

SoC23

Summit on Children 2023



PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Foster Care Placement Stability

March 16, 2023

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Placement Stability

*Safety and Resilience in and after
Foster Care*



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POLL

What is your role in supporting children and families?

- a) Foster Parent
- b) Bio/Adoptive/ Legal Parent
- c) GAL
- d) Parent Attorney
- e) Delinquency Attorney
- f) CASA
- g) Other Advocate



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Placement Disruption

For our purposes, placement moves in foster care, post removal from family of origin.

- Does not include:
 - Respite placements,
 - Runaway episodes,
 - Placements after 18 years old.



Capacity Building Center for States. (2019). *CFSR round 3 statewide data indicator series: Placement stability*. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



3

POLL

Have you represented / advocated for a child though placement disruption?

- Yes/No



4

Child Welfare

- According to the Casey Family National Foster Care Alumni Study, 90 percent of foster youth alumni reported a history of abuse and/or neglect, and 21 percent reported abuse and/or neglect that took place during out-of-home placement (Salazar, Keller, Gowen, & Courtney, 2013).



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Agenda

AGENDA

- Placement instability in foster care: why it matters
- Predictors (i.e. behavior, age, race, disability)
- Placement instability rates by location and child characteristics
- Outcomes
- Initiatives
- Advocacy tips to support placement stability in foster care



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Placement Stability in Foster Care

Across a child's life, **placement stability** plays a **foundational role** in the path to **safety and resilience**. For children and youth in foster care, the importance of stability is not well understood, at a cost to vulnerable young people.

First Person: Michelle Vorhees, Kansas City Star

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Placement Instability in Foster Care



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RISK



**Impaired Cognitive Ability
and Academic
Achievement**



**Diminished Language
Development**



Memory Difficulties



**Increased Likelihood for
Mental Health Diagnoses**



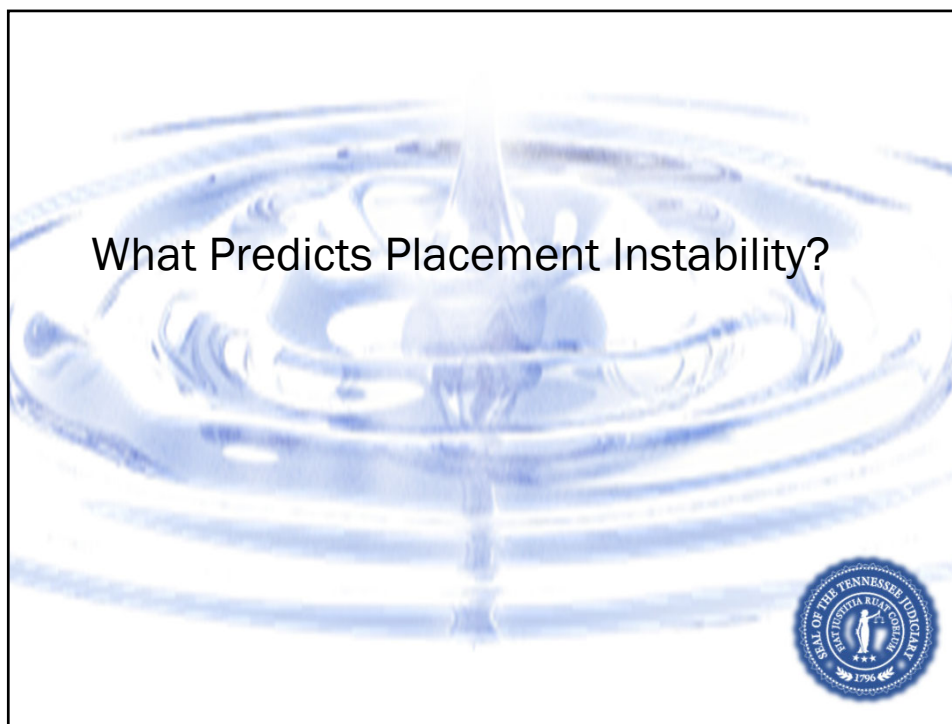
Poor Social Skills

(Bartlett & Rushovich, 2018; Forkey et al., 2016;
Felliti et al., 1998; McLaughlin, 2012)

[https://developingchild.harvard.edu/
guide/a-guide-to-toxic-stress/](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/a-guide-to-toxic-stress/)



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What Predicts Placement Instability?

- The strongest association with instability of foster care placements was found for behavioral problems of the child, and in particular **externalizing problems** (Konijn et al., 2019; meta-analysis).
- Child **externalizing problems** had the strongest association with the number of lifetime placements and a strong predictor of the duration of first placement (Vreeland et al., 2022).

(See resource folder)



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What Predicts Placement Instability?

- Other predictors across studies:
 - **Non-kinship foster care** (highest risk for younger children),
 - **Low quality of foster parenting,**
 - **Older age at initial placement** (highest risk for children from ethnic majorities),
 - **Placement without siblings,**
 - **History of maltreatment** (highest risk for children from ethnic minority samples). (Konijn et al., 2019; meta-analysis).

(See resource folder)



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What Predicts Placement Instability?

- **School difficulties** was also significantly associated with both **number** of lifetime placements and **length** of first placement.
- Interaction analyses of age and externalizing problems suggest that **older children have significantly shorter first placements** when exhibiting **high levels of externalizing problem behaviors** compared to young children. (Vreeland et al., 2022).

(See resource folder)



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Race as a Predictor of Instability

In a 5500 child sample from a national population of CPS involved children between 1999-2002, compared to white children, **African American children had an increased risk for placement instability, even when controlling for other factors.**

- Placement in a non-kinship home, older age at entry and disruptive behavior each increased the risk of instability among African American children, but not white children. Foster, Hillemeir, and Bei (2011)

Black or Hispanic race or ethnicity were associated with increased risk of instability, **“and associations between sibling separation and instability were stronger for Black children,** implying enhanced efforts to maintain sibling groups maybe especially beneficial for Black children.” (Font and Kim 2021)

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Disability as a Predictor of Instability

- An analysis of more than 680,000 children using AFCARS data demonstrates that **children in care with disability have significantly more disruptions and longer stays in foster care.** While risk and protective factors affect all foster children similarly, they have significantly greater effect on foster children with disabilities. (Platt & Gerhardt, 2022).
- Texas Cohort Study: **Mental health problems, cognitive disability, behavior problems are each significantly correlated with placement moves,** and each is more prevalent in non-relative foster care settings than in kin placement. (Font and Sattler, 2018).

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Other Contributors from the Field

- Systems factors/ policy mandates (James, 2004)
- Caseworker Turnover (Ryan et al., 2006, Pardeck, 1984)



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Placement Instability Data



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Data Indicators



- The Children's Bureau conducts Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) in partnership with child welfare systems in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- CFSRs enable the Children's Bureau to assess conformity with federal child welfare requirements, determine the experiences of children and families receiving state child welfare services, and help states identify agency and program strengths and areas for improvement.

Per Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) And The Capacity Building Center for States. (2019). *CFSR round 3 statewide data indicator series: Placement stability*. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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CWO Report: Placement Instability Children/Youth in Care

Of all children served in foster care during the year who had been in care, what percentage had **three or more placement settings**?

Placement stability measure

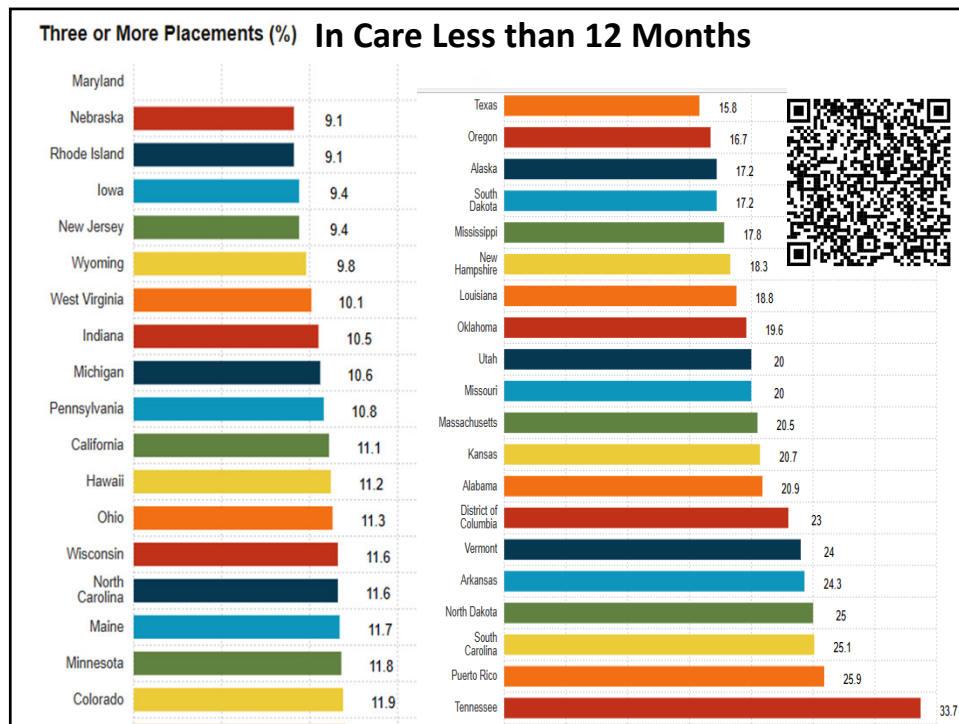
- (a) **Less than 12 months** from the time of latest removal from home
- (b) **At least 12 months but less than 24 months**
- (c) **More than 24 months**

Children in care each federal fiscal year, from Oct 1 2019-Sept 30 2020

<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/methodology>



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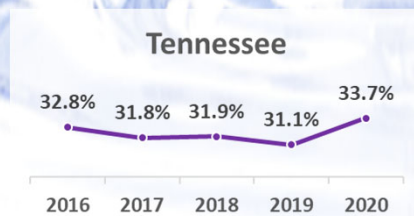


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CWO Report: Placement Instability In Care Less Than 12 Months

Children with 3 or more placements

National Performance: 15.3%



CWO Report By State

<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/byState>



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CWO Report: Placement Instability In Care 12 – 24 Months

Children with 3 or more placements

National Performance: 36.7%



CWO Report By State

<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/byState>



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CWO Report: Placement Instability In Care More Than 24 Months

Children with 3 or more placements

National Performance: 59.4%

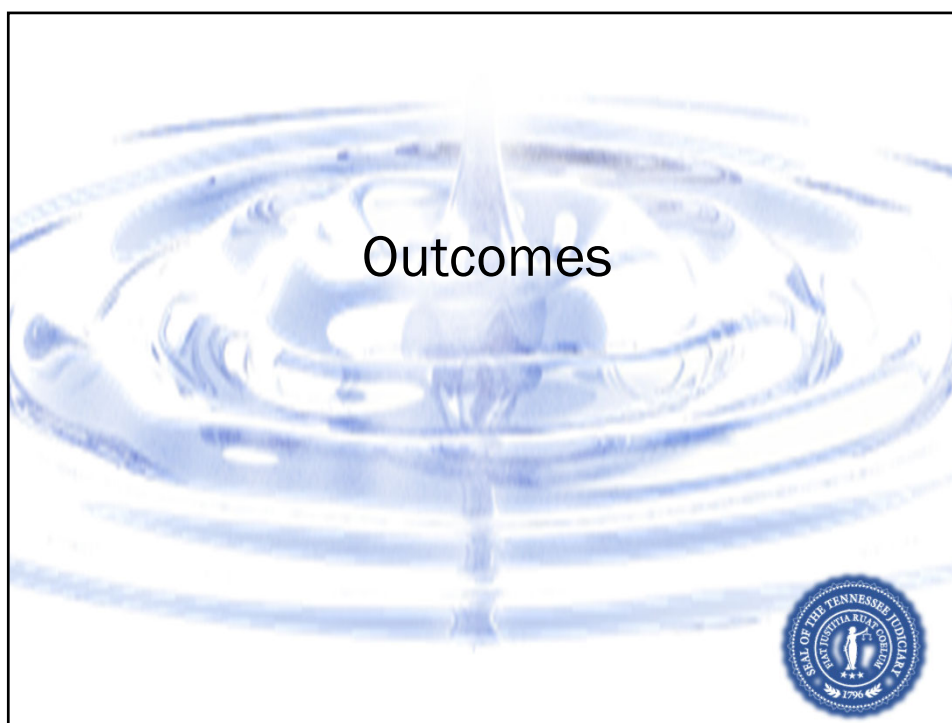


CWO Report By State

<https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/byState>



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Outcomes: Problem Behavior

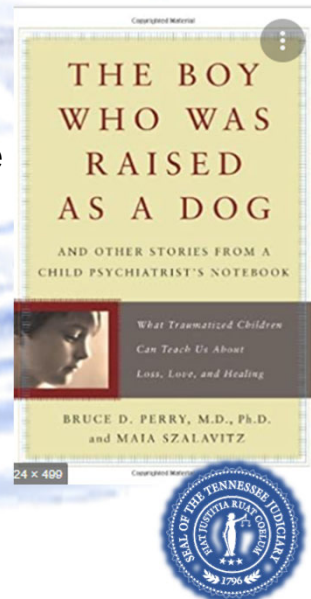
Behavior problems

- Placement instability has a significant impact on behavioral well-being. Children judged to be “low risk” at child welfare entry experienced **a 63% increase in behavior problems due to instability alone.**
- 64% of children judged to be “high risk” at child welfare entry experienced behavior problems in the midst of placement instability, versus 47% of similarly judged peers who experienced stability (Rubin O’Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007).
- Even for children who do not exhibit behavior problems at entry, an **increase in number of placements predicts an increase in behavior problems** (Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000).

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Outcomes: Problem Behavior

“So I decided to run away, I decided to do bad things so that I would change foster families. You know, because I was smart: I knew that if I caused trouble, my mom would come for me. I knew that if I ran away, well, I was running away from my problems, in a way. ... You know, when I wasn't feeling well, I did what I had to to feel better, I did things to make sure that they had to change my foster family. So it was all planned, you might say.” -Annabelle Hebert, Lanctot, and Turcotte (2016).



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Outcomes: Delinquency

- Placement instability **increases the risk of delinquency** for males in foster care (not for females) (Ryan and Testa, 2005).
- Children predicting a change in placement (perceived instability) **were significantly more likely to experience delinquency petitions** as compared with those predicting no change in foster placement (Ryan, Testa and Zhai, 2008).



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Outcomes: School Achievement

School Achievement: Placement changes have a greater negative effect on academic growth than school moves do, even when school curriculum differs.

But the consequences on achievement are most significant when these disruptions co-occur:

- Placement disruption
 - Average loss of 2.5 percentile points in reading
- Co-occurring placement and school disruption:
 - 3.7 percentile points in reading

Stability of placement matters:

If a child stays in a foster placement at least four and a half months will make up this loss in percentile point loss to placement move (2.5). If he didn't change schools with that move, the damage to his achievement can be minimized (Clemmons, Klopfenstein, Lalonde and Tis, 2018).



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Initiatives


- Build Relationships
- Strengthen Core Skills
- Reduce Sources of Stress





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8 Advocacy Tips to Support Placement Stability in Foster Care


 Placement with kin has proved more stable and safe for many children and youth in care. **Advocate for vigorous family search efforts and for kin placement if a safe option is available.**¹


 Kin caregivers may struggle with the costs of providing for the children in their care. Depending on the caregiving arrangement there may be financial supports available. Advocate for foster care financial benefits for kin.²


 Research demonstrates that children placed with siblings are more stable than those that aren't, on average.³ Advocate that siblings stay together unless sibling placement is not in the child's best interest, according to the Foster Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008⁴


 Ask: Is the agency providing support and services that support healthy reunification? Does the proposed foster parent plan align with 5th child's permanency goal? Engage with the child's team and advocate for reasonable efforts.⁵

 Research demonstrates that children's behavior is the most significant cause of placement disruption.⁶ Advocate for evidenced-based mental health services and treatment foster care, if appropriate, especially in the face of repeated disruption.

 Maintain regular contact with the child/client and the caregivers. Placement breakdowns can occur because the caregiver doesn't know where to communicate their needs.⁷ In addition, providing caregivers voice in meetings and court appearances improves their sense of efficacy and may improve child welfare outcomes.⁸

 The Every Student Succeeds Act requires school stability for students in foster care when that in their best interest. Success at school supports placement stability. Ask for a Best Interest Determination from the child's school and attend the meeting.⁹

 Youth in care need more than school stability; they need connection to peers & adults,¹⁰ a chance to catch up on their academics,¹¹ and to demonstrate skills in extracurriculars.¹² Make sure schools support sustained achievement. Ask for special education support (if applicable) and general education support like "Check and Connect"¹³ if available. Ask about **strength** based activities after school and how your student might benefit.



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Initiatives

Kin:

- Metanalysis suggest that children in **kinship foster care** experience better behavioral development, mental health functioning, and placement stability than do children in non-kinship foster care (Winokur et al. 2014).
- **Placement with siblings**, especially in a kinship home (Jones, 2016; Akin, 2011).
- See also: Jones & Wells (2008); Konijn et al. (2019).



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Promising Practices

- Subsidies for guardians (Berry & Barth, 1990; Testa, 2006; See also: Jones & Wells, 2008)
- Foster parent training and support (Jones and Wells, 2008)
- Caseworkers with graduate level training (Ryan et al., 2008)
- There is a positive association between use of childcare assistance and stability of young children's foster care placements. (Meloy & Phillips, 2012).



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Initiatives

Multidimensional Treatment and Early Intervention Foster Care

High need populations (Juvenile Justice, youth with mental health needs, as well as high need adolescents, preschoolers)

- Therapeutic intervention that includes close supervision, behavior support intervention, mentoring, reduced exposure to peers with similar behaviors, parent training, respite.
- Preschoolers with a history of placement instability: Benefits exceed cost (Stability- Fisher et al, 2009; Cost-Lynch et al., 2014).

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Initiative in Nashville, Tennessee

In a large Tennessee Cohort, school difficulties independently predicted placement instability.

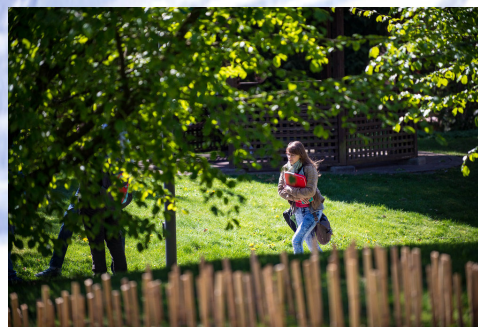
- Researchers theorized that when a child is disruptive at school, foster parents may be contacted or the child may be suspended, which may lead to conflict and chaos in the family.
- In the Tennessee study, **school difficulties remained a significant predictor of placement disruptions even after controlling for child externalizing problems.** (Vreeland et al., 2022)
- Davidson County teens experience only of the highest placement stability rates in our state, and have one of the lowest graduation rates.

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Initiatives

Project Wrap Around

Research has shown that a positive school climate is protective for children living in difficult family situations and structures (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2014).



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Relationship and Reduced Stress



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