



Evaluating the Efficacy and Cost Effectiveness of a Post-Foster Care Program

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Team Project Abstract

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Background

Currently there are over 400,000 children in foster care in the United States. The federal standard for re-entry within 12-months of discharge from the system is 8.6%. Yet state-by-state, the re-entry rate exceeds the standard. In 2003, the re-entry rate within 12-months of discharge was over 20% in Westchester County, New York. The long-term repercussions of repeated and continued involvement in out-of-home placement include homelessness, substance abuse, financial struggles, mental health issues, poor physical health, unemployment, and criminal activity.

The Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD) created the Every Family Counts (EFC) Aftercare Program to ensure permanent reunification by providing long-term family-centered support services. Since the inception of the program, participants' re-entry rates have dropped to less than 10%, on average. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the EFC Aftercare Program by examining outcome data. Results will be considered for future planning, expansion, and replication of the program.

Objectives

- ✓ Determine the impact of participation in the EFC Aftercare Program on the rate of re-entry to foster care.
- ✓ Determine the cost effectiveness of the EFC Aftercare Program.

Methods

- ✓ **Study Design:** This study is a retrospective review of EFC outcomes of re-entry rates and parenting success. A cost analysis was also conducted to determine the EFC Aftercare Program's financial effectiveness.
- ✓ **Subjects and Setting:** Families who participated in the EFC Aftercare Program from 2008-2012 (N=149 families, 238 children) were included in the analyses.
- ✓ **Data Collection:** Once potential families were identified, data were extracted from program charts and files.
- ✓ **Analysis:** Demographic data were first summarized. Re-entry rates for children of eligible families were then calculated and compared by program year with rates for Westchester County and New York State.
- ✓ This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the New York Medical College (NYMC).

Community Partners

- ✓ Westchester County Department of Social Services: Program and Policy Office for Foster Care & Preventive Services
 - Lisa Swanson
 - Phil Goldstein
- ✓ New York Medical College Department of Health, Policy, and Management
 - Kenneth Knapp, Ph.D.
 - Denise Tahara, Ph.D.

Results

- ✓ On average, EFC participants' 12-month re-entry rates have dropped to under 10%, significantly below the national, state and county averages.
- ✓ The EFC program provides a cost-effective alternative to foster care that benefits individuals, families, and society as a whole.

Next Steps

- ✓ Examine parenting characteristics that contribute to successful reunification
- ✓ Determine long term reunification outcomes post aftercare
- ✓ Conduct cost-benefit analysis of EFC program