Reunifying Maltreated Children with Alcohol and Other Drug Involved Parents

Poster Presentation: Miami
First Annual Conference, February 28, 2005
"Children in Our City: Coping with Substance Abuse and AIDS"
Florida International University
Miami, Florida
Sandra C. Cordell, Doctoral Candidate

1. General Problem Statement

Children are placed in foster care due to maltreatment by parents (abuse, neglect, abandonment). There are approximately half a million children in foster care in the U.S. (1). The reunification of the number of children in foster care who come from homes of alcohol and other drug-involved families (ADIF) ranges from low of 20% to highs of 80% (Smith & Malteca, 1998). Foster care is the generic term used to refer to the system of out-of-home placement

2. General Problem Statement (cont’d)

Once placed in foster care there are several outcomes for maltreated children, to be decided by the courts:

- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)
- Adoption
- Other Drug Involved Parents
- Parent's Rights Termination

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3. General Problem Statement (cont’d)

While foster care is a primary outlet for the Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997) (Kriel & Poertner, 2002), reunification is the goal. Permanent decision is made by the court.

4. Conceptual Model

- The overall aim of the proposed retrospective study is to investigate the relationship between drug treatment components, and treatment-related changes, and child AOD permanency outcomes (e.g., reunification with custodial parent, long-term foster care, adoption) for foster children from drug-involved families
- The main objective of the proposed study is to improve the decision-making process for reunifying maltreated children and their drug-using parents by identifying the drug treatment components and treatment-related changes that predict positive child placement outcomes.

5. Methodology

- Data Analysis: Retrospective, non-probability, criterion sample: non-probability, criterion sample: AOD mothers
- Data set(s) stripped of identifiers
- Match data sets
- Communicate
- Only research ethics review board
- Any author or co-author of the study
- Only researchers who have contributed significantly to the paper

6. Methodology: Data Analysis

- First, analyze the correlation between individual treatment components and their measures (independent variables), and permanency outcomes: reunification (reunification event dependent variable)
- Then, examine possible differential distribution of reunions according to "measurable within groups" and "within streams" groups, employing ANOVA to be used for specific comparisons

7. Conceptual Model

- Reunification must be made earlier that AOD recovery timeframe recommends
- While indicators of safe reunification have been identified in previous studies (specifically, Kriel & Poertner’s study, 2002), they have not been empirically validated
- Behavioral indicators of reunification-related change, empirically linked to safe reunification outcomes would help make the reunification decisions earlier

8. Hypothesis of Study

- Recovery from AOD is a healing process.
- By month 12 the court must establish the permanency plan based on available evidence of "sufficient progress" (e.g., parent has completed drug treatment, parenting skills training, domestic violence counseling) (Barth, 1997). Evidence provided by child welfare

9. Hypothesis of Study (Cont’d)

- Is there a relationship between AOD treatment outcomes and child placement outcomes (reunification)?
- Is the relationship among AOD treatment components (each in these provided by the Spectrum residential treatment program) and reunification valid?
- In what specific indicators of treatment-related change (i.e., predictors) of positive child placement outcomes?
- Is there a single "best predictor"?
- Is there any comparability among AOD treatment components identified in having some predictive ability (see question 2) and the list of indicators associated with safe reunification previously identified by other researchers (e.g., Poertner & Karroll, 2002)?
- Are AOD affected parents from all ethnic groups, receiving the same AOD treatment, experience the same treatment-related changes that predict positive child placement outcomes?

10. Methodology Design and Instrumentation: Research Questions

- First, define the research questions:
- What are the components of AOD treatment that predict positive child placement outcomes?
- Are reunification outcomes differentially distributed amongst racial or ethnic groups?
- Is there a single "best predictor"?
- Are AOD affected parents from all ethnic groups, receiving the same AOD treatment, experience the same treatment-related changes that predict positive child placement outcomes?

11. Methodology Design and Instrumentation: Retrospective

- Focus on the relationship between drug treatment components, and treatment-related changes, and child AOD permanency outcomes (e.g., reunification with custodial parent, long-term foster care, adoption) for foster children from drug-involved families

12. Methodology: Data Analysis

- First, analyze the correlation between individual treatment components and their measures (independent variables), and permanency outcomes: reunification (reunification event dependent variable)
- Then, examine possible differential distribution of reunions according to "measurable within groups" and "within streams" groups, employing ANOVA to be used for specific comparisons

13. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- Focus on the relationship between drug treatment components, and treatment-related changes, and child AOD permanency outcomes (e.g., reunification with custodial parent, long-term foster care, adoption) for foster children from drug-involved families

14. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- First, define the research questions:
- What are the components of AOD treatment that predict positive child placement outcomes?
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15. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- Focus on the relationship between drug treatment components, and treatment-related changes, and child AOD permanency outcomes (e.g., reunification with custodial parent, long-term foster care, adoption) for foster children from drug-involved families

16. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- First, define the research questions:
- What are the components of AOD treatment that predict positive child placement outcomes?
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17. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- Focus on the relationship between drug treatment components, and treatment-related changes, and child AOD permanency outcomes (e.g., reunification with custodial parent, long-term foster care, adoption) for foster children from drug-involved families

18. Methodology: Data Analysis (cont’d)

- First, define the research questions:
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