

Title: Exploration of Child Welfare Case Typologies, Associated Worker Activities and Case Outcomes

Currently available electronic and statistical methods have made it possible to think about empirically deriving descriptions of child, family and case characteristics that more accurately represent cases as they are seen by the caseworker. By better understanding these typologies, it is possible to observe differential outcomes by type, better evaluate targeted interventions and develop more specific interventions. The outcomes of interest in this study are reunification from, and re-entry into, out-of-home care (or “foster care”). Using administrative data, the potential for developing a case typology is being determined through an exploratory analysis of the Adoption and Foster Care Administrative Reporting System (AFCARS) database from 11 randomly selected states. Three construct validation studies will be conducted including comparison of a typology developed from Minnesota’s AFCARS data with one developed independently using the state’s more detailed Social Service Information System (SSIS). Once the typologies are established, analyses will be conducted to determine if the identified typologies are associated with reunification and re-entry outcomes. In order to better understand the interaction between outcomes, worker case activities, and type of case; case records will be read and workers interviewed about selected cases in several Minnesota counties. The research questions are: (1) can a child welfare case typology can be identified through available databases, (2) are specific case types associated with differential outcomes; and (3) how do child, family, case and service characteristics interact to impact outcomes by case type?