An Assessment of Differential Response: Implications for Social Work Practice in Diverse Communities

Amy Conley
Jill Duerr Berrick
UC Berkeley

Center for Child & Youth Policy
Overview of the Problem: Lack of Prevention Services

- In the U.S., over 2 million child maltreatment reports per year receive no services
- Evidence that unsubstantiated cases re-refer at rates similar to substantiated cases
- Differential response: Voluntary, community-based services for lower-risk families
Overview: Alameda County DR Program

Reports of child abuse/neglect

Screened out cases in designated zips

CBO liaison

Assessment & Triage

Moderate to High Risk

Intensive family support

- Weekly home visits
- Linkages to other service providers

Low Risk

Info on community services
Program Goals

• Overarching goal: Prevention of child welfare system involvement

• Proximal goals:
  ▪ Increased connections with community resources
  ▪ Provision of temporary social support
  ▪ Elimination of unmet basic needs
  ▪ Improvement of parent-child relationship
Methods

Process:
- Focus groups with line staff (n = 12)
- Interviews with managers (n = 16)
- Interviews with clients (n = 30)

Outcomes:
- Treatment group: 161 families who received intervention
- Comparison group: 477 families eligible for intervention

Community services:
- Data collection and organization using GIS
Research Question: Outcomes Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is DR in Alameda County successful in preventing future child welfare system involvement?</td>
<td>Administrative child welfare data for DR clients and comparison groups</td>
<td>Survival analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Client Outcomes: Report as Failure

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for re-report by treatment, clients with prior reports only

- Unadjusted: Hazard ratio 1.03, p-value 0.87
- Evidence of strong confounding by prior reports
- Clients with prior reports only: Hazard ratio 0.69, p-value 0.064
Client Outcomes: Investigation as Failure

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for investigation by treatment, clients with prior reports only

- Unadjusted: Hazard ratio 1.45, p-value 0.05
- Clients with prior reports only: Hazard ratio 0.96, p-value 0.85
Client Outcomes: Substantiation as Failure

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for substantiation by treatment, clients with prior reports only

- Unadjusted: Hazard ratio 1.82, p-value 0.15
- Clients with prior reports only: Hazard ratio 0.84, p-value 0.71
- Rare event, large confidence intervals
Implications

• While goal of this program is prevention of recurrence of maltreatment, the findings are in line with meta-analyses of child maltreatment prevention programs that show small treatment effects\(^1\)

• Findings also fit with other DR studies that have found no difference in re-reporting for DR and non-DR families\(^2\)

• Intervention may have beneficial outcomes in untested domains, such as parenting and health

\(^1\) MacLeod & Nelson, 2000; Van den Noortgate, Geeraert, Grietens, & Onghena, 2006.

\(^2\) Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004; English et al., 2000; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005a.
Thank you

Questions?
References


