The Struggle for Outcome-Based Accountability in the Child Welfare System

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Heinz Foundation

May 13, 2002
Whose Outcomes?

- Child Welfare Outcomes Report to Congress
- Child and Family Service Review Process
- Consent Decrees
- State Strategic Planning Processes
- Reform Initiatives
  - Family to Family, the Annie E. Casey Foundation
  - Casey [Family Program] Outcomes & Decision-Making Project
  - Families for Kids, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
  - Community Partnerships for Protecting Children
An Emerging Value Base

- **Every child deserves a family**—
  - The 16 year old as well as the infant
  - Long-term foster care is not permanency
  - Congregate care should be used only when necessary, not merely when it is convenient to the agency

- **Families need support and services from their neighborhood and community**
  
  *Kids do better when their families do better, and families do better in strong neighborhoods and communities*

- **Child welfare agencies need neighborhood and community partners to protect children and to support families**
Some Assumptions About Accountability in the Child Welfare System

- A community-based approach is more responsive and responsible.
- The child welfare agency *shares* authority and responsibility with the community.
- Must address outcomes, not merely procedural compliance.
- New “bottom lines”
  - Child safety, permanence, & well-being
  - Family outcomes
  - Community outcomes
Focal Outcomes in Child Welfare

• Keeping children safe while avoiding out-of-home placement

• Using the least restrictive placement appropriate to the child’s needs and the interests and capabilities of the family—
  ✓ Maintaining attachments to family, friends, and schoolmates
  ✓ Maintaining neighborhood and/or community attachments
  ✓ Placement with families

• Stability of care while in custody

• Shortest length of stay consistent with the strengths and needs of the child and family

• Permanency for children and youth of all ages through reunification, adoption, guardianship, or other legally secure relationship

• Safety and well-being for children who achieve permanent placements
The Cycle of Experiences in the Child Welfare System

Substantiated Report of A/N

Counterbalanced Indicators of System Performance

Permanency Through Reunification, Adoption, or Guardianship

Home-Based Services vs. Out-of-Home Care

Use of Least Restrictive Form of Care

Shorter Lengths Of Stay

Maintain Positive Attachments To Family, Friends, and Neighbors

Stability Of Care
Data to Support Outcome-Based Accountability

- Use longitudinal data to track every child’s experiences
- Present data in ways that highlight changes in performance
- Link placement data with abuse & neglect reports to address pre- and post-placement safety issues
- Use GIS technology to monitor neighborhood impact
The Bias of Caseload Snapshots: The Long and the Short of It

Jan. 1, 2001
How Old Are the Children Being Served?
Caseload vs. Longitudinal Perspectives

The diagram shows the distribution of children served in different age categories for both Entries and Caseload perspectives. It compares the percentage of children in each age group for Entries and Caseload data. The categories are:

- < 1 yr
- 1 - 5 yrs
- 6 - 10 yrs
- 11-15 yrs
- 16+ yrs

The diagram uses color coding to represent these categories: Red for < 1 yr, Blue for 1 - 5 yrs, Green for 6 - 10 yrs, Light Blue for 11-15 yrs, and Yellow for 16+ yrs.
Caseload vs. Longitudinal Perspectives on Length of Stay

In Care Entered
30-Jun-95 SFY95
30-Jun-96 SFY96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>In Care 30-Jun-95</th>
<th>Entered SFY95</th>
<th>In Care 30-Jun-96</th>
<th>Entered SFY96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Pattern of Initial Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statewide</th>
<th>Level 3 Counties</th>
<th>Sample County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFY'93</td>
<td>SFY'94</td>
<td>SFY'95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oven Home</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Home</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>4787</td>
<td>5264</td>
<td>5217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Length of Time in Custody/Placement Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median Number of Days</th>
<th>% remaining in custody/placement authority after 3 months</th>
<th>% remaining in custody/placement authority after 6 months</th>
<th>% remaining in custody/placement authority after 12 months</th>
<th>% remaining in custody/placement authority after 18 months</th>
<th>% remaining in custody/placement authority after 24 months</th>
<th>% in care whose record is checked on 3/24/98</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Counties</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample County</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Length of Time in Licensed Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median Number of Days</th>
<th>% in licensed care after 9 months</th>
<th>% in licensed care after 18 months</th>
<th>% in licensed care after 27 months</th>
<th>% in licensed care after 36 months</th>
<th>% in care whose record is checked on 3/24/98</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Counties</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample County</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Disruptions in care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% remaining in own home only</th>
<th>% remaining with relative only</th>
<th>% in other non-facility arrangements only</th>
<th>% with only 1 licensed facility</th>
<th>% with 2 licensed facilities</th>
<th>% with 3 licensed facilities</th>
<th>% with four or more licensed facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Counties</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample County</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Rates of Re-entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% children who re-entered care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Counties</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample County</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This report tracks the experiences of children each fiscal year who entered the custody/placement authority for the first time in their lives.

NA = data not available due to insufficient follow-up time.

Note: Percentage totals may be slightly greater than or less than 100% due to rounding.
Private Foster Home Placements From One Los Angeles Neighborhood
Are Children Being Placed Near Their Homes? Caseload vs. Longitudinal Perspectives

Percentage of Children Placed in Same Zip Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zip 3</th>
<th>Zip 4</th>
<th>Zip 5</th>
<th>Zip 6</th>
<th>Zip 7</th>
<th>Zip 8</th>
<th>Zip 9</th>
<th>Zip 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Green: In Care 1999
Number of Placements by Type of Initial Placement

- Foster Home
  - Relative
  - GH - Residential
  - GH - Treatment
  - Shelter
  - All Others

Percent: 100

- Blocks:
  - 5 or more: Red
  - 4: Yellow
  - 3: Light gray
  - 2: Green
  - 1: Dark blue
  - Home Only: Purple

Percent ranges:
- 100 to 90
- 80 to 70
- 60 to 50
- 40 to 30
- 20 to 10
- 0 to 10
Placement Patterns
LoS in Guilford and Other Level 3 Counties: 1997 Cohort

Proportion remaining in care

Days After Entering Care
Federal Outcome Framework

Safety
- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Permanency
- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

Family and Child Well-Being
- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recurrence of Maltreatment</strong></td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>For six months following the first report date during the period from January-June, the percentage about whom another substantiated or indicated report is received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidence of Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care</strong></td>
<td>0.57%</td>
<td>The percentage of children reported as maltreated by a perpetrator who was a foster parent or a residential facility staff person for the nine-month period of January 1 through September 30 divided by the population of children served in foster care for the same time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foster Care Re-Entries</strong></td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>Of all children who entered foster care during a given year, the percentage who were re-entering foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stability of Foster Care Placements</strong></td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>At a point in time, among children who have been in foster care less than 12 mos from the time of the latest removal or left care in the previous 12 months without having been in care 12 mos, the percentage with &lt; 3 placement settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time to Achieve Reunification</strong></td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>Among children reunified in a given year, the percentage reunified in &lt; 12 months from the time of the latest removal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time to Achieve Adoption</strong></td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>Among children who exit in a given year to a finalized adoption, the percentage who exit care in &lt; 24 months from latest removal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt from a CFSR

• Item 7. Permanency goal for child

_____ Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The median length of stay for each of the last five entry cohorts (i.e. SFY 94-95 through SFY 98-99) is (in days) 425, 401, 391 and 369 respectively. DSS attributes this improvement to . . .

The number of children in foster care has declined from a peak of 6,982 in 1997 to 5,765 in 2000. In part because of the requirements of ASFA, the percentage of terminations resulting from adoption increased from 14.8% of all closures to 21.3% of all closures.

Basis: Onsite Review

While the length of time to achieve reunification and achieve adoption did not meet the national standards, the trend is demonstrably going in that direction, as measured by declining average length of stay in foster care and the declining number of children in foster care.
Placements Types From Three Perspectives

Most Recent Placement for 1st-Time Entry Cohort Group
Current Placement for Children in Point-in-Time Profile
First Placements for Initial Entrants

- Pre-Adoptive Homes
- Foster Family Homes (Relative)
- Foster Family Homes (Non-Relatives)
- Group Homes
- Institutions
- Super’d Ind Living
- Runaway
- Trial Home Visit
- NA
Placement Stability From Three Perspectives

No. of Placement Settings for 1st-Time Entry Cohort Group: AFCARS
No. of Placement Settings in Current Placement for Children in Point-in-Time Profile: AFCARS
No. of Placement Settings in Initial Spell Through Feb. 2001 for Entry Cohorts

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six or more
Accountability Grounded in Self-Evaluation

- Seeks to create a flow of information to support mid-course corrections and continuous improvements in outcomes.

  *Evaluation is a process, not a report.*

- Without authority to change policy and to redirect resources, consumers of evaluative information engage in mere academic exercises.

  *Evaluation is not auditing; auditing is not evaluation.*

  *You can be honestly ineffective.*
Selected Applications

- **Family to Family: Reconstructing Family Foster Care**
  The Annie E. Casey Foundation and child welfare agencies in 12 states

- **The Right Home for the Right Child**
  The Casey Family Program and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services

- **Making Connections**
  The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Local Learning Partnerships in 12 U.S. cities

- **Evaluation of the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration in NC**
  Children’s Bureau/DHHS and State of North Carolina
Staffing Requirements for Self-Evaluation

Agency Management & Community Collaboratives

Program Staff

Data Manager

Analyst
Expanding Self-Evaluation Throughout the Agency and Into the Community

- Develop Resource Maps
  - Interviews with Foster Parents
  - Track Foster Parents' Experiences
  - Track Children's Experiences

Self-Evaluation Team
- Program & Practice Perspective
- Analytical Perspective
- Data Management Perspective

Agency Management
- Decision-makers with authority to act on what is being learned
- Helps set agenda for SE Team
Obstacles to Self-Evaluation

- Child welfare managers’ failure to assert that self-evaluation is part of the “real work” of the agency.

- Shifting the focus to reports or monitoring systems rather than maintaining a commitment to an ongoing interactive process.

- Difficulty hiring and retaining staff who have analytic and data management skills.

- Incompatibility of university reward systems with an intensive and long-term commitment to community and practitioner partners.