Promising Evidence Regarding the Benefits of Early Care & Education for Children in the Child Welfare System

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In FY 2013, **40.5%** of confirmed child maltreatment victims & **34%** children placed in foster care in U.S. were birth to 5 yrs old.

"Infantalization" of U.S. child welfare system (Berrick et al, 1998)
• More likely than older maltreated children to experience developmental impairments, serious injury & death

• Experience more comprehensive set of negative academic & behavioral outcomes (implications for school readiness)

In 2013, nearly 87% of all child maltreatment fatalities involved children < 5 years old
1. Safety
   • Protection from abuse & neglect
   • Children safely maintained in their homes whenever possible & appropriate

2. Permanency
   • Stability in living situations
   • Continuity of family relationships & connections is preserved

3. Child & Family Well-being
   - Children receive adequate services to meet their physical, emotional & mental health needs
   - Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
   - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs
Ways ECE May Contribute to CWS Goals

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
- Non-violent 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
Effects of Early Care & Education on Child Welfare Outcomes:

RESEARCH EVIDENCE
SAFETY: Evidence ECE may protect children from abuse & neglect

• Chicago Parent-Child Centers participants ~half as likely to be abused/neglected by age 18 than controls (Reynolds & Robertson, 2003).

• Early Head Start participants had fewer CPS encounters btwn ages of 5 & 9 yrs than controls, were less likely to have multiple CWS encounters, & slowed rate of subsequent encounters; also less likely to have substantiated physical or sexual abuse report (but more likely to have a substantiated neglect report) (Green et al., 2014).

• Low-income, urban children in Head Start were less likely to have had a CWS encounter at age 5 than children not receiving any ECE (Zhai, Waldfogel & Brooks-Gunn, 2013).

• Los Angeles County neighborhoods with higher rates of preschool enrollment & a greater supply of licensed child care relative to demand had lower rates of early child maltreatment (Klein, 2011).
SAFETY: Evidence ECE may help children remain safely in their homes

• CWS-supervised 0-5 year olds participating in center-based ECE had 65% lower odds of being placed in out-of-home care ~18 months later than those not in center-based ECE (Klein, Fries, Cohen & Emmons, unpublished).

• For every add’l hour per week of child care received by CWS-supervised 0-5 year olds living at home, their odds of being placed in out-of-home care 18 months later decreased 4%; children in full time child care were 84% less likely than children receiving no child care to be placed in out-of-home care 18 months later (Klein, Fries, Cohen & Emmons, unpublished).

• 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).

• 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).
**PERMANENCY: Evidence ECE may promote placement stability**


- CWS-supervised children in Oregon who experienced higher **number of foster placement moves** had lower probability of receiving child care subsidies (Lipscomb et al., 2012).

- However, the **average # of placement changes** within a foster care removal episode was **higher** among states with more ‘accommodating’ CCDF rules for children in CWS (Meloy, Lipscomb & Baron, 2015).
**WELL-BEING:** Quality ECE may promote school readiness for maltreated children

- Among children in highly rated ECE programs in MN, both CPS children & matched controls experienced **↑ social competence & receptive vocabulary** over the course of their pre-K year (Kovan et al., 2014)


- B-5 year olds referred to CPS who had center-based ECE scored higher on **language development** outcomes than those w/o ECE; game changer for children reported for supervisory neglect (Merritt & Klein, 2015)
Ideas for Increasing ECE Access for Children in CWS

• **Training** staff & educating other stakeholders on benefits of ECE for children in the CWS, how to identify most appropriate providers & navigate ECE systems to refer

• **Regulatory & legislative changes** that make child care subsidy, state Pre-K, Head Start/Early Head Start policies more ‘accommodating’ for CWS-supervised children
  • Waiving fees & employment requirements for birth & foster parents
  • Prioritizing CWS-supervised children for enrollment
  • Eliminating geographic eligibility rules that disrupt continuity of care for children re/placed in foster care

• **ECE-child welfare cross-sector collaboratives** to monitor referrals/enrollment data & problem-solve barriers to CWS-supervised children’s access to ECE