

Federal and State/Local Child Welfare Agency Spending per Child, 2004–2014

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Child welfare agencies across the United States protect and promote the well-being of children and youth who are at risk of, or who have been victims of, maltreatment. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs, Child Trends conducts the Child Welfare Financing Survey every other year. This important survey promotes understanding of how much child welfare agencies spend and which funding streams they use. For example, we know that over half of the \$29.1 billion spent by child welfare agencies in state fiscal year (SFY) 2014 came from state and local sources, and less than half came from federal sources. We also know that, over time, the proportion of federal expenditures has decreased and the proportion of state/local expenditures has increased.

While this aggregate information helps us understand trends, it does not account for changes in child populations—important context for understanding changes in child-level spending. This brief summarizes findings from an analysis of federal and state/local child welfare agency spending *per child* between SFYs 2004 and 2014.

Approach

For this brief, Child Trends combined child welfare agency expenditures from the Child Welfare Financing Survey and child population data from the KidsCount Data Center to calculate child welfare agency spending per child in the general population.^{a,b} We used the general child population because restricting our analyses to foster care caseloads, investigations, or prevention cases would exclude child welfare agencies' work on behalf of children and families not included in official caseloads. In using the general child population, we have also provided a common measure across states, avoiding issues associated with state variation in how children are determined to be formally part of the child welfare system.

We separately calculated federal and state/local per-child child welfare agency spending to promote understanding about how these two broad funding sources have changed over time. All dollars were adjusted for inflation (presented in 2014 dollars).

^a Per child spending was calculated for states with complete federal expenditure or state/local expenditure information on each round of the Child Welfare Financing Survey included in this analysis.

^b Child population only captures those under age 18, which results in a slight undercount of the population that could receive services from the child welfare agency because states can provide services to some young people ages 18 and older.

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Findings

Federal funding

In SFY 2014, child welfare agencies in the United States spent \$12.8 billion in federal funds. With more than 74 million children in the United States, this represents approximately \$172 in federal spending per child by child welfare agencies during that fiscal year.

At the state level, the average federal spending per child dropped 19 percent between SFYs 2004 and 2014, from \$216 to \$174 per child.^c Ten states saw an increase in per-child federal expenditures (an average 22 percent increase per state), while 32 states experienced a decrease (an average 24 percent decrease per state).

State/local funding

In SFY 2014, child welfare agencies in the United States spent \$16.3 billion in state and local funds, or approximately \$222 per child.

At the state level, the average state and local spending per child increased 8 percent between SFYs 2004 and 2014, from \$236 to \$255 per child.^d Twenty-seven states saw an increase in per-child state and local expenditures (an average 44 percent increase per state), while 15 states experienced a decrease (an average 25 percent decrease per state).

Patterns

The following patterns emerged among the 36 states with complete federal and state/local expenditure data for SFY 2004 and SFY 2014:

- Sixteen (16) states experienced **decreases** in per-child federal expenditures and **increases** in per-child state and local expenditures.
- Eleven (11) states (including the District of Columbia) experienced **decreases in both** federal and state and local expenditures per child.
- Seven states saw **increases in both** categories.
- Two states experienced **increases** in per-child federal expenditures and **decreases** in per-child state and local expenditures.

The size of state-level increases and decreases in per-child expenditures varies in magnitude. See Table 1 for more information.

^cThese figures are average per-child federal expenditures among the 42 states for which there is complete federal expenditure data in SFY 2004 and SFY 2014. The amount reported here for SFY 2014 (\$174) differs from the amount reported in the previous paragraph (\$172) because (1) the amount reported in the previous paragraph was computed by dividing total child welfare agency federal expenditures across all states by the total number of children in the country; it was not computed as a state-level average, and (2) we restricted the analysis of change over time to the 42 states for which there is complete federal expenditure data in SFY 2004 and SFY 2014.

^dThese figures are average per-child state and local expenditures among the 42 states for which there is complete state and local expenditure data in SFY 2004 and SFY 2014. The amount reported here for SFY 2014 (\$255) differs from the amount reported in the previous paragraph (\$222) because (1) the amount reported in the previous paragraph was computed by dividing total child welfare agency state/local expenditures across all states by the total number of children in the country; it was not computed as a state-level average, and (2) we restricted the analysis of change over time to the 42 states for which there is complete state/local expenditure data in SFY 2004 and SFY 2014.

Table 1. Patterns of Changes in Per-child Expenditures from SFY 2004 to SFY 2014

State	Change in federal expenditures per child	Change in state/local expenditures per child
Decreases in federal expenditures per child and increases in state/local expenditures per child		
Alabama	-37%	14%
Alaska	-14%	53%
Connecticut	-5%	43%
Delaware	-31%	25%
Maryland	-25%	13%
Massachusetts	-33%	32%
North Carolina	-5%	29%
North Dakota	-9%	14%
Ohio	-2%	33%
Oklahoma	-11%	83%
Oregon	-14%	60%
Pennsylvania	-51%	32%
Rhode Island	-36%	13%
Texas	-16%	66%
Utah	-30%	19%
Washington	-17%	1%
Decreases in both federal and state/local expenditures per child		
Colorado	-37%	-2%
District of Columbia	-44%	-15%
Florida	-10%	-3%
Georgia	-9%	-3%
Idaho	-25%	-39%
Illinois	-19%	-26%
Iowa	-34%	-27%
Minnesota	-42%	-17%
Missouri	-29%	-7%
New Hampshire	-33%	-19%
New Mexico	-10%	-35%
Increases in both federal and state/local expenditures per child		
Arkansas	28%	8%
Kentucky	21%	11%
Montana	2%	39%
Nebraska	53%	35%
New Jersey	68%	62%
Tennessee	25%	9%
Virginia	4%	161%

Table 1, cont. Patterns of Changes in Per-child Expenditures from SFY 2004 to SFY 2014

State	Change in federal expenditures per child	Change in state/local expenditures per child
Increases in federal per-child expenditures and decreases in state/local expenditures per child		
California	<1%	-40%
Vermont	2%	-43%

While Table 1 shows variation across states, these findings generally mirror the overall findings from the SFY 2014 Child Welfare Financing Survey: federal expenditures are decreasing over time as state/local expenditures are increasing.

Comparisons across states

Table 2 presents SFY 2014 federal and state/local expenditures per child for each state. The table is organized by U.S. geographic region to facilitate comparisons between nearby states, and illustrates a great deal of variation in per-child spending within and across regions. We urge caution in comparing per-child spending across states because there are many reasons for spending variation that do not relate to the amount or quality of services provided by a child welfare agency. For example, the cost of living and needs of the child population vary across states. And because child welfare services are administered locally, either through state or county-administered systems, there is variation in how child welfare agencies fund their activities. For example, child welfare agencies in some states rely primarily on federal funding, while others rely more on state and local sources.

Table 2. SFY 2014 Per-child Expenditures, by Region

State	Federal expenditures per child	State/local expenditures per child
NORTHEAST: New England		
Connecticut	\$345	\$626
Maine	\$162	\$292
Massachusetts	\$146	\$445
New Hampshire	\$99	\$122
Rhode Island	\$289	\$605
Vermont	\$425	\$159
NORTHEAST: Middle Atlantic		
New Jersey	\$169	\$319
New York	\$260	\$410
Pennsylvania	\$136	\$513
MIDWEST: East North Central		
Illinois	\$215	\$162
Indiana	\$162	\$340
Michigan	\$328	\$174
Ohio	\$175	\$309
Wisconsin	\$114	\$228

Table 2, cont. SFY 2014 Per-child Expenditures, by Region

State	Federal expenditures per child	State/local expenditures per child
MIDWEST: West North Central		
Iowa	\$188	\$206
Kansas	\$123	\$200
Minnesota	\$124	\$281
Missouri	\$192	\$182
Nebraska	\$149	\$335
North Dakota	\$244	\$166
South Dakota	\$120	\$148
SOUTH: South Atlantic		
Delaware	\$69	\$262
District of Columbia	\$576	\$1,363
Florida	\$141	\$128
Georgia	\$139	\$84
Maryland	\$103	\$300
North Carolina	\$111	\$135
South Carolina	\$142	\$90
Virginia	\$113	\$217
West Virginia	\$286	\$55
SOUTH: East South Central		
Alabama	\$122	\$133
Kentucky	\$201	\$326
Mississippi	\$101	\$99
Tennessee	\$207	\$248
SOUTH: West South Central		
Arkansas	\$116	\$79
Louisiana	\$124	Unknown
Oklahoma	\$163	\$190
Texas	\$95	\$92
WEST: Mountain		
Arizona	\$231	\$148
Colorado	\$95	\$236
Idaho	\$91	\$44
Montana	\$137	\$174
Nevada	\$113	\$219
New Mexico	\$117	\$67
Utah	\$79	\$118
Wyoming	\$142	\$133

Table 2, cont. SFY 2014 Per-child Expenditures, by Region

State	Federal expenditures per child	State/local expenditures per child
WEST: Pacific		
Alaska	\$217	\$487
California	\$253	\$196
Hawai'i	\$145	\$222
Oregon	\$277	\$252
Washington	\$141	\$189

States are organized by Census Bureau regions and divisions. Puerto Rico is not included in this table.

Appendix: Per-child Spending by State

Table A1: Federal spending per child by state from 2004-2014

State	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Alabama	\$195	\$171	\$168	\$176	\$153	\$122
Alaska	\$253	\$290	\$258	\$248	Missing	\$217
Arizona	Missing	Missing	\$196	\$196	\$228	\$231
Arkansas	\$91	\$105	\$103	\$110	\$118	\$116
California	\$251	\$229	\$240	\$267	\$239	\$253
Colorado	\$150	\$169	\$137	\$144	\$123	\$95
Connecticut	\$363	\$386	\$337	\$323	\$343	\$345
Delaware	\$101	\$71	\$59	\$56	\$52	\$69
District of Columbia	\$1,022	\$1,112	\$888	\$780	\$618	\$576
Florida	\$156	\$146	\$158	\$166	\$154	\$141
Georgia	\$153	\$262	\$169	\$158	\$144	\$139
Hawai'i	Missing	\$210	\$218	\$216	Missing	\$145
Idaho	\$120	\$104	\$86	\$77	\$79	\$91
Illinois	\$265	\$222	\$203	\$218	\$222	\$215
Indiana	Missing	\$130	\$116	\$126	\$134	\$162
Iowa	\$283	\$299	\$187	\$205	\$194	\$188
Kansas	\$213	\$128	\$105	\$146	\$123	\$123
Kentucky	\$167	\$195	\$202	\$210	\$196	\$201
Louisiana	\$140	Missing	\$181	\$276	\$153	\$124
Maine	Missing	\$150	\$149	\$173	\$141	\$162
Maryland	\$137	\$172	\$200	\$177	\$154	\$103
Massachusetts	\$219	\$207	\$210	\$167	\$147	\$146
Michigan	Missing	\$234	Missing	\$268	\$282	\$328
Minnesota	\$212	\$161	\$132	\$137	\$125	\$124
Mississippi	Missing	Missing	\$82	\$78	\$81	\$101
Missouri	\$269	\$182	\$159	\$169	\$183	\$192
Montana	\$134	\$164	\$146	\$161	\$143	\$137
Nebraska	\$97	\$110	\$124	\$121	\$110	\$149
Nevada	\$93	\$100	\$84	\$105	\$96	\$113
New Hampshire	\$149	\$185	\$161	\$163	\$108	\$99
New Jersey	\$101	\$139	\$137	\$163	\$156	\$169
New Mexico	\$129	\$127	\$126	\$119	\$125	\$117
New York	\$372	Missing	\$256	\$406	\$312	\$260
North Carolina	\$116	\$115	\$123	\$119	\$121	\$111
North Dakota	\$268	\$273	\$285	\$325	\$247	\$244
Ohio	\$178	\$213	\$179	\$181	\$171	\$175
Oklahoma	\$184	\$180	\$193	\$171	\$164	\$163

Table A1, cont.: Federal spending per child by state from 2004-2014

State	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Oregon	\$321	\$353	\$307	\$329	\$316	\$277
Pennsylvania	\$277	\$160	\$189	\$199	\$158	\$136
Puerto Rico	Missing	Missing	\$37	Missing	\$27	\$35
Rhode Island	\$451	\$427	Missing	Missing	\$279	\$289
South Carolina	Missing	\$183	\$150	\$166	\$131	\$142
South Dakota	\$196	\$187	\$171	\$174	\$137	\$120
Tennessee	\$166	\$188	\$149	\$164	\$184	\$207
Texas	\$113	\$118	\$128	\$131	\$99	\$95
Utah	\$113	\$92	\$105	\$103	\$79	\$79
Vermont	\$416	\$435	\$420	\$451	\$421	\$425
Virginia	\$110	\$120	\$107	\$109	\$103	\$113
Washington	\$169	\$178	\$187	\$186	\$152	\$141
West Virginia	Missing	Missing	Missing	Missing	\$443	\$286
Wisconsin	\$147	\$165	\$140	\$157	\$134	\$114
Wyoming	Missing	\$104	\$96	\$99	\$80	\$142
U.S. TOTAL	\$202	\$185	\$176	\$197	\$176	\$172

Table A2: State and local spending per child by state from 2004-2014

State	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Alabama	\$117	\$137	\$173	\$144	\$129	\$133
Alaska	\$319	\$386	\$675	\$720	\$574	\$487
Arizona	\$101	\$149	\$179	\$156	\$112	\$148
Arkansas	\$73	\$67	\$84	\$104	\$89	\$79
California	\$328	\$292	\$233	\$276	\$201	\$196
Colorado	\$242	\$230	\$248	\$232	\$227	\$236
Connecticut	\$438	\$570	\$705	\$707	\$656	\$626
Delaware	\$209	\$235	\$261	\$217	\$243	\$262
District of Columbia	\$1,597	\$1,846	\$2,571	\$2,192	\$1,667	\$1,363
Florida	\$132	\$146	\$170	\$153	\$130	\$128
Georgia	\$86	\$137	\$116	\$81	\$84	\$84
Hawai'i	Missing	\$235	\$261	\$242	Missing	\$222
Idaho	\$72	\$50	\$65	\$56	\$44	\$44
Illinois	\$219	\$235	\$240	\$211	\$176	\$162
Indiana	\$233	\$343	Missing	\$225	\$268	\$340
Iowa	\$282	Missing	\$231	\$210	\$198	\$206
Kansas	Missing	\$352	\$275	\$228	\$214	\$200
Kentucky	\$294	\$284	\$314	\$322	\$319	\$326

Table A2, cont.: State and local spending per child by state from 2004-2014

State	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Louisiana	\$87	\$98	Missing	Missing	Missing	Missing
Maine	Missing	\$343	\$332	\$316	\$300	\$292
Maryland	\$264	\$251	\$277	\$271	\$263	\$300
Massachusetts	\$338	\$373	\$409	\$416	\$389	\$445
Michigan	\$149	\$154	\$71	\$63	\$169	\$174
Minnesota	\$338	\$325	\$344	\$285	\$302	\$281
Mississippi	\$30	\$30	\$39	\$69	\$74	\$99
Missouri	\$196	Missing	\$196	\$186	\$178	\$182
Montana	\$125	\$161	\$177	\$172	\$167	\$174
Nebraska	\$249	\$238	\$330	\$382	\$375	\$335
Nevada	Missing	\$130	\$166	\$197	\$186	\$219
New Hampshire	\$151	\$127	\$240	\$202	\$134	\$122
New Jersey	\$197	\$264	\$345	\$317	\$331	\$319
New Mexico	\$103	\$43	\$86	\$91	\$73	\$67
New York	Missing	Missing	\$535	\$522	\$418	\$410
North Carolina	\$105	\$112	\$113	\$119	\$103	\$135
North Dakota	\$146	\$154	\$134	\$130	\$165	\$166
Ohio	\$233	\$185	\$146	\$131	\$346	\$309
Oklahoma	\$104	Missing	\$118	\$99	\$119	\$190
Oregon	\$157	\$211	\$176	\$202	\$242	\$252
Pennsylvania	\$389	\$507	\$551	\$546	\$481	\$513
Puerto Rico	Missing	Missing	\$141	\$117	\$151	\$161
Rhode Island	\$537	\$597	Missing	Missing	\$578	\$605
South Carolina	Missing	\$53	\$104	\$87	\$86	\$90
South Dakota	Missing	\$149	\$128	\$131	\$138	\$148
Tennessee	\$228	\$228	\$215	\$198	\$175	\$248
Texas	\$56	\$66	\$74	\$88	\$90	\$92
Utah	\$99	\$113	Missing	Missing	\$98	\$118
Vermont	\$276	\$309	\$286	\$261	\$303	\$159
Virginia	\$83	\$222	\$311	\$257	\$273	\$217
Washington	\$186	\$188	\$226	\$214	\$179	\$189
West Virginia	\$245	\$293	\$340	\$346	\$370	\$55
Wisconsin	Missing	Missing	\$189	\$189	\$225	\$228
Wyoming	\$181	\$148	\$285	\$296	Missing	\$133
U.S. TOTAL	\$204	\$219	\$238	\$233	\$220	\$222