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(DRAFT) Research Project Abstracts Arising from IV-E Research Sequence

Report #1

An Examination of Adoption Trends in California

Background. A paramount goal for children who enter California's public child welfare system is to achieve permanency in a timely manner. When a child is unable to safely reunify with his or her parents, alternative forms of permanency through such means as adoption are sought out.

Objective. This study provides a broad overview of adoption as a permanency option in California. Information concerning adoption trends over time and subgroup variations in rates of adoption is synthesized in order to highlight areas where important improvements have been made, as well as areas where further efforts are still needed.

Methods. Publically available child welfare data from California were downloaded from the Center for Social Services Research for the period from 1998 through 2009. Adoption trends over time were analyzed using [X]. Descriptive comparisons of rates of adoption and length of time to adoption were made based on the child's age, race, gender, and allegation type using [X].

Results. The overall number of children adopted in California in 1998 was [X]. By 2009, that number had [increased/decreased] to [X]. Adoptions as a percent of all exits in California have increased between [X] and [X]. From [X] and [X], the entry cohort rate of adoption within 48 months of a first placement in foster care has [increased/decreased/remained constant]. Compared to other children, Black children in California had a [lower/greater/similar] entry cohort adoption rate by [X] months, [and/but] the time to adoption was [lower/higher/similar]. [These/This] difference(s) [increase/decrease] as the child's age increases. In California, children who entered care at age [X] have the highest rates of adoption, while children entering at age [X] have the lowest rates. Differences by allegation type and gender were statistically [significant/insignificant].

Conclusions. These data demonstrate there has been a significant growth in adoption as a permanency option in California over the last decade. The results of this study [supports/does not support] the finding from previous studies that Black children are less likely to be adopted, and [supports/does not support] the finding that the length of time to adoptions is greater for Black children. These data suggest younger children are more likely to be adopted and the likelihood of adopt decreases as the child ages.



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Report #2

Children Re-Reported for Maltreatment: An Analysis of Alameda County

BACKGROUND. In 2008, child maltreatment was estimated to impact 772,000 children in the United States. Although these numbers highlight the prevalence of child maltreatment, it is frequently the case that even after child protective services (CPS) becomes involved, efforts to correctly identify victims and to prevent subsequent victimization are unsuccessful. Rates of re-reporting capture at least a subset of children whose initial allegation may have been incorrectly unfounded.

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE. This research project examines the rates at which children in Alameda County are re-reported for maltreatment after an initial allegation of abuse or neglect.

METHODS. Publicly available child welfare data for Alameda County, California, were downloaded from the Center for Social Services Research. Cohorts of children reported for possible maltreatment between 2000 and 2009 were followed to identify the fraction re-reported for maltreatment within 24 months of the first report. Cohorts were stratified by allegation type and across disposition type. Re-report rates were also assessed according to the child's age, ethnic group, and gender. Group differences were tested using [X].

RESULTS. Of all children reported in 2000, the re-report rate within 24 months was [X]%. Compared to the [X]% of children re-reported of all children reported in 2008. Children initially reported for physical abuse were [more/less] likely than children first reported for neglect to be re-reported for maltreatment. Differences based on disposition assigned to the initial report were statistically [significant/insignificant]. Subsequent allegations of maltreatment were most correlated to the initial [X] disposition.

CONCLUSIONS. The results of this study demonstrate that children whose initial allegation is [X] and who are [X] are significantly at risk of being re-reported for further maltreatment, and thus would be candidates for more specialized services.



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Report #3

Psychotropic Medication of Children in Foster Care: Data from Contra Costa County, California

Background. It is estimated that 35-85% of children in foster care in Contra Costa County suffer from some form of mental health problem and may require mental health services. Among the children currently in care, 8.2% are authorized to receive psychotropic medications. An unknown percentage is receiving some other form of mental health service intervention.

Objective. The objective of this study is to examine available data on foster children authorized for psychotropic medication in Contra Costa County and California in order to better understand the characteristics of these children.

Methods. Publicly available child welfare data were downloaded from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) housed at Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) at U.C. Berkeley. Data concerning the characteristics of children authorized for psychotropic medication were extracted for both Contra Costa County and California as a whole. [X] tests were used to determine if there were differences in the authorization of psychotropic medication by age, ethnicity, gender, or placement type. Trends over time by each variable were also examined using [X] test for trends.

Results. Most children authorized for psychotropic medication are placed in [X]. [A/no] significant relationship was found between [age, ethnicity, gender, and/or placement type] and psychotropic medication use in these children. Compared to boys, girls were [more/less] likely to be authorized psychotropic medication, older children were [more/less] likely to be authorized psychotropic medication and compared to White children, Black and Hispanic children were [more/less] likely to be authorized for psychotropic medication. Tests for trends demonstrate that psychotropic medication use [increased/decreased] over time in a manner that was constant across subgroups.

Conclusions. These results are a start to providing a better understanding mental health service interventions received by foster children in Contra Costa County and California. More research must be done to develop a more thorough understanding of whether or not medication is an effective intervention for addressing the mental health needs of these children.



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Report # 4

Latino Children Involved with California's Child Welfare System

Background: The Latino population is currently the fastest growing ethnic minority in the United States. Given the continued increase of Latino families in the United States, it is crucial that the child welfare system be prepared to respond with appropriate, culturally sensitive services for these children and families. Research indicates that this population encounters many barriers when accessing services, including language, immigration status and acculturation. These factors must be taken into consideration when the child welfare system works with this population.

Objective: This report will examine how Latino children fare in their contact with the child welfare system, compare trends for Latinos with that of other ethnic groups in California and examine Latino subgroups by such variables as age, allegation type, and disposition type.

Methods: Publicly available child welfare data were downloaded from the Center for Social Services Research housed at the University of California at Berkeley for the years X to X. Data were filtered by demographic variables including age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Descriptive data were then tabulated by child welfare variables such as allegation type, placement type, exit reason, and time in care. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau will also be used to examine trends in California for the broader Latino population.

Results: In California, the Latino rate of maltreatment allegations is X and the rate of entry into foster care is X. Compared to white, black and Asian children, Latino children had a (lower/greater/similar) allegation rate and entry rate. Latino Children that were (age) were also (more likely/less likely/equally likely) than other ethnic groups to have (certain type of allegation) and (disposition type) than children in other ethnic groups.

Conclusions: Although unable to predict outcomes for Latino children, the analyses of the data provides (support) or (refutes the notion) that Latino children have child welfare experiences that are distinct from other racial/ethnic groups in the state. While a more detailed study is needed, this could be the start to addressing specific needs in the Latino Community.



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Report #5

Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Hispanic Families in California's Child Welfare System

Background. In 2010, Hispanic children made-up a majority of children in California, and a majority of children involved with the child welfare system. Although many of these Hispanic children are likely to live in immigrant families, with risk factors and service needs that may differ from non-immigrant Hispanic families, there is no reliable data concerning possible within-group differences based on whether or not the mother was born in the United States.

Objective. This study sought to 1) describe Hispanic trends in child welfare system involvement over time by allegation type, age, and disposition, and 2) to provide a within-group comparison of Hispanic children by examining the characteristics and child welfare contacts of those born to immigrant mothers vs. Hispanic children born to US-born mothers.

Methods. Publicly available child welfare data were downloaded from the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) website for the years 1999 to 2009. Referral (by allegation type), substantiation, and foster care entry rates for Hispanic children ages zero to seventeen were computed. Trends over time were tested using [X]. Data arising from a de-identified CSSR dataset of child welfare records linked to birth records from 2002 were used to make descriptive comparisons of child welfare involvement among Hispanic children born to immigrant mothers and Hispanic children born to non-immigrant mothers.

Results. The overall rate of child maltreatment reports for Hispanic children [increased/decreased] over this ten year window. Likewise, the rate of substantiations and entries to foster care [increased/decreased]. No differences in the form of maltreatment or age distribution were observed. Compared to Hispanic children of non-immigrant mothers, Hispanic children of immigrant mothers had a [higher/lower/similar] risk of maltreatment and involvement in the child welfare system.

Conclusions. Findings suggest that differences [are/are not] present within California's Hispanic community on the basis of maternal immigration status. The findings in this study indicate that the service needs of Hispanic immigrant families [vary/do not vary] from those in non-immigrant families, suggesting that the child welfare system may need to consider means through which it might improve its practice and engagement of immigrant families through [X, X, and X].



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Report #6 Racial Disparity within California's Child Welfare System

Background. Research demonstrates that a disproportionate number of children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system belong to minority groups, with African American families proving to be particularly vulnerable. Racial disparities in rates of contact continue to be observed across later child welfare system decision points, including decisions to substantiate an allegation, and entries to foster care.

Objective. This study focuses on racial disparities in California's child welfare system over time. Disparities in rates of referrals, substantiation decisions, entry rates, and exit rates are examined in order to ascertain whether the magnitude of racial differences has increased, decreased, or remained constant.

Methods. Publicly available data extracted from California's Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) were downloaded from California's Center for Social Services Research for the years 1998 to 2009 by race and age. These data were used to examine trends in racial disparity (Black to White) over time based on computed disparity indices for each of [X] age groups. Of interest was how disparities have changed for each age group at each of the four key decision points in the child welfare system: referrals, substantiations, and entries to foster care.

Results. In 1998, the Black-White racial disparity in referrals of maltreatment was [X]. In 2009, this disparity had [dropped/increased] to [X], representing an [X%] change over time. During this same period, disparity in substantiations [dropped/increased] from [X] to [X]. Notable differences by age [were/were not] observed over time.

Conclusions. African Americans are over-represented within California's child welfare system compared to European Americans. Their rates of referrals, substantiations, and entries have been higher during each year of the last decade. Although more research is needed on the factors and reasons for these disparities, it is clear that different racial groups have different experiences with the child welfare system, and African Americans are particularly vulnerable.