

FFTA



Foster Family-based Treatment Association

Annotations of Research in Treatment Foster Care

Citation

Chamberlain, P., Leve, L. D., & DeGarmo, D. S. (2007). Multidimensional treatment foster care for girls in the juvenile justice system: 2-year follow-up of a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 75*(1), 187–193.

Keywords

Multidimensional treatment foster care

Research Questions

Does treatment using multidimensional treatment foster care have better outcomes than typical group care 2 years after intervention?

Method

Subjects: The study involved 81 adolescent females, ages 13–17, referred by judges in Oregon's juvenile courts for out-of-home placement because of delinquency.

Design: This was a controlled, randomly assigned clinical trial with blind assignment to experimental and alternative treatment groups.

Materials/Measures: Materials and measures used in the study included an off-the-shelf measure of self-reported delinquency (Elliott General Delinquency Scale), juvenile justice records, and a composite measure of delinquency developed by the authors specifically for the study.

Procedures: The study used blind random assignment from a pool of participants referred by judges in Oregon juvenile courts. Outcome data were collected at baseline, discharge, and 1- and 2-year follow-ups. Specially trained foster parents provided the experimental Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care interventions, which included close monitoring by program staff.

Results/Findings

As expected, the results of the experiment showed that girls receiving Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care were less likely to have repeated delinquency episodes than were the girls receiving the group care alternative. These effects persisted at the 1- and 2-year follow-up analyses. Girls receiving Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care spent, on average, over 100 fewer days in detention than did the control group.

Limitations

This was a strong, well-controlled study. The primary limitation is that the sample size ($n = 81$) was relatively small. Another limitation is that the study could not determine whether gender-

specific aspects of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care were in effect because the subjects were all female.

Application to Practice

This study clearly demonstrates the robust effects of using well-trained foster parents, in community settings, with well-developed interventions, on the reduction of delinquency in adolescent females.

Application to Policy

The Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) model has received national attention as an empirically based model for the treatment of chronic juvenile offenders. The success of this model has already led the State of New Jersey to implement bonus incentives for agencies that are certified in the MTFC model.

The impact on public policy could eventually lead to a one-size-fits-all approach whereby funding may be limited to agencies that follow specific models such as MTFC. However, MTFC and other intervention models are not appropriate for every type of population served in out-of-home care.

Finally, the trend in many states has been to create outcome based contracting standards to increase outcome measures for services provided. As empirically based models such as MTFC continue to take the spotlight, they could easily be used in the formulation of public policy.

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