Early Childhood Court Outcomes Analysis

The Early Childhood Court (ECC) initiative has been underway in Florida for over three years. In an effort to ensure continuous quality improvement (CQI), the Office of Court Improvement has collected data on ECC cases, and recently conducted a comparative analysis of Florida's ECC children to Florida's non-ECC children. Using Florida's Dependency Court Information System, Jie Xu, Senior Court Analyst II and doctoral candidate at Florida State University, complied the data and developed findings regarding the safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved in ECC over a 3-year period. She also made recommendations for improvements to support the CQI process.

The Success of Permanency, Safety and Well-Being

Fifteen counties were involved in the analysis. Outliers were removed and a subsample of children were obtained via random sampling, resulting in a comparison of approximately 130 children in each group (ECC and Non-ECC).

Several independent sample t tests were conducted to compare the success of *permanency* between the ECC and the non-ECC groups for time to reunification prior to closure and time to case closure. The s*afety* of ECC children was measured with the percentages of re-removals. The frequency of placement moves and timeframe for provision of early intervention services was measured for *well-being*.

Summary and Findings

- The average time to reunification for the ECC group (M_{ECC} = 217 days) was *significantly* * *shorter* than that of the non-ECC group ($M_{non-ECC}$ = 297days), t (171) = -4.538, $p < 0.05$.
- The average time to case closure (excluding adoption) for the ECC group (M_{ECC} = 433 days) was s*ignificantly* shorter than that of the non-ECC group ($M_{non-ECC}$ = 505 days), t (172.471) = -3.871, $p < 0.05$.
- The average time to adoption for the ECC group (M_{ECC} = 546 days) was *significantly* shorter than that of the non ECC group ($M_{non-ECC}$ = 679 days), t (58.667) = -2.86, $p < 0.05$.
- *No significant association* was found between the group membership (ECC or non-ECC) and types of closure based on the chi-square test of independence, χ2 (1) = 2.288, $p > 0.05$.
- *No significant association* was found between the group membership and the status of re-removal, χ2 (1) = 2.1, $p > 0.05$.
- *No significant correlation* was found between the number of placements and days to reunification (r = -0.02, $p > 0.05$) or closure in the ECC group (r = 0.04, $p > 0.05$).
- Race didn't show any effect on the time to reunification prior to closure in the ECC group. However, the average time to closure was significantly different among different race groups in ECC as determined by one-way ANOVA, F (2, 123) = 3.578, $p < 0.05$. The post-hoc Tukey test showed that white children took longer than black children to achieve permanency.
- Gender didn't impact any of the timelines in the ECC group.

Recommendations

1. Add additional elements, such as allegations or reasons for removal
2. Use same age ranges for comparison
3. Compare QIC* sites to non-QIC sites
4. Conduct an experimental study to examine the effect of CPP and the influence of different number of CPP sessions for children in ECC
5. Create a missing data report
6. Explore why white children took longer than black children to achieve permanency
7. Develop a dashboard for public use
8. Compare large ECC sites to small ECC sites on outcome performance

*Statistical significance means that a result from testing or experimenting is not likely to occur randomly or by chance, but is instead likely to be attributable to a specific cause.

**Florida has five Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams (QIC) demonstration sites (Bay, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, & South Okaloosa)