Child Welfare Outcomes Report
Oregon Relief Nurseries 2008-2010

Beth L. Green, Ph.D.
Director of Early Childhood and Family Support Research
Center for the Improvement of Services for Children and Families
Portland State University[1]

Introduction

One of the most important goals of the Oregon Relief Nurseries is to prevent child abuse and neglect. Many of the families who receive Relief Nursery services have a history of abuse or neglect, either because parents were themselves abused or neglected as children, or because children in these families experienced maltreatment before starting Relief Nursery services. Risk assessment data collected by the Relief Nurseries when families enroll in the program suggests that 20% of families have parents with a history of childhood abuse or neglect, one of the key risk factors for children entering the child welfare system. Relief Nursery families also have high levels of other social, personal, and demographic risk factors (on average, about 16 per family) that put these children at high risk for maltreatment. Research consistently shows that the more risk factors families have, the higher the risk for child maltreatment.

Results of the 2008-2010 evaluation of Oregon's Relief Nurseries showed significant reductions in risk factors for parents who participated in the Nursery (Green & Rodgers, 2011), suggesting that services are effective in helping to reduce children's risk for maltreatment. However, it is also important to examine whether the program has reduced the incidence of maltreatment by examining actual child welfare reports and foster care placements. This report presents outcomes in these areas.

Methodology

To examine the relationship between Relief Nursery services and child welfare system involvement, PSU's Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services entered into a data-sharing agreement with the Oregon Department of Human Services, Children, Adults and Families office (CAF). PSU submitted a list of 1910 children served by the Relief Nursery during 2008-2010. CAF staff matched this list with existing administrative records of substantiated

maltreatment reports and out-of-home placement episodes. CAF data on maltreatment reports was only available starting July 1, 2005; thus, the number of reports for children prior to entry in the Relief Nursery is likely to be under-counted (that is, it is likely that some children had reports prior to July 1, 2005 that were unavailable for analysis). Foster care data was available from July 1, 2004. CAF staff then returned information to PSU about the dates and types of all substantiated abuse or neglect reports, and about dates and outcomes for out-of-home placements.

To examine the effect of Relief Nursery services on child welfare reports and foster care, we compared the frequency of maltreatment reports both before and after beginning Relief Nursery services. For those children in foster care, we examined the number of days spent in foster care before and after starting Relief Nursery services. We also examined the disposition of foster care cases before and after being involved in the Relief Nurseries, to begin to understand the role of the Relief Nursery in helping families to achieve family reunification.
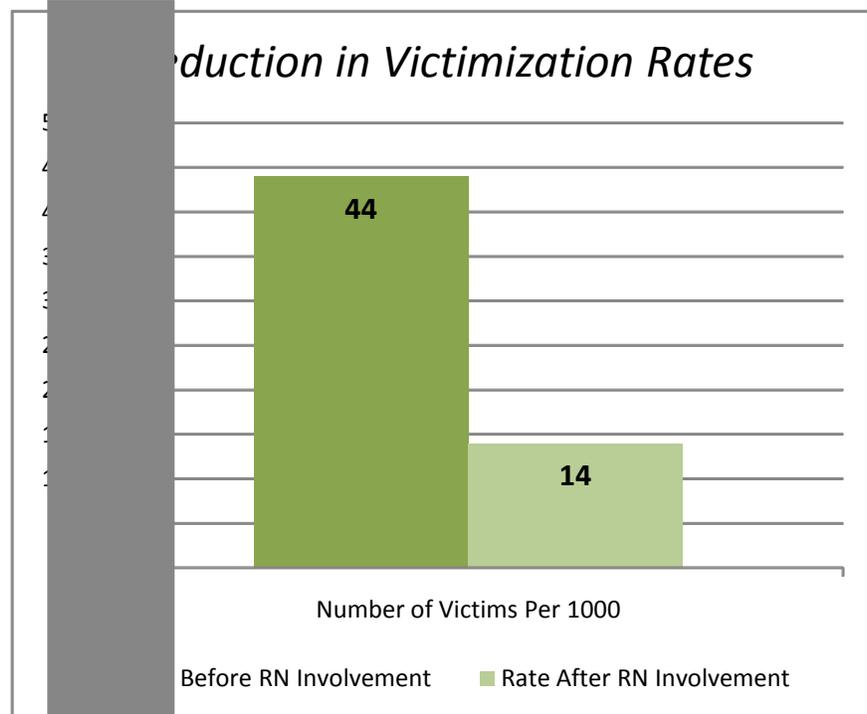
Results

Child Welfare Reports Are Reduced

Out of the 1910 children submitted to CAFS for matching, 107 had at least one substantiated maltreatment report. The vast majority of these reports involved neglect (73%, n=75 reports), or "other" types of maltreatment (n=98 reports, 91%)[2]. In Oregon, these 'other' types of maltreatment are most typically 'threat of harm', a type of abuse not included in federal reporting guidelines, but which in Oregon typically connotes domestic violence or potential danger to the child because of substance abuse in the home. Only 5% (n=6 reports) involved physical abuse[2].

The first key outcome question for the Relief Nursery was whether the frequency of child maltreatment was reduced following receipt of program services. To examine this question, we identified whether each report occurred prior to the date the family was screened by the Relief Nursery, or whether the report occurred on or after the screening date. Of the 107 victims, 12 were missing the date they were screened by the RN, and therefore their reports could not be categorized as occurring either "before" or "after" the date of screening. These 12 victims were excluded from the analysis of changes in reporting over time. Of the remaining 95 victims, 85 children had a total of 131 reports *prior* to Relief Nursery involvement. Twenty seven (27) children had a total of 30 reports *following* Relief Nursery screening, with 9 of these having their only report after Relief Nursery involvement. Only 2 children had more than one report following Relief Nursery screening, compared to 32 children with multiple reports prior to Relief Nursery involvement.

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[2] The maltreatment types do not sum to the total number of reports as each report can involve more than one form of maltreatment.

Victimization rates were computed based on the number of children with at least one report divided by the number of children served by the Relief Nursery and submitted for child welfare record review (1910). The victimization rate prior to Relief Nursery involvement was 85/1910, or 4.4% (44 per 1000). The victimization rate following Relief Nursery involvement was 27/1910, or 1.4%, (14/1000). Thus, the rate of victimization was reduced

Reduction in Victimization Rates

44

14

Number of Victims Per 1000

Before RN Involvement   Rate After RN Involvement

by 68% for children following entry into the Relief Nursery program. The likelihood of victimization after screening by the Relief Nursery was significantly lower than the likelihood of maltreatment prior to the start of Relief Nursery services (X^2 = 25.04, p=.000). In concrete terms, 58 fewer children were abused or neglected following their first contact with the Relief Nursery programs[3]. Statewide, the rate of victimization for the general (not high-risk) population of children ages 0-5 is 1.8%, or 18/1000[4]. This suggests that the victimization rate for Relief Nursery families was somewhat lower than for the general population of children under age 5. This is particularly striking given the extremely high risk profile presented by these families.

Foster Care Placements Are Reduced

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[3] It is important to note that this analysis does not control for the amount of time the child may have been "at risk" for maltreatment either before or after the start of Relief Nursery services. On average, CAF data were available for 55 months prior to the start of Relief Nursery screening, and for 22 months after, so the time at risk before Relief Nursery entry was greater than the time following Relief Nursery screening.
[4] Oregon population estimate for children under age 5 obtained from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41000.html; Number of victims under age 5 obtained from *The 2009 Child Welfare Data Book, Oregon DHS/CAF,* http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/abuse/publications/children/index.shtml.

The second key question for Relief Nurseries was whether the frequency and length of out-of-home placements were reduced following program entry. To address these questions, we compared the number of foster care placements and number of days spent in foster care for children before and after the date families were screened by the Relief Nurseries.

Following screening by the Relief Nurseries, 99.6% of children served were free from abuse and neglect

Of the 1910 children submitted to CAF, 52 children had a total of 62 out-of-home placements. Seven of these children were excluded from further analysis because of missing screening dates. Twenty-three (23) of these placements occurred entirely before screening by the Relief Nursery (started and ended before screening). Thirty-four placements were ongoing at the time of screening (that is, the placement began before the Relief Nursery was involved, but ended after the family began services). Only five placements began after screening by the Relief Nursery, and all resulted in reunification. Thus, the number of placements that started after families entered the Relief Nursery was dramatically fewer than the number of out-of-home placements for these families prior to services.

We then calculated the number of days in foster care that occurred for these children prior to and after screening by the Relief Nursery[5]. Children spent an average of 394 (with a

	Prior to Relief Nursery Services	After Relief Nursery Services
Days spent in out-of-home placements	394	179
Number of new out-of-home placements	57	5

range of 2 to 1408 days) in out-of-home placements prior to being served by the Relief Nurseries. Children spent an average of 179 (with a range of 6 to 705) days in out-of-home care after beginning Relief Nursery services. However, it is important to note that the amount of time available for analysis before and after services varied for each child, with children generally having a longer time "at risk" prior to starting the Relief Nursery (average of 594 days before starting the Relief Nursery vs. 418 days after starting Relief Nursery services).

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[5] For episodes that were ongoing, we substituted the last date of the biennium as an "end date" for these placements (June 30, 2010).

All but 1 of the placements that had reached a final disposition resulted in reunification. All placements that were ongoing when Relief Nursery services started, or which began after Relief Nursery services, resulted in reunification. Of those that occurred prior to families entering the Relief Nursery, one resulted in adoption.

Conclusions

These results demonstrate the role of the Relief Nurseries in preventing the recurrence of child abuse and neglect in a population of extremely high risk families. There were significantly fewer substantiated maltreatment reports among families subsequent to enrollment in Relief Nursery services, compared to prior to program involvement. Further, the low rate of maltreatment among the very high-risk families served by the Relief Nurseries (14/1000) compared to the overall rate of victimization statewide (18/1000) suggests that not only are Relief Nurseries preventing recurrence of abuse and neglect among families already involved in the child welfare system, they may be preventing additional high risk families from entering the system. For families involved with child welfare, Relief Nurseries also appear to play an important role in reducing children's time in out-of-home placements and in supporting family stability. A very small number (n=5) of out-of-home placements occurred subsequent to families becoming involved with the Relief Nursery; of these, all resulted in reunification. While without a formal control group that did not receive Relief Nursery services, it is not possible to state conclusively that Relief Nurseries _caused_ these reductions, these data point to an important role played by the Nurseries in preventing and reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.