

DoCS Research to Practice Update

A regular update on the latest national and international research

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Research Publications – What's New!

Research to practice

The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and DoCS staff.

As part of this important initiative, the Research to Practice Update encompasses a broad range of research publications and resources to reflect the diversity of DoCS staff.

If you have any comments or suggestions about how we could improve this Update to make it more useful or relevant to your work, please email the Research to Practice Team at:

- researchtopractice@community.nsw.gov.au, or
- 'Research to Practice' on the internal email.

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Prevention & Early Intervention

Collaborative helping: A practice framework for family-centered services

Madsen, W.C. (2009). *Family Process*, 48(1), 103-116

A framework for collaborative family-centered practice that can reinvigorate work with families who have not responded to more traditional approaches is offered. Collaborative Helping is grounded in family-centered principles that include: striving for cultural curiosity, believing in resourcefulness, working in partnership, and making service provision more accountable. The article introduces collaborative inquiry as an organising metaphor for clinical practice and offers a five-step practice framework with clinical illustrations and sample questions. The framework draws from appreciative inquiry, motivational interviewing, the signs of safety approach to child protection work, and solution-focused and narrative therapies.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

The effects of socioeconomic status, race, and parenting on language development in early childhood

Pungello, E.P., Iruka, I.U., Dotterer, A.M., Mills-Koonce, R., & Reznick, J. (2009). *Developmental Psychology*, 45(2), 544-557

The authors examined the associations between socioeconomic status (SES), race, maternal sensitivity, and maternal negative-intrusive behaviors and language development. Mother-child interactions were observed at 12 and 24 months, and language abilities were assessed at 18, 24, 30, and 36 months. The results highlight the

importance of sensitive parenting and suggest that the association between negative-intrusive parenting and language development may be dependent upon family context.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Do early childhood interventions prevent child maltreatment? A review of research

Reynolds, A.J., Mathieson, L.C., & Topitzes, J.W. (2009). *Child Maltreatment*, 14(2), 182-206
This article reviewed the empirical evidence on whether early childhood primary prevention programs could reduce rates of child abuse and neglect. Fifteen studies of 14 programs for children ages birth to 5 years were completed from 1990 to 2007. All but one of the programs intervened from birth to age 3 through home visits, parent education classes, or the provision of health services. Of the five programs showing significant reductions in substantiated rates of child maltreatment, three provide strong evidence of preventative effects. To advance the field, more longer term studies of a variety of intervention models are needed.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Brief and intensive family support program to prevent emergency placements: Lessons learned from a process evaluation

Dagenais, C., Brière, F.N., Geneviève Gratton, G., & Dupont, D. (2009). *Child and Youth Services Review*, 31(5), 594-600

This article presents the results from the evaluation of the Montreal Brief and Intensive Intervention (BII) program designed to prevent emergency placements or other longer-term services by Youth

centres in situations involving family crises by providing short-term, intensive interventions. A multi-methods evaluation design was used to evaluate program implementation, processes and outcomes. The implementation results were linked to the outcome evaluation results in order to identify the predictors (characteristics of families and intervention) of success of the intervention. Practical implications are discussed.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Out-of-Home Care

Parental substance misuse and children's entry into Alternative Care in South Australia

Jeffreys, H., Hirte, C., Rogers, N., & Wilson, R. (2009). Department of Families and Communities, Business Affairs, Research Unit.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the potential for an individual's substance use to have implications for other family members and particularly for the welfare and development of children. This study explores a number of key issues relating to problematic parental substance use and the impact on children as well as the child protection and alternative care system in South Australia.

<http://www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au>

Effects of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers (MTFC-P) on reducing permanent placement failures among children with placement instability

Fisher, P.A., Kim, H.K., & Pears, K.C. (2009). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(5), 541-546

The aims of the present study were to examine the effects of a therapeutic intervention for foster preschoolers with histories of placement instability on permanency outcomes and to determine whether the intervention's effectiveness on these outcomes varied based on prior maltreatment experiences. Permanency outcomes for 52 children who had experienced 4 or more placements prior to study entry ($n = 29$ intervention condition; $n = 23$ regular foster care condition) were examined through 24 months post-study entry. The results indicated no group differences in permanency attempt rates but more than double the rate of successful permanency attempts for the intervention condition. The findings indicated that systematic interventions have the potential to impact permanency outcomes among children with prior instability.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Overcoming challenges to implementing and evaluating evidence-based interventions in child welfare: A matter of necessity

Maher, E.J., Jackson, L.J., Pecora, P.J., Schultz, D.J., Chandra, A., & Barnes-Proby, D.S. (2009). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(5), 555-562

This case study highlights the challenges and solutions for implementing an evidence-based program and associated evaluation in child welfare. The program is designed to support the mental health needs of youth in foster care in school settings. The intervention is unique, not only in the application of an evidence-based program to child welfare, which many scholars and practitioners point out is all too rare, but also because the intervention requires multiple system integration. In detailing the process, the authors hope to contribute to a growing body of literature documenting the integration of science and practice through the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based

programs.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Child Protection

Psychiatric diagnosis as a risk marker for victimisation in a national sample of children

Cuevas C.A., Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., & Turner, H. (2009). *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*, 24(4), 636-52

Research examining childhood abuse has shown an association between victimisation and psychiatric diagnoses (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder, depression). Historically, psychiatric diagnoses have been emphasised as a consequence of victimisation, with less research examining if it also functions as a risk factor for further victimisation, perhaps making diagnoses a general victimisation risk marker. The results highlight the need to consider psychiatric diagnoses as a marker for past and possible future victimisation.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Postnatal depression and infant health practices among high-risk women

Zajicek-Faber, M. (2009). *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 18(2), 236-245

Women's postnatal depressive symptoms have been associated with many adverse outcomes for children. The current study examined the frequency association with relative risk between postnatal depressive symptoms and mothers' use of preventative infant health practices. Results found that compared to women without postnatal depressive symptoms, women with symptoms engaged in significantly fewer well-child health-visits, were less likely to use home safety devices or place their infants in the preferred back-to-sleep position, and did not complete immunisations. Depressed

women were also more likely to lack knowledge of nurturing and sensitive parenting, use corporal punishment and inappropriate foods, and to show poor parenting practices.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Children of probationers in the child welfare system and their families

Phillips, S., Leathers, S., & Erkanli, A. (2009). *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 18(2), 183-191

This study describes changes over a 36-month period in the lives of children of probationers who were subjects of reports of maltreatment. Data on a nationally representative sample of reported victims of maltreatment were used to examine probationer-parents' contact with the criminal justice system, and concurrent changes in their children's households, risk exposure, and emotional and behavioral problems. Results show that 36 months after coming in contact with the child welfare system, about 40% of probationers' children no longer lived with their probationer-parents. During the same period, children's exposure to risk such as parental substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence dropped markedly; however, there was an upward trend in the prevalence of child emotional and behavioral problems. These problems ultimately declined among very young children, but persisted among elementary school age children.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Parental mental illness: Issues in custody determinations

Marsh, D.T. (2009). *American Journal of Family Law*, 23(1), 28-36

The author focuses on custody determinations involving parental mental disability. The author cites the absence of statistics in the U.S. regarding the prevalence of adults with mental illness who are parents and raising children. Also discussed is the impact of mental illness on parenting including parent-child relationships. The author notes that custody decisions should be based on results of comprehensive diagnostic, functional, parental and child assessment and not merely on the presence of a mental disorder.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

From policy to practice: The implementation and negotiation of technologies in everyday child welfare

Peckover, S., Hall, C., & White, S. (2009). *Children & Society*, 23(2), 136-148,

A central element of the Every Child Matters reforms in England are measures which aim at improving information sharing. Amongst these are the children's database and the Common Assessment Framework, both representing technological solutions to long-standing concerns about information sharing in child welfare. This article reports some findings from an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded study which examined their introduction and use in everyday professional practice. Substantial differences in policy implementation, access to and use of the technologies, draw attention to the importance of the localised and situated contexts into which these technologies are being introduced, raising serious questions about their future development as national standard systems.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Other

Early child maltreatment, runaway youths, and risk of delinquency and victimisation in adolescence: A mediational model

Min Jung Kim, Tajima, E.A., Herrenkohl, T.L., & Bu Huang. (2009). *Social Work Research*, 33(1), 19-28

This article examines whether running away from home mediates the link between child maltreatment and later delinquency and victimisation in adolescence. Specifically, the authors tested the hypothesis that childhood physical and psychological abuse increase the risk of a child's running away from home by the time of adolescence. Running away from home is, in turn, hypothesised to increase the risk of delinquency and victimisation. Childhood sexual abuse, modelled independently of physical and psychological abuse, is hypothesised to have a similar effect on the intervening factor of running away, as well as the two adolescent outcomes: delinquency and victimisation. Findings show that physical and psychological abuse predict a child's running away from home. Running away predicts later delinquency and victimisation and partially mediates the effect of earlier abuse. Findings can support social workers in their efforts to advocate on behalf of child abuse victims in developing interventions and support services.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Therapeutic responses of psychopathic sexual offenders: Treatment attrition, therapeutic change, and long-term recidivism

Olver, M.E., & Wong, S.C.P. (2009). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 77(2), 328-336.

The authors examined the

therapeutic responses of psychopathic sex offenders in terms of treatment dropout and therapeutic change, as well as sexual and violent recidivism over a 10-year follow-up among 156 federally incarcerated sex offenders treated in a high-intensity inpatient sex offender program. Although psychopathic participants were more likely than their nonpsychopathic counterparts to drop out, almost 75% of the former completed treatment. Psychopathic offenders who failed to complete sex offender treatment were more likely to violently but not sexually recidivate than completers. Positive treatment changes were associated with reductions in sexual and violent recidivism after psychopathy and sexual recidivism risk were controlled. Overall, the results suggest that given appropriate treatment interventions, sex offenders with significant psychopathic traits can be retained in an institutional treatment program and those showing therapeutic improvement can reduce their risk for both sexual and violent recidivism.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

Learning patterns in social skills training programs: An exploratory study

Preece, S., & Mellor, D. (2009). *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 26(2), 87-101

While Social Skills Training programs have been shown to improve the social skills of children with Disruptive Behaviour Disorders, the pattern of change in the participants' learning during the training period remains unknown. Identifying this pattern could assist in determining whether more or less training hours are required to maximise the benefits of such programs within available resources. The current study aimed to replicate the

social skills improvements found in previous research, and to explore the pattern of improvements in social knowledge and social performance that occurs during a Social Skills Training program.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

College students' attitudes toward adoption: A brief note

Bonds-Raacke, J.M. (2009). *College Student Journal*, 43(1), 132-135.

In the current experiment, college students were presented with a scenario describing a fictitious couple that was adding another child to their family. After reading the scenario, students answered a series of questions on their attitudes toward the new addition. It was found that attitudes were not as positive for an adoption compared to having a biological child. These results are discussed in light of societal norms and expectations for family size and structure.

<http://search.ebscohost.com>

overview of the key changes to homelessness policy that were introduced in December 2008 by the federal government's white paper on the issue, and developments since then.

www.apo.org.au

Taking chances: The effect of growing up on welfare on the risky behaviour of young people

Cobb-Clark, D.A., Ryan, C., & Sartbayeva, A. (2009). Centre for Economics Policy Research

This paper analyses the effect of growing up on welfare on young people's involvement in a variety of social and health risks. Young people in welfare families are much more likely to take both social and health risks. Much of the apparent link between family welfare history and risk taking disappears, however, once family structure and mothers' decisions regarding their own risk taking and investment in their children are taken into account. Interestingly, the authors find no significant effect of socio-economic status per se.

<http://www.apo.org.au>

Reports

Homelessness in NSW

Simon, K. (2009). Research Service, Parliament of New South Wales

This briefing paper provides a brief

Resources

MoodGYM

MoodGYM is an interactive program designed to help individuals:

(i) identify whether they are having problems with emotions like anxiety and depression, and

(ii) overcome these problems by developing good coping skills for the future.

It is a free program available online and is based on two programs which are successful in preventing and treating depression and anxiety. These are: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy. The online program was recently updated.

[http://
www.moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au)

Strengthening Families and Communities: 2009 Resource Guide

Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children's Bureau, FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention

This Resource Guide was written to support service providers in their work with parents, caregivers, and their children to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. The guide includes information about protective factors that help reduce the risk of child maltreatment, strategies for changing how communities support families, and evidence-informed practices. It also offers suggestions for enhancing

protective factors in families, tools to build awareness and develop community partnerships, information about child abuse and neglect, a directory of national organisations that work to strengthen families, and tip sheets in English and Spanish on specific parenting topics.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov>

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