

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

2013

Social workers' perspectives on placement stability

Joseph Charles Van Campen

Susan May Copple

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Van Campen, Joseph Charles and Copple, Susan May, "Social workers' perspectives on placement stability" (2013). *Theses Digitization Project*. 4094.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/4094>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PLACEMENT STABILITY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Joseph Charles Van Campen
Susan May Copple

June 2013

SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PLACEMENT STABILITY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Joseph Charles Van Campen

Susan May Copple

June 2013

Approved by:

[Redacted Signature]

Dr. Janet C. Chang, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

6/3/2013
Date

[Redacted Signature]

Sally Richter, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.,
Supervising Field Instructor,
San Bernardino County, Children and Family
Services

[Redacted Signature]

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to obtain opinions of social workers on placement stability. Specifically the study examined social workers' opinions of present placement tools, their thoughts on alternative placement tools, and other factors that would promote placement stability for foster youth. This study employed a mixed-method design and consisted of 80 participants. Participants were recruited from San Bernardino County Children and Family Services and completed the survey through self-administered questionnaires provided by the County's data collection system. Results indicated the most common barrier interfering with placement stability reported by the participants was "uninformed or non-educated caregivers." Social workers in the study identified teenagers and older youth, 13 to 21 years of age, the population with the greatest difficulty for achieving placement stability. Implications for social work practice and policy included the implementation and use of a placement tool.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge Ms. Sally Richter and Ms. Sandra Wakcher for their assistance in obtaining approval from San Bernardino's Children and Family Services.

We would also like to individually thank Ms. Wakcher for assistance in developing the survey tool used in this study.

Most importantly, we would like to thank and acknowledge Dr. Janet Chang for the support and guidance offered throughout this project.

DEDICATION

Joseph Van Campen:

First and foremost, I dedicate this to my wife and son, Belen and Liam Van Campen, who have supported and encouraged me while pursuing a higher education.

Secondly, I dedicate this to my father, mother, and sister. Without their support and valuable guidance I would not have been able to achieve the goals that I have set forth.

California State University San Bernardino's Professor, Dr. Donna Garcia who provided me the motivation and guidance to pursue my master's degree while simultaneously delivering me an exceptional education.

Lastly, I dedicate this to my research partner and classmate, Susan Copple, thank you for being a wonderful research partner and an even better friend.

Susan Copple:

I dedicate this research to my family, friends, and academic Professors who inspired me to carry on my education and achieve my master's degree in social work.

My loving parents, Robert and Betty Copple, my brother, Thomas Copple, and Gabriel Ceja, Sr.,

continuously encouraged me throughout my graduate education, and were sympathetic and understanding when graduate school took precedence over family gatherings and events. My loyal canine companion, Bruiser, kindly understood missing walks when I was busy with research.

My talented research partner and authentic friend, Joseph Van Campen, generously conducted a majority of the coordination and logistics involved in completing this research in partnership with San Bernardino County's Department of Children and Family Services as he performed his social work field placement and internship with San Bernardino County.

California State Polytechnic University Pomona's Professors, Dr. Jack Fong, Dr. Stacy McGoldrick, and

Dr. Fernando Parra provided me the motivation to pursue my master's degree while simultaneously delivering me an exceptional education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of the Study	5
Significance of the Project for Social Work	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	10
Placement Stability	10
Negative Effects of Placement Stability	13
Interventions for Placement Stability	20
Social Worker's Current Opinions of Placement Stability	23
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction	26
Study Design	26
Sampling	28
Data Collection and Instruments	30
Procedures	32
Protection of Human Subjects	33
Data Analysis	35
Summary	36

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction	37
Presentation of the Findings	37
Summary	48

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction	49
Discussion	49
Limitations	54
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research	55
Conclusions	57

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE	59
---------------------------------	----

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	63
------------------------------------	----

APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT	65
--	----

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER	67
--------------------------------------	----

REFERENCES	69
------------------	----

ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE	73
--------------------------------------	----

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents	38
Table 2. Paternity and Family Information	40
Table 3. Central Placement Unit Promotes Placement Stability	41
Table 4. Matching System	42
Table 5. Factors that Promote Placement Stability	43
Table 6. Barriers that Interfere with Placement Stability	45
Table 7. Difficult Populations	46
Table 8. Effective Strategies or Tools	48

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this section the problem statement will be the first topic addressed. After this the authors will propose the purpose of this research project. Also discussed in this section will be the importance of this study to the social work practice and a specific section discussing the benefits of this research to Child Welfare Services.

Problem Statement

Many individuals in social service fields are familiar with the foster care system. According to Rosenfeld et al. (1997), foster youth are at greater risk of being impoverished, experiencing traumatic events, and facing a multitude of emotional challenges. The foster youth that are in out-of-home placement are faced with these disadvantages and many more (Harrison, 2009). When facing these challenges foster youth can face a great deal of instability in their lives. According to Harrison (2009) a working definition for placement stability is, "An environment which provides ongoing highly skilled assessment of the child's framework whereby all parties

work jointly to promote the stability of the placement, which in turn supports the child in achieving their full potential" (p. 7).

Simply said, placement stability refers to two or less negative placement moves in a 12-month period (Rubin, O'Reilly, Xianqun, & Localio, 2007). Factors that impact placement stability have been heavily researched in last decade by many County Child Welfare agencies. The key component of placement stability is a consistent environment where youth may thrive. When stability is lacking in a placement, the end result is often higher levels of delinquency for youths that experience placement instability (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Lewis, Dozier, Ackerman, & Sepulveda-Lozakowski, 2007; Ryan, Marshall, Herz, & Hernandez, 2008). Knowing the importance of attachments and the consequences of an instable environment, placement stability has become a pertinent topic in Child Welfare.

Periods of instability may typically occur around adolescence or young adulthood for many people, however, for foster youth that experience placement instability while in foster care, these unstable periods occur with greater magnitude. Instability while in out-of-home

placement has become a pressing issue for foster youth. According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (2011), from 2002 through 2006 roughly 20 percent of youth in foster care had three or more placements per 12 month cycles. On average there are roughly 400,000 youth in the foster care system annually, meaning that roughly 80,000 foster youth are experiencing instability, and all of its negative ramifications, while in out-of-home placement (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011).

The importance of placement stability has caused the governing agencies of Child Welfare to reform legislation and make placement stability for foster youth a priority. Riverside and San Bernardino counties believe placement stability has a pertinent impact on foster youth; because of this, placement stability was included in their System Improvement Plans (SIPs). If the County's Child Welfare departments found it necessary to include placement stability on their SIPs, it is an indication that San Bernardino, Riverside, and other Child Welfare agencies are concerned with placement stability (A. Reyes-Robbins, Executive Director and Founder Child Law Research, personal communication, May 15th, 2011). By including placement stability on their SIP's the counties are also

acknowledging that there is a problem with maintaining a stable placement for foster youth who are in the system.

Many counties have implemented the use of placement units, rather than leaving placement choices up to individual social workers, to improve placement stability (S. Wakcher, Statistical Analyst HS-legislation and Research Unit, personal communication, September 12th, 2012). This is the most common intervention being implemented at both the local and national levels to assist in increasing placement stability.

Placement Stability has become a significant problem in Child Welfare to the extent of influencing federal legislation (Ryan & Testa, 2005). Instability in out-of-home placement has been linked to countless problems with the foster youth who have experienced it. Risky sexual behavior is seen in former foster youth who experienced instability while in placement (Stott, 2012). Along with risky sexual behavior, placement instability has been linked with an increase in oppositional behavior, "problem behaviors", and increased risk of delinquency for foster youth who experience instability (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Lewis et al., 2007; Ryan et al., 2008).

In both Riverside and San Bernardino counties, placement stability has a success rate of approximately 69 percent (Needell et al., 2012). This means that roughly 200 children in the foster system of each of these counties experiences the negative effects of instability while in placement. Despite an abundance of research exploring the causes and costs of unstable placement in foster care, very little research has looked at the opinions of the social workers who work with these youth on a daily basis. It is essential to gain the knowledge of the social worker to learn about contributing factors that hinder placement stability. Aside from the foster youth themselves, the social workers play the biggest role in their placement choices and options. Despite this, there remains a lack of research addressing the opinions of the social workers pertaining to placement stability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this present study is to obtain the opinions of current social workers on placement stability. Specifically, the researchers wish to obtain the opinions of current social workers regarding present

placement tools and whether there could be better placement tools which identify factors that would increase placement stability with foster youth. As previously noted, in San Bernardino County 69 percent of foster youth experience placement stability, which equates to roughly 31 percent of foster youth in San Bernardino County are experiencing instability while in out-of-home placement (Needell et al., 2012).

There has been research conducted on the effects that placement instability has on former and current foster youth (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009; Lewis et al., 2007; Ryan et al., 2008). This is a clear indication that placement stability is a problem within the social service field, specifically within Child Welfare. Other research has indicated that foster youth were concerned about placement instability too (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). However, these previous studies have not conducted research on the opinions of social workers. It is important to note that although there appears to be a multitude of research on placement stability; placement stability is a term that was coined around the beginning of the millennium.

Considering all of these factors, it is clear that placement stability is a problem in foster care that needs to be addressed. With placement stability and the negative ramifications of instability becoming problematic, placement stability has begun to influence social work practice and policy. Struggles with placement stability have led Child Welfare Departments to rewrite their current policies regarding placement stability in hopes of improvement. These changes have affected the social workers who make placements choices for their clients. Conducting research on this topic will provide an assessment of the immediate effects improved placement tools will have on current foster youth.

For this study, the data will be collected through online survey questionnaires administered by the County's data collection system. Potential participants will respond to link emailed to them; through this link potential participants will be directed to the online survey posted through the County's data collection tool. The target population will be current social workers employed by San Bernardino County. The survey will include three different sections. The sections will be

closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and a demographics section.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Gaining the opinion of current social workers on placement stability can provide invaluable information for the County of San Bernardino. In asking questions of social workers, the researchers will be able to obtain valuable insight on social workers' perceptions of factors that promote placement stability that have not yet been researched. The results the researchers obtain assist in facilitating recommendations on possible improvement strategies pertaining to placement stability. This information will be valid as it is the direct opinion of social workers who deal with placement decisions on a daily basis and simply not the researchers' opinions.

In terms of the generalist model, this study is using the evaluation stage. The researchers are evaluating the use of current placement tools and gaining input as to what other tools could be more useful. Because the opinions of the social workers have not been heavily researched before, this study will present social

work research with direction for future research regarding placement stability. The intended purpose of this study is to get the opinion of current social workers on placement stability and how it could be improved.

This study is dealing directly with a problem many foster youth face that are in out-of-home placement. Results from this study can directly benefit the Child Welfare System at either the local or the state levels. Results can offer valuable insight into factors that assist in facilitating higher placement stability rates which can influence possible changes in current legislation. Another possible outcome of this study and the impact it may have on the Child Welfare System is offering social workers alternative methods or tools to assist in promoting placement stability.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are growing concerns about placement stability for foster youth, as evidenced by the State of California's Health and Human Services Agency Department of Social Services All County Information Notice number 1-31-12, regarding Best Practices for Placement Stability (Jones, 2012). In order to properly evaluate the factors that affect placement stability, a comprehensive review of literature is warranted to identify the definition of placement stability, the impact of placement stability on foster youth, current interventions and best practices, and social workers' opinions about challenges to achieving placement stability. Identification of the most salient factors affecting placement stability will allow Child Welfare Services (CWS) to have a comprehensive understanding of what can be done to increase placement stability.

Placement Stability

No exact definition exists which exactly qualifies placement stability. According to James (2004), current

studies have significant limitations due to their differences in concepts and methods as they pertain to what constitutes a placement and a placement change. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) defines placement stability as, "no more than two [placements] for a single foster care episode", (2010, p. 4). For the purposes of this research, San Bernardino County's definition of placement stability will be considered and is described as two or less placement moves within two years of dependency, as noted in the County's System Improvement Plan (SIP) (2009).

Webster, Barth, and Needell (2000) studied the placement moves experienced over an eight year period by 5,557 children in one state who entered out-of-home care between birth and age six. The study found that foster youth who experienced more than one placement during their first year of dependency were more likely to experience a lack of placement stability in long-term care outside of their own homes, in comparison to experiencing no move or only one move during their first year of dependency. The study's conclusion suggests that the selection of the child's first out-of-home placement

during dependency may be an important predictor of the child's future placement stability.

Placement stability is associated with achieving permanency for foster youth. The foster youth's inability to achieve permanency may lead to unsuccessful formations of meaningful caregiver-child relationships, which are believed to impact relationships throughout the youth's life-span. The continuity view emphasizes the importance of early caregiver-child relationships and their influence on all subsequent relationships. This view states that basic components of social relationships are shaped by the security or insecurity of caregiver-child attachment relationships.

James (2004) noted that placement changes due to a child's behavior are critical because a placement change may be upsetting and the effects of the change can diminish a child's ability to function. Some placement changes that are initiated due to a foster child's behavior may merely be a reflection of the foster family's inability to adjust to the new foster child in their home, or an indication of the foster family's need for improved coping strategies to guarantee the foster child's placement remains stable (James, 2004).

Additionally, the characteristics of the foster family play a role in placement changes, including the foster family's reactions to abuse allegations, how they handle intrusion from the foster child's biological parents, and how they utilize support from the Child Welfare agency (James, 2004).

Negative Effects of Placement Stability

According to Koob and Love (2010), children who enter foster care after the age of 11 are likely to have difficulty forming attachments with their foster family, increasing the likelihood of placement instability. This placement instability that the foster youth experience can lead to undesirable developmental results. There is extensive literature evaluating the relationship between the age of the foster youth and their likelihood of achieving stable placement.

Evidence suggests there is an "increased risk" of a first behavior-related placement change and in association with children who are older at the time of entry into the foster care system (James, 2004, p. 618). Child Welfare Services may evaluate whether special programs or interventions should be established to focus

on this age-specific population who seem to achieve lower rates of placement stability. For foster youth who experience more than one placement change within their first year of dependency, it is highly probable that these youth will experience three or more changes in placement in following years (Webster et al., 2000). This association reinforces the importance of identifying the needs of the foster child, which can be done by CWS personnel while performing a risk/needs assessment, in order to secure a proper placement setting in the foster youth's critical first months of care.

In addition to the child's age being a potential factor with placement stability, there is an association between ethnicity of the foster child and multiple placements. One study revealed that white foster children were more likely to go through several placements in comparison to black foster children (Pardeck, 1983). Additionally, Pardeck (1983) also evaluated causes for initial placement with CWS, which in addition to neglect and abuse, also included emotional problems and behavioral problems at home and school. There is a positive association between multiple placements and children displaying emotional problems. Risk/needs

assessments performed by CWS personnel should also examine school records and attempt to obtain information related to the child's behavior patterns or trends.

Also affecting the child's placement stability is their relationship with birth parents. Pardeck (1983) discovered that if a parental substance abuse problem existed, there was strong evidence that the child would experience multiple placements in foster care. Crum (2009) noted that children who have been sexually abused had more challenges with controlling their emotions and behaviors, struggled with attachment, and experienced frequent changes of foster care placements. James (2004) noted that appropriate placements must consider the level of restrictiveness required to meet each child's needs. James (2004) also indicated that placement of the foster child with kin and siblings should be attempted whenever possible and appropriate. When placement with kin is not practical, efforts should be made to place children in culturally matched homes. Placing foster children within a close proximity to their original community will assist in the facilitation of visits with the biological parent and siblings when appropriate. Additionally, changes in

placement for most foster children also imply changes in schools, friends, and communities.

Ryan and Testa (2005) studied the impact placement stability has on child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency by identifying factors associated with delinquency from two cohorts that comprised a total of 18,676 children. The results of their study indicated that children who did not experience placement stability were at double the risk of delinquency than their counterparts that experience stability (Ryan & Testa, 2005). More specifically, African American males are twice as likely to experience delinquency in comparison to white males. This statistic is especially concerning, and efforts made to decrease delinquency for this population may increase their placement stability.

Former foster youth experience more Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and higher rates of substance abuse and mental health disorders in comparison to the general population according to a study conducted by Keller, Salazar, and Courtney (2010) that evaluated 732 former foster youth. Additionally, former foster youth that experience placement instability show signs of precarious sexual activities (Stott, 2011). Lastly, there are less

than ideal statistics for former foster youth that indicate 50 percent of this population does not have high school diplomas, and that unemployment and homelessness are experienced by almost half of this group of people at some point in their lives (Stott, 2011).

Past research has also looked at how placement stability influences the behavioral well-being for children in foster care (Rubin et al., 2007). For this study, the data analyzed included 729 children from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent. The goal of this study was to identify the distinctive contribution of a child's placement stability toward their risk for behavioral problems. Behavioral well-being was measured using a composite of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and temperament scores for infants (under 2 years of age). Placement stability had three categories; early stability (long-lasting placement within 45 days), late stability (long-lasting placement after 45 days), and unstable (failure to achieve long-lasting placements for 9 months). Rubin et al. (2007) concluded that stability influences children's well-being in out-of-home placement. The researchers also found that regardless of a child's baseline risk for instability, those who

experience instability in their placement had an estimated 36 to 63 percent increased risk of behavioral problems compared those who experience stability while in placements (Rubin et al., 2007).

Hyde and Kammerer (2009) studied adolescents' perspectives on placement moves. The researchers did not have a hypothesis, as this was an exploratory study based on the gathering of information from current and former foster youth. There were 20 foster youth who participated in this qualitative study. The data was collected by performing two separate face-to-face interviews with each youth. Participants reported a range of 2 to 19 placement moves, with 90 percent reporting a minimum of four moves, since entering out-of-home care.

The sole goal of this study was to recognize the opinions of the foster youth. The study found that foster youth indeed had opinions about placement moves. Foster youth indicated that they were likely to be moved due to behavioral problems they had at a placement, because of a mismatch between the youth and the foster guardians, or due to a transition to a less restrictive environment. Another emerging answer related to their removal from placement included no knowledge of why the removal took

place, including not being informed about a move prior to its occurrence. The researchers concluding remarks indicated that these were the opinions of individuals who were experiencing possible instability while in foster care (Hyde & Kammerer, 2009). Despite these being interviews and opinions of individuals in foster care, one could conclude that there is a relation between these feelings and the conclusions in the previous studies.

Stott (2012) studied the specific relationship between risky sexual behavior and placement instability among former foster youth. Stott (2012) considered how placement instability compounds with risky sexual behavior in foster youth who have aged out of "the system." The sample consisted of 114 former foster youth. The data was collected using telephonic interviews. Risky sexual behavior was measured based upon three categories; number of partners, frequency of condom use, and frequency of other forms of birth control. Placement instability was measured by a change in the physical location. Stott (2012) found that participants had higher rates of pregnancies, increased likelihood of being parents, began sexually experimenting at a younger age, and used birth control less frequently than young adults

in the general population. These results were consistent with past research.

Interventions for Placement Stability

Kim, Pears, and Fisher (2012) studied longitudinal placement patterns for foster youth. The researchers evaluated the placement patterns while identifying groups that were at risk for multiple placements and additionally created specifically timed interventions to improve placement outcomes. Their study suggests that CWS personnel may implement a tool such as the "Placement History Chart" to effectively evaluate the experiences of foster children within the CWS system (p. 1459). The creation of a tool similar to the Placement History Chart can be valuable in assessing the scope and variations of foster children experiencing placement changes by recording events over a period of time. More importantly, the creation and implementation of a placement history chart can assist with the creation of intervention strategies that adequately service specific at-risk groups of foster children.

Mitchell and Kuczynski (2009) noted foster care's objective of reunifying children with their families and

the CWS' view of foster care as temporary experience. Mitchell and Kuczynski (2009) also pointed out that the majority of studies related to foster care and CWS policy have primarily focused on the, "services offered to children either before or after [their] transition into foster care rather than on the transition itself" (p. 184), due to CWS' intention to make foster care a time-limited or short-term experience. Mitchell and Kuczynski (2009) also noted the importance of having a social support network for children who are transitioning into foster care. Ideally, Mitchell's and Kuczynski's (2009) observation of the need for research related to the foster child's experience during transition into foster care would promote research and policy changes. Child Welfare Services does have current policies that require foster children to have visits, when appropriate, with siblings and extended family while placed in out-of-home foster care. This policy ensures the foster child maintains his or her social network while in foster care.

The subsequent studies of Mitchell, Kuczynski, Tubbs, and Ross (2009) identified the foster child's transition into foster care as a significant milestone

and claimed his study brought awareness to the importance of the foster care transitioning process for children. The research by Mitchell et al. (2009) provided an understanding of children's interpretations and evaluations of the transition into foster care. The study addressed foster care transition transactions. The findings from this research should be taken into account by CWS policy divisions and personnel, researchers, and those who provide care for the foster child during the transition into foster care.

Park and Helton (2010) confirmed that kin caregivers have a significant role in providing support for foster children in kinship care settings, and in foster care settings. Current policies that encourage the participation of kin caregivers to provide kinship care can be beneficial to foster children. Policies that support maintaining contact between kin and foster children while in foster care also benefit the foster youth by allowing them to have a consistent placement and maintain contact with their parents (Park & Helton, 2010).

Social Worker's Current Opinions of Placement Stability

San Bernardino County Child Protective Services (CWS) has examined the issue of placement instability, and identified the following goals:

Goal 1: Increase awareness of permanency options, including the services and financial payments available through those permanency options.

Goal 2: Develop placement matching process to improve stability of out-of-home placements.

Goal 3: Improve probation placement stability outcome data. (p. 4)

Although the CWS goals may be reasonable, they have not altered existing tools, nor created new tools that thoroughly provide a risk/needs assessment for placement stability as a child enters the foster care system. The use of a comprehensive and effective risk/needs assessment tool would be invaluable in improving placement stability and provide more opportunities for the child's success in life and overall well-being.

Bretherton (1992) noted the theory of attachment, which proposes secure attachment in infancy is central to the development of social competence, and also suggests

that separation between a mother and child can have negative consequences for the child as they develop through their lifespan. Consideration of attachment theory may be applicable and valuable when evaluating permanency options and factors impacting placement stability of foster youth. Additionally, Bretherton mentioned the importance of attachment theory research and its impact on developmental psychopathology interventions for families with depression, maltreatment, low social support, and families with behavior-problem children. While performing a risk/needs assessment of incoming foster youth, it may be valuable to consider the type of attachment the child had with their caregiver in order to promote placement stability. Although increased placement stability is the ultimate goal of CWS, attachment theory should also be considered when evaluating placement options. There are many foster parents who have loving relationships with their foster child, but they are not willing to adopt the foster child. This loving relationship may be comforting for the child, but is not likely to result in permanency which is the ultimate goal of social workers (Webster, 2000). This concept should be considered when assessing foster youth

and determining why they may be resistant to leaving their current placement. It is likely that social workers will find that some foster children are bonded to their foster parents, and this is the cause of the foster child's hesitance to enter a placement that would be more likely to lead to permanency.

Foster youth in the foster care system, especially those in out-of-home placements, tend to have an increased struggle with attachments. When an absence of placement stability is added to the youth's environmental stressors, foster youth have added challenges in developing secure attachments (Kamptner, 2012). Attachment theory would suggest that these foster youth do not receive enough warmth, responsiveness, consistency of presence, or sensitive ("emotional") attunement (Kamptner, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The following section is an in-depth review of the methods that this study employed. The researchers will first discuss the design this study utilized. Next will be a discussion of the sample that was recruited for the study, followed by a presentation of how the data collection process was conducted, and a description of the instruments that were used. In the following section will be a review of the procedures used in this study. The last two parts in this section include a review of how protection to human subjects was attained and a brief discussion on the data analysis procedures.

Study Design

Although there is extensive research on placement stability and factors affecting placement stability, there has not been research conducted on social workers' opinions regarding placement stability. The purpose of this study was to review the opinions of current San Bernardino County social workers on placement stability. More specifically, the researchers assessed the social

workers' opinions of current placement methods, and determined whether there were more effective placement methods that could be implemented to increase placement stability for foster youth.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods with the use of an online survey design, with both open and closed-ended questions. The goal of this method was to obtain the opinions of current San Bernardino County social workers on placement stability. Through the online survey, information was collected to determine the social workers' opinions about placement stability in regards to foster youth. The survey included an informed consent, instructions on how to use and information about the survey, the survey questions, a demographics section, and a debriefing statement; all of which were provided through the County's data collection tool. The study's participants clicked the next button on the informed consent form to indicate that they had given their consent to participate.

A mixed-methods study design was selected due to the design's ability to incorporate both open and closed-ended questions. A quantitative research design

allowed the researchers to collect a large sample while a qualitative design allowed the researchers to explore an area of research that has not previously been studied. The use of this study design provided accurate and objective data and eliminated potential biases of the survey participants or researchers. In addition, the use of the Children and Family Services data collection tool was chosen as the preferred method of delivery of the survey because social workers were more likely to participate due to the ease of completing the survey online. A possible limitation of the study could be participants not fully disclosing their answers in the open-ended question portion of the survey.

The goal of this study was to determine the opinions of current San Bernardino County social workers on placement stability and how it can be improved.

Sampling

Survey participants for this research study were recruited from Children and Family Services in San Bernardino County. The participants were located in the Central, Eastern, Western, and North Desert regions of the County. There were also 10 participants who were

located at the Placement Resources office for San Bernardino County. San Bernardino County Children and Family Services employees that were excluded from the survey included management, administrative personnel, support staff personnel, clerical staff, student interns, and volunteers. One participant did identify themselves as Deputy Director; because of the information included in their response it was included in the data set. There was no criterion required for those being surveyed in relation to their demographic profiles, including gender, age, ethnicity, length of service with department, level of education, years of experience in Child Welfare, or salary level.

The survey's sample was predicted to consist of a majority of female participants whose demographics reflect a variety of ethnicity, age, and length of service with the department. There was a concern for survey fatigue so the researchers had to eliminate several demographic questions. The researchers only asked four questions which pertained to participant's job title, current position, length of time in current position, and what region they work in. The sampling criteria for the study will include current San

Bernardino County social workers who participate in the placement process of foster youth. The sample consisted of 92 responses, 80 of which were included in the sample. These participants were recruited through the County's email database; through this email database participants were emailed a link to participate in the online survey.

Data Collection and Instruments

For this study the data was collected by self-administered questionnaires provided through the County's data collection system. The questionnaire included three different sections. The three sections were broken up as follows: closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and a demographics section.

The first section contained scaling questions that were related to placement stability. The second question contained open-ended questions that asked social workers opinions on placement stability. Specifically, it asked social workers to evaluate and offer input on current methods utilized by San Bernardino County to promote placement stability and ideas for improvements regarding placement stability. The demographic portion of the survey included questions related to the participant's

position, years of service in their current position, job title, and County region.

The dependent variable in this study was placement stability. The independent variable was the social workers' perceptions of placement stability. All elements of the questionnaire were created by the researchers because there were no previous instruments. The researchers had to create their own survey tool because there was no prior research regarding the opinions of current social workers on placement stability. Participants responded to the questionnaire questions by clicking their chosen answer or by typing in their answer in the blank sections of the survey. A potential limitation of this survey was the open-ended questions because this section allowed participants to write as little or as much as they would like and also allows for a high number of candid answers. Another potential limitation of this study was that the survey was created without the implementation of a pretest-posttest design. However, the researchers did use a pretest design to ensure reliability. In the survey, three of the seven survey questions utilized a five-point Likert scale.

Procedures

The first phase for conducting this research study included the request for approval from San Bernardino County Children and Family Services. A research proposal describing the purpose of the study and research methods to be used was submitted and approved by San Bernardino County Children and Family Services on November 1, 2012. To ensure reliability of the questionnaire, two copies of the questionnaire were provided to two current social workers at San Bernardino County Children and Family Services. The two social workers reviewed the questionnaire and offered feedback on two of the survey questions. The social workers' recommendations were to use the abbreviations used by the department as well as the full name (for example, NREFM and non-relative extended family member). Potential study participants included female and male social workers whose demographics reflected a variety of length of service with the department. Participants were recruited via the County's email database. Next, participants completed the online survey that was made available via the County's data collection tool. Data collection took place from February 25th, 2013 through March 11th, 2013.

Consent to participate in the study was obtained by participants clicking the next button on the informed consent and instruction page. The participants were instructed to refrain from listing any identifying information such as their name, address, or employee number on any part of the informed consent form in order to maintain confidentiality during the research process. The on-line survey (Appendix A) was made available through the County's data collecting tool. The survey included 11 questions, including demographic questions, and was designed to take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Upon completion of the survey, participants were instructed to read the debriefing statement (Appendix C).

Protection of Human Subjects

All participants were treated in accordance with the principles articulated in the NASW Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers, 1996) and in accordance with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2009). The questions listed in the survey did not cause stress to the participants nor were they manipulative.

The participant's questionnaires were numbered; however, this was not associated with any identifying components, which allowed for participants identity to remain confidential.

The informed consent explained that participation is voluntary and the participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants had the right to refuse to answer questions if they believed their confidentiality was compromised. The debriefing form included in the participant's packet included the researchers' faculty advisor's contact information, details of how and when the study results would be made available, and referral information if the participant believed he or she had experienced distress due to participation in the study. Although results were presented in group format, individual identity was still remained confidential. Data was stored in San Bernardino County's online database which ensured all surveys were kept confidential and only accessible by the researcher and the research department of San Bernardino County. At the conclusion of the research study, in approximately June, 2013, all data collected will remain under the supervision of San Bernardino County and all responses

will remain confidential as the only identifying information associated with the questionnaires were the numbers participants were assigned.

Data Analysis

Researchers tested to see if there was a relationship between social workers' opinions on placement stability and the regions they work in, their years of service, or job titles. The study used descriptive statistics (including measures of central tendencies and frequencies) to describe and summarize the data set. Specifically, researchers employed inferential statistics (Chi-square tests) to see if there was a significant relationship between social workers' opinions of placement stability and gender, age, or years of services in their current position. For the qualitative data portion, the researchers analyzed the survey responses and grouped together common similar answers provided by participants. Descriptive statistics were used when analyzing all data gained from the demographic section.

Summary

This section was an in-depth review of the methods that were employed by the researchers. The researchers discussed in detail the study design, sampling methods, data collection and instruments utilized, the procedures of the study, and how protection of human subjects was obtained. The section closed with a brief discussion on the data analysis tools to be used for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This section addresses the results of the study. First discussed in this section are the demographic characteristics of the respondents which are also displayed in Table 1. Next, this section reviews the first three questions of the survey that are quantitative in nature. Lastly, the section covers the last four questions of the survey which are qualitative in nature.

Presentation of the Findings

Table 1 displays the demographics of the sample. There were a total of 80 respondents in this study (N = 80). Of the sample approximately 10 percent were social worker II (SW II), 76 percent were social service practitioners (SSP), and 11 percent of the sample identified as other. When asked to identify their position, approximately 25 percent identified themselves as intake social worker, 33 percent as carrier social worker, five percent as JD writer, 11 percent as adoption worker, and 22 percent choose other. When asked how many years participants had been at their current position,

approximately 30 percent indicated two years or less, 20 percent three to five years, 12 percent six to eight years, 11 percent nine to 11 years, and 25 percent 12 years or more. When asked what region respondents worked out of, approximately 28 percent indicated Central, 27 percent indicated Eastern, six percent indicated North Desert, 22 percent indicated Western, and 11 percent indicated Placement Resources.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Job title (N = 78)		
SW* II	8	10
SSP*	61	76.3
Other	9	11.3
Position (N = 78)		
Intake SW*	20	35
Carrier SW*	57	33.8
JD Writer	4	5
Adoption Worker	9	11.3
Other	18	22.5

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Years in position (n = 79)		
2 yrs or less	24	30
3-5 yrs	16	20
6-8 yrs	10	12.5
9-11 yrs	9	11.3
12 yrs or more	20	25
Region (N = 77)		
Central	23	28.8
Eastern	22	27.5
North Desert	5	6.3
Western	18	22.5
Placement Resources	9	11.3

Note. *Special Worker, **Social Service Practitioner

Table 2 presents respondents' responses to the statement, "The information collected on the Paternity & Family Information Questionnaire (CFS 436.1/436.2) can help social workers find stable placements for children removed from home." The Chi-Square test did not yield a statistically significant difference between respondents' answers and job title or region. As shown in Table 2, approximately 78 percent of the participants answered either "strongly agree" or "agree" and 20 percent answered either "neither agree nor disagree" or "disagree".

Table 2. Paternity and Family Information

Variable (N = 80)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	18	22.5
Agree	45	56.3
Neither agree nor disagree	11	13.8
Disagree	6	7.5

Table 3 presents respondents' responses on the statement, "The Central Placement Unit (CPU) provides placement options that promote placement stability." The Chi-Square test did not yield a statistically significant difference between respondents' answers and job title or region. As shown in Table 3, approximately 42 percent of the respondents answered either "strongly agree" or "agree", 32 percent answered "neither agree nor disagree", and 25 percent answered either "disagree" or "strongly disagree".

Table 3. Central Placement Unit Promotes Placement
Stability

Variable (N = 80)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	6	7.5
Agree	28	35
Neither agree nor disagree	26	32.5
Disagree	16	20.0
Strongly Disagree	1	5.0

Table 4 presents respondents' responses on the statement, "A system that would allow social workers to match children's characteristics and needs to placement homes' characteristics and resources would help improve placement stability." The Chi-Square test did not yield a statistically significant difference between respondents' answers and job title or region. As shown in Table 4, approximately 93 percent of the respondents answered either "strongly agree" or "agree" and six percent of the respondents answered either "neither agree nor disagree" or "disagree".

Table 4. Matching System

Variable (N = 80)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	43	53.8
Agree	32	40.0
Neither agree nor disagree	4	5.0
Disagree	1	1.3

Table 5 presents respondents' responses for the question, "In your opinion, what are some specific factors that facilitate and promote placement stability?" The qualitative responses were grouped into general categories for each question. For each of the qualitative questions respondents offered approximately two different responses per question. From the responses, a total of nine categories were identified plus the category of other. For example, one participant stated, "Foster parents' willingness to work with children's problems and not give up on them"; this example was identified under the category of "Willingness of caregiver". Another major category was "Support, resources, training". An example response was, "Foster parents who are appropriately trained and prepared for the some of the behavioral

issues that foster children have." An example of a response that was classified under "other" was "Also when the caregivers are interested in adoption versus fostering only."

Table 5. Factors that Promote Placement Stability

Variable (N = 158)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Willingness of caregiver	29	18.3
Support, resources, training	25	15.8
Caregiver fully aware of child's needs	20	12.6
Culture matching	17	10.7
Placing w/relatives or NREFM*, keeping siblings together	17	10.7
Characteristics of child or foster parent	16	10.1
"Other"	15	9.4
SW** involvement	7	4.4
Maintaining contact w/bio parent/family/other siblings	7	4.4
Keep child in the same school/community	5	3.1

Note. *Non-Relative Extended Family Member, **Social Worker

Table 6 presents respondents' responses for the question, "Now, what are specific barriers that interfere with placement stability?" There were a total of 10

categories identified. An example response that was classified under the category "Uninformed or non-educated caregiver" was "Unexperienced or uninformed foster parents who do not know how to handle the behaviors of foster children in their care." An example response that was classified under the category "Youth's own mental health status, amount of prior placements" was "The amount of prior placements children have had." An example of a response that was classified under "other" was "Timeliness - placements often occur during emergencies."

Table 6. Barriers that Interfere with Placement Stability

Variable (N = 151)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Uninformed or non-educated caregivers	34	22.5
Youth's own mental health status, amount of prior placements	21	13.9
Limited/lack of services or appropriate/adequate placements	20	13.2
"other"	16	10.5
Lack of money/Inadequate home (e.g., # of kids)	12	7.9
No attempt to match child and caregiver/culture	10	6.6
Foster parent motivation (e.g., for the money)	10	6.6
Lack of good parenting/caregiver characteristics	10	6.6
Parent makes it difficult	7	4.6
FFA*	5	3.3
RAU**/CPU***	6	3.9

Note. *Foster Family Agency, **Relative Assessment Unit, ***Central Placement Unit

Table 7 presents respondents' responses for the question, "Is there a specific population where placement stability is harder to achieve (e.g., based on age, ethnicity, needs or other factors/characteristics)?" There were a total of six categories identified. An

example response that was classified under the category "Teenagers/older youth in general" was "Teenagers seem most vulnerable to placement changes due to the twin factors of their foster child status and their adolescent brains." Another major category reported by the participants was "Special needs children (e.g., mental health)." An example response in this category was "special needs children which includes mental health." An example of a response that was classified under "other" was "The LGBT population."

Table 7. Difficult Populations

Variable (N = 145)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Teenagers/older youth in general (13-21)	62	42.7
Special needs children (e.g., mental health)	26	17.9
Children w/behavioral issues	23	15.8
"other"	14	9.6
African American children/race/culture	11	7.5
Sibling sets	5	3.4
Gender (boys more difficult)	4	2.7

Table 8 presents respondents' responses for the question, "Please list strategies or tools that you have found to be effective in promoting placement stability." There were a total of six categories identified plus the category of other. An example response that was classified under the category "Open communication/giving proper info" was "Being open and honest with foster parents regarding the behaviors of the children." Another major category indicated by the participants was "Utilizing department resources" an example response in this category was "TDM has helped." An example of a response that was classified under "other" was "Respect, honesty and willingness to explore child's point of view."

Table 8. Effective Strategies or Tools

Variable (N = 128)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Open communication/giving proper info	32	25.0
Utilizing department resources	27	21.0
"other"	27	21.0
Social Worker involvement	26	20.3
Place with relatives	8	6.2
Meeting ahead of time	5	3.9
Follow-up w/children	3	2.3

Summary

This section included a presentation of the results of this study. First reviewed were the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Next was presentation of the bivariate findings. There were no relevant significant levels that were discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter is a presentation and discussion of the study's results obtained from the data collected from 80 employees at the San Bernardino County Department of Children and Family Services, of which more than three-quarters of the respondents were Social Service Practitioners. Limitations of the study and recommendations for social work practice, policy, and research will be discussed as well. Direction for future research related to the topic of placement stability will be addressed and the study will be summarized.

Discussion

The study revealed three major findings related to the social workers' perspectives on placement stability. The study's results provided the social workers' perspective that caregivers play a vital role in the outcomes of placement stability for foster youth, the social workers' identification of populations that are perceived to have difficulty achieving placement stability, and the social workers' acknowledgement of

strategies and tools that are considered to promote placement stability.

First, the social workers' perspective is that the caregiver's willingness to work with children's problems, the caregiver's refusal to give up on the foster youth, and the support, resources, training obtained by the caregiver are all important to the success of placement stability. Also, an additional perception from the social workers as to placement stability was the availability of caregivers who are interested in adoption versus fostering only. The findings of the social workers' perceptions about the caregiver's willingness to work with the foster youth, and the importance of resources and training for the caregiver are consistent with James (2004) study that revealed importance of the foster family's ability to adapt to the foster youth, and the foster family's utilization of support from the Child Welfare agency.

Second, the social workers identified populations they perceive to have difficulty achieving placement stability, which include teenagers/older youth, special needs children such as those with mental health disorders, and also children with behavioral issues.

Teenagers and older youth of 13 to 21 years of age were identified by almost 43 percent of the respondents as the specific population for whom placement stability is more difficult to achieve. James (2004) discussed placement change's association with older aged children at their time of entry into the foster care system. James' findings are consistent with the findings of this study that revealed older aged children experience problems with placement stability.

Participants in this study reported the second and third most identified factors associated with placement stability as special needs children (mental illness) and children with behavioral issues. Special needs children (mental health) were noted by almost 18 percent of respondents, and children with behavioral issues were identified by almost 16 percent of respondents, as specific populations experiencing difficulty maintaining placement stability. If the responses identifying these two populations were to be combined, the responses would account for 33 percent of the total responses received, revealing children with special needs, whether physical or mental, are a significant population that experiences an absence of placement stability. James (2004) noted

that placement changes due to a child's behavior are critical because the placement change may be upsetting and can be linked to the worsening of a child's ability to function, therefore impacting future placements as well.

Although only about 10 percent of respondents chose "Other" as a specific population with placement stability challenges, it should be noted the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) population was identified in this response, and will likely require more attention as non-heterosexual lifestyles are revealed by foster youth.

Lastly, social workers believe there are strategies and tools that are effective in promoting placement stability, including open communication/giving proper information, and being open and honest with foster parents regarding the behaviors of the foster children, and the social worker's willingness to explore child's point of view about their placement. This study found that one-fourth of the participants identified open communication and giving proper information as a key component of effective strategies and tools to promote placement stability. As to the social workers who

answered "other" to the question regarding strategies and tools effective in promoting placement stability, respect for the child, honesty with the child, and willingness to explore the child's point of view was a common theme in their answers, which is consistent with Hyde and Kemmerer's (2009) findings from their study of foster children's perspectives on placement moves. Their study found that foster youth's opinions about placement moves included themes such as, no knowledge of why their removal from placement occurred, and not being informed about a move prior to its occurrence. A social worker may provide competent service to a foster child by facilitating age-appropriate, open communication with the child. Involving foster children in their placement plans when appropriate, and notifying foster children about upcoming placement changes allows the foster child to feel they have some level of understanding and control over their placement stability.

Interestingly, more than 20 percent of the social workers noted social worker involvement as effective strategies and tools in placement stability, whereas only four percent of respondents identified social worker

involvement as an important factor in question four relating to factors that promote placement stability.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study include the absence of information and data from those directly affected by placement stability, such as the foster children, the caregivers, Family Foster Agencies (FFA's), and biological families. Social workers may be more likely to list caregivers as the most important factor in placement stability, as social workers have minimal control over the selection of caregivers, setting goals and creating means of measurement for the caregivers, and ensuring caregivers are taking steps to encourage placement stability. Social workers may over-report, or be hesitant to report the importance of their role in placement stability because this may impact their job responsibilities by creating more workload, or creating new positions within their Department. Additionally, many first placements are made without proper planning due to time constraints and the need to place the child in protective custody. Collecting data from the workers who are directly involved in the placement of children would

be useful for this type of study to determine how their actions and limitations impact placement stability.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The authors of this study recommend further comprehensive studies related to placement stability of foster youth including feedback from all parties involved in the placement process to accurately determine how each person's role impacts the placement stability of foster youth.

County foster homes, FFA's, Group Homes, Kin caregivers, and NREFM caregivers, should be interviewed as to their opinions and needs as care providers, revealing how Child Welfare can better support the caregiving community to increase placement stability. More in-depth interviews with Child Welfare social workers, supervisors, placement unit workers, and other social services personnel will also add to the information gleaned providing more data to evaluate and utilize in the creation of programs to increase placement stability. Additionally, Foster youth should be interviewed in regards to their opinions and needs related to placement stability.

Data revealed from further research should be used to augment and improve social work practice, by improving the delivery of services to foster youth. The information obtained by interviewing and surveying the parties involved in placement stability will be valuable when considering the creation of evidence-based practices to be used with foster youth, and the caregivers of foster youth.

Social work policy may be changed as well after further research by introducing and passing legislation to guarantee certain placement provisions and/or beneficial restrictions for foster youth. The further research will also be valuable in international policy creation and/or legislation impacting Child Welfare agencies and caregivers.

Lastly, information obtained through further studies will be appreciated when researchers conduct studies requiring the use of secondary data, and the information will also be helpful when assessing trends in placement stability within longitudinal studies.

Future researchers may consider the implementation and use of a placement tool to determine its impact on placement stability. This may include adjusting existing

placement tools or creating a new placement tool to determine the effect on placement stability.

Conclusions

The authors of this study believe there is still work to be completed to effectively utilize the social workers' perceptions of placement stability to increase placement stability. This future research may include focus groups with caregivers, identification of caregivers suited to work with special populations of foster youth, and the introduction of a revised placement tool to ultimately improve placement outcomes for foster youth.

The study's findings of the social workers' perceptions in regards to the importance of the caregiver's role were more significant than anticipated. Because of these findings, more direct partnerships and collaboration between the caregivers and the Department of Children and Family Services may be beneficial to the placement stability rates of foster youth within San Bernardino County.

This study did not reveal findings that were contrary to any of the existing data reviewed that

related to placement stability, or the populations affected by placement stability. Since there is no existing data on social workers' perceptions of placement stability of foster youth, the authors hope this study provides future researchers with some initial data and some clues as to areas for further research. It is the authors' wish to continue the research on placement stability of foster youth, as they are passionate about advocating for this population while recognizing the limitations faced by Child Welfare Agencies, and the challenges faced by caregivers.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

SOCIAL WORKER'S PERSPECTIVES ON PLACEMENT STABILITY

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. For the purpose of this survey, placement stability means maintaining a child (under 18) in a consistent placement, avoiding placement disruptions and multiple placement moves.

A.

1. The information collected on the **Paternity & Family Information Questionnaire** (CFS 436.1/436.2) is useful in finding a stable placement for youth that have been removed from parental/guardian care. **(Check only one)**
 1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neither disagree/agree
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree
2. The Central Placement Unit (CPU) provides placement options that will promote placement stability? **(Check only one)**
 1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neither disagree/agree
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree
3. A system that would allow social workers to match children's characteristics and needs to placement homes' characteristics and resources would help improve placement stability.
 1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neither disagree/agree
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree

B. The following questions ask for your opinions. Please write as much as you would like in the space provided.

4. In your opinion, what are some specific factors that facilitate and promote placement stability?

5. Now, what are specific barriers that interfere with placement stability?

6. Is there a specific population where placement stability is harder to achieve (e.g., based on age, ethnicity, needs or other factors/characteristics)?

7. Please list strategies or tools that you have found to be effective in promoting placement stability?

C. Demographics

8. What is your job title? **(Check only one)**

1. Social Service Practitioner
2. Social Worker II
3. Other, please specify _____

9. What best describes your position?

1. Intake Social Worker
2. Carrier Social Worker
3. JD Writer
4. Adoption Worker
5. Other, please specify _____

10. How many years have you been in your current position? **(Check only one)**

1. 2 years or less
2. 3-5 years
3. 6-8 years
4. 9-11 years
5. 12 or more

11. In which CFS region do you work?

1. Central
2. Eastern
3. North Desert
4. Western
5. Special & Placement Resources

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the opinions of current social workers on placement stability. This study is being conducted by Joseph Van Campen and Susan Copple under the supervision of Dr. Janet C. Chang Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to attain the perspectives of social workers on placement stability.

Description: Participation in this study will require participants to answer a brief electronic survey consisting of questions pertaining to placement stability.

Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation, refuse to answer questions.

Confidentiality: All of your responses will be completely anonymous. Your job title and current position will be collected; however, the researchers will not share individual data outside of the research project. Although data may be presented in a group format, the participants' anonymity will still be protected.

Duration: Altogether this study should only take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Risks: This study entails no risk beyond those routinely encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to the participants; however, results from this study will provide important information regarding improvement strategies in placement stability for foster youth.

Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about this study you can contact Dr. Janet Chang at jchang@csusb.edu.

Results: The results from this study will be made available at San Bernardino County Children and Family Services and at the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2013.

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Social Workers' Perspective on Placement Stability

**Conducted by Joseph Charles Van Campen and Susan May Copple for
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Social Work**

Thank you for your participation in this research on social workers' opinions about placement stability. The goal of this study was to gain insight into what social workers feel is assisting and hindering placement stability. For the purpose of this study the research question posed was to obtain the opinions of current social workers on placement stability and how it could be improved. If you have questions please feel free to contact the faculty member supervising this study, Dr. Janet Chang at jchang@csusb.edu. Your participation in this study was extremely valuable to the social work profession; we thank you very much for your participation.

APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT LETTER

Subject: MSW Graduate Research Project –Placement Stability

Dear Madam or Sir,

We are graduate students in the school of social work at California State University, San Bernardino. Below is a link to a survey to collect data for our research project. This is a short 10-15 minute survey about your perspectives on placement stability. If you choose to participate in this survey please click on the link below and you will be presented with an informed consent page. The informed consent page will review the purpose of this study prior to you answering any of the survey questions. Your participation with our research is greatly appreciated!

[URL]

Thank you for your time,

Joseph Van Campen
vancampj@coyote.csusb.edu

Susan Copple
copples@coyote.csusb.edu

REFERENCES

- Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2011). *Foster care statistics 2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.
- Crum, W. (2009). Foster parent parenting characteristics that lead to increased placement stability or disruption. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(2), 185-190.
- Harrison, A. (2009). *Placement stability: Research handbook to inform practice*. Retrieved from [http://www.cambslscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Placement_Stability_Handbook.pdf#search="LSCB handbook"](http://www.cambslscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Placement_Stability_Handbook.pdf#search=LSCB%20handbook)
- Hyde, J., & Kammerer, N. (2009). Adolescents' perspectives on placement moves and congregate settings: Complex and cumulative instabilities in out-of-home care. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 31(2), 265-273. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.07.019
- James, S. (2004). Why do foster care placements disrupt? An investigation of reasons for placement change in foster care. *Social Service Review*, 78(4), 601-627.
- Jones, E. State of California - Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Social Services. (2012). *All county information notice number 1-31-12 (1-31-12)*.
- Kamptner, L. (2012). *Attachment: Key concepts* [PowerPoint]. Retrieved from Lecture Notes Online Web site: <http://blackboard.csusb.edu/webapps/portal>
- Keller, T. E., Salazar, A. M., & Courtney, M. E. (2010). Prevalence and timing of diagnosable mental health, alcohol, and substance use. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 626-634.

- Kim, H. K., Pears, K. C., & Fisher, P. A. (2012). The placement history chart: A tool for understanding the longitudinal pattern of foster children's placements. *Children and youth services review*, 32, 1459-1464.
- Koob, J. J., & Love, S. M. (2010). The implementation solution-focused therapy to increase foster care placement stability. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 1346-1350.
- Lewis, E. E., Dozier, M., Ackerman, J., & Sepulveda-Lozakowski, S. (2007). The effect of placement instability on adopted children's inhibitory control abilities and oppositional behavior. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1415-1427. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1415
- Mitchell, M. B., & Kuczynski, L. (2009). Does anyone know what is going on? Examining children's lived experience of the transition into foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 437-444.
- Mitchell, M. B., Kuczynski, L., Tubbs, C. Y., & Ross, C. (2009). We care about care: Advice by children in care for children in care, foster parents and child welfare workers about the transition into foster care. *Child and Family Social Work*, 15, 176-185.
- National Association of Social Workers. (1996). *Code of ethics in social work*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J.,...& Henry, C. (2012). *Child welfare services reports for California*. Retrieved 10/2/2012, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare
- Pardeck, J. T. (1983). Multiple placements of children in foster family care: An empirical analysis. *National Association of Social Workers*, 11, 506-509.

- Park, M. P., & Helton, J. (2010). Transitioning from informal to formal substitute care following maltreatment investigation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 998-1003.
- Rosenfeld, A., Pilowsky, D., Fine, P., Thorpe, M., Fein, E., Simms, M.,...Nickman, S. (1997). Foster care: An update. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36(4), 448-457.
- Rubin, D. M., O'Reilly, A. R., Xianqun, L., & Localio, A. (2007). The impact of placement stability on behavioral well-being for children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 119(2), 336-344.
doi:10.1542/peds.2006-1995
- Ryan, J. P., & Testa, M. F. (2005). Child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency: Investigating the role of placement and placement instability. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 27(3), 227-249.
doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2004.05.007
- Ryan, J. P., Marshall, J., Herz, D., & Hernandez, P. M. (2008). Juvenile delinquency in child welfare: Investigating group home effects. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 30(9), 1088-1099.
doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.02.004
- San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services and the Probation Department, (2009). *San Bernardino county system improvement plan 2009-2012*. Retrieved from website: <http://hss.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/ChildrensNetwork/PC/SIPCombinedDraft012209c.pdf>
- Stott, T. (2012). Placement instability and risky behaviors of youth aging out of foster care. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 29(1), 61-83.
doi:10.1007/s10560-011-0247-8

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families, Children's
Bureau. (2010). *The AFCARS report: Preliminary FY
2010 estimates as of June 2011* (18) Washington, DC:
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report18.htm

Webster, D., Barth, R. P., & Needell, B. (2000).
Placement stability for children in out-of-home
care: A longitudinal analysis. *Child Welfare League
of America*, 614-619.

ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Assigned Leader: Joseph Van Campen

Assisted By: Susan Copple

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Assigned Leader: Susan Copple

Assisted By: Joseph Van Campen

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Joseph Van Campen & Susan Copple

b. Methods

Team Effort: Joseph Van Campen & Susan Copple

c. Results

Team Effort: Joseph Van Campen & Susan Copple

d. Discussion

Team Effort: Joseph Van Campen & Susan Copple