Strengthening Child Welfare Services
In Baltimore City

University of Baltimore School of Law
Urban Child Symposium
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

The Urban Child in the Child Welfare System:
From Fracture to Fix

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Disclaimer

• Commissioner, Baltimore City Department of Social Services Advisory Board, since 2008

Background

• Have been involved with child welfare services research & analysis since 1978
Four Take Home Points

• Acknowledge the Recent Success of Baltimore City Child Welfare Services

• Improve Parent Training for birth families at removal and point of reunification

• Implement KEEP to support foster and adoptive parents, reduce placement instability, and increase positive exits from care

• Help the City End LJ so Baltimore City can become more innovative
Baltimore City DSS Recent Successes

• Two consecutive awards as DHR Local DSS of the Year (2009, 2010)
• Reductions of children in group care are significant
• Development of Active Youth Advisory Board
• Gaining ground on ultimate conclusion of LJ Consent Decree
• Nation leading work with local School District to share emergency contact information
• Growing proportion of MSW-trained child welfare workers and, now, all supervisors have LCSWs
  • < 10% vacancy rate
Parent Education

• 800,000 parents get parent education through CWS each year in the U.S.
  – If .002% of America’s children live in Baltimore that’s still 1600 families that should get high quality parent training each year

• Evidence based parent education programs have emerged:
  – Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  – The Incredible Years
  – Parent education campaigns (Triple P) are growing (perhaps in Baltimore County)

• Common elements approaches to parent education is emerging…
Parent Education II

• Only PCIT actually includes competencies that parents have to demonstrate achieving and that can be provided to the court!
  • Yet it is hardly available

• It’s time for advances in parent education in CWS, generally, and at DSS.
Evidence Based Implementation Requires Reform of Programs and Processes

• Good new ideas have been developed that could assist CWS
  – Parent training is the most developed and needed
• It’s use will require deep involvement of CWS in implementation:
  – We cannot implement them all at once
  – We must allocate adequate resources to starting them and to adapting them to CWS populations and practice parameters
  – We must also provide extensive supervision during implementation
  – Willing partners exist but the support is needed
Child Welfare Services Have Been Dominated by Attachment Theory

- Attachment theory ostensibly helps to explain children who are remote, disconnected, indiscriminant, stuck, and unreciprocating.

- The principle of PARSIMONY calls for “the simplest and most frugal route of explanation available.”
  - Question: Does attachment theory add something that other newer neuro-psychosocial interventions do not provide?
Past Time to Detach from Attachment

• Our CWS involved children and families do not need their own Freudian-based theory

Indiscriminate Friendliness From Inhibitory Control Not Problems with Attachment

Bruce, Tarullo & Gunnar (2009); Pears, Bruce, Fisher, & Kim (2009)
Risks of Over Use of Attachment Theory

• Barahona case in Florida-- Clear warnings from CWW and other professionals that the girl, at least, was not doing well (loosing hair, depressed, etc).
  – Psychological report focused on attachment – resulting in conclusion that children needed to stay with Barahona’s
Risks of Over Use of Attachment Theory

• Recent Audit of cases in Maryland where children were left with parents with indicated abuse and neglect… 2 Baltimore City cases in which court had ordered them to be placed there despite DSS recommendation

• California study in mid 1990s; families that indicated that they were “bonded to young children” and allowed to keep them in care; 20% of children subsequently had 4 or more moves in the next 3 years
Relationships Matter …

• …but future relationships matter as much as past relationships
Implement KEEP in Baltimore City

- Parent Management Training-O
- Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care-Adolescents (and MTFC-Pre)
- KEEP (MTFC-lite) and, soon, KEEP-SAFE, and KEEP-Pre

MTFC-Pre Intervention

Foster Parent Consultant
Family Therapist
‘Daily Report’ Caller

STAFF
Case Manager

Child Therapist
Behavioral Skills Trainer
Child Psychiatrist

Caregiver-Child Relationship
Case Management
Child Needs
KEEP Intervention

Foster Parent Consultant
Foster Parent Behavioral Groups
‘Parent Daily (WEEKLY) Report’
(PDR) Caller

Caregiver-Child Relationship
# Project KEEP: Parent Daily Report

Did your foster child do any of the following behaviors in the last 24 hours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Behaviors</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Upset?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Back-talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Defiant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Destructive, vandalize</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boisterous, rowdy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay out late</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skip meals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How upset were you?</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat/a little</th>
<th>Quite a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Run away</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Swear, use bad language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tease, provoke</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Depressed, sad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sluggish</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Truant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Steal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nervous/jittery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short attention span</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daydream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Irresponsible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marijuana/drugs/Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any school problem</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inappropriate sexual activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate the day (A-F)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Which Foster Care Placements Disrupt?

After 6, every additional behavior problem increases probability of disruption by 25% within next 6 months.

Number of behavior problems per day on PDR

KEEP is very good at keeping behavior problems in the 3, 4, and 5 range.
Effect Of Prior Out-of-home Placements On Placement Moves: MTFC-P Vs. Regular FC

(Fisher, Burraston, & Pears, 2005)
Predicted Probability Of Negative Exit By Prior Placements and Intervention Group

Number of Prior Placements

Mean Predicted Probability

GROUP
- Control
- Intervention

KEEP
Percentages of Exit Type by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Negative Exit</th>
<th>Positive Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>干预组</td>
<td>控制组</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>干预组</td>
<td>控制组</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>干预组</td>
<td>控制组</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>干预组</td>
<td>控制组</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>干预组</td>
<td>控制组</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep

![Chart showing percentages of exit type by group. The chart compares negative exits and positive exits between the intervention group and the control group. The intervention group consistently has higher percentages in both negative and positive exits.]
KEEP Implications

• Investing in therapeutic interventions that change physiology and behavior may make it more likely that the improved behavior will be sustained

• KEEP could become a prototype for adoptive parent support—it is much more likely to matter than PRIDE or MAPP which have no parenting support component
End LJ (Now that Results are In)

• Baltimore DSS has worked heroically to end the LJ consent decree
  – Many performance indicators are now achieved
  – More need to be accomplished
• The State of Maryland should not continue to pursue and end to the lawsuit in court—the end should come under mutual agreement with the plaintiff
• Ending LJ will give Baltimore City even more chance to innovate
Four Take Home Points

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Thank you very much
Partial References


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