**Basic Family Supports**

Research shows that there is a direct link between families receiving financial and other basic supports and a reduction in reports to child protection and children who enter foster care. In the United States, for instance, research shows that when the number of families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families increases, reports of child maltreatment and foster care cases decrease,[[1]](#footnote-1) and that raising the minimum wage by $1 per hour can lead to close to a 10% decrease in the number of reported child neglect cases.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In this [article](https://www.risemagazine.org/2020/09/we-need-childhood-protection/) from [Rise magazine](https://www.risemagazine.org), a parent advocate argues not only for basic services, but also for quality programs that allow children to experience joy and connection and provide “the village,” or social support, that has also been proven to be a protective factor that strengthens families.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the article, she argues that countries need “protection from child protection” and a “childhood protection service.”

This section features policies that focus on supporting families in poverty or all families. Although these policies lie outside of child welfare, they can have an outsized impact on keeping families out of poverty, out of crisis and out of the child welfare system.

**European Union: Child Guarantee**

In 2021, the European Commission adopted the European Child Guarantee, which aims to ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion will have access to basic human rights including: early childhood education and care; school-based activities; healthcare; nutrition and housing.

While the initiative itself is significant, how effective it will be depends on how individual countries implement it, what mechanisms the EU puts in place to encourage implementation, and whether corruption and/or mismanagement keep the funds from reaching families. Other factors that may impact the initiative’s effectiveness include whether there will be independent monitoring and evaluation of implemented programs.

Although the initiative has the potential to benefit families, it was written with a focus solely on child well-being with little to no mention of supporting parents. This is likely because of the greater ease of passing policies that focus on children rather than parents, says Mari Herczog, senior policy analyst at the Institute for Human Services, in Columbus, Ohio, and IPAN board member. She hails the initiative, but adds that “without supporting families, no child-related program can be fully successful.”

[Read more](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en) about the Child Guarantee and access related documents including a factsheet and a study on the economic implementing framework.

Click [here](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1246&langId=en) to go to the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC), an evidence-based online platform with information about policies relating to helping children and families in vulnerable situations. The site includes a [collection of evidence-based practices](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1251&langId=en) being implemented across the EU and a [social innovation repository](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1416&langId=en) of innovative practices developed in the past 5 years.

**United States: Biden’s American Families Plan**

On April 28, 2021, President Joe Biden unveiled his American Families Plan. The American Families Plan would invest in children and families by helping them cover basic expenses that they may be struggling with in order to reduce child poverty. The plan proposes adding at least 4 years of free education by providing universal high-quality preschool to all 3–4-year-olds and by providing 2 years of free community college.

Children and families will also be given direct support by: ensuring that low- and middle-income families spend no more than 7% of their income on child care; creating a national comprehensive paid family and medical leave program that will be on par with other wealthy nations; and providing critical nutrition assistance to families who need it.

Additionally, the plan outlines extending tax cuts for families as well as lowering health insurance costs.

Read more about the American Families Plan [here](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/28/fact-sheet-the-american-families-plan/).

**United Nations: UNICEF’s Family-Friendly Policies**

In 2019, UNICEF released a policy brief outlining family-friend policies aimed at reducing parenting stress and promote family wellbeing. The policies call for paid parental leave, support for breastfeeding, and access to affordable, quality childcare for all children.

Specific recommendations include:

* ensuring at least 6 months of paid maternity, paternity, and parental leave after birth of child;
* ensuring paid leave to care for sick children;
* guaranteeing breastfeeding breaks for six months;
* subsidizing child care in and out of the home;
* providing universal access to quality pre-school programs from the end of parental leave to children’s entry into the first grade of school.

Read the policy brief on family-friend policies [here](https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/UNICEF-family-friendly-policies-2019.pdf).

1. Erin Heger, “When Lawmakers Slash Assistance for Families, Foster Care Cases Increase” ([Rewire News Group](https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2018/01/11/lawmakers-slash-assistance-families-foster-care-cases-increase/), January 11, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kerri M. Raissian & Lindsey Rose Bullinger, “Money matters: does the minimum wage affect child maltreatment rates?” ([Children and Youth Services Review](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.09.033), Volume 72, January 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/riskprotectivefactors.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)