

DoCS Research to Practice **Update**

A regular update on the latest national and international research

Issue 3, January 2006

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.*

DoCS

Methodological design issues in longitudinal studies of children and young people in out-of-home care: A review and recommendations

Practitioners, researchers and the Department have all identified the need for NSW to undertake a longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care.

This review takes a look at the literature on major longitudinal studies related to out-of-home care in Australia and overseas. In particular, it discusses some of the methodological issues involved in undertaking such a study and how they have been resolved in similar studies.

This review is available on DoCS website under Research to Practice—www.community.nsw.gov.au

As part of the response the Government will convene two national conferences which bring together key stakeholders responsible for the care and protection of children.

One conference will identify the ongoing needs of care survivors and recommend the most effective ways to meet those needs. The second will identify a practical way forward in developing a national approach to child protection.

For a copy of the full response, visit: http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/News/govt_response_forbidden_austs.htm

A new name for Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: defining fabricated or induced illness by carers

This paper has been written by the National Child Protection Clearinghouse at the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

Fabricated or Induced Illness by Carers (FIIC) is the deliberate production or fabrication of physical or psychological symptoms in a child by a parent or carer. Professionals typically begin to suspect that a carer has fabricated or induced an illness in their child when children are repeatedly presented to medical practitioners or hospitals with difficult to explain illness symptoms.

The authors describe this somewhat controversial phenomenon and explore some implications of FIIC for practitioners working to protect children from harm.

The paper is available online at: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/issues/issues23.html#background>

National – other agencies

Australian government response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee reports Forgiven Australians and Protecting Vulnerable Children: A national challenge

These reports were produced following the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's inquiry into children in institutional care.

The reports detailed the historical abuse of children in institutional and out-of-home care and children protection issues respectively.

The Australian Government's response to these reports was tabled in the Senate on 10 November 2005.

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Patterns and precursors of adolescent antisocial behaviour: outcomes and connections

This report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Australian Temperament Project) explores questions about how and why young people do, or do not, successfully negotiate the transition to early adulthood.

A range of factors that may be associated with subsequent anti-social behaviour are considered including: victimisation; substance use or abuse; and motivation and attitudinal factors in law abiding or antisocial behaviour.

The report is available online at: www.aifs.gov.au/atp/pubs/cpv/report3.html

Indigenous community development projects: Early learnings. Telstra Foundation, Volume 2

This report, which was prepared by AIFS, evaluates the outcomes of 14 projects seeking to improve child and youth outcomes in Indigenous communities.

These projects were chosen because they showcased initiatives that are likely to contribute to positive change to indigenous communities.

The report is online available at: www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/telstra2.pdf

ACSSA Wrap: Adult victim/survivors of childhood sexual assault

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault has produced the first issue of a new series called *ACSSA Wrap*. *ACSSA Wrap* is a bi-annual publication that is designed to keep people who work in the field of sexual assault prevention abreast with the latest practices and policy information.

This issue deals with adult victims/survivors of childhood sexual assault. *ACSSA Wrap*'s first issue is available online at:

www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/wrap/acssa_wrap1.pdf

Future issues will be available at: www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/pubsmenu.html#wrap

Australia's Welfare 2005

This report was recently released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). *Australia's Welfare 2005* provides a guide to how the Australian welfare system affects large groups of Australians. The 2005 edition also includes an extended chapter on children, youth and families.

The report is available online at: www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10186

International

Intervening in the early years

This publication, produced by Research in Practice, is the 4th in the Champions for Children Series.

There is clear evidence from research that young children who are suffering impairment or harm to their physical, psychological or emotional development often communicate their distress through their behaviour. In many cases, if nothing is done to address this, the problematic behaviour will continue through childhood and into adulthood and could result in a range of poor outcomes.

This publication is available online at: www.rip.org.uk/publications/champions.asp

From the cradle to the labor market? The effect of birth weight on adult outcomes

This report has been produced by the US National Bureau of Research (NBER). The report explores the short and long term effects of low birth weights.

The abstract of the report is available online at: (*\$5 to view whole document*)

<http://papers.nber.org/papers/W11796>

How much is too much? The influence of preschool centers on children's social and cognitive development

This report, also produced by NBER, examines the 'ideal' age for children to enter childcare and the optimal amount of time to spend in centre programs.

The report uses American national data from their Early Childhood Longitudinal Study.

The abstract of the report is available online at:

<http://papers.nber.org/papers/W11812>

Going to scale with high-quality early education: Choices and consequences in universal pre-kindergarten efforts

This report, produced by the RAND Corporation, looks at a sample of eight US states trying to implement consistent state-wide pre-kindergarten services. Drawing on a review of the literature and interviews with pre-K personnel the report examines the policy choices and debates involved in implementing pre-K in an environment of fiscal uncertainty. In particular, it focuses on the key issues of funding, auspice, access, accountability and staffing.

The report is available online at: www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR237/index.html

Useful links

Social Care Institute for Excellence

SCIE is an independent UK organisation that gathers and publicises knowledge about how to improve social care services.

www.scie.org.uk

Dartington Social Research Unit

Dartington Social Research Unit conducts scientific research about child development in the context of children's services, with a view to informing needs-led, evidence-based interventions for children in need.

www.dartington.org.uk

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Child poverty in rich countries 2005: Innocenti Report Card No. 6

This UNICEF report compares rates of child poverty in OECD countries. The report indicates that Australia came in 18th in the 24 country league table Australia, with 14.7 per cent of children considered to be living in 'relative' poverty.

A copy of the full report can be viewed online at:
www.unicef.ca/press/childpoverty/

Home visits during pregnancy and after birth for women with an alcohol or drug problem: A systematic review by the Cochrane Collaboration

The review discusses the effects of home visits during pregnancy and/or after birth for pregnant women with a drug or alcohol problem.

They found evidence that home visits after the birth increased the engagement of these women in drug treatment services but there were insufficient data to say if this improved the health of the baby or mother. Further research is needed, with visits starting during pregnancy. A copy of the abstract is available online at:

www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab004456.html

Transitions: Young adults with complex needs

This report was prepared by the Social Exclusion Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK. The report examines the effectiveness of services for young adults with complex needs as they make the transition to adulthood. It focuses on 16 to 25 year olds, analyses the issues they face and sets out 27 agreed cross-government action points.

The report is available online at:
www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=563

Disclaimer

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

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