



Reports of Child Abuse by Low-Income Parents with Disabilities: The Importance of Poverty and Race

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Introduction

The child welfare system is supposed to keep children safe. It reports when parents are not doing a good job of taking care of their children. Parents with disabilities interact with the child welfare system more than parents without disabilities.

The child welfare system often does not treat parents with disabilities fairly. For example, some parents with disabilities don't receive the supports and services they need.

Black parents interact with the child welfare system more than white parents. Poor parents interact with the child welfare system more than rich parents. But we don't know about parents with disabilities that are Black or poor. This is a big deal since people with disabilities are often poor. And Black people who have disabilities face even more challenges.

It is important to look at the experience of Black parents with disabilities. It is important to look at the experience of poor parents with disabilities. That's what we did in this study.

How We Did the Study

We looked at information about child abuse over a long period of time. We looked at 127 poor parents with disabilities. We looked at 254 poor parents without disabilities. We looked at reports of abuse by both groups. We also looked at if poverty or race made a difference in the reports of abuse.

What We Found

The child welfare system keeps records of who abuses their child. Poor parents with disabilities were just as likely as poor parents without disabilities to have reports of abuse. Black parents were more likely than white parents to have reports of abuse.

Parents with disabilities were **more likely** to have reports of abuse if they...

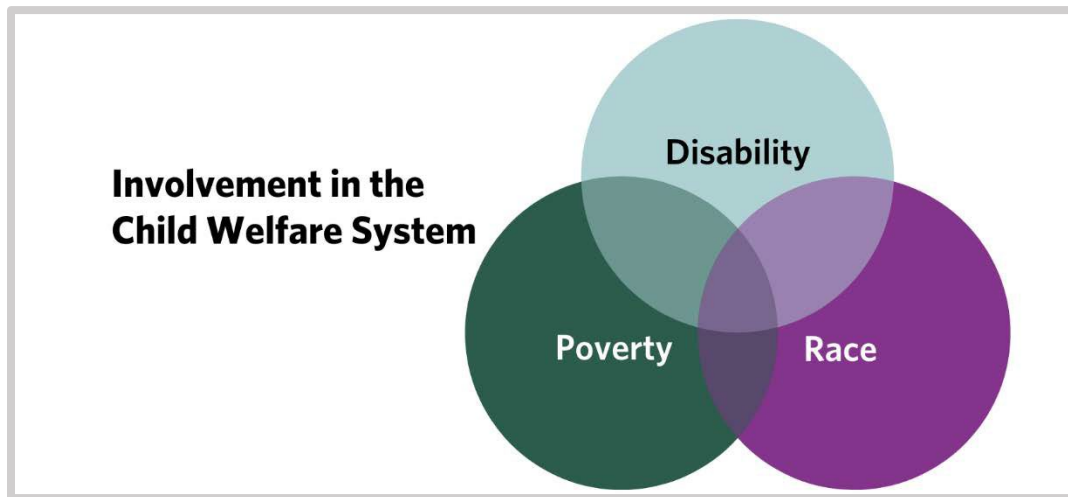
- are older
- get food stamps
- have a daughter
- have a child who gets care outside of the home

Parents with disabilities were **less likely** to have reports of abuse if they...

- went to higher education, like college
- have a lot of family members

Parents without disabilities were **more likely** to have reports of abuse if they...

- had family instability, like changing who takes care of the children



Why It Matters

It is confusing how poverty, race, and disability interact with parents in the child welfare system. For example, a poor parent with a disability might not be able to afford accessible parenting supports.

Disability does not cause someone to have more reports of abuse. Poverty can cause someone to have more reports of abuse. We think people with disabilities interact more with the child welfare system because lots of people with disabilities are poor.

We need to understand what poor parents with disabilities need. We need to make sure that poor parents with disabilities have the services and supports they need. We need to make sure that the supports work well for people of all races and cultures.

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How to Cite This Brief

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