

Differences Between Mother and Father Perpetrators on Child Maltreatment Foster Care Outcomes: An Emphasis on Hispanic and Native American Families

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Abstract : Background and Purpose: Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) families impacted by child protective services (CPS) continue to be a population in literature where little is known. There is less known about the fathers of these children and the safety or risk factors attributed to child maltreatment and case outcomes. However, it is known that involving fathers in children's lives is needed for healthy development, academic achievement, and cognitive development. The few articles that have studied the impacts of engaging fathers in the CPS have found that children in general experience shorter times in foster care, are likely to reunify with their biological family, and overall have better case outcomes. The purpose of this study is to determine whether perpetrators identified as the mother, father, or both impact foster care placement in Hispanic and AI/AN families in CPS. Methods: Using NCANDS Child File data, the selected reports submitted in FY2017 with at least one substantiated allegation, i.e. those with perpetrator information. Reports were categorized into one of three categories: mom-perpetrator-only, father-perpetrator-only, and both. Reports that did not fall into any one of these three categorizations were omitted (<18%). Lastly, only reports where the mother and father self-identified as Hispanic or AI/AN were kept. Foster care placement was measured if any child in the report was placed within three months of the report date. Multilevel Logistic Regression models (random intercepts at the state and county) were used to model the relationship between report-parent type and foster care placement. Controls included Maltreatment types, number of children, any prior reports, and age of the youngest child. Results: For AI/AN reports, 64% were mom-perpetrator-only, 20% were father-perpetrator-only, and 16% both. Father-perpetrator-only reports had 60% lower odds of placement than mom-perpetrator-only, and both had 35% greater odds than mom-only. For Hispanics, 51% were mom-perpetrator-only, 30% father-perpetrator-only, and 19% both. Father-perpetrator-only reports had 74% lower odds than mom-perpetrator-only, and both had 55% greater odds than mom-perpetrator-only. Conclusion and Implications: Fatherhood research focused on prevention and intervention services should include Hispanic and AI/AN fathers to create culturally relevant and tailored services for both groups. By identifying differences in children's CPS trajectories conditional on fathers' involvement as a perpetrator, this analysis helps to inform where and how prevention efforts should be focused when considering variation in parental involvement for both populations. The findings indicate that the father's involvement predicts substantial differences in the probability of future placement, with the direction depending on the mother's joint involvement. Future research should investigate mediating pathways of these relationships while accounting for the unique experiences of AI/AN and Hispanic families. Each of these racial groups faces unique and differing challenges related to CPS, yet both groups have a shared understanding of the importance of fatherhood in the lives of children. Developing a better understanding of what is happening with Hispanic and AI/AN fathers as it relates to children's CPS experiences may result in new tools to reduce child maltreatment rates in these communities.

Keywords : child Abuse, child maltreatment, NDACAN, latino, native American

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