

Community Services Research to Practice Update

A regular update on the latest national and international research

Issue 39, April–May 2011

Research Publications – What's New!

Research to practice

The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and Community Services 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 Community Services 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@dhs.nsw.gov.au, or
- 'Research to Practice' on the internal email.

Early Intervention

Effects of chronic maltreatment and maltreatment timing on children's behaviour and cognitive abilities

Jaffee, S. & Maikovich-Fong, A. (2011). *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 52 (2), 184-94

Chronic maltreatment has been associated with the poorest developmental outcomes, but its effects may depend on the age when the maltreatment began, or be confounded by co-occurring psychosocial risk factors. This study used data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) to identify four groups of children who varied in the timing, extent, and continuity of their maltreatment from birth to 9 years. The study comprised of 1,777 children. Internalising and externalising problems, pro-social behaviour, and IQ were assessed 21 months, on average, following the most recent maltreatment report.

The results showed that children maltreated in multiple developmental periods had more externalising and internalising problems and lower IQ scores than children maltreated in only one developmental period. Chronically maltreated children had significantly more family risk factors than children maltreated in one developmental period and these accounted for maltreatment chronicity effects on externalising and internalising problems, but not IQ. It appears that the timing of maltreatment did not have an effect on cognitive or behavioural outcomes, although it did moderate the effect of maltreatment chronicity on pro-social behaviour. The authors conclude with the need for early intervention to prevent maltreatment from emerging and to provide more mental health and substance use services to caregivers involved with child welfare services.

Child Protection

Inquiring into non-accidental child deaths: reviewing the review process

Devaney, J., Lazenbatt, A. & Bunting, L. (2011). *British Journal of Social Work*, 41(2), 242-260

There is significant public and professional interest in the non-accidental death of children where abuse and neglect are suspected of being contributory factors. Systems for reviewing these deaths have been developed in each of the four jurisdictions within the UK. The main aims are to ensure that individuals and professionals are held to account if practice falls below the expected standard, whilst also seeking to strengthen the systems for protecting children through reflecting on what lessons, if any, can be learnt from the death of a child through abuse or neglect. Recently, the benefit of such inquiries and the quality of serious case reviews have come under scrutiny.

In this paper, the authors report the findings of a Delphi study that sought to explore how the process of conducting reviews following the death of a child could be improved through seeking the views of experienced professionals responsible for child protection in Northern Ireland. 28 panel experts from varying professions participated in a semi structured interview and 27 of them completed a sequential questionnaire. The authors conclude that the system does command professional support, but could be improved through greater attention to process issues with a stronger emphasis that well intentioned policies are translated into workable and functioning practices.

Produced by
The Research to Practice Team
Research Centre
Community Services
4–6 Cavill Avenue
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
DX 21212 ASHFIELD

Phone: 9716 2644
Fax: 9716 2788
researchtopractice@dhs.nsw.gov.au



Family &
Community Services
Community Services

Community Services Research to Practice Update

Disentangling the relationship between child maltreatment and violent delinquency: using a nationally representative sample

Yun, I., Ball, J. & Lim, H. (2011). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(1), 88-110

This study uses the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescents data, a U.S. nationally representative sample of adolescents, to disentangle the relationship between child maltreatment and violent delinquency. It is known as the largest comprehensive study of nationally representative adolescents. The study collected data in three waves from 1994 to 2002. The final sample consisted of 3,472 cases. It also examines the potential moderating effects of gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and religiosity on the association between child maltreatment and violent delinquency. Contrary to prior research findings, the results show that physical abuse is not associated with future violent delinquency, whereas sexual abuse and neglect predict violent delinquency significantly. The study did not reveal any moderating effects of gender, SES, and religiosity on the association between maltreatment and violent delinquency.

Child maltreatment and adolescent development

Trickett, P., Negriff, S., Juye, J. & Peckins, M. (2011). *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 3-20

Research indicates that adolescents' affected by child maltreatment that continues or begins in adolescence is linked with internalising and externalising mental health

problems, as well as other maladaptive developmental problems, in childhood and beyond. This article reviews research published from 2000 to 2010 with a specific focus on the nature and impact of child maltreatment on adolescent development in America. It focuses on three critical themes from recent research: (1) prospective longitudinal studies that examine adolescent adaptation and maladaptation of individuals abused or neglected earlier in life; (2) research that focuses on some developmental outcomes with particular salience during adolescence such as delinquency and substance abuse, romantic relationships, and sexuality; and (3) research that examined psychobiological processes in maltreated adolescents, processes that might indicate the mechanisms underlying maladaptive development.

Identifying children at high risk for a child maltreatment report

Dubowitz, H., Kim, J., Black, M., Weisbart, C., Semiatin, J. & Magder, L. (2011). *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 35(2), 96-104

This study's objective was to help professionals identify factors that place families at risk for future child maltreatment, to facilitate necessary services and to potentially help prevent abuse and neglect. Data was collected from a prospective, longitudinal study of 332 low-income families recruited from urban paediatric primary care clinics, followed for over 10 years, until the children were approximately 12 years old. Children with prior child protective services (CPS) involvement were excluded. The initial assessment included socio-demographic, child, parent and family level variables. Child maltreatment was assessed via CPS reports. Risk ratios and their 95% confidence intervals were estimated using Cox regression models.

The results showed that of the 224 children without a prior CPS report and with complete data who were followed for an average of 10 years, 97 (43%) later had a CPS report. In a multivariate survival analysis, five risk factors were associated with an increased risk for later maltreatment. These related to child's low performance on development assessment; maternal education, drug use, depressive symptoms and more than one child in the family. Child health care and other professionals can identify these risk factors and facilitate necessary services to strengthen families, support parents and potentially help prevent child maltreatment.

Longitudinal study on the effects of child abuse and children's exposure to domestic violence, parent-child attachments, and antisocial behaviour in adolescence

Sousa, C., Herrenkohl, T., Moylan, C., Tajima, E., Klika, J., Herrenkohl, R. & Russo, M. (2011). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(1), 111-136

This U.S. study examined the unique and combined effects of child abuse and children's exposure to domestic violence on later attachment to parents and antisocial behaviour during adolescence. The study began in 1976. The first wave of data included 457 children aged from 18 months to 6 years. Four years later a second wave of data was collected. Approximately, 10 years later 91% of the original children were reassessed at adolescence at an average age of 18 years. Analyses also investigated whether the interaction of exposure and low attachment predicted youth outcomes. Findings suggest that,

Community Services

Research to Practice Update

although youth dually exposed to abuse and domestic violence were less attached to parents in adolescence than those who were not exposed, for those who were abused only and those who were exposed only to domestic violence, the relationship between exposure types and youth outcomes did not differ by level of attachment to parents. However, stronger bonds of attachment to parents in adolescence did appear to predict a lower risk of antisocial behaviour independent of exposure status. Preventing child abuse and children's exposure to domestic violence could lessen the risk of antisocial behaviour during adolescence, as could strengthening parent-child attachments in adolescence. However, strengthening attachments between parents and children after exposure may not be sufficient to counter the negative impact of earlier violence trauma in children.

Trying to come home: Substance exposed infants, mothers, and family reunification

Huang, H., & Ryan, J. (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2). 322-329

Substance abusing mothers comprise a significant proportion of caregivers in public child welfare, and achieve low reunification rates. Unfortunately little is known about treatment options intended to facilitate recovery and increase reunification. This study focuses particular attention on the relationship between specific treatment modalities (e.g., residential and outpatient), recovery from substance abuse and family

reunification. Analysing a sample of 160 U.S. mothers and their substance exposed infants, the findings clearly identify the benefits of residential treatment in terms of both treatment progress (directly) and family reunification (indirectly), but only when residential services are delivered in combination with transitional services.

Out-of-Home Care

Dissociation in middle childhood among foster children with early maltreatment experiences

Hulette, A., Freyd, J. & Fisher, P. (2011). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35 (2), 123-126

This study examined dissociation in 118 school-aged foster children who had been maltreated in early childhood and transitions to middle childhood. The median age was 9 years. Data was collected at 6 month intervals over one and a half years. The finding that foster children continue to be highly dissociative years after maltreatment experiences supports previous research findings. Comparisons revealed that the children with moderate to high maltreatment profiles had significantly higher mean levels of dissociation than other groups combined. In middle childhood, girls who had early maltreatment experiences tended to have higher dissociation scores than boys. The analysis indicated that gender and number of placement transitions were significant predictors of dissociation.

The relationship between time spent living with kin and adolescent functioning in youth with a history of out-of-home placement

Taussig, H. & Clyman, R. (2011). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(1), 78-86

Many children in the US who are court-ordered to live in out-of-home care are placed with kinship caregivers. Few studies have examined the impact of living with kin on child well-being. This study examined the relationship between length of time living with kin and indices of adolescent well-being in a cohort of 148 youth, ages 7-12, who entered court ordered out-of-home care. Seventy-five percent of those interviewed at 6 months following placement were interviewed 5 years later.

The multivariate findings suggested a pattern of poorer functioning for youth who spent more length of time living with kin and related to a greater involvement in delinquency, sexual risk behaviours, substance use and total risk behaviours. Poorer life-course outcomes included school suspensions, lower grades, offences and arrests. The study's findings suggest that further research on the impact of kinship care with more sophisticated methodology is needed.

Other

Interventions to prevent and reduce cyber abuse of youth: a systematic review

Mishna, F., Cook, C., Saini, M., Meng-Jia, W. & MacFadden, R. (2011). *Research on Social Work Practice*, 21(1), 5-14

The use of electronic communication through the internet is exploding worldwide as a communication tool particularly for young people. While there are many benefits that result

Community Services Research to Practice Update

from electronic-based communication, the Internet is concurrently a potential site for abuse and victimisation. This paper systematically reviews the effectiveness of cyber abuse interventions in increasing Internet safety knowledge and decreasing risky online behaviour. The review uncovered 3,029 studies. Three of the studies dated between 2003 and 2006 met all inclusion criteria. Significant results were found between pre- and post test scores related to Internet safety knowledge. Most results related to risky online behaviour were not significant. The results showed that participation in psycho-educational Internet safety interventions is associated with an increase in Internet safety knowledge but is not significantly associated with a change in risky online behaviour.

Lessons learned from children who have experienced homelessness: what services need to know

Moore, T., McArthur, M. & Noble-Carr, D. (2011). *Children & Society*, 25(2), 115-126

Children who accompany their parents or guardians during a period of homelessness make up 37% (more than one in three) of all people accessing the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services. This paper describes an Australian qualitative study that explored the experiences of children who accompanied their families during periods of homelessness. The study was carried out by the Institute of Child Protection Studies in Canberra between March 2006 and September 2007. 25 children and young people participated in semi-structured interviews, art activities and group discussions.

It focuses particularly on what children and young people say they want from the services that they come in contact with; particularly specialised homelessness services such as housing support services and refuges. Key themes that emerged from the research include: the need for services to engage with children as individuals in their own right, to listen to and acknowledge their stories, to have services that meet their individual needs, to act and respond when children feel unsafe and for workers who can provide support to children to talk to parents about what is going on. Children and young people wanted workers to know that they felt their parents were doing their best to keep them safe. They focused on what their parents could do and did do rather than what they were not able to provide and encouraged the same from the human service system.

Use of data to assess performance and promote outcome achievement by public and private child welfare agency staff

Collins-Camargo, C., Sullivan, D. & Murphy, A. (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2), 330-339

Despite the emphasis on evidence-based practice in the literature, little is known about the extent to which child welfare workers routinely use data to assess the effectiveness of their practice, or consider an array of evidence informed practices such as peer record review, supervisory sessions or program evaluation as useful in improving their performance. This study, conducted as a part of the planning phase for a larger research and demonstration project measured frontline staff perceptions in both the public and private sectors in one U.S. state regarding these and other outcome-focused activities. 466 child welfare workers and supervisors from the public sector

and 85 private agency staff responded to a survey that was developed based on a review of the literature. Statistically significant differences were noted between public and private agency staff. In addition, the relationship between staff's use of data and their assessment of their own skill and the support provided by their agency for an array of out-of-home care practice activities are described. Implications for building the use of evidence-informed practice in child welfare are discussed.

Reports

Evaluation of the self directed support pilot for children and young adults with a physical disability

Genera, S., Fisher, K., Robinson, S., Clements, N. & Eastman, C. (2011). *Social Policy Research Centre, Disability and Community Care Services, Department of Communities*

The Department of Communities commissioned an evaluation of the outcomes, process and costs of the Self Directed Support pilot by a research team led by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC). The pilot participants included 23 children with a physical disability, aged 6 months to 6 years of age, from the Sunshine Coast Children's Therapy Centre and 26 adults with acquired brain injury and physical disabilities, aged 20 to 35 years of age, from the Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service in Brisbane and their families. The two key objectives of the study were community inclusion and empowering service users to make their own choices about their support (self direction) and be their own agents of change. This baseline report provides early findings about

Community Services Research to Practice Update

the outcomes for participants and their families, implementation of the pilot the process and cost analysis. It also draws together arising questions for the pilot and implications for future development of the program.

<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/>

Working together to prevent child abuse and neglect: a common approach for identifying and responding early to indicators of need

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. (2010).

The Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) project is one of the 12 National Priorities planned during the initial three year period of the COAG National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020: Protecting Children is Everyone's Business. The new approach is being developed under the auspices of the CAARS Taskforce, which was established by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) in 2009.

The Common Approach promotes the use of common language across professions and can be embedded in existing practice to help meet the needs of child protection in Australia. Universal service providers will have at their disposal a comprehensive and, at the same time, easy-to-use instrument that helps them

identify the needs of children and families at an early stage.

The Common Approach also provides guidance to practitioners on the next steps involved in assisting and empowering these children and families to meet their needs in an effective and timely manner. The Common Approach is thus expected to enhance the capacity of universal service providers to identify the strengths, concerns, protective factors and unmet needs of children, young people and families, and to facilitate a pathway to appropriate support services. A consistent approach to responding early to need as a way of preventing an escalation of problems will contribute to the overall goal of enhancing the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children.

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

Resources

Drugs and the law

Bolt, S. (2011). Library Council of New South Wales

This plain language publication covers the law in New South Wales relating to drugs. It includes what possession means, the use and supply of drugs, manufacturing, importing and exporting offences and the penalties that can be imposed for these offences. It also covers the use of drugs by young people and how the court process works. Case studies are also included.

<http://www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/guides/drugs/index.cfm>

Books

Interventions for young children exposed to intimate partner violence.

McDonald, R., Jouriles, E. & Minze, L. (2011). *In: How intimate partner violence affects children: Developmental research, case studies, and evidence-based intervention.* Graham-Bermann, S. & Levendosky, A., (Eds.), Washington, DC, U.S., *American Psychological Association*, 109-131

Knowledge of the natural processes underlying the effects of intimate partner violence exposure on children is fundamentally important for identifying potential intervention targets and refining interventions to address them. Research on mediators and moderators of the relation between intimate partner violence and child outcomes has improved to include numerous sources of influence on children's adjustment and factors that operate to amplify or modulate that influence, enhancing the interpretations of the findings of intervention research. This chapter highlights the linkages between theory and empirically supported interventions for young children exposed to intimate partner violence, identifying those theoretical propositions that appear to be substantiated and those for which intervention research remains lacking. The interventions reviewed in this chapter include those specific to preschool as well as older school-age children included in evaluations.

Community Services Research to Practice Update

Conferences

Interrupting Transmission: youth | change | policy | practice

May 30 - June 1 2011, Sydney
Convention and Exhibition
Centre, Darling Harbour
Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
The conference will focus on
reflection and communications
and provide current information
on youth policy, development
and practice, with an
opportunity to develop networks
and contacts throughout the
youth sector.

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

The Body Remembers: (2 day Workshop)

30 June & 01 July, 2011, Sydney
Convention and Exhibition
Centre, Darling Harbour,
Australian Childhood Foundation

Education, health and welfare
professionals who are seeking
enhanced knowledge and the
latest evidence about the
neurobiology of trauma in
therapeutic practice with
children, young people and
adults are encouraged to attend.

<https://secure.childhood.org.au>

Australian Social Policy Conference: Social Policy in a Complex World

6-8 July 2011, UNSW Social Policy
Research Centre

The biennial conference aims to
bring together researchers,
practitioners and policy makers
from across disciplines and provide an
opportunity to explore research and
practice.

<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au>

3rd Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators

27 - 29 July 2011, University of York,
International Society for Child
Indicators

This theme of the three day
conference is 'Children's Well-Being:
The Research & Policy Challenges'.
It is the third conference organised
by the International Society for Child
Indicators (ISCI), an international
group of experts, practitioners and
researchers in the field worldwide.

<http://www.york.ac.uk/>

Disclaimer

This Update has been compiled by
the Research Centre as part of the
Research to Practice Program. It has
been developed to facilitate access
to research publications and
resources.

The content contained within these
publications is provided for your
information only and should not be
seen as a directive or endorsement
by Community Services.