

Community Services 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 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:

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Community Services Publications

Research Note:

Child protection and mothers in substance abuse treatment study: major findings

This Research to Practice Note provides a summary of the major findings from the Child Protection and Mothers in Substance Abuse Treatment study conducted by Dr Stephanie Taplin and Professor Richard Mattick at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales. The study is the first in Australia to examine the involvement of illicit drug-using mothers with the child protection system, and to ask them about their parenting issues. The findings from this study have implications for child protection and drug treatment policy and practice.

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/>

Early Intervention

The impact of behavioural parent training on fathers' parenting: A meta-analysis of the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program

Fletcher, R., Freeman, E. & Matthey, S. (2011). *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 9(3), 291-312

Behavioural parent training programs have been developed to address child behaviour problems through improvement in parenting practices. Ideally, programs would demonstrate effectiveness with all parents. The Triple P-Positive Parenting Program is widely reported as an effective,

evidence-based program for parents. A total of 37 treatment groups were obtained from the 28 journal articles. The meta-analysis demonstrated that there are significant differences in program effectiveness for mothers and fathers. It showed that while Triple P has a large positive effect on mothers' parenting practices, it has a smaller effect on fathers' parenting practices. The authors argue that considering fathers make a significant and unique contribution to child development, it is important for parenting programs to assess their effectiveness with fathers as well as mothers.

www.mensstudies.com

Child Protection

Shifting definitions of emotional maltreatment: An analysis child welfare investigation laws and practices in Canada

Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Chamberland, C., Chabot, M. Esposito, T. (2011). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(10), 831-840

The feasibility and appropriateness of including emotional maltreatment (EM) in child welfare statutes continues to be questioned despite the growing evidence that EM is particularly damaging to the child though it is not as easily defined or delimited as physical or sexual abuse.

This study reviewed legislation and child welfare investigation practices in Canada to examine (1) whether Canadian child welfare services respond to EM with the same level of perseverance as with other forms of maltreatment and (2) the extent to which the introduction in 2008 of a more specific EM classification

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distinguishes between EM and family problems that could lead to EM.

The study examines investigation practice data from the 1998, 2003 and 2008 cycles of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS). It uses data from the 2008 cycle, to compare EM investigations to other maltreatment investigations for all of Canada ($N = 15,980$). Changes in EM investigations over time are then compared using data from the three cycles of the study.

The study showed that EM is included as a form of reportable maltreatment in all provincial and territorial statutes in Canada and is a well established category for child welfare intervention. The authors argue that more emphasis should be given to distinguishing between EM and family problems that place children at risk of EM.

Measurement of emotional/psychological child maltreatment: Review

Tonmyr, L., Draca, J., Craina, J., & MacMillan, H. (2011). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(10), 758-766

Emotional/psychological child maltreatment (ECM) is a major public health problem with serious consequences including emotional and behavioural problems. This review aims to identify ECM measures and evaluate its psychometric properties and utilities. The review provides a summary of ECM measures that have been tested for their reliability validity and quality. Directions for future research are suggested.

A search of PsycINFO and Medline databases from 2000 to 2010 identified 2344 articles and these

abstracts were reviewed independently by two authors. Using pre-established criteria, 144 of the articles were selected and reviewed in full to assess whether the instruments included a separate measure of ECM and its psychometric properties. Forty-five articles examining 33 measures met the inclusion criteria and were selected for further review.

Measures with strong psychometric properties are important in identifying children who have been exposed to ECM. The majority of measures demonstrated acceptable reliability; fewer measures had evaluated one or more types of validity. The results show that both reliability and validity testing are required in order to establish more accurate measures of ECM.

How well do evidence-based universal parenting programs teach parents about psychological maltreatment?: A program review

Baker, A., Brassard, M., Schneiderman, M., Donnelly, L. & Bah, A. (2011). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(10), 767- 782

Psychological maltreatment (PM) is a widespread form of child maltreatment both in high-risk and maltreating families as well as in the general population of parents, though the U.S.A researchers of this study found there were no intervention programs that target it directly. The study evaluated the content of universal parenting programs to assess whether they include content on PM.

Ten evidence-based, universal parenting programs were rated on how well their content covered 18 types of psychological maltreatment (PM), as defined by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, (APSAC). Each type of PM was coded along several dimensions which resulted in two summary scores: (1) Does the program contain content designed to teach parents what not to do in regards to the 18

psychologically maltreating behaviours and (2) Does the program contain content designed to teach parents what to do instead?

Content related to most PM types were not included in the curricula, especially regarding "what not to do" and no program was rated as having content related to teaching all 18 types of PM. The article concludes that existing parenting programs do not currently cover content for teaching community parents about psychological maltreatment.

Out-of-Home Care

Prevalence of children with disabilities in the child welfare system and out of home placement: An examination of administrative records

Lightfoot, E., Hill, K. & LaLiberte, T. (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(11). 2069-2075

This article explores the prevalence and characteristics of children with disabilities within the child welfare system using administrative data from the State of Minnesota in the U.S. The sample included 6270 children ages 0-18 with active child welfare cases through a county child protection agency in Minnesota during 2005. The study finds that more than a fifth (22%) of children with substantiated maltreatment are labelled in administrative records as having a disability, and more than one quarter of children (27.9%) over age five. The most common type of disability among children with substantiated maltreatment was emotional disturbance, while other common disabilities included intellectual and developmental disabilities and learning disabilities. Using logistic regression, this study finds that children with substantiated maltreatment with disabilities were about two times more likely to be in out of home placement than children with substantiated maltreatment without disabilities.

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Housing experiences of former foster youth: How do they fare in comparison to other youth?

Cosner Berzin, S., Rhodes, A., & Curtis, M. (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, (33)11, 2119-2126

Research indicates that foster youth tend to fare poorly in a number of domains in the transition to adulthood, and the shift to independent living may be particularly challenging. However, it is unclear whether negative housing outcomes are attributable to foster care history or if they are due to other risk factors. This study uses data from the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 to compare housing outcomes for foster youth to a matched sample of youth who share similar risk factors and to an unmatched sample. The sample was representative of U.S. residents born between the years 1980 and 1984 (N = 8894) and a corresponding parent (N = 7942) using a computer-assisted personal interviewing system.

Results indicate that foster youth struggle more in the transition to independent living in comparison to both groups, showing higher rates of homelessness, less housing stability, poorer neighbourhood quality, and more reliance on public housing assistance. The paper explores how factors related to foster care and confounding risk factors that tend to have higher prevalence among foster youth may contribute to these outcomes.

The contribution of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to understanding and promoting the interests of young people making the transition from care to adulthood

Munro, E., John Pinkerton, J., Mendes, P., Hyde-Dryden, G.

Herczog, M. & Benbenishty, R. (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(12), 2417-2423

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) acknowledges that young people without parental care are entitled to special support and assistance from the State. In detailing their expectations, the UN Committee have issued *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children* which recognise that State parties have a number of responsibilities towards care leavers. The article explores how the UNCRC reporting process, and guidelines from the Committee outlining how States should promote the rights of young people making the transition from care to adulthood, can be used as an instrument to track global patterns of change in policy and practice. Content analysis of State Party Reports and Concluding Observations from 15 countries including Australia reveals that to date there has been limited engagement with understanding and promoting the needs of this group in the reporting process; although where a government is committed to developing legislation and practice then this does find its way into their national reports. Data supplied by affiliates of the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC) reveals that national concerns, political ideology, public awareness, attitudes and knowledge of the vulnerability of care leavers influence service responses to protect and promote the rights of this group and the attention afforded to such issues in reports to the Committee. Findings also suggest that global governance is not simply a matter of top down influence. It argues that future work on both promoting and monitoring of the impact of the UNCRC needs to recognise that what is in play is the management of a complex global/national dynamic with all its uneven development, levels of influence and with a range of institutional actors involved.

Parent management training, relationships with agency staff, and child mental health: Urban foster parents' perspectives

Spielvogel, J., Leathers, S., Christian, E. & McMeel, L., (2011). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2366-2374

Many foster parents are ill prepared to meet the behavioural needs of children placed in their homes. Research suggests they lack training in evidence-based behavioural interventions and feel unsupported by child welfare professionals. Given the complex needs of foster children and increased rates of placement disruption for foster children with behaviours problems, implementation of effective interventions is essential. However, little is known about foster parents' receptivity to these types of interventions. This qualitative study examines urban foster parents' perceptions of the specific elements of parent management training (PMT), an evidence-based treatment for disruptive behaviours that teaches parents to improve desired behaviours and decrease oppositional behaviours by rewarding positive behaviours (positive reinforcement) and responding to negative behaviours with mild, consistent punishments such as timeout or a privilege removal. Data is presented from four focus groups (N = 38). Questions focused on parent's perceptions of PMT, though the responses often related to parent interactions with agency staff. Four strong themes emerged from the data. First, foster parents discussed a need for more support and training in how to address children's behaviours, but also had concerns that some PMT discipline techniques would be ineffective based on their past experiences with foster children. Second, carers described how staff communication skills and allegations of child abuse could affect parents' motivation to continue fostering. Third, they expressed a need for more detailed information about children's histories and visits with biological families as the lack of

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information contributed to difficulty in meeting foster children's needs. They suggested that joint training of foster parents and staff in the intervention could improve their ability to work together to support the child's positive behaviours. Lastly, parents reported little involvement in child mental health services and doubted the effectiveness of the mental health services their foster children received.

Other

Young people on the margins: What works in youth participation

Black, R., Walsh, L. & Taylor, F. *Youth Studies Australia*, 30(1), 42-48

Current Australian public policy has a strong focus on youth and young people. In particular, the policy discourse and the initiatives that are emerging in support of this discourse advocate young people's active participation in their communities. Drawing on a PhD study being undertaken with the Australian Youth Research Centre, this paper considers the nature of this policy discourse and its implications for young people's participation. It also describes the findings of a recent report released by The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), which shed light on the way in which this policy agenda is being enacted by young people.

Reports

Child maltreatment prevention: Past, present, and future

Child Welfare Information Gateway, & Daro, D. (2011). Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and

Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

This issue brief discusses the importance of prevention as a critical component of the U.S child protection system. It outlines programs and strategies that are proving beneficial in reducing the likelihood of child maltreatment, such as public awareness efforts, parent education, home visitation, and community prevention efforts. Key challenges and opportunities for the future of child maltreatment prevention are addressed.

<http://chapinhall.org/sites>

Child protection and mothers in substance abuse treatment

Taplin, S. Mattick, R. (2011). National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. University of New South Wales, Sydney

This report presents the findings from the Child Protection and Mothers in Substance Abuse Treatment study, a three-year study funded by Community Services and the University of New South Wales. The study provides an understanding of parenting issues and child protection involvement among women with a history of illicit drug use in Australia. 171 women with at least one child aged under 16 years were interviewed between May 2009 and May 2010.

The major findings revealed that over one-third of the women were involved with child protection services at the time of interview, with one-third of their children (n = 99) in OOHC. Using logistic regression analysis the study compared women who were involved with child protection and those who were not to determine the factors associated with child protection involvement. Variables that significantly increased involvement with child protection services included women who had a greater number of children, were on psychiatric medication, and had less than daily contact with their own parents. Having greater social

support, particularly from parents, significantly reduced the likelihood of being involved with the child protection system. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

<http://ndarc.cms.med.unsw.edu.au>

Fathering in Australia among couple families with young children

Baxter, J & Smart, D. (2011). Occasional Paper No: 37, Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 189pp

This report aims to increase understanding of the many ways in which fathers in couple families with young children contribute to family life, through the study of their time investment with children, their supportiveness as partners, their financial contribution, their parenting behaviours and styles, and their perceptions of their own adequacy as fathers. The impact of fathers on children's wellbeing is also examined. The report uses data from Waves 1 to 3 of *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*, a large-scale, nationally representative study of children and families.

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/>

Therapeutic residential care in Australia: Taking stock and looking forward

McLean, S. Price-Robertson, R. Robinson, E. (2011). *Australian Institute of Family Studies*, 24 pp

Therapeutic residential care (TRC) is becoming an increasingly relevant out-of-home care option for children and young people with multiple and complex needs. It is a new and developing approach in Australia, one aimed not simply at containment of the "hard cases"—as is often the case in traditional residential care—but rather at

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actively facilitating healing and recovery from the effects of abuse, neglect and separation from family. In this Issues Paper, therapeutic residential care is described and contrasted with other models of out-of-home care. The theory and evidence supporting the use of this form of care are examined and used to develop a set of key elements, which, it is argued, should guide the provision of therapeutic residential care in Australia.

[Therapeutic residential care in Australia: Taking stock and looking forward](#)

Give kids a chance: Seeing a better future with mentoring

The Wesley Report, No.10,(2011)

This report from Wesley Mission includes a number of recommendations for addressing social exclusion of youth in transition. Estimating 50,000 young Australians to be "falling through the cracks each year" the report calls for changes to education and training policy in order to prevent ongoing disengagement from the education and employment sectors. Adult support and guidance, especially through mentoring, are identified as both necessary and effective for at-risk young people, and for their more engaged peers

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

A new way home: Refugee young people and homelessness in Australia

Couch, J. (2011). Journal of Social Inclusion, 2 (1), 39-52

This article describes part of a larger study on interviews with homeless refugee young people and consultations with agencies. Interviews described in this

paper are with five females and four male refugee homeless young people aged between 19 and 25 years. The authors state the homelessness experienced by young people of refugee background is "profoundly under recognised phenomenon". It is often hidden and does not match commonly held beliefs about homeless young people. The article examines the stereotypes about youth homelessness and the impacts of culture and ethnicity on young people seeking assistance. The study finds that this stereotype is alive and well in the perceptions of refugee young people and the agencies. Young people of refugee background often feel unable to access or attend these services. All the young people interviewed showed a capacity to negotiate new spaces of hope and belonging, despite their exclusion.

<https://www104.griffith.edu.au>

Speaking our about reducing alcohol-related harm on children and young people: The views of Western Australian children and young people

Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, (2011), 32pp

This publication presents findings from almost 300 interviews with young people aged 14 to 17 on the topic of alcohol-related harm. It discusses what influences children and young people in their decisions about drinking, the harms of alcohol and the strategies that may be effective in protecting them. Some of the key findings reported included a perception that a culture of excessive alcohol consumption is pervasive in the Australian community, with alcohol widely available and associated strongly with most social, recreational and celebratory occasions. The young people interviewed showed varying degrees of support for harm reduction strategies such as raising the drinking age, health warning labels, and restrictions on

advertising and sponsorship. The strongest support was found for education initiatives, increased frequency of alcohol-free events and harsher penalties for adults who supply alcohol to minors.

<http://www.cyp.wa.gov.au>

Social justice report 2011

Gooda, M., Priday, E., Gargett, A. & Kiss, K. (2011). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, Parliament House, Canberra

The theme of the Social Justice report for 2011 relates directly to the Social Justice Commissioner's priorities concerning the relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within their communities and giving full effect to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). This is also in line with the Australian Human Rights Commission's priority of tackling violence, harassment and bullying.

The relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is explored through the lens of lateral violence. Firstly, the report introduces the concept of lateral violence and its relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Second, the report explores how a human rights framework, particularly the Declaration, can assist both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and governments address lateral violence. Appendix 2 provides a chronology of key events for 2010-2011.

[Social Justice Report 2011](#)

[Summary of key findings](#)

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Australia's welfare 2011, (2011). *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*

Australia's welfare 2011 is the tenth biennial welfare report. It is a comprehensive and authoritative source of national information on welfare services in Australia. Topics include: children and young people; disability and disability services; ageing and aged care; informal carers; homelessness; housing assistance; community services workforce; welfare expenditure; indicators of Australia's welfare.

<http://aihw.gov.au/publication>

Australia's welfare in brief (2011). *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*

Australia's welfare 2011 is accompanied by a companion booklet that introduces new readers to AIHW's publication. It presents key comparisons and trends across the welfare sector, including those aspects that influence the demand for welfare services.

<http://aihw.gov.au/publication/brief>

Resources

Orygen Youth Health Research Centre (University of Melbourne) and Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre (Monash University and Eastern Health) have put together a website to help parents manage the challenging issues that may occur during adolescence, including alcohol and drug misuse, depression, anxiety and other mental health problems.

<http://www.parentingstrategies.net/home/>

Books

The batterer as parent: Addressing the impact of domestic violence on family dynamics (2nd ed)

Bancroft, L., Silverman, J.G. & Ritchie, D. (2011). 352pp, Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications

This book takes into account the complex ways in which a batterer's abusive and controlling behaviours are woven into the fabric of daily life. It serves as a guide for therapists, child protective workers, family and juvenile court personnel, and other human service providers in addressing the complex impact that batterers-specifically, male batterers of a domestic partner when there are children in the household-have on family functioning. In addition to providing an understanding of batterers as parents and family members, the book also supplies clearly delineated approaches to such practice issues as assessing risk to children (including perpetrating incest), parenting issues in child custody and visitation evaluation, and impact on children's therapeutic process and family functioning in child protective practice.

Child-centred practices for the courtroom and community: a guide to working effectively with young children and their families in the child welfare system

Katz, L. F., Lederman, C. S., Joy, D., Osofsky, J. D. & Baltimore, C., M. (2011). Baltimore, Md, Paul H. Brookes Publications

This guidebook assists professionals navigate the complex child welfare system, work with the courts, and plan interventions and treatment so that they can provide best practice and services and supports to the most vulnerable young children and families.

The guide was developed by a psychologist, a judge, and early intervention and education expert. This practitioner's guide introduces early childhood professionals to the coordinated, evidence-based

practices successfully used in Miami juvenile court and child welfare community. It follows a case study of one young mother and her children, and details why effective, integrated services are needed to improve child and family outcomes. It also offers practical tips and guidance from the perspective of the court, the clinician, and the early intervention expert. It demonstrates how to plan and implement a coordinated system of care; choose and implement an evidence-based parenting program; improve children's early access to quality care and education programs.

Conferences

AbSec Conference 2011

7-9 December 2011
Penrith Panthers, Penrith
www.absec.org.au/home/

Zero to Three National Conference

9-11 December
Washington USA
www.ztnticonference.org

The 26th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment – 2012

21-27 January, 2012
San Diego, California
www.sandiegoconference.org/

Third Australian Conference on Children and the Media

9 March 2012
Melbourne Victoria

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