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Evaluation of the North Carolina Work First Program

Study of Child Only Cases in the Work First Program

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from a study of “child only” Work First cases in North Carolina. The report presents the results of telephone surveys conducted with persons in 500 child only cases across the state.

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Child only cases have been the subject of growing interest in recent years among policy makers in North Carolina and across the nation. With the decline in welfare caseloads since 1995, child only cases comprise a much larger percentage of TANF cases in North Carolina and other states. Adults in child only cases are typically not subject to the time limits or work requirements imposed upon regular welfare cases. As a result, they tend to leave welfare less quickly than most “regular” welfare cases, thereby explaining the increasing percentage of child only cases in the welfare caseload.

Different Types of Child Only Cases

As child only cases have come to account for a larger share of the welfare caseload, policy makers have shown increasing interest in finding out more about these cases. National studies have shown that child only cases may consist of several different types of cases, depending partly on the specific welfare policies in effect in an individual state. The major categories of child only cases are as follows:

- Cases in which the biological parents of the child are no longer in the home due to such factors as incarceration, substance abuse, death, or abandonment, and in which the child is being looked after by another adult – usually a “caretaker relative” such as a grandmother or aunt.
- Cases in which one or both biological parents are present in the home but the parents are not eligible for welfare because of their citizenship status.
- Cases in which one or both biological parents are present in the home but the parents are not eligible for welfare because one of them is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits that make them ineligible for TANF. Some studies have shown that many of these SSI cases tend to be former TANF cases in which the parent has switched from TANF benefits to SSI benefits.
- Cases in which the parent has been removed from the welfare grant because of failure to comply with work requirements, and in which one or more children are still receiving TANF benefits.

The fourth type of case can only exist in states where the parent can be removed from the welfare grant because of sanctions for non-compliance and where the state decides to count these cases as child only cases. These types of cases do not exist in the child only caseload in North Carolina.

Key Issues of Interest to Policy Makers

Policy makers are interested in several key issues when it comes to the different types of child only cases. With regard to parental cases in which one or more adult is receiving SSI benefits, there are concerns about the impact of the parent's disability upon the well-being of the child, as well as the parent's own physical and mental health. With regard to non-parental cases, there is interest in whether the child is in an appropriate and supportive living arrangement. There are also concerns about the child's emotional well-being after being separated from the biological parent(s). For both types of child only cases, policymakers are concerned that the parents and caretakers may not be making adequate use of the services and programs that are available to low-income families. Specifically, there is concern that adults in child only cases may be under-utilizing these programs because they are not on welfare and do not come into regular contact with case managers.

On a more specific level, the study examined the following issues:

Household Characteristics

- the relationship between the caretaker and the child(ren) in non-parental cases;
- household composition and marital status;
- age, education, and employment of the parents and non-parental caretakers; and
- characteristics of child only cases compared to "regular" TANF cases.

Status and Well-Being of the Children

- length of time that the child has been with the non-parental caretaker;
- contact between the child and biological parents;
- physical health of the children;
- behavioral and emotional problems;
- cognitive stimulation of young children;
- involvement of the children in groups and activities;
- school engagement of the children;
- school attendance, behavior, and mobility;
- trouble with the police; and
- comparisons with national data for children in low-income families.

Well-Being and Hardships Among Parents and Non-Parental Caretakers

- physical health and limitations;
- mental health;
- aggravation with children;
- impact of the parent's or caretaker's mental health upon the children;
- housing situation and other resources;
- difficulties paying for housing and utilities;

- household income;
- availability of social supports; and
- comparisons with national data for low-income families.

Use of Available Services and Programs

- use of services and programs available to help low-income families.

B. METHODOLOGY

Surveys were conducted with respondents in 500 child only cases that were on Work First in early 2002. To assess the well-being of the children, a “focal child” was randomly selected for each case. The focal child had to be part of the Work First case. Questions about child well-being were asked only of the focal child. To facilitate comparison between child only cases in North Carolina and low-income families in general, the survey instrument for the study incorporated a number of questions from the National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF).

C. APPROACH TO THE DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis focused primarily upon comparing the following two types of cases:

- cases in which one or both of the biological parents of the Work First child(ren) were in the home (“parental cases”); and
- cases in which the Work First child or children were being looked after by a non-parental caretaker (“non-parental cases”).

In addition to comparing the two types of child only cases, we examined how the child only cases compare to regular Work First cases on some of the demographic characteristics. The data on the regular Work First cases are derived from surveys that MAXIMUS conducted on a statewide sample of 1,750 families who were on Work First in the summer of 2000.¹

D. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

This section presents a summary of the key findings from the study, organized in terms of the major policy issues described previously.

1. DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF CHILD ONLY CASES

In this section, we provide findings on the demographic characteristics and household composition of the two types of child only cases, and draw comparisons with regular Work First cases.

¹ *Characteristics and Barriers of TANF Recipients in North Carolina*, MAXIMUS, January 2001

Parental Cases Included More Work First Children than Non-Parental Cases

About 71 percent of the cases involving non-parental caretakers had only one child on Work First, compared to less than 54 percent of the parental cases. In turn, 20 percent of the parental cases involved three or more children, compared to less than 9 percent of non-parental cases. Almost 42 percent of regular Work First cases had only one child, and 25 percent had three or more children. In addition to the Work First children, many of the households had other children who were not on Work First. In terms of the *total number of children in the household*, almost 33 percent of the cases where a biological parent was present involved three or more total children, compared to only 24 percent of cases involving non-parental caretakers.

Children in Non-Parental Cases Were Older on Average Than Children in Parental Cases

Work First children in non-parental cases were older on average than children in parental cases. In 34 percent of the parental cases, the children were aged 0-5, compared to only 21 percent of the non-parental cases. About 36 percent of children in non-parental cases were 12-17 years of age, compared to only 30 percent of the children in parental cases.

In Terms of Ethnicity, White Children Accounted for a Relatively High Percentage of Work First Children in Non-Parental Cases. Children in “Other” Ethnic Groups Accounted for a Relatively High Percentage of Children in Parental Cases

White children accounted for only 14 percent of the Work First children in cases where a biological parent was present, compared to 24 percent of children in child only cases involving a non-parental caretaker. Black children accounted for 66 percent of the Work First children in cases where a biological parent was present, and for the same percentage in cases where a non-parental caretaker was present. The percentage of black children was about the same as in regular Work First cases. The data show, however, that children in “other” ethnic groups accounted for a relatively high percentage of children in the parental child only cases – 19.5 percent compared to only 10 percent of child only cases involving a non-parental caretaker. For regular Work First cases, the percentage was only 5 percent.

In Non-Parental Cases, Almost All of the Caretakers Were Grandparents, Aunts, or Uncles

For non-parental cases in which the youngest child was on Work First, Exhibit 1 shows the relationship of the adults to the child. As indicated, both of the child’s grandparents were present in about 30 percent of the households. In another 38 percent of the households, the child’s grandmother was present but not the grandfather. This includes 3.7 percent of cases where the grandmother and the child’s aunt were both present. In another 11 percent of the households, the child’s aunt and uncle were both present, but not either of the grandparents. In almost 13 percent of the households, only the child’s aunt was present, not the uncle. (In one of these cases, the child’s grandfather was also present). In 92 percent of the cases, therefore, the household included both grandparents, or the grandmother only, or both an aunt or uncle, or an aunt only.

Exhibit 1
Non-Parental Cases -- Relationship of the Adults
to the Youngest Work First Child

Relationship of Adults to the Youngest Work First Child	Percent of Households
Both grandparents present	30.5%
Grandmother present but not grandfather*	38.2%
Aunt and uncle present, no grandparent	11.1%
Aunt present but not uncle	12.6%
Siblings only present	1.5%
Uncle present but not aunt	0.9%
Grandfather only present	0.6%
Other	4.6%
Total	100.0%

*Includes 3.7 percent of cases in which the grandmother and aunt only were present

Non-Parental Cases Were More Likely to Include Two or More Adults

Almost 62 percent of the parental cases involved only one adult, compared to 42 percent of non-parental cases. In terms of the number of adults, the parental cases were similar to regular TANF cases.

The Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to be Married than the Respondents in Parental Cases

About 45 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases were married and living with their spouse, compared to only 11 percent of the respondents in parental cases and 5 percent of the persons in regular TANF cases. Only 12 percent of the non-parental cases involved never married respondents, compared to 49 percent of parental cases. In parental cases, the father of the focal child was present in only 14 percent of the cases.

The Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Better Educated Than the Respondents in Parental Cases

Almost 53 percent of the respondents in parental cases had not completed high school, compared to only 39 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

The Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Much Older on Average than the Respondents in Parental Cases

The average age of the respondents in parental cases was only 37, compared to 52 in non-parental cases. About 62 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases were aged 50 or older, compared to less than 9 percent of the respondents in parental cases. About 23 percent of the respondents in parental cases were aged under 29, compared to only 4 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. The respondents in parental cases, however, were not as

young on average as parents in regular TANF cases. In the survey of TANF cases, it was found that 60 percent of the respondents were aged 18-29, and 28 percent were aged 30-39. Only 11 percent were 40 or older.

The Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Own Their Homes

About 60 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that they owned their homes, compared to only 21 percent of the respondents in parental cases.

The Respondents in Parental Cases Were More Likely to be Living in Public Housing or Subsidized Housing Than Respondents in Non-Parental Cases

About 15 percent of the respondents in parental cases were living in public housing and another 19 percent were living in Section 8 housing. By comparison, only 13 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases were living in either public housing or Section 8 housing.

The Adults in Non-Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to be Employed than the Adults in Parental Cases

Almost 51 percent of the adults in non-parental households were employed at the time of the survey, compared to only 23 percent of the adults in parental cases.

2. CONTACT BETWEEN THE CHILDREN AND PARENTS IN NON-PARENTAL CASES

In Non-Parental Cases, the Children Had Typically Been Living with the Caretaker for Long Periods of Time

Of the children aged 0-5, almost 54 percent had been living with the caretaker for more than two years. Of the children aged 6-11, about 77 percent had been living with the caretaker for more than two years, and 54 percent had been living with the caretaker for more than 5 years. Of the children aged 12-17, about 64 percent had been living with the caretaker for more than 5 years, and 42 percent had been living with the caretaker for more than 10 years. Only 17 percent had been with the caretaker for less than 2 years.

In 82 percent of the non-parental cases, the child had lived with the caretaker continuously since last living with the biological parent.

In About 60 Percent of the Non-Parental Cases, the Focal Child Had Had Some Contact with the Mother in the Last 6 Months. In 35 Percent of the Cases, the Child Had Had Some Contact with the Father in the Last 6 Months

Exhibit 2 shows that in 60 percent of the non-parental cases, the focal child had had some contact with the mother in the last 6 months. In 31 percent of the cases, the mother was alive but had had no contact with the child in the last 6 months. Exhibit 3 shows that in 35 percent of the cases, the focal child had had some contact with the father in the last 6 months. In almost 46

percent of the cases, the child's father was alive but had had no contact with the child in the last 6 months.

Exhibit 2
Contact Between the Focal Child and the Child's Mother

Status	Percent
Mother deceased	7.2%
Mother's status not known	1.1%
<i>Mother living:</i>	
Child lived with mother in last 6 months	5.6%
Child did not live with mother in last 6 months, but saw mother once a month or more often	31.7%
Child did not live with mother in last 6 months, saw mother in last 6 months, but less than once per month	22.9%
Child had not seen mother in last 6 months	31.5%
Total	100.0%

Exhibit 3
Contact Between the Focal Child and the Child's Father

Status	Percent
Father deceased	3.5%
Father's status unknown	15.5%
<i>Father living:</i>	
Child lived with father in last 6 months	3.2%
Child did not live with father in last 6 months, but saw father once a month or more often	14.4%
Child did not live with father in last 6 months, saw father in last 6 months, but less than once per month	17.6%
Child had not seen father in last 6 months	45.6%
Total	100.0%

Only a Small Percentage of the Absent Parents Were Paying Child Support or Helping in Other Ways

In non-parental cases where the father was living, the father was paying child support in only 11 percent of the cases. In parental cases where the father was not living in the home but was alive, only 16 percent of the fathers were paying child support. In addition, very few of the absent fathers in either non-parental or parental cases were helping out in other ways, such as providing cash, food, or help paying for child care. In non-parental cases where the mother was absent from the home but living, about 9 percent were paying child support. Very few of the absent mothers helped out in other ways, according to respondents.

3. PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DISABILITIES AMONG CHILDREN

Children in Non-Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely Than Children in Parental Cases to Be in Good Health

Almost 66 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases rated the focal child's health as excellent or very good, compared to only 54 percent of the respondents in parental cases. However, there was no difference between the two types of cases in the percentage who rated the child's health as fair or poor. In addition, there was not a great difference between the two groups in the percentage who ranked the child's health as better or worse than 6 months before. About 99 percent of the respondents in both types of cases reported that the focal child was covered by Medicaid.

The Health Status of Children in Child Only Cases in North Carolina Was Roughly Comparable to the Health Status of Children in Low-Income Families Nationally

As indicated in Exhibit 4, the NSAF 1999 surveys showed that 7.7 percent of children in families below 200 percent of the poverty were in fair or poor health. This compares to 8 percent of the children in parental cases in the child only sample, and 9.9 percent of the children in non-parental cases. The slightly higher percentage for children in non-parental households may be due to the fact that these children were older on average than the children in parental households. The NSAF data show that older children were more likely to be in fair or poor health: 10.5 percent of 12-17 year olds were in poor or fair health, compared to only 6.3 percent of children aged 0-5, and 6.7 percent of children aged 6-11.

Exhibit 4
Percent of Children in Fair or Poor Health
(Children Aged 0-17)

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	7.7%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	8.0%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	9.9%

Children in Parental Cases Were Somewhat Less Likely Than Children in Non-Parental Cases to Have a Physical, Learning, or Mental Health Condition, But This May Be Due to Age Factors

Almost 17 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that the focal child had a physical, learning, or mental health condition that limited the child's participation in usual activities. The same was true for only 11 percent of the children in parental cases. The same overall pattern was found when respondents were asked whether the child had conditions that limited the child's ability to do schoolwork (14 percent for the parental cases and 18 percent for the non-parental cases). It is possible that part of the difference between the two types of cases is that the children in non-parental cases were somewhat older on average than the children in

parental cases. This is confirmed, in fact, by data showing that children aged 6 and older were more likely to have limiting conditions than younger children.

4. COGNITIVE STIMULATION OF CHILDREN AGED 0-5

Caretakers in Non-Parental Cases Were More Likely than the Parents in Parental Cases to Read Stories to Young Children on a Daily Basis

Almost 66 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that they read stories every day to their child aged 0-5. This compares to only 53 percent of the respondents in parental cases. Almost 12 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that they never read stories to the child, compared to less than 2 percent of respondents in non-parental cases. It is possible that some of the difference between the two types of cases may be due to the fact that the parental cases typically involved younger children within the 0-5 category, such as infants.

Children in Parental Cases Were Doing Somewhat Worse than the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of being Read Stories, While Children in Non-Parental Cases Were Doing Much Better Than the National Average

The published NSAF data for 1999 show the frequency with which parents or caretakers read stories to their young children. However, the data are provided only for children aged 1-5, whereas data for the study were collected for children aged 0-5. To make the data comparable, Exhibit 5 presents data from both sources for children aged 1-5. As indicated in the exhibit, about 33 percent of the respondents in child only parental cases said that they read stories to their child fewer than three days per week. This compares to 24 percent for NSAF families below 200 percent of the poverty level. In non-parental child only cases, only 8 percent of the children were read stories fewer than three days per week.

Exhibit 5 Percent of Parents or Caretakers Who Read Stories to Their Child Fewer Than Three Days Per Week*

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	24.1%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	33.3%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	7.9%

* Data are for children aged 1-5

There Was Not a Great Difference Between Parental and Non-Parental Cases in the Frequency With Which Young Children Were Taken on Outings

About 36 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that they took their 0-5 year old child on outings about once per day, compared to 32 percent of the respondents in parental cases. (Outings include trips to stores or parks or other types of outings). However,

almost 19 percent of the children in non-parental cases were taken on outings 2-3 times per month or fewer, compared to only 13 percent of children in parental cases.

The Children in Child Only Cases in North Carolina Did Somewhat Better than the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of Outings for Young Children

As indicated in Exhibit 6, almost 22 percent of the respondents on the 1999 NSAF survey of families below 200 percent of poverty reported that they took their young children on outings two to three times a month or less often. This was higher than the percentages found for respondents in both the parental and non-parental cases in North Carolina.

Exhibit 6 Percent of Children Aged 0-5 Who Were Taken on Outings Only Two to Three Times a Month or Less Often

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	21.7%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	13.5%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	18.8%

5. BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHILDREN AGED 6-11

Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Slightly Less Likely to Report that Their Child Did Not Get Along With Other Children, But Were More Likely to Report That the Child Could Not Pay Attention and Was Depressed

Almost 11 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their child aged 6-11 often did not get along with other children, compared to only 6 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. About 19 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child had trouble concentrating or paying attention, compared to only 5 percent of the respondents in parental cases. Almost 42 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child was often or sometimes depressed, compared to only 32 percent of the respondents in parental cases.

Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Slightly More Likely to Report that Their Child Aged 6-11 Sometimes Felt Worthless or Had Been Nervous or High Strung

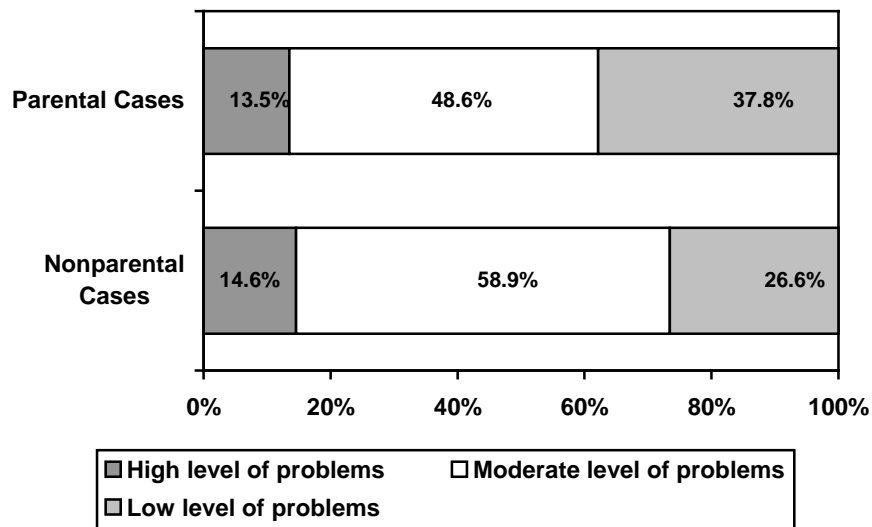
About 23 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child often or sometimes felt worthless or inferior, compared to only 16 percent of respondents in parental cases. Almost 35 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child often or sometimes was nervous or high-strung, compared to only 16 percent of respondents in parental cases. However, there was not a major difference

between the two types of cases in the percentage of respondents reporting that their 6-11 year old child acted too young for his/her age.

On the Overall Child Behavior Index, the Percentage of 6-11 year Olds Who Had a High Level of Problems Was About the Same for Parental and Non-Parental Cases. However, Children in Non-Parental Cases Were More Likely to Have a Moderate Level of Problems.

Using the NSAF Child Behavior Index to combine the results of the previous set of questions, Exhibit 7 shows that almost 15 percent of the 6-11 year old children in non-parental cases had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems, compared to 13.5 percent of children in parental cases. However, almost 59 percent of the children in non-parental cases had a moderate level of behavioral and emotional problems, compared to only 49 percent of the children in parental cases.

Exhibit 7 - Child Behavior Index, by Case Type (Children Ages 6 to 11)



Children Aged 6-11 in Child Only Cases in North Carolina Were Somewhat More Likely to Have a High Level of Behavioral and Emotional Problems than Children in Low-Income Families Nationally

Exhibit 8 shows that, on the 1999 NSAF survey, about 9 percent of the 6-11 year old children in families below 200 percent of poverty had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. This was somewhat lower than the percentages found for both types of child only cases in North Carolina.

Exhibit 8
Percent of Children Aged 6-11 Who Had a High Level of Behavioral and Emotional Problems

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	9.3%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	13.5%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	14.6%

9. INVOLVEMENT IN POSITIVE ACTIVITIES AMONG CHILDREN AGED 6-11

Children Aged 6-11 in Non-Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Have Been Involved in Clubs, Activities, and Sports than Children in Parental Cases

About 71 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child had been involved in clubs, organizations, or organized activities in the last 6 months, compared to only 37 percent of respondents in parental cases. In addition, 30 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child had been on a sports team in the past year, compared to only 10 percent of respondents in parental cases. About 15 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 6-11 year old child had taken lessons or classes after school or on weekends in subjects like music, dance, languages, or computers, compared to only 10 percent of respondents in parental cases.

In combination, about 78 percent of the 6-11 year old children in non-parental cases had been involved in at least one of the three types of activities, compared to only 39 percent of the 6-11 year old children in parental cases.

Children Aged 6-11 in Parental Cases Were Much Less Likely to be Involved in Activities Than Children in Low-Income Families Nationally

Exhibit 9 presents NSAF data on the percentage of children who were involved in at least one of the three types of activities mentioned above. As indicated, about 67 percent of the low-income respondents to the 1999 NSAF survey reported that their 6-11 year old child was involved in at least one of the three activities. This compares to only 39 percent of the respondents in parental child only cases in North Carolina. Children in non-parental child only cases exceeded the national average for low-income families in terms of the percentage engaged in positive activities.

Exhibit 9
Percent of Children Aged 6-11 Participating in at Least One Positive Activity

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	67.5%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	39.5%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	78.5%

10. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AMONG CHILDREN AGED 6-11

Among Children Aged 6-11, Those in Parental Cases Were Somewhat Less Likely than Those in Non-Parental Cases to be Highly Engaged in School. However, the Children in Parental Cases Were Also Less Likely to Have Low School Engagement

Using the four-question School Engagement scale, we found that almost 47 percent of the 6-11 year old children in non-parental cases were highly engaged in school, compared to slightly less than 40 percent of 6-11 year old children in parental cases. However, almost 18 percent of the children in non-parental cases had low school engagement, compared to only 10 percent of the children in parental cases.

Children Aged 6-11 in Parental Cases Had School Engagement Scores That Were Close to the National Average for Low-Income Families, While Children in Non-Parental Cases Had Scores That Were Above the National Average

Exhibit 10 shows that about 39 percent of focal children aged 6-11 in the 1999 NSAF survey were highly engaged in school – about the same as the percentage for 6-11 year old children in parental child only cases in North Carolina. In non-parental child only cases, children aged 6-11 exceeded the national average for low-income families in terms of the percentage who were highly engaged in school – almost 47 percent compared to 39 percent for all low-income families.

Exhibit 10
Percent of Children Aged 6-11 Highly Engaged in School

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	38.9%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	39.5%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	46.8%

11. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS, AND SCHOOL MOBILITY AMONG CHILDREN AGED 6-11

Children Aged 6-11 in Non-Parental Cases Were More Likely to Have Skipped School than Children in Parental Cases but Very Few Children in Either Type of Case Had Truancy Problems

The percentage of 6-11 year old children who had skipped school or cut classes in the past 6 months was 6.4 percent in non-parental cases, compared to only 2.6 percent in parental cases.

Children Aged 6-11 in Non-Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely to Have Been Expelled or Suspended

The percentage of 6-11 year old children who had been expelled or suspended in the past 6 months was almost 8 percent in parental cases and almost 11 percent in non-parental cases.

Children in Parental Cases Were More Likely to Have Changed Schools in the Last 6 Months

The percentage of cases in which the 6-11 year old focal child had changed schools in the past year was 10.5 percent in parental cases and 5.7 percent in non-parental cases.

12. BEHAVIOR AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHILDREN AGED 12-17

Respondents in Parental Cases Were More Likely to Report That Their 12-17 Children Had Trouble Getting Along With Other Children

About 46 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child often or sometimes did not get along with other children, compared to only 31 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely to Report That Their 12-17 Children Had Trouble Concentrating or Paying Attention

Almost 49 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child often or sometimes had trouble concentrating or paying attention, compared to only 42 percent of the respondents in parental cases.

Respondents in Parental Cases Were More Likely to Report That Their 12-17 Children Was Often Unhappy

About 18 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child was “often” unhappy or depressed, compared to only 6 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. However, there was not a major difference between the two types of cases in the *combined* percentage reporting that their child was “often” or “sometimes” depressed.

Respondents in Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Report That Their 12-17 Children Had Trouble Sleeping

About 12 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child often had trouble sleeping, compared to less than one percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

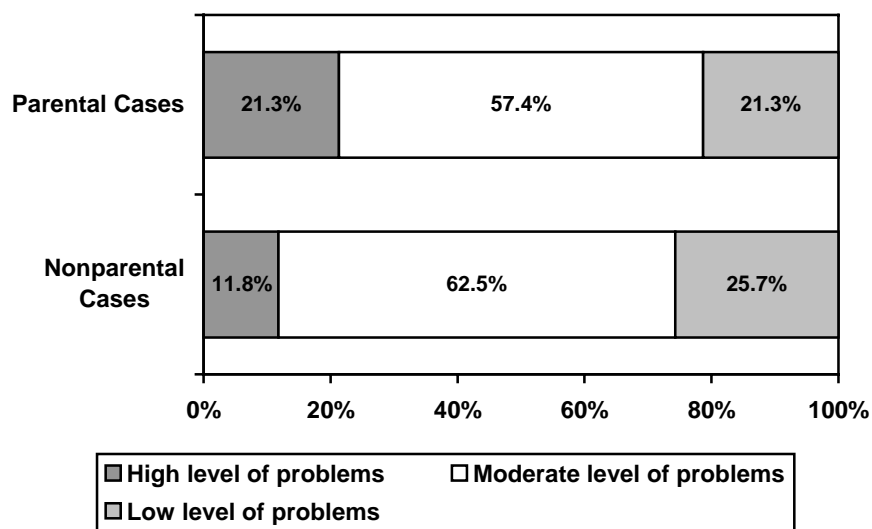
Respondents in Parental Cases Were Slightly More Likely to Report That Their 12-17 Children Did Poorly at Schoolwork

At 40 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child often or sometimes did poorly at schoolwork, compared to 33 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

On the Overall Child Behavior Index, the Percentage of 12-17 Year Olds Who Had a High Level of Problems Was Much Higher in Parental Cases

Using the NSAF Child Behavior Index to combine the results of the previous set of questions, Exhibit 11 shows that 21 percent of the 12-17 year old children in parental cases had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems, compared to only 12 percent of children in non-parental cases.

Exhibit 11 - Child Behavior Index, by Case Type (Children Ages 12 to 17)



Children Aged 12-17 in Child Only Parental Cases Were Twice as Likely as Low-Income Families Nationally to Have a High Level of Behavior and Emotional Problems

Exhibit 12 shows that, on the 1999 NSAF survey, about 10 percent of the 12-17 year old children in families below 200 percent of poverty had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. In contrast, 21 percent of the 12-17 year old children in child only *parental* cases in North Carolina had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. Children aged 12-17 in child only *non-parental* cases in North Carolina resembled low-income families nationally.

Exhibit 12
Percent of Children Aged 12-17 Who Had a High Level of Behavioral and Emotional Problems

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 Data For Families Below 200 Percent Of Poverty	10.3%
North Carolina Children In Child Only Parental Cases	21.3%
North Carolina Children In Child Only Non-Parental Cases	11.8%

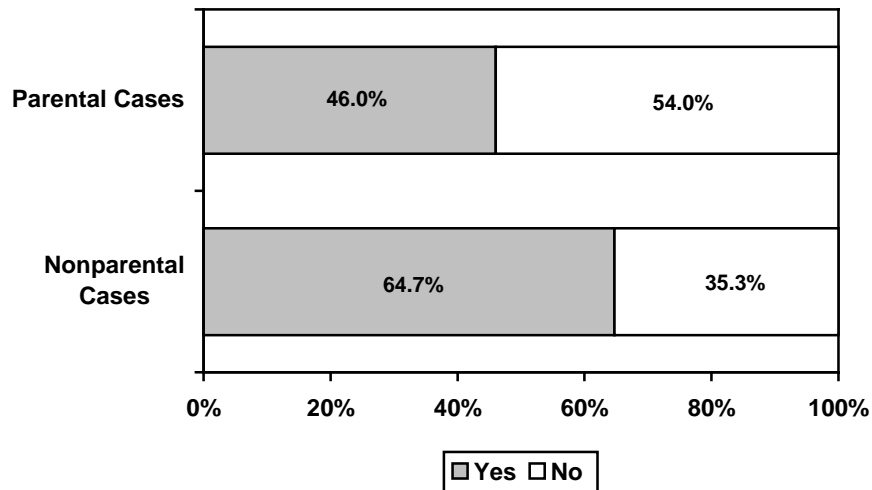
13. INVOLVEMENT IN POSITIVE ACTIVITIES AMONG CHILDREN AGED 12-17

Children Aged 12-17 in Non-Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Have Been Involved in Clubs and Activities Than Children in Parental Cases

Almost 50 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that their 12-17 year old child had been involved in clubs, organizations, or organized activities in the last 6 months, compared to only 22 percent of the respondents in parental cases. There was no difference between the two groups in the percentage reporting that their 12-17 year old child had been on a sports team in the past year (34 percent in both groups). In addition, there was no difference between the two groups in the percentage reporting that their 12-17 year old child had taken lessons or classes after school or on weekends in subjects like music, dance, languages, or computers (16 percent for both groups).

Exhibit 13 combines the data to show the percentage of 12-17 year old children who were engaged in at least one of the three types of activities. As indicated, almost 65 percent of the 12-17 year old children in non-parental cases had been involved in at least one of the three types of activities, compared to only 46 percent of the 12-17 year old children in parental cases.

Exhibit 13 -- Percent of Children Aged 12-17 Who Had Been Involved in at Least One Positive Activity, by Case Type



Children Aged 12-17 in Child Only Parental Cases Were Much Less Likely to be Involved in Activities Than the National Average for Low-Income Families

As indicated in Exhibit 14, almost 73 percent of the low-income respondents to the 1999 NSAF survey reported that their 12-17 year old child was involved in at least one of the three activities mentioned previously. This compares to only 46 percent of the respondents in parental child only cases in North Carolina. Children in non-parental child only cases were slightly below the national average for low-income families in terms of the percentage engaged in positive activities.

**Exhibit 14
Percentage of Children Aged 12-17 Participating
in at Least One Positive Activity**

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	72.6%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	46.0%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	64.7%

14. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOR, AND MOBILITY AMONG CHILDREN AGED 12-17

There Was Not a Great Difference Between Parental and Non-Parental Cases in the School Engagement of Children Aged 12-17

Using the four-question School Engagement scale, we found that almost 42 percent of the 12-17 year old children in parental cases were highly engaged in school. About the same percentage of 12-17 year old children in non-parental cases were highly engaged in school.

Children Aged 12-17 in North Carolina Child Only Cases Had School Engagement Scores That Somewhat Exceeded the National Average for Low-Income Families

Exhibit 15 shows that 34 percent of focal children aged 12-17 in the 1999 NSAF survey were highly engaged in school – somewhat lower than the percentage for 12-17 year old children in parental and non-parental child only cases in North Carolina.

Exhibit 15
Percent of Children Aged 12-17 Highly Engaged in School

Sample Unit	Percent
NSAF 1999 data for families below 200 percent of poverty	34.0%
North Carolina children in child only parental cases	41.7%
North Carolina children in child only non-parental cases	42.1%

There Was Not Much Difference Parental and Non-Parental Cases in the Percentage of 12-17 year Old Children Who Had Skipped School or Been Expelled or Suspended

The percentage of 12-17 year old children who had skipped school or cut classes in the past 6 months was 10.7 percent in parental cases and 13.8 percent in non-parental cases. The percentage of 12-17 year old children who had been expelled or suspended in the past 6 months was 25 percent in parental cases and 28 percent in non-parental cases.

Children Aged 12-17 Years Old in Parental Cases Were More Likely to Have Changed Schools in the Last 6 Months Than Children in Non-Parental Cases

About 14 percent of 12-17 year old children in parental cases had changed schools in the past 6 months, compared to only 7.5 percent of the 12-17 year old children in non-parental cases.

NSAF Data Suggest That 12-17 Year Old Children in Child Only Cases Had Been Suspended or Expelled at a Higher Rate than the National Average for Low-Income Families

The 1999 NSAF survey data suggest that 12-17 year olds in child only cases in North Carolina had been suspended or expelled at a higher rate than the national average for low-income families.

In Non-Parental Cases, Children Who Were Living with Married Caretakers Had Higher School Engagement Than Children Living with Non-Married Caretakers

Exhibit 16 shows that, in non-parental cases, school-age focal children were more likely to have low school engagement if they were not living with married caretakers. In households where both grandparents were present, only 9 percent of the focal children aged 6-17 had low school engagement. In cases where both the aunt and uncle were present, about 18 percent of the children had low school engagement. In households where only the grandmother was present but not the grandfather, 22 percent of the children had low school engagement. In households where the aunt was present but not the uncle, almost 42 percent of the school-age focal children had low school engagement. In “other” households, almost 35 percent of the children had low school engagement.

Exhibit 16
Percentage of Children Aged 6-17 With Low School Engagement,
by Household Composition, Non-Parental Cases

Household Composition*	Percent with Low School Engagement
Both grandparents present	9.3%
Grandmother present but not grandfather	22.3%
Aunt and uncle present, no grandparents	17.9%
Aunt present but not uncle	41.7%
Other	34.8%

*Relationship of adults to the youngest Work First child

15. TROUBLE WITH POLICE (CHILDREN AGED 12-17)

Children Aged 12-17 in Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely to Have Been in Trouble with the Police than Children in Non-Parental Cases

About 8 percent of the 12-17 year old focal children in parental cases had been in trouble with the police in the past 6 months, compared to only 4.6 percent of the 12-17 year old children in non-parental cases.

16. HEALTH PROBLEMS AND DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG PARENTS AND NON-PARENTAL CARETAKERS

Respondents in Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Have Health Problems and Disabling Conditions Than Respondents in Non-Parental Cases

About 49 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their health was poor or only fair, compared to only 32 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. The reason for this is no doubt that a large percentage of the respondents in parental cases were receiving SSI disability payments. In addition, almost 57 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that they had a physical, learning, or mental health condition that limited their ability to do regular work, compared to only 29 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

About 40 Percent of the Respondents in Parental Cases Reported That They Had a Condition That Limited Their Ability to Participate in Usual Activities, Compared to Only 28 Percent of Respondents In Non-Parental Cases

About 40 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that they had a physical, learning, or mental health condition that limited their ability to participate in activities usually engaged in by people of their age. This compares to only 28 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. It should be noted that some of the respondents in parental cases were not on SSI themselves. The percentage of respondents who reported limiting conditions was correlated with age.

17. MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF PARENTS AND NON-PARENTAL CARETAKERS

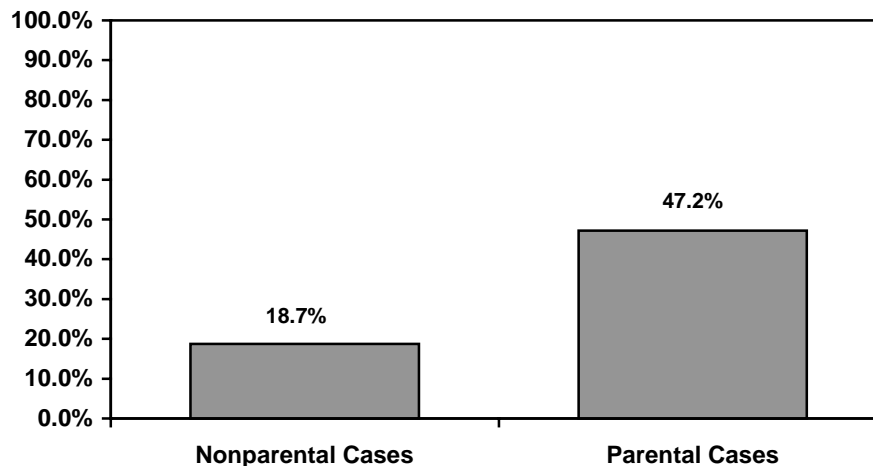
Respondents in Parental Cases Were Much More Likely to Report Problems with Nervousness, Anxiety, and Depression

Almost 28 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that they had been very nervous all or most of the time in the past month, compared to only 13 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. Only 27 percent of the respondents in parental cases had been calm or peaceful all or most of the time in the past month, compared to 60 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. About 28 percent of the respondents in parental cases had been downhearted or blue all or most of the time in the past month, compared only 10 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. Only 36 percent of the respondents in parental cases had been happy all or most of the time in the past month, compared to 67 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. About 19 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that all or most of the time in the past month, they had been so depressed that nothing could cheer them up. This compares to only 7 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

Exhibit 17 shows the summary score for the percentage of parents and caretakers who had poor mental health, based on the NSAF Caregiver Mental Health Index. As shown in the exhibit, about 47 percent of the respondents in parental cases could be classified as having poor mental health, compared to only 19 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. A partial explanation for this may be that the adults in parental cases were more likely than the adults in

non-parental cases to be disabled or incapacitated, based on their SSI status. In addition, the adults in parental cases were more likely to be lacking support in the form of a spouse or other social supports (see the data presented later in this chapter).

Exhibit 17 - Percentage of Respondents With Poor Mental Health, Based on the NSAF Caregiver Mental Health Index, by Case Type



Respondents in Parental Cases Greatly Exceeded the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of Having Poor Mental Health, While Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Had Fewer Mental Health Problems than the National Average

As shown in Exhibit 18, about 24 percent of the 1999 NSAF survey respondents in families below 200 percent of poverty were classified as having poor mental health. This was only about half the rate that we found for respondents in child only parental cases in North Carolina. In contrast, respondents in child only non-parental cases in North Carolina did somewhat better than the national average for low-income families in terms of mental health.

**Exhibit 18
Percent of Cases With a Parent or Caretaker Reporting Symptoms of Poor Mental Health (Cases With Children Aged 0-17)**

Sample Unit	Percent
1999 NSAF data for families below 200 percent of poverty	24.5%
North Carolina child only parental cases	47.2%
North Carolina child only non-parental cases	18.7%

In Households Where the Respondents Had Poor Mental Health, the Focal Child Was More Likely to Have a High Level of Behavioral and Emotional Problems

Exhibit 19 shows the scores of the 6-17 year old focal children on the NSAF Child Behavior Index, by the scores of the respondent on the NSAF caregiver Mental Health Index. As indicated, respondents with poor mental health were much more likely to have children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. In parental cases, for example, 23 percent of the respondents who had poor mental health had children who had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. In contrast, only 8 percent of the respondents who did not have poor mental health had children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems.

The same general pattern was found in non-parental cases. Of the respondents who had poor mental health, 24 percent had children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. In contrast, only 12 percent of the respondents who did not have poor mental health had children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems.

Exhibit 19
Child Behavior Index, by Caregiver Mental Health
(Children Ages 6 to 17)

	Parental Cases	
	Poor Mental Health	Not in Poor Mental Health
Child Behavior Index		
High level of behavioral/emotional problems	23.1%	8.3%
Moderate level of behavioral/emotional problems	53.8%	45.8%
Low level of behavioral/emotional problems	23.1%	45.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
	Non-Parental Cases	
	Poor Mental Health	Not in Poor Mental Health
Child Behavior Index		
High level of behavioral/emotional problems	24.1%	12.4%
Moderate level of behavioral/emotional problems	62.1%	58.1%
Low level of behavioral/emotional problems	13.8%	29.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

18. PARENT AND CARETAKER AGGRAVATION

Respondents in Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely to Report Being Aggravated With the Children in Their Care

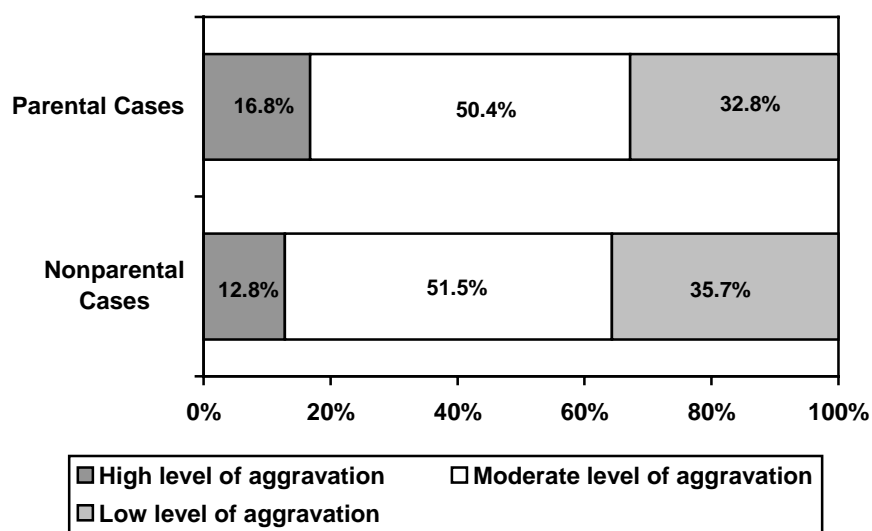
About 16 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that all or most of the time in the past month they had felt that the child(ren) in their care were much harder to care for than most children. By comparison, only 9 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases felt this way. Almost 10 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that all or most of the time

in the past month, the child(ren) in their care did things that really bothered them, compared to only 5 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

About 22 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that all or most of the time in the past month, they felt that they were giving up more of their lives to meet their children's needs than they expected. By contrast, only 18 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases felt this way. There was not much difference between the two types of cases in the percentage of respondents who had been angry with the children in their care all or most of the time during the past month – only 1-2 percent in both types of cases. About 30 percent of the respondents in both types of cases had been angry with the child(ren) some of the time in the past month.

Exhibit 20 shows the summary score for the respondents on the NSAF Caregiver Aggravation Index. As indicated, almost 17 percent of the respondents in parental cases could be classified as having a high level of aggravation, compared to only about 13 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

**Exhibit 20 - Caretaker Aggravation Index,
by Case Type**



Respondents in Parental Cases Somewhat Exceeded the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of Having High Aggravation with the Children in Their Care, While Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Had Slightly Lower Aggravation than the National Average

As shown in Exhibit 21, almost 14 percent of the 1999 NSAF survey respondents in families below 200 percent of poverty were classified as being highly aggravated with the children in their care. This was less than the 17 percent that we found for respondents in child only parental cases in North Carolina. Respondents in child only non-parental cases in North

Carolina did slightly better than the national average for low-income families in terms of aggravation with children.

Exhibit 21
Percent of Cases With a Parent or Caretaker Who Was Highly Aggravated
(Cases With Children Aged 0-17)

Sample Unit	Percent
1999 NSAF data for families below 200 percent of poverty	13.9%
North Carolina child only parental cases	16.8%
North Carolina child only non-parental cases	12.8%

19. PARENT AND CARETAKER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Were Somewhat More Likely to Have Better Social Support Systems and Were Much More Likely to Attend Religious Services on a Regular Basis

Almost 14 percent of the respondents in parental cases felt that they did not have family, friends, or neighbors that they could count on in an emergency, compared to less than 8 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. About 62 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases attended religious services at least once per week, compared to only 40 percent of the respondents in parental cases.

Respondents in Both Types of Child Only Cases Exceeded the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of Attending Religious Services, But Respondents in Non-Parental Cases Exceeded the National Average by a Greater Margin than Respondents in Parental Cases

As shown in Exhibit 22, about 54 percent of the 1999 NSAF survey respondents in families below 200 percent of poverty reported that they attended religious services at least a few times per month. This compares to 67 percent of respondents in child only parental cases in North Carolina, and 84 percent of respondents in child only non-parental cases. In general, the NSAF data show higher levels of attendance at religious services in southern states.

Exhibit 22
Percent of Cases With a Parent or Caretaker Who Attended Religious Services
at Least a Few Times per Month (Cases With Children Aged 0-17)

Sample Unit	Percent
1999 NSAF data for families below 200 percent of poverty	54.5%
North Carolina child only parental cases	67.2%
North Carolina child only non-parental cases	84.5%

20. RESOURCES AND HARDSHIPS AMONG HOUSEHOLDS IN CHILD ONLY CASES

Adults in Non-Parental Households Were More Likely to Have Bank Accounts and to Own Vehicles

About 70 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that at least one adult in the household had a bank account, compared to only 42 percent of the respondents in parental cases. About 79 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that at least one adult in the household owned a vehicle, compared to only 44 percent of the respondents in parental cases.

Non-Parental Households Had Higher Incomes Than Parental Households

As shown in Exhibit 23, almost 75 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported household incomes of \$1,000 per month or lower. This compares to only 36 percent of non-parental households

Exhibit 23
Monthly Household Income, by Case Type

Monthly Household Income	Parental Cases	Non-Parental Cases
\$500 and under	14.6%	4.6%
\$501-\$1,000	60.2%	31.5%
\$1,001-\$1,500	17.9%	19.8%
\$1,501-\$2,000	2.4%	16.3%
\$2,001-\$2,500	0.0%	10.9%
\$2,501-\$3,000	0.8%	4.6%
More than \$3,000	0.0%	9.2%
Refused	4.1%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Parental Households Were More Likely to Have Experienced Problems Paying Housing Costs and Utilities in the Past Six Months

Almost 31 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that there had been times in the past 6 months when they were not able to make housing payments. This compares to only 20 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. However, respondents in parental cases were much more likely to have received help when they had problems than respondents in non-parental cases.

Almost 41 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that there had been times in the past 6 months when they were not able to pay for utilities (excluding telephone). This compares to only 23 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. However, respondents in

parental cases were more likely to have received help paying for utilities when they ran into problems.

About 10 percent of the respondents in parental cases reported that their utilities, except telephones, had been cut off in the past six months, compared to only 4 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. About 31 percent of the respondents in parental households reported that their telephone had been cut off in the last 6 months because they did not pay the bill. The percentage for non-parental households was only 15 percent.

Respondents in Parental Cases Greatly Exceeded the National Average for Low-Income Families in Terms of Having Difficulty Paying for Housing and Utilities

As shown in Exhibit 24, respondents in child only parental cases were twice as likely to have had problems paying for housing costs and utilities than low-income families across the country, based on NSAF data.

Exhibit 24 Percent of Households That Had Problems Paying Their Mortgage, Rent, or Utility Bills

Sample Unit	Percent
1999 NSAF data for families below 200 percent of poverty*	23.1%
North Carolina child only parental cases**	46.4%
North Carolina child only non-parental cases**	28.8%

* Last 12 months ** Last 6 months

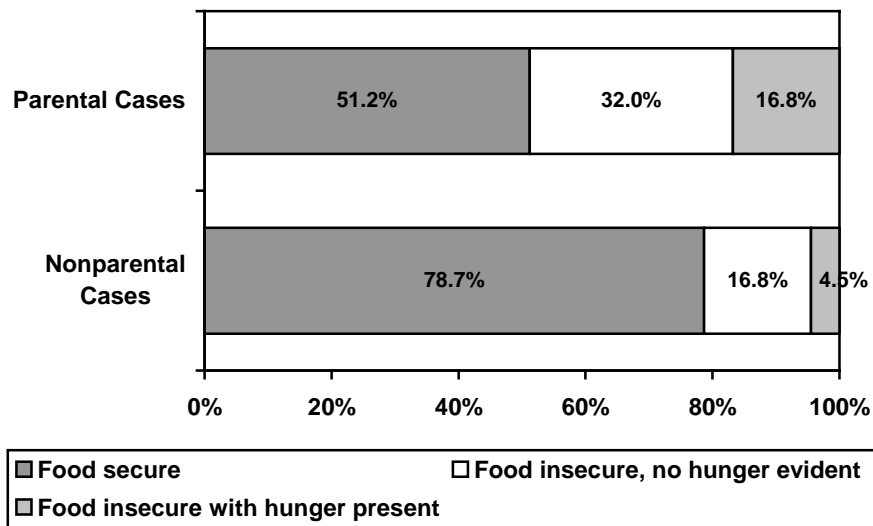
Parental Households Were Much More Likely to Be Receiving Food Stamps Than Non-Parental Households

About 74 percent of the respondents in parental households reported that someone in the household was receiving Food Stamps. This compares to only 33 percent of the respondents in non-parental households.

Parental Households Were Much More Likely to Have Been Food Insecure in the Past Six Months

As shown in Exhibit 25, almost 26 percent of the households in parental cases could be classified as “food insecure with hunger present” at some time in the last 6 months, while an additional 32 percent were food insecure without hunger. In contrast, only 4 percent of non-parental households had been food insecure with hunger present in the past 6 months, and only 17 percent had been food insecure without hunger.

**Exhibit 25 - Food Security in the Past Six Months
(USDA Food Security Index) - by Case Type**



21. USE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS BY PARENTS AND NON-PARENTAL CARETAKERS

Non-Parental Households Were More Likely to Report Receiving Help Paying for Child Care

About 19 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases reported that they received help paying for child care, compared to only 6 percent of respondents in parental cases. As noted earlier, the non-parental households were much more likely to be using child care than the parental households.

Parental Households Were More Likely to Be Receiving Help with Transportation, Emergency Food, and Emergency Clothing

Of the respondents in parental cases, 27 percent were receiving help with transportation, compared to only 14 percent of respondents in non-parental cases. About 20 percent of the respondents in parental cases were receiving help with emergency food, compared to only 7 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases. Almost 13 percent of the respondents in parental cases were receiving help with emergency clothing, compared to only 5 percent of the respondents in non-parental cases.

Parental Households Were Much More Likely to Be Using the WIC Program

Almost 68 percent of the parental households with children aged 0-5 were using the WIC program, compared to only 38 percent of the non-parental households with children aged 0-5.

There Was Not Much Difference Between Parental Households and Non-Parental Households in the Receipt of Other Types of Services

The percentage of households receiving help with child support enforcement was 13 percent in parental cases and 14 percent in non-parental cases. The percentage receiving help with parenting or child rearing was 6 percent in parental cases and 5 percent in non-parental cases. The percentage receiving help with job training or education was 4 percent in parental cases and 3 percent in non-parental cases. About 8 percent of the non-parental cases were receiving legal help to deal with issues related to their child(ren), compared to 5 percent of the parental cases.

Almost 9 percent of the parental cases had received help getting school records or documents for school enrollment, compared to 6 percent of non-parental cases. About 16 percent of the parental households had received help getting medical, immunization, or other health records for the child, compared to 15 percent of non-parental households. About 16 percent of the non-parental households had received counseling for emotional issues or mental health, compared to 14 percent of parental households.

Less than two percent of either type of household had received substance abuse treatment services. Less than 3 percent of either type of household had received help with domestic violence situations. About 30 percent of the respondents in both types of cases reported that they used programs in school or other help with schooling for their children.

E. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study shows that child only cases in North Carolina actually consist of two very different caseloads. The two types of caseloads – parental and non-parental – appear to have very different characteristics and needs.

Policy Issues for Parental Cases

The findings raise a number of concerns about the well-being of parents and children in child only parental cases. In terms of overall economic status and resources, these households face much more significant challenges than the child only non-parental households. The parental households have much lower incomes and fewer resources, and experience much more hardship in terms of food security and shelter security. In addition, the adults in the child only parental cases are much less likely to be employed than non-parental caretakers, and have greater educational deficits.

The adults in child only parental cases are also much more likely to have health problems and limitations on work and other activities. This no doubt reflects the fact that most of the adults in these cases are on SSI. The adults in parental cases are also much less likely to be married than the non-parental caretakers, so they have less capacity to rely on the income and resources of a spouse.

With regard to the well-being of children, the study shows that pre-school children in parental cases were doing worse than the national average in terms of being read stories by their parents. The relatively low level of education among the parents may be a factor in this situation. The young children in parental cases were also somewhat less likely to be taken on outings than young children in non-parental cases. In addition, the 6-11 year old children in parental cases did much worse than the national average in terms of being involved in clubs, organizations, and sports. This may possibly be a reflection of the parents' disabilities.

Children aged 6-11 in parental cases also somewhat exceeded the national average for low-income families in terms of the percentage who had a high level of behavioral and emotional problems, although this was also true for 6-11 year old children in non-parental cases. In terms of overall school engagement, 6-11 year old children in parental cases did as well as the national average, but were slightly below their counterparts in non-parental cases.

For children aged 12-17, the study shows a much higher level of behavioral and emotional problems in parental cases than in non-parental cases. In addition, in parental cases, the percentage of 12-17 year old children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems was about twice the national average for low-income families. The study also shows that 12-17 year old children in parental cases had a very low level of involvement in clubs, sports, and other activities, compared to children in low-income families nationally and children in non-parental child only cases. Again, this may reflect disabling conditions among the adults in parental cases.

The study also raises issues about the mental health of parents in child only parental cases. The respondents in these cases scored much higher than the national average for low-income families in terms of the Caregiver Mental Health Index. They also scored much higher than the caretakers in non-parental cases. The study shows that parents and caretakers with poor mental health were more likely to have children with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. It is likely that the mental health problems among the adults in parental cases are related to their disability status or may be an indirect result of physical incapacities.

The study also shows that the parents in child only parental cases had somewhat higher levels of aggravation with their children than the caretakers in non-parental cases, and also somewhat exceeded the national average for low-income families on this measure. The parents in child only parental cases also had somewhat less extensive social support networks than the caretakers in non-parental cases.

Overall, these findings indicate that child only parental cases may need a higher level of services to help them address problems with behavioral and emotional problems among children. These families also appear to need services to help with the mental and physical health problems of the parents, especially since these problems seem to affect the well-being of the child.

Policy Issues for Non-Parental Cases

In general, the study raises far fewer concerns about the non-parental cases than about the parental cases in the child only caseload. For most of the indicators of child well-being and caregiver well-being, the non-parental cases did as well or better than the averages for low-

income families nationally. The non-parental households were doing much better economically than the parental households, had better social supports, and provided relatively stable environments for the children (as measured by the length of time that children had been with the caretakers).

In terms of possible areas of concern for non-parental cases, the 6-11 year old children in these cases slightly exceeded the national average for low-income families in the percentage with a high level of behavioral and emotional problems. In addition, children in non-parental cases did somewhat better in terms of school engagement if they were living with married caretakers than with non-married caretakers. Also, while the non-parental households were doing better than the parental households in terms of income and resources, they experienced somewhat more difficulty paying for housing and utilities than families below 200 percent of poverty nationally.

In terms of policy, the findings do not seem to indicate a need for greatly increased services for non-parental child only households. However, cases in which the caretakers are not married may need a higher level of services than cases involving non-married caretakers.

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