Delinquency in Child Welfare: Investigating Kinship Care Effects

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Children placed in foster care due to:
- Abuse/neglect
- Voluntary placement
- Person in need of supervision (PINS)
Since 1982, reported cases of child abuse and neglect increased 333%.

A number of children entering out-of-home care increased (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1995)

However, according to the Calif. Dept. of Social Services, the number of children entering kinship care in Calif. and L.A. County decreased from 1999 – 2008.
Estimates of Children in Kinship Care in California

Number of child

Year

1999 2001 2003 2005 2007

0 20000 40000 60000 80000 100000

Estimates in Formal Kinship Care Use
Estimates of Children in Kinship Care in Los Angeles County


Number of Children: 0, 20000, 40000, 60000, 80000, 100000

Estimates in Formal Kinship Care Use
• Relatives considered in foster care placement by many child welfare agencies (Geen)

• Rationale: Relatives can afford to care for the child. Little need for intervention by child welfare agencies or government (Iglehart, 1994)
Why has Kinship Care Increased?

• **Policies:** In 1979, the Supreme Court ruled that kin caregivers cannot be excluded from receiving benefits - *Youakim v. Miller* (Berrick & Barth, 1994; Berrick et al., 1994; Gleeson & Craig, 1994; Iglehart; Jantz, 2002; Shore et al., 2002).

  – States must now make the same foster care maintenance payments to kin caregivers for Title IV-E-eligible children.
Benefits of Kinship Care

Key to *family preservation and support* (Freundlich et al., 2003)

*Continuity and connectedness to children* (Geen, 2004)

Alleviate trauma that results from family *separation* (Dubowitz et al., 1994; Freundlich et al.; Johnson-Garner & Meers, 2003)
Less placement instability than non-kinship
(Webster et al., 2000)

- Kinship youths have only one placement; non-kinship have more than one (Iglehart, 1994)
- Lower levels of behavioral problems at home (Shore et al., 2002)
Limitations of Kinship Care

**Economic Hardship** (Ehrle et al., 2001)
- Poverty and food insecurity
- Caregivers unmarried, no high school degree, and unemployed

**Health Risks**
- Unmet health care needs (Dubowitz et al., 1994)
- High-risk sexual behavior (Carpenter et al., 2001)
Limitations of Kinship Care

Mental/Emotional Health Risks

Adults in kinship care as children reported

✓ depression
✓ marital unhappiness
✓ intimate-parental relationships less likely
✓ social isolation (Cook & Fong, 2000)
School-Related Risks
- mental health problems at school (Iglehart, 1994)
- lower educational performance
- poorer study habits and attention (Dubowitz et al., 1994)
Limitations of Kinship Care

Risks to Kinship Guardians:
Familial stressors undermine permanent placement

Barriers to permanency:
✓ Contact with biological parents
✓ Child’s rejection of structured environments
✓ Special needs children
✓ Health limitations of kinship guardians
Current Study

- Longitudinal research on kinship foster care children is needed.
- However, there have not been any longitudinal studies on kinship foster care children from official data sources.
- The purpose of this study is to assess whether the outcomes of children placed in kinship foster care are more positive than for those in traditional foster care.