

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 12, 2024

Contact: Tracy Schmidt  
Tschmidt@brightpoint.org

**Brightpoint, State of Illinois Unveil Statewide Guaranteed Income Pilot Program to Safeguard Families from Child Welfare System**

*Innovative study will determine if financial stability positively impacts family outcomes*

CHICAGO – Brightpoint, formerly Children’s Home & Aid, and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (Illinois DCFS) announced today the launch of Empower Parenting with Resources (EmPwR), the nation’s largest guaranteed income pilot program for families involved in the child welfare system. The program, spearheaded by the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, in collaboration with the William T. Grant Foundation and the Doris Duke Foundation, will evaluate the impact of cash stipends on family stability, well-being and future involvement with the child welfare system, with contributions from researchers at the University of Connecticut and Rutgers University.

“Caring for children and families and doing what we can to prevent their entry into DCFS is one of our key priorities,” said **Heidi E. Mueller, director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services**. “We are proud to support this innovative study that seeks a solution to keep children with their families and keep families stable, so children can grow up in their own communities with the people they love.”

“Brightpoint has been deeply invested in understanding how preventative services and economic stability are vital for family stability, particularly to families in the child welfare system,” said **Mike Shaver, president and CEO of Brightpoint**. “EmPwR reaffirms our commitment to a holistic approach to family welfare, as backed by the policy recommendations in our newly released paper [‘Economic Stability is Family Stability: Economic policies support families and reduce interactions with the child welfare system.’](#) EmPwR also aligns with the strategic mission of our [Blueprint for Impact](#), which prioritizes preemptive measures to address challenges before they escalate into life-altering crises.”

EmPwR offers participating families a monthly cash stipend of at least \$100 a month, depending on family size and location, for 12 months without restrictions. All families have been referred by Illinois DCFS for the Intact Family Services program, which allows them to stay together safely while they receive individualized support for their needs. The stipend amount is based on household size and local cost of living.

Led by principal investigators Will Schneider, Ph.D., associate professor and faculty director of the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) at the School of Social Work at Illinois and Meg Feely, Ph.D., associate professor of community organizing at the UConn School of Social Work, researchers will compare outcomes for 400 families to that of a control group of 400 families receiving standard support services from Brightpoint to determine whether the cash benefit enhances stability and prevents child neglect and abuse.

"Studies indicate that when families on the edge of entering the child welfare system have financial stability, they are less likely to involve welfare agencies," **said Ben Lough, dean, School of Social Work at Illinois.** "EmPwR, influenced by this data and similar efforts nationwide, will observe how families use the funds to learn about their spending habits and priorities, challenge assumptions and guide future support strategies."

"As stewards of our foundation's mission to combat inequality in youth outcomes, we eagerly embrace the opportunity to engage in this research endeavor," **said Adam Gamoran, president of the William T. Grant Foundation.** "By leveraging our resources to support rigorous research efforts, we aspire to drive meaningful change and foster a future where every young person has equitable access to opportunity and success."

Enrollment is slated to begin this fall with support from Illinois DCFS, the program's largest funder.

For more information about the EmPwR pilot go to [www.empwrstudy.com](http://www.empwrstudy.com).

###

**About Brightpoint** - Brightpoint, formerly Children's Home & Aid, has served Illinois children since 1883. We now engage with nearly 30,000 children, youth, and families each year in 67 counties across the state. Our organization's mission is to advance the well-being of children by investing in families to disrupt the systemic and multi-generational cycle of racial, social, and economic inequality. We strive to build an equitable world where all children and families thrive in strong communities.

**About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** - Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to reports received by the Child Abuse Hotline at [childabuse.illinois.gov](http://childabuse.illinois.gov) (non-emergency situations) or 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship or adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.

**About the William T. Grant Foundation** – Founded in 1936, the William T. Grant Foundation supports research to improve the lives of young people in the United States. Today the Foundation is focused on studies that help build, test, and improve strategies to reduce inequality in youth outcomes and improve the use of research evidence in policy and practice. An independent, nonprofit grantmaking organization, the Foundation is based in New York City.

**About the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign** - The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is a public land-grant research university in Illinois in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana. It is the flagship institution of the University of Illinois system and was founded in 1867. The university serves the people of Illinois through a shared commitment to excellence in teaching, research, public engagement, economic development and health care. The School of Social Work enhances people's health and wellbeing, and empowers individuals, communities, and organizations to dismantle inequitable systems and promote social justice. We conduct cutting-edge interdisciplinary research with real world impact, educate students to be effective and innovative practitioners, and collaborate with community partners to reimagine and design solutions to social challenges.