

# **NSCAW Secondary Analysis Projects 2006-2008**

## **Board of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin System**

*Project Title:*

Estimating the Impact of Foster Care Placement on Child Well-Being

*Principal Investigator:*

Lawrence M. Berger, PhD

*Project Abstract:*

Current evidence suggests that foster care placement may be associated with adverse outcomes for children. However, obtaining unbiased estimates of the effects of foster care placement on child well-being is complicated by potential selection bias. That is, children who are placed in foster care may have poorer developmental outcomes than children who remain in their parents' homes for a variety of other reasons, including differences in socioeconomic, child, or parent/family characteristics, and/or differences in the types and severity of maltreatment to which they have been exposed. The inability of most prior studies to adequately adjust for selection bias has severely limited current knowledge about the effects of foster care placement on child well-being. To address this gap, investigators will use data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) and three statistical methods that adjust for selection bias (OLS regressions with extensive controls, change models, and residualized change models) to test whether foster care placement is associated with multiple indicators of cognitive, behavioral, and social well-being. This study will estimate these associations separately for children of different ages (0-5, 6-10 and 11-17) and will examine whether they vary for children from different racial and ethnic groups. It will also explore whether there are differential associations between foster care placement and child well-being for children placed in kin and non-kin foster homes. Finally, the study will compare estimates achieved through various methods for addressing selection bias in order to gain insight into whether associations between foster care placement and child well-being may have causal implications. By providing new knowledge regarding the impacts of various foster care experiences on the well-being of particular groups of children, the results of this research will inform child welfare policies and practices that aim to promote well-being for children involved with child protective services.

**The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

*Project Title:*

Developmental Trajectories of Young Maltreated Children

*Principal Investigator:*

Anita Scarborough, PhD

*Project Abstract:*

This study will analyze the developmental and behavioral patterns among young children entering child welfare services (CWS) and their developmental trajectories across multiple waves of the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) data. The study will address the early identification of young children (infants, toddlers and preschoolers) who are at higher risk of poor developmental outcomes. Findings from NSCAW baseline data revealed that almost half of children between birth and 6 years of age would likely be eligible for early intervention services because of very low scores on standardized measures of development. This study will examine changes in developmental status among children maltreated at a very young age, and the child, family, maltreatment type, outcome of investigation (substantiated vs. unsubstantiated), placement, and services associated with changes in the child's developmental status and behavioral characteristics from baseline to the most recent data available.

Developmental patterns across measures will be examined to determine if there are profiles associated with subgroups of children that will inform the need for specific child-centered services from CWS or early intervention services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Results of the study will be disseminated through peer reviewed journals, presentations that will be made available through a website sponsored by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG), and through presentations at national meetings.

## **University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center**

*Project Title:*

Epidemiology of Co-Occurring Depression and Substance Abuse in Child Welfare

*Principal Investigator:*

Anne Libby, PhD

The goal of this study is to characterize the patterns and developments of mental health and substance use problems among adolescents involved with child welfare systems using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW). The three specific aims of the study

include: (1) to identifying and characterizing four risk groups of youth at baseline, and estimating the prevalence of youth in each: depression only, risky substance use only, co-occurring depression and risky substance use, or neither of these; (2) measuring and comparing youth-, family-, and system-level characteristics at baseline among the four risk groups; and (3) to estimating the likelihood of depression, substance use, or co-occurring depression and substance use 36 months after child welfare intake, accounting for baseline risk group, and youth-, family-, and system-level characteristics. This endeavor promises to build on and contribute to the knowledge base and provide empirical evidence for policymakers and practitioners alike.

## **University of Iowa**

*Project Title:*

The Impact of Supervisory Neglect on Peer Relationships, Behavior and School Performance among School Aged Children

*Principal Investigator:*

Carol Coohy, PhD

*Project Abstract:*

The proposed study will use data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW) to determine the effect of inadequate parental supervision and other types of maltreatment on three salient areas of development: children's peer relationships, behavior, and school performance. Special emphasis will be placed on supervisory neglect, because it is the most frequently occurring type of maltreatment and because the effect of supervision problems on children has not been examined longitudinally and in depth. To specify more precisely the link between supervisory neglect and development, investigators will also examine characteristics of the maltreatment and caregivers, and three potential moderators of development: child adaptive daily living skills, child intelligence, and child welfare services. These analyses may have important implications for policy and practice as they will (a) increase our ability to accurately identify those children who are at highest risk of poor outcomes and, therefore, increase our confidence that limited resources are being allocated appropriately and (b) determine whether and which services moderate the effect of different maltreatment experiences and caregiver problems on development and, thus, provide us with practical information that can be used to match families to services.

## **Washington University**

*Project Title:*

Assuring the Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child Welfare Environments Through Stable Health Insurance Coverage

*Principal Investigator:*

Ramesh Raghavan, PhD

*Project Abstract:*

Children in the child welfare system (CWS) require an array of services to improve their emotional well-being and to increase their chances of permanency. Health insurance is the mechanism through which most children finance such services, and virtually all children in out-of-home care and most children maintained in-home are eligible for Medicaid.

The first goal of this study is to understand the stability of this insurance coverage over time for children in the CWS. Because insurance eligibility is linked to placement, and because Medicaid benefits end with entry into certain residential settings, unstable placement and some patterns of service utilization can cause children to lose insurance coverage. The financial gap between services covered by insurance and services that are needed but are not covered by insurance is bridged by child welfare agencies, which have emerged as major purchasers of public mental health care. The second goal is to uncover policy solutions that can mitigate the financial burden on child welfare systems of paying for services not covered by insurance.

The existence of four waves of NSCAW, and their linkage with the Caring for Children in Child Welfare (CCCW) study, offers a unique and unprecedented opportunity to examine insurance change over time at the child-level, and to study the effects of agency-level policies on such change. This study will undertake longitudinal data analysis using child-level and county-level variables to answer the following questions: (1) How does health insurance coverage vary over time for children in NSCAW, and what factors predict such variation? (2) Which CCCW-derived health financing policies promote stable health insurance coverage for children in NSCAW? (3) What are the effects of varying health insurance coverage on use of ambulatory and inpatient mental health services?

## **Westat, Inc.**

*Project Title:*

Kinship Effects in the NSCAW Data

*Principal Investigator:*

Spencer Li, PhD

*Project Abstract:*

Currently about one in four foster children in the nation is in kinship care. Research findings on the effects of such care on children have been mixed. Studies have identified a higher prevalence of both risk and protective factors in kinship care families compared to nonkinship families. Among the risk factors, kin caregivers are more likely to be single and older, have less education and income, and receive fewer benefits and services. On the protective side, kin families are more likely to have strong attachment to the child, frequent contact with birth parents, available help with childcare, and greater placement stability. Yet, it remains unclear exactly how such factors contribute to child outcomes.

Research focusing on the relationship between kinship care and child outcomes has not advanced beyond an attempt to demonstrate such a relationship. In addition, most of the research to date has been cross-sectional and based on geographically delimited study populations. The extent to which findings from such studies are nationally generalizable is unclear.

The proposed study will use longitudinal data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW) to analyze the relative mediating effects of risk and protective factors on the relationship of caregiver kin status and the outcomes of permanency, safety, and well-being for children in foster care. The NSCAW data allow a more detailed examination of such effects than has heretofore been possible. The study will apply a structural equation modeling (SEM) methodology to clarify what factors associated with kinship care underlie its relationship to child outcomes. Results will advance child welfare policy by illuminating the mechanisms through which kinship care can enhance child outcomes.