Placement Patterns for Adolescents in Foster Care:

A Longitudinal Analysis of NH AFCARS Data

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PRELIMINARY ANALYSES-PLEASE DO NOT CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION
Acknowledgements

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Presentation Overview

• Development of practice-based research questions

• Longitudinal analysis of 2001-2003 NH AFCARS foster care data

• Discussion, implications and directions for future research
Practice-based Questions about Family/Environment

• What parental characteristics contribute to reunification?

• Is it the case that children whose parents struggle with drug and alcohol issues are in care longer?

• What happens to siblings? Are they generally placed together or adopted together?

• Do youth who have an outcome of APPLA stay connected with their biological parents?
Practice-based Questions about Foster Families

• Are there regional differences in foster parents within NH?

• What are the characteristics of the foster care population served in NH?

• What are the characteristics of foster parents who foster adolescents?

• Is it possible to better match children with “ideal” foster parents?
Practice-based Questions about Adolescents in Care

- Are children in care longer less likely to reunify?
- What child characteristics are associated with longer stays in foster care?
- What happens when youth age out?
- What are the conditions of youth in foster care?
Length of Stay in Foster Care

• Practice focus on permanency planning (AFSA)

• Research emphasis on length of stay (Benedict & White, 1991; Courtney, 1994; Connell, Katz, Saunders & Tebes, 2006)

• Do placement trajectories vary across developmental stages? (Finkelhor, Cross, & Cantor, 2005; Finkelhor & Hashima, 2001; Wulczyn, Barth, Yuan, Harden, & Landsverk, 2005)

• Do other child factors and case characteristics impact length of stay in foster care?
Foster Care Exits

• Foster care exit possibilities captured in AFCARS
  – Reunification
  – Relative/guardian
  – Adoption
  – Aged out at 18 (or 21 if requested)
  – Transfer, runaway, death
  – Still in care (censored here)

• Length of stay in foster care (LOS)
Use of AFCARS Data

• Foster Care File and Adoption Files

• Advantages
  – Able to merge multiple years of case-level data
  – Nationally available data with consistent fields

• Limitations
  – General administrative data limitations
  – Missing outcomes and data recoding
Longitudinal Analysis of NH AFCARS Data

Methods
NH AFCARS
Longitudinal File Creation

• 12 month AFCARS submissions from 2001-2003

• Fred Sebesta syntax
  (Hornby Zeller Associates)
  – Data cleaning routines
  – Record imputation routines

• Discrepancy between AFCARS and NH SACWIS
NH AFCARS Cases 2001-2003 Longitudinal File

• File Includes:
  – All youth who entered care between 10/1/00 and 3/15/04 (AFCARS window)
  – Primary first case within this window

• 5 cases deleted (adults and no entry to care in study window)
Developmental Age

- Infancy (birth to 2.99)
- Early childhood (3 to 5.99)
- Middle childhood (6 to 13.99)
- Adolescence (14 and older)
Other Covariates

• Child characteristics
  – Gender
  – Race/Ethnicity

• Case characteristics
  – Prior removals
  – Removal reason
  – Initial placement setting
Sample Characteristics

- Child Characteristic
  - Gender
    - Male 52 % (849)
    - Female 48% (774)
  - Age
    - Infant 21% (341)
    - Early child 14% (226)
    - Mid child 37% (593)
    - Adolescent 28% (462)
  - Race/Ethnicity
    - White/Non-His 82% (1,328)

- Case Characteristics
  - Prior removals
    - No prior removals 84% (1,357)
  - Placement setting
    - Relative FF 14% (236)
    - Nonrelative FF 58% (939)
    - Other 28% (450)
  - Removal reason
    - Neglect 58% (948)
    - Sexual abuse 3% (49)
    - Physical abuse 10% (160)
    - Parent Sub abuse 3% (43)
    - Child behavior problem 21% (334)
    - Other 5% (81)
Foster Care Outcomes by Developmental Age

- Infant
- Early Child
- Middle Child
- Adolescence

- Still in care
- Reunified
- Kinship
- Adopted
- Aged out
- Other exit
Length of Stay in Foster Care

- Mean = 1.1248
- Std. Dev. = 0.94067
- N = 1,625
Survival Curve: All Exits from Care
Survival Curve: Reunification Exits

Exits to Reunification

One Minus Cum Survival

Time in Care (years)
Developmental Differences in Median Length of Stay

- Infancy: 1.91 years
- Early Childhood: 1.50 years
- Middle Childhood: 1.60 years
- Adolescence: 0.86 years
- Total sample: 1.37 years
Developmental Differences in Exit

All Exits from Care

Exits to Reunification
## Predictors of Exit from Foster Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Characteristic</th>
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<th>Risk Ratios</th>
<th>Adolescents</th>
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Length of Stay Analysis Summary

- Children likely to exit all types of foster care are:
  - Adolescents
  - Experiencing their first removal
  - In nonrelative care
  - Removed for child behavior problems

- Children likely to be reunified with families are:
  - Experiencing their first removal
  - Removed for physical abuse or child behavior problems
Practice and Policy Considerations

• Impact of Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) process.

• DCYF data improvements and increased data usage.

• Staffing changes:
  – Adoption
  – Adolescents

• Permanency Plus! Pilot project (intensive reunification and foster families willing to be permanent caregivers) in some offices during this study window.
Implications

• Length of Stay as measure of child well-being

• Developmental differences
  – In removal trajectory
  – In removal reason
  – In exits from care

• Practice implications for working with adolescents in the foster care system
Limitations

• Data file creation issues

• Utility of AFCARS data for longitudinal analyses

• Ability of AFCARS data to answer practice-oriented questions
Practice-Based Issues We Can Examine with AFCARS

- Parental characteristics associated with reunification
- Duration of care for children removed due to parental drug and alcohol issues
- Characteristics of the foster care population served in NH
- Characteristics of foster parents who foster adolescents
- Length of stay for children who are reunified with parents
- Child characteristics associated with longer foster care stays
Practice-Based Issues We Cannot Examine with AFCARS

• Sibling placement and outcomes
• Youth with APPLA outcomes or their connection with biological parents
• Regional differences in foster parents within NH
• Methods for better matching children with “ideal” foster parents
• Aging out issues
• Conditions of youth in foster care
Future Analyses

• Assessing the unique characteristics for adolescents in foster care

• Supplementing AFCARS data with NCANDS or SACWIS fields

• Examining practice-based questions raised here
Comments, Suggestions, or Innovations in other States?