



**Children's
Interagency
Coordinating
Council**

CICC Knowledge Exchange
Improving Benefit Access and Utilization
for Children and Their Families
Experiencing Poverty

July 22, 2024
12:00 – 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time

Hosted by U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services (HHS), Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor and
the Social Security Administration

Host

Jennifer Burnszynski

Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Human Services Policy

U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Planning and Evaluation

About the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council

- Congress stated that the CICC will:
 - foster greater **coordination and transparency** on child policy across agencies
 - examine and periodically report on a broad array of cross-cutting issues affecting **child well-being**
 - engage the National Academies to prepare a report **analyzing federal policies** that have affected child poverty
- The CICC is the **only federal interagency group that**
 - **focuses both on all children**, up to age 18, and
 - **the coordination of federal child policy**, with particular interest in well-being and poverty.



CICC Priorities for Year 1

Shared Learning Effort

- Learn more about each member agencies' policies, programs, research, and tools focused on children and their families experiencing poverty.
- Convene related interagency groups to ensure coordination of ongoing interagency efforts.
- Hear directly from people and communities with lived experience, practitioners, and other experts.
- Promote transparency on relevant child poverty and well-being issues and opportunities through public engagement efforts.

Child Care as Support for Economic Mobility

- Explore challenges and opportunities related to child care to enable families experiencing poverty to achieve and maintain economic security.

Stay connected to the CICC!

[Subscribe](#) to our quarterly
newsletter.

Review the [FY 2023 Report to
Congress](#).

Watch the November 2023
[kick-off event](#).

Knowledge Exchange Goals

Learn directly from lived experts, researchers, and community/state leaders.

Explore issues related to benefit access and utilization, including stigma, administrative burden, and benefit cliffs.

Highlight resources and initiatives that effectively address these issues.

Poverty Stigma

Federal Moderator: Kirk Lew
Office of Disability Employment Policy
U.S. Department of Labor

Panelists:

Dr. Elizabeth Linos
Harvard Kennedy School of Government

Jillian Raining Bird
CICC Lived Expert Consultant

Alexis Bylander
Food Research and Action Center

Panel Discussion

How do you define stigma?

How does poverty stigma impact children, families, and communities?

What types of policies or interventions can reduce poverty stigma?

Q&A

Takeaways

Definition/Context

- Societal, internalized, and anticipated stigma
- Stereotypes and bias from cultural and historical context

Impact

- Fear, shame, and lack of trust
- Information and resources are inaccessible
- Increased administrative burden
- School meal debts

Interventions

- Frame communication with a focus on destigmatizing
- Provide cultural responsive and bias training
- Partner with affected individuals and communities to change the narrative
- Healthy School Meals for All

Administrative Burden

Federal Moderator: Kathleen Romig
Office of the Commissioner
Social Security Administration

Presenters:
Rachal Hatton Moore
First Five South Carolina

Dr. Derek Wu
University of Virginia

Monica Ferrey
CICC Lived Expert Consultant

Centering family voice

We listened to 7,500+ parents and caregivers in every county of the state and members of the SC Family Voice Council

"It takes forever to wait at offices in-person."

"Finding support can be difficult."

"As a parent you have to fill out [applications] several times, and it takes a lot of time."

The paperwork is always daunting... and with two the work doubles! One challenge has been obtaining services for both children. Since one is my biological grandchild and the other is not, they often don't qualify for the same types of services. It's difficult to conceive!

Tre' Tailor
Family Voice Council member

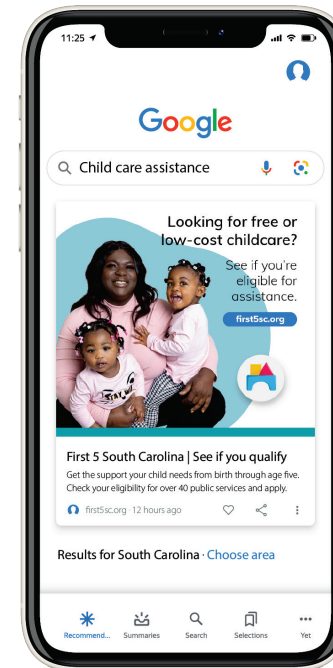


An online portal that families want, need, and deserve



Promotion

Leveraging partner engagement and outreach to connect families to services



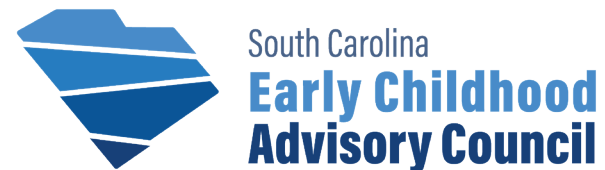
It's Working: For Families



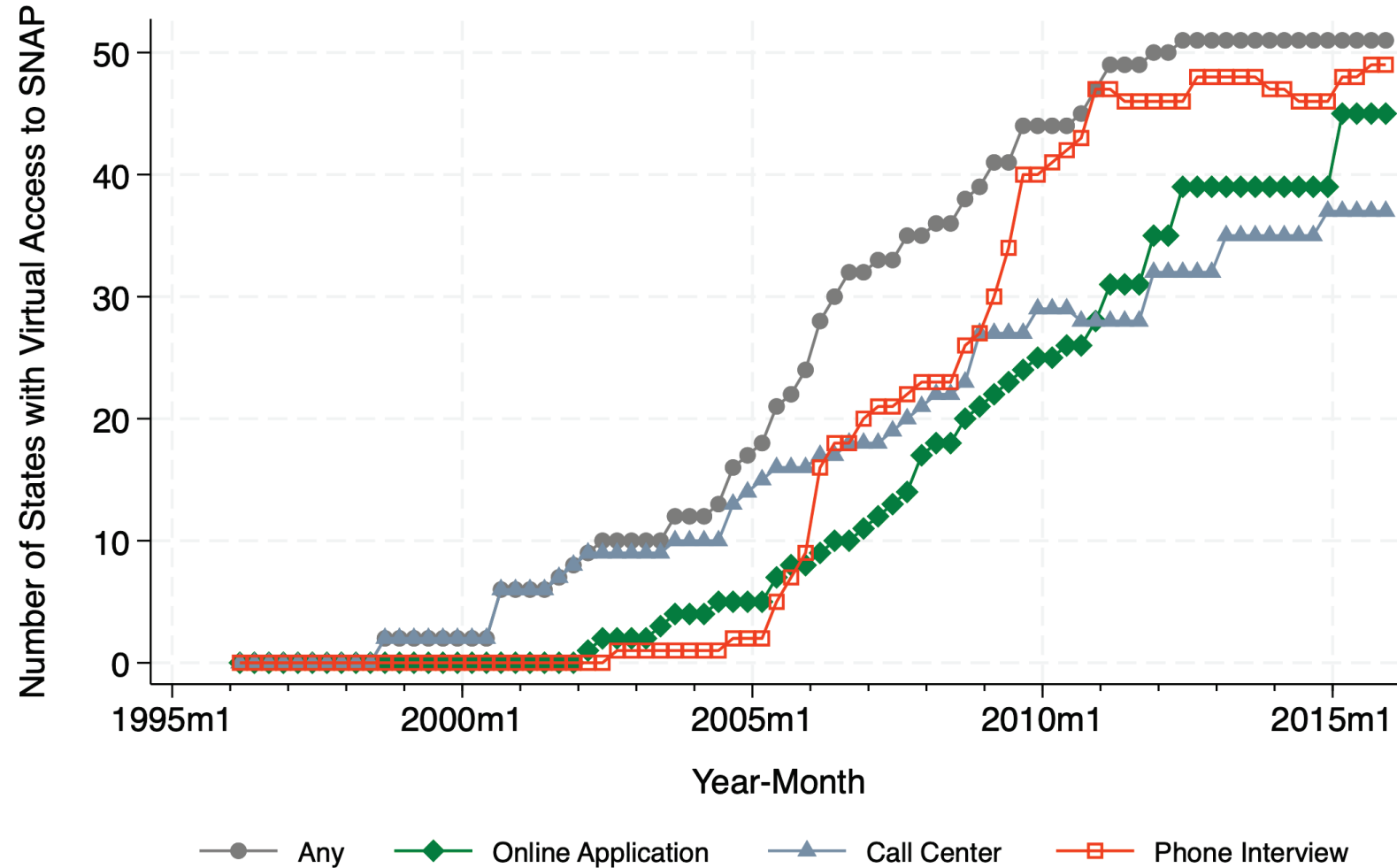
When our two-year-old daughter was diagnosed with an extremely rare syndrome that impacted her hearing, we didn't know where to start. First Five SC connected us to the resources we needed and coached us through the application process. Having all that information in one centralized place was key to getting the right kind of help – fast.

Katie H.
South Carolina parent

Rachal Hatton-Moore
rhatton@scfirststeps.org



Virtual Interactions with Welfare Offices Have Proliferated



Data Sources (public-use): USDA SNAP Policy Database (1996-2016)

But Lack of In-Person Caseworkers Can Create Burdens



Since the pandemic began in March, many new applicants for CalFresh “food stamps” or Medi-Cal have experienced long hold times over the phone and processing times of up to a month, as a result of both a backlog of new cases and a lack of county workers, according to recent data from the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance.



Politics

Social Security offices have been closed for most of the pandemic. That effort to protect public health has wounded some of the neediest Americans.

“I really need a face-to-face [meeting] because my case is complicated,” Chambers said, shaking his head. A young woman pulled on the locked front doors. “Excuse me, babe!” he yelled to warn her. “You will not get into that building!”

Effects on Take-Up and Targeting of Programs

- Wu & Meyer (2023) investigate how administrative burdens from automating caseworker assistance affect 1) enrollment in multiple programs and 2) who is screened out at a given stage
 - Setting: In 2007, International Business Machine (IBM) Corp used online and phone interactions to replace face-to-face engagement with local caseworkers in one state
 - Led to lack of personalized assistance, lower tolerance for errors, and long wait times at call centers
- TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid enrollments fell by 24%, 15%, and 4% one year after automation
 - Differences in effects across programs largely driven by differences in recertification costs
- Exiting individuals appear particularly disadvantaged
 - Devoting more in-person assistance at recertification stage may benefit neediest individuals most at risk of losing benefits

Panel Discussion and Q&A

Key Takeaways

Context

- Families may be inadvertently screened out due to automation and fewer in-person interactions
- There can be issues related to timely notification and recertification
- Access to documents and time are additional barriers

Interventions/Considerations

- Eligibility screening tools
- Transition planning
- Family voice
- Peer navigation and support
- Targeted interventions for families and communities in need

Benefit Cliffs

Federal Moderator: Anna Fogel
Administration of Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Presenters

Robin Ghertner
HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation

Talethia Edwards
CICC Lived Expert Consultant

Christina Morales
Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (2Gen)

Sarah Griffen
National 2Gen Consultant

Definitions

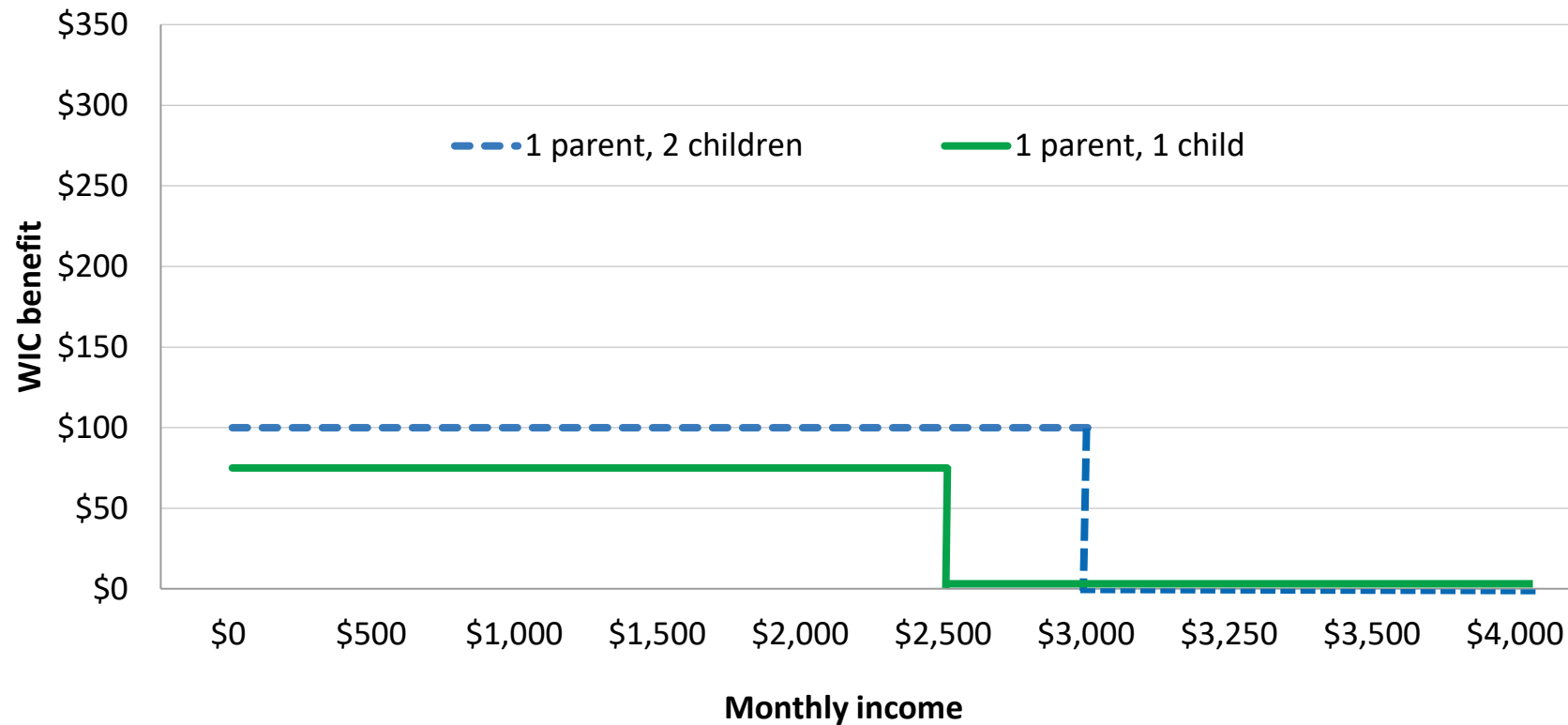
- Example of a “**benefit cliff**” – a worker earns an extra \$100 and becomes ineligible for SNAP (worth \$300)
- Example of a 50% “**effective marginal tax rate**” – a worker earns an extra \$100 and loses \$50 of SNAP

A benefit cliff is a special case of effective marginal tax rates (>100%)

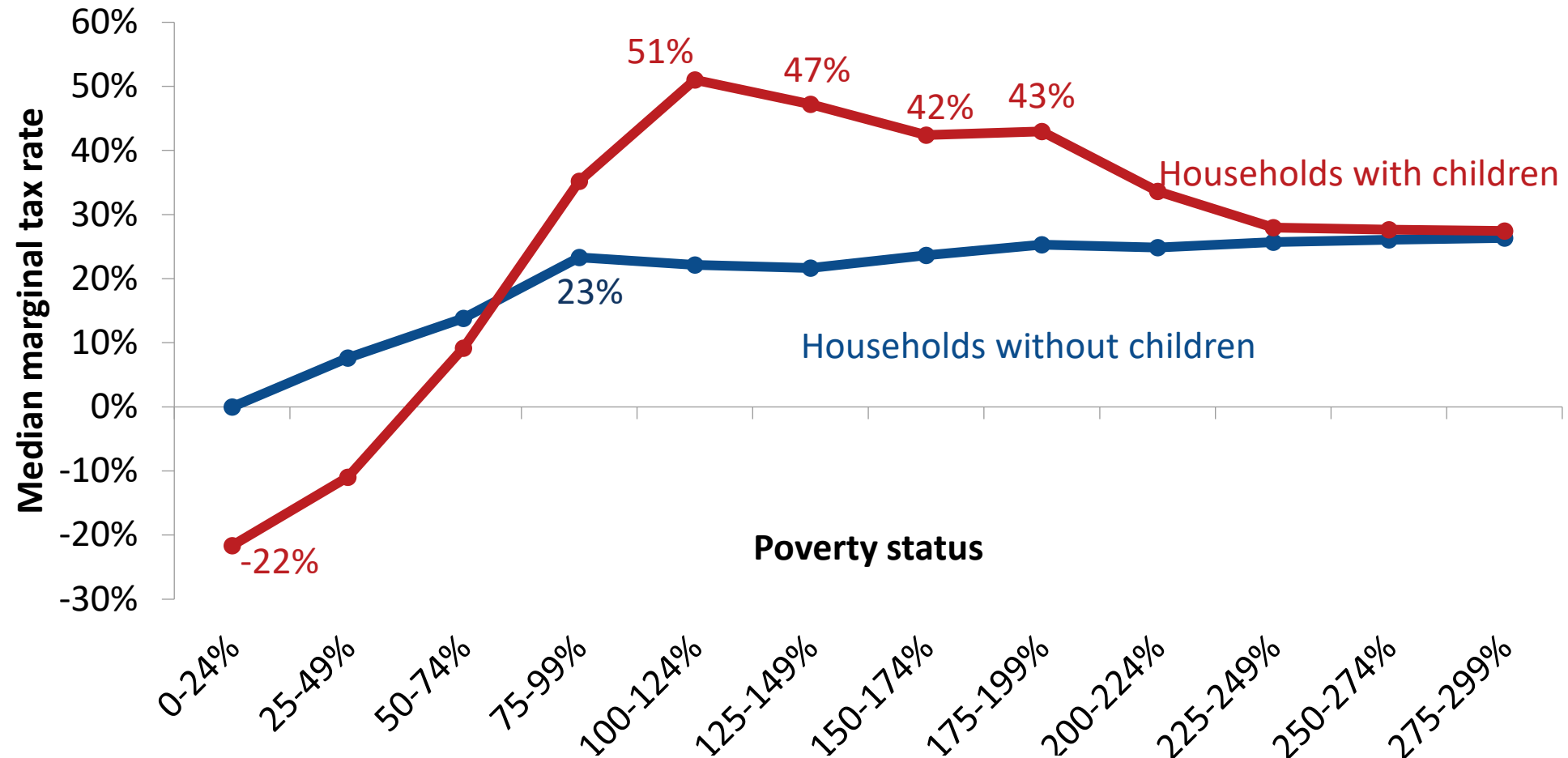


An example...

WIC Benefit Cliff in Northeast Region



Households with children with incomes between 100 to 200% poverty face highest marginal tax rates



Link to report: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/aspe-files/260661/brief2-overviewmtranalyses.pdf>



ASPE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
PLANNING AND EVALUATION

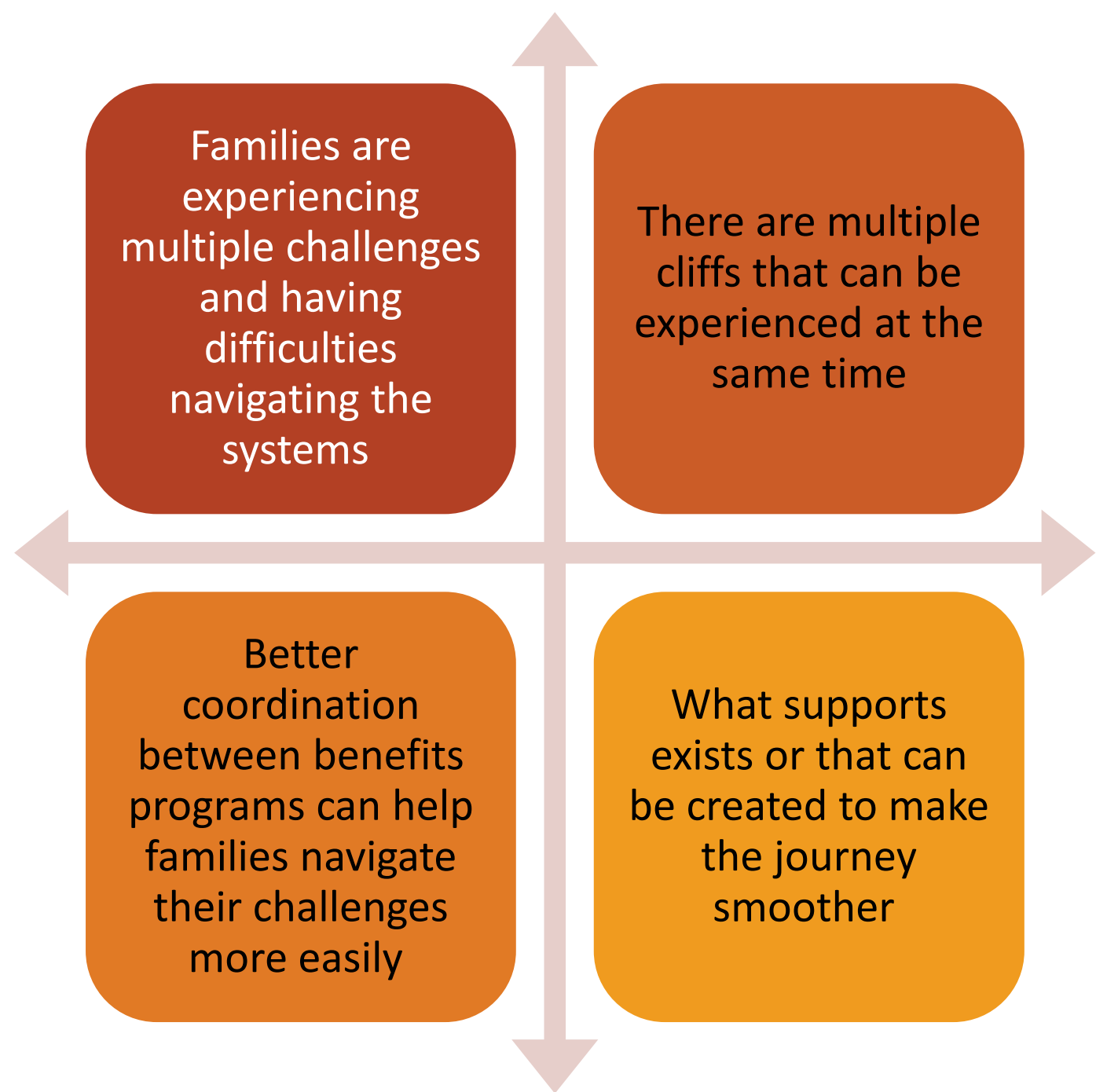
OFFICE OF HUMAN
SERVICES POLICY

Benefit program structure and employment stability influence how people respond to benefit loss

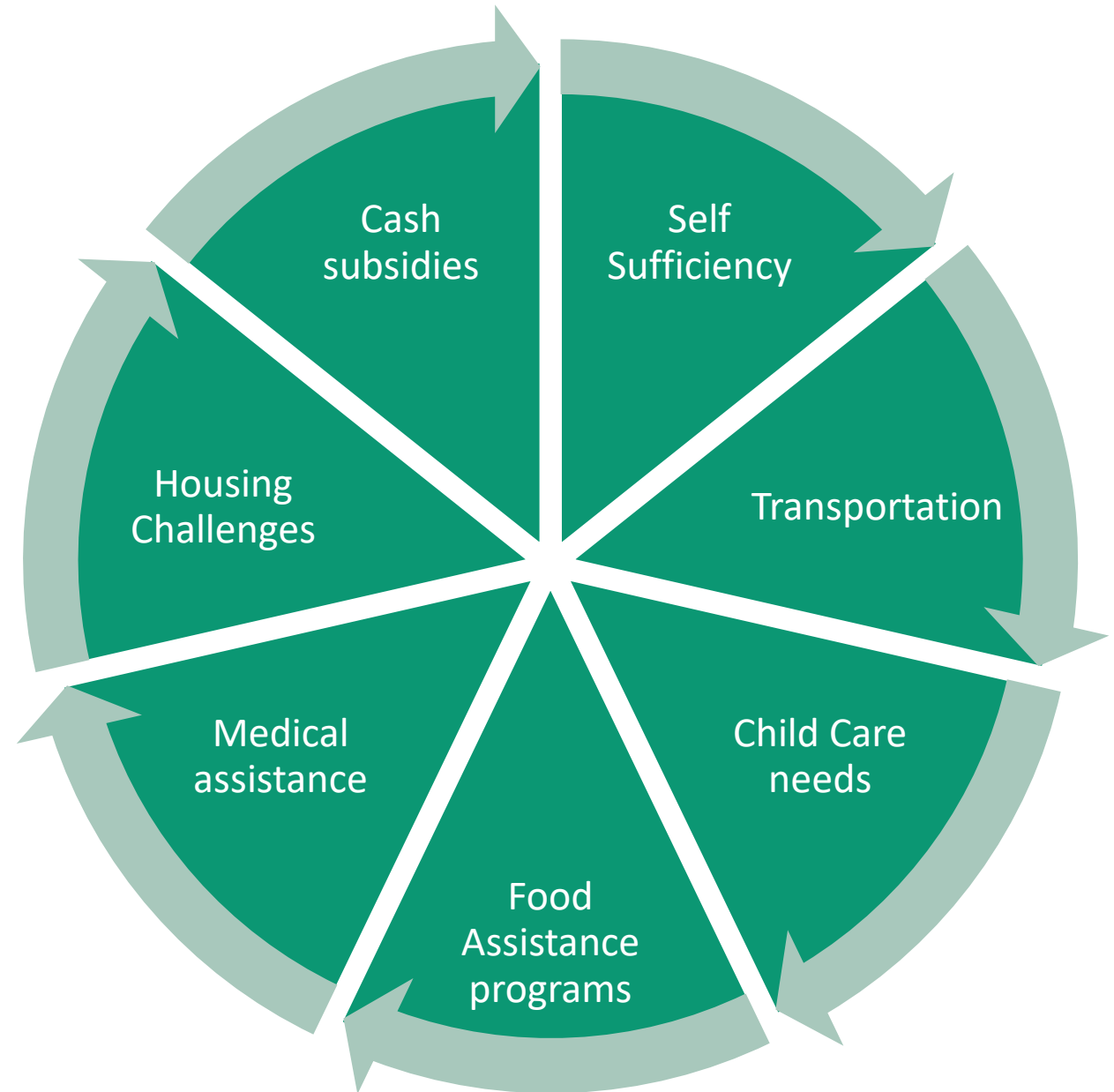
- **Benefit loss** → People less likely to take a new earnings increase.
- **Automatic benefit recovery** → People less worried about taking new earnings, *even if benefit loss is the same.*
- **New earnings more stable** → People less worried about taking new earnings, *even if benefit loss is the same.*
- **New earnings have higher net income** → People less worried about taking new earnings, *even if effective marginal tax rate is the same.*
- **Marginal tax rate is lower** → People less worried about taking new earnings *even if the net income is the same.*



Benefit Cliffs threaten Economic Mobility



The Hurdles and the Cliffs



Beyond The Cliff



Policy reform like gradual reduction of benefits



Financial and educational resource planning



Increase in income thresholds



Support from community-based organizations and advocacy groups



Employer involvement in varied incentive pay



Create systems that support upwards mobility and economic independence

CT 2Gen Initiative

Implementation of CLIFF Tools and CT Policy



CONNECTICUT'S TWO GENERATIONAL INITIATIVE (2GEN)

First state in the nation to codify 2Gen in statute as a bipartisan initiative.

Brings parent/caregiver and child systems and policies together to support the whole family towards well-being and economic mobility.

- Provide education, training, and social supports
- Allows parents the ability to pass on economic security to their children.

A Legislative 2Gen Advisory and OEC's leadership in the executive branch bring perspective and alignment to our work. Work groups engage stakeholders from around the state in providing input and resources to shape the work.

Parent expertise guides 2Gen's policy and program strategies, which includes addressing benefit cliffs, elevating parent voice across state government, identifying affordable transportation solutions, and program alignment across agencies.



BENEFITS CLIFF TOOL

PLANNER

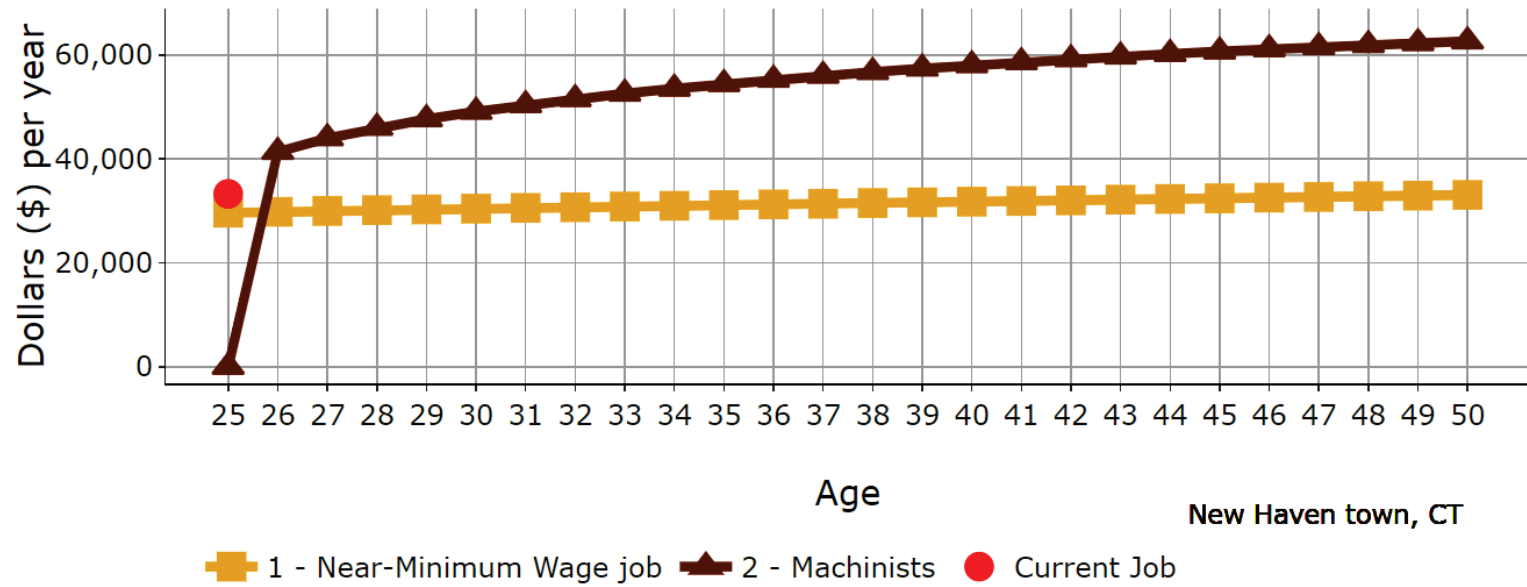


Create a detailed budget in support of a career move

Client is interested in **detailed** career planning AND wants to create a **customized budget** that will help them navigate potential financial barriers to career advancement.

PROJECTED INCOME ALONG SELECTED CAREER PATH

The chart below compares employment income before taxes for one's current job (indicated by the red dot in the first year) and the selected career path(s). If the new job requires training, income may be low in the beginning due to the inability to work full-time while enrolled in school.



BENEFITS CLIFFS ROLL OUT IN CT

2Gen piloted the benefit cliff tools with case managers and families.

UConn evaluated the pilot, finding the tools a value-add in making work and career choices

The benefit cliff tools are in the process of being rolled out to case managers and coaches in a variety of settings:

- Nonprofits serving low-income individuals & families like Community Action Programs
- Staff at Career Centers serving TANF and WIOA customers
- Counselors working with high school students, including non-traditional secondary students
- Community Colleges and other post-secondary training platforms
- Agencies with Case Managers administering public benefits

Roll-out includes:

- Introduction to managers and directors about the tools and their benefits
- Orientation for front line staff to the tools and to the on-line training
- A regular time for “office hours” offers case managers and coaches a time to learn from peers and to ask questions.
- 2Gen Parent Workgroup supporting partners with use of tool for other projects working with parents – parents supporting parents.



CONNECTICUT POLICIES ADDRESSING THE CLIFF EFFECT

2016–2017

- Workgroup on benefit cliffs formed
- Establishes study on cliff effect and opportunities to mitigate cliffs

2018–2019

- Childcare sliding scale improved
- Medicaid for parent/caretakers at 160% FPL
- State EITC increased to 30.5%

2020–2021

- TANF family cap repealed 2021
- Medicaid eligibility + coverage expanded for kids + pregnant women
- Covered CT established
- Benefit Cliff tool piloted

2022–2023

- TANF time limits increased, asset limits increased
- State EITC increased to 40%
- Increased SNAP income eligibility from 185% to 200%



BENEFITS CLIFF PILOT

- Pilot being explored by 2Gen, Office of Workforce Services, Department of Social Services, and Office of Early Childhood.
 - Support parents increase their economic mobility by moving over the cliffs with policy changes.
- Pilot envisions 200 families focused on making 2 career steps over three years.
- Families would retain their full set of benefits regardless of income changes/increases.
- Evaluation will focus on implementation and on data to demonstrate that with economic stability.



HOW TO REACH US

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National 2Gen Consultant

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Panel Discussion and Q&A

Key Takeaways

Context

- Families have difficult choices between economic mobility and retaining benefits
- Families may be unaware of exactly what income increase would trigger a benefit cliff
- Families may experience multiple benefits phase out at or close to the same time
- Benefit program structure and employment stability influence how people respond to benefit loss

Interventions/Considerations

- The work of mitigating benefit cliffs must happen on many levels, involve many participants, and make use of multiple possible levers
- Facilitate cross-systems collaboration
- Integrate family voice and partner with families in implementation of resources/tools
- Develop tools to help families make work and career choices like the benefit cliffs tool
- Advance supportive and flexible policies and programs, including supporting systems navigation

Closing Remarks

Jennifer Burnszynski
Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Human Services Policy



Panelist Resources

- **Stigma**
 - Improving Delivery of the Social Safety Net: The role of Stigma (Lasky-Fink and Linos, 2022)
 - The State of Healthy School Meals for All (Food Research & Action Center, 2024)
- **Administrative Burden**
 - Certification and Recertification in Welfare Programs: What Happens When Automation Goes Wrong? (Wu and Meyer, 2023)
 - San Francisco Recreation and Park Department's Requity Program (2022)
 - First Five South Carolina
- **Benefit Cliffs**
 - What Happens When People Increase Their Earnings? Effective Marginal Tax Rates for Low-Income Households (Chien and Macartney, 2019)
 - Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta CLIFF Tools
 - Connecticut 2Gen



Links and references to information from non-governmental organizations are provided for informational purposes and are not an HHS or CICC endorsement, recommendation, or preference for the non-governmental organizations.



Selected Federal Resources

- **Stigma**
 - [The 411 On Disability Disclosure for Adults](#) (Department of Labor, 2021)
 - [Job Accommodations Network](#) (DOL)
- **Administrative Burden**
 - [Tackling the Time Tax: How the Federal Government is Reducing Burdens to Accessing Critical Benefits and Services](#) (Office of Management and Budget, 2022)
- **Benefit Cliffs**
 - [Benefit Cliff Calculator](#) (ASPE, 2023)
 - [Less Poverty, More Prosperity – States Tackle Benefit Cliffs](#) (ACF, 2024)
 - [Facing a Financial Shock](#) (Federal Interagency Group)

