

Brightpoint, State of Illinois Unveil Guaranteed Income Pilot Program to Safeguard Families from Child Welfare System

Innovative study will determine if financial stability positively impacts family outcomes

CHICAGO, IL, USA, August 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Brightpoint](#), formerly Children's Home & Aid, and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (Illinois DCFS) announced

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today the launch of Empower Parenting with Resources (EmPwR), the nation's largest guaranteed income pilot program for families involved in the child welfare system. The program, spearheaded by the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), in collaboration with the William T. Grant Foundation and the Doris Duke Foundation, will evaluate the impact of cash stipends on family stability, well-being and future involvement with the child welfare system, with contributions from researchers at the University of Connecticut and Rutgers University.

“Caring for children and families and doing what we can to prevent their entry into DCFS is one of our key priorities,” said Heidi E. Mueller, director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. “We are proud to support this innovative study that seeks a solution to keep children with their families and keep families stable, so children can grow up in their own communities with the people they love.”

“Brightpoint has been deeply invested in understanding how preventative services and economic stability are vital for family stability, particularly to families in the child welfare system,” said Mike Shaver, president and CEO of Brightpoint. “EmPwR reaffirms our commitment to a holistic approach to family welfare, as backed by the policy recommendations in our newly released paper, [Economic Stability is Family Stability](#). EmPwR also aligns with the strategic mission of our Blueprint for Impact, which prioritizes preemptive measures to address challenges before they escalate into life-altering crises.”

EmPwR offers participating families a monthly cash stipend of at least \$100 a month, depending on family size and location, or 12 months without restrictions. All families have been referred by

Illinois DCFS for the Intact Family Services program, which allows them to stay together safely while they receive individualized support for their needs. The stipend amount is based on household size and local cost of living.

Led by principal investigators Will Schneider, Ph.D., associate assistant professor and faculty director of for the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) at the School of Social Work at U. of I. and Meg Feely, Ph.D., associate professor of community organizing at the UConn School of Social Work, researchers will compare outcomes for 400 families to that of a control group of 400 families receiving standard support services from Brightpoint to determine whether the cash benefit enhances stability and prevents child neglect and abuse.

"Studies indicate that when families on the edge of entering the child welfare system have financial stability, they are less likely to involve welfare agencies," said Ben Lough, dean, School of Social Work at UIUC. "EmPwR, influenced by this data and similar efforts nationwide, will observe how families use the funds to learn about their spending habits and priorities, challenge assumptions and guide future support strategies."

"As stewards of our foundation's mission to combat inequality in youth outcomes, we eagerly embrace the opportunity to engage in this research endeavor," said Adam Gamoran, president of the William T. Grant Foundation. "By leveraging our resources to support rigorous research efforts, we aspire to drive meaningful change and foster a future where every young person has equitable access to opportunity and success."

Enrollment is slated to begin this fall with support from Illinois DCFS, the program's largest funder.

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About Brightpoint - Brightpoint, formerly Children's Home & Aid, has served Illinois children since 1883. We now engage with nearly 30,000 children, youth, and families each year in 67 counties across the state. Our organization's mission is to advance the well-being of children by investing in families to disrupt the systemic and multi-generational cycle of racial, social, and economic inequality. We strive to build an equitable world where all children and families thrive in strong communities.

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