Going Home

Factors that Contribute to Permanency for Children in the Residential Setting

Erin Sutton

Abstract

Since the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was introduced nearly seven years ago, there has been great concern about permanency for children who are in out-of-home care. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant relationship between the variables of interest and permanency. This study focused on children who are in residential treatment facilities in Kentucky. This is a correlational study that uses secondary data analysis to examine information collected from the Kentucky Foster Care Census and information provided by the Children’s Review Program database. Children placed in a rural area reach permanency at an expedited rate as compared to those in urban ones. There was no difference between ethnic groups, gender, or age groups in reaching permanency.
Going Home: Factors that Contribute to Permanency for Children in the Residential Setting

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Introduction

- Since the implementation of ASFA, there is great concern about permanency for children in out of home care
- Number of children reaching permanency slowly increasing (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 1998a)
- Most research focuses on permanency in foster care
- Factors studied in past are gender, age, and ethnicity (Courtney, 1994)
Introduction

• Chances of children reaching permanency decreases over time (Kemp & Bodonyi, 2002)

• No racial differences in attaining permanency

• Older and minority children have more difficult time attaining permanency (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 1998b)
Study Purpose

• To assess what factors affect permanency
• Focus on age, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural placement, and permanency of children in residential care in Kentucky
Literature Review

• Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was created to promote adoption efforts for children in foster care
• Establishes a timeline for termination of parental rights and establishes a permanency planning hearing
• Determines if a child will return to parent, placed for adoption, or if other permanent living arrangements are more appropriate
Literature Review

• Since ASFA was implemented, adoption has increased 57% (CWLA, 2003)
• Focus and shift in literature on foster care and its benefits
• Important to shorten the amount of time a child spends in out of home care because of potential detrimental long term effects (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 1998b)
• Community partners can work together to improve social skills and mental health through concurrent planning
Literature Review

• Kentucky Adoptions Opportunities Project (KAOP) created to help high risk children reach permanency
• Focused on one urban and rural area
• More social worker involvement and client compliance in urban areas
• Rural populations achieved permanency at a slower rate (Martin, Barbee, Antle, & Sar, 2002)
Literature Gaps

• No focus on how location affects permanency
• Kentucky has conducted research on foster care through Kentucky Foster Care Census but has not yet analyzed residential data
Research Questions

• Do gender, age, and ethnicity affect the attainment of permanency for children in residential care?

• Do state committed children under the age of 18 who are placed in a residential treatment facility in an urban area attain permanency at an expedited rate compared to those children who are placed in a rural area?
Method

• Correlational study using secondary data analysis
• Used information from Kentucky Foster Care Census
  - Accounted for 5,890 children
  - Ran from August 2002 to November 2003
  - Given by Ruth Huebner and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS)
• Also used information from Children’s Review Program database to examine demographic information
Method

• Original n= 1,070
• New n= 669
  - Due to wrong placement, permanency tracking issues, unexpectedly leaving care
  - 401 children removed
• First point in time April 21, 2003
• Second point in time March 29, 2005
Method

• Subjects were protected by sanitizing their identifying information before use
• Study was approved by CHFS, Bluegrass MH/MR Board, Inc., and UK Institutional Review Boards
• Independent Variables
  - child’s permanency goal, county of placement, age, gender, and ethnicity
• Dependent Variable
  - amount of time it takes for the child to attain his/her permanency goal
60% of subjects were male; 40% were female
Ethnicity of Residential Children

- White: 75%
- African American: 23%
- Native American: 0%
- Asian: 0%
- Other: 2%
**Permanency Goals Used**

- Adoption: 10%
- Parent: 61%
- Relative: 29%
County of Placement

- Urban: 61%
- Rural: 39%
Was Permanency Achieved?

63% Yes
37% No
Table 2 – Cross Tabulations of Achievement of Permanency and Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (p value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanency Achieved</td>
<td>Male/Female</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency Achieved</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>4.411</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – T-tests for Permanency Achieved and Length to Current Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (p value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Permanency Achieved</td>
<td>-1.786</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban and Rural</td>
<td>Length of Time to Achieve Permanency</td>
<td>-.790</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>.430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

• Children in rural areas reach permanency at a faster rate
• No differences between gender, ethnic group, or age group
• Inconclusive findings
Limitations

• Why do rural kids reach faster?
• Large number of kids; no way to track all—data integrity
• Not all children have a level of care
• Family History
• Point in time study
• Severity of child needs, issues
Conclusions

• Very small knowledge/research base on permanency and residential setting

• More research needed
  - ASFA; forefront to child welfare
  - Data is there; just need more time, interested parties to analyze data