

Public Abstract

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Title: Analysis of Alternative Care Placement Changes as Provided by Case Managers

National concern for children residing in foster or alternative care, who experience multiple caretakers, has grown since the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. Efforts to improve stability in alternative care placements requires more knowledge about the reasons children experience multiple placements. This exploratory study systematically identified and analyzed a comprehensive list of 53 primary reasons children experienced alternative care placement changes in Missouri's child welfare system. Case managers employed by Missouri's public child welfare agency and by private agencies contracted to provide case management services completed web-based surveys on 844 changes of placements that occurred in May and June of 2007. In addition to identifying primary placement reasons, case managers reported whether each placement move was in the child's written case plan for permanency and if the move was in the child's best interest. Primary placement changes that occurred for system or policy related reasons made up 38.7% of all moves. Foster or adoptive family reasons were identified for 21.4% of the total moves. Child related reasons were identified for 35.2% of all moves; and biological family reasons were identified for 4.8% of placement changes. Chi-square tests for association found that the geographical region of case management and the age of the children involved were statistically, significantly related to the reasons placement changes occur. Gender and race of the children involved in the placement changes were not found to be related to placement reasons.