Differential Response and Family Poverty
Evidence from Evaluations

Conference on Differential Response in Child Welfare
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Most Families that Enter DR Programs have Financial Problems

- In Nevada, nearly half (48.2%) of DR families have a household income of less than $15,000—$3,310 less than the 2009 Federal Poverty Guideline for a family of three. Across the state of Nevada, 9.9 percent of families have incomes less than $15,000.

- In Ohio, to date, about 62% of families entering the DR pilot earn less than $15,000 per year.

- In the Minnesota Parent Support Outreach Program only 27.6% of caregivers had a full-time job.

- Six of ten (61.4%) families in Minnesota PSOP reported incomes less than $15,000 per year (average of 2.4 children per family).

- Slightly less than half (c. 47%) of the families in the Missouri evaluation had no employed adult.

- In the Minnesota DR evaluation about one quarter of families earned less than $15,000 per year and had no high school diploma.
Bias in Selection of Families? OR Is there a Relationship between Child Maltreatment and Poverty?

- Child Maltreatment is not one thing.
  - The alleged incident, characteristics of the child, characteristics of caregiver and family, social environment of the family, family history.
- At the family level poverty is many different things.
  - Insufficient income to purchase necessities on a regular basis; periodic expenses; lack of access to non-cash assistance; no assistance from relatives, spouses, etc.; inconsistent resources to maintain income over time.
- Relationship is not univocal
  - At the most general level it can be seen as aggravating or exacerbating other conditions of the family.
  - In some instances, the maltreatment cannot be easily distinguished from poverty.
A Different Approach

- Most of research is concerned with various methods of showing that correlations exist between poverty and child maltreatment.
  - Bias in the kinds of families reported and accepted by CPS or does poverty increase the likelihood of child maltreatment.

- Bias definitely exists, but some recent studies suggest that the latter is the better explanation.
- Poverty $\Rightarrow$ Conditions of Risk $\Rightarrow$ Child Maltreatment?

- The approach to explanation based on our differential response evaluations comes at the problems from the other direction.
  - Address Poverty $\Rightarrow$ Reduce Future Instances of Child Maltreatment?
Experimental Studies have shown:

- **Child Safety** is not compromised by avoiding investigations in appropriate cases.
- Families are more engaged.
- Increased services are provided to more families. Service addressing basic poverty-related needs tend to increase under DR.
- Community resources tend to be more heavily utilized. Linkages to community agencies tend to increase under DR.
- This created a kind of natural experiment in which experimental families received more poverty-related services than control families.
- New child abuse and neglect reports were shown to decline for families offered a family assessment compared to similar families that were investigated. Child removals also declined.
- Analysis indicates that these changes are due to the increase in services and are related to family engagement and satisfaction.
1. Families felt they had greater involvement in decision making.
2. Families were more satisfied with the way they were treated.
3. Workers responses reflected these differences.
Ohio Family Responses: Emotional Response to First Visit

How would you describe your feelings at the end of the first visit? (Negative Emotions)

- Discouraged (ns)
- Pessimistic (ns)
- Negative (ns)
- Tense (ns)
- Confused (ns)
- Worried (0.0320)
- Dissatisfied (ns)
- Anxious (0.0740)
- Irritated (0.0760)
- Stressed (0.0170)
- Afraid (ns)
- Angry (0.0450)

Experimental
Control
Ohio Family Responses: Emotional Response to First Visit

How would you describe your feelings at the end of the first visit? (Positive Emotions)

- Optimistic (ns)
- Encouraged (0.0001)
- Positive (0.0060)
- Grateful (0.0460)
- Reassured (0.0580)
- Comforted (0.0070)
- Thankful (0.0210)
- Pleased (0.0160)
- Helped (0.1070)
- Satisfied (ns)
- Hopeful (0.0001)
- Relieved (0.0070)

Experimental
Control
Family Reports of Services Received (Ohio)

- Food or clothing for your family*
- Help paying utilities**
- Other financial help**
- Car repair or transportation*
- Housing
- Money to pay rent*
- Appliances or furniture
- Medical or dental services*
- Welfare/public assistance
- Help getting into educational classes
- Job training or vocational training
- Employment help
- Legal services
- Child care or day care
- Assistance in home
- Respite care
- Meetings with other parents
- Parenting classes
- Mental health services
- Counseling services**
- Alcohol or drug treatment
- Help for a family member with a disability

*Statistical Trend (p < .10) **Significant (p < .05)
Family Reports of Services Received (Minnesota)

- Individual counseling
- Marital/family/group counseling
- Parenting classes
- Help with basic household needs
- Mental health/psychiatric services
- Childcare/daycare services
- Help with rent or house payments
- Emergency food
- Medical or dental care
- Domestic violence services
- Housing services
- Assistance with transportation
- Educational services
- Respite care/crisis nursery
- TANF, SSI or food stamps
- Legal services
- Assistance from support groups
- Recreational services
- Homemaker/home management assistance
- Assistance with employment
- Vocational/skill training
- Family preservation services
- Alcohol abuse treatment
- Drug abuse treatment
- Emergency shelter
- Disability services
- Independent living services
Minnesota: Increases in Post-Assessment Services Statewide

- **Ratio CM WG to New Intakes**
- **Percent FA to Intakes**

- Red line: Ratio of total open case management WGs to total new intakes
- Blue line: Percent of new FA to total new intakes
Missouri Utilization of Community Resources Increased

Overall there was a greater utilization of community resources in pilot areas.

* = statistically significant difference; p < .01
Minnesota Utilization of Community Resources Increased

A similar pattern was found in Minnesota.
Ohio Family Reports of Worker Involvement and Worker Reports of Level of Contact with Family

- Did the worker help you obtain other help or services?
  - DR: 21.2%  
  - Traditional: 14.1%

- Did your worker provide any direct assistance?
  - DR: 44.6%  
  - Traditional: 38.1%

### Types of Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Contacts</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many face to face meetings did you have with members of the family?</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many telephone contacts did you have with members of the family?</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many other contacts did you have with a family member?</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many other contacts did you have with others on behalf of this family?</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many face to face contacts did other service providers have with a family member?</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri County</td>
<td>Changes in Report Recurrence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaway</td>
<td>-0.365-0.139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar</td>
<td>0.213-0.034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade</td>
<td>0.000-0.587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>0.000-0.059</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>0.141-0.034</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maries</td>
<td>-0.466-0.001</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>0.108-0.281</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phelps</td>
<td>-0.221-0.070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pulaski</td>
<td>-0.024-0.211</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>0.003-0.070</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>0.108-0.048</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>-0.092-0.127</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis County</td>
<td>-0.221-0.328</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis City</td>
<td>0.022-0.069</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan</td>
<td>0.223-0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>0.176-0.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>0.174-0.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasconade</td>
<td>0.034-0.388</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>0.070-0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>0.153-0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>0.520-0.041</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>0.095-0.020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>0.229-0.094</td>
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<tr>
<td>Platte</td>
<td>-0.019-0.287</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>-0.304-0.066</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Francois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>0.370-0.367</td>
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<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>0.297-0.110</td>
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<td>St. Louis County</td>
<td>0.163-0.111</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis City</td>
<td>-0.028-0.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Basic Needs = Children lack basic necessities, Supervision/Care = Lack of supervision or proper care, Education = Lack of proper concern for education.
# Negative values indicate reduction in recidivism and are shown in yellow.
* No cases in these categories.
Cumulative Survival of Experimental and Control Families until a New Child Maltreatment Report is Received (Hennepin County)

Post-Assessment Services by Risk Level of Family

Percent Families with Workgroup Opened

Risk Level

Cumulative Survival

Days to a New Child Maltreatment Report

The higher the line the better the survival

Experimental

Control
Cumulative Survival of Experimental and Control Families until a Child is Removed and Placed Outside the Home

The higher the line the better the survival

Cumulative Survival

Days until a child is placed
Summary from Minnesota

- The Minnesota evaluation involved a designed experiment (DR versus traditional) and a natural experiment (large difference in the service response between DR and traditional cases).
- Substantially more services were received by DR families compared to similar control families under traditional CPS.
- Under DR financially-related services increased and were shown to be directed toward the most needy families.
- Families were more satisfied under DR than the same kinds of families were under traditional CPS.
  - Families also reported that they had received the services they needed and this was correlated with overall satisfaction.
  - This was considered an indication of improved family engagement.
Summary from Minnesota

- The non-adversarial approach alone apart from services had long term effects.
- In addition, services (including large increases in basic financially related services) were shown to reduce future reports, but particularly for families with services that also had ongoing worker contact (continuing engagement).
- Thus, there was support for the notion that increased help was most effective in the context of participatory decision making, emotional support, and respect (which DR families report more frequently).
- The DR approach appears to be more effective for many families but is it more cost effective? Consider the next slide.
Minnesota Parent Support Outreach

- This project was oriented to families whose reports were **not accepted for action by CPS**.
  - A voluntary program with about half of families agreeing to services.
- This population was as poor financially as the population in the Minnesota DR evaluation.
- A difference was that workers were not pushed to close cases. On average they worked with families slightly less than five months.
- Most of the services provided were poverty-related.
- Effects were found for families that were most financially deprived and that participated in services.
- This report contains many extended case example description. See our web site: www.iarstl.org
Reduced Costs Associated with CPS

2004 Evaluation Report: Service and Staff Costs for Experimental and Control Families 7/1/01 to 9/30/2003

2006 Evaluation Report: Service and Staff Costs for Experimental and Control Families 7/1/01 to 3/31/2006 (Excludes Ramsey County)