

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:

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Early Intervention

Does child care quality matter?

Associations between socio-emotional development and non-parental child care in a representative sample of Australian children

Harrison, L. (2008). *Family Matters*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 79, 14-25.

This paper focuses on the impact of child care quantity and quality by examining the relationship between the hours of early child care, the quality of care and children's socio-emotional development and well being. It draws on data from the nationally represented study *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*. The sample comprised of wave 2 data from the LSAC birth cohort comprised of 4,606 children aged 2-3 years, who were receiving non-parental child care at the time of the study. It compares social and behaviour problems for children in formal care, informal care, mixed formal and informal care, and not attending care child with international child care systems and studies. It found that caregivers play important roles in explaining the links between child care quality and the development of positive behaviours (as well as reduced negative behaviors) in children. The researchers suggest that quality is a feature of child care that cannot be under-estimated or remain undisputed when child care providers seek to clarify and act on research in their practice. Results and implications of the study are discussed.

The effect of residential neighbourhood on child behaviour problems in first grade

Caughy, M., Nettles, S., O'Campo, P. (2008). *American Journal of Community Psychology*, (Online First).

This article reports on a study that examines cross-level interactions between neighbourhood characteristics in predicting child behaviour problems, and whether parenting behaviour mediates and/or moderates the effect of neighbourhood and the role neighbourhood social processes play in regards to child behaviour problems. The sample included a racially diverse sample of first grade children from 405 urban dwelling families residing in Baltimore City neighbourhoods from different census block groups. Multivariate multi-level regression analyses results indicated that a high negative social environment is linked to greater internalising problems for children. The study showed that characteristics of the neighbourhoods in which children live have an influence on child behaviour problems and are not only a function of processes at the individual and family level. It concludes with a discussion on neighbourhood effects on behaviour problems amongst young school aged children as well as limitations and implications for the study.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content>

Early manifestations of childhood depression: influences of infant temperament and parental depressive symptoms

Gartstein, M., & Bateman, A. (2008). *Infant and Child Development*, 17 (3), 223-248.

This article reports on a U.S. longitudinal study to understand

early predictors of depressive symptoms in toddlers, specifically the impact of maternal depression and infant temperament on early depression-like symptoms. Questionnaires were completed by 83 parents of infants between 3 and 12 months assessing demographic information, infant temperament, and maternal depression. A follow up at 18 months of age assessed toddler temperament and depression like symptoms. The study also examines moderator effects of infant temperament. The findings indicated that lower levels of infant regulatory capacity and greater severity of maternal depression were predictive of toddler depression like symptoms. The results suggest that parental depressive symptoms need not be 'clinically significant' to predict toddler affective problems. Practice implications are discussed.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/117888113/PDFSTART>

Child Protection

Parental alcohol misuse in complex families: The implications for engagement

Taylor, A., Toner, P., Templeton, L., & Velleman, R. (2008). *British Journal of Social Work*, 38 (5), 843-864.

This article explores the barriers to engagement with parents from complex families misusing alcohol. This small study used triangular qualitative methodology and involved in-depth qualitative interviews with parents to explore the reasons for disengagement and identified the characteristics of such families. Data was also sourced from case files. The study highlights the impact multiple problems have on family functioning and their capacity to engage. It discusses strategies and approaches for engagement with multi-problem families and implications for practice.

<http://atoz.ebsco.com>

Exposure to childhood sexual and physical abuse and adjustment in early adulthood

Fergusson, D., Boden, J., & Horwood, L. (2008). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32 (6), 607-619.

This article reports on a New Zealand longitudinal study that examined linkages between exposure to childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and childhood physical punishment/abuse (CPA) and mental health issues in early adulthood. The sample included a birth cohort of over 1000 children born in 1977 studied at birth, 4 months, 1 year and annual intervals to 16, and then at ages 18, 21 and 25 years.

The findings showed that exposure to CSA and CPA was related to increased risks of later mental health problems in adolescence and young adulthood including depression, anxiety disorder, conduct/anti-social personality disorder, substance dependence, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts at ages 16-25. Exposure to CSA was associated with consistent increases in risks of later mental health problems. Exposure to CPA had weaker and less consistent effects on later mental health. These findings suggest that much of the association between CPA and later mental health reflects the general family context in which CPA occurs, and is less the case for CSA.

[doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.12.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.12.018)

Parenting services for mothers involved with child protective services: Do they change maternal parenting and spanking behaviours with young children?

Casanueva, C., Martin, S., Runyan, D., & Barth, R., & Bradley, R. (2008). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30 (8), 861-878.

This article reports on a national representative sample of families investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS) in the U.S, to assess whether parenting training was related to changes in parenting practices 18 months after training,

controlling for maternal, child, and family characteristics. The study compared mothers who received parenting services with mothers who did not, even though they had a similar need for services, as determined by Propensity Score Matching. This study found some modest benefits in maternal responsiveness and total parenting scores for mothers of 3- to 5-year-old children who received parenting services, as compared with mothers that did not. However, the findings were not confirmed with multivariate analysis. The results show that parent training obtained through the child welfare system lacks the requisite features to significantly change parenting practices. The study highlights the need for cohesive, national, evidence-based effective parenting training for families involved with CPS.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?>

Retention of front-line staff in child welfare: A systematic review of research

DePanfilis, D., & Zlotnik, J. (2008). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30 (9), 995-1008.

This article reports on a rigorous systematic review process that aims to identify the personal and organisational factors that may enhance retention and limit turnover among child welfare workers in the U.S. The study analysed 25 research studies. The article focuses on reviewing the methods and findings of nine studies that used multivariate analyses to explore the relationships between organisational and/or personal factors and retention or turnover. The findings reinforce the importance of workers' commitment to child welfare, self-efficacy and low levels of emotional exhaustion as

important personal factors for staying, and supervisory and co-worker support and salary and benefits as important organisational factors affecting retention. It provides suggestions for future research.

[doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.12.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.12.017)

Out-of-Home Care

The academic status of children and youth in out-of-home care: A review of the literature

Hagaman, T., Casey, J., Reid R., & Epstein, M. (2008). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30 (9), 979-994.

The article reports on a literature review that investigates published research on the academic status and school functioning behaviours of children and youth in out-of-home care in the U.S. It evaluates 29 studies to assess (a) characteristics of the children and youth studied, (b) academic and school functioning areas evaluated, (c) reports of overall academic performance and (d) quality of the reported research. The results suggest that overall, children in out-of-home care are at risk of short and long-term school failure. The article highlights the studies' limitations and narrow understandings of the specific academic strengths and limitations of this population, which in turn hinders the development of targeted intervention programs. Study limitations, implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

[doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.11.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.11.019)

Supporting informal kinship care

Saunders, H., & Selwyn, J. (2008). *Adoption and Fostering*, 32 (2), 31-42.

It is estimated that there are over 200,000 households in England where kinship carers (usually grandparents) are informally looking after children who cannot live with their parents. This article reports on an independent evaluation of the Kinship Care Team (KCT). The KCT's role is to support 'children in need', but not 'in care', who cannot live with their parents to remain with their extended family and reduce the risk of them entering care. The evaluation included qualitative and quantitative methodology. It analysed 58 case file studies and interviewed service users including kin carers, birth mothers, children and young people. The findings discuss clients' involvement with KCT and other children's service use, placement, carer issues and concerns and length of placement and contact with birth parent. The study found that most kinship carers were committed to the care of the child and that the program was effective in promoting stability for children and young people and reduced the need for them to be looked after by the local authority. The article discusses implications for practice.

Family types and social integration in kinship foster care

Holtan, A. (2008), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30 (9), 1022-1036.

This article reports on a study that aims to address the variation and complexity of relationships in kinship foster care, and explores the social integration of foster children in Norway. The study is based on qualitative data and employs the principles of Grounded Theory combined with abductive strategies. The study included in-depth interviews with children between 9-12 years of age, the majority in

statutory kinship care, and their biological parents and foster carers. It also included a survey of 214 children aged 4-13 years in both kinship and non-kinship care. The article analyses the meaning of family and parenting from the perspective of the child, foster parent and biological parent. It places an emphasis on child welfare services to take responsibility in building alliances between parents and foster parents that meets the needs of the different types of family to promote child-friendly outcomes. Practice implications and recommendations for intervention and training are discussed.

[doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.01.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.01.002)

The recruitment and retention of family foster-carers: An international and cross-cultural analysis

Colton, M., Roberts, S., & Williams, M. (2008). *British Social Work Journal*, 38 (5), 865-884.

This article reports on an international comparative analysis of the recruitment and retention of foster-carers. It draws on data from previous empirical research and a recent study of global trends in family foster-care. Three key themes emerged from the study: 1) motivation and capacity to foster, 2) professionalism versus altruism, and 3) criteria for kinship and unrelated carers. The article explores the key themes and challenges to foster care services and reflects on the implications for policy and practice.

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Psychotropic Medication Practices for Youth in Systems of Care

Moses, T. (2008). *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17 (4), 567-581.

Concerns have been raised about the quality and appropriateness of psychiatric medication treatment for youth treated in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Additionally, there is a lack of empirical research on whether there are widespread problems with psychopharmacologic treatment for youth served by public sector systems. This exploratory study utilised data from a national survey of social workers to examine differences in reports on medication type, processes and perceived outcomes for adolescent clients in the juvenile justice and/or child welfare system (n = 90) versus non-systems clients (n = 305). The results indicated that social workers referring to system cases were more likely to report the use of highly potent medication (antipsychotics, mood-stabilisers), less likely to report that clients were receptive to or involved in the decision to utilise medication, and less likely to report beneficial medication outcomes. The reported differences suggested that medication treatment for youth in

care tends to be less participatory and beneficial, and were largely accounted for by differences in clients' level of functional impairment and rate of disruptive behaviour disorders. Implications for further research are discussed.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/hpm11678g526456p/fulltext.pdf>

Reports

Mental health services in Australia 2005-06

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (August 2008).

Mental health services in Australia 2005-06 is the ninth in the series of AIHW's comprehensive annual reports on the characteristics and activity of Australia's mental health services. Details from a wide range of data sources for the 2005-06 period are presented, together with changes over time. Information on mental health care provided by a range of services is detailed. Included are ambulatory services (such as community-based services, emergency departments, private psychiatrists, allied health professionals and general practitioners), hospital and residential services and other services (such as supported accommodation services). In addition, information is provided on mental health-related prescriptions and mental health resources such as facilities, workforce and expenditure. Where possible, comprehensive data is provided for each state and territory and comparisons are made between population groups (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and overseas-born and Australian-born people). This report is a useful resource for health planners, policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers and others with an interest in mental health in Australia.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10594>

New Books

Interviewing Clients Across Cultures

Aronson-Fontes, L. (2008). Guilford Press, New York.

This book is a guide for professionals to help them conduct productive interviews and build strong relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse clients. The chapters cover avoiding different types of bias; verbal and non verbal ways to build rapport and convey respect; how to overcome language barriers, including effective use of interpreters; culturally competent interviews with children and adolescents; and key issues in working with immigrants and refugees. It provides strategies for avoiding common cross-cultural misunderstandings and producing fair, accurate reports.

Resources

Queensland Child Safety Depart - Brighter Futures June Edition

<http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/magazine/2008-06/index.html>

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