

Effectiveness of Adoption Match Program

Kent School of Social Work

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What is the Adoption Match Program?

The Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) is responsible for finding adoptive placements for all children in foster care whose parental rights have been terminated. In January of 2003, the DCBS rolled out its first statewide computerized program to allow workers to match children waiting to be adopted with parents seeking to adopt a child. This program was created to address the increasing numbers of children in out-of-home care in need of adoption. The Adoption Match Program attempted to remove geographic barriers within the state of Kentucky for waiting children. No other known states have developed match programs such as this for their waiting foster children.

Quantitative Study

Design, Sample and Measurement

The Quantitative Study's purpose was to explore DCBS social workers' utilization of the Adoption Match Program, as well as workers' perceptions of its benefits & barriers. The design was descriptive and non-experimental using a pen & pencil 29-item survey tool. Volunteers were solicited from staff meetings in which children and family workers were gathered. Purposive sampling occurred with 33 DCBS social workers from the following three Kentucky service regions: Jefferson (urban), Fayette (urban) and Barren River (urban/rural).

Of the surveyed employees, sample characteristics uncovered a mean number of 8 years with a standard deviation of 7. Of the completed surveys, 25% were Recruitment & Certification workers (match families w/children) and 75% Adoption, Permanency, Treatment & Generic workers (match children w/families). The respondents indicated that 63% of workers "are not properly trained" for the Match Program, 33% say the Match Program is "user friendly", and 7% agree that the acceptance scale "reflects a true acceptability".

Research Questions

What is the level of utilization and training for workers for the Adoption Match Program? Of the surveyed workers, the numbers were duplicates with 61% reporting they had "never used" the Match Program and 61% had "never been trained". The other 39 % reported utilizing and having been trained for the Match Program to "some degree".

What is the success rate for the Adoption Match Program? Surveys indicated that only 11% had reached adoptive referral or pre-placement stage as a result of the Adoption Match Program. 18% reported having reached finalized adoptions as a result of the Match Program.

Is training related to usage of the Adoption Match Program?

A Pearson product moment correlation was conducted to explore the relationship between training and usage of the Adoption Match Program. A moderately significant relationship was found, $r(31)=.34$, $p=.051$. A positive relationship was found such that as training increases, usage of the Adoption Match Program increases.

Additionally, a Mann Whitney U was performed to analyze the variance in attitudes about the Match Program between those that have little usage and moderate/high usage (all surveys included). There was no significance between the difference in attitudes such as relevant behaviors, family needs, time & effort, user friendliness, availability, child scale, family scale, access, more usage and training. Further exploratory analysis again using the Mann Whitney U was performed on those who never used and those with high usage of the Match Program. The same attitude characteristics were measured, and two showed moderate significance (time & effort and user friendliness) were measured higher by those who have used the match program. The child scale, family scale and consistent effort were showed as low significance. The remaining categories were non-significant.

Qualitative Study

Design and Sample

The Qualitative portion of this study explored perceived strengths, barriers and recommended Improvements of DCBS social workers. An exploratory mini-ethnography was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The sampling was non-probability purposive sampling and six DCBS social workers participated. Tesch's data analysis technique was used for to explore the interview content.

The following are examples of interview dialogue: A.) *Training Comments*: to the wrong people, prior to the implementation & with poor notification/follow-up; B.) *Child and Family Profile Comments*: The information used to match is "too general", age ranges are too wide, two totally different type children will often be matched with the same family, information not maintained accurately by worker; C.) *Strengths as described by workers*: Good idea originally, user friendly, technology easy to use, (if information was accurate) could be a "great tool", there were some matches documented-but none that lead to placement;

Recommendations for Policy/Practice

From the information, the workers consistent themes of more awareness about training as well as providing to more workers were present. Additionally, recommendations were made about the need to revisit the use of the child/family profiles which may be a source of weakness. Possible outside consultation from programs who use other means to analyze compatibility such as the Comprehensive Assessment & Training Project (CATS) at the University of Kentucky may be helpful in the creation of a more effective matching tool.

A LOOK INTO THE ADOPTION MATCH PROGRAM WITH COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

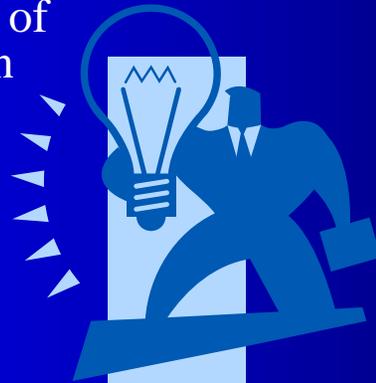
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What is the Adoption Match Program?

- ✓ The Department for Community Based Services, (DCBS) is responsible for finding adoptive placements for all children in foster care whose parental rights have been terminated.
- ✓ In January of 2003 the state of Kentucky rolled out it's first computerized program to allow workers to match children waiting to be adopted with parents seeking a child to adopt.
- ✓ This program was created to address the increasing number of children in out-of-home care in need of adoption.
- ✓ Established to remove geographic barriers with in the state of Kentucky when seeking an adoptive family for a child.
- ✓ No other known states that have developed match programs for their waiting foster children.
- ✓ Kentucky has been contacted by the state of New Hampshire discuss the functionality for a Match program that they are considering developing.



Quantitative Study

Purpose:

- Workers' Utilization of the Match Program
- Perceptions of Benefits & Barriers



Design, Sample, & Tool:

- ✓ Descriptive
- ✓ Non-Experimental
- ✓ Pen and pencil survey
- ✓ 29 Items administered to the teams.
- ✓ Descriptive statistics to describe:
 - Years of service
 - Type of worker
 - Training and Utilization
 - Success rates
- ✓ Purposive Sampling of 33 Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) Social Workers
- ✓ Three regions,
 - Jefferson, n=8 (Urban)
 - Fayette, n= 12 (Urban)
 - Barren River, n=13 (Urban/Rural)

Research Questions:

- Who was trained to use the Match Program?
- Who needs the Match Program?



Sample Characteristics:

- Mean # of years worked: 8 yrs., st. dev. = 7
- 25% Recruitment and Certification workers. (match families with children)
- 75% Treatment, Adoption, Permanency, Generic workers (match children with families)
- 29% Indicated children on their case load need the Match Program



Training and Utilization

Been *trained* on the Match Program?

- 61% Never
- 39% To some degree

Have *used* the Match Program?

- 61% Never
- 39% To some degree



Success with the Match Program?

- ✓ 11% have made adoptive referrals
- ✓ 11% have reached pre-placement stage
- ✓ 18% have reached finalized adoptions



Is training related to usage of the Match Program?

- ✓ A Pearson product moment correlation
- ✓ $r(31) = .34, p = .051$
- ✓ Moderately significant
- ✓ As training increases, usage increases.





Match Usage

Little Usage Moderate/High Usage Mann-Whitney
Mean Mean

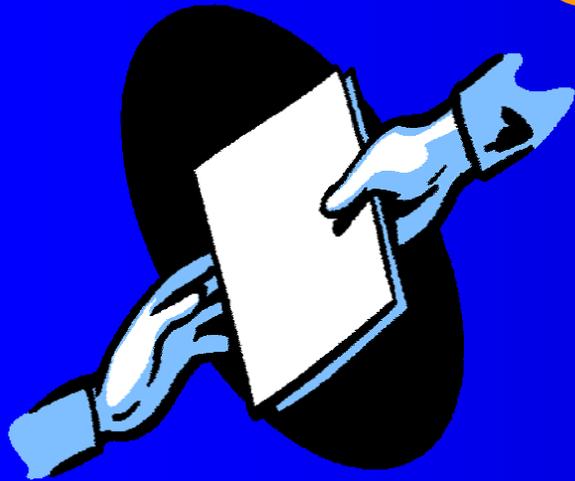
1. Relevant behaviors	13	15	NS
2. Relevant family needs	15	14	NS
3. Time/Effort	14	14	NS
4. User Friendly	12	17	NS
5. Availability	15	14	NS
6. Child Scale	15	13	NS
7. Family Scale	15	13	NS
8. Consistent Access	16	12	NS
9. More Usage	14	15	NS
10.No Proper Training	12	16	NS



Match Usage Exploratory Analysis

	Never Used Mean	High Usage Usage Mean	Mann- Whitney
1. Relevant behaviors	6	8	NS
2. Relevant family needs	6	8	NS
3. Time/Effort	5	9	.02
4. User Friendly	5	10	.01
5. Availability	6	9	NS
6. Child Scale	8	5	.08
7. Family Scale	6	9	.06
8. Consistent Access	8	5	.07
9. More Usage	6	8	NS
10. No Proper Training	6	8	NS

Qualitative Study To Explore:



- Strengths
- Barriers
- Recommended Improvements
For the Match Program

Design & Sample

- Mini-ethnography
- Semi-structured interviews
- Exploratory
- Non-probability purposive sampling
- Tesch's data analysis technique
- 6 participants/ DCBS
- Common barriers/ successes
- User friendliness and training
- Recommendations for Enhancements

Barriers



- ✓ Training:
 - to the wrong people
 - prior to the implementation
 - with poor notification/ follow-up

- ✓ The information used to match is “too general”:
 - age ranges are too wide
 - two totally different type children will often be matched with the same family
 - information not maintained accurately by worker

Strengths

- ✓ Good idea originally
- ✓ User friendly
- ✓ Technology easy to use
- ✓ (If information was accurate) could be a “great tool”
- ✓ There were some matches documented, but none that were finalized



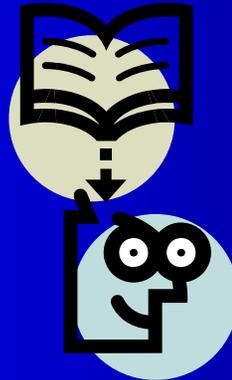
What Does all this Mean?

What would we do different:

- ✓ No % on measurement of success

Strengths:

- ✓ Good sample size/ 75% of using workers
- ✓ Consistent themes in Qualitative interviews
- ✓ Use of 3 largest regions in Kentucky
- ✓ Diverse population surveyed



Recommendations for Policy/Practice:

- ✓ Training: more awareness, to more workers
- ✓ Revisit the use of the child/family profiles
- ✓ Possible outside consultation from programs who use other means to analyze compatibility such as the Comprehensives Assessment & Training Project at the University of Kentucky. (CATS)