

# DoCS Research to Practice Update

A regular update for staff 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

#### Preschool influences on mathematics achievement

Melhuish, E.C., Sylva, K., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Phan, M.B., & Malin, A. (2008). *Science*, 321, 1161-1162

This study tested the claim that preschool improves disadvantaged children's school readiness, educational achievements, and social adjustment. Specifically the study focussed on the relationship between mathematics achievement and preschool effectiveness finding that although preschool has benefits, effective or higher quality preschools have the greatest effects. Preschool learning environments can be improved through programs that target cognitive functioning and staff training.

[www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org)

#### Effects of fully established Sure Start Local Programmes on 3-year-old children and their families living in England: A quasi-experimental observational study

Melhuish, E., Belsky, J., Leyland, A.H., Barnes, J. et al. (2008). *The Lancet*, 372, 1641-1647

Sure Start Local Programmes are area-based interventions to improve services for young children and their families in deprived communities, promote health and development, and reduce inequalities. 5883 3-year-old Sure Start Local Program recipient children were compared with 1879 3-year-old children from similarly deprived areas across outcomes of immunisations, accidents, language development, father's involvement, maternal smoking, body mass index, life satisfaction, mother's rating of area, positive and negative social

behaviours, independence, parenting risk, home-learning environment, and family's service use. Beneficial effects associated with the programme were noted for the last five outcomes. Early interventions can improve the life chances of young children in deprived areas.

[TheLancet.com](http://TheLancet.com) - Home Page

#### The Family Check-Up in early childhood: A case study of intervention, process and change

Gill, A.M., Hyde, L.W., Shaw, D.S., Dishion, T.J., & Wilson, M.N. (2008). *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 37(4), 893 - 904

This article describes a case study in the use of the Family Check-Up (FCU), a family-based and ecological preventive intervention for children at risk for problem behaviour. The FCU is an assessment-driven intervention that utilises a health maintenance model; emphasises motivation for change; and offers an adaptive, tailored approach to intervention. This case study follows one Caucasian family through their initial assessment and subsequent treatment for their toddler daughter's conduct problems over a 2-year period. Clinically meaningful improvements in child and family functioning were found despite the presence of child, parent, and neighbourhood risk factors. The case is discussed with respect to the findings from a current multi-site randomised control trial of the FCU and its application to other populations.

[www.informaworld.com](http://www.informaworld.com)

### The personal service gap: Factors affecting adolescents' willingness to seek help

Raviv, A., Raviv, A., Vago-Gefen, I., & Schachter Fink, A. (2008). *Journal of Adolescence*, in press

The study explores adolescents' attitudes toward seeking help for emotional problems. The personal service gap is examined by asking adolescents about their willingness to refer themselves and others to formal (psychologists) and informal (friends) help sources. The study included 662 Israeli adolescents in the 10th and 12th grades. The results indicate that adolescents refer peers more than themselves to a psychologist and to a friend. They are also more willing to refer themselves and peers to a friend rather than to a psychologist. Barriers to seeking psychological help are explored and significant correlations between perceptions of psychological benefit, problem severity and barriers to help seeking are described. Recommendations for increasing adolescents' awareness and use of help sources are suggested.

[www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

### Maternal sensitivity and communication styles

Hwa-Froelich, D., Loveland Cook, C., & Flick, L. (2008). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 31(1), 44-66

Women living in poverty are at increased risk for depression, especially during their childbearing years. Whereas poverty has known adverse effects on children's cognitive, social, and communication development, maternal depression may place these children at additional risk of developmental delays. The maternal sensitivity of mothers with and without depression and its relationship to maternal-child

communicative patterns was investigated. Early childhood professionals need to be aware of the effects maternal depression has on communicative interactions and children's development.

<http://jei.sagepub.com>

## Out-of-Home Care

### Children with ADHD in residential care

Casey, K., Hagaman, J., Trout, A., Reid, R., Chmelka, B., Thompson, R., & Daly, D. (2008). *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17(6), 909-927

Little is known about the characteristics or functioning of children with ADHD in residential care as compared to their non-ADHD peers. This study evaluated data on 538 children with ( $n = 125$ ) and without ( $n = 413$ ) ADHD in residential care to determine demographic, mental health, behavioural, and treatment (i.e., medication use) characteristics. Results revealed that both groups presented elevated risks, however, scores for children with ADHD indicated even greater levels of need. Specifically, differences were found between the two groups on demographics (e.g. family reunification status, restrictiveness of prior out-of-home placements), behaviour (e.g. attention problems, rule-breaking and aggressive behaviours) and medication status. Findings suggest that there is a need for aftercare services to help support families as children transition from care, interventions to address behaviour, and medication management through assessment and monitoring.

[www.springerlink.com](http://www.springerlink.com)

### The impact of residential context on adolescents' subjective well-being.

Cicognani, E., Albanesi, C., & Zani, B. (2008). *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 18(6), 558-575

The study investigates the impact of residential context on stressful events and subjective well being (emotional and psychological) in young people living in a deprived geographical area, and the mediating role of personal (self-efficacy) and social (social support, sense of community) variables. A questionnaire was submitted to 297 subjects from different socio-economic (SES) levels. Results confirm the significant impact of the residential context on youngsters' perceived residential quality, stress and subjective well being outcomes; such effect partly differs according to participants' gender and age. Adolescents are less satisfied of their living context and enjoy lower well being than young adults. social resources (friend and family support) significantly buffer the effect of a deprived residential context of youngsters' well being, whereas personal resources (self-efficacy) directly increase well being levels.

[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

### Role perceptions of foster care in African American kinship and nonkinship foster parent

Warde, B. (2008). *Journal of Family Social Work*, 11(3), 272-286

This article reports on a study that examined a cohort of African American kinship ( $n = 57$ ) and nonkinship ( $n = 53$ ) foster parents' perceptions of their role responsibilities as a foster care provider. Results indicated that both the kinship and nonkinship foster parents perceived their primary role responsibilities as that of caring for the needs of the foster child(ren), while perceiving much less role

responsibility for working with the biological family of the child (ren) or partnering with the agency. The implications of these findings for practice are discussed.

[www.haworthpress.com](http://www.haworthpress.com)

## Child Protection

### Parental substance misuse and child welfare: Outcomes for children two years after referral

Forrester, D., & Harwin, J. (2008). *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(8), 1518-1535

This paper reports on placement and welfare outcomes for children allocated a social worker where there was a concern about parental misuse of drugs or alcohol. Out of 100 families with 186 children at follow-up, 46% of the children remained with their carer, 26% were living with wider family and 27% were in the formal care system. A rating of welfare outcome was made based on educational, emotional/behavioural and health development. At follow-up, 47% of children had no problems, 31% had continuing problems and 22% had more problems in more areas than at allocation. Factors associated with poor welfare outcomes were children remaining at home, domestic violence, alcohol misuse, and being a boy. The combination of a high proportion of children moving carer and poor outcomes for those at home suggests that attention needs to be paid to improving outcomes in this area.

[www.bjsw.oxfordjournals.org](http://www.bjsw.oxfordjournals.org)

### Coping with exposure to violence: Relations to emotional symptoms and aggression in three urban samples

Boxer, P., Morris, A., Terranova, A., Kithakye, M., Savoy, S., & McFaul, A. (2008). *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17(6), 881-893

Relations among exposure to violence, coping, and adjustment were examined in three urban samples. In study 1, which took place in a southeastern city, children ages 6-16 ( $N = 35$ ;  $M$  age = 10.7 years) completed measures of adjustment, exposure to violence, and coping with violence. In study 2, which took place in one southern Midwestern city and one Northeastern city, children ages 8-15 ( $N = 70$ ;  $M$  age = 11.3 years) completed similar measures with the addition of a measure assessing normative beliefs about aggression. Results are in line with the *pathologic adaptation* model and provide preliminary evidence for two hypothesized pathways explaining the effects of exposure to violence on adjustment: a *normalisation pathway* in which exposure leads to more aggression-supporting beliefs and in turn to greater aggression, and a *distress pathway* in which exposure leads to avoidant coping and in turn to emotional symptoms.

[www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com)

### Child maltreatment in remote Aboriginal communities and the Northern Territory emergency response: A complex issue

Hunter, S.V. (2008). *Australian Social Work*, 61(4), 372-388

In June 2007 the Howard Federal Government launched an Emergency Response intervention in the Northern Territory, having recognised the urgent need to reduce the incidence of child maltreatment in remote Aboriginal communities. In the present review

of the literature, the complexity of the issue of child maltreatment, in particular child sexual abuse, in Indigenous Australia is explored as well as the extent to which the Emergency Response is evidence based. The complexity of making a report about child maltreatment, in particular child sexual abuse, in a remote Aboriginal communities is considered. Implications for policy and practice are also discussed.

[www.aasw.asn.au](http://www.aasw.asn.au)

### Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms and child maltreatment: A population-based study

Ouyang, L., Fang, X., Mercy, J., Ruth Perou, R., & Grosse, S.D. (2008). *Journal of Pediatrics*, 153(6), 851-856

This article examines whether symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) during childhood are associated with child maltreatment. Childhood ADHD symptoms were associated with self-reported child maltreatment. Health care providers should be alert to the potential for child maltreatment among children with ADHD symptoms, especially those with inattentive symptoms.

[www.jpeds.com](http://www.jpeds.com)

### Effective Child Protection

Munro, E. (2008). 2nd Edition. London, Sage Publications.

Eileen Munro's latest book directly addresses a core issue, the relationship between intuition and formal analytic thinking in decision-making and practice. Effective child protection practice requires both, and Munro provides a framework that facilitates clear thinking in the complex real world of child protection practice.

[www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)

## Other

**The quest for a child of one's own: Parents, markets and transnational adoption.**

Högbacka, R. (2008). *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 39 (3), 311-330

Transnational adoption is currently at its peak. The direction of these adoptions is from south to north and from east to west. Scrutiny of previous research shows that there is a discrepancy between the supply and demand of children for adoption. While there are millions of orphans and children in the world needing homes, Western adoptive parents queue for what are considered to be 'adoptable' children.

[www.soci.ucalgary.ca](http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca)

## Reports

### Child Pornography Law Update

The brief updates the paper Child Pornography Law published in August 2008 and specifically reviews the proposals for reform to child pornography recommended in *Penalties Relating to Sexual Assault Offences in NSW* report.

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/publications.nsf/>

### Family relationships and mental illness: Impacts and service responses

Robinson, E., Rodgers, B., & Butterworth, P. (2008). Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, Australian Policy Online

This paper gives a brief overview of mental health problems, including types and prevalence,

causes of mental illness, and family-related risk and protective factors. The impact of mental health problems on family relationships and family dynamics are explored, including the role of carers and relationship issues resulting from, or contributing to, the presence of a mental health problem.

[www.apo.org.au](http://www.apo.org.au)

### Quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities: April-June 2008

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership, Queensland Government

This report provides a summary of the progress being made to 'close the gap' and improve the quality of life for Indigenous Queenslanders living in discrete Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities. It includes an overview of the key indicators of community wellbeing, building on the previous report (January-March 2008) and including two indicators relating to child safety.

[www.apo.org.au](http://www.apo.org.au)

## IREOURCES

### Responding to young people disclosing sexual assault: A resource for schools

Quadara, A., (2008). Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. Australian Policy Online

Australian schools have made a significant commitment to reducing violence, including sexual assault, in schools and supporting students who have been victims of violence. This article aims to supplement these national and state and territory initiatives.

[www.apo.org.au](http://www.apo.org.au)

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## Disclaimer

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