

# POVERTY AND CHILD MALTREATMENT: COMMON CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Family Economic Success  
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# What evidence is there of a connection between poverty and maltreatment?

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- Poverty is the single best predictor of child maltreatment
- Children living in families with incomes below \$15,000 annually were 22 times more likely to be abused or neglected than those living in families with incomes of \$30,000 or more
- Some red flags about the impact of early welfare reform on families' involvement with the child welfare system
  - ▣ Loss of cash assistance associated with increased involvement with CW – work lessened that risk, but those with steady cash assistance were at less risk
  - ▣ Loss of cash assistance associated with longer time to reunification

# What are the Possible Pathways to Explain the Connection?

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- Poverty → Stress → Child Maltreatment
  
- Poverty → Lack of Resources → Neglect
  
- Parental Challenges → Poverty  
→ Child Maltreatment

# This Suggests a Cross-Systems Approach is Necessary:

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- Must address poverty, substance abuse, mental health problems, violence, *and* child maltreatment
- Must address interactive effects of these challenges
- No agency can do it alone *and* no agency can afford to ignore any of these challenges

# The “Approach” from the Child Welfare Perspective:

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- Develop strong primary prevention that addresses conditions underlying or contributing to child abuse and neglect, including poverty
- Develop intensive supports for families without requiring them to become involved with the child welfare system
- Narrow the focus of child welfare to deal only with most serious cases

# The “Approach” from a Family Economic Success Perspective:

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- Develop strong work and income supports that address conditions interfering with a parents’ ability to find and maintain family sustaining work
- Create strong workforce development policies, including those specifically designed for families with more significant barriers to work
- Create policies that promote asset building

# What Strategies Might Fall Within the “Approach”?

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- Comprehensive family assessments
- Homevisiting
- Differential response
- Team decision-making
- Access to treatment services
- Child care
- Respite care
- Income supports (e.g. cash assistance, EITC, child tax credit, SNAP, WIC, child support, health insurance)
- Family friendly workplaces
- Foster care, kinship care and adoption
- “Work supports” (e.g. child care and transportation)
- Income supports (e.g. cash assistance, EITC, child tax credit, SNAP, WIC, child support, health insurance)
- Human capital development strategies (e.g. child care, quality schools, access to post-secondary education)
- Job creation and training
- Transitional jobs & treatment services
- Individual Development Accounts
- Family friendly workplaces

# The Approach is *Not Just* a Service Delivery Mechanism, it is a Vision!

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- Children and families don't come in pieces, we must deal with them holistically
- Families know a lot about what they need *and* sometimes need help getting it
- Agencies and service providers are part of the team, but not the whole team, they must work together and with the families as *partners*

# What is the Role of Such A Vision?

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- Vision provides the overarching framework
- Vision provides the blueprint to connect components and fill in the framework
- Vision is the core of the transformed structure
- Vision is necessary but not sufficient for the structure to stand

# Vision and Mission Help:

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- Coordinate structures, policies and service delivery components and move them forward simultaneously
- Overcome fear and resistance to change
- Guide decision-making
- Tackle challenges -- e.g. funding silos, “this is how we’ve always done things”, confidentiality concerns, information sharing and IT issues

# What You're Trying to Do is Bigger than TANF and Child Welfare

It is a whole new way of approaching families and helping them help themselves

## However, Today's Focus is on TANF

What do we know about TANF and how can it help develop comprehensive cross-system strategies?

# Creation of TANF

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- In 1996, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- TANF is a fixed federal block grant (\$16.5 billion annually) together with a state maintenance of effort requirement (MOE), as opposed to AFDC which was an open entitlement where federal funding automatically increased with increasing caseloads

# Differences Between TANF and AFDC:

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- TANF is not an entitlement for eligible families
- TANF is time limited
- Many of the requirements, for example, work participation rates, time limits, and data reporting apply only to families receiving “assistance”

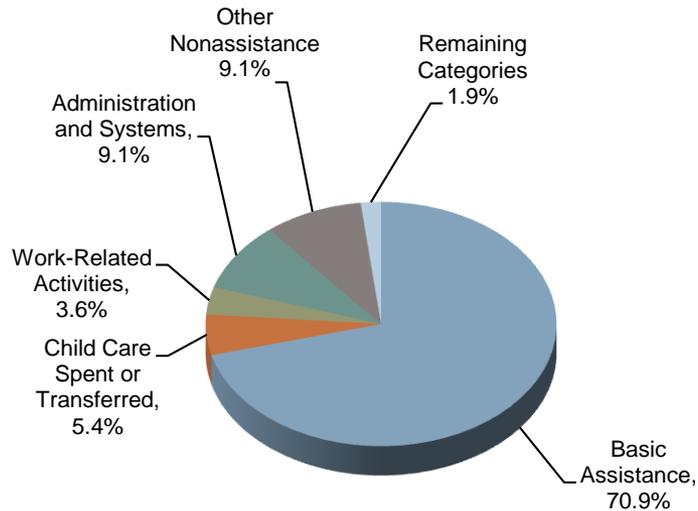
# TANF funds may be used:

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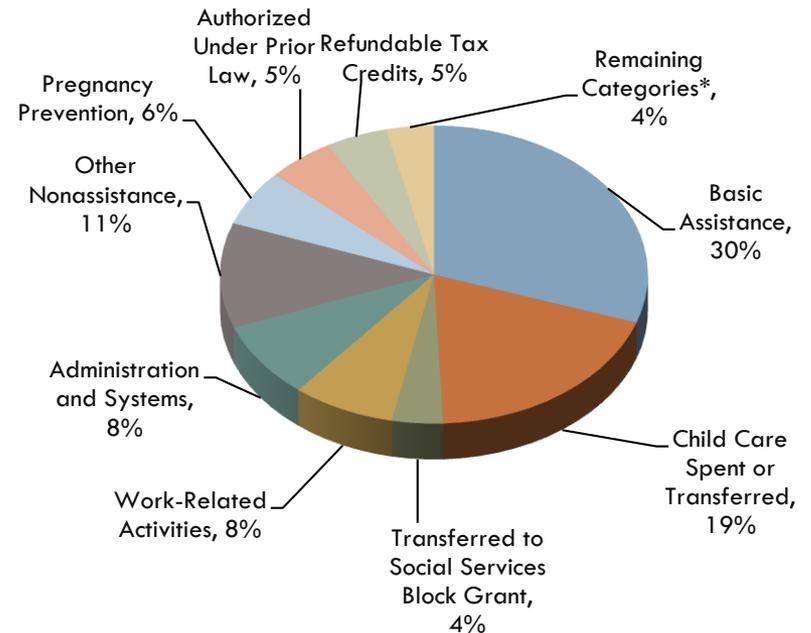
- To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or the homes of relatives;
- To end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies;
- To encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families

# TANF Funds Support a Wide Range of Activities

## 1997 Spending – TANF and MOE



## 2007 Spending – TANF and MOE



# 2005 Reauthorization

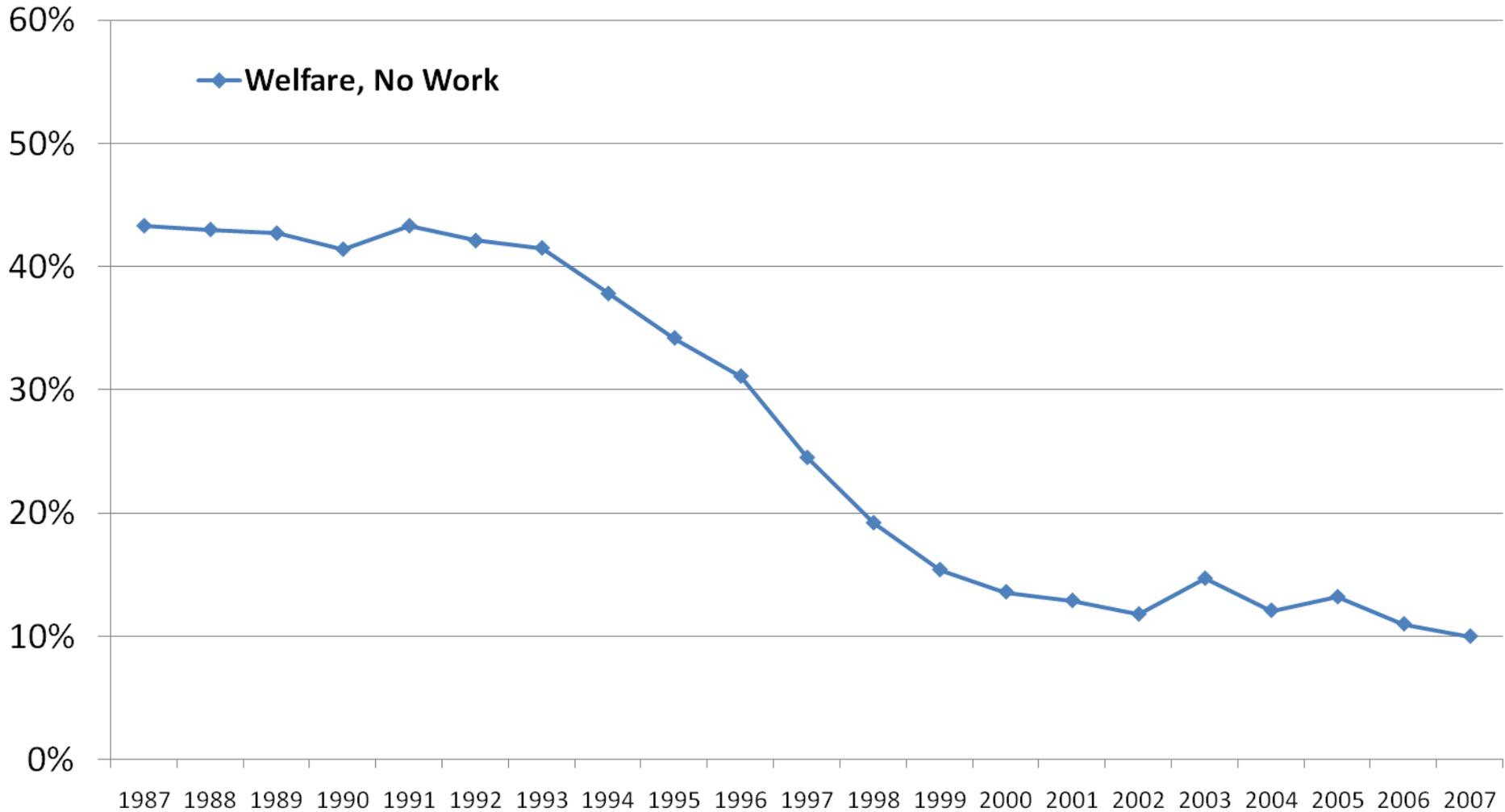
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- Many expected or hoped that the reauthorization would look back at the impact of changes and make needed adjustments
- Instead, the reauthorization focused largely on work requirements, defining them and documenting them
- There was little look at the “big picture” and what was happening to families

## So what has happened to children and families?

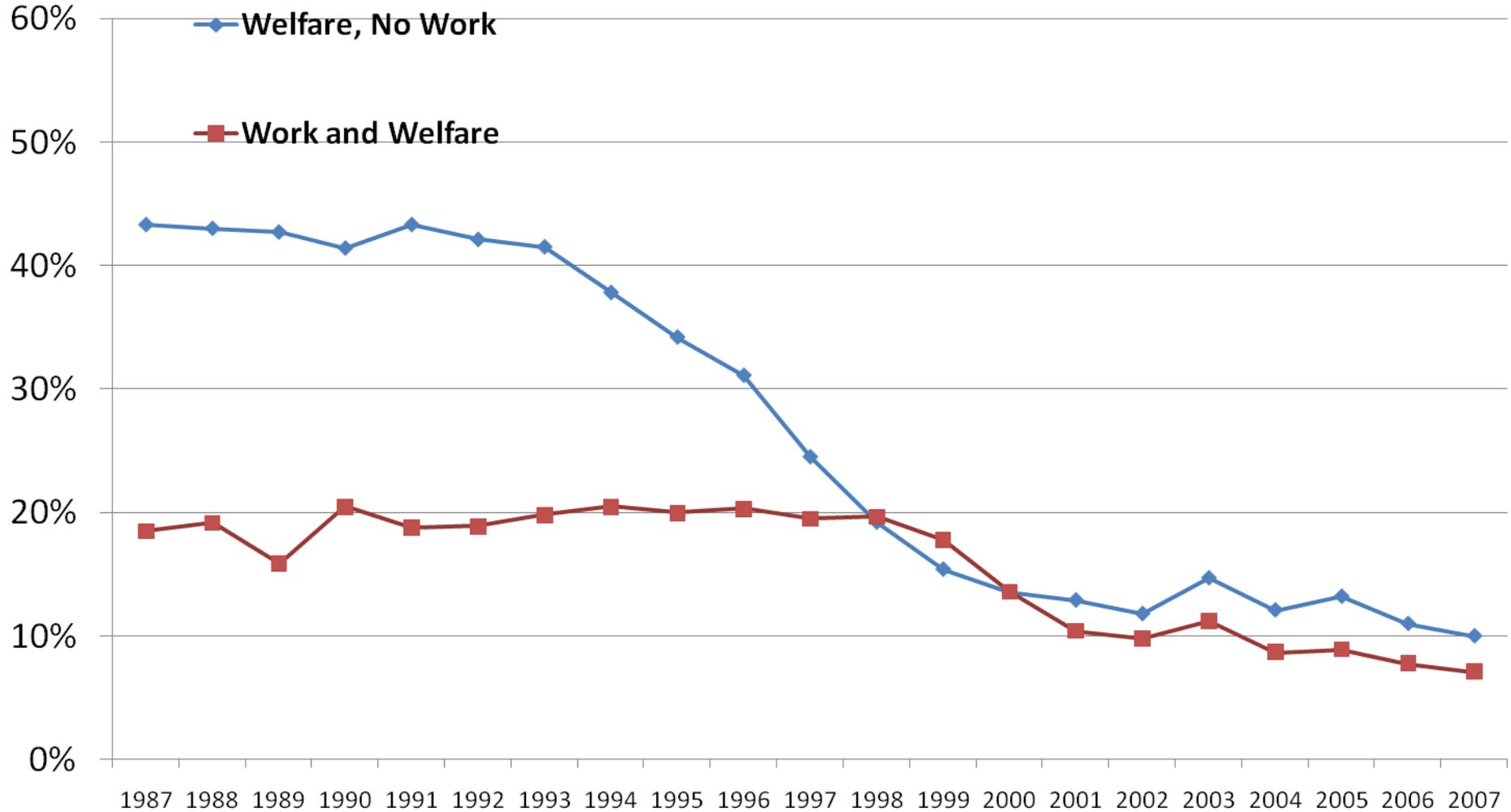
What is the “big picture” – or at least a bigger slice of it?

# Work and Welfare Among Poor Single Mothers, 1987-2007



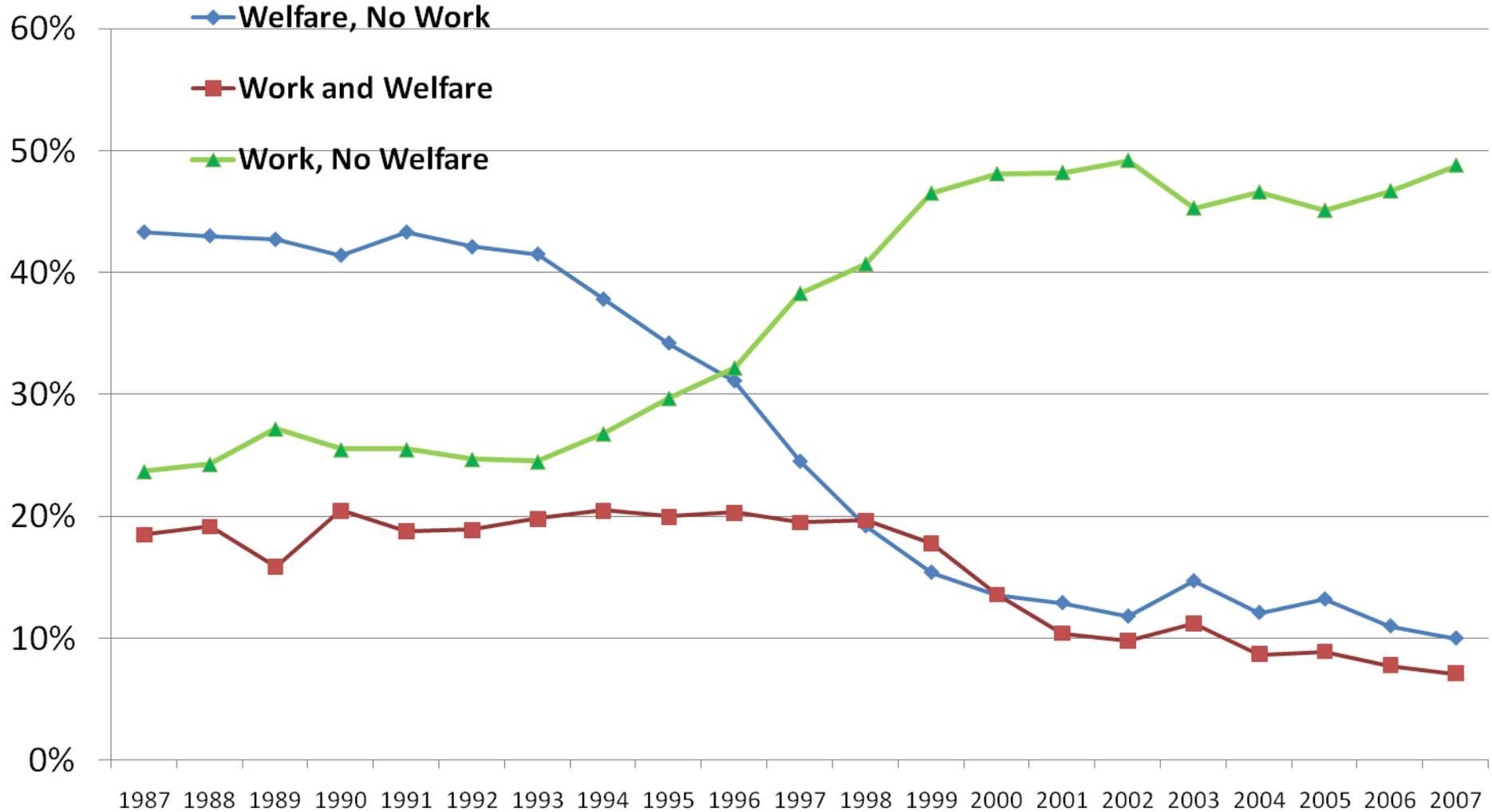
Source: Congressional Research Service, Trends in Welfare, Work, and the Economic Well-Being of Female-Headed Families with Children: 1987-2007 (April 21, 2009).

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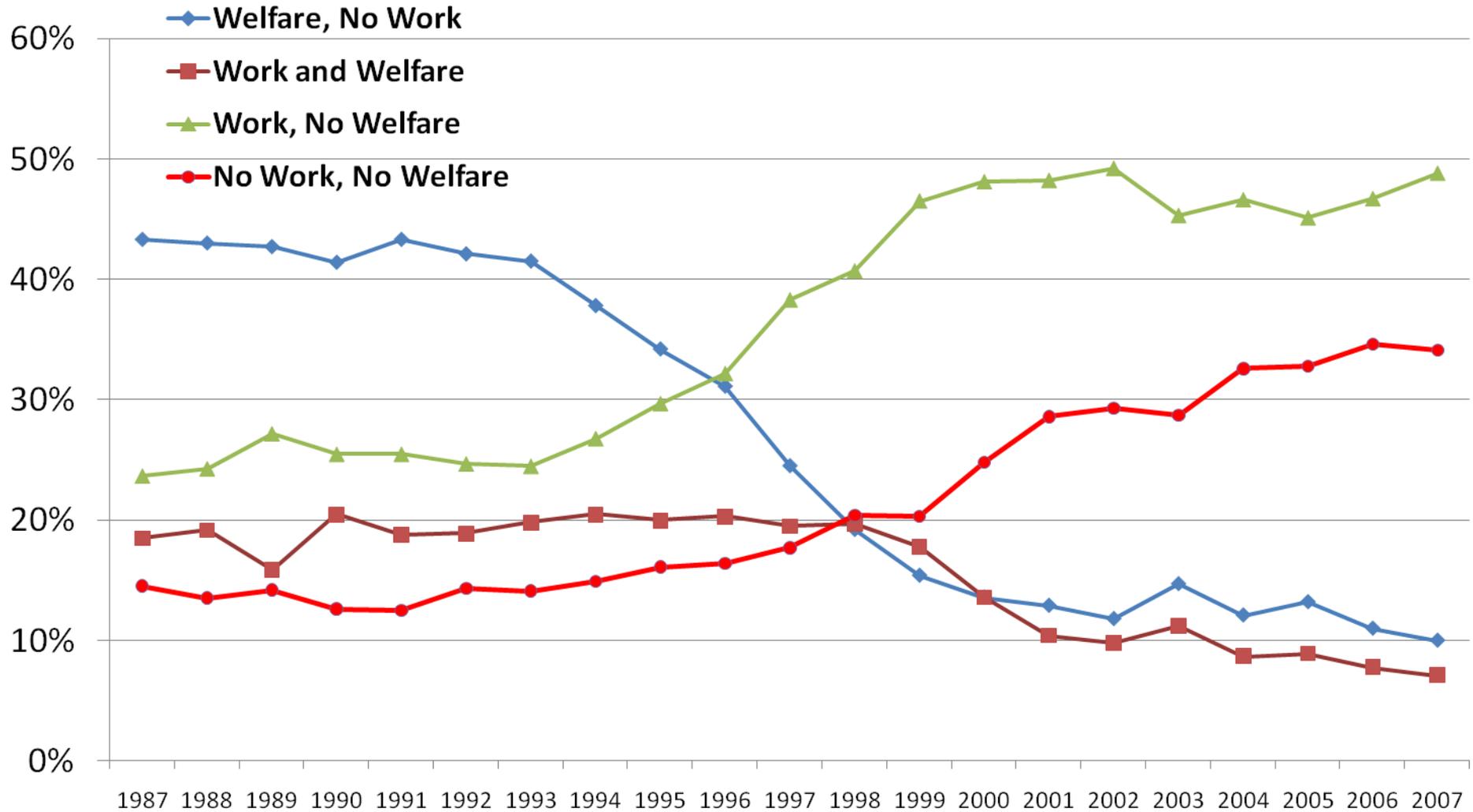
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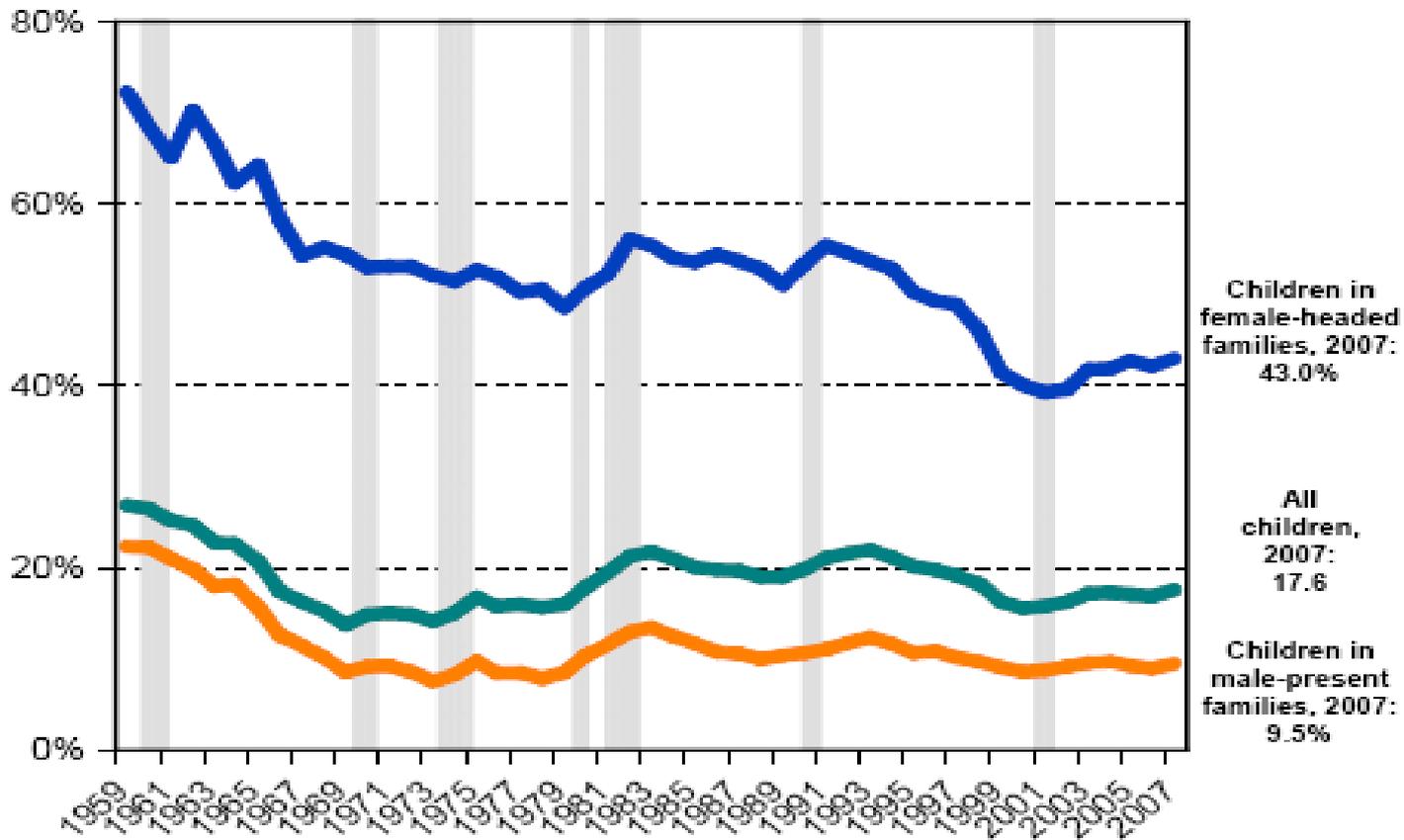
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# Child Poverty Rates by Family Type 1959-2007

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Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS) with data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Bureau of Economic Research.

# What about child poverty in this recession and beyond?

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- Researchers at the Brookings Institution estimate that child poverty will be:
  - ▣ 21% in 2009
  - ▣ 23% in 2010
  - ▣ 24% in 2011 and 2012
- They expect child poverty rates to remain over 20% *throughout the next decade*

# What about poverty in single mother families in this recession and beyond?

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- Brookings estimates that poverty rates for single-mother families will:
  - ▣ Climb to 41% in 2009
  - ▣ Continue to climb to 44% or 45% by 2011
  - ▣ Remain near 40% for the *rest of the next decade*

# TANF Provisions in the Recovery Act

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- ❑ Created \$5 billion TANF Emergency Fund, provides 80% reimbursement for increased spending on (1) basic assistance , (2) short-term non-recurrent benefits, and (3) subsidized jobs.
- ❑ Provided a hold harmless clause on caseload reduction credit to remove disincentive for allowing caseloads to increase
- ❑ Made no modification to work participation requirements, but HHS already has authority to waive penalties based on reasonable cause.

# So, How Can TANF & Child Welfare Work Together?

What are the implications of the 2010 reauthorization of TANF?

# What Strategies Did We Identify That Can Move Us Towards Our Vision ?

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- Comprehensive family Assessments
- Homevisiting
- Differential response
- Team decision-making
- Access to treatment services
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- Income supports (e.g. cash assistance, EITC, child tax credit, SNAP, WIC, child support, health care)
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# Remember, TANF funds may be used:

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- To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or the homes of relatives;
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# Remember Recovery Act Funds Can:

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- Provide basic assistance
- Subsidized work
- Short-term non-recurrent benefits
  - ▣ Utilities and energy assistance
  - ▣ Housing and emergency housing assistance
  - ▣ Domestic violence services
  - ▣ Vehicle support and transportation assistance
  - ▣ Family support services
  - ▣ Kinship care support and services
  - ▣ See other examples at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/porgams/ofa/policy/Non-recurrent\\_Short-Term\\_Benefits.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/porgams/ofa/policy/Non-recurrent_Short-Term_Benefits.htm)

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So, what do you want to do that you think you cannot do?

# What are Criticisms of Current TANF Program?

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- Too focused on getting those receiving “assistance” into countable activities to meet “participation rate” when individuals need different types of activities to get into stable employment and out of poverty
- Too focused on reducing numbers on caseload to obtain “caseload reduction credit” – which in turn allows states to meet participation rate
- Harder for TANF to function as a counter-cyclical response to a bad economy
- Funding has seriously eroded – both federal and state (The value of federal funds has declined 27% since 1996 due to inflation and despite MOE, state spending on non-medical social services has actually declined since 2001)

# Broad Recommendations for TANF Reauthorization:

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- Renewed focus on poverty alleviation and preventing hardship among children and families
  - ▣ Shift toward outcome-based accountability by starting to collect state-by-state data on indicators of hardship such as poverty rates, homelessness, hunger and indicators of success, like employment, stable housing, stable child care and schooling
  - ▣ Allow states to opt-out of process measures (participation rates) for outcome-based measures negotiated with HHS

# Broad Recommendations for TANF Reauthorization:

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- Strengthen funding to allow states to offer counter cyclical help
  - ▣ Build on the TANF Emergency Fund created in the Recovery Act
  - ▣ Revise MOE to ensure states are actually continuing to invest their own funds in the program
- Increase federal funding for innovation that creates multiple pathways to success for families based on their particular needs

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