PCWCP Outcomes Evaluation
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Introduction

The Public Child Welfare Certification Program was established in 1999 to achieve these goals:
1. Develop a cadre of workers who are ready to provide high quality services to the Cabinet for Families and Children upon graduation with a BSW.
2. Improve retention of child welfare workers by adequately preparing them for the challenges of child protection work.
3. Improve professionalism (competent and dedicated to best practices in child welfare) of Cabinet workers that will result in improved outcomes for families and children.

To date, the PCWCP program has shown preliminary success in meeting goals one and two. Documentation of these outcomes is provided in reports from the University of Louisville. Data on achievement of goal three is needed.

Purpose: This study was designed to answer these questions:
1.   Are there differences in the child welfare outcomes of safety, permanency and well being between social workers graduating from the Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP) and similar workers without the PCWCP credential?
2.   Is there evidence that the PCWCP graduates working for the CFC utilize best practices in child welfare practice more often than non-PCWCP graduates?

A secondary purpose of this study was to establish a methodology for investigating outcomes for these groups using existing management reports. Management reports are routinely used in the CFC to provide supervisors and workers with feedback on the use of best practices in child welfare.

Methodology

Participants
The Training Resource Information System (TRIS) supplied a list of PCWCP and non-PCWCP graduates hired between July 2001 and Nov 2002. The existing TWIST Report (W058 children in out-of-home care) from Nov. 17, 2002 was utilized to establish matched groups for comparisons. A group of PCWCP graduates was matched with non-PCWCP graduates on the basis of time of hire and geographic placement.   All participants were identified as 'case manager' in the TWIST reports.

A total of 24 matched sets (PCWCP and non-PCWCP) were identified with hire dates between August 2001 – July 2002. Twenty-one former PCWCP students could not be

found in the 058 report that included ongoing cases. PCWCP graduates were matched with non-PCWCP graduates as follows:

- 5 on same county, 8 on same region, 11 on similar (rural/urban, size, geography) county.
- 10 on same month of hire, 10 +/- one month of hire, and 3 +/- 2 months of hire. When matching on the same month of hire was not possible, Non-PCWCP workers with a longer time on the job (1-2 months) were matched with PCWCP graduates to give the advantage the Non-PCWCP group.

Case managers in the final matched set database represented 15 service regions (Gateway Buffalo Trace was not included) in 28 counties. They had between 2 and 15 months experience since being hired.

Data Set Generation:

Five data sets were created for the study and described here for replication. Each data set was used to examine specific outcomes and to describe the casework of the workers in the study. When the data sets were completed, the names of all cases, supervisors, and workers were eliminated from the set.

Matching Data Set. The initial set of matched pairs of case managers (PCWCP and non-PCWCP) was expanded so that the name of each case manager was included 30 times in the data set. Because this data set was then used to match against case-based data, each case manager could then be matched with up to 30 cases in any case-based TWIST report that had the case manager listed. The same matching data set was used to generate all the succeeding data sets. Existing management reports during a 3-month period were merged with this data set to find cases assigned to each case manager. The integrity of the match sets tended to be lost after a 3-month period (workers may change their name, leave etc.). A new matching data set would be required for each 3-month time period.

Safety Data Set. The TWS-W153 (Completed Referrals) was used to examine safety outcomes. Only CPS cases were included. This data set contains ratings on the CQA (Continuous Quality Assessment – a risk assessment) and the track of the case (FINSA, investigation, closed), the findings (substantiated, unsubstantiated, resource linkage, law enforcement, closed), and disposition (closed, continued, resource linkages). The CQA ratings should be consistent with the track, findings, and disposition of the case if the safety of the child is considered. The final data set included 211 cases completed between 10/5/02 and 12/14/02; 122 PCWCP cases and 89 non-PCWCP cases.

Permanency Data Set. The TWS-W058 (Children in Care) was used to examine the permanency goals and out of home placements for children. Three management reports (8/25/02, 10/6/02, and 11/17/02) were merged. Duplicate child names were eliminated, keeping the most current case listing. (Note. Using a list from 6 weeks intervals was the best interval to include all children and reduce duplication of names). The final data set included 399 unduplicated cases of children in care between 8/26/02 and 11/17/02; 206 PCWCP cases and 193 non-PCWCP cases.

Well-Being Data Set.   Data from the Child Census Form collected during the Kentucky Foster Care Census (Phase I: DCSBS homes) was used. The census data was merged back in to the original census list generated form the TWS-W058 (8/25/02). The TWS-W058 contains case manager names and allowed the comparison of the child census data for each child with the case manager. This data set contained 98 children in out of home care that were included in the census; 58 with PCWCP and 40 with non-PCWCP case managers.

Case Work Quality. The TWS-W059 (Referral Status) reports on referrals. Case managers have up to 45 calendar days (30 working days) to complete a referral. This report includes all referrals and for those over the 45-day limit, it includes the number of days the referral is "past due". Management reports were filtered to include only CPS cases; 3 reports (9/13/02, 10/23/02, and 12/2/02) were merged. Duplicate names were eliminated, keeping the most recent case listing. This data set contained 540 unduplicated cases in the referral stage during the time period; 233 PCWCP cases and 307 non-PCWCP cases.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Chi-square, and one-way ANOVA were used.

Results

Case Work Descriptions

Each of the data sets yielded descriptive data on the casework of the two groups. **PCWCP graduates were significantly more likely to accept a case as an investigation and less likely to accept it as a FINSA (Family in Need of Service Assessment)**. Results from the TWS-W059 (referral status) are displayed here, X^2 (2, 540) = 12.67, p = .002. Similar trends were seen in the TWS-W153 (closed referral) reports, X^2 (3, 211) = 11.40, p = .01. Significant differences (not all numbers) are displayed here.

Status	FINSA	Investigation
PCWCP (059)	23.6%	76.0%
Non-PCWCP (059)	37.5%	61.6%
PCWCP (153)	25.4%	72.1%
Non-PCWCP (153)	36.0%	53.9%

Safety Outcomes

There were no differences in average cumulative risk scores between status groups. (Note – CQA totals run between 0 and 28). PCWCP (mean total risk: 8.06); non-PCWCP (mean total risk: 6.63). The PCWCP accepted 34.7% of cases rated as low risk for a FINSA compared to the 49% accepted by the non-PCWCP group as a FINSA.

Overall the PCWCP group was more likely to continue a case, less likely to find that services are not needed, and more likely to substantiate abuse, X^2 (6, 211) = 18.29, p = .006.   These results are displayed here.

Status	Continue Case	Services NOT needed	Substantiated
PCWCP	27.9%	17.2%	32.8%
Non-PCWCP	18.0%	25.8%	18.0%

These findings were compared across status groups by risk levels. Risk levels were defined as low, moderate, and high risk based on the total CQA score. 100% of the workers in both groups accepted high-risk cases (22 total cases) as investigations and substantiated those investigations. The differences between the groups are displayed here.

Status	Low risk – Services NOT needed	Low risk – unsubstantiated	Moderate risk: Substantiated	High risk: Continue Case
PCWCP	26.4%	58.3%	64.7%	69.2%
Non-PCWCP	43.1%	45.1%	57.1%	33.3%

The rating of risk in a case as zero (0) – meaning no signs of risk is seen as problematic by the CFC because it is suspected that risk is being rated too low in these cases.   Nine of the 122 cases (7%) were rated by PCWCP graduates as 0; 17 of 89 cases (19%) were rated as zero by non-PCWCP graduates.

Ensuring the safety of vulnerable children is a complex intervention that is not readily reflected in only one statistic. **The pattern seen here is that the PCWCP graduates tended to intervene more aggressively in cases. They investigated more cases, substantiated more cases, and provided services more often.** They tended to rate the CQA more sensitively (fewer zeros and a tendency to higher average ratings). **The PCWCP group also tended to use practices more consistent with the rating of risk in the cases. They unsubstantiated more low risk cases, substantiated more moderate risk cases, and continued care for more cases at high risk.**

Permanency Goals and Placements

There were no significant differences between status groups on the average age of children in care (PCWCP - 8.93 and non- 9.55 years), the months in care (PCWCP – 21.4 and non – 22.22), IV status, number of placements (PCWCP 2.65 and non- 2.33), or costs of out of home care (PCWCP - $28 and non - $42). (NOTE. There are trends visible here, but these differences are not statistically significant because of the variability of the data.)

The status groups were different in type of placement, X^2 (8, 384) = 25.10, p = .000. **The PCWCP group had significantly more children placed with relatives and fewer children placed in PCCs, more in adoptive home and fewer in emergency shelter placements**. Differences (not all results) are displayed here.

Status	DCBS FH	Relative	PCC	DCBS adopt	Emergency Shelter
PCWCP	87 (44.2%)	31 (15.7%)	55 (27.9%)	6 (3.0%)	2 (1.0%)
Non-PCWCP	100 (53.5%)	9 (4.8%)	62 (33.2%)	3 (1.6%)	7 (2.3%)

- Thirteen percent (27 cases of 206 cases) of the PCWCP cases did not have a permanency goal established; 18.6% (36 cases of 193 cases) of the non-PCWCP group did not have permanency goals established.

After 12 months in care, the child's permanency goal should be changed from return to parent to adoption or another permanency goal, because it is unlikely that return to parent is still reasonable. Data for children in care for 13 or more months were selected for this analysis. There was a statistically significant difference in the goals set by the PCWCP group with far more adoption goals and far fewer return to parent goals, X^2 (5, 186) = 24.38, p = .000. Significant differences in permanency goals for children in care for 13 or more months are displayed here.

Status	Adoption	Return to Parent
PCWCP	53 (58.2%)	14 (15.4%)
Non-PCWCP	24 (25.3%)	38 (40.0%)

A more detailed analysis was performed by breaking out the months in care by 6-month intervals and comparing that to the permanency goal. The pattern, seen above, continued to be significantly different. The PCWCP group had only 1 child in the return to parent goal group after 30 months in care; the non-PCWCP continued to have 9 children in the return to parent group after 30 months in care. **Thirty percent of children in the PCWCP group had goals of adoption while only 15.5% had a similar goal in the non-PCWCP group.**

Well-Being

There were no differences in the cases seen by PCWCP vs. non-PCWCP on the basis of child gender, type of care, the presence of any identified or diagnosed need (medical, physical, educational, emotional, or developmental), if in school there were no differences in the number of children with IEPs.   There were no differences in the frequency of physical or dental examinations.

There were significant differences (p = < .05) between the status (PCWCP vs. non-PCWCP) in the following:

Measure	PCWCP group	Non-PCWCP group
Age – average	6.76	9.48
Months in care – average	20.67	47.00
Length of time in this home	17.29	38.67
Number of prior placements	1.55	3.40

Children in this cohort who had non-PCWCP case managers tended to be significantly older, with a longer stay in care overall and in the current foster home, and with more moves in care.

There were significant differences in the satisfaction with visits made to these foster children with more satisfaction with visits by PCWCP case managers. These are displayed in the following table.

Measure	Status	Means	F value	Significance
Satisfaction with the schedule of visits by the DCBS worker to the specific child	PCWCP	2.90*	6.71	.011
	Non-PCWCP	2.46*		

Note. Rated on a 4-point scale with higher scores equal to higher satisfaction.

Although not statistically significant, PCWCP graduates on average visited the child in the home in the past 1.3 months compared to the 1.6 months of the non-PCWCP group. **There was a difference in the pattern of visits over time. Only children who were in care for 6 or more months were included in this analysis. The differences were statistically significant, X^2 (5, 75) = 14.45, p = .013, showing more regular visitation by PCWCP graduates.** The results are displayed here:

Status	<=1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	6 months
PCWCP	30 (78.9%)	8 (21.1%)			
Non-PCWCP	28 (75.5%)	1 (2.7%)	4 (10.8%)	2 (5.4%)	2 (5.4%)

Because of the differences in the age and length of placement for children in this cohort, a correlation matrix was generated to determine the relationship of time and placement variables with visits to the child variables. There were no significant relationships found between visits and time variables, suggesting that the time in care, child's age, or number of placements made little difference in satisfaction with visits or regularity of visits to children. Thus, the differences seen here are more likely attributable to the PCWCP status groups, rather than the child's characteristics. There was a very strong inverse relationship (r = -.57) between frequency of visits and satisfaction with visits; longer time between visits was associated with less satisfaction with visits.

Case Work Quality.

There were no differences based on status (PCWCP vs. non-PCWCP) on the number of referrals that were not 'past due' (50% and 49% respectively). There was a significant difference between the numbers of days a case was 'past due' between status groups.

- **On average, the PCWCP cases that were past due were 92.4 days past due and the non-PCWCP group past due cases were 109.1 days past due, $F (1, 272) = 4.34, p = .038$.**

Because many of these case managers were new to the agency, it was reasoned that they might have been assigned existing referrals that were long past due (there was outlying data in both groups up to 499 days past due). To examine this, cases that were past due between 45 and 90 days were selected to represent the cases likely to be primarily managed by these case managers; the results were compared by status. The differences in the number of days of past dues were statistically significant for status.

- **The PCWCP group averaged 60.85 days past due compared to the 66.29 days of the non-PCWCP group, $F (1, 161) = 8.23, p = .005$.**

Limitations

- New workers may have been assigned cases from workers who left the agency.
- All case managers under study are new to the agency.
- Other workers and factors influence the case; these are outside the control of the case manager and are not reflected in this data.
- Because many efforts to involve community partners are not entered into these reports, it is not possible to determine if the case manager provided comprehensive family services and other referrals and linkages.
- Problems with data integrity are well known with TWIST. However, field staff regularly use these reports in worker evaluation; consequently they tend to be more accurate. Most of the data presented here is used to monitor the agency performance by the federal government; the data is salient if not entirely accurate.
- Only about half of the PCWCP graduates were identified in the database. It is not possible to know which workers had left the agency, changed their names, or work in an area not reflected in these management reports. However, the number of PCWCP graduates identified in these data sets is roughly consistent with the number of graduates still on the job as reported by the University of Louisville.
- The data were for a three-month point-in-time period without reflecting long-term outcomes in a case.
- Longitudinal analysis of cases would improve understanding of PCWCP performance; such a study is proposed as a follow-up to the Kentucky Foster Care Census.

Results Highlights: The PCWCP graduates:

- Were significantly more likely to accept a case as an investigation rather than as a FINSA. This is hard to interpret. It could be that (as is shown in the literature) that they are likely to error on the side of caution. Or, they may be better at risk assessment (although the numbers are the same). They could be more sensitive to subtle risk findings or conversely too eager to conduct investigations. There could be multiple explanations for this finding.
- Tended to intervene more aggressively in cases. They investigated more cases, substantiated more cases, and provided more services. (Increased use of safety processes – the outcomes are not really evident here).
- Were significantly more likely to use practices consistent with the rating of risk in the cases. They unsubstantiated more low risk cases, substantiated more moderate risk cases, and continued more cases at high risk. (Safety interventions consistent with risk assessment).
- Assigned more children with a permanency goal of adoption and less children with a goal of return to parent after 12 months in care. (Improved permanency goals).
- Placed significantly more children with relatives, fewer children in PCCs, more in adoptive home, and fewer in emergency shelter placements. (Use of less restrictive placements).
- Visited the children in out of home care more regularly. (Attention to child well being and quality casework).
- Were rated by foster parents as providing more satisfactory visits to the children in out-of-home care. (Attention to child well being, support of foster parent, quality case work)
- Completed past due referrals in a significantly shorter period of time. (Evidence of higher quality casework).
- Established a permanency goal more often than the non-PCWCP group. (Evidence of higher quality casework).