Unstable Early Care & Education Services for Child Welfare-Supervised Children: Risk Factor for Foster Placement?

2017 Child Care & Early Education Policy Research Consortium

Dr. Sacha Klein, MSU School of Social Work
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1. Safety
   - Protection from abuse & neglect
   - *Children safely maintained in their homes whenever possible & appropriate*

2. Permanency

3. Well-being
STUDY AIM: To determine if stable ECE services help maltreated children remain at home with their parents as opposed to being placed in foster care.

RESEARCH QUESTION: To what extent does the continuity of ECE participation (continuous, interrupted, or no participation) affect the likelihood that 0-5 year olds reported to the U.S. child welfare system for suspected maltreatment will be placed in foster care?
WHY ECE MIGHT PREVENT PLACEMENT

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION SERVICES

DIRECT EFFECTS ON SERVICE RECIPIENTS

INDIRECT EFFECTS ON FAMILY FUNCTIONING

CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

ABC

Early Care & Education (ECE)

Child(ren)
- Enhanced cognitive development
- Enhanced social adjustment
- Reduced exposure to potentially threatening caregiver

Parent/Caregiver(s)
- Respite from caregiving
- Parenting knowledge & support
  - Appropriate developmental expectations for children
  - Nonviolent child discipline
  - Linkage to support services
- Employment & educational support

Family
- Reduced parenting stress, parent-child conflict, & other family problems
- Strengthened parent-child relationships
- Enhanced parenting capacity & greater parent involvement in children’s education
- Increased family income and access to resources

Safety
- Protection from child abuse/neglect
- Children safely maintained in home

Permanency
- Stability in living situations
- Continuity of family relationships & connections is preserved

Well-Being
- Children receive services to meet physical, emotional, & mental health needs
- Children receive services to meet educational needs
- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs
• CWS-supervised children in Oregon who remained in their parents homes instead of being placed in foster care were more likely to have received child care subsidies (Lipscomb et al., 2012).

• States with more ‘accommodating’ CCDF rules for children in CWS had, on average, fewer child removals from their parent’s care than other states (Meloy, Lipscomb & Baron, 2015).
BACKGROUND: ECE Stability

• Research on non-child welfare samples suggests that **stability is an important moderator of ECE outcomes**, amplifying positive effects on child development (Bratsch-Hines, Vernon-Feagans, & the Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2013; Bratsch-Hines Mokrova, Vernon-Feagans, & the Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2015; De Schipper, Tavecchio, Van IJzendoorn, & Linting, 2003; Morrissey, 2009; Pilarz & Hill, 2014; Ruprecht, Elicker, & Choi, 2016).

• Research on ECE stability with child welfare samples/outcomes sparse & mixed
  
  • 4-yr olds who with interrupted ECE were almost 3x more likely to be reported to CWS than 4-yr olds with continuous ECE or no ECE before age 8 (Li et al., 2011).
  
  • Duration of child care subsidy receipt unrelated to the likelihood of experiencing foster placement disruption (Meloy & Phillips, 2012)
• **DATA SOURCE:** National Survey of Child & Adolescent Well-being II (NSCAW II), nationally representative sample of children referred to CWS for suspected maltreatment

• **SAMPLE:** $N = 863$ children 0-59 months old & living with a permanent caregiver at wave 1

• **DESIGN/ANALYSIS:** Multivariate weighted logistic regression of continuity of ECE at wave 1 and risk of foster placement at wave 2
• **DEPENDENT VARIABLE:** Placed in foster care at wave 2 (yes/no)

• **INDEPENDENT VARIABLE:** ECE Stability/Continuity (3 levels)
  - *Continuous ECE Receipt:* At wave 1 permanent caregivers reported regularly receiving ‘child care’ during previous 12 months & still receiving regular care
  - *Interrupted ECE Receipt:* At wave 1 permanent caregivers reported regularly receiving ‘child care’ in previous 12 months but no longer receiving regular care
  - *No ECE:* Permanent caregivers reported not regularly receiving ‘child care’ during previous 12 months and not receiving care currently
VARIABLES: COVARIATES

• **Child welfare characteristics**
  • Maltreatment type
  • Substantiation status
  • Foster placement risk based on prior child welfare system involvement
  • Foster placement risk based on child/family characteristics

• **Child characteristics:** age, sex, race/ethnicity

• **Caregiver/household characteristics:** education, employment status, % federal poverty level
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Continuous Care Model</th>
<th>Interrupted Care Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ECE Continuity</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous Care (v.</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interrupted &amp; None)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interrupted Care (v.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous &amp; None)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prior CWS Involvement</strong></td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Factor Score</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child Age in Yrs</strong></td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Race (v. White)</strong></td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caregiver HS Educated</strong></td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.98</td>
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<td>100-200% FPL (v. &gt;200%</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>9.40</td>
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IMPLICATIONS

• Interrupted ECE may be a risk factor for foster placement, perhaps because it reflects unmet ECE need
  • Interruption of ECE services could increase family & parenting stress, withdraw a needed source of parenting support, cause children to act out, and/or increase the amount of time that children spend with parents, any of which might elevate the risk of child maltreatment, which can lead to foster placement.

• Or interrupted ECE may be symptomatic of an unmeasured family factor(s) that both disrupt ECE participation and increase foster placement risk (e.g., housing instability, job loss, child behavior problems).

• Should assess the ECE service history and needs of families with young children who enter the CWS, paying attention to the continuity of ECE services used
OTHER THOUGHTS?
THANK YOU!

Dr. Sacha Klein, Ph.D., MSW  
Michigan State University  
kleinsa@msu.edu  ☀ (818) 744-6445