


Characteristics of Children Referred From Child Welfare, Their Service Use and Clinical Outcomes in Systems of Care


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Previous Research

- ▶ Children involved with child welfare agencies are more likely to receive mental health services – Farmer et al., 2001
- ▶ Circumstances such as physical and sexual abuse, maltreatment, and a family history of domestic violence lead to child welfare agency intervention and contribute to the development of certain mental health disorders – Burns et al., 2004




The Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services Program for Children and Their Families Program

- ▶ CMHS grant program addressing youth with severe emotional problems
- ▶ Individual, family-centered focus
- ▶ Focus to integrate systems across child agency sectors
- ▶ Has funded 121 system-of-care communities since 1994




Study Purpose

- ▶ This study describes the demographic and clinical characteristics of children referred from child welfare agencies and compares them to children referred to the system of care from other sources.
- ▶ Service use during the first 12 months following entry into services is also examined.




Study Design

- ▶ Children referred from child welfare were compared to children referred from other based on demographic, diagnostic, and clinical measures at entry into the system of care.
- ▶ Child and family history was also examined.
- ▶ Children referred from child welfare were then compared with other children to determine differences in service use and clinical outcomes.



Sample Description

- ▶ 45 communities funded by CMHS between 1997 and 2000 contributed data to this analysis.
- ▶ Sample with complete data on selected descriptive and clinical characteristics at baseline was 3,997.
- ▶ 8.6% of 3,997 children were referred from child welfare agencies.



Measures

- ▶ Descriptive Information Questionnaire (DIQ)
- ▶ DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition)
- ▶ Multi-Sector Service Contracts (MSSC)
- ▶ Education Questionnaire
- ▶ Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach, 1991)
- ▶ Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS, Epstein & Sharma, 1998)



Statistical Methods

- ▶ Reliable Change Index (RCI)
 - Used as a quantitative indicator of meaningful clinical change and compares scores at entry into the system of care and 12 months later to indicate whether a change in scores reveals clinically significant improvement, stability, or deterioration. RCIs were used to measure changes in clinical outcomes, school performance, and school attendance.
- ▶ Chi Square
 - Used to test group differences in dichotomous measures.
- ▶ t-test
 - Used to test differences in continuous measures.

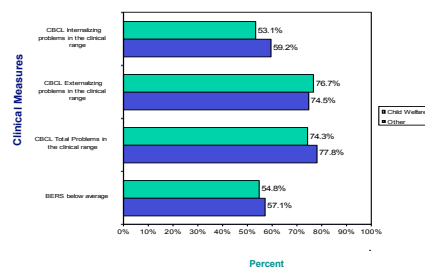


Demographic Characteristics

	Child Welfare (n = 343)	Other (n = 3654)
Gender		
Male	43.4%	30.5%
Female	56.6%	69.5%
Average Age	12.1 years (n = 343)	12.1 years (n = 3654)
Race*		
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.3%	5.4%
Asian	.9%	0.6%
Black or African American	29.2%	27.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.6%	0.4%
White	58.0%	62.3%
Of Hispanic Origin	12.0%	12.0%
Multi-racial	8.6%	9.3%



Clinical Measures at Intake



▶ 53.1% of children referred from child welfare are less likely to exhibit internalizing problems in the clinical range.



Child and Family History

Child History	Child Welfare n = 343	Other n = 3654
Received outpatient mental health services prior to intake	72.0%	73.1%
Received school based mental health services prior to intake	69.2%	61.0%
Received mental health day treatment services prior to intake	18.0%	15.2%
Received residential treatment mental health services or inpatient psychiatric hospitalization prior to intake	37.6%	28.4%
History of physical abuse	37.0%	22.8%
History of sexual abuse	31.2%	20.8%
History of both sexual and physical abuse	19.2%	10.8%
History of run away attempt	40.2%	31.1%
History of suicide attempt	15.2%	16.7%
History of substance use	17.2%	18.1%
Sexually abusive to others	12.5%	6.9%
History of domestic violence	60.1%	49.3%
Family History		
History of mental illness among biological family members	60.1%	58.5%
Parents convicted of a crime	56.3%	47.5%
Family history of substance abuse	70.3%	63.3%

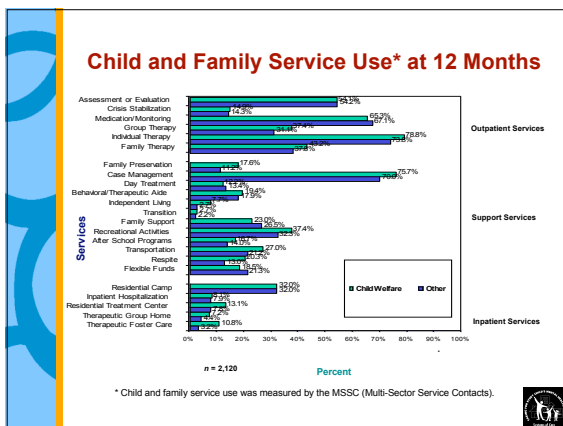
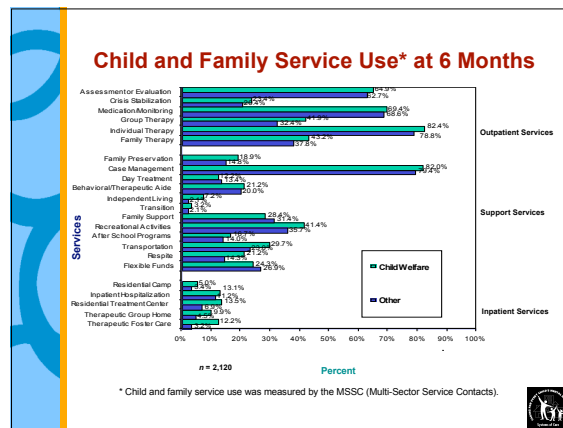
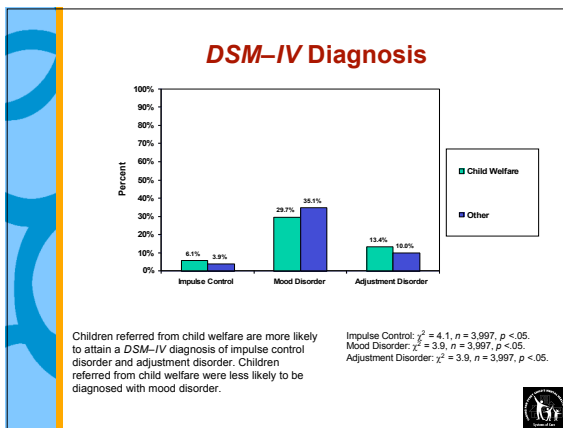
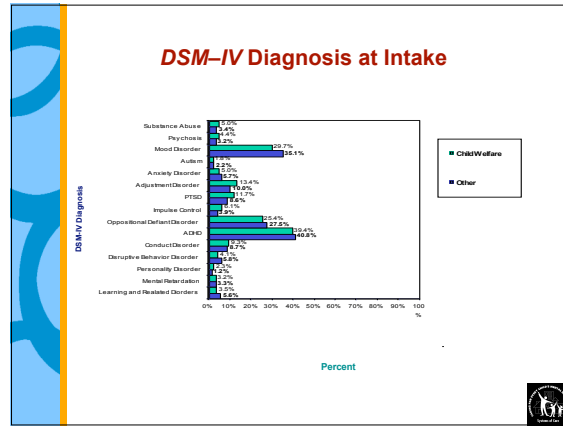
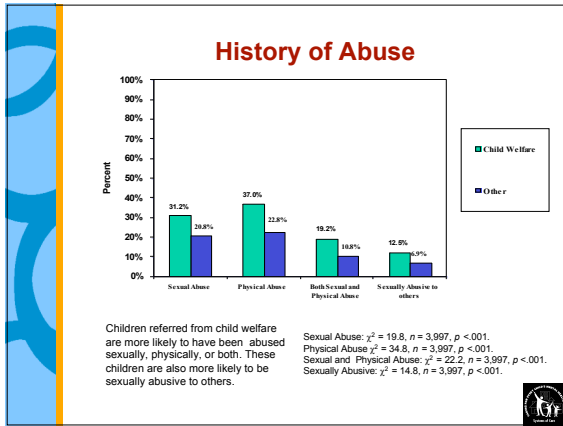


Children Referred From Child Welfare

- ▶ Child History
 - More likely to make a run away attempt
 - History of domestic violence
- ▶ Family History
 - Parents convicted of a crime
 - History of substance abuse

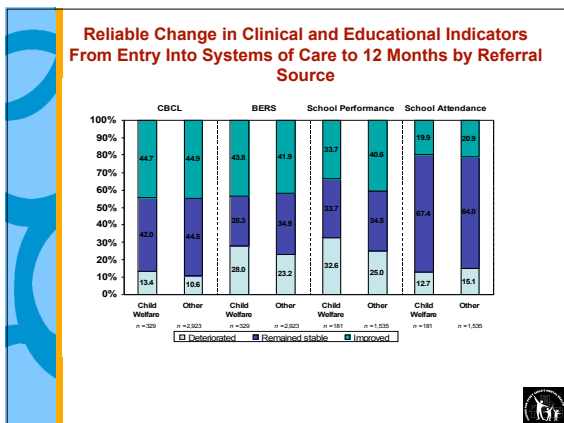
Child History:
Run Away: $\chi^2 = 12.2, n = 3,997, p < .001$.
Domestic Violence: $\chi^2 = 14.5, n = 3,997, p < .001$.
Family History:
Convicted of a Crime: $\chi^2 = 9.6, n = 3,997, p < .01$.
Substance Abuse: $\chi^2 = 6.5, n = 3,997, p < .05$.





Service Use

Service	6 Months		Statistical Significance	12 Months		Statistical Significance
	Child Welfare	Other		Child Welfare	Other	
Therapeutic Group Home Services	9.9%	4.5%	$\chi^2 = 12.2, n = 2,120, p < .001$			
Group Therapy	41.9%	32.4%	$\chi^2 = 8.0, n = 2,120, p < .01$			
Family Preservation Services				17.6%	11.2%	$\chi^2 = 7.8, n = 2,120, p < .01$
Residential Treatment Services	13.5%	6.9%	$\chi^2 = 12.7, n = 2,120, p < .001$	13.1%	7.8%	$\chi^2 = 7.2, n = 2,120, p < .01$
Therapeutic Foster Care	12.2%	3.2%	$\chi^2 = 40.0, n = 2,120, p < .001$	10.8%	3.2%	$\chi^2 = 29.8, n = 2,120, p < .001$
Independent Living Services	7.2%	2.1%	$\chi^2 = 20.1, n = 2,120, p < .001$	7.7%	2.7%	$\chi^2 = 15.3, n = 2,120, p < .001$
Respite Services	21.2%	14.3%	$\chi^2 = 7.3, n = 2,120, p < .01$	20.3%	13.0%	$\chi^2 = 8.8, n = 2,120, p < .01$
Transportation Services	29.7%	23.1%	$\chi^2 = 4.9, n = 2,120, p < .05$	27.0%	21.2%	$\chi^2 = 4.0, n = 2,120, p < .05$



- ### Clinical Measures
- ▶ **Reliable Change Index**
 - **School Performance**
 - ◆ 33.7% of children referred from child welfare improved
 - ◆ 40.6% of children referred from other sources improved
 - **BERS**
 - ◆ 43.8% of children referred from child welfare improved their scores
 - ◆ 41.9% of children referred from other sources improved

- ### Conclusions
- ▶ The Comprehensive Community Mental Health Program for Children and Their Families Program provides a therapeutic environment for children referred from child welfare served as evidenced by the percentage of these children who either remained stable or improved after 12 months in services.
 - ▶ Children referred from child welfare were clinically the same at entry into services and had similar clinical outcomes as children referred to the system of care through other sources, in spite of experiencing a greater number of risk factors.
 - ▶ Children referred from child welfare reported more child and family risk factors that required a comprehensive array of services at both the child and family levels. Data from this analysis show that they received services aimed at addressing needs at both levels.

- ### Implications
- ▶ Additional focus should be placed on providing services that will improve the educational performance and emotional strengths and competencies of children referred to the system of care from child welfare agencies.
 - ▶ Future research can be conducted to examine service utilization and its relationship to outcomes of children referred from child welfare and their families.

References

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