

INSTABILITY OF OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY YOUTH IN CHILD AND YOUTH WELFARE

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This document is a summary of an exploratory literature review on youth from ethnocultural communities in youth protection. The investigation of factors that predict placement instability is at the heart of the study in order to better understand the elements that might influence the service trajectories of these young people. In both Canada and the United States, ethnocultural communities, particularly Blacks and Latinos, are overrepresented, unlike their White, Asian, Arab, etc. peers (Lavergne & Dufour, 2020). These adolescents are more likely to face experiences of discrimination (Casey Family Programs, 2007; Sow and al., 2020), to encounter culturally and ethnically incongruent placements (Villegas, Rosenthal, O'Brien, & Pecora, 2014), but also are more likely to be involved in the juvenile criminal justice system (Miller and al., 2014; Ryan, Perron, & Huang, 2016; Watt & Kim, 2019).

THE INCREASED RISK OF PLACEMENT INSTABILITY AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICANS

The literature reveals that not only are African American youth more likely to be placed in out-of-home placement than their white peers, they would also be at greater risk for placement instability. In addition, predictors of placement instability differ across racial groups. Among African Americans, being older, being initially placed in a non-extended family setting, and having externalizing problems increased the risk of placement instability. In contrast, only initial placement would predict instability among their White peers (Foster and al., 2011).

FORMS OF TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT

Interruptions in placement are related both to youth's initiatives and to decisions made by the youth protection system. In fact, there are three types of placement disruptions: 1) those initiated by the youth who flees or refuses the placement setting; 2) those related to an inadequacy between the youth's needs and the placement, in which case there is behavioral disruption of the youth or an inability of the setting to meet youth's need; and 3) those associated with non-compliance with state standards (Sattler and al., 2018)..

RELATIONS BETWEEN PLACEMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERRUPTION TYPE

LExtended family placements, as opposed to foster care, are less likely to be disrupted because of youth behavioural issues (inadequacy of placement) or runaway children (youth-initiated disruption), but rather because of violations of state placement quality standards. Furthermore, being placed with siblings decreases the risk of placement inappropriateness or youth-initiated disruption. However, it

would increase the risk of the placement disruption due to a breach of state regulations (Sattler and al., 2018).

TYPES OF DISRUPTION AS WELL AS ETHNIC AND GENDER DISPARITIES

Females across all racial/ethnic groups, as well as Latino-Americans, would be more prone to initiate placement disruption themselves. Yet, African Americans would be at a greater risk of a disruption due to a placement incompatibility or due to a placement that may pose a threat to their safety or well-being (Sattler and al., 2018). Additionally, once involved in the youth protection system, American boys would be more at risk for placement change (Miller and al., 2014).

EXTENDED FAMILY: A POWERFUL FACTOR IN THE PLACEMENT'S STABILITY

The literature has linked placement context to placement stability (Foster and al., 2011; Sattler and al., 2018; Schwartz, 2008, 2010). African American youth in extended family placements experience more enduring connections to people and places and spend more time in fewer placements, which contributes to greater placement stability. These youth would spend less time on average in the youth protection system than their peers in foster care. In fact, they experience few changes in their relationships and social context, which would mitigate the sense of loss associated with placement disruption.

In contrast, foster youth would experience both place and person-related losses, feeling lonely and anonymous, often cut off from relationships with siblings. Moreover, unlike foster parents, extended family guardians are more likely to be able to surround the youth with a support network that includes other family members, such as aunts or uncles (Schwartz, 2010).

CULTURAL AND IDENTITY FACTORS: KEY FACTORS IN THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE FOSTER YOUTH

The cultural mismatch between youth and their guardians is thought to have measurable negative effects on self-reports of internalizing symptoms and the level of externalizing problems reported by the foster parent (Anderson & Linares, 2012). First, the different ethnicity between the biological and foster families would be «detrimental» as it would create a sense of lack of belonging for the foster youth that reduces ethnic identity and «social ties» with the foster home. Second, a common language between biological parents and foster homes is important because it facilitates «[o]ur direct communication between guardians about the child's likes and dislikes, family routines and rules, and shared expectations, which promotes behavioral adaptation to the foster home.» (Anderson & Linares, 2012, p. 8)

In conclusion, black youth, in addition to being the most overrepresented ethnic minority in the youth protection system, would also be at greater risk of placement instability than their peers. In addition, they would be more likely to experience placement disruption related to a mismatch between their needs and the placement or related to a violation of state standards. Extended family placement, while an important factor in placement stability, would be likely to result in contact between the youth and his or her biological parents. Finally, consideration of the cultural factor is important as cultural mismatch could be detrimental to the youth in placement.

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