

Do Intensive In-Home Services Promote Permanency? A Case Study of Youth Villages' Intercept Program

Executive Summary

PURPOSE

In this report, we describe our assessment of whether Youth Villages' Intercept program (previously known as YVIntercept) had a demonstrable impact on the likelihood a child placed in foster care would leave care to live with their parents, with relatives, or through adoption.¹ Intercept employs Bachelor's- and Master's-level family intervention specialists, who are trained to engage families whose children are in out-of-home placements in order to facilitate return to the family or transition to an alternative permanent placement with relatives or an adoptive family. Key features of the program include program intensity (meeting with families an average of three times weekly), low staff caseloads of 4 – 5 families, active 24/7 on-call availability, structured weekly supervision and consultation from a licensed clinician who is an expert in the Intercept treatment model, and staff access to online resources for treatment planning and implementation. There are two referral pathways. First, youth who are in placement with Youth Villages, either in residential treatment, a group home, or foster home, are referred to Intercept by DCS staff or by Youth Villages' staff in the residential or foster care program. Second, for youth in out-of-home placements with other agencies, DCS submits referrals for Intercept by phone, email, or online to Youth Villages' placement staff.

THE ANALYSIS

The study uses a quasi-experimental design, relying exclusively on administrative data. Using Intent-to-Treat analysis, study eligible children included young people placed into care after their 6th birthday (older than 5) and who were in care for more than 60 days. From that sample, we identified the subgroup that was referred to Intercept. For a comparison group, we used an exact matching method, taking several variables and other confounds into account. Overall, the design adheres closely to evaluation requirements detailed in the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse guidelines for quasi-experimental designs.

THE FINDINGS

Our evaluation of the Intercept program found that the program increases the likelihood of permanency. Among children referred to Intercept, the average treatment effect shows that the odds of being discharged to permanency increased, on average, by 24 percent over that for the children in the comparison group.

THE IMPLICATIONS

Public policy in the United States has long-favored shorter stays in foster care. In that policy context, interventions that increase permanency rates are especially important. On the one hand, close work with families increases reunification rates. On the other hand, close work with families frames the other permanency options in a clearer light. This study provides rigorous evidence that the Intercept program is effective in achieving these policy goals.

¹ This is the second study of Intercept. The first assessed whether Intercept lowered the likelihood a child referred to Intercept would be placed in foster care. 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/>