

# DELAWARE'S TITLE IV-E WAIVER PROJECT NCSACW RESEARCHER'S FORUM

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December 10, 2003

## Project Overview

- Substance Abuse Counselor assigned to DFS unit in each County.
- Comparison Unit in each County.
- Quasi-random assignment.
- Matched cases.
- Process Evaluation.
- Outcome Evaluation.
- Cost Analyses.

## Project Objectives

1. Serve 180 families per year.
2. Reduce foster care costs.
3. Reduce the number of children entering out-of-home placements and reduce the time in foster care for 50% of the cases entering out-of-home placement.
4. Enhance parents' ability to provide adequate care, connect families to community resources, and provide treatment services until families are connected to community-based services.
5. Increase well-being among children and families.

## Program Results

1. Integrated substance abuse treatment and child welfare.
2. Increased child welfare's awareness of, attention to and understanding of substance abuse.
3. Engaged families in substance abuse treatment.
4. Developed a substance abuse policy in DFS.
5. DFS adopted a new substance abuse assessment form.

## Outcome Evaluation Results

1. Only 55% of the expected number of families was served primarily because families needed services from the substance abuse counselor for an average of three times longer than expected. The substance abuse counselor worked with families for about nine months rather than the anticipated three months.
2. The project resulted in cost savings.
3. Foster care days were reduced but not by as much as expected. Foster care days were reduced by 14% rather than the desired 50%.
4. Insufficient data was available to assess objectives 4 and 5.

## Evaluation Conclusions

1. Continual cross training is critically needed in order to integrate substance abuse treatment services and child welfare services.
2. Integration is an evolutionary process that involves developmental changes at all organizational levels.
3. Substance abuse counselors working jointly with DFS case workers is the most effective model for DFS case workers to learn to recognize and respond to substance abuse. Years of education and training did not have the same effects as “on-the-job” training working directly with substance abuse counselors.
4. Substance abuse counselors must understand child safety issues and be able to adopt, at least when initially working with cases, a harm reduction approach to substance abuse.

## Research Issues

- Random Assignment
- Sample Size
- Program Development Stage
- Cost Neutrality

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