

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Subcommittee on Race, Poverty and Neglect

October 19 2023



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Today:

- What is the subcommittee on race, poverty and neglect?
- What do we know about allegations of neglect in NJ?
- What can we do to combat the conflation of racial bias, poverty and neglect in NJ?



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NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Subcommittee on Race, Poverty and Neglect

The subcommittee is convened to examine

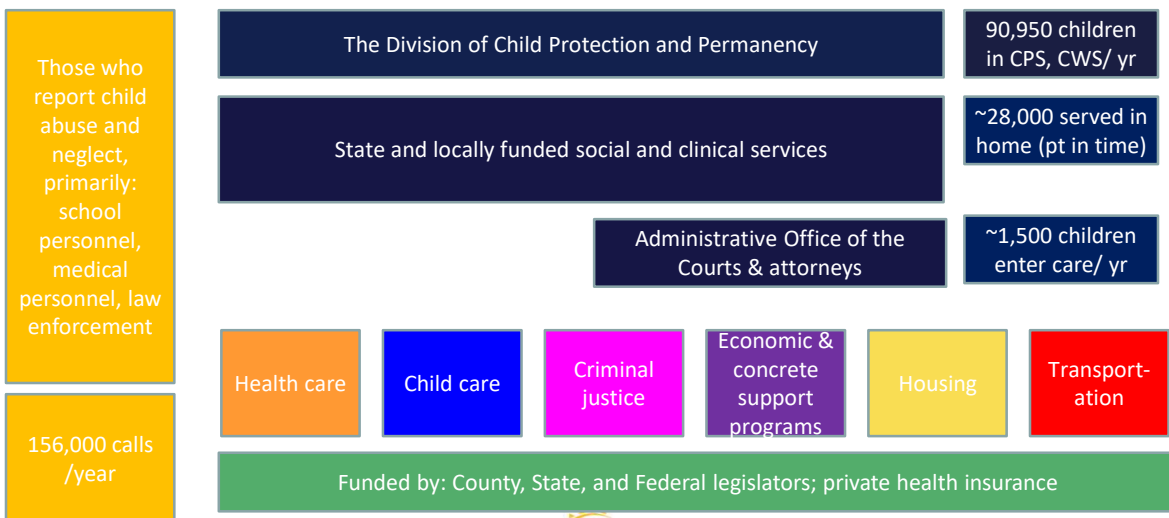
- Ways in which the current operation of the child welfare system inappropriately conflates poverty and neglect,
- Ways in which racial inequities drive that conflation
- Identify specific efforts that can change the status quo

2023-24 goal:
Making concrete recommendations for change in New Jersey in 4-6 major domains



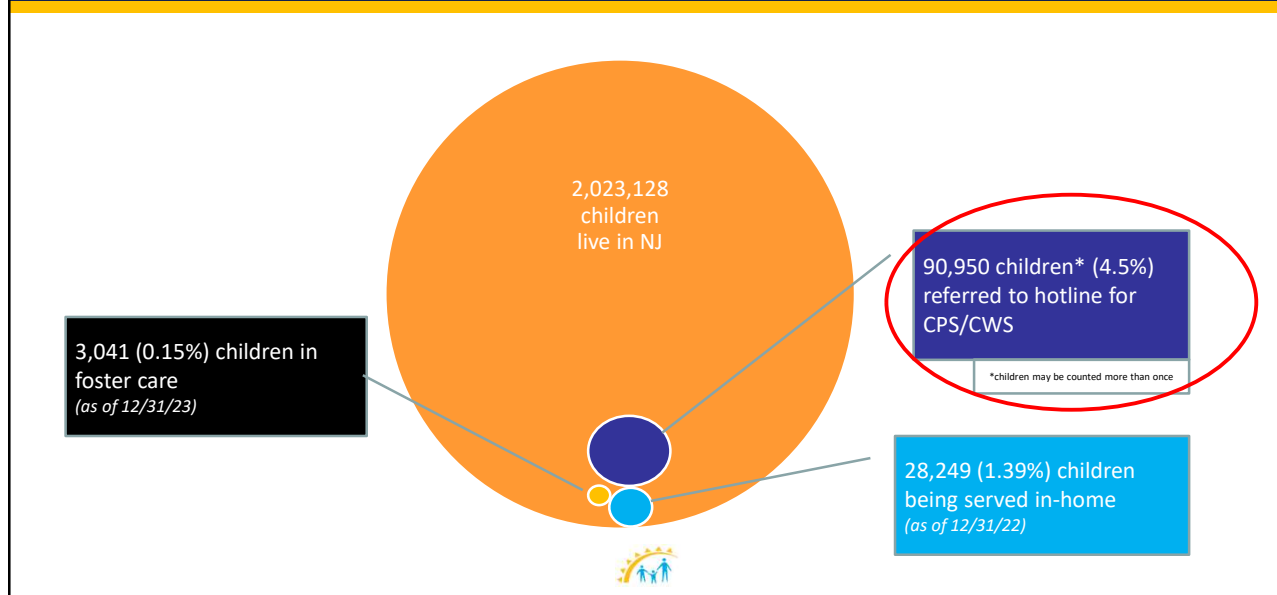
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Multiple sectors drive child welfare results



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Relatively few NJ children interact with the NJ child protection system each year...



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...but over the course of a whole childhood, the picture is much different.

“We estimate that **37.4% of all children** experience a child protective services investigation by age 18 years.

Consistent with previous literature, we found a higher rate for African American children (**53.0%**) and the lowest rate for Asians/Pacific Islanders (**10.2%**).”

Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. [Hyunil Kim](#) MSW, [Christopher Wildeman](#) PhD, [Melissa Jonson-Reid](#) PhD, MSW, and [Brett Drake](#) PhD, MSW. American J of Public Health. February 2017.



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CPS investigations are more common than a lot of other childhood experiences...

	Black	White	Hispanic
Do not live in 2 parent household	62.3%	28.7%	39.1%
Experience poverty during childhood	77%	30%	<i>Not avail.</i>
Be named subject of a CPS investigation	53%	28.2%	32%
Break a bone		50%	
Have a job before age 20		19%	
Have asthma	16%	7%	<i>Not avail.</i>
Be placed into foster care	11%	4.9%	5.4%
Have a food allergy	4.0%	4.1%	3.1%

- For Black children, being part of a CPS investigation is more common than breaking a bone in childhood.
- For all US children, being part of a CPS investigation is more common than having asthma, or being employed as a teen

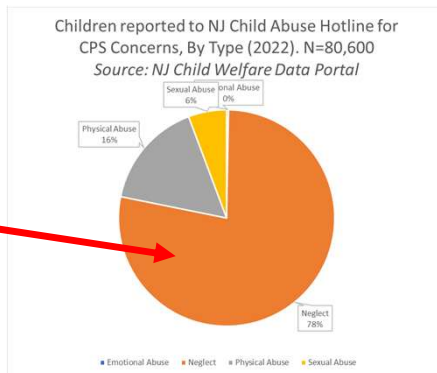


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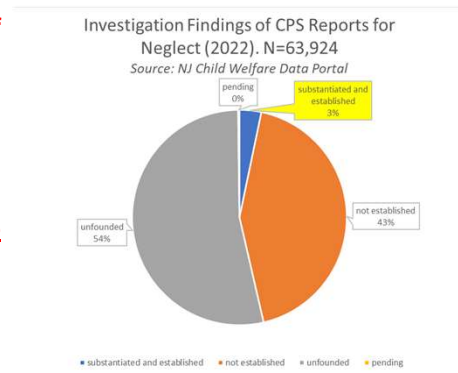
...yet, most CPS investigations show no evidence of harm to the child.

~ 90,000 calls alleging CPS each year.

Neglect is alleged ~80% of the time



But **97% of the situations** in which neglect is alleged ultimately result in **no finding of neglect**



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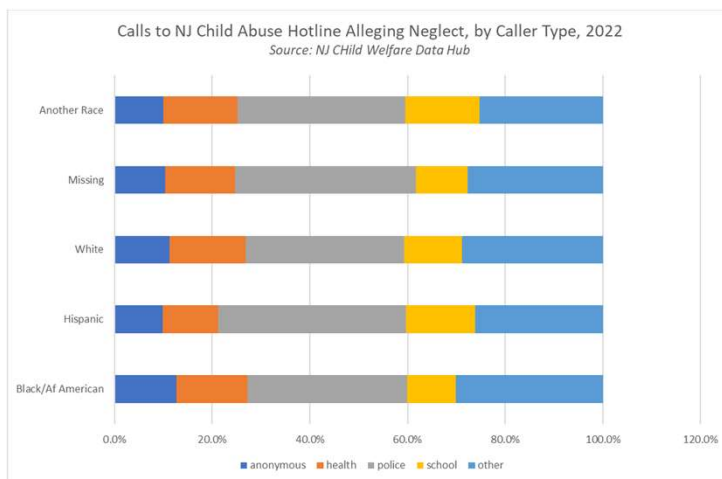
Rates of substantiation are extremely low.. ...and vary by the source of report

Reporter	# children	% substantiated or established
Agency	1,651	4.85%
Anonymous	6,967	1.12%
Facility	419	4.30%
Friend/Neighbor/Community	4,295	1.30%
Health	8,698	4.41%
Legal & Court	1,378	1.89%
Parent	4,188	0.84%
Police	21,815	4.81%
Relative	2,415	2.57%
School	7,625	2.19%
Self	191	0.00%



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Police comprise the largest volume of reporters alleging neglect, across all races



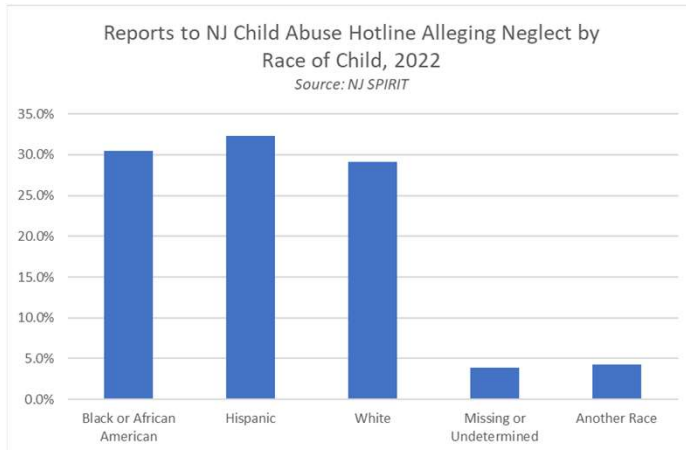
Police, Health, School and Anonymous together account for > two-thirds of all neglect calls.

Within that group, police are the largest source of calls alleging neglect, across all races



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Neglect reports disproportionately involve children of color



30% of neglect reports involve Black children, but only 13.5% of NJ children are Black.

32% involve Hispanic children, who comprise 29% of NJ children.

White children comprise 43.8% of the NJ child population, but only 29% of the neglect allegations.



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And academic literature suggests a conflation of poverty and neglect:

ECONOMIC SUPPORT POLICIES & CHILD WELFARE CASELOADS ARE HIGHLY CORRELATED:

States that spend more money on housing infrastructure, child care assistance, medical assistance programs, refundable Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) and cash assistance, on average, experience lower rates of substantiated maltreatments, foster care placements and maltreatment-related child fatalities.

Nationally:

- **Increases in TANF caseloads** were associated with significant reductions in numbers of neglect victims and foster care placements
- **State SNAP policies** that improve and stabilize household resources appear to be associated with reductions in CPS involvement and use of foster care
- State-level analyses of **EITCs** and child maltreatment reports demonstrate that increased EITC generosity is associated with fewer reports of neglect.
- A 2022 study found higher expected rates of child maltreatment in states whose policies make it more difficult to qualify for **child care subsidies**



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If we want to combat the conflation of racial bias, poverty and neglect, what should we focus on first?

Potential areas of focus :

- Create a space to have discussions about interactions (with and beyond child welfare) about race, racism and poverty in a way that changes mindsets
- What NJ resources can be used to provide information & referral, case management/care coordination, legal representation, financial literacy “upstream” to prevent escalation of stress into a risk situation?
- Pre-litigation legal representation
- Address impact of foster care placement on parents’ cash/other government assistance/ benefits

Subcommittee will convene 4-6 workshops over the next 12-15 months to generate recommended actions.

Each workshop will include:

- Pre-reads & pre-meeting
- Action planning meeting
- Written recommendations

What’s missing?



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Example: *Workshop #2: Meeting family support needs outside of child protection system*

DELIVERABLES COULD INCLUDE:

- A. Identify the most common struggles that trigger neglect calls to the child abuse hotline – struggles for the family, as well as for the caller
- B. Identify what NJ resources can be used to provide information & referral and – where needed – case/care coordination “upstream” to prevent risk to children
 - Who currently notices that a family may be struggling?
 - What would it take to equip them to be prepared to help families connect effectively to support? (e.g., training, information, etc.)



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Table Talk

- What stood out for you/ was surprising?
- The subcommittee proposed 4 workshops with concrete deliverables over the next 12-15 months:
 - Do any of these 4 proposals need to be amended?
 - Are any major “must have” efforts missing?
- What are the two most important topics the Subcommittee should grapple with first?

Each team needs two roles:

- Time keeper
- Note taker

30 min for discussion

If interested, please indicate desire to participate in upcoming working sessions!



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Let's discuss

What suggestions for subcommittee priorities did you generate?

What can you do to support the work of the subcommittee?

