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ABSTRACT

The Project on State-Level Child Outcomes is designed to assist states and other groups to improve the measurement of child outcomes in state welfare evaluations and in other state data systems. This report summarizes the first meeting of the five states (Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota) that participated in the operational phase of the project concerning data collection related to child well-being and family processes. The primary purpose of the meeting was to come to a consensus on how to measure the common core constructs that had been previously selected by the project participants. This report details each state's updates on impacts and indicators studies. In addition, the report outlines the discussion on measurement of the constructs in the following areas: (1) income; (2) employment; (3) family formation; (4) stability and turbulence; (5) psychological well-being; (6) absent parent involvement; (7) use of heath and human services; (8) consumption, percent of income spent on child care and rent; (9) child care; (10) home environment and parenting practices; (11) education; (12) health and safety; and (13) social and emotional adjustment. The meeting summary continues with tips for training interviewers and monitoring data collection quality, lessons learned from other program evaluations regarding this area, and the technical assistance needs of states and evaluators for the operational phase of the project. The report concludes with a list of participants. An attachment to the report delineates the components of the core constructs. (KB)

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THE PROJECT ON STATE-LEVEL CHILD OUTCOMES

Implementing the Common Core of Constructs: Measurement and Interviewer Training

The First Meeting of the Operational Phase of the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes

December 9, 1997

Meeting Summary Prepared by
Child Trends, Inc.
Washington, D.C.
February 13, 1998

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Project Overview: *The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services'* Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) are working together with states and other groups to improve the measurement of child outcomes in state welfare evaluations and in other state data systems. ACF is providing grants to states instituting welfare reform demonstrations to augment their demonstration evaluations with measures of child outcomes and also to expand their data capability to track state-level indicators of child well-being on an ongoing basis. Under funding from ASPE and the other federal contributors and private foundations, the states are receiving technical support on these activities from leading researchers who are members of the NICHD Family and Child Well-Being Research Network. The Network's technical support effort is led by *Child Trends, Inc.*

The project has two phases. The first phase was a one-year planning and design phase which began October 1, 1996. The second operational phase is an implementation phase for data collection, analysis, and reporting activities which began October 1, 1997. Twelve states participated in the first phase: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Virginia. Five states received funding for the operational phase. These include: Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, and Minnesota.

This report summarizes a meeting on implementing the common core of constructs of child well-being and family processes. This meeting was the first of the five states that are participating in the operational phase of the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes.

The project is sponsored by ACF and ASPE. Additional federal funding to support this project has been provided by the *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, the *National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)*, and the *Centers for Disease Control.* Several private foundations have contributed funding to support the organization of national level meetings, the provision of technical assistance to the states, and the preparation and dissemination of written products. These include: the *Annie E. Casey Foundation*, the *Edna McConnell Clark Foundation*, the *George Gund Foundation*, and the *Smith Richardson Foundation.*

The following individuals have been involved in multiple aspects of this project:

Administration for Children and Families
- Howard Rolston
- Alan Yaffe

Child Trends, Inc.
- Christopher Botsko
- Brett Brown
- Lauren Connon
- M. Robin Dion
- Laura Gitelson
- Tawanda Greer
- Tamara Halle
- Chisina Kapungu
- Sharon McGroder
- Suzanne Miller Le Menestrel
- Kristin Moore
- Erin Oldham
- Kathryn Tout
- Martha Zaslow

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Martha Moorehouse
- Ann Segal

NICHD Family and Child Well-Being Research Network
- Jeanne Brooks-Gunn
- Natasha Cabrera
- Greg Duncan
- V. Jeffrey Evans
- Kristin Moore

National Center for Children in Poverty
- Lawrence Aber
- Barbara Blum

MEETING OF THE PROJECT ON STATE-LEVEL CHILD OUTCOMES

OPERATIONAL PHASE
AGENDA
DECEMBER 9, 1997

CHILD TRENDS, INC.
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 100
Washington, DC 20008

9:00-9:30 CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

9:30-10:00 WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
Howard Rolston, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, ACF, U.S. DHHS
Ann Segal and Martha Moorehouse, ASPE, U.S. DHHS
Kristin Moore, President, Child Trends, Inc.

10:00-11:00 STATE UPDATES ON IMPACTS AND INDICATORS STUDIES
Connecticut
Florida
Indiana
Iowa
Minnesota

11:00-12:30 MEASURING THE COMMON CORE OF CONSTRUCTS

12:30-1:15 LUNCH

1:15-2:30 MEASURING THE COMMON CORE OF CONSTRUCTS, Continued

2:30-2:40 BREAK

2:40-3:40 INTERVIEWER TRAINING AND THE MONITORING OF DATA COLLECTION QUALITY

- Questionnaires
  Lee Robeson, Response Analysis Corporation
- Calendars
  Adria Gallup-Black, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
- Interviewer Observations
  Martha Zaslow, Child Trends, Inc.
- Audio Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI)/Self-administered Questionnaires (SAQs)
  Adria Gallup-Black, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

3:40-4:15 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF WELFARE TO WORK STRATEGIES (NEWS) ABOUT INTERVIEWER TRAINING AND THE MONITORING OF DATA COLLECTION QUALITY
Lee Robeson, Response Analysis Corporation

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FIELDING THE MINNESOTA FAMILY INVESTMENT (MFIP) PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE
Adria Gallup-Black, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

4:15-4:45 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR THE OPERATIONAL PHASE

OVERVIEW OF THE OPERATIONAL PHASE

The operational phase, which began October 1, 1997, is the second phase of the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes. Five states received funding for data collection, analysis, and reporting activities. These include: Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, and Minnesota. This document summarizes the first working meeting of the operational phase, which was held on December 9, 1997 at Child Trends, Inc., Washington, D.C. Meeting participants included representatives from the five operational phase states, their evaluators, federal government representatives, and the technical assistance team from Child Trends. The primary purpose of the meeting was to come to a consensus on how to measure the common core of constructs that was selected by the project participants during last year's planning phase of the project. The second goal of the meeting was to provide information on interviewer training and the monitoring of data collection quality to carry forth the theme of commonality across the five states' evaluations.

I. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Howard Rolston opened the meeting by emphasizing the importance of making this project a unified one. He said that developing a common set of constructs and measures is an important milestone. The critical end goal of the project is to create a data base that contains comparable measures. Rolston also indicated that he is confident that all five states will be able to field an in-home survey. HHS has prepared a prospectus that has been shared with several private foundations, and they also have had conversations with other federal government funders. The prospectus laid out several "add-ons" to the basic surveys. The highest priority is for all five states to do in-home surveys. The second highest priority is to build sample sizes. Next are linkages to administrative data bases. HHS also included in the prospectus as funding options a teacher survey and stand-alone studies of child care. Rolston said that the work that these projects are doing will serve as a tremendous legacy and long-term asset.

Ann Segal noted that the government has a strong interest in getting some state-level information and developing a database. Part of the underlying commitment to the project, she noted, is that what happens to the children is an important part of welfare reform.

Martha Moorehouse noted that these waiver evaluations build on the pioneering efforts of the JOBS evaluation (now called the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies or NEWS evaluation). This was the first attempt to embed a set of child outcomes measures in a major welfare evaluation focusing on adults, in order to track the effects of welfare reform on children. Getting rich information on children in a survey context is not always easy, but the NEWS study made considerable methodological progress and provides a history of what to do that will inform this project. The commonality in the current set of studies comes out of that history.

Moorehouse also noted that it is important to look at the null hypothesis in this setting. We need to be sure that policies do no harm. Thus, both finding differences and also not finding differences in child outcomes is significant. She also noted the importance of taking a finegrained look at risk factors and emphasized the importance of understanding implementation. Common measures, common implementation, and common interviewer training are all essential. She commented that interviewer training is where commonality hits the road, that "the devil is really in the details." She emphasized the seriousness of interviewer training and encouraged states to use NEWS as a model, with Child Trends' technical help.

Identifying herself as this project's spokesperson for tracking indicators of child well-being over time, Moorehouse then encouraged states to look at administrative data, perhaps with experimental and control groups. She noted that the broader work of looking at indicators is not being led out of the welfare offices but indicated that the government still wants to support indicator efforts and is exploring other ways to support indicators of child well-being work as the operational phase of the impact studies continues.

Kristin Moore highlighted two goals for the day. The first goal was to help state representatives develop and implement a useful data collection effort for their state. The second was to build a larger body of knowledge about how welfare policies affect children. She suggested that these two goals are generally compatible, and can be forwarded by a lot of sharing of knowledge and experience. Moore reiterated the theme for the day: Commonality.

Moore noted that at previous meetings, state representatives had agreed on a set of common constructs, but had not yet selected specific measures to operationalize these constructs. Since Minnesota is already in the field, while other states will not be in the field for some time, this is a complex task, made easier by the availability of the Minnesota Family Independence Program (MFIP) questionnaire to use as a template. She commended Minnesota and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) for their excellent work, noting that any subsequent comments be viewed not as criticism of their work but the need to use the MFIP instrument as a common reference point for seeking to implement the common core of constructs. Where possible, other states should attempt to replicate the MFIP questionnaire. Before moving on to discussions about specific measures, meeting attendees provided brief updates about each state.

II. STATE UPDATES ON IMPACTS AND INDICATORS STUDIES

Sharon McGroder from Child Trends introduced the state representatives. They were asked to discuss any changes in funding, the evaluation's design, and project time tables. In addition, the representatives were asked to describe any recent changes in policies, and their state's economic or political environments. Finally, they were asked to discuss any indicators work that their offices are conducting, as well as other indicators efforts being conducted in the state.

1. CONNECTICUT

Mark Heuschkel from Connecticut's Department of Social Services began by discussing the status of their waiver evaluation. As a Track One state, they are maintaining their control group,

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which is still subject to pre-TANF (i.e., AFDC) policies though, in a few cases, controls are subject to a few TANF provisions that are expected to affect very few families (e.g., making sure fleeing felons don't get assistance). In terms of changes to their proposed "enhanced" child outcomes evaluation, Connecticut is now planning an 18-month "interim" survey to be fielded in Spring, 1998; this is in addition to the enhanced 36-month survey effort, which will commence in the Spring of 1999. Some academic researchers in Connecticut and elsewhere are interested in collaborating on this. Connecticut is not currently funded by ACF to conduct an in-home survey or for administrative data collection, which hampers their ability to develop indicators under this project; they would like to track child welfare data over time.

An additional study, funded state funds and including subjects from both within as well as outside the waiver evaluation research sites, will focus on tracking those who leave welfare due to time limits -- which is already happening -- and examine such characteristics as their financial well-being and living arrangements. Anecdotally, Heuschkel reported that about half of those are eligible for extensions, but many are not because they are working and have earnings above the TANF cash program's payment standard. Heuschkel also reported, incidentally, that Connecticut has met their TANF participation rates for FY 1997 (mostly through subsidized employment).

In terms of the economic and political context of Connecticut, the economy is starting on an upward turn. The unemployment rate is still lagging in the region. The national economy is "pulling up" Connecticut's economy.

Howard Rolston then asked about the inherent disincentive to increase the number of hours worked, given that Connecticut's income disregards do not expire and are enough to allow recipients to become "comfortable" with the amount of money they get. He wanted to know if there is some effort to encourage people to increase work hours. Heuschkel noted an increased interest on the part of the state to address this issue, and there is a big effort to get people into higher-paying jobs. While addressing this "hours disincentive issue," they are currently concentrating their efforts on people reaching the end of their time limits.

2. FLORIDA

Jeannee Elswick-Morrison from the Florida WAGES Office was "pinch-hitting" for the usual Florida representatives, Pat Hall and Don Winstead, who were attending another conference. Elswick-Morrison reported on several policy changes that have occurred in Florida. The Florida legislature has set a 48-month lifetime limit on welfare program participation. There is also a Work First Plus time limit. However, Florida is providing intensive case management for hard to place and long-term welfare recipients. They are piloting these programs in six counties. Among other changes taking place in Florida is the piloting of a privatization program for welfare administration, including eligibility and termination. The legislature has required a privatization pilot program in three counties: one urban, one suburban, and one rural. These pilot programs will be up and running in the next two months.

Next, Elswick-Morrison gave an update on child care and child safety issues, including informal child care. Within the last three months, five children have died in Hillsborough county while they were in informal care arrangements. These events have precipitated changes in how informal child care can be arranged for welfare recipients. The legislature gave a directive for the need to insure child safety in informal arrangements beyond the immediate family. This directive was interpreted as meaning if anyone beyond the maternal grandmother was used for informal care, there had to be a national background check prior to placement. However, interpretation of informal care placement approval was not coordinated with welfare reform prior to implementation, and much confusion has resulted. (In Florida, the State Department is the child care provider, with placement carried out by private, non-profits; welfare reform, however, is operated under local WAGES coalitions. Elswick-Morrison noted that often one hand doesn't know what the other is doing.) Currently, Florida is working on getting the new child care policy in place and getting it well-known across the state.

Also, the Florida legislature is meeting and considering issues related to work requirements. They met the work requirement for FY 1997. They are changing what is an allowable work activity, and are also dealing with the issue of transportation (which is a big issue for the state of Florida, since there is no public transportation). Elswick-Morrison also mentioned that they are trying to retain control of some dollars that were slated for welfare and now seem to be up for grabs. Florida is now entering the tourist season; there is much seasonal employment in the state. Elswick-Morrison reviewed how welfare reform is handled in Florida. She likened it to a tripod, where the major players in welfare reform are the Department of Labor and Employment Security, the Department of Children and Families, and local WAGES coalitions.

For a discussion of indicators, Caroline Herrington of Florida State University took the floor. Herrington reported that a state-wide task force consisting of state agencies (Department of Labor, Department of Education, etc.), oversight groups, Management Information Systems people, and university people (who are conducting research or who have expertise) had been convened and was in the process of compiling a set of core indicators specific to Florida. She mentioned that this list of indicators would hopefully be comparable to the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes' common core of constructs. This process should be finished in the next month or so.

3. INDIANA

Tracey Nixon provided the update on Indiana's activities. There have been several recent policy changes in the state. In June of 1997, Indiana eliminated a two-track system in which one track was not subjected to the 24-month time limit until it reached a higher track. As of June, there is only one track and all adults are subject to the 24-month time limit. Changes are also being made to rules for exemptions from the time limit. Currently, parents with children age one year or younger are exempt. This age limit will be reduced in stages, until by December 1998, only parents who are responsible for the care of children 12 weeks of age or younger will be exempt. Two requirements were added to the personal responsibility agreement that program participants must sign. These include: agreeing to raise children in a drug-free home, and agreeing to raise children in a home free from domestic violence. Nixon reported that the number of people who are sanctioned has actually declined. She attributed part of this decline to the fact that employment and training contractors have become more proactive in getting people to work.

With regard to the impacts evaluation, Indiana has taken several steps to strengthen the experiment. One difficulty that they were experiencing is that caseworkers in the entire state needed to be trained in both the new (i.e., TANF/waivers) and old (AFDC) policies. Beginning in January, 1998, random assignment will be limited to 12 counties. Each office will have a designated "control group" caseworker who will be very familiar with the AFDC policies. The other difficulty that the state has had with the experiment is that there was a period of several months during which people were not being assigned to the control group because of a computer problem. Nixon expects that control group assignment will be reestablished in January, 1998. Indiana will field a total of four surveys. The first has already been fielded, the next will be fielded in early 1999, the child well-being survey will be fielded in 2000, and the fourth will be fielded in 2001. Abt Associates is analyzing the first survey results and has completed an indicators study.

4. IOWA

Deb Bingaman described the state's recent policy changes and the context in which their evaluation is being conducted. Bingaman said that welfare reform in her state has nearly remained the same since 1993. At this point, there is some "tweaking" of the policies. Iowa has a five-year time limit for receipt of assistance. They have increased incentives and have found that almost all of the state's caseload are participating in employment or training. Only those who are disabled are excluded from employment or training. They are currently conducting several small pilot studies on systemic barriers such as transportation and child care. They will provide recommendations to the state legislature by January, 1988 on whether funding should be increased.

Bingaman also noted that the state's sanctions only last for six months. Based on results from the Limited Benefit survey, they have concluded that families are not suffering extreme deprivation or hardship. Also, Mathematica Policy Research has completed an interim impacts study report. This report is currently under review by Bingaman's department.

With regard to indicators, Bingaman said that her department has very little authority to initiate projects in this area. However, several indicators activities are happening in the state. The Council on Human Investment is doing indicators work in the child abuse and neglect and foster care areas. In addition, the Lieutenant governor's department is restructuring a task force which will recommend a set of indicators for children ages 0 to 5.

Christine Ross from Mathematica Policy Research described the state's impacts evaluation. She said that Iowa will be the second state in the field. They plan to field both the Track 1 survey and the child impact survey by the end of January, 1998. The Track 1 survey will be a 30-minute telephone survey of approximately 3,000 people. The child impact survey will be in-home and will include about 2,000 families. The families that overlap between the two surveys will be contacted first by phone for the Track 1 survey. The child impact survey will be scheduled for a later point in time. There will be some overlap between the Track 1 and common core constructs. Ross said that they will have to set some priorities for constructs in both the Track 1 and child impact surveys.

5. MINNESOTA

Joel Kvamme from Minnesota and Adria Gallup-Black from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation described Minnesota's policy environment and evaluation activities. Kvamme said that the demonstration program that Minnesota has had in place since 1994 will be the state's TANF program. Beginning in January 1998, the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) will be implemented state-wide. There has been a change of focus in the state to take a broader look at working poor families. The 1997 legislature increased the state's investments in child care and health care. Kvamme also said that there has been a lot of attention focused on what is happening to children in the state.

With regard to the adult impacts evaluation, Gallup-Black reported that MDRC has completed an 18-month follow-up report that was done in three urban counties, 12 months after random assignment. They found positive employment and earnings impacts, and greater welfare receipt, but a reduction in poverty. The child impacts evaluation has gone forward in seven counties and the control groups have remained intact. The MFIP child outcomes questionnaire went into the field in August of 1997 and will be out of the field by March, 1998. They are expecting approximately 2,100 child completions, and 1,500 non-child survey completions.

III. MEASURING THE COMMON CORE OF CONSTRUCTS - PART I

Kristin Moore began by directing attendees to the one-page "constructs" sheet (see Attachment A), which lists all the common core constructs agreed upon during the 12-state planning phase. She said that for each construct, a member of the Child Trends staff will present the rationale for why it is important to gather information on the construct, how it is measured in the MFIP questionnaire, how the technical assistance team comprised of members of the NICHD Network proposed measuring it in the measures notebook for core constructs, and Child Trends' current recommendation, which recognizes the need to balance consistency across states with the best possible measure.

1. INCOME

Kristin Moore led the discussion on constructs in the income domain. By altering labor-force behavior, the size and duration of cash grants, and family composition, numerous waiver provisions may produce important changes in the level of family income. Family income can affect children because money can be used to purchase things that are essential for growth and development, such as food, quality child care, activities, and lessons, and other resources. Lack of resources may mean that low-income children do not have as many stimulating experiences as do children in more affluent families. Money may also provide for greater safety and stability. A continual struggle for resources may lead children in low-income homes to experience less predictable daily routines and more residential moves than children in higher income homes. Last year's planning phase project participants selected the following income-related constructs for the common core: total income; sources of income; stability of income; and financial strain/material hardship.

1a. Total income. While noting the value of MDRC's decisions on measuring monthly income in the MFIP questionnaire for assessing adult outcomes, Moore noted that, for purposes of child outcomes, income needs to be measured over a longer time period, e.g., annually, because child well-being is affected by longer-term economic well-being. Child Trends recommended that other states use the two CPS items as proposed in the "Revised Measures Notebook for Core Constructs." A discussion followed focusing on: (1) whether annual income can be measured reliably; (2) technical issues surrounding measurement of annual income, and (3) options for how best to measure annual income. Below is a summary of the discussion of these three issues.

First, Barbara Goldman (MDRC) questioned whether reliable annual income data can be collected in a survey, which is why they are focusing on obtaining monthly information from the survey and from administrative records. David Fein (Abt) noted that when "lining up" survey and administrative reports of annual income, there is wide variability in measures. Barbara Goldman concurred, reporting that 70-75 percent of surveyed income is accounted for by administrative data on income. Christine Ross (MPR) proposed using administrative data to create an annual amount since it may be more accurate than surveyed household income. However, Howard Rolston noted that food stamps are not taxable and, thus, would not appear on tax records. Following this line of reasoning, Barbara Goldman asked, "What else can't we get from administrative records?" Child support was mentioned.

However, Moore noted that there may be good reasons why these two numbers might not be equal; for example, to the extent that recipients earn money under the table (e.g., babysitting) which is not reported in administrative records, such non-reported income is not captured in administrative data but may be captured in surveys. In addition, she argued that the two CPS items work well according to Greg Duncan (an economist and NICHD Network member at Northwestern University). George Cave (Child Trends) proposed that the issue is whether you can go from monthly income to poverty status, which is based on annual income and which is an important construct for relating to child outcomes. He suggested that asking summary questions such as the two CPS items would not take much time and would allow a poverty level to be calculated (along with information on family size). Howard concurred that it could be obtained quickly with these two items, to which Moore added that it could serve as a "signal," even if it is not precisely correct. She noted that annual income will not only be used in impact analyses; it will also be used in non-experimental analyses of child well-being as an "intervening mechanism."

Barbara Goldman suggested pretesting these two CPS items on the next survey (Iowa's), and recording $10,000 intervals, though others said that $10,000 intervals would not provide a sufficiently detailed income distribution. David Fein concurred that pretesting would demonstrate not only how valid the measure is but also the degree of bias and, most importantly, whether the bias is the same for the experimental and control group respondents-- in which case impact estimates will not be affected.

In terms of technical issues, Lee Robeson asked whether family or household income is preferred. Moore responded that household income is preferred. Robeson then noted that welfare recipients do not think in terms of annual income, which exacerbates the problem of getting a reliable estimate from a survey. Jeannee Elswick-Morrison (FL) concurred, saying that sanctioning requires respondents to adjust the amount on a monthly basis. Mark Heuschkel (CT) noted that characterizing changes in income due to sanctioning, time limits, and other fluctuations makes it hard for clients to accurately report. Barbara Goldman expressed concern that the amount of time it would take to get a reliable survey estimate of annual income may not be worth it.

Given monthly fluctuations in income, Jeannee Elswick-Morrison (FL) suggested that if respondents do not know their annual income, maybe they can provide an educated guess on a range of income. Several options were discussed, such as asking respondents if "this past month was typical?," using categories of ranges of annual income, or following up the monthly income questions with "if we multiply this amount by 12, is this an accurate estimate of your annual income?" The group agreed to use a follow-up question listing categories of ranges of annual income. Child Trends will provide states and their evaluators with items to pre-test. As items are finalized (presumably for Iowa), final items will be forwarded. In writing these items, Fein recommended attention to four technical issues: (1) which 12 months are typical? (2) what about food stamps? (3) before tax or after tax income? and (4) family or household income? Moore reiterated that household income is preferred; it is easier to define a household than a family.

1b. Material Hardship. Moore noted that the measure of material hardship included in the MFIP questionnaire was the same one that was recommended by Child Trends. The group agreed to include the same measure.

Child Trends also recommended getting permission to obtain administrative record data in the future if required by the state. One of the evaluators pointed out that in welfare evaluations, permission is not needed. However, others said that parental consent is necessary to obtain school records data. States were urged to obtain parental consent just in case the teacher surveys are funded; an example of how this is done is on page 103 of the MFIP questionnaire.

2. EMPLOYMENT

Kristin Moore led the discussion on constructs in the employment domain. How changes in the number and timing of work hours of adult women and other family members affect family life and children is a matter of considerable debate. On the one hand, employment may reduce time for the care of children, for monitoring the activities and behavior of older children, and for carrying out household responsibilities. On the other hand, employment and increased income may enhance parents' sense of financial security, self-worth, efficacy, and status. Children's activities and time use are very likely to be affected by changes in maternal employment. Further, children observing their parents succeeding in employment may lead to increases in children's aspirations and optimism about the future. Yet if parents experience a substantial increase in stress in association with their employment, and/or experience job insecurity and instability, this could have negative implications both for the quality of parent-child relations and for the children's aspirations. The constructs that the 12 states selected in this domain include: any vs. no employment; health benefits through employment; wages; hours of employment; stability of employment; education/licenses; hard job skills; multiple jobs concurrently; and barriers to employment.

2a. Employment History and Job Characteristics. Kristin Moore began the discussion on employment by commending MDRC for obtaining detailed employment information in the MFIP questionnaire, but wondered whether the child care calendar was used to help respondents remember jobs. Adria Gallup-Black said that the reverse is true: jobs appear on the child care calendar as an "anchor" to help the respondent remember child care arrangements. Barbara Goldman noted that low-income populations are more apt to have shift work employment, and are less likely to know their schedule (which days, what hours) weeks in advance. She recommended getting this information at least for the most recent job; she also suggested obtaining the reason for job loss. (MDRC is putting this back into the Florida and Connecticut surveys). Deb Bingaman (IA) noted that their survey (to be fielded in January, 1998), is already asking how a job ended and why). Mathematica Policy Research will share these items with the project team.

Christine Ross asked how far back an employment history should be obtained. She suggested obtaining the last two years. Moore noted that employment since random assignment and since the last survey date are other possibilities. This is an "absolute versus relative time" issue. She agreed that a five year employment history would be difficult, but also noted that it was done in the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Child Outcomes Study on the child care calendar which covered the target child's first five years of life. However, Christine Ross noted that this sample is 5- to 12-year-olds, and getting a history since birth would mean more than five years for most sample children. Adria Gallup-Black noted that in MFIP, they are getting detailed information only about the most recent job, although a job history is collected for the entire three year period since random assignment. Howard Rolston suggested counting no more than the three most recent jobs; he also noted that going back only two years may not capture the respondent's first job off welfare, but we may have to live with that. Moore noted that while welfare officials may want to know about the first job off welfare, for child well-being, the most recent jobs are more salient. Moore proposed that as part of the common core, states obtain a job history for the last two years, with the option of collecting more years if they want to. Barbara Goldman recommended getting information about (1) reasons for job loss, (2) shift work, (3) rotating hours for each job in last year (see National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey), and (4) an employment calendar. Howard Rolston noted that it would be nice to have each of these in each site, since many states are doing it anyway (except MFIP), especially as they relate to child outcomes. The group reached consensus to get reasons for job loss, shift work, rotating hours for each job in the last year, and the job history for at least the last two years.

Coordinating with the child care questions, Christine Ross noted that Iowa is planning to obtain current child care arrangements for all 5- to 12-year-old children in the family/household and obtain a detailed history for 5- to 7-year-olds. Dave Fein wondered whether this would focus only on child care while the mother was employed. Martha Zaslow noted that there is lots of child care used by mothers who are not employed, as they may be in training, so employment should not be tied into the child care calendar. This issue was tabled until the discussion on child care.

2b. Hard skills. Kristin Moore noted that, beyond asking about educational attainment and licensing, there were not measures of "hard skills" in the MFIP questionnaire. The group discussed including additional items specifically pertaining to human capital and "promotionability." However, there was consensus that these additional questions would be optional, not part of the common core.

3. FAMILY FORMATION

Kristin Moore led the discussion on constructs in the family formation domain. One of the stated goals of welfare reform on the national level is to reduce non-marital births and to end potential incentives that exist for family dissolution. While most waiver policies do not directly seek to influence what kind of families recipients live in, the policies may have consequences which affect family formation and dissolution. The following constructs were selected for inclusion in the common core: nonmarital/marital birth; child/family living arrangements; marital status of mother and whether she is or was married to the biological or non-biological father. (Note that a discussion about child living arrangements is covered in the stability/turbulence section).

3a. Nonmarital birth. Kristin Moore noted that, while obtaining information about additional births since random assignment and about whether the mother had married since random assignment, MFIP does not measure whether any additional births since random assignment occurred *when the mother was married to the biological father*. She noted that Congress was not only interested in tracking non-marital births but also whether births occurred in the context of a two-parent biological family. Martha Moorehouse then asked if we would have child outcomes on the nonfocal child who was born to biological parents since random assignment. Howard

Rolston noted that this is not a central issue for this particular study, and the group concluded this would not be part of the core, but states can pursue this on their own.

IV. MEASURING THE COMMON CORE OF CONSTRUCTS - PART II

4. STABILITY AND TURBULENCE

Suzanne Miller Le Menestrel led the discussion on measures for the Stability and Turbulence domain. During last year's planning phase, the project participants voted on including several aspects of stability and turbulence for the common core. These include: foster care placements; whether the child was not or is not living with his or her family; stability in child care; stability in income; number of moves of residence; and changes in marital status or cohabitation.

Turbulence means that a child and family is experiencing multiple changes in life circumstances. It is possible that some welfare policies may bring about changes in several areas of a child's family life, such as changes in child care, place of residence, or family income. Some waiver provisions might provide supports that may make children's lives more stable, whereas others might increase turbulence in children's lives. Turbulence during childhood in terms of family structure and living arrangements, family relocation, schools attended, child care, and income level, has been shown to be associated with a number of negative outcomes for children and young adults.

4a. Foster care and why the child is not living with his or her family. These constructs are being measured in MFIP by asking parents whether they and their child have been separated since random assignment and how many times this has happened. For the most recent separation, the parent is asked the main reason why the separation occurred. Placement in foster care can be captured in this follow-up question.

4b. Stability in child care. This is measured in the MFIP questionnaire using several different types of questions. There is a series of questions about the types of arrangements that the parent has used since random assignment and how many different arrangements of that type the child attended for a month or more. Second, using the calendar, one can ascertain the number of different child care arrangements that were used for a month or more since random assignment. For the most recent arrangement (that is, the one used in the last full week), parents are asked how many caretakers a child has, how many children are in the arrangement, and the number of hours the child spent in the arrangement. Stability in child care was discussed more fully in the section on child care.

4c. Stability in income. This construct is more difficult to measure. In the MFIP questionnaire, data on income sources are only collected for the prior month. Thus, a variable which measures stability in income will need to be created from data collected in prior surveys and via administrative records since random assignment such as earnings from UI records, AFDC and food stamp payments. In order to measure stability in income since random assignment, states decided to use administrative records data.

4d. Changes in residence. This is being measured in MFIP by asking respondents a question from the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey which asks how many times they have moved since random assignment.

4e. Changes in marital status and cohabitation. These are being measured in MFIP using a series of questions from the New Hope evaluation. Respondents are asked if they got married, separated or divorced, or started or stopped living with someone since random assignment, and if these events occurred, how many times.

The most important decision point was to determine a time period in which to construct a composite measure of stability or a composite measure of turbulence. Because the constructs that were selected for the common core are being measured since random assignment in the MFIP questionnaire, it would be possible to get a picture of stability and turbulence for this time period. With some of the questions included in MFIP, such as the question about recent separations, it would not be possible to create a stability and turbulence composite measure for a time period such as the last year or month, because the specific dates for the separations cannot be ascertained.

The meeting participants decided that it would be important to find out whether the focal child was ever in foster care over some period of time, such as in the past two years. Project participants agreed to use the MFIP items to measure number of changes in residence and in marital status and cohabitation. Finally, upon Child Trends' recommendation, everyone agreed to add to the common core one item from the National Survey of America's Families which asks about the number of school changes the focal child has experienced in the past two years.

5. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Kathryn Tout led the discussion about psychological well-being. Maternal depression was the aspect of psychological well-being that the group focused on in the common core. Depression is defined as a "negative mood state so extreme that it interferes with daily functioning and productive activity." There are two general ways in which program participation could influence maternal depression. On one hand, mothers who are employed in low-wage jobs with few benefits or who hit time limits and sanctions may experience more depression. We know from prior research that depression is related to diminished parenting skills, high levels of child behavior problems and school difficulties, and poor physical health for children. On the other hand, mothers who secure employment and become self-sufficient may show decreased levels of depression and, in turn, may have children who show fewer negative developmental outcomes.

In the common core, Child Trends recommended using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale which is a 20-item questionnaire that has been used in other welfare program evaluations and which has high reliability and validity. MFIP adopted the full scale (p. 90) and states agreed to follow suit.

6. ABSENT PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Suzanne Le Menestrel led the discussion about the measurement of constructs in the absent parent involvement domain. Absent parent involvement was a domain of interest to the states because many of the waiver provisions are aimed at increasing the role of the father in his child's life, mainly through paternity establishment, enforcement of child support collection, and allowing families to keep more or all of the child support awards by passing through the monies. A possible consequence of these provisions is that fathers may see their children more frequently and the relationships between fathers and their children may be enhanced. On the other hand, forcing fathers to acknowledge their paternity and pay child support might increase feelings of anger and resentment toward both the mother and the child. Prior studies provide evidence that provision of child support is related to several areas of child well-being including cognitive development, academic achievement, and behavior problems. The planning phase project participants decided to focus on the following aspects of absent parent involvement as part of the common core: whether child support is or was provided; whether paternity was established; and the frequency of contact that the father has with the target child.

6a. Whether child support is provided. This is measured in MFIP with a series of questions which ask if the child is covered by a child support order, whether any money was received from the child support office or from the father directly in the past year, and whether the father has provided informal noncash support such as buying gifts for the child, babysitting, or caring for him or her overnight. Jeannee Elswick-Morrision from Florida asked whether these questions could measure whether child support was not provided (or accepted by the mother) because it is actually in the child's best interest <u>not</u> to see his or her father or receive support from him because of abuse or other reasons. It was agreed that the states could add questions which could answer that question, if they were interested in reasons why child support was not provided.

6b. Whether paternity was established. This construct is measured in MFIP by asking parents if papers have been filed with a court or legal agency that establish the father as the legal father. There is also a question which asks whether the respondent was married to the child's father at the time the child was born. These questions were accepted for inclusion in the common core.

6c. The frequency of contact that the absent parent has with the focal child. This is measured using two questions asking if the father has talked to the child on the phone or sent him a letter or card. Child Trends recommended adding an additional question about "face to face" contact that the child has had with his natural father in the past 12 months. This recommendation was supported by all project participants.

7. CONSUMPTION

Kathryn Tout led the discussion about consumption, which refers to patterns of family resource use or the decisions families make to allocate scarce resources for their children. Last year's project participants had decided to measure consumption in the common core as the percent of income spent on child care and housing. Program participation can affect consumption patterns by increasing or decreasing income. For example, if family income increases and a smaller percentage of income needs to be spent on housing and child care, more income is left over for other purposes. If family income decreases, families may need to move to poorer quality housing or choose lower quality child care settings. These patterns of consumption directly affect the contexts, such as neighborhoods and child care, in which children spend their days and thus are important for child well-being.

In the common core, Child Trends recommended using questions that ask families how much is spent per week or per month on housing (including rent or mortgage, insurance and taxes) and child care.

MFIP included questions assessing percent of income spent on both housing (p. 68, question AA4a) and child care (p. 58, question H9) in its Basic Survey. Child Trends recommended that the other states include the same questions.

Jeannee Elswick-Morrision asked if the impact of subsidies is captured in a measure of consumption (e.g., if a family only pays $4/week for child care)? Howard Rolston replied that the importance of a consumption measure comes from assessing what the family pays. Thus, if a family pays only $4/week (and the rest is covered by subsidies), then the $4 figure is what is recorded.

8. USE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Tamara Halle led the discussion for this domain. Halle noted that access to health and human services is likely to benefit children indirectly, by reducing parental work disincentives, and directly, by providing services that will promote children's overall health, and educational and socioemotional development. The recommendations made in the common core of constructs for Health and Human Services include specific questions about food stamps, medical insurance coverage for the parent and child, child care subsidies, and access to medical care.

8a. Food stamps. MFIP included questions about food stamps from the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey (Section F, page 38; A5, page 3). Howard Rolston urged states to get food stamp data from administrative data rather than adding questions to their surveys. Barbara Goldman explained that some of the food stamp questions in MFIP were there because MFIP did a cash out. MFIP also included an additional question about receiving MFIP benefits, net of other food assistance (F4, page 39). It was agreed that states would try to get food stamp information from administrative data; if they were unable, they would use the MFIP

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items. Adria Gallup-Black cautioned that there may be a problem with using administrative data if more than one food stamp recipient unit resides in a household.

8b. Medicaid/Medical Insurance. MFIP used a series of questions from the New Hope survey to ask about insurance coverage in the past month (Section I, page 60). In addition, two items in the Material Hardship Scale (2Jf & 2Jg, page 63) ask if anyone in the household postponed medical or dental care. It was agreed that other states would use the MFIP items. States were also urged to consider (as an option) getting additional information for reasons why medical care was postponed (question F17 from National Survey of America's Families was recommended).

8c. Child care subsidies. Questions about child care subsidies were covered in Section H of the MFIP survey (H3 & H7, pages 55-57). It was agreed that states would use the MFIP items (although other states will substitute their own state programs where MFIP is explicitly mentioned).

8d. Access to medical care. MFIP has questions about source and regularity of dental and medical care for the child (Section CC, page 78). States agreed to use these items.

9. CHILD CARE

Martha Zaslow led the discussion on the measurement of constructs in the child care domain. The work requirements in place with many of the waivers and with TANF are likely to affect the use of child care. There is evidence that child care can affect the mother's ability to get and maintain a job. The use of child care by respondents is also likely to affect the development of the children. In particular, the research literature suggests that high quality early childhood programs can play a significant, positive role in the lives of disadvantaged children. Zaslow noted that the recommendation for the common core regarding child care measures had been to address *extent* of care used for the focal child, *types* of care used; *quality* of care used; and *stability of care.* (Other sections of the common core address issues concerning paying for child care).

These aspects of child care are well covered in MFIP, particularly in section HH. Very little is missing in terms of particular items that had been recommended for the core (see below). In addition, MFIP goes beyond the core recommendations in the sense that it includes the full series of questions developed by Emlen concerning reactions to child care (e.g., "CHILD feels safe and secure" in the primary arrangement; with mother responding never, sometimes, often or always). This set of questions had been noted as optional in the core recommendations.

9a. Type, Extent, Quality, Stability. Zaslow noted that the MFIP survey covers child care in two very different ways. Section H asks about child care *specifically for the mother's current or most recent job* and *regarding all of the mother's children.* By contrast, Section DD asks about *the entire period of time since random assignment*, about *child care used for any reason, not only for employment,* and about *the focal child only.* Zaslow noted that the differences in approach in asking about child care in these two sections are important. For example, regarding the fact that one section focuses on child care for purposes of employment but the other does not require employment, it is important to note that national data indicate that child care occurs for reasons other than employment. In the context of welfare waiver evaluations, one reason for using care other than employment might be for participation in education or training activities or unpaid work.

Zaslow reviewed the content of these two child care sections in MFIP: Section H asks where the care is occurring (or occurred); how many of the mother's children are in the care situation; whether the care giver is paid and who pays for all or most of the care; which particular types of care are used for any of the mother's children and for how many hours per week; the total payment for child care for all of the mother's children; and whether there is assistance with paying. Section DD asks, for the focal child, whether particular types of care have been used since random assignment; how many different persons or arrangements of each type have been used since random assignment; and whether the care giver for each type of care is younger than 13, between 13 and 17, or older.

One item that had been recommended for the core was not included in MFIP: "As far as you know, is your child care provider licensed or regulated by the state?" (Yes/No/Don't Know; This question was to be asked regarding in-home child care but not center care). The group decided that this should be included among the items used in common where this is still possible.

There is at present no item concerning accidents or injuries while the focal child is in child care. The morning discussion, especially comments made by the representatives from Florida, had raised the possibility that such accidents or injuries might occur. The group decided to add a question to the child care section asking whether since random assignment the focal child had experienced an accident or injury while in child care that resulted in a visit to the emergency room. The Child Trends team will make this item available to the state teams.

Ross noted an alternative to asking about care quality that might perhaps be more fitting to a sample of school age children: asking about the three activities that the child engages in most while in the primary child care arrangement. Such an item would reveal, for example, whether watching television is the most frequent activity. Ross noted that they will be pretesting this item shortly for the Iowa evaluation. The group decided that this item should be optional. The Child Trends team will make this item available to all the state teams and provide any information provided by Mathematica Policy Research from the pretest.

9b. Child Care Calendar. A calendar format is used in Section DD to note the months since random assignment when each type of care was used. The calendar also notes the months during this period when the mother was employed. Section DD also asks the child's age when he/she first cared for him/herself and the number of hours the child cared for him/herself in the last week. For the primary child care arrangement for the focal child in the last week, there are questions about hours/week, group size, and number of care givers. The section ends with a series of questions about reactions to the major child care arrangement. Gallup-Black gave a presentation on how the child care calendar is being administered in MFIP using CAPI. Participants were able to examine an example of a completed child care calendar.

The group discussed whether school age children experienced enough child care beyond school hours to warrant the use of a child care calendar format, given the time that this format requires to complete. Gallup-Black noted that in the interviews completed thus far in MFIP, quite a bit of child care is being reported for the children in the sample, who are school-age children. Zaslow noted that there is evidence linking the development of school-age children to the quality of the before and after school programs they participate in. It was noted that child care for school age children was a topic in the recent White House Conference on child care. The group decided to retain the child care calendar.

While the group favored retaining the child care calendar, the issue remained regarding the period of time it should cover. In some of the state evaluations a period of more than two years would have elapsed since random assignment. The decision was made to focus the child care calendar on the two years prior to the survey, with the option of going back further, particularly for children between the ages of 5 to 8 years old at the time of the survey.

Zaslow noted that the MFIP items regarding child care can be used to get a measure of stability of child care, but that it should be considered a proxy measure rather than an exact measure of child care stability. The MFIP questions ask about the number of different providers or arrangements of each type used since random assignment. Yet, if a mother stopped using a care situation but then resumed using it, this will not be accounted for in the tally. The calendar notes months during which particular types of care were used (and types of care used concurrently), but does not note start and stop dates for specific arrangements. The group decided that the coverage of child care stability was sufficient given the approach used in MFIP.

It was noted that it will be critical for all of the states to be using the same definitions about each child care type. Child Trends staff will provide all the states with MFIP'S question by question specifications about types of care.

10. HOME ENVIRONMENT AND PARENTING PRACTICES

Sharon McGroder led the discussion on this set of constructs. Four aspects of the home environment were proposed as common core constructs for mixed-mode surveys, with a fifth core construct if surveys are to be conducted in the home: child abuse and neglect; domestic violence and abusive relationships; family routines; mothers' feelings of aggravation; and characteristics of the home environment.

In general, participation in welfare-to-work activities may influence many aspects of the clients' home life, and these changes are likely to affect children. Some policy makers fear that the added stressor of having to participate in welfare-to-work programs may be so great as to lead

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some parents to neglect and/or abuse their children. There is a strong link between low income and family violence, and there is growing evidence of domestic violence suffered by participants in welfare reform programs. Mothers who are mandated to participate in employment and educational activities might also experience an increase or a decrease in the degree to which their lives are routinized, or follow a regular schedule. For example, mandated employment may force mothers to *establish regular routines,* such as regular bedtimes and mealtimes. Children can benefit from such predictability. Alternatively, the home environment may become *more disorganized and less routinized* as a result of increased stress or because families have difficulties managing employment, transportation, and child care arrangements, and children may suffer from the increased disorganization.

Mothers who are mandated to participate in employment and educational activities might experience on the one hand, an increase in their subjective sense of stress, which can lead to more impatient and aggravated parenting practices. Also, questionable feelings of self-efficacy, time stress, or difficulties securing transportation or child care might increase mothers' feelings of aggravation in the parenting role. On the other hand, involvement in activities beyond the family may diminish negative feelings toward the parenting role, with greater parenting aggravation associated with poorer child outcomes.

10a. Child Abuse/Neglect. The MFIP questionnaire does not ask about child abuse and neglect because of the difficulty in obtaining accurate self-reports. The technical assistance team had recommended relying on administrative records on reported and substantiated abuse, which requires that states have the capacity to link their administrative records to survey members through a unique identifier. Several evaluators said that would be difficult to collect this administrative data with the limited dollars available. The costs vary by state and by whether the welfare office was already connected to the child welfare office data. They also wondered whether there was another way to collect this information besides administrative data. The quality of the data varies across states also, and in states where the data is of high quality, it could be a straightforward process. Howard Rolston then noted that several states provided estimates in their proposals. The prospectus sent to foundations reported that for the three states who proposed to collect this data administratively, the estimated total cost was $600,000 which includes administrative data on child support as well as child welfare. This issue will be revisited if additional funding becomes available.

10b. Domestic violence/abusive relationships. Child Trends had proposed nine items asking whether anyone has made it difficult to find or keep a job for a variety of reasons, which were developed by MDRC and used in the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey. MFIP used these items verbatim (GG1-GG9b, pp. 91-93). Also, Child Trends had proposed items asking whether or not anyone had ever abused them in various ways (e.g., threatened with physical harm; actually hit or kicked), who, and how long ago (also from the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey). MFIP substituted one item, and structured the items to obtain even more detail than had been proposed (asking about who and how long ago for *each* of six types of abuse). In the interest of consistency and comprehensiveness of the measure, Child Trends recommended adopting the MFIP items and response category format (p.94-95). Iowa agreed to field this measure and report on length.

Martha Moorehouse asked how well these items were working so far in the field in MFIP and in the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year survey. Adria Gallup-Black, who was heavily involved in designing as well as fielding these items, noted that these items are not asked in a phone survey because answering aloud may put the respondent in danger and does not yield honest answers. MFIP uses audio-CASI (Computer-Assisted Self-administered Interview) -- which is the first time such abuse items are obtained from audio CASI -- and preliminary checks indicate that these items are being answered.

10c. Family Routines. Child Trends proposed a seven-item scale that captures the frequency with which families do such things as eat meals together, do household chores, and have regular bedtimes. MFIP uses a seven-item routines scale that drops one recommended item and adds another item (child eats breakfast at a regular time) (see page 69 of survey). Child Trends recommended asking all eight items and using the MFIP response categories, so that both the MFIP seven-item scale and the Child Trends-recommended seven-item scale can be created. No disagreements were noted with this recommendation.

10d. Aggravation/stress in parenting. Child Trends proposed a five-item aggravation in parenting scale. MFIP dropped one item, relying on a four-item scale (p. 97). They also used different response categories than had been initially proposed by Child Trends, though MFIP's are consistent with what was used in the National Survey of America's Families Study. Child Trends recommended that the five-item scale that was originally proposed be used by the other states in order to be comparable to data collected in other studies -- including the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Child Outcomes Study, the National Survey of American Families (Assessing New Federalism) and the Survey of Program Dynamics. Child Trends also recommended using MFIP's response categories. The group approved this recommendation.

10e. Parenting Practices and the Home Environment. Involvement in welfare-to-work programs, as well as eventual employment, can influence many aspects of parenting, including involvement in joint activities, monitoring, discipline strategies, and the physical environment of the home. MFIP used the maternal report items from the HOME-Short Form (pages 70-74) as well as interviewer ratings of the home environment (page 104), as recommended by Child Trends in the revised measures notebook. In addition, because interviewer ratings of mother-child interactions from the HOME-SF require both the mother and child be in the home during the interview -- which may require re-scheduling callbacks and, thus, is more expensive -- MDRC consulted with Child Trends about options. In a prior memo, Kristin Moore reported on psychometric analyses showing what was lost by dropping these interviewer ratings and proposed obtaining additional maternal report items pertaining to discipline and monitoring in order to make up for the loss. MFIP includes these additional items as recommended by Child Trends. Child Trends recommended that the other states also use the HOME-SF (see pages 70-74 and

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104) and additional items used in MFIP [see pages 97-98 (discipline), and 98-99 (monitoring)], to maintain comparability with MFIP.

Finally, MFIP obtains interviewer ratings on physical characteristics of the neighborhood (pages 104-105 of the survey). Child Trends said that they would support other states' decisions to collect this data, but because it is not in the common core, these items are optional.

11. EDUCATION

Tamara Halle led the discussion on educational outcomes. Improving family income may have a significant and positive influence on children's educational outcomes. For example, increasing family income due to employment may make it possible for parents to provide their children with educational materials (such as books or toys) and the opportunity to engage in activities that could serve as sources of cognitive stimulation. Halle reviewed the five constructs related to educational outcomes included in the common core: engagement in school; attendance; performance; suspended or expelled; and grades. She noted that change in schools is covered in the stability/turbulence domain.

11a. Engagement in school. Tamara Halle noted that MFIP included the four-item school engagement scale used in the National Survey of America's Families that was recommended in the common core of constructs. All states agreed to used these same items.

11b. School attendance. School attendance was measured in MFIP using questions from the New Hope survey (Section G, pages 51 & 52). These questions ask -- for each child in the family -- what grade the child is in (with a code for "not in school" as an option), why the child is not attending school (including codes for hasn't started school yet, is being home schooled, health reasons, parental choice, graduated, and dropped out), and what month and year the child last attended school. Halle noted that while the MFIP questions gather information on school absence or dropout, they do not capture much detailed information about children who are in school but who are experiencing problems with absenteeism or tardiness. Halle urged the states to consider including two of the recommended questions (Q29 & 31) from the Prospects survey in addition to the questions already in MFIP for this construct. The Prospect items ask how many days in the past four weeks the child was late to school or missed school. Some concern was voiced by the states that asking these questions for each child in the household would be too time-consuming. It was agreed that the questions would be asked for the focal child, and that states had the option of asking the question for all children, if time allowed.

11c. School performance. MFIP included two items to measure school performance: one item (G11, page 53) asks if the child has ever repeated a grade in school; the other (EE1, page 86) asks whether the child ever received an academic honor. States agreed to ask these same questions.

Additionally, Halle pointed out that special education, ESL, and academically gifted classifications, or other educational classifications that may have a bearing on school performance, could be obtained through school records if permission was received from the parent; parental permission for accessing school records appears on page 103 of the MFIP survey.

11d. Suspension/Expulsion. MFIP included one item from the New Hope survey (EE3, page 86) to cover this construct. As specified in the core, this item covers any child residing in the household. States agreed to include this question in their surveys.

11e. Grades. Information about grades is requested for all children in the household. MFIP includes a question on page 51 (item G6) that asks the parent to evaluate each child's school performance, taking into account the child's school work and report card grades. Halle pointed out that the MFIP question was an indirect measure of grades and stressed that the only way of getting reliable data on grades would be to access school records. It was agreed that, for consistency's sake, that all states should use the MFIP question. However, states were urged to attempt to get parent permission to access school data; MFIP includes a form to obtain parental permission for school records on page 103 of the survey.

12. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Sharon McGroder led this discussion on children's health and safety outcomes. She noted that mothers' involvement in welfare-to-work activities may have implications for children's health and safety, specifically: the occurrence of accidents and injuries; hunger and nutrition; overall health; and teen pregnancy. Mothers' participation in welfare-to-work programs is likely to lead to increased time away from home. Unless the parent has a reliable child care arrangement for the child, the child may be at greater risk for accidents and injuries. Children who care for themselves or for their younger siblings may be placing themselves and their siblings at risk for accidents and injuries. Stress due to employment or other mandated activities may lead to more harsh discipline which, if extreme, could result in increased visits to the emergency room for accidents and injuries. Mothers' time away from home without adequate alternative supervision of her children could lead to increased sexual activity and pregnancy among her adolescent children. Early childbearing and fathering of children is related to truncated educational and employment opportunities and could lead to welfare dependency among adolescent children of current recipients. On the other hand, work requirements, job training, time limits and other waiver provisions may increase adolescents' motivation to delay parenthood.

In terms of hunger and nutrition, if families experience an increase in income through working or a combination of work and benefits, they may be less likely than other recipients to experience food shortages. This may be especially true for the states that are experimenting with increased income disregards. On the other hand, sanctions for non-participation may reduce available income and thus availability of nutritious food. Children who do not receive adequate nutrition experience numerous physical problems as well as problems concentrating in school.

12a. Accidents, injuries, poisoning. Child Trends recommended a widely-used single item asking whether the respondent's children had had an accident, injury, or poisoning requiring an emergency hospital visit. MFIP used this item verbatim (p. 60). Child Trends recommended that other states use this same item; there was agreement to do so.

12b. General Health. Children's general health may be affected by their mothers' participation in welfare-to-work programs -- through the mechanism described above. Child Trends recommended a widely-used single item pertaining to children's general health. MFIP included this item (page 78). Child Trends recommended that other states use this same item; there was agreement to do so.

12c. Teen Pregnancy. Child Trends recommended as part of the core that surveys ask which, if any, of the respondent's children have ever had or fathered a baby, and how old they were. MFIP used these items with slightly improved wording (pages 86-87). Child Trends recommended that other states use the MFIP item; there was agreement to do so.

12d. Hunger and Nutrition. Child Trends recommend the six-item USDA Food Security Module largely because this measure is being used in other national surveys which allows researchers to "benchmark" their findings against this national sample. However, MFIP used three different items in their survey (page 63-64). Barbara Goldman noted that this was because these fewer items -- approved by FNS -- were used in the 12-month survey, and they kept them for consistency across waves. She also noted that these items came closer to the concepts relevant to those facing welfare time limits. Howard Rolston agreed that measuring food security was important, and wondered if the Department of Agriculture could help them get at hunger. Kristin Moore suggested, as a default, that other states use the six-item Food Security Module as recommended and Child Trends would follow up with USDA to verify that this is still the set of items that they would recommend.

12e. Health at Birth. While mothers' participation in welfare-to-work activities cannot affect whether or not the focal child was born low-birth weight (under 5.5 pounds), received intensive care after birth, or was exposed prenatally to harmful substances, these aspects of the focal child's health at birth <u>can</u> have ramifications for their health, development, and learning throughout childhood which, in turn, can also influence mothers' successful participation in welfare-to-work activities. This suggests that analyses of program impacts on children's outcomes would benefit from being able to control for the fact that some focal children were already "at risk" for poorer health outcomes before their mothers were exposed to program activities. Indeed, there may be differential program impacts on mothers and/or focal children depending on whether or not the focal child had early health problems.

Sub-group measures, other than child gender, age and race/ethnicity, are difficult to obtain retrospectively. For example, child temperament might comprise a sub-group, but it was not possible to obtain temperament at birth and, while stable over time, it was too difficult and time-consuming to measure temperament among 5- to 12-year-olds. Health at birth, on the other hand, is relatively easy to obtain with very few items asked retrospectively. The key is selecting items on which we are fairly confident that the mother can accurately report, especially for her older children. Because this construct was not discussed for the common core, we cannot recommend that states collect this information -- we can only urge states to *consider* doing so.

Intensive Perinatal care. For states interested in asking about intensive care after birth, they can ask:

"Did (FOCAL CHILD) receive any newborn care in an intensive care unit, premature nursery, or any other type of special care unit?" (From NHIS, 1988)

Yes
No

Low Birth weight. For states interested in asking about birth weight, they can ask:

"How much did (FOCAL CHILD) weigh at birth? Was it . . .

"Less than 3 1/4 pounds?
"At least 3 1/4 but less than 5 ½ pounds?
"Over 5 ½ pounds?"

13. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Suzanne Le Menestrel led the discussion on the measurement of constructs in the social and emotional adjustment domain. There are several mechanisms through which welfare reform provisions might affect children's social and emotional adjustment. Maternal stress or depression rates, which may increase because of reduced grants, sanctions, or time limits, or because of the mandatory nature of program participation, is related to an increased incidence of child behavior problems. Similarly, changes in family living arrangements or family income may affect children's behavior. Alternatively, if welfare programs bring about enhanced maternal psychological well-being (for example, because of satisfaction with new employment roles), improved family economic well-being, and/or residence in a better neighborhood, behavior problems could diminish. Three constructs were selected by planning phase project participants to measure in the social and emotional adjustment domain. These include: behavior problems; arrests; and positive behaviors.

13a. Behavior problems. MFIP has included the Behavior Problems Index (BPI). The BPI is a 28-item parent report rating scale of children's behaviors based on the Child Behavior Checklist developed by Thomas Achenbach. The BPI can distinguish between children who have received clinical treatment from those who have not, and taps some of the more common behavior syndromes in children, such as antisocial "acting out," distractible-hyperactive behavior, and depressed-withdrawn behavior. It is widely used in many national level surveys (e.g., the NLSY79-CS) and has acceptable psychometric properties. Using the full BPI in the common core was approved by the state representatives and their evaluators.

13b. Arrests. This construct is being measured indirectly in MFIP by asking parents if their children have ever been in trouble with the police. Child Trends suggested adding a follow-up question about actual arrests because this will help sort out those children who are actually doing something wrong from those who may just be harassed by the police. Everyone agreed that this follow-up question should only be asked about children aged 10 and older.

13c. Positive behaviors. These are being measured in MFIP with the 25-item Positive Behavior Scale (PBS). This scale was developed for use in the New Chance evaluation conducted by MDRC. The scale was designed to tap three aspects of positive behaviors including compliance and self-control; social competence; and autonomy. Child Trends suggested that states could include the shorter, seven-item social competence subscale rather than the full PBS. Project participants agreed to include the social competence subscale, with the full PBS as an option.

V. INTERVIEWER TRAINING AND THE MONITORING OF DATA COLLECTION QUALITY

1. QUESTIONNAIRES

Lee Robeson, the survey director of the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies Five Year study from Response Analysis Corporation, talked about the importance of interviewer training and the monitoring of data collection quality. Robeson said that when data collection begins, there are two basic tools: the questionnaire and the interviewer. During training, the interviewers should come to understand everything that the survey developers understand. However, interviewers still need to be monitored in order to ensure that they are administering the questionnaires in the way in which the survey designers intended, and that they do not drift away from proper procedures over time.

Robeson noted that interviewers are social, curious people, but they are not social scientists, child development experts, or standardized test administrators. They need clear instructions and definitions that are free from jargon. The instructions should be embedded in the questionnaire itself so that interviewers do not have to rely on manuals. The ideal questionnaire would require no training, instructions, or definitions. The closer the actual questionnaire comes to this ideal, the more likely that interviewers will be able to read the questionnaire in the way it was designed. The wording of the questionnaire should not be left to the interviewer to interpret. During training, the interviewer should feel comfortable in "trusting" the questionnaire so that he or she does not ad lib or feel that she or he has to ad lib. The most important tool that an interviewer needs in training is a manual with all of the necessary information. The training itself should provide multiple opportunities to practice the newly learned material. The interviewers also need to be prepared to deal with disadvantaged neighborhoods and households, abusive situations, and crime in neighborhoods and households.

Following training, the quality of data being collected by questionnaires needs to be assessed. Robeson recommended asking interviewers to tape-record their interviews to better assess the

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quality of the data being collected. The tapes can be used by supervisors to determine whether the interviewers are reading and recording the survey correctly and maintaining a good, comfortable interaction with the respondent. Monitoring should begin immediately. Interviewers want to do a good job and their needs can best be met by quick feedback. It is also important to let interviewers know at the start how and when their work will be evaluated. Robeson said that weekly, personal contact with interviewers is essential.

There are several different sources that can be used to monitor the quality of questionnaires. First, the questionnaire instrument itself should be reviewed. Robeson suggested examining all key items and any items that might be potentially problematic. A review of questionnaires completed by the same interviewer to determine patterns is also helpful. Robeson also uses respondent tracking logs, notes, call logs, and site supervisors to monitor data collection quality. Respondents are also recontacted to verify that the interviews actually took place and were not forged. All monitoring efforts should also be documented to better track problems with interviewers.

2. CALENDARS

Please note that calendars were discussed more completely in the section on Child Care. Adria Gallup-Black reminded the group at this point that interviewers must receive very clear instructions in order to insure consistency in the data. The rules and guidelines for filling out the calendars should be explicit and practice time is necessary.

3. INTERVIEWER OBSERVATIONS

Martha Zaslow discussed the issue of training interviewers to make ratings. She noted that it has proven to be extremely helpful to have interviewer ratings in previous evaluation studies. These ratings give you the perspective of a different informant in the home. This permits you to discern whether a pattern of group differences, for example, is attributable entirely to maternal report or is corroborated by another informant.

At the same time, asking interviewers to complete ratings requires them to make judgements. This in turn requires that special steps be taken during interviewer training. Steps that Child Trends recommends based on previous experience with interviewer ratings include:

- Providing the interviewers with a sheet reminding them of the ratings they will need to complete and what aspects of the home environment they will need to be attending to during the home visit. This helps interviewers to be attentive to or look for the features of the environment that they will be rating.

- Providing specific decision rules during training on how to complete the ratings.

- Building the question by question specifications for the interviewer ratings right into the form the interviewers will be completing. In this way, interviewers have the criteria for the rating available to them each time they make a rating.

- Using words like "dark" and "not dark" rather than "yes" and "no" for ratings, to help to be certain that there is no problem in moving from the question or description to the rating.

- Photographs can be used in training to support the introduction of the specific criteria for each of the ratings. However, photographs cannot cover every possible exemplar, and should be used to support a more extensive discussion of each of the ratings.

Zaslow noted that at present, survey interviewers are not required to demonstrate inter-rater reliability on ratings of the home environment. This is a standard requirement in other types of research using ratings of the home environment. She noted that over time we should move in this direction. In the meantime it is critical to understand that training for the completion of interviewer ratings requires additional time and the provision of specific information on the criteria for each rating.

In the group discussion, others confirmed the particular importance of allocating time to training for interviewer ratings. It was agreed that all of the states should receive question by question specifications from the MFIP survey on each of the ratings of the home environment.

4. AUDIO COMPUTER ASSISTED SELF-ADMINISTERED INTERVIEWS (CASI)

Adria Gallup-Black gave the group a quick demonstration of audio-CASI. This technology involves the use of a lap-top computer and headphones so that the respondent can answer sensitive questions (e.g., questions about domestic violence, behavioral problems, and depression) in private. One key to making audio-CASI a success is having a good tutorial for the respondent. The tutorial and the program should be user-friendly and easy to operate. Preloaded information also can make administration easier. For example, random assignment date and child's name can be preloaded. As a respondent answers questions, her child's name will appear on the screen (although the audio will say "your child").

Gallup-Black described three additional features of the audio-CASI. First, for very sensitive items, respondents can choose to read the screen and turn off the sound, or she can turn off the screen and listen to the headphones. These features are helpful for working with respondents who can't read. Second, respondents can go back and review or change previous answers. Finally, skip patterns can be programed in to simplify administration of the survey.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF WELFARE TO WORK STRATEGIES STUDY ABOUT INTERVIEWER TRAINING AND THE MONITORING OF DATA COLLECTION QUALITY

Lee Robeson discussed the "lessons" that he has learned by fielding the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWS) surveys. He said that, given the lengthy field period, interviewer attrition and interviewer "drift" (e.g., interviewers asking questions differently than before) are two things that one must be prepared for. Initial over staffing helps to moderate attrition, although restaffing and retraining is often required. Monitoring interviewers' performance using cassette tapes helps identify drift when it occurs.

The second thing that he and his colleagues at Response Analysis have learned is that there is no way to adequately prepare interviewers to work in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Having older, more experienced interviewers is better, because they will often stay with the study after the training and first interview. Unfortunately, the older interviewers are more resistant to training, because they think they know how to do things better.

Robeson has also learned that it is essential to include personal interaction in training and monitoring. Survey firms should insist on weekly contact with interviewers and should hold refresher training sessions every few months. These sessions help to build morale and boost production. These periodic meetings are particularly important with a lengthy data collection time. Validating the interviews is also important. The interviewers should be told that 100 percent of their interviews are being validated.

Finally, Robeson said that reliability is an important concern when relying on interviewers to make assessments, particularly of the home environment. Interviewers are not a homogeneous group; they come from dissimilar backgrounds. Without adequate training they will not all view a situation the same way. More often than not, they will not agree with the researcher's view of the situation either. To ensure reliable results, thorough training is required. He offered the example of training interviewers to rate aspects of the physical environment. Showing photographs labeled with the appropriate rating is a beginning, but the training should go beyond that, for example, pointing out particular parts of the photograph that lead to a particular rating, and implementing training that has been shown to provide high inter-rater reliability.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED FROM FIELDING THE MINNESOTA FAMILY INVESTMENT (MFIP) PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Adria Gallup-Black from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation discussed the lessons that she has learned from being involved in the fielding of the MFIP questionnaire. First, she said that tracking respondents has been a big issue, not necessarily because of refusals but because of frequent moves. This problem with tracking has cost implications for the study, and the interviewers have to be creative in finding the respondents. They have found that incentives are useful in keeping the refusal rate down (after people have been found in the first place), but

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some respondents want more than $15 for the time and trouble of an intensive interview. Gallup-Black said that a questionnaire like MFIP's cannot be fielded without incentives.

VIII. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR THE OPERATIONAL PHASE

Kristin Moore led the discussion about the technical assistance needs of the state representatives and third-party evaluators. Below is the list of technical assistance needs that will be addressed:

- Child Trends will consider how to create a ListServe so that project participants can share information about their evaluations.

- Decide on which measures should be asked of respondents when the focal child is not living with the mother.

- Distribute questionnaire instruments and interviewer training materials to project participants.

- Child Trends will review drafts of questionnaires and provided feedback to the evaluators.

- Consistent criteria across the five evaluations for selecting the focal child need to be developed.

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Meeting of the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes Operational Phase
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December 9, 1997
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ATTACHMENT A

Core Constructs for the Project on State-Level Child Outcomes(4/8/97)

TARGET OF WELFARE POLICIES	OTHER VARIABLES LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY STATE POLICIES	ASPECT OF CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY PREVIOUS COLUMNS	CHILD OUTCOMES
INCOME:	**PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING:**	**CHILD CARE:**	**EDUCATION:**
Total income	Depression	Type	Engagement in school (ages 6-12)
Sources of Income (mother's earnings, father's earnings, child support, AFDC, food stamps, SSI, Foster Care/Adoption)		Extent	School attendance (All Child)
Stability of Income	**STABILITY AND TURBULENCE:**	Quality (group size, ratio, licensing, parent perception)	School Performance (All Child)
Financial Strain/Material hardship	Foster care	Stability	Suspended/expelled (All Child)
EMPLOYMENT:	Stability in child care	*Child Care Calendar for last several years*	Grades (ages 6-12)
Any vs. None	Stability in income		
Health benefits through employment	# of moves of residence	**HOME ENVIRONMENT AND PARENTING PRACTICES:**	**HEALTH AND SAFETY:**
Wages (hourly)	Change in marital status or cohabitation	Child Abuse/neglect (Admin. Data)	Hunger/nutrition (ages 5-12)
Hours of employment	Why child not living with family	Domestic Violence/Abusive Relationships	Rating of child's health (ages 5-12)
Stability of employment		Family Routines	Regular source of care (ages 5-12)
Education/Licenses	**ABSENT PARENT INVOLVEMENT:**	Aggravation/stress in parenting	Teen Childbearing (ages 14-17), (All Child)
Job Skills (Hard)	Whether child support provided	*HOME (Emotional Support and Cognitive Stimulation Scales)*	Accidents and injuries (All Child)
Multiple jobs concurrently	Paternity establishment		
Barriers to Employment (harassment, violence)	Frequency of contact with child		**SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT:**
			Behavior problems Index (ages 5-12)
FAMILY FORMATION:	**USE OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES:**		Arrests (All Child)
Nonmarital birth/Marital birth	Food stamps		Positive Behaviors/Social Competence Scale (ages 5-12)
Child/Family living arrangements	Medicaid (awareness, use, eligibility)		
Marital Status, whether married to biological or non-biological father	Child care subsidy (awareness, use, eligibility)		
	Access to medical care		
	CONSUMPTION:		
	% of income spent on child care and rent		

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Constructs in Italics = In-Home Survey
All Child = All Child Module

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