



## Improving Outcomes for Children at Risk of Maltreatment and Abuse

### Overview

Policymakers lack reliable evidence to inform child removal policy in the case of maltreatment and abuse. RIPL developed state-of-the-art science to measure the impact of removal policy on children using administrative data. In one state, CPS removal **improves educational outcomes for girls under the age of six**, with **no significant positive or negative impact on later life outcomes for boys or girls after the age of six**.

### Measuring What Helps At-Risk Children

Children removed from their homes tend to experience poorer outcomes than their non-removed peers. Nearly 20 percent of CPS investigations across the country will result in removal.<sup>1</sup> But does removal help children reach their full potential, or harm them?

In partnership with the Office of the Governor and executive agencies in Rhode Island, we built a new data lake of integrated and anonymized administrative records, unlocking the power of data and science to improve policy and lives. We used this data lake to measure the impact of removal from a home on a child's short- and long-run outcomes. RIPL found that removal *causes*:<sup>3</sup>

- Better educational outcomes for girls under the age of six.** We find reductions in Individualized Education Program participation and increases in standardized test scores for girls removed before the age of six (see Figure 1). Although there are some negative impacts for boys of all ages, these are not statistically significant. With a larger sample size, we would be able to produce statistically significant results.
- No significant impact on later life outcomes regardless of gender or age.** We find no impact of removal on rates of juvenile conviction, high school dropout, college enrollment, or teen pregnancy.
- For girls, removal **significantly increases the likelihood of post-investigation criminal charges or incarceration** for parents and caretakers who are the perpetrators of abuse or neglect.

We show that these results are not simply because of removed children transferring to different or better schools, because of increased school mobility or characteristics of school attended. These results are consistent with mounting evidence that both gender and age may be strong mediators for the impact of removal in cases of abuse and neglect on child development. **They provide policymakers with the facts necessary to make informed decisions to improve children's lives.** This analysis can be replicated at low cost with data that states and local counties already have.

