

Spring 2025: Family & Child Policy and Evaluation

Tuesday and Thursday 5:00 pm to 6:20 pm

Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago

Public Policy # 30602 PPHA
Teaching Asst: TBD

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Information about this course

Background and Goals

This class will explore how we define social policy problems, how we determine what programs to evaluate, how we evaluate, what we learn and do not learn from evaluation, and how we use evidence (or not) to advance policy. It will also explore ways to provide policy advice using evidence in three decision memoranda. After reviews of frameworks for problem definition and evidence summary, we will dive into three child and family policy issues: child welfare (identification of child maltreatment and the use of out of home placement), and teen and unintended pregnancy prevention.

Prerequisites

Basic understanding of U.S. social policy programs and program evaluation

Student assignments and grading

In each class we will review readings and discuss how these readings relate to the topics of interest and to other policy topics. We will use discussion and interactive exercises where possible to draw out themes and questions. *It is important to attend every class and participate fully. One quarter of your grade will be based on this.*

The grade in the course will be based on the following:

Three Short Policy Decision Memos 25% each (75% total)
Late memos will be graded down 1/3 letter grade for each day late.

Class participation in discussion 25%

Decision Memos – Short papers (3 – 4 pages) focused a substantive topic covered in class. These papers will reflect on the definition of a policy problem, the use of evidence to assess next steps, and a policy recommendation.

Class Participation – This course is small to facilitate group discussions. Participation is expected and you may be called on. Please read all assigned readings *before* the class session. Each class session will begin with questions related to the readings.

Instructor Office Hours

Send an email to schedule a Zoom meeting or in person meeting downtown.

Teaching assistant(s) and/or graders

TBD

Teaching and learning in person, dual-modality, and/or remote environments

Class attendance in person (and participation in class discussion) is required. Slides may be available after class by request for any excused absence.

General Resources Available to Students

Include any texts and links as desired:

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- [University Learning Resources](#)

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

Include any text and links as desired to highlight or emphasize issues related to academic integrity, disability accommodations, diversity and inclusion, and video and audio recordings.

- [Harris School Policies](#)
- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Policies](#)
- Policies on audio and video [recordings](#) and [deletion](#).

Readings, topics, and schedules

Books we will draw on – please purchase or download

Barbara Nelson, *Making an Issue of Child Abuse*, University of Chicago Press.

Melissa Jonson-Reid and Brett Drake, *After the Cradle Falls*, Oxford University Press.

J.W. Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Harper Collins College Publishers.

Ron Haskins and Greg Margolis. *Show Me the Evidence*. Brookings.

Isabel Sawhill. *Generation Unbound: Drifting into Sex and Parenthood without Marriage*.

Brookings.

Section 1: Frameworks on how policy problems are defined and how research is used in policy making

Week 1 March 25-27

Introduction to the course, problem definition in policy making, understanding what programs are trying to accomplish

John A. Hoornbeek and B. Guy Peters, *Understanding policy problems: a refinement of past work*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1361631>

Kingdon, J. W. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Chapters 1, 3 and 4

Developing a logic model (in class)

State of evidence-based policy, evidence synthesis, and meta-analysis

Cottingham, P., Maynard, R., Stagner, M. (2004). Synthesizing Evidence on the Impacts of Programmes and Policies in Education, Crime and Justice, and Social Welfare: Practical Recommendations Based on 14 Test-bed Reviews. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 18(1&2).

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45599673_Programs_and_Policies_in_Education_Crime_and_Justice_and_Social_Welfare_Practical_Recommendations_Based_on_14_Test-bed_Reviews

Haskins and Margolis, *Show Me the Evidence*, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 8.

Types of evidence summaries (meta-analysis, NAS/IOM reports, literature reviews, evidence maps)

Explore web sites for evidence-based programs.

What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention - Blueprints: <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/>

Campbell Collaboration <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research <https://clear.dol.gov/>

Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearing House <https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/>

Evidence gaps maps <https://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence-hub/evidence-gap-maps>

Section 2: Child Welfare Policy and Evaluation

Week 2 April 1-3

What is the problem in protecting children? What are the solutions?

Nelson, B. (1984). *Making an issue of child abuse: political agenda setting for social problems*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2023>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). Child Maltreatment 2023. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2023.pdf>

CICM Evidence Map Prototype v3. The purpose of this map is to serve as an evolving tool to explore the multiple pathways through which child maltreatment is created, prevented, and addressed. <https://kumu.io/eaballar/cicm-summer-2023-slc-evidence-map>

Hyunil Kim, MSW, Christopher Wildeman, PhD, Melissa Jonson-Reid, PhD, MSW, and Brett Drake, PhD, MSW *Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children*, *Am J Public Health*. 2017;107:274–280. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2016.303545 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5227926/pdf/AJPH.2016.303545.pdf>

Week 3 April 8-10 First assignment given, due April 18 at 11:59 pm.

Family prevention, policy and evaluation

Doyle, J. (2006). *Child Protection and Child Outcomes: Measuring the Effects of Foster Care*. https://cap.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/doyle_2007_aer_child_protection_placement_foster_care.pdf

Policy Levers for Preventing Child Maltreatment, National Council of State Legislators, <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/policy-levers-for-preventing-child-maltreatment>

Berger and Slack, *Contemporary U.S. Child Welfare System(s): Overview and Key Challenges* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0002716220969362?casa_token=GuwIALtMMwAAAAAA:fWpMD1Hc8BBydqwi3eqHvaetkbbkSngQn1VV2bJ0GlsPkPaMtA20uc2b7hLeOkjBRRAY0j-7YBg

Evaluation of Family Preservation and Reunification Programs: Final Report. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/evalfampres94/Final/index.htm>.

Family First Prevention Services Act and supporting docs

<https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr253/BILLS-115hr253ih.pdf>

<https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/>

Week 4 April 15-17

Predictive analytics in child welfare: can better use of data help target? where in the pipeline?

Pecora, Peter. What is a well-functioning child protection agency? <https://www.casey.org/what-is-well-functioning-child-protection-agency/>

Jeremy D. Goldhaber-Fiebert and Lea Prince. Impact Evaluation of a Predictive Risk Modeling Tool for Allegheny County's Child Welfare Office.

https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Impact-Evaluation-from-16-ACDHS-26_PredictiveRisk_Package_050119_FINAL-6.pdf

The future of the system

<https://inthesetimes.com/article/child-welfare-abolition-cps-reform-family-separation>

<https://imprintnews.org/opinion/research-black-families-not-support-child-welfare-abolition/47964>

Assignment 1 due 4/18 at 11:59 pm

Decision Memo – Child Welfare

Section 3: Teen and Unintended Pregnancy Prevention

Week 5 April 22-24 Second assignment given, due May 2 at 11:59 pm

What is the problem in teen and unintended pregnancy? What are the solutions?

Teen pregnancy has declined significantly

<https://www.npr.org/2023/01/08/1147737247/teen-pregnancy-rates-have-declined-significantly>

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_02/sr02-201.pdf

Nelson, et al. Associations of Unintended Pregnancy With Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36318133/>

Michele Troutman, Saima Rafique & Torie Comeaux Plowden. Are higher unintended pregnancy rates among minorities a result of disparate access to contraception?

<https://contraceptionmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40834-020-00118-5>

Sawhill, *Generation Unbound*, Chapters 2-5.

Contraceptive deserts <https://powertodecide.org/node/842>

“Powerful Contraception, Complicated Programs: Preventing Coercive Promotion of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives,” Olivia Cappello, *Guttmacher Policy Review*, vol 24, 2001

<https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2021/05/powerful-contraception-complicated-programs-preventing-coercive-promotion-long-acting>

“Estimated reductions in unintended pregnancy among Delaware Title X family planning clients after a contraceptive access intervention,” Welty and Manlove, *Sexual & Reproductive Health*, Dec 17, 2018

Week 6: April 29 – May 1

Teen sex, sex ed, abstinence education, policy and evaluation

Rector, R. (2002). *The Effectiveness of Abstinence Education Programs in Reducing Sexual Activity Among Youth*. Backgrounder, No. 1533, The Heritage Foundation: Washington DC
www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1533.html

Barbee, A.P., Cunningham, M.R., Antle, B.F., & Langley, C.N. (2022). “Impact of a relationship-based intervention, LoveNotes, on teen pregnancy prevention.” *FamilyRelations*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12798>

Scher, Lauren, Rebecca A Maynard, Matthew Stagner. *Interventions intended to reduce pregnancy-related outcomes among adolescents*. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2006: 12.

Oringanje C, Meremikwu MM. (2010). Interventions for preventing unintended pregnancies among adolescents (Review) *The Cochrane Library* 2010, Issue 1
<http://apps.who.int/rhl/reviews/CD005215.pdf>

Trenholm, C. et al, (2007). *Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Programs: Final Report*. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Policy Research. <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/impactabstinence.pdf>

Recent RFP for evidence-based Teen Pregnancy prevention programs

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/grant-opportunities/assets/funding_announcement_04012010.pdf

Assignment 2 due 5/2 at 11:59 pm CT

Decision Memo –Teen/Unintended Pregnancy

Section 4: Early Care and Education (readings to be finalized)

Week 7: May 6 – 8

Aletha C. Huston, *How Can Public Policy Improve Quality of Early Care and Education?* International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy volume 2, pages1–14 (2008)
<https://ijccep.springeropen.com/articles/10.1007/2288-6729-2-1-1>

Week 8 May 13 – 15 Final assignment given, due May 24 at 11:59 pm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (January 2010). *Head Start Impact Study. Final Report*. Washington, DC.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/executive_summary_final_508.pdf

Section 5: Intergenerational poverty

Week 9 May 20 – 22

Kimberly Noble, et al. *Baby's First Years: Design of a Randomized Controlled Trial of Poverty Reduction in the U.S.* Pediatrics. 2021 October; 148(4):. doi:10.1542/peds.2020-049702.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34475270/>

Raj Chetty, et al. *Race and economic opportunity in the United States: An intergenerational perspective*, NBER Working Paper 24441 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w24441>

Robert A. Moffitt, *The Negative Income Tax and the evolution of U.S. welfare policy*, NBER Working Paper 9751, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w9751>

Women's Policy Institute. *Where to from here? Understanding the expanding landscape of cash transfers in the US and their impact on women.* <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IWPR-Cash-Transfer-Landscape-Report-2023-2.pdf>

Cash Transfer Programs Are Growing More Common in the U.S. As Studies Show They Improve People's Health, But the Public Remains Skeptical and Policymakers Have Been Leery to Launch Big Efforts <https://ldi.upenn.edu/our-work/research-updates/cash-transfer-programs-are-growing-more-common-in-the-u-s-as-studies-show-they-improve-peoples-health/#:~:text=Cash%20transfer%20programs%2C%20which%20provide,experimental%20versions%20of%20these%20projects.>

Assignment 3 due 5/24 by 11:59 pm CT

Final Decision Memo