

Caring for Children in Child Welfare (CCCW) Newsletter

Health Assessments for Children Entering the CWS

The Caring for Children in Child Welfare (CCCW) study is examining the delivery of physical, mental health, and developmental services provided to children involved with the Child Welfare System (CWS). The need for this type of research has been supported through studies showing that children in the CWS have, or are at extremely high risk of, developmental, psychological, and physical health problems.

In the first wave of CCCW, phone interviews were conducted with state and county level personnel in order to describe the organization of mental health services for children in the CWS. A snowball interview technique was used to identify informants, who were typically supervisors, program managers, and agency directors. One portion of the interview focused on the services that children receive upon entry into the CWS. The questions, which were asked of the county child welfare agencies, focused on policies and practices regarding physical, mental, and developmental health assessments for children entering out of home care in the CWS.

Results showed most counties require a comprehensive physical assessment for all children entering out of home care and about 58% have a policy requiring developmental assessments for children under the age of five. However, less than 50% require a mental health assessment for all children upon entry to out of home care (fig. 1). Some counties report a policy requiring assessments for subgroups of children, such as children entering group care settings or those with a history of physical or sexual abuse. Accordingly, CWS report of the receipt of assessments shows that while most children receive physical health assessments, less children receive mental health assessments (fig. 2).

To provide further insight into the ways to best serve these youth, the CCCW investigation team continues to analyze the data collected in the first wave of the study. The data collected was linked to child-level data collected by the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW) to allow for the examination of the relationship between the need for and use of mental health services by children involved in the CWS. It is our hope that the results of these studies will allow further improvement in child welfare policies and practices in order to improve the delivery of needed services for children involved in the CWS.

Figure 1. Type of policy for assessment of physical, mental, and developmental health

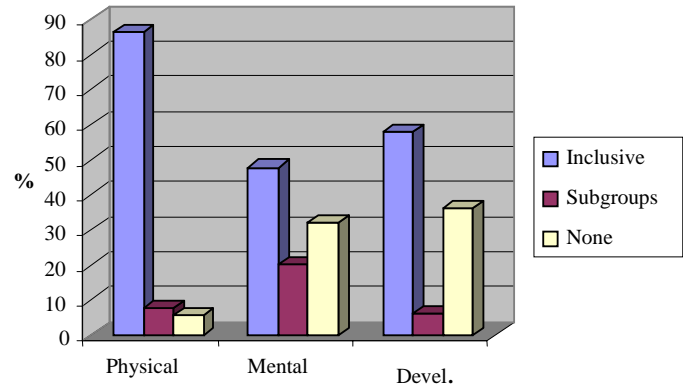
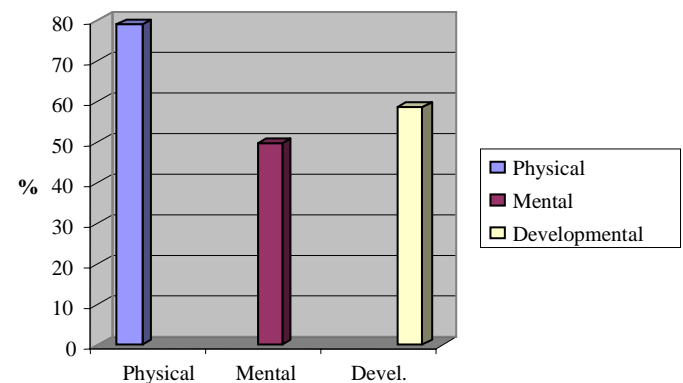


Figure 2. Percent of children that receive assessment, by caseworker report



We are grateful to the Child Welfare and Mental Health personnel who participated in the interviews, without whom this study would not be possible. The information obtained from the data collected has been, and continues to be, extremely valuable for researchers, agency administrators, and policy makers alike in our endeavors to improve services provided to children involved with the Child Welfare System.

More information on the CCCW study is available on the internet at www.casrc.org

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