

Program Evaluation on 4Kids on Foster Parent Retention

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Abstract

The number of children coming to the foster care system is increasing while the individuals willing to be foster parents and take these children in their care is rapidly decreasing. There are some aspects that play a crucial part in foster parents' choice to foster children, including available resources and motivation. Research has studied why foster parents elect to foster and what leads foster parents to close their doors. For the foster care programs that provide services to foster parents, there is minimal research on foster care program evaluation regarding foster parent retention. The program evaluation aims to assess 4Kids and its effects on foster parent retention utilizing quantitative archival data from 4Kids. For this study, the hypothesis is that foster parents will continue to foster due to the services provided by 4Kids. The results from the study can offer insight into what services are needed to retain foster parents.

Key words: Foster parent, foster child, retention, foster care program

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter reviews the need for an independent program evaluation for 4Kids on the effect on foster parent retention. Foster parents play an essential role in providing a home where foster children have opportunities to grow. While foster care programs provide support and assistance to foster parents and children, there is limited research on the effectiveness of foster care programs. Research has studied why foster parents elect to no longer foster, what motivates them to stay, and what programs could offer to meet the needs of foster parents. Still, the specific effects on 4Kids and impact of programs on retention of foster parents have yet to be evaluated and verified through research. Therefore, a program evaluation is necessary.

The present study's objective is to evaluate 4Kids's impact on foster parent retention. Archival data from 4Kids will be evaluated from the last ten years regarding foster parent retention to conduct a quantitative research study. Even though foster care is generally understudied, little research examines foster care programs and their effect on foster parent retention. 4Kids has yet to be the subject of any studies on foster parent retention. Foster parents are necessary as they look after and care for those in need. According to research, contact with the case manager from the foster care program, additional training, and services offered to foster parents and children all boost foster parent satisfaction (Leffler et al., 2021, Newquist et al., 2020). When foster parents are satisfied and feel supported by foster care programs, the program can continue to offer services that motivate the foster parents to continue to foster. However, no study has completed a program evaluation on 4Kids in regard to foster parent retention. The intent of the program evaluation is to close this gap.

Background

Over 420,000 children are in foster care (Davi et al., 2021). While the number of children entering the foster care system is increasing, those that are willing to foster is decreasing. The number of foster parents is reducing as a result of many issues parents have to face. In recent years, the needs of foster children have been complex, as the children can possibly struggle with emotional disturbances (Day et al., 2018). Foster children can even have special learning needs and developmental disabilities (Bergstrom et al., 2020). In addition, there is an increase in foster children that present with substance abuse addiction which started while in the womb. Further, foster children can present with aggression and emotional distress (Leitz et al., 2016). Foster parents will no longer foster if they feel the foster children could physically threaten the family (Leathers et al., 2019). More complex and demanding care needs can result in foster parents electing to foster no longer.

Children that enter the foster care system can bring negative habits established from their previous home environment. The challenges result in foster children with additional needs that can make them vulnerable. Caring for children who have been exposed to trauma or abuse can result in foster parents needing to provide a higher level of care (Kassboll et al., 2019). For foster parents to meet the high level of care needed, foster care programs need to provide support and services. If services and support are lacking, it can be difficult to prepare foster parents with the training needed to meet the needs of foster children.

Foster parents can experience opposing demands that can be stressful. Stressful situations can include foster children returning from visits with their birth parents, children returning to their homes, and having to go through the court for decisions to be made regarding the foster children (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007). If foster parents are stressed, it can affect the foster

parent's well-being, and additional stress can influence their physical and mental health, which in turn can impact the care provided to foster children (Mancinelli et al., 2021). The foster care system can be challenging to work through. Foster parents are not satisfied with foster care programs as needs such as appropriate emotional support and adequate training have not been met (Mancinelli et al., 2021). Foster care programs have the opportunity to equip foster parents to feel sufficiently trained to overcome the challenges.

Being a foster parent can also be demanding, stressful, and financially taxing. Foster parents receive monetary compensation; however, the compensation that is received is found to not be enough to offset the expenses of caring for the foster child (Geiger et al., 2018; Cooley et al., 2015). When children are removed from their homes and enter the foster care system usually come with nothing of their own such as clothes or daily use items. Foster parents state that the monetary amount provided is insufficient to support a child deprived of the basic necessities. Individuals that do not have the extra disposable income may elect to no longer foster.

Given the challenges of fostering, foster parents need support during stressful and challenging times. Being a foster parent is demanding. When foster parents are stressed, it can negatively impact their confidence when caring for foster children (Whenan et al., 2009). If foster parents do not have strong parenting skills, it can result in the foster parent electing to no longer foster. During these challenging times, foster parents need assistance and guidance from the foster care program to overcome these challenges. The lack of interaction and services available from the foster care program has been referenced as a factor for foster parents to no longer foster (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007). Foster care programs have the opportunity to provide support and offer additional training to increase foster parent confidence to retain foster parents.

Foster parents are an essential component in providing foster children with a safe and dependable environment. Foster parents who received support from the beginning during the licensure process were more likely to continue fostering (Howell-Moroney, 2013). Foster care programs that can evaluate the needs of the foster parents regarding what foster parents need in order to feel satisfied and motivated, that can lead to continuing to foster.

Program Information

4Kids assists children and families in eleven Florida counties located in the east and west coast, with four regional agencies in Southwest Florida, the Treasure Coast, Palm Beach County, and Fort Lauderdale. 4Kids's main mission is to offer hope for children in need and train and equip foster parents to meet those needs. 4Kids is able to offer hope, healing, and homes through collaborations with local churches, businesses, and government programs. 4Kids partners with numerous local churches in the four different counties to recruit individuals that want to foster. 4Kids will not turn an individual or couple away that are interested in becoming foster parents if they do not have any experience with fostering or raising children, as they have training classes and resources available for foster parents. 4Kids's vision is that every child has a home. One unique feature 4Kids is that it has homes that can keep siblings together.

4Kids conducts all recruiting of foster parents through connections with local churches. Individuals or couples interested in fostering through 4Kids first have to complete the interest form on their website. Once the form has been completed, the individual or couple is contacted within three business days to begin the onboarding process.

When the individual or couple is set to begin the onboarding orientation, 4Kids will get them scheduled to start the orientation at a location that is nearest to the individual. If there is no orientation on the schedule, 4Kids will conduct the orientation with two individuals or couples or

offer them to attend a class at a different 4Kids location. In addition to the necessary training and licensure courses to become a foster parent, 4Kids requires individuals or couples to take an additional eight-hour course regarding Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). Further, 4Kids has designed a therapeutic approach (Emotional, Physical, Intellectual, Character / EPIC) for those children who have exposure to trauma that assist with healing, in which the EPIC Training for foster parents is optional.

EPIC is a therapeutic method for educating parents on how to gain the influence of trust-based relationships. EPIC training is constructed on the foundation that God shaped all individuals with physical, psychological, and character-based needs. The EPIC Training provides individuals with a trauma-informed perspective when parenting foster children so the needs of the children are met. Children who experience trauma may present with behavioral issues, anxiety, depression, and attachment issues. Working through the past trauma can be overwhelming for foster parents and child. The main goal of EPIC is to educate those working with foster children on how to look past the behaviors and get to the root of why a child can exhibit certain actions.

Along with providing additional training for foster parents, 4Kids offers foster parents monthly support group meetings. In addition, 4Kids hosts events for foster parents and children that include: a parent's night out, providing school supplies, hosting foster family picnics, and a Christmas party. The additional support from 4Kids in regard to receiving therapeutic support with EPIC, TBRI course, and foster families having the option to receive support from the FAM Team can increase foster parent retention.

4Kids has a church engagement team that completes the Family Advocacy Ministry Team (FAM Team) recruitment. The FAM Team consists of volunteers from the local churches

who partner with 4Kids to assist foster families. The FAM Team can assist foster families with running errands, preparing meals, or providing transportation assistance. The FAM Team is there to provide additional support to foster parents to assist during challenging times.

Problem Statement

The foster care system has been negatively noted for failing to meet the needs of foster children and parents. Foster parents can get aggravated with the foster care system as there is little support and is challenging working through a disorderly system. However, getting to the root of the aggravation is complicated. There is a combination of elements that make foster care difficult for those who enter and elect to foster. For those involved in the foster care system, there are multiple layers that one has to go through while providing care to a child. The multiple layers include foster care program case managers, courts, advocates, and guardians. Foster parents are obligated by the foster care system's instructions and have the system making the choices for the child. Having to go through multiple individuals to care for a child can be challenging and impact the decision to remain a foster parent.

Between 30% and 50% of foster parents give up fostering each year (Davi et al., 2021). The decrease in foster parents is a result of issues such as the foster child's behaviors, interactions with the foster child's biological parents, or participating with a foster care program that does not provide adequate services (Cox et al., 2003; Davi et al., 2021; Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007). As a result, there need to be more homes, as more foster children are entering the system than foster parents are available. Foster care programs can assist those who want to foster by offering resources and encouragement in overcoming the hurdles of fostering. Moreover, the connection amongst foster care programs and foster parents, their contentment, and motivation levels were noted as key factors impacting retention rates (Hanlan et al., 2021; Leffler et al.,

2021; Newquist et al., 2020). The problem at hand is 4Kids a faith-based foster care program that has not been empirically evaluated regarding the effect on foster parent retention.

Faith affiliations and the possible positive outcome from the affiliations is seldomly discussed in the research. Even though not discussed, faith affiliations provide additional resources to offer foster care programs. Howell-Moroney (2014) suggests that future research should examine how faith programs work to support and assist foster parents. Further, others suggest a need to examine whether additional support impacts retention (Ahn et al., 2017). Given that 4Kids is a large program in different locations throughout Florida should be evaluated to discover the effect of foster parent retention.

Purpose Statement

The current study examined the effect of 4Kids on foster parent retention. The study employs quantitative research using archival data from 4Kids to evaluate foster parent retention. The archival data includes no identifying information.

Since the number of foster parents in the US is decreasing each year steadily (i.e., 30% to 50%) (Davi et al., 2021), this research could benefit foster care programs by highlighting programs that best assist foster parents and children. The results could subsequently support foster care programs in assisting foster parents and children in having less difficulty adjusting to the new environment. A healthy and secure environment will allow foster children to perform well in everyday activities and improve their academic performance. Moreover, the findings from this study can instill a more profound compassion and comprehension of the services and care provided by foster parents.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to lend insight into what specific services, whether that be additional parental training, therapeutic therapy, or activities for foster parents and children, positively influence on foster parent retention. The result could guide other programs on what services to offer to foster parents to increase retention. The literature regarding foster care program evaluation is limited, so this works seeks to begin to address that gap in the research (Schoemaker et al., 2020; Lotty et al., 2020).

The foster care system has been criticized for failing to meet the needs of foster children and parents. The analysis offers quantitative outcomes reviewing the influence of 4Kids on foster parent retention that has not been previously reviewed in published research. Analysis of archival data provides measurable results to assist the future growth of foster care programs. The outcome of the analysis can assist in growing quantifiable practices for the specific foster care program 4Kids.

The lack of foster care program evaluations from non-profits often results from the non-profit not having the time or resources to conduct program evaluations. State programs do not want to release information as many times foster children and parents have unmet needs. For example, mental health services are a need that often goes unmet for foster children (Conn et al., 2018). The community may have services available; however, with placement disturbances, lack of agreement from guardians, health insurance barrier, and the lack of provider accessibility or availability limits access. The study can offer direction for improving foster care program practices which can improve foster parent satisfaction that can lead those to continue to foster.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does 4Kids effect foster parent retention?

RQ2: How does participation in FAM Team impact foster parent retention?

RQ3: How does participation in EPIC Training impact foster parent retention?

Definitions

Foster care: Foster care is a temporary placement arrangement for children who a child protective service worker or court has deemed not able reside safely at home (Leathers et al., 2019)

Retention: The length of time to continue to provide care between 8-14 months (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007)

Motivation: The general desire or willingness of someone to do something (Davi et al., 2021)

Attachment: A feeling of a strong connection to someone (Friedman et al., 2014)

Satisfaction: One's necessities or expectations are being met (Clearly et al., 2018)

Summary

The study analyzed the effect of 4Kids on foster parent retention using archival data. There is a demand for individuals who are open to foster. Recruiting, educating, and training foster parents is challenging. Assessing the effect of 4Kids on foster parent retention provides valuable information that can direct the future of foster care programs. Further, the study provides insight into what services or programs satisfy foster parent needs. In doing so, the program evaluation of 4Kids provides empirical findings that address the current research gap.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter reviews Attachment Theory's theoretical framework and the empirically supported evidence that examines the components that impact foster parent retention to establish the necessity of independent studies that explore foster care programs. The primary goal of the analysis is to review what foster programs can offer to foster parents to fulfill their needs. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of foster care programs, evidence supporting what impacts foster parent retention is reviewed. One of the primary purposes of the evaluation was to determine how to better retain foster parents and exploring how foster care programs can fulfill their growing needs that motivate and demotivate the drive to foster children.

The chapter includes two main parts. First, is the theoretical framework and the literature review. The review of the literature explains different factors that impact foster children's behaviors and cognition. Further, the literature review details factors that motivate foster parents to take in foster children despite the hurdles associated with the process and how additional training and resources can improve the outlook for fostering children. Lastly, the literature review examines the importance of mental health interventions for foster parents and children.

Theoretical Framework

Resource theory has been utilized by others for an explanation on what leads individuals to elect to foster (Davi et al., 2021). Resource theory defines what one individual or group is able to offer to another individual to assist with satisfying their needs and goals (Davi et al., 2021). Foster parents who have additional support and resources can deliver increased motivation to foster and may expand the chance of fostering, as an absence of resources can be

an obstacle (Davi et al., 2021). The number of resources an individual or a couple has influences their motivational force to foster children. Someone who may not have the basic resources themselves may not be able to offer the basic resources foster children need.

While the resources provided and made available are important to foster parents, this paper will focus primarily on the role of Attachment theory and how it can help with retaining foster parents. Attachment theory can be summarized as a psychological behavior through which human beings exhibit a close connection (Moretti et al., 2020). The earliest attachment occurs between a child and their caregivers, which some psychologists and behaviorists believe is a learned behavior (Snyder et al., 2011). For example, when a child finds themselves attached and dependent on their caregivers, the caregivers also develop a sense of dependence on the child to achieve joy and comfort.

A strong sense of attachment between the child and the caregivers is important, especially when it comes to foster parenting. Attachment to caregivers helps children feel safe and secure. Positive attachments is for foster children to experience. The development of positive attachment is equally important for foster parents. Strong attachment with a foster child or foster children acts as a motivational force to keep on fostering these children (Cole, 2005; MacGregor et al., 2006; Konijn et al., 2019; Miranda et al., 2019).

Related Literature

Foster care was created to provide support for children who were not able to be cared by their biological parents. When it is not suitable for children to remain in their homes, foster care or even kinship care is the next option to provide children with a safe and secure environment. The length of stay in foster care can range from short to long term. Many children who come

into the foster care system are in danger of unhealthy developmental, emotional, and learning outcomes, as well as substance abuse and other issues that can result in foster placement disturbances (Lynch et al., 2017). No matter what the kind of arrangement, foster parents play a vital part in the children that are in their care.

Placement

Before placement, foster care programs must quickly evaluate if kinship care is an option, consider the child's strengths, the foster parent's availability, and the location of the child's current school. Entering the foster care system, there are various alternatives for placement: kinship care, foster homes, or group homes. Foster care is meant to be a place where children have a safe and stable placement during a challenging time. While there are positive and negative impacts regarding the type of placement, research affirms when a child goes into foster care, a preferred selection for placement would be kinship care (Ryan et al., 2016).

Kinship is a preferred preference for placement for foster children. Putting a child in kinship care means giving children to the care of immediate or extended family members such as siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents (Ryan et al., 2016). When children are taken from their homes, being able to be put with family or friends of the family is able to reduce the trauma experienced (Leathers et al., 2019). When children are placed in kinship care, siblings are more likely to stay together (Konijn et al., 2019). Children placed in kinship care have better emotional and psychological outcomes (Ryan et al., 2016). Research establishes that families who care for children are more likely to provide assistance when challenging behaviors occur rather than requesting for the child to be removed (Font, 2015). Thirty-two percent of children adopted from foster care are adopted by family (Ryan et al., 2016). Relatives may not want the child to be placed with an unknown individual in an unfamiliar environment, so if the parental

rights are terminated, the relative often decides to change their role and become the legal parent of the child. Foster children who are in kinship care have the opportunity to maintain their culture along with the relationships with those in the biological family.

Placement in kinship care has many positive components. Placement within a relative or family friend reduces the risk of trauma that the foster child might experience otherwise, especially separation from siblings because kinship care is more likely to take in large sibling groups. Compared to foster families that might not be able to accommodate all siblings under one roof, so they might only take in one child under care. In most cases, kinship placement also allows continuity of care for these children more than foster care with unrelated families (Ryan et al., 2016). Research states that children growing up in kinship care are more prone to feel loved, which positively influences self-regard and confidence (Xu & Bright, 2018). When children are at ease in their home environment, they have better self-esteem and less anxiety and worry, which leads to the child having the ability to grow and learn. While there are many benefits to kinship care, it is not always an option.

When foster children are removed from the home, children need placement that will be safe and offer stability. Foster children have already suffered trauma and can prosper if they do not switch placements regularly (Newquist et al., 2020). Foster children going from one foster family to another can encounter negative adverse effects, particularly in educational performance, as they are frequently changing schools (Fawley-King et al., 2017). Foster children who do not encounter placement disruptions have the ability to develop social support networks and their developmental stages are not impacted through the constant changes. Foster parents are at the center to encourage and support foster children to ensure their needs are being met. While foster parents are essential for foster children, foster parents can be the result of

influencing a placement disruption. Eighty-three percent of requests to remove children from home come from the request of the foster parent (Leathers et al., 2019). The request regarding a foster child to move to another foster home can be result for a multitude of reasons. While foster care is intended to be for short-term, when electing to foster children the time period for fostering can be unknown. Further, foster parents without support or proper training may request for the foster child to be moved.

Placement disruptions impact foster children, foster parents, and foster programs. If the foster care program does not have strong communication with foster parents it can result in children missing necessary services. Foster care programs that provide foster parents with the necessary emotional support can lead to increased retention rates, greater satisfaction, and improved child functioning (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007). When placement disruptions occur, it can add additional challenges faced by foster children as a result of entering a new environment, having to form new relationships, and possibly starting a new school. When foster children experience multiple moves, it can add to the additional trauma along with impacting the foster child's perception of stability.

For foster children to have a bright future, it is crucial that foster care agency case managers put the child in a home that will provide stability and awareness of how trauma affects different components of life. While foster care is supposed to offer stability, for those in foster care extending 24 months, 64% will go through three or more various placements (Finster & Norwalk, 2021). Placement disruptions can happen for a multitude of reasons. The most common reason for placement disruption is the child's behavior (Leathers et al., 2019). If foster parents do not receive proper training, behaviors can seem overwhelming. Foster children with emotional disorders are three times more likely to have three or more placements than their

counterparts (Villodas et al., 2016). When foster children move, that results in a new home, new school, and having to develop new friendships. The foster parents may not be willing or feel that they have the necessary resources to care for children with extensive behavior challenges. If the foster children are posing the threat of harm to other children in the home, then foster parents request the children to be moved (Leathers et al., 2019).

Foster homes are limited; when foster children enter the foster care system, siblings may not be placed together. Foster parents may not have the space available to be able to keep siblings together. Further, if one sibling has behavioral issues, foster parents may not feel confident to provide the care needed. When foster children are not able to be kept together can impact the trauma experienced along with the grief that comes with being separated from family. When siblings are kept together, they experience fewer behavioral problems (Linares et al., 2007). Foster children that stay together can console one another during difficult times. Foster care programs that are able to keep siblings together can reduce the number of placement disruptions, decrease emotional or behavioral challenges, and better adjust to their new environment (Linares et al., 2007). Foster care programs can assist with keeping siblings together by matching foster parents that can accommodate siblings, and if not able to be placed together make certain, the siblings can be placed close to one another.

Childhood Trauma

Children in foster care most likely have experienced some form of trauma before entering foster care. Trauma develops from physical and emotional harm directed at them or an individual close to them. The traumatic event can be one time or event or multiple events over a period of time. Trauma is an emotional response to an intense incident that threatens or causes impairment (Sullivan et al., 2016). Trauma has different types, such as physical, emotional, and

mental. Physical abuse is when one physically hurts a child (Chiang et al., 2022). Examples of physical abuse include hitting, beating, burning, or kicking a child (Sullivan et al., 2016). Most children are abused at home or by someone they know (Sullivan et al., 2016).

Emotional abuse entails controlling and manipulating feelings of fear or being extremely critical towards an individual (Stoltenborgh et al., 2012). When the child has feelings of fear or worthlessness it can be a result of emotional abuse (Stoltenborgh et al., 2012). Emotional abuse is also known as mental, emotional, or verbal. Emotional abuse can include constant rejection, hostility, yelling, or family violence (Stoltenborgh et al., 2012). Even while in foster care, if foster children are placed with foster parents who are not attentive to the child, this can add to the emotional scars.

Neglect is failing to provide physical, medical, emotional, and educational needs of the child (Stoltenborgh et al., 2012). Examples include not feeding the child or abandoning the child for long amounts of time without any supervision. Children who have poor hygiene or are frequently absent from school can be considered neglected. The impact of neglect can have a negative effect on the child. For foster children that have experienced neglect, some may show signs and symptoms immediately while others may show them over time. While each foster child can react differently to the impact of neglect, if they do not receive the needed services, it can adversely impact the child into adulthood and pass on to other generations.

The abuse or neglect that foster children may have witnessed can result to being fearful of certain adults. Even if the child has a safe environment, the trauma from the past can impact their current situation. Depending on the trauma experienced, the children's feelings of safety may be impacted by visual stimuli, loud sounds, or other feelings related to uncertain events. Children may experience being overwhelmed by how they feel or what they need and not know

how to verbally express their emotions. Children who have experienced trauma can show behaviors that individuals may not know how to respond to those actions.

Children who experience trauma show certain behaviors as a result of the trauma. Younger children ages 0-2 will not have the ability to express themselves in words if they feel afraid (Levers et al., 2012). These children can have a poor appetite, have low body weight, or scream and cry excessively as a result of the trauma (Levers et al., 2012). Children aged between three and six years who experience trauma can act out in social situations, be verbally or physically abusive or unable to trust others, and develop a friendship (Levers et al., 2012). In addition, they can experience trouble sleeping (Levers et al., 2012). Those in middle school and high school can develop mental health problems, develop eating disorders or self-harming behaviors, partake in risky behaviors, or begin using drugs or alcohol (Scott Jr et al., 2018). Children who experience trauma through ongoing exposure during early development can cause serious problems with behaviors.

Young children who have experienced and witness trauma, abuse, or neglect can have an adverse impact on brain development. Trauma experienced in the begging stages of life has been linked to a smaller cerebral cortex (Thomason & Marusak, 2017). The cerebral cortex is the area that handles the individual's capability to think, process, and be aware of the local surroundings. A foster child may experience changes that impact their way of thinking and their ability to manage their emotions, leading to increased fear or anxiety and a diminished sense of security (Cooley et al., 2020). Foster children can suffer from large amounts of stress as they can have difficulty expressing their needs and do not have assistance from a caretaker to assist with controlling their emotions (Chambers et al., 2020). Early exposure to trauma or fearful events can impact the child's brain development (Thomason & Marusak, 2017). The amygdala senses

whether an activity or change environment is intimidating in addition the hippocampus links the fear reaction to the context in which the threatening action occurred (Thomason & Marusak, 2017). The hippocampus and amygdala parts of the brain are essential in the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, influencing the regulations of thoughts, emotions, and actions (Thomason & Marusak, 2017). Foster care children are on alert to protect themselves from any potential threat. The stress experienced can impact the child's capability to settle down if he or she is constantly in alert mode.

Foster children can react differently to experiencing neglect or abuse. The impact of neglect or abuse can negatively affect the foster child into adulthood. Foster care programs can provide services to foster children to overcome the adverse effects of neglect or abuse. Further, foster care programs that offer additional training along with research-based services, so foster parents have support services along with an understanding of how abuse or neglect can negatively impact the entire domain of the foster child.

Removal

Children are separated from their parents for a multitude of harmful and negligent behaviors. For example, locking the children in a room, leaving them unfed for long durations, or suffering from drug addiction. When children are displaced from their homes, they are ultimately also removed from their school, which disrupts their friendships and sense of community. The uncertainty of where they will go and who will be there for them can be confusing and unsettling. The removal can be unexpected for the child in which they have no security showing up on a stranger's doorstep. The child can experience sadness and feel overwhelmed from being taken from the known environment.

Children can think that it is a typical day going to school or being with their biological parents, and the next thing they know, a police officer is taking them away. Even if the environment they are living in is toxic and unsafe, that environment is their only option because it is all that they have known all their life. However, depending on the age of the child can play a factor in if the child understands why they are being removed from the environment. When children are taken into custody, Child Services will find a relative or foster family to care for the child while a service plan is put into place.

Children that are not able to remain under the care of their biological parents are removed most times by police and an employee from child welfare services. Depending on the reason for removal, whether that be for the use of the illegal substance, neglect, or abuse, if the child is of age may hear the reason for removal. The terrifying moment of removal is a memory that the child may not forget the details of that day. When children are removed, they may ask questions about when they will return home, where they are going next, or if the siblings will be able to stay together. At the moment of removal, they may not be able to get answers to those questions. Children not at an age to understand the reason for removal can have a difficult time reasoning why they were removed from their birth parents. No matter the child's age, being removed from their biological parents can be traumatic.

Trauma Impact on Domain Areas of Life

Foster children who have experienced trauma, abuse, and disrupted attachments are more likely to develop psychological or behavioral challenges. Children in foster care are likely to develop problematic eating habits (Norrish et al., 2019). Children who experience trauma and are not able to establish attachments, in addition to not being able to regulate emotions, run the risk of problem eating. Foster children can overeat to find comfort and self-soothe, and on the

other end, can isolate and create distance (Norrish et al., 2019). Foster children may not have experienced different types of foods and are picky eaters. Further, foster children who have not had basic needs can overeat if they are not certain they are going to get another meal. Foster parents possess the chance to assist with developing secure attachments. Foster parents ought to be aware of how secure attachments can impact components of children's behavior in regard to eating.

The number of children entering foster with emotional, mental, or physical concerns is increasing. Children subjected to parental drugs, abuse, or neglect, are at a greater risk of developing health problems (Cecil et al., 2017). In addition to suffering and undergoing trauma, foster children are also highly susceptible to developing mental health disorders (Enger et al., 2020). The research found that foster children are more likely to develop a mental health disorder (Burns et al., 2004). Furthermore, foster children who have experienced mistreatment can also develop developmental delays because of the abuse (Goemans et al., 2016). Experiencing abuse can also impact how the brain receives and processes information. In order for foster parents to feel confident in their ability to parent, they need to understand how trauma negatively impacts different areas of life.

Academic Challenges

Foster children can find academics challenging. Factors that contribute to academic challenges for foster children include multiple school relocations, attending schools that are rated lower, disrupted attendance, and unmet necessities for mental health services (Fawley-King et al., 2017). In addition, foster-care children are twice as likely to receive special education for learning disabilities (Powers et al., 2012). When foster children experience numerous moves, it is not certain that the child will continue in the same school. With the combination of

developmental delays along with moving schools, the child runs the probability of falling behind. For children to be able to flourish, they need consistency and predictability from foster parents.

Trauma

Foster children, assessed to their counterparts, are more in danger of developmental impediments (Begum et al., 2020). Early neglect and maternal abuse of drugs or alcohol can result in premature birth that can cause developmental delays (Guille & Aujla, 2019). Foster children who go through sustained trauma or maltreatment can put their bodies into constant fight or flight mode, which can impact the brain (Terpou et al., 2019). Foster children are likely to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from the abuse and neglect experienced (Salazar et al., 2012). Foster children that develop PTSD can impact multiple different domains of their life. For example, foster children with PTSD can see challenges in relationships with others, experience nightmares and behavioral issues, or be sensitive to specific environments. For foster children to be able to overcome PTSD, need to be able to access therapeutic services. Research demonstrates that experiencing trauma can alter how children think, behave, or act (Conn et al., 2018). In addition, trauma can lead to memory problems (Bucker et al., 2012). Further, children who have been abused can impact the brain's emotional response and mental health (Hein & Monk, 2016).

Children who go through continuing and constant abuse are more likely to develop a depressive disorder (Stoner et al., 2013). Undergoing trauma and not having a supportive environment can influence how one feels about themselves. Early traumatic experiences have a dramatic influence on the development of representations related to oneself (Wu et al., 2020). Those who do not know how to cope with past experiences can end up engaging in maladaptive behaviors to cope with their feelings.

Those who have experienced abuse and neglect are more likely to abuse substances (Garrido et al., 2017). Foster children can resort to turning to substance abuse to disguise the distress brought on by maltreatment and trauma. Youth in foster care appear to begin substance use earlier than their peers (Blake et al., 2018). Partaking in dangerous and unsafe behaviors can have a serious and harmful adverse progression in adulthood.

Childhood experiences will carry over into adulthood. Research has examined the negative impacts of early trauma and mental health problems into adulthood (Huh et al., 2017). Individuals who have not had the opportunity to work through the trauma may believe these behaviors are acceptable. The adverse effects of abuse and neglect experienced in childhood can have negative outcomes that carry over into adulthood.

Attachment

Foster parents not only need to be aware of how trauma can impact different areas of life but also of the importance of attachment. Attachment disorders develop in foster children as a result of not having stable caregivers, which results in difficulties establishing a deep connection with new caregivers (Bovenschen et al., 2016). When foster children lack the ability to develop attachments, it can have negative impacts in multiple domains of life. Foster care agencies need to ensure placement will allow for foster parent and child to develop attachments.

In order to understand the foster child's emotional state, one needs to understand attachment. From being a young child all the way to adulthood, Attachment theory describes the role of relationships in the development of an individual. The role of the primary caregiver can have a significant influence on the foster child's behaviors (Fuentes et al., 2014). Further, children who do not have the chance to develop a secure connection are more likely to become

hostile (Strolin et al., 2017). Children who develop poor attachments as a result of neglect and abuse often engage in a host of negative behaviors.

Emotion Regulation

Foster children not only need to learn how to have secure attachments but also need to learn emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is a core developmental process that is related to the child's mental health and academic success (Bergum et al., 2020). When children learn emotion regulation, it will influence how they respond to situations and how they deal with stress (Bergum et al., 2020). All children develop emotional skills in different ways, but one thing that is constant is the support from parents to achieve emotion regulation skills. Children who have attachment issues are more likely to develop behavioral issues that influence their capability to convey emotions and build trust for connections in the future (Miranda et al., 2019). For foster children to have optimal growth, foster children need to be placed with those that can meet their needs and provide them with consistency.

Secure Placements

When children are removed from their homes, foster care agencies have the responsibility to safeguard stability in placement. Secure placement can help foster children who already have some odds stacked against them (Steenbakkens et al., 2017). Being separated from their biological families or primary caretakers can be traumatic, in addition to constantly being moved from different homes (Brukas, 2008). Since the objective is not to increase any added trauma, placement stability is important. Not only is attachment impacted by negative placement stability, but also developmental influences.

Those who elect to foster it is meaningful to comprehend the attachment styles exhibited by foster children and how those styles can impact other areas of life. Attachment style can impact the child's development. Children who have been traumatized, abused, or have experienced multiple moves in foster care can have problems relating to others.

Attachment theory suggests an important role for the stability of placements (Miranda et al., 2019). Attachment theory purposes that establishing proper connections with caregivers at a young age is essential to fostering nourishing adult connections and functioning (Snyder et al., 2011). When reviewing the child's environmental system, every time a placement disruption occurs, the system is disrupted along with any possibility of creating and sustaining relationships. Interruptions in a foster child arrangement generate a conflict in the stability of support that they obtain. Placement disruptions influence numerous elements of foster children's daily lives from things as fundamental as friends, schools, or health providers (Carnochan et al., 2013). Therefore, frequent relocations are barriers to establishing and sustaining a significant connection (Font et al., 2018). Numerous interruptions in a child's diverse structure ultimately wear down a child's capability to adjust and can impact their mental state. Foster children who experience instability in placement are likely to experience that into adulthood (Goyette et al., 2021).

Children who do not obtain support and nurturance to understand what it means to create secure connections can adversely influence those attachments into adulthood. Those who have insecure attachments will more likely not desire closeness to others than compared to those individuals that desire closeness with others (Konijn et al., 2019). Further, adults may have difficulties trusting others as a result of an insecure attachment during childhood (Pasalich et al., 2016). Even if adults did not have a reliable, compassionate, and supportive atmosphere when

growing up, foster parents can be persistent and work through the challenges so the foster child can learn how to develop and have meaningful relationships.

Foster Parents

Foster parents are an essential part for the foster care system to function. Being a foster parent means a couple or individual elects to care for those needing a home. To meet the requirements on becoming a foster parent, individuals must be at least 21 years of age, pass the level two background check, and complete the licensing process. Foster parents who have completed all the requirements to become certified offer those in need a safe place to further their development and healing. For those who elect to foster, assist the foster children with emotional and behavioral development, teaching self-care skills, and the development of positive attachments. Foster children who have been exposed to severe neglect or abuse can require an increased level of care. Foster children are coming into the foster care in which foster homes and parents are needed. Those who elect to foster may have different motivations to open their home to those in need.

Motivation

Altruism is the principle or practice of concern for the well-being of others (Howell-Moroney, 2014). When the foster parent's intentions are for the concern of the child, they push through the difficult times rather than giving up. Howell-Moroney (2014) states that altruism is associated with foster parent quality and satisfaction. There are individuals who elect to foster for the sole meaning of children needing a home. Altruism can give the foster parent the motivation to overcome challenging times.

Individuals who elect to foster do so for different reasons. Individuals who choose to foster mainly for altruistic reasons are internally motivated to care for the child or feel the need to have a responsibility to society (Rodger et al., 2006). Foster parents feel the need to contribute to a better society by caring for those in need. Individuals are motivated to foster as they want to do something for the community.

Faith can be a main role in the motivations to elect to foster. Religious beliefs and church involvement are motivating factors to foster (Howell-Moroney, 2014). Foster parents who have religious beliefs feel they have a duty to care for those in need. Those who follow religious beliefs are likely to consider fostering as a result of the support from the church (Keys et al., 2017). As a result, the additional support from the religious organization can give one the motivation to make that step and foster children as the support system is in place. Faith-based organizations have volunteers who provide support to those that are fostering (Howell-Moroney, 2009). As a result of the motivation to serve and support, religious beliefs can have a positive impact on the motivation to foster.

Individuals who elect to foster may have, themselves, been involved in foster care (MacGregor et al., 2006). Foster parents that have experienced foster care are able to closely identify with the foster children (MacGregor et al., 2006). Intrinsic motivations result in providing care to children in need. Foster parents who have been in foster care themselves will understand the attachment issues, visits with the child's birth parents, and behavioral challenges. Further, foster parents who have personal experience with being in foster care could want to provide a different experience than what they received from previous foster parents.

There are also extrinsic reasons why some elect to foster. Some are motivated to foster as a result of the additional monetary stipend (Randle et al., 2016). While some may see that as

additional income, other research explains that people stop fostering because the monetary stipend is not enough (Randle et al., 2016). Being motivated by monetary gain is not necessarily bad, but individuals need to understand that reimbursement is often minimal. The amount of time and energy, and money that foster parents will need to spend on foster children getting to and from appointments or visits with biological families may not be worth it to continue to foster. During training, foster care programs need to empathize with the importance of what reasons foster parents have for fostering so that foster children do not have additional trauma as a result of the foster parent making a selfish decision.

Personal motivation is a key factor that impacts the individual's satisfaction and drives them to continue to reach that goal. If motivations are not genuine, then the care provided to the foster children can be impacted. Understanding the motivation to begin fostering is essential. Being able to understand why one elects to foster can result in continuing to foster (Davi et al., 2021). Further, when foster care programs understand what can motivate foster parents to foster, the foster care program can tailor initiatives for recruitment and retention. Depending on the specific motivation of those choosing to foster, programs can benefit by comprehending the foster parent needs.

Foster parents are needed more than before. Currently, more children are coming into foster care than there are licensed foster homes (Ahn et al., 2017). Being a foster parent is demanding and requires a considerable amount of time and energy. Before electing to foster, reviewing what motivates one to foster is necessary. There are extrinsic and intrinsic reasons for those who decide to foster (De Maeyer et al., 2014). Howell-Moroney (2014) states that the main reason for those who choose to foster is the selfless desire to help children who need a home. Those with a strong desire to help those in need tend to be more successful at foster

parenting (Cooley et al., 2015). Further, some decide to foster as they are not able to have children of their own (Davi et al., 2021). One may also choose to foster for religious reasons (Davi et al., 2021). While foster parenting can be demanding work, many have intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that continue them to foster.

Challenges with Fostering

To become a foster parent, all have to through training. Individuals acknowledge the significance of education on fostering and all that comes with it; however, parents have expressed dissatisfaction with the current training as well as the need for more (Randle et al., 2016). For example, in one study, foster parents voiced the need for additional training, specifically regarding mental health, and foster parents have requested additional training in how to handle challenging behaviors (Kassboll et al., 2019). Another study found that additional training material should be available online as foster parents would be able to access it when needed (Randle et al., 2016). Further, research states that foster parents were not impressed with the foster care agency in regard to training and support (Cooley et al., 2019). The studies illustrate the troubles described by foster parents regarding training and the importance of focusing on unmet training needs. When needs are unmet, individuals can feel unprepared, and it can impact the motivation why one would continue to foster.

The foster care system is supposed to be a place that provides support to those in need. Research states that foster care agencies are understaffed (Randle et al., 2016). A research study explained that foster parents found it difficult to assist foster children in getting the help needed when the programs were absent (Davi et al., 2019). In addition, foster parents found it challenging to continue to foster when there was a lack of support from the agency case manager (Ahn et al., 2017). Foster parents are often left alone to navigate the complicated foster care

system. Foster parents would appreciate a resource guide to know whom to reach out to when needed for specific services (Kaasboll et al., 2019). The foster care system depends on foster parents and needs to set them up for success. To overcome the challenges of foster care, foster parents need to have adequate resources to feel confident and to meet the needs of the children.

Foster parent training provides new foster parents with an awareness of what the child has been through and how to combine the child into the family. Providing training to new foster parents allows them to learn and practice new parenting skills (Solomon et al., 2016). When an individual elects to foster, this can be the first time that they are working with a child, and the training can be a time to extend parenting skills and techniques. In addition, the training is a time when foster parents can learn how abuse and neglect can impact different domains of a child's life (Cooley et al., 2018). When parents are provided with training, they will have the foundational tools to work through challenging behaviors.

Foster parents are at the center of having a positive impact on foster children. Due to the tremendous pressures and challenges of being a foster parent, foster parents sometimes elect to no longer foster within the first year of starting (Davi et al., 2021). When foster parents leave the system, it impacts the foster children along with other potential children needing a home. Foster parents elect to close their doors for different reasons. Foster parents choose to no longer foster due to the lack of communication from case managers, not being given enough information about the child, or not being properly trained prior to receiving the foster child (Kassboll et al., 2019). When foster parents do not have the necessary resources to succeed and resources for the foster children, it can negatively impact their confidence in fostering.

The main goal when a child enters foster care is to return back to their biological parents. The timeframe for how long the child will remain in foster care is, at times, uncertain. When

individuals elect to foster, they have to accept that fostering can be unpredictable. Foster parents can struggle with the uncertainties that surround how long a foster child may be placed in their home (Tonheim & Iversen, 2018). Not knowing how long a foster child may be assigned puts stress on the foster parents as it could negatively impact the attachment and bond that the foster parent puts toward the relationship knowing that the child could return to their biological parents or family at any time (Tonheim & Iversen, 2018). Foster care is having children come and go; however, these changes are emotionally draining.

Being a foster parent comes with a distinctive set of challenges. Foster parents must be ready to deal with extreme behaviors and the unexpectedness of being a foster parent. For example, there are often multiple court date visits with biological families and working with case managers from the foster care programs. While being a foster parent can be rewarding, it is a necessity to have support from the foster care agency and programs available when needed. For foster parents to feel confident in their parenting abilities, it begins with fostering the right motivation and having a foster care program that will set one up for success with the proper training and support.

Providing a caring and warm home may appear straightforward; however, the past suffering and difficulty resulting from trauma can bring about its own sets of behaviors and challenges for foster children. Foster parents frequently close their homes within the first year of becoming foster parents (Cooley et al., 2015). Parenting is not easy, and adding the title of a foster parent is challenging to an entirely different level.

Foster parents noted another area that led to their decision to no longer foster was the lack of communication and follow-through from the agency case manager (Barnett et al., 2018). Additionally, foster parents noted that the constant change in the case manager does not help the

continuity of care for the child (Cooley et al., 2015). When case managers are constantly changing, it can impact the continuity of care as proper communication may not be passed off to the following case manager, and in that event, the new case manager may not be aware of who needs resources and assistance. In order to provide support for foster parents, the foster care programs need to complete an effective review of how to improve assistance to those who are helping the vulnerable.

All individuals who are interested in becoming foster parents have to go through training, and it would be necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction; however, previous studies have evaluated the benefit of the effectiveness of foster parent training. Foster parents felt that they were not prepared after completing training (Cooley et al., 2017). Research states that many foster care programs do not collect data to review effectiveness (Strickler et al., 2018; Dorsey et al., 2008).

Foster Care Program

For those who elect to foster, training is not only beneficial for learning about behaviors but also for reviewing what support foster care programs have to offer. Foster parents need to feel prepared and know where services can be accessed (Cooley et al., 2018). Foster parents have requested that they be supplied with a list of resources rather than waiting to hear back from the case manager (Cooley et al., 2018). When resources are needed and foster parents do not know how to access them can be challenging. Research has confirmed that foster parents feel insufficient if they are not prepared with resources and assistance (Cooley et al., 2017). A replacement request can be initiated if foster parents do not feel supported by the foster care program.

Being a foster parent is challenging, and foster parents can feel alone as others do not understand the challenges that come from fostering. Foster parents may not be open to asking for assistance from friends or family as they were the ones who took on the task of fostering. In order to prevent burnout, foster care programs need to educate on ways to decrease the feelings of burnout (Whitt-Woosley, 2020). Foster care programs that offer support groups or events for foster parents are an optimal way to support parents (Cooley et al., 2018). When foster parents have support from others who are going through a comparable situation, they have the opportunity to provide support and encouragement (Stricker et al., 2018). Being able to have a support group during challenging times will allow the foster parents to have someone to turn to when feeling overwhelmed and who understands the situation (Alvarez et al., 2021). When foster parents have support from others, it can result in reducing the feelings of wanting to close their doors and rather helping those in need.

When foster parents receive support from others who are going through similar situations, they build not only confidence in themselves but also can positively affect their parenting style. Foster parent assistance from foster care programs can be correlated to the foster parent having a positive impact on the foster child. Research has found that when foster parents are not satisfied, it can intensify the negative behaviors exhibited to the foster children (Cleary et al., 2018). Another study found that the foster child's behaviors can be heightened by the home environment (Van Holen et al., 2016). Foster children's domains of life are impacted by the support of the foster parent. The research found that children who had involvement from parents who were positive and encouraging were more likely not to partake in risky behaviors and not be disrespectful toward authority figures (Kouros et al., 2017). When foster parents have confidence and support, it can result in a profound impact on themselves and the foster children.

Foster parent confidence is important, but so is the style of parenting. The style of parenting can impact a child's development. Research has found that parents who tend to be controlling can lead to the child being defiant and not wanting to follow the rules (Serbin, 2015). Different parenting styles will have a different influence on foster children. Research has found that those who fall in the authoritarian style put a high demand on children and offer slight reassurance, whereas authoritative style individuals are highly amicable and yet firm with their demand. Permissive style requests little from children, and the uninvolved style are deficient in the area of providing attention to the children (Pali et al., 2022). Foster care programs can include training on parenting styles and how the type of parenting can impact the domains of life for the foster child.

Foster parents' self-esteem and behaviors, along with support, have positive outcomes for all involved. Research has found that those who have increased confidence correlate to positive outcomes for the entire family system (Cooley et al., 2018). Those who have confidence and support are more likely to continue to foster (Cooley et al., 2015). When foster parents have the confidence to foster and the support from foster care programs, they are more likely to continue to foster (Mihalo et al., 2016). Research articles noted that foster parents voice the need for training. When foster parents' needs are not met, then foster parents can feel overwhelmed, which can negatively impact the foster children. Teaching foster parent's interventions to use will not only increase their confidence but also assist the foster children.

Mental Health Interventions

Mental health is something that can be impacted in foster children despite their age. Not all foster children develop a mental health disorder; however, dealing with parental loss, neglect, or abuse can leave adverse effects on foster children. In addition, the challenges of foster care,

such as sibling separation, attachment, and detachment, among many other issues, can inhibit the progression of a mental health disorder. Foster care children need support from foster parents in order to overcome these challenges.

Although the foster care system attempts to advance and include multidisciplinary assistance whenever needed, the foster children that continue to enter the system is increasing and the limited number of providers for foster children to receive the services needs can be troublesome and have a negative impact on foster parents. Children who do not have access or the opportunity for mental health interventions may end up with life-long traumas that eventually develop into serious conditions and negatively impact their personal and social lives in the future. However, if foster care programs can put forward additional services to foster parents, the children can have the opportunity to be able to overcome their mental health issues or at least manage them appropriately with professional guidance.

Foster care programs have an opportunity to provide interventions to foster children and parents that can assist with deescalating behaviors exhibited by the foster children. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is such an intervention, and it is a type of interviewing to strengthen a commitment by setting goals to achieve (Hall et al., 2019). Foster children need to have the capability to feel they are in control when making decisions (Hall et al., 2019). When an individual can empower and engage the foster child to elect their own choices, the outcome is more likely to be positive (Hall et al., 2019). If foster children are reminded of the negative behaviors and told what to do, they are more likely to retract and not partake (Hall et al., 2019). The advantage of using MI is that it permits individuals to work out in their own way without judgment (Hall et al., 2019). MI can be used to educate foster parents on how to use while parenting foster children.

Foster children can experience a broad range of behaviors stemming from trauma. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT) has been proven to assist with a wide range of behavioral and emotional experiences (Bartlett & Rushovich, 2018). Research has found that TFCBT is sensitive to those who are experiencing PTSD from abuse or violence (Bartlett & Rushovich, 2018). Foster children may receive the most optimal care from the foster parent but still require additional interventions. Being able to participate in TFCBT can allow the child to talk through how behaviors lead to certain actions and increase communication skills for other family members who participate in the session (Dorsey et al., 2014). For appropriately aged individuals, TFCBT was observed to be successful as it provides understanding for individuals to comprehend what transpired in the past (Dorsey et al., 2014). Foster parents that participate in TFCBT often strengthen bonds between parent and child.

Children who have experienced trauma may need additional care. Foster children can display behaviors that foster parents are not accustomed to. Through education regarding attachment-based interventions, foster parents can discover when to offer additional support even when it may not be warranted (Lind et al., 2017). Research has observed that those who practice ABC were at an enhanced improvement for attachment (Bernard et al., 2017). Research has noticed that children who participated in ABC were found to exhibit less anger than those who did not receive ABC intervention (Lind et al., 2017). Further research has shown that children who obtained ABC intervention had a better vocabulary than those who did not (Bernard et al., 2017). ABC has many benefits for foster children, ranging from increased vocabulary to self-regulation. If foster children do not receive early intervention, can result in negative impact into adulthood and research states that early intervention could offset the negative effect later on in life.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) was designed to include trauma-informed intervention so the intricate necessities of foster children who have been abused will be met (Purvis et al., 2013). TBRI uses entrusting values to review physical necessities and attach concepts to reduced fear-based actions or behaviors (Purvis et al., 2013; Crawley et al., 2020). Experiencing trauma can alter the foster child's thought process which can impact their behavior. Although a variety of parenting approaches may be effective in an ordinary environment, children who have been exposed to trauma need caregivers who meet their needs and address the whole child. TBRI is intended to serve the complex demands of children who have experienced premature abuse, neglect, or trauma (Crawley et al., 2020). Experiencing abuse, neglect or trauma early in life that was caused by an adult figure can impact the faith foster children may have for foster parents that want to show love. Foster parents being educated on TBRI grants the individual to see the whole child and will the child to have the opportunity to grow.

Experiencing trauma can impact each child differently. Research has stated that those who have been impacted by trauma can impact the brain (Thomason & Marusak, 2017). Practicing trauma-informed care focuses on the importance of rebuilding connections (Sullivan et al., 2015). Foster care program case managers can remind foster parents that healing takes time and individuals have different methods of healing. Case managers need to inform foster parents that trauma-informed care is not only for those who provide care but can be used at home (Sullivan et al., 2015). Research has stated that trauma-informed parenting ensures that parenting styles meet the child's needs (Lotty et al., 2020). Being educated on trauma-informed care along with learning evidence-based practices, foster parents can have a different viewpoint when encountering challenging behaviors.

For foster care programs to be successful it is beneficial to have resources for both foster parent and child. When foster parents have the proper training and support system from the case manager, the parents will be educated and be able to handle the behaviors that are associated with the trauma (Kassboll et al., 2019). When parents have the support and training tools rather than immediately requesting a replacement, they will know how to handle the situation (Kassboll et al., 2019). When children do not move multiple times, they can focus on healing (Villodas et al., 2016). Working through trauma research states that interventions TFCBT, MI, ABC, and TBRI can assist with working through the painful past. Programs that have limited resources to offer need to plug into faith-based organizations for assistance (Garland et al., 2005). Research has found that religious-based organizations are known to assist and could provide many benefits to foster care programs (Garland et al., 2005). As the times evolve, one variable remains the same children continue to enter the foster care system and need support overcoming the challenging time.

Foster care remains a constant need. Foster care programs that conduct a program evaluation can have a positive impact for those involved. When foster care programs are not fully inclusive, it is like providing a loving home and not fixing the foster child's mental health system. Research has shown that when services are available to foster, parents are more satisfied, which leads to retention (Strickler et al., 2018). To meet the needs of those involved in the foster care, foster care programs need to constantly be changing. Foster care program evaluation will ensure the programs are providing positive outcomes to those they serve. Through completing further analysis, the foster care program analysis results have the opportunity to improve the foster care program.

Summary

Foster care programs can offer many benefits to foster parents and children. Research has stated that programs can be used to reduce parent stress (Pope et al., 2022). When programs are available, foster parents and children can build connections with others that are in a similar situation (Pope et al., 2022). When foster parents have support, they are less likely to become overwhelmed and ask for the child to be removed (Dorsey et al., 2014). Foster parents who have support from the foster care program may be less likely to turn down placement when there is a child in need as the parent is aware of the support and services provided by the program. In order to meet the changing demands, foster care programs need to review current practices. There is not one answer or solution that will help children to overcome trauma. However, the combination of a stable home along with evidence-based interventions, there can be a positive outlook for foster children. It has been documented that there is a lack of programs available for foster parents and children (Collins-Camargo et al., 2011). Through completing the evaluation of foster parent satisfaction, 4Kids will be reviewed and, if proven effective, can shed guidance to other local foster care programs on what services can positively impact foster parent retention.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The research study provides a non-experimental program analysis of archival data collected from 4Kids. The study aims to evaluate quantitative data from 4Kids program to analyze foster parent retention. This chapter provides a general outlook on the non-experimental design used to gather and analyze the archival data, including research questions, participants' demographics, measurements utilized in the research, and data analysis. Further, regard is presented to the influence of the internal and external validity of the study.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does 4Kids effect foster parent retention?

RQ2: How does participation in FAM Team impact foster parent retention?

RQ3: How does participation in EPIC Training impact foster parent retention?

Hypothesis

H_a1: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the assistance available and extra support provided by the foster care program. The 4 Kids participants report higher foster parent satisfaction and self-confidence with foster parenting.

H₀1: There will be no statistical significance in the difference for foster parent retention as a result of the assistance available and extra support provide by 4Kids.

H_a2: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the assistance provided through the FAM team.

H₀2: There will be no statistical significance in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of participation in the FAM team.

H_a3: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the additional EPIC training.

H₀3: There will be no statistical significant in the amount of foster parent retention as result of the participation in the EPIC training.

Design

The study uses a non-experimental design to analyze the archival data from 4Kids on foster parent retention. Archival data is collected from the last ten years by 4Kids, eliminating the need for a treatment variable that is manipulated. The primary goal of the program evaluation is to identify how foster parent retention is impacted as a result of the services provided through 4Kids. Archival data is analyzed regarding foster parent retention in addition to having foster parents support survey. Quantitative descriptive research can assist in identifying patterns and understanding how something has come about.

Participants and Setting

The study included 981 participants of 4Kids starting from year 2011 to current. Participant ages included those 21 and older, varying marital status, and the individual or couple's participation in the additional available resources from 4Kids. Participants of 4Kids are connected to a local church in the area that 4Kids serves. The sample size contains enough participants to support the analyzing variable correlations.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria: To be included in the study, the individuals must be over the age of 21. In addition, those who were included must be new or previous foster parents for 4Kids. Those that did not meet the following requirements were not included in the study.

Data Collection

4Kids uses the electronic record system called Extended Reach and the data from that system is extracted into PowerBI. PowerBI contains archival data that consists of foster parent retention data that have been consistently collected over the last ten years. The participant data has been stripped and participants are labeled with a number. Before completing the program evaluation, data was requested, which consisted of the following:

- Gender
- Age
- Marital Status
- Race
- The date of service started with 4Kids
- The date of service ended with 4Kids
- Participation in FAM Team
- Participation of EPIC Training

Instrumentation

Individuals who are already participating and those who had finished service with 4Kids were sent a questionnaire that included foster parent satisfaction, components that were related to foster parent retention, location of the foster family, and experience with intake (Strickler et al., 2016). Completing a study using surveys allows more individuals to participate, which means

having more participants that can impact the outcome (Heppner et al., 2015). The results from surveys allow conclusions to be drawn.

Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)

The measure provides a self-administered questionnaire that evaluates treatment to assess critical domains of treatment parent retention and satisfaction (See Appendix B). Individuals will be asked about four domains of treatment parent satisfaction: (1) professional parenting role, (2) treatment parent efficacy, (3) quality of training, and (4) support from staff. Additional questions could be included: (5) intent to continue to foster; (6) intent to refer others to the foster care program (Strickler et al., 2016).

Procedure

Before the study began, IRB approval was obtained to conduct research. Once the application of consent was provided to 4Kids, data was sent. When receiving the archival data, statistical assessments are examined to complete the conclusion.

Data Analysis

Variables

Independent Variable: The independent variables participation in FAM and EPIC training.

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable is foster parent retention. Foster parent retention could be reviewed by foster parent satisfaction with the additional programs and support from 4Kids.

Statistical Procedure

This study focuses on 4Kids participants and factors related to their retention. The non-experimental between-group design as it examines differences in characteristics between two groups. Group membership (open vs. closed home) is the dependent variable. Independent variables include participation in the FAM and EPIC programs and several demographic variables. The primary statistical approach utilized to test hypotheses is the Chi-square test of independence. This test addresses whether the distribution into categories for one variable is related to the distribution of another variable (e.g., does FAM participation relate to greater foster parent retention?).

The program evaluation used a non-experimental quantitative research design to assess the archival data of foster parent retention collected by 4Kids. Non-experimental research is not manipulated in a lab environment. The design utilized the Chi-Square test to inquire about the difference between the categorical variables. Further, the Chi-Square test was appropriate for the program evaluation as the categorical variables can be tested to see if the variables are related.

Internal and External Validity

Research explains that non-experimental designs have high external and low internal validity (Heppner et al., 2015). Through using archival data, participants are not randomly assigned, and the outside factors are not able to be managed. As a result, the connection is not able to be concluded, in which the study would be based on correlation. Further, the external validity can be a result of the service provided through 4Kids being in the community rather than in a controlled environment.

Summary

A quantitative archival data along with a questionnaire/survey is conducted to provide insight to the questions: How does 4Kids impact foster parent retention? How does participation in FAM Team impact foster parent retention? How does participation in EPIC Training impact foster parent retention? A non-experimental analysis of 4Kids archival data and the relation to foster parent retention were assessed. The results from the program evaluation can increase the need for additional services for foster parents, provide insight into what services can impact foster parent retention, and provide quantifiable guidance for improving foster care programs. The findings from the analysis can improve the retention of foster parents that receive services from 4Kids.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

The main objective of the research study is to assess the effect of 4Kids foster parent participation in FAM and EPIC regarding foster parent retention. The goal was to discover if there was a significant variance in foster parent retention when individuals participated in either FAM or EPIC. The chapter will examine the statistical analysis of the data, the descriptive statistics, analyze the results, and summarize key findings.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does 4Kids effect foster parent retention?

RQ2: How does participation in FAM Team impact foster parent retention?

RQ3: How does participation in EPIC Training impact foster parent retention?

Hypothesis

H_{a1}: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the assistance available and extra support provided by the foster care program. The 4Kids participants report higher foster parent satisfaction and self-confidence with foster parenting.

H₀₁: There will be no statistical significance in the difference for foster parent retention as a result of the assistance available and extra support provided by 4Kids.

H_{a2}: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the assistance provided through the FAM team.

H₀2: There will be no statistical significance in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of participation in the FAM team.

H_a3: There will be a statistically significant difference in the amount of foster parent retention as a result of the additional EPIC training.

H₀3: There will be no statistical significant in the amount of foster parent retention as result of the participation in the EPIC training.

Data Cleaning

Before conducting statistical analysis, the data were cleaned. Data cleaning started with removing cases that had large amounts of missing data. In the present study, 30 participants were removed as they were labeled as Safe Families, no longer exist with 4Kids. In addition, 32 homes were removed as the status of the home was on hold. The test at hand was evaluating homes that are open and closed. After removing the data points, the number of participants was $N=981$, in which the foster parents provided no missing values for data examined in the study.

Descriptive Statistics

The study utilized a sample from archival data. Descriptive statistics summarized the sample's age, marital status, race, and gender. The way that 4Kids collects the data on foster parents is by Parent A and Parent B, as the individuals can be married. The primary parent is recorded as Parent A. As shown in Table 1, the number of foster parent participants in 4Kids was ($N=981$); 81.9% were married, and 18.1% were not married; gender for Partner A was 91.9% female, and for Partner B, 8.1% were male. The gender for Partner B was 90% male and 10% were female. The race for Partner A 75.2% White, 14.7% Hispanic, and 14.9% African American 10%. For the partner B, 76.2% White, 17.1% Hispanic, and 6.7% African American.

Table 1*Demographic variables*

Variable	Category	% or <i>M(S)</i>
Marital Status	Married	81.9
	Not Married	18.1
Gender Partner A	Male	8.1
	Female	91.9
Gender Partner B	Male	90.0
	Female	10.0
Race Partner A	African American	10.0
	White	75.2
	Hispanic	14.7
Race Partner B	African American	6.7
	White	76.2
	Hispanic	17.1
Average Caregiver Age		46.0(9.6)

Note. $N = 981$. Categories with small numbers omitted to facilitate analyses.

Result for Research Question One

The survey on foster parent support that was going to be used to answer the research question did not include the raw data. Therefore, the question cannot be statistically addressed, as there would have to be some sort of comparison group. As a result, the hypothesis is not able to reject the null hypothesis.

Result for Research Question Two and Three

Foster parents that participate in FAM and EPIC were more likely to remain an active foster home with 4Kids. Table 2 shows that (64.6%) of foster parents who participated in FAM were more likely to stay active foster homes compared to (35.4%) of those foster parents that did not participate in FAM. Further, foster parents that participate in EPIC were more likely to

remain active foster homes. Foster parents that are EPIC trained (61.6%) are more likely to remain an active foster home compared to (41.1%) that did not participate in EPIC.

Table 2

Foster Parent Participation in FAM and EPIC comparing Open and Closed Homes

Category	Active	Closed				Decision
	%	%	χ^2	p	V	
FAM Yes	64.6	35.4	35.1	<.001	.19	Reject Null
FAM No	39.3	60.7				
EPIC Yes	61.6	38.4	17.0	<.001	.13	Reject Null
EPIC No	41.1	58.9				

Note. V is Cramer's V

Table 3 shows which demographic categories were more likely to remain an active foster home in regard to participation of FAM and EPIC. As displayed, in Table 3, foster parent retention was stronger for married foster parents (50.9% active) than non-married parents (36.2%). Retention did not differ by gender of either the first or second parent. Across both ethnicity variables, retention was not the best for African American participants (22.4%, 20.5%) than for White (46.9%, 39.2%) and Hispanic parents (39.2%, 44.0%). Older parents were more likely to be closed ($M = 46.9$, $SD = 9.5$) than open ($M = 45.0$, $SD = 9.5$), $t(596) = 2.46$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.20$.

Table 3

Foster parent retention by participant demographics

Category	Active	Closed				Decision
	%	%	χ^2	p	V	
Married	50.9	49.1	10.1	<.001	.11	Reject Null
Not Married	36.2	63.8				
A Male	45.7	54.3	0.2	.65	.02	Fail to Reject Null
A Female	48.6	51.4				

B Male	52.1	47.9	1.3	.26	.04	Fail to Reject Null
B Female	45.1	54.9				
A African American	22.4	77.6	19.4	<.001	.15	Reject Null
A White	46.9	53.1				
A Hispanic	39.2	60.8				
B African American	20.5	79.5	13.6	.001	.15	Reject Null
B White	50.6	49.4				
B Hispanic	44.0	56.0				

Note. V is Cramer's V

Table 4 provides FAM Team participation by demographic category. FAM participation did not differ by marital status or by gender of either the first or second parent. FAM participation differed across ethnicity of the first parent with African American participants (5.9%) participating at lower rates than white (18.2%) and Hispanic parents (9.6%). Participation was comparably lower in Treasure Coast (3.2%) than in the other counties (12-20%). There were no differences related to the second ethnicity variable. Age did not differ between non-FAM participants ($M = 46.1$, $SD = 9.4$) and FAM participants ($M = 45.0$, $SD = 10.3$), $t(596) = 0.90$, $p = .37$, $d = 0.09$.

Table 4

FAM Team Participation by participant demographics

Category	FAM Yes	Fam No				Decision
	%	%	χ^2	p	V	
Married	20.0	80.0	0.4	.54	.02	Fail to Reject Null
Not Married	17.7	82.3				
A Male	25.7	74.3	2.6	.11	.10	Fail to Reject Null
A Female	17.9	82.1				
B Male	18.1	81.9	1.5	.23	.05	Fail to Reject Null
B Female	23.9	76.1				
A African	5.9	94.1	12.7	.002	.12	Reject Null

American						
A White	18.2	81.8				
A Hispanic	9.6	90.4				
B African American	10.3	89.7	5.8	.06	.09	Fail to Reject Null
B White	21.3	78.7				
B Hispanic	13.0	87.0				
Broward	19.7	80.3	30.5	<.001	.18	Reject Null
Palm Beach	19.5	80.5				
Southwest	12.5	87.5				
Treasure Coast	3.2	96.8				

Note. V is Cramer's V

Table 5 examines EPIC Training participation by demographic category. EPIC participation did not differ by marital status or location. However EPIC participation differed across gender of both parents with participation more likely for men (22.9%) than women (12.1%) when they were the first parent and more likely by women (22.5%) than men (12.2%) when they were the second parent. Parent ethnicity analyses showed African American parents (1.2%) were much less likely to take advantage of EPIC training than white (11.9%) and Hispanic parents (8.8%). EPIC participants were younger on averages ($M = 46.6$, $SD = 9.5$) than non-participants ($M = 42.9$, $SD = 10$), $t(596) = 3.43$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.38$.

Table 5

EPIC Training participation by participant demographics

Category	EPIC Yes	EPIC No				Decision
	%	%	χ^2	p	V	
Married	16.6	83.4	0.6	.43	.03	Fail to Reject Null
Not Married	13.9	86.1				
A Male	24.0	76.0	6.0	.02	.08	Reject Null
A Female	13.6	86.4				

B Male	13.8	86.2	5.3	.02	.09	Reject Null
B Female	23.7	76.3				
A African American	1.2	98.8	10.3	.01	.11	Reject Null
A White	13.1	86.9				
A Hispanic	11.5	88.5				
B African American	2.6	97.4	6.2	.046	.10	Reject Null
B White	15.3	84.7				
B Hispanic	19.2	80.8				
Broward	13.1	86.9	0.6	.89	.03	Fail to Reject Null
Palm Beach	13.6	86.4				
Southwest	11.1	88.9				
Treasure Coast	11.2	88.8				

Note. V is Cramer's V

Summary

The chapter summarized the data, the descriptive statistics, and the research questions. The independent variables were FAM participation and EPIC training, and the dependent variable was foster parent retention. There were statistically significant relationships between involvement in both FAM and EPIC in regard to foster parent retention. Participation in either program related to greater rates of retention. For Research Question Two and Three, the null hypothesis were rejected. Chapter Five will discuss the statistical findings. Future research recommendations will be presented to review the study's limitations.

Chapter 5

Overview

This study conducted a program evaluation on 4Kids that has different locations in Florida, including Broward, North and Central Miami Dade, Southwest (Glades, Hendry, Lee, Charlotte, and Collier), and Treasure Coast (St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Martin and Indian River) county. 4Kids goal is that every child has a home. The non-profit foster care program assists foster children by providing homes in which foster parents are equipped to care for those who have had a challenging past and may not have had the basic necessities. 4Kids offers programs like FAM and EPIC to assist foster parents. FAM assists foster parents by helping with running errands, cooking meals for the family, or helping the foster children with projects and homework. At the same time, EPIC offers foster parents the tools to see beyond the behaviors exhibited by foster children. The EPIC training equips parents with how to connect with foster children using a trauma-informed perspective. While learning about the trauma-informed approach, foster parents learn about the Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) that provides foster parents with strategies to meet the foster child's needs. Further, EPIC training includes learning about attachment styles, sensory integration, different kinds of trauma, and how experiencing trauma can impact foster children's development. The current chapter discusses the program evaluation along with the findings and results. Implications of the program evaluation are addressed, and the chapter ends with future recommendations for future research.

Discussion and Findings

The program evaluation aimed to analyze and evaluate archival quantitative data from 4Kids regarding foster parent retention. There is limited data on foster care program evaluations (Schoemaker et al., 2020; Lotty et al., 2020). Completing the program evaluation on 4Kids fills

a gap in research but also provides 4Kids with data to notify if the program and services of FAM and EPIC are beneficial and what could be improved to further contribute to improving the program. 4Kids constantly has to be altering the services provided to meet the needs of foster parents. The Kaizen approach makes small changes to address the needs of those who receive the service, which can positively impact the program (Gasper & Mwenda, 2023). The results from the program analysis, 4kids could use the Kaizen approach in making small adjustments to benefit the program.

RQ1: How does 4Kids of South Florida effect foster parent retention? The hypothesis is that 4Kids positively impacts foster parent retention. 4Kids provided the researcher with the Foster Parent Support Survey for the last three years (2021, 2022, 2023) and information on foster parent homes that included race, age, gender, marital status, religion, education, and income level in which many data points were missing. Through the analysis of the surveys, common positive and negative perceptions of 4Kids were gathered. The perceptions that were gathered can impact the performance of 4Kids. Positive perceptions of 4Kids are that foster parents feel supported and appreciate the regular check-ins and communication. While many responses included that 4Kids is doing great, there is always room for improvement. Foster parents voiced the need for a resource guide on enrolling children in a different school and learning how to enroll in Medicaid. Identifying areas of improvement is a way for 4Kids to continue to grow and accommodate the needs of foster parents. The data on foster parent homes provided could not accept or reject the null hypothesis. Furthermore, the information provided from the surveys gave insight into the positive impact 4Kids has on foster parents.

RQ2: How does participation in FAM Team impact foster parent retention? The hypothesis is that participation in FAM would increase foster parent retention. Data sent from

4Kids included if homes were opened, meaning currently have foster children or able to accept foster children or closed no longer accepting foster children. Further, the data set included whether the home was flagged yes or no for participation in FAM. The analysis indicated that participation in FAM was more likely to remain in open homes than those who did not. FAM participation can impact foster parent retention. From the Foster Parent Support Survey from the last three years (2021, 2022, 2023), there are about 91 different churches where foster parents attend. At the time of the study and analyses, the extent of the involvement of the different churches with 4Kids is unknown. For 4Kids to make continuous improvements to serve foster parents better, the program can start by identifying churches that do not have a FAM Team. Connecting with churches and establishing additional FAM Team Volunteers could result in retaining foster parents and possibly recruiting new foster parents. Placing focus on churches that do not have a FAM Team can be a gradual improvement so that all foster parents have the opportunity to participate. The data showed that participation in FAM increased foster parent retention, in which the null hypothesis is rejected. Providing additional support to foster parents can positively influence their decision to continue to foster.

RQ3: How does participation in EPIC Training impact foster parent retention? The program evaluation hypothesizes that involvement in EPIC would improve foster parent retention. Data on foster parent homes sent by 4Kids had a data set flagged yes or no if there was participation in EPIC. The results indicated that those who participated in EPIC were more likely to remain open than those who did not. The null hypothesis is rejected as participation in EPIC training positively influences foster parent retention. Additional training can result in foster parents being equipped to understand behaviors exhibited by foster children. To further improve foster parent sanctification, 4Kids could survey parents for feedback on when the EPIC

training is offered. EPIC training is currently offered for two days, about eight hours, either in person or virtually. Including foster parents' requests regarding when the training is offered could be a way to increase foster parent participation in EPIC training and a small change that 4Kids could easily implement.

Implications

Foster parents are needed as foster children enter the foster care system. The program evaluation illustrates that participation in EPIC and FAM impacts foster parent retention. 4Kids could continue to make program improvements to increase participation in EPIC and FAM. Small improvements can yield significant results. To increase participation in EPIC, 4Kids could meet with local counseling agencies and school counselors to provide training and inform about EPIC services. 4Kids meeting with local agencies is a positive step to improve and increase participation.

4Kids can look to increase participation by meeting with local agencies but also examine which population 4Kids can reach to increase participation. The program evaluation found that participation in FAM and EPIC was lower for African American families, which suggests there should be more outreach to African American families. There is always room for improvement, and by identifying a specific population 4Kids could complete a general outreach in those communities to gain foster parent retention. Further, 4Kids could meet with local churches in the communities where retention of foster parent is lower and to see how 4Kids can improve to meet the needs of foster parents.

In order to retain foster parents, 4Kids needs to comprehend foster parent's needs. Research has stated that Resource Theory can detail the rationale for becoming a foster parent

(Davi et al., 2021). Resource Theory can be explained as offering individual assistance to meet their needs (Davi et al., 2021). When 4Kids can identify the needs of foster parents, meeting those needs could increase the commitment to continue to foster. Resource Theory can be a framework to assist 4Kids in retaining foster parents. When foster parents have resources made available can deliver motivation to foster (Davi et al., 2021). Not only can the additional resources increase foster parent satisfaction, but 4Kids also assist in decreasing feelings of burnout. When foster parents do not have support can result in feelings of burnout (Whitt-Woosley et al., 2020). The foster parents who feel burnout and have no support will not feel motivated to continue to foster. 4Kids continues to survey or have feedback groups to inquire if needs are being met and use the results to make improvements that would benefit the foster parent, which would benefit the program.

For 4Kids to continue supporting foster parents and children, it is a necessity of the program to offer benefits to those receiving the services. Research has found that available resources can determine if foster parents elect to remain open (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007, Randle et al., 2016). Although 4Kids completes regular surveys of foster parents, a central component of the survey is designed to evaluate the experiences with EPIC and FAM. Additional survey items could be developed that directly question the unmet needs of foster parents, including the satisfaction of caseworkers or training on handling biological parent visits. While this study focused specifically on 4Kids, findings regarding the EPIC and FAM programs may be relevant to similar faith-based foster care support programs. In addition, it could benefit 4Kids to have discussions with similar organizations that could be mutually beneficial.

Christian Worldview

4Kids is a faith-based non-profit. The mission of 4Kids is that every child has a home. For children to have a home, individuals must be willing to foster parents. "God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts; use them well to serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10, NLT). Rather than taking pleasure in themselves, individuals should share the gifts and blessings provided to them. Failing to use God's gift to serve others is poorly being a good steward. "Defend the weak and fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed (Psalm 82:3, NLT). When individuals see those in need, the Bible instructs them to be the hands and feet of Christ. Being the hands and feet of Christ can be shown in different ways; for some, it can be a calling to be a foster parent, and others can assist those foster parents during that time of fostering.

Limitations

When explaining the analysis of the program evaluation, possible limitations should be considered. The foster parents participating with 4Kids were of a Christian denomination so that the results would be biased based on the sample. The foster parent support survey included the results rather than raw data. Details on the foster parents that received the survey would have been beneficial to include if the foster parents were open homes or did the survey include homes that were closed, along with detailing how each question was or was not answered by each participant. 4Kids could benefit from offering a survey that solely focuses on areas of improvement. The response could further improve the services and programs provided by 4Kids. In addition, several data points were missing regarding the information on foster parent homes. Factors concerning education level, annual income, and homeownership status could indicate a higher correlational impact on foster parent retention. Moving forward, when 4Kids collects data on foster parents, integrate that all data points need to be obtained before moving on

to another section regarding foster parent data. Having access to complete data could have resulted in a different outcome.

Future Recommendations

From the limitations, there are recommendations for the future that should be considered for 4Kids. Resources benefit foster parents, but how could attachment impact foster parent retention? In addition, a majority of the participants were females, and future research could consider how gender can impact the decision to foster. Further, while the program evaluation analyzed foster parents who had participated in 4Kids future studies could follow the parents from the beginning and be able to survey foster parents at different peaks in their journey.

While EPIC is helpful in preparing foster parents with tools to look beyond the behaviors, EPIC also services the foster children. Research has stated that foster children often suffer mental health issues (Enger et al., 2020). Future research could examine how receiving counseling could impact the amount of placement disruptions. When a foster child has the opportunity to receive the necessary mental health services to work through the challenging past could result in a decreased number of behavioral outbreaks, which in turn could reduce the number of moves experienced.

Future studies could include foster care programs that compare faith-based vs. non-faith based. The study at hand has support from faith-based community resources. Being able to compare if one program may have less displacement along with increased foster parent retention. Further, does one have more resources available for foster parents and children? In addition, what is the experience of the foster parents from the two programs?

Summary

The program evaluation of 4Kids specifically looked at how FAM and EPIC impacted foster parent retention and found statistical significance for participation in EPIC and FAM regarding those homes that remained open compared to closed homes. The results suggest that the additional support through FAM aids in foster parent satisfaction, which impacts foster parent retention. Further, 4Kids offers EPIC training to equip foster parents on how to handle those who have challenging behaviors as a result of a traumatic background. The results suggest that foster parents who participate in EPIC can aid in foster parent retention as they have the tools to handle challenging behaviors, which can prevent placement disruption. The EPIC training provides foster parents the tools to handle complex behaviors and allows foster children to receive counseling services. The services provided by 4Kids have a noteworthy role in foster parent retention.

The program evaluation aimed to evaluate the archival data from 4Kids to examine if the FAM and EPIC participation impacted foster parent retention. Research question one was not able to be answered with the data that was provided. However, the null hypothesis was rejected for research questions two and three as the data showed statistically significant. The chapter illustrated specific programs FAM and EPIC offered by 4Kids evaluated in the study and confirmed the positive outcome of participation in the program regarding foster parent retention. In addition, the limitation of the study was considered, and future recommendations were presented. Further, the benefit of the program evaluation is to gain additional awareness for 4Kids to continue to support foster parents and foster children.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 11, 2023

Brittany Morton
Thomas Vail

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1364 Program Evaluation on 4Kids of South Florida on Foster Parent Retention

Dear Brittany Morton and Thomas Vail,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of *identifiable*, private information from or about living individuals (45 CFR 46.102).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Foster Parent Support Survey

1. How satisfied are you with the way the 4Kids helped prepare you for working with the child in terms of sharing information and in discussion of the child's behavioral needs?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

2. How satisfied are you with arrangements for pre-placement visits before the child was placed in your home?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

3. How satisfied are you with the pre-service training you received?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

4. How satisfied are you with the amount and content of in-service training that was offered during the past year?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

5. How satisfied are you that the skills you learned in these trainings will be useful in working with the child(ren) placed with you?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied

Not Applicable

6. How satisfied are you with the frequency of home visits and phone contacts made by the program staff?

Extremely Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Not Applicable

7. How satisfied are you with the quality of home visits and phone contacts made by program staff?

Extremely Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Not Applicable

8. How satisfied are you that the 4Kids is sensitive and responsive to issues of race and culture in working with you and the child(ren) placed with you?

Extremely Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Not Applicable

9. How satisfied are you with the support you received from program staff in working with others associated with your child (schools, courts, birth families etc.)?

Extremely Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Not Applicable

10. How satisfied are you with the quality of help and guidance you receive from program staff?

Extremely Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

11. How satisfied are you overall that the 4Kids Program is meeting the needs of the child in your care?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable

12. How satisfied are you that the 4Kids Program is meeting your overall needs as a Treatment Parent?

- Extremely Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Not Applicable