

POVERTY AND CHILD MALTREATMENT: COMMON CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Family Economic Success
Learning Network Webinar,
December 11, 2009



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”

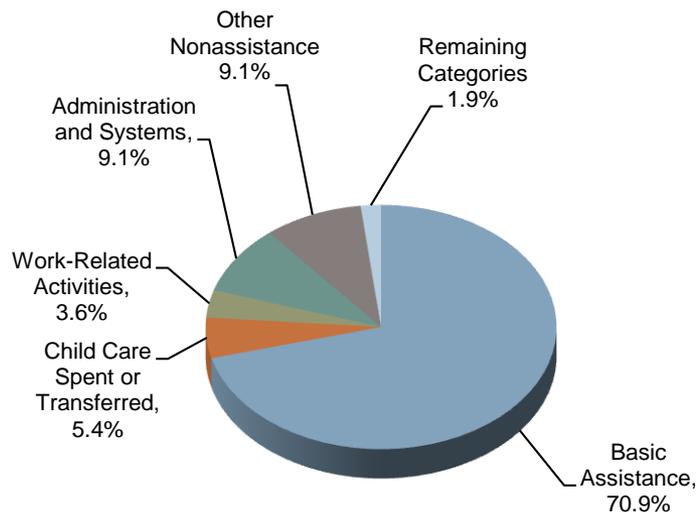
TANF funds may be used:

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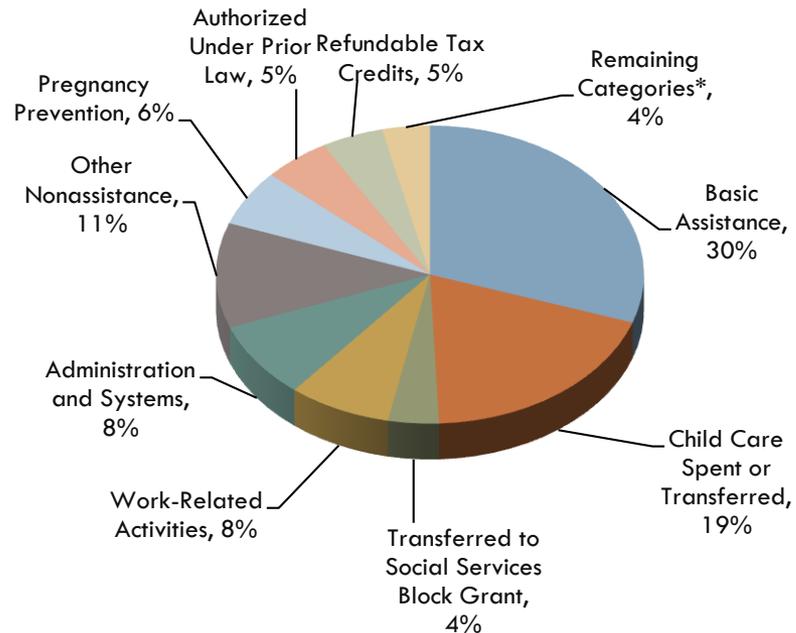
- To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or the homes of relatives;
- To end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies;
-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

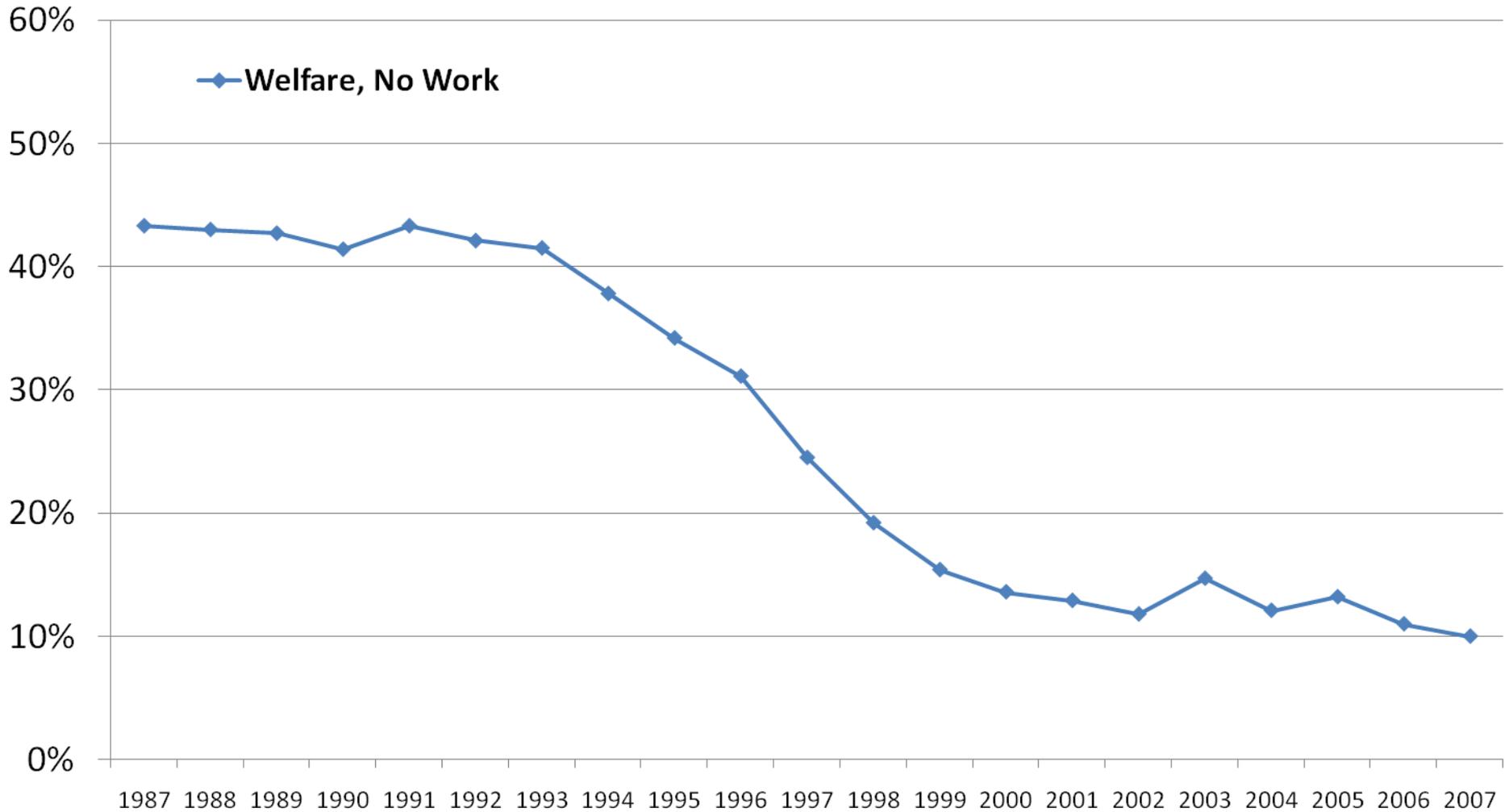
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- Many expected or hoped that the reauthorization would look back at the impact of changes and make needed adjustments
- Instead, the reauthorization focused largely on work requirements, defining them and documenting them
- There was little look at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

So what has happened to children and families?

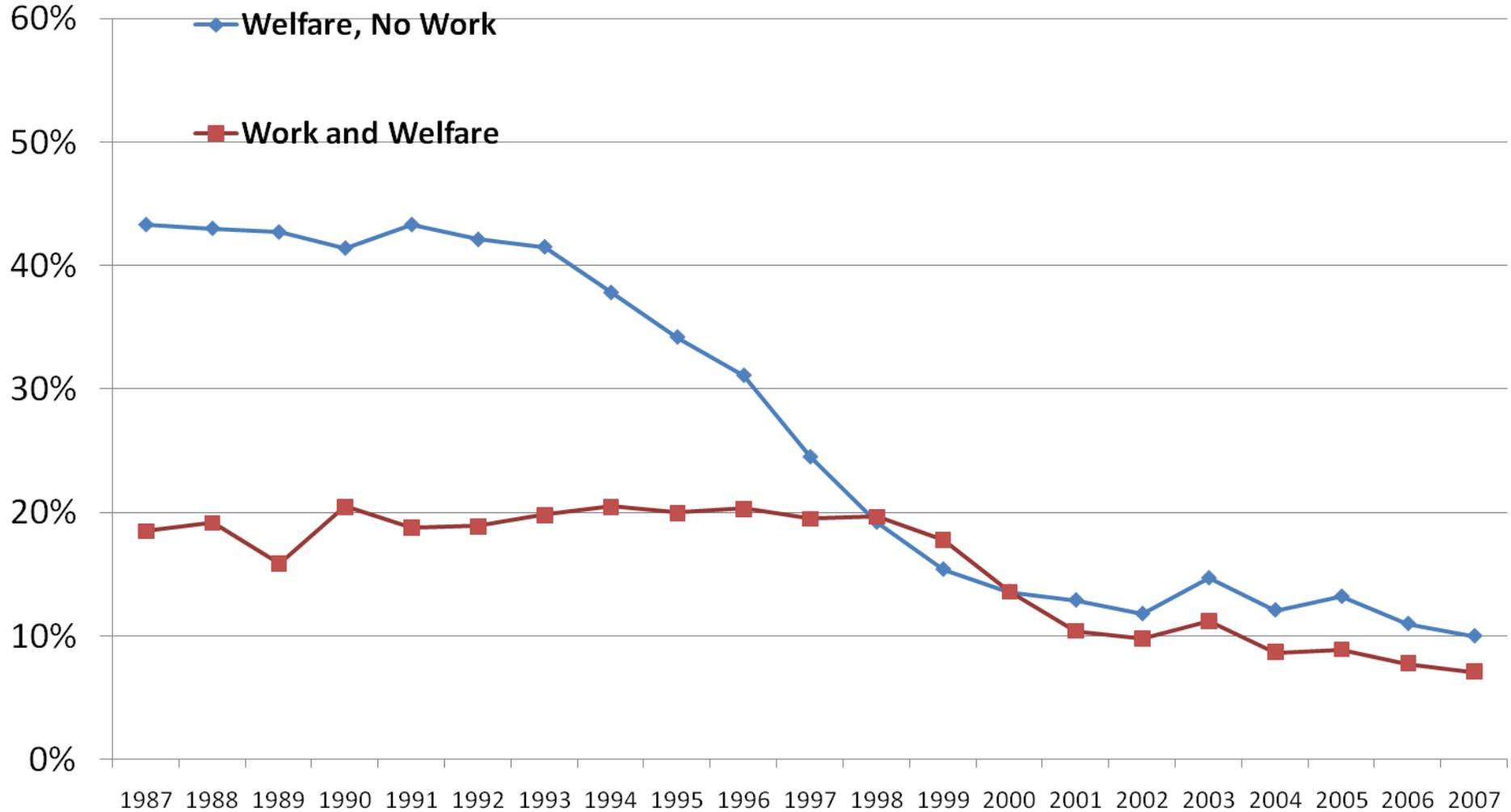
What is the “big picture” – or at least a bigger slice of it?

Work and Welfare Among Poor Single Mothers, 1987-2007



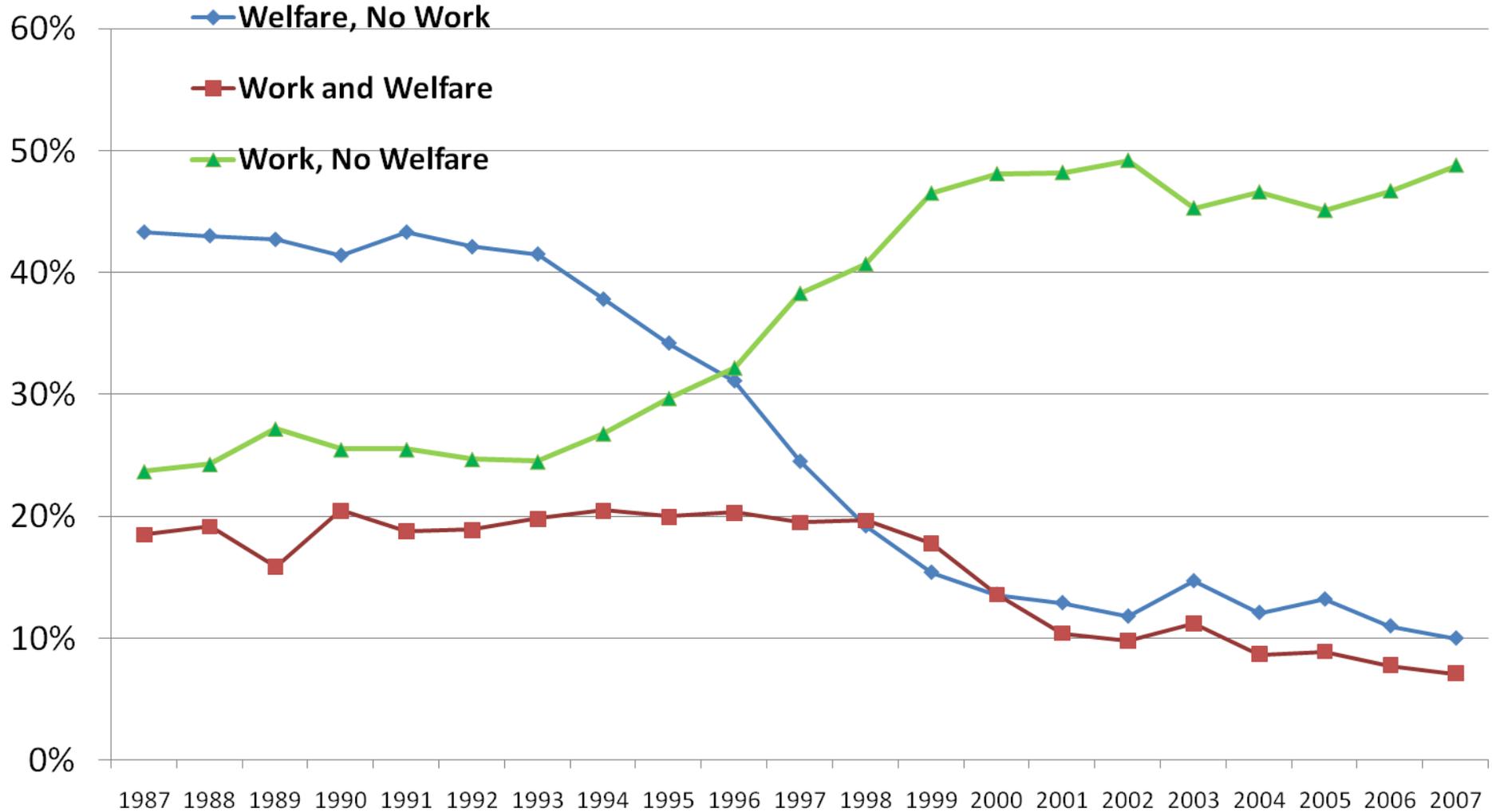
Source: Congressional Research Service, Trends in Welfare, Work, and the Economic Well-Being of Female-Headed Families with Children: 1987-2007 (April 21, 2009).

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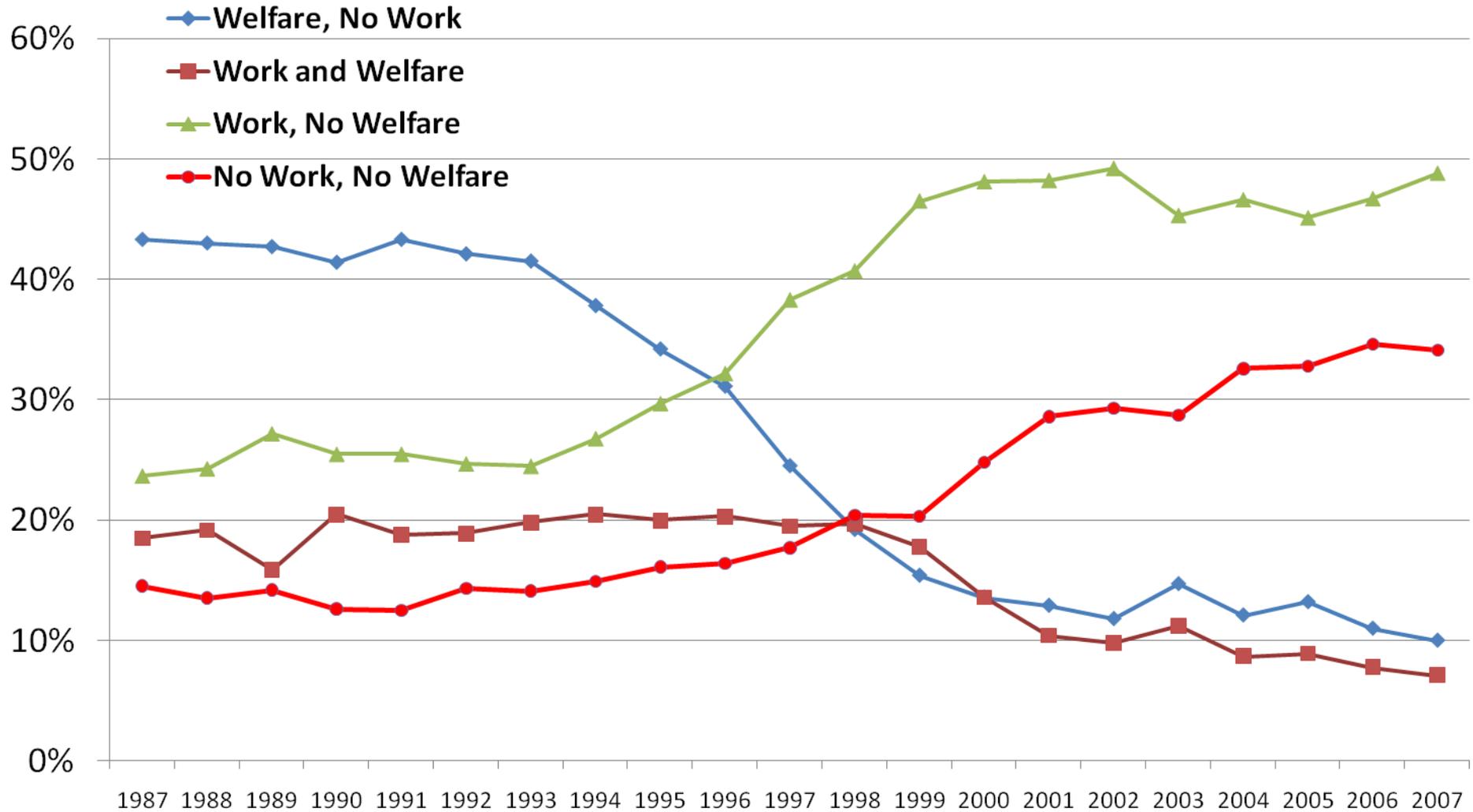
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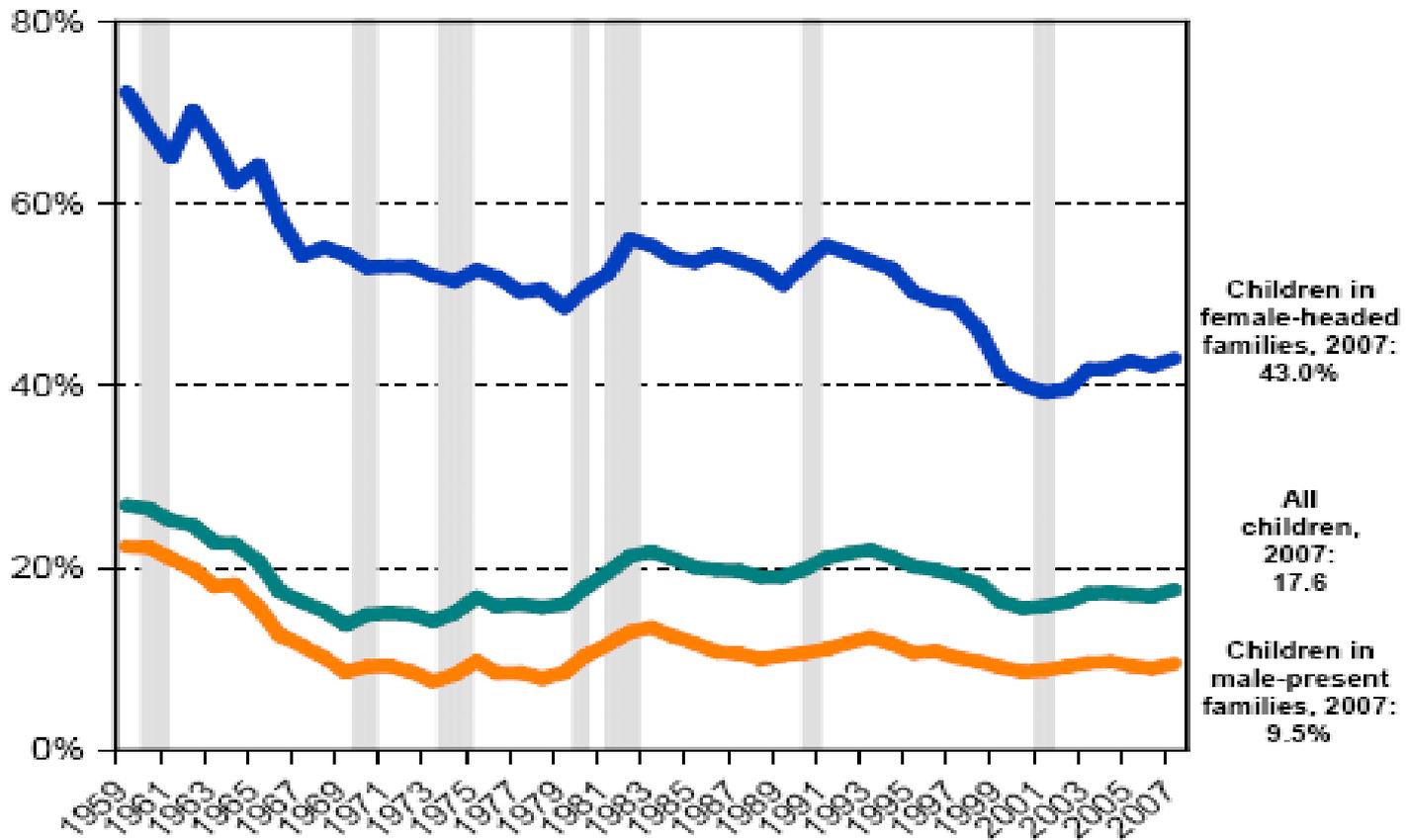
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Child Poverty Rates by Family Type 1959-2007

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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
- Child 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

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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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