



The Prevalence of Children with Disabilities in the Child Welfare System: An Analysis of State Administrative Data

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Overview

- Overview of the research: Incidence of children with disabilities in the child welfare system
- Study methods
- Preliminary findings
- Areas for future research



Challenges in determining **prevalence of maltreatment** of children with disabilities

- No Federal Reporting Requirements
- Uneven State Reporting Requirements
- No Standard Definition of “Disability”
 - Administrative Data has **serious limitations** for determining prevalence



Prevalence of Disability

- Data from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) 2006
 - **6.1%** of children in Minnesota ages 5-15 has a disability
 - **6.8%** of youth in Minnesota age 16-20 has a disability



Prevalence of children with disabilities who experience maltreatment

- Two Main Studies
 - 1988 NIS-2 National Study
 - Prevalence of children with disabilities in the child welfare system
 - Omaha Population Studies
 - Prevalence of maltreatment of children with disabilities

National Survey – NIS-2, 1988

- Children with disabilities were **1.7** times more likely to be maltreated than children w/o disabilities
 - (Crosse *et al.*, 1993)
 - Children with disabilities – 35.5 per 1000
 - Children w/o disabilities – 21.3 per 1000
 - Nationally representative sample of 35 CPS Agencies
 - Recording substantiated CPS investigations
 - Disability = worker assessment

Omaha Population Studies

- 1) Survey of maltreated children found **64%** of maltreated children had a disability, while **32%** of non-maltreated children had a disability
 - Merging hospital records with social service records, law enforcement – 1982-1992
 - Sullivan, 1997
- 2) Children with disabilities **3.4 times more likely** to be maltreated than those without disabilities
 - Merging school records, social service, law enforcement – 1994-1995
 - Sullivan & Knutson, 2000

Demographic characteristics of children with disabilities experiencing maltreatment

- **Gender:** Crosse et al. (1992) and Johnson-Reid et al. (2004) found that males with disabilities were more likely to experience maltreatment, while Sullivan & Knutson (2000) found no gender differences.
- **Age:** Sullivan & Knutson (2000) found that children with disabilities were more likely to experience maltreatment at earlier ages than children without disabilities, while Crosse et al (1992) found that children with disabilities experiencing maltreatment were more likely to be older than four.
- **Race:** Crosse et al (1992) found that children with disabilities were more likely to be white, while Johnson-Reid et al (2004) found that non-white children had an increased likelihood of special education entry.



Children with Disabilities in Out of Home Placement

- Nearly 50% of children/youth in foster care receive special education services (not including youth with DD) (Chapin Hall, 2005)
- 80% of children/youth in foster care have behavioral emotional or development conditions (CWLA, 2005)
- 30-40% of children/youth in foster care have chronic medical conditions (GAO, 2004)



Overview of OUR Study

- To determine the prevalence and characteristics of children with disabilities within the child welfare system using administrative data
- To compare the characteristics of children with disabilities with those of children without disabilities, focusing particularly on ethnicity, gender, rural/urban location, and **out-of-home placement rates**.

Methods-Sample

- Minnesota's Social Service Information System (SSIS) database
- The University of Minnesota – has access through cooperative arrangement through **MINN-LINK**.
- This study uses all SSIS child protection records for children with substantiated maltreatment between January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005.
 - Final sample that we used for our study had 6270 children ages 0-18 who had active child welfare cases through a county child protection agency in Minnesota during 2005.

Methods- Variables

- Children were classified as having a disability or not having a disability if they had at least one of the 23 disability codes related to children present in the SSIS database.
- Several of the codes were collapsed into a single category. For example, children could have chemical dependency codes that indicated specifically alcohol or drug abuse; these were collapsed into a single “chemical dependency” code.
- Children who had been coded with multiple disability codes were recoded one of two ways.
 - If the codes were codes that would have otherwise been collapsed, than they were recoded into the “new” code for those disabilities.
 - Children with multiple, different disability codes (ie: visual impairment and emotional disturbance), were recoded into a new category of multiple disabilities
- Other variables included: under/over age five, race and ethnicity, metro or non-metro residence, and out of home placement.



Findings...

- There are Preliminary Findings

	Children with disabilities		Children without disabilities		All Children w/ sub. maltreatment	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
GENDER						
Female	611	44.2%	2583	52.9%	3194	50.9%
Male	772	55.8%	2304	47.1%	3076	49.1%
RACE						
White	882	63.8%	2784	57.0%	3666	58.5%
African American	313	22.6%	1257	25.7%	1570	25.0%
Native American	124	9.0%	479	9.8%	603	9.6%
Asian	16	1.1%	132	2.7%	148	2.4%
Unable to determine	48	3.5%	235	4.8%	283	4.5%
METRO/OUTSTATE						
Urban	633	45.8%	2471	50.6%	3104	49.5%
Rural	750	54.2%	2416	49.4%	3166	50.5%
OVERALL	1383	22.1%	4887	77.9%	6270	100%
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Type of Disability Diagnosis among children with substantiated maltreatment	All children with disabilities (n =1383)	Children with disabilities over age 5 (n=1112)
Emotional Disturbance	518 (37.5%)	473 (42.5%)
Multiple Disabilities	131 (9.5%)	127 (11.4%)
Intellectual or Developmental Disability	148 (10.5%)	101 (9.1%)
Substance Use/Abuse	71 (5.1%)	67 (6.0%)
Specific Learning Disabilities	62 (4.5%)	51 (4.6%)
Speech Impairment	37 (2.7%)	21 (1.9%)
Physical Disability	29 (2.1%)	20 (1.8%)
Hearing Impairment	10 (0.2%)	7 (0.6%)
Adult Mental Illness	8 (0.6%)	6 (0.5%)
Visual Impairment	2 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)
Currently Being Evaluated	97 (7.0%)	60 (5.4%)
Other	136 (9.8%)	101 (9.1%)
Unknown	134 (9.7%)	76 (6.8%)

Disability Diagnosis

- Females were about 38% more likely to NOT have a disability diagnosis than males
 - (O.R. = .616, SE = .072, $p < .001$)
- Whites with substantiated maltreatment cases were 1.35 times more likely to have a disability diagnosis in their records than non-whites
 - (O.R. = 1.35, SE = .074, $p < .001$)
- Children living outside the metropolitan region were about 24% more likely to have a disability diagnosis than those living in the seven county metro region
 - (O.R. = .765, SE = .079, $p < .001$).

Out of Home Placement

	Out of Home Placement		
	Yes	No	Odds Ratio
Disability Status			
Disability Label	888 (62.2%)	495 (35.8%)	2.61*
No Disability Label	2390 (48.9%)	2497 (51.1%)	

**p<.01, S.E.=.074, Gender, Race & Rural/Urban not significant in model*

Our Preliminary Thoughts on Implications

- Preparation for professionals and foster care providers should include mandatory training on disability-related issues.
- There is a need for specific, targeted efforts to recruit foster care providers with disability expertise.
- Parenting classes should include a focus on children with disabilities so that parents of these children are able to access appropriate supports.
- Child welfare providers should collaborate with disability organizations (i.e: PACER, ARC, Centers for Independent Living) to build strong connections between service providers.



In Summary

- Preliminary Findings indicate that
 - More than a quarter of children over age 5 with substantiated maltreatment in Minnesota have a disability
 - Children with disabilities with substantiated maltreatment are most likely to have an emotional disability
 - Children who are white, male and living in rural areas were more likely to be identified as having a disability
 - Children with disabilities are more likely to be in out of home placement than children without disabilities



Discussion questions

1. How do YOU interpret the findings?

- ◆ Why do you think children with disabilities are more likely to be in out of home placement?
- ◆ Why do you suppose that children with disabilities are most likely to be labeled as having an “emotional disability”?
- ◆ Why do you think that male children, rural children, and white children are more likely to have a disability label among children with substantiated maltreatment in Minnesota?

2. What do YOU think the implications are for service providers?

- ◆ Child Welfare Services
- ◆ Disability Services
- ◆ Others



Areas for Future Research

- Why are children with disabilities more likely to be in out of home placement than their non-disabled peers? Are children with disabilities at higher risk for more severe abuse, leading to out-of-home placement? Or are they more likely to be removed from their homes due to their disability diagnosis in and of itself, or because their families' lack the supports necessary to care for them?
- How do children with different types of disabilities fare in the child welfare system? How does the type of disability impact a child's likelihood to be placed in out-of-home placement?
- What are the best practices in the field in working with children and youth with disabilities in the child welfare system? How can current standards of care be improved to better serve this population?