

DoCS Research to Practice Update

A regular update for staff on the latest national and international research

Issue 21, March 2008

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.

Produced by:

The Research to Practice Team
Centre for Parenting & Research

NSW Department of Community Services
4-6 Cavill Ave
Ashfield NSW 2131
Ph 02 9716 2644
Fax 02 9716 2788

researchtopractice@community.nsw.gov.au



Early Intervention

The impact of Sure Start local programmes on three year olds and their families

The National Evaluation of Sure Start Team. (2008). *Report 027*, Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck, University of London.

This evaluation report discusses the second phase of the impact study of Sure Start in the United Kingdom. Child and family functioning in over 9,000 families was investigated. The results differ markedly from those of the first phase evaluation in 2005. The cautious conclusion is drawn that increased benefits found in the current study may stem from improvements in service effectiveness and longer exposure to services of children and families.

Both the full report and a summary report are available online. The full report can be found at:

http://www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002519.pdf

The summary report is located at:

http://www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002520.pdf

Strengthening Aboriginal family functioning: What works and why?

Walker, R., & Shepherd, C. (2008). *AFRC Briefing, 7*, Australian Family Relationship Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This briefing paper presents data on how Aboriginal families are functioning, including the protective factors associated with family resilience and factors that impose risks for healthy functioning. The

paper includes an analysis of the policy implications and presents two case studies "as examples of using a strength-based approach to support and enhance the protective elements of good family functioning". The paper also includes links and resources for professionals and practitioners.

www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/briefing/briefing7.html

Father-inclusive practice and associated professional competencies

Fletcher, R. (2008). *AFRC Briefing, 9*, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This paper explores the research relating to fathers' involvement with children and the evidence of effective practice for the inclusion of fathers in health, education and welfare services. Factors that may influence fathers' involvement with services are reported. The competence of practitioners to engage with fathers when they do come into contact with the services is discussed.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/briefing/briefing9.html>

Long-term maternal effects of early childhood intervention: Findings from the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP)

Martin, A., Brooks-Gunn, J., Klebanov, P., Buka, S., & McCormick, M. (2008). *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*, (2), 101-117.

This article reports on a randomised clinical trial of early intervention services for low birth weight,

premature infants. Among measures of mothers' employment, mental health and home environment at two, five and 15 years post-intervention, employment was the only domain showing a treatment effect over time. These results suggest that early intervention services may have more success altering a mother's life course than her mental health or parenting style.

[doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2007.12.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2007.12.007)

Prevention and early intervention in strengthening families and relationships: Challenges and implications

Robinson, E., & Parker, R. (2008). *AFRC Issues, 2*, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This issues paper explores the characteristics of healthy relationships and families, help-seeking behaviours and barriers to participation. The paper considers individual, family and service level responses to encouraging healthy relationships as well as government level responses arguing for a multifaceted approach to support families in seeking help before crises occur or problems become entrenched.

www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/issues/issues2.html

Child Protection

Child Protection Australia 2006-2007

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (2008). *Child welfare series, 43*, AIHW, Canberra.

This report provides comprehensive information on state and territory child protection and support services. It contains data for 2006-07, as well as trend data on child protection notifications,

investigations and substantiations, children on care and protection orders and children in out-of-home care. Detailed information on the characteristics of children in the child protection system is presented, specifically data on their age, sex and Indigenous status. In addition, for child protection substantiations, data on the family type and the source of notification are also included. For children on care and protection orders there are data on types of orders and living arrangements, and for children in out-of-home care there are data on types of placements and length of time in out-of-home care.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/cpa06-07/cpa06-07.pdf>

Supporting the families of young people with problematic drug use

Frye, S., Dawe, S., Harnett, P., Kowalenko, S., & Harnlen, M. (2008). *ANCD Research Paper 15*, Australian National Council on Drugs.

This report investigates the support needs of families who have a young person misusing substances. The report reviews the literature examining the prevalence and type of substance misuse amongst young people. Also reviewed are the ways in which substance misuse impacts on family functioning and relationships. Interventions for family members of young substance misusers are examined and principles of best practice provided.

http://www.ncd.org.au/publications/pdf/rp15_supporting_families.pdf

The missing assessment domain: Personal, professional and organizational factors influencing professional judgements when identifying and referring child neglect

Horwath, J. (2007). *British Journal of Social Work, 37*, (8), 1285-1303.

Factors influencing practitioners' approaches to the identification and

referral of cases of child neglect are explored in this article. A range of factors appear to influence practice. These include the practitioner's own perceptions, feelings, interpretation of their role and the views of their colleagues. The paper concludes by producing a 'practitioner domain' alerting practitioners and managers to the decision making influences that impact on referral practice.

<http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/37/8/1285>

Transitions and turning points: Examining the links between child maltreatment and juvenile offending

Stewart, A., Livingston, M., & Dennison, S. (2008). *Child Abuse and Neglect, 32*, (1), 51-66.

This article examines the impact that timing and chronicity of child maltreatment have on juvenile offending. The study analysed administrative data on all children who were born in Queensland, Australia in 1983 or 1984 and had contact with child protection services for at least one child matter ($N = 5,849$). Child maltreatment was found to peak around the transition from preschool to primary school and the transition from primary school to secondary school. Furthermore, children for whom maltreatment started or extended into adolescence were more likely to offend as juveniles than children whose maltreatment occurred prior to, but not during, adolescence.

[doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.04.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.04.011)

Family group conferencing in Australia 15 years on

Harris, N. (2008). *Child Abuse Prevention Issues*, 27, Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

This paper reports on a study mapping the adoption of conferencing in child protection systems across Australia. Fifteen years after initial implementation, the use of conferencing in Australian child protection systems, apart from a few states, appears fairly limited. A number of specific implications are identified regarding how conferences can better contribute to child protection goals.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues27/issues27.html>

Out-of-Home Care

Out-of-home care for children in Australia: A review of the literature and policy

Smyth, C., & Eardley, T. (2008). *SPRC Report 3/08*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

This study reviews trends in out-of-home care in Australia. Emerging models of care and evidence on the outcomes of different models are also reviewed. The research involves a review of national and international literature, analysis of policy documents and discussions with policy makers and practitioners.

<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/reports/2008/Out%20of%20Home%20Care.pdf>

'Getting the big picture': A synopsis and critique of Australian out-of-home care research

Bromfield, L., & Osborn, A. (2007). *Child Abuse Prevention Issues*, 26, The Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

This paper provides an overview of Australian out-of-home care research. It summarises information about the characteristics of families when children enter care, outcomes for children and young people in care, educational needs and family contact of children in care and outcomes for young people leaving care. The paper discusses the quality of the evidence base, gaps in the research and future research priorities.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues26/issues26.html>

The ties that bind: Support from birth families and substitute families for young people leaving care

Wade, J. (2008). *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, (1), 39-54.

This paper draws on findings from a study of outcomes for young people leaving care in the United Kingdom. It explores the informal support networks available to a sample of 106 young people over a period of 12-15 months after leaving care. It examines patterns of contact with birth families and caregivers, the support that emanated from these links and the strategies of leaving care professionals to strengthen these connections. It also considers the new families created by many young people through relationships with partners and the onset of parenthood and discusses the continuing support needs of young parents. The paper situates the needs and experiences of care leavers in a wider youth transitions framework and highlights the need for continuing professional attention to be given to strengthening family links as one strategy for helping care leavers to negotiate the transition to adulthood.

<http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/38/1/39>

Adoptions Australia 2006-2007

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (2008). *Child welfare series no. 44*, Canberra.

This report presents the latest data on adoptions of Australian children and those from overseas, while also highlighting important trends in adoptions over the last three decades. Data in this report were obtained from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Adoptions Australia data collection from each state and territory department responsible for adoption.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/aa06-07/aa06-07.pdf>

Resources

Year Book Australia, 2008

Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2008). Canberra.

Based on the latest ABS data, the Year Book provides a comprehensive statistical picture of social and economic conditions in Australia and includes chapters dealing with Australia's population, education, health, labour market, income and welfare, housing, crime and justice. A special feature article is included on "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage".

www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1301.0Main+Features12008?OpenDocument

Identifying parental substance use and misuse in clinical practice

Dawe, S. (2008). *Family Relationships Quarterly*, 7, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This article addresses how to determine if a parent is a problematic substance user and how to gauge whether this use may be adversely affecting children.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/n7b.pdf>

Raising Children Network: the Australian parenting website

Raising Children Network provides a comprehensive range of information on the parenting of children from newborns to school age. Information on this website is regularly updated.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Research to Practice Team

Cate Thomas

Manager, Practice Research
Phone: 9716 2728
cate.thomas@community.nsw.gov.au

Hyllus Munro

Senior Research Officer (Aboriginal)
Phone: 9716 2381
hyllus.munro@community.nsw.gov.au

Kate Flannery

Senior Research Officer
Phone: 9716 2642
kate.flannery@community.nsw.gov.au

Neriman Kashouli

Senior Research Officer
Phone: 9716 2571
neriman.osman@community.nsw.gov.au

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.

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