

EVALUATION PROPOSAL FOR THE SHARED FAMILY CARE PROGRAM

Note: This preliminary evaluation proposal was submitted by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to the Division of Children and Family Services in May 2001. The preliminary proposal is a beginning point for a more detailed evaluation proposal that will be submitted to the U.S. DHHS Children’s Bureau for approval. The proposal addresses the process analysis and outcome analysis portions of the federal Title IV-E waiver evaluation requirement.

SFC PROGRAM GOALS:

1. Reduced length of stay and quicker reunification of families (compared to regular family foster care; or TPR/adoption).
2. In reunification cases, participating parents will demonstrate an improvement in their ability to provide a safer environment for their child(ren) and reduce child(ren)’s risk of re-entry into child welfare system.
3. Recruitment and retention of SFC Program host families

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES:

1. **Process Analysis:**

This aspect of the evaluation effort will describe how parts of the demonstration program were implemented and operated for the experimental and comparison groups. The plan is to examine and document:

- a. Organizational features of the program, including:
 - X planning process
 - X identification and engagement of stakeholders
 - X staffing structure
 - X funding resources
 - X level of acceptance by field staff
 - X project implementation (monitoring, problem resolution, etc.)
- b. Service utilization information (host versus birth families)
 - X level of care (i.e., residential plus mentoring; or mentoring only)
 - X type, array, mix of services provided
 - X unit of services provided and duration of services provided
 - X timeliness of service delivery
 - X referrals made
 - X client satisfaction (or not) with services
- c. Contextual factors affecting project
 - X social, economic and political forces that might have a bearing on the replicability or effectiveness of the project

2. Outcome Analysis

Outcome indices and the source of information will include:

- a. Length of time in care/SFC Program (overall, time in program)
- b. Number of placements prior to reunification
- c. Parent's psychological and emotional status (case records, rapid assessment measures)
- d. Parent's ability to meet child's physical and emotional needs (case record review)
- e. Parent's access and utilization of community resources (interviews, case records)
- f. Parent's progress towards treatment goal attainment (case records)
- g. Parent's self-sufficiency status (employment, stable housing, etc.)
- h. Children's physical, emotional, educational and psychological development (rapid assessment measures)
- i. Fulfillment of court orders and conditions (case records)

In addition, *demographic* information on the child and his/her family will be extracted from files and from the State's child welfare management information system (WiSACWIS)

EVALUATION DESIGN

- X Quasi-experimental: Assignment of children and their families to either Experimental (SFCP) group or Comparison group.

Assignment process: The first screening is done while cases are in the process of being referred from Initial Assessment to Ongoing Case Management. The first screening is done largely based on the case records with little or no client contact. The purpose of the first screening is to rule out cases for safety reasons. The first screening could also be used to rule out those cases where the child is being placed for reasons other than abuse/neglect, such as youth with behavior problems. A profile of those cases screened out will be developed using data from WiSACWIS.

A second screening will be done on the remaining cases to identify those cases that are the best candidates for the SFC program. The second screening will generally involve contact with the clients and an assessment of the family's strengths and interest in the SFC Program. In any given month, only a handful of cases will pass the second screening and the SFC Coordinator will work intensively with those cases to match them with SFC providers (host families) and to develop agreements between the parents and the providers. Some cases will be placed with SFC providers and some will not.

For the evaluation design, the SFC Program will have a Comparison group and an Experimental group. Assignment to the Comparison group or Experimental group will be based on the capacity to match an interested family with a SFC provider, complete the required agreement and obtain the court authorization for this placement arrangement. Within the Comparison group there will be subgroups based on why a placement does not take place. They will be tracked separately to see if there are differences between the C1 cases that showed interest in SFC but there were no placements available versus the C2 group that could not agree to the conditions or the placement

available. There will be a subgroup of cases wherein the family indicates that they do not wish to participate in the program. The SFC Coordinator will ask and record reasons individual cases/families give for not wanting to participate in the program. These records will be forwarded to UWM for inclusion in the evaluation data base.

Within the Experimental group, there will be subgroups depending on how the SFC placement turns out. E1 are the successful completions (reunification, or TPR/adoption), E2 are cases where the parent drops out/is expelled, and E3 are cases where the parent (or children) are removed from the case for reasons outside the control of the SFC Program.

- X Measurement/data collection points:
 - At intake/assessment (*pretest*)
 - At termination/drop-out (*posttest*)
 - 6 months after termination (*follow-up1*)
 - 1 year after termination (*follow-up2*)

(Note: Designation of “comparison” or “experimental” stays with program participant for the duration of the project, including if they re-enter the child welfare system after exit from SFC Program. Also, monetary incentives to enhance participation rates in follow-up evaluation activities will be provided.)

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Process Evaluation

- X Face-to-face interviews (e.g., with caseworkers; SFC host families; SFC Program participants; Comparison group participants; Drop Out clients).
- X Case Record analysis (e.g., of referrals made; service linkages; units of services rendered)
- X Examination of administrative records (e.g., minutes of meetings for decisions made re: planning, staffing structure and assignments, project implementation and organization)
- X Paper and pencil measures (e.g., Client Satisfaction Inventory (McMurtry, 1994))

Outcome Evaluation

- X Examination of case and administrative records (e.g., whether court conditions have been fulfilled; service consumption data)
- X Paper and pencil rapid assessment measures (e.g., Family Risk Scales (Magura, Moses and Jones, 1987;)

All data collection forms and documents, and measures used will be circulated for BMCW and IFPI's review and comments, prior to implementation/use.

MAJOR DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative Analysis

X Content/thematic analysis of interviews

Quantitative

(Contingent on research question, measurement characteristics of dependent variable/s, and sample sizes):

X Descriptive statistics and parametric analyses, e.g., Event History Analysis; Time Series Analysis; Analysis of Variance/Multivariate Analysis of Variance

X Non-parametric analyses

Note: Prior to any data collection, a more detailed evaluation plan with copies of all instruments and measures used to collect data will be submitted for review by UW-Milwaukee's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

EVALUATION TIMELINE

July 1, 2001 – March 31, 2006.

Jun 1 – Jul, 2001	Project start-up; selection of rapid assessment measures for outcome evaluation portion; submission of research/evaluation plan to UWM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects; orientation and familiarization with WISACWIS; documentation of recruitment, training and preparation of staff and host SFCP families
Jul 1 – Sep 30, 2001	Administration of pre-test/assessment materials; trouble-shooting re: data collection and problem-solving; data entry; data cleaning and verification; preparation and submission of Quarterly Status Report (QSR1) to the State.
Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2001	Data collection; data entry and verification; preliminary data analyses; preparation of End-of-Year Report (EYR1).
Jan 1 – Jun 30, 2005	Data collection; data entry and verification; data analyses. Regular project meetings with State and IFPI. Preparation and submission of project status reports.
Jul 1 – Mar 31, 2006	Data analysis, preparation of final report.

DELIVERABLES

1. **Quarterly Reports** due Oct 1, Apr 1 and Jul 1 of each year (Total = 12 quarterly reports). Updates on project status (includes process, outcome and cost-benefit information to date).
2. **Year End Reports** due Jan 1 of 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. (Total = 4)
 - a. Interim Outcome Evaluation Report) covering first 10 quarters, i.e.,
 - b. Interim Process Evaluation Report) July 1, 2001 – December 31, 2003;
due June 1, 2004.
3. **Final Evaluation Report** (integrating Process, Outcome and Cost Benefit analyses) due April 1, 2006.
4. Data tapes and pertinent project documents.

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