



Institute for  
Research on  
Poverty

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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# Building and Using Integrated Data Systems (IDS) to Promote Cross-Agency Problem-Solving in Human Services: The Wisconsin Experience

National Association for  
Welfare and Research Statistics

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# Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP)

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- Established in 1966 during the War on Poverty
- Functions as independent, multi-disciplinary center within the College of Letters & Science at the UW-Madison

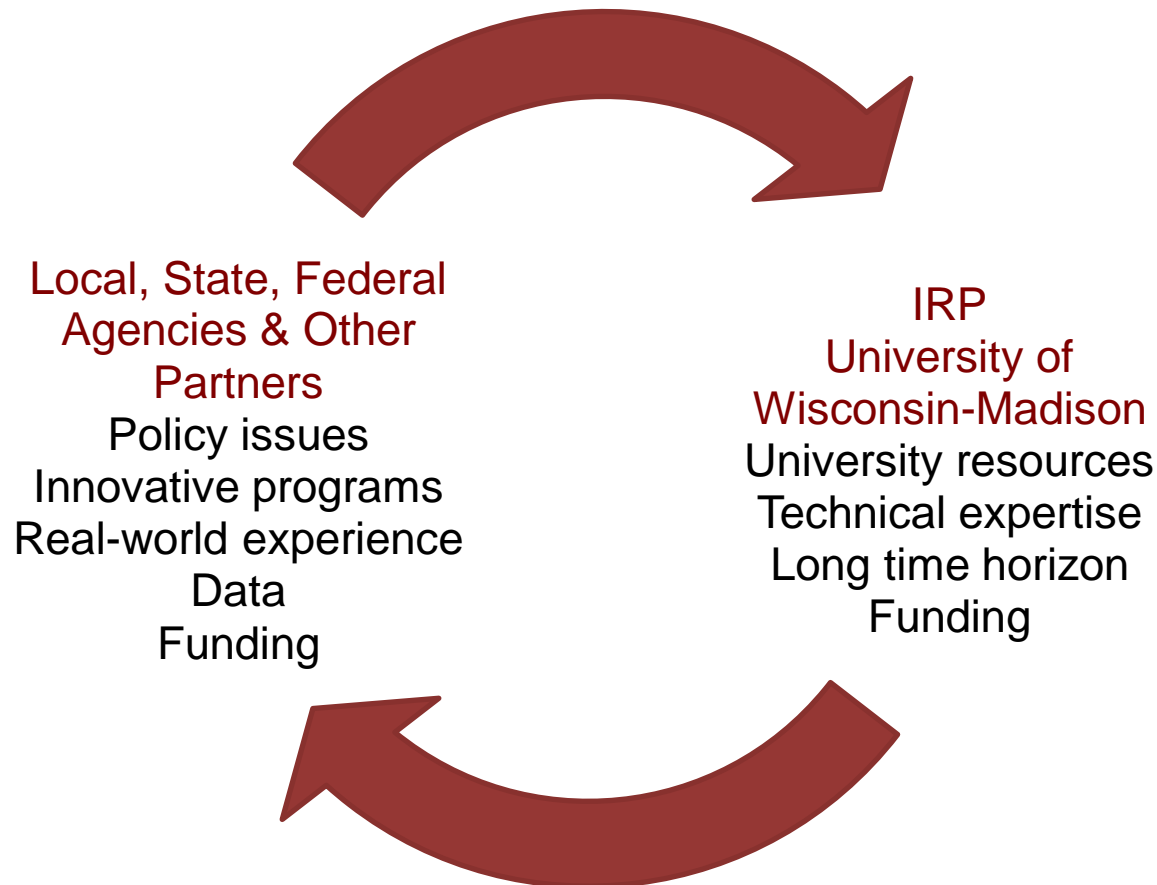
- Core infrastructure funding from UW-Madison and U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services
- ~\$30 million in grants and contracts from foundations, state and federal agencies



# Realizing “The Wisconsin Idea”

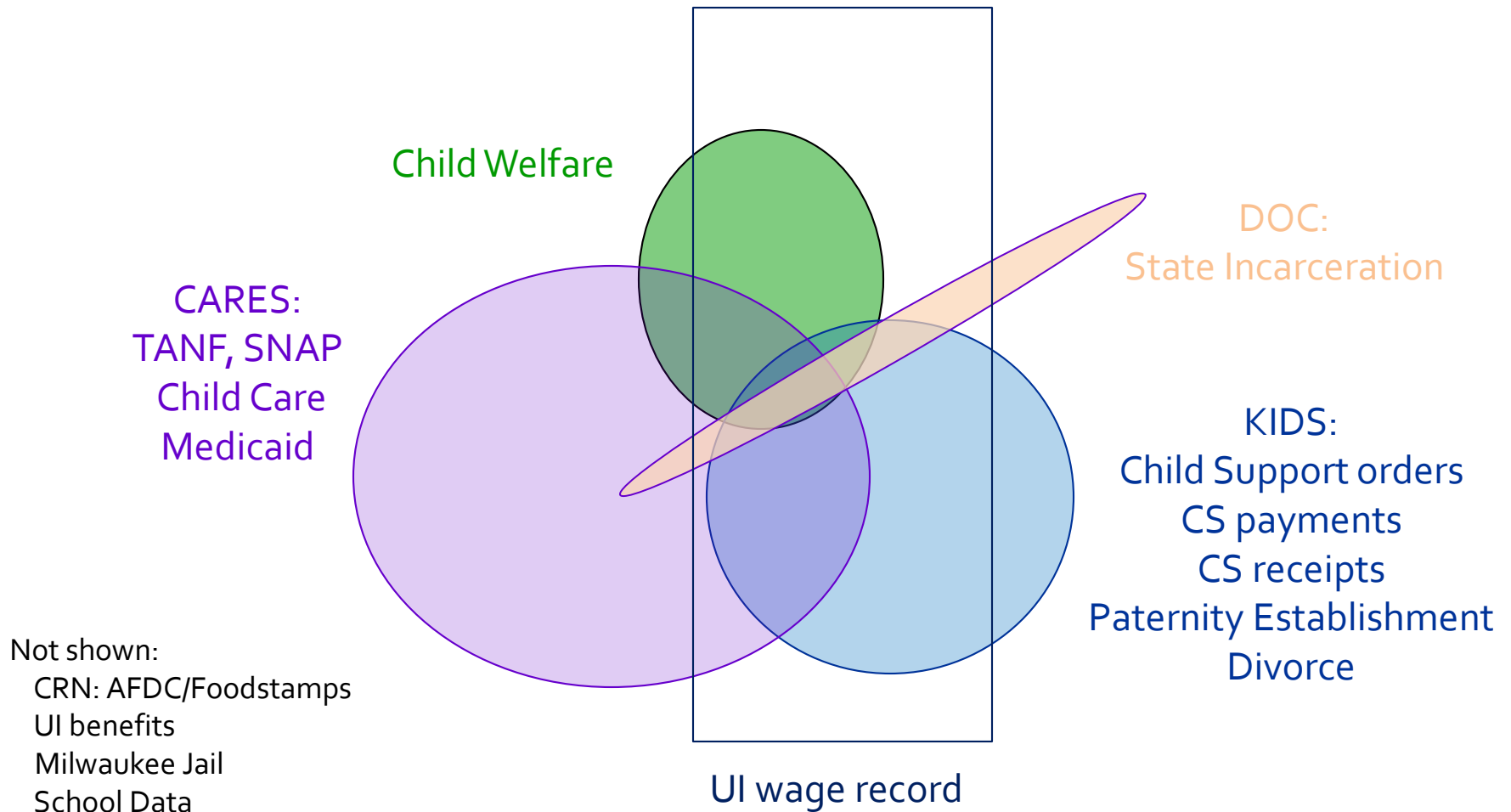
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## Collaboration Supports Policy Development and Academic Research



# The Wisconsin Administrative Data Core

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# Current Wisconsin State Administrative Data Resources

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## **CORE – fully linked:**

- SNAP/Food Stamps (CRN, CARES)
- Child Protective Services (WiSACWIS)
- AFDC/TANF (CRN, CARES)
- Medicaid/Badgercare eligibility & claims (CRN, CARES)
- Child Care Subsidy (CARES)
- Child Support (KIDS)
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UI)
- Incarceration (Dept. of Corrections)
- Milwaukee Jail

## **REGULAR MATCH:**

- Wage Records (UI)
- Dept. of Public Instruction (K-12)

## **SPECIALIZED MATCH**

### **(ad hoc/samples):**

- Department of Revenue
- Juvenile Circuit Court Records
- SSI records (CARES)
- Vital Records (births/paternity)
- Circuit Court Records (CCAP; foreclosures)
- Family Court Records (not electronic)
- TANF Applicants (not electronic)
- Parent Surveys
- CSPED

# Identifying Questions of Interest

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- IRP staff and faculty affiliates meet regularly with agency leadership and staff
- Sustained research agreements for specific programs (e.g., child support, child welfare)
- Contracts for specific programs and projects (e.g. educational disparities, CSPEd evaluation)
- Quarterly “Learning Exchanges”
- Ad-hoc TA provided by IRP staff and faculty (some state funded, some not)
- Ad-hoc consultation provided by state agency leadership and staff
- “Translation by design”—how findings will be shared with and used by agency partners

# How the WI Data Core Requires and Sustains the Partnership

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- Provides a unique resource for agencies that cannot otherwise link and analyze across systems
  - Sustains state support of Data Core data access and funding
- Provides a unique data resource for research that cannot otherwise be completed
  - Sustains commitment and interest of academic researchers

***Yours, mine, and (increasingly) ours***

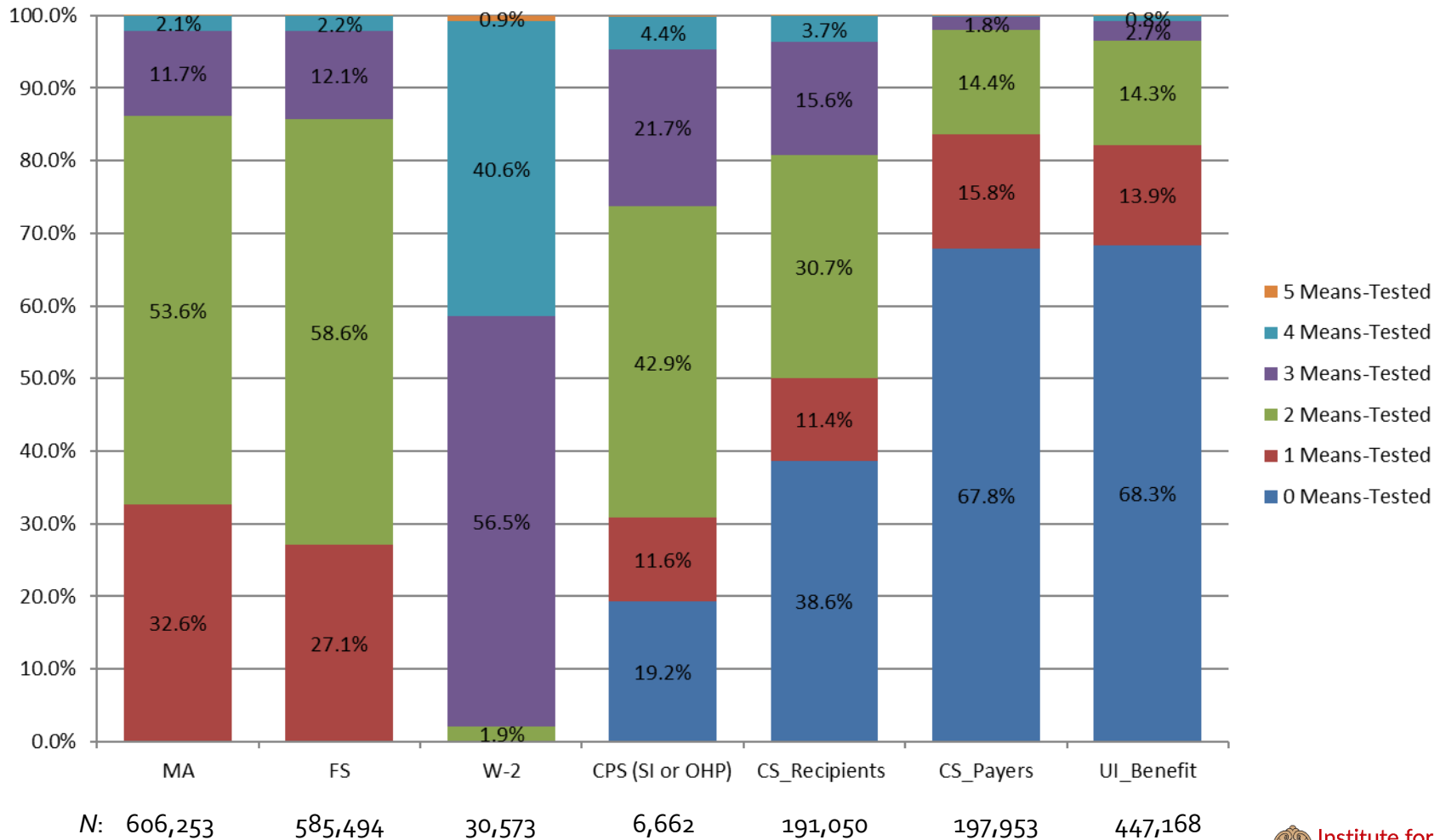
# How Institutional Constraints Shape the Partnership

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- **Data may only be used to inform policy and program administration**
  - State agencies are not permitted to provide data access for research not relevant to the agency's mission, so researchers need to accept limitations, and understand and explain utility
- **Research results must be made public, and identified matched data cannot be returned to agencies**
  - IRP faculty and staff are not permitted to submit research for clearance by funders nor to return matched data to agencies, so agencies must value and accept independence



# Multiple Program Participation



# Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE)

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RCT looking at effect of full pass-through of child support for families on W-2 (TANF)

- Pass-through mothers receive more child support (\$120-\$140)
- Pass-through fathers more likely to pay child support (2-3 percentage points)
- Pass-through mothers reduced TANF participation (2 percentage points, year after entry)
- Little effect on employment or earnings for both parents
- Pass through mothers' total income increased (\$200, year after entry)

# National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)

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- Decrease in monthly child support owed (\$15-\$16)
- Decrease in monthly child support paid (\$5-\$7)
- No impact on child support compliance
- No impact on employment
- No impact on TANF usage or UI benefits
- Mixed results re: earnings: 4% increase in Year 1
- Large changes in attitudes toward Child Support

# Challenges

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- Legacy systems not at all “research ready”
- Expensive to build, maintain Data Core; high costs passed on to researchers
- Steep learning curve and some cumbersome processes for using data
- Not clear how well research is utilized by agencies, policymakers
- Interest in pursuing data not currently included, working at local levels

# Next Steps

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- How to better systematize data sharing, cross-agency agenda setting?
- How to modernize data matching, cleaning, and interface processes?
- How to reduce transaction costs for researchers?
- How to gain access to other data and work locally?
- How to support research utilization?
- How to support and work with other states?