FOSTER CARE RE-ENTRY IN EL DORADO COUNTY: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Sheryce M. Allendorf
B.A., Sonoma State University, 2000

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2010
Student: Sheryce M. Allendorf

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the Project.

_______________________
Teiahsha Bankhead, PhD, LCSW
Graduate Coordinator

Date

Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

FOSTER CARE RE-ENTRY IN EL DORADO COUNTY: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

by

Sheryce M. Allendorf

El Dorado County’s child welfare agency is facing the challenge of decreasing the rate in which children re-enter the foster care system, to meet the federal standard of 9.9% or less. As a rural community a myriad of factors contribute to the current rate of foster care re-entry at 20.4%, including accessibility of community resources, adequacy of resources, and isolation. The number of placements while in foster care was not a contributing factor to a child re-entering foster care. A questionnaire survey was administered to fifteen professionals working with child welfare clients, in various capacities. Study findings affirm that substance abuse among parents is a key barrier in ones’ ability to parent a child. Findings further affirm that children of parents with social and economic supports are less likely to re-enter the foster care system. A systemic change, as well as providing adequate substance abuse treatment services, and developing a home based service modality, that will allow continued treatment in a families’ native environment, will reduce the rate of children re-entering foster care in El Dorado County.

_______________________
Committee Chair
Dr. Francis Yuen, DSW

_______________________
Date

iv
DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to the many special people who have provided me with both strength and support throughout my pursuit of a Master’s in Social Work degree: My family, who has provided years of support with their “go get ‘em” attitude, my co-workers, who have listened to my many hours of frustration through this journey, and my friends who have gone neglected throughout this process. Without you, I would not be the person I am today.

-Sheryce
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Francis Yuen for his continual support, guidance, and patience throughout the development, data collection, and editing of my thesis. I appreciate the many hours he has dedicated to helping me through this journey, and reminding me “done is good.”
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Dedication..................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgments......................................................................................................... vi
List of Tables.................................................................................................................. ix

Chapter
1. THE ISSUE................................................................................................................. 1
   Introduction................................................................................................................. 1
   Statement of Research Problem ............................................................................... 3
   Purpose of Study....................................................................................................... 3
   Theoretical Framework.............................................................................................. 4
   Definition of Terms.................................................................................................... 6
   Assumptions............................................................................................................... 8
   Justification............................................................................................................... 9
   Limitations............................................................................................................... 9

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE........................................................................................... 11
   History of Child Welfare........................................................................................... 11
   Rates of Foster Care Re-entry.................................................................................. 14
   Reasons for Re-entry............................................................................................... 17
   Gap in Knowledge...................................................................................................... 28

3. METHODS.................................................................................................................... 30
   Introduction................................................................................................................. 30
   Research Question..................................................................................................... 30
   Study Design and Study Population......................................................................... 30
   Protection of Human Subjects.................................................................................. 32
   Data Gathering and Analysis Procedure................................................................... 33
   Limitations of Study.................................................................................................. 34

4. STUDY FINDINGS ....................................................................................................... 35
   Introduction................................................................................................................. 35
Presentation of Data ................................................................. 35
Summary of Findings and Discussion ..................................... 42
Emerging Findings .................................................................. 43
5. SUMMARY ........................................................................... 47
Conclusion ............................................................................. 47
Recommendations ................................................................. 50
Implications for Social Work Practice .................................... 53
Evaluation ............................................................................... 55
APPENDICES ........................................................................... 56
Appendix A. Consent to Participate in Research ...................... 57
Appendix B. Questionnaire and Interview Guide .................. 59
References .............................................................................. 63
LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1: Experience working with Families who Re-enter Foster Care........... 36
2. Table 2: Substance Abuse Affecting Re-entry........................................... 37
3. Table 3: Services Reducing Re-entry Rates and Promoting Reunification...... 41
Chapter 1

THE ISSUE

Introduction

As a social worker, working with families within the child welfare system, the researcher has observed children be removed from the family home for a myriad of reasons, including, but not limited to, substance abuse by one or both parents, physical abuse, mental health problems of the parents, and domestic violence. Once a child is removed from their parent or guardian, the child is placed into foster care, which includes relative, non-relative, or group home placement, while the child welfare system works with the family in an effort to ameliorate the problems that led to intervention by the child welfare system.

During the time in which Family Reunification Services are being provided to the family, counties, through state and federal funds, pay for the placement of the child, which ranges from three hundred dollars a month to well over three thousand dollars a month, depending on the type of foster care placement in which the child is placed. Additionally, each county child welfare agency is responsible for providing reasonable services, which may include counseling and mental health services, residential or outpatient substance abuse treatment, and anger management courses. County child welfare agencies are responsible for payment of these services if a family’s medical insurance is unable to cover such treatment, which often costs counties thousands of dollars a month in service related expenses.
By the time a child is reunified with their parent or guardian, tens of thousands of dollars have been spent by the county child welfare agency, in providing foster care placement and services to the family to alleviate the issues that brought the family to child welfare’s attention. This is not including the cost to the court system, which includes the court’s time spent hearing and trying a child welfare case, as well as providing legal representation to all parties involved in the child welfare case.

With this being said, it ever so important to examine the factors that lead to a child re-entering the foster care system after being reunified with their parent or guardian. Not only is the examination of children re-entering foster care important for child welfare agencies fiscally, but more importantly because of the additional trauma caused to a child after being re-removed from their family home and the long-term effects this trauma may have on a young child.

According to Needell et al. (2009), the national goal for children re-entering foster care is 9.9% or less. In 2007, children in California were re-entering foster care at a rate of 11.6%, with ten California counties having over a 20% re-entry rate of children returning to foster care within a year of being reunified with their families (Needell et al., 2009). The majority of these counties are rural, which makes this researcher question whether child welfare clients in these counties have specific needs that are not being addressed through the child welfare system, leading to children re-entering foster care at a higher rate. El Dorado County’s child welfare system has attempted to address this issue through the 2006 and 2009 System Improvement Plan, developing internal
strategies to reduce child welfare re-entry rates within the county; however, to date these strategies have been unsuccessful at reducing the rate of children re-entering foster care.

Statement of the Research Problem

The inability of child welfare agencies being able to adequately address the specific needs of families within rural communities, prior to reunifying children with their parent or guardian, is associated with the increase in children re-entering the foster care system.

The difficult challenges of raising a family are everyday realities for many families who have been involved with the child welfare system. Many of these challenges are pervasive and specific to those families living in a rural community, more specifically El Dorado County. Several of these challenges include the lack of adequate support systems, isolation, lack of stable employment and housing, and the lack of availability of community resources. Although families within the child welfare system are provided with services such as parenting, counseling, and substance abuse treatment, child welfare agencies have not been successful at eliminating poverty, reducing isolation of families in rural communities, nor helping families obtain adequate support systems in which they can rely on in a time of need.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify the needs of families reunified through the child welfare system in El Dorado County, to reduce the rate of children re-entering foster care after being successfully reunified with their parent or guardian. The main purpose of this study is to explore and gain a better understanding of the unique factors that are
associated with families whose children re-enter foster care in El Dorado County. Based on this descriptive research, results can be further examined by El Dorado County, Child Protective Services, in order to further determine how to better meet the needs of families who will be reunifying with their children, and in turn reduce children’s re-entry into foster care, promote long term family stabilization, and reduce the trauma to children associated with removal from the family home. Secondary purposes include utilizing the identified needs of families in El Dorado County who have been reunified with their children, to work with El Dorado County, Child Protective Services, or other community based and private organizations, in developing and implementing specific, direct client services, based on the outcome of this study, to in turn, reduce the rate of children re-entering foster care in El Dorado County.

Theoretical Framework

The ecological perspective focuses on the family environment in context to the larger society (Baumrind, 1994). Through the ecological perspective the researcher not only examines the family dynamics, but also how the family interacts and relates to the larger systems of society. This includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem. Each of these systems are intertwined with one another, influencing the individual and family (Voydanoff, 1995). The ecological perspective provides a context to consider in families who have newly reunified with their children, in that the family is coming together as individuals, where the previously known and comfortable microsystem has changed, due to services provided through Family Reunification Services. Furthermore, the individual may experience changing dynamics within their
mesosystem, including employment, academia, health care providers, and influences of
continued monitoring by the child welfare system, community organizations, and the
court system, all affect how individuals within the family unit respond to one another and
their environment.

By utilizing the ecological perspective in working with families who have newly
reunified with their children, child welfare worker’s could assess the family in relation to
their environment, and work towards reducing any stressors that may emerge in their
multiple environments.

Another theoretical framework, which will be addressed in this research, is the
systems theory, which naturally integrates with the ecological perspective, in that this
theory recognizes how individuals function independent from one another, and how
individual’s functioning changes when interacting with a larger system, whether it be
family, employment, community, or society (Cox & Paley, 2003). In utilizing the systems
theory in relation to parents being reunified with their children, the researcher must
acknowledge the interdependence of the family unit, and that each individual’s problems
affect the actions and reactions of the family unit (McGoldrick, 2002). In working with
families in the child welfare system, one may see an emotional fusion between
individuals of a family unit. This fusion can make a family unit vulnerable to
dysfunction, in that the unit may be less inclined to accept input from their environmental
systems (McGoldrick, 2002). When stress levels increase in this type of family system,
the family may not have the capacity to handle to stressors, and maltreatment, and re-
entry into the foster care system is likely to occur.
Definitions of Terms

Child Maltreatment: An act or serious of acts of child abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or neglect, which includes physical, emotional, and medical neglect, as well as in adequate supervision, and exposure to violent environments, that results in harm, or threat of harm to a child (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Child Protective Services (CPS): County based organizations that provide specialized support, case management, and intervention services for abused and neglected children and their parent(s), or guardian(s).

Family Reunification Services: are to be provided or arranged for by county welfare department staff in order to reunite the child separated from his or her parent because of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Family reunification services shall be available without regard to income to families whose child has been adjudicated or is in the process of being adjudicated a dependent child of the court under the provisions of Section 300. Family reunification services shall include a plan for visitation of the child by his or her grandparents, where the visitation is in the best interests of the child and will serve to maintain and strengthen the family relationships of the child (California Juvenile Laws & Rules, 2009).

Foster Care: System enabling a child without parental support and protection to be placed with a person or family to be cared for, usually by local welfare services or by court order. The foster parent(s) do not have custody, nor is there an adoption, but they are expected to treat the foster child as they would their own in regard to food,
housing, clothing and education. Most foster parents are paid by the local government or a state agency. The child's parents may retain their parental rights, and the child may ultimately return home (U.S. Legal Definitions, 2009).

Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR): One of the four components of the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 (AB 636); a means of qualitative data analysis. PQCR’s consist of social workers within the agency and from other counties who examine a group of cases to thoroughly review how they were handled. The case reviews reflect the agency’s best practices, as well as practices that need the most improvement (CDSS, 2009).

Program Improvement Plan (PIP): The development and implementation of specific strategies to improve child welfare services and outcomes by states, when a state has not met the national standard of any of the outcome indicators, as set forth by the Administration of Children and Families.

Reasonable Services: Reasonable Services means those services provided by the county welfare agency or probation department to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child, or to resolve the issues that led to the child’s removal in order for the child to be returned home, or to finalize the permanent placement of the child. The reasonableness of services is judged according to the circumstances of each case. The standard of services is not whether the services provided were the best that might be provided in an ideal world, but whether the services were reasonable under the circumstances (California Juvenile Laws & Rules, 2009).
Re-entry: A re-entry occurs when a child enters foster care for a second or subsequent time. Re-entry occurs only when a child has been discharged from foster care and placed permanently back into the home of the parent or guardian. For the purposes of this study re-entry into foster care is described as a child re-entering foster care within twelve months of being discharged from foster care (CWLA, 2007).

System Improvement Plan: Individual county development and implementation of strategies to increase positive child welfare outcomes. These plans are developed and implemented through the state’s Program Improvement Plan, a county self assessment, and from the results of the Peer Quality Case Review.

Team Decision Making Model: TDM meetings are led by a skilled, immediately accessible, internal facilitator, who is not a case-carrying social worker or line supervisor. The goal is to involve birth families and community members, along with resource families, services providers and agency staff, in all case plan decisions, to ensure a network or support for the child and adults who care for them (Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.).

Assumptions

Services provided in El Dorado County cannot adequately meet the demands from child welfare families that have multiple interconnected problems. The researcher makes the assumption that families, who have an ongoing positive support system, are less likely to have children re-enter foster care. A functional, stable, support system provides families and their children with a safety net, providing emotional, mental, and physical
support to the family, reducing stressors, which often lead to a child re-entering foster care.

The assumption is also made that a child’s placement in foster care affects the likelihood of the child re-entering foster care. The number of placements during a child’s initial stay in foster care, as well as the type of placement, whether it be with a relative, non-relative extended family member, a licensed foster home, or group home, all contribute to the mental and emotional stability of a child.

_Justification_

With so many children re-entering foster care within the state of California, and more specifically El Dorado County, there is an increasing demand to assess and evaluate the needs of newly reunified families in order to develop and implement strategies that will yield successful reunification outcomes. This study will assist social workers in identifying the unique needs of newly reunified families in El Dorado County.

If the research findings confirm that parental substance abuse, lack of a stable support system, and placements of the child are all risk factors in re-entering foster care, then prevention, and transitional program should be developed to assist families who are newly reunified with their children, to ensure long term family stabilization. This study may further highlight the need for specialized programs in rural communities across the United States, to reduce the rate of children re-entering foster care.

_Limitations_

The population that was interviewed for this research study included social workers and social worker supervisors working with child welfare clients in El Dorado County.
County, people who work for community based organizations that service child welfare clients in El Dorado County, and attorneys who represent clients in child welfare proceedings in El Dorado County. Information collected, therefore only applies to El Dorado County, California.

Further, the researcher is merely exploring factors and common themes that lead to a child re-entering foster care within El Dorado County.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Child Welfare

Prior to 1874, when the case of Mary Ellen brought attention to battered children, there were no laws protecting children from abuse or neglect. At the time Mary Ellen was removed from her mother’s home, after being whipped, stabbed with scissors, and tied to a bed, it was the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (SPCA) that stepped in, and were able to remove Mary Ellen from her home on the grounds that the child was part of the animal kingdom (DiNitto, 2007). Mary Ellen’s mother was sentenced to a year in prison. One year after the case of Mary Ellen, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC) was added, after the New York Legislature authorized branches of this child welfare society to be established in each county of the state (New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [NYSPCC], n.d.).

It was not until 1909, when the federal government demonstrated concern for children’s welfare by holding the first White House Conference on Children (DiNitto, 2007). Seven years later, the federal government established the Children’s Bureau, which addressed child welfare issues, including health, child labor, delinquency, and orphans (DiNitto, 2007). However, it was not until 1935 when the Title V of the original Social Security Act, authorized federal funding for child welfare services (Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 2003), and instructed the Children’s Bureau to work with each state to create child welfare services (DiNitto, 2007).
In 1961, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) established a Foster Care program which provided funds for out of home care to children (DiNitto, 2007). Although child welfare services expanded under Title IV B of the Social Security Act, it was not until 1974, when Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), and formed the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) (DiNitto, 2007).

CAPTA helped states form identification and prevention program with regard to child abuse and child neglect, as well as, authorized government research for child abuse prevention and treatment. The NCCAN was developed to administer grant programs, identify issues and areas needing new research, and as a focal point of the collecting of information, improving programs, and providing information in regards to best practice to state and local governments. NCCAN also created the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information system, and established state grants and development grants for training and implementing innovative programs to prevent and treat child maltreatment (United States. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], n.d).

In 1975, Title XX of the Social Security Act allowed for additional child welfare services to be provided. Title XX was labeled as Block Grants to states for Social Services, with the goal of preventing and creating solutions neglect, abuse, or exploitation of children and adults who cannot protect themselves (DiNitto, 2007).

The Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, was enacted in response to the amount of children entering foster care, and remaining in foster care
during the 1970’s (DiNitto, 2007). During this time questions arose as to whether adequate efforts were made to reunify children with their birth families. The Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, created an adoptions assistance program, required courts to review child welfare cases on a regular basis, and required states to make reasonable efforts in keeping children with their family through prevention and family reunification services, and established federal procedures regarding child welfare case management, and permanency planning (PEW, n.d.).

In 1988 CAPTA was amended to create the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). In 2001, CAPTA expired, however Congress approved funds through 2003, at which time the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act, was passed, and CAPTA was reinstated (DiNitto, 2007). With CAPTA being reinstated under the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, there were a number of additions to CAPTA, focusing on early intervention and prevention. These new assurances mandates states to require medical providers who deliver a child exposed to controlled substances, to report to Child Protective Services, and develop a safety plan for the substance exposed infant. It also requires states to create procedures for reporting children at risk of maltreatment to community organizations for preventative services, develop provisions for completing background clearances on prospective foster and adoptive parents, as well as to develop training, work towards employee retention, and improve supervision of case workers (DiNitto, 2007).

In 1997, the Adoption and safe Families Act (ASFA), made amendments to the 1980 Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act, including ensuring that within twelve
months of child being placed in foster care, a permanent plan hearing would result, to
determine whether a child would return home, placed for adoption, or to establish another
permanent plan for the child (DiNitto, 2007). Through this 1997 act, goals of safety,
permanency, and well-being were established for children within the foster care system
(McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006). To comply with ASFA states had to make
evident in conforming to seven statewide indicators, including recurrence of
maltreatment, incidences of child abuse or neglect while a child was placed in out of
home care, foster care re-entries, time taken to achieve family reunification, time taken to
achieve adoptions, and stability of foster care placement (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner,
2006).

Based on the outcome indicators initiated in the ASFA, states focus on ensuring
timely passage of children through the foster care system, whether it is through family
reunification, or the development of a permanent plan for children within the children
welfare system. With clear timeframes on family reunification being established through
the ASFA, comes the question of whether child welfare workers return children to their
biological families prior to the family being ready for this transition. If this is the case, it
could lead one to question whether re-entry rates into the foster care system have
increased since the passage of ASFA.

Rates of Foster Care Re-entry

Rates of re-entry into foster care vary considerably from state to state; however
studies have shown that child welfare agencies tend to exceed the national goal of 9.9%
(Kimberlin, Anthony, & Austin, 2009). Re-entry rates within twelve months of family
reunification, for all states, are tracked by the United States Department of Health and Human Services; most recent statistics from 2005, reported a median re-entry rate of 14.8% (USDHHS, 2005). Federal measurements of re-entry rates in child welfare include all children that have been reunified with their families during each year, and the percentage of children who subsequently re-enter foster care in less than twelve months from the date of reunification (Needell et al., 2009). Through the 1997 amendments to ASFA, when states exceed the national goal in any of the seven outcome indicators, a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is implemented between the State and the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), to implement strategies to conform to the national goals established through the ACF (USDHHS, 2003). In 2003, a PIP was developed and implemented in California, to address several outcome indicators that were above the national standard, including children re-entering foster care after successful reunification with their families. Goals set forth in the PIP to reduce child welfare re-entry rates include, but are not limited to, identifying successful practices in risk and safety assessments, creating a legislative proposal to change the twelve month limit on family maintenance, which would allow more flexibility in providing additional services to meet the needs of specific families, as well as to work with other state departments to ensure the needs child welfare clients are being met throughout multiple systems (USDHHS, 2003). More specifically, the PIP requires counties to complete self-assessments, participate in County Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR), and develop a System Improvement Plan (SIP), every three years, in an effort to create better outcomes for children and families (USDHHS, 2003).
Re-entry rates in California, in 2007, were at 11.6%, although the rates of children re-entering foster care varied significantly from county to county, with Sutter County having the lowest rate of re-entry at 5.1%, and Modoc County far exceeding the national goal, at 26.9% (Needell et al., 2009). El Dorado County’s rate of re-entry into foster care in 2007, measured at 20.4%, with only five other counties in California, having higher rates of re-entry (Needell et al., 2009).

Due to El Dorado County’s re-entry rates being well above the national standard of 9.9%, El Dorado County’s 2006 and 2009 SIP included strategies to reduce foster care re-entry rates within the county. Rates of re-entry into foster care from April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005, were measured at 16% (El Dorado County System Improvement Plan [EDCSIP], 2006).

In the initial 2006 SIP strategies to reduce re-entry rates into foster care after reunification included assessment of cases where children were detained, through a Multi-Level Review process, which included professionals with specific expertise to determine the most appropriate treatment plan for the family based on the identified risk level, as well as to identify those families that would fall under §361.5 (b) of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and determine the Department’s recommendation to establish a permanent plan for the child instead of offering Family Reunification Services to the family. An additional strategy to reduce re-entry into foster care was to include families that would be receiving Family Reunification Services, in the Multi-Level Review case planning meeting (EDCSIP, 2006).
El Dorado County’s most recent SIP, effective May 2009, again, included specific strategies to address the ongoing high rate of reoccurrence of re-entry into foster care. Their most recent SIP strategies included, implementing a vertical model, in which the child abuse investigator would retain the referral until such time the child abuse referral is closed, or if a case was opened, the investigator would carry the case through the Disposition hearing, as well as to implement the Team Decision Making model during the development of the case service plan in Family Reunification cases, as well as prior to recommending that a Dependency case be dismissed, and to develop and implement a procedure to analyze re-entry data (El Dorado County System Improvement Plan [EDCSIP], 2009). With re-entry rates into foster care climbing in El Dorado County, it’s pertinent to further examine factors that are linked to a child’s re-entry into the foster care system, and develop strategies to reduce re-entry rates, not only to meet the federal objectives, but to reduce damage to children.

*Reasons for Re-entry*

Through the amendments made to AFSA in 1997, states are required to meet specific, measureable outcomes, including the national goal of 9.9% or less, of children re-entering foster care after being reunified with their family. Failure to meet federal standards on the objectives set forth in AFSA can lead to monetary sanctions (Kimberlin, Anthony, & Austin, 2009). Although one can see how re-entry rates can affect states’ funding, and cause additional damage to a child who re-enters the foster care system, limited research has been conducted on why children re-enter the foster care system.
One such article examined the correlation between re-entry into foster care and characteristics of the child and family, and child welfare services (Kimberlin, Anthony, & Austin, 2009). In Re-entering foster care: Trends, Evidence, and Implications (2009), research shows that characteristics of a child, including health problems, behavioral problems, and mental health problems, increased the risk of re-entering foster care. Courtney (1995), Jones (1998), Koh (2007), and Shaw (2006), found a higher rate of re-entry for infants as well as adolescents, which may be linked to vulnerability and increased tension between parents and adolescents (Kimberlin, Anthony, & Austin, 2009). Looking at the special needs of an infant, as well as the changes that take place in adulthood, could explain why infants and adolescents are at a higher risk for re-entering foster care.

There are several studies cited in Re-entering foster care: Trends, Evidence, and Implications (2009), that found family risk factors associated with the rate of foster care re-entry, including, poverty, parental substance abuse, type of initial maltreatment, and lack of parenting skills and social support. In examining this study, in relation to rural communities, specifically El Dorado County, substance abuse as well as poverty are seen throughout the population, which may indicate why El Dorado County, as well as several other rural communities, have such high rates of re-entry into foster care after successful reunification.

Characteristics of child welfare services that have been found to increase re-entry rates include the initial length of stay in foster care, the number of placements while in foster care, as well as the ongoing needs of a family after reunification takes place
(Kimberlin, Anthony, & Austin, 2009). Rural communities often lack adequate foster homes, which leads to multiple placements of a child during a child’s initial stay in foster care. Additionally, rural communities, specifically El Dorado County, lack adequate resources to meet the needs of families upon successful reunification. Barth (1997), Courtney (1994), Davis and Ellis-MacLeod (1994), Davis, Landsverk, and Newton (1997), Rzepnicki, Schuerman, and Johnson (1997), Westat (2001), and Wulczyn (2004) all suggest that there is a relationship between brief placement in foster care and re-entry into the foster care system (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006). Research between short stays in foster care and subsequent re-entry into foster care, indicates that short-term placement of children into foster care, does not allow the family time to ameliorate the issues which brought them to the attention of child welfare (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006). Often families who come to the attention of child welfare services, and subsequently have their children placed in foster care, face a myriad of social and interpersonal problems, which cannot be resolved in several months, let alone in the time frames set forth in AFSA.

Wells and Guo (1999), used the child, family, and child welfare characteristics discussed above to complete a study in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Through their research and data collection, Wells and Guo found African American children re-enter foster care 97.9% faster than Caucasian children. This finding indicates that African American children re-enter foster care more quickly after reunification, than those Caucasian children in the study. Research also revealed that children who entered foster care for physical abuse, re-entered foster care 70.9% slower than those children initially removed
for other forms of child abuse and neglect, showing evidence that parents who physically abuse their children may in fact be less likely to re-abuse their children after addressing the issues that led to the physical abuse of their child. This finding could conclude that ameliorating the causes of neglect, are more difficult and time consuming than ameliorating the core issues within families that have physically abused their children. In this same study children who had multiple placement changes during their initial stay in foster care, had a 30.5% increase in their rate of re-entering foster care. Those children who were in non-relative foster homes at the time of reunification, re-entered foster care 226% faster than those last placed in a relative home.

A study completed by Courtney (1995), in which foster children who reunified with their parents in California, showed a link between re-entry and children who had medical problems, African American children, families who were receiving Aid to Dependent Children, now referred to as Temporary Aid to Needy Families, children who were placed with non-relatives, and children who had multiple foster care placements (Wells, & Guo, 1999).

A study completed by Connell, Vanderploeg, Katz, Caron, Saunders, and Tebes (2009), confirms the above-cited research outcomes regarding factors associated with re-entry into the foster care system. This 2009 study in Rhode Island, found that children whose final placement prior to reunification was in a non-relative foster home, were at greater risk of re-maltreatment. Additionally, 81% of children who were reunified with their parents and re-maltreated suffered from neglect. Further, the experiences of children while in foster care, including placement type and number of placement changes
during a child’s initial stay in foster care can increase the risk of further maltreatment upon reunification (Connell, Vanderploeg, Katz, Caron, Saunders, & Tebes, 2009).

A 1993 study where reunification and re-entry rates were studied in nine states, data concluded that children, who were in foster care for thirty to sixty days, had the highest rate of re-entering the foster care system. In 2004, Wulczyn, found that children who were placed in out of home care for one to two months were at an increased risk for re-entering the foster care system, through analyzing data obtained from the Foster Care Multistate Data Archive at the University of Chicago (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006). In this same study, children who remained in foster care for six months or longer, had a decreased chance of re-entering foster care (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006).

In 2003, McDonald, Bryson, and Poertner (2006), examined case data from Oklahoma’s child welfare administrative data set, to determine the relationship, if any, between reunification and re-entry rates. Twenty three thousand two hundred sixty one cases were used as their sample, and the analysis concentrated on the relationship between reunification and re-entry rates for seventy-seven counties in Oklahoma. Findings concluded that the median length of time for families to reunify was one and half years, which exceeds the time frames of reunification, set forth in ASFA. The study produced a broad range of re-entry rates, from twelve to forty-three percent. Given the variance between data analysis from county to county, researchers examined the most favorable reunification time, which was associated with the lowest rate of re-entry into foster care. Through this analysis, researchers determined that a child spending approximately one hundred and eighty days in foster care, produced the lowest rate of re-
entry into foster care, at approximately eleven percent (McDonald, Bryson, & Poertner, 2006).

Other research links re-entry rates to not only the length of time in foster care, but other factors, such as type of placement, substance abuse by one or both parents, poverty and social support systems. A historical analysis was utilized by Frame (2002), in which the researcher examined children entering foster care between July 1, 1991 and June 30, 1992, in several counties in California. Through this analysis Frame (2002) found no statistical significance in gender, age at initial entry into foster care, or ethnicity, but did find that children prenatally exposed to controlled substances, or removed from their biological family due to neglect, increased children’s risk of re-entering foster care (Shaw, 2006).

Additional research completed by Festinger (1996), examined two hundred fifty-four children within twenty child welfare agencies in New York City, who returned home to either a parent or relative. The researcher wanted to determine why children were re-entering the foster care system, as well as to determine factors that lead children into re-entering foster care. Festinger relied on data collected from a questionnaire given to each of the caseworker’s monitoring the two hundred fifty-four cases. The analysis of data collected from this study showed, at the time of initial reunification, over 50% of caregivers had below average parenting skills, and almost 46% percent of parents had little to no support system, including family, friends, and neighbors. Approximately 75% of the caregivers had previous problems with substance abuse, physical abuse, interactions with the criminal justice system, or identified mental health needs. 12.9% of
children in this study re-entered foster care within twelve months of reunification.

Festinger (1996) concluded that the majority of children, who re-entered foster care, re-entered due to parental substance abuse, subsequent child abuse or neglect, and difficulties in parenting. Through this study, factors that were associated with re-entry into foster care included the age of the child in association to the caregiver’s problems, and if initial placement was voluntary, there was a higher rate of subsequent foster care placement. In this study length of initial placement in out of home care, and placement changes were not contributing factors in children re-entering foster care (Festinger, 1996). Caseworker’s who participated in the study noted two areas of need in relation to re-entry into foster care, which included parent training and homemaker services, which could reduce the rate of re-entry in that lack of parenting skills and lack of social support were determined to be key factors in re-entry rates. (Festinger, 1996). Parent training and homemaker services are two services in which case workers in El Dorado County do not have access too, based on the limited amount of community based organizations who provide services to clients in the child welfare system.

Like Festinger (1996), Terling (1999) correlates parental competence as a key indicator of children re-entering foster care. However, Terling (1996) makes a distinction between those that are not able to appropriately parent, and those parents who through psychological testing have shown permanent, limited overall functioning. Based on Terling’s (1999) study, where twenty-seven percent of children re-entering foster care were from homes with parents who had limited functioning and poor parenting skills, one could conclude services being provided to parents within this category are not able to
adequately address the parents’ needs. Through §361.5(b)(2) of the Welfare and Institutions Code, parents who have been found to have limited functioning or mental impairment in which it is believed that a parent cannot benefit from services, do not have to be offered Family Reunification Services. However, in proving that a parent will not benefit from services, two psychological evaluations must be completed, indicating that the parent is not amenable to services provided by the child welfare agency.

Additionally, this study, similar to Festinger’s (1996), suggests that there is a correlation between re-entry of children into foster care and that lack of quality support systems within the family (Terling, 1999). Families, who experience isolation, were more likely to re-enter the foster care system, as well as those in which parents’ experienced strained relationships, such having an abusive partner. This leads the researcher to believe that being isolated, and lacking quality support systems, interrupts a parent’s ability to provide stability to his or her children, leading to a higher rate of re-entry, than those families who have adequate support systems.

Shaw (2006) utilized the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to gather data on children who entered foster care between 1998 and 2002, as well as to obtain data on those children who re-entered foster care within twelve months of reunification throughout the state of California. Through this research Shaw (2006), noted that 65.5% of children were initially removed from their homes for neglect, 56.24% of children were in foster care for less than three months, over 37% of children initially removed from their homes were eligible for Temporary Aid for Needy Families
(TANF), and almost 41% of parents whose children were initially removed, identified as having substance abuse treatment on their case service plan.

From this study, 13.33% of children who entered the California child welfare system between 1998 and 2002, re-entered foster care within twelve months of being reunified with their family; infants and children between eleven years old and thirteen years old had higher rates of re-entering foster care than any other age groups.

In terms of ethnicity, Shaw (2006) found African American and Native American children to have a higher rate of re-entry into foster care than other ethnic groups. African American children had a 16.35% rate of re-entry, while Native American re-entry rates were 15.58%.

15.27% of children, who initially entered foster care for neglect, re-entered the foster care system within twelve months of being reunified with their family. Shaw (2006) notes the difference in child welfare re-entry rates of larger counties versus rural counties. At the time of this study, 18.71% of children in California rural counties were re-entering foster care, while Los Angeles County only had 5.67% of children re-enter foster care within twelve months of reunification.

A major finding in Shaw’s (2006) study on re-entry rates in California, was the correlation between children whose families qualified for TANF, as well as families who received substance abuse treatment, having over a 19% re-entry rate into the foster care system. This is contrary to Terling’s (1999) study in which there was no significant relationship between family income and the rate of re-entry into foster care.
These outcomes lead one to believe that families eligible for TANF and/or being treated for substance abuse at the initial time of removal can be major indicators for re-entry into foster care. This further leads this researcher to believe that Family Reunification services, at the time of initial removal, may not be adequately addressing the needs of the family.

A study completed in Houston, Texas, by Terling (1999) further confirms Shaw’s analysis of substance abuse being a major factor in children re-entering foster care. Terling (1999) indicates 50% of cases involving re-entry into foster care presented with substance abuse problems. Of further importance is that while many parents showed evidence of sobriety, if a substance abusing spouse or partner failed to obtain treatment, re-entry occurred 100% of the time (Terling, 1999).

Jones (1998) focused her research on the successful reunification of children in foster care. In her research, Jones (1998) examines the role of environmental and social factors related to child abuse. Factors that are included are housing, or lack thereof, employment, social support systems, crime statistics of various neighborhoods, the use of public assistance, and marital status. Jones (1998) notes that a person’s socioeconomic status may be an important link to whether a suspected child abuse report is investigated, substantiated, and to whether a child is ultimately removed from the care of a parent. Examining the socioeconomic factors that relate to child abuse are important because they are expected to increase stress within the family structure. This stress can cause conflict within the family as well as decrease a parent’s effectiveness (Jones, 1998). Further, a family’s social support system may benefit the family, reducing stress and
providing emotional support to the family; however, on the contrary, some families social support systems can increase stress and pressure felt by the caretaker, making parenting and day to day tasks even more difficult.

Jones (1998) research attempts to determine whether a child being reunified with their parents will be successful, or whether the child will re-enter the foster care system, based on family and social characteristics. Through this research Jones (1998) found the use of public assistance, exposure to controlled substances, a child initially being removed from an unsafe and environment, and inadequate housing as key predictors in not only a family having subsequent child welfare referrals after successful reunification, but also having a child re-enter foster care after successful reunification.

The key predictors found in Jones’s (1998) research indicate that there is a link between economic deprivation and the likelihood of a child re-entering foster care after successful reunification. However, economic deprivation is not linked to just single parent households (Jones, 1998).

Contrary to the researcher’s belief that El Dorado County has a large population who fall below the federal poverty levels, in 2002 only 9% of the county’s population made less than the federal poverty income levels, indicating that El Dorado County does not have a large population of people in poverty, with only 4% of the population receiving Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (El Dorado County Community Health Needs Assessment [EDCCHNA], 2002). With this being said, in relation to economic and social deprivation discussed in Jones (1998) research, 79% of El Dorado
County’s population live in unincorporated areas of the county, where there is a lack of
class-public transportation, and community services.

*Gap in Knowledge*

Research regarding the causes of children re-entering foster care after successful
reunification, shows that there are a myriad of correlates between child, family,
environmental, and child welfare factors that have been linked to the increased the risk of
re-entry. Individual, social, economic, and environmental factors all play a role in a child
re-entering the foster care system. With this being said, recent research examining factors
of children re-entering the foster care system, cannot be generalized based on the unique
demographics of the studied populations, as well as the small samples utilized to
complete recent research. Additionally, many, if not all recent research relied on case
analysis, Federal and State statistics, which can lead to errors in significant results based
on a child welfare worker’s documentation, views on poverty, substance abuse, and
parental ability, as well as the way in which states report re-entry to the Federal
government.

Research in which recommendations for decreasing the rate of child welfare re-
entry are scarce; however, the researcher located one article, in which recommendations
for reducing the rate of re-entry were addressed. Bronson (2005) examined intensive
family based services, utilized most commonly prior to an initial removal of a child from
their home, and attempted to evaluate this service when utilized after re-uniting families,
whose children were in foster care. Based on Bronson’s (2005) research, she determined
that the needs of families who have not had a child removed from the home, are different
from the needs of families whom have been re-united with their children, indicating that intensive family based services need to be curtailed to the specific needs of families newly reunified.

In this researcher’s quest for information pertaining to factors related to re-entry into foster care, the researcher was unable to locate any research in which the author examined or interviewed people other than child welfare workers or case data. Although child welfare workers often see the results of children re-entering foster care, they may have a limited perspective on why children re-enter foster care based on their professional experiences, training, and personal belief system, which may contribute to their sense of why children re-enter foster care.

Given the gap in knowledge surrounding child welfare re-entry rates in general, as well as more specifically in California, and rural counties within California, it is pertinent that additional descriptive research, drawing from a multitude of people working with, and for, child welfare clients, be utilized to determine the significant factors that have led to the increasing rate of children re-entering foster care throughout many rural counties in California, in and effort to bring to light necessary resources, which could decrease the ever growing rate of children re-entering the foster care system within El Dorado County.
Chapter 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to explore factors that are associated with children re-entering foster care within the child welfare system, in El Dorado County. This research provides information regarding the needs of newly reunified families, and suggestions for ensuring long-term successful reunification of families within the child welfare system. This chapter identifies and explains the research question, study design, data gathering method, and study population, limitations of the study, and the protection of human subjects.

Research Question

What are the specific needs of newly reunified families within El Dorado County’s child welfare system? Can services be implemented to support these needs to ensure long-term successful reunification?

Study Design and Study Population

This is an descriptive study attempting to gain first hand knowledge of the specific factors that lead to a child re-entering the foster care system in rural communities, specifically, El Dorado County. Although there have been several research studies examining reasons for children re-entering foster care within the child welfare system, the majority of these studies utilized secondary data analysis from state and federal databases, such as Child Welfare Services/Case Management System...
(CWS/CMS), and do not provide information specific to rural communities, and the factors that lead to re-entry within these communities. This study is responsive to an area that has not been subjected to a sufficient amount of research, although it is clear that rural counties in California have higher re-entry rates than those urban and suburban counties, which led this researcher to examining the unique needs of rural counties, specifically El Dorado County. This ethnographic approach of gathering ideas from those professionals who live in, and work with child welfare clients has led to a more accurate assessment of the needs of newly reunified families within the child welfare system. Based on the amount of social workers, community based organizations, and court appointed Dependency attorneys in El Dorado County, the researcher’s study consisted of fifteen participants, including four child welfare social workers and one social worker supervisor, five participants who work with community-based organizations and serve child welfare clients, and five attorneys who represent child welfare clients in Dependency proceedings. With such a small group of participants, this research lacks the ability to generalize; however, this research has practical implications to El Dorado County.

The researcher contacted via telephone and email, people who work for child welfare as social workers and social worker supervisors, as well as people who work with community-based organizations and serve child welfare clients, and attorneys who represent child welfare clients in Juvenile Court proceedings, to inform the sample population of the researcher’s study, and to invite them to participate in this research study. There were no incentives provided to individuals participating in this research
study. Each participant had the option of whether or not they wanted to participate, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw their consent at anytime during the interview.

*Protection of Human Subjects*

The California State University requirement for the protection of human subjects was adhered to. The “Protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects” was submitted to the Division of Social Work Human Subjects review committee and was approved as “no risk.”

Confidentiality and informed consent was obtained through a consent form prior to conducting any data collection from each participant (see Appendix A). The researcher was present to answer any questions when the participants reviewed and signed the consent form. Voluntary participation was stressed and it was reiterated to each participant that they could withdraw their consent to participate at any time.

This study was deemed “no risk” to the participants involved in the questionnaire and interview questions; however, some discomfort may be felt in answering questions based on their cumulative experience working with child welfare clients in El Dorado County. The researcher was available on location, to answer any questions, which developed over the questionnaire and interview. The benefit of individual professionals working with child welfare clients, participating in this research study, is that they were able to voice personal views, opinions, and suggestions, in regards to what is necessary for child welfare clients to be successful in reunifying with their children, as well as what
they have observed to increase chances of children re-entering the child welfare system after successful reunification.

Data Gathering and Analysis Procedure

The data was collected through a questionnaire survey and interview between the researcher and participant. Each interview took approximately thirty minutes to one hour to complete, and no identifying information was recorded on the questionnaire and interview guide. All responses to the researcher’s questions were kept in strict confidentiality and were destroyed upon completion of the researcher’s thesis. The Foster Care Re-Entry in El Dorado County: A Needs Assessment questionnaire and interview guide has fourteen items, which include the following: demographic questions, experience in children re-entering foster care, factors associated with a child re-entering foster care, key factors of successful reunification, services that would promote successful reunification, and views on In-Home-Family-Based services (see Appendix B).

After all questionnaires and interviews were completed, the researcher organized the data and analyzed it. The data for this study was analyzed using content analysis and statistical analysis. The researcher utilized content analysis to analyze the qualitative data obtained through the researchers interview questions. The data was divided by specific units of analysis, which included emerging themes throughout each of the interview questions.

The researcher then utilized statistical analysis for the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires and interviews. The researcher utilized Microsoft Excel to
determine what interviewees found as important factors leading to re-entry into the child welfare system, as well as key factors within families who do not re-enter the child welfare system, and services that interviewees believed would reduce re-entry of children into foster care, through the child welfare system in El Dorado County.

If the researcher’s hypotheses are supported, alcohol and other drug use by one or both parents, is a major contributing factor to children re-entering the foster care system in El Dorado County, and families who have adequate social and economic support will be less likely to have children re-enter the foster care system. Further, if the researcher’s hypothesis of families needing ongoing supportive services after reunification, to create long term successful reunification, is supported by the data, a deeper look at the current laws and local programs regarding child welfare would be warranted to provide such services to clients within the child welfare system and in turn decrease the rate of children re-entering foster care after being successfully reunified with their families.

Limitations of Study

Participation in the questionnaire and interview is voluntary, and the researcher could only include results from those participants who chose to participate. In addition, the sample population only included those professionals who work with child welfare clients in El Dorado County. Therefore, results from this study cannot be generalized to determine the needs of all child welfare clients within other rural counties or the state of California.
Introduction

Review of the literature suggests that there is a myriad of factors that increase the likelihood of a child re-entering foster care after being successfully reunified with one or both parents. Factors examined in the literature vary, but include parental substance abuse, the number of placements a child incurs during their initial stay in foster care, and the use of public assistance by the family. However, prior research on re-entry into the child welfare system, cannot be generalized based on the limited populations studied in prior research studies. Further, the data collected by this researcher is limited to examining factors that lead to re-entry of children into the child welfare system in the rural community of El Dorado County.

Presentation of Data

Demographics of Sample. The sample consists of fifteen professionals who work with child welfare clients in the capacity of the child welfare system, the court system, and within community based organizations, and includes five participants from each of the above categories. Seven of the fifteen participants have worked with child welfare clients for five years or less; four have worked with child welfare clients in El Dorado County for fifteen years or more. Out of fifteen participants, eleven live in El Dorado County. All participants from community based organizations reside within El Dorado County.
Eight participants report working with families who have children re-enter the foster care system on a frequent basis. Only two participants who work in the child welfare system reported working frequently with families who have had children re-enter the foster care system, while three participants from the legal system and three participants from community based organizations (CBO) reported working frequently with families who have had children re-enter the foster care system in El Dorado County. The remaining seven participants reported working with families who have children re-enter the foster care system, “sometimes,” (see Table 1).

Table 1

Experience working with Families who Re-enter Foster Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Child Welfare</th>
<th>CBO</th>
<th>Legal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parental Substance abuse. In determining the significance of factors related to children re-entering the foster care system in El Dorado County, 80% (n=12) of participants report alcohol or other substance abuse by the parent as being a very important factor in children re-entering the foster care system. While all participants interviewed from the legal system and community based organizations report alcohol or other substance abuse by the parent being a very important factor in children re-entering
the foster care system, only two participants from the child welfare system report this factor as being very important. The other 20% (n=3) of participants report substance abuse by a parent as being an important factor affecting re-entry into the child welfare system (see Table 2).

Table 2

Substance Abuse Affecting Re-entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Child Welfare</th>
<th>CBO</th>
<th>Legal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to rank a series of ideas that would reduce child welfare re-entry rates in El Dorado County and promote long-term reunification. Seven ideas were presented and each participant was requested to assign a point value to each of the ideas, creating a total of value of one hundred points. The data collected from this ranking scale indicates that increased treatment for alcohol or other drug abuse would be the most important factor in reducing re-entry rates into the child welfare system and increasing successful long-term reunification (see Table 3). Participants working the child welfare system ranked this factor significantly less important in reducing re-entry into foster care than those participants from community based organizations and the legal system.
Mental Illness. In determining the importance of parental mental illness and its effects on a child re-entering foster care, ten of fifteen participants report this factor as very important. One participant from the legal system report a parent’s mental illness as not affecting a child’s risk of re-entry, while the other participants from the legal system report this factor as being very important.

While 67% (n=10) of participants report a mental illness of the parent as being a key factor in children re-entering foster care, only 47% (n=7) of participants report a child’s mental health or behavioral needs being a very important factor in a child re-entering foster care in El Dorado County. However, all participants interviewed report a child’s mental health or behavioral needs as having some impact on a child re-entering foster care.

Social Support Systems. Of the fifteen participants, 80% report the lack of social support for the parent being a very important or important factor affecting a child re-entering foster care after successful reunification. Three participants ranked the lack of social support as being only a somewhat important factor affecting a child’s re-entry into the foster care system. Sixty percent of participants who work in the legal system report the lack of social support for the parent as being a very important factor affecting a child re-entering the foster care system, while one participant from community based organizations and the child welfare system ranked this identified issue as very important.

Six participants report that having an adequate social support system in place as a key factor in successful long-term reunification, while two participants report this as being only somewhat important.
When utilizing a ranking system to rank the importance of increasing the development of support systems within the family, to reduce re-entry rates and promote long term successful reunification, all participants within each category, ranked this equally. Out of seven identified factors, increasing a family’s support system is fourth out of seventh in level of importance (see Table 3).

While participants indicate a level of importance of a family having an adequate social support system to reduce the likelihood of a child re-entering foster care, providing a support group for parents is not a key factor for participants in reducing re-entry into foster care in El Dorado County.

*Economic Support/Stability.* In examining factors involved in affecting a child re-entering the foster care system, nine participants report the lack of economic support as being a very important factor, while four participants report the lack of economic stability as having no or minimal affect on children re-entering the foster care system in El Dorado County.

Similarly, nine participants report adequate economic stability and support as being a very important factor in long-term successful reunification. Twelve of the fifteen participants report economic stability and support as being either important or very important in the long term success of a family being reunified; one participant interviewed from a community based organization reported that economic stability is not a factor leading to long term successful reunification.

Participants from the legal system ranked promoting economic stability and support second to increasing treatment for parents with alcohol or other drug abuse.
Overall, out of seven identified factors to reduce re-entry into the child welfare system and promoting long-term successful reunification, promoting economic stability ranked third most important, under providing home based family services and increasing substance abuse treatment for parents of children in the child welfare system (see Table 3). When assessing and promoting economic stability and support to families in the child welfare system, 87% (n= 13) of participants’ report adequate housing as an important or very important factor in the long-term success of family reunification.

**Foster Care Placement.** Only 34% (n=5) of participants report the type of placement in which a child is in during their initial stay in foster care as an important or very important factor contributing to a child re-entering foster care, while 40% of participants report the number of placement changes a child experiences during their initial stay in foster care, as an important or very important factor affecting a child’s likelihood of re-entering foster care. Only 20% (n=3) of participants, all of which are from the legal system, report the number of times a child changes placements, as not being a factor affecting a child re-entering foster care. However, 47% (n=6) of participants’ report that a child placed with a relative during their initial foster care placement or maintaining placement in one foster home, is an important or very important factor leading to successful family reunification.

**In Home Services.** Ninety-four percent of participants report adequate family transition from Family Reunification to a Family Maintenance case, as an important or very important factor leading to successful long-term reunification of a child.
When asked to rank the importance of seven factors that would reduce re-entry rates and promote long term successful reunification, providing in home family based services, was ranked second, to increasing alcohol and other drug treatment for substance abusing parents (see Table 3).

Table 3

Services Reducing Re-entry Rates and Promoting Reunification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Points Received</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased treatment for AOD Issues</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Home Based Services</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Economic Stability</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Support Systems w/in Family</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Family Therapy</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide FR Support Group Services</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, all participants from each profession, report home based family services as beneficial to child welfare families. When interviewed one participant from a community-based organization stated that in home services are, “often the only viable option due to most dysfunctional families’ ongoing struggle with transportation. This service provides one on one skill building, with concrete feedback, geared toward the
family’s particular issues.” Another participant from the child welfare system stated that in home family based services are, “helpful in that classes do not provide the parents with hands on feedback and direction.”

A participant from the legal system reports their thoughts on in home family based services being beneficial, stating, “It shows the parent that they are not alone and there is someone they can ask for help during the crucial time of reunification.”

Summary of Findings and Discussion

Substance Abuse by Parent(s) and re-entry rates. Study findings support the research hypothesis that alcohol or other drug abuse by one or both parents is a major contributing factor in a child re-entering foster care after successful family reunification. The data shows 80% (n=12) of research participants report substance abuse by a parent as a very important factor in a child re-entering foster care in El Dorado County. Interestingly, only 40% (n=2) of participants from the child welfare system report this factor as being very important, whereas 100% of participants from the legal system and community based organizations rated this factor as very important when identifying factors that lead to children re-entering foster care in El Dorado County. Further, data suggests that there is a need for increased substance abuse treatment for parents of children in the child welfare system in order to decrease the rate of re-entry and promote long-term successful reunification.

Social and Economic Support and re-entry. The data confirms the belief that parents having adequate social and economic support systems and stability decrease the risk of a child re-entering foster care. Overall, 70% (n=11) of participants report the lack
of economic and social support is a key factor in a child re-entering foster care. Further, economic stability and support is two times more important in creating long-term successful reunification, than having an adequate social support system, with only 40% of participants reporting that an adequate social support system is a key factor to successful reunification. Additionally, 87% (n=13) of research participants report a family securing and maintaining adequate housing as a key factor in long-term successful reunification.

*Ongoing Supportive Services and re-entry.* In addressing factors that lead to long-term successful reunification, and decreasing the risk of re-entry into the foster care system, 94% (n=14) of participants report that an adequate transition from Family Reunification to Family Maintenance is necessary. Further, during the researcher’s interview with participants, all participants indicated that in home family based services are affective and beneficial in addressing the individual needs of families, identifying needs as they arise, while providing hands on support and mentorship, which in culmination with one another, would reduce the rate of children re-entering foster care in El Dorado County.

These finding clearly confirm the study’s hypothesis that families need ongoing supportive services after reunification to create long term successful reunification.

*Emerging Findings*

*Mental Illness of parent and re-entry.* The data analysis of multiple factors associated with children re-entering foster care in rural, El Dorado County, suggests that a parent being afflicted with mental illness is a factor in a child re-entering the foster care system. Nearly 67% (n=10) of participants ranked a parent having a mental illness as a
key predictor of a child re-entering the foster care system. However, contrary to prior research, only 47% of participants report a child’s mental health or behavioral needs being a key factor in a child re-entering the foster care system.

*Legal Timeframes/Knowledge of the Court.* Several significant notions have emerged from the qualitative data. They include the county’s culture of the use of legal time frames for Family Reunification, as well as the Court’s knowledge of issues affecting parents in the child welfare system, and the effects these factors have on re-entry into the child welfare system. Several participants indicated that, the Court’s knowledge of specific issues that plague child welfare clients would help or hinder the successful long-term reunification of a family. If the Court were more aware of practices best suited to address the needs of specific issues, such as domestic violence, or substance abuse, the Court would be more likely to approve the requests by child welfare workers, which could affect the likelihood of a child re-entering the foster care system.

Additionally, several participants articulated the necessity for the Court to adhere more firmly to the guidelines set forth in the Welfare and Institutions Code, pertaining to the guidelines associated with time limitations in a Family Reunification case. Participants report that a reduction in the rate of children re-entering foster care in El Dorado County would occur, as families who do not meet the legal criteria for Family Reunification services, or additional Family Reunification services would not be given additional time or services to ameliorate the issues that led to a child’s initial removal. Therefore, the child would not be at risk of re-entry, and instead, a forever family would be secured.
In examining reasons why children re-enter foster care in El Dorado County, it is clear that there is no simple solution. The issue of children re-entering foster care is multi-faceted, involving not only the laws in which child welfare is governed, but also by the county culture, and the many needs of families within the child welfare system. To identify and focus on one area of a families need, would set families up for failure, as it is clear that there are many issues that contribute to the re-entry of children in to the foster care system in El Dorado County.

California Juvenile Laws & Rules (2009), states that a parent with a child under three years of age at the time of initial removal, is entitled to six months of Family Reunification services, and a parent who has a child over the age of three at the time of initial removal is entitled to a total of twelve months of Family Reunification services, unless the parent falls under §361.5 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, in which case services may not be offered to the parent or parents. However, the Juvenile Court may extend services to parents, up to a total of eighteen months, if the Court finds by clear and convincing evidence that there would a substantial probability of the child being returned within this time frame (California Juvenile Laws & Rules, 2009). At first glance a person could assume that a parent having up to eighteen months of services to ameliorate the issues that brought the family to the Court’s attention is feasible; however, based on the findings of the researcher’s needs assessment, and from the review of literature, many families within the child welfare system have deep seeded, multi generational issues that prohibit them from resolving the multitude of factors that have led to their child’s removal, in the course of eighteen months.
Given the laws set forth in the California Juvenile Laws & Rules (2009), it is pertinent that a countywide systemic change take place to develop and provide services that will meet the myriad of needs that families have after reunification, in order to promote long term successful reunification and reduce rates of re-entry. The outcome of the researcher’s needs assessment indicate that there are many contributing factors associated with a child re-entering foster care in El Dorado County, that cannot be resolved in a matter or twelve or eighteen months. By providing home based services during and after reunification, families will have additional support and learning opportunities while re-adjusting to one another. This will reduce family stress and individual triggers that may lead to substance abuse relapse, increase of mental health symptoms, or economic instability, while increasing a family’s support system.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY

Conclusion

Families within the child welfare system in El Dorado County face a myriad of struggles, both during the Family Reunification process, and upon a child returning from foster care. Some parents are products of the child welfare system, being former foster youth, others have carried on family roles and lifestyles portrayed in their own childhoods, and others have only isolated incidences of exposing their children to abuse or neglect. Whatever the reasons are for a child entering foster care, its imperative that the issues be successfully addressed in order to promote long term successful reunification, as well as stability and longevity of the family unit.

The data shows that many factors contribute to a child’s risk of re-entering foster care after successful reunification, which supports Kimberlin, Anthony, and Austin’s (2009) research where parental substance abuse, poverty, and lack of parenting skills were noted to contribute to a child’s rate of re-entry into the foster care system. Contrary to prior research conducted by Wells and Guo (1999), concluding that the type of foster care placement and multiple placement changes increase a child’s risk of re-entry, the researcher’s data, suggests that placement type or number of placements while in foster care is not a contributing factor to a child re-entering foster care in El Dorado County.

The data clearly supports the researcher’s research hypothesis that parental substance abuse is a significant factor in a child re-entering foster care, which creates a
barrier for parents to perform the task of parenting. Further, data validates the researcher’s belief that families having an ongoing positive support system as well as economic stability and support, will be less like to have children re-enter the foster care system. Additionally, research respondents confirmed the researcher’s belief that families need ongoing supportive services once reunified to create long term successful reunification and reduce the rate of re-entry in El Dorado County.

Data indicates that substance abuse by one or both parents is the key factor in children re-entering foster care within El Dorado County, and in order to reduce children re-entering foster care, there must be increased substance abuse services for parents. The researcher believes parental substance abuse is a primary factor associated with a child re-entering foster care due to the long road of recovery. Parents are often provided with residential or outpatient substance abuse treatment services; however, these services only provide a basis for recovery, often times creating short-term change with limited after care, and behaviors have not changed. Further, in the researcher’s experience in working with parental substance abuse and families in the child welfare system, once a parent completes residential and/or outpatient substance abuse treatment, they are left without having an adequate positive support system to maintain sobriety. So often, parents return to the environment in which they came, associating with the same supports that introduced, used, or provided the parents with their drug of choice. Because of this experience with the child welfare system and parental substance abuse, the researcher believes the key to effectively treating substance abuse is by not only providing
appropriate substance abuse treatment, but also working with the family in identifying how their micro, meso, and macro systems help or hinder their process of recovery.

The researcher’s hypothesis that those families with positive ongoing social support systems are less likely to re-enter the child welfare system, is minimally supported, as only 40% of participants reported an adequate support system reducing re-entry into foster care. However, when economic support and stability is combined with having an adequate support system, over 70% of the participants reported an increased likelihood of successful long term reunification, and a decrease in a child re-entering the foster care system in El Dorado County. It is this researcher’s belief that the importance of positive social support is minimized because people working with child welfare clients in El Dorado County are often providing services that correlate directly to the imminent risk of the child, such as substance abuse, anger, parenting, and lack of appropriate housing. However, it is the researcher’s assumption that by increasing a parent’s positive social support system, issues of imminent risk would decrease, as parents would have the social support mechanisms to alleviate the issues prior to the child being placed at imminent risk.

Programs that can address multiple familial troubles, while in the home environment, are supported through the researcher’s needs assessment. Ninety-four percent (n=14) of research participants reported that an adequate transition from Family Reunification to Family Maintenance is a key factor leading to long term successful reunification. Further, data shows that providing home based services to families in child welfare would reduce re-entry rates in El Dorado County. Research participants report
that home based services are affective in handling the multiple tribulations experienced by families in the child welfare system, while providing support, and identifying and addressing problems as they arise within the family.

Recommendations

In effort to decrease re-entry rates in El Dorado County, the researcher recommends a systemic change to the way in which child welfare, community organizations, and Juvenile Courts assess, develop, and implement a Family Reunification case service plan. It is this researcher’s belief that by utilizing home based services to address the multitude of familial needs, adequate support and guidance can be given, while increasing families’ strengths, reducing the rate of re-entry into foster care. By providing such services, it provides an opportunity for parents to utilize the knowledge gained in individual treatment in their native environment. The integration of knowledge and skills, while parenting in the home environment is conducive to long term behavioral change within the family.

Child welfare workers need education and training on home based services versus instruction done in a classroom setting, while community organizations need to develop, organize, and implement additional home based family services. In order for Juvenile Court Judges to support and recommend such services, they need ongoing educational opportunities to review outcomes of home based services.

By utilizing home based service programs, many familial issues can be resolved without overstretching a parent’s participation in multiple services. Home based services provide families with hands on skills and guidance that cannot be acquired in a
classroom. Utilizing such services prior to and at the time of reunification, will make for a smoother transition from foster care; individual and family stressors can be identified and explored prior to a crisis erupting, reducing the risk of a child re-entering foster care. Further development and maintenance of home based services for families would provide an opportunity for El Dorado County and other community agencies to evaluate outcomes of such programs, allowing for the restructuring of home based programs as necessary to create a truly successful evidence based program, leading to successful long term reunification.

Further, it is this researcher’s opinion that the development and implementation of a Family Reunification Foster Home, would increase successful reunification and decrease the likelihood of a child re-entering foster care by providing a supervised transition from court ordered Family Reunification to Family Maintenance.

This study supports the researcher’s belief regarding Family Reunification Foster Homes. Data suggests that this transition would be beneficial to an array of child welfare clients. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that this type of service would be very beneficial to families who have children with behavioral problems, while 73% of respondents reported that these services would be very beneficial to families who lack adequate support systems, as well as families who have parents utilizing mental health services. Although, not as significant, 53% of respondents suggest that a Family Reunification Foster Home would be very beneficial to parents who have substance abuse issues.
The researcher’s image of a Family Reunification Foster Home includes a family residing in the foster home for six to eight weeks after being reunified with their children in order to provide a successful transition from Family Reunification to Family Maintenance. The foster parents would provide mentoring to the parents and would be available to provide twenty-four hour support. The foster parents would provide support and guidance on such things as scheduling conflicts, transportation issues, and working with the parents to arrange for supervision of the children. During this six to eight week time period, the parents would be guided on setting effective boundaries with their children, developing a routine, nutrition and meal planning, as well as obtaining support from the foster parents in handling specific behavioral issues of the child. Additionally, a social worker would be in the home at least three times a week to help the family process the transition, as well as to discuss and parenting or relational issues that may arise during this important time. Foster parents would be included in at least one meeting a week to provide the social worker and family with the strengths of the family as well as to discuss the family’s progress in transition.

Although research respondents felt positively about such services, funding and the implementation of such a program were seen as barriers in providing this type of service. Obtaining and maintaining adequately trained foster parents, securing large enough housing, and getting the “buy in” of the family, were noted concerns in the implementation of such program.
Implications for Social Work Practice

Current and prior research depicts many factors that lead to re-entry into the foster care system. Although this research merely explores professionals views on re-entry into the foster care system and what leads a family in El Dorado County to successful long term reunification, it is clear that all aspects explored require the training, skills, and advocacy of social workers.

Social workers are often first to provide early intervention services, determine a child’s safety in the home, and assess the family dynamics to eliminate re-abuse or neglect of a child. With this being said, it is pertinent that social workers help in the development of and utilize services, which have been identified as helping families become successful as a unit.

Social worker’s can begin working towards a reduction in children re-entering foster care by utilizing the ecological perspective and systems theory, wrapping the family with their current support systems, and increasing the families support systems by creating an eco-map, and involving community based organizations to be utilized during and after reunification. Doing so, will not only provide additional support to the family, but also increase supportive services to social workers by bringing in family and friends to help the family succeed. In essence, at the time of reunification, families will have built and rebuilt some positive social supports within their family, and externally through community based organizations in which a level of trust has been built.

Due to the ever-changing needs of individuals and family systems, it is imperative that continued research be conducted regarding children re-entering foster care in El
Dorado County and other rural communities that are afflicted with high re-entry rates. By doing so, social workers can implement services based on the current child welfare trends, reducing over all re-entry rates in rural communities, making families stronger, and more successful.

Social workers can advocate for local, state, and federal policy changes, in order to reduce rates of re-entry into the foster care system. This could be in the form of informing the Court’s of current child welfare trends, evidence based practices that increase success within a family, developing and implementing programs designed to help create long term successful reunification, and advocating for a change in laws governing the child welfare system.

With additional research and data collection, as well as secured funding, the idea of a Family Reunification Foster Home could be realized. This approach to reducing the rate of children re-entering foster care could prove fruitful to families who enter this program, as well as to child welfare agencies throughout California and the United States. In order for such program to be implemented, a program must be designed, tested, and restructured throughout time. Ongoing tracking of family outcomes based on this type of program could lead to full implementation of such program, as well as ongoing funding. Social workers and child welfare agencies alike must develop and implement programs to address the many factors associated with families in the child welfare system, while ensuring that the legal timelines set forth in ASFA can be successfully met.
Evaluation

If given the opportunity to complete this research project over again, the researcher would have included secondary data analysis, examining cases within El Dorado County in which children re-entered foster care. This researcher would have examined both the reasons for initial removal and the reasons for subsequent removal. This would have identified specific factors that were not ameliorated during Family Reunification Services, as well any factors that arose after the time of initial removal. The questionnaires and interviews completed in this research, led the researcher to have more questions than answers, in that simply identifying factors associated with children, re-entering foster care does not clearly paint an overall picture of what families in the child welfare system experience to either help or hinder successful long term reunification.

Additionally, this researcher would have asked each respondent the average amount of time spent with families that had experienced their children re-entering foster care. This information would have aided in determining how familiar each respondent was with the families that had experienced children re-entering foster care, leading the researcher to assume that those respondents who spent greater amounts of time with families, would have greater knowledge of individual and family needs.

Further, had the researcher been able to obtain first hand knowledge from families in El Dorado County that had their children re-enter foster care, this would have provided an additional point of view from the perspective of parent. This information may be vital in truly understanding factors that lead to successful reunification and reduce the rate of children re-entering the child welfare system.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in Research

You are invited to participate in a research study that will be conducted by Sheryce Allendorf, a Master of Social Work student at the Division of Social Work, California State University, Sacramento. This researcher is working under the direction of Dr. Francis Yuen, as a thesis advisor. This study will explore the needs of parents within the child welfare system who are newly reunified with their children.

Procedures:
After reviewing this form and agreeing to participate, you will be given the opportunity to set up a time at your convenience. The interview should take approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete. The interview is anonymous and no names will be recorded. The interview will be documented by the researcher and upon completion of the project, all documentation will be destroyed.

As a participant in the study you can decide at any time not to answer a specific question or stop the interview.

Risks:
The study is considered to have no risk of harm or discomfort to the study participants, as the questions are not personal in nature. The questions are related to professional work and activities for the participants who have received educational and professional training.

Benefits:
The research gained by completing this interview will provide a better understanding to child welfare workers of the unique needs of parents newly reunified with their children in El Dorado County. Additionally, research may contribute to better understanding the needs of families within the children welfare system in rural communities.

Confidentiality:
All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your privacy. Your responses in the interview will be kept confidential. Information you provide on the consent form will be stored separately from the notes of the interview, and kept in a secure location at the researcher’s home. The researcher’s thesis advisor will have access to the completed interview notations for the duration of the project. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All of the data will be destroyed approximately one month after the project is filed with Graduate Studies at California State University, Sacramento, in June of 2010.
Compensation:
Participates will not receive any kind of fiscal compensation.

Rights to withdraw:
If you decide to participate in this survey, you can withdraw at any point. During the interview you can elect not to answer any specific question.

I have read the descriptive information on the Research Participation cover letter. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. My signature or initials indicate that I have received a copy of the Research Participation cover letter and I agree to participate in the study.

I, ______________________________________, agree to be interviewed.
Signature or Initials: ___________________________ Date: _____________

If you have any questions you may contact the researcher:

Sheryce Allendorf
(530) 647-2750 – home
(530) 306-3662 – cellular
Allndrf@yahoo.com

Or, if you need further information, you may contact the researcher’s thesis advisor:

Francis Yuen, DSW, ACSW
C/o California State University, Sacramento
(916) 278-7182
fyuen@csus.edu
APPENDIX B

Questionnaire & Interview Guide

Foster Care Re-Entry in El Dorado County: A Needs Assessment

1.) How long have you been working with child welfare clients in El Dorado County?

Circle One:

0-5yrs 5-10yrs 10-15yrs 15+yrs

1a). In what professional capacity do you currently work with child welfare clients?

Circle One:

Legal County Child welfare agency Community Based Agency

2.) Do you currently reside within El Dorado County? Yes No

3.) How often would you say you have experienced families that have had children re-enter foster care in your professional capacity?

Circle One:

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently

4.) In your opinion, how significant are the following factors affecting a child re-entering foster care in El Dorado County?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Important (NI), Somewhat Important (SI), Important (I), Very Important (VI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol or other Drug Abuse by the parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness of the parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social support for the parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate economic support of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement type of child (relative, non-relative, group home, ect.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times child has moved placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify): ___________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.) In your opinions, what do you believe are key factors that lead to successful reunification (where children do not re-enter foster care)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental illness/behavioral needs of child</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6.) What do you believe would help reduce re-entry rates, and promote successful long-term reunification?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Important (NI), Somewhat Important (SI), Important (I), Very Important (VI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial stay in foster care being with relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable foster care placement (a child being moved no more than 2 times while family reunification services are being offered to the family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family has adequate social support systems in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family has economic support/stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate transition for family from family reunification to family maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify): ____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Points
- Increased treatment for AOD issues
- Increase of developing support systems within the family
- Promote economic stability (vocational training, employment services, employment)
- Provide home based services (parent coaching, guidance in behavioral techniques, etc)
- Provide family therapy
- Provide family reunification support group services
- Other (specify): ____________________

Assign any points from 0 to 100 to each of the following items for a total of 100 points. The points assigned are in proportion to the factor’s importance. e.g., 25 points item is more important than a 10 points item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.) What are your professional views on the effectiveness of the In-Home-Family-Based services (i.e., In-home parenting coaching and mentoring once or twice a week for up to three hours each visit)?
Transitional Family Reunification Foster Homes is a program design where “a family resides in the foster home for a six to eight week time frame after being reunified. The foster parents will provide mentoring to the parents, as well as twenty-four support to the parents and child(ren). The transitional foster parents will provide support and guidance regarding family and individual schedules, including problems solving transportation and supervision issues of the child(ren) if the parent(s) work, or have other appointments to attend to, as well as guiding the parent(s) in setting effective boundaries with their children, the importance of routine for children, nutrition and meal planning, and guiding and providing support to the parent(s) regarding behavioral issues of the child(ren). A social worker will visit at least three times a week processing the transition with the family as well as any parenting and relational issues that may arise. The social worker will include the foster parents in at least one meeting a week, in order for the foster parent to provide strengths of the family, as well as how they view the family’s progress in transition.

8.) In your opinion, which of the following populations in El Dorado County would benefit most from this Transitional Family Reunification Foster Homes service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Not at all (NA)</th>
<th>Somewhat Beneficial (SB)</th>
<th>Beneficial (B)</th>
<th>Very Beneficial (VB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents with AOD issues</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families initially presented with domestic/family violence</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families have one or more care providers utilizing mental health services</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families lack an adequate social support system</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children who present with behavioral problems</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children who present with medical problems</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>VB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.) What do you believe would be the top three advantages of utilizing this service model?

1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________
11.) *What do you believe would be top three disadvantages to this model?*

1. 
2. 
3. 

12). *If you were to develop a Transitional Family Reunification Foster Homes program, what particular services would you emphasize?*

13). *What barriers would you anticipate in developing Transitional Family Reunification Foster Homes program?*

14). *Do you have any other recommendations for reducing the rate of re-entry into foster care in El Dorado County?*
REFERENCES


Ohio State University, College of Social Work.


http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/childmaltreatment/definitions.html


http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/financinghistory.htm


http://ndas.cwla.org/Include/pdf/EntryReentryDefs_Final.pdf


Maltreatment following reunification: Predictors of subsequent Child Protective


Placerville, California: El Dorado County Department of Human Services.


Placerville, California: El Dorado County Department of Human Services.


http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cso05/chapters/chapter3.htm

