



Centering Families, Supporting Parents: Building Transformative and Inclusive Child Support Engagement Models

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- When you hear the phrase **‘family-centered child support policy,’** what does it mean to you?





The Case for Change

Most enforcement actions linked to resuming payments.

- Driver's license suspensions sometimes reduced payment likelihood. (Meyer, Cancian, & Waring 2020)

Iowa's "positive family support" model child support program (less punitive) increased monthly payments by ~\$25.

- Compliance ratio rose 6 percentage points vs. standard enforcement. (Lee et al 2020)

Jail threats led fathers to work more hours (often in low-wage jobs).

- Short-term compliance increased, but through coercion. (Zatz & Stoll 2020)

Maryland's Job Opportunity Task Force Report found no evidence license suspension improves collections for low-income parents.

- Likely decreases payments by undermining work capacity. (JOTF 2023)

Minnesota's Whole Family Approach

- Whole Family Approach is an approach to practice, program and policy decision-making that recognizes and addresses the needs of children and the adults in their lives simultaneously.



Talk to Your Neighbor

In your state, what's one barrier that prevents families from experiencing child support as supportive?



Core Strategies of Transformation

Removing
Financial
Barriers

Supporting
Parent's Long-
Term Goals

Integrating
Parents into
Decision-making

Storytelling as
Advocacy





Removing Financial Barriers

Emergency Cash Assistance

Stimulus Checks improved food security for marginalized households during early pandemic (Jacobs et al., 2022).

Pandemic SNAP): \$300 per child benefit cut food insufficiency by ~30% and improved maternal mental health (Bauer et al., 2024; Brookings, 2020).

Enhanced Unemployment Benefits supplements reduced hunger and housing insecurity among jobless workers (NELP, 2025).

Expanded Child Tax Credit

Families who received Monthly CTC Payments had lower odds of food insecurity, rent delinquency, and housing instability; caregiver anxiety decreased (Ettinger de Cuba et al., 2025)

CTC linked to ~25% drop in food insufficiency among families with children (FRAC, 2023).

Arrears Forgiveness Programs

Evaluations find debt relief linked to more consistent payments rather than drop-offs (Haney, 2021; Pearson et al., 2012).

Forgiveness focused on state-owed arrears maximizes collections to families and curbs debt growth (Pearson et al., 2012; Meyer, 2017).

Programs document license reinstatement, credit score improvements, and reduced employment obstacles after debt relief (Hahn et al., 2019; Haney, 2021).



Addressing Financial Barriers in Minnesota

Childcare expenses and costs



Supporting Parents' Long-Term Security

Employment and Training Programs

Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)

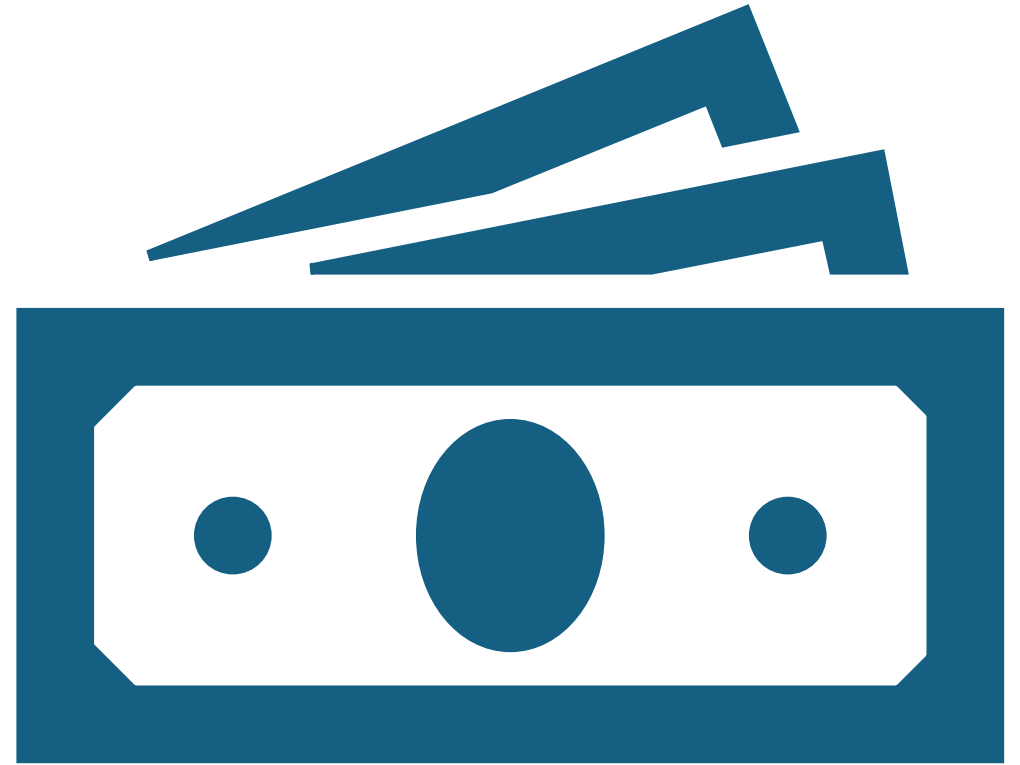
- Overall compliance and amounts paid did not significantly increase
- Parents' satisfaction with the system improved (Cancian, Meyer, & Wood 2022)

Texas "NCP Choices" Employment Program

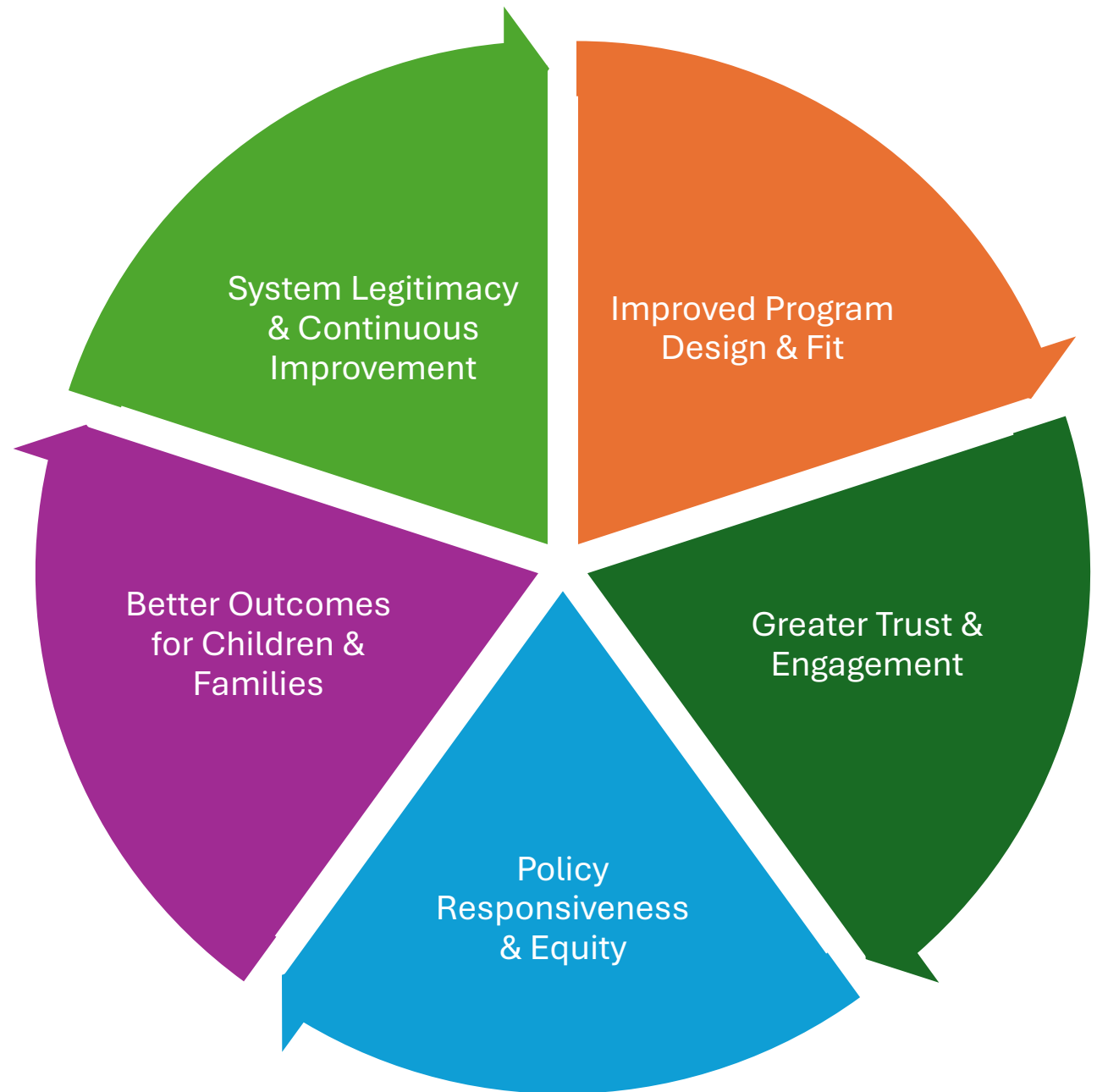
- Participants were 15 percentage points more likely to pay child support in the first year and paid \$54 more than non-program participants.
- Boosted employment rates for these fathers in the program.

Family Financial Stability in Minnesota

NextGen Employment
and Training
Demonstration Grant



Integrating Parents into Decision-making





Parents' Voice and Policy in Minnesota

Childcare Assistance
Mandatory Child Support
Cooperation Legislation



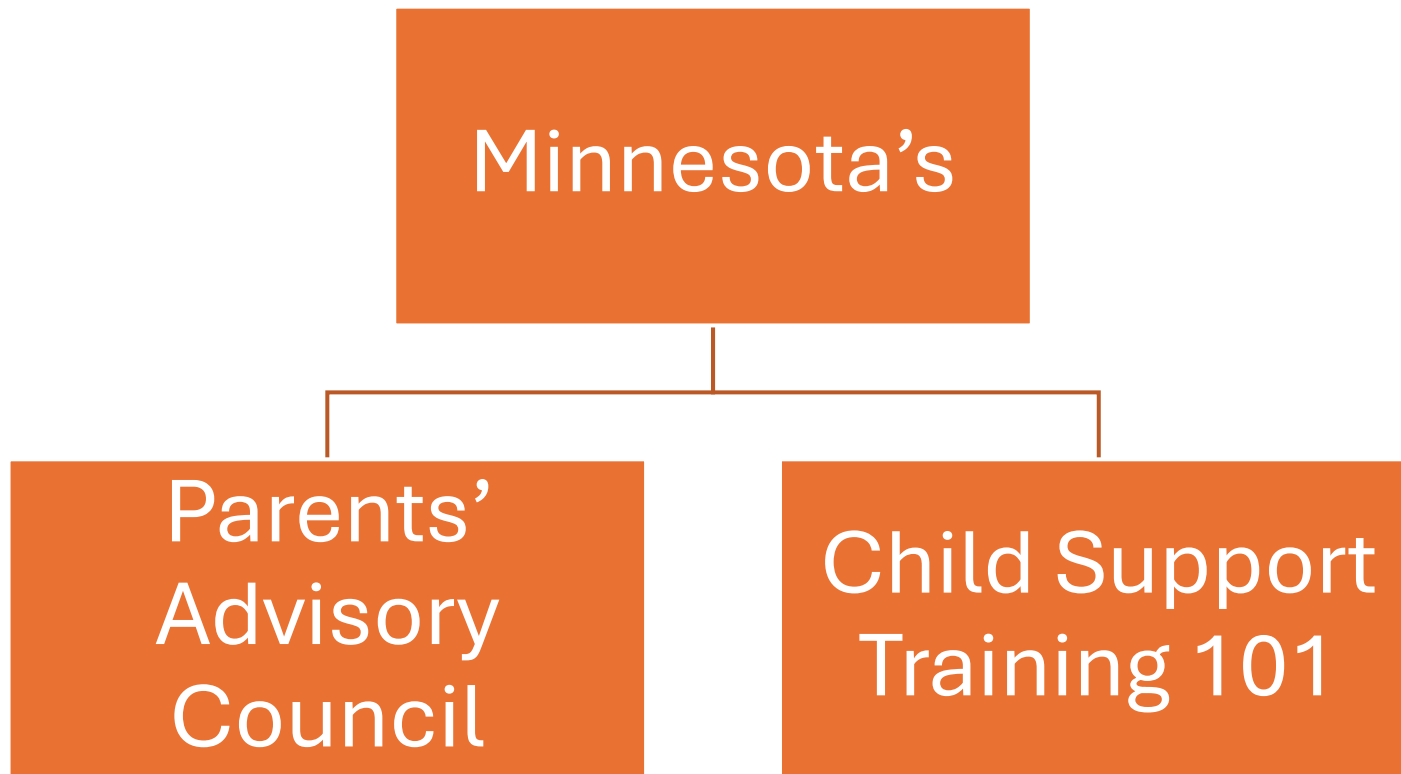
The Power of Storytelling as Advocacy

- Mother Value Co-parenting Relationships more than Economic Resources
 - Formal child support unnecessary when father are involved
 - Informal support arrangements dominated their child support approach
 - Financial arrangements built on shared financial and childcare responsibilities
 - Rejected the need for formal child support if they felt father's contributions were fair
 - Informal child support and formal child support viewed as substitutes

Adriana, Twin Cities, Mn.:

“He’s, he takes really good care of our daughter, so I’m not one to put him on child support. But I do know that in some cases they may because, you know, the government is the government, and they want their money”

Storytelling as Advocacy



Speak up!

Which of these strategies currently or would potentially create the biggest impact on families in your state if implemented tomorrow?



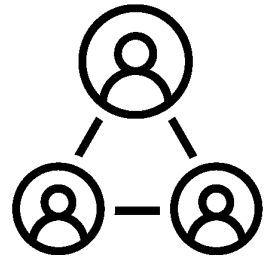
Protecting Families

- Minimizing Contact
 - Formal child support as a possible source of support when custodial parents want to limit contact
 - Formal child support viewed as more harmful than helpful over time
 - Custodial parents avoid formal child support to prevent nonresidents fathers' access to their children

Jade, New Orleans, La.:

I took him off of child support because he was harassing and, you know, it was alot going on with him... [H]im and his girlfriend pops up at multiple places where I was this year.... [T]hey were trying to fight. So, yeah, so I won't have any more harassment and no—no type of strings attached with him... I don't have to contact him. He won't have to contact me. He stopped paying child support anyway...

Family Violence and Good Cause in Minnesota



Five lived experience
experts in MN SAVES

Survivor Acknowledgement

- We acknowledge victims/survivors and keep all those impacted by family violence or other forms of abuse at the forefront of our work. We recognize the devastating impact of family violence on individuals, families, and communities, and honor those lost and unseen in this work.
- We recognize that safety is a unique experience for everyone, and that what is safe for one person may not be for another as there is no universal survivor experience even though there are commonalities. We honor the strength and resilience of the children and adults who have and may still be experiencing family violence and understand that being a survivor does not mean the experience is "over" or that it will feel "over."
- While we honor and recognize those who see themselves in this language and those who don't yet use the language of survivor to explain their experience, we understand this is a statement and that tangible actions are needed to address the financial, mental, physical, familial, and social impacts of being a survivor.



Family Violence and Good Cause in Minnesota

MN Key Year 1 Takeaway, Centering Our Lived Experience Experts

“Thank you for all you do! I've not been apart of a group that really does have the survivors in the forefront of everything, I really appreciate it. ”

“I am realizing our input can impact this work significantly - great conversation is happening and it's in depth.”

“Thank you for the changes that are already being made from our suggestions as we actively try to improve these areas.”

“Some of us survivors may be dealing with ongoing effects of abuse, people should have an awareness that “survivor” does not mean the situation is over”



Family Violence and Good Cause in Minnesota

Good Cause

- Good cause is the **EXCEPTION** to the public assistance cooperation requirement
 - Minn. Stat. §256.741, starts at subd. 9
- If an individual receives public assistance and has concerns a child support case could lead to harm to them or their child → **they can claim good cause by filling out form DHS-2338**



Community Partnerships

Exhibit 2: Four main SYSTEMS critical in addressing participation in the child support program



Public human services programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and child welfare



Justice systems, including both civil and criminal justice systems



Workforce development organizations



Community-based organizations, including fatherhood service providers and mental health service providers



Talk to Me!

Name one strong family-centered community partner in your state — and one challenge with that partnership?





Group Project

Instructions

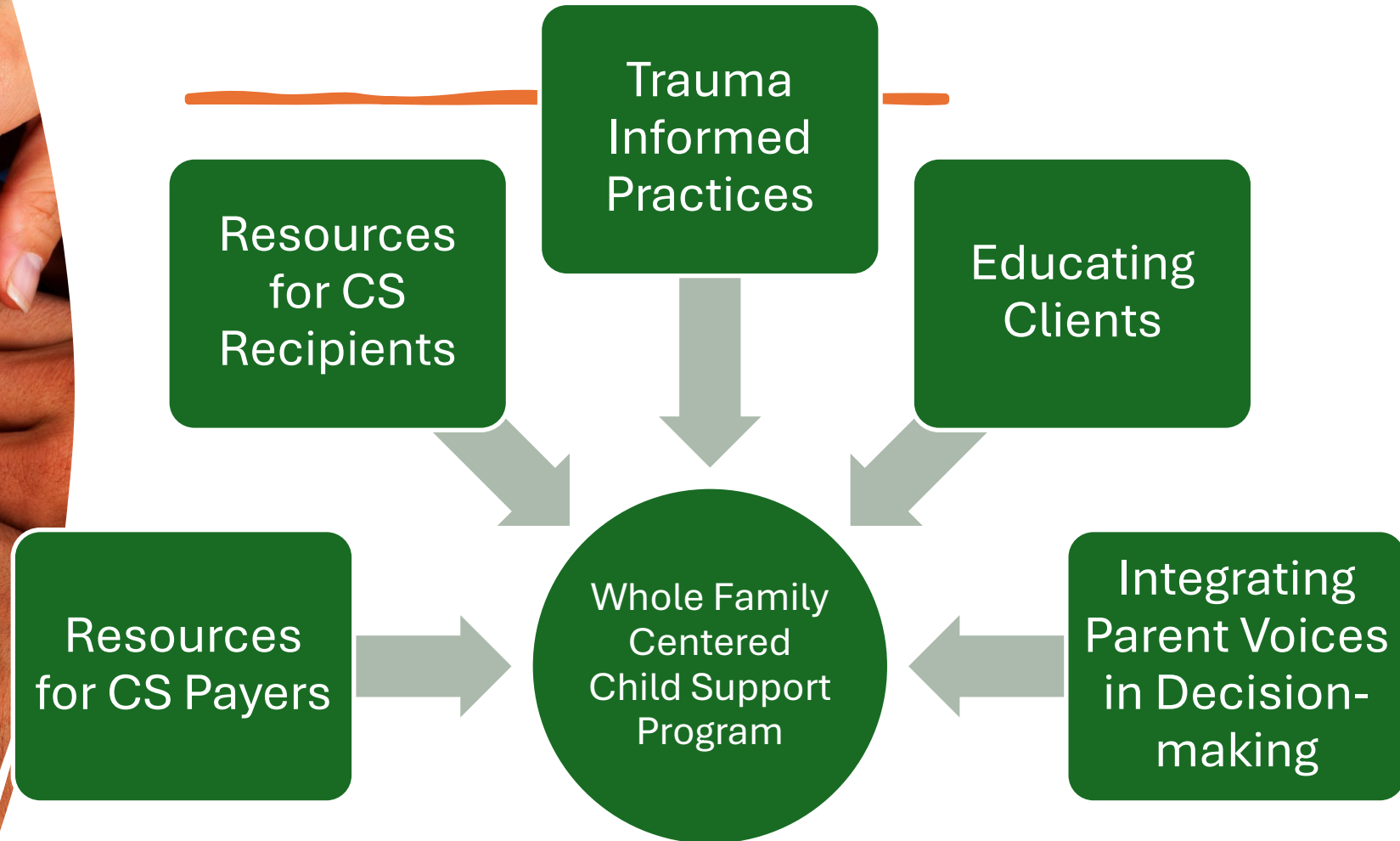
Each group will be given a scenario

Answer The Following Questions:

- What trauma-informed shift would you make in your state's program to benefit whole families?
- Which partners would you engage, and how would you ensure safety?

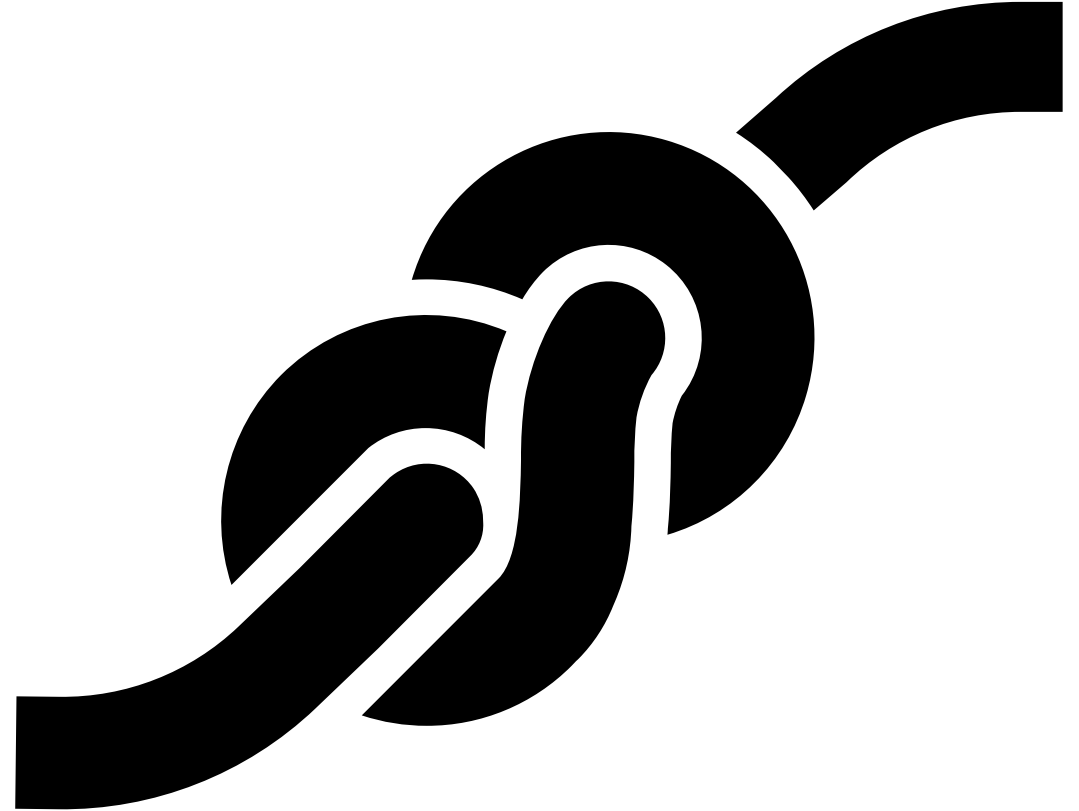


Bringing It All Together



Tying It All Up

- Trauma-informed, lived experience-centered child support.
- Integration across systems
- The importance of research + practice alignment



Collaboration

How many of you would be open to continuing a cross-state exchange on trauma-informed, family-centered child support?

