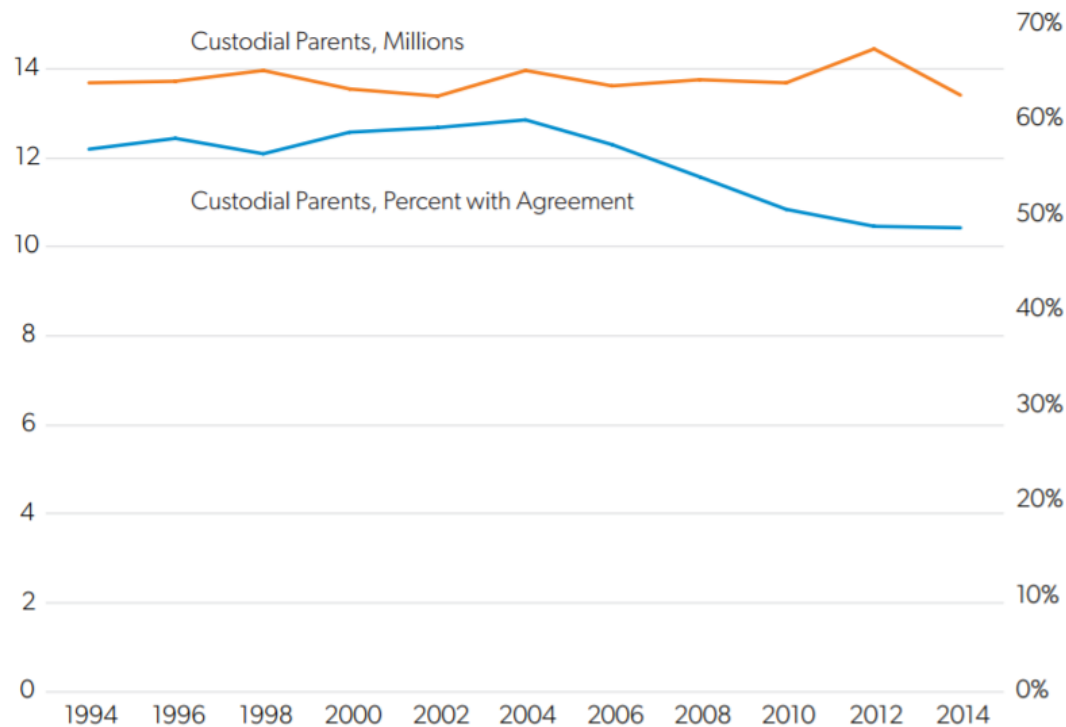
3. CS (broadly conceived) increases financial resources to kids and enhances child wellbeing

- Amato and Gilbreth 1999 (meta-analysis of 63 studies)
Outcomes: Cognitive Ability, Behavior
- Argus et al. 1998 (NLSY)
Outcomes: Cognitive Ability
- Nepomnyaschy et al. 2014 (Fragile Families)
Outcomes: Cognitive Ability and Behavior

4. For fathers without stable jobs and sufficient income, CS may *diminish* capacity, coparenting, father-child bonds.

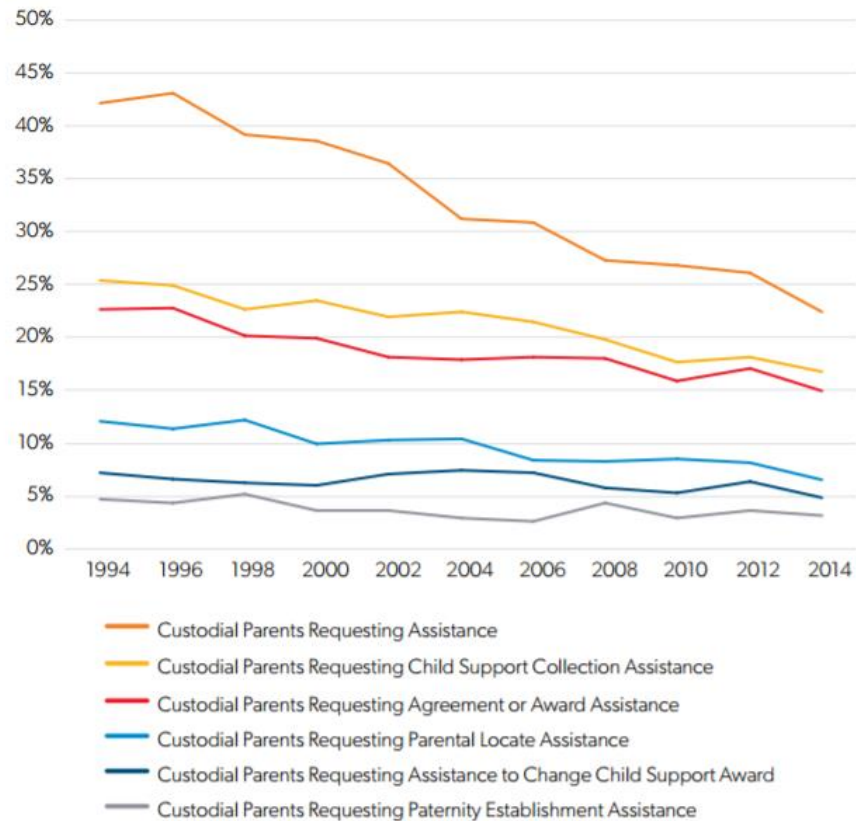
- Sharp **sanctions** for nonpayment.
- 70% of NCPs have CS debt, 25% of all arrears are owed to the state.
- *Formal CS* may not benefit, and could even harm, children's wellbeing.
- Over time, more CPs are **voting with their feet** and failing to participate.

Figure 4. Custodial Parent Population over Time, Share with Child Support Agreement



Source: Author's analysis of summary data from tables accompanying Timothy S. Grall, *Current Population Reports*, nos. P60-212, P60-217, P60-225, P60-230, P60-234, P60-237, P60-240, P60-246, P60-255, 2000-15, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/population.html>.

Figure 6. Requests for Assistance



Note: Requests for assistance obtaining health insurance or getting TANF or Medicaid are not shown.

Source: Author's analysis of summary data from tables accompanying Timothy S. Grall, *Current Population Reports*, nos. P60-212, P60-217, P60-225, P60-230, P60-234, P60-237, P60-240, P60-246, P60-255, 2000-15, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/population.html>.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE to transform child support into a family-building institution for 21st century families?

- CS must embrace a new overarching goal: Get as many parental resources (broadly defined) to kids as possible
 - Material Resources
 - cash
 - Informal
 - In-kind
- but ALSO.....
 - Social/Emotional Resources
 - Cooperative, supportive co-parenting
 - Strong father-child bonds
- To that end, make strengthening co-parenting relationships and father-child bonds part of the core mission of CS

Our Plan

1. Building on momentum in the field, **rebrand and recast the mission of CS** to embrace these broader goals
2. **Tie caring and paying together** explicitly in ways that build coparenting and the father-child bond
3. **Assign reasonable orders, invest in expanding dads' capacity to pay.**
4. **Ensure that every \$ gets to the child**, not the government.



San Francisco

Child Support and Community College

Providing Support that Empowers Families

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Director, San Francisco Department of Child Support Service

Child Support Services

Puts families first...

Our Vision

Children can count on their parents for the financial, medical and emotional support they need to be healthy and successful.

Our Mission

To empower parents to provide economic support for their children by furnishing child support services in the form of location of absent parents, establishment of paternity and support obligations and enforcement of support obligations, thereby contributing to the well-being of families and children.

San Francisco Child Support Services

Puts families first...

FFY2017

11,689 open cases

9,792 children



Child Support Services

Putting families first...



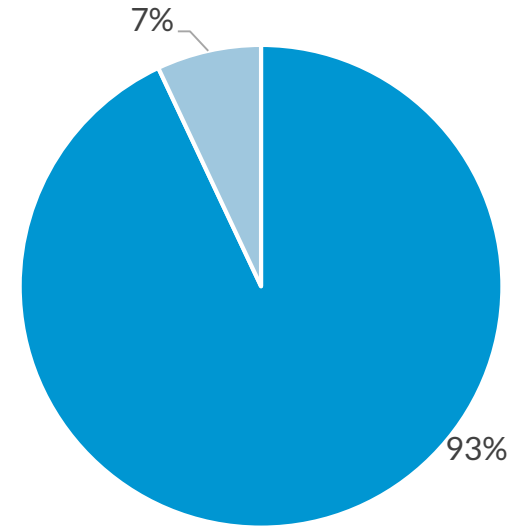
Goals	FFY2017 Performance
Paternity Established (IVD)	97%
Support Orders Established	90%
Current Support Collections	76%
Cases w/Arrears	73%

Child Support Services

Putting families first...



San Francisco
Collections (Current and Arrears)
for
FFY 2017
\$25,861,070



■ Collections to Families ■ Welfare Recoupment

Child Support Services

Helping parents to reach self-sufficiency...

Challenges:

Custodial parents attending San Francisco's Mission Campus of the Community College System struggle with balancing child care needs and educational requirements.

Lack of affordable and accessible child care is a common reason why some students fail or abandon the pursuit of their education.

63% of SFDCSS orders were based on default or presumed income

50% of SFDCSS caseload were delinquent in payments

Child Support Services and City College Pilot

Mission Campus, San Francisco Community College

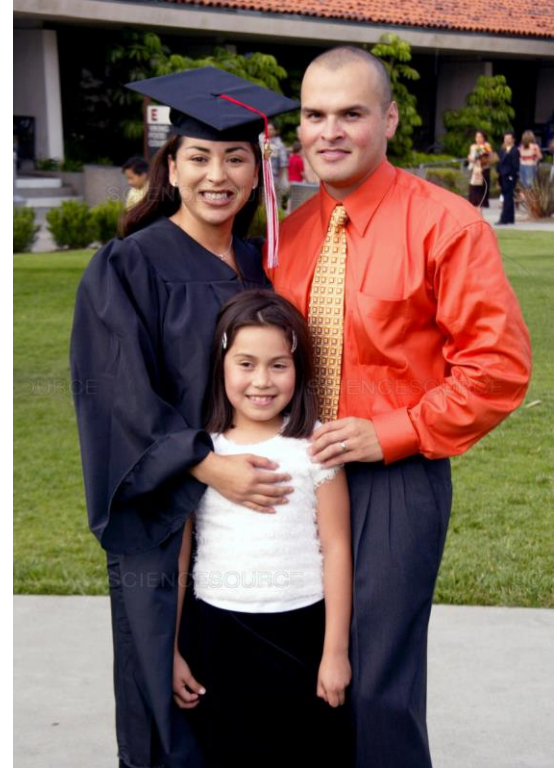
- 100 participating couples
- CP mother attending part time or full time
- 12 months
- In-reach /Outreach and recruitment
 - On-site child support services at the community college
 - In class presentations
- Parent Collaboration – NET court calendar, parenting classes
- Arrears solutions
 - Compromise of Arrears Program
 - Waiver of arrears (non-aided custodial parties)
 - Adjudication of arrears
 - Potential for development of new solutions

Child Support Services and City College Pilot

Mission Campus, San Francisco Community College

Outcomes

- 100% graduated,
 - 98% on time 2% graduated after one additional semester
- 50% of father's showed interest in enrolling at City College
- 30 couples reunited, 4 couples were married



Child Support Services and City College Pilot

Mission Campus, San Francisco Community College

- Modification of orders to realistic orders
- Related child support cases moved from delinquent to paying
- 75% of participating families requested referral to Family Law Facilitator for assistance with access and visitation



Next steps....

- 1. Expand engagement interventions.** Help existing programs add capacity, create new partnerships and develop new programs.
- 2. Educate the field.** Educate providers on the complex nature of poverty and how whole family strategies can help.
- 3. Strengthen existing providers.** Support providers through funding and technical assistance to implement whole family approaches into their work. Allow child support funding for employment, parenting time, fatherhood and co-parenting services.
- 4. Evaluate and share best practices.** Support evaluations of new whole family interventions, identify challenges and benefits, disseminate key findings.

What are your reactions and questions?



Type your **questions** or **comments** into the Questions box. Be sure to include your **name** and **organization**.

A screenshot of a web interface for submitting questions. It has a title bar that says "Questions" with a close button on the right. Below the title bar is a large empty text area for typing. At the bottom of the text area, there is a smaller text input field with the placeholder text "Type your questions here!". To the right of this field is a blue "Send" button.

#MobilityFromPoverty

For further information



www.MobilityPartnership.org



[#MobilityFromPoverty](https://twitter.com/MobilityFromPoverty)