

Do Intensive In-Home Services Prevent Placement?

A Case Study of Youth Villages' Intercept Program

Executive Summary

PURPOSE

In this report, we describe our assessment of whether Youth Village's Intercept program (previously known as YVIntercept) had a demonstrable impact on the likelihood of out-of-home placement for children at risk of placement who were referred to the program by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS).¹ Intercept is an integrated approach to in-home parenting skill development that offers a variety of evidence-based and best practice interventions to meet the individualized needs of a family. Intercept staff work with families with children who are at risk of either entry or re-entry into state custody (i.e. foster care) so as to prevent placement. DCS staff also refer children already in custody, with the goal of increasing likelihood of reunification and reducing time to reunification. For the current study, only children who were referred to the program before their first placement were included in this analysis.

THE ANALYSIS

The study uses a quasi-experimental design, relying exclusively on administrative data. Using Intent-to-Treat analysis, all children referred to Intercept before placement in out-of-home care were included as part of the treatment group, regardless of the level of participation in services. The study used an exact matching method to define a comparison group, taking several variables and other confounds into account. Overall, the design adheres closely to evaluation requirements laid out by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse guidelines for quasi-experimental designs.

THE FINDINGS

Our evaluation of the Intercept program found that not only does the Intercept program reduce the likelihood of placement, but the program has sustained effects, beyond one-year post-treatment. Among children referred to Intercept, the average treatment effect shows that the odds of placement were 53 percent lower than the children in the comparison group, with a substantially larger impact during the six months following the start of an investigation.

THE IMPLICATIONS

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act provides funding to states for placement prevention services, provided the state child welfare agency invests in evidence-based interventions. Although a final determination rests with IV-E Clearinghouse, these *results have placed Intercept on the list of supported interventions states may consider when looking for programs eligible for transition funding under Family First.*

¹ Huhr, S. & Wulczyn, F. *Do Intensive In-Home Services Prevent Placement?: A Case Study of Youth Villages' Intercept® Program.* 1–24 (2019). Available from: <https://fcda.chapinhall.org/data-center-research/do-intensive-in-home-services-prevent-placement/>